



# HOLDING THE MAN

a play by Tommy Murphy

## Director's Notes

*Holding the Man* holds a special place in my heart. It is a book I read almost 15 years ago when I was living and studying acting in Sydney. I wasn't able to finish it at the time. I could not read the last few chapters without tears dripping down the page and blurring my vision. I only finished reading those chapters during the summer of last year.

I believe there are two kinds of people. Those who know and love the play, and those who do not know how much they will love it until they see it. Some of those who haven't seen the play yet tend to say first, 'oh no, it is another AIDS sob story'. This statement could not be more wrong. Tim Conigrave wrote *Holding the Man* for John Caleo, the love of his life, after he was gone. It is a love story, tragic, yes, but it is so real that it helps us to really connect with Tim and John regardless of age or sexual orientation. This makes *Holding the Man* a very special, universal and timeless story of love.

In my work, I try to combine my Eastern European training, rooted in emotion, with the Western practice, emphasising words and text. In this production of *Holding the Man*, I am trying to find a balance between these two worlds, whilst focusing on the characters, and relationships between them, to tell a story about people, their emotions, and their complex lives.

In this production, the stage becomes a rehearsal room to honour Tim's passion for theatre. The costumes are symbolic and fragmental, representing Tim's memories of the people he knew. I envisioned Tim 'summoning' his actors to help him tell his story. Rapid scene changes occur as Tim travels from memory to memory, through events in time.

Now, I would like to offer some thanks: Firstly, thanks to the people at the Two Brewers in Clapham, who have kindly welcomed us for numerous promotional events and activities. The cast and I would also like to thank Trevor from the Terrence Higgins Trust, who shared his experiences of what it means to be living with HIV and losing a partner to AIDS, which added new inspiration to our telling of the story.

I could not be more grateful to Tommy Murphy for trusting us and letting us work on this beautiful story. I am humbled and thankful for the cast's dedication and commitment, and their openness to the process and working style I introduced. They have made many personal sacrifices to be able to work with us. As for the production team, I am filled with gratitude for the many hours, days, and weeks spent by all to help make my vision become a reality.

Finally, I would like to thank Karl Swinyard, Kate Bannister and the team at Brockley Jack Studio Theatre, for opening the door to a brand new company like us. The energy and support I have received has been unexpected and far beyond my biggest dreams.

I hope you will enjoy the show.

**Sebastian Palka**

*Artistic Director*

Big Boots Theatre Company

[www.BigBootsTheatreCompany.com](http://www.BigBootsTheatreCompany.com)

# HOLDING THE MAN

## Cast

**Christopher Hunter**  
Tim

**Paul-Emile Forman**  
John, Mission Control

**Marla-Jane Lynch**  
Mary-Gert, Jackie, Rhys, Rose, Queen, Lois  
Caleo, NIDA Director, Doctor Two, Actor,  
NIDA Actor

**Dickon Farmar**  
Neil Armstrong, Scarecrow, Dick, Bob Caleo,  
Derge, Queen Two, Woody, Richard, Doctor  
One, Theatre Director, NIDA Actor

**Emma Zadow**  
Juliet, Eric, Door-Bitch, NIDA Teacher,  
Richard, Actor & Doctor Shepherd

**Sam Goodchild**  
Kevin, Marie, Biscuit, Lee, Bartender, Harry,  
Philip (New Romantic) Franco, Peter, NIDA  
Actor, Waiter Actor

**Timothy Hofmeier**  
Richard (voice)

a play by **Tommy Murphy**  
adapted from the book by  
**Timothy Conigrave**

## Production

**Sebastian Palka**  
Director/Producer

**Roman Berry**  
Movement/Assistant Director

**Przemyslaw Piotr Klonowski**  
Costume Designer

**Reiko Moreau**  
Set Designer

**Tom Butler**  
Lighting Designer

**Lucy Ellis**  
Stage Manager

**Peter Taylor**  
Assistant Stage Manager

**Alexandra Iordache**  
Assistant Costume Designer

**Rita Rua**  
Assistant Producer

**Kelise Franclemont**  
Media Coordinator

**Matt Mulcachy**  
Yoga Coach

**Nicolas Chinardet**  
Photography/Graphic Design

**Kris Webb**  
Casting

**Aga Zaborowicz**  
Head of Operations



There will be a 15 minute interval after act one.  
Running time approximately 2.5 hour, including the interval.  
This production of *Holding the Man* opened at the Brockley  
Jack Studio Theatre, London on 17 January 2017.



## Cast



**Christopher Hunter (Tim)** Christopher is thrilled to be returning to the stage for his London debut with Big Boots Theatre Company. Before moving to London in the summer of 2016 Christopher spent a year in Paris where he continued to hone his skills working on many independent shorts and studying the Eric Morris method under the tutelage of Celia Anne Brown. In his native Australia Christopher received his B.A. in theatre from the University of Southern Queensland and has performed professionally in a variety of onstage productions (*Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Pygmalion*) and a number of short films including the award winning *Interzone*.



**Paul-Emile Forman (John)** This is Paul-Emile Forman's first professional play. Recently graduated from Drama Studio London, he was nominated for the BBC Radio Caryl Chesson Award. His credits include Romeo in *Romeo and Juliet*, Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Stephen Guest in *The Mill on the Floss*. Since then he has played a variety of parts in both feature and short length films, including *Seagull*, *The Confessional* and *She*. Having played guitar for most of his life, he draws a lot of inspiration through music. Paul-Emile is fully bilingual in English and French as he studied at the Lycée Français Charles De Gaulle, he then pursued Mathematics at Cardiff University before embarking on his journey as an actor. Paul-Emile explains: "Not knowing much about *Holding The Man*, I initially wanted to take part in this project for my brother. When he told me he was gay, he explained he grew up feeling as if there was something "wrong" with him - he'd fight the thoughts in his head. I found it heart-breaking that people felt amiss about being gay and I felt a strong sense of duty to portray the life of a gay protagonist in theatre. I express my respect through this play."



**Marla Jane Lynch (Mary-Gert and ensemble)** Marla started acting at the grand old age of 5 in the land down under where she also happened to be born, and 8 years ago fulfilled the dream of coming to London to continue her journey as an actor and film-maker. Marla keeps her acting muscles firm and perky in the London Masterclass of Anthony Meindl's Actor Workshop (voted Backstage's No.1 Acting School). Back in Oz, Marla also trained with The National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) and Screenwise. In July Marla launched a sketch comedy channel *Marla, Myself and I* on YouTube. She will be appearing next in a short film drama inspired by a Bryony Lavery play, portraying a child-murdering prisoner. Marla is very excited to be in this incredible Australian love story as the themes in it are very close to her heart, and being able to perform Australian work in her adopted home-town is a wonderful honour.

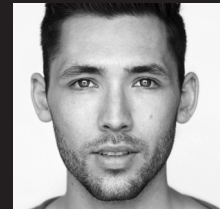


**Dickon Farmar (Bob and Ensemble)** Dickon is thrilled to be a part of the *Holding The Man* cast. Previous roles include Scullery in *Road*, Ken in *Whose Life is it Anyway?*, and Alan in *Serial Killers* (all at Bridewell Theatre). Royce in *The Night Heron* (Theatro Technis), Ferdinand in *The Duchess of Malfi* (Barons Court Theatre & Greenwich Playhouse), Alwa in *Lulu*, (Tabard Theatre) Count Bellair in *The Beaux Stratagem* and Radiator in *Cinderella – A Summertime Pantomime* (Tabard Theatre and Edinburgh Fringe Festival). Dickon is also a writer and is currently working on his third full length play.

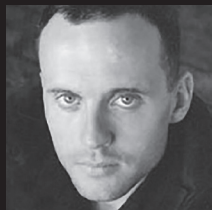
**Emma Zadow (Juliet and Ensemble)** Emma trained at Rose Bruford College graduating in 2015 where she also trained at Centre College, Kentucky. She is a member of the National Youth Theatre. She recently performed in the one-woman show *PRO* (Bread and Roses Theatre). Other credits include *The Taming of the Shrew* (Get Over It Productions), *Cockroaches* (The Cockpit Theatre) and as Christopher Marlowe in John Green's new play *Kit Marlowe is Dead Again* (Da Vinci's Kitchen Ensemble). Recent film work includes Ada Camille in short film *The Victorious* directed by Chris Anstey (Best National Film at Making Waves Film Festival). Her debut play *Fridge* premiered at the Etcetera Theatre in June 2016 with Blackout Creative Arts. Emma is pleased to be bringing the story of Tim Conigrave and John Caleo to the London Fringe with Big Boots Theatre Company's opening production.

**Sam Goodchild (Peter and Ensemble)** Sam trained at Drama Centre London. Credits include: *Party* (Above The Stag Theatre); *Thérèse Raquin* (Southwark Playhouse); *Emoticon* (Brockley Jack Studio Theatre); *Up4aMeet?* (Waterloo East Theatre); *Brace* (Up+Up Productions). Credits whilst training include: Agamemnon in *After Troy*; Tom Moody in *Golden Boy*; Jenny Diver in *An Opera from the East*. Whilst at Drama Centre he was chosen to represent the school at the Sam Wanamaker Festival at Shakespeare's Globe.

**Timothy Hofmeier (Richard Voice)** Timothy is an Australian Actor from Old Bar on the Mid North Coast of NSW. He graduated from Drama Studio London in 2016 and has since been developing his career with numerous small role in stage and screen, Timothy is currently performing as MacDuff in *Macbeth* at The London Theatre in New Cross.



## Creatives



**Tommy Murphy (writer)** Tommy is an award-winning playwright and screenwriter. He is currently the Patrick White Fellow at the Sydney Theatre Company. *Holding the Man*, Tommy's stage adaptation, continues to be produced across the world with upcoming productions in France, USA and Israel. His screenplay for *Holding the Man*, for which he was Associate Producer, won the Australian Writers' Guild Award and the Film Critics Circle Award for Best Screenplay. After a successful cinematic release, the film is now distributed globally by Netflix. The play won multiple awards including the NSW Premier's Literary Award, the Australian Writers' Guild Award and the Philip Parsons Award. He was the youngest and only dual winner in consecutive years of the NSW Premier's Literary Award, having won for *Strangers in Between*, at Griffin Theatre, in 2005. Tommy's adaptation of Lorca's *Blood Wedding* formed part of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad. His play *Gwen in Purgatory* (Belvoir, La Boite) won the WA Premier's Award and the prestigious Richard Burton Prize. Other plays include *Troy's House* (Old Fitz, ATYP) and *Massacre at Paris* (after Marlowe, at ATYP). He is currently writing for two television series having written on *Devil's Playground* (winner Logie Most Outstanding Miniseries and AACTA Best Mini Series). Murphy's new play, *Mark Colvin's Kidney*, a unique take on the News of The World phone hacking saga, premieres this month at Sydney's Belvoir Theatre.



**Sebastian Palka (Director)** Actor and director has worked in theatre, film, TV in a wide range of styles, roles and forms. Sebastian worked with acclaimed theatre and film directors Jacek Skalski (Poland), Adam Cook (Australia) and Shane Meadows (UK). He trained in the Polish National Drama School in Krakow and The Acting College in Sydney, Australia. Sebastian has written musicals and directed at the Polish Children Theatre *Syrena* in Hammersmith, London. Recently he directed at the Tristan Bates Theatre and assisted at City Lit Drama School on one of the acting courses. Sebastian is a founder of Big Boots Theatre Company Limited.



**Roman Berry (Movement Director and Assistant Director)** Roman trained in Australia: Centre for PA (Dance); Flinders Drama Centre (Theatre). Career Highlights: Australian Premiere *Miss Saigon*; Artistic Director II Commonwealth Youth Games Ceremony. Divergent Theatre Collective's *Illegals: The Game Show* (Waterloo East Theatre), Music Box Theatre's *Poppies*, *The Musical* (The Space), Karen Morash's *Playground*, Pregnant Fish Theatre's *The Picture Of Dorian Gray* (The Space), *PRO* (Bread & Roses Theatre), *The Hound Of The Baskervilles* (The Jack Studio Theatre). *Body and Mind*, *Wellness* (J4DWUK). He is currently Artistic Director for Divergent Theatre Collective.



**Big Boots Theatre Company** Besides *Holding the Man*, Big Boots Theatre Company has two other projects currently in the works for 2017: *Spring Awakening* by Frank Wedekind in a new translation by Marko Waschke and *Balladina* by Juliusz Slowacki in a new adaptation by Kaja Kolman and Sebastian Palka. Big Boots Theatre Company was established in June 2016 and *Holding the Man* is its debut production. To keep informed of our future work, please consider liking us on Facebook and following us on Twitter by looking up "BigBootsTheatre".

To share your thoughts about the production please visit:  
[www.BigBootsTheatreCompany.com/feedback](http://www.BigBootsTheatreCompany.com/feedback)





*The cast and crew were very proud to be able to contribute to World AIDS Day by donating two tickets to the show for a charity auction at the Two Brewers in Clapham. The tickets raised £210 for Wandsworth Oasis, a local charity supporting people living with HIV.*

## Special thanks

*from Big Boots Theatre Company:  
2Brewers London's Premier Cabaret and Club Bar, Terrence Higgins Trust, Drama Centre London Diana Fraser, The Team at Brockley Jack Theatre, and everyone else who supported us in the making of *Holding the Man*.*

*from the Jack Studio Theatre:  
Ruth and all the staff at the Brockley Jack Theatre, Greene King Brewery, Acorn Estates Ltd.*

In 2016 the Jack Studio the marked twenty two years of creating theatre. It is a vibrant and intimate performance space in south east London, with a long history both within its community and the London-wide theatre scene. Currently led by Artistic Director, Kate Bannister, and Theatre Manager, Karl Swinyard, the Jack is committed to producing theatre that inspires, challenges and entertains our audience. The theatre is keen to continue its tradition of supporting emerging companies, providing a space for them to develop their work, alongside the productions created each year by the Jack's in-house team.

We're always pleased to welcome new companies to the Jack, with bold and ambitious ideas. Throughout the year we programme a diverse mix of productions, providing a platform for new writing, innovative revivals of classic texts and musical theatre.





**John Caleo**

30 May 1960 - 26 January 1992

**Timothy Conigrave**

19 November 1959 – 18 October 1994

