

*David Williamson's*

# EMERALD CITY

**MTC** MELBOURNE  
THEATRE  
COMPANY

# WELCOME



At MTC we are passionate about Australian stories, be they modern masterpieces or brand new plays fresh off the page. In our 2020 season new works dominate, but there was one classic we couldn't go past, especially as its revival marks a particularly special milestone.

In his 50th year as a playwright, we celebrate David Williamson's incredible career and achievements as a writer with this new production of *Emerald City* – one of his finest plays and an undeniable Australian classic.

As the 21st century seems to careen again into the Greed is Good world of self-interest, self-obsession, consumerism and real estate dreams so pervasive in the 1980s, there is no better time to re-visit this classic play. Set at the height of the 80s pandemic of wealth accumulation at all costs, *Emerald City* takes the blowtorch to one of our most visible signs of money vs humanity – the wrestle between art and commercialism. This high-velocity dramedy, full of Williamson wit and zingers, uses of course its infamous backdrop of Sydney/Melbourne rivalry to land its exploration of seduction by wealth, beauty and a gorgeous harbour view. But more broadly, its revival in 2020 asks whether we ever really left behind the Greed is Good years of the 80s.

Please do read both David's essay in this programme and that of director Sam Strong, who each write so eloquently about *Emerald City's* themes and about David's astonishing career. David is revered around the country as one of our most popular dramatists, and his prolific output and critical success have long secured his place in the literary canon.

As the production's director, Sam has assembled a team of exceptional creative minds for this MTC & Queensland Theatre co-production and we welcome them to Southbank Theatre following a stellar season in Brisbane.

Enjoy the show.

**Brett Sheehy AO**  
Artistic Director & CEO

**Virginia Lovett**  
Executive Director & Co-CEO

Melbourne Theatre Company acknowledges the Yalukitj Willam Peoples of the Boon Wurrung, the First Peoples of Country on which Southbank Theatre and MTC HQ stand, and we pay our respects to all of Melbourne's First Peoples, to their ancestors and Elders, and to our shared future.

MTC is a department of the University of Melbourne.



MTC is assisted by the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body, and by the State Government of Victoria through Creative Victoria.



MTC is a member of Live Performance Australia and the Australian Major Performing Arts Group.



MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY & QUEENSLAND THEATRE PRESENT

# David Williamson's EMERALD CITY

6 MARCH — 18 APRIL 2020

Southbank Theatre, The Sumner

## — About the Play —

Welcome to the glittering jewel in Australia's cultural crown – that sinkhole of ambition and superficiality we call Sydney. Colin is the country's most successful screenwriter, but since moving from Melbourne with his wife Kate he's been faced with a choice between art and commerce that will define his career forever. Meanwhile, Kate's star is on the ascent and her latest publication has been shortlisted for the Booker Prize. Fame and fortune are there for the taking, but big surprises are in store for both.

## — Cast —

**Malcolm** Ray Chong Nea  
**Elaine** Marg Downey  
**Kate** Nadine Garner  
**Helen** Megan Hind  
**Colin** Jason Klarwein  
**Mike** Rhys Muldoon

## — Creative Team —

**Director** Sam Strong  
**Associate Director** Travis Dowling  
**Set & Costume Designer** Dale Ferguson  
**Lighting Designer** David Walters  
**Composer & Sound Designer** Russell Goldsmith  
**Intimacy Coordinator** Michala Banas  
**Stage Manager** Jess Keepence  
**Assistant Stage Manager**  
(Melbourne season) Vivienne Poznanski

## Assistant Stage Manager

(Rehearsals & Brisbane season) Ella Gordon  
**Directorial Secondment VCA** Kathryn Yates  
**Production Photography** Jeff Busby (Melbourne),  
David Kelly (Brisbane)  
**Rehearsal Photography** Charlie Kinross

## Music Credits

### *Flame Trees*

Composed by Don Walker and Steve Prestwich  
Published by Sony/ATV Publishing (Australia) Pty Limited

### *Take Me Back*

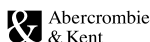
Composed by Jon Stevens and Brent Thomas  
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### *Take My Breath Away*

Composed by Giorgio Moroder and Tom Whitlock  
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For information regarding running time, please see a member of the Front of House team.

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A co-production with Queensland Theatre

**QUEENSLAND THEATRE**

# FROM THE DIRECTOR

Sam Strong on celebrating 50 years of David Williamson

**E**merald City has all the qualities that have made David Williamson Australia's favourite storyteller. There are vivid and colourful characters who are gifts for actors. Then, David plunges those characters into pivotal moments of crisis or change. Then, he piles on the challenges and we cringe and laugh as we recognise ourselves writ large on stage.

*Emerald City* also displays David's peerless ability to speak to our times as well as across time. His breakthrough play, *The Removalists*, unforgettably dramatised the toxic masculinity and police brutality of the 1970s. Yet its examination of abuse of power rings just as true in 2020. So too *Emerald City* dissects the culture of excess and entrepreneurialism of the late 1980s. But it also interrogates a much more

universal theme of personal integrity. At its broadest, this is a story about the struggle to do the right thing – to be a better human – in the face of temptations to do the opposite.

There is also something else going on that is unique to this play. Beneath the 'glittering surface' of *Emerald City* is the beating heart of a very real partnership between Colin and Kate. In a perhaps unguarded moment this play gives us a very candid and moving portrait of a creative marriage. So, *Emerald City* is perhaps an even more fitting celebration of everything that David and Kristin Williamson have given to the theatre over the years. I for one am very grateful to them both and have loved the chance to add my voice to the chorus of celebration with this production.

**'At its broadest, this is a story about the struggle to do the right thing – to be a better human – in the face of temptations to do the opposite.'**





*(Top) Nadine Garner and Jason Klarwein;  
(left) Composer & Sound Designer Russell  
Goldsmith, Stage Manager Jess Keepence  
and Director Sam Strong*

*Production photos throughout:  
David Kelly*



*(Above) Jason Klarwein and Marg Downey;  
(right) David Williamson at the opening night  
of Emerald City in Sydney, 1987.  
Photo supplied by David Williamson.*



# FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT

## Melbourne, the Emerald City and 50 years in the theatre

I've had a very fortunate and exciting 50 years in the theatre.

Amongst my great memories is the opening night of *Emerald City* in Sydney, which still ranks as one of the best nights in my career, so I'm delighted that MTC decided to mark my 50 years with its revival, with the talented Sam Strong bringing it back to life.

The biggest kick for a playwright, as well as the most nerve-racking, is finally seeing those words you put on paper come to life in a vibrant production and palpably connect with an audience. That's what any playwright does it for. Not the money, or the fame, but that moment when you know you've added something to the life experience of those people watching your work.

The truth is it's been a dream run with some 55 of my plays being produced here and abroad, often with multiple productions, and I've been blessed with some of the best actors and directors in Australia working on my scripts over that time.

I don't claim to have written stories that resonate with all Australians. My reflections on life have been mainly stories of middle-class Anglo Celts. As I finish my career, I'm delighted to see the plethora of new writers exploring the lives of other Australian groups and identities. It's as it should be. And I rejoice to see this new and vibrant work on our stages.

I have, however, never believed that my particular tribe didn't warrant their stories being told, and as I start to read through my

**'It's great to be back in Melbourne –  
in the theatre company that did more than  
any other to consolidate my career.'**

work again after many years – and despite the fact I’m often described as writing comedies – I’m struck by the fact that what I’m reading isn’t really comedy, it’s drama; which, as in life, has its blackly funny moments. Without that leavening of humour, sometimes life would be hard to bear.

Even in *Emerald City*, which does have its share of blackly funny moments, these are real human beings facing real human dilemmas – sometimes with the emotional stakes high. And to tell the truth, those conflicts and choices weren’t a million miles away from some of my own and my family’s experiences when I drove from Melbourne to Sydney all those years ago. My wife, Kristin, did find it all uncomfortably close when Robyn Nevin, playing Kate, said to her during rehearsals ‘I’m playing you again.’







(Top of page) Rhys Muldoon;  
(opposite page) Nadine Garner and Jason Klarwein;  
(above right) Megan Hind; (left) Ray Chong Nee.



Nadine Garner,  
Jason Klarwein and  
Rhys Muldoon



True, the stakes in my plays aren't the searingly high stakes that face people on the verge of starvation or annihilation in war-torn arenas, but despite the headlines every day, the majority of humanity isn't on the edge of starvation or facing imminent death.

Yet even so, those of us who live in relative security still manage to suffer agonies when we're snubbed or belittled, when we fear losing the love of our life, when we let ambition consume our lives, when we're in the grip of virulent envy, when we're obsessed with wreaking revenge, when we feel the ache of compassion over the misfortune of others, or just when we're feeling the acute guilt of being bad parents.

We're all highly emotional creatures with more or less the same set of emotions that allow us to relate so strongly to Greek dramas written thousands of years ago.

And I'm glad we are all too often in the grip of these ancient emotions, or there wouldn't be much colour in our lives and there wouldn't be any drama to write about.

And writing about those emotions playing havoc with the harmony of our lives is what I've been doing all these 50 years, and loved doing it.

So a sincere thank you to all the hugely talented people who have honoured me by bringing my words to life, and thank you in particular to the audiences who have continued to come in numbers and gain something from my labours.

And it's great to be back in Melbourne – in the theatre company that did more than any other to consolidate my career.

— David Williamson, January 2020

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MELBOURNE

## CAST & CREATIVE TEAM



### RAY CHONG NEE | MALCOLM

Ray Chong Nee's theatre credits include *I Call My Brothers* (Melbourne Theatre Company); *Noises Off* (Queensland Theatre and MTC); *Hydra* (Queensland Theatre and STCSA); *Antony and Cleopatra*, *The Dream*, *Othello*, *Actors at Work: The Players* (Bell Shakespeare); *How to Rule the World* (development Sydney Theatre Company); *The Motion of Light in Water* (Elbow Room/La Boite Theatre Company/ HotHouse/Theatre Works), *Bare Witness* (Performing Lines); *Angels in America* (Theatre Ink/Parramatta Riverside) and *Andy X* (NIDA). His film credits include *Swimming for Gold*, *There's a Bluebird in My Heart*, *Amalia Lucia Gomez is Gluten Intolerant*, *The Bench*, *Savage Garden* and *The Pool*. Television credits include *Pulse*, *Tomorrow When the War Began*, *Glitch*, *Party Tricks*, *Offspring*, *Rescue Special Ops* and *Dance Academy*. Ray is a Green Room nominated actor for Outstanding Performance in a Featured Role and Best Independent Male Performer, and recipient of Best Performance (Melbourne Fringe) and Best Ensemble (Green Room) awards.



### MARG DOWNEY | ELAINE

As one of Australia's leading comedy actors, Marg Downey is best known for the numerous characters she portrayed on comedy series *Fast Forward*. Marg has also been applauded for her dramatic roles for television and theatre. Her theatre credits include *Hay Fever*, *Rupert*, *Moonlight* and *Magnolias*, *A Flea in Her Ear* (Melbourne Theatre Company); *Timeshare* (Malthouse Theatre), *A Skull In Connemara*, *Glimpse* (fortyfivedownstairs), *La Cage Aux Folles* (The Production Company); *Mum's The Word* and *Mum's The Word 2*, and the world premiere season of Joanna Murray-Smith's *Rapture* (Playbox). Marg first appeared on television as part of *The D-Generation* and subsequently appeared regularly in *Fast Forward*, *Full Frontal*, *Something Stupid*, *Kath & Kim* and *Open Slather*. Marg has also appeared in *Back in Very Small Business*, *Get Krackin*, *The Other Guy*, *Newton's Law*, *Top of the Lake: China Girl*, *The Doctor Blake Mysteries*, *House Husbands* and *City Homicide*. Marg is also a highly sought-after voiceover artist, and has been heard in animation projects including *L'il Elvis Jones and the Truckstoppers*, *Ocean Girl*, *Dogstar*, *Wakkaville* and *The Flamin' Thongs*.



### NADINE GARNER | KATE

Nadine Garner previously performed on stage at Melbourne Theatre Company in *Photograph 51*, *Di and Viv and Rose*, *The Distance*, *The Weir*, *Private Lives*, *Three Sisters*, *The Balcony*, *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, *Così* and *The Cherry Orchard*. Her other theatre credits include *A Little Night Music* (Watch This); *Zebra!* and *Life After George* (Sydney Theatre Company); *Birds Eye View* (Old Fitz Theatre); *Miss Julie* (Perth Theatre Company); *The Taming of the Shrew* (EHJ Productions); *Cabaret* (IMG Entertainment); *The Three Sisters* (20/20 Theatre); *Romeo and Juliet* (Elston Hocking & Woods). Her television credits include *Part Time Private Eyes*, *My Life is Murder*, *Mr. Black*, *It's a Date*, *The Doctor Blake Mysteries*, *City Homicide*, *Blue Water High*, *Boys From The Bush*, *The Flying Doctors* and *Henderson Kids*. Her film work includes *Celeste*, *The Wedding Party*, *Razzle Dazzle*, *The Book of Revelation*, *Metal Skin* and *Mull*. Nadine received a Helpmann Award and Green Room Award for her performance in *Cabaret*, a New York City International Film Festival Award for *The Wedding Party*, and an AFI Award for Best Actress for *Mull*.



### MEGAN HIND | HELEN

Megan Hind is a graduate of the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA). During her time there she specialised in physical theatre and received the prestigious Keith Bain OAM Scholarship for Movement. *Emerald City* marks Megan's debut with Melbourne Theatre Company. Megan has been seen in Playmaker Media's critically acclaimed mini-series *Friday on My Mind* about iconic Australian rock band The Easybeats; the ABC series *Cleverman* Series 2; and Seven Network's *Secret Bridesmaids' Business*. She will soon be seen in the Amazon series *Cowboy Bebop*, shot entirely in New Zealand.

## CAST & CREATIVE TEAM



### JASON KLARWEIN | COLIN

*Emerald City* is Jason Klarwein's debut performance with the Melbourne Theatre Company.

Jason is a seasoned theatre performer and has appeared in many productions for Queensland Theatre including *Hedda*, *Twelfth Night*, *Once in Royal David's City*, *The Odd Couple*, *The Seagull*, *Macbeth*, *Design for Living*, *Elizabeth*, *Almost by Chance a Woman*, *Fractions*, *Faustus*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *God is a DJ*, *Phaedra*, *Mad Hercules*, *Bash*, *Shopping and Fucking* and *The Skin of Our Teeth*. His other acting credits include *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Sydney Theatre Company; Washington DC, New York); *Henry 4*, *Faustus* (Bell Shakespeare); *Paul, Capricornia*, *Maralinga* (Belvoir); *Peter and the Wolf*, *The Happiness Box*, *Tubby the Tuba*, *Young Person's Guide to the*

*Orchestra*, *Carnival of the Animals* (Queensland Symphony Orchestra); *The Glass Menagerie*, *Così*, *Half and Half* (La Boite Theatre Company). Jason's television and film credits include *Devil's Playground*, *Slide*, *Sea Patrol*, *Cybergirl* and *Celeste*. Jason was nominated for Best Actor in the 2017 Helpmann Awards for *Once in Royal David's City*.



### RHYS MULDOON | MIKE

Rhys Muldoon's varied career encompasses film, television, theatre, radio, comedy and journalism. His theatre credits include *Don's Party*, *Design for Living*, *A Moon for the Misbegotten* (Melbourne Theatre Company); *Nearer the Gods* (Queensland Theatre); *Peter and the Wolf* (Sydney Opera House); *The Power of Yes*, *Gethsemane* (Company B); *Tot Mom*, *Don's Party* (Sydney Theatre Company); and *Stuff Happens* (Belvoir). His television credits include *House Husbands* (series 1-5), *Les Norton*, *Fighting Season*, *Dead Lucky*, *Childhood's End*, *The Secret River*, *Rake* (Series 1, 2 & 3), *Jack Irish: Bad Debts*, *Jack Irish: Black Tide*, *Lockie Leonard*, *Grass Roots*, *The Secret Life of Us* and *Water Rats*. Rhys' film credits include *Book Week*, *Chasing Comets*, *33 Postcards*, *Bitter* and *Twisted*, *The Extra*, *Danny Deckchair*, *The Sapphires* and *Love is Now*, as well as the Oscar-nominated short *The Saviour*.

Rhys has twice been nominated for AFI Awards for his work on *Grass Roots* and *Lockie Leonard*.



### DAVID WILLIAMSON | PLAYWRIGHT

David Williamson is Australia's best known and most widely performed playwright. Some of his 55 produced plays over the last 50 years include *The Coming of the Stork*, *The Removalists*, *Don's Party*, *The Club*, *Travelling North*, *Money & Friends*, *Dead White Males*, *The Jack Manning Trilogy*, *Up for Grabs*, *Soulmates*, *Nothing Personal*, *When Dad Married Fury*, *Rupert*, *Cruise Control*, *Dream Home*, *Odd Man Out*, *Sorting Out Rachel*, *Nearer the Gods*, *The Big Time*, *Family Values* and *Crunch Time*. His plays (also in translation) have been performed internationally, including in London, Los Angeles, New York and Washington. David has adapted many of his plays into feature films to great acclaim and his many original feature screenplays include *Gallipoli*, *Phar Lap*, *The Year of Living*

*Dangerously*, *Balibo* (as co-writer) and *On the Beach* (adapted for television). David's many awards include 12 Australian Writers' Guild Awards, five Australian Film Institute Awards for Best Screenplay and, in 1996, the United Nations Association of Australia Media Peace Award.



### SAM STRONG | DIRECTOR

Sam Strong is an award-winning theatre director and dramaturg. He was Artistic Director of Queensland Theatre from 2015 to 2019. Prior to that, he was Associate Artistic Director of Melbourne Theatre Company, Artistic Director of Griffin Theatre Company, Literary Associate at Belvoir, and founding dramaturg in residence at Red Stitch. Sam has directed productions for all Australian state theatre companies. For MTC, Sam directed *Storm Boy* (with Queensland Theatre), the Helpmann Award-winning production of *Jasper Jones*, *Double Indemnity*, *The Weir*, *Endgame*, *The Sublime*, *The Speechmaker*, *Private Lives*, *The Crucible*, *Other Desert Cities* and *Madagascar*. Queensland Theatre credits include: *Hydra*, *Nearer the Gods*, *Twelfth Night*, *Noises Off* (with MTC) and *Once in*

*Royal David's City*. Other theatre credits include: *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* (Sydney Theatre Company); *Masquerade* (Sydney/Melbourne Festivals); *The Floating World*, *Between Two Waves*, *The Boys*, *Speaking in Tongues* (Griffin); and *Red Sky Morning* (Red Stitch). Sam won a Sydney Theatre Award for Best Direction and has received multiple nominations for Best Direction and Best Production at the Sydney Theatre Awards, Green Room Awards and Helpmann Awards.

## CAST & CREATIVE TEAM



### TRAVIS DOWLING | ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

*Emerald City* is Travis Dowling's debut with the Melbourne Theatre Company. Travis is a theatre director and youth arts facilitator and is currently the Associate Director for Queensland Theatre. His directing credits for Queensland Theatre include *Antigone*, *The Shot*, *Six Hundred Ways to Filter a Sunset*, *Riley Valentine*, *Love and Information*, *Constellations* (Young Artists' Ensemble), *This Hollow Crown*. And as Assistant Director, *Twelfth Night*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Macbeth* and *Thom Pain (based on nothing)*. Travis was previously Associate Director for Hothouse Theatre, where his credits included *Between the Clouds*, *The Pyjama Girl*, *Letters from the Border*, *The Duck Variations*, *Macbeth Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat*. His other directing credits include *Supernatural*,

*Romeo and Juliet Must Die*, *Versus*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Warning Small Parts*, *Heart fail (Grin and Tonic)*; *Richard III (QUT)*; *The Last Five Years (QPAC)*; *A Midsummer Night's Dream (Backbone Youth Arts)*; *Lazarus Won't Get Out of Bed*, *Furious Angels (Metro Arts)*. Travis has had extensive experience facilitating workshops and programs and has facilitated with companies including Queensland Theatre, Hothouse Theatre, The Grin and Tonic Theatre Troupe, Sydney Theatre Company, ATYP, Backbone Youth Arts, QUT and USQ.



### DALE FERGUSON | SET & COSTUME DESIGNER

Dale Ferguson's credits for Melbourne Theatre Company include *Così*, *An Ideal Husband*, *Born Yesterday*, *The Weir*, *The Speechmaker*, *The Crucible*, *Top Girls*, *The Drowsy Chaperone*, *God of Carnage* and *August: Osage County*. Other recent credits include *L'Appartement* (Queensland Theatre), *Oklahoma!* (The Production Company); *Counting and Cracking*, *Sami in Paradise*, *The Blind Giant is Dancing* (Belvoir); *Away*, *Brothers Wreck*, *Night on Bald Mountain*, *Dance of Death*, *Timeshare* (Malthouse Theatre); *Exit the King* (Broadway); *Les Liasions Dangereuses* (Sydney Theatre Company). Recent opera credits include *Tosca* (Opera Queensland); *The Magic Flute* (Lyric Opera of Chicago); *The Riders* (VSO/Malthouse); *Anything Goes* (Opera Australia); *Otello* (Cape Town Opera); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Houston Grand Opera, Canadian Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago); *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Welsh National Opera, Boston Lyric Opera) and *The Marriage of Figaro* (Opera Australia, The Welsh National Opera).

Dale received Helpmann Awards for *August: Osage County* and for *Counting and Cracking*. He has also received five Green Room Awards, most recently for *Away*, and Tony and Drama Desk nominations for *Exit the King* on Broadway.



### DAVID WALTERS | LIGHTING DESIGNER

David Walters returned to Australia from Iceland in 1986 to take up residency as the Lighting Designer for what was then the Royal Queensland Theatre Company. Subsequently he has designed nearly 100 productions for the company, including David Williamson's recent play *Nearer the Gods*. For Melbourne Theatre Company, David has lit *Ladies in Black*, *Amigos*, *Birthrights*, *After the Ball*, *Design for Living*, *Long Day's Journey into Night* and *Amy's View*. He has designed for Sydney Theatre Company, STCSA, Handspan, Playbox, Bell Shakespeare Company, QPAC, La Boite, Rock 'n' Roll Circus, Nimrod, Company B, Expressions, Queensland Ballet, Australian Ballet, Opera Queensland and Opera Australia. In Iceland he has lit for the National Theatre, the National Opera and The Reykjavik City Theatre. David is currently an Adjunct Associate Professor in Drama at QUT. In 2018 he was recognised with a Lifetime Achievement Award in theatre from the Queensland ABF.



### RUSSELL GOLDSMITH | SOUND DESIGNER & COMPOSER

Russell Goldsmith is a multiple award-winning Melbourne-based sound designer, composer, producer and audio system designer. He has a diverse body of work in theatre, film, television, commercial and radio production, live music and installation works. He has worked as the sound designer and composer for Melbourne Theatre Company productions of *Gloria*, *Vivid White*, *Noises Off*, *John*, *Disgraced*, *Lungs*, *Endgame*, *What Rhymes with Cars and Girls*, *I'll Eat You Last*, *The Speechmaker*, *Ghosts*, *The Other Place*, *His Girl Friday*, *The Golden Dragon*, *Don Parties On*, *The Swimming Club* and *Ruby Moon* (for MTC Education). He had his Broadway debut in 2009 with the critically acclaimed season of Malthouse Theatre/Belvoir's *Exit the King* at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre. Russell has received multiple Green Room Award nominations, while his sound design for *Exit the King* won the 2007 Sydney Theatre Award, and was nominated for Best Sound Design at both the 2008 Green Room Awards (Melbourne) and the 2009 Tony Awards (New York).





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Ben Cooper  
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