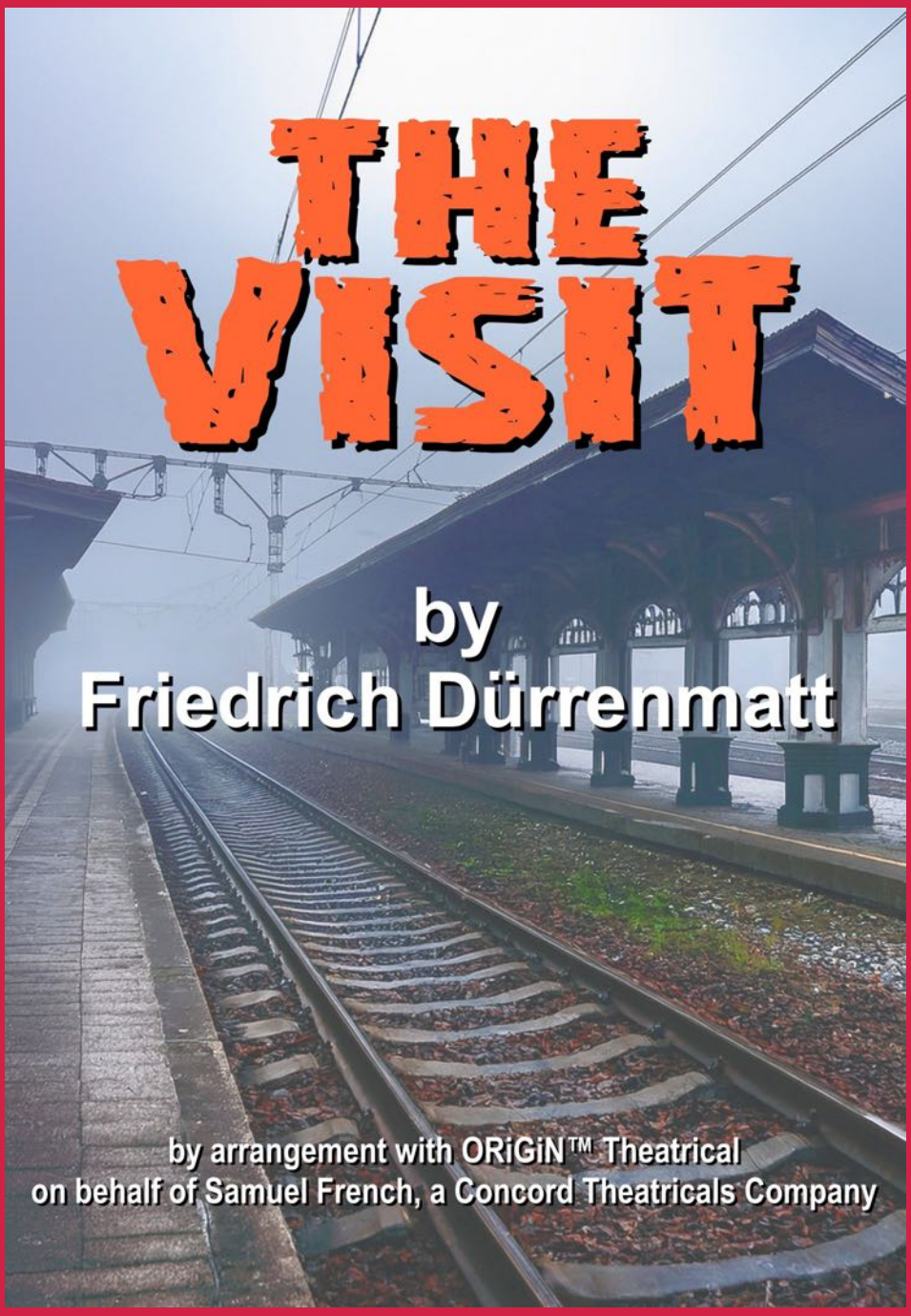
malvern theatre company

is proud to present its 383rd major production



17 April – 2 May 2026

Directed by Andrew Ferguson

About the Play

The Visit is a darkly satirical and tragic comedy that explores justice, vengeance and moral decay. When billionaire Claire Zachanassian returns to her impoverished hometown of Güllen, she offers the citizens a fortune – on one chilling condition: they must kill the man who once betrayed her. Initially appalled, the townspeople slowly rationalise the murder.

Dürrenmatt masterfully exposes the fragility of ethics under financial desperation, weaving absurdity and irony into a haunting critique of collective guilt. As Claire's grotesque entourage and surreal demands unfold, the play explores the dark side of human nature, especially societal compromise. *The Visit* is a masterpiece of 20th Century European theatre – we are proud to bring this seldom-performed work to the Malvern stage.

About the Playwright, Friedrich Dürrenmatt

Friedrich Dürrenmatt was a renowned Swiss playwright, novelist, and essayist. Born in 1921 in Konolfingen, his works are characterised by their sharp wit, philosophical depth, and exploration of moral dilemmas.

Dürrenmatt's plays, such as *Der Besuch der Alten Dame (The Visit)* and *Die Physiker (The Physicists)*, often examine the complexities of justice and human nature, while blending dark humour with suspense. His storytelling is also marked by a keen sense of irony. Dürrenmatt's legacy continues to influence writers and theatre-makers, making him a pivotal figure in European literature.



Director
Andrew Ferguson

Andrew is an experienced director and set designer, working mostly at Malvern Theatre Company, Encore Theatre Company and The 1812 Theatre, where he designed and directed *The Fire Raisers* in 2024.

Andrew also acts on the Malvern Theatre Company stage, including in 2022 in *The Lady in the Van*, receiving a VDL nomination for Best Actor in a Drama, and in 2025 in a play-reading of *The Scottish Play*.

Assistant to the Director



Jade Colletti

Jade's recent credits at Malvern Theatre Company include Assistant Director for *Macbeth* (2025) and Director of *Temporal Snaps* (2025), a NEXT GEN original work. An actor, she has also performed with Brighton Theatre Company. Over three years with Malvern Theatre Company, she has developed her practice across producing, writing, directing, and acting. She is grateful to be part of *The Visit* and thanks Andrew for the opportunity.

Director's Notes

I have chosen to set the action during the Weimar Republic in Germany, because it was a time of intense creativity in the Arts and hedonism. Also, political instability and increasing monetary inflation ultimately led to the formation of the Third Reich. I believe the theme of how extreme wealth (and poverty) can lead to the downfall of a society was, and still is, relevant for troubled times.

The design of the production is inspired particularly by German Expressionist cinema, and uses theatrical devices of *Verfremdung*, which are often associated with Brecht. This 'alienation' of the audience employs non-realistic devices to encourage intellectual engagement with, as well as emotional involvement in, the action on stage. Amongst other techniques, you'll experience the actors 'breaking the fourth wall' by addressing you, the audience, directly.

A note on this English version of the original play – it is an adaptation of the text by Maurice Valency, who has taken some liberties with the translation, but he has not altered the town's name, *Güllen*, which as a verb means 'to spread liquid manure'.

Finally, Kobby and Lobby are not played by actors who are blind or partially-sighted. We have researched how to portray these characters respectfully, and are grateful to *Blind Citizens Australia* and *Blind Sports and Recreation Victoria* for their assistance in this matter.

Setting

This production is set in various locations in a small, conservative town in Southern Germany in the 1920s.

The performance runs for 2 hours and 30 minutes, including a 20 minute interval. Complimentary tea, coffee and biscuits will be available during the interval. Wine will also be available for purchase.

The Cast

Claire Zachanassian ..... Pam Christie Birkett

Anton Schill ..... Nicholas Opolski

Mayor ..... Duncan Woodcock

Teacher ..... Bill Konstantinidis

Policeman ..... Hamish Walker

Nun, First Woman ..... Penelope Peck

Doctor ..... Marcus Flood

Bobby ..... Gilbert Gauci

Pedro, Photographer ..... Anuk De Silva

Ensemble *in alphabetical order by surname*

Train Conductor, First Blind Person, Athlete, Newspaper Reporter ..... Sam Bennett

Painter, Barman ..... Bob Bramble

Second Blind Person, Shop Customer, Radio Reporter ..... Ashweni De Silva

Mayor's Daughter, Schill's Daughter, Truck Driver, Radio Reporter ..... Jessica Evans

First Person, Schill's Wife ..... Pia Maganov

Station Master, Second Person ..... Lynne McGregor

Fourth Person, Max ..... Blake Randall

Third Person, Mike, Schill's Son ..... Damian Russo

Second Person, Mayor's Wife ..... Claire Ryan Ruberu



Pam Christie Birkett
Claire Zachanassian

Recipient of four Music Theatre Guild of Victoria Awards (nine times nominated), two GV Georgy Awards, a Bendigo Outstanding Performance Award, and a Peridot Theatre Best Actress award. Grand Finalist, Australian Singing Competition (Contemporary Section). Pam's most recent performances include 'Dorothy Brock' in *42nd Street*, 'Drowsy Chaperone' in *The Drowsy Chaperone*, 'Tanya Cresham-Leigh' in *Mamma Mia!*, all for CLOC Musical Theatre, 'Annie Clarke' in *Calendar Girls* at Brighton Theatre Company and 'Helene Hanff' in *84 Charing Cross Rd* at Peridot Theatre Company. Pam has also appeared as 'Elsie Bruno' in *Strangers on a Train* and 'Patricia Highsmith' in *Switzerland* at Malvern Theatre Company.



Nicholas Opolski
Anton Schill

Nicholas has made many appearances at Malvern Theatre Company, with some favourites including: *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, *Our Town*, *33 Variations* and *Julius Caesar*. Other plays as an actor include *Hamlet*, *The Department*, *Tartuffe*, and *Rattle of a Simple Man*. He has appeared with community theatres, State theatre companies, co-ops and on television. He is the Artistic Director of Malvern Theatre Company, and his directing credits with the company include *Dracula*, *Crown Matrimonial*, *Lady in the Van*, and last year's *A Happy and Holy Occasion*.



Duncan Woodcock

Mayor

Duncan commenced his acting career in school plays and with the National Youth Theatre of Great Britain performing in several Shakespeare productions. After training as both a theatre technician and an actor at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School he worked in repertory and theatre-in-education in England and Scotland. Roles he has played include 'Khlestakov' in the *The Government Inspector*, 'Estragon' in *Waiting for Godot*, and 'Woyzeck' in *Woyzeck*. He has also worked in stage management, set construction, lighting and sound, taught at the VCA school of Drama, and is pleased to return to the stage with Malvern Theatre Company.



Bill Konstantinidis

Teacher

Bill studied acting at the William Bates Academy and later at New Vic Theatre. He has appeared in several amateur theatre productions, including *Charley's Aunt* with Sherbrooke Theatre Company in 1999, *A View from a Bridge* with Kyiv Players in 2008, and *Lend Me a Tenor* with the Riyadh Theatre Company in 2018. Bill is excited to be participating in *The Visit*, his third show with Malvern Theatre Company.



Hamish Walker

Policeman

This is Hamish's debut with Malvern Theatre Company. He appeared in *Heatstroke* at The Basin Theatre earlier this year. A VCA film graduate, he's more experienced behind the camera, working tight deadlines as a news producer at the BBC, ABC and Sky News, so in theory he'll hit his cues. By day a public servant, by night an actor, he's delighted to join *The Visit* as 'Police Chief Schultz'. Next stop: Güllen!



Penelope Peck

Nun, *First Woman*

Penelope last appeared with Malvern Theatre Company in their 2025 production of *Macbeth*, winning Best Actor in a Minor Role for her portrayal of 'Lady Macduff', 'The Gentlewoman' and 'The Sergeant'. She has also previously performed with Malvern Theatre Company in the role of 'Anne' in *Key for Two* (2009). At Peridot Theatre Company, she played 'Kelly' in *Chaim's Love Song*, 'Lucy' in *Secret Bridesmaid's Business* and 'The Wife/Mistress' in *The Good Doctor*. Other favourite acting roles include 'Jenny' in *I Remember Mama*, 'Shelby' in *Steel Magnolias*, 'Jess' in *Lipstick Dreams* and 'Cassie' in *Rumors*.



Marcus Flood

Doctor

Marcus is delighted to return to Malvern Theatre Company, having most recently appeared in the 2020 production of *Crown Matrimonial* as the 'Duke of York (Bertie)'. His previous credits include a range of community theatre plays and musicals across Melbourne. He has also written, produced, and performed multiple seasons of his one-man cabaret, *Public Transport: The Good, the Mad and the Ugly*.



Gilbert Gauci

Bobby

This is Gilbert's third show with Malvern Theatre Company, having previously played outlaw, 'Antonio', in *Twelfth Night* (2019) and sleazy reporter, 'Jim McCormack', in *Ladies' Day* (2023). A glutton for the stage, Gilbert has performed in over sixty shows and has already finished up two this year, playing 'Nanny Nora' in *Sleeping Beauty* at Encore Theatre Company and 'Garry' in *A Night on the Tiles* at Peridot Theatre Company. He is honored to serve as 'Bobby' in this production, butler to Madame Claire Zachanassian.



Anuk De Silva

Pedro, Photographer

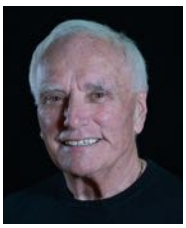
Anuk has been involved in theatre for nearly three decades, beginning his stage journey in Sri Lanka. His favourite roles include 'Prospero' in *The Tempest*, 'Alfieri' in *A View from the Bridge*, 'Juror Number 8' in *12 Angry Men*, and 'Giles Ralston' in *The Mousetrap*. He recently expanded his repertoire into film, contributing voice and motion capture performance to the upcoming animated feature *The Secret of the Moonstone*. Anuk is delighted to be making his Australian stage debut with Malvern Theatre Company in *The Visit*.

Ensemble *in alphabetical order by surname*



Sam Bennett
Train Conductor, First Blind Person, Athlete, Newspaper Reporter

Sam is a bartender and life model from a very small village in Oxfordshire, England. Prior to *The Visit* he performed in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (South Hill Park Arts Centre, UK) and *Orlando* (Marvellous Machine Theatre Company, UK). He currently runs Dry Theatre Company – a theatre group for recovering alcoholics and addicts. *The Visit* is his first show with Malvern Theatre Company.



Bob Bramble
Painter, Barman

Bob has been actively involved in the non-professional theatre scene for fifty years, working with companies such as Lilydale Athenæum, Encore Theatre Company, Peridot Theatre Inc., Eltham Little Theatre and The Basin Theatre Group. Among his favourite roles are 'Saul' in *The Ghost Train* and 'Potter' in *Haunted*. He was inducted into the Lyrebird Hall of Fame for his contribution to community theatre and has received numerous awards and nominations at the Victorian Drama League Awards and the Lyrebird Awards. He is delighted to be making his debut here at Malvern Theatre Company.



Ashweni De Silva
Second Blind Person, Shop Customer, Radio Reporter

Originally from Sri Lanka, Ashweni has spent over 20 years in theatre, working both onstage as an actor and singer, and behind the scenes as a Production Manager and backstage hand. Her credits include *The Wiz, Jesus Christ Superstar, The Phantom of the Opera, and 12 Angry Men/Women.* This production marks her Australian stage debut, and she is excited to continue building her practice within the local theatre community.



Jessica Evans
Mayor's Daughter, Schill's Daughter, Truck Driver, Radio Reporter

Jessica recently relocated to Melbourne and found herself enamoured by the local community theatre scene. Most recently, she worked as an assistant stage manager on the first show of the Malvern Theatre Company 2026 season, *The Tin Woman*. Previously, she has acted in roles as 'Queen Margaret' in *Henry VI: Part III*, 'Cassandra' in *Trojan Barbie* and 'Evelyn' in *The Shape of Things*.



Pia Maganov
First Person, Schill's Wife

Pia is thrilled to be part of this production, her first with Malvern Theatre Company. She is delighted to have this opportunity to work with Andrew again, who previously directed *The Fire Raisers* in 2024 at the 1812 Theatre Company, where Pia played the role of 'Babette'. She has performed with other companies, including The Basin Theatre and Lilydale Athenæum Theatre Company.



Lynne McGregor
Station Master, Second Person

Lynne's most recent stage appearances have been in Strathmore Theatre Arts Group's production of *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, Heidelberg Theatre Company's productions of *The Ladykillers*, *A View From The Bridge* and *Pride and Prejudice*. Previous productions have included Malvern Theatre Company's production of *Pygmalion*, *Twentieth Century Ltd* and *Twelfth Night*. Lynne is delighted to have this opportunity to work with such a talented and creative group of people.



Blake Randall
Fourth Person, Max

As well as his previous volunteering experience with Peridot Theatre Company and The 1812 Theatre in front of house and various set builds, Blake has recently delved into community theatre on the stage. Prior to his ensemble role in *The Visit,* he has also performed as the 'Constable' and ensemble with Peridot Theatre Company in their 2025 production of Nick Dear's *Frankenstein*, directed by George Benca.



Damian Russo
Third Person, Mike, Schill's Son

Damian is making his debut with Malvern Theatre Company, appearing in multiple ensemble roles in *The Visit*. Previous credits include *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Twelve Angry Men*. Damian enjoys exploring moral complexity on stage and brings a thoughtfulness and depth to the characters he portrays in the world of Güllen.



Claire Ryan Ruberu
Second Person, Mayor's Wife, Radio Reporter

The Visit marks Claire's debut with Malvern Theatre Company, and she has enjoyed the welcoming spirit of the Malvern Theatre community. Claire most recently perfected cackling as 'Witch' in Beaumaris Theatre's *The Witches*, performed in their inaugural Monologue Festival and has also appeared in Beaumaris Theatre Company's 2023 production of *Christmas Panto-Revue*. She is loving community theatre again after a long hiatus and is thrilled to be among this fantastic cast and production.

Production Team

Director	Andrew Ferguson
Assistant to the Director	Jade Colletti
Stage Manager	Barry James
Assistant Stage Manager	Jessica Evans
Set Designer	Andrew Ferguson
Lighting and Sound Designer	Michael Birkett
Costume Designer	Harry Bell
Assistant Costume Designer	Tay Chen
Props Designer	Milla Pearl
Lighting and Sound Operator	Michael Birkett
Rehearsal Prompt	Annie Grant
Technical Director	Michael Birkett
Set Construction	David Allen, Noel Ellis, Peter Erlanger, John James, Graeme Munro, Max Murray, Toula Psevdoikonomou
Production Coordinator	Simon Cooper
Programme Designer	Janine Evans
Programme Coordinator	Jade Colletti
Photography	Rory McGrath
Publicity	Blake Stringer
FOH Manager	Judy Clues
Ticketbox Manager	David Gordon
Ticket Secretary	Kerry Carr

Proud member of
2026
THE VICTORIAN DRAMA LEAGUE

Production Crew Bios

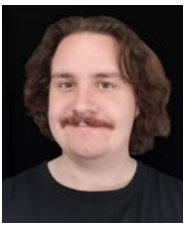


Michael Birkett – *Lighting and Sound Designer*

Michael is a multi disciplined live production technician, designer, and trainer based in Melbourne. As an AV Technician (Head of Production Design, Venue Maintenance, and Student Training at McKinnon Secondary College), and as a freelancer across both theatre and concert production, Michael displays abiding passion for his craft, and constant desire to create amazing experiences for his audiences. Michael has acted as Technical Director for Malvern Theatre Company since early 2021. His design credits with the company include *Macbeth* (2025, lighting/sound/vision design), *The Lifespan of a Fact* (2024, lighting design), and *Switzerland* (2022, lighting/sound/vision design), as well as with Malvern's NEXT GEN program as technical director and mentor. Michael is excited to help bring yet another amazing Malvern production to life!

Videos have been created by Michael Birkett, as have all but one still image - the one depicting the town of Güllen in the background. The Director used Artificial Intelligence to create this image. We acknowledge and respect the artistry of others for their source images that may have been used.

Featured Creative Team Member



Harry Bell – *Costume Designer*

Over the last few years Harry has become involved in Melbourne's community theatre scene and has just this year had the honour of wardrobing for the Malvern Theatre Company. Having helped out in set building with the company last year, he was first asked to come onboard with costuming for *The Tin Woman* (2026), making *The Visit* his second show working with the friendly and welcoming crew of Malvern.

Acknowledgements

Malvern Theatre Company acknowledges that we are performing on the traditional land of the Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri People and offer our respects to their elders past, present and emerging.

Malvern Theatre Company is very grateful for the support provided by the City of Stonnington.

We would like to thank the following organisations for their additional support of this production: CLOC Musical Theatre and Williamstown Little Theatre for their help with props, set and costume and special thanks to David Clausen-Whisken for his help with Claire Zachanassian's wig, and the McKinnon Secondary College Junior Singers for their help with vocals for audio recording.

As an organisation, we take pride in supporting the local volunteer network in the community and the charitable organisations that underpin this important work. As such, we have donated all benefits of the Charity Night performance to the following organisations:

- Ashburton Baptist Church
- RSPCA
- Compassionate Friends Victoria

If you are a member of a volunteer group or a charitable organisation and would like to raise funds by arranging a group to attend our Charity Night Preview Performance, please contact us at **malverntheatrecompany@gmail.com.**

Calling All Volunteers

Would you like to volunteer at Malvern Theatre? There are many opportunities to be involved. Please visit our website and click on the 'Volunteer' tab to express your interest.

Thanks to our Sponsors

L'Olivo is a small, family-owned restaurant located at 171 Waverley Road in Malvern East. Visit lolivo.com.au for further details or to book. Show your ticket for a 10% discount on your total bill.

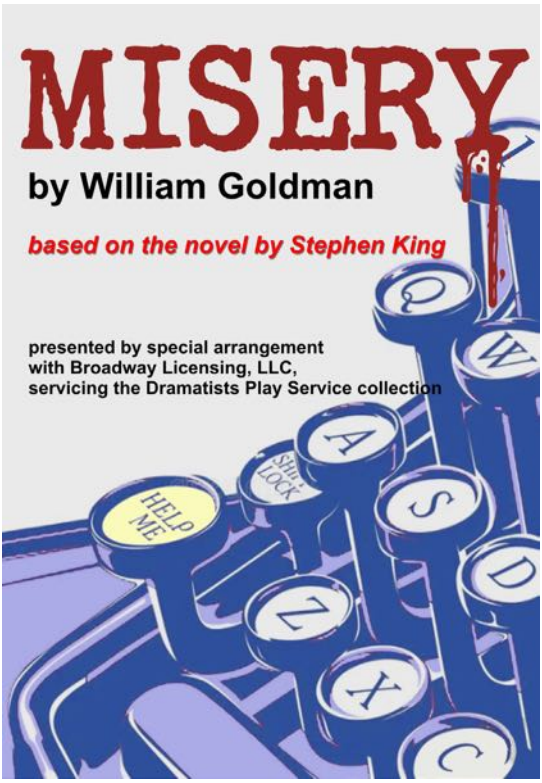
Fletchers is a proud, fourth-generation family-based real estate agency, with a 100+ year history. Visit fletchers.net.au.

Menzies Malvern is a contemporary retirement village, providing an exceptional lifestyle in the heart of cosmopolitan Melbourne. Further details at menziesmalvern.com.au.

Via Fratelli is a traditional Italian restaurant located at 151 Waverley Road, Malvern East. Show your ticket for a 10% discount on your total bill. Visit viafratelli.com.au.

Community Bank Malvern East is a local bank with 23 years history dedicated to servicing the community. Further details at bendigobank.com.au/branch/vic/community-bank-malvern-east.

Next at Malvern Theatre Company



MISERY

By William Goldman, based on the novel by Stephen King

Presented by special arrangement with Broadway Licensing, LLC, servicing the Dramatists Play Service collection.

directed by Keith Hutton

19 June – 4 July 2026

Paul Sheldon, successful romance writer, and creator of the beloved character Misery Chastain, drives off the road during a snowstorm in the Colorado Mountains. He wakens in the home of his "number one fan", Annie, who vows to help him recuperate. Paul slowly realizes that her obsession with his work is far from benign. When Annie learns that Paul intends to kill off Misery, her behaviour becomes increasingly erratic. What ensues is a nail-biting game of cat-and-mouse survival for Paul.

Misery is a tense psychological thriller exploring celebrity and fandom, and the line between obsession and madness. From the chilling novel by Stephen King, adapted by Academy-Award winner William Goldman, this production will keep audiences on the edge of their seats from start to finish.

To book tickets, visit our website at www.malverntheatre.com.au/book-tickets or phone 1300 131 552.