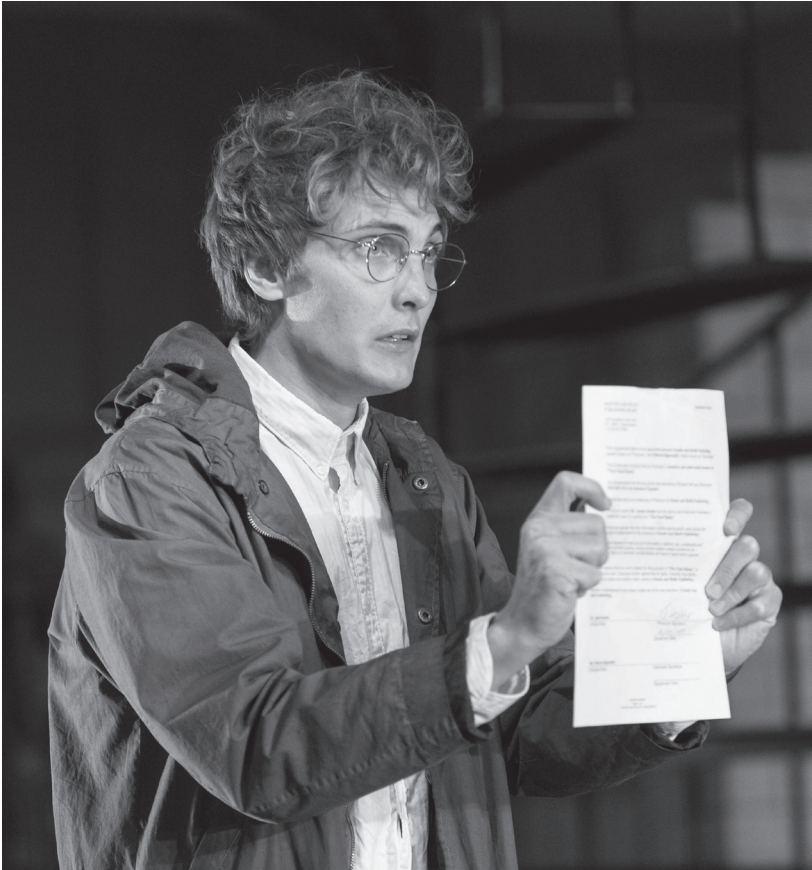




JOANNA MURRAY-SMITH's plays have been produced in many languages, all over the world, including on the West End, Broadway and at the Royal National Theatre. Her plays include *Pennsylvania Avenue*, *Fury*, *Songs for Nobodies*, *Day One—A Hotel—Evening*, *The Gift*, *Rockabye*, *The Female of the Species*, *Ninety*, *Bombshells*, *Rapture*, *Nightfall*, *Redemption*, *Flame*, *Love Child*, *Atlanta*, *Honour* and *Angry Young Penguins*. She has also adapted *Hedda Gabler*, as well as Ingmar Bergman's *Scenes from a Marriage*, for Sir Trevor Nunn (London). Her three novels (published by Penguin/Viking) are *Truce*, *Judgement Rock* and *Sunnyside*. Her opera libretti include *Love in the Age of Therapy* and *The Divorce*. Joanna has also written many screenplays.



Eamon Farren in Sydney Theatre Company's 2014 production of SWITZERLAND. (Photo: Brett Boardman ©)

Switzerland

Joanna Murray-Smith



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For Nita Murray-Smith

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Joanna Murray-Smith



Sarah Peirse and Eamon Farren in Sydney Theatre Company's 2014 production of SWITZERLAND. (Photo: Brett Boardman ©)

The co-world premiere of *Switzerland* was first presented, by special arrangement with the Geffen Playhouse, by Sydney Theatre Company at the Drama Theatre, Sydney Opera House on 3 November 2014, with the following cast:

PATRICIA HIGSMITH

Sarah Peirse

EDWARD/TOM

Eamon Farren

Director, Sarah Goodes

Assistant Director, Scarlet McGlynn

Production Designer, Michael Scott-Mitchell

Lighting Designer, Nick Schlieper

Composer & Sound Designer, Steve Francis

Voice and Text Coach, Charmian Gradwell

Wardrobe and Wigs, David Jennings

Production Manager, Terri Richards

Stage Manager, Karen Faure

Assistant Stage Manager, Vanessa Martin

Switzerland was commissioned and presented as a co-world premiere by the Geffen Playhouse at the Audrey Skirball Kenis Theater, Los Angeles, California, on 6 March 2015, with the following cast:

PATRICIA HIGSMITH

Laura Linney

EDWARD/TOM

Seth Numrich

Director, Mark Brokaw

Scenic Designer, Anthony T. Fanning

Costume Designer, Ellen McCartney

Lighting Designer, Lap Chi Chu

Composer & Sound Designer, John Ballinger

Stage Manager, Cate Cundiff

CHARACTERS

PATRICIA HIGHSMITH, an older woman, distinct vestiges of beauty
EDWARD, twenties, handsome, sexually ambiguous

SETTING

It's 1995. We are in the spacious study of Patricia Highsmith, in her minimalist modern house in Tegna, Switzerland. By contrast to the bunker-like architecture, the study is a brilliant archive of a life. Books, pictures, rugs and artifacts—all somehow unique or beautiful—fill the space, including a collection of antique weapons, both knives and guns. Every object in the room has been 'placed' there by her, so that the overall effect is curatorial rather than cluttered. Her desk is furnished with a 1956 Olympia Deluxe typewriter, papers, an ashtray, a packet of Camel cigarettes—she smokes on and off throughout the play—a half empty bottle of Scotch and a glass. The window may or may not reveal a classic picture postcard vista of Switzerland.

ACT ONE

Lights up. 1994. Early fall. Early morning.

PATRICIA HIGHSMITH *is sitting at her desk. She is wearing men's trousers, a boy's shirt and loafers. She is older now, but there are vestiges of her once great beauty, and she has an innate gender-neutral style. As she types, her bottom lip spills out exaggeratedly.* EDWARD, *an ordinarily handsome young man of around twenty-five—neatly if inexpensively dressed, is standing. A backpack and a small suitcase sit beside him on the floor. He has a copy of Vanity Fair under his arm, with Nicole Kidman on the cover. He is nervous.*

PATRICIA: [*without turning to look at him, still typing*] You're late.

EDWARD: Oh.

PATRICIA: I know that because this is Switzerland.

Beat. She turns around to take him in.

EDWARD: The train was um... late leaving Paris.

PATRICIA: Is that my business?

EDWARD: I tried to call from the Gare du Nord—

PATRICIA: I don't answer the phone.

EDWARD: I did email to say—

PATRICIA: I don't do email.

EDWARD: No, I get that—

PATRICIA: Something that easy makes you sloppy. And if you're impulsive, it's downright dangerous.

EDWARD: I guess that's true!

PATRICIA: No-one realises that the whole point of an envelope and a stamp is to act as a buffer between *thought* and *deed*.

EDWARD: I never thought of that before.

PATRICIA: I can sound very pleasant, benevolent even, in a letter, but in an email, my personal generosity doesn't come through.

EDWARD: Really?

PATRICIA: I emailed my German publisher and he completely misread my tone.

EDWARD: What did you write?

PATRICIA: I said, '*What the hell makes you think I'm going to have the goddamned wool pulled over my eyes by a bunch of Nazis who'd sell their mother to make an extra deutschmark?*'... It came across as 'hostile' apparently.

EDWARD: Computers are changing everything. We're at the dawning of a new age.

PATRICIA: A new age of mediocrity. And you're the Messiah.

He steps forward nervously and offers his hand.

EDWARD: Edward Ridgeway.

She looks at it disdainfully. He retracts it.

PATRICIA: What's that?

EDWARD: Ah, um *Vanity Fair*.

PATRICIA: Who is that?

EDWARD: Nicole Kidman.

PATRICIA: Who's Nicole Kidman?

EDWARD: Um... Well, she's married to Tom Cruise.

PATRICIA: Who's Tom Cruise?

Beat as he absorbs this.

EDWARD: A movie star. And a Scientologist.

PATRICIA: Doesn't get much better! You're not a Scientologist, are you?

EDWARD: No... You don't like Scientologists?

PATRICIA: I just don't want one in my house.

EDWARD: Oh. Right. Well— [*His nerves showing*] Is it okay if I—sit? It's been a long trip!

PATRICIA: Boo hoo.

EDWARD: Miss Highsmith, I'm hoping we're going to address the situation—

PATRICIA: The 'situation'—

EDWARD: I think we both know—

PATRICIA: I guess we do know—

EDWARD: The reason I'm here—

PATRICIA: You're the troubleshooter?

EDWARD: Well, I'm confident that—

PATRICIA: Confident, eh? Think you're going to 'sort me out'?

EDWARD: Well—

PATRICIA: Once upon a time, you could *depend* upon confidence. People asked themselves: Do I have the *right* to be confident? You *earned* that degree of self-affirmation.

EDWARD: Well, I—

PATRICIA: Whereas these days, young people... they *start out* confident.

Why? I'll tell you why! Because they're deluded. They're *silly little fuckers!* And then *life* has to take the wind out of their sails.

EDWARD: I don't think I'm deluded!

PATRICIA: That's because you are deluded, genius!

EDWARD: Miss Highsmith, first of all I want to take this opportunity to say that we're sure it was just all some kind of misunderstanding.

PATRICIA: Who's 'we'?

EDWARD: Mr Hunter and the company. And I would certainly add my vote to that.

PATRICIA: You would, would you? Are you old enough to vote?

EDWARD: [*carefully*] We think Bradley Applebee probably just allowed himself to let his imagination get the better of him.

PATRICIA: Bradley Applebee didn't have any imagination.

EDWARD: Well, his mind—

PATRICIA: There was no indication Applebee had a mind, either.

EDWARD: The company wants you to know there are no hard feelings.

PATRICIA: Presumably Applebee has a couple of hard feelings.

EDWARD: Well, actually he's—

PATRICIA: What?

EDWARD: Bradley's left the company.

PATRICIA: No great loss!

EDWARD: We're hopeful he—

PATRICIA: Hopeful?

EDWARD: A full recovery.

Beat.

PATRICIA: Well, no doubt this is all some distant memory for Bradley Applebee. He's probably pushing a pen in some mediocre office as we speak.

EDWARD: Oh no—no, Bradley's not ready for work yet.

PATRICIA: 'Not ready'?

EDWARD: Well, he's—ah—in counselling. I think he took it rather hard.

PATRICIA: Well, that says it all. The company had no business sending a timid little nobody with no sense of humour.

EDWARD: He's still having flashbacks, apparently—

PATRICIA: Flashbacks!

EDWARD: About the knife.

PATRICIA: There was no knife!

EDWARD: Well, that's what we mean about his imagination taking the lead.

PATRICIA: As if I'd—

EDWARD: Exactly. That's what we said. As if Miss Highsmith would—

PATRICIA: I don't have time to threaten underlings with—

EDWARD: Of course not!

PATRICIA: I'm not in the habit of—

EDWARD: He kept saying it wouldn't have been so bad in the daylight—

PATRICIA: *Nothing's* so bad in the daylight. That's why we revel in darkness!

EDWARD: For whatever reason, he had a strong sense of waking up in the pitch black and feeling the steel blade against his throat—

PATRICIA: Crazy.

EDWARD: Crazy. Exactly.

PATRICIA: *He* woke *me* up in the dead of night. It's not my fault Hunter sent a kid with a capacity to hallucinate. I tell you what though, that kid could scream! Hitchcock would have bottled it. When Applebee gets out of therapy you could suggest he do it for a living.

EDWARD: Anyhow, Bradley aside, we still feel very strongly—

PATRICIA: 'We'?

EDWARD: Mr Hunter and the company—

PATRICIA: Want to make some money.

EDWARD: Well, yes. Okay. Companies generally like to make money. Is there anything wrong with that?

PATRICIA: They want to make money off of me.

EDWARD: They want you to make money, too.

PATRICIA: I'm touched.

EDWARD: And they wanted me to come and tell you that the reason they are overlooking—the reason I'm here, is to let you know we have every confidence.

PATRICIA: Really? You're the company spokesman? You've still got your baby teeth!

EDWARD: I'm older than I look. And not to blow my own trumpet, but I think I have the sensibility to understand you.

PATRICIA: Notice how it's only trumpet blowers who use that phrase?

EDWARD: I think I can help and everyone will be happy.

PATRICIA: From the moment you walked through that door, I could see that you brought all the slapdash of America with you. Maybe I've been in Europe too long, but the attention to detail is very beguiling here—Europeans use their *senses*. Americans like you and Americans *are* like you, think close enough is good enough. It's a kind of general national callow youth. The sensibility is just not *fine*. How is your mind? Is it a fine mind?

EDWARD: My mind?

PATRICIA: Is the taxi still here? Tell him to keep the meter on.

EDWARD: Please, Miss Highsmith—

PATRICIA: That honestly is the very best thing about Switzerland. When you call a cab, *the cab comes*.

EDWARD: Just give me a chance—just a—

PATRICIA: They should put *that* on the tourism ads. Enough with the *chocolate*, for Christ's sake. The dependability of a cab, *that's* the secret to its success.

EDWARD: I've come a long way.

PATRICIA: Yes, you have. And for absolutely no reason.

EDWARD: All the way from New York City.

PATRICIA: New York City!

EDWARD: The greatest city on earth.

PATRICIA: The greatest city on earth! Full of pseuds and Jews and Catholics! *The greatest city?* Is that where you get your air of self-congratulation? Sitting there at your little desk in a publishing house that thinks it's hit the big time with Tom Wolfe. Tom Wolfe! What a joke! I can see you in your cheap suit sitting in Emmett's coffee shop thinking that those pretty girls eating pie and drinking coffee are going to be impressed that you're some big cheese because you get to fraternise with authors. Like you're an intellectual!

EDWARD: Emmett's has gone.

PATRICIA: What?

EDWARD: There is no Emmett's.

PATRICIA: [*wind out of her sails*] Emmett's is gone?

EDWARD: And girls don't eat pie. They eat... *romaine*.

PATRICIA: What the hell is romaine?

EDWARD: It's a lettuce. They eat lettuce. And yoghurt. There are very few
[*making the quotation mark sign with his fingers*] 'diners'.

PATRICIA: [*mimicking and nasty*] Please don't do that.

EDWARD: [*continuing*] And girls don't smoke.

PATRICIA: They don't smoke?

EDWARD: Nobody smokes. Apart from models.

PATRICIA: Nobody smokes?

EDWARD: And they don't drink coffee—they get organic cafe lattes in
paper cups to go.

PATRICIA: What the hell is *that*?

EDWARD: It's the new coffee.

PATRICIA: I liked the old coffee! Cafe lattes! So Americans can pretend
they're in Europe even though they don't know where it is!

EDWARD: There are also nineteen different brands of bottled water—

PATRICIA: What happened to *tap* water?

EDWARD: That's like saying what happened to white bread.

PATRICIA: What happened to white bread?

EDWARD: We lost the fight.

PATRICIA: Who lost the fight?

EDWARD: White bread lovers of the world. It's all rice cakes and oat
loaves. Don't even mention butter.

PATRICIA: Good God!

EDWARD: A little African ceramic dish of Ligurian virgin olive oil,
perhaps. But butter, Jesus, keep your voice down!

PATRICIA: And if you don't happen to have any Ligurian virgins on hand?

EDWARD: You couldn't possibly have a character who eats a Wonder
bread sandwich anymore. White bread eating is an act of a dedicated
radicalised anarchist. Which, of course, is someone you *could* write!

PATRICIA: Maybe this country has influenced me, but there's altogether
too much *personality* going on here: you and your world view about
what I can and can't do. I don't know why I said yes to Hunter. He