

## Introductory Notes

### 1. Introductory information

Event name: Prima Facie

Event presenter: State Theatre Company of South Australia

Event synopsis:

**Prima Facie**, by Susie Miller, is a play for one female actor, set in the world of The Law.

Tessa (played by Caroline Craig) is a defence barrister at the top of her game, albeit one who regularly defends men charged with sexual assault. Tessa is a gladiatorial master of emotions, certain of the righteousness of the legal system and her place in it, but her belief in law and justice is about to be totally shattered.

The play has gripped audiences all over Australia in a Griffin Theatre Co. production directed by Lee Lewis and starring Sheridan Harbridge (last seen in SA in State's *Rumplestiltskin*). It played to universal acclaim on London's West End (where it won best play and best actor for star Jodie Comer at the Olivier Awards), and that production recently opened on Broadway to rave reviews and a Tony Award nomination for Comer.

South Australia gets its very own unique production: acclaimed director David Meador (most recently at the helm of *Glengarry Glen Ross*) directs Caroline Craig (familiar to State audiences from *Eureka Day*) in the SA made SA premiere production.

Audio Describers: Charley Sanders and Jules Fielke

### 2. Set description

The production has a simple, pared back design.

The Space Theatre is configured to create a corner stage, with audience seating bordering two sides of a square playing space. Long sheer black drapes hang along the other two sides - the 'back' walls - with a wide void behind them.

The curtains almost meet in a V at the centre back - the furthest away visible point - but at that point are slightly parted to create an elegant slim entranceway, about a metre wide, a little thinner than a standard doorway, but much taller, open all the way to the ceiling.

The curtains hang in a neat rippling wave-fold, fall completely to the floor and pool there very slightly.



The curtains and rear walls create an L-shaped corridor behind that extends all the way from far right past the back corner of the space, to far left.

The drapes appear to be plain black, but have in fact been art-finished with light-sensitive paint, such that under certain lighting conditions they have a streaky textural print of dark grey streaks on black, evoking mud splatters or pelting rain. In addition, while the curtains appear to be dense and heavy, they are in fact made of a material that is sheer when lit from behind, meaning that at moments we can see beyond the curtains, including seeing the actor in the corridor at times.

The floor is of greyish blonde wooden boards, in rectangular sections that vary slightly in colour, so that in some lights it looks like traditional long-boards and in others like large parquet tiles.

A functional but elegant chair with black tubular steel legs and slightly curved wooden seat and backrest, is situated a few paces in front of the corner break - almost dead centre, but a little further back.

Lighting and sound are integral to the production, instantly transporting us to different settings and creating moods that reveal and enhance Tessa's emotional journey.

Key locations evoked using light and sound, include:

The University - the space bright and open, flooded with warm white light, sounds of a busy public space, muffled voices in the distance.

A Nightclub - spirals in iridescent coloured lights spin on the floor and walls, and a throbbing baseline fills the space.

Tessa's Office At Night - dim bluish light hits the right side curtain and right an adjacent area of floor as if through an open venetian blind.

A Taxi - while Tessa sits on the chair as if in the taxi, a white square of light from overhead, with soft bleed at the edges, forms a tight pool of light enclosing her.

Tessa's Balcony - bright yellow sunlight hits the centre section of the floor as if shining down from the back through a window with smallish square panes.

Tessa's Home at Night - the space is drenched in blue light throughout the scene set here, and a white square of light follows and precedes Tessa through the scene - often she is in the white square but not always. Late in this scene, after a major change in Tessa's emotional state the space is very dark, the muddy spattered print of the curtains is at its most forcefully present, and Tessa is held in a tiny tight square of white light.

Throughout the production a motif of rhomboids of light on the floor, thrown in shards from unconventionally positioned often moving light sources creates mood and a sense of something slowly shattering.

There is a near total blackout between Part 1 and Part 2, a piece for piano plays throughout it, and the only light is from behind the curtains, meaning we are able to see through them. This is the only time Tessa goes behind the curtains.

### 3. Characters and Costumes

Caroline Craig plays Tessa. She is a slim woman with blonde hair.

She begins the production wearing a sophisticated black skirt suit consisting of knee-length pencil skirt and immaculately fitted black jacket, the outfit is completed with a white shirt and black high heeled shoes with a chunky heel.

A number of times during Part 1 she adds to this her barristers' garb - black robes which drape past her knees, a white shirtfront with collar and bands, and a peruke, the traditional horsehair wig worn by barristers, which is dyed greyish blonde, sits in rolled curls at the top and sides, and has a curled ponytail that hangs to the nape of the neck.

During Part 1 she carries a large squarish leather satchel which she refers to as her Barrister's Bag. The barristers garb emerges from and returns to the bag.

In Part 2 she wears a different jacket, light grey and of a slightly less formal cut. She carries a different bag too, a more traditionally feminine handbag, smaller than the satchel, about 30 centimetres long and half as high, it is black and mostly of canvas with leather edgings and handles.

### 4. Cast and Creatives

#### **Creative Team**

Playwright: Suzie Miller

Director: David Mealor

Set & Costume Designer: Kathryn Sproul

Lighting Designer: Nic Mollison

Composer: Quincey Grant

Sound Designer: Andrew Howard

Assistant Director: Connor Reidy

Production Manager: Gavin Norris

Stage Manager: Laura Palombella

Assistant Stage Manager: Carmel Palmer

#### **Cast**

Tessa: Caroline Craig

Tessa (understudy): Annabel Matheson

## 5. Event details

Event date and time:

The Audio Described performance is at **1:00pm on Saturday the 6<sup>th</sup> of May 2023**.  
With pre-show description from 12:30pm.

Event location: Space Theatre, Adelaide Festival Centre

## 6. Access information

Ticket information: Tickets through Ticketek

Getting to the event: The production takes place in the **Space Theatre** at the Adelaide Festival Centre.

Please contact the Adelaide Festival Centre on 131 246 for details on current Covid requirements and the best access route to the theatre complex.

At the theatre, access is through the Dunstan Playhouse foyer via the Riverbank Concourse. The Space Theatre is wheelchair accessible and guide dog friendly and there are two accessible toilets in the venue. One is opposite the bar in the Space Foyer. The other is opposite the main reception desk, near Door One of the Dunstan Playhouse. Assistance is offered by venue staff.

For all other disability access enquiries please contact Patron Services on email [access@adelaidefestivalcentre.com.au](mailto:access@adelaidefestivalcentre.com.au) or call 08 8216 8600.

For more information on audio described performances please contact Access2Arts using the email address [audio.describer@access2arts.org.au](mailto:audio.describer@access2arts.org.au) or Voice/Text 0415 090 547. Or alternatively speak to one of the audio describers at the theatre.

This completes the audio description pre-show notes for **Prima Facie**, these notes were produced by Charley Sanders and Jules Fielke.