

THE
NATIONAL
VOICE



2015



The Australian Writers' Guild looks to Australia's major theatre companies to lead the way in developing and producing the work of Australian playwrights in all its diversity and its many forms. To this end the Guild intends to release an annual account of programming across the nation called "The National Voice".

The National Voice will provide a snapshot of who's doing what each year and report on the general trends across programming, whilst making a series of observations highlighting the companies that are producing Australian plays. In this first report we have also chosen to make gender parity in programming a key focus.

Ninety Two shows have been surveyed across ten companies including the major state companies; Sydney Theatre Co, Melbourne Theatre Co, Queensland Theatre Co, The State Theatre Co of SA and Black Swan. Also included are Belvoir, Malthouse, Griffin, The Ensemble and La Boite.

General Observations:

Australian Work: Of the 92 plays included across ten programs 58 are by Australian writers [or 63%]. Of these 58, 42 are original Australian works whilst 16 are adaptations by Australian writers of underlying works. Of the 42 original works 37 are new works and 5 are revivals of earlier works.

Comment: The AWG believes that our theatre is best served when Australian authored works are placed at the centre of the national conversation. We believe that this makes for a dynamic and relevant theatre practice and one which audiences are keen to engage with. We're encouraged that almost two-thirds of the national program is written by Australian playwrights and believe that this figure reflects a positive engagement with our work. It is of concern though that this figure falls below 50% when adaptations are excluded. Original works by Australian playwrights and creators make up less than half of the national program in 2015 and we think that this is a problem.

Whilst the latest international works and the classics will always be a vital part of our theatre, nothing engages Australian audiences more than theatre about our own experience written by Australian playwrights. It is difficult to sustain a viable practice of playwriting in this country when less than half of the work produced by the ten main companies is original work written by our playwrights. The result is a continual loss of talent to television and film and to overseas opportunities.

We are encouraged to see 37 new Australian works being produced across the national program though we note the paucity of revivals of recent works and more generally works from the Australian canon. Where are the plays of our senior and most experienced playwrights? It's great to see new productions of *Radiance* at Belvoir and *After Dinner* at STC this year. But these are just two plays of a rich and extensive canon. The Australian theatre has a rich history. There are many great plays ready to be discovered and re-interpreted by a new generation. Next year we hope to see more of the Australian classics revisited whilst also hoping to see recently produced plays receive a second or third or fourth production. This is how a national theatre is built.

Gender Parity: Of the 58 works by Australian playwrights including original and adapted works, 57% are by men and 43% by women. When adaptations are excluded the figure for original Australian work is 60% written by men and 40% by women.

Comment: The AWG is unequivocal in its belief that gender parity should be achievable across the programming spectrum of the ten companies surveyed and that these figures indicate a continued bias toward programming the work of male playwrights over their female colleagues. Whilst not expecting every company to achieve parity every year we do expect that the numbers would roughly fall 50/50 across the national program each year. We believe that these figures are better than in previous years and indicate a growing awareness of the issue within the theatre industry and we will continue to strongly advocate for the current imbalance to be redressed.

Company	Works in season	New Aus.	M \ F	Revival Aus.	M \ F	% of original Aus. Work	% M/F (Aus. writers)	Adaptations by Aus. Writers	M \ F	% of works with an Aus Writer (inc. Adaptations)	% M/F (inc. Adap)
Sydney Theatre Company +	15	3	1 \ 2	1	1 \ 0	27	50 \ 50	2	2 \ 0	40	67 \ 33
Melbourne Theatre Company	12	4	3 \ 1	-	-	33	75 \ 25	1	0 \ 1	42	60 \ 40
Queensland Theatre Company	8	4	3 \ 1	-	-	50	75 \ 25	1	1 \ 0	63	80 \ 20
State Theatre Co SA	7	2	0 \ 2	2	2 \ 0	57	50 \ 50	1	0 \ 1	71	40 \ 60
Black Swan STC	7	1	0 \ 1	-	-	14	0 \ 100	1	0 \ 1	28	0 \ 100
Belvoir	12	6	2.5 \ 3.5	1	1 \ 0	58	50 \ 50	4	2 \ 2	92	50 \ 50
Malthouse*	9	6	4 \ 2	-	-	67	66 \ 34	1	0 \ 1	78	57 \ 43
The Ensemble Theatre	10	3	2.5 \ 0.5	1	1 \ 0	40	87.5 \ 12.5	1	1 \ 0	50	90 \ 10
Griffin Theatre Company^	6	6	3 \ 3	-	-	100	50 \ 50	-	-	100	50 \ 50
La Boite Theatre Company	6	2	1 \ 1	-	-	33	50 \ 50	4	2 \ 2	100	50 \ 50
*Not incl is Blak Cabaret, another new Australian work, but with no credited writer. As a cabaret performance, from theatre stats, as have dance works presented by Malthouse.											
^Season includes 'Masquerade', based in part on the book by Kit Williams; this has been included as a New Australian Work.											
+ Includes in these statistics the Wharf Revue as a New Australian Work.											
Total no. productions	92						Total % M/F (Original Works Only)				Total % M/F
Total % of work with an Aus Writer	63%						60 \ 40				57 \ 43
		M	F								
Total Original Aus Works	42	25	17								
Total Adaptations by Aus. Writers	16	8	8								

Company by Company:

Griffin Theatre Company: Griffin continues its commitment to a full program of Australian work. In previous years they have included revivals of works from the canon - most recently “Emerald City” by David Williamson. This year Lee Lewis has programmed six new Australian works, three by men and three by women achieving gender parity. We hope that the company continues to grow so that it can produce a larger program in future years.

<http://www.griffintheatre.com.au/whats-on/griffin-2015-season/>

La Boite: In his first program as Artistic Director, Chris Kohn has achieved gender parity across the six shows. It’s a 100% Australian authored program but skews heavily toward adaptations, with two of the six works being original Australian work. We also note and applaud the company’s commitment to diversity in casting and hope that new Artistic Director, Todd MacDonald maintains the company’s commitment to this policy.

<http://laboite.com.au/default.asp?varMth=8&varYr=2014>



Belvoir: Out of a program of 12 works, 92% of them are penned by Australian writers. 58% are original Australian works, the rest are adaptations. Belvoir has also achieved gender parity in its programming. We note the company's continued commitment to developing and promoting the work of indigenous playwrights.

<http://belvoir.com.au/2015-season/>

Malthouse: Artistic Director Marion Potts maintains her varied and cross-platform approach to programming. Australian creatives author 78% of the work. Most of that is original rather than adaptations. Gender skews 57/43 toward men.

<http://malthousetheatre.com.au/whats-on/season-2015>

State Theatre of SA: In a program of 7 works, 71% are penned by Australian writers. On parity the company skews toward women 60/40. We note that the company was the only major Australian theatre company last year to receive international recognition for its continued commitment to gender parity, and that they have committed to a policy of gender parity across all aspects of the company. We congratulate them.

<http://www.statetheatrecompany.com.au/>

Queensland Theatre Company: At the QTC 8 works are programmed in the main stage season. Five of those [62.5%] are by Australian playwrights. This figure falls to 50% once adaptations are taken out. On gender the program favours men 87.5/12.5%. The figures are better for the "Diva-Add On season" which focuses on female creators but it is the main stage programs that we are concerned with here.

<http://www.qldtheatreco.com.au/>

Melbourne Theatre Company: 12 shows (not including the Neon Festival). 42% by Australian writers. On gender 60/40 split favouring men.

<http://www.mtc.com.au/plays-and-tickets/mainstage-2015/>

Sydney Theatre Company: 15 shows 40% by Australian writers. On gender 67/33 split favouring men.

<https://www.sydneytheatre.com.au/season-2015>

It's interesting to note that the figures are similar for the two major theatre companies. Both are currently experiencing critical and commercial success. We'd hope that this success translates to an increased number of Australian works, whether original or adapted and that each company achieves gender parity in coming years. These two great Australian companies could be leading the way on these issues.

Black Swan: 7 programmed works. One new Australian work. One adaptation by an Australian writer. Both of these are women. We note the company's continued commitment to commissioning and producing the work of women playwrights. This year only 28% of the program is authored by Australian writers. We hope that figure rises significantly next year.

<http://www.bsstc.com.au/>

The Ensemble: A program of ten plays sees five of them by Australian writers but of those five, four are by men meaning the gender figure skews 90/10 percent toward men. We note that this is in line with previous years. There has been very little opportunity for female playwrights at The Ensemble. We hope that with the new artistic leadership in place this will change.

<http://ensemble.com.au/whats-on>

We wish all the companies surveyed here successful seasons and look forward to celebrating the work of every Australian playwright who will be produced by those companies in 2015.



Brought to you by the Playwrights Committee of the Australian Writers' Guild represented by:
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