

# unHOWsed



Director/Designer	Deborah Leiser-Moore	
Composer/Sound Artist	Nela Trifkovic	
Written By	The Ensemble	
Performers	Carla Mitterlehner	Jan Grey
	Diann Pattison	Maurya Bourandanis
	Catherine Samsury	Karen Corbett
	Liza Dezfouli	Susan McDonald-Timms
Lighting/Sound Designer/Av	Kinetic Screen	
Produced by	Tashmadada and Drum Theatre	
Event partner	Wayss	
Originating presenter	Theatre Works	

## **DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT**

It's been an absolute privilege working with these inspirational women. unHOWsed developed over many months and included writing workshops with Cath Samsury, vocal work with the show's composer/sound artist, Nela Trifkovic and performance "training" with me. In this piece I set out to create an environment that gives a glimpse and a visceral experience of the lives of these mature women who experienced homelessness. The content developed as a result of many lunches around a large table in the vestry of the Christ Church St Kilda – who generously gave permission to take it over and make it our 'home'. These lunches were full of stories, banter and a lot of laughter. That is the spirit that runs through the veins of unHOWsed. As all of the women have said, "we don't want pity porn". The work is about them now. About their strength. About their presence. It says, 'I Am Here'.

## BIOS

### DEBORAH LEISER-MOORE - DIRECTOR

**Deborah** is an interdisciplinary performance maker/director who is known for her visual and physical approach. She has directed/co-created *unHOWsed*, in which eight older ex-homeless women share their experiences of homelessness, for Theatre Works St Kilda's main season and now remounted for Drum Theatre. It was selected for competition at the 2020 Cairo International Festival for Experimental Theatre. Deborah has toured extensively, notably to New York performing and collaborating in Richard Schechner's *Imagining O* in the Peak Performance Festival. In 2017/2018 she worked with Ranters Theatre in collaboration with Korean company, Creative VaQi, in *Unknown Neighbors* at Ansan Festival and as part of Festival of Live Arts at Theatre Works. She presented her solo duration live-art work, *My Body, My Country* at the 2017 Queer Zagreb Festival, Croatia and toured the promenade production of Chi Vu's *The Dead Twin* (originally presented at Footscray Community Arts Centre), which she directed and performs in, to George Town Festival in Penang, Malaysia. In 2018 she traveled back to George Town Festival with her performance/installation work *KaBooM: Stories From Distant Frontlines* for which she interviewed ex-soldiers from global conflicts (previously at fortyfivedownstairs and the Alice Desert Festival in Alice Springs). In 2019 Deborah's work, *Medea: Kaddish For The Children* - based on the classic Euripides text, told from the woman's perspective and intertwined with the Kaddish, the Jewish Mourners Prayer - was presented by Footscray Community Arts Centre as part of their 2019 Women, Arts and Politics program. Deborah completed her practice led PhD at La Trobe University and her MA (Performance) at Victoria University. [www.deborahleisermore.com](http://www.deborahleisermore.com)

### NELA TRIFKOVIC – COMPOSER, MUSIC AND SOUND DIRECTOR

**Nela** is a Bosnian-Australian musician and multi-disciplinary artist whose work straddles music, theatre, performance and installation art. She is the artistic director of the ensemble *SARAY Iluminado* (Bosnian and Herzegovinian Sevdah and Sephardic Jewish music). This ensemble has performed extensively in Victoria and nationally. In August 2019, a trio-version of the ensemble made its European debut at the *Alkantara* and *La Scialla* music festivals in Italy. Nela moved to Australia during the ex-Yugoslav war in the '90s and was one of the youngest students to be admitted into the WAAPA music course in 1996, where she studied piano, voice, composition and, later, performance making. In 2005 Nela moved to Melbourne. She studied at VCA, completing her doctorate in 2012. Nela worked professionally since the late 90s, as composer, musical director and vocal consultant for many WAAPA student productions. She worked for Annie Steiner's "Total Theatre" musically directing and composing original scores for all her public seasons. From 2006 until 2015 she was composer for the local Eagle's Nest Theatre company, creating original music and sound for about 15 of its public productions and touring to UK, Germany, Holland and Bosnia and Herzegovina with some of its members. In 2005 Nela worked composed for ORPHANAGE OF THE ANIMALS La Mama Season. Recently she was composer/voice coach for *unHOWsed*. Nela has received several grants and scholarships and has performed and presented research in Australia, Europe, Asia and USA.

### KINETIC SCREEN - VISUAL AND SOUND EDITING

**Kinetic Screen** is a multi-disciplinary artist, sound and lighting designer and audio-visual technician who freelances collaborating with partners that range from independent theatre, music and performance makers all the way to commercial clients. **Kinetic Screen** worked with the creative team of *unHOWsed* in 2019, and has previously, had a long history of collaboration with theatre artists Karen Corbett and Catherine Samsury, on their independent work over the past 10 years. [www.kineticscreen.com](http://www.kineticscreen.com)

**Theatre Works was the originating presenter of *unHOWsed* in 2019 and the digital performance you will see was filmed as part of that season. The Drum Theatre acknowledges the investment and support that Theatre Works provided to help create this production.**

## THE WOMEN:

### **Maurya:**

It took me 17 years and 4 attempts to leave my physically and sexually abusive marriage which started a long succession of rooming/boarding houses & emergency housing. I was the only woman in 4 of these and one was housing for men convicted of domestic violence. I was told to stay in my room for my own safety and only come out to use the shared bathroom. This started my journey of sleeping rough, repeatedly getting physically and sexually assaulted all over again.

**Diann:** My mother was my angel that sheltered me from my father's violence She did so despite her fear that he would find us (and kill us). We lived in a single room in St Kilda boarding house

**Carla:** After being sexually, physically and mentally abused I had to leave home at 13 and a half so I went to Sydney and couch surfed. Again, when my son was 11 months old, his father kicked us out and I had nowhere to go and couldn't get public housing because I was paying my bills even though I wasn't eating to do it. Paying private rent.

**Karen:** I began a theatre career at the age of 17 in the original Australian production of Godspell and went on to play leading roles in theatre, television and film. I forged a distinguished career in theatre as an actor, writer, cabaret performer, theatre director and teacher, mentoring generations of actors and theatre makers. I found myself single and pregnant after a sexual assault. I couldn't go home due to domestic violence. I lived in caravans, on people's couches and even a boy's boarding school during school holidays.

**Cath:** (BSc Ed, MA (Literature USA) MA (Theatre USA) Post Grad Dip (Primary Drama, Melbourne). I developed curriculum in creative writing and performing arts for the state of Maryland, USA; founded the extra-curricular dance and drama program at Penleigh & Essendon Grammar School and wrote the primary school drama curriculum for PEGS and Melbourne Girls Grammar School; was Head of English at Yeshivah College and taught English in years 7-12 and Drama in years P-12. I am currently couch surfing and 'in-between' homes

**Liza:** I have had four full length and many short plays produced. My writing is informed by feminist issues. For the last ten years I have been reviewing performing arts, film, books and music in Melbourne for ArtsHub. I freelance as a copywriter and cartoonist/illustrator and am currently writing songs for my new comedy cabaret. My past experiences inform my passion for life and for telling my story.

**Jan:** In unHOWsed my story of my young life in an orphanage where I had no love. No one-on-one. Just a number is told through visual storytelling.

**Sooz:** I had a job, a home, a boyfriend, friends, a course hoping towards a career, all the outer things in place, but inside was a tornado of fear, and using many forms of OCD behaviours to cope. Still having failed to stem my anxieties and mental storms, I began drinking. I had lost all but my car, where I lived and kept myself going by washing at park toilets and by washing myself and my clothes in public swimming-pool showers and staying overnight at times at my parents or friends' homes or whoever would temporarily have me there.

