

MEDIA RELEASE

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New exclusive performance to be held in the Separate Prison at Port Arthur until Easter

A PUNISHING EXPERIMENT

"The experiment which has been made at Port Arthur has succeeded beyond my expectation."

— Lt.Gov. Denison statement in a report to London, 1864

ONLY 12 PERFORMANCES: FRIDAY AND SATURDAY EVENINGS 13 MARCH—13 APRIL

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A short play that dances in the shadows between reality and the idea of separation and silence as reform.



Starting tomorrow night, a new immersive performance that dances in the shadows between the idea and the reality of separation and silence as reform will be performed at Port Arthur.

Called *A Punishing Experiment*, this new show, produced by the Port Arthur Historic Site and Turin Production Partnership, will enthrall audiences in the most haunting structure of the penal settlement, the Separate Prison.

Audiences will be drawn back to the time when the Separate Prison was in full operation. Intended to deal with the worst class of criminals at Port Arthur; this new prison effectively subdued prisoners by imposing the strictest treatment possible with techniques taken directly from the most modern prison reform ideas in England.

Up until this time, prisoners were physically punished with brutal floggings, human treadmills and hard labour. The new rules of the new establishment were based around solitary confinement, complete silence and isolation. Even the names of the prisoners were removed and replaced with only a number.

In Lt.Gov. Denison's report to London, he wrote: "The experiment which has been made at Port Arthur has succeeded beyond my expectation."

Through the eyes and the memories of various characters, including the Doctor, the Warden, the Constable and 'Irish' the convict narrator, audiences will experience for themselves how this experiment of a Separate Prison functioned.

While the Separate Prison at Port Arthur was eventually closed and the prisoners dispersed, *A Punishing Experiment* gives cause to wonder - what are the legacies this building has left us and what was it that we, as a civilisation, ultimately learned?

There will be 12 exclusive performances of *A Punishing Experiment* held Friday and Saturday evenings from 6pm – 7.30pm from 13 March through to 13 April. Tickets are limited for the intimate performance so bookings are essential. More information and reservations can be made on the website www.portarthur.org.au.

Images:

<http://bit.ly/portarthurperformance> (mandatory credit: Punishing Experiment, Alastair Bett)

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