

PRE-SHOW IN-THE-KNOW

FAST FACTS

TITLE

The Secret River

By Kate Grenville

An adaptation for the stage by Andrew Bovell

ABOUT THE PLAY

A sold out hit in 2013, *The Secret River* is a stirring adaptation of Kate Grenville's award-winning novel. In 2016, it returns for an encore season.

Directed by Neil Armfield, *The Secret River* is a story of two families divided by culture and land. William Thornhill arrives in New South Wales a convict from the slums of London. His family's new home offers him something he hadn't dare dream of: a place to call his own. On the banks of the Hawkesbury River, he plants a crop and lays claim to the soil in which it grows.

But the Hawkesbury is already home to another family. A family from the Dharug people, whose existence depends on that land. As Thornhill's attachment to the land deepens, he is driven to a terrible decision that will haunt him for the rest of his life.

Winner of six Helpmann Awards, including Best Play, Best Direction and Best New Australian Work, *The Secret River* was heralded as "a stunning, shattering piece of theatre that goes to the heart of our history" (The Sunday Telegraph). Don't miss out.

CAST

Georgia Adamson, Joshua Brennan, Toby Challenor, Shaka Cook, Nathaniel Dean, Frances Djulibing, Jennifer Hagan, Isaac Hayward, Trevor Jamieson, Heath Jelovic, Ningali Lawford-Wolf, Madeleine Madden, Colin Moody, Jeremiah Mundine, Wesley Patten, Kelton Pell, Richard Piper, Rory Potter, James Slee, Bruce Spence, Matthew Sunderland

STYLE

Contemporary Australian theatre
Historical Fiction
Indigenous Australian theatre

RUNNING TIME

2 hours and 50 minutes

ACTIVE AUDIENCE

THINK ABOUT

- Indigenous connection to the land and the now dispelled idea of Terra Nullius
- How *The Secret River* supports reconciliation
- Ownership and possession
- The notion of 'give a little, take a little' and the effects of not embracing this

WATCH AND LISTEN FOR

- The overlapping sounds of Aboriginal song and English nursery rhymes
- Thomas Blackwood and what he represents
- How the set and lighting design work together to create place and time
- The use of minimal, transformative props

MEMORABLE MOMENTS

- The first meeting between the Thornhill family and the Dharug family
- The Dharug children playing with Dick Thornhill
- Will Thornhill's discovery in Smasher Sullivan's hut
- The massacre

Compiled by Hannah Brown, Education Projects Officer, Sydney Theatre Company. Copyright protects this Education Resource. ©