

STATE THEATRE COMPANY SOUTH AUSTRALIA SEASON 2020

COME ON IN - STATE THEATRE COMPANY REVEALS 2020 SEASON

UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL THURSDAY, 10 OCTOBER, 6PM, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

A provocative new festival piece, a premiere Australian work, reimagined international and Australian classics and a post-modern masterpiece that rocks the very foundations of theatre itself are just some of the highlights making up State Theatre Company South Australia's 2020 season, the first program from its new artistic director Mitchell Butel.

Announced at the Adelaide Convention Centre on Thursday (Oct 10), the eight-play season is a bumper ride of diverse, supercharged works sparked by the theme of power.

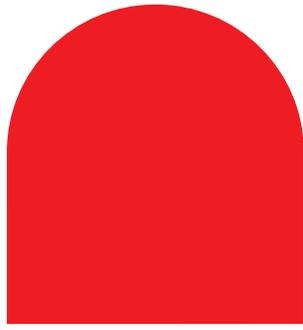
"Over the past six months I've been speaking with the local artistic community and audiences to learn about the works they want and need to see and what excites them. These conversations, and my great belief in theatre's ability to not only entertain but engender empathy, reflection and maybe even social change, have very much informed the works I've programmed," Butel says.

"A common theme that has seemed to emerge from the stories that have magnetised themselves towards us is the notion of power – what it is, who has it, who wants it, what it does. Power structures within families, within relationships, within broader social and political contexts. The notion of personal power. What power means to different age, racial and class groups.

"In the context of these theatrical tales about power, I'm thrilled to say we have gathered a number of diverse and powerhouse artists to create them."

Esteemed South Australian favourites such as Amber McMahon, Tim Overton, Nathan O'Keefe, Emily Steel, Elaine Crombie, Nescha Jelk, Ksenja Logos, James Smith and Catherine Fitzgerald and leading interstate artists and creatives such as Nancye Hayes, Toby Schmitz, Tara Morice, Emily Barclay, Jonathan Biggins, Jessica Arthur, Imara Savage and Shari Sebbens all feature in the 2020 season.

"My long association with the company has demonstrated to me that some of the world's best theatre artists reside in South Australia. To that end, I'm interested in them developing their work and practice for the benefit of audiences and in ensuring that I expose the rest of the country to their talent and skill. I'm thrilled two of our works will be touring interstate in co-productions with Sydney Theatre Company and Belvoir," the four-time Helpmann Award winner says. "I'm thrilled too that we're co-producing the premiere of a new Australian play with Country Arts SA, which will be performed in Adelaide before setting off on tour throughout regional South Australia "



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Kicking off the season is the stinging satire of ambition, ***Dance Nation***, which sees State Theatre Company South Australia back at the Scott Theatre for the first time in 10 years. Starring *Strictly Ballroom*'s Tara Morice, Louisa Mignone, Chika Ikogwe, Amber McMahon and Butel himself, the co-production with Belvoir St Theatre - presented as part of Adelaide Festival - examines ambition, success and female desire from the perspective of a group of 13-year-old dancers competing for a national title.

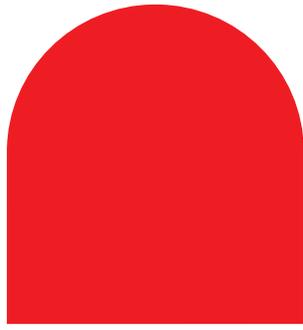
Dubbed "blazingly original, glorious rough magic" by *The New York Times*, the 2018 off-Broadway hit by Brooklyn playwright Clare Barron was nominated for the 2019 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, where it was described as "refreshingly unorthodox". Under the direction of Imara Savage (*Mr Burns: A Post-Electric Play*) and with design by the award-winning Jonathon Oxlade, *Dance Nation* is set to be one of the highlights of Adelaide Festival. Visceral, shocking and wildly funny, this is theatre at its most unhinged.

In March, beloved comedian Jonathan Biggins becomes Paul Keating in all of his sardonic glory in ***The Gospel According to Paul***, a comedic ode to the man who forged the modern Labor party. Born out of Biggins' Wharf Revue performances as Keating, the one-man show chronicles the former Prime Minister's highs and lows, both personal and political, through a mix of song and story. The Soft Tread production comes to the Dunstan Playhouse following hit seasons in Sydney and Brisbane.

Michelle Law's riotous Chinese Australian comedy that has delighted audiences across the country, ***Single Asian Female***, hits the playhouse in April. Exploring gender and race politics in contemporary Australia with heart, biting wit and a hefty dose of '90s karaoke, Law's triumphant 2016 debut for La Boite has been heralded a "necessary addition to the Australian theatrical canon" (*Time Out*) and sold out seasons nationwide.

State Theatre Company South Australia's 2020 education show, ***Euphoria***, comes from the pen of Adelaide playwright Emily Steel, under the direction of RUMPUS co-founder Nescha Jelk (*Jasper Jones, Terrestrial*) and presented with Country Arts SA. Informed by conversations between Steel (*Rabbits, 19 Weeks*) and regional communities across South Australia, *Euphoria* brings an entire country town to life through two actors: James Smith (*Jasper Jones, Vale*) and Ashton Malcolm (*Rumpelstiltskin*). Commissioned and developed by Country Arts SA, *Euphoria* is a heart-warming tale of good days, bad days and everything in between. Steel's script is an achingly funny examination of the real issues and challenges faced by thousands of people in regional South Australia. *Euphoria* has a short season in the Space Theatre, bookended by an extensive tour throughout regional South Australia.

Deborah Mailman and Wesley Enoch's landmark work, ***The 7 Stages of Grieving***, comes to the Space Theatre in June. Starring Helpmann Award-winning Elaine Crombie and directed by Shari Sebbens (*The Sapphires, Black Is The New White*), the 1995 play traces stories of love, loss and survival to create a portrait of modern Aboriginal life. The modern masterpiece gets a stunning update 25 years after it first brought audiences across Australia to their feet.



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July brings Ella Hickson's mind-bending new play *The Writer*, presented with Sydney Theatre Company and starring *Please Like Me*'s Emily Barclay and Toby Schmitz. One of the hottest British plays of the last decade, *The Writer* comes to Adelaide under the direction of emerging Australian talent Jessica Arthur. Barclay portrays a young playwright who wants a new form of theatre that overturns the patriarchy and dismantles capitalism, while her older male director seems more turned on by the commercial potential of her rage. An audacious showdown between male and female, young and old, actor and audience, *The Writer* is set to leave audiences reeling and walk away questioning the very foundations of theatre itself. Described as "unflinchingly provocative, meta-theatrical and inventive" when it premiered in London, the revolutionary production breaks the fourth wall and beyond, taking the theatrical form and turning it completely upside down.

In September, Adelaide director Catherine Fitzgerald brings Patrick Hamilton's Victorian thriller, *Gaslight*, roaring into 2020. On an elaborate set from Adelaide designer Ailsa Paterson, SA actors Ksenja Logos and Nathan O'Keefe bring to life the 1938 play that sparked the buzzword known today.

Australian legend Nancye Hayes returns to State Theatre Company South Australia in the uproarious comedy *Ripcord*, the final show of the season. Directed by Mitchell Butel and starring South Australian actors Jude Henshall and Carmel Johnson, the play sees two nursing home residents in an epic battle of wills. Written by Pulitzer Prize winning writer David Lindsay-Abaire, the viciously funny examination of friendship and fate is set to end the year on a stunning comic high.

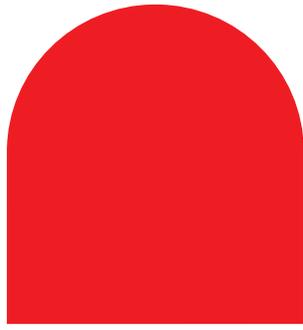
The 2020 season also brings the launch of Stateside, a program supporting two small to medium local companies. As part of the program, State Theatre Company South Australia is supporting Brink Productions' *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* and Theatre Republic's *The Bleeding Tree*. Each company receives marketing and production support from the new scheme, allowing local artists to tap into the extensive networks and resources the company has to offer.

In summarising his first season, Butel says, "Ultimately, I want this company to be the centre for important stories about who we are and the world in which we find ourselves, told in the most captivating manner possible.

"This is a very special company filled with people onstage and behind the scenes who are in love with theatre and its ability to transform and transport audiences. Our audiences are very special creatures too – they have an equally large appetite for artistic risk and excellence.

"It's an immense privilege and joy to be in their midst."

In 2020 State Theatre Company South Australia also introduces Flexi Subscriptions, meaning subscribers can choose their plays now and dates later. Visit statetheatrecompany.com.au



STATE THEATRE COMPANY SOUTH AUSTRALIA SEASON 2020

GETTING TO KNOW SEASON 2020 - A FULL OVERVIEW OF THE PLAYS

DANCE NATION

By Clare Barron

21 Feb-7 Mar, Scott Theatre

In short:

A Pulitzer Prize-nominated satire of ambition from the perspective of a girls' dance group – starring *Strictly Ballroom's* Tara Morice. Co-presented with Belvoir in association with Adelaide Festival.

Synopsis:

Somewhere in America, an army of teenage competitive dancers is plotting world domination. One routine at a time.

As the national title looms and the dancers fight it out for the lead role, reality and fantasy blur in this award-winning pageant of ferocious girl power.

Part-*Dance Moms*, part-*Hunger Games*, *Dance Nation* is a crushingly funny satire of ambition. The New York Times says it “conjures the passionate ambivalence of early adolescence with such being-there sharpness and poignancy that you’re not sure whether to cringe, cry or roar with happiness. Blazingly original and unsettlingly familiar.”

Creative team

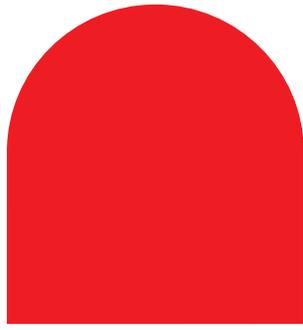
Director: Imara Savage/ Set and costume designer: Jonathon Oxlade/ Lighting designer: Alexander Berlage/ Choreographer: Larissa McGowan Starring: Emma Harvie, Chika Ikogwe, Yvette Lee, Rebecca Massey, Mitchell Butel, Amber McMahon, Louisa Mignone, Tara Morice, Tim Overton

Mitchell says:

“I’m thrilled that this show opens our 2020 season, thrilled that it’s a part of the Adelaide Festival and thrilled to welcome Tara Morice back to the company. A fantasia of the female - feral, tender, hilarious, wise, brilliant and spinning. It will blow your sequins away.”

FOR MEDIA INFORMATION

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STATE THEATRE COMPANY SOUTH AUSTRALIA SEASON 2020

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO PAUL By Jonathan Biggins

24 Mar-4 Apr, Dunstan Playhouse

In short:

The hilarious Jonathan Biggins becomes Paul Keating in a virtuosic performance that brims with the former Prime Minister's signature wit and charisma. A Soft Tread production.

Synopsis:

Australian politics are in peril. There's only one man who can save it and, luckily, a window has opened up in his very busy schedule.

Paul Keating is a giant in Australia's political memory. He knows it, you know it. And he's here to tell you why he's remembered so fondly. A smash-hit all around the country, *The Gospel According to Paul* sees the hilarious Jonathan Biggins become Keating in a virtuosic performance that brims with the former Prime Minister's signature wit, charisma and very expensive suits.

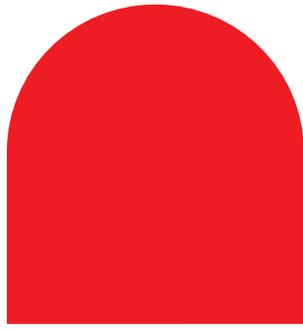
Creative team:

Director: Aarne Neeme / Set and costume designer: Mark Thompson / Lighting designer: Verity Hampson / Sound and video designer: David Bergman

Starring: Jonathan Biggins

Mitchell says:

"Both Jonathan Biggins and Paul Keating are national living treasures. Biggins is one of our greatest comic minds and performers. The bravura and idiosyncrasy of Keating are similarly legendary. I laughed like a drain when I saw this show but also found it to be a surprisingly moving history of the last 50 years of Australian politics and the battles waged and won."



STATE THEATRE COMPANY SOUTH AUSTRALIA SEASON 2020

SINGLE ASIAN FEMALE By Michelle Law

23 Apr-9 May, Dunstan Playhouse

In short:

Michelle Law's riotous comedy about a Chinese Australian family running a restaurant on the Sunshine Coast. A La Boite Theatre Company production.

Synopsis:

Inside the Golden Phoenix, a humble Chinese restaurant on the Sunshine Coast, two generations of Wong women stand at a crossroads. Mei is a teenager grappling with her identity and getting ready for her school formal; while Zoe is eternally single and having a quarter-life crisis after some seriously terrible dates. At the centre of it all is Pearl, the whip-smart, brutally honest matriarch of the family. But Pearl is harbouring a secret that could change their lives forever.

Michelle Law's riotous family comedy bursts onto the stage after sold out seasons around the nation. Brilliantly funny and incisive, *Single Asian Female* is a heart-warming story about love, family and karaoke from one of Australia's most exciting writers.

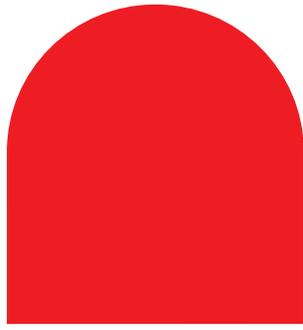
Creative team

Director: Claire Christian / Set and costume designer: Moe Assaad / Lighting designer: Keith Clark / Sound designer: Wil Hughes

Starring: Jing-Xuan Chan, Patrick Jhanur, Tatum Mottin, Courtney Stewart, Hsiao-Ling Tang

Mitchell says:

"I breathed a sigh of relief (and slapped my thighs a lot) when I saw this fantastic La Boite production. A play reflecting a slice of Australian life not often seen on Australian stages and one that packs an emotional kinghit under its good-natured heart. One of the most feel-good nights you'll ever have in a theatre."



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EUPHORIA By Emily Steel

21-30 May, Space Theatre. Regional tour from April – June to Goolwa, Renmark, Lameroo, Bordertown, Mt Gambier, Murray Bridge, Tanunda, Port Pirie, Leigh Creek, Kangaroo Island, Streaky Bay, Port Lincoln, Whyalla, Port Augusta and Burra as well as Elizabeth, Noarlunga and Golden Grove.

In short:

A gently moving work based on real conversations between playwright Emily Steel and residents of regional South Australia, by State Theatre Company and Country Arts SA.

Synopsis:

Meg is busy and she'd rather not be. But sometimes she can't help it. She's holding a town meeting and her ex-student Ethan is there. He hasn't got a job...he can't help that either. She wants to start a new festival to celebrate everything their little country town has to offer. It's going to be called "Euphoria", which means "happiness". And they should be happy, shouldn't they?

With the festival barrelling towards them, Meg and Ethan come face to face with the darkest parts of themselves as the past collides with the present. Based on real conversations between playwright Emily Steel and regional South Australian communities, *Euphoria* is a gently moving new work that will see audiences come together for a town meeting they'll never forget.

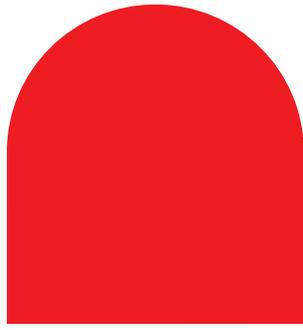
Creative team:

Director: Nescha Jelk / Set and costume designer: Meg Wilson / Lighting designer: Alexander Ramsay / Sound designer: Andrew Howard

Starring: Ashton Malcolm and James Smith

Mitchell says:

"Emily Steel is one of the brightest, most original voices in Australian playwriting today. With stealth and charm, she brings to life an entire town through two actors in this deeply felt and slyly comic portrait of family, friendship and people searching for connection and for themselves."



STATE THEATRE COMPANY SOUTH AUSTRALIA SEASON 2020

THE 7 STAGES OF GRIEVING By Wesley Enoch and Deborah Mailman

25 Jun-4 Jul, Space Theatre

In short:

Award-winning Elaine Crombie paints a rich portrait of the different phases of Aboriginal history in Wesley Enoch and Deborah Mailman's stunning production, reimagined by director Shari Sebbens. A Sydney Theatre Company production presented by State Theatre Company South Australia.

Synopsis:

One woman walks onstage to tell the stories of her people. Stories of survival. Of heartbreak. Of loss and of love. It is her story and she's giving it to you.

Wesley Enoch and Deborah Mailman's *The 7 Stages of Grieving* is an Australian masterpiece. In this reimagined production directed by Shari Sebbens, Helpmann Award-winner Elaine Crombie paints a rich portrait of the different phases of Aboriginal history in what is sure to be another of her tour de force performances.

Defiantly funny and deeply moving, *The 7 Stages of Grieving* is an invitation to join hands, to grieve, to reflect on our past and look to the future.

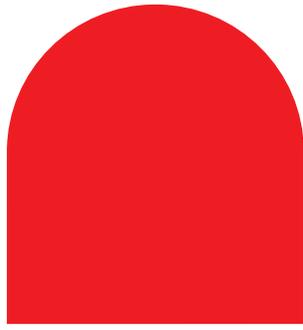
Creative team:

Director: Shari Sebbens / Set and costume designer: Elizabeth Gadsby / Associate designer: Tyler Ray Hawkins / Lighting designer: Mark Pennington / Composer and sound designer: Steve Francis

Starring: Elaine Crombie

Mitchell says:

"Wesley Enoch and Deborah Mailman are two of our greatest theatre minds. This classic and beloved Australian play should be revived every year as far as I'm concerned. Part-theatre, part-ceremony, part-meditation, this is a virtuoso vehicle for an actress. We're lucky to have one of the best in the divine Elaine Crombie."



STATE THEATRE COMPANY SOUTH AUSTRALIA SEASON 2020

THE WRITER By Ella Hickson

15 Jul-1 Aug, Dunstan Playhouse

In short:

A ferocious new work that rocks the very foundations upon which theatre is built. Starring Emily Barclay and presented by State Theatre Company South Australia and Sydney Theatre Company.

Synopsis:

A young female playwright and an older male director find themselves alone in an empty theatre one night. She wants a new form of theatre that dismantles capitalism and overturns the patriarchy. He's turned on by the commercial potential of her rage.

A showdown between male and female, young and old, Ella Hickson's incendiary new play comes to Adelaide after an explosive world premiere in London where it was described as "unflaggingly provocative, metatheatrical and inventive".

The Writer is a ferocious new work that rocks the very foundations upon which theatre is built.

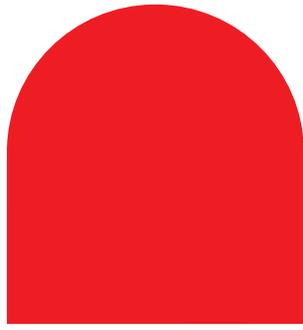
Creative team:

Director: Jessica Arthur / Set and costume designer: Elizabeth Gadsby / Lighting designer: Mark Pennington / Sound designer: Clemence Williams

Starring: Emily Barclay, Charmaine Bingwa and Toby Schmitz

Mitchell says:

"The minute I put down this script, I knew we had to do it. Completely original, daring and coruscating, it goes where other plays about power and gender and art fear to tread. It breaks the fourth wall and the fifth and the sixth... Add an actor like *Please Like Me's* Emily Barclay, it will be unmissable."



STATE THEATRE COMPANY SOUTH AUSTRALIA SEASON 2020

GASLIGHT By Patrick Hamilton

4-19 Sep, Dunstan Playhouse

In short:

The mind-bending Victorian thriller by Patrick Hamilton comes storming into 2020 under the direction of Catherine Fitzgerald.

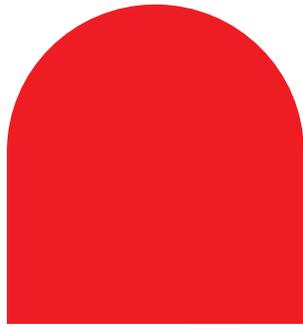
Synopsis:

Bella Manningham is on edge. She's hearing footsteps in the night, pictures are moving by themselves and the gaslights in the drawing room dim without even a touch. Her husband is constantly disappearing. He tells her she may be mad and she starts to believe him... As her grip on reality begins to slip, she finds herself in the middle of a mystery most foul.

A mind-bending Victorian thriller, Patrick Hamilton's *Gaslight* is the stuff of legend. Written in 1938 and spawning the 1944 film starring Ingrid Bergman and Charles Boyer, director Catherine Fitzgerald brings this classic creepshow storming into 2020 in a production that sees it become more vital than ever.

Mitchell says:

"Who could have ever foreseen that the title of a crime thriller from the 1930s would become a buzzword in our conversations about gender politics and our relationships today? I can't wait to see how Catherine flips this classic psychodrama on its head with a new twist that still honours the play's original power and shock."



STATE THEATRE COMPANY SOUTH AUSTRALIA SEASON 2020

RIPCORD

By David Lindsay-Abaire

13-28 Nov, Dunstan Playhouse

In short:

Pulitzer Prize-winner David Lindsay-Abaire's razor-sharp comedy sees two formidable women duke it out to claim their rightful spot in the nursing home. Starring Nancye Hayes.

Synopsis:

Abby has lived in the Bristol Place Senior Living Facility for four years. She likes reading, peach cobbler, silence and wants nothing more than to live alone. Marilyn has just taken up the spare bed in Abby's room. She loves small-talk, skydiving and wants nothing more than Abby's bed by the window.

Pulitzer Prize-winner David Lindsay-Abaire's razor-sharp comedy sees two formidable old women duke it out to claim their rightful spot in the nursing home. What starts as a humble bet between two rivals becomes an epic battle of wills that uncovers their darkest secrets.

Viciously funny and charmingly affecting, *Ripcord* is a story about second chances and a powerful reminder that you should never, ever mess with an old lady.

Creative team:

Director: Mitchell Butel / Set designer: Victoria Lamb / Lighting designer: Gavin Norris / Sound designer: Andrew Howard

Starring: Nancye Hayes, Jude Henshall, Carmel Johnson

Mitchell says:

"The first person to ever give me a mainstage theatre job was Australian entertainment legend Nancye Hayes. It's time for me to repay the favour and I know this role will be one of her greatest triumphs. I can think of no one better than her to pull this particular ripcord on our end of year comedy."