



Pymble Ladies' College

NE

**AN ORIGINAL PLAY BY YEARS 11/12 DRAMA STUDENTS UNDER
THE MENTORSHIP OF PLAYWRIGHT RICHARD GRAHAM**

Thursday 21 February 2019

TIME 7.00pm
VENUE GMCPA Theatre

*It's only in your head you feel left out or
looked down on. Just try your best. Try
everything you can. And don't you worry
what they tell themselves when you're away.*

Jimmy Eat World, 'The Middle'

*This production contains
some references to the
Metoo movement and
eating disorders.*



**Artist in Residence/
Principal Playwright:**

Richard Graham

Playwrights:

Pymble Ladies' College Years 11 and 12 Drama students
2018/19

Producer/Director:

Tamara Sweetman

Set and Costume Designer:

Genevieve Graham

Lighting Designer:

Matthew Tunchon

Choreographer/Stage Manager:

Madeleine Gallagher

Performers/Playwrights:

Jaime Bell
Sarah Boyd
Jessica Brown
Erin Carley
Patsy Chan
Tiffany Chan
Jemma Charlin
Anna Cocquerel
Annabel Cole
Chloe Colfer
Lucinda Denny
Isabelle Docker
Jade Everett
Ariana Frater
Charlotte Parker
Lara Richards
Georgia Winter

Performers:

Isabel Ryan
Ruby Stewart
Abby Valvekens

Playwrights:

Georgia Fuller
Dharma Surridge

Theatre Manager:

Tonya Grelis

Theatre Technicians:

Sophie Botta and Tim Colvin

Assistant Stage Managers:

Annabelle Richens and Miranda Stewart

Audio Operator:

Saskia Vander

Lighting Operator:

Nikita Wong

Joiner:

Brent Yatawara

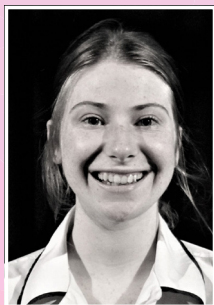
Painter:

Scott Madden

CAST PHOTOS



Jaime
Bell



Sarah
Boyd



Jessica
Brown



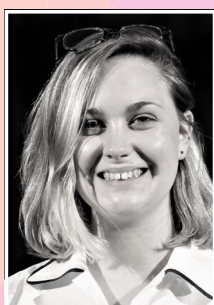
Erin
Carley



Patricia
Chan



Tiffany
Chan



Jemma
Charlin



Anna
Cocquerel



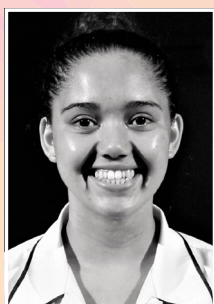
Annabel
Cole



Chloe
Colfer



Lucinda
Denny



Isabelle
Docker



Jade
Everett



Ariana
Frater



Charlotte
Parker



Lara
Richards



Isabelle
Ryan



Ruby
Stewart



Abby
Valvekens



Georgia
Winter

A NOTE FROM THE PRINCIPAL PLAYWRIGHT / ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE

When I met with Tamara Sweetman and Justin Raymond, they asked me if I would facilitate the construction of an original full-length play for the Year 11 Drama class. The class would be very involved in the writing and, of course, the performance. I thought, yes, that's a great thing to do. And, on the drive home, I thought, that's a ridiculously difficult thing to do. Therein lay the challenge.

If I was going to do this, I wanted everyone involved. Everyone to contribute. Everyone to participate and perform in a significant way.

So, the next question was, how to meet this challenge.

That was where my background in writing short plays became relevant. I wondered if we could split the class into groups who could each create their own short play – a less imposing task – and somehow tie all those pieces together in a meaningful way.

I'd heard that original plays by Year 11 students hadn't really been done before. The task we were contemplating – an original full-length play created by and for the students, starting from a blank piece of paper – was one of the first of its kind. I mention this only because staging such a 'first' is a courageous undertaking by the school, Tamara Sweetman and the young women from the Year 11 (now Year 12) Drama class.

Their creative intelligence, ability to innovate and willingness to take constructive criticism and rework their scripts was admirable and inspiring.

I hope you enjoy their work and efforts. I certainly do.

Richard Graham

BIOGRAPHIES



Richard Graham

(PRINCIPAL PLAYWRIGHT / ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE)

Richard is a reformed lawyer who started his playwright career in 2004 when he entered Short and Sweet, the biggest short play festival in the world. His short play, *Trough*, won the comedy writing prize and it has since gone on to be performed around Australia in more than 40 venues, as well as overseas, including at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and the Brighton Fringe Festival in the UK. He has since had close to 20 productions of his short plays performed in five countries. To focus on full-length plays, Richard applied for and won a mentorship with Timothy Daly, Australia's most internationally-performed playwright, through the NSW Writers' Centre. That play has now had a reading with professional actors and is due to be finalised shortly. Richard is married and lives in Sydney with his wife and three daughters, all of whom attended Pymble Ladies' College, the youngest completing her HSC year in 2018.



Genevieve Graham

(SET AND COSTUME DESIGNER, EX-STUDENT OF PYMBLE LADIES' COLLEGE, CLASS OF 2013, HSC DRAMA, NINTH IN THE STATE)

Genevieve graduated from NIDA in 2016 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Design for Performance) and went on to complete her Masters of Fine Arts (Design for Performance) degree in 2017. In 2016, she undertook a placement on the set of *Alien: Covenant* by renowned director, Ridley Scott, assisting in the art department and wardrobe. She was also awarded the William Fletcher Foundation Grant for the development and advancement of talented young Australian artists. In 2017 Genevieve co-designed the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra's *Handel's Messiah* and was costume designer on The Australian Brandenburg Orchestra's new Opera, *Bittersweet Obsessions*. In 2017, Genevieve was production designer on NIDA's production of *Eurydike and Orpheus*, a new Australian work which was part of NIDA's Nick Enright season. She was also production designer on NIDA's production of *Fraternal*, a new Australian play. Genevieve has worked closely with some of the most highly-regarded theatre and film figures in Australia including John Bell, Michael Scott-Mitchell and Margot Wilson. In December 2017, Genevieve won the APDG award for Best Production Design for an Emerging Designer for her work on *Eurydike and Orpheus*.



Matthew Tunchon

(LIGHTING DESIGNER)

A graduate from NIDA, Matthew's works include numerous theatre, musicals, events, concerts, and fashion shows. His lighting design credits include: *Big Fish* and *Songs for A New World* (Hayes Theatre); *Blonde Poison* and *Lip Service* (Strange Duck Productions and MTC); *The Sunset Limited* (Ensemble Theatre); *The Sneeze* (Theatre Forward); *The Herbal Bed* (New Theatre); and *Checklist for an Armed Robber* (Belvoir Theatre). Matthew's musical designs include *Into the Woods*, *Witches of Eastwick*, *Rent* and *Sweeney Todd* for AIM, and *The Musical of Musicals (The Musical!)* for Triptych theatre. He was also Associate Designer for *Candyman*, *Witches With Your SSO*, *Buddy Holly The Musical* and *Wicked* and Assistant Designer on *Billy Elliot*.

BEHIND THE SCENES OF 17

Extract from *Illuminate* research journal, Edition 1 2018, by Tamara Sweetman

ORIGINAL PLAYWRITING EXPERIENCE FOR YEAR 11 DRAMA STUDENTS

Walk into the Drama Studio, tucked away in the Gillian Moore Centre for Performing Arts, and you can hear Year 11 Drama students asking, "What stories do you want to tell?"; "What is important to us?"; "What do we care about?". They are debating and questioning what it is to be a young woman right now and the power of storytelling in a theatrical form.

Amidst it all, *Pymble's* Artist in Residence, playwright, Mr Richard Graham, is busy pulling all these ideas together, listening and sharing, and steering a holistic story from these confident young women.

“ I first chose drama because I was a quiet, shy girl and wanted to come out of my shell. Look at me now! Still perhaps a bit quiet, but so much more confident in myself and my ideas.”

– Year 12 Drama student

In the current educational landscape, we have investigated new avenues and opportunities for students to not only be a part of plays and productions, but to find ways for them to have authentic, genuine ways to express their voice and ideas. As educators, we have considered how to enable platforms for student voice and 'real world' theatre approaches, allowing for creative expression and innovation. *Pymble's* Artist in Residence program has been able to provide this platform.

Throughout 2018, Mr Graham—who was appointed as Artist in Residence thanks to the support of the Ex-Students' Union Grant—has worked with

our Drama students to craft an original full-length script. The result is a play called *17*, which celebrates friendship, standing up for what's right, and the experience of growing up. In 2019, *17* will enjoy a full theatrical production.

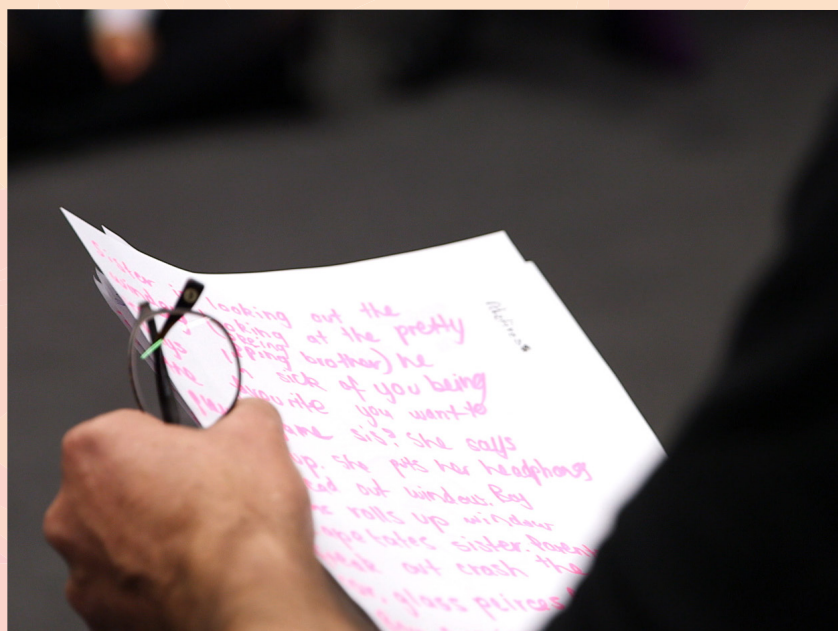
As part of the strategic vision for learning and teaching at the College, we want every *Pymble* girl to move beyond what they know and "question, discover, reflect and improve" (*Towards 2020*).

The playwriting project enables each student to learn about 'real world' approaches – in this case being a playwright in the theatre industry. The program supports our Drama teaching and learning philosophy which is about the ownership students have over their projects and how they can drive their learning and storytelling for their audience. It enables the Year 11 Drama students involved to focus on growth, authentic learning opportunities and choice, while embracing a highly challenging task with the support of a playwright.

The purpose of this playwriting project was to discover an answer to the question: How does working in a team as scriptwriters and theatre makers to create a full-length play enable Year 11 Drama students to explore their voice?

The answer lies in research that highlights the importance of students connecting to experiences outside of themselves, to those in their community. Having a deep emotional intelligence is not something directly taught, but indeed it is a skill needed in young people's lives (Anderson and Jefferson, 2009).

In the playwriting project, we wanted to examine ways of addressing and strengthening our students' original storytelling skills and how we can maximise 21st century competencies in this approach. It is highly effective for students to tell their stories as this in turn builds empathy, tolerance and understanding. It helps children to know and better understand their worlds, have a greater sense of identity and it improves





literacy capability (Perso, Nutton, Fraser, Silburn & Tait, 2011). Enabling student voice through script and story can potentially address these complex skills for students and provides these learning opportunities.

Such outcomes return us to the collaborative nature of Drama. It is intrinsically interlocked in our interactions with others in the creation of it. In today's society, as teachers, we are challenged to consider how we can encourage students to communicate their ideas effectively, foster resilience and drive individuals to strive constantly for improvements and new ways of approaching situations (Ritchhart & Perkins, 2008). It is the opportunity for these skills to be enriched in our students' voice, drive and empathy which warrants this scriptwriting opportunity.

“ I enjoy all forms of writing, but playwriting is what made me what I am. Not only working with the ghosts of Chekhov and Ibsen and Shakespeare, but what it is to be a playwright, to be interacting with human beings in the live theatre and affect people on such a direct, emotional level.”

– John Logan, Producer

PYMBLE PLAYERS

At *Pymble*, I believe we have a unique opportunity to redefine how students tell and communicate their stories. Our aim is for the playwriting project to be embedded into the Year 11 Drama course in the future, as it enables unique storytelling approaches from our students. The skills learned and applied whilst working as a member of the scriptwriting team supports students in aspects of their life beyond the creation of the script and production. It has promoted creativity, problem solving, team work and decision making. It has also provided a collaborative

and highly interactive pedagogy as I have worked alongside an experienced playwright and played a role in the mentoring process.

The Ex-Students' Union Artist in Residence Grant

The \$5,000 annual Ex-Students' Union Grant enables an academic member of staff to engage an artist to provide a significant opportunity for students and/or staff, that will enhance their learning and enrich their experiences at the College.

The 2018 recipient of this grant was Drama Co-ordinator, Miss Tamara Sweetman, who appointed theatre playwright, **Mr Richard Graham**, as Artist in Residence.

Our next steps are to complete 17, then create it ready for an audience by exploring acting, characterisation, movement and music. We will be working with a professional designer in creating the sets and costumes for the production in 2019. By engaging in this theatrical production, from its inception to its final performance for an audience, the students will learn about all aspects of theatre from mentors: with the scriptwriting phase from the playwright; directing and acting from myself; and design from a professional designer. Working together, the students will have input into all facets of this theatrical production.

To conclude, I'll return to the impetus for challenging our students and enabling student voice. One of our Year 11 Drama students, Jaime, will have the last word: "Working on the script project with Richard has been a complex, immersive experience in the process of creating a play. Over the year, I've developed my ability to write convincing and authentic dialogue, and gained knowledge about how to create characters who are interesting and believable. Despite the challenges we've faced along the way, this has been a fun project that I've genuinely enjoyed—I'm looking forward to the next step, bringing our script to life on stage!"

“The skills learned and applied whilst working as a member of the scriptwriting team, supports students in aspects of their life beyond the creation of the script and production. It has promoted creativity, problem solving, team work and decision making. It has also provided a collaborative and highly interactive pedagogy for myself as I have worked alongside an experienced playwright and played a role in the mentoring process.”

— Drama Co-ordinator,
Miss Tamara Sweetman



DRAMA AT PYMBLE LADIES' COLLEGE

Co-curricular Drama projects include:

- Drama Productions in the Gillian Moore Centre for the Performing Arts, Years 7 to 12
- Theatre Sports, Years 5 to 12
- Shakespeare Festival, Kindergarten to Year 12
- Centre Stage, Co-curricular Drama Showcase, Kindergarten to Year 12
- On Camera Film Festival, Kindergarten to Year 12

Curriculum Drama projects include:

- Year 9 Drama Learning Showcase: published full-length play
- Year 10 Drama Learning Showcase: published full-length play
- Year 11 Drama: original play, creation and theatrical production
- Year 12 Drama: individual project and group-devised performance
- Years 11 and 12 Theatre Club with Shore School: evening theatre excursions

Curriculum

- HSC Extension English, original play project
- Year 12 Drama, original play project (as option for individual project)

References:

Anderson, M. & Jefferson, M. (2009). *Teaching the screen: Film education for generation next*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin Publishing.

Perso, T., Nutton, G., Fraser, J., Silburn, S.R. & Tait, A. (2011). *The arts in education:*

A review of arts in schools and arts-based teaching models that improve school engagement, academic, social and cultural learning. Centre for Child Development and Education, Menzies School of Health Research: Darwin, N.T.

Pymble Ladies' College. (2012). *Towards 2020: Striving for the highest*, Available:

<http://www.pymblelc.nsw.edu.au/en/About/Towards-2020.aspx>

Ritchhart, R. & Perkins, D. (2008). Making thinking visible: How to promote engagement, understanding and independence for all learners. *Educational Leadership*, 65:5, pp. 57-61.