

DAVID WILLIAMSON's first full-length play, *The Coming of Stork*, premiered at the La Mama Theatre, Carlton, in 1970 and later became the film *Stork*, directed by Tim Burstall.

The Removalists and *Don's Party* followed in 1971, then *Jugglers Three* (1972), *What If You Died Tomorrow?* (1973), *The Department* (1975), *A Handful of Friends* (1976), *The Club* (1977) and *Travelling North* (1979). In 1972 *The Removalists* won the Australian Writers' Guild AWGIE Award for best stage play and the best script in any medium and the British production saw Williamson nominated most promising playwright by the London *Evening Standard*.

The 1980s saw his success continue with *Celluloid Heroes* (1980), *The Perfectionist* (1982), *Sons of Cain* (1985), *Emerald City* (1987) and *Top Silk* (1989); whilst the 1990s produced *Siren* (1990), *Money and Friends* (1991), *Brilliant Lies* (1993), *Sanctuary* (1994), *Dead White Males* (1995), *Heretic* (1996), *Third World Blues* (an adaptation of *Jugglers Three*) and *After the Ball* (both in 1997), and *Corporate Vibes* and *Face to Face* (both in 1999). *The Great Man* (2000), *Up for Grabs*, *A Conversation*, *Charitable Intent* (all in 2001), *Soulmates* (2002), *Birthrights* (2003), *Amigos* and *Flatfoot* (both 2004) have since followed.

Williamson is widely recognised as Australia's most successful playwright and over the last thirty years his plays have been performed throughout Australia and produced in Britain, United States, Canada and many European countries. A number of his stage works have been adapted for the screen, including *The Removalists*, *Don's Party*, *The Club*, *Travelling North*, *Emerald City*, *Sanctuary* and *Brilliant Lies*.

David Williamson has won the Australian Film Institute film script award for *Petersen* (1974), *Don's Party* (1976), *Gallipoli* (1981) and *Travelling North* (1987) and has won eleven Australian Writers' Guild AWGIE Awards. He lives on Queensland's Sunshine Coast with his writer wife, Kristin Williamson.



DON'S PARTY

David Williamson



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Don's Party was first performed by the Australian Performing Group at the Pram Factory, Melbourne on 11 August 1971 with the following cast:

DON	Wilfred Last
KATH	Evelyn Krape
SIMON	Tony Taylor
JODY	Yvonne Marini
MAL	Bruce Knappett
JENNY	Lindy Davies
MACK	John Smythe
EVAN	Graham Hartley
KERRY	Ros Horin
COOLEY	Rod Moore
SUSAN	Kerry Dwyer

Director, Graeme Blundell
Designer, Craig Haire

A revised version of the play was presented at the Jane Street Theatre, Sydney, opening on 29 June 1972 with the following cast:

DON	Martin Harris
KATH	Pat Bishop
SIMON	Mervyn Drake
JODY	Wendy Blacklock
MAL	Allan Lander
JENNY	Judith Fisher
MACK	James H. Bowles
EVAN	Ken Shorter
KERRY	Darlene Johnson
COOLEY	John Ewart
SUSAN	Barbara Stephens

Set design by Lindsay Megarrity
Directed by John Clark



CHARACTERS

DON
KATH
SIMON
JODY
MAL
JENNY
MACK
EVAN
KERRY
COOLEY
SUSAN

All characters are in their early to middle thirties, with the exception of SUSAN, who is in her early twenties.

SETTING

The action of the play takes place in the home of DON and KATH HENDERSON in the Melbourne suburb of Lower Plenty. The set is constructed in such a way that the living room and the kitchen of the house can be viewed simultaneously. The living room is spacious, with trendy decor. The walls are hung with abstract prints and large, ceiling-high bookshelves are stacked with books.

The date is 25 October 1969: election night.

ACT ONE

8.40 p.m. Guests are expected any minute. DON is in the kitchen. He plugs in the television set and begins to adjust it. The audience can't see the screen but can hear the soundtrack. KATH is tidying the living room.

KATH: [*edgy, preoccupied*] Put the peanuts and crisps around, will you?

DON: I'm tuning in the television.

KATH: People will be arriving any minute.

DON: I'm tuning in the television.

KATH: Just switch it on and leave it.

DON: I'm adjusting the vertical hold.

KATH: [*barely controlled*] Just switch it on and leave it.

DON: The picture's rolling.

KATH: Well, it wasn't last night.

DON: Well, it is now.

KATH: Adjust the vertical hold.

DON: That's what I'm doing.

KATH: Could you come back to it? The guests'll be arriving any minute now.

DON: So what!

KATH: They might like something to eat!

DON: I'm adjusting the contrast.

[DON *turns up the sound on the TV. We hear this announcement:*]

TV: Polling closed tonight at eight o'clock and the counting of votes for the 1969 Federal Election has begun. We are now in the Central Tally Room in Canberra and as soon as the results come to hand we will bring them to you. Our panel of experts is standing by ready

to interpret voting trends for you, and will be conducting interviews with party representatives throughout the evening. Stay tuned to this channel for a complete coverage of the 1969 Federal Election.

[KATH glares at him, puts down whatever she's doing, picks up the trays of chips and Twisties, and starts distributing them herself in the living room, banging the trays down unnecessarily hard to give vent to her annoyance. DON stands back from the television set, satisfied that it's working.]

DON: There's no need for you to do it.

KATH: I've done it.

DON: I would've done it.

KATH: [*sharply*] Try and act like a host tonight, will you?

DON: [*complaining*] Cut it out.

[DON turns down the sound.]

KATH: It wouldn't take much effort.

DON: Since when have I been rude to guests?

KATH: You usually point them in the direction of the fridge and that's it.

DON: That's all my friends need.

KATH: I can't see the point of coming to a party with the sole intention of drinking yourself into a stupor.

DON: That's not the intention.

KATH: Hmm.

DON: There's a bloody important event on the television tonight. Or perhaps you haven't heard.

KATH: It's just an excuse for a booze-up.

DON: [*flaring*] A booze-up? That's why I've been out there all day handing out how-to-vote cards? Just an excuse for a booze-up?

KATH: I've never noticed Cooley showing much interest in politics.

[Pause.]

DON: [*indignant*] Cooley's left of centre!

KATH: The only thing Cooley's left are a trail of used up women and more empty beer bottles than anyone else in Australia.

[Pause.]

Who's he bringing tonight?

DON: [*surly*] I don't know.
KATH: Is he bringing that air hostess?
DON: No.
KATH: What happened to her? She was nice.
DON: I don't know.
KATH: Probably got too serious.
DON: Probably.
KATH: Who's he bringing then?
DON: I told you. I don't know. He just flew down from Sydney yesterday.
KATH: Could you tell him to leave his gymnastics until he gets back to the motel? He woke Richard last time.
DON: He didn't wake him. The air hostess did.
KATH: It's frightening for a young child.
DON: It was probably frightening for the air hostess. Would you like a drink?
KATH: I can't. I'm on tablets.
DON: They were supposed to make you happy. Bloody shithouse tablets.
KATH: [*sharply*] Lay off. And try and show me a little bit of affection tonight, will you?
DON: I show you a lot of affection. You just don't notice it.
KATH: Neither does anyone else.
[*Pause.*]
If you want the honest truth, I think that your friends are the biggest bunch of pricks I've ever met.
DON: Yeah... well, it would be a pretty sparse party if we threw one for your friends. Unless we invited the pottery class.
KATH: Why did you marry me if I'm so bloody mundane?
DON: I didn't want my personality swamped.
[*DON moves to the record player and puts on the Beatles' "When I'm Sixty-Four".*]
KATH: As well as filling up the odd beer glass, try and make sure everyone mixes.
DON: Everyone knows each other.
KATH: Jody and Simon don't know anyone.

DON: That was a brilliant move, that was.

KATH: What?

DON: Inviting Simon and Jody.

KATH: Wasn't I supposed to invite any of my friends?

DON: Inviting those two to an election night party with my friends is equivalent to inviting Cooley to a Women's Liberation meeting.

[singing]

Will you still need me,
Will you still feed me...

[The front doorbell rings. KATH goes to move.]

When I'm sixty-four...

[He goes to the door and ushers in SIMON and JODY.]

[jovially] Simon. Jody. Long time no see. Can I take your coat?

[DON takes JODY's coat. SIMON is immaculately dressed and good looking, but his hair is fluffed up and set so perfectly that the effect is a little bit too effete and prissy. He has a cultivated confidence and bonhomie that covers a certain unease. This becomes more evident as the play progresses. JODY is attractive and socially confident. She has a conservative upper middle class background, which sometimes emerges as a trace of arrogance. She is very fashionably dressed.]

As a matter of fact we were just talking about you.

SIMON: Nothing bad, I hope?

DON: On the contrary. We were saying that you'd both add a touch of refinement to the gathering. There'll be some pretty grotty types here.

JODY: I hope I haven't overdressed.

DON: No. You'll be right. Come and I'll get you a drink.

SIMON: *[handing DON two bottles of beer in the normal brown paper bag]* Whack these in the Westinghouse.

DON: Take them in yourself mate. I've just had a domestic with the wife.

[SIMON holds up a finger, the gesture suggesting that he knows the situation perfectly. He goes into the kitchen and ad libs a quiet conversation with KATH as he puts the beer into the fridge. The focus remains on DON and JODY.]

JODY: I have overdressed, haven't I?

DON: [*grinning*] For Christ sake, woman, no one's going to give a stuff how you're dressed.

JODY: I've got plenty of casual gear in the wardrobe but I just didn't think. What sort of people are coming?

DON: Mainly friends of mine.

JODY: Will they all be Labor?

DON: They'll all be left wing.

JODY: I should have worn my casual gear.

DON: [*good humoured*] For Christ sake. If you say another word about your gear I'll do something drastic.

JODY: It's important for a woman to feel she's dressed appropriately.

DON: Right!

[DON *walks offstage toward the area of the bedroom.* SIMON *walks back into the living room.*]

SIMON: Where's Don going?

JODY: I don't know.

SIMON: Did he get you a drink?

JODY: No.

SIMON: No. He didn't get mine either.

KATH: [*from the kitchen*] Did Don get you a drink?

SIMON: No. I don't think he did.

KATH: Don. Would you pour your guests a drink?

JODY: He's not here.

KATH: [*muttering*] Where is he?

JODY: He went off towards the bedrooms.

KATH: [*annoyed*] I'll go and get him.

SIMON: I'll pour the drinks. It's no bother.

KATH: [*resuming her food preparation*] Would you, Simon? Thanks very much.

[SIMON *walks back into the kitchen.*]

You know what Don's like.

SIMON: [*pouring drinks*] Sometimes I think it's better to be a casual host.

KATH: Better for the host but not for the guests.
SIMON: I'm always so careful to be a good host that I miss all the action.
KATH: I wish Don would take a few lessons from you.
SIMON: Were you at our last barbecue?
KATH: No. I don't think we were.
SIMON: [*thinking*] I think we asked you... didn't we?
KATH: I think you did. I think Don had something on.
SIMON: That's right. He did. Pity you couldn't come. Vermouth and dry, Jody?
JODY: Please.
SIMON: Will you have something to drink, Kath?
KATH: No thanks. Not just yet.
SIMON: [*fidgeting*] Er... Kath...
KATH: Are you having trouble finding something?
SIMON: The dry...
KATH: [*blackly*] I told him to get dry.
SIMON: Look it doesn't matter. [*Raising his voice.*] Would you prefer a gin and bitter lemon, Jody?
JODY: Isn't there any vermouth and dry?
KATH: [*calling out sharply*] Don!
DON: [*offstage*] What?
KATH: Did you get the dry ginger?
JODY: Look it doesn't matter. Gin will be fine.
DON: [*offstage*] There's dry ginger there!
KATH: Where?
DON: [*off*] In the fridge.
SIMON: [*finding the dry ginger bottle*] Ah yes, here it is. A little bit of vermouth and a lot of dry for Jody.
 [*He pours a vermouth and dry and gives it to JODY.*]
Cold enough?
JODY: It's fine. How are you, Kath?
KATH: Fine. How are Sophie and Dalton?
JODY: Fine. How's Richard?