

*Jopuka presents*

# LYSA AND THE FREEBORN DAMES

*by Claire Christian*



November 2021

Red Tree Theatre, Darkinjung Country, Tuggerah

**JOPUKA**  
[PRODUCTIONS]



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Jopuka acknowledges that we reside on the stolen lands of the *Darkinjung* People. We pay our respects to their elders past and present.

*Always was, Always will be Aboriginal Land*

# ABOUT JOPUKA

Jopuka Productions is the Central Coast's peak youth-arts body. It was established specifically to provide performing arts training and development to a wide array of emerging artists, aged 12-26, from all across Darkinjung Country, on the Central Coast of New South Wales. Jopuka provides a safe and peer-driven space for emerging artists to hone their craft and forge their own pathways into the arts industry. We present unique and innovative seasons, filled to the brim with new works, Australian classics, cutting-edge musicals and Fringe favourites.

Jopuka has staged over 30 acclaimed productions, including a range of new and established works. We've commissioned nine new Australian works from emerging writers and theatre-makers across Australia, and even won a couple of awards in process. Since launching we've provided arts opportunities for over 1200 young people across many areas of production.

Now neatly tucked away in our own venue, The Launch Pad, Jopuka is committed to creating innovative, inclusive and exceptional work with our community of emerging artists. Despite the challenges that 2020 brought, Jopuka kept the fire burning, and we look forward to sharing new work with our community for many years to come.

# JOPUKA GOES GREEN

We're ramping up our efforts to become more sustainable.

One of the newest ways we are changing how we operate is scaling back our programmes, flyers, and posters. For this show we'll be providing both hard copy and digital programs and only be printing limited stocks of posters and flyers and were possible on 100% recycled paper.

As COVID-19 begins to slow we we'll be announcing a range of new initiatives to get the company more green.

*Jopuka is registered charity*

*Jopuka is a registered COVIDSafe company*

*Flash, Video, Still photographer are strictly prohibited*





# MESSAGE FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

“This place is every place.”

Those words moved this electric piece of writing from the “to consider for future production” pile immediately to the “get the rights as soon as possible” pile.

It’s hard to put into words how much of an impact this work had on me, and how much I hope it impacts our audiences. I’ll admit even I learnt a thing or two.

Claire’s work is visceral, breathtaking, messy, glittery, and very, very needed. This is a battle cry. We need to do more than just listen and talk, and we need to embrace bold ideas and concepts and take action to make this world safer and more inclusive.

Rosie is one of the Central Coast’s best directors, clear in her purpose and passionate in her vision. During an early planning meeting it took Danielle and I less than a minute to decide she was the right person for the job. It was less than a minute into our first meeting with her that we discovered she was the only person for the job.

She and her team have created a beautiful piece of theatre which, because of a casual mutant variant of a pandemic, has ended up being the closing production of our 5th birthday season. While we are saddened we couldn’t present the season as planned this work is a beautiful book end to our season.

We want to thank Red Tree Theatre and Sixt5 Productions for their incredible support, not just on this show but throughout the year - we wouldn’t be here without them.

To the cast, crew, and band, thank you for your dedication on this project. There are many new faces on this project and we hope to work you all again soon.

This isn’t just a play - it’s a provocation. The message of this work needs to be taken forward.

It is up all of us to help change our community for the better.

*Joshua Maxwell*  
Artistic Director / Chair







# MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

What a whirlwind the adventure of Lysa has been. From casting so long ago, being shut down the day after completing blocking, dealing with this being version three of the production dates, a vision change due to venue change, recasting, zoom rehearsals and more, I am so very proud to be presenting to you, our long-awaited audience, the final product that is Lysa and the Freeborn Dames.

The show you see before you today, is one that has come from a place of love, frustration, anger, hope, determination, and inspiration, derived from the sometimes heartbreakingly relatable dialogue and themes.

I would firstly like to thank Josh, when sending me the script to peruse in July of 2020 (yes it has been that long!), I fell in love instantly. This piece informs, educates, and understands the personas that we see in our day to day. It demonstrates so beautifully why we should not give up hope of a better tomorrow for all, and how even though it will be tough, and we will not reap immediate benefit, those that follow will have clearer guidance for their portion of the fight. I am so appreciative to have had the opportunity to put my creative spin on these issues.

I would like to thank the Jopuka board, the Red Tree Theatre team and Sixt5 Productions for their partnership and generous support, this has allowed us to perform this play in all its decked-out glory. I and the team are so very grateful to you all. When a director asks for a theatre space to be turned into a pub, the fact that you didn't run screaming was a miracle in itself!

To my artistic team, thank you for your energy, expertise, and support over this longer than anticipated journey. Your commitment, understanding, flexibility and genius have really allowed the play to be a full production. Thank you for supporting my vision, adding your creative flair and being all round fab!

To the band, thank you for creating the dynamic. You have all worked so very hard to create mood and really enhance the immersion experience for our audiences. Your willingness to be flexible and have fun on stage with the cast has made music such an important addition to the play, and to realising the wholeness of the vision. Thank you all so much.

To the crew and technical team, your production elements have really allowed the characters and the town come to life. Creativity and willingness to change designs fifty times and run around to get the prop piece, in the two days of production week have not been lost on me. I thank you so very much for your willingness and support.

To this spectacular group of actors, I am lucky enough to call my cast. Through the laughter, the tears, changing of blocking three times over and learning lines via zoom, you have made me so very proud. I am so thankful to all of you for seeing this project out. You have grown, developed, and adapted in these roles, and I hope you all feel that the lengthy commitment was worth it. You are all so spectacularly talented and I am privileged to have worked with you all on this project. I hope you take a piece of Lysa's determination with you after we have wrapped and know that you all hold a very special place in my heart.

And finally, I would like to thank you, our audience. Thank you for coming back and supporting the arts in this very difficult time. Thank you for supporting local, and youth theatre, for coming to see something new, coming to see a play! And for hopefully enjoying the journey we take you through. I hope you find genuine connection to these characters, and that upon reflection, you embrace a deeper understanding of others.

I encourage you all be strong advocates of change, to create a better future for all women, everywhere.

*Rosie Ross*

# LYSA & THE FREEBORN DAMES

*by*

**CLAIRE CHRISTIAN**

*In partnership with*  
**SIXT5 PRODUCTIONS** *and*  
**RED TREE THEATRE**

*Executive Producers*

**JOPUKA**

*Director*

**ROSIE ROSS**

*Producer & Set Designer*

**JOSHUA MAXWELL**

*Assistant Director & Choreographer*

**RAYELLE ROBYN**

*Musical Supervisor*

**BEN ROSS**

*Assistant Musical Supervisor*

**BRADLEY HUGHES**

*Costume Design*

**RAYELLE ROBYN**

**MADELINE WELLS**

*with cloaks by* **KELLY MAXWELL**

*Lighting Design*

**NIK LYONS**

*Sound Design*

**DANIEL LOWE**

*Crew*

**LIBBY BLAKE**

*Props*

**RAYELLE ROBYN**

*Microphones*

**HARRIET WOODROW**

*About The Playwright*

Claire Christian is a storyteller; a playwright, author and theatre maker, based in Brisbane. Her first novel, *Beautiful Mess* won the Text Publishing Text Prize in 2016 and was released in 2017. Her play *Lysa and The Freeborn Dames* debuted at La Boite in 2018 and is published by Playlab Theatre. She has had the great joy of directing Michelle Law's smash hit comedy *Single Asian Female* since 2017. Her plays *Talking to Brick Walls*, *Hedonisms Second Album* and *The Landmine is Me* are available through Playlab Theatre. She is a member of the Mamas Boys Theatre Collective and is the writer and co-collaborator on their play *Brothers Book Club*. Her next novel, a pleasure seeking, queer romantic comedy *It's Been A Pleasure*, Noni Blake will be released in October.

*This performance runs 100 minutes with a 20 minute interval*

*This production opened November 19th, 2021, at Red Tree Theatre, Darkinjung Country, Tuggerah.*

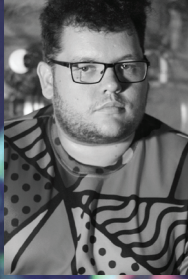
*Program Photography by James Beggs*



# PRODUCTION TEAM



*Director*  
**ROSIE  
ROSS**



*Producer*  
**JOSHUA  
MAXWELL**



*Playwright*  
**CLAIRE  
CHRISTIAN**



*Asst. Director*  
**RAVELLE  
ROBYN**



*Musical Supervisor*  
**BEN  
ROSS**



*Asst. Musical Supervisor*  
**BRADLEY  
HUGHES**



*Lighting Design*  
**NIK  
LYONS**



*Crew*  
**LIBBY  
BLAKE**



“THIS PLACE IS



S EVERY PLACE”



# THE HIDDEN BAD OF "GOOD": THE STAGNANCE OF TRADITION IN CLARE CHRISTIANS LYSA AND THE FREEBORN DAMES.

by DANIELLE BRAME WHITING *BA(Hons), L.T.C.L., Grad. Dip. Ed. MThPerf.*

Clare Christians play, *Lysa and the Freeborn Dames* has taken its inspiration from the ancient Greek comedy, *Lysistrata*, by Aristophanes. Both are concerned with gender roles in their respective cultures, however where the ancient text acknowledges the inequity and serves to reinforce gender roles and feminine stereotypes, Christians contemporary story speaks more to understanding the roles we play in perpetuating cultural constructions of binary gender, how this impacts on our daily lives, and, importantly, the possible reasons why; And she does this through a collection of beautifully flawed human characters. This focus on exploring the "why" is what allows a multigenerational audience, and cast, to engage with the story and its characters, because it creates a familiarity.

In 2004 the gang rape scandal that has dogged the Canterbury Bankstown rugby league club ever since, pushed discussion about the role of women in rugby league culture to the foreground of mainstream discourse (Weidler and Duff 2004). I was entering my thirties at this time (consider me the Gen X representative of this cast). I grew up here on the Central Coast in a community, and extended family, where rugby league held pride of place; Partner this with being raised as a practising catholic within the catholic schooling systems and, lady, sportiness was next to goddess-ness, especially league and union. The culture of league was akin to a religion with its rituals, hierarchies, gender roles, and its closets full of skeletons. The very public naming and shaming of the Bulldogs team-building activities opened up those closets and forced many of us who'd overlooked or blanked out the less palatable aspects of the culture, for the sake of tradition or history or loyalty or community or... whatever reason, to consider the consequences of this acquiescence. Through *Lysa*, Christian is again asking us to consider the consequences.

"This is a bloody good place, with bloody good people" (Dad 2019, p. 27), *Lysa's* dad professes, insisting the War Weekender team are "good blokes" who are "just horsing around", "drunk", and they "don't mean it" (Dad 2019, p. 61); Most people could recognise it as the Boys will be Boys defence. It is this concept of "good", that Christian so deftly weaves through her story, through which we are able to relate and consider why such behaviours in a patriarchal hegemony are produced and tolerated. To consider the members of one's community or family might, when publicly called out for damaging behaviour, be recategorized as something other than "good" is not an easy pill to swallow; And in this discomfort we wonder, does the act of acknowledging the detrimental aspects of a culture negate the "good"? The potential to destabilise certainty can be overwhelming.

In 2004, during a conversation regarding the Bulldogs scandal, a woman forty years my senior - intelligent, strong, outspoken, and prone to protest - admitted that she had worried every time her sons attended a team-building trip with their rugby league club. She trusted that her boys were capable of making the "right" choices, but questioned what behaviours the coaches and managers were encouraging, concerned about their perspective of what was "right" when it came to their team-building agenda. In 2004 she lamented never using her voice to question these trips, this culture, and some twenty years after the fact she still worried about the activities in which her boys might have participated on those trips.

What if she had spoken up? Christians protagonist, *Lysa King*, does. Her friend, Ken, a local police officer, confesses that, although he doesn't agree with how she's gone about it, he thinks she's brave for standing up and speaking out for what she believes in (Ken 2019, p.97). A

simple gesture that powerfully acknowledges that any attempt to challenge the status quo and destabilise existing rituals and tribalism and subjugation of the feminine, will be met with aggressive resistance. Christian knows that this is something her audiences will recognise. She has watched this resistance play out since the 2017 #MeToo movement took hold (2019 pp. 24, 33, 36). We can read about it in the history of the suffragette movement that started long before the more well-known movements in the late 19th and early 20th century. We can recognise these same battles in the aftermath of the 2004 Bulldogs scandal, or, indeed, the innumerable examples that have arisen at many other sporting clubs since. We can recognise the same reluctance in some reactions to allegations brought against clergy and many other highly visible, culture influencing, organisations, institutions, industries and individuals.

This is why, with such confidence, Christian can allow her chorus to declare “This place is everywhere” (Chorus 2019, pp.18, 104). It is announced in the prologue to frame the discourse that will follow and it is revisited in the epilogue to conclude Christians well considered case study. Lysa and the Freeborn Dames, through a clever balance of comedy and drama, and an honest presentation of binary gender roles and relations within a familiar community structure, allows her audience to spend a couple of hours recognising the impact our relationship to our culture can have on our ability to live what Judith Butler defines as a ‘liveable life’ (Butler 2009, p.xi). By attempting to create the everywoman through her chorus and the everywhere by its familiarity, Clare Christian has presented us with a genuine opportunity to learn about ourselves and grow. “Small changes, right?” (Chorus 1 2019, p.104).

#### Bibliography

Butler, J 2009, ‘Performativity, Precarity and Sexual Politics’, *Revista de antropologia iberoamericana*, vol.4, no. 3, pp. I-XIII.

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Weidler, D and Duff E 2004, ‘Rugby Rocked by Fresh Rape Claims’, *The Age*, accessed 16/11/2021 at <https://www.theage.com.au/national/rugby-rocked-by-fresh-rape-claims-20040229-gdxeku.html>.

# THE CAST



*Alyssa King*  
**CHARLOTTE  
COOKE**



*Peta*  
**EVA  
BERRY**



*Mrya*  
**JACINTA  
GOVIND**



*Esme*  
**HARRIET  
WOODROW**



*Chorus*  
**LOLA  
BROWN**



*Chorus*  
**MADELINE  
WELLS**



*Chorus*  
**DANIELLE  
BRAME WHITING**



*Grant Turner*  
**BRANDON  
ALEXANDER**



*Ken*  
**JORDON  
SNOOK**



*Malcolm King*  
**CHRIS  
BRAME**







*Keys*  
**ABIGAIL  
BUTLER**



*Bass*  
**LACHLAN  
RUSH**



*Electric Guitar*  
**JOHNATHON  
BULLARD**



*Electric / Acoustic Guitar*  
**YVES  
ALLMAN**



*Acoustic Guitar*  
**BEN  
ROSS**



## SET LIST

**BETTER** *The Screaming Jets*

**ONE WORLD** *Baby Animals*

**APRIL SUN IN CUBA** *Dragon*

**RUN TO PARADISE** *Choirboys*

**DON'T CHANGE** *The Goo Goo Dolls*

**FLAME TREES** *Cold Chisel*

**LOCOMOTION** *Little Eva*

**WEIR** *Killing Heidi*

**AM I EVER GOING TO SEE YOUR FACE AGAIN** *The Angels*

**ROLL OVER DJ** *Jet*





*Drums*  
**BRADLEY  
HUGHES**



*Drums*  
**LUKE  
WIERINGA**



*Guitar / Vocals*  
**BRANDON  
ALEXANDER**



*Vocals*  
**RAYELLE  
ROBYN**



*Vocals*  
**ROSIE  
ROSS**

# THE BAND





*with thanks to*

SIXT5 PRODUCTIONS  
PEAK ENTERTAINMENT  
RED TREE THEATRE  
XTRACT DRAMA  
CENTRAL COAST MUSIC FACTORY  
JAYNE JOHNSTON  
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BENDIGO BANK  
KWIK KOPY TUGGERAH  
SPIRALZ  
WYONG DRAMA GROUP  
THE MAXWELL FAMILY  
GRILL 'D TUGGERAH  
GREATER BANK  
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ZAC PARTRIDGE  
MICHELLE WALLS

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director **ANNA CARTER**  
director **JAMIE HORNSBY**  
director **TAYAH BLACKAMN**  
director **ELYSE HAYHURST**

*the staff of jopuka*

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deputy AD **DANIELLE BRAME WHITING**  
general manager **KELLY MAXWELL**  
CFO **CHERYL AMEY**  
class manager **GABRIELLE BROOKS**

*Note; A large number of the photos in 'The Girl' are taken from magazines and books. However those sort from contacts of the production were placed in the jar with consent on the subject.*



TO FIND OUT MORE  
[www.jopuka.org.au](http://www.jopuka.org.au)



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