



**THE STRATEGY FOR
MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY
2019 — 2025**



First Peoples Young Artists Program (2018)

Melbourne Theatre Company
acknowledges the people of the Kulin Nation,
First Peoples of Country on which Southbank Theatre
stands. We pay our respects to all First Peoples of the
land on which we meet, create and perform, 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.



EVERY GENERATION DESERVES REMARKABLE STORYTELLING TO HELP UNDERSTAND THEIR TIMES

Melbourne Theatre Company (MTC) is Melbourne's home of live theatre, producing annual mainstage seasons and education programs, additional productions and co-productions for families and with independent artists, and a raft of industry and community outreach and development initiatives.

Founded in 1953, MTC is the oldest professional theatre company in Australia and one of the largest theatre companies in the English-speaking world. With 180,000 to 250,000 theatre attendances annually and a loyal subscriber base of over 20,000, it is the most subscribed theatre company in the nation.

Live theatre occupies a unique place in society to present performance in and of our time. It is one of the very few live artforms which speak directly with us about ourselves, each other and the world around us, in this 21st Century. It is a current conversation. Unlike the heritage arts (opera, ballet, classical music) which more frequently present repeated, known, historic works, theatre has the unique capacity to consistently be part of society's conversation, in which we gather around a metaphorical campfire to tell new stories, to better understand our own times, and enrich and improve our world.

Accordingly, this Strategy is designed to take MTC beyond its now 65 year history, to ensure the Company's live storytelling remains vital, relevant and transformative for Australia. It is especially designed to ensure MTC's financial sustainability into the future, and to benefit the wider theatre community of artists and audiences (local, regional and national), including culturally diverse artists and audiences.

This new Strategy particularly acknowledges achievements to date, and new directions and opportunities for the future.

Storm Boy (2019); (above) The Architect (2018)





As one of Australia's largest performing arts organisations and a department of the University of Melbourne, MTC has an enduring commitment to fostering the social and cultural engagement of the nation. This is reflected in our vision and mission.

OUR MISSION

To create exceptional theatre, relevant to our times,
for the broadest possible audience.



OUR VISION

To be the leading theatre company in Australia, reflecting the changing world around us and enriching lives in the way only great theatre can.

Shakespeare in Love (2019); (above) Hungry Ghosts (2028)

ACHIEVEMENTS AND HEADWINDS

This new Strategy acknowledges achievements to date, the headwinds we face, and opportunities for the future.

The Company's success in recent years has included:

- Annual ticket sale increases from 184,000 in 2015 to 250,000 in 2018
- Regular subscriber numbers in excess of 20,000 annually, in a national and international climate of falling theatre subscriber numbers
- Growth in new subscribers, u30 subscribers and University of Melbourne Theatre Pass purchases
- Low subscriber churn and excellent subscriber retention (80% annually)
- Rising philanthropic support

Despite this success, the mainstage productions do not break even and we rely on philanthropy, government and University of Melbourne to assure our future. Our cost structure reflects that of a State theatre company and much of the expenditure we make is designed to fulfil social objectives.

Our new Strategy responds to the coming decade of significant external change. MTC is part of Melbourne Arts Precinct which is seeing unprecedented investment by University of Melbourne (UoM), City of Melbourne and the Victorian Government. MTC is in a prime position to benefit from this investment and to contribute to the success of the Precinct.

To benefit from this opportunity and counter the constraints on growth because of limited suitable theatres (current MTC theatres are already at 86% capacity), and limited food and beverage outlets, the Board has endorsed a new vision for the Southbank Theatre complex and established a Capital Campaign to support these element of the Strategy.

This Strategy looks to modest audience and revenue growth goals. They will be modest because of the need to bring performance spaces online, and to accommodate Art Centre Melbourne's closing for refurbishment of venues used by MTC, over the next five years.

This Strategy incorporates engagement with the University of Melbourne to develop and promote its cultural assets.

This Strategy acknowledges the challenge to address the increasing diversity of our society, and to ensure MTC's stories speak to the different communities which comprise Australia, to help better understand each other.

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time (2018)



A STRATEGY BUILT ON SIX KEY VALUES

This Strategy is built on six key values. These values inform every decision and choice made by MTC – artistically, operationally, socially and politically. These are our values:

1. EXCELLENCE

In every aspect of our producing theatre and our operations we are as good as it gets.

2. RELEVANCE

We are relevant to the lives of audiences and artists in this 21st Century.

3. INNOVATION

We innovate in theatrical practice and all our operational endeavours, recognising that innovation requires risk and sometimes failure.

4. GROWTH

We expand our audience reach by presenting great theatre to as much of humanity as possible.

5. SUSTAINABILITY

We plan and execute strategies which expand and extend our revenue streams to ensure our survival and growth into the future.

6. DIVERSITY

We honour and reflect the diversity of our society through the stories we tell, and the artists who tell them, to ensure MTC is one of the principal storytellers for all Australians.



Golden Shield (2019)

DELIVERING OUR VISION OVER THE NEXT 5 YEARS

With an overarching commitment to excellence and diversity, we will deliver our vision through five strategic goals, all of them designed to engender a love of theatre and a greater acceptance of live performance across the community, and to enhance Australia's cultural landscape.

Behind these goals will sit operating plans for each. These goals are:



1.

To develop the artistic capability of the company and enhance the community



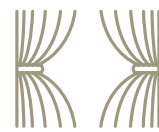
2.

Strengthen and grow audience base



3.

Increase MTC's financial security



4.

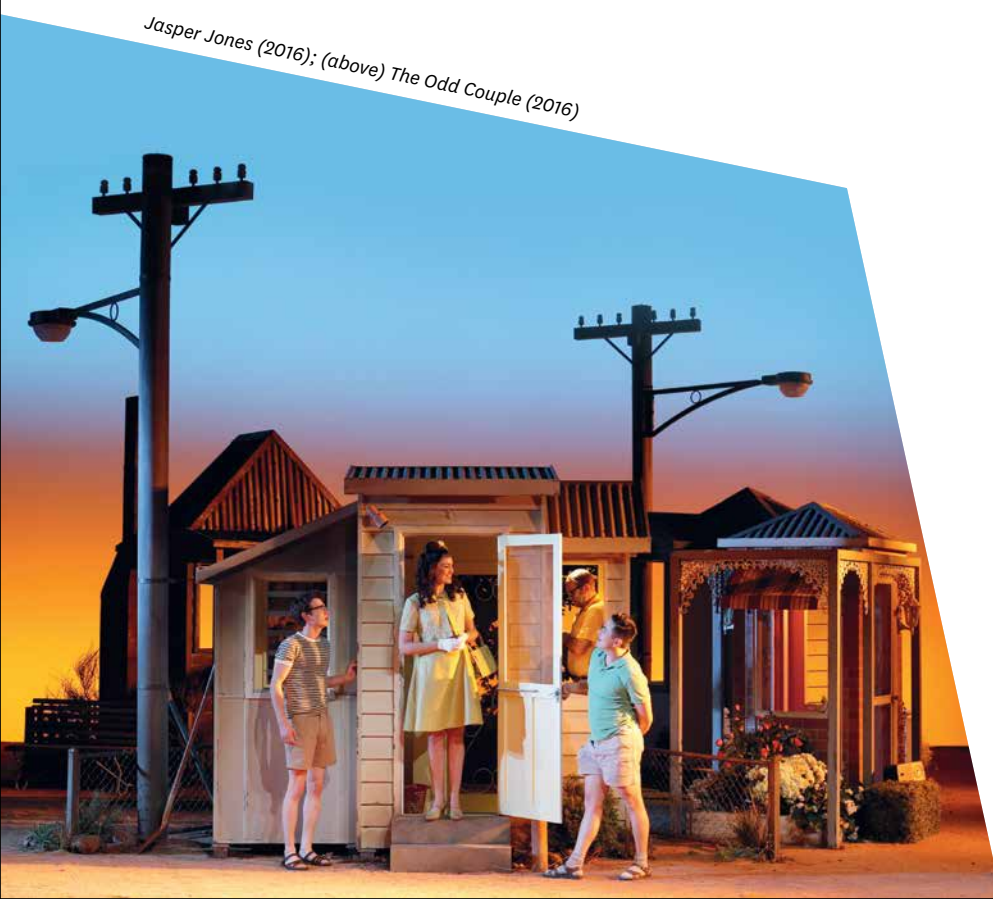
Assist the University of Melbourne to realise the benefits of its cultural assets



5.

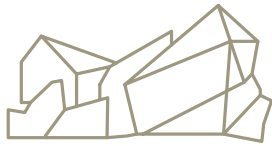
Achieve a harmonious and efficient workplace

Jasper Jones (2016); (above) The Odd Couple (2016)

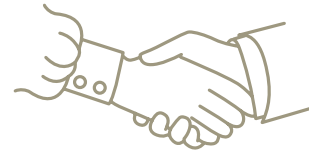


PRIORITIES

To meet the objectives of our new Strategy the MTC will invest in the following major initiatives:



- Redevelop the Southbank Theatre building to expand the capacity of the Lawler Studio and upgrade the food and beverage facilities and offerings.
- Conduct a capital campaign to support this development
- Increase the resources devoted to advocacy and fundraising
- Increase our digital capability to reach new audiences and explore models for distribution of content



Furthermore, the company will continue its commitment to:

- diversity, new writers and access
- strengthening its relationship with the University of Melbourne
- investing in MTC's production capabilities



HOW WE WILL DEFINE SUCCESS

- A 9% increase in audiences (digital & live) over five years
- The production of four new Australian plays in any year's season
- MTC is the theatre company preferred by the best artists and staff
- The completion of the redevelopment of Southbank Theatre
- An annual increase in diversity of artists engaged by MTC

