

GRIFFIN THEATRE COMPANY 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

Prepared by Karen Rodgers, Executive Director

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OPERATIONAL REPORT

Griffin's 2019 season was a huge success on many levels. At the SBW Stables Theatre we presented five Main Season works including *City of Gold* which was co-presented with Queensland Theatre. Four of our Main Season productions exceeded targets and paid attendance across Main Season shows reached an average of 79% of sellable capacity.

The Main Season in 2019 was complemented by five Special Extras including *Love and Anger* by Betty Grumble and *Exhale* by Black Birds. *The Happy Prince* from Melbourne company Little Ones Theatre and *Glittery Clittery* from the Fringe Wives Club both toured to the Stables. We presented 14 sold-out shows of *Since Ali Died* by Omar Musa, a production that originated as part of the 2018 Batch Festival, which went on to tour to Riverside Theatres Parramatta, Canberra Theatre Centre, Arts Centre Melbourne, Brisbane Festival, and the OzAsia Festival in Adelaide. All of these seasons provided Griffin with the opportunity to work with new companies and artists whilst welcoming new audiences to the Stables and beyond.

In 2019, Griffin hosted ATYP at the Stables. Across the year, ATYP presented two seasons of new Australian work made by and for young people, playing to a total audience of 2,673 people.

2019 also saw the return of Batch Festival presented at Griffin. Curated by Artistic Associate Phil Spencer and Associate Producer Nicole La Bianca, this festival provides a platform for independent storytellers, poets, comedy artists and non-traditional performance makers to debut work the Stables stage. 2,073 tickets were distributed for 28 ticketed performances and 94 artists and creatives were engaged across the two-and-a-half-week Festival. Paid attendance increased to an average of 61% from the previous year. Two of the works presented as part of Batch Festival, *Lady Tabouli* and *Me and My Mother, Singing*, went on to be programmed by Riverside Theatres Parramatta and the Sydney Opera House respectively as part of their 2020 programs.

2019 also saw a very successful on-sell of Suzie Miller's *Prima Facie*, travelling to Riverside Theatres Parramatta and Canberra Theatre Centre. We also toured Hilary Bell's *Splinter* to Hothouse Theatre in Albury.

In 2019, 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 2019 prize was Jane Bodie for *Tell Me You Love Me*. The 2019 Griffin Award, now in its 21st year, was won by Mark Rogers for *Superheroes*, which has been included in the 2020 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; and *Griffin Scratch*, a component of the Griffin Studio program which enabled us to bring five new artists into the company to take part in a development and presentation of new writing, both providing vital platforms for artists and a vibrant cultural hub for audiences. We also continued captioned performances for all our Main Season productions, increasing audience accessibility.

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

In 2019, Griffin subscriber numbers reached 1,651 — an increase of 3% from 2018. We have maintained subscriber retention at 60%.

Around 26,000 patrons visited the Stables throughout the year. Outside of the Stables, Griffin Theatre Company productions reached an audience of over 11,300 people. Importantly, paid attendance was maintained on average at 79% of capacity for Main Season shows, with three Main Season productions exceeding their income targets and one exceeding attendance targets, while containing expenditure within budget.

This success was also evident for Griffin's Special Extras. The five Special Extras staged in 2019 achieved an average paid capacity of 70%, playing to an audience of over 5,900.

The fundraising and development total reached \$1,080,691 in 2019, representing a growth in philanthropic support for the Company, despite there being no cash sponsorship income in 2019. 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 in the future.

For the financial year ended 31 December 2019, Griffin generated an operating deficit of -\$25,584 (compared to an operating deficit of -\$28,795 in 2018). The company's reserves decreased from \$278,696 at 31 December 2018 to \$253,113 at 31 December 2019. This deficit reflects the Company attempting to deliver on our core mission while responding to the reduction in the government funding we had previously received.

Overall, Griffin's turnover reached \$2,950,787 – a slight decrease of 1.7% on the 2018 year (\$3,001,882). Griffin's retained earnings of \$222,737 represent 8% of turnover.


2019 OPERATIONS SUMMARY – KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS


Strategic Directions & Actions	Outcomes
1: Champion the Best Australian Stories	
Curate a season of at least 5 Australian works	10
Premiere at least 3 new Australian plays in Griffin's annual Main Season	4
Invest in 5 -week rehearsals for all Main Season works	5 @ 4 weeks
Achieve at least 3 award nominations	26
2: Lead artistic thought and conversation	
Engage nationally with writers, artists, and audiences	Ongoing
Run at least 2 national playwriting competitions	2
Deliver workshops, presentations, audience participation events	Achieved (8 key offerings)
3: Provide relevant and accessible opportunities	
Produce the Griffin Ambassadors program for high school students	Achieved (93 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 (40 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 (79% average)
Present 1 regional or national tour	7
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 First Nations employment	Ongoing
Grow donation and cash sponsorship income by 2% pa (<i>against 2016 baseline value</i>)	17%

Performance Key:

Target Exceeded 

Target Met 

On-going 

Target Unmet 

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S REPORT

2019 was a year of huge critical and artistic success for Griffin. In our Mainstage Season we staged four pieces of new Australian writing, in addition to two world premieres in our program of Special Extras and five in Batch Festival. Our stage also became a platform for national conversations. wāni Le Frère, Lou Wall, Too Rude, and Little Ones Theatre all toured shows into the Stables from interstate, while our co-production *City of Gold* toured in from Queensland Theatre for an acclaimed second season.

Batch Festival again proved its huge value as an incubator for independent artists. After development at Batch 2018, Omar Musa's *Since Ali Died* returned to the Stables in a Special Extras season, before embarking on a national tour to major venues including Canberra Theatre Centre, Arts Centre Melbourne, and a stint at Brisbane Festival. Betty Grumble's *Love & Anger* also returned as a Special Extras show. The response to *Love & Anger* demonstrated once again our audience's appetite for boundary-pushing, politically-activated work, and on the back of its success we gave Betty's 'handler', Emma Maye Gibson, her first commission from a mainstage theatre company. This new Betty Grumble work, *Enemies of Grooviness - EAT SHIT!*, will premiere as part of our 2020 Season. *Enemies* was first developed as part of Griffin Scratch, which further highlights the success of the pathways Griffin has put in place for artists within our company: from Scratch, to Batch, to Special Extras, and beyond.

On our mainstage, Mary Rachel Brown's *Dead Cat Bounce* became the first winner of The Lysicrates Prize to play a season at the Stables. Another award-winner, Suzie Miller's *Prima Facie* (Griffin Award, 2018) followed it up—earning overwhelming critical acclaim for Suzie's text, Lee Lewis's restrained direction, and a towering performance by former Griffin Studio artist Sheridan Harbridge. For this role, Sheridan deservedly went on to win the 2019 Sydney Theatre Award for Best Female Actor in a Mainstage Production, and the production secured 2020 Seasons at Malthouse Theatre, Queensland Theatre, and a return stint at the Seymour Centre. But critical and box office success aside, the true joy of *Prima Facie* was watching the foyer buzz after each performance, as patrons clustered and vibrated with fury over the glaring failings in legal process that Suzie's play laid bare.

Meyne Wyatt's *City of Gold* was another shot of theatrical adrenaline. Meyne harnessed the intimacy of the Stables, fronting his own words in a guttural howl of rage against injustice and inequality in this country. Isaac Drandic's production garnered a nomination for Best New Australian Work at the Sydney Theatre Awards and took out gongs for Meyne and Shari Sebbens as Best Male Actor and Best Supporting Female Actor respectively.

Hilary Bell's *Splinter* was that rarest of things in Australian theatre: a second production. Sydney audiences were lucky to again experience its subtle, creeping gothic horror, in a taut production directed by Lee Lewis. Lee then brought the year to a triumphant close with the local premiere of Rita Kalnejais's *First Love is the Revolution*. With a joyously inventive design from Ella Butler, Rita's story of star-and-species-cross'd lovers received overwhelming critical acclaim and was nominated for Best New Australian Work at the Sydney Theatre Awards.

Griffin's towering successes in 2019 belied the difficulties that continue to face the company. Without financial capacity for the development of plays, all three of our premieres—*Dead Cat Bounce*, *Prima Facie*, and *City of Gold*—landed on stage without in-house script workshopping. This put tremendous strain on the actors and the playwright, who were then obliged to use rehearsal time to fix any problems with the play—further compounded by their four-week rehearsal time, which is one week less than the industry standard for a new work.

Programming for 2020 also proved a strain. Griffin exists in a deeply contradictory space: as a new writing theatre that cannot afford to pay playwrights to write plays. Since our funding was slashed in 2015, the Griffin Award and The Lysicrates Prize have provided our pool of plays from which to draw each season's program. Though the quality of the work is generally high, these are plays authored by writers who can financially justify writing a play without guaranteed payment. As long as this is the case, it will be harder for us to support and program writers who come from marginalised backgrounds; writers who cannot afford to bankroll their own writing practice. When our budget was cut in 2015, our donors well and truly stepped up to help us continue running the company and producing plays—but they are at-capacity, and as long as we are reliant on mercurial corporate and foundation sponsorship, the home of new Australian writing will not have solid foundations.

As I write this, Griffin has been successful in securing an increase in our four-year funding from the Australia Council (though this will not come into effect until 2021). We wait with bated breath to see the outcome of our application to Create NSW, in the hope that we can, once again, pay writers to write plays.

Declan Greene

Artistic Director

2019 ARTISTIC SUMMARY

MAIN STAGE PROGRAMME – SBW STABLES					
	Number of Performances	Total Audience	% Attendance Tickets		Income vs. Target(%)
			Paid (KPI = 70%)	Total	
<i>Dead Cat Bounce</i> Written by Mary Rachel Brown Directed by Mitchell Butel 22 February – 6 April	45	2675	56	65	76
<i>Prima Facie</i> Written by Suzie Miller Directed by Lee Lewis 17 May – 22 June	39	3478	95	104 ¹	138
<i>City of Gold</i> Written by Meyne Wyatt Directed by Isaac Drandic 26 July – 31 August	39	3515	89	96	137
<i>Splinter</i> Written by Hilary Bell Directed by Lee Lewis 6 September – 12 October	32	2782	92	98	106
<i>First Love is the Revolution</i> Written by Rita Kalnejais Directed by Lee Lewis 1 November – 14 December	44	3018	63	72	84
SPECIAL EXTRAS					
<i>Since Ali Died</i> By Omar Musa Directed by Anthea Williams Presented in association with Sydney Festival and Riverside Theatres Parramatta 7 – 19 January	14	1022	71	75	104
<i>Love and Anger</i> By Betty Grumble 21 – 26 January	6	586	82	93	128
<i>Exhale</i> By Black Birds 9 – 13 April	6	461	60	73	91
<i>The Happy Prince</i> By Little Ones Theatre 25 June – 6 July	10	880	78	84	96
<i>Glittery Clittery: A Consensual Party</i> By Fringe Wives Club 8 – 20 July	12	870	71	75	107
ATYP					
<i>Intersection 2019: Arrival</i> By the 2018 National Studio Writers 30 January – 16 February	20	1454	51	69	NA
<i>April Aardvark</i> By Nathaniel Moncrieff 16 – 26 October	13	1183	70	87	NA

TOURING					
<i>Prima Facie</i> Written by Suzie Miller Directed by Lee Lewis Riverside Theatres Parramatta Canberra Theatre Centre	5 4	1024 1634	82 59	96 67	NA NA
<i>Splinter</i> Written by Hilary Bell Directed by Lee Lewis Hothouse Theatre, Albury	7	576	42	51	NA
<i>Since Ali Died</i> By Omar Musa Directed by Anthea Williams Riverside Theatres Parramatta Canberra Theatre Centre Arts Centre Melbourne Brisbane Festival Adelaide OzAsia Festival	4 4 6 5 2	297 339 1003 246 211	76 84 33 NA 44	84 92 44 NA 60	NA NA NA NA NA

ARTIST DEVELOPMENT

Griffin 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. This is the most successful theatre artist development program in the country.

In 2019 the Studio artists were Emily Havea and Tasnim Hossain.

Griffin Scratch

22 September 2019

In addition to Griffin Studio, Griffin Scratch returned in 2019 with an eclectic array of writers, performance makers and theatrical marvels. We invited a new collection of exciting artists to the Stables to present an afternoon of bold, challenging and ambitious ideas for the stage — a glimpse of early drafts, ideas in development and outright experiments. Griffin Scratch showcased never-before-seen works from **Jessica Bellamy, Emily Havea, Tasnim Hossain, Phil Spencer, and Oliver Twist**. Featuring performers **Thomas Fonua, Amy Hack, Claire Lovering, Nikhil Singh, Vaishnavi Suryaprakash, Sela Vai, Aanisa Vylet, Michael Whalley**.

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 94 submissions received in 2019. The Award in 2019 went to Mark Rogers for *Superheroes*, which will be presented as part of the Griffin 2020 Main Season program.

The Lysicrates Prize

The Lysicrates Prize, now in its fifth year, provides a platform for established writers to develop new work. The competition is open to professional playwrights, who submit the first act of a new play. The winner of the prize receives a full commission of \$15,000 and the runners up each receive \$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 2019, 46 submissions were received. The winner, voted by the audience members, was Jane Bodie's *Tell Me You Love Me*.

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 2019 to encourage participation and access points:

Griffin Ambassadors

In 2019, this education scheme introduced 93 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 run by leading theatre practitioners. Initiated in 2004, the program engages students from across greater Sydney and as far as Wollongong, Goulburn, Dural, Katoomba, Bathurst and Terrigal to participate in this highly successful audience development initiative.

Griffin Up Late

During the run of each Main Season production, Griffin programmed a handpicked collection of singers, joke-makers and storytellers for a post-show session in the Stables. The events featured four to five artists from a range of disciplinary and cultural backgrounds. The focus was on music and comedy, rather than drama, with the intent of broadening our audience demographic without competing with our primary creative ambitions. This initiative helps build new audiences as well as maximising the use of the theatre.

General Auditions

These were held in November 2019, in order to give new and emerging actors who are passionate about Australian plays access to Griffin. 40 actors attended the General Auditions in 2019.

APPENDIX 1 - 2019 PROGRAM OF ACTIVITIES

PROJECT ONE – Dead Cat Bounce

Dead Cat Bounce

By Mary Rachel Brown

SBW Stables Theatre, Kings Cross: 22 February – 6 April

As if their 20-year age gap wasn't trouble enough, Matilda's fighting for space with Gabe's long-time bedfellows: misery, booze and writerly angst. She's not even convinced he's over his ex-girlfriend and publisher Angela, who was hooked on picking up his pieces.

If Gabe wants to get sober, he'll have to abandon his image as tragic writer betrothed to the bottle. And if Angela's really trying to let Gabe go, like her partner Tony needs her to, she should probably say goodbye to Gabe's wretched cat—which she's somehow *still* looking after.

Mary Rachel Brown (*The Dapto Chaser*) wields her razor-sharp wit to ask painfully familiar questions around romance and addiction: how do we find the strength to be loved? Why do we cling to people intent on pushing us away? And how do we shake off the past, when the bastard won't stop tailing us?

Teaming up Brown's deft understanding of human fallibility with director Mitchell Butel's comedic expertise, *Dead Cat Bounce* finds humour in the everyday muck, with characters that hit rock bottom... and keep digging.

Director Mitchell Butel

Designer Genevieve Blanchett

Lighting Designer Alexander Berlage

Composer & Sound Designer Nate Edmondson

Stage Manager Michelle Sverdloff

Stage Management Secondment Jennifer Jackson

With Kate Cheel, Lucia Mastrantone, Johnny Nasser, Josh Quong Tart

Outcomes

Dead Cat Bounce was presented at the Stables for a six-week season of 45 performances to an audience of 2,675. The show achieved 56% paid attendance and 65% total attendance, with box office target reaching 76% of target.

Critical Response

"*Dead Cat Bounce* is a reflective recoil; a whiplash interrogation of the nurtured and sustaining addictions harboured inside an allowance to love." ★★★★★ Judith Greenaway, [ArtsHub](#)

PROJECT TWO – Prima Facie

Prima Facie

By Suzie Miller

SBW Stables Theatre, Kings Cross: 17 May – 22 June

The Playhouse, Canberra Theatre Centre: 26 – 29 June

Lennox Theatre, Riverside Theatres Parramatta: 3 – 6 July

Winner of the 2018 Griffin Award, *Prima Facie* is an indictment of the Australian legal system's failure to provide reliable pathways to justice for women in rape, sexual assault or harassment cases. It's a work of fiction, but one that could have been ripped from the headlines of any paper, any day of the week, so common you could cry.

Sheridan Harbridge stars as Tessa—a criminal lawyer at the top of her game who knows the law permits no room for emotion.

To win, you just need to believe in the rules. And Tessa loves to win, even when defending clients accused of sexual assault. Her court-ordained duty trumps her feminism. But when she finds herself on the other side of the bar, Tessa is forced into the shadows of doubt she's so ruthlessly cast over other women.

Turning Sydney's courts of law into a different kind of stage, Suzie Miller's (*Sunset Strip, Caress/Ache*) taut, rapid-fire and gripping one-woman show exposes the shortcomings of a patriarchal justice system where it's her word against his.

Maybe we need a new system.

Director Lee Lewis

Designer Renée Mulder

Lighting Designer Trent Suidgeest

Sound Designer & Composer Paul Charlier

Stage Manager Khym Scott

With Sheridan Harbridge

Outcomes

Prima Facie was presented at the Stables for a five-week season of 39 performances to an audience of 3,478. The show achieved 95% paid attendance and 104%¹ total attendance, with box office target reaching 138% of target.

Critical Response

"Sheridan Harbridge is superb as Tessa. Combative, controlled and clear-sighted in the first half, her decimation in the second is all the more gut-wrenching in this intense production directed by Lee Lewis." ★★★★★ Joyce Morgan, Sydney Morning Herald

"Miller's writing is sharp, urgently precise, and yet still evokes beauty; it's a steely play overlaid with delicate, insightful emotional work. In the hands of Sheridan Harbridge, a performer who invites you into her characters' inner life without hesitation, it soars... the play is a living document, a map for change. It's theatre that holds our hands and says: there could be justice for those one in three. We can change the law." ★★★★★ Cassie Tongue, Audrey Journal

PROJECT THREE – City of Gold

City of Gold

By Meyne Wyatt

Billie Brown Theatre, Queensland Theatre: 29 June – 20 July

SBW Stables Theatre, Kings Cross: 26 July – 31 August

Young actor Breythe left Kalgoorlie dreaming of a dazzling career. Now he's found himself starring in a controversial Australia Day ad that pays big, but draws the ire of his mob. Racism is subtle but persistent in an industry where directors request he darken up for 'authenticity' and typecast him as 'tracker,' 'drinker' or 'thief.'

Returning home, Breythe's just as alienated from country and lore. His cultural capital distances him from furious brother Mateo and activist sister Carina, all of them struggling with regret and responsibility after their father's death.

Meyne Wyatt burst onto the acting scene in 2011's *Silent Disco* at Griffin, going on to grace our screens (*The Sapphires*, *Redfern Now*, *Mystery Road*) and star on the Broadway stage (*Peter Pan*). Now he returns to the Stables as a playwright who is as courageous as he is merciless. It may be unclear where character ends and creator begins.

¹ Due to the popularity of the performance, a waitlist was introduced to sell uncollected tickets at the point of lockout. This extra revenue allowed us to exceed our maximum projected ticket value by 4%.

City of Gold is a howl of rage at the injustice, inequality and wilful amnesia of this country's 21st century. It's an urgent play for our moment from a vital new voice. As Childish Gambino sings across the Pacific 'This is America,' Meyne Wyatt calls back loudly 'This is Australia.'

A co-production with Queensland Theatre

Director Isaac Drandic

Assistant Director Shari Indriani

Set Designers Simone Tesorieri & Simona Cosentini

Lighting Designer Jason Glenwright

Composer & Sound Designer Tony Brumpton

Costume Designer Nathalie Ryner

Dramaturg Paige Rattray

Fight Director Nigel Poulton

Directorial Observation Hannah Belanszky

Stage Manager Khym Scott

Assistant Stage Manager Ella Griffin

Acknowledgements Uncle Gary Cooper, Aunty Rayma (McGrath) Morrison

With Jeremy Ambrum, Mathew Cooper, Maitland Schnaars, Shari Sebbens, Anthony Standish, Christopher Stollery, Meyne Wyatt

Outcomes

City of Gold was presented at the Stables for a five-week season of 39 performances to an audience of 3,515. The show achieved 89% paid attendance and 96% total attendance, with box office target reaching 137% of target.

Critical Response

"...fast-paced and full of contrasts, a perfect tempest of heartbreak and rage, guilt and grief. This is contemporary Australian theatre at its finest – urgent, honest, and unmissable." ★★★★★^{1/2} Elise Lawrence, *Limelight*

"The swift pacing is masterful and the dialogue – peppered with Wongi words – is a joy." ★★★★★ Kate Hennessy, *Sydney Morning Herald*

"It goes for the throat. It goes for the heart. It's breathtaking." ★★★★★ Cassie Tongue, *Time Out*

PROJECT FOUR - Splinter

Splinter

By Hilary Bell

SBW Stables Theatre, Kings Cross: 6 September – 12 October

Hothouse Theatre, Albury: 15 – 19 October

Tales of missing children have always held a terrible fascination.

Celtic folklore chilled the bones of many a superstitious new mother with stories of babies stolen from their beds by envious fairies, changelings left in their place. These days, when a child disappears the media grabs us by the throat and won't let us go. These disappearances haunt us for days, weeks, years.

In the dark of a Sydney winter, Hilary Bell's disquieting and downright chilling thriller *Splinter* channels tabloid news and primal fears alike.

A couple are reunited with their missing daughter. Fierce love has sustained them through her unbearable absence. But now she's home...something just isn't right. How do they stop their imaginations running wild? Maybe if they return to the beach house where they spent their happiest summers, they'll return to their old selves.

Revisiting the sinister territories of *Wolf Lullaby*, *Splinter* reunites Bell's supreme atmospheric with another powerhouse performance from sister, Lucy (*Speaking in Tongues*, *Dreams in White*) as a mother forced to confront the unthinkable. Directed by Lee Lewis and starring Lucy Bell and Simon Gleeson, this claustrophobic chamber piece questions how well we know our families. Up close and intimate in the Stables, there's nowhere to hide.

Director Lee Lewis
Designer Tobhiyah Stone Feller
Lighting Designer Benjamin Brockman
Composer & Sound Designer Alyx Dennison
Video Designer Mic Gruchy
Stage Manager Rebecca Poulter
With Lucy Bell, Simon Gleeson

Outcomes

Splinter was presented at the Stables for a five-week season of 32 performances to an audience of 2,782. The show achieved 92% paid attendance and 98% total attendance, with box office target reaching 106% of target.

Critical Response

"Hilary Bell's lyrical prose orchestrates the gothic, leaving us suspended over the abyss." ★★★★★ Harriet Cunningham, The Sydney Morning Herald

"Two superb performances, led by the playwright's sister Lucy Bell, draw the audience deep into a labyrinth where there are no easy answers...Recommended without reservation." ★★★★★ Diana Simmonds, Stage Noise

"Lewis has drawn wonderfully febrile performances from the two excellent actors and there are little moments where the disquiet really is palpable." Jo Litson, Limelight

PROJECT FIVE – First Love is the Revolution

First Love is the Revolution

By Rita Kalnejais

SBW Stables Theatre, Kings Cross: 1 November – 14 December

This is a play about hunger and desire. It's *Romeo and Juliet* pushed to deranged extremes, where the unlikely sweethearts are a 14-year old boy and a young fox with brutal birthrights.

Rdeca's whole family have fleas. Her mum is pushing her into making her first kill, a snivelling mole, before she's ready.

Basti is being bullied at school by kids who call him a shrimp. His dad is too busy flirting with the neighbour to be of any real help.

Beneath the light of a full moon, Basti captures Rdeca, and so begins a starcross'd romance between hunter and prey.

Rita Kalnejais (*BC*, *Babyteeth*) makes a blood-splattered return from London with a play that's blisteringly funny, provocative and just plain freaky. *First Love is the Revolution* is *Fantastic Mr Fox* if Margaret Atwood wrote the Netflix adaptation.

Director Lee Lewis
Designer Ella Butler
Lighting Designer Trent Suidgeest
Composer & Sound Designer David Bergman
Stage Manager Khym Scott
With Amy Hack, Rebecca Massey, Bardiya McKinnon, Sarah Meacham, Guy Simon, Matthew Whittet

Outcomes

First Love if the Revolution was presented at the Stables for a six-week season of 44 performances to an audience of 3,018. The show achieved 63% paid attendance and 72% total attendance, with box office target reaching 84% of target.

Critical Response

“A breath of fresh air – zippy with kinetic energy, endlessly amusing and very endearing” ★★★★★ Debbie Zhou, TimeOut

“Playful, moving and shocking. Above all, it makes you constantly check in on your assumptions. What is love? What is human?” ★★★★★½ Harriet Cunningham, Sydney Morning Herald

“One of the most eccentric and beguiling coming-of-age stories you will ever encounter.” ★★★★★½ Jason Blake, Audrey Journal

PROJECT SIX – SPECIAL EVENT

Since Ali Died

By Omar Musa

SBW Stables Theatre, Kings Cross: 7 – 19 January

Riverside Theatres Parramatta: 22 – 25 January

Canberra Theatre Centre: 29 January – 2 February

Arts Centre Melbourne: 15 – 18 August

Brisbane Festival: 9 – 15 September

Adelaide OzAsia Festival: 1 – 3 November

Rapper, poet and award-winning author Omar Musa brings his electrifying show *Since Ali Died* back to the Stables after a triumphant sold-out run at Griffin’s inaugural Batch Festival.

Using the death of his hero Muhammad Ali as a lyrical springboard, Musa dives into a furious torrent of poetry, story and song, confronting everything from suburban violence to lost love to his Malaysian heritage and the dark realities of growing up as a brown-skinned Muslim boy in Queanbeyan.

A livewire, hypnotic and totally unmissable hour of theatre.

“The show unfurls like the river imagery in Musa’s evocative script: borne on a central, unstoppable current, fluid and fluent in a style of its own making.”

★★★★ Time Out

Director Anthea Williams

Written and performed by Omar Musa

Guest Performer Sarah Corry

Outcomes

Since Ali Died was presented at the Stables for 14 performances to an audience of 1,022. The show achieved 71% paid attendance and 75% total attendance.

PROJECT SEVEN – SPECIAL EVENT

Love and Anger

By Betty Grumble

SBW Stables Theatre, Kings Cross: 21 – 26 January

A womanifesto, call to arms and long, hard kiss from surreal showgurl, obscene beauty queen and totem critter, Betty Grumble.

Witness her ecosexually charged protest party of dancing dissent, disco and deep push back-ery, where pleasure is a radical act and the body a bloody love letter. *Love and Anger* is a “reclamation of the feminine spirit in all its juices, jiggles and joy” (Edfest Mag).

“A Revelation.”
The Age

Winner Innovation in Form, Green Room Awards 2017

Nominee Best Cabaret Performer, Helpmann Awards 2017

Winner Best Cabaret, Fringe World 2017, 2018

Created and performed by Betty Grumble

Set and Costume Designer Emma Maye Gibson (and her unknowing mother)

Sound Designer Emma Maye Gibson

Including music by Stereogamous

Outcomes

Love and Anger was presented at the Stables for 6 performances to an audience of 586. The show achieved 82% paid attendance and 93% total attendance.

PROJECT EIGHT – SPECIAL EVENT

Exhale

By Black Birds

SBW Stables Theatre, Kings Cross: 9 – 13 April

Interdisciplinary and intercultural, *Exhale* is about indigeneity, accountability and trauma. It explores the relationships and boundaries forged between Indigenous cultures on foreign lands; negotiations between environmental and urban lifestyles; and the ability to heal through storytelling.

Exhale is the creation of Black Birds—the Sydney collective fast gaining kudos for energetic, uplifting performances that astutely dissect the female Black and Brown experience in Australia. Incorporating art forms including spoken word, movement, dance, song and story, Black Birds’ work is at once intimate and unexpected, challenging and empowering.

Created & Performed by Ayesha Ash, Emele Ugavule

Lighting Designer Amber Silk

Choreographer Sela Vai

Stage Manager Madelaine Osborn

Outcomes

Exhale was presented at the Stables for 6 performances to an audience of 461. The show achieved 60% paid attendance and 73% total attendance.

PROJECT NINE – SPECIAL PROJECT

The Happy Prince

Little Ones Theatre

SBW Stables Theatre, Kings Cross: 25 June – 6 July

From the company that brought *Merciless Gods* to the Griffin stage comes a queer re-telling of one of Oscar Wilde’s most beloved and tender stories.

Little Ones Theatre's award-winning *The Happy Prince* is a playful and poetic visual fable about the earth-shattering love that grows between a golden statue and a spritely swallow. Directed by Stephen Nicolazzo (Best Director, 2018 Green Room Awards) and brought to life by unforgettable performances from Catherine Davies and Janine Watson.

"Detailed, sumptuous and authentically sensuous."

The Australian

"A flawless little jewel."

★★★★1/2 The Age

Originally developed and presented by La Mama

Director Stephen Nicolazzo

Set & Costume Designer Eugyeene Teh

Lighting Designer Katie Sfetkidis

Composition & Sound Designer Daniel Nixon

Producer Little Ones Theatre, Jo Porter

With Catherine Davies, Janine Watson

Outcomes

Happy Prince was presented at the Stables for 10 performances to an audience of 880. The show achieved 78% paid attendance and 84% total attendance.

PROJECT TEN – SPECIAL PROJECT

Glittery Clittery

By Fringe Wives Club

SBW Stables Theatre, Kings Cross: 8 – 20 July

You're invited to join the all-singing, all-dancing Cliterati: a not-so-secret society dedicated to combating misogyny and oppression, fuelled by champagne and armed with a killer disco soundtrack.

Part explosive comedy cabaret, part interactive club night, this fiercely funny show by three comedy goddesses brandishes bedazzled weapons of original live music, games, glamour and epic dance moves to wage war on the oppressive forces of bigotry, sexism and homophobia.

"An all-singing, sparkle-filled show with a strong message of female empowerment set to cracking tunes...irresistibly energetic."

★★★★ Chortle

Winner Best Cabaret, Adelaide Fringe Festival 2018

Director Clare Bartholomew

Designers Alicia Fernandez, Alice Edgley

With Laura Frew, Victoria Falconer, Tessa Waters

Outcomes

Glittery Clittery was presented at the Stables for 12 performances to an audience of 870. The show achieved 71% paid attendance and 75% total attendance.

PROJECT ELEVEN – BATCH FESTIVAL

A three-week festival of alternative writing that will introduce Griffin audiences to exciting new Australian voices. We're inviting an exceptional line-up of storytellers, poets, comedy artists and non-traditional performance makers to take over the Stables. To top it off, the foyer will be transformed into a curated, vibrant space with live

entertainment—and if it all gets too exciting you can refresh yourself with hand-crafted beers supplied by Batch Brewing Company.

SBW Stables Theatre, Kings Cross: 22 April – 11 May

Program:

You're Safe till 2024 by David Finnigan: Like the strangest David Attenborough documentary you've ever seen, told through sounds, stories and beats, this work explores where we are, how we got here and where we are headed.

Book Club for Reclusive Dance Hall Queens by Rebekah Robertson: Outrageously cutting and comedic, this work melds together stand-up comedy, traditional modes of Caribbean storytelling and poetry, all underscored by a thumping original queer dance hall soundtrack.

You've Got Mail by Sarah Hadley and Ang Collins: Part performance art, part theatre; a tight hour of laughs, so-bad-they're-good Hollywood tropes, and cyberfeminism.

A Little History Play by Caleb Lewis: brings together theatre, indie role-playing games, and board game design into three glorious nights of revolution.

Unite Project (ongoing) by Todd Fuller: a participatory artwork surveying a range of responses to same-sex love and marriage equality.

Me and My Mother, Singing by Oleg Pupovac: a one-man show which explores identity, otherness and one man's eternal search for the perfect painting of snow.

Lady Tabouli by James Elazzi: Unapologetic, piercing and deliciously camp, an unflinching look at a life desperate for freedom, truth and a little more mascara.

Tales of an Afronaut by wāni Le Frère: a journey through the world of a third-culture generation, delivering a raw performance of vulnerability, resilience and honesty in an evening of spoken word poetry.

Lou Wall's Drag Race by Lou Wall: an award-winning, binary smashing extravaganza, featuring Melbourne's fiercest and freshest Drag Royalty.

Don't Knock Your Granny by Older Women's Network Theatre Group: a highly entertaining socio-political parody cabaret which brings elder abuse out of the shadows and into the spotlight.

Never Let Me Go by Adriano Cappelletta: dramatises a tumultuous decade that saw the soldiers of AIDS fight fear with enlightenment and love.

Savage (WILD) by Aanisa Vylet: a mashup of primal female storytelling, drums, belly dancing, physical theatre and song.

Grumble 'n' Friends by Betty Grumble: A genre-smashing variety evening that whirls the worlds of performance art, club art, art art and heart art together in a womb of possibility.

Griffin Up Late: a special Batch edition.

Never Trust a Creative City by Too Rude (Emma McManus & Maria White): A little bit TED talk, a little bit buddy comedy and a little bit dystopian science fiction, this piece untangles the complex relationship between artists and gentrification.

Outcomes

Batch Festival was presented at the Stables for 28 performances to an audience of 2,073. The show achieved 61% paid attendance and 71% total attendance.

ATYP @ GRIFFIN

It makes sense, doesn't it? The country's new writing theatre connecting with our newest talents. In 2019 Griffin welcomed back **Australian Theatre for Young People** (ATYP) to the Stables stage. At the forefront of emerging practice, ATYP presented two world premieres:

Intersection 2019: Arrival

30 January – 16 February 2019

A collection of short plays written by some of Australia's most exciting young writers.

April Aardvark

By Nathaniel Moncrieff

16 – 26 October 2019

EZ and his gang of bullies have created a fake social media account to inflict torment and misery on their fellow Middle Schoolers. To everyone's horror, she is the greatest bully that ever lived.