

Diary of a Wombat

Diary of a Wombat is an award winning Australian story that has been exciting Australian families for several generations, and is one of Jackie French's most popular books.

What exactly do Wombats do all day?

Once there was a wombat, round, brown and stroppy, who taught humans to be her servants and leave out rolled oats in homage?

She ripped up doormats, the washing; shoes left outside, the mop; chewed holes in doors and gnawed at window frame.

Monkey Baa Theatre Company is recognised nationally and internationally as a flagship theatre for young audiences. Since 1997 we have been bringing Australian stories to the stage.

Our works have won prestigious Helpmann, Drover and Glug awards for Best Children's Presentation.

We are passionate about touring new work, particularly to regional and remote communities, connecting with audiences who do not always have the same opportunity as city kids to engage in quality theatre experiences.

In 2017 we are delighted to be offering Jackie French's most famous work *Diary of a Wombat* published in 2002, for national touring.

The Ideal Audience

Schools, Family and Community, Holiday performances
Suitable for 3 to 9 year olds (Stages early Stage One and Stage Two)
Performance Length Approximately 50 minutes
Maximum 12 performances/week

Insight into the creation of the work from the Monkey Baa Creative team

Diary of a Wombat takes us on a creative journey into a world of storytelling aided by the incredible art of puppetry. The team will focus on the story, its trajectory, and the incorporation of the pre picture book true history of Mothball. And then over a series of creative development opportunities involving the entire creative team, we will investigate scale, the depiction of the differing facets of one world, the Wombat's outlook, its keeper's perspective and the audience viewpoint.

In bringing the story to life, the team will incorporate Wombat's character traits, through puppetry, with the human story and how they interact with Mothball and those shifting moments of power and perspective between humans and animal.

The musical score performed on stage a cellist will enhance story as Wombat's voice, with a greater musical original score to accentuate the world around her.

This is an exquisitely sparse tale about the beauty that exists within the mundane daily day life of a wombat.

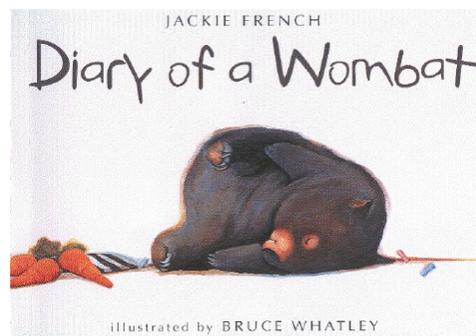
Jackie French on Mothball, Diary of a Wombat

For nearly two decades Mothball the Wombat ruled our lives.
So I wrote about a week in her life: the true story.

No one expected its success. I stopped counting at 32 translations. No one can count the copies sold overseas. She has been a companion to millions of young people for two generations --- Mums and Dads who grew up with the book now buy it for their kids.

No matter what I write, for the rest of my life, I will be known not for what I have achieved, but for what my wombat did. When I was recently announced as Senior Australian of the Year the Prime Minister announced 'and this year's Senior Australian of the Year is the creator of *Diary of a Wombat*.'

She was not a friend, as other wombats have been, and never a pet. She died an old grey wombat. Her daughter and granddaughter live under our bedroom now. Both are as stropky as their ancestor. And I still miss her, every day.



About Jackie French

The Australian National Children's Laureate for 2014 and 2015, Jackie is also an historian, ecologist, dyslexic, and a passionate worker for literacy, the right of all children to be able to read, and the power of



books. Jackie's writing career spans 25 years, 148 wombats, over 140 books, 36 languages, 3,721 bush rats, and over 60 awards in Australia and overseas.

Jackie is one of the few writers to win both literary and children's choice awards. *Hitler's Daughter* spent a decade on most of Australia's kid's choice award shortlists; among other awards it won the 2000 CBC Book of the Year for Younger Readers, the UK Wow! Award, a Semi Grand Prix Award in Japan and has been listed as a "blue ribbon" book in the USA. Monkey Baa's production of Jackie French's *Hitler's Daughter: the play* won both the Helpmann and Drover's Awards and toured the USA in 2013.

Pete the Sheep; the musical, will open in March 2014. *Diary of a Wombat*, created with Bruce Whatley, is also one of Australia's best-loved picture books. It has been on bestseller lists across the world, with a still increasing number of awards and translations.

A joint patron of Monkey Baa with Susanne Gervay and Morris Gleitzman, she is also a director of The Wombat Foundation that raises funds for research into the preservation of the endangered northern hairy nosed wombat.

About the Creative Team

EVA DI CESARE – Director/Conceptual Team



Eva graduated from VCA in 1989 & is a founding member of Monkey Baa and has co-adapted many of the company's productions including *The Bugalugs Bum Thief*, award winning plays *Hitler's Daughter*, *Thursday's Child*, *I Am Jack*, *Goodbye Jamie Boyd*, *Emily Eyefinger*, *Pete the Sheep*. In 2012, Eva co-developed *Discover the Stage -- Digital Drama Workshops* for SOH. She co wrote & directed the 2013 Opera House *Babies Proms* and co adapted *Snugglypot and Cuddlepie* for CDP. She also co wrote and directed *Simon Tedeschi: Pianist and Prankster*, co wrote *A Voyage to the Deep* for the Australian National Maritime Museum & is currently adapting *The Peasant Prince* by Li Cunxin.

ALICE OSBORNE – Puppet Director



Alice is a theatre maker who works collaboratively as a puppeteer, director, performer and movement artist. She was the Resident Puppetry Director for *WAR HORSE*. As dancer/puppeteer, Alice was a member of Compagnie Philippe Genty (Paris) for 2.5 years, touring internationally with the work *BOLILOC*. In Australia she worked extensively with My Darling Patricia. She worked as Puppetry and Movement Director on *THE SPLINTER* by Hilary Bell for STC in 2012. Other companies she has collaborated with include Erth, Urban Theatre Projects and PACT. Alice's TV credits puppeteer include *FIVE MINUTES MORE*, *ME & MY MONSTERS*, *FARSCAPE MINI SERIES* and *THE UPSIDE DOWN SHOW*. She has a BA (Theatre/Media) from Charles Sturt University, Bathurst.

IMOGEN ROSS – Set and Costume Designer

Imogen Ross is an artist, theatre designer, writer, lecturer & community arts worker. She works across a broad spectrum of contemporary performance styles, collaborating with a wide range of artists, creators, writers, musicians & performers. She trained in Production Design at WAAPA and has designed sets and costumes for over 70 theatre, musicals, dance, opera, corporate events, short films and TV in both Australia and the UK. Imogen is currently in production for *Snugglepote and Cuddlepie* FOR CDP and *Milli, Jack and the Dancing Cat*, *Hitler's Daughter*, *The Prospectors* and *Thursday's Child* for Monkey Baa.

OONAGH SHERRAD – Composer

Oonagh has been creating music and sound works for theatre, film, dance, radio and live performance for 20 years. She is a cellist, singer/songwriter, teacher, producer and writer - having written and produced numerous radio features with ABC RN and more recently a short film for PARRAMASALA. Oonagh studied Composition at Sydney University with Peter Sculthorpe, Ann Boyd and Ross Edwards and also has a BA in Theatre and Australian Aboriginal History from Macquarie University.

MATT COX – Lighting Designer

Matt's career in theatre has spanned 15 years in both Australia and the UK. Matt's credits include Bangarra; *Blak, Belong*. For the Australian Chamber Orchestra: *Reflections on Gallipoli*. for Bell: *Romeo and Juliet*. for STC: *Ruby Moon*. for Louise Withers & Assoc: *The Mousetrap*, and *A Murder is Announced*. for Company B: *The Seed*. for Legs on the Wall: *Symphony*. for Sport for Jove: *The Libertine* and *Othello*. for Sydney Festival: *The Famous Spiegeltent* (2015), *The Aurora Spiegeltent* (2014). for the Sydney Chamber Opera: *His Music Burns*.

SANDRA ELDRIDGE – Concept

Sandra is a WAAPA acting graduate has a Master of Arts (Practice) for directing CSU and has an extensive acting career most recently *All's Well* for Sport for Jove. She has adapted and directed for Monkey Baa; *Goodbye Jamie Boyd*, *I am Jack*, *Hitler's Daughter*, *Thursday's Child* and directed *The Prospectors*. For WAAPA she's directed *The Grapes of Wrath* and is about to direct *The Mill on the Floss*. At the ANMM she directed and adapted *Voyage to the Deep*. For Monkey Baa she has adapted and performed in *Worry Warts*, *Sprung! Emily Eyefinger* and adapted, *Milli, Jack and The Dancing Cat*, *FOX*, *Pete the Sheep* and *Snugglepote and Cuddlepie* for CDP. This year she has written and is performing in her first play *The Unknown Soldier*.

TIM MCGARRY – Concept

A Graduate of WAAPA and founding member of Monkey Baa, Tim's skills include writing, performing, directing, teaching and in the creation of arts education programs. Theatre credits include *It's a Dad Thing* (TML), *The Sentimental Bloke* (WATC), *Bouncers* (RTC), *The Carthaginians* (O'Punskys) *A Respectable Wedding* (Crossroads), *I Am Jack*, *Hitler's Daughter*, *The Prospectors* (Monkey Baa) *The Male Line*, *Time is Not Yet Ripe*, *Macbeth*, *Italian Stories*, (Theatre South), *Big River* (GFO). Film/TV credits *Lilian's Story*, *Goddess of 1967*, *A More Fortunate Life*, *Backberner*, *All Saints*, *Underbelly --- The Golden Mile* and *Manny*. He has co adapted many Australian novels for the stage including *Worry Warts*, *Hitler's Daughter*, *Thursday's Child* and *Goodbye Jamie Boyd*.

Director's Notes

Diary of a Wombat

"For nearly two decades Mothball the wombat ruled our lives. So, I wrote about a week in her life; the true story. No one expected its success. I stopped counting at 32 translations." Jackie French

Mothball has well and truly ingrained herself into our Aussie literary folklore – the image instantly recognisable as the much-loved legendary character from Jackie French and Bruce Whatley's iconic *Diary of A Wombat*. For me Mothball is the perfect representation of all that we know of nature – its unpredictability, uncontrollable force witnessed most brutally through ravaging bushfires, tsunamis and devastating cyclones. The more the humans try to keep nature at bay, in our case a wombat, the more destructive she becomes - that indomitable, unstoppable force of our natural environment.

Bored with her mundane life, Mothball sets off from her burrow each day in search of new adventures... and well, carrots. And here the worlds collide. With the current climate change debate raging, it is the very theme of nature verses humanity that drew me most to this story. Can the environment in all its many forms and the human race exist side by side harmoniously, without slowly destroying each other? Can we learn to truly live with what we can't possibly control?

In developing the work for the stage, we grappled with form, knowing our audience would be more familiar with this particular protagonist more than any other work we'd previously created. Puppetry seemed to me to offer the very best in terms of depicting a known reality on stage, and our puppet maker Bryony Anderson, has created the most exquisite interpretation of Mothball. In portraying Mothball's journey, from the moment I began to dream about the work, I kept hearing the powerful, resonant tones of a cello. I wanted Mothball to have a 'voice' and the 'cello by far has the ability to evoke the atmosphere and feelings Mothball needs to balance her journey with that of our human characters.

I read recently *'collaboration is not about gluing together existing egos. It's about the ideas that never existed until after everyone entered the room.'* To everyone who entered that room - the creative team, the students of Cringila, St Mary's and Fort Street Public Schools, thank you for your enthusiasm, your generosity, your spirit, your inner wombats and mostly, your magic.

To Jackie and Bruce, thank you once again for entrusting us to tell your beautiful story.

And thank you dear Mothball, my very first leading lady, take a bow. You've taught me more than I ever imagined.

Eva Di Cesare
Director

Marketing

This production can be marketed to young people aged 3 --- 9 and their families. It is suitable for preschool children, and Kindergarten --- Year 4.

Other Marketing Issues

This production is highly suitable for school seasons, weekend and early evening community performances and school holiday seasons.

Promotional Billing Requirements

Venue PAC presents

DIARY OF A WOMBAT

Based on the book by Jackie French and Bruce Whatley
Devised by Monkey Baa Theatre Company

Picture Book Awards

2007

Winner, Kroc Award, for the 'favourite book of 2007' by the children of the Northern territory

2004

USA Benjamin Franklin Award
USA Lemmee Award
KIND Award USA

2003

Voted Favourite Picture Book of the Year in the Cuffie Awards in the USA
Number two on the 'Best 20 picture books for 2003' in the USA
Cool Award, for Best Picture Book, voted by the kids of the ACT
Winner Young Australian Readers' Award
Winner KOALA Award for Best Picture Book
ABA/AA Nielsen Book of the Year
Honour Book for the CBC Picture Book of the Year



Education

Monkey Baa's Creative Directorate and Education Team will develop an Arts Education Program, which includes a Teaching Artist connecting venues with school communities, Teachers' Resources, Lesson Plans, pre- and post-show workshops and other extra curricula activities for schools attending *Diary of a Wombat*.

Key Learning Areas: English/Mathematics/ Human Society And Its Environment/ Science And Technology/ Creative And Practical Arts

CURRICULUM Australian Curriculum: English; The Arts --- Drama.

NSW Curriculum: English; Creative Arts – Drama; HSIE (Stages 2---3);

Teaching Artists on the Road

Monkey Baa tours all works with a Teaching Artist who delivers pre or post show in school workshops for participating schools. Our Teaching Artist will be responsive to individual community needs offering skilled facilitation in student workshops, discussion groups, teacher PD training, training venue staff on pre/post show foyer activation. Teaching Artists are about engaging your community.

We will work with venues in prioritising and scheduling Teaching Artist activities that best engage your teachers and schools.