



The
Appleton
LADIES' POTATO RACE

By Melanie Tait

Directed by Neil Horton



April 2024



MELANIE TAIT

WRITER

Melanie Tait is a writer for stage and screen with a proven track record in Australia and the UK.

Her play *The Appleton Ladies' Potato Race* premiered at the Ensemble Theatre in Sydney in March 2019 and toured nationally in 2021. It's been programmed right around Australia and New Zealand including at the State Theatre Company of South Australia and upcoming productions at Queensland Theatre and The Court Theatre in Christchurch. Melanie has also adapted the play into a feature film, writing the screenplay for *The Appleton Ladies' Potato Race* which is post-production with Paramount+ and EQ Media.

Melanie's play *A Broadcast Coup*, opened in January 2023 at Ensemble Theatre as part of Sydney Festival.

She currently has 3 plays under commission at Melbourne Theatre Company, Ensemble Theatre and Blue Cow Theatre Tasmania and she is developing an original tv series with Screen Tasmania, 3rd Gen Productions and Congaline. She is also at various stages of development on a couple of other screen projects.

Her first play *The Vegemite Tales* won critical and popular acclaim playing eight years in London, including two years on the West End. Melanie then trained as a journalist with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, where she worked for twelve years across radio, podcasting and television. For enquiries regarding Melanie Tait please contact us via email or on (02) 9319 7199



A message from the Director

It would be quite easy to substitute Appleton for Armidale in "The Appleton Ladies' Potato Race". So familiar are the characters that we can instantly recognise them as people that are in our community albeit with just a little tweak.

I just know that our audiences are going to have a blast watching this lovely piece of very Australian writing. Melaine Tait has drawn on her own experiences in Robertson in the Southern Highlands of NSW to craft a story that touches on equality, family, prodigal daughters returning to their hometown, the fight for change, refugees trying to blend in and many other current themes. She does it with a broad humour with just enough poignancy to have you rolling in the aisles one minute and reflecting on life's hardships in another.

The Appleton Ladies Potato Race premiered at the Ensemble Theatre in March 2019 the year before COVID invaded our lives. It played to great acclaim starring Sharon Millerchip, Merridy Eastman, Valerie Bader, Amber McMahon and Sapidah Kian. Since then it has played professionally in many of our state capital cities and has become a frequent favourite for our fellow amateur theatre companies throughout Australia.

I have been blessed to have a great cast to bring this show to life for you and the enthusiasm with which they have thrown themselves into their roles has been such an uplifting experience.

Plays like this don't get put on by themselves and I would like to especially thank the people tonight who you won't see on stage. My stage manager Rachel Horton, sound technician Ron Ziv our front of house staff, Waine Grafton for his artistic design and the people who turned up to put the simple but effective set together. Richie Kiehne, Carmel Reilly, Hadi Hussein and our numerous painters.

So sit back, relax, sip on your glass of bubbles and prepare for a great night out. I just know you're going to leave the theatre having had a great time.





CAST

Penny Anderson – Lana Howlett



Lana has always had a strong passion for The Arts. She was an active member of Astrid Blake's *Stage One School of Drama* during her youth and first joined ADMS in 1994 to play Louisa Von Trapp in their production of *Sound of Music*. Since returning to Armidale in 2015, she has performed in many ADMS productions including *Legally Blonde* (as Pilar), *Heathers: the Musical* (as Heather Chandler), *Singing in the Rain* (as Kathy Seldon), *Les Miserables* (as Fantine), *Company* (as Jenny), *Into the Woods* (as Stepmother and Witch understudy) and has performed as a soloist in ADMS variety and showcase nights at The Armidale Playhouse. She is very excited to be playing Penny in *Appleton Ladies' Potato Race*, to be working with this fantastic cast and team, and to be taking on the challenge of a play again.

Nikki Armstrong – Emily Waldron



Since moving to Armidale for university, Emily has performed in five ADMS Musicals (Enid Hoopes in *Legally Blonde* 2015, Ensemble *Singing in the Rain* 2019, Lisa in *Mamma Mia* 2021, Ensemble *Les Miserables* 2022 and Susan in *Company* 2022) as well as performing as a soloist for ADMS showcase nights and concerts. Emily directed the 2023 ADMS musical *Into the Woods* and will be appearing in the 2024 ADMS musical *Crazy For You*. Emily has performed in a number of plays in Armidale with Felt Tip Theatre, Veracity Theatre and UNE Theatre. She has a Bachelor of Theatre and Performance from UNE and is absolutely delighted to be on the playhouse stage again for Appleton.

Rania Hamid – Gal Winter



Gal is making her theatrical debut in *The Appleton Ladies' Potato Race*! She is excited to be playing Rania, drawing from her own immigrant journey to a small Australian country town. By day, she's a Senior Lecturer in Biomedical Science at UNE, by night... she sleeps. Gal extends her love for food and nutrition through Gal's Kitchen Culture, an initiative aimed at promoting hands-on culinary skills and healthy eating habits.

Bev Armstrong – Catherine Wright



After leaving Drama school and working as a stage actress around Australia, Catherine was in a number of Armidale stage productions in the early Noughties, including as Madame Thenadier in *Les Mis* (2002), Roxy Hart in *Chicago* (Mach 1) and *The Laramie Project*. She was absent for the acting scene for 20 years moonlighting as a poet, and made her re-entry in *Breast Wishes* as Irene/Helen in 2023. She is looking forward to showcasing an extensive range of "flannies" and other chic workwear in her upcoming role as Bev. She is loving working with this fantastic cast and crew.

Barb Ling – Annie Keoghan



Annie trained as an actor at the Ensemble Studios in North Sydney, and has been working in theatre, film, and television for over 30 years. She has been treading the boards in our ADMS productions since 2009, and often helps with props and costumes in our backstage crew. Annie has performed in our productions, "*Into the Woods*" (2009), "*The Producers: A New Mel Brooks Musical*", "*The Hatpin*", "*A Kick in the Baubles*" and "*Favourite Shorts*." She will be playing the role of Lottie Child in our upcoming production "*Crazy For You*". She loves playing the role of Barb Ling, in *The Appleton Ladies' Potato Race* - a dedicated secretary for the Appleton Show and a very proud aunt of Nikki and Penny."

Radio & TV voices

Mike Gibson, Nick Troon, Richie Kiehne, James Meyer, Anita Brown, Mary Evans, Geneva Stocker, Kate Frazier, Cal Hunter, Stuart Pavel, Hadi Hussein, Greg Dorrian,



Behind the Scenes

Director – Neil Horton



Neil has directed many shows for the ADMS over the years. The majority of these have been Musicals. These include "Mamma Mia", "Spamalot", "Joseph and the amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat", "Les Miserables" and "Fiddler on the Roof" just to name a few. Plays perhaps not as many with the most recent being "The 39 Steps" in 2015 and "California Suite" in 2010. In between all of these he has directed all of the concert series and gala concerts ADMS has staged since the inaugural concert in 2004 with a 'Night on Broadway with Peter Couseys'. He has been itching to stage "Appleton Ladies" for a few years now and is thrilled with the amazing cast he has assembled and just knows the Armidale audiences are going to love it.

Stage Manager – Rachel Horton



This is Rachel's first Stage Manager role for the ADMS. She has been backstage numerous times performing various functions in shows such as "Urinetown" for which she won the Dennis Wright Award for outstanding work in the props department, As a stage hand in "Singing in the Rain" and as a Sound Technician for "Into the Woods". She was also assistant director for "The 39 Steps". Rachel has also been in the ensembles for many of the recent ADMS's musicals. Most notably, "Les Miserables", "Mamma Mia", "Legally Blonde", "Heathers" among many others.

Special Mention

Ron Ziv - Sound Operator/Prompt/ Rehearsal Stand In



Ron is passionate about all things theatre and is often described as "Too dramatic to function". His first stage performance was at the age of 5 and he has since acted in productions by Felt Tip Theatre, Two Sticks, and High Country Theatre. This is Ron's first time behind the scenes and he has enjoyed experiencing this aspect of theatre, although he mostly loved stepping in when one of the actresses fell "mysteriously" ill.

Behind the Scenes

Lighting Design – Pat Bradley

Lighting Operator – Neil Horton

Artistic Design – Wayne Grafton

Sound design and recording - Nick Troon

Graphic Design – Emma Horton

Costumes – The Cast of Appleton Ladies

Costume assistants – Carmel Reilly, Evie Howlett

Props – Neil Horton, Annie Keoghan, Rachel Horton, Carmel Reilly and Cast

Set Construction – Richie Kiehne, Carmel Reilly, Hadi Hussein, Jono McAteer, Ruth Cason, Prue Oxford, Greg Cotterell, Warren Bartik, Murray Kennedy and Cast Members

Front of House – Donna Wainohu, Nicholas Troon, Shell Potter, Kate Frazier, David Young, Diana Helmrich, Liz Ellis and all our fabulous volunteers.

Armidale Playhouse Manager - Stuart Pavel

Thank you - Jamie Ellis for Show paraphernalia

DONATIONS TO ARMIDALE PLAYHOUSE

The Armidale Playhouse ADMS would like to thank everyone for their generous support towards the renovation of The Armidale Playhouse. There is still much to do to develop and maintain Armidale's only community theatre... If you would like to donate, APH now has Tax Deductible status and donations of \$25, \$50, or more are very welcome



from the ADMS

Armidale Drama and Musical Society Presents

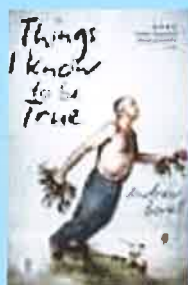
CRAZY FOR YOU



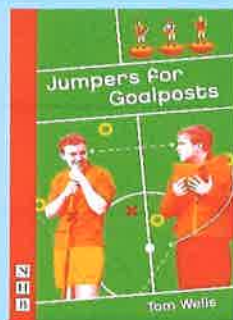
Music and Lyrics by
George Gershwin and Ira
Gershwin
Book by
Ken Ludwig
Inspired by Material by
Guy Bolton and John
McGowan
Directed by
Anita Brown
Musical Direction by
Bruce Menzies

12th - 20th July 2024
TAS Hoskins Centre

"Crazy For You" is presented by permission of ORIGIN™ Theatrical, On behalf of Tamis-
Witmark LLC, A Concord Theatricals Company



A play by Andrew Bovell -
Directed by Melanie Rumble
6 - 14 September 2024



A play by Tom Wells -
Directed by Mark Bourne
Nov/Dec 2024