



Actors Stefanie Lekkas and Ruth Pieloor star in *Metamorphosis* alongside Dylan Van Den Berg's Gregor, a bright young man who wakes up one day to discover he's become a human-sized insect. Photos Kerrie Brewer.

A bug's life

It's a hilarious yet horrific premise that opens up a host of thematic and subtextual possibilities.

Later this month The Street brings *Metamorphosis* to the stage, a modern interpretation of Steven Berkoff's 1969 stage play, adapted from Franz Kafka's bizarrely comic 1915 tale about alienation.

It stars Dylan Van Den Berg as Gregor Samsa, a bright young man who works hard as a travelling salesman to support his family.

One day Gregor oversleeps his morning alarm and wakes up to discover he's become a human-sized insect.

Actor Stefanie Lekkas, who plays Gregor's sister Greta, says despite its serious themes, *Metamorphosis* is funnier than one might think.

"The whole premise is quite amusing, a guy

wakes up as a giant insect," Lekkas says.

"There is certainly quite a bit of humour, and for me that brings humanity and realness to the piece, because life has its pretty icky moments, but there's nothing funnier than the truth sometimes."

Actor Ruth Pieloor, who plays Gregor's mother Mrs Sampson, says it's important this work is told in 2019, as a number of its universal themes are at the fore of public consciousness.

"We are accountable for each other, the planet, and the theme of guilt and denial that's in the play, audiences will, can, and should relate to it," Actor Ruth Pieloor tells *Canberra Weekly*.

"That's why this story needs to be reimaged now, it's a time where we need to question our values."



Metamorphosis' design elements are informed by a sense of creative freedom, with the cage, a prominent element of the set, symbolising Gregor's descent into metamorphosis.

Director Adam Broinowski says *Metamorphosis'* themes of segregation and loneliness will also resonate.

"With many people from diverse contexts and backgrounds who experience marginalisation, isolation, the abjection of being stigmatised and voiceless, this is an important theatre work that speaks to Australian audiences now."

With *Metamorphosis*, Broinowski continues his work on adaptations of classic writing having directed *Tourmaline* at The Street in 2018, and brings his trademark stylisation to this work.

"He's a master of finding that tension," Pieloor says of Broinowski.

"The timing of the piece really plays with the tension, and any performer from stand-up comedian to a dramatist will tell you holding, building and releasing tension is the play of drama versus comedy."

The creative team also includes award-winning designer Imogen Keen, Andrew Meadows (lighting) and Kimmo Vennonen (sound), all of whom have all worked together to transform the theatre into a set heavily inspired by roads, train tracks and timetables, while also warping the shape of the stage to give the audience a bug-eyed view of the action.

Metamorphosis' design elements are informed by a sense of creative freedom as audiences follow the evolution and ultimate release of Gregor.

Pieloor says the cage, a prominent element of the set, symbolises Gregor's descent into metamorphosis.

"It's his room, and it's like a transformation booth which he lives in and has to escape, but it's his safe haven. Interestingly the other characters view it as a contaminated space.

"For Gregor, since he's changed, the rest of the world is contaminated and his room is his cocoon," Pieloor says.

Metamorphosis will be performed at The Street, City West, 17-31 August; thestreet.org.au

- Denholm Samaras