

For Immediate Release: 5 August 2021

Joint statement about premiere seasons of new Australian musical *The Dismissal*

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a devastating impact on the Australian arts industry, with the announcement that the 2021 premiere of new Australian musical *The Dismissal: An Extremely Serious Musical Comedy* will not proceed. *The Dismissal* is a co-production between independent theatre producers Squabbalagic, Sydney Theatre Company and Canberra Theatre Centre. A razor-sharp, musical account of Australia's constitutional crisis of 1975, the production was due to begin rehearsals in Sydney later this month before opening in October at Canberra Theatre Centre followed by a season at Sydney Opera House.

STC Artistic Director Kip Williams said, "*We are devastated to be losing this exceptional production. Staging a musical is a huge undertaking at the best of times but with the current restrictions in Greater Sydney and the inevitability of ongoing capacity limits for NSW venues, it is a particularly difficult time to mount a brand new Australian production. The incredibly talented team at Squabbalagic have put an immense amount of work into creating this hilarious, sharp-witted and nuanced take on Australian politics and this sensational production deserves to perform to full houses*".

The Dismissal: An Extremely Serious Musical Comedy is conceived, co-written and directed by Squabbalagic's Jay James-Moody with co-writer Blake Erickson and original music and lyrics by Laura Murphy. James-Moody said, "*As crushing as it is for *The Dismissal* to join the long line of theatrical works impacted by COVID and the associated restrictions, the health and safety of our team and audience is paramount. I'm very grateful to everyone at STC and CTC for their passionate support of the show, and in going above and beyond to navigate these circumstances. In the meantime Squabbalagic will — as Gough Whitlam mandated in 1975 — maintain the rage and enthusiasm for *The Dismissal* until 'it's time'*".

Alex Budd, Director of Canberra Theatre Centre said, "*We were so excited to be joining with Sydney Theatre Company and Squabbalagic to host the world premiere of *The Dismissal* at the Canberra Theatre, a stone's throw from where the story was born in 1975. Having seen audiences return so strongly to our venues in 2021 makes these latest COVID interruptions all the more heartbreaking. Lost employment for artists and arts workers is considerable, and the long-reaching and lasting impact of this pandemic on our industry cannot be overstated. The curtain can't come down on COVID fast enough*".

Since the introduction of restrictions for Greater Sydney in June, STC has cancelled 224 performances nationally across seven productions: *Grand Horizons*, *Triple X*, *White Pearl* (STC season and 6 performances of Qld tour), *The 7 Stages of Grieving* (SA tour), *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *The Dismissal: An Extremely Serious Musical Comedy* and the Company's *Rough Draft* program.

Squabbalagic, Sydney Theatre Company and Canberra Theatre Centre are encouraging theatre audiences with the means to do so to consider donating to the [Actors Benevolent Fund of NSW](#), an organisation that supports theatre workers — a largely freelance and casual workforce — throughout NSW and ACT in times of need.

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

- *The Dismissal: An Extremely Serious Musical Comedy* is a co-production between independent theatre producers Squabbalogic, Sydney Theatre Company and Canberra Theatre Centre.
- *The Dismissal* was commissioned and developed by Squabbalogic with the support of the Russell Mills Foundation, Seaborn, Broughton & Walford Foundation and Create NSW.
- [The Dismissal: An Extremely Serious Musical Comedy](#) was due to perform at Canberra Theatre Centre 9–24 October 2021. Ticket-holders will be contacted and refunded.

- The STC season of [The Dismissal: An Extremely Serious Musical Comedy](#) was due to perform at Sydney Opera House from 29 October–18 December, 2021. STC ticket bookers will be contacted in a few days and automatically issued a credit voucher that is valid for 3 years and may be used for any future STC production. They are also given the option of a full refund or to make a tax-deductible donation. Throughout the 6 month lockdown in 2020, \$1.3m worth of tickets to cancelled shows were generously donated back to the Company rather than taken as refunds.

For tickets purchased via Sydney Opera House, the Box Office will be in contact directly and ticket bookers have the option of a full refund, credit voucher or to make a tax-deductible donation.

- The STC season of *White Pearl* has been cancelled. However, the season at Canberra Theatre Centre scheduled for 15–18 September is currently expected to proceed. Tickets are available at <https://canberratheatrecentre.com.au/show/white-pearl/>
- **The Actors Benevolent Fund of NSW** supports entertainment professionals throughout NSW and ACT with critical financial help at their greatest time of need <https://www.actorsbenevolentfund.org.au/>
- **STC Philanthropy:** STC is one of the biggest employers and providers of creative opportunities in Australia and is proudly market-dependent – it's the audience buying tickets to shows that keeps the Company going. In the six months when theatres were closed in 2020, STC lost almost \$18m in revenue. Private donations directly support STC's future capacity to create great theatre, with a full workforce made up of Australia's most inspiring artists both emerging and established. <https://www.sydneytheatre.com.au/support/donate/donate-now>