

Tenth Muse Initiative presents

# THE PRIESTESS OF MORPHINE

Music by  
Ros a Crean

Libretto by  
Aiden K. Feltkamp



22 FEB 2024 - Albany Entertainment Centre



Department of  
Local Government, Sport  
and Cultural Industries

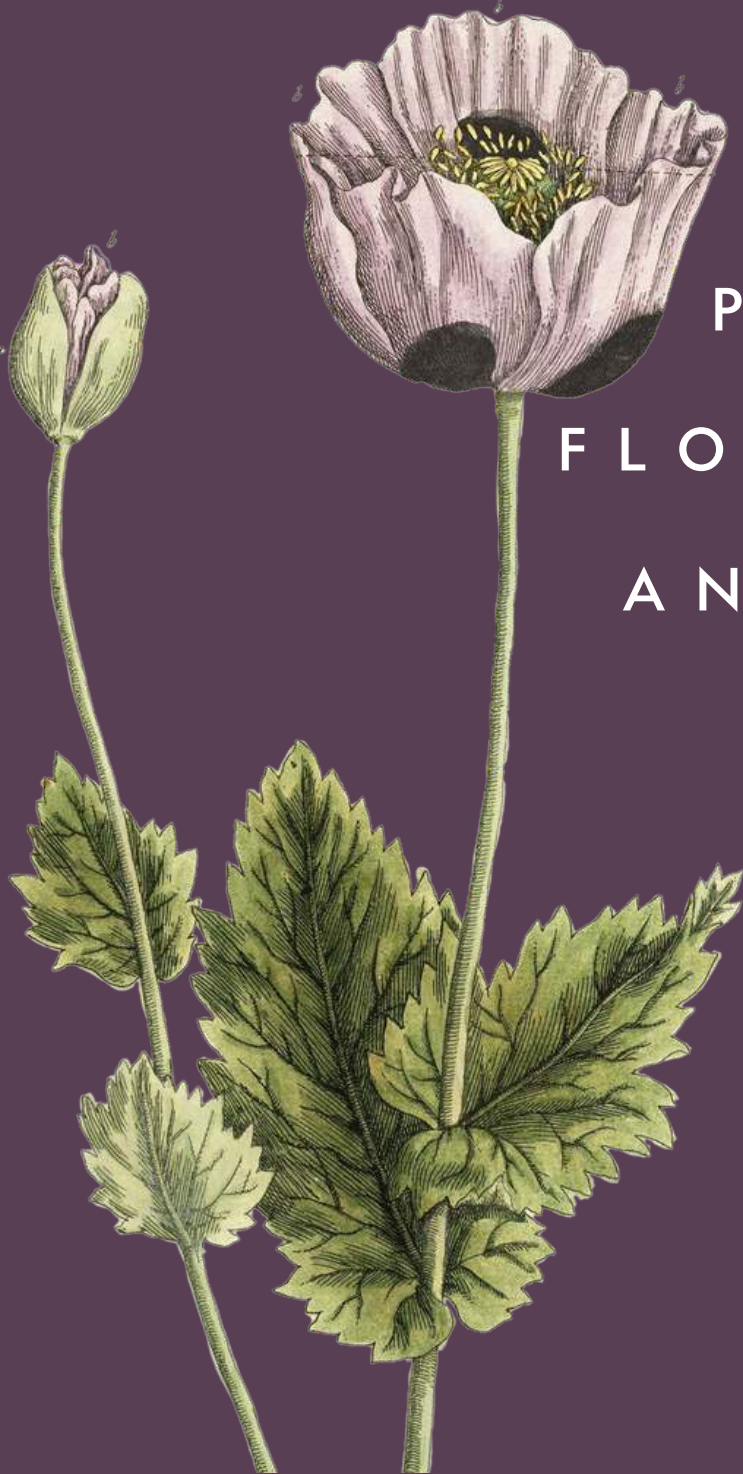


# THE PRIESTESS OF MORPHINE

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"POPPIES ARE  
MONOCARPIC  
THEY DIE AFTER  
FLOWERING  
BUT I AM  
POLYCARPIC,  
FLOWERING AGAIN  
AND AGAIN AND  
AGAIN AND  
AGAIN"



TENTH MUSE  
INITIATIVE

# THE PRIESTESS OF MORPHINE

## CAST & CREW

### PRODUCTION TEAM

#### DIRECTOR

Rachel Doulton (she/her)

#### PRODUCER

Hannah Lee Tungate (she/they)

#### PROJECTION DESIGNER

Blair Parkinson (He/him)

#### LIGHTING DESIGNER

Kartina Johnston (she/her)

### CREATORS

#### LIBRETTIST

Aiden K. Feltkamp (They/he)

#### COMPOSER

Rosá Crean (they/them)

### MUSIC TEAM

#### 'GERTRUD' & ARTISTIC ADVISOR

Jessica Taylor (she/they)

#### 'MARIE-MADELEINE'

Ava Charleson (she/her)

#### MUSIC DIRECTOR

Laurissa Brooke (she/her)

#### CELLIST

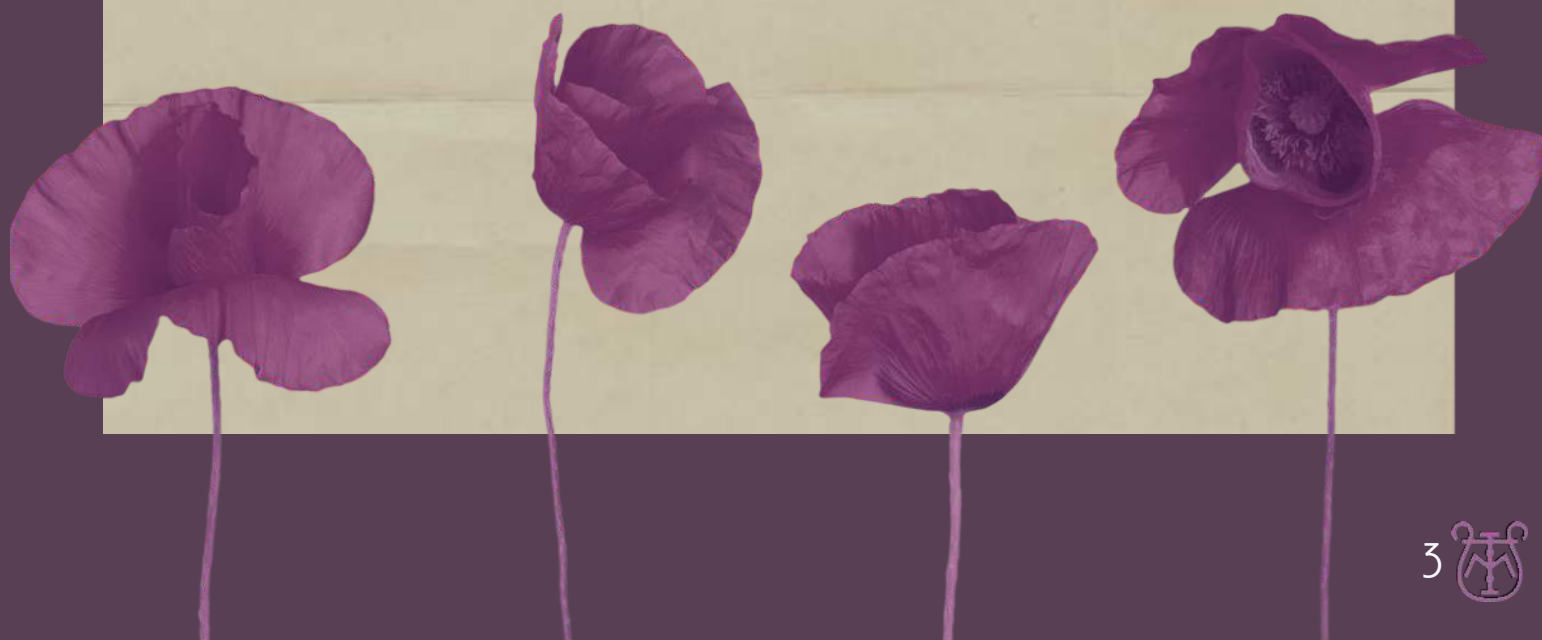
Miranda Murray-Yong (they/them)

#### PERCUSSIONIST

Thea Rossen (she/her)

#### VIOLINIST

Hannah Brockway (she/her)



# THE PRIESTESS OF MORPHINE

## SYNOPSIS



### **Prelude - Instrumental**

Both characters are introduced to us; Gertrud Günther von Puttkamer and her muse Marie-Madeleine. To the music played by Violin, Cello and Vibraphone, we see Gertrud trying to distract herself from her next hit of morphine by writing. Marie-Madeleine enters, called by Gertrud's desire. She playfully tries to convince Gertrud to give in and inject once again. When she is unsuccessful she leaves.

### **I. The Awakening - Gertrud Günther**

Gertrud begins to tell us what she is writing and is at first forensic but becomes more poetic as she goes on. As she begins to talk of her life she calls forth her muse again and unveils her creation, Marie-Madeleine.

### **II. In Salvation and Sin - Marie-Madeleine**

Marie-Madeleine is recounting a past love affair for Gertrud to write. There is a feeling of erotic desire throughout, coloured with self-loathing. As Marie finishes her story, Gertrud feels the pull of desire again.

### **III. Morphine - Gertrud Günther**

Gertrud tries to distract herself from her craving by giving us factual information again, this time about the origins of morphine. She then recounts the time she was forcibly injected with morphine at her husband's death bed. Marie-Madeleine sees an opportunity to help her and offers her the morphine. Gertrud gives in but leaves angrily.

### **IV. Tumbling - Marie-Madeleine**

Marie-Madeleine has been left alone. She has never been alone in this place before and she is frightened and panicked. She grapples with her uninvited guest 'addiction'.

### **V. Harvest Song - Duet**

Gertrud comes back intoxicated. She discovers the state Marie-Madeleine is in and comforts her by singing to her a lullaby they have sung together a thousand times. Marie pulls herself together and they both inject themselves with morphine. They sink back into bliss but are pulled to paranoia by visions of Nazis coming after them. Gertrud realises that their visions are not real and helps to calm Marie again.

She places Marie at her desk as she is ready to depart from this space and let Marie-Madeleine continue in her stead.

### **VI. The Flower of Oblivion**

Marie is now taking over the role that Gertrud used to play and is discovering what it is to write. Marie remembers that she is alone and Gertrud is gone but this time is accepting of her grief. Once she finishes her writing, she fixes up the desk, places back her shroud and leaves, ready for the next cycle to begin.



# THE PRIESTESS OF MORPHINE

## DIRECTORS CONCEPT NOTES

She was alive to see;

- WW1,
- Spanish Flu,
- End of German Imperialism 1918-
  - what did this mean to her as a Baroness?
- Domestic labour reform -
- universal suffrage for people over 20 years,
- the introduction to the 8 hour work day, ect.

Much of the early 20s saw high inflation, unemployment and food shortages as a result of WW1.

Her existence is seen as political defiance to growing conservatism, but did she see herself as such?



### Character - Gertrud Günther

The librettist notes her as the "forensic observer of her own life"

Grounded more in reality - aware of her surroundings, breaks fourth wall to address audience

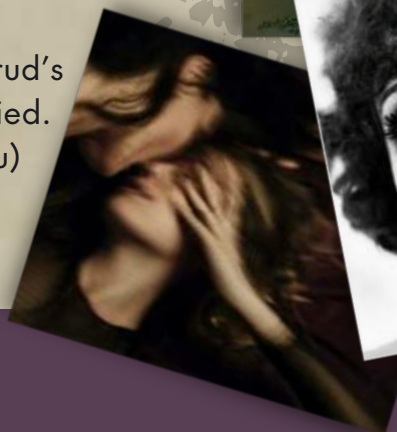
Style is structured lines and bold jewel-tones (art deco)



### Character - Marie-Madeleine:

Described as "the wild darkness and chaos of [Gertrud's] life, of addiction and hidden desires"

Her character is transient, she is Gertrud's addiction, desire, lesbianism personified. Her style is softer, curved (art nouveau)



# THE PRIESTESS OF MORPHINE

## DIRECTORS CONCEPT NOTES

Lighting:  
Shapes created by shadow  
Backlighting



Projection:  
Helps lead the transitions  
of the libretto and setting  
Silent film style (20fps)  
Also functions  
as an  
accessibility  
resource  
for projecting  
surtitles



# BARONESS GERTRUD GÜNTHER VON PUTTKAMER

Born Gertrud Günther, (April 1881 – September 1944), also known by her pen name Marie-Madeleine, was a German writer of lesbian-themed erotic literature and homoerotic poetry. Her first book, *Auf Kypros*, sold over one million copies during her lifetime.

Born in Eydtuhnen, East Prussia to Jewish parents, she Gertrud grew up in Eydtkuhnen's middle class Jewish community. At age 19 she married she married Baron Heinrich Georg Ludwig von Puttkamer, a member of the Pomeranian nobility who was 35 years her senior.



Upon her marriage, Baroness von Puttkamer moved into a villa with her husband in Grunewald, Berlin and frequently traveled to Vienna, Paris, Nice, and Monte Carlo where she socialized with Hollywood actors, European royalty and nobility, artists, and writers and began using morphine recreationally. Her husband's death in 1914 led to her morphine addiction.

In 1900, von Puttkamer published her first book of poetry under the pen-name Marie-Madeleine, titled *Auf Kypros*, which was a collection of lesbian-themed erotic verses. *Auf Kypros* became a best-seller throughout the German Empire, particularly in high society circles.



At the time, her work was seen as contrary to societal standards on morality and was even considered pornographic. Throughout the next fourteen years, she published 28 more books, including poetry, short stories,, and novels. By 1910, her writings were not only centered on lesbian erotic love but also on the use of morphine. By the end of her life, she had written over 46 works.

Eventually, identity was discovered by the Nazis. In 1932, her writings were condemned as degenerate and ordered to be burned. In 1943, she was committed to a sanatorium in Katzenelnbogen under the pretense of treating her morphine addiction. She died on 27 or 30 September 1944 while under the care of Nazi doctors.

# THE CREATORS OF 'THE PRIESTESS OF MORPHINE'



*Ros sa Crean*  
COMPOSER (THEY/THEM)

Ros sa Crean (they/them) jokingly says they "create strange things that they like to appreciate when they are by themselves, eating raw cookie dough in a dark closet," but in truth, their music has been referred to as being "funny...and virtuosic" (Classic Concert Nova Scotia), having "exceptionally different, outstanding quality" (Download), and music that "stirs you deep, undertones of humanity" (Access Contemporary Music). Composing and creating music with a focus on the evocative and lyrical, they began their professional career as a Bass-Baritone. As a person with synesthesia, Crean occasionally creates projects that focus on their own neurological responses between sound, color, and emotional states. Composer Paula Kimper has said "Ros sa Crean is at the leading edge of today's opera field, as a composer, producer, and prolific artist with many gifts and talents."

"I knew I needed to create this piece to show that we are not erasable, that even through the efforts to erase our existence, our legacies and works still survive. We exist, despite what others may feel towards us, and by paying tribute to our queer ancestors like Marie-Madeleine, we prove that we thrive." - Ros sa Crean

Aiden K. Feltkamp (they/he) began their artistic life at the age of 5 playing a quarter-size cello and now they're "upending preconceptions about voice and gender" (New York Times) as a trans nonbinary writer. Mx. Feltkamp's work centers marginalized characters, and spans the serious and the ridiculous, the real and the surreal. Most recently, they premiered an opera about Emily Dickinson's queerness at her historical home (Emily & Sue). They also write science fiction, poetry, and educational non-fiction, which has been published in PBS's American Masters series, Cr pe & Penn, and NewMusicBox. In 2021, they curated New Music Shelf's award-winning New Music Anthology for Trans & Nonbinary Voices, Vol. 1. When they're not writing, they consult arts organizations on equity and inclusion. They live in Jersey City with their partner, cat, two parrots, and robot dog.



*Aiden K. Feltkamp*  
LIBRETTIST (THEY/HE)

"Marie-Madeleine's life story and poetry spoke to me immediately -- her visceral, vibrantly gay artwork inspires me and connects me to my queer ancestors." - Aiden K. Feltkamp



# THE PRIESTESS OF MORPHINE

## PRODUCTION TEAM



*Rachel Douulton*

**DIRECTOR (SHE/HER)**

Rachel studied a Bachelor of Music (Classical Voice) at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (2017) and Bachelor of Arts (Drama & Theatre) at Murdoch University (2018), where she was given the opportunity to direct opera, theatre, and pantomime. She then went onto studying abroad at Greve Opera Academy and Berlin Opera Academy (2018). She believes in using her skills to provide opportunities for underrepresented artists and guiding them to perform with a deeper understanding of their characters story on the stage.

"When the chance to direct this piece was presented, I couldn't say no. I'm excited to see fellow emerging artists and composers who still love the artform as much as I do, want to create safer spaces and give the people represented the respect and dignity they deserve." - Rachel Douulton

Hannah is an arts administrator, producer, a classically trained soprano, and the founder of Tenth Muse Initiative. Her passion for sharing classical music written by marginalised or disempowered composers drives Hannah to spend her spare time extensively researching and advocating for women and non-binary composers, particularly through her Women Composer Project and all the work TMI are doing. Hannah has performed, produced & curated several projects with TMI, with a highlight of Tea Break premiering at Fringe World 2022 which won a Weekly Award in the music/musicals category. Though Hannah has been producing concerts since 2017, The Priestess of Morphine is her first opera production, and she's excited for the challenge.



*Hannah Lee Tungate*

**PRODUCER (SHE/THEY)**

PHOTO CREDIT: MICHELLE CHONG

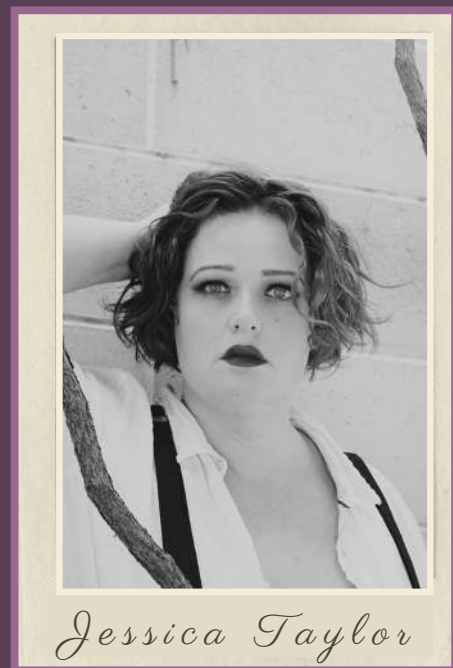
"The story of 'Priestess' resonated with me on a personal level. Gertrud Günther/Marie-Madeleine seemed so confident in her writing that being able to tell her story to a broader audience felt almost like a responsibility. It's not every day we get a chance to reclaim a little bit of history for the Queer community." - Hannah Lee Tungate

# THE PRIESTESS OF MORPHINE

## THE SINGERS

A busy solo and ensemble creative with special interests in improving accessibility and diversity in Classical Music, Jessica's recent operatic performances include Georgette in Puccini's *Il Tabarro* for the double-bill *Cloak and Dagger* at Perth Fringe World (a show which she also produced), the title role in *Sāvitrī* for Fringe World (also self-produced), the title role in *Cendrillon* for WAAPA, Female Chorus in *The Rape of Lucretia* for ICW Productions, and the title role in *Suor Angelica* for the Sound Thinking Summer School.

Extending their skills after studying at West Australian Academy of Performing Arts, Queensland Conservatorium of Music and The University of Queensland, Jessica has been working in Arts administration and as an independent producer for several years and is currently the Administrator for Perth Symphonic Chorus. They act as an artistic adviser and producer with Tenth Muse Initiative.



**'GERTRUD' (SHE/THEY)**

PHOTO CREDIT: COLE CURRIE



**MARIE MADELEINE  
(SHE/HER)**

PHOTO CREDIT: COLE CURRIE

Ava Charleson is a young Australian Soprano under the tutelage of Lisa Harper Brown. Trained at the West Australian Academy of Performing Arts in Classical Voice, Ava has experience in a wide range of repertoire and performance. She has been involved with high-level choral singing from a young age, both in a church and concert setting. She has performed works such as Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*, G. F. Handel's *Messiah*, the *Requiem Masses* of Gabriel Faure and Maurice Durufle, as well as the Operatic works of Henry Purcell and many others. In 2020, Ava performed the role of Eurydice in WAAPA's production of Jacques Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld*, and previously sung Chorus in Jules Massenet's *Cendrillon* and Johann Strauss' *Die Fledermaus*.

She has also performed the roles of Nella and Sorella Cercatrice I in Freeze Frame Opera's double bill of Puccini's *Suor Angelica & Gianni Schicchi*. Ava also works extensively in the choral community of Perth.

# THE PRIESTESS OF MORPHINE

## PRODUCTION TEAM



*Katrina Johnston*

**LIGHTING DESIGNER  
(SHE/HER)**

Katrina Johnston is a lighting designer working and living on Whadjuk Noongar boodja. She has been involved in theatre since she was ten years old.

In 2010 she made the transition from on stage to backstage and began her lighting design practice with Mood Theatre's production 'A Wilde Night'. Since then, Katrina has worked with a wide range of Perth production companies including Third Culture Kids MoR (2021), Tempest Theatre Monstrous Woman (2021) and most recently in The Blue Room Theatre 2022 Summer Nights season designed for The Complete Show of Waterskiing presented by Laura Liu (2022) and 107 presented by Michele Gould (2022).

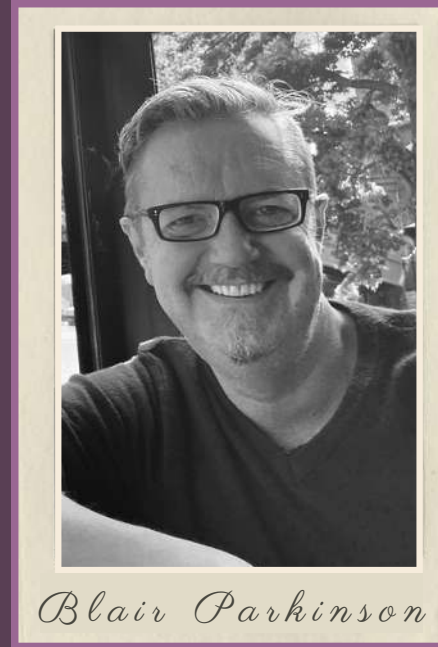
Katrina's designs are defined by subtlety and dedication to story and using her spotty art education to guide the audience down the rabbit hole.

Blair studied set and costume design at WAAPA and worked professionally in Perth, Melbourne and Sydney. Following a series of strokes in 2016 Blair used his background in the arts as rehabilitation and therapy giving him the ability to relearn cognitive thought, motor skills, sight and speech.

This has led him to a successful re-emergence designing and making costumes and scenery pieces locally and had set designs for Aida, Marriage of Figaro, Der Ring des Nibelungen, Anna Bolena, and The Rape of Lucretia, debut in the USA, China, and Australia. Latest projects include pieces for WA Ballet's new production of Swan Lake, a Sportsbet tv commercial, plus costume work for the Discovery Channel.

Blair also operates a successful costume and prop business, Living Horus Designs, with pieces in private collections, galleries and museums worldwide, incl: France, Germany, the UK and USA.

Future engagements include set designs for Der Rosenkavalier for Pacific Northwest Opera and costume pieces for Tulsa Opera's Aida in 2023.



*Blair Parkinson*

**PROJECTION DESIGNER  
(HE/HIM)**

Nanci Nott  
ArtsHub



"Superb acting and enchanting music enhanced this metaphor-rich experience of Sapphic madness, heart-breaking sadness, trauma, oppression and infinite longing."

Stewart Smith  
SeeSaw Mag



This production from Hannah Lee Tungate's Tenth Muse Initiative happily supersedes its exemplar in every way.

Bec Weldon  
X-Press Mag

8/10

"Whether audiences are experienced connoisseurs, or opera newcomers, this show will stay with them far longer than its final bow."

Bec Bowman  
OutInPerth



"The Priestess of Morphine distils Opera into its true essence — pure emotion. The truth is opera is K-Drama for the stage — you don't need to understand every word to experience the emotion of the characters."

*"It was beautiful, haunting, and utterly relevant"*

"a genuinely interesting, arrestingly emotional show"

"Bold, exquisite, unique, perfection!"

"Riveting."

Reviews from  
The Priestess of Morphine  
The Blue Room Theatre  
31 Jan - 4 Feb 2023

# THE PRIESTESS OF MORPHINE

## MUSIC TEAM



*Laurissa Brooke*

**MUSIC DIRECTOR  
(SHE/HER)**

Laurissa Brooke is a Perth/Boorloo conductor, composer, violinist and educator. A multi-award winning graduate of the West Australian Academy of Performing Arts, Laurissa pursued her post-graduate studies in Hungary, studying with Orsolya Szabo and János Vajda.

With the launch of her professional life in the Middle East, Laurissa performed regularly as a violinist with the Bahrain Sinfonia and chamber group Octessence.

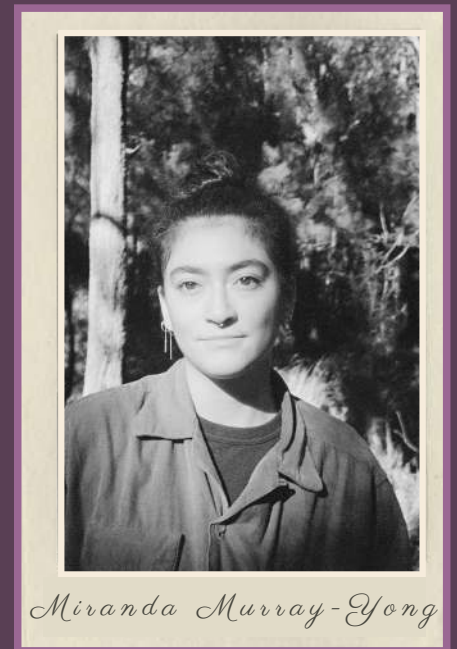
Since her return to Perth, Laurissa has been active within several areas of the music scene including significant work in cross-cultural projects. Laurissa made her debut as conductor with Perth Symphony Orchestra in February 2022. She was Musical Director of South Side Symphony Orchestra (2018-2020) and has appeared as guest conductor with the Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra and Allegri Chamber Ensemble amongst others.

Miranda Murray-Yong (23) is a freelance cellist and former student at WAAPA. They regularly perform with Perth ensembles such as Perth Symphony, Fremantle Chamber and Cygnus Arioso. They started studying cello through the SIM music program when they were in year four, after being inspired by seeing a cellist live in concert.

When they began their final year of primary school they were accepted into Gondwana National Choral School, which they would attend for 6 years. During their studies at WAAPA, Miranda participated in three camps run by the Australian Youth Orchestra, won the Royal Over-Seas League Chamber and Bach prize, played in multiple Musica Viva masterclasses and played as Principal Cellist with the Orchestra de la Francophonie in Montreal.

They currently play in Cecilia Brandolini's band and have recorded for multiple artists including Stella Donnelly, Dulcie, Grievous Bodily Calm and Noah Dillon.

Presently, Miranda's week is filled by musical freelancing, disability support work and waiting on tables. This year they are excited to add a Bachelor of Counselling to the mix of pursuits in their life.



*Miranda Murray-Yong*

**CELLIST (THEY/THEM)**

# THE PRIESTESS OF MORPHINE

## MUSIC TEAM

Percussionist and composer Thea Rossen has built an artistic practice that spans genres and connects audiences around big issues that matter. An ANAM graduate and renowned solo and chamber performer, Rossen's workshops, concerts and creative collaborations combine rigorous musicianship with seamless artistic presentation and strong outreach and education outcomes. Director of Ad Lib Collective, Thea's work has been presented by WASO, MSO, Sydney Opera House, Musica Viva Australia, Perth Festival and Tura New Music.



*Thea Rossen*

**PERCUSSIONIST  
(SHE/HER)**

Hannah began learning violin at the age of three and a half and from a young age she performed won many eisteddfods around Perth. At the age of ten Hannah commenced lessons with Dorothy Ford, with whom she completed her Australian Music Examinations Board exams 6, 7, 8 and A.Mus. A, receiving the mark of A+ and Distinction for all.

Hannah successfully passed her casual audition with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra aged 17, making her the youngest person to do so. She commenced her Bachelor of Music at the West Australian Academy of Performing Arts and completed her degree, with Honours, at the University of Tasmania. In 2022 she received her Masters of Music by research from the University of Western Australia.

Notable ensembles Hannah has performed with include the Australian International Opera Company, The Discovery Orchestra, Perth Symphony Orchestra, Australian Youth Orchestra, Momentum Ensemble and the West Australian Symphony Orchestra.



*Hannah Brockway*

**VIOLINIST  
(SHE/HER)**

# THE PRIESTESS OF MORPHINE

## RESEARCH

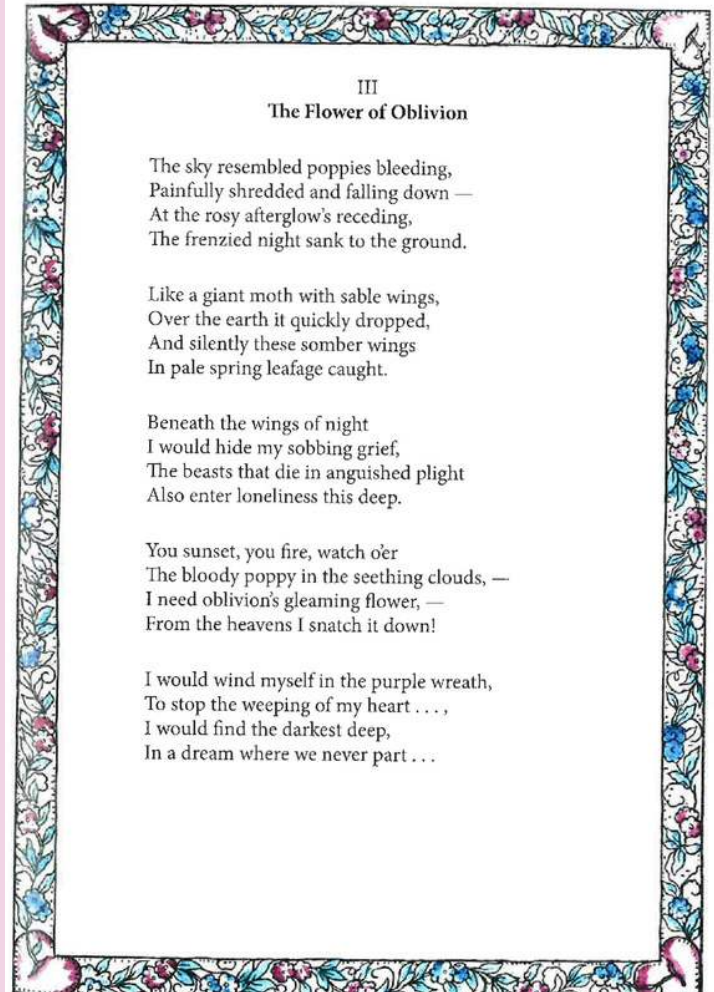
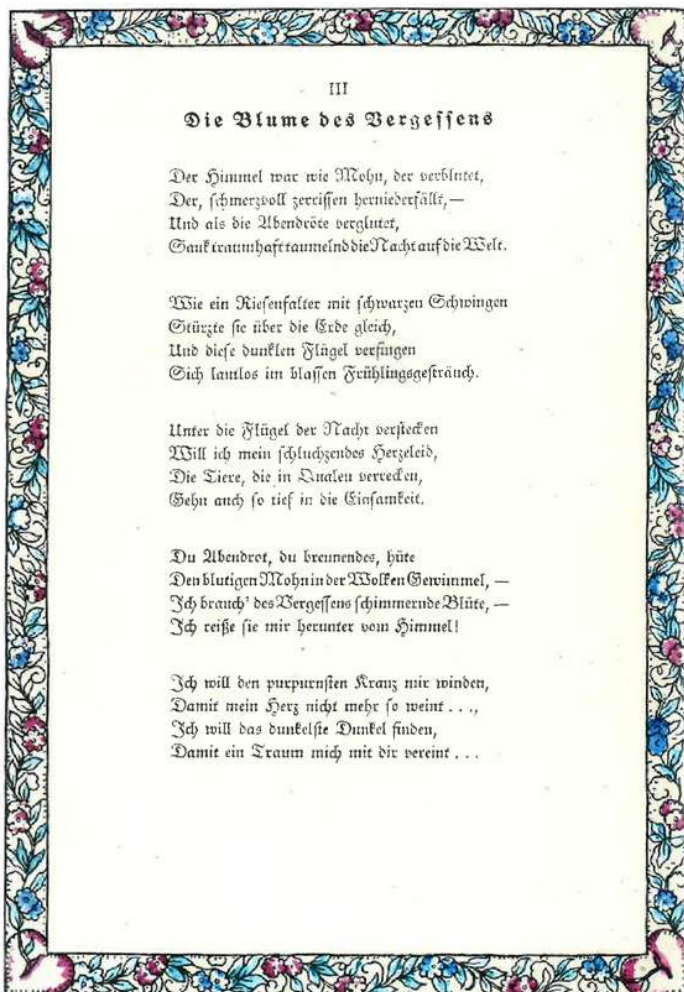
In our research for this breathtaking opera we purchased a copy of the book that inspired composer Ros a Crea to write the opera.

“Priestess of Morphine: The Lost Writing of Marie-Madeleine in the time of Nazis” (Marie-Madeleine, Ronald K. Siegel, Eric A. Bye) is a treasure trove of her original works translated into English for the first time, her life story, and insights into the tumultuous era that she lived.

The book starts to give you an idea of just how prolific she was, and how lucky we are that someone managed to unearth these writings, because for over 80 years her writings were nearly erased. Thankfully through this book and this subsequent opera, Gertrud/Marie-Madeleine lives on.

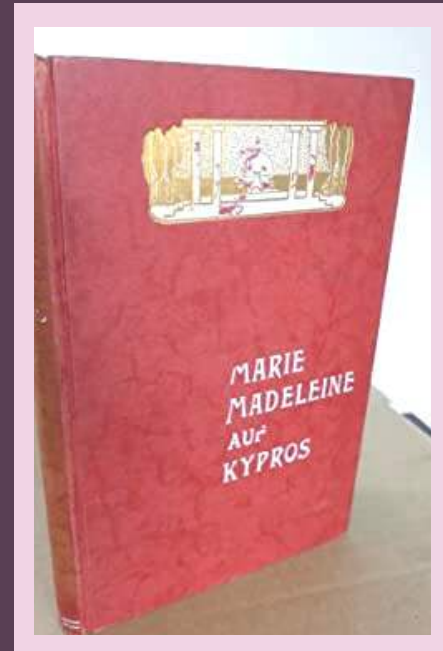
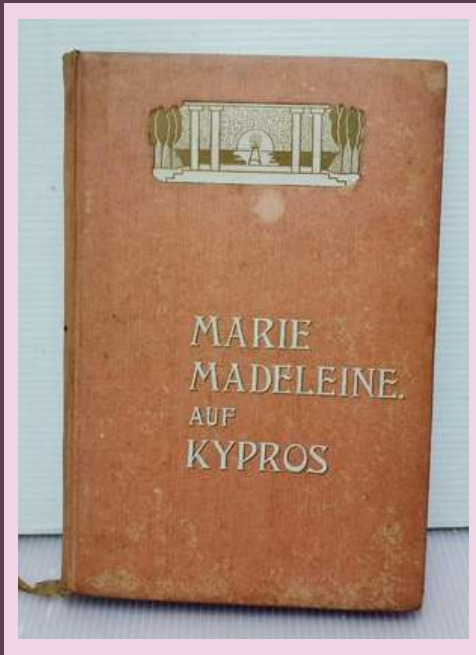
### ‘THE FLOWER OF OBLIVION’

#### ORIGINAL GERMAN & TRANSLATION



"WHO TAUNTED THE NAZIS WITH HER BRIGHT RED HARDCOVERS, AND INCENDIARY TURNS OF PHRASE..."

## AUF KYPROS, 1900



Her first book, *Auf Kypros*, sold over one million copies during her lifetime.

She republished it in this bright red cover just as the Nazis started burning all her books.

### Marie-Madeleine's Hardcover





# THE PRIESTESS OF MORPHINE

## PROJECTION DESIGN

Being given the opportunity to contribute to the Australian premiere of one of the most original operatic works I've heard in years was not something to ignore.

In "Priestess of Morphine" I have the honour to pay tribute to those bright and brilliant souls whose lives were cruelly extinguished by the Nazis. As a gay man it's important that we never forget what our people have endured in the names of both religion and politics, and continue to, to this day. All because love is love.

My intention with these designs was providing a German Expressionist film style that never overtakes or distracts from the narrative. Life and death in its never ending, ever repeating cycle. Devoid of colour, purposefully only to be seen in the music, text and lighting.

May my contribution do justice to Rossa Crean's incredible vision and once again help breathe life into the voice of Gertrude Gunther.

-Blair Parkinson, Projection Designer





The Priestess of Morphine  
The Blue Room Theatre  
31 Jan - 4 Feb 2023

photo credit: Michelle Chong





# TENTH MUSE INITIATIVE



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