

GRIFFIN THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS
THE WORLD PREMIERE OF

GLORIA
BY BENEDICT ANDREWS
26 AUGUST - 8 OCTOBER



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GLORIA

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THE WORLD PREMIERE OF

GLORIA BY BENEDICT ANDREWS 26 AUGUST - 8 OCTOBER

Director Lee Lewis
Associate Director Ben Winspear
Designer Sophie Fletcher
Lighting Designer Luiz Pampolha
Audio Visual Designer Toby Knyvett
Composer Steve Toulmin
Photographer & Videographer Brett Boardman
Stage Manager Natalie Moir
Production Coordinator Danny Oliver
Child Chaperone Elishia Semaan
With Chloe Bayliss, Kristy Best, Marta Dusseldorp, Louis Fontaine, Huw Higginson, Max Philips, Pierce Wilcox, Meyne Wyatt

SBW STABLES THEATRE
26 AUGUST - 8 OCTOBER

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Griffin acknowledges the generosity of the Seaborn, Broughton and Walford Foundation in allowing it the use of the SBW Stables Theatre rent free, less outgoings, since 1986.

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

In the final scene of Michelangelo Antonioni's psychedelic masterpiece *Zabriskie Point* (1970), a house in the Arizona desert explodes in slow motion. While Pink Floyd warbles away on the soundtrack, Antonioni shows various domestic objects – racks of clothes, outdoor dining set, fridge, colour TV etc. – blown to smithereens. Slowed right down, the destruction of these objects is hypnotic, exquisite and sublime – like abstract expressionist paintings seen on acid, or satellite images of deep space. As Pink Floyd fades out, Antonioni cuts to the blissed-out face of a young hippie woman. For her, and for Antonioni, the destruction is a gesture of ecstatic liberation. I had these repeated detonations in mind while writing *Gloria*.

My play explodes domestic drama into something prismatic, crystalline and kaleidoscopic. Realities overlap, shift and entwine, like when a Skype call breaks down into dancing pixels – which, by the way, look not unlike those slow motion explosions in *Zabriskie Point*. Boundaries between dream and life, reality and fantasy, actor and role become porous, unreliable.

Gloria contains five parts, conceived of as five separate yet interlocking plays-within-plays. The characters generally keep their names as they move across each play, but their roles shift, like Chinese Whispers. In Part One, for example, Jared is Gloria's teenage son, in Part Three, he's her co-actor backstage at a theatre, in Part Four, he's her soon to be ex-husband, and in Part Five, a sailor in the hull of a freighter. Only Gloria keeps her role – that of an actress – across the play's five parts. The play whirls around her, like the particles of that exploding house or pixels breaking apart during a Skype call.

Gloria is full of echoes, mirror realities, distorted harmonies. It digs into the borderline condition of being an actor. Night after night, onstage, we ask actors to play out experiences which, in everyday life, would send us to the madhouse or jail. Actors are like our emotional guinea pigs, researching the limits of human behaviour. They must possess the boundless play of children, the frenzied imagination of a poet, the forensic mind of a detective, as well as gigantic hearts. *Gloria* depicts an actress in the grip of an emotional breakdown. Like Myrtle Gordon, the character played by Gena Rowlands in John Cassavetes' film *Opening Night* (1977), she experiences a total collapse of role and life. The slipping boundaries between role and life influence the form of the play itself. *Gloria* is a kind of demented love song to the theatre and to actresses in particular.

Benedict Andrews
Writer

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

If I could have one wish it would be to go forward in time about 400 years in order to get enough perspective on this age to know what is actually happening to the world right now.

As Juno arrives at Jupiter and takes photos of the moons that got Galileo into so much trouble, as Pokémon GO invades our streets, as suicide bombers and mad men with guns strip away any illusion of safety around the world, as Britain prepares to leave the EU under the leadership of a new Prime Minister, as the world contemplates the possibility of a President Trump, as one woman a week dies a victim of domestic violence in Australia, it feels almost impossible to know if we are in the middle of a 200 year war or nearing the end of a 100 year war.

Gloria may well be a love song to the great women who act on our stages, who we call upon to embody the imaginative state of our nation. But the play is also a symptom of the time we are in ... a greedy time, a selfish, self-centred, vain, fearful, frantic, unstable time in which we cling so hard to anything that can make us feel connected to other people, anything that can feel real. *Gloria* is not a portrait of an actor, it is a portrait of us, one we are desperately trying to deny. Sometimes it takes an Australian on the other side of the planet to have enough distance to see us for what we are becoming.

Lee Lewis
Director