

PROGRAMME



a lone



We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we create our work, the Wadawurrung People of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and to emerging leaders, recognising their continuing connection to land, water, culture and community.

This production contains themes and images that reference anxiety, depression, loneliness, social isolation and domestic violence and contains occasional coarse language. If you require assistance please reach out to the following services:

Lifeline 131114

Beyond Blue <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/>

SANE Australia 1800 187 263 <https://www.sane.org/>

Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800 <https://kidshelpline.com.au/>

a/lone CREDITS

Devised by Project Connect Ensemble

Writer/ Director: Janine McKenzie

Composer/Musician: Sheshtin Honey

Performer A: Stacey Carmichael

Performer B: Xavier McGettigan

Performer C: Emily Jacker

Designer (Set/ Costume): Alard Pett

Original Projection Design: Melinda Chapman

Additional Projection: Stacey Carmichael & Sheshtin Honey

Graphic Design: Sheshtin Honey

Photographer: Sandy Gray

Film Actors

Tess: Maggie Evans

Steve: David Wilkie

Nicole: Julie Fryman

Producer: Stacey Carmichael

Tour Producers: Stacey Carmichael & Janine McKenzie

Production Assistant: Maggie Evans

Education Resources: Stacey Carmichael & Janine McKenzie

We thank all those in our community who gave their permission for their interviews to be used in the development of this work. This production is supported by Geelong Arts Centre's Creative Engine, La Mama, Back To Back Theatre and Clonard College.



COMPANY

Project Connect Ensemble is a group of independent Australian artists that use group-devised physical theatre processes to explore the human condition.

Founded by long time collaborators Stacey Carmichael and Janine McKenzie, Project Connect began its first creative development in December 2022 with a theatrical exploration of the universal experience of loneliness. This resulted in the company's first full length work, *a/lone*, which premiered at the Geelong Arts Centre before making a successful international debut at the 2023 Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

The Project Connect Ensemble has developed a unique style of story telling that brings together elements of verbatim theatre, physical theatre, improvisation, original music, sound design and spoken word.



SYNOPSIS

“In the experience of profound disconnection, when there are no more floors to crash through, I found my way out by going in”.

This dynamic Australian work is a humorous and moving theatrical cycle that explores the painful depths of loneliness, the profound joy of aloneness and the impact of social isolation. *a/lone* combines physical and verbatim theatre, poetry, improvisation, dialogue and spoken word, with an evocative live original score.

Project Goal: Open up the conversation about loneliness and social isolation, confront shame and improve connection.

“Research has found that ‘people who are disconnected lead sicker, sadder and shorter lives.’ We wanted to have a conversation about the epidemic of loneliness. Audiences will see themselves and people they love in the stories we tell. This performance resonates deeply and continues to stay with you long after you leave the theatre.”

Janine McKenzie, Director



A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Members of Project Connect came together in December 2022 and pretty quickly, we decided that we wanted to explore people's diverse experiences of being alone. We knew it was a universal experience, that it could be a source of delight as well as a source of despair, but we didn't often hear people talking about it openly. We were curious to hear what people had to say when we asked them to share their experiences.

As artists with diverse training and creative interests, we used the rehearsal room to respond to the conversations we'd had with members of our community. We also contributed our own experiences and insights as part of the development process.

As a company of theatre makers, we have a long history of working with each other in various capacities. The chemistry between original performers Stacey and Xavier provided a physical language that showed some of the themes that emerged from the interviews we conducted, and the organic way in which Sheshtin responded to and shaped much of the physical work through their music was extraordinary to witness.

Some of the key ideas that came through that initial development stage addressed the initial questions we sought to explore, finding their form through non-verbal movement, voice overs, poetic interpretations of verbatim text and monologues (both internal and delivered as direct address to the audience).



When we considered the experience of loneliness, we were curious to understand what it meant to be connected to oneself. We knew that this kind of connection means different things to each of us, but it seems that at the heart of connecting to oneself is self-awareness and self-care. We noticed that some people fill their buckets through activities such as meditation, journalling, spending time alone, talking with friends or a counsellor and engaging in fun, fulfilling hobbies or pursuits.

Many people find that spending time with others and being active contributes to a stronger sense of connection. We found that many organisations exist that can alleviate a sense of social isolation and we found that people feel less lonely when they find their tribe.

Some other things we learned were:

- We can connect to others in real life and online. Local governments websites often have directories that list community groups with contact information, and public notice boards have upcoming events and information about local activities.
- Many community activities are driven by volunteers. Over the past few years, volunteer numbers have dropped away, but there are still many diverse community groups that meet and share common interests.
- Online communities increase the opportunities for people with diverse interests to connect, often without financial and geographical constraints.
- Some people know what they like and go in search of others that share these interests, but some people want to try something new or meet people they wouldn't otherwise encounter. Sometimes, working out where to start looking is the biggest hurdle to finding our tribe.

Whether we seek healthier relationships with ourselves, others or the wider community, one of the key findings of Project Connect's exploration of loneliness and social isolation is that there are many options that each of us can find or create to connect, and often a good way to start is to reach out.

*Janine
McKenzie*

CREATIVES

STACEY CARMICHAEL: PRODUCER / PERFORMER A



Stacey is a director, choreographer, actor, dancer and teacher. She has directed award-winning productions of *The Pirates of Penzance* and *Exit the King* (Best Director, Geelong Theatre Awards). She was also awarded Best Female Actor in a Lead Role for her performance in *The Savages of Wirramai*. Stacey's most recent credits include Cecily (*The Importance of Being Earnest*), Pretty Femme (*Shadows of Angels*) and Daughter (*The Bleeding Tree*). Stacey traveled to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2023 to perform in Anglesea Performing Arts production of *Shadows of Angels* and Project Connect's *a/lone*. Stacey has completed short course studies in acting and directing with RADA (London), NIDA, Brave Acting Studio and Frantic Assembly (London) and holds a Bachelor of Contemporary Arts in Dance/Drama. For 10 years she ran her own contemporary dance company "Collision Dance". www.staceyccreative.com

JANINE MCKENZIE: WRITER / DIRECTOR



Janine has worked with various theatre companies as an actor, director and designer, including Back to Back, Comic Genius, APA, Geelong Repertory Theatre Company, TTT and Theatre of the Winged Unicorn. Her work as an actor includes roles in *The House of Bernarda Alba* (Poncia), *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Lady Bracknell), *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (Diane de Poitiers) and *Romeo and Juliet* (Nurse). Janine's directing credits include *Emma Celebrazione!*, *The Crucible*, *Under Milk Wood*, *Medea*, *The Tempest*, *Top Girls*, *Love and Information*, *Shadows of Angels* (Edinburgh Fringe Season) and *Masquerade*. Janine is an award-winning drama educator, receiving the Drama Victoria Regional Teacher of the Year Award in 2015. In addition to receiving multiple nominations for her acting by the VDL, Janine was awarded the Geelong Theatre Best Director Award (with Iris Walshe-Howling) for *The Hope Song*.

ALARD PETT: DESIGNER (SET/COSTUME)



Alard has enjoyed his time over the last 15 years designing multiple theatrical productions in Geelong and surrounding regions. He works as a designer in the production areas of set, lighting, props and costume, as well as in the area of set construction. He has worked on plays in intimate spaces, and musicals in much larger theatrical places as well as working in large arenas. He thrives when working with diverse teams, both on and off stage, and lives for collaborative theatre-making. He welcomes the challenge of production design across mediums and genres.

SHESHTIN HONEY: COMPOSER/ MUSICIAN/ SOUND DESIGN



Sheshtin Honey is a composer, musician, sound designer, producer and visual artist. They are an award-winning artist who has toured both nationally and internationally with theatre productions and rock bands. In the last 12 months they composed / designed, an electro opera score for Back to Back Theatre's *REDHEALER*, an electronica score for *a/lone* and a dark gothic murder ballad score for Angus Cerini's *The Bleeding Tree*. Their composition history ranges from live improv, soundscapes, Alt Classical, Post Rock, Doom, Electro, Alt Folk, Appalachian Thrash, Witch House and Dark Wave. Theatre composition highlights include working with Back to Back Theatre, Glen Shea, Skin of Our Teeth, APA and Project Connect. Sheshtin has worked with bands including; Whiskey n Snacks, Made of Steam, Presbyterian Merrimaker, Seascapes of the Interior, Dandelion Wine and Winter Palace. www.sheshtin.com

XAVIER MCGETTIGAN: PERFORMER B



Xavier is a Geelong-based choreographer, director, actor and musician and is the director of Attitude Dance Company. He graduated from Ministry of Dance in 2012, trained at Brave Studios and has appeared in multiple productions including *Saturday Night Fever* (Stage Art, 2016) as a musician and ensemble member, made his international debut both as an actor in *a/lone* (Project Connect Ensemble) and as a director/choreographer in *Perfect Pairing: A Wine Tasting Dancegustation* (Attitude Dance Company) at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival 2023. He directed *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency* (Geelong Repertory Theatre, 2022) winning "Best Sound Design", "Best Director of a Comedy" and "Best Production of a Comedy" at the 2022 Victorian Drama League awards.

EMILY JACKER-LAWRENCE: PERFORMER C



Emily completed a Bachelor of Music Theatre at Federation University in 2018. 2023 marked her international debut, performing in *Perfect Pairing: A Wine Tasting Dancegustation* at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. 2022 saw her perform in a new Australian work *You're A Catch; Why Are You Single?*, written and directed by Sarah Wynnen, and take part in *Show Some Respect*, a theatre-in-education program within Victorian Secondary schools. In 2021 she filmed a live stream performance of *Songs for A New World* with Staged by Creatives, and performed a new children's work *The Junior Detective Collective: The Mystery of the Golden Scoop* with the Juicy Orange at the Adelaide Fringe Festival.

MELINDA CHAPMAN: PROJECTION DESIGN



Melinda began her career in advertising and design before shifting into the computer games industry. Melinda began as a pre-production illustrator at Creative Edge in Edinburgh, Scotland. She returned to Australia to work for Atari Melbourne House and I.R. Gurus as an environment artist and level designer for several game titles for PC, Playstation and Xbox. A sea change brought Melinda to the Surfcoast, where she worked freelance in commercial 3D, game art and graphic design. The highly creative culture in Geelong and its surrounding regions soon introduced her to theatre-making. She has since ventured into acting and directing for stage and has written three plays.

MAGGIE EVANS: PRODUCTION ASSISTANT/ TESS



Maggie's love of theatre began at a very young age, which led to joining the GSODA Junior Players. Maggie's recent onstage credits include *Summer of the Aliens* (Geelong Rep. 2022), *Persuasion* (Theatre of the Winged Unicorn 2023) and most recently playing April in Someone New Theatre Company's *Why They Stay* (2023). She currently works in the Commercial Events team at Deakin University and is in the ensemble of *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* with Theatre of the Damned.

JULIE FRYMAN: NICOLE



Julie completed a Bachelor of Performing Arts at Monash University back when phones weren't smart. Now she performs with community theatre groups Anglesea Performing Arts and Theatre of the Winged Unicorn. She has recently appeared in Anglesea Performing Arts' production of *The Bleeding Tree*, and their Edinburgh Fringe production of *Shadows of Angels*.

DAVID WILKIE: STEVE



David Wilkie has worked with a number of theatre companies, performing in productions of *Three Pears* and *12x12 with 3222*. He has performed with the Portarlington Players and appeared as William Buckley in *The Pioneers*. David loves the creative process and has a particular interest in mime. In his spare time, David writes poetry.

2024 TOUR

Geelong Season - Kildare Theatre, Clonard College

Thur Feb 29th at 1pm & 6.30pm

Gippsland Season- Marian Theatre, Marist Sion, Warragul

Sun March 17th at 6.30pm

Mon March 18th at 11am

Bendigo Season - The Engine Room

Thur April 18th at 1pm & 7.30pm

Fri April 19th at 11am

Drysdale Season- Potato Shed

Tue April 23 at 1pm & 7.30pm

Wed April 24 at 1pm & 7.30pm

Melbourne Season- La Mama HQ

Wed June 19th at 1pm & 6.30pm

Thur June 20th at 1pm & 6.30pm

Fri June 21st at 11am & 7.30pm

Sat June 22nd at 7.30pm

Sun June 23rd at 4pm



www.projectconnectensemble.com

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