

RED STITCH ACTORS' THEATRE PRESENTS

# GRACE

WORLD PREMIERE

BY KATY WARNER

Directed by Sarah Goodes

1 - 27 Feb 2022



## CAST

**Kate Cole** Emma  
**Jillian Murray** Beth  
**Mia Tuco** Grace

## CREATIVES

**Sarah Goodes** Director & Production Dramaturg  
**Jacob Battista & Sophie Woodward** Set & Costume Design  
**Harrie Hogan** Lighting Design  
**Grace Ferguson** Music Composition & Sound Design  
**Paul Jackson** Lighting Mentor  
**Ella Caldwell** Dramaturg & Assistant Director  
**Tom Healey** Dramaturg

## PRODUCTION

**David Bowyer** Production Manager  
**Natasha Marich** Stage Manager  
**Holly Anderson** Assistant Stage Manager

## THANKS

Gabriel Bethune, Max Bowyer, Dean Bryant, Jing-Xuan Chan, Emily Goddard,  
Caroline Lee, Georgina Naidu, Izabella Yena & MTC.

This play was developed through Red Stitch's INK program.

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THE  
ACTORS'  
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## WRITERS NOTES

This was not the play I had intended to write as part of the INK Program. In fact, I presented Ella and Red Stitch with a very different play all those years ago. But after our first conversation, Ella knew there was something else, something I was holding back on, and she encouraged me to write that play. This play. *Grace*. What started as a play about sisters and a dying mother turned into three, very much alive, unapologetic women. Sisters. Mothers. Daughters. That's all still there, from that first play, in a way. But it grew into something more. A play about fairytales and stories, about memory and guilt, expectation and reality, and some of big, gnawing questions about motherhood. What does it mean for a woman? To be a mother? Or not? To make that choice ...Or not ... I haven't found any answers. But I don't think I was looking for any.

I am so grateful to Ella and Red Stitch for the opportunity to write this work through the incredible INK Program. What an absolute privilege to have the time to really find something you want to write about and the support to write it. I am indebted to the women who have been in the workshop room across the various iterations of this work: Caroline Lee, Emily Goddard, Izabella Yena, Jillian Murray and Kate Cole, thank you for your time, talent, honesty and generosity. To Ella for pushing me to go further than I would have ever thought myself able. And, of course, Sarah Goodes for her skillful, thoughtful dramaturgy and beautiful direction. Since writing this play I now have a niece named *Grace*.

This play isn't named for her. This play isn't about her. But to all my nieces – Abby, Violet, Amelia, Billie, Tessa, Grace, Arielle – I love you and hope you will always have the courage to create, discover and tell your own stories. Because the stories you tell, the stories you share and the ones you keep, are so important. As are you.

*Katy Warner*



## DIRECTORS NOTES

Ella approached me to direct a workshop and reading of Katy Warner's play Grace at the beginning of this year. Or was it last year? Some time, somehow, during the slippery past year, in a brief opening we got together for a workshop and reading of this new work. Ella had organised the reading to take place at the Danish Club in the city. Seated on Danish chairs complete with sheepskin rugs draped over the backs, the audience enjoyed a traditional Danish meal of smoked fish and pumkinkle bread. While we made final tweaks to the script in an adjacent room we looked up to see a large, framed painting of Hans Christian Andersen quietly and patiently looking down on us. It felt fortuitous. Afterwards the audience stayed much longer than expected engaged in a fascinating and moving conversation about motherhood and how society treats women who choose not to have children or leave children. When the work was programmed, I was in.

For a long time, I have thought about why there are certain stories we rarely tell- women who choose to not have children or relinquish their roles as mothers are harshly judged and you are hard pressed to find many stories that touch on the subject. So I was captivated by Katy's play that touches so beautifully on the defensive armour that the character Emma has spun around herself to protect herself from judgment and how this has had such a huge impact on her life and relationships. During the design and rehearsal process we often spoke of the spiral-like feeling to the piece and about the cycles of motherhood and how it is common for a grandmother and granddaughter to enjoy an intimacy and warmth that has, for complex reasons, always eluded the grandmother and her own daughter. At times our society seems to project endless expectations around parenting- the bar always being set higher and higher on what children expect from parents and what parents expect of themselves and harsh judgment of others parenting techniques and outcomes. The thing that struck me most about this piece was the idea that story can sometimes be enough. That the family dynamics Katy has captured through these beautiful characters demonstrates how we blame, exaggerate, lie, love, and annoy each other in attempts to get what we want and need but most importantly we tell each other stories- that stories are sometimes all we have to reach other each across seemingly impassable conflicts - that they are sometimes the only fragile vessel we have to navigate our way back towards each other.

This has been an extraordinary process steered so beautiful by Ella and Fiona and the wonderful Ink program at Red Stitch. The time and resources allocated to this program are so important for new work. The actors Jillian Murray and Kate Cole were involved through most of the workshops, I think and Katy has woven their voices into the piece beautifully. Both Jillian and Kate are actors I have wanted to work with for a long time and what they have brought to this piece is extraordinary. I directed newcomer Mia Tuco in her final year production at VCA in 2020 and have been looking for a production for us to work together on. The design team has been incredible: Jacob Battista and Sophie Woodward on set and costume and Grace Ferguson on composition and sound and Harrie Hogan on lights with Paul Jackson as mentor - you couldn't wish for a more dedicated and talented group of established and emerging artists. Thank you to Natasha Marich and Holly Anderson for their care and incredible attention to detail and lastly thank you to Katy Warner for trusting me with this beautiful play and for the incredible dialogue, complex nuanced characters and world you have created in this work GRACE.

*Sarah Goodes*

Red Stitch would like to thank the following supporters who generously contribute to our INK program.



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