

Callum Mackay takes home the 2023 Queer Playwriting Award with “Waterfowl”

In its eighth year, the **Queer Playwriting Award Showcase** presented to **Midsumma Festival** audiences at **Gasworks Arts Park**. Aided by audience feedback gathered on the night, the selection panellists convened and announced on 28 February that *Waterfowl* by **Callum Mackay** will take home the 2023 Queer Playwriting Award. Mackay is set to work alongside Gasworks and Midsumma over the next year to deliver a full work for Midsumma Festival audiences in 2024.

“I am incredibly honoured to have been chosen as the winner of this prestigious award. Presenting Waterfowl through QPAS with the support of Midsumma and Gasworks has been a tremendously rewarding experience and one I’m very excited to be given the opportunity to continue being a part of. I want to say a massive thank you to my remarkable cast and my brilliant director Hayden Tonazzi who have been of constant support. I’m beyond excited to present this play to a wider audience and share a story I am so personally proud to tell.” – Callum Mackay, playwright - Waterfowl

"We commend all of the playwrights, directors, and actors who have taken part in QPAS 2023. This year’s shortlist plays showcased great diversity in style, form and narrative, and the writing presented was of an exceptional standard. Gasworks is proud to be able to support the development of new queer playwriting talent. We hope to continue to build a safe space for queer artists to share their work with audiences, and to strengthen our reputation as a platform for supporting emerging talent and developing exciting new work.

“With Midsumma’s continued support, Gasworks is thrilled to congratulate Callum Mackay as the winner of our 2023 Queer Playwriting Award. The panel were particularly impressed by Callum’s incisive wit and fast-paced comedic dialogue, and the deft hand he demonstrated in balancing this with dramatic subject matter and poignant moments. Audience feedback reflected an appreciation of the sharp comedy, a fresh but familiar take on a known subject, as well as its ability to transcend its setting to be relevant and compelling to broad demographics. Callum is an exciting new writing talent and his play *Waterfowl* will not only sit well in a future Midsumma season at Gasworks, it also has the potential to go on to have a healthy touring life at venues and festivals beyond our backyard. We look forward to our forthcoming collaboration with Callum and his team in developing *Waterfowl* into a full production for public presentation at Gasworks during Midsumma Festival soon." **Marisa Cesario, Programming Co-ordinator - Gasworks Arts Park**

Waterfowl is an epic queer play that takes place in a private boarding school during the late 80s and present-day Australia. Lawler, now a fifty-year-old man, looks back on his tumultuous relationship with Samuel, the thriving seventeen-year-old school captain. But as the school year begins, they meet a young charismatic exchange student named Carter. A blossoming young romance, a splintering friendship, and an entanglement between Lawler and a young boy collide and interlock during a final year of high school.

An actor and emerging playwright, **Callum Mackay** was born and raised in Eora Country (Sydney). After moving to Naarm (Melbourne) in 2016, he completed acting studies at VCA in 2018. He's consistently acted in independent theatre including such companies as Melbourne Shakespeare Company, 7th Floor Theatre and EbbFlow Theatre Company. He began playwriting in 2019 and has since written four plays, including *Brittany & The Mannequins* and *The Last Train to Madeline*. Callum is deeply passionate about creating provocative work with young artists for young audiences and is interested in theatre that pushes boundaries, stimulates thought-provoking conversation and energises young artists with a voice.

In addition to development support from Gasworks, for the first time in QPAS history, the 2023 Award winner will also receive funding towards production design thanks to the generous contribution of the Gasworks Patrons Foundation Fund.

About QPAS

Creators of new or developing works of theatre were invited to submit their proposals for consideration by a panel of supportive industry professionals. A **shortlist of four works were selected** by the industry panel and invited to present a 15 minute staged reading at Gasworks Arts Park as part of Midsumma Festival 2023 on **23 January**.

This development program aims to identify, support and develop new playwriting talent and get queer issues out there for mainstream audiences to consider and enjoy. The LGBTQIA+ community is diverse, exciting and full of stories and ideas that deserve to be heard on the stages of performing arts venues throughout the country.

Find out more about the [Queer Playwriting Award Showcase 2023](#), or apply for 2024 (opens June 2023).



Presented by Midsumma Festival and Gasworks Arts Park.

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