

The Blue Room Theatre Summer Nights & Tenth Muse Initiative present

THE PRIESTESS OF MORPHINE

Music by
Ros a Crean

Libretto by
Aiden K. Feltkamp



31 JAN - 4 FEB 2023

**The
Blue Room
Theatre**



Australia
Council
for the Arts



Department of
Local Government, Sport
and Cultural Industries



CITY OF PERTH
City of Light



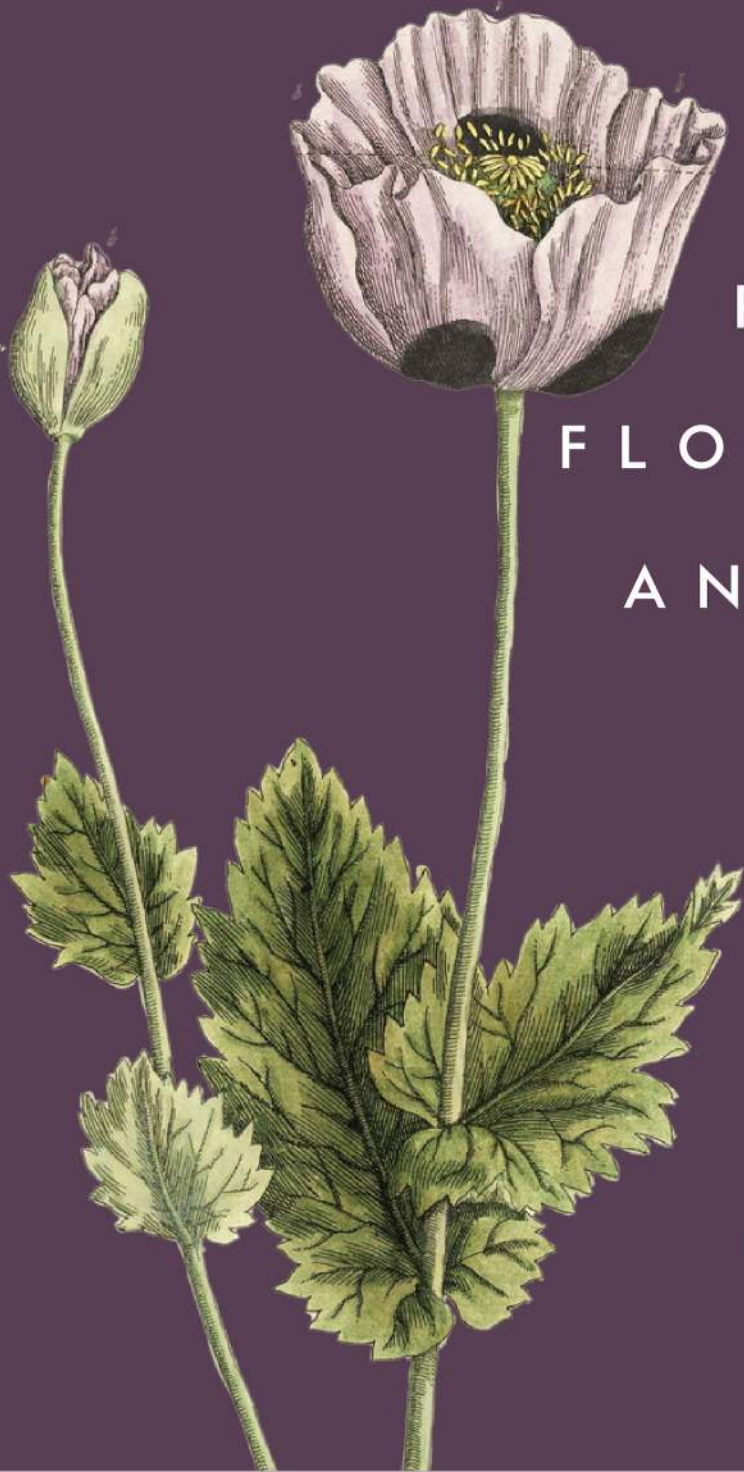
The Blue Room Theatre is supported by the State Government through the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries and the City of Perth. Summer Nights has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.

THE PRIESTESS OF MORPHINE

Music by
Ros a Crean

Libretto by
Aiden K. Feltkamp

"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/her)

PROJECTION DESIGNER

Blair Parkinson (He/him)

LIGHTING DESIGNER

Kartina Johnston (she/her)

TECH OPERATOR

Chloe Palliser (she/her)

ADMIN COORDINATOR

Isabella Cisse (she/her)

SOCIAL MEDIA COORDINATOR

Sophie Coleshill (she/her)

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Georgia Crowe (she/they)

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

Julia Watson (she/her)

LIBRETTIST

Aiden K. Feltkamp (They/he)

COMPOSER

Ros a Crean (they/them)



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;

- WWI,
- 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 WWI.

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'



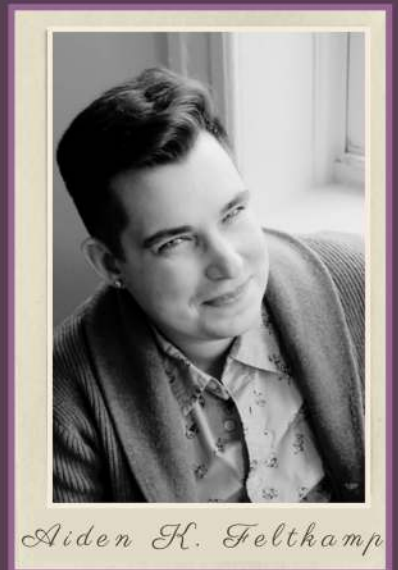
Ros sa Crean

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 Doulton

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 Doulton

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/HER)

"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)



MARIE MADELEINE
(SHE/HER)

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*. Most recently, she played the roles of Nella and Sorella Cercatrice in Freeze Frame Opera's double bill of Puccini's *Suor Angelica & Gianni Schicchi*. She was a finalist in the 2019 ROSL Bach prize and the 2021 Opera Lovers Aria Prize.

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).

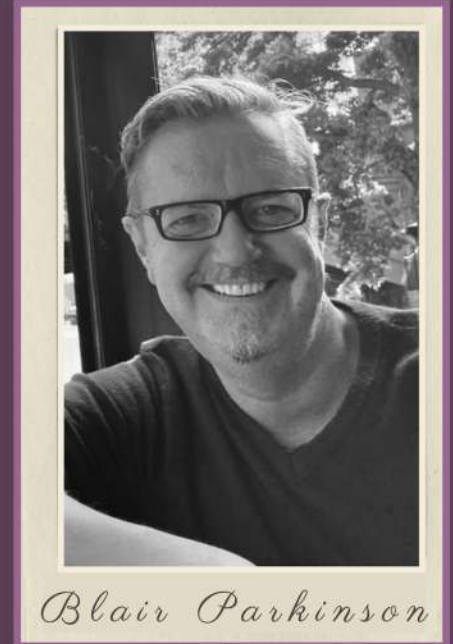
Katrina's designs are defined by subtlety and dedication to story and using her spotty art education to guide the audience down the rabbit hole.

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)**

THE PRIESTESS OF MORPHINE

PRODUCTION TEAM

Chloe's arts training comes from her years of dancing in various genres, and smaller scale high school productions. She started in the arts world at age 3 and hasn't stopped since. Chloe has just recently finished her Bachelor of Arts Degree at Curtin University, majoring in Theatre Arts.

In the last 20+ years, Chloe has been involved on and off stage in various productions including Choreography on My Fair Lady, and Lighting Designer on School of Rock the Musical. Both 2022 productions scored Chloe a Finley nomination for the areas of lighting and choreography. Chloe is excited to be involved with Tenth Muse's production "Priestess of Morphine" as a technician, and can't wait to hear the audience's point of view on all their hard work.



Chloe Palliser

**TECH OPERATOR
(SHE/HER)**



Isabella Cisse

**ADMIN COORDINATOR
(SHE/HER)**

Isabella is a classically trained musician and music educator. Since graduating with a Bachelor of Music for Classical Voice at the UWA Conservatorium of Music in 2021, she has committed to teaching and professional choral singing development.

Besides singing, Bella is a multi-instrumentalist and pursues a personal goal to own and learn as many instruments as possible. Her favourite instruments include the Ocarina, Hang Drum and the Piano. She has experience in an array of musical projects, including the semi-chorus of WA Opera's 'Elijah', various UWA lunchtime concert performances, and has most recently been accepted as a member of the National Youth Choir of Australia.

She has an interest in lesser-known works by those whose validity was overshadowed. Her exploration of works includes those by women, transgender and non-binary composers, with a passion for their music from the Romantic Era to the present.

With additional Support from:

Bec Bowman - Copywriter

Georgia Crowe - Graphics designer

Sophie Coleshill - Social Media Coordinator

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.

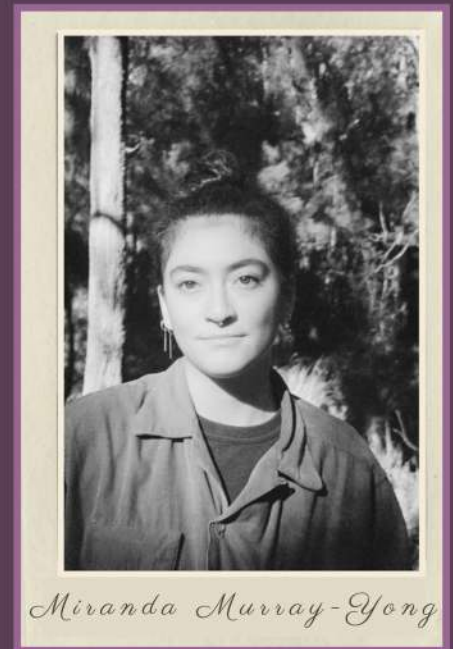
Since her return to Perth, Laurissa has been active within several areas of the music scene including significant work in cross-cultural projects. Laurissa made her debut as conductor with Perth Symphony Orchestra in February 2022. She was Musical Director of South Side Symphony Orchestra (2018-2020)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

The unique body of work envisioned by percussionist, creator, collaborator, and educator; Thea Rossen follows a compelling common thread: helping audiences fall in love with music by immersing them in the transformational worlds she creates. With multiple awards and nominations to her name (2017 Hugh Rogers Fellowship winner, 2018 Bang on a Can Summer Music Festival Fellow, 2018 Freedman Fellowship finalist, and more), Rossen's trademark intuitive and inviting approach to music-making, programming and performance continues to turn heads across Australia, and beyond.

Central to the success of Rossen's artistic output is its depth, innovation and fierce contemporary relevance. Attracting worldwide attention, her work has featured in seasons presented by Western Australian Symphony Orchestra (WASO), Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (MSO), Queensland Symphony Orchestra (QSO), and Musica Viva. A dynamic artist for the ages, Rossen is a regular collaborator with Australia's top artists.



Thea Rossen

**PERCUSSIONIST
(SHE/HER)**



Julia Watson

**VIOLINIST
(SHE/HER)**

Julia completed Bachelor studies at the University of Western Australia and Masters by Research at WAAPA. Julia's research and musical output has been focused on collaborative projects of Western Art Music and Middle Eastern musical traditions. As musical director of Bembina Ensemble for the past two years, Julia has created multiple programs incorporating Persian, Arabic, Egyptian and Tango Nuevo repertoire, completing arrangements, newly composed works, and collaborative projects.

Julia has attended residency at Banff Centre for Creative Arts, where she developed Persian Bach Project (solo violin works of Bach alongside traditional Persian Radif), Silkroad's Global Musician Workshop including study with the late Bassam Saba (New York Arabic Orchestra, Silkroad), intensive study with Buenos Aires renowned Tango music faculty at Reed College, Portland, and a self-directed study tour to Iran to undertake lessons in the Persian Radif with Kamencheh player Shervin Mohajer.

Julia has enjoyed a full schedule over the past 15 years as violinist with Perth Symphony, Australian Baroque, Fremantle Chamber, WA Philharmonic, and others.

THE PRIESTESS OF MORPHINE

RESEARCH

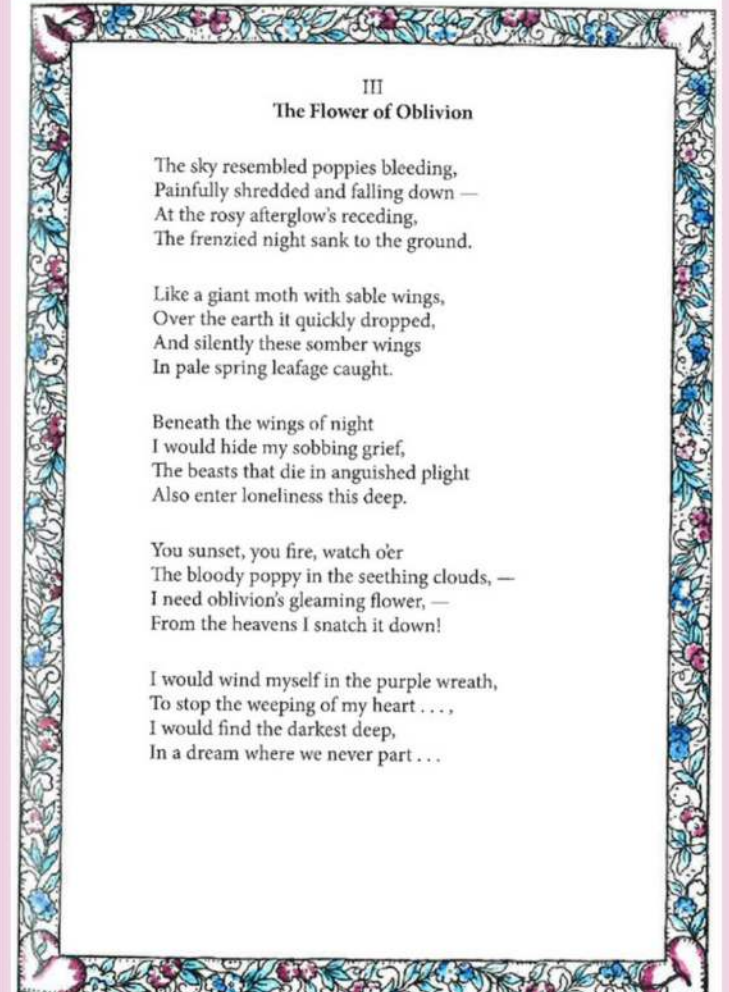
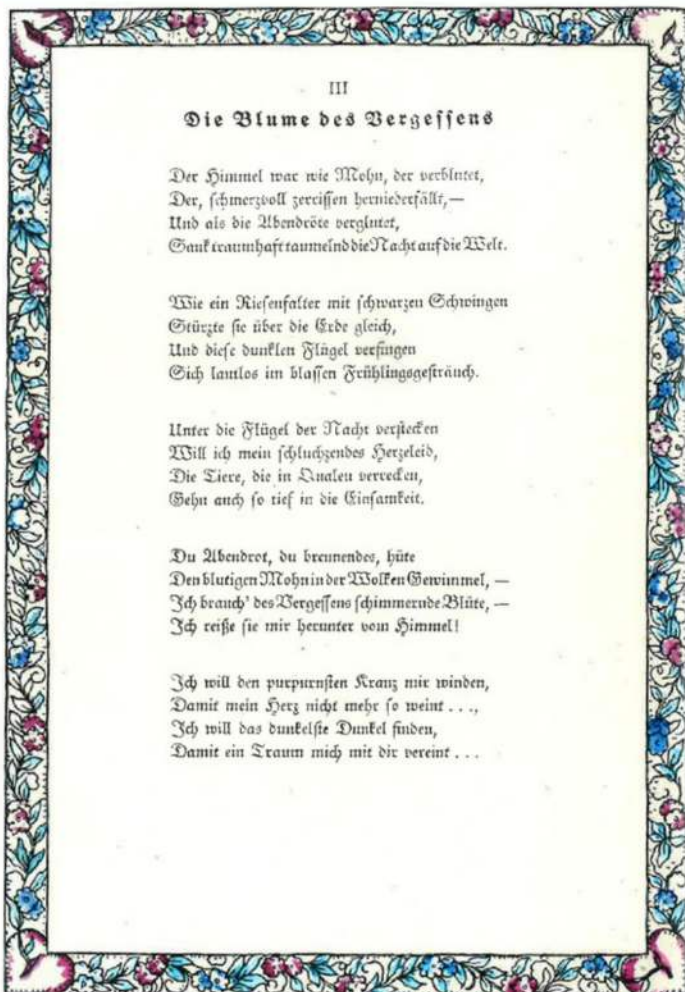
In our research for this breathtaking opera we purchased a copy of the book that inspired composer Ros a Crea to write the opera.

“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.

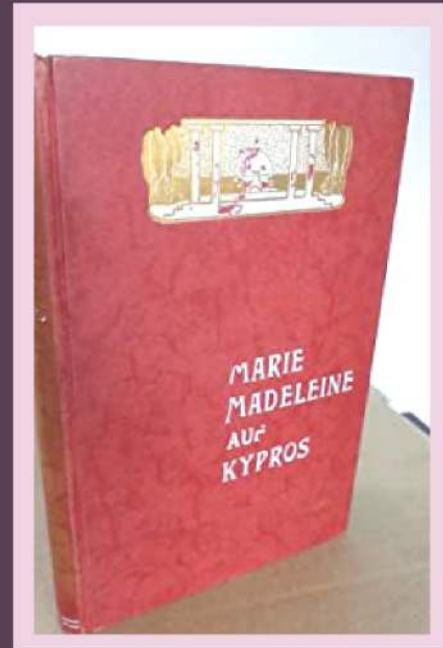
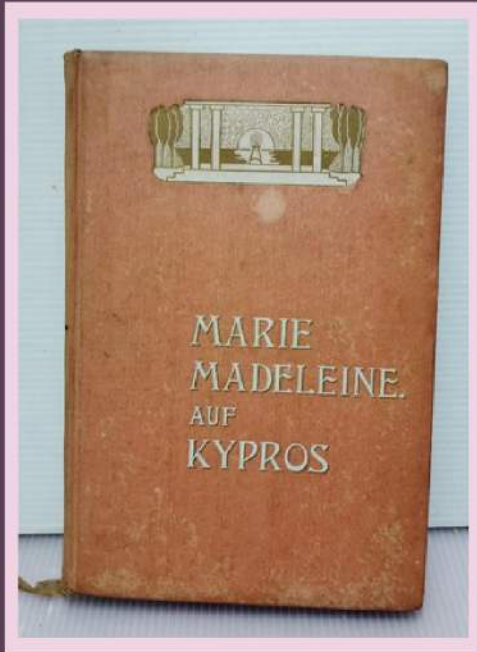
‘THE FLOWER OF OBLIVION’

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





Thank you to everyone so far who has donated to our Australian Cultural Fund!

Fiona Campbell

Thomas Dimmick

Anne Frankenberg

Pia Fruin

Dion Gampfer

Hannah Goodman

Kelly Hudson

Fran Tempest-James

Emma Jayakumar

Zoë Cobden-Jewitt

Ruth Lira

Nouhad Louedziane

Graham Lovelock

Nicole M

Rachel Martella

Emily Martin

Stephanie Nicholls

Leah Phillips

Anonymous (15)

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'Priestess'



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A MASSIVE thank you to...

The Blue Room Theatre



For trusting us to be the first opera
in this space and for giving us the
tools we needed to put on these
performances

Thank you Lesbians Incorporated
for their Community grant which
has enabled us to document the
process

Thank you to our volunteers, this
opera couldn't have happened
without them!

Genevieve Alderson

Bec Bowman

Brittany Carroll

Adam Doulton

Kelsey Gray

Wilson Kang

Nathan Lewis



Thank you to our community of friends
and family for the unending support,
props, and cheerleading

And a big thank you to composer Ros a Crean
and librettist Aiden Feltkamp. We cannot thank
you enough for trusting us with your score and we
hope we've done you proud and honoured
Marie-Madeleine's legacy



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