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La Mama Theatre is on traditional land of the people of the Kulin Nation. We give our respect to the Elders of these traditional lands and to all First Nations people past, present and future. We acknowledge all events take place on stolen lands and that sovereignty was never ceded.

We are grateful to all our philanthropic partners and donors, advocates, volunteers, audiences, artists and our entire community as we work towards the La Mama rebuild. Thank you!

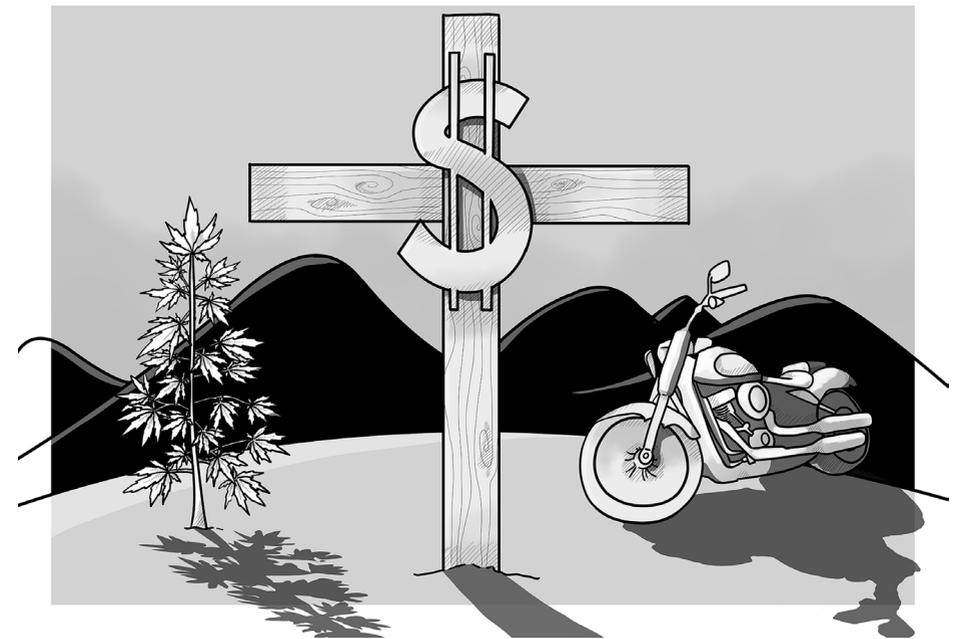
La Mama is financially assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council – its arts funding and advisory body, Restart Investment to Sustain and Expand (RISE) Fund - an Australian Government initiative, the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria, and the City of Melbourne through the *Arts and Creative Partnerships Program*.



L A M A M A
P R E S E N T S

THE BUSINESS OF GOD

as a part of Melbourne International Comedy Festival 2021



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THE BUSINESS OF GOD

Written & Directed by

Brendan Black and **Martin Chellew**

Performed by **Heather Valentine, Sarah Bliss, Zachary Kazepis, Ruth Gilmour, Max Gettler**

Image by **Ruby Culley**

CREATORS' NOTES

The Business of God came about due to our own personal experiences with religion many years ago, infused with the reasons why we turned our backs on it and the effect we see it having on societies throughout history. It started its life in 2010 as a short film, yet as we soon realised we would need a very large budget to bring it to fruition, we shelved the project. We raised it from the dead in 2018 and set about breathing new life into it as a stage production, discovering that theatre would allow us to examine subjects that we could barely touch on in a 15-minute film.

In October 2019, life imitated art when Martin had a serious motorcycle accident, coming very close to experiencing his own mortality, but he has since started recuperating - though he likely

ZACHARY KAZEPIS PERFORMER

Zachary Kazepis is an actor, writer and music composer who has performed in a number of shows in Melbourne over the last 5 years as well as touring his critically acclaimed one-man show *Last Year's Eve* to Adelaide Fringe in 2019.

RUBY CULLEY IMAGE DESIGNER

A self-taught, Melbourne artist and long-time lover of performing arts. Frequently seen doodling in local cafes over a soy latte.

MARTIN CHELLEW WRITER & DIRECTOR

Martin is a disability support worker who dabbles in filmmaking and playwriting. He has a profound love of France, motorcycles, drinking far too much coffee, and spending time with his grandchildren. Despite his tattoos, he is actually a big teddy bear.

BRENDAN BLACK WRITER & DIRECTOR

Brendan is a filmmaker, playwright, wine writer and composer who's currently co-editing a book on the films of David Bowie, as well as writing a guide to the best wineries, breweries and distilleries of Victoria. He exists on coffee, pastries and wine and it's rumoured that at least 70% of his body is made of chocolate.

RUTH GILMOUR PERFORMER
Ruth graduated with a Bachelor of Dramatic Art at Excelsia College (formerly Wesley Institute) in 2013. Performance highlights for Wesley Theatre include *Kiss Me Kate* (2011), *Cavalleria Rusticana* (2012), *The Government Inspector* (2012) *As You Like It* (2012), *Faust* (2013), *The Proposal* (2013), *Ice-cream* (2013) and *Hot Fudge* (2013). For School Performance Tours: *Let's Stamp Out Bullying* (2014/15), *Pass The Poetry Please* (2014/15), *Let's Chat Habitat* (2014/15) and *Six Decades of Bullying* (2018-2020). For ACLE's *Theatrino: Five Fairy Tales* (2016) and *Comedy Sketches* (2016). For Gunnedah Conservatorium: *Secret Bridesmaid's Business* (2017). For Babble Productions: *Scientastic* (2018-2020), *Scientastic: Movement and Machines* (2019-2020) and *Aussie Allsorts* (2018-2020). When Ruth and her business/life partner aren't touring kids shows they enjoy filming spoof sketches for their YouTube Channel, reviewing questionable beers and emceeding their friend's weddings (whether they like it or not).

(creator's note continued...)

won't ride again. Our main hopes with *The Business of God* are not only that it gets people laughing, but also gets them thinking that one can still lead a full and rich life without religion.

Brendan Black and Martin Chellew have been making short films together since 2009, on topics such as politics, clerical abuse and asexuality. After Brendan had success with *Trotsky and Friends* at the 2016 and 2017 Melbourne International Comedy Festivals, the theatre bug had well and truly bitten, and Martin joined him this time, adapting *The Business of God* into a project of which we could both be very proud.

Acknowledgements / Thank you:

A big thank you to our cast for helping us finally realise this project, after the crappiness of 2020. Another big thank you to Shane Grant for his tech support and dealing with never-ending questions. A huge thank you to Ruby Culley for designing our logo, which helped to beautifully encapsulate many of the play's themes. And a MASSIVE thank you to everyone at La Mama for their amazing support of independent artists and allowing us to show *The Business of God* to the world.

HEATHER VALENTINE PERFORMER

Heather has had starring roles in several award-winning short films which have won awards at international and local film festivals and screened at Golden Door, San Diego and Southampton, Sunshine Short and Monsterfest Film Festivals. In 2018 she made her French language theatre debut in the Melbourne French Theatre's *C'est encore mieux l'après-midi* with award winning director Kotryna Gestait. Heather has trained extensively with US master teacher Howard Fine, and works with expert local coach Les Chantery and singing guru Sally Bourne. She believes in the power of storytelling to create real and meaningful change in the world. Dual US and Aussie national Heather has played state representative level touch football, and worked across the Middle East and Africa using her two masters degrees to respond to the Ebola outbreak and Syrian refugee crisis as a public health expert.

SARAH BLISS PERFORMER

Sarah was raised a Catholic and ended up marrying an atheist. While her partner challenges her faith daily, she refuses to give it up and risk losing all the good car parks courtesy of Saint Anthony. Sarah has studied performance at NIDA

Screen Actors Studio, PEM Studios Melbourne and Improv at the Improv Conspiracy. Sarah was overjoyed to be cast in the role of 'God.' She figured if Eric Clapton can play like God, then she can too. Sarah loves being involved in Community theatre, being on stage and on a set and performing in front of a camera, thanks to catching the acting bug two decades ago. Sarah has appeared in community theatre, short films and web series and looks forward to many more opportunities to collaborate in the future.

MAX GETTLER PERFORMER

Max Gettler is an actor at Sharon Power Management. He's performed in various projects, including 'True Story with Hamish & Andy', a number of theatre-in-education shows by Eagles Nest Theatre Company and 'That's Batman', starring Mark Bonnano of Aunty Donna-fame. Max has trained in a wide variety of workshops for performing arts, both in Melbourne and in New York. These include workshops for voice, improv (whether it be short or long-form, or musical) and, of course, acting. Before COVID, Max was in 'My Life is Murder' with Lucy Lawless and performed in Alpha Shows' touring production of 'Cinderella', as well as 'Arete: Epsilon' by Dionysus Theatre.