

LIFE IS SHORT, BUT THE TOUR IS LONG... AND HILARIOUSLY PAINFUL!

State Theatre Company South Australia and
Country Arts SA present Brink Productions'

SYMPHONIE

OF THE

BICYCLE

BY HEW PARHAM



WRITER'S NOTE

HEW PARHAM

I first came up with an idea for a show about cycling when I was asked to invent a character for the Tour Down Under; and Jacques Cornichon, a buck-toothed French cycling buffoon, was born. But by some divine intervention, I stumbled upon a video telling of Gino Bartali's exploits saving Jews in Italy during World War 2. I had set out to make a silly clown show but I just couldn't stop thinking about this man. What struck me most about Gino's story was that he never told anyone about his efforts. In a world seemingly run by narcissistic men, I felt his was a story I needed to tell.

I will freely admit I get petulant at award ceremonies when I don't win, and when I went into a twenty-minute rant in rehearsal after being humiliated at an event where I was paid to dress as a former colleague of mine, I realised the vehicle to express the counter point to Gino was me. The "loser" who desperately wants recognition, versus the champion quietly going about his business but the world keeps asking him for favours.

Music is an important part of my work and with these two characters, I had an idea of being inspired by the symphonic structure where it establishes two themes takes them apart and brings them back together. The challenge or mountain was always how to bring these two men from different times together.

I never set out to make a show about men (or the masculine), but I think I accidentally kind of have. The projections masking deeper pain, the desperate need to prove your worth and the havoc that can be wreaked in its pursuit. That sometimes we can't save the world, it is too heavy a burden and we need to remember that we are sometimes: "just a cyclist." That redemption can also be found in the little things.

This show has been a mountain, an epic tour and sometimes you feel like you are alone on the mountain and then you look around at the people, the organisations, that have supported you. This show lives at the heart and veins of the Adelaide independent arts scene and I'd like to thank everyone who has supported this project, especially Brink, Chris and Karen and now Mitchell and State Theatre Company South Australia for believing in me and giving me this podium to share this story.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

CHRIS DRUMMOND

Symphonie of the Bicycle is, in many ways, an ode to the power of imagination. Not only is this captured in Hew's bravura performance, as alone on stage he conjures a sweeping multi-narrative, but it speaks to the core ideas of the work.

The two central protagonists in *Symphonie* are fundamentally shaped by the power of imagination. Gino Bartali, like many athletes, capitalises on his physical gifts through the sheer force of his mental fortitude, pushing himself to the highest levels of endurance. Yet, ironically, he is something of a figment himself, a product of collective imagination. Wherever he goes he is held to impossible standards by people who want him to be a hero. How to stay true in the face of such celebrity? How to discern between artifice and authenticity? Hew, by contrast, feels utterly invisible.

The obstacles Hew faces are largely of his own making. He projects the monsters of his imagination (born of real and perceived slights, injustices, and unrealised ambitions) onto external forces and people, like his childhood friend, Jake Johnson. In a downward spiral of imagined slings and arrows, his mind becomes a cage entrapping his heart. In the process he becomes isolated, losing all appreciation for his true gifts and value.

In *Symphonie*, Hew and Gino must transcend their obstacles, stepping beyond the projections that confine them. What I love about *Symphonie* is how, in the most surprising of ways, a genuine connection and equality is conjured between these two men. We may not all get to be world champions, but ultimately the challenges we face, the dreams we have, the accomplishments we achieve, carry their own qualities of grandeur and purpose.

It's a great joy and privilege to take this ride with Hew again. Enormous thanks to the teams at Brink and State Theatre Company South Australia for all their wonderful work, as ever!



Playwright &
Actor

**HEW
PARHAM**



Director &
Dramaturg

**CHRIS
DRUMMOND**



Set, Costume &
Lighting Design

**WENDY
TODD**



Composer & Sound Designer

**WILL
SPOTALIS**



Associate
Lighting Designer

**AARON
HERCZEG**



Dramaturg

**CALEB
LEWIS**



Voice Coach

**ANNA
MCCROSSIN-OWEN**



Stage Manager

**ISABELLA
STRADA**



Production Manager

**GABRIELLE
HORNHARDT**



Production Manager

**LACHLAN
TURNER**

Lighting Technician **SAM BAILEY** Sound Technician **MICK JACKSON**

ABOUT COUNTRY ARTS SA

Country Arts SA's vision is for artists and communities of regional South Australia to thrive through engagement with the performing and visual arts and be recognised as essential contributors to the nation's cultural voice.

For 31 years, we have transformed the way the arts are made and engaged with in regional South Australia. We focus on engaging with and elevating regional Aboriginal Elders, artists and communities; being informed and led by regional South Australians; representing and reaching all South Australia's diverse communities; and measuring, responding to and reducing our environmental impact.

Through the Shows on the Road touring program, Country Arts SA is committed to providing the opportunity for more communities to access professional touring performances in their towns. Shows on the Road is a collaborative partnership between our regional Community Presenters, artists and the communities we work alongside.

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Country Arts SA Chief Executive,

Anthony Peluso



At Country Arts SA, we live and create on the lands of the First Nations peoples of South Australia and pay our respects to Elders past and present. We embrace the principle of 'First Nations First' and are committed to working together to safeguard, celebrate and present First Nations' living cultures.