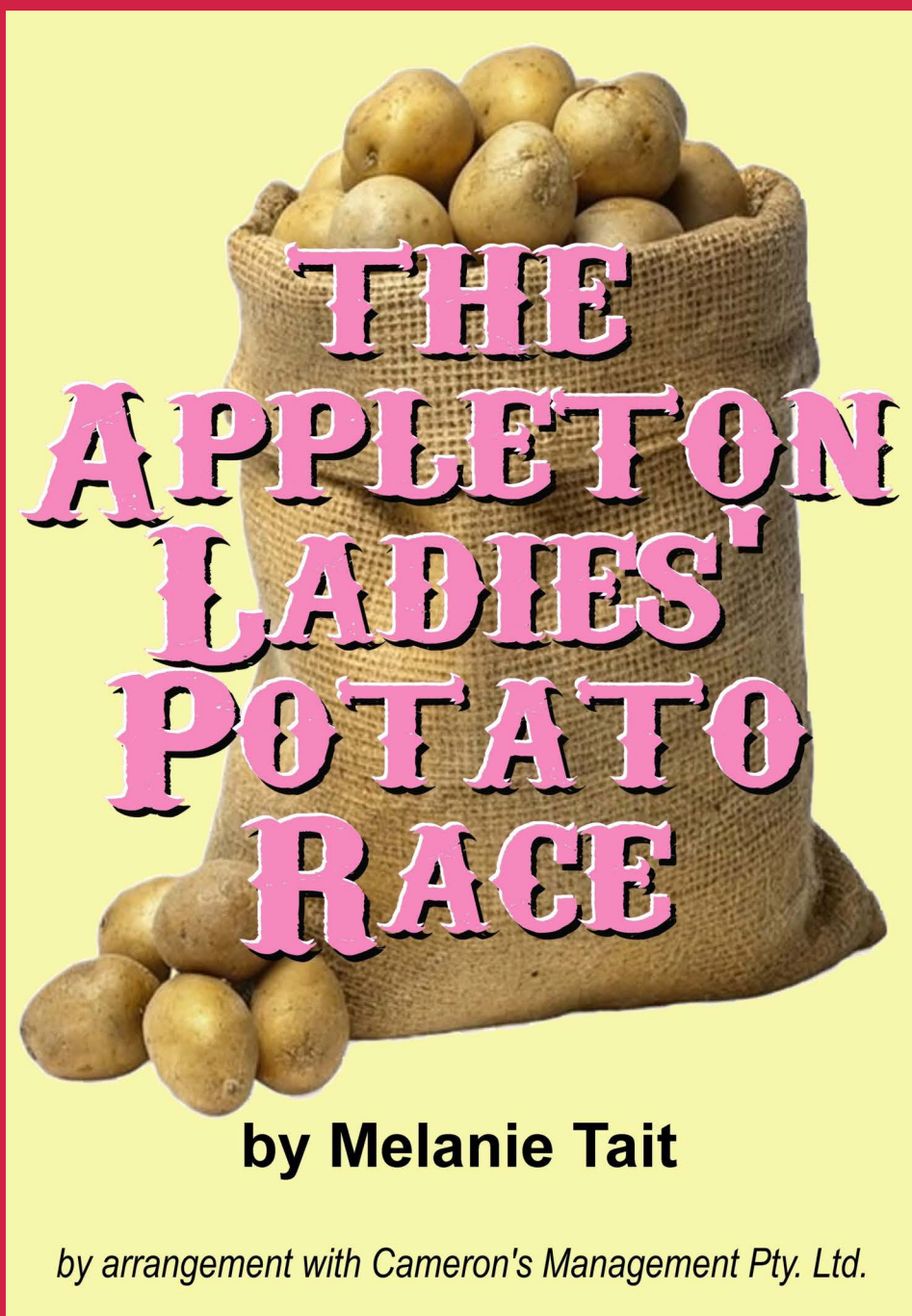


malverntheatre
company

is proud to present its 376th major production



14 February – 1 March 2025

Directed by Helen Ellis

The Cast

Penny Anderson	Genya Mik
Barb Ling	Genevieve Ryan
Bev Armstrong	Glenda May
Nikki Armstrong	Trudi Sheppard
Rania Hamid.....	Camille Gautam

Special appearance by 'Bazza' the Radio Announcer, played by Sass Pinci.

Synopsis

When Penny returns to her hometown of Appleton in NSW to set up as the local GP, she is excited to embrace the town and all its quirky pastimes, including the biggest event of the year, the famous Potato Sack Race. However, when she learns the prize money for the women is 5 times lower than that for the men, well, she just can't stay silent. But she isn't prepared for the battles she is about to face.

Inspired by Melanie Tait's own experiences, 'Appleton' tackles gender politics and the fight for equality in an exuberant, warm-hearted comedy. This sparkling play has enjoyed return, sell-out seasons across the country, and has been adapted into a movie. Malvern Theatre Company is delighted to present its first Victorian production.

Setting

The year is 2019, with flashbacks to 1988.

The action takes place in Appleton, NSW at the pub, Nikki's hairdressing salon (Get Nikked), Penny's surgery (The Doctor), the Crop Swap, the Pavillion and the Show.

The performance runs for approximately 90 minutes without an interval.

After the performance we will serve our usual complimentary tea/coffee and biscuits. Wine will be also available for purchase.

CONTENT WARNING
This play contains strong language and some racial references.



About the Playwright

Melanie Tait

Melanie Tait is an Australian playwright, author and journalist. She wrote *The Appleton Ladies' Potato Race* in 2019 which was subsequently made into a film of the same name, starring Claire van der Boom and Robyn Nevin. The story was inspired by a real event in Tait's hometown of Robertson, NSW where her parents built and ran a grocery store for 34 years. They bought "The Big Potato" in Robertson, which was

located in the lot next to their store. Tait now lives in Sydney with her two dogs and is a freelance journalist and writer, frequently contributing to *ABC Online*, *Guardian Australia* and *news.com.au*.



Helen Ellis – Director

This is Helen's sixth production with Malvern Theatre Company having directed *The Flick* in 2021 and *Last Gas* in 2018 and appearing here in *Deathtrap* (2023), *Doubt* (2007) and *Pizzaman* (1998). Helen's community theatre directing credits are extensive. She has won awards for Best Director and Best Production for her productions of *Outside Mullingar*, *Becky's New Car*, *Switzerland*, *Almost, Maine* and others. Most recently, Helen has directed *Fabuloso* for Brighton Theatre

Company and *Cul De Sac* for Encore Theatre Company.



Genya Mik – Penny Anderson

Genya is thrilled to be part of this production, especially because it finally answers the age-old question: What else can potatoes do? Audiences may have seen Genya most recently as 'Judy' in *Home, I'm Darling* with Mordialloc Theatre Company, and 'Miss Scarlett' in *Clue* with Lilydale Athenaeum Theatre. Prior to this Genya performed as 'Kate' in *Fabuloso* with Brighton Theatre Company and 'Eve' in *The Wisdom of Eve* with Lilydale Athenaeum Theatre. When not

racing around with sacks of spuds, Genya enjoys pondering the other unsung roles of the potato, like serving as an unlikely Wi-Fi booster... look it up!



Genevieve Ryan – Barb Ling

Genevieve is thrilled to be back at Malvern Theatre Company, having first performed here in 2006, playing 'Jean Horton' in *Quartet*, followed by 'Felicity' in *Relative Values* and 'Fran' in *Counting Sparrows*. Genevieve's favourite roles include 'Daisy Werthen' in *Driving Miss Daisy*, for which she was awarded The Victorian Drama League Best Actress Award and 'Bridie' in *The Shoehorn Sonata* for which she was nominated for Best Actress at both The Victorian Drama

League Awards and Lyrebird Awards. Genevieve hopes you enjoy her portrayal of Barb, who's chief goal in life is to leave everyone feeling a little happier..



Glenda May – Bev Armstrong

Glenda has worked with most theatre groups across Melbourne and is delighted to be back on the Malvern stage. Her first production at Malvern Theatre Company was in 1997 in *The Family Dance* and then again in *Pizzaman* in 1998, *Elephant Man* in 2009 (for which she won a Victorian Drama League award) and *The Man Who Came to Dinner* in 2015.

Glenda's last performance was here in 2023 as 'Helga ten Dorp' in *Deathtrap*. Having recently retired she is hoping not

to leave as long between productions in the future. Glenda hopes you love the straight-talking Bev... nothing would get done without her!



Trudi Sheppard – Nikki Armstrong

Trudi is delighted to make her debut with Malvern Theatre Company. Most recently, Trudi was seen in Beaumaris Theatre's *Steel Magnolias* as 'Truvy' (having previously played 'Shelby' in their 2006 production). She also recently played 'Jackie Jones' in *Cul De Sac* with Encore Theatre, for which she received a Lyrebird Award, and before that played 'Virginia' in Mordialloc Theatre Company's *It's Only A Play*. She has played the role of 'Alice' in *The Vicar of Dibley*,

multiple times – with Beaumaris Theatre and also the 1812 Theatre for which she also received a Lyrebird Award. Trudi is chuffed to again be part of an excellent all-female show!



Camille Gautam – Rania Hamid

This is Camille's debut with Malvern Theatre Company with her first theatrical production being *The Crucible*, where she discovered the thrill of live theatre. Prior to this, you may have spotted Camille in *Neighbours*, or in the movie *Shantaram*, or perhaps awkwardly smiling in a commercial. Camille is beyond excited to be part of *The Appleton Ladies' Potato Race*. Playing Rania in this sharp, hilarious Aussie gem has been a rewarding challenge, as Camille worked to bring

her character's strength, courage, and big heart to life. It has been a pleasure for Camille to work alongside this gifted cast and crew.



Special appearance by 'Bazza' the Radio Announcer, played by Sass Pinci

Sass has worked on a myriad of productions as an actor, singer, director and writer. Although mostly working on screen of late, they are always excited to jump back onto the stage. A few recent theatre favourites include playing 'Kristie' in Encore Theatre Company's *Cul De Sac* (also directed by the incredible Helen Ellis), 'Dee' in the Irish play *Chancers* with Brighton Theatre Company and 'Aine' in *FryPan* at The Butterfly Club. This is Sass' first time working with the lovely people at Malvern Theatre Company, having a tonne of fun bringing 'Bazza', and small country radio, to life.

Thanks to our Sponsors



Community Bank Malvern East is a local bank with 23 years history dedicated to servicing the community with personalised service and great banking products. They

are committed to remaining in the area with them recently purchasing their premises at 268 Waverley Rd, Malvern East. With more than \$5m given back to community groups, they have demonstrated they feed into the prosperity of their community, not off their community. Further details at

www.bendigobank.com.au/branch/vic/community-bank-malvern-east.



L'Olivo is a small, family-owned restaurant located at 171 Waverley Rd in Malvern East. In a warm, friendly atmosphere, L'Olivo serves up an array of tasty Mediterranean delicacies including tapas, pastas, pizza and much

more. Recommended for a pre or post-show meal, coffee or drink!

Visit lolivo.com.au for further details or to book.



AUV Real Estate specialises in private sales and property management. In 2024, they achieved consistently strong results in the Malvern East area. Offering both leasing and

sales services, they can meet all your needs, no matter the enquiry.

Further details at auvrealstate.com.au.

Menzies Malvern

For over 20 years Menzies Malvern, a contemporary retirement village, has provided an exceptional lifestyle in the heart of cosmopolitan Melbourne. Live a short

stroll from the delights of Malvern's cafes and boutiques while enjoying the peaceful retreat of your beautiful home. Menzies Malvern will enrich your wellbeing with a warm community of like-minded neighbours, resort-style luxuries and thoughtfully designed surrounds. It's your place to live well.

Further details at menziesmalvern.com.au.

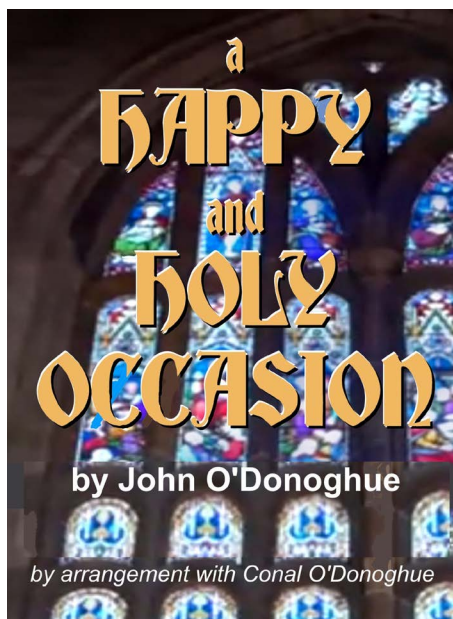
Director's Notes

This is a sweet Australian play with quirky country characters and fabulous feminist themes. Hence, my decision to have an entirely female team of creatives, crew and cast. I love working with women. We support each other, have each other's shoulders, ears and backs. This has been a pleasure and a hoot. Jemma by my side is the best sounding board, an incredibly positive and skilled AD and SM and we have fun bouncing off each other. Amy on board fills me with happiness. She is so thorough and gets how my brain works. Having Gail backstage is just wonderful. She is so experienced but never ceases to make me laugh. The cast are funny, talented, collaborative, and willing to go that extra mile with cakes, dance skills, voiceovers, quirky ad content, painting, printing and hairdressing paraphernalia... everything that makes this show that little bit more special. To our creatives Jas and Linda, whom I admire and feel privileged that they said 'yes', also to Kate, Barbara, Janine, Jenine and our honorary women, Nick and David & team – thank you!

Production Team

Director	Helen Ellis
Stage Manager	Jemma Goding
Stage Manager	Jemma Goding
Assistant Stage Manager	Gail Brackley
Set Designer	Helen Ellis
Lighting Designer.....	Linda Corrin
Sound Designer.....	Jasmine Tolentino
Costume Designer	Barbara Murray
Props Designer	Amy Thomas, Jenine Caruso
Lighting and Sound Operator.....	Kate Deavin
Prompt.....	Amy Thomas
Additional voice-overs	Yusuf Ahmed, Ivan Martinez Botella, Alessandra Carelli, Vivian Shen, Chris Forde, Anita Sheppard, Yana Smirnova, Iain Summers, Mel Warren and members of the cast and crew
Choreographer.....	James Rooney
Technical Director.....	Michael Birkett
Set Construction.....	David Allen, Noel Ellis, Peter Erlanger, John James, Graeme Munro, Max Murray, Ken Rowe
Set Artistic Painter	Janine Evans
Production Coordinator.....	Jenine Caruso
Program Designer	Janine Evans
Program Coordinator.....	Monica Greenwood
Photography	Rory McGrath
Publicity.....	Blake Stringer
FOH Manager.....	Judy Clues
Ticketbox Manager.....	David Gordon
Ticket Secretary.....	Kerry Carr

Next at Malvern Theatre Company



A Happy and Holy Occasion by John O'Donoghue

It is February 1942, and tonight is a very happy and holy occasion. Tomorrow, young Christy will travel to Sydney to begin his studies for the priesthood. The O'Mahon family, proud Irish-Australians, throw a small party of farewell, with lamingtons and sing-alongs. But faith and duty can be heavy burdens, and the news of the war is increasingly grim – the family is forced to confront difficult truths.

Malvern Theatre Company is pleased to revive this classic Australian play. A joyous celebration of Irish-Australian humour and resilience, a study of

faith and friendships, a drama of a family at pressure-point. *A Happy and Holy Occasion* is a bitter-sweet portrait of a vanished Australia.

Directed by Nicholas Opolski

26 April – 10 May

To book tickets, visit our website at malverntheatre.com.au/book-tickets or phone 1300 131 552.

Acknowledgements

Malvern Theatre Company acknowledges that we are performing on the traditional land of the Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri People and offer our respects to their elders past, present and emerging.

Malvern Theatre Company is very grateful for the support provided by the City of Stonnington.

We would like to thank the following people for their additional support of this production, without whom the show would not be what it is: Jock Macneisch, Jack Geraghty, Sarah Haugh, Christine Corrin, Debbie Keyt, Kwik Kopy Braeside, Beaumaris Theatre Company and members of the cast.

As an organisation, we take pride in supporting the local volunteer network in the community and the charitable organisations that underpin this important work. As such, we have donated all benefits of the Charity Night performance to the following organisations:

- Ashburton Baptist Church;
- RSPCA;
- The Compassionate Friends Victoria.

If you are a member of a Volunteer group or a Charitable organisation and would like to raise funds by arranging a group to attend our Charity Night Preview Performance, please contact us at malverntheatrecompany@gmail.com.

Calling All Volunteers

Would you like to volunteer at Malvern Theatre? There are many opportunities to be involved. Please visit our website and click on the 'Volunteer' tab to express your interest.

