

ACT NIDA CONFERENCE 2026 LECTURERS

Keynote Simon Ward: (Practical tips on theatre well-being)

Simon Ward is a psychologist, actor and educator.

Simon trained at the Royal Academy of Music UK in musical theatre and voice teaching, at the Actors Centre Australia, and is an accredited Estill Master Trainer with Estill Voice International. Simon has performed and directed in the UK, in London's West End, on the BBC, in solo cabaret in London & New York City, toured throughout Australia in musicals, plays, opera and extensively in cabaret.

Simon gained four psychology degrees and works as a Clinical Psychologist with young people and creative arts professionals. Simon lectures in singing & voice at NIDA; musical theatre, singing, and psychology for performers at NIDA, AMPA, JMC and Macquarie University. He presents on psychosocial wellbeing in the creative arts industries and higher education, in voice science and psychology, mental health for teachers and health workers for various performer health organisations theatre & production companies and with elite performers. www.simonward.info

Keynote : (The importance of community theatre) and Acting Part One and Two

Jay Laga'aia

Jay's notable film credits include Nim's Island and Star Wars. On television, he has appeared in Home and Away, Doctor Doctor, Bed of Roses, Legend of the Seeker, Xena: Warrior Princess, Fighting Season, and Jay's Jungle.

As the host of two seasons of Lost for Words on SBS, Jay guided a class of ten adults on a transformative journey to overcome challenges in reading, writing, and spelling—changing their lives forever. A passionate advocate for early childhood education and literacy, Jay is also a celebrated children's author. He has collaborated with Scholastic to create books for the New Zealand and Australian markets.

A gifted musician, Jay has written and recorded four children's albums with ABC for Kids, touring his live shows across Australia.

In theatre, Jay has portrayed iconic roles such as Mufasa in The Lion King and the Wizard in Wicked: The Musical. He starred in Children of the Sun with Sydney Theatre Company and captivated audiences as the title character in Shrek: The Musical at Parramatta Riverside Theatre. His comedic talents shone in the touring production of Peter Pan Goes Wrong, and he originated the role of Jason in the world premiere of The Deb at the Australian Theatre for Young People (ATYP) in 2022.

Jay performed as Da in the critically acclaimed production of Once at the Darlinghurst Theatre. He reprised the role in 2022 and 2023, performing to sold-out audiences in Sydney and on the Gold Coast.

Most recently, Jay delighted audiences as Vince Fontaine in the national tour of Grease: The Musical from January to November 2024. He concluded the year with a powerful performance in The Heartbreak Choir at Ensemble Theatre.

Outside of his professional achievements, Jay is a proud father of eight.

Let's Put On a Show

Speakers include

Stuart Hendricks Stuart is the Managing Director for Music Theatre International (MTI) Australasia. He oversees the theatrical licensing of major Broadway, West End, and local musical works for schools, amateur societies, and professional companies across Australia and New Zealand.

Origin Theatrical. Ashlei Carroll – Amateur Licensing Manager

Ashlei has been a part of the ORiGiN team for the past seven years and manages the theatrical licensing division, with a focus on amateur musical licensing and supervising the licensing assistant. Ashlei has an Advanced Diploma of Film & Media from AFTT (formerly International Film School Sydney).

Raicheal Essam joined ORiGiN™ in July 2025, bringing with her a strong background in customer service and administration, developed through roles in the entertainment, retail, and accounting industries.

David Spicer - David was a journalist at the ABC for 31 years and founded his theatrical agency in 1997 – leaving the media in 2018 to focus full-time on licensing musicals and plays. David is the co-publisher of Stage Whispers Magazine and has been the communications officer for ACT since 1995.

Carla Moore - Carla has been an integral force at The Theatre on Chester in Epping. A published playwright (*Over the Moon and Far Away*) and passionate advocate for theatre education, Carla has shaped generations of performers and audiences alike

Making Props Beautiful

Bob Peet OAM and Col Peet are legendary Australian theatre makers, set builders, and community arts advocates. Known for their extensive work across Australian stages and community theatre, they have contributed decades of expertise in stagecraft, technical production, set design, and prop making.

Background and Career Highlights

Bob Peet OAM: Recognized for his foundational contributions to regional performance spaces, including serving as the first director of the Illawarra Performing Arts Centre (IPAC) from 1987 to 1996. The rehearsal space at IPAC was named the "Bob Peet Studio" in his honor. [\[1\]](#)

Col Peet: An accomplished theatre technician, set builder, and ballroom dance champion who began his career with J.C. Williamson and has worked extensively on major Australian venues and festivals. [\[1\]](#)

Child Protection Theatre

Andrew Yagar is the CEO of Red Globe Productions. He was actively involved in developing the [Breaking the Silence](#) framework for church organisations.

He will explain how he applies various child protection codes to his work at Beacon Musical Theatre in Sydney's north-west. Andrew will reference the following codes.

The National Principles for Child Safe

Organisations <https://www.childsafety.gov.au/resources/national-principles-child-safe-organisations>

The Office of the Children's Guardian documentation - relevant is the [Child Safety Assessment](#), the [eLearning](#) and the documentation on the [Child Safe Scheme](#)

Live Performance Australia [Child Safety Documentation](#) which very closely mirrors the national standards, and provide excellent templates that form a strong starting point for preparing policy documents.

Smart Use of Technology

Chelsea Holland is President of the Regals Musical Society and was honoured as Bayside Citizen of the Year for 2026. This award recognised her outstanding leadership, tireless dedication, and the incredible impact she continues to make through community theatre and youth arts.

Her resume includes work as a Senior Solutions Engineer and Fundraising Consultant.

Intimacy Coaching Actress and Intimacy Co-ordinator Chloë Dallimore

Chloë Dallimore AM is an internationally trained and accredited Intimacy Coordinator and Director working across stage and screen. She is best known for her performance as Ulla in Mel Brooks musical *The Producers* (2004/05) which won her the Helpmann Award for Best Female Actor in a

Musical. Chloë's film credits include APEX, Send Help, Bump Christmas and I Know What You Did Last Summer. She was Federal President of the MEAA Equity for six years.

Musical Theatre Dance Style – Katie Kermond

Katie is a highly sought-after, multi-talented creative professional in the entertainment industry. Her diverse skillset spans roles as Producer, Choreographer, Production Coordinator, Performer, Stage Manager, and sometimes Stand-up Comic.

Katie has graced the stage in major musicals, including *West Side Story*, *La Cage Aux Folles*, *Guys & Dolls*, *Evita*, *Grease*, *Chicago*, and *Follies* ... to name a few. Following marriage and motherhood, the natural progression was stand-up comedy, developing a one-woman show featured at the Melbourne International Comedy Festival.

She has creatively collaborated on national and international Corporate Events, and as a Producer, Katie has brought to life the musical comedy [Jive Junkys](#) and the cabaret [Candy Man](#). Her recent creative output includes *Kermond 3 Gen Show*, *Vaudies* and [Spiegelesque](#).