

Riverside's National Theatre of Parramatta  
in association with Sydney Festival presents

# QUEEN FATIMA

BY JAMES ELAZZI

Directed by Paige Rattray



Riverside Theatres, Parramatta

7 - 16 Jan 2021

RIVERSIDE  
NATIONAL THEATRE  
OF PARRAMATTA

2021  
SYD  
FEST



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# QUEEN FATIMA

## BY JAMES ELAZZI

### Performers

Fayssal Bazzi  
Neveen Hanna  
Sheridan Harbridge  
Johnny Nasser  
Rahel Romahn  
Kristelle Zibara

## CREATIVE TEAM

**Playwright** James Elazzi

**Director** Paige Rattray

**Set and Costume Designer** Renée Mulder

**Lighting Designer** Kelsey Lee

**Composer/Sound designer** David Muratore

**Stage Manager** Lauren Tulloh

**Production Manager** Cara Woods

**Creative Futures (Assistant Director)** Priscilla Doueihy

*Queen Fatima* opened Saturday 9 Jan, 2021 at Riverside Theatres, Parramatta.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Riverside's National Theatre of Parramatta acknowledges the Traditional Owners of this land, the Darug people.

RIVERSIDE  
NATIONAL THEATRE  
OF PARRAMATTA  
PUTTING THE NATION ON STAGE



## A NOTE FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT

I've always been intrigued with the relationships we have with our bodies and what we deem as attractive or 'enough' to be content. Furthermore, I wanted to explore the consequences of not being 'enough'. The notion that we have to change who we are physically to be enough. To be 'chosen'. With *Fatima*, I wanted to go further and interrogate the complex hierarchies of Lebanese Australian culture, and what it means for a confident, thirty something woman to love her body, but at the same time, is taught to be ashamed?

*Queen Fatima* plays snakes and ladders with status, class, identity and sacrifice. Throw in a Lebanese beauty pageant and I could find a better way to bring these themes to the boil.

There are choices that *Fatima* makes, that we've all had to make at some point. But *Fatima* isn't a victim of the choices her family, boyfriend or the pageant. She doesn't suffer fools, and with a strong interior and exterior, she begins to pull the reigns on anything that stands in the way of her of showing the world what she's made of. *Fatima* is boisterous, confident and loving. But above all, she is human, with flaws and strengths. And with that, naming her a 'Queen' feels admittedly truthful, in all its glory.

**James Elazzi**



## A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Every now and then a play comes along that from the moment you start reading it, makes your heart sing. *Queen Fatima* is one of those plays. Our first reading was during lockdown over zoom and many of us were feeling pretty grim about the future in general, let alone what the future of theatre may be. Cut to 90 minutes later post reading, we're laughing, talking over each other at a million miles an hour (like the good old days) and having wild ideas about all the opportunities for staging this play and how much joy it had given us.

So I see *Queen Fatima* as a gift from James Elazzi to the team making it, his community, and most of all his audience. We're in day 4 of rehearsals as I write this and we haven't stopped laughing. Multiple times a day we exclaim how lucky we are to be able to work on the play and that working in theatre is our job.

I hope that you feel as lucky sitting in the audience and that the incredible warmth, heart and empathy that sits at the core of this play travels out into the world with you when you leave the theatre tonight.

*Queen Fatima* is our antidote to 2020, as Gada would joyously cry 'le Le le le le le le le le le!'

**Paige Rattray**



**JAMES ELAZZI**  
*Playwright*

We are pleased to welcome back James after Riverside's National Theatre of Parramatta's production of *Lady Tabouli* (2020). James is a young playwright who has made quite a splash in the last couple of years. His play *Lady Tabouli* (Riverside's National Theatre of Parramatta for Sydney Festival) enjoyed a sold-out season in 2020 and as did his play *Omar and Dawn* (Apocalypse Theatre Co and Green Door Theatre for Kings Cross Theatre) in 2019. He was also granted a place in the 2019-21 Sydney Theatre Company Emerging Writers' Program and was named one of the 2020 AMP Tomorrow Makers for Excellence in Writing for Screen/Stage receiving an award and grant for his work. In 2018 his plays were selected for readings at Kings Cross Theatre's Storytellers Festival, the Siren Theatre's Playwriting Festival and the National Playwriting Festival. James was also selected to take part in the WestWords' writing residency in Varuna. In 2017, James was selected for two National Theatre of Parramatta programs for emerging artists, 'Page to Stage' and 'Creative Futures'. His play *Son of Byblos* (finalist for the Silver Gull Play Award) was programmed as part of the Belvoir's 25a 2020 season but was unfortunately postpone due to COVID-19.



**PAIGE RATTRAY**  
*Director*

Paige is currently Sydney Theatre Company's Associate Director, after holding the role of Associate Artistic Director at Queensland Theatre. Prior to that, she was Sydney Theatre Company's Richard Wherrett Fellow and has previously directed *Triple X*, *The Deep Blue Sea*, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, *How to Rule the World*, *Black is the New White*, *Australian Graffiti*, *Power Plays* and *Boys will be boys* for STC. Paige was co-founder of independent theatre company Arthur, was the 2011 Resident Director at Griffin Theatre Company as well as the company's 2010 Affiliate Director. Other directing credits include, Queensland Theatre: *Hedda*, *Scenes from a Marriage*, *Switzerland*. Belvoir: *Fangirls* (with Queensland Theatre in association with ATYP). Arthur: *Bright World* (with Theatreworks), *The Sea Project*, *Return to Earth* (with Griffin Independent), *The Myth Project: Twin* (with MTC NEON), *The Mesh* (with Red Stitch) *The Midlands* (with Mudlark), *Dirtyland* (with The Spare Room), *Cut Snake*. Milk Crate Theatre: *This House is Mine*. Paige won Best Direction of a Mainstage Production for *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* and Best Production of a Mainstage Musical for *Fangirls* at the 2019 Sydney Theatre Awards, Best Mainstage Production at the 2016 Matilda Awards for *Switzerland*. She is a graduate of NIDA.



**FAYSSAL BAZZI**  
*Performer – Gada*

Fayssal has performed with many of the national theatre companies. Selected credits include: *Deep Blue Sea*, *Mary Stuart*, *The Other Way*, *Look the Other Way* (Sydney Theatre Company); *The Merchant of Venice* (Bell Shakespeare); *Sami in Paradise*, *Food and Back at the Dojo*, *Ivanov*, *The Government Inspector* (Belvoir); *Blasted* (Malthouse); *Good Cook*. *Friendly*. *Clean*, *The Pigeons* (Griffin Theatre Company); *The Motherf\*\*ker With the Hat* (Black Swan State Theatre Company) and *All the Blood and All the Water* (Riverside Theatre). Fayssal's television credits include; *Stateless*, *The Commons*, *Chosen*, *Mr Inbetween*, *Rake*, *Wake in Fright*, *The Let Down*, *Top of the Lake: China Girl*, *East West 101*, *Stupid Stupid Man* and *All Saints*. Fayssal's feature film credits include *Measure for Measure*, *Peter Rabbit*, *The Merger*, *Down Under*, *6 Days*, *Emulsion*, *We're Not Here To F\*\*k Spiders* and *Cedar Boys*. Recently Fayssal won the AACTA Award for Lead Actor in a TV Drama for *Stateless*.



**NEVEEN HANNA**  
*Performer – Jamili*

Neveen toured nationally in 2018 with Bell Shakespeare's production of *Julius Caesar* playing the roles of 'Soothsayer' and 'Treboneous'. Her other theatre credits include *Future Seekers* for Scene Theatre; *Beirut Adrenaline* for Theatre Excentrique; *Gallery Guard* and *Golden Soil* for Double Dare Productions; *Hell Hath No Fury* for Tunks Productions; and *Dylan* for Belvoir. On the screen Neveen is known for her leading role of Layla on SBS *On The Ropes* which received an AACTA nomination for Best Telefeature or Mini Series. Her television credits include Netflix *Clickbait*, Hoodlum's

*Tidelands*, Seven Networks *Home & Away*, ABC's *Harrow*, Goalpost Pictures *Fighting Season*, Matchbox Pictures *Hyde & Seek*, SBS *The Principal* and Jungle Ent. *Here Come The Habibs!*. Neveen's feature film credits include *Peter Rabbit 2: The Runaway*, *Australia Day*, *The Combination 2* and *The 5th Shadow*.

**SHERIDAN HARBRIDGE**  
*Performer – Moonia*



Sheridan is an actor, playwright and director, graduating from NIDA in 2006. Her musical *Songs for the Fallen* won Best Musical,

and Outstanding actress at the New York Music Theatre Festival, and toured Sydney & Brisbane Festival, Arts Centre Melbourne, and New Zealand. She was a Griffin Studio member, and directed and co-wrote *Nosferatutu, or Bleeding at the Ballet* for Griffin. She is director and dramaturg of the upcoming new musical *Dubbo Championship Wrestling* for the Hayes. She recently starred in *Prima Facie* at Griffin Theatre, and received best actress at the Sydney Theatre Awards and GLUG awards. She collaborated with UK cult band The Tiger Lillies for the Biennale and appeared with John Cleese in the Just for Laughs Festival. Theatre credits include *Muriel's Wedding the Musical*, *The Dog/The Cat*, *The Sugar House*, *Girl Asleep*, (Belvoir), *North by Northwest*, *The Beast*, *The Speechmaker* (MTC), *Detective's Handbook*, *You're a Good Man Charlie Brown* (Hayes). She played Valerie Solanas and Judy Garland in Jim Sharman's film *Andy X*. TV credits include *Rake*, *All Saints* and *Wild Boys*, *Doctor Blake Murder Mysteries*, *The Justine Clarke Show*.



**JOHNNY NASSER**  
Performer – Rony

We are pleased to welcome back Johnny after Riverside's National Theatre of Parramatta's production of *Lady Tabouli* (2020). Johnny is a National Theatre Drama school graduate. He has worked extensively with Sydney company, Loose Canon Arts for over 15 years, creating and performing in shows such as, *Trash Alchemy* (Casula Powerhouse) *Darlingwood Tales* (Sydney Opera House), & *Monkeyshines* (Sydney Opera House) as well as numerous touring shows throughout Asia & the Middle East. Recent theatre credits include: *Lady Tabouli* (Riverside's National Theatre of Parramatta), *Dead Cat Bounce* (Griffin), *The Effect* (Redline prods), *The Ham Funeral* (Stables, Siren theatre co), *Night Slows Down* (Bakehouse Theatre co), *Julius Caesar* (GPAC), *Vampirella* (Darlinghurst Theatre Co.), *Wilde Tales* (State of Play - Downstairs Belvoir), *Arabian Night* (NIDA Co.), *'Railway Wonderland'* (NORPA), *Clusters of Light* (Sharjah Ampitheatre, United Arab Emirates), *The 52 Storey Treehouse* (CDP, Sydney Opera House), *MR Stink* (CDP, Sydney Opera House & Dubai tour) TV: US series *The Wilds* and *Reef Break*, *Street Smart*, *Home & Away*, *Here Come the Habibs*, *Chandon Pictures*, *Simone de Beauvoir's Babies*, *Stingers*, *Legacy of the Silver Shadow*, Film: *Shock Room*, *Convict* and *The Combination Redemption Awards*: Sydney theatre award for best supporting actor in *The Ham Funeral*.



**RAHEL ROMAHN**  
Performer – Karim

Rahel Romahn was most recently seen in *No Pay? No Way!* for Sydney Theatre Company. Other stage credits include: *Lord of the Flies*, *Mary Stuart*, *Harp in the South*, *Three Sisters*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Sydney Theatre Company) and *Così* (Sydney Theatre Company/ Melbourne Theatre Company). Rahel's television credits include *Australian Gangster*, *Secret City*, *Mr Inbetween*, *The Other Guy*, *Hyde & Seek*, *Janet King*, *Clever Man*, *Ready for This*, *The Principal*, *Gangs of Oz*, and *Underbelly: The Golden Mile*. Feature film credits include *Moonrock for Monday*, directed by Kurt Martin, *Little Monsters*, *The Redemption*, *Ali's Wedding*, *Down Under*, *Alex and Eve*, and *The Combination*. In 2016 Rahel was nominated for the AACTA Award for *Best Guest or Supporting Actor* in a Television Drama for his role in *The Principal*. Rahel received a Logie Award Nomination for *Most Outstanding Newcomer* for the same role.



**KRISTELLE ZIBARA**  
Performer – Fatima

Kristelle Zibara first studied acting at Excelsia College where she received her Bachelor's Degree in Dramatic Arts. More recently, she lived in Los Angeles where she studied Improv at Groundlings, along with various writing courses at The Second City and UCB. She has also studied film Acting at the Acting Corps, also in LA. Her most recent roles include Sydney Festival's *Trojan Barbie*, *My Father's Left Testicle* (Depot Theatre), *Surprise* and *Socialite Networking*, both as part of Sydney's Short & Sweet Festival. Kristelle was extremely active in community and college theatre when studying, starring in around 15 stage plays, and a few short films. She has recently dipped her toes into Directing, her first show *On The Way Out* was voted Judges Choice, and with her Web Series, *Sharing Space*, which she also wrote and Produced. *Queen Fatima* will be her first professional show. She hopes to pursue a long and fulfilling career in Comedy. Mainly with Acting, Improv and Sketch, both on stage and screen.



**RENEE MULDER**  
Set and Costume Designer

Renée is an award-winning set and costume designer. Designs for theatre include: for Sydney Theatre Company, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, *Banging Denmark*, *The Torrents*, *Black is the New White*, *The Bleeding Tree* (with Griffin), *Hamlet: Prince of Skidmark*, *Orlando*, *Battle of Waterloo*, *The Effect* (with Queensland Theatre), *Perplex*, *The Long Way Home*, *Dance Better at Parties*, *Mrs Warren's Profession*, *Marriage Blanc*, *In a Heart Beat*, *The Splinter*, *Actor on a Box: The Luck Child*; as costume designer, *The Harp in the South Part One and Two*, *Saint Joan*, *Top Girls*, *Chimerica*, *Endgame*, *Children of the Sun*; as set designer, Edward Gant's *Amazing Feats of Loneliness* (with La Boite); for Griffin, *Superheroes*, *Prima Facie*, *Rice* (with QT), *The Bleeding Tree*, *The Boys*, *A Hoax* (with La Boite); for Melbourne Theatre Company: as designer, *Home I'm Darling*, *Arbus and West*; Queensland Theatre: *Mouthpiece*, *Triple X*, *Nearer the Gods*, *An Octoroon*, *Sacre Bleu!*, *Fat Pig*.



**KELSEY LEE**  
*Lighting Designer*

Kelsey is a lighting, set and costume designer for theatre and film. Her recent credits include *A Room of One's Own* (Belvoir). For Belvoir's 25A season in 2019, Kelsey designed the lighting for *Extinction of The Learned Response*, *Skyduck* and *Kasama Kita*. Other theatre credits include *I'm With Her* and *Comedy Kiki 2019* (Darlinghurst Theatre Company); *April Aardvark* (ATYP); *Good Dog, If We Got Some More Cocaine I Could Show You How I Love You* (Greendoor Theatre Company). She designed the lighting, set and costumes for *There's a Sea In My Bedroom* (Australian Chamber Orchestra) and *Lulu: A Modern Sex Tragedy* (NIDA) directed by Claudia Osborne. For film, Kelsey was involved with internships on both *Ladies and Black*, and the Marvel Studios film *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings*. She was also in the art department for Josh Lawson's upcoming film *Long Story Short* (See Pictures).



**DAVID MURATORE**  
*Composer*  
*/Sound designer*

David Muratore is a record and electronic music producer, sound designer, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist from Sydney, NSW. Although working primarily in the music industry, he is the originating and continuing music producer for the new Australian musical *Fangirls* (Belvoir/Queensland Theatre Company). His work has gained the attention of radio monolith Triple J on many and various counts, through works of his own and his clients and cowriters alike, receiving consistently positive reviews for his production and remixing work. In Late 2017, David gained the attention of Grammy-winning pop-star, Lorde, with his remix of her song *Homemade Dynamite*. David continues to work with artists across many and varied mediums of sound design, record production, mixing, engineering in many genres of the music and theatre worlds.



**LAUREN TULLOH**  
*Stage Manager*

We are pleased to welcome back Lauren after Riverside's National Theatre of Parramatta's production of *The Things I Could Never Tell Steven* (2020). Lauren Tulloh is a NIDA graduate, completing a Bachelor of Dramatic Art (Production). Lauren's most recent theatre credits for NTofP: *The Things I Could Never Tell Steven*, *Jesus Wants Me For A Sunbeam* (Belvoir St Theatre return season). For Ensemble Theatre: *The Last Wife*, *The Last Five Years*, *Marjorie Prime* which also toured to Noosa Alive! Festival, *The Plant* and *Betrayal*. For the Hayes Theatre Company: *American Psycho*, *High Fidelity*, *Assassins*, *The Fantasticks*, *Violet* and *Calamity Jane* which also toured to the Comedy Theatre Melbourne, Belvoir St Theatre, Canberra Civic Centre, Arts Centre Melbourne, IPAC Wollongong, Orange Civic Centre and Parramatta Riverside Theatres. For Griffin Theatre: *Lighten Up*. For Chapel off Chapel: *Songs for A New World* and *Violet*. For Sydney Opera House: *Charlie and Lola's Extremely New Play*. For Christine Dunstan Productions: *The Gruffalo* and *The Gruffalo's Child* for which toured extensively in Australia and New Zealand. For Tall Stories UK: *The Gruffalo: Songs from The Show* which toured to Singapore.



**PRISCILLA DOUEIHY**  
*Creative Futures,*  
*Assistant Director*

Best known for her role of Amal in the critically acclaimed SBS series *On The Ropes* from director Shannon Murphy. Priscilla made her screen debut in the feature film *Suburban Wildlife* from director Imogen McClusky, was featured in the US studio film *Godzilla Vs Kong* as well as the indie feature *Babyteeth* opposite Essie Davis and Ben Mendelson, also directed by Shannon. Priscilla's other screen credits include TV series *Orange Is The New Brown*, Web-series *The Out There*, *LoveBug*, and Channel 7's *The Unboxing*, short films *Sugar*, *Atomic Love*, and *Brunch Shift Massacre*. Priscilla will soon appear in the upcoming Stan series *Eden* as well as Daniel Askill's debut feature film alongside Isabel Lucas and Bobbi Salvor Menuez. In London Priscilla starred as Portia in *The Merchant Of Venice* and Cecilia in *Widows* for London Contemporary Theatre. Priscilla also starred in the award winning production of *Them* at La Mama Theatre, Melbourne.

## ABOUT RIVERSIDE'S NATIONAL THEATRE OF PARAMATTA

Riverside's National Theatre of Parramatta based in Sydney's geographical heart, launched in November 2015, reflects the diversity of Australia today through contemporary and bold performances, education programs and its audiences. As the producing arm of Riverside Theatres, NToFP is raising the profile of performance and engaging the imagination and creative ideas that resonate in Western Sydney and beyond and is *Putting the nation on stage*.

As a principal arts organisation based in Western Sydney, NToFP contributes to Sydney's vibrant artistic community by fostering the creation of new works and building capacity in the arts.

## THE TEAM

### RIVERSIDE'S NATIONAL THEATRE OF PARRAMATTA

**Executive Producer,  
National Theatre of Parramatta**

Joanne Kee

**Associate Producer – Production**

Cara Woods

**Project Officer**

Leigh Russell

**Coordinator (acting)**

Shy Magsalin

**Volunteer**

Arran Munro

**Director**

Robert Love AM

**Business Manager (acting)**

Sainesh Moss

**Operations Manager**

Mike Brew

**Program Manager**

Catherine Swallow

## THANK YOU

**Sydney Theatre Company**

**Elisa Grigg**

**Luke Joslin**

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