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Description

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nimrod theatre & eric dare
very proudly present

Gordon Chater
The Elocution of
Benjamin Franklin
by Steve J Spears

directed by Richard Wherrett
designed by Larry Eastwood

A masterly new play and a stunning one-man performance
Norman Kessell TELEGRAPH
Margaret Jones SYD. MORNING HERALD
A splendid full-throttle performance
timely observed, outrageously funny, achingly moving
Geraldine Pascall AUSTRALIAN

A riveting piece of theatre:
must be transferred
Taffy Davies THE SUN
You'll be knocked out
Frank Harris MIRROR
A stunning performance
Mike Gibson THE SUN

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EDITORIAL

Crisis of our first three issues have so far been kind: “lusty-voiced” says one; stimulating and eclectic” say another, “the broad base of the magazine is its greatest appeal”. For some in the world of commercial theatre, however, it seems either our base is not broad enough, or our voice too lusty.

But how to cover them? We offered Harry Miller a voice (declined) and the Edgley organisation (accepted ... then mysteriously no delivery nor reasons given). With distribution we seemed to have had theatre sales arranged at the Regent during the Bolshoi season (even a plug in the programme - many thanks) yet when the day came the doors were closed to us. It seems that either our offensiveness, not being ignored, was the problem at the Music Hall, Sydney, we denounced ourselves by spelling out the dash that the censor (later) imposed on Bert Deling’s film Pure S.

The rumour is that we are uninterested in the commercial theatre scene. Not so - but they seem to want only promotion, not appraisal. Isolating you, you will not get led with Reg Livermore emblazoned on the cover, eulogised within in save for one sympathetic critic which suggested that Reg might be made of better stuff than Bijou patrons were getting. Entrepreneur Eric Dare had taken one hundred magazines for sale on the premises, then promptly threw them out (and roundly abused an Editor) when the crit was noticed.

Our Critics have sometimes been less than kind to, for instance, the Old Tote and Q.T.C., yet these kind companies go on selling the magazine, providing copy and buying advertisements. Involvement from their side, and (we hope) sound criticism and overviews from ours, is what Theatre Australia was founded upon - and the more of each, the better for everyone. When the commercial entrepreneurs treat the magazine as an open forum and substantial sounding-board our task will be much easier, will theirs.

This month we look at Brodziak, the savior of The Firm. Contributors Raymond Stanley and Ian Buckland agree in regarding him as something of a colossus in our theatre. No doubt it can only be to the good if he can pack them into J.C.W.’s five vast theatres. We hope not to have trodden on any toes in this issue, but who knows?

Amongst a plethora of sociological playwrights, Dorothy Hewett stands out as a poet, amongst a plethora of sociological playwrights, Dorothy Hewett stands out as a poet, and one we are confident will in time be acknowledged as great. Helen van der Poorten suggests directors have not yet come sufficiently to terms with her work. Perhaps it’s a question of being ahead of her time; certainly we can envisage the day when Dorothy Hewett’s theatricality will be commercially very viable indeed.

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Opinions expressed in signed articles are not necessarily those of the Editors.

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NEW SOUTH WALES:

ACTORS COMPANY (660 2503)
Waiting for Godot by Samuel Beckett
Directed by Michael Edwards (to Nov. 25th)

AUSTRALIAN THEATRE
The Proposal by Anton Chekhov directed by George Sias
Bespoke Overcoat by Wolf Mankowitz Directed by Rolf Saftich (Nov 19th-Dec 17th)

BALMAIN BIJOU (827 3652)
Wonder Woman Reg Livermore (continuing)

CAROUSEL (358 2333)
Hello Hollywood Tracey Lee (continuing)

ENSEMBLE (929 8877)
California Suite by Neil Simon
Directed by Hayes Gordon (open Nov. 18th)

GENESIAN THEATRE (827 3023)
Gaslight by Patrick Hamilton
Directed by Jon Williams (Nov. 20th - Dec. 31st)

HER MAJESTY'S (212 1066)
Private Lives by Noel Coward (to Dec 18th)

HUNTER VALLEY THEATRE COMPANY, Newcastle (26 2526)
A Cabaret (starts mid-Nov.)

INDEPENDENT (929 7377)
Bullshot Crummond by Ron House, Dez White, John Neville-Andrews, Alan Sharman & Derek Cunningham.
Directed by Rick Pellizzeri (Nov 10th - Dec 11th)
Turbo Reverso by Richmond Young (Every Sat afternoon)

KILLARA COFFEE THEATRE
Memories — A Tribute to Ten Years Devised by John Howitt (continuing)

MARIAN STREET (498 3166)
Tarantara Gilbert & Sullivan Music Revue Directed by Ted Craig (to Dec. 22nd)

MINERVA (358 1221)
Saturday Night at the Tiv Chelsea Brown (continuing)

MUSIC HALL THEATRE RESTAURANT (909 8222)
The Beast of Belgrave Square by Stanley Walsh
Directed by Stanley Walsh (continuing)

NEW ARTS THEATRE, Glebe
The Elocution of Benjamin Franklin by Steve J Spears
Directed by Richard Wherrett, Starring Gordon Chater (continuing)

NEW THEATRE (519 3403)
Falling Apart by Monte Merrick
Directed by Brian Syron (to end Dec.)

NIMROD (69 5003)
Upstairs: A Handful of Friends by David Williamson
Directed by John Bell (to Jan. 8th)
Downstairs: Dirty Linen by Tom Stoppard
Directed by Ken Horler (Dec 17th - Jan 15th)

OLD TOTE (663 6122)
Drama Theatre: The Season at Sarsaparilla by Patrick White
Directed by Jim Sharman (to Dec. 18th )
Parade Theatre: Rockery Nook by Ben Travers
Directed by Bill Redmond (Nov. 24th - Jan 11th)

QUEENSLAND:

ACTORS THEATRE (399 4026)
At the Conservatorium of Music Theatre
The Misanthrope by Tony Harrison after Moliere Directed by David Clendinning. (Dec 6th - 11th)

ARTS THEATRE (36 2344)
Carousel
Directed by Andrew McKelvey & Robyn Fowler (Nov. 25th - Dec. 24th)

LA BOITE (36 2296)
How Could You Believe Me When I Said I'd Be Your Valet When You Know I've Been A Liar All My Life?
Adapted from Goldoni by John Bell.
Directed by Graeme Johnston (to Dec 18th)

QUEENSLAND THEATRE CO. (21 3861)
The Big Men Fly by Alan Hopgood
Directed by Murray Foy
Designed by James Ridewood (to Dec. 11th)
VICTORIA

HER MAJESTY'S

*More Canterbury Tales* (continuing)

LA MAMA

*Cascando* by Samuel Beckett
Adapted & Directed by Valerie Kirwan (to Dec 5th)

*Still Life* by James Claydon
Directed by James Claydon (to Dec. 19th)

LAST LAUGH THEATRE

*Crackers at the Savoy* by Garrie Hutchinson
Nov. 16th to mid-Jan)

MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY (645 1100)

Russell Street: *Arden* adapted by Mick Rodger
Directed by Mick Rodger
Designed by Tony Tripp (to Dec. 11th)

*Other Times* by Ray Lawler
Directed by John Sumner
Designed by Anne Fraser (Dec. 14th - Jan. 22nd)

St. Martins: *City Sugar* by Stephen Poliakoff
Directed by Ian Giles (to Jan 8th)

Grant Street: *Old Flames* by E.A. Whitehead,
Directed by Simon Chilvers (to Dec. 11th)

PLAYBOX (634 888)

*Godspell*
Directed & Choreographed by Betty Pounder
(continued)

AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING GROUP (347 7133).

*The Dudders* by John Romeril & John Timlin
Directed by John Romeril (Nov. 11th - Dec. 24th)

*Stretch of the Imagination* by Jack Hibberd
Directed by Paul Hampton (Nov. 23rd - Dec. 24th)

St Marks Hall: *The Young Peer Gynt* (Nov. 16th - Dec. 24th)

ST. MARKS HALL

*Peer Gynt* by Henrik Ibsen (from mid-Nov)

WINDSOR REGIS

*The Naked Vicar Show* (continuing)

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

HER MAJESTY'S

*Same Time Next Year* by Morris Salden
Directed by Gordon Hunt (Nov. 26th - Dec. 11th)

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN THEATRE COMPANY (51 5151)

*Malta* adapted by Rodney Fisher
Directed by Rodney Fisher (to Nov. 27th)

*Happy Landings* by Michael Cove
Directed by George Ogilvie (Dec. 2nd - 18th)

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

HOLE IN THE WALL (81 2403)

*The Maids* by Jean Genet
Directed by Alexander Hay (to Nov. 20th or longer)

*Mixed Doubles* by Harold Pinter, Alan Aykbourne, James Saunders & others
Directed by John Milson. (open Dec 1st)

PLAYHOUSE (23 3344)

(Return Season Nov 3rd - 6th)

*Arsenic and Old Lace* by Joseph Kesselring
Directed by Aarne Neeme (opens Nov 15th)
CURRENCY STILL CURRENT

"It looks as though the battle inside Currency-Methuen Drama is reaching its conclusion and that Currency Press will resume its role as Australia's major drama publisher. At the time of going to press proposals for terms of settlement between Currency Press and its English-owned partner, Associated Book Publishers (Aust.) Pty. Ltd., had been exchanged. The dispute has inevitably caused delay to several announced titles: David Williamson's A Handful of Friends, due out for the Nimrod Theatre opening on November 12th, has been completed by A.B.P. with the Currency Press imprint, and Currency is now publishing Drag Show, a jazzy picture and story book on transvestite entertainment which contains Peter Kenna's Mates and Steve Spear's Elecution of Benjamin Franklin. This has gone to Asia for printing and may now not be published until February. Alex Buzo's "Norm and Ahmed," published with Louis Esson's The Woman Tamer in the Double Bill series, got through the net just in time and is now available, but its Martello Towers has been held in hostage at the printers, together with the Double Bill Richard Bradshaw's Bananas with the Currency Press imprint; and Currency now available, but his.

ACTORS AND APARTHEID

"I have played to racially integrated audiences throughout the whole of South Africa in African and Asian townships such as Soweto and Lenasia and Black Universities such as Turfloop - and the message given to me time after time from Zulus and Xhosas, from Shonas and Asis, and from Coloureds and Afrikaaners is "keep the plays coming and make sure we can ALL see them."

"For us to imagine we can influence Apartheid policy by refusing to play to any fully integrated South African audience is naive to the point of stupidity (the white audiences are very well catered for by home produced shows and plays of high standard), and to limit our choice of authors is to apply our own arrogant brand of censorship which cuts off the ordinary person of South Africa from our flow of ideas thereby hurting the very people we should be trying to help."

-Barrie Ingham, in response to arguments put forward for a total boycott of South Africa by the casts of Australian-based productions (eg J.C. Superstar), at a public meeting called in Melbourne in support of the imprisoned black actors John Kani and Winston Noshan.

Dear Sir,

Congratulations on your magazine: we have all waited too long. My special thanks for devoting at least a portion to the amateur theatre.

Dear Goddard in his article "The Art of Amateur Acting (TA 1.1 p.43) touched on many contentious points very relevant to the amateur theatre. Some of these were neatly observed legitimate criticisms, some were generalisations, but some were manifestations symptomatic of a malaise, which, I submit, groups either ignore or are unaware of.

This malaise as I have chosen to call it, is basically the lack of a broad fundamental artistic philosophy. By this is meant: a policy, based on a philosophy that has at least been considered, debated and defined by the group or some of it. Let me illustrate from practical experience.

Most groups that I have been in have tacitly assumed (probably correctly) that their audiences prefer comedy - which I will not shy away from and it does have advantages that the professional theatre - especially touring professional theatre - does not have.

For example the group I am in at present recently proved (by survey) that 75% of its audience regard wonder of mouth as the prime factor responsible for their presence at a play. Therefore every group not only has to plan ahead so that they can choose a programme of related or balanced plays, chosen for their quality, and then attack their problems with imagination: but it must also consider just what it is trying to do with its plays (a) in the community (b) as against T.V. (c) as against professional theatre (d) as against other forms.
of entertainment. In other words it should be asking itself continually a series of questions on its aims and functions and whether these are being achieved. What is the point of group X putting on a jolly family comedy that T.V. may well do better, given its technical facilities and finances? on the other hand, it is a while since I saw on Beckett, Pirandello, Brecht, Chekov, Aristophanes, Pinero, Sheridan or Stoppard on T.V., and yet these are all proven entertainers. In summary then I am saying that many amateur groups need to sort themselves out. Until they do this they are wasting the vast amounts of time, effort and talent at their command - or if not wasting it then not using it to its fullest and most productive.

If I have accused many groups of a certain neglect, or ignorance, then, if the cap fits ... Let me say however, that I believe that amateur theatre has an immense job of work to do. It can do it and do it well and for one intend to be in there pushing. I don't believe the professional theatre can cast too many of these stones and I may get hit with a few of my own, but they need to be cast.

Yours faithfully,
W.F. Oakes
Petersham

Dear Editors,

I was a little dismayed to read in Richard Fotheringham's criticism of The Department, his opinion that David Williamson does not pursue radical issues. I think it is not appropriate for a critic to impose his tastes in this way on a writer. Since David Williamson has chosen to explore bourgeois academia in Australia for what it is and not for what it might be, let us examine the play in that context. To my mind, Williamson has not failed to present a true picture of his Department and it is perhaps this very picture which prompted Richard Fotheringham to ponder radical issues. That, I think, is a plus for the play. Where Williamson has failed, I feel, is on a theatrical point. He introduced an element of suspense at the beginning of Act 2 with the filling of the dreaded water bath, but alas, he threw it away, unravelling a piece of plot which could have made the play a humdinger, had it been sustained.

Simply because it is not trendy to consider the bourgeoisie does not mean that an exploration of the middle class is not valid and even called for. For instance, no one would say of Charles Lamb that he failed to investigate British Imperialism, although he was writing, in essay form, the life of a civil servant at a time when the British were claiming great slices of the world for their empire. The empire has crumbled, but Lamb's essays survive as a chronicle of an ordinary Englishman's life experiences both because of and in spite of the times in which he lived. If Williamson is to survive his generation, then it will surely be for reasons akin to these.

Best of luck with Theatre Australia.

Yours faithfully,
Sally Morrison
Kew, Victoria

A POLOGY TO ARTS COUNCIL

Since my criticism of the actions and policies of the Queensland Arts Council in a review of the Grin and Tonic's As You Like It last issue, I have had an opportunity to talk at length with the Arts Council administrator Mr. Peter Dent, and also look through the councils relevant files.

It's right and proper for me to withdraw the remarks I made in that review. I do hold to my belief that the administration of the Arts in Queensland is so structured as to make it difficult for any small group to gain an effective foothold, however excellent their work. But the Queensland Arts Council does support local and regional activity.

I had evidence suggesting otherwise and that led me to write as I did. I'm now satisfied that evidence was wrong: the stories of "persecution" which were related to me by people in the North Queensland area are clearly an application to another company.

I'm satisfied that the Arts Council was not carrying out a discriminatory policy against the Grin and Tonic, and I'd like to extend my apologies to them for suggesting it.

Richard Fotheringham.

SHOCKABLE MELBOURNE

Angela Punch, versatile Sydney actress who has been appearing in The Gift at Melbourne's Grant Street Theatre, has been amazed at the different receptions to her nude scenes between Melbourne and Sydney audiences. The vivacious young actress says: "Sydney takes it in its stride while it seems an outrageous thing to Melbourneites." (The Melbourne press has been featuring in text her nude appearances as though it was something unique.)

Angela at the beginning appears nude, save for a sash, a sparkler in her hand and a card attached to her bottom explaining she is a birthday gift for the only other character in the play. She is there to serve his birthday wish, especially in bed.

Angela feels that Melbourne people don't take the tight well-written play as a comedy as Sydney people do. There is a world of difference in the receptions - as though on two different worlds.

She also has been critical of the Grant Street theatre, which she insists could "have a few hundred dollars spent to improve it", especially the roof which plays a tune on a rainy day.

Audiences were much better in Sydney - more of them for a start, she adds.
Hear Gordon Chater is delighted with reception to The Elocution of Benjamin Franklin ... especially excellent review in London Evening Standard. Talk is, will be going to Melbourne and other states in future.

Melbourne's Rocky Horror Show is one year old in November. It's attracting crowds to Fitzroy's Regent theatre.

Believe I.A.C. report has caused some strong rows at Australian dinner parties, especially when self-made businessmen have dined with local artists. Seems that the twain can't meet. Although one good question asked, but not really answered is, if some "stars" dropped their high, over-inflated salary demands could ticket and production costs be dropped? After all, how do you evaluate (in monetary terms) talent?

A.B.C.'s Power Without Glory breakup party was as good as some of episodes ... maybe better than some!

Private Lives is packing them in to Melbourne's Comedy Theatre. Says a lot for Melbourne audiences and their likes and what the new regime using Williamson theatres should look out for...

Natalie Miller, who runs Sharmill film distributors (currently handling Bo Widerberg's Stubby) and is on the Victorian Film Commission, will be going into film production next year. Also hear, about six other locally-made films are slated for production. It is vast reaching stage where one will have to go to small movie houses to see a foreign production.

Jonathon Hardy has taken his Diary of a Madman from the Grant Theatre to Pram Factory Back Theatre. Interesting things coming up in the youth world of Mr. Hardy in '77. Hear Diary will be going to NSW in future ... needs good intimate theatre.

Nice to hear talented actress Maggie Miller will be making more stage appearances in Melbourne in the near future.

Since it opened at its new premises, about a pace away, Tikki and John's Theatre-Restaurant on Melbourne's Exhibition Street, is just as busy as ever. Bookings can go up to eight months ahead. As an English journalist recently wrote: "It's one of the best shows in Australia".

Hear A.B.C. will produce new TV series based on adventures of trucks in '77. Casting is currently underway.

Sydney is going to take on the Parisian look. Reg Priestman will be introducing long-legged showgirls in a new-type revue in the heart of the Cross, costing plenty. Stars include ex-Lido showgirls and especially Sally Staines. Good for tourist trade too...

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**Spotlight**

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Graeme Blundell speaks his mind to Stan Marks

Co-ordinate theatre activities, says Graeme Blundell

Actor-film star Graeme Blundell was speaking his mind. And, it all made good sense.

I had asked him why he was going to stage plays at Melbourne's Grant Street theatre and what he thought about the state of Australia's theatre today.

The Melbourne theatre scene is pretty crook. We need more mobility, more actors and producers alternating between states and theatres, more general involvement for the sake of the whole theatre world.

"There needs to be more training. Perhaps the answer is a complete repatterning of the theatre industry here. I go along with Phil Adam's line. Theatres should have to account for their money more. Then there is a total lack of programming."

"I know it's all right to sit here in some sort of judgement. But what the answers are I'm not sure. There is an element of knocking the local product like with the two series Power Without Glory which is the wrong thing to do just for the sake of doing it."

"No, I haven't seen the actual I.A.C. report but there does seem a lot of good as well as bad in it. You know, I do think there is some hope in Kenn Brodziake - maybe our commercial theatre can undergo a revival. Hopefully he will take the gamble of moving local shows to larger commercial theatres. We have to put a lot of hope in him."

"The film world? It's dicey - but then business in it all over the world is down. I think there are eight Australian films due for release within the near future."

"But, overall what we need are more cooperative efforts, more groups of people getting together for the sake of the theatre. Writers and producers working together. Melbourne is rife with fringe groups, such as out at Melbourne University - they are a great hope. We need more venues, more late night shows - why not a theatrical fun palace in the heart of Melbourne? It would be great. I am hoping to do some shows at the Last Laugh. It could be quite terrific."

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"What else do we need? New collaborations, people from different theatre cells getting together. I think the fact that I am doing some work for John Sumner shows something. Maybe he should do some plays at other theatre groups too."

"The Grant Street venue should be the most exciting theatre in this country if the shows are good. But so far, and I don't know why, it hasn't quite worked that way. I think the College of Arts and its drama department will change the nature of things. We are going to work with them. There is real hope as the idea and talent are there. We need to develop new directors. Our best actors should be back in the theatre not only in films. Look at the large number of terrific talents in our films from Helen Morse and Jackie Weaver on."

"I find The Doll trilogy very exciting and would like to see the idea followed with other Australian writers, such as Patrick White."

"Perhaps we need Australia's sparse theatre movements to be co-ordinated. Maybe the Australia Council could do this. A national talent pool in all areas of the theatre."

"I do think more and more that people are aware of our theatrical problems but not aware how to solve them. But, I'm optimistic and the signs are hopeful. Would I be taking on Grant Street if I wasn't?"

"At Grant Street we want to do really good plays. I am open to suggestions and of course would like to see works by Australian writers. We will be doing Chilvery by Almdor Geren and Dorothy Hewett's The Golden Oldies. I'm working with Garrie Hutchinson. I think Dorothy Hewett is a remarkable talent.

"We expect to get going the second week in December. Pat Bishop, Maggie Miller and other well known people will be included. It's an exciting concept we have in mind. I suppose you can say, we are really doing these shows because we want to do them. Yes, I do hope to work in Sydney, which is very stimulating and a place I love."

It was evident that Graeme Blundell was concerned and doing a great deal of thinking about Australia's theatre.
Gough and Tony Whitlam were the Labor speakers in the debate on the ammendments to the Australia Council Bill, and Tony Whitlam, while making all the usual noises about how only Labor loved the Arts and how we have to look with fear and trembling on the Libs, was at least kind enough to say of the young man who has been made Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on the Arts "At least he's no philistine". When the Whitlams are saying that you know there must be something alright somewhere.

But what of Government cuts? In the last budget the Lodge Party had already begun the cuts. We didn't take to the knife first. It was very delicate: we did everything we could to keep expenditure up to a very healthy level in the Arts. As you know, it exploded greatly - and good luck to Labor because they did lavish money, but so many of the important structural things had been set in train in our time: the experimental film area, the film school itself, and support for the theatre goes back a long way. It's not as if Whitlam waved a magic wand and created all this. While I don't want to go into any detail as to all the things that they buggered everything, I want to give them credit for the importance which they recognised by lavishing money — I just note with sadness that sometimes if you give so much so quickly you create enormous difficulties across the board.

There is going to be, I hope and believe, a bipartisan approach to the Arts in this country. I don't want this to be an area where we'll play politics. I'd hope that we're mature enough as politicians and as community to recognise this as an area of national interest and one where party politics can only despoil the area.

The I.A.C. Report? You could feel a bit rueful that the preliminary report has come out now, when it was set up as a Labour initiative - they'll say here it is, bloody Libs, the true colours.

The notion that we would consider phasing out subsidy is just not on. But it was commissioned by the Labor Party when commercial theatre was in trouble and this narrow request from one company became the basis for the whole thing. I don't know what happened in between. The I.A.C. was set without a charter, without riding instructions as to the value that Government and those of us involved in the Arts should have answers to those questions and be able to state them to the satisfaction of even the hardest heads in the business world.

Perhaps there were some inadequacies in the evidence given to the I.A.C., but I am absolutely convinced that there are thoroughly respectable arguments in all these areas which can justify subsidy, but they do rest on values in the end.

You have got to accept values - we support all sorts of industries in this country, not just the Performing Arts; grazing, the growing of all sorts of crops, manufacturing. Indeed, just about everything that moves gets some sort of support from Government! Everyone who wants this sort of support needs to argue the case.

One thing I feel fairly strongly about is that I know there is a fairly small actual physical audience for theatre in its different forms, but I'd hate to think that we might ever adopt the user pay principle to the point where only the very rich could afford to take part in the Arts. There is no argument which I'd accept that says you can do without subsidy at the level of the top performing companies or without stimulus and incentive being provided at the grass roots.

Subsidisation is needed in the areas of innovation and education; so that while there might be some very interesting questions across the middle range, there is just no question about the top level nor getting people off the ground and providing them with the wherewithal so that their creativity can be given the necessary stimulus.

We've made it plain that the I.A.C. will only recommend - we will make a policy. Our commitment to the Arts stands, and it stands like a rock and is as clear as the burning daylight. The idea of phasing out subsidy to the Arts just looks sick.

We will look at responsible suggestions as to how the Arts cake should be cut up and we will always attempt to do that. We'll seek to see that we don't waste, or squander resources on heavily subsidised major companies; you've got to watch these sorts of shows, they can become bureaucratic and conservative - like everybody's auntie. We're clearly looking at all these things anyway - it doesn't take the I.A.C. to make us do that.

They have made everyone ask questions. Such as how in times of inflation, can we ensure that individual performers and the theatre generally receives proper stimulus? How can we get away from the fact that the large companies, because they are labour-intensive, gobble up more and more of the cake and become more and more top heavy? The Australian Council has expressed its concern about this and it will want to do everything it can to ensure there is a better spread of resources in the future.

What about the concern for indigenous drama? Certainly these are the sorts of questions which demand answers; need I say more? I'd want to see those answers. I am concerned for our own forms - not crude ocker 'Aussie' forms, but Australians skilled in their crafts and arts who can show the world that we can produce stuff which touches on and draws its inspiration from the great universals of the people who can be lured into support for the arts industry. I think we have a responsibility now Australia is so over-taxed, to find ways of spreading the burden of patronage by opening up incentives for others to help the Arts. That seems to me to be the way to heal them - the way to diversity and excellence.

Funding from private industry? I can't make any commitment as it's a big study not to be completed until next year, but I do think we need to see how we can lure resources out of the private sector and into the arts industry.

I don't want to be too specific but I don't think there's any question that there are people who can be lured into support for the arts industry. I think we have a responsibility now Australia is so over-taxed, to find ways of spreading the burden of patronage by opening up incentives for others to help the Arts. That seems to me to be the way to heal them - the way to diversity and excellence.

Your position as Minister Assisting? I did a lot of hack work and the P.M. comes in at the heroic level! The Arts are in his department and are his ultimate responsibility. It is because he wanted to maintain a personal involvement, not just neglect it or leave it to the bureaucrats that he appointed a minister to assist him. Otherwise he would have had to rely on diverse sources of advice.

The P.M. is very concerned that there should be a concentration on the Arts in his Government. This is a personal determination.

He loves the Arts, his sister is a painter and indeed Tammy Fraser has always taken a strong interest in theatre, painting and a number of art forms. All politicians have far too little time to take part in the Arts; they are emptied out by other things from those which would work them most good.

And Theatre-Australia? I've been most excited by this venture and my great hope would be that you will continue to develop in the way in which you have started. You have got quality stuff across a fairly wide spectrum and are filling a tremendous need. As such I hope we can assist you in appropriate ways in the vital role you play.
### DRAMA THEATRE, Sydney Opera House

**THE MAGISTRATE** by Arthur Wing Pinero  
Sat. January 1 to Tue. February 15, '77

**THE PLOUGH & THE STARS** by Sean O'Casey  
Wed. February 23 to Tue. April 12, '77

**CAESAR & CLEOPATRA** by George Bernard Shaw  
Wed. April 20 to Tue. June 7, '77

### PARADE THEATRE, Anzac Parade, Kensington.

**THE FATHER** by August Strindberg  
Wed. February 9 to Tue. March 29, '77

**THE ALCHEMIST** by Ben Jonson  
Wed. April 6 to Tue. May 24, '77

**UNSPEAKABLE ACTS** by Colin Free  
Wed. June 1 to Tue. July 19, '77

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**FOR ALL ENQUIRIES.**
It involves the 'rehabilitation' of a man found beaten up in an alley and suffering from amnesia. Albert is the perpetrator of this Good Samaritan act. An unobtrusive chap who shuffles about in a shabby overcoat and hat clutching an airline bag (a relic of a more active and affluent past or a second-hand aid to fantasy fulfilment?). A man of simple needs who is no doubt lonely at times.

It is pleasing that fate has given his mundane life new purpose, and heartwarming to watch him devote himself so readily to the task of re-educating this unfortunate victim of a brutal assault and robbery.

There is genuine poignancy in his authoritative mis-spellings (automatic: a-o-t-m-a-t-k; plight: p-l-i-t-i-t) and in his constant references to what happened when Clarke Gable got amnesia in a film he remembers.

He is a little over-fascistic perhaps as he potters about his sparsely furnished one room home. But who would deny him that if it helps him to preserve what little is left of his dignity?

Mind you some of those old-hat strict regimenting and repressive teaching methods are a little hard to condone. And Albert's claim that he first mentioned a name his student suddenly remembers is suspicious to say the least. Little things like ignoring his patient's recollection that he only has one sugar in his tea and giving him two again begin to emerge as significant behaviour patterns.

Thus the anatomy of repression and manipulation is slowly exposed. Myths are created which reinforce Albert's control: Albert must always check the peanut butter to make sure it hasn't grown an invisible but deadly mould; "If you lie your arms will drop off" ... Newspapers and books (Mickey Spillane novels) are suppressed. The mirror is removed and the windows are painted over. Rules are changed at will so that the boss always wins - at cards and everything else.

Albert gains total power over the mind of this man he has chosen to name Edward. Edward turns out to be Albert's long-lost brother whom everyone thought was killed in the war. But not content with thus recreating Edward, Albert goes on to condition him into becoming a reincarnation of his own self. He has become increasingly aware of his mortality and this is his answer to life after death.

The memories Edward is fed, of Albert's days as a handsome intelligent soldier who fought the Japs, was called Mr. Universe by a girlfriend and who chatted up beautiful women on the train from Brisbane, are strangely redolent of Gable and Spillane ...

Albert Names Edward is an expertly crafted eerily absorbing play which works on a number of levels. But its low-key surrealism in no way obscures the haunting reality of its perceptions.

Darryl Wilkinson's unobtrusive directing serves the play very well indeed. His production was ideally paced timed moved focussed and balanced.

Peter Dahlsen's Edward was thoroughly thought through and played with great truth and commitment. Bruce Kerr gave a finely crafted and chillingly subtle performance as Albert. My only quarrel is with his cockney' accent - condoned as I understand it by both Wilkinson and Nowra. In fact I believe Nowra requested that an Australian accent be avoided on the grounds that it would contribute to the play's universality.

I'm sorry but I think that is bunkum. It is an argument which smacks of cultural cringe with colonialist overtones. Pinter's plays are no less

**LA MAMA THEATRE**

**ALBERT NAMES EDWARD**

John Smythe

Louis Nowra is a highly individual brilliant playwright of enormous skill perception and integrity. He has been writing here in Australia (Melbourne) for four years, one of them whilst in receipt of an Australian Council grant. Have you heard of him or seen any of his plays?

Before I launch into a diatribe concerning the lot of our lesser known playwrights, let me take a relatively sober look at one of Nowra's that has finally made it into production.

Albert Names Edward is the second play in a yet to be completed quartet in which all the central characters are outcasts. Each play involves the 'publication' of a private hell.

First of the four is Dreamhouses: George's daughter takes on a number of different personae and he builds a dreamhouse to accommodate each one; she turns further and further inwards, all contact with reality is lost and destruction ensues.

The third is Inner Voices set in Russia in the 1760's and centred round Ivan, heir apparent to the Romanov throne, who would have been Ivan VI had Catherine the Great not had him imprisoned at the age of one and forbidden anyone to talk to him. The architect of a military coup has him tutored to speak his language and tries to use him as his puppet.

Inside the Island, not yet completed, is the final play of the quartet.

Albert Names Edward was first written for stage performance. But it was adapted for radio, broadcast by the A.B.C. and translated into German (they requested plays from the A.B.C. and selected only a A names E - high praise indeed in a country where even Peter Handke and Gunter Grass regard it as a privilege to write for radio), before being given its first live airing at La Mama (October/November).
universal for their acutely observed vernacular. Shakespeare's plays were performed in English idiom regardless of where they were set. Peter Oyston's thoroughly Australian production of Waiting for Godot (earlier this year) liberated the universal absurdist and existential elements because it provided us with a familiar point of departure.

To perform Australian characters with English accents in a play written set and performed in Australia does nothing but make it unnecessarily remote. It is an insult to suggest that we might otherwise be incapable of generalising from the particular.

I am not suggesting that all Australian written plays should be heavily colloquial. But since idiomatic turns of phrase cannot be avoided in this sort of play they should be effectively utilised. A well-placed piece of vernacular can be just as evocative, if not more so, than the odd reference to Spillane, Gable or World War Two.

But Nowra is very particular about his use of language. He has cogent reasons for eschewing Oz vernacular. (We asked Nowra to defend his stand on language and he does so at the end of this article. - Eds)

Before we plunge into that, however, mention should be made of Darryl Wilkinson's contribution to Louis Nowra's development. It was he who discovered his first playwrighting contribution to Louis Nowra's development. It was he who discovered his first playwrighting contribution to Louis Nowra's development. It was he who discovered his first playwrighting contribution to Louis Nowra's development. It was he who discovered his first playwrighting contribution to Louis Nowra's development. It was he who discovered his first playwrighting contribution to Louis Nowra's development. It was he who discovered his first playwrighting contribution to Louis Nowra's development.

Subsequently he workshoped Nowra's The Devil of the Opera (the longest play which has the police inspector from Orton's Loot investigating his author's violent death, and roped Nowra in to a group developed rock musical called Affluence as the student's hack writer (at the Melbourne State College where Darryl was lecturing at the time). Such experiences are invaluable to a developing playwright.

But it was beginning to look like a one-man fan club and Wilkinson was starting to doubt his own judgement, until an A.B.C. radio producer discovered Albert Names Edward and the Life of a Legend, a strong indictment of media exploitation and manipulation castigating both the vultures and the voyeurs - which Nowra now regards as a poor piece of work. Wilkinson directed it as La Mama in July, 1973.

Now we all know that sort of thing is okay especially in the eyes of the latest least common sense practitioners of the new theatre but it is not creative. Something more is needed in the way of an energy-producing, and balanced environment if that procreative urge is to be finally bear fertile fruit - not only now but in generations to come. And that is as much about risk-taking as it is about common sense; about taking good ideas and accepting and refining them despite criticism. The audience is invaluable to a developing playwright.

Consider the fate of our playwrights over the past half decade. A handful have been shot prematurely to the 'top' where they reposit untouched, uncoined and confused. Seeds albeit bursting with promise which have been forced to masquerade as brilliant blooms of a nation's hysterical lunge for creative identity. Products of our impatient groping then frenetic grasping tugging and pumping at prurences through which we choose to express that identity: we ejaculate therefore we are! (The male bias is intentional - like it or not that's how it was.)

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So where are our hopes for the future? What has become of the countless writers whose plays have been done at the Playwright's Conference, who have received grants and commissions, who have struggled to produce without such aid! Who is doing their plays?

It would be naive to suggest that a good play will always out despite the all too constant obstacles. The floors of theatre company offices are literally littered with unread scripts. Many have been lobbed off on hopelessly unproven authors. Others are bought by the entourage of notable names who have struggled to produce without such aid! Who is doing their plays?

Some have been done on the cheap in desperation, leading often to further frustration, financial loss and the bruises left by informed critical response - except where they are ignored altogether. Many of the writers directors and actors who are aware of the excellent but undevelop plays around may quite rightly refuse to condemn them to such a fate. So they seek in vain for the wherewithal to give them the full-time and fully professional attention they deserve.

The most dispiriting experience of all for a writer is getting consistently enthusiastic responses to a script which nevertheless remains unproduced. If this is to become a planned production (at last) suddenly cancelled for reasons totally unrelated to the quality of the work.

A case in point is Nowra's Inner Voices regarded as brilliant by all who have read it (including myself). It has been rated one of the best plays ever written in Australia by more than one commentator.

Where disillusionment fails to win defensive strategies, acknowledgement of their worth has emerged in performance) find that delays of up to eighteen months are par for the course.

The first two plays, Crossing Niagara and The Foursome, both imports and vastly inferior to Inner Voices and any other play that now had economic necessity not only emerged in performance) find that delays of up to eighteen months are par for the course.

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LOUIS NOWRA ON HIS USE OF LANGUAGE

Both Dreamhouses and Albert Names Edward are set in Australia and yet, as it's been pointed out by people who have seen the latter, my characters don't use the 'Australian vernacular'. It's an annoying criticism, especially when I am a writer who deals rather specifically with language.

I lived in Munich for six months earlier this year and was asked by a German who had recently read a series of published plays, if Australia, like Germany, had dialect theatres. It appears she was puzzled by the use of a glossary at the back of many of our plays, especially when it was obvious the glossary would be used by Australians. It is puzzling when one thinks about it; Pinter doesn't have to have a glossary, nor do we see them used by such playwrights as Genet, Beckett, or Orton.

German authors write in Hoch Deutsch (High German) as its the most common language in Germany (placing a piece of Bavarian dialect theatre in Hamburg would illustrate exactly, the parochial nature of such theatre). Also, and this is important, Hoch Deutsch is seen as the language of the theatre because it transcends regional dialects and its power doesn't fade like old slang. Genet, interesting to note, did not write about the homosexual underworld in its argot but in some of the most perfect, classical French written since Chateaubriand's memoirs. One could repeat examples endlessly, even the Elizabethans wrote in the Queen's English, continually refining and testing its strengths, diversity and richness.

Theatre is a concentration on words, a preoccupation with them is necessary if all the subtleties of the text can be understood e.g. Pinter. Some Australian plays mystify me. Even an excellent play like Stretch of the Imagination has me reaching for my Sidney Baker [The Australian Language] as do many other plays.

The playwrights in question will probably say they are trying to communicate to the audience, that theirs is a popular theatre, however, if its a scalpel you want to use, the Australian language isn't the instrument. It's a perplexing thing studying the 'Australian vernacular'. It's a language which allows little or no feeling to emerge from below the surface. It shows itself to me male orientated, with the resultant anti-female impulse and immature attitude to sex, yet perversely, it is one of the most colourful, funny languages in the world. As a means of communication between people it has always struck me as a thorough camouflage for sensitivity, compassion and understanding. Interestingly, one of the best Australian plays (Stretch) is a one man play, left alone the solitary man has only himself and his interior life to fall back on, a rare view, indeed, of an Australian.

Its obvious from the above why I personally don't use the vernacular; I find it too limiting and parochial for my purposes. Also, I'm not interested in being a professional Australian, its a bore, as are too many Australians. Finally, having characters on stage, speaking English, not vernacular or a mixture of both, separates the Australian speaking audience from the work and instead of indentifying with the characters on stage (which should be the last thing a writer ever asks his audience or reader to do-thank goodness for Genet, Nabokov and Orton) he or she, hopefully, will be able to be a little bit more objective and make a much greater effort to understand what is happening in front of them (something lazy Australian audiences haven't yet learnt-not helped, I think, by the importance given to David Williamson's work).

In such a short piece I can't do justice to my approach, nor can I do the same to those playwrights whose work is different from mine. What I'm asking is for the audience to see my approach as being just as valid as other.

Louis Nowra
It was a bizarre experience sitting amongst a phalanx of moist-eyed matrons as they identified totally with the Vogue-like world of Noel Coward's *Private Lives*. They complimented the sets, sighed voluptuously at the handsome men, applauded Suzannah York before she had uttered a line, and clacked their dentures whenever fortunes took a turn for the worse.

One of the most ludicrous aspects of the star-system is that it is largely a hoax. The trumpeting and rhetoric of the media often puff up reputations and entice the more susceptible sections of the public into entirely suspending their disbelief. They extend to these luminaries, often from overseas, the most extraordinary indulgence, and when disappointed they frequently refuse to acknowledge that disappointment as such is the tenacity of their indoctrination.

Not that Suzannah York and Barrie Ingham are impostors or hacks. They give polished and adroit performances in the familiar euphonious English manner. Ultimately, however, these performances are easy and unprovocative, something unimaginable from great actors, even with material as brittle and insubstantial as *Private Lives*. Having seen Barrie Ingham bring off superb performances in *The Relapse* and *The Winter's Tale*, it was rather a shock to see him lounge through this stuff as if on a theatrical vacation.

*Private Lives* is undeniably a period piece, evoking that glittering and mildly decadent ethos of the Thirties - glamorous yet somewhat illusory with both Hitler and the Depression on the immediate horizon. Its affluent characters, whose precise social backgrounds are tastefully never revealed, flap like elegant birds across the fun-fields of provincial France, Paris.
The Company of More Canterbury Tales.

MORE CANTERBURY TALES by Martin Starkie and Nevill Coghill. Music by Richard Hill & John Hawkins; Her Majesty’s Theatre (world premiere 23.x.76.) Director, Martin Starkie; Designer, Derek Cousins; Choreographer, Betty Pounder.

DAVID RAVENSWOOD, BRIAN JAMES, KERRYN HENDERSON, RANDELL BERGER, ALTON HERVY, IRENE BEVANS, WARWICK COMBER, KEITH LITTLE, JOHN COUSINS, PHILLIP GOULD, TONY HAWKINS, MARTIN DYCKHOF, JOHNNY LOCKWOOD, MARGARET BURTON.

and St Moritz. The play provides simple vicarious pleasures, a nostalgic peek at the nice things of the Thirties - clothes, interior decoration, insipid Swing, sophisticated youth, and naughty manners.

For J.C.W however, it is a death-croak a final mawkish look over the shoulder at halcyon days, days when they were more in touch with the public and the fickle sands of the entertainment trade. Australia has changed swiftly and radically in the Seventies, less sniveling towards Overseas, more oriented within its own cultural selfhood, more content to scrutinize its own absurd navel. These factors J.C.W have seemingly ignored, clinging to old habits and formulae, hence their demise.

As a playwright, Noel Coward is a minor farceur, a supremely harmless insect that history will swat. He is not terribly funny. Even the acolytes in the audience only managed a few feeble titters during the whole afternoon. Admittedly, they were mainly there to soak up the sentiment and recapture a glimpse of their flapper youth in a more international context.

PRIVATE LIVES deals with love and hate in marriage and relationships and enduring themes (e.g. Strindberg’s The Dance of Death) of potent rivalries, of violence and passion, which in Coward’s hands becomes a predictable pattern of bombast and schmaltz, of pat conclusions instead of precariousness.

Robert Chetwyn has directed the play in a smart and craftsmanlike fashion, rightly ignoring the rest of the century. Kenneth Rowell has flicked out appropriate sets and costumes, expertly causing the mums to gasp over their beauty. Bruce as Victor (a dull and ponderous pill) acquiesced himself feasibly, though his performance lacked full physicalization, tending to emanate from the shoulders up. Broney Behets pushed the pouting fatuity of Sibyl to the very limits of caricature. Thus failing to really shape or modulate her performance.

Over the road at Her Majesty’s Theatre, J.C.W Productions Ltd (Kenn Brodziak), in alliance with Edgley and Miller, was presenting another exasperating event: More Canterbury Tales, a musical based on four of Chaucer’s tales and boldly billed as a world premiere.

Again female patrons dominated the audience, though this time they were more generally accompanied by men, some who either snoozed slumped back in their seats or slunk off to the bar for refreshment. As I left the theatre one whacker remarked to his wife: “That’s the best night’s sleep I’ve had in the theatre for a long time.”

An over-harsh reaction to the evening, for among the razzamatazz and genteel bawdy, there are some good performances, particularly those of Brian James, David Ravenswood and John Cousins.

The main trouble is the music by Richard Hall and John Hawkins, a potpourri of bland melodies in quasi-pop style, banally orchestrated with overuse of brass and tympani. The lyrics of a lot of the songs (by Neville Coghill the eminent Chaucerian scholar) are pure sugar, especially numbers like ‘Love My Heart is Waking’ and ‘Let Happiness Begin.’

Not so much more helpful is the interweaving around the four tales of a rather dank love story - that of a young Squire and Eleanor. Philip Gould, fresh-faced and boyish, as if just out of New Faces, is quite uncomfortable as the earnest Squire at this early stage. Both he and Kerryn Henderson (Eleanor), who is technically quite assured, will need to bring a lot more wit and ironic verve to their parts as the run proceeds.

More Canterbury Tales also boasts two stars. Johnny Lockwood and Margaret Burton (from England). Johnny Lockwood, whose main attributes are golfball eyes and a kayak of a mouth, I found a terrible disappointment - a graduate of the mug-and-beef-it-out school of comedy. Margaret Burton, on the other hand, was content to keep a lower profile and perform with modest professional ease - competent and unexciting, not transcending her drab material.

Doubtless the show will be re-worked before it takes off for the showbiz capitals of the world, but until radical alterations are made to the music and the narrative links, the choreography is freshened up, and even re-casting considered. I can’t see the turnstiles spinning like propellers.
Not so long ago, people were arrested in Melbourne for swearing on stage. They are still arrested for swearing offstage, but leave that difference between life and art aside. One remembers with a certain amount of nostalgic anger The Boys In The Band, or Graeme Blundell and Lindsay Smith being arrested for

Alex Ruzzo’s famous epithet at the end of Norm and Ahmed. F ...... boong, as it was written then. Nowadays, with the ice broken in substantial fashion by avalanches of swearing in plays like Don’s Party, writers can write and actors can say anything. There is now absolutely nothing unsayable short of slander of real persons. One may slander the fictional at will.

The question now arises, what can one do on stage. Here the reverse of the swearing situation applies. One may do in real life, albeit discreetly, anything sexual one desires. I refer to positions and perversions, not, of course, rape, incest and undergarde liaisons, although doubtless these occur. You may involve yourself in duos, trios, quartets, quintets, and even sextets to your hearts desire, made up of any part of the smorgasbord of sexualities readily available to the discerning customers. But you may not do any of this on the stage.

At least you may not really do it. That is to say, you are not permitted to reach genuine catharsis with the partner of your choice in a public place, to wit, a theatre. What you may do is represent various kinds of psychic or physical climax. You may talk about it till you are blue in the face. You may act it. Because, if you are on stage, acting (representing) you are not a real person. You are a species of ghost, and ghosts are not into really doing it. But in representing this ‘other’ (I leave aside the confessional species of drama, where actors do not act so much as be) you may appear in as much deshabille as you like. You may be naked, and you may, unlike a Windmill girl, move. You may expose yourself, perform ablutions and excretions. You may touch. But you must not do it.

Not that I see any virtue in watching people fuck. I believe watching is not as good as doing it, although there are some porno movie actors, who seem to enjoy being watched doing it for a living. But it is interesting that the actual penetration, if you like, is the place where the line is currently drawn against the complete breakdown in civilization as we know it.
This is by way of a homily.

What brings me to this moralising cast of mind is some advance publicity for Lysistrata recently staged at La Boite Theatre in Brisbane, and the production itself.

The publicity item was perpetrated on T.V. by This Day Tonight (local edition), no doubt with a little on-the-inside promoting from the theatre itself. It was probably seen as one of those spicier tit-bits occasionally dropped into the heavier routine of current affairs programmes as a change of pace. On such occasions, one can almost feel the critical faculties of the production team unwinding - not that one begrudges T.V. personalities a few moments release from their own turgidity.

The question is whether it is proper to sell the play this way, even if it gets prime time.

What the viewers were treated to was a portentous preamble over outside shots of the theatre, along the lines of: "... the last time Lysistrata played in Brisbane, outraged public opinion forced it to close ... etc." We never were told quite what the circumstances were. You drew your own conclusions; but I can think of a dozen legitimate reasons for closing lots of productions I have sat through.

Anyway, thus teased, we were taken inside La Boite (which by now we were expecting had been transformed into "The Pit") where the probing camera circled round a darkened foreground figure revealing half-glimpses of an agitated Lysistrata. Not that we were much interested in her by now, the voice-over having long since steered us towards checking what the actress (Patsy McCarthy) had on. Could it be?

The effect was compounded by an interview with Ron Finney (the director) who playfully parried a series of loaded questions, while affecting a leer on one side of his face and a tongue-in-cheek on the other. This performance was calculated to appeal to several potential audiences at one.

At least, I assume the intention was to stir a complex of urges in the viewers which would make the production a "popular success". It is the sort of "idea that exercises many a publicity mind. Very few of us in theatre, impelled as we are by a yearning to get 'the people' into those empty rows of seats, can resist the temptation offered by a play like Lysistrata.

Somehow, in the commercial area of our brains, we imagine a series of little scenes going on all over town. There's the one at a pub in Leichhardt Street, that goes something like this: "Dave's at the bar and in comes Barney, dressed to the nines: "G'day Barney. Ya look like foreman material in those new clothes!"

"Not new clothes. That's me theatre outfit."

Theatre outfit?!!

"Yer! I'm going ter Lar Bwart Theatre ter see Lice's Strata."

"But, Barney, that's cultural. It's not fer the likes of us."

"Ar Dave, if what I seen on T.D.T. was culture then yer can write me out a subscription, any day."

Meanwhile, over at Albion Heights, that little old lady with the blue rinse and pearls who is "vice" president of the Joh's Witnesses is getting up a little "Party-Booking of Protest".

The main point is that the vast unreachables of the theatre are supposed suddenly to be hurling their bums on seats.

The fact is that La Boite seems to have had a box-office bonanza with Lysistrata; but as one cynic said the other day, how do we know that the same old audience that spreads itself over a year of theatre hasn't concentrated its attention on this one play.

When I went, whether the audience was a new one or not, the atmosphere they created was certainly different. The mere sight of a poly styrene penis or a spangled crust brought forth bawdy roars from the young blades, interestingly and obviously there in groups, and the roaring was immediately accompanied by a rustle of wrist-slaping from their female companions. It was just like one of those Rugby riots which are tedious enough when you're half-drunk on some river bank but in a theatre, when you're sober, they're agony.

The programme confessed to having "taken liberties" of which it was "sure the author would have approved". I would be a little less confident. "Outrageous" though Aristophanes meant to be, his purpose was something more than a "romp".

My objections, then, are two-fold. To publicise the play as some sort of 2000 year old Peloponesian peep-show in order to reach a wider audience is bad, because theatre that isn't mere business should be above using the easy means to an end. Above all, to produce the play to titillate the demand created, subverts its main intention, making it prurient and tawdry. It would be a superb irony if the show became so "successful" that it had to extend for six months. Then all concerned could really test how deep was their belief in this sort of "theatre for the people".
TWELFTH NIGHT THEATRE COMPANY

CHILDREN'S DAY

Richard Fotheringham

Children's Day has three flaws which plummet it to the bottom of a pit far below And The Big Men Fly (I saw the Q.T.C. production of the latter in Mackay when it was five weeks on the road, and suffering from the rigours of touring.) The least of the flaws is that it is sending good royalty money out of the country to two English writers, Keith Waterhouse and Willis Hall. The greater flaws are firstly that the play has the insufferable pretension to load morals and symbols onto its equally ridiculous storyline, and secondly that whereas I found it possible to ignore the racism and sexism in the Australian play, in Children's Day I kept being struck by the extreme unpleasantness of much of the dialogue and the sniggering juvenile mentality of the comedy.

Try as a sample this piece of witty repartee. The play is set in the home of the wife, and the estranged husband arrives to try to patch things up. They quarrel, and after a cross-examination of both by the wife's lawyer friend as to the possibilities of a quick divorce, the lawyer sums up with:

"Well if he's not a poof and you're not up the pot then we're up the proverbial creek without an affidavit."

Both play and production try to pretend that it's all really just a bit of fun folks. It's a charming English household straight out of indooroutily, all glass and wide open doors in the late English autumn, with girls in their summer frocks. A civilized place, where a guest tells the maid to get back in there and mind those bloody kids or she'll get a boot up her backside. And guess what — though we see only the adults at this kids party, the grown-ups argue and bicker over things like marriages and mistresses and magic bros while they're wearing the kids' party hats on their heads. Which is pretty profound when you think about it.

I can only abandon all hope of reviewing the play further and say quite sincerely that Brisbane and Australia have a lot to thank Twelfth Night Theatre for over the years. The number of prominent Australian actors and directors who have worked and trained there over the years — particularly in the sixties - is a long and impressive one. And even more recently when they had an impossible mortgage around their necks and unequal competition from the bigger and better subsidized QTC, they still found their own ground; even if it was only doing Don's Party when the Queensland officialdom was horrified.

And having recently lost their theatre to the State Government, and being at present under threat of a government proposal to absorb them into the Q.T.C., the Twelfth Night morale must be pretty low, perhaps again close to the point of collapse. But unless they can find a better reason for existing than most of their recent efforts, only those of us with long memories are going to care.

THE SEASON AT SARSAPARILLA

John Tasker

It is a somewhat strange experience to watch somebody else's production of a play you have been formerly closely involved with. I directed the first production of The Season At Sarsaparilla for the Adelaide University Theatre Guild and the production in Sydney and it is cause for jubilation that the Old Tote has decided to revive one of Patrick White's plays The Season at Sarsaparilla.

Thirteen years have passed since Sydney saw a Patrick White play when The Ham Funeral was really not "nice" enough for such a prestigious festival. The Season At Sarsaparilla of all his plays is possibly the most accessible and hopefully its success will lead to revivals of his other three plays.
The play is described as a 'Charade of suburbia' in two acts. We are taken simultaneously into the homes of three suburban families: the Knotts — a young couple — he's in menswear and she is very pregnant; the Pogsons — living desperate lives of others. Young Joyleen (Pippy) Pogson leaves knowing that one day he will be back. And over it all the hot heat of an Australian summer and the constant sense of the dogs after the poor bitch on heat.

As I said, it is a compassionate play and even the most unsympathetic of the characters are allowed moments of quiet and touching anguish. It is a comedy of Australian manners, Australian propriety. It swings easily from satire to comedy to drama; from the trivial to the wrenchingly real.

Nola Boyle is closely related to Mrs. Lusty in The Ham Funeral leading to Miss Docker in A Cheery Soul and Miss Quodling in Night on Bald Mountain — all barren yet carrying with them an irresistible life force.

Kate Fitzpatrick as Nola Boyle, especially in Act II, with her guilt, self-reproach and her reconciliation with Ernie was magnificent. For her, as an actress, I would go so far to say that her performance must be the greatest achievement in this young acting career. Gone are the mannequins and affectations with which I had begun to permeate some of her recent work. Her Nola was raw, exposed, vulnerable yet still with an arrogance for life. With one or two small adjustments her performance in the first half will be equally true. There is a touch of something slatternly in Miss Fitzgerald's performance in Act I. I doubt if Nola would make a bed with a cigarette in the wrong place. And the self-castigating Roy Child is not for her and her reconciliation with Ernie was a very real achievement for Jim Sharman, a quality these characters needed and which in both my productions I doubt if I was able to achieve.

In the middle house Peter Whitford was rather wasted in the slight role of Clive Pogson, a man of depressing utter banalities. His wife, Girle, Robin Nevin contributed the fussiness, the small-minded values and the accent on "daintiness" the role requires. She also lined the character's essential loneliness and numbing frustration with her husband, her children and her life. However, Mr. Barry Humphries has, since the writing of the play, made this type of housewife completely his own and it will be an uphill battle for Miss Nevin to banish Mrs. Everage from the stage. With superb lines such as "I like a hat to look different, so long as it's what the others are wearing" and "There's nothing common about zinnias," and those are only two of scores, Edna is only a gladly throw away.

Jim Sharman has brought a restraint to this production, subduing his natural ingenuity and inventiveness to serve the playwright. He has followed Patrick White's request to the letter.

The set, by Wendy Dickson, is three identical grey boxes backed by a curtain. In each kitchen there is a minimum of visible furniture — a stove, a fridge, a chrome and laminex table and matching chairs. Each kitchen has a basic colour — the Pogson's blue, the Knott's brown and the Boyle's pink, and these colours are carried through into the costumes. Most of the kitchen-ware, meals, glasses of beer are mimed. Again, in accordance with Patrick White's wish, although in his notes he has said "wherever it will not make the action too tricky or distracting," I must say that I did find the miming quite distracting especially as it was achieved with widely varying degrees of success. Besides I doubt it's validity in suburbia, possessions are a tangible insignia of achievement. As Ernie says "That's the mixmaster. Got everything now."

Above and beyond that the cast has responded well to the affection and professionalism Mr. Sharman brought to the play. Patrick White had every reason to look pleased as he took a curtain call.

There are two roles in the play which I feel are pretty near unplayable — one poorly realised and the other unnecessary. The first is the model Julia — what the hell she's doing in the Pogson's backyard has always been beyond me and that such a cool, ambitious woman should kill herself because she is pregnant has always been out of my comprehension. Schematically her death has logic; it corresponds with the birth of Kevon Knott and the super objective of White's play is Eliot's irreducible 'birth, copulation and death'. But realistically and dramatically, truthfully it isn't.

The second is the character Roy who acts as a chorus and has always seemed extraneous as what he describes we view in detail on stage. It is somewhat as if Mr. White is doubly ensuring that we do not miss his point. I still think that the role of this pompous, cutting young man does not work. Andrew Sharp brought a young idealistic attitude to the role and it is not his fault that he only just made it palatable. I have seen three other actors battle with this role and even the talented Reg Livermore in Melbourne could not bring the character to life.

Part of the reason for these two unsatisfactory characters may be in the fact that Patrick White seems unable to write realistic roles for young men or women. Something locks him out of understanding the age range of puberty to adulthood. Judy and Ron in 'Season' are two other casualties with their stilted stiff language and attitudes. With children, witness Pippy and Dedree, White is delightfully accurate and for adults he can write electrifying real characters. I can't pinpoint why, only regret it.

Hard words? I hope not. On the first night in Adelaide a young designer sent me a telegram — "Nola's is pink, Girle's is blue, someone's off white I hope it's not you." I'm not. Far from it. Welcome back to the theatre, Patrick White.
MEN WITHOUT SHADOWS

Rex Cramphorn

Morts sans sépulture, (variously, and equally unsatisfactorily, rendered in English as The Victors and Men Without Shadows), depicts the torture and execution of French maquisards by their own collaborating countrymen during the German occupation of France. The play appeared in 1946 when the events to which it referred were still white-hot in the memory. Thirty years later, as presented by young, non-professional actors, the play still communicates some of its desperation and anguish. There is not much more that I can say about the production. It did not, for me, transcend the limitations implicit in student theatre. The text demands performances that represent the extremes of mental and physical pain while accommodating a good deal of talking above the moral and philosophical complexities of the situation. The credibility of the pain and the validity of the talking are not within the reach of young, inexperienced actors, fully exposed in a three-quarter-round staging. But within these limitations the production (Ian Watson) presents the text clearly, conveys a certain enthusiasm for the violent aspects of the action, and provides ample food for thought.

What I thought about mostly was the separation of acts and words. When, as here the acts are extremely violent, requiring us to believe in physical damage, rape and death, the separation seems to become more acute.

Given the distancing factors of time, translation and performance I am unable to decide to what degree Sartre's words are intended to be simple, direct and appropriate to the action. But even if they are intended to be completely so, they are situated in a firm, classical structure which never lets us suppose that real-life reportage is intended.

KILLARA COFFEE THEATRE

A TRIBUTE TO TEN YEARS

Barry Eaton

To mention the word mime in theatre circles one's mind automatically conjures up images of Marcel Marceau, the Canadian Mime Theatre or perhaps the Black Theatre of Prague: each internationally recognised for its individual style. In Sydney mime is also automatically associated with the Killara 680 Coffee Theatre.

Killara 680 does not perform classical mime, rather classic entertainment. It is always difficult to explain this unique show succinctly. John Howitt, who created and has lived with the '680' for over ten years also finds this difficulty. "Telling people we mime to recorded music and comedy material makes it sound like a church social," says John.

Nevertheless that is exactly what they do on their tiny eight by fourteen feet stage. Recorded sketches from the Kenneth Horne Show, Marty Feldman, Lily Tomlin and Stan Freberg are combined with music from the ballet to Ray Stevens. The cast ranges to Ray Stevens. The cast adorn themselves with costumes either splendid or outrageous to suit the occasion and then the fun starts.

Entertainment is always the name of the game at Killara 680 and that is what Sydney-siders have come to expect. Clever, hilarious, mad, outrageous - all these words apply to the show. But entertainment is the goal.

It is no wonder that the 680 recently celebrated its tenth birthday, with a party of course. Cakes, candles, sweets and funny hats were all on the tables for the guests.

The audience sits at tables, closely packed together and at intervals the cast all help serve supper. These are the touches of intimacy that help make an evening at the 680 so enjoyable.
Those members of the media who helped celebrate the birthday with the cast and their friends enjoyed themselves to the full, judging by the noisy reception.

The new show is appropriately called *The Best of Ten Years*. It has all been done before but the freshness remains. Some of the sketches have become classics and audiences demand them again and again.

John Howitt with 'My Boomerang Won't Come Back', brought forth the kind of audience response usually reserved for pop singers!

One of the funniest pieces of the show is used to close Act I. It is a glorious ballet send up complete with large bumbling ballerina (David Foster) ably assisted by a bored corps de ballet. Not a new idea by any means, but hilariously done.

This then is the product of ten years hard work at Killara for John Howitt. An out of work actor, he decided to make his own opportunities. Things were not made easier in Killara for his venture. A suburb of Sydney known more for its 'genteel' upper middle class residents than for any theatrical activities, it presented a real challenge. Now many of the locals are John's most ardent supporters.

Peter Parkinson has been at the 680 now for six years and is considered part of the place. Peter's comedy timing, incredibly elastic face and the impish way he at times upstages everyone have made him a favourite.

John and Peter apart, the cast changes for each show, although some like Louise Howitt (John's sister in law) appear frequently.

John has started to phase himself out of the show, appearing only in the second half. He wants to concentrate on directing and also planning for the future. A future which includes a possible national TV series. John has recently been given the rights to mime on TV, previously forbidden for all performers. He is producing a pilot programme and says he has enough material for fifty two one hour shows!

Television aside, John still has thousands of followers for his live shows and is preparing a new spectacle for 1977. Despite some recent legal problems with the authorities over the premises, the future looks bright.

Along with his many fans I hope John never becomes too involved with backstage activities to quit performing altogether. His large six feet five inches whether "dragged up" as a nun (frilly panties and all!), a pop singer, cowboy, ballerina or as Dolly Levy singing 'Hello Dolly' is always a welcome sight.

Happy tenth Anniversary Killara 680 - and many happy returns.
One could say that it was artistic suicide to select Shakespeare’s multi-layered drama, ordinary productions of it are more than not unsuccessful, or at least only illuminate one aspect of the play at a time.

To try and get across the meaning of the language and the philosophical and emotional depth implicit in the text in the medium of mime would seem to be next to impossible.

Granted the Theatre of the Deaf’s production will not be the play as we know it. Basically it will be the story and the human relationships therein, reconstructed and interpreted so that the underlying sense comes through.

In rehearsal, the company goes through the text with fine tooth comb and explores the most succinct gesture or mimetic narrative that can convey both what is said and what is meant.

It is a very subliminal form of theatre, this and audience needs to work with the company in order to uncover the mystery, the compassion and the humanity of Shakespeare’s text.

The N.S.W. Theatre of the Deaf is not professional. In our terms, it is amateur. But because they are the product of the deaf, they have to much live theatre or seen many movies they are untrammeled by personal expectation or past standards, and as has been noted, as far as its method of communication is concerned the company is experienced and professional.

Whether the two languages (that of the company and it’s audiences) will fuse into a clear and concisely understandable “King Lear” is yet to be seen.

If it doesn’t work, it won’t be because of lack of rehearsal or self discipline in the company, for some of the most dedicated and attentive performances I have seen. It will be because they haven’t explored the huge spectrum of physical expression that Lear would seem to demand, and that the audience hasn’t put aside its own prejudices and preconceptions in coming to witness the performances.

Unlike the New York Theatre of the Deaf that visited and overwhelmed Australian audiences with its production of Camde in 1974, the local company will not use a “voice over” narrator to speak the text for the benefit of the hearing audience.

The New York company’s great asset was charm and a mixture of physical versatility, subtlety and a director with keen eye for expressive stage images.

The N.S.W. Theatre of the Deaf will have intense personal involvement from all its cast, a true determination to show mime as a serious and wide ranging medium of expression and a director who knows how to make a point clear and how to get it across to audience in a concise and totally theatrical manner.

It is a world apart from the “pure mime” mannerism of Marcel Marceau or the currently touring Canadian Meme theatre.

This company sticks to the type of mime that most of us are familiar with, the short sketch, the anecdote.

Its pieces are what I would call “referenced” snippets from life.

There are scenes of people in a doctor’s waiting room, all with the fascinating idiosyncrasies that most of us have witnessed. There are whimsical skits about first dates, little girls playing with a dog (and vice versa) and shop window mannequins.

The thing that is so interesting about such forms of mime is the way and manner in which the situations are conveyed.

The degree of physical emphasis that can change scaredness into outright terror for example.

Just as in abstract ballet, the medium is the message. It is essentially the same sort of mistake that Lindsay Kemp used in Clouds.

The mime language demands that we, the audience, create in our minds, the world that the performer inhabits. It is up to us to colour in the scene and to add our embellishments and interpretations as we see fit.

This process of making the audience work is one of the theatre’s greatest strengths. It forces a communion between stage and theatre.

I have never known so many people to leave a production so drained and emotionally exhausted, so wildly divergent in their personal interpretation of what they had just witnessed as those that left a performance of Lindsay Kemp’s Clouds.

This production relied less on pure mime than it did on incorporating mime into a theatrical pageant involving lights, music, sets and costumes.

What emerged was a potently mimetic spectacle that shocked the audience into accepting the argument and the language that expressed it.

To me it was as near to Artaud’s “Frantic signals through the flames” as is currently possible.

Flowers concocted a totally subconscious, subliminal form of non vocal theatre, an aspect of drama that a lot of great theatre directors have attempted to explore. Such people as Grostowski or Peter Brook in his Orghast experiment.

In this production Kemp had so sharpened his stage imagery that those trance like ecstatic episodes etched themselves into people’s minds.

He showed his limitations in his later Sydney production of Salome.

Salome seemed to me to be cast adrift from its own argument. The elements of speech (the greatest flaw), music, costume and lighting seemed to be fighting each other for prominence, nothing working together.

Admittedly it was an impressive spectacle, but it was a spectacle without anything to say and without a convincing method of saying it.

Gone was the passion and intensity that fired Flowers. What we had instead was a badly directed production of Oscar Wilde’s play, smothered in pointless music, lavish gowns, simpering voices, risible self indulgence and an excess of amiss, though beautiful, semi-nude young men.

It hardly needs to be added that what mime there might have been in it was crushed under the weight of the decorations, and thus Salome had no heart and no mind.

Yet all of these productions in some way illustrated both the limitations and the strengths of mime as a way of communicating in the theatre.

Mime will never replace the spoken word in working through the delicacies of an intellectual argument, but it does convey feelings, senses and emotions in a totally honest way and it can express abstractions in a manner that no amount of words could ever achieve.

The trouble is that a lot of people will not bother to educate themselves into the “grammar” of mime and thus are stumped when confronted with it. They say they are bored.

Well personally I think that’s their limitation, not mime’s.
OLD TOTE THEATRE COMPANY

A TOAST TO MELBA

Katharine Brisbane

A TOAST TO MELBA by Jack Hibberd. Parade Theatre (opened 29 ix.76.) Director, Mick Rodger; Designer, Hugh Colman. Nellie Melba, JENNIFER MCGREGOR; Armstrong, Oscar Wilde, Mayor of Brisbane, Enrico Caruso, JOHN ALLEN; Lemmone, Newsboy, TERRY BADER; Lady de Grey, Amy Castles, Eunice, Mother's voice, CHRISTINE COLLINS; Maestro Cecchi, Sir Augustus Harris, Neville Cardus, Norton, RALPH COTTERILL; Father's voice, George Lupton, Treacle O'Kane, G.B. Shaw, Duke of Orleans, Wedekind, Sir Thomas Beecham, DREW FORTHSYTH; Madame Marchesi, A cockney street walker, Jimmy Mulinia, Gladys Moncrieff, ANNE GRIGG; Gottlieb, MARIO MERINO.

There are two particular pleasures for me in the Parade Theatre's production of A Toast to Melba. One is that its popularity here as elsewhere confirms Jack Hibberd's long held view - and that of the Australian Performing Group - that popular theatre can be contrived out of our daily rituals and our vaudeville tradition. The other is that Hibberd has found a director and a cast able to do real justice to the inventive raw material which is Hibberd's text.

While I cannot be categorical about productions of Hibberd's plays - and certainly not about the many productions of Dimboola, for example - I have long wished to see a really luxurious performance of his work with actors vocally better qualified than those common to the Australian Performing Group. With Hibberd's work the A.P.G. has never been as successful outside the Pram Factory as it has been in it, and the chief reason has seemed to lie in a lack of precision which more formal environments accentuate. At the Parade Theatre under Mick Rodger's direction the Hibberd style comes into full bloom in a splendid amalgam of elegance and vulgarity.

"Popular theatre in general", writes Hibberd in the introduction to the printed text. "suggests for me a theatre of accessibility that is above all Australian in theme and substance, a theatre for the populace that deals with legendary figures and events, perennial and idiosyncratic rituals, mythically implanted in the nation's consciousness." It is a tall order and one Hibberd has been searching to satisfy since he first emerged as a playwright in 1967. A Toast to Melba which places our most legendary lady in a context of sublime Italian music and ribald larrikin burlesque, is his most triumphant experiment to date. And in artistic terms his most successful

The play is an account - a lively and fairly objective one - of Melba's life as those who knew her have recorded it. We see her first as a child practising the piano and swimming naked in the Yarra; and follow her through training to triumph, through her marriage and love affairs to maturity and the gradual loss of her powers as old age advances. Seven actors play the gallery of miniature portraits of those who inhabited her life: her teacher Madame Marchesi, Oscar Wilde, Caruso, Neville Cardus, John Norton, and so on. The script gives splendid opportunity to the imaginative resources of directors and actors and the cast are impeccable. John Allen's time with the Neutral Bay Music Hall stands him in fine stead as, in particular, Nellie's lifelong friend. Ralph Cotterill gives four immaculately devised vignettes of which my favourite was Maestro Cecchi; and Drew Forsythe whose work continues to astonish, goes from the extremes of Treacle O'Kane, Mackay pineapple farmer, to Shaw, Wedekind, Sir Thomas Beecham and the Duc d'Orleans. Anne Grigg is especially endearing as a thirteen year old streetwalker and as Gladys Moncrieff in duet with Melba; and Christine Collins' roles included the Lady Fairfax of Covent Garden in the 1890s, Lady de Grey, jovially at the piano all evening as Gottlieb was Mario Merino.

As Melba herself the Old Tote has been blessed in Jennifer McGregor who not only sings with great charm but as an actress has a warmth that makes a real bridge between the audience and the woman Melba. Ms McGregor's Melba is vastly different from that of the A.P.G.'s Evelyn Krape; and Mick Rodger's production takes a different slant from Hibberd's own production as I saw it in Adelaide. Ms Krape is an excellent comic actress and she concentrated upon the burlesque and the bitterness. She has a
pleasant trained singing voice but did not attempt to reproduce Melba at the height of her powers, making use instead of the nostalgia inherent in the real Melba's recordings. In his production Hibberd was nearer to the text as published by Outback Press than Mick Rodger who takes a number of liberties which diminish the toughes of cruelty in Hibberd's writing - and indeed in the personality as it has come down to us. The message I came away with in Adelaide was that the killer instinct essential to development can make the creative genius a right bastard. Melba's non-romantic account of her fellow characters was ruthless at times in Adelaide, and historically probably truer. Its drawback finally was that without full exploration of the artistic dilemma in the text, or of the voice in performance, the audience was not always inclined to empathise. In other words I found Ms Krape's Melba a pretty unlikeable character and I needed more to justify my concerned attention. Ms McGregor's Melba, on the contrary, is engaging at every point and her voice, if not exactly in Melba's class, has more importantly a moving poetic warmth - in, for example, the mad scene from Lucia Di Lammermoor which opens the second half. One can forgive her everything. But this is not without cost to Hibberd's text. So much of her eccentricity, as he sees it, is played down, in fact, that there is nothing much to forgive. And when in the last line the words of Mimi's farewell are quoted: Addio senza rancore, it comes not as a lifelong struggle accomplished but a reflection upon a life lived without bitterness and in Ms Krape's terms, without passion.

A Toast to Melba was greeted with enthusiastic praise by the critics at the last Adelaide Festival. At the time it struck me as odd that the current productions of Shakespeare's Coriolanus and Tennessee Williams' Kingdom of Earth should be knocked so savagely in the process of giving Melba its accolade. For the tasks set by the first two plays were incomparable.

But the answer to the riddle lies in Hibberd's own aim of popular theatre. A Toast to Melba's great quality is that it is accessible. After the hot-house sexuality of Williams' imaginary world and the cold power politics of Rome, the world of Melba was, literally, a coming.

Colin O'Brien

Jean Genet is of the 'exquisite defilement' or poof and perfume school of aesthetics. This loose collection of aesthetes includes artists of such diverse talent as the Marquis de Sade, Oscar Wilde (in his Salome hat), Aubrey Beardsley, Edgar Allan Poe (and that crowning pooh-bah of kitsch painters, Salvador Dali (George Orwell had the last word on him)). In lumping these people together I would not like it thought that I am condemning them out of hand: at its best and most perceptive - and indeed, for me, includes Genet - it is as searching and revealing an aesthetic movement as any. But it stems from an essentially Gallic sensibility (note that Wilde wrote Salome in French, and that Poe is more admired in France than in English-speaking countries). The Anglo/Germanic tradition prefers other less exquisite tastes and perversion, is more tied to the vice Anglais and the jackboot than the spade under the green carnation.

Genet was the illegitimate son of a prostitute who abandoned him. His foster parents had him sent to prison as a child for stealing. He spent most of his working life in prison, where he was literally and metaphorically buggered by the French penal [sic] system. I think that the raw facts of Genet's life and some acquaintance with his other works helps us in coming to terms with The Maids, although as a rule one must shun biographical explanations or interpretations of artistic endeavours. I agree with W.H. Auden that such interpretations 'betray a complete misunderstanding of the relationship between art and life, or are attempting to rationalize and justify plain vulgar curiosity', so sucks to you A.L. Rowe.

Genet wanted the three roles in The Maids, all female, to be played by young males. In directing the first production in 1946 Louis Jouvet persuaded Genet to allow the casting of women, and such has been the tradition since. Alexander Hay has followed Genet's wishes in using an all-male cast; he has also given the play a further dimension by setting it in a prison. In doing both he has also been influenced by Genet's other work, notably The Thief's Journal, The Miracle of the Rose and, especially in setting and context, Genet's first play Deathwatch.

The only justification for such innovation is that it is about roleplaying, about the creation of fantasy and illusion. It is clear in all his plays that he is concerned to anamolize dominance and subervience in both sexual and social terms: hence the brothel as a context for acting out sexual/ political power games in The Balcony; the exposition of the relationship between prison, life and in Deathwatch, and the exploration of colonialism in a sexual context in The Blacks and The Screens.

The theatre as a direct image of life has become something of an obsession in twentieth century drama, perhaps as a reaction to the nineteenth century preoccupation with realistic illusion as the image of reality. Nevertheless, it was not invented by Pirandello for the benefit of the Absurdists. It was a common Elizabethan dramatic and poetic image even before Shakespeare, although he expressed it at its most subtle. I am not thinking only of Jacques and Macbeth, but to the fact that Shakespeare more than anyone before him drew attention to the essential likeness of theatre to life. In stressing the boy actor beneath the girl persona (often given further point by 'her' being disguised as a boy) he showed that our perception of others and consciousness of our own existence is inextricably bound up with the roles we assume or have imposed upon us. This preoccupation of Shakespeare's is given its most extreme expression not in the comedies but near the climax of a tragedy, Antony and Cleopatra. Just before Cleopatra suicides Shakespeare has the audacity to completely undercut any realistic credibility in his own play, to draw attention directly to the play as play and the boy actor as drag queen by having her abjure seeing 'some squeaking heel is drawing attention to the fact that nature of roles and the way they are imposed in the exposition of the whole drag tradition, whether it be in the form of a pantomime dame, Danny La Rue or Rosalind. The man tittering around on stilteed heels is drawing attention to the fact that fashion is arbitrary, dictatorial and often sadistic in making women conform to an
image; in short, it is a process of turning them into sexual objects.

It is not surprising then that Kate Millett in her excellent Sexual Politics concludes with a chapter in praise of the ironic insight of Genet into sexual roles, having disposed of those murderers or betrayers of essential femininity D.H. Lawrence, Henry Miller and Norman Mailer. She notes that Genet sees sexuality in prisons as finally one of dominance and subservience, with the 'males' (powerful both in the prison hierarchy and as sexual exploiters) dominating and degrading the 'queens' or 'chickens' who serve them. Ms Millett sees this as an image of sexual power politics in the community at large. There is even a strong religious parallel (of which the turning of old abbeys into prisons is an emblem) between the Christian concept of triumph through suffering and humiliation and a certain nobility through subservience of the imposed-on-queen, the martyr's crown in each case being the epitomy of a slave mentality. And of course the masculinity of the 'males' is as much a denial of the feminine in themselves as is the aggressive aversion to 'poofters' in an all-male Australian bar.

Alexander Hays decision to set the play in a prison is a recognition that this grotesque vision of sexual power politics often finds its clearest artistic expression in the image of an all-male institution, whether it is an English public school or a French prison. In such rigidly hierarchal institutions female roles - assigned naturally' to females in outside society - are given to males, thus stressing that such role-assignation is not primarily about sex but about power.

The meticulous and clearly-focussed exposition of such power games in the production is also expressed in Graham Maclean's set design: a prison with a gothic window, centre, and a cross emerging from the brickwork below it; the room prison-grey but adorned with flowers; a lavatory-pan upstage left.

Solange, the stronger in personality of the two maids, is enacting the role of the more submissive Claire Estragon, Alexander Hay a powerful Madame. Although they relate through their games, 'filth does not love filth' and there is little more than mere give-and-take in their mutual love/hate as slaves bound to one another. Madame can come and go more or less as she pleases, subject to the will of the never-present Monsieur. I took it that in this production the maids were prisoners Madame either a 'trusty' or low-ranking warden, Monsieur chief warden. But the precise ranking does not matter, the power structure is clear. I could not help but see the analogy with Waiting for Godot: Solange the equivalent to Vladimir, Claire Estragon, Madame Pozzo, Monsieur Godot. No wonder the lifes in San Quentin found Godot so accessible. As did Pozzo, Madame sweeps briefly through the action, a Triton among the minnows, or perhaps more aptly a barracuda among the small fry.

Chris Ferguson is a mincing but vicious Claire, Robert van Mackelenberg a glowering Solange, Alexander Hay a powerful Madame. People have suggested to me that Alexander Hay dominates the play stylistically as well as in the person of Madame, that the other actors do not measure up to the sheer size of his performance. I frankly think this a confusion between the roles and the actors. I found the playing of both maids subtle and to the purpose, there being not one moment when the interaction between the two and the subtext was not crystal clear.

Robert van Mackelenberg I have long thought deserving of more notice than he has yet received for his skill as an actor. He has the ability to adopt a quite amazing range of roles without either the appearance of effort or drawing attention to his skill doing so. It is only in retrospect that one becomes aware of his extensive range and the unobtrusive skill and economy he brings to his work.

As Claire Chris Ferguson confirmed the good impression I received of his acting in The Ride Across Lake Constance. He performed in The Maids with a nervous, at times nearly hysterical, bitchy attack which nicely balanced Solange's sullenness. It was a subtle and well-sustained performance.

And finally, Alexander Hay. The intelligence and insight which went into his directing was clear: the action and its subtextual meaning were always apparent, the actors completely in focus and direction. As Madame a heavy narcissism sat on him, a powerful, menacing self-regard. His face heavy with makeup, gold necklace, tattoos, and when he took off his dress a grotesque jockstrap-cum-suspenders belt holding up light brown stockings in contrast to the maids black: a figure of rampant perversion and power. For me this conception of Madame was absolutely true to Genet's vision of uncompromising 'masculinity', a steel dildø of a performance. It was chillingly grotesque, a mixture of outrageous vanity and self-regard yoked to a cold, humourless assertion of power: imagine, if you will, a cross between Frank Thrang and Malcolm Fraser.
SOUTH AUSTRALIAN THEATRE COMPANY

AND MISS REARDON DRINKS A LITTLE

Guthrie Worby

The way things are shaping, the tippling Miss Reardon is going to be the talk of the town for a while. In the past month Adelaide has been a fleeting parade. The Black Theatre of Prague came and went in a week. Premature evacuation after a massive display of indifference was obviously not what the backers of Bill Reed’s You Want it Don’t you Billy were asking for - but the play closed prematurely just the same. After the cast had taken up its bed and walked, there were a few dull rumblings as T.D.T. quizzed the ‘critics’ and the playwright, but that was all. As we thrust “Billy” from us we embraced an avowedly “Tatty” Show for a night. Pretty Limited Productions presented a benefit performance for playwright/poet Dorothy Hewett in the Town Hall .... “we’re gonna sing the sue me sue you blues” .... “libel libel!” .... A fleeting parade.

Fortunately, despite a certain thinness on top, and a somewhat ragged fringe, the S.A.T.C. combed what was left of the theatrical thicket and stirred a beast or two from hibernation (or was it hiding, after the I.A.C. scare?). Lunchtime theatre emerged to blink and be blinked at by a pleasantly surprised public, and a campus tour of the appropriately named Scars & Strife, by Rodney Fisher, also saw the light of day.

But Miss Reardon drew the crowds! Why? Is it a first rate play? Are we eager to indulge again our newly acquired or revitalized taste for entertainments in which products of the fictive imagination cleave each other with well-honed, tertiary-educated polysyllabics? Maybe the early onset of the Festive Season is stalking us, driving us out, at last, to the theatre, terrifying full of determination to enjoy, to consume and enjoy ... Well, Miss Reardon’s problem is not beyond enjoyment at any time, but chewing the fat her way, with or without booze, is nevertheless a pretty grisly business. For all that, audiences have been giving their belly-ruumble of approval so, bon appetit, and here’s blood in your eye!

Take three schoolteaching sisters, one dead parent to whom they are irrevocably corded, one appartement so lost and anonymous that its inhabitants might be in provincial Russia or darkest America, take a full measure of yearning for something better, or at least different (“what world were we waiting for”), stir briskly with a couple of unwanted intruders and you have a recipe for a play. It could be by Anton Chekhov, or Paul Zindel - two men skilled in the art of dissecting the social anatomy - but the science which yields the matter for this piece lacks the scalpel’s precision, and the memory of Dr. Chekhov fades before Zindel’s alchemy. His three sisters may be facing a universal problem, but their version of it is homemade and marketed in the U.S.A.: add neurosis, psychosis, schizophrenia, and liquor to taste - genuine New York “fruit” frappe.

I remember a production by George Ogilvie of the play about those other three sisters, It was full of subtlety, with a palpable subtext and depth of feeling which eight years have not dimmed. I doubt that I will remember this production for as long or for the same reasons.

To be sure Paul Zindel is no Chekhov, but his work has sufficient substance to reward due concern and the right emphasis.

The production treads a fine line between quite sharp and sadistic black comedy, and a frightening, occasionally surreal fable. A nudge would have moved it either way, but I felt that the audience was urging it only
towards the black side of the border. There is considerable evidence to suggest that the fable element needs to feature strongly in any production - references to flesh eating and killing, fish symbolism, allusions to warm-blooded and furry creatures and to cold blooded ones give the clues. The analogies and associations are too numerous to ignore. They are significant enough to use as a guide to a treatment that should make cod, guppies, perch, angel fish, piranha, cats, dogs, rats, horses, monkeys and seals more than merely humorous; they are the beasts within.

Eight months after Mama's death sister Ceil comes to dinner to straighten out sister Catherine (the Miss Reardon), and certify sister Anna, who has apparently done "something sexual with a young adult", at school, during the final phase of her breakdown. The meal they are to share is supposed to be vegetarian. Anna has "caressed vegetarianism" and stores up the spoils. By the time the prying visitors, Bob and Fleur (it's French for flower) Stein arrive, her aim is a little unsteady and her ammunition a little damp. She calls for reinforcements to repel invaders and Anna obliges by shooting at Ceil and later Bob with a real gun - part of Mama's legacy - which as it happens, is loaded with blanks. The brush with life almost frightens the hell out of all of them.

Mr. Ogilvie has spoken recently, in a press interview, of his 'almost operatic' approach to this work, of the way "characters elbowed their way to the centre of the stage" in order to show the brittle-thin facade and the unnatural mirror-images of nature. This tactic, I think, calculatedly accentuates the cadenzas and separates them from the body of the work - to its detriment.

Undoubtedly, in performance, the focal point was downstage, centre. Anyone who stood there was immediately framed by one of three doors at the back of the "apartment", and the eye then followed the line of the set up and away into the flies, then down again, over a corrugated and pitted fascia, past the seried ranks or mirror-windows which blinked distorted images back at the audience. A mock-up cable lift, stage left, which ascended at the beginning, and came down at the end of the play, gave further notice of the intention to hoist the audience, suspend it for a while, and then bring it to earth with a new and fractured point of view. Such devices and motifs can doubtless be effective: they also run the risk of doubtless be effective: they also run the risk of appearing transparent and gimmicky, particularly if the action on stage merely apes their dynamic without adding to it. They set implied that the play turns life inside-out and outside-in ... did the actors and director accept the same proposition?

Jude Kuring's Miss Reardon saw life through a glass, darkly. On the surface the put-upon, left-in-the-lurch sister wants to protect the little that remains of her independence and her past (including Anna) from the depredations of Super Ceil, protect them with a swing and a swing ... and who would blame her? This fiercely protective, co-rushing Catherine Reardon Ms. Kuring captured, centre stage; feet apart, hip jutting, fists clenched. But there is another, deep-water Miss Reardon who escaped close scrutiny. It is she who uses Anna's failing mind, and Ceil's hard won success to feed her own wretchedness. She is the "godless" subject of the play, who is "killing" all of them, and "everything". The audience should know before Anna says it. Catherine is a carnivore, a piranha. She is a Miss Reardon to pity and fear.

As Anna, the perennial bait, the decoy, Barbara West provided a mixture of waiflike vulnerability, capriciousness, and chemteacher precision which persuasively drew attention from the predatory Catherine and laid blame on Ceil.

Daphne Grey was thus cast as the "baddie". It was to her credit that she epitomised the cool and ruthless hunter - Ceil by name and nature - yet managed to expose Catherine's double role.

Leslie Dayman and Diane Chamberlain gave the Steins insensitivity and rawness which compounded the already severe disturbance in the murky depths of sisterhood. They clearly conveyed the minor neuroses of land-locked ignorance which turn, on occasion, ambivalent and hydra-headed.

For all the sophistication, Zindel deals with protein humanity in his play. The intelligent, articulate sisters are afraid of their beastliness and try to drown, lock out or walk away from their fears and sexual/social frustrations. The Chemist-playwright will not let us forget that he wants us to look deeper into the very cela-structure of our being for the predispositions which will turn us from gods into mutants and vice versa.

The production lacked a final infusion of D.N.A. - that primary genetic material which forms the basis of new cells and essential protein.
The Beautiful Mrs Portland

by Dorothy Hewett

To my daughter Kate Lilley I am indebted for the title, and also to a beautiful actress friend. In our youth she was always known as the beautiful Miss Skevington. Beauty is both a gift and a burden, and when it begins to wane we need to see in the eyes of others that we are still sometimes lovely. That is one of Mrs. Portland's problems, and why she is so susceptible to the compliments of the young painter, Robert Dean.

To my husband Merv. Lilley I am indebted for much of the concept. Discussing my play The Tatty Hollow Story he said that it seemed to him I had begun to touch towards the end of that play a theme of significance that hadn't been really analysed on the Australian stage... and that was the well documented fact that the middle aged woman keeps her sexual libido much longer than the middle aged man, in fact, after the fear of childbirth is over middle aged women often have a violent increase of desire, alarming to their husbands. Such information is really threatening to our society who like to keep their middle aged women as mother figures and their young women as sex symbols, a polarisation reflected clearly in the women in Australian drama.

Some critics of The Tatty Hollow Story found Tatty's final relationship with the young dropout Paul Laureate redundant. It was meant to reflect Tatty's final challenge to the mores of her society, and seemed to me inevitable. But because of the pressures of that society the only way Tatty was able to survive into old age was to transform her sexuality by moving beyond it, and outside it, to "go to bone" and be a looney.

It is very close to the solution found by Patrick White for his old ladies.

We decided that at fifty-three there was a subject I should be equipped to deal with at some depth, and the only way to deal with it was to grasp the nettle danger and document the tragic love affair of a young man and a middle-aged woman. Tragedy would undoubtedly have to be the end of it because society would pressurize them both into conformism and/or a tragic resolution.

To my grandmother I am indebted for the plot line. It goes back to her corrugated iron sleepout in the Western Australian wheat paddocks. There she kept the heirlooms of her trade, ostrich feathers, jet beading, petticoats with thick hems of home-made lace, photo albums of ladies with pads in their hair and violet surroundings. She had been a society dressmaker in Melbourne at the turn of the century. Every portrait told a story, but until I was ten or eleven she wouldn't tell me the tale of the beautiful brunette matron with the starched pleated blouse, and high piled hair. It is an unforgettable story, and it forms the bare bones of the plot of The Beautiful Mrs. Portland.

The fact that it surfaced again in my memory I owe to the Opera House production this year of O'Neill's Mourning Becomes Electra, and the brilliant performances of my friends Jennifer Claire and Robyn Nevin. I left the theatre saying aloud to myself "What we want in the Australian theatre are some bloody good plots," and casting about in my mind, with the image of those two confronting Mannon women still haunting me, I remembered my grandmother's story.

Discussing with Richard Wherrett of Nimrod my last play, The Golden Oldies, he asked me why I didn't try a realistic play for a change. It was a form I had shied away from since my first play This Old Man Comes Rolling Home, not because I ever had the temerity to sneer at realism. I know how difficult it is to do well but I have felt that the exclusive brethren of Australian realists made it very difficult for other and different playwrights to breathe the same theatrical air. I knew what a challenge a realistic play would be for me, no tricks, no razzamatazz to excite the audience and send them out reeling, only the bare bones of a plot, a Toorak house and garden in 1915, eight characters, a touch of melodrama and a tragic ending.

This is the third draft of a play that has been neither workshopped, discussed or performed. It has therefore not reached anything like its final form (although the word "final" for a play script is very misleading. Each season is by the nature of the art form, different.)

The experience has however already been exciting, chastening and new.

I knew this play had to be written in some kind of realistic form. It cried out for no open stage, no epic treatment, no expressionist extension, but a Toorak drawing room furnished in the fashion of the time, a garden full of roses, an ordered lifestyle to be shattered by the events of the play.

At first I was drawn towards Chekhov, always my favourite dramatist, but I know that the underplayed delicate precision of a Chekhov is beyond me for all time, however much I wish it wasn't. Then as the location of Toorak drawing room was set, the time decided on, the unities in place, and the shadowy outline of the romantic garden rose like a centrepiece out of the garden, I knew I had been here before. For the velvet opulence, yet strict control of surface, plot, place, character and melodrama, the only playwright I could go to for my style was Ibsen. I had lectured for a couple of years on Ibsen to first years at the University of Western Australia, and he had a continual fascination.

Yet somehow, as I drew the heavier swaying lines I yearned for the delicacy of a Chekhov. It surfaces once I think in Claire Portland's last speech to her husband and father in that terrible drawing room. "We'll go on living my darlings. We'll be happy... it'll be as if it all never happened. We'll go on in this house... as if she'd died... and her memory will fade, gradually people will forget about her... and in a little while... they won't even mention her to us... anymore."

Do you hear it too, a faint echo of the cadences of Sonia's last speech in Uncle Vanya?

"Well, what can we do? We must go on living. We shall go on living Uncle Vanya. We shall live through a long, long succession of days and tedious evenings. We shall patiently suffer the trials which Fate has imposed on us; we shall work for others, now and in our old age, and we shall have no rest. When our time comes we shall die submissively, and over there, beyond the grave, we shall say that we've suffered, that we've wept, that we've had a bitter life, and God will take pity on us. We shall rejoice and look back on these troubles of ours with tender feelings, with a smile and we shall have rest...."

For the words of "Sweet Adeline" I am indebted to the instant recall of Hal Porter. Claire's fingers on the drawing room piano, the blending of Gracie and Charley in their terrible duets, the final harsh notes of Rosie's voice floating out from the kitchen seemed to me to be a fitting accompaniment to the story of the passion of a middle-aged mother-in-law and a handsome son-in-law, a subject in Australia always only fit for a bar-room joke.

Sweet Adeline, my Adeline.

At night dear heart for you I pine.
Your fair face beams in all my dreams
You're the flower of my heart

Sweet Adeline.

Dorothy Hewett Sydney Oct. 1976
**ACT ONE**

Scenes One and Two ... late summer into early autumn, and an Epilogue. 1915 in Toorak.

**ACT TWO**

Scene One ... Autumn

Scene Two ... Winter

1915 in Toorak

A wealthy Toorak house and garden in 1915. We look straight into the sitting room with the fourth wall removed. The sitting room takes up a little more than half the stage area. On the right hand side runs a bank of glass doors opening into the garden, screened, when closed, with floor-length velvet curtains. The sitting room is luxuriously furnished with a small velvet Victorian sofa, a piano, an occasional table, a grandfather clock, a marble fireplace, a wing backed chair, two standard lamps (Ar: Nouveau figures), a lady holding a fluted shade on the gaslight above the piano. A flight of stairs leads into the bedroom above, and there is a door leading into the interior of the house upstairs.

During the second half of the play Addie's portrait, in a big yellow hat, holding an armful of yellow roses, dominates the room, hanging over the fireplace.

Downstage right in the garden area is a small gazebo. There is an upstairs right entrance into the garden, and a downstage right entrance past the gazebo, and up the garden path to the glass doors. A stone cupid stands in the garden, near a small garden table. Outside the fourth wall of the sitting room, frontstage, is a loggia framed with fake marble columns. A velvet curtain is drawn back from this area.

The play consists of: Two Acts, One Set, Eight Characters (4 male, 4 female)
Tom: Mother!
(loudly)
(Robert and Addie turn guiltily. Tom clicks the camera.)
Addie: Caught you both, Addie puts her fingers to her lips.
Tom: triumphantly
Addie: Ssh dear.
(She gestures towards the singers, then moves out onto the loggia. Tom looks after her, shrugs, begins putting away his camera gear.
Robert follows Addie onto the darkened loggia.
Robert: Mrs. Portland. (PAUSE) May I paint you sometime?
Addie: Me, Robert? I’m too old to model for a young man. Why don’t you paint Claire instead?
Robert: It’s you I’d love to paint.
Addie: How would you want me?
Robert: In the summerhouse in a big hat with a basket full...
Addie: ... of yellow roses.
Robert: That’s how I first saw you, standing, your face flushed, a little bead of sweat at your hairline.
(he bends over her hand, kisses her finger, then drops her hand as if it burnt him.)
Addie: You must paint Claire.
Robert: If you say so.
Addie: You’re really going to marry her?
Robert: Perhaps. I’ve always extirpated myself before when things got too serious.
Addie: What were you protecting?
Robert: Myself.
Addie: For some purpose?
Robert: For my work. My work always comes first.
Addie: Drawing curlicues in the Portland Plaster Works?
(amused)
Robert: My painting. I don’t let women interfere with my painting. (pause) I can’t make love and paint.
(with dignity)
Addie: I’ve always thought love affairs for an artist were productive.
Robert: Not for me. Not when I’m really working. Then I’m single-minded, monkish, almost. Sometimes if I want to get the essence of a woman it’s necessary... to have her, but that’s before the process of creation.
Addie: I always thought it was part of it.
Robert: You’re far too clever for me Mrs. Portland.
Addie: No, you’re very clever, and very wary, but don’t you get lonely?
Robert: I never get lonely... only... randy, sometimes.
(very daring)
A Silence.
Addie: (quickly) The Autumn’s coming. I saw the swallows fly out of the city yesterday evening. There’s a chill in the air. (She turns) You must go inside.
(Robert lays a hand on her arm, stopping her.)
Robert: I need fresh air... because of my asthma. My mother died of it. I know always like the turn of the season, but the spring’s difficult for me. The whole world pollinating...
Addie: shivers.
Robert: But you’re cold. I’ll get your wrap. Where is it?
Addie: A white shawl, lying on top of the piano.
Robert: moves back into the room, plucks the shawl off the piano. Claire looks up, smiles, but he ignores her. The song continues. Claire turns and watches him, vamping with one hand, as Robert moves back to the loggia.
Addie stands as he left her, perfectly still, her only agitation in the hand drumming against the loggia pillar. Claire stumbles over the note. Tom is watching Robert too. He shuts his camera up angrily. Edward lies asleep under his arm. He (he bends over her hand, kisses her finger, then drops her hand as if it burnt him.)
Addie: You must paint Claire.
Robert: The roses are very beautiful now.
Addie: (almost whispering) With the dew on them.
Robert: moves off the loggia into the garden.
Robert: follows her like a shadow. They enter the gazebo. He makes his way to her, his hand over her breasts and down her hips. The song stops in the sitting room. Claire turns on the piano stool and stares out into the garden.
Tom: claps obliquely.
Claire: Thank you, Tom dear.
Grace: Oh! look at Edward. He’s fallen asleep again. And where’s Addie and your young man Claire? Just as well we’re not thin-skinned isn’t it?
Tom: plays something else Claire.
Grace: e swings round on the piano stool and begins to thump savagely at "Sweet Adeline."
(Tom) (sharply)
Grace: Oh yes, it’s Edward’s favourite. (She claps her hands.)
All: (singing) Sweet Adeline, my Adeline, At night dear heart for you I pine.
Your fair face beams, in all my dreams, You’re the flower of my heart sweet Adeline.
Grace and Charlie take a turn or two round the room together, arm in arm, singing in duet. Then Grace moves out onto the loggia, peering short sightedly into the garden.
Grace: Addie, Addie, it’s your song. Do come and join us... (calling) Whatever are you doing out there? You’ll catch your deaths. The dew’s so... Claire.
She turns back into the room, speaking to Claire:
So bad for your young man’s asthma dear.
Addie runs across the lawn, her hair slightly dishevelled, but her face quite calm.
Grace: What singing Grace.
She enters and goes to the piano. Claire shoots her one angry glance, and goes on playing.
Robert moves towards Addie and grasps her waist. His hand creeps up towards her breast. She removes it firmly. The charade continues, his hand moving upwards, his hand taking it away. The others pretend not to notice. They continue the song. Robert moves through the garden, crosses the loggia and stands staring in at them. The song finishes on a discord.
Robert moves around and stands at the piano. The grandfather clock chimes.
Grace: It’s time we were on our way. We’ve such a long drive home. And look at Edward. I declare, he’d sleep through anything.
Addie: He gets so tired. The plaster works wear him out and he’s not young anymore you know.
Grace: None of us are... except the dear children of course. You’re no spring chicken either, Addie. Char, will you get me my wrap? Claire, show them where it is, that’s a dear good girl.
Grace: He’s such a duffer.
Charlie: goes obediently to the door into the interior of the house. Claire hesitates, then follows unwillingly. Outside the door there is the sound of a sharp scuffle, and a muffled scream. Claire runs back in, ruffled, agitated, putting her wrap and a cloak on her. She runs to Robert. He helps her with her wrap, straightens her hat. She turns to face him. Charlie enters, shamefaced, carrying Grace’s wrap.
Claire: Mother, Robert and I would like to drive into town for our supper.
Addie: Really dear. It seems very late.
Claire: Not too late though. Couldn’t we take the car... (sharply)
Addie: Well. I suppose, your father. (She turns to the sleeping Edward, Claire watches her scornfully.) Edward, Claire wants to... Oh! it’s stupid of me. Of course you may go... and... enjoy yourselves.
She turns to the piano and tries a few notes.
Robert: I didn’t know you played Mrs. Portland.
Addie: I do nothing well... not like Claire... just a school-girl accomplishment.
Grace: Goodnight mother.
(firmly)
Addie: Goodnight dear.
Robert: It’s not true that you do nothing well.
Claire: Goodnight Auntie... Uncle.
Charlie: Goodnight sweetheart.
Grace: I do like your young man dear, so polite and so handsome.
Robert bows, smiling.
Addie: It’s the quiet ones you have to watch isn’t it Addie, the dark horses.
Grace giggles but Addie doesn’t turn from the piano.
Robert: Goodnight Mrs. Portland.
Addie: Goodnight Robert. Don’t bring her home too late.
Claire: Don’t wait up.
Grace: Of course not. I’m far too tired.
Robert: You’ll remember about the portrait?
Addie: I’ll think about it Robert.
Tom: Portrait, what portrait?
Robert: I want to paint your mother.
Tom: Mother! (laughing)
Robert: Yes... your mother.
Grace: You’ll be calling her mother soon enough yourself Robert. When’s the happy day?
Claire: We haven’t... set it yet. Coming Robert?
Robert: You won’t forget?
Addie: (sharply) No. Goodnight. (to Claire) Drive carefully darling and keep the hood up.
Robert hesitates. Claire takes his hand and they move out through the glass doors, through the upstage exit. Addie sits on the piano stool.
Tom: (calling after them) Goodnight... both of you.
Grace: A lovely young man. Hasn’t much to say for himself but as they say, still waters. Has Edward taken him in yet?
Addie: It’s all arranged. He began last week. (to Tom) Didn’t he darling?
Tom: So I believe. He’ll be an acquisition. He does draw beautifully, and his designs are first rate. (lightly)
Tom moves over, sits at his mother’s feet. She plays with his hair.
Grace: You should be ashamed of yourself, Tom. That’s your place.
Tom: What... here? At mother’s knees? I know it.
Grace: You know what I mean. Your father’s fine. You’ve got a touch of it too you know.
Tom: Of what?
Grace: The artist. It’s in all of us. All the Portlands are artists, of one kind or another.
Tom: ‘I’m a photographer not a creator. I record what’s already there, that’s all. I’m a dull fellow. Bourne, Father and I ... we’re better when we’re apart.
Addie: (tenderly) Tommy’s starting up his own business Grace.
Grace: You’ve always spoiled him silly, hasn’t she Charly?
Charly: Oh yes, always.
She gestures for her coat and hat. He moves across, hands them to her. She begins to struggle into her coat.
Grace: Do help me Charly.
Charly assists her.
Grace: (gasping) It’s so tight. I’ve got a French figure you know, hard to fit. My dressmaker told me.
She jams a dreadful hat on her head. Tom grins. Addie and Charlie both wince.
Thank you for the fine dinner Addie. Say goodnight to Edward for us.
Addie: Goodnight Grace, goodnight Charly.
Charlie lounges across the room to kiss Addie.
Grace: (whistling) No thank you, I don’t like to be kissed.
Tom: Goodnight Uncle.
Charlie tries to move around. Tom blocks him adroitly, grinning. Charlie stumbles discreetly to the door.
Tom: I’ll get your hat and coat Uncle. (mocking)
He exits backstage. Charlie rushes Addie, takes her in his arms, bends her back and kisses her passionately. Grace stirs out into the garden.
Grace: Your roses are always so rare Addie, those yellow ones, hearts like miracles. I hope the frost doesn’t get them this year.
Tom enters with Charlie’s hat and coat. Addie struggles out of Charlie’s embrace, patting her hair.
Grace: Do come Charly. (crossly)
Charlie stumbles through the French doors and they exit past the gazebo downstage right. Arms round each other Tom and Addie go to the doors, waving.
Tom: (calling) Goodnight.
They fall about laughing.
Tom: What a pair.
Addie: ‘I’ll walk beside you.’
Addie sinks down on the sofa, giggling.
Tom: Dirty old lecher!
Addie: Poor Charlie. She’s such an ugly woman your Aunt Grace.
Edward wakes up, throws down his paper.
Edward: (tremulously) Giggle, giggle, giggle. Never a minute’s peace with the two of you. He gazes round the room.

Where’s Gracie?
Addie: She’s gone home Teddy.
Edward: Thank God for that then. Where’s Claire?
Addie: Driven out with Robert for supper.
Edward: At this time of night?
Addie: Only young once dear.
Edward: Hope they drive carefully.
Addie (brightly) Plenty of time for sleep ... afterwards.
Edward: Ay? Oh yes, I suppose so.
He moves to the stairs.
Edward: Coming up now?
Addie: I’ll be up presently.
Edward: Don’t be too long. I don’t sleep till I hear you close your door.
Addie: I’ll come soon.
Edward climbs heavily up the stairs, ignoring Tom.
Addie moves to the foot of the stairs and watches him out of sight. She turns back, subdued.
Addie: He’s getting so old.
Tom: Don’t play the dutiful wife with me. He’s always been old.
Addie: Not when I married him.
Tom: God, Mother, that was ... centuries ago.
Addie: Twenty five years. It’ll soon be our silver wedding.
She muses about the room, turning off the standard lamps, till only one soft gaslight burns over the piano, and the coal fire burns low in the grate.
Tom: (brutally) Why does he want you upstairs? You don’t share a bedroom.
Addie: He listens for the creak of my mattress. He likes to know where I am, all his possessions in their rightful places.
Tom: (laughing) You’re a bit of a bitch Mother but you’ll never be old. I saw that ... Robert ... eyeing you off tonight. You be careful.
She turns looking at him archly over her shoulder.
Addie: Oh! Tom I’m old enough to be his mother. Like Gracie said, in a month or two he’ll be calling me ... mother.
Tom: Mother (seriously)
Addie: Yes Tom?
Tom: Sit down with me by the fire here like you used to.
Addie moves to the fireside chair. He sits at her knee, his head resting against her.
Tom: Pictures in the fire! Do you remember how we used to play at that game?
Addie: What do you see? (tenderly)
Tom: I don’t know ... the end, some great burning holocaust, utter destruction.
Addie turns his head around.
Addie: Don’t say that.

Tom: It’s only a game. (he laughs shortly)
Addie: I don’t like your games. They’re morbid. (tearing his hair)
Tom: Haven’t you been reading the news lately? ‘The gravest crisis in our land will be faced by a united people.’
Addie: Oh! war talk.
Tom: (bombastically) “We are part of the Empire. Like the Empire is at war, we are at war. We’re in it ... to the last man and the last shilling.” (He jumps to his feet, salutes)
Addie: You sound like your father.
Tom: (seriously) I wouldn’t let him down Mother.
Addie: jumps up, facing him, hands on his shoulders.
Addie: Don’t be a fool Tom.
Tom: You’ve never thought I was a fool before. (She paces about the room) What’s got into you for God’s sake, all these platitudes. That’s old men’s talk. That’s not you. Don’t let them blind your eyes.
Tom: And cut my legs off, and blow my brains out.
(quietly)
Addie shudders.
Is Robert going?
How would I know. He doesn’t confide in me.
Tom: Doesn’t he?
Addie: No ... he doesn’t. (swinging round) I do believe you’re jealous?
Tom: Jealous of Robert?
Laughing nastily
Addie: Yes and your father, and any reasonable looking man who even looks at me. Only Charlie you’ll hand me over to Charlie because he’s no rival, only poor joke. They glare at each other. He turns angrily back to the fire. She crosses and leans her head against his back.
Addie: If you enlist I’ll have no-one. Who will I talk to? Who will ever listen to my ... sillinesses?
Tom: You’ll have Robert. He won’t be enlisting. (sulkily)
Addie: How do you know that?
Tom: I heard them talking, down at the works. They say he’s one of these ... conches.
Addie: Good for him.
(She swings him round)
Tom: What’s got into you? You used to think, now you’re talking like ... a jingo.
Tom: Not like him eh, not like Robert.
Addie: Robert and I have hardly exchanged two words since she brought him here.
Tom: She?

Addie: Claire.
Tom: Your rival.
Addie: I wish you’d stop. I do wish you’d stop.
Tom: But it’s true isn’t it? You play such dangerous games, my mother, and the trouble is I love you for them.
Addie takes his face in her hands.
Addie: No games darling.
Tom: Are you sure? The way he looks at you ...
Addie: He’s an artist.
Tom: And the way you look at him.
Addie: I look at him as ... I look at a personable young man, who will be ... my daughter’s husband.
Tom: You don’t know.
Addie: Then I must just ... stop looking.
Tom: Yes, you must. Let him look ... but don’t look back.
Addie kisses him tenderly.
Addie: Dear Tom.
She goes to the foot of the stairs, teasing him. I can’t help being beautiful can I?
Tom: (Laughing) You’re a vain, dissolute woman.
Addie: That’s what they’ve always called me, ‘The beautiful Mrs. Portland’, and it won’t last much longer. Let me gather roses while I may. She climbs the stairs, throwing a kiss down to him.
Tom watches her out of sight like a beau at the foot of the stairs.
Rosie the young maid enters in her dressing gown from the interior of the house, carrying a coal scuttle. She pretends not to notice Tom, and bends over the replenish the fire. Tom creeps across, pinches her bottom, she shrieks and slaps his hand.
Tom: Sh! (He puts his hand for a minute over her mouth)
Rosie: (stage whisper) I didn’t know you was there Mr. Tom.
Tom: You’re a liar Rosie. You should be in bed ... it’s late.
Rosie: My bed’s so cold. (Pause, takes his hand). It was waitin’ for you.
He pulls her down beside him by the fire, undoes her bodice and begins to fondle her breasts. Rosie stretches languorously in his arms.
Rosie: God! you do make me tingle.
Tom: I’ll make you tingle alright.
Rosie: Oh! Tommy you are so common. (Giggling)
Tom buries his face in her bosom.
Tom: Oh! Rosie, Rosie I love being common with you.
Sound of a car stopping, voices, footsteps. Robert and Claire enter the garden backstage,
Laughter, hands in hand. Rosie stiffens.
Rosie: (shyly) It's Miss Claire an' the new young man. C'mon, they'll be 'ere in a minute.
She gets up, primly standing in her bodice, then holds out her hand to him. She pulls him to her feet, and hands in hand they tiptoe out through the entrance into the back of the house.
Claire opens the French doors. Claire and Robert stand in the doorway, kissing.
Claire: Come in! Come in a minute.
Robert: It's terribly late darling.
Claire: It doesn't matter.
Robert: Your father will be... outraged. (Claire giggles)
Claire: And my mother?
Robert: You mother will be... very stern. Claire: They're all asleep. They won't even know about it. Look, somebody's built up the fire. It's so lovely and warm in here.
She tries to pull him into the room, but he resists. She moves across.
Claire: What were you doing in the garden with my mother?
Robert: (glibly) She was showing me her yellow roses, and I asked permission to paint her, holding them in her arms.
Claire: It's difficult having a beautiful mother. She warns them at the fire. She stands uncertainly by the velvet curtains.
That's what she's always been called you know. "The beautiful Mrs. Portland was seen at the opening of the Art Gallery." "The beautiful Mrs. Portland first to arrive at the opera." "The beautiful Mrs. P. opens the handicraft exhibition at the Royal Melbourne Show, and takes a walk in the Botanic Gardens."
She is parading satirically around the room, preening herself, acting our version of Addie.
Robert: You're beautiful Claire.
Claire: No I'm not... not stuffing like she is.
Robert: You're the spitting image of her, you must know that.
Claire: Oh! Robert who would tell me?
She comes close to him.
Robert: Your mirror must tell you so.
Claire: Mirror, mirror, who is the loveliest of us all? (she laughs)
Robert: In a few years you'll look exactly like her. (He holds her away, studying her face and body)
She's just had... more time to perfect herself that's all.
Claire moves to the arm of the sofa.
Robert moves behind her, massaging her temples.
Claire: (dreamily) When we were children, Tommy and I often went riding in mother's carriage in the Park. We always thought she was the Snow Princess. We were Gerda and little Kay, and we were both privately convinced that if we whisked away to her frozen lake and put us there, in the middle of it, forever... it would be worth it, because going out with mother was always so exciting.
Robert: Why was it exciting?
Claire: Because men on horseback would ride by and tease us, smiling with all their teeth, and give us sweets to eat just so they could come close and talk to mother. She always believed in safety in numbers. There was one in particular though, something special. He bribed us with chocolates with walnut centres. Heavenly! And he rode a great black stallion. It plunged when it saw mother's carriage. Now I come to think of it he looked like you.
Robert: The stallion?
Claire: No, the man. He had foxy eyes. My Father called them sly. No, I'm not like Mother. I'm my Father's daughter. I have nothing of Mother in me, nothing at all. (She sits up straight)
Robert: (smiling) Are you sure?
Claire: Yes. She's a coquette and I mean what I say... and what I do... Come... inside with me.
Robert: Come now.
She puts her hand in his over the back of the sofa.
Robert: Honestly Claire. I don't think it would be... very wise.
Claire: What a careful young man you are, under all that dash. She kneads up on the sofa, facing him.
No-one will hear us. My room is at the back of the house. It's quiet as the grave out there.
Robert kisses her lips softly.
Robert: You're a wicked wild girl, and I love you, but now you're going to your room, and dream about me if you like. There's plenty of time for us.
Claire clings to him.
Claire: There's never enough time. I get this terrible feeling sometimes that I'll never really... have you.
Robert: Of course you'll have me.
Claire: I don't think so. I don't think anybody... any woman... can ever have you. You're the fox who walks by himself hidden in the deep woods. But then I'm the vixen. Don't underestimate me Robert.
Robert: No... I won't.
She stares at him.
Claire: Goodnight.
Robert: Goodnight Claire darling. He kisses her swiftly and exits through the glass doors, downstage past the gazebo. Claire watches him out of sight with the velvet curtain pulled back. She locks the glass doors; turns off the single piano light, puts the tender around the fire and exits through the door into the interior of the gazebo. Robert comes very quietly back into the garden, checks the house and the curtains, and enters the gazebo, waiting. The clock strikes loudly. Addie comes downstairs in her nightgown and a cream silk wrap, her hair in a loose black cloud on her shoulders. It makes her look very young. She goes to the fire, pokes it, stands staring into it. Robert has moved to the pergola. He makes a slight movement. She whirls around.
Addie: Who is it?
Addie hesitates, picks up the poker and moves towards the loggia. Then she catches her breath. Robert is standing staring at her. She stands motionless, confronting each other, for what seems like minutes. She is shaking her head. He doesn't move. Then she moves to the fire, her back to him. They speak very softly.
Addie: What are you doing here?
Robert: I brought Claire home...
Addie: And then...?
Robert: I waited in the summerhouse. (Pause) I knew you'd come down
Addie: Why?
Robert: To see you down.
Addie: I came down because I thought I heard... a noise... a sigh.
Robert: You knew I'd be here.
Addie: (violently) No. (She checks herself)
Robert moves over to her, stands right behind her, very close.
Robert: Don't lie to me Addie. It is the first time he has used her name.
Addie: What are we doing? What's happening to us?
Robert: We want each other.
Addie: We can't. We...
Robert: We're not doing anybody any harm. We're not taking anything away from anybody, that they haven't already got... (wheedling) She swings around, staring at him.
Nothing will change because of us. You'll have your husband, I'll have... my wife.
Robert takes her hand.
Where are you taking me Addie?
Addie draws him as if mesmerized to the foot of the stairs.
Robert: Where do you sleep?
He pulls up her sleeve, running his fingers up and down her bare arm. She shivers.
Addie: I sleep alone. I...
Robert: How do I leave afterwards?
Addie: Outside my room there's a little balcony. A young man could climb down... very easily.
She stares at him.
I've slept alone for years.
Robert: No lovers? (teasing)
Addie: Only once, a long time ago, and he left.
Robert: Why?
Addie: He said I smothered him. He said I asked for a commitment he couldn't give. Robert withdraws his hand sharply. He seems to be struggling for breath. She takes his hand again.
Addie: (triumphantly) But this time it's easy. We don't know each other. There can be no commitment, no future... I'm too old for you. This time I won't smother you. We'll both be perfectly free.
They smile at each other, in complicity. They climb the stairs together. His arm slips under her robe, and clasps her waist, her head drops on his shoulder.

SCENE II
Addie sits outside the gazebo in the sunlit afternoon. She wears a white muslin dress and a large yellow hat. In her arms she carries a huge bunch of yellow roses. Her hair is loose. Her body is relaxed. She smiles like a woman in love. Nearby Robert sits at his easel painting her. The scene is lyric, like a nineteenth century Australian impressionist painting. Edward sits in his armchair in the sitting room, asleep. The velvet curtains are drawn against the sunlight.
Robert: Turn your head a little to one side Addie. I want to get that light on your cheekbone, just where it catches.
Addie: You darling (demurely)
Robert looks around nervously.
Robert: Don't you love him?
Addie: Yes darling?
Robert: Could you address me as Robert do you think, in public?
Addie: (teasing him) If you insist.
Robert: You're looking wonderful. You know that.
Addie: My friends all tell me I look younger every day.
Robert: (gloomily) And I'm growing older, minute by minute.
Addie: Look at me.
Robert: I'm always looking at you. Their eyes met.
Addie: Oh! darling, it has been beautiful, hasn't it?
Robert: Yes Addie.
Addie: You haven't found me... physically
repulsive?

Robert: No, I thought I might but I haven't. The very reverse.

Addie: I feel as if I was twenty eight again.

Robert: (crucially) But you're not twenty eight are you?

Addie: When I hear the gate click, when I see the shadow of your head against the rose arbour I run like a young girl.

Robert: You'll give us away.

Addie: (speaking rapidly) Let's go away together soon, find some place in the country, be alone, just for a few days.

(softly) Will you?

Robert: (brutally) No.

Addie trembles, drops her roses.

Robert: Sit still.

Addie: (crying out) Why not?

Robert looks back to the house quickly.

Robert: Addie! He's there in the sitting room.

Addie: He's asleep.

Robert: There are rules. Stop breaking them.

Addie: (dully) You'll marry her soon?

Robert: Yes I think I'll marry her.

Addie: Stop dandling her. Why don't you make up your mind?

Robert: Is this the mother ... or the mistress speaking?

Addie: (crueelly) Are you sleeping with her yet?

Robert: Not lately.

Addie: How can you sleep with her?

Robert: You sleep with him.

Addie: You know that's not true.

Robert: Addie ... be sensible. I'm engaged to marry your daughter.

Addie: Marry her then, for God's sake marry her.

Pause.

It's disgusting isn't it? I'm even jealous of my own daughter.

Robert smiles.

Robert: There, I've got that sunlight just where I wanted it, etching the jawbone.

Addie: You're using me.

Robert: We're using each other. It suits us both... just for a little while.

Addie: Greece would be beautiful, or Austria.

We'd wake up in the morning under one of those big feather eiderdowns, and the diamond pane window full of great snowy mountain.

She picks up her roses, re-arranges herself.

Robert: There's a war on. (Pause) Keep that smile. Just like that. (He lets out a deep breath of satisfaction) Oh! my darling!

Addie: We went to the continent, Edward and I, before the children. We sat playing bridge in a Paris hotel, with another rich Australian couple. It was as if we'd never left Toorak. She looks towards the closed-in house.

They've embalmed me in those rooms Robbie, full of bad plaster reproductions holding dim lights in their hands.

Robert: You'd pitch your beautiful yellow hat over a windmill and throw yourself after it.

Addie: I'm far from being a rebel really darling.

Robert: What about when the chips are down?

Addie: Oh! then there's no alternative.

Robert: There's always a boathole somewhere for someone like me, with a strong streak of caution, and self-preservation. I grow curious. I do something reckless, and then spend my time wriggling out of the consequences. How do you manage to be so free and so circumstant?

Addie: I've had such marvellous practice in intrigue.

(smiling slyly)

Robert: Stop teasing me.

Addie: You tease me every time you walk into the room. You display your body.

Robert: Like a woman flirting.

(interested)

Addie: No, like a man. A woman could never use herself so aggressively. I'm not ... using you Addie.

Addie: I know my love. Not anymore than I'm using you.

Robert: Keep absolutely still. This is a very tricky little bit. Don't move!

Addie sits absolutely motionless.

Addie: Don't destroy me Robert.

Robert: (softly) I'm immortalizing you Addie.

"...this is my last luscious hanging on the wall."

Claire enters from the inside room, goes to the doors, jerks back the velvet curtains, and stares into the garden at Robert and Addie. She is wearing a plain black skirt and high necked white blouse, her hair pulled back severely ... like a parody of Addie in Scene One. Rosie enters, pushing a tea trolley.

Edward wakes with a start. Claire doesn't turn round.

Edward: (testily) Drink your tea Claire, before it gets cold.

Claire ignores him. He signs to Rosie to leave the room. Rosie looks at Claire, then out into the garden. She smiles slyly to herself as she goes to the door.

Claire: (sharply) What are you grinning at Rosie?

Rosie: (frightened) I'm not grinning miss.

Claire: You are. You stared at my mother and Mr. Drew and you grinned. I distinctly saw you in the glass doors.

Rosie: (futitily) I was smilin' miss.

Claire: At what, may I ask?

Rosie: I was feelin' happy miss, not for any particular reason, just happy. Don't you ever feel just happy?

Edward: Oh! do let her go Claire.

Claire tosses her head and exits, banging the door behind her. Drink your tea. Claire takes her tea, sits on the sofa, sips it nervously. And don't fidget.

Claire: (bitterly) How can you be so blind Father?

Edward: Blind to what?

Claire: Mother, oh there in the garden making a fool of herself, flirting and laughing with my ... fiance, my Robert. She's got no shame.

Edward: Claire, your mother is getting her portrait painted.

Claire jumps up, spilling her tea. She kneels on the carpet, mopping at the stairs with her handkerchief.

Claire: Yes. isn't she. Just look at her, glorying in it, purring like a cat that's licked up all the cream.

Edward: Jealousy is not a very pretty emotion my dear.

Claire: Pretty! It's indecent. To be jealous of my own mother when she's over forty.

Edward: And still a very beautiful woman. She can't help it. She was born with it, and she loves to flirt, just as she likes to breathe.

Claire: Let her flirt with someone else then.

Edward: Your young man happens to be here, it's Indian summer, he's painting her portrait. She's looking her best for it. Don't begrudge her her moment. She's at the end of it all. You'll have so many more.

Claire: Will I? I'm beginning to wonder...

Edward: Come here darling. Claire moves across, sits at his feet. He gives her his tea to finish.

Edward: What's happening to my bright clever girl?

Claire: I don't understand why you don't care. How can you condone it?

Edward: Condone what?

Claire: You must be blind as well as ... Edward: As well as ...?

Claire: Don't let me hurt you Father.

She catches his hand. Then rises and moves across to the glass doors again, staring at her mother and Robert.

Claire: How can you endure it? I can't. (She turns round) Why does she sleep in her own room? When did she leave you?

Edward: (furt) That's an impertinent question isn't it, from a daughter?

Claire: It's a woman's question.

Edward: (calmly) If you must know I left her room.

Claire: (dumbfounded) You left her?

Edward: Yes.

Claire: But why? If you still think she's beautiful?

Edward: After Tom was born the doctor said, "No more children," so I ... curbed my appetites.

Claire: Never again?

Edward: Oh! once or twice, when I fell from grace.

Claire: But mother, what about her, what did she feel?

Edward: Women haven't the same drive.

Claire looks at him ironically.

Not after their first youth. I think she was relieved.

Claire steps out into the garden.

Claire: Poor Mother?

Edward: She didn't seem to want me, didn't miss anything. It was never ...

Claire: (not turning round) Yes ...?

Edward: (heavily) It was never very good for us anyway ... after the children. (Pause) I'm important to her, you understand. I give her security. It's too bad in the world, home, children, position. I look out for her. Without me she'd be lost.

Claire swings round and looks at him.

Edward: (explosively) You want to get married Claire. Get married ... now.

Claire: Yes Father. I will.

She goes back to the glass doors.

Addie looks up and sees her. Their eyes lock.

Robert: (alarmed) What's up? What are you staring at?

Addie: Claire is staring at us through the glass, as if she hates us both.

Robert: Keep smiling, don't speak.

Addie turns swiftly and exits in to the interior of the house.

Addie: She's gone. (Pause) I'm trying to keep you in my heart and still set you free.

Robert: And can you?

Addie: (lightly) I'm working at it.

Robert: You're so beautiful. I'll schil telling stories about you all the rest of my life. Addie re-enters with the tea tray, steps through the glass doors into the garden, leaving Edward smoking his pipe.

Claire: (calling) Tea break you two. She comes up behind Robert, looks critically at the painting.

Claire: How is it coming?

Robert: It's getting there.

Claire kisses the top of his head, and places the tray on the garden table. Robert puts down his brush and stretches.

Robert: Alright Addie. Time for your tea.
Clare brings Robert a cup and takes one to Addie.

Clare: Why Mother, your hand is shaking. You're tired.

She sits on Robert's knee.

Addie: I've got a headache. It's the sun. I'll go in for a while.

Robert: We'll call it a day then.

Tom enters downstair right in A.I.F. uniform. He gives a long whistle.

Tom: Captain Thomas Portland, at your service.

Tom stands and salutes them. Robert frowns, putting his paint away. Clare runs to Tom, kisses him.

Clare: You look so splendid Tommy. Addie, half way up the path, doesn't turn round.

Tom: Mother!

Addie turns, stares at him.

Addie: Oh! Tom.

Her voice breaks. She moves away. He runs after her. Together they enter the house through the French doors, his arm around her. She looks suddenly middle-aged, walking stiffly, her shoulders slumped. Robert looks after them, frowning. Then picks up his painting gear.

Robert: Well I'll be off then.

(audibly)

Clare: Aren't you staying for dinner? Father expects you.

Robert: Not tonight.

Clare: Tom's upset you.

Robert: Not really.

Clare: What is it then?

Robert stands silently staring at the house. Father thinks we should be married immediately.

Robert: I got my first white feather yesterday. He pulls it out of his pocket, hands it to her. It came in the post ... anonymously.

Clare: It will be better for you ... being married. No-one expects a married man with asthma to enlist.

She takes his arm, propels him towards the house. Come in now and we'll announce it to them. He looks up at her and she puts her hands on either side of his face. I've made up your mind for you haven't I?

Robert: You always do don't you?

Clare: Then kiss me for it darling. He looks down at her, kisses her slowly.

Robert: I'm kissing my executioner.

Clare: (smiling) Nonsense, your asthma's been so much better lately. They move into the house together, arm in arm.

Edward sits smoking in his chair. Tom and Addie are together on the sofa. Tom is holding her hand. Clare enters gaily still arm in arm with Robert. They move centre. Robert looks uneasy. Clare holds up her hand.

Clare: We have an announcement to make everybody. Robert and I have decided to be married ... straight away.

Addie half rises, clinging to the sofa. Tom rushes forward kisses Clare, shakes Robert wildly and kisses him too.

Tom: I'm delighted. I'm really delighted. Edward rises from the chair, smiling.

Edward: Welcome to the family Robert. We're all very pleased. Very pleased indeed. Aren't we Addie?

Addie nods dumbly.

Edward: That's for a celebration. He rings the bell and Rosie enters. Rose, we want the very best of the champers. His voice dies away as he exits after her. Clare turns to her mother.

Clare: Aren't you going to congratulate us Mother?

Addie: (turning) Of course darling. I wish you every happiness. I really do. She crosses to Clare, kisses her, holds her close. Their eyes meet. Clare smiles.

Clare: Thank you Mother. Yes — really. Thank you for the champers.

Addie: And Robbie ... every happiness.

Addie reaches up, kisses him on the mouth. He stands very still. Edward enters carrying a tray with champagne and glasses.

Edward: Champagne everybody.

Clare and Tom move across to the tray and take their drinks. Robert and Addie are left standing centre.

Edward: To Clare and Robert on their approaching marriage, and to Captain Thomas Portland on the occasion of his commission in the Australian Imperial Forces.

Tom smirks delightedly at his father. Edward puts his arm around his son and daughter. Robert crosses for his drink, and takes one for Addie. He hands it to her. He and Addie are standing at the entrance to the loggia where we saw them at the opening of Scene 2. Clare goes to the piano, begins to play "The Wedding March" very loudly. She is very gay, almost hysterical. They all drink.

Tom: Addie: To Claire and Robert.

Edward: To Captain Thomas Portland.


Addie and Robert move onto the loggia.

Addie: With the music tonight (Pause) Please?

Robert: I'll take a quickcheck on it tonight Addie.

Addie: Why? Why?

They stare at each other.

(bitterly) To hell with you then.

Robert: And to hell with you too.

Addie: Why are you doing this to me?

Robert: I'm doing it to myself.

Addie: It hurts me, it hurts me. Robert: I know.

Addie: Why don't you smash me across the mouth? It would be kinder. Don't you like me at all anymore?

Addie: Like you. I love you.

Addie: (sadly) I love you too.

Robert: But I'm not infatuated with you. I can do without you. Do you understand that?

Addie stares at him and nods her head dumbly. I can do without you, and I'm going to marry your daughter.

Addie turns away in tears. They re-enter the room. The glasses are refilled. Clare starts up "For They Are Jolly Good Fellows".

Edward begins to sing. He places Tom and Robert centre, then goes to Addie drawing her back to him as he gathers in, and putting his arm around her waist. They stand together, glasses raised, the tears still marking Addie's cheeks. Tom and Robert, arms around each other's shoulders, stand self consciously grinning centre. Clare plays on. Robert glances once at Addie, his eyes begging her acceptance. Addie smiles, and raises her glass to him. It is an effort but her voice joins Edward's and Clare's at the piano. Clare moves into a medley of wartime favourites. "Pack up your troubles", "Rose of No Man's Land", Mademoiselle from Armentieres".

BLACKOUT ... CURTAIN ... THE MUSIC AND THE VOICES CONTINUE TO COVER UNTIL THE CURTAIN RISES ON THE EPILOGUE TO ACT ONE.

The velvet curtains are open in the Portland sitting-room. It is early Autumn and Addie is placing long-stemmed yellow roses in silver vases strategically about the room. Over the mantelpiece her portrait is hanging, dressed in the yellow hat and the white muslin. She is dressed identically now except that her hair is piled on top of her head. Behind Addie, Rosie is setting out glasses and plates of savouries, coming in and out from the interior of the house.

Upstage right, laughing, and hand in hand, enter Robert and Clare, dressed in smart "going away" costumes. Behind them comes Edward, walking slowly, and Grace and Charlie, in their "terrible best." They form a dignified ceremonial family procession. Tom jumps up from his hiding place in the gazebo and arms his camera at them. They freeze obediently. Addie doesn't look up, but Rosie goes wistfully to the French doors.

Rosie: Doesn't Tommy look a masher in his uniform. I mean ... Mrs. Portland (she clasps the glasses to cover her confusion) I 'spect Mister Tom 'll be goin' overseas soon won't he? It's France 'e's 'pectin' to go isn't it? Dya think 'e'd be an ebro Mrs. Portland?

Addie (dully) I don't know what to think Rosie. Rosie Oh! I dunno, I think it's a pity. Why can't 'e 'ave a asthma too, like Mr. Drew. It would saved 'im. Saved! I'm for all of us. Rosie exits sniffling into a lace handkerchief.

Tom: (calling) Claire ...Robert

Claire and Robert stand arm in arm, smiling obligingly.

Tom: But where's Mother? Where's the bride's Mother?

Grace: She went on ahead to fix up the wedding supper Tommy. The family fool about and pose around the garden table, while Tom darts about trying for different angles. Even Edward clowns in a disjointed kind of way, striking poses, first with Grace and Charlie, and then with Claire. Only Robert remains aloof, silent, but always smiling at the watchful camera.

Tom: Robbie's such a good subject. He keeps so still.

Grace: And he holds his head up so nicely. Nobody holds their head up anymore, do they Edward?

Clare: That's his asthma. He holds his head up to breathe, don't you darling?

Grace: Like a man to hold his head up. Not like you Tom, always got your head buried in a great book or the like.

Laughter. The tableau freezes. Addie comes onto the loggia and stares into the garden. Only Robert notices her there. Their eyes meet. She turns quickly away, dropping the yellow roses. They scatter and the petals fall. She kneels and begins agitatedly to gather them up in her hands. Robert is still staring from the garden.

Addie: (to herself mechanically) He loves me He loves me not he loves me he loves me ... not.

CURTAIN

END OF ACT ONE

Act Two of The Beautiful Mrs Portland will be published in the next issue of Theatre Australia.
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The playwright

Dorothy Hewett interviewed by Barry Eaton

She is not sure what the mechanism is that takes over. Certainly when writing at her best, some other hand or consciousness is present.

"I can quite see why writers in the past romantically thought that they were possessed, because it is a feeling akin to that sometimes. Not all the time, of course."

Would Dorothy Hewett describe herself as a romantic?

"er, yes, but a slightly sardonic one!"

"Why sardonic?"

"I started off as a full blown romantic but it is very hard to keep that sort of bounce up into middle age, particularly in Australia."

Any sort of romantic writer needs control however otherwise they go completely overboard according to Dorothy. The control that she personally favours is a black comedy device. This is her vision of the world.

It is this fascination with the past that led Dorothy to start on her autobiography. She plans two volumes which will take the next two years to complete.

A feature film script will keep her busy in the early part of 1977, but she plans to keep plugging away at the autobiography.

"Right now", sighs Dorothy, "all I would like is a rest. I have written five plays, two film scripts and a revue in the last three years and I don't want to burn myself out."

Receiving a government grant three years ago has been a great source of joy and also wonderment to Dorothy. The ability to be free to do the thing one most wants to do in life is great. Now that her second grant has come through she can look and plan ahead with no financial worries.

Life has not always been that easy for her, though. She has worked in assorted factories, as a journalist on a Communist newspaper and finally as an English tutor at the University of Western Australia. All the time aching to be a full time writer.

"It is a play which deals very much more romantically than anything I've written up to now."

She has completed two plays since this idea first happened, so there is obviously something there. Dorothy feels the next three years will probably be the most about writing that she can do. The grant means that she can do at least three times the amount previously possible.

While teaching at the University of Western Australia she became engrossed in her work and wrote mainly in the long vacation period. This meant a play a year — with a bit bit of luck. Now writing occupies all her time and she intends to make the most of it.

Dorothy feels that not many writers in this country are lucky enough to be in her position. For too many years writers have been looked upon as dilettantes or at best supplementing their real jobs with part time writing.

For Dorothy Hewett, full time professional status means being able to take seriously in public, what she always has done secretly. It is an 11th hour reprieve in her life and she intends to make the most of it.

It also means a change of life style.

"Previously my habits of work were to stay up all night or work at weekends. This was just not good enough."

Not knowing exactly what she wants to do she feels the next three years will probably be her most important ones.

The immediate year ahead may see the completion of a play that has so far frustrated her. The outline was completed a couple of years ago, but then everything dried up.

"This is very unusual for me. When I get to that stage I usually go on and complete the play. There is obviously something there preventing me from writing it."

She has completed two plays since this idea first happened, so there is obviously something different about this one — trapped in its embryonic web.

"It is a play which deals very much more romantically than anything I've written up to now."

She has completed two plays since this idea first happened, so there is obviously something different about this one — trapped in its embryonic web.

Nowadays Dorothy is a little more self protective. Writing is paramount and nothing must get in its way. The grant means that she can do at least three times the amount previously possible.

After a year of unpleasant legal and emotional hassles Dorothy Hewett is getting her life together again. One of the country's best known playwrights, the Hewett life story has been filled with drama, personally and professionally for many of her 53 years.

It is from this rich background that she freely draws for her plays.

She feels that people live largely on legends and myths that they make up from their own past, rather than living from day to day.

Of her early memories:

"I suppose I was brought up in a family that talked an awful lot about the past. They were all great storytellers and tale spinners."

Brought up in the country, where people used to sit on open verandahs on hot summer nights, she heard amazing stories of her ancestors. Even about the lives of other people living in the bush around her in Western Australia. They all became legendary figures in her mind.

"In those days it was always quite common for the grandparents to live in the same house. This meant as a child you were always very conscious of time, because old people dwelt tremendously in the past. I don't know whether this always means I have been old!" she added by way of an afterthought.

Now, when Dorothy really gets onto a good writing streak (as she puts it), she gets into an almost euphoric state. "Blake called it being a full time writer."

"I now only get involved with causes that in some way relate to being a writer. I think that..."
my whole experience being deeply involved with politics has wasted my time. I don’t regret some of it, but I do regret the amount of time it took. In all these years I could have been making myself a much better writer than I am today.”

Many of these experiences were used in *The Chapel Perilous* staged successfully in Sydney and Melbourne a couple of years ago. Many people thought the play was completely autobiographed. Dorothy has denied this.

She is very worried about the whole question of power. Power means politics, and as she says, “I think art and politics don’t mix. They are like oil and water and are basically (pause) — enemy camps!”

Since her break from the political world in 1968, Dorothy Hewett has immersed herself in her writing with increasing success. Her latest play now nearing production in Melbourne is, *The Golden Oldies*.

It was written for the National Playwrights Conference in Canberra early this year where it was given a workshop production by Richard Wherrett. Since then Dorothy has rewritten and revamped, with a lot of help from Wherrett, who has great faith in it.

“It is most important for a new work to get a showing,” observes Wherrett, “and this is a remarkably original piece which takes a new direction for Dorothy.”

*Golden Oldies* goes into production on December 1st at the alternative M.T.C. theatre. Graham Blundell has formed a company to present it and will direct the play himself. *Golden Oldies* will be staged in January and if successful Blundell would like to set up a national tour.

Dorothy has just returned home to Sydney after visiting Adelaide and Perth. In both cities as well as in Sydney, loyal supporters staged benefit evenings for her. They were to help pay recent legal costs when sued by an ex-husband over poems published several years ago.

“The benefits didn’t cover all my costs, but they certainly helped a lot”, says a thankful Dorothy Hewett. “It was all enormously warming.”

The relief of putting the legal battle behind her means a lot to Dorothy.

“I hope I never have an experience like it again. It hung over me for about a year. Its very difficult to put something like that out of your mind. I hope it hasn’t made me self conscious and wonder what I’m going to write when I put pen to paper. I hope it won’t happen — I don’t think it will”.

Somehow Dorothy, neither do I.

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**DOROTHY HEWETT** born 1923, Western Australia, daughter of a Wickepin wheat and sheep farmer, was educated by correspondence, at Perth College, and the University of Western Australia.

She began writing poetry, plays and short stories as a child, at seventeen was first published in Meanjin Papers, at eighteen won a one-act University play competition, and at twenty-two an ABC National Poetry Competition. Always “stage-struck” she helped to found the W.A. University Dramatic Society with Phillip Parsons, Jackie Kott and others. In 1944 she married a law student, Lloyd Davies, and in 1948 left for Sydney with a boilermaker-welder, Les Wherrett. They lived for nine years in the working class areas of Sydney, had three sons, and were embroiled in the tumultuous anti-Communist years of the 50’s .. the Crimes Act, the Communist Party Dissolution Bill and the Petrov case. Out of these experiences came her novel *Bobbin Up* (1959), translated into five foreign editions, and her first full length play, *This Old Man Comes Rolling Home* (1965).

In 1960 she married Merv. Lilley, merchant seaman, poet and short story writer. They lived in Perth where she became tutor in English at her old University. They have two daughters.

*This Old Man Comes Rolling Home* was produced at the New Fortune theatre, W.A. University in 1966, and at the Old Tote, Sydney in 1968. Her first collection of poetry *Windmill Country* was published in 1969, and her second play, *Mrs. Porter and the Angel*, had a brief Sydney season in the same year.

*The Chapel Perilous* (1971), *Bon-Bons and Roses for Dolly* (1972) and a folk opera...
Theatre Australia is publishing in this issue the second play to be written by Dorothy Hewett in 1972. A new play by the prominent and imaginative one of our major playwrights is something of an event, and it seems high time for some assessment of the direction in which Ms Hewett's work is moving. Let me say at the outset that I have always liked her plays. I enjoy the flair with which she manipulates highly theatrical elements such as music and effigies of characters. I am intrigued by the way in which she plays with time sequence and sets. I respect the historical scope of her plays and her exposure of women is experience to tragic and tragic scrutiny. I admire the sheer density of her texts, rich in verbal and spatial poetry. It is something of a shock, then, to find that all but the feminine elements have gone in The Beautiful Mrs Portland, a melodrama about sexual repression. It is restricted to two tightwoven, rather grim acts, in which all events bear directly on the plot.

Some may breathe a sigh of relief that Dorothy Hewett has now written a play which makes fewer demands on audiences, directors and actors, but my own first instinct, as regards these influential people, was to think: 'Look what they've made do!' At last she has bowed, like her character Sally Banner, I thought. At last she has taken advice to rationalize her plays, to tighten them and to throw out all of the Jacobean embellishment that has been so much a part of her work.

But of course it is not as simple as that. In some ways Dorothy Hewett's writing is theatrically impossible. I have called her a major playwright, and so believe, because of her scope and imagination, she is, but she also gives much of this stature to her notoriety and to the rest of publishing.

As regards her notoriety, I am inclined to side-step the issue. It is difficult now to credit the controversy surrounding Raymond Omodei's premiere production of Dolly at Perth in 1972, all because a character was supposed to menstruate on stage. The secrecy with which people lined up to see Mrs Porter and the Angel, at PACT, Sydney in 1969 seems similarly ludicrous. In the former case Dorothy Hewett was moved to liken Perth society to an ingrown tonnail, and this capacity for provocative witticisms has ensured her a permanent place in the public eye. Her plays involve many kinds of provocation, probably an essential attribute of the serious contemporary playwright. It both angered and pleased me to hear audience members arguing after Tatty Hollow this year as to whether Miss Hewett 'really' hated men or women more. Clearly she hates neither, but her plays tend to prod many people where it hurts most.

As for publication, Currency-Methuen has been praised for having made especially The Chapel Perilous available to readers. Thousands of schoolchildren and others have read this play, and although I had seen two Hewett plays before its publication in 1972, I had to read her work before I really appreciated it. Although I find great depth and entertainment in Dorothy Hewett's plays as read, I have never seen a production of one which was wholly or even largely satisfying.

Dorothy Hewett often sets problems which no director can solve and I find one feels that her poetic imagination becomes a theatrical liability. Casting is the main problem. I would say a case in point is that of Sally Banner, who narrates some of her own quest for life in The Chapel Perilous by stepping into and out of the action at will. She ranges image from 16 to 47 years, not always chronologically. In casting, what guides is one to follow? Does the director choose an actress who will "impersonate" all ages? Surely not, for the driving egotism of the character will be lost. Does he then pick a perennial ingénue? Or does he pick an experienced actress for the extraction of the stage presence of Sally Banner bows to life? Both of these approaches are possibilities, but any director who makes either choice will be accused of insensitivity to the playwright's intentions. The Tatty Hollow Story spells the problem out more clearly. Dorothy Hewett directs in her list of characters to be "ageless". It must be "agelass" that is what guides such an actress's casting as she was wholly or even largely satisfying.

The solution to some of these problems has tended to be a temporary one: that of the 'workshop production'. It would be hard to think of a playwright who has been involved in so many workshops as Dorothy Hewett, and here I count an expert but experimental version of Bon Bons and Roses for Dolly at Jane St. in 1973. It could be that she is a playwright whose work has suffered from from excessive workshopping. I would also suggest, as a corollary to this, that she has not yet found a director who will commit her wholly to her work. Cutting, changing and compromise may be the essence, the theatrical workshopping, but surely the time comes for commitment to the integrity of the playwright's work.

Earlier this year, Alexander Hay directed Tatty Hollow at the Stables Theatre. He said to me at the time, that, since he considered the play to have been for a prosenium arch theatre, and since the Stables acting area is tiny, he felt justified in removing from the play the lifesize effigy of Tatty Hollow which was to have been seen throughout the play dominating visually in a perspex phone booth presumably trying to "get through". Now I sympathised with his problem, it was impossible for me to accept much of this. To interpose a dominant visual image in one of Ms Hewett's plays is like cutting the final couplet from a sonnet or the narrator from one of Brecht's plays. Nor do I accept that for her of theatre a prosenium stage is needed: only a stage with a focal point is essential. But on course, Mr Hay was absolutely right about the lifesize effigy of Tatty Hollow which I tried to find an equivalent for the image that would do justice to the playwright. He solved this by having a large perspex screen back centre on which the statue Tatty inscribed the name of the play Stage rain shortly washes away the decoration. Effective yes, but equivalent? Surely not. In this case the violence done in Dorothy Hewett's image of the girl in the telephone booth is too great.

Is it not time that we saw a director recognizing the sure dramatic sense with which she has set some of her images? I would say that, although Dorothy Hewett has met many inventive and perceptive directors able to give her plays greater theatrical definition, she has not yet met the one who will direct her own plays.

Of course there are numerous obstacles to this possible commitment. The golden-haired

Helen van der Poorten

In this and the next issue of Theatre Australia, Dorothy Hewett's newest play, The Beautiful Mrs Portland, will be published. A "well-made" melodrama, it reveals a total change in theatrical style that will be greeted by Hewett fans with mixed feelings. Helen van der Poorten looks with mixed feelings at Dorothy Hewett's development as a playwright.
girl "wearing her hair like armour" has always been a stumbling block for directors in their casting, and even more for critics, who feel it their duty to point out some autobiographical self-indulgence in all the plays. I reject the trial-by-biography which has plagued Hewett criticism, and feel that what Dorothy Hewett terms the "tough vulnerability" of her central women is essential to her work. My own to swan down the stairs at any moment singing theatrical characters like Sally and Dolly, likely the consciousness of her mother and sister.

Oldies, casting, and even more for critics, who feel it terms the "tough vulnerability" of her central heroine. If Ms Hewett heroines are self-indulgent, then the indulgence must be of a highly masochistic kind.

More to the point, I would say, is the possibility that the golden girl, so important in Dolly and Tarty, has now become something of a creative gag. The exposure of the softness behind the Hollywood-style glamour girls is too frequently repeated, and it is clear that in 1976 Ms Hewett has attempted to subdue the blonde lady. In the first of her new plays, The Golden Oldies, she has removed her to the outside of the play. Still the most real and dominant character in some ways, the reprobate daughter Becca never appears in the play. The move is a healthy one, as that theatrical scene-stealer is allowed to appear only as she affects the consciousness of her mother and sister. This broadening of scope means that Ms Hewett is now able to explore old age and sibling rivalry as she never could with highly theatrical characters like Sally and Dolly, likely to swan down the stairs at any moment singing show-stoppers.

In the most recent play, The Beautiful Mrs Portland, the golden girl is gone. Or is she? Mrs Portland is a brunette, but is it just, as Richard Wherrett has suggested to me, that she has simply dyed her hair? To be fair he also commented that this in itself would be a major move, and indeed the change has left Dorothy Hewett free to explore different relationships more fully.

Much in the manner of Mourning Becomes Electra, the play is allowed to focus on the cold daughter of Mrs Portland too, thus extending the investigation of mother-daughter ties that had become central in The Golden Oldies. In a play about sexual repressions, it is not only those of the title character which matter. "The Beautiful Mrs Portland" as she is always called, is like Dorothy Hewett's golden girls in that she has a reputation to live up to. She is especially like Tatty in revealing her vulnerable and often unattractive core, and she is like Becca in her unpredictability. But she is not perhaps as enduring as the others. The play concludes in such a way as to leave us wondering if anyone will ever remember her. And there is no Ibsenite new world awaiting Mrs. Portland when she leaves.

Another element of Dorothy Hewett's plays which has changed and become rationalized is the music. Influenced quite consciously by Brecht in The Chapel Perilous, she uses music in such a variety of ways that one can view the play as a musical. She covers tricky sexual scenes with songs like "Without love I lay with you", she both entertains and ridicules with "The Good Ship Venus" song at Sally Banner's wedding, and she compresses years of off-stage action by juxtaposing her Hiroshima song with the M.O.T. H.E.R. song on the death of Sally's baby. In this mammoth, often sprawling play, her uses of music reflect gifts of poetic conciseness that make it possible for Dorothy Hewett to cover private and public history from 1939 to 1970. The association in Sally's mind of her child's death with those of the Hiroshima children and with her own mother's demise make for the kind of dense theatrical experience that is to be found in just a few moments of a Hewett play. At times one asks, who would dare to remove a single song? But of course this density often makes the plays too long and too complicated.

The function of the music changes to a clearer one in what is possibly her finest play, Bon Bons and Roses for Dolly, where the dreams of a golden girl are placed against her real life. Alexander Hay has objected to me that Ms Hewett weakens the theatrical impact of Dolly Garden's suicide by revealing it too early and this is hard to dispute. But surely the hindsight we are thus given adds ironical impact to the songs and dreams of Act III. The Mervyn Drake settings of the Dolly songs as used in Mr Hay's production at Jane Street in 1973 only enhanced the double view we are given of Dolly's world, being lighthearted and rollicking against the reality of Dolly's life. The whimsical P. Laureate Song in Mr Drake's music for the 1976 Tarty works in similar ways, but the little song fails because it is almost too much in the correct mood.

In The Golden Oldies, directed in workshop by Richard Wherrett at the 1976 Playwright's Conference, much of the music has become conventionally appropriate to moment and character. Jennifer West's lively singing voice aided her performances of the cheerful nurse Robbie, who destroys as she sings, and the companion Norah, who sings as she steals. While the music adds drive to these characters, it is entirely possible in naturalistic terms, and is helped by atmospheric background music. The Beautiful Mrs Portland incorporates the music only where it is required by the plot. Thus we see the 1915 Toorak family sitting around the piano singing Sweet Adeline while the mother, "Addie", can
be seen being hotly embraced by her future son-in-law in the gazebo. Melodramatic, maybe, but possible. Obviously this narrowing and tightening of Miss Hewett’s use of music makes casting and production easier in budget-conscious times, one hopes that the songs will return in later work. They are important for their dramatic power and the sheer theatricality of the plays.

Questions of theatrical exigency are central to any discussion of Dorothy Hewett’s future as a playwright. It is possible to view her changing style alternately as development or degeneration, and neither view will be entirely adequate. After George Whaley’s Melbourne production of *The Chapel Perilous* Ms Hewett decided to make Sally Banner bow as the actress in that production had done. On the other hand, one cannot help feeling that in writing a conventional melodrama she has succumbed at last to theatrical pressure of a less valuable kind.

Dorothy Hewett has admitted to being stage-struck, as one would guess from the love of glamour, show, and theatrical settings in her plays. Unlike another self-confessed theatricalite, Patrick White, she now seems prepared to compromise her style and unique double-view of men and women in order to get a professional production. It is appalling to note, for instance, that neither the M.T.C. nor the Nimrod, have given her work the commitment of a production, so one can understand that she might bend over backwards to make them change this. Pretty clearly her latest play is written with a theatrical management in mind. It is subtitled “A melodrama in 2 Acts for 8 characters”, spelling out thereby the information that the play is empathetic, fairly short, and not all that expensive to cast. I am not suggesting for a minute that these are the only considerations in changing her style, but they have some influence.

Is it true that Nimrod Theatre had a financially attractive chance to do *Tatty Hollow* earlier this year? If so, why did they not risk a production of it instead of, say, going for a tired old play like *The Recruiting Officer*? Nimrod is supposed to be on the side of Australian dramatists. Considering such difficulties, one wonders whether it is worth all the trouble of whether Dorothy Hewett should retire from theatrical writing as White has done for some time.

My comparisons between Dorothy Hewett and Patrick White are by no means obscure. Both have turned from other forms to the play, and both have experimented with theatrical imagery and a wide range of styles. The dominance of voracious and self-righteous female characters is similar, and Ms Hewett admits to admiring White’s work greatly. Most of all, they both seem to me playwrights writing well ahead of their time, and their like comic skill with vaudevillian humor is evident in *The Ham Funeral* and *Dolly*. Farcical conversations about war in the Banner household are technically reminiscent of those in the backyards of *Sarsaparilla*, and the expert timing of both playwrights as they cut from conversation to conversation is impressive for its theatrical decisiveness. It is not absolutely known as to what extent we lost a major playwright in Patrick White; it is clear that the loss of an audacious Dorothy Hewett would be disastrous. It is easy to see why Patrick White might not have compromised much in the theatrical climate of the 80’s, it is disgraceful that Dorothy Hewett has to do so in 1976.

"I think they thought I wouldn’t be able to make a speech because I would be too busy crying into a lace handkerchief in a pink spot", Dorothy Hewett told a cheering audience after a non-stop four hour variety show which had been staged to help raise funds for her. And she was right. For, although many of the ninety-one people participating in *A Tatty Show* had not known of Dorothy Hewett when they agreed to lend their services for the benefit, on that Sunday night, everyone was doing it “for Dorothy”; and this extravagant, joyful mood of solidarity for an Australian artist infused both performers and audience alike. Such a gift required a teary gratitude and infused both performers and audience alike.

For in a sense every creative work is essentially libellous in that it is the author’s obviously very personal vision of life interpreted of necessity through the maternal life around him”. Certainly, for Dorothy Hewett, writing is not so much an art to be practised, as an immediate extension of her own life and consciousness. “Every attempt at creation”, she has said, “is a raid on the subconscious which has its own rules and its own truth.”

Talking to Dorothy Hewett, one is forever glimpsing the eager, idealistic, optimistic child within. The child’s need to confirm her own existence has kept Dorothy Hewett firmly on a course of non-conformity - emotional, sexual, political - all her life; and has driven her to thumb her nose at narrow conventions, to shock her family, to attempt suicide, to swap her own experience.

The idea of “doing something for Dorothy” had
occurred to them as far back as June but the case needed some sort of resolution before the idea could gather sufficient momentum to be launched as a definite project. When the case was settled, a date was fixed five weeks ahead and the recruitment of artistic and technical contributors was launched. Pretty Limited Productions enlisted Wal Cherry and myself to co-direct the show, or rather to supervise the last minute co-ordination of events. Sydney stage manager Ian McGrath was handily in Adelaide and looking for work. With the aid of Julanne Rosbrook, the South Australian Theatre Company’s elfin efficiency machine, he agreed to take on the task of Stage Director. Chris Potter from the Adelaide Festival Centre volunteered as Technical Director. A large back-up crew gathered around these three.

Most rehearsal centred on the presentation of work by, or inspired by, Dorothy Hewett. Robyn Archer used two Hewett poems as lyrics for impressive new songs - “In Moncur Street” and “Forsaken Mermaid”; Dave Dallwitz set the poem “You Gave Me Hyacinths First A Year Ago” under the title “Stranger’s Room” and he played piano when his band accompanied Penny Eames in its first performance; Margaret Roadknight’s two Hewett numbers were “Sailor Home From The Seas” and “Island In The River”; young Adelaide composer, Ian Craven, created a haunting setting for “Last Summer”, sung by The Saturday Company, and the mellifluous baritone of John Wood was wondrously right for Mervyn Drake’s stardust ballroom setting of Bon Bons and Roses for Dolly. Jude Kuring, leering and lurching, tawny port in hand, presented Laurie Dockerty from This Old Man Comes Rolling Home with Patrick Frost as Tom. Daphne Grey read three poems: “Underneath the Arches”, “Last Summer” and “Miss Hewett’s Shenanigans” - this last performed with Craig Ashley and Jo England.

The rest of the programme was largely a matter of artists giving the best of their current repertoire. And there were extra bonuses - like The Saturday Company and Robyn Archer singing Dylan in the foyer at intermission; New Circus frizzling the faces of the front three rows with an all too intimate bit of fire-eating; and quite a deal of dancing in the aisles.

Many statements of support for Dorothy Hewett came with love and solidarity from around Australia - from George Ogilvie, Tony Freewin, A.D. Hope, Tony Morphett, Tim Burstall, Ron Robertson-Swan, Graham Bond, Graeme Blundell, Garrie Hutchinson, George Dreyfus, Pat Lovell, Bruce Petty, Jim Sharman, David Williamson, Professor Manning Clark and Katharine Brisbane. A statement from Peggy Seeger and Ewan McColl came in lieu of their expected appearance on the bill. They had also made a statement on Dorothy Hewett’s behalf the night before at their Adelaide concert but were unable to stay for a Tatty Show because of publicity commitments in Perth. Songwriter Bob Hudson made the statement: “This is the kind of outrage that could only happen here in Russia and at times like this I only wish I lived in a free country like Australia”.

Well, what - apart from an atmosphere of friendly harmony and unity - did A Tatty Show achieve? For Dorothy Hewett it meant that, in Adelaide, hundreds of people have learned about her for the first time and, hopefully, her writing; it meant $1,200 towards her $6,000 debt. For the audience it meant a sustained, inexpensive night of mostly top class local entertainment with the added pleasure of Margaret Roadknight in superb voice. For anyone who cares about the fate of the Australian artist, it meant a ray of hope - in a country which treats its writers and artists with a pariah, bizarre lack of understanding and consideration; a poet and playwright was celebrated with love and respect. One can only regret that those two doyens of Adelaide poetry, Dunstan and Dutton, were unwilling to participate.

But, of course, the best benefit show for Dorothy Hewett would be handsome, professional productions of her vital, challenging, unique plays by Australia’s major theatre companies. What company will consider Bon Bons and Roses for Dolly or The Tatty Hollow Story for its next repertoire? Please. I’ll offer my services for a pittance if anyone’s interested.

A TATTY SHOW mounted by Pretty Limited Productions at the Adelaide Town Hall, 17 x 1976

Directors: Wal Cherry and Rodney Fisher

Producers: Diana Manson and Suzanne Roux

With: Margaret Roadknight, Robyn Archer, Jude Kuring, Daphne Grey, John Wood, David King, Patrick Frost, Craig Ashley, Jo England, Penny Eames, Dave Dallwitz and his Jazz Band, Sybil Graham, Marlene Richards, Tintagel, Madman’s Lady, Ted and Dennis, Nicholas Lyon, Noel Shannon, Rick Lock, Peter Goodrich, Kerrin Bailey, Russell Saiton, New Circus and The Saturday Company.

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87 Jersey Road, Woollahra, N.S.W. 2025.
Raymond Stanley on the demise of the Firm and its resurrection as J.C. Williamson's under the most powerful man in commerce.

Ever since J.C. Williamson Limited celebrated its centenary in August 1974 there were murmurings its subsidiary company, J.C. Williamson Theatres Ltd., would be compelled to cease operations. Official celebrations had consisted of a preview of an A.B.C. documentary T.V. programme on the Firm, followed by a luncheon in Melbourne and the same night in Sydney. For some odd reason New York Times' critic Clive Barnes was brought out as guest of honour for the occasion. For some odd reason New York Times' critic Clive Barnes was brought out as guest of honour for the occasion.

At the same luncheon/dinner Mitchell announced a number of plans to attract larger audiences and to celebrate J.C.W.'s centenary: a $5,000 Centenary Award for the best Australian play or musical suitable for a commercial production; establishment of an artist's agency for actors, dancers and variety artists; opening of a J.C.W. theatre school; setting up of an advisory panel comprising members of the public to advise the company about its policy and shows; and establishment of a theatregoers' club and a first nighters' club which would offer discounted prices and preferential booking.

Only the proposed play competition managed to get off the ground. Eighty scripts were submitted and, according to a downbeat announcement, a comedy-thriller was declared the winner. No more was ever heard of the play.

The demise of J.C.W. Theatres perhaps really started in the mid-sixties. Certainly things were never right when, after the death in 1965 of Sir Frank Tait (last of the Tait Brothers at the helm of J.C.W.'s for so many years), the successor he had personally trained, John McCallum, resigned a year later.

Declining to give an official reason for his resignation, at the time McCallum merely said: "There has been some measure of disagreement. We have agreed to disagree and I am sorry. Yet our disagreement has been amicable."

McCallum was the last of the J.C.W. top hierarchy who knew what theatre was about from all angles. During his eight years at J.C.W.'s McCallum would sit-in on performances in the last weeks in one city, ironing out the 'staleness' that had inevitably set in during a long run, making certain that when the musical or play opened in the next city it was as fresh as in its initial weeks.

Soon after McCallum's resignation Melbourne solicitor Cecil Hooper was named chairman of the company and John McFarlane executive director. At the time of his appointment, McFarlane was described as "a business man and amateur singer-actor".

Theatrical operations were in the hands of director and general manager Harry A. Strachan and general manager Charles Dorning. The Firm's London director, was brought to Melbourne as Strachan's deputy. The company's N.S.W. manager, Syd Irving, was also made a director on retirement of Harald Bowden. Within a few weeks McFarlane also had resigned "following a disagreement with the board on management policy". He was replaced by Frank Paine, who came to The Firm direct from a stocking manufacturing company. From then on the fortunes of the company steadily declined.
For the next few years J.C.W’s theatrical operations were presided over by Strachan and Dornin in tandem. Early in 1968 Robert Sturgess (who had been concert manager and touring manager for J.C.W’s 1949-56) returned as assistant to Strachan. A year later Dornin quit to become a general administrator of HSV 7 in Melbourne (later leaving that post and was appointed director of Moomba, a position he held for some years). There were constant rumours that all was not well with J.C.W’s and that anyone could take over The Firm - at a price. Harry M. Miller very nearly did, but he considered the price far too high.

In 1971 The Firm joined forces with Edgley and Dawe and, with Michael Edgley as managing director, became Williamson-Edgely Theatres Ltd. There were many staff changes, including Strachan leaving The Firm and later joining the staff of the Sydney Opera House.

Michael Edgley apparently found himself "hedged-in" too much and the partnership lasted only fifteen months. The company back as J.C. Williamson Theatres Ltd. with Robert Sturgess and Noel Blackburn (who had been J.C.W.'s Secretary) guiding theatrical operations and soon having as their boss Alastair Mitchell, grandson of John Tait of the Tait Brothers, and who had been head of Allans’s, Melbourne’s noted music store.

By now The Firm’s failures were outnumbering its successes. Frequently its theatres were dark. In frantic attempts to keep them open The Firm rushed on productions that should not have been staged, and probably would not have been but for the fact a great number of people had to be kept in employment. This is one of the main reasons why J.C. Williamson Theatres eventually had to wind up operations: it not only had to operate a chain of five theatres in Australia and three in New Zealand, attempt to fill them for fifty two weeks a year, but also maintain a large staff made up of executive personnel, production, workshop, publicity and other departments.

In a vain attempt to keep going, Mitchell sought subsidies from the Australian Council, asked the Government to buy its theatres, and requested short term financial aid from the Industries Assistance Commission. All requests fell on deaf ears.

So now, after its final production Private Lives, J.C. Williamson Theatres Ltd is no more. Its parent company, J.C. Williamson Ltd (in which the Herald and Weekly Times has shares) still owns theatres it would like to sell.

Meantime a new company, known as J.C. Williamson Productions Ltd., has been set up, headed by Kenn Brodziak of Aztec Services Pty Ltd. as chairman and managing director. Other directors are deputy chairman John Wren (chairman of Stadiums Pty. Ltd., with whom Aztec have been associated for many years), Lady Tait (widow of Sir Frank), Michael Edgley, Aland Benjamin and Susie Stock.

Thirty years ago Brodziak formed Aztec Services in Melbourne, initially publishing guidebooks, but soon involved in presenting a multitude of attractions. There was drummer Gene Krupa, Winifred Atwell, the Vienna Boys Choir, Moira Lister in a one-woman show, Sophie Tucker, Dave Brubeck, The Black and White Minstrel Show, Joyce Grenfell, the Beatles, Marlene Dietrich, Bob Dylan, Canterbury Tales. Boys in the Band, Anna Neagle. Derek Nimmo, and Johnny Farnham in Charlie Girl, Carol Channing. Godspell, Pippin.

Derek Nimmo in Why Not Stay for Breakfast.

The list really is endless.

Over the years Brodziak has had his failures, but as a close associate and investor in his ventures says: "For every one he’s wrong about, he’s right about four. I can’t remember Aztec Services ever not paying a dividend - and a very good one. He’s been right more times than anybody I know in the industry. There’s one thing about Kenn: if you’re going to lose money, you’ll lose less with Kenn than you’ll lose with anybody else. And he never loads; he never loads management fees. When you go into a production with Kenn, you’ll know exactly what it’s going to cost you. You’ll know exactly who’s going to get what and what’s going to be charged against what. You’ve got no hidden costs, or things. He’s got that reputation all over the world."

Many people are asking what the main differences will be between the new company and the old. The old company was burdened with theatres it had to fill, and the number of people it had to retain on its payroll whether they were employed or not. The new J.C.W.’s is committed to fifty two weeks a year at the Comedy in Melbourne and a minimum of twenty weeks a year at both Her Majesty’s in Melbourne and Sydney, with sole letting rights to other entrepreneurs.

Brodziak will operate with a small staff, employing people only as and when needed. The Victorian General Manager is Robert Ginn; Paul H. Riomflavy, Chief General Manager for N.S.W. Shane Hewitt. General Manager, they have all worked with Aztec for some time. From the old company come John Robertson and Production Director. Betty Pounder. Casting Director and Choreographer; and Sue Natrass. Lighting and Stage Director.

What Brodziak will be providing is a good
night's entertainment for the masses of people who want just that. Many of his attractions are likely to be of the caliber that have appealed to J.C.W. audiences in the past; that have been proven money-makers. But also he will be initiating new ventures, of which the world-premiere of *More Canterbury Tales* is the first. In association with the Old Tote Theatre Company he is commissioning Ron Blair to write a comedy based on the events surrounding the sacking of the Whitlam Labor Government by the Governor-General. In addition there is under consideration a musical written by Australians, about a legendary international historical figure.

Brodzak's biggest ambition is to mount the world-premiere of an Australian-orientated musical good enough to later be staged in London and New York. (Paradoxically, John McCallum before he resigned, had been planning world-premieres in Australia. One he negotiated was *Heaven to Betsy*, based on the old play *Pego My Heart* for which he intended bringing out Leslie Uggams as star. With McCallum's resignation the idea never got off the ground and when the musical was eventually tried out in America - with Eartha Kitt - it flopped.)

Other plans mulled over by Kenn Brodziak included the Australian production of the American musical *A Chorus Line*, the starring of Johnny Farnham and Julie Anthony (on her return from playing in Irene in the West End) in an American musical, and bringing back the successful drag duo Hinge and Bracket (Patrick Frye and George Logan) to play the two old ladies in a revival of *Arsenic and Old Lace*.

High on the list of attractions to be staged are the naughty English sex comedy *Funny Peculiar* and English TV star Richard (Man About the House) O'Sullivan in a revival of the farce *Boeing Boeing* (which should please Sir Henry Bland!) Derek Nimmo will also be back to play again in *Why Don't You Stay For Breakfast?* in those cities he did not visit before, and in a new comedy for those capitals who have already seen him.

At Melbourne's Comedy, with entrepreneur Paul Sturgess has established a new company, Sturgess Concerts Pty. Ltd., to present tours of classical and popular (but not "pop") international and Australian celebrities. And Geoff Sinclair, who was director of publicity, is co-presenting American femina-ironic comedian, and Russian pianist, Melodiya's Moscow's Playbox Theatre for a short season, and has plans for importing other overseas entertainers.

There is little pleasure in writing about someone who means a great deal to you. Your interview can only discover what not to say. So I will not speak of Kenn Brodziak's closest friends. Or about the slapstick time he had in New York last new year's eve. And I wouldn't dare reveal that Brodziak believes Bob Dylan lacks audience rapport and further, possesses a bad act.

But right there is the paradox. Kenn makes it quite clear that he would invest in Dylan again if some other entrepreneur took top billing. What an extraordinary man is K.B.

He is finally the very biggest boy behind the scenes, but out front, as a performer, he does the best exits and entrances in the business. When I left my starring role in *The Magic Flute* we were discussing the situation as Kenn bought a Herald in Collins Street, Melbourne. He said: "Ian, I think you should go on the dole!" Then with his little boy grin at a cheeky half-mast, he walked off, thankful that I had not been quick enough to get the last word.

Topping this man is as difficult as starting a Naval Tank in Monton. If he runs mad like a razor blade, then I have one like a Bic disposable shaver. When he rants, 'Sensurround' becomes passe. An eyewitness has reported that bystanders looked in wonder at the window of his second floor office this week. Some Jefferson as Kenn had a multi- decibel conversion.

But Kenn has mellowed, the Brodziak watchers tell us knowingly. Apparently the bad old days have more or less gone and K.B. screams only when he needs to.

He started as a writer. "My first love!" Or in the very first instance, as a promising teenage wordsmith. In school he wrote an essay entitled *My Idea of Success in Life* (it was about Show Biz); his principal must have wondered at the single-mindedness of this young man for he remarked in ink, a praiseworthy effort and remember the golden rule, there is always room on top!"

Young Brodziak studied law expertly, not necessarily to attain a degree, but in order to become without doubt the very best contract man in the local, and sometimes I suspect not so local, show business structure. His parents were naturally unthrilled when Ken (with one n) at that time) decided not to take his degree after five expensive years. Ken cleared the matter by saying, "I will not fail!"

I believe that Kenn changed his first name sometime after he left the air force where he flew as a navigator. It was during his time with...
always "A very busy man!" His staff of four permanents are devoted to both his genius and open crankiness. Lurl, his private secretary (who should be writing this piece), has been there for twenty one years. There is no doubt she would crawl over broken footlights in service. Shane Hewitt, ex-rock singer and now Aztec general manager, is a strikingly young man who follows an imposing line of heir apparents. Robert Ginn, chief general manager, battles his way past that title to become Kenn’s cool and collected 2.I.C.

Helen Kipouropolous, the girl in the outer office, gets an entire paragraph to herself. She was hired, not so much for her abilities, but for the fact that the boss took great delight in the fact that the boss took great delight in her presence. Shane Hewitt, ex-rock singer and now Aztec general manager, is a strikingly young man who follows an imposing line of heir apparents. Robert Ginn, chief general manager, battles his way past that title to become Kenn’s cool and collected 2.I.C.

Here is a sample of Aztec non-news in reply to a typically stupid question: Will More Canterbury Tales be successful?”

His come-back was rapid-fire. “There are many ways to gauge success, from box-office success, to success through scenic design. In all history success has been a matter of opinion. Superstar was a success, who’s to say eastern religions might not be a success on stage …. “But he never declines to comment.

The world premiere of More Canterbury Tales took place at Her Majesty’s Theatre, Melbourne on October 23 and is the first production of his newly formed company J.C. Williamson Productions Ltd…. The New Firm. Kenn is, as a result of his new commitment, heavily overworked - but only very slightly a different man. A Brodziak helper deftly observed a touch more protocol in his enterprises, but you would have to know him very well to notice the change.

Martin Starkie, the man who put the first Canterbury Tales on stage in other countries, is visiting Australia to direct and create a world first for Aztec. He gave me this explanation: “Kenn is a very persuasive man, it was his idea to open the new show in Melbourne. But I wanted to do it here for many reasons: I’d heard such favourable reports of Johnny Lockwood’s performance in the initial production ... and we all enjoyed working with several talented Australians in London.”

“Two world firsts on the one day! One you can see, one you can’t!”

Brodziak will, with a shove and a push, attract the public to his theatres and here’s how he intends to do it: “By giving them what they want. By keeping a step ahead.” Just remember, we are listening to a man who knows who’s on the telephone before he picks it up. Sometimes.

Oh there’s so much more to tell. Like the call he received from the late Brian Epstein: “Kenn, do you think you’ll ever find another Beatles?” His reply was suitably enigmatic. Then there are stories of his personal letters to and from some of the world’s greatest stars who have variously worked for Kenn without a written contract and purely on a gentleman’s agreement. I can tell you from experience how the moguls on Broadway adore him and heap fine adjectives upon his name. Oh yes, and wouldn’t I like to reveal the master plan for Johnny Farnham which is sure to have a seven figure outcome.

Now, let’s have the last question for a most stimulating human being. Kenn, if someone were to write a musical about the life, times and humor of Kenn Brodziak, would Miller and Edgeley put the money up? “They’d rush in!” And would it make money? “Certain to!”
from Friday 19th November

DAVID WILLIAMSON’S

A HANDFUL OF FRIENDS

directed by JOHN BELL; cast includes PETER CARROLL, JUDITH FISHER, BERYS MARSH, PETER SUMNER and ANNA VOLSKA.

and at the Canberra Playhouse — Box Office 49-7600
Tuesday 23 November — Saturday 4 December

DIRTY LINEN

by TOM STOPPARD

Australian premiere of a brilliant farce on the hypocrisy of randy politicians and journalists. A select committee of MP’s are meeting to investigate the immorality of members:
“Someone’s going through the ranks like a lawnmower in knickers!” — Shades of Christing Keefer, the Profrimo Affair, Ainslie Gotto and Junie Morosi. Stoppard has worked as a political journalist and says of them:
“There as snug as collection of hypocritical, self-important, bullying, shoddily printed sick bags as you’d hope to find in a month of Sundays; and dailies, and the weeklies aren’t much better.”
“This is fertile, literate high farce” — Irving Wardle, The Times, London
Cast includes JOHN GADEN, RALPH COTTERILL, ROBERT DAVIS, ALAN TOBIN, WILLIAM NAGLE, ELIZABETH MORTISON as the minute secretary Miss Gotobed, and JOHANA PIGOTT.
Director is Ken Horter.

The DIRTY LINEN moves from Nimrod Downstairs from Tuesday, 7th December.
The I.A.C.'s draft report on assistance to the performing arts stresses the need for subsidies, provided the arts are educating, being disseminated or being innovative. To this extent the report potentially provides for a large stimulus to the performing arts. However, by seeing these activities as an alternative to the present functions of the performing arts, it negates this benefit, and suggests a complete restructuring of the performing arts.

The economic basis of the report is that the existing performing arts only entertain their audience and there is no economic justification for subsidising the private pleasure of these consumers. If this pleasure is purely a private benefit then the consumers must be prepared to pay the full cost of their pleasure or go without. There would be little disagreement with this on economic grounds if the benefits from the arts were purely private, and if the market mechanism was not impeded in meeting the wishes of these consumers. It is on both of these points that the conclusions of the report can be criticised.

The Commissioners argue that the arts can provide entertainment, education and cultural awareness, the latter through high innovation and dissemination. Education and cultural awareness are accepted as benefits to society (public benefits) and are worthy of subsidy, in contrast to entertainment which is a private benefit. Unfortunately the Commissioners destroy their own case by arguing (on pp. 5 and 98) that entertainment provides an important stimulus to education and cultural awareness. To this extent it is difficult to see how they can maintain that entertainment provides purely private benefits, and if there is a public benefit from entertainment, then a subsidy is warranted.

The report lays great stress on the notion that consumer preferences are best satisfied in the market place. This is only true to the extent that (i) no public benefits are provided by the goods; (ii) these will not be recognised in the market and so the output will not be less than the desirable level, and (ii) the market is operating perfectly. It is unlikely that the market for the output of the performing arts is perfect, (very few markets are, if any at all), and this can be confirmed by at least one example. A perfect market requires consumers to have perfect knowledge of the costs and benefits of the good in question and as the report notes, the lack of education in the arts prevents many people being fully aware of the benefits obtainable from the arts. This is especially true of the long term benefits arising from increased cultural awareness. The arts need to be subsidised at the same time as people are educated, and a cultural awareness develops, for only then can people really express their preferences through the market. Education and a greater cultural awareness are not alternatives but are integral parts of the existing performing arts framework.

Another problem is raised by the report's recommendation that assistance should be neutral between art-forms. To the extent that all art-forms are to be equally available, unequal amounts of money may be allocated, because X may cost more per person attending than Y. This is neutrality in terms of availability but not in terms of funds allocation. If funds are allocated evenly between X and Y, we may have plenty of Y but little or none of X; this would give neutrality in terms of funds allocation but not in terms of availability. If we accept that the present framework should be supported until consumer preferences can start to be allocated through the market (more likely fifteen rather than five years) then equal availability is the relevant criterion.

From an economist's viewpoint, a major area of debate in the report is the treatment accorded to the benefits of the arts. The Commissioners contend that they could not objectively determine the extent of any public benefits, although they were prepared to accept the benefits of education and cultural awareness on subjective grounds.

It is not clear why they accept these and not others, but apart from that, they continually consider issues in light of the cost only. Clearly, the cost of a particular good is only relevant when compared to the benefits accruing from that good, and comparisons based on cost alone can be invalid.

Of course, the Commissioners' reply would be that no one provided objective benefits that could be matched alongside costs. Some evidence was tendered to them on this point and they chose to ignore it without reason. In any case, one can never be objective about the intrinsic merit of public benefits for by definition they are subjective. Once one can investigate and quantify the extent to which people feel their welfare is altered by these benefits, and this is the only objective evidence available. The longer term public benefits of any government policy, be it tariffs on steel or textiles, or subsidies to the arts, can only be objectively assessed in this way.

Much has been made in the press of two points in the report. The first is the remark that direct subsidies to the Australian Opera were equivalent to $10.52 per seat, and that another $7 per seat is subsidised when the Australian Opera performs at the Sydney Opera House (page 103). This does not mean as many commentators have stated, that opera-goers are subsidised nearly $18 per seat. Even if one accepts the argument, it only refers to one opera company (although the largest) in one location. In any case it is only valid to include the additional $7 if the Opera House was built for opera performances (which it clearly was not) and if cheaper and better performances did not exist (which they do.). In fact, it can be argued that opera-goers are subsidising the national monument built by the N.S.W. State Government which would otherwise be a white elephant.

The second point often mentioned in the press is the footnote on page 103 that direct subsidies to the Australian Opera and the AETT Symphony Orchestra total more than $11,000 per employee. This does not mean that all employees in the performing arts are subsidised to this extent. In any case such a comment is only meaningful if used to assess the argument that the subsidy is necessary to preserve employment. This cost per employee still has to be compared to the benefit per employee before it has any purpose and although the report did not make this comparison, at least it was mentioned in connection with the preservation of employment argument. Unfortunately many commentators have used this figure to justify their assertion that subsidies are too high, and this is completely invalid. It would not matter if the subsidy was $1 million per employee provided the benefits to society exceeded this cost.

The report adopts a contradictory stance on the effect of its recommendations on employment in the arts. On page 23 they claim that this is unclear, yet on page 65 they assert that a reduction in employment is unlikely. This is difficult to reconcile with their argument that one reason for rising costs of the arts is that they use a high proportion of labour in performances and that this is outmoded in our society. The recommendation is that art forms requiring less labour and more capital are required ("Boyera rts"). Consequently unemployment of artists must rise in the short term unless (a) many artists can be absorbed into education, or (b) they can easily find other non-artists jobs, or (c) the output of the new Boyerarts will expand rapidly and so require the same quantity of labour as before. All three appear unlikely within the five years set by the Commissioners for the phasing out of existing subsidies and therefore a rise in unemployment is a likely consequence of the full implementation of the report.

There are many strange and unsupported statements in the report. For instance, it is assumed that the main criterion for assessing preferences for live music against those for recorded music is the technical quality of the reproduction. The more technically perfect performance is assumed to be better and therefore the report asserts that people will prefer recorded concerts etc. to live performances. No evidence is given for this value judgement.

The report is disappointing in many ways. It is often contradictory, it abounds in unsupported assertions; and it uses economic analysis in a far too extreme manner. Ultimately all government policies are based on a belief that society's welfare is improved by such policies. Some objective evidence can be tendered in support of this but there will always be a certain element of subjectivity in continually attacking this element in the case for support to the performing arts the Commissioners have gone dangerously close to burying the diamonds they possess beneath a pile of manure.
CERTAIN WOMEN IN NEARLY 200 YEARS OF AUSTRALIAN THEATRE.

"The Alice", a commemorative statuette, is to be given for a play of literary merit by an Australian woman writer to mark the 50th anniversary of the Society of Women Writers (Australia) in a current competition for a play which is "suitable for professional presentation." With it goes a prize of $1,000 donated by the New South Wales Government.

The Pioneer Players in 1922, though directed by three men, were probably the first theatre group to present plays by women writers. By 1940 women playwrights for the stage and for radio broadcasting were in full swing. The 1960s and 1970s were a golden age of women playwrights, with the stage and the radio as regular producers for women writers. By 1940 women playwrights for the stage and for radio broadcasting were in full swing.

Among them is Gwen Meredith, authoress of "Currency Methuen Drama" 1975. It was this year published by Currency Methuen with the title changed to "Crossfire" because of Pinter's play "No Man's Land" which premiered in London last year: with a cast of four men!

Though not as playwrights until after the first third of this century, women have always played leading parts in the local theatre scene. For an earlier Tasmanian play about bushranging, the first truly Australian play - with an indigenous theme and setting, and written and presented locally - was "The Currency Lass" or "My Native Girl" by the convict playwright Edward Goeghegan. In a very lively way it dramatised female enterprise in a courtship situation and extended the currency lads and lasses then emerging with a new and

Marlis Thiersch lectures on Australian drama and theatre at the School of Drama, University of New South Wales, is Honorary Secretary of the Australian Centre of the International Theatre Institute and was awarded her doctorate for a thesis on the development of indigenous playwrighting. She apologises for inaccuracies and omissions and would enthusiastically welcome additional information.

Gwen Meredith, with the title changed to "Crossfire" because of Pinter's play "No Man's Land" which premiered in London last year: with a cast of four men!

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and singing in London around 1890, they both died in the same year, 1931, in Sydney. The two Nellies took their art very seriously, only staying married briefly before pursuing their careers. Nellie Stewart later in life formed a close relationship with George Musgrove, with whom she travelled together to Vienna. Nellie's outraged husband filed for divorce and though the case was never heard, Louis Philippe went on safari to Africa and later married an Austrian archduchess. Melba came back to Australia, to become Dame Nellie in 1918 in recognition of her work for war charities.

Another Nellie was the popular vaudeville artist Nellie Kolle, who appeared on many Australian music hall stages in tails and top hat, entertaining her spell over audiences into old age.

Nellie Bramley made her debut at the age of fourteen in East Lynne before the first world war. She had her own company in the early 1920's and is said to have been a smooth performer and trouper in every sense of the word. Together with Marie Ney she is mentioned in the ode by James McAuley which was spoken by Dame Sybil Thorndike at the opening of the Elizabethan Theatre in 1956 and which begins: "Here Drama used to live and now once more she breathes, she wakes, far lovelier than before."

Between the wars, 'our Glad' or 'Australia's Queen of Song', Gladys Moncrieff was the big star of the musical comedy age. Her most famous role was The Merry Widow in which she first appeared in 1918 and once again in 1942 before retiring to Surfers Paradise, where she died in 1975. She apparently gave wonderful parties, was a generous hostess and entertained troops overseas, for which she was awarded the O.B.E.

Two wives of post-war musical comedy producers who were well-known performers in their own right were Viola Wilson who married Sir Frank Tait, and Kitty Carroll who was the wife of Garnet H. Carroll. In the vaudeville era, the wife of 'Mo' (Roy Rene) was Sadie Gale, a Tivoli soubrette, and Bob Dyer's wife Dolly was formerly also a Tivoli showgirl. Another well-known Tivoli performer was Dorothy 'Dilly' Foster, the versatile radio comedienne and script writer.

Several Australian women have had acting success abroad, such as Madge Ryan, Zoe Caldwell, Judith Anderson, June Jago, Dianne Cilento and, more recently, Darlene Johnson and young Joanna McCallum, the daughter of Googie Withers, who, though English, was herself a popular stage success in Australia.

It is not true that either Lola Montez, Sarah Bernhardt, Anna Pavlova, Anna Russell, Marlene Dietrich or Abigail are Australian, though they are among the many female celebrities who have greatly contributed to the attractiveness of Australian theatre over the years by their visits to these shores.

Next Month Mariis Thiesch considers modern day contributions from women in theatre.

AUSTRALIAN CENTRE - INTERNATIONAL THEATRE INSTITUTE

FOR PLAYWRIGHTS: The O'Neill Theatre Centre is now accepting scripts for its annual NATIONAL PLAYWRIGHTS CONFERENCE. Each year the conference selects about ten works from those submitted. Participating playwrights work with professional actors, directors and dramaturgs during a four-week summer session, while the O'Neill Centre pays for room, board, transportation and weekly stipend. The writer explores his work with other artists participating in the "work-in-progress" production. Prior to the December 31 deadline, submit two copies of a previously unproduced play to National Playwrights Conference, 1860 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10023.

THE BOOK OF BALLET: The Book of Ballet has been sent to us for review and for inclusion in our library and we are most grateful to the publishers for this kindness. The book is quite wonderful, the explanations of the classical dance clear and precise, the drawings are simple, alive and kinetic. GENEVIEVE GUILLAULT, Director of the Paris Opera School of Dance, and GERMAINE PRUD'HomMEAN, Professor of Dance History and Ballet Studies at the Paris Opera, have collaborated in the production of this step-by-step guide to the practice and appreciation of classical ballet.

I would very much like to suggest that although it is quite expensive, $19.15, this book would make the most handsome, cherished and useful present perhaps for Christmas - for any young person, male or female, who is interested in, or studying, ballet.

Publishers: Prentice Hall and $19.15 for this hard back copy.

NEW ZEALAND: The end of 1976 will see a change in leadership at both the Mercury Theatre and at the Downstage Theatre in Wellington. Tony Richardson has been Mercury's only director since the Auckland Theatre Trust brought him out from Britain in 1968 to open and run the Mercury. He is returning to the United Kingdom and his place will be filled by Robert Alderton. Downstage chose Tony Taylor to replace Mervyn Thompson, the Artistic Director. Mervyn Thompson takes up an appointment as Senior Lecturer in Drama at Auckland University. We are also informed that The Central Theatre in Auckland, after fifteen years of hard struggle by Mrs. Mary Amoore and all connected with this theatre, has taken the decision to close down operations. "The end of Central should not be seen as a 1975-76 phenomenon. It needed to expand; it could not expand without a grant, without a formalized, legalized structure; Mary Amoore had struggled on solo for too long to suddenly think in terms of board approval.

THE GIRL FROM DOMREMY: Giseth Klebe made use of the Friedrich Schiller's Jungfrau von Orleans and historical records of the trial of Joan of Arc in the libretto for his ninth opera, commissioned by the Stuttgart State Opera and first performed there in June. Over a dozen composers, including Giuseppe Verdi and Peter Tchaikovsky have presented the fate of Jeanne d'Arc in the opera house. Klebe keeps his distance from them in that he consciously renounces any hint of Grand Opera. He replaces the usual orchestra with "a strictly anti-culinary instrumentarium" (Frankfurter Rundschau) consisting of four pianos, harpichord, harp, percussion and tape. The vocal parts - a choir and over twenty solo parts - are mainly cantabile, though, with the libretto presented in almost continuous recitative occasionally interrupted by arioso sections, which meant that the words are mostly clearly comprehensible. (Kulturbrief)

DAAD BAYREUTH SCHOLARSHIP: The German Academic Exchange Service's Bayreuth Scholarship was awarded in May to Robert Gard, from the Sydney Opera Company. This scholarship is intended to provide Australian singers with a national or international reputation with a chance of intensifying their study of the great Wagnerian roles at Bayreuth. In contrast to other DAAD scholarships, this is not a regular award and will only be presented in recognition of exceptional talent. (Kulturbrief)

June Collins, I.T.I. Editor
Let me open by clarifying a couple of points. Firstly, I have no intention of setting myself up as an expert or consultant on fire in theatres or elsewhere and, secondly, I have no intention of lecturing you on which extinguisher to use or how to hold a fire hose.

Further, this paper is presented not as a cure-all but rather a means to an awareness of the problems associated with the highly dangerous and sometimes lethal materials that each and everyone of us observes and uses each day.

Let us set the scene:

1. The basic construction of the modern building, controlled as it is by the various statutory regulations, does not represent an area of great concern in itself - but the materials used in the interior furnishings and fittings introduce the combustibles on which the fire can feed.

2. Statistics from the Melbourne Fire Brigade at December, 1975 show approximately 10,000 fires per year in Melbourne.

3. Over the years there have been many disastrous fires in theatres and places of entertainment, and although protective devices and fire fighting techniques have improved many of the basic hazards still remain.

   In the recent past, overseas, three disastrous fires at the Grenoble Dance Hall, the Isle of Man Holiday Centre and St. Laurent Du Pont have involved plastic materials.

Let me quote from a report relative to the St. Laurent Du Pont fire:

   "The building involved in the fire was a dance hall consisting of stone walls covered with cement slabs, and a metal framework supporting a combustible roof deck. The suspended ceiling was also supported by a metal framework. The owners had personally sprayed on a white foamed plastic material to the ceiling and walls, so that the interior of the hall represented a gymnasium.

   The plastic foam was made by the owners using polyurethane as the base material. The building had three exits, two of which were locked at the time of the fire, and the width of all exits was below standard.

   The fire is said to have started at 1:30 a.m. when a foot stool was set alight accidentally in the corner of the dance floor. Burning drops from the ceiling rained onto the dance floor and the people dancing.

   Less than five minutes after the start of the fire all calls for help from people inside the building had stopped and one hundred and forty six people died."

4. Smoke and toxic gases given off by the combustible contents within the building are responsible for 95% of so-called fire deaths. In many cases there is no evidence of actual contact with flames or even with any great degree of heat.

   The effects of smoke, toxic gases and heat either singularly, or in combination, constantly confront the fire fighter and victim. The relative importance of each of these factors will vary with the nature of the material involved and the conditions under which the combustion is taking place.

SMOKE

Smoke may be broadly defined as the visible products of incomplete combustion. Where combustion is supported by an adequate supply of oxygen and sufficient heat being generated, there will be little or no smoke visible.

   There are three main factors associated with smoke which give rise to the greatest concern on the fire ground. They are:

   i) The tendency of occupants to build up panic in smoke filled atmospheres;

   ii) The lack of visibility, hampering fire fighters in their work and preventing occupants locating exits.

The difficulties with controlling panic stricken persons need no elaboration. Fortunately, this problem rarely presents itself.

   With regard to the second factor, the fire fighter has available to him protective clothing and breathing apparatus which enables him to work in irritant atmospheres. To overcome lack of visibility he is trained and encouraged to develop his sense of touch by systematic procedures.

   But what about the third? It may well be that there is a "primary fire" case for emergency services to be located at floor level rather than over exit doors and high on walls so that a person seeking an exit could remain in cooler and lighter smoke areas at floor level while seeking such signs.

   The possibility of flame propagation is clearly related to density and temperature of the smoke. With the oxygen-starved fire, generating large quantities of smoke, there is no steady increase in the temperature of the smoke until ignition occurs and this is reached; when flame propagation will occur. Hence the eye witness accounts of "the whole building just burst into flames."

   An example of this occurred approximately two years ago at a car establishment in Coutham Road, Kew. The situation for most buildings is that smoke and hot gases spread much more rapidly than heat and flame, and the restriction of the use of smoke producing materials is being considered as necessary.

TOXIC GASES

The ever present carbon monoxide must surely present the greatest hazard of them all; because of its insidious nature, there is no irritation or discomfort at all but, in fact, a feeling of drowsiness and well being.

   With plastics in such broad and general use, it is probably fair to say a large percentage of fires that occur in the theatre, home office and shops involve plastic in some form or other and this must increase every year as more and more exotic plastics are developed.

   It is appropriate that we highlight some of the lethal peculiarities of some common plastics.

   Research shows that carbon monoxide still exists in plastic fires but, added to this, we have hydrogen cyanide and nitrogen dioxide, combining to form phosgene gas and, for good measure, hydrocyanic acid and hydrogen chloride, which are all lethal to human beings.

   By way of comparison, we have:

   Carbon monoxide = 4,000 p.p.m.
   Hydrogen Cyanide = 1,250 p.p.m.
   Hydrogen Chloride = 40 p.p.m.

   Remembering these figures, let us review some figures obtained during laboratory testing.

   Before leaving the subject of toxicity, let me relate some basic chemistry - the hydrogen chloride or hydrochloric acid; when water is applied to burning plastic, it doesn't asphyxiate you, it merely reacts with the material to produce hydrochloric acid which retards the fire. Therefore, what articles you save from the fire will probably be ruined anyway, due to the acid effect.

   This is another appropriate time to quote from a United Kingdom report on plastics. We quote:

   "Apart from toxicity, smoke production of foamed plastics makes fire fighting operations extremely difficult. Recently, (1971), M.H. Factory Inspectorate arranged a demonstration in co-operation with the Glasgow Fire Brigade. It showed manufacturers the dangers of fires in foamed plastic materials. A derelict warehouse was used for the demonstration and some seventy foamed plastic cushions, as found on a standard domestic lounge chair, were ignited by a sheet of burning newspaper.

   Within fifteen seconds the ground floor was thick with dense black smoke; given off by the burning cushions, and within thirty seconds smoke was pouring out of the second storey windows and side doors. Fire appliances arrived within two minutes forty five seconds (as part of the demonstration) and by this time the whole building was enveloped in smoke.

   Fire Master G.P. Cooper of the Glasgow Fire Brigade said that the local advice that he could offer to anyone involved in a foamed plastic fire was to call the Fire Brigade immediately. After this he said it was a dangerous time; fire fighters could be injured in the rush to extinguish the blaze.

   And a further quote from the July, 1972 issue of FIRE (Journal of the British Fire Service), in relation to polyurethane fires:

   "The realisation of the hazards with which the Fire Service is faced, is an exciting challenge with incidents involving polyurethane must lead to..."
a re-thinking of the fire fighting techniques now employed. To ensure the safety of firefighters, they must be aware of the problems likely to be encountered and be adequately protected against them. Breathing apparatus and protective clothing should be worn at all but the very minor incidents.

It must be remembered that the toxic gases can be absorbed through the skin and that the Threshold Limit Value of the gases involved are lower than the face mask leakage of a breathing apparatus set required by the British Standards Institution, that is 500 p.p.m. Wherever possible, therefore, fire fighting should be undertaken in open air, and in cases of doubt, buildings must be immediately evacuated."

When the Fire Brigade is faced with problems of this sort in attacking fires, then can you imagine how much greater is the problem for you and me?

HEAT

When a building or a compartment of a building is completely involved in a fire, it is not unusual to encounter temperatures in the range of 1500°F to 2000°F. The time/temperature tolerance for second degree burns, established by authoritative studies, have shown that the same degree of damage will occur after:

- 6 hours @ 110°F
- 20 seconds @ 120°F
- 1 second @ 158°F

Having regard to these heat limitations of human tolerance it necessarily follows that unless the fire fighter can attack the fire in its incipient stage, it will very quickly establish a situation that will preclude the possibility of attack from inside the building; in fact, the N.F.P.A. Fire Protection Handbook suggests that firemen should not enter atmospheres exceeding 120°F - 130°F without special protective equipment. By the way, that hot bath that we all enjoy is not so hot after all - probably around 105°F.

PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

As with most ills, prevention is always better than cure. Therefore, we should establish some simple but straightforward preventative measures that will protect both our place of employment and ourselves.

It is essential that once the fire-prevention measures are established they be constantly policed to ensure their efficiency in emergencies. All occupants should be encouraged to report matters constituting a potential hazard.

Typical points to watch for are:

1. Accumulation of litter. Good housekeeping is essential. Waste materials should be collected regularly and stored in a safe place whilst awaiting disposal.

2. Placement of furniture, boxes, scenery etc. must not be where it will obstruct exits or the access to emergency equipment such as extinguishers and hose reels.

3. Fire doors should be tested regularly for function. When an area is unoccupied, they should be closed. Never lock fire doors open. If you have a requirement to constantly use that exit, perhaps you should consider fitting a fusible link which allows the door to close automatically in the event of fire.

4. The discharge of an extinguisher, either purposefully or accidentally, must be reported to a responsible member of the Emergencies Staff. This person should be designated on a notice, adjacent to the equipment.

5. Flammable or explosive materials should only be permitted into the building in small quantities, and under controlled conditions.

6. Staff members should be regularly warned of the rules regarding use of possible sources of ignition - e.g. matches, radiators, double adaptors.

7. Acquaint yourself with the nearest and various fire escape exits and routes. Make this an automatic action when ever you enter any complex. Should the occasion arise where you are involved in a fire, then there are only three golden rules to remember.

   i) Raise the alarm

   ii) Attack the fire with first-aid appliances ONLY if there is no immediate danger to life.

   iii) Evacuate the involved area.

CONCLUSION

Finally, may I suggest that very valuable instruction and information can be gained from three sources:

1. The Victorian State Emergency Service conducts a four hour course at their headquarters in St. Kilda Road. The course is repeated each six to twelve weeks, and there is no charge;

2. The Metropolitan Fire Brigade produces a booklet (again, free) called Guide Lines for Emergency Procedures in Multi-Storey Buildings. The principles here are just as applicable to theatres;

and

3. The Insurance Council of Australia will, on request inspect and assess your premises relative to hazards. This is also a gratis service.
"The thing that appeals to me most about radio is its vast flexibility. It seems to me that the writer is never hemmed in. Everything is open to him. He has the whole world of imagination to work from. Radio to me is so much a realm of the imagination."  
Colin Free

A radio coverage of the recent solar eclipse would probably not have captured a particularly wide audience. And, at the risk of alienating my colleagues in the ABC Sporting Department, I've never seen much sense in radio broadcasts of spectator sports. Rather like listening to the opening night of the Australian Ballet at the Sydney Opera House. The music may be pleasant enough, but the words don't come across at all.

Qualitative statements and comparisons about film, radio and television have always appeared specious to me — like all those tired old gags about Melbourne and Sydney weather.

But having worked in theatre, film and television, I feel at least competent to make some sort of educated, objective statement about the state of the medium in which I am at present employed — radio. And, more to the point, Radio Drama and Features.

There still exists in the Industry a sort of categorising of talents according to the area in which any one person works. Film for the wildly imaginative and artistic; television for those who are of now and know where it's all at; and radio for those who can't quite make the grade — or, at least, who register zero in the mechanical abilities sections of intelligence tests.

But what is more important than any sort of domestic or partisan squabble, is the realisation that each medium, of its very nature, has qualities which are peculiar to it.

No intelligent or informed person would argue for one minute that there are times when television is able to present vividly and immediately what no other medium can do. Nor that radio can present with immediacy and economy what no other medium can do. And surely our souls would languish, were it not for the masterful crafting of film.

There's no way of knowing if Guglielmo Marconi ever surrounded himself with a group of actors. Even if he did, he probably had no idea that within a century there would be broadcasting organisations of the magnitude of those which exist today in the U.K., Europe, the Americas — and Australia.

Wireless messages became broadcasting and broadcasting became established as more than a news and information service.

It was only a matter of time before the creative use of the medium was developed. And what better way to develop that service than to introduce the notion of plays on radio. And so a whole new world began. Whilst there still exist excellent examples of what might loosely be described as vintage radio plays, there is much to make strong men shudder.

Everybody is prepared to back an Oscar winner — or at least to be photographed with him. Even if he is a pumpkin. But in radio, it is interesting to note that both listeners and writers alike are impelled by the impermanence of a continuing audience. Admittedly, some will be retrieved by revival (which is not the same as a re-run); but most will be lost to posterity.

Like television (and Media), Radio eats its own children. Such is the evanescence of production and presentation. Basically, the radio writer has a vague notion of what he is writing for. And, in most cases, he is writing to a time limit. No longer such need ... much thanks.

Even now, the form is still strange — still new in the medium. But, at the same time, there is no way that an aware writer can be unaware of television or film. There is too much now in the writing of radio drama that is akin to the economy of film scripting.

One of the major problems confronting the radio writer is the fear of language — and the fear of silence. To me, a good radio writer knows the use of both. When to utter and when to keep quiet. A Pinter, if you like. And while I am not calling for a spate of neo-Pinters, the discerning reader (and, hopefully, writer) will know what I mean.

The true radio play may make statements about human life which may baffle and disquiet. But, most of all, they show an awareness of the medium itself. What does it best do? How best does it do it?

At base, there is the extremely difficult problem of transmitting a medium which disperses views and weather etc., into one which transmits the real signals of the lives of real men and women.

According to Henry James: "If a woman looks at a man in a certain way, that's drama."

Would that it were so easy. And think of the hours of effortless production that would be afforded us if countless ladies and gentlemen would gaze upon us in like fashion.

In short, writers of radio drama employ elevated dialogue as well as poetry. And at the same time (if not as well) they engage the listener's mind in standard statements which comfortably — or otherwise — he has met before. Very often it is that element of otherwise which changes a competent script into a compelling one.

I feel the need here to make some sort of plea for more visceral drama. There is no disputing the fact that the esoteric, the aurally delightful are important. We all strive to craft that perfect production which can give joy to the maker and listener alike. But we are in the business of communicating, and it seems to me that a lot of what we hear and see lacks the gutsiness and reality that are so much a part of contemporary life. Admittedly, there are those who would argue that while it is all well for people to act and utter in a particular way in real life, they have no wish to let such things enter their living rooms. And I am not making a plea for licence, merely honesty.

Often at seminars and lectures, I am asked how I recognise a good radio script. Good, that is, as opposed to ordinary or dully competent. The answer is invariably — gut. Crude, perhaps, but there is a small blue magical flame, or a feeling of fire in the belly that tells you. If it's there, it's there. If it's not, then no amount of genius or production can compensate.

So far I have been using the terms radio play and radio drama almost interchangeably. It is probably time to make a distinction. From the outset (in Australia, the thirties), writers have been asked to regard radio as a medium in its own right. And whilst one does not wish to denigrate the efforts of those who have come before, new radio writing is vastly different. Technology has a lot to do with it. But there is more.

That is not to say, of course, that there is no place for the well-crafted, conventional radio play. We still produce them; there is still an audience for them. And, in addition, we are constantly called upon to present radio versions (adaptations) of existing theatre pieces.

What I would prefer to concentrate upon is the pure radio work. And it is here that the term radio drama (as distinct from radio play) comes into its own.

In broadcasting, this type of work is described as radiophony — writing on tape, if
you like. The radiophonic piece is an attempt to take words and sounds as written or described by an author especially for the purpose. These are in turn built up into something that could not exist on the printed page — a pattern of words and utterances. Words which are manipulated and sounds which illustrate the words. In this way the writer, the actor, technical personnel and producer/director are able to create something which is intensely technical and physical. In this way the writer, the actor, technical personnel and producer/director are able to create something which is intensely technical and physical.

In 1966, the BBC commissioned All That Fall from Samuel Beckett. For many of us, this work represents the first major breakthrough in radio drama. It also gave birth to the BBC Radiophonic Workshop. The play is largely a monologue, and a convention was needed which gave the movement of an old lady from Samuel Beckett. For many of us, this work represented the first major breakthrough in radio drama.

This was done by starting with natural footsteps which were then taken up by a sound rhythm. Whenever this musical shorthand was heard, the listener knew that the old lady was on the move. She is absorbed in her own thoughts and, from time to time, reality impinges upon her in the shape of people she knows who meet her on the way. Their approaches are indicated by strange and unreal sounds which, as she becomes aware of them, materialise into the real sound of, say, a donkey cart or an old motor car.

Such a process, though envisaged, could never have been realised in the thirties. And in the past twenty years much has been done to refine the concept. The tape recorder is the first and most obvious invention. Gone are the days when actors would cluster around a ribbon microphone uttering speeches that had just been completed by an ashen-faced writer huddled in a corner of the studio. And all of that live to airl! But the use of tape, mixing and multi-tracking has done a lot to free actors, writers and producers from earlier restraints.

With the promise of FM came the exciting world of stereophonic radio production. Like anything new, we were all a little daunted by it at first. But it’s here, and, as listeners to the ABC’s FM Network will know, there is an openness, a vast expanse of difference. The stereophonic production of radio drama also presents a wider world to the actor and director. Plays are blocked as they would be for the stage; rudimentary sets — or props at least are provided for the actor, and so long as the actor remembers a few basic rules, the process is more real. Moves that would be made along diagonals on stage are effected by inscribing arcs, like a point to a compass for straight lines, more oblique for distancing, or fading off.

I have included a simple plan which we give to actors to illustrate the process. It is known at the ABC as Peach’s Patent — probably because it was Robert Peach, a former actor, who did much to unbundle the baffled in the early days of stereo production.

By way of conclusion, I make a plea. No, several. I have always been amazed at the way in which radio drama is neglected by critics. Newspapers, magazines and periodicals will devote endless column space to the reviewing of film, television, music and theatre. But where does one find intelligent, reasoned, informed comment about radio drama? It’s a sad state when a medium which provides so much for the writer, the actor — and the mind, can pass unnoticed.

The second plea? An invitation, really. To the listener. It has to do with Colin Free’s words quoted earlier. In radio, the writer is never hemmed in. Nor is the listener. Everything is open to him. He has the whole world of imagination within reach. Radio is so much a realm of the imagination.

Rather like the mind’s ear.

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M.T.C. T.I.E.

PROGRAMME & PROTEST

Speak to most Theatre in Education actors and directors in Australia and the same cries seem to be repeated; lack of follow up, lack of facilities, lack of interest from the profession, education departments, press, whatever. For the most part the inherited system consists of: two to four actors, with or without stage management, touring for long periods, at times far from home with all the inherent dangers of an isolated group, i.e. disgruntled with management, the director, the play, schoolkids, even each other.

For all this the Melbourne Theatre Company in 1976 managed to field a record four companies with a policy of bringing theatre to schools and preferably with original material conceived for such touring in Australia. To this end we have played throughout the year Bananas by Richard Bradshaw, Strange Words and The Girl by Louis Nowra, Tiger by the Tail and Who's Your Friend? by Brian Bell, The Intrepid Tales of the Twilight Saloon and Phonetics by Mick Rodger and Cupid in Transit by Simon Hopkinson. To these were added two overseas works, John John by John Heywood and The Good Doctor by Neil Simon. The reaction to most of these was good and they were considered useful in the schools.

However, the work has all the aforementioned problems and a continuing assessment besets the director.

Firstly the external problem of touring. Basically there are two choices: stay close to base and go deep - or tour extensively and risk going too wide, but cover more schools with the work. The only answer would seem to be regionalisation and in our case we pursue this.

Secondly the internal problem - especially with new works - of time to rehearse, finding actors who are both motivated and capable, and having the resources to constantly monitor performance. Thus the Theatre in Education director has to be able to create sometimes from slim material as well as teach and coach actors and actually direct work. There is a need for well-trained, good young actors who have some internal discipline of acting from which to work. It is immensely important that the director of Theatre in Education be also a teacher of actors. Perhaps our strongest moment was a performance in Wilcannia of a piece devised within the company, played and directed by ex-members of our own Youth Theatre who have entered the profession.

The nature of the work demands young, enthusiastic performers; our belief in the work demands the children receive theatre of the highest possible standard. Here the director needs both time and money to develop his artists and the works.

Finally there's the recurring chestnut that Theatre in Education is not the realm of the professional theatre. Naturally we believe it is. However, the need for good follow up and a continuing relationship with schools over a wide area can only be answered by a closer working relationship with the education authorities. Dare one hope for a concerted effort, with both hard funding for staff and access grants to schools?

Presumably we have developed well within our resources but this work has opened vistas that, in Victoria at least, are still in the areas of debate and discussion.

Jonathon Hardy

I was informed soon after joining Melbourne Theatres Company's Theatre in Education programme that we were to be termed instead, Theatre in Schools. The implications of this change in name I was to learn in a much slower and more difficult manner.

Work started in the first term of this year. Our team, one of three, was touring Victorian country schools. We performed twice daily to audiences of one hundred and fifty, minimum, whether primary or secondary. As well we conducted long workshops. Due to our audiences numbers participation was kept to a minimum of vocal responses. After each show we spent about fifteen minutes in formal discussion, usually centring round us or our work. No follow up work on the themes of the plays was available either as printed material or direct. Our workshops were totally separate entities and quite often the students participating in them hadn't seen the shows.

Since it was we actors who had had closest contact with staff and students it seemed obvious that our feedback into the system would be vital for improvement. So I returned to second term rehearsals ready to discuss my many new ideas.

These ranged over bringing our shows closer to the audiences, running greater participation shows, restricting audience sizes, using novel and controversial material and perhaps workshops. Follow up could be extended into workshops, discussions and printed material whilst strict adherence after the play an informal "getting to know the actors" session could take place.

However, second term started with four teams, one stage manager and two weeks for each team to rehearse two shows. Formal discussions of our work were not included in our tight schedule, and although I forced this issue and a meeting was held, it tended only to a rationalisation of our existing policies. Our programme apparently would not hold itself responsible for any kind of education value in our work. Moreover, we who had worked in the schools were restricted in our contribution to the programme by being considered as only actors. Even our discussions were scrapped because it was thought that we weren't skilled discussion leaders. Yet no movement was made to develop our skills in that direction.

Second term started. Three of us touring Victoria and one N.S.W. country schools for thirteen solid weeks. One hundred and thirty shows were performed and about thirty workshops taken. Our director visited us twice. The director of the whole programme didn't see our work at all. Whether we would be touring and what shows we would be performing in third term was decided upon without our conference or approval.

As the team drew to a close we requested several alternative schemes for third term; the possibility for actors to spend only a few nights in the country at a time, the possibility to meet our audiences more regularly and perhaps performing less than ten shows a week. Then it wouldn't matter for these reasons, whilst our main company was a heavily subsidised theatre. Without such needed stimuli how could we actors keep our energy output at the high level demanded of us?

Personally I felt I couldn't. I offered my resignation as did a fellow team member. A
CONSTRUCTIVE THEATRE?

Helen van der Poorten

"Children, turn to page 45 of your textbook, the teacher said, and the children began to leaf through their books. "Drop", she yelled suddenly.
The children flung themselves down, scrambling under their desks to crouch with heads wrapped in arms hugging close to the floor.

Canberra playwright Roger Pulvers thus describes the routine known as "Drop Drill", a routine familiar to himself and to many American children growing up in the post-Hiroshima era of the 50's. From this ritual, as common to most as fire drill, comes the name of Mr Pulvers' new play, which opens shortly at the A.N.U. Arts Centre.

The invitation to the gala premiere of Drop Drill urges guests to come attired "to match the incomplete building", and judging by the state of the Arts Centre as I saw it last week, the dress could be quite arresting. A huge shell near the Australian National University Library, the A.N.U. Arts Centre, has remained incomplete because of University cutbacks. In this respect it is reminiscent of public buildings in bankrupt South American republics, and one wonders how many other buildings in the national Capital have met with a similar fate.

But the Arts Centre is fortunate in having people who care about it, and one of them, Roger Pulvers, approached the University for permission to stage Drop Drill so that the proceeds would go towards the completion of the project. It now seems likely that this presentation will act as a catalyst to the activation of the Centre, and the Assistant Vice-Chancellor of the A.N.U., the Department of the Capital Territory, Pulvers, and local director Ralph Wilson have all combined to make the production in the so-called "Rehearsal Room": a possibility. The Fire Regulations have been satisfied at last, and with some wiring run through to the Centre from the Chifley Library, it is possible to stage Drop Drill before an audience.

The rest of the A.N.U. Arts Centre, however, is bare and cement-floored only, littered with rubble at the moment, with several galleries and a sunken amphitheatre representing the main theatre. It will take $10,000 of non-existent money to complete the four modules which would transform the space into a stage, and even though the A.N.U. people think they can reduce, for instance, electricity costs from $30,000 to $5,000, there is still a long way to go.

And what of the play which will help inaugurate the building? The publicity handouts describe Drop Drill as a "stark piece of drama about nuclear obliteration", but this possibly bypasses the sense of ironical humour and slapstick which permeates the play Drop Drill seems to me to dramatize the precariousness of life rather than absolute destruction. The producers tell us of the play's action: "A Prime Minister comes to a foreign country on a mission. But she stays on in the country instead of returning home. The people she eventually meets there are as if out of a dream: a little girl who bleeds but feels no pain; an old man who has spent his life sweeping around a dead tree; a young intellectual boy who dreams of being a soldier." But in fact this account of the play can give us no indication of the time-shifts in Drop Drill. The Noh-type moments of complete inaction, and the non-verbal sections in which, for instance, two politicians conflict and negotiate by playing musical instruments.

The playwright, Roger Pulvers, has schematized the action carefully, so that one steps, say, from November 31st to November 2nd, then forward to the following year, and back again. This scheme, however, is unavailable to the audience, who are to respond to the reverse chronology with the same sense of mystification as the characters in the play. Often the motivating scenes follow the scenes of action, and the playwright has carefully avoided an arrangement which would help an audience understand what is happening in terms of traditional dramatic development.

Roger Pulvers has commented frequently on the difficulty experienced by Western actors in portraying abstract roles, so that even in a Handke play we may find actors having to decide for themselves whether they are husbands, lovers, or whatever, in order to get a line. In Drop Drill it is the essence of being a Prime Minister or a grandma which matters, not the maternal or grandmotherly roles (false anyway, as the play demonstrates) which both characters assume momentarily. Pulvers' play deliberately plays with our conventions of dramatic development, and the dislocation of one scene from another produces a painfully humorous effect. To this end director Ralph Wilson allowed the actors to play to excess with their roles for a time, then cut them back to the abstractions. This non- but not antinaturalistic approach should help create the sense of impending doom which the playwright intends.

I have probably given the impression that Drop Drill is a highly cerebral and grim play, on the contrary, it is a predominantly visual and audial play, with any symbolism coming from the music and the sound of a stopping plane. It is a play about fear, but the playwright seems to have achieved his ends without frightening his participants wantonly. Hopefully the Canberra audiences will recognize in this production of Drop Drill exactly the kind of experimental venture which justifies a new Arts Centre.
How do plays come to be done within the College system?

The students I work with are all training to be teachers of developmental drama in schools. Their role will be to work with kids on the 'theatre of themselves' - helping them to use drama as a means of expressing their own thoughts, feelings and experiences.

When we do a play here students become involved as part of their course work. There is a unit called 'performance'. So we usually get a fairly heterogeneous group together each time - students who have never acted before, students who wanted to go to N.I.D.A. but couldn't, students whose only ambition is to be a good teacher.

And that's your starting point?

Right. The first problem I'm confronted with is to get this group of people to share some similar consciousness in relating to the work we are doing. I find a peculiarly traditional approach to theatre quite prevalent amongst this age group. Their previous experience has often been limited to the English Rep style of play, produced by High School English teachers and entered in eisteddfods. They tend to see acting as something separate from themselves. So the initial task is to redefine theatre as an immediate, relevant expression of their own real lives.

My basic premise is that the only way to create a really 'true' piece of theatre is to build from their points of reference - their own perceptions of the world around them.

Let's talk about your production of The Ride Across Lake Constance. In the light of what you've just said, why did you choose such a complex unusual and enigmatic play?

My job demands that I read many plays. I find more and more that fewer and fewer excite me. Constance stood out - it affected me strongly. For three years it stayed in the back of my mind as something I'd like to direct. But I hadn't conceived of doing it with a student group because it was so complex. Then, when the time came to choose a play to do with second year students, I thought why not? Why couldn't people such as these effectively explore the notions of power-games, manipulation, language and other social conventions dealt with in the play? And it was a stimulating challenge to me as a director to fuse it all into a meaningful piece of theatre which a wide range of people could relate to.

What about the metaphysics and politics of Handke's work? Order both natural and imposed, anarchy, nihilism, existentialism, causality, time, , , , were the students already aware of and interested in such things?

Most of the students doing this course tend to be pretty naive intellectually. Most of their subjects are non-academic. So their political and philosophical awareness is often nil. Also, given their ages and stages, they have not yet experienced or developed in some of the emotional areas relevant to a play like Constance. So our point was simply the practical reality of the basic interaction between people within the play. For them this stage was a raw and intense experience which stimulated the need to articulate what they'd just been through. That's how the political and philosophical implications emerged.

Did this need to work up from such a basic point of departure improve the play's accessibility to audiences, do you think?

I think it did. Everyone seemed to be affected at a gut level even if they didn't understand it intellectually or hadn't experienced Handke before. The response was strong and
immediate - much to my amazement.

I'm not surprised. Your achievement was such that despite the inherent strangeness of the event as a piece of theatre, your presentation was certainly not obscure. I'd say the only thing stopping anyone relating to it immediately in terms of their personal day-to-day experience was their own limited preconceptions about what theatre should be.

But back to how you went about achieving that. How did you set about casting the play? I advertised that the play was going on and all students interested in taking it on as a unit of work attended a meeting. I distributed copies of the play and asked them to read it then come and see me if they felt any empathy with any one of the roles.

I should point out that Handke did not create "characters" such as one finds in the traditional "well-made" play. He named the eight roles after famous German actors but just as well have called them A, B, C, D or whatever. They are not just eight mouth-pieces for the same consciousness, however. Each has distinctive qualities, but they are everchanging, not static. The actors must bring their own vulnerability to the character, so that they are not making the roles intelligible. That's why the empathy bit was so important. But it is significant that each actor chose a role that would enable them to explore a part of themselves they'd never before explored.

How did you approach the text?

Let's move on to your most recent production. We also looked at various exercises and games as a means of finding appropriate roads into the play. We had intensive physical and vocal work - we explored. They had an intellectual understanding of oppression of the individual by the state but our initial task was to develop an emotional awareness of what it involved. They tended to say they weren't oppressed themselves yet constantly complained about the institution they were trying to operate with.

We had a number of lengthy discussions about the political and philosophical content of the text, concentrating on the argument between de Sade and Marat and, but I soon realised it wasn't getting us anywhere. It was still too remote. So we went straight into the working of the play, instituting methods of work which would actually demonstrate how oppression occurs within a society.

The first objective was to release the actors from self-imposed oppression. Initially they were given a great deal of permission to work in any way they liked. As they set about learning the play their judgemental "parents" within themselves, by breaking the environment in which they wouldn't be scared of making fools of themselves. This environment became the asylum, in fact, and the creative personages the students discovered became the inmates. So right away we were working within the actual structure of the play. (The full title explains it: The Persecution and Assassination of Marat Performed by the Inmates of Charenton Under the Direction of the Marquis De Sade.)

When we were developing the asylum personae each individual claimed a part of themselves they hadn't previously recognised - their agression, perhaps, or intolerance or love. And they accepted it fully. This made them extremely vulnerable within the group. But through that process they also learned to take responsibility for their own feelings and attitudes - something some people never do all through life.

Once the inmates were fully developed as distinctive, unique characters, de Sade himself (an inmate too) invited each of them to take part in his play and perform particular roles. As the director I too had to become an effective force within the asylum and operate as an inductor or guide who recognised that the inmates lived. That way I could keep the rehearsals going at a steady rate and stop them if things weren't working effectively.

After initial exercises we'd start each rehearsal with the "drumming in" - a process by which we would simulate the forty-five performers would "clear" themselves and adopt their inmate personae. As they set about learning the play their asylum characters would become stronger and more defined.

How successful was that in practice? Given the very limited theatrical experience most of the cast had, to what degree were they in fact able to exert that artistic control?

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It wasn't. In this way of working the actors reach an altered state of consciousness and in this state create a character mask. If they have acquired vocal/physical skills the mask is then fed these resources. If not the students are still able to create living characters but their direction and projection suffers.

How did you feel about that?
Helen van der Poorten

A View of the English Stage by Kenneth Tynan, Paladin Paperback, U.K. 1976

Recommended Retail Price: $5.40

In a review of Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf, Kenneth Tynan remarks upon the dangers of blasphemy in reviewing popular Broadway plays, then proceeds to blaspheme. It is characteristic of his intelligent subjective criticism that he should insist on his right to do so, and as a result this book should at least provide a good nostalgic time for all.

It is a collection of reviews and articles written by Tynan between 1944 and 1964, by which time he had become Literary Director of the National Theatre. A View of the English Stage is made up of articles from three previous volumes and provides as comprehensive a view of post-war English theatre as Shaw had done for the 1890's. The title indicates that Tynan, like his intellectual hero Shaw, asserts the right to make negative and committed judgements. And indeed it becomes clear that commitment is the keynote of his writing, as he looks for it in the work of his favourite playwrights and directors.

He is helped by his conciseness, which enables him to dismiss Guthrie as an "inspired puppet-master" and introduce Godot to the public in two pages. A further asset is obviously Tynan's gift for the acid word, as he expresses his fear of becoming a critical "necroligist" or describes Donald Woff's Richard III as "a visionary Sweeney Todd". But it would be wrong to think of Tynan's writing as merely negative, and I was constantly delighted by the breadth of his theatrical taste, as he moved with ease from Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf to My Fair Lady.

The most striking throughout is Kenneth Tynan's concern that modern playwrights should exhibit some kind of commitment to social change hence the prominence of Ibsen and Shaw in all of his criticism. This more-than-theatrical social concern is shown up in Tynan's critical phraseology, in which he links theatre tactically with politics. Thus he can support Beckett by terming himself a "Godotista", and he can complain that Terence Rattigan is "the Formosa of the contemporary theatre - occupied by the old guard, but geographically inclined towards the progressives."

As his article "The Lost Art of Bad Drama" shows, Tynan deplores the justified contempt in which intellectuals held English theatre in the early 50's and he turns to the Continent as the alternative to "British backwardness". It is with some embarrassment that he tells of the French girl who complained to him in 1954 that Paris offered nothing in the theatre "apart from Sartre, Anouilh, Claudel, Beckett and Salacrou". But Tynan's objection that Joan Littlewood is merely catching up with the rest of the world with The Hostage is later answered, as he firmly takes the side of Osborne and Wesker in their dramatic development.

To me the most memorable article is his influential attack upon censorship under the title "The Royal Smut-Hound". It is amusing, of course, as we read how the Lord Chamberlain preferred "the testicles of the Medici" to "the balls of the Medici", but these examples do not disguise Tynan's undoubted concern that the preservation of the censor emasculated British playwrights in a crucial and formative period. Kenneth Tynan's role in helping new English playwrights and in attacking destructive theatrical institutions is proof that good criticism need not be just academically objective.

Crossfire, by Jennifer Compton ed. Meaghan Morris, Curreny-Methuen Drama Ltd., 1976

Recommended Retail Price: $3.00

Commitment to socially meaningful theatre is quite different from presenting drama as sociology. It is my fear that some of Currency-Methuen's "Documentary Specials" may err in this direction as the editors attempt to reach a non-theatrical audience. Their edition of Jennifer Compton's Crossfire confirms some of these fears. The play, better-known to Sydney audiences by its earlier title No Man's Land, depicts women against women in the crossfire of emancipated thinking, and Currency have used this prize-winning drama as the basis for a publication on "The role of women in Australian Society, with historical comment on women's suffrage, status, and the politics of motherhood."

Now to some extent the cross-period setting of the play (the set represents simultaneously action in 1910 and 1975) justifies Meaghan Morris' historical introduction, but there are ways in which the links are tenuous. Jennifer Compton's play shows us the dilemma of several women trapped in the no-man's land between intellectual commitment and instinct. It is unfortunate that Cilla, the character with the most room for dynamic development, is so dominated theatrically by the apparently more vulnerable 1910 Jane and 1975 Mim. We are invited to see the middle-class feminist Cilla as somewhat "weird", but all we see in fact is her confusion, and she comes off the worse in most encounters with women and men.

But ultimately it is the gear-shifting and seeming inconsistency in this play which make it fascinating, as characters from the past almost meet their present-day sisters, and as they move from slick feminist jargon through sophisticated chit-chat to invasive messages make for several fine female roles.

But I must say frankly that I found the introductory article "Who'll Mind the Babies?" so revealing that I wanted more of that and less drama. The satirical illustrations from early women's magazines match the stories of the political in-fighting which led to the female franchise in Australia, and the analysis of simplistic Darwinism which was thought to justify large families is fascinating. But the article finishes with a proof that early Australian feminists espoused the "ideology of motherhood", and leads to a different kind of consideration from that of Jennifer Compton. The reading - list on women in Australia does not satisfy one curiosity, and the article on "The Play in the Theatre" is pallid, vague, and unadventurous in comparison with the historical section. It is symptomatic of the problem with documentary specials that the theatrical section seems out of place, and it is unfortunate that Miss Compton's lively "antipropaganda" play seems out of place too.

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Page 56 Theatre-Australia Nov-Dec, 1976
DANCE OF DEATH?

William Shoubridge

Over the past year, there have been so many upheavals in various ballet and dance companies throughout Australia that one wonders, when the dust finally settles, whether things will ever be the same again.

Late in 1975, the Adelaide based Australian Dance Theatre was disbanded and its dancers thrown into limbo.

Now British choreographer Jonathon Taylor has come out to reestablish it with a small company of eight dancers. Just what form it will take is still open to conjecture, but it would be safe to predict that with Taylor’s history as a performer and choreographer with Ballet Rambert, it will be based on modern dance rather than classical ballet.

Jaap Flier who earlier resigned from co-Artistic Directorship of the Australian Dance Theatre has resigned from the Dance Company (N.S.W.) and returned to Holland.

The Artistic Director of that group is now home grown choreographer Graeme Murphy.

Anne Williams took over as Artistic Director of the Australian Ballet just as the regime of Sir Robert Helpman was drawing to a close with performances of The Merry Widow in London.

Now, almost recently, on the same day that the findings of the I.A.C. were announced, it was found that Ballet Victoria had been put into receivership and the company itself closed down.

This happened, ironically just on the thirteenth anniversary of the company’s foundation, the Victorian Ballet Guild.

Money has since been found by the Victorian Government to keep classes for students going until the end of the year so that they can take their exams, thus avoiding the waste of a whole year’s study, but it means that dancers, musicians and administrative staff are without work and therefore without income.

As was noted by Garth Welch, artistic director of the company, most of the dancers will go overseas to look for work.

But, considering the renewal of A.D.T. and the auditions for new dancers for the Dance Company, there will be a few opportunities for dancers to join these companies.

The Victorian Ballet was an extremely well drilled, technically proficient body of dancers. They were always trying to extend both their range and the appreciation of their audiences towards a greater understanding of the many threads within the term, “dance”.

Even as the closing of the company was announced, they were embarking on a tour of Victorian schools, taking a production of Peter and the Wolf to approximately thirty thousand schoolchildren.

Garth Welch has since said that he will attempt to start up another company.

Whether the Victorian Government and the approached business firms will have enough faith in him to fund the venture has yet to be seen.

The question is, how did the Company manage to lose so much money?

Well aside from the fact that (as the I.A.C. gleefully informs us) ballet, opera and theatre are always losing money on a strictly output/income basis, Ballet Victoria was always touring extensively throughout the nation. Because they weren’t widely known, audiences tended to ignore them and so they felt that in order to attract audiences they needed to import overseas “stars”.

It was an enormous coup for them to obtain the services of those two, recently defected superstars Natalia Markarova and Mikhail Marishnikov for last year’s tour of Giselle Act I. It was even more of a coup to get Galina and
Valery Panov to tour with them in a full scale production of Fokine's *Petrushka*.

Ballet Victoria hoped, with this production, to make up their losses which had mounted to almost $500,000; instead they ended up with a loss somewhere in the region of $300,000.

Why was the Panov tour such a financial fiasco (while still being an artistic triumph)?

Well, things become a little clearer when the initial cost of the venture is considered.

In the first place they had to buy the services of the Panovs and fly them out here, that cost money.

In mounting the production, they were helped no end by repetiteur Serge Golovine, who has had a long association with *Petrushka*, having learned some of the details from Bronislava Nijinsky, sister of the first ever performer in the title role, Vaslav Nijinsky. You can’t buy the services of someone like Golovine for tuppence.

The set itself, and the costumes were exact replicas of what Benois had designed for Diaghilev's *Ballet Russes* back in 1911, one can imagine the cost of researching the designs and reconstructing them.

In the case of Benois's set, two copies had to be made. While the company was performing in one city, in one set, another was being freighted to the next city, so tight was the schedule.

In every city the company performed in, extras had to be hired for the crowd scenes, that cost money. Principals, dancers and orchestra had to be flown from one city to the next. Cities included in the itinerary were Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Newcastle, Canberra, Adelaide, Hobart, Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch!

As if this wasn’t enough, publicity costs must have been enormous. Admittedly the public had to know that *Petrushka* was being performed, that it was a masterpiece of dance theatre and that the Panovs were touring in it etc. etc., because quite simply Australia had never seen this ballet before and the majority of audiences wouldn’t have had a clue what it was about.

Still and all, every paper in the country carried huge advertisements of the production for almost two months before the tour began.

In the week before the opening of the tour, there was a four full page supplement in *The Australian* about the company and the ballet itself that reportedly cost about $13,000.

Personally, I think a lot of the money that went into this grandiose, saturation point advertising would have been more constructively used in the production itself, especially in engaging an orchestra that could at least play together and obtaining more rehearsal time for the company in each capital city!

Still, one can’t cry over spilt milk. The company worked hard and with dedicated enthusiasm but that enthusiasm apparently wasn’t shared by the audiences.

The whole tour was a brave, audacious attempt, but one can’t help feeling that it was a little stupid as well. The Australian Ballet would never tackle it, even with their larger resources, and Michael Edgley’s attractions have always played safe using a company like the Bolshoi, a performer like Nureyev or a ballet like the *Sleeping Beauty* to get the audiences in.

It remains to be seen whether the Ballet Victoria will rise phoenix like out of its ashes. It will need some philanthropic business house to take them out of receivership and pay their debts and perhaps a special Australia Council grant to get them back on their feet.

In these penny pinching times, that prospect recedes further into the distance as the days go by.

In the meantime, Garth Welch, the administrative staff and the dancers are without an income and those students, once they have finished their exams at the end of this year, face a very dismal future indeed.
LONG SHADOW OF G & S

David Gyger

The Gilbert and Sullivan operettas cast a far longer shadow over the English-speaking world, perhaps, than their intrinsic merit justifies; but it is easy to see why. Scarcely a schoolboy or schoolgirl in Britain, Australia or America can have escaped exposure, however unwilling, to an amateur production no matter how unsophisticated; so returning to G&S in later life has something of the flavor of renewing an acquaintance with an old friend.

Even if many of the lyrics and much of the dialogue sound archaic to modern ears, and absurdity that is common to all societies, is so much built-in send-up of the pretence and simulacrum of the real world, we must make do with what G&S is all about.

The Gilbert and Sullivan Society presented a semi-staged production of The Sorcerer; on a six-week G&S season, rang up the same curtain. Graham Tier's Don Alhambra and Shirley Williams' Duchess of Plaza-Toro also deserve special mention. The G&S Society's semi-staged production of The Sorcerer comprised the second half of a program whose other half is best forgotten, despite some good singing, for its abysmal presentation. In his production of The Sorcerer, Brian Phillips more than atoned for such sins through the admirable use he made of the subterranean recording hall at the Opera House. Using piano accompaniment, only a bare minimum of props, and capitalising on the inbuilt theatricality of the hall through ingenuity in lighting and deployment of some of the action on the promenades which surround the hall, he proved once again that effective opera, like any other effective theatre, need not necessarily depend on lavish sets and decor.

In the live theatre, the dichotomy is just as easy to experience, though not always so clearly spelt out as it has been in Sydney in the past few weeks. On the one hand, the Australian Opera, less than a single week after ringing down the curtain on an arduous four and a half month season of legitimate opera at the Sydney Opera House, rang up the same curtain on a six-week G&S season; on another, the Gilbert and Sullivan Society presented The Gondoliers in an unsophisticated inner-city hall.

This Gondoliers was a bit above fair-average quality adult amateur G&S, seldom either exquisitely bad or spine-tingling good. It was particularly interesting, as such productions are inclined to be, for the presence of a talented young patter song exponent in the person of Neil Litchfield, whose Duke of Plaza-Toro was very well sung, if not quite up to speed, and promisingly acted. Conductor Kenneth Webber got some nice sounds out of a small but competent orchestra, despite the surfeit of compulsive gabbler in the audience (why, once one forsakes the hallowed precincts of the Opera House, do audiences feel no guilt whatever about arriving late and chattering gaily through overtures, dialogue, and even heart-felt lyrics?); Graham Tier's Don Alhambra and Shirley Williams' Duchess of Plaza-Toro also deserve special mention.

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The usual G&S Society principals were out in force, doing everything the traditional way, with the odd updating of text that is de rigueur: not sending musically sensitive eardrums into ecstasies but getting the message across with
immense good humor. Robert Hatherley was a fine Sorcerer, Mary Blake in her usual formidable form as the dragon lady, John Wirth - Linguist and Roslyn Dansie in fine form as the romantic leads; Damon and Patrick Donnelly and Betty Morison very good in supposing roles. All that was missing for the ideal in G&S was ... beautiful singing.

Which brings us back to the A.O.'s G&S season topside at the Opera House, where H.M.S. Pinafore was launched under Joern Utson’s billowing concrete sails on Friday, October 15, and just about foundered before her voyage had even got properly under way. "Gilbert and Sullivan with the professionals!” trumpeted the A.O.'s pre-season brochure in large magenta letters even down to the exclamation point; but it was quite clear on opening night that the lead from Janacek and Mozart, which the company had been performing on the same stage just five days earlier, to the quarterdeck of a British frigate was simply too much for the company to accommodate in less than a week.

Even the thoroughly polished performance of Dennis Olsen as Sir Joseph Porter, K.C.B., could not rescue the evening from dangerous flirtation with boredom. Nor were the purely musical compensations all they ought to have been - stage and pit were too often at odds with each other, too much of the solo singing below par, too much of the chorus work downright lachderasical.

By the Pinafore matinee little more than a week later, things had improved enormously - everything was tighter musically, and most of the principals had added life and conviction to their spoken and spoken dialogue alike. Nowhere was the improvement more striking than in the performance of June Bronhill as Josephine even as seasoned a professional as she (though admittedly she was making her G&S debut) had not grasped the subtleties of the art form by opening; by the matinee, she was sparkling in her dialogue, singing beautifully, and had mastered the G&S acting style as though she had been doing it all her life.

Rosina Raisbeck's Buttercup was fuller of voice and mock high drama as required. Anson Austin's guilelessness, as the romantic lead, was as impressive as the Lord Chancellor as he was fully become the frustrated, not-too-bright hero, had matured; John Pringle's captain had Anson Austin's guilelessness, as the romantic lead, was as impressive as the Lord Chancellor as he was fully become the frustrated, not-too-bright hero, had matured; John Pringle's captain had also lacking polish and life at opening; but by the matinee, she was sparking in her dialogue, singing beautifully, and had mastered the G&S acting style as though she had been doing it all her life.

Sister Angelica photo: George Hofsteter

Australian Opera even if just fleetingly, now and then, one does get the feeling he is having to force himself to forget this is the ten thousandth time he has performed this particular trick, and remember that everything must seem absolutely spontaneous.

Sydney's one new legitimate opera program of recent weeks was a student production of two-thirds of Puccini's Trrittico at the Conservatorium of Music. Unfortunately, Il Tabarro was omitted and not Sister Angelica, which is generally conceded to be the weakest - not to mention the soupiest of the three operas, which is generally conceded to be the weakest - not to mention the soupiest of the three operas, which is generally conceded to be the weakest - not to mention the soupiest of the three operas, which is generally conceded to be the weakest - not to mention the soupiest of the three operas, which is generally conceded to be the weakest - not to mention the soupiest of the three operas, which is generally conceded to be the weakest - not to mention the soupiest of the three operas, which is generally conceded to be the weakest - not to mention the soupiest of the three operas, which is generally conceded to be the weakest - not to mention the soupiest of the three operas, which is generally conceded to be the weakest - not to mention the soupiest of the three operas, which is generally conceded to be the weakest - not to mention the soupiest of the three operas, which is generally conceded to be the weakest - not to mention the soupiest of the three operas, which is generally conceded to be the weakest - not to mention the soupiest of the three operas, which is generally conceded to be the weakest - not to mention the soupiest of the three operas, which is generally conceded to be the weakest. The ensemble singing and acting was very good; but almost without exception the female cast of its usually all-female cast.

Justin Macdonell's production and Pierre St. Just's set design did most of what could be done with the piece within its own constraints and those imposed by the limited stage facilities available, and the difficult apportionment of the stage area. The ensemble singing and acting was very good; but almost without exception the girls seemed to suffer from acute stage fright when they had to sing on their own. Even Heather Sneddon, in the title role, suffered from this problem, though she sang well when she could be heard; only Sandra Hahn, as the Princess, was not guilty on this count - for that reason hers was far and away the outstanding performance of the opera.

The Gianni Schicchi which completed the program was another matter altogether. The students took to this miniature gem of a comic opera, which ranks among the very best of vintage Puccini, like ducks to water. Their ensemble work was excellent; no doubt aided considerably by Ronal Jackson's direction and an even more successful set from St. Just; and there were several fine individual performances, led by Roger Howell's confident Schicchi, which seemed to inspire a good deal of confidence in his colleagues.

Angela Denning was an attractive Lauraetta and Mario Alfacci (Rinuccio) displayed a good presence and what could develop into an outstanding tenor voice, though his major solo vocal opportunity went to waste when a disturbance in the audience obviously distracted him during the orchestral introduction.

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MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY

THEATRE-AustraHa

H.M.S. Pinafore was launched under Joern Utson's billowing concrete sails on Friday, October 15; and just about foundered before her voyage had even got properly under way. "Gilbert and Sullivan with the professionals!” trumpeted the A.O.'s pre-season brochure in large magenta letters even down to the exclamation point; but it was quite clear on opening night that the lead from Janacek and Mozart, which the company had been performing on the same stage just five days earlier, to the quarterdeck of a British frigate was simply too much for the company to accommodate in less than a week.

Even the thoroughly polished performance of Dennis Olsen as Sir Joseph Porter, K.C.B., could not rescue the evening from dangerous flirtation with boredom. Nor were the purely musical compensations all they ought to have been - stage and pit were too often at odds with each other, too much of the solo singing below par, too much of the chorus work downright lachderasical.

By the Pinafore matinee little more than a week later, things had improved enormously - everything was tighter musically, and most of the principals had added life and conviction to their spoken and spoken dialogue alike. Nowhere was the improvement more striking than in the performance of June Bronhill as Josephine even as seasoned a professional as she (though admittedly she was making her G&S debut) had not grasped the subtleties of the art form by opening; by the matinee, she was sparkling in her dialogue, singing beautifully, and had mastered the G&S acting style as though she had been doing it all her life.

Rosina Raisbeck's Buttercup was fuller of voice and mock high drama as required. Anson Austin's guilelessness, as the romantic lead, was as impressive as the Lord Chancellor as he was fully become the frustrated, not-too-bright hero, had matured; John Pringle's captain had also lacking polish and life at opening; but by the matinee, she was sparking in her dialogue, singing beautifully, and had mastered the G&S acting style as though she had been doing it all her life.

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