

# QUEENSLAND THEATRE

23 June, 2021

## A Prima Facie case of must-see theatre

Suzie Miller's award-winning play takes aim at Australia's legal system

Human rights lawyer-turned-playwright Suzie Miller is turning our courts of law into a different kind of stage for Queensland Theatre's powerful debut of *Prima Facie* from 14 July to 7 August 2021.

Initially delayed by last year's theatre shutdown, this play was provocative when it was first written, but *Prima Facie* will now be staged in concert with generations of women proclaiming "time's up" as the country demands more of our governing and legal systems to improve the treatment of sexual assault survivors.

The acclaimed Sheridan Harbridge (*Stop Girl*, *Muriel's Wedding the Musical*, *Songs for the Fallen*) performs the career-defining role of Tessa, a brilliant criminal defence lawyer — a winner at the top of her game — who finds herself on the other side of the bar when a date becomes an assault. Does she risk her career or stay silent in a patriarchal justice system where it's her word against his? If Tessa believes in the law, will it believe in her?

Queensland Theatre Artistic Director Lee Lewis (*Our Town*, *Mouthpiece*) directs this one-person show. "Suzie Miller has found the perfect form for this story. She has chosen to have only one woman on the stage to testify to the inadequacy of our legal system when it comes to sexual assault trials. One woman will speak for all of us."

"This play is more necessary now than ever," Lewis said. "More than one woman every week dies at the hands of her current or former partner. One in three Australian women has experienced physical violence perpetrated by a man since the age of 15. And Covid saw a horrible increase in domestic violence. Things are getting worse, not better. Listen to Brittany Higgins, listen to Chanel Contos.

"*Prima Facie* asks us to consider why we continue to believe in a system that re-traumatises victims? Is our life's work to support the status quo, or seek to evolve our systems?"

The potency of *Prima Facie* has been recognised by the Australian Writers' Guild's annual AWGIE Awards, receiving the 2020 Major Award, and the David Williamson Prize for Excellence in Writing for Australian Theatre — two of the most prestigious writing awards in the country.

For Suzie Miller (*Sunset Strip*, *Dust*), it's the performance by Sheridan Harbridge that audiences won't want to miss.

"Sheridan Harbridge blows my mind as she continues to embody, enliven and illuminate my character Tessa in a bold, tender, warm, funny and devastating portrayal. I am in awe of her magnificent talent and humanity.

"As Tessa, she brings us to the point where we really see, through her experience, what needs to change in the legal system."

While it's a work of fiction, Miller and Lewis recognise that *Prima Facie* is a reality for too many people. They both speak of theatre as a safe space for audiences to deeply consider new perspectives on our toughest social issues.

"If we can't imagine a different future together, how will we build one? This is a hopeful play because it encourages us to imagine how to reshape our legal future — it believes in the future of the law," Lewis reflects.

"Who sees this work and who finds the courage for the next steps in the fight for survivors is what I am excited about."

### PRIMA FACIE by Suzie Miller

Directed by Lee Lewis

14 July – 7 August 2021

Bille Brown Theatre, South Brisbane

Bookings [queenslandtheatre.com.au](https://queenslandtheatre.com.au) | 1800 355 528 | [sales@queenslandtheatre.com.au](mailto:sales@queenslandtheatre.com.au)

A Griffin Theatre Company production

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## ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

A tour de force indictment of the legal system.

One woman stands centre stage: Tessa, a criminal lawyer at the top of her game, who knows the law permits no room for emotion.

To win, you just need to believe in the rules. And Tessa loves to win, even when defending clients accused of sexual assault. Her court-ordained duty trumps her feminism. But when she finds herself on the other side of the bar, Tessa is forced into the shadows of doubt she has so ruthlessly cast over other women.

Turning our courts of law into a different kind of stage, human rights lawyer-turned-playwright Suzie Miller's taut, rapid-fire and gripping one-woman show exposes the shortcomings of a patriarchal justice system where it's her word against his.

## CAST and CREATIVES

Tessa	Sheridan Harbridge
Playwright	Suzie Miller
Director	Lee Lewis
Designer	Renée Mulder
Lighting Designer	Trent Suidgeest
Composer and Sound Designer	Paul Charlier

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For further information, imagery or interviews, please contact Amanda Lawson, Queensland Theatre via [publicity@queenslandtheatre.com.au](mailto:publicity@queenslandtheatre.com.au) or phone 07 3010 7669

Queensland Theatre acknowledges the Jagera and Turrbal people who are the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work, and their unique relationship with the lands, seas and waterways. We pay our respects to their Elders both past and present, and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

