



Queensland Theatre Company in association with Queensland Performing Arts
Centre presents the world premiere season of

Ladies in Black

Book by Carolyn Burns, based on Madeleine St John's novel, *The Women in Black*

Music and Lyrics by Tim Finn, OBE

Additional lyrics written by Simon Phillips and Carolyn Burns.

14 November to 6 December at Playhouse, QPAC

Director: Simon Phillips

Musical Director: Isaac Hayward **Orchestrations:** Guy Simpson

Designer: Gabriela Tylesova

Lighting Designer: David Walters

Cast Includes: Christen O'Leary, Naomi Price, Kathryn McIntyre, Andrew Broadbent, Bobby Fox, Carita Farrer Spencer, Greg Stone, Lucy Maunder, Kate Cole, Diedre Rubenstein and introducing Sarah Morrison as Lisa.

The world premiere of *Ladies in Black*, the stylish story of fashion, friendship and 1950s Australia will close Queensland Theatre Company's 2015 Mainstage Season, with the frock-fest signalling a stunning and triumphant return of musical theatre for the company.

From the adaptation of **Madeleine St John's** 1993 novel, *The Women in Black*, this new production is brought to life by Australian screenwriter **Carolyn Burns** and internationally-acclaimed director **Simon Phillips** (*Priscilla Queen of the Desert*, *Love Never Dies*) with original music from acclaimed singer songwriter, **Tim Finn** OBE (*Split Enz*, *Crowded House*).

The multi-award winning stage powerhouse **Christen O'Leary** will reunite with Brisbane's first lady of voice in **Naomi Price** (after their success in *Gloria* last year), joining the brilliant **Bobby Fox**, who won critical acclaim playing Frankie Valli in the smash hit, *Jersey Boys*, along with seasoned performer **Andrew Broadbent** who shines in so many roles (*South Pacific*, *Love Never Dies*, *Priscilla – Queen of the Desert* and more).

The multi-talented and award-winning artist and QUT Alumni **Carita Farrer Spencer** brings her considerable talent back to Brisbane for the production, with fellow Queensland graduate and music and stage performer **Kathryn McIntyre** joining her. The accomplished actor **Greg Stone** will make the trip to Brisbane from Melbourne for the season, after critical acclaim in the MTC production *The Weir* and onscreen in ABC's *The Glitch*.

Playing the role of Lisa is Queensland-born rising star, **Sarah Morrison**. Sarah studied Opera at the Queensland Conservatorium after high school, and then moved to Victoria to follow her first love in musical theatre, and is thrilled to be performing for the first time at the Playhouse in her hometown.

Ladies in Black will feature a stunning range of some 30 customised designed and created dresses and suits, representing one of the biggest wardrobe projects for the company in recent years.

Screenwriter Carolyn Burns wrote her first book, the comedy-thriller for children, *The Retrievers* in New Zealand, with her first play *Objection Overruled* performed throughout that country. Now based in Australia, she has since



written four plays, including adapting both *Haxby's Circus* and *High Society* for the stage, and is in demand as a dramaturg and script editor.

Akin to writing an entirely new album, the full musical score and lyrics for *Ladies in Black* is the doing of the highly acclaimed singer and songwriter, Tim Finn. Synonymous with legendary groups Split Enz and Crowded House, Tim was a major contributor to what is the Australian soundtrack of the 1980s and early 1990s. In 2009, he collaborated with playwright Matt Cameron on *Poor Boy* which premiered at MTC, directed by Simon Phillips (who he reunites with for *Ladies in Black*) and he is currently under commission by the Western Australian Opera, Victorian Opera and New Zealand Opera to write *Star Navigator*, which will tour Australia and New Zealand in 2016. Tim is one of the key drivers behind *Ladies in Black* becoming a stage reality.

Award-winning director Simon Phillips returns to QTC for this world premiere season and brings serious directorial revenue to the stage, having developed *Priscilla – Queen of the Desert* from a film script to a hit musical in Melbourne, Sydney, London, Toronto and Broadway. Recently, he successfully refashioned *Love Never Dies*, the sequel to *The Phantom of the Opera*, for The Really Useful Company, and is currently working on the musical version of *An Officer and a Gentleman* for a major international production. Phillips' newly adapted version of *First Wives Club The Musical* began at Chicago's Oriental Theatre in March with the aiming for Broadway in the 2015-2016 season. The former Artistic Director of MTC (2000 – 2011) his director credits are both long and prestigious.

The Story:

With a dash of delicate comedy, *Ladies in Black* is a magical modern-day fairytale set in a stylish department store - F.G. Goode - in a city on the cusp of becoming cosmopolitan: Sydney is crossing the threshold between the stuffy repression of the 1950s and the glorious liberation of the 1960s. Donning a distinguished black dress, the bright-eyed, bookish school leaver Lisa is about to join the ranks on the sales floor of the city's most prestigious department store – temporarily, of course. Her domineering dad intends to railroad her into a career as a secretary, but Lisa has grander schemes in mind. In that summer of innocence, a world of possibilities opens up as she befriends the colourful denizens of the women's frocks department – there's Patty, embroiled in her marital strife; the lovelorn and unlucky Fay; and the exotic, compelling European refugee, Magda, mysterious mistress of the model gowns, who takes Lisa under her wing.

From the Christmas rush to the chaos of the sales, these women stand shoulder to padded shoulder and together learn lessons in life, love and longing – and at the end, it's not just the fancy frocks that are forever altered.

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Tickets are available at queenslandtheatre.com.au or by calling 136 246



Ladies in Black is supported by the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland.