



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*, *Don's Party*, *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*, *Rupert*, *Nearer the Gods* and *Sorting out Rachel*. He has had over fifty plays produced. His plays have been translated into many languages and performed internationally, including major productions in London, Los Angeles, New York and Washington. As a screenwriter, Williamson has brought his own plays to the screen, 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. Williamson 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 Institute 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. Williamson has been named one of Australia's Living National Treasures.

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David Williamson



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NEARER THE GODS



Rhys Muldoon (left) as Isaac Newton and Matthew Backer as Edmund Halley in Queensland Theatre Company's production of NEARER THE GODS in 2018. (Photo: Jeff Busby)

Nearer the Gods was first produced by the Queensland Theatre Company at the Bille Brown Theatre, Brisbane, on 6 October 2018, with the following cast:

EDMUND HALLEY	Matthew Backer
KING CHARLES II	William McInnes
ISAAC NEWTON	Rhys Muldoon
ISAAC BARROW / SAMUEL PEPYS	Daniel Murphy
SIR CHRISTOPHER WREN / TOWN BAILIFF	Hugh Parker
ROBERT HOOKE	Colin Smith
JOHN WICKINS / MARTIN COX / SIMON	Lucas Stibbard
JOANE / ROYAL EQUERRY	Hsiao-Ling Tang
MARY HALLEY	Kimie Tsukakoshi

Director, Sam Strong
Designer, Renée Mulder
Lighting Designer, David Walters
Composer / Sound Designer, Steve Francis
Movement Director, Nerida Matthaëi
Dramaturg, Julian Meyrick
Design Assistant, Kaylee Gannaway
Stage Manager, Pete Sutherland
Assistant Stage Manager, Yanni Dubler

CHARACTERS

EDMUND HALLEY, 26
MARY HALLEY, 24
ISAAC NEWTON, 43, 23
ROBERT HOOKE, 50, 30
KING CHARLES THE SECOND, 55
SIR CHRISTOPHER WREN, 53
TOWN BAILIFF, 50
ISAAC BARROW, 55, 35
SAMUEL PEPYS, 54
JOHN WICKINS, 41, 21
SIMON, 28
MARTIN COX, 40
JOANE, 50
ROYAL EQUERRY, 50

Suggested doubling:

SIR CHRISTOPHER WREN / TOWN BAILIFF
ISAAC BARROW / SAMUEL PEPYS
JOHN WICKINS / SIMON / MARTIN COX
JOANE / ROYAL EQUERRY

ACT ONE

ACTOR: I'm about to play Sir Isaac Newton. We're taking you back to the late seventeenth-century England.

He takes off his wig.

We won't be wearing the type of clothes they wore. Those of you who prefer period accuracy—

He points to his costume.

—you've got about thirty seconds to savour the detail.

King Charles the Second is on the throne. The monarchy has been restored after eleven years of austere Puritan rule under Oliver Cromwell.

The great English universities taught that the ancient Greeks had discovered everything of importance. They hadn't.

In Europe, Galileo and Kepler had established that the planets revolved around the sun, but no-one knew why.

The answer to that question fell to Isaac Newton. He ultimately gave us the greatest leap in knowledge of the natural world we've ever been gifted.

But as you'll see, it almost didn't happen.

He indicates the action about to unfold.

MARY HALLEY, 24, a spirited and pretty young woman, enters the parlour of their small but neat house in Islington, London, with a letter in her hand. Her husband, EDMUND HALLEY, 26, a handsome and urbane young man, looks up from some mathematical calculations he is doing at his desk. The year is 1684.

MARY: A letter for you.

HALLEY: Delivered by whom?

MARY: A royal equerry in a grand coach. It's from King Charles.

HALLEY *bounds up from his desk, takes it and rips it open.*

So?

HALLEY: He's coming to the Royal Society. He's requested that I be there. Along with Christopher Wren and Robert Hooke.

He looks at MARY.

Along with Wren and Hooke?

MARY: Why so surprised?

HALLEY: They're big fish, Mary. The biggest in the Society.

MARY: You're not exactly a minnow yourself. When you came back from the South Seas the king granted you a personal audience.

HALLEY: I thought he would've forgotten.

MARY: You create more of an impression than you think, Edmund. As you finally realised when we first met.

HALLEY: I was surprised.

MARY: What surprised me that night was that you seemed blind to the fire storm of fluttering female eyelids all around you.

She smiles and pats him.

Your modesty is endearing, my love, but it can also be irritating. You received the invitation because you deserved it. [*Indicating the letter*] Does he give a reason for his visit?

HALLEY: [*reading*] 'To inform him of our work in areas which might interest him.'

HALLEY *looks at MARY who raises her eyebrows quizzically.*

Inside the members lounge of the Royal Society, London, two men are discussing exactly the same letter from the king. They are ROBERT HOOKE, 49, highly intelligent, but forceful, opinionated, egotistical and argumentative. He looks across at his friend and colleague SIR CHRISTOPHER WREN, the well-known mathematician and architect, who is holding a similar letter from the king to that which HALLEY has received. WREN is also highly intelligent, but wry and balanced, always prepared to see the best in others.

WREN: 'To inform him of our work in areas which might interest him'?

HOOKE: My recent work on the modes of vibration of glass plates would surely be of great interest.

WREN: [*wryly*] Certainly, but let's first ask what His Majesty would like to know.

HOOKE: [*prickly*] My work wouldn't be of interest?

WREN: [*always the diplomat*] Of course, Robert. Of course, but let's ease him into it.

The king is on his way. HALLEY, WREN and HOOKE stand nervously in the foyer of the Society, adjusting their collars and garments as they wait to receive him.

HALLEY: Sir Christopher. Mr Hooke, Linus,

LINUS: Edmund.

HALLEY: Mr Pepys.

PEPYS: Mr Halley.

HOOKE: [*to HALLEY, indicating he should stand back a little*] The two of us will greet him.

WREN: I'll introduce you in due course, Edmund.

HALLEY: Thank you, Christopher.

KING CHARLES sweeps in. He is an impressive figure, now in his early fifties. Over six feet tall, strongly built and darkly handsome. HALLEY, WREN and HOOKE bow low, doffing their hats. CHARLES shakes WREN's hand.

CHARLES: My brilliant gentlemen! Sir Christopher. Always a pleasure to see you. England owes you a deep debt of gratitude, sir.

WREN: You are too kind, Your Majesty.

CHARLES: Far from it. I remember the despair we all felt when London was burnt to the ground.

WREN: It was a grim time.

CHARLES: Indeed, but now, thanks to the brilliance of your designs, we have buildings which enchant the world and frustrate the French.

SORTING OUT RACHEL



*Natalie Saleeba (left) as Julie and Jenna Owen as Rachel
in the Ensemble Theatre production of SORTING OUT RACHEL
in 2018. (Photo: Heidrun Löhr)*

Sorting out Rachel was first produced by the Ensemble Theatre, Sydney, on 19 January 2018, with the following cast:

TESS	Chenoa Deemal
CRAIG	Glenn Hazeldine
BRUCE	John Howard
RACHEL	Jenna Owen
JULIE	Natalie Saleeba

Director, Nadia Tass

Set and Costume Designer, Tobhiyah Stone Feller

Lighting and AV Designer, Christopher Page

Sound Designer, Daniel Nixon

Stage Manager, Ruth Horsfall

Wardrobe Co-ordinator, Alana Canceri

CHARACTERS

BRUCE, a wealthy retired businessman, 70

TESS, his younger daughter, 20

JULIE, his older daughter, 41

CRAIG, Julie's husband, 45

RACHEL, Julie's daughter and Bruce's granddaughter, 17

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

TESS, *a young woman of twenty, who is of part-European, part-First Nations ancestry, is waiting in a cafe in inner Sydney.*
BRUCE, *who is white and in his late sixties, enters. He's big, bluff, and up-front. With BRUCE what you see is what you get.*

TESS: I was just about to go.

BRUCE: Bloody Sydney parking. Can still never find a spot after ten years. Don't know why I ever came here.

TESS: Dad, you're practically around the corner. Walk. I had to come by bus and train. Took me over a bloody hour.

BRUCE: So what's this about? I thought you were never going to talk to me again.

TESS: Not coming to Mum's funeral? I was totally pissed off.

BRUCE: Molly was in hospital bloody well dying.

TESS: Yes, and you were by her bedside. My mother was dying too.

BRUCE: You had your mob up there with her. Hundreds of them.

TESS: Here.

She hands him a large envelope.

BRUCE: What's this?

TESS: Hundred-dollar bills. You've still been putting money into my account.

BRUCE: Of course I have. You're my bloody daughter.

TESS: I don't want your money. I'm doing two part-time jobs. I'm okay.

BRUCE: Okay, I didn't come to your mum's funeral but no need to go crazy vindictive on me. Jesus, I'm the first to admit I haven't been a great father to you, but I came up to see you both as often as I could and had to lie to get away with it.

TESS: I don't want your money anymore. I'm doing okay.

BRUCE shoves the envelope back to her.

BRUCE: If I could've managed to be two places at once I would've been there. I sent a huge bloody bunch of flowers. Take the bloody money. You're my daughter. I love you just as much as I do Julie.

Beat.

TESS: You've never said that before.

BRUCE: I'm not good at ... wearing my heart on my sleeve.

TESS: You love me?

BRUCE: Yes! So take the bloody money!

TESS: If you didn't love me you wouldn't give it?

BRUCE: I'd still give it if I hated your guts, but liking you makes me feel better about it.

TESS: It's gone down to liking now?

BRUCE: Don't get all legalistic on me. Take the money.

He shoves the envelope further towards her. She leaves it there.

Your mother was never like this. She was bloody nice.

TESS: I must've taken after you.

BRUCE: So what is this about? Just to give me back the money.

TESS: No. I've been doing a lot of thinking.

BRUCE: About what?

TESS: About me being your daughter but not being your daughter.

Or not being allowed to say I'm your daughter.

BRUCE: I couldn't do it any other way.

TESS: You could've but it would've meant being honest.

BRUCE: Molly would have been devastated.

TESS: You should've thought of that before you started sleeping with my mother.

BRUCE: Look. It wasn't how you bloody think.

TESS: How was it?

BRUCE: Whatever else I was, I was never a user. I loved your mother.

TESS: Not enough to come to her funeral.

BRUCE: I loved her.

TESS: And Molly too?

BRUCE: Yes!

TESS: Yeah, sure.

BRUCE: Molly was a wonderful wife, but whatever engine drove her it was always on full throttle. If there was any bloody organisation around she made it her business to become its president. Golf club, Country Women's Association, tennis, arts and crafts centre—your mother was—

TESS: Was what?

BRUCE: Funny, relaxed, took me as I was, but never scared to take the mickey out've me. But in a loving way. Look, I didn't plan for it to happen.

TESS: Well, it did. Can you imagine how my mother felt? Housekeeper and nanny for Molly all those years, knowing that she's cheating with her husband?

BRUCE: I felt guilt too, but it was still manageable until—

TESS: She decided to get pregnant with me?

BRUCE: After nearly ten years. I never worked out why.

TESS: She wanted a child! And she was sick of waiting. So of course you fled to the big city.

BRUCE: It would've been too difficult. Everyone would have asked who the father was.

TESS: She never told and she never was going to tell. Mind you, all my mob bloody well guessed.

BRUCE: [*with a sigh*] Which is why I had to go. And most of my business was down here by that time, in any case. How are you doing?

TESS: Struggling. Course is a nightmare. Wish you hadn't talked me into it.

BRUCE: You'll make it. Do you need extra tuition?

TESS: Teaching's fine. First-class. Problem is my brain's not first-class.

BRUCE: You'll get there. You've been thinking?

TESS: Yes.

BRUCE: When any woman says they've been thinking, that's bloody ominous.

THE BIG TIME



Jeremy Waters as Rohan Black in the Ensemble Theatre production of THE BIG TIME in 2019. (Photo: Brett Boardman)

The Big Time was first produced by the Ensemble Theatre, Sydney, on 18 January 2019, with the following cast:

VICKI FIELDING	Claudia Barrie
NELLI BROWNE	Zoe Carides
CELIA CONSTANTI	Aileen Huynh
NATE MACKLIN	Matt Minto
ROHAN BLACK	Jeremy Waters
ROLLY PIERCE	Ben Wood

Director, Mark Kilmurry
Assistant Director, Felicity Nicol
Set and Costume Designer, Melanie Liertz
Lighting Designer, Nicholas Higgins
Sound Designer, Marc Ee
Stage Manager, Bronte Schuftan
Costume Supervisor, Renata Beslik

The author would like to thank Ben Wood for his initially improvised 'Constant Gardener' routine at the very end of the play.

CHARACTERS

CELIA, 37

ROHAN, Celia's partner, 46

VICKI, Celia's 'friend', 39

ROLLY, Rohan's old school friend, 46

NELLI, Celia and Vicki's agent, 53

NATE, producer, 40

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

ROHAN BLACK, *in his late forties, sits thinking. He's not an overly impressive man to look at, with thinning hair and a sallow complexion, and at the moment he's as totally inert as if he's been snap frozen. Suddenly he leaps up.*

ROHAN: Celia! Celia!

CELIA, *in her middle to late thirties, appears holding her iPhone, visibly annoyed to be interrupted.*

CELIA: What?

ROHAN: Listen to this.

CELIA: I'm in the middle of something.

ROHAN: Facebook? Bloody Facebook! Ninety percent of your waking hours you're on bloody Facebook. You only got fifteen likes one day so you start counting the number of sleeping pills you have. It's sick. Social media is sick!

CELIA: Everyone needs to feel connected.

ROHAN: Do you think any of them would help if you were in *real* trouble?

CELIA: A lot of them.

ROHAN: [*sceptical*] Sure.

CELIA: I know it's hard for you to believe, because you don't have any, but friends enrich your life.

ROHAN: I've got friends.

CELIA: Like?

ROHAN: [*thinking hard*] Rolly.

CELIA: Oh, yes. Old school friend Rolly. The one you groan about every time you have to meet.

CELIA *hears an incoming message on her iPhone and*

can't help glancing at it eagerly and starting to reply to the message.

ROHAN: Celia, please! Switch the bloody thing off and listen.

CELIA: [*reluctantly abandoning her message*] To what?

ROHAN: A killer pitch that's going to make me a fortune.

CELIA: Like all the other ones?

ROHAN: This is a game changer. Just listen.

Suddenly he transforms into pitch mode. Something emerges from nowhere that could be called charisma, but isn't quite.

Nate!

CELIA: Nate? Nate Macklin?

ROHAN: Cut and Thrust Productions. A slate of four series and three movies, all financed.

CELIA: I know who Nate Macklin is. He's agreed to listen to your pitch?

ROHAN: Why so surprised?

CELIA: He's the big kahuna. And he's obsessed with *new* talent.

ROHAN: I kept demanding he speak to me personally, and when he finally did, he picked up on the excitement in my voice. There's a great role in it for you.

CELIA: I've got a great role.

ROHAN: Celia, it's a soapie. And you've been in it far too long.

CELIA: Don't.

ROHAN: Don't what?

CELIA: Don't *ever* call it a soapie. It's a continuing drama series.

ROHAN: Call it what you like. Your self-respect is being slowly eroded because you know your talent isn't being fully utilised.

CELIA: It's utilised enough to let you enjoy a rent-free harbour-side lifestyle in the world's second most expensive city.

ROHAN: Okay, I'm not pulling my weight financially at the moment—

CELIA: At the moment?

ROHAN: Honey, this series will change everything. And turn you into the star you deserve to be. Listen.

CELIA *hears her iPhone ding again and again, and instinctively looks at the text message.*

Turn that bloody thing off!

He goes into pitch mode again.

Nate, mate—

CELIA: Nate, mate?

ROHAN: It's an invitation to bond.

CELIA: It's pathetic.

ROHAN: Pathetic?

CELIA: It'd be fine if this was 1945. Now it just sounds ... bogan. And he's not your mate.

ROHAN: None of them are. They're sharks circling the creative pond, feeding off other people's talent. But they get funding.

CELIA: Why not just say, 'Nate, I've got a great idea which I'd like to share with you'.

ROHAN: That's too California.

CELIA: Okay, don't listen. Do it your way. But please, not 'mate'.

ROHAN: [*irritated*] Okay. Okay.

He leaps into pitch mode again.

Nate, my friend. This is a series concept that's so good it doesn't need the hard sell. In just one log line I'm going to hook you, and if it doesn't I'll join a Tibetan monastery and chant for the rest of my life.

CELIA: [*shaking her head firmly*] Sorry. Cringeworthy.

ROHAN: How about, 'If that one log line doesn't hook you, I'll go to Sardinia and pick olives'?

CELIA: Go with monks and monastery.

Her iPhone beeps. She eagerly looks at the screen and goes next door.

ROHAN: You haven't heard the log line!

CELIA: [*offstage*] It's Vicki. I've got to get back to her. She's having a rough time.

ROHAN: When isn't she?

ODD MAN OUT



Left to right: Rachel Gordon, Lisa Gormley and Justin Stewart Cotta in the Ensemble Theatre production of ODD MAN OUT in 2017. (Photo: Clare Hawley)

Odd Man Out was first produced by the Ensemble Theatre, Sydney, on 19 January 2017, with the following cast:

EMILY / POLLY	Gael Ballantyne
RYAN	Justin Stewart Cotta
CARLA	Rachel Gordon
ALICE	Lisa Gormley
EVAN / NEVILLE	Matt Minto
GARY / POLICE OFFICER	Bill Young

Designer, Anna Gardiner
Lighting Designer, Christopher Page
Sound Designer, Alistair Wallace
Stage Manager, Dani Ironside
Wardrobe Co-ordinator, Renata Beslik

CHARACTERS

ALICE, 38

RYAN, Alice's boyfriend/husband, 40

CARLA, Alice's friend, 38

GARY, Alice's father, 66

EMILY, Ryan's mother, 63

POLLY, Alice's mother, 64

EVAN, Carla's partner, 40

POLICE OFFICER, 55

Suggested doubling:

GARY / POLICE OFFICER

EMILY / POLLY

ACT ONE

ALICE, *in her mid thirties, stands centre stage.*

ALICE: [*to the audience*] I don't like trouble. I don't ask for trouble. But sometimes it just happens, as they say, out of a clear blue sky. Actually it was overcast and cold. Which is why I took the bus to work instead of cycling into the city. Yes, I'm a bit of health freak. But not fanatical enough to cycle through cold wind and sleeting rain. It was early so the bus wasn't full. I looked across and there was this guy. A little oddly dressed. Jeans, sneakers, scruffy jacket. One of those ones they make out of recycled plastic bottles that are incredibly warm that you buy from The North Face. But, hey, nice-looking. Intelligent-looking. As it turns out I wasn't wrong about that. Guys who are good-looking and intelligent, being fairly uncommon, tend to elicit a reflex smile from me. I wasn't sending any kind of signal, I assure you. But he saw the smile and his face sort of exploded into a look that was somewhere between ecstasy and amazement and in a few milliseconds he was suddenly opposite me, staring into my eyes.

RYAN, *in his late thirties, gets up from his seat across the aisle and moves rapidly towards her with a slightly odd and awkward gait that characterises his movements. Especially his rapid movements. He sits down opposite ALICE. She gets a little uncomfortable under his intense gaze.*

[*To RYAN*] Hello.

RYAN *continues to stare at her. But he only retains eye contact for short periods of time. The impression is of someone inherently shy, which ALICE finds quite appealing.*

Hello?

RYAN: Life is not the number of breaths you take, it's the moments that take your breath away.

ALICE: Excuse me?

RYAN: It seems right now that all I've ever done in my life is making my way here to you.

ALICE: Aren't we rushing this just a tiny bit?

RYAN: When you realise you want to spend the rest of your life with somebody, you want the rest of your life to start as soon as possible.

ALICE: I'm sorry, but this is all going a little bit fast for me.

RYAN: You're a beautiful woman. You deserve a beautiful life.

ALICE: Could I possibly ask your name?

RYAN: Ryan. Ryan Stillnacht. My grandfather was German.

ALICE: And what do you do, Ryan? Apart from launching killer lines at vulnerable women.

RYAN: What's your name?

ALICE: Alice.

RYAN: I knew.

ALICE: You knew my name was Alice?

RYAN: I knew it was either Alice, Naomi, Olivia or Rebecca.

ALICE: How is that?

RYAN: They're my favourite names and I just knew you were one of them.

ALICE: Ryan, sorry, but this is a little bit weird.

RYAN: Love is passion, obsession, someone you can't live without.

If you don't start with that, what are you going to end up with?

ALICE: That's from a movie.

RYAN: They all were. They're good lines though, aren't they?

ALICE: Well yes, but—

RYAN: I could have said something totally pathetic like, 'The other angels must be missing you since you fell from heaven'. How would you have reacted to that?

ALICE: Badly.

RYAN: Hey, I stole the lines but I wouldn't have bothered using them unless I thought you were incredibly beautiful.

ALICE: I am not incredibly beautiful.

RYAN: When you smile you are. Believe me. I just saw it happen and hey, I don't behave like this to every woman who smiles at me, I can assure you. Can we have dinner tonight?

ALICE: Ryan, I have a partner.

RYAN: Well, that's a pity. Because I think you're amazing.

ALICE: I don't have a partner. I did but it ended badly.

RYAN: Do you want to talk about it?

ALICE: No. It's still a bit raw.

RYAN: Oh, okay. What kind of food do you like?

ALICE: Ryan, I may not have a partner but that doesn't mean I'm about to go out to dinner with you.

RYAN: I'm not one of those guys who insists on going Dutch. I'll pay. In fact I'll insist on it. Money isn't a problem for me.

ALICE: What do you do, Ryan?

RYAN: I work for a bank.

ALICE: What? Sort of a teller?

RYAN: No, no. I'm a physicist.

ALICE: Ah.

RYAN: Do you know the most significant year in human history?

ALICE: No, but that doesn't matter because I've got a feeling you're going to tell me.

RYAN: 1984. Charles Bennett and Gilles Brassard discovered how to use quantum mechanics to send a code that no-one could ever break. BB84. That's what it's called. Banks need utter secrecy. I show them how to do it and they pay me lots of money. Which is why I can take you to the very best restaurant in the city. What do you do, Alice?

ALICE: I'm a physiotherapist. I work with stroke victims. Trying to get them functioning again.

RYAN: You must be very patient.

ALICE: I guess I have to be.

RYAN: I could never be that patient.

ALICE: It can be very rewarding.

RYAN: Really? Sounds pretty tedious to me.