

Thursday 28 March 2019

The Secret River to tour the United Kingdom

The Secret River

By Kate Grenville

An adaptation for the stage by Andrew Bovell

King's Theatre, Edinburgh – 2 -11 August.

National Theatre, London – 22 August – 7 September.

“Astonishingly beautiful to look at, languid in its storytelling and deeply affecting... Essential viewing.” - Sun Herald

Sydney Theatre Company announced today that *The Secret River* will tour the United Kingdom in August and September this year, with dates at The King's Theatre in Edinburgh as part of the Edinburgh International Festival and at the National Theatre in London.

The upcoming production of *The Secret River* will see a touring party of over 40 Australian actors, creatives and crew travel to the UK.

“This is a tremendously exciting moment for Sydney Theatre Company and for the cast, creatives and crew of *The Secret River*,” STC Artistic Director Kip Williams said. “Since the play was commissioned in 2012, it has been the company's hope to take *The Secret River* to where Kate Grenville's novel begins. We're very interested to see how audiences in the UK will react to this powerful Australian story.”

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.

The Secret River depicts a turning point in the development of Australia; a fork in the road with the chosen path resulting in consequences we all live with today.

Commissioned by Sydney Theatre Company under Cate Blanchett and Andrew Upton 2012, *The Secret River* debuted at Sydney Theatre Company in 2013, followed by a tour to Canberra and Perth. In 2016 it made a return season at STC, followed by a tour to Brisbane and Melbourne and dates at the 2017 Adelaide Festival with stunning outdoor performances under the stars in the Anstey quarry.

With UNESCO's International Year of Indigenous Languages taking place in 2019, it will be a powerful moment to hear First Nations actors speaking the Dharug Language on the stages of London and Edinburgh.

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" (*Sunday Telegraph*).

STC has a long history of putting Australian theatre artists on the world stage. Recent tours to Europe and the United States have included *Waiting for Godot* at the Barbican in London in 2015, *Gross und Klein* travelling around Europe in 2012, and *The Present* in a landmark season on Broadway in 2017.

This project has been assisted by the Australian Government's Major Festivals Initiative, managed by the Australia Council its arts funding and advisory body, in association with the Confederation of Australian International Arts Festivals Inc., Sydney Festival, Perth International Arts Festival and The Centenary of Canberra. *The Secret River* 2019 tour is supported by Ian Narev & Frances Allan, Gretel Packer and original commissioning patrons Catriona & Simon Mordant AM and David Gonski AC & Orli Wargon OAM.

#ENDS#

Director: Neil Armfield. Artistic Associate: Stephen Page. Set Designer: Stephen Curtis.
Costume Designer: Tess Schofield. Lighting Designer: Mark Howett. Composer: Iain Grandage. Sound Designer: Steve Francis.

About Edinburgh International Festival

Edinburgh International Festival is an unparalleled, city-wide, celebration of the performing arts for three weeks each August in Scotland's capital. Created in 1947 to celebrate the human spirit and bring people together through art, the International Festival remains dedicated to creative excellence and as a point of annual cultural exchange for a global audience exceeding 400,000 per year.

Committed to virtuosity and innovation, the International Festival presents some of the finest performers and ensembles from the worlds of dance, opera, music and theatre. It also connects with local artists and communities through a range of programmes year-round. The current Festival is curated by Festival Director Fergus Linehan and takes place from 2-26 August 2019. www.eif.co.uk

About The National Theatre

The National Theatre's mission is to make world class theatre that's entertaining, challenging and inspiring – and to make it for everyone. It aims to reach the widest possible audience and to be as inclusive, diverse and national as possible with a broad range of productions that play in London, on tour around the UK, on Broadway and across the globe. The National Theatre's extensive UK-wide learning and participation programme supports young people's creative education through performance and writing programmes like Connections, New Views and Let's Play. Its major new initiative Public Acts creates extraordinary acts of theatre and community; the first Public Acts production was 2018's Pericles. The National Theatre extends its reach through digital programmes including NT Live, which broadcasts some of the best of British theatre to over 2,500 venues in 65 countries, and the free streaming service On Demand In Schools, used by nearly 60% of UK state secondary schools. The National Theatre invests in the future of theatre by developing talent, creating bold new work and building audiences, partnering with a range of UK theatres and theatre companies.

For more information, please visit <https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/>.

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