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Theatre Australia

Comprehensive Review Section including film, ballet, opera, records, books.
National Guide.

Spotlight: Kate Fitzpatrick
Twelfth Night Saga
Cocteau and Poppy
Irishman and Last Wave
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Does theatre constantly need revitalising from the bottom up? The Old Tote looks close to being saved, but not without being revamped to some extent in the process. No one can doubt that the crown of artistic pre-eminence long since passed to Nimrod, though Nimrod itself is now at a stage where its policies and ideals must be developed or move to bigger things if others are not to steal a march on it with a more vital form. "Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown."

The national and international compass of the company in March (playing five states and London) and the increasing rumours that John Bell is to move to the larger kingdoms of the state company, testifies the degree to which such thinking has already gone. Nimrod, particularly since Paul Hes became "chancellor" has ambitiously broadened its base, but seems to be tending more to commercialism than the artistic vanguard.

The APG has followed a comparable path, going over, to some extent, to a clever but facile theatricalism, and moving into film and records to such an extent that it will soon have to be called the APG Group of Companies. The more outer plays are being mounted by Hoopla, supposedly in the middle ground between the APG's (denied) radical image and the MTC's (unconfessed) conservatism. Victoria's new premier has by no means yet won the crown — and indeed may lose its head in the attempt — but returned to England to publish even bitterer invective against Australia: "I now know there is a hell on earth" he is reported as saying. Possibly such a splendid display didn't do any harm, in at least thursting the Conference before the public gaze, but it is unlikely that an overseas "name" will be coming this year.

In the past there has been some confusion in the desire of this national meeting ground to be all things to all men. This year the Conference is to be split into two distinct, but not wholly separate sections, the play workshops for the first ten days and a theatre forum for the last four.

For the first two thirds, then, the new plays are the thing, with all seminars and discussion focussed solely upon the new playwrights. The six who are chosen (out of the hundred and fifty applicants) are served by a pool of twenty actors, three directors, three dramaturgs and this year for the first time a resident designer, Kristian Frederikson, to advise on staging the plays.

When indigenous plays take a significant place in theatre repertoires this aspect alone more than justifies the event. But it is not intended to be a play supermarket where producers can buy pre-cooked fare, though it can't avoid being that to a degree. The guiding principle is the nurturing of playwrights and the bringing of expert analysis, using practical and theoretical means, to their work.

A unique melting ground for professional and greenhorn alike, participants and observers, in a levelling, informal atmosphere in the national capital deserves more support. Federal money has been increased (this year its $12,000), but still thinking seems to be blinkered towards the flower and not the seed — though this year's seeds are next year's crop. A year's preparation leading to a fortnight's intensive work involving nearly three hundred people — some of whom are sponsored by the Conference itself — makes a bill of roughly $29,000. This is less than the cost of one middling professional production; it deserves more support from state and federal bodies, and hopefully from the private sector too.
The new company will open at the Paris Theatre on 15th June with a season of Pandora’s Cross, a musical play by Dorothy Hewett. As a mark of their enthusiasm and support for the project the Company will forgo wages during the four week rehearsal period. They will work for a minimum wage during the season and will share the responsibility for running the company as well as any profits from the season.

The Company is totally independent and will rely on donations for initial finance. With $12,500 already in hand, the same amount again will be needed to launch the first production.

Seat prices will be kept as low as possible — $5 and $7.50 — as part of a concern to make theatre going more accessible.

The Paris Company plan to make the Paris Theatre a centre for various activities, rock concerts of new wave music will continue on Saturday nights and that will be extended to premieres of new contemporary music work in conjunction with the Australian Music Centre. Further plans are for the creation of late night cabarets.

Major productions will be Rex Cramphorn’s staging of Louis Nowra’s Visions, a black comedy set in the palaces of Lima, Patrick White’s A Cheery Soul, for which the company will be joined by Ruth Cracknell as Miss Docker, and a Christmas pantomime devised by Norman Gunston writer Bill Harding.

Foundation members of the company are Jennifer Claire, Arthur Dignam, Robyn Nevin, John Gaden, Kate Fitzpatrick, Neil Redfern and Julie McGregor. Artistic Directors are Rex Cramphorn and Jim Sharman with Brian Thomson designing sets, Luciana Arrighi, costumes and David Reid lighting.

The aims of the Paris Theatre Company are to tell the story of our times; to give the tellers the responsibility for the way it is told; and to make the story worth the price of a ticket.”

NOW IN THE FOREFRONT

ANTHONY STEELE, ex Artistic Director of the Adelaide Festival of the Arts: “Now that the Adelaide Festival Centre’s three auditoria work at the rate of around a thousand performances a year, there has been every reason and opportunity to widen the scope of the programme of the Adelaide Festival of the Arts, making it a biennial high peak of activity in the city and taking advantage of the largely captive audience to attempt to broaden the taste and experience of the public by programming unusual repertoire which is relevant to the times in which we live.

The opinion seems to be fairly widely held (ie not just by myself!) that, of the world’s festivals which attempt to cover all aspects of the performing arts, Adelaide’s is now in the forefront. This year’s Festival will probably, like the previous two, break even financially — taking into account of course all subsidies received, both from the public and private sector.

Where the Festival goes from here is not for me to say, but will be the responsibility for the new artistic director. I hope profoundly that the Board of Governors will allow him the free rein which I have insisted upon and will not try to dilute or emasculate the content of the programme.”

SPONSOR NEEDED

JOAN BLAIR, Moomba Festival: “Without the help of a sponsor there’s not much hope for us. This year the State Bank has sponsored us, and it has indicated that it might help us in the future, but it’s not something we can be certain of at this stage. We certainly don’t break even on sales of tickets, but provided we can get a backer we will certainly be continuing.

It’s more than likely that we will be able to use St Martin’s Theatre on a regular basis. It has just been taken over by the State Government and is being operated by an interim committee; they have to make a report to Mr Hamer in three months time on whether it is viable. They would like to make it into a complete arts complex and have already opened St Martins Youth Arts Centre.

This year the Festival of Theatre had nine amateur groups taking part from all round Victoria. They compete for the best production, runner up, actor, actress, director and a twelve month scholarship. We opened with the Mess Hall Players’ production at Pentridge jail and they tried for runner up. The President was allowed to come and collect the prize. We don’t get a huge audience, but we’re probably about at our limit now. We keep on advertising, and being in St Martin’s is definitely a help. The Festival was great this year, with production standards very high and the organisation going very smoothly. It can only get better.

Moomba is often criticised for the low cultural level it has, but it is a festival for the people, and I think it supplies the level of culture that is demanded.”

DRAMA THE PROBLEM AREA

JOAN AMBROSE, Perth Festival: “It is generally agreed that the 1978 Perth Festival
was a good one. It had an excellent and highly acclaimed music programme, the response to the films, the street theatre and the art exhibitions were gratifying.

It was a marathon. There were 370 events in a month, but despite the very hot summer Western Australia has suffered this year, the public supported the Festival with enthusiasm. David Blenkinsop, the Director, has reason to be pleased. It is the second Festival he has organised and his programme has proved itself.

But, the problem area this year, again proved to be Drama. Last year the Festival suffered a fiasco in the Old Tote Theatre's presentation of O'Casey's The Plough and the Stars. The opinion was then that local productions were good, and the public might be wary of paying high prices for imported theatre.

However, the pre-bookings for the Chichester Company's Othello were excellent. But the end result was a dissatisfied and disgruntled audience. There were two difficulties. The venue chosen was the Concert Hall, because its seating capacity is 1,200 patrons. This number of seats were needed to cover costs, but without amplification much of the audience couldn't hear. In addition the production of the play was small-scale, and the fine gesture and nuance was lost beyond about the sixth row. So once again, an imported company drew the press and public's fire.

Until Perth has a suitable theatre, importing the classics with big casts and backstage crew will be a problem. But David Blenkinsop is quite determined that Perth shall continue to have the chance to see International Drama companies.

It is too soon to say what will be done in 1979. However plans and some decisions have already been made. A focus will be the 150th centenary celebrations in Western Australia. And the Festival will most certainly be participating in that.

To make it a really good year, let us hope that the problems David Blenkinsop has had with Drama will be solved and theatre will be a successful as the rest of his Festival programme.

A GROWING INFLUENCE

DAVID BURWOOD: For an event approaching its third year, the Festival of Sydney is shaping up to be a significant stimulus to the theatre arts. With festivals behind that hosted a range of attractions that included hundreds of free performances to the Sydney International Theatre Arts Forum, festival planners are poised to outline year three's month-long programme of opera, dance, mime, puppetry, street theatre and drama. Drawing on 1978's successful formula that emphasised variety and accessibility, the programme promises to expose even more Sydneysiders and visitors to what the city has to offer theatrically, be they regular theatre goers or that large section of the population whose contact with the theatre is minimal or non-existent.

Thus on the drawing board are plans to encourage quality special productions in established venues by well known local and interstate companies, exploratory discussions with the other major festivals in the country to share overseas companies visiting Australia and a programme of free or assisted theatre in places that range from city parks and squares to pub courtyards and established theatres.

Building on the base laid firmly in year two will be those companies aiming productions specifically at young and family audiences seeking good entertainment in the long summer holiday. Nimrod's outstandingly successful presentation of Treasure Island mounted on an island in Sydney Harbour is the most innovative and imaginative example. The production was seen by 11,000 people, 70% of whom were children, in a season that had a 98% attendance. Other family attractions included pantomimes of the traditional variety, such as Peter Williams's production of Cinderella and the less traditional approach of the Producers Actors Composers Talent Cooperative with their Do It Yourself Pantomime.

At a more adult level, Nimrod premiers Rock-ola; Hilton Bonner's Godspell ran at the recently re-opened Mayfair Theatre Workshop under the direction of Geoffrey Brown presented Satyricon; the old Tote mounted The Tempest as their special festival attraction and the Australian Opera participated with their presentation of The Plough and the Stars.

The success of the village concept points to its continuance and development in year three. The Festival is working to co-operate with the International Puppetry Festival in Tasmania next January to bring to Sydney the best in interstate and overseas guest artists. Also featured will be those theatrical groups from around the country that are the leaders in their field be it theatre in education, street theatre or youth drama. Dance too will once again feature as a highlight; year two saw an addition to the programme with the inclusion of a Dance Week featuring five different companies whose styles ranged from the New Dance influence of the Melbourne based Dance Exchange to Sydney's One Extra Dance Group and The Dance Company (NSW).

The second Festival also saw the second Sydney International Theatre Arts Forum, this year featuring overseas guests Tim Rice, Wendy Toye, Norman Newell, Richard Toeman and Stephen Oliver. The theme of the forum was Creativity in the Musical, Opera and Operetta. All participants, from interstate, the country and Sydney itself, commented on the need to keep this internationally unique event ongoing, though attendances need to be built for future forums.

The Festival of Sydney is still young. But the progress to date is encouraging: more and more theatre companies are gearing themselves to January's festival month and festival planners themselves are seeking the best from Australia's theatre for the programme.

It will not be long before the month long festival is recognised as a major stimulus to the local theatre scene and increasingly a catalyst with longer term implications for productions from interstate and overseas: and that's good news for everyone involved in theatre.

GLORIA WAS A LADY

BILL ORR, Director, Manly Music Loft:
"Over the years one has heard many actresses referred to as the first lady of the theatre and one has thought to oneself, of the theatre, yea, lady — never. Not so with Gloria Dawn; she was first and foremost a lady. During the last seventeen years I produced her in six shows and never once in that time did I hear her lose her temper or use foul language. Not that these things alone make a lady, it was Gloria's whole style of life that set you take your choice. In the future, wherever there are people of the theatre, it will be argued just what was she best in? Annie Get Your Gun, A Cup of Tea, A Bex and a Good Lie Down, Gypsy, A Hard God... you take your choice. I think the role she was most proud of was that of a mother of four wonderful children. They and we will miss her. She was a lady."
Ray Stanley's

WHISPERS RUMOURS & FACTS

In all the publicity for Mike Walsh's Hayden Price Productions, it seems to have gone unnoticed that associated with the new company's presentations will be Malcolm C. Cooke and Associates. Malcolm, who worked for Kenn Brodziak's Aztec Services for many years, is highly knowledgeable about show business, and undoubtedly it will be he negotiating the theatrical attractions ...

Noticing a more aggressive approach by the board.

Learn that companies and private individuals are now members of the board. Lovejoy and Leonard Teale are now members of the board.

Speaking of the Trust, only recently did I learn that companies and private individuals giving it donations get a tax rebate on these. And they can specify that such monies go into a particular company or venture. Seems like a good scheme to me, especially if the donors get publicity out of it ... After his success with the Chichester Festival Theatre Company, Robert Sturgess intends bringing Yehudi Menuhin back for another tour ... The success of Shaw's The Apple Cart, makes me recall that some years back John Tasker was toying with the idea of staging the play and had worked out what seemed like perfect casting at the time. Can't remember all the names, but I do know Robert Helpmann was to be Magnus, Bettina Welch Orintthia and Don Lane the American ambassador.

For about the first time, boos were heard at the first night of a Melbourne Theatre Company production — Massakar Reef. And obviously those boos weren't for the first rate cast and direction. But at least one person in the audience enjoyed all the Casablanca send-up mumbo-jumbo up on stage; as usual playwright Buzo was in the audience laughing heartily at his own work ... John Diedrich indicates everything is fitting nicely into place for he, Caroline Gilmour and John O'May to go to London with The Twenties and All That Jazz ... Gordon Chater, enjoying the success so richly deserves in London with The Elocution of Benjamin Franklin, writes me that he has "had a fan letter from a twenty six year old Chinese boy, saying how much he would like to take elocution lessons on my knee!"

So it seems that American Carole Cook will be returning here to tour in the play Father's Day. She will be remembered for appearing (and sometimes not appearing when in Sydney!) in the title role of Hello Dolly. Wonder who her understudy will be ... When that wonderful Kabuki troupe was in Melbourne, I understand representatives of it went along to inspect the Palais Theatre. Seems they might be returning around 1980-81 and already are looking for venues ... Could be Sandy Gore will be seen in Adelaide and Sydney this year now that she's free-lancing.

Susan Penhaligon, who was so outstanding in the TV serial Bouquet of Barbed Wire, and has been starring in the yet-to-be seen Australian picture Patrick, couldn't wait to get back here to promote her film Leopard in the Snow. Susan told me she loves Australia so much she would really like to tour in a play sometime. In England she is going to play Vivie in a production of Shaw's Mrs Warren's Profession, in which Dora Bryan will be playing Mrs Warren ... English director Frank Hauser, out here to direct The Beau Stratagem and Electra for the MTC, confesses to being a canasta freak. He's urgently trying to contact people with like interests.

Were there any productions or celebrations anywhere in Australia to mark the birth 150 years ago on March 20 of Henrik Ibsen? If so, I didn't hear of them!

So that rich musical voice of the multi-talented Michael MacLiammoir is silent. Who can forget the impact he made on audiences here in 1964 when he toured with his one-man show, The Importance of Being Oscar. I was associated with him when he played in Melbourne, and have never ceased to remember the wonderful theatre anecdotes he used to relate at the least provocation. Many are unprintable — even today — but he was full of tales of how he had acted as a boy with the eccentric Herbert Beerbohm Tree, playing Oliver to Tree's Fagin, and of meeting Mrs Patrick Campbell in the wings as she was about to go on stage as Lady Macbeth, and how she had whipped a banana from her bosom, bidding him to give it to his 'poor starved little sister'. Fortunately MacLiammoir has left us a heritage of his entertaining books and his hypnotic voice on a number of recordings, not least of all his Oscar Wilde show.

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Judy Davis
Ronald Falk
Peter Farago
Neil Fitzpatrick
John Francis

Michael Freundt
Colin Friels
Patrick Frost
Michael Fuller
John Gaden
Mel Gibson
Daphne Grey
Edwin Hodgeman
Brian James
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‘Oedipus . . . a quality rarely achieved by the other more generously funded state companies.’
Melbourne Age

The South Australian Theatre Company
South Australia’s State Company
Keith Michell

Interviewed by Ray Stanley

Keith Michell

Few people, surely, would dispute my assertion that Keith Michell is Australia's most internationally distinguished and versatile actor today, probably of all time. With what seems like remarkable ease (but is in fact plain hard work), he has achieved the very pinnacle of success: returning in great triumph to his homeland, leading a fine English company like Chichester Festival Theatre's, which he himself has helped to reach new heights in the last four years as its artistic director.

At the back of it all though he still feels Australian, as he told me in his dressing room at Melbourne's Comedy Theatre one very hot afternoon just after a matinee of The Apple Cart. But could he ever return on a permanent basis?

"I would love to work here, I really would. But, it's a question of what one is offered".

One had heard he had turned down the job of the administrator to the Adelaide Festival Trust.

"We never exactly came to any terms. I explained my situation, which is that I want to keep on working in the theatre for a few more years and acting, and I would like to do some more directing. I hadn't directed till I took over Chichester, and then I had to, and found I loved it. And I enjoyed designing — costumes and scenery — designing the whole production. This is something I find very often lacking in productions: a sort of uniformity, a concept. And I would like to develop that."

I suggested perhaps one of the national companies might work out some scheme for Michell to be a co-administrator, to be in Australia half the year, directing and acting, rather in the way Robert Helpmann did with the Australian Ballet.

Michell smiled: "That's what I've always thought to myself to be a hypothetical question... Well, nothing is impossible I suppose — and that's what's exciting about life."

I queried him as to why he had chosen to play the role of Othello on the current tour when it was Iago he had played in the original 1975 Chichester production. Earlier I had heard it was undecided which role he would play, that he might even alternate them.

"They wanted me to play Othello. I wanted to play Othello. It was a mutual thing. I was quite interested in doing both, but the management wanted me to play Othello only. I'm glad now that we didn't, because our director wasn't very well, and we just didn't have all that much time. We were playing The Apple Cart at night, and rehearsing during the day. I don't honestly think it would have worked out; it would have meant twice as much work for whoever was playing lago, and for me a hell of a lot of work, although I know the role of Iago."

When I suggested that, because of the way it is written, a reasonably good lago will always steal the play, unless it is turned inside out as with Olivier, Michell disagreed.

"I found lago much lighter work. I think people are always very surprised that Iago is such a good part. They are both such good parts, but I do prefer playing Othello. I think lago is fine, it's great fun to play — but Othello is the man who's closest to my heart. I f . J it a wonderful part, much more rewarding to me; it might not be to someone else."

"I think it has to do with the complete submersion you have to get; it's not just into another character, but into a black skin as well. And it has all that strangeness... you discover more about it every time you play it. That doesn't always happen with a part. Also the poetry — I think it's the most wonderful poetry that Shakespeare wrote for any part."

Was he intimating Othello is his favourite Shakespearean role?

Michell laughed. "Well, the character I'm playing at the moment always is. So yes, I would say yes."

"Magnus is a great relief after playing Othello, because there are eight performances of the play a week, which is pretty gruelling. I knew it would be. It may get easier as the season goes on. Magnus used to be very tiring for me. I used to have to sleep a lot of the time when I was doing that because the brain cells... it's longer than Hamlet actually. It is very very long, and very agile, mentally agile. Shaw requires cerebral energy. Othello is animal energy, you're physically tired. But with Shaw — and certainly with Magnus — it's mental energy."

The Apple Cart has proved to be one of the most successful plays staged by Chichester; it played fifty performances in its own theatre, then another hundred in the West End. It did incredibly good business and the London management was absolutely furious that it could only play a limited season because of the Australian commitment.

What classical roles would Michell still like to portray?

"I'd love to have a go at Lear, and wouldn't mind having a go at the Scottish play, and Coriolanus is something I've been asked to do several times, and would like to."

He was also asked on several occasions to play Hamlet, but only did so at the Bankside Globe in 1972, in modern dress. Strangely he has never appeared in Chekhov. And Ibsen.

"I've done Peer Gynt — well, I've sort of lived Peer Gynt. I always wanted to do Peer Gynt and never quite got down to it, but I did a radio version of it and feel I know it very well. I wouldn't mind directing Peer Gynt. At times though I find some of Ibsen a bit burdensome.

Asked about appearing in contemporary plays, without any hesitation Michell replied: "I would love to do one of the Australian plays. I'd love to appear in a David Williamson play".

Surprisingly he has not had an Australian play submitted to him, and would welcome one specially written with him in mind.

And musicals?

"I like doing musicals providing they've got a good story. La Mancha was a marvellous part and so, in a kind of way, was Robert Browning. Most leading actors would give their right eye to play Browning — and then to sing him as well!"

It was probably his role in the musical Irma La Douce which Michell has played more than any other.

Impressed with the new wave of Australian films, Michell would certainly like to appear in one and says he has been approached as to whether he would, but maintains it would have to be the right subject and role. "I only hope they don't think of me only as an English type Australian actor with my crushed up old face!"

After the Australian season he is going to take a couple of months off "just to be with the family and do some art work. It's the sort of solitary side of me which I need, to just sit down by myself. In the theatre you're dealing with people all the time. It's very important, I think, for an actor to get right away and be by himself and nourish... and of course coming back here, coming back to one's roots... I was talking to June Jago about this the other day. It's very nourishing, it's very good for one to be out here, because you sort of smell it, there's a smell in the air which you miss."

Whatever the future holds for Keith Michell, one hopes that for Australia's sake it brings him back to this country on a more permanent basis, or at least for longer periods. He is our leading actor internationally, and has much to contribute to the performing arts in this country.
Kate. She hopes that they will be able to
generate the same kind of excitement she
experienced at the Comedie Francaise. “My
character is supposed to be very sophisticated.
It’s rather difficult with all the rhyming couplets,
even though it’s been translated into a modern
idiom” Kate says. To do the role to her complete
satisfaction she would like a lot of time to devote
to its development. “I don’t particularly like big
roles really. I prefer smaller, showy ones”.

Is this because of the enormity of a lead part
or the lines to be learned?

“No, I’m just lazy. Also I’m afraid of boring
the audience when I play big parts. I’m not
awfully brave. I prefer those ones where you
come on, do a couple of dazzling things and look
terrific most of the time. All except for one scene
where you cry, wear something dreadful and then
go home. You’re never on long enough to bore
anyone”.

Kate also has an injury to her ankle which
may make rehearsals and playing rather tiring.
She is hoping that an operation will not be
necessary as she has a very busy time ahead. An
involvement with the newly formed Paris
Theatre Company in Sydney will next see her in
*Visions*; written by Louis Nowra it will be
directed by Rex Cramphorn.

Kate is also a regular on the daytime
television show *11 am*. Other appearances on
film and TV make for a busy life. Just in case
you are one of those interested in actresses’
hobbies, Kate loves reading, crosswords and
going to movies and restaurants. In between I
guess she sleeps — if she ever has the time!

### Portable Lighting Controls for the Non-Professional

**David Bird**

Interest in live theatre in Australia has
undergone a tremendous boom in the last ten
years. During this time more than fifty major
theatres have been constructed or totally
renovated. In addition, a large number of
smaller theatres have sprung up in every capital
city and many small towns.

One inevitable result of this growing interest
in the theatre has been that more and more
schools are including drama instruction in their
curriculum, and new amateur dramatic societies
are being formed every day. In some cases the
facilities available for these non-professional
activities are modern and well equipped. More
usually they are quite rudimentary, due to lack
of funds or space, or both. In no area is this more
apparent than in stage lighting.

Lighting equipment has been a speciality of
Rank Australia’s Strand Electric Division for
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Recognising the special needs of the non-
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The Model 3 Portable Dimmer is a compact,
lightweight unit made of sheet steel and housing
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3-in socket outlet is associated with each
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individually varied between zero and full
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‘power-on’ indicator light.

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an ordinary three-pin plug, thus it can be
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watts, which may be one large light or several
smaller ones connected via a multiple adaptor.
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or as the Double 3, with two units fitted into a
custom-made attache case. In its case, the
Model 3 measures 420mm x 300mm x 105mm,
and weighs 9 kg. The two units can be operated
in the case by one person — the dimmer slides of
each unit are conveniently arranged for single-
hand operation — or removed for use in
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The Model 3, which conforms to Australian
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Electricity Commission, is backed by the
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this equipment was exhibited and attracted
considerable interest at the Melbourne
conference of the National Association for
Drama in Education, earlier this year.

The price for the Double 3 in its custom case
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David Bird is National Product Manager,
Lighting & Controls of Rank Australia.
Kantor is really Insatiability is what Kantor is really personifying.

Roger Pulvers

Tadeusz Kantor, Director of Cricotz, has stunned audiences with his production of The Dead Class, brought over for the Adelaide Festival.

In the majority of the plays of Stanislaw Ignacy Witkiewicz — the playwright that is Kantor’s primal inspiration — a certain variety of stage ghost makes an appearance. This ghost is not merely a moving white sheet, but an ordinary character who visits from the metaphysical dimension.

This is precisely, I feel, what Tadeusz Kantor himself is doing inside The Dead Class (recently seen in Adelaide and Sydney). This is what he means, when he said during a two and a half hour interview (for Broadband), ‘We do not play Witkiewicz. We play with Witkiewicz’!

Most critics called him a conductor, a director-on-stage who calls the shots as they come to him every night. But this is Kantor’s theatrical prank. (Witkiewicz was, after all, a gloating prankster.) He is actually one of the actors, the super-teacher in the classroom. He is acting out his conception of Gordon Craig’s Über-marienette. His ‘directing’ of the play as it unfolds is an act. He convinces us that he is removed from the locus of action and, by doing so, appears to be a dimension removed.

Kantor has produced only two plays not directly inspired by Witkiewicz. His first, an underground presentation of Słowaicki’s Balladyna during the war years, was staged in a flat across from German Occupation offices. ‘At any moment’, he said, ‘our bodies could have been soaking in blood’.

It was at that time that Kantor the artist and sculptor decided — and he did decide these things — to shift the focus of influence on himself from Malevich and the Constructivists to the native Polish artistic tradition, especially to Wyspiański the Krakow artist, playwright and intellectual of the turn of the century. This is not only the Polish tradition; it is the Krakow tradition, a kind of romantic catastrophism, that at any moment the world may disappear or be besieged: Krakow, the great cultural and peasantry of Galicia.

The line leading to Kantor, then, starts essentially at Wyspiański. Then to Witkiewicz, whose ‘purified nonsense’ and acute senseless violence is always present. Next, Bruno Szulc, writer of genius of the thirtyies who was shot in the face by a Nazi policeman on the street for no reason at all. Mira Rychlicka, who plays the old man in the wc in The Dead Class, is Szulc’s comic father-figure. Imagine a zany Jewish dad with hair-brain schemes, a character who would be likely, say, to emerge were Kafka translating Babel.

The final influence, and one that Kantor talks little about, is Witold Gombrowicz. In fact, The Dead Class may well have been the classroom in Gombrowicz’s magnificent novel of the thirties, Ferdydurke. In Ferdydurke, some thirty-year-olds return to their childhood classroom to re-enact the practical jokes and selfish horesplay of adolescence. The bare bum, exhibited by the man who stands on his desk in The Dead Class, is the very symbol of Gombrowicz’s novel: that the bum has replaced the face as the symbol of humankind’s expression.

‘Literature is the world in the beginning’, said Kantor, ‘but the scenic action of the play is always absolutely separate. It is like two parallel roads. One is the text; the other is the action itself. In my productions these are always kept separate. Often the scenic action runs ahead of the text. When I did Witkiewicz’s The Water Hen in 1967, I didn’t introduce any part of the text until well into the piece. What is it, then, that keeps the two on track, so to speak? It is Tension. The tension that flows between the two as a charged current’.

What does Kantor mean by Tension? I believe that he means the use of visual symbols and audial clues — sometimes an object like a strange bicycle, sometimes an enigmatic word-image, a nonsense-word repeated as an incantation, or an everyday phrase from our childhood which is used as a whip on the conscience. These all act as signposts on the road of the scenic action, tying it to similar markings in the text. If the audience is familiar with the text, as a Polish audience would be, all the deeper will be their grasp. If not, the scenic action stands alone at all times as a visual and verbal presentation, the play itself. This is what makes Polish theatricality unique, the independence of the scenic action as an entity in itself. In most other countries, drama leans heavily on the written text; the play is an interpretation of a script. The good Polish production is not an interpretation of a text, but a text’s total scenic equivalent. It may be brash, but not far-fetched, to divide all theatre into Polish and non-Polish!

‘My theatre is not “professional”’, says Kantor, smirking. ‘After all, I’ve only had six premiers in my life. By the definition given out by the Ministry that dispenses the funds, that disqualifies me as a professional!’

Kantor’s work method is unusual, even for Poland. His troupe comes together rarely, only when he has a new workable idea. Rehearsals go on for months. The show is put on in a converted 14th century dungeon in Krakow. It is the peculiar atmosphere of his city that nourishes his drama, not tolerant Polish subsidisers. Had Kantor been born in Cracow Queensland (pop. 11), he would hardly have been able to survive the trip to Sydney. Our subsid schemes allow only for what Kantor calls ‘professional’ theatre.

During a long speech in The Space in Adelaide, Kantor spoke of his ideas of the early sixties. ‘And I say that the theatres are no place to present plays; and the museums and galleries no place to hang pictures’.

Everybody applauded. So did I. Then he added, ‘Of course, I don’t believe this now. I am just trying to be chronological for you’. My face turned very red. That is Kantor. The total commitment to an idea, taken by him to the limit, then dropped when he has explored it, in favor of a new dramatic concept.

His new concept is what he calls the theatre of death. He acts it out himself in The Dead Class as Witkiewicz’s ghost. Here is where he combines his own idea with Gordon Craig’s Über-marienette. Craig saw the super-puppet as the original inspiration for theatre: that actors are people who try to dress, live, and act like the puppet. Kantor sees the Original Actor as an individual who left the first commune. When everybody was part of the group there was no distinction between spectator and actor. When the single individual left the group the others watched him. He took the responsibility for his own death onto himself rather than see it ritualised by the group. ‘Not only was this the first actor’, said Kantor. ‘He was the first intellectual’.

At one moment in The Dead Class, a character screams out, ‘I feel Insatiability!’ Insatiability — Witkiewicz’s word Nienasycenie — is what Kantor is really personifying. For both Witkiewicz and Kantor, it means the human inability to understand the real question of existence; and the excruciating attempts to demonstrate this to others using the stage as a representation of the brain, inside out.
ONLY HEROES
AND HEROINES

Colin Robertson looks at the history of Brisbane’s Twelfth Night Theatre Company.

Colin Robertson is a freelance writer and Queensland theatre critic for The Australian.

On the morning of Christmas Eve 1977 the committee of Brisbane’s Twelfth Night Theatre walked on stage and (in a scene which would have been sub-titled “Confrontation” had it been an old silent movie) fired the remaining members of the production team.

Artistic Director Joan Whalley had already resigned although her resignation officially did not take effect until 31st December.

The Brisbane press quoted one of the five, Jeremy Muir-Smith, as saying the whole thing was bloody stupid, and that given the money, he could make the theatre a going concern. A view which apparently was not shared by the committee because Muir-Smith was one of the applicants for the position of artistic director. The committee eventually decided to replace this post with a freelance artistic consultant Bill Redmond from the Old Tote Theatre in Sydney.

Although the appointment of a freelance artistic consultant was unconstitutional; there was no suggestion that Muir-Smith was incompetent in his work. He had directed one of the few successes for Twelfth Night in 1977 (The Winslow Boy) and in fact everyone acknowledged the great amount of work and devotion to Twelfth Night displayed by all the sacked production team.

The fact was there was simply no money left to pay a permanent staff and given the insane and chaotic methods of funding the Australia Council money is calculated on a calendar year—something had to be done and quickly.

Rightly or wrongly the committee’s actions were not appreciated by Joan Whalley or by Twelfth Night founder and patron Rhoda Felgate who felt that the members were not kept in the picture and that scant regard was paid to the forty year old traditions of Twelfth Night by such precipitate action. Looking at the situation from the outside however it is difficult to see what else the committee could have done, especially at Christmas; the season when Australia closes down for a month or so and people are hard to contact.

At the time of writing the rift between Joan Whalley and committee president Marie Watson Blake is sadly wide and the auditions conducted by Bill Redmond after which local actors were told that the company would be using southern talent has brought sharp reaction from well known theatre people like N.I.D.A. graduate Ron Finney. Finney was quoted as saying that the original concept of Twelfth Night was that of a company which provided speech and drama training, recognised young talent, saw that talent through workshop on to the stage and promoted local acting ability. But the committee says the main aim must now be to mount some professional productions which will bring back the audiences and the subscribers and thus attract more subsidies. Then they can move back to the encouragement of local talent and more towards Twelfth Night’s original aims. Again from the outside looking in—it is easy to sympathise with both points of view, but finally it seems that young talent won’t have much use for a darkened theatre nor one which houses another restaurant and a downstairs club. The original intention was that the club and the restaurant would help provide income to service the mortgage on the half million dollar building—one of the first of its kind in Australia.

Twelfth Night Theatre Company began in 1936 and its name is not a Shakespearean allusion but a reference to the fact that their plays began on the twelfth day of the month. Rhoda Felgate ran a school of speech and drama on Wickham Terrace and with fifty members, put on plays at the old Empire Chambers then the Princess Theatre in South Brisbane. Later they rented what had been an old church and Gowrie Hall became their home. Twelfth Night has always been something of an innovator and Brisbane people will remember their being thrown out of the Albert Hall by the Methodist elders for their production of White’s Ham Funeral which contained a simulated rape scene. Strangely enough the Church eventually sold the land on condition a theatre was incorporated into the new insurance building. Thus the State Government Insurance Office acquired a theatre and it was Joan Whalley’s suggestion that the Queensland Theatre Company be formed to occupy it. Twelfth Night also did the famous Norm and Ahmed by Buzo which caused actor Norm Staines to be arrested by those well known arbiters of the public taste—the Queensland Vice Squad. This was in 1967 and when the case was thrown out of the Supreme Court a new era for freedom of speech began in theatre, not only in Queensland but all over Australia. One of Twelfth Night’s strong supporters over the issue was opposition leader Bill Hayden.

But that’s jumping the years, because it was back in 1959 that Rhoda Felgate asked Joan Whalley to take over as artistic director. Joan felt that she wasn’t ready and instead went to Sydney to lecture at N.I.D.A. The speech and drama school continued to turn out young hopefuls, Barry Creighton, Rowena Wallace, Carol Burns, Judy McGrath were some of the subsequent luminaries who emerged. Eventually Joan Whalley came back to the fold. (She still refers to the Twelfth Night founder as Miss Felgate.) Towards the end
of the sixties Brian Sweeney entered the Twelfth Night story in earnest.

Brian Sweeney is now chairman of the Australia Council Theatre Board and is a man of vast enthusiasms. You can take Sweeney lots of ways, you can like him or hate him but you can’t ignore him. Ask any restaurateur who runs out of Dom Perignon while Sweeney is thirsty and find out that he is a man who is not easily discouraged. Joan Whalley tells of the day he sat at her desk and picked up a photo of her in profile which emphasised a rather large nose. “Joan” he said “that nose has gotta go.” Give me the phone. It was ten o’clock at night but no worry to Sweeney who dialled the home number of a leading Brisbane plastic surgeon. The surgeon’s wife answered and was told abruptly by Sweeney that Joan Whalley’s nose had gotta go. Sweeney had no time for involved explanations. And go the Whalley nose. Sweeney had no time for involved explanations. And go the Whalley nose. “Joan” he said “that nose has gotta go.” Give me the phone. It was ten o’clock at night but no worry to Sweeney who dialled the home number of a leading Brisbane plastic surgeon. The surgeon’s wife answered and was told abruptly by Sweeney that Joan Whalley’s nose had gotta go. Sweeney had no time for involved explanations. And go the Whalley nose did, to be replaced by a snappy shorter version with which Joan is delighted.

Sweeney decided that what the Twelfth Night Theatre Company needed was its own complex and with his vast business contacts, his incredible generosity and goodwill he set about making the dream come true. The then Liberal Party Treasurer Gordon Chalk played fairy godfather with a loan of $250,000 and with a strong ground swell of public goodwill and private generosity the theatre opened in February, 1971. They were heady days for Twelfth Night. The Queensland Theatre Company was still in its infancy and everyone was delighted with architect Vitaly Gzell’s design. But if there were no cracks in the building there were plenty in the relationships between those responsible. From the outset Sweeney claimed that once the building was there the people would support the theatre. Joan Whalley took the opposite view that the people would say “Okay the building is up so you don’t need help any more”; it seems amazing but in dear old adolescent Brisbane that’s exactly what happened. The company had to service a half million dollar overdraft and with financial pressures mounting, Joan Whalley alienated many of her staunchest supporters. Brian Sweeney resigned from Twelfth Night Theatre committee along with several others in 1975 and although his relationship with Joan Whalley has deteriorated somewhat, he is still one of her greatest admirers and vice versa. “There ought to be a statue of Joan in every theatre in Australia” he says, “She is one of theatre’s great martyrs.”

In 1976 after not much joy with either the club or the restaurant the Government stepped in, bought back the building for a mere $180,000 and appointed the Twelfth Night Theatre Building Trust to run it. In Dallas Texas where a similar thing happened, the theatre was given back to the company at a nominal rent. The Nimrod Theatre pays no rent although no one would deny the wonderfully talented people they have at the helm or quibble at their success.

Twelfth Night was still paying large rents to the Government and Joan Whalley was dealing with dry as dust accountants who she felt did not understand. Then she had a cerebral haemorrhage. In 1977 production standards slipped to a low ebb with programmes printed on roneoed sheets and the stage sometimes unswept. Defeat lurked round Twelfth Night like Hamlet’s ghost.

Which brings us to the present. Joan Whalley has recovered, but is bitter about the way things have gone in the last few months. The Building Trust is trying to interest the Queensland Government and particularly new Minister for Culture Tom Newberry in having the Works Department maintain the building. Mark Johnson is trying to get himself a reasonable office and co-ordinate the totally inefficient telephone system, among three thousand other things. Bill Redmond is trying to mount some professional productions. The committee are trying to get new subscribers and keep the old ones happy and informed. There are no villains in the Twelfth Night Story. Only heroes and heroines and some tragic misunderstandings.

What should happen ideally is that the Government should either give Twelfth Night back their building or at least charge a reasonable rent; Joan Whalley should realise that the committee and especially president Marie Watson Blake wish her well. She should herself get back on the committee where she should be made welcome. Mark Johnson should talk often with QTC artistic director Alan Edwards and find out what ticks in Queensland theatre politics. Edwards has been a great supporter of Twelfth Night Theatre and realises that Brisbane must have an alternative professional company. Newly appointed artistic director of the Speech and Drama School Jane Atkins must continue her great work with the children and the name should not be changed to the Twelfth Night Youth Theatre, which has been suggested.

The committee should redouble their efforts to raise money through subscriptions or any other means. Talented people like Ron Finney and others who hold opposite views should be positively encouraged to help towards the ultimate goal of a second profession Il theatre company which can compete with the highly successful Queensland Theatre Company. There is an abundance of amateur theatre companies here already. And when all that happens we can get back to seeing some wonderful theatre at Twelfth Night. Brian Sweeney should be placed at the bar to personally supervise a few bottles of Dom Perignon and in the early hours we’ll sit back and not fall asleep when he recites T S Eliot.

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The general comment around Adelaide has been that it was the best Festival yet.

It is easy to forget, of course. I have been to every Festival since 1968, and certainly I remember such excitement of other years like the Royal Shakespeare Company's breathtaking A Winter's Tale and Twelfth Night in 1970; the amazing promotion of the Jesus Christ Superstar concert performance in 1972; local performances by the South Australian Theatre Company and New Opera in 1974 of Esson’s The Bride of Gospel Place and Janacek’s The Excursions of Mr Broucek — and so on. But for a Festival of surprises, in the small things as well as the great, I do not remember a better Festival. Nor a calmer one.

It is having the Festival Centre as a focus that makes the difference, of course. The organisers have now spent a couple of festivals settled into the building and audiences and visitors have become accustomed to the buzzing box office, the crowded bistro and bar areas, the open air performances in the grounds and the complex of marquees in the gardens across King William Road which marked Writers’ Week. Even before the programme entered its third and final week the director, Anthony Steele, had announced that box office receipts had reached the sixty per cent break-even point and that the only loss the Festival Trust had taken had been on a couple of pop concerts included against his better judgement.

Certainly all the major events had been solidly booked, some in advance of opening. It was a personal triumph for Steele, whose last Festival as director it is. Like those before him, he has had no easy time.

Big names this year included Sir Michael Tippett, whose The Midsummer Marriage was the grand opening event; Tanya Moseiwitsch, who designed the Oedipus costumes; and the stars of the Kabuki Theatre of Japan. But for me the excitement of surprise was in the smaller theatres where one really felt the straining to capacity.

The undoubted coup of the Festival was Tadeusz Kantor’s Cricot 2 company from Cracow. Kantor is one of those elusive and uncompromising geniuses which Poland seems to produce, who, regardless of the conventions and pressures of life, pursue an aesthetic with a single-mindedness any capitalist society would regard as simply eccentric.

Kantor is an artist who in the ‘30s and ‘40s was a radical surrealist. His life has been devoted to the concept of matter and movement and the objects we use to defend ourselves from the terror and vulgarity of the material world. He was wrapping up objects in the name of art long before Christo.

His The Dead Class, performed by what he calls the Theatre of Death, is a natural progression in his painter’s study of the body as...
audiences responded in ovations. They dry wit as well as an original skill to which infinite tenderness by Genty. This remarkable breaks the strings one by one until he is left a of what it is to be alive.

ordinating and directing them, a vivid reminder of what it is to be alive. The sprightly figure of Kantor himself, his brown face and black velvet jacket gleaming amid the rust, moves among the figures, co-ordinating and directing them, a vivid reminder of what it is to be alive.

Philippe Genty in his black velvet suit gave the same vivid impression when in view of the audience he conducted a pas de deux with a tragic Pierrot marionette. As the knowledge that he is being manipulated dawns upon the doll, he breaks the strings one by one until he is left a motionless heap, gathered up at the finish with infinite tenderness by Genty. This remarkable French puppet company has sophistication and dry wit as well as an original skill to which audiences responded in ovations. They metamorphose inanimate objects with masterly manipulation. Invention reached surreal levels at times: for example a feather boa becomes a woman being photographed, the photographs break up into a corps de ballet which by degrees lose their knickers, then their legs ... and so on.

Philippe Genty was followed at the Arts Theatre by Steve Berkoff's East, intended to be the focus of the Festival's last week and the cause of the biggest of Anthony Steel's headaches. News of the 'punk' play, aimed at frontally assaulting us with the true depths of depravity in the East End of London these days, was enough to have the Opposition spokesman on the Arts, Mr Hill, call for Steele's resignation. Instead (of course) the season was booked out.

It is an oddly unfinished play — and indeed it is hard for a critic to justify it as art when its entrepreneur is flashing its private parts across the press by way of promotion. In fact, the play reminded me of nothing more than C J Dennis dirtied up, with its comic-naive Shakespearean doggerel and its stoushing and obsession with women. It has many joyful surprises in the episodic way it moves from scene to scene, depicting incidents in the sex and money absorbed lives of Mike and Les; and there is poignancy in the hopeless desire for better things expressed by the mother and the girl in the play. The whole does, I suppose, reach new heights of crudity, but these and the rest of the play are finally forgettable because Berkoff himself appears to have no point of view. The characters remain archetypes without the individuality to arouse pity or horror; it is the style of the actors — casual, muscular and bold — that gives the evening its quality.

The style has something in common with Tim Gooding's Rock-ola taken to Adelaide by the Nimrod Theatre. Under the energies of the actors the show has pulled together into a pretty impressive piece of fantasy. Rock-ola's central theme is an inspired one — the idea of the refuse of the rock and roll generation taking a kamikaze flight to bomb out in Rushcutters Bay where once stood the Sydney Stadium.

And the debris of that disaffected decade is abundantly littered through the language and the music. The play's strength is its exuberance and nostalgia, its weakness is that it takes itself too seriously. Despite the marvellously comic energies of Kris McQuade as a rocker who has hit the other side of the hill, the script exhausts the audience too early with its barrage of words. It was only this, it seemed to me, that stopped the show being a winner.

By coincidence on the fringe the Stage Company at the Sheridan Theatre had another piece of nostalgia for the 60s, Let's Twist Again, by Rob George. This play has had a chequered history, having been scheduled for performance by the SATC some years back, and the script certainly shows commercial potential. The setting is a country dance hall where a group of former tearaways have gathered for a picnic to go over old times. It turns out that for the leader the search for his lost youth is more than a game and the play ends in sudden violence. Brian Debnam and the cast make a good fist of the work with resources available: more luxurious design could have made more of the movement in and out of reality, and a batty woman caretaker who gives a lift to the middle of the play disappointingly disappears without notice. But it still looks a promising piece.

Adelaide, in fact, looks as though it has taken over from the eastern States as a centre for alternative theatre. Troupe, who presented at their Red Shed a sketch about the founding of Adelaide, Don't Listen to Gouger, by David Allen, was original in its approach to an old subject and offered some splendid acting. Icon Theatre's production of Steve Spears' There Were Giants in Those Days had some good acting going for it too, though I doubt that the revival of this piece of Spears juvenilia has done much for his present reputation.

Altogether Focus, the alternative festival, had some 112 events on which my token visits could make hardly a mark.

The South Australian Theatre Company's contribution to the Festival was a serious and satisfying production by Colin George of Sophocles' two plays, Oedipus the King and

Kris McQuade and Jaki Weaver in Nimrod's Rock-ola. Photo: Peter Holderness.
Oedipus at Colonus. The Moseiwitsch style, especially in connection with the Greeks, one must place in the category of museum theatre these days; but that is not to dismiss her genius. The opening scene against Richard Roberts’ starkly modernist set, in which the blackened bodies of dead children serve to heighten the despair of the famished people of Thebes, has an expressionist impact. Oedipus the King is familiar to most theatregoers but it was a rare treat to see the second play. Oedipus the King’s theme is physical and temporal pride and power: in Oedipus at Colonus the writing is spiritual to an almost ethereal degree. As the King fights the will of the gods in the first play, so he submits, body and soul, in the second and in reward is received, body and soul, by them. The play is triumphantly interpreted by the cast, particularly Dennis Olsen as Oedipus.

Of a different nature entirely, though also on the theme of suffering and the gods, is the black American show, For Colored Girls...Who Have Considered Suicide...When the Rainbow is Enuf. This collection of poems and prose for seven rainbow-coloured women by Ntozake Shange is a touching and exquisitely presented piece which I think deserves deeper attention than it generally received here.

The cast was recruited for the Australian tour and on opening night in Adelaide were nervous of their first audience. They spoke too fast and too softly in a too-large theatre; and their unfamiliar rhythms were for a while a problem to the audience. For me, anyway, it was difficult to come to grips with Shange’s very personal message of desperation, awareness and hope for the black women of America. The whole is deeply felt by the cast, who speak with the author in dance, song and monologue, telling a painful story of misplaced love and sacrifice in a man’s world. They end on a determined but ambivalent note with the chorus: “I found God in myself.”

The Kabuki, on the other hand, was more a diplomatic exchange of views and postcards than of mutual understanding. The company presented two pieces, the first a short dramatic sequence from the five-act epic Yoshitsune Senbon Sakura, in which a fox — a magic creature in Japanese mythology — disguises himself as a servant of Prince Yoshitsune in order to retrieve his wife’s hand drum, made from the skin of the fox’s parents. The story gives occasion for one actor (in this case Jitsukawa Enjaku III) to play the true and false servant and the fox in a series of lightning changes. Tokyo is accustomed to more colourful and athletic performances from younger casts and other incidents containing disguises, murders, battles and suicides might have appeared less mysterious — and indeed less effete — to an Australian audience than this one. One suspects that such overseas tours are retirement bonuses for those at the top of the Kabuki hierarchy.

Samidagawa was a better choice in that it is a whole work, and satisfying both musically and in the refinement of its staging and emotional expression. It is a dance drama based on an old Noh play about a woman’s grief-stricken search for her kidnapped son, was performed exquisitely in that mewing manner by Nakamura Utaemon VI — and yet again there was a self-conscious awareness of the perfection.

A good part of the trouble in bringing to Australia the classical drama of any country is that one leaves behind the environment from which it springs. The presence of an audience familiar with the art is the best guide for the stranger to an understanding. An unfamiliar theatre in an unfamiliar country with an eager but uncomprehending audience, is not the best atmosphere for any artist. But it is better than nothing and the answer is not to have less of experiences like the Kabuki, but more. On the whole, however, I think I enjoyed the short open air rough, indeed primitive, performance by the Chhau masked dancers of Bengal. They performed their versions of incidents from the Ramayana with a sense of spontaneous fun that might have been a dress-up party while the audience squatted on the amphitheatre steps.

The SATC broke new ground by presenting a children’s play as a major event in their Playhouse — Uncle Hector and the Bohemians, commissioned for the occasion from Anne Harvey. It is a very traditional style of play about a comical family on a journey to meet magical animals, which made the most of the staging opportunities provided by the theatre — I think my main criticism was that the two children in the cast have almost no influence upon the action of the play. There were many shows I did not see in my time there — some because bookings were too heavy, like Robyn Archer’s After Dark Club show, which became spontaneously a tour de force of the festival; and the English comedian Chris Langham’s zany late night performance. Peter Kenna’s The Cassidy Album gave the weight of real drama and narrative to the third week of a programme overall noted for its choice of out-of-the-mainstream work. (I discuss this elsewhere in this issue.) Some shows came and went too quickly, like The Bread and Puppet Theatre presented by a group of Australians under the tuition of Peter Schumann, founder of the American Group. One or two, as always happens did not come at all.

But on the whole for sheer quality and abundance I do not remember a better festival — and that is an achievement in a show that has been going eighteen years.
In 1834/5 Melbourne was unofficially settled by Henty and Batman; in 1842 the town saw its first official theatrical performance in a timber shed which possessed the ubiquitous title, Theatre Royal.

Melbourne was fortunate to have possessed an Irish immigrant who, after arriving in 1841 and becoming a leading journalist, developed by the mid-sixties an increasing concern with the preservation of the then vanishing history of the early settlement. Under the name of "Garryowen", Edmund Finn chronicled an historical, anecdotal and personal account of the town and its people from 1835 to 1852. He describes the two earliest theatres, the actor-managers who ran them and finally dwells at some length on George Coppin, the first of the big touring actor-managers to organise theatre in Australia.

Finn gave the dimensions of the Royal, Pavilion, Victoria, as it was variously known in its short life, as 65 by 35 feet. It contained a pit and a surrounding dress circle of boxes which was constructed so low (probably in the style of an English provincial Georgian theatre) that the more affluent classes could lean over and "bonnet" patrons in the pit, that is, push their hats down over their eyes. A kind mannered pitite, upon removing his hat and showing a bald pate, would frequently have his denuded dome made the target of catarrhal expectorations. There was also in the accommodation of the theatre a gallery made up of a circular row of small pens arrived at by a ladder-like stair.

This Pavilion Theatre, rocking in the wind, leaking in the rain, was a small house run by a consortium of amateurs (the only system of management by which it could obtain a licence). Its performances were the scene of regular uproar and ruffianism with actors having to walk out of role to abuse an unruly audience. One night when George Buckingham began brandishing a dagger at the audience a "burly loon in the front of the pit declared he would punch Buckingham's head, and the enraged actor solemnly vowed 'he would leap dagger and all down the other fellow's throat'". There were missiles thrown at actors from the audience and, in counter attack, threats were made of storming the dress circle by the company, with occasionally the entertainment in the auditorium rivalling that on the stage. In 1844, when the Pavilion was virtually bankrupt, Charles Wentworth treated a woman, said to be his wife, to an outing; both were in a forward state of inebriation when a quarrel broke out between them in the gallery. "Wentworth set to thrashing
the fair one, and she nailed him, like a wild cat, about the throat. He was half choked, and to ward off death by asphyxia had her up on the parapet in the act of pitching her over into the pit, when he was pounced upon by Chief Constable Sugden..."

The Pavilion was not relicensed after April 1845. On the 21st of that month a new theatre was opened—The Queen's Theatre Royal. It was a "plain, substantial, brick, shingle-roofed building, with not attempt at external architectural ornamentation", situated at the south-west corner of Queen and Little Bourke Streets. It was slightly larger than the Pavilion, being 75 by 40 feet, holding during a capacity benefit performance 943 persons. The stage would have cut off between 30 to 35 feet from the long dimension; a contemporary newspaper gave the pit as only 37 by 25 feet, yet at that benefit it held 453 bodies. The interior design by architects Charles Laing and George Wharton, was criticised by being vulgar, "outre in design and crude in execution. The proscenium was an elliptical arch, supported on pilasters, and surmounted by the Royal Arms, whilst there was a grotesque attempt to construct niches, out of which leered figures said to represent Aeschylus, Euripides, and a couple of unrecognizable magnates of reputed mythological antecedents."

The company at the Queen's was fair but the weather was so exceedingly poor as to deter the most ardent playgoers; when the weather brightened so too did the box office takings. Then there arrived a more illuminated theatrical in the form of George Coppin. Coppin had formed a company in Launceston after having played in Sydney and Hobart. The Tasmanian company landed in Melbourne on June 14th, 1845 and first performed at the Queen's on the 21st. They, particularly Mr and Mrs Coppin, were a tremendous success: on 3rd July in the farce *Winning a Husband* Mrs Coppin sustained eight different characters "in very superior style". The Coppins remained at the Queen's in Melbourne until August, 1846 when they moved to Adelaide. After losing his wife and a fortune in Adelaide, George Coppin returned to the stage, for the most part at Geelong, then went to England, only to return to Melbourne in 1855 to settle. And to bring with him his own prefabricated theatre!

Before this event there were two other houses built: there was the predecessor of the Princess, Astley's Amphitheatre (to be detailed in another article), and another Theatre Royal which opened between Swanston and Russell Streets in Bourke Street on July 16th, 1855, only fourteen days before Coppin's prefabricated iron Olympic Theatre presented its first dramatic season.

The Royal was built by John Black to the plans of J R Burns. The fronting hotel and theatre had a depth of over 300 feet to Little Bourke Street; the auditorium and stage, in their dimensions, were equal to the equivalent at London's Convent Garden or Drury Lane Theatres of the time. Its four levels seated 3,000 persons in typically cramped 19th century conditions. Although the population had grown considerably due to the Victorian gold rush, Melbourne could not find 8,000 pairs of buttocks every evening to sit in its now four theatres.

In October 1855 John Black went insolvent and the builder of Astley's anachronised his new amphitheatre. The lights of the Queen's flickered and sputtered to permanent darkness in 1856 but Coppin took over Astley's for vaudeville in 1855 and formed a partnership with the tragedian Gustavus Brooke to buy the lease on the Royal, re-opening it in June 1856 with *She Stoops to Conquer*.

The amphitheatre was renamed Princess's in 1859 and the smaller capacity Olympic was found redundant so Coppin had it converted to Turkish baths which were more financially successful than his theatres in the depression of 1860. (During mid 1850's there was also a strange circus tent-like structure, the Sale de Valentino, which was only licensed for musical entertainment.)

The building of the Olympic, perhaps more than any other act demonstrated Coppin's flare for adventurous entreprenuership and his own confidence in his ability as manager. Being a respected actor-manager in England he could beat his Australian opposition in obtaining quality performers, however not everyone walks down the street to buy a theatre off the shelf and ship it across the world (as well as signing up a leading actor for 10,000 Pounds for 200 performances). The manufacturers of the theatre, E. & T. Bellhouse of Manchester, did have some experience, that of building Prince...
Albert's iron theatre and ballroom at Balmoral Castle. The Olympic had cast-iron stanchions, being clad mostly in glass, where it showed a public front, and in galvanised corrugated iron elsewhere. It was 88 feet long, 40 feet wide with, it seems, from a description in The Australian Builder, no gallery. The layout was very modern for the time with six boxes built into the proscenium in lieu of the earlier Regency style doors; and comfortable stalls took over the front portion of the pit. The proscenium for a house holding 1150 persons was a relatively wide 33 feet.
International Greek Theatre

Bob Henderson

Risks are regularly overcome by the simple charisma of the known Star.

Greek Theatre? What, you mean Sophocles, the classics and that? The festivals, balmy summer evenings spent in ancient amphitheatres, coach tours to Epidauros between island-hopping?

Well, yes, all that. But let's go back to Athens, where everything begins, and winter.

Is there such a thing as a contemporary Greek theatre? — an up-to-date, living thing, which the people support? Can you find anything resembling the scene in thoroughly European cities such as Paris and London?

It might be more interesting to compare Athens with Sydney, a city of roughly the same size. My newspaper today lists fifty-three companies on the fringe. Seems promising. But is this misleading? What's playing, actually?

A handful of classics from various countries; three well-known, modern European plays; one full-scale musical; many satirical revues; a fair dose of vaudeville; plenty of light comedy; a few children's shows; and about a dozen contemporary Greek works that you've never heard of.

Is all this in Greek? All in Greek, yes. But accessible to the foreigner? Up to a point. Tourists patronize the festivals, for a start. And familiarity with the works is enough to tempt many to a further look. What's more, they're making it easier for you right now, with four English plays on show: Titus Andronicus, Pinter's The Homecoming, Coward's Blithe Spirit and Bond's Bingo. Not that it's really for our benefit, plays in English tend to translate easily into demotic Greek; the general approach is eclectic and obviously Britain and America have a lot to offer; then, there's enough Anglomania amongst the upper middle classes to ensure that there's always at least one Noel Coward show in town.

And who goes? Of course, the audience varies according to the show. But, at the legitimate theatre it looks familiar: the middle-class, the students. Television, introduced during the last unpleasantness, seems not to have hurt the theatres, as it has the cinemas. And there are few short runs: anything which is any good at all is likely to play for a long time. (Things are different at the National, with its planned repertoire.) Hamlet and Romeo and Juliet both enjoyed recent twelve-month seasons. The long runs have a lot to do with the star system, more of which in a moment.

The average price of a ticket is about A$4, more than twice the price of a movie, with big concessions for students and soldiers doing nasho. Everyone says it's too expensive, concessions or not. The critics flourish, in-depth reviews appear daily in all the newspapers. Sounds like big business. Is it?

While the two national companies, centred in Athens and Salonica respectively, rely on heavy government subsidy, basically, theatre in Athens is mounted by small private firms. Actor-managers, and manager-directors are common. Not to mention actor-manager-directors. It's not always so. The main point, I think, is that companies tend to stick together. Even the well-known risks of doubling as director and lead-actor are regularly overcome by the simple charisma of the known Star.

For instance, there is the presentation of four Platonic dialogues at the Athens Theatre — an unlikely choice of material, you would think, but it makes surprisingly good theatre. Largely responsible is the presence of Dimitris Murat in the central role of Socrates. It's quite a performance. Murat also directs and did the translation and adaptation. The show just passed its 150th performance.

A more stunning example of a star in action is waiting at the Superstar, with the beautiful Jennie Karessi playing the lead in Rousse's Pope Joan. Not even the sumptuous costumes and immaculate staging can hide the silliness of the play — but Karessi is irresistably funny from the opening lines and makes the character unquestionably human, sailing effortlessly through the melodrama of the later scenes. Her co-star Costas Kazakos directs. This is the hit show at present.

On the other hand, you sometimes see both a good play and a good actor sacrificed: The Picture of Dorian Grey (John Osborne, from Wilde) seen recently at the Research, had the excellent young Cypriot actor Dimitris Potamites hopelessly out of control at the centre of his own very effective production.

There are two auditoriums within the National Theatre Company's rather stolid-looking premises at town centre: The Central Stage, and the New Stage. The latter offers flexibility in production and theoretically, a more adventurous repertoire — though we've seen Camus' Caligula and Albee's A Delicate Balance there recently, so you don't expect radical experiments all the time. At present, the larger theatre is offering Roma's Casanova in Cercyra (I think it can be ignored) while at the New Stage we have two new plays by local playwrights: The Match by Giorgos Maniotes, and The Game and a Twinge of Remorse by (Ms) Costoula Mitropoulou. An interesting evening, with shades of David Storey and Edward Bond.

At the least, the National promises you a regular change of programme, with plays from all over, and a reasonably stylish production — as well as all the other joys and sorrows of a comfortable subsidized company. You tend to hear the same complaints about the National as you used to hear in Oz about similar companies: sameness; lack of excitement; stuffy management; dead wood at the top; failure to exploit young talent; etc., etc.

Sadly, dissatisfaction with the National becomes most intense during the festivals, when the amphitheatres open, foreign tourists join the enormous, — and enormously enthusiastic — Greek audiences, and time and again, having been inspired by Barishnikov, Bernstein, Bolshoi et al, we are let down by yet another competent and uninspired production of (say) Euripides, courtesy of the National. By contrast, in the same festivals, the independent companies come up with some sensational productions. Such as Amphitheatre's Frogs — impossible to get a ticket for this one, despite the vast capacity of the Herod Atticus Amphitheatre. And Arts Theatre's production of Peace, a minor work of Aristophanes, to say the least, which ought to have bombed, but, transformed by a brilliant production and cast, was an hilarious celebration, wild, witty and wise.
You don't have to wait for the Athens Festival for these goodies: saving the mass audience, the moonlight and the jasmine, it's all happening at Arts Theatre (two stages) and Amphitheatre, all year round, in their downtown premises. Not just the classics, though most of the festival productions do transfer there.

At the centre of each of these companies is one of Greece's star directors — and they are stars in every sense, as celebrated as the star performers.

Amphitheatre boasts Spyres Evangelatos. At present he's offering Titus Andronicus — a bold and energetic mounting, and somewhat flattering to the Bard. It's in its fourth month. Behind Arts Theatre is Karolos Koun, probably the giant of the contemporary Greek theatre. He started way back with a group of schoolboy amateurs, and dreamed large dreams. Supported along the way by friends and the Ford Foundation, he has his own theatre now, hasn't stopped experimenting, packs them in annually with tours of London, Paris and Moscow. Recently honoured by the French, he's one of the world's best. You can forget the language problem; it's fascinating, with such a variety of material, how unerringly Koun holds up the mirror.

And talking of mirrors, who's the biggest Star of them all? Many would sneer and stomachs may turn, but it's back to the musical stage. Leaving aside Thanassis Vengos, an immensely popular stand-up comedian whose vaudeville revue is the one show in town where you must book well in advance, the prize must go to Miss Aliki Vouyouklaki — our Aliki, as they call her, those who like her, and thousands love her. One wouldn't think of going to Athens to see My Fair Lady, would one, but that's her current vehicle. Before that, she did Sweet Charity. One a year, run a year. Like many companies, Aliki's moves outdoors for the summer, to a delightful garden venue, set in sprawling Green Park. Pleasant way to take your Lerner and Loewe, ouzo in hand. And surprisingly My Fair Lady, in demotic Greek, make for a good night's entertainment.

It's not a lavish production, by world standards, but attractive enough, and full of zest. The set creaks and shakes, the chorus is bored to death, half the songs are recorded and mimed (an accepted convention here) and there's some frightful miscasting, but none of it matters. Because Aliki is in the spotlight. Gorgeously costumed, needless to say, getting the last ounce out of every entrance, switching her performance on and off like a strobe, delivering punch-lines like a prize-fighter, and playing shamelessly to friends in the front box, she's not quite the Eliza you remember. But she's all Star, exuding animal vitality and making it impossible to ignore her for a moment.

You score a few surprises when you see a Greek production of Pinter or Shakespeare — as you do when you look into the recent local product. But that's another story.

For information on the forthcoming festival events throughout Greece, notably the Athens and Epidaurus Festivals, plus all other cultural activities, please contact the Greece National Tourist Organisation, 51 Pitt Street, Sydney, 2000. Tel: (02) 241-1663.
Rodger - our most imaginative and exciting director.

**RICHARD III**

RAYMOND STANLEY


Richard, Bruce Myles; Clarence, David Downer; Chorus of guards, murderers, messengers, citizens, soldiers, etc., Bruce Spence, Peter Curtin, Don Bridges, Lex Marinos; Brackenbury, Lloyd Cunnington; Hastings, Barry Pierce; Anne, Lynnette Curran; Elizabeth, Jennifer West; Rivers, Sydney Conabere; Grey, Michael Edgar; Buckingham, Jonathan Hardy; Stanley, Don Barker; Queen Margaret, Jennifer Hagan; Edward IV, Norman Kaye; Ratcliffe, Gary Day; Duchess of York, Mary Ward; Archbishop, Stephen Blsley; Edward, Prince of Wales, Johannah Sonenberg; Richard, Duke of York, Paul Jonas/Gummy Phillips; Catesby, Ian Suddards; Tyrell, Lloyd Cunnington; Richmond, John Stanton.

Richard III has always been my favourite amongst Shakespeare's histories. The fact that possibly the character bears little resemblance to the real life Richard, has never seemed to matter; it is the play itself, hanging together perhaps better with its less confused character relationships than some of the other histories. Richard himself can be interpreted in more varied ways than most Shakespearean characters, and I have always admired the several portrayals I have seen. If really pressed though, it was probably Marius Goring—red-headed—who caught my imagination most when he performed the role at Stratford back in 1953.

I did not see Olivier play the role on stage, but have never really forgiven him for omitting that wonderful character of Queen Margaret from the film version. With such major re-construction, the changes Mick Rodger brings to the character and conception in his version for the Melbourne Theatre Company, really do not irritate and frequently improve. For instance, having Richard open with some lines from Henry VI seems perfectly valid.

Rodger probably is our most imaginative and exciting director. Not all of his effects come off but, as with his production of The Revenger's Tragedy, it is always good theatre and constantly presents that element of surprise so often lacking in Australian productions.

One feels that Rodger has conceived his production specifically for today's audiences and, with the gigantic overshadowing background's wheel of fortune frequently revolving, and Richard as a partial jester, it is easy to read things into the production Rodger may or may not have intended.

Not always, as he has been fortunate with his cast, at least in some of the smaller roles. It highlights either the scarcity of actors around Melbourne—or at least deficiencies in those whom the MTC is willing to employ. Too often one has the impression of people being engaged simply because they are actors, not because they have a love or aptitude for Shakespeare. There is for instance Mary Ward as the Duchess of York, a good actress doubtless in a straight commercial play, but badly miscast in Shakespeare. Ditto Gary Day (Ratcliffe) and Don Barker (Stanley), both obviously at home in TV police dramas. And Bruce Spence, as one of the death-like chorus, with his customary irritating nasal whine.

As Richard, Bruce Myles really comes into his own at last—a highly satisfying all-round performance, beautifully spoken. Belatedly Myles seems on the verge of being recognised as one of our major—and certainly most versatile—actors. There is no trace in his performance of any of the characters he has played in other recent plays, such as Ashes, Ring Round the Moon or Of Mice and Men, although at times one does detect fleeting glimpses of his Tony Hancock in Hancock's Last Half Hour.

Particularly impressive is Jennifer West's Queen Elizabeth—a new name to me, but others look very much out of place and outrageous and grotesque seem to work—but others look very much out of place and on the first night caused a few laughs on appearance.

All things considered this is quite a satisfactory production of Richard III, for which most of the credit must go to Rodger. One wishes the film industry here would take him up—the mind boggles at what he would do in pictures—but I cannot think of any movie director in Australia who has graduated from the stage. Maybe this is one of the things wrong with our current film industry.

A serious handsome production.

**PERFECT STRANGERS**

CHRISTIAN BROTHERS

JACK HIBBERD

Neil Fitzpatrick in Perfect Strangers

This evening of Ron Blair is made memorable by a top performance: that of Peter Carroll in The Christian Brothers. In a theatrescape where we often accept the slipshod, trick-laden and outright fraudulent, it is refreshing every now and then to see an impersonation that is authentically felt, immuaculately detailed and technically accomplished.

Here is an actor working on his nerves and taking risks. The character and performance Peter Carroll has wrought is a possessed one. It has a strong whiff of dementia and hysteria, the product of a freely associating imagination in intellect, something that puts him in the select company, among males of Peter Cummins, John Gaden, and Max Gillies. These qualities ensnare and heighten the turbulent contradictory frustrations of the brother, his anguish and sheer isolation, all in a compressed series of fragments, the shards, assembled from his personal and teaching life, all cleverly contained under the quasi-naturalistic umbrella of an afternoon in a classroom.

The metaphor of the audience as class, however, works uneasily at The Playbox because of the near-catacomb nature of the stalls. The incessant craning up from the front led to a weird kind of detachment, especially weird for me as I'd seen the same play at the Melbourne critics, which aside from Buzo's smouldering contempt for the critical genius, also misses the point; slightly. The point of Makassar Reef is the same point as was made by Martello Towers. Buzo is interested, even more than Williamson, in staking out his own area of the entertainment business. He makes points in the play, about romance, imperialism, menopause, indeed life itself: but not in the passionate serio-comic fashion of Williamson. Buzo's plays nowadays do not have a purpose outside of the passing of a reasonably ok night away from the television. That is not a dishonourable aim, and Makassar Reef is not a dishonourable play, although it is stylistically confused, and hydrakie in its search for character and effect.

Makassar Reef is Somerset Maugham in Casablanca, a collection of tourists and locals stuck together (they find it about as difficult to leave as anyone in a Bunuel movie), who, largely for want of anything better to do, really try to say anything about anything. There's a corrupt customs man, and an intermediary who sets up the smuggler for a bust, and bails him out when he needs to get out of the place.

One can see there's a lot going on, plenty of opportunity for gags, put downs, romances, thrills, sex, violence, crime, corruption, drinking, eating, ennui, sight-seeing, culture, and lots more. And there is a lot of this pot pourri in Makassar Reef, set by director Aarne Neeme as if it were Casablanca, with that bittersweet romantic innocence supposedly permeating everything.

Unfortunately Buzo hasn't written the right play for that Monica Maughan's character isn't Ingrid Bergman, nor is Gerard Maguire Humphrey Bogart. Saviour Sammut does a fair job as Sydney Saviour Saviour Saviour Saviour Saviour Saviour Saviour Saviour Saviour Saviour, but in the end Makassar Reef isn't funny enough, consistent enough, stylish enough to do other than stagger along. By trying to do too many things it does very little, without being funny, and without confronting the East, Tourism, Racism, Anything.
DON’T PIDDLE AGAINST THE WIND, MATE.

RICHARD FOTHERINGHAM

Don’t Piddle Against The Wind, Mate by Kenneth Ross, Queensland Theatre Company. SGIO Theatre, Brisbane, Qld. Opened 5 April 1978. Director, Bryan Nason; Designer, Fiona Reilly; Stage Manager, Ellen Kennedy. Bob, Ben Gabriel; Frank, Gordon Glenwright; Theieka, Pat Thomson; Noreen, Ingrid Mason; Phillip, Geoffrey Cartwright; Normie, Douglas Hedge.

I’m puzzled by Piddle; for starters I’ve never met anyone who likes the play. That includes perhaps a dozen acquaintances who’ve seen different productions (the QTC’s is the third) not to mention several who were at the Canberra Playwrights’ Conference where it was workshopped. And I can only agree — it’s a dull script. The QTC production has a dull hospital green set, and the acting kindles few sparks. The first scene is one of the gauchest pieces of exposition writing that I can remember, and the layout of characters — man, trumpy wife, drunken friend, child, and child’s fiancée from the other side of the tracks — is the absolute stereotype of Australian suburban life from The One Day of the Year to The Naked Vicar Show. In order to relieve the monotony of this, the central character Bob Davies occasionally jerks into poetic outflowings about flowers. The director of the current production makes a plea in his programme note for resonance of dialogue; mostly it’s as resonant as concrete. The actors do their best, but the life isn’t in it.

There’s been however a rather nasty spinoff from the present QTC production. The Courier Mail’s critic David Rowbotham dismissed it in his shortest review ever: “It is no good”. I’m told that at the next performance after publication of that comment the audience was encouraged to boo the critic. Suddenly there’s a whole SGIO full of people who like the play a lot. But as a publicity man put it crudely to me once, making people like shit is a difficult advertising and PR job, but that’s all it is. And attacking anyone who dares to call it shit is not a bad way to start.

Personally, I didn’t think the play shit; just boring, trivial, and naive. Rather stupidly naive on the part of the QTC to present it before Queensland’s politicians weeks before they move to introduce “right to work” legislation could have been a conscious plan (I’m sure it wasn’t). “Right to work” incidentally is an idea borrowed from some states of the USA where it has destroyed trade unionism to the extent that the average wage in those states is 36% lower than in the rest of the US.

Major and cutting plays need to be written about the trade unions; how about for starters a play about how when Comalco sacked four hundred of its thousand workers at Weipa, they successfully bought off the opposition of the remaining men (and their union delegates) by offering those remaining a 35% wage increase?

I use an example like that to show why Piddle really is a piddling play. It concerns a worker (Wharfie I presume) who refuses to pay a $2 social levy applied by his union. The ensuing repercussions lead to hundreds of men being forced to go on strike; and for the worker it means social ostracism, the breakup of his family, and finally a vigilante attack on his flower bed. I’m sure it happens, and it could have been a good play.

What’s wrong fundamentally is that we see the frightening consequences of a trivial act totally through the eyes of the worker and his family, and the actions of hundreds of other people are treated as the behaviour of bigoted and thuggish fools. We are invited to consider a trivial act as a major blow for human liberation, and to see other ordinary humans who disagree with that act as a mindless and evil mob. This effect is exacerbated in the QTC production by the interpretation of the QTC director of the minor role of the Union organiser. He’s the only representative of that ‘mob’ who appears on stage, and his lines could be played quite straight; but he’s played here as a smarmy and insincere young bastard. In short what the play represents is a grotesque indulgence in a paranoid vision of the world.

It really isn’t any good.

Renewed respect for the old larrikin.

BRISBANE SURVEY

DON BATCHELOR

The Beast — La Boite
The Apple Cart — Chichester Theatre Company
Mary Stewart — Arts Theatre

This month’s Australian premiere from La Boite (yes—another one) was Snoo Wilson’s This Beast — a biographical fantasy of the life of Aleister Crowley”. It’s a warlock’s brew of ultra-theatricality which sets the unsavoury doings of Crowley and his ghoulish mistress Laria against the satanic events of European history between the wars.

David Bell gives further evidence that when it comes to visual treatment he is a director with flair. Everything and everyone looked fantastic — and I don’t mean "beaut". Attention to detail was careful. But in handling the actors all constraint...
was removed. What happened was a splurge; ugly, but not faintly diabolical. The powers of darkness are more pervading at an average staff meeting.

Greg Silverman seemed more demented than demonic. The script suggests that Crowley should “exclude power” and “inmorating energy”. Instead he was frenetic and sad — a cross between Groucho Marx and Mussolini.

The only truly diabolical thing all night was the spoken French.

The play itself gives an interpretation of the rest of the cast, and the stolidly (which nobody could know about). purported to have made to her confessor which depends so much on a confrontation 24

The theatre big guns on stage together and

too derivative of Glenda Jackson. —

relive a sense of nausea.

unimaginative setting. To recall just one made. So well made, in fact, that they threw into unflattering relief both the transitory and impotent political games of King Magnus and his cabinet, laid a far greater chill on my blood.

The editors have insisted I do this — I suppose it is impertinent to compare Kenna with Sophocles, especially since we think of the Greek as the most perfect interpreter of universal truth and The Cassidy Album is a not altogether satisfactory account of a half-successful writer whose life and potential death hardly touch those around him — certainly not in the way Oedipus’ life is bound to the life of the people of Thebes. I suppose the parallel has occurred to me because a season of Sophocles was playing concurrently at the Adelaide Festival.

And yet the authors do have a common thread — a human’s defiance of God; and Kenna sees his hero’s life not as affecting but as reflecting his environment. Joe Cassidy’s journey, if one cares to see it that way, is a challenge to self-determination in the teeth of a hard and apparently uncomprehending deity; a working out of the conflict between the flesh and the moral beliefs which guide our lives and which ends in acceptance and a hard-won patience. But not, as in Sophocles’ case, understanding.

The three plays were conceived from the beginning as a trilogy and were written, in fact, before Lawler’s, though not performed in their entirety till now. At the time Kenna was suffering chronic kidney disease and his life prognosis was limited. He was living, as he describes it, a kind of remembrance of learning how to live.

The Doll is a journey forward into darkness; a rare opportunity, they are like, the causes of his own self-destruction.

The Doll lays it on with a heart. It was good to see so many of the Arts big guns on stage together and Bill Hill thoroughly in command.

A human’s defiance of God.

THE CASSIDY ALBUM

KATHARINE BRISBANE

The Cassidy Album; A Hard God, Furtive Love, An Eager Hope by Peter Kenna. Seymour Centre, Sydney, NSW. An Adelaide Festival Production. Director, John Tasker; Designer, Ian Robinson.

Dan Cassidy, Tom Nathan, Paul Carver, Vic Rooney; Aggie Cassidy, Doris Dare, Maggie Kirkpatrick; Joe Cassidy, Tony Sheldon; Jack Shannon, George Cooper, Jonathan White, Danny Cassidy, Alan Wilson; Martin Cassidy, Ned Thomas, Phillip Ross; Monica Cassidy, Sophie Cassidy, Marie Tate-Smith, Beryl Cassidy, Lotte Brach, Janice Finn; Paddy Cassidy, Tom Parkinson, Francis Cassidy, Ray Meagher.

The director, John Tasker, has a rare opportunity, they are thinking, for a significant statement. Well, it is inevitable that The Cassidy Album be compared to The Doll Trilogy, since by some curious coincidence our two senior playwrights have come up with similar projects. (Has Patrick White thought of autumn and winter in Sarsaparilla?) But in fact the one trilogy experience bears no relation to the other, except in the fact that they challenge us to treat two playwrights as dramatists.

The pair do have one other important similarity: and that is that the authors have found in the task a means of working their way back into their Australian psyche after long absence.

Both works are reassessments of the past from the perspective of middle age. But while Lawler’s task has been to travel backwards to the beginning, the end predestined from the start, The Cassidy Album is a journey forward into darkness: an unsure, experimental, brave and personal voyage of discovery in which the author himself examines, like Oedipus-like, the causes of his own self-destruction.

Summer of the Seventeenth Doll remains the masterpiece of The Doll Trilogy; Kid Stakes and Other Times, while handsome plays in their own right, serve to expand a familiar story and enlarge the emotional force behind the demolition of that doll’s house of seventeen years by the cold draught of middle age. A Hard God will remain the major work of The Cassidy Album; but in this case lays down not the direction of the journey but the ground roots to the other two plays—the rich soil of neurosis and sterility which creates Joe Cassidy—a hero who, again like Oedipus, is not bad but—in Joe’s own word, “trivial”.

And yet the weakness of the trilogy as a totality is that Joe Cassidy’s life, which forms the backbone, is never firmly at the centre. In A Hard God Joe’s brief love affair with Jack Shannon hovers in the darkness like the guilty thing it is; and yet it implicitly parallels Aggie Cassidy’s defiance of God at the end of the play, as though his action had dictated hers.

The whole field of generations of Irish Catholic Australians is ploughed for us in this play; and the barrenness of the stories that follow it are the harvest of empty husks. A Hard God is rich in comedy and tragedy. John Tasker’s fine production with Maggie Kirkpatrick as an earthly and uncomprehending Aggie had her audience sobbing audibly in the gallery at the end of the play.

Kenna is much concerned in the pursuit of form as a means of expression; and the second play is daring and to his audience puzzling. It is a decade later and Joe, now an actor and the author of a touring play,
A bit like making the Black and White Minstrel Show, a plea for racial equality.

**EAST**

**REX CRAMPHORN**

*East* by Steven Berkoff. London Theatre Group at the Arts Theatre Glebe, presented by Eric Dare. Director, Steven Berkoff; Designer, Sylvia Janssen; Music, John Prior; Lighting, John Gorringe; Production Manager, David Harvey. Dad, Matthew Scurfield; Mum, Roy McArthur; Sylv, Sara Mason; Les, Barry Philips; Mike, Steven Berkoff.

*East* is a collection of loosely-articulated sketches (the programme divides them into nineteen scenes) of life and character in the East End of London. The text has been worked into rough iambic pentameters (in effect the clash of meter with slang reminded me not a little of *The Sentimental Bloke*). The work is performed by five actors with an accompanying pianist. One of the main roles is played by the author and director, Steven Berkoff. The other actors represent a friend, a mum and a dad, and a girlfriend. Minimal props are used, with some careful, theatrical (in the rather pejorative sense) lighting, some good physical work (like the sketch—number 12: 'Oh, for adventure'—in which Les (Barry Philips) plays a motor cycle ridden by Steven Berkoff), and some tentative bows in the direction of traditional mime (like the section of Mike's puddena speech—number 17—which parodies Marceau's cage mime as a struggle to enter and escape from giant female pudena).

The scabrous is a large element in *East*'s impact. Words, situations and jokes related to sex and body functions are dwelt on with a kind of challenging bravado and glee. The general audience reaction is a groan of delighted acceptance of this assault on taste and decorum, although the New Arts' wooden floors made protesting departures quite a feature of the first half. This element of the production seemed to me well justified on the level of documentary realism and also on the level of social protest, the aggressive and 'vengeful' level which is the stimulus for the energetic attack of the production. *East* was first performed at the Edinburgh Festival in 1975 and I guess the word for it is proto-punk.

Along with the good energy of the production, however, there is a sense of overkill, or repetitive slogging at points that have been made and ideas that have been conveyed. But then perhaps assaults are always repetitive, and victims always thought the first hit, but he would keep doing it'. I certainly thought the first half awfully long and it

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Tony Sheldon and Alan Wilson in *The Cassidy Album*  
Photo: Jan Dalman

is one of a company on the point of disbanding. Here we have a new set of characters and a new style of play altogether.

The theme of *Furtive Love* is identity. A group of vacant-minded actors, diverting themselves with various sexual aspirations, transform into real flesh as they act out the roles Joe has given them. These roles, in turn, represent the lives of the Cassidy sisters as Joe remembers them. Deprived of these identities by the last performance the group falls apart, with only a photograph and a shabby autograph book to remind them of something soon forgotten. Doris, whose itinerant life was imposed by her parents, goes from play to play, resenting a condition which has deprived her of life. Ned's memory is going and he keeps his biography in breast pocket in fear of losing himself; Tom, a closet bisexual, has, by conspiring against himself, become a pompous bore. And Joe, the observer, torn between his homosexual nature and the moral order in which he believes, in the end opts for his sexuality out of fear of never coming to terms with life.

*Furtive Love* is a startling contrast to *A Hard God*, both in its episodic form, the mirror images of life it imposes one upon another, and the complex clues to the Cassidy family album which are sprinkled through it. The play within a play has, I think, some of the best writing Kenn has done. But there are still bugs in the structure which left me frustrated. I would like, for example, some discussion of the Cassidy sisters by Joe and the cast to elucidate the facts; more importantly Joe is over-pompous and the point that his sisters' affairs were a crucial cause of his own uptightness is not made clear in the text. Nevertheless the fact that these inconsequential people held my attention for two hours makes me feel that in time this play will prove better than I think it is now.

*An Eager Hope*, the last play, returns to safe ground in the Cassidy living room with Aggie. Joe is now in his 30's, mature and self-determined but now doggedly but unsuccessfully fighting off kidney failure. While Joe's wheel of fortune is relentlessly on the downturn, that of his charming but irresponsible brother Francis reaches new heights. Francis, having deserted both wife and mistress, is now being happily pampered by his aging mother. He steals money from his boss, his two women and his son invade the house. Francis is a hollow man, irresistible but hollow. His charm lies in his lack of love and commitment, in contrast to Joe, whose commitments to love and to art bring only pain. This is Francis's moment, not Joe's. My time is not now. Joe says at the end of the play, but it will come.

It is a personal triumph for John Tasker and Peter Kenna to have succeeded in mounting such a project for a week at the Adelaide Festival; and their faith has been rewarded in a transfer to Sydney. As Joe, Tony Sheldon also contributes immeasurably, as he creates with conviction and assurance a personality at three stages of development and in three environments. It is a splendid performance.

Not all the cast manage three roles so well. *An Eager Hope* is Francis's play and Ray Meagher is not a big enough actor for such a role, though his cowardly Paddy in *A Hard God* was delightful. It was a huge undertaking for a cast not all that well prepared by experience. That they succeeded as well as they did is due to the director and the deeply felt performances of Sheldon and that fine actress Maggie Kirkpatrick.

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**THEATRE AUSTRALIA MAY 1978**
didn’t make me feel that the second half would be bound to add much to the experience. I was wrong in the sense that some of the best material is concentrated in the shorter second half. In fact if you saw only the second half you might well feel sorry that you’d missed the first. I found myself thinking that the problem might be a sort of over-refinement of the material—what was once, no doubt, still might be a sort of over-refinement of the material. For an English-speaking audience who live outside a tradition of theatre and theatre-going, the idea that verse can save a play from being dull, and the inherent notion that anything that resembles Shakespeare is automatically more acceptable—all seem rather alien. For me, this formal relic, like the inherited space, the gun-toting, target-missing Biddy Garfield Squeeze and Aleda Johnson, as well as the inherent notion that anything that resembles Shakespeare is automatically more acceptable—all seem rather alien. For me, this formal relic, like the inherited space, the gun-toting, target-missing Biddy

Two aspects troubled me: the rather dull and conventionally derivative physical presentation of some of the material, and a dimly discerned clash between the stated aim of the work and the means chosen. In an interview with Jill Sykes (Herald, 1-4-78) Mr Berkoff says ‘...I wanted to write a kind of expressive, scabrous, lovely, erotic play. It became a bit filthy, so then I shung in a few thees and thous and it sounded like Shakespeare. After that I wrote a few lines in iambic pentameter and it really took off. Shakespeare was very shrewd when he wrote in verse. His plays might have been very dull if he had written them in prose’. For an English-speaking audience who live outside a tradition of theatre and theatre-going, the idea that thees and thous and a verse form could make a play less ‘filthy’, the proposition that verse can save a play from being dull, and the inherent notion that anything that resembles Shakespeare is automatically more acceptable—all seem rather alien. For me, this formal relic, like the inherited space, the gun-toting, target-missing Biddy

The other worry was that the little introduction and resolution sections at beginning and end—the protest framework of ‘we don’t like you’ (the audience), ‘we shouldn’t have to live like this’, ‘be warned’ (‘now you know our names’)—had a quality of ideological justification for what was really only one step from Till Death Do Us Part and Steptoe and Son in the direction of social documentary. Some of the sketches are so cute and amusing, some of the jokes are so funny that it seems mean to give us a good time at the expense of the characters (like Mum and Dad) and then kick us in the teeth for not taking their problems seriously. It’s a bit like making the Black and White Minstrel Show into a plea for racial equality.

But the theory is finally less important than the practical event and East is a vivid enough display of theatrical energy to overcome doubts of that sort.

Melodramas and misfits
SYDNEY SURVEY
ROBERT PAGE

Two home grown plays were premiered in Sydney this month, thankfully not too unusual an event these days, but extraordinary in these cases when both owe more to the nineteenth century than our own. Both are neo-melodramas, in that Michael Boddy’s latest conundrum of heroes and villains, Crushed By Desire is almost more of a musical than a melodrama, and the major piece in An Evening at the Royal Victoria Theatre... under the direction of Rex Cramphorn, is a burletta, The Ran Dan Club.

A major theme of both is the corruption of big business aided and abetted by the police department. Each exalts the individual who in cavalier fashion triumphs over corporate hostile forces. The Ran Dan Club because of its exposure of corruption from the life was banned “as it contains matter of a libellous nature” by the Colonial Secretary in 1843, then forgotten until now.

Sensationalism, black and white morality, exaggerated acting and simple, if cliff-hanging, plots are the stock in trade of melodrama, making it an abiding popular form. The Music Hall cares little for any elitist scorn, with its success resting on its ability to attract the kind of audience who wouldn’t cross the threshold of any other kind of theatre building and its aims of the very highest standards of performance and settings. With Crushed By Desire, also directed by the author, it has excelled itself.

With Boddy proving to be such a master of the form, the Music Hall can continue to call on the very ablest actors and set designers. Bruce Barry, using his voluminous baritone as the dastardly ravisher Sir Garfield Squeeze and Aleda Johnson, as the gun-toting, target-missing Biddy Carroll, give the lie to the adage that actors can’t sing and vice versa. Set in the goldfields the play has a double plot of two beauties, almost subdued and ravished by Squeeze. Tom Lingwood’s genius for design provides sets which, more than a visual backdrop for the actors, are an integral part of the show. The “crusher” of the title, symbolising the methods of and finally consuming the dreaded villain, is a masterpiece—and a hallmark of the Music Hall’s increasingly inventive theatricality.

Staging a previously unseen play, as the student group Cartwheel has, deserves all credit, but it is unfortunate that their skills and standards are so far below those of the
Music Hall. The Ran Dan Club would originally have been part of an evening's programme, so a suitable melange has been concocted supposedly with George Coppin and his actors, in which to set it. The rest of the bill is made up of amusing short sketches and a badly mis-pitched melodrama Fazio; or the Italian Wife, which failed to realize its “great merit (as an) opportunity for robust and full-blooded acting”.

The Ran Dan Club itself is about an eponymous Sydney club of the era whose members (male) found sport in drinking, fisticuffs, foxing law officers and exposing charlatans; their women pursue them to marry and reform their high spirits. Sadly, without a first rate production, the play in the end seems unworthy of all the research which has gone into the staging, styles and music of the period (superbly arranged by Peta Williams). An attractive set, in what is otherwise a barn of a studio, did not go far enough to fulfil the intention of recreating the atmosphere of the famous Royal Victoria Theatre of 1843.

From two indigenous melodramas to two modern American plays. The Curse of the Starving Class is a play of misfits; a description of that socio-economic group who supposedly dream about belonging to a world of achievers. Because of something in their makeup they never have, never do and never will realise their felt potential. Misfits are not only in the play but of it — the most striking one being the magnificent final image, “the story Dad used to tell” of an eagle and cat fighting in mid-air, the soarer dragged down by the terrified earth-bound creature tearing at its throat. Is the majestic eagle meant to symbolise these crippled individuals? Is the cat wicked, predatory society or something, slinking around their personalities? Their curse, the menstrual life blood dripping away, not in fertility but sterility of purpose, never became clear. True, the play therefore avoided didacticism, but ended up in a stalemate of frustration for characters and audience alike.

The nucleus of the wretched family, father, mother, son and daughter, were given by and large sound method treatment by the actors, Hugh Keays Byrne, Carole Skinner, Malcolm Keith and Suzanne Roylance respectively. Emotional intensity generated a certain compulsiveness to begin with, but it soon lost its grip. Ken Horler's direction appeared adequate though lacking imagination in blocking and attention to voice; but the real problem here is the play (and the choice of it) — a misfit in the general standard of Nimrod repertoire.

Vanities at the Ensemble ends in cynicism rather than mawkishness, but with considerably more interest along the way. The situation can hardly be said to be theatrical per se, though following three girls from school to college to the workaday world through conversations at each of these junctures is potentially fascinating material. The three actresses, on stage throughout, making up and changing during intervals at their identical vanity tables, are strong and as convincing as they can be under the painstaking direction of Brian Young, but dissatisfaction creeps in with the realisation that the characters are just predictable stereotypes and any surprises are just that, lacking motivation from within.

The girls progress from being cheerleaders at a small town American school to the equivalent at college, but from there Joanne will marry and have kids, Kathy teach PE, only for want of a positive purpose and Mary will off to Europe to seek her freedom. Their final meeting, their changing accents charting their progress to New York, reveals Joanne to be as invincibly provincial as ever, but not as happy with monogamy and domesticity as she professes; Mary rich and affected as a dealer in erotic art and veteran of musical beds; and Kathy with a new found philosophy living as a wealthy kept woman. The moral has something to do with a blinkered existence as big fish in the tiny pool of institutional life bringing people too late to freedom, initiative and stimulation to ever find personal fulfilment: “All is vanity and vexation of spirit”.

(more NSW Review on Page 31)
THE GLASS MENAGERIE
THE RIGHT MAN

TONY BAKER

The Glass Menagerie by Tennessee Williams. South Australian Theatre Company at the Playhouse, Festival Centre, Adelaide, SA. Director, Ron Blair; Designer, Richard Roberts.
Amanda Wingfield, Patricia Kennedy; Tom Wingfield, Patrick Frost; Laura Wingfield, Linden Wilkinson; Gentleman Caller, Paul Bertram.

Ron Blair’s production of The Glass Menagerie for the South Australian Theatre Company returned to its permanent home in the Festival Centre Playhouse rather than was presented at it. The first performance was at Port Augusta almost three weeks earlier at the start of a successful tour sponsored by the Arts Council.

This is relevant as well as being interesting and worthy since designer Richard Roberts’ set and the production itself had to be crafted with the peculiarities of provincial halls in mind. But it lacked some of the elaboration laid down in Tennessee Williams’ directions, it was effective and suited to the mood of the play.

Also relevant was an interview Mr Blair gave in the local press while the company was exploring the backblocks. “It’s a play with humour”, he said. “It’s got a great deal of feeling and in the hands of an actress like Patricia Kennedy...she can find those depths...and that humour”. Miss Kennedy in the exacting role of Amanda Wingfield does just that. She is proud, domineering, pathetic and vulnerable. In her programme notes Mr Blair whose second production for the SATC this was, refers admiringly to her “plangent, protien voice”. She used it well here and combined it with a capacity for stillness at the right moment that added impact and insight.

More of the humour is brought out by Patrick Frost as Tom. He has the lines and he and Mr Blair make the most of them. Mr Frost, who is apparently moving east after expiry of his current contract with the SATC, has played Williams with the company before; he was Lot in Kingdom of Earth. Experience then benefited here. It was a most attractive performance, cool, professional and never losing sight of the character both as participant and as more detached commentator.

But it would be grotesque to see The Glass Menagerie as comedy and absurd to suggest that Mr Blair underestimates its pathos and embracing sense of claustrophobia. In this he is most ably helped by Linden Wilkinson as Laura. Her interpretation as the girl crippled in more than body is excellent. She is gawky, trapped, vulnerable, a wistfully beautiful victim. Her scene with Paul Bertram as the gentleman caller brings out this poignancy to the full.

In the end it is the claustrophobia which leaves the most powerful impression with these seedy, so-human people and an era in which, in Tom’s words, “the huge middle class of America was matriculating in a school for the blind. Their eyes failed them, or they had failed their eyes, and so they were having their fingers pressed forcibly down on the fiery braille alphabet of a dissolving economy”.

Early Williams, intelligent Blair and shining Wilkinson.

A reading of Ken Ross’ The Right Man was a feature of the series of evenings presenting the work of Australian playwrights that was one of the innovations of Colin George’s first year with the SATC. It has been represented at the Sheridan Theatre by The Stage Company, Adelaide’s second professional group.

The Right Man is about a young idealistic politician with the no-symbolic name of Harold Hope, the machinations of power in smoke-filled rooms and idealism versus compromise. It’s the stuff of politics but the trouble is, to reap a criticism I made on first hearing it, I find Mr Ross’ acquaintance with what actually happens as only slight and his overall view of the business of government and part as naive. Perhaps it is the uneasy compromise between the symbolic and the naturalistic.

I also thought that, given the somewhat different style of presentation, the two productions shared equal honours. In this second one, the work of director John Dick, I especially liked John Noble as Hope, David Hursthouse as the archetypal local member and Jenufa Scott-Roberts as the politician’s wife.

People telling people just who they are... FOCUS

BRUCE MCKENDRY

Let’s Twist Again — Stage Company
There Were Giants In Those Days — Icon Theatre
Just Throw Money — Adelaide Theatre Group

Every Festival has a fringe and Adelaide has its Focus. A central body assisting groups onto the stage. Focus is to be thanked for providing a huge array of performances, exhibitions, entertainments to call them what you will. From the dancing girl to the political comedian to the busker on the street Focus was their umbrella.

To go by the shear number of attractions you would have thought Adelaide to be a town solely of Festival goers whose entire three weeks were taken up with one spectacle, one concert, one after another in a total bombardment. Too much they cried. As it turned out some houses were empty, many seats unfilled (Oh well, say the connoisseurs; tut tut, retort the managements) but for all that Adelaide was alive with a native energy of its own.

The drama groups favoured the Australian play. Out of the closets came the scripts of the past, and to the stage went the rehearsed play. The quality of performance, that relationship between actor and what was once on a page seemed strained at times. The confidence in assuming a role is something an actor must be sure of. For its believability and presence The Stage Company stood out as being on top of their trade. Their production of Let’s Twist Again by Rob George held some excellent moments supported by a cast skilled in their art. To read the play one wonders at its merit, but directed by Brian Dehnag it comes alive with a ferocious determination. One performance in particular, that of Peter Crossley as the flabbergasted John, brought home the need for experienced, sensitive gutsy actors and actresses if a play is going to succeed on any level.

The Steve Spears play There Were Giants in those Days worked on an ideas level but in the flesh seemed to lack the presence of the actual characters who played Superman, Robin and Wonder Woman. Actualities aside it’s hard to get into a respectably balding Superman. Good acting on the part of Graham Duckett, Rob Gerge and Jo Talikis couldn’t overcome the problems of a script built on a myth that everybody’s seen and heard.

The director of Giants Malcolm Blaylock also directed a musical play titled Just Throw Money by Malcolm Purcell with the Adelaide Theatre Group at the round the clock Sheridan. Good entertainment based on a singer of moving talents (Susie O’Connor) the play with its wonderful collection of theatrical eccentrics seemed almost secondary to her heartfelt
I would like to have enjoyed it more.

**THE SEAGULL**

COLLIN O'BRIEN

_The Seagull_ by Anton Chekhov. Hole in the Wall, Perth, WA. Opened 17 March 1978. Director, designer, Mike Morris; Lighting, Stephen Amos; Costumes, Steve Riches. Masha, Mary Haire; Medvedenko, Alan Fletcher; Yakov, Damien Jameson; Kostia, Igor Sas; Sornin, Ray Bluett; Nina, Wanda Davidson; Dorn, Geoff Gibbs; Polina, Margarle Fletcher; Arkadina, Joan Sydney; Trigorin, Bill Dunstone; Shamrayev, John Adam; Maid, Margaret Sandercock; Cook, Martin Christenson.

It is no coincidence that Stanislavski, the first great Chekhov director, should also be the first and still most profound explorer into the nature and fundamental techniques of realistic acting. Before realism was invented the problems of acting were at least clear in that dramatic action, however effective, was unabashedly artifice. As such it could draw attention to its own artificiality without losing credibility by breaking its own internal conventions, as in all those famous Shakesperean allusions to the theatre as a metaphor of life. The problems of acting were those of decorum, of finding appropriate rhetoric and gesture. Stanislavski grasped the nettle of the inherent problems and paradoxes of realism. He knew that the actor could not depend neither on conventions of emotional expression nor powerful poetic language to help him convey the play’s meaning to the audience. To be credible he must reproduce observable reality, which means the inarticulateness, evasiveness (conscious and otherwise) and lack of knowledge of the reality underlying our own actions. And to pile Ossia on Pelion he must reproduce observable reality and the emotions underlying it, (which are necessarily ‘false’) in spite of the way he might happen to feel at the time—the inherent paradox of realism. His answers were in terms of a concentration on the clear understanding of subtext (in rehearsal, let me hasten to add), on the finding through the actor’s emotional memory and creative imagination of the wellsprings of emotion and through them the appropriate action, and finally the precise formulation of this philosophy the mechanics of language make it ungainly in performance. An earlier production by the Guild, of the Brechtian inspired play _Fanshen_, proved more satisfying because of its historical relevance helped also by being performed in the language it was written in. Dance featured, tried at least, in a small festival of its own. From Sydney came the One-Extra Dance Company, the Kinetic Energy group and the Dance Exchange; from Melbourne the Modern Dance Ensemble. It’s odd how support for dance is heavy at the top, the full-on, heavily subsidised gang, yet light at the bottom, the home-grown innovative bunch. As dance moves into drama and drama into dance a development towards a conglomerate theatre is taking place. The many languages merge.

Focus is something every community should have. Of people telling people just who they are and why they’re there at all. Apologies to Michael Beauchamp. It was he who directed _Happy End_ not Malcolm Blaylock.

I would like to have enjoyed it more.

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action into techniques of performance which will work in spite of the particular feelings of the actor 'on the night'.

This meant that the rhythm of performance, the buildup to climaxes, the tones and change of pace, took on a special and unprecedented meaning. I am afraid that for all which is terrific in Mike Morris’s production of The Seagull it sins against such notions of playing, which are essential to Chekhov.

These faults are partly the result of having a cast of uneven experience and technical skill, not aided by a very brief rehearsal period. But the problem for me is deeper than that, to a directorial loss of nerve. To illustrate: Arkadina in begging Trigorin to stay with her flings him about on the sofa like a rag doll, turning what should be a touching and embarrassing scene into Commedia dell’Arte; Trigorin says goodbye to Nina, talking about how he does not wish to leave the beauty of the place, gazing into her face hands on her shoulders the while, thereby making explicit that which I am sure works best as written, as subtext; given what is happening at the moment, the trouble between the servants are too often snatched or elided. In short the rhythms of the play seem to me to be wrong, and too often it is conveyed by playing the subtext, an unforgivable error of unsubtlety.

Mike Morris (designer) used an effective device given the cramped space at his disposal: silver poles with speckled perspex at their tops. It effectively suggested the face setting, and being abstract should not have worried anyone in Act Four. True the furniture before it was realistic, but I think as Svdoboda proved in that famous National Theatre Three Sisters, symbolic and realistic elements can be combined as long as the distinction is clear and precise. In the last Act Nina emerges through these poles, and I for one found it a subtle and effective momentary disposal: silver poles with speckled perspex at their tops. It effectively suggested the face setting, and being abstract should not have worried anyone in Act Four. True the furniture before it was realistic, but I think as Svdoboda proved in that famous National Theatre Three Sisters, symbolic and realistic elements can be combined as long as the distinction is clear and precise. In the last Act Nina emerges through these poles, and I for one found it a subtle and effective momentary

The Australian premiere of a very new, and from all reports very challenging play, to be performed in what remains the most flexible and exciting of Perth’s theatres and directed by Perth’s most consistent director, with the cream of Perth’s acting talent at his disposal. Given such a set of conditions, is it any wonder than one’s increasing days. But it does not speed the passage of the play to a point of creaking with scenes of Diaghilev’s vivid pursuit of Italian beach boys in order to insist on the point. Finally, MacDonald no doubt intends that the multiple echoes of Mann’s Death in Venice used throughout Chinchilla should add support and significance to his own themes. In fact these ‘echoes’ are both clumisly obvious and obviously redundant. If there were a point to them at all it should have been to cast some further light on Diaghilev’s vexed relationships with his proteges Nijinsky and Massine. But it is precisely in his treatment of these relationships in the play that MacDonald is least assured, least convincing, resorting frequently to cliches of language and situation.

MacDonald obviously intended that his
Continued from Page 27

NSW Theatre Review

Production misplaced second to product.

KOLD KOMFORT KAFFEE

LUCY WAGNER

Kold Komfort Kaffe, a cabaret, Nimrod Downstairs, Sydney, NSW. Opened 8 April 1978.

Director, designer, Ken Horler; Stage Manager, Judi Pemell.

With Robyn Archer, John Gaden, Sharon Raschke and Jerry Wesley.

Like its namesake Cold Comfort Farm, Nimrod’s Kold Komfort Kaffee (German for coffee, not cafe), is a spoof of a popular form of entertainment of the 1930’s. The former satirises the romantic novel of that era in its own idiom so successfully that one can enjoy both the style of the original and the spoof simultaneously. In content Robyn Archer and John Gaden also achieve this success; by lulling the middle class audience into enjoying their chosen form of entertainment, they get them to sing along to the rousing chorus of “The Middle Class are Pigs”, and even to be aware of what they are doing. Unfortunately the execution of the form, that of cabaret, provoked a regret for the passing of the original, rather than admiration for the accuracy of the satire.

In cabaret the style precedes the content. A brilliant performer can feed the audience anything; for the sugar of style they will swallow any pill of propaganda—should it be given to them. At Nimrod Downstairs production is misplaced second to product. Archer, Gaden and their excellent musicians are unquestionably talented, but in a medium that appears to be new to them they are inadequately presented.

It is distinctly to a performer’s disadvantage not to be seen, and the cramped, low corner stage makes it an evening of craning for the audience seated at tables on the flat, where as a higher, if smaller, back-wall stage with a cat-walk through the tables would have enabled actors to move, more of the audience to see and the lighting to aid. Martin Sharp’s cartoon background is fascinating, but potentially distracting (and why is Ken Horler the magic pudding?). Robyn Archer’s reputation precedes her as a lady who gives it hard and straight. Her choice of material for the evening is broad and complementary, and much well-delivered (though I would quibble with the suitability of poetry recitations, even of Brecht, in such an evening), but for some reason she limited her vocal range entirely to volume, and the vital lyrical side of, particularly Brecht’s, songs never surfaces to contrast with its hard hitting counterpart. “Ah” said a veteran of the original Berlin cabarets, “but Marlene Dietrich could also make you cry.”
BEGINNING BALLET: From The Classroom To The Stage
by Joan Lawson
This excellent handbook for students of all ages provides a basic guide to practice, descriptions of the costume for class and stage (what to wear and how to make it) and detailed advice to parents on such questions as the age a child should begin, how to choose a teacher and the different types of training.
A&C Black $11.20

BALLET: (Teach Yourself Book Series)
by Ian Woodward
Here is the book for both beginner and the keen ballet-goer. The story of Dance is followed from its beginnings with the Romans and Ancient Greeks, through the Renaissance and the Romantic Ballet, to the Modern Dance of the twentieth century.
Hodder & Stoughton $9.45

THE CLASSIC BALLET
Basic Technique and Terminology
by Kirstein, Stuart, Dyer, Balanchine.
This handsome book is a basic visual dictionary of ballet — of the positions, steps, movements, and combinations that together make up its vocabulary. There are 156 pages of accurate line drawings by Carlus Dyer, remarkably illustrating not only the stance and posture for basic ballet steps, but also their preparation, practice, direction, significance, and motion.
A&C Black $21.60

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Don't Piddle Against The Wind, Mate was first performed at the NIDA 1977 Jane Street Theatre season on 20 July 1977.

The original cast was
Frank Bourke
Bob Davies
Norreen Davies
Phillip Sutton
Thelma Davies
Normie Pitcher

John Clayton
Ron Graham
Noni Hazlehurst
John Paramor
Maggie Kirkpatrick
Michael Ferguson

The play was directed by John Tasker and designed by Bill Pritchard.

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ACT 1

Don't Piddle Against The Wind, Mate

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KENNETH ROSS

Four years ago Ken Ross made a commitment to leave Victoria to establish himself as a writer in South Australia. "It seemed the ideal place to stimulate such things."

After one early expectation of a production of his first play Wally Woodbee's Bucks Night the company involved folded and nothing happened for him until this play got him a ticket to the Canberra Playwrights Conference in 1976 as an observer playwright.

It was here in coming in contact with such writers as John Powers, Ray Lawler and Dorothy Hewitt he found the impetus to carry on writing. "There were so many good writers around I realised then I would have to push myself harder."

The following year he was back again with his play Don't Piddle Against The Wind, Mate being workshopped but still without a production to his credit.

However that has all changed; with a span of nine months since the Playwrights Conference his work will have been produced in four States, Queensland, NSW, Victoria and South Australia adding up to seven different productions in all. These plays are: Don't Piddle Against The Wind, Mate (Space Theatre — Adelaide, Jane St. — Sydney and now the Queensland Theatre Company); Breaker Morant (MTC Melbourne); You're Mine, Alice (Little Theatre — Adelaide, two productions); and The Right Man (Stage Co. — Adelaide).
AUTHOR'S NOTE

It is several years now since I watched the real ‘Don’t Piddle Against The Wind’ saga. A man refusing to pay his social levy to his union threatened, abused and sent into Coventry by those that had been life long friends — all over a social levy!

A past Union Branch Secretary, an old-time Union member to end his final working days in such intense bitterness. (The real story is, as yet, not concluded). As an onlooker to what was happening to the real Bob Davies and his workmates, it seemed things had gone mad; great ideals were being wasted.

Bob Davies is a victim of our age rather than of a dogma. Such a victim could as easily be a business executive, for today it can be anyone ‘out there’ calling to be heard above the machinery of anonymous tribal power.

All characters are fictional etc.

CHARACTERS

BOB DAVIES
Perhaps small in stature. Would, except for his working man appearance, seem at home in an academic world.

THELMA DAVIES
Outgoing, domineering, rather vain, but not dislikeable.

FRANK BURKE
Physically strong appearance, but long out of condition. Although at times he is unsympathetic toward Bob his mate­ship is genuine. He is at times shown to be aggressive but his Irish sentiment should be equally apparent not only to make the character work, but to a great degree, make the play ‘work’. In short he should be seen as essentially likeable.

A young vivacious school teacher.

NORRENE DAVIES
Young Union Representative. Should be played with sympathy.

NORMIE PITCHER

SETTING

The play is set in an urbanised provincial town, somewhere on the coast outside the city of Melbourne. It has seen much growth in the post war years and, with it, the changes and problems of urban living.

There is one set throughout the play, the lounge room of the Davies.

The set is so constructed that the kitchen, with its bar style servery can be partly viewed by the audience. Upstage right, a passage leads offstage. Left of kitchen (or behind kitchen) there is a back door entrance, right of which is a window. On the window sill sit several small pot plants. Left of stage there is also a door.

The furniture is all post war, beginning with the couch and armchairs of the forties advancing piece by piece into the stereogram belonging to NORRENE DAVIES.

The other furniture consists of a perhaps laminex table and chrome chairs and, dating from the mid-fifties, a coffee table positioned near the couch. A bookcase stands near centre stage. On this there is placed a brass gun-shell, and several family photos. On the wall left of stage, hangs a wedding photo. Above fireplace sits perhaps two sporting trophies of Norreen’s and an old photo of Bob in AIF uniform (or something). Centre stage above bookcase there hangs a lone wooden head carving of Papua New Guinea origin: the lighting is such that its presence can be felt at given periods throughout the play.

As the play opens a large man in his late fifties sits at the table covered by a grey rug which he, Frank Burke, is examining closely. On the rug are placed empty beer glasses, two large ashtrays full of cigarette butts, and two packs of cards roughly stacked. Offstage is heard the muffled sound of car door. On entering left of stage, stands Bob, wearing a cardigan with a collar. His pants hang loosely on him. He is sitting perhaps two sporting trophies of Norreen’s, and several family photos. On the wall left of stage there is a door.

The other furniture consists of a perhaps laminex table and chrome chairs and, dating from the mid-fifties, a coffee table positioned near the couch. A bookcase stands near centre stage. On this there is placed a brass gun-shell, and several family photos. On the wall left of stage, hangs a wedding photo. Above fireplace sits perhaps two sporting trophies of Norreen’s and an old photo of Bob in AIF uniform (or something). Centre stage above bookcase there hangs a lone wooden head carving of Papua New Guinea origin: the lighting is such that its presence can be felt at given periods throughout the play.

The front door is heard to shut, followed by a silence. Finally Bob appears hesitantly left of stage, in passage doorway. Sheepishly he returns to his friend who is still examining the rug over the table. Bob Davies in contrast to his larger friend is a short man, even frail looking, although he could be described as ‘wiry’. There is an appearance of sadness that hangs about him, although this should not be confused with defeatism. He is wearing a cardigan with a casual check coloured shirt, done up at the collar. His pants hang loosely on him. He is smoking heavily on his pipe which is (until last eye about everything.

That was a time when we saw eye to eye about everything. (Frank goes to kitchen and returns with two cans of beer — he gives
Frank: You know I don’t know how to take her fiancé — what’s his name again?

Bob: Christ no.

Frank: It worries Thelma. Tell me, how’s Geoff and Joan?

Bob: Well we don’t see much of them, you know how busy Geoff is, but we got some photos in the mail of the kids the other day. Now where are they? (Looks on mantle piece) Ah, here we are.

Frank: Gee, you a grandfather — time does move on.

Bob: Yes, — well they grow up, your kids, and I guess they have got to go their own way like — like we did, it is their life now.

Frank: Yeah, but, ah, but ah, it went.

Bob: What went?

Frank: The time went — our time.

Bob: You’re not usually so introspective.

Frank: What?

Bob: Tell me Frank do you remember how we felt when we came back from the war, like being born again — the wattles they were in full bloom —

Frank: Yeah, I do.

Bob: It was as if we were seeing our first spring. Everything new and fresh not like those dried-up yesterday countries we left behind. But a tomorrow bursting to flower. And me, saying to you Frank, don’t they look lovely the...

Frank: (enthusiastically) The wattles, yeah the wattles, I do remember the bright yellow wattles, you were even cranky on plants then.

Bob: You do remember.

Frank: I had forgotten.

Bob: But you do remember now!

Frank: Yeah I remember that day.

Bob: And the hope we had, do you remember that too?

Frank: Ah hell! Bob things have changed, we were young then.

Bob: Yes, we were young then.

Frank: Come on drink your beer.

Bob: Is that where it went?

Frank: What went?

Bob: Ah nothin’.

Frank: Knock it off will yer! (There is a short silence) Did yer know who called in on me the other day? Captain Morris, he was passin’ through the town he was.

Bob: Froggy Morris?

Frank: Yer, when he remembered I lived here, can you imagine that. Captain Morris looking me up, rememberin’ I lived here, he even took the trouble to go to the RSL to find out where I lived, can you imagine? I always thought of him as such a prick, poor bastard. But you know what he said, he said ‘Corporal’, yeah, ‘Corporal Burke’ he said, we both laughed at that — ‘You had guts’, that’s what he said, ‘you had guts’. You know I’d even forgotten but he reckons I saved his life at El Alamein that night we were on patrol and he got it — I never told him I nearly left the ol’ bastard — not that I was scared, you know that, it was just that it seemed a good place to leave him...

Frank: (Drinks from can, short pause) Do yer know, that night, the bastard had the hide to keep givin’ orders while I had him on my back, that’s why he remembered me, as his bloody packhorse, he got a medal out of that night, remember? — on my back he got a medal! Well, that’s their class ain’t it, — gettin’ rewards on the workin’ man’s back. But I gotta admit I remembered me, the ol’ bastard — God he did look old too, he really did.

Bob: We all do.

Frank: Hey, remember that night we went into that ‘Iti’ shelter. You, you bastard picked up that bottle of plonk that was booby trapped, if it had gone off like it was supposed it would be history now. Remember?

Bob: (draws on his pipe heavily) I’ve got something I’ll show you. (He stands up and goes over to his bookcase)

Frank: Don’t give me any more of your ’book bull’ tonight, spare me that tonight mate — you know I wonder if you would have got through the war without me, I do. (Bob removes two books from his bookshelf slowly, then removes an object which is out of sight from the audience and replaces the books with his free hand) What are yer hidin’ — come on what have you got?

Bob: Hold your horses. Bob walks back slowly, both hands clasping something in his palms, which he opens on reaching Frank.

Frank: A bloody grenade, an ’Iti’ grenade, Christ, where did you get it — here give me a look. (He takes it and looks at it, then tosses it in the air) Why it brings back that old feelin’ don’t it? It really does.

Bob: It’s the same grenade you were talkin’ about. It was in the rafters, I spotted it the other day while I was re-wiring, I’d forgotten I’d planted it there years ago.

Frank: To think this was the little bugger which was supposed to get us — fancy, fancy that, what a souvenier. (He imitates throwing it, suddenly pulling the pin out).

Bob: God! Hang onto it, it’s still detonated — come on slowly get that pin back in, slowly.

Frank: You’re — you’re kiddin’ me aren’t you?

Bob: Frank, get that pin back in for Christ sake.

Frank (frightened) Ah shit, you’re determined to kill us both. I should have guessed, I should have, I should have. (He slowly replaces the pin) You bastard, oh you bastard — to think that thing could have got us after all these years — oh yer bastard, here take it — gently for Christ sake — where’s my beer I gotta have a drink (He is obviously shaken and takes several hefty mouthfuls of beer) You, you little twerp, me Frank Burke, nearly gettin’ it thirty years after the bloody war’s over — a casualty of the second world war — shit can you imagine that, how would they explain that, my name being up on the honour board of the Town Hall — a casualty of the second world war[1977, shit — they’d have to put my name up wouldn’t they? Shit how would that go over — it bloody well wouldn’t it, I’d be the laughing stock of the town all because of you — what are you doin’ with the thing anyway, yer got no right havin’ it, yer ought to know that, why I’ve got half a mind to do yer in myself — you take it down to the cop shop tomorrow, yer understand — say you found it, say anything but get rid of that thing.

Bob: I intend to. (He grins slightly)

Frank: (goes to the kitchen — offstage) You get rid of that thing you hear, I’m not comin’ in until you’ve put it back. Bob returns it to the bookcase.

Bob: It’s away now.

Frank: Good. (returns to the room and paces up and down) Not that I was frightened of it, yer know that — but, it don’t make sense to get it with an ’Iti’ grenade, — not after all these years, shit if I’d just been injured just imagine the fight I’d have gettin’ a TPI pension.

Bob: Come on admit it — you were scared.

Frank: Listen yer know what I said before was right, yer know everybody reckons I had guts.

Bob: Sure. Will you second my motion on Monday night?

Frank: You’re not going to bring that up again — no, the bet’s off remember, the answer is no, — I’m not a mug, and don’t you be either.

Bob: You won’t then?

Frank: No bloody fear — get Fitzy to do it if you want, he reckons he’s with yer — he said he’d do it, — he’s nearly as cracked as you.

Bob: Look — it’s the annual meeting, it’s the only real chance to make an issue of it.

Frank: So you get a seconder, so what? Go on, so what, don’t think you’re going to get any votes — it’s crazy — stupid and by tomorrow you’ll think so too.

Bob: The average bloke will give yer a go, they’ll listen...

Frank: Shut up. I don’t want to hear any more of your bull. (Bob shrugs his shoulders, they drink their beer in silence) You know it is mad ain’t it?

Bob: What’s mad?

Frank: This world.

Bob: Absolutely.

Frank: Do yer really think so?

Bob: In most ways.

Frank: Where’s it goin’ to end?

Bob: What?

Frank: The madness.
**Bob:** Boom.

**Frank:** You really think so?

**Bob:** Where else is there to go.

**Frank:** We always find a way out — we always do.

**Bob:** Sure — but in the end people are goin' to want it.

**Frank:** Want what?

**Bob:** The Boom.

**Frank:** Ah!

**Bob:** They'll crave for it.

**Frank:** You need treatment you do.

**Bob:** They'll crave for the peace that will come with it.

**Frank:** With the boom?

**Bob:** (looking towards the audience) Yeah the boom, the silence after the boom, can you imagine the calm, the beautiful silent calm, soft, peaceful calm silence. *(There is a silence)* Do you ever think what it's all about, now and after now. What purpose do we serve Frank, can you tell me that?

**Frank:** Fancy Fitzy buyin' two bullets to give him four of a kind?

**Bob:** The odds to that are one thousand to one against him doin' it.

**Frank:** Buggin' me, with your knowledge why don't you play Bob? Just to be sociable, why don't yer?

**Bob:** As I said, I like watching.

**Frank:** But you know the game, yer got all the odds worked out.

**Bob:** Drop it will yer.

**Frank:** OK, OK, if that's how yer want it.

**Bob:** That's how I want it!

**Frank:** You're a stubborn bastard.

**Bob:** That was my old man's fault.

**Frank:** Bein' stubborn or bein' a bastard?

**Bob:** Both I suppose, my God I wish my old man was alive to see some of the blokes runnin' our Union here.

**Frank:** Tell me something new.

**Bob:** I'm tryin'.

**Frank:** Very Tryin'. *(The front door is heard to open)* Who's that?

**Bob:** Perhaps someone is opening the door for you.

**Frank:** What's that?

**Bob:** Nothin'. It's sure to be Norreen.

**Frank:** With — him.

**Bob:** Leave it.

Norreen enters followed by Phillip Sutton — both are in their early twenties. They have been out to the drive-in and are dressed accordingly.

**Bob:** Hello love, how was the drive-in?

**Norreen:** Well, ah —

**Phillip:** Good, it was good. Hello Mr Davies, Mr Burke.

**Frank:** Frank.

**Phillip:** Sure Frank.

**Norreen:** Hello Uncle Frank.

**Frank:** Hey what ever happened to your little girl figure? *(Admiring her somewhat revealing top)*

**Norreen:** I doubted it — coffee for everyone?

**Frank:** Not for me.

**Norreen:** You need it most.

**Frank:** You don't talk to your Godfather like that!

**Norreen:** *(teasing Frank)* My dear oldfather.

**Frank:** Godfather — can't you control her any more Bob, she unnerves me.

**Bob:** She's old enough to control herself.

**Frank:** *(looking at Phillip)* That I would worry about.

**Bob:** Sit down Phillip. Phillip looks awkwardly at the couch and sits down next to Frank. Frank, looking just as awkward, moves up the couch to put more room between Phillip and himself.

**Bob:** Have a good night, too.

**Phillip:** Yes, yes a good night thanks — how did the card game go?

**Bob:** Good, I think everybody enjoyed themselves.

**Phillip:** Did you win?

**Frank:** Win! He doesn't win or lose, he don't — how can yer if you don't play? Do you play?

**Phillip:** Not poker.

**Frank:** That's the trouble these days. I suppose there wouldn't be a young buck in a hundred who knows how to play poker — bet you ain't even played swy either?

**Phillip:** Swy?

**Frank**: *(to Bob)* See what did I tell yer, swy — two up!

**Phillip:** No, I haven't even played two — swy either.

**Frank:** Two-swys? What hope have yer got — two up?

**Phillip:** What hope have yer got — two-up mate — you should try it.

**Phillip:** Yes, I'll keep it in mind.

**Frank:** Well, on second thoughts your idea of two-up and mine might be different, quite different!

**Norreen:** *(from kitchen)* Is Uncle Frank embarrassing you Phillip?

**Phillip:** No.

**Norreen:** His vocabulary might be small but his turnover is phenomenal.

**Frank:** Well, I like that!

**Norreen:** Good, I think you better have some coffee.

**Frank:** You think I need it or somethin' — I ain't drunk yer know. You don't think that, now do yer?

**Norreen:** *(from kitchen)* Oh no — but you look like you might be suffering from bottle fatigue.

**Frank:** *(to Norreen)* Well, I like that. The trouble is you young uns are all too serious.

**Norreen:** *(from kitchen)* What's he do?

**Phillip:** He's in the drapery business.

**Frank:** *(to Norreen)* Hey, have you set a weddin' date yet?

**Norreen:** Seven months and three days — dad how's that carnation coming along?

**Frank:** *(looking at his daughter)* I think it is beautiful. *(Come and have a look. Frank and Phillip look at each other awkwardly.)*

**Norreen:** *(from kitchen)* Well it won't be long now.

**Phillip:** No it won't, — what won't?

**Frank:** You and Norreen getting hitched.

**Phillip:** That's right, not long.

**Frank:** I remember when she pissed on my pants.

**Phillip:** Who — Norreen?

**Frank:** Yeah, she pissed on my pants! Mind you it's more than twenty years ago now.

**Phillip:** *(more put out than amused)* I must say she has never been that intimate with me.

**Norreen:** Intimate! What are you sayin'.

**Phillip:** I said...

**Frank:** I know what yer said and I'll tell yer, hands off, understand!

**Phillip:** *(taken aback)* Alright, don't get excited.

**Frank:** That's what I'm tellin' you to do, not to get excited! I'm a wake up to you young blokes, I am, my God in my time... 

**Phillip:** Yes, I'm sure.

**Frank:** Well as long as yer understand, she's like a daughter to me, she is.

**Phillip:** I wonder what Sigmund Freud would
Frank: I don’t know him — so I reckon it wouldn’t be any of his bloody business.

Phillip: You don’t know who Fred is?

Frank: Well if he lives in this town he can’t be a drinker — otherwise I’d know him.

Phillip: Yes, I’m sure you would.

Frank: Hey, hey fella you tryin’ to be smart with me?

Phillip: No, I don’t — have to try.

Frank: (standing up) Who in the fuckin’ hell do you think you are? Don’t you come in here, with your fancy plum-in-the-mouth accent. (There is a silence) Frank: You think you are? Don’t you ever think you are? Don’t you come in here, five bob a go in Jimmy Sharman’s tents when I was fifteen and, I used to win! So don’t push me, I don’t have to put up with that kind of smart something.

(Thelma enters wearing dressing gown, hair in rollers and pearl rimmed glasses)

Thelma: Are you trying to wake the dead? Oh Phillip how are you?

Phillip: Well if he lives in this town he can’t be a drinker — otherwise I’d know him.

Frank: Hey, you’re just looking for trouble ain’t yer.

Thelma Davies enters wearing dressing gown.

Thelma: Are you trying to wake the dead? Oh Phillip are you? (Looks at Frank) What’s going on? There is an awkward pause.

Frank: (laughing the matter off) Ah nothin’, nothin’ love. Gee you look beautiful tonight sweet.

Thelma: I’m not sure how I should take that.

Frank: With love dear.

He walks over and swings Thelma around in ballroom fashion. She giggles in a young girl fashion.

Thelma: Oh Frank (she sees Phillip looking disapprovingly at the scene) Frank, behave yourself, really. (Trying to gain her dignity) Don’t take any notice of Frank — he’s never grown up, Phillip.

Phillip: (staring coldly at Frank) Yes, yes so I notice.

Thelma: (feeling she should defend Frank) Well, he is fun, good fun.

Enter Norreen with her father carrying a deep red carnation.

Norreen: Look at this (displaying flowers).

Thelma: Oh Phillip look at this — Norreen’s going to carry these on her wedding day.

Norreen: It’s a new breed he’s developed.

Thelma: I’ll get a vase.

Bob: Six years work in that Phillip.

Frank: I’m off.

Phillip: That’s quite an achievement Mr Davies.

Norreen: Quite an achievement? I think it’s fantastic!

Bob: Yeh, well it keeps me out of trouble.

Frank: Well I’m off.

Norreen takes the flower to the kitchen and returns with it in a single vase which she places on the mantle piece. The fondness between Norreen and Bob can be seen in this moment.

Frank: Well I’m off.

He swigs the last of his can.

Bob: You’re not drivin’ are yer?

Frank: No, no mate, I’m just steering, the car does the rest.

Bob: Better stay here tonight.

Frank: She’s right, no worries.

Thelma: You can sleep in the spare room, I really think you should Frank.

Frank: I’m alright I tell yer, watch this (drops his car keys on the floor and proceeds to look for them) Look, see what did I tell yer.

Phillip: I’ll drive you home.

Frank: (insulted) No, no one’s drivin’ me home, old Frank can look after himself, you look after your future father-in-law, he’s the bloke who needs lookin’ after, believe me.

Norreen: I think he’s quite capable of looking after himself.

Frank: I hope so, I really do.

Bob: Don’t worry about me.

Frank: I won’t, I won’t, and don’t expect me to back your mug motion.

Bob: Forget I ever asked you.

Frank: Why do I have to have a mate like you when everyone else has got normal ones.

Thelma: What are you talkin’ about?

Frank: I’m talkin’ about this mad idea of your husband’s.

Thelma: What mad idea?

Norreen: (pause) Come on just what is this motion?

Frank: Not payin’ the social levy — Bob wants it to be voluntary.

Norreen: What’s a social levy?

Frank: A fund we put into every week for our social nights.

Norreen: Well he shouldn’t have to put into that if he doesn’t want to, should he — he never goes.

Frank: The point is our Union tells you you’ve got to put in (he hangs his fist on the table) and when they tell yer, that’s it!

Norreen: Well it doesn’t seem fair.

Frank: What’s fair? Listen Nor, I ain’t against your father, he knows that, I’m just tryin’ to get it into that thick skull you don’t buck our Union.

Bob: I’m not tryin’ to buck our Union.

Frank: Bugger me, I’d hate to see you try then!

Bob: I’ve paid my Union dues and Monday night I’m going to have my say about the levy, that’s all, my say.

Frank: That’s all! Do you really think you’ll get one vote, do yer? Except maybe Fitzy’s. Do yer really reckon anyone would back a bloody silly motion sayin’ that the social levy be voluntary and not compulsory?

Bob: They might, they might.

Frank: But you won’t get it through.

Bob: Probably not.

Frank: Then what’s the point?

Bob: I’m entitled to my say, everyone is — that’s my point.

Frank: Ha, ha.

Bob: There is nothing in the constitution that says you have to pay a social levy.

Frank: The fact is, our Union says you pay, so that’s it, you pay.

Thelma: Really!

Frank: Thelma you go to your church every Sunday and you hit your kick when they pass the plate around don’t you?

Thelma: That’s different.

Frank: I say it ain’t as different as you think — we are both after a return on our money — no mistake — only difference we don’t pretend otherwise and we want our divy now, in this world.

Thelma: Really! Sometimes Frank Burke you sound just like Bob.

Phillip: It’s a bit mandatory specially for a group that doesn’t believe in conscription.

Frank: You stay out of this — no offence but this is a sort of a family thing.

Thelma: He is one of the family now.

Frank: I mean the Union — he’s on the other side.

Phillip: That’s a bit much! How would you know.

Frank: You’ve got the look of a bloody Lib.

Thelma: Frank — you apologize for that.

Frank: For calling him a Lib?

Thelma: Well no — for saying he’s on the other side.

Frank: He’s a boss, ain’t he? Look, I don’t mean no offence, after all if he’s a Lib he shouldn’t be offended, if he ain’t well he could never take the remark to heart, could he? (pause) OK I apologise, I’m sorry. I’m on my way. But I’ll tell you somethin’ he’s flogging a dead horse if he don’t pay that levy. And, he’s lookin’ for trouble, real trouble if he don’t.

Thelma: Oh, you men, you take your affairs so serious.

Bob: Frank, there’s no one who has been more of a Union man than me and my father before me.

Frank: I know that, but does anyone else?

Bob: Most do.

Frank: Don’t kid yourself mate. Times have moved on, who remembers your old man except you? All the old faces are goin’ or have gone. No one remembers except for today and maybe yesterday. Anything further back is pre-historic. That’s the way it is now. Well Uncle Frank’s goin’ to hit the track.

Thelma: Make sure it doesn’t hit you.

Bob: I’ll see you out.

Frank: (turning back at the doorway) Goodnight.

Thelma & Norreen: Goodnight.

Bob: Don’t forget your tomatoes (passes paperbag of tomatoes to Frank) — don’t squash ‘em.

Frank exits.

Norreen: Peaceful.

Thelma: Frank was just letting off steam — a man’s got to do that sometimes.

Phillip: Hot air would be more accurate.

Thelma: Oh don’t take too much notice of Frank, Phillip, he’s had a little too much to drink tonight.

Phillip: Yes, I guess so, I must be off too.

Thelma: Peaceful.
Goodnight Mrs. Davies.

Bob returns.

Norreen: I'll see you to the door.

Thelma: There was no reason to get worked up over that Union business — was there Bob?
Bob: No reason.

Thelma: Well I wouldn't want to see any trouble.
Bob: I'm only goin' to put a motion, in the proper way — that's all. There won't be any trouble.

Thelma: Good.

Darkness except for light on PNG head carving.

**SCENE 2**

It is the following Monday — the setting is the same. Phillip is sitting in Bob Davies armchair.

Norreen is on his lap in a long embrace. There are two cups of coffee on the table. Phillip's hands begin to wander.

**Norreen:** (picking up his coffee and taking a great gulp)

**Phillip:** Two spoons.

**Norreen:** All I wanted was to be heard.

**Phillip:** Thanks all the same Mr. Davies, but I'm drinking coffee.

**Bob:** Much better for you too (he goes into the kitchen and returns with a can of beer) How was the basketball?

**Norreen:** Good. Phillip: Good.

**Phillip:** How did the meeting go?

**Bob:** Alright, not bad, good turn up, there was a good turn up. Normie Pitcher is President again for his second year, there weren't any other nominations.

**Norreen:** The meeting finished late.

**Bob:** I've been at the pub, thought I'd call in tonight, been a long time since I've drunk at a pub.

**Frank:** (to Norreen and Phillip) Good evening. (To Bob) Ah, don't be like that.

**Bob:** I'm not payin'. I wasn't heard, I was entitled to be heard.

**Frank:** I won't cool off.

**Bob:** Yes yer will, it'll be different tomorrow you'll see. (Frank goes to the kitchen and returns with a can of beer) Raising his can. Charmin' Good luck!

**Norreen:** Uncle Frank, Dad's not asking a lot, if, it's as serious as you say, then surely you, of all people, can help him.

**Frank:** It's not that simple.

**Norreen:** What is?

**Frank:** Alright, alright, I don't like it one bit, but alright, I'll see if I can round up a few extra heads, maybe they'll listen, but you'll have to do your own battlin', you understand!

**Bob:** I understand.

**Frank:** Alright, alright. (The lights fade away) If you're silly enough, alright, god help me, god help you. But I really don't reckon you know what you're doin', but worse I don't know why you're doin' it.

**Bob:** To be heard, to be heard Frank. I'm going to have another beer, do you want one?

As the lights fade the PNG head carving remains lit.

**SCENE 3**

The scene is the same, the following Friday evening. Bob Davies is staring out his back window in thought. Thelma is in her dressing gown just finishing ironing.

**Thelma:** (switching off her iron) When are they due?

**Bob:** Around eight o'clock — should be
Thelma: How many comin'?
Bob: Eight or nine — I don't know. (Bob starts pacing the floor)
Thelma: I thought Frank might have told you.
Bob: Well he didn't — but he said he was going to round up a few — I don't expect more than a few — that's enough to get the ball rolling.
Thelma: Well I hope you know what you are doin'.
Bob: I do.
Thelma: It doesn't make much sense to me.
Bob: Don't think about it then.
Thelma: Frankly I wouldn't waste my time.
Bob: One thing I've got in this world is some good mates and the name of Davies still means somethin' around these parts, especially in our Union, you'll see Thelma, you'll see.
Thelma: Will you stop pacing the floor.
Silence.
Bob: Would you like a drink?
Thelma: You're drinkin' too much lately.
Bob: Yeah — have a sherry?
Thelma: No thanks.
Silence.
Bob: Well I'm goin' to have a beer.
Thelma: You can't leave it alone lately, can yer. (Bob ignores the remark and goes to the kitchen and return with a beer can) Don't make so much noise this week.
Bob: (finishes drinking) Yeah.
Thelma: Silence.
Thelma: I believe Frank's gettin' noisier every year, he should settle down.
Silence.
Bob: Too late for that.
Thelma: It's unhealthy for a man livin' alone like he does, he's let himself go since his mother died, he has.
Bob: I suppose so.
Thelma: I think I'll go down to his place one afternoon and give his place a bit of a clean-up.
Bob: You'd need a week.
Thelma: An afternoon will have to do.
Bob: I don't think he would let you. (Silence) How's Geoff?
Thelma: Alright — the kids both have colds at the moment —
Bob: Did he say he was coming up?
Thelma: He's so busy, you know.
Bob: Sure — he's always busy, sometimes I wonder whether I've really got a son.
Thelma: Don't be silly.
Silence.
Bob: Joan has never got used to us, has she?
Thelma: What do you mean?
Bob: You know what I mean.
Silence.
Thelma: Norreen's told me she's thinking of not getting married in our church.
Bob: That's their business.
Thelma: I think Father Brady should see them.
Bob: Stay out of it, Thelma. There is the familiar knock of Frank's at the back door.
Thelma: Come in!

Bob goes to the side board. There is a short silence.

Frank: G'day, how are yer? (holds cans under his arm)
Thelma: I'm just off to bed.
Frank: You don't have to go — just because I've arrived — besides your husband's here — ah, no offence Bob.
Thelma: Oh you're a shocker Frank Burke.
Frank: Got a can in the hand already.
Bob: Didn't anybody come with you?
Frank: No.
Bob: It's getting late.
Frank: How about a can?
Thelma: Since when have you asked?
Frank: I'll get you one.

Bob: (to head carving). Pause.
Frank. I've arrived — besides your husband's here —

Frank: He takes the pack of cans off Frank and goes to the kitchen, returning with a can for Frank.
Frank: Thanks mate.
Bob: What's the time?
Frank: Just after eight — it's early, ay aren't you havin' a drink love?
Thelma: No, I'm right.
Frank: Come on love — a sherry, it'll do you good.
Thelma: Oh, alright.
Frank: That's the spirit love — get her a sherry will yer Bob?
Thelma: Just a small one.
Frank goes to the side board.
Frank: You can be a devil when you want to.
Thelma: Don't talk like that.
Frank: Like what? You're talkin' to Frank, remember, the bloke who introduced you's two to each other.
Thelma: I wouldn't brag about that!
Frank: He ain't so bad — why I can remember it was love at first sight between you's two that night at the oddfellows ball.
Thelma: I was too vain to wear my glasses at the time.
Bob returns with the sherry.
Frank: Why Bob didn't come up bad on the dance floor if I remember, Bob, why don't you get out more these days — do you both good?
Thelma: The last time we went out together was to see Gone with the Wind, which is what he did for five years after that.
Frank: He's done you better than that love. Take her out Bob — take her out next week.
Bob: Would you like to go out Thelma?
Thelma: Oh no, I love it at home, what would my ironing do without me — no I'm afraid those days are gone.
Frank: You're as young as you feel you know.
Thelma: That explains it then!
Frank: What?
Thelma: Nothing.
Silence.
Frank: Have another drink love.
Thelma: I'm still drinking this one.
Frank: Then drink it up. (He takes a large guzzle of his can) Hey — come on love, drink it up — come on.
She empties her glass in one mouthful.
Thelma: Just one more then.
Frank takes Thelma's glass.
Frank: That's the girl — here fill them up again will yer mate.
He hands Thelma's glass to Bob, who goes off to fill it.
Thelma: No-one's arrived yet.
Frank: It's early.
Thelma: Well someone should have arrived by now.
Frank: Don't worry love.
Thelma: I'm not.
Frank: How's the engaged couple?
Thelma: I want Norreen to get Phillip to see Father Brady, but she won't.
Frank: Hey, leave me out of that.
Thelma: I don't care that he's not one of our faith, but I do think he should at least talk with Father Brady. Norreen is even talkin' of not being married in the church.
Frank: Thelma it ain't my business.
Thelma: I do like Phillip, you understand, he is a nice boy.
Frank: Oh yeah, I had him twigged for a poof, but he stood up to me. Yeah, he's OK.
Bob returns to the room with drinks. There is a short silence.

Bob: They are comin' aren't they?
Frank: I wish you'd get rid of that bloody head carving, always starin' down at a bloke — boo! (to head carving).
Bob: Frank, I said, they are comin' aren't they?
Frank: Well you know how things are.
Bob: No, how are they?
Pause.
Frank: Not good mate.
Bob: What do you mean, not good?
Frank: Everyone was workin' tonight.
Silent.
Bob: Everyone workin' night shift!
Frank: Yeah, yeah, that's right.
Bob: Don't give me that!
Frank: They were, rigidly-didge.
Bob: Don't give me that Frank — no-one's comin' that's it, ain't it? (Bob walks to window) Well tell me! Short silence.
Frank: Fitzy's comin'.
Bob: Just Fitzy?
Frank: Yeah, geez mate who'd want to come out in crook weather like this?
Bob: You didn't tell them right, you couldn't have.
Frank: They just couldn't make it that's all.
Bob: What was stoppin' them, what was?
Frank: Normie Pitcher of course.
Bob: Normie Pitcher!
Frank: Yeah.
Bob: Why?
Frank: They had a meetin' the other night, the executive. You're bad news mate, until you pay yer levy.
Bob: What do you mean I'm bad news?
Frank: They've black-balled you — until you pay the levy — I'm sorry, I am.
Bob: (Frank nods confirmation. Bob is stunned into silence. Finally) They couldn't have, not me, not me Frank.
Thelma: Does that mean Bob can't work?
**END OF ACT 1**
I know that poetry is indispensable but to whom?
What others criticise you for, cultivate, it is you.

Jean Cocteau:

The life, the work and the mind of Jean Cocteau (1889-1963) are to be the subject of the Dance Company (NSW)’s latest, most ambitious and most expensive essay into the realm of dance theatre. The full-length work, entitled Poppy (the reason for which will become obvious later was performed for three weeks in April at Sydney’s Theatre Royal, from whence it will travel to Canberra, Brisbane and Melbourne.
Jean Cocteau.

Cocteau's works are hard enough to summarise, let alone the man himself, a mixture of baroque fantasy, rigorous clarity, self-doubt and narcissism, an electric conversationalist, a brooder, a genius by collaboration and one of the few men who erected the signposts of twentieth century art and thought. On a more personal level, a homosexual, an opium addict (hence the title of the ballet), a man who left the First World War "because I started to enjoy it", a determined artistic revolutionary and a zealous prophet of new talent.

"Creating the ballet, structuring it is more a matter of subtraction really" says Murphy, "One mustn't get bogged down in the material. But it's a life and a mind ideally suited to dance. Cocteau used image so well and dance is at its best when conveying image."

But will it help in conveying an understanding of Cocteau's vast body of work... his unique place in this century's artistic thought?

It would be tedious in an article of this sort to attempt to analyse Cocteau and his works, but I think a sort of understanding of his place in art is a facility towards seeing how eminently suitable a subject like Cocteau is to the dance.

As far as I can see, Cocteau's prime place of importance is as a "myth maker". He took examples of ancient myth occasionally and reinvested them with meaning, unearthing in them powerful resonances that had all too clearly been forgotten. He didn't merely trivially use them for modern sympathies but revitalized them. Even in his own completely original works one sees the place of myth and ritual in them; from the books of poetry Opera and Plainchant, the novel Le Grand Ecart, scenarios for the ballets Parade and The Wedding on the Eiffel Tower and the films The Blood of the Poet and Beauty and the Beast. Ritual has always been a strong element in dance especially modern dance — Martha Graeme Murphy proved that once and for all — so in theory the rites of passage of Jean Cocteau could be admirably treated and if so, following Murphy's premise, the art and the man's mind are part and parcel.

But Cocteau is not all ritual and mystery. For all his obsessions with bleeding bards, double headed eagles and leather jacketed angels of death, he remained a realist. He himself said that the closer one approached to a mystery, the more important it was to remain a realist. What constituted "realism" however was a matter of structure and interpretation, an examination of the terminology.

Cocteau's early Paris was also the Paris of the Ballets Russes. Its Director, Sergei Diaghilev had a knack of gathering about him all the progressive creators of the time and Cocteau was no exception. In fact it was Diaghilev with his command to Cocteau, "Astound me" that turned Cocteau from the polished, witty but second rate homosexual darling of the Paris salons to a real, definitive creator of impact.

The Ballet Russes was also the company that created Le Sacre du Printemps, one of the signal works of the twentieth century, one of those creations, born fully grown, by which we characterise our own age. Cocteau worshipped Stravinsky and held Le Sacre... as his ideal. The revolution towards a "new" structure had been simmering for a long time. Le Sacre... along with Picasso's Demoiselles d'Avignon and Apollinaire's graphic poetry burst the banks and swept away the supine, ingrown post impressionism that was then fashionable; they were electric shocks applied without tact to chlorotic organisms.

Cocteau, placing himself in the vanguard, identified with all these impulses and grown alongside them and with them. He didn't just jump on the band wagon as some critics have suggested, he applied them to his own style. The libretto for Parade could never be said to be derivative. It is because the Ballet Russes figured so largely in the early life of Cocteau, set him on the road as it were, that it plays a large part in Act I of Poppy.

"For the first half of the work" says Murphy, "we deal with biographical material, the childhood erotic fantasies, the days in the salons, those with the Ballets Russes and the love affair with the precocious nineteen year old novelist, Raymond Radiguet."

"The second part covers the opium years" continues Murphy, "the personal poetry, the search for expression, the interior life and art of Cocteau".

Did Murphy have any qualms about arranging it all sequentially so as not to be confusing?

"There is so much material, one has to be careful. But the dance will be used for every expression we can get out of it. I'm trying to get right away from the "balletic" image. I'm going to use spoken word in it too which one has to be wary of. Dancers can speak quite well as long as one doesn't expect them to be actors; they will just be dancers who happen to speak as a part of their expression. But everything will have a point and a purpose, the laser holograms will not be just there for decoration, they will be used sparingly to express something, just like the music, the costumes and the set."

"I'm especially lucky with people like Carl Vine, George Gittoes and Ross Barnett. With them I have people I can trust, whose inspiration and ideas are complimentary, it's a giving, creative collaboration. The reaction from the dancers is unbelievable too. This production is stretching them all to the limit, the males especially, something that ordinary full length ballets rarely do. They are all discovering new potentials in themselves, potentials that dancers seldom discover".

If all of this pulls together, if it all works, it will place the Dance Company in the forefront of all the dance companies in Australia. It already enjoys a unique position, an exploratory company always game to tackle something different. Graeme Murphy is at present our great hope as a native born choreographer, always analysing dance and the things it can express. It behoves one to hope that audiences too will be a little more game than usual and admit that dance is as expressive, within the parameters of its own terminology, as any other performing art.

Poppy has an entirely knew libretto, especially commissioned score by Carl Vine, lighting design (including laser holography) by George Gittoes, set design by Ross Barnett and of course choreography by the Company's Artistic Director, Graeme Murphy. In terms of playwriting, a collaboration like this is a rare enough occurrence, but in terms of the dance in Australia, it is a first time ever event. "I've always wanted to make a full length ballet" says Graeme Murphy, "and when I discovered Jean Cocteau a few years ago in New York, it all fell together; the subject suggested itself. There was something in him and his life that fired my imagination, a marvellously rich life, full of material."

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The West Australian Ballet Company offered five new works in their fortnight season for the 1978 Festival of Perth. That's ambitious programming for a small chamber group whose repertoire since re-establishment just one year ago has already gained nine ballets, including a number of commissioned pieces. The eight resident dancers have grown in strength and stagecraft from this forced feeding, and the most successful pieces in this Festival programme show the company's women dancers to very considerable advantage. To do him justice, the strong, sympathetic partnering of visiting dancer Paul Tyers also contributed a great deal to the fine showing of the women.

The two works which came off best in the season were Jack Carter's *Cage of God* and Peter Darrell's *O Caritas*. The leading role in *O Caritas* was danced by the company's director, Robin Haig, returning to the stage one year after the birth of her daughter. She danced the work often when she was with Darrell's Scottish National Ballet and her speed, razor-sharp profiling and powerful expressiveness made it hard to imagine this ballet without her.

*Cage of God*, under the personal direction of English choreographer Jack Carter, reproduced well on the regional company. The six dancers, including visitors Raymond Lewis and Paul Tyers, mingled and matched and paired off on a bare white stage in this allegory about Adam and Eve and the serpent. Carter's sinewy, uncluttered choreography didn't falter once in its structuring of mood, emotions and shapes in space. It's an arresting work and an important addition to the repertoire.

The other ballets didn't fare so well on the cramped, boxy stage of the New Dolphin Theatre. Rex Reid's *Tancredi and Clorinda*, with its fine original score by Verdon Williams, was commissioned by the company a few years back. It's a high style romantic piece, needing all the resources of large scale professional theatre to achieve its high finish. With one notable exception, the company's dancers and technicians didn't entirely get to grips with the work. Vanessa McIntosh, the company's star dancer, is an elegant and powerfully sure performer, and her Clorinda gave Perth audiences a taste of the romantic, classically strong dancing they love.

Gerard Sibbritt's *Don Juan* suffered from under-production and the absence of the choreographer during the final stages of presentation. And the fifth work, Sara Sugihara's *Bokhara*, was the real disappointment of the programme. The banality of the writing was an insult to the Mozart string quartet score, and the dancers were never at ease with Sugihara's totally individual vocabulary of movement which sat uneasily on their classically trained bodies.

The Western Australian company has a handful of strong and expressive women dancers who, in the year since Robin Haig reformed the group, have helped establish its identity. But like dance companies everywhere these days, this one is hard put to find equally strong men. To mount this season they had to rely on visitors, and it's a dangerous thing to build a repertoire around non-residents.

The company also lacks a performance home of its own, and it doesn't look like getting one for a year or so yet while the State Government potters around deciding on the final shape of renovations to Her Majesty's Theatre, now the property of the state. The company is forced to perform in totally unsuitable venues while it builds a repertoire which must be assembled with a view to eventual residence in Her Majesty's.
Midsummer Marriage and country tours

Both of the productions I have for review this month are off the beaten track, though in quite different ways: one is off the beaten repertory track, the other an exciting co-safari into the wilds of northern New South Wales by the Australian Opera and the Queensland Theatre Orchestra.

The high profile event of the month would have to be deemed State Opera of South Australia's Adelaide Festival production of Sir Michael Tippett's *The Midsummer Marriage*, the long overdue Australian premiere season of a twenty six year old work that once again put the nation's opera lovers in the debt of its overall atmosphere. The whole point about the opera is neatly frustrated at every turn. Cervenka's costumes further spelled out the dichotomy of the piece: one set of characters was dressed very much as of today's Australia, while the other was robed and loinclothed in a vaguely classical, almost aggressively non-specific, way.

By and large, Adrian Slack's direction for *The Midsummer Marriage* was as sure-footed and efficient as it had seemed imprecise and sometimes almost non-existent in his *Don Giovanni* late last year.

Jonathan Taylor's choreography was pleasant without being exciting: that it failed to convey very fully the complexities of the ritual dances, and the differences between them which are detailed so fully by Tippett in his libretto, should perhaps not be made too much of. Joseph Scoglio, in the non-speaking dance lead of Strephon, moved with a lithe eloquence that did much to atone for any inherent deficiencies in the choreography itself.

Marilyn Richardson and Gregory Dempsey, as the noble lovers Jenifer and Mark, both sang very well and acted as convincingly as the rather too noble and featureless personalities drawn by the libretto permitted.

The part of King Fisher offers a good deal more scope; he is a thoroughly real and recognisable character, a big-time small town businessman full of bluff and threat which in the opera is neatly frustrated at every turn. Raimund Herinx made the most of a very good part, both in vocal and dramatic terms.

Thomas Edmonds was credible enough as Jack, the rather dull mechanic at heart who nevertheless has the guts to dig in his toes when pushed to the limits of his own simple code of ethics. Carolyn Vaughan was a thorough success as Bella, the pert, ultra-businesslike secretary who gets most of the few comic chances in the piece — particularly when playing intermediary between King Fisher and the Ancients at the door to the temple.

Ruth Garner sang Sosistris well, though banished a little too far into the bowels of the stage to be adequately heard during her big vocal chance. The whole lotus blossom effect of her appearance was uncannily like the descent of Don Giovanni into hell last year, only in reverse: perhaps the guts of the same disused barber's chair was used for the one as the other. They're big on the subterranean stage machinery in Adelaide these days.

A hefty percentage of opera buffs — encomiumed as a class as they are within the confines of enormous cities — simply couldn't care less if the art form ever reached anyone at all in the bush. Some of the more narrow-minded and self-centred undoubtedly think that opera in Australia begins and ends on Bennelong Point, Sydney; and there is no denying that such thinking has been given de facto encouragement by the performance schedules of the Australian Opera in recent years.

Finally, though, the greatest factor in the triumph of this *Midsummer Marriage* was its ensemble excellence, both orchestral and choral. Conductor Myer Fredman was of course a crucial factor, and he obviously was completely attuned to Tippett's music; but he could not have achieved such a resounding success without in-depth support.

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It is to the great credit of Peter Hemmings, the new general manager of the national company, that so much has been accomplished to break down that idea in the few months since he took over control. Joint seasons have already been announced for this year involving the AO and two of the most established State companies, those in South Australia and Queensland; and the bull of fully professional country touring — with orchestra — has also been taken by the horns.

Admittedly, the first AO safari was short in duration and limited in geographical terms: eleven performances of one opera in nine centres in northern New South Wales over a period of one month. But if the performance of Donizetti's *Don Pasquale* I saw in Glen Innes Town Hall on February 21 was in any way typical of the tour,
the whole exercise was eminently worthwhile.

It was of course a performance lacking in many of the finer refinements of city opera-going: the sets were simple, sturdy and utilitarian, the air conditioning non-existent, the sight lines and acoustics in a pitless hall less than ideal. If you wanted a drink at interval, you had to sprint to the nearest pub.

No matter: Grant Dickson, who is singing particularly well these days, was a thoroughly satisfying Pasquale; Rhonda Bruce was a very good Norina; Robin Donald a successful Ernesto; Gregory Yurisich a fair enough Malatesta. All those four singers being who they are, that was only to be expected: the real surprises, of course, lay elsewhere.

Specifically, in two quarters: the quality of the orchestral backing and the ingenuity of the fully self-supporting, quickly demountable stage conversion kit contrived by the Australian Opera's living national treasure of a resident designer, Tom Lingwood.

In this instance, Lingwood acted as producer as well as designer, repeating his previous schizophrenic stint for the AO's Carmen in 1976, on a considerably smaller scale. The production itself was thoroughly sensible and straightforward, if predictably lacking in the sort of spectacular and expensive touches that can sometimes be indulged in when one is staging opera in a metropolitan context.

In its own way, the Pasquale set was every bit as brilliant a practical concept as Lingwood's 1975 Aida set which converted the performing area of the concert hall at the Sydney Opera House into a viable venue for staging grand opera: it solved in one brilliant master stroke most of the chronic problems involved in staging opera in a variety of country venues in quick succession.

Completely free-standing, it can be bolted together and taken apart with despatch and a minimum of labor; and it is sturdy enough to withstand the rigors of rough country travel. It also incorporates its own prosenium arch, draw curtains and lighting grid which — though of course limited in potential — is capable of providing light of a surprisingly effective and varied nature.

The other welcome innovation in this particular country tour was the use of the recently formed Queensland Theatre Orchestra together with its musical director, Georg Tintner, who conducted most of the performances of Don Pasquale. Of course, using an orchestra inevitably creates sound balance problems in the country touring situation, where practically all the venues available are of the church town hall variety with flat floors and no pits. But the overall gain in sound quality is immense, when compared with the thoroughly unsatisfactory alternative of performing to piano accompaniment — particularly when an orchestra of the thoroughly acceptable standard of the QTO is available.

It is to be hoped that other country opera tours along similar lines will become an increasingly regular feature of Australia's operatic landscape in the next few years. Though of course, in deference to the rigors and deprivations inevitably imposed on the performers involved, they should be firmly kept within the proportions of the brief foray rather than the extensive grand tour of many weeks' duration which has sometimes characterised such activities in the past.

Keith Hempton and Susan Kessler as the Ancients, Gregory Dempsey as Mark in the State Opera's Midsummer Marriage.
something old, something new.

of the three Australian films that ushered in 1978, one had something original to say and the other two repeated, in different ways and with varying success, a selection of well-worn statements. The three are The Last Wave, The Mango Tree and The Irishman. Each film offers good-to-splendid camera-work and colour, careful design with reasonably authentic costumes and sets, and that technical expertise which is the result of the hard school of experience in making commercials. This training never hurt anyone, and it's interesting to note that a man who never previously made anything but commercials has produced one of the genuine masterpieces of recent film-making, The Duellists.

The Last Wave is the most interesting of the three for various reasons. It is set in the present and its theme is a contemporary one — an exploration of modern man’s vulnerability, or at least susceptibility, to those forces at work just beyond the reach of physical perception. The theme of The Last Wave is the "accident" of black impact on a white man and how event inevitably from one point to another, partly because nobody knows how to put the thing into reverse. The very eerie quality of the film comes from the mental distance separating the protagonists and the impossibility of the space ever being closed, because, for one thing, they share the same language but the words have different meanings.

The Last Wave, which was produced by the McElroy brothers and directed by Peter Weir, won prizes at the Teheran and Paris festivals in 1977 and was admired at the Berlin Film Festival. It has sold well in Europe but the US is, as usual, showing little interest.

The stars of The Last Wave are Richard Chamberlain, as Adam, a Sydney lawyer with a practice in equity, or something equally stuffy, and David Gulpilil as Chris, a city black. With others, Chris is arrested when another black is found dead in a puddle of water after he has been threatened and chased. Chamberlain (tree-fringed suburban house, swimming pool, wife, two small children) becomes involved in the blacks’ defence through one of those old-mate relationships. While three of his clients are dumb in both senses it is clear that Chris is intelligent, devious, both shy and shy and up to his ears in tribal secrecy although, as everybody knows and keeps saying, city blacks have no tribe.

The blacks finally get into court and Chris blows the gaff, spilling tribal truths while absent from the perving, perhaps malignant, influence of his tribal elder, old Charlie, played to the hilt by Nandjiwarra Amagula. Which leads to the climatic scenes, too long drawn out — there is a limit to your average cinemagoer's ability to sustain interest in the monotonous windings of a sewer — and to the climax itself, which is positively wonderful.

Several people were responsible for the script, including Petru Popescu, imported from America, who has written a book of the film, and Michael Pate's filmscript and in this capacity given their due by the director, Kevin Dobson. The film cost $650,000 contributed principally by Greater Union, The Australian Film Corporation and the Australian Film Commission put up a share of the $780,000 cost.

The film cost $650,000 contributed principally by Greater Union, The Australian Film Corporation and (bravo) the Bundaberg Sugar Company. Locations included Gayndah, a Queensland citrus township and the Walla Brahmim Stud.

The Mango Tree glows with conventional stepfather character, legal solecisms in the court scene — probably the most interesting film, and likely to command the most attention from critics and audiences everywhere, since The Devil’s Playground. It has a good idea to start with, a competent script and two excellent central performances from Chamberlain and Gulpilil.

With The Mango Tree we are off on a trot down Nostalgia Lane. The equivocations and subtleties of Ronald McKie’s book, which raised it above the standard of 1-was-a-boy-in-Bendigo reminiscence, are replaced by stereotypes in Michael Pate’s filmscript and in this capacity given their due by the director, Kevin Dobson.

A lot of The Mango Tree looks very good (design by Leslie Binns, cinematography directed by Brian Probyn and carried out by Peter Moss) and it has a cast of well-knowns including Robert Helpmann, Gerard Kennedy, Gloria Dawn, Carol Burns, Diane Craig, Ben Gabriel, Tony Bonner (making a curiously anachronistic appearance as Bert Hinkler) and Gerry Duggan. The youth who is both participator and observer, Jamie, is played by Christopher Pate (son of the producer-writer) and the role of his granny, a kind of combined female squire, dowager duchess and lady bountiful, is taken by the distinguished American actress Geraldine Fitzgerald.

The last two, The Irishman and The Devil's Playground, are less interesting. Both are intelligent, but dreary, and both show that a man who never previously made anything never hurt anyone, and it's interesting to note that a man who never previously made anything but commercials has produced one of the genuine masterpieces of recent film-making, The Duellists.
good feeling that is not quite warmth, and it reeks of "packaging." It is like a television serial crammed into a hundred and five minutes, but the artificial compactness fails to give it depth and the director clearly has no control over his performers. Perhaps he did not wish to exercise it. Robert Helpmann and Gerard Kennedy appear to be using a different acting language from Geraldine Fitzgerald, Gloria Dawn and Gerry Duggan. As for Christopher Pate, he brings nothing much more to the role than a cocky smile. The notion that a young woman such as the French mistress Miss Pringle (Diane Craig) could take him to bed is simply ludicrous.

Soggy as it is, The Mango Tree does offer one fresh and striking talent. This belongs to Carol Burns, who plays Maudie Plover, a girl with a chip on her shoulder, not to mention a demented mother and a homicidal Uncle Gerard Kennedy. She is a real find.

The Irishman, appropriately released (except for Townsville, which got its own gala world premiere) on St Patrick's Day, is a combined Anthony Buckley and Donald Crombie effort and certainly one of the most dramatically and beautifully photographed films to be made in Australia. The opening in which Paddy Doolan's team of heavy horses plunge into the shallow river as birds whirl above and great fountains of water fly up from their great stamping hooves, sets the tone of the film's lush appreciation of figures, human and animal, in a landscape. The film is a real celebration of life, however often it lapses into a cliche of living.

Peter James directed the photography with John Seale as camera operator. They make a formidable team. And so of course do Buckley and Crombie, creators of Caddie. It may be presumptuous to imagine, as a critic suggested to me, that an essential part of the integrity of their films is their own philosophy. They can be trusted not to make a film that is untrue to experience.

The Irishman is taken from a novel by Elizabeth O'Connor which in 1961 won the Miles Franklin Award (Ronald McKie won it more than ten years later for The Mango Tree) which I have never read. So I am unable to say whether Crombie, credited with the screenplay, has stuck to the original text. The story is that of an illiterate Irish teamster named Paddy Doolan who has pridily got together twenty horses to haul his dray with supplies from the railhead to the township, in the film represented by Charters Towers. But the time is just after World War I (as in The Mango Tree) and motor lorries are on the horizon. Paddy sees bad days ahead, although he won't admit it, and his prospects are further moderated by the closure of The Galaxie mine after an accident. His younger son Michael is an apprentice at the mine, and so out of work. His elder son Will won't join him in the business.

Michael Craig, who has had variable film and television luck since settling in Australia, is a most persuasive Paddy Doolan, awe-inspiring handsome and picturesque but still credible in his teamster's gear, seemingly quite at home with the no less awe-inspiring and handsome horses, short-tempered, long-winded when he gets an audience, ducking the problems of his future, eventually taking up the soft option of the bottle. A lesser enterprise would have had the script reclaim Paddy from the booze, which would have made a happy ending that nobody would have believed.

The Irishman suffers from that endemic disease of Australian films: too many sub-plots and too many clues not followed up. And really ludicrous miscasting, or mis-reading of the character, also turns up, as in Caddie. In Caddie it was the role of the Greek. In The Irishman it is the less important part of Mrs Clark, wife of Bailey Clark the local toff, or grazier. The conception and the performance, by Roberta Grant, are quite freakish. And is it too pedantic to wish that somebody would catch such solecisms (for 1920) as "room service" said jokingly, and "stroppy"?

But on the whole the performances supporting those of Michael Craig and Simon Burke, who plays the younger son and is to be taken as the survivor who will move into the modern world without fear, are extremely satisfying. Lou Brown stands out as Will, Tui Lorraine Bow as the dreadful old granny, Tony Barry as Robert Dalgleish. Gerard Kennedy, with the right direction, establishes an enigmatic and commanding presence in all his scenes, as if he had never heard of The Mango Tree.

The Irishman is beguiling as well as beautiful, a bit like an early innocent western with special fringe benefits of a rowdy Picnic Race meeting and timbergetting scenes on the slopes of the rain forest, where Paddy takes his horses.
A Massenet revival and an early English Festival.

People with tidy minds may be able to satisfy themselves that Jules Massenet is a composer of cloying sweetness and rather tawdry theatricalism and leave it at that. Massenet may deserve such epithets for occasional passages in his operas. Nevertheless, a Massenet revival is well under way in Western Europe and North America. It is not really surprising. Even Massenet’s most intemperate critics concede that he was a master of a certain kind of theatrical effect. The number of opera composers who have a mastery of this kind is small in any period. On this ground alone Massenet might be considered worth getting to know better. Opera lovers know that theatrical artifice, while absolutely necessary to an opera composer of professional stature, cannot redeem itself by its own standards. Jules Massenet and his music invented the salon which inevitably causes the music of composers from other cultures. In fact, it is not surprising that some Massenet’s songs, covering a range of scenes and subject matter. No conductor of the present day has played a bigger part in the present day has played a bigger part in the revival and enlarged appreciation of Massenet now being established than Richard Bonynge. His recording of Esclarmonde for Decca (Set 612; 3 discs) helped to revive facile generalisations on the size and scope of Massenet’s dramatic gifts and musical apparatus. Bonynge has also turned his attention to Massenet’s songs on a Decca single disc (SXL 6765) on which he supplies collaboration at the piano with the singing of the French-Canadian mezzo soprano, Huguette Tourangeau. Between them they perform twenty of Massenet’s songs, covering a range of style representative of Massenet’s very considerable gifts as a songwriter.

Some of the songs have that French kind of flow and sweetness, however, there are dramatic and muscular songs among this selection. Le petit Jésus is deeply felt, regarding the manger with an eye that also is aware of the crucifixion to come. There is a truly haunting bell motive in the piano part for a song about the message of the bells. Three of the songs have enhancing cello parts added to them. The recording allows the sound to reach us in an unfettered way. I have never heard Tourangeau in better voice and Bonynge provides piano playing which is wholly sympathetic and is strongly characterized or discreet, as the occasion demands. In its combination of performance and recording and in its collection of many beautiful songs not widely known at present this record is one of the most successful and desirable recital discs to come my way for a long time.

The title, Festival of Early Music, on a box of three discs from Argo (D40D) is a rather routine label for a reissue of three records of exceptional individual interest. Instead of offering, as the title might seem to suggest, a representative sampling of medieval and early renaissance music, the set concentrates on three periods. The earliest of these is the era of the crusades. The majority of the songs and dances on it belong to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The late David Munrow, who is the musical director of the three discs, leads his Early Music Consort of London in imaginative but not extreme realisations of the various political, amorous and sporting songs performed in this anthology. The songs as preserved in the chansonniers of this and slightly later periods provide only a single line of melody to go with the words. It is no longer satisfactory, as it was in the early days of the medieval music revival, to perform these as invariably unaccompanied. A great deal more is known now about instrumentation of the period and some very good guesses have been acted on in using melody instruments and percussion to help construct a shapely musical entity. The playing of the dance tunes is splendid and the solo singing is mostly highly accomplished. No less interesting for its general historical reference is the disc originally entitled Ecco la primavera (Florentine music of the fourteenth century). Here the music is simple and unaffected on occasions, but most of it is undeniably lovely in its eloquent music and in its collection of many beautiful songs not widely known at present this record is one of the most successful and desirable recital discs to come my way for a long time.

The Triumphs of Maximilian I is, as David Munrow notes in the text booklet, one of the best proofs that he was right.
It has been pointed out often that the new morality is no morality at all but a dogma of selfishness. It's all right to do anything as long as morality is no morality at all but a dogma of material self-interest and the counter-culture attitude has been around for a long time, but with the establishment pursuing a doctrine you are personally satisfied and fulfilled. This is surely the last word on what Whitlam years meant for artistic people in Australia. According to the play it seems that Whitlam said, here is some money, go forth and think great thoughts — but no one did. Whether this is a just view of Australian artists' failure to live up to Whitlam's dreams for them is open for discussion but as far as the ABC goes Brooksbank and Ellis seem to be being proven right. At least Esson and Yeats used to talk about Art and Truth.

The characters in Down Under mostly suffer under an illusion typical during the Whitlam years. This is that they had great things in them, and vast potential as artists or producers or whatever. Like Don and Mal in Don's Party, with which this play has been compared, this gives them the chance to be disillusioned, at length, when the great hopes for their future are unrealized. If anything the disillusion is more tedious than the illusion. There is only one character in this play without illusions, and that is the young girl Rosalie, who restricts herself to a doctrine of spiritual self-interest things may be unrealized. If anything the disillusion is more pathetically but with great understanding. The play made me feel I didn't want to be one of them, but it's good to have them there, reassuring, portraits on the wall.

Tourist To The Antipodes (University of Queensland Press) documents, rather sketchily, the little early visitors' impressions of the Colonies. It has nothing to do with theatre but is reviewed here because its author went on, after his Antipodean tour, to become a well-known drama critic, playwright and translator and champion of Ibsen. William Archer was only nineteen when he travelled to Australia, and it shows. He lacks the Hungry Questing Intelligence (a critic's term, read, perhaps, "intense curiosity") that makes a great travel writer. Too often he writes "Why this should be so I could not discover" or something of the sort. It is also obvious that he is not writing out of a particular interest in the colonies, but because he likes writing and 19th century Australia provides an interesting and exotic subject. His point of view is furthermore definitely that of a member of the squattocracy.

This account of Australian bush life through the eyes of a cultivated and intelligent new chum will be of interest to students of 19th century Australian melodrama if to non-one else.

It is wittily written, and it rehearse most of the by now familiar cliches of Colonial life. In the towns, you will not be surprised to hear, Australian "society" aped the English; in the bush (tread "country") Australians drank a lot, unless they were squatters, in which case they grew all their own food. Blacks are cannibals and "cannot grasp the higher numbers". Archer dutifully records many of the bush yarns he heard, and some of them are good ones. His book will appeal to the well-known Australian taste for reading what people from Overseas think of their country.

Still on Australia, we come to a collection of short plays for schools, Life Pieces, by Allan Mackay, misleadingly subtitled Ten Australian Plays. These are all for and about teenagers. Even if teenagers now really do behave in the way they are presented in these plays, it seems unfair to subject them to this tired series of theatrical cliches. Mackay uses the cliches fairly, and there is sensitivity lurking there somewhere, but it would be nice to think that students in school had something more adventurous to deal with.

An odd little publication is In Collaboration, a trilogy of television plays by Maurice Hurst and Ian Cameron. If the Preface and Introduction (by Frances Kelly and Hilary Mitchell respectively) are to be believed the only reason for publication was for the insight into the process of collaboration in writing. The plays themselves are workmanlike cops-and-robbers dramas. Quoted in the front is the startling claim, by a Melbourne critic, that these two writers "manage to succeed in Australian comedy, an area in which most of our big name writers fail." The book is apparently published in Panama, printed in Sussex and is an "ICOL Playscript Classic" distributed in London, New York and Los Angeles, but available in Australia from Tom Whitton at the Second Back Row Press in Sydney. You must get it, it's so cosmopolitan.

Two more books may be mentioned. Helen Caldwell's Michio Ito: The Dancer and His Dancers chronicles the work of a Japanese American dancer in a tone and style for which I cannot work up any enthusiasm at all. It is apparently intended as a companion to a series of films of her performing his work, and may be useful as such. Joachim Berendt's The Jazz Book, in an extensively revised fourth edition, is a forbidding volume to someone such as myself who is no expert on jazz music, but I note its publication, by Melbourne's Lansdowne Press, for those who might be interested.
THEATRE AUSTRALIA MAY 1978

GUIDE

A.C.T.

THE BARD'S THEATRE RESTAURANT (47 6244)
Blue Hat Productions: Command Performance in honour of the visit of H M Edward VII on the occasion of the Federation of the Commonwealth of Australia. Devised and directed by Gordon Todd, with Monsieur Frederick. Thursdays to Saturdays (continuing).

CANBERRA OPERA (47 0249)
Opera in the Schools Series
The Puppet Master by Tchaikovsky. Producer, Nina Cooke; Design, Ron Butters. Touring schools till July.

CANBERRA THEATRE (49 7600)
Canberra Opera
A Masked Ball by Verdi. Conductor, John Curro; Director, Keith Richards; Design, Mark Wagner. May 3, 5, 6.
London Theatre Group.
East by Steve Berkoff. 29 May to 2 June.

CANBERRA YOUTH THEATRE (47 0781)
Canberra Youth Theatre Camp. 6 to 10 May.

JIGSAW COMPANY (47 0781)
In repertory: Act Now, a documentary play for adults, on self-government in the ACT, Crumpet and Co., a participation play for children; The Empty House, a participation play for preschool, Prometheus, a participation play for primary schools; in schools and various other locations.

PLAYHOUSE (49 7600)

NEW SOUTH WALES

ACTOR'S COMPANY (660 2503)
Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare, Director, Steve Agnew, with Kate Ferguson, Dallas Lewis, Narelle Johnson, Brian Barrie, John Paramor. (to June 10th).

ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW SOUTH WALES

FORUM, 50 Tempo
Theatres and Festivals of the Arts Council of New South Wales. From May 6.

TRAVELLING THEATRE COMPANIES (31 6611)
Wayne Rolon Brown, multi-instrumentalist. Schools tour of NSW western areas and Sydney metropolitan, May 1 - 7.
Bob Fillman and Friends, ventriloquist, magician and puppeteer. Schools tour of Sydney, South Coast and Riverina areas, May 1 - 7.
ENSEMBLE (929 8877)
Vanities by Jack Heifner. Director, Brian Young (continuing).

GENESIAN (827 3023)
The Royal Hunt of the Sun by Peter Shaffer, Director, Tony Hayes. From May 6.

HER MAJESTYS (212 3411)
The Apple Cart by the Chichester Festival Theatre Company starring Keith Michell, Nyree Dawn Porter and Roy Dotrice. May 1 - 6. Isn't it Pathetic at His Age. Barry Humphries introduces new characters. From end May.

MARIAN STREET THEATRE (498 3166)

MARIONETTE THEATRE OF AUSTRALIA (357 1638)
Whacko the Diddle-O! (A Funny Kind of Puppet Show), devised, director, Richard Bradshaw and Steve Hansen. Tour of Sydney Metropolitan community centres. From May 1.

MUSIC HALL THEATRE RESTAURANT (909 8222)
Crashed by Desire, written and directed by Michael Boddy, With Anne Semler, Bruce Barry, Reg Gillam, David Gilchrist.

MUSIC LOFT THEATRE RESTAURANT (977 6585)
Encore, written and produced by Peggy Mortimer, starring the Topanno Family.

OLD TOTE (663 6122)
Drama Theatre, Opera House: The Misanthrope by Moliere, translated by Tony Harrison. Director, Ted Craig; with Barry Otto and Kate Fitzpatrick. To June 6.

OMNIBUS THEATRE (821 6445)
Fasten Your Seat Belts, written by Don Battye and Peter Pinne. Director, Jon Ewing; with Liz Harris, Beth McDonald, Anne Grigg, John Hannan, and Greg Raffel (also choreographer). Continuing.

OSCARS HOLLYWOOD PALACE THEATRE RESTAURANT, Sans Souci.
(529 4455)
A Day In The Death Of Joe Egg. Opening date not yet fixed.

QUEENSLAND

ARTS THEATRE (36 2344)
The Waltz of the Torpedoes by Jean Anouilh. Director, Yve Morrison; designer, Max Hurley.
To 20 May.

WAVERLEY THEATRE (36 2444)
Waiting For Godot by Samuel Beckett. Director, Yve Morrison; designer, Max Hurley.
To 14 May.

THEATRE OPERA DANCE
Margaret Brown. 25 May - 24 June.
Children’s Theatre: The Witch The Wizard and the Giant Cook by Eugene Hickey. Director, Barbara Webber. 20 May - 10 June.
Camerata (36 6651) Plans not definite as yet.
The REALTO (Hardgrave St, West End) Bookings Festival Hall (229-4250) G & M Promotions by arrangement with Harry M Miller. The Rocky Horror Show by Richard O'Brien. Director, Bryan Nason.
Theatricals (36-6651) Plans not definite as yet.
The Yeoman of the Guard, HMS Pinafore by Gilbert and Sullivan. Old Theatre Orchestra conducted by David Macfarlane (also director). Designer, Max Hurley.
LA BOITE (36-1622) Young Mo by Steve J Spears. Director, Rick Billinghurst; designer, David Bell; with Rod Wissler. School for Clowns by S K Waechter, translated by Ken Campbell. Director, Sean Mee; designer, Luigi Forzin. 1-12 May.
City Sugar by Stephen Poliakoff. Director, Jennifer Blocksidge; technical director, Leigh Wayper. From 19 May.
Queensland Light Opera Co: The Yeoman of the Guard, HMS Pinafore by Gilbert and Sullivan. Qld Theatre Orchestra conducted by David Macfarlane (also director).
Designer, Max Hurley.
LA BOITE (36-1622) Young Mo by Steve J Spears. Director, Rick Billinghurst; designer, David Bell; with Rod Wissler. School for Clowns by S K Waechter, translated by Ken Campbell. Director, Sean Mee; designer, Luigi Forzin. 1-12 May.
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City Sugar by Stephen Poliakoff. Director, Jennifer Blocksidge; technical director, Leigh Wayper. From 19 May.
Workshop productions, May 15 - 20.
Athenaeum Theatre:
The Beaux' Stratagem by George Farquhar.
May 4 - June 10.

PILGRIM PUPPET THEATRE (818-6650)
Alice In Wonderland.

PRINCESS THEATRE (662-2911)
The Australian Opera Company

TIKKI AND JOHN'S THEATRE LOUNGE (663-1754)
Old Time Music Hall

VICTORIAN STATE OPERA (41-5061)
Schools program on tour.
The Barber of Seville. From May 12 on tour, Albury region.

MAJOR AMATEUR COMPANIES
Please phone these theatres in the evenings for details of current productions.

HEIDELBERG REPERTORY (49-2262)
MALVERN THEATRE COMPANY (211-0020)
PUMPKIN THEATRE, Richmond (42-8237)
1812 THEATRE, Ferntree Gully (796-8624)

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

HOLE IN THE WALL (381-2403)
Sporting Double; The Les Darcy Show by Jack Hibberd.
The Roy, Murphy Show by Alex Buzo. Director, John Milson. From April 26.

PLAYHOUSE (325-3500)
The Club by David Williamson. MTC production April 27 - May 20.
A Streetcar Named Desire by Tennessee Williams. Director, Stephen Barry. May 24 - June 17.
Greenroom:
Miss Julie by August Strindberg. Director, Mike Morris. May 2 - 27.

THE REGAL (381-1557)
In Praise of Love by Terence Rattigan. Director, Anthony Sharpe. From May 4.

WA BALLET COMPANY (380-2440)
The Octagon Theatre:
Selected programme: Dances from William Tell, In A Clear Place, Just A Moment, Flower Festival, Jexs, Chairs, Suite of Dances. May 4 on.

WA OPERA COMPANY (322-4766)
Perth Entertainment Centre:
The Gondoliers by Gilbert and Sullivan with June Bronhill and Peter Pratt. Conductor, Alan Abbot; Producer, Betty Pounder. May 3 - 12.

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WASHINGTON STATE OPERA COMPANY
Schools program on tour.
The Barber of Seville. From May 12 on tour, Albury region.