

QUEENSLAND THEATRE

MEDIA RELEASE

Jordan Shea announced as winner of Queensland Premier's Drama Award 2025

From over 200 entries for the Queensland Premier's Drama Award 2025, and three finalists announced earlier this year, playwright Jordan Shea has been announced as the winner for his tender dramedy that pits love against obligation, *Malacañang Made Us*.

Shea's work was selected as winner of this year's Award alongside fellow finalists David Burton for *the good dad*, and Steve Rodgers for his work, *The Future is History*.

Premier of Queensland, the Honourable Steven Miles MP, congratulated Shea on his winning entry saying, "Congratulations to Jordan Shea on his exceptional work, which tells a brave and powerful tale, touching on themes of politics, identity, culture and resilience," he said.

"It's a story inspired by Jordan's own multicultural journey and one that many Queenslanders will be able to relate to, given the diversity of our community.

"I look forward to seeing Jordan's thought-provoking play make its debut on the Queensland Theatre stage and thank everyone who has contributed their diverse storytelling to the Awards."

Minister for the Arts Leeanne Enoch congratulated Shea on his winning entry, praising the play's unique storytelling of family, place and culture.

"The Queensland Premier's Drama Award proudly supports the development and presentation of powerful new works by Australian playwrights, creating compelling and diverse contemporary stories and strengthening Queensland's position on the national theatrical stage," Minister Enoch said.

"The Government's investment in Queensland Theatre enables writers to develop and share their stories, create employment opportunities, and engage audiences delivering on our 10-year *Creative Together* strategy and its priorities of sharing our stories and celebrating our storytellers.

"As Queensland prepares to showcase our arts and cultures on the global stage of the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, initiatives such as the Queensland Premier's Drama Award help to grow opportunities and capacity for our creative talent."

Shea's winning work will receive ongoing mentorship from some of the state's most renowned theatre makers, a substantial \$30,000 cash prize from Prize Sponsor, Griffith University, a \$16,000 fee to develop the play ahead of its world premiere production as part of Queensland Theatre's 2025 Season.

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Queensland Theatre Executive Director, Criena Gehrke said welcoming a new Queensland Premier's Drama Award winner's incredible storytelling is always a highlight for the company.

"Since the Queensland Premier's Drama Award launched in 2002, we've developed 39 new Australian plays, employing over 245 actors, writers and directors along the way, and gathered more than 52,000 audience members to see these plays on stage," Gehrke said.

"This award magnifies the diverse playwrighting talent we have in this country and we couldn't be more excited to work alongside Jordan Shea to bring his powerful work in *Malacañang Made Us* to Queensland audiences."

In *Malacañang Made Us*, Shea tells the story of the 1986 separation of two hopeful, young Filipino brothers, Martin and Ernie amid Ferdinand Marcos's 21-year dictatorship and their reunion nearly 40 years on in Brisbane, creating an ambitious, complex story of family, legacy and survival which judges commended for its powerful, thought-provoking creativity.

"*Malacañang Made Us* is epic in its theatricality. It reads like a global and historic conversation, but carries themes that will undoubtedly resonate with the world today. Shea has woven together many different stories, elevating under-represented voices, with it all centred around the power of ordinary people creating history and change," said the group of judges of Shea's winning entry.

"From the first reading of this script, we could sense Shea's bravery as it's quite ambitious in scale and journeys through language, time and place - making this something we know audiences will be moved by."

Alongside Queensland Theatre's Associate Artistic Director (First Nations) Isaac Drandic, judges for the 2025 award included Marcel Dorney, playwright, director and performer; Dan Giovannoni, playwright and theatre maker; Courtney Stewart, Artistic Director and CEO at La Boite Theatre; and Lydia Miller, Creative Consultant, Marigold Enterprises.

Professor Scott Harrison, Griffith University's Pro Vice Chancellor (Arts, Education and Law), Assistant Vice Chancellor (Cultural Curation and Community Partnerships) was thrilled to share in Jordan Shea's winning congratulations.

"Griffith University is delighted to once again support the Queensland Premier's Drama Award. From what began with a production sponsorship with Queensland Theatre more than 20 years ago, we're proud to play a role in seeing so many incredible productions and emerging talent realised, and we recognise that the continuation of live theatre in Queensland is vital," said Professor Scott Harrison.

The industry's excitement for the award upcoming winner comes off the back of enormous success from previous award recipients, including the 2022-23 award winner Ryan Ennis and his play *Drizzle Boy* which premiered in Brisbane in March 2023 and is set to be touring the country as part of a regional tour in October.

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The Queensland Premier's Drama Award is an initiative of the Queensland Government, delivered in partnership with Queensland Theatre and supported by Griffith University.

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2025 QPDA Award Winner

About Jordan Shea

Jordan Shea is a graduate of the Victorian College of the Arts whose extensive body of work has been shortlisted or awarded runner-up for the Lysicrates Prize 2023, the Australian Theatre Festival's New Play Award and the SBW Award. Recent credits include: *One Hour No Oil* (as co-writer), *CAGE*, *The House at Boundary Road*, *Liverpool* and *Kasama Kita*. Jordan won the Writing NSW Varuna House Fellowship and was a co-winner of the Philip Parsons Fellowship at Belvoir. Jordan is commissioned Performing Lines and Australian Plays Transform to develop a new documentary theatre work centering Filipino community leaders.

His entry, *Malacañang Made Us*

A tender new dramedy that pits love against obligation. It's 1986: Manila, Philippines. Hopeful young brothers Martin and Ernie take to the streets to celebrate the impending fall of Ferdinand Marcos's 21-year dictatorship. By early morning, they've been separated in the crowd. In 2022, Australia, a now cautious Martin implores his internet activist son Leo to be careful with his online presence. In the wake of Bong Bong Marcos' landslide victory, Leo feels now more than ever, to reconcile both his identity and his activism. But when free-spirited Ernie shows up unannounced, all three men must face their shared legacy of survival and responsibility.

The 2025 Judges

About Issac Drandic

Isaac Drandic is a Noongar man from the southwest of Western Australia. He is an award-winning playwright, director, and dramaturg. Isaac has held several positions within the theatre industry including Associate Director of ILBIJERRI Theatre Company, Resident Artist at Playwriting Australia and Resident Dramaturg at Queensland Theatre among others. He is a member of Australian Plays Transforms National Advisory Panel and is currently Associate Artistic Director of Queensland Theatre. His productions have earned numerous Green Room Awards including Most Outstanding Independent Theatre Production for *Blood on the Dance Floor*, as well as Best New Writing, Best Direction and the coveted award for Best Production in the theatre companies' category for *The Season*.

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About Marcel Dorney

An award-winning playwright and director, Marcel Dorney is a founding member and co-AD of Melbourne based theatre company Elbow Room. His work has been commissioned, developed and produced by Queensland Theatre, Malthouse Theatre, Merrigong Theatre Company, Hothouse Theatre, La Boite Theatre, Griffin Theatre, Red Stitch Actors' Theatre, Brisbane Powerhouse, Artslink, QMF and the Next Wave Festival, and published by Playlab Press. Marcel's play *Fractions* (Queensland Theatre/HotHouse) received the 2010-11 Queensland Premier's Drama Award, and he was part of Queensland Theatre's National Artistic Team initiative from 2016. He has also worked extensively as a dramaturg, script editor and assessor, and educator.

His work includes *We Get It* (Elbow Room/MTC, 2015), *Prehistoric* (Elbow Room/Brisbane Festival 2014), and (with Dan Evans) *The Tragedy of King Richard III* (La Boite, 2016). His awards include: Best Director and Best Ensemble (Ind.), 2011 Green Room Awards (*After All This*); 2012 Gold Matilda Award (*Fractions*); Best Writing, 2014 Green Room Awards, (*Prehistoric*); and Best Ensemble (Ind.) 2021 Green Room Awards (Joe Paradise Lui's *The Enlightenment of the Siddhartha Gautama Buddha and the Encounter with the Monkey King, Great Sage, Equal of Heaven*). Both *After All This* (2011) and *Prehistoric* (2014) were awarded Best Performance by Melbourne Fringe Festival.

About Dan Giovannoni

Dan's plays for families, young people and adults have been produced across Australia in big and little theatres, school halls, circus tents, restaurants and even a barn outside of Hobart. He's worked with companies including Melbourne Theatre Company, Malthouse Theatre, Barking Gecko, Terrapin Puppet Theatre, Red Stitch Actors Theatre, Arena Theatre Co and Little Ones Theatre. His work has won three Green Room Association awards, a Helpmann award, an AWGIE and has been nominated for a Victorian Premier's Literary Award. Currently, under commission from MTC, Terrapin and Malthouse, Dan lives and works on the lands of the Wurundjeri people with his husband, daughter and two dogs.

About Courtney Stewart

Courtney Stewart is an acclaimed director, dramaturg, actor and teaching artist with a deep passion for intercultural works and multicultural dramaturgies. She is the current Artistic Director and CEO of La Boite Theatre. A proud Queenslander, Courtney started her professional career as an actor before honing her talents as an artistic leader, diversity specialist and change maker for some of the country's most prolific companies and organisations including Sydney Theatre Company (as Directing Associate and Richard Wherrett Fellow), Belvoir and Contemporary Asian Australian Performance (as Artistic Associate). Courtney was previously Chair of the Equity Diversity Committee, a delegate to the National Performers Committee, and a former board member for Contemporary Asian Australian Performance. Courtney's production of *The Poison of Polygamy* by Anchuli Felicia King premiered at La Boite in May this year and had a subsequent season at Sydney Theatre Company. Courtney's production of *Miss Peony* opened at Belvoir in July and is currently touring nationally. Courtney was recently appointed to the Board for Creative Australia.

About Lydia Miller

A KukuYalanji and Waanyi woman from Far North Queensland, Ms Miller has a career spanning over 35 years in the arts and cultural sector as a performer, artistic director, producer, administrator, senior executive and

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advocate. Her professional performing arts career spans theatre, film, television and radio. She was executive director for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts at Australia Council for the Arts from 2005 to 2021. She also has public policy and administration experience in the health, community services and criminal justice sectors. She has held several Council, Board and Committee positions. Currently, she is a creative consultant with Marigold Enterprises.

Previous Winners

2022–23

Ryan Enniss, *Drizzle Boy* (winner)

Phoebe Grainer, *Burning House*

Anthony Mullins, *The Norman Mailer Anecdote*

2020–21

Steve Pirie, *Return to the Dirt* (winner)

Anna Loren, *Comfort*

Maddie Nixon, *Binnavale*

2018–19

David Megarrity, *The Holidays* (winner)

Hannah Belanszky, *don't ask what the bird look like*

Anna Yen, *Slow Boat*

2016–17

Michele Lee, *Rice* (winner)

Kathryn Marquet, *Furious Creatures*

Suzie Miller, *I Looked Up and There You Were*

2014–15

Daniel Evans, *Oedipus Doesn't Live Here Anymore* (winner)

Tim Benzie, *The Overflow*

Megan Shorey, *One in Seven*

[\[Additional winners can be found here\]](#)