



Midsumma Festival &  
Taylor Made Productions Presents  
Harvey Fierstein's

# TORCH SONG

31 Jan - 10 Feb

CHAPEL OFF CHAPEL

 midsumma  
festival

**Taylor Made Productions acknowledges the  
Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung peoples of the East  
Kulin Nations as the Traditional owners and  
original custodians of this land of which we  
work, create and gather.**

**We pay our respects to all First Peoples,  
their Elders past and present, and their  
enduring connections to Country, knowledge  
and stories.**

**Midsumma Festival &  
Taylor Made Productions Presents**

Harvey Fierstein's

# TORCH SONG

directed by Cal Robinson-Taylor & Phoebe Anne Taylor

**31 January - 10 February 2024**

**The Loft Theatre, Chapel Off Chapel**

## **ABOUT THE PLAY**

In *Torch Song*, the poignant two-act revival of Harvey Fierstein's acclaimed *Torch Song Trilogy*, the narrative centers on the life of Arnold Beckoff—a Jewish drag queen and torch song performer in 1970s and 1980s New York City. The production unfolds with a heartfelt exploration of Arnold's pursuit of love and happiness. His desire for a husband, a child, and even a pair of well-fitting bunny slippers takes center stage. However, amidst his journey, a visit from his overbearing mother serves as a reminder that, beyond all else, Arnold seeks a fundamental form of love.

# DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Welcome to "Torch Song" at Chapel Off Chapel, an exhilarating revival that delves into the intricate tapestry of love, family, respect, and courage. Harvey Fierstein's timeless exploration of these themes continues to resonate profoundly, and as we bring this iconic piece to the stage, we are compelled to acknowledge its enduring significance for a modern audience, especially within the vibrant context of the Midsumma Festival.

As we navigate the creative process of reimagining "Torch Song," our journey into the heart of love, family, respect, and courage has been both enlightening and transformative. In our exploration of Arnold Beckoff's character, we delved into the profound complexities of his pursuit of love, the creation of a chosen family, and the courage to be true to oneself, all while donning the simple yet powerful symbol of bunny slippers. The themes embedded in Fierstein's work have become even more resonant in today's world, where conversations surrounding diversity and acceptance take center stage.

The research involved in revisiting the original 'Torch Song Trilogy' has been invaluable to our production. The nuances of Fierstein's writing, the layers of emotion woven into each character, and the careful crafting of a narrative that transcends its time have served as a guiding light. We've dissected the intricacies of Arnold's journey as a Jewish drag queen, drawing inspiration from the past while infusing the performance with a contemporary relevance that underscores the universal desires for love and self-discovery.





This production is not just a reimagining; it is a celebration of the human spirit's resilience and the enduring power of love to triumph over societal norms. The Midsumma Festival, with its celebration of LGBTQIA+ culture and community, provides the ideal platform for "Torch Song" to shine anew. Arnold's story, once rooted in a specific era, now stands as a timeless exploration of the human quest for love, understanding, and respect.

As you witness Arnold's challenges unfold on stage, we invite you to reflect on the progress we've made as a society and to acknowledge the ongoing importance of embracing diversity and fostering inclusivity. Through humor, heart, and a touch of glamour, "Torch Song" beckons you to connect with the characters on a deeply emotional level. We encourage you to engage with the story, discovering echoes of your own journey in the pursuit of love and acceptance.

Thank you for joining us on this transformative journey. May "Torch Song" ignite a flame within your hearts, inspiring you to embrace the beauty of love, the strength of family, the essence of respect, and the courage to be authentically yourself.

Cal & Phoebe  
**Directors.**





# CAST

<b>Arnold</b>	Joshua Reuben (he/they)
<b>Ed</b>	Scott Middleton (he/him)
<b>Laurel</b>	Phoebe Anne Taylor (she/they)
<b>Alan</b>	Declan Clifford (he/him)
<b>David</b>	Louie Dalzell (he/him)
<b>Ma</b>	Melina Wylie (she/her)

# CREATIVE TEAM

<b>Directors</b>	Cal Robinson-Taylor (he/him) Phoebe Anne Taylor (she/they)
<b>Stage Manager/ Sound Designer</b>	Anthony Jacobsen (he/him)
<b>Company Manager</b>	Takarah Williams (she/her)
<b>Lighting Designer</b>	Sidney Younger (he/him)
<b>Costume Designer</b>	Melina Wylie (she/her)
<b>Cultural Consultant</b>	Tammy Cohen (she/her)
<b>Dialect Coach</b>	Jenny Kent (she/her)
<b>Intimacy Consultant</b>	Rebecca Fortuna (she/her)

Special thanks to: David Taylor, Christine Taylor, Tom Noble, Aayushi Khatri, Brandyn Pearcey, Chapel Off Chapel, Shtiebel Melbourne.

This production contains coarse language, sexual references and mature themes.

The running time for this production is approximately 2 hours and 30 minutes with a 20-minute interval.



**CAST &  
CREATIVE TEAM**



## Arnold Joshua Reuben (he/they)



Josh Reuben (he/they) is an actor, singer, and primary school Yiddish teacher. As an actor, Josh has performed in several works with the Kadimah Yiddish Theatre (KYT), including YIDDISH DIVAS: Into the Red Tent, and The Ghetto Cabaret (fortyfivedownstairs), which was nominated for four Green Room awards. Josh has been on the creative team for several other KYT works, including the multi-award-winning Yentl at Arts Centre Melbourne, for which he created and operated the subtitles.

Josh is a member of a Yiddish choir, Mir Kumen On, and has been featured in many Yiddish-language events both in Melbourne and internationally. Josh feels incredibly privileged to portray Arnold in Harvey Fierstein's iconic play, alongside this delightful bunch of actors and creatives

## Ed Scott Middleton (he/him)

Scott has worked in Theatre, Film & Television nationally and internationally as well as establishing several companies to devise new work. His training includes a BA in Acting from Federation University (2008) and a Masters from RADA in London (2016) along with extensive training in Commedia dell'Arte, Viewpoints, Suzuki method and with Frantic Assembly. After returning to Melbourne he established his own company Sheoak Productions in 2022 producing their first show Midsummer, and their second show Hamlet opens later this month. He is also humbled to be a regular Movement and Acting lecturer at Federation University and made his directorial debut with the 3rd year graduating company devised production Exquisite Corpse early last year.

He is grateful to be returning to share his knowledge where his professional journey began. His most recent appearances include in the sold out season of Traps at LaMama and the critically acclaimed Songs of the Flesh and Prophet both at Theatre Works last year as well as a guest appearance on the TV series Warnie. He is passionate about devising new work and reinterpreting existing texts with a physical and visceral approach to performing and training. He is thrilled to be working with Taylor Made Productions for the first time and grateful to be bringing the role of Ed and this wonderful and iconic story to life.



## Laurel Phoebe Anne Taylor (she/they)



Phoebe Anne Taylor is a Melbourne based theatre maker, actor and writer. Phoebe holds a Bachelor of Arts Honours (Creative Writing, University of Melbourne) and Honours (Performance, Monash University) and was a graduate of the inaugural Full Time ensemble of the Howard Fine Acting Studio Australia. In 2019, Phoebe became an alumni of the Arteles Creative Centre in Finland, having completed the Silence Awareness Existence residency. Phoebe was awarded runner up for the sorry game in the 2020 Alpine Fellowship International Theatre Writing prize, and has had work produced at La Mama and the Butterfly Club. Phoebe is also a producer for Incognita Enterprises; their series Shakespeare Republic, of which she is also an ensemble member, is internationally recognised and awarded.

Phoebe will also be running a series of writing and acting classes for the Incognita at Montsalvat Programme, starting in February. Phoebe was resident director on Taylor Made Productions Holding the Man, and directed Georgie Harris' Love Bird, Mark Salvestro's Buried at Sea and John Corwin's Navy Pier. Recent performance credits include Women's Shout, Dark Arcadia, Spring Awakening, The Cocoon and Never Ending Night. Phoebe Anne Taylor is represented by WHO Artists.

## Alan Declan Clifford (he/him)

Declan Clifford is an actor based in Melbourne/Naarm. Most recently he played Timothy Conigrave in the 2023 stage adaptation of 'Holding the Man' produced by Taylor Made Productions. He also appeared in the feature film 'Strange Creatures', television pilot 'Hive', mini series 'My Lycan King', indie short 'Melted' and the dark comedy 'Necrophilia' by Lincoln Vickery, which received a Judges Pick Award at the Melbourne Fringe Festival in 2023 and is returning for a season at Melbourne International Comedy Festival in 2024.

Declan is thrilled to be bringing the character of Alan to life in 'Torch Song', transporting audiences back to the 70s in New York and exploring our search for love in Harvey Fierstein's timeless classic. He would like to thank the cast and crew of 'Torch Song' for their dedication and support, and making this an unforgettable experience.



## David Louie Dalzell (he/him)



Louie Dalzell (He/him) is a versatile National Theatre-trained actor and singer, known for his dynamic and engaging stage presence. Louie's most recent work includes the role of Orlando in Orlando (Antipodes Theatre Company), Friend of Dorothy/Scarecrow cover in The Wizard of Oz (Theatrical Inc), and performer/deviser in How Long Is A Piece Of String? (Live Witness Theatre) at Adelaide Fringe and Melbourne Fringe (2022). In addition to this, Louie performs as his drag cabaret alter-ego Florian Wild (They/them), and wrote and starred in his debut cabaret show MONSTER (dir. Oliver Ayres) at Melbourne Fringe (2023) .

Florian has also featured at a variety of events including Mama Alto's 12th Annual Holiday Special, Redlight Confidential, Cabaretica, Queer Cabaret, and T4t: a Transgender Showcase (prod. Olly Lawrence) at Melbourne Fringe

## Ma Melina Wylie (she/her)

Melina Wylie, a Melbourne-based multidisciplinary performer with 25 years of experience, discovered her passion for theatre at age 10. After studying Drama/Media at Melbourne University, she focused on Meisner, Burlesque, and Clowning. Collaborating with like-minded creatives, Melina co-founded Next Tuesday Theatre. Their debut work, "You're No Good," premiered at La Mama's Explorations Season in November 2022, receiving further development through an Artists' Residency by Geelong Arts Centre. It returns for La Mama's Primary Summer season in February 2024.

As a Burlesque performer under the pseudonym Mel FunKtion, Melina explores the grotesque, challenging beauty myths. She co-founded the Fandom Femmes with Dolores Daiquiri and Venus Skyrocket, making a significant statement in the Burlesque industry as seasoned older performers. Melina's recent credits span various performances, including "Show Real" at film festivals, "Holding the Man" at Chapel Off Chapel, and "Torch Song" in February 2024. Beyond performing, she practices costume design, contributing to notable projects such as "La Brea" Season 2 and "Holding the Man" in 2023. Melina Wylie's diverse talents showcase her commitment to authentic themes and human relationships in the realms of theatre and performance arts.





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## Director Cal Robinson-Taylor (he/him)



Cal is a distinguished graduate of the Arts Academy at the University of Ballarat, specializing in Music Theatre. With a diverse career spanning Melbourne, London, and New York, he has made significant contributions as an actor, director, and vocal coach. Upon returning to Melbourne in 2018, Cal founded the acclaimed 'North by South Theatre Company,' showcasing his artistic vision and commitment to excellence. Under his leadership, the company has delivered three highly successful productions at Chapel Off Chapel: 'Beautiful Thing' (2018), 'Spring Awakening' (2019), and the compelling 'Holding the Man' (2022, 2023), presented through his new venture, Taylor Made Productions .

In addition to these achievements, Cal's directorial prowess extends to notable productions such as 'Fall on Death Ears' with Impending Storm Productions, 'Someone Like You' with North by South, 'Once on this Island' with GNLC, and 'Hairspray' with GNLC

## Sound Designer Anthony Jacobsen (he/him)

Anthony, a versatile music producer, writer, and performer hailing from Brisbane, boasts a rich background in the performing arts industry. His journey commenced with composing music for Channel 10's Crocamole, a platform where his talent quickly garnered recognition. Since then, Anthony has evolved into a prolific figure, contributing significantly to the realm of musical theatre. His creative ingenuity is evident in the development of various productions, notably the captivating Love After, the thought-provoking Endings, and his inaugural song cycle, Struggling to Speak. Anthony's artistic pursuits extend beyond the stage, reflecting a holistic engagement with the diverse facets of the entertainment industry.

Academically, Anthony has honed his craft through the acquisition of bachelor's degrees in Music from the Queensland University of Technology and Musical Theatre from the Fed Uni Arts Academy.



## Lighting Designer Sidney Younger (he/him)



Sidney is an emerging Lighting Designer working regularly across Melbourne and Brisbane. He is a 2021 graduate of the BFA (Design and Production) degree at the Victorian College of the Arts, where his coursework efforts were recognised, being awarded the Cassidy Bequest Scholarship for Production. His design credits include 'Parade' & 'Songs for a New World' (Soundworks), 'Insert Self' (Chunky Move & L2R), 'Redhealer' (Back to Back), 'Flight' & 'Steer' (Showfit, Dean Bryant), 'Niusia' & 'Still Buried' (Kathryn Yates), 'Uncle Vanya' (Anthropocene Play Co), 'Yiddish Divas: Red Tent' (Kadimah Theatre), 'Songs of the Flesh' (Danger Ensemble), 'Motherlod\_ ^e' (Frenzy Theatre), 'Bach's Universe' (Brandenberg Orchestra), 'Propaganda' (Annabelle Ford), 'Play' & 'Monark' (Scimm Dance), 'Macbeth' (Bruce Langdon), 'The Spook' (Daniela Farinacci), 'The Hello Girls' (Jason Langley), and 'The Cripple of Inishmaan' (Georgina Naidu).

In 2023 Sidney also worked as the Assistant Lighting Designer on 'Bananaland' (Simon Philips), and 'Salamander' (Maxine Doyle & Es Devlin). His works have been seen by audiences across Australia, praised by reviews as "one of the best lighting designers Melbourne has to offer". Sidney identifies as an artist with a disability and is passionate about increasing access and diversity within creative and technical teams.

## Cultural Consultant Tammy Cohen (she/her)

Tammy is a Jewish educator, storyteller and musician. She is passionate about the innate connections between Jewish culture, history and the arts. Tammy finds profound meaning in supporting Jewish artists and cultivating avenues to share Jewish stories. Tammy earned her Bachelor of Arts (Musical Theatre) from The University of Ballarat, in 2014, during which she devised a comedic cabaret, "A Bagel with Mama Tam," and performed the darker "Cabaret", connecting her to the power of conveying Jewish narratives through the arts. Tammy performed in and was an education consultant for "Singing Swallows," a Holocaust educational performance for children. She was the Assistant Director for "Fiddler on the Roof."

Tammy is one of the Founders & Creative Directors of The Chai Collective 18, dedicated to giving life to Jewish stories through the arts. Tammy completed a Masters of Jewish Education and a Masters of Jewish Nonprofit Management from Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, in 2020. Beyond her artistic pursuits, Tammy is a devoted Jewish educator. She serves as both the Education Director of shtiebel and Jewish Studies Teacher and Experiential Educator at The King David School. Tammy is honoured to be a part of bringing this beautiful story to life!

