



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), *Corporate Vibes* and *Face to Face* (both in 1999) and *The Great Man* (2000).

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.



┌ |
— |

┌ |
— |

david williamson
two plays
up for grabs
 corporate vibes



Currency Press, Sydney

┌ |
— |

┌ |
— |

CURRENCY PLAYS

Up For Grabs first published in 2001

Corporate Vibes first published in 1999

by Currency Press Pty Ltd,

PO Box 2287, Strawberry Hills, NSW, 2012, Australia

enquiries@currency.com.au

www.currency.com.au

Reprinted in 2007, 2012

Copyright © David Williamson, 2001; Introduction to *Up For Grabs* © John McCallum, 2001; Introduction to *Corporate Vibes* © Robyn Nevin, 1999.

COPYING FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES

The Australian *Copyright Act 1968* (Act) allows a maximum of one chapter or 10% of this book, whichever is the greater, to be copied by any educational institution for its educational purposes provided that that educational institution (or the body that administers it) has given a remuneration notice to Copyright Agency Limited (CAL) under the Act.

For details of the CAL licence for educational institutions contact CAL, Level 15, 233 Castlereagh Street, Sydney, NSW, 2000; tel within Australia 1800 066 844 toll free; outside Australia +61 2 9394 7600; fax: +61 2 9394 7601; email: info@copyright.com.au

COPYING FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Except as permitted under the Act, for example a fair dealing for the purposes of study, research, criticism or review, no part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means without prior written permission. All inquiries should be made to the publisher at the address above.

Any performance or public reading of *Up For Grabs* or *Corporate Vibes* is forbidden unless a licence has been received from the author or the author's agent. The purchase of this book in no way gives the purchaser the right to perform the play in public, whether by means of a staged production or a reading. All applications for public performance should be addressed to the playwright c/- Cameron Creswell Agency, Locked Bag 848, Surry Hills NSW 2010, Australia; tel: +61 2 9319 7199; fax: +61 2 9319 6866; email: info@cameronsmanagement.com.au.

In accordance with the requirement of the Australian Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance, Currency Press has made every effort to identify, and gain permission of, the artists who appear in the photographs which illustrate these plays.

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA CIP DATA

Williamson, David, 1942-.

[Up for grabs]

Up for grabs; Corporate vibes.

ISBN 9780868196534.

I. Williamson, David, 1942- Corporate vibes. II. Title.

A822.3

Set by Dean Nottle for Currency Press.

Printed by Finesline Print & Copy Service, St Peters, NSW.



Cover design by Kate Florance for Currency Press.

Front cover: Helen Dallimore as Simone and Simon Burke as Gerry in the 2001 Sydney Theatre Company production of *Up For Grabs*. (Photo: Tracey Schramm.)



Contents

UP FOR GRABS	1
<i>Introduction</i>	3
John McCallum	
<i>Playwright's Note</i>	6
David Williamson	
Act One	9
Act Two	43
CORPORATE VIBES	67
<i>Introduction</i>	69
Robyn Nevin	
Act One	75
Act Two	104







up for grabs



Playwright's Note



David Williamson

Like most of my work, *Up For Grabs* is a comedy. The definition of comedy offered by Sir Philip Sidney is still probably one of the best. He saw comedy as writing in which the dramatist represents his characters in such a ridiculous and scornful manner that no one in the audience would want to emulate them. In this view comedy has a moral thrust. The comic dramatist depicts characters behaving very badly in the hope that the self harm such behaviour causes is obvious to all.

In *Up For Grabs* there's some very bad behaviour indeed, but comedy differs from satire in that while satire offers its characters no redemption whatsoever, comedy allows its characters to begin to come to terms with their failings. Comedy, in effect, reflects the enduring war in our natures between pursuing our own selfish interests, both material and sexual, and our desire to be decent, moral and find respect and love.

This conflict has become even more acute in the last thirty years or so as society moves further and further towards individualism, pushed by the highly competitive ethics of advanced consumer capitalism which assumes that humanity is egoistic and acquisitive, and gives little credence to the fact that we are also social creatures who desire to be respected and loved, and who have a capacity for empathy and compassion.

In writing the play I was looking for an arena which intensified the pressure on my characters to behave selfishly and I chose the auction of a work of art. Art in its best sense is a celebration of the capacity and power of the human imagination, but at its worst, it is just another commodity offering quick capital gains. I wanted to create characters under pressure to be selfish and egoistic, but who were still capable of a humanity which occasionally transcended the cynicism of our times. When the crunch comes, most of us retain a little of our inherent human decency, no matter how much we are told that such behaviour is foolish and naïve.



Up For Grabs was first produced by Sydney Theatre Company at the Drama Theatre, Sydney Opera House, on 1 March 2001 with the following cast:

SIMONE

GERRY

MINDY

KEL

DAWN

FELICITY

MANNY

Helen Dallimore

Simon Burke

Kirstie Hutton

Felix Williamson

Tina Bursill

Angela Punch McGregor

Garry McDonald

Director, Gale Edwards

Set Designer, Brian Thomson

Costume Designer, Jennifer Irwin

Lighting Designer, John Rayment

Musical Supervisor, Max Lambert





CHARACTERS

SIMONE ALLEN
GERRY
KEL
MINDY
DAWN
MANNY
FELICITY



ACT ONE

A slim woman in her late twenties, SIMONE ALLEN, dressed in a manner that declares she has expensive and innovatively fashionable taste, walks to the front of the stage and looks at the audience.

SIMONE: [*to the audience*] Marcel Duchamp said that art dealers were lice on the backs of artists. Being a dealer, it's not an image I find either appealing or accurate. I think a religion provides a much better metaphor. If the artist is God, gripped in the epiphany of divine creation, then we are the Priests, interpreting, explaining, and giving insights into God's all too frequently mysterious handiwork. To whom do we give these insights? To the only congregation which really matters in the high church of Art. The wealthy. Preferably the obscenely wealthy. My feelings towards the wealthy are very ambivalent. On one level I hate them with a passion. They're a living reminder that one has—not yet succeeded. On the other hand I love them because they are the only ones who can possibly make *me* wealthy.

She looks up at a painting she can see but we can't.

[*To the audience*] Don't misunderstand me. I'm in no way a crass materialist. I want money so I can own beauty. Something like that. [*She keeps looking at the painting. Then at the audience.*] For most people who buy art it's purely commerce. Speculative commerce. If I owned something like that there's no way I'd ever sell it. If we're stranded half way between ape and angel—that— [*looking up at the painting again*] —is angel. [*She looks down and sighs.*] Long term dreams of wealth and beauty are one thing, a severe short term cash flow crisis is another.

GERRY *walks onstage looking defensive.*

GERRY: Simone will you face reality for once. We can't afford the lifestyle we're living. The Sultan of Brunei could barely afford the lifestyle we're living.

SIMONE: Gerry I warned you that I wasn't going to become the most successful art dealer in the country overnight.

GERRY: Yes you did. You said it might take a 'few months'. Well hello. It's three *years*, and I'm about to have to sell the apartment to clear our debt.

SIMONE: Don't panic! Everything's tracking on schedule. The big end of town has *finally* got to realise I'm around.

GERRY: Why wouldn't they? You're taking them to lunch in the best restaurants in this city every day... and I pay!

SIMONE: You ask big money out, you pay.

GERRY: Obviously why the rich get richer.

SIMONE: It's an investment Gerry.

GERRY: Honey, an investment is this thing that you do that gets you *returns*.

SIMONE: It takes time. They've got loyalties to their own dealers. Those loyalties have got to be undermined subtly.

GERRY: There's nothing subtle about the letters I'm getting from Visa and Amex. 'If you've paid in the last three days please disregard this letter. If you haven't, our representative is on his way to break both arms and a kneecap.'

SIMONE: Coping with persistent low level threat is a necessary skill of contemporary life.

GERRY: Losing this apartment is not a 'low level threat'. Not to me.

SIMONE: Gerry, don't do the—

GERRY: When I was a kid in Kogarah—

SIMONE: Gerry. Don't do the impoverished childhood thing.

GERRY: Look at that view! An apartment like this was my dream.

SIMONE: An apartment is a *THING*, Gerry. A *THING*. Didn't you ever dream that you wanted someone you loved?

GERRY: Yes, and much to my surprise I got her. And within three years we were going to have paid off our mortgage and start thinking about children. You said part of the reason you were attracted to me was because you knew I'd be a great father.

SIMONE: The schedule's just been a bit delayed.

GERRY: I don't want to rock up to my kid's twenty-first in a Zimmer frame!

SIMONE: Gerry, I'm on the cusp of a breakthrough. I can sense it.

GERRY: I'd be more excited if I hadn't heard that speech eighteen months ago. Maybe you'll have to go back into marketing.

SIMONE: No! Do you know what I started calling myself? Snow White, because my last three bosses were Dopey, Grumpy and Sleazy.

GERRY: Well I'm sorry. 'Follow your dream' is fine for pop psych gurus, but most of us have got to do things we don't entirely like.

SIMONE: Gerry, I have the best eye in the city. I know every dealer in the city says that but the difference is that I'm *right!* Don't put me in leg irons. I've got a big sale just about to happen.

GERRY: As of today?

SIMONE: As of today. Don't ask any questions. Believe.

GERRY *looks at her sceptically. He moves off.*

[*To the audience*] I didn't have a big sale about to happen, but terror concentrates the mind. Gerry was right. The established buyers who were only too happy to let me pick up the bill in the best restaurants in the city had no intention of buying any of the second rate artists I had on my books. I had to change tactics. Go hunting for the *new* rich and sell them a dream. Not an aesthetic dream. A greed dream. Buy now and in ten or twenty years time it'll be worth ten or twenty times as much. You think that sort of thinking is ethically suspect? Try working in Marketing.

She walks across and looks up at the unseen painting again. KEL and MINDY appear.

[*To the audience*] Kel and Mindy. They run a high speed gift and flower delivery website for people whose relationships are about to disintegrate, called Damage Control dotcom. I found them in an article on the dotcom survivors. Those who had managed to weather the IT nose dive and stay mega-rich. [*She turns to KEL.*] Well there it is.

KEL *looks up at the painting, continuing his strange solo dance moves.*

KEL: [*to MINDY*] Looks paler than in your book.

SIMONE: The reproductions are often a little more gaudy than the real thing. A great great work isn't it? One of the very finest Whiteleys.

KEL: You want my honest opinion? It's dated. It's yesterday's news, it's kitsch.

SIMONE: [*to the audience*] Kel would prefer his testicles fed slowly into a coffee grinder rather than admit he liked anything created earlier than last week. [*To KEL*] You think?

KEL: Whiteley's never been anything more than a slick Matisse imitator with a clever line and no sense of colour.

MINDY: That's just what you read on the web. I think it's beautiful.

KEL: As an investment. He's still iconic. Sex, booze, drugs. The distilled visual essence of Sydney. Died tragically just before he became a total bore. Yeah, all that shit.

SIMONE: 'The Jacaranda Tree' sold for close on two million.

KEL: I'm here for his *future* prices. And standing here looking at it I'm thinking how long will the icon thing last?

SIMONE: [*to the audience*] Standing there looking? He's made eye contact for all of half a second. Whiteley is iconic because he could *paint*. At his best, and this is very close to his best, Whiteley's restless torment, his obsessive sensuality, his wry dark humour, and his supreme gift for line and colour transcend his faults. This painting will still be fought for in two hundred years. Moron. [*To KEL*] I think he's the safest investment there is. But you're the one investing money.

KEL: What's Truscott want for it?

SIMONE: He won't name a price. In fact, and here's the bad news, he told me he wouldn't sell unless I had at least two other competing buyers. [*To the audience*] Not quite true, but if I was going to get to the one and a half million dollar reserve I had to try and spark the artlust frenzy that only an auction can generate.

KEL: You said we could buy it. Now it's an *auction*?

SIMONE: Not *really* an auction. All you need to do is get a sealed envelope with your bid to me by say, Tuesday next week.

MINDY: And that's it. Highest wins?

SIMONE: No, you get a chance to top the highest bid.

KEL: That's an auction!

SIMONE: In a minor sort of sense, I guess. [*She shrugs helplessly.*] Sorry. David Truscott. Greedy and tough.

KEL: If he's that greedy why doesn't he auction publicly?



SIMONE: CGT.

MINDY *looks puzzled.*



corporate vibes







Corporate Vibes was first produced by Sydney Theatre Company and Queensland Theatre Company at the Drama Theatre, Sydney Opera House, on 30 January 1999, with the following cast:

DEBORAH
BRIAN
ANGELA
MEGAN
SAM
MICHAEL
MICHELLE

Lydia Miller
Tony Llewellyn-Jones
Caroline Kennison
Olivia Pigeot
William Zappa
Andrew McFarlane
Kelly Butler

Director, Robyn Nevin
Set Designer, Stephen Curtis
Costume Designer, Tracy James
Lighting Designer, Neil Schlieper
Composer, Max Lambert





CHARACTERS

DEBORAH

BRIAN

ANGELA

MEGAN

MICHAEL

SAM SIDDONS

MICHELLE



ACT ONE

An office in the central business district of Sydney. City and location are projected onto the set along with the date, which is 1997. DEBORAH, a woman of mixed Aboriginal and European descent in her late thirties, sits behind a desk. She is well-dressed and attractive and looks composed and at peace with herself. She looks up from the folder she is reading as a worried-looking man, BRIAN, in his late forties, enters. BRIAN is dressed neatly but is clearly edgy. She smiles.

DEBORAH: Take a seat, [*reading his name on the folder*] Brian. I'm Deborah Fielding. I'm the new Human Resources Officer. I'd like to talk to you about your job.

She reads material about him from her folder and looks at him and smiles.

BRIAN: If you're about to tell me I'm being 'let go', fine. But if you tell me I should view it as the start of a new and challenging phase of my life, I might have to smash furniture.

DEBORAH waits for him to calm down.

Deborah, I'm forty-nine, I've got two kids going to school. A mortgage, a car on lease. Fire me and I'm dead.

DEBORAH: Brian, I'm not about to fire you. [*Pause.*] Tell me your story.

BRIAN: Story?

DEBORAH: We've all got one.

Pause.

BRIAN: I made a mess of my first marriage and so this one's very precious to me. We've got a little bit of land and I've planted a garden. [*Pause.*] You don't want to hear this shit.

DEBORAH: Yes I do.

BRIAN: Plants grow well. Good soil. I plant related species together and separate them with fragrances. Birds everywhere. The kids love it.

DEBORAH: Your wife works?

BRIAN: She did. She was top management. She had your sort of job, which was fine until the new management theories of the eighties came along. Flat structures. Get rid of middle management. Save costs by getting three times the work from half the staff. After she'd ruined about fifty lives she had what was called a depressive episode.

Now she makes quilts. You got kids?

DEBORAH: Yeah, two. [*Pause.*] Madison Towers.

BRIAN: Madison Towers.

DEBORAH: You're heading the sales team?

BRIAN: Yes.

DEBORAH: The apartments aren't selling. Why d'you reckon that is?

BRIAN: One, they're far too expensive. Two, they're bloody awful.

DEBORAH: [*tongue in cheek*] Don't feel you have to be polite.

BRIAN: [*indicating the brochure*] Look at them. The only place in Sydney you can escape from the visual horror is inside 'em. No, sorry, once you're inside 'em you get the decor. Have you seen the interior design?

DEBORAH: Yeah. I was given a tour.

BRIAN: And?

DEBORAH: It's the first time I've seen burgundy satin stripes and embossed gold wallpaper in a toilet.

BRIAN: Statistically I'm sure to get the occasional customer who's short-sighted and colour-blind, but Deborah, Madison is a *very* hard sell.

What can I possibly say that's good about it?

DEBORAH: Easy access to freeway?

BRIAN: Sure. Step off your balcony and you're on it. Instead of blaming the building, Sam blames me.

DEBORAH: Amongst others.

BRIAN: Which others?

DEBORAH: His chief architect, his marketing manager—

BRIAN: [*nodding*] What's the use? He wants us fired, so fire us.

DEBORAH: Brian. I only took this job after having it written into my contract that no one gets fired around here until I recommend it.

BRIAN: Sam would never give you that power. He's a total control freak.

DEBORAH: Sam's still overseas. I negotiated my contract with Michael.

BRIAN: Michael took an independent initiative? I'm stunned. I'd never be uncharitable enough to call Michael spineless, but I think you should be aware that everyone else does.

DEBORAH: He gave me the job. I'm here and I'm glad.

BRIAN: Why? This place is stuffed.

DEBORAH: [*shrugging*] Then let's try and fix it. We've got an award-winning architect, a brilliant marketing person, and a top salesman.

BRIAN: We've also got Sam, who doesn't listen to any of us.

DEBORAH: Why does he hire the best talent around at premium rates if he never listens?

BRIAN: If Sam hired God he'd be bitching about him in a week.

DEBORAH: [*looking at the brochure*] How could an architect who won a University Medal bring herself to design Madison?

BRIAN: Try terror. If there was a Federated Association of Bullies, Sam would be elected President, Secretary and Treasurer unopposed.

DEBORAH: You have to stand up to bullies, Brian.

BRIAN: Good theory.

DEBORAH: Does Sam really *want* this sort of stuff? Surely no one's that devoid of taste?

BRIAN *shrugs*.

Lot of puzzles, Brian.

BRIAN: You won't find any rational answers.

DEBORAH: We're not very rational creatures.

BRIAN: So if I'm not fired, what's this meeting about?

DEBORAH: To start to get to know you. Brian, sit amongst your trees next weekend, clear your mind of all the normal babble, and listen for your song.

BRIAN: My song?

DEBORAH: Everyone's got a song they want to sing, Brian. Listen for it.

BRIAN: Are you into crystals?

DEBORAH: [*smiling*] I'm a psychologist. Same sort of thing.

BRIAN *looks at her and nods his head in a puzzled fashion*.

BRIAN: Can't wait to see what Sam makes of you.

* * * * *

A woman in her middle thirties, ANGELA, sits in front of DEBORAH. She's edgy and fidgeting, in contrast to DEBORAH's good-humoured calm.

ANGELA: If I'm here to be fired, please fire me.

DEBORAH: You've been taking a lot of time off lately, Angela?

ANGELA: I've got a kid whose got severe asthma who worries me out of my brain. When he's carted off to hospital, you think I'm not going to go and be with him? You got kids?

DEBORAH: Two. Tell me your story.

ANGELA: My story? I haven't got a story. My life hasn't even got up to the table of contents.

DEBORAH: You're divorced.

ANGELA: Isn't everyone? Look, please, I don't want to discuss my life. If I'm here to be fired, then fire me.

DEBORAH: Angela, there's no way I'm going to recommend that an architect who won a University Medal is fired until I know why she isn't performing up to expectations.

ANGELA: Expectations? Whose expectations? Sam's expectations? I give Sam exactly what he expects. And then when the bloody monstrosities don't sell, I cop the blame!

DEBORAH: You could surely get work somewhere else.

ANGELA: What do you think I've been trying to do for the last five or so years? Unfortunately the stuff I've been forced to design for Sam is deeply unimpressive.

DEBORAH: I *would* like to hear your story if you don't mind sharing it with me.

ANGELA: What's it got to do with my job here?

DEBORAH: Some employers like to pretend that you plug people in like a computer, but computers don't have feelings or histories.

ANGELA: My story?

DEBORAH *says nothing. The silence grows.*

[*Sighing*] 'Love sucks.' I married an arsehole, had Damien, and two days after Damien's second birthday Arsehole ran off.

DEBORAH: With another woman?

ANGELA: I think of her more as a mouse. She scurries and squeals.

DEBORAH: How did you cope when it happened?

ANGELA: I didn't. I had absolutely no warning. It was humiliating!

DEBORAH: Sad?

ANGELA: Mainly humiliating.

DEBORAH *says nothing.*

