

# PRE-SHOW BRIEFING

AUCKLAND ARTS FESTIVAL AND GWB ENTERTAINMENT IN ASSOCIATION WITH STATE THEATRE COMPANY SOUTH AUSTRALIA AND AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY PRESENT THE HEADLONG, NOTTINGHAM PLAYHOUSE & ALMEIDA THEATRE PRODUCTION

# 1984

BY GEORGE ORWELL

A NEW ADAPTATION CREATED BY ROBERT ICKE AND DUNCAN  
MACMILLAN



This document may be used to brief students prior to attending *1984*.

# DETAILS

**Suitable for:** Years 10-12

**Duration Approximately:** 101 minutes (no interval)

**Warnings:** Adult Themes, Graphic Violence and Intensive Technical Effects

1984 – Auckland Tour Link – <http://www.1984play.co.nz>

(This link contains information for the Auckland tour, interviews and up to date media publications.)

# INTRODUCTION

April, 1984. 13:00. Comrade 6079, Winston Smith, thinks a thought, starts a diary, and falls in love. But Big Brother is watching him - and the door to Room 101 can swing open in the blink of an eye.

One of theatre's most powerful events of recent times, the stage adaptation of *1984*, originally produced in the West End by Sonia Friedman Productions and Eleanor Lloyd Productions, received a nomination for Best New Play at the Olivier Awards, won a UK Theatre Award for Best Direction, and has played to huge audiences over the last three years.

Even more now than the last time we visited, Orwell's dystopian vision of a surveilled and totalitarian regime seems horribly relevant. Set in a world where an invasive government keeps a malevolently watchful eye on its citizens, this radical and richly praised staging explores surveillance, identity and why Orwell's vision of the future is as relevant now as ever. It is a timely reminder of the dangers posed by the digital age and society's subconscious cooperation in the invasion of our own privacy. It explores the world inside Winston Smith's head, as well as the world without free thought, and catches the euphoria and bliss buried deep underneath the cold face of Big Brother.

Published in 1949, *1984* is one of the most influential novels of all time, with its depiction of perpetual war, pervasive government tracking, mind control and the corruption of language and history. Its ideas have become our ideas, and Orwell's fiction is often said to be our reality. Many of the terms coined by Orwell in the book have entered the English language, with the entity of Big Brother becoming one of the most iconic literary inventions and potent symbols of the 20th century. Even the recent US Presidential campaign evoked the legacy of the book when US Senator Bernie Sanders warned of an "Orwellian future" when responding to the rise of Wikileaks and the release of classified NSA files by Edward Snowden.

Now with a brand new Australian cast, we bring adapter-directors Robert Icke and Duncan Macmillan's thrilling vision back to Australia for a national tour.

*"This production of 1984 is a re-staging of the Headlong production that was created by Robert Icke and Duncan MacMillan. So our job was not to create a wholly new version of their adaptation. Our job was to re-stage what they created with a new cast of Australian actors. So we're not reinventing the wheel. Given how brilliantly their adaptation of Orwell's novel works on stage it would be folly to attempt to change it. Our job is to honour their vision."*

Corey McMahon, Associate Director (Australia)

# CREATIVE TEAM

Co-Adaptor-Director	Robert Icke
Co-Adaptor/Director	Duncan MacMillan
Associate Director (Australia)	Corey McMahon
Designer	Chloe Lamford
Lighting Designer	Natasha Chivers
Video Designer	Tim Reid
Sound Designer	Tom Gibbons
Associate Lighting Designer	Marc Gough
Associate Sound Designer	Richard Bell

# CAST

Paul Blackwell	<b><i>Parsons</i></b>
Tom Conroy	<b><i>Winston</i></b>
Rose Riley	<b><i>Julia</i></b>
Bill Allert	<b><i>Martin</i></b>
Guy O'Grady	<b><i>Syme</i></b>
Simon London	<b><i>Charrington</i></b>
Fiona Press	<b><i>Mrs Parsons</i></b>

# GEORGE ORWELL - author

Eric Arthur Blair (**George Orwell**) was born in 1903 in India, where his father worked for the Civil Service. The family moved to England in 1907 and in 1917 Orwell entered Eton, where he contributed regularly to the various college magazines.

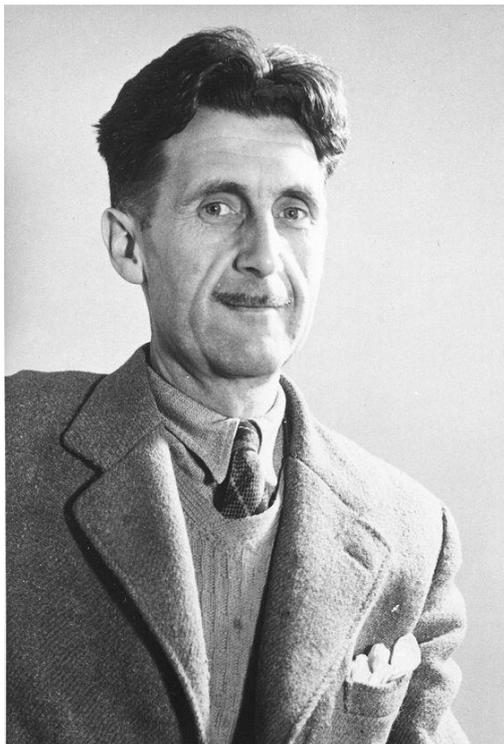
From 1922 to 1927 he served with the Indian Imperial Police in Burma, an experience that inspired his first novel, *Burmese Days* (1934). Several years of poverty followed.

He lived in Paris for two years before returning to England, where he worked successfully as a private tutor, schoolteacher and bookshop assistant, and contributed reviews and articles to a number of periodicals. *Down and Out in Paris and London* was published in 1933. In 1936 he was commissioned by Victor Gollancz to visit areas of mass unemployment in Lancashire and Yorkshire, and *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937) is a powerful description of the poverty he saw there.

At the end of 1936 Orwell went to Spain to fight for the Republicans and was wounded. *Homage to Catalonia* is his account of the civil war. He was admitted to a sanatorium in 1938 and from then on was never fully fit. He spent six months in Morocco and there wrote *Coming Up for Air*. During the Second World War he served in the Home Guard and worked for the BBC Eastern Service from 1941 to 1943. As literary editor of the *Tribune* he contributed a regular page of political and literary commentary, and he also wrote for the *Observer* and later for the *Manchester Evening News*.

His unique political allegory, *Animal Farm* was published in 1945, and it was this novel, together with *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), which bought him worldwide fame.

George Orwell died in London in January 1950.



# PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

(Spoiler Alert... Some of these links will expose what happens at the end!)

Watch this clip for insight into the characters and background of the novel *1984*

<https://www.bl.uk/20th-century-literature/videos/george-orwells-nineteen-eighty-four>

Go to this link to watch a *Prezi* presentation on the historical context of George Orwell's novel. Includes information on: Orwell's stories and intentions in writing *1984*, World War II, Totalitarian Governments, Fascism, Nazism, Stalinism, Definition and Examples of Propaganda.

<https://prezi.com/fhodxj1mw9m7/historical-context-of-george-orwells-1984/>

Watch this clip to hear Professor Alex Callinicos discuss *1984*

<http://www.digital-double.com/article/1984/>

Read these comprehensive notes on the novel *1984* (*Spoiler Alert*)

<http://www.jiffynotes.com/1984/HistoricalContext.html>

Watch this clip to hear Dr Btihaj Ajana on Surveillance

<https://headlong.co.uk/ideas/dr-btihaj-ajana-on-surveillance/>

Go through these Spark-Notes to learn about the novel *1984* (*Spoiler Alert*)

<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/1984/facts.html>



1984 Australian cast on stage Photo credit: Shane Reid

## something to think about...

Did you know that any website addresses you visit or any phone numbers you call on a computer or phone will be tracked by telecommunication companies in Australia?

Go to this website to learn about metadata and what information Australian telecommunication companies retain

**<http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/2017/04/18/data-retention-laws-are-now-in-effect-and-heres-what-you-need-t-a-22037910/>**

Did you know that there are thousands of CCTV cameras (Closed Circuit TV) used around Australia? Go to your capital cities council websites to learn more... For example:

**<http://www.cityofadelaide.com.au/city-living/welcome-to-adelaide/city-safety/cctv/>**



Rehearsals of 1984 Australian Tour 2017. Photo credit: James Hartley

# theatre review preparation

Whilst in the theatre or as soon as possible after viewing the show, note down your observations of the following elements and if they successfully contributed to the story unfolding on stage...

- Sets
- Costumes
- Multimedia and Projections
- Lighting
- Sound Design
- Props
- Direction
- The Ensemble
- Individual Actors
- Blocking
- Key Moments
- Quotes
- Audience Reaction

**For more advice on how to write a theatre review go to...**

<http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/PlayReview.html>

## a note for students...

This production of *1984* will most likely be a confronting and thought provoking experience for you. Hopefully studying the background and subtext of it all will empower you. Do not allow it to make you become paranoid about the world we live in, but rather raise your awareness.

Enjoy the show!

please use this pre-show document in conjunction with the *1984* study guide.