

get real
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DEvised BY
ST MARTINS – EMBOLDEN ENSEMBLE



September 29 — October 4
Irene Mitchell Studio



The ensemble and production team live, work and perform to you now across both Boonwurrung and Wurundjeri countries. Lands that have been cared for by the oldest living culture, who have and continue to evolve, adapt and respect the tradition of storytelling. We acknowledge the Elders past and present to continue to guide and care with wisdom. Joy and mirth have always had a place here, and we are honoured to partake in the play, curiosity and generosity of theatre-making with this in mind. We stand in solidarity for First Nations peoples on this land and abroad.

Always was, always will be Aboriginal land.

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

I have a vivid memory of going out one day a few years ago knowing 100% that it would be nice and sunny. The Mediterranean in me was very happy about the forecast: clear skies all day long.

Then it started raining.

Instead of thinking “okay, now it is raining”, I checked my phone to see what the forecast was saying. It still said “clear skies”. The disconnect gave me a sense of righteousness.

But then I felt ridiculous. What was I trying to prove? Was I thinking “If it’s not raining in my phone, the actual rain isn’t real enough”?

There is something to be said about this glitch. Get Real is a bit about that.

Get Real is also about the world.

Our beautiful and tired world.

And its inhabitants. Lucky and mostly overstimulated.

Allow me to be real for a moment, please.

The 21st century is hard:

It’s hard to be online.

It’s hard to be a human with a beating heart.

It’s hard to think about romance without considering the politics of it all.

Amidst all the chaos, reassuring things happen too. People get together for good causes and form communities. People still go to the theatre. People still make shows.

EMBOLDEN 2026 Ensemble first got together in May.

Working with them has truly been a delight. The sense of togetherness that these young artists managed to create both in the rehearsal room and on stage is no small feat.

So, yes, Get Real is also about togetherness.

If you’re reading this, you are somehow together with us. Maybe you’re in the foyer and the show’s about to begin. Maybe you’ve already seen it and want to know more about us. Maybe years have passed and you are an archivist and you found yourself here browsing this digital program.

No matter what brought you here, welcome to the theatre.

İbrahim Halaçoğlu (Playwright and Director)



To describe life realistically would take longer
than to live it – that is why Get Real
is shorter than life.

Devised by the EMBOLDEN 2026 Ensemble,
this new work is the theatrical outcome of an
investigation into not only what is real,
but also what is more real than real.
Think close-ups. But also think an establishing
shot so wide that it can contain planets.

Think make-up.
But also think gentle make-up remover wipes.
Think seance: Young people in a circle
conjuring something.
Lip sync, mascara, and high resolution.

Oh, also,
this is not a show about the AI revolution.



Devised by EMBOLDEN 2026 Ensemble St Martins Youth Arts Centre



Cherri Anderson / co-deviser, performer
Winnie Barton / co-deviser, performer
Ciara Craven / co-deviser, performer
Zachary Fernandez / co-deviser, performer
Isabella van der Meer / co-deviser, performer
Alexia Shaw / co-deviser, performer, dramaturg
Joey Sheppard / co-deviser, performer
Tyga Wheatley / co-deviser, performer

Alysa Kimpton / EMBOLDEN ensemble, dramaturg, outside eye
Bronte Lemaire / co-deviser, dramaturg, outside eye
Elyas Osborne / EMBOLDEN ensemble, dramaturg, outside eye
Rebecca Stephens / co-deviser, dramaturg, outside eye
Daniel Woldemichael / EMBOLDEN ensemble, outside eye



Concept/Playwright/Director / İbrahim Halaçoğlu
Production Manager / Flick
Stage Manager / Stephanie Lee
Set and Costume Designer / Sam Diamond
Assistant Designer / Leonie Leonida
Sound Designer / Justin Gardam
Lighting Designer / Joe Lui
Choreographer / Daniel Newell
Support Artists / Cohan, Karla Livingstone Pardy
AV, Design Intern / Amy Todd



MEET THE TEAM

İbrahim Halaçoğlu – Concept/Playwright/Director



A theatre-maker from Istanbul, İbrahim has been professionally involved in theatre since 2010, predominantly as a performer, as well as a director, dramaturg, and playwright. Most of his solo theatre-making practice centres around meddah, an ancient form of Turkish/Ottoman storytelling. He is passionate about revising traditional storytelling techniques to understand what it means to be a 21st-century storyteller. He currently focuses on queering and contemporising the meddah by combining autoethnography with postmodern narratives and metafiction. He truly believes that fiction can be used in art to make more sense of, or even authenticate, reality.

He finished his master's degree in directing at the VCA in 2021. He was offered the Graduate Director position at Red Stitch Actors' Theatre in 2022. He is currently the Artistic Associate at St Martins Youth Arts Centre. Some of his works in Melbourne include The Hyena (Western Edge), Peacemongers (The People), The Amateurs (Red Stitch Actors' Theatre), Monument (Red Stitch Actors' Theatre), Life Changing Show (The People), The Gospel According to Jesus, Queen of Heaven (Bullet Heart Club) and Very Nice Pot Plants (Karla and Zachary). İbrahim commences his PHD at the University of Melbourne this year and is the recipient of the prestigious Melbourne Research Scholarship.

Flick – Production Manager

Flick is an A-type person working sparingly in production roles for shows and people who fill them with love and inspiration. When they're not doing that, they're a writer.

Flick wrote SLUTNIK™, SLUTNIK™ 2: Planet of the Incels, mutual obligations, and GAG REFLEX for the stage. Other writing published with Slush Press, Sprig Mag, HNDL Magazine, Humana Obscura, Osborne and Fawcner Publishing, CREATurE Magazine, Vellichor Literary, and YDAS. Recent writer in residence with Darebin Arts, La Mama and the City of Melbourne; member of the Australia Plays Transform National Playwriting Group; and Cybec Electric writer with Melbourne Theatre Company.

Recovering workaholic trying to rest, ponder, and (un/re)learn theological theory & practice, mathematics and emotions. A proud union member. Graduated from Victorian College of the Arts with a Master of Theatre (Dramaturgy). Soon to graduate from the University of Melbourne with a Master of Creative Writing, Editing & Publishing.



Steph Lee – Stage Manager

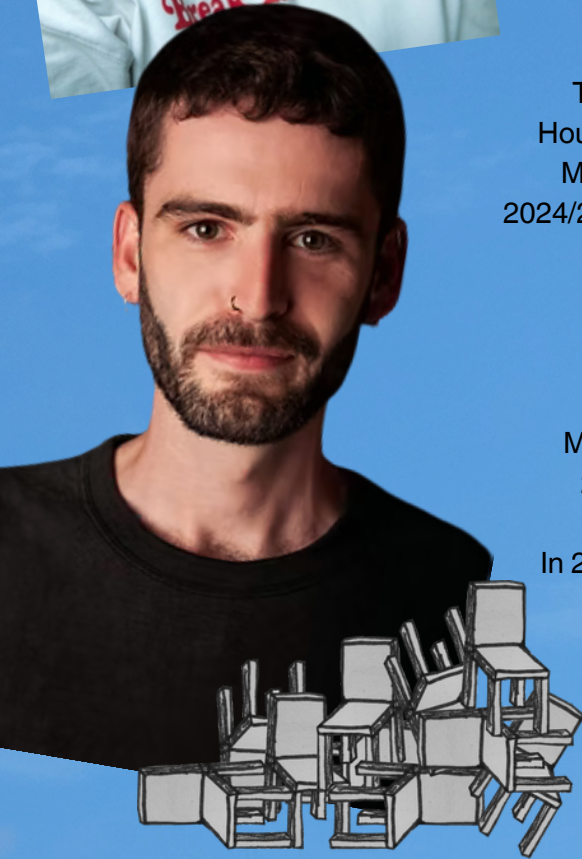


Steph is an early-career queer director, theatre-maker and stage manager who graduated with a Masters of Theatre Directing from the VCA in 2023. They are a Green Room Award-nominated music theatre writer and have a passion for making new Australian work.

Most recently, they co-wrote and directed 'Checked Out: The Musical' for Melbourne Fringe 2025, which was a Judge's Pick (Solidarity Hall). Last year they also directed and co-devised 'SLAY' (Explosives Factory) and co-directed the inaugural 'Green Room Project' in Wyndham City Council, directing 5 new mini play readings. For Midsumma 2024, they revived Declan Greene's early work 'HOME ECONOMICS' at Explosives Factory after a sold-out run for her 2023 VCA grad show. In the last few years, they have interned on 'Looking For Alibrandi' at Malthouse (dir. Stephen Nicolazzo), 'Wolf Play' at Red Stitch (dir. Isabella Vadiveloo), and 'Harry Potter and the Cursed Child' at Princess Theatre (resident dir. David Spencer).

Their recent stage management highlights include: SM on 'Specials' (Arts House 2024 and 2026), ASM on 'A Nighttime Travesty' (Malthouse 2025 and Meat Market 2023), PM/SM for Western Edge's Edge Ensembles Program 2024/2025/2026 and VUSC school program 2025, and ASM on 'STORKED' for Antipodes Theatre Company (Theatre Works 2025).

Sam Diamond – Set and Costume Designer



Sam is a Naarm-based set and costume designer and graduate of the Master of Design for Performance from the Victorian College of the Arts. In 2025, he was nominated for Outstanding Stage Design at the Performing Arts WA Awards for his work on the multi-award-winning Logue Lake. In 2022, Sam was the Graduate Designer for Red Stitch Actors' Theatre and in 2019 received the Orloff Family Charitable Trust Scholarship for excellence from the VCA. Recent projects include Rumbleskin (Dirty Pennies Theatre Project/fortyfivedownstairs), Logue Lake (Perth Festival 2024), Yahoos Descent (La Mama Explorations), Wolf Play (Red Stitch), Prophet (Theatre Works), All The Fraudulent Horse Girls (Melbourne Fringe), Bed & Breakfast (Fairly Lucid Productions).

Joe Lui – Lighting Designer

Joe Paradise Lui is a submerging artist and undisputed winner of the 2013 Spirit of the Fringe award. It has won no awards since. Joe Lui is a founding member of Renegade Productions. Within its aegis, it creates experimental theatre and performance works. Joe Lui is also a freelance director, writer, and a sound and lighting designer. Its most recent professional directing work was as Assistant Director on A Streetcar Named Desire (Melbourne Theatre Company). Its most recent independent directing work was Whitesnake3000, presented at Co3.





Justin Gardam – Sound Designer & Composer

Justin Gardam is an award-winning designer whose practice spans sound, composition, video and dramaturgy for theatre.

Recent highlights of his work include *Pride & Prejudice* and *Animal Farm* (Bloomshed/Darebin Arts), *How the King Learned to Live Forever* (Pummel Squad), *No Seasons* (Oliver Ayres/SKINT), *Endling* (Barking Spider/ArtPlay), and *Laurinda* (Melbourne Theatre Company). As associate designer, his credits include *Truth*, *Macbeth: An Undoing and Hour of the Wolf* (Malthouse Theatre), and *Homo Pentecostus* (Malthouse Theatre/Joel Bray Dance).

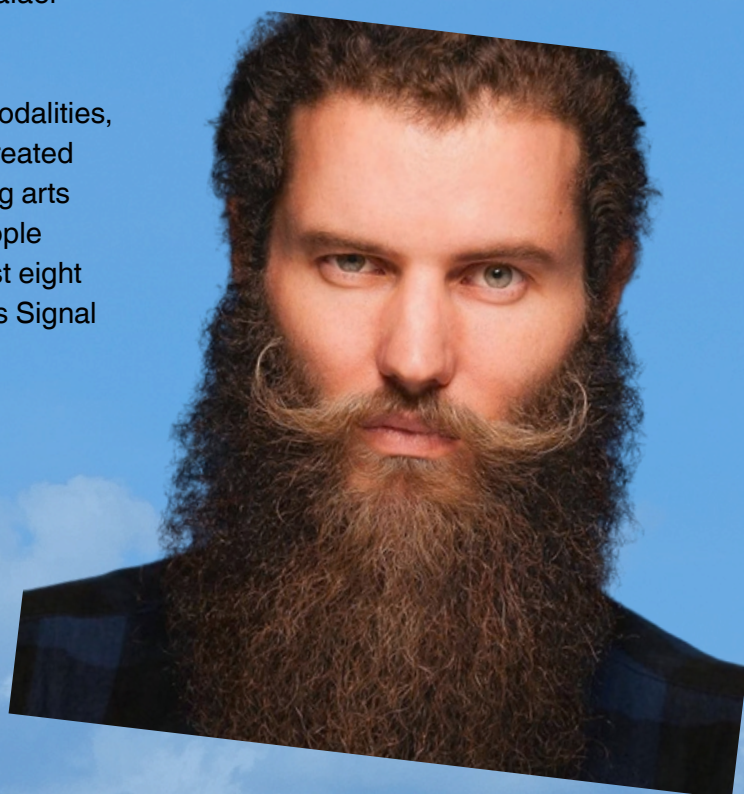
Justin is the recipient of three Green Room Awards, and has received multiple Green Room Award nominations for his work across design, writing and direction. He graduated from Monash University with a Bachelor of Performing Arts and holds a Master of Dramaturgy from the Victorian College of the Arts.

Daniel Newell - Choreographer

Daniel Newell is a non-binary dancer, theatre maker, performance artist, facilitator and graduate of the Victorian College of the Arts.

Having performed across 20 countries, highlights include working with ABC's 'You Can't Ask That', Melbourne Festival, Dance Massive, Arts House, Sydney Opera House, Bollywood Film, Strange Fruit Productions, Shelley Lasica, Deanne Butterworth, Stephanie Lake, Phillip Adams BalletLab, Taylor Mac, Rafael Bonachela and Kylie Minogue.

Interested in dance, somatic practice, improvisational modalities, experimental performance art and theatre, Daniel has created solid prominence within Australia's alternative performing arts ecology. They have worked with Children and Young People between Melbourne\Naarm and rural Victoria for the past eight years, teaching dance and within the City of Melbourne's Signal and Artplay.



Amy Todd – AV Designer

Amy Todd is a multi-disciplinary production designer, working across set, costume, and projection design. Influenced by her formative years as a dancer, Amy's artistic pursuits revolve around a love for the human form, with a focus on evoking thought, through visual impact. Amy's creations push beyond traditional limits, blending experimental aesthetics and utility effortlessly. Completing her studies at the Victorian College of the Arts, Amy's 2024 credits include Set/Costume/Vision Designer on 'Dessert', and Vision Operator/Programmer for 'The Bank'. In 2025 Amy is thrilled to be the Vision Designer for 'Fountain', and Vision Designer for 'Cendrillon'.



Karla Livingstone-Pardy - Support Artist

Karla is a theatre-maker and producer from Melbourne living and working on Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Boon Wurrung land. She has a Masters in Theatre (Directing) from the VCA and an Honours in Performance Studies from the University of Melbourne. Karla makes work with her collaborator and producing partner Zachary Sheridan under the moniker KARLA & ZACHARY. Recent Credits include The Golden Circles of Hell (La Mama, 2026) and Someday We'll Find (2023, 2024, 2026) for which she was the recipient of Best Theatre (Melbourne Fringe 2023).



Cohan - Support Artist

Cohan is a director, theatre maker, and Creative Director of Blank Space Productions. Their aesthetic invests in visceral, image-based forms and is driven by posing questions within a work, using dramaturgy to expose the restrictive functions of social norms. Their work includes The Irreducible at The Explosives Factory (2026), Cruel Britannia at The Glitch (2025), Arts Centre Melbourne and Edinburgh Fringe (2024), Unbound (2021) at The Blue Room Theatre (TBRT), winner of a TBRT Judges Award, Threshold (2018) at TBRT, winner of the TBRT Audience Development Award, Sudden Skies (2018) with TBRT, and Alone Outside (2017) with TBRT, nominated for the FRINGE WORLD Martin Sims Award. Their original work Don't Ever Stop was selected for The Best of 600 Seconds at TBRT. Their short film Sunday received multiple awards at Sydney's Best in the West Film Festival (2014) and was nominated for Best Film at the Montreal International Film Festival. Cohan holds a Master of Directing (First Class Honours) from the Victorian College of the Arts.





Cherri Anderson - co-deviser, performer

Cherri Anderson is a trained actor-singer, with a Bachelor of Performing Arts in Acting and a professional footprint as a gigging songwriter and vocalist, having shared stages with The Black Sorrows, Painters and Docker, Nat Bass and Mahalia Barnes.

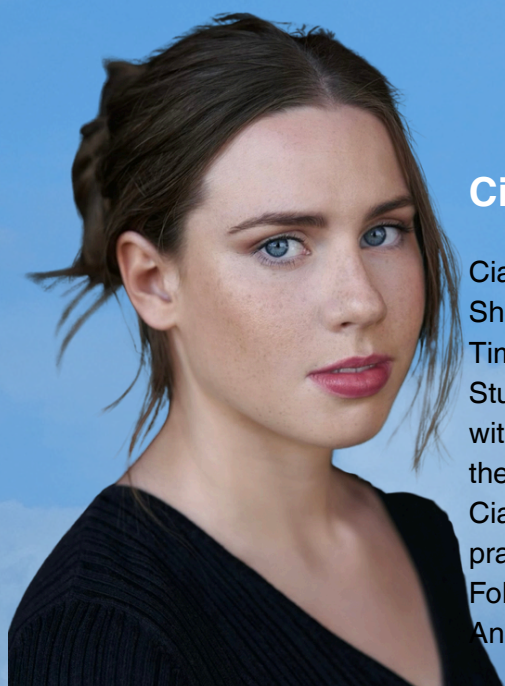
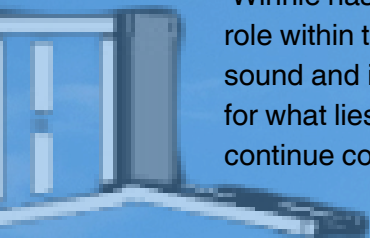
Cherri has nurtured a love for theatre through devising with Stephen Nicolazzo, as well as Kitan Petkovski for Theatre Works and continued their working relationship for Eva Rees's play, 'Djuna' at Darebin Arts and for 'The Hall' at Fortyfivedownstairs, where she was able to also involve her vocal ability as a singer. She then combined all her passions for singing, acting and devising through Sandra Fiona Long's La Mama Exploration earlier this year and made her debut in the Melbourne International Comedy Festival as part of an improvising troupe. Cherri is most enthused to be a part of Melbourne Fringe Festival 2026 and to have devised 'Get Real' through improvisation and collaboration with other emerging artists and İbrahim Halaçoğlu.

Winnie Barton - co-deviser, performer

Winnie Barton is a multi-disciplinary artist, mainly operating in the worlds of performance and music.

As an actor, Winnie has pursued prospects in London, where he worked as a supporting artist on multiple major screen productions such as Narnia, Vision Quest, Ted Lasso and Heartstopper. While in London, Winnie also spent time studying acting, devising and directing at Roundhouse's Youth Arts Centre.

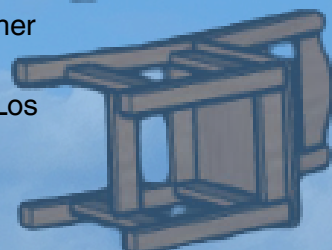
Winnie has strong ambitions to continue exploring and developing his role within the performance industry, including the connection between sound and image. His participation in 'Get Real' has excited his curiosity for what lies ahead in Melbourne's theatre community, and is eager to continue collaborating in vast ways.



Ciara Craven - co-deviser, performer

Ciara Craven is an actor, voice-over artist and musician. She holds a Bachelor of Music and completed the Full-Time Professional Acting Program at Howard Fine Acting Studio Australia. She has an ongoing creative relationship with the Australian Red Cross and ICAN, working across their cinema and radio campaigns.

Ciara loves writing and enjoyed exploring this side of her practice through the devising process of Get Real. Following the closing performance, she'll be flying to Los Angeles to shoot a film directed by Jessica Orcsik.





Zachary Fernandez - co-deviser, performer

Zachary is a young Australian actor, predominantly known for his lead role as Levi in the short film 'Upper Hand' (2025), portraying a teen who reconnects with his mother in pursuit of healing. Another noteworthy credit includes his portrayal of Pip in the VCA capstone film 'Can I Watch?' (2026), directed by Ronan Martin. He has also trained at 16th Street Actors Studio, specifically studying screen naturalism.



Isabella van der Meer - co-deviser, performer

Isabella van der Meer is a young emerging Australian actor and writer. They recently produced and starred in her own short film: PATHWAYS made as part of There's A Story In You: Queer Filmmaking Workshop with Louise Lever. She has also appeared in various other student films and projects.

After falling in love with theatre in primary school and high school, they discovered their passion for creating and telling stories. They completed a Bachelor of Arts majoring in creative and professional writing at LaTrobe University and was part of the production crew for Laneway: A CTV News Project on Channel 31. She has trained in screen acting with The Australian Film and Television Academy (TAFTA) and Hollywood Actor Lab (HAL). Represented by Campos Talent and always eager to explore new creative endeavours.



Alexia Shaw - co-deviser, performer, dramaturg

Alexia Shaw is a writer, artist, and theatre maker based in Naarm/Melbourne. They have previously performed with Union House Theatre and the Australian Shakespeare Company Graduate Players. They are also the writer and director of "Is Everything Okay?" which was awarded "Best Theatre" at MUDFest 2023. Their written work has been published in Farrago Magazine, Verandah Journal, and dSCRIBE.



Joey Sheppard - co-deviser, performer

Joey Sheppard is an award-nominated multidisciplinary artist, writer and performer. A graduate of Toi Whakaari New Zealand Drama School. Joey believes in making good art with her hands and saying things people say you shouldn't. They have produced a variety of work, including development of her solo "I am not afraid of sadness (TAHI Festival HATCH program 2024), a two-woman show (NZFRINGE park and development, most promising Emergist artist nominee 2024) Performance art and street performances (121music festival, CUPADUPA), screen appearances in Honey Kaha (MIFF 2024) and, alongside fellow Toi grads, a travelling theatre programme for youth. Their latest puppetry project, THE FISH, was commissioned with funding from the Peace and Disarmament Trust for Wellington Puppetry Festival 2026 and will be making its debut in September. Now based in Melbourne Naarm Joey is excited to continue expanding her creative practice across the Tasman Sea.



Tyga Wheatley - co-deviser, performer

Tyga is a Melbourne-based actor originally from Queensland. She holds a Bachelor of Creative Arts (Acting) from JMC Academy. Tyga's theatrical credits include Juror 6 in 12 Angry Jurors (Directed by Ben Samuel), When the Lights Go Out (Directed by Deborah Leiser-Moore), Helen of Troy in Polemos: The Epiphany of Artemis (Directed by Mary Sitarenos) and Mademoiselle/Albert in Picnic at Hanging Rock (Directed by Annabelle Tudor). Tyga is passionate about contemporary theatre and performance, as well as physical, movement-based, and visual driven storytelling. Tyga is drawn to collaboration processes and is excited to continue developing her practice as an actor and early career theatre-maker within Melbourne's independent theatre community.



Rebecca Stephens - co-deviser, dramaturg, outside eye

Rebecca is an actor-musician and aspiring director, and a recent acting graduate of JMC Academy. She has performed in various concerts, outdoor pantomimes, musical theatre and university productions, frequently playing multiple roles and musical instruments on stage. Earlier this year she was the assistant director and assistant stage manager for Artefact Theatre Company's production of Cyrano de Bergerac, and has also been performing on tour with Brainstorm Productions in schools throughout greater Melbourne since April 2026. She is also currently rehearsing with Artefact Theatre Company for their production of Julius Caesar, playing Cassius, and performing at the Irene Mitchell Studio in October. Rebecca has enjoyed the opportunity to develop her artistic practice across multiple disciplines throughout this process and is excited to present the outcome of the ensemble's many months' worth of exploration, devising, and rehearsal.



Alysa Kimpton - EMBOLDEN ensemble, dramaturg, outside eye

Alysa Kimpton is an aspiring actor located in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne. Previously, she has participated in a collection of amateur theatre productions with Babirra, Lightbox, Fab Nobs, Four Letter Word, UMSC, Brighton Theatre Company and

Windmill theatre. Alysa spends her free time acting as an extra on television shows and in advertisements, working with companies like AAMI, ABC, Coles and Freemantle Australia.

She is represented by Lisa Campos Talent management. Additionally, she adores working as a children's birthday party entertainer for 'Little Party Faces'.



Bronte Lemaire - co-deviser, dramaturg, outside eye

Bronte Lemaire is an emerging writer and director based in Naarm and is the Artistic Director of Tip Toe Theatre.

During her creative writing Honours, Lemaire debuted their first original, full-length play 'Medusa' with Four Letter Word Theatre which went on to be part of Theatre Works' Melbourne Fringe 2025 Season. She then founded Tip Toe and wrote and directed the company's debut play 'I Thought You Said' as part of Theatre Works' 2026 Season to critical acclaim. Lemaire was part of the 2026 La Mama Emerge ensemble and is the upcoming writer and a performer in Tip Toe's 'Too' at the 2026 Melbourne Fringe.



Elyas Osborne - EMBOLDEN ensemble, dramaturg, outside eye

Elyas is an experienced sound technician and emerging sound designer based in Naarm/Melbourne. They completed a Certificate IV in Music(Sound Production) at Melbourne PolyTechnic in 2024. Some recent credits include Sound Technician on 'Sacrifice of Farinelli' (Subverse Theatre), 'Aladdin Jr' (Perform X, 2026) and 'High School Musical' (JMC, 2026) and Radio Technician on 'Mamma Mia' (AG Theatre, 2026) and Once (AG Theatre, 2026). Outside of the theatre, they also produce audio for film and media with a special interest in recording foley and blending synthetic and natural sounds.





EMBOLDEN is the first professional development program for St Martins in response to both a need in the industry as well as from our young people.

There are many emerging artists 18-25 who want to pursue a career in theatre but would like a guiding hand.

Supported by City of Melbourne Arts Grants,
JohnTruscott Foundation, and ADFAS Yarra.
In partnership with Melbourne Fringe Festival.

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