



IN THEIR FOOTSTEPS

BY ASHLEY ADELMAN AND INFINITE VARIETY PRODUCTIONS

It's been 50 years since thousands of young American women served their country in Vietnam, and their stories have remained largely untold... until now.

Based on the true accounts of five extraordinary women, 'In Their Footsteps' explores the experiences of women working in war zones, their struggles to be recognised heroes, their loss of faith and the friendships they forged in the face of trauma.

This deeply moving, time traveling piece brings us a better understanding of the Vietnam experience from a uniquely female perspective. It tells us of jobs that have been long overlooked, particularly of civilian jobs in the war that receive, not only no fanfare, but no recognition of service either. It reminds us of the long-term pain, horrors and specifically health implications of serving your country during the Vietnam War.

More than anything, it reminds us of the histories we hear...and importantly, the ones that we don't.

Sixty-seven American Women died in the Vietnam War. Only eight have been recognised with their names inscribed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington, D.C. These women, and many of the other 11,000 American women who participated in the war efforts between 1956 and 1975 remain hidden figures. Women who served and played a critical role in sustaining the national effort, and as medical personnel, whilst often facing sexism in the field, and the well documented disparagement from home.

Theatre Travels is proud to bring this show for its Australian premiere production and to be the first international cast worldwide to perform Ashley Adelman and Infinite Variety Productions beautiful piece of Verbatim Theatre. This show debuts in Sydney after successful runs Off-Broadway and at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

CARLY FISHER

10 years ago I was first introduced to Verbatim Theatre, a style of theatre that called on a knowledge of historiography and journalism, and immediately I was intrigued by the form. It remains one of my favourite styles of theatre because of the challenges in artistically presenting it, because of the pressure to tell these stories through the lenses of whole people, not just whole characters, and more than anything because of the authenticity, the truth that this form of theatre is structured upon.

In beginning one's work on a Verbatim piece, research is key and getting to know the details of those who you are portraying, and also, in this instance, the circumstances in which we find them, was critical. Hours and hours, days upon days, of research has gone into each of the performances that you will see on the In Their Footsteps stage as we became more and more determined to tell these stories correctly. This culminated in us speaking with Ann Kelsey and Judy Jenkins Gaudino, two of the brave women who share their stories through this play, on zoom last week, an opportunity that gave this whole experience even more meaning and significance.

But research can only take you so far, then you need to inform these characters and scenarios with life, with the lived experiences of real human beings. And what a privilege it has been to work with the phenomenal humans who breathe more than just life into the women we portray on stage, but also breathe empathy, charisma and passion into them as well.

I felt something special from this script from the moment I first read it. I strongly believe that you know a script is right for you to bring to life when you can see moments of staging as you read through it even the first time. I had that immediately with this text - I could see it, I could hear it, I could feel it. I loved it and I wanted to bring these stories, the life experiences of brave women who seldom receive recognition of their services, but sacrificed for their country all the same, to the stage urgently. Through the many ups and downs of 2020, my passion to bring this show to the stage remained intense.

But as much as I loved the script, there was one real reason I loved this particular project so much - Nola, Rowena, Suzann, Sonya and Linda. This cast is rare. Working together twice a week for the last few months has been an absolute joy and a truly special experience. Our rehearsal room has been filled with laughter, with openness, with sharing, with stories, with respect, with support and most importantly of all, with friendship.

To my wonderful ITF cast, thank you. Thank you for supporting me, trusting me, teaching me, sharing your most intimate truths with me. Thank you for making this experience everything that I hoped it would be and more.

Thank you to the fantastic crew - Capri, Robert, Maddie, Isabel and James - who helped make this show what it is - I am very proud of what we have created together.

Finally, thank you to 6 other women - Ann, Judy, Lucki, Lily and Jeanne for sharing their experiences through this beautiful play, and Ashley, for piecing together a stunning story for us to have the privilege to share.

I hope that you, as an audience, walk away from this show having learnt something new, having questioned whose side of history you have exclusively heard, and to borrow from another show opening in Sydney tonight, have the opportunity to question "who lives, who dies, who tells your story."



IN THEIR FOOTSTEPS

THE CAST



NOLA BARTOLO

Nola is an Australian film and television actress of Lebanese descent whose heart belongs to the stage. As an avid theatre performer, who attended UNSW Bachelor of Arts majoring in Theatre and Film, Nola played the lead roles in FURY (2018) and The Odd Couple (2019).

She has a range of experience from film and television to directing and co-writing a short film, Possum62 in 2008. She featured in the short film Tea for Two - Directed by Jonas McLellan in 2004.

Her noteworthy television roles were in Doctor Doctor in 2016 and more recently Channel 7's Sunday Night show cast her in the reenactments of two of their lead features; one of which being the story of a mother lost in the bush with her son for days on end; wherein Nola immersed herself in some very honest emotions, which she was able to draw on to recreate this event. (2018)

Nola has starred in commercials for big brands; KFC (2017) and TAB (2018)

She is fluent in English and Arabic.



SUZANN JAMES

Suzann discovered her love for stage performance whilst living in Hong Kong. Her experiences included productions with the Hong Kong Players, American Theatre Company and the Hong Kong Singers. Returning to New Zealand, she studied performing arts at the National Academy of Singing and Dramatic Art, then after several years of working in Auckland, she jointly founded The Unreal Theatre Company. Her acting career has encompassed musicals, film and television as well as stage, but theatre remains her favourite.

Since moving to Sydney, from 2017, Suzann's stage credits include Letitia Blacklock in A Murder is Announced for Genesians, Alice in The Big Meal for The Depot, Kate Jerome in Broadway Bound for The New, Jennifer Jones in The Realistic Joneses for Limelight, Lyubov Ranevskaya in The Cherry Orchard for Virginia Plain, Helena and TV Host in A Deal for Flying House and Claire in A Delicate Balance for Sydney Classic.

Her screen credits include Shortland Street and Filthy Rich in NZ and several short films here including 'A Conversation', winner of Best International Film at the 2019 Prodigy Film Awards in which she was nominated for Best International Actress.

Suzann is very much looking forward to working with this wonderful ensemble bringing to light these incredible women's stories.

IN THEIR FOOTSTEPS

THE CAST



SONYA KERR

Sonya Kerr is a graduate of The Flinders University Drama Centre in South Australia. She has worked extensively in Melbourne and Sydney, appearing in both stage and screen roles. Her theatre credits include: WPC Parker/Hilary, The Angry Brigade, Ivy, August: Osage County, Gail/Kelly/Mel/Sam, Next Lesson, Joan, Dinkum Assorted for The New Theatre, Lady Macduff/Meneith/Bloody Captain, Macbeth and Duke Frederick/Corin/Hymen As You Like It for SheShakespeare, Kat, Seed Bomb, Donna, One Way Mirror, The Net A Quiet Night in Rangoon, Anne, Lucy Black, Erica, Cristina in the Cupboard, Eclectic Girl, Shut Up and Drive for Subtlenuance, Titania, A Midsummer Night's Dream for 63 Globes, Lady Macbeth, Macbeth, Norma, The Auxiliary for Phrankly Theatre - Melbourne, Dom, A Moment on the Lips for Mad March Hare, Catherine Winslow, The Winslow Boy for The Genesian Theatre, The Girl, The Ham Funeral for Sibils, Gabrielle, Appropriation for Fledgling Theatre.

She has also appeared in several short films, including the award winning Work Mate with Bus Stop Films. Sonya was one of the creators and hosted Kapow: Comics, Cartoons and Collectables, Australia's largest online comic book review show.



LINDA NICHOLLS-GIDLEY

Trained as an actor and a theatre voice/accents and dialects specialist, Linda has worked in the Industry for over 20 years.

Recent acting credits include: Ex-Girlfriend in Once at Darlinghurst Theatre Company and multiple character voices for Hyde Park Barracks museum experience and will be seen later this year on Channel 72's science program for children Get Clever. Linda played Marge Murray and Judy Shepard in The Laramie Project/ The Laramie Project: 10 Years Later for Theatre Travels, Polonius/Stage Manager in Hamlet with Ban Shakespeare at Bondi Feast, Susan in One Way Mirror with Subtlenuance, and as various characters for the 2018 KXT Storytellers festival, she appeared as 'Coach' in the independent feature film Zoe.Misplaced.

In 2019 Linda was dialect coach for: Shrek - The Musical (GFO), Little Miss Sunshine, I'm With Her, Kasama Kita, Good Dog, Baby Doll, Table, Once, Hitler's Daughter, Mercury Fur, Cypress Ave, Saturday Night Fever, Russian Transport, The last 5 Years, Grounded, The Crucible, The Rise and Fall of Little Voice, Counting and Cracking and two short films The Hollow and Vincent. She also directed two short plays: Toxic by Maryanne Lynch and You Still Here by Patricia Cornelius. Other Theatre credits include Love, Maggie Stone, The Humans, Torch Song Trilogy, The Walworth Farce, A Girl is a Half-Formed Thing, DNA, and Home Invasion. Linda has also coached for large mainstage productions such as Dreamworks' How to Train Your Dragon Arena Spectacular, The Bodyguard, Rocky Horror and Dirty Dancing. Film: Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon 2, Jungle, and Book Club. Television: Mary - The Making of a Princess, The Chase Australia. She directed Pramkicker by Sadie Hasler at its Sydney premier in October 2018.

Linda can be heard talking about the Australian accent on the podcast In A Manner of Speaking and about the voice in general on the podcast's Brady's Hunch and Don't Be So Dramatic.

IN THEIR FOOTSTEPS

THE CAST



ROWENA ROBINSON

Rowena was born in Los Angeles, California. She was a student at Santa Monica City Collage and subsequently accepted a scholarship to Southern Illinois University in the US to compete on their prestigious gymnastics team. That team won the National Championships in her final year at SIU.

Rowena's love of the arts and in particular the stage has seen her participating in small amateur projects from time to time over many years. Some of her roles include Tituba from *The Crucible*, various parts in the *Deadly Women* TV series and television commercials work.

Rowena brings life experiences to this role having lived through the Vietnam war and watched many of her contemporaries be dragged away to that conflict, some of them never to return. She is also an accomplished violinist, studio artist, educator and Herbalist.

Rowena immigrated to Australia in 1972.



IN THEIR FOOTSTEPS

THE CREW



ASHLEY ADELMAN: PLAYWRIGHT

Ashley Adelman received her BFA from NYU TISCH and her MFA from The Actors Studio Drama School. Ashley specializes in documentary theatre focused on stories from women's history. Her play *In Their Footsteps* has been performed all around NYC, as well as around the country for The Women Overseas Service League in San Antonio, The Borderlight Fringe in Cleveland, and JMCC. The production also had great success in Edinburgh Fringe and will be heading back to Europe next November for a production not yet announced. Her other works such as *Nellie* and *The Women of Blackwell* has been commissioned for an immersive theatre run in downtown NYC. The work is based on the undercover reporter Nellie Bly who went into the lunatic asylum to expose the horrid conditions. Lastly, Ms. Adelman's play about a family who sought asylum from Hitler and then the Japanese invasion once they had immigrated to the Philippines is set to go up in NYC as part of The Estrogenius Festival in March 2020.

Ashley owns her own theatre company and is a proud resident of FringeNYC and is honored to have such an incredible group of artists around her. And a huge thank you to all those who trust her with their stories. To learn more about Ms. Adelman or her theatre company "Infinite Variety Productions" head to www.infinitevarietynyc.org



CARLY FISHER: DIRECTOR

Carly is the Founder and Artistic Director of Theatre Travels.

As a producer, Carly is passionate about bringing debut works to stages in new markets and seeks new writers and performances ready to make their Sydney, Australian and even World premieres. Carly's portfolio demonstrates her priority of telling the stories of real, empowered women and bringing light to important social issues on stage.

For Theatre Travels, Carly has Directed and Produced; *In Their Footsteps* and *Girl Shut Your Mouth* (NO: INTERMISSION 2021), *Girl Shut Your Mouth* (Adelaide Fringe Festival 2020), *Final Placement*, *Falling Skies* and *Albumen* (NO: INTERMISSION 2019) and *The Laramie Project* and *The Laramie Project: 10 Years Later* (Seymour Centre 2018). Carly has also produced *Rattling the Keys* and *Lipstick* (NO: INTERMISSION 2021), *5 Lesbians Eating a Quiche* (Sydney Mardi Gras 2021), *Girl Shut Your Mouth* and *Bleach* (Adelaide Fringe Festival 2020), *Broken*, *Bleach*, *Lady Liberty* and the *Donut Girl*, *Infidelity* and *Enlightenment* and *Queenslander* (NO: INTERMISSION 2019).

Carly was selected for the 2019 Broadway Evolved Educators Seminar in New York. In 2018, Carly worked on *Carmen: Live or Dead* (Hayes Theatre) as Assistant Director and Company Manager. Carly has also diversified her experience in and knowledge of the industry by working for Sydney Theatre Company's Philanthropy department, Michael Seider's Presents as Production Assistant and through secondments with the Gordon Frost Organisation (Company Management), Ian Phipps Publicity (PR) and ACMN (Marketing and Advertising). Carly is the editor of Theatre Travels reviews and a theatre reviewer.

As the Producer and Co-Curator of NO: INTERMISSION, Carly is extremely excited to finally welcome you to this year's festival and has been honoured to work with such talented, committed and considerate creatives on bringing this festival to life.

