

IN SHADOWS

(DALAM BAYANG-BAYANG)

DAREBIN ARTS SPEAKEAGY
PRESENTS

BY LIANG LUSCOMBE, ISOBEL D'CRUZ BARNES
& HANEEN MAHMOOD MARTIN



**Darebin
Arts**

Image by Nur Aishah Kenton

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

LIANG LUSCOMBE
DIRECTOR

In Shadows (Dalam Bayang Bayang)

is the story of a woman transformed in death into a hantu – a ghost. The pontianak, or ponti is a soul that will not rest, driven by the grief and anguish of her lover's betrayal. It is a devastating story that asks the audience to sit with the anguish of the haunter, not the haunted. Through live music, improvised dance and shadow puppetry, the show asks: how do the immaterial, fleeting qualities of the shadow whisper our protagonist's grief?

The story of the Pontianak is well-known throughout Southeast Asia and its diaspora, sometimes to the point of cliché: she's a ghost who lives in the banana trees, wears white, trails long black hair, and comes after men. The folklore was first recounted to me by my mother, who grew up in Singapore fearing that the pontianak would come after her blood. But the more time I spent with ponti – spurred by conversations with friend and music director Isobel D'Cruz Barnes, whose Malaysian mother feared walking near trees after dark as a child – the more I found in ponti a figure who gave voice to feminist concerns rarely spoken aloud: gendered violence, sexual assault, maternal loss. She is a Southeast Asian woman unafraid to refuse conformity; a spirit-creature

who takes revenge on the male perpetrators of sexual violence.

I had initially imagined this as a moving image work for gallery. That shifted when Isobel and I became friends with producer and dramaturg Haneen Mahmood Martin, and together we began to imagine transposing puppetry and sound into live performance. This vision took shape through collaboration with choreographer and performer Janette Hoe — whose unique blend of Butoh and somatic improvisation embodies the pontianak's presence— and artist and puppeteer Bronwen Kamasz, with whom the shadow puppetry was co-devised over many months in my studio, alongside Isobel's five-piece ensemble Hantu that creates a tactile and emotive sound world.

The work also deepened through travel and research: artist residencies at Rimbun Dahan and Sunway University's Centre for Digital Humanities and Cultural Heritage in Malaysia to research Malaysian wayang kulit, a research dinner with the theatre community at Teater Ekamatra in Singapore, and a residency at Spare Parts Puppet Theatre in Fremantle. I would like to thank those friends made during those developments, and the entire *In Shadows* teams for their dedication, creative energy and friendship.

DAREBIN CITY COUNCIL ACKNOWLEDGES THE WURRUNDJERI-WOI WURRUNG PEOPLE AS THE TRADITIONAL OWNERS OF LAND IN WHICH DAREBIN STANDS. WE RECOGNISE THEIR CONTINUING CONNECTION TO LAND, WATERS AND CULTURE. WE PAY OUR RESPECT TO ELDERS PAST, PRESENT AND EMERGING.

ABOUT

A PONTIANAK'S RECKONING

A ghost story told through shadow puppetry, live music and dance, *In Shadows (Dalam Bayang-Bayang)* reimagines a classic tale from Southeast Asian folklore and immerses audiences in a world of shadow, sound and memory.

Created by visual artist Liang Luscombe, musician and ethnomusicologist Isobel D'Cruz Barnes, and writer-producer Haneen Mahmood Martin, the work follows a woman transformed by betrayal and loss into the pontianak, a spectral figure known for her long black hair, haunting laughter, and lingering presence among the banana trees and frangipani-scented air.

This retelling follows a woman who falls in love with a man obsessed with her hair. When she attempts to reclaim her independence by cutting off her hair, he turns violent and murders her. She transforms into the pontianak, a monstrous spirit who will not forget.

Enter a world of shadow puppetry inspired by Malaysian wayang kulit, live music by the five-piece ensemble Hantu, and dance-theatre influenced by butoh. Moody, evocative, and steeped in the supernatural, *In Shadows (Dalam Bayang-Bayang)* offers a contemporary experience of Southeast Asian storytelling, immersing audiences in a haunting spirit world.

Running time: approx. 55mins, no interval.

Show warnings: This production contains scenes of domestic violence and moments of high volume.

CREATIVE TEAM

Dancer & Choreographer:

Janette Hoe

Puppeteers: Bronwen Kamasz & Vanessa Eillis

Director, Puppetry Design & Set Design:

Liang Luscombe

Puppetry Devising:

Liang Luscombe & Bronwen Kamasz

Musica Director: Isobel D'Cruz Banres

Live Music: Hantu

Lighting Designers:

Amelia Laver-Davidson and Giovanna Yate Gonzalez

Costumes: Geoffrey Watson

Producer & Dramaturg:

Haneen Mahmood Martin

Production & Stage Manager:

Harry Dowling

In Shadows (Dalam Bayang-Bayang) has been supported by Creative Australia, Creative Victoria, and Creative Partnerships Australia through the Australian Cultural Fund. Creative development of this project was supported through Spare Parts Puppet Theatre's Artists in Residence program. The *In Shadows* team wishes to extend their thanks to Rimbun Dahan (Malaysia), Spare Parts Puppet Theatre (WA), Teater Ekamatra (Singapore), Leysha Al-Yahya, and everyone who has so generously shared their excitement for a pontianak story to be co-created and shared by Southeast Asians in Australia, for their support and belief in this work in its development.



THE CREATIVE TEAM WOULD LIKE TO THANK

The making of this work has been a team effort, sustained largely by the generosity and curiosity of others over our interest in the pontianak, and our eagerness to make the type of show we wanted to see on our stages. We wish to thank Janette Hoe, Bronwen Kamasz, Vanessa Ellis, and Hantu for their incredible approach to collaborating, Elaine Chia OAM, Joanna Kitto, John Blaney, Kat Heinrich, Katie Harrigan, Malcolm Blaney, Peter Martin, Priya Pavri, Project Eleven Foundation Ltd, Sarah Martin, Tan Shen, Trevor Grant, and Anonymous x8 for contributing towards our Australian Cultural Fund Campaign.

Thank you to Jason Harrigan for his technical wizardry; to Michael Barlow for his puppetry wisdom and friendship; to Sarah and Jacob from Lemony S Puppet Theatre for their puppetry mentorship and guidance; to Chris Harrigan for his endless support in editing and shaping our words for *In Shadows*; to Michelle Antoniette, Frances Barrett, Professor Patricia Hardwick and Jocelyn Marcia Ng Siu Lyn for the research support and guidance. Thank you also to our families and friends for sharing your pontianak stories with us, may we keep sharing stories with each other for years to come.

DAREBIN ARTS SPEAKEASY

Darebin Arts Speakeasy is Darebin City Council's award-winning year-round independent performance and development program. For over 10 years, the program has curated and invested in contemporary dance, circus, theatre and multi-disciplinary artists whose works offer audiences a dynamic and diverse mix of stories that matter to the community, celebrate cultural diversity and reflect the times we're living in.

Darebin Arts has backed many of the groundbreaking artists and companies that make Melbourne's art sector so iconic: RAWCUS, Ilbijerri Theatre Company, The Hayloft Project, Little Ones Theatre, Stephanie Lake Company, Elbow Room, MKA, Double Water Sign, and lead artists like Joel Bray, Michele Lee, Emilie Collyer, Anna Seymour, Stella Young and Sammy J.

ARTIST BIOS



JANETTE HOE

(Dancer & Choreographer)

Janette is a Melbourne-based dance artist whose work draws the body, memory, and place into conversation. Through movement, gesture, materiality, and mark-making, she engages the body as a living archive. Drawing on her Malaysian-Chinese-Indonesian heritage, her practice spans over three decades of site-specific work grounded in Butoh and somatic improvisation. Her work moves beyond the theatre, into public spaces, galleries, and natural environments, and she collaborates across disciplines with artists and designers from diverse backgrounds — contributing as performer, collaborator, and co-devisor. *KuehLapis* is her current long-term research container: an autobiographical inquiry into the ageing body, tracing unpredictability, vulnerability, and homeness.



VANESSA ELLIS

(Puppeteer)

Vanessa is a puppeteer, designer, and maker working at the intersection of movement, material, and story. With a background in dance and over 25 years in visual theatre, she creates and performs puppetry for stage, film, and television.

Her work spans intimate and large-scale forms, including body, rod, shadow, marionette, tabletop, and animatronics, across independent and collaborative projects presented nationally and internationally. She was Head of Puppetry with AIME Mentoring for seven years, where she designed for live performance and film, created over 50 puppets, and led training with Australian Indigenous staff and children using puppetry for storytelling and connection.

ARTIST BIOS



BRONWEN KAMASZ

(Puppeteer & Puppetry Deviser)

Bronwen is a Naarm-based multi-disciplinary artist working collaboratively across the visual and performing arts with a focus on embodied, sensory and site-responsive works. For *In Shadows* (*Dalam Bayang-Bayang*), Bronwen draws on her experience as a puppeteer, a dancer with a practice steeped in Body Weather and as a co-deviser of performance works. Bronwen is a member of immersive puppet theatre company Golden Scissor Puppets and site-specific performance art company Environmental Performance Authority. *In Shadows* is Bronwen's third project working with artist Liang Luscombe.



LIANG LUSCOMBE

(Director, Puppetry Designer, Puppetry Deviser & Set Designer)

Liang's artistic practice encompasses puppetry and moving image that engage in a process of generative questioning of how images and film affect audiences. She received her MFA at Virginia Commonwealth University, USA and is a PhD candidate in Fine Art at Monash University. She has been included in screenings at Night Gallery, Los Angeles; Artists Space, NYC; The Capitol, Melbourne; Table, Chicago; The Sunview Luncheonette NYC; ACMI, Melbourne; Composite, Melbourne; and the 51st Athens International Film + Video Festival. She has undertaken residencies at Rimbun Dahan, Kuala Lumpur, 2025; Spare Parts Puppet Theatre, Fremantle, 2025; Lemony S Puppetry Development Lab, Melbourne, 2024; EXPAND Adelaide Film Festival Lab, Adelaide, 2023; Bemis Center of Contemporary Arts, 2022; Chicago Artist Coalition's HATCH residency program, Chicago, 2019; SOMA Summer, Mexico City, 2018; Australia Council Studio, British School at Rome, 2013; and Perth Institute of Contemporary Art Studio Residency, Perth, 2011.

ARTIST BIOS



ISOBEL D'CRUZ BARNES

(Musical Director/Flute, Hantu)

Isobel is a Malaysian-Australian musician and ethnomusicologist based in Philadelphia, USA. She writes on post-colonial theory and subculture and performs/composes as Hantu. Her research has been published by a range of academic and public organisations (IASPM-ANZ, Memo Magazine). In music performance, she holds an AmusA and BMus (Flute), was awarded Best Live Bassist by the National Live Music Awards (2018) and is a student of bansuri virtuoso Vinod Prasanna. She has been nominated for the Australian Music Prize (2019) and the Music Victoria Awards (2019, 2024). She is currently undertaking her PhD at the University of Pennsylvania.



RAMA PARWATA

(Percussion/Suling, Hantu)

Rama is a Naarm/Melbourne based composer and sound artist who has a distinguished reputation for his audacious and technical explorations in sound, texture and rhythm. Primarily working with percussion, his works often navigate the liminal spaces between rhythm and noise, and structure and chaos. As a composer, he has worked with the likes of Chunky Move, Melanie Lane, and Lucy Guerin Inc. In 2026, he was awarded a Green Room Award for Outstanding Sound Design for his score for Melanie Lane's *Pulau*. His ensembles include Kilat and Whitehorse. As a solo artist, he has released two albums on Important Records.

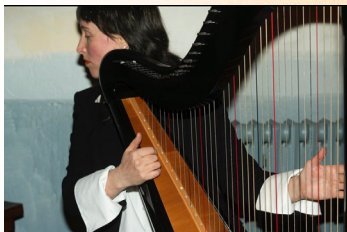
ARTIST BIOS



TOM FLENADY

(Double Bass, Hantu)

Tom is a Naarm/Melbourne-based musician engaged in a number of improvisatory music practices. A double bass player who predominantly performs as part of the Melbourne jazz scene, Tom's practice embraces the situatedness of music performance and explores the embodied, temporal structures of improvised music-making. Tom's interest in embodied temporality has grown out of a longstanding fascination with music perception and cognition, and informs his current research as a PhD candidate at the Victorian College of the Arts. Tom has made appearances at the Melbourne International Jazz Festival, OzManouche, Port Fairy Folk Festival, the National Folk Festival and Nongkrong Festival.



GENEVIEVE FRY

(Harp/Recorder, Hantu)

Genevieve is an interdisciplinary artist based in Narrm. Interested in exploratory music and improvisation drawing inspiration from the natural world, their soundscapes encourage an inward journey touching on deep time, memory and sense of place. As well as being the writer for post-ambient project Cold Hands Warm Heart, Genevieve has performed and collaborated with Hantu, Jen Valander, On Diamond, King Gizzard and the Lizard Wizard, Jacob Coppedge, Jillian Steiner, Birdsnake, Grand Salvo, Manisha Anjali, Jesse Boylan, Outer Urban Projects and Geoffrey O'Connor as well as internationally based Taylor Mac (US) and Four Larks Theatre (US). Genevieve is the co-founder of artist-run studios, label and performance space Eastmint.

ARTIST BIOS



ZACHARY SCHNEIDER

(Guitar/Synth, Hantu)

Zachary is a musician and producer based in Melbourne/Naarm. His output has seen him on national and international tours, session work, and music production and engineering. Stylistically, his work focuses on a deep exploration of melodicism with a penchant for musical contortion. Across several projects, Zachary has been featured by the BBC (UK), The Guardian (UK), Pitchfork (US), SXSW (US), Allmusic (US), Wire (UK) and many national outlets. Over the years he has shared the stage with the likes of Belle and Sebastian, Kurt Vile, The Chills, Robert Forster, Mac Demarco, Paul Kelly and Michael Hurley. He currently runs his own independent tape label Collected Dust.



AMELIA LEVER-DAVIDSON

(Co-Lighting Designer)

Amelia is a lighting designer based in Melbourne, whose practice encompasses theatre, dance, television and events.

Recent credits include: *GAME.SET. MATCH*, *Macbeth (an undoing)*, *Hour of the Wolf*, *K-Box*, *Because the Night*, *Australian Realness*, *Trustees* and *Turbine* (Malthouse Theatre); *Julius Caesar* and *Coriolanus* (Bell Shakespeare); *The Wrong Gods*, *Blessed Union*, *My Brilliant Career* and *Every Brilliant Thing* (Belvoir); *The Almighty Sometimes*, *Meet Me at Dawn*, *Bloom*, *Bernhardt/ Hamlet*, *Girls & Boys*, *Slap. Bang. Kiss.*, *Admissions*, *Torch the Place* and *The Violent Outburst That Drew Me to You* (Melbourne Theatre Company); *Your Name Means Dream*, *Monument*, *Desert 6.29pm*, *Jurassica* and *Foxfinder* (Red Stitch Actors' Theatre); and *The Seagull* and *Julius Caesar* (Sydney Theatre Company).

ARTIST BIOS



GIOVANNA YATE GONZALEZ

(Co-Lighting Designer)

Giovanna is a Colombian-born dancer turned lighting designer and technician in Australia. After studying at VCA, she's worked on standout projects like Siren Dance at Sydney Dance Company and the Fringe award-winning *LUSH*. In 2023, she was selected for the Besen Artistic Program at Malthouse and FUTURE CREATIVE program with MTC in 2024-2025. This year, she has design for DanceHouse show *Sync Well* by GEMMA+MOLLY and, presented at the Capitol the concert *Air Pressure* by Phillip Samartzis and Michael Vodfeld.



GEOFFREY WATSON

(Costume Designer)

Geoffrey is an artist whose practice is rooted in dance but frequently wanders into other disciplines and art forms like a stray cat looking for something to eat. His work is indebted to classical, religious, folk and experimental art traditions, twisting and distorting materials through handcrafted processes in order to create emotionally, devotionally infused relics. Geoffrey's collaborations as a costume/set designer include work for Lucy Guerin Inc., Chambermade, BalletLab, Lilian Steiner, Tra Mi Dinh and Amber McCartney. His work has been exhibited at Virgin Australian Fashion Festival, Melbourne Fashion Week, Liverpool Powerhouse, Temperance Hall and The Substation.

ARTIST BIOS



HANEEN MAHMOOD MARTIN
(Producer & Dramaturg)

Haneen is a Kuala Lumpur born, Malay-Saudi multi-arts manager and programmer, writer, and artist. Her work focuses on best-practice engagement and ethical governance as it pertains to underrepresented migrant and PoC communities and building sustained relationships. She is currently the General Manager of Corrugated Iron Youth Arts and has worked across Australia and art forms as a producer, programmer, and manager for Performing Lines, RISING, Biennale of Sydney, MPavilion, Regional Arts Australia, Next Wave, Brown's Mart, National Young Writers Festival and Skinnyfish Music. Haneen co-wrote the Engage! Report and Toolkit published by Contemporary Asian Australian Performance and Arts on Tour. She also manages a directory for Malay and Malaysian creatives in Australia and hosts the Sayang-Sayang Supper Club from her home. Haneen has an MFA (Cultural Leadership) from NIDA.



HARRY DOWLING
(Production & Stage Manager)

Harry is a freelance production and stage manager for live performances based in Naarm. With a background primarily in new works, Harry has worked on productions presented by Malthouse Theatre, Melbourne Theatre Company, Sydney Festival, RISING, Belvoir St Theatre, ATYP, Performing Lines, Kia Mau Festival, and extensively across the independent sector. Recent highlights include as Stage Manager for *Game. Set. Match.* at Malthouse Theatre and as Production Manager for *LEGENDS of The Golden Arches* presented at Perth Festival and MTC in 2025.