

Theatre People

# 9 TO 5 THE MUSICAL

Feb 27, 2022



**REVIEWER RATING: ★★ ★.5**

Almost two years after it was initially slated to make its Australian debut, *9 TO 5 THE MUSICAL* has finally opened at Sydney's Capitol Theatre. The show is based on the 1980 film of the same name, its smash hit title track is accompanied by a score from Dolly Parton, and its book is penned by Patricia Resnick, who co-wrote the film's screenplay.

On stage, as on screen, *9 TO 5* is the story of three women employed by Consolidated Industries. Directed by Jeff Calhoun, it tells the tale of the smart and stalwart senior supervisor, Violet Newstead (Marina Prior); Judy Bernly (Casey Donovan), who is newly separated and new to the workforce; and the maligned and shunned Doralee Rhodes (Erin Clare). All three women work under the truly loathsome and misogynistic Franklin Hart Junior (Eddie Perfect), who treats all of his female employees with the level of disrespect you would expect.



But the tables are soon turned. A misstep by Violet sets off a chain of events that lead to the women detaining Franklin in his own home. In his absence, they begin to introduce changes to the workplace to the benefit of its employees, including an office day care, equal pay for men and women, and flexible working conditions, all of which ultimately improve the productivity of its workforce.

The narrative is thin and it's unfortunate that, more than 40 years after the film's release, its hopes for workplaces that have meaningfully evolved have obviously not become reality (as of 2021, [Australia's national gender pay gap is 14.2%](#)). Its calls for workplace safety and equality for women therefore remain pertinent, and although conveyed through the slightest of stories, the Australian premiere production of *9 TO 5* is a highly entertaining and even uplifting experience thanks to its supremely talented leading women.



Prior is a powerhouse as Violet, the tyrannised senior employee who eventually gets her opportunity to detoxify her workplace and show her staff what fit leadership looks like. Vocally, she's in superb form, but her acting is just as impressive; she convincingly shifts from a disenchanting worker to an empowered leader.

Donovan continues to show what an asset she is to Australia's musical theatre scene as the mild-mannered and initially unworldly Judy, who transforms over the course of the show, finding untapped inner strength. Of course, Donovan is known foremost for her powerful voice, and here she certainly doesn't disappoint. In fact, she receives the most rapturous applause (and even a standing ovation) on opening night for her rendition of Act II's 'Get Out and Stay Out'.



Clare completes a stellar trio as Doralee Rhodes, the role made famous on film by Parton. Hers is a wonderful portrayal of Franklin's misunderstood secretary, the victim of mean office gossip and a person of much stronger character than that for which she is given credit. Like her co-stars, Clare is in terrific voice, particularly in her Act I solo number, 'Backwoods Barbie'. And then there's Caroline O'Connor, one of Australia's most revered performers, who plays Roz Keith, Franklin's hopelessly devoted administrative assistant. In lesser hands, this character would be the mere butt of a joke, forever hoping to win her boss's affection. However, in this production, Roz's relatively limited stage time is memorable, owing to O'Connor's spectacular performance of 'Heart to Hart', which ends up being a show highlight. While it exists to mock the lovelorn Roz, its greatest success is in reinforcing why O'Connor has earned the immense respect of the global theatre community.



Perfect is cartoonishly villainous as Franklin, who will likely make most attendees cringe with almost every utterance. It's hard to think that workplaces like this have ever existed, let alone that anything remotely resembling this environment might remain a reality for some members of the workforce in 2022. Completing the cast is a tight ensemble, who not only

appear well drilled on opening night, but who consistently exude energy – it is clear that this opening has been a very long time coming.

In the end, despite the basic story at its heart, the Australian production of *9 TO 5 THE MUSICAL* makes for a tremendously enjoyable evening of live entertainment. Aptly, it's the result of some of the finest women in musical theatre in Australia banding together to showcase their talents, championing a message of female empowerment in the vein of the superstar attached to the show. Tumble outta bed and get a ticket when you can.

**Photo credit:** David Hooley

## **SYDNEY SEASON DETAILS**

**Venue:** Capitol Theatre, Campbell Street, Haymarket

**Season:** Playing to 8 May, 2022

**Performance Times:** Wed-Sat 7.30pm, Wed 1pm, Sat 2pm, Sun 1pm & 6pm

**Prices:** From \$69.00 (Transaction fees apply)

**Bookings:** [9to5themusical.com.au](http://9to5themusical.com.au) or 136 100

**Groups 8+ call 1300 889 278**

## **BRISBANE SEASON DETAILS**

**Venue:** Lyric Theatre, QPAC

**Season:** From 22 May, 2022

**Performance Times:** Wed 6:30pm, Thurs-Sat 7.30pm, Wed 1pm, Sat 2pm, Sun 1pm & 6pm

**Prices:** From \$69.00 (Transaction fees apply)

**Bookings:** [9to5themusical.com.au](http://9to5themusical.com.au) or phone 136 246

**Groups 8+ call (07) 3840 7466**

## **MELBOURNE SEASON DETAILS**

**Venue:** State Theatre, Arts Centre Melbourne

**Season:** From 10 July, 2022

**Performance Times:** Wed -Thurs 7pm, Fri-Sat 7.30pm, Wed 1pm, Sat 2pm, Sun 1pm & 6pm

**Prices:** From \$69.00 (Transaction fees apply)

**Bookings:** [9to5themusical.com.au](http://9to5themusical.com.au) or phone 1300 182 183

**Groups 8+ call 1300 889 278**