

MEDIA RELEASE

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NEW PIECE OF THE PATCH WORK

Naomi Edwards has imbued a wave of transformation into Adelaide based children's theatre company **Patch Theatre** since her appointment in late 2015. It signifies a bright 2018 and a new chapter for the 45-year old theatre company.

Since taking the helm, Naomi Edwards has premiered her highly successful first show, **Yo Diddle Diddle**, which played to audiences in Adelaide and regional South Australia. In 2018 Edwards will deliver her second work, **Can You Hear Colour?**, a bold operatic adventure for young audiences which will premiere in the 2018 Adelaide Festival.

"Premiering in the Adelaide Festival is a significant and strategic achievement for Patch Theatre which presents a significant opportunity for the company and we are eager to embrace it," said Ms Edwards.

Can You Hear Colour? is the tale of what happens when one small child discovers she has a special gift: to her, each colour has its own sound. She invites us into this unusual and wondrous world and we follow her across the seasons, share her joy as she sings and dances to a rainbow, meet her new friend (a legendary multi-coloured bird), share her loneliness when the bird departs and her heartbreak as she encounters one who doubts her gift and prefers things grey.

The fable gently unlocks for children the musical world of pitch, intervals, scales, rhythm, harmony and counterpoint and helps them to open their ears to the natural world and the sounds that they can 'paint with' inside their minds.

This kaleidoscope of musical energy stars **Michaela Burger** (seen previously in Windmill Theatre's Rumpelstiltskin), **Bethany Hill** (2017 Adelaide Festival's *Saul*) with music composed by award winning theatre, opera and screen composer **Alan John**.

"*Can you Hear Colour?* is an opera designed for children aged 4 to 8 years of age. Opera is rich in storytelling language, it is a visual spectacle and it provides the perfect form to weave together the love children have for colour and music. The show has a beautiful energy to it and features an extraordinary score of musical work performed live by Alan John. It is fitting to begin the year with a show which is tantamount to Patch Theatre's reputation for producing high-end children's theatre for 4-8 year olds," said Ms Edwards.

In April 2018 *Yo Diddle Diddle*, which is adapted from the children's book *The Cow Tripped Over the Moon* by Tony Wilson, embarks on a 6-month national tour of Australia where it will perform in 25 venues before finishing at the Sydney Opera House. It is closely followed by *Cranky Bear*; a much-loved Patch Theatre show which returns for a 7-week tour in South Australia followed by a week-long season at the Adelaide Festival Centre in October.

"Regional and national interest in our theatre shows has been overwhelming and that is a really good thing for Australian children! It means children across the country, even those living in remote areas, will have access to a great theatre going experience," said Ms Edwards.



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She continued, “With the growing prevalence of screen-based culture and a curriculum that focuses on attainment, the opportunity for children to play and create freely has been reduced.

Theatre fires the imagination and gives kids the skills and creativity necessary to face the world, understand it and even change it.”

ENDS

Notes:

Patch Theatre Company is dedicated to the creation and presentation of high quality in-theatre experiences for children aged four to eight years old. Since its inception in 1972 Patch Theatre has performed 105 new works to more than 1.8 million children and their families. We have presented more than 30 international seasons at centres and festivals across the US, Canada, Singapore, Korea, Japan, Hong Kong and New Zealand. Patch is keen to develop additional touring circuits in Europe and Asia.

Naomi Edwards is an accomplished theatre and opera director. Before joining Patch as Artistic Director in 2015, Naomi directed for Australia’s major theatre and opera companies, creating work for adult and young audiences, including *The Waiting Room* – Melbourne Theatre Company, *Peter and the Wolf* – Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, *Hamlet* – Sydney Theatre Company, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* - Michael Sieders Prod., *Noye’s Fludde* – Victorian Opera, *The Magic Flute* – Opera Australia. As an arts educator, Naomi has worked in schools, teacher education, community, youth, deaf and mental health contexts, and as Head of Drama at Islington Arts & Media School in London and Education Manager at Sydney Theatre Company.

Patch Theatre has collaborated with Scientist-in-Residence, **Professor Martin Westwell**, Director of the Flinders Centre for Science Education. Martin Westwell completed his degree and PhD at Cambridge University and a Research Fellow in Biochemistry at Oxford University. Martin specialises in executive functioning of children and from collaborative research undertaken by Martin Westwell and Naomi Edwards, a suite of four works over four years have been conceived in response to the challenges facing children growing up in today’s world.

The four works will explore the themes of **Resilience** (*Yo Diddle Diddle* - 2017), **Empathy** (*Can You Hear Colour?* - 2018), **Sustainability** (*Hive Mind* - 2019) and **Creativity** (*What Do You Do With An Idea* - 2020). The themes have a strong resonance within the early childhood context, and are essential capacities for a bright future.

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