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## Reviews

**DON PARTIES ON**  
**Red Phoenix Theatre**  
**Holden Street Theatres**  
Until 19 Nov 2016



Review by [Paige Mulholland](#)

You'd think that after his last disastrous party, Don would be done. However, the host with the most (most drama and confrontation, anyway) is back in "Don Parties On"; David Williamson's much-awaited sequel to "Don's Party". Red Phoenix's production was polished and passionately performed – an excellent taste of what this young Adelaide theatre company has to offer.

"Don's Party" follows Don and his wife Kath, who throw an election party for the federal election of 1969, believing the election to be a sure Labor victory. As the tide turns on a federal scale, tensions rise among the friends. "Don Parties On" follows a similar structure – one that is easy to follow even if you have not seen the original play or film. Don and Kath throw another party for the 2010 election with their friends, some of whom have grown estranged and unhappy. Once again, as the results swing further and further to the right, the group becomes increasingly confrontational, particularly with Don and Kath's son, Richard, thrown into the mix as his relationship with his daughter and the rest of his family are in jeopardy.

There are times when Williamson's attempts to reset the characters in a modern setting feel a little contrived; Williamson certainly shows his age when the only era-appropriate hobby he can think of for the adolescent Belle is watching vampire movies. The confrontations, too, at times feel repetitive and artificial – while real election parties tend to be long and frustrating, the dramatisation could have been less so with a little cutting down. Williamson's work also often borders on preachy, with his characters blatantly spelling out themes that could have come across just as clearly with a subtler hand.

Overall, however, the work is very enjoyable; Williamson is a master at dynamics, and the play rises and falls, bringing in comedy, shocking twists and painful turns at just the right times. His characters are real and flawed, and this was well portrayed by the talented cast.

The cast all perform to high standards, balancing witty one-liners with emotional confessions. Brian Godfrey's dance as Cooley was a hilarious crowd favourite, and Lyn Wilson portrayed the bitter Jenny with sensitivity and precision. The group worked very well as an ensemble with very few slips, and the lack of a standout performer speaks to the quality of the group.

The set was detailed, enough to fill the space and provide some realism to the scenes without overwhelming them. The audience has to walk through the set to get to their seats, which is an excellent opportunity to appreciate the level of detail the production team have committed to; right down to the 2010 election playing on the television, even though this is not visible once the audience are seated. The costumes are simple and effective, although Julie Quick's jewelry often caught the light in a distracting manner.

Although Don's most recent party is a disaster (as usual), this production certainly is not. With a well-rehearsed cast and high quality production elements, "Don Parties On" is an intriguing and engaging work that is a must for any Williamson fan.

*Brian Godfrey is a reviewer for Adelaide Theatre Guide.*

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