

Scenes from the Climate Era

27 May - 25 June

By
David Finnigan
Directed by
Carissa Licciardello



**BELVOIR ST
THEATRE**

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Oranges & Sardines
Patty Akopiantz & Justin Punch



Scenes from the Climate Era

27 May - 25 June

RUN TIME

1 hour and 20 minutes (no interval)

WARNINGS

Scenes from the Climate Era includes the use of strobe lighting.

Some elements of the show's design may affect people with coeliac disease. Masks will be available on request. If you have any concerns, please contact our box office.

CAST

Harriet Gordon-Anderson

Abbie-Lee Lewis

Brandon McClelland

Ariadne Sgourgos

Charles Wu

CREATIVES

Writer David Finnigan

Director Carissa Licciardello

Set & Lighting Designer Nick Schlieper

Costume Designer Ella Butler

Composer & Sound Designer David Bergman

Vocal Coach Laura Farrell

Assistant Director Clement Rukundo

Dramaturg Vaishnavi Suryaprakash

Observing Director Rikiah Lizarraga

Stage Manager Luke McGettigan

Assistant Stage Manager

Christopher Starnawski

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We acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation who are the traditional custodians of the land on which we share our stories. We also pay our respect to the Elders past and present, and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Front cover image by Dan Boud
Rehearsal photography by Brett Boardman



WRITER'S NOTE

DAVID FINNIGAN

I've been making theatre with climate researchers for nearly 20 years. Before that, I grew up surrounded by environmental scientists (my dad is a climate researcher specialising in turbulence and windflow). In the whole time I've been following the climate conversation, I've never seen anything like the last five years. Everything is shifting, fast, in good ways and bad, and the pace is dizzying.

People have been talking about climate change since the 1970s. For most of those five decades, the conversation has been stuck in a loop. Politicians, businesses, activists, scientists, climate deniers, all saying the same things, while the only thing changing is the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

About five years ago, everything changed.

In science conferences and journals, climate scientists began debating solutions that would have been unacceptable just five years earlier. Fossil fuel lobbyists and pundits shifted tactics from direct climate denial to the language of greenwashing and delay.

In the political sphere, governments and businesses started signing up (sincerely or not) to 'Net Zero by 2050' pledges. There was a new wave of climate activism, from Extinction Rebellion to the school strikes, both larger and more extreme than anything that had come before.

And all over the world, climate impacts hit harder and faster than any model predicted.

Before five years ago, I felt like my writing was trying to direct people's attention to the conversations happening in climate science. After that shift, those conversations were suddenly everywhere. In the last five years, my work has shifted to an attempt to document the flood of climate conversations taking place everywhere: in meeting rooms, on social media, over dinner tables, in bus shelters, car radios and on dancefloors.

I was raised to live in a world that was a certain way. That world no longer exists. Truthfully, it was gone before any of us were born. We were educated for a life on a planet that was already gone, and we didn't know it. Now we're starting

to take stock of the world we actually live in, and it means rethinking everything.

I wrote this play as an attempt to capture some of the thousands of stories unfolding in this space over the last few years. This is a selection of some of the things shared with me by colleagues working in research, in climate policy, in the mining industry, on the frontlines of activism, and many other sectors.

This play is a snapshot of some of the contours of this new world. And it's also an invitation. Because we can't navigate this new world by ourselves. So, we're inviting you here for a conversation, to help us figure out: what is this new planet we've found ourselves on? And how are we going to get through it?

An incomplete list of people whose work I've drawn on in telling these stories:

Anab Jain, Honor Harger, Ketan Joshi, Naomi Oreskes, Issa Lopez, Peter Brannen, Alex Steffen, Ben Yeoh, Andreas Malm, Anna Emmelin, Brian Walker, Beth Fulton, Roger Bradbury, Anne-Marie Grisogono, Victor Steffensen, Greg Mullins, Bernie Krause, Clive Hamilton, Kim Stanley Robinson, James Bradley, Ed Yong, Thom Van Dooren, Rebecca Huntley, Tyson Yunkaporta, Cassie Lynch, Michael-Shawn Fletcher, Dan Hill, Holly Jean Buck, James Vaccaro, Kimberley Jutze, Lydia Hascott, Elizabeth Kolpert,

David Wallace-Wells, Gaia Vince, Amitav Ghosh, Derrick Jensen, Jamie McCaughey, Sabrina Smith, and DJ Sabrina The Teenage DJ's incredible 2020 album '*Charmed*'.

An even more incomplete list of the people who've helped me make this, through readings and good advice:

First of all, a massive thanks to Belvoir for picking up this play and running with it. Especial thanks to Carissa Licciardello, Vaishnavi Suryaprakash, Eamon Flack, Dom Mercer, Zainab Syed, and all the cast and creatives behind this work. A script is just a few thousand words in a word document, but this play was created by all these people, and I don't even know how they did it.

Secondly, thanks to those people who helped shape this script from its earliest form to where it is now: Rebecca Giggs (always), Annette Mees, Adam Hadley, Jordan Prosser, Chris Finnigan, Nathan Harrison, Rachel Roberts, Bec Massey, Nikki Kennedy, David Shaw, Jordan Prosser, Lloyd Allison-Young, Eleanor White, Yolande Norris, Jean Mostyn, Elly Speer, Tom Wright, Bridget Balodis, Chris Thorpe and Tessa de Josselin.

Finally, thanks to the two scientists who've shaped what I do: my dad and his best friend, John Finnigan and Will Steffen.



Brandon McClelland, Ariadne Sgouros, Charles Wu, Harriet Gordon-Anderson & Abbie-lee Lewis



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

CARISSA LICCIARDELLO

Few other scripts I've encountered in my time at Belvoir so captured my imagination as this one.

From the first read, the ambition of the work was clear - here was a play grappling not only with the major challenge of our times, but with how the hell do you even begin to do that through theatrical form. In our current cultural landscape, theatre still mostly favours the single, linear story, the contained timeline, and the hyper-naturalistic setting - features that do not neatly lend themselves to tackling an issue of such colossal scope.

But in *Scenes*, David comes at the issue via post-drama, via montage - his approach is kaleidoscopic. The collection of scenes he's written each spin the glass to give us a different angle on the climate era, and each one sparks our minds in a new way. Far from the didacticism one might expect from a play about climate change, the scenes form a conversation across the play, complementing, contradicting, and compounding on one another.

And it's in the accumulative power of these scenes that David's play makes what I believe is its central and most significant offering. The play begins by meeting most of us where we're at - thinking of climate change as something that we'll either more or less solve, or will drive us into apocalypse - and then, scene-by-scene, offers us a way to move beyond this binary, towards something more complex and therefore truer, taking us through dread and horror and fascination and beauty and laughter in equal measure. It offers us a new way of seeing, and therefore coping, and therefore living.

The task for the creative team was an exciting one - the montage form required the design team to create a context in which the scenes would be played out, and thus carry much of the ultimate meaning of the work; and it required us to shape a satisfying journey through the play while embracing its multiplicity. Over several months leading up to rehearsals, David, myself and dramaturg Vaishnavi Suryaprakash worked carefully to refine the scenes and curate what we hoped would be a satisfying shape for the work. At the same time, set and lighting designer Nick Schlieper, and costume designer Ella Butler

and I worked to create a theatrical language that was economical but eloquent, giving us the dexterity to move from one scene to another in an instant, and allowing us to always foreground the dramatic situation. We also sought to realise an environment onstage in which the actors were not fully in control – one that evolved over the course of the production – and one that, we hoped, could allow an audience to sit inside the heart of David's thesis.

Despite how harrowing some of the content is, I have never laughed more in a rehearsal room. You couldn't ask for a more vibrant, energetic, and committed team than the one who has created this work. It's been a pleasure to make this show, and we hope that it galvanises, enthrals, and entertains you as much as it has us.



Charles Wu and Harriet Gordon-Anderson



Abbie-lee Lewis



Ariadne Sgouros



Brandon McClelland



Charles Wu



Brandon McClelland



Brandon McClelland, Abbie-lee Lewis and Carissa Licciardello



Harriet Gordon-Anderson





David Bergman



Christopher Starnawski



Nick Schlieper & Carissa Licciardello



Laura Farrell



Luke McGettigan



Rikiah Lizarraga and Clement Rukundo

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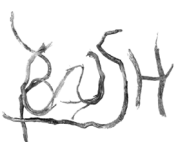
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