

Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (QCGU) supports the call for a great Australian Musical.

With the newest program on the block, we are still establishing our place in the market. The first cohort from our Bachelor of Musical Theatre graduated in 2013 and many have already found work in productions such as *King and I*, *Carrie* and *Once*. Locally we have, in a very short time, provided support for emerging new work: *Hell and High Water* by Matthew Samer (November 2013); *On the docks* by Rex Ablett (December 2015); *Life Goes On* by Dominic Woodhead and Jackson McGovern (December 2014); *The Valley Burns* – an Australia Council-supported project with Brisbane Powerhouse (July 2015); *Ladies in Black* which students and graduates have, in part, assisted with workshops prior to its premiere in late 2015 by Queensland Theatre Company, in a university-sponsored season. Matthew Robinson conducted workshops of his new work in our spaces, with our students, in the last 2 years.

Our track record in opera production demonstrates our preparedness to commit to new staged work. We commissioned and premiered the opera *Floods* in 2014, and have commissioned another for 2018. This is no recent phenomenon: in September 2001, we co-premiered (with Guildhall School of Music and Drama) Andrew Schultz' *Going Into Shadows*. While we cannot claim to be responsible for all the successes of our alumni, the last main stage Australian opera performed by Opera Australia was by QCGU Alumnus Brett Dean, and the most recent OA production for the Perth Festival, *Rabbits* was also by a QCGU alumna Kate Miller-Heidke.

I would posit, then, that Queensland is actually the place for out-of town tryout of new operas and musicals and that, while youthful, we have the capacity and frontier mentality to pull it off.

We would support the establishment of funding stream and, as our program in musical theatre matures, we see a role for ourselves in developing work, and training the artists to service it. The matter of spaces remains problematic, and we simply must re-invest in medium-sized spaces. QCGU has a 600-seat theatre and a 130-seat black box on site, but a 1500 seat theatre in Queensland is essential to ensure the ongoing development of opera and musical theatre.

In addition to contributing to popular debate, this author - together with colleagues Paul Sabey (Head of Musical Theatre) and Jessica O'Bryan (Lecturer in Singing) - has also weighed into the academic space on musical theatre training with articles such as:

Sabey, P. (2014) Developing a Tertiary Course in Music Theatre. In Harrison, S. and O'Bryan, J. (Eds) *Teaching Singing in the 21st Century*. Dordrecht: Springer.

Harrison, S. Sabey, P. & O'Bryan, J. (2014) Are we there yet? The role of assessment in musical theatre training. *Studies in Musical Theatre* 8 (2) 159 – 175.

Sabey, P., Harrison, S. & O'Bryan, J. (2013). Training in Musical Theatre: Assessing progress and performance. *Proceedings of the 8th International Congress of Voice Teachers*, 9 – 13 July, Brisbane, Australia.

O'Bryan, J., Harrison, S. D. & Sabey, P. (2015). Musical Theatre Assessment: Perspectives on the efficacy of continuous assessment. In Lebler, D., Carey, G. and Harrison, S.D. (Eds). *Assessment in Music Education: From policy to practice*. Dordrecht: Springer.

There is work to be done, and Queensland Conservatorium is up for the challenge!