GRIFFIN
THEATRE
COMPANY

STRATEGIC PLAN 2023–2024:

An update to Griffin's COVID-19 Recovery Plan 2021-2022

1. OUR PURPOSE

To lead the country in the production of the best new Australian plays.

2. AUSTRALIAN STORYTELLING HISTORY

Griffin Theatre Company and the SBW Stables operate and tell stories on the lands of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, the traditional custodians of the land on which we work.

We acknowledge and honour First Nations people as the oldest continuous living culture on the planet and their more than 60,000 years of storytelling practice, which underpins Australian culture.

It is a privilege that we do not take lightly: to share space on this land, and to tell stories on its soil.

3. OUR VISION

There is nothing more important to the evolution of Australian identity than having stories written for us and told to us, in our own voice, about ideas that matter deeply to us today. Theatre is agile, responsive, lightweight. It can reflect the passionate concerns of a community and connect that with the audience and artists who gather together to share space. As these concerns become embedded in text, plays become a living benchmark of our nation's progress over years, decades, and centuries.

As our nation's only new writing theatre, Griffin Theatre Company is committed to showcasing distinct and original Australian stories on our stages. The existence of this company is a promise to the artists and audiences of this nation that there will always be a stage to hear and celebrate the Australian voice.

The core mission of Griffin will never change. Two and a half years into this pandemic, with its impacts being felt in every area of the performing arts, our vision is unwavering and our determination to meet the hurdles ahead is steadfast. As a company who produces new Australian plays, it has never felt more critical to interrogate what 'new' is, what 'Australian' is, and what 'plays' look and sound like.

4. OVERVIEW

Griffin's elevation in June 2021 to membership of the National Performing Arts Partnership Framework (NPAPF) is an important recognition of the vital role the company plays in this nation's cultural ecosystem as Australia's theatre of new writing. It acknowledges Griffin's trajectory of growth and resilience over the last four decades, while also encouraging its ambitions for the future.

In parallel, Griffin has the opportunity, through the proposed redevelopment of the SBW Stables Theatre, to create a new, nationally-significant hub for Australian storytelling. The redeveloped theatre will increase the footprint of the venue by 40%, address vital safety and access improvements including wheelchair access, and breathe new life into this iconic 51-year-old theatre.

It has been a challenge to both embrace and plan for this game-changing moment in the company's history while continuing to manage COVID impacts—as well as a performing arts industry turned upside down. In our COVID-19 Recovery Plan 2021-2022, we identified four pillars to ensure that the challenges of COVID-19 were met. They were: a COVID-conscious **Artistic Program,** the **Development** of artists and new Australian works; an **Access and Inclusion** strategy; and **Activation** of skills and spaces to encourage additional revenue streams.

While the first three pillars remain relevant in 2023-2024, the opportunity to explore new revenue streams was not taken up and energies were diverted into adapting to a vastly changed environment due to COVID. In light of the proposed redevelopment, efforts to explore new revenue streams are being deferred and channelled into the opportunity presented by the new building, including additional spaces, programming and retail potential.

In 2023-2024, our four pillars have been refined to be:

- a COVID-conscious **Artistic Program** that is both ambitious and agile;
- the **Development** of artists and new Australian works;
- an **Access and Inclusion** strategy that champions diversity at all levels;
- a **Redevelopment Project** that will create a new home for Australian plays with national reach.

Griffin is led by a skilled and engaged Board and Executive, supported by a hard-working and passionate staff and artistic community. The company has a strong governance model, a positive workplace culture, an ambitious artistic vision, respected standing within the Australian arts and entertainment sector, and an enthusiastic community of donors and supporters.

CURRENT ENVIRONMENT & COVID-19 IMPACT

The impact of COVID-19 on the arts landscape, both within NSW and nationwide, has been immense. Between 2020-2021, before vaccinations were readily available, many of the impacts were concerned with the cancellation of work and ensuring the safety of audiences, staff and contracted workers. In 2022 many of these impacts have shifted into unexpected areas: from ticket-buying patterns amongst audiences through to disruptions with the supply chain of set and costume materials, to staffing shortages.

Audience & Box Office Income

Patternmakers research from March 2022 has provided metrics around some of these impacts which are being felt by Griffin. Their Audience Outlook Monitor revealed that of the arts consumers surveyed, "*7 in 10 past attendees are back at cultural events, but half remain concerned about risks*", with four of the 10 remaining requiring adjustments to their prior ritual of attendance.

Though encouraging in many ways, this number still represents a significant 30% drop in regular arts attendance, with impacts felt by companies such as Griffin who rely on box office as a major source of income. Since the start of 2022 when we have returned to regularly staging work, our average audience size sits at approximately 65% of the capacity of our auditorium.

Attendance is also affected by patterns of delayed ticket buying. Patrons booking events within the next 7 days increased by 10% between the November 2021 and March 2022 phases of the Patternmakers research—and the largest proportion of bookings are for events happening *'later this month'* (45%). This pattern of late ticket buying has significant impacts on the allocation of company resources across public-facing departments such as box office, front of house and marketing. It has also seen numbers drop for subscribers, who are the audience members typically most invested in a long lead-time in ticket purchasing. In 2021, subscriber numbers sat at 1,055—down from 1,651 in 2019 pre-pandemic.

Workload & Capacity

Since the start of 2022 the pandemic has seen a major increase in the workload and cost of producing theatre which has seen all departments of the company stretched to capacity and at risk of burn-out.

Our executive, producers, production and creative teams are now required to continually strategise the short-notice withdrawal of actors, directors, designers, and crew from rehearsal and production processes due to COVID contact and diagnosis. This means the rapid search for temporary or permanent substitutes or 'swings' for these crucial roles, along with the additional inductions, handovers, workflow re-planning and rescheduling this entails.

Impacts from the rescheduling of cancelled performances are also felt by our small box office team across 2020-2021. Our ticketing software and box office systems have not previously had the capacity to batch-process this volume of refunds, credits, donations, or transfers, meaning a considerable amount of manual processing. Griffin's relative lean box office and marketing departments have struggled to manage the volume of customer service or communications required through these processes.

Like many companies across NSW and Australia at large, the small production department of Griffin (two full-time employees) is being adversely impacted by shortages of skilled labour in contracted production and technical crewing. Scenic builders, mechanists, lighting and sound technicians and operators, production managers, production assistants, and stage managers are all in short supply. Though there is currently no data available on the reasons for these shortages, anecdotally it is believed to be due to the increase in film and TV production across Australia (an equivalent industry with better wages and working conditions)—as well as mass departures from the live performance industry during the pandemic. The resultant engagement of non-skilled contractors, and the time-consuming task of finding and booking people, has resulted in an increased workload for the production team at Griffin.

Staffing

The additional pandemic-related workloads across all departments at Griffin since early 2020 have had adverse effects on staffing. Though staffing remained stable across 2020-2021 due to job insecurity during the lockdown period of the pandemic, from early 2022 Griffin began to experience a high volume of resignations. These resignations were felt across all areas of the company, but principally in managerial roles in Production, Development, Box Office, Marketing and Administration.

Efforts at recruiting skilled managers to these crucial roles have been stymied by both low unemployment across the general population (3.9% as of June 2022) and the level of Griffin's salaries, which are low when benchmarked across the subsidised theatre industry but especially non-competitive when benchmarked against roles in equivalent creative industries such as film or television. For instance, when recruiting for the Marketing Manager role in April, Griffin received only one application. Advice from a recruiting agency was that Griffin's rate of pay was $20K below what would be considered the minimum for a head of department marketing role in similar industries.

Freelance Artists

Freelance artists continue to be made vulnerable by the continuing impacts of the pandemic. This is an area in which Griffin has been proud to provide leadership across the sector in terms of equitable practice. In 2020 when the company announced its first slate of show cancellations, Griffin immediately made public commitments to honour artist contracts beyond minimum obligation without standing down either administrative or artistic staff. This pledge continued across the remainder of lockdown-plagued 2020 and 2021, through rolling lockdown-related cancellations that dogged multiple productions and the artists impacted.

In recognition of the rarity of first productions of new writing in Australia, Griffin is proud to have honoured our commitments and have produced nearly all the plays to which we promised production in 2020 and 2021. Between 2020 and into 2022 we have only cancelled one production outright; all others have received a full production post-cancellation, sometimes after multiple attempts at rescheduling.

Programming

One of Griffin's roles within the theatre landscape is to produce the plays that are too risky, either in form or content, for larger theatre companies with higher box office targets. In many ways, this mission runs in contradiction to the programming desire of a majority of audiences surveyed by Patternmakers (40%) to see work which is light-hearted and escapist in tone - which places additional pressure on our programming team to reconcile the desires of audience with company mission, and to either source, commission or develop a narrow bandwidth of plays that meet both this criteria.

FINANCIAL CONTEXT

Government funding

In June 2021, Griffin was endorsed by the Australia Council and Create NSW to become part of the National Performing Arts Partnership Framework. This recognition acknowledges Griffin's place amongst the top performing arts organisations in Australia, providing an increase in annual funding to around $1 million annually accompanied by longer-term security of funding.

Historically, Griffin's income has been roughly one-third government funding, one-third fundraising and one-third earned income—predominantly ticket sales. The funding cuts Griffin experienced in 2015 shifted this to around one quarter government funding, with the balance an even split between earned income and fundraising. The pandemic swung the dial yet again, seeing a significant increase in government support through COVID subsidies, as well as an increase in support from philanthropy and ticket holders who chose to donate their tickets. This eased the blow of a significant drop in box office due to forced cancellations and extended periods of lockdowns in 2020, 2021 and into 2022.

The aim over the next two years is to build earned income and fundraising to match the increase in government arts support through NPAPF and return to an optimum mix of one-third government funding, one-third fundraising and one-third earned income as we gear up towards the redevelopment.

Earned Income

Pre-pandemic, box office accounted for around 60% of Griffin's Earned Income, the other sources being a mix of performance fees, ticketing income, bar sales, venue hire, interest and royalties. In 2020, box office income was 58% of 2019 figures, and 2021 dropped further to 51% of 2019 figures.

Griffin's 2022 Budget was built on the assumption that disruptions to performances would likely persist until mid-year but then return to close to normal (i.e. pre-COVID) from July onwards. While audience confidence is slowly returning, a shift in behaviour to more last-minute planning and regular no-shows is likely to persist for some time, which is impacting box office. Our budgeting for 2023 is for pre-pandemic attendance, which sets capacity at 72% for our Main Season shows, but this may need to be revised based on the second half of 2022.

Philanthropy

The last two years of the COVID-19 pandemic have created enormous disruption for Griffin. However through the company's deep and sustained relationship with audiences and donors, Griffin has grown its philanthropic income and remained financially sustainable. In five years (2017-2021), Griffin has tripled its cash development income, primarily through an increase in larger donations. While it is unlikely, given the current economic forecasts, that this increase will remain as steep, it is fair to expect current levels can be maintained and continue modest growth.

New programs supported through philanthropy in the last two years include:

- **Griffin Studio Workshop** (piloted as Griffin Studio Ensemble in 2021)
- **Griffin Alumni Engagement Event** (additional annual event run as part of our long-running Ambassadors program funded by a family PAF)
- **Associate Artistic Director** position (funded by the Griffin Women's Initiative formed in 2019 - its first year supported by matched funding through CPA Plus1 to bring in new donors)
- **Griffin Amplify** (a three-year audience development initiative supported by a family PAF)
- **Green Griffin Carbon Offsets** (in support of becoming carbon neutral).

As development targets increase and the number of donors increases, resources are becoming stretched. The size of the development team has not grown since 2017. However, the Capital Campaign associated with the redevelopment will be an opportunity increase resourcing to match this growth and strengthen development at Griffin.

2023-2024 Financial Position

Healthy surpluses in 2020 and 2021 have placed the company in a strong and stable financial position, despite the challenging impacts of the pandemic. This is in no small part thanks to the significant COVID relief provided by both the state and federal governments. Griffin currently operates with financial reserves of $1 million representing 33% of total annual revenue in 2021 of $3.1 million.

The 2023 Budget has been built on the expectation of audiences returning to close to pre-pandemic behaviours, with capacity set at 72% for Main Season shows. We are maintaining a COVID contingency fund to manage the additional production costs of show cancellations and extended seasons.

Building works are set to commence in late 2023. We have therefore not programmed a full year at the SBW Stables Theatre in 2023. Relocation costs have been built into the redevelopment project, and costings for 2024 program will be managed within existing resources, while noting we will be programming work at alternate locations during the period of building works.

TWO-YEAR RESPONSE STRATEGY

Workload & Capacity

In order to mitigate the risk of staff burn-out from the increased workload of producing theatre during the pandemic, as well as difficulties recruiting skilled staff and contractors, Griffin is implementing the following strategic approaches in 2023-2024:

Ticketing Systems. During the second Sydney lockdown period in 2021 the workflow for these processes was reviewed and refined in detail. In 2022 these systems are being revised in consultation with Tessitura to reduce impacts on Box Office and Marketing departments, enabling smoother operation of these departments over 2023-2024 and to significantly reduce workload.

External Support. Partnerships have been forged with external agencies to support specific departments at Griffin. Anthem will provide strategic oversight and specialised marketing support for the Marketing Department, and Paperjam Partners will similarly provide strategic oversight and administrative support for the Production Department as well as additional technical crewing support.

Additional Staffing. A new full-time role of Programs Producer has been created to absorb some of the workload and responsibilities formerly held by the Associate Producers and the Administrator. An additional permanent part-time role has also been created in Box Office.

Salary Increases. Salaries across the company are being benchmarked annually and reviewed, with recommended increases made to Board. In 2022, salaries increased between 3%-6% based on length of tenure at the company—a further incentive for people to stay with the company. This will likely continue in order that Griffin remains competitive with its peers, noting that the majority of resignations in the past 12 months have gone to higher paying jobs but still within the arts industry.

Audiences & Box Office

Recognising that patrons are increasingly purchasing tickets last-minute and that there has been a 30% drop in audiences not yet ready to return to the theatre, Griffin is employing the following strategic measures to strengthen box office income across 2023-2024.

Subscription Drive. We have set an internal target to build subscriber numbers from 1,055 (2021 total) to 1,500 for 2023, providing a more comfortable box office baseline for the year. We will do this by targeting lapsed subscribers with new initiatives including a Subscriber

Briefing (an exclusive, in-person preview of the 2023 Season in advance of the official launch). We will set a new subscriber target for 2024 midway through 2023, and evaluate whether a revised strategic approach is required.

Rush Tickets. Recognising the increasing value of word-of-worth on last-minute single ticket sales, over 2023-2024 we will explore the expansion of our Monday Rush Tickets initiative.

Advertising Spend & Marketing Strategy. With high-level strategic advice from our new marketing partner Anthem, we will reallocate our marketing spend for 2023-2024 to better reach single ticket buyers making last-minute purchases. This will include a drive to grow our follower numbers and footprint on social media.

Griffin Amplify. With funding support from the Girgensohn Foundation and strategic support from Diversity Arts Australia, we are building robust community engagement strategies to complement our marketing campaigns for 2023-2024, providing access to a pool of potential ticket buyers who have not been historically been targeted by Griffin.

Programming

Buffered scheduling. To manage the domino effect of cancelled and postponed shows, in 2021 we created a buffer of two weeks between the seasons of each show. This system of scheduling has already proved invaluable in 2022 in mitigating the scheduling impacts of COVID on *Orange Thrower* and *Ghosting the Party* and will be retained for 2023 and potentially beyond.

Reduced Subscription Season. In recognition of the increased labour and costs involved in producing each show and the proposed redevelopment, in 2023 we will produce four Main Season works instead of five. This structure of the subscription season (4 x Main Season, 2 x Lookout) will be retained in 2024, pending adjustments necessitated by the redevelopment project and subject to relocation needs.

Reduced Artist Programs. Through the strategic reallocation of resources around Griffin's support of early-career artists, over 2021-2022 three resource-heavy programs have been discontinued: Batch Festival, Scratch Night, and the Artist Membership Program. To ensure the company maintains the same level of accessibility to early-career and independent artists, in 2023-2024 Griffin Lookout will transition from an invitation-only program to an open submission program, with applications taken annually. Griffin Studio, Incubator Fellowship, Griffin Award, Ambassadors, and our Play Submissions programs will remain accessible through an annual open submission process.

Programming Mix. In recognition of the Patternmakers research indicating audience preferences for light-hearted work, across 2023-2024 we are seeking to achieve a balance within individual works themselves—showcasing works which are comic, joyful, and generous in tone, but which also take risks on their content and form.

Artistic Program

New Work

Upon joining NPFAF Griffin held the hope that additional funding would allow us to restore core funding of commissioning and script workshop programs. However, the COVID-related increase of production costs and workload for staff have absorbed that opportunity. As such, Griffin will—over 2023-2024—remain reliant on philanthropy and additional funding to vouchsafe the quality of the scripts we produce. This is a considerable risk for a company which is heavily reliant the success of these works to generate box office income.

Commissioning

Griffin currently has seven playwrights under full commission, with funding partners including the Malcolm Robertson Foundation, Create NSW (RESTART), and the City of Sydney.

Over 2020-2021 with use of COVID-response funding and philanthropy Griffin also paid a number of smaller commissions to twelve playwrights, for continued drafts of extant projects. This is a novel proposition in the Australian theatre industry, where playwrights are often expected to undertake redrafting work for free.

In our COVID-19 Recovery Plan 2021-2022 we spoke to the ambition of fully commissioning two new plays per year from 2022, and to commission four work-in-progress Treatments per year from 2022 . However, with the increased cost of productions and pressures on staffing, and the drying up of COVID-response funding and philanthropy, this target is no longer realistic to maintain. As such, through 2023-2024 the number of annual commissions will remain dependent on philanthropic support.

Script Workshopping

Though Griffin had success in 2020-2021 commissioning of new work through external funding, the workshopping of these scripts has proved considerably more difficult to resource, with fewer philanthropic foundations focused on this specific aspect of playwright support. Griffin's inclusion in NPAPF also makes the company ineligible for the Australia Council for the Arts and Create NSW individual project funding, which were former avenues of resourcing for script development.

In our 2020 Strategic Plan we anticipated adding a fifth week of rehearsal time to each of our premieres—which could be allocated as either a rehearsal week or a development week, according to the wishes of the writer and director. We also hoped to allocate $18,000 from core budget annually from 2022 for two developments of commissioned plays. In the wake of rising expenses across all areas of the company, neither of these ambitions have proved financially viable.

However, in late 2021 Griffin established a new circle of donors called the 'Griffin Studio Workshop', with the target of $30K annually. This $30K will afford a modest script workshopping budget towards approximately three plays per year.

It is our hope that the Griffin Studio Workshop donors will re-commit their funding for 2023-24, though at the time of writing this is not confirmed.

Residencies

Griffin currently provides two annual programs for playwrights to work in residence with the company: **Griffin Studio** and the **Incubator Fellowship.** Both programs are focused on early-career artists, with strong intake of artists from Culturally & Linguistically Diverse and First Nations backgrounds.

Griffin Studio
Griffin Studio is a hands-on, experience-based program of skills development over a one year period. Griffin Studio is, strategically, Griffin's most valuable current pipeline for the incubation and development of new work, as well a means of early-career artists securing career advancement through programming in Griffin's Main Season. Since 2020 Griffin Studio artists **Kirsty Marillier**

(*Orange Thrower*, 2021-2022) and **Dylan Van Den Berg** (*Whitefella Yella Tree,* 2022) have been programmed in the Main Season. In both cases this was a mainstage debut for the playwright.

The continuation of Griffin Studio over 2023-2024 is held to be a vital part of Griffin's strategic support for early-career artists. Though it is entirely funded by philanthropy, as a legacy program its ongoing funding from these donors and foundations is secure.

Incubator Fellowship

Since 2020 the **Incubator Fellowship** has been run in partnership by Griffin and Create NSW under a three year agreement. Each year, the Fellowship sees between four and five artists annually develop a project over a three month period, with support from Griffin's artistic team. At the end of this three-month period the artists pitch their projects to a panel of Griffin and Create NSW representatives, and one project is selected for a $30,000 year-long Fellowship.

The ongoing funding of the Fellowship beyond this initial three-year period is yet to be confirmed.

Actors' Ensemble

Through donor support, in 2021 Griffin held a one-year actors' cohort of four casually contracted actors - the 'Griffin Studio Ensemble ' - to participate in a structured year of workshops and work in progress showings with our Griffin Studio artists.

Though valuable over 2021, the Griffin Studio Ensemble was not held to be strategically viable for 2022 onwards. Accordingly, script workshopping activities for Studio and commissioned artists over 2023-2024 will be facilitated through the Griffin Studio Workshop initiative. The philanthropic funding that made Griffin Studio Ensemble possible in 2021 has been consolidated into Griffin Studio Workshop.

Open Access

Since 2020 Griffin has run an online play submissions portal, maintained by a Literary Associate, through which any playwright with a minimum of two independent productions (or prior development support through a non-tertiary arts organisation) can submit a play for consideration for Griffin's programming.

With support from the Copyright Agency Griffin also produces the Griffin Award, a long-running annual cash prize for the most promising new Australian play, which is an entirely open submission.

The open-access nature of both these play submissions processes is significant given Griffin is Australia's peak new writing theatre. Continuation of both the Griffin Award and the Literary Associate position (which runs the Play Submissions portal) are dependent on philanthropy over 2023-2024. While the Griffin Award, as a legacy program, is held to be secure, funding for the Literary Associate position is yet to be confirmed for 2023.

Inclusion

Griffin has historically committed to cultural and gender diversity on stage and off. As a company, we aim to reflect contemporary Australia on our stages. It is critical that we create environments where First Nations and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse creatives and administrative staff are safe, it has been necessary to examine hiring priorities and workplace protocols at every level of Griffin—from Box Office to Board.

In 2021 Griffin initiated a partnership with Diversity Arts Australia, commencing with a company-wide audit. Findings indicated that Griffin had strong representation of Culturally & Linguistically Diverse and First Nations artists in its programming, but revealed areas for improvement across staffing and Board, as well as policy and procedure. In late 2021 Griffin's staff and board undertook DAA's Fair Play training program, with a series of seminars and workshops undertaken in areas including Marketing, Capacity Building, and Community Engagement. An Equity Action Committee was formed, including Griffin's executive team. At the time of writing (June 2022) a three-year Equity Action Plan is being drafted with support from DAA mentor Tian Zhang, to be finalised and published shortly.

Access

The Diversity Arts Australia audit indicated engagement of Disabled & d/Deaf communities as a major area of improvement for Griffin and the SBW Stables Theatre. While the Equity Action Plan will assist in this engagement, there are still limitations imposed by our current venue. Most significantly, the SBW Stables Theatre is not wheelchair accessible, with no lift access to the theatre or other areas for artists and audiences with mobility needs. Work undertaken in 2010 with Tonkin Zulaikha Greer (TZG) determined that lift access was not possible within the current footprint of the building.

Embedded in the Stables Redevelopment, with its expanded footprint of the combined 10 and 12 Nimrod Street buildings, is the inclusion of a lift across all three floors of the new venue. Artists, creatives, arts workers and audiences with mobility issues will be able to access the rehearsal room at basement level, the foyer for ticketing and events, and the theatre, stage and back of house areas.

A successful application to RISE in partnership with Australian Theatre Live means that the majority of Griffin's 2022 Season will be digitally captured and available to watch as Video on Demand for Disabled and d/Deaf patrons who cannot attend the theatre in person.

As part of Griffin's EAP, strategies for better access will be devised in partnership with a peak organisation such as Accessible Arts and inform how we strengthen our offer to artists and audiences in 2023 and 2024, and beyond.

Griffin is also proud to create points of access for marginalised members of the local community through its long running Community Performances program which provides free tickets to local NFP service organisations. Notwithstanding the continuing impacts of the pandemic, in 2023-2024 Griffin will continue to consult with our local NFP community partners in relation to our program, and the redevelopment. Early consultation has already indicated that additional spaces within the building could be used to harness new opportunities for social connection and support on-site for vulnerable members of the local community.

Additional Revenue

In our *COVID-19 Recovery Plan 2021-2022*, we identified a number of alternative revenue streams to be developed to offset the reduction in box office. These were aimed at monetising some of the skills and resources available to Griffin and the Stables more broadly. They included reviewing our ticketing model, introducing a membership model, assessing scripts, writing masterclasses and venue hire.

The resource-heavy efforts of managing lockdowns, show cancellations and an upended industry due to the pandemic - alongside Griffin's redevelopment plans throughout 2021 and 2022 - meant that little progress was made on exploring additional revenue streams. In such an unstable environment, testing new business opportunities was neither wise nor viable.

Touring and digital have emerged as an increasingly key focus in an effort to both increase revenue as well as expand Griffin's footprint and reach. A position paper was developed in late 2021 with a remit to strengthen and grow both areas in 2022 and beyond.

Membership

In 2021, Griffin introduced an Artist Membership model. Originally this was going to be geared to ticket buyers who wanted a more 'behind-the-scenes' experience, but with was not possible due to the pandemic. Year-round engagement was offered to our artist community through the Artistic Membership which required a nominal monthly fee to participate in online and in-person (when possible) workshops. Modest take-up and considerable resources needed to service this model meant it was phased out in late 2021.

Venue Hire

Griffin partnered with ATYP during their period of redevelopment to provide a dedicated venue. This also provided guaranteed venue hire income for Griffin in 2020 and 2021. While this was disrupted due to the pandemic, it was still an important opportunity for both companies during an unstable time. Griffin will look to secure a similar partnership with a trusted arts peer in 2024 and 2025 while the Stables Theatre is rebuilt.

Griffin will continue to generate modest revenue from the casual venue hires when our own programming needs allow.

Touring

Griffin is looking to expand and make sustainable its touring activities to increase the company's footprint to regional audiences, as well as other metropolitan cities, and opening up the conversation about Australian identity playing out on our stages to include a broader cross-section of Australia. This should also be an increasing source of revenue for the company.

For several years Griffin has undertaken touring that sees key works presented in one to three transfer venues immediately following its premiere season at the SBW Stables. It has tended to be resource heavy with no government subsidy or philanthropic support.

In the second half of 2021 Griffin met with Arts on Tour and members of NAPACA to more formally engage regional presenters in Griffin's pipeline of new work. Since then, Griffin with support from Arts on Tour applied to Playing Australia for a tour of *Prima Facie* in 2023. Whether or not this is successful, it signals a more strategic and intentional approach to touring, working more closely with regional and metropolitan venues in the discussion of programming and audiences. Griffin will continue to actively explore opportunities in 2023 and 2024, regardless of touring-specific funding.

Further to this, Griffin is undertaking a pilot program in 2022 (funded by the Robertson Foundation) connecting our Ambassadors program to our touring efforts. This represents a significant 'value-add' experience for venues and connects Griffin's Ambassadors program to a growing digital and in-person participation with young people living in regional NSW.

Digital

Griffin was successful with RISE funding to support the digital capture of our 2022 Main Season program, in partnership with Australian Theatre Live (ATL). This built on the relationship between Griffin and ATL which saw the filming and distribution of digital seasons of *Emerald City* by David Williamson, *Diving for Pearls* by Katherine Thomson (not yet available due to ongoing negotiations) and Apocalypse Theatre's Griffin Independent Production *The Dapto Chaser* by Mary Rachel Brown.

A key focus in 2023-2024 will be to work with ATL and Griffin's own networks to increase the reach of filmed productions, both in cinemas and online. The capture of Griffin's works remains funding dependent, and while efforts are being made to explore revenue streams, this remains uncommercial at this very early stage of the industry's foray into filmed theatre productions.

We are also looking to explore the possibility of including screen options for main season works in licencing agreements whereby Griffin would be a screen producing partner (via provision of specialised dramaturgical expertise) for screen adaptations of Griffin-premiered works. This is a large industry conversation, but one in which Griffin has a high stake, given the increasing number of new works Griffin commissions.

Stables Redevelopment

The SBW Stables is a unique, much-loved theatre venue. Though small in scale, its 105-seat auditorium and its 'kite-shaped' stage provide a level of intimacy cherished by artists and audiences alike. However, this belies the fact that the 51-year-old SBW Stables Theatre is, sadly, no longer fit for purpose. It is riddled with safety issues. It is inaccessible to Disabled and d/Deaf audiences, with no wheelchair access to the theatre. Its dimensions are incompatible with most touring venues in regional NSW and Australia. And it lacks many of the facilities required by a nationally significant company like Griffin and its artists, audiences, and vibrant local community.

In late 2020, the SBW Foundation purchased 12 Nimrod Street, the terrace next door to the SBW Stables Theatre. This paved the way for the opportunity to redevelop the theatre and secure a permanent and accessible home for Griffin.

The Stables Redevelopment will see the current theatre building (10 Nimrod Street) combined with the terrace house next door, providing a 40% increase in landsize. Designed by award-winning architect Tim Greer (Tonkin Zulaikha Greer Architects), the new Stables will stand as a nationally significant cultural hub for Australian storytelling.

A brief summary of the key features of the new venue is outlined as follows:

- An expanded and flexible 151-seat theatre maintaining the distinctive diamond shape delivering improved audience experience, and standardised to better allow touring of Griffin productions. (This is a 44% increase on our current 105-seats)
- A new rehearsal room with performance capabilities, featuring adjacent courtyard, workshop, laundry and amenities to significantly improve creative outcomes, streamline operations and reduce reliance on hire of external facilities.
- A larger multi-purpose 130 sqm foyer with a generous bar/retail offer, event and performance capabilities, providing space for additional diversified programming to reach new audiences.
- Vastly improved back of house configuration including bio-box access and location, larger dressing rooms, improved artist amenities and technical storage areas.
- The installation of a lift across all three levels, allowing wheelchair and access for mobility needs currently not possible within the current building footprint.

The total project cost is just under $10 million, which includes the purchase price of 12 Nimrod Street ($1.6 million). A Planning Proposal has been submitted to the City of Sydney, to be followed by a DA once planning is approved. Construction is due to commence in late 2023, with the new building due to be complete for programming in 2025.

A Business Case for the Stables Redevelopment has been submitted as part of the application to Create NSW's Creative Capital Fund. The requested contribution from NSW Government, which would be required to be matched, is for just under $5 million. A project budget was submitted as part of the application along with a three-year operational budget, a project plan with key milestones, a Capital Campaign Plan with a target of $4 million, risk assessment, etc. The application is being assessed with an announcement on the application outcome expected in July 2022.

When completed, this new cultural hub will see benefits for Griffin such as increased income and increased reach to new audiences. However, benefits will also flow to the communities around Griffin. This new venue will be fully accessible to Disabled & d/Deaf artists and audiences. For independent artists and local community groups it will provide much-needed affordable creative space. Our new, diversified programming across our additional spaces will create new employment and engagement opportunities for artists, while stimulating the late-night rejuvenation of Kings Cross. With improved digital and touring capacity we will better reach regional and remote audiences. And, perhaps most importantly, our theatre industry will finally have a home for Australian storytelling that properly reflects the boldness, vision and quality of the work created in this country.

RISK ASSESSMENT

RISK	CONSEQUENCE	RISK SCORE	STRATEGIES TO MINIMISE
COVID-19 related cancellations continue to impact productions	Increasing costs for productions and decreasing income from box office	8	Maintain tight controls in relation to COVID-19 safety amongst show company and Griffin staff. Building in additional flexibility to scheduling.
COVID-19 related audience reticence continues past 2022	Box office revenue targets are not met.	9	Additional marketing resources applied to subscription season and individual shows.
Changing economic trends result in decreased audience numbers—loss of subscribers and single ticket buyers	Box office revenue targets are not met.	6	Competitive pricing and flexible ticketing options. Explore new avenues for ticket sales, i.e. rush tickets, etc.
SBW Foundation discontinues current level of patronage	Rent for office or theatre increase significantly	9	Manage negotiations with SBW Foundation. Ongoing communication about Griffin financial position. Monitor budget and potential impact.
Loss of talent from the industry as artists pursue less unstable employment / careers	Griffin-preferred artists no longer available.	6	Provide artistic employment opportunities where possible. Advocate for artists throughout the impact of COVID-19
Impact of cancellation of productions on brand	Patron weariness in making future bookings.	6	Flexible ticketing options, including full refunds.
Philanthropic support is reduced due to economic downturn.	Reduced capacity to support/develop new works, playwrights, commissions or artistic development initiatives.	8	Maintain positive and productive relationships and clear lines of communication with major stakeholders.
Redevelopment stalls or fails to secure adequate funds	Extended period out of the building negatively impacts programming, reserves are depleted.	8	High-level project management, governance and management.

Risk Assessment Table

	LIKELIHOOD				
	1	2	3	4	5
CONSEQUENCE	Rare	Unlikely	Moderate	Likely	Almost Certain
Insignificant	1	2	3	4	5
Minor	2	4	6	8	10
Moderate	3	6	9	12	15
Major	4	8	12	16	20
Catastrophic	5	10	15	20	25

APPENDIX A – PROGRAMMING: 2023 SEASON

MAIN SEASON:

SEX MAGICK by Nicholas Brown, directed by Declan Greene
A co-production with Sydney World Pride
When a series of hallucinatory seizures end his career as an elite footy physiotherapist, Ard Panicker takes a trip to South India - hoping to find the source of his illness. But instead he finds a shadowy tantric guru who will crack open his identity, his sexuality and his grip on reality. A rollicking, LSD-laced exploration of queerness, masculinity, and South Asian-Australian identity.

PONY by Eloise Snape, directed by Anthea Williams
Hazel is a pregnant fantasist, who realises - nine months too late - that having a child might not be the best thing for her. *Pony* is a bitingly honest and hilarious coming of (middle) age story, which explores bodies, sex, and the wild ways we avoid talking honestly about pre and post-natal mental health.

JAILBABY by Suzie Miller, directed by Declan Greene
18-year-old AJ lives on the poor fringes of a city like ours with a mum who doesn't care. Seth is also 18. He lives in the leafy suburbs, with a mum who cares too much. One night an act of petty robbery sees the lives of these two boys smash together - sending AJ perilously close to prison. What waits for him inside those walls will change him forever.

BLAQUE SHOWGIRLS by Nakkiah Lui, directed by Shari Sebbens
Reprogrammed from the 2022 Season, *Blaque Showgirls* is a twisted reinvention of the so-bad-it's-good cinematic masterpiece *Showgirls* from the acidic pen of Nakkiah Lui. With Nakkiah's trademark mix of wit and balls-to-the-wall silliness, *Blaque Showgirls* delivers a blistering critique of the commodification of First Nations cultures.

GRIFFIN LOOKOUT:

UFO by Solomon Thomas & Kirby Medway, directed by Solomon Thomas
A UFO lands in a field, and it could change the world for humans forever… Unless we choose to pretend it didn't. An exquisite work of sci-fi theatre, presented in 1:8 miniature with a mix of puppetry, live-feed camera and voice over. Supported and developed with Erth Visual & Physical and Brand X Studios.

NEEDLEMOUTH, created by Marcus Whale
In Buddhist belief the 'Needlemouth' is a ghost afflicted with insatiable hunger as well as a throat the size of a needle, so no food can enter. Marcus Whale uses the Needlemouth to weave a semi-autobiographical fusion of song and spoken-word, exploring a longing for connection to diaspora.

ON TOUR:

PRIMA FACIE by Suzie Miller, directed by Lee Lewis
Suzie Miller's landmark work will tour to Melbourne for a season at Melbourne Theatre Company, before embarking on a regional tour supported by Arts on Tour.

APPENDIX B – PROGRAMMING: 2024 SEASON

NB. *In response to the current timeline of the Redevelopment, Griffin's 2024 season will likely take place off-site in a host theatre venue or multiple venues.*

MAIN SEASON:

FLAT-EARTHERS: THE MUSICAL by James Gales, Jean Tong, and Lou Wall
Somewhere on the fringes of the internet, Ria eMeets Flick and instantly falls in eLove... Until Ria learns with horror that Flick is a "Flat Earther". And Flick learns with horror that Ria is a "Globe Earther". *Flat-Earthers* smashes together some of the world's most iconic and bizarre conspiracy theories, in a queer pop-spectacle that satirises our divided age of post-truth politics.

FURIOUS MATTRESS by Melissa Reeves, directed by Declan Greene
Convinced that his wife is possessed, Pierce enlists the aid of Annette and Max to battle for the soul of Elsie. As the country swelters in the grip of a heat-wave, even Elsie's death can't shake Pierce and Annette's desperate conviction they have done the right thing. A revival of Melissa Reeves 2005 slice of Australian Gothic horror, based on a true story of religious fervour, domestic violence, and murder in rural Australia.

NATURISM by Ang Collins, directed by Tessa Leong
Helene is a self-identified eco-friendly zero-waste anti-plastic anti-fast fashion advocate zoomer, who moves to a remote nudist colony in the hope of forging a more sustainable life. But her bucolic new home is soon de-railed by a terrible secret about the land they're on. Set during an unforgiving drought in the Australian Summer, the audience will be taken on an hilarious journey of hope and delusion about what we can do in the face of climate disaster.

SWIM by Ellen Van Neerven, directed by Andrea James
Co-produced by Moogahlin, in association with BlakDance
On a trip to the public pool, our narrator "E" negotiates the space between the men's and women's change rooms. A performance piece about water sovereignty and gender identity, and the theatrical debut of award-winning poet Ellen Van Neerven.

GRIFFIN LOOKOUT:

THE BIRDSONG OF TOMORROW, created by Nathan Harrison
An elegetic performance piece about the limits of human memory in the slow-moving global climate catastrophe, told through the phenomenon of Shifting Baseline Syndrome. Developed through Griffin Studio.

GAME. SET. MATCH., written and directed by Megan Wilding
Winner of the Griffin Award. At his mother's wake, Michael meets Amber. As a tennis match plays out on a radio in the background, a flirtation segues to an adorable first date. But appearances are deceitful, and Michael soon discovers that he and Amber have a deep and troubling history.

ON TOUR:

GHOSTING THE PARTY by Melissa Bubnic, directed by Andrea James
A tour of this 2022 Main Season work is yet to be confirmed, but interest has been shown by subsidised theatre companies and our regional touring partner Arts on Tour.