

Prize sets the scene for next stage of theatre



HOLLIE ADAMS

Playwrights Katy Warner and Julian Larnach saw the first scenes of their new plays performed at the Sydney Opera House on Sunday

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New plays can end up in the writer's bottom drawer or add to the pile of hopeful scripts on a producer's desk, but a unique prize in Sydney is offering dramatists the chance to get their work on stage and their dialogue into the mouths of actors.

The Lysicrates Prize each year selects the first scene from three new plays and gets them per-

formed before an audience, which then votes for its favourite.

Last night, Jane Bodie's play about a family affected by dementia, *Tell Me You Love Me*, was voted the winner, after about 500 people at the Sydney Opera House took part in a modern recreation of the drama contests held in ancient Athens.

Bodie said she was caring for her mother as she "disappears" due to dementia, and dedicated the award to her.

The other plays were *Appro-*

priate by Katy Warner and *Leviathan* by Julian Larnach, all staged by Griffin Theatre Company, a partner in the prize.

Founded five years ago by Sydney couple John and Patricia Azarias, the Lysicrates Prize already has a legacy of producing works for the stage, with four plays from the prize going on to become full-length productions.

Warner entered the prize for the first time after being a finalist last year in the Martin-Lysicrates Prize for plays for young audien-

ces. *Appropriate*, is about the different reactions of a group of women when one of them accuses a senior male colleague of misconduct.

Warner said the reaction of yesterday's audience to the first scene would help her shape the rest of the play.

"That feedback is just invaluable and something you don't tend to get as you're working on a play," she said.

Griffin Theatre Company artistic director Lee Lewis said

violence was a predominant theme among this year's submissions.

"There are a lot of writers struggling with violence in society, and trying to represent those stories in different ways," Lewis said. "I think that will be a frame for a lot of our drama writing for the next 10 years, and there are very different strategies for writing about it, from male and female perspectives."