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LIV HEWSON “PAYS IT BACK” TO CANBERRA YOUTH THEATRE AND THEIR NEXT GENERATION OF ARTISTS

Liv Hewson (they/them) is one of Canberra’s most successful exports: star of the Paramount + with Showtime series *Yellowjackets*, and the upcoming Australian comedy crime mystery *He Had It Coming*. Now based in the USA, Liv credits Canberra Youth Theatre as the place that began their creative career, and is now “paying it back” with an annual philanthropic donation to ensure the next generation of actors, writers and theatre-makers have access to the same opportunities.

Hewson describes their experience with Canberra Youth Theatre as their “foundation as an artist.” They participated in workshops and productions with the company throughout their adolescence, and credits the training they received there as setting them up to enter the professional world.

Hewson says:

“I didn’t go to university, I went to Canberra Youth Theatre. I was taught a lot of theory, and theatrical technique, but always in an environment that encouraged myself and my peers to put what we were learning to practical use. We were empowered to learn by doing. We were given tools and trusted that we could use them. The work we were doing was woven into the arts scene of the city. As artists, we were taken seriously.”

Canberra Youth Theatre announced last year that it was scaling back its operations – compelling Hewson, and other alumni, into action. Hewson has personally committed to donating \$100,000 over the next five years, funding which will go directly to subsidising pre-professional training programs for emerging artists, including Young Critics, Writers Ensemble, Open Studio, and acting programs.

Drawing a direct line from the opportunities they had at Canberra Youth Theatre and the career in Hollywood that has followed, Hewson felt a responsibility to reach out and offer their support.

Hewson says:

“When I was young, hungry and had no idea where to start, there was a theatre company in my hometown that was made for people just like me. I would not be where I am today without the training I received at CYT. It’s only fair that I use the

position I'm in now to help look after the place that I came from. There are young people like me in Canberra now who need it. Where do we expect the artists of the future to emerge from if we don't support their development now?"

Following a trend among many arts organisations across Australia who are fighting to maintain the viability and sustainability of the sector, Canberra Youth Theatre announced last December that it would be pausing all of its productions and suspending some of its training programs, unless additional ongoing funding can be secured.

Luke Rogers, the Artistic Director & CEO of Canberra Youth Theatre, says:

"Liv's incredibly generous donation comes at a crucial time, and will enable us to deepen the opportunities we create for emerging artists to develop their craft and pursue a professional practice. Liv's talent, determination, and success is a brilliant example of how youth arts companies like ours can be a direct pathway to a professional career in the arts and creative industries."

Fundraising efforts will continue at Canberra Youth Theatre, as the organisation continues to fight for its future. On Saturday 12 April, Canberra Youth Theatre will hold a 'giving day' to coincide with their 12 Hour Theatre Project, when they will aim to raise \$12,000 in 12 hours, as 60 young people aged 7–25 come together for a rollercoaster day of theatre-making.

Anyone who would like to have a conversation about supporting Canberra Youth Theatre's future with a philanthropic donation is encouraged to contact Luke Rogers at luke@canberrayouththeatre.com.au or 02 6248 5057. A tax-deductible donation can also be made at any time at canberrayouththeatre.com.au/donate

WE LOOK FORWARD TO THE OPPORTUNITY FOR MEDIA TO DISCUSS:

- The ongoing challenges with funding facing youth arts organisations in Australia, which have been neglected for the past decade (since Liv Hewson's time with Canberra Youth Theatre).
- The advocacy efforts from the youth arts sector for changes to arts policy and funding priorities, and increased youth engagement across our arts, education, and cultural sectors.
- Canberra Youth Theatre's place in the ecosystem of Canberran theatre, and its 53-year legacy of nurturing artists who have gone on to shape Australian culture.
- Liv Hewson's early experiences at Canberra Youth Theatre: learning fundamental skills as an actor, devising original work in an ensemble, performing in Australian premieres of plays, touring interstate, staging plays in national institutions, getting their first opportunities as a playwright, and developing an artistic practice that was woven into the arts scene of the city.
- The professional pathways programs that this annual donation will support, allowing Canberra Youth Theatre to continue to offer affordable opportunities for emerging artists to develop their craft here in Canberra.



- The life-long benefits of youth arts, despite the constant threat of diminishing funding, in its contributions to social wellbeing, community enrichment, intergenerational collaborations, artistic expression, innovation, civic responsibility, education, and cultural leadership.
- Available for interview:
 - Liv Hewson — Canberra Youth Theatre alumni and supporter (schedule permitting)
 - Luke Rogers — Artistic Director & CEO, Canberra Youth Theatre

FOR IMAGES, INTERVIEWS OR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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