

GRIFFIN THEATRE COMPANY AND  
SEYMOUR CENTRE PRESENT

**GRIFFIN  
THEATRE  
COMPANY**

# PRIMA FACIE

**BY SUZIE MILLER**

**REGINALD THEATRE,  
SEYMOUR CENTRE**

**23 JUNE – 10 JULY 2021**

DIRECTOR  
**LEE LEWIS**

WITH  
**SHERIDAN HARBRIDGE**

DESIGNER  
**RENÉE MULDER**

LIGHTING DESIGNER  
**TRENT SUIDGEEST**

SOUND DESIGNER  
& COMPOSER

**PAUL CHARLIER**

STAGE MANAGER  
**KHYM SCOTT**



Griffin would like to acknowledge and thank the generous support of our 2019 Production Patrons and Production Partners.

Government partners



Presented with

**SEYMOUR**

Production patron

GIRGENSOHN  
FOUNDATION

Griffin's Production  
Partner program

**PRODUCTION  
PARTNER**

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

---

# PLAYWRIGHT 'S NOTE

***Prima Facie* - A (Latin) legal term meaning: On the face of it.**

***This production is dedicated to all the women who have bravely approached me following the play's premiere season and shared their stories with me. Courageous, confident, inspiring women.***

The idea behind *Prima Facie* has been playing out in my mind since my law school days, years before I was a playwright. It was there waiting for me to find the courage to write, and for the right social environment to provide a space for it. In light of the #MeToo movement, *Prima Facie* was able to be realised. Years of practicing as a human rights and criminal defence lawyer did nothing to silence my feminist questioning of the legal system, because while I firmly believe that 'innocent until proven guilty' is the bedrock of human rights, I always felt that its application in sexual assault cases served to undermine rather than to uphold any real fairness.

The legal system is shaped by the male experience: its cases decided by generations of male judges, its laws legislated by generations of white male politicians, and built against a backdrop where women were categorised once as the property of their husbands, brothers, fathers. So sexual assault law does not fit the lived experience of women. While innocence/guilt focuses on whether the (usually) male person reasonably believes there was consent or not provided by the (usually) female person, it has always been the victims, (usually) women, who are on trial, cross-examined and made to relive their humiliating experience. Yet significantly, research has shown that women giving

evidence in sexual assault cases are just not believed! Even by other women.

To report a sexual crime, attend all of the court attendances, show up for the prosecution, be cross-examined and publicly written about in the media, takes extraordinary courage. It is not a short process either, and, ironically, indicates an immense faith that the system will be fair. But does the legal system deserve this faith? Or does it silence women further? How can society and therefore the law evolve to reform this area of the legal system?

If one in three women are being sexually assaulted, and only one in ten of those women report it, with only one in that ten securing a conviction, there is something deeply wrong with the system. We need to recognise sexual assault in its many manifestations, and not only in the easily recognisable stranger predator—because sexual assault occurs on dates, in relationships, between friends, at parties and in unexpected social situations. It is everywhere.

We have now seen, in these last months, a devastating series of sexual assault allegations in our country's highest halls of power. I shudder when I hear that the sexual assault survivor is troubled or emotional—because of course they are, and it's surely irrelevant to their truth-telling. This is not to say that we should damn anyone on an accusation.

---

---

In this play, the audience see the sexual assault as it happens, then sit through the legal twisting of evidence that makes the survivor of the sexual assault appear to be a liar. In this story, the audiences are not the judge and jury, but witnesses to what happened, and then to what happened in the legal system to betray a woman's truth.

When *Prima Facie* was first staged at Griffin—Australia's beloved playwrights' theatre—one performance was dedicated to an entire audience of legally-educated women who worked in law, politics or policy. The audience was made up of women judges, QCs, SCs, barristers, solicitors and female politicians from both state and federal parliaments. All of us women. An extraordinary energy in that room. As one of the creatives, I sat on stage afterwards. What followed was a long and exciting discussion playing out at an authentic intersection between art and social change. Later that week, members of the NSW Law Reform Commission also attended a weekday matinée.

One night, Her Excellency, the Honourable Margaret Beazley, the Governor of NSW, attended with staff, and later I would discuss the ideas behind the play with her. Significantly, we also had an influx of boys' schools attend in groups accompanied by teachers and parents. The compassion and curiosity expressed by those young men after the show offered a true beacon of hope for future generations.

When this play was awarded the prestigious national award, the Griffin Award, followed by three AWGIES, it proved to me that women's stories

really do matter. Having the enormously talented Lee Lewis directing this work, and with its premiere season starring the dynamic Sheridan Harbridge, made for a perfect team. *Prima Facie* is now back up and running post-COVID, with the same perfect team and with further layers of context after years now of #MeToo discussion and the ongoing interrogations and calls for accountability in the highest offices of our land.

Most importantly, this play is back on our stages because of everyone who works at Griffin, those who sit on its Board, and its donors. Thanks also to the brilliant creative team behind *Prima Facie*, and the Seymour Centre, Queensland Theatre, HotHouse Theatre and Geelong Arts Centre, and their staff. It truly takes a village!

My beloved mother, Elaine, died just before the opening night of the premiere season of *Prima Facie* in 2019. She was my biggest fan and most enthusiastic audience member. I miss her every day and know she would be extremely thrilled to be part of the ongoing conversation around it.

**Suzie Miller**  
Writer

---

# A NOTE FROM THE LEGAL WORLD

*Prima Facie* was first performed in the wake of the #MeToo movement, and, like that movement, it shows the power of storytelling in the face of injustice... Bringing individual complaints before the law, on its own, is not enough. Law reforms, hard won, unravel before our eyes as they are unstitched by the legal system. Tessa, strong, clever and skilled, says that 'something has to change', but what?

*Prima Facie* itself offers part of the answer. We can change the law as much as we like, but until the experiential material it is made from changes, those laws are easily eroded. The shape that law takes depends on the stories that are heard and the harms that are seen. As #MeToo and other hashtag movements put violence against women centre stage, some men expressed surprise that harassment was so common an experience, even as it was happening all around them. We have to stop treating every act of violence against women anew, as if there is nothing pervasive or patterned about it. We have to tell our stories everywhere, at once, together.

The #MeToo movement was powerful because when one woman tells her story she can be pilloried for it, or dismissed, but when everyone tells their stories, they have a different quality of power, a cultural power. When women collectively tell their stories, and when those stories enter our cultural forms—social media, television, books and theatre—we are changing the culture in which law is embedded, and the material from which it is made.

*Prima Facie* demonstrates how that can happen. It's the story of one woman, and the two very different worlds of law she inhabits. It is also the story of the 99 women out of every 100 who are sexually assaulted and who are left out of law. The gap between the two worlds of meaning in *Prima Facie* needs to be closed so that women's experiences become the stuff of which law is made. Since we made the law, as Tessa points out, we can choose to make it differently, making our own stories—our own lives—into law.

**Karen O'Connell**

Associate Professor of Law,  
University of Technology Sydney

---

---

# DIRECTOR'S NOTE

There is nothing new about this play. It is so familiar. That is what makes it so distressing. It is fiction. But it is based on a key kernel of reality that I have personally lived. That you have lived. That the woman sitting next to you has lived. That your mother, your grandmother, your best friend has lived. This is the reality of so many everyday violences, of absolutely ordinary awful moments, that it is almost journalistic. It is almost verbatim. It is almost documentary. It does not exaggerate or embellish.

*Prima Facie* is a new play to add to the chorus of voices in Australia today protesting that the current legal system is incapable of delivering safe pathways to justice for survivors of sexual harassment and sexual assault. It lays bare a process which re-traumatises, stigmatises, isolates and mostly silences these survivors. This play is an appeal for a new system. We have the capacity to make change. Where is the resistance and how do we wear it away?

Suzie Miller is a scientist who evolved into a lawyer who evolved into a playwright. Her stories are created with a breadth of lived experience that gives her not only the courage of her convictions but also the courage of her emotions. She writes with a language that has struggled to find a place on the traditionally male stage that is mainstage theatre. She is one of an extraordinary number of female playwrights who have continued to create despite not being produced by major companies. This country owes them a cultural debt for their persistence in representing non-dominant voices in the theatrical landscape.

This play won the 2018 Griffin Award. It would not have won ten years ago because the audience did not want to hear this story then. I hope this story will not win ten years from now because it is redundant. I hope.

**Lee Lewis**  
Director



---

## BIOGRAPHIES



**SUZIE MILLER**  
PLAYWRIGHT

Suzie Miller is a contemporary international playwright and screenwriter drawn to complex personal stories often exploring injustice. Her credits include: for Griffin: *Caress/Ache*, *Prima Facie*; for Griffin Independent: *Sunset Strip*; for Black Swan State Theatre Company: *DUST*; for La Boite: *The Mathematics of Longing*, *Medea*; for Performing Lines WA: *Overexposed*; for Perth International Arts Festival: *Driving Into Walls*, *OneFiveZeroSeven*; for Queensland Opera: *Snow White*; for Ransom Theatre Northern Ireland & Seymour Centre/Riverside Theatres: *Transparency*. Other international credits include: for Assembly Rooms for Theatre 503 (UK): *SOLD*; for the Cherry Tree Theatre (USA): *Reasonable Doubt*; for the National Theatre of Scotland: *Velvet Evening Séance*; and for Theatre Gargantua (Canada): *The Sacrifice Zone*. Among other awards, Suzie was awarded the Kit Denton Fellowship in 2009, as well as the 2018 Griffin Award, the 2020 AWGIE for Drama, and the 2020 David Williamson Prize for Outstanding Theatre Writing for *Prima Facie*. She is currently under commission by theatre companies nationally and internationally, and is developing several works for screen, including a feature film adaptation of *Prima Facie* (Bunya Productions/Participant Media USA).

---



**LEE LEWIS**  
DIRECTOR

Lee is the Artistic Director of Queensland Theatre and one of Australia's leading directors. For Griffin she has directed: *The Bleeding Tree* (Best Director at the 2016 Helpmann Awards), *Is There Something Wrong With That Lady?*, *Family Values*, *First Love is the Revolution*, *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 Wanderland*, *The Bull*, *The Moon and the Coronet of Stars*, *The Call*, *A Hoax*, *The Nightwatchman*. Other directing credits include: for Griffin/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 Queensland Theatre: *Mouthpiece*, *Our Town*; for Sydney Theatre Company: *Mary Stuart*, *Honour*, *Love- Lies-Bleeding*, *ZEBRA!*; for Darwin Festival: *Highway of Lost Hearts*.

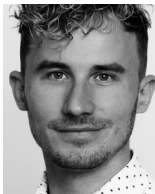
---



**RENÉE MULDER**  
DESIGNER

Renée is an award-winning set and costume designer and Design Director at Queensland Theatre. Her theatre design credits include: for Griffin: *The Bleeding Tree, The Boys, Dogged, Prima Facie, Superheroes*; for Griffin Independent: *The Pigeons*; for Griffin and La Boite: *A Hoax*; for Griffin and Queensland Theatre: *Rice*; for Bell Shakespeare: *Romeo and Juliet*; for La Boite: *As You Like It, Ruben Guthrie, I Love You, Bro*; for Melbourne Theatre Company: *Arbus and West, Home, I'm Darling*; for Queensland Theatre: *An Octoroon, Boy Swallows Universe, Fat Pig, Mouthpiece, Nearer the Gods, Sacre Bleu!, Triple X*; for Sydney Theatre Company: *Actor on a Box: The Luck Child, Banging Denmark, Battle of Waterloo, The Beauty Queen of Leenane, Black is the New White, Dance Better at Parties, Grand Horizons, Hamlet: Prince of Skidmark, In a Heart Beat, The Long Way Home, Mariage Blanc, Mrs Warren's Profession, Orlando, Perplex, The Splinter, The Torrents*; for Sydney Theatre Company and Queensland Theatre: *The Effect*; and for Theatre Forward: *The Sneeze*. As Costume Designer, her credits include: for Sydney Theatre Company: *Children of the Sun, Chimerica, Endgame, The Harp in the South Part One and Part Two, Playing Beatie Bow, Saint Joan, Top Girls*; for Sydney Theatre Company and State Theatre Company of South Australia: *Vere (Faith)*. As Set Designer, her credits include: for Sydney Theatre Company and La Boite: *Edward Gant's Amazing Feats of Loneliness*. As Associate Designer, her credits include: for Sydney Theatre Company: *Cyrano de Bergerac*. Renée's film credits include, as Co-Production Designer: *A Parachute Falling in Siberia*; and as part of the armour art department: *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. Renée was Sydney Theatre Company's Resident Designer from 2012-2014, and was a member of Queensland Theatre's National Artistic Team from 2016-2017. She is a graduate of NIDA and Queensland College of Art.

---



**TRENT SUIDGEEST**  
LIGHTING DESIGNER

Trent Suidgeest's lighting design credits include: for Griffin: *The Feather in the Web, First Love is the Revolution, The Homosexuals or 'Faggots', Kill Climate Deniers, Prima Facie, Wicked Sisters*; for Belvoir/Black Swan State Theatre Company: *The Sapphires* (which toured to Barbican, London and Daegu Opera House, South Korea); for Black Swan State Theatre Company: over 20 mainstage productions, recently including *Oklahoma!, Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*; for Black Swan State Theatre Company/Melbourne Theatre Company: *National Interest*; for Darlinghurst Theatre Company: *The Rise and Fall of Little Voice*; for Ensemble Theatre: *Black Cockatoo, Folk*; for Global Creatures: *Muriel's Wedding The Musical* (also at Sydney Theatre Company), for Hayes Theatre Company: *Calamity Jane* (including Australian Tour and Belvoir), *Darlinghurst Nights, Gypsy, Only Heaven Knows, The Rise and Disguise of Elizabeth R, The View UpStairs, Young Frankenstein*; 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

---

---

Redline Productions: *Betty Blokk-Buster Reimagined*; for Sydney Theatre Company: *Accidental Death of an Anarchist, Appropriate, Hay Fever, Talk*. In 2015, with a Mike Walsh Fellowship, Trent assisted Jan Versweyveld and Ivo van Hove at Toneelgroep Amsterdam on their Shakespearian epic *Kings of War* at Wiener Festwochen.

---



**PAUL CHARLIER**

COMPOSER AND SOUND DESIGNER

Paul started out with industrial bands SoliPsiK and SPK and composing for Anthill Theatre, Melbourne. He has since worked on nearly two hundred productions, including: for Griffin: *Prima Facie*; for Belvoir: *A Room of One's Own, Aftershocks, Buried Child, Dance of Death, Diary of a Madman* (for which he received a Sydney Theatre Award), *Faith Healer, Hamlet, The Lieutenant of Inishmore, Suddenly Last Summer*; for Force Majeure: *Already Elsewhere*; for Malthouse/Sydney Opera House: *Honour Bound* (for which he received a Sydney Theatre Award); for Sydney Theatre Company: *A Streetcar Named Desire* (for which he received a Sydney Theatre Award and a Helpmann Award), *Copenhagen, Love-Lies-Bleeding, Tot Mom, Victory*. International credits include: *Deuce* on Broadway; for DV8 Physical Theatre (UK): *The Cost of Living*; for National Theatre (UK): *Afterlife*; for Out of Joint (UK): *Dreams of Violence*. Paul's film and television credits include: as Composer: *Adam Goodes – The Final Quarter, Aftershocks, Candy, The Comedian, Last Ride, Suzy & the Simple Man*; as Music Supervisor: *Holding the Man*; as Sound Designer: *Looking for Alibrandi*; as Sound Designer and Music Mixer: *Paul Kelly – Stories of Me* (for which he received an Australian Screen Sound Guild Award). Paul wrote and produced the ABC Radio features *A Plan for Eurydice* and *The Touring Machine* (in partnership with MoCA, Los Angeles). In 2017, he co-directed the polymedia surveillance work *WIRELESS*. He is currently composing for Marrugeku on their production of *Jurrungu Ngan-ga (Straight Talk)*.

---



**KHYM SCOTT**

STAGE MANAGER

Khym has previously worked for Griffin Theatre Company as Stage Manager: *City of Gold, Family Values, First Love is the Revolution, Festival of New Writing, Girl in Tan Boots, Good Cook, Friendly, Clean., Kill Climate Deniers, Prima Facie, The Serpent's Table, Superheroes, The Witches*; as Broadcast Director: *Griffin Award 2020, Griffin Lock-In*; and for Griffin/Bell Shakespeare: *The Misanthrope*. Other recent credits include: for Belvoir/Malthouse: *Barbara and the Camp Dogs*; for Belvoir: *The Cherry Orchard, The Dance of Death, Fangirls, 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 the 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.

---





**SHERIDAN HARBRIDGE**

TESSA

Sheridan has performed in Griffin's productions of *Jump for Jordan*, *Kill Climate Deniers*, *Prima Facie*, and co-wrote and performed in the Griffin Independent production *Nosferatutu, or Bleeding at the Ballet*. She was part of Griffin Studio in 2016. Her other recent performance credits include: for Belvoir: *Calamity Jane*; *The Dog/The Cat*, *Girl Asleep*, *The Sugar House*, *Stop Girl*; for Darlinghurst Theatre Company: *Gaybies*; for Hayes Theatre Company: *Calamity Jane*, *The Detective's Handbook*, *You're a Good Man Charlie Brown*; for Melbourne Theatre Company: *The Beast*, *North by Northwest*, *The Speechmaker*; for Sydney Festival: *Queen Fatima*, *Songs for the Fallen*, *The Tiger Lillies at Cockatoo Island*; for Sydney Theatre Company: *Muriel's Wedding*; for Opera Australia: *Carmen*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *I Love the Frog*, *My Fair Lady*. Her musical *Songs for the Fallen* won Best Musical and Outstanding Actress at the New York Music Theatre Festival, and has toured to Sydney Festival, Arts Centre Melbourne and Brisbane Festival. Her cabaret *Mrs Bang: A Series of Seductions in 55 Minutes* appeared in Brisbane Festival, Sydney Festival, Edinburgh Fringe, Adelaide Cabaret Festival, the 32nd Stage Song Review in Poland, and the Sydney Opera House. She played Valerie Solanas and Judy Garland in Jim Sharman's online film *Andy X*. TV credits include *All Saints*, *The Doctor Blake Mysteries*, *The Justine Clarke Show*, *Rake*, *Wild Boys*, and various radio plays for ABC Radio National. Sheridan is a NIDA graduate.

---