

Francis Greenslade on the Nuclear Family ahead of 'The Platypus' premiere



Francis Greenslade's *The Platypus* is a two-hander debut exploring deeply human and raw emotions. I sat down with Greenslade to explore this new text ahead of its September season at the 2025 Brisbane Festival.

Francis Greenslade is an actor and writer best known for his screen performances in Shaun Micallef's *Mad as Hell*. Performing with major theatre companies around Australia, Greenslade has also had his work (adaptation of *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* by Dario Fo) performed by [Sydney Theatre Company](#) and has published a novel [How I Learnt to Act](#). We sat down with Francis Greenslade to talk about his first original work *The Platypus* that is set to premiere as part of the 2025 [Brisbane Festival](#).

Written and directed by Greenslade, *The Platypus* is a two-hander play that follows the painful breakdown of one couples' relationship. It tells the story of a romantic relationship in its death throes, exploring deeply human and raw emotions through timeless and complex dynamics within relationships.

"I think sometimes theatre companies ignore their audience a little bit by writing and programming for their cohort rather than for their audience," says Greenslade. After presenting a work to program at an unmentioned theatre company, Greenslade was told by the literary manager "I don't think the nuclear family is relevant anymore". This interaction was the genesis for writing *The Platypus* and showing how relevant nuclear family life still is to audience members. The work has been written for today's audience to see (elements of) themselves on stage and centres around the universal experience

of human relationships. Greenslade hopes to highlight just how timeless and universal themes of human connection are.



Actor Rebecca Bower and Francis Greenslade in rehearsals

Most audience members can relate to spending time in a nuclear household and some may even relate to the experience of a relationship breakdown. However, every audience member can relate to the feeling of having to put on a facade to keep face in your everyday life – even if you’re feeling horrendous on the inside. We put on a different persona and different parts of our personality come out depending on who we’re encountering. *The Platypus* explores this notion through the use of different genres.

“It’s a pretty universal and bleak story, but I wanted to tell it in a way that is constantly theatrically surprising,” continues Greenslade in our interview. Exploring the idea that we put on a slightly different persona depending on who we’re engaging with, the writing utilises different genres to reflect these different personas. The scenes inside the house are naturalistic, then every time the characters exit and meet someone else (played by the other actor) those scenes are made up of different theatrical genres. There’s a scene in the genre of Shakespeare, Wilde, there’s restoration comedy, a stand-up comedy scene, and even musical theatre. Even if you may not be familiar with each genre in its entirety, Greenslade says the story is clear enough to follow and still enjoy.

“The demanding, genre blending nature of this work requires a very multi-faceted performer”, Greenslade says of the work, with the roles giving the performers opportunity to show off the breadth of their skillsets. Greenslade talks about how the success of the work has been very dependent on the performers excellent artistry.



Actors Rebecca Bower and John Leary performing The Platypus

Artists **Rebecca Bower** and **John Leary** have been a part of the work from the very first rehearsals. Greenslade discusses the organic development of the rehearsal process as he talks about the growth and changes from its first season in Melbourne, to the Fringe run in Adelaide and beyond. He says, “they [Bower and Leary] were great in Melbourne, but [in Adelaide] it was like they had done the work of living together as a couple – even though they’re not. They make you go ‘these people have definitely been married for many years’. It’s an undefinable richness that’s come with the familiarity”.

However, balancing artistic vision with actor interpretation is a challenge that many directors face, particularly when it’s your own writing as well. Discussing the unexpected challenges of going from being the person receiving the direction to giving it, Greenslade talks about being conscious of allowing the actors to bring their own interpretation and not boxing them into fitting exactly what he’d envisioned. “Generally they’re going to say the lines differently to how I imagined it in my head. And you’ve got to allow them to do it differently – it comes back to trusting their artistic instincts, I cast them for a reason. They’ve found things I didn’t expect, they’ve made it different, and they’ve made it better because they bring another point of view”.

The Platypus will be performed from September 10-13 at QPAC as part of Brisbane Festival. You can book tickets at:

<https://www.brisbanefestival.com.au/events/the-platypus>

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