



# Ensemble Theatre Receives Major Gift From The Balnaves Foundation

April 3

<http://www.broadwayworld.com/sydney/article/Ensemble-Theatre-Receives-Major-Gift-From-The-Balnaves-Foundation-20160403>



Ensemble Theatre, Australia's longest, non-funded continuously running professional theatre company has today been given a major gift of \$300,000 from The Balnaves Foundation.

Mark Kilmurry, Artistic Director of Ensemble Theatre said he and the entire team at Ensemble is absolutely thrilled by the huge generosity of Neil Balnaves and The Balnaves Foundation. Neil visited our theatre several months back then phoned to say he thought Ensemble was Sydney's 'best kept secret'. He liked what we were doing, in particular performing the often confronting plays which we feel are important on so many

levels to help make us think about our society and its people differently.

This gift is a huge boost to Ensemble Theatre and its actors, writers and all who are involved in our wonderful theatre. This generous gift will be utilised over 3 years on marketing, PR, and communications. Our ultimate aim is to reinforce the Ensemble's place as a major and important theatre company in the Sydney where people can enjoy a varied and wide range of productions.

Ensuring that Australia has a flourishing arts sector is important to our national identity, our individual and collective health and our economy. The arts is the inception point for new ideas by helping us to stretch our imagination, stimulate our creativity, nourish our soul and help us process, change and make sense of the world around us said Neil Balnaves, Chair, The Balnaves Foundation.

Theatre is so much more than entertainment. Good theatre challenges our beliefs, helps us to empathise with others, looks at the problems we confront individually and as a society and helps us find solutions and ultimately better our lives. We wanted to support Ensemble because it does these very things so well. We want to see Ensemble grow, have its voice heard and help as many people as possible to benefit from what Ensemble does added Neil Balnaves.

Ensemble Theatre is Australia's longest, continuously running professional theatre company. Since its inception, Ensemble Theatre has presented over 350 productions. Many of Australia's favourite performers have appeared at Ensemble Theatre including Lorraine Bayly, Simon Burke, Russell Crowe, Max Cullen, Max Gillies, Darren Gilshenan, Nancye Hayes, Reg Livermore, Garry McDonald, Todd McKenney, Amanda Muggleton, Georgie Parker, Marina Prior, Craig Reucassel, Brooke Satchwell, Henri Szeps, Jack Thompson, William Zappa and international performers such as Warren Mitchell and Greta Scacchi.

Ensemble Theatre began in 1958, when a group of talented theatricals, who had been studying acting with American expatriate actor Hayes Gordon, assembled to present the first of two Sunday night performances in Cammeray Children's Library, and in 1960 the theatre moved to the current premises in the old boatshed at Careening Cove. The theatre this year celebrates 56 years in Kirribilli.

There have been only three Artistic Directors since Ensemble Theatre's beginning: Hayes Gordon for the first 27 years, Sandra Bates for the next 30 years and, after ten years as Associate Director, then Co-Artistic Director, Mark Kilmurry is now the sole Artistic Director.

The Balnaves Foundation is a private philanthropic organisation established in 2006 by Neil Balnaves AO to provide support to charitable enterprises across Australia.

Dispersing over \$2.5 million annually, the Foundation supports eligible organisations that aim to create a better Australia through education, medicine and the arts with a focus on young people, the disadvantaged and Indigenous communities.