DAVID WILLIAMSON is Australia’s best known and most widely performed playwright. His first full-length play *The Coming of Stork* was presented at La Mama Theatre in 1970 and was followed by *The Removalists* and *Don’s Party* in 1971. His prodigious output since then includes *The Department*, *The Club*, *Travelling North*, *The Perfectionist*, *Sons of Cain*, *Emerald City*, *Top Silk*, *Money and Friends*, *Brilliant Lies*, *Sanctuary*, *Dead White Males*, *After the Ball*, *Corporate Vibes*, *Face to Face*, *The Great Man*, *Up For Grabs*, *A Conversation*, *Charitable Intent*, *Soulmates*, *Birthrights*, *Amigos*, *Flatfoot*, *Operator*, *Influence*, *Lotte’s Gift*, *Scarlet O’Hara at the Crimson Parrot*, *Let the Sunshine* and *Rhinestone Rex* and *Miss Monica*, *Nothing Personal* and *Don Parties On*, a sequel to *Don’s Party*, *When Dad Married Fury*, *At Any Cost?* co-written with Mohamed Khadra, *Dream Home*, *Happiness*, *Cruise Control* and *Jack of Hearts*.

His plays have been translated into many languages and performed internationally, including major productions in London, Los Angeles, New York and Washington. *Dead White Males* completed a successful UK Production in 1999. *Up For Grabs* went on to a West End production starring Madonna in the lead role. In 2008 *Scarlet O’Hara* at the Crimson Parrot premiered at the Melbourne Theatre Company starring Caroline O’Connor and directed by Simon Phillips.

As a screenwriter, David has brought to the screen his own plays including *The Removalists*, *Don’s Party*, *The Club*, *Travelling North* and *Emerald City* along with his original screenplays for feature films including *Libido*, *Petersen*, *Gallipoli*, *Phar Lap*, *The Year of Living Dangerously* and *Balibo*. The adaptation of his play *Face to Face*, directed by Michael Rymer, won the Panavision Spirit Award for Independent Film at the Santa Barbara International Film Festival.

David was the first person outside Britain to receive the George Devine Award (for *The Removalists*). His many awards include twelve Australian Writers’ Guild AWGIE Awards, five Australian Film Institutes’ Awards for Best Screenplay and, in 1996 The United Nations Association of Australia Media Peace Award. In 2005 he was awarded the Richard Lane Award for services to the Australian Writers’ Guild. David has received four honorary doctorates and been made an Officer of the Order of Australia.

David has been named one of Australia’s Living National Treasures.
Also by David Williamson

The Removalists
The Club
The Perfectionist
Sons of Cain
Collected Plays Volume I:
  The Coming of Stork
  The Removalists
  Don’s Party
  Jugglers Three
  What If You Died
  Tomorrow?
Emerald City
Top Silk
Siren
Money and Friends
Collected Plays Volume II:
  The Department
  A Handful of Friends
  The Club
  Travelling North
Brilliant Lies
Dead White Males
Third World Blues
After the Ball
Corporate Vibes + Face to Face
The Great Man + Sanctuary
Up for Grabs
The Jack Manning Trilogy:
  Face to Face, A Conversation, Charitable Intent
Flatfoot
Birthrights + Soulmates
Amigos
Influence + Operator
Scarlett O’Hara at the Crimson Parrot + Let The Sunshine
Don Parties On
Rupert
Collected Plays Volume III:
  At Any Cost
  Managing Carmen
  At Any Cost
  Rhinestone Rex and Miss Monica
  When Dad Married Fury
Collected Plays Volume IV
  Jack of Hearts
  Dream Home
  Happiness
  Cruise Control
Brilliant Lies

DAVID WILLIAMSON

CURRENCY PRESS • SYDNEY
To my wife Kristin for her continuing love, editorial advice and support.
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BRILLIANT LIES

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Acknowledgements

I’d like to thank my wife Kristin, my daughter Rebecca, Aubrey Mellor, Ray Barrett, Miranda Otto, Genevieve Lemon, Chris Betts, Christine Amor, Peter Adams, Rhett Walton and dramaturg and assistant director David Berthold for their feelings and opinions during the development of this play. I finally had to decide for myself what went on the page but their input undoubtedly gave me richer options.

D. W.

*Brilliant Lies* was first performed by the Royal Queensland Theatre Company on 29 April 1993 at the Suncorp Theatre, Brisbane with the following cast:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Actor</th>
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<tr>
<td>MARION</td>
<td>Christine Amor</td>
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<tr>
<td>SUSY</td>
<td>Miranda Otto</td>
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<td>VINCE</td>
<td>Peter Adams</td>
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<tr>
<td>GARY</td>
<td>Chris Betts</td>
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<tr>
<td>KATY</td>
<td>Genevieve Lemon</td>
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<tr>
<td>BRIAN</td>
<td>Ray Barrett</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAUL</td>
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Director, Aubrey Mellor
Designer, Dale Ferguson
Lighting Designer, David Walters
CHARACTERS

MARION, official mediator from the anti-discrimination commission.
SUSY, a young, ambitious career woman
VINCE, owner of the company where Susy works
GARY, Susy's manager
KATY, Susy's sister
BRIAN, Susy's father
PAUL, Susy's brother

SETTING

The play is set in the offices of LifeChoice Options, an office gymnasium, Susy and Katy's home and Brian's home.
Act One

A conference room. Functional but soothing. MARION LEE, an attractive woman in her mid-to-late thirties sits facing SUSY CONNOR. SUSY is in her mid-twenties, very attractive, very vivacious, very personable.

MARION: Can you give me examples?
SUSY: Of the harassment? Sure. It went on continually from the moment I arrived, but if you want the highlight, it was the time I was asked to stay back late just before I was fired.
MARION: What happened?
SUSY: What happened. When we were the only two left in the building he turned to me and said, ‘This is boring. Let’s talk sex’. Gary’s not subtle.
MARION: What did you say?
SUSY: ‘Gary, you have been talking sex to me for the last seven months. I don’t find it titillating, and I don’t find it amusing, so please stop’. Then he said, ‘Do you want to keep your job here?’ I said, ‘Yes’. No prizes for guessing what happened next.
MARION: [with her notebook poised] Unfortunately I do need to know what happened next – with as much precise detail as you can remember.
SUSY: [frowning, concentrating] I was sitting at the computer. He came up behind me. I concentrated as hard as I could on the screen, then suddenly there were two hands on my breasts and he said something sick making like, ‘The twin peaks of womanhood. Soft, sweet, seductive’. I froze and when I turned around Gary’s member was inches in front of my nose. I ran.

[MARION scribbles furiously on her notepad, then looks up at SUSY.]
I went to Vince – Vince owns the business – next morning and told him what had happened. He called Gary into the office and asked if it was true. Gary denied everything. Vince sent me out. I heard them arguing. Vince called me back in and fired me.

[MARION looks at her.]

MARION: You heard Vince and Gary arguing?

SUSY: I'm sure Vince must know what a sleaze Gary is, but he depends so heavily on Gary that he had no choice.

MARION: Before this incident Gary talked sex over the inter-office phone?

SUSY: [nodding] Gary had an office that overlooked my wordprocessor. I'd pick up the phone and Gary would start to tell me some vile fantasy.

MARION: What kind of fantasy?

SUSY: Which position he was screwing me from, how he was doing it – I was usually so shocked he got two or three seconds in before I hung up. And the fantasies got progressively worse.

MARION: Why didn't you go to – [Consulting her pad.] Vince, earlier.

SUSY: I just thought Gary was pathetic, and that I should be able to cope with it myself.

MARION: You didn't talk about it to any of the other women there?

SUSY: There were only four and they weren't exactly friendly.

MARION: Why not?

SUSY: Who knows.

[Pause]

Because they . . .

MARION: Because they what?

SUSY: This is going to sound snobbish but they were – they resented the fact I wear decent clothes, that I didn't talk – [Imitating a broad Australian accent] like I just drove in from Rooty Hill, that I know most of the movers and
shakers of this city, that I had a decent education – those sort of things.
MARION: Decent education?
SUSY: I went to a good private school – and they didn’t. Not that that makes any difference to me, but it obviously did to them.
MARION: Did you go to University?
SUSY: I went for a term, but I couldn’t stand it. I went to Europe and lived in France and Italy for two years, then Dad went broke and that was that.
MARION: You came back and got this job?
SUSY: I came back and couldn’t get a job. For nearly three years.
MARION: You know most of the movers and shakers of the city?
SUSY: It’s one thing to meet them at nightclubs. It’s another to get them to give you a job. I finally got mad at this guy who’d been sort of promising me a job in his ad agency for months, and he took me aside and said I had to understand that the market is flooded with girls like me with looks and personality, but that if I didn’t get some real workplace skills I was no use to anyone.
MARION: Who supported you for those three years?
SUSY: Men. I fooled myself that I was having a series of deep and meaningfuls. The truth was I was passed from hand to hand around the half dozen or so wealthy unmarried heterosexual men left in this city. Three years on I found myself back where I started and realised that workskills were urgently needed.
MARION: Did you? Get some skills?
SUSY: I did a wordprocessing course. And finally after dozens of interviews I got a job.
MARION: Not the sort of job you were hoping to get?
SUSY: No. A firm of borderline shonky insurance brokers called LifeChoice Options was definitely not where I wanted to position myself in life.
MARION: Pretty bad, huh?
SUSY: [noding] Charming little scams like recommending policies and not bothering to tell the client that the true rate of return they'd get at the end of their twenty years was not much better than burying their money in a tin at the bottom of their garden.
MARION: Your letter said you were an Assistant Manager.
SUSY: I assisted the manager.
MARION: Gary?
SUSY: Yeah. Vince is the owner, but Gary effectively runs the place.
MARION: Tell me a bit more about Gary.
SUSY: He did accounting at some minor college, drives a Mazda MX5, married above himself, obviously doesn't get enough sex, has about as much style and panache as a particularly gauche gorilla, but thinks he's Mel Gibson with a dash of Kerry Packer.

[MARION laughs.]
So? Where do I stand?
MARION: It seems a clear cut case of wrongful harassment and dismissal. If it goes to court the difficulty is going to be to prove it.
SUSY: It's basically my word against theirs?
MARION: Yes.
SUSY: I told my sister Katy about it. Right from the start. We rent a place together.
MARION: She'd be prepared to back you up?
SUSY: [noding] She saw how upset it was making me. You said 'if' it goes to court?
MARION: The other side usually wants to solve this kind of dispute before it gets that far.

[SUSY looks at her]
SUSY: Bad publicity?
MARION: [noding] If it goes public the press are certain to pick it up and Gary and – [Consulting her pad] LifeChoice
Options will get the sort of publicity I’m sure they don’t want.

SUSY: [nodding] Gary would hate it. His wife’s a North Shore princess. If Gary hits the headlines as Mr Gary Twin Peaks Fitzgerald, her family will order her to divorce.

MARION: How distressed did the harassment make you?

SUSY: I got incredibly distressed. If I’m blasé now it’s a defence.

MARION: In part the compensation depends on the distress.

SUSY: I was very distressed.

[Pause]

I read some woman got forty thousand the other day.

MARION: That was very severe harassment and she had proof.

SUSY: Mine was severe. Very severe. And I have my sister to back me up.

* * *

Two men sit opposite MARION: VINCE WILLIAMS, in his late fifties, wearing a very conventional suit, with ultra-neat hair and the accent and style of old suburban Australia and GARY FITZGERALD, in his thirties, tough and athletic, wearing an expensive but ill-fitting suit and with an air of ruthless cold competence.

VINCE: By what right? On whose authority? A phone call out of the blue and we’re summoned in here like bad schoolboys.

MARION: The government has seen fit to pass laws –

VINCE: [looking at GARY] We know about those laws.

GARY: The ‘make life hell for successful white male laws’.

MARION: Susy Connor has lodged a complaint with us that she was sexually harassed and then unfairly dismissed. I want to arrange a conciliation conference to try and settle this without having to go to court.