

The Director

Lara Thoms

Presented by
Arts House

World Premiere
Performance
21 Nov – 2 Dec
70 mins

**Warning: Content on
death or dying**



Creative Team

Lead Artist

Lara Thoms

Co-Creator, Performer

Scott Turnbull

Co-creator, Dramaturge

Aaron Orzech

Dramaturge

Lz Dunn

Sound Artist

Kenneth Pennington II

Lighting & Design

Katie Sfetkidis

Florist

Julia White

Artist Statement

Three years ago, in Hobart, Tasmania, I was staring into a warm cremation chamber. I was introduced to this machine as the 'Big Scone Cooker' by a funeral director called Scott, who clearly liked a joke. Scott is a rare find when it comes to the funeral business—someone who was able to perform traditional funerals for a multinational company alongside installing eclectic installations for funerals in his chapel or hand making coffins. Scott and I worked together in 2016 to create an event called *The Funeral Party* for Dark Mofo. We had bands playing in his chapel while Scott toasted marshmallows on the crematorium flames. We have remained friends ever since. *The Director* looks at an industry that doesn't offer many options to grieving families. It is a conversation about an issue that is uncomfortable to talk about. I feel that funerals share many elements with the arts and that artists have the skills to conceptually reinvigorate an understanding around death and dying. *The Director* delves into the detail of what happens behind closed doors after we go, in the hope we can all take a bit more control.

– Lara Thoms

Images: Bryony Jackson



Biographies

Lara Thoms

Lead Artist

Lara Thoms is interested in socially engaged, site-specific and participatory possibilities in contemporary art and performance. Lara's projects sit within the common theme of reconsidering social hierarchies and highlighting the less visible. Her collaborative work has been presented with Perth International Arts Festival (*Before the Siren*) Arts House (*We All Know What is Happening, Howl, Thrashing Without Looking*) Melbourne Festival (*9000 minutes*) Campbelltown Arts Centre, (*We All Know What is Happening*), The Malthouse, (*A Singular Phenomenon*) the MCA, (*Ultimate Visions, Pie, Hello Big Institution*) Performance Space, (*The Experts Project, Televisions*) as well as multiple venues and institutions. She was recently shortlisted for the Victorian Creative State commission and was the co-creator of the major project *ICON* by Field Theory for Federation Square. In 2019 Lara will begin her role as co-director of arts organisation Aphids with Mish Grigor and Eugenia Lim.

Scott Turnbull

Co-Creator, Performer

Scott Turnbull has been a funeral director for 20 years, and started gaining experience in the family business when he was 13. Being involved throughout the crematorium, mortuary, chapel, memorials and reception he has experience across the many facets of the industry. He endeavours to encourage funerals to reflect the life and unique qualities of the recently departed. In 2016 he created *The Funeral Party* with Lara Thoms as part of Dark Mofo. He now works as a leader of the Moonah Coffin Club and a death literacy advocate.

Aaron Orzech

Co-Creator, Dramaturge

Aaron Orzech is a Melbourne-based performer and theatre-maker. Over the past twelve years he has worked as an actor, director, dramaturge and collaborative creator of numerous works, including traditional plays, large-scale community events, dance-theatre, devised performance and documentary theatre. Recent works include *The Collected Works of Victor Bergman*, which he co-directed and performed, and Fraught Outfit's *Innocence Trilogy* (*The Book of Exodus Parts 1 & 2, The Bacchae, On The Bodily Education of Young Girls*), which he co-created with Adena Jacobs, *A Singular Phenomenon*, with Lara Thoms, and *Antigone* which he performed in at The Malthouse.

Lz Dunn

Dramaturge

Lz Dunn works across performance, movement, design and participatory models to consider queerness, ecology and place.

Lz's recent project *Aeon* (in collaboration with Lawrence English, Shian Law and Lara Thoms) premiered with Arts House for Dance Massive 2017, and toured to Liveworks in Sydney and Tura New Music Festival for Perth Institute of Contemporary Art. *Aeon* links queer ecology and bird flocking, is site-responsive to public parks and engages local artists as co-performers. *Flyway*, Lz's other collaborative project with Lawrence English (and Aphids) is a performative audiovisual walk that immerses audiences in the epic plight of migratory birds. It won the international Music Theatre NOW competition (2012) and received the Operadagen Rotterdam Award (2013). It has been presented in Melbourne, the Netherlands, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Germany and France.

Lz worked as an Artistic Associate with Aphids from 2012-2018 and is a co-creator of *Howl, A Singular Phenomenon, The Drive In Project* and *Thrashing Without Looking*.

Biographies

Kenneth Pennington II Sound Artist

Kenneth Pennington II is a multimedia artist from Oakland, California, where he was primarily active as an electronic musician belonging to the witch house subgenre in the late 2000s. Currently, he uses documentary video, audio production, digital animation, text, and installation as a form of psychic escapism. His work employs occult themes and postinternet forms that move from meditative and ethereal to heavy and tense engendering a sort of spiritual journey. Kenneth regards his practice as primarily therapeutic, describing his process as “lamentation.” His work has been shown throughout the U.S and most recently at Dark Mofo, Tasmania.

Katie Sfetkidis Lighting & Design

Katie Sfetkidis is a contemporary artist and lighting designer living and working in Melbourne. She recently graduated from her Masters of Contemporary Art at the Victorian College of the Arts where she was the recipient of the National Gallery of Victoria Women’s Association Prize. Katie’s multidisciplinary feminist practice includes the use of video, performance and role-play as tools for social critique. Katie has shown work with a number of festivals and galleries in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. Recently she performed as part of the Feminist Colour- In at ACCA for their *Unfinished Business: Perspective on Art and Feminism*. As a theatre lighting designer Katie is the winner of the 2015 Green Room Award for her lighting design for *Meme Girls*. She has worked with major and independent companies in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane including: Sydney Theatre Company, La Boite, Belvoir Theatre, Malthouse Theatre and Melbourne Theatre Company. She is a key creative member of Little Ones Theatre. In 2018, Katie ran for Mayor of the City of Melbourne



Thank You

**Dark Mofo, Lucy Forge, Deanna Turnbull,
Alexandra Frith, Jake Goldenfein, Anghared
Wynne-Jones, Tara Kelly, Jeff Khan, Hannah Fox,
Katerina Kokkinos-Kennedy, Ingrid Voorent,
Kathryn Barron, Tara Mackay, Marc Goldenfein,
Freya Waterson, Katrina Henley.**

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

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