THE BIRDS

- *The Birds* is adapted from Daphne Du Maurier's 1952 short story, *The Birds* and adapted for the stage by Louise Fox. The play was first produced and presented by Malthouse Theatre in 2025. It was commissioned and developed by Malthouse Theatre. The production is directed by Matthew Lutton and opened at Belvoir on Wednesday 20th May 2026.
- *The Birds* runs for approximately 1 hours and 20 minutes, with no interval.
- *The Birds* is a psychological thriller and horror story set in a coastal town and centred around a couple and their two young children – Tessa (the mother), Nat (the father), Jill (the daughter) and Johnny (the son). This adaptation is set in present-day Australia, and the protagonist has been changed from a male character (Nat) to a female character (Tessa). The story is narrated by Tessa who describes the events to the audience as they unfold.
- There is only one actor in the production, Paula Arundell, who plays all of the characters. Each character is made distinct through voice and physicality.
- The events of the story take place shortly after Tessa, relocates her family from the city to a small coastal town. Shortly after their arrival, Tessa notices unusual activity among birds in the area. Over the following three days, the birds begin to swarm, attack people and invade homes.
- The production has a minimal set, with the space representing several different locations, both interior and exterior. The production makes use of technical elements to create atmosphere and impact.
- The production contains **sudden, loud noises** and **very bright white flashing lights** which may impact students with photosensitivity. These effects are intended to startle, representing moments when the birds suddenly attack.
- [SPOILER] The production contains graphic descriptions of birds violently attacking people and the wounds inflicted. ['…now there are five, maybe more, frenzied, flapping in circles around me … others pick and tear at the exposed flesh on my hand and feet and neck.]
- The play contains some coarse language, used by Tessa at a time of intense pressure and stress. The word 'c*nt' is used on one occasion. In one scene, halfway through the play, Tessa discovers the birds have tried to enter the house through the chimney. She says: 'Those bastards. Little fucking bastards. It's the birds. They're trying to come down the chimney. I'll show them. I'll burn them. I'll burn as many of the fuckers as I can. Come on! Come on down!! All of you!!!! I'll put a hundred logs on. I'll fan those fucking flames. You sneaky fucks. You evil, fucking, sneaky c*nts. I'll burn every stinking one of you. I don't care if I burn this whole fucking house down. And I'll burn every one of you with it. Even the dead ones. I'll burn you dead or alive*. You're evil. Evil fucking demons!!!!*
- [SPOILER]The production contains a graphic description of a fatal helicopter crash caused by a swarm of birds deliberately flying into the rotor blades. Tessa describes the dead birds: 'Hundreds of shredded corpses, jam, blunt and twist the metal wings.' and the death of the pilots '…tortured faces of the soldiers, burning to death…we all hear their screams.'
- [SPOILER] Toward the end of the play, Tessa enters the house of a neighbour, Muriel and her two children. Tessa discovers the body of Muriel, still holding her young son's hand. Tessa describes their dead bodies: '…her mouth a deep hollow and her cheeks pierced, her eye sockets clean pecked out of her skull but even in death she holds Fred's hand, his face peeled half off and his young body riddled with punctures and wounds, his torn open throat exposed, his mangled heart chewed, his lungs flat, collapsed, dead also.'
- [SPOILER] Following the sequence above, Tessa encounters Muriel's daughter, who is barely alive following the attack. Tessa smothers the child with a pillow, as an act of mercy. The sequence of events is described, with only nominal physical actions.
- The play contains graphic description of dead birds ['they crunch, bruised and broken on the asphalt'] and a reference to shooting birds.
- The play contains a reference to someone having a panic attack, and a veiled reference to a breakdown.
- The production contains a smoke effect, and the on-stage use of herbal cigarettes.
- Tickets are not sent out beforehand, please collect your tickets from the Box Office in the foyer of the theatre upon arrival.