

MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY



**MY
BRILLIANT
CAREER**

A NEW MUSICAL BASED ON THE NOVEL BY MILES FRANKLIN

BOOK BY **Sheridan Harbridge & Dean Bryant**

MUSIC BY **Mathew Frank** LYRICS BY **Dean Bryant**

DIRECTED BY **Anne-Louise Sarks**

**RELAXED PERFORMANCE
VISUAL STORY**



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.

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Important information

Relaxed Performance

The relaxed performance of *My Brilliant Career* will take place on Wednesday 4 February at 2pm.

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. We embrace noisy enthusiasm and it's okay to move about and self-regulate.

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.
- Your ticket will have a seat row and number on it, but you can decide where you'd like to sit on the day of the performance. There will be an opportunity before the performance begins where you can move to a different seat if you'd prefer.
- You can leave the venue at any time and a designated quiet space is available on level 1 of the foyer.

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. Please note that the information includes 'spoilers' which may impact 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 an Australian musical based on the novel by Miles Franklin. This production was first performed in 2024 at Southbank Theatre. Although the story opens in 1899 and the costumes look like they belong in that era, the music, some dialogue and the representation of Sybylla make it feel like the story could exist in the world we live in now. The story is told from Sybylla's perspective, and she often speaks directly to the audience. Like in many musicals, the songs – played by other actor-musicians surrounding Sybylla on stage at all times – also reflect Sybylla's feelings and help tell her story.

Venue

This production of *My Brilliant Career* 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

- Melbourne Theatre Company continues to be aware of the risk of COVID-19 infection. For more information and advice visit **mtc.com.au/your-visit/covid-19-information**.
- Photography and recording is not permitted during the performance. Mobile devices can be used to assist with communication and it's always fine to use a device in the foyer or quiet space.
- For some audience members, clapping can be very loud and feel uncomfortable, so we encourage you to join us at the end of the performance by using the Deaf applause. This is done by waving your hands up in the air, which is the Deaf community's way to show appreciation.

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 will occur, including the crack of a whip. You can read about when this will happen in “the story” section.
- Theatrical haze is used to create a fog-like atmosphere. It is safe to breathe and not dangerous.
- When Sybylla arrives at Caddagat, hundreds of yellow flowers suddenly drop from above and fall onto the stage.
- A sudden drum beat is used to indicate a gunshot sound effect.
- As the production is a musical, the band will often play music throughout the show. Sometimes they start playing suddenly, like at the start of Act 2. To reduce volume levels for you, you may like to sit further back in the auditorium or use your own headphones.

Content warnings

This production contains mature themes:

Sexual references

- Harry flirts with 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 refer to Sybylla in ways that shame her for her sexuality, or express the desire/expectation to kiss Sybylla.
- Harry misreads a situation and tries to kiss Sybylla. In another scene, Harry and Sybylla kiss to show their affection towards each other.
- 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 offstage, and no violence is shown on stage.

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 twice 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 is shown in many ways and Sybylla tries to challenge it throughout the story.

About the venue

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.

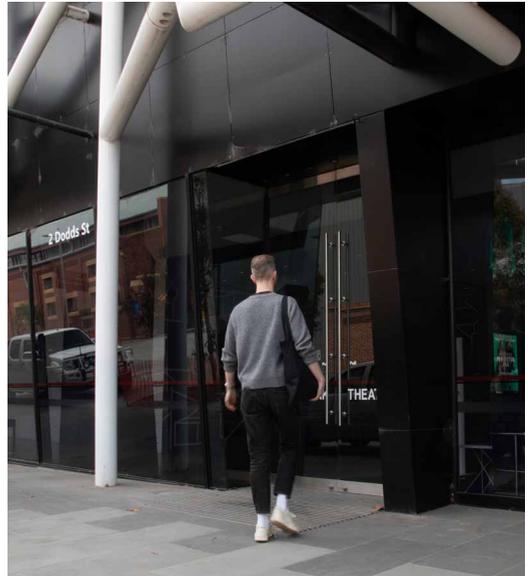
When you arrive at the building you will see other people who are also going to see *My Brilliant Career* like you.

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.

You may hear some verbal announcements over the foyer speakers reminding you that the show will begin shortly.



Southbank Boulevard entrance



Dodd Street entrance

Find your way

The venue might be busy when you arrive, so you might wish to allow yourself extra time or wear headphones if it's noisy.

There are two theatres inside the building. The relaxed performance of *My Brilliant Career* will take place in The Sumner – the largest theatre with entrances on both sides of the building.

If you need help with your tickets, you can go to the Box Office which is on the ground floor.

To the left of the Box Office is the cloak room where you can place large bags or coats if you don't want to take them inside the theatre. In exchange for your belongings, a staff member will give you a small card to keep until you'd like to pick up your items.



Box Office



Cloak Room

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

Accessible toilets are
available on all levels. You
can ask a friendly usher for
directions if you need help.



If your ticket says Door 3 or Door 4, you can enter the theatre from the ground floor. Door 3 is on the left-hand side of the building (left of the bar) and Door 4 is on the right-hand side (right of the Box Office).

If your ticket says Door 1 or Door 2, you can enter the theatre via Level 1.

To get to Level 1, you can walk up the stairs or use the lift located to the right of the Box Office.

Door 1 is on the left-hand side of the building on Level 1 (left of the bar) and Door 2 on the right-hand side (at the top of the stairs). The ushers can help you find your way.



Use the stairs to reach Level 1



Use the lift to reach Level 1

Seating

The doors to the theatre will open about 30 minutes before the start of the show.

You will need a ticket to enter the theatre. You can go into the theatre and find a seat early if you want to. If you can't find your ticket, please visit the Box Office on the ground level and they will assist you.

Before you go into the theatre, you will need to show your ticket to the usher at the door. Your seat row and seat number are also on your ticket.

The ushers can help you find your seat or you can find it yourself.



Today's relaxed performance has a smaller audience to make everyone a bit more comfortable.

At this performance, it's okay to change seats if you would feel more comfortable sitting somewhere else.

There will be an announcement pre-show to let you know when you can move to a different, empty seat. An usher can help you find an empty seat if you ask them.

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 15 minutes.

As you enter the auditorium, the actors may be playing music on the stage. When this music ends, some of the performers will come to the front of the stage and introduce themselves and the story.

They will tell you when you can move to an empty seat. After this pre-show announcement another member of the cast will do an Acknowledgement of Country.

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.

There will be a quiet space in the foyer on level 1 that has comfortable beanbags where you can relax if you want to.

You can return to the auditorium and watch the rest of the show whenever you feel ready.

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

After about 15 minutes, a verbal announcement will play over a loudspeaker in the foyer to remind you that interval is nearly over and to return to the theatre for the second half of the performance.



After the show

To say thank you for their work, we ask you to join us at the end of the show in a Deaf clap by waving your hands in the air.

This is a visual way of showing appreciation without making any sound, used in the Deaf community.

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

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



About the show

The story

The story is about Sybylla Melvyn, a young woman living in rural New South Wales in the 1890s.

Sybylla has big dreams for her life and wants to be a writer, but she's unsure how to become one. Opportunities for women in the 1890s are limited and success is tied to marriage, not careers.

Sybylla's family struggles due to drought and the poor decision-making of her father. Sybylla is very unhappy about working on the farm and therefore relieved when she's sent to live with her grandmother.

Life at Caddagat – her childhood home – suits Sybylla because she has access to books.

It's at Caddagat that Sybylla meets a young wealthy farmer, Harry Beecham, and they become good friends, although Harry would like to be more than just friends.

Later, Sybylla is forced to leave Caddagat to become a governess (teacher) for the M'Swat family, to help pay off her father's debts. This doesn't go well at first and after leaving the M'Swats, Sybylla continues to search for her 'brilliant career' and is forced to make some challenging decisions.

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 and Sybylla's childhood home (Caddagat), the M'Swat family home (where she becomes a governess), and other scenes set in an

apple orchard, on a boat and inside a fancy ballroom. The central platform will revolve at times and the actors have practiced with this structure during rehearsals so they are safe.

Cast and crew people will carry props like parasols and ladders onto the stage. For some scenes, chandeliers and streamers will lower from above the stage. The stage will look similar to the photo below at the start of the play.



The characters

There are 20 characters in the story, played by a cast of 10 actor-musicians.

Many of the actor-musicians play more than one character. They wear different costumes and change their voice and movement to create these multiple characters.

Throughout the show, the cast act out the story and play music. Sometimes their characters play instruments in the story, and at other times they play music as part of the band.

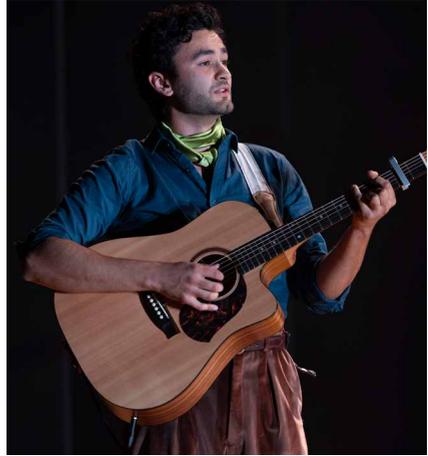




Sybylla Melvyn

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

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



Harry

This is Harry. He is sometimes also called Harold, Mr Beecham and Hal in the play. He owns a property near Caddagat called Five Bob. Harry plays guitar and sings to Sybylla because he likes her and wants to marry her.

Harry is played by actor Raj Labade.





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 and lives at Barney's Gap. Jimmy loves to hit his ink pot to annoy Sybylla.

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





Frank

This is Frank Hawden, an English jackaroo (farm worker) who works at the property Caddagat. He's recently arrived from England and likes Sybylla.

Frank is played by actor Cameron Bajraktarevic-Hayward.



Peter

This is Peter, the oldest son of the M'Swat family. His family idolise him.

Peter is played by Raj Labade, the same actor 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. He is a carefree bachelor who travels around a lot but is back 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, Sybylla's grandmother.

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





Mr M'Swat

This is Mr M'Swat. He runs a successful farm at Barney's Gap. Sybylla is sent to the M'Swats to be a governess for their children. This arrangement is 'payment' for the money Mr M'Swat lent to Sybylla's father.

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 and is referred to as Missus M. She has many children, including a newborn baby (which is a doll prop).

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





Gertie

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

Gertie is played by actor Melanie Bird.



Blanche

This is Blanche Derrick, a glamorous woman who visits Caddagat with Harry. She is also referred to as Ms Derrick. She is enjoying her life auditioning husbands across the country.

Blanche is played by Melanie Bird, the same actor who plays Gertie.





Grannie

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, the same actor who plays Grannie.

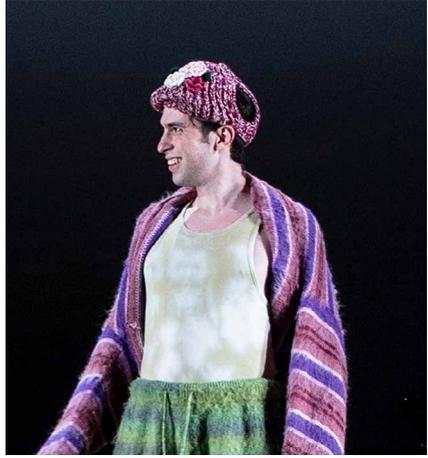




Lizer

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 Melanie Bird, the same actor who plays Gertie and Blanche.



Bullant

This is Bullant, another of the M'Swat children. He's called bullant because he often pinches his siblings.

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





Balladeer

The Balladeers are musicians who are part of the ensemble. They often move around the stage to become part of the storytelling.

This balladeer is played by musician Victoria Falconer, who is also the Musical Director of the production.



Balladeer

Another Balladeer, this musician plays guitar and percussion, and provides many sound effects throughout the show.

This Balladeer is played by musician Jarrad Payne.



The story

ACT 1 SCENE 1

We see a group of musicians on stage playing music. The main character, Sybylla, moves towards the audience and tells them that she's going to tell her story.

As she talks, the band continues to play music.

Sybylla says that the year is 1899 and that her story will not be a romance. As she introduces the characters in her life, band members become these characters to show what Sybylla is narrating.



Sybylla starts talking about her past. She describes her life at 15 years old, where she lives with her mother Lucy, father Dick, brother Horace and sister Gertie, on a farm in Possum Gully.

The farm is not doing well financially because of 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.

Throughout the song, interactions with her family continue – Sybylla says a cow has fallen down in the paddock due to hunger, so her father shoots it.

A drum beat is used to symbolise the gun shot. It is suggested that her father shoots the cow offstage, so you won't see this happen.



ACT 1 SCENE 2

Sybylla is desperate for a life that isn't hard, physical farm work. She wants to experience art, books and music.

She talks with Gertie about how their lives were better when they lived at Caddagat, where their mother comes from, and their first family home before they had to move to Possum Gully. Sybylla's mother Lucy says she's found Sybylla a

position being a governess (teacher) but Sybylla refuses – she wants to be a writer. Her mother calls Sybylla “useless”. Gertie encourages Sybylla's writing and requests a story.

Sybylla sings ‘Prince of A Girl’ about their parents' relationship – they were once happy but now they are not. Her father's alcohol addiction has made their lives difficult.



ACT 1 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.

Horace reminds Sybylla that she's just a "stupid girl." Sybylla playfights with Horace, but neither actor is hurt.

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 because it means she won't have to do farm work. But she's also sad because Grannie's letter described Sybylla as "plain" looking.



ACT 1 SCENE 4

As the scene transitions, Sybylla changes costumes in front of the audience with the help of a crew member.

Sybylla travels to Caddagat by train – which we do not see – and is collected from the station by head jackaroo (a trainee farm worker) of Caddagat – Frank Hawden. The actors bob up and down to show they are travelling by horse and buggy – which is also not visible.

As they travel, Sybylla describes how they see men walking across the countryside looking for work and food. The audience do not see these men.

Frank makes comments to Sybylla that suggests he's interested in her romantically.



ACT 1 SCENE 5

When Sybylla and Frank arrive at Caddagat, hundreds of fake yellow flowers drop from above and onto the stage.

Sybylla asks Frank if he knows what a curlew (a type of bird) sounds like, and she makes a high-pitched scream. Sybylla does this to playfully scare Frank and make him go away – it works.



Sybylla is excited to see her childhood home, full of shelves of books (which are not visible) and the piano (visible, centre stage).

Sybylla sees Grannie Bossier and her Aunt Helen. Aunt Helen 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 Sybylla grows more confident. The actor changes some layers of costume in front of the audience, but she does not fully undress.



ACT 1 SCENE 6

There is a party for the arrival of Sybylla's Uncle Jay-Jay. Each member of the family takes turns singing a song at the party. When it's Sybylla's turn, she sings a song she wrote called 'In the Wrong Key', about how she wishes she could be a writer.

Towards the end of the song, the actor climbs on top of the piano.

Sybylla surprises everyone with how good her song is and Jay-Jay suggests he take her to Sydney to help Sybylla become an actress. Grannie does not like this idea because she thinks young girls should focus on being good wives and mothers – not having careers.



ACT 1 SCENE 7

Sybylla is in a good mood, feeling positive about her life at Caddagat. Frank appears and tells Sybylla he loves her. Sybylla laughs at the idea. Frank wrongly thinks that her reaction means that Sybylla thinks she's not good enough for him.

Frank then sings 'Brick' to try and convince Sybylla that she's a good, reliable match for him, even though he says she's not beautiful.

As Frank sings, the band playing along joins in with dancing. Sybylla finds the song shocking – in a funny way – because she doesn't like Frank, but he keeps trying to show his love anyway.



ACT 1 SCENE 8

In reaction to Frank's song, Sybylla sings 'Good Enough', to tell him that she's not interested in him romantically and that he doesn't know her at all.

During the song, the actor playing Sybylla runs energetically around the stage and jumps over a chair.

As the song ends, the setting transitions into an apple orchard at Caddagat. Actors and crew members move props and set pieces.



ACT 1 SCENE 9

Time passes and Sybylla and Jay-Jay are in the orchard. Jay-Jay doesn't take Sybylla's ideas about politics seriously and asks her to do a funny voice – one of Sybylla's party tricks.

Sybylla climbs a tree to pick apples. The tree is not visible and a crew member passes apples. Sybylla slips and falls, and is caught by Harry Beecham, a local farmer and landowner.

Harry doesn't realise that he's caught Sybylla – he thinks she's a new farm worker. Harry loudly cracks a whip to impress Sybylla.

Harry is shocked when Sybylla's family arrive and he realises who he was talking with. Harry invites her to visit him on his property, Five Bob. As the scene ends, Harry cracks his whip again.



ACT 1 SCENE 10

Sybylla and Harry pretend they're on a rowboat (only half a boat is used and no water is visible). Sybylla has been staying at Harry's for a month. He plays guitar and sings 'Wait With You'. She disrupts what is almost a romantic moment by tipping them overboard. The actors pretend to fall into water.

Harry tells Sybylla that he's going to Melbourne and asks to visit her when he returns.

When Aunt Helen hears about this, she tells Sybylla that Harry might propose. Helen believes that marriage is one of the most important decisions of a woman's life.

Helen reveals her husband, who she married for love, left her for another woman. Helen thinks she's an embarrassment, but Sybylla thinks Helen is free.



ACT 1 SCENE 11

The set transforms for a ball at Five Bob, with chandeliers lowering from above the stage and curtains made from ribbons. Several weeks have passed. Harry has returned from Melbourne and speaks to the audience using a microphone. He introduces a glamorous woman called Blanche Derrick. Sybylla discovers that Harry has been back for weeks but has not visited her. This makes her upset.

The partygoers do a choreographed dance and different duos are formed as the dance progresses. When Sybylla and Harry are coupled up, Harry asks Sybylla to meet him later because he has a question for her. As the dance continues, Sybylla is coupled with Frank, then Blanche. Blanche tells Sybylla that she's having great fun auditioning husbands across Australia.



ACT 1 SCENE 12

Blanche sings 'Make a Success', about how she makes society's rules for women work for her – she won't settle for a husband without money.

During the song, the actor playing Blanche is lifted by other actors in carefully rehearsed choreography.

Although Sybylla was jealous of Blanche at first, she's now impressed by Blanche's confidence.

Blanche encourages Sybylla to have fun with Harry.



ACT 1 SCENE 13

As the ball ends, Sybylla is alone with Harry. He asks her if she wants to get engaged. Sybylla surprises herself by agreeing. When Harry tries to kiss Sybylla, she hits him across the face with his riding crop, and Harry holds her wrist.

Sybylla and Harry dance.
Sybylla talks to the audience
– without Harry hearing
– about how she's not sure
about marrying Harry.

Harry presents an engagement ring. Sybylla says they must have a 3-month trial before properly committing. Harry agrees and they kiss.

The curtain lowers at the front of the stage to indicate the end of Act 1.



Interval

It is now interval.

The show will start again in 20 minutes. You may choose to go out to the foyer and buy a refreshment or use the quiet space. Or you can stay in the auditorium if you wish.

If you're in the foyer, after 15 minutes you may hear a verbal announcement over the loudspeaker to remind you that interval is nearly over and it's time to return to your seat.

ACT 2 SCENE 2

Sybylla and Harry argue and she asks if they can go back to being friends. Harry gets frustrated by Sybylla changing her mind, so he starts to sing 'Mates and a Little Bit More' about their relationship.

Sybylla joins in the song, and they push and pull each other playfully in choreographed danced moves.

By the end of the song, Harry and Sybylla have made up. Harry says he loves Sybylla and she says she almost loves him back. They agree to go back on their 3-month probation.

As the scene ends and transitions into the next, crew move props on and off the stage.



ACT 2 SCENE 3

Three months pass and Sybylla has to make up her mind about marrying Harry. But before she gets the chance, Grannie delivers a letter from Sybylla's mother, Lucy.

Lucy's letter says that Sybylla must move to a farm called Barney's Gap to be a governess to the M'Swat family children. This is because Sybylla's father

has failed to repay a loan to the M'Swats. Sybylla will need to go for three years to pay off her father's debt.

Sybylla is very unhappy about this – being a governess is not part of her career plans and once again she doesn't have a choice. Grannie reminds Sybylla that she should have chosen to accept Harry's proposal earlier, to avoid having to go.



ACT 2 SCENE 4

To try to avoid the arrangement, Sybylla tells Harry she has changed her mind and definitely wants to get married. But Harry has some news for Sybylla – he says he can't marry her because he now has no money.

He explains that he couldn't afford to keep his farm because of the drought, so he needs to leave to find work. Sybylla asks Harry to take her with him, but he says no. They're both sad about having to say goodbye.



ACT 2 SCENE 5

Sybylla travels to Barney's Gap by horse and buggy – which are not visible. A crew member helps Sybylla change costume.

The M'Swats introduce themselves through a song called 'M'Swat'. Mrs M'Swat carries a prop baby. The eldest child, Peter, is mentioned but not present.

The children tell her that they aren't interested in what she is teaching.

As they sing, the children throw props around the stage, creating a stressful environment for Sybylla.

Jimmy keeps hitting his inkpot which makes a very loud noise. Sybylla asks him to stop but he won't. Sybylla hits him with a small rod. Mrs M'Swat sees this and is unhappy about it. No actors are harmed by the rod in these scenes.



ACT 2 SCENE 6

Time passes throughout the 'M'swat' song and things continue to go badly for Sybylla. She doesn't get on well with the children and she's so busy being their governess that she has no time or energy to write.

Peter enters and introduces himself. Sybylla begins to be more forceful with her lessons, and the younger children start to listen to her, except for Jimmy – he continues to hit his inkpot. Frustrated, Sybylla hits Jimmy again very hard and it breaks her rod.



ACT 2 SCENE 7

Months pass. Sybylla receives a letter from her mother (that Lizer reads out loud) saying Gertie is now at Caddagat and that Sybylla must stay with the M'Swats. Lucy also doesn't believe the M'Swat children are as bad as Sybylla describes.

Peter tells Sybylla off for thinking she's better than them. Sybylla realises she has been very self-centred and sings 'Gargoyle' about

how she feels lost. The children listen and ask to play, too. They end the song in a good mood. Mr M'Swat tells Sybylla she can leave – they think she's in love with Peter, but he's promised to another young woman. Sybylla doesn't correct him because she's glad to be leaving.

Mr M'Swat says not to worry about paying of the rest of the debt.



ACT 2 SCENE 8

Sybylla arrives back at Possum Gully. Her mother thinks Sybylla has failed at being a governess – she doesn't realise Sybylla was sent away and her family is now debt free.

Sybylla feels sorry for her mother because she's pregnant again (the actor is wearing a fake belly) – Lucy has had no control over her life since marrying Dick Melvyn.

Sybylla's brother Horace leaves Possum Gully to find other work. It is now just Sybylla and her parents.



ACT 2 SCENE 9

As the scene changes, many letters fall from the ceiling onto the stage. Sybylla reads a letter from Harry which we hear as a song, as the actor enters the auditorium and makes his way up to the stage. As Harry sings and plays guitar for 'Working My Way', he tells Sybylla that he's inherited some money and re-bought his property, Five Bob. This means he's on his way back to Sybylla.

Sybylla also reads letters from Gertie, which Gertie reads out loud to the audience. Gertie says that she's become friendly with Harry while she's been living at Caddagat. Sybylla and her mother think this means that Harry and Gertie will soon be engaged. This pleases Lucy but not Sybylla.



ACT 2 SCENE 10

It's now Sybylla's 19th birthday. Harry enters and surprises Sybylla with the same accent Sybylla did when they first met.

Sybylla thinks he's come to say he's marrying Gertie. To Sybylla's surprise, Harry says he still wants to marry Sybylla. Harry says he

doesn't love Gertie and that she's only like a sibling to him. Although Sybylla loves Harry, she says she cannot marry him.

She wants to be a writer and being married will mean she'll always have the duties of being a wife and mother.



ACT 2 SCENE 11

It's the next morning. Sybylla speaks to the audience about how she wants her voice to be heard through her writing.

Sybylla writes a letter to Harry explaining her decision – it's sung and the actors sit on the stage to represent the letter like a conversation between the two.

Sybylla tells Harry they can only be “mates and nothing more”, in a reprise of their earlier song in Act 1.

Harry is sad but he asks Sybylla to send him a copy of her book when she finishes it. Harry leaves.



ACT 2 SCENE 12

A short time passes and Sybylla works hard on the farm. She tries to write in her spare time.

Lucy enters, upset that Harry has left and not proposed to Gertie – she has no idea about Sybylla and Harry's connection.

Sybylla has a moment with her mother where they finally begin to understand one another. They bond as they play piano together. Sybylla tells Lucy she wants to be a writer, and her mother is surprisingly supportive.



ACT 2 SCENE 13

Sybylla sits at the piano and speaks to the audience.

Sybylla sings 'Someone Like Me' about the power of telling your story in the hopes of inspiring someone else.

Sybylla steps towards the front of the stage and reads the beginning of her book out loud to the the audience (like she's narrating the book but not holding it).

She returns to her piano and plays the final moments of the song. As the song ends, the lights on stage cut to black.

This is the end of the story.



The actors line up at the front of the stage and bow. The audience is encouraged to show their appreciation through applause or a Deaf clap. This might include clapping, whistling or cheering. If it gets too loud you can cover your ears or leave the theatre.

After they bow, the actors go back to their instruments and play more music as a band. At the end of the song, the actors exit the stage. Some may wave to the audience.

The show is over.





Southbank Theatre

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My Brilliant Career

production photography

Pia Johnson

Set and costume design

Marg Horwell

Lighting design

Matt Scott

2024 production

photography including

cast member HaNy Lee



MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY

DEVELOPED BY MONASH UNIVERSITY, MELBOURNE, AS PART OF THE JEANNE PRATT ARTIST IN RESIDENCY PROGRAM, WHICH CULMINATED IN A DEVELOPMENT STAGING DIRECTED BY PETRA KALIVE WITH DRAMATURGY BY ANNA BARNES. FURTHER DEVELOPMENT FUNDED BY CITY OF STONNINGTON AND MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY'S NEXT STAGE WATERS' PROGRAM.

PAUL AND WENDY BONNICI & FAMILY, TONY AND JANINE BURGESS, KATHLEEN CANFELL, FITZPATRICK SYKES FAMILY FOUNDATION, JANE HANSEN AO AND PAUL LITTLE AO, LARRY KAMENER AND PETRA KAMENER, THE MARGARET LAWRENCE BEQUEST, HELEN NICOLAV, TANIA SEARY AND CHRIS LYNCH, CRAIG SEMPLE, DR RICHARD SIMMIE

NEXTSTAGE



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