

Media Release: May 2010  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Riverside Productions and Phil Bathols present  
*Shakespeare's R&J*  
Adapted by Joe Calarco



# *Shakespeare's R&J*

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*Four testosterone-pumped schoolboys decide to stage 'Romeo and Juliet' in this sexy new interpretation of Shakespeare's classic love story, directed by Craig Ilott, starring Julian Curtis, Ben Gerrard, Garth Holcombe, and Tom Stokes.*

Following a three state tour, this passionate, masculine and highly physical adaptation comes to Sydney's **Seymour Centre** from **June 29 until July 3, 2010.**

Directed by highly acclaimed **Craig Ilott** (*Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, STC's *The Pig Iron People*, and recently *Smoke and Mirrors* for the Sydney Festival.), *Shakespeare's R&J* is a raw, unadorned, and true to the source production.

Staged in the background of a repressive Catholic boys' boarding school where the play has been banned; four students sneak out at night to secretly explore the roles for their own enjoyment. At first it's just for laughs, but as the young men discover themes of secret and forbidden love, they gradually immerse themselves.

"I wanted to get to the essence of what I think Shakespeare is: passionate, violent, thrilling and theatrical," says playwright, Joe Calarco.

"By cutting the cast to four guys we've been able to explore the way men interact and how they view women, sex and masculinity. The concept of students in a private school was created in order to mirror Shakespeare's Verona and the stifling, repressive, forbidden world that Romeo and Juliet inhabit," he says.

Starring young NIDA graduates, **Julian Curtis, Ben Gerrard, Garth Holcombe,** and WAAPA graduate **Tom Stokes** – a group well versed in performing Shakespeare amongst their many other theatre, television and film credits; *Shakespeare's R&J* promises a powerful, electric and physical performance.

A hit worldwide, *Shakespeare's R&J* has played over four hundred performances in New York and won the prestigious Lucille Lortel Award.

**WHERE:** Seymour Centre - Corner Cleveland Street and City Road, Chippendale

**DATES/TIMES:** 29 JUN-3 JUL TUE-THU 10.30AM, WED 10.30AM & 6.30PM, FRI 10.30AM & 8PM, SAT 2PM & 8PM

**BOOKINGS:** Box Office P: 02 9351 7940 W: [www.seymourcentre.com](http://www.seymourcentre.com)

**PRICE:** ADULT: \$32 CONC:\$28 GROUP: (8+) \$25

**OTHER:** The Seymour Centre wishes to advise patrons that this production is also a part of our Education Season. Please note that our 11am performances are also offered to school-age audiences, however patrons are most welcome to attend. For more information about our education program and to download teachers' resources visit <http://education.seymourcentre.com>

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**MEDIA ENQUIRIES CONTACT:** Amber Forrest-Bisley P: 02 8021 1215  
M: 0405 363 817 E: [amber@cardinalspin.com.au](mailto:amber@cardinalspin.com.au)  
Ella Ryan P: 02 8021 1215 M: 0412 209 190 E: [ella@cardinalspin.com.au](mailto:ella@cardinalspin.com.au)

MEDIA RELEASE

**EDITORS NOTES**

**Craig Illot**

Acclaimed director Craig Illot was a NIDA graduate in 1991. Illot's skills as a theatre director came to notable attention for his production of *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* which won Best Musical at the 2006 Sydney Theatre Awards. *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* returned in 2007 for a second sell out Sydney season, and Craig won the Green Room Award for Best Musical Direction along with iOTA winning Male Artist in a leading role. The production was also nominated for Best Musical, Best Director and Best Actor at the 2007 Helpmann Awards, with iOTA winning Best Actor.

In 2008 Craig directed to critical acclaim *Love Song* for Melbourne Theatre Company, *The Pillowman* for Company B Belvoir (nominated for 6 Sydney Theatre Awards including Best Production and Best Director), *R & J* at the Riverside Theatre and *The Pig Iron People* for Sydney Theatre Company.

Other directing credits include the national tour of *Smoke and Mirrors* which appeared at the Famous Spiegeltent as part of the Sydney Festival; *Rainbow's End* for Riverside Theatre; *Buddy Holly the Musical* (Lyric Theatre); *Let It Be (the music of Lennon and McCartney)* for Spirit Entertainment; *I Get the Music in You* for The Ensemble Theatre; *The Decameron* (Old Fitz) which was nominated for The Sun Herald Best Independent Production 2002; Patrick Marber's *Dealer's Choice* (Old Fitz) which went on to win The Sun Herald Best Independent Production 2004; *Edmond*, which was a co-production with B Sharp Belvoir and was nominated for Best Independent Production at the 2005 Sydney Theatre Awards; *Sunday in the Park with George* (NIDA); Dario Fo's *Can't Pay? Won't Pay!* (NIDA); *Three's Company* (Glen St); *The Present* (La Mama); *Fiddler on the Roof* (Darwin Theatre Company) and *The Suitors* which was nominated for Best Independent Production Award at the Sydney Theatre Awards 2006 (Easily Distracted, Old Fitz).

Craig was resident director on *Makropoulos Secret* for Opera Australia, and in 2005 was assistant to director Neil Armfield on the feature film *Candy* starring Geoffrey Rush and Heath Ledger.

**Julian Curtis**

Talented actor Julian Curtis, a NIDA graduate has acted with a number of companies throughout Australia, including Hot House Theatre and Sydney Theatre Company's *Embers*, Queensland Theatre Company's *25 Down*, and Sydney Theatre Company's *Gallipoli*, as well as television shows *Rescue Special Ops* and *East West 101*.

**Garth Holcombe**

No stranger to Shakespeare, Garth Holcombe has taken part twice in Bell Shakespeare's Actors at Work, Bell Shakespeare Company's *Shakespeare's Magic Box*, *Bardistic Adventures* and *The Seven Ages of Man*. Other credits include Darlinghurst Theatre's *As Bees in Honey Drown*, Sydney Symphony Orchestra's *Don John of Austria*, East Coast Co's *Italian Straw Hat*. Holcombe's NIDA production credits include *Closer*, *Beach: A Theatrical Fantasia*, *The Attic*, *The London Cuckolds*, *Cymbeline*, *Three Sisters* and *Don's Party*. Holcombe's television credits include Seven Network's *All Saints* and *Home and Away*, and ABC's *Head Start*.

**Ben Gerrard**

NIDA graduate, Ben Gerrard is well acquainted with Shakespeare, most recently in Bell Shakespeare's Actors at Work, Canute Productions' *Shakespeare on Trial* and in the Riverside's 2008 season of *Shakespeare's R&J*. Gerrard's recent short film credits include *Dream the Life* and *Veneer*.

**Tom Stokes**

WAAPA graduate, Tom Stokes has been in a number of WAAPA student productions including most recently *Julius Caesar*. He is a skilled theatre sports improviser. His film credits include *Wasted on Young*, *Plum Role* and short films *Spirited*, *Shatter* and *At Play*. *Shakespeare's R&J* is an innovative and highly physical interpretation

**Joe Calarco**

Joe is the adaptor/director of *Shakespeare's R&J* which ran for a year in New York and earned him a Lucille Lortel Award. He also directed the play's premieres in Chicago (5 Jeff Award nominations including Best Play and Best Director) and Washington, D.C. (Helen Hayes Award nominations for Best Play and Best Director). *R&J* completed a celebrated run in London's West End in late 2003.

Joe's other credits include directing the critically acclaimed world premiere of the musical *Sarah, Plain and Tall* at the Lucille Lortel Theatre in New York. He also directed Julia Jordan's *The Summer of the Swans* at the Lucille Lortel and directed Jordan's play *Boy for Primary Stages*.

Further, Joe is an artistic associate at Signature Theatre in Arlington, Virginia, where he has directed productions of *Urinetown*, William Finn's *Elegies: a song cycle* (3 Helen Hayes nominations including Best Musical), the world premiere of Norman Allen's *Nijinsky's Last Dance* (4 Helen Hayes Awards including Best Play and Best Director), *Side Show* (4 Helen Hayes Awards including Best Musical and Best Director), and the world premiere of his own play, *In the Absence of Spring*, which premiered in New York at Second, under his own direction. As a writer, his adaptation of *Antigone* was work-shopped at the National Theatre in London.

**Seymour Centre**

Sydney University's performing arts centre, the Seymour Centre, is dedicated to showcasing a wide range of theatrical and musical productions. Housing four performance venues, bars, expansive foyers and gallery space, performances at the Seymour Centre range from concerts and theatre presentations to dance, opera and shows for a wide audience. The centre is the home of a number of arts organisations, such as Monkey Baa Theatre for Young People, and Arts On Tour.

**NATIONAL TOUR DATES**

**NSW**

Albury - June 3-4  
 Riverside Theatres, Parramatta - June 17 - 19  
 Taree - June 22  
 Dubbo - June 24 - 25  
 Queanbeyan - June 8-12  
**Seymour Centre, Sydney - June 29 - July 3**

**VICTORIA**

The Arts Centre, Melbourne - May 4 -8  
 Sale - May 11 - 12  
 Shepparton - May 17  
 Bendigo - May 19 - 20  
 Horsham - May 23  
 Geelong - May 26 - 29  
 Ballarat - June 1

**QUEENSLAND**

Gardens Theatre, QUT, Brisbane - July 12-17

