

27 SEPT - 23 OCT 2022

# THE MEETING

by Jeff Stetson

Directed by Tanya Gerstle

AUSTRALIAN PREMIERE

# WELCOME

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Welcome to Red Stitch Actors' Theatre,  
Australia's leading actors' ensemble.

We exist to advance the vitality of theatre in Australia by nurturing artists and promoting integrity in our craft. The ensemble of actors and creatives who comprise our company endeavour to produce the best in contemporary playwriting from around the world, to enrich the craft of acting and script development in this country, and to sustain a unique organisational model – one that puts artists at the centre of its practice. Established in 2002, we perform contemporary Australian plays and award-winning new writing from around the world.

We also play a vital role in the development and presentation of new Australian works through our unique INK playwriting program, and offer opportunities for theatre-makers at all stages of their careers to hone and develop their craft.

With a national reputation for the quality of our work, Red Stitch remains at the forefront of contemporary Australian theatre practice.

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We at Red Stitch acknowledge and pay our respects to Australia's First Peoples and Elders past and present, and offer our gratitude to the Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation, on whose unceded lands we work.

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Black Photography

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RED STITCH ACTORS' THEATRE PRESENTS

# THE MEETING

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BY JEFF STETSON

27 Sept - 23 Oct 2022

## CAST

**Christopher Kirby** Malcom X  
**Dushan Philips** Dr Martin Luther King Jr  
**Akhilesh Jain** Rashad

## CREATIVES

**Tanya Gerstle** Director  
**Peter Mumford** Set & Costume Design  
**Richard Vabre** Lighting Design  
**Justin Gardam** Sound Design

## PRODUCTION

**David Bowyer** Production Manager  
**Caitie Murphy** Stage Manager  
**Brigitte Jennings** Assistant Stage Manager

## THANKS

Sam Diamond, Hahnie Goldfinch, Olga Makeeva, Phil Roberts,  
Lindsay Templeton, Andrew Umney.

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Playwright

## JEFF STETSON

Jeff Stetson is an internationally acclaimed award-winning playwright and screenwriter for film and television. His produced stage plays include: *Keep the Faith: A musical on the life and times of Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.*; *Fathers and Other Strangers*; *Fraternity*; *And the Men Shall Also Gather*; *To Play a Black Man*; *Love You Better*; *The Apology*; and *The Meeting*, which has been produced in all fifty-states and more than a dozen countries including South Africa, the Netherlands, Canada, the Virgin Islands, Nigeria, Scotland, United Kingdom, Brazil, Jordan, France and Austria. He adapted it for American Playhouse.

He adapted his play, *Fraternity*, for HBO as a one-hour series. He recently co-wrote with Debbie Allen, a movie for ABC television and is currently writing and executive producing the next *Genius* series entitled *MLK/X* a limited series about Dr. King and Malcolm X to be broadcast in 2023 on Disney+, Hulu, and National Geographic. His work has generated 27 N.A.A.C.P. Image Awards and been awarded 23, most recently for a four-hour documentary *For Love of Liberty*, broadcast nationally on P.B.S.

He has written and developed more than two-dozen films and television movies for the major studios as well as numerous television series. Mr. Stetson's novel: *Blood on the Leaves*, was published by Warner Books. He adapted it for Paramount Pictures to star Jamie Foxx and adapted it as a one-hour series in partnership with Morgan Freeman and his production company.

Mr. Stetson was the formal Dean of Faculty and Staff Affairs and Director of Public Affairs and University Relations for the California State University. He served as a writing mentor at Robert Redford's Sundance Institute and Professor at the Theater Arts and Dance Department at California State University, Los Angeles where he taught creative writing for stage, film, and television. He also taught the first Professional Workshop for African American Screenwriters established by Bill and Camille Cosby at the USC School of Cinema-Television and served as visiting Professor, Writing for Theater, Film & Television Workshop for the Florida Center for the Literary Arts at Miami Dade College.



Director

## **TANYA GERSTLE**

Tanya is a theatre director, performance maker and teaching artist. She has worked in many performance, training and research contexts in Australia, USA, and Europe over the past 35 years.

She is the founding Artistic Director of OpticNerve Performance Group, which has been nominated for six Green Room Awards, and her body of work includes directing texts for the stage by Barker, Barton, Churchill, Kushner, Wertebaker, Brecht, Chekhov, Lorca, Shakespeare, and adaptations to the stage from contemporary and classic writings for radio, film, and literature.

Tanya was a Senior Lecturer in Theatre, Head of Acting (2007-2012) and Head of Theatre (2010-2012) at the VCA, University of Melbourne and is currently an Honorary Senior Fellow.

She received an award for Teaching Excellence in 2002, has a master's degree in Directing (by Research) and has recently completed a doctorate on her training and rehearsal process entitled, *Physical Acting – Words Made Flesh*. Tanya has been a Visiting Teaching Artist at Penn State University, USA, the University of York, UK, the University of Caen, France as well as the international consultant on a Knowledge Exchange Project (UK) 2011-13 investigating global training practices in the conservatoire and university sectors.

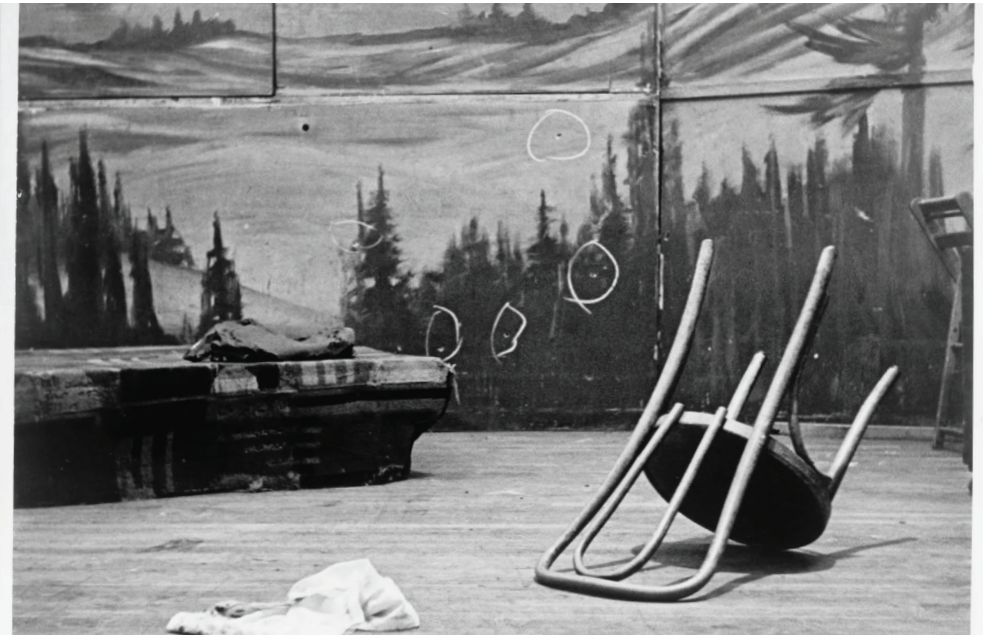
# Thoughts from *The Meeting Room*

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On February 21, 1965, as he was beginning to address his followers at the Audubon Ballroom, Malcolm X was assassinated at the age of 39.

Our imagined Meeting takes place one week before his assassination.

Three years later, on April 4, on a balcony in Memphis, Tennessee, as he was preparing to lead a demonstration in support of striking sanitation workers, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated at the age of 39.



Peter Mumford - Production Designer

The poignant picture above was taken in the Audubon Ballroom after Malcolm X was assassinated. It became my inspiration and starting point for the stage design.

## From Dushan Phillips – Dr Martin Luther King Jr

*Martin said: "Race and colour prejudice reduces people to a status of things. There is a close relationship between racial segregation and colonialism. Both are immoral systems aimed at the degradation of human personality. Equal opportunity without regard to race must be established because it is right."*

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## From Chris Kirby – Malcolm X

*In his last speech, Malcolm said: “One of our first programs is to take our problem out of the civil rights context and place it at the international level of human rights ... If we keep it at civil rights, then the only place we can turn for allies is within the domestic confines of America. But when you make it a human rights struggle, it becomes international, and then you can open the door for all types of advice and support from our brothers in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and elsewhere.”*

## From Tanya Gerstle - Director

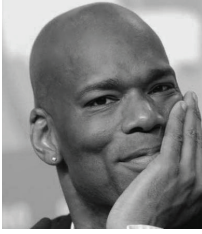
I first came across *The Meeting* in the late 1980’s, as an actor living in Amsterdam, and the dialectic of ideas wrought in writing had a significant impact on me as a young, white artist.

Now thirty-five years on, it saddens me to see that the context for this debate still exists and these arguments still need to be heard. In re-imagining this work through a contemporary and global lens, I felt the ideas in the play attributed to Martin and Malcolm now spoke to all people of colour, no longer specifically to an African American community. When I became interested in pursuing this notion symbolically through the casting, I approached Jeff Stetson for his thoughts on my vision. I would like to share his response with you.

*“Regarding the casting issue, if the play has proven anything, I believe its fundamental power is that it transcends countries or racial/ethnic demographics and underscores that the desire for basic dignity and the quest to overcome hatred or violence or inhumanity remains a universal goal. At its heart, the play is about the power of love to overcome those obstacles that deny us the ability to touch and be touched and perhaps, most importantly, to empathize with those who are different and yet share the same dreams and experience the same pain.*

*So if your actors understand all the vulnerabilities associated with being human, and have experienced love or heartache or anger or pain or fear or the power of dreams and still believe that beauty is possible and truth is worth pursuing no matter the cost, then they should feel free to accept any role they desire, unencumbered by the face they see in the mirror and concerned only with what is discovered by the heart.”*

## CAST



**CHRISTOPHER KIRBY  
MALCOLM X**

Christopher has appeared in the just now completed *Late Night*

*with the Devil*. His other acting credits include; *Upgrade* directed by Leigh Whannell *Predestination* (directed by the Spierig Brothers) and *The Matrix: Reloaded* and *Revolutions* (both directed by Lana & Lilly Wachowski).

Christopher Kirby studied at Point Loma College in Speech Communication and Drama. He continued his study with such acting coaches as Bruce Glover, Laura Gardner, and Howard Fine (which continues to this day).

Having worked both locally and internationally, his credits cut across film, television and stage. Film: *Arrowhead*, *Day-breakers*, *Star Wars: The Revenge of the Sith*, *Iron Sky*, *Mao's Last Dancer*, *Visitors*. Television: *Hunters*, *Camp*, *Shakespeare Republic*. *Nightmares and Dreamscapes- the stories of Stephen King*, *Salem's Lot*, *The Starter Wife*.

Stage: *The Speechmaker*, *Boundry St.*, *Lobby Hero*, *This Is How It Goes*, *Feston*, *The Sapphires*, *Transit*, *Twelfth Night*, *Othello*.

Christopher is also putting together a film based on the true story of an African slave who became a samurai, and fought in the feudal wars in Japan.



**DUSHAN PHILIPS  
DR MARTIN LUTHER  
KING JNR.**

Green Room Award Winning Dushan Philips trained with

Robert Marchand, who has been hailed as Australia's foremost expert in the Mike Leigh acting technique. He was also a member of Scott Williams' Masterclass, who was a student of Sanford Meisner. He has graduated from the Victorian College of the Arts Foundations Program (Melbourne), The Melbourne Actors Studio (Bruce Alexander), The Actor's Playhouse (Meisner Technique), and 16th Street (Chubbuck Technique). In London, he is a member of the Actors Centre.

His theatre credits include; *The Antipodes* (Directed by Ella Caldwell), *Fury* (Directed by Ella Caldwell and Brett Cousins), *Right Now* (Directed by Katy Maudlin), *Angels In America* (Directed by Gary Abrahams), *Conviction* (Directed by Declan Greene), Attic Erratic Theatre Company's *The City They Burned*, Chapel off Chapel's *Teleny*, and debuted with the Flying Bookworm Theatre Company, touring through Victoria as the lead male in productions of *Macbeth* and *Romeo & Juliet*. His TV credits include Stan's *Romper Stomper*, ABC's *Glitch*, Channel 10's *Offspring*, Foxtel's *Wentworth*, and the American TV Series *Hunters*. He was also one of the leads in Channel 31's ghost hunting 6 part series *Sonnigsburg*.



## CREATIVES



**AKHILESH JAIN  
RASHAD**

Akhilesh Jain a new actor for Australia is very excited to make

his debut with Red Stitch Theatre in a guest role. His international experience includes regional language commercial film in India, student films in Los Angeles, and theatre during school and college in India. He has done several improv comedy shows at The Improv Conspiracy, Melbourne. Akhilesh has done acting training in India, Los Angeles and Australia. He has been training with Brave studios, Melbourne since 2019 and has completed the prestigious 12 Month advanced acting program, where he was taught by highly accomplished industry people, including Rob Meldrum, Damian Walshe Howling, Ana Kokkinos, Lyndelle Green, Daniela Farinacci, Mark Henessy, and many others. Akhilesh is taking private accent training lessons from Jenny Kent. He also has experience in accounting and telecommunication.

Akhilesh speaks four languages- English, Hindi, Marathi and Marwari (Rajasthani). Akhilesh is also the recipient for the highly competitive Red Stitch Graduate Actor position for 2022.

Theatre includes: Ensemble member of team called Per Diems performing Harold at The Improv Conspiracy fortnight Thursdays.

Film includes: NYFA Productions are *The Promotion* (2010); *Modernization* (2010); *Welcome to the Club* (2010) various other short films.



Set & Costume Design

**PETER MUMFORD**

Peter graduated from Flinders University with a BA (Hons). He

ran away from an MA at Adelaide University to join the theatre. His first stage design was for The Stage Company, *Nijinsky, Le Sacrifice du Faune*, which featured dancers from the Australian Dance Theatre. Peter went onto work with Ariette Taylor on *Paper Walls* for ADT. He also designed Jonathan Taylor's ballet *For Ever and Ever* for The Adelaide Festival. He was a founding member of The Torch Projects and produced touring production designs and worked closely with indigenous Victorian artists and performers. Peter was resident designer with Red Stitch Actors Theatre 2005-2013. Awards included Best Company Production Green Room Award for *Harvest*, he received a Green Room Award nomination for his design of *Red Sky Morning* and special mention for *Pool (No Water)*. He received the Green Room Award for best design for *Foxfinder*. Peter has designed plays by AWGIE nominated playwright R. Johns including *Tchekov at the House of Special Purpose* (La Mama), *As Told By The Boys Who Fed Me Apples* and *Stray* (Big West Festival) and *At the Centre of Light* (La Mama/ Regional Victorian tour/ 12th Night Theatre Brisbane). Peter has had a long association with director, Rodney Hall, including designing four of the early Opera projects for Woodend Winter Arts Festivals, - *Dafne, A Soldier's Tale, Eurydice, Una Stravaganza Dei Medici* and the 2018 world premiere of *Dry River Run* at the Queensland Conservatorium.



Lighting Design

**RICHARD VABRE**

Richard Vabre is a freelance Lighting Designer for live performance based in Melbourne.

He has had almost 20 years of professional experience designing across all modes of live performance including theatre, opera, dance, experiential installation and circus. His work has toured extensively both within Australia and Internationally.

He has lit productions for MTC, STC, Malthouse Theatre, Belvoir Street, Black Swan State Theatre Company, Victorian Opera, The Flying Fruit Flies, Windmill Theatre, Ridiculisumus, Arena Theatre Company, NICA, The Darwin Festival, Stuck Pig's Squealing, Chambermade, rawcus, Red Stitch, Polyglot, Melbourne Worker's Theatre, Aphids and many many productions at La Mama.

Richard has won 5 Green Room Awards including the Association's John Truscott Prize for Excellence in Design (2004). He has also been nominated for 10 other Green Room Awards.

His recent theatre credits include; *Mountain* (Geelong Arts Centre), *Here We Are Among You* (rawcus), *Girl With Altitude* (Flying Fruit Fly Circus), *An Uncertain Time* (The Sarah Austin Company), *When The World Turns* (Polyglot), *THIS* (Rising).

FOR RED STITCH: *After Miss Julie*, *Mortortown*, *Beyond The Neck*, *Stockholm*, *Herding Cats*, *Hir*, *Right Now*.



Sound Design

**JUSTIN GARDAM**

Justin Gardam is an award-winning sound and video designer.

He is a graduate of Monash University's Bachelor of Performing Arts and completed a Master of Dramaturgy at the Victorian College of the Arts.

For Red Stitch, his sound design work includes; *Heroes of the Fourth Turning*, *Lamb*, *Control* and *Wakey Wakey*. Further highlights of his design work include; *Laurinda* (Melbourne Theatre Company); *Paradise Lost*, *Bad News*, *The Market is a Wind-Up Toy* and *The Nose* (Bloomshed); *Everyone is Famous*, *The Lockdown Films* and *F*. (Riot Stage); *Us* (St Martins Youth Arts Centre); *Driftwood* (Umbrella Productions); *Sneakyville* (Before Shot). As associate: *Abigail's Party* (Melbourne Theatre Company); *Considerable Sexual License* (Joel Bray Dance); *Suddenly Last Summer* and *The Moors* (Red Stitch Actors' Theatre); *Merciless Gods* (Little Ones Theatre).

In 2020, Justin won a Green Room Award for Sound Design and Composition. He has received a further four Green Room Award nominations.

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## CREW



Stage Manager

### CAITIE MURPHY

Caitie Murphy is a multi-skilled, Naarm-based emerging theatre professional from Monash University, specialising in stage management.

In 2022, Caitie has been proud to present a bolder and brighter repeat season of *Ballads & Ballgowns* at The MC Showroom, a critically acclaimed ongoing project she has co-produced and stage managed for Midsumma Festival with creator and Melbourne drag favourite Isis Avis Loren.

Most recently Caitie has stage managed another successful repeat season of *Law & Order: PTV* by Sevenfold Theatre Company at Toff in Town, and *I Am Emilia Bassano*, the writing debut of John Warzawski, at the Justin Arthouse Museum.

In addition to stage managing *The Meeting*, Caitie is currently producing a digital season of *Ballads & Ballgowns* by Isis Avis Loren and is the Head Stage Manager & Lighting Designer for the weekly *Vixen* shows at Vau D' Vile Drag Cabaret.

She is excited to be working with Red Stitch for the first time and taking on her biggest season yet as she nears the end of her double degree.

Portfolio: [www.caitiemurphysm.com.au](http://www.caitiemurphysm.com.au)



Asst. Stage Manager

### BRIGETTE JENNINGS

Brigitte is a stage manager, artist and theatre-maker based in Naarm (Melbourne), about to finish her Bachelor of Arts (Drama and Visual Arts) at Deakin University. Brigitte has worked in community and independent theatre since 2017, working with groups such as Theatre Works, ARK Theatre, and Deakin University.

Most recently, Brigitte has worked as an Assistant Stage Manager for *Medea: Out of the Mouths of Babes* (Theatre Works), as well as producing art in various exhibitions and performances at Deakin University (2020-2022).

This is Brigitte's first time working with Red Stitch and is excited to continue her career in theatre as she nears the end of her degree.

Theatre includes: *Medea: Out of the Mouths of Babes* (TheatreWorks), *A Midsummer's Nightmare* (Deakin University), *Robin Hood: Men in Tights* (ARK Theatre), *63 Results* (ARK Theatre).

## ENSEMBLE

Ella Caldwell (AD)	Olga Makeeva
Richard Cawthorne	Dion Mills
Jing-Xuan Chan	Georgina Naidu
Jessica Clarke	Christine O'Neill
Kate Cole	Dushan Philips
Brett Cousins	Tim Potter
Ngairé Dawn Fair	Joe Petruzzi
Daniel Frederiksen	Ben Prendergast
Emily Goddard	Tim Ross
Laura Gordon	Kat Stewart
Kevin Hofbauer	Sarah Sutherland
Justin Hosking	Andrea Swifte
Khisraw Jones-Shukoor	David Whiteley
Darcy Kent	
Caroline Lee	
Chanella Macri	

## STAFF

**Artistic Director**  
Ella Caldwell

**General Manager**  
Fiona Symonds

**Production Manager**  
David Bowyer

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Penelope Thomson

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Anne Henderson

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Olivia Durst

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Cecelia Scarthy

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Andrew Domasevicius-  
Zilinskis  
Belinda Locke  
Michael Rich  
Sandra Willis

## 2022 GRADUATES

Sam Diamond - **Design**  
Hayley Edwards - **Acting**  
Ibrahim Halacoglu - **Directing**  
Kevin Hojerslev - **Dramaturg**  
Akhilesh Jain - **Acting**



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## Schwartz



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*RedStitch*

23 NOV - 18 DEC 2022

WORLD PREMIERE



by Ross Mueller