

GRIFFIN THEATRE COMPANY 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

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OPERATIONAL REPORT

2022 will long be remembered as the year Griffin purchased the Stables Theatre. Thanks to an extraordinary gift from the Neilson Foundation, we were able to purchase both the theatre at 10 Nimrod Street and the neighbouring terrace: 12 Nimrod Street on 11 November 2022. This has paved the way for a major redevelopment of the theatre which will take place over the next three years. We would like to especially thank Melinda Graham and Nick Read who generously applied their expertise to this undertaking.

Griffin was doubly fortunate to secure \$5 million from the NSW Government through their Creative Capital Fund in July 2022. Since then, we have commenced a major Capital Campaign to raise the \$6 million we still need to redevelop the site. This will include installing a lift for the first time in the history of the Stables Theatre, making it accessible to wheelchair users and anyone with mobility needs. There will also be a rehearsal room, increased theatre capacity and a re-vamped foyer. We are honoured to be working with TZG Architects on the project who understand the importance of retaining Griffin's DNA as well as creating a building for the future of Australian playwriting. We have also assembled an impressive Capital Campaign Committee, Co-Chaired by Lenore Robertson and Paris Neilson, and supported by Griffin's Fundraising Committee, Jane Clifford and Ruth Ritchie.

Now as the proud owners of the theatre, we also acknowledge the late Rodney Seaborn who provided the Stables to Griffin rent-free for almost 35 years through the Seaborn, Broughton and Walford Foundation. Without Dr. Seaborn's love of theatre, we would not be here today.

2022 saw box office income increase with audiences keen to be back in theatres across Sydney and beyond. In 2022, Griffin subscriber numbers reached 1,138 — an increase of 8% from 2021. There was also an increase in single ticket buyers. It was joyous to have audiences back in our tiny foyer, scrambling up those creaky stairs, and once again gathering to see the best new Australian work. While we continued to have challenges resourcing shows and general operations due to the longtail of COVID and some performances were cancelled, it was still a significant contrast to recent years, with greater certainty and confidence.

We started the year with two special events as part of Sydney Festival ahead of our 2022 Season at the SBW Stables Theatre with six Main Season works programmed and two independent works through Griffin Lookout. Multiple shows sold out which felt like a blessing post-COVID, with only one major re-scheduling: *Blaque Showgirls* which moved to 2023.

Our donor family is the lifeblood of the company, supporting nearly all our artist development programs, works in development, and Griffin Ambassadors for high school students. Special thanks to our Company Patrons the Neilson Foundation, to Season Patrons the Girgensohn Foundation and the Robertson Foundation, to the Malcolm Robertson Foundation and Darin Cooper Foundation for supporting a range of projects and programs, to our Production Partners for their support of *Whitefella Yella Tree*, to Mary Ann Rolfe and the Griffin Studio Workshop donors, to supporters of Griffin Studio and the Griffin Women's Initiative, and to many, many other generous individuals. We are also grateful for the generous support of the Copyright Agency which funds the Griffin Award.

Our government partners, the Australia Council for the Arts and Create NSW, as well as providing long-term investment through the National Performing Arts and Partnership Framework, remained a vital source of guidance and support as we emerged from the pandemic and its ongoing challenges.


For the financial year ended 31 December 2022, Griffin recorded a surplus of \$5.178m (compared to an operating surplus of \$432k in 2021). The 2022 result included a capital project contribution of \$5.304m, meaning there was an operational deficit of \$127k. The company's reserves increased from \$1.104m as at 31 December 2021 to \$6.281m as at 31 December 2022. Griffin's turnover reached \$3.186m—a decrease of 15% on the 2021 year (\$3.741m).


2022 OPERATIONS SUMMARY KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS


Goals & Key Performance Indicators	2022 Outcomes	
	TARGET	ACTUALS
1: Produce the best Australian stories		
Premiere at least three new Australian plays in Griffin's annual Main Seasons	3	4 presented
Invest in five-week rehearsals for all new Main Season works	0	5 @ 4 weeks
Engage nationally with writers, artists and audiences	Ongoing	Ongoing
2: Lead artistic thought and conversation on Australian playwriting		
Curate a season of Australian works	5	9 presented, 1 postponed
Run national playwriting competitions	1	1
Deliver workshops, presentations, audience participation events	Ongoing	Achieved: 4 workshops; 4 community performances 2 Amplify performances
3: Reflect the diversity of contemporary Australia		
Develop one work per year with a CALD playwright	1	11
Conduct open auditions annually	1	Auditions held in response to programming needs
Develop strategies for employment of First Nations people Indigenous to Australia within the company	Ongoing	Ongoing
Ensure diverse programming of Australian artists across all main season shows	Ongoing	Achieved
4: Provide relevant and accessible opportunities		
Provide opportunities for Griffin Studio resident artists on an annual basis	2	3
Mentor at least one Affiliate Director on a Main Season Griffin production	1	1
Produce the Griffin Ambassadors program for high school students	1	Achieved (89 students)
Create opportunities for emerging theatremakers to present work at the Stables	2	Achieved (2 Lookout)
5: Reach the widest possible audience—grow connections and deepen relationships		
Engage in at least one co-production per year	1	3
Present one regional or national tour per year	1	2
Achieve a combined average of 70% paid attendance across all Main Season shows	70%	Almost achieved (69%)
Increase reach of Griffin website, eN.ewsletter and social media platforms annually by 2%	Ongoing	Ongoing

6: Operate an outstanding, sustainable business.		
Review Board Governance Policy annually	Ongoing	Achieved
Review staffing performance and organisational structure to lead industry practice	Ongoing	Achieved
Grow donation and sponsorship income by 2% p.a. (against 2019 baseline value)	2%	13% Decrease
Develop strategies for First Nations employment	Ongoing	Ongoing

Performance Key:

Target Exceeded 

Target Met 

Ongoing 

Target Unmet 

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S REPORT

2022 represented a recent landmark for Griffin: for the first time in two years the company was able to present a (near) full Season of work, undisturbed by the state-wide lockdowns of the previous two years.

This did not mean the year went smoothly. Like many theatre companies, our season was beset with problems—from COVID-19 outbreaks, to supply chain disruptions, to challenges with recruitment. In the wake of countless unexpected challenges, performances were rescheduled, new cast members were rehearsed in, the executive staff were roped in to help paint sets—often with alarmingly tight deadlines looming.

However, the Griffin team and wider artistic community around us ended the year triumphant. For any theatre company, the risk-to-reward ratio is high in producing new writing. And there was an enormous risk implicit in the ambition of our 2022 program for a company of our size, with the presentation of nine works—seven of them premieres. Yet across the program, each work demonstrated a phenomenal level of success across box office, critical reception, and embodiment of Griffin's values and core mission. We aimed to produce exceptional new writing that reflects the cultural plurality of Australia on the SBW Stables stage. This season delivered and then some.

The Season commenced with a remount of Elias Jamieson Brown's *Green Park*—as part of Sydney Festival. Nestled in the historic Darlinghurst Park that gives the play its name, *Green Park* once again sold out its limited season—as did the premiere of Hilary Bell's *Window, Cricket Bat*, presented in the gallery space of the Australian Design Centre amidst the exhibition *Happy Objects*. The long-delayed production of Kirsty Marillier's mainstage debut *Orange Thrower* (co-produced with National Theatre of Paramatta) represented the arrival of a major playwriting talent, with the play subsequently winning the Nick Enright Prize for Playwriting at the NSW Premier's Literary Awards. Jessica Bellamy's *A is for Apple*, Melissa Bubnic's *Ghosting the Party*, and Merlynn Tong's *Golden Blood* (黄金血液) all attracted a majority of 4 and 4.5 star reviews. Dylan Van Den Berg's *Whitefella Yella Tree* also received unanimous critical acclaim, selling out its seasons at both the SBW Stables Theatre and Canberra Theatre Centre. The year closed with two exceptional solo shows, each performed by the playwright: Mel Ree's *Mother May We* and Ash Flanders' *End Of*. Mel and Ash each harnessed the intimacy of the SBW Stables with dual works of visceral, complex, exquisitely crafted storytelling.

Beyond box office metrics and critical response, most gratifying was the energy that returned to the building. A season of deeply humanist work—cut through with a vein of dark humour—saw audiences laugh and weep in equal measure as they watched characters grapple with injustice, inhumanity and the always-fraught love of family. Crucially, Griffin had the opportunity in 2022 to share this experience with new audiences. Thanks to the Girghensohn Foundation, our community engagement program 'Griffin Amplify' had its pilot year—with strategies developed for two works in the season. *Orange Thrower* saw a collaboration with 2 Sydney Stylists to reach South African-Australian and African diasporic audiences, while Neville Williams-Boney helmed a program for *Whitefella Yella Tree* catered to First Nations communities.

In addition to Amplify, Griffin's family of donors continued their remarkable contribution to the creative lift of the company. All script development activities, and the majority of our artist development activities, are funded by private donors and philanthropic foundations. In 2023 we continued the development of works for future Seasons by writers including Maxine Beneba Clarke

and Elaine Crombie, while also polishing a number of our 2022 Main Season works ahead of their rehearsal period. The company's development arm continued its support of early-career playwrights and theatremakers with playwrights Bernadette Fam, Megan Wilding and Bedelia Lowrenčev as residents in Griffin Studio, and theatremaker Eve Beck was selected as the Create NSW x Griffin Incubator Fellow in a strong field that also included Kirsty Marillier, Shahmen Suku, and Low Standards.

Given the year of theatre-going austerity that was 2021, it was also a pleasure to throw open artistic processes to audiences in a way that had not been possible in the previous year. In February, Griffin undertook a script workshop of Nicholas Brown's *Sex Magick*—culminating in a public showing to an invited audience. Outgoing Incubator Fellow Happy Feraren staged a hysterical half-improvised seminar on international aid, populated by characters from her play *SAVIOUR*. Excerpts of the work of 2021's Griffin Studio cohort were similarly given public presentation, while the winner of the 2022 Griffin Award—Grace Chow's *The Promise Land*—received a public reading in full as part of the ceremony. Cumulatively, these activities reminded us of the importance of plays meeting their audience early in the process; for playwrights to test the hypothesis they are creating with their text through play and experimentation with their chosen audience.

At the end of 2022, as we gathered our community together for the launch of our 2023 Season (the company's first in-person launch in two years!), we felt an overwhelming confidence in the playwrights and plays who will hold our audience in the years to come.

Declan Greene
Artistic Director

2022 ARTISTIC SUMMARY

MAIN SEASON PROGRAM – SBW STABLES THEATRE					
	Number of Performances	Total Audience	% Attendance Tickets		Income vs. Target (%)
			Paid (KPI = 70%)	Total	
<i>Orange Thrower</i> By Kirsty Marillier Directed by Zindzi Okenyo 18 February – 26 March	37	2381	69	78	100
<i>Ghosting the Party</i> By Melissa Bubnic Directed by Andrea James 20 May – 18 June	32	2579	72	80	123
<i>Golden Blood (黄金血液)</i> By Merlynn Tong Directed by Tessa Leong 24 June – 30 July	39	2765	59	68	84
<i>Whitefella Yella Tree</i> By Dylan Van Den Berg Directed by Declan Greene and Amy Sole 19 August – 23 September	32	2624	75	83	86
<i>End Of.</i> By Ash Flanders Directed by Stephen Nicolazzo 13 October – 5 November	25	2054	71	79	149
SPECIALS (PRESENTED AS PART OF SYDNEY FESTIVAL 2022)					
<i>Green Park</i> By Elias Jamieson Brown Directed by Declan Greene 19 – 30 January	11	771	80	88	
<i>Window, Cricket Bat</i> By Hilary Bell Directed by Jennifer Rani 11 – 21 January	7	138	43	53	
GRIFFIN LOOKOUT					
<i>A is for Apple</i> By Jessica Bellamy Directed by Scarlet McGlynn 30 March – 9 April	12	787	69	79	128
<i>Mother May We</i> By Mel Ree 27 September – 8 October	13	670	36	42	86
TOURING					
<i>Orange Thrower</i> By Kirsty Marillier Directed by Zindzi Okenyo Riverside Theatres Parramatta	5	200	19	47	
<i>Whitefella Yella Tree</i> By Dylan Van Den Berg	6	406	74	88	

Directed by Declan Greene and Amy Sole Canberra Theatre Centre					
OTHER					
<i>The End of Winter</i> By Noëlle Janaczewska Directed by Kate Gaul Presented by Siren Theatre Co 2 – 12 February	12	554	18	58	

ARTIST DEVELOPMENT

Griffin Studio

The aim of Griffin Studio is to establish career pathways for early career artists and to further contribute to the canon of great Australian plays developed and staged at Griffin. In 2022, the Studio artists were Bernadette Fam, Megan Wilding and Bedelia Lowrenčev.

Incubator Fellowship

In partnership with Create NSW, Griffin worked with five shortlisted artists on two-month residencies, matched with members of the Artistic team. The successful Fellow, Eve Beck, was announced in early 2023.

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 127 submissions received in 2022. The 2022 Griffin Award was awarded to Grace Chow for *The Promise Land*. The play received a full reading with a complete cast at the SBW Stables Theatre on 21 August 2022, directed by Studio artist Bernadette Fam.

Griffin Studio Workshop

Griffin Studio Workshop supported the development of a range of works, including play readings, script development and creative developments. Works included developments of many of our Main Season works, as well as *Moeto Srce* by Diana Popovska, *Reykjavik* by Julian Larnach, *The Hate Race* by Maxine Beneba Clarke, *The Crombie Crew Cabaret* by Elaine and Lillian Crombie, *Boys and Cigarettes* by Adrian Russell Wills and *Good for Nothing* by Winnie Dunn.

EDUCATION AND ACCESS

Griffin aims to ensure it remains an accessible company for artists and audiences. The following initiatives were offered throughout the year to encourage participation and access points:

Griffin Ambassadors

In 2022, Griffin Ambassadors introduced 98 senior high school students to Griffin from over 36 metropolitan and regional schools across NSW, ranging from the Hunter Valley to the South Coast. These students became part of Griffin's creative life for a year. Students attended performances of *Orange Thrower*, *Ghosting the Party*, *Golden Blood* and *Whitefella Yella Tree* followed by Q&As with cast and directors. They also attended two workshops run by industry creatives and practitioners.

APPENDIX 1: 2022 PROGRAM OF ACTIVITIES

PROJECT ONE – SPECIAL EVENTS

Window, Cricket Bat

By Hilary Bell

Australian Design Centre, Darlinghurst: 11 – 21 January 2022

Some objects possess mysterious powers. They can take us back in time. They can remind us of someone. They can make us emotional—joyful, wistful, homesick.

Objects can also imply drama. When you hear the words ‘window’ and ‘cricket bat’... what do you think of?

A short chamber performance for a solo performer and a curious audience, *Window, Cricket Bat* comes to life within the exhibition space of Happy objects at the **Australian Design Centre**. Become a guest at the glamorous luncheon of one of the world’s most famous playwrights—evoked with nothing more than a well-loved souvenir and a cracking story.

Produced in a unique collaboration with Griffin, the Australian Design Centre’s *Happy Objects* is a celebration of ‘stuff’—material items that are often imperfect, and always deeply symbolic of the lives we lead. Accompanying the exhibition, *Window, Cricket Bat* is a delightful journey back to London in the 1980s, penned with fond humour by playwright Hilary Bell.

**Co-presented with Australian Design Centre
Part of Sydney Festival 2022**

Director Jennifer Rani
With Lucia Mastrantone

Outcomes

Window, Cricket Bat was presented at Australian Design Centre in Darlinghurst for a two-week season of 7 performances to an audience of 138. The show achieved 43% paid attendance and 53% total attendance.

Critical Response

“The script by **Hilary Bell** sparkles with colour and crackles with wit, while capturing the warm belly glow of thinking back on good times past. **Lucia Mastrantone** is fabulous, as she ducks and weaves between characters and voices, animating the space and the story as she brings the energy and verve that audiences will know and love from her previous work.”—**James Mukheibir**, [Theatre Travels](#)

“As a whole, the site-specific production is originally observed, neatly timed and winsomely surprising.” ★★★1/2—**Kate Prendergast**, [Audrey Journal](#)

PROJECT TWO – RETURN SEASON

Green Park

By Elias Jamieson Brown

Green Park, Darlinghurst: 19 – 30 January 2022

After a sold-out season and unanimous critical acclaim, *Green Park* is making a special return to its outdoor stage—the real Green Park—as part of [Sydney Festival](#).

You've walked past it. Maybe through it. Down the end of Victoria Street, opposite St Vincent's Hospital—Green Park. It's picturesque by day, a little eerie by night. And it's where Warren and Edden are meeting, as a prelude to their Grindr hook up.

One of them doesn't look like his photo. There's an age gap between them (but what's a decade or three?). And one is harbouring a dangerous secret. In an hour's time, both will leave the park profoundly transformed.

Outside the rotunda, audience members will be given a set of headphones. And together, they will eavesdrop on playwright **Elias Jamieson Brown**'s finely wrought Darlinghurst noir. To everyone else, the two men talking on a bench might not look like much. But in the gloom of the setting sun, you'll experience a dangerous psycho-sexual collision... in a very public place.

Presented as part of Sydney Festival

Director & Dramaturg Declan Greene

Designer Emma White

Composer & Sound Designer David Bergman

Associate Sound Designer Daniel Herten

Sound Technician Laura Parker

Stage Manager Julia Orlando

With Joseph Althouse, Steve Le Marquand

Outcomes

Green Park was presented at Green Park in Darlinghurst for a two-week season of 11 performances to an audience of 771. The show achieved 80% paid attendance and 88% total attendance.

Critical Response

"The play is centred on amazing performances all round, with Althouse and Le Marquand perfectly juxtaposed yet constantly in synch." ★★★★★ **Julian Ramundi**, [The AU Review](#)

"*Green Park*... is a stunning work of theatre in a challenging watch which is a mighty outreach of remembering and remembrance." ★★★★★ **Judith Greenaway**, [Reviews by Judith](#)

"It is great to see a play in which, if the characters want to refer to a real place, they point to it." **John McCallum**, [The Australian](#)

PROJECT THREE – Orange Thrower

Orange Thrower

By Kirsty Marillier

SBW Stables Theatre, Kings Cross: 18 February – 26 March 2022

Lennox Theatre, Riverside Theatres of Parramatta: 30 March – 2 April 2022

The night is still. The air is hot and thick. From up on the roof, matching houses stretch as far as the eye can see. Welcome to the sunny suburb of Paradise.

While her folks are back in Johannesburg, Zadie is holding down the family fort. This means keeping her little sis away from bush doofs, avoiding the cute boy next door, and smiling when her nice white neighbours try to touch her hair.

All that changes when an unexpected visitor bursts back into Zadie's life in the middle of the night, breaking the silence with loud music and even louder opinions. To make matters worse, someone's been pelting the house with oranges. All of a sudden, Zadie's got a big, sticky suburban mess on her hands.

Orange Thrower is the award-winning debut play from **Kirsty Marillier**. A fresh twist on the Australian coming-of-age story, this play is a joyful comedy, a curious mystery, and a poignant love letter to South African women.

Directed with zest by musician, performer and director **Zindzi Okenyo**, and starring a kick-arse ensemble playing larger-than-life characters, *Orange Thrower* rolls into our 2022 Season from 2021, ripe and ready for an unforgettable premiere on the SBW Stables stage.

Winner of the Rodney Seaborn Playwrights Award

A co-production with Riverside's National Theatre of Parramatta

Director Zindzi Okenyo

Designer Jeremy Allen

Lighting Designer Verity Hampson

Associate Lighting Designer Veronique Benett

Composer & Sound Designer Benjamin Pierpoint

Dramaturg Declan Greene

Directing Secondment Chemon Theys

Intimacy Director Cessalee Stovall

Wigs Stylist Dynae Wood

Stage Manager Hannah Crane

With Callan Colley, Angela Nica Sullen, Mariama Whitton, Gabriela van Wyk

Outcomes

Orange Thrower was presented at the SBW Stables Theatre for a five-week season of 37 performances to an audience of 2,381. The show achieved 69% paid attendance and 78% total attendance, with Box Office reaching 100% of target.

The Riverside Theatres of Parramatta season of 5 performances reached audiences of 200, achieved 19% paid attendance and 47% total attendance.

Critical Response

"The diverse characters bounce off each other, lighting up the stage like a pinball machine, erupting into hysterical laughter, joyous dancing and quivering epiphanies." **Harriet Cunningham, [The Sydney Morning Herald](#)**

“*Orange Thrower* is a piece of theatre that is fresh, new and yet all too familiar at the same time. This is a stellar debut; a diverse piece of surreal storytelling that will have you thinking long after you’ve left the theatre.” **Justin Clarke, Theatre Thoughts**

“Marillier’s script is constructed beautifully, with characters and dialogue that are incredibly grounded and multifaceted.” **Gavin Roach, Australian Arts Review**

PROJECT FOUR – GRIFFIN LOOKOUT

A is for Apple

By Jessica Bellamy

SBW Stables Theatre, Kings Cross: 30 March – 9 April 2022

Shoshana, 12 years old, is about to celebrate her Bat Mitzvah, which will welcome her into the hallowed halls of Jewish womanhood. Miriam, double her age, is the teacher helping Shoshana prepare for her big day. However, one question keeps stopping both student and teacher in their tracks: what even is a Jewish woman? *A is for Apple* is an irreverent, impertinent romp through the Old Testament’s patriarchs and matriarchs, in search of role models. **Jessica Bellamy’s** (*Shabbat Dinner*) inventive new play asks how women can rewrite the myths that formed them, and create a version of ‘woman’ that embraces contradiction and complexity. *A is for Apple* relishes in genre-blending and cultural translations to ask lovingly provocative questions and welcome everybody into the tribe.

So, load up on Genesis, cue up some Missy Elliott and get ready for a night at the theatre that will leave you empowered and renewed.

Director Scarlet McGlynn

Set & Costume Designer Emma White

Lighting Designer Kelsey Lee

Associate Lighting Designer Saint Clair

Composer/Sound Designer Jessica Dunn

Stage Manager Claire Ferguson

Producer Jessica Bellamy

Production Assistant Paris Freed

With Amy Hack, Zoe Resnick

Outcomes

A is for Apple was presented at the SBW Stables Theatre for a two-week season of 12 performances to an audience of 787. The show achieved 69% paid attendance and 79% total attendance, with Box Office reaching 128% of target.

Critical Response

“Some plays make you happier than when you were before the play begins. *A is for Apple* is one of them.”

★★★★—**Cassie Tongue, The Sydney Morning Herald**

“Thank goodness for Griffin Theatre’s Lookout programme otherwise we may have missed out on the opportunity to see Jessica Bellamy’s refreshingly charming and provocative play, *A is for Apple*.” **Catherine Skipper, South Sydney Herald**

“So good I could imagine it being staged in a little theatre off Broadway.” **David Spicer, Stage Whispers**

PROJECT FIVE – Ghosting the Party

Ghosting the Party

By Melissa Bubnic

SBW Stables Theatre, Kings Cross: 20 May – 18 June 2022

Coming home from her sister's funeral, Grace decides that at 87 years old... her time has come. She's done with it all. She's ready to leave the party.

Her daughter, Dorothy, decides her mum is just depressed. She makes it her mission to show Grace the beauty of living. But Dorothy is divorced. Stuck in a dead-end job. Estranged from her own daughter, Suzie, who lives halfway across the world. Soon, Dorothy starts to worry that her mum might have the right idea.

Pushing up daisies. Kicking the bucket. *Ghosting the Party*. The euphemisms are endless. For a phenomenon so certain and all-encompassing, humans are terribly good at looking for ways to avoid talking about death. It's easy to forget that the concept of 'checking out' can be complex, contradictory—funny, even. Especially when an old lady with a bone-dry wit is involved.

Three generations of women face brutal questions of mortality in this uproarious pitch-black comedy from **Melissa Bubnic**, internationally-renowned writer of *Boys Will Be Boys* and *Beached*, with Griffin's Associate Artist **Andrea James** in the director's chair—hand on heart and tongue in cheek. Painted with poetry, unflinching honesty and an almost absurd amount of biting one-liners, confronting death has never been this (gravely) funny.

Winner of The Lysicrates Prize

Director Andrea James

Designer Isabel Hudson

Lighting Designer Verity Hampson

Associate Lighting Designer Saint Clair

Composer & Sound Designer Phil Downing

Stage Manager Madelaine Osborn

With Belinda Giblin, Amy Hack, Jillian O'Dowd

Outcomes

Ghosting The Party was presented at the SBW Stables Theatre for a four-week season of 32 performances to an audience of 2,579. The show achieved 72% paid attendance and 80% total attendance, with Box Office reaching 123% of target.

Critical Response

"Bubnic's wonderful words and ideas, are brought to the stage by director **Andrea James**, who is herself brilliantly humorous." ★★★★★½—**Suzy Wrong, Suzy Goes See**

"*Ghosting the Party* is wickedly funny, desperately loving, and just sharp enough to pierce your heart." ★★★★★½—**Cassie Tongue, The Sydney Morning Herald**

"Scintillating, hilarious, unpredictable and shocking." ★★★★★—**Diana Simmonds, Limelight**

PROJECT SIX – Golden Blood (黄金血液)

Golden Blood (黄金血液)

By Merlynn Tong

SBW Stables Theatre, Kings Cross: 24 June – 30 July 2022

Golden Blood feels like a big-screen thriller, even though it's got a cast of two. Playing out on the neon streets of Singapore, it desperately claws back the extreme wealth it once knew, holding a rusty machete between its teeth.

Originally slated for our 2021 Season, **Merlynn Tong's** *Golden Blood* is back and hungrier than ever in 2022.

When her mother dies, a teenage girl is left alone within the four walls of the only thing she's inherited—a decaying penthouse in the heart of Singapore. To make matters worse, she's now in the care of her estranged brother, and he's not exactly up to the gig. For one, he's only a few years older than her. And two, he's a gangster.

Like, an actual one.

Left with next to nothing, the orphaned siblings become a formidable, atypical corporation of two. But it's not long before cracks begin to show. What is the trade-off for desiring excessive levels of luxury? What should be kept in this world, and what should be offered to the next?

Merlynn Tong is an unstoppable acting-writing polymath—directed at the centre of her own play by Griffin's Associate Artistic Director **Tessa Leong**. *Golden Blood* will make its long-awaited premiere in 2022, presented in a unique partnership with our friends at Melbourne Theatre Company.

Director Tessa Leong

Set & Costume Designer Michael Hankin

Lighting Designer Fausto Brusamolino

Composer & Sound Designer Rainbow Chan

Producer Eloise Snape

Dramaturg Jennifer Medway

Effects Consultant Emily Parsons-Lord

Stage Manager Susie Henderson

Stage Manager Jen Jackson

With Merlynn Tong, Charles Wu

Outcomes

Golden Blood was presented at the SBW Stables Theatre for a five-week season of 39 performances to an audience of 2,765. The show achieved 59% paid attendance and 68% total attendance, with Box Office reaching 84% of target.

Critical Response

"Tong combines vulnerability with strength and determination. This is very much Girl's story and her coming-of-age journey is deeply affecting." ★★★★★—**Joyce Morgan, The Sydney Morning Herald**

"Both actors bring a marvellous sense of depth to the characters they inhabit, allowing *Golden Blood* to venture into outlandish and wondrous spaces, without compromising even a fragment on authenticity." ★★★★★—**Suzy Wrong, Suzy Goes See**

"One of those rare combinations of great writing, great actors and a great sense of mise-en-scene." ★★★★★—**Charlotte Smee, Theatre Thoughts**

“*Golden Blood* is an enthralling 90 minutes of theatre superbly performed by two spellbinding actors.” **Catherine Skipper, [South Sydney Herald](#)**

PROJECT SEVEN – *Whitefella Yella Tree*

Whitefella Yella Tree

By Dylan Van Den Berg

SBW Stables Theatre, Kings Cross: 19 August – 23 September 2022

The Courtyard Studio, Canberra Theatre Centre: 28 September – 1 October 2022

Once in a blue moon, in the middle of nowhere, two teenage boys meet under a lemon tree. After a rough start, a fragile friendship fruits into a heady romance. Ty and Neddy fall madly in love, as teenagers are wont to do.

If history would just unfurl a little differently, the boys might have a beautiful future ahead of them. But without knowing it, Ty and Neddy are poised on the brink of a world that is about to change forever. It's the early 19th century. Ty is River Mob. Neddy is Mountain Mob. And the earth they stand together on is about to be declared 'Australia'.

In his young career, **Dylan Van Den Berg** has won the Griffin Award, the Rodney Seaborn Playwrights Award, and the Nick Enright Prize for Playwriting at the NSW Premier's Literary Awards. In *Whitefella Yella Tree* he has penned a heart-warming and heartbreaking story about love, Country, and Blak queerness throughout history. Starring Helpmann Award-winner **Guy Simon** (*First Love is the Revolution, Wakefield*), and nurtured through our Griffin Studio program, *Whitefella Yella Tree* is a force of nature and a tender first kiss.

Co-Directors Declan Greene and Amy Sole

Designer Mason Browne

Lighting Co-Designers Kelsey Lee and Katie Sfetkidis

Composer & Sound Designer Steve Toulmin

Dramaturg Andrea James

Stage Manager Isabella Kerdijk

Intimacy Coordinator Akala Newman courtesy of Key Intimate Scenes

Community Engagement Consultant Neville Williams Boney

Elder-in-Residence Uncle Graham Simms

With Callan Purcell, Guy Simon, Mathew Cooper (12 – 16 September)

Outcomes

Whitefella Yella Tree was presented at the SBW Stables Theatre for a four-week season of 32 performances to an audience of 2,624. The show achieved 75% paid attendance and 83% total attendance, with Box Office reaching 86% of target.

The Canberra Theatre Centre season of 6 performances reached audiences of 406, achieved 74% paid attendance and 88% total attendance.

Critical Responses

“Everything one could possibly ask of a playwright, Van Den Berg delivers, through the greatest of acuity and sophistication.” ★★★★★—**Suzy Wrong, [Suzy Goes See](#)**

“The actors create something impossibly tender that still bites with gloriously lived-in detail. As they fall in love with each other, we fall in love with them.” ★★★★★—**Cassie Tongue, [The Sydney Morning Herald](#)**

“It is the best of theatre writing where you feel you ‘have learned’ but did not experience ‘being taught’. Subtle, clever and straight to the heart.” ★★★★★1/2—**Dennis Clements, [ArtsHub](#)**

“*Whitefella Yella Tree* is exceptional work all-round; a uniquely Australian story told by a largely Indigenous cast and crew [...] I haven't stopped thinking about it since I left the theatre.” ★★★★★—**Chad Armstrong, [The Queer Review](#)**

“Once again, Griffin Theatre Company has demonstrated that when it comes to telling diverse, meaningful, nuanced stories about who we are – they are leading the way.”—**Vaanie Krishnan, The Theatre Enthusiast**

PROJECT EIGHT – GRIFFIN LOOKOUT

Mother May We

By Mel Ree

SBW Stables Theatre, Kings Cross: 27 September – 8 October 2022

If you're a first generation Australian woman. If you're the daughter of a black mother. If you've inherited their pain—of escaping the horrors of third world conditions, of carrying physical and emotional trauma, of reckoning with an unfamiliar western frontier that regards you as 'other'—then you'll know how difficult it is to ask for permission to heal.

How can you balance your history with your unwritten future? How can you inhabit an individual identity when you've inherited the truths of your ancestors? How can you open your arms and feel the sunshine on your skin when secrecy and shame drain the colour from your parents' eyes?

Poet **Mel Ree** rhapsodises about intergenerational trauma and marries ancestral and modern truths in a truly epic and cathartic performance. Peppering playful performance art with humbling, hard truths, **Mother May We** is a motivational manifesto for how to heal.

Writer & Performer Mel Ree

Lighting Designer Frankie Clarke

Projection Designer Nema Adel

Sound Designer Steven Khoury

Associate Sound Designer Sam Cheng

Costume Designer Georgia Harper

Movement Choreographer Fetu Taku

Dramaturg Jackson Used

Stage Manager Natalie Low

Producer Bec Annetts

Publicist Sean Landis

Production Manager Saint Clair

Production Assistant Defne

Outcomes

Mother May We was presented at the SBW Stables Theatre for a two-week season of 13 performances to an audience of 670. The show achieved 36% paid attendance and 42% total attendance, with Box Office reaching 86% of target.

Critical Responses

“Ree expertly reels the audience in – as she confronts the abuse and loneliness of her past, you are unable to look away, implored to relive it alongside her.” ★★★★★—**Jasmine Joyan, Time Out Sydney**

“With magnetism seeping from every pore, Ree makes an hour in her presence feel a fleeting moment.” ★★★★★—**Suzy Wrong, Suzy Goes See**

“*Mother May We* runs the gamut from trauma to celebration, as Mel Ree puzzles out the pieces of her life to find out who she is and it's a spiritually and emotionally fulfilling journey. All in a tight 65 minutes.” ★★★★★—**Chad Armstrong, The Queer Review**

PROJECT NINE – End Of.

End Of.

Written and Performed by Ash Flanders

SBW Stables Theatre, Kings Cross: 13 October – 5 November 2022

There's no crueller thing you can say to an actor than 'Don't quit your day job'. Fortunately, thanks to cover bands and theatre restaurants, **Ash Flanders** never needed one. But after years of glittering appearances on stages and in school gyms across the country, Ash unceremoniously finds himself seated at a computer terminal in a decidedly un-sparkly corporate office. No longer an acclaimed playwright and performer, Ash is now a legal transcriptionist—typing the words of suspected criminals who are not nearly as fascinating as TV suggested.

As Ash painstakingly types out the narratives of petty crims, he begins to interrogate his own poor choices. That thing he did in an abandoned carpark. The visit to the horse knackery. Those people at the old folks home. All of it in service of one thing: making people laugh.

But as his own transcript unravels, Ash realises it's about making *her* laugh. His toughest audience. A heavy-drinking, chain-smoking behemoth named Heather Flanders. And her health is getting so dire it's, well... laughable.

Ash Flanders (*Blackie Blackie Brown*) is a consummate showman—an awarded writer, actor, and elder millennial shaman. But in *End Of.* he is stripped uncommonly bare. Under the dreamy direction of **Stephen Nicolazzo** (*The Happy Prince*) Ash has created an honest, hilarious gut punch of a one man show... End of.

Director Stephen Nicolazzo

Set & Costume Designer Nathan Burmeister

Lighting Designer Rachel Burke

Sound Designer Tom Backhaus

Stage Manager Jen Jackson

Outcomes

End Of. was presented at the SBW Stables Theatre for a three-week season of 25 performances to an audience of 2,054. The show achieved 71% paid attendance and 79% total attendance, with Box Office reaching 149% of target.

Critical Responses

"Flanders delivers in spades. He is an actor of enormous range and his performance is not to be missed. End of." ★★★★★—**Joyce Morgan, The Sydney Morning Herald**

"The sheer pleasure of being in the presence of a performer at the top of their game, doing what they do best, is one of the gifts of theatre that can never be replaced." ★★★★★—**Suzy Wrong, Suzy Goes See**

"Unequivocally a linguistic, psychological and – most importantly – comic triumph." ★★★★★—**Juliana Payne, Theatre Thoughts**

"Fleet in wit, cattily ironic in his observations, he's a self-aware diva of the absurd, with a manic whim to plunge with theatrical flourish into gallows humour. You will find yourself cackling more than once." ★★★★★—**Kate Prendergast, Limelight Magazine**