

September - December 2021 at the Finborough Theatre

The European Premiere

THE SUGAR HOUSE

by Alana Valentine.

Directed by Tom Brennan. Set and Costume Design by Justin Nardella. Lighting by Sherry Coenen.

Sound Design by Ellie Showering. Casting by Lucy Casson.

Presented by A Million Freds in association with Neil McPherson for the Finborough Theatre.

Cast: Lea Dube. Adam Fitzgerald. Jessica Zerlina Leafe. Fiona Skinner. Patrick Toomey. Janine Ulfane.

"You know the worst thing about. pretending to be all polished and posh, people start to believe that's all you've ever been. They tear everything down in this city, tear it down, gussy it up. We paid for this city like everyone else, so why are we never listened to? Why are our memories and our sense of belonging so worthless in this city?"

In a production commissioned by the Finborough Theatre, the European premiere and the UK debut of multi-award-winning Australian playwright Alana Valentine, *The Sugar House* opens at the Finborough Theatre for a four week limited season on Tuesday, 26 October 2021 (Press Nights: Thursday, 4 November 2021 and Friday, 5 November 2021 at 7.30pm).

Narelle is Sydney born and bred, but lately she's lost her sense of belonging.

The city changes all the time, places are torn down and with them go her certainties.

She finds herself drawn back to Pymont, formerly the working class industrial heartland of the city, but now newly gentrified as 19th century factories become shiny apartment blocks with million dollar views of Sydney Harbour. But it remains her family's bedrock, and the home of her extraordinary grandmother June.

As she keeps going over the forces that formed her – the last man hanged in Australia, the mistakes that changed lives, her mother's divorce, her grandfather's decline – she tries to make sense of what she, her city, and her country have become. And what has been lost along the way.

Focusing on three generations of remarkable women, *The Sugar House* is a deeply moving family drama that distils the conflict of how we are raised against what we choose, and how the hope of social transformation as we move forward to embrace the future sometimes means the irretrievable loss of what built us.

The Sugar House was a hit at Sydney's renowned Belvoir Street Theatre in 2018, where it was nominated for Best New Australian Work in the Sydney Theatre Awards. It now receives its first production outside Australia at the Finborough Theatre.

As an intimate theatre venue, we are taking extra precautions to ensure the safety of performers, staff, and audience members during the current pandemic. We have reduced our audience capacity to 80% and temporarily increased our ticket prices to reflect this. Due to the size of our auditorium, we will ask audiences to wear a face covering throughout their visit including during the performance. We will also be asking audience members to provide the following evidence on arrival at the venue of either double vaccination, negative test results, or a recent infection. We will be reviewing these protocols every month and will lift them as soon as it is safe to do so. For full information, please see our website.

Playwright Alana Valentine is an Australian playwright and librettist, and makes her UK debut at the Finborough Theatre. Her award-winning work with First Nations Australians includes, with co-writer Ursula Yovich, the multi

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e-mail admin@finboroughtheatre.co.uk www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk Artistic Director Neil McPherson

Helpmann-Award winning (Best Original Score, Best Musical) *Barbara and the Camp Dogs*, first seen at Belvoir Street Theatre, Sydney, in 2017 and on tour in Australia in 2019. It was also nominated for the Victorian Premier's Literary Award and the New South Wales Premier's Literary Award as Best Drama. In November 2019, a song cycle *Flight Memory*, written with composer Sandra France, premiered at Street Theatre, Canberra. As well as recent productions of original plays at the Seymour Centre for Performing Arts, Sydney – *Made To Measure* (a commission from the Charles Perkins Centre, University of Sydney, where Alana was Writer in Residence in 2018) and *Ear to the Edge of Time* (winner of the 5th International Playwriting Award), Alana's plays *Parramatta Girls*, *Letters to Lindy* and *Head Full of Love* have toured Australia. Her play *The Ravens* won the BBC/British Council International Radio Playwriting Competition in 2014 and was recently produced in the United States. Alana has also worked with First Nations artistic director Stephen Page and Bangarra Dance Theatre as dramaturg on Helpmann-Award winning Best New Australian work *Bennelong* as well as *Patyegarang*, *Dark Emu* and *ID in Belong*. Forthcoming productions include *Notre Dame* with the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra in August 2020 and *Wayside Bride* to be presented by Belvoir Street Theatre in 2021. Amongst many awards and residences, she won three Australian Writers Guild Awards in 2013 including the Major Award and the Inaugural David Williamson Award for Excellence in Writing for the Australian Theatre for *Grounded*, and has also held an International Writing Fellowship at London's Shakespeare's Globe Theatre. Her plays are published by Currency Press.

Director **Tom Brennan** is a theatre director, playwright, and filmmaker. He trained in American Theatre at Rose Bruford College and on *Made in Bristol* at Bristol Old Vic. His company, The Wardrobe Ensemble ("The most exciting young company I have seen for quite a while." Dominic Maxwell, *The Times*) is an associate company of Complicité and Shoreditch Town Hall. Tom's work with the company has been performed at the National Theatre, Almeida Theatre, Trafalgar Studios, Soho Theatre, and Bristol Old Vic among many other venues across the UK and USA.

He was also a resident director at the Almeida Theatre on Rupert Goold's production of Mike Bartlett's *Albion* and Richard Jones' production of Anne Washburn's *Twilight Zone*. He was the Associate Director on the revival of *Albion* and Michael Fentiman's production of *The Windsors*. Tom is also a Creative Associate of North Wall Theatre, Oxford. For The Wardrobe Ensemble, he co-directed and co-wrote *The Last of The Pelican Daughters*, *1972: The Future of Sex* (Winner Stage Award for Acting Excellence 2015, Spirit of The Fringe Award) and *Eloise and The Curse of The Golden Whisk*. He directed and co-wrote *RIOT*, *33*, *The Forever Machine*, *South Western* and most recently a new two-woman adaptation of *The Great Gatsby*. He was a co-writer and performer on *Education, Education, Education* (Winner - Fringe First, Stage Award for Best Ensemble 2017). *1972: The Future of Sex* and *Education, Education, Education* are published by Nick Hern.

Tom is a playwriting mentor and Creative Associate for North Wall Theatre, Oxford. Recently, he co-directed a new devised show *SAFARI*, as part of The North Wall's summer residency in collaboration with The Wardrobe Ensemble. Elsewhere, he directed and co-wrote the new musicals *Drac and Jill* and *The Rocky Shock* for the Wardrobe Theatre, Bristol. He also wrote and directed *The Episode* (2014) which toured through Spring 2017 and he directed feminist sci-fi *252AM* (2015) for Shady Dolls Theatre. Tom is a founding member of The Wardrobe Theatre, Bristol, where in 2011 he founded *Closer Each Day*, an improvised soap opera that continues to be performed bi-weekly.

His music video for Dodie's *In The Middle* has been viewed over 2,500,000 times.

He has taught and directed at the University of Northampton, Rose Bruford College, ALRA and Bath Spa University. He has several years' experience running ensemble theatre workshops for young people with Bristol Old Vic, The Old Vic and Almeida Theatre.

Producers **A Million Freds Productions** return to the Finborough Theatre after their sell out run last year of Athol Fugard's *A Lesson From Aloes*, directed by Dame Janet Suzman. The Company's work has previously been seen in London and internationally including productions in South Africa, Sweden and Ireland.

The cast is:

Lea Dube | Jenny / Prin

Trained at The Unseen Acting School.

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e-mail admin@finboroughtheatre.co.uk www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk Artistic Director Neil McPherson

The Sugar House is Lea's professional stage debut.

Adam Fitzgerald | Ollie Macreadie / Zee

Trained at Drama Studio London.

Theatre includes *Macbeth* (The Globe Players) and *The Dedication* (Chapel Playhouse)

Television includes *The Crown*.

Radio includes winning the BBC Carleton Hobbs Award for Radio Drama, *Fusion Confidential*, *The Archers*, *Charles Paris* and *The Shepherd's Hut*.

Audio includes several audio productions with Sony Pictures Germany and Audible.

Jessica Zerlina Leafe | Narelle Macreadie

Trained at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School.

Theatre in training includes *The Love of the Nightingale*.

Film includes *Year 10*.

Television includes *The Innocents* and *Rhyme Time Town*.

Fiona Skinner | Margo Macreadie

Theatre includes *The Sweet Science of Bruising* (Southwark Playhouse and Wilton's Music Hall), *The Dark Room* (Theatre503), *The Full Monty* (UK Tour) and *Our Ajax* (Southwark Playhouse).

Television includes *Coronation Street*, *Hold the Sunset*, *Endeavour*, *The Rook*, *Holby City*, *Taboo*, *Doctors*, *Casualty*, *Not Safe For Work*, *Birds of a Feather*, *Call The Midwife*, *Our Girl* and *A Last Resort*.

Film includes *The Pentaverate*, *Official Secrets*, *A Royal Night Out*, *Oakwood*, *Little Big House* and *24 Little Hours*.

Patrick Toomey | Sidney Macreadie / Others

Trained at London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art.

Theatre includes *The Remains Of The Day* (Northampton Theatres and Out Of Joint), *The Exorcist* (UK Tour), *A Princess Undone*, *The Keepers Of Infinite Space*, *Casualties* (Park Theatre), *Wendy And Peter Pan*, *The Blue Angel* (Royal Shakespeare Company), *Murder In The Cathedral* (Temple Church), *The Father* (Belgrade Theatre, Coventry), *Lovebirds* (Southwark Playhouse), *Wild Horses* (Theatre503), *On The Waterfront* (Hackney Empire), *Richard II*, *Edward II* (Shakespeare's Globe), *Mister Heracles* (West Yorkshire Playhouse), *The School For Scandal* (Royal and Derngate Theatres, Northampton), *Sweet Phoebe* (Hen and Chickens Theatre), *The John Wayne Principle* (Nuffield Theatre, Southampton), *The Boys in the Band* (Aldwych Theatre), *The School For Scandal* (English Touring Theatre), *The Merchant Of Venice*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Recruiting Officer* (Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh), *The Woman In Black* (Fortune Theatre), *The Country Wife* (Holland Park), *As You Like It*, *Lady Betty* (Cheek By Jowl), *A Small Family Business* (Birmingham Rep), *Romeo and Juliet* (London Shakespeare Group), *The Beaux' Stratagem* (Stephen Joseph Theatre) and *Pommies* (Warehouse Theatre, Croydon).

Film includes *Broken*, *Walking With the Enemy*, *Adventures of Arsène Lupin* and *The House Of Angelo*.

Television includes *Inside Man*, *Doctors*, *The Crown*, *Ransom*, *Murder Maps*, *The Escape Artist*, *Doc Martin*, *Vera*, *The Curse of King Tut's Tomb*, *Law & Order: UK*, *My Family*, *Push*, *Missing*, *Mutual Friends*, *Holby City*, *Auf Wiedersehen Pet*, *Courtroom*, *Hollyoaks*, *The Only Boy For Me*, *The Bill*, *William and Mary*, *Monarch of the Glen*, *Jackson's Wharf*, *Water Rats*, *Heartbeat*, *Murder Most Horrid*, *Annie's Bar*, *Over Here*, *Cadfael*, *Young Indiana Jones* and *Streetwise*.

Janine Ulfane | June Macreadie

Productions at the Finborough Theatre include *A Lesson From Aloes*.

Theatre includes *A Part of Me* (Jermyn Street Theatre), *The Mercy Seat* (Pleasance London), *Strindberg's Apartment* (New Diorama Theatre), *Hello and Goodbye* (BAC, South Africa and Irish Tour), *The Guests* (Orange Tree Theatre, Richmond), *The Orchestra* (Southwark Playhouse), *Play* (Riverside Studios), *Betrayal*, *The Real Thing*, *War* and *A Play* in Swedish, English and Italian (Dramaten and Strindberg's Intima Teatern, Stockholm), and *Daniel Deronda* (Gatehouse Theatre).

Film includes *Noche Flamenca*.

The Australian press on *The Sugar House*

“A gift of theatre; an exploration of who we were, who we are and who we wish we could be.” *Time Out, Sydney*

“An extraordinary new play which takes us on a family saga across three generations of Pymont residents...The playwright’s nuanced, all-too-human characters ring devastatingly true. This is rich stuff, dealing with the story of Sydney’s now increasingly displaced working class, and its history of endemic urban crime and police corruption. It tells of how our city has sought to reinvent itself and reclaim areas of poverty and industry with almost a fetish for superficial “authenticity” for our rough-and-tumble past, rendered anodyne for expensive tastes.” *Australian Stage*

“As credible, tough and romantic as a Dickens saga.” *Stage Noise*

“Valentine weaves themes of class, injustice, “bad blood” and intergenerational tension into a female-dominated family saga replete with warm humour, heart-on-sleeve emotion and salt-of-the-earth values.” *Audrey Journal*

“The personal and political astuteness of Ms Valentine’s storytelling...is combined with the creation of characters so beautifully realised that any actor would give their eye-teeth to have possession of them, that they will become iconic figures in our Australian literary canon. The characters have an authenticity of a studied and owned relationship, especially, that of June, Margo and Narelle - that they feel as if they come as a cri de coeur from the heart of Ms Valentine’s own life. Three magnificently realised Australian women.” *Kevin Jackson’s Theatre Diary*

“Alana Valentine goes from strength to strength. None of these characters is mocked or celebrated. They are simply presented with all their human contradictions, faults feelings and small triumphs.” *The Australian*

“*The Sugar House* is also at its core about shame passed down through generations, complicated family dynamics and the need we often feel to understand the past and where we came from, in order to gain some authentic sense of identity. This is a wonderful, thoughtfully-constructed and distinctly Australian work...Each character rings true to life; the issues with which they grapple are real, and the impact they have on those who come after is undeniable.” *Theatre People*

“An interesting and important work as it explores the stories of the people that are usually erased from the history books and the landscape. As the Sugar Refinery made way for posh housing with only token reminders of the past which people don’t really understand, stories of families like the Macreadie’s would normally be forgotten as well. *The Sugar House* gives them a voice and shares the challenges of growing up in poverty, the changes a family can make in a few generations, and the burden on history on the future. A wonderfully presented new Australian story that should be seen.” *Broadway World*

**PRESS NIGHTS: THURSDAY, 4 NOVEMBER AND FRIDAY, 5 NOVEMBER 2021 AT 7.30PM.
PHOTOCALL: TO BE CONFIRMED.**

Finborough Theatre, 118 Finborough Road, London SW10 9ED

Book online at www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk

Box Office 020 7244 7439

No booking fees

Tuesday, 26 October – Saturday, 20 November 2021

Tuesday to Saturday evenings at 7.30pm. Saturday and Sunday matinees at 3.00pm.

Prices until 7 November 2021 – Tickets £23, £20 concessions, except Tuesday evenings £20 all seats, and Friday and Saturday evenings £23 all seats. Previews (26, 27, 28, 29, 30 and 31 October, 2 and 3 November) £14 all seats.

£10 tickets for Under 30s for performances from Tuesday to Sunday of the first week when booked online only.

£14 tickets for residents of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea on Saturday, 30 October 2021 at 7.30pm when booked online only.

Prices from 9 November 2021 – Tickets £25, £23 concessions, except Tuesday evenings £23 all seats, and Friday and Saturday evenings £25 all seats.

Performance Length: Approximately two hours with one interval of fifteen minutes.

For more information, interviews and images, please contact

Livvy Perrett on e-mail press@finboroughtheatre.co.uk or **07889 794858**

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