

MEDIA RELEASE

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Producer of Priscilla – Australia’s most successful theatrical export – to launch revolutionary approach to creating a new Australian musical.

The dazzlingly-original Australian film **STARSTRUCK** is to be turned into a fully-fledged “all-singing, all-dancing” musical in a ground-breaking and extraordinary partnership between industry heavyweights, aspiring theatre talents and the NSW Government via its tourism and major events agency, Destination NSW.

It was announced today that **RGM Productions** – spearheaded by Australian producer **Garry McQuinn** (*Priscilla Queen of The Desert, The Musical*) and his partner **Rina Gill** – will join forces with the **National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA)**, **Destination NSW** and **ORiGiN Theatrical** to bring director Gillian Armstrong’s iconic 1982 comedy drama to vibrant life on stage.

Set in pub under Sydney Harbour Bridge, the film was written by **Stephen MacLean** (*The Boy From Oz*), designed by **Brian Thomson** (*Jesus Christ Superstar, The Rocky Horror Show* and *Priscilla Queen of the Desert, The Musical*) and featured an uplifting, catchy soundtrack, including *Body and Soul* by Tim Finn, the title song *Starstruck* by Phil Judd, and *The Monkey in Me!* by Dennis Nattrass.

McQuinn said: “**STARSTRUCK** is an Australian fairytale, a wonderfully naive film with a ‘dare to dream’ message. It’s a neglected classic; people forget how original and influential the film was. Jackie Mullens strutting across the Sydney Opera House’s stage with her punk hair in her neon-lit tutu, tiara and gloves anticipated Madonna’s *Like A Virgin* by two years.

“**STARSTRUCK** is the perfect title for this collaboration between the students and teachers at NIDA, and our most talented and experienced theatre makers.”

The development of **STARSTRUCK** begins in September 2018 with preliminary workshops involving both undergraduate and post-graduate NIDA students. The book for the musical has been written by **Mitchell Butel**, one of Australia's best-known actors and musical theatre stars.

Directed by **Simon Phillips** (*Priscilla Queen of the Desert*, *Ladies in Black*, *Muriel's Wedding*), set designed by the Tony Award-winning Thomson (for the 1996 Broadway production of *The King and I*) and choreographed by **Andrew Hallsworth** (*Anything Goes*, *Sweet Charity*), the uniquely home-grown **STARSTRUCK** will showcase NIDA's graduating class of 2019 when it premieres at the Parade Theatre late next year. The production aims to serve as a springboard for later commercial seasons.

"It'll be an exciting adventure to see this warm-hearted little Australian film take shape on the stage. The story about a couple of self-invented Ozzie kids trying to save their family pub is full of joy and adolescent energy, and NIDA feels like the perfect place to road-test its charms," Simon Phillips said.

For McQuinn, shepherding the production to the stage in such a resourceful way enables a level of mentoring and cross-generation collaboration that is vital to the future life-blood of the theatre. It also further enriches his long-standing association with NIDA, first as a student, then Head of Production, Board Member and now Trustee.

NIDA's Director/CEO Kate Cherry has embraced the partnership, supported by **Mushroom Music Publishing**, the owner of **Foundation Theatres Stephen Found**, **Destination NSW**, **Origin Theatrical** and **David Elfick** of **Palm Beach Pictures**.

"The National Institute of Dramatic Art is proud to host the initial **STARSTRUCK** workshops in Sydney this year," said Cherry. "The development of new Australian work resonates with NIDA's primary aim to provide an immersive creative environment that encourages industry collaboration and innovation.

"As we head into our 60th year, NIDA looks forward to being part of this exciting creative process. Collaboration is central to our training philosophy and our students will benefit greatly from this opportunity."

NSW Minister for Tourism and Major Events Adam Marshall said the NSW Government was delighted to support the development of a new Australian musical.

"NSW is the nation's home of first-run musical productions and we are delighted to be supporting this fantastic collaboration between industry and NIDA students to turn **STARSTRUCK** into a musical masterpiece on stage. I can't wait to see the world premiere of **STARSTRUCK** performed in Sydney next year," Mr Marshall said.

David Elfick of Palm Beach Pictures, the Producer of the film said “**STARSTRUCK** was Australia’s first movie musical. It was a contemporary movie made during the golden era of Australian pop music. Now with **STARSTRUCK** the stage musical we have the chance to celebrate seventies and eighties music and include the best songs from that time into its comedy storyline of Jackie Mullens, a barmaid aspiring to be a popstar.”

Michael Gudinski, Founder and Chairman of Mushroom said “it’s very exciting that **STARSTRUCK** will come to life again. Mushroom’s artists and songwriters contributed most of the music in the film in 1982. It was a great movie that was ahead of its time. The musical will feature a lot more Mushroom songs from the era that will bring great energy to the stage.”

McQuinn, a NIDA Alumnus and the lead producer of *Priscilla Queen of the Desert The Musical* – many refer to it as Australia’s national musical - said the vastly experienced creative team will work with NIDA students across all its courses, giving lectures and masterclasses, and workshopping the production processes.

McQuinn and Gill founded their family business RGM Productions in 2013. The independent production house produced the world premiere of the stage adaptation of Ingmar Bergman’s film *Through A Glass Darkly* with Ruth Wilson in London and Carey Mulligan in New York, and the UK Theatre Awards short-listed *Two Worlds of Charlie F* performed by and based on the stories of injured ex-soldiers. Most recently, RGM produced an adaptation of *The Hunting of the Snark*, a high-energy family musical that played at the Sydney Opera House and Arts Centre Melbourne this past July after successful seasons on London’s West End and the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. RGM is committed to bringing Aussie talent to the world and recently produced *Songs For Nobodies*, starring Bernadette Robinson in London. They are the international bookers and managers of Australian shows *The Tap Pack* and the cabaret musical *Velvet*. RGM is the international booker and manager for the West End Hit musical, *Everybody’s Talking About Jamie* and the international producer of Jean Paul Gaultier’s new musical *Fashion Freakshow* which opens in Paris this October.

Foundation Theatres is an Australian family organisation who own and operate two of Sydney’s premier theatres; the Capitol Theatre and Sydney Lyric. Owners Stephen and Angela Found, and all who work alongside them, share a passion for the performing arts industry, its product, and its long-term growth and stability. Foundation Theatres invest heavily in education and product development, and having partnered with NIDA on a range of education initiatives, is delighted to see **STARSTRUCK** developed in this way.

Stephen Found said “Having an Australian creative team of this calibre to craft this exciting new Australian musical alongside NIDA students is an inspiring and exciting project for us to support. We hope this will provide unique learning opportunities for the students, encouraging a new generation of theatre makers to develop wonderful Australian stories for the stage.”

Described by The Guardian as “a neon lightning bolt with all the makings of a classic”, **STARSTRUCK** is a cinematic love letter to Sydney. It came as a startling contrast to the pioneering Gillian Armstrong’s earlier work, the internationally-acclaimed period film *My Brilliant Career*.

STARSTRUCK was billed as “a modern musical comedy”. It was splashy, colourful and bold, and established a new style of Australian filmmaking. The film earned three AFI Award Nominations, including for Best Original Music Score, Best Achievement in Costume Design and Best Achievement in Production Design.

Set primarily in and around The Rocks, **STARSTRUCK** is centred on the loveable and quirky Jackie Mullens, a teenager who works in her mother’s failing harbour-side pub but dreams of becoming a rock star while her cousin Angus aspires to be her manager and get her on the national TV talent series, ‘The Wow Show’.

Adds Thomson: “The film is flamboyant, vivid and celebrates a time of innocence and excitement when it just might be possible to make dreams come true.”

The workshop of **STARSTRUCK** is supported by the NSW Government via its tourism and major events agency, Destination NSW.

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