

THE CROCODILE

by Tom Basden. After Fyodor Dostoevsky.
Directed by Cassandra Fumi.
Presented by Spinning Plates Co.



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An amateur production by arrangement with Origin™ Theatrical, on behalf of Nick Hern Books.

CREATIVE TEAM

Directed by Cassandra Fumi

Performed by James Cerché, Joey Lai, Cait Spiker & Jessica Stanley

Set & Costume Design by Dann William Barber

Design Associate Savanna Wegman

Costume Supervisor & Maker Alexandra Aldrich

Sound Design by Gabriel Bethune

Lighting Design by Spencer Herd

Lighting Design Associate Natalya Shield

Lighting Mentor Rachel Burke

Stage Managed by Luci Watts

Assistant Stage Managed by Finn McLeish

Produced by Spinning Plates Co.

Photography by Jack Dixon-Gunn

SPECIAL THANKS TO

Luke Adams, Janne & Bro Barber, David Charles Bowyer, Rachel Burke, Sarah Clarke, Oliver Coleman, Callum Dale, Amanda Dhammanarachchi, Susie Dee, Jack Dixon-Gunn, fortyfivedownstairs staff, Tom Halls, Philip Hayden, Samara Hersch, Tenna Lavelle, Cam Lukey, Jessica Martin, Monash University Student Theatre, Fabio Motta, Sam Ryan, Michael Shaw, Yvonne Virsik, Mark Wilson, the Howard Fine Acting Studio, and the family, friends and pets of our cast & crew.

Proudly supported by fortyfivedownstairs.

CAST



JAMES CERCHÉ (HE/HIM) **IVAN & CO-PRODUCER**

James is a Green Room Award nominated actor, musician, producer and writer from Melbourne, Australia. He is graduate of the Howard Fine Acting Studio Full Time program and previously attended Monash University, where he achieved his Bachelor of Arts, majoring in English, Theatre and Film Studies. James is an active member of the Melbourne independent theatre scene, engaging on and offstage in productions with several companies. He currently joins other Howard Fine alumni as a member of North Of Eight. James appeared on stage in the acclaimed production of *Psychopomp* at La Mama (Barking Spider, 2015), *Rainbow Man* at fortyfivedownstairs (Goodnight Darlings, 2017) and *Philtrum* (North of Eight, 2018). In 2022 James toured the state with educational productions of *The Crucible* and *The Dressmaker* with Complete Works Theatre Company. Screen credits include Stan Original series *Bloom*, independent feature *Angel Of Light* and upcoming experimental film *Utopia*.

JAMESCERCHE.COM
[@jamescerche](https://www.instagram.com/jamescerche)

JOEY LAI (HE/HIM) **ZACK**

Joseph is a Chinese Australian performer with a passion for movement and performance. Since graduating the Victorian College of the Arts Joseph has pursued this passion by devising and producing multiple physical theatre shows, receiving his level 2 Certification from the Society of Australian Fight Directors Incorporated, and completing an Honours degree researching theatrical play and improvised performance.

Stage credits include *An Ideal Husband* (Melbourne Theatre Company), *Peter and the Wolf* (Melbourne Symphony Orchestra), and *Love/Chamberlain* (Theatre Works). In 2018 he received the Ian Potter Travel Grant to study clowning at Ecole Philippe Gaulier in France and collaborate with Rapier Wit Stage Combat school in Canada as a movement practitioner.

JOSEPH-J-LAI.COM
[@happy.go.joey](https://www.instagram.com/happy.go.joey)





CAIT SPIKER (SHE/HER)
THE SWING

Cait is an actor, who lives and works on the land of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people. Her theatre credits include: *Away* (Theatreworks), *Traps* (La Mama) *The Human Voice*, (Periscope Productions) *Her Father's Daughter* (HOTEL NOW), *Rainbow Man* (Fortyfive Downstairs) and *Stupid F*cking Bird* (Lightning Jar Theatre). Her recent film credits include *The Cost* by Matthew Holmes and *Visitors* by Alex Badham. Cait is a graduate of the Victorian College of the Arts ('14) and has trained extensively with NIDA, 16th Street and The Clowning Workshop. She has participated in master classes with Mike Alfreds, Iain Sinclair, Patsy Rodenberg, Kim Farrant, Les Chantery, Larry Moss, Ian Rickson and Howard Fine. She is a co-founder of HOTEL NOW, a company committed to the development and presentation of new work. She is represented by Mollison Keightley Management.

CAITSPIKER.COM
[@caitspiker](https://www.instagram.com/caitspiker)

JESSICA STANLEY (SHE/HER)
ANYA & CO-PRODUCER

Jess is an award-winning actor, writer, voice artist, director and producer from Naarm. She was the recipient of the Art Unbound Award for her ASMR-based show, *JSMR* (2021), the Howard Fine Performance Project's Best Actor, a Victorian Premier's Award, the Jennifer Francis Drama Prize, and a scholarship to study at Monash University, where she completed her Bachelor of Performing Arts. In 2015, she concurrently completed the Full-Time Program at the Howard Fine Acting Studio, Australia, and a Bachelor of Psychology at Swinburne University.

Jess recently returned from shooting feature film *Ancestry Road* in Tasmania, while other on-screen credits include roles on *The Doctor Blake Mysteries* and *Glitch*. In 2016, she was nominated for Best Performance Award for her solo performance in *Ménage* at Melbourne Fringe Festival, and her most recent play *Shut Up I'm a Vampire* was nominated for a Green Room Award in 2023. Other stage credits include *Ross & Rachel*, *You Are The Blood*, *Quite Drunk*, *Very Jesus-y*, *Strata, Inc.* and *Extinction*. Jess tours regularly with Complete Works Theatre Company. When she's not on stage Jess works as a marriage celebrant. She is represented by Profile Creative Management.



JESSICASTANLEYACTOR.COM
[@jstanny](https://www.instagram.com/jstanny)

CREATIVE TEAM



CASSANDRA FUMI (SHE/HER) **DIRECTOR**

Cass is a theatre maker and director. Directing credits include THE MERMAID (La Mama Theatre 2021 Playlist, Green Room Award Winner for Set, Costume & Lighting - Independent), DOG SHOW (Melbourne Fringe Hub - Winner Best Emerging Theatre Ensemble & Falls Festival), The Places You'll Go (Adelaide Fringe - Winner Best Theatre - Week 3), NADJA after André Breton (The Cockpit Theatre & Hornsey Town Hall Arts Centre, London), An Act Of Self-Destruction (VAULT Festival & Ply Gallery) & Assistant Director The House of Bernarda Alba (Melbourne Theatre Company). Cassandra is the Associate Artist on Body of Knowledge with Samara Hersch 2020-2022 and new work It's Going To Get Dark. Cassandra has run a drama program at Parkville Youth Justice Centre and been one of the facilitators of the Lets Take Over 2019-2022. Cassandra also works as a stage manager with companies that include; THE RABBLE, Samara Hersch & Lara Thoms, APHIDS, Fraught Outfit, Susie Dee and Performing Lines. In 2024, she will be directing Melbourne Theatre Company's production of World Problems.

CASSANDRAFUMI.COM
[@casa_blanca1](https://www.instagram.com/casa_blanca1)

DANN BARBER (HE/HIM) **DESIGNER**

Dann's work in set and costume design is overtly theatrical and is heavily influenced by his study of drawing and fine art. Recent work includes Wittenoom at Red Stitch 2023, the acclaimed re-imagining of Yentl produced by Kadimah Yiddish Theatre at the Fairfax, Arts Centre Melbourne, 2022, and The Amateurs at Red Stitch, 2022. Dann has won two Green Room Awards for his set and costume design for The Ghetto Cabaret at Forty-five Downstairs, 2019 and for The Mermaid at La Mama in 2021. He is a regular guest lecturer at the Victorian Collage of the Arts (VCA) and the Melbourne University. Other recent work includes his acclaimed re-imagining of Barnum: The Circus Musical starring Todd McKenny (StoreyBoard Entertainment) 33 Variations starring Ellen Burstyn (Mariners Group and Cameron Lukey), Escaped Alone (Red Stitch Actors Theatre), and the sold out season of Angels in America (Cameron Lukey, Dirty Pretty Theatre). In addition to his NIDA design degree, Dann has a degree of Fine Arts-Drawing from RMIT.



DANNBARBER.COM
[@dannwilliambarber](https://www.instagram.com/dannwilliambarber)



SAVANNA WEGMAN (SHE/THEY)
DESIGN ASSOCIATE

Savanna Wegman is a multidisciplinary designer, theatremaker and writer. She is New Zealand born, of Chinese Malaysian and Dutch descent and is now based on unceded Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung land in Naarm (Melbourne).

She is Co-founder of the STRANGEkit Performance Collective and her work spans across live, digital and hybrid mediums. Recent projects include: Set/Costume Designer 'Brittany and The Mannequins' (Fever103 Theatre), Associate Set/Costume Designer 'The Mermaid' (La Mama), AudioVisual Designer 'Kill Climate Deniers' (Monash Uni Student Theatre), Associate Designer 'The Dream Laboratory' (Essential Theatre), AudioVisual Production Designer 'WE ARE AIR' (CTP/Melbourne Fringe), Assistant Stage Manager 'The Invisible Opera' (RISING Festival), Assistant Stage Manager 'My Dearworthy Darling' (Malthouse/THE RABBLE). Savanna completed her Bachelor of Arts at Monash University's Centre for Theatre and Performance.

SAVANNAWEGMAN.COM
[@savannaas](https://www.instagram.com/savannaas)

ALEXANDRA ALDRICH (SHE/HER)
COSTUME SUPERVISOR & MAKER

Alexandra Aldrich is an Australian television and theater actress. She earned a Bachelor of Creative Arts degree from the University of Melbourne and is the co-founder of the Melbourne University Shakespeare company. In 2012, she graduated from the National Institute of Dramatic Arts (NIDA), earning a Bachelor of Dramatic Art (Acting) degree. A two-time Green Room Award nominee for Best Actress, Alexandra's recent stage credits include *The Maids* (Belvoir); *Bambert's Book of Lost Stories* (Barking Gecko) and outings with MTC, Red Stitch & Essential Theatre.

[@alexandraalrich](https://www.instagram.com/alexandraalrich)





GABRIEL BETHUNE (HE/HIM)
SOUND DESIGNER

A Lighting Designer, Sound Designer, Composer, and Performer, Gabriel wears many hats to support his practice in Theatre, Dance, Opera, and any other forms of performance that he is excited about at the time. He has worked in Independent Theatres throughout Melbourne. His practice is entirely collaborative and loves to work on more experimental, avant-garde, and non-naturalistic performances and works. Outside of the work space, Gabriel loves to take walks outside, practice photography and music, and speaks in the third-person.

[@gabe bethune](#)

SPENCER HERD (HE/HIM)
LIGHTING DESIGNER

Spencer (he/him) is a lighting designer and technician with a keen eye for detail and nuance, working across all forms of live performance, including theatre, concerts and events, and nightclubs. Spencer's deepest passions for design are lighting the world of sound, whether that being music, composition, a soundscape or musical theatre.

Graduating from the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (Bachelor of Performing Arts - Production & Design, Specialising in Lighting, 2018), he hopes to bring a new and innovative outlook into the industry as a collaborative and dynamic artist through new Australian works, queer stories and important voices.

Spencer's recent credits include Wittenoom (Red Stitch Actors' Theatre), Lehenda: Ukrainian Soul, Australian Soil (The National Theatre Melbourne), Curveball (La Mama Courthouse) Medea: Out of the Mouths of Babes (Theatre Works), Pull the Pin (Blue Room Theatre), A Hundred Words for Snow (Theatre Works Explosives Factory), Daddy (Chillout Festival), and From All Who Came Before (La Mama HQ). Spencer has also seconded with Trent Suidgeest on Muriel's Wedding the Musical for Global Creatures at Her Majesty's Theatre.

SPENCERHERD.COM

[@spencer_herd](#)





NATALYA SHIELD (SHE/HER)
LIGHTING DESIGN ASSOCIATE

Natalya Shield is a Melbourne based lighting technician who completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Production) at the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) in 2022. She works as a lighting technician at Melbourne Theatre Company, Arts Centre Melbourne, Her Majesty's Theatre, and Malthouse Theatre. Some of her recent production credits include followspot operator on The Tokyo Ballet's 'Giselle' and The Australian Ballet's 'Jewels' in The State Theatre, Michael Cassel Group's 'Mary Poppins' in Her Majesty's Theatre, and interned with Bangarra Dance Theatre's 'SandSong: Stories from the Great Sandy Desert' in Arts Centre Melbourne's Playhouse, and 'Terrain' in QPAC's Playhouse.

NATALYASHIELD.COM
[@natalya.shield](https://www.instagram.com/natalya.shield)

LUCI WATTS (SHE/HER)
STAGE MANAGER

Luci is a third year university student who is taking 2023 off from university to work professionally in the theatre industry. Working in 2022 on two Monash University Student Theatre shows, production managing *Tartuffe* and marketing manager for *The Wolves*. As well as an assistant stage manager on The Rising Festival show *The Invisible Opera* earlier in the year. Most recently, Luci stage managed the February season of *The Crocodile* and the Monash University Melbourne Fringe Festival show *Giant*.

[@luci.watts](https://www.instagram.com/luci.watts)



FINN MCLEISH (SHE/HER)
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

Finn is an emerging theatre manager and performer based in Naarm/Melbourne. She is currently studying Psychology at Monash University. Recent production credits include: Stage Manager, *Flake* (Red Stitch), Assistant Stage Manager, *Julius Caesar* (Melbourne Shakespeare Company), Assistant Stage Manager, *Far Away* (Patalog Theatre), Assistant Stage Manager, *The Crocodile* (Spinning Plates Co.), Co-Production Manager, *Shakespeare in Love* (Monash Uni Student Theatre), and Assistant Director, *Marie Antoinette* (Monash Uni Student Theatre). Recent performance credits include *Jack in Into the Woods* (Monash Uni Student Theatre) and *Elmire - Tartuffe* (Monash Uni Student Theatre).

[@finnmcleish](https://www.instagram.com/finnmcleish)



DIRECTOR'S NOTES



Cass Fumi in tech week for *The Crocodile*, February 2023

The world of *The Crocodile* is extreme.

A man is eaten by a crocodile. He survives. In fact, he thrives. He can dance, sing, and even, eventually, pontificate, all from the gory comfort of the insides of that poor creature.

Fyodor Dostoevsky wrote and never finished the satirical short story from which Tom Basden's play draws its inspiration. In Dostoevsky's original, Ivan is a civil servant who finds the innards of the crocodile a perfect place to carry out his administrative duties. In Basden's version, Ivan is an actor who finds the absurdity of his situation a perfect attraction for crowds from which he can draw that admiration he so craves. Dostoevsky's Ivan was a cog in the bureaucratic machine, while Basden's is a player in the attention economy. Both versions reflect the anxieties of the time in which they were written.

Nature is destroyed, ignored, and disregarded in this play. A crocodile captured, caged and teased lashes out only to become the hollowed out vessel for this pathetic subject of capital to carry out his empty ambitions. We struggle to consider an allegory more apt for making art on a dying planet. We watch on and laugh.

This work is an independent production that has been labored over and is filled with love. Mums papier machéing, big pots of soup, partners doing meal prep, and a sense of creating something together, for now from now.

Someone wise once said to me, as a director that "you are only as good as the people you surround yourself with". This team, both on and off stage, has brought so much joy, belly laughs and massive commitment to make this show happen.

Cassandra Fumi
February, 2023

ABOUT SPINNING PLATES CO.

Spinning Plates Co.

is an award-winning independent artist collective forged in Melbourne and joined together by a love of creating. Formed in 2018 after many years of collaboration, James Cerché and Jessica Stanley began Spinning Plates so that they could produce and perform their own work, with a focus on strong writing and offbeat storytelling.

With a solid foundation of training and technique, having studied extensively at the Howard Fine Acting Studio, Monash University and 16th Street, Spinning Plates has had a warm introduction to Melbourne's independent theatre scene with plays such as *Ross & Rachel* by James Fritz (Theatre Works, 2018) and *You Are The Blood* (Meat Market, 2019), and short film *Laundry* (2020). In 2020, their digital play, *JSMR*, won the Art Unbound Award at Melbourne Fringe, and Jess took out a Best Actor award for her short film, *Jafar*. Their 2022 production, *Shut Up I'm a Vampire*, received a Green Room Award nomination for Best Sound Design & Composition for James. Their February 2023 production of *The Crocodile* was a sellout hit, received rave reviews, and was a part of the VCE Playlist, resulting in a return season in September of the same year.

Spinning Plates is interested in presenting work that will continually expand and challenge their craft, whilst always paying homage to technique and heart. Having enjoyed more than a decade of acting across Melbourne's theatre scene and occasionally popping up in Australian film and television, Jess and James hope to continue making exciting and fascinating work for many years to come.



James Cerché & Jessica Stanley, Spinning Plates Co-Founders & Co-Artistic Directors.

COMPANY NOTES

The Crocodile has been a long time in the pipe and we are beyond thrilled to finally be presenting it to an audience—for the second time this year! I picked up the play in a bookstore in 2019 and was immediately sniggering within the first few pages I flicked through which is usually a good sign so here we are four years later.

Plays about art always seem appeal to artists and this one is no exception. The sadness, euphoria, arrogance and desperation of a career in creativity has always been a fun thing to laugh at and to celebrate. *The Crocodile*'s ability to employ cutting satire and political commentary with genuine giggles and heart has made it a joy to work on and Spinning Plates is chuffed to be doing it with a group of Melbourne's finest artists. We count ourselves as truly the luckiest of ducks. The audience and critical response to our February season exceeded our wildest expectations and we're thrilled that people responded to the story so warmly.

Theatre is an incredibly collaborative form and this production has had no shortage of laughs, tears and Chomps as we fumbled our way towards the jaws of the beast. It's all been a bit weird but that's art baby, and we're happy you're here to see it.

*James Cerché.
September, 2023*



Part of the production team for The Crocodile. Image by Sarah Clarke. From L-R: Gabe Bethune, Finn McLeish, Cait Spiker, Joey Lai, James Cerché, Jess Stanley, Luci Watts & Cass Fumi.

**THE CROCODILE WAS JUST THE BEGINNING.
IN 2024**

THE BEAST TRILOGY

CONTINUES

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SPINNINGPLATESCO.COM

spinningplatesco@gmail.com

@spinningplatesco



Like our work? We'd love your support!

We want to keep bringing theatrical, daring and entertaining work to the stage, but we can't do it alone. If you're a lover of the arts and want to see more from Spinning Plates Co. in the future, please head to our Australian Cultural Fund page at the QR code above to throw your support behind us.