

PRESENTED BY **Steamworks Arts**

SAVAGE LOVE, DEATH, AND ETHICS GRACE

BY ALANA VALENTINE

STATE THEATRE CENTRE OF WA
AUGUST 11-14

steamworks arts
INNOVATION



Department of
Local Government, Sport
and Cultural Industries

lotterywest

SAVAGE LOVE, DEATH, AND ETHICS GRACE

BY ALANA VALENTINE

Dr Robert Bavaro
Humphrey Bower

Dr Tex Cladakis
Gibson Nolte

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Director
Sally Richardson

**Co-director and
Lighting designer**
Joe Paradise Lui

Publicity
Tracy Routledge

**Assistant director and
Stage manager**
Timothy Green

Social media
Sian Murphy

Original photography
Jon Green

Sound designer
Professor Cat Hope

Creative producer
Libby Klysz,
Variegated Productions

Set designer
Matt McVeigh

Graphic designer
Vaughan Davies,
Stage Left Design

DIRECTORS STATEMENT

SALLY RICHARDSON

Steamworks Arts will be 21 in 2021. It's hard to believe... when I set out with a group of friends to create the company I certainly didn't imagine that Steamworks might be still around twenty one years later. Our creative fortunes have roller-coasted, as we have enjoyed incredible highs and also the inevitable quieter moments...yet here we are!

I started Steamworks because as a female director/writer I was frustrated with the lack of opportunities to do the creative work that I wanted to do, to work with the artists I wanted to work with, and in the way that I wanted to work in terms of process and practice.

Companies provided some opportunities, but at the time my experience was both frustrating and disappointing, as usually the work was one the Artistic Director wasn't interested in, or it was targeted as a specifically 'female' project and offered as a token gesture towards inclusion.

How exciting to witness the ground-breaking shift and genuine commitment to gender parity and diversity that is now taking place across the arts sector, and for us still be an active part of it.

I can look back and feel proud of our legacy; new works and programs that have championed WA independent artists, new writing exploring contemporary forms and genres, the choice to actively supporting independent theatre and contemporary dance practice and artists, while pro-actively working in partnership with women in all areas of the company's business. We have presented work in most venues here in Perth, at major Festivals and toured nationally and internationally. The constant challenge to secure resources and funding, and to continue in the face of the ongoing reduction in support to the independent sector both locally and federally.

Our first show *Savage Grace* premiered at The Blue Room Theatre in 2001, and was a wonderful success, which we then remounted and toured nationally. It feels exciting be revisiting this work with Humphrey, Gibson, Alana and Cat twenty-one years on, still with the mandate to re-invent and reinterpret work, exploring and developing a fresh response to Alana's award-winning play. I want to thank Alana for her support to the production, and for writing a new prologue and epilogue that sees us in today's COVID pandemic speaking to another pandemic, HIV/AIDS. Thanks also to Cat Hope, who has also generously allowed us to work with her original composition.

To share the experience with the current next generation of performance makers is particularly exciting. Historically little is recorded and documented of the past works of smaller companies, so this as a wonderful opportunity to look back, while actively being a part of making a new version that is a timely reflection on current events.

21 YEARS ON

This is a real first in having the same cast take on the same play twenty-one years later. What was a budding, passionate love affair and a heated ideological debate between two men in their twenties/thirties becomes a very different emotional frame when the performers playing those characters are in their forties/fifties, where the stakes are higher. I think it's also great to see love and relationship explored by characters (and actors) who are mature, who deeply understand the craft of the actor, resulting in performances that are nuanced and layered.

We welcome colleagues Libby Klysz, Matt McVeigh, Timothy Green, Nicole Marrington, and Joe Paradise Lui (who has worked alongside me on so many Steamworks productions).

I am humbled that these artists, many of whom now have high profiles and busy careers, have come together to collaborate on this production. We will produce something very special and unique in the current climate, I have no doubt.

WRITER'S NOTE

ALANA VALENTINE

We four are back together.

We have never, essentially, been apart.

There are so many things to say about the joy of having the Steamworks production of this play revived after twenty years. But life is fast and time is short and attention spans are infinitely more fickle so I will say only the things I feel with absolute conviction must be said.

Gibson Nolte and Humphrey Bower are two of the best actors you will see anywhere in the world. Perth – I envy you tonight, being able to sit and watch these two remarkable performers – their maturation, the focus and complexity that the years have blessed them both with. I am awed all over again by their generosity, their raging, vivid talent and their ability to show what real artists can do with my ambitious, ardent script.

That Sally Richardson, whose own artistry has matured in the dance, physical theatre and circus forms, started her beautiful company with this dense textual work about sexuality, philosophy and verbal dexterity continues to be a revelation of her prodigious talent. I am as grateful for her inventive flexibility as I ever was, and I trust Perth will claim her for the visionary that she surely is. To the brilliant Cat Hope and all those who worked on the first production, including Sue Ravine and Andrew Lake, to those on this fresh version including Libby Klysz, Joe Lui, Matt McVeigh, Tim Green and Nicole Marrington, thank you all.

Savage Grace was in fact commissioned by the Sydney Theatre Company's New Stages program in 1998. I was an emerging, intense writer with a wordy, intense play. In the character descriptions I had indicated that the roles were non-gender specific. In 1998 that was just too hard, too hard. A staged reading was given at the Stables in Sydney and the play was shortlisted for the Griffin Award. But a man of faith who was sexually active. Too hard.

The only company that would touch this play was the small, independent company gf, and the only people who would present it was my LGBTQ+ community at FEAST festival in Adelaide in 2000. It was then that Steamworks took the enormous leap of faith to produce it at the

Blue Room in 2001, then onto the Subiaco Arts Centre 2002, the Darlinghurst Theatre in Sydney 2003 and La Mama in Melbourne 2005.

Savage Grace dramatizes the sincere and dimensional religious faith of a homosexual person in a country where the same-sex marriage debate and the forthcoming religious freedom act debate may continue to perpetuate a myth that these two things are incompatible. It is the responsibility of the arts, the deep purpose of theatre to dramatize the human dimension, to complicate with empathy the calcifying effects of stereotyping and discrimination and this acclaimed Steamworks production of *Savage Grace* does that with humour, authenticity and lingering beauty.

We four are back together.

We have never, essentially, been apart.

You taught me how to claim a stage,
you are in my blood, my heart.

The playtext is available from [Currency Press](#).

TIMELINE

- 2001** Blue Room Theatre
 - 2002** Subiaco Arts Centre
with Black Swan Theatre Company
 - 2003** Darlinghurst Theatre
Mardi Gras Arts Festival
 - 2004** La Mama Theatre
 - 2021** State Theatre Centre WA
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THANKS

Thanks to Alice, Kaitlin and the team at State Theatre Centre for supporting independent artists with care and understanding; The Blue Room Theatre (especially Scott); and Lucy Cosgriff aka The Well Rested Baker.

This production of *Savage Grace* is gratefully made with assistance from Department of Local Government, Sports and Cultural Industries.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Steamworks Arts is proudly located on Whadjuk Noongar boodjar, where stories have been shared for sixty thousand years. We pay our deep thanks and respects to elders past and present.

Always was, always will be Aboriginal land.