

27 September 2021

## **BOY MAKES HISTORY: *Boy Swallows Universe* world premiere smashes box office records**

The world premiere season of Trent Dalton's *Boy Swallows Universe*, adapted for the stage by Tim McGarry, opened Brisbane Festival 2021 and has smashed box office records to become QPAC's highest selling drama, and Queensland Theatre's best-selling show in its entire history.

The fastest selling Australian debut novel ever, *Boy Swallows Universe* continues its meteoric rise with the stage adaptation directed by Sam Strong having its season extended three times, resulting in a sold-out six-week run at 100% capacity in QPAC's Playhouse seen by nearly 40,000 people.

In a partnership as formidable as Brett Kenny and the Paramatta Eels, the co-presentation between QPAC, Queensland Theatre and Brisbane Festival, has been met with overwhelming critical and audience praise.

The cast and creative team have garnered standing ovations for lifting the grit, nostalgia, magical realism and – above all else – heart from the book and enhancing it in a theatre setting.

More remarkable than Eli's great escape from Boggo Road Gaol on Christmas Day, the stage adaption of *Boy Swallows Universe* is a show of epic dreaming and scale and is Queensland Theatre's most technically ambitious and complex show to date.

Thirteen actors play more than 30 characters wearing in excess of 50 different costumes; and a catalogue of more than 94 props are peppered throughout more than 40 different scenes – from the sparkling waters of Redcliffe's Hornibrook Bridge to Darra's double-storey brick public housing – projected on to a seven-metre-high set.

Minister for the Arts Leeanne Enoch said it had been so exciting for Queensland audiences to be the very first to experience the compelling stage version of Trent Dalton's tale of growing up in suburban Brisbane.

"The unprecedented success of *Boy Swallows Universe* is to be applauded and celebrated," Minister Enoch said.

"Congratulations to the Brisbane Festival, Queensland Theatre and Queensland Performing Arts Centre on their success in joining forces to develop and present this landmark production of a uniquely Brisbane work.

"The Queensland Government's investment supports Brisbane Festival, QPAC and Queensland Theatre to create new Queensland work and provide employment and creative development opportunities for our phenomenally talented artists and arts workers.

"The arts, cultural and creative industries are key to delivering Queensland's plan for economic recovery from COVID-19, each year contributing \$8.5 billion into the state's economy and supporting more than 92,000 jobs for Queenslanders."

QPAC Chief Executive John Kotzas said the world premiere of *Boy Swallows Universe* was one for the record books and audiences had been moved profoundly by the show.

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“Trent has said all along that *Boy Swallows Universe* belongs to Brisbane, and I'm so proud of our city for doing the right thing so that we could operate at 100% capacity, allowing more people to see this special show. The love and triumph surrounding this season has certainly made us aware of what a privilege it is to be one of the few major performing arts venues open in Australia right now,” Mr Kotzas said.

“Audiences have been moved to see our city depicted with such clarity and care on stage. The best stories can change the way you see the world around you and I love the thought that an audience member might see the express bus to Bracken Ridge glide past them on their way home, and see it in an entirely new light.”

Queensland Theatre Artistic Director Lee Lewis said *Boy Swallows Universe* was the perfect story to be telling in Brisbane at this moment in time.

“I can't emphasise more strongly how important it is to be presenting this story of triumph over adversity, of love overcoming trauma, and shooting for the stars with unbridled optimism when situations are at their most hopeless,” Ms Lewis said.

“This show has been loved, dreamt about, longed for, and toiled over for more than three years now and the enormous heart it has been given by all those who have worked on it, or looked forward to seeing it radiates from the theatre every night. I feel incredibly proud that Queensland Theatre succeeded in getting this beautiful production onstage and that so many people are coming to be delighted, moved, and enthralled by it.”

Brisbane Festival Artistic Director Louise Bezzina said she was overjoyed, and not surprised, at the extraordinary success of this page-to-stage production of Trent Dalton's beloved novel.

“We are so privileged to have had this opportunity to co-produce this seminal work and to finally present it to the world. It has been a shining light of our 2021 program,” Ms Bezzina said.

“The curation of the 2021 Brisbane Festival had at its heart two things: community and celebration. *Boy Swallows Universe* encapsulates both elements and I'm proud that we could present this heartfelt and ultimately joyous Brisbane story featuring so many of our incredibly talented local artists and arts workers.

“I couldn't imagine a better way to have opened Brisbane Festival than with the world premiere of *Boy Swallows Universe*.”

*Boy Swallows Universe* is presented by Queensland Theatre, Brisbane Festival and QPAC, and runs in the Playhouse until 9 October 2021.

## ENDS

### Season Details

Queensland Theatre, QPAC and Brisbane Festival present Trent Dalton's *Boy Swallows Universe*, adapted for the stage by Tim McGarry

**When:** Monday 30 August to Saturday 9 October

**Where:** Playhouse, QPAC, Queensland Cultural Centre, South Bank, Brisbane

**Bookings:** [qpac.com.au](http://qpac.com.au) or 136 246

Download high resolution images via [atqp.ac/BoySwallowsUniversePublicity](http://atqp.ac/BoySwallowsUniversePublicity)

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...3

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