

As Told By The Boys Who Fed Me Apples

Presented by R Johns and Big West Festival

Writer's notes:

I wrote As Told By The Boys Who Fed Me Apples because the work about Sandy found me. I went to the Australian premiere of the National Theatre of Great Britain and Global Creatures' production of War Horse at the Arts Centre in late 2012, and a woman out of the blue accosted me in the foyer. She was very upset and told me how her grandfather's horse had been sold to the Indian army after World War One and that many of the other Australian horses were shot and butchered at the war's end. I noted in the programme that only one horse, Sandy, came home. In 2013 Marcia Ferguson, Artistic Director of Big West Festival asked Big West writers to see if we were interested in writing plays for the Anzac Centenary that focused on Footscray and World War One.

As I was researching I was amazed to discover Sandy had spent his last days in the Maribyrnong remount depot, and that there was a community group called Friends Of Sandy and The Australian Light Horse. This group has two Order Of Australia recipients, an amazing 90 year old, and members including Alan Ross in his eighties, who sadly passed away within weeks of our meeting. Alan's father fought at The Battle of Beersheba with the 4th Light Horse Brigade. He and other older members of this group are the last living connection with those who fought in World War One.

This group has fought for years, long and passionately and without success, to have the historical remount depot land behind Maribyrnong Community Centre recognized and preserved as a permanent memorial to all the 136,000+ horses who went to war, and as the burial place of Sandy.

With As Told By The Boys Who Fed Me Apples, I want the audience to walk away knowing Sandy's story and the story of the forgotten men who served with him.

The work had its first public reading to Members of The National Gallery Of Victoria in conjunction with The Horse exhibition. We were fortunate enough to have this work funded through the Australian Government's Anzac Centenary Arts and Culture Fund, the Australia Council for the Arts, and the generous support of VU.

Sequence One: Gallipoli.

Major-General Sir William Throsby Bridges.

Sequence Two:

The Western Front. A veterinarian officer with Sandy.

Sequence Three: Calais and the return home.

The groom, Archibald Thomas Jordan and Sandy outside the vet hospital at Calais and the return home from war.

Sequence Two is based on a small article from The Argus (1918) about Sandy in France.

Thank you:

The Australian Government's Anzac Centenary Arts and Culture Fund, Big West Festival, the Australia Council for the Arts, Victoria University College of the Arts, the National Gallery of Victoria and Auspicious Arts. Friends of Sandy and The Australian Light Horse, vale Alan Ross.

Marcia Ferguson (Artistic Director), Amber Stuart (General Manager), Kate Crawford (Marketing), Van Locker (Production) and all at Big West Festival.

Selene Bateman and the team at Auspicious Arts.

Dr. Chris Coulthard-Clark, Visiting Fellow Australian Defence Force Academy (Canberra).

Jane Peek (Curator - Military Heraldry and Technology) and Craig Blanch (Assistant Curator) from the Australian War Memorial, Canberra.

Dr Ted Gott (Senior Curator - International Art) and Laurie Benson (Curator - International Art) and the Directorate, National Gallery of Victoria. Emily Miller, Public Programs, NGV. Alex Hardy, Members Engagement Officer, NGV.

Women International Playwrights Conference Cape Town 2015, Jyl Lynn Felman (Rants and Raves: Writing for the Solo Voice) and Lynne.S. Brandon.

Tony Wright, National Affairs Editor - The Age.

Peter Stratford, first dramaturgical eye. Development Artist: Jordan Fraser-Trumble.

Matthew Myers, from the Creswick Light Horse Troop. Leonie Pratt and Holly Cochrane at the Shrine of Remembrance. Metanoia Theatre, Jean Merbach (Tallangatta, who has family connections to Bonner O'Donnell who donated Sandy to the war), Sarah Sutherland, Jeremy Press, Olga Makeeva, George Zelen, Margie Blackford, Martin Foot, Carolyn Leach, Elizabeth Mumford, Donna and Mr & Mrs Lawry from Wodonga, Kew Historical Society, Royal Historical Society, Essendon Historical Society, Footscray Historical Society, Bill Horrocks, Tony Lambides-Turner, The Henry Lawson Society, Britt Gow, Denise Regan and Anne Mirtschin from Hawkesdale P12 College, Carolyn Bock. Bernie Dingle Light Horse and Field Artillery Museum Nar Nar Goon. Marjorie Jane Scott, Margaret Hunt. Adrian Prosen and all at MDM Copy Centre. To the wonderful director and cast for all the cuts and edits on the floor as we rehearsed.

Elaine Brogan OAM, Peter Somerville OAM, Pauline Ashton, Trish Hodda, Bob and Josie Myers, Ian Wheeler, Alex Yokolev, Dorothy and Ladd Hanlon, and Joyce and Alan Ross, who inspired me with their stories and dreams.