

Interview: Steve Giannakouras - Greekcity Australia - www.greekcity.com.au

"Greek City" sat down with Bulldog Theatre founder Alex Lykos to find out why Alex & Eve is so hot right now...

When and how did you start BULLDOG THEATRE?

We formed the Bulldog Theatre Company in 2006 with the premiere of our inaugural production *The Negotiating Table*. It was performed downstairs at the Cat and Fiddle Hotel in Balmain. It was a little dungeon with a capacity of 40 people. We formed the theatre company because we wanted to tell contemporary stories that people could relate to. I started writing films first and several of them would get to a point where they would almost get made and at the last minute something would happen to stop the movie from getting made. (Films are hard to make. Films with an "ethnic" flavour are extremely hard to make in this country). So we formed the theatre company so we could tell our stories and not have to rely on old men in suits to give us the green light.

Have you always been a writer / ...How did you get into writing?

I played tennis most of my life. I moved to America when I was 18 and lived there for almost a decade playing tennis. When I hung up my racquets, I moved back to Sydney. All my life I had a focus, but once I finished playing tennis, I had no focus and because I had been away from Sydney for such a long time, I felt a little isolated and so I struggled for a while. Amidst the isolation, I began jotting thoughts, reflecting on my time in America. I found this quite therapeutic. And it just grew from there...I discovered writing was free therapy.

Are you a fulltime writer now?

I try and write 5 days a week. I still teach a couple of times a week-to get out of the house and out of my head.

Where does your passion for the arts come from?

I don't know where it comes from but I am very passionate about stories. I love good stories. Stories are a metaphor for life. And right now more than ever, we need good stories-in particular, we need stories that leave us with a feeling of hope-that tomorrow will be a better day. I saw *The Shawshank Redemption* the other



day for the umpteenth time and was still moved by it. It's an extraordinary story of hope.

Where do you get your inspirations from?

I love humans. We are so complex and contradictory and neurotic and filled with humanity-we are fascinating creatures. Like most writers, I began writing from my experiences. Life is so complex; everyone has so many interesting stories to tell. Over the years the more I write, the more I explore stories and genres that aren't necessarily from personal experience.

I love reading, watching movies; going to the theatre so will often be inspired by good work. How can you not be inspired after watching *Slumdog Millionaire*.

What was your first production and where? And How did it go?

Our first production was *The Negotiating Table* in January of 2006. We performed it in a tiny shoe box at the Cat and Fiddle which had a capacity of 40 people. We still can't believe three years later, we are here performing at the Factory Theatre in front of 400 people every night.

What other shows have you produced?

We have produced the play *Better Man*, about the reunion of two childhood best friends, one a professional tennis player and the other a "professional" drug dealer —and of course *ALEX & EVE* the original play.

You write, act, produce and co-direct your shows, how do you manage?

I don't have a life!!!! We

from there. Revisiting those characters was an absolute delight-especially the Greek father and Lebanese mother. I love those two characters.

Alex & Eve is about a Greek Boy and a Muslim Girl... do you truly believe that these two religions can join in matrimony and work?

I do. Because a person who has good values is honest, sincere, tries to make a contribution to the world usurs any religious differences

Do you think people should convert for their partners?

No. I think one should only convert if that person believes in the principles of that particular religion. Converting for your partner implies you are doing it as means to an end, not for its own

sake, therefore it is a hollow conversion — and could be construed as deceitful.

How does it feel to have started from nothing to being such success story now?

It is overwhelming. Our audience, in particular the Greek community, have given us enormous support. It has galvanised us to work even harder to honour the faith they are showing us. We take this responsibility very seriously.

What is the most powerful thing someone has said to you about one of your productions?

During our season of *Better Man*, a man told me that he and his father hadn't spoken for years. He came to see the show. And after watching it,

he called his Dad to make up. Then he brought his father to see the show.

How do you get so many young people to your shows?

We try to tell stories that people can relate to. In the case of *Alex & Eve*, we have all gone out with someone who isn't from our "ethnic background" or know someone who has. So whether you are 15 or 50, people of all ages can relate to Alex and Eve's precarious plight.

What do you think is missing from the Greek community in Sydney?

I think the Greek community is in great shape. Observing this years Greek Festival Of Sydney, it was great to see so many families and young kids embracing their heritage. We have three Greek-themed theatre shows on back to back. How many other communities have such an array of shows? I think it is wonderful and a clear indication of the burgeoning community we have.

So where on from here? What's next?

ALEX & EVE the film recently received development funding from Screen Australia. A wonderful cast has been assembled and we are working towards shooting it late 2010. I am currently writing a play titled "The Bridge That Joins" which will hopefully be performed later this year and I am writing another film titled "Another Long Night." And I was recently commissioned to write a novel and have begun prep work for it. And of course, I am really looking forward to performing *Alex & Eve: The Wedding* ■



have a small but excellent team (Helena Stamoulis, Paul Miskimon, and Socrates Vithoulkas) that work round the clock to put on our shows.

Alex & Eve and "The Wedding", how did you come up with the concept?

When we first did *Alex and Eve* back in 2006, after the show, people would come up to me and ask if Alex and Eve get together. And people said I should write the sequel. But I immediately dismissed the idea of a sequel. Then we did it again in 2008 and the response was so strong from the audience, I instinctively started visualising what would happen if Alex and Eve were to bump into each other in the future. Ideas started flowing

