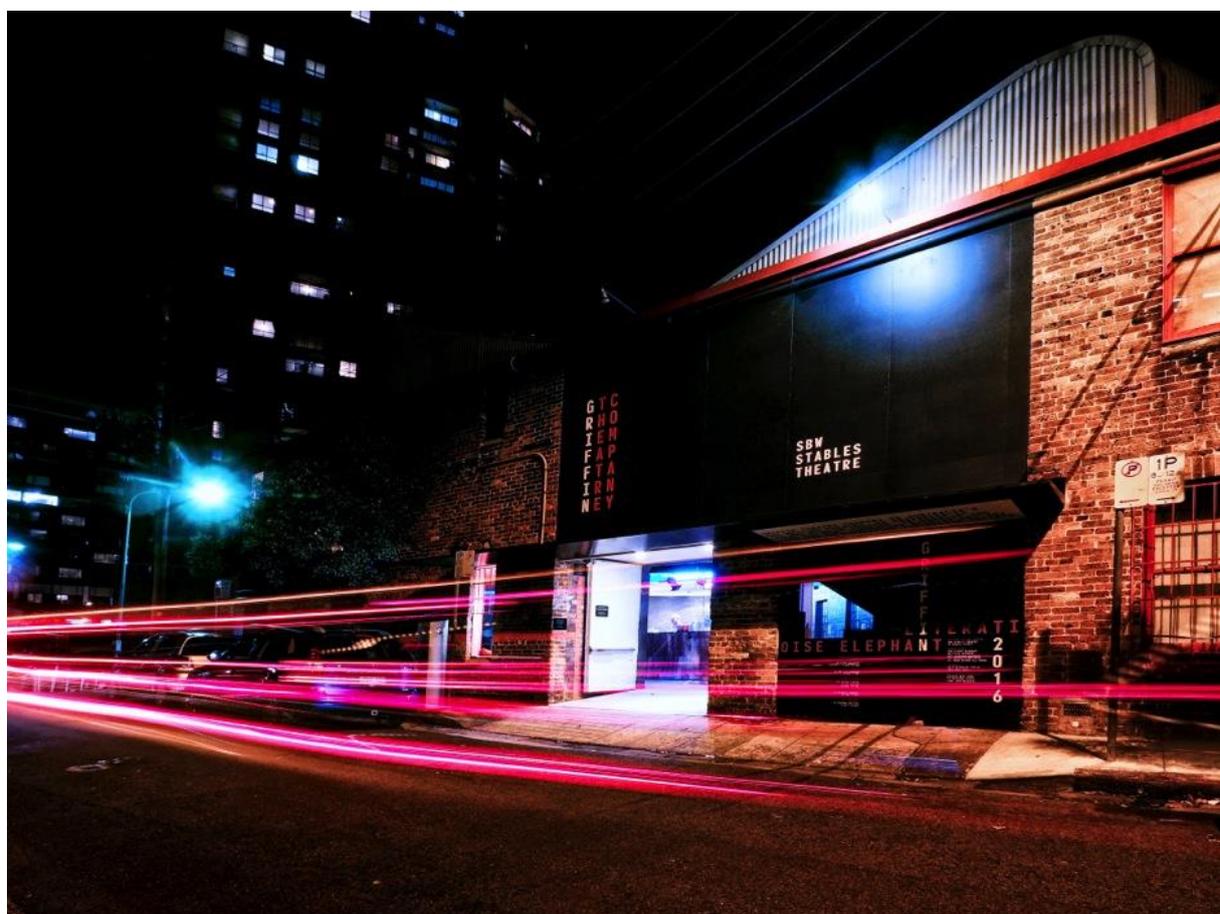


# GRIFFIN THEATRE COMPANY 2015 ANNUAL REPORT

Prepared by Karen Rodgers, General Manager



*Image: Peter Collie, Urban Walkabout*

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## OPERATIONAL REPORT

Griffin's 2015 season was a huge success on many levels. Three of the four Main Season productions exceeded their box office targets, while we produced national tours of both *Masquerade* and *The Witches*. The Sydney theatre community and our audiences are learning to expect nothing but excellence from Griffin, and we've fulfilled that expectation now in numerous successive seasons of great theatre.

In 2015 Griffin continued to take on more and to investigate and deliver in a number of new areas of interest. In addition to producing four Main Season shows and co-presenting five Griffin Independent shows, we also developed a range of new, unique projects including *Masquerade*, a co-production with the State Theatre Company of South Australia; *Yasukichi Murakami: Through A Distant Lens*, a special event at the Stables presented with Performance 4a; and a national tour of *The Witches*. We also presented the inaugural Lysicrates Prize, a new playwriting competition that provides opportunities to established writers and introduces new audiences to Australian theatre.

An initial creative development was undertaken for a new work for children, *Cosmic Comics* supported by the City of Sydney. We plan to stage a second development of this project in 2016, continuing our ambition to investigate and grow opportunities and audiences for new Australian plays for young people.

All of these projects are indicative of the national ambition and relevance of Griffin, and the success of a long-term strategy that will see the company work with the country's most exciting artists to create the best new Australian stories, and reach diverse new audiences.

In 2015, Griffin subscriber numbers reached 1,703, an increase of 1.5% on 2014 (1,677). This continues a trend over the past 4 years, which has seen our subscribers triple since 2010. We have also maintained buyer retention at 65%. Around 29,000 patrons visited the Stables in 2015, while an additional 28,500 people saw Griffin's work in touring productions around the country.

Importantly, paid attendance increased to 70% of capacity for Main Season shows in 2015, with three of these productions exceeding their box office target, while expenditure was contained within budget.

This success was also evident for Griffin Independent productions. Five Independent works were staged in 2015 with the average paid capacity staying steady at 51%. The average ticket price was not increased (staying fixed at \$27) with a box office average of \$33,500 per production. At the same time, Griffin decreased the cost of providing ticketing services to Indie producers, combining with box office success to significantly increase their net income.

The sponsorship and donations total reached \$883,349 in 2015, an increase of 5% to 2014 (\$842,018) while the number of individual donors rose from 237 in 2014 to 290 in 2015 representing a 22% growth.

During the year ended 31 December 2015, Griffin generated an operating surplus of \$1,552 (compared to an operating deficit of \$28,160 in 2014). The company's reserves increased from \$282,455 at 31 December 2014 to \$284,007 at 31 December 2015.

Overall, Griffin's turnover reached \$3,163,830 up 18% on the 2014 year (\$2,662,489), which included the one off Major Festival's Initiative funding for *Masquerade*. Griffin's retained earnings of \$253,895 represent 8% of turnover.

In 2016, Griffin is approaching the year with its traditional gusto artistically although applying a higher degree of financial conservatism to ensure a surplus is achieved. A surplus reflects a sustainable business model and the Board and management are conscious of this.

## 2015 OPERATIONS PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

GOAL ONE: DEVELOP AND STAGE THE BEST AUSTRALIAN STORIES		
KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	Outcome	Target Met
At least three new Australian works premiere in Griffin's annual program	5	✓+
Engage in one co-production in each year	2	✓+
Develop one work with a CALD playwright	2	✓+
Raise profile of Australian Playwriting by focus on Griffin Award	1	✓
GOAL TWO: CREATE CLEAR PATHWAYS FOR ARTISTS TO MAINSTAGE PRODUCTION		
KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	Outcome	Target Met
Fund four Griffin Studio residents each year	4	✓
Support at least one Affiliate Director per main stage Griffin Production	2	×
Facilitate the Ambassador Program	1	✓
Produce a season of work by Independent theatre-makers	5	✓+
GOAL THREE: REACH THE WIDEST POSSIBLE AUDIENCE		
KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	Outcome	Target Met
Increase Subscribers annually by 5%	1.5%	×
Increase paid attendance to 70% of capacity by the end of 2016	70%	✓+
Secure one regional or national tour	2	✓+
Increase digital reach by 20% by the end of 2016	Ongoing	!
GOAL FOUR: BE THE BEST ARTS BUSINESS IN AUSTRALIA		
KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	Outcome	Target Met
Board Governance Policy implemented	Ongoing	!
Review staffing performance and organisational structure annually	Ongoing	!
Increase Production Income to an average of 30% of turnover	25%	×
Increase Donation and Cash Sponsorship by at least 10% by end 2016	Ongoing	!

## ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S REPORT

In giving a report on the artistic achievements of 2015 I must acknowledge how the confidence at the beginning of the year, building on the successes on the past four years, was severely undermined by the government intervention in the funding process. We started the year planning for an ambitious and exciting six-year strategy to expand the reach of the company around the country; but we ended the year submitting a conservative application for reduced four year funding requiring a structure with fewer staff and fewer productions.

There is no denying that these backward steps were upsetting, especially given the success of all of 2015's Main Season productions, the increase in subscribers, and the considerable achievements in all departments. On the back of years of artistic success and company growth the change in focus from growth to survival has been disconcerting. I hope we have been able to shield our audience and artists from the uncertainty that has lived in the Craighend office for most of the year.

On the public surface, 2015 was an artistically successful year for Griffin which saw us present another all-Australian program with six new works in our Main Season and five new works in the Independent season. With the works of eleven playwrights onstage through the year, 2015 saw 142 artists working on the Griffin stage on productions.

Highlights for the year included:

1. **Opening Sydney Festival with Kate Mulvany's *Masquerade*.** Three Artistic Directors and three General Managers later, the play that Kate brought to the first Griffin Studio in 2011 finally made its world premiere in January 2015 under the gorgeous white sails of the Opera House. Co-directed by Sam Strong and myself, the production was ambitious and enchanting, critically acclaimed and loved by audiences, filled with laughter, tears, music and madness. The scale and success of the enterprise proved beyond doubt that Griffin has the capacity to nurture work from the smallest of seeds and deliver it on the biggest stages. Not bound or protected by the Stables stage, this production is a future promise to Australian playwrights that we are equipped to be led by their ambitions, by their visions. Sharing the work with Adelaide and Melbourne was a real joy and an investment in the idea of national conversations across states and audiences, led by our playwrights. The partnership with The State Theatre Company of South Australia was challenging and invigorating – it embedded in Griffin the capacity for future collaborations of scale.
2. **A Main Season of breadth, depth, diversity and surprise.** Every time the Griffin audience walks up the stairs they are in for an adventure – they do not know where the story of the night will end. 2015 gave us the painful coinciding of Suzie Miller's *Caress/Ache* with the fate of Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran hanging in the balance in Bali. The play allowed audiences a fictional way to contemplate the complex emotions and arguments running through Australia at that time. It was almost a relief to step into the taut thriller of Aidan Fennessy's genre play *The House On the Lake* which brought to the theatre all those people who would most often be curled up on their couch with a mystery. But nothing could have prepared us for the impact of Angus Cerini's *The Bleeding Tree*. In his mainstage debut, his visceral and authentic voice blew audiences and critics away. Winning Best New Australian Work at the Sydney Theatre Critics Awards, shortlisted for the NSW Premier's Nick Enright Award for Drama, this is the play that reminded everyone of why Griffin exists – to take risks on unknown, complex and challenging works that larger companies cannot afford to champion. We also exist to take our audiences on unexpected journeys such as the one found in Kit Brookman's *A Rabbit For Kim Jong Il*. Traveling from Germany to North Korea and meditating on forgiveness, the play will be remembered for far more than the appearance of the cutest bunny in the country in its final moments. 2015 will be

remembered for a startling range of stories, extraordinary emotional impact, an almost confronting intimacy and direct connection to the most important political conversations of the year. We saw the country's best actors drawn to the flame of the country's best writing – Helen Dallimore, Ian Stenlake, Huw Higginson, Jeanette Cronin, Paula Arundell, Steve Rodgers all thrilled audiences with their virtuosity and commitment.

3. **An Independent stage like no other.** Providing a prominent showcase for the depth of emerging talent in this country, the 2015 Griffin Independent Season presented five new plays and featured 65 independent artists – directors, designers, actors and producers. Starting with the highly controlled chaos of Zoey Dawson's *The Unspoken Word is Joe*, the year plunged into an exploration of masculinity (*5 Properties of Chain Male*), examined the desperation, poverty and dreams of the dog racing world (*The Dapto Chaser*), rewrote the Electra myth into 21<sup>st</sup> Century Australia (*minusonesister*), and dumped us in December with a riotous ode to Keith Richards in *A Riff on Keef* which had us all dancing our way into Christmas. We took chances on new artists and riskier work in the Independent season, and let a whole new group of theatre makers onto the Stables stage to begin their journey in Australian story.
4. **The continued success of the Studio.** The Griffin Studio is the most successful artist development program in the country. The writers and directors who benefit from the close mentorship of the Studio are going on to create significant mainstage works both at Griffin and around the country. Griffin is proving its worth as a platform for the arrival of artists at a stage when their craft can contribute significantly to our industry. This program can and will evolve to meet the needs of the playwrights and directors so that the company is completely responsive to the artistic community that is at its heart.
5. **Partnerships.** From our collaboration with the State Theatre Company of South Australia, to our ongoing relationship with Riverside Theatres, to the new relationship being forged with Powerhouse Youth Theatre in Fairfield, to our new Production Partners, 2015 saw Griffin grow our capacity to partner across States, across art forms, across business models and with audiences. The future growth of the company will lie in our skill in partnering confidently and generously for the benefit of audiences and artists alike.
6. **Works for young audiences.** Our commitment to new Australian works for all ages is now established and new works are being developed to build on the successes of *The Witches* and *Masquerade*.

2015 threw huge challenges at Griffin and thanks to the foundations of the last five years, the company has responded positively. The Board has engaged in complex conversations about the future shape, growth, ambition and potential of the company. Strongly and surely led by Bruce Meagher, strategies for the evolution of the company will be developed to lead us beyond the funding setbacks and ensure that Griffin continues to be the vibrant centre of Australian new play writing. 2020 will be 50 years since Nimrod was established in the Stables – surely an amazing opportunity to throw light onto the extraordinary achievements in Australian storytelling that have been witnessed on our diamond stage. Let the planning begin!

2015 was a year of extraordinary success and unexpected upheaval. I am proud of the way the company responded, and I look forward to the challenges of 2016.

Lee Lewis, Artistic Director

## 2015 ARTISTIC SUMMARY

MAIN STAGE PROGRAMME					
	Number of Performances	Total Audience	% Attendance		
			Paid KPI = 70%	Total	vs.Target
<b>MASQUERADE</b> BY KATE MULVANY	34	14,746	NA	NA	NA
<b>Observations:</b> Presented across three states in 2015. Season 1: Sydney Festival 2015 7 – 17 January; Season 2: State Theatre Company of South Australia 20 – 31 May; and Season 3: Melbourne Festival 2015 22 – 25 October. Funded by the Major Festivals Initiative and co-presented with the State Theatre Company of South Australia it allowed Griffin to present & tour a larger scale production than is possible in the Stables.					
<b>CARESS/ACHE</b> BY SUZIE MILLER 27 FEBRUARY – 11 APRIL	43	4057	71% ✓	90%	107%
<b>THE HOUSE ON THE LAKE</b> BY AIDAN FENNESSY 15 MAY – 20 JUNE	39	3697	75% ✓	90%	120%
<b>THE BLEEDING TREE</b> BY ANGUS CERINI 31 JULY – 5 SEPTEMBER	38	3549	72% ✓	89%	109%
<b>Observations:</b> Angus Cerini won Best New Australian Work at 2015 Sydney Theatre Awards for <i>The Bleeding Tree</i> and Most Outstanding New Australian Work at the Glugs Awards. He is nominated for the Nick Enright Prize for Playwriting (NSW Premier's Literary Award).					
<b>A RABBIT FOR KIM JONG-IL</b> BY KIT BROOKMAN 9 OCTOBER – 21 NOVEMBER	44	3323	55% ✗	72%	84%
<b>Observations:</b> The show transferred for a highly successful week at Parramatta Riverside continuing our intent for audiences in Western Sydney to have access to new Australian plays.					
SPECIAL EVENTS					
<b>YASUKICHI MURAKAMI: THROUGH A DISTANT LENSE</b> BY MAYU KANAMORI 10 FEBRUARY – 21 FEBRUARY	13	1212	74% ✓	89%	NA
<b>Observations:</b> The show provided an opportunity for Griffin to continue to partner with local companies (Performance 4a) to produce a diverse program of Australian works at the Stables.					
TOURING					
<b>THE WITCHES</b> BY ROALD DAHL	62	9335	NA	NA	NA
<b>Observations:</b> <i>The Witches</i> toured to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barking Gecko – Subiaco Arts Centre, WA 1 – 12 April</li> <li>• Mandurah Performing Arts Centre – Fishtrap Theatre, WA 15 – 18 April</li> <li>• Dark Mofo – Peakcock Theatre, TAS 15 – 20 June</li> <li>• Parramatta Riverside, Lennox Theatre NSW 23 - 25 June; 9 – 12 September</li> <li>• Monkey Baa Theatre Company, NSW 30 June – 4 July</li> <li>• Merrigong Theatre Company, IPAC Gordon Theatre NSW 8 – 11 July</li> </ul> <p>Enabled Griffin to build on our objective to develop and tour great Australian theatre for young audiences.</p>					

## GRIFFIN INDEPENDENT

Running in parallel to Griffin's own Main Season of Australian plays, Griffin Independent aims to bridge the independent and main stage sectors and to provide independent theatre makers with the best opportunities and support. Griffin provides minimal hire fees for its theatre, artistic and production support, equipment, free marketing and publicity, and ticketing services. In 2015, Griffin Independent co-presented five Australian plays produced by independent teams of artists.

	Number of Performances	Total Audience	% Attendance	
			Paid	Total
<b>THE UNSPOKEN WORD IS 'JOE'</b> BY ZOEY DAWSON 21 JANUARY - 7 FEBRUARY 2015 Produced by MKA: Theatre of New Writing.	17	1,554	59%	87%
<b>FIVE PROPERTIES OF CHAINMALE</b> BY NICHOLAS HOPE 15 APRIL - 9 MAY 2015 Produced by Arts Radar in association with Catnip Productions and Hope Productions	23	1,107	35%	46%
<b>THE DAPTO CHASER</b> BY MARY RACHEL BROWN 1 - 25 JULY 2015 Produced by Apocalypse Theatre Company	23	1,875	62%	78%
<b>MINUSONESISTER</b> BY ANNA BARNES 9 SEPTEMBER - 3 OCTOBER 2015 Produced by Stories Like These	23	1,289	39%	53%
<b>A RIFF ON KEEF: THE HUMAN MYTH</b> BY BENITO DI FONZO 25 NOVEMBER - 12 DECEMBER 2015 Produced by Ocelot Productions	17	1,453	62%	81%

## ARTIST DEVELOPMENT

**THE STUDIO** is Griffin's flagship artistic development program. Through a year-long residency with the company, the program establishes clear career pathways for directors, writers and dramaturgs. Each participant is supported in a number of ways including remuneration for their work and the opportunity to develop short and full-length works.

The 2015 Studio Artists were:

- Guy Edmonds and Matt Zeremes (Boomshaka Film)
- Kim Hardwick
- Karen Therese
- David Williams

The success of the Studio program is evidenced by the inclusion of 2011 Studio Artist Kate Mulvany's *Masquerade*, 2012 Studio Artist Suzie Miller's *Caress/Ache* in Griffin's 2015 Season. Kim Hardwick (Studio 2015) also directed the highly acclaimed *The House on the Lake* in Griffin's 2015 Season.

**COMMISSIONS & SCRIPT DEVELOPMENT in 2015** complemented writing developed through the Studio program, and new work was read and workshopped for the following year's season. Continued commissioning of Australian writers to deliver new work is at the heart of Griffin's mission. Writers currently under commission are Declan Greene, Michele Lee, Steve Rodgers and Mary Rachel Brown (2016).

## WRITING AND SCRIPT DEVELOPMENT

**THE GRIFFIN AWARD** recognises an outstanding new play that displays an authentic, inventive and contemporary Australian voice. Judged by a panel of theatre professionals from national submissions, the prestigious award carries a \$10,000 prize for the winner and \$1,000 for each of the four other finalists through the support of Copyright Agency Limited's Cultural Fund. The 2015 Griffin Award for new playwriting went to Stephen Carlton for *The Turquoise Elephant*. This play has been programmed in Griffin's 2016 Main Season.

**THE LYSCRATES PRIZE**, a new playwriting competition, saw its inaugural year in 2015. The prize provides opportunities to established writers and introduces new audiences to Australian theatre. The competition is open to professional playwrights, who submit the first act of a new play. The three finalists' entries then receive a week's rehearsal before a staged reading is held before an audience. The audience votes for the winner, who receives a full commission from Griffin (\$12,500) to finish the play. The runners-up receive a cash prize of \$1,000. The Lysicrates Prize is a philanthropic initiative produced in association with The Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney and supported by The Lysicrates Foundation. One of the shortlisted plays from 2015 Justin Fleming's *The Literati* has been programmed for the 2016 Main Season.

## EDUCATION AND ACCESS

Griffin aims to ensure it remains the most accessible company in Australia for artists. The following initiatives are additional activities and support programs were offered throughout 2015.

**AFFILIATE ARTISTS**, through this scheme recently graduated directors become part of the working life of Griffin and assist on a Main Season production. In 2015 this included positions on both *A House on the Lake* and *The Bleeding Tree*.

**GRIFFIN AMBASSADORS**, in 2015 this education scheme introduced 65 senior high school students to Griffin – receiving free tickets to productions, reduced price tickets for friends and family, exclusive cast forums and a series of theatre craft workshops. Since 2004, students from across greater Sydney and as far as Wollongong, Goulburn, Dural, Katoomba and Terrigal have participated. In 2015 Ambassadors came from further than ever before, with students attending from as far South as Nowra and as far North as Tamworth.

**SCRIPT CLUB**, in 2015 Griffin launched our inaugural Script Club where participants rediscover classic Australian plays then come together for afternoon tea and to engage in a robust round-table discussion led by John McCallum -Theatre Critic for The Australian and Senior Lecturer in Theatre at UNSW.

**GENERAL AUDITIONS**, held in May 2015. Gives new and emerging artists access to Griffin.

## PRODUCTION ONE

### MASQUERADE

BY KATE MULVANY

BASED ON THE BOOK BY KIT WILLIAMS

*A Griffin Theatre Company and State Theatre Company of South Australia co-production*

### SEASON ONE

**Sydney Festival 2015**

Co-presented by Sydney Festival and Sydney Opera House

Wednesday 7 January – Saturday 17 January 2015

### SEASON TWO

**State Theatre Company of South Australia**

Presented by State Theatre Company of South Australia

Wednesday 20 May – Sunday 31 May 2015

### SEASON THREE

**Melbourne Festival 2015**

Presented by Melbourne Festival

Thursday 22 October – Sunday 25 October 2015

***“Fifty is my first, nothing is my second. Five just makes my third, my fourth a vowel is reckoned.”***

In a wondrous world of riddles and hidden treasure, bumbling Jack Hare is on a race against time to deliver a message of love from the Moon to the Sun. Far, far away in a world just like ours, a mother cheers her son Joe with the tale of Jack Hare’s adventure. But when Jack’s mission goes topsy-turvy, Joe and his mum must come to the rescue, and the line between the two worlds becomes blurred forever.

Bringing to life Kit Williams’ iconic picture book, *Masquerade* stars a talking fish, a tone-deaf barbershop quartet, a gassy pig, a precious jewel and a few mere mortals. It’s a magical adventure that is, at its heart, about the love between a parent and a child.

Bound to amaze and enchant audiences aged 9 to 90, Griffin began 2015 with the world premiere of *Masquerade* at the Sydney Opera House for Sydney Festival. Sam Strong and Lee Lewis joined forces to co-direct, weaving their own special magic over a fabulous cast, with songs and music performed live by Mikelangelo and the Black Sea Gentlemen.

### CREATIVE & PRODUCTION

<b>Writer</b>	Kate Mulvany
<b>Directors</b>	Sam Strong & Lee Lewis
<b>Designer</b>	Anna Cordingley
<b>Lighting Designer</b>	Geoff Cobham
<b>Composition &amp; Musical Direction</b>	Pip Branson & Mikelangelo
<b>AV Designer</b>	Chris Petridis
<b>Sound Designer</b>	Michael Toisuta
<b>Assistant Director</b>	Nescha Jelk
<b>Associate Designer</b>	Romanie Harper
<b>Producer - Griffin</b>	Karen Rodgers
<b>Producer - STCSA</b>	Rob Brookman
<b>Production Manager - STCSA</b>	Gavin Norris

<b>Stage Manager</b>	Amy Harris
<b>Assistant Stage Manager</b>	Mel Dyer
<b>Stage Management Secondment</b>	Jennifer Parsonage
<b>Children's Chaperone</b>	Whitney Richards
<b>STCSA Head of Wardrobe</b>	Kellie Jones
<b>Wardrobe Supervisor</b>	Caitlin Newbury
<b>Head Mechanist</b>	Damien King
<b>Head Electrician</b>	Daniel Barber

## **CAST**

Kate Cheel  
Helen Dallimore  
Nathan O'Keefe  
Zindzi Okenyo  
Mikangelo  
Jack Andrew  
Louis Fontaine  
Pip Branson  
Guy Freer  
Sam Martin  
Phil Moriarty  
Mikel Simic - Mikangelo

Supported through the Major Festivals Initiative, with co-commissioning partners Sydney Festival and Melbourne Festival.

## **Outcomes**

*Masquerade* was presented across three states in 2015 with seasons in New South Wales at Sydney Festival, South Australia with STCSA and Victoria at the Melbourne Festival. There were a total of 34 performances across the 3 seasons playing to an audience total of 14,746. *Masquerade* was funded by the Major Festivals Initiative and co-presented with State Theatre Company of South Australia allowing Griffin to present and tour a larger scale production than is possible in the Stables.

## **Critical Response**

"*Masquerade* is a delight from start to finish." ★★★★★ **Time Out**

"...Terrific performances all round" ★★★★★ **Sunday Telegraph**

"*Masquerade* is alchemy in action. As a winsome fantasy it is fantastical and as a clear-eyed rendering of the real world of childhood it is moving and honest." **Stage Noise**

"A vivacious collaboration of music, light, colour, costume and larger-than-life characters... *Masquerade*... interweaves a sombre reality with a beautiful and bizarre other world"  
**The Conversation**

"...Mulvany's adaptation is exemplary. At once light-handed and bold, it transforms this book into children's theatre of unusual depth and charm." **ABC Arts**

"...A poignant, charming play animated by vivid spectacle and costume, offbeat humour and musical flair, all of which deepens, rather than sugar-coats, the story of love and death at its core." **The Age**

## PRODUCTION TWO

### CARESS/ACHE BY SUZIE MILLER

***“Touch my skin, go on, feel it, feel the heat of me. Hit me, scratch me, feel the pulse of me.”***

A brilliant surgeon can no longer bear to touch the living. Two voices connect fleetingly over the phone. A desperate mother begs to embrace her son one last time. A young woman seeks atonement.

Disparate lives interweave, intersect, collide and connect in the most unexpected of ways in *Caress/Ache*. This is our world – where some long for the electrical charge of human contact, others flee it, and lives turn on the smallest moments of random intimacy.

With *Caress/Ache*, Suzie Miller proves herself a most fearless playwright, revealing humanity in all its messy complexity. She was perfectly matched by director Anthony Skuse.

#### CREATIVE TEAM

**Director** Anthony Skuse

**Designer** Sophie Fletcher

**Lighting Designer** Matthew Marshall

**Composer & Sound Designer** Nate Edmondson

**Stage Manager** Amy Harris

**Movement Coach** Sam Chester

**NIDA Stage Management Secondment** Gin Rosse

**With** Zoe Carides, Helen Christinson, Gary Clementson, Ian Stenlake, Sabryna Te’o

#### Previews

27, 28 February, 2-3 March

#### Season

6 March – 11 April

#### Outcomes

*Caress/Ache* was presented at the Stables for a six-week season of 43 performances to an audience of 4,057. The show achieved 71% paid attendance and 90% total attendance and exceed box office target by 107%.

#### Critical Response

“Zoe Carides is heartbreaking to watch as the desperate and downtrodden Alice.” ***Time Out***

“A compelling, fascinating and troubling work by playwright, director and cast alike...” ***StageNoise***

“Excellent design: Sophie Fletcher and lighting: Matthew Marshall.” ***StageNoise***

“Director Anthony Skuse has gathered an attractive cast and moves them well and clearly.” ***The Australian***

“Sophie Fletcher’s design is clean and simple, allowing for resonant moments of multiple occupancy... Miller’s final tableaux, crushing yet hopeful, left several in tears.” ***Sydney Morning Herald***

## PRODUCTION THREE

### THE HOUSE ON THE LAKE BY AIDAN FENNESSY

***“I can’t go back to yesterday because I was a different person then.”***

A criminal lawyer with a cool head and a passion for logic, David wakes up to find himself confined to a small, sparsely furnished room, unable to remember what happened the day before. With the help of his doctor, David begins to coax memories out of the darkness, before the details of a terrible secret emerge.

Razor sharp and tourniquet tight, *The House on the Lake* is a psychological thriller so crafty it’s criminal. Mired deep in layers of deception, it’s a puzzle of a play certain to engage the intellect and assault the nervous system.

*The House on the Lake* is a twisting labyrinth of playwright Aidan Fennessy’s devising. Director Kim Hardwick led the way through.

**Director** Kim Hardwick  
**Designer** Stephen Curtis  
**Lighting Designer** Martin Kinnane  
**Composer** Kelly Ryall  
**Stage Manager** Edwina Guinness  
**With** Jeanette Cronin, Huw Higginson

#### Previews

16 - 19 May

#### Season

22 May – 20 June

#### Outcomes

*The House on the Lake* was presented at the Stables for a five-week season of 39 performances to an audience of 3,697. The show achieved 75% paid attendance and 90% total attendance and exceed box office target by 120%.

#### Critical Response

“Kim Hardwick directs an absorbing production” ★★★★★ ***Sunday Telegraph***

“Higginson is superb as David, giving a subtly shifting performance...Cronin offers strong support playing Alice with a brusque, reserved professionalism.” ★★★★★ ***Sunday Telegraph***

“...broadly entertaining nod to neo-noir and the almost forgotten art of the stage thriller.” ★★★★★½ ***Sydney Morning Herald***

“...the sharpness of the writing in the lead-up is matched by the sharpness of every element in this taut, engrossing production directed by Kim Hardwick.” ★★★★★½ ***Daily Review, Crikey***

“designer Stephen Curtis’ abstract take on a hospital room, this is a production perfectly pitched for the small Griffin space.” ★★★★★½ ***Daily Review, Crikey***

“It is tantalising acting.” ***The Australian***

## PRODUCTION FOUR

### THE BLEEDING TREE BY ANGUS CERINI

***“Girls, I think your father’s dead. I knocked his knees out.  
I conked his head. I shot that house-clown in the neck.”***

In a dirt-dry town in rural Australia, a shot shatters the still night. A mother and her daughters have just welcomed home the man of the house - with a crack in the shins and a bullet in the neck. The only issue now is disposing of the body.

Triggered into thrilling motion by an act of revenge, *The Bleeding Tree* is rude, rhythmical and irreverently funny. Imagine a murder ballad blown up for the stage, set against a deceptively deadly Aussie backdrop, with three fierce females fighting back.

With his brutal, and brutally funny, wordplay, Angus Cerini won the 2014 Griffin Award for *The Bleeding Tree*.

**Director** Lee Lewis

**Designer** Renée Mulder

**Composer** Steve Toulmin

**Lighting Designer** Verity Hampson

**Stage Manager** Edwina Guinness

**With** Paula Arundell, Airlie Dodds, Shari Sebbens

#### Previews

31 July, 1 – 4 August

#### Season

7 August – 5 September

#### Outcomes

*The Bleeding Tree* was presented at the Stables for a five-week season of 38 performances to an audience of 3,549. The show achieved 72% paid attendance and 89% total attendance and exceed box office target by 109%.

Angus Cerini won Best New Australian Work at 2015 Sydney Theatre Awards for *The Bleeding Tree* and Most Outstanding New Australian Work at the Glugs Awards. Angus is also nominated for the Nick Enright Prize for Playwriting, which is a NSW Premier’s Literary Award.

#### Critical Response

‘Lee Lewis’s great and complex production’ *The Australian*

‘They say it takes a village to raise a child. This excellent production suggests that it also takes a village to kill a bastard.’ *The Australian*

‘It’s a rare thing for every element of a production to converge in this fashion. The combined effect is thrilling.’ ★★★★★ *Crikey*

‘Cerini’s writing exists in an almost abstract space — his use of language is sharp and evocative, using playful rhymes along the way — but it’s all narrative-driven, and the narrative structure of this piece is perfect, right down to the quiet, creeping ending.’ ★★★★★ *Crikey*

‘Powerful look at domestic violence...a short but potent piece, equal parts murder ballad and revenge thriller.’ *Sydney Morning Herald*

'Director Lee Lewis, designer Renee Mulder, composer Steve Toulmin and lighting designer Verity Hampson fashion a visually striking and aurally rich production around Cerini's words. Arundell, Sebbens and Dodds... are spellbinding as his outback Furies.' **Sydney Morning Herald**

'...you will find yourself powerfully swayed.' **Sydney Morning Herald**

'bruising, bold and brilliant.....The performances in *The Bleeding Tree* are pitch perfect.' **Australian Stage**

'THE BLEEDING TREE addresses the issue with passion, compassion, irreverence and gravity that hopefully will have audiences going away with the feeling that they have not only seen a great piece of drama but also prompt them to think about the society in which they live.' **Broadway World**

'Angus Cerini's wonderful script is so powerfully lyrical" **The Australian**

'Paula Arundell, as the mother, and Airlie Dodds and Shari Sebbens, as the daughters, play all this superbly. Arundell, particularly, is magnificent as a woman who has suffered so much and is now finally taking control of her life and defending her children.' **The Australian**

'Lee Lewis, the Director, takes hold of this contemporary gothic tale of self defence and revenge and hurls it out into the world onto the SBW Stage with a fearsome sense of this is a truth you all may have only dreamt about in the unconscious swirls of your deepest, darkest nightmares, but for some is a wish fulfilment of a lifesaving confrontation.' **Kevin Jackson**

'There is a contagious fever of daring and simpatico between these three actors that is breathlessly thrilling to witness.' **Kevin Jackson**

'Grotesquely beautiful. Morally cauterising. Glorious artistic daring from all.' **Kevin Jackson**

'As the mother, Arundell commands the stage, alternately self-possessed when cornered and giddy with relief at the end of their suffering.' ★★★★★ **The Guardian**

'This is powerful, visceral and deeply exhilarating theatre – just as it should be.' ★★★★★ **The Guardian**

'The dialogue spars and parries, words rush in over one another, and the plot powers ahead at a cracking pace.' ★★★★★ **The Guardian**

'It's liberation through violence, it's women as anti-heroes, and it's thrillingly subversive and deeply affecting.' **Time Out**

'Director Lee Lewis has composed a stunningly lyrical production that centres squarely on three fierce performances. Arundell is blazing with rage and commanding in a way that is, for all the darkness, oddly beatific; Dodds and Sebbens are sharp, vulnerable sisters.' **Time Out**

## PRODUCTION FIVE

### A RABBIT FOR KIM JONG-IL BY KIT BROOKMAN

***“Rabbits don’t talk Mr Wertheim. They keep their stupid mouths shut or they get whacked on the head with a shovel... Learn to be a rabbit.”***

Johann’s super-sized rabbits are his pride and joy. Much to his surprise, the Supreme Leader of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea has taken a special interest, and will stop at nothing to get his hands on them. When a bungled undercover rescue mission transports Johann to North Korea, he finds himself, and the bunnies he betrayed, in a bit of a stew.

Preposterously based on a true story, *A Rabbit for Kim Jong-il* is a cunning comic thriller spanning two continents. Crammed with secret agents, espionage, double-crossings and a giant rabbit named Felix, the play is also a pointed parable about betrayal and forgiveness, greed and regret.

**Director** Lee Lewis

**Designer** Elizabeth Gadsby

**Lighting Designer** Luiz Pampolha

**Sound Designer** Steve Francis

**Stage Manager** Charlotte Barrett

**With** Kate Box, Kit Brookman, Kaeng Chan, Steve Rodgers, Mémé Thorne

#### **Previews**

10 – 14 October

#### **Season**

17 October – 21 November

#### **Outcomes**

*A Rabbit for Kim Jong-il* was presented at the Stables for a six-week season of 44 performances to an audience of 3,323. The show achieved 55% paid attendance and 72% total attendance. The show transferred for a highly successful week at Riverside Theatres in Parramatta continuing our intent for audiences in Western Sydney to have access to new Australian plays.

#### **Critical Response**

“It starts out absurd and then creeps up on you and hits you over the head” “a theatrical ambush.” ***The Australian***

“The brilliant opening scene sets the tone of a comic thriller – funny and scary in equal parts.” ***Australian Stage***

“Almost any scene involving Chan, are highlights of the play. His performance as the sickly polite, immaculately groomed wheeler-dealer naturally lent itself to comedy and suspense.” ***Arts Hub***

“Steve Rodgers is outstanding as Johann” ***Daily Review***

“...The playwright, Kit Brookman’s performance of Felix the rabbit steals the show.” ***Australian Stage***

“An entertaining new satire on capitalism, socialism, geopolitics and perfect, fluffy innocence.” ***Concrete Playground***

## SPECIAL EVENT

**Griffin Theatre Company & Performance 4a present**  
**YASUKICHI MURAKAMI: THROUGH A DISTANT LENSE**  
**BY MAYU KANAMORI**

***'We take so many photographs. How do we know which ones are important, which ones matter?'***

Japanese photographer, entrepreneur and inventor Yasukichi Murakami was the talk of the town in Broome and Darwin in the early 1900s, until the outbreak of the Second World War saw him and his family, like all Japanese in Australia, interned as enemy aliens. Murakami's photographs were impounded and subsequently lost.

Using photographic projections, video, original music and soundscape, Japanese-Australian photographer and writer Mayu Kanamori goes in search of Murakami's lost photographs. Uncovering a fascinating story of unlikely friendships, thwarted ambition and unrequited love, *Yasukichi Murakami* stirs our collective amnesia about the history of the Japanese in Australia.

*Yasukichi Murakami* is a meditation on love, truth and, in a digital age where cameras proliferate, the nature of photography.

**Director** Malcolm Blaylock  
**Dramaturg** Jane Bodie  
**Composer, Sound Designer & Musician** Terumi Narushima  
**Visual Designer** Mic Gruchy  
**Producer** Annette Shun Wah  
**Dramaturgical Consultant** Yuji Sone  
**With** Kuni Hashimoto, Yumi Umiuare, Arisa Yura

### **Previews**

10 – 11 February

### **Season**

13 – 21 February

### **Outcomes**

*Yasukichi Murakami* was presented with Performance 4a at the Stables for a two-week season of 13 performances to an audience of 1,212. The show achieved 74% paid attendance and 89% total attendance. The show provided an opportunity for Griffin to continue to partner with local companies to produce a diverse program of Australian works at the Stables.

### **Critical Response**

"... A thought-provoking show and a valuable reminder of the formative influence of Asian peoples on Australian culture and of clumsy and inhumane attempts to downplay, dismiss or caricature it." ***Sydney Morning Herald***

"...A compelling and always absorbing work... Highly recommended." ***Stage Noise***

"Arisa Yura is completely charming...[and]...Kuni Hashimoto is superb as Murakami" ***Sydney Arts Guide***

"This is an intimate, visually delightful show, with three excellently acted, delicately nuanced performances." ***Arts Hub***

"It's largely due to these two performers' vivacity [Arisa Yura + Kuni Hashimoto] that the work lifts from documentary to compelling drama" ***Daily Review Crikey***

## TOURING

### THE WITCHES

BY ROALD DAHL

Adapted from the stage play by David Wood

### TOUR DATES

**Barking Gecko – Subiaco Arts Centre, WA**

1 12 April

20 Performances

**Mandurah Performing Arts Centre – Fishtrap Theatre, WA**

15 – 18 April

8 Performances

**Dark Mofu – Peacock Theatre, TAS**

15 – 20 June

8 Performances

**Parramatta Riverside, Lennox Theatre NSW**

23 - 25 June

9 – 12 September

10 Performances

**Monkey Baa Theatre Company, NSW**

30 June – 4 July

9 Performances

**Merrigong Theatre Company, IPAC Gordon Theatre NSW**

8 – 11 July

7 Performances

“Witches? With silly black hats and cloaks riding on broomsticks? No. They’re for fairy tales. Very tame. I’m talking of real witches.”

When one little boy unwittingly stumbles into the annual meeting of witches, he hears their nasty plan to get rid of all the children in the world – by turning them into mice! It’s going to take smarts and sneakiness to stop them – and not get squished in the process.

Think you can outwit a witch and outrun a mouse? Then grab a seat in the front row for *The Witches*, as a mind-boggling and madcap one-man show. Brave boys and girls, rat-racers and retirees are in for a wicked and wonderful time. Just be on the lookout for ladies with ugly claws, fake hair, and great big gross nose-holes!

**Director** Lucas Jervies

**Designer** Hugh O’Connor

**Dramaturg** Chris Summers

**Lighting Designer** Christopher Page

**Sound Designer** Nate Edmondson

**With** Guy Edmonds or Scott Sheridan

### Outcomes

The 2015 National tour of *The Witches* crossed three states playing a total of 62 performances for 9,335 people. The tour enabled Griffin to build on our objective to develop and tour great Australian theatre for young audiences.

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## DEVELOPMENT PROJECT ONE

### COSMIC COMICS

*Cosmic Comics* is a new Australian play being developed for young audiences. Created by Ben Winspear, Brett Boardman and Silvia Colloca, *Cosmic Comics* takes its inspiration from a book of short stories titled *Cosmic Comics* by Italo Calvino. *Cosmic Comics* will be a bilingual work for young people and families that interweaves the magical and transformative insights into the world that Calvino describes in his short stories into a contemporary Australian story. The creative development of this project is funded by the City of Sydney.

#### Outcomes

In 2015 Brett, Ben and Silvia spent one week in creative development investigating the starting points to adapt Calvino's short stories to the stage. A further creative development will be undertaken in 2016 with the plan to develop and stage the work as part of the 2017 Griffin season.

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## GRIFFIN INDEPENDENT

Griffin recognises that it is necessary for the health of the theatre sector to embrace and champion the work of independent companies and individual artists. Our primary means of doing this is *Griffin Independent* – an annual season co-presented with the country's most exciting independent theatre makers.

Running in parallel to Griffin's own Main Season of Australian plays, *Griffin Independent* aims to bridge the independent and main stage sectors and to provide independent theatre makers with the best opportunities and support.

As part of this support, Griffin provides: minimal hire fees for its theatre, artistic and production support, equipment, free marketing and publicity, and ticketing services.

In 2015, *Griffin Independent* co-presented five Australian plays produced by independent teams of artists from NSW and Victoria.

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## GRIFFIN INDEPENDENT – PRODUCTION ONE

### THE UNSPOKEN WORD IS 'JOE'

#### BY ZOEY DAWSON

**Produced by MKA: Theatre of New Writing.**

Zoey Dawson has written a play and it's her big night, however real life rivalries and resentments are sending things way, way off-script. But nothing's going to stop her putting on one hell of a show.

*The Unspoken Word is 'Joe'* is a biting meta-satire of Australian theatre which Zoey would describe as dramatic and beautiful. And tender. And also really clever. She wrote it as a way of dealing with a really bad break-up – but it's not just a break-up play. It's about love, and loss. It's about life. It's a really, really good play. It's a portrait of a woman desperate for the approval of her peers.

Following critically acclaimed, sold-out seasons at Melbourne Fringe and Brisbane Festival, *The Unspoken Word is 'Joe'* is written by Zoey Dawson and directed by Declan Greene.

**Director** Declan Greene

**Designer** Eugyeene Teh

**Lighting Designer** Romanie Harper

**Sound Designer** Martin Kay

**Producers** Corey Reynolds & John Kachoyan

**Production Manager** Ketura Budd  
**Stage Manager** Gina Bianco  
**With** Natasha Herbert, Matt Hickey, Annie Last, Aaron Orzech, Nikki Shiels

**Previews**

22 - 22 January

**Season**

24 January – 7 February

**Outcome**

In its three-week season, with 17 performances, *The Unspoken Word is 'Joe'* played to an audience of 1554 achieving 59% paid attendance and 87% total attendance.

**Critical Response**

"Fiendishly clever, side-splittingly funny and quite unlike anything I've seen before." ★★★★★ **Time Out**

"...Incredibly clever and way funny and the actors are brilliant." **Stage Noise**

"Joe's blend of deadpan observation and full-blown hysteria makes for an entertaining and unpredictable hour of theatre that takes pleasure in messing with your mind to the end." **Sydney Morning Herald**

"Extreme, raw, confronting, explosive..." **Sydney Arts Guide**

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**GRIFFIN INDEPENDENT – PRODUCTION TWO**

**FIVE PROPERTIES OF CHAINMALE**

**BY NICHOLAS HOPE**

**Produced by Arts Radar in association with Catnip Productions and Hope Productions.**

Five men. Five worlds. In a seedy London hotel room, a trendy gallery in Oslo, the cafés of Adelaide, the streets of coastal Sydney and the waiting room of a criminal court, modern man grapples with his crumbling reflection.

*Five Properties of Chainmale* presents five variations on the theme of contemporary masculinity with not a bro-mance in sight. It is an excavation of the male mind across generations and time zones. Confronting, uncomfortable and comical, *Five Properties of Chainmale* is written and directed by playwright and award-winning actor Nicholas Hope.

**Director** Nicholas Hope

**Designers** Tom Rivard and Tom Bannerman

**Lighting Designer** Chris Page

**Sound Designer** David Kirkpatrick

**Costume Designer** Zora Milevska

**Producers** Sam Hawker (Arts Radar), Cat Dibley (Catnip Productions)

**With** Alan Lovell, Dominic McDonald, Jeremy Waters, Briony Williams

**Previews**

15 – 16 April

**Season**

18 April – 9 May

**Outcome**

In its four-week season, with 23 performances, *Five Properties of Chainmale* played to an audience of 1,107 achieving 35% paid attendance and 46% total attendance.

## Critical Response

“Through irony, self-deprecation and humour we are willing to look just a little at the vanities, excesses and dangers of man’s love of himself (beautiful creature that he is!)” **Australian Stage**

“It’s refreshing to see such a concept tackled on stage, and Hope should be commended for this...he opens our eyes to a culture laced with narcissism, misogyny, furtiveness and more.” **ArtsHub**

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## GRIFFIN INDEPENDENT – PRODUCTION THREE

### THE DAPTO CHASER

BY MARY RACHEL BROWN

Produced by Apocalypse Theatre Company

For the Sinclair family, the cut-throat world of greyhound racing is a religion. And their beloved dog Boy Named Sue is more than a greyhound; he’s their heart and soul on four legs. With the crucial Winnebago Classic on the horizon, Cess Sinclair has one shot at reversing his family’s fortunes for good. Against all the odds, he’s betting on a miracle.

*The Dapto Chaser* is warts-and-all Australian comedy that gets its hands dirty with the adrenaline, sweat and guts of the dog racing sub-culture. The Sinclairs are a family trapped in the pressure cooker of gambling addiction and when things don’t go to plan, they are forced to gamble the most important commodity of all – their relationship to each other.

Playwright Mary Rachel Brown wrote *The Dapto Chaser* perched in the bleachers track-side, while director Glynn Nicholas went on an all-schnitzel diet to get it over the line.

**Warning:** This production contains dogs, bitches, mongrels, drugs, cheating, lying, winning, losing and masses of family dysfunction.

**Director** Glynn Nicholas

**Set and Costume Designer** Georgia Hopkins

**Lighting Designer** Toby Knyvett

**Sound Designer** Daryl Wallis

**Stage Manager** Cara Woods

**Producer** Dino Dimitriadis

**With** Danny Adcock, Noel Hodda, Jamie Oxenbould, Richard Sydenham

### Previews

1 – 2 July

### Season

4 – 25 July

### Outcome

In its four-week season, with 23 performances, *The Dapto Chaser* played to an audience of 1875 achieving 62% paid attendance and 78% total attendance.

### Critical Response

‘Brown wrings humour from every twist of the plot and the play glows in this well acted and thoroughly realised production directed by Glynn Nicholas.’ ★★★½ **Sydney Morning Herald**

‘*The Dapto Chaser* features an awesome foursome of seasoned performers.’ **Australian Stage**

‘A luscious mix of ingredients that make a spicy, unexpected, twisting, turning narrative. The four characters are richly fashioned and the actors grab them with both hands and make the most of them.’ **Stage Noise**

'All in all, *The Dapto Chaser* is a funny, rude, illuminating and a fine play that's meaningful and extremely entertaining. Not to be missed.' **Stage Noise**

'Playwright Mary Rachel Brown has scripted a whippet smart play, a family saga set in the sub culture of dog racing.' **Australian Stage**

'Like a canine on cocaine, *The Dapto Chaser* is a get up and go show. Run to see it.' **Australian Stage**

'Brown's script is full of humour and anguish.' **The Australian**

'Directed by Glynn Nicholas, who has a sure touch with the comedy, and it has a good cast adept at finding the moments where hope turns to despair and then back again.' **The Australian**

'Danny Adcock is fantastically bitter as Errol' ★★★ **Time Out**

'Jamie Oxenbould is heartbreaking as the downtrodden *Jimmy*..... Noel Hodda exudes an unctuous charm as the charlatan' **Australian Stage**

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## GRIFFIN INDEPENDENT – PRODUCTION FOUR

### MINUSONESISTER

BY ANNA BARNES

Produced by Stories Like These

A father sacrifices the life of his eldest daughter for the common good – having her snatched away during a TV ad break. It's the kind of thing that can really mess up a family. Mother turns against father. Son turns against mother. Sister turns against sister. Maybe you've heard the myth, but not like this.

*MinusOneSister* is Sophocles' *Electra* furiously wrenched into the present and told from the point of view of the teenagers. Eternal obsessions mingle with the obsessions of our times, bloodshed goes hand in hand with Bacardi Breezers and Facebook, and a chilling portrait emerges of a family irreversibly shattered by grief and guilt.

A piercing new play with ancient roots, *MinusOneSister* won Anna Barnes the Patrick White Playwrights' Award in 2013. It will be realised in all its chilling glory by Luke Rogers.

**Director** Luke Rogers

**Set and Costume Designer** Georgia Hopkins

**Lighting Designer** Sian James-Holland

**Sound Designer & Composer** Nate Edmondson

**Stage Manager** Angharad Lindley

**Producer** Peter Gahan

**With** Kate Cheel, Lucy Heffernan, Liam Nunan, Contessa Treffone

### Previews

9 -10 September

### Season

12 September –3 October

### Outcome

In its four-week season, with 23 performances, *MinusOneSister* played to an audience of 1,289 achieving 39% paid attendance and 53% total attendance.

## Critical Response

‘Formidable, forceful performances’ ★★★★★ *Time Out*

‘Barnes has tapped into something essential and immediate about young women, about anxiety and terror and anger and a constant, destructive lack of control over their own bodies and lives’ ★★★★★ *Time Out*

‘This cast of four sensitive and forceful young actors gives you faith in the future (the present, really) of Australian acting’ ★★★½ *Daily Review*

‘The production elements are all first-class, from Georgia Hopkins’ sophisticated set and costumes to Sian James-Holland’s lighting design and Nate Edmondson’s sound design, which both punctuate the dramatic beats of the play.’ ★★★½ *Daily Review*

‘A thoroughly compelling and thought provoking night at the theatre.’ ★★★½ *ArtsHub*

‘Georgia Hopkins’ plastic draped walls, furniture, and television conjure domestic sterility and crime scene. The bed becomes an unholy altar of bloody matricide.’ *Australian Stage*

‘This is a tight ensemble piece, the energy and pace does not let up’ *TheatreNow*

‘Another great production from Stories Like These and the Griffin Theatre. Worth adding this to you ‘Go See’ list.’ *TheatreNow*

‘a compelling cast, each with a distinctive presence, and an enthusiasm for agile atmospheric shifts’ *Suzy Goes See*

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## GRIFFIN INDEPENDENT – PRODUCTION FIVE

### A RIFF ON KEEF: THE HUMAN MYTH

BY BENITO DI FONZO

Produced by Ocelot Productions

Spend an evening with the greatest living myth – rock ‘n’ roll guitar legend, ‘Keef’ Richards – and his motley crew of demons, lovers and fellow music makers, as Keef navigates us through his philosophy on living and the search for the secret chord.

In this uncharted, unlawful, and unofficial tale, our working-class hero traverses the globe, masterminding bands, coups and crimes, to see how far this riff can take us all.

Hedonistic and hilariously absurd, this latest theatrical jam from playwright Benito Di Fonzo and director Lucinda Gleeson stars Helpmann Award-winning Terry Serio, a fearless axe-wielder in his own right, as the guitar anti-hero.

**By** Benito Di Fonzo

**Director** Lucinda Gleeson

**Dramaturg** Erin Taylor

**Set and Costume Designer** Hugh O’Connor

**Lighting Designer** Sian James Holland

**Sound Designer** Katelyn Shaw

**Stage Manager** Cara Woods

**Assistant Stage Manager** Karina McKenzie

**Producers:** Fiona Boidi, Cat Dibley and Lucinda Gleeson.

**With** Branden Christine, Abe Mitchell, Lenore Munro, Terry Serio, Dorje Swallow

## Previews

25 - 26 November

## Season

28 November – 12 December

## Outcome

In its three-week season, with 17 performances, *A Riff On Keef: The Human Myth* played to an audience of 1453 achieving 62% paid attendance and 81% total attendance.

## Critical Response

“Terry Serio delivers an impressively sustained performance as Richards.” *Sydney Morning Herald*

“...An unforgettable evening full of masterminding bands, coups and crimes as the audience takes an uncharted and unofficial journey through Keef’s philosophy on life and his search for the secret chord in a hilariously absurd way.” *Alt Media*

“The collaboration between writer and director is a winning one, working on the same page to create the alchemy to stage. Gleeson picks up on the riff motif and phrases the piece with an improv feel, with a pace that’s tight but relaxed.” *Australian Stage*

“There is at once a twinkling mischief and laconic world weariness about Richards that’s captured by Serio which explains the man’s charm and charisma.” *Stage Noise*

“Abe Mitchell evokes the Jagger jut and strut and does a wicked Nick Cave to boot. A double hoot.” *Sydney Arts Guide*

“The performers fill the room with sheer electricity every time they pick up an instrument, leaving you craving more at the close of each song.” *Upstaged Reviews*

“The cast are talented in abundance, convincing you of their aptitude as rock stars in every sense.” *Upstaged Reviews*

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## ARTIST DEVELOPMENT

### THE STUDIO

The Studio is our flagship artistic development program. Through a year-long residency with the company, the program establishes clear career pathways for directors, writers and dramaturgs. It’s an invaluable experience for artists to come together to hone their craft, gain vital experience inside a company and develop new work.

In 2015 the Studio Artists were:

#### **Guy Edmonds and Matt Zeremes (Boomshaka Film)**

Guy and Matt are creative collaborators at Boomshaka Film – their production company. They are experienced actors who work across theatre, television and film around the globe. They have credits as directors, writers, editors and producers of TV commercials, features and short films, many of which have played festivals internationally.

#### **Kim Hardwick**

Kim is the Co-Director of White Box Theatre and has directed productions in collaboration with companies such as Monkey Baa Theatre for Young People, Critical Stages, Seymour Centre and Wagga Wagga Civic Theatre. Kim's main interest lies in the commissioning and development of new Australian work.

### **Karen Therese**

Karen is a director and creative producer. She is Artistic Director of Powerhouse Youth Theatre in Fairfield and Director/Producer of *Funpark* presented in Mt Druitt for Sydney Festival 2014. Her current works include *Little Baghdad* and creative development with parkour group 9Lives and Force Majeure.

### **David Williams**

David creates theatre that opens space for public conversation about political and social issues. He has worked as a writer, director, producer, dramaturg and performer with companies across Australia. He is the Curator for the 2015 Australian Theatre Forum.

Each participant is supported in a number of ways including remuneration for their work, and the opportunity to develop short and full-length work.

In 2015 the success of this program is evidenced by the inclusion of 2013 Studio Artist Kate Mulvany's *Masquerade* and Kim Hardwick directed the highly acclaimed *The House on the Lake* for the Griffin Main Stage season.

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## **WRITING AND SCRIPT DEVELOPMENT**

### **GRIFFIN AWARD**

The Griffin Award recognises an outstanding new play that displays an authentic, inventive and contemporary Australian voice. Judged by a panel of theatre professionals from national submissions, the prestigious award carries a \$10,000 prize for the winner and \$1,000 for each of the four other finalists through the support of Copyright Agency Limited's Cultural Fund.

Griffin continued its commitment to accepting and assessing scripts from around the nation, awarding its 2015 Griffin Award for new playwriting to Stephen Carlton for *The Turquoise Elephant*. The play has been programmed in Griffin's 2016 Main Season.

### **THE LYSICRATES PRIZE**

The Lysicrates Prize, a new playwriting competition, saw its inaugural year in 2015. The prize provides opportunities to established writers and introduces new audiences to Australian theatre.

The competition is open to professional playwrights, who submit the first act of a new play. The three finalists' entries then receive a week's rehearsal before a staged reading is held before a live audience. The audience votes for the winner, who receives a full commission from Griffin (\$12,500) to finish the play. The runners-up receive a cash prize of \$1,000.

The inaugural competition was a wonderful success, with Steve Rodgers' *Jesus Wants Me for a Sunbeam* winning first prize. The audience on the day was also delighted by staged readings of Lally Katz's *Fortune* and Justin Fleming's *The Literati*. *The Literati* was selected as part of Griffin's 2016 Season and will be a co-production with Bell Shakespeare.

The Lysicrates Prize is a philanthropic initiative produced in association with The Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney and supported by The Lysicrates Foundation.

### **COMMISSIONS & SCRIPT DEVELOPMENT**

In addition to writing developed through Studio resident artists, and new works read and workshopped for the following year's season, Griffin continued to commission Australian writers to deliver new works.

Working closely with playwrights to bring their scripts to life is at the heart of our mission. Writers Declan Greene, Michele Lee, Steve Rodgers and Mary Rachel Brown (2016) are currently under commission, and in 2016 we continue to work with these and other writers to nurture new plays for the coming years.

### ACCESS SCHEMES

Griffin aims to ensure it remains the most accessible company in Australia for artists. The following initiatives are additional activities and support programs were offered throughout 2015.

- **Affiliate Artists:** Through this scheme recently graduated directors become part of the working life of Griffin and assist on a Main season production. In 2015 this included positions on both *A House on the Lake* and *The Bleeding Tree*.
- **Griffin Ambassadors:** Griffin Education continued to be a fundamental and treasured part of the company's growth. In 2015 this education scheme introduced 65 senior high school students to Griffin - receiving free tickets to productions, reduced price tickets for friends and family, exclusive cast forums and a series of theatre craft workshops. Since 2004, students from across greater Sydney and as far as Wollongong, Goulburn, Dural, Katoomba and Terrigal have participated and in 2015 Ambassadors came from further than ever before, with students attending from as far South as Nowra and as far North as Tamworth.
- **Script Club:** In 2015 Griffin launched our inaugural Script Club. Oprah has one, ABC's Jennifer Byrne has one, now Griffin has one. The difference is, rather than books, we are rediscovering classic Australian plays then coming together for afternoon tea and engaging in a robust round-table discussion led by John McCallum - Theatre Critic for *The Australian* and Senior Lecturer in Theatre at UNSW.

*"There are many great plays in the Australian repertoire that have, mysteriously, been more or less forgotten. They still have a lot in them to excite us and to say to us, and they ought to be revived. The Script Club highlights four of these each year. It is like a tasting menu (there are many more). When you read an old play you should always ask, 'What's in it for us, now?' That is what we will be asking."* – John McCallum.

- **General auditions:** Held in May 2015.

APPENDIX 2 – COMPANY GOALS, STRATEGIES AND KPIs

GOAL ONE: DEVELOP AND STAGE THE BEST AUSTRALIAN STORIES			
STRATEGIES	PRIMARY ACTIONS		
Attract the highest quality work	Deliver Griffin Award, Lysicrates Prize, two new commissions, Griffin Studio Program, and Access and Networking programs.		
Create the best environment for developing work	Increase budget for new play readings and workshops, and continue a 5-week rehearsal process for new work.		
Collaborate with excellent and diverse creative teams	Enable senior artists to work alongside early stage artists and support new collaborations.		
Produce and present thought-provoking, inspiring theatre that questions and reflects our culture	Continue collaboration with artists from diverse cultural backgrounds to move new CALD works into first stage development.		
KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	2015 Target	2015 Actual	
<b>KPI 1: At least three new Australian works premiere in Griffin’s annual program</b>	<b>Four</b>	<b>Five</b>	<b>✓+</b>
<b>Observations:</b> All works presented as part of the main stage season in 2015 were new Australian works			
<b>KPI 2: Engage in one co-production in each year</b>	<b>One</b>	<b>Two</b>	<b>✓+</b>
<b>Observations:</b> Co-productions in 2015 included <i>Masquerade</i> with STCSA and <i>Yasukichi Murakami: Through A Distant Lens</i> with Performance 4a			
<b>KPI 3: Develop one work with a CALD playwright</b>	<b>One</b>	<b>Two</b>	<b>✓+</b>
<b>Observations:</b> Two CALD works currently in development – <i>Moths</i> by Michele Lee and <i>Cosmi Comics</i> created by Silvia Colloca, Brett Boardman and Ben Winspear			
<b>KPI 4: Raise profile of Australian Playwriting by focus on Griffin Award</b>	<b>One</b>	<b>One</b>	<b>✓</b>
<b>Observations:</b> Griffin Award staged in June 2015. The winning play, <i>The Turquoise Elephant</i> will be presented as part of the 2016 Main Season			

<b>GOAL TWO: CREATE CLEAR PATHWAYS FOR ARTISTS TO MAINSTAGE PRODUCTION</b>			
<b>STRATEGIES</b>		<b>PRIMARY ACTIONS</b>	
Provide artistic development for emerging and established artists		Provide Griffin Studio and Affiliate Director programs, a series of playwriting courses, and an Ambassadors program for years 10 -12 students provide vital skills development and mentorship, exposure to industry networks and company operations.	
Support Independent artists to create and present new work		Offer in-kind support (marketing, box office, artistic, technical and administrative services) to five teams of artists to produce work for Griffin Independent program curated around Griffin's Main Season.	
Diversify programs to engage a broad range of artists, arts practices and ideas		Maintain Griffin Studio program plus creative development of new work ( <i>Cosmic Comics</i> in 2015) to enable Griffin to engage with new artists in a process to create work that integrates multiple art forms.	
<b>KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS</b>		<b>2015 Target</b>	<b>2015 Actual</b>
<b>KPI 5: Fund four Griffin Studio residents each year</b>		<b>Four</b>	<b>Four</b> ✓
<b>Observations:</b> From the four Studio residents in 2015 – Guy Edmonds and Matt Zeremes (Boomshaka Film), Kim Hardwick, Karen Therese and David Williams – three will have work presented with Griffin in 2016/2017.			
<b>KPI 6: Support at least one Affiliate Director per main stage Griffin Production</b>		<b>Four</b>	<b>Two</b> ✗
<b>Observations:</b> The Affiliate program originally was open to NIDA Directing graduates. In 2015 this program was opened out to all recent directing graduates. Due to the timing of this change only two positions were filled in 2015, one on <i>The House on the Lake</i> and one on <i>The Bleeding Tree</i>			
<b>KPI 7: Facilitate the Ambassador Program</b>		<b>One</b>	<b>One</b> ✓
<b>Observations:</b> 70 students were involved in the Ambassador program in 2015			
<b>KPI 8: Produce a season of work by Independent theatre-makers</b>		<b>Four</b>	<b>Five</b> ✓+
<b>Observations:</b> Five works supported as part of Griffin Independent – <i>The Unspoken Word Is Joe</i> (MKA: Theatre of New Writing), <i>Five Properties of Chainmale</i> (Arts Radar), <i>The Dapto Chaser</i> (Apocalypse Theatre Company), <i>MinusOneSister</i> (Stories Like These), <i>A Riff on Keef: The Human Myth</i> (Ocelot Productions)			

GOAL THREE: REACH THE WIDEST POSSIBLE AUDIENCE			
STRATEGIES	PRIMARY ACTIONS		
Promote flexible ticketing offers that target a range of markets	Offer a range of ticket and subscription to various audience segments, including a low price digital Earlybird subscription, supported by implementation of a new ticketing and CRM system.		
Tour the company's work	Tour <i>Masquerade</i> to Adelaide and Melbourne and <i>The Witches</i> to eight venues across three states.		
Strengthen market awareness of the Griffin brand	Continue work with design and branding partner RE:, a subsidiary of M&C Saatchi. Marketing team to expand social media framework.		
Conduct research and collect data to better understand our audience	Conducted audience surveys in 2015, including a general survey to the entire data base. Increase level of (volunteer) data analyst services.		
Research digital engagement	Develop a new website and engage a digital content producer. Marketing team to continue developing a digital engagement policy.		
KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	2015 Target	2015 Actual	
<b>KPI 9: Increase Subscribers annually by 5%</b>	5%	1.5%	×
<b>Observations:</b> While the 5% growth target for total subscriber numbers (1760) was not reached, subscriber numbers did increase by 1.5%, to total 1,703. Growth has increased in the 2016 season.			
<b>KPI 10: Increase paid attendance to 70% of capacity by the end of 2016</b>	69%	70%	✓+
<b>Observations:</b> Paid attendance increased to 70% for Main Season shows in 2015, ahead of the "end of 2016" target date			
<b>KPI 11: Secure one regional or national tour</b>	One	Two	✓+
<b>Observations:</b> <i>The Witches</i> toured nationally to Western Australia, Tasmania and regional NSW. <i>Masquerade</i> toured to Adelaide and Melbourne			
<b>KPI 12: Increase digital reach by 20% by the end of 2016</b>	Ongoing	Ongoing	!
<b>Observations:</b> New website development and engagement of a digital content producer postponed until 2016/2017 - On target to meet the 2016 KPI			

<b>GOAL FOUR: BE THE BEST ARTS BUSINESS IN AUSTRALIA</b>			
<b>STRATEGIES</b>		<b>PRIMARY ACTIONS</b>	
Ensure an active and engaged board		Board to meet at regular 6-weekly intervals and be actively engaged in recruitment of staff and strategic planning. Finance and fundraising sub-committees meet more regularly to develop strategies and monitor performance.	
Ensure optimal staffing structure, clearly defined roles and professional development opportunities		Maintain a stable permanent staffing structure while responding to strategic priorities and increasing efficiency, productivity and job sustainability.	
Optimise the company's diverse income streams		Focus on consolidating the core company operations, evaluating the effectiveness of the staff structure, and reviewing bar operations. Initiate campaigns to engage both new subscribers and donors including the Lysicrates Prize.	
<b>KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS</b>		<b>2015 Target</b>	<b>2015 Actual</b>
<b>KPI 13: Board Governance Policy implemented</b>			
<b>Observations:</b> Board renewed in 2014 – ten new board members confirmed as at 31 December 2014. All board members retained in 2015.			
<b>KPI 14: Review staffing performance and organisational structure annually</b>		<b>Ongoing</b>	<b>Ongoing</b> !
<b>Observations:</b> Organisation remained stable in 2015 with permanent staffing levels staying the same at 15 (8FT and 7PT). In response to strategic priorities and new federal funding parameters Griffin has undergone a staffing restructure in 2016.			
<b>KPI 15: Increase Production Income to an average of 30% of turnover</b>		<b>30%</b>	<b>25%</b> x
<b>Observations:</b> Currently tracking for production income to be 25% of turnover at the end of 2015			
<b>KPI 16: Increase Donation and Cash Sponsorship Income by at least 10% by the end of 2016</b>		<b>10%</b>	<b>Ongoing</b> !
<b>Observations:</b> 10% increase by end of 2016 target is anticipated to be met			