

GRIFFIN
THEATRE
COMPANY

GRIFFIN THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS

FIRST LOVE IS THE REVOLUTION

BY RITA KALNEJAIS

SBW STABLES THEATRE
1 NOVEMBER – 14 DECEMBER 2019

DIRECTOR
LEE LEWIS

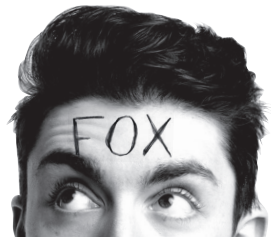
DESIGNER
ELLA BUTLER

LIGHTING DESIGNER
TRENT SUIDGEEST

**COMPOSER AND
SOUND DESIGNER**
DAVID BERGMAN

STAGE MANAGER
KHYM SCOTT

WITH
AMY HACK
REBECCA MASSEY
BARDIYA MCKINNON
SARAH MEACHAM
GUY SIMON
MATTHEW WHITTET



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PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

I hope you enjoy this play. I wrote it five years ago when I was doing a residency at Soho Theatre in London and that was where it had its first production. I am so proud that it's now going to have a life in the beautiful SBW Stables Theatre. It's such a good, intimate space—a perfect place to tell a first love story. And to make a fox's den. And I'm so *thrilled* that Lee Lewis is directing it—her production of debbie tucker green's play *Stoning Mary* many years ago left me shaking.

When I wrote this play, I was experiencing serious culture shock. I'd moved to London a year earlier and felt completely out of my depth writing in British-English. Though we were speaking the same words (more or less), the intention behind them, the rhythm, what filled the pauses, the reason for speaking in the first place, seemed to me to be completely different. English-English felt like a second language. If I'm honest, that's why I wrote a play with talking animals—it was the only practical thing to do, seeing as I didn't yet feel qualified to write a whole cast of humans. I was learning to listen in a different way. I'm so interested to see how it will translate back into Australian-English.

I was also so in love with foxes when I was writing this. I love how in London—in this very *civilised* society—these wild

animals wander around unchecked. Dusk and dawn you'll find yourself being watched, sometimes followed. They have no natural enemies in the cities so they're not scared—they haven't been scared of people for generations. There are sometimes fox paw prints across the roof and bonnet of our car. They're such punks.

I haven't lived in Australia for a few years now, but I've read there's an estimated 7,000 foxes in the southern Sydney area—10 per square kilometre—and they've already been responsible for wiping out 10 native species. They were introduced solely for fox hunting. Sometimes humans can be really dumb.

Also, at the time of writing this, I was obsessed by this international conflict that was flaring up and receiving huge coverage in the UK. I could not stop reading and watching news articles about it. It made no sense to me as someone sitting outside of the cultures and territories involved—you had to go back hundreds of years to find the original offence. Now schools and hospitals were being bombed—the dehumanisation necessary to commit such acts of violence is breathtaking. *First Love* isn't an allegory of that conflict (that's why I'm not naming it); it's more a question about how we dehumanise people and how it gives us permission

to act badly. Not just in international disputes, obviously.

And of course, this play is also about first love—this gorgeous experience that overwrites everything we know about ourselves and the world. There are no rules. I think it's the ultimate form of revolution, and with each revolution there's the chance of success no matter how slight...it's so hopeful. When we feel seen and understood—when we see and understand each other—anything is possible.

Anyway, it doesn't really matter where it came from. Plays are about the moment they make. I hope it lands beautifully with you the evening or the day you're seeing it. I'm so happy it's on at Griffin. Some of my favourite actors are in it. I hope you have a wonderful evening.

Rita Kalnejais

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Rita Kalnejais is an Australian treasure. *First Love is the Revolution...* what a title... what an assertion... what an extraordinarily hopeful vision for the future. In an act of radical generosity, this playwright offers this age of despair an imaginative leap into optimism. But it is a 21st century optimism, alive with knowledge of poverty, violence and desperation, energised with the hardest of choices, and pushing us to face up to ancient knowledge.

I cannot fully describe this play, but it has a magnet inside it that has compelled me to bring it to life. That magnet may be the theatrical challenges it offers to the director; it may be the promise of joy for an audience if we can pull it off; it may be the extraordinary mother-daughter relationship it captures; it may be the beautifully original exploration of the act of killing, which cumulatively creates the strongest argument for vegetarianism I

have encountered. Whatever it is about her writing that is pulling me towards production, the force is strong. And for all its English signifiers, the force is deeply Australian.

This play began on the other side of the world five years ago and is finally coming home. I hope that all the Australian playwrights scattered around the world know that there will always be a home audience for their words here.

Lee Lewis



RITA KALNEJAIS

PLAYWRIGHT

Rita Kalnejais is a Victorian College of Arts graduate who has worked extensively as an actor at Griffin, Belvoir, Malthouse Theatre and Sydney Theatre Company. Her first play, *B.C.*, was part of The Hayloft Project, which played at Arts Centre Melbourne's Black Box Theatre, and was nominated for Best New Australian Play at the 2009 Green Room Awards. Her short plays, *Whistling in Bed* and *How To Get Very Clean* were performed at Sydney Theatre Company in 2011. *Whistling in Bed* was later presented by Caryl Churchill at Theatre 503, London. In 2012, Rita's play *Babyteeth* premiered at Belvoir and was subsequently produced by the State Theatre Company of South Australia in 2013. *First Love is the Revolution* enjoyed a popular season at Soho Theatre in 2015 and at Steep Theatre, Chicago, in 2019. Her play *This Beautiful Future* enjoyed two sell-out seasons at Yard Theatre, London. Rita's television credits include writing for the Starz series *The Spanish Princess*, and *Dangerous Liaisons*. Rita adapted her play *Babyteeth* into a film produced by Alex White, executive produced by Jan Chapman and directed by Shannon Murphy. *Babyteeth* opened in competition at the Venice Film Festival in 2019. Rita was also co-writer on *Surge*, which is due to open in 2020, and is directed by Aneil Karia, starring Ben Wishaw, produced by Rooks Nest, BBC Film and BFI. Rita was Resident Playwright at Sydney Theatre Company in 2011 and at Soho Theatre, London in 2014/2015. She is currently developing various theatre, film and television projects in the UK, US and Australia.



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), *Splinter*, *Prima Facie*, *The Almighty Sometimes*, *Kill Climate Deniers*, *Eight Gigabytes of Hardcore Pornography*, *The Homosexuals or 'Faggots'*, *Rice*, *Masquerade* (co-directed with Sam Strong), *Gloria*, *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*, *The Misanthrope*; for Bell Shakespeare: *The School for Wives*, *Twelfth Night*; for Belvoir: *That Face*, *This Heaven*, *Half and Half*, *A Number*, *7 Blowjob*, *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: *Mary Stuart*, *Honour*, *Love-Lies-Bleeding*, *ZEBRA!*; for Darwin Festival: *Highway of Lost Hearts*.

**ELLA BUTLER**

DESIGNER

Ella is a Sydney-based designer for theatre, film and live performance. Ella's recent credits include: as Designer: for Belvoir (25A): *Extinction of the Learned Response*; for Darlinghurst Theatre Company: *LOVE*; for National Theatre of Parramatta: *Girl In The Machine*; and for Theatre Works: *The Other Place*. Ella recently

styled Tim Minchin and his band for his return to the stage with the National Tour of *BACK*, as well as working as Costume Designer for his music videos *15 Minutes* and *Leaving LA*. Ella was also Production and Costume Designer for World Champion's music video for their song *Skyline*. Ella's work in theatre has been received internationally after designing *Enter the Underworld* as part of the Piccolo Spoleto Festival in Charleston, South Carolina. Ella is a graduate from the National Institute of Dramatic Art with a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Design for Performance).

**TRENT SUIDGEEST**

LIGHTING DESIGNER

Trent Suidgeest's lighting design credits include: for Griffin: *Prima Facie*, *The Feather in the Web*, *The Homosexuals or 'Faggots'*, *Kill Climate Deniers*; for Barking Gecko Theatre Company: *Duck, Death and the Tulip*, *Jasper Jones*; for Black Swan State Theatre Company: over 20 mainstage productions including *Summer of the*

Seventeenth Doll; for WAAPA: *Strictly Ballroom*; for Hayes Theatre Co: *Calamity Jane* (including Australian Tour and Belvoir), *Darlinghurst Nights*, *Gypsy*, *Only Heaven Knows*, *The View Upstairs*; for Opera Australia: *Carmen*, *Sydney Opera House—The Opera (The Eighth Wonder)*, *The Rabbits*; for The Production Company: *The Boy From Oz*, *Dusty*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *The King & I*, *Nice Work If You Can Get It*; for Sydney Theatre Company: *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, *Hay Fever*, *Talk*; and for STC/Global Creatures: *Muriel's Wedding The Musical*. In 2015, Trent received the Mike Walsh Fellowship and the WA Department of Culture and the Arts Young People Fellowship; he went on to assist at Toneelgroep Amsterdam with Ivo van Hove and Jan Versweyveld on their Shakespearian epic *Kings of War*.

**DAVID BERGMAN**

COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER

David is a composer, sound and video designer and has been based in Sydney for over 10 years. His recent work includes: as Composer and Sound Designer: for Darlinghurst Theatre Company: *Maggie Stone*; for NIDA: *Another Country*, *SALEM*; for Seymour Centre: *Made to Measure*; as Sound and Video Designer: for Sydney

Theatre Company: *A Cheery Soul*, *The Wharf Revue* (2009-2018); for Soft Tread Enterprises: *The Gospel According to Paul*; as Sound Designer: for ATYP: *Spring Awakening*; for Hayes Theatre Company: *Catch Me If You Can*; for Monkey Baa:

Josephine Wants to Dance; and as Video Designer: for Monkey Baa: *The Peasant Prince*, *Possum Magic*; for Sydney Theatre Company: *The Effect*, *The Hanging*, *Muriel's Wedding the Musical*, *The Long Way Home*. David trained at NIDA and is now a part-time tutor for their graduate and postgraduate courses.



KHYM SCOTT

STAGE MANAGER

Khym has previously worked for Griffin Theatre Company as Stage Manager for *City of Gold*, *Prima Facie*, *Good Cook*, *Friendly Clean.*, *Kill Climate Deniers*, *Festival of New Writing*, *The Witches*, *Girl in Tan Boots*, *The Serpent's Table*; and for Griffin/Bell Shakespeare: *The Misanthrope*. Other recent credits include: for Belvoir/

Malthouse: *Barbara and the Camp Dogs*; for Belvoir: *The Dance of Death*, *Miss Julie*, *This Heaven*; for Contemporary Asian Australian Performance: *Double Delicious*, *Stories Then and Now*; for Sydney Festival: *Lady Rizo: Red, White and Indigo*; and for Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. From 2013 to 2017, Khym was Assistant Stage Manager of The Australian Ballet, and toured with the company regionally, nationally, and internationally. Khym is a graduate of NIDA and The University of Sydney.



AMY HACK

GUSTINA, GEMMA, SMULAN

Amy Hack is a graduate of Actors Centre Australia, Atlantic Theatre Company (NYC), and Patrick Studios Australia's dance and professional development course. Amy's theatre credits include: for Griffin: *Shabbat Dinner*; for Bell Shakespeare (The Players): *Romeo and Juliet*; for Hayes Theatre Company: *American Psycho*, *Caroline, Or Change*, *Cry Baby*; for KXT bAKEHOUSE: *Wrath*; for Red Line

Productions at the Old Fitz: *Amongst Ruins*; for La Mama Theatre: *Intoxication*; and for SheShakespeare: *As You Like It*. Amy's television credits include: for Network Ten: *Brock*; and for Nine Network: *Hyde & Seek*. Amy is a proud resident actor with the Ignite Collective, an emerging collective of female artists producing new work around Australia. She has also worked as movement director and choreographer on various music videos for artists including Belinda Woods and Don the Toga.



REBECCA MASSEY

COCHINEAL, BAILEY CHICKEN

Rebecca Massey is considered one of Australia's most versatile and accomplished film, television and theatre actresses. Her theatre credits include: for Griffin: *Kill Climate Deniers*, *Ship of Fools*, *Borderlines*; for Bell Shakespeare/Griffin: *The Misanthrope*;

for Belvoir: *The Alchemist*, *The Book of Everything*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, *Cloudstreet*, *Exit the King*, *It Just Stopped* (for which she won a Green Room Award for Best Actress), *Macbeth*, *The Seagull*, *The Small Poppies*, *Stuff Happens*, *The Underpants*; for Malthouse Theatre Company: *Tartuffe*; for Sydney Theatre Company: *After Dinner*, *Chimerica*, *Dinner*, *Perplex*, *Travesties*; and for Sydney Theatre Company/State Theatre Company of South Australia: *Vere*. Rebecca's television credits include: for ABC: *The Letdown*, *Lowdown*, *My Place*, *Total Control*, *Utopia*; for Foxtel/Working Dog: *Pacific Heat*; for Lingo Pictures: *Upright*; for Movie Extra: *Chandon Pictures*; for Network Ten: *Packed to the Rafters*, *Small Claims*; for Nine Network: *Kangaroo Creek Gang*, *Tricky Business*; for Seven Network: *All Saints*, *City Homicide*; and for SBS: *Deep Water*, *The Principal*. Film credits include: *Accidents Happen*, *Backyard Ashes*, *Bad Girl*, *The Black Balloon* and *Mask II*. In addition to winning a Green Room Award and a Glug, Rebecca has been nominated for two Helpmann Awards.



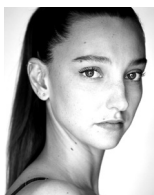
BARDIYA MCKINNON

BASTI

Bardiya started out in television at a young age with regular roles on the SBS series *East West 101*, *As The Bell Rings* for Disney and Southern Star's *In Your Dreams*. Since then, Bardiya's theatre credits have included: for ATYP: *Spring Awakening*; for National Theatre of Parramatta: *The Incredible Here and Now*; for Outhouse

Theatre: *BU21*; and for Red Line Productions at the Old Fitz: *Metamorphoses*.

Bardiya founded and runs the independent production company Last One Standing, where his credits include: for Last One Standing/Old 505: *An Intervention*; for Last One Standing/Sydney Fringe/KXT bAKEHOUSE: *DNA*; and for Last One Standing/Red Line Productions at the Old Fitz: *Alice in Slasherland*.



SARAH MEACHAM

RDECA

Sarah is a graduate of the University of Wollongong (Bachelor of Performance – Acting). Since graduating, her theatre credits include: for ATYP: *All Good Things*; for Belvoir (25A)/Glitterbomb: *Extinction of the Learned Response*; for Belvoir/Red Line Productions at the Old Fitz: *The Wolves*; for KXT bAKEHOUSE/

Mad March Hare Theatre Co: *You Got Older*; for KXT bAKEHOUSE/Mad March Hare Theatre Co/Outhouse Theatre Co: *Dry Land* (for which she was awarded the Sydney Theatre Award for Best Female Actor in a Leading Role for an Independent Production); and Phedre (Asia-Pacific Bureau Directors' Conference and Theatre Festival Tour, Shanghai). Screen credits include *Amelia*, *Doggy*, and *Parisian Jam*. Sarah has been a proud member of Actors Equity since 2013.

**GUY SIMON**

THOREAU, ROVIS

Guy's theatre credits include: for Belvoir: *Jasper Jones*; for Browns Mart Theatre: *I Am Man*; for Cameron Lukey Presents: *Strangers In Between*; for IPAN Productions: *Lucky*; for KXT bAKEHOUSE: *Junction*; for Malthouse Theatre: *Blaque Showgirls*, *Cloudstreet*; for Melbourne Theatre Company: *Jasper Jones* (for which he was awarded a Helpmann Award for Best Actor in a Supporting Role in a Play), *The Myth Project: TWIN*; for Moogahlin Performing Arts: *My Memory, This Fella*; for Queensland Theatre: *Black Diggers*; and for Sydney Theatre Company: *The Battle of Waterloo*, *The Harp in the South Parts I & II*. Television credits include: for ABC/Blackfella Films: *Redfern Now*; for Brindle Films: *Occupation: Native*; for Network Ten/Playmaker Media: *The Wrong Girl*; and for Noble Savage Pictures: *A Chance Affair*. Film credits include *Around the Block* and *Undertow*. Guy graduated from NIDA with a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Acting) in 2010.

**MATTHEW WHITTET**

SIMON, GREGOR MOLE, QUENTIN

Matthew is an actor, writer and dramaturg who has worked extensively in theatre, film and television. Matt has performed across Australia and abroad with directors such as Benedict Andrews, Neil Armfield, Lucy Guerin, Barrie Kosky, and Rosemary Myers. Matt's most recent theatre credits include: for Seymour Centre: *The Dismissal*; and for Sydney Theatre Company: *Mary Stuart*. His recent television credits include: for ABC: *The Letdown*; and for Lingo Pictures: *Upright*. His film credits include *Australia*, *Girl Asleep*, *The Great Gatsby*, *Moulin Rouge* and *The Nightingale*. As a writer, Matt's plays include Griffin's upcoming production of *Kindness*; for Belvoir: *Cinderella*, *Old Man, Silver*; for Belvoir/Lyric Hammersmith: *Seventeen*; for Belvoir/Windmill Theatre Company: *Girl Asleep*; and for Windmill Theatre Company: *Big Bad Wolf*, *Fugitive*, *School Dance*. Matt also wrote the feature film adaptation of *Girl Asleep*, which opened the Generation 14+ programme at Berlinale 2016.
