

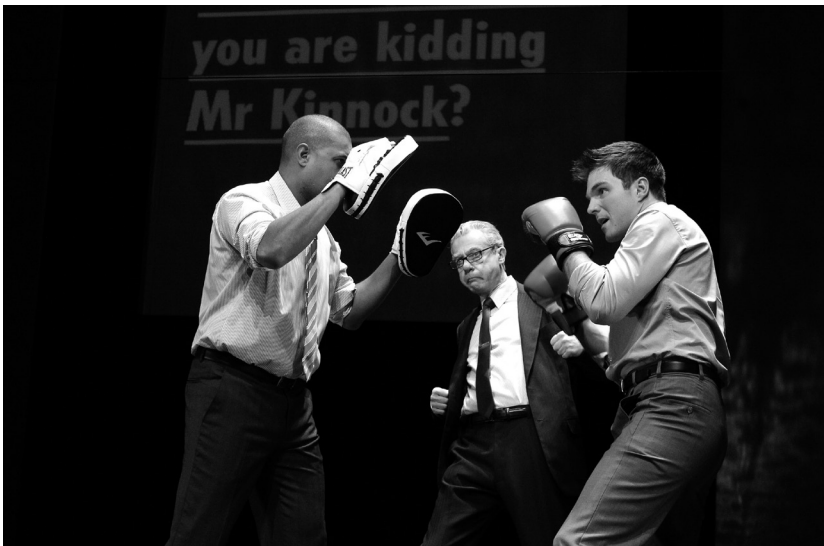
DAVID WILLIAMSON is Australia's best known and most widely performed playwright. His first full-length play *The Coming of Stork* was presented at La Mama Theatre in 1970 and was followed by *The Removalists* and *Don's Party* in 1971. His prodigious output since then includes *The Department*, *The 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*. His latest *When Dad Married Fury* had its world premiere in Perth at the Metcalfe Playhouse and *At Any Cost?* co-written with Mohamed Khadra opened at the Ensemble Theatre in July.

His plays have been translated into many languages and performed internationally, including major productions in London, L.A., 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 12 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.



Bert LaBonté as Mackenzie, Sean O'Shea as Rupert and Guy Edmonds as Young Rupert in the 2013 Melbourne Theatre Company production at Arts Centre Melbourne, Playhouse. (Photo: Jeff Busby)

RUPERT

David Williamson



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enquiries@currency.com.au
www.currency.com.au

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Front cover shows Sean O'Shea as Rupert in the 2013 Melbourne Theatre Company production at Arts Centre Melbourne, Playhouse (photo Jeff Busby).



Rupert was assisted by the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.

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HaiHa Le as Rebekah Brooks, Guy Edmonds as Young Rupert and Simon Gleeson as James Murdoch in the 2013 Melbourne Theatre Company production at Arts Centre Melbourne, Playhouse. (Photo: Jeff Busby)

Rupert was first produced by the Melbourne Theatre Company, at Arts Centre Melbourne, Playhouse, on 24 August 2013, with the following cast:

RUPERT	Sean O'Shea
YOUNG RUPERT	Guy Edmonds
YOUNG ELISABETH, DAME ELISABETH, MARGARET THATCHER	Marg Downey
ANNA TORV, BANKER 1, PAT, JOURNALIST, REPORTER, BBC INTERVIEWER	Daniela Farinacci
JAMES MURDOCH, ROHAN RIVETT, KERRY PACKER, SIR WILLIAM CARR, RUPERT HENDERSON, DAVID FROST, GOUGH WHITLAM, DOLLY SCHIFF, HARRY EVANS, BARRY DILLER, BOB HAWKE, PAUL KEATING, TONY BLAIR, LOANS OFFICER	Simon Gleeson
ASA BRIGGS, FRANK PACKER, STAFFORD SOMERFIELD, HUGH CUDLIPP, SIR JOHN KERR, CLAY FELKER, RONALD REAGAN, KELVIN MACKENZIE, MARVIN DAVIS, JOURNALIST, COMMENTATOR, ROGER AILES	Bert LaBonté
PRUDENCE MURDOCH, WENDI DENG, BANKER 2, JOHN ADDEY, ANN LANE, REBEKAH BROOKS, TINA BROWN	HaiHa Le
LACHLAN MURDOCH, TED PICKERING, DOUGLAS BRASS, SIR THOMAS PLAYFORD, LORD CATTO, STAFFER, LARRY LAMB, STEVE DUNLEAVY, RICHARD SARAZEN, NICK CLEGG, WOODROW WYATT, BBC INTERVIEWER, TOM WATSON, JOURNALIST, CLYDE PACKER	Scott Sheridan

Director, Lee Lewis

Set, Costume and AV Designer, Stephen Curtis

Lighting Designer, Niklas Pajanti

Composer, Kelly Ryall

Dramaturg, Chris Mead

Assistant Director, Clare Watson

Stager Manager, Sally Hitchcock

Assistant Stage Manager, Vivienne Poznanski

CHARACTERS

RUPERT MURDOCH / ELISABETH MURDOCH (JUNIOR) / DAME
ELISABETH MURDOCH / LACHLAN MURDOCH / JAMES MURDOCH /
PRUDENCE MURDOCH / ANNA TORV / WENDI DENG / ASA BRIGGS /
TED PICKERING / ROHAN RIVETT / BANKER 1 / BANKER 2 / RUPERT
HENDERSON / FRANK PACKER / DOUBLAS BRASS / CLYDE PACKER
/ KERRY PACKER / PAT BOOKER / LORD CATTO / SIR WILLIAM CARR
/ STAFFER / STAFFORD SOMERFIELD / JOHN ADDEY / DAVID FROST /
HUGH CUDLIPP / LARRY LAMB / GOUGH WHITLAM / SIR JOHN KERR
/ CLAY FELKER / DOLLY SCHIFF / STEVE DUNLEAVY / MARGARET
THATCHER / RONALD REAGAN / HARRY EVANS / TINA BROWN /
WOODROW WYATT / KELVIN MACKENZIE / BBC INTERVIEWER /
RICHARD SARAZEN / MARVIN DAVIS / BARRY DILLER / BOB HAWKE
/ PAUL KEATING / ANN LANE / LOAN OFFICER / ROGER AILES / TONY
BLAIR / COMMENTATORS #1 – #4 / REBEKAH BROOKS / NICK CLEGG /
JOURNALIST / TOM WATSON

NOTE

The play is envisaged as a constant swirl of action as befits the life of a hyperactive man like Rupert. No sooner has one interaction finished than the next should start, all the actors possibly being onstage at all times to facilitate the flow of events. The cast is five men and three women who double rapidly to become a multiplicity of characters.

ACT ONE

Pre-play recorded announcement over PA system.

ANNOUNCER: Attention please. Mr. Rupert Murdoch welcomes you to tonight's performance in which he will recount his life story. He would like you to know that any opinions he expresses tonight are his own, but believes, as do all his editors worldwide, that any intelligent person looking at the facts can come to no other conclusions. He warns that there could be frequent coarse language and nudity, as there are many rapid costume changes which can make the cast short tempered. He also warns that any secret iPhone recordings of the confidences he shares with you will be erased by powerful magnets as you leave the theatre. Finally could you all please switch off your cell phones as he is expecting several important calls himself and the bandwidth in this theatre is limited. He invites you to enjoy his show and will take note of those who don't.

Present-day RUPERT walks down the aisle towards the stage. He's got his iPhone on and is tweeting.

RUPERT: [*to himself as he tweets*] Full house again for my show. Hash tag. How good am I?

He looks up at audience. The house lights are still on so he can see them clearly.

Four hundred and fifty thousand followers. One lady tweeted me and said if she hasn't heard from me in three days she can't sleep at night. Here's a few I wrote that got really big responses. [*He reads*] 'Conviction politicians hard to find anywhere. Australia's Tony Abbott a rare exception.' Divided the house with that one. [*Scrolls back some more*] 'How did fat lady who fell thru street get to 400lbs? Welfare stamps etc.? Then leave us all with 20yrs immense health bills.' Huge support for that one too. Ah, here's one from last week. [*He reads*] Great visit with the editors in Melbourne today. Terrific professionals. [*He looks into the audience*] Every

one of them here again tonight. Loyalty. That's what I value more than anything. Loyalty.

He looks around the audience, takes a remote control device from his pocket and turns down the house lights.

Thank you all for coming. It's very heartening to me to see how many people want to hear the real story of my life and not the lies peddled by taxpayer funded left wing academics and mindless cafe latte sipping, same sex marriage, acai berry eating, climate alarmist, inner city Greens. The story of how a young man, bequeathed one failing, small circulation afternoon newspaper in far away Adelaide, became the most powerful voice in the English speaking world and used this power for the good of his fellow human beings. [*He looks at a dissenter in the audience*] I can see you disagree sir. An *Age* reader no doubt. The Collins Street politburo. Tough. This is my story told my way. I know all some of you are here for is all the personal stuff. Broken marriages, family feuds, Wendi Deng, all that stuff. But the impact my career has had on the world is far more important than why my marriage with Wendi went belly up. Right?

He looks into the audience.

[*sighs*] There's a lady there shaking her head. Madame, there will be family stuff, but I am unashamedly the main thrust of the story. *Rupert*, that's what the play's called. Not Wendi or Anna. Rupert. [*She's still not happy*] Okay, okay, family is part of the story. Madame you will get family, but if you've paid your ticket to find out if Wendi and Tony Blair were an item then you've wasted your money. However in the spirit of compromise for which I am not noted, I'll introduce the family right now so you'll recognise them later. Firstly Prudence.

He beckons her onstage. She enters.

RUPERT: My first marriage to Pat didn't work out but the bonus was a beautiful daughter Prudence who stays well out of the dynasty thing and probably understands me better than anyone.

PRUDENCE: That's all very well Dad, but don't let's pretend there haven't been times when you've hurt me deeply.

RUPERT: Darling this is just a brief introduction. We can get to this later.

PRUDENCE: I'll never forget that press conference where you talked about your THREE children. I felt as if I'd just been banished from your life.

RUPERT: I apologised. Over and over. Sent flowers. Hey, let's not forget what a bloody handful you were when you were young.

PRUDENCE: Anna tried her best but I never really felt welcome.

ANNA strides onto the stage, not happy. RUPERT groans. The last thing he wants is a family spat right now.

ANNA: I was pregnant with Lachlan, I was in London which I hated and suddenly this nine year old—who to put it mildly was surly—arrived.

RUPERT: Guys. I'm trying to tell my story here.

They ignore him.

ANNA: [*to PRUDENCE*] There was no need to call yourself the 'forgotten child' in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on the day of Lachlan's wedding.

PRUDENCE: Well that's how I always felt. Your three kids looked like members of the master race. I was just a dumpy little—

RUPERT: You were never dumpy. And I really appreciated the way you accepted Wendi, which is more than some others did.

ANNA: What did you expect? You announce one day, without any warning, that our marriage of thirty one years is over and not long after you're waltzing around with a Chinese woman barely out of her teens. The children still think you're crazy.

LACHLAN walks onstage.

LACHLAN: Mum, that's not true. I was—

ANNA: Lachlan, you were shocked, outraged.

LACHLAN: I was taken aback, but what happens in your emotional life—you've got to cut a bit of slack.

ANNA: [*to RUPERT*] She takes you for a tour of the Shanghai markets, buys you a tie for four dollars and suddenly you're in love. And that's the first and last time she ever saved you any money.

WENDI strides angrily onstage.

WENDI: Not this again.

ANNA: Forty four million for a New York apartment. A yacht bigger than the Queen Mary.

WENDI: He's one of the richest men in the world! Why shouldn't he enjoy what he's worked his butt off for!

RUPERT: Anna, it's all worked out. Six months after I married Wendi you were married again yourself.

ELISABETH *strides onstage*.

ELISABETH: Too easy Dad. There were years before that when Mum was a psychological wreck.

ANNA: And it still isn't easy. I still have to watch as you continually audition my children to see who's going to take your place. What do you think that does to their psyches?

LACHLAN: Mum, it hasn't been that bad.

ELISABETH: It's fine for you. You opted out of it.

ANNA: Opted out? Elisabeth, what choice did he have. His father sent him to New York then sat back and watched him get chewed up by those two consummate political operators Chernin and Ailes.

LACHLAN: Mum it's fine now.

ANNA: It wasn't fine at the time.

JAMES *strides onstage*.

JAMES: [*to* LACHLAN] You're not still whining about that. You're back in Australia having a ball. I've had it far worse than you.

ELISABETH: James, if you had've had the gumption to find out what was really going on at *News of the World* we wouldn't have had this whole mess.

WENDI: [*to* ELISABETH] We know what game you're playing. Getting up at the McTaggart lecture and telling the world that News Limited had to clean up its act.

ELISABETH: I said things in the News Corp. culture needed to be addressed.

WENDI: [*to* ELISABETH] Your father knew what you were doing.

RUPERT: Wendi.

WENDI: Positioning yourself as the new broom. The saviour and next head of News Limited. [*To* ELISABETH] Your father wasn't impressed.

ELISABETH: I have no interest in heading up News Limited.

JAMES: Really?

WENDI: I wouldn't be assuming it's going to be one of you two if I were you. Your father has two other daughters Grace and Chloe.

JAMES: The marriage is over and you're still harbouring that sort of ambition?

WENDI: Grace and Chloe are still his children!

This starts an overlapping uproar. RUPERT presses a remote control device he has been holding and freezes the tableau just as they are about to tear themselves to death. He extricates himself from them then turns to the audience.

RUPERT: [*picking out the photo album woman in the audience*] Okay? That's sort of where things are now. Now we'll see how it got to all that. [*To audience*] Some of my biographers claim that I've spent my life trying to prove to my long dead father that he was wrong to have doubts about me. Frankly that's rubbish. If there was anyone who got me moving it was my mother. I was terrified of her.

OLD RUPERT: [*indicating YOUNG RUPERT who has just come onstage*] My younger self. Okay Madam, a little more rugged and charismatic than you might remember me, but it's my show and I cast it.

His mother ELISABETH, after whom daughter ELISABETH was named, comes onstage. She is in her early forties. She approaches YOUNG RUPERT.

ELISABETH: Don't run away from me. I've got something to say to you.

RUPERT: My mother always had something to say to me. For a hundred and three years. Thank you all of you who sent messages when she died. [*Trace of a tear*] I appreciated it.

YOUNG RUPERT: Mum, I don't want to be here. I hate Oxford.

ELISABETH: Your father is ill. Too ill to travel if the truth be known, but he came all this way because he is worried sick about you.

YOUNG RUPERT: I hate it here. Okay the history, the dreaming spires, all that, but what they teach is just plain boring. There's a world out there where big things are happening. Important things. There can't be any justice in the world until the workers own the means of production.

ELISABETH: For God's sake don't let your father hear any of that red ragging nonsense. Is it true you've got a bust of Lenin on your mantelpiece?

YOUNG RUPERT: No, it's on my window sill so that people going past can see it.

ELISABETH: Your tutors say you are rude, opinionated, loud and boorish.

YOUNG RUPERT: Mum—

ELISABETH: Did you call one of your tutors a 'putrid little shit'?

YOUNG RUPERT: Mum, we might have been top of the tree in Australia but over here they hear an Australian accent and snigger. No one's ever going to sneer at me and get away with it.

ELISABETH: [*angry*] Rupert, you have failed us time and time again. We sent you to the best school in Australia and your headmaster called you a 'damn little nuisance,' and your academic record was—to call it mediocre would be flattering you. We had to use every connection we had to get you into Oxford, which anyone else would think an extraordinary privilege and you refuse to study, and behave like a lout. Your father is one of the most respected men in Australia and he's heartbroken at the way you're frittering your life away. Behave like a bloody Murdoch.

RUPERT: [*to audience*] My mother lectured. My father took a much more practical step. He paid one of the brightest young tutors, Asa Briggs, to cram me with the knowledge he knew I'd never get around to reading.

ASA BRIGGS, *a young oxford professor, approaches RUPERT. He's a charismatic young professor with an oxford accent.*

YOUNG RUPERT: Okay Asa. What do I need to know?

ASA: To pass your exams? Easy. About life? Difficult.

YOUNG RUPERT: Let's try difficult.

ASA: You're a Marxist.

YOUNG RUPERT: More or less. You're not?

ASA: No.

YOUNG RUPERT: Why?

ASA: Because Marx thought that under communism Humankind would become peaceful and cooperative.

YOUNG RUPERT: A noble aim.

ASA: An impossible aim. The forces that have shaped history are man's greed and fear and those forces are always going to be with us.

YOUNG RUPERT: So in the future nothing changes?