



Preshow: *Julia*

Hello and welcome to the Audio Introduction of *Julia*, by Joanna Murray-Smith.

The State Theatre Company, South Australia in association with The University of Adelaide present a Sydney Theatre Company and Canberra Theatre Centre Production.

The Audio Described performances will take place at the Dunstan Playhouse on Saturday, 24 August, with the briefing at 1.00pm, and the performance at 2.00pm, and on Monday 26 August, the briefing beginning at 5.30pm, with a 6.30pm performance, followed by a post-show Q&A.

The performance runs for approximately 1hr and 30 minutes with no interval.

This theatre piece spans the years of Gillard's life up until her term at the first female Prime Minister of Australia, and the seminal speech she made in 2012 that sent shockwaves around the world. Combining genuine excerpts from Gillard's speech with playwright Murray-Smith's incredible dramatic imagination, this play is a thrilling coming together of history and art.

As women around the world continue to fight for human rights, representation and against oppression, *Julia* is an empowering reminder of where we've come from and the challenges that lie ahead, seen through the prism of Julia Gillard's childhood, her education in Adelaide and her journey into and through the battlefield of Australian politics. This is an intimate and compelling insight into the person behind the public mask, and a reflection on the experience of women in contemporary politics.

CONTENT warning

Contains strong coarse language, and strobe lighting.

1. Set description

The set is focused on a central square of eucalypt green carpet (about 4 x 4m) set at an angle to the front of the stage forming a diamond. The carpet is slightly raised and edged with a black rubber strip or border; at the opening it is lit from above. At times this is the floor of the Chamber, where the House of Representatives meet. Centred above the carpet, a large skylight protrudes into the room, projecting its black circular tube about a metre into the space.

Reflective panels placed side by side delineate the acting space. The panels are approximately 3m high by 1m wide, 5 on either side combine to make two wide screens, which are set back, one and a half metres from the edge of the green carpet. This creates a central entrance from between the wide screens into the playing space. Other entrances are from the left or right, around the downstage sides of the mirrored screens. In front of the diagonal screens are two mid-century chairs with elegant polished wooden frames and eucalypt or government green leather upholstery. The chairs are placed, one to the far left, the other mirroring it, on the far right. As the play opens both chairs are lit from above and sit in a tight square pool of light.



Key locations are created by moving the furniture and utilizing additional props to create other scenes, such as Julia's family home, which is created on the left front of stage by moving forward one of the green upholstered chairs and adding a standard lamp with wooden upright and an amber-coloured shade.

The home of her childhood friend is indicated by a 1970's tall chrome tubular folding step ladder/stool that is brought forward and placed on the green carpet square.

Lighting is an integral part of the design. Perhaps the most important feature is that hidden around the four edges of the green carpet, these long strips light up at various times like a fluorescent lazer beam. Switched on together they frame the carpet square or chamber, which is also then reflected in the banks of mirrors multiple times. These four angled lights can also flick on and off at different times, creating a strobe effect much like the camera flashes of a media pack.

The large round skylight above the central carpet can be fully illuminated from within. It is also fitted with a ring of light around its lower edge, which can be worked independently to create a floating 'halo' effect at other times.

The two banks of mirrors create long segmented screens. Images are both reflected in them and projected onto them from the rear. This allows a creative use of video that enhances and reinforces aspects of the action taking place. At times the screens are covered in the green grass of the Welsh countryside, or large images of gorgeous flowers. At other times they display a barrage of microphones set up for a press announcement, or show the back of Gillard, (either from a distance or as close-ups) with her signature coiffed red hair and purposeful royal-blue jacket. Sometimes each screen is filled with individual projected images whilst simultaneously reflecting the action on stage, or views of the audience.

The music is filmic and underscores Gillard's emotional journey from childhood, to adolescence, through early experiences of power within the Student Union movement, and highlights social justice causes close to her heart. The music climaxes around her roles as she becomes the first female Deputy PM and then Prime Minister of the Country.



2. Cast, Characters and Costumes

Justine Clarke embodies the former Prime Minister, the Hon Julia Gillard, and is the play's 'narrator'. She is onstage throughout the performance.

As the 'narrator', Justine uses her own voice. She slips seamlessly into Julia Gillard's distinctive voice and accent only when quoting her directly. When portraying the voices of Julia's mother and father, she adopts a Welsh accent. She also does brief impressions of Julia's political colleagues, pulling off both Tony Abbott's supercilious smirk and John Howard's stammering bluster.

There are several simple, onstage costume changes. Julia/the narrator enters wearing an unbuttoned, long-sleeved, grey checked shirt, cuffs rolled up a couple of times, with smart, tailored, rust-coloured trousers. She is of average height with wavy, shoulder-length blonde hair, parted just off centre. She wears small gold hoop earrings, a sensible large-faced watch on her left wrist and white canvas shoes with no socks. Under the open shirt she wears a white, scoop-necked T-shirt, revealed as short-sleeved when she later removes the overshirt.

Initially she wears sandals which are removed when she slips on a pair of red low-heeled shoes and is helped into a pale-pink long-sleeved shirt which she buttons up to the neck. The cuffs are rolled up once or twice. She tucks the shirt in at the front, but the back shirt tails are left out, accentuating her hips.

Later the shirt tails are tucked in and she is helped into a beige, hip-length, long-sleeved jacket which she wears undone.

The final onstage costume change is a transformation. She removes the beige jacket and pink shirt, pins up her hair and puts on a short coppery-red wig, which is sleek and neatly coiffed, cut in Julia's iconic chin-length style. She slips into a long-sleeved, royal blue, hip-length jacket. The cut of the jacket, which she wears buttoned at her waist, accentuates her hips.

While written as a solo performance, the director has chosen to also have a Young Woman playing various, mostly silent, roles – the younger Julia, her conscience, a representation of future generations, both a witness and a watcher – as well as providing props and moving furniture, she helps with costume changes and, occasionally, represents other characters. She speaks a few of the narration lines and occasionally speaks together with Julia.

The Young Woman is played by Jessica Bentley. She is about 173cm tall, slim, with long, dark hair pulled back in a ponytail. She wears a short-sleeved, pale pink, round-necked T-shirt, patterned with irregular diagonal slashes of colour, dusty-pink coloured cotton jeans and well-worn, scruffy white trainers.



3. Creatives

Creative Team

Playwright: Joanna Murray-Smith
Director: Sarah Goodes
Designer: Renée Mulder
Lighting Designer: Alexander Berlage
Composer & Sound Designer: Steve Francis
Video Designer: Susie Henderson
Assistant Director: Charley Allanah
Voice & Dialect Coach: Jennifer White
Touring Production Manager: Gareth Simmonds
Stage Manager: Stephanie Storr

Getting to the Venue

This show will be performed at the Dunstan Playhouse, Adelaide Festival Centre.

The recommended Dunstan Playhouse drop off zone is at the northern end of the Riverbank Footbridge on War Memorial Drive (walk across the Footbridge to Dunstan Playhouse) or at the Intercontinental Hotel (walk north between the Intercontinental Hotel and Railway Station along the lane way to the Riverbank). There is also a drop off area and two accessible car spaces on lower Festival Drive, accessible from the west via Montefiore Road.

Adelaide Festival Centre is easily accessible by public transport, including the tram (stop at Railway Station), trains, buses and a free bus service that operates on a loop throughout the city and North Adelaide with stops on the corner of King William Road and North Terrace.

Wheelchair access & Companion Cards

Wheelchair accessible seats, companion cards and other accessible bookings can be made via phone on 08 8415 5353 (Monday – Friday, 9.00am – 5.00pm), or via email at tickets@statetheatrecompany.com.au

This completes the audio introduction for *Julia*.
Your Describers will be Jules Fielke and Kay Jamieson.

For more information on audio described performances please contact Access2Arts using the email address audio.describer@access2arts.org.au