

ADELAIDE FESTIVAL CENTRE'S

ADELAIDE

**CABARET**  
FESTIVAL

7-22 JUNE 2024



# Skinny

Michelle Pearson

A Frank Ford Commission

15-16 June '24 | Space Theatre

Adelaide  
Festival  
Centre  
Foundation



Artistic Director's Fund

# Acknowledgement of Country

Adelaide Festival Centre is located on Kurna Yarta, sitting alongside the Karrawirra Pari (River Torrens) and Tarntanya Wama (the parklands around Adelaide Oval). For the Kurna people, this land has been a place to gather, meet, dance, sing and tell stories.

As South Australia's arts and entertainment heart, we celebrate this performance and story-telling tradition today and recognise that art can bring community together in a shared understanding that encourages reconciliation with First Nations cultures. We acknowledge the Kurna people as the traditional custodians of the land colonial settlers called the Adelaide Plains. We respect Kurna people and First Nations people around Australia and thank them for their continued wisdom and stewardship.

# The Frank Ford Commission

## Frank Fords Legacy

### Inspiring Future Artists

Frank Ford AM, was a pivotal figure in South Australian Arts.

He was the godfather of cabaret, having founded Adelaide Cabaret Festival in May 2001. In 2015, Frank was honoured with an Adelaide Cabaret Festival icon award and remained a member of Adelaide Cabaret Festival's Advocacy Committee until he sadly passed away in 2018.

Frank's dedication and passion were whole-hearted and unwavering. He was a champion of artists, a mentor to several generations of Adelaide artists and creatives, and an active writer and director.

To ensure his passion for supporting new work by local artists continued, Frank bequeathed a generous legacy to the Adelaide Festival Centre Foundation to establish the Frank Ford Commissioning Award.

Working closely with Frank's partner, Sam Harvey, the Frank Ford Commissioning Award was established in 2019 and provides \$20,000 a year toward the commissioning of new South Australian cabaret works to be performed by local artists at Adelaide Cabaret Festival.

*"The Commission enables artists to realize a dream .... and showcases the outstanding legacy Frank has left and which will continue as an opportunity for artists for many years to come."* – **Sam Harvey, partner of Frank Ford.**

# About the Show

Skinny is ultimately my personal story but I suspect that many people will relate. I started writing a show about all the things I had done to be skinny from my hospital bed in 2021. I'd just undergone a third traumatic surgery due to complications with a procedure I had performed in my early twenties (ten years earlier) to essentially be skinnier. It was from the hospital bed that I started pondering how things could've been different and how I'd ultimately been trying to conform to someone and something I wasn't for a very long time. This was the beginning of a huge shift for me.

The world we live in today has an unhealthy obsession with people's looks and their weight. We celebrate people for their waist size or how much weight they've lost instead of celebrating their incredible achievements and it's absurd. We use size to describe people rather than other individual features. There's also a massive industry making profits from the insecurities of others. We're talking about thousands of diet brands, shapewear, health and fitness influencers, pharmaceuticals, surgery, cosmetic procedures and more. Research tells us that diets (especially crash diets that don't produce behavioural change) lead to increased and unhealthy weight gain and poor health outcomes. We weren't born hating on our own and each other's bodies and it's something we are taught. But when will it stop?

Through writing this piece I feel like I have so much information from so many different perspectives that I could produce several different versions of this show but ultimately this is my personal story and me calling time on the societal chokehold that has led me here. It's also about healing and it's very much about acceptance in all forms.

I'm so incredibly excited and grateful to be a part of this year's Adelaide Cabaret Festival as the recipient of the Frank Ford Commission and have the opportunity to share this story and hopefully be a small part of some change in this area.

For professional help and support I encourage you to look at the Body Image Movement by Australian of the Year, Taryn Brumfitt. It contains links and amazing free resources.

**[Click here to see more about the Body Image Movement.](#)**



# Michelle Pearson

## Creator

Michelle Pearson is a distinguished and award-winning cabaret performer, singer and creative who is recognised by her powerful and soulful sound, moving interpretations of songs and engaging storytelling in cabaret and theatre. Michelle is an accomplished producer, event manager and publicist, and also works as a cook and caterer.

Born and living in South Australia, Michelle is well known for her hit music and food sensations, *Comfort Food Cabaret* and *Just Desserts* which weave together cabaret, storytelling, live music and cooking. More recently Michelle has experienced immense success with her new production, *Down Under: The songs that shaped Australia* (formerly known as *Mixtape Australia*) and is set to present the show at the 2024 Edinburgh Fringe. Between *Comfort Food Cabaret*, *Just Desserts* and *Down Under*, Michelle has won multiple awards and performed throughout Australia and performed her shows in Copenhagen, London and Edinburgh.

# Musicians



## Aaron Nash

Co-writer & Musical Director + keys

Aaron Nash is an Adelaide-based pianist, composer, and musical director. He has been working across a variety of genres for almost 20 years, traversing cabaret, musical theatre, jazz, and rock. Since 2016, he has worked closely with Michelle to develop and perform her award-winning productions *Comfort Food Cabaret*, *Just Desserts* and *Mixtape Australia*. Highlights include performing *Comfort Food Cabaret* in Copenhagen and Edinburgh, and their recent South Australian regional tours for both shows. He is a stalwart and passionate member of the Adelaide original music scene, performing regularly with local songwriters such as Alana Jagt, Max Savage, and Tom West among others.



## **Briohny Taylor**

### Cellist

Briohny has been a sought-after cellist since moving to Adelaide over 25 years ago. She is a member of a diverse range of ensembles, from the classical string quartet Aurora Strings and Southern Cross Symphony, to Adelaide alt-folk-pop band Special Patrol. Briohny freelances for shows and recordings across Australia, including a recent run of sold-out Nirvana tribute shows in the Adelaide Fringe Festival, and has performed at festivals such as Womadelaide, Falls, and Woodford Folk Festival.



## **Sam Millar**

### Drums

Sam has been a professional drummer for the past decade, carving out a dynamic career in Adelaide's music scene. He has played mainly as a freelance musician with numerous bands across diverse genres and styles, both in live and recorded contexts. Sam has also performed globally, working as a showband musician on cruise ships in 2017 and touring to Edinburgh in 2019 with Michelle's *Comfort Food Cabaret & Just Desserts*. Whether on stage at local venues or on international tours, Sam brings skill and versatility to every performance.





## **Michael Ciaramella**

### **Bass**

Michael is a born and bred Adelaide bass player that has been part of the local music scene for over 15 years. Graduating from Adelaide University's Elder Conservatorium of Music in 2013 with a Bachelors Degree in Jazz Performance, he has been a member of numerous local bands and ensembles. A seasoned festival player having been part of Adelaide Fringe, Adelaide Cabaret Festival, Perth Fringe, and Scotland's Edinburgh Fringe, he has also played at The Big Day Out and the Adelaide 500 after-race concert. Michael has been playing with Michelle since 2016 and featured in a number of her award winning shows, *Comfort Food Cabaret*, *Just Desserts* and *Mixtape Australia*.

# Creative Team



## **Amelia Ryan**

Director & Dramaturg

Amelia Ryan is ‘a powerhouse of cabaret’ (Glam Adelaide); a multi-award-winning Performer, Writer, Curator, and Dramaturg.

Named amongst SA’s 40 Under 40 in 2022, her shows have traversed the Australian Arts circuit, as well as New York City, London, and the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

Her credits include *Simply Brill*, *I Am Woman (UNSUNG)*, *Livvy & Pete*; *The Songs of Olivia Newton-John & Peter Allen*, *A Storm In A D Cup*, and *Lady Liberty*. She values collaborating with like-minded creatives to create world class work.

Amelia and her husband Zac Tyler are the brains trust behind *Seasonal Sessions at Woodville Town Hall*, and *The Queens: The Fringe At Its Finest*. They’ve recently joined forces to create South Australia’s newest production company, Amplified House, creating shows for both the local and international stage.



## **Jamie Mensforth**

### Technical Designer

Jamie Mensforth has completed a Bachelor of Music Performance at the University of Adelaide, and a Diploma of Sound Production at Tafe SA.

He is celebrated for his consultative approach to any process, and for obtaining clear vocal tones and moving musical mixes.

He has worked as mix engineer for Womadelaide, Adelaide Cabaret Festival, Adelaide Guitar Festival, *Rumpelstiltskin* (Windmill Theatre Company), *And Then You Go – The Vali Myers Project* (Victoria Falconer), and others.

Jamie's sound design credits include: *Pirates Of Penzance*, *Hms Pinafore* and *The Sorcerer* (State Opera South Australia), *Spring Awakening*, *Cabaret*, *Mamma Mia*, *Urinetown*, *In Pieces*, *Legally Blonde*, *25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, *Sweeney Todd*, *A Chorus Line* (Elder Conservatory Music Theatre), *Godspell* (Irregular Productions and Lydian Productions), and *Stars in the Arena* (The Primary Schools Music Festival).

Jamie is also a skilled Exhibition video works technician having assisted Rolf De Heer & Molly Reynolds, Amos Gebhardt, Madison Bycroft and Lisa Reihana.



## **Clare Mansfield**

Dramaturg

Clare Mansfield is an actor and theatre maker. She graduated from Flinders University Drama Centre (BCA Hons) in 2013.

Clare was nominated for Best Professional Female Performance at Adelaide Theatre Guide Awards for *East of Berlin*. She was nominated for an Adelaide Critics Circle award for *Reasons to Be Pretty*.



## **Rebecca Stanley**

### Choreographer

Rebecca Stanley began dancing at the age of four at Panache Dance Studio in the Adelaide Hills. Over the years she has completed her major examinations in the Cecchetti Ballet method, and trained in and taught various styles including pointe, jazz, contemporary, tap, and musical theatre at Panache Dance Studio, Thirroul Dance Academy, Element Cheer and Dance and participated in classes and workshops around Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney, London and New York. Rebecca has danced professionally with the Adelaide-based Jungle Jooce Band and performed in and choreographed for a number of corporate and Adelaide-based Musical Theatre companies, including The Hills Musical Theatre Company and The Metropolitan Musical Theatre Company. In 2023, Rebecca's passion for dance and teaching led to her co-creating The Dance Collective Moruya, a dance studio based in a regional town on the South Coast of NSW. In her role as a dance teacher and studio co-owner, she is always looking for opportunities to support the community and has been involved in the Stars of Eurobodalla, raising funds for the Cancer Council for the past three years. She is extremely excited to be working with Michelle Pearson to bring her show to life at the Adelaide Cabaret Festival.

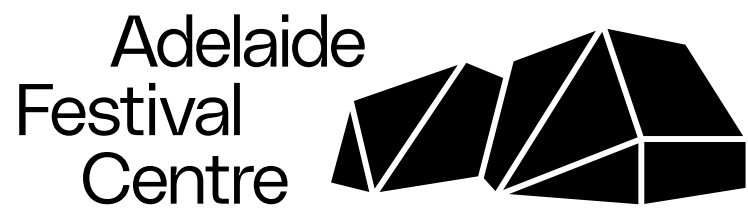
# Acknowledgements

Channel 44  
Panache Dance Studio  
That Retro Man  
Mosaic AV  
Slingsby  
Run Wild Productions  
Brent Leideritz  
Alice Healy  
Mark White  
Dani Pope  
Teyha Russell  
Mia Argent  
Emma Krumeich  
Tara Warrilow  
Albert Jamae  
Clare Elvia  
Lauren Ann Hilman  
Gemma Winter  
Jay Chaseland  
Mark Oates  
Sandra Senn  
Rachel Scholich  
Josephine Voyser  
Jared Nicholson  
Sue Antony  
James Hedges  
Stu Symons  
Jade Tanner

# THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS

---

Produced & Presented by



Government Partner



---

Festival Partners



Office for Ageing Well and Seniors Card



---

Accommodation Partner



Wine Partner



Vehicle Partner



---

Ticketing Partner



Foundation Partner



---

Supporting Partners



---

Creative Partner



---

Media Partners



ADELAIDE FESTIVAL CENTRE'S

ADELAIDE

---

**CABARET**  
FESTIVAL

---

7 - 22 JUNE 2024

Adelaide  
Festival  
Centre

