

Andrea Demetriades on love and intimacy in ‘The River’



Described as allegorical, poetic and mysterious, **Jez Butterworth’s** 2012 work *The River* is an intimate study on the human need for connection. Unfolding on an ambiguous, puzzle-like timeline, *The River* follows a man and his two great loves: ladies and fishing.

Sydney Theatre Company’s production has a star-studded cast portraying the Man (**Ewen Leslie** – STC’s Julius Caesar, [Top of the Lake](#)), the Woman (**Miranda Otto** – *The Lord of the Rings* series) and the Other Woman (**Andrea Demetriades**). I was lucky enough to sit down and talk to said ‘other woman’ prior to *The River* opening in Sydney Opera House’s Drama Theatre.

Andrea Demetriades is a Logie, AACTA and Green Room award nominated performer originally from Western Australia. Known for her screen roles in *Janet King*, *The Artful Dodger* and *Alex & Eve*, she has also performed with Sport for Jove, Griffin Theatre Co, Belvoir St, Malthouse, Bell Shakespeare, Ensemble and [Sydney Theatre Company](#).



(Left to Right) Miranda Otto, Margaret Thanos, Ewen Leslie and Andrea Demetriades. Photo: Daniel Boud

Talking about how deeply the current sociopolitical landscape impacts art for both creators and audience members, she remarks on how fluid and current this production feels. “The world is a bin fire at the moment. I think we’re looking and searching for intimacy and love and safeness more than ever, perhaps because it’s something in the chaos that we can control.” Of the work, she says, “there are lots of ways people can take it. I like to think of it as a choose your own adventure play where, as an audience member, you will hold onto certain storylines or arcs. [Butterworth] has left it very open.”

“It’s so present this play, it’s actually scary; every time we get on stage something changes in the way we say or feel something. You get on stage and feel like anything can happen in this moment. And that’s what theatre should be – it should feel so alive!”

Demetriades remarks on how invaluable Director [Margaret Thanos](#)’ collaborative approach and willingness to delve into intricacies of the writing has been in creating rich context that still honours the text. “Thanos’ fascination and curiosity around the human condition combined with her intelligence has created a really extraordinary space for us to move around in”.

The work demands physical and emotional intimacy, and we talked about the intimacy coordination work they’ve done that allows the actors to honour their characters and themselves, night after night. “I feel so safe with Ewan” she says, “We are in quite a dangerous place, and I can make that seem more dangerous on stage because we’ve done all the safety work.” She remarks, “It’s so intimate, we want this play to almost feel like people shouldn’t be watching certain moments”



Ewen Leslie and Andrea Demetriades. Photo: Daniel Boud

“I usually know what to expect from the audience, but this is the first time I haven’t” she says. “We’re all really excited yet curious to see how an audience deals with this play.” When talking about what she hopes audiences take away from the work, she says, “I want people to go home and have a great chat and talk about who these characters are. I want you to go out feeling satisfied but wanting more.”

“As an audience member, you can have your political views, and that will be your informant on what’s happening on stage. But for me personally I think love is more important than ever.”

*Sydney Theatre Company presents *The River*, by Jez Butterworth*

Directed by Margaret Thanos

Playing at the Drama Theatre, Sydney Opera House from 1 April – 16 May 2026.

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