

Sydney Theatre Company and UBS present

***The Present***

After Anton Chekhov's *Platonov*  
By Andrew Upton

4 August - 19 September 2015. Opening Night: Saturday 8 August at 7.30pm.  
Roslyn Packer Theatre, 22 Hickson Road, Walsh Bay

Variously known as *Platonov*, *Wild Honey*, *Fatherlessness* and *The Disinherited*, Anton Chekhov's untitled first play was not discovered until 1920, some 16 years after the playwright's death. Written by a young man the manuscript was clearly unedited but fascinatingly displayed an early grappling with what would become the familiar Chekhovian tropes of lust, longing, vodka and shattered dreams. In Andrew Upton's new version of the play for Sydney Theatre Company, *The Present*, premiering at Roslyn Packer Theatre from 4 August, the two central roles are played by Richard Roxburgh and Cate Blanchett, both of whom have been integral to STC's work in recent years and were last seen together on stage in Upton's adaptation of Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*. They are surrounded by a remarkable ensemble including Anna Bamford, Eamon Farren, Jacqueline McKenzie, Marshall Napier, Susan Prior, Chris Ryan and Toby Schmitz.

At an old country summerhouse, friends are gathered to celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> birthday of the independent but compromised widow Anna Petrovna (Blanchett). At the centre is the acerbic, witty, unexploded bomb that is Platonov (Roxburgh) with his wife Sasha (Prior), his former students and friends Sergei (Ryan) and Nikolai (Schmitz) and their partners Sophia (McKenzie) and Maria (Bamford). They may appear comfortable, but boiling away inside is a mess of unfinished, unresolved relationships, fueled by twenty years of denial, regret and thwarted desire.

While Chekhov's unfinished play was set towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century just as the ideas of communism were being conceived in the minds of some, Upton has relocated the action to the mid-1990s. Perestroika has been effective, the Soviet state has been dismantled and the first wave of oligarchs has emerged.

At one point everyone might have thought Platonov would be a powerful force for change in such a period of flux. But now, yesterday's promised hero and those around him, are lost, self-involved observers; impotent idealists who've been prevented from evolving by an older generation refusing to let go of power, while being sidelined by a younger generation who want whatever they can get, now.

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STC welcomes Irish director John Crowley, whose renowned work on the West End and Broadway includes the premiere production of Martin McDonagh's *The Pillowman*. His collaborators are STC stalwarts, designer Alice Babidge and lighting designer Nick Schlieper, with sound design by Stefan Gregory.

Cast: Anna Bamford, Cate Blanchett, Andrew Buchanan, David Downer, Eamon Farren, Martin Jacobs, Jacqueline McKenzie, Brandon McClelland, Marshall Napier, Susan Prior, Richard Roxburgh, Chris Ryan, Toby Schmitz.

Director: John Crowley. Designer: Alice Babidge. Lighting Designer: Nick Schlieper. Composer & Sound Designer Stefan Gregory

Box Office: 02 9250 1777. [www.sydneytheatre.com.au](http://www.sydneytheatre.com.au) Tickets from \$93 (fees apply)

*Suncorp Twenties* (tickets for just \$20 for every performance by STC) become available for *The Present* from Tuesday 28 July 2015. *Suncorp Twenties* are released for sale every Tuesday at 9am for the following week's performances (Monday to Saturday).

Insight Events:

Pre-season Briefing: Monday 20 July at 6.15pm. Wharf 2 Theatre

Audi Night with the Actors: Monday 17 August (post-show)

For further information: Tim McKeough (02 9250 1703 [tmckeough@sydneytheatre.com.au](mailto:tmckeough@sydneytheatre.com.au)) or Katherine Stevenson (02 9250 1705 [kstevenson@sydneytheatre.com.au](mailto:kstevenson@sydneytheatre.com.au))

#stcthepresent

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