



Starchaser

TimeOut Melbourne

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<http://www.au.timeout.com/melbourne/kids/events/3587/starchaser>

Award-winning playwright Lally Katz has been wowing us with adult productions like *Return to Earth* of late, but her latest offering is for children – a wildly imaginative dash around the universe on a magical bed. *Starchaser* is the enchanted tale of Catta and brother Tommy on a quest through space to find a dying star that holds the power to bring back their parents to life.

Lally, what would you like to tell us about *Starchaser*? This play is fun – there's adventure and there's sadness. People worry about the sadness but it's important for children to see sad stuff – it's how you work out your feelings. So much of life is about visualising things and practicing; it's how we work out our identities.

Everything I write now you could trace back to things in my childhood. Like Disney princesses; Disney informs the foundations of life. He told us we're going to be rescued, and it's still part of me, an outdated brain girdle. I'm in the world, doing what I want to do, but inside there's a Disney voice going where's that prince? You fix this by telling different stories with women in different roles. In *Starchaser* the lead is thirteen-year-old Catta. She is just in the world doing her thing, like girls and women really do.

The name Catta sounds familiar... Hmmm, every play of mine had a Catta in it for a while. I seem to get stuck on one name but this Catta is very different from all the others!

Catta's parents have died in *Starchaser*, why do parents vanish in children's plays? Interesting... maybe it allows kids to be the boss so they can make the decisions, practice at being a human on their own? Or maybe it's a fantasy, negotiating the world on your own.



You grew up in the States – are there some cultural references you wish your audiences here would get? I've been here since I was eight and Australia has taken on so much American pop culture it's easy to forget that they're different countries. I'm a mixture of the two, but even though I've lived here for so long and I love Australia, I don't always communicate as an Australian. But I also don't work as an American. Americans are constantly stating how they feel. When I'm there I get embarrassed by how candid the people are.

Starchaser is for eight to 12 year olds. What were you doing as a tween? When I was 12 I used to fantasise that Kylie was my sister. And I loved movies. My mum saw *The Last Unicorn* with me six times. Now why is it that kids can watch things over and over?

Don't you still watch every performance of your plays? Oh yeah. There were so many versions of this play and we have shown them all to kids. And their feedback is the most important. Sadly they don't lie at all. The kids loved the relationships between the characters, particularly between Catta and her nemesis, the space hunter, who is hunting her tears. She travels around in her bed, which becomes a space ship; they thought that was really cool. It's just a magical fun play where you get to be in a wild world for a bit.

Want more? After the 2pm performance there's a workshop for eight to 12-year-olds: Theatre-chaser, Behind the scenes of Starchaser. Amcor Lounge, Arts Centre, 3.30-4.30pm. \$12.