

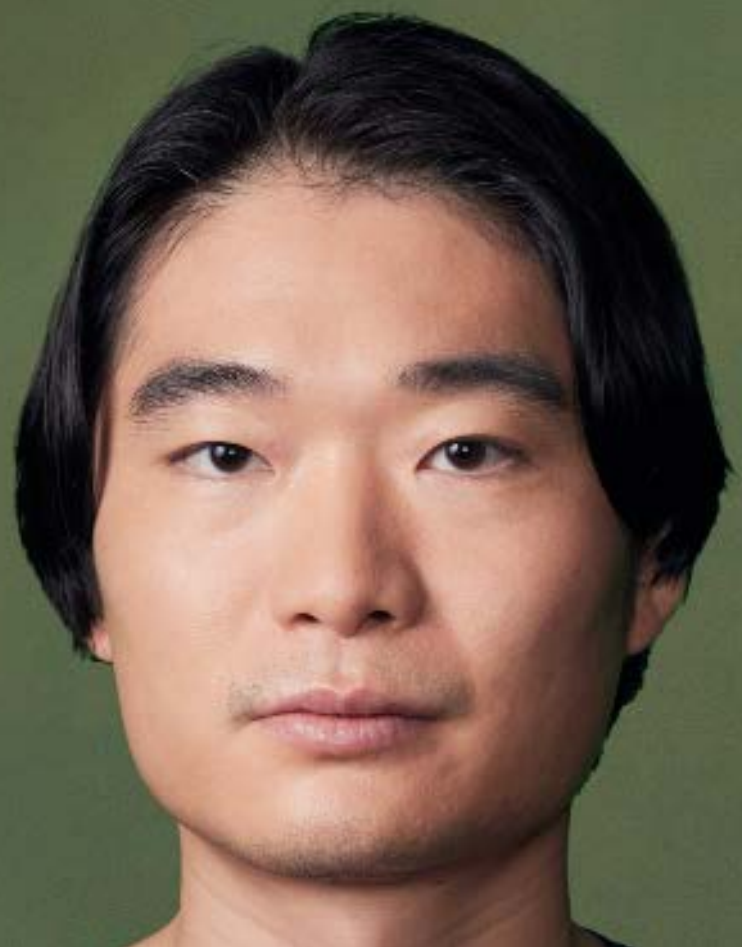


**BELVOIR ST
THEATRE**

SCENES FROM THE CLIMATE ERA

27 MAY - 25 JUNE 2023

**LEARNING
RESOURCES**



Belvoir presents

SCENES FROM THE CLIMATE ERA

By **David Finnigan**

Directed by **Carissa Licciardello**

This production of *Scenes from the Climate Era* opened at Belvoir St Theatre on Wednesday 31 May 2023.

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**

With

Harriet Gordon-Anderson

Abbie-Lee Lewis

Brandon McClelland

Ariadne Sgourgos

Charles Wu

Supported by **Oranges & Sardines, Patty Akopiantz & Justin Punch**

We acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation who are the traditional custodians of the land on which Belvoir St Theatre is built. We also pay respect to the Elders past, present and emerging, and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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BELVOIR

ST THEATRE

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 Aaron Beach, 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



David Finngian
Writer



Carissa Licciardello
Director



David Bergman
Sound Designer



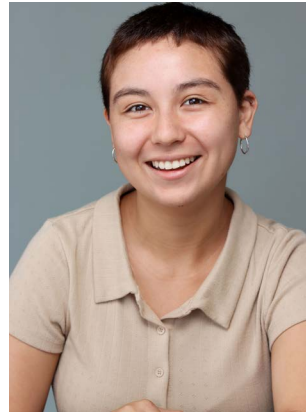
Ella Butler
Costume Designer



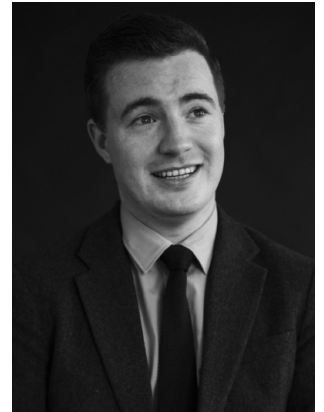
Harriet Gordon-Anderson
Cast



Abbie-Lee Lewis
Cast



Rikiah Lizarraga
Observing Director



Brandon McClelland
Cast



Luke McGettigan
Associate Lighting Designer



Clement Rukundo
Assistant Director



Nick Schlieper
Lighting Designer



Ariadne Sgourgos
Cast



Christopher Starnawski
Assistant Stage Manager



Chloe Ogilvie
Lighting Designer



Charles Wu
Cast

WRITER'S NOTE

DAVID FINNIGAN

PROGRAM

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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.



Ariande Sgourgos

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 Suryaprakesh, 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.



Ariadne Sgourgos, Charles Wu

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

CARISSA LICCIARDELLO

PROGRAM

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.

TEXT

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.

DESIGN

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, enthralls, and entertains you as much as it has us.

PRODUCTION

MEDIA



Brandon McClelland, Carissa Licciardello



Carissa Licciardello

EXPLORE THE SCRIPT

PROGRAM

Scenes from the Climate Era is written by David Finnigan. David is a playwright and game designer from Ngunnawal Country. He works with climate and earth scientists to create theatre and games about complex systems and planetary transformation.

ACTIVITY

In groups, read through the following lines of dialogue (page 12 & 13) from *Scenes from the Climate Era*. Take turns to read each line aloud.

You might like to consider how you say your line to communicate meaning.

Listen carefully as the lines are delivered as they contain information that will help you start to understand who and what the play is about as well as where the action might be taking place. These lines of dialogue are from different scenes in the play.

Once your group has read through all the lines consider what you have heard and complete the activity table.

There are no right or wrong answers, you are using the clues in the dialogue to consider what the play might be about and where the action might be taking place.

[GO TO LINES OF DIALOGUE](#)

TEXT

DESIGN

PRODUCTION

MEDIA



Abbie-lee Lewis

ACTIVITY TABLE

WHAT happens in the play (plot and action):

WHO is in the play (characters):

WHERE the action takes place (setting):

WHEN the action occurs (time):

WHAT ideas and themes are explored (thematic concerns):

LINES OF DIALOGUE

GROUP 1

1. *My last plane flight? Ages ago, god, I think it must have been... December 2038, that's right. I hadn't flown for five years or maybe more by that point.*
2. *Everyone's signed their NDA, but again just to be crystal clear: you do not discuss what we talk about here. This is not a government project, this is not a university, so the rules are a little different to what some of you may be used to. If that's an issue for anyone, this is your moment to theatrically head to the door. Grab one of those little quiches from the buffet on your way out.*
3. *Do you think that distress gives you the right to break into a construction site and detonate an explosive on the front seat of a truck?*
4. *So this morning, I took off from Tienyang Base in a KC-135 Stratotanker with a cargo of about 30 tons of sulfur dioxide. With me?*
5. *That's what I'm saying. The best climate anthems were never actually meant to be about the climate crisis.*

GROUP 2

6. *Well - getting pregnant is, like, the worst possible thing you can do, right? It blows everything else out of the water. You stop driving, stop flying, stop eating meat, use a canvas bag for 50 years, and then you have a kid and it all gets wiped out.*
7. *Hi everyone, Welcome. This is the show. Zero to 'should we have a child in an age of climate ruin' in less than ten seconds, which has got to be some kind of record.*
8. *People go through three stages when they're getting to grips with climate change. Stage 1 - denial. You know the world is transforming, but it's big, it's scary, it's too much to comprehend. Intellectually you know it's happening, but deep down in your gut, you can't believe it. And so you're paralysed.*
9. *I know about the stages, I'm not interested. Listen, I don't need people spraying hope at me. The reason we're in this mess is that we kept hoping things would get better. Hope is what chains us to this system, hope is the enemy.*
10. *But the shocks aren't the end, they're the beginning. The shocks are just the opening act, and then we're really in the climate era.*



Brandon McClelland, Carissa Licciardello, Abbie-lee Lewis

GROUP 3

11. *I'm losing, I guess, my sense of a future. When I was a kid I thought that my life would get easier as it went along, and now I've lost that feeling.*
12. *If climate is a crisis, then all of us alive today were born in the crisis. And we'll die in the crisis, we live our whole lives inside the crisis. I'm saying it's too big to be a crisis.*
13. *Yeah it matters. I want to know that we're going to get through this. Even if none of us gets to see it, I want to know that there's an end to this.*
14. *Why is it up to the people bringing the bad news to also conjure up some good news? I'm an atmospheric chemist, I'm not a cheerleader.*
15. *I don't know, because they do. We do. You feel despair, and it washes over you, and then you get up and keep fighting. It doesn't mean you don't care, it doesn't mean you can't feel joy, it just means you've let go of hope.*

GROUP 4

16. *Their model says that within 200 years it could be five degrees hotter. The ice caps will just melt. Are you sure that's wrong? Because if you're not sure, you can't just go on TV and dismiss it.*
17. *Finally, 1am, a breakthrough. A deal is on the table. No disagreement. The chairman of the negotiations reads out the finalised agreement line by line one last time. Everyone gets ready to sign. At that moment, 1.42am, Robert Hill stands up and says, "We need to include a special exemption so Australia can keep emitting greenhouse gases. If we don't get that loophole in the agreement, Australia walks away and you don't get a consensus."*
18. *When you phrase it like that, you're basically accusing them of corruption. If you publish this, we'll get a letter from their lawyers tomorrow morning.*
19. *Well it depends. I want a solar panel for our place, I think they're great. But when they talk about putting wind farms all over the country, then no, I'd prefer the coal.*
20. *I don't mind sacrifice, but who's sacrificing? This young person - and I know you're just doing your job, you're saying what you've been told to say - but you're telling us we need to make sacrifices. What are you giving up?*

GROUP 5

21. *No-one saw it coming. There are old blokes who'd been fighting fires fifty years - they've seen everything, and they didn't pick it. One of them said, there's something new here.*
22. *This shipping container has been converted into a little frog habitat. And just one frog lives here. One silver fringe-limbed tree frog. And there's me, every day, keeping vigil.*
23. *Climate change is a crisis. Like there are farmers now who have to plant rice at night, wearing headlamps, because it's too hot to be out in the daytime. You don't think that's happening?*
24. *Expected maximum in Penrith, 55 degrees Celsius. Tenth straight day of more than 50 degrees.*
25. *I remember covid when I was a little girl, we weren't allowed to leave the house. This is like that, except we can't even leave the room. When I get up to go to the bathroom, it's so hot in the corridor I feel like I can't breathe.*

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 *Scenes from the Climate Era*
Sustainability concept in the Costume Design
Set and Lighting beginning and end states

COSTUME DESIGN

ELLA BUTLER

Sustainability was a defining factor in all facets of design for the show, *Scenes from The Climate Era*. This is of course something that designers and makers internationally are focusing on to ensure sustainable practice is maintained. However, for this show it became a driving conceptual ethos and challenge to confront. Sometimes it can feel wastage is an inevitable part of the theatre making process; a show goes up and eventually will come down. To ensure we were truly taking an environmental approach to the production we limited ourselves to existing stock, second hand and actors' own clothing throughout the fitting process. All but 3 individual costume elements in the show sit within this criteria. This was a real task in flexibility, restraint and patience. Judy Tanner (Costume Supervisor) and I did not over-purchase and held off to find the right items for the actor and for the palette of the show. A huge thank you to St Vincent De Paul Charity stores that are now honouring a returns policy. This meant in the few moments we needed to return items that were not appropriate we weren't contributing to the donations load that continues to overwhelm charity shops.



PROGRAM

TEXT

DESIGN

PRODUCTION

MEDIA

SET & LIGHTING DESIGN



Set & Lighting Design, by Nick Schlieper



Set & Lighting Design, by Nick Schlieper

Questions to consider after seeing this production

1. What are the key differences between the beginning state of the play and the final image?
2. Why might this change have taken place?
3. How are set pieces used to change the space? What impact does this have?
4. How has the designer used stage space, texture, colour and composition to enhance dramatic meaning?

REHEARSING SCENES FROM THE CLIMATE ERA

PROGRAM

TEXT

DESIGN

PRODUCTION

MEDIA



Charles Wu, Harriet Gordon-Anderson, Ariadne Sgourgos

1. What do you think is happening in this scene? Give reasons for your answer
2. What evidence is there that this is a rehearsal?



Brandon McClelland, Carissa Licciardello, Abbie-Lee Lewis

1. Describe what you see in the photo above
2. What do you think is happening? Give reasons for your answer.



Abbie-Lee Lewis, Ariadne Sgourgos,

1. Describe what you see in the photo above.
2. What do you think is happening in this moment?
3. What do you think the relationship is between these characters? Give reasons for your answer



Charles Wu

1. Describe what you see in the picture above.
2. What do you think is happening in this moment? Give reasons for your answers

POST SHOW DISCUSSION

PROGRAM

TEXT

DESIGN

PRODUCTION

MEDIA



Ariadne Sgourgos, Harriet Gordon-Anderson, Charles Wu, Brandon McClelland, Abbie-Lee Lewis,

How does the play explore themes of humanity?



Ariadne Sgourgos, Brandon McClelland, Charles Wu

How does the play present varied perspectives?

Did a scene in the play resonate with your experience? Why or why not?



Abbie-Lee Lewis, Ariadne Sgourgos

The play mentions four stages of responding to climate change denial, despair, solutions and hope. How does the play explore these stages? Give examples.



Ariadne Sgourgos, Harriet Gordon-Anderson

How did the play use time and place to create a montage of the themes?

WHAT MOMENT IN THE PLAY HAD THE MOST IMPACT ON YOU AND WHY?

PROGRAM

TEXT

DESIGN

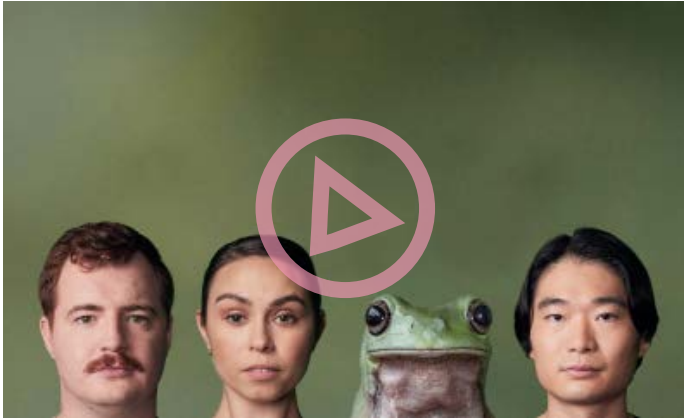
PRODUCTION

MEDIA



Brandon McClelland

WATCH & LISTEN



Social Media Trailer | *Scenes from the Climate Era*

Take a look at the creative trailer for the show.

[WATCH NOW](#)



Interview with the Director

Belvoir Resident Director, Hannah Goodwin, sat down with Director of *Scenes from the Climate Era*, Carissa Licciardello (*Opening Night, A Room Of One's Own*) to discuss what audiences should expect to see in this new work by climate playwright, David Finnigan.

[WATCH NOW](#)

Social Media | *Scenes from the Climate Era*

Lots of sneak-peek content, and promotional information can be found on social media. Take a look at the grid and the stories for more content during the run.



ARTICLES & REVIEWS

How the little-known art of dramaturgy can help us make sense of climate change by Eamon Flack, for Green Left - May 23, 2023

[READ ARTICLE](#)

Becoming a target changed how this playwright thought about art by Hannah Story, Sydney Morning Herald - May 24, 2023

[READ INTERVIEW](#)

**Scenes from the Climate Era review - the world's biggest story, told in 50 plays over 80 minutes ★★★★★
- The Guardian**

[READ THE REVIEW](#)



Audience Reviews | *Scenes from the Climate Era*

Find out what audiences had to say after seeing David Finnigan's *Scenes from the Climate Era*.

[WATCH NOW](#)

CONTACT EDUCATION

PROGRAM

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TEXT

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DESIGN

Belvoir Education would like to thank Jake Severino, Xu Yang Chua, Ella Butler, Ren Kenwood and Topaz Marlay-Cole for their support creating these resources.

PRODUCTION

MEDIA