

MUSICAL THEATRE AND  
AUSTRALIAN LEADING LADIES  
– LEGACIES OF THE PAST AND  
CURRENT CHALLENGES: ‘HOW  
LUCKY WE ARE TO BE ALIVE  
RIGHT NOW’

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At the 2011 Helpmann Awards, the J.C. Williamson Award recognising an outstanding contribution to Australia’s live performance industry was jointly presented to three groundbreaking musical theatre actresses: Nancye Hayes, Toni Lamond and Jill Perryman.<sup>1</sup> As the first Australian women to be cast in leading roles in major productions, these performers paved the way for a long succession of Australian leading ladies, including Geraldine Turner (*Chicago*), Marina Prior (*The Phantom of the Opera*) and Debra Byrne (*Sunset Boulevard*).

In the twenty-first century, a new generation of female performers has emerged. Lucy Durack (*Wicked*, *Legally Blonde*), Chelsea Gibb (*Chicago*, *Cabaret*), Amanda Harrison (*Wicked*, *The Rocky Horror Show*) and Natalie O'Donnell (*Mamma Mia*) are at the forefront of musical theatre in Australia and are all forging diverse careers that also include television roles and cabaret performances. Through interviews with these four leading ladies, this article investigates the impact of earlier pioneers on current female performers, as well as outlining the current opportunities and challenges for female musical theatre performers in Australia.

In writing this article, I am very conscious of my position as a male researcher. I contribute to this work as an ally<sup>2</sup> and advocate for the diversification of voices in the field of musical theatre. Throughout my own career, I have been greatly inspired by women in Australian musical theatre and their influence, and I have built a close professional relationship with Chelsea, Amanda and Natalie. All four performers eagerly consented to participating in the interviews and were pleased to have the opportunity to lend their voices to this discussion. Lucy Durack,<sup>3</sup> for example, said:

It's so amazing that you're choosing to spend your time doing this about Australian women in musical theatre.

That in itself is really inspirational. Thank you so much.

I have attempted to ensure that the themes and discussion points in

this article are presented with a clear female voice by primarily using direct quotes from the interviews with the performers, rather than using my own commentary. The full transcripts of these interviews and the final draft of this article have been approved by all four women to ensure that their discussions and opinions are well represented.

### THE LEGACY OF THE PAST

Nancye Hayes, Toni Lamond and Jill Perryman were the first female stars of Australian musical theatre. Prior to the late 1950s, the leading female roles in musicals had been performed by British or American actresses who came to Australia to reprise their previous successes on Broadway or on the West End.

Toni Lamond<sup>4</sup> was cast in the lead role of Babe in *The Pajama Game* in 1957 after many years of performing on radio, television and in variety acts around the country. She was a regular on the popular television show *In Melbourne Tonight* and was the first woman to comper an evening television variety show when she took over the role of host twice a week. Other starring roles in musicals included the title role in *Wildcat* (1963), Nancy in *Oliver* (1966) and Rose in *Gypsy* (1975). Lamond lived and worked in the USA from 1976 to 1988, appearing in major musicals and featured roles in television.

Jill Perryman<sup>5</sup> joined the J.C. Williamson Theatre Company as a chorus member at the age of nineteen. After years of smaller roles and understudying (most notably in the 1965 Australian production

of *Hello Dolly*, in which she played the leading role on numerous occasions), Perryman was cast as Fanny Brice in the 1966 national touring production of *Funny Girl*. Subsequent significant stage roles included Miss Hannigan in *Annie* (1978), Desiree Armfeldt in *A Little Night Music* (1973) and originating the role of Marion Woolnough in *The Boy from Oz* (1998). Perryman also had a significant television and film career, as well as featuring in plays such as *Brighton Beach Memoirs* (1985).

Nancye Hayes's<sup>6</sup> breakthrough role was as Charity Hope Valentine in *Sweet Charity* in 1966. She subsequently performed as a leading lady in many musicals around Australia, including *Chicago* (1981), *Pippin* (1974) and *Sweeney Todd* (1987). Hayes originated roles in many new Australian musicals, including *Eureka* (2004), *Jonah* (1991) and *Summer Rain* (1989). She also had an extensive television career, as well as directing and choreographing several musicals for companies around Australia.

When discussing the legacy of these three pioneering female performers, all four current leading ladies acknowledged the importance of Nancye, Toni and Jill as the first leading ladies of Australian musical theatre. Their contributions to the industry allowed Natalie (NO'D), Lucy (LD), Amanda (AH) and Chelsea (CG) to envisage leading roles as a possibility for their own careers.

NO'D:<sup>7</sup>It's invaluable – what they did for females in our industry is completely invaluable. They were our first leading ladies,

really, and that's amazing. What a legacy! They allowed us to have a career as a leading lady in Australian musical theatre. Their fight to have Australian artists recognised and for those roles to be given to Australian artists at a time that they weren't – and for them to be the first ones to do that was pretty extraordinary.

LD: It wouldn't have given us that dream, I guess. To see these amazing women who played amazing roles. Having those women there meant that in the back of our minds, we thought that maybe we'd get to play a part. Having them in those positions gave you a little more breadth and width within your dreams.

CG:<sup>8</sup> We definitely were brought up to see these women as icons. They morphed across so many different roles and they were given opportunities to go across so many different areas of theatre in Australia.

AH:<sup>9</sup> It has affected my career in that I can see a longevity in performing. That you still can do it into your elderly years, and that's a positive thing for me because at this point in my career I'm wondering whether I should keep going or not. I think that because of those women who have had ongoing careers into their sixties and seventies, it gives me a bit of hope that there's going to be a legacy for me, I guess.

A significant thread emerged through all four interviews about the personal qualities that this first generation of leading ladies brought to their work. In addition to being skilled performers, these women would lead a company with gracious humility, as well as a strong, committed work ethic and deep respect for the theatre and profession.

LD: I was so enamoured of Nancye's generosity and humility.

CG: Jill was the same – the same nature. Gracious. I warmed to her. She was extremely talented. I saw her in *Hello Dolly* in Perth and she was phenomenal.

NO'D: Nancye is such a consummate professional and gracious and hard working. It's about the work. Everything is about the work for those ladies. They have such a respect for the church of theatre in that sense – for it as a spiritual home for performers and crew. We're creating something amazing and special for an audience and that's the most important thing. That was invaluable for me at both stages to be witness to that. They're such gracious women. They're so authentic.

CG: They were brought up with this love for the job and they appreciate the work and honour their craft.

NO'D: Realising Jill's work ethic and values when it came to performing and as an artist, but also what it is to respect the

industry and to respect the position that you're in and the responsibility that comes with that. It's beyond the stage in terms of the company. That was invaluable.

This work ethic and respect were inspiring to other performers in a rehearsal room and enabled everyone to feel like a valued member of an ensemble without hierarchy:

NO'D: They really live and breathe the 'ensemble' part of performing and the true nature of that word in that theatre sense. We're all in this together and the person who has no lines is just as important as the person who has fifteen scenes and seventeen songs. We're all in this together to create something wonderful for people to come and see and enjoy. The camaraderie in that – there's camaraderie in company.

CG: I wish I had been in a show with her earlier, because of the way she held herself in the room. Literally everybody is the best version of themselves when she's in the room. She's amazing.

AH: It's always amazing to have those role models and women who have had so much experience. When you work with them, you hope that just a little bit rubs off on you. So you can take on board something that they've experienced.

As well as the inspiration drawn from the first generation of Australian leading ladies, other inspirational female

performers were also discussed throughout these interviews, including Geraldine Turner, Marina Prior and Rhonda Burchmore. This important lineage of female performers in Australia has played a significant part in the legacy for our current leading ladies:

NO'D: I'm so grateful for the mentors that I've had in my life. Anne Wood was, for me, the leading lady that I had intimate workings with. I got to see her in action and I take my way of conducting myself, when I'm privileged enough to have a leading position, from her.

CG: It was really Jodie Gillies' album that basically inspired me. When she sang 'Fifty Percent', it hit a chord and I felt that was such a beautiful escape to be able to throw yourself so inside a song.

LD: Natalie O'Donnell was probably the most contemporary version of Toni Lamond, Nancye Hayes and Jill Perryman for me. She's been a real guiding light and continues to be a real guiding light throughout my career. I was and still am so inspired that somebody who is so talented and so good at what she does is also so kind and so generous.

## CURRENT OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN

After discussing the legacy of the previous generations, the interviews then moved towards the present situation for women in Australian musical theatre. All four present-day leading ladies were asked to discuss the current opportunities or positive elements of being a female performer in Australia at this time. They were then asked to discuss the current challenges for women in Australian musical theatre. A number of the issues discussed presented both challenges and opportunities. First, each of the singers commented on the current boom in Australian Musical Theatre:

LD: There are so many producers making lots of musicals happen. There's so much more work and it's so heartening to think that musical theatre is really alive and well and thriving.

NO'D: There's a lot more happening now than there ever was when I graduated and that's a really great thing. The opportunities are really great.

This means that there are some great musical theatre roles available for women in Australia:

LD: The great thing is that there are great female roles. We're coming through in a time now where it's celebrated to be

a strong female role model and a strong female lead part. Things are being written really differently and giving females even more of a voice of their own.

CG: At the age I'm at now, there are still some really great opportunities for roles to come through.

However, in a small local industry that is producing a large number of musical theatre graduates each year, these roles can still be quite rare, particularly as women progress through their careers:

NO'D: The amount of work is always a challenge. I felt so lucky that Donna went my way, with complete awareness that it was the one lead role around for women over forty.

AH: They don't write shows for women. As far as the leading roles that I've done, they're few and far between.

I'm finding it very difficult now. That's the challenge of middle age, I think. I'll be forty-five this year, so it's getting to that point. There are not that many roles out there for middle-aged women. I'm totally open to being that second tier character, and often they're a lot more interesting and have the best songs [*laughs*], but that's few and far between as well.

In particular, Natalie discussed the different opportunities for men and women in musical theatre as they progress into middle age, especially with regards to romantic lead roles:

NO'D: I think that the playing age for men continues to be a lot wider than the playing age for women.

Does something happen when you become a mum that people see you in a different light? I don't know the answer to that.

There is a large number of highly skilled and experienced women in the musical theatre industry in Australia, so it can be very competitive for women auditioning for a small number of roles:

AH: The competition as well is quite fierce at this stage, because there are fewer roles but a lot of talented women who have been in this business for twenty years like myself – well nearly thirty years now! There's still a lot of talented women at my level to compete with for the one part that comes along every five years.

However, a major theme that emerged through these interviews was the strong support networks between women in the Australian musical theatre industry:

NO'D: The support network is amazing. Nothing ever feels like a competition in this industry. In what is a very small industry for females, nothing ever feels like a competition. It's very supportive. It's incredible.

CG: As you get older, you celebrate other women around you. You know how hard it is to keep at this job in this industry and to juggle family, so you do celebrate other women. There's nothing that any of us do except celebrate the triumphs when they get a role. Most of us are going up for the same role but it's a celebration when they get it. When they get a win, you know that you can still get a win. It's great and feels fantastic. That constantly surprises me – that support around each other.

AH: Catherine Alcorn made an incredible post a few weeks ago.<sup>10</sup> She challenged women to support one another rather than to compete with one another. To open the doors to creating opportunities for your fellow females. Not holding back information. Not holding back your knowledge. It was about sharing knowledge and sharing experience. Not being afraid that if you lend someone a piece of music and say they should sing this in their audition that they're going to get the role over you. Sharing your knowledge with other performers is going to boost the industry rather than depress it.

**LD:** I think we band together and that really helps. Women support each other in our Australian industry more than I realised, and I am so glad. It is definitely not the back-stabbing world that films and TV shows would have you believe. I have rarely come across women not supporting each other. If anything, most of the women I know really lift each other up as we all really know exactly just how hard we have all worked and continue to work to get where we are today.

Another major theme that emerged from these interviews was the breadth of opportunities currently available for female performers in Australia beyond performing in mainstage musical theatre productions. These include cruise ship entertainment, cabaret performances and working on smaller-scale shows:

**AH:** I've done a couple of cabaret shows. I'm also getting charts together so that I can perform on cruise ships. It's affording me an opportunity to create that for myself, which is great! I get to see the world and I also get to perform.

**CG:** I think that people are self-promoting and self-creating great shows. If nobody's employing you, it's not about waiting around for somebody to say they want you in a musical. That sort of self-promotion and fight for work wasn't happening ten or twenty years ago and now you see amazing performers – everyone individual in their own right, creating space for

themselves based on their skills.

LD: There are so many smaller companies. These companies give people a leg up when they have all of this potential and all of this enthusiasm. It gives them the opportunities that they wouldn't otherwise have. They super-charge your CV, so all of a sudden you've gone from graduating and not having many things, but in a year – if you do a bunch of smaller shows ... I did a few years of Production Company shows, so all of a sudden I'd played Laurey in *Oklahoma* and Bianca in *Kiss Me Kate* and Miss Dorothy in *Thoroughly Modern Millie*. They were all just short runs, but they were such valuable experiences in getting to play these lead roles. Maybe otherwise producers wouldn't take a chance on you yet, because you're not a good insurance bet. It gives you that opportunity to prove that you can play a role.

CG: I think the great thing is how everything has opened up now. There used to be a stigma attached to doing small, pro-am productions. I think that's all gone now. The exciting thing is that you can still do some fantastic roles on a small scale now, and instead of a fear that the industry sees you stepping down, there is now, instead, a huge respect that you keep putting yourself out there.

Television acting is also starting to become more possible for

musical theatre performers in Australia, which is a significant shift from the past:

LD: I used to hear when I first graduated from WAAPA [Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts] that if you wanted to get into TV, you had to take all of your musical theatre credits off your CV. But now, again, there's a lot more television opportunity too and my experience is that music theatre credits have, instead, given me a leg up or a point of reference or difference to get me in the audition room.

CG: You've got people like Christie Whelan and Lucy Durack who are, through pure talent and passion, paving the way themselves and changing the face of that. It's very inspiring.

Although some performers are starting to experience success in television roles, this is still an area that could become more accessible to musical theatre performers in Australia:

CG: I think most people say in Australia that musical theatre performers aren't really actors – they get very much boxed into 'this is what you do' and to get a television or film audition is like knocking through concrete. I still feel like they are still two very separate categories. I still feel that musical theatre actors aren't given much space in front of the camera, both in television and in film in Australia. Unlike London and

America where ‘triple-threats’ are celebrated, it does still feel like here, we are placed in boxes that feel hard to break.

Among the most important themes to emerge from these interviews were the discussions around gender equality and representation in the musical theatre industry in Australia. The industry is starting to acknowledge the need for more equal gender representation:

LD: I do think that the Gender Matters thing [Screen Australia’s programmes to promote female talent in key creative roles and so increase the diversity of screen stories] is huge and that’s seen as such a positive. I’m involved in producing new writing these days as well, and in our grant applications for the web series that we’ve just had funded and made, we made a point of the fact that we’re largely a female-heavy team, as that is now seen as a positive and something important and valued.

NO’D: The industry is shifting and changing to give women a strong platform and voice in our industry. We’re moving into and lucky to be in an industry where the shift towards gender equity is coming and happening. We can have a voice and we can have a brain and we can be listened to. I feel really lucky to have worked with a producer like Louise Withers and Linda [Bewick] last year, and being in an environment where I’m seeing women in powerful positions wherever I look around me.

This important shift gives women a stronger voice in the industry, and it is particularly evident in the emerging generation of female performers:

NO'D: I was really blown away by the younger female generation and their comfort in having a voice and not questioning that, in a really positive way. It is really amazing – you can be a female and speak up or speak your mind and not seem challenging or divaesque or difficult. You are actually listened to and considered. I think that's a really amazing thing.

It is necessary to note, however, that there is still a great need for continued improvement in female representation and equality in musical theatre in Australia:

LD: There is still a long way to go with Gender Matters, but it is getting better. There are some really wonderful female producers, and some male producers who are championing female directors and female writers and working really hard to give women a better chance.

Following on from the discussion of representation and equality, the balance of being a mother and a working performer was incredibly important for all four performers interviewed. It seems that there are positive changes occurring in the industry to support working mothers:

NO'D: I definitely feel like being a mother is becoming a much more acceptable part of our industry. Being supported to balance family life and work.

This has been an ongoing struggle for women in musical theatre for many years, and it is important to acknowledge the women who have struggled with this in the past and fought for some changes in the industry:

NO'D: I'm lucky to be in a position where I can learn from the people who have had to sacrifice before me, and I'm in an emerging part of the industry that is starting to understand that performers have families. It's starting to understand that performers or creatives are actually better if they do have a balanced life outside of their work. It's an industry where it's becoming okay to take the holidays that you're entitled to. We were really supported [during *Mamma Mia*] in taking holidays, though I remember a time in Australia where you just wouldn't do that.

Social media have enabled women trying to balance motherhood and a performing career to provide active support for one another:

LD: I'm part of this great Facebook group called Actor-Dancer-Singer-Mother. There must be about 400 of us and it's all

women in the industry. It's not just musical theatre, but it has all of the musical theatre women that I know who are mothers, a lot of the screen actors and now we're broadening it to be more entertainment industry women. With these discussions, it was always an individual problem. If you had a child, you had to work out what to do with it, but I feel like it's becoming part of a larger discussion and we're trying as a community to find solutions and trying to make it a more family-friendly arena. I feel like we're a real sisterhood, the women of musical theatre. Particularly the women with children, because it is a big challenge. We've got one another's backs.

However, managing motherhood and performing is still very difficult in the musical theatre industry in Australia, particularly as major productions require the performers to tour between the major cities. This is unlike Broadway or the West End, where a show can be resident in one city for many years. The need for touring often means that women with children can only tour if they have strong support from partners and other family members, or they can only accept roles in smaller productions that do not tour:

LD: There definitely are a lot of challenges, particularly when it comes to mothers.

NO'D: There's still a long way to go in terms of finding the optimum way of working for everyone.

AH: Middle-aged women have children to consider, so touring in productions is a massive deal for the family.

CG: I truly think for the women in the industry who have become mothers, it's the choice between being there all the time for your kids or choosing a show – which is a massive choice.

There's no accommodation for women or mothers, really. You have to still pretend you're not a mum, which makes it difficult. I'm still so grateful that I have opportunities to do shows, but they're always going to be smaller shows – unless they're a great production company that are prepared to celebrate the fact that you have kids and they come on board.

The difficult thing in Australia, though, is that we tour. So you sign on for a show and have to sign at least an eleven-month contract, so that may mean two or three tours within that time.

LD: If you have a very supportive partner with more flexible work hours, it is still a jigsaw puzzle, but it makes it possible. If you have a partner who is not able to tour, it makes it a very challenging thing to tour, which, in turn, makes it very hard to audition for most mainstage musicals.

To make touring productions more possible for mothers in musical theatre, a solution, suggested by Lucy Durack, could be to cast different performers for different legs of the tour:

LD: It would be great if you could say, ‘I could do the tour, but I’d be really interested in just doing the Melbourne leg’. It would be a bit trickier in terms of rehearsing people up, but if you had various women of a particular age going for different roles – largely people who had children, maybe you could cast somebody just for the Sydney season, somebody just for the Melbourne season and do it that way so that mothers would have more of a chance.

This relates closely to the concept of job-sharing, which was recently revealed as a possibility for women in theatre in a ground-breaking case on London’s West End:<sup>11</sup>

LD: Fairly recently, there was a landmark case where a woman was allowed to job-share with another woman in a production. I’ve never seen that happen in Australia in a mainstage production, but that is maybe on the cards.

CG: I think that every woman that I know would embrace the idea of being able to job-share – to still do what you love and bring in some money each week doing your craft, but still be home with your kids some of the time. I think that in Australia, though, the producers come up against the fact that they have to pay for two lots of airfares for the job-sharing.

A striking example of trying to maintain the balance between

being a mother and a performer was visible on Australian television when Lucy Durack was interviewed to promote a forthcoming production with her three-year-old daughter:<sup>12</sup>

LD: I had a lot of really positive feedback. I think the aim was just to sell the show as a family-friendly show, but then I've had lots of people send really nice messages and lots of really positive feedback acknowledging that I'm a working mum.

Finally, social media were discussed as both benefit and challenge for women in Australian musical theatre:

AH: Thank goodness for social media! You can make it look like you're actually doing things when you are not. You can still try to keep relevant in some way and let people know that you are still out there and doing things and are open to things.

NO'D: I think the world of social media is an added pressure for young females and just generally. I think there's huge worth in using it as a business tool, but I do think that there's an added pressure now for the amount of followers that you have, which goes beyond physical attributes and talent. That's always been a pressure for women, but now on top of that there's how many social media followers you have, which comes into consideration for younger people in lead roles when it comes to jobs. That's really scary, because it puts an unfair focus for

young people to make that a big part of their business. It takes time away from being able to focus on the skill and the craft and the kind of magic that comes with the theatre.

### CONTINUING LEGACY

In the final section of these interviews, the four current leading ladies of Australian musical theatre were asked to discuss what legacy they would like to leave for future generations of female performers. Some spoke about wanting to set an example for their own children:

CG: I said to my daughter, ‘I want to show you that you can still do what you love’. We still should be able to enjoy our passion – we’re not in the 1960s anymore.

LD: You can show your daughter that you’re a working mum and that it can be a really positive thing to work and do what you love.

They also talked about the importance of openly discussing the challenges and difficulties of being a performing artist. Amanda Harrison left the cast of *Wicked* to preserve her voice<sup>13</sup> after playing the demanding role of Elphaba for eighteen months in Melbourne and Sydney. She stressed the importance of talking about those events and their impact on her career:

AH: Being open to sharing my struggles with *Wicked* and my vocal struggles, which is not something that a lot of people do. Crushing that stigma of vocal trauma. I crashed and burned, but I got through it after that. It wasn't the end for me. It was the end of *Wicked*, but it wasn't the end for me. I think it's important to let people know that once you crash and burn, it's not necessarily the end.

LD: You're always aiming to be the best version of yourself, but I want people to see that nobody's perfect. Don't think that just because we might get to play a big lead role in a big show, that we've got all of our stuff together, because we haven't. We're all the same. I think I'd like to break down the barriers a bit more and make people see that we're all just real people trying to feed our families and do the best that we can. Be the best mothers and wives and friends, daughters and sisters that we can be. And that it's okay, not shameful and, in fact, normal to fail sometimes. It happens to everyone and that is part of life.

There is a beautiful synergy between the legacy that our current leading ladies would like to leave and the legacy of Nancye, Toni and Jill that shaped their own careers. Particularly the inspiration that musical theatre can be a long-term career:

AH: I would like to leave the legacy that Jill, Toni and Nancye are leaving. That longevity of career. That legendary status and the passing on of knowledge.

CG: I think that what I pass on to people I speak to is that it's a long career. The legacy I would leave is to keep at it. Life's hard. It has ups and downs and performing is a joy. It's the icing on the cake for me, so when I get the opportunity I'm extremely grateful and I think that's how everyone should view it. It's a privilege to do what we do.

In the same way they spoke about the legacy of the first generation of Australian leading ladies, the women discussed the importance of being a strong example for other cast members:

NO'D: Your responsibility as a leading player is not just about what you do onstage. It's about the way you conduct yourself offstage. There's a responsibility that comes with it.

Finally, the performers stressed the importance of being generous, respectful and kind, just as Nancye, Toni and Jill were throughout their careers:

CG: Holding a room like Nancye – just being there, being grateful. Not holding your phone. Not chatting while the director's

talking. All of those things are so important and that's what I try to instil in my kids. Be a good person. People remember a good person. Be polite. It speaks volumes to your character and that will open doors for you. People want to work with that kind of human being. Nancye is truly a perfect representative of that.

**LD:** We always strive to be the kindest person that we can be – that's probably the biggest and most impressive thing that I've learnt from Nat and Nancye. It is possible to be working really hard and probably be really tired and juggling lots of different things, but still try to find the time to be a kind version of that person. That's what I'm trying to do myself, I guess – more than leaving a legacy. That's my aim. Sometimes I fail, but that's what I'm aiming for.

Australia has a rich history of leading ladies, beginning with Nancye Hayes, Toni Lamond and Jill Perryman. The legacy of these performers continues on to the current generation including Lucy Durack, Chelsea Gibb, Amanda Harrison and Natalie O'Donnell. This legacy provides aspiration for a long career in musical theatre and inspires qualities such as graciousness, generosity and respect for the craft and ensemble of performing. As outlined by the current generation of female performers, the Australian musical theatre industry is now experiencing a boom in popularity. There is still, however, a

lack of roles for female performers, particularly later in their careers. Although there can be great competition for the limited number of roles for women, the female performers in Australia are very supportive of one another and celebrate each other's successes. Wider avenues of performing are becoming available to female musical theatre performers – including cabaret, cruise ship performances and television – though there are still some obstacles in the latter area.

Gender equality and representation is progressing in the Australian musical theatre industry, but there is still a great need for continued improvement, particularly in allowing women to balance the roles of being a mother and a performer. Touring presents particular challenges in Australia for female performers, and the possibility of job-sharing or dividing segments of a tour between different performers could become possibilities in the future. The legacy that is being left for future generations of female musical theatre performers will allow them to understand the challenges of being a performing artist. Musical theatre can be a long-term career for women in Australia and leading ladies will continue to inspire future generations by being a strong example for their fellow cast members through generosity, respect and kindness.

## NOTES

- 1 'JC Williamson Award Recipients Announced', 8 June 2011, online: [www.australianstage.com.au/201106084466/news/industry-news/jc-williamson-award-recipients-announced.html](http://www.australianstage.com.au/201106084466/news/industry-news/jc-williamson-award-recipients-announced.html) (accessed 10 May 2019).
- 2 The definition of 'ally' here is drawn from Jamie Washington and Nancy J. Evans, 'Becoming an Ally', *Beyond Tolerance: Gays, Lesbians, and Bisexuals on Campus* (1991) 195.
- 3 All quotations for Lucy Durack are from an interview conducted by Trevor Jones on 10 April 2019.
- 4 Biographical information collated from 'The Arts Centre Presents Leading Ladies: A Creative Development Initiative. Toni Lamond. Biography', May 2003, online: [web.archive.org/web/20080304040311/http://assets.theartscentre.net.au/VirtualGalleries/leadingladies/tonibio.htm](http://web.archive.org/web/20080304040311/http://assets.theartscentre.net.au/VirtualGalleries/leadingladies/tonibio.htm) (accessed 10 May 2019) and 'Live Performance Australia Hall of Fame. Toni Lamond AM 1932', online: [liveperformance.com.au/halloffame/tonilamond.html](http://liveperformance.com.au/halloffame/tonilamond.html) (accessed 10 May 2019).
- 5 Biographical information collated from 'The Arts Centre Presents Leading Ladies: A Creative Development Initiative. Jill Perryman. Biography', May 2003, online: [web.archive.org/web/20080304040215/http://assets.theartscentre.net.au/VirtualGalleries/leadingladies/jillbio.htm](http://web.archive.org/web/20080304040215/http://assets.theartscentre.net.au/VirtualGalleries/leadingladies/jillbio.htm) (accessed 10 May 2019) and 'Live Performance Australia Hall of Fame. Jill Perryman AM MBE 1933', online: [liveperformance.com.au/halloffame/jillperryman.html](http://liveperformance.com.au/halloffame/jillperryman.html) (accessed 10 May 2019).
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