

# Theatre Club 2025

Below is the synopsis of each play organized by Theatre

## Belvoir

### Songs of Desire

From the inimitable **Andrew Bovell** (*When the Rain Stops Falling*, *Things I Know to Be True*) comes a superb new play of passion, history and politics, intimate in its detail and epic in its storytelling.

Camelia is losing her grip, lost between the past and the present as she passes her days in the garden of her Madrid home. Her children employ Alejandro, a Colombian migrant, to look after her. But this house isn't what it seems, keeping the terrible secrets of history in its stones. As Alejandro's presence begins to unlock the past, it shakes a family that has buried its pain – and its country's – for too long.

*This is a dazzling piece of writing. Set in 1968 and the present, it unpicks the instincts that drive individuals and whole societies towards fear and violence – and perhaps, also, reconciliation. Andrew wrote it with and for an acclaimed theatre collective in Madrid, where it premiered, in Spanish, in 2023. We've invited **Jorge Muriel** and **Borja Maestre** from that original cast to join the great **Kerry Fox** and **Sarah Peirse** for the English premiere. I think you can call it a must-see. – Eamon*

### Big Girls Don't Cry

Redfern 1966. Cheryl, Lulu and Queenie are young and life is glorious, full of hilarity and joy, even if jobs are precarious, the police harass them, and racism seeps into everything. But as they gear up for the biggest night of the year – the Deb Ball – their lives, Redfern, the country are all about to change.

A sharp and celebratory new play from Gumbaynggirr/Wiradjuri woman **Dalara Williams**, that pays respect to a generation that led the way, and to Black women who won't take a backward step. Featuring **Megan Wilding** (*The Rover*), **Stephanie Somerville** (*Stolen*) and Dalara herself (*Balnaves Fellow*, *The Visitors*).

*From the first time we read it, this felt like the great play about Redfern that we've all been missing and longing for without quite realising it. And I'm really proud that it's going to premiere here, a hop and step from the lives and streets it celebrates. It's funny, it's wise, it's heartfelt, and it evokes key moments in our history such as the Freedom Rides, Vietnam, and a referendum that's about to change the game. Also, these three women are glorious. – Eamon*

### Spare Room

When Helen's old friend, Nicola, comes to town for treatment, it only makes sense she should stay in the spare room. Nicola has put her faith in a shady alternative cancer clinic, and Helen is determined to be her brilliant friend and carer no matter what. But as the sleepless nights rack up, a short stay in the spare room becomes a loving, maddening battle for life.

Helen Garner's novel has been praised for its empathy, emotional honesty, hawk-eyed detail and perfect prose. Now, with **Judy Davis** as Helen and **Elizabeth Alexander** as Nicola, it's a tour-de-force of modern Australian theatre.

*I'll call it: Helen Garner's our greatest living writer. I've been dreaming for years of putting her work on stage. The Spare Room looks like a story about dying but it's really about what we live for: each other. It's also by turns naughtily funny, sympathetic, cruel, invigorating. And, let's cut to the chase, here's a chance to see Judy and Liz in complex, nuanced roles they were born to play. It'll only be on for a few weeks in June and July – you'll regret it if you miss it. – Eamon*

## Grief Is a Thing With Feathers

*"...and the boys shouted I LOVE YOU I LOVE YOU I LOVE YOU and their voice was the life and song of their mother. Unfinished. Beautiful. Everything."*

Two young boys fall back on their imaginations as they grapple with their mother's sudden death. Their father has the soul of a poet but can only see a future of platitudes and loneliness. In the sadness, like a gothic Mary Poppins, comes Crow – trickster, babysitter, provocateur and healer. Did this odd bird come to a grieving family because they needed him? Or is he something they made?

**Max Porter's** exquisite verse novel has been a literary sensation, garnering an ardent tribe of devotees. Now, in the expert hands of **Simon Phillips**, comes a fresh stage version full of theatricality and insight.

*The dad in this story knows his Ted Hughes poetry well, and it's from Hughes that the character of Crow emerges. The book has legions of fans, and after you've heard the mercurial **Toby Schmitz** tell this tale of loss and life, you'll be in their ranks. It's dark, then it's beautifully bright. And you're in the hands of some of the country's most celebrated and experienced theatre makers. A gem. – Eamon*

## Orlando

**Virginia Woolf's** most beloved and brilliant novel takes to the stage in a joyous new adaptation.

Orlando is young, rich and handsome. A courtier in the time of Elizabeth, he sets out in search of love, life, and a fabulous destiny – but he has to travel through 400 years to find it. He dashes through time, from wars and revolutions, to the decadence of the Restoration and the rise of industrial capitalism under Queen Victoria, to modernity – and as the world changes, so does Orlando. Who are they – woman? man? or something which defies all the old orders?

*This is a bold new version of Woolf's cheekiest, most brilliant creation from creators **Elsie Yager** and **Carissa Licciardello** (A Room of One's Own, Scenes from the Climate Era). It's a visionary text, a century old, ping-pong with ideas about very present themes – gender, imperialism, nature, technology – and this fresh team of game-changing artists are, in some ways, the very people Woolf and her Orlando dreamed of: **Shannen Alyce Quan** (Holding the Man, Fangirls), **Nyx Calder** (Harry Potter and the Cursed Child) and **Janet Anderson** (Overflow, Mercury Fur). One for those who like their theatre theatrical and want to see the world through a new lens. – Eamon*

The True History of the life and death of King Lear and his Daughters

Shakespeare's greatest play, in an energised, classic Belvoir production, featuring the grit and power of **Colin Friels**.

It's time to retire. Lear has a plan – he'll divide the kingdom between his three daughters, they'll work in harmony with each other, he'll live with them, there will be a seamless transition of power, and all will be well.

The universe doesn't work that way.

A play of what happens when the trappings of privilege, education, and civilisation are stripped away, and we have to look the human specimen square in the mirror.

*Colin's been building to this role for years, and in an age when sclerotic old orders threaten to take the world down with them, it's time Belvoir had a go at this astonishing play. Every page explodes with possibility. We've used a version of one of its original titles, which gives you a sense of the play's real scope of interest. Colin will be a fascinating and potent Lear – this will be unforgettable. – Eamon*

## Hayes Theatre

### The Producers

They picked the wrong play; the wrong director; the wrong cast... Where did they go right?

Bialystock and Bloom! Those names strike terror and hysteria into anyone familiar with Mel Brooks' classic cult-comedy film, or the smash-hit, record-breaking Broadway musical it inspired. Blazing the trail for a new kind of modern, outrageous, in-your-face musical comedy, *The Producers* won a record 12 Tony Awards. Now, the show comes to the Hayes in an all-new production!

The plot is simple: a down-on-his-luck Broadway producer and a mild-mannered accountant come up with a scheme to produce the most notorious flop in history – thereby swindling their backers (all 'little old ladies') out of millions of dollars. Only one thing goes wrong – the show becomes a smash hit. The antics of Max Bialystock and Leo Bloom as they manoeuvre their way

fecklessly through finding the ‘perfect’ show (the gloriously offensive *Springtime for Hitler*), hiring the ‘ideal’ director, raising the money, and finally getting their comeuppance is a masterclass in comedy construction. And at the core of this insanely funny adventure is the heartfelt emotional journey of two very different people who up-end each other’s lives, and – against all odds – become friends.

With a truly hysterical book by Mel Brooks and Thomas Meehan (*Annie*), and music and lyrics by Brooks himself, *The Producers* takes no prisoners in skewering classic Broadway – and creates a new Broadway classic in the process.

## Griffin Theatre

### Nucleus

Gabriel is a nuclear engineer. Cassie is an anti-nuclear campaigner. For nearly thirty years their lives have collided and entwined, with Cassie’s cause dominating public opinion across the decades. But with political change rumbling underfoot, Cassie’s life’s work could yet be undone—and it’s all led to this explosive night.

Against the enflamed background of one of Australia’s most divisive environmental issues, **Alana Valentine**’s tender, surprising new play interrogates the intersection of personal ambition and global responsibility.

*Nucleus* welcomes two of Australia’s theatre greats back to Griffin—one of our most celebrated and awarded playwrights Alana Valentine (*Ladies Day*) and the great **Paula Arundell** (*The Bleeding Tree*). Directed by Griffin’s very own Associate Artistic Director **Andrea James** (*swim, Jailbaby*), *Nucleus* tears through long-drawn battle lines to reveal what’s at our core.

### White Fella Yella Tree

After a runaway premiere season at the SBW Stables Theatre in 2022, ***Whitefella Yella Tree*** is back to wow audiences in 2025—presented by Sydney Theatre Company, La Boite Theatre and University of Melbourne Arts and Culture (UMAC).

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.

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.

Palawa playwright **Dylan Van Den Berg** has won most of Australia’s major playwriting awards—including the Griffin Award, the David Williamson Prize and the NSW Premier’s Literary Award for playwriting (twice!).

In ***Whitefella Yella Tree*** Dylan has penned a heart-warming and heart-breaking story about love, Country and Blak queerness through history. The extraordinary **Joseph Althouse** (*Green*

*Park*) makes his return to Griffin, alongside the directing team of Griffin's **Declan Greene** and Wiradjuri/Worimi theatremaker **Amy Sole**.

## Sydney Theatre Company

### Picnic at Hanging Rock

A play by Tom Wright

Adapted from the novel by Joan Lindsay

Directed by Ian Michael

#### **Our most beguiling modern myth, boldly reimagined**

Five modern teenage girls recount a story burnt into the Australian psyche. In Tom Wright's lyrical and daring adaptation, Joan Lindsay's hypnotic classic becomes a form-shattering mix of storytelling, gossip, and reenactment. Seen through the eyes of STC Resident Director Ian Michael (*Stolen, Constellations*), "the most exciting new director of this generation" (*Limelight*), *Picnic at Hanging Rock* promises an inventive and dreamlike theatre experience like no other.

St Valentine's Day, 1900. In the summertime heat of the Victorian Highlands, four schoolgirls sneak away from their excursion to climb the imposing monolith of Hanging Rock, pulled higher and higher by a mysterious force. All but one disappears without a trace.

With a cast featuring some of this country's finest young performers including Olivia De Jonge (Baz Luhrmann's *Elvis*), Kirsty Marillier (*Home, I'm Darling*), Lorinda May Merrypor (& *Juliet*), Masego Pitso (*Is God Is*), and Contessa Treffone (*On the Beach*), this critically-lauded adaptation brings an archetypal mystery into the twenty-first century while preserving the chilling enigma at its heart.

Eerily beautiful, *Picnic at Hanging Rock* cracks wide open one of the most famous fables of contemporary Australia to create a heart-stopping and thoroughly contemporary investigation of innocence, cultural clash, and the enduring power of the wilderness.

### Bloom

Music by Katie Weston and Lyrics by Tom Gleisner

Book by Tom Gleisner

Directed by Dean Bryant

#### **"Big hearted, home-grown theatre romp." *The Age***

From the comedic genius of Working Dog's Tom Gleisner, co-creator of Aussie classics *The Castle*, *Frontline*, *The Dish* and *Utopia*, comes *Bloom* – a cheeky, heartwarming and cross-generational musical that will have you dancing in the aisles and crying with laughter.

Beloved by audiences and critics alike, *Bloom* was the hottest ticket at Melbourne Theatre Company last year when it premiered to sold-out houses. Now having its Sydney

premiere, *Bloom* features comedic icons Mandy McElhinney (*No Pay? No Way!*) and John Waters (*Talk*) along with returning cast members Evelyn Krape, Vidya Makan, Maria Mercedes, Eddie Muliaumaseali'i, John O'May, Christina O'Neill, Jackie Rees and Slone Sudiro.

The ambitious and greedy owner of Pine Grove Aged Care, Mrs MacIntyre (McElhinney), thinks she's struck gold when she comes up with a brilliant plan to cut costs: offering free room and board to uni students in exchange for unofficial shifts as care workers. But the arrival of Finn Bailey (Sudiro), a layabout twenty-something with a heart of gold, throws her plan into disarray.

Directed with hilarity and compassion by Dean Bryant (*Hubris & Humiliation, Dear Evan Hansen*), with music by Katie Weston, this joyful production takes Working Dog's distinctive brand of Aussie humour and uses it to build a bold and charming vision of hope. With a cast of comedy legends bringing it all together, "Bloom comes up roses" (*ArtsHub*).