

Presented by Arts House and Mobile States

I'M YOUR MAN

A BELVOIR PRODUCTION
CREATED BY ROSLYN OADES

Arts House,
North Melbourne Town Hall
Wed 4 – Sun 8 September 2013
70 minutes
Post-show Q&A Thu 5 September

Creative Team

Creator and Director: **Roslyn Oades**
Sound Designer: **Bob Scott**
Lighting and Set Designer: **Neil Simpson**
Movement Director: **Lee Wilson**
Script Dramaturge: **Raimondo Cortese**

Starring:

Michael Mohammed Ahmad –
Billy 'The Kid' Dib
Katia Molino – CJ, Thai boxing manager,
Dave Aloua and Billy's trainer
Billy McPherson – gym manager, Wally Carr
and Billy's cutman
Justin Rosniak – Jeff Fenech, Gus Mercurio,
ring announcer and Billy's manager/brother

John Shrimpton – Wale 'Lucky Boy' Omotoso,
Tony Mundine, Vacharakrit 'Cinderella Man'
Senehan and Billy's cousin

Production Manager: **Holly Woollard**
Stage Manager: **Laura Harris**

Originally produced by Belvoir and Sydney
Festival in association with BYDS. Toured by
Performing Lines for Mobile States

artshouse.com.au
belvoir.com.au
roslynoades.com

Toured by Performing Lines for Mobile States with the support
of the Australian Government through the Australia Council,
its arts funding and advisory body, and Playing Australia. The
development of *I'm Your Man* was made possible through the
generous support of Belvoir's B Sharp creative development
program and its partnership with the Macquarie Group
Foundation; the Australian Government through the Australia
Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body; the NSW
Government through Arts NSW; and Bankstown City Council.

"THERE'S NO COWARDS IN FIGHTERS
THAT ARE ABLE TO CLIMB THOSE THREE STEPS
INTO THE RING. NOW HE MAY GO LAY DOWN
IN THERE, WHEN HE GETS HIT THE FIRST TIME,
HE MAY BE FRIGHTENED SCARED SHITLESS,
'SCUSE MY LANGUAGE, BUT HE'S
GOT TO CLIMB THOSE THREE STEPS.
THAT TAKES COURAGE." — Gus Mercurio

Artistic Notes

I'm Your Man is the final part in a headphone-verbatim trilogy exploring acts of courage. The previous works, *Stories of Love & Hate* and *Fast Cars & Tractor Engines*, investigate courage within the context of specific sociopolitical struggles. With **I'm Your Man**, we set out to explore this theme in a more immediate, physical manner. I wanted to capture adrenaline on tape; and the world of professional boxing introduced me to an elite community driven by the intense desire, will or need to fight. In the hyper-masculine and very public realm of the pro-boxer the idea of maintaining your dignity or pride enters a whole new level of personal risk. Time and again I was struck by the vulnerability of these big-hearted warriors: inspiring individuals who burn bright and fall hard.

The beginnings of this project took root ten years ago, when I met a charismatic ex-fighter called CJ at a boxing gym in East London. It also happened that one of my long-term collaborators in Bankstown, performer Mohammed Ahmad, had been a boxer and was passionate about making a boxing show. In 2010 we approached local Featherweight fighter Billy 'The Kid' Dib, who kindly allowed us to follow him over an 18-month period as he pursued his dream of an IBF World Title belt. During this time I became increasingly interested in boxing gyms as a site – the sounds, the rhythms, the discipline, the community. The process of making this work has been an amazing journey and in many ways this show is a diary of my adventure – or more accurately, an *eavesdrop*.

The headphone-verbatim technique used in **I'm Your Man** is a process I have been exploring since 2001. I have a long-held fascination with the unique qualities of speech patterns, individual vocabularies and group conversations. As a theatre-maker I operate from the principle that there is as much

information embedded in the way someone speaks as what they are saying. Through meticulously preserving the vocal print of real-life interviews in performance, we set out to mine these rich nuances like musicians following a score.

The audio-script for **I'm Your Man** relies heavily upon the generosity and trust of our interviewees, to whom I am extremely grateful. The stories of seven professional boxers appear in this production, but many individuals from Australia's boxing community contributed to my research – providing invaluable insights and contacts.

Roslyn Oades

The Performance Technique

Rather than reciting memorised lines, the actors wear headphones and speak along to a sequence of carefully edited audio interviews, word-for-word. By confining the actors to the discipline of accompanying a recording with absolute precision (including every cough and stumble), a curious, hyper-real performance style is established. While the actors often adopt characters with an accent/background/age/gender obviously not their own, the technique eliminates the possibility of parody or interpretation. It also allows the many quirks and imperfections of human speech to be acknowledged with integrity.

Biographies

Roslyn Oades

Creator and Director

Roslyn Oades is a theatre-maker, performer and voice artist. **I'm Your Man** is the third part in her headphone-verbatim trilogy on *Acts of Courage*. The previous works, *Stories of Love & Hate* (2008, STC remount 2011) and *Fast Cars & Tractor Engines* (2005) were created with Urban Theatre Projects and Bankstown Youth Development Service (BYDS). In 2012 she created and directed *Cutaway: A Portrait for Vitalstatistix*. She is currently Director-in-Residence at Malthouse Theatre. As an artist she has a particular interest in the voice, and moonlights as a well-known cartoon character voice performer – including major roles on the animated television series *Tracey McBean*, *Bananas in Pyjamas*, *Zigby*, *Dogstar*, *ZuZu & the SuperNuffs*, *Bambaloo* and *Sea Princesses*.

Michael Mohammed Ahmad

Performer

Michael Mohammed Ahmad is a writer, editor and actor. He was recipient of the 2012 Australia Council Kirk Robson Award and is currently the Director of Sweatshop: Western Sydney Literacy Movement. His first novel, *The Tribe*, is forthcoming in 2014 (Giramondo Press). His acting credits include *Fast Cars & Tractor Engines* with Urban Theatre Projects (2004–05), *Stories of Love & Hate* with Urban Theatre Projects and Sydney Theatre Company (2008/2011) and **I'm Your Man** with Belvoir and Sydney Festival (2012). He is a doctoral candidate in the University of Western Sydney's Writing and Society Research Centre.

Raimondo Cortese

Script Consultant

Raimondo Cortese graduated from the Victorian College of the Arts School of Drama in 1993 and is a founding member of Ranters Theatre. He was the Artistic Director of Ranters from 1994 to 2000. He has written over 30 plays, including *Features of Blown Youth*, *Roulette*, *St Kilda Tales*, *Holiday* and *Dream Life of Butterflies*. *The Indestructible Corpse* was published in 1998 (Text Publishing). Most

recently he co-scripted the feature film *Boy Castaways* with Michael Kantor. He lectures part-time in the Masters of Performance Writing at VCA, Melbourne University.

Billy McPherson

Performer

Billy McPherson is a proud Murri man from the Gamillaroi Tribe, South West Queensland. He first started in the arts industry in 1988 with Street Arts Community Theatre Company, West End, Brisbane. A performer, writer, director and former amateur boxer and trainer, he has performed in scores of community and professional productions including, recently, the ABC television series *Redfern Now* (2012). He first performed at Belvoir in 1993 in *Gunjies*. Other credits include *Close to the Bone* (Q Theatre), appearances at the Dreaming Festival and Sydney Theatre Company, and *The Aboriginal Protesters* (Performance Space). His television and film credits include *Heartlands*, *My Place*, *Dead Heart* and *The Combination*. He has also recently directed his first short film, *Nalingu (Yours and Mine)* (2011), which was screened at the Message Sticks Festival, Sydney Opera House.

Katia Molino

Performer

Katia Molino completed a Bachelor of Creative Arts at the School of Creative Arts, Wollongong University, majoring in theatre and movement. Since then she has worked as a freelance performer with many companies, including Entr'Acte, Stalker, The opera Project, Version 1.0, Theatre Kantanka, NORPA and Ensemble Offspring. She also makes her own short performances for audiences with challenged attention spans. For Urban Theatre Projects she wrote and performed *Inclusions*, in response to time spent with the Bankstown Lapidary Society.

Justin Rosniak

Performer

Justin Rosniak has been acting since the age of ten, and is well known to Australian audiences from many film and television roles. He had many leading roles in his younger

days, including the feature films *Sweet Talker* and *Sample People*, and television series such as *Sky Trackers*, *Escape from Jupiter*, *Eggshells* and *Home & Away*. In more recent years, he has appeared in the feature film *Animal Kingdom* and in television series *Packed to the Rafters* (in the recurring role of Warnie), *Underbelly Razor* and *Laid* series two. Some other television credits include *Rush*, *Dangerous*, *Scorched*, *All Saints*, *Fireflies* and *White Collar Blue*. Other theatre work includes *Men* at fortyfivedownstairs in Melbourne, and *Blackrock* for Sydney Theatre Company.

Bob Scott

Sound Designer

Bob Scott has an extensive resumé in sound design, recording and mix engineering in modern music production and acoustic music recording. Some of his gigs include audio director for the ANZAC Day ceremonies in Gallipoli, Canberra International Music Festival, Four Winds Festival in Bermagui, Australian Festival of Chamber Music, and numerous large-scale outdoor events. He has worked as a recording and mix engineer with Nigel Kennedy, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, the West Australian Symphony Orchestra, the Song Company, Ensemble Offspring, Australian Chamber Orchestra, Salut Baroque, Marshall McGuire, Genevieve Lacey, Brett Dean, Terry Riley, Synergy Percussion and Nigel Westlake. Most recently, he composed the sound for Branch Nebula's *Concrete and Bone Sessions*, Sydney Festival (2013).

John Shrimpton

Performer

A NIDA acting graduate from 2007, John Shrimpton has worked in a wide variety of projects in film, television, theatre, short film, and commercial and video art. Last year he performed in the first season of **I'm Your Man** during the 2012 Sydney Festival at Belvoir and acted in the Sydney Theatre Company and BYDS joint production of *Look the Other Way*. He recently performed in Sydney Theatre Company's community project, *Road Train*, which toured regional New South Wales. He is

also a facilitator for Playwriting Australia and a proud member of the MEAA. Television and film credits include *Out of the Blue*, *East West 101* and *Wolverine*.

Neil Simpson

Lighting and Set Designer

Neil Simpson first walked through the doors of Belvoir 35 years ago when it flew the Nimrod Theatre colours. He worked with the Nimrod for many years under the directorship of John Bell, Richard Wherrett and Ken Horler and was there when Neil Armfield joined as an Associate Director. For Urban Theatre Projects, Neil has lit *Stories of Love & Hate*, directed by Roslyn Oades; *Ama and Chan* directed by Drew Fairley (this production opened the new Bankstown Arts Centre); and *Back Home*, *Last Highway* and *The Fence*, all directed by Alicia Talbot in association with Sydney Festival. Other design at Belvoir includes Big hART's *Ngapartji Ngapartji*. As a producer, he works with the Sydney Opera House, most recently producing the 2012 and 2013 Message Sticks Festivals. He was also part of a small team that produces the Parramasala Festival of South Asian Arts in Parramatta. He is a founding shareholder of Company B.

Lee Wilson

Movement Director

Lee Wilson is Co-Artistic Director of Branch Nebula. Branch Nebula's most recent production *Concrete and Bone Sessions* premiered at Sydney Festival in 2013 and has been nominated for a Helpmann Award. **Whelping Box**, a co-production with Matt Prest and Clare Britton, premiered at Performance Space's SEXES festival at Carriageworks in October 2012. *SWEAT* premiered at Performance Space, Sydney, in 2010 and toured to Dance Massive in Melbourne (2011) and the In Transit festival at Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin (2011). Branch Nebula is currently creating *sloop*, working with local professional street-style artists, with the Kiasma Museum in Helsinki, Finland, for the Urb Festival. The company has also started work on a new commission by Carriageworks, for a premiere in 2014.

The Real I'm Your Man Legends

① **Billy 'The Kid' Dib** is a charismatic 26-year-old boxer from Bankstown, Sydney. Over the duration of this project his opponents included Filipino boxer Reynaldo Belandres, Thai boxer Vacharakrit Senahan, and Mexican boxer Jorge Lacierva, for a shot at the IBF Featherweight Title of the World.

② **Wale 'Lucky Boy' Omotoso** is a talented up-and-coming Welterweight boxer. He is hoping for a world title shot within the next 12 months. Originally from Lagos, Nigeria, Wale relocated to Melbourne in 2006 and is now a permanent resident of Australia.

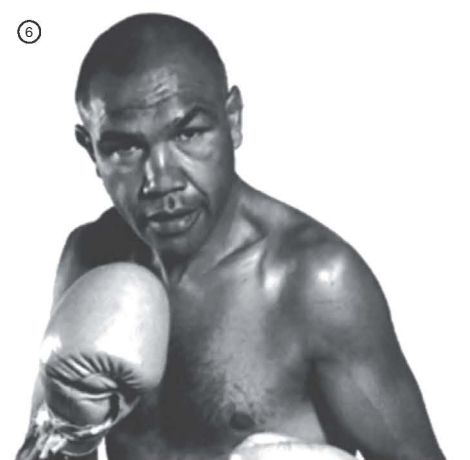
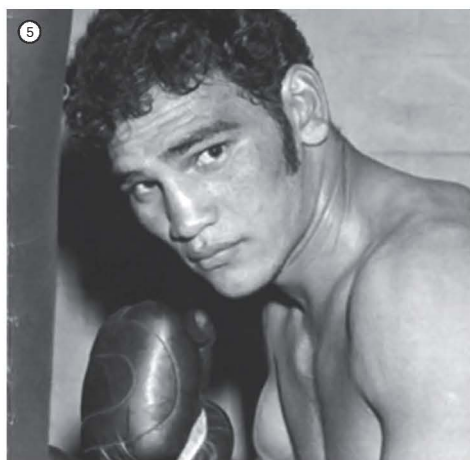
③ **Gus Mercurio** was well known as a commentator, referee, judge and President of the Australian National Boxing Federation. Born in mid-west America, Gus boxed professionally in the USA before relocating to Australia in 1956. He passed away at age 82 in December 2010. He is also fondly remembered as a husky-voiced character actor.

④ **Jeff Fenech ('The Marrickville Mauler')** boxed professionally from 1984 to 2008. Jeff is a three-time world champion at Bantamweight, Super Bantamweight and Featherweight, and is arguably one of the greatest boxers Australia has ever produced.

⑤ **Tony Mundine** boxed professionally from 1969 to 1985. He held Australian national titles in the Middleweight, Cruiserweight, Light Heavyweight and Heavyweight divisions. Tony is father of World Super Middleweight Champion Anthony Mundine. He currently trains Anthony and New Zealand Cruiserweight, Dave Aloua.

⑥ **Wally Carr ('Wait-a-While Wal')** boxed professionally from 1971 to 1986. Wally fought 101 professional fights during his career and is in the Guinness Book of Records for having fought in more weight divisions than any other boxer: from Super Bantamweight to Heavyweight, sometimes giving away up to 25kg in weight difference.

Little is known of **CJ** and no photos are available. Based in London, he had a short and unsuccessful boxing career before turning his hand to training. When interviewed in 2001, he was disillusioned with boxing and reconsidering his career options.



Thank You

Members of the Australian boxing community who shared their stories: Billy 'The Kid' Dib and the Dib family, Jeff Fenech, the late great Gus Mercurio, Oyewale 'Lucky Boy' Omotoso, Tony Mundine and Dave Aloua, C.J. Vacharakrit Senahan and his management, Wally Carr, Billy Hussein (trainer extraordinaire), Anthony 'The Man' Mundine, Jorge 'Baby Face' Lacierva, Barry Raff, Mischa Merz, Diana 'Dirty Di' Prazek, Mick Hargraves, Barry Michael, Garth Woods, Nader Hamden, Peter 'The Chief' Graham, Nathan Butler, Murray Thompson (Fighters Factory Gym), Paul Kent (*Telegraph* sports reporter), Tristan Hay (announcer), Barrie Francisco (Grange Old School Boxing), Elouera Boxing Gym, Steve Stenborg (North Melbourne Boxing & Fitness), Tim Hateley, Brian Wilmott (cutman), ring-side photographers Peter McDermott, Tim Barry and Richard Davis, and card-girls Sam Smith and Renee Milne.

Special thanks to our project champions: the wonderful Annette Madden, who initially commissioned the work through B Sharp, and long-term collaborator Tim Carroll at BYDS. Also Bill Harris and the 2012 Sydney Festival team; intern-extraordinaire Anna-May Evans; Mark Wing-Davey; Alicia Talbot and Michelle Kotevski at Urban Theatre Projects; Andrew Ma; Patrick Skene (*Black Gold*, Koori Radio); Santo Caruso (Melbourne Sports Bookshop); Murray Thompson at the Fighters Factory; Jane Worsley, Aaron Galea, Bilal Reda, Laura Luna and Sam Ivancsik at BYDS; Fred El-Harris at Filmotion; Jack Michaels; Angus Pitt and Owen Smith at Fox Sports; Sam Ada; Peter Crome and Derrick Cox; Clare Britton and Bridget Dolan; Chester Ferro at ChesFX; Uncle Sam; David Griffin; Keith Drain; Chris and Reuben Womersley; Mark Evans; Khai Ngo at City of Sydney PCYC; Emily Oades and Steve Taylor; Angela Morosin and Paul Heath; Janice Muller and Patrick Fensham; Vandana Ram; Nic Carroll and Yvonne Haber; Jane Flanders;

Bankstown Arts Centre; and lastly to the many generous colleagues who attended our work-in-progress showings.

Arts House

Arts House presents contemporary arts in programs encompassing performance, exhibitions, live art, residencies and other activities that nurture, support and stimulate cultural engagement. We value work in which artists at different stages of their careers, as well as our diverse audiences and communities, are actively involved in creating an imaginative, just and environmentally sustainable global society.

Arts House's programs include two curated public seasons of multidisciplinary work each year. Approximately half of this work is selected through an Expression of Interest process. We seek artists who are responding to the urgent issues of our time in imaginative and surprising ways, taking artistic risks and offering multiple ways for audiences to engage with or co-author their work.

For more information, please contact us on the details below.

521 Queensberry Street
North Melbourne VIC 3051
(03) 9322 3720
artshouse@melbourne.vic.gov.au
artshouse.com.au

ARTS HOUSE  **CITY OF MELBOURNE**