

YOUR DAYBILL

Text Only Version

The Photo Box

WORLD PREMIERE / ADELAIDE EXCLUSIVE

Vitalstatistix and Brink Productions

Created and performed by Emma Beech

3 – 7 Mar 2022 / Space Theatre

Duration 1hr 30mins, no interval

Warnings Recommended for ages 15+

This daybill includes:

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CREDITS

The Photo Box is an Adelaide Festival presentation, and a commission and co-production by Vitalstatistix and Brink Productions, produced by Vitalstatistix. *The Photo Box* is supported by RISE an Australian Government Initiative, the Government of South Australia through Arts South Australia, the Australia Council for the Arts and Country Arts SA.

The team acknowledge this work was made on Kurna Country and on the Lands of the First Peoples of the River Murray and Mallee including the Ngawait, Nganguruku, Ngintait, Erawirung, Ngaralte, Ngarkat, Ngaiawang. We thank First Nations custodians of Country and Culture. We would like to thank Uncle Michael Kumatpi Marrutya O'Brien for his contribution to the performance, and for welcoming us and our audience to Kurna Country each night.

The team would also like to thank: Alexis West, Angela Lee, Craig Behenna, Emma Luker, Heath Britton and Replay Creative, Joanne Mensforth and Revive Beauty, Maggie Oster, Michelle 'Maddog' Delaney, Ray Harris and Holy Rollers, Richard Higgins, RUMPUS, and Sam Roberts.

CREATIVE TEAM

Creator & Performer **Emma Beech**
Director **Mish Grigor**
Dramaturg **Anne Thompson**
Film Maker **Shalom Almond**
Production Designer **Meg Wilson**
Composer **Jason Sweeney**
Lighting & Projection Designer **Chris Petridis**
Costume Designer **Renate Henschke**
Choreographer **Larissa McGowan**
Assistant Director **Tim Overton**
Welcome to Country **Michael Kumatpi Marrutya O'Brien**
Producer **Jennifer Greer Holmes**
Production Manager **Emma O'Neill**
Stage Manager **Françoise Piron**

FILM

Producer & Director **Shalom Almond**
Cinematographer **Helen Carter**
Editor **Lauren Wells-Jones**
Colourist **Sam Matthews**

PROGRAM NOTE

EMMA BEECH | CREATOR AND PERFORMER, *THE PHOTO BOX*

In 2019, before the pandemic, my parents delivered me a box of photos. Being from a family of nine children, naturally they had a lot of old-school printed photos in a massive box in the linen press. Now in their early 80s, and with me as their youngest child heading into her 40s, in very practical form they decided to get those photos sorted and create a box for each of their adult children.

Despite working as a performance artist all my adult life, I've still always thought of myself as an ordinary woman with a pretty ordinary life, with a couple of notable exceptions - one of them being my flock of siblings and another being that I myself have non-identical triplets; three distinct people grew in me and then were born at the same time. However, a deep dive into the giftbox of photos unearthed remarkable memories, family myths and half-truths moved down from person to person, and from here this show was conceived and born.

As an artist, I'm a storyteller in the most old-fashioned of ways: I tell stories to audiences that are often about other people, real-life people that I come across, seek out, or that I have accosted randomly on the street and to whom I have asked a question! This is one of my specialties, and it is astonishing what people have told me and willingly allowed me to re-tell in a theatre setting. Ordinary people are amazing. Turning this lens on myself to make this show has made me realise how amazing my family are too – and I thank them for coming on this ride with me with trust, generosity, and curiosity.

This is undoubtedly my most personal and most revealing work. I'll be telling you intimate stories only my dearest friends know - my deep fuck-ups, my loves, my life-long growing up. Everyone has stories, most become partially buried over time, but in an age where the search for realness and truth abounds, I discovered a desire to unravel what has made me.

What my wonderful creative team and I have created together, I hope invites people to pay a little more attention to the everyday stories of our lives, and perhaps even sift through your own family narrative, not with nostalgia but definitely with a little bit of wonder, perhaps as we might see a piece of architecture. These are my stories; however, I could have made a show about any of you reading this right now. Because we all have an incredible architecture to our lives, no matter how messy, or tidy, or interesting, or mundane, or tangled or planned.

Creating this show has taken a village and my heartfelt thanks goes to many. This includes Mish Grigor, Anne Thompson, Shalom Almond and the entire creative team who have brought all their talents and worked tirelessly and lovingly with me to bring *The Photo Box* into the world. Vitalstatistix and Brink Productions for commissioning and so generously realising the project, it has been a gift to work with both these Adelaide performance icons again – and this time together! Jennifer Greer Holmes for her above-and-beyond work in producing the project. Rachel Healy, Neil Armfield and the Adelaide Festival team for believing in this show and giving it context and an audience.

And, of course, the Beech family, who when asked if I could tell their stories and would they like to know what I'm going to say about them, said, 'Yes and No. Yes, you can tell the stories and no, we don't want to know what you're saying. We'll see it in the show'. Well, here it is - I hope it's all you feared and looked forward to.

A NOTE FROM VITALSTATISTIX

EMMA WEBB | DIRECTOR, VITALSTATISTIX

When I first learnt from Emma Beech that she was experimenting with telling stories about her own life, springing from a box of photos her parents had given her, I was intrigued and exhilarated.

For over a decade, Vitalstatistix have supported and presented many of Emma's shows, these works intricately created through a unique and uncanny process of getting to know strangers and acquaintances. Her performances are charming, funny, surprising, and so very revealing about what makes us humans tick. Of course, there's always a bit of Emma in all her shows; however, the proposition of her turning her storytelling craft towards her family and her own life was really a leap into something very different and exciting.

Whether you have seen Emma Beech perform before, and perhaps you think you know her, or you are seeing this exceptional South Australian performance-maker for the first time, you are in for a treat.

The Photo Box captures that feeling which inexplicably encompasses both the everyday and the completely remarkable. Along the way, in this love letter to the imperfect art of making community and family, we discover things about caretakers and compasses, loyalty and sacrifice, tragedy and privilege, and those monsters – imaginary and real – that exist in everyone's stories. All backgrounded by the landscape and life of regional South Australia (Barmera – place of large water on the lands and waters of the First Peoples of the River Murray and Mallee - in particular).

Vitals has been delighted and grateful to share this journey with Brink Productions, in our first co-commission together. Chris Drummond and Anne Thompson's original dramaturgical support to Emma provided this project with a fantastic foundation for bringing together a stellar team of artistic collaborators, including another regular Vitals collaborator, feminist performance-maker Mish Grigor to direct the work. Our huge congrats and thanks to the whole brilliant artistic team, and to the producing and production staff across both Vitals and Brink, who have made this work so very special.

Country Arts SA's support has also helped bring this project to life, and we thank them for their commitment to regional culture and the careers of artists such as Emma. And of course, a heartfelt thank you to the Adelaide Festival team, and especially Rachel Healy, for intuitively knowing the power of this story and championing *The Photo Box* the whole way along.

And finally, to Emma Beech herself, and her family, thank you for sharing this beautiful, vulnerable, and life-affirming story-telling experience with us, and making it during a once-in-a century pandemic to boot. Legends.

A NOTE FROM BRINK PRODUCTIONS

CHRIS DRUMMOND | ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, BRINK PRODUCTIONS

Over the past decade or so I've been watching, with ever-growing admiration, the extraordinary evolution of Emma Beech as a performance-maker. A born storyteller, she has a very particular way of revealing the remarkable in the seemingly mundane, re-creating worlds and communities;

usually alone on stage, her work is all at once humane, hilarious, absurd, tender, authentic and profound. So, when she told me about her parents' gift of a box of photos and her inkling that there might be a show to be found within it, I was instantly hooked. This deeply personal material would be new territory for Emma and all at Brink were keen to get involved. Since that moment, Emma has built an extraordinary coalition of collaborators around her, including of course, the Beech famil(ies) who have been fearless and generous at every turn.

For our part, it has been an absolute thrill for Brink to enter into this co-production with Vitalstatistix (the first time in our two companies' histories). Vitals, who have had a deep and sustained relationship with Emma Beech over many years, have been utterly steadfast in bringing *The Photo Box* to the stage in the age of COVID, for which we are very grateful. On behalf of all at Brink, I want to congratulate Emma, Mish and their incredible creative team for their beautiful work. Also, thanks to Country Arts SA for their support and especially to Rachel and Neil and the Adelaide Festival for their unstinting advocacy, belief and support of this exquisite new work.

BIOGRAPHIES

Emma Beech

Creator & Performer

Emma Beech started making shows for her mum in her bedroom when she was six. She graduated from Flinders Drama Centre in 2000 and has worked in theatre and screen, establishing a practice developing theatre shows from conversations with strangers, talking about subjects from the sad to the sublime.

Emma was a resident artist with immersive theatre company Carte Blanche in Denmark from 2006 to 2004, set-up by visual arts and theatre practitioner, Sara Jenson. There, Emma co-developed and performed in six of Carte Blanche's new works.

Emma has worked with The Last Tuesday Society, Real TV, Patch, Monkey Baa, Playwriting Australia, Arts House, Open Space Contemporary Arts, State Theatre Company South Australia, The Rabble, and has an ongoing relationship with Vitalstatistix who developed and produced *Saskia Falls*. She has participated in several Adhocracy festivals, and her 2016 work with the company, *Life is Short and Long*, an investigation into the GFC in Barcelona, Spain & Wirrabara, South Australia, was a significant production for Vitals. In 2017, Emma was Vitalstatistix's resident artist, and in 2018 she had a residency with State Theatre Company South Australia before performing in their 2019 season of *Jasper Jones*.

Emma is a proud founding member of the Australian Bureau of Worthiness, with Tessa Leong and James Dodd, a residency model that creates theatre from interviews conducted with people on the street, asking 'What makes your day worth it?' The ABW has now met nine towns, the last being *Met Gumeracha* in 2018.

Mish Grigor

Director

Mish Grigor's work is situated in an expanded performance practice that includes making theatre, curating events, holding public dialogues, creating socially engaged projects and publishing. She is co-director of experimental arts organisation APHIDS, one third of the collaboration POST with Zoe Coombs Marr and Natalie Rose, and develops projects with other artists as a collaborator and performer. She has presented her work at Sydney Opera House; Malthouse Theatre (Melbourne), Sydney Theatre Company; Hong Kong Black Box Festival; Artshouse (Melbourne); Noorderzon Festival (Netherlands); Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts; Forest Fringe (Edinburgh); Battersea Arts Centre (London); La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club (New York); Taipei Performing Arts Centre; Arts Centre Melbourne; Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art, and Gabriela Mistral Cultural Center (Santiago), amongst others. Mish is currently a PhD candidate at Monash University researching feminist theatre histories.

Anne Thompson

Dramaturg

Anne Thompson's skills as a dramaturg have been honed through choreographing, directing, teaching directing and performance making, lecturing in contemporary performance, working as a dramaturg with performance makers and choreographers, and reviewing dance and contemporary performance work. Her theatre company with William Henderson, the Eleventh Hour Theatre, focussed on adapting canonical works. She explored a range of dramaturgical interventions over the 10-year life of that company (2001-2010). The company presented Beckett and Shakespeare works in international festivals in Australia and Ireland. She has a long history with the Victorian College of the Arts Drama School, Flinders Drama Centre, Dance Works, Australian Dance Theatre and RealTime.

Shalom Almond

Film Maker

Shalom Almond is an observational documentary filmmaker whose films follow memorable characters on transformative journeys and grant unique access inside closed worlds. She is the 2019 recipient of the South Australian Film Corporation's Lottie Lyell Award, granted to a female filmmaker demonstrating boldness and courage in her work. Shalom's recent documentary *Prisoners and Pups* (2017) premiered to a sell-out audience at the Adelaide Film Festival and was broadcast on ABC2. Her film *My Long Neck* (2014) has so far been broadcast in over 20 countries around the world. Shalom's first long-form documentary *The Love Market* (2009) was nominated for Best Documentary and Best Director at the 2009 AACTA Awards among other awards and nominations.

Meg Wilson

Production Designer

Meg Wilson has designed set and costume with State Theatre Company South Australia (*Terrestrial* 2018, *Euphoria* 2021, *Eureka Day* 2021) and Windmill Theatre Co.

(*Amphibian* 2018/2021) and works extensively with Vitalstatistix (*Bedroom* lighting design 2021 and *Progress Report* set, costume and lighting designs 2021), Patch Theatre (*Lighthouse*, AF 2020) and Restless Dance Theatre, for whom she designed the Adelaide Festival productions of *Intimate Space* (2018) and *Guttered* (2021). She has been largely involved with the establishment of RUMPUS for whom she was venue designer. In 2016, Meg was Lead Artist Intern with The Rabble. Her work *SQUASH!* premiered with Arts House during the FOLA 2018, for which she was awarded the 2019 Green Room Award for Contemporary and Experimental Performance (Innovation in Durational Performance).

Jason Sweeney

Composer

Jason Sweeney has collaborated with some of the world's leading performing arts companies and organisations, as well as directing and creating a number of his own works for the internet. He has released music internationally with two bands, Panoptique Electrical and Pretty Boy Crossover. Over the last few years, Jason has made an experimental feature film, *The Dead Speak Back* (2014 - SAFC/Screen Australia), and a trilogy of works focused on quietness, including major projects *Stereopublic: Crowdsourcing the Quiet* which won a TED Prize (City2.0, 2013), *Silent Type* (2014) and the 2016 research odyssey, *Quiet Ecology*. His recent collaborative sound works with Em König include *Sentients* (2018), *Masc* (2019) and *Emission* (2021). He currently releases music under the names Panoptique Electrical and Sweeney.

Chris Petridis

Lighting & Projection Designer

Chris Petridis is a lighting and video designer from Adelaide, South Australia. Following his completion of the Technical Production course at the Adelaide Centre of the Arts, Chris has continued to develop his experience across theatre, dance, and other live events in Australia and internationally. He recently worked with the World of Wearable Art in New Zealand to design the lighting for their 2019 arena show which was performed to 60,000 people. He designed and has been touring with the show *13 Ways to Look at Birds* featuring Paul Kelly, James Ledger, Alice Keath and the Seraphim Trio. Chris has worked with State Theatre Company South Australia, Theatre Republic, isthisyours?, Brink Productions, Tiny Bricks, Australian Dance Theatre, Restless Dance Theatre, Slingsby Theatre Company, Windmill Theatre Co., Force Majeure, Vitalstatistix and Flying Penguin.

Renate Henschke

Costume Designer

Renate Henschke is a costume and production designer working in film, television and theatre. Currently based in Adelaide, Renate spent 12 years working in Dublin, Ireland, in costume departments for film and television shows. Work includes costume design for upcoming ABC 10-part series *Parent Up* for Aquarius Films and *Honey I'm Home* web series for Windmill Pictures. An ongoing collaboration with film collective Closer Productions has led to costume designing for the acclaimed SBS *The Hunting*, the Irish Australian co-production *Animals*, the ABC/Screen Australia

television series *Fucking Adelaide*, and the Berlin Film Festival Crystal Bear Award winning short film *A Field Guide to Being a 12 Year Old Girl*.

Larissa McGowan

Choreographer

Larissa McGowan is an award-winning Australian dancer and choreographer. She was a longstanding performer and Associate Choreographer with Australian Dance Theatre. Larissa works independently creating contemporary dance, and is sought out for movement consultation for theatre, opera, film, TV, video clips and commissions for major dance companies. Her works include: *Skeleton* (Adelaide Festival, Dance Massive, Dublin Dance Festival); *Transducer* (Tasdance, Co:3); *Zero-Sum* (WOMADelaide); *Fanatic* (Spring Dance, De Novo); *Habitus* co-choreographed with Garry Stewart; *Mortal Condition* (Adelaide Festival Centre); *Playlist* (PYT Fairfield, Sydney Opera House); *Cher* (Vitalstatistix / Adelaide Cabaret Festival 2019, Adelaide Festival Centre 2020); *Dance Nation* (State Theatre Company South Australia / Adelaide Festival 2020).

Tim Overton

Assistant Director

Tim Overton is an Adelaide director, maker and performer. Tim had his start in performance and storytelling, and has been directing professionally since 2015. His work has comprised of predominantly local independent collaborations, though he has also had the pleasure of directing tertiary student productions and one incredible opportunity in New Zealand. Tim's devising and development experience includes working with renowned companies Slingsby, Patch Theatre Company, State Theatre Company South Australia and various independent companies. His performance credits include work for State Theatre Company South Australia, Sydney Theatre Company, Belvoir, Vitalstatistix, Slingsby Theatre, Patch Theatre Company, Windmill and August & September. Tim was a founding member of Adelaide independent theatre initiative RUMPUS.

Françoise Piron

Stage Manager

Françoise Piron trained as a Theatre Stage Manager at the Victorian College of the Arts. Since 1995, she has worked as a Stage Manager, Production Manager and Project Coordinator for companies including the Adelaide Festival, Adelaide Festival Centre, Brink Productions, Restless Dance Theatre, Australian Dance Theatre and Theatre Republic. She has a special interest in sustainable event management and its application in existing and new events. She created and manages The French Brace, a service encouraging sustainable behaviour change and resource recycling in the arts and education sector in South Australia.

ABOUT THE COMPANIES

VITALSTATISTIX

Vitalstatistix (Vitals) is a vibrant home for contemporary art and community life, based on the Port River, Yerta Bulti, Kurna Country in Port Adelaide, South Australia, at the heritage-listed Waterside Workers Hall.

Vitals was founded in 1984 by Margie Fischer, Ollie Black and Roxxy Bent – a radical and ambitious act by three women determined to make a difference to the opportunities for and workplace experiences of women artists in Australia. This determination to make change still lies at the heart of the organisation.

Vitals champions Australian artists who are creating transformative, multidisciplinary art and progressive public dialogue. Valuing experimentation and public engagement, the organisation works across theatre, dance, performance art, sound, social practice and more, offering artists and audiences an innovative site for important ideas and outstanding arts experiences.

Working in partnership with artists, Vitals offers year-round public programs of performance, residencies, projects, events, talks, exhibitions, festivals, collaborations, and professional development initiatives for artists.

Director **Emma Webb**

Executive Producer **Jennifer Greer Holmes**

Production Manager **Emma O'Neill**

Program and Events Coordinator **Isobel Moore**

BRINK PRODUCTIONS

For 25 years, Brink has created acclaimed original theatre from its base on Kurna Country in Adelaide. Established by seven acting graduates, between 1996 and 2004, the company produced over 20 shows including the world premiere of Howard Barker's nine-hour epic *The Ecstatic Bible*, in co-production with his UK company Wrestling School for the 2000 Adelaide Festival of Arts.

Since 2004, under the artistic leadership of Chris Drummond, Brink has been dedicated to evolving the art of storytelling in Australian theatre, making original multi-artform theatre in collaboration with great artists. Brink's vision is for theatre to be a transcendent experience: a place to gather, observe and reflect upon who we are, giving voice and flesh to the mysteries, crises and wonders of human existence. And to use theatre to start deep conversations about big ideas that contribute to, and engage with, the national discourse in ways that enliven, inspire and elevate.

Brink's original commissions and collaborative creations have won multiple awards for plays such as: Andrew Bovell's *When the Rain Stops Falling*; *Thursday* by Bryony Lavery, a play about Gill Hicks, an Australian who was the last living survivor rescued after the 2005 London bombing; *The Aspirations of Daise Morrow*, Brink's unique adaptation of Patrick White's *Down at the Dump*, and *Memorial* by Alice Oswald with score by Jocelyn Pook, a radical retelling of the *Iliad* starring Helen Morse and featuring a 200-strong community chorus (Adelaide and Brisbane Festivals, the Barbican, London).

In 2021, Brink created the Brink Production Hub to support more leading independent South Australian artists. In 2022, Brink celebrates 26 years of creating brilliant theatrical experiences for diverse audiences and will continue to find new ways to place culture at the centre of daily life.

Artistic Director **Chris Drummond**

General Manager **Karen Wilson**

Producers **Amanda Jones** and **Belinda MacQueen**

Production Manager **Lachlan Turner**

Production Coordinator/Stage Manager **Françoise Piron**

Finance Manager **Theresa Williams**