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SYDNEY'S ENSEMBLE THEATRE GETS A \$300,000 GIFT FROM THE BALNAVES FOUNDATION

By **Daily Review** (<https://dailyreview.com.au/author/dailyreview/>) April 4, 2016

Ensemble Theatre (<http://ensemble.com.au>) based on Sydney's North Shore has received \$300,000 from The Balnaves Foundation. It's a gift, Ensemble's artistic director Mark Kilmurry says, that was a direct result of a visit to the theatre by the Foundation's chairman Neil Balnaves (<http://www.balnavesfoundation.com/biography>).

"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," Kilmurry said today.

"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 theatre reyears 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."

Neil Balneves said in a statement: "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."

"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," he said.

Ensemble Theatre was established in 1958 and has never received government funding. It relies on box office returns, donations and corporate sponsors to run an annual season of 10 to 12 plays that usually includes established UK and US plays, revivals of Australian plays and new works — in recent years David Williamson has premiered his plays there. The waterfront theatre's 220 seat theatre in Kirribilli boasts 9000 subscribers — the third largest in the country after the state subsidised Sydney Theatre Company and Melbourne Theatre Company.

Its next production, beginning April 7, is American writer David Lindsay-Abaire's contemporary comedy of manners *Good People* (<http://ensemble.com.au/whats-on/plays/good-people>) to be directed by Kilmurry.

The Balnaves Foundation is a private philanthropic organisation set up by Neil Balnaves in 2006 and distributes over \$2.5 million annually to organisations working in education, medicine and the arts with a focus on young people, the disadvantaged and indigenous communities.

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A big thank you to Neil Balnaves who does not want the theatre named after him in return and has no casino interests or relatives who do! The Ensemble is indeed a treasure.

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