

Ben Elton play wants you to breathe easy - for a price

Limelight Theatre Saturday, September 11th, 2021

TAKE a breath of fresh air - Ben Elton's *Gasp!* is coming to Limelight Theatre.

Directed by Phil Bedworth, it's a modern re-working of Elton's original 1990 play *Gasp!* updated for an Australian audience.

Australian mining company Lockheart Industries is looking for the next big idea to make the company millions and starts producing "designer air" with its revolutionary Suck-and-Blow machine.

As a result, air becomes a commodity, like fuel or food, and can be bought and sold according to market forces.

"It is a dark, satirical look at how the privatisation of the most basic human need can be influenced by big business and profit," Phil said.

"Anyone who knows the work of Ben Elton will understand his writing is of such intellect, wit and observation that any performance of his works cannot be done without understanding the rhythm and nuances laced throughout it.

"Every word in the script has to be understood because none are there superfluously.

"As a satire like this demands, finding the right emphasis and timing for each line has to be carefully analysed to do it the justice it deserves.

"Thankfully, I have been smart enough to surround myself with incredible people on and off-stage who also understand these elements - the talent on display is amazing."

First treading the boards in a 1990 high school production of *Oliver Twist*, Phil didn't take to the stage again until 2019 when he was cast as Dr Watson in *An Evening with Sherlock Holmes* at Limelight Theatre.

He has since appeared in the musical *Rock of Ages* and *The Two of Us* and as Sir Humphrey in *Yes, Prime Minister* at KADS Theatre - and has also played an evil psychopath in the film *Fading Numbers*.

"I saw the 2014 production of *Gasp!* at the Heath Ledger Theatre and loved it," Phil said.

"It's funny in a way that makes you take a very introspective view of your world in a manner that only Ben Elton's work can.

"When I was contemplating a show to direct, I wanted to find something that was biting, funny, relevant and different.

"*Gasp!* immediately came to mind as a show that would be able to break the mould of what's usually offered to theatre audiences.

"Being set in Australia means everyone who comes to see the show will find it enjoyable, while also providing plenty of food for thought."

Ben Elton's *Gasp!* plays at 8pm September 23, 24, 25, 30, October 1, 2, 7, 8 and 9 with a 2pm matinee October 2. Tickets are \$23, \$20 concession - book at www.limelighttheatre.com.au or call 0499 954 016 between 9am and 12pm,

Contact Profile

Limelight Theatre

Celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2013, Limelight Theatre is home of Wanneroo Repertory on Civic Drive, Wanneroo, in Perth's northern suburbs, located next to the Aquamotion Centre, opposite the memorial.

The theatre is always pleased to welcome new members, whether they want to act, direct, paint a set or simply receive monthly news.

Phil Bedworth

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Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

Limelight Theatre is on Civic Drive, Wanneroo.

CAPTIONS

gasp1: Ben Elton's *Gasp!* features Lisa Michelle, left, Usman Banday, Mark Fitzpatrick, Joel Coyle and Federica Longo-Huntington.

gasp2: Philip (Usman Banday, left), Peggy (Lisa Michelle), Chifley Lockheart (Mark Fitzpatrick), Kirsten (Federica Longo-Huntington) and Sandy (Joel Coyle) in Ben Elton's *Gasp!*

gasp-joel2: Joel Coyle plays senior executive Sandy in Ben Elton's *Gasp!*

gasp-mark1: Ben Elton's *Gasp!* features Mark Fitzpatrick as mining magnate Chifley Lockheart.

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