



# Stage role marries Abi's dual loves

**/// This play has changed the way I think about music and the way I listen to things**

A popular television actress is showcasing her musical talent, writes **Alex Lalak**

ABI Tucker has always had to juggle the two big loves in her life. She is familiar to most people as an actor and has relished her time on shows such as *The Secret Life Of Us*, *Heartbreak High* and *McLeod's Daughters*. She has always been equally passionate about her music career, which has led her to release two solo albums.

Finally, a role in the upcoming Sydney Theatre Company play *Poor Boy* is giving her the chance to bring them together.

"This show has been a real coming together of paths for me," Tucker says.

"Sometimes I get a bit uncertain about whether I am on the right path.

"This has pulled me back to thinking I am going in the right direction.

"This has been a really great thing to have happen at this point of my life. I've always concentrated so heavily on both sides of my life, and here they really are combined."

Tucker describes *Poor Boy* as a "play with songs", which features music by iconic musician Tim Finn laced throughout a script by playwright Matt Cameron.

"This play has changed the way I think about music and the way I listen to things," she says.

"Tim's music has a lot of contrast and colour and there is a dramatic rise and fall in the script itself that feeds into these songs, and goes through the emotions."

*Poor Boy* tells the story of a seven-year-old boy who one day announces that he is the reincarnation of a man who died several years earlier.

The play presents the fallout of this situation, and the way it affects the dead man's widow, who is played by Tucker, by using the lyrics of some of Finn's songs including *I Hope I Never*, *Persuasion* and, of course, *Poor Boy*.

It has been a moving experience for Tucker, who is an experienced songwriter.

"I think it's really interesting when you do get into someone's lyrics and into dissecting each of them as parts of a character and a story," she says. "This is what I've been finding the most thrilling part of the experience of being part of this show and it's been a real joy."

*Poor Boy* has already played for a season in Melbourne earlier this year with Guy Pearce cast as the deceased husband.

In the Sydney season this role will be played by Matthew Newton, and it has been

a challenge for Tucker to recalibrate her character for this season.

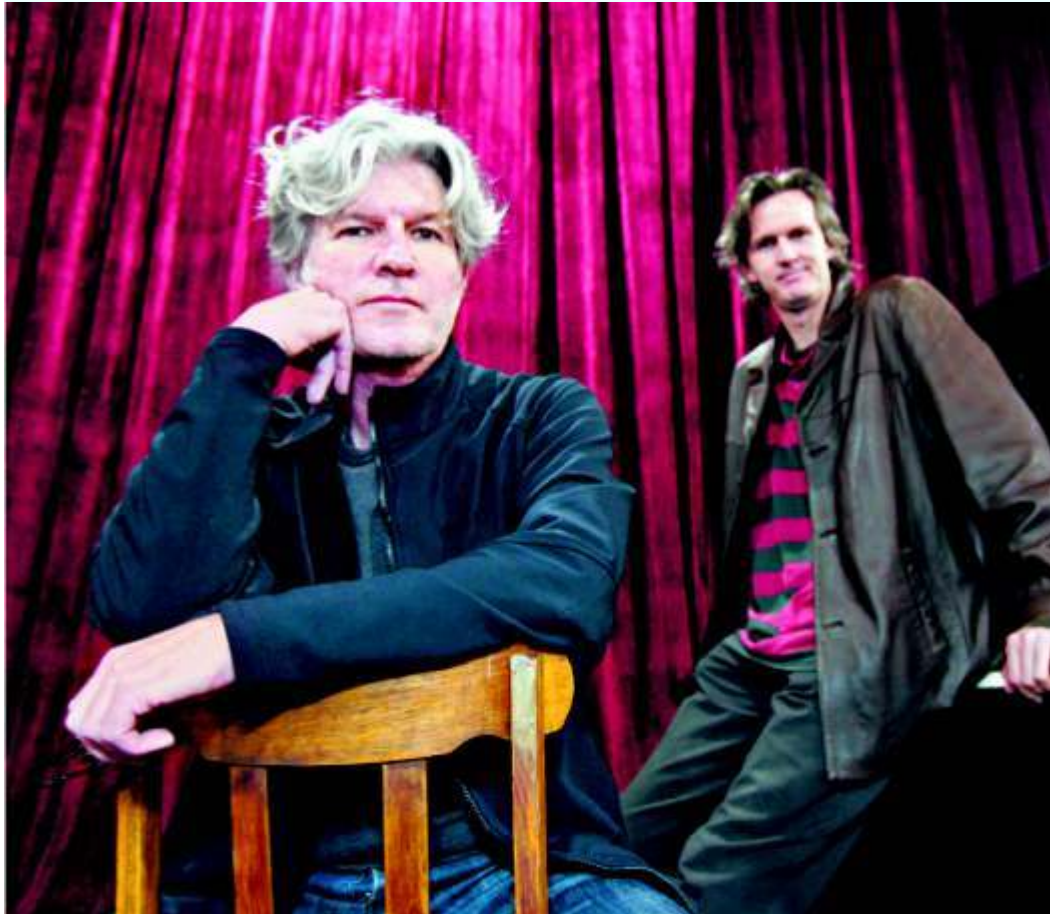
She says it is a challenge she welcomes and her focus once the season opens at the Sydney Theatre will be to stay focused on the current production.

"I try not to look too much beyond what I'm doing on stage because otherwise I might start reflecting on things like past performances, so I really try to stay inside that area," she says.

"I have a tendency to get a bit caught up in the moment, swept away with notions but you have to keep your feet firmly planted sometimes. The thing I really love about doing stage stuff is the instant reaction which is so different to telly and film where you're in a studio space on location with a crew and a cast. Here we're in front of an audience and it's a different feeling and if I'm too aware of everything around me then I might get swept away."

After *Poor Boy*, the one thing Tucker can promise is that she will continue to share her time between acting and music.

"I don't have much control over it," she says. "It's more a case of I can't stop rather than I want to keep going."



Musical drama: Tim Finn and Matt Cameron, who co-wrote *Poor Boy* around Finn's music

## Musos dive into theatre

TIM Finn is not the first pop or rock musician to have a crack at the theatre scene. Locally, Faker's Stefan Gregory has been involved in numerous theatre productions, most recently *Lady Macbeth Of Mtsensk*, which opened yesterday at Belvoir St Theatre, and Robert Forster is pairing up with fellow Go-Betweens band member Adele Pickvance to write songs for Nick Earl's new play *The True Story Of Butterfish*, premiering at the Brisbane Powerhouse in October. Nick Cave and Warren Ellis have

shown they have a knack for finding dramatic potential in their music, having composed scores for Icelandic theatre company Vesturport's productions of *Woyzeck* and *Metamorphosis*, which played at the Sydney Theatre earlier this year. UK electronic genius Matthew Herbert has scored several theatre shows, including Caryl Churchill's *Drunk Enough To Say I Love You*. Even Dolly Parton last year turned her most famous song into the Broadway hit *9 To 5: The Musical*.  
**Alex Lalak**



Multi-talented: Actress/singer Abi Tucker and (above) Tucker and Jack McKinnis-Pegg in *Poor Boy* Main picture: Bob Barker