

GRIFFIN THEATRE COMPANY 2018 ANNUAL REPORT

Prepared by Karen Rodgers, General Manager

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OPERATIONAL REPORT

Griffin's 2018 season was a huge success on many levels. At the SBW Stables Theatre we presented four new Main Season works and co-presented one Main Season show, *The Misanthrope*, with Bell Shakespeare at Sydney Opera House. Four of our Main Season productions exceeded targets and paid attendance reached an average of 76% across Main Season shows.

The Main Season in 2018 was complemented by four Special Events including *Fag Stag* from Western Australian company *The Last Great Hunt* and Hannie Rayson's *Hello Beautiful*, toured by Performing Lines. We presented six sold-out shows of *Shabbat Dinner* by Jessica Bellamy and *The Smallest Hour*, a new comedic work created by Phil Spencer and Susie Youssef specifically for the Griffin stage. All of these seasons provided an opportunity for Griffin to work with new companies and artists whilst welcoming new audiences to the Stables.

In 2018 Griffin hosted ATYP at the Stables. Across the year, ATYP presented three seasons of new Australian work by and for young people, playing to a total audience of 3,887 people.

2018 also saw the inaugural Batch Festival presented at Griffin. Curated by Artistic Associate Phil Spencer and Associate Producer Nicole La Bianca, this new festival provided a platform for independent storytellers, poets, comedy artists and non-traditional performance makers to access the Stables stage. 2,057 tickets were sold across 36 ticketed performances plus two immersive non-ticketed installations with engagement of another 120 audience members across 12 festival nights. We utilised four performance spaces (three on site and one off site) and engaged 59 artists. Two of the works presented as part of Batch Festival, *Since Ali Died* by Omar Musa and *Love and Anger* by Betty Grumble, went on to be programmed as Special Events in our 2019 program.

2018 also saw a hugely successful tour of Angus Cerini's *The Bleeding Tree*, travelling to Canberra Theatre Centre, Melbourne Arts Centre and Geelong Performing Arts Centre. The play won four Green Room awards including Best Ensemble, Best Writing/Adaptation and Best Director. *The Almighty Sometimes* toured to Geelong Performing Arts Centre, signaling a presenting partnership with GPAC that both organisations are interested to explore in the future.

In 2018 we once again presented the Lysicrates Prize, a playwriting competition that provides opportunities to established writers and introduces new audiences to Australian theatre. The winner of the 2018 prize was Travis Cotton for *Starfish*. We also partnered with National Theatre of Parramatta and the Lysicrates Foundation for the second year on the Martin Lysicrates Prize, a playwriting competition focused on new work for children aged between 8 to 12 years of age. The winner of the 2018 award was Brendan Hogan for *Farewell Mr Nippy!* In its 20th year, the 2018 Griffin Award winner was Suzie Miller for *Prima Facie*, which was included in the 2019 Main Season program.

Audience development initiatives included *Griffin Up Late*, a program utilising the theatre space to present alternative acts such as music, comedy and storytelling; *Griffin Scratch*, a new component of the Griffin Studio program, which enabled us to bring six new artists into the company to take part in a development and presentation of new writing; and Script Club, now in its fourth year, which provided vital platforms for artists and a vibrant cultural hub for audiences. We also continued captioned performances for our Main Season productions, increasing audience accessibility. We presented short courses and workshops including *Between the Lines* and *Page to Stage*.

Our new website was launched in 2018 and has received excellent feedback from both customers and our industry peers. This new platform has improved user experience across all areas of the website including access to purchase both subscription packages and single tickets as well as promoting the Griffin brand in a new and vibrant online environment that complements our social media presence.

All of these projects are indicative of the 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 new and diverse audiences.

In 2018, Griffin subscriber numbers reached 1,588—a small decrease of 2%, measured on average over the past three years. We have maintained subscriber retention at 57%.

Around 23,500 patrons visited the Stables throughout the year. Outside of the Stables, Griffin Theatre Company productions reached an audience of over 15,000 people. Importantly, paid attendance was maintained at 76% of capacity for Main Season shows, with four of the Main Season productions exceeding their targets, while expenditure was contained within budget.

This success was also evident for Griffin Special Events and Batch Festival. Four Special Events and Batch Festival were staged in 2018, with the average paid capacity increasing to 68%, playing to an audience of over 5,500.

The sponsorship and donations total reached \$1,112,514 in 2018, representing a 17.5% increase over the last three years. The company continued to implement development programs throughout the year, including the End of Financial Year campaign and new fundraising initiatives, ensuring continued donor and foundation support. New fundraising and sponsorship opportunities will be investigated with an eye to continue to diversify revenue streams.

For the year ended 31 December 2018, Griffin generated an operating deficit of -\$28,795 (compared to an operating surplus of \$18,290 in 2017). The company's reserves decreased from \$307,491 at 31 December 2017 to \$278,696 at 31 December 2018. This deficit is a reflection of the Company attempting to deliver on our core mission while responding to the 30% reduction in the funding we had previously received.

Overall, Griffin's turnover reached \$3,001,882, an increase of 4% on the 2017 year (2,880,618). Griffin's retained earnings of \$248,321 represent 8% of turnover.

2018 OPERATIONS SUMMARY – KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Strategic Directions & Actions	Outcomes
1: Champion the Best Australian Stories	
Curate a season of at least 5 Australian works	12
Premier at least 3 new Australian plays in Griffin's annual Main Season	5
Invest in 5 -week rehearsals for all Main Season works	5 @ 4weeks
Achieve at least 3 award nominations	15
2: Lead artistic thought and conversation	
Engage nationally with writers, artists and audiences	Ongoing
Run at least 2 national playwriting competitions	3
Deliver workshops, presentations, audience participation events	Achieved (8 key offerings)
3: Provide relevant and accessible opportunities	
Produce the Ambassadors program for high school students	Achieved (109 participants)
Create opportunities for emerging theatre makers to present work at the Stables	6
Mentor artists and at least 1 Affiliate Director on a Main Season Griffin production	1
Provide opportunities for Griffin Studio residents on an annual basis	2
Conduct open auditions annually	Achieved (70 auditionees)
Develop 1 work per year with a CALD playwright	1
4: Grow connections and deepen relationships	
Engage in at least 1 co-production each year	1
Achieve a combined average of 70% paid attendance across all Main Season shows	Achieved (76% average)
Present 1 regional or national tour	4
Increase reach of 'owned' digital platforms annually by 2%	Ongoing
5: Operate an outstanding, sustainable business.	
Review Board Governance Policy (annual)	Achieved
Review staffing performance and organisational structure (annual)	Achieved
Best practice of negotiating and contracting with Artists (audited)	Achieved
Develop strategies for Aboriginal employment	Ongoing
Grow donation and cash sponsorship income by 2% pa (<i>against 2016 baseline value</i>)	17.5%

Performance Key:

Target Exceeded 

Target Met 

On-going 

Target Unmet 

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S REPORT

2018 was an artistically vibrant year for Griffin Theatre Company. Despite the impact of financial challenges, the reach of our work has never been greater, the range of storytelling was impressive and the intensity of audience response was inspiring. It was a year that created five new works in our Main Season, presented four works in our Special Events program, invented Batch Festival to showcase independent artists, sent out three tours nationally, held three award competitions, hosted two artists in the Griffin Studio program, extended our hours with a late night program, launched a new website, navigated a new and leaner administrative structure and welcomed ATYP into the Stables. There is no such thing as a small year at Griffin.

Significantly, 2018 saw Griffin providing an important platform for new and emerging voices. Four of our Main Season plays were the first professional productions for playwrights David Finnigan, Brooke Robinson, Kendall Feaver and Nick Coyle. Of these, three received nominations in the Best New Australian Play category at the Sydney Theatre Awards and one, *The Almighty Sometimes*, has been nominated and awarded around the world, most recently receiving the Nick Enright Prize for Playwriting at the NSW Premier's Literary Awards, and the Victorian Premier's Literary Award. It's not all about the awards of course; it's about new and original Australian voices connecting with audience. Their voices are urgent, their skill evident, their ambition impressive and Griffin was able to give a home to their first professional experience of play making. All of them are writing their next plays.

Griffin's dedication to finding new writing voices and offering them pathways towards the professional stage was very publicly visible in 2018 as our awards, late night programs, and Scratch process all fed directly into the creation of Batch Festival; which in turn fed into our 2019 Special Events program. Audiences thrilled to the provocative talents of artists like Omar Musa and Betty Grumble in Batch and showed their excitement by including these artists in their 2019 subscription packages.

Griffin has the best audience for new writing in the country. The Special Events program allowed us to include the writing of Chris Isaacs and Jeffrey Jay Fowler, Hannie Rayson, Jessica Bellamy and Phil Spencer and Susie Youssef in the breadth of storytelling of the 2018 program. Obviously Griffin's ambition to nurture and promote Australian playwriting goes way beyond our Main Season and 2018 was a great example of how we interweave our core business of mainstage production with our vision to create a centre for Australian playwriting by inviting developing and experimental artists into the Stables to connect to our adventurous, diverse and highly literate audience.

Highlights of the year must include the work we did in taking new Australian work out of the Stables to Sydney Opera House with Bell Shakespeare for *The Misanthrope* by Justin Fleming, to Canberra, Melbourne and Geelong for *The Bleeding Tree* by Angus Cerini, and to Geelong for *The Almighty Sometimes* by Kendall Feaver. It is a joy to see audiences in different venues thrilling to the experience of excellent new Australian writing and it is a real pleasure working with other companies and venues to build their confidence in producing new Australian work. The relationships built by our touring and co-productions in 2018 were significant and will see more work travelling in years to come.

The four main challenges of the year stemmed directly from the reduced funding environment:

- Staging new works with no budget for development prior to the rehearsal increases the risk to the artists of significant public disappointment, critical negativity and personal doubt. Without even the funds to read the works aloud with professional actors before the rehearsal process there is more pressure to employ established directors, thereby limiting opportunities for new directors. It increases the pressure on all creative departments significantly as there is greater likelihood of major changes to the script during rehearsal. It also increases the likelihood of going over budget as we respond to those changes.
- Programming future seasons is made more complicated without having any commissioning money to offer to playwrights who cannot afford to write without financial support. The pipeline of diverse voices has been substantially compromised.
- There is increased pressure on the company to fill the gap left by the funding cuts with more funding from philanthropy, corporate and foundation sponsorship. But with a reduced staff, increasing our philanthropic

processes has been difficult, and in the current age of huge capital works by larger companies the pool of private money is difficult to access and convince. Keeping our philanthropic conversations centred on supporting art and artists rather than capital works is imperative.

- Our ability to participate fully in national conversations is limited by our lack of funding to travel. As the industry faces challenges such as those discussed at the Safe Theatres Forum it is essential that Griffin be able to lead conversations about the specific issues in the creation of new work as we have specialist experience to bring to the table. If we cannot afford to be at the table, our institutional knowledge is wasted.

The challenges are not overwhelming – they are providing the entire company with experience in restructuring our processes, recalibrating our expectations and inventing ways to economise. The enthusiasm of the company for the work we do and the artists we work with remains undiminished. Indeed, with a need to focus and refine our core mission has come a greater understanding of our function and importance in the artistic community, the arts ecology, and the national project of leading conversations about our cultural future. The relationships between Griffin and other companies are much stronger and our communications with the artistic community are better than they have ever been.

The artistic success of the company in 2018 should be celebrated, and the detailed learning gained from functioning well in a difficult environment should not be undervalued, as it will serve the company and everyone working at Griffin well in the future.

2018 ARTISTIC SUMMARY

MAIN STAGE PROGRAMME – SBW STABLES					
	Number of Performances	Total Audience	% Attendance		
			Tickets		Income
			Paid (KPI = 70%)	Total	vs.Target
KILL CLIMATE DENIERS BY DAVID FINNIGAN 23 FEBRUARY – 7 APRIL	42	3,762	83%	95%	109%
GOOD COOK. FRIENDLY. CLEAN. BY BROOKE ROBINSON 4 MAY – 16 JUNE	44	3,034	64%	75%	86%
THE ALMIGHTY SOMETIMES BY KENDALL FEAVER 27 JULY – 8 SEPTEMBER	45	3,893	84%	93%	118%
THE FEATHER IN THE WEB BY NICK COYLE 5 OCTOBER – 17 NOVEMBER	45	3,331	75%	83%	93%
SPECIAL EVENTS					
THE MISANTHROPE BY JUSTIN FLEMING AFTER MOLIÈRE PLAYHOUSE, SOH 28 AUGUST – 28 SEPTEMBER	34	9,484	NA	NA	NA
FAG STAG THE LAST GREAT HUNT 10 – 27 JANUARY	18	1,320	61%	75%	90%
BATCH FESTIVAL 11 – 28 APRIL	32	2,057	52%	61%	91%
HELLO BEAUTIFUL PERFORMING LINES 9-14 JULY	8	562	61%	74%	86%
SHABBAT DINNER JESSICA BELLAMY 10 – 15 SEPTEMBER	6	609	90%	102%	129%
THE SMALLEST HOUR PHIL SPENCER AND SUSIE YOUSSEF 5 – 15 DECEMBER	12	1,003	75%	84%	117%
ATYP INTERSECTION IMPENDING EVERYONE CHARLIE PILGRIM	52	3,887	NA	NA	NA
TOURING THE BLEEDING TREE CANBERRA THEATRE CENTRE, MELBOURNE ARTS CENTRE, GEELONG PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE	17	4,463	NA	NA	NA
TOURING THE ALMIGHTY SOMETIMES GEELONG PERFORMING ARTS	4	821	NA	NA	NA

ARTIST DEVELOPMENT

Griffin Studio

The aim of the Studio is to establish career pathways for artists and to further contribute to the canon of great Australian plays developed and staged at Griffin. In 2018 the Studio artists were Caleb Lewis and Meyne Wyatt. Both Caleb and Meyne developed new scripts during the year with Meyne's play *City Of Gold* being programmed as part of the 2019 Main Season program. The additional Studio Program, Scratch, also went ahead, enabling Griffin to bring six new artists into the company to take part in a development and presentation of new writing.

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 with 116 submissions received in 2018. The award in 2018 went to Suzie Miller for *Prima Facie*, which will be presented as part of the Griffin 2019 Main Stage program.

The Lysicrates Prize and the Martin Lysicrates Prize

The Lysicrates 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 are then rehearsed over three days before a staged reading is held in front of an audience. The audience votes for the winner, who receives a full commission from Griffin (\$15,000) 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. In 2018, 32 submissions were received. The winner, voted by the audience members, was Travis Cotton's *Starfish*.

In 2017 we also collaborated with the Lysicrates Foundation and the National Theatre of Parramatta on the Martin Lysicrates Prize. This prize, in the same format as the Lysicrates Prize, celebrates the best new Australian writing for children aged 8-12. The event was held at Riverside Theatres, Parramatta and the audience on the day (only the school children in the audience got to vote) voted Brendan Hogan's *Farewell Mr Nippy!* as the winner. Brendan received a full commission to complete the script. The two runners-up received a cash prize of \$1,000. This prize provided a great opportunity for Griffin to not only work with the National Theatre of Parramatta but also to develop new work targeted specifically at families and children.

EDUCATION AND ACCESS

Griffin aims to ensure it remains an accessible company for artists and audiences. The following initiatives, additional activities and support programs were offered throughout 2018 to encourage participation and access points:

Griffin Ambassadors

In 2018 this education scheme introduced 109 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, Bathurst and Terrigal have participated in this highly successful audience development initiative.

Script Club

In 2018 Griffin continued its Script Club where participants read classic Australian plays then come together for afternoon tea and a robust round-table discussion led by John McCallum, academic and theatre critic for *The Australian*.

General Auditions

These were held in November 2018, in order to give new and emerging actors who are passionate about Australian plays access to Griffin.

PRODUCTION ONE

KILL CLIMATE DENIERS
BY DAVID FINNIGAN

“Because revolution is better at night.”

What would it actually take to stop climate change dead in its tracks? Guns? Revolution? A pumping soundtrack?

Kill Climate Deniers centres on a militant cell of eco-activists that takes the audience hostage during a concert at Parliament House. Led by charismatic spokeswoman Catch, they demand Australia immediately cease all carbon emissions and coal exports—or they’ll start executing their 1,700 hostages.

But they’re not the only ones to take the title literally. Between scenes of bloody action and banging ‘90s tunes, writer David Finnigan discusses the outrage the play’s title provoked from Andrew Bolt and his cabal of conservative bloggers. The original production was shut down in the ensuing shitstorm, leading Finnigan to eventually fold the scandal into the play.

Lee Lewis will direct this controversial take on the climate change ‘debate’ in Australia. It’s a play within a play, an action film inside a documentary, a satire inside a rave. It is the kind of play the major theatre companies can’t put on. It’s why Griffin exists.

It’s *Kill Bill* meets Tim Flannery, and it’s all true. The science is real. The media fracas is real. Only the blood is fake. No one dies...at least, not yet. Come join the party.

Director Lee Lewis

Designer Jonathan Hindmarsh

Lighting Designer Trent Suidgeest

Sound Designer Steve Toulmin

Audio Visual Designer Toby Knyvett

Stage Manager Khym Scott

With Eden Falk, Sheridan Harbridge, Emily Havea, Rebecca Massey, Lucia Mastrantone

Preview 23 – 28 February

Opening Nights 1 & 2 March

Season 3 March – 7 April

Outcomes

Kill Climate Deniers was presented at the Stables for a six-week season of 42 performances to an audience of 3,762. The show achieved 83% paid attendance and 95% total attendance and exceeded its box office target by 109%.

Critical Response

“...a highly inventive production – a fast and furious eco-satire, with rapid-fire gags, clever staging and one of the best soundtracks to reach a Sydney stage. ” ★★★★★ Joyce Morgan, [Sydney Morning Herald](#)

“We don’t often get to see direct political comedy on our stages, or plays that marry the silly with the deeply urgent, and *Kill Climate Deniers* hits that sweet-spot, filling a Sydney theatre void you may not have realised was empty in the first place.” ★★★★★ Cassie Tongue, [Time Out](#)

“...brilliantly mischievous and multi-layered...There’s no way you could put together a spectacular large-scale action drama on the tiny Griffin stage, right? Wrong. They do.” John McCallum, [The Australian](#)

“...an audacious and often hilarious enterprise that may upset and offend in order to make a whole range of people stop and think and take a good hard look at themselves. In that alone it’s remarkable and as an entertainment, it’s a most ridiculous and ridiculously clever script and production.” Diana Simmonds, [StageNoise](#)

“Undeniably brilliant.” Judith Greenaway, [Sydney Arts Guide](#)

“Director Lee Lewis brings a wildness to proceedings that captivate with a caustic energy...the experience it provides is unforgettably exhilarating. It is theatre that grabs you and throws you around, impressive in its inexhaustible capacity to keep us fascinated.” Suzy Wrong, [Suzy Goes See](#)

“You can see the years of hard sweat and tears that have gone into the show. It was well worth it.” Frank Hatherley, [Stage Whispers](#)

“Massey and Harbridge are a violently funny comic team. Mastrantone is contrastingly real and fiery as Finnigan’s blue-collar terrorist.” Jason Blake, [Audrey Journal](#)

PRODUCTION TWO

GOOD COOK. FRIENDLY. CLEAN. BY BROOKE ROBINSON

Where do you go when you don’t have a home?

Coming home one night, Sandra learns she has two weeks to move out. It’s nothing personal, her housemates just have a friend who needs somewhere to stay. No choice but to pack up and find another sharehouse. But Sandra is in her 50s. And affordable places are hard to find in the ruthless Sydney rental market. In one interview after another, she contorts herself into the shape of what she thinks people want in a housemate. But with each rejection she becomes increasingly desperate, losing control of her life in frighteningly simple ways.

Brooke Robinson has written an unflinching examination of homelessness, asking how willing we are, as a society, to take care of our most vulnerable. As the housing crisis worsens, what happens to people like Sandra – to those who don’t own a home, who are getting older and don’t have family to fall back on?

Funny until it’s not, *Good Cook. Friendly. Clean.* is a devastating portrait of someone slipping through the cracks. It’s not a comfortable play—it’s a critical one. And under the direction of Marion Potts, looking away is not an option.

Director Marion Potts

Designer Melanie Liertz

Lighting Designer Alexander Berlage

Sound Designer & Composer Nate Edmonson

Stage Manager Khym Scott

With Fayssal Bazzi, Tara Morice, Kelly Paterniti

Preview 4 – 8 May

Opening Nights 9 & 10 May

Season 11 May – 16 June

Outcomes

Good Cook. Friendly. Clean. was presented at the Stables for a six-week season of 44 performances to an audience of 3,034. The show achieved 64% paid attendance and 75% total attendance, with box office target reaching 86% of target.

Critical Response

“Directed with a steady, compassionate hand by Marion Potts, Tara Morice’s Sandra is the centre of the play and you can’t look away from her for a second.” ★★☆☆ Cassie Tongue, [Time Out](#)

“The cast is a blessing: Tara Morice can do more with a look and prolonged silence than many can do with a full soliloquy, while Fayssal Bazzi and Kelly Paterniti are abundantly talented and able to carry off their various and wildly diverse characters and the weight of the action...*Good Cook, Friendly, Clean* should be at the top of your “to do” list.” Diana Simmonds, [Stage Noise](#)

“Playwright Robinson has identified something so ugly but so accurate, about modern Australia, and the reflection she offers up through the mirror of her play, is so hideous, it is almost unbearable to watch. We do of course, find ourselves mesmerised by the car crash scenario, a human catastrophe unfolding before our eyes, powerfully directed by Marion Potts who never once lets us off the hook.” Suzy Wrong, [Suzy Goes See](#)

“...an electric performance from Morice.” Jason Blake, [Audrey Journal](#)

THE ALMIGHTY SOMETIMES
BY KENDALL FEAVER

“If an illness doesn’t kill you, it’s supposed to go away.”

Anna has been medicated for a range of mood and behavioural disorders for as long as she can remember. Now she wants to know what life would be like without pills and prescriptions. More fulfilling? More exciting? More real?

As Anna tries to find out who she really is, her mother, Renee (played by Hannah Waterman), remains determined to protect her. She can’t bear to watch her daughter go through the anguish all over again, to throw it all away for a personal experiment—but Anna’s treatment is no longer her decision.

Winner of the Judges’ Award in the prestigious Bruntwood Prize for Playwriting (UK), Kendall Feaver’s captivating play is a profound and compelling study of a young woman trying to discover where her illness ends and her identity begins. Directed by the Helpmann Award-winning Lee Lewis, it’s a quick-witted and bracingly honest take on the difficult choices you make in your child’s best interests, and what happens when you no longer have a say.

An extraordinary work about mental health and the medication of children, this play will guarantee Kendall Feaver a place as one of our next great writers.

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 Hannah Waterman, Brenna Harding, Penny Cook and Shiv Palekar

Previews 27 – 31 July
Opening Nights 1 & 2 August
Season 3 August – 8 September

Outcomes

The Almighty Sometimes was presented at the Stables for a six week season of 45 performances to an audience of 3,893. The show achieved 84% paid attendance and 93% total attendance, and exceeded its box office target by 118%.

Critical Response

“[Harding] delivers a brave, raw, unruly, frightening performance.” ★★★★★½ John Shand, [Sydney Morning Herald](#)

“Lewis directs with energy and extraordinary feeling; her actors deliver performances that are generously, almost dangerously vulnerable...Feaver has written a play that balances harrowing but genuinely fresh ideas with deft construction and quick humour. This is a play that says ‘we need to have a serious talk about the way we’re handling this mental health crisis’ but it also reaches out and holds your hand.” ★★★★★ Cassie Tongue, [Time Out](#)

“Harding gives a fierce, raw, no-holds-barred performance.” ★★★★★ Jo Litson, [Daily Telegraph](#)

“Taut and stark, driven by Harding’s blazing performance as a young woman spinning off centre...this fine Griffin production taps its underlying urgency and anger and seldom lets you off its hook.” ★★★★★ Jason Blake, [Audrey Journal](#)

“The great central performance is by Brenna Harding as the mercurial Anna. Harding is very moving as she conveys Anna’s constantly shifting moods, the sudden moments of euphoria and the equally sudden periods of depression.” John McCallum, [The Australian](#)

“It is a fiery piece of theatre, featuring high stakes and big emotions, that director Lee Lewis integrates powerfully for a tense, affecting experience. The play features a lot of fighting, but it is really the intense love underscoring the strife and angst, that we connect with.” Suzy Wrong, [Suzy Goes See](#)

“This premier Australian production is as good as it gets: hugely entertaining, beautifully performed and deeply rewarding.” Diana Simmonds, [StageNoise](#)

“Opens up an almighty discussion on mental illness and its treatment.” Richard Cotter, [Sydney Arts Guide](#)

“...an evening of gut wrenchingly honest and brave performances.” Oliver Wakelin, [Arts Review](#)

PRODUCTION FOUR

THE FEATHER IN THE WEB

BY NICK COYLE

“I’m like a chimpanzee because I’m mischievous and I’m stronger than a man.”

Kimberly is a character like no other. She’s powerful, wicked, in control—but she has no voice. So she sets out to find it, leaving a trail of car crashes and crying people in her wake. Then she meets Miles. And she’ll do anything he says.

From engagement parties to team-building weekends to improv comedy, *The Feather in the Web* is an unpredictable take on infatuation and self-discovery. Skewering our obsession with couples and careers, it asks just how much we’re willing to give (and lose) for love.

Nick Coyle (*Hammerhead (Is Dead)*) has written a playful, startling and surprisingly hopeful coming-of-age story. It’s part picaresque, part fable—a journey from silence to a full-throated ROAR. Directed by Ben Winspear, this Lysicrates Prize finalist is without a doubt the most inventive play you’ll see all year.

Director Ben Winspear

Designer Sophie Fletcher

Assistant Designer Ella Butler

Composer/Sound Designer Steve Toulmin

Lighting Designer Trent Suidgeest

Video Designer Mic Gruchy

Stage Manager Samuel Johnson

With Tina Bursill, Gareth Davies, Michelle Lim Davidson, Claire Lovering

Preview 5 – 10 October

Opening Nights 11 & 12 October

Season 13 October – 17 November

Outcomes

The Feather in the Web was presented at the Stables for a six week season of 45 performances to an audience of 3,331. The show achieved 72% paid attendance and 83% total attendance, and reached 93% of box office target.

Critical Response

“Playwright Nick Coyle leads you into a mad tunnel of laughs, that has jokes, slapstick, silliness and satire jostling you relentlessly from all angles, until you feel pinched and punched into a state of comedic exhaustion. Then he hits you where it hurts with a mouthful of poignancy that leaves a lump in the throat. Few writers can pull this off...But Coyle succeeds, aided by a cast that switches gears as seamlessly as a luxury car.” ★★★★★ John Shand, Sydney Morning Herald

“An unlikely celebration of those who exist outside the box.” ★★★★★ Ben Neutze, Time Out

“Coyle plays with reality, time, and human needs in *The Feather in the Web*, a deliciously funny and consistently off-kilter consideration of what love means – and what falling into it does to our individuality. By taking an apocalyptically queer lens to contemporary relationships, Coyle – with director Ben Winspear – has created a world that’s all our anxieties, desires and impulses writ large.” ★★★★★ Cassie Tongue, Audrey Journal

“Highly sophisticated, marvellously polished, and very funny indeed.” Suzy Wrong, *Suzy Goes See*

“Claire Lovering is kinetic as Kimberly, a coiled spring of fevered, manic daredevil, ready to dare anything as she gallops uncontrollably through an unattainable fantasy.” Richard Cotter, Australian Stage Online

SPECIAL EVENT

Griffin Theatre Company and Bell Shakespeare

THE MISANTHROPE

BY JUSTIN FLEMING AFTER MOLIÈRE

PLAYHOUSE, SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

A comedy of manners. Without the manners.

She has the success, the influence, the looks. He’s got cheekbones for days. She speaks her mind no matter who she offends. He’s surrounded by sycophants and yes men. She captivates him with her honesty and frankness, but does he really love her, or is he being a little loose with the truth?

This is Molière with a delicious twist: the Misanthrope not a grumpy old man, but the savvy, sartorial Danielle Cormack. In fabulous form she rejects the social conventions of false flattery, challenging us to tell people what we really think of them. What’s the worst that could happen?

Following the outrageous success of *The Literati*, writer Justin Fleming and director Lee Lewis reunite to bring you this glorious satire of polite society. It’s got all the social climbers, sycophants and hypocrites that keep our ‘Emerald City’ functioning.

Once again we’re in bed with Bell Shakespeare, only this time we’re headed to Sydney Opera House—because where better to stage a tale of love, compromise and the true cost of honesty?

Director Lee Lewis

Designer Dan Potra

Lighting Designer Matthew Marshall

Composers and Sound Designers Max Lambert and Roger Lock

Stage Manager Khym Scott

With Danielle Cormack, Simon Burke, Catherine Davies, Ben Gerrard, Rebecca Massey, Hamish Michael, Anthony Taufa

Preview 28 – 30 August

Opening Night 31 August

Season 1 – 28 September

Outcomes

The Misanthrope was presented at the Playhouse, Sydney Opera House for a four-week season of 34 performances to an audience of 9,484.

SPECIAL EVENT

FAG STAG

THE LAST GREAT HUNT

Jimmy and Corgan are BFFs. Hurtling towards their 30s, life is filled with a mix of Tinder, Grindr, binge-drinking and half-hearted hook-ups. As the wedding of Corgan’s ex looms and Jimmy’s love life stagnates, the two struggle to get their lives in working order. *FAG/STAG* is one story, told twice, from the perspective of two (very) unreliable narrators. Brimming with laughs, tenderness and quarter-life-crisis ennui, this is a brutally honest and hilarious exploration of contemporary masculinity and what it means to have a best mate when you’re stuck being your worst self.

‘Fowler and Isaacs are two of our most adept young writers and *FAG/STAG* crackles with their talent.’ ★★★★★ – The West Australian

Written and Performed by Jeffrey Jay Fowler and Chris Isaacs
Sound Designer Brett Smith

Season 10 – 27 January

Outcomes

Fag Stag was presented at the Stables for a season of 18 performances to an audience of 1,320. The show achieved 61% paid attendance and 75% total attendance, and reached 90% of box office target.

SPECIAL EVENT

HELLO, BEAUTIFUL!
BY HANNIE RASON
PERFORMING LINES

Playwright and author **Hannie Rayson** brings her sublimely comedic one-woman show to Griffin. Featuring select stories from her acclaimed book *Hello, Beautiful!*, Rayson shares true tales from an adventurous life, ranging from her childhood in East Brighton to the treacheries of Hollywood, from sharehouses in Fitzroy to the beauty of rural Australia. Rayson's writing has always been driven by her deep curiosity about contemporary Australian life: how we live, what matters to us, and the political and ethical challenges we face. Self-deprecating and hilarious, *Hello, Beautiful!* seeks out extraordinary moments in the everyday.

'[Rayson] takes centre stage with a sharp, economical style, skipping vividly between juicy anecdotes, shards of remembered conversation and moments of reverie.' – The Australian

Written and performed by Hannie Rayson
Director Matthew Lutton
Lighting Designer Emma Lockhart-Wilson
Production Manager Liz Young
Originally commissioned and produced by Malthouse Theatre

Season
9 – 14 July

Outcomes

Hello, Beautiful! was presented at the Stables for a season of eight performances to an audience of 562. The show achieved 61% paid attendance and 74% total attendance, and reached 86% of box office target.

SPECIAL EVENT

SHABBAT DINNER
BY JESSICA BELLAMY

In Jewish tradition, a new day begins in the evening. That is why Shabbat, the day of rest, is welcomed at sundown. You're invited to the Bellamy family dining table, set with their finest glassware and a few charmingly mismatched spoons. In this unique (and not so traditional) dinner-turned-performance, the rituals and customs of a Shabbat dinner are recreated. Bread is broken. Family stories are offered. As the night unfolds, a community is built and then dismantled. Written by award-winning playwright **Jessica Bellamy**, *Shabbat Dinner* weaves together poetic storytelling, live music and Bellamy's best attempt at rekindling the taste of her Baba's borscht. A celebration of food, family and feminism that will stay with you long after you've left the theatre.

'A powerful, universal tale of love, loss and the hardship that people, and women in particular, must still endure worldwide.'
★★★★ – ArtsHub

Director Anthony Skuse
Producers Brent Davidson & Jessica Bellamy
Stage Manager & Co-Designer Kelsey Lee

With Jessica Bellamy, Amy Hack, Kirsty Marillier

Season

10 – 15 September

Outcomes

Shabbat Dinner was presented at the Stables for a sold out season of six performances to an audience of 609. The show achieved 90% paid attendance and 102% total attendance, and reached 129% of box office target.

SPECIAL EVENT

THE SMALLEST HOUR

BY PHIL SPENCER AND SUSIE YOUSSEF

A woman bails on her bestie's Hens' Night. A cop dodges the bus fare into town. A dog walker whistles ABBA in the dead of night. Pop the kettle on and join storytellers Phil Spencer (*Story Club, Hooting & Howling*) and Susie Youssef (*Accidental Death of an Anarchist, Whose Line Is It Anyway?*) for this bleary-eyed stagger through the night that was. *The Smallest Hour* is a richly woven comedy about broken dreams, second chances and velcro pants.

Written & performed by Phil Spencer & Susie Youssef

Directed by Scarlet McGlynn

Dramaturg Mary Rachel Brown

Set & Costume Designer Tyler Hawkins

Lighting Designer Veronique Benett

Sound Designer & Composer Steve Francis

Associate Sound Designer Michael Toisuta

Stage Manager Isabella Kerdijk

Season

Previews 5 – 6 December

Season 7 – 15 December

Outcomes

The Smallest Hour was presented at the Stables for a season of 12 performances to an audience of 1,003. The show achieved 75% paid attendance and 84% total attendance, and reached 117% of box office target.

SPECIAL EVENT

AUSTRALIAN THEATRE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Griffin hosted three ATYP shows in 2018:

Intersection 2018: Chrysalis

By 2017 National Studio Writers

31 January – 17 February

Impending Everyone

By Michael Andrew Collins

20 June – 7 July

Charlie Pilgrim

By Sam O'Sullivan

21 November – 1 December