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THE ALMIGHTY SOMETIMES

GRIFFIN THEATRE COMPANY
PRESENTS

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BY KENDALL FEAVER
27 JULY – 8 SEPTEMBER



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Director Lee Lewis

Assistant Director Scarlet McGlynn

Designer Dan Potra

Lighting Designer Daniel Barber

Sound Designer/Composer Russell Goldsmith

Stage Manager Michelle Sverdlhoff

Stage Management Secondment Ella Griffin

With Penny Cook, Brenna Harding, Shiv Palekar,
Hannah Waterman

SBW Stables Theatre

Preview 27 – 31 July

Season 3 August – 8 September

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I wrote the first draft of this play back in 2012, at a time when media headlines were preoccupied with a so-called medication 'epidemic.' My generation, Gen Y, had the dubious honour of being the most medicated in history, and young people who had been diagnosed with a mood and/or behavioral disorder in childhood or adolescence had now come of age. There was little to no research, however, on the long-term effects of psychotropic medications, or any suggestion of how many of these young people were continuing their treatment into adulthood, and I wanted to write a play from the middle of this developing fault line.

Plays—especially when they're your first 'proper' one—can take a long time to reach the stage, and I was concerned that *The Almighty Sometimes* would lose its relevance while it waited for production. I needn't have worried: Anna is now comfortably Generation Z, but rates of diagnosis have continued to rise across the world. The experience is far more common in her age group than it ever was in mine.

I spoke with many young people, parents, psychiatrists, psychologists, support workers, mental health advocates and critics as part of this project. A lot of frustration was voiced, a lot of anger and resentment, a lot of conflicting advice, and identity issues abounded—"what is me and what is my medication?"—but there were also many young people who'd had their lives undoubtedly saved by medical intervention. Every experience of mental illness is different, and it would be impossible to represent all within the scope of this play, but I do hope it goes some way towards exploring the experience of growing up with a label, and the huge and often fraught responsibility of being a parent, partner or mental health professional.

Beyond the research and the headlines, however, this is a play—first and foremost—about mothers and daughters: the bickering and the too-intense-familiarity, the lack of privacy or personal space, the belly-laughs, the life-lessons imparted (whether asked for or not!), the late-night vigils by the door, the swallowed injustices, the pain we sometimes inflict and the unconditional (and somewhat unfathomable) love we receive in return.

Kendall Feaver
Writer

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

It is a pleasure to welcome *The Almighty Sometimes* to Sydney. What a journey it has been on to get here. I first met the play, and its talented playwright, through the Griffin Award shortlist. Since then, Kendall has moved to London, establishing herself there as a young writer to watch, with this play winning over audiences in Manchester at the Royal Exchange Theatre earlier this year. The theatre industry in Australia is small, so many of our playwrights need to build an international career in order to survive. I think our writers have such a unique perspective on the world, so it doesn't surprise me when their words are lapped up by audiences in other countries. But I'm also thrilled when we can bring those words back home to the SBW Stables stage.

This play is about a relationship between a mother and a daughter that is simultaneously ordinary and extraordinary. For as much as the characters' lives are shaped by Anna's illness, by questions of creativity, identity, medication and the mental health industry, the beating heart of the play is the fear that every parent has: "Am I making the right choices for my child?" This fear, which starts even before your child is born, will one day be met with the furious, accusing gaze of your young adult offspring asking in tones incredulous, self-righteous and appalled: "How could you have done that?" There is no safe or right path to follow as a parent, just as there is no guidebook for forgiving your parents for the choices they made on your behalf before you were deemed old enough to decide for yourself.

I love how hopeful this play is. Kendall Feaver is part of a new generation of playwrights creating narratives of smart hope as opposed to Disney hope; hope that is embedded in a belief in the power of community and how individual action can shape our lives; hope that we can believe in, that does not seek to deny the complexity of the daily lives we wrestle with; hope that does not offer an unearned happy ending; hope that resists the tempting undertow of nihilism and dystopia.

If the world feels overwhelmingly negative or confusing, it is in stories like this that we will find inspiration to work through the difficulties, and it is in playwrights like Kendall Feaver, writing for the world, that we will find our new generation of leadership.

And this is all before day one of rehearsal...can you tell how excited I am?

Lee Lewis
Director



Kendall Feaver

Playwright

Kendall won a Judges Award at the 2015 Bruntwood Prize for Playwriting—the largest playwriting competition in Europe—for her play, *The Almighty Sometimes*. She has previously been shortlisted for the Griffin Award, and the Max Afford Playwright's Award. *The Almighty Sometimes* was her first professional production, and it premiered in the main house at the Royal Exchange, Manchester, to critical acclaim, and will transfer to London in 2019. Kendall has been on attachment at the Bush Theatre, and twice at the National Theatre Studio. She has developed and presented work at Queen St Studios, Sydney; the Australian Theatre for Young People; Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh; Just So Festival, Cheshire; the Arcola Theatre, London; and Islington Youth Theatre, London. Kendall holds a Masters in Writing for Performance from Goldsmiths, University of London, which was supported with an Ian Potter Cultural Trust Award. She is currently under commission to Manhattan Theatre Club, New York, and is the writer (book and lyrics) of a new musical in development with the National Theatre, London.



Lee Lewis

Director

Lee is the Artistic Director of Griffin Theatre Company and one of Australia's leading directors. For Griffin she has directed: *The Bleeding Tree* (Best Director at the 2016 Helpmann Awards), *Kill Climate Deniers*, *Gloria*, *Eight Gigabytes of Hardcore Pornography*, *The Homosexuals or 'Faggots'*, *Rice, Masquerade* (co-directed with Sam Strong), *Emerald City*, *A Rabbit for Kim Jong-il*, *The Serpent's Table* (co-directed with Darren Yap), *Replay*, *Silent Disco*, *Smurf In Wonderland*, *The Bull*, *The Moon and the Coronet of Stars*, *The Call*, *A Hoax*, *The Nightwatchman*. Other directing credits include: for Griffin and Bell Shakespeare: *The Literati*; for Bell Shakespeare: *The School for Wives*, *Twelfth Night*; for Belvoir: *That Face*, *This Heaven*, *Half and Half*, *A Number*, *7 Blowjob*s, *Ladybird*; for Hayes Theatre Company: *Darlinghurst Nights*; for Melbourne Theatre Company: *Gloria*, *Hay Fever* and David Williamson's *Rupert*, which toured to Washington DC as part of the World Stages International Arts Festival and to Sydney's Theatre Royal in 2014; for Sydney Theatre Company: *Honour*, *Love-Lies-Bleeding*, *ZEBRA!*; for Darwin Festival: *Highway of Lost Hearts*.



Scarlet McGlynn

Assistant Director

Scarlet is an award-winning director and dramaturge who has worked professionally both in Australia and the UK. Her theatre credits include: as Director: for Griffin: *Glimpse* with Jonathan Hindmarsh (Batch Festival); The Lysicrates Prize (staged readings); for Critical Stages: *Hooting & Howling*; for La Boite Indie: *Show Me Yours, I'll Show You Mine*, which won a Green Room Award at the Melbourne Fringe; for Sydney Theatre Company: *Hooting and Howling* (Rough Draft Program); for Tin Shed Theatre Company: *You and Whose Army*, *Boxing Day*; as Writer/Director: for Rock Surfers Theatre Company: *Future Senior/Former Youth*; as Assistant Director: for Sydney Theatre Company: *Disgraced*, *Storm Boy*, *Switzerland*; as National Tour Director: for Sydney Theatre Company: *Disgraced*. Scarlet is currently on the Women in Theatre Program at MTC and is Artist in Residence at Critical Stages.



Dan Potra

Designer

Dan is a design graduate of NIDA and works across the full spectrum of the arts, designing sets, costumes, concepts and animation for opera, theatre, large-scale events, dance and film. International opera and theatre credits include: as Designer: for AC Orange International: *Double It*; for Circus Cirkor/Folkoperan: *Satyagraha*; for Coruna Festival (Spain): *Idomeneo*; for Folkoperan (Sweden): *Hoffmann's Adventure*; for the Houston Grand Opera: *The Barber of Seville*; for the National Theatre of Greece: *Cyrano de Bergerac*; for Opera North and Opera de Lorraine (UK/France): *The Portrait*; for the Royal Swedish Opera: *Askungen, Dracula*; for Seattle Opera: *Le Comte D'Ory*; for Southbank London: *Sweeney Todd*; for St Gallen Opera (Switzerland): *A Streetcar Named Desire, Norma*; for Teatro Real/English National Opera: *The Perfect American*; and as Costume and Projection Designer: for Global Creatures/Dreamworks: *How To Train Your Dragon*. Australian opera and theatre credits include: for Andrew McManus in association with Alexander Productions: *Dead Man Walking*, for which Dan was awarded the Helpmann for Best Scenic Design; for Opera Australia: *La Bohème; The Eighth Wonder; Turandot*; and for The Production Company: *Jesus Christ Superstar*. Dan has designed many large-scale sporting and cultural events, include designing the now famous *Deep Sea Dreaming* and *Tin Symphony* segments in the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games Opening Ceremony. Dan has received six Helpmann Award nominations for his design work in opera and theatre in Australia, of which he has won three.



Daniel Barber

Lighting Designer

Daniel discovered lighting at the age of 12 and has set his mind to professionalism ever since. Lighting Designer credits include: for Griffin: *Robyn Archer*; for Adelaide Fringe: *An Evening with Annabel Crabb*; for Biddigal Performing Arts: *Biddigal Dreaming, Ngali Guman*; for Darlinghurst Theatre Company: *Remembering Pirates*; for Insite Arts at Adelaide Festival: *The Country*; for Popjam Productions: *Mother, Wife and the Complicated Life*; for Sport For Jove: *Cyrano De Bergerac*; for State Opera of South Australia: *Il Segretto di Susanna/Bluebeard's Castle, The Magic Flute*; for Stories Like These: *Blink*; and as Associate Lighting Designer: for Griffin: *The Turquoise Elephant*; for Belvoir: *Faith Healer*.



Russell Goldsmith

Sound Designer/Composer

Russell Goldsmith is a multiple award-winning Sound Designer, Composer, Installation Artist, Audio Producer, Audio System Designer and Educator. He has a diverse body of work in theatre, dance, film, television, commercial and radio production, live music and installation art. As Sound Designer/Composer, Russell has worked nationally and internationally: for Malthouse/Company B Belvoir: *Exit The King* (dir. Neil Armfield), for which Russell was awarded the Sydney Theatre Award for Best Sound Design and Composition, and nominated in the same category in the 2007 Green Room Awards; and at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre (Broadway): *Exit The King*, for which Russell was nominated for a Tony Award for Best Sound Design. Russell has been involved in a number of cross-platform works, including: for Next Wave Festival: *Panic*; for RMIT: *Echo Chamber*; for White Night Melbourne/ City of Melbourne: *Rosie's Secret*; and, internationally: for BBC London: *A Packet of Seeds*. Russell has received nominations for seven Green Room Awards.



Michelle Sverdloff

Stage Manager

Michelle is a theatre-maker, producer and stage manager. Her stage management credits include: for Bell Shakespeare: *The Players* (in-school performances); for Bontom Entertainment: *Chamber Pot Opera*; for Erth Visual & Physical Inc. for Vivid Festival: *The Liminal Hour*; for Heartbeat Opera NYC: Heartbeat Opera Festival; for Jack Arts NYC: *The Geneva Project*; for Northern Rivers Performing Arts: *Railway Wonderland*; for Punchdrunk Theatre Company: *Sleep No More*. Michelle has also completed professional secondments at Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, Mullum Circus Festival and Belvoir. She graduated with a Bachelor of Communication (Theatre/Media) from Charles Sturt University in 2014.



Ella Griffin

Stage Management Secondment

Ella is a Sydney-based Stage Manager and Sound Designer. As Assistant Stage Manager, Ella's theatre credits include: for Blue Saint Productions: *Violet*; and various productions for Packemin Theatre Company and for Willoughby Theatre Company. Ella is currently completing the final year of her degree in Technical Theatre and Stage Management at NIDA.



Penny Cook

Vivienne

Penny Cook is a graduate of NIDA. Penny has been involved in over 40 theatrical productions, including: for Griffin: *The Ginger Man*; *Cheap Thrills*, *The Father We Loved On A Beach By The Sea*, *Us Or Them*, *Border Country*; for Ensemble Theatre: *I Ought To Be In Pictures*, *Ladies in Lavender*; for GFO: *An Ideal Husband* (Australian tour), *Footloose*; for Hunter Valley Theatre Company: *Macbeth*; for IAJ Performing Arts Orchestra: *Oklahoma!*; for Queensland Theatre: *The Heidi Chronicles*; for Sydney Theatre Company: *Away*; for Toe Truck at Seymour Centre: *Hating Alison Ashley*. Although probably best known as Vicky the Vet in *A Country Practice* (Seven Network), other television credits include: for ABC: *Dance Academy*; *G.P.*, *Rake*, *Pulse*; for Network Ten: *E Street*; *Good Morning Australia*, *Neighbours*; *The Restless Years*; for Nine Network: *The Flying Doctors*, *Young Lions*; for Seven Network: *All Saints*, *The Great Outdoors*, *Tonight Live with Steve Vizard*. She is a co-founder and life member of Griffin and Chair of Monkey Baa Theatre Company.



Brenna Harding

Anna

One of Australia's most exciting young actors, Brenna Harding is best known for her role in the hit television series *Puberty Blues*. Brenna's theatre credits include: for Griffin: *The Bleeding Tree* (2018 tour); for Lume Productions: *The Gulf*; for Melbourne Theatre Company/Sydney Theatre Company: *Jumpy*; for Redline: *The Wolves*. Brenna's television credits include: for ABC: *The Code* (Season 2); *My Place*; for Netflix: *Black Mirror*; for Network Ten: *Puberty Blues*, for which Brenna was awarded a Logie for Most Popular New Female Talent, the Graham Kennedy Award for Most Outstanding New Talent, and the AACTA Award for Best Young Actor; for the Seven Network: *A Place To Call Home*, *Packed To The Rafters*; for Showcase on Foxtel: *Secret City*. Brenna's film credits include: *Cockleshell*, as part of the feature film collaboration *The Turning*. Brenna is also a co-founder of all-female production company Lume Productions, along with Mia Lethbridge and Diana Popovska, and in 2015 founded the Sydney-based feminist group Moonlight Feminists.



Shiv Palekar

Oliver

Shiv was born in Mumbai and raised in Hong Kong. A graduate of both Hong Kong's Zen Zen Zo Physical Theatre Company's six-month internship and Sydney's NIDA, he has trained for several years in Butoh and The Suzuki Method of Actor Training. Shiv's theatrical credits include: for Bell Shakespeare: *The Players*, *The Merchant of Venice*; for NIDA: Writing for Performance: *A Personal View*, *Cymbeline*, *In The Blood*, *Kasimir & Karoline*; for Sydney Theatre Company: *Disgraced*; and for the Corinthian Food Store Collective, of which he is an associate artist: *This, This Is Mine*. Shiv's film credits include: *Granny*, *The Green House*, and *Picking Up*. Television credits include: for the ABC: *Cleverman*, *Growing Up Gracefully*. *The Almighty Sometimes* marks Shiv's debut at Griffin Theatre Company.



Hannah Waterman

Renee

Hannah began her career with the National Youth Theatre of Great Britain and went on to star in a wide variety of British television shows and stage productions. From 2004, Hannah toured the UK and appeared on the West End with a variety of shows including: for Anvil Arts: *Calendar Girls* (tour and West End); *Tom, Dick and Harry* (West End); *Strangers on a Train* (tour), *Vagina Monologues* (London and tour); for Stephen Joseph Theatre: *Soap*; and *Abigail's Party* (tour). Hannah's Australian theatre credits include: for CDP Theatre Producers at Sydney Opera House: *Mr Stink*; for Christine Harris and HIT Productions: *Love Letters* (tour); for Ensemble Theatre: *The Kitchen Sink*; for Hayes Theatre Company: *Side Show*; for the Old Fitz: *The Whale*; for Sydney Theatre Company: *Talk*. Hannah's film credits include *Patient 17*. Hannah's television credits include: for BBC: *Come Fly With Me*, *Dangerfield*, *Doctors*, *New Tricks*, *Patient 17*; for ITV: *Peak Practice*; for London Weekend Television: *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. In 2000, Hannah joined the cast of the British soap opera *EastEnders* (BBC) where she remained for four and a half years, appearing in over 400 episodes. *The Almighty Sometimes* marks Hannah's debut at Griffin Theatre Company.