

Biography

Melissa Western



Born: Manchester, England.

Emigrated to Brisbane,
Australia aged 8

Mother: award winning Sri

Lankan model, Miss Max Factor
1961, celebrated with
telegrams from Marlon Brando,
Ginger Rogers and Rock
Hudson

Father: English jazz cabaret

crooner, host and entertainer,
wooded mother in Soho club in
London

Qualifications: Trained at

RADA (London), Broadway
Dance Centre (New York),
MPhil in Theatre, first-class
Honours, University Medal and
Valedictorian at University of
Queensland.

Career highlights: Edinburgh

Fringe Festival, Brisbane
Cabaret Festival, La Boite
Theatre, Zen Zen Zo Physical
Theatre, Brisbane Jazz Club,
Speigelitent, Woodford Folk
Festival, Valley Jazz Festival,
The Basement – Gold Coast
Arts Centre, Mackay
Entertainment Centre, The
Tivoli, Brisbane City Hall.
President, Brisbane Jazz Club
2003-2007.

Loves: Chocolate, the colour

red and a really good, long,
sweaty dance

Dream Band: Ben Folds on

piano, the girl drummer from
Lenny Kravitz's band,
Shakespeare as the lyricist,
Prince and Justin Timberlake as
backup singer-dancers.



Melissa Abigail Western was born in Manchester, England ... the only daughter of a jazz-singing English father and an award-winning Sri Lankan model mother.

Melissa performs internationally, acting, singing and dancing in musical theatre shows and cabarets, writing and producing new works and singing jazz with a variety of ensembles. Her passion is taking to the stage in front of a live audience, seamlessly weaving song, dance and story into an experience they will want to share and cherish. Her self-penned musical **Ella, Marilyn, Marlene and Me** was an official sell-out at the 2007 Edinburgh Fringe and her latest original cabaret work, **Melissa and the Cunning Accompanist** toured Sydney, Melbourne and the Adelaide Fringe Festival in early 2008.

Melissa was Valedictorian of her graduating Bachelor of Arts at UQ, holds a University Medal from the University of Queensland, first class Honours degree and was awarded her Masters of Philosophy in the field of Drama. She has trained intensively in musical theatre at RADA (London) and NIDA, physical theatre with Zen Zen Zo, and has trained in dance for over fifteen years including: classes with Luis Pinto (Megajam), Jasmine Meakin (Hip-hop, Sexy Cool), Simone Pope (flamenco) and with teachers at the Broadway Dance Centre (New York).

An established theatre actor, writer and producer Melissa has toured around South-East Queensland, Sydney and Melbourne with Sydney-based musical theatre company **Tell Tales Entertainment**. She opened the Queensland branch of the company in 2005 and both performs and directs the Queensland-based shows.

Melissa was the President of the **Brisbane Jazz Club** from 2004 – 2007. Under her stewardship the club flourished and is now celebrated both nationally and internationally as one of Australia's premier Jazz venues. She was the youngest President in the club's 35+ year history.

If Melissa has one goal it is to make as many people as possible feel that feeling that you can only get from live performance, that 'zing' that makes you remember what life and humanity and existence is all about. Her extensive and varied work in the performing arts as singer, actor, dancer, writer, director, producer and mentor are testament to that strong belief.

"Melissa Western is a cabaret singer of the sultry jazz club variety ... this olive skinned beauty grew up in Queensland, but has honed her skills in London and New York. Her voice is incredible and she just glows on stage."

Stephanie Glickman, Australian Stage Online, February 2008

"Western is an appealing performer with a natural rapport with her audience. There's something very sweet and funny about her, and you get the feeling that there is a big personality just waiting to burst out." Claire Smith, The Scotsman (Scotland), August 2007

Venue and festival highlights: The Vault - Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Adelaide Fringe Festival, L'Église – Avaux (France), The Butterfly Club (Melbourne), Will and Toby's (Sydney), Powerhouse Theatre - Brisbane Cabaret Festival, Brisbane Jazz Club, Speigelitent - Qld Music Festival, Brisbane Festival 2008, Woodford Folk Festival, QPAC, The Basement – Gold Coast Arts Centre, Valley Jazz Festival, Mackay Entertainment Centre, The Tivoli, Gold Coast Jazz and Blues Club, Maggie Blacks Jazz Club, The Milkbar, Brisbane City Hall, QLD Premier's Australia Day Flag Raising Ceremony, Sirromet Winery, King George Square, Tweed Valley Jazz Club, La Boite Theatre, Zen Zen Zo Physical Theatre.

Theatre credits include: Wicked Bodies (La Boite Theatre, Zen Zen Zo Physical Theatre), The Madness of Sweeney, Taliesan (Mog Roith / Eugene Gilfedder), The Dinosaur Show, Captain Flash and the Fantastic Flying Machine, Santa of the Never Never (Tell Tales Entertainment), Boneless Chicken Brecht, Inheritance, Schoolies, An Entirely New Sensation (Cracka Theatre Troupe).

Cabaret history includes: Brisbane Cabaret Festival, VIII World Shakespeare Congress, Alliance Francaise Bastille Day @ QPAC, Mischievous Minx in Winter: A flirty cabaret about alcohol, drugs, sex and sin, (Metro Arts), The Lady Mayoress' Valentine's Gala, Velvet Souls: An Exquisite Evening of smooth jazz ballads, Destiny 10 Dance Party, The Speigelitent, Brisbane City Hall as part of Festivus, Le Classique - Bastille Day.