

**GRIFFIN THEATRE COMPANY
2023 ANNUAL REPORT**

CONTENTS

OPERATIONAL REPORT2
ARTISTIC REPORT4
2023 SUMMARY KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS6
2023 PROGRAM OF ACTIVITIES.....7
2023 ARTISTIC SUMMARY.....13
ARTIST DEVELOPMENT.....14
WRITING & SCRIPT DEVELOPMENT14
EDUCATION AND ACCESS.....15
BOARD & STAFF.....16



OPERATIONAL REPORT

Griffin Theatre Company had a successful year in 2023 with a season of multiple sell-out shows, strong progression in plans to redevelop the SBW Stables Theatre, the release of a new Strategic Plan 2025–2028, and generous support from audiences, donors and the wider arts industry.

2023 saw box office income increase by a third in comparison to 2022, with audiences keen to be back in theatres across Sydney and beyond. The company presented four Main Season plays, with all productions meeting critical acclaim and exceeding box office targets. The seasons of both *Jailbaby* and *Blaque Showgirls* were extended due to popular demand, *Pony* transferred to Canberra after a successful Sydney season, and with support from Playing Australia the company undertook an eight-city regional tour of *Prima Facie* following a sold-out season at Melbourne Theatre Company.

Griffin's Ambassadors program, which invites young people from years 10–12 to see work and attend workshops throughout the year, continued to be a treasured part of the company's access strategy. In 2023, we had 85 Ambassadors involved in the program, representing 46 different schools across Greater Sydney and New South Wales. Griffin Ambassadors continued to be generously supported by the Robertson Foundation.

With assistance from Create NSW, Griffin ran two week-long playwriting workshops in January 2023 for young people in Lake Macquarie and Lismore in partnership with Tantrum Youth Arts and NORPA, developed and delivered by Literary Associate **Julian Larnach** and playwrights **Ang Collins** and **Hannah Belanszky**.

Free community shows were offered with each Main Season production. This community program is a long and proud tradition at Griffin, ensuring access for people who face financial and/or social barriers to theatre attendance. The company has a particular focus working with service organisations in our local area. Monday Rush and a range of other programs supporting specific productions provided additional points of access and equity.

In 2023, subscriber numbers reached 1,196—a 5% increase from 2022 (1,138). We also saw a continued increase in single ticket buyers, now accounting for around 65% of our audiences. While the challenge of resourcing shows and general operations continued due to the long tail of COVID-19 and some performances were cancelled, it marked a significant contrast to recent years, with renewed certainty and confidence from audiences. Griffin undertook its first comprehensive Audience Survey since 2018, which provided excellent insights and has informed future strategies to adapt to the changing behaviours of our audiences.

Plans progressed for the redevelopment of the SBW Stables Theatre. A planning proposal was submitted to the City of Sydney in March and was unanimously endorsed by the council and approved by the relevant planning committees in May. Griffin consulted with the local residents throughout this period and continued ongoing discussions with our artist community regarding the theatre design and layout. Architect **Tim Greer** and the team at Tonkin Zulaikha Greer worked closely with Griffin and a range of specialist consultants to further refine the designs ahead of the development application being submitted to council in November. The company further worked with consultants Cox Inall Ridgeway to consult with First Nations Traditional Owners and Elders.

In 2023, Griffin was generously supported by our donor family across a range of activities—in particular our artist development programs and the creation and development of new work. Our Production Partners got behind the powerful and potent *Jailbaby* by **Suzie Miller**, our Griffin Studio Workshop donors championed new works in development, Malcolm Robertson Foundation and our Griffin Studio donors allowed three artists to be in residence with the company over the course of the year, and the Griffin Women's Initiative supported our Associate Artistic Director **Andrea James**; enjoying a thrilling conversation at an annual lunch generously supported by our Company Partner Beppi's Restaurant. The Girgensohn Foundation continued their support of Amplify, Griffin's Audience Development program, which was connected to *Sex Magick* by **Nicholas Brown**

and *Blaque Showgirls* by **Nakkiah Lui**. We offer special thanks also to our Company Patrons Shane & Cathryn Brennan and the Neilson Foundation, Legacy Benefactor Seaborn, Broughton & Walford Foundation, and to the organisations and major donors who continue to support a range of projects and programs including the Copyright Agency Cultural Fund, Darin Cooper Foundation, Malcolm Robertson Foundation, Playking Foundation and Robertson Foundation. This is only the tip of the iceberg that is Griffin's donor family, and we are lucky to enjoy the support of many other generous individuals who underpin the company's operations and ongoing commitment to Australian storytelling. Thank you!

A small group of Griffin Board members and donors visited New York to see *Prima Facie* on Broadway in April 2023 and celebrate this landmark achievement with playwright **Suzie Miller**. A donor trip was also organised to celebrate the Melbourne season and national tour of *Prima Facie* in March.

In very sad news, we saw the passing of one of Griffin's beloved supporters **Mary Ann Rolfe**. Mary Ann was a dear friend to many at Griffin, including Board Member **Simon Burke AO**. Mary Ann remains deeply missed.

Our government partners, Creative Australia and Create NSW, provide long-term investment in Griffin through the National Performing Arts and Partnership Framework. This support and endorsement is greatly valued by the company. Create NSW provided additional support through Rescue/Restart which helped to offset many financial challenges posed by post-pandemic impacts. Griffin was also successful in receiving a collaboration grant for \$99,846 to partner with BLEACH* Festival in Queensland for the final-stage development and presentation of *swim* by **Ellen van Neerven**.

For the financial year ended 31 December 2023, Griffin recorded a surplus of \$1.284m (compared to an operating surplus of \$5.178m in 2022 which included a capital project contribution of \$5.304m).

The company's reserves increased from \$6.281m as at 31 December 2022 to \$7.566m as at 31 December 2023. Griffin's turnover reached \$5.814m—an increase of 56% on the 2022 year (\$3.715m).

Julieanne Campbell
Co-CEO & Executive Director

ARTISTIC REPORT

It's no secret that 2022 was a tough year for the sector, with the effects of COVID-19 felt at every level of theatre production. But for Griffin, 2023 was a year of post-COVID confidence and renewal. We saw exciting responses from both audiences and critics to a season designed to inspire awe, joy, confrontation, and re-connection with theatre and community.

The six Australian works presented across our program of plays included five world premieres, four of which were—excitingly—written by early-career playwrights. *Sex Magick* by **Nicholas Brown** kicked off our Main Season, playing a sell-out season in partnership with Sydney WorldPride. *Pony* followed, by first-time playwright **Eloise Snape**, receiving critical plaudits and a nomination for Best New Australian Work (alongside *Sex Magick*) in the Sydney Theatre Awards. Our two plays by seasoned stage veterans—*Jailbaby* by **Suzie Miller** and *Blaque Showgirls* by **Nakkiah Lui**—both had their seasons extended due to popular demand. Two Griffin Lookout works were programmed as part of our presentation season which supports independent theatre. After two years of COVID-related reprogramming, we finally presented **re:group collective's** *UFO* by **Kirby Medway** and **Solomon Thomas**, which sold out its season immediately after opening. Our second Griffin Lookout work, *Gadigal Gal* by **Graham Simms aka Nana Miss Koori**, was programmed but unfortunately cancelled due to illness.

Plays programmed at Griffin continued to generate social impact beyond our stage. Alongside our season of *Jailbaby*, which was developed and produced with the assistance of the Australian Writers' Guild David Williamson Prize, a number of post-show events were programmed to highlight the vital messaging of the work. Suzie Miller featured in conversation with **Gabrielle Bashir SC**, President of the Bar Association of NSW. The Public Interest Advocacy Centre hosted an event to bring awareness to their Raise The Age campaign, with a panel facilitated by **Fran Kelly** in conversation with **Michael Coutts-Trotter**, **Jane Sanders** and **Larissa Behrendt**. The community engagement program for *Blaque Showgirls* saw "blaque bucks" sold in the foyer, raising money for essential First Nations charities.

Griffin continued its partnership with Australian Theatre Live to digitally capture and distribute our Main Season program. *Whitefella Yella Tree* by **Dylan Van Den Berg**, which premiered in Griffin's 2022 Season, was screened at the Australian Embassy in Washington D.C. and in New York as part of the Australian Theatre Festival in New York. *Orange Thrower* by **Kirsty Marillier**, which also premiered in 2022, had a premiere screening at the Seaborn, Broughton & Walford Foundation in July.

Griffin maintained a renewed focus on dramaturgy, strengthening our position as the country's leading developer of new Australian plays. With generous support from the Robertson Foundation, Griffin created the new position of Literary Manager, with Dylan Van Den Berg subsequently recruited for the role. We invested significant time and resources on developing new works in 2023, undertaking several script developments, which ranged from in-house table-reads through to larger moved play readings with public outcomes. We also held developments for future works including *Moeto Srce* by **Diana Popovska**, *Flat Earthers: The Musical* by **Jean Tong**, **Lou Wall** and **James Gales**, *The Hate Race* by **Maxine Beneba Clarke** and *Naturism* by **Ang Collins**, and commenced the year-long residencies of our 2023 Griffin Studio artists: **Emma Maye Gibson**, **Michelle Lim Davidson** and **Randa Sayed**.

Though we could not financially deliver the five-week rehearsal periods we hoped for in our 2020–2024 Strategic Plan, we committed to pre-rehearsal development periods for each of our 2023 Main Season works. This achieved the same goal: ensuring each play was ready for performance by day one of rehearsals. It was gratifying to see Griffin's leadership in new play development recognised by the NSW Premier's Literary Awards for the second year running, with the Nick Enright Prize for Playwriting awarded to Dylan Van Den Berg for his 2022 work *Whitefella Yella Tree*. Dylan's play was also heavily recognized at the Australian Writers'

Guild's AWGIE Awards, winning the award for Original Writing for the Stage, and the David Williamson Prize for Excellence in Writing for Australian Theatre.

In February 2023, Griffin announced the third and final recipient of the Griffin Theatre Company x Create NSW Incubator Fellowship for early-career artists: director and theatremaker **Eve Beck**. In partnership with the Copyright Agency Limited, we delivered the 24th annual Griffin Award, recognising an outstanding new play that displays an authentic, inventive and contemporary Australian voice. Judged by a panel of theatre professionals from national submissions, this prestigious award carries a \$10,000 prize for the winner and \$1,000 for each of the four other finalists. Griffin continued its commitment to accepting and assessing scripts from around the nation with 144 submissions received in 2023, the highest number ever recorded. For the first time ever, Griffin also provided written feedback reports to 53 of the 144 submissions. The 2023 Griffin Award was awarded to **Wendy Mocke's *I am Kegu***.

Artistically, Griffin enjoyed a landmark year that symbolised both a return to pre-COVID standards and exciting new opportunities for growth.

Declan Greene
Co-CEO & Artistic Director

2023 SUMMARY KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Goals & Key Performance Indicators	2023 Outcomes	
	TARGET	ACTUALS
1: Produce the best Australian stories		
Premiere at least three new Australian plays in Griffin's annual Main Seasons	3	3
Invest in five-week rehearsals for all new Main Season works	5	4 @ 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	6 presented, 1 cancelled
Run national playwriting competitions	1	2
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	6
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	0
Produce the Griffin Ambassadors program for high school students	1	Achieved
Create opportunities for emerging theatremakers to present work at the Stables	2	1 (1 cancelled)
5: Reach the widest possible audience—grow connections and deepen relationships		
Engage in at least one co-production per year	1	1
Present one regional or national tour per year	1	2
Achieve a combined average of 70% paid attendance across all Main Season shows	70%	80%
Increase reach of Griffin website, e-newsletter 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)	2%	
Develop strategies for First Nations employment	Ongoing	Ongoing

Performance Key: Target Exceeded ■ Target Met ■ Ongoing ■ Target Unmet ■

2023 PROGRAM OF ACTIVITIES

MAIN SEASON – Sex Magick by Nicholas Brown

17 February – 25 March 2023

SBW Stables Theatre, Kings Cross

After a workplace indiscretion shatters his elite footy physiotherapy career, Ard Panicker finds himself begging for work at a metaphysical health spa, selling Ayurvedic rubdowns to yummy mummies in Bondi. With his sense of self at an all time low and staring down a sea of healing crystals, green juices and sound baths, Ard wonders how the hell his life took him from sport to spirituality in one fell swoop.

His search for answers takes him to Kerala, South India, where he meets an enlightened and enigmatic tantric guru. But when he returns to Sydney, Ard's body begins to shudder with mysterious seizures—accompanied by waking visions of a terrifying, all-powerful deity.

What happened to Ard in India? ...And will he ever get his mind back?

From the brilliant brain of playwright **Nicholas Brown** (*Lighten Up*) and featuring a mind-melting breakout performance by **Raj Labade**, *Sex Magick* is a wildly funny (and just plain wild) exploration of queerness, masculinity and South Asian-Australian identity. Griffin's Artistic Director **Declan Greene** (*Green Park, Dogged*) teams up with Brown to co-direct a tantalising mix of live video and ancient Indian Kathakali dance theatre in an experience that will be like nothing else on Sydney stages in 2023. Guaranteed.

In association with Sydney WorldPride 2023

Playwright & Co-Director Nicholas Brown

Dramaturg & Co-Director Declan Greene

Choreographer Raghav Handa

Set & Costume Designer Mason Browne

Lighting Designer Kelsey Lee

Composer & Sound Designer Danni A. Esposito

Video Designer Solomon Thomas

Associate Cultural Dramaturg Jay Emmanuel

Community Engagement Director Gary Paramanathan

Creative Producer Bali Padda

Intimacy Coordinator Chloë Dallimore

Malayalam Translation Anish Chacko, Athira Pradeep, Rashmi Ravindran

Voice & Accent Coach Nikki Zhao

Stage Manager Isabella Kerdijk

With Blazey Best, Raj Labade, Stephen Madsen, Veshnu Narayanasamy, Mansoor Noor, Catherine Vän-Davies

Outcomes

Sex Magick was presented at the SBW Stables Theatre for a five-week season of 35 performances to an audience of 3,147. The show achieved 78% paid attendance and 88% total attendance, with Box Office reaching 107% of target.

Critical Response

"It may be a serious core that anchors Brown's story, but *Sex Magick* is boldly extravagant and extremely playful, with genuine hilarity persisting for its entire two-and-a-half hour duration. Directed by Brown and Declan Greene, the show is relentlessly fascinating in its explorations into sexuality, and all that it implies." ★★★★★½—**Suzy Wrong, Suzy Goes See**
"Brown's writing is reflexively clever, frequently funny, and propelled with curiosity about mythology, spirituality, wellness, gender, and sexuality." ★★★★★—**Cassie Tongue, Sydney Morning Herald**

"This is exactly what a queer play during WorldPride should be: bold, fresh, sexual, and expansive." ★★★★★—**Chad Armstrong, The Queer Review**

MAIN SEASON – Pony by Eloise Snape

12 May – 17 June 2023

SBW Stables Theatre, Kings Cross

22 June – 1 July 2023

Courtyard Studio, Canberra Theatre Centre

Hazel is no angel. In fact, she's a delusional, reality TV-obsessed fantasist who swears like a sailor and has a fondness for greased-up male strippers. She's also hugely, undeniably, ready-to-pop pregnant.

Up the duff and coasting through ultrasounds, baby showers and appointments with her midwife, Hazel is very good at ignoring the stark reality that's about to rock her world from the inside out—literally.

What happens when you're not ready to swap grinding to Ginuwine for nursery rhymes? When you're questioning whether you're even cut out for motherhood, but that horse bolted eight months ago? *Pony* is the sassy, oh-so-crass one-woman crusade that's desperately searching for the light at the end of the (vaginal) tunnel.

The exquisitely comedic **Briallen Clarke** (*A Strategic Plan, Irreverent*) stars as the mortifyingly hilarious Hazel in the Australian stage's answer to *Fleabag* and *The Letdown*.

Shortlisted for the Griffin Award 2022, the Queensland Premier's Drama Award 2022–23, the Rodney Seaborn Playwrights Award 2021 and the Patrick White Playwrights Award 2022

Director Anthea Williams

Set & Costume Designer Isabel Hudson

Lighting Designer Verity Hampson

Composer & Sound Designer Me-Lee Hay

Voice Coach Linda Nicholls-Gidley

Stage Manager Jen Jackson

With Briallen Clarke

Outcomes

Pony was presented at the SBW Stables Theatre for a five-week season of 38 performances to an audience of 2,925. The show achieved 69% paid attendance and 75% total attendance, with Box Office reaching 103% of target.

The Canberra Theatre Centre season of 10 performances reached audiences of 560, achieved 36% paid attendance and 61% total attendance.

Critical Response

"*Pony* is an exuberant show that kicks up its heels in the face of life's messiness." ★★★★★—**Joyce Morgan, The Sydney Morning Herald**

"Clarke makes a lot of clever choices that really help shape the story. She doesn't hold back and gives her whole body to this performance."—**Lauren Donikian, Theatre Travels**

"Crass, in your face and oh so funny, *Pony* is the pregnant tragicomedy you didn't know your life was missing."—**Chantelle Mayo, Toasting Aussie Theatre**

MAIN SEASON – Jailbaby by Suzie Miller

7 July – 19 August 2023

SBW Stables Theatre, Kings Cross

This wasn't how it was meant to go. A few iPhones, a huge TV and a Socceros jersey—shove them all in the IKEA bag then drive away as fast as you can. AJ wasn't meant to be spotted at the scene. AJ wasn't meant to get ID'd in the line up. AJ definitely wasn't meant to go to prison. But once AJ is convicted of theft, he is placed behind the walls of an institution where his own body is stolen from him.

In a cramped communal cell, AJ will become a 'jailbaby'—the ward of a justice system that chooses to turn a blind eye to the life-altering sexual violence committed against young men behind bars.

After an acclaimed performance in 2021's *Dogged*, **Anthony Yangoyan** reunites with director **Andrea James** for this crucial interrogation of Australia's legal system by multi-award-winning playwrighting powerhouse **Suzie Miller**. A spiritual sequel to her international phenomenon *Prima Facie*, Miller once again opens our eyes to the darkest corners of society and asks us to pinpoint the exact moment when it all goes so, so wrong.

Director Andrea James

Dramaturg Declan Greene

Set & Costume Designer Isabel Hudson

Design Assistant Hailley Hunt

Lighting Designer Verity Hampson

Lighting Associate Sammy Read

Composer & Sound Designer Phil Downing

Stage Manager Madelaine Osborn

Production Manager Tyler Fitzpatrick

Intimacy and Consent Consultant Bayley Turner

Fight Coach Tim Dashwood

With Lucia Mastrantone, Anthony Taufa, Anthony Yangoyan

Outcomes

Jailbaby was presented at the SBW Stables Theatre for a six-week season of 45 performances to an audience of 4,511. The show achieved 92% paid attendance and 97% total attendance, with Box Office reaching 177% of target.

Critical Response

"*Jailbaby* is truth-telling of a national shame (the "justice" system and the toxicity of male power/violence) couched in the most personable and humane terms. Recommended without reservation." ★★★★★½—**Diana Simmonds, [Stage Noise](#)**

"By committing to its reality, the play empowers itself—its political power—and loses none of its tension." ★★★★★—**Richie Black, [ArtsHub](#)**

"This is Miller's writing at its most potent..." ★★★★★½—**John Shand, [The Sydney Morning Herald](#)**

MAIN SEASON – Blaque Showgirls by Nakkiah Lui

4 September – 21 October 2023

SBW Stables Theatre, Kings Cross

Plumage! Puns! Political incorrectness gone mad! Griffin Theatre Company is proud to present: Blaque Showgirls!

A lonely kid in rural Australia, fair-skinned Sarah Jane Jones is deathly sure of two things: 1. She's the best dancer in the whole town of Chithole, and 2. She's a proud Aboriginal woman. There's very little proof of either of these things.

So, when a long-lost photograph offers hope of her Indigenous ancestry, Sarah Jane high-tails it to the glitziest casino in Brisvegas. Her mission? To land a role in the First Nations burlesque spectacular: 'Blaque Showgirls'... by any means necessary.

Blaque Showgirls is **Nakkiah Lui's** sparkly, smart-arsed spoof of the so-bad-it's-good cinematic masterpiece *Showgirls*. The luminous **Stephanie Somerville** (*Chalkface*) fan kicks her way to the front of the chorus line alongside an all-star, all-First Nations cast of incredible performers!

Co-Directors **Shari Sebbens** (*Superheroes, City of Gold*) and **Ursula Yovich** (*Diving for Pearls, Barbara and the Camp Dogs*) jam-pack a long-awaited, pint-sized rhinestoned arena spectacular into the SBW Stables Theatre in 2023.

Co-Director Shari Sebbens

Co-Director Ursula Yovich

Set & Costume Designer Cris Baldwin

Lighting Designer Verity Hampson

Sound Designer & Composer Jessica Dunn

Choreographer Sani Townson

Intimacy Coordinator Chloë Dallimore

Voice & Accent Coach Nick Curnow

Community Engagement Lead Neville Williams Boney

Stage Manager Isabella Kerdijk

Lighting Secondment Madeleine Picard

Costume Assistant Hamish Elliot

With Mathew Cooper, Jonathan Jeffrey, Matty Mills, Angeline Penrith, Stephanie Somerville, Ian Michael (cover)

Outcomes

Blaque Showgirls was presented at the SBW Stables Theatre for a six-week season of 46 performances to an audience of 4,214. The show achieved 79% paid attendance and 87% total attendance, with Box Office reaching 120% of target.

Critical Response

"What a gift—an act of resistance in the face of daily oppression, wrapped up in laughter. It tackles questions of identity, authenticity, and appropriation with complexity disguised as bawdy raucousness. It's campy, defiant, ambitious, and gloriously subversive." ★★★★★—**Cassie Tongue, The Sydney Morning Herald**

"A wildly entertaining all-killer, no-filler, 90-minute one-act package." ★★★★★—**Alannah Le Cross, Time Out Sydney**

"Lui's work is irrepressibly effervescent, but with sarcasm dripping from every line, it aims to create laughter as it fervently exposes the injustices suffered by those Indigenous to this land." ★★★★★—**Suzy Wrong, Suzy Goes See**

TOURING

Prima Facie

By Suzie Miller

Fairfax Studio, Arts Centre Melbourne: 8 February – 25 March 2023

Studio 4, Geelong Arts Centre: 28 March – 1 April 2023

Studio Theatre, Theatre Royal Hobart: 4 – 6 April 2023

Town Hall Theatre, paranaple arts centre Devonport: 13 April 2023

The Studio, Lighthouse Theatre Warrnambool: 15 – 16 April 2023

The Q, Queanbeyan Performing Arts Centre: 19 April 2023

Wagga Wagga Civic Theatre: 21 April 2023

Butter Factory Theatre, Hothouse Wodonga: 26 – 29 April 2023

Armitage Centre, Empire Theatres Toowoomba: 3 May 2023

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, this taut, rapid-fire and gripping one-woman show by **Suzie Miller** (*RBG: Of Many, One, Anna K, Sunset Strip*) 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

Composer & Sound Designer Paul Charlier

Production Manager Julia Orlando

Stage Manager Katie Hankin

With Sheridan Harbridge, Luisa Hastings Edge (Standby Cover)

Outcomes

- Arts Centre Melbourne: 53 performances; audiences of 18,229, 88% paid attendance; 91% total attendance.
- Geelong Arts Centre season: 7 performances; audiences of 669, 97% paid attendance; 99% total attendance.
- Theatre Royal Hobart; 4 performances; audiences of 865, 81% paid attendance; 88% total attendance.
- Paranaple Arts Centre Devonport: 1 performance; audiences of 138; 51% paid attendance; 53% total attendance.
- Lighthouse Theatre Warrnambool: 2 performances; audiences of 223, 66% paid attendance; 71% total attendance.
- Queanbeyan Performing Arts Centre: 1 performance; audiences of 346, 100% paid attendance; 100% total attendance.
- Wagga Wagga Civic Theatre: 1 performance; audiences of 293, 58% paid attendance, 60% total attendance.
- Hothouse Wodonga season: 6 performances; audiences of 740, 67% paid attendance; 78% total attendance.
- Empire Theatres Toowoomba: 1 performance, audiences of 242, 71% paid attendance, 81% 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." ★★★★★ **Cameron Woodhead, The Age**

"Sheridan Harbridge stunned theatregoers in the Fairfax Studio of Arts Centre Melbourne, where the auditorium was so subdued during her delivery you could have heard a pin drop." ★★★★★ **Saffron Swire, Time Out Melbourne**

GRIFFIN LOOKOUT – UFO by Kirby Medway & Solomon Thomas

18 – 29 April 2023

SBW Stables Theatre, Kings Cross

On the putting green at the edge of a regional town, a group of young people have been recruited for a highly confidential and, it turns out, highly dull job: to keep tabs on a grounded UFO. Sitting still and silent for weeks, the workers are about to call it quits when...

Using an innovative blend of science fiction tropes, live cinema and exquisitely detailed 1:8 miniatures, *UFO* is a funny, freaky encounter of the third kind from re:group performance collective's **Kirby Medway & Solomon Thomas** that we promise you've never experienced before.

Writer Kirby Medway

Director & Video Designer Solomon Thomas

Sound Designer Tom Hogan

UFO Design Dylan Tonkin

Puppet Design Chris Howell & Solomon Thomas

Puppet Painting Miri Badger

Set Designer Angus Callander

Creative Consultants Hannah Goodwin, Tessa Leong, Jenni Medway, Mark Rogers

Stage Management & Technical Assistance Annika Bertinat, Jessica Henley-Sadgrove

Accessibility Services Steve Wilson-Alexander

Creative Producer Malcolm Whittaker

Administration Intimate Spectacle

With Matt Abotomey, James Harding, Angela Johnston, Tahlee Leeson

Outcomes

UFO was presented at the SBW Stables Theatre for a two-week season of 13 performances to an audience of 1,254. The show achieved 88% paid attendance and 95% total attendance, with Box Office reaching 209% of target.

Critical Response

"The experimental use of play in both theatrical and multimedia aspects has always been at the heart of what re:group does, and *UFO* continues this ... you would be doing yourself a disservice by not letting yourself escape into a sense of childlike wonder." ★★★★★—**Justin Clarke, Theatre Thoughts**

"*UFO* is WTF. Winding theatre and film. Or wrapping theatre with film. It's theatre, Jim, but not as we know it."—**Richard Cotter, Sydney Arts Guide**

"Re:group have taken new technology to the stage that has in the past been seen in larger scale and bigger budget events such as *North by Northwest* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and made it more accessible and intimate, while pointing the way that future theatre can interact with technology, opening up endless possibilities."—**John Moyle, City Hub**

2023 ARTISTIC SUMMARY

MAIN SEASON PROGRAM – SBW STABLES THEATRE					
	Number of Performances	Total Audience	% Attendance Tickets		Income vs. Target (%)
			Paid (KPI = 70%)	Total	
<i>Sex Magick</i> By Nicholas Brown Directed by Declan Greene and Nicholas Brown 17 February – 25 March	35	3147	78	88	107
<i>Pony</i> By Eloise Snape Directed by Anthea Williams 12 May – 17 June	38	2925	69	75	103
<i>Jailbaby</i> By Suzie Miller Directed by Andrea James 7 July – 19 August	45	4511	92	97	177
<i>Blaque Showgirls</i> By Nakkiah Lui Directed by Shari Sebbens and Ursula Yovich 4 September – 21 October	46	4214	79	87	120
GRIFFIN LOOKOUT					
<i>UFO</i> By Kirby Medway and Solomon Thomas Directed by Solomon Thomas 18 – 29 April	13	1254	88	95	209
TOURING					
<i>Prima Facie</i> By Suzie Miller Directed by Lee Lewis Arts Centre Melbourne Geelong Arts Centre Theatre Royal Hobart paranaple arts centre Lighthouse Theatre Queanbeyan Performing Arts Centre Wagga Wagga Civic Theatre Hothouse Wodonga Empire Theatre Toowoomba	76	21,745	87	91	
<i>Pony</i> By Eloise Snape Directed by Anthea Williams Canberra Theatre Centre 26 June – 1 July	10	560	36	61	

ARTIST DEVELOPMENT

Griffin Studio

Griffin Studio, our in-house artist development program, continued 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 March 2023, we presented the final outcomes of 12 months spent with 2022 Griffin Studio artists Bernadette Fam, Megan Wilding and Bedelia Lowrenčev. We welcomed the 2023–2024 cohort Michelle Lim Davidson, Emma Maye Gibson and Randa Sayed, who have spent a year embedded within the company, seeding a new work and receiving mentorship from members of the Artistic team and undertaking industry masterclasses on playwriting and theatremaking. Griffin Studio is funded by the Malcolm Robertson Foundation and our Griffin Studio donors.

Incubator Fellowship

We announced Eve Beck as the successful recipient of the 2022–23 Incubator NSW Theatre (Emerging) Fellowship in partnership with Create NSW. The third recipient of the fellowship, Eve spent the year developing a new immersive theatrical work *Drive*, an audio installation piece that weaves together a series of curated interviews within a site-specific setting, brought to life by two to three performers. Throughout the year a number of progress showings took place, including work with a set designer, sound designer and actors, and feedback and support was provided by Griffin’s Artistic team. A final showing is aimed at being presented in early 2024 to scope how it could be presented at a full production scale.

Griffin also continued to work with develop the projects produced by the recipients of the Incubator Fellowships 2020–21 and 2021–22, Ang Collins and Happy Feraren.

Ang Collins’ work *Naturism* received a week-long development with the playwright, dramaturgical support and actors in partnership with Belvoir. Happy Feraren’s work *SAVIOR* continued to receive dramaturgical support throughout the year, which will culminate in a showing in early 2024.

WRITING AND SCRIPT DEVELOPMENT

Griffin remains one of the leaders in playwriting as an artform in Australia. We have a focus on rigorous script development that seeks to achieve a playwright’s desired impact for their work, and a grounded connection with their intended audience.

Griffin Award

The Griffin Award is a true reflection of who we are as a company and we feel proud to provide such a prestigious pathway for our best writers—both established and emerging. Established in 1998, previous winners include a who’s who of Australian playwriting: Lachlan Philpott, Glace Chase, Angus Cerini, Melissa Reeves, Debra Oswald, Brendan Cowell, Suzie Miller, Dylan Van Den Berg, Megan Wilding and more.

Griffin continued its commitment to accepting and assessing scripts from around the nation with a record 144 submissions received in 2023. We were thrilled to announce that the winner of the Griffin Award 2023 was Wendy Mocke for her play *I am Kegu*. 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.

In 2023, Griffin made a change in the Award’s submission process to reflect changes in the playwriting ecology and to continue to make the Griffin Award even more sustainable and viable to both playwrights and Griffin. The Griffin Award will remain a vital source for open submissions but is now more approachable for mid-career artists to submit ideas and writing samples. In 2024, the winner will receive a full commission of \$17,400 prize and dramaturgical support from the company to develop their play in-house.

The Griffin Award is generously supported by the Copyright Agency’s Cultural Fund.

Griffin Studio Workshop

Griffin continues to renew our focus on dramaturgy and strengthen our position as the country’s leading developer of new Australian plays.

In 2023, Griffin Studio Workshop continued to provide a flexible program of script development—from table reads, dramaturgy sessions, trialling for test audiences and more. Works that benefited from this in 2023 included developments of many of our 2023 Main Season works, as well as *Moerto Srce* by Diana Popovska, *Flat Earthers: The Musical* by Jean Tong, Lou Wall and James Gales, *The Hate Race* by Maxine Beneba Clarke, *Naturism* by Ang Collins, and *The Crombie Crew Cabaret* by Elaine Crombie.

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 our 19th year of Griffin Ambassadors, Griffin continued to provide young audiences access to world-class Australian storytelling. In 2023, we welcomed 81 senior high school students into the company, representing 46 different schools across NSW, ranging from Bronte to Scone and West Wollongong to Newcastle.

These students became part of Griffin's creative life for a year. Students attended performances of *Sex Magick*, *Pony*, *Jailbaby* and *Blaque Showgirls* followed by Q&As with cast and directors. They also attended two workshops run by industry creatives and practitioners.

BOARD & STAFF

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Bruce Meagher – Chair
Nigel Barrington – Treasurer
Simone Whetton – Secretary
Guillaume Babilie
Simon Burke AO
Julieanne Campbell
Jane Clifford
Lyndell Droga
Declan Greene
Nakul Legha
Julia Pincus
Lenore Robertson AM

STAFF

Artistic Director and Co-CEO – Declan Greene
Executive Director and Co-CEO – Julieanne Campbell

Administration

General Manager – Khym Scott
Administration & Ticketing Coordinator – Kate Marks (to December)

Artistic

Associate Artistic Director – Andrea James
Literary Manager – Dylan Van Den Berg (from June)
Literary Associate – Julian Larnach
Commissioned Writers – Eve Beck, Elaine Crombie, Winnie Beck, Happy Feraren and Adrian Russell Wills

Customer Relations

Ticketing Manager – Jackson Used (to January) / Gary Barker (from April)
Ticketing Administrator – Nathan Harrison
FOH Manager – Alex Bryant-Smith
Front of House – Riordan Berry, Kandice Joy, Max Philips, Maddy Withington, Willo Young

Development

Head of Development – Jake Shavikin
Relationships Manager – Ell Katte

Finance

Finance Manager – Kylie Richards
Finance Consultant – Emma Murphy

Marketing

Marketing Manager – Erica Penollar (from February)
Content Producer – Ang Collins

Production

Production Manager – Ally Moon (to January) / Julia Orlando (from October)
Technical Manager – Sam Gray (from July)

Programming

Senior Producer – Leila Enright
Programs Producer – Janine Lau (to January)
Associate Producer – Cassie Hamilton (from June)