

CLAIRE DELLA AND THE MOON

BY ELLEN GRAHAM AND JAMIE HORNSBY



Madness of Two

presents

CLAIRE DELLA
AND
THE MOON

by Ellen Graham and Jamie Hornsby

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Claire Della and the Moon was developed and performed on the traditional lands of the Kurna people. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. Always was, always will be, Aboriginal land.

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And you, dear reader, for picking up this script!

*Dedicated to Peter Graham
And every time you loved me despite what planet I was on.
- Ellen Graham*

PRODUCTION HISTORY

Claire Della and the Moon received its first public performance on the 26th September, 2020 at the Parks Theatre in Adelaide, South Australia. The cast and creative team were as follows:

Actor 1	Ellen Graham
<i>Claire Della</i>	
<i>Sergei</i>	
Actor 2	Jamie Hornsby
<i>Laika</i>	
<i>Jon</i>	
<i>Bus Driver</i>	
<i>And others</i>	
Director	Shannon Rush
Composer	Jamie Hornsby
Lighting Designer	Mark Oakley
Puppet Designer	Stephanie Fisher
Stage Manager	Clare Miyuki Guerin
Assistant Stage Manager	Grace Calabretto

Claire Della and the Moon was developed through the inaugural Hall of Possibility Artist in Residence program at Slingsby Theatre Company. It was developed in close consultation with OK Psychology, an Adelaide based child-psychology practice. It was presented with the support of the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

CLAIRE DELLA AND THE MOON

*As we enter we're struck by the beauty of the space.
It's all deep purples, bright blues.
Cosmic brilliance.
We can deduce that we're on the surface of the Moon.
And far upstage sits a young girl.
Her knees folded into her chest
Facing away from us.
She's lost in thought.
As the last of the audience file in
She turns to us.*

ACTOR 2

Claire Della was on the Moon.
Claire Della was on the Moon.
Around her swirled the stars and the galaxies
The comets and constellations
Infinite possibilities
Infinite questions
But the one thing you could say for certain
Was that Claire Della was on –

CLAIRE

The Moon.

ACTOR 2

Claire Della was a happy person.
Mostly.
To look at her you'd see just a normal little girl.
With wide eyes
Unkempt hair
A quizzical look on her face.
A perfectly normal person.
But still, from time to time
She'd find herself up here
On this cold, white rock.

CLAIRE

Alone.

*Claire looks around.
She's totally alone.*

ACTOR 2

She hadn't always been up here.
No, Claire Della was a traveller.
A visitor.
A cosmic adventurer!
She came from down below.

The Earth comes into view.

CLAIRE

Earth.

ACTOR 2

Her brother Jon had taught her about the Moon.
Her brother Jon taught her about most places.
Back when they were kids
When they would sit on their lawn on warm summer nights
Staring up at the stars.

SHIFT.

Claire and Jon lie together on their lawn.

JON

At the moment we think there are about 400 billion stars in our galaxy.

CLAIRE

At the moment?

JON

They're always discovering new ones.
Tomorrow there might be a hundred more.
Or a thousand.
Who knows?

CLAIRE

Wow.
If there's 400 million –

JON

Wrong! Billion -

CLAIRE

400 *billion* stars in our galaxy alone...
What else is out there?

Claire looks to the sky and imagines

The stars seem to grow larger

To move.

Fully alive and utterly breathtaking.

JON

There's probably 170 billion galaxies that we'll never reach.

CLAIRE

That many?

JON

Probably more.

And in each galaxy there'd be hundreds of planets.
Thousands.
Millions.
Planets made of diamonds.
Planets made of gas.
Even planets just like ours.

CLAIRE

Wow.

*Claire looks to the stars
Eyes ablaze with wonder.*

CLAIRE

What about the moon?

JON (*reciting*)

That's three hundred and eighty four thousand kilometres from here.

CLAIRE

And is it quiet?

JON

Well, there's no one living there.

ACTOR 2

Claire didn't know what it was
But that thought stuck in her head.

CLAIRE

No one living there...

*The Moon shines into view.
Claire watches it float past.*

ACTOR 2

And so Claire Della spent her days
Dreaming about the stars.
And when the world was too loud –
Which it usually was –
There was one thought that Claire Della would think.

Claire watches the Moon float past.

CLAIRE

It's quiet on the Moon.

SHIFT.

ACTOR 2

Claire Della longed for a place that was quiet.
A place that was peaceful.

It wasn't that she didn't like noise.
It was the *amount* of sound that bothered her.
With cars beeping.

CLAIRE

At me.

ACTOR 2

She thought.
Dogs barking –

CLAIRE

At me.

ACTOR 2

She thought.
And the phone ringing.

The phone rings.

ACTOR 2

The phone was a mystery
A tragedy waiting to reveal itself.
And the anticipation of the news it would bring?
That was the scariest thing of all.
Perhaps it would say she had left a candle burning.
Which had set fire to –

CLAIRE

My desk.

ACTOR 2

Which had set fire to –

CLAIRE

My room.

ACTOR 2

Which had set fire to –

CLAIRE

My house.

ACTOR 2

And her neighbour's house.

CLAIRE

The neighbour with the funny hat -

ACTOR 2

Who used to drive her to hockey practice when her parents were working late.
And then it would set fire to the neighbourhood.

CLAIRE

The town.

ACTOR 2

The city.

CLAIRE

The whole country!

ACTOR 2

And the more that Claire would think about what could be on the other end

The more she would panic.

And the phone would ring and ring.

*Claire races, paces, tears her hair out
Stuck in a spiral of anxiety.*

ACTOR 2

Until finally,

Mercifully,

It would...

The phone stops ringing.

CLAIRE

Stop.

*A moment of silence.
Before the noises start up again.
They begin to overlap.*

ACTOR 2

And when the noises became too much

Claire did what anyone else would do...

She looked for a way to get rid of them.

SHIFT.

*Claire looks through her cupboard.
She finds a fishbowl.
And jams it over her head.
The noises morph, quieter, softer, muffled.
Claire looks at her shadow.
She looks like an astronaut.*

ACTOR 2

But fishbowls are a bit bulky

And a bit hard to balance in.

And sure enough...

Claire wobbles, trips over herself, falls backwards

*And suddenly the fishbowl has a very large crack in it
And all the noises come flooding back in.*

ACTOR 2

Fishbowls just weren't going to cut it.

*Actor 2 hands Claire a bus ticket.
She looks at him, confused.*

ACTOR 2

Claire Della was on the bus.

SHIFT.

*Claire is on a bus.
She tries to validate her ticket.*

MACHINE

BLAAAAAARGH!

She tries again.

MACHINE

BLAAAAAARGH!

CLAIRE

What am I doing wrong?

Claire tries the ticket again, from each direction.

MACHINE

BLAAAAAARGH! BLAAAAAARGH!

The Bus Driver comes up to Claire.

BUS DRIVER

WHATDOYOUTHINKYOU'REDOING

CLAIRE

What?

BUS DRIVER

WHATDOYOUTHINKYOU'REDOING

CLAIRE

What am I doing?
I'm standing with my weight on one foot...
I'm resting my hand against my hip...
I'm just trying to catch the bus.

BUS DRIVER

AREYOUBEINGFUNNY

CLAIRE

I'm sorry – I'm just trying to –

BUS DRIVER

JUSTPUTTHETICKETINTHEEEEEERE-

CLAIRE

I –
I just –
I'm sorry!

BUS DRIVER

YOUNEEDTOGETOFF-

CLAIRE

I'm sorry –
I didn't mean to –
I'm sorry!

*Claire runs off the bus.
It drives off, full of smog and noise
And Claire is alone.*

ACTOR 2

From then on Claire would walk home every day.
It took just over an hour.
But at least there was no one there to yell at her.
To judge her.

CLAIRE

I'm better off alone.

ACTOR 2

She thought.
Things weren't much better at home, either.

SHIFT.

ACTOR 2

It started simply enough.
One Sunday afternoon
Claire was trying to rewire the circuit board from an old radio.

CLAIRE

Stupid thing!

ACTOR 2

... It wasn't going well.

CLAIRE *(to herself)*

Why isn't this working?

JON

Because you're doing it wrong.

CLAIRE

I'm fine.

JON

It doesn't go like that.

CLAIRE

I don't need your help!

Claire throws the circuit board across the room.

ACTOR 2

Claire had a bit of a temper, now and then.
She and Jon were fighting a lot, these days.
And it didn't matter what the fights were about
They always ended the same way.
Claire Della was in the cupboard.

SHIFT.

*Claire's sandwiched inside a cupboard.
Wedged tight between two shelves.
Jon pounds on the cupboard door.*

CLAIRE

Go away!

JON

Claire! Come out!

CLAIRE

I said go away!

JON

You can't stay in there forever!

CLAIRE

I hate you!!

ACTOR 2

And the more her brother pounded on the door –
The tinier the cupboard felt
The tinier she felt
And the harder it became to breathe.
She needed to get out.
She needed to get away.
She needed some...

CLAIRE (*screaming*)
SPAAAAAAAAAAAAACE!!!

Silence.

*A small, sweet melody.
The Moon appears, shining brightly in the darkness.
Claire watches it float past.
And suddenly Claire begins to float too.
In beautiful, perfect, zero gravity.*

SHIFT.

ACTOR 2

And so one night...
When her head was full of space rocks...
And her stomach full of stars...
She left.

*Claire springs out of her bed.
She looks around her room.
She decides not to take anything.*

ACTOR 2

She crept out of her room.
Down the stairs.

*Claire creeps down the stairs.
She steps on a creaky floorboard, gingerly, then backs up.*

ACTOR 2

Taking care to jump over the creaky floorboard at the bottom.

*She jumps over the floorboard.
And continues sneaking through the house.*

ACTOR 2

Through the kitchen
Past her parents' room.
Past Jon's room.

*Jon snores.
Claire sneaks past.
She freezes as the snoring stops abruptly.
The snoring starts again, and Claire continues.*

ACTOR 2

And out the back door.

She leaves the house.

ACTOR 2

Onto the cold brick.
And then the wet grass.
And then into the shed.

*Claire is in the shed.
She brings out a wheelbarrow full of stuff.
Including the fishbowl, the bus ticket and the circuit board.*

ACTOR 2

Claire would never admit this to herself
But she was quite a brilliant inventor.
She could see how different parts might fit together
How a bunch of broken things could come together
And become something entirely new.

Claire looks at the items in the wheelbarrow.

ACTOR 2

She looked at all these things
And thought about the pain they represented.
She was going to put them to use now.

Claire begins building something.

ACTOR 2

She didn't think too much.
Just grabbing
Pushing
Bending
Breaking
Hand over hand over hand
Until there was nothing more to grab.
And suddenly...
She had a way to get to the Moon.

Claire stands before a rickety ladder, stretching all the way into space.

ACTOR 2

And Claire Della took one last look at her backyard.
At the only world she'd ever known...
And she began to climb.

Claire begins to climb the ladder.

ACTOR 2

She climbed and climbed and climbed.
Until the sky became very big.
And the Earth, which had seemed so loud
And so frightening
Became very small.
Perspective is everything.

Claire exits the atmosphere.

ACTOR 2

And as she exited the atmosphere
The stars blazed so impossibly bright
And though her feet hurt
And her hands were scratched
And she was shivering with cold
She kept on climbing.

Claire continues to climb.

ACTOR 2

And the higher she went
The more rickety the ladder became
And the less certain Claire became of what she was doing.
She thought about those nights on the lawn with her brother
Staring up at the stars.

JON

The Moon?
That's three-hundred-and-eighty-four-thousand kilometres from here.

CLAIRE

It's such a long way.
Maybe I should turn back.

Actor 2 sings a soft, sweet melody.

CLAIRE

What's that?

*Suddenly we see them:
A beautiful array of people on their own planets
They float past, a whirlwind of colour and stillness.*

ACTOR 2

There were people out there.
So many people.
Tucked away on planets, asteroids,
Moons of their own.
Claire saw a woman on Jupiter with a half-smile.
A little boy on an asteroid with a dream for every star he saw.

CLAIRE

Funny people.
Sad people.

ACTOR 2

A collection of lost souls.
Citizens of space.

All of them on their own journeys
In their own orbits
And all of them singing
This sad, sweet song.

*Actor 2 sings the melody again.
Claire joins in.*

CLAIRE

I can do this.

*Claire begins to climb again.
She climbs and climbs and climbs.
Until she finally arrives on the Moon.
Claire looks around.*

ACTOR 2

Claire Della was on...
The Moon.

Claire and Actor 2 look at each other, amazed.

ACTOR 2

The Moon was like nowhere else.
It was...

CLAIRE

Dusty.

*Claire kneels down and blows.
A cloud of white dust floats away.*

ACTOR 2

It was...

CLAIRE

Cold.

Claire shivers.

ACTOR 2

But most of all it was...

CLAIRE

Quiet.

*Claire listens.
Silence.*

CLAIRE

I've made it.
... What now?