



# A MODEL

Sydney  
Festival  
2025

# MURDER



# A MODEL MURDER

WORLD PREMIERE

Darlinghurst Courthouse

4-25 January

1 hour 10 minutes (no interval)

---

## CAST AND CREDITS

**Story by** Melanie Tait

**Written and Directed by** Sheridan Harbridge

**Commissioned by** Sydney Festival

**Original Concept by** Olivia Ansell

**Dramaturg** Rob Johnson

**Musical Supervisor** Glenn Moorhouse

**Movement Director** Vi Lam

**Set and Costume Designer** Michael Hankin

**Lighting Designer** Phoebe Pilcher

**Sound Designer** Zac Sarik

**Wigs by** Nick Eynaud

**Stage Manager** Jaymii Knierum

**Assistant Stage Manager** Isabella Kerdijk

**Project Manager** Gordon Rymer

**Project Manager** Bridget Hennessey

**Production Intern** Amelie McCarthy

**Costume Supervisor** Evelyn Everaerts-Donaldson

**Wardrobe** Emma Fitzgerald

**Associate Producer** LPD Productions

## CAST

**Shirley Beiger** Sofia Nolan

**Edith Beiger/Gill Blazey** Best

**June and Donny** Maverick Newman

**Arthur Griffith/Detective Blissett** Ryan Morgan

**Lyal Richardson** Amber McMahon

**Phillip Roach** Anthony Taufa

**Prosecutor Knight QC** Marco Chiappi

**Swing** Gabbi Bolt

**Arthur Cover** Rob Johnson

## ABOUT THE SHOW

On the night of 9 August 1954, glamour model Shirley Beiger pointed a gun at her bookie's clerk boyfriend, Arthur Griffith, in front of Chequers, one of Sydney's ritziest nightclubs. Arthur was there with another woman... he'd told Shirley he was at the dentist. In her trial for Arthur's murder, Shirley claimed she did not hear the gun go off, "but knew something dreadful must have happened".

After three months in Long Bay Gaol, Shirley arrived at Darlinghurst Courthouse for what was billed as "the Trial of the Century", and found herself at the centre of an unprecedented media storm. Glamorously dressed women clamoured to be given the best seats at the front of the court; journalists swarmed the halls in pursuit of a scoop; the judge tried in vain to silence the gallery of onlookers who whistled, cooed and yelled support for the 22-year-old model, despite the severity of the charges she faced.

Perhaps Australia's first true "trial by media", and certainly its most sensational, the murder trial of Shirley Beiger is a surprising, disturbing and often absurd story. Performed by a cast of seven inside the very courthouse where the trial took place, *A Model Murder* presents the story of Shirley Beiger as it (almost) happened.



### A NOTE FROM SHERIDAN HARBRIDGE

*‘Come to court see a trial have you? There’s murder, violence, adultery, treachery, everything that Sydney holds dear.’*

An enormous amount of mystery still shrouds the Shirley Beiger story. The coverage of the trial, while extensive, didn’t always allow for easy answers about how these events played out, or why. The media’s obsession with Shirley, a young and beautiful woman with a successful modelling career, is not unlike the story of Luigi Mangione playing out in the American press at present. The “hot assassin” obsession is fascinating and disturbing, and this show delves into why an admitted murderer was elevated to a folk heroine to the women of Sydney. What was going on in Australia 1954 – that rallied a city behind a beautiful bad girl who took a man’s life .

The story of Arthur Griffith’s death, and Shirley’s subsequent trial for his murder, has the intoxicating lure of old-world Sydney. The story of crime and glamour, on the streets of the Cross in 1954, sent Sydney into a frenzy. Many aspects of the Beiger trial are bizarre. Sometimes, properly bonkers. We found ourselves often thinking the audience will believe the facts of the case to be a written fiction, yet parts of the dialogue in this production are lifted directly from court transcripts, police documents and

contemporaneous newspaper articles, and they often read like lines from a soap opera or a farce. But also, the tone is disquieting. The gaze of the press over Shirley’s appearance, judgement of how she should behave. The glamorisation of her emotions surpassing the real tragedy of a man whose life was taken.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In partnership with the Supreme Court and supported by the Department of Communities and Justice

Special thanks to:

The Hon. Andrew Bell, Chief Justice of New South Wales  
Nick Sanderson-Gough, Nathan Gray and Sophie Howard from the Supreme Court of New South Wales

Larissa Reid and Louise Koopman from the NSW Department of Communities and Justice

Sheriff Scott Mayer, Superintendent Tegan Gatherer and A/Sergeant Nathan Woods from the NSW Sheriff’s Office

Caroline Butler-Bowdon and Margot Riley from the State Library of New South Wales

### SUPPORT SYDNEY FESTIVAL

Learn more about how your support could make projects like *A Model Murder* possible [here](#).

### GOVERNMENT PARTNERS

