

Stars Announced for Hit Australian Musical *The Sunshine Club*

With tickets on sale Wednesday 30 March, **Queensland Performing Arts Centre (QPAC)** and **Queensland Theatre** have revealed the stars of *The Sunshine Club*, a revival of the “unashamedly feel-good musical” (*The Australian*) that will swing into the **Playhouse** from **9 to 30 July 2022**.

First performed by Queensland Theatre in QPAC’s Playhouse in 1999, *The Sunshine Club* launched the career of artists that are now household names including Wesley Enoch, David Page, Roxanne McDonald, Stephen Page, Ursula Yovich, Wayne Blair, Elaine Crombie, Tessa Rose and Christen O’Leary.

The hit Australian musical follows Frank Doyle, an Aboriginal serviceman who spent years fighting shoulder-to-shoulder with troops from all over Australia only to find race relations hadn’t changed at all when he returned home to Brisbane after World War II.

Brimming with hope and defiance Frank sets up his own ballroom, The Sunshine Club, where everyone is invited to meet, mingle and sway the night away.

Singer-songwriter and actor **Marcus Corowa** will fill the boots of Frank Doyle. An award-winning artist of Aboriginal and South Sea Islander heritage from Bowen, Corowa recently seduced audiences as one of The Drifters in *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*, with other credits including Opera Australia’s *Bran Nue Dae* and Sydney Theatre Company’s *The Secret River*.

Soprano and *The Voice* alumni **Irena Lysiuk** will play Rose Morris, the girl of Frank’s dreams and the Reverend’s daughter. A Queensland Conservatorium graduate, Lysiuk has worked extensively with Opera Queensland and The Little Red Company, recently appearing in *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Your Song* for them respectively.

Celebrated actor **Roxanne McDonald** will reprise her role as Aunty Faith, following a stellar career spanning more than 20 years. A descendent from the Mandandanji and Darambal tribes of Central Queensland, Aunty Rox has starred in more than 50 mainstage plays with Queensland Theatre, Sydney Theatre Company, Melbourne Theatre Company and Belvoir St Theatre, and played roles on screen in the likes of *Australia Day* and *Harrow*.

Internationally acclaimed Nunukul and Ngugi playwright and director **Wesley Enoch AM** will direct the revival. Currently the inaugural Indigenous Chair in the Creative Industries at Queensland University of Technology, Enoch will return to Queensland Theatre – where he was Artistic Director from 2010 to 2015 – to remount the work he was commissioned to create at just 28 years of age.

Several other original creatives will return, including Composer John Rodgers, Musical Director Wayne Freer and Costume Designer Richard Roberts, to combine forces with a new generation of talent comprising Choreographer Yolande Brown, Set Designer Jacob Nash, Lighting Designer Ben Hughes and Sound Designer Derek Wilson.

Minister for the Arts Leeanne Enoch said *The Sunshine Club* was a joyful, local First Nations story that shone a light of warmth, love and marvellous music with a diversity of voices.

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“It is wonderful to see two major arts organisations, QPAC and Queensland Theatre, work together to spread some sunshine at the Playhouse Theatre in presenting a fresh new production of this popular theatre production,” Minister Enoch said.

“QPAC and Queensland Theatre have a proven track-record of success after co-partnering on the smash hit world premiere of Trent Dalton’s *Boy Swallows Universe* for last year’s Brisbane Festival.”

“Presenting home grown productions help to deliver on our 10-year Roadmap for arts, culture and creativity, sharing our stories and celebrating our storytellers.”

Queensland Theatre Artistic Director **Lee Lewis** said if we ever have needed a revival of *The Sunshine Club*, it was now.

“The love story between Christen O’Leary as Rose and David Page as Frank lit up Brisbane hearts 20 years ago, and now we are poised to fall in love with Irena and Marcus, new young voices to fill us with hope for a new future. The next generation of Queensland audiences will see this next generation of Queensland talent take to the QPAC stage in this Made in Queensland classic. Look back with fondness, look forward with hope, just make sure you come and look at this great big Queensland musical,” Ms Lewis said.

“The huge heart inside this musical will burst onto the stage reminding us all that resilience is made up of generosity, community, laughter and love. This will be a celebration of great talent, great ambition and the power of music and dance to bring us all together. I can’t wait!”

QPAC Chief Executive **John Kotzas** said *The Sunshine Club* would be a special return to where it all began in the Playhouse and a season that brings together generations of Queensland and First Nations artists.

“This season will showcase a wealth of homegrown Queensland talent. Many of the original cast and creatives have enjoyed illustrious careers since 1999 and we can’t wait to see some of them reunite at QPAC,” Mr Kotzas said.

“More than 20 years later, we hope *The Sunshine Club* will encourage reflection but also make us to look to the future. The sharing of knowledge and truth across generations will be powerful, distilled through First Nations storytellers like Jacob Nash and Yolande Brown, who have worked closely with original choreographer Stephen Page at Bangarra Dance Theatre. We hope it is just as powerful for our audiences.”

Inspired by the Boathouse dances that were held in Brisbane in the late 1950s and early 1960s, *The Sunshine Club* is an examination of Australia’s relationship with its First Nations People through humour, optimism and toe tappin’ music.

The musical received wide acclaim during its initial run, with a Helpmann Award nomination for Best Choreography in a Musical, a Deadly Award for Excellence in Film or Theatrical Score and Matilda Award for book, lyrics and direction.

The Sunshine Club is QPAC and Queensland Theatre’s first major co-production since the record-breaking success of the world premiere of Trent Dalton’s *Boy Swallows Universe*, adapted for the stage by Tim McGarry, in 2021.

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The full cast will be announced soon. Tickets are on sale on Wednesday 30 March via qpac.com.au or 136 246.

Queensland Theatre is generously supported by the Landmark Productions Fund and Production Partner, Ergon Network and Energex, part of Energy Queensland.

QPAC is proudly supported by Principal Partner MinterEllison.

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