

AMONGST THE LIVING

by

*John Pielmeier
Jean-Paul Sartre
Diana Son*

Directed by
Kai Paynter



IN-DEVELOPMENT WORK

*Leichhardt Uniting Church
June 26-29, 2025*



»»» DIRECTOR'S NOTE «««

At the heart of this development work lies a fascination with confinement—both literal and existential—and the fragile human truths that emerge when we are placed under pressure.

Agnes of God, Stop Kiss, & No Exit are wildly different plays in tone, time, and structure, yet they all grapple with the same question: What happens when we are forced to confront the limits of belief, identity, and responsibility—when there is no escape?

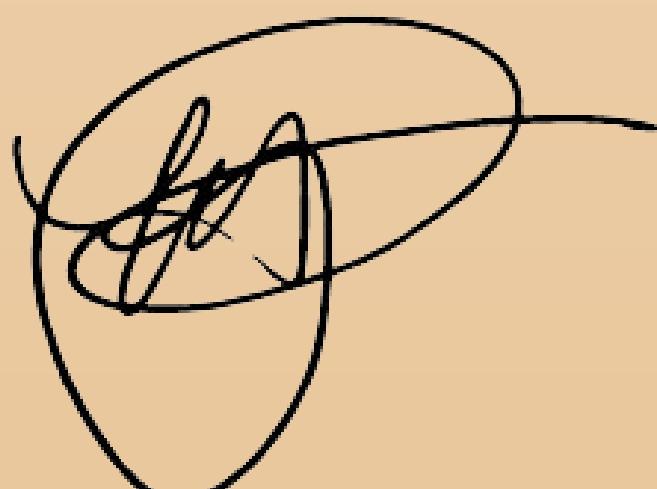
In Agnes of God, faith and trauma clash in a psychological battleground where logic and mystery pull against one another. In Stop Kiss, Diana Son presents us with a poetic and gritty world where pain and salvation collide. And finally, in No Exit, Sartre's infamous room with no mirrors or doors reminds us that hell is not in fire and brimstone, but in each other—and in ourselves.

Each piece has been approached with a spirit of exploration. This is a development showing: a space for risk, for rough edges, and for process. These works are not polished excerpts or abridged versions but living, breathing inquiries into control, confinement, and the struggle for freedom—be it spiritual, social, or psychological.

We invite you to lean into the discomfort, contradictions, and questions that arise—and to sit with them, as we have.

Thank you for being part of this stage in the journey.

*Kai P.
Director*



AMONGST THE LIVING

RUN TIME: 1:30

The Americas presents an intimate showcase of developmental work entitled AMONGST THE LIVING. Woven together by the stunning vocals of John de Voy, Amongst the Living is a bold anthology of theatrical works that grapple with the liminal space between belief and brutality, salvation and self-deception. Featuring Agnes of God, Stop Kiss and No Exit, these three distinct yet thematically resonant plays examine the desperate human need for meaning - whether in divinity, identity, or the judgement of others.

An excerpt from the play Agnes of God by John Pielmeier, is a powerful meditation on faith, trauma, and the search for truth. It explores the collision between reason and belief, science and the sacred. In an intimate chamber of doubt and conviction, three women confront the mysteries of suffering, sanctity and the unknowable.

Another excerpt from Stop Kiss by Diana Son offers a glimpse into this tender, razor-sharp play that traces the quiet beginnings of love between Callie and Sara. What starts as a growing friendship turns into something deeper, something unspoken... Stop Kiss is a love story that refuses to whisper. It doesn't just ask who we love — it asks what we risk to be seen.

No Exit is an existential classic by playwright Jean-Paul Sartre, adapted & abridged by Ruby Jenson. We see a tense, unrelenting examination of self, otherness, and the inescapable gaze of judgement. No Exit traps its characters - and its audience - in a psychological crucible where truth, identity and damnation are laid bare. Hell, it turns out, is not fire and brimstone... but other people.



TEAM



Playwrights

John Pielmeier - *Agnes of God*

Jean-Paul Sartre - *No Exit*

Diana Son - *Stop Kiss*

Director

Kai Paynter

Executive Producer

BearTiger Productions

Producer

The Americas, A Theatre Co.

Production Manager

Matt Giles

Rehearsal Stage Manager

Kloud Milas

Media Co-ordinator

Kloud Milas

Marketing

Eddie Langford

Cast

Tiana Meehan

Ella Sullivan

Grace McDonald

Dr John De Voy

Kalana Wijayatilake

Liam Merchant

Anoushka Nesbitt

Grace Ho

Michael Waples



JOHN PIELMEIER

Playwright

John Pielmeier's career has spanned theatre, film, and television. Born in 1949, Pielmeier first gained widespread recognition with *Agnes of God*, which premiered on Broadway in 1982 and became an international success. The play delves into themes of faith, trauma, and the mysteries of belief through a powerful psychological drama between three complex women. It was later adapted into a feature film in 1985, starring Jane Fonda, Anne Bancroft, and Meg Tilly.

Pielmeier's writing is known for its emotional intensity and philosophical depth. Beyond *Agnes of God*, his work includes plays such as *Voices in the Dark* and *Haunted Lives*, and numerous screenplays for TV, including adaptations of *Hitler: The Rise of Evil* and *The Pillars of the Earth*.

With *Agnes of God*, Pielmeier created a haunting and unforgettable piece that continues to challenge audiences and actors alike, resonating with questions that are as urgent now as they were over 40 years ago.



JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

Playwright

Jean-Paul Sartre was a French philosopher, novelist, playwright, and political activist, and one of the central figures in 20th century existentialism. A sharp critic of the bourgeois morality and an advocate for individual freedom and responsibility, Sartre's work spans literature, philosophy, and theatre.

His plays - including *The Flies*, *Dirty Hands*, and *No Exit* - dramatise existentialist ideas through taut, intellectually charged dialogue and morally complex characters.

No Exit, perhaps his most famous theatrical work, distills his philosophy into a claustrophobic confrontation between three characters trapped in a room - and in themselves. Sartre declined the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1964, remaining committed to independence of thought and radical self-definition.



DIANA SON

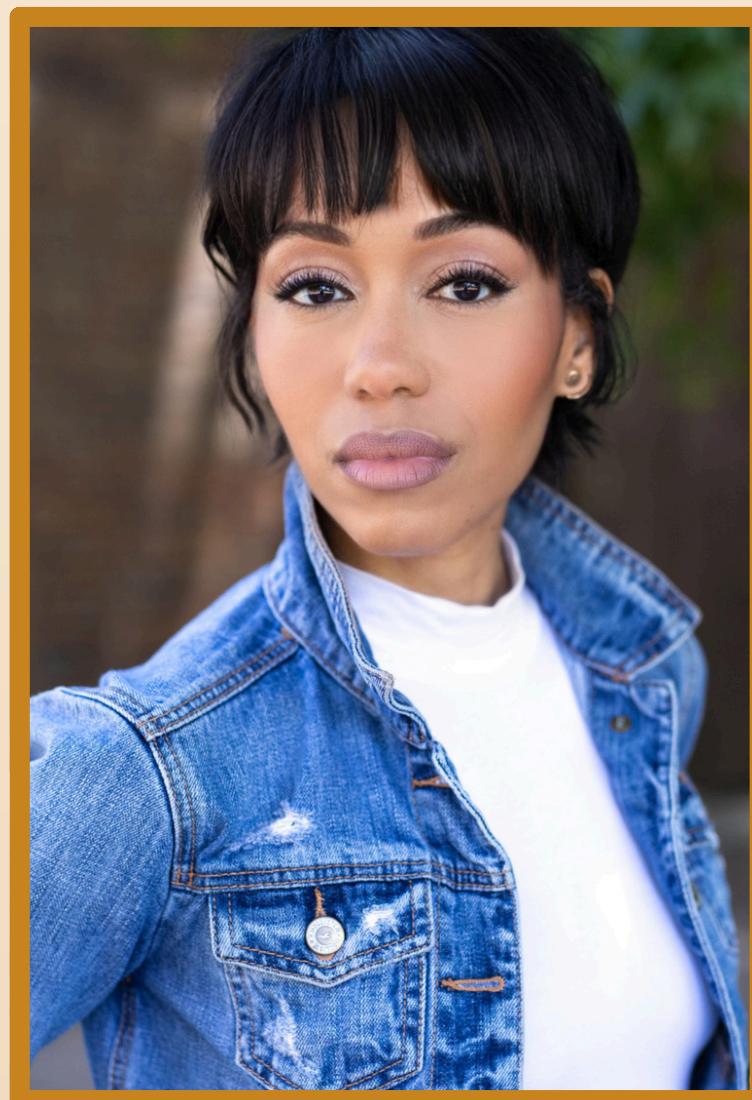
Playwright

Diana Son is a Korean-American playwright, screenwriter, and producer best known for her critically acclaimed play *Stop Kiss*. Born and raised in Philadelphia and educated at New York University, Son's writing is celebrated for its emotional depth, authenticity, and nuanced exploration of identity, love, and cultural intersections.

Her breakthrough play, *Stop Kiss* (1998), premiered at The Public Theater and quickly became a modern classic in contemporary theatre, frequently staged in colleges and professional theaters across the U.S. The play explores themes of queer identity, violence, and unexpected intimacy, and has garnered praise for its innovative structure and heartfelt storytelling.

In addition to her work in theatre, Son has had a distinguished career in television. She has written and produced for hit series such as *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*, *Southland*, *Blue Bloods*, and *13 Reasons Why*. She was also a co-executive producer on **American Crime* and served as showrunner for the Netflix series *Ginny & Georgia*.

Diana Son continues to be a trailblazing voice in American drama and television, championing stories that center marginalized voices with compassion and power.



KAI PAYNTER

Co-Operator | BearTiger Productions

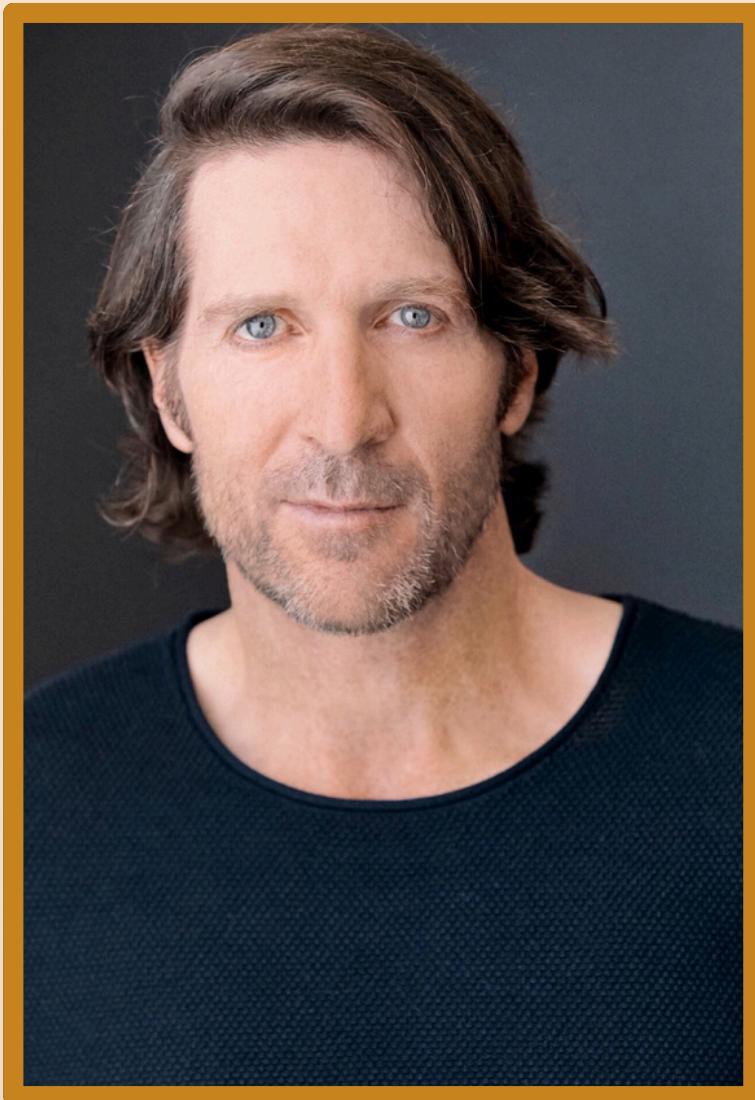
Artistic Director | The Americas, A Theatre Co.

Director | Amongst The Living

Kai is a NY artist, local to Sydney who founded @theamericastheatreco . As a director/ producer, Kai's credits include THE MONEY SHOT, WHEN SHE LOVES ME (writer), THIS IS L-O-V-E (co-writer), NO DIRECTION HOME, MEGAN, L-O-V-E (co-writer), BRAVE PEOPLE, SUDS, HELLO DOLLY, CRAZY FOR YOU, HONK, THE UGLY DUCKLING, countless actor showcases, sizzle reels, pilots, and music videos. She is the recipient of the 2024 Sydney Short+Sweet Festival award for Best Director and Best Play.

In addition to directing, producing, and writing, Kai has mentored students for entry into competitive collegiate programs such as Yale School of Drama, Columbia University, NYU's Tish and coached celebrity talent in both Sydney & Los Angeles.

Together with partner @kirk_hastings , they formed @beartiger.productions. Kai holds a BA (Hon) in Political Science from Purdue University and an MFA from the University of California, Irvine. She's at www.KaiPaynter.com



KIRK HASTINGS

Co-Operator | BearTiger Productions

@kirk_hastings is co-founder of @beartiger.productions (with his wife @kai.paynter) and recently starred in the Australian premiere of Neil LaBute's THE MONEY SHOT, playing Steve.

His producer credits include MEGAN, WHEN SHE LOVES ME, NO DIRECTION HOME, music videos CLOSER, RIGHT FOR YOU, and SPOTLIGHT. Kirk's film and TV credits include Deadly Women - FOXTEL, Bite Club - CHANNEL 9, Last King of the Cross - STAN.

His theatre work includes 2024 Short+Sweet Festival, Sydney winner - Best Play for BRAVE PEOPLE, L-O-V-E, and THIS IS L-O-V-E. Kirk has trained in the Meisner Technique at Actor's Pulse Studio, Sydney.



RUBY JENSON

Chief of Staff | BearTiger Productions

Ruby is excited to be collaborating for the fifth time with Kai & Kirk to bring Amongst the Living to life. Her production work includes L-O-V-E, This is L-O-V-E, No Direction Home and The Money Shot (the latter two for which she also worked as intimacy co-ordinator).

Ruby has always been passionate about the arts, ensuring creative voices have the opportunity to be heard. She has completed training with Sydney Acting Association, AFTRS, NIDA and Actors Centre Australia.



KLOUD MILAS

**Media Co-ordinator | The Americas
Rehearsal Stage Manager | Amongst the Living**

Kloud Milas has acting experience in a range of various projects such as feature films, TV, short films, theatre, music videos, commercials /campaigns - some of her acting work can be viewed on Apple TV and Amazon Prime.

Kloud's most recent work includes the feature film Box: Metaphor that took prominence in the US (which she acted in and Assistant Directed) and the feature film Cuckoo's Den (Amazon Prime Video). Horror/Slasher short film In A Place Like This also is currently circulating the film festival circuit. Kloud is attached to projects such as Sahela (Companion) which had a mini cinema release at the end of March 2025 (Executive Produced by Dev Patel) and feature film Carmen & Bolude that premiered in March 2025 and recently screened at the Gold Coast Film Festival. Kloud is also attached to feature film Akoni, which was AACTA-nominated and also ARIA-nominated.

She is excited to come on board and work with BearTiger Productions and The Americas A Theatre Company for their developmental work Amongst The Living. You can follow Kloud Milas and her journey on Instagram : @kloudmilas



MATT GILES

Production Manager

Matt Giles is a Sydney-based actor and creative. He holds a Bachelor of Performance (Dramatic Arts) from the Australian Institute of Music and is the co-founder of Astral Seas Productions, which debuted its first show The Mark You Leave at Sydney Fringe Festival 2024.

Matt's acting credits include The Mark You Leave (Astral Seas), Cloudstreet (Lane Cove Theatre Company), Jack (Echo Theatre Company), and Waiting for Godot (AIM).

His behind-the-scenes credits include Stage Manager and Sound & Lighting Operator for The Money Shot (The Americas A Theatre Co), Sound Designer, Dramaturg, and Producer for Mind the Gap (Astral Seas), Sound Designer for Cloudstreet (Lane Cove Theatre), Stage Manager for The Long Haul (Sydney Fringe 2023) and Heroes of the Fourth Turning (Outhouse Theatre Company).



EDDIE LANGFORD

Marketing

Eddie Langford graduated from AIM with a Bachelor of Music (Music Theatre) in 2022 and recently closed Hills Musical Theatre Company's production of Freaky Friday, playing Adam!

His past theatre credits include Ensemble in Head Over Heels (Regals Musical Soc., 2025), Officer Lockstock in Urinetown (MUSE, 2024), Ensemble/Nicky's Right Hand in Avenue Q (Blackout Theatre Co., 2024), Anthony the Squirrel in Nutz!: A New Musical (MUSE, 2023), Whiffle/Father Officer O'Brien/Ensemble in Cry Baby (MUSE, 2023), Leo Bloom in The Producers (Holroyd Musical & Dramatic Soc., 2023), Voice 5 in 35mm: A Musical Exhibition (MacMS, 2023), and Mr/Dennis in Sunday in the Park with George (MUSE, 2022). @eddiejlangford on Instagram.



TIANA MEEHAN

**Dr. Martha Livingston | Agnes of God
Estelle U/S | No Exit**

Tiana Meehan is a proud Wiradjuri woman, actor and performer with a love for theatre and film.

Her credits include performances at the Logie Awards with Todd McKenney, on The Voice for Guy Sebastian, and in commercials for I'm A Celebrity S8 and David Jones, as well as music videos for The Veronicas and Amy Shark.

In Australia, Tiana has completed her Diploma in Performing Arts and trained at Screenwise and TAFTA. She has also studied and performed internationally at the Broadway Dance Center, Joffrey Ballet School, and Alvin Ailey in New York City, as well as in cities like Beijing, Los Angeles, and Las Vegas. Additionally, she has had the opportunity to learn from legends such as Ann Reinking, Chryssie Whitehead, and Alexis Carra.



GRACE MACDONALD

**Agnes | Agnes of God
Nurse | Stop Kiss**

Grace is a Sydney-based performer with a strong foundation in musical theatre, commercial dance, and acting. Originally from Rockhampton, Queensland, she holds an Advanced Diploma of Art (Musical Theatre & Commercial Dance) obtained at the Australian Dance Performance Institute in Brisbane and has trained with The Dream Dance Company (Show|Business), Anthony Meindl's Actor Workshop, and at AFTRS.

Grace's stage credits include Spiegelesque working with Kermond Creative and theatre companies around Sydney such as Mark Edmonds Productions and Retrosweat.

Her screen appearances include The Masked Singer (Warner Brothers) and music videos for Cosmo Blue. She is thrilled to join BearTiger Productions/ The Americas and is so grateful to the creative team for the opportunity to explore such a powerful and challenging piece.



DR. JOHN DE VOY

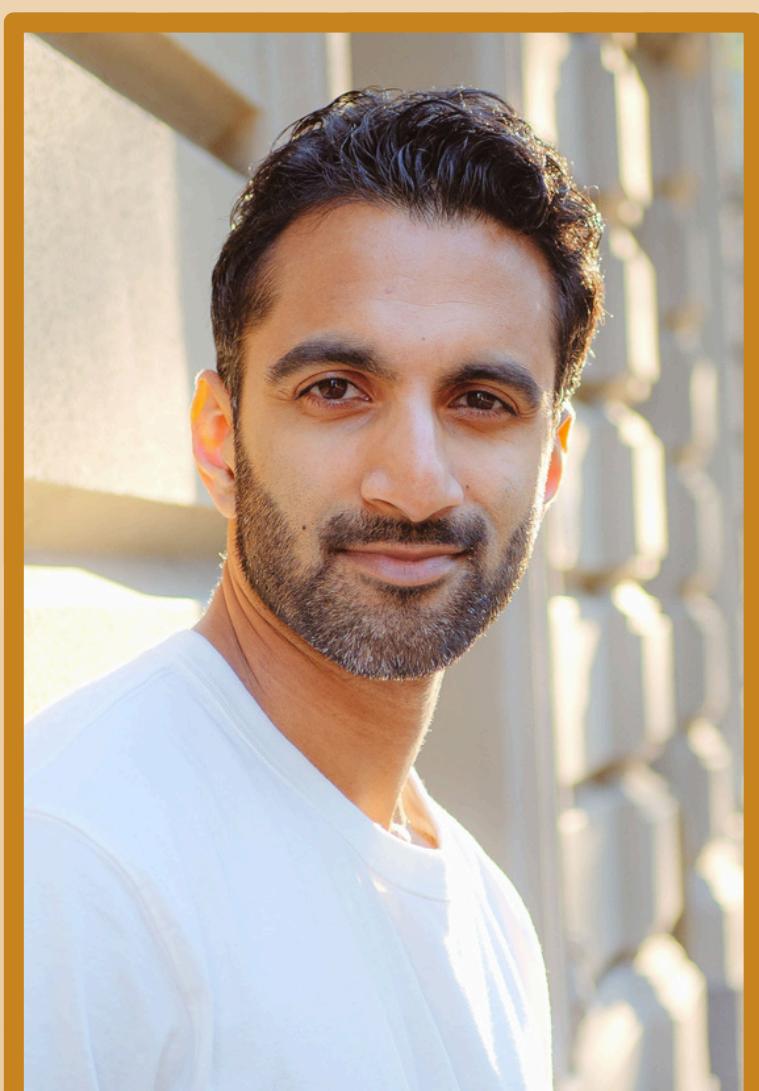
Vocalist

Singing and entertaining have always been John's greatest passions. While building a career as a chiropractor, he was introduced to the world of opera by the remarkable soprano Margaret Eales, former principal soprano for the English National Opera. She saw potential in John as a high-range baritone and encouraged him to explore new opportunities. With her unwavering belief in John's talent, he moved from country NSW to Sydney, where he earned a role in the original 1993 cast of *Les Misérables* at the Hill's Centre, portraying the Bishop of Digne.

Since then, he has performed numerous principal roles with Rockdale Opera, including Doctor Malatesta in *Don Pasquale*, Danilo in *The Merry Widow*, The Pirate King in *The Pirates of Penzance*, and Caliph in *Kismet*, among others.

You may have seen John in the cast of *Opera Afloat* for Captain Cook Cruises Sydney or performing at Alfredo's restaurant at Circular Quay. During the 2000 Olympics, he was honored to be part of the ensemble for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's performance of *Götterdämmerung*, and also had the privilege of performing as a soloist for two Papal visits to Sydney.

With three wonderful children and a passion for singing that is now being reignited, John is thrilled to return to the stage, embracing opportunities to perform and entertain once again.



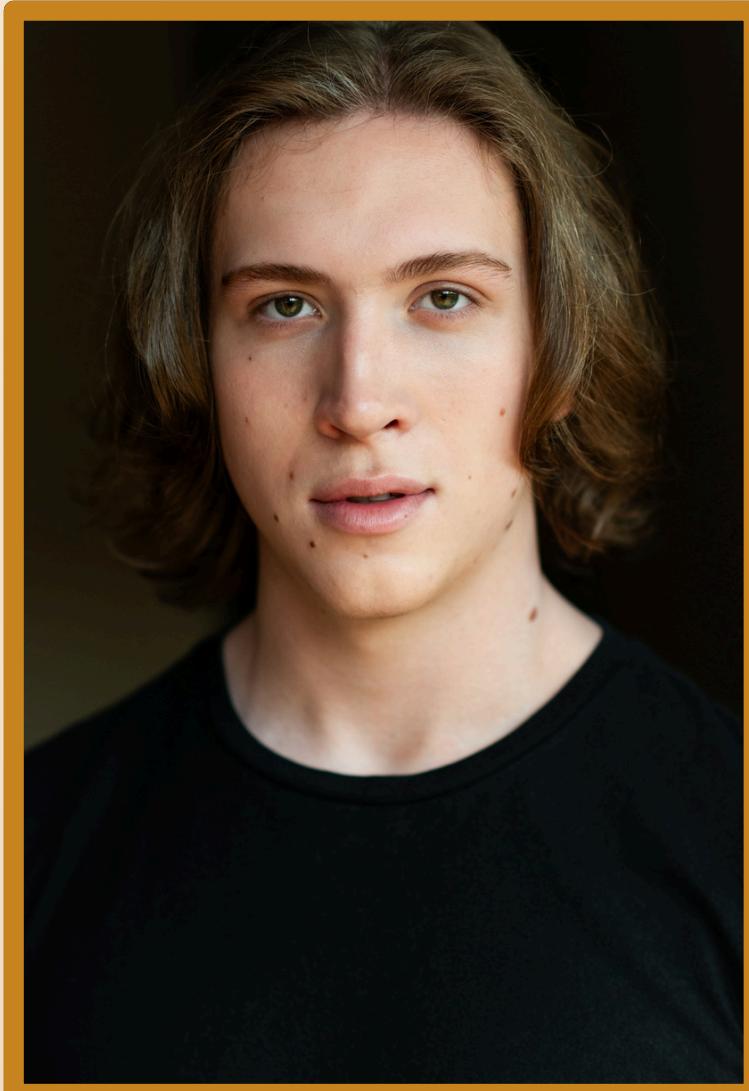
KALANA WIJAYATILAKE

Garcin | No Exit

Kalana is a Sydney-based actor working across stage and screen. He has trained with a range of industry professionals and continues to grow his craft through ongoing work in both commercial and theatrical productions.

In the last couple of years, Kalana's screen credits include lead roles in a string of national and international commercials, supporting roles on ABC's 'Total Control' and 'Austin', and a lead performance in the short film 'The Pleasure of Meeting Someone' - which screened across major cities in Australia as a finalist for Flickerfest 2023, as well as in Berlin as a finalist for the Orion Film Festival.

Kalana is thrilled to be collaborating with The Americas on this production of 'No Exit'.



LIAM MERCHANT

Valet | No Exit

Liam Merchant was born and raised in Sydney. As a young child, Liam's parents nurtured his passion for the creative arts through music, playing both flute & piano for several years. Liam also grew up playing many sports as a child before choosing to settle on gymnastics, of which he trained competitively for six years, placing 3rd on floor at the National Clubs Championships held in Bendigo 2017.

Though growing up shy, Liam's love for performance from competitive training and creative influence derived from his music influence slowly nurtured his admiration for acting. With little knowledge of the industry, Liam chose to take his first step towards his passion through high school drama & instantly fell in love, being provided a space of creative freedom and self expression, though still craving more. Post high school graduation in 2022, Liam knew he wanted to focus more on screen acting, where he enrolled in Screenwise, graduating November 1st 2024.



ELLA SULLIVAN

Callie | Stop Kiss

Ella Sullivan is a Sydney-based actor and graduate of the Bachelor of Dramatic Arts program at Excelsia College. She continued her training at the Los Angeles Performing Arts Conservatory, specialising in screen acting and the Meisner Technique. Ella regularly hones her craft through courses at The Hub Studio and currently serves on the ATYP Youth Advisory Board.

Her recent credits include The Money Shot (Stage, 2025), Dumb Kids (Stage, 2024), Salt Waters (Screen, 2024), and Anything's Fair Game (Screen, 2025). A passionate writer and producer, Ella co-wrote, produced, and starred in Things Left Unsaid (2023), which premiered at Excelsia College, and also co-wrote and starred in the short film Transcending (2022). She is currently co-producing her latest screenplay, Remembering You.

Ella is also a trained dancer with experience in ballet, contemporary, and modern dance, as well as physical theatre. In 2023, she appeared in Some Things Change, a physical theatre piece presented at Sydney Fringe Festival. Equally passionate about stage and screen, Ella brings energy and commitment to every project she takes on.



ANOUSHKA NESBITT

Estelle | No Exit
Sara | Stop Kiss

Anoushka Nesbitt is ecstatic to make her acting debut with BearTiger Productions / The Americas A Theatre Company production of AMONGST THE LIVING as Estelle in 'No Exit'.

With a deep passion for storytelling and emotional connection, she is currently completing a Bachelor of Acting at JMC Academy, in which she has created her own short film, starred in peer and independent projects, and performed in a dynamic range of productions, from Shakespearean classics to contemporary works.

In her free time, Anoushka enjoys immersing herself in other creative outlets, like singing, fashion, and visual arts. Anoushka is fully dedicated to pursuing a professional career in the performing arts, eager at all opportunities to learn, take direction, and put in the hard work necessary to develop her skills and become a valuable member of any project she's involved in.



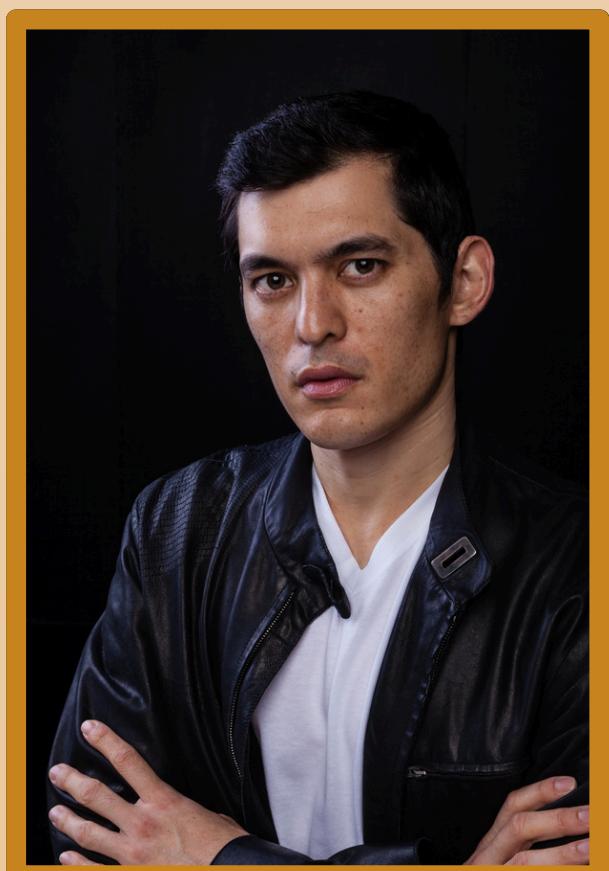
GRACE HO

Inez | No Exit
Mother Miriam Ruth | Agnes of God

Grace Ho is an actor with experience across both stage and screen, and she is excited to be part of Amongst the Living. She played a lead role in To Freely Flourish (official selection, St Kilda Film Festival 2025), and has performed on stage with Slanted Theatre, Silver Pillow Productions, and others.

Grace began her training at Sydney Theatre School and later completed both the Actors Residency and Screen Actors Studio programs at NIDA Open.

In addition to her acting work, Grace co-created and co-produced a comedy show for the Sydney Fringe Festival, and served as associate producer on a new stage play that premiered in 2024 at Riverside Theatres.



MICHAEL WAPLES

Garcin U/S | No Exit

Amongst The Living marks Michael Waples' first professional involvement with The Americas A Theatre Company. For the past three years, Michael has trained extensively across several renowned acting institutions in Sydney, including Sydney Theatre School, Sydney Actor's Association and Anthony Meindl's Acting Workshop. Besides his love for theatre, Michael has a passion for music, singing, and writing, and is thrilled to be a part of this exciting production.

26 – 29 JUNE 2025

Leichhardt Uniting Church

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT

events.humanitix.com/the-americas-a-theatre-company-presents-amongst-the-living

THE
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