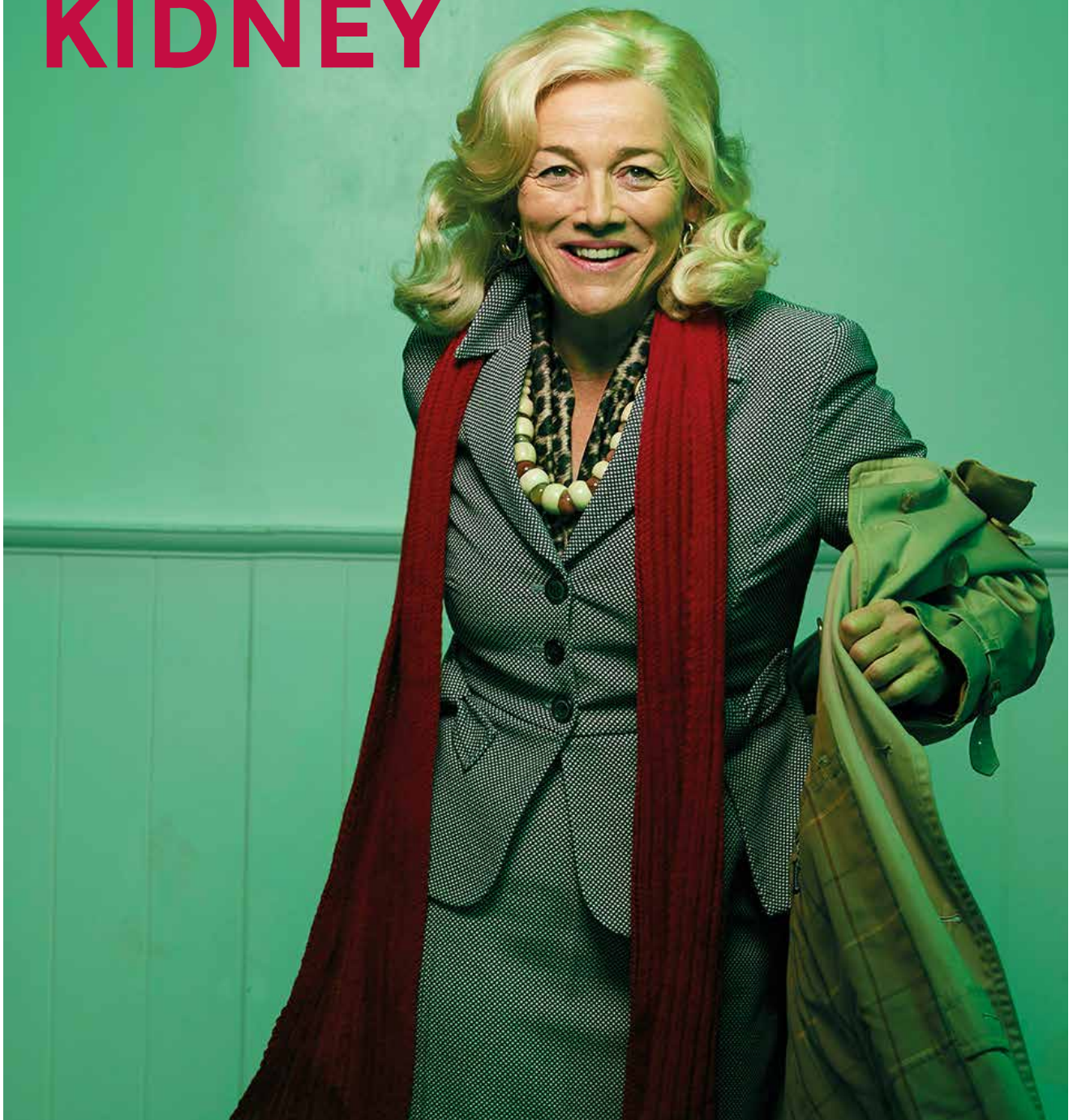


MARK COLVIN'S KIDNEY



25 FEBRUARY - 2 APRIL 2017

LEARNING RESOURCES

BELVOIR



Belvoir presents
MARK COLVIN'S KIDNEY

By **TOMMY MURPHY**

Director **DAVID BERTHOLD**

*This production of Mark Colvin's Kidney opened at
Belvoir St Theatre on Wednesday 1 March 2017.*

Set Designer **MICHAEL HANKIN**

Costume Designer **JULIE LYNCH**

Lighting Designer **DAMIEN COOPER**

Composer & Sound Designer **NATE EDMONDSON**

Projection Designer **VEXRAN PRODUCTIONS**

Movement Director **SCOTT WITT**

Stage Manager **LUKE MCGETTIGAN**

Assistant Stage Manager **KEIREN SMITH**

Production Manager **SALLY WITHNELL**

With

PETER CARROLL

KIT ESURUOSO

JOHN HOWARD

SARAH PEIRSE

CHRISTOPHER STOLLERY

HELEN THOMSON



Peter Carroll, Christopher Stollery, Kit Esuruoso and Sarah Peirse

CONTENTS

About Belvoir	1
Cast and Creative Team	2
Writer's Note	3
Director's Note	5
Context	6
Timeline	7
Rehearsing <i>Mark Colvin's Kidney</i>	8
Production Elements	12
Costume Design	
Set Design	
Podcast	18
Contact Education	19

ABOUT BELVOIR



One building.

Six hundred people.

Thousands of stories.

When the Nimrod Theatre building in Belvoir Street, Surry Hills, was threatened with redevelopment in 1984, more than 600 people – ardent theatre lovers together with arts, entertainment and media professionals – formed a syndicate to buy the building and save this unique performance space in inner city Sydney.

Thirty years later, under Artistic Director Eamon Flack and Executive Director Brenna Hobson, Belvoir engages Australia's most prominent and promising playwrights, directors, actors and designers to realise an annual season of work that is dynamic, challenging and visionary. As well as performing at home, Belvoir regularly takes to the road, touring both nationally and internationally.

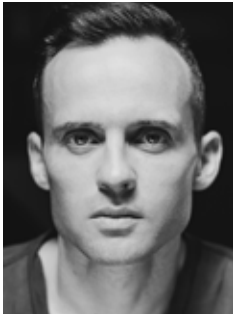
Belvoir Education

Our Education Program provides students and teachers with insights into the work of Belvoir and first hand experiences of the theatre-making process.

Belvoir Education offers student workshops, teacher professional development workshops, work experience, VET placements, archival viewings and a wealth of online resources designed to support work in the drama classroom. Our arts access programs assist schools in Regional NSW and Western Sydney to access the company's work.

Explore our education pages at www.belvoir.com.au/education

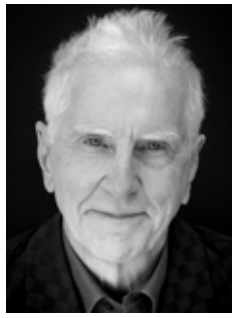
CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM



Tommy Murphy
Playwright



David Berthold
Director



Peter Carroll
Bruce/Physician
David/Priest/Officer



Damien Cooper
Lighting Designer



Nate Edmondson
Composer &
Sound Designer



Kit Esuruoso
Charon / Kane



Michael Hankin
Set Designer



John Howard
Mark Colvin



Julie Lynch
Costume Designer



Luke McGettigan
Stage Manager



Sarah Peirse
Mary-Ellen Fireld



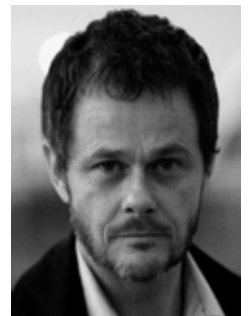
Keiren Smith
Assistant Stage
Manager



Christopher Stollery
Professor Zolton &
Others



Helen Thomson
Elle Macpherson/
Nurse & Others



Scott Witt
Movement Director

WRITER'S NOTE: TOMMY MURPHY



Tommy Murphy

This is the play in which renal defeats venal. We can thank actor John Howard for coining that phrase. In our final script workshop, Sarah Peirse, who plays Mary-Ellen Field, noted a turning point. Her character concludes that the structures she trusted – the law, the state, the press, even the simple decency of her fellow humans – have failed her. The turning point comes with the choice she makes. In an ethically deficient world, the individual can only take charge of one person's actions – her own. In identifying this, I heard Sarah explain to me the heart of the story.

Many people contribute to the making of a play. For this one in particular that includes some real living people. Those I managed to reach granted me their trust and wisdom. I thank them.

Belvoir's Artistic Director, Eamon Flack, provided the initial provocation that triggered the hunt for '...a play that is local and global'. I had already been curious about creating a journalist character. The forces of change on the profession and a journalist's daily wrestle with matters of principle seemed delicious for drama. I suggested to Eamon that a play centring on a foreign correspondent might fit the bill. Seeking inspiration, I spoke to many journos both abroad and locally – one who lived across the road in fact. They all offered glimpses into brilliant lives and striking moments of ethical quandary. I even began a draft about one bright spark. He'd got himself into a pickle in the United States and was arrested for doing his job. Great. Several scenes into my draft he apparently hired a clever lawyer and got away with it. Good for him. But my second act vanished. He is on notice to continue to live a life rich with dramatic incident and get back to me. Along the way he suggested I speak to his mentor, a person who is a guiding figure for many...

I shadowed Mark Colvin at ABC radio for an afternoon as he made his flagship national current affairs program PM. Here it was. He was describing scenes. Did he see my eyes light up at the exchanges of dialogue I was desperate to scribble down there and then?

I was a stranger and he had begun the first draft of *Light and Shadow: Memoirs of a Spy's Son*. He could very well have told me to go and get stuffed. However, like all the journalists I met, Mark had been on the other side of an obfuscating interviewee. He displayed a professional duty to share the truth. And he did

not stand in the way of someone who was keen to file a story. So he permitted me to go right ahead. What a guy!

The mode of making the play began to echo its content: interviews, recorded voice, and the way distance can achieve an intimate connection. Mark arranged for me to meet Mary-Ellen Field via Skype. I have the recordings, with permission. I began with 'So tell me, how did this go from a tweet to an organ donation?' I heard her wonderful laugh for the first time.

Mark would call me on long car trips. I'd conduct an interview, sometimes nervously as he is one of the great interviewers in the country. I tried to apply his own advice. 'Why?' is often the best question. Listening is the most important thing. I'd get lost in his stories, lost with that voice, and have to remind myself to respond because this time he was not on my kitchen radio.

The first draft was complete before a film festival gave me the opportunity to be in London where I met Mary-Ellen Field in person. 'Oxygenating will fix your jetlag,' she advised me. So there I was pedalling along the Thames and Richmond Park alongside my protagonist. I was struck that Mary-Ellen was so generous with the details. Emails would promptly arrive with the documents to back up her testimony. She is a victim of a terrible intrusion into her privacy, yet she allowed this stranger to hear it and see it all. She wanted the story told. I have felt that responsibility acutely.

Now the play is complete and I have many people to thank. They include the actors who workshopped early exploratory drafts. They are the staff of Belvoir led by Brenna Hobson who have expertly shepherded this project to the stage. They are the cast and entire team led by my long-time collaborator, director David Berthold, for whom it is always thrilling to work your hardest, and who knows when I am bullshitting and when I am telling the truth.

So, here is a story that makes claims of truth. It is about a woman who sought to correct falsehoods. It comes to you as we brace for the era of 'fake news'.

Playwright's thanks

Mark Colvin, Mary-Ellen Field, Bruce Westwood, William Colvin, Nicholas McKenzie, Michele McKenzie, Professor Zoltan Endre and the Prince of Wales Department of Nephrology, Playwriting Australia, The ABC archives, Cameron's Creswell Agency, Cait MacMahon and the DART Centre for Journalism and Trauma, Dr. Andrea Phelps, Yasmin Parry ABC digital producer, Emma Burnett, Jude Bunting, Chris Tange, James Hanning, James Baker, Michael Carey, Mick Fanning, Catherine Clare, Lucy Wirth, Anthony Blair, Needeya Islam, Hugh O'Keefe, Timothy 'Lady Di' Spencer, Angela Bowne, Raena Lea-Shannon, Baker & McKenzie Lawyers and Patricia and Philip Murphy and their brood.

The journos: James West, Sally Sara, Ali Benton, Suzie Smith, Sophie McNeill, Greg Wilesmith, Marianne Leitch, Jo Chichester, Mark Davis, Janine Cohen, Lucy McNally, Sally Virgoe, Scott Spark, Stephen Long, Sarah MacDonald, Simon Marnie, Toby Creswell and Jo Jarvis.

The actors who workshopped the script: Annie Byron, Thuso Lekapwe, Eryn Jean Norvill, William Zappa, Sacha Horler, Duncan Ragg, Callan Colley and the current cast.

And the beautiful Dane Crawford.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE: DAVID BERTHOLD

Ripples of Hope

I remember being glued to the Leveson Inquiry. All that rigorous interrogation and the testimonies of the famous, including a fragile-looking Rupert Murdoch. It felt like we were witnessing the fall of a media empire. It felt like the world was about to change and that 'truth' and 'ethics' and 'justice' would somehow flourish.

Five years on, that feeling is foreign. 'Alternative facts' fight with the truth, and justice for many seems more distant than ever.

I was not aware of Mary-Ellen Field's story until Tommy Murphy, that most intrepid of playwrights, brought it to my attention. Things struck me with immediate force. Here was a very successful woman, a member of the Conservative Party, who bit by bit had her natural faith in the cornerstones of British justice eroded. More specifically, here was someone who had been treated savagely by the media and yet decided to give her kidney to a journalist. How does that happen?

Altruism is mysterious. Evolutionary biology and neurobiology tell us that we're hardwired for it, but that the trigger can be untouched. We are often suspicious of those who say they expect no reward for their kindness. The idea of absolute selflessness (is there such a thing?) doesn't quite gel in times when empathy seems to be in such short supply.

But, it happened. Mary-Ellen gave Mark a kidney, that spectacular centre of the body's waste disposal system. That act of kindness, in its private, personal way, helped to cleanse. It added, in its modest way, to the sum of goodness in the world. Perhaps, in the face of crushing malice and injustice, that is the best we can hope for. Perhaps, though, such acts, however small, accumulate and cultivate.

Perhaps *Mark Colvin's Kidney* can be part of that current, its own ripple of hope.

"Few will have the greatness to bend history itself, but each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total of all those acts will be written the history of this generation. It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance."

(Robert F. Kennedy, Day of Affirmation address delivered at the University of Capetown, South Africa, June 6, 1966)



David Berthold

CONTEXT

Mark Colvin's Kidney is the true story of the remarkable friendship between ABC journalist Mark Colvin and business advisor Mary-Ellen Field. Their friendship began when Mark interviewed Mary-Ellen for an ABC Radio report on the Murdoch News International phone hacking scandal (of which she was a victim) but took on new meaning when Mary-Ellen donated one of her kidneys to Mark. In writing this play Tommy Murphy spoke extensively with the real-life Mary-Ellen Field and Mark Colvin.

Murdoch News International Phone Hacking and the Leveson Inquiry

The infamous Murdoch News International phone hacking scandal was a controversy involving the now defunct British newspaper *News of the World*. Employees of the paper were accused of phone hacking and police bribery in the pursuit of stories.

Mary-Ellen Field was caught up in the scandal when one of her high-profile clients (supermodel Elle Macpherson) had her phone voicemail messages illegally hacked. Unaware that her phone had been hacked, Elle accused Mary-Ellen of leaking the secrets of her private life to the press. Subsequently Mary-Ellen lost her job and her professional reputation was severely damaged.

The phone hacking scandal culminated in a number of arrests and convictions following the public Leveson Inquiry in 2011. The Inquiry examined the culture, practices and ethics of the press and, in particular, the relationship of the press with the public, police and politicians. Mary-Ellen was a witness.

You can explore pages of the Leveson Inquiry website and read witness statements from Mary-Ellen and others [here](#):

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140122145147/http://www.levesoninquiry.org.uk/>

Mark Colvin

Mark Colvin is a well-respected Australian journalist and the host of ABC Radio's News and Current Affairs program *PM*. During his years as a foreign correspondent in Africa, Mark contracted a rare autoimmune disease that resulted in him requiring frequent dialysis.

During some scenes in the play the character of Mark Colvin is attached to a dialysis machine. This machine is designed to filter a person's blood to remove excess water and waste products when the kidneys are diseased. The machine can almost be thought of as an artificial kidney. Prior to receiving his kidney donation from Mary-Ellen, Mark was requiring dialysis every 2-3 days in order to survive.



John Howard

TIMELINE

Key events mentioned in *Mark Colvin's Kidney*

1979 A young Mark Colvin is working as a foreign correspondent in London and is reporting on the American hostage crisis in Tehran, Iran.

1994 Mark Colvin's work as a foreign correspondent takes him to Goma (in the Democratic Republic of the Congo) where he is reporting on the Civil War in nearby Rwanda.

November 24, 2005 Elle Macpherson wrongly accuses Mary-Ellen of leaking her private information to the press. Mary-Ellen subsequently loses her job and her professional reputation is in ruins.

August 9, 2006 Mary-Ellen and Bruce listen to the BBC Radio *Today* program and learn that Elle McPherson, along with a host of other celebrities and politicians, was the victim of phone hacking by private investigators working for the British tabloid *News of the World*.

2011 Mary-Ellen has been waiting five years for police to interview her about the crimes committed by employees of *News of the World*. In the play Mary-Ellen approaches a female MP at Westminster, unannounced, to ask if there will be a public inquiry into the phone hacking scandal. She is rebuffed. In frustration, Mary-Ellen gives an interview to a BBC journalist. Mark Colvin hears this interview in Australia.

January 31, 2011 Mark Colvin sends his first tweet to Mary-Ellen asking if he can interview her on ABC radio. This tweet marks the beginning of their correspondence by phone, text and email.

February 9, 2011 Mark Colvin reports on the phone hacking scandal and makes reference to Mary-Ellen's experience.

July 13, 2011 The Prime Minister announces that a public inquiry will investigate the role of the press and police in the phone-hacking scandal. Lord Justice Leveson was appointed as Chairman of the Inquiry.

July 18, 2011 Mark tapes a phone interview with Mary-Ellen for his ABC Radio program *PM*. His health is deteriorating.

November 22, 2011 Mary-Ellen's Witness Statement is recorded for the Leveson Inquiry.

June 17, 2012 Mary-Ellen Field meets with Dr Zoltan Endre at the Prince of Wales Hospital in Sydney to discuss her wish to make an altruistic donation of a kidney to Mark.

July 24, 2012 Mary-Ellen makes her submission in person to the Leveson Inquiry

November 29, 2012 Lord Justice Leveson publishes his Report on Part 1 of the Inquiry.

March 6, 2013 Rupert Murdoch is secretly recorded by a Sun journalist in the newspaper's headquarters.

March 16, 2013 Surgeons at Prince of Wales Hospital in Sydney transplant Mary-Ellen's healthy kidney into Mark Colvin. The operation is a success.

May 6, 2013 Elle Macpherson breaks her silence on the topic of the phone hacking scandal with a single tweet which fails to recognise that she wrongly accused Mary-Ellen of leaking private information to the press.

REHEARSING MARK COLVIN'S KIDNEY



Kit Esuruoso and John Howard

Describe what you see in the photo above. How would you describe the expression on each actor's face?

What do you think the relationship between these two characters might be? Why?

Where might this scene be taking place? What clues are there to indicate this might be the case?



Peter Carroll and Sarah Peirse

Describe what you see in the photo above. How would you describe the expression on each actor's face?

Where is the focal point in this moment?



Helen Thomson

Describe what you see in the photo above. What might be happening in this scene?

Look carefully at the photo. What do you see in the background? What do you think this is?



Christopher Stollery

Describe what you see in the photo above. How would you describe the expression on the actor's face?

What do you think is happening in this scene? Who might the character be speaking to?



Sarah Peirse and director David Berthold

'Mary'Ellen's quest at the beginning of the play is to find justice, for herself initially, but bit by bit she realises justice is a very difficult thing to find in a world that is conspiring against her. Then she finds justice in a different way. She is to provide Mark with a new life... She adds to the sum of goodness in the world in an entirely altruistic way... '

David Berthold in conversation with Rosemary O'Neill
The Gift of Life Weekend Australian (February 25 2017)

PRODUCTION ELEMENTS

The elements of production are the technical and visual elements used to manipulate the elements of drama in order to effectively tell a play's story.

In these notes we are going to look at *Mark Colvin's Kidney*:

Costume design renderings and references

Set design and construction

COSTUME DESIGNS: REFERENCES AND RENDERINGS

The costume designer behind 'Mark Colvin's Kidney' discusses the creative license involved in dressing real-life people, and the key to recreating Elle Macpherson's look.

Scan over Julie Lynch's impressive resume as a costume designer and it boasts such grand works as *Carmen* and *La Bohème* for Opera Australia and the cult classic *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. More recently, her work includes *The Tempest* for Bell Shakespeare and the elaborate period pieces *Arms and the Man* and *Arcadia* for Sydney Theatre Company.

With *Mark Colvin's Kidney*, Julie tackles something different: a decidedly modern tale. It's a story that begins with Elle Macpherson and relays the unexpected friendship that develops between ABC journalist Mark Colvin and Australian business woman Mary-Ellen Field in the midst of the phone hacking scandal. "It's definitely based in a real world," Julie tells us. "I'm not working in an over designed world. But I believe every piece you work on, you get something out of it, you really do."

Why did you want to help tell this story?

"Well, I actually love [playwright] Tommy Murphy's work. In particular, I love *Holding the Man*. I've known Tommy since he was a NIDA student and I was a staff member so I feel like I have a personal connection and I've seen his career flourish. And [director] David Berthold is really well known for developing new Australian work and I'm very pleased to be part of that."

In creating a story based on real people, how precisely do you try and recreate outfits they actually wore and how much creative license do you take?

"It's a really interesting point and I think it differs per individual. I feel I've made more effort to try and make Helen Thomson look like Elle Macpherson because she's a figure we see at the beginning of the show and we have to know it's her straight away. With Mary-Ellen and Mark Colvin, these are characters that we gradually get to know and they're played by two different actors who we also get to know. So while there will be aspects of the real Mark Colvin and Mary-Ellen, there's also got to be aspects of the actors, Sarah Peirse and John Howard, so I don't feel it's been as slavish a process. It's about creating more of a merged image.

"I did have a look at [Mark Colvin's son] William Colvin and [Mark Colvin's father] John Colvin, and then you look at the actor playing those parts, and you try and work out the essence of the person and also the essence of that scene. For example, William Colvin can look like he plays in a band and can look very urban, but we only see him for one scene. In that one scene, he needs to very much represent the honest image of a son without too much decoration or bells and whistles."

We witness Mary-Ellen's journey from someone whose life is falling apart to a woman determined to restore her reputation. What role did costume play in illustrating this journey?

"I think in some ways she's always fighting for something until the moment she actually does get to give away her kidney. So I feel there's a weight on Mary-Ellen throughout that time. It's only in that final scene that we try and give some sense of lightness and positivity – we're using lighter colours and lighter fabrics. But before then Mary-Ellen starts off a little more corporate and then becomes simpler."

Your original sketch has Mary-Ellen quite boldly dressed in a leopard print dress and red blazer, which is an outfit the real Mary-Ellen wore...

"We will end up using leopard skin patterns, but probably more in the scarves now. It's more of a touch. We have some dresses with patterns, but those patterns make less of a comment. Even though the real Mary-Ellen wears leopard skin dresses, I did want the performers' input the whole time and Sarah [Peirse] preferred to have less of a pattern that made such a statement and that's the kind of feedback that I like to get. I go out of my way to try and make sure I spend time with each performer and talk through these things because their input really helps to inform my decisions."

Elle Macpherson obviously has a very iconic look. What was involved in recreating her look and ensuring she was recognisable to audiences?

"When you analyse what Elle wears, she wears a lot of trousers. She wears very high shoes even though she's tall herself but she also has a very simple elegance. She does wear a lot of black and white so she's very striking in her appearance. That's very helpful to us but her signature is also her hair so we've spending a considerable amount of Belvoir's budget on the hair!"



Costume rendering by Julie Lynch (2017)



Sarah Peirse



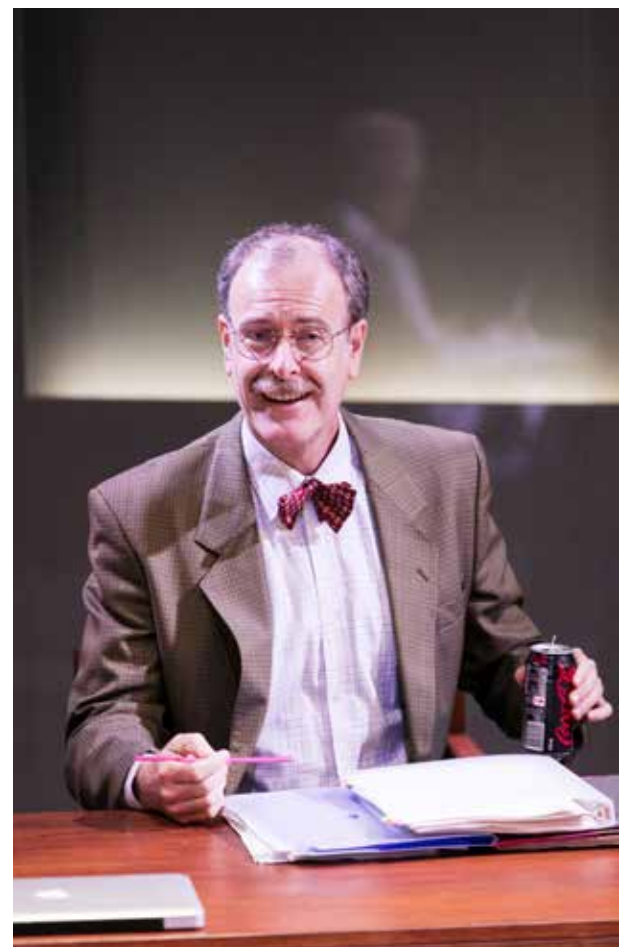
Costume rendering by Julie Lynch (2017)



John Howard



Costume rendering by Julie Lynch (2017)



Christopher Stollery



Costume rendering by Julie Lynch (2017)



Helen Thomson



Costume rendering by Julie Lynch (2017)



Kit Esuruoso

PRODUCTION ELEMENTS

SET DESIGN

The play is set in periods of time between 2005 (when Elle Macpherson accuses Mary-Ellen of leaking private information to the press) and 2013 (when Mary-Ellen donates her kidney to Mark). The action of the play takes place in different locations: Sydney, London, the USA and France. Locations from Mark Colvin's past also exist on stage during the play. On one occasion, while on dialysis, Mark hallucinates that he is in Goma (near Rwanda). On another occasion we see a young Mark telephone his father from a hotel in Tehran, Iran.

At the beginning of each Belvoir rehearsal period the Set Designer will give a design presentation to the company outlining their design and inspirations. In this presentation Michael Hankin spoke about the need for the *Mark Colvin's Kidney* set to allow for these bold shifts in geography and time but also to remain fluid so as to move effortlessly around the character of Mary-Ellen, who is in almost every scene.



Michael Hankin presents his model box to the company during a design presentation for *Mark Colvin's Kidney* (2017)

Questions to consider after seeing the production

How many different locations do you remember in the productions?

Were any of the set pieces (furniture) used in more than one scene?

How were the set pieces used to create different locations?

How effective did you find this choice?

SET MODEL BOX



Set Model Box: *Mark Colvin's Kidney*
Michael Hankin (2017)



Set Model Box: *Mark Colvin's Kidney*
Michael Hankin (2017)

SET MODEL BOX



Set Model Box: *Mark Colvin's Kidney*
Michael Hankin (2017)



Set Model Box: *Mark Colvin's Kidney*
Michael Hankin (2017)

Set model boxes are made by set designers at a 1:25 scale.

PODCAST



Helen Thomson and Sarah Peirse

Elle Macpherson, the ABC's Mark Colvin, Rwanda, the phone-hacking scandal and everything in between, this is the real-life story of an unlikely friendship between one of our finest journalists and the extraordinary woman who saved his life.

Playwright Tommy Murphy brings this incredible true story to life in collaboration with director David Berthold (the dream team behind *Holding the Man*). Starring the glorious Sarah Peirse as Mary-Ellen Field, alongside Peter Carroll, Kit Esuruoso, Christopher Stollery, John Howard as Mark Colvin and Helen Thomson as Elle Macpherson.

Produced for Belvoir by Zoe Ferguson

Listen to the *Mark Colvin's Kidney* podcast online [here](http://belvoir.com.au/schools-performances/mark-colvins-kidney/#Podcast).

<http://belvoir.com.au/schools-performances/mark-colvins-kidney/#Podcast>

CONTACT EDUCATION

JANE MAY, EDUCATION MANAGER

02 8396 6222
jane@belvoir.com.au

SIMONE EVANS, EDUCATION COORDINATOR

02 8396 6241
simone@belvoir.com.au

Belvoir Education would like to thank **Amy Goodhew, Georgia Goode, Michael Hankin, Julie Lynch** and **Cara Nash** and for their support in creating these notes.