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# Chris Thomas

## - *Reality Matters*

A one act play - drama

**Running Time:** approx. 20 minutes

**Period:** Typically modern

### Synopsis:

*Reality Matters* has been written to be performed almost anywhere, requiring no set – just the two actors on stage. It's a slightly surreal piece, as one character is forced to question his own perception of reality when an enigmatic character starts to strip away his many masks, forcing him to think outside the square for a moment. The piece is left open-ended as to whether the events occur for real or in the main character's mind.

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## About the Playwright: Chris Thomas



Born in Perth, Western Australia, Chris Thomas is a writer, actor, journalist and broadcaster who has developed diverse experience in these areas over several years.

He has many eclectic acting credits to his name and broad journalistic experience, working for mainstream newspapers, independent publications and freelancing for numerous titles, as well as extensive work in media relations and flexing his dulcet tones as a radio announcer.

Chris Thomas is also the author of the novel *Journo's Diary*, the *Doctor Who* short story *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* and the plays *Which One?*, *Reality Matters*, *Appetite for Destruction*, *The Bonza Land of Oz*, *King Bling* and *SMS Mess*.

*Which One?* received an encouragement award for writing at the 1994 Bunbury One-Act Drama Festival. Chris himself has received numerous accolades including an Excellence in Performance Award at the 2001 South West Drama Festival for his role in *Disposal* and Best Male Supporting Actor at the 2008 South West Drama Festival for his role in *The Return*.

### About the Play:

*Reality Matters* was first performed with Jeff Cefai and Vanessa Davis in New South Wales at Blacktown City Theatre in 2007. It was the only Australian entry selected for their season *4 Short Plays Plus*.

It was then performed by Groovy Boots Theatre at PICA's 2009 Putting on an Act Festival (Northbridge, WA), KADS Theatre's one-act play season (Kalamunda, WA), the South West Drama Festival (Bunbury, WA), the Independent Theatre Association of WA's annual State DramaFest (Queens Park, WA) and the inaugural Hills Drama Festival at Marloo Theatre (Darlington, WA). This production was performed and directed by Phil Barnett and Chris Thomas. Phil Barnett was nominated for Best Supporting Actor at the Hills Drama Festival

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# REALITY MATTERS

By Chris Thomas

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## CHARACTERS:

- MC: Larger than life, colourful, he always makes the show his own – and is somewhat full of himself (but has typical human insecurities lying within).
- STRANGER: An enigmatic, strangely detached character with an almost other-worldly nature. Odd and perhaps not quite human.

## PRODUCTION INFORMATION

This piece has been written to be performed almost anywhere, requiring no set – just the two actors on stage. Directors are free to elaborate on the characters’ interaction with each other and their movement about the stage, depending on the nature of the venue.

While *Reality Matters* has been written with two male leads in mind, directors are also free to change genders, making it two females or a male-female pairing, making minor script modifications where necessary.

## SCENE:

*[Spotlight on stage. An MC comes out to greet the crowd – best described as a cross between a traditional circus ringmaster and a court jester. He plays his welcome big, completely over the top. Perhaps use a 30-second intro, highlighting “fun music, fun evening” before he walks out.]*

- MC: Welcome one, welcome all, I hope you have a right grand old ball. I’m your MC for the evening, giving you all the charm, smarm and everything else in-between. Yes, ladies and gentlemen – and all you others, you know who you are – we’re going to have a gay old time. What’s that? Oh, for goodness’ sake! A jolly old time then... words can have two meanings you know. *(The flow of the MC’s welcome is interrupted as a STRANGER has wandered into his spotlight)*
- STRANGER: Yes, they’re called homophones. That’s their house over there. I’ll go down the aisle on the isle.

- MC: *(unsure of the STRANGER but not losing his composure)* And who might you be? We’re trying to do a show here you know! And I can certainly show you a thing or two, can’t I

ladies and gentlemen... oh yes indeed! HAHAHAHA! (*ignoring STRANGER*) Now coming up tonight on this salubrious stage of ours –

STRANGER: You don't know who I am? (*with a hint of mystique*) You're so full of your own balderdash do you not recognise what I could be or possibly represent? (*general wash lights come up as MC's face starts to look concerned*)

MC: (*loud whisper*) I don't know what you think you're playing at but you've got no right to be here. And you're spoiling the show for everyone else! (*to audience*) We'll be back in a just a mo' folks, as soon as we sort this out. (*then as an aside to the audience*) We could have some fun. Don't you think?

STRANGER: (*starts wandering around MC*) I have EVERY right to be here. For once in your life you must THINK.

MC: Think SHMINK! This audience isn't paying me to think! They're paying me to entertain, aren't you my darlings? (*skips and dances around the stage before STRANGER stops him in his tracks*)

STRANGER: Do you not credit your audience with at least one iota of intelligence? Do you think they are all mindless fools who want to hear you witter on endlessly about nothing?

MC: You're a fine one to talk. Did you ever consider the possibility they would LIKE a bit of entertainment they don't have to think about too much? To get away from the horrors of everyday life, the horrors of the world? It's a way for them to relax.

STRANGER: I see you're finally beginning to think a little. So perhaps there is a chance after all...

MC: Chance for what? The show to go on? (*to audience*) Yes folks, the show will go on, just talk amongst yourselves but don't get too frisky... plenty of time for that. We haven't even got to intermission yet!

STRANGER: How do you know the audience is there? The lights almost blind you.

MC: How about you think for a change? Perhaps because I can hear them, I can *feel* their presence. (*MC starts circling around STRANGER*) What right do you have to judge me or my audience?

STRANGER: Who says I am judging you? You're putting words in my mouth. Perhaps *you're* judging *me*?

MC: Look, I've got better things to do than judge you, even if you suddenly metamorphosed into a Miss World contestant. I keep telling you I've got a show to do and I just wish you'd let me get on with it.

STRANGER: *(starts pacing around MC, as if a lion stalking prey)* Aren't you even remotely interested as to why I may be here?

MC: I'm more interested in when you're going to leave. *(to audience)* Isn't that right, folks? Would you rather listen to this patsy carry on like a pork chop or would you rather I give you something more saucy?

**This is not the end of "Reality Matters"  
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# arts & leisure

SEE IT | DO IT | HEAR IT | LIVE IT

## Chris spins with delight

Playwright shocked by news that *Reality Matters* was one of eight plays chosen

By FLEUR MASON

**C**HIS Thomas is well known around the port city as the City of Fremantle's media relations officer, but not so well known for his role as a playwright.

Thomas is the only Australian playwright to have his script selected for the NSW Blacktown City Community Theatre's season of short plays.

The Community Theatre sent his play *Reality Matters* to the theatre when it called for national and international submissions to its annual Four Short Plays Plus season.

His work was up against original works from the US, Canada, Japan, Melbourne, Sydney and Perth, between 10 and 20 minutes long.

Thomas said he was shocked when he received news that *Reality Matters* was one of the eight plays chosen and that will be performed

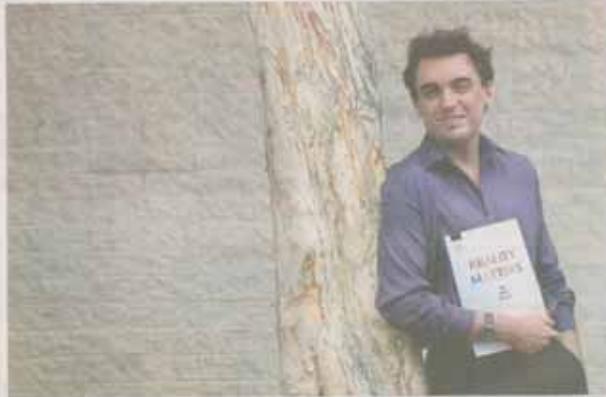
during the season. Thomas wrote his play seeking to get actors to perform it anywhere without a set.

"*Reality Matters* is a slightly surreal piece featuring one character constantly interrupted as he tries to introduce a show, hence to question his own perception of reality by another enigmatic character," he said.

"This stranger tries to strip away his many masks, forcing him to think outside the square for a moment, and I decided to leave the piece open-ended as to whether the viewer comes for real or in the main character's mind."

The plays performed during the Four Short Plays Plus season will receive a DVD copy of their play performed during the October season.

Thomas has been involved in local theatre for 15 years and has appeared in 20 productions including *Twelfth Night*, *Frankenstein*, *Red*, *Dear God* and *Plaza*.



Reality takes Chris Thomas with a copy of his script. Picture: Geoff Foxworth

Fremantle Gazette

**STAGE WHISPERS**



**SIMON CLARKE**

- Perth actor and writer Chris Thomas has notched a small literary coup — as the only Australian playwright selected for a theatre season of short plays at the Blacktown City Community Theatre in New South Wales. The company put the call out internationally and chose Thomas' play, *Reality Matters*, from submissions received from the US, Canada, Japan, Melbourne, Sydney and Perth. Congratulations, and with any luck, we'll see it over here sometime.

The West Australian Newspaper

# Reality Matters



arts

By ADRIANA TSOVLEAS

COMO actor Chris Thomas will bring one of his own scripts to life with the WA premiere of *Reality Matters* as part of the Putting on an Act short-performance festival at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts this month.

Putting on an Act was developed to provide an opportunity for WA performers and writers to perform short, sharp and challenging works, each restricted to 15 minutes.

The Cockburn worker said his play was the only Australian entry chosen for the NSW-based Blacktown Theatre's annual 4 Short Plays Plus season in 2007, and was up against works from the US, Canada and Japan.

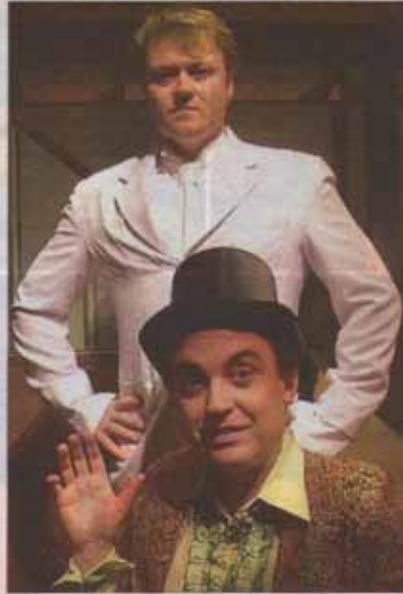
"My aim was to come up with a script that could be performed anywhere without a set, simply requiring two actors on stage.

*Reality Matters* is a slightly surreal piece featuring one character - the MC - constantly interrupted as he tries to introduce a show and he is forced to question his own perception of reality by another enigmatic character.

"This stranger tries to strip away his many masks, forcing him to think outside the square, and I decided to leave the piece open-ended as to whether the events occur for real or in the main character's mind."

Over the past 16 years, Thomas has appeared in more than 25 productions. Actor Phil Barnett plays the mysterious stranger.

*Reality Matters* is one of five short plays to be performed on Thursday July 30 from 8pm, as part of Putting on an Act, which runs from July 28 to August 1. Tickets are \$18 or \$15 concession. Book through PICA, 9228 6300.



Actors Chris Thomas (front) and Phil Barnett... the play, written by Chris, takes just 15 minutes and is up against works from the US, Canada and Japan.

Cockburn Gazette, 21.07.2009



Phil Barnett in *Reality Matters*.

## Actor juggles work and plays

Practicing theatrics on a cherry picker may sound a bit odd but it's the perfect preparation for Victoria Park actor Phil Barnett. Mr Barnett, a construction worker by trade, is a talented stage performer preparing for next Thursday's WA premiere of *Reality Matters* - part of the annual Putting on an Act short performance festival at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts.

The festival is an opportunity for WA performers and writers to

showcase short, sharp and challenging works in 15 minutes.

Mr Barnett, 36, said he had to find alternative ways to juggle work, acting and four children.

"Sometimes it is difficult but I just love acting. Sometimes I learn my lines at work on the cherry picker," he said.

Involved in theatre for the past eight years, some of Barnett's favourite roles have been in *Breaker Morant*, *Dracula* and *Jekyll and Hyde*.

Earlier this year, he was named best male (other than a lead) for *The Sum of Us* at the Finley Awards. The former Kent Street

Senior High student said he was excited about his latest role.

"It's a slightly surreal piece featuring one character, the MC, constantly interrupted as he tries to introduce a show and forced to question his own perception of reality by an enigmatic stranger that I play," he said.

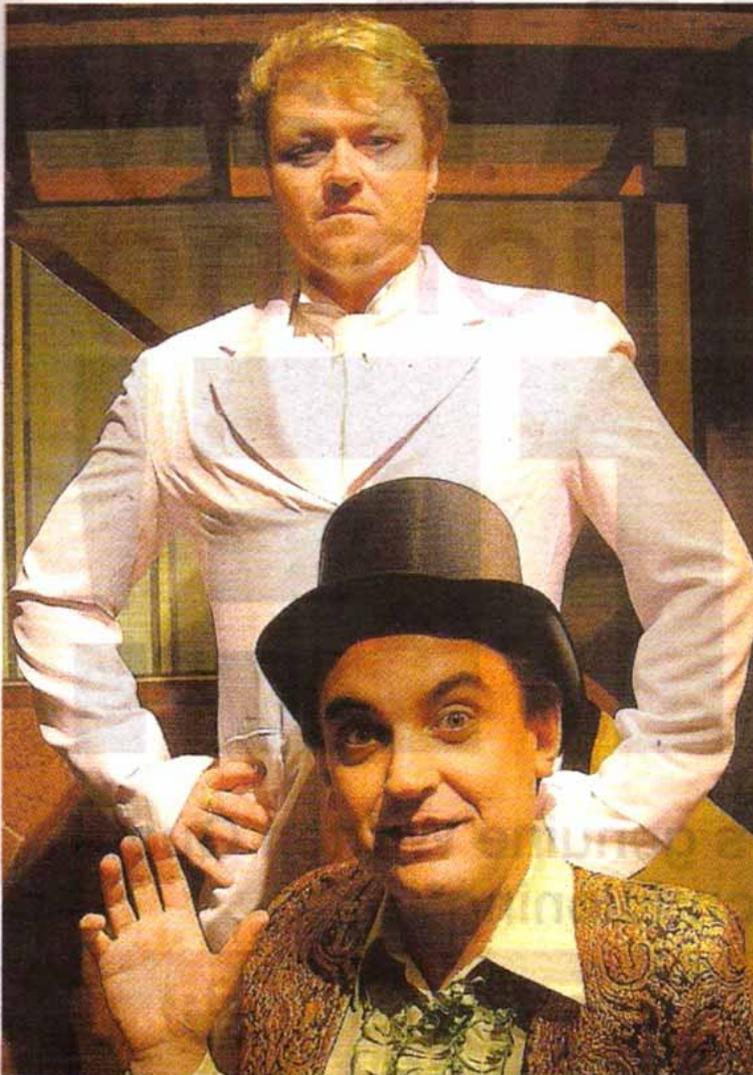
"I was attracted by the character because of its escapism.

"I haven't played this type of character before."

*Reality Matters* is one of several pieces being performed from 8pm on July 30. Tickets are \$18 and \$15 concession. Bookings can be made on 9228 6300.

Victoria Park Examiner, 24.07.2009

# Playwrights' efforts bear fruit at festival



Chris Thomas and Phil Barnett in *Reality Matters*.

Picture: Nardia Bordas

LOCAL playwrights will be able to enjoy the fruits of their creative labour as part of this year's DramaFest event at St Norbert College's Xanter Centre on Friday.

The annual state drama festival provides dramatists the opportunity to have their productions performed to local audiences.

The production *Reality Matters*, written by Como resident Chris Thomas, will be among the productions performed.

Described as surreal theatre, *Reality Matters* tells of the tribulations of an MC who experiences constant interruptions from a stranger during a show.

"The stranger forces the MC to question his own perception of reality and tries to strip away his many masks, forcing him to think outside the square for a moment," Thomas said.

"My original aim was to come up with a script that could be performed anywhere without a set, simply requiring two actors on stage.

"I decided to leave the piece open-ended as to whether the events occur for real or in the main character's mind."

Southern Gazette, 22.09.2009