



Queensland Theatre Company presents a Sydney Theatre Company production

The Secret River

By Kate Grenville

An adaptation for the stage by Andrew Bovell

25 February – 5 March at Playhouse, QPAC

Touring nationally 1 February – 19 March

Director Neil Armfield

Artistic Associate Stephen Page

Set Designer Stephen Curtis

Costume Designer Tess Schofield

Lighting Designer Mark Howett

Composer Iain Grandage

Musical Director Isaac Hayward

Sound Designer Steve Francis

Tour Director Kip Williams

Language Consultant Richard Green

Dramaturg Matthew Whittet

Voice & Text Coach Charmian Gradwell

Additional Music Trevor Jamieson

Fight Director Scott Witt

Aunty in Residence Glendra Stubbs

Cast Includes: Georgia Adamson, Joshua Brennan, Toby Challenor, Shaka Cook, Nathaniel Dean, Frances Djulibing, Jennifer Hagan, Isaac Hayward, Trevor Jamieson, Heath Jelovic, Ningali Lawford-Wolf, Madeleine Madden, Colin Moody, Jeremiah Mundine, Wesley Patten, Kelton Pell, Richard Piper, Rory Potter, James Slee, Bruce Spence, Matthew Sunderland

Following on from an award-winning season in 2013, two of Australia's most respected artists come together to adapt Kate Grenville's iconic novel into one of the landmark Australian theatre works of the decade, Sydney Theatre Company's *The Secret River*, showing at the Playhouse on February 25. Directed by **Neil Armfield** and adapted by internationally recognised playwright and screenwriter **Andrew Bovell**, this ambitious play dramatises the powerful story of two families divided by culture and land.

The Secret River features one of the biggest creative teams on a theatre production in Australia, and headed by none other than **Neil Armfield**, whose films include *Holding the Man* starring **Ryan Corr**, and *Candy* starring **Heath Ledger** and **Abby Cornish**. The production will feature a stellar line up of Australian cast members with award-winning actor **Nathaniel Dean**, celebrated theatre and film actor **Trevor Jamieson** and TV and film actress **Ningali Lawford-Wolf**.

The story of *The Secret River* begins on the banks of the Hawkesbury River with an introduction to William Thornhill, a man born into brutal poverty in London and exiled to the Colony of New South Wales. On the River he sees an opportunity to be something more than he could ever have been and "takes up" 100 acres of land, only to discover that the land is not his to take. It is owned and occupied by the Dharug people. The play then unravels the narrative of two families – one settler, one Indigenous. And as Thornhill's attachment to this place and his dream of a better life deepens, he is driven to make a choice that will haunt him for the rest of his life.



Director Neil Armfield said *The Secret River* was a difficult story to tell.

“For all the beauty, dignity and depth of this tale, it leads relentlessly into dark places. It takes us back to a moment in our country’s narrative when a different outcome, a different history, was possible. Or, at least, imaginable. Where those who came might have listened and learnt from those who were here, might have found a way of living here on this land with respect and humility,” he said.

“Instead, enabled by gunpowder and fed by ignorance, greed and fear, a terrible choice was made. It is a choice that has shaped the present. Nine generations later, we are all living its consequences. The lucky country is blighted by an inheritance of rage and of guilt, denial and silence. Imagine how hard it is for our actors, who draw strength and humanity from their Indigenous elders and family, to tell this story. And to keep on telling this story.”

The award-winning **Nathaniel Dean** has worked on a number of high profile Australian TV shows and films including *Underbelly*, *Bikie Wars*, *Puberty Blues* and the 2006 film *Candy*. His recent transition into stage saw him perform in Belvoir St Theatre’s production of *Gwen in Purgatory*, also directed by Neil Armfield. His body of work is remarkable and he will be warmly welcomed in Brisbane for *The Secret River*.

Amongst the Dharug people is Ngalamalum played by **Trevor Jamieson**, who starred in distinguished Australian film *Rabbit-Proof Fence* and held roles in TV Series’ *My Place*, *The Circuit* and *Lockie Leonard*. His film and television achievements sit proudly alongside theatre performances for the Sydney Theatre Company in *Storm Boy* and he won Best Leading Man for *Ngapartji Ngapartji* at the Sydney Theatre Awards in 2010.

Creative powerhouse **Ningali-Lawford Wolf** is an Australian favourite, appearing in roles in films *Last Cab to Darwin*, *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, *Bran Nue Dae* and *3 Acts of Murder*, winning the Australian Centenary Medal in the 2001 Queen’s New Year’s Honours List for her services to Indigenous performing arts.

Winner of six Helpmann Awards, including Best Play, Best Direction and Best New Australian Work, *The Secret River* has been heralded by **The Sunday Telegraph** as “a stunning, shattering piece of theatre that goes to the heart of our history.”

QTC Artistic Director Sam Strong said *The Secret River* is a work that is epic in every sense. “Its historical and geographic sweep, the scale of its tragedy, the complexity of its relationships, even the sheer number of people on stage - it’s a rare work and a rare opportunity to see this already great Australian story brought to life in a way that is uniquely theatrical. Even if you’ve read the book or seen the screen version, the stage version of *The Secret River* will still leave its imprint on your soul.”

The Secret River opens at the Playhouse, Queensland Performing Arts Centre on Saturday 27 February 2016 in this show-stopping Queensland premiere.

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Tickets are available at queenslandtheatre.com.au or by calling 136 246