



Wominjeka / Welcome

Melbourne Theatre Company acknowledges the Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation, the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work, create and gather. We pay our respects to all First Nations people, their Elders past and present, and their enduring connections to Country, knowledge and stories. As a Company we remain committed to the invitation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart and its call for voice, truth and treaty.

Relaxed Performance

The relaxed performance of *My Brilliant Career* will take place on Monday 16 December at 6.30pm.

Relaxed Performances focus on relaxing or adapting the theatre environment while maintaining the creative integrity of the show. Relaxed Performances are for anyone who would benefit from a more relaxed environment.

During a Relaxed Performance:

- We may make minor changes to sensory elements of a show such as reducing bright lighting or loud noises
- There is a relaxed attitude to noise and movement
- You are welcome to bring in, and use, stimming devices
- The theatre doors remain open and the house lights remain on, but dimmed, throughout the performance

- You can leave the venue at any time and a designated quiet space is available in the foyer
- Your seat number will be on your ticket but you can move to an empty seat if you'd feel more comfortable sitting somewhere else.

Visual Story

Visual Stories are designed to help prepare you for your visit. They include information about the venue and what will happen during the performance.

Visual Stories are suitable for people who wish to be familiar with what to expect prior to attending. Please note that the information includes 'spoilers' which may impact on your experience of the production.

Visit mtc.com.au/access to learn more.

Contact

If you would like more information in the lead up to your visit, please contact Melbourne Theatre Company on **03 8688 0900** during business hours or email **info@mtc.com.au**.

The production

My Brilliant Career is a new musical based on the novel by Miles Franklin.

Venue

This production will be performed at The Sumner which is inside Southbank Theatre. The Sumner is wheelchair accessible.

Length

My Brilliant Career runs for approximately 2 hours and 30 minutes, including a 20-minute interval.

Age recommendation

My Brilliant Career is recommended for ages 11+ / school years 6–12.

Theatre guidelines

- Face masks are strongly recommended indoors.
- Photography is not permitted during the performance. Mobile devices (e.g. iPads) are permitted to be used to assist with communication and it's always fine to use a device in the foyer or quiet spaces.
- At the end of the show, we ask you to join us in a Deaf clap, by waving your hands in the air, as some audience members find clapping hands together uncomfortable.

Content warnings

This production contains:

Mature themes

Sexual references

- Harry propositions
 Sybylla. After she falls,
 he catches her and
 holds her in a physically
 intimate pose.
- Sybylla describes in comic, sexually charged language what Harry's body looks like.
- Several characters are referred to in sexually objectifying language by other characters.
- Several characters refer to Sybylla in ways that shame her for her sexuality.
- Several characters express the desire to kiss Sybylla, or their expectation that she will kiss them.

- Harry misreads a situation and tries to kiss Sybylla.
- Peter removes his shirt in a way that is unconsciously sexually suggestive.

References to death and dying

- Drought and the death of a sick cow are key moments at the start of the play.
- A gunshot (represented by a drum beat) signals that a cow has been shot. Two characters briefly and mistakenly believe that one of the characters has shot themselves.
- Sybylla and other characters refer to death several times throughout the play as a figure of speech, as a possible and future event, and/or as a flippant remark. There is no depiction of death on stage.

 Death in childbirth and the loss of children is referred to.

References to enslavement

 Sybylla describes being stuck on the farm as enslavement, and the experience of women as slavery.

Depictions of animal cruelty

- Drought and the death of a sick cow are key moments at the start of the play.
- A gunshot (represented by a drum beat) signals that a cow has been shot.

References to alcoholism

 There are references throughout to Sybylla's father who struggles with alcohol addiction.

References to suicide

 A cynical joke about suicide and hell is made by Sybylla and appreciated by Lucy.

Depictions of violence

- Sybylla hits and/or threatens to hit several characters in the play with her fists and a riding crop.
- Sybylla, Horace and Gertie fight physically on numerous occasions.
- To 'test' her character, Harry cracks a whip dangerously close to Sybylla.
- Harry grabs Sybylla by the wrist, causing her pain, and releases it upon her request.

 Sybylla uses corporal punishment when tutoring young people from the neighbouring family by striking one boy repeatedly with a rod.

Depictions of sexism and misogyny

 Sexism and misogyny is depicted as an everyday part of the world in which Sybylla lives. This manifests in many different ways and Sybylla rails against it.

Sensory warnings

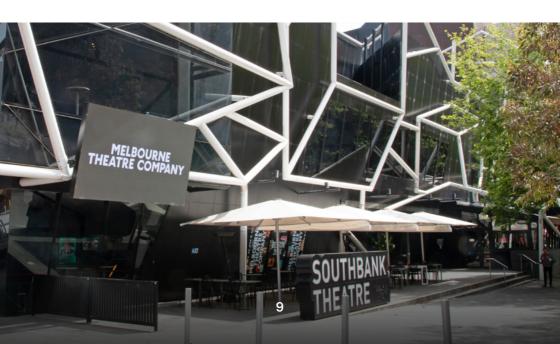
We may make minor changes to sensory elements of this show, such as reducing bright lights or loud noises. Please be aware of the following:

- Some sudden noises may occur, including the crack of a whip.
 You can read about when this will happen in the visual story.
- In one moment, hundreds of yellow flowers suddenly drop from above and fall onto the stage.
- Sudden drum sounds which symbolise gun shots.

Venue information

My Brilliant Career is being performed at –

Southbank Theatre 140 Southbank Boulevard Southbank, Victoria. The building has lots of white poles on the outside that look like cubes from some angles.



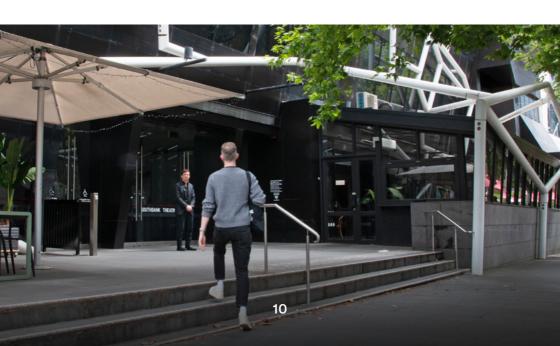
Entering the building

You can enter the building through the doors on Southbank Boulevard or the Dodds Street entrance.

When you arrive at the building you will see other people who are also going to see *My Brilliant Career* like you.

You will also see people wearing black uniforms. They are called ushers.

They can help you with directions or answer any questions you may have about the performance.



Find your way

There are two theatres inside Southbank Theatre. Today you are going to The Sumner Theatre.

You might need to walk down or up some stairs or use the lift to get to the door listed on your ticket. The venue might be busy when you arrive, so you might wish to allow yourself extra time or wear headphones if it's noisy.

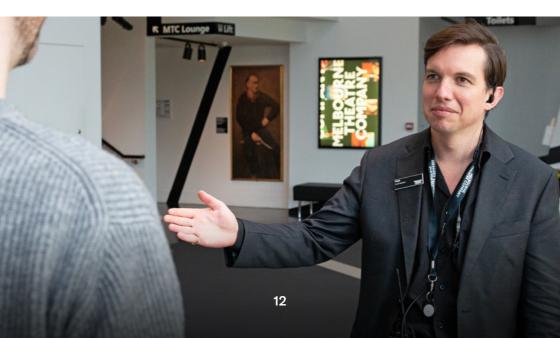


The friendly ushers will help you find your way.

Before going inside The Sumner you may like to use the bathroom.

Accessible toilets are available on all levels, so please feel free to ask for directions.

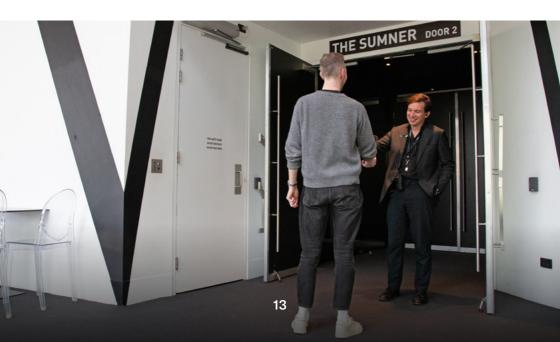
Mobile devices (e.g. iPads) are permitted for live captioning and to assist with communication – please inform the ushers or ask for assistance. It's always fine to use a device in the foyer or quiet areas.



Seating

The doors to the theatre will open about 20 minutes before the start of the show. Before you go into the theatre, you will need to show your ticket to the usher. The door you should enter through will be printed on your ticket.

You can go into the theatre and find a seat early if you want to. Before the story begins, the actors will be onstage playing some music while people take their seats.



Tonight's performance has a small audience to make everyone a bit more comfortable. If you would feel more comfortable, you can have space between groups.

There will be an announcement pre-show to let you know when you can move to an empty seat.

During the show

The play will go for about 2 hours and 30 minutes in total. There will be a 20-minute interval after about 1 hour and 13 minutes.

If you need to take a break during the show you can leave your seat and come out to the foyer area. You can do this whenever you need to. Today's performance will begin with an on stage announcement. Some actors will come on stage and introduce themselves and the story. They will tell you when you can move to an empty seat. There will be a quiet space that has comfortable beanbags and soft lighting where you can relax if you want to. You can return to the theatre and watch the rest of the show whenever you feel ready. You can follow the signage or ask an usher to help you find the quiet space.

During the interval some audience members might go to the foyer to buy refreshments from the bar or use the facilities.



After the show

To say thank you to the artists for their work, we ask you to join us at the end of the show in a Deaf clap.

This means using an Auslan sign for clapping by waving your hands in the air.

Some people in the audience may clap their hands together in applause.

If it gets too loud, you can cover your ears.



The set

My Brilliant Career is set in rural New South Wales in the 1890s. During the show, what you see on stage will change to create different locations as we follow Sybylla on her journey.

There's Possum Gully (Sybylla's family's farm), her grandmother's home (Caddagat), the M'Swat family home (where she becomes a governess), and other scenes set in an orchard, on a boat and at a fancy ball.

The central platform will revolve at times, and people will carry props like parasols and ladders onto the stage. For some scenes, chandeliers will lower from above the stage.

The stage will look similar to the photo below at the start of the play, and the cast will be playing music onstage before the show begins.



The characters

Ten actors play different characters to tell the story.

Some actors play multiple characters, so you will notice they wear different costumes and change their voice and movement. Some characters in this story also play musical instruments and sing.





This is Sybylla. She is the main character of the story and is telling it. Sybylla is a teenager who lives on a farm in Possum Gully and wants more from her life than to get married.

Sybylla is the only character played by actor Kala Gare. Sybylla has several costume changes throughout the production.





Frank

This is Frank Hawden, an English jackaroo (farm worker) who works at the property Caddagat.

Frank is played by actor Cameron Bajraktarevic-Hayward.





Horace

This is Horace. Horace is Sybylla's younger brother and he teases her a lot.

Horace is played by actor Lincoln Elliott.



Jimmy

This is Jimmy. He is one of the M'Swat children who lives at Barney's Gap. Jimmy loves to bang his ink pot to annoy Sybylla.

Jimmy is played by actor Lincoln Elliott, the same actor who plays Horace.







Harry

This is Harry. His full name is Harold Beecham. He is called both Harry and Harold throughout the play. He owns the property near Caddagat called Five Bob Downs.

Harry is played by actor Raj Labade.

Peter

This is Peter, the oldest son of the M'Swat family. He is idolised by his family.

Peter is also played by Raj Labade who plays Harry.







Dick

This is Dick or Richard Melvyn. He is Sybylla's father. He struggles with alcoholism and has made some bad business decisions causing the Melvyn family to struggle financially.

Dick is played by actor Drew Livingston.

Lucy

This is Lucy. Lucy is Sybylla's mother. She grew up on Caddagat in wealthy surroundings but married for love and it did not turn out well for her.

Lucy is played by actor Christina O'Neill.









Jay-Jay

This is Jay-Jay, Sybylla's Uncle. His full name is Julius and he is a carefree bachelor who travels around a lot but is back briefly to visit everyone at Caddagat.

Jay-Jay is played by actor Drew Livingston, the same actor who plays Dick.

Helen

This is Helen, Sybylla's Aunt. She was married to a man who left her for another woman and she now lives at Caddagat with her mother.

Helen is played by actor Christina O'Neill, the same actor who plays Lucy.









This is Mr M'Swat. He runs the farm at Barney's Gap. He is more successful than Sybylla's father and has lent money to him.

Mr M'Swat is played by actor Drew Livingston, the same actor who plays Dick and Jay-Jay.





Mrs M'Swat

This is Mrs M'Swat, the matriarch of the M'Swat family. She has many children and carries a baby, which is actually a doll.

Mrs M'Swat is played by actor Christina O'Neill, the same actor who plays Sybylla's mother Lucy and Helen.







Gertie

This is Gertie, Sybylla's younger sister. She loves Sybylla's stories and encourages her to write.

Gertie is played by actor HaNy Lee.

Blanche

This is Blanche, a glamorous woman who visits Caddagat with Harry. She is enjoying her life auditioning husbands across the country.

Blanche is played by HaNy Lee, the same actor who plays Gertie.







This is Grannie Bossier.
She runs Caddagat and is Sybylla's grandmother.
She has very fixed ideas about how women should marry well and be good wives and mothers, which Sybylla disagrees with.

Grannie is played by actor Ana Mitsikas.





Rose Jane

This is Rose Jane, the youngest member of the M'Swat family.

Rose Jane is played by Ana Mitsikas who also plays Grannie.





Lizer

This is Lizer, one of the M'Swat children. She likes learning from Sybylla and loves her older brother, Peter.

Lizer is played by actor HaNy Lee, the same actor who plays Gertie and Blanche.

Bullant

This is Bullant, one of the M'Swat children. He is taught by Sybylla at Barney's Gap.

Bullant is played by actor Cameron Bajraktarevic-Hayward, the same actor who plays Frank.









Balladeers

The Balladeers are a group of onstage musicians. They sometimes move around the stage to become characters in the story.

These Balladeers are played by musicians Victoria Falconer and Jarrad Payne.



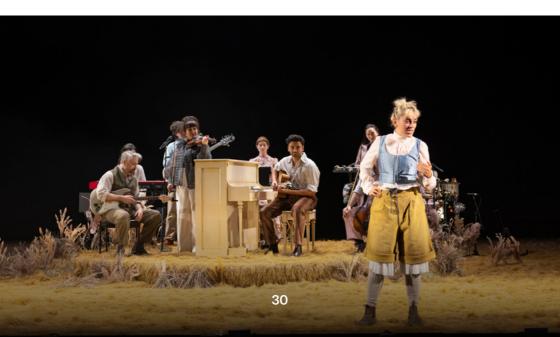


The story

SCENE 1

We see a group of musicians on stage. The main character, Sybylla, steps towards the audience and grabs a microphone. She talks directly to the audience and says that she is going to tell her story.

Sybylla says her story is set in 1899 and that it is not a romance. She begins to tell her story and other characters begin to show what Sybylla is narrating.



Sybylla is 15 and lives with her mother, father, brother and sister on a farm in Possum Gully. The farm is not doing well financially because of a drought and Sybylla's father's bad management of their money. Sybylla sings 'Life As We Know It' about how she is fed up with her life on the farm. Sybylla says a cow has fallen down due to hunger and cannot get up again, so her dad shoots it. You will hear a sudden drum beat to symbolise the gun shot. It is implied that her dad shoots the cow offstage, so you won't see this happen.



SCENE 2

Sybylla is desperate to run away from her life on the farm and to experience more art, books and music. She talks with her sister Gertie about how their lives were better when they lived on the property Caddagat, where their mother comes from.

She sings Gertie the song 'Prince of A Girl' about how their father used to tell Sybylla she could do anything before he became very negative and developed an alcohol addiction.



SCENE 3

With Gertie's encouragement, Sybylla decides to write a book and send it to a Sydney publisher. The publisher rejects the story and she is sad.

A letter arrives from Sybylla's grandmother, Grannie Bossier, asking her daughter Lucy (Sybylla's mum) to send Sybylla to Caddagat to help Sybylla find a husband.

Sybylla is excited to go but she's also sad because Grannie's letter said she looked 'plain'.

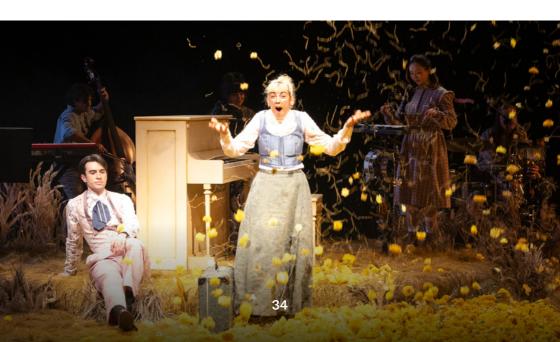


SCENE 4

Sybylla travels to Caddagat and on the way meets the head jackaroo Frank Hawden. As they travel they describe how they see men walking across the countryside looking for work and food. The audience do not see these men.

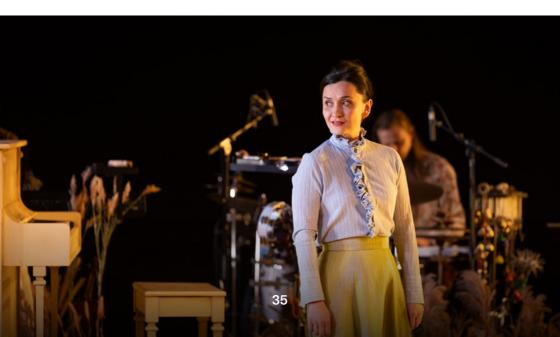
SCENE 5

When they arrive at Caddagat, you will see hundreds of fake yellow flowers drop from above onto the stage. Sybylla is thrilled to see the piano and shelves of books.



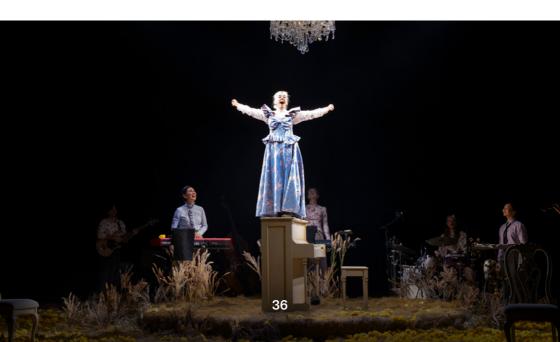
Sybylla sees her Aunt Helen who sings 'Turn Away From The Mirror' about how Sybylla needs to think and talk about herself with more kindness.

With Aunt Helen's help, Sybylla has a style makeover and she changes some layers of costume in front of the audience. She does not fully undress.



There is a party for the arrival of Sybylla's Uncle Julius (Jay-Jay) and the family.

They take turns each singing a song. Sybylla sings a song she wrote called 'In the Wrong Key' about how she wishes she could be a writer. Sybylla surprises everyone with her song and Jay-Jay suggests he take her to Sydney to help her become an actress.



Frank sings 'Brick' about how he thinks Sybylla is reliable, rather than beautiful. It is a funny song for the audience but not for Sybylla.

SCENE 8

Sybylla sings a song to Frank called 'Good Enough' about how he does not see her for who she is. She argues with Grannie about how marriage is unfair to women.



Time passes and Sybylla continues to enjoy her time at Caddagat. She tries to talk to Uncle Jay-Jay about the growing number of men who arrive at the farm looking for work. He tells her not to worry.

In the apple orchard, Sybylla climbs a tree to pick apples. She falls and is caught by Harold Beecham, a local landowner. In this scene, Harry loudly cracks

a whip. You might want to cover your ears when you see him preparing to use it.

Harry mistakes Sybylla for a worker on the farm and flirts with her. It is clear the two like other. Harry is shocked when Sybylla's family arrive and he realises who he was talking with all along. He becomes shy. Harry invites Sybylla to visit him on his property, Five Bob Downs.



Sybylla and Harry are on a boat on the river. He sings a song called 'Wait With You'. Sybylla disrupts what is almost a romantic moment by tipping them both overboard.

Harry tells her he's going to Melbourne for a while and asks to visit her when he returns. Aunt Helen tells Sybylla that Harry will want to marry her and Sybylla should say 'yes'.

Helen believes that marriage is one of the most important decisions of a woman's life and warns Sybylla not to make the same mistake she did. Helen reveals her husband, who she married for love, left her for another woman.



Time passes. The set transforms for a ball with chandeliers and curtains made from ribbons.

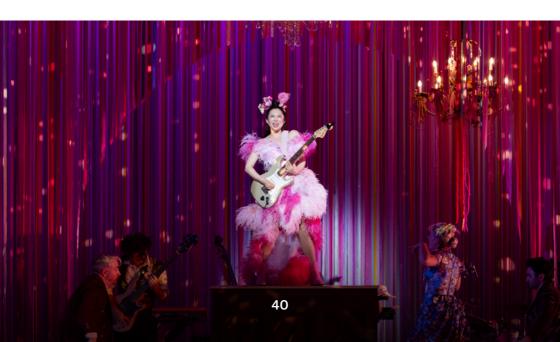
Harry has returned to Caddagat with a glamorous woman called Blanche. Sybylla discovers he has been back for weeks with Blanche but not visited her.

SCENE 12

Blanche sings 'Make a Success'.

Sybylla is intimidated and a little jealous of Blanche but impressed by her at the same time.

Blanche tells Sybylla that she is auditioning husbands and enjoying the process very much.



Harry asks Sybylla to dance and then confesses that he would like to become engaged to her. Sybylla is surprised but agrees. When Harry goes to kiss her she hits him across the face with his riding crop. This movement has been rehearsed and the actors are not hurt. Sybylla and Harry dance. Sybylla isn't sure about whether she should marry Harry. Harry gives her an engagement ring. She likes it very much but insists on a three-month trial before properly committing. Harry agrees and they kiss. The lights fade and a curtain lowers in front of the stage.



Interval

It is now interval.

The show will start again in 20 minutes. You may choose to go out to the foyer and buy food or drinks or use the quiet space. You can also stay in the theatre seats if you want.

After 15 minutes you may hear a bell sound and a verbal announcement over the loud speaker to remind you that interval is nearly over and to return to your seat for the second half of the performance.

After interval, we see Sybylla dressed up in frilly white clothes. Harry arrives to take her to her birthday picnic. At the picnic Harry gets angry at Frank and Sybylla for tickling each other and

playing. Harry does not think she should behave like that with other men. Sybylla challenges him on this and returns his engagement ring saying she will not marry him.



Sybylla and Harry argue and she asks if they can go back to being friends. They sing 'Mates and a Little Bit More' about their relationship. Harry says he loves Sybylla, and she says she almost loves him.



A letter arrives. Sybylla must move to Barney's Gap to be a governess to the M'Swat family children. This is because her father has failed to repay a loan he received from them. She will need to go for three years to pay off her father's debt. Sybylla is very unhappy about this.

SCENE 17

To try to avoid this arrangement, Sybylla tells Harry she has changed her mind and definitely wants to get married. Harry says he can't marry Sybylla because he couldn't afford to keep his farm and needs to leave to find work. Sybylla says that if in three years he still wants to, she will marry him.



Sybylla goes to Barney's Gap. The M'Swats introduce themselves through a song called 'M'Swat'. The children tell her that they aren't interested in what she is teaching and that they know she thinks she is better than them. Jimmy won't listen to Sybylla and always disobeys her, so she hits him with a small rod. Mrs M'Swat sees this and is unhappy about it.

SCENE 19

Things continue to go badly until Sybylla finally hits Jimmy again and threatens to hit Mrs M'Swat. She begins to be more forceful with her lessons and they begin to listen to her.

None of the actors are harmed by the rod in these scenes.



Months pass. Sybylla receives a letter from her mother saying she must continue to stay with the M'Swats. Her mother cannot believe the M'Swat children could possibly be the 'gargoyles' Sybylla describes them as.

Peter, the oldest M'Swat son, tells off Sybylla for thinking she's better than them. Sybylla realises she has been very self-centred and sings 'Gargoyle' about how she has not been thinking about the world with enough care and complexity.

The children are fascinated that Sybylla can make music and she teaches them that they can too. They all sing.

Mr and Mrs M'Swat tell Sybylla that she is being sent home. This is because they think she is in love with Peter and he is already going to be married to someone else. Sybylla plays along, glad to be leaving. The children have become much more mature since she arrived.



Sybylla arrives back at Possum Gully. Her brother Horace leaves for other work and her sister Gertie leaves to spend time at Caddagat. It is now just Sybylla and her parents.

Sybylla's mother is now pregnant (the actor is wearing a fake belly).

SCENE 22

Sybylla gets a letter from Harry which we hear as the song 'Working My Way'. He has inherited money and re-bought Five Bob Downs and will be back soon for her.

Parts of the song are letters from Gertie. Gertie says that her and Harry have become close. Sybylla and her mother assume that this means Harry and Gertie will soon be engaged.



Harry surprises Sybylla by walking up to the stage from the audience while playing guitar. He says again that he wants to marry her. Harry says he doesn't love Gertie and that she's only like a sibling to him.

Sybylla thinks she cannot marry Harry. She wants to be a writer and being married will limit her opportunity to pursue it.

SCENE 24

Sybylla tells Harry they are mates and nothing more in a reprise of their earlier song. He leaves.

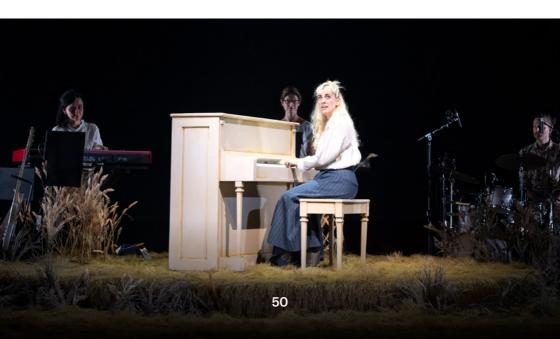


Time passes and Sybylla works hard on the farm and writes in her spare time. She has a moment with her mother where they finally begin to understand one another. Sybylla has decided that she wants to be a writer. She is very sure about this.

SCENE 26

Sybylla sings 'Someone Like Me' about the power of telling your story in the hopes of inspiring someone else. We hear the beginnings of the story she is writing.

This is the end of the play.



The actors reappear, lining up and bowing, while the audience continues to applaud or wave their hands with a Deaf clap to show their appreciation.







MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY

DEVELOPED BY MONASH UNIVERSITY, MELBOURNE, AS PART OF THE JEANNE PRAIT ARTIST IN RESIDENCY PROGRAM, WHICH CULMINATE IN A DEVELOPMENT STAGING DIRECTED BY PETRA KALIVE WITH DRAMATURGY BY ANNA BARINS, FURTHER DEVELOPMENT FUNDED BY CITY OF STOMNINGTON AND MELBOURNET HEARTE COMPANY'S MELT STAGE WRITERS PROGRAM.

NEXTSTAGE

PAUL AND WENDY BONNICI & FAMILY, TONY AND JANINE I BURESS, KATHLEE CAMFELL, FITZPATRICK SYKES FAMILY FOUNDATION, JANE HANSEN AO AND PAUL LITTLE AO, LARRY KAMENER AND PETRA KAMENER, THE MARGABET LAWBENCE BEOUST, HELEN MICIALTY, TAMIS SERRY AND CHRIS LYNCH, CRAIG SEMPLE, OR RICHARD SIMMIE



MTC IS A DEPARTMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

MTC IS ASSISTED BY THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT THROUGH CREATIVE AUSTRALIA, ITS ARTS FUNDING AND ADVISORY BODY, AND BY THE STATE GOVERNMENT OF VICTORIA THROUGH CREATIVE VICTORIA.







