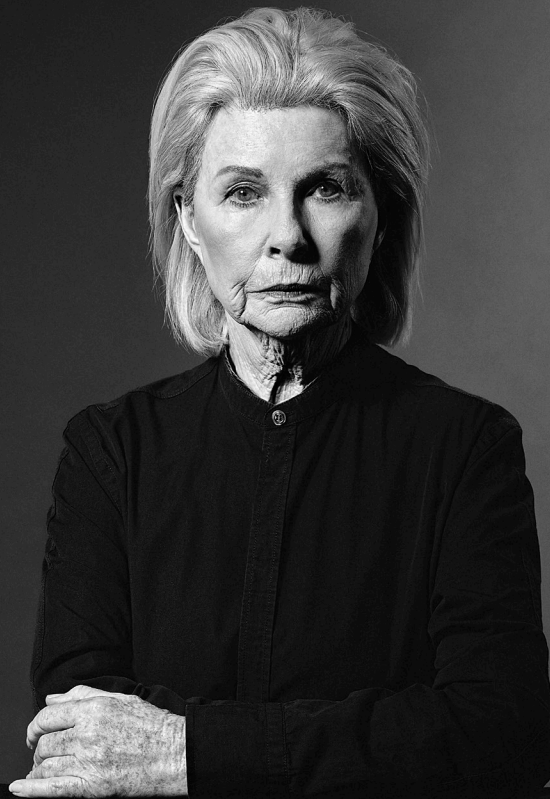


AF

ADELAIDE FESTIVAL

26 FEB – 14 MAR 2021



THEATRE / AUSTRALIA

A German Life

Written by Christopher Hampton

Starring Robyn Nevin

Directed by Neil Armfield

//

This play is as much
about our contemporary
world as it is about
Hitler's Germany.

//

Neil Armfield

19 Feb - 14 Mar, 2021

Dunstan Playhouse

Adelaide Festival Centre

Duration

1 hr 30 mins, no interval

#AdlFest
adelaidefestival.com.au



A German Life

Co-produced by Adelaide Festival and The Gordon Frost Organisation.

Written by
Christopher Hampton

Starring **Robyn Nevin**

Cello
Catherine Finnis

Directed by **Neil Armfield**

Associate Director
Chris Parker

Composer **Alan John**

Set & Costume Designer
Dale Ferguson

Lighting Designer
Nigel Levings

Sound Designer
Jane Rossetto

Producer
Kate Hillgrove

Production Manager
Lachlan Turner

Stage Manager
Amelia Mullinar

Rehearsal Stage Manager
Tanya Leach

Main Image **James Green**

Generously supported by
Jill Hill & Bob Warner

Supported by
Amnesty International

Archival video from United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Library of Congress.

Based on the documentary film *A German Life* by Christian Krönes, Olaf Müller, Roland Schrotthofer and Florian Weigensamer / Blackbox Film & Media Productions (www.blackboxfilm.at).

A German Life was first presented at the Bridge Theatre, London, on 6 April, 2019.

With thanks to Rachael Azzopardi, Patonga Progress Hall, Torrens Rowing Club and Annika Stennert.

Note

The production contains graphic historical footage which may be distressing for some patrons.

A German Life

The Gordon Frost Organisation Pty Ltd

Chief Executive Officer

John Frost AM

Executive Assistant to John
Frost **Matthew Cannon**

Chief Operating Officer

Shirley McGrath

Accounts Associate

Harry Flitcroft

Executive Producer

Bernadette Hayes

Executive Producer

Suzanne Jones

Executive Producer

Adrian Storey

Executive Producer

Mitzi Zaphir

Associate Producer

Bec Windsor

Associate Producer

Robbert Van der Zwaag

Senior Production Associate

Shane O'Connor

Production Associate

Natasha Cohen

National Ticketing Manager

Susan Knott

Ticketing Consultant

Jay Lawrence

Executive Producer Emeritus

Walter van Nieuwkuyk OAM

The Gordon Frost Organisation
is part of the **Crossroads Live**
group of companies.

Chairman & CEO

Tom McGrath

President

Dan Miller

Director

David Ian

EVP International Theatre

Bob Eady

**KEEPING THE ARTS
CENTRE STAGE**

For over 130 years adelaide.edu.au



Background

A German Life draws on 235 pages of transcribed interviews with Brunhilde Pomsel.

Pomsel's long life intersects with some of the most extraordinary events of the twentieth century. As a young German woman living during The Great Depression, she took a series of secretarial jobs. Her employers ranged from persecuted Jewish business owners to Joseph Goebbels; the Nazi Minister for Propaganda and architect of a narrative that enabled the most dangerous political movement in modern memory.

Playwright Christopher Hampton grew fascinated with her story

after seeing the film *A German Life*, directed by Christian Krönes, Florian Weigensamer, Roland Schrotthofer, and Olaf S. Müller. But it was the transcriptions of the full interviews the filmmakers conducted in 2013, when Brunhilde was 102, that opened the door for the theatrical version we see onstage today.

In the many pages of interviews, Christopher says he saw Brunhilde Pomsel come "vividly to life". His translation onto stage of this detailed and ambiguous character was first seen by audiences at the Bridge Theatre in London in 2019.

This is its Australian premiere.



Bringing important
conversations to life

Discover Success

Perks Private Wealth believes in the
legacy of great stories and helping them
to reach new heights.



180 Greenhill Road
Parkside SA 5063

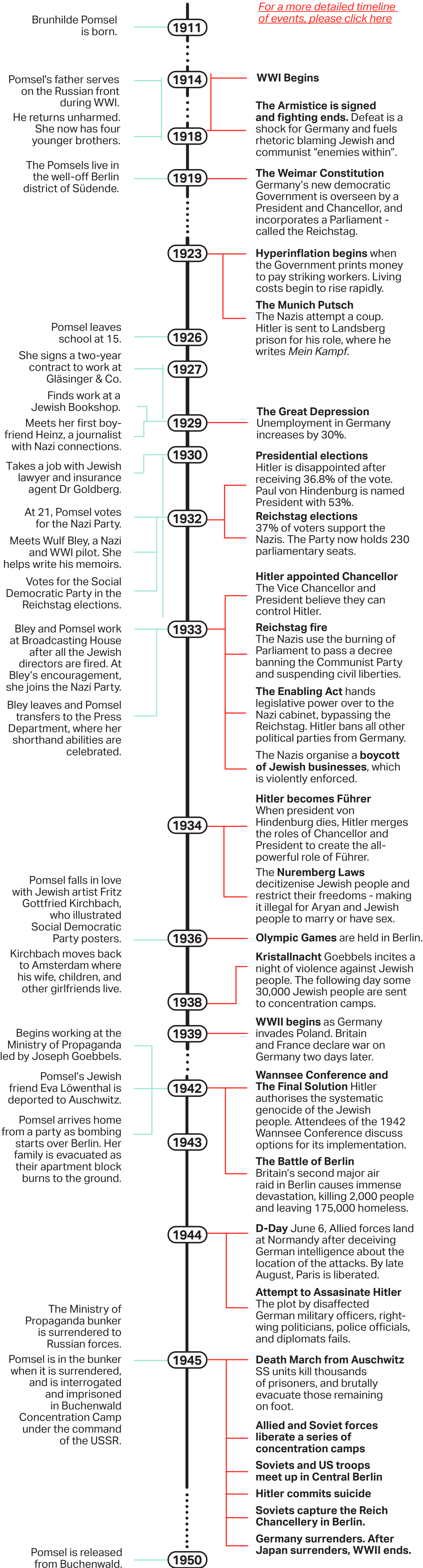
Telephone
(08) 8273 9300

info@perks.com.au
perks.com.au

The Life of Brunhilde Pomsel

The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich

For a more detailed timeline of events, please [click here](#)



Director's Note

A year ago, when Robyn Nevin gave me Christopher Hampton's play drawn from Brunhilde Pomsel's interviews with a group of Austrian filmmakers in 2016, I thought it fascinating, and unique.

And a wonderful role for Robyn.

In July we began work on it. Over the course of a week we slowly picked our way through, talking about her voice, and the kind of theatrical space we might place her in, and how much we could believe her testimony. And we talked of how resonant many of the things she described were for us today. Especially in a world dominated by the lies of Donald Trump.

Then we met again for four weeks from the end of November, with shifting Covid restrictions bouncing us from Adelaide to Patonga, NSW and back to Adelaide. Every day we talked about Trump - he had clearly lost the election

but was calling on frenzied support from every corner of the country to discredit the electoral process.

We returned to the play on February 1. The security of American democracy had been shattered by the storming of the Capitol on January 6, and we were reminded of just how fragile modern democracies are. More and more this play seems to be as much about our contemporary world as it is about Hitler's Germany. Brunhilde Pomsel died on January 27, 2017 – seven days after Trump's inauguration. She had turned 106 two weeks earlier. In one of her last interviews she said, "Hitler was elected democratically, and bit by bit he got his own way. Of course that could always repeat itself with Trump, or Erdogan..."

This story is not over.

Neil Armfield, 2021



Robyn Nevin on Brunhilde Pomsel

Image of Brunhilde Pomsel: Lifestyle Pictures / Alamy Stock Photo

Brunhilde, the woman, has given me insights into a life lived in relative innocence in Germany before Nazi rule, then living under Nazi rule and ultimately living and working close to Nazi leadership.

The complexities and questions lie in her denial of personal responsibility; and that's the challenge for the production. How much did she know of the atrocities ordered by her boss? When is she lying? Is she lying? How can one reconcile the choices one has made when young? Does she regret? Is it painful to recall, to know? Did she know? And on and on...

I recognise the complexities of understanding the dark recesses of another's mind, in this case one that has wrestled with mind stuff for more than nine decades.

Brunhilde offers us an opportunity to think about our world now, in 2021, and the dangers of revisiting the horrors of her time; the dangers of propaganda, of the gradual manipulation of a country's people. Witness the US now. As Brunhilde said, "the Ministry of Propaganda certainly worked on me".

Beware the slippery slope.

Robyn Nevin, 2021

Biographies



Robyn Nevin *Brunhilde Pomsel*

One of the greats, Robyn's career spans almost sixty years in theatre, film and television. Robyn has played leading roles at all of Australia's major theatre companies, in London's West End and Carnegie Hall in New York. Her credits include *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *A Long Days Journey Into Night*, Lally Katz' *Neighbourhood Watch*, *Suddenly Last Summer*, *Queen Lear*, *My Fair Lady* directed by Julie Andrews, and *Oklahoma!*. Robyn's recent television credits include *Back In Very Small Business*, *Cleverman*, Jane Campion's *Top Of The Lake* and three seasons of *Upper Middle Bogan*. She can most recently be seen in the feature film *Relic* and Foxtel's *The End*.

Photo: Jill Furmanovsky



Written by Christopher Hampton

Christopher wrote his first play at the age of eighteen. Since then, his plays have included *The Philanthropist*, *Savages*, *Tales from Hollywood*, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, *White Chameleon*, *The Talking Cure*, *Appomattox* and *All About Eve*. He has written the libretti for three Philip Glass operas, co-written three musicals, and translated plays by Ibsen, Molière, von Horváth, Chekhov, Yasmina Reza, Daniel Kehlmann and Florian Zeller. His plays, musicals and translations are multi-award winning as are his screenplays, which have garnered Oscars, BAFTAs and many more accolades.



Neil Armfield *Director*

Neil is Joint Artistic Director of the Adelaide Festival 2017 – 2023, in partnership with Rachel Healy. Neil directs for theatre and film. He was Artistic Director of Belvoir Street Theatre in Sydney from 1994 to 2010. He has directed for all of Australia's state theatre companies, London's national theatre, the West End and on Broadway, Opera Australia, Welsh National Opera, The Bregenz Festival in Austria, Zurich Opera, Canadian Opera, Houston Grand Opera, English National Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Glyndebourne Festival Opera and Royal Opera House Covent Garden. He was awarded an Officer of the Order of Australia in 2007 for service to the arts, nationally and internationally.



Catherine Finnis Cello

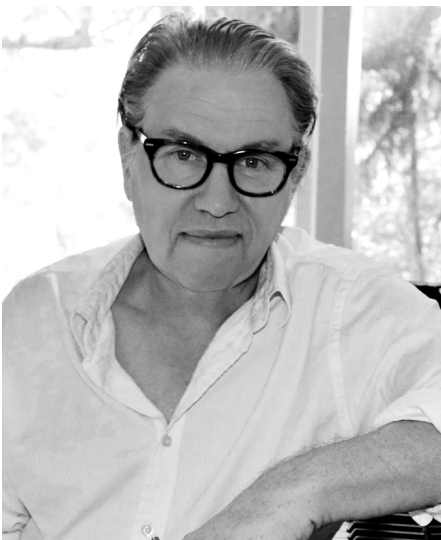
Catherine was born in Adelaide and studied at The Elder Conservatorium of Music. She joined the music profession as a chamber music player, a member of many musical groups, and as a freelancer before women were generally accepted in that world. After migrating to Sydney, Catherine was fully occupied as a freelance cellist, playing both modern and baroque cello and viola da gamba, teaching, and playing for visiting artists including Phil Collins and George Benson and as a member of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. Catherine then moved to England where she was in high demand and involved in many recordings, concerts and tours. She returned to Adelaide ten years ago and is proud to be part of the 61st Adelaide Festival in 2021.



Chris Parker Associate Director

Chris is a director and graduate of the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts. He recently directed the 25th Anniversary concert of *Jekyll and Hyde* starring Jemma Rix and Anthony Warlow, and a critically acclaimed production of *Oklahoma!* at the State Theatre, Melbourne.

His work credits include *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, *Sondheim on Sondheim*, *The Irish Boy*, *The Graduate*, *Les Misérables*, *Cry Baby*, *The Matchmaker*, *The Bodyguard*, *Avenue Q*, *Georgy Girl*, *Moonshadow*, *Twisted Broadway*, *The Last Five Years*, *Atlantis*, *Happy People*, *Blood Brothers*, *The Gathering*, and a much-touted production of Paul Sirett's play *Bad Blood Blues*.



Alan John Composer

Alan is one of Australia's most prolific composers for theatre, opera, television and film. Theatre credits include *Things I Know To Be True*, *Twelfth Night*, *Summer Of The Seventeenth Doll*, *Stuff Happens*, *Once In Royal David's City*, *The Judas Kiss* (Belvoir); *I'm Not Running* (National Theatre London); and *Much Ado About Nothing* (Bell Shakespeare).

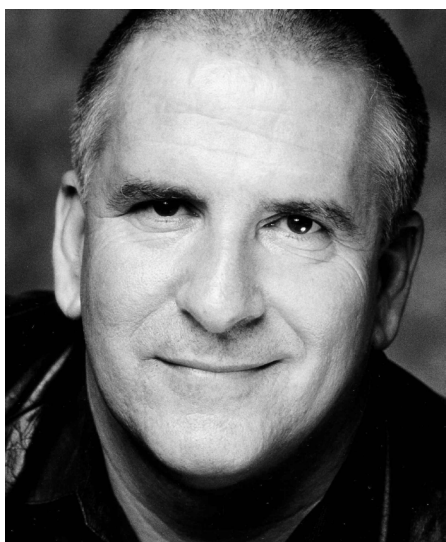
Opera credits include *The Eighth Wonder* (Opera Australia), *How To Kill Your Husband*, and *Through The Looking Glass* (Victorian Opera/Malthouse Theatre). Musical Theatre credits include *The Adventures Of Snugglespot And Cuddlepie* and *Jonah Jones*.



Dale Ferguson *Set & Costume Designer*

Dale has worked extensively with major theatre and opera companies around the world. Theatre credits include the Broadway season of *Exit the King*, the English tour of *The Convict Opera* and the West End transfer of *The Judas Kiss*. His recent opera credits include *Tosca* for Opera Queensland; *The Magic Flute* for Lyric Opera of Chicago; and *The Riders* (Victorian Opera).

Dale is the recipient of multiple Helpmann Awards for *August: Osage County*. In 2019, he received five Green Room Awards for *Counting and Cracking*.



Nigel Levings *Lighting Designer*

Nigel has lit opera in St Petersburg, Paris, Washington, London, Cardiff, Berlin, Baden-Baden, Innsbruck, Bregenz, New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, Dallas, Adelaide, Sydney, Melbourne, and Toronto. He is a Fellow of the Illuminating Engineering Society. Awards include a Helpmann Award, a Green Room Award, an Ovation, a Dora Mava Moore, two Outer Circle Critics Awards, a Drama Desk and a Tony.

Nigel's recent work includes *Tartuffe* (State Theatre Company SA), *170 Days in Nanjing* (Jiangsu Performing Arts, China), *Hydra* (Queensland Theatre), *Les Miserables* (Queensland Conservatorium), and *Memorial* (Brink and Adelaide Festival).



Jane Rosetto *Sound Designer*

Jane is a graduate of the School of Audio, Diploma for Sound Production and AC ARTS Diploma Live Theatre and Events – Sound. Jane's very first paid theatre show was STCSA's *Hedda Gabler* with Robyn Nevin AM. Starting out in 1998 as a radio microphone technician, she was lucky to work on classic musicals like *CATS* and *Les Miserables*. Jane has worked extensively on a variety of shows for many companies and arts organisations. Design credit highlights include Brink's *Memorial*, SOSA'S *Cloudstreet*, STCSA's *Metro Street*, SOSA's *The Ring* cycle 2004, and WOM-AD 2010-2012 and 2019-2021. In her current role as Head of Sound at Adelaide Festival Centre, Jane manages a talented team of sound engineers.