

# SLOW BOAT

By **Anna Yen**

An epic tale of 5 men, indentured workers, caught in the storm of World War II, evacuated to Brisbane in 1942 via Nauru with 580 fellow wartime refugees.

**SLOW BOAT** winds its way from poverty and war in rural China, to hard work on the tiny phosphate-rich island of Nauru and a hasty evacuation from the Japanese to Brisbane, through terrifying times down underground mines in Central Australia and building boats for General McArthur's Pacific Campaign in Bulimba, to an unknown future.

Told through physical theatre, storytelling, song, dance, circus, improvised Cantonese Opera, music and martial arts, **SLOW BOAT** features a unique ensemble of 5 multi-skilled acclaimed, young Chinese Australian performers.



**SLOW BOAT** asks: how did these young men survive when everything was out of their control?

The community of men turned to art. They improvised Cantonese Opera for each other on their one night a week off on Nauru, hand built a theatre in the central Australian desert from discarded materials, created concerts for each other at the dockyards in Bulimba, Brisbane.

Challenges were as abundant as waves in a stormy sea: racism, faceless spies, muddling middle management, threats of violence, death, and distance from loved ones. But the challenges the men faced were not all external: When the Japanese were about to take Nauru and the evacuating boat couldn't fit everyone - how did they decide who must be left behind? What did the men do when they discovered that someone they trusted had betrayed them for money?

The story is set at a post-war celebratory concert at the Bulimba dockyards, where the audience is playfully invited to put themselves in the same boat as the community of young Chinese men.

Ultimately, **SLOW BOAT** is a story of resilience, mateship, and the power of art to help us all through tough times.

Writer/Co-Director/Producer ANNA YEN Dramaturge/Co-Director THERESE COLLIE Designer GEORGINA GREENHILL Lighting Designer DAVID WALTERS Composer / Musical Director NICHOLAS NG Performers JOEL CHIA, LUKE HA, NICHOLAS NG, HARRY TSENG, JULIAN RENLONG WONG

**SLOW BOAT** is supported by the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland, part of the Department of Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts. This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body. Creative Sparks is a joint initiative of Brisbane City Council and the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland.

Producing Partners Cluster Arts Pty Ltd. and Anna Yen. Photos Suzon Fuks – Igneous.