

= Keating ! =

Keating ! is a musical which portrays the political career of former Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating . Keating was Prime Minister between 1991 to 1996 ; the musical follows him from his ascent to the leadership through to his eventual electoral defeat by John Howard . It was written by Casey Bennetto , who was inspired to write the show by his disappointment at the results of the 2004 federal election , which saw Howard 's Coalition government returned for a fourth term . The musical takes a humorous , satirical tone and presents a positive image of Keating while frequently criticising the Howard government . Bennetto describes the show as " ridiculously pro @-@ Paul Keating " .

Originally performed by musical group the Drowsy Drivers , the show achieved rapid success from its low @-@ budget premiere at the 2005 Melbourne International Comedy Festival where it enjoyed a sold @-@ out run and won an unprecedented three festival awards . In 2006 , Neil Armfield directed an extended Company B production of Keating ! , now with two acts and six new songs written by Bennetto . The Company B production toured Australia , receiving favourable reviews and winning Helpmann Awards for Best Musical and Best Regional Touring Production . In 2008 a live recording of the show was broadcast nationally on ABC2 ; it was released on DVD in November 2008 , through Madman Entertainment .

= = Background = =

Paul Keating was a Labor Prime Minister of Australia from 1991 to 1996 , ascending to the office after two leadership challenges against his predecessor , Bob Hawke . As Prime Minister , he was interested in a " big picture " approach to government , engaging with issues such as a closer relationship with Asia , Aboriginal reconciliation and the formation of an Australian republic . His government was defeated in the 1996 federal election by the Liberal @-@ National coalition under John Howard . Writer Casey Bennetto was inspired to write a musical about Keating following his disappointment at the result of the 2004 federal election , which saw the Howard government returned for a fourth term . " It was time to have a laugh at it , " he said . He says Keating 's story appealed to him because of its classic dramatic structure , that of a man who struggles , " makes it to the top " and must compete against " three bad guys " ? successive Opposition leaders John Hewson , Alexander Downer and John Howard . Bennetto believed Keating 's colourful personality made him an " ideal " character for musical theatre , citing the former Prime Minister 's reputation for being sharp @-@ tongued , wearing Zegna suits and collecting antique clocks . Bennetto wrote the show in eight weeks , drawing on Keating biography Recollections of a Bleeding Heart by Don Watson . He describes it as a " ridiculously pro @-@ Paul Keating " piece which ultimately aims to be funny and entertaining .

= = Production history = =

Originally performed by musical group the Drowsy Drivers , Keating ! premiered at the 2005 Melbourne International Comedy Festival as a low @-@ budget , single @-@ act show in a 100 @-@ seat venue at the Melbourne Trades Hall . Mike McLeish played the lead role , with Bennetto as " the three Hs ? Hawke , Hewson and Howard " , Enio Pozzebon as Gareth Evans and Cam Rogers as Alexander Downer . Despite the musical 's success in Melbourne , Bennetto did not have any plans for Keating ! after the end of the comedy festival . However , producer Catherine Woodfield (Bennetto 's partner and Trades Hall publican) insisted they develop it further . Between 2005 and 2006 they took it on tour across Australia , including a week of shows in the Sydney Opera House , a return season at Melbourne 's Trades Hall , a two @-@ week season at the Adelaide Cabaret Festival , a week of shows at the Brisbane Powerhouse and two nights in Darwin .

Also in 2006 , renowned director Neil Armfield offered to direct a production of Keating ! at Sydney 's Belvoir St Theatre with Company B. For the Company B production Bennetto reworked the

musical into a two @-@ act piece , writing six new songs for the show . Of the original cast , only McLeish , Pozzebon and Bennetto were retained ; McLeish returned as Keating and Pozzebon as Evans , while Bennetto took on the roles of Hewson and Downer . Terry Serio joined the cast as Hawke and Howard . Bennetto says that both he and McLeish were worried that Armfield would turn " relatively simply staged , roughly hewn " musical into " the Amadeus version " without the original show 's sense of fun , but instead felt it became a " more accomplished , buffed @-@ up version of the original show " .

The Company B version of Keating ! enjoyed sold @-@ out seasons in Melbourne , Sydney , Adelaide , Brisbane , Perth , Canberra , Wollongong , Albany and elsewhere (including a run of shows at the 2007 Melbourne International Comedy Festival) before coming to a close on 31 August 2008 . On 20 August 2008 , ABC2 broadcast a live performance of the show from Sydney 's Seymour Centre . The recording was released on DVD by Madman Entertainment in November 2008 .

= = Response = =

The premiere of the Drowsy Drivers ' production at the 2005 Melbourne International Comedy Festival was met with enthusiastic reviews . Comedian Chris Addison praised the musical as " the best show I 've seen at this festival in five years " and The Age 's Daniel Ziffer described it as " clever and superbly funny " . Within the first week it had become one of the most popular shows of the festival , having sold out by the fifth show . By the end of its Melbourne run , the show had won three major festival awards ? the Barry , The Age Critics ' Award and the Golden Gibbo ? the first time any production had ever done so . For the songs of Keating ! , Bennetto won both the 2006 Helpmann and Green Room Awards for best original musical score .

The Company B version also received strong reviews , with a writer in Brisbane 's Courier @-@ Mail describing it as " brilliantly satirical " and a reviewer in Melbourne 's Age awarding it the top rating of five stars . However Paul Sheehan , writing for the Sydney Morning Herald , criticised the musical 's pro @-@ Keating bias , calling the script " preachy and safe " and an insult to those who voted for Howard . In 2007 it won the Helpmann Award for Best Musical , as well as the awards for best direction for Armfield and best actor in a supporting role for Serio . The following year it won another Helpmann for best regional touring production . By the end of its 2007 Sydney season , it had taken \$ 500 @,@ 000 in box office earnings , and by its final show in 2008 its total audience had reached over 223 @,@ 000 people across Australia .

Keating , who has attended the show multiple times , believes that it is popular because politics and public life today are without humour . " The game is very dour , " he says , " But satire can get a lot across . It can cut out the humbug . " He believes another reason is an increased interest in the unsettled issues in the national debate , such as the question of a republic . Downer has also seen the show and commented afterwards that he enjoys satire and thought " Keating ! the musical was far better than Keating the prime minister . "

= = Synopsis = =

The following summary refers to the extended , two @-@ act version of the musical .

= = = Act One = = =

Sung @-@ through , the production begins with Bob Hawke introducing the political situation of 1990 and the contrasting personalities of Hawke ? with his enthusiasm for " footy " and cricket ? and his deputy , Paul Keating , who is fond of " the works of Mahler " (" My Right Hand Man ") . While Hawke admires Keating 's economic prowess , he is perplexed by the other man 's " un @-@ Australian " interests . Keating emerges and shares some of his life story and his hopes to gain the leadership from Hawke as they had agreed to in a deal known as the Kirribilli Accord for the venue at which it was reached (" Do It In Style ") . However , Hawke reneges on the deal and Keating

returns to the back bench . In a rock ballad , vaguely in the style of Queen , he sings of his desolation before resolving to challenge for the Prime Ministership (" I Remember Kirribilli ") . He confronts Hawke with the blue @-@ eyed soul @-@ style " It 's Time " ; the song refers to the name of former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam 's famous 1970s campaign and uses Keating 's fondness for collecting antique clocks as a motif for his belief that it is indeed time for a change of leadership . Keating becomes Prime Minister and sings of his ambitions for the nation ? including a treaty with Australian Aborigines , an Australian republic and improved relationships with Australia 's Asian neighbours ? in a reggae song (" Ruler Of The Land ") .

As Keating celebrates his success , Gareth Evans cautions that the political life of a Prime Minister is limited in the minor @-@ key Latin tune " The Beginning Is The End " . Both he and the ghost of Gough Whitlam counsel Keating to " maintain your rage " . Keating then faces off against Opposition Leader John Hewson in a freestyle rap battle , arguing over the merits of Hewson 's " Fightback ! " policy platform , with Keating winning the battle due to his superior command of colourful invective , much of which is drawn from actual Keating quotes (" On The Floor ") . Angered , Hewson challenges Keating to call an early election , but Keating refuses in the song " I Wanna Do You Slowly " . The song 's title again refers to a well @-@ known Keating quote , but takes on a sexual interpretation in the slow , Barry White @-@ style funk number . The Keating government contests the 1993 federal election , and in an animated video Kerry O 'Brien , Michael Kroger , Robert Ray and Antony Green report on the incoming results in scat over ukulele (" Antony Green ") . Labor wins , and Keating sings about the unexpected victory as " the sweetest victory of all " , using a famous phrase from his actual election night speech (" Sweet ") .

= = = Act Two = = =

In the ska tune " The Arse End Of The Earth " , which refers to Keating 's private description of Australia , both Keating and Evans complain about the day @-@ to @-@ day issues of the economy and their unfavourable portrayal in the commercial media getting in the way of their larger agenda , including republicanism , a new flag , and Aboriginal reconciliation . Alexander Downer replaces Hewson as Opposition Leader for a short and unsuccessful period . In a costume of fishnets , corsetry and lipstick that alludes to a photograph of the actual Downer posing in fishnet stockings for a competition , he sings his belief that he is just " too freaky " for the leadership (" Freaky ") . Meanwhile , Evans has an extramarital affair with Australian Democrats leader Cheryl Kernot (typically played by a male) (" Heavens , Mister Evans ") . In an understated minor @-@ key bossa nova song , Keating sings of the need to recognise and apologise for the damage done by white colonisation and subsequent subjugation of the Australian Aboriginal population (" Redfern ") , before segueing into a more upbeat mambo about the Mabo decision by the High Court of Australia and his attempts to use the decision to promote a reconciliation agenda (" Ma (m) bo ") .

John Howard becomes leader of the Opposition , presenting a new threat to Keating . Howard describes his intense desire for power and his thirst for revenge against the petty humiliations put on him as a child in a menacing minor @-@ key march (" Power ") . However , in the media he presents himself as " a normal bloke and nothing more " (" The Mateship ") . Through various costume changes , he attempts to cast himself as a sports fan , a friend of the Australian soldier and a farmer , though the song implies that these are only costumes . The song also refers to the " children overboard " affair , his criticism of political correctness , and his use of immigration as a political issue , some of which occurred after the actual Howard 's subsequent election to Prime Minister . In a slow rock duet , Keating and Howard both beseech voters to " Choose Me " . However , as the 1996 electoral polls close , Keating concludes that he is doomed electorally . He sings of his unachieved dreams and with some bitterness at what he sees as the backward @-@ looking message of his opponent in a country @-@ influenced ballad referring to former Labor Prime Minister Ben Chifley 's description of Labor 's overarching goals (" The Light On The Hill ") .

In the final number , " Historical Revisionism " , the election tightens dramatically and the results come to hang on a single polling booth ? the theatre in which the musical is playing . Keating wins

and Howard concedes with the line " Well , I 'm sorry ... that I lost ! " (a reference to his unwillingness to support a formal apology to the Aboriginal people) . As the song 's title indicates , the actual Keating did not win the 1996 election . The song segues into a reprise of " Ruler Of The Land " .

= = Music = =

The songs of Keating ! employ a wide range of musical styles , including bossa nova , blues , rap , reggae , soul , swing and beer @-@ barrel waltz . Mara Lazzarotto Davis has written a highly readable and entertaining academic study of Casey Bennetto 's " Keating ! " as a generic hybrid - deftly blending vaudeville , theatre and musical comedy (" " Flicking the Switch : Vaudeville Traditions and Myth @-@ Making in Keating ! " in Sydney Undergraduate Journal of Musicology , Vol . 5 , December 2015) . The lyrics frequently draw on quotes from the real Keating and other political figures , particularly in " On The Floor " which contains numerous verbatim quotes from Keating 's debates with Hewson . In expanding the show for the Company B production Bennetto wrote six new songs , adding an Act One " curtain " number (" Sweet ") , an exploration of Keating 's time in office (" The Arse End Of The Earth ") , two songs on Aboriginal reconciliation and native title (" Redfern " and " Ma (m) bo ") and another song for Howard (" The Mateship ") . " Dogs Of Damnation " , a song from the original version in which Evans warns Keating that his political life is limited , was replaced by the similarly themed " The Beginning Is The End " .

A live recording of the original single @-@ act version played at the Sydney Opera House was released in 2006 by Bella Union Enterprises and is available through the Drowsy Drivers ' Keating ! website . In 2007 Company B released a cast recording of the extended show containing all of the musical numbers featured on stage except for " Antony Green " . The CD features the Company B production 's original cast , with McLeish as Keating , Serio as Hawke and Howard , Bennetto as Hewson and Downer , Pozzebon as Evans and Mick Stuart as Kernot . The band consists of Alon Ilisar (drums) , Eden Ottignon (bass) , Pozzebon (keyboards) , Guy Strazz (acoustic guitar) and Mick Stuart (electric guitar) . By 2008 , the CD had sold over 5 @,@ 000 copies . Also that year , a live recording of the extended version was performed at Sydney ' s Seymour Centre . Among the audience members who attended the recording , the real @-@ life Keating and Cheryl Kernot made an appearance . The recording is currently available on DVD .

= = = Musical numbers = = =