



SHAKE & STIR THEATRE CO

FOURTEEN

THEATRE

 **The Playhouse,
Darwin Entertainment Centre**



Thu 15 Aug & Fri 16 Aug 7pm

Duration 1hr 40mins

Photo: Joel Devereux

**Presented by Darwin Festival and
Darwin Entertainment Centre**

NOTE

Contains strong coarse language, mature themes, simulated violence, depictions of self-harm and suicide ideation, sexual abuse. It also contains strobe lighting, theatrical smoke effects, and the use of stage cigarettes. Suitable for ages 14+

Premiered in 2022 with co-producers QPAC and Brisbane Festival.

**DARWIN
FESTIVAL**
8-25 AUGUST 2024

**SHAKE
& STIR**
THEATRE CO



Darwin Festival Acknowledgement:

Darwin Festival takes place on what has always been Larrakia land. We wish to pay our respects to the Traditional Owners of this Country and to their ancestors. As the Festival welcomes contemporary artists and art from Australia and around the world, we also celebrate the continuing culture of the Larrakia people.

Scroll through to read more about this performance of Fourteen.

Enjoy the show!

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FROM THE AUTHOR

I'm watching myself on a screen, only he's 20-something years younger. He's a scared teenager, recounting the moment an older student – a boarder from a cattle property out west – tried to sexually assault him behind the school library. That's where half a dozen kids would sneak to smoke at lunchtime.

On this afternoon, it's just teenage Shannon Molloy: the stick-thin and pasty 'poofter' who everyone knows and loathes, and the burly cowboy. Beneath the brutal central Queensland heat, the menacing older boy makes his move. Conor Leach plays out that story, part of my story, in his audition to play the role of 14-year-old me in this stage production. I'm watching a video of it from my couch in Sydney, where life is vastly different. I'm married with a child, 15-plus years into a successful career, and have had a life of happiness and joy and adventure. But Conor's gentle mannerism, that soft voice, his welling eyes... I'm suddenly transported back to Yeppoon and the year 1999.

It's not the first time I'm dragged from the present moment into my dark and distant past, and it won't be the last. For several months, I'm part of the surreal process of adapting my book for the

stage, from an initial conversation to an idea and through to the thrilling end result. It's 18 months or so since Ross Balbuziente, Nick Skubij and Nelle Lee reached out and kicked off this in-a-lifetime journey. They've treated my story with such care and consideration, involving me in every step of the fascinating process, genuinely eager for my input and ideas. I don't really know what I'm doing. I'm just thrilled to have a seat at the table as we turn a 320-page paperback into a 90-minute stage show.

There are many conversations – those had over wine as we paint broad brushstrokes of a story, and those held huddled over a laptop as we pull apart and put back together draft script after draft script. We discuss staging, costumes, lighting, the marrying of multiple cheesy late 90s pop songs, character development, story arcs, marketing, choreography and more. I meet the cast. I meet more of the creative team. I feel a joyous professional connectedness that I haven't felt in a long time. It feels like this is exactly where I'm meant to be. Each beautiful and incredible milestone feels unreal to me.

On sale date, extending the season, the media interest, the excitement of the 2022 Brisbane Festival organisers, the energy of the cast, the emotional first table read, rehearsals... it's a

whirlwind that I hope never ends. Watching my story come to life on stage in a theatre surrounded by 300-odd people is an incredibly moving and utterly unbelievable experience. I laugh. I dance in my seat. I cry. I mourn the adolescence robbed from me and so many other queer kids, but my heart swells with hope because my story is a reminder that it does get better and despite appearances at times, there is kindness in the world.

The almost four-week run in 2022 is one of my life's greatest honours. And it's a sell-out smash hit. More than six thousand people come to see this thing of beauty, so full of heart, that a brilliant and talented team has so carefully put together. I mourn the experience when it's over. It's like breaking up with your true love, when neither of you especially wants to.

So, imagine my joy when news arrives less than 18 months later that the band is getting back together. We're hitting the road! Now, as I write this, we're preparing to embark on a several month, 20-stop national tour to take Fourteen to Australia. We're hitting some of the grandest stages in the biggest cities, but we're also taking it to the regions. That means so much to me.

My story was born in a small town, after all. How many marvellous moments of luck can one person experience in a lifetime? My book was a beautiful accident, the combination of good fortune and impeccable timing. It being adapted for the stage was another momentous thing that probably wasn't meant to happen. And now, my third miracle, is that thousands more people will see Fourteen on stage. Someone pinch me. I must be dreaming.

Shannon Molloy, Author

FROM THE DIRECTOR

When FOURTEEN first premiered as part of 2022's Brisbane Festival, expectations were high. The best-selling memoir by the remarkable Shannon Molloy had been tweaked, trimmed and massaged into a live play and put in front of an audience – an audience as diverse as it was supportive. It is with great pride that a best-selling, critically-acclaimed book has now become a best-selling, critically-acclaimed play! Testament to the quality of the material and the tireless, passionate work of an incredible team of creatives, cast and crew.

It is now an even greater joy to have the opportunity to remount the production for a major national tour – taking this important work right into the heart of the communities where it could have the most impact. While our story is set in a quiet community in Central Queensland, its soul is found in so many other regional towns. There is an assumption that growing up in these places is simple, wholesome and supportive. It's as if that knowing everyone in town, means safely sleeping with your window open and your door unlocked.

For many living in remote and regional areas, especially young people, this small-town life can

feel incredibly isolating and oppressive. Before the days when social media helped keep us connected, no matter our postcode, our networks were far smaller and our opportunities to find our tribe were limited to the school yard and ICQ – more on THAT, in the play ;).

How does a young man (who has a big secret) navigate such a space? How can he survive? The answer is – barely. We built the physical environment of this play to represent this postcard-perfect version of what we assume a small-town life to be. There are fragments of wonder and welcome — the lattice, the jasmine, perhaps the weathered timber slats of a jetty or the balcony of a weather board house — where the community gathers for many a messy backyard party.

This setting supports happy memories of playing and growing up, uninhibited by the threat of big city living. But this is also an environment where that assumption of safety can lead to neglect. Where with nothing to do, good kids turn bad. Where those who are different are feared, resented, and targeted.

This play is also a memory play, told through the eyes of Shannon long after the fact and with the

creative humour and flair that only an incredibly talented writer can offer. It has been great fun playing with that concept of fragmented and faded memories as postcard-esq images, suspended in time. Why and how the good and bad times sear into our memories in their own ways and are recalled with varying degrees of detail. And how, over time, our memories distort, and the significant moments become even more dramatic with the passing of time. Why can we remember the worst days as if they happened yesterday but find it hard to rediscover all the details also contained in the good times?

For the 2024 season of FOURTEEN, we have assembled an incredible company; many from the original production and all who have played a part in the story of Shake & Stir. To my best friends – Nelle and Ross. You are Nicole and Morgan to my Shannon. We too have grown up together and without you, I wouldn't be here today. Now, all that's left to do is sit back, relax and in the immortal words of Shania – LET'S GO GIRLS!

This is FOURTEEN.

Nick Skubij, Shake & Stir Theatre Co



CREDITS

Writer Shannon Molloy

Adaptors Nelle Lee, Nick Skubij with Shannon Molloy

Director Nick Skubij

Creative Producer Ross Balbuziente

Set Designer Josh McIntosh

Costume Designer Fabian Holford

Lighting Designer Trent Suidgeest

Sound Designer & Composer Guy Webster

Choreographer Dan Venez

Intimacy Director Michelle Miall

Fight Director Tim Dashwood

Performers

Helen Cassidy (Rhonda, Morgan & others)

Karen Crone (Donna, Mrs Stewart & others)

Judy Hainsworth (Trinity, Nicole, Ms

Kostopolous, Meredith & others)

Will Carseldine (Tom & others)

Conor Leach (Shannon Molloy)

Tom Oliver (Mr Nelson, Jonathon & others)

Steven Rooke (Brett, Andy, Dad & others)

CREDITS

Stage Manager Mitch Cooley

Assistant Stage Manager / Props Supervisor
Shania Manning

Wardrobe Supervisor Nicholas James

Head of Lighting Morgan Cole

Head of Staging Andrew Whittaker

WE CARE

We love that art has the capacity to amplify important questions, stories and messages. Art can help us explore what it is to be human and plays a vital role in truth-telling and healing, promoting understanding and empathy. We're also aware that engaging with art that gives voice to truth-telling can sometimes raise concerns or issues for our audiences. Please take care as you immerse yourself in the experience of this production. We encourage you to reach out for help from family, friends or professionals if the stories or issues you interact with raise any concerns for you.

If you or someone you know needs information or support, these organisations are there to help:

Beyond Blue..... 1300 22 4636

Q Life 1800 184 527

Lifeline..... 13 11 14

Headspace.....1800 650 890

Kids Helpline 1800 551 800

MIND Australia 1300 286 463

DARWIN FESTIVAL

Darwin Festival is the centre piece of what makes August in Darwin the best time of year. Loved by locals and adored by visitors, this tropical winter festival invites you to experience the very best in Northern Territory, Australian and international arts and culture. It is full of magical moments that we hope will stay with you for years to come.

DARWIN FESTIVAL 2024
RUNS 8 – 25 AUGUST

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