



Heidelberg Theatre Company

OTHER DESERT CITIES



HEIDELBERG THEATRE COMPANY (HTC)

BOOKINGS 03 9457 4117

ENQUIRIES 03 9455 3039

EMAIL htc@htc.org.au

WEB www.htc.org.au

HTC is a member of the Victorian Drama League.

HTC acknowledges financial assistance from the City of Banyule.

HTC Artspace presents Deb Marshall

Deb is a visual artist living and working on Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung country in Naarm/Melbourne. She has a Master in Fine Art from RMIT University.

Working in landscapes, Deb progressively discovers the form and shape of her surroundings and how she is situated within them. Her onsite methodology is a mixture of sketching and reference photography for further investigation.

Back in the studio, and working predominantly on paper and timber panel, Deb further explores these themes using ink, graphite, watercolour, acrylic paint and coloured pencils.

This exhibition is a collection of Deb's responses to the landscapes she has encountered, and sought to capture, over the past few years.

Mezzanine Display

Please visit the upstairs mezzanine to experience our recently refreshed display of HTC set panoramas by our fabulous in-house photographer David Belton.

Louise Millar-Hoffmann
HTC Art Space Coordinator



**HEIDELBERG
THEATRE
COMPANY**

by arrangement with Creative Artists Agency

OTHER DESERT CITIES



by
JON ROBIN BAITZ

directed by
Gaetano Santo

Sep 5 - Sep 20, 2025

About the Playwright

Jon Robin Baitz was born and raised in Los Angeles as well as Rio de Janeiro and Durban, South Africa.

His plays have been extensively produced on and off Broadway and throughout the world. They include *The Film Society* (1988), *The Substance of Fire* (1992), *Three Hotels* (1993) – which earned a Drama Desk Award nomination for Outstanding New Play – *A Fair Country* (1996), *Mizlansky/Zilinsky* (1998), *Ten Unknowns* (2001), *The Paris Letter* (2005), *Other Desert Cities* (2011) and *I'll Be Seein' Ya* (2022).



He created the ABC series *Brothers & Sisters*, which ran for five seasons from 2007 to 2012, and the miniseries *The Slap* for NBC. Other television credits include episodes of *The West Wing*, *Alias* and Showtime's *Fallen Angels*.

Screenplays include *The Substance of Fire*, *People I Know* and *Stonewall*.

Jon Robin Baitz is a Tony Award nominee for the Broadway production of *Other Desert Cities*, a two-time Pulitzer Prize finalist (*A Fair Country* and *Other Desert Cities*), a Guggenheim and National Endowment for the Arts Fellow and an American Academy of Arts & Letters Award winner.

Director's Note

In Jon Robin Baitz's carefully crafted drama/comedy *Other Desert Cities* is a storm of secrets and emotional wounds within the Wyeth family — and what unfolds is an emotional presentation of loyalty, truth, and the cost of confrontation.

This play centres on Brooke Wyeth, a once-promising writer returning home after a long absence. She brings with her a memoir, ready for publication, that brings up a long-suppressed family tragedy — one her parents, Lyman and Polly, would rather leave in the past. As the family gathers around Christmas Eve a verbal battleground emerges. Ideological divides, political tensions, and deeply personal betrayals are laid bare.

But at its core, this is a play about perspective — how each person interprets shared history through their own eyes. It's about the stories we choose to protect, and the ones that, once told, cannot be untold.

Other Desert Cities offers more than just a family drama. It's a mirror reflecting our own relationships — the tension between generations, the weight of unspoken pain, and the balance between love and honesty.

Like the desert itself, *Other Desert Cities* is both simple and brutal, filled with laughs and tears.

GAETANO SANTO - Director

This is Gaetano's first directorial stint at Heidelberg Theatre Company and he is both delighted and excited to bring *Other Desert Cities* to fruition with the assembled talents of the performers and the production team.

Gaetano's previous production was at Williamstown Little Theatre in 2024 where he directed the English satirical comedy *Handbagged*. At WLT he also directed the double bill of *Black Comedy* and *The Real Inspector Hound* in 2019.



In 2023 Gaetano directed the comedy *Lovesong* at Brighton Theatre Company, where in 2015 he was also involved in the very successful and award-winning play *Caught In The Net*.

Gaetano has thoroughly enjoyed working with the cast, the production team and the brilliant technical crew of *Other Desert Cities*, and sincerely hopes you all enjoy the performance.

Commentary on the play - by Honor Moore

... Jon Robin Baitz meticulously unpacks ethical dilemmas while constructing a play that turns on the revelation of a truly surprising secret, just like a great memoir. Even-handed, but never sacrificing a commitment to the truth or to the emotions that bind a family, Baitz allows all the important questions to be asked. When a family is involved, who owns the story? What kind of consequences might require a writer to have a responsibility beyond herself and her commitment to her art? When is the publication of "just a book" worth the splintering of a family? What is a writer talking about when she says that telling her story is for her "a matter of life and death." Is there any such thing as a secret that should be kept?

As the play unfolds, the making of art—in this case the publication of a book—becomes a metaphor for the investigation of the cost of telling of truth inside one particular family. At the same time, a contemporary dramatist reveals to us that we are in the midst of a cultural shift that challenges us to a higher standard of ethics, to greater courage and honesty in that first society where we all begin our lives, the family.

CAST

BROOKE WYETH.....Jen Bush

POLLY WYETHLindy Yeates

LYMAN WYETH..... Phil Lambert

SILDA WRAUMAN Paula McDonald

TRIP WYETHLiam Gillespie

Setting

ACT 1

2004 - Christmas Eve - Palm Springs, California,
The Wyeths' Living Room

Scene 1: Morning

Scene 2: Late afternoon

INTERVAL

ACT 2

Scene 1: Setting as above - Night

Scene 2: 2010 - A book signing at a Seattle bookstore

During the interval, refreshments are available in the foyer.

PRODUCTION TEAM

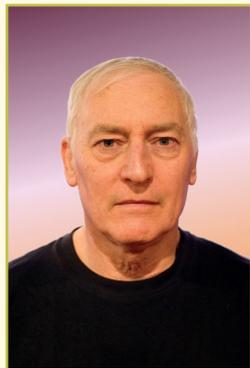
DIRECTOR	Gaetano Santo
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR	James Antonas
PRODUCTION COORDINATOR	Jim Thomson
STAGE MANAGER	Melanie Belcher
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER	Bobbie Parish
SET DESIGN	Gaetano Santo
LIGHTING DESIGN	Craig Pearcey
SOUND DESIGN	John Rowe & Gaetano Santo
COSTUMES	Wendy Drowley, Catherine Christensen, Jenny Gilbert
PROPERTIES	Jim Thomson, Wendy Drowley, Catherine Christensen
SET DÉCOR	Pam Neivandt
MURAL DESIGN	Morgan Thomas-Connor
SET PAINTING	Mal Cother, Anne Woodward, Pam Neivandt
LIGHTING & SOUND OPERATORS	John Rowe, Jeff Edwards, Bruce Moorhouse
SET CONSTRUCTION	Owen Evans, Doug McNaughton, Phil Holmes, Dave Belton, Brett Hunt, Tim Scott, Noel Purdey, Ashley Deans, Alex Deans, Nick Bartholomew, Blake Egan, Sean Tessari, Ron Thomas, Norm Munks, Chris McLean & HTC members
SPECIAL PROPS	Warren Lane, Chris McLean
REHEARSAL PROMPT	Bobbie Parish
PHOTOGRAPHY	David Belton, Aislinn Ryan
PROGRAMME & POSTER	Chris McLean
PUBLICITY	Jim Thomson, Morgan Thomas-Connor
BOX OFFICE	Sally Scott, Carol Farr, Louise Millar-Hoffmann, Brett Hunt, Fiona Campbell, Margaret Hassall
FRONT OF HOUSE	Jenny Gilbert and HTC members



JEN BUSH (Brooke). Jen is an experienced stage performer who works with a variety of companies across Melbourne and is delighted to be making her stage debut at Heidelberg. She has previously appeared in *Rabbit Hole*; *Photograph 51*; *The Revlon Girl*; *What is the Matter With Mary Jane* and *SLUT* and Lightning Jar Theatre's Green Room Award-winning *Mr. Burns, a post-electric play*. She is also a lover of music, musical theatre, and Shakespeare (appearing as Juliet, Ophelia, Lady Macbeth and Helena). Jen completed the Howard Fine Six-Month Professional Acting Program, and previously trained with Kevin Harrington and Shane Connor at The Actor's Coach, with actor and teacher Charlie Cousins, and with the late, great Penelope Chater. She also co-hosts a comedy-horror podcast with her comedian-bestie, *Yeah, I'll Never Watch That* (available where you get your podcasts *wink*).



LINDY YEATES (Polly). Lindy is delighted to return to HTC, this time as the sharp-witted Polly. Lindy trained at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, UK, at the Howard Fine Actors Studio and has enjoyed leading and supporting roles in Theatre and Music Theatre Productions for many years. In 2023, Lindy performed in *My Old Lady* with HTC, and as Dr Lorna James in Mordialloc Theatre Company's *The Effect* for which she won a Best Supporting Actor Award with the Victorian Drama League. In 2019, Lindy also received this award for her role as Grandma Kurnitz in Neil Simon's *Lost in Yonkers* with HTC and was nominated for a Lyrebird Award for her portrayal of Kate in *Sylvia* with Lilydale Athenaeum TC. A personal favourite was playing Mama Murphy in the musical *Bright Star*, a Pursued by Bear production that received five Green Room Award Nominations in 2020.



PHIL LAMBERT (Lyman). Phil's recent roles include Robin in *The Children* (Mordialloc), Billy in *Lovesong* (Malvern), John in *Still Alice* (Lilydale Athenaeum) for which he won a Lyrebird Award and Donny Kirshner in *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* (Altona City Theatre). For the Australian National Academy of Music he has written and performed *Bach Diaries*, a trilogy of monologues/concerts celebrating the great composer, and narrated Schoenberg's *Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte*. Fun fact: Phil had a minor role in the very first production in this theatre, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, in 1982. He hopes he has improved since then.



PAULA McDONALD (Silda). Paula is delighted to be back after her last appearance here in the festive chaos of *It's a Wonderful Life*. This time it's still Christmas but with the dysfunctional Wyeth family, playing Silda, the cigarette-toting, recovering alcoholic aunt and sister. In recent stage adventures Paula played the fierce matriarch, Fran in *Things I Know to Be True* at Essendon, and donned pearls and channelled the iron will of an ageing Maggie Thatcher in *Handbagged* at Williamstown. A self-confessed accent addict, Paula has attempted and occasionally mastered a whole united nations of dialects - from Welsh, Scottish, German & South African to a smorgasbord of English and American twangs. She's even taken on real life icons like the Iron Lady herself and opera diva, Maria Callas in *Masterclass*, proving that no accent, or ego, is too big to tackle. Paula is thrilled to be joining a talented and rather lovely bunch of thespians and hopes you enjoy Palm Springs as much as she has - with no hangover!



LIAM GILLESPIE (Trip). This is Liam's eighth production on the Heidelberg stage. You may remember him from *All My Sons*; *It's a Wonderful Life*; *Lost in Yonkers* and *One Man, Two Guvnors*. This is his third collaboration with Gaetano Santo. Liam is a firm believer in the three strikes policy. As Trip, Liam is excited to add his voice to the Wyeth family and help illuminate *Other Desert Cities*. Liam's favourite audience member has a big laugh, a silent phone and a boiled sweet unwrapped in interval. Enjoy the show!

*To assist those with hearing difficulties, a hearing loop
is installed in the theatre.
HTC gratefully acknowledges a City of Banyule grant for this service.*

REFERENCES IN THE PLAY

Chasen's: restaurant in Hollywood, frequented by film stars, entertainers, politicians, and other dignitaries

Brown Derby: chain of restaurants in Los Angeles, California

Encino: neighbourhood in the San Fernando Valley of Los Angeles, California

Carnies: carnival workers

Bryn Mawr: private women's liberal arts college in Pennsylvania, United States

Mojito: traditional Cuban punch

Elie Wiesel: Jewish author, philosopher and Nobel Peace Prize winner who bore witness to WWII genocide

Antabuse: medication used in the treatment of alcohol use disorders

Farkakte: Yiddish for defective or messed up

Totie Fields: American comedian

Pucci: clothing brand famous for its iconic coloured geometric prints

Loehmann: US retail chain known for its low prices

Pat Buckley: Canadian-American socialite and prominent fundraiser for charitable organizations

Menorah: Jewish candelabra

Dorothy Dale Kloss: held the Guinness World Record in 2008, aged 85, for being the oldest still-performing showgirl

Knopf: (pronounced "knop") publishing house founded by Alfred and Blanche Knopf

Tapas: Spanish cuisine appetizers or snacks

Punta del Este: seaside city and peninsula on the Uruguay coast

Bahia: northeastern Brazilian state

Indio: city in the Indio desert, 200km west of Los Angeles

Paul Bowles: American expatriate composer, author, and translator.

Ojai: (pronounced 'oh-high') a small city in Ventura County, California, northwest of Los Angeles

Betty Bloomingdale: American socialite and philanthropist; considered a fashion icon

Lee Annenberg: American businesswoman, diplomat, and philanthropist

Chile Relleno: Mexican dish of stuffed chile

Patchouli: scent used in perfumes, incense, insect repellent and alternative medicines

WASP: White Anglo-Saxon Protestant or Wealthy Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) - sociological term describing white Americans of English descent who are part of the white dominant culture or upper-class

Hagiographer: writer of the lives of the saints

Zapotec: indigenous pre-Columbian civilization

Stanford-Berkeley: Stanford Uni & University of California are two of California's most prestigious universities

Hugh Hefner: American magazine publisher, founder and editor-in-chief of Playboy magazine. He also resided in luxury mansions where Playboy Playmates shared his wild partying life.

Golden State: refers to California, recalling not just the Gold Rush, but the seemingly limitless possibilities of the state, with 'Golden State' becoming the official State Nickname in 1968.

Chester 'Chet' Huntley: American television newscaster, best known for co-anchoring NBC's evening news program

Bohemian Grove: large campground in Monte Rio, California, owned and operated by the private men's club, the Bohemian Club. A well-known, exclusive gathering place for influential men. Notable members: Clint Eastwood, Henry Kissinger, Walter Cronkite, Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, Mark Twain, and Jack London.

NOV 14 TO NOV 29

The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee

Music & Lyrics by
WILLIAM FINN

Book by
RACHEL SHEINKIN

Conceived by
REBECCA FELDMAN

Additional Material by
JAY REISS

Originally Directed on Broadway by James Lapine

Originally Produced on Broadway by
David Stone, James L. Nederlander, Barbara Whitman, Patrick Catullo
Barrington Stage Company, Second Stage Theatre

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www.mtishows.com.au

• Buy tickets at htc.org.au or call 94574117

BE PART OF THE BEE!



Ever dreamed of stepping into the spotlight—without having to learn a single line? Here's your chance!

Our November production of *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* needs some fun-loving audience volunteers at each performance to briefly join the cast on stage as “guest spellers”. No experience necessary—just bring your enthusiasm and a sense of humour.

You'll be helped along the way and be asked to spell a few words, some simple, some hard enough (and funny enough) to eliminate you from the contest. That's right, you won't win the Bee – but you'll certainly get a real “buzz”. This opportunity is open to anyone aged 12 or older with a ticket to the show. Registration is essential. To find out more, go to <https://tinyurl.com/htcspell> or scan this QR code.



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Heidelberg Theatre Company ♦ Season 2025 ♦ Play 4