LEAH PURCELL AM

Actor/Writer/Director/Producer

Leah Purcell AM is an internationally acclaimed actor, writer, director and producer of stage and screen, and a proud Goa-Gunggari-Wakka Wakka Murri woman from Queensland, Australia.

Screen

Leah stars opposite Sigourney Weaver in the Amazon Prime Video limited series ***The Lost Flowers of Alice Hart*** (Amazon Studios/Endeavor Content/Made Up Stories), earning Logie and AACTA nominations for the role. She plays police officer Andie Whitford in the mystery thriller series ***High Country*** (Curio Pictures/Foxtel/Binge), which earned her a 2025 AACTA nomination for Best Lead Actress in a Drama and returns for a second season. She also stars in the feature film ***Shayda*** (Executive Producer, Cate Blanchett), which had its world premiere at the 2023 Sundance Film Festival, and lends her voice to the upcoming animated film ***Zac Power***.

As one of Australia's most in-demand actors, Leah has appeared in films including ***Lantana***, ***Jindabyne***, ***The Proposition*** and ***The Last Cab to Darwin***, and in television series including ***Wentworth***, ***Redfern Now***, ***Janet King*** and ***Police Rescue***.

The Drover's Wife

Leah's play ***The Drover's Wife***, a reimagining of Henry Lawson's short story, premiered at Belvoir in 2016 and swept the awards season, winning Best New Australian Work, Best Play, Best Direction and Best Sound Design at the 2016 Sydney Theatre Awards and Best New Australian Work, Best Director, Best Actor and Best Play at the 2017 Helpmann Awards; the script won Best Stage Play, the David Williamson Prize for Excellence in Writing and the Major Award at the 2017 Australian Writers' Guild Awards, as well as the Victorian Prize for Literature and the Nick Enright Prize for Playwriting. She adapted the story into a novel of the same name, published by Penguin Random House in 2019 and since translated and released in China, Japan and France.

Her debut feature film, ***The Drover's Wife: The Legend of Molly Johnson***, which she wrote, directed, produced and starred in, premiered in competition at SXSW 2021 and was released theatrically in the US by Samuel Goldwyn Films. It won the 2022 AACTA Award for Best Lead Actress in Film, the 2022 Australian Directors' Guild Award for Best Direction in a Feature Film, the 2023 Film Critics Circle of Australia Award for Best Actress, the 2021 Asia Pacific Screen Award Grand Jury Prize and the 2021 Australian Screen Industry Network Award for Best Writer/Screenplay.

In May 2026, ***The Drover's Wife — The Opera***, co-commissioned by Opera Australia and the Queensland Performing Arts Centre, had its world premiere at QPAC's new Glasshouse Theatre. Composed by George Palmer AM, who co-wrote the libretto with Leah and directed the production, the opera has since played seasons in Sydney and Melbourne.

Directing and Writing

Leah directed two chapters of the anthology feature film ***Here Out West***, which premiered at the Sydney Film Festival in 2021, and five episodes of the genre series ***Cleverman*** (ABC/Goalpost), broadcast in the US on Sundance TV and in the UK on BBC3. She also directed two episodes of ***Redfern Now*** for the ABC, was the set-

up director on ***My Life Is Murder*** (Network Ten/CJZ) starring Lucy Lawless, and the set-up director on ***Secret Daughter*** (Seven Network/Screentime).

As a writer, Leah has written for ***The Twelve*** (Warner Bros International Television, AACTA Award-winning), ***Redfern Now***, ***Love Child*** and the Emmy-winning ***Ready For This***. Through her company Oombarra Productions, she is currently developing several new projects, including the youth series ***Netball***, which she created, co-funded by the Australian Children's Television Network.

Awards and Honours

Leah received an Honorary Master of Music Theatre from the University of Central Queensland in 2002, an Eisenhower Fellowship in 2004 and the Bob Maza Award in 2006. Leah was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 2021. She received the Chauvel Award in 2022 and a Creative Australia Fellowship for Literature in 2023. In 2026 she received the Adelaide Film Festival's Don Dunstan Award, recognising her significant contribution to the Australian screen industry, and was conferred an Honorary Doctorate by the Queensland University of Technology for her distinguished service to the community. Her screen and stage honours also include a 2012 AACTA Award for Best Lead Actress in a Television Drama (***Redfern Now***) and the awards for ***The Drover's Wife*** listed above.