Adam Kelly / Neuro Bureau

# Dragon I



Image: Aaron Claringbold

PERTH FESTIVAL

Founding Partner UWA

Principal Partner lotterywest

A Perth Festival commission

**Perth Festival acknowledges the Noongar people who continue to practise values, language, beliefs and knowledge on kwobidak boodjar.**

**Noongar people remain the spiritual and cultural birdiyangara of this place and we honour and respect the caretakers and custodians and the vital role Noongar people play for our community and our Festival to flourish.**

**We also acknowledge all First Nations people, whose contributions make our Festival culturally and artistically richer.**

**Our hearts are happy that you are here, on the traditional lands of Whadjuk, part of the Bibbulmun nation and its people.**

**Perth Festival Noongar Cultural Authority Council**
Roma Yibiyung Winmar, Vivienne Binyarn Hansen, Richard Walley, Barry McGuire & Mitchella Waljin Hutchins

# Contents


2 Welcome

3 Show Details

4 A Note from the Creators

6 Credits

7 Biographies

10 Acknowledgements

# Welcome

*Dragon I* is a new Western Australian work, finely made, deeply considered and emotionally precise. It comes from the gentle and brilliant minds of Adam Kelly and James Berlyn, artists whose intelligence shows not through noise or scale, but through care, restraint and an almost mischievous attention to detail.

Their practice is shaped by neurodivergent ways of thinking – by attentiveness, pattern, focus and a deep sensitivity to how ideas are felt as much as understood. Their work has a rare clarity. Ideas are allowed to breathe. Humour sits alongside vulnerability. Nothing is rushed, nothing is over explained. There is a generosity in how they invite an audience in, trusting us to lean forward, to notice, to feel our way through the experience rather than be told what to think.

*Dragon I* reflects a way of making that values patience, curiosity and craft. It is intimate without being insular, playful without being slight. This is work shaped by neurodiverse Western Australian artists who understand the quiet power of live performance and how deeply it can resonate when space is made for difference. It is an honour to support it and to share it with you.

**Anna Reece**
Artistic Director



**Adam Kelly / Neuro Bureau**

# Dragon I

**WA**
WORLD PREMIERE

**26 Feb – 1 Mar**

Subiaco Arts Centre
Wandaraguttagurrup / Subiaco

**Duration** 60mins

Thu 7.30pm
Fri 11am & 7:30pm
Sat 2 & 7.30pm
Sun 6pm



↗ Auslan performance Fri 27 Feb

Contains coarse language, use of multiple screens and flashing images.

Suitable for ages 12+

# A Note from the Creators

What do two emerging artists and a senior artist who have formed an adhoc collective called Neuro Bureau really know about AI? Turns out, not much more than anybody else who has access to the internet. Certainly, nothing approaching levels of serious proficiency. How comfortable could they be therefore, in making a show about AI? Not very!

Long story short, the more we worked on *Dragon I* the more we realised that we knew more about standing on the beach watching the AI tsunami approach than the actual nature of the technological 'wave' itself. This show is a response to that.

Adam, Ben and James collaborated successfully on the show *ARCO* which, five years later, is still touring. Then Adam aged out of WA Youth Theatre Company and James left the role of AD of the company to do other things. Finding themselves free they decided to 'put the band back together' and see what emerged.

Dragons and AI were the big areas of interest but, as always, from a neuro diverse perspective. *Dragon I*, written by Adam and James with input from the newest Neuro Bureau member, performer Jade Del Borrello, is a kind of onstage fever dream in an age of rapidly shifting and often very unclear technological goal posts.





In a nutshell, as so many creatives are wrestling with these days, *Dragon I* is a kind of 'To AI or not to AI' proposition. It is centred around artist Adam Kelly's long-lived passion for all things dragon and his own extensive dragon story making. Structured as a talk about dragons that gets derailed, *Dragon I* explores the complex conundrum of creative assistance. In this case, offered by an unwelcome technological guest.

Five neurodiverse artists and three neurotypical ones have collaborated on this project to take the audience on a journey about what it means to be creative, to be human and to share the magic of creating in real time.

# Credits

**Director & Co-writer**
James Berlyn
**Performer & Co-writer**
Adam Kelly
**Performer & Script Contributor**
Jade Del Borrello
**Illustrator**
Ben Hollingsworth
**Composer**
Candice Susnjar
**Animator & AV Editor**
Jude McAuley
**Lighting Designer & Technical Consultant**
Peter Young
**Dramaturg**
Will O'Mahony

**Auslan Interpreter**
Danielle Pritchard

**Images**
Aaron Claringbold





# Biographies

**Adam Kelly** Writer & Performer

Adam is an emerging writer and performer and a self-described autistic gentleman. He worked and trained with the WA Youth Theatre Company (WAYTCo) from 2017 to 2023 and performed in many of WAYTCo's major productions including *Away* (2017), directed by Stuart Halusz, and *yourseven* (2018) created by James Berlyn. He also wrote a monologue for, and performed in, WAYTCo's *REST* at East Perth Cemeteries (FRINGE WORLD 2019). The show sold out, won five Fringe Awards and was highly praised by the critics. In addition, Adam performed in three Company 24 Hour Play Generators (2017, 2019 & 2021). During the COVID years, he and James Berlyn made a longer version of the show *ARCO* suitable for junior and adult audiences and, in 2022, toured it to several towns in South West WA. They took the show to Melbourne and Adelaide in early 2023 and then to the FUSE International Festival in Kingston, London where ARCO Junior won the Best of Children and Families Award. ARCO is set for another national tour in 2026.

**Ben Hollingsworth** Illustrator

Ben is an emerging illustrator and animator from Western Australia. He has trained in animation at DAADA WA and South Metropolitan TAFE an is also self taught. Ben has shown his work at DAADA – DDWA, Friendship Project, an online educational platform for friends 2022, at Perth Comic Arts Festival, and as part of the exhibition *Strange Adventures* at DADAA Gallery in 2022. Ben created the animations for *ARCO*, Adam Kelly and James Berlyn's show at WA Youth Theatre Company, which toured WA, Australia and to London.

**Candice Susnjar** Composer

Candice is a composer who draws from classical, contemporary and jazz influences. Her work spans theatre, film, TV and games, including *Santa Duties* (2024), *Delusion* (WA Made Film Festival 2024), *Physical: 100* and the game Don't Stop, Girly Pop. In 2024 she was Composer in Residence with Mirabilis Collective, resulting in two chamber commissions. She has written and arranged music for ensembles including Perth Symphony Orchestra, Decibel New Music, Artemis Orchestra, the West Australian Youth Jazz Orchestra and Tender Is the Night. Her music has been featured in television series and film productions across the world, reaching international audiences through screen placements. Candice holds a Bachelor of Music (Jazz) from the West Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA).

**Jade Del Borrello** Performer & Script Contributor

Jade is a performer and writer based in Perth and is undertaking a Bachelor of Secondary Education in drama and visual arts. Jade was introduced to theatre production in 2014 and has been gaining as much experience as possible. Jade joined the WAYTCO senior ensemble in 2023, getting involved in works such as monologue showcases, *Body of Knowledge* (2022) and The 24-Hour Play Generator, where Jade has performed for three years in a row, even eventually performing the Improvised Cage Match variant of her dream show The Big HOO-HAA! She is also a self-taught visual artist, animator and voice actor. Jade has experienced firsthand the damage that generative AI is capable of and has already done, and does not wish to use it for any future endeavours. *Dragon I* was an opportunity brought together by chance, and that is so wonderful.

**James Berlyn** Writer/Director

James is a multi-award-winning performing artist, writer, director, curator and educator who has been at this for 40 plus years! Trained in dance at VCA, he has worked in dance, dance-theatre, theatre and community art across the country and has toured his own works to most of the major arts festivals in Australian and some overseas. He has made numerous children's work for WA's Awesome Festival and PICA's Spark_Lab program, which have toured nationally. He is the instigator and co-founder of Proximity Festival, Australia's first festival of one-on-one performance. He was a co-founding director of Tracksuit, WA's adult disability performance group. He was the Artistic Director of WA Youth Theatre Company for six years, where he created and directed the multi-award winning hit at FRINGE WORLD 2018, *yourseven*, and *REST* in 2019 which was the stand out hit of the Fringe winning five awards including Best Theatre and the Martin Sims Award, as well as a national award at the Australian Museums and Galleries Awards. James received a Sidney Myer Performing Arts Award for 2021. His work *ARCO* with Adam Kelly completed a tour to London in 2023 where it picked up Best Family Work award at FUSE Festival. He is currently artistic director of westberlyn, an artist studio and tiny performance venue in Boorloo.

**Jude Macauley** Animator & AV Editor

Jude is a broadcast editor, post production supervisor and Adobe Master trainer with more than 25 years' experience in the industry. She is best known for her work on the *72 Dangerous* group of programs on Netflix, but has worked in multiple genres including short films, cooking shows, true crime, lifestyle programs, children's drama, documentary and television commercials. As a keen bleeding-edge techno-nerd, Jude has also been experimenting with AI and game design for several years, as well as using AI in her day-to-day work to repair, accelerate, enhance and generate professional content.



**Peter Young** Lighting Designer & Technical Consultant

Peter is a lighting designer, technician and creative professional with a strong passion for theatre and live performance. Since graduating from the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts in 2019, he has established himself in Perth's vibrant arts scene through a wide range of productions and collaborations.

Peter has designed lighting for leading companies including Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company, The Last Great Hunt, Perth Festival, Black Swan State Theatre Company, and Barking Gecko Arts. He has also worked closely with many of Western Australia's most respected independent artists and collectives, both as a designer and associate. His technical expertise has supported productions at major venues such as His Majesty's Theatre, the State Theatre Centre and Crown Theatre. He also specialises in exhibition lighting, notably for the Western Australian Museum, where he has co-designed and successfully delivered a variety of exhibitions.

**Will O'Mahony** Dramaturg

Will is an actor, writer and director practicing on Noongar country in Perth, Western Australia. His recent acting credits include *Never Have I Ever*, *August: Osage County*, *Things I Know To Be True*, *Angels In America*, *Part One* and *Glengarry Glen Ross* — all for Black Swan State Theatre Company.

A guest lecturer at WAAPA for over a decade, Will has written six plays, with both *Tonsils+Tweezers* (2016) and *Coma Land* (2017) receiving mainstage presentation with Black Swan. His other presented works include *Great White* (2013), *The Mars Project* (2015) and *Minneapolis*, which was shortlisted for the Griffin Award in 2018. In August 2026, Will's latest play *Day (After Day) In The Life Of The Useless* will have its world premiere with Black Swan at the Heath Ledger Theatre.

# Acknowledgements

## Thanks to our Partners

### Founding Partner

### Principal Partner

### City Events Partner

### Boorloo Contemporary Partner

### Premier Partners

### Major Partners

### Associate Partners

### Festival Partners

Alex Hotel | Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions | Heritage Council of WA
Paramount Security Services | RTRFM 92.1 | The Backlot Perth | The Embassy of France in Australia

With thanks to Subiaco Arts Centre staff, management and board

## Thanks to our Donors

We thank our community of donors for helping us achieve our bold artistic vision and for making an impact on the cultural narrative of our State.

### Leadership Partners

### Patrons

Adrian & Michela Fini

### Trusts & Foundations

**Chair's Circle $20,000+**

John & Linda Bond*
Margrete Chaney &
Michael Chaney AO
Jock & Kathryn Clough
Marco D'Orsogna & Terry Scott*
Paul & Didi Downie
Adrian & Michela Fini
Greg Lewis & Sue Robertson*
Ben Lisle
James Litis
The Mack Family
The McClements Foundation
Paula Rogers & Phil Thick
Tim & Chris Ungar*

To review Perth Festival's complete donor acknowledgement please **visit our website**.

**Find out more** about how you too can join our community of donors and support Perth Festival.

perthfestival.com.au