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La Stupenda
Mastery or Myth?
CONCERT HALL
NORTHERN FOYER
1.30pm Sundays

ROUP 1
September 3
SYDNEY STRING ENSEMBLE
September 17
DON BURROWS & QUINTET
September 24
RENAISSANCE PLAYERS

ROUP 2
October 1
JOHN WINTHER
October 15
JADE HURLEY AND GROUP
October 29
LAURIS ELMS

ROUP 3
November 12
CANBERRA WIND ENSEMBLE
November 26
LEONINE CONSORT
December 3
GALAPAGOS DUCK

Fridays available at Opera House
Dus: $4.00; Children, pensioners and students: $2.00
Tickets concessions available
Presented by the Sydney Opera House Trust.

CONTemporary Music
AT BENNElong 1978
Featuring the Works of
Today's Most Important Composers

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 22
SYDNEY WIND SOLOISTS
Quartet for Wind Instruments,
Colin Brumby: Psalmody for Wind
Quartet, Op. 47, Eric Gross: Quintet
for Winds, Richard Meale: Wind
Quartet, Tristram Cary.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26
SYDNEY STRING ENSEMBLE
Conductor: Patrick Thomas.
Leader: Donald Hazelwood.
Sinfonia da Camera, Jindrich
Feist: One Pearl, Alison Bauld;
Five Variants for String Orchestra,
Ian Cugley: Ramifications, Gyorgy
Ligeti.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 28
SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Conductor: Patrick Thomas.
Soloist: Lazlo Vidak (Viola).
Concerto for Viola and Orchestra
(World Premiere).
William Lovelock:
Symphony No. 3 (Colleges)
Roberto Gerhard.
# Theatre

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**National Theatre Opera Dance Guide**

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At the time of writing the Tote situation remains unresolved. On August 17th a summit meeting was scheduled, and so the matter will be to some degree settled before 7.4 appears. It seems, however, still worth commenting on the options and implications for the future, which spread further than the life or death of one company.

The Australia Council were being naive if they thought their decision to cease funding would be a quick and silent death blow. The Tote are determined to fight; they have too much at stake to give in quietly. The State Government are the meat in an increasingly sticky sandwich and have reasons to be pulled both ways. But if the Tote manages to stage a coup and pull themselves out of the quicksand, it will be almost certainly at a reduced level of subsidy, and the options remaining open to them will be limited.

One of the reasons the Australia Council wasn't happy about pouring in more thousands of dollars in '79 was the decreasing return offered for the taxpayer. Although Robert Helpmann says he has not worked out next year's applications for his Opera House Drama Theatre, for which the Tote presently pays a quarter of a million dollars a year, it is not expected they will amount to only eight productions over the year, but an increase in funding requested, presumably to some extent to discharge their present deficit. Unofficial rumour has it that their application would have received far greater sympathy if negotiations with John Bell had been successful. Bell is used to working with comparatively miniscule budgets, but it looks as though Helpmann's negotiations with Peter Hall and Katharine Hepburn (stars of world theatre?) will have to be cancelled.

Eight productions would not seem to require, let alone justify, the running costs of two theatres. One of the NSW Government's considerations must be maintaining the tenancy of their Opera House Drama Theatre, for which the Tote presently pays a quarter of a million dollars in rent. To move out would be an obvious way to cut the theatre company's spending, but their earlier residence, the Parade, is a no longer tenure ground to retreat to. The University of New South Wales, the owners of the theatre, are finally getting restless about the constant occupation of their premises at a peppercorn rent by the Tote; questions have been asked at the highest level, and students of the Drama Department demonstrated outside the opening of The Knack.

If it is the State Government who again helps to break the deadlock situation, the Tote will almost certainly have to remain in their Drama Theatre. There, of course, there are no administration or workshop facilities at present available to them, so the administrative heart of the company, the building at O'Riordan Street, Alexandria, will have to be retained. It was partly this which has made the Tote's expansion possible. The overhead structure that it signifies, that took the Tote's subsidy to its present heights.

But the Tote has shown an openness to reform; the measures demanded by the Australia Council's March ultimatum of 86/78 have been carried out. The chair and the manager and single artistic director have all been carried out despite an apparently recalcitrant attitude. In April the Theatre Board wrote a letter unequivocally wishing the company well and "anxious to see that the Tote prosper...under the leadership of an outstanding artistic director"; so surely a more constructive move would be to fund at some level in conjunction with further reform stipulations. Clearly, if the Tote is to continue in any sense as the de facto state company, one of these wrinkles must be the production of Australian plays, and this agreement with the Theatre Board's present declared policy. It is indeed regrettable that the Tote chose to abolish the Seymour Centre season of new and Australian work to stick with what has turned out to be an unimpressive season of classics and a series of semi-comedic commercials.

But whatever the criticism of performance — and this magazine has never been its apologist — the Tote is an established theatre company with a name that is patronised and respected by regular audiences who fill their theatres to high capacity houses. It has been the most expensive theatre in Sydney, and is the longest running. One would have thought it was worthier of preservation given ability for and response to improvement, than perhaps Brisbane's Twelfth Night, which the Australia Council will be funding for majorly entrepreneurial activity in 1979.

Brian Sweeney has stated that the money could be better used elsewhere, and that a sub-committee will be set up in conjunction with the NSW Government to discuss "alternative ways of promoting and funding drama in NSW". But the immediate result will be that Sydney will be one theatre company the less, a sorry situation for the already under-employed pool of actors and technicians, and theatre-goers. The disastrous Columbian Gold Exhibition is said to have pruned Australia Council budgets across the Boards, and indications are that even less money will be available for the next year. The cynics suggest this was one way for the Council to balance its budgets, but in any case the likelihood of the kind of money needed to start a new company being found in the near future is almost non-existent. As poor attendances at the Paris Theatre have shown, you can't create a new, successful company overnight.

The Australia Council have decided that a limit has been reached in the affairs of the Tote Theatre Company beyond which they may not go, but how and why that point has been reached appears not to have been properly thought out (and certainly not disclosed). A theatre company, like any company, once it reaches a certain level of success has to expand to keep level pegging, otherwise decline sets in. The Australia Council have been the means by which the Tote has expanded to its present level, and has implicitly condoned its expansion. The Melbourne Theatre Company has done this, Nimmor and the State Theatre of South Australia are doing this, also with the support and knowledge of the Australia Council. When will they go beyond the acceptable level, and where is the axe next to fall? All over the world vast organisations of state theatre companies have been given life by government funding bodies, and they are having to take responsibility for the organisations they have created. The Australia Council must take a deal of responsibility for creating this situation; an offer of at least reduced funding for one theatre, a proportion of Australian plays etc would maintain a major theatre organisation, one of the few with an international name, and allay the fear of fundamental insecurity that must sweep through all the arts in Australia.
OLD FOR NEW

CHRISTOPHER HUNT, Director, Adelaide Festival.

"From all my first impressions of Australia one has surfaced which dominates all the others. This is the pervading contrast between young and old, and new — a contrast that, despite its universality, seems to have a far greater significance here than anywhere else I know. It is this contrast, which one can also see as the interaction of tradition and progress that I propose to take as the theme for the 1980 Adelaide Festival of Arts. It is a theme that will unify virtually all the arts elements of the Festival and will involve and cater for all elements of the community. It is a theme that affects everyone in the community every day. Each of us, after all, has been a child, and hopes to live to old age.

Approaches to the theme may include the last works of composers, artists, writers, dramatists etc., presented alongside their earliest ones. The play is set against the vaudeville period of Stan's pre-Laurel and Hardy days when, for a time, he worked with an Australian singer and dancer I've called Kate. I've tried to show the clash of their needs and ambitions through the use of different composers, including commissioned works.

I will be overseas until mid-September finding out who and what is available, and hopes to have good news on that front when I return."

BIG LITTLE MAN

DAVID ALLEN

"Stan Laurel, the comedian, has always fascinated me: his screen persona — his amiable idiocy — contrasts so very strongly with what one can gather about his professional drive and his personal ruthlessness. This is the main theme of Gone With Hardy.

The play is set against the vaudeville period of Stan's pre-Laurel and Hardy days when, for a time, he worked with an Australian singer and dancer I've called Kate. I've tried to show the clash of their needs and ambitions through the background of their different national origins. As a Pom myself, resident here for seven years, I find this kind of English/Australian cultural encounter particularly interesting — in fact the predominant theme of most of my current writing!

The gross figure of Jock McTavish, the third character in the play, who in some ways acts as a kind of chorus, sums up for me all that is crudely entertaining in the Music Hall tradition. He, like Stan, but for different reasons, is a survivor: Kate is a victim."
DIGESTIBLE WORLD WAR II

BRYON WILLIAMS, Stage Door Theatre Restaurant in Melbourne.

"The idea of theatre with food has always interested me and suddenly finding myself working in a theatre restaurant situation, I again toyed with the idea. I and my partner, Barbara Ramsay, believed that it should be possible to write and produce a show suitable for a theatre and transplant it into a venue where people could enjoy a good meal, a glass of wine and sit back and enjoy a show without having to rush from restaurant to theatre. With this in mind we conceived, wrote and produced, Kiss Me Goodnight Sergeant Major.

After several disappointments we eventually found a venue which, although not ideal for our purposes, had a lot of things in its favour. It was a fairly large convention room adjoining The Ponsonby Restaurant, Queens Road, Melbourne. The location was ideal, being just on the fringe of the city proper, with plenty of off street parking, its own entrance and foyer, kitchen and toilet facilities.

Kiss Me Goodnight Sergeant Major is a nostalgic trip through the Second World War period. The show commences with the declaration of war by the then Prime Minister, R G Menzies and through news flashes, sketches, songs and dances, we travel through the war years covering such areas as Dunkirk, the London Blitz, munition workers, Pearl Harbour, US / Australian relations, African desert campaign, the home front, letters and parcels to the boys, New Guinea, the Atom Bomb and finally on to the Victory celebrations. There are one hundred songs from the period played by a three piece band and sung by the cast comprising Gary Down, Val Mills, Suzanne Dudley and Will Deumer.

After supper which is served during the show, the audience are allowed to dance until midnight to the sounds of Glen Miller, Tommy Dorsey and other bands of the era.

As for the future, one would hope that it is possible to do all types of theatre in such a venue. Not only musical comedy/revue like the present show, but drama, one man recitals, children’s theatre, in fact any kind of theatre where people can relax in an informal atmosphere and enjoy good theatre and good food without rushing through their meal to sit in a conventional type of theatre with indigestion as their partner."

PRESENTING NEW TOURS

LES CURRIE

"As Presentations Manager for the Arts Council of New South Wales for nearly two years I have had the pleasure of presenting many excellent artists to thousands of appreciative school children. Unfortunately I have also had to reject many fine acts for Arts Council touring as there is a limit to the number of acts one organisation can accommodate. For this reason, I have decided to organise tours privately and introduce some new faces as well as some of the more familiar and popular artists who have previously toured for the Arts Council.

Initially I will be touring shows to schools, but later intend promoting concerts and theatrical productions of a larger scale. I will also be making myself available on a freelance basis for the planning and promotion of shows, and in particular country touring. The first two shows I will be doing for schools will be the Modern Mime Theatre, Infants and Primary Schools in the Metropolitan area November and December, and Mike Jackson, Infants, Primary, and Secondary in the West, Riverina and South Coast districts during October, November and December."

BEST DRESS RATES IN SYDNEY

MICHAEL JAMES, AETT Costume Department.

"The Trust’s Costume Hire Department has over ten thousand costumes and we're constantly increasing our stock and expanding the department to give the public a better selection. We've got a very good range of period and fancy dress, and we can make costumes for hire or for order. If you’re a Trust member, a charity, a school or an amateur group you get a special discount, but we have the cheapest rates in Sydney anyway.

We hire for fancy dress parties, drama groups, professional productions, TV and newspaper commercials, TV shows, films, exhibitions and fashion parades. But we're also always interested in purchasing costumes from other productions and films. We have all the costumes from —Picnic at Hanging Rock, for instance. We also buy original pieces from the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, for patterns to work from and for reference work. We have a good reference library on costume and research facilities and drama groups and schools are always welcome to go on a tour of the costumes."

NO RIGHT TO SUBSIDY

LLOYD O’NEIL, Chairman, Hoopla Theatre Foundation.

"No one likes to see a theatre company in trouble — particularly when you are in the business yourself. However Hoopla feels compelled to support the Australia Council Theatre Board’s courageous decision in refusing to continue to bail out the Old Tote."

"No company, ours included, has any right to subsidy. Public funding must be earned and re-earned. Every company must be judged regularly on its merits as there is a tendency by subsidised theatre (or any arts for that matter) to develop bureaucracies, and to institutionalise ideas that have lost their relevance. The theatre (Continued on page 40)"
Hayes Gordon —
from Kate to Annie

Sharen Flanagan

It's a long way from the impoverished farmlets of Russia to the American boardrooms of multi-billion dollar business, but when Hayes Gordon opens in JC Williamson's new musical Annie later this year he will be going all the way.

Known by Australian audiences principally for his role as the imposing Russian Jew in Fiddler on the Roof, he will beshedding his full beard and five fictional daughters to assume the clean-shaven bald-headed facade of Daddy Warbucks — a wealthy American business tycoon who eventually adopts one pint-sized orphan girl. Offstage he will be making a much bigger transition — from being director-teacher at Sydney's Ensemble Theatre to the rigorous routine of a singing-dancing actor.

It has been eight long years since Hayes last stepped on stage. But he has travelled the road before. When he accepted the lead role in Fiddler back in 1967 it was after an eleven year absence. He is the first to admit it was tough then, and now, at the age of fifty eight it has not become any easier.

"Let's face it — I haven't opened my mouth in eight years and while I'm telling everybody else to play actions, I'm out of practice. And who knows, as soon as I have my head I'll probably come down with pneumonia and be out of the show for eight years. Anything can happen", he jokes, but with a touch of underlying apprehension.

Hayes first came to Australia in 1952. He travelled out from the US to take the lead role in JC Williamson's Kiss Me Kate. He liked Australia and stayed, giving birth to the Ensemble Theatre and acting employment. And being set in the United States gives it some sort of distancing association so that if people don't want to see it any closer than just fun and games they are not forced to but if they want to draw analogies and say, "yea, well if they did it there why can't we do it here, feel free".

He admits that he himself was not over impressed when he first heard the music of the show. But then he read the script. "Now suddenly the music plus the script puts everything in perspective. It is like so many integrated musicals, one depends on the other," he tells you.

"The most wonderful evocative legends are all combined in the one concept of a musical," he says. "I don't know why the shown't work, and then coming in around Christmas I think it's perfect family fare and people have been crying out for family fare."

He also describes the show as "a sneaky political play": "It's very topical. The play takes place during the depression and the government is in a dilemma about what to do about rising unemployment. They ultimately decide upon government action to open the factories and create employment. And being set in the United States gives it some sort of distancing association so that if people don't want to see it any closer than just fun and games they are not forced to but if they want to draw analogies and say, 'yea, well if they did it there why can't we do it here, feel free'."

Hayes himself admits to being paid New York wages and other heavyweights already signed up include such names as Jill Perryman, Nancy Hayes and Kevin Johnson. On the technical side there is George Martin as director (an American who came out previously to direct A Little Night Music), Martin Charmin as script writer, Kenn Brodziak as producer, Noel Smith as musical director and George Martin's wife as choreographer.

But still, why is Hayes returning to the stage? It was no secret that he only undertook to do Fiddler for the money, necessary at the time for the very survival of the Ensemble. But the Ensemble is "able to stand on its own hindlegs now," he tells you. "There were an awful lot of reasons saying, 'hey, stay put, don't rock the boat'. "But I have been girding my loins to write a book, a kind of text on acting and some of the stuff that seems theoretically correct still needs to be tested," he says. Hayes points out that sometimes his acting students are a little reluctant to embark on some of the techniques he teaches, "so if I can put them to the test and they can see them working, I think it will accelerate their process of training," he says.

"Another thing too, I think it is a timely show. It has beneath its fun and games, something to say which I think is relevant and pertinent to us here and now and I think it needs saying". "Also I can use the money," he admits. "Every now and then I have to keep an eye on my retiring age, because you know I'm not a citizen of Australia. I'm not entitled to a pension and I'm having to provide my own superannuation."

So is this finally Hayes Gordon's swan song? "Every show I do is a swan song. I hope never to do another one again, but there comes a time when you discover maybe you have to do it," he tells you. One thing is certain, it is no ego trip.

Hayes recalls the advice of WC Fields who warned other actors against working on stage with children or animals: "We are going to be working with a stageful of very cute talented little girls and a wafidog with a wistful look named Sandy and if there were any ego tripping I don't think we would have a hope in hell," he laughs.

Meanwhile it's business as usual at the Ensemble. Hayes is currently directing a new show called Lamb of God which will open at the theatre in the first week of August.
I was asked by many people, on my arrival in Australia, how long I would be staying. My answer — “three weeks” — brought incredulous stares. One girl, who studies Japanese theatre said to me, “You're planning on seeing the whole country in only three weeks!”

When one has given oneself over to the helter-skelter world of Japanese journalism, three weeks to see one country’s theatre seems like all the time in the world. But Australia proved to be the exception to this. I couldn’t quite believe the diversity. And time seemed to pass with a quiet composure of its own. I didn’t see a single person huffing or, for that matter, puffing through a single crowd, as in Japan. (In Tokyo virtually everybody rushes everywhere for no reason at all.) For any number of reasons, here was a country that was truly Japan’s opposite number.

If I was to approach Australian theatre as well, I would have to begin with withholding judgment on the basis of a Japanese sensibility to time and space. Besides this, Australia seemed different from both Europe and America too. In Asia, it was not exactly Asia. It appeared to me as a Fourth World, an independent domain, with its own sense of time and space.

I was very happy that the country offered so much that I had to see, far more than were my expectations of it. I saw plays after play in Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne, sometimes up to three a day; and I never tired of it. The standard of production was always high.

I should point out that I was fortunate to meet a large number of great people of ability, as Katharine Brisbane, Philip Parsons, Marlis Thiersch, Roger Pulvers, Len Radic, Peter Kenna, Ron Blair, Dorothy Hewett, Ray Lawler, Alex Buzo, Jim Sharman, and Rob Page. They addressed themselves to my Japanese questions with the greatest care, sensitivity, and patience. They gave me valuable advice at every turn. I felt a warmth and an attractiveness in both the people of Australian theatre and the theatre itself. Those three weeks were very happy ones for me! I felt I was at a festival the entire time.

Now, I don’t think so highly of myself to presume that I could draw any concrete conclusions from such a short stay in one country. Were I to come at another time and see other productions, I would no doubt have a different view of things. What I write here are temporary assumptions on my part and nothing more; fleeting impressions, if you will.

First, I was struck by the largeness of the beauty of Australian theatre. Australian theatre, too, has both feet on the ground. It is a productions theatre. It seemed to me to be a theatre that has chosen a concrete simplicity over superficial showiness. It has not strayed from the essential elements or yielded to a technique-for-its-own-sake tendency, a transient state at best. Australian theatre is a healthy balance, not carried away by violent one-directional outbursts of dogmatic self-righteousness. To put it another way, Australian theatre has as its backdrop an artistic sensibility that comes from maturity. It is a civic theatre.

Where does this stability come from? Probably from the solid base of a large continent as it is reflected in people’s minds; from a society that is built on peaceful processes and is comparatively well-off and free of strains. So much of modern theatre has entered the cul-de-sac of technique for its own sake, of excessive technicality without purpose. That theatre is theatre for its own sake. It may be intelligent, but it is largely empty. Australian theatre, it seems to me, has checked this kind of theatre before it could take hold.

I was surprised to find that the majority of playwrights who are active on the front line of theatre were in their thirties; and that the “new wave” had come, with them riding it, during the second half of the 1960’s. There is an intriguing similarity in this with the Japanese situation. In Japan, the so-called little theatre movement of anti-establishment writers and directors arose — Kura Juro, Suzuki Tadashi, Betsuyaku Minoru, Sato Makoto, Terayama Shuji, Higashi Yutaka... These people, and others, re-drew the map of Japanese theatre.

But one quickly sees the differences between the two “new waves”. The Japanese theatre of the sixties was one which set out to negate a modern drama based on psychologism and realism. It was an avant-garde experimental movement which is still a minority movement in the world of Japanese theatre today.

So I was naturally surprised to see that most of the same generation of playwrights and directors in their thirties here in Australia were writing popular pieces which were widely accepted and enjoyed by society, dramas that had a mature technique in them and a traditional point of departure; and that these people were already successful in the middle area of their society. The Japanese theatre world has a thick layer of old people running it at the top. It is a theatre that is sharply polarized in its value system. And it doesn’t have an open-ended structure as does Australian society.

Be that as it may, most Australian playwrights are sure of their technique, which is a careful and meticulous one. Moreover, it is a technique that uses means which have a high rate of success. A typical example of this is Alex Buzo’s Makassar Reef which I saw in Melbourne. It was a “well-made play” full of ready wit and a cosmopolitan, refined sense. Aarne Neeme’s direction was skilful, and there was life on stage; and I was impressed by the playwright’s ability.

However, whilst the play did entertain the audience very much, it was not the kind of piece that confronts an audience in a keen way. I prefer this playwright’s early work which is much more interesting, plays like Norm and Ahmed and Rooted, which I have only read, however. At least in those plays there is a mystery, a darkness that cannot be fully elucidated.

That is why I felt that, while there was a high overall level in production and a sure maturity — and I fully value these qualities, there was one thing lacking: most of the plays I saw lacked wonder.

This may merely be the prejudice of a person who has seen too much Japanese experimental work from a theatre that gives all its power over to superceding realism, a theatre that thrives on the theatricality of the spectacle and the element of the unexpected in the plot. It may be that I am ill-informed really, that I feel this way only because I have seen so little of Australia’s theatre. Whatever, it does appear to me that Australian theatre, in the long run, will take its form from the gentle discord that exists between the representational mainstream of people like Alex Buzo and David Williamson on the one hand, and non-mainstream anti­naturalists like Dorothy Hewett, with her poetic dramas, Roger Pulvers with his social criticism and satire, and directors like Jim Sharman and Rex Cramphorn, on the other.

This theatre would be different again from that of either Europe or Asia. It would be the original product of this unique continent. It would be a theatre that reflects the complexities of a multi-racial state; not restrained by tradition; supported by a largeness of approach and no limits on time and space; facing, more than anything, the future, and opened out wide: a theatre of possibility and abundance.

Australian theatre is part of the zone of Asian theatre, yet in many ways is such a contrast to Japanese theatre. We cannot but be deeply impressed by it.
Music Theatre in Melbourne

On September 1st at the Union Theatre, University of Melbourne, the Victorian State Opera is to open its second season of contemporary music theatre.

Two of the works, The Apology of Boney Anderson, text by Murray Copeland to the music of Barry Conyngham, and Sin: An Immoral Fable in Seven Deadly Acts and Entr'actes, written by Jack Hibberd with music by Martin Friedel, have been specially commissioned by the company. The third work of the evening is Eliza Fraser Sings, words by Barbara Blackman and music by Peter Sculthorpe, which was recently premiered in Sydney.

With this season of music dramas the Victorian State Opera can now rightfully claim to be the only opera company in the country to present new works by Australian composers and writers on a regular basis. Not only that, the company views the production and presentation of such works as "one of its major functions and achievements". All praise to them.

Boney Anderson tells the tale of a convict chained to a rock in Sydney Harbour after becoming violent due to a head injury sustained at the battle of Navarino. On his rock, like a modern Prometheus, he became a tourist attraction. The piece takes up his story after he had been reserved and taken to Norfolk Island, where visitors draw flashes of memories from him as he tends animals.

Jack Hibberd's Sin is a modern morality tale described as "theatrical, boisterous, irreverent and thought provoking". It takes the lid off conventional social attitudes by juxtaposing comically and satirically, images of vice and virtue Martin Friedel worked with the writer for the Pram Factory's production of The Overcoat, as did Paul Hampton the director. Evelyn Krape and Jan Friedel are in the cast.

In Eliza Fraser Sings. Margot Cory plays the half-mad Mrs Fraser outside the Showground booth she set up in Hyde Park, Sydney, where she told the story of her long ordeal on what is now known as Fraser Island, in the hands of the aboriginals.

The season runs for five nights between September 1st and 8th.

Theatre in Schools with Andrew Ross

Joan Ambrose

A winter's morning, a school with the sounds and smells of a school. The elusive nostalgia of orange peel, wet gym shoes and duplicating ink. And the year twelves are restless. They have been herded into a rather cramped reading room to see a play. They give the impression they'd rather be doing maths, or better still not being at school at all. Suddenly a transistor breaks out the acting area, shortly followed by John Rayment as Joe, and the play The Winners by Brian Friel begins. It is a play about being in love, about exams, leaving school, and being pregnant. Eighty minutes later, a group of kids walk out of that room, moved, inarticulate, each separate, each wrapped in a response that they do not wish to be, so great has been their empathy with the play.

All of that is something new to students in Western Australia. Director Andrew Ross was appointed in January 1977 to set up TIE in the West, under the auspices of the National Theatre Company. There was no money and a big job to do. But Andrew was very clear in his mind where he wanted to and what he wanted to do. In this he has been supported by both Aarne Neeme and Stephen Barry, successive Directors of the National Theatre. The result has been outstandingly successful. There is now a waiting list of schools who are asking for the Theatre in Education team, and schools even book return visits of the plays.

Andrew's background is as a Director of Student Theatre at Monash and some years with the MTC on a freelance basis. A fortuitous accidental meeting with Aarne Neeme gave him the opportunity to join the National Theatre and to put into practice his convictions about what kind of theatre should be played in schools.

But the first problem was money. Initially, the plays chosen were two-handers. The TIE company in the beginning had to largely run on box-office. But the response to these first plays Cupid in Transit and Winners was so good that the Schools Commission funded Eureka by David Young for primary schools. A film of the performance has been made so that schools not yet involved can see the type of work the TIE team presents.

Subsequent funding from the WA Arts Council and the Australia Council has allowed the Company to develop, and to realise Andrew Ross's initial belief that TIE companies work best with a writer in the team. Richard Tulloch has now been with the company since the beginning of this year and two new plays Red Earth and Kuspaajack — a word play for primary schools — have emerged as a result.

The guiding philosophy behind Andrew's work is a commitment to bringing theatre to schools, in a way that relates to the child's complete experience and not just to curriculum needs, presenting plays that are both entertaining but with a depth and pithy content that expand the childrens understanding and awareness.

It has been a busy period for Andrew Ross. In addition to the exacting demands of forming TIE in Western Australia he also has some critically acclaimed Greenroom productions to his credit, such as Ashes and Going Home.

He never imagined that he would come West. But it has been a rather marvellous, almost frontier, experience he says. There are so many opportunities and a fresh and vigorous approach here, that make the efforts of the last eighteen months very worthwhile.

THEATRE AUSTRALIA SEPTEMBER 1978
Dear Sir,

On reading Marguerite Well's article "No Culture Comes Out of Emptiness", it strikes me that readers may well get the impression that Fortune Theatre Company is critical of the Canberra Theatre Trust for assisting us in staging our lunchtime seasons in the foyer of the Canberra Theatre, rather than the Playhouse.

In fact this is not so, we would be pleased to have the use of the Playhouse in the future — but only at such time as we have sufficient funding to enable us to make full use of the available facilities.

We are a newly formed company, gradually building a reputation for lunchtime theatre, and, by necessity keeping our expenditure as low as possible. The foyer of the theatre is ideal for us, we are able to use representational furniture, sets, lighting etc. We believe this informality is one of the reasons for the success of our lunchtime seasons.

We have received the utmost co-operation from Terry Vaughan, and the Theatre Trust in general. And are now in the process of preparing four more plays, to run from September 11th to October 6th.

In her article Ms Wells has not misquoted us, but used our statement out of context, with the unfortunate effect of bracketing Fortune Theatre Company with a group of people in the A.C.T. who feel they have a grievance against the Theatre Trust.

Yours faithfully,

Pat Hutchinson
Fortune Theatre Company
A.C.T.

Dear Editor,

It's about time I re-established correspondence with you, and re-assured you of my continued interest in T.A. This is an interest, by the way, which is shared by many people in Canada; comments have been made on the quality and breadth of the journal, and I think these worth passing along.

John Romeril was in town last Spring, visiting theatres and theatre people in Canada from coast to coast. He made a great impression here; his disarmingly relaxed personality did more for the success of his stay than the cultural attache at the Australian High Commission in Ottawa. At Harbourfront, a community/multi-arts complex, John gave a televised, live performance of the Les Harding monologue from 'The Floating World'. It was the highlight of an evening scheduled otherwise for poetry recitation. John Romeril's being in Canada was part of his winning the Canadian-Australian Literary Prize, which he actually won, I think, two or three years ago. Much interest in Romeril now exists here, and about theatre in Australia generally. The National Theatre in Ottawa (NAC) is possibly going to perform 'The Floating World' as part of their season for 1979.

Another stray piece of miscellany is about Australian films and the way they are marketed over here. First, I've never seen 'Picnic at Hanging Rock' screened in Canada, neither in regular distribution nor festival showing. Recently, 'The Devil's Playground' was shown in a large iby that I mean four cinemas under the one roof downtown house. It ran for a scant week, and was hopelessly billed as "An Australian horror movie" — and they meant horror in the genre not the aesthetic sense. Another case is Petersen — from a David Williamson script, I believe — which became 'Jock Petersen over here, where it was released in a blood-n'-guts outlet ('Jock', I guess you already know, is North American for an individual who answers to his brawn rather than his brain — ocker may translate?). I think distributors are loath to take a risk with Australian films in Canada. Of course, this is understandable while not laudable; 'Mad Dog Morgan' was given conventional release because it had Dennis Hopper as its star. But then, I wonder why Rachel Roberts (at least known here for her role in a Tony Randall sitcom doesn't qualify 'Picnic at Hanging Rock' for North American release. Perhaps it has been shown in the states, I don't know. At least one would hope that our local Festival organisers would smarten up their act.

I am presently attending the Stratford Festival, from which I hope a submission will be forthcoming to you. All the best for continued success with the journal.

Yours sincerely,

Barry O'Connor
Canadian Correspondent

Dear Sir,

We were somewhat taken aback at Ray Stanley's column in the June issue in which he referred to our "selfish un-co-operation" in relation to our tour of 'The Twenties and All That Jazz'.

It is a fact that the 'Twenties' company approached us a few weeks prior to their tour to see if it was practical to get out of their contract, but when we explained that we had already spent about $10,000 in initial preparation and advertising for the tour they agreed to proceed with their contract.

Our relations with the company before, during and after the tour have always been most cordial and professional, so we wonder how Ray could have formed such a distorted view of the situation even allowing for the fact that his column puts whispers and rumours ahead of facts.

Sincerely,

Don Mackay
Director, Victorian Arts Council

Dear Sir,

I regret that Terry Vaughan is away at present and cannot reply to Marguerite Wells' article on the Canberra Theatre Centre personally. However I would like to make the following comments.

The Canberra Theatre Trust's principle responsibility under its Ordinance is the management of the Theatre Centre — that is, basically, to provide for occupancy of its venues and to maintain these to the original standards set. The operational funds of the Theatre Centre are derived as follows — 53% from revenue and 47% from subsidy.

Secondary to this function the Ordinance requires the Trust to promote and encourage the arts. However the financial structure set up by the Government did not allow for the continuous funding of these aims. In 1965 the Trust was given $8800, non-replenishable, which it nurtured and nourished until it was finally used up in 1978.

The main source for entrepreneurial funds over the last nine years has been a variable entrepreneurial grant from the Australia Council. This has been used to bring all types and styles of presentations to Canberra which for financial reasons would not otherwise be seen here; also, to encourage and support events emanating from within the community itself. From July 1977 to June 1978 we presented 35 different attractions including the Pram Factory's production of "A Stretch of the Imagination", with Max Gillies, and the Fortune Theatre lunchtime season in the foyer of the Canberra Theatre.

By the way, the Fortune Theatre wants to play in the foyer and we are planning another season in September/October. Also, the Jigsaw Company is currently playing a foyer season as well.

Usage and attendances did decline from 1975 to 1977 in company with the general economy and theatrical events throughout Australia. I cannot speak for the economy but I am happy to state that both usage and attendances at the Canberra Theatre Centre increased in 1977/78 to 504 usages and 223,365 attendances.

As regards "Witold Gombrowicz in Buenos Aires" by Roger Pulvers; we were approached by Grapevine Productions to present this play for a season at the Playhouse. We suggested that it would do better in the environment of the

(Continued next page)
Ray Stanley’s

WHISPERS RUMOURS & FACTS

Sydney may be ahead of London with its production of Dracula, but it looks ultimately as though the vampire cult will be bigger in England. On November 11 the Dracula Society will be holding its annual dinner when guest of honour will be veteran actor Hamilton, who toured around England in the play for many years. Then George Chakiris is due to co-star with Roy Dotrice in a completely new stage version, with plans in hand to present the Broadway version we’re seeing, with Terence Stamp mentioned for the title role. Frank Langella (who’s been playing it on Broadway) is due in London in October to star in the film version, with Lord Olivier as Van Helsing. And of course Ken Russell is to direct yet another film version.

Hear there’s a possibility Glynis Johns will star in a Broadway version of the film Harold and Maude. Seems Liv Ullmann will probably be taking singing lessons whilst she’s in Australia, preparing for the Broadway lead in Richard Rodgers’ Mama... There’s talk all over again of James Stewart coming here to play in Harvey... And the search for a lead for Ben Travers’ The Bed Before Yesterday still continues.

The multi-talented Nick Enright, having made the translation of the MTC’s Electra with Frank Hauser, has followed this with the translation of The Servant of Two Masters with Ron Blair for the South Australian Theatre Company... I am told by a quite reliable source that a name to remember for the future is Tanya Straton, that she will quite likely be another Jill Perryman... Shaving of Hayes Gordon’s locks for his role in Annie is likely to be caught for posterity by the TV cameras.

Apparently tentative title for Reg Livermore’s next show is Sacred Cows. Sounds vaguely familiar. Was one of Jon Finlayson’s revues years ago called that?... Understand it was Lara Levin who told Kenn Brodziak Patrick Macnee would be the best possible lead for the Australian production of Death Trap. Am tippin’ an unknown Australian will be cast in the other leading role and make a big impact... Quote from Lionel Bart: “America is where I earn my living. Britain is where I pay my tax...” The Green Guide of The Age recently listed a radio play as June and the Pastrycook by Sean O’Casey... Confusion being caused in Adelaide by Wal Cherry’s newly formed Australian Stage Company as another organisation in the city is called The Stage Company.

Those who can recall Frank Thring’s Arrow Theatre days will be saddened at the death in London at sixty five of actor-director Frederick Farley. After a period of pioneering work in the New Zealand theatre, he came to Melbourne in 1950 and during his time there directed Jimmy Hanley in No Trees in the Street, Jessie Matthews in Larger Than Life and Ralph Petersen’s The Square Ring. His most recent achievement was taking over from Alan Webb in the West End production of The Kingfisher and acting in the three hander with Ralph Richardson and Celia Johnson, following this with direction of a national tour of the same play.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CONT’D

campus and the Director agreed. However, we offered to support it with a guarantee of $500. This offer and the money was accepted and we still think it was the right course to take.

Canberra is still only a city of 200,000 and the Theatre Centre has to endeavour to provide a varied diet for the entire population. However the Canberra Theatre Trust awaits with interest the outcome of the Inquiry Into Drama in the ACT. (on which two of its members are sitting) as recommendations may well influence the future role of the Theatre Centre in regard to drama.

For the 1978 calendar year, our entrepreneurial funds totalled $32,000 and this doesn’t go very far. The Trust would certainly like to do more and is making representations for a larger sum next year.

Yours sincerely,
D.M. Purnell
Chairman
CANBERRA THEATRE TRUST

Dear Sir,

Wanting only that my plays get produced and that I continue to develop as a playwright I wasn’t all that fussed that you failed to mention in your April “Comment” that I was awarded the National Critics’ Circle gong for the ACT.

You did however mention all the State awards. Nor was I all that put out that last September you didn’t publish the crit of my new play The Return of Ida Mulloy (produced by Canberra Rep). But then on reflection I thought I’d write to you so that the people who have encouraged me in my work, will know that I’m alive and well and living productively in Canberra.

Yours faithfully,
Mike Giles
Fisher, ACT

Dear Sir,

Last month the Company of Players, a constituted part of the State Theatre of South Australia, held one of its regular meetings, it was an extraordinary meeting, in as much as actors, box office, workshop, scenic and lighting design staff were there to discuss the appointment of the new artistic director.

It formed a working party to draft a report of the attitudes expressed at the meeting and this report will be presented to the board by our representative.

The Company of Players has a representative on the board, with full voting powers.

Extraordinary?
A blue print for other companies?

Yours faithfully,
Robin Bowering
State Company of South Australia

APOLOGY

Apologies to Ray Stanley, who wrote the review of Electra in the August issue, not, of course, David Parker, who took the photos.

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THEATRE AUSTRALIA SEPTEMBER 1978 9
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Mastery or Myth?

A personal assessment of opera’s superstar by Greg Curran.

Listen to a batch of “Stupenda” fans, and you’ll quickly come to believe expressive singing began and ended with Maria Callas. The old refrain, Callas for acting, Sutherland for the vocal thrills, is still being warbled, still passing for thoughtful confabulation in certain dress circles.

Which is a pity, because, apart from the quaint notion that the singing and acting of opera can be effectively separated, the distinction is hardly fair to either lady. To those whose minds are not closed to a broad view of what vocal beauty can be, Madame Callas was, more often than not, the voice beautiful; while our Joan, hailed as “great” so long and so mindlessly on the basis of her fabled virtuosity, may now, on the strength of her recent Sydney Normas, and (I suspect) a deepening awareness of what the tragic heroine in general (and Norma in particular) is all about, have it in her to be a more complete artist, to be really great.

One prime fact should immediately be made clear. Expression in singing, and particularly opera, was always sought after. Benigne de Bacilly, one of the first French theoreticians of singing, divided voices into two categories; the beautiful ones and the good ones. The good ones are those which, without any natural gifts, are nevertheless capable, thanks to technique, of expressing all a performance requires. The naturally beautiful ones, on the other hand, content to wallow in their own beauty, rarely produce anything of significance and are often boring.

Foreward to Paris in the 1830’s and Vincenzo Bellini, great composer of La Sonnambula, I Puritani, and Norma. Bellini’s friend, Ferdinand Hiller, has left impressions of musical evenings, at which Bellini and Chopin were present. On one of these occasions, Hiller tells us, Bellini sang some of his own compositions “in a voice less full of sound than of feeling” (my italics). Guiditta Pasta, favourite of the composer, the diva who created the diverse roles of Norma and Sonnambula, had, according to the critic Chorley, a voice that was, originally anyway, “hard, uneven and unbeautiful”. Groves Musical Dictionary states that “her voice was not absolutely free from imperfection but the individuality of her impersonations and the peculiar and penetrating expression of her singing made the severest critic forget any faults of production in the sympathy and emotion she irresistibly created”.

Another Norma, the “fabulous” Malibran, contemporary of Pasta and Bellini, and the singer to whom, in our own day, Maria Callas has been most compared, was an artist of great presence and force, but, again according to Grove, her charm “seems to have lain chiefly in the peculiar colour and unusual extent of her voice, and in her excitable temperament... that her voice was not faultless either in quality or uniformity seems certain”. Giulia Grisi, another contemporary, a gentler type of singer by all accounts, with apparently more conventional (and “perfect”) vocal resources, nevertheless appears to have striven for expression at all costs. She was the first Elvira in Bellini’s last opera I Puritani. In London (1835) the critic of The Spectator pays tribute to her acting in the role; “In the forlorn being who stands before us with dim and rayless eyes, sunk and meaningless features and a voice hollow, tremulous, hoarse, not a vestige remains of the lovely and splendid creature we had seen an instant before”.

Composers other than Bellini preferred dramatic truth to some spurious vocal perfection. Verdi, for instance, who stated that “his” Lady Macbeth should have a voice “harsh, stifled and hollow... a demonic quality”. Richard Wagner said of Wilhelmine Schroder-Devrient, the great Leonore of Fidelio, creator of Senta in The Flying Dutchman, first Venus in
"She needs Franco Zeffirelli again to direct her and Tullio Serafin to come back from the dead."

Tannhauser "Because we have celebrated you as a singer. I have been asked whether your voice was really exceptional, the question implying that this was the essential point... If I were to be asked this question today I would give roughly this reply; no, she had no voice; but she knew so well how to handle her breathing and thereby to create, with so marvellous a musicianship, the true soul of a woman, that one thought no longer of singing nor of voice."

That’s rather a good description of Callas as well, and indeed the conductor Tullio Serafin her discoverer, who was also a major influence on Rosa Ponselle (great Norma of the twenties) and an early "encourager" of Miss Sutherland herself, has echoed Wagner in his comments on the Italian tenor Aureliano Pertile (a contemporary of Gigli). "I never actually noticed that Pertile had a voice. I don’t know why, but evening after evening I have only heard the voices of Faust and Lohengrin, of Des Grieux and Edgardo, and so on. I’ve heard as many voices as there are parts in his repertory", Which may be just another way of putting what Ernest Newman, the great English critic, said about Ponselle’s Norma”, Mme Ponselle proves to us that the finest singing, given a good voice to begin with, comes from the constant play of a fine mind on the inner meaning of the music".

Another Norma, she may have been the greatest of all; Lilli Lehmann, turn of the century soprano with a phenomenal repertoire including Isolde and Brunnhilde (in that respect, at least, she was the Callas of her day). Yet, according to the Viennese critic Hanslick, “Nature denied her penetrating strength and sumptuousness of voice... but endowed her with a personality predestined not only for the stage but particularly tragic and noble roles”. One might almost say Joan Sutherland is Lilli Lehmann in reverse. From the beginning of her international career the voice was a great one, with subject to few limits in the matter of top range, flexibility (decorations handled with consummate ease) and quality. The trouble was that, from the outset she hardly seemed to have much temperamental affinity with the tragic heroines she portrayed. For a start, she was monumentally placid onstage. And the problem was not confined to physical acting, or even vocal acting. It was more fundamental. What do I mean?

Well, in the first place, while her tone was not blanched like the whistle-stop, twenty-pie coloraturas of 19th century French opera, it was light, and though bright, which was usually attractive, it was soft grained which was often a drawback. Moreover there was a tendency toward a single colouration, a monochromatic effect. Though the voice was clearly capable of darker colours, it did not naturally favour the deeper shades. Compared to the dark "mysterious" beauty of the voice of Rosa Ponselle (described by JB Steane in The Grand Tradition as port wine, roses, pansies, velvet, cream), the delicate colourations and the light and shade of Montserrat Caballe, the vigour and attack of two such Normas as Anita Cerquetti and Elena Souloitis (paid for alas in short careers) not to mention the vehemence, majesty and supreme authority of Maria Callas (even at times of great vocal stress), La Stupenda seemed-in a word — colourless.

At the same time, whether by nature, or inadvertence, or a deliberate intent to "cover", at all costs she seemed to have some difficulty in proper production of the voice, in that area largely free of the frills and flounces of singing — i.e. the middle voice. Here the following were sometimes lacking, either singly or in combination a feeling for pure line; a forward limpid, even stream of tone closely knit phrasing steadiness and clarity of enunciation the ability to sing simply and sound natural. Considerations such as these are often of paramount importance in what is, after all, the vocal heartland of singing. In this singer they were sometimes curiously lacking. This meant that, as well as often being colourless, the singing was wordless as well. The mushy mouthed, bubble gummy effect of this odd voice production provided a preponderance of vocalise. And without clear diction there could be little in the way of vocal acting, expression, communication, drama. Over the years as Lucia, Amina, Elvira, Violetta (in Oz 1965 that really was interminable), Marguerite, Semiramis et al, the singer always seemed pretty much the same. All that changed were the costumes. Performances I’ve seen were usually enlivened by the physical beauty of the vocal instrument (something which, however, quickly runs out of interest) plus fantastic bouts of virtuosity at the top of the range (being also of a limited fascination, they soon outstay their welcome). Was Sutherland then, doomed forever to be the "boring" voice of the 17th Century, Bacilly previously..."
"The singer always seemed pretty much the same. All that changed were the costumes."

mentioned, one of those voices "content to wallow in their beauty?"

In London 1967 the diva sang Norma for the first, I think, of two series of performances in that city to date (the other was in 1970). Harold Rosenthal, Editor of Opera Magazine, said this "Not only were there long stretches in this opera which were boring, in which Miss Sutherland just did not rivet one's attention . . . but this was the kind of performance which must surely have given the impression to those who did not know the opera that it is not a particularly good piece, and that Bellini was not a dramatic composer".

Rosenthal's words are of more than routine interest in Sydney 1978. The critics here have variously attributed the longeurs to-faults in the libretto, and the music, that the opera has for a long time been buried (which is nonsense), that the piece is hackneyed, that the production is at fault (and, to my mind, it is certainly a bad one) and so on and so forth. Anything to avoid saying something obvious to a child; that any boredom felt with Norma is more likely to lie at the feet of the Druid priestess herself, more likely to arise from a lack of consistent, convincing interpretation from the opera's central figure. Nothing like this was suggested. Miss Sutherland, a national treasure, has been, as always, pelted with local superlatives.

Can that damehood be far off?

Yet Montserrat Caballe, another famed practitioner of Norma, got pasted in some quarters for the dramatic defects in her recent performances (at Covent Garden). The critic of The Sunday Times (London) said "I made the mistake of first seeing Norma with Callas in her blazing prime — a standard of dramatic and musical intelligence and commitment compared with which her successors at Covent Garden have come nowhere. Caballe, unlike Sutherland, at least gives a semblance of the great issues of passion and patriotism that are at stake; but, until the final scene, her singing in the big numbers had little of Sutherland's great accomplishment of indeed, of her own, while its lack of involvement and purpose made the recitatives seem interminable".

Well that's one critic's view, based, one supposes, in Sutherland's case, on the memory of those 1967 and 1970 performances. Despite what I've said about the Sutherland voice, despite the stretches of dullness in the Sydney performances, I think Miss Sutherland, (whose Norma has become a real curate's egg) would make a much stronger impression in London now.

Her local efforts show a much more thoughtful singer, an artist coming to grips with her powers as never before. There is a clarity in the recitatives, a feeling for phrases, an overall authority which bodes well. Perhaps, at fifty two, she no longer feels so confident about her top (though she has few worries on that score) and has other priorities. Perhaps she now sees her goal as a singing actress. Whatever, she has conquered with (well almost) the centre of her voice. Her singing of Casta Diva was lovely, she was touching in the scenes with the children, had a go at raging at her lover, the deserting Roman proconsul Pollione, and tried for real meaning in the string of great numbers that make up the last act. Thus In Mia Man (in which Norma has Pollione in her power) was gripping, Qual Cor Tradisti (in which she reveals her selfless love) moving, and the finale, in which the mighty Priestess goes to her death, appropriately noble.

But, and it is a big but, does she yet command the role with her whole being? — there were patches of foggy and indistinct singing, a lot that was tentative, too much stop-go in the physical acting (she needs Franco Zeffirelli again to direct her and Tullio Serafin to come back from the dead and conduct one of his great expansive performances). The whole evening lacked an overriding feeling of inevitability. A truly great Norma should appear to be possessed, caught up, swept away, by the role. Maybe Joan Sutherland, who has never seemed so much at home on stage as now, soon will be. I hope so, for I would like to really like her, to be completely satisfied for once.

As Harold Rosenthal also said "The great Normas of operatic history have, to a greater or lesser extent all been great singing actresses, mistresses of dramatic declamation and outstanding personalities — Lilli Lehmann, Rosa Ponselle, Maria Callas". Will Joan Sutherland join this august group? I doubt it, but she has surprised me this time, and may again. In 1972, in a farewell to the students of a master class at the Juillard School New York, the late Maria Callas said "The only thanks I want is diction, feeling, and expression" Will "our" diva ever be able to say that? Perhaps. Time will tell. In the meantime, constant affirmations and re-affirmations of her "greatness" by the Australian press miss the point, and are hardly conducive to an atmosphere in which art can truly flourish.
Wal Cherry looks at the aims and uses of ‘political’ theatre

When we were rehearsing The Threepenny Opera for New Opera, now the State Opera of South Australia, in late November and December 1975, some momentous political events overtook the Australian people. The Governor General sacked the Whitlam Government and by European standards we ought to have been in political chaos. The fact that we were not, disturbed ‘the left’ and relieved ‘the right’. The effect on the company in rehearsal was exactly this, although the left protested volubly and the right tended to remain quiet. John Willett and I thought we would take advantage of the situation to make a point with local reverberations. We had already placed the play in an Australian social-political context and now seized on the opportunity to flex our political muscles, have some fun and perhaps demonstrate the spirit of Brecht. We brought the text back closer to the original meaning which Brecht, by the wildest stretch of his imagination, could never have expected to refer directly to life.

You will recall that The Threepenny Opera ends when the hero/villain Macheath is reprieved as he stands on the gallows. A messenger arrives from the Queen (King in our version) and interferes with due process. Macheath stands immune. We thought there was an easily made political point in there somewhere and John Willett made it with a few deft strokes of the translator’s pen...Peachum said:

Dear audience, we now are coming to The point where we must hang him by the neck
Because it is the Christian thing to do
Proving that men must pay for what they take,

But as we want to keep our fingers clean
And you are people we can’t risk offending
We thought we’d better do without this scene
And substitute instead a different ending.

Why hang Macheath? We know that men are all alike.
For crime so long as it is nice and legal.

So let’s refer this to the Governor-General
And may his answer to us be Vice Regal.

A Governor-General, resplendent in appropriate plumage, dropped from the flies and sang:

I bring a special order from our beloved King to have Captain Macheath set at liberty forthwith — all cheer — as it’s the coronation, and raised to the hereditary peerage. Cheers. The castle of Marmarel, likewise a pension of ten thousand pounds, to be his in usufruct until his death. Cheers. To any bridal couples present His Majesty bids me to convey his gracious good wishes.

The Chorus sang:

Injustice should be spared from persecution:
Soon it will freeze to death, for it is cold.
Think of the blizzards and the black confusion
Which in this vale of tears we all behold.

And the moral was drawn.

If the audience got the point it displayed massive unconcern. The company remained as it was. No Liberal voter got upset at having to perform this kind of theatrical value. The aesthetic quality of the piece were enhanced and we felt a little smug about our relevance. We’d done our bit.

There is a sense in which all theatre is politics and it can certainly be judged and analysed from that point of view. But there can be no justification for examining the theatre as politics without also examining its political function. How successful is political theatre as politics?

The answer is not very successful at all.

There are limited unspecific claims which can be made for the political effectiveness of committed theatre. You can claim that political theatre provides a rallying point for like-minded people. You can claim that at certain places and times it has incited relatively small numbers of people to civic demonstrations and riots, as in the Federal Theatre days of Welles and Housman, or the turbulent times of the Abbey. It can generate lawsuits which attract publicity, and in the days of modern communications it can sometimes generate a modicum of public attention.

But largely the committed political theatre conducts its business, both imaginative and financial, with the converted or the indulgent — the happily unthreatened upper-middle class which seems not to care in the least that Melbourne’s Australian Performing Group, or any other theatrical faction, should survive happily on the taxpayer’s money.

The theatre is not a very satisfactory place in which to be politically active. The results are simply not there. The politically disadvantaged and disenfranchised people in Australia are those who live in poverty, deprivation and neglect and for the theatre to pose as an instrument which can effectively help these people is shamefully self-indulgent. The theatre can and should be able to demonstrate this neglect, this disillusionment but the theatre exists on its sense of fun, of celebration, and pretty soon the fact of poverty becomes theatrical “content”, the play is experienced at the level where cast and audience can in their own way feel guilty, and/or good about their personal feelings aroused by the performance.

In this area we are left in little doubt about the political roles. The audience is meant to feel guilty and the performers, by virtue of being politically active, are meant to feel good.

Of course, there’s nothing necessarily wrong about that. And there’s nothing necessarily right about it either. What has happened is that an event has occurred in a public place from which a relatively
small number of people has derived pleasure.

In the theatre politics rapidly enlarges its role as the source of enthusiasm and soon becomes part of the achieved aesthetic. Theatre is to politics as knitting and to execution by guillotine during the French revolution. Something to be getting on with while you're waiting.

That said it might be interesting to ask what impact modern political ideologies have had on the theatre in Australia. In the major subsidised theatre the effect has been negligible. The repertoire has been expanded to include some quarrelsome works from the left. Programme notes and actors biographies make passing references such as: "Favourite hero — Mao" and occasionally companies such as the South Australian Theatre Company under George Ogilvie's regime talk as though the middle-class audience needs to be educated culturally and politically and by God they're going to do it. That's about as far as it goes.

In the smaller theatres a number of political gestures are made but the achievements can be measured in good old uncommitted terms. The major achievement of the Australian Performing Group and it is indeed a major achievement, lies in the writers it has given to the Australian theatre. It has had no discernible effect on Australian politics but its methods of work have loosened up a certain amount of theatrical practice and it has acted as an excellent foil for the companies which receive larger subsidies. It has also provided a lifestyle focus for a number of Melbourne citizens. It also believes, in what it does. The weakness of the APG's position is reflected in a production of The Mother which I saw there in 1975. In that play by Brecht there is a scene in which a schoolteacher, who is by no means politically "correct", is recruited by a revolutionary cell to teach the members to read and write. When members of the cell wish to spend their time discussing the political implications of the schoolteacher's position the Mother brings them back to the fact that learning to read and write provides a basic revolutionary tool. Now being able to communicate clearly and occasionally companies such as the South Australian Theatre Company under John Willett, who is co-director of the production of "Puntla" which will occur next year.

This article owes a great deal to many conversations with John Willett, who is co-director of the production of "Puntla" which will occur next year.

FOOTNOTE:

Radioactive Horror Show
— 1977. Photo: Ponch Hawkes

The APG's Radioactive Horror Show

Scenes from Wal Cherry's
The Threepenny Opera.

FOOTNOTE:

This article owes a great deal to many conversations with John Willett, who is co-director of the production of "Puntla" which will occur next year.
The first thing that one notices about Melbourne Theatre Company director, Mick Rodger, is his lack of pretension. He is in no way precious. Those quirks, mannerisms, foibles and idiosyncracies that are associated with the popular caricature of the stage director are not found in Mick Rodger at all. Publicly, professionally and privately, he seems content to be what he is — an extremely talented, nice bloke.

Right now, Rodger's version of Alan Ayckbourn's *Just Between Ourselves* is playing at the Russell Street Theatre, and Rodger is rehearsing his next play, Dylan Thomas's *Under Milk Wood*, which will open at the Athenaeum on September 5. Certainly, Mick Rodger has both hands very full at the moment.

But, even when he is at his most frantic, Rodger manages to resemble my vision of Bilbo Baggins — a benign, contented, shy, rather hairy, amused and gentle sort of tatterdemalion — although, to be fair, he is somewhat leaner than a thoughtful Hobbit would consider ideal. This disarming front effectively conceals two of Rodger's most valuable qualities; the delightful irony of his humour, and his gift of observation.

Strong traces of both of these attributes can be found in a story that Rodger told me about a recent Saturday lunch at his favourite suburban pub.

"I'd eaten my meal," he said, "and I was sitting in the back bar, drinking wine, relaxing, and watching the people. Groups of people always fascinate me. Gradually, I began to sense an odd atmosphere. Something seemed to be happening, but I couldn't tell what it was.

"Suddenly, an attractive blonde girl climbed onto the bar and began to take off her clothes. She danced to the music from the radio, and very well, too. Then a man joined her, and the pair of them did a brilliant send-up of a bump-and-grind strip. They were beautiful, very funny. The lovely thing about it was that the performance was natural. I know that I couldn't have directed them to do a routine like that so perfectly. It was pure theatre. The people in the bar just loved it.

"There were encores, of course, and during one of these I left the bar and took myself to the lavatory. One of the old, obese, beery chaps from the front bar was there, a local. He made it quite clear that he abhorred the way I was dressed — my high boots and fur jacket seemed to confuse him somewhat — and he started to insult me. First he called me a 'trendy' and when this didn't work he offered me his ultimate scorn and called me an 'effing cowboy'.

"My God! I had to resist an urge to take him into the back bar with me. If my clothes upset the poor chap so much, the scene in the back bar would have made him pass out!"

Mick Rodger started his life in England, thirty five years ago. "I was born during a heavy blitz," he says. "In Crewe, of all places. Generally, people only go through Crewe when they're on their way to somewhere else."

Such was the case with the infant Rodger, who moved to Birmingham when he was three. He remembers with affection the Sunday nights that he spent in the Bull Ring, the hot chestnuts, the speakers and the atmosphere of street theatre.

Rodger passed the 11+examinations (which he regards as iniquitous) rather well, and won a scholarship to a grammar school. This surprised his entire family, because he had shown no great potential at primary school. ("The family thought I was a dumb kid," he remembers, "and I tended to agree with them.") In those days, candidates for 11+exams had to nominate three schools that they would like to attend if they were successful, and Rodger selected Handsworth Grammar, a Church of England school with an awesome academic record, as his first choice. He did this partly because of the whimsy involved in the notion that a 'dumb kid' could win his way to Handsworth, and he was amazed when he was accepted.

In 1956, Rodger's parents decided to emigrate to Australia, and the family settled in Adelaide. Inevitably, Rodger found his way to Adelaide University, where he enrolled as a medical student. However, he found the pressure of the first year's work to be so heavy that the course precluded any activity that was not directly related to study. He held the opinion that university life should offer more than hard work, that the ancillary attractions of the campus were quite as vital for a rounded education as were formal lectures and tutorials, so he quit medicine and took up a more congenial option, Honours English.

"It was quite strange," he says. "When I had been at school I'd done a lot of debating, so, when I started the arts course, I decided to join the Debating Society. I found out that there was a meeting of the society, and I went along, but I got either the date or the room..."
presently one of the directors at the Melbourne Theatre Company.

confused and I found myself at a meeting of the Drama Society. I was immediately auditioned — as was everyone else in the room — for the forthcoming production of Webster’s The Duchess of Malfi. Furthermore, I was cast as Antonio!"

So, introduced to drama and the theatre by accident, Rodger found himself totally absorbed in a completely new world. “I never got to relax as Antonio, and I don’t think I had grasped the Promised Land; I thought I could fly."

“I spent the next four years at university doing plays, getting better and learning, and finally I finished up as Jimmy Porter in Look Back in Anger. I felt an enormous identification with Jimmy. The play was just started then — it had only just started to be done in Australia — and the experience of acting in it made me think of Osborne as a mentor.” Now, however, Osborne is something of a disappointment to Rodger.

At the end of four happy years on the boards, Rodger graduated from university with first class honours. In doing so, he picked up a scholarship that carried with it a grant to be used for further study overseas, so, in 1965, Rodger went to Oxford to study for his B. Litt.

He missed the great wave of Oxford comedy talent by a couple of years and several thousand miles, and this may have contributed to his initial response to Oxford. “At first I thought I’d got onto some kind of academic conveyer belt. The thought that there was still off most of all was the Oxford academic atmosphere, which was so stultifying.

“To give an example — one of the first things that I did after I arrived was to look up the Oxford University Dramatic Society and get myself into a show. This was the year when this Just Between Ourselves Guildenstern to Edinburgh. My moral tutor — he was only two years older than me — was also my English tutor, and one day he took me aside and said, ‘I understand you’re dabbling in theatre’! I admitted that this was the case, and he replied, ‘Look here, that sort of thing is all very fine for undergraduates, but post-graduates should be beyond it’. Amazing!”

Undeterred by this intellectual snobbery, Rodger went on to direct plays for OUDS, and also for the Experimental Theatre Club. While his tutors were urging him towards an academic career, he was perceiving theatre to be a living thing — something to be done rather than taught.

Oxford found Rodger to be an attractive person. “One day I received the most astounding invitation, to ‘join and attend a meeting of the Fifty Five Club’. The meeting was at Christ Church, which seems to be for well-to-do public school kids and the aristocracy, and I was from Balliol, which is the intellectual college. So I had to go, just out of curiosity.

“Well, there was an interview in progress at a long table, and around the table were assembled — I later discovered — the fifty five most important students of that particular year. Or, the fifty four most important, and me. God knows how I was selected, but it was interesting. I mean, there was — of the radical left — talking to a group of the enemy about which way to pass the port!”

Strange stuff. But Oxford has its own strangeness, its own magic. The high hot summer at Oxford breeds its own unworldliness, and a young man, whether under- or post-graduate, can find the ambience seductive; life can hardly be real if the world is not. Rodger rode in punts, drank, revelled, and did what one would expect, and he also married. Perhaps significantly, he remembers Accident, the 1967 Joseph Losey film (that was scripted by Harold Pinter) as being an accurate record of the “feeling” of his years at Oxford.

Rodger didn’t come back to Australia immediately. By 1968, he was a professional in the business, having as one of his credentials directorial success in a student drama competition that was judged by the egregious, ineffable Harold Hobson himself. (Yes, later, when Rodger was a member of the audience at Stratford, he gathered his courage and approached Hobson at the theatre bar. ‘Oh, yes! Certainly! Hobson remembered Rodger. He remembered every detail of the play in question, and he was delighted that Rodger had approached him. What a character . . .’)

In an effort to stay afloat and beat the banks at the money game, Rodger applied for — and won — a place in the ITV Trainee Director’s scheme, a position that gave him the freedom and the doors that he was after. He claims that he learned a lot there, but the truth is that he left the lights of television as rapidly as he could. He went back to the theatre, of course, back to the real theatre.

Rodger became involved in the success of the play, Zoo Zoo Widdershins Zoo, then did Halliwell’s Little Malcolm and his Struggle Against the Eunuchs, which had both a long title and a long run. He did The Superannuated Man in Watford, in repertory, then, in 1971, he journeyed to Tottenham Court Road and a six month liaison with Charles Marowitz.

Marowitz is an innovator who starts — generally — with experimental writing. He tends to restructure classics, relying on his own intellect to make expressionist (rather than impressionist) interpretations of the key characters. I have wondered whether Rodger’s recent Richard III owed anything at all to Marowitz’s influence.

Whatever, Rodger remembers Marowitz as an intellectual who had some considerable trouble communicating his abstruse theories to the actors in his charge. Rodger was aware of the man’s power, and of his importance, but he thought that the actors generally finished up confused when directed by him. His own lucid, friendly style may have evolved in contrast.

Mick Rodger then became enthused with the idea of taking theatre into the regions, rather than working — as most of his fellow directors were — towards bringing audiences into the city. He found himself at the head of a company called East Midlands Mobile Arts (EMMA) which was dedicated to mobility and adaptability. EMMA mounted short plays, for short runs, usually to uneducated theatre audiences, and met with success. Theatre was working for the people.

Now Mick Rodger is nominally an Assistant Director — with Bruce Myles — of the Melbourne Theatre Company. But what’s in a name? Both Bruce and Mick are busy directors; both seem to have transcended the appellation “Assistant”.

Rodger takes the qualified praise of the critics for his Just Between Ourselves with the combined aplomb and resignation of the veteran (“Basically, I’m quite pleased with the reception, although I do feel that the problem with Ayckbourne is that he’s underestimated in this country. In Melbourne, the critics seem to believe that if something is funny, it’s trivial”).

His current project is Under Milk Wood at London’s Mayfair theatre uses only six performers for the thirty nine voices that are represented.)

The future? Rodger plans to take twelve months off for a serious writing project. He says that he has twenty one separate ideas for plays, and that all he wants is the time to get his head down. His current favourite of the twenty one is a play about Brecht, particularly the angry, disputatious Brecht of the later years. He relishes the idea of having time to write.

Mick Rodger may well have become an academic had he not been disenchanted by some of the negative aspects of the Oxford literature hierarchy, and had he not become so enthused with the art of theatre. Rodger fell arts over Lit, as it were, and I for one am glad he did.

Lynette Curran (Pam) and John Bowman (Neil) in MTC’s Just Between Ourselves

Photo: David Parker
New York, New York

From Al Weiner in the U.S.A.

When I last wrote for these pages I was complaining about how cold it was in New York; now I'm complaining how hot it is. The air conditioners grind away, dribbling on the passersby, but they seem to have as little effect upon the stifling heat (it's not that hot, it's the humidity) as the heat has on the eager theatre audiences. There are few empty seats. The heat of course enhances the stench of urine on most of the streets around Times Square, and one sees many more unconscious bodies sprawled on the streets than in winter, but mutatis mutandis, everything is normal, and not to worry.

As a brief post-script to my last article, one of the plays I reported on, and with faint praise, Cold Storage by Ronald Ribman, has been so successful that it moved out of the American Place Theatre and into a Broadway house and continues to be successful. Larry Gelbart's Sly Fox with George C Scott finished its Broadway run and is now on tour. Guess who's playing Volpone now. Jackie Gleason! which strikes me as only slightly less ludicrous than the role being played by Jackie O'Neill, or, to be truthful, anyone else unfortunate enough to be called Jackie.

A Chorus Line is still running and is still the hottest ticket in town. Its momentum has boosted the latest hot ticket in town, Bob Fosse's Dancer!, which fairly well establishes that dancing's very big in New York these days. The Wiz, the black version of The Wizard of Oz, which also has a great deal of dancing, is still packing them in. And then attempts have been made to resuscitate a few rotten cadavers. Carol Channing is once more doing Hello, Dolly! (I, and god, I can hardly get this one out) Yul Brynner is once more doing The King and I, which will give the Hadassah ladies sport on Wednesday afternoons. The manufactured-on-demand musical Annie, which had just opened when I last wrote for this paper, is still running and is (therefore) a hit. Little Orphan Annie tee shirts and Sandwich gathering is. and not to worry.

I shall focus my comments on three new plays: one by an American, one by a Canadian, and one by a Hungarian. They each received very good notices by the New York press.

A Life in the Theatre is by David Mamet, a young Chicago playwright, who is gaining quite a following. He has had one large success, American Buffalo, and several lesser successes. A Life in the Theatre stars Joe Ferrell who, when we thought he was out of our lives forever, like Maureen Stapleton only not so pretty, she goes to hear Victor sing in recital. That evening her best friend steals Victor away, and in utter desolation she dumps a whole bottle of what she believes are sleeping pills into a mug, then fills the mug with chicken soup, and finishes it in a gulp. "Not bad," she remarks. "It's like eating their toes, waiting for Death's icy grip to feel her up. Of course sugar pills only give you gas.

There are at least two false notes, one in the direction and the other in the script. Much of the play's dialogue takes place between Bella and her sister who is living in Germany. During these scenes the sister is on stage and they speak to one another, but they do not see one another. This can be excused, perhaps, as a mere convention, but it is very confusing in that we cannot figure out how they are communicating, whether by telephone, letter, or telepathy. Better direction could probably solve this problem. Not so easily solved, however, is the playwright's total avoidance of the political situation in Hungary. This may make his Communist captors happy, but to us it is a patent lie. The play takes place in the 1960s, when Hungary was enslaved par excellence, but can he today write? Mr Orkeny pretends that Bella is living in a free country, with good middle-class values, and that she could travel to visit her sister in Germany any time she chooses.

One does not think of Jack Lemmon as a stage actor, and with good reason. In a professional acting career that began in the early 1950s, Mr Lemmon has appeared in only half a dozen stage plays. He is of course the bearer of that odious title, "Superstar." But only the title is disgusting. He has created (for me) some of the most memorable film roles in recent decades. His portrayal of the drunk in Days of Wine and Roses is indelibly etched in my memory. His junior executive with a lapsed but not lost sense of morality in The Apartment was fine. I think that Save the Tiger is one of the most under-rated films of recent years. So, Mr Lemmon is a fine actor. But can he act? Seldom are great film actors great actors, or even actors. Clark Gable or Gary Cooper could
not, as the saying goes, act their way out of a wet paper bag. Frequently outstanding stage actors fail miserably in films. Olivier and Richardson can do both with genius, as could Brando before he misinterpreted the term genius which was so frequently applied to him, thinking it referred to his intellect. But the list is short, and one can never know whether a film actor can act until he appears on the stage.

After having seen Tribute with Jack Lemmon, I must put him on the same list with Olivier, Richardson, and Brando. One day not long ago Lemmon received a manuscript from a "B Slade" from Edmonton, Canada. The covering note said simply, "I wrote this for you so I thought I'd let you reject it." B Slade happens to be Bernard Slade, the author of Same Time, Next Year, which is in its fourth year on Broadway. Such modesty is surely unAmerican. The manuscript was Tribute, and Lemmon thought enough of it, and was courageous enough to move his family from Hollywood to New York. We are the richer for that decision.

Tribute is a good, solid, journeyman-crafted play, traditional, perhaps a trifle too slick, and too sentimental by half, but I wouldn't want Mr Slade to change a word of it. When the final curtain fell I was sobbing like a baby, and having seen it at a matinee performance I had to walk down 47th Street in broad daylight, tears positively coursing down my cheeks. Tribute could be classified, I guess, as a serious comedy, but then all good comedies are serious; only tragedy can admit of the frivolous. Tribute is not plotty and therefore can be quickly summarized. Scotty Templeton (he deserves a better name), played by Mr Lemmon, is a PR man who has achieved whatever material success he has won not through ability, but because everybody loves him, because just to be with him is therapeutic. His only gift, as Noel Coward said his was, is a talent to amuse. The only one who is not amused by Scotty's antics is his son Jud, a twenty two year old, tight-assed prig. Jud, the child of a former marriage, comes to visit his father for a week between university terms. They have not seen one another for several years and do not know one another.

Early in the piece we learn that Scotty is dying of leukemia. The dramatic problem, then, is that father and son must discover their love for one another before the father dies. The dramatic frame of Tribute is an evening in which all of Scotty's friends (we the audience) rent the Brooks Atkinson Theatre and pay tribute to this dying, dear man who has so often given himself unstintingly to us. His life is reviewed, both in direct address to us and in dramatic flashbacks. The climax of the play, which is withheld to the very last moment, is the reconciliation between father and son. In the last scene, after having begun medical treatment for the disease, we see the ravages of cancer in Scotty for the first time. Lemmon's technical mastery of playing a dying man is brilliant; and a clown to the end, as he is taking his final exit, embracing his son, his trousers fall down. Previous to this only Chaplin has been able so to confuse me that I did not know whether I was laughing or crying. I am not prepared to hail Slade a genius. It seems to me that Lemmon's acting is as crucial to the success of the production as the play itself, and for that reason alone I doubt that Tribute will become part of our standard theatrical literature. But in this age when "inspiration", no matter how uninspired, is valued above craftsmanship, when the "idea" is paramount and the execution is an afterthought, Mr Slade deserves our tribute. Slade and Lemmon serve one another very well, along with the fine direction of Arthur Storch. The inspiration was there, god knows, but so was the hard, careful work.

Betty Henritze and Helen Burns in Catsplay, Promenade Theatre, New York

Photo: Gerry Goodstein.
AUSTRALIA COUNCIL
Theatre Board Grants, 1979:
DANCE, DRAMA, PUPPETRY, MIME

The Theatre Board has limited funds available for projects in 1979, and invites applications in the following categories:

Development:
Assistance to companies, groups or individuals for special projects, particularly of an experimental or community oriented nature.

Limited Life:
One or two grants may be given to groups of leading professional artists, temporarily brought together, to undertake innovative theatre performances or development activity, which is not presently possible within the normal marketing constraints of an ongoing theatre company. Maximum period two years; non-renewable.

Regional Theatre:
A small number of grants may be given for development of regional community theatres. Programs submitted must have both local and State government financial support. Any assistance given would be strictly on a reducing basis over a period of up to three years by which time the project would have to be fully sustained from other sources.

Training:
Assistance to professional companies for the implementation of basic and advanced training programs within Australia. Priority will be given to programs providing wide access to theatre professionals.

Travel/Study:
Assistance to experienced, full-time professional theatre personnel to travel overseas for work or study programs unavailable in Australia. A small number of grants are available for outstanding applicants — a maximum of $2,000 for any one grant.

Drama Directors'/Theatre Designers' Development:
Assistance to artists of proven potential for personal development programs within Australia, as drama directors or theatre designers.

For details and application forms contact:
The Secretary, Theatre Board, Australia Council, PO Box 302, NTH. SYDNEY, NSW 2060.
Tel.: (02) 922 2122.

Closing Dates:
Development and Training:
Regional Theatre: 15 September, 1978 — Decision advised by mid-December, 1978
15 February, 1979 — Decision advised by 30 April, 1979
Limited Life:
Drama Directors'/Theatre Designers' Development:
Mercia Deane-Johns (Nellie), Irene Inescort (Widow Quin), Edwin Hodgeman (Christy Mahon), Adele Lewin (Honor Blake), Judith McGrath (Susan Brady), and Sally Cahill (Sara Tansey) in the MTC's Playboy Of The Western World.

A one level production

THE PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD.

RAYMOND STANLEY


Margaret Flaherty (called Pegeen Mike), Katy Wild; Shawn Keogh, Bruce Spence; Michael James Flaherty, Lloyd Cunningham; Philly Cullen, Rod Williams; Jimmy Farrell, Anthony Hawkins; Christopher Mahon, Edwin Hodgeman; Widow Quin, Irene Inescort; Old Mahon, Michael Edgar; Susan Brady, Judith McGrath; Nelly, Mercia Deane-Johns; Honor Blake, Adele Lewin; Sara Tansey, Sally Cahill; Bell Man, Laurie Jordan; Drummer, Don Bridges; Peasants, Helen Darlington, Nina Holgate, Ernest Wilson.

The prospect of seeing another production of John Millington Synge's The Playboy of the Western World did not exactly fill me with enthusiasm. Its coyness and naïveté — like much of James Barrie's work — tends to make me squirm inwardly.

The theme of a man supposedly hero-worshipped because he has killed his father, then scorned by his lady love when it turns out he hasn't, then again about to be lynched by the locals (led by said girl) when his second attempt appears more successful, is a difficult one for me to swallow. Yet despite its impossibilities it was based on events related to Synge.

The real virtues of The Playboy are of course Synge's wonderful lyrical and almost musical phrases and word imagery. To do full justice to this really calls for a full-blooded Irish company; then it can seem an exhilarating experience. Failing such a company, I would far rather read the play in private.

To add further to my dismay, on studying the programme I discovered young Christy was to be played by an actor twice the correct age, his father by someone I would imagine to be younger than the Christy, and the Widow Quin — described by Synge 'as about 30', by an actress (not to be too un gallant) rather more than that.

All in all then my vibes were far from favourably inclined towards the production. I wish, in retrospect, I could report the end result was complete captivation. But alas, no.

What emerged was a very competent straight-forwarded staging of the play by Ray Lawler. For those unfamiliar with The Playboy — if able to follow fully the sometimes dithering Irish accents — a workmanlike interpretation was provided.

To me it appeared very much a one-level production, rather uninspiring, and with hardly any sparks generating. Different reactions might have been experienced by those coming fresh to the play. I hope so. Judging from the sparseness of the first night audience, there must have been several others sharing my apprehensions.

My forebodings about the casting were swept aside — at least in the cases of Christy and the Widow Quin. The Old Mahon of Michael Edgar I was less happy with: despite a greying beard his face still looked too young, his general demeanour not really convincing, nor was he aged more than that.
Gradually gathers depth and strength

JUST BETWEEN OURSELVES

JACK HIBBARD

Just Between Ourselves by Alan Ayckbourn. Melbourne Theatre Company, Russell Street Theatre, Melbourne, Vic. Opened July 18 1978. Director, Mick Rodger; Designer, Kim Carpenter; Dennis, Dennis Olsen; Vera, Jan Friedl; Marjorie, Mary Ward; Neil, John Bowman; Pam, Lynette Curran, (Professional)

I am no expert on Alan Ayckbourn's work. Indeed before Just Between Ourselves, I had neither read nor seen a single Scarborough farce. Farce, especially in the French tradition, is a lofty form. It is an expository, padded and trite first scene, the play gradually gathers depth and strength.

Certainly this 'downgrading' of Pegeen increased the stature of Christy, and it was quite easy for that excellent actor Edwin Hodgeman (looking hardly a day over twenty!) to dominate and present on several occasions the evening's only fireworks. Had he been matched in performance by the rest of the cast (indeed his scenes alone with Irene Inescort as Widow Quin came near to being highlights), then a really memorable evening may have resulted.

I doubt if many (or any) other productions of this play could boast such an excellent handsome set of a tavern as that designed by Tony Tripp (howbeit very 'new' looking and hardly conjuring up a timeless atmosphere). Cut away halfway along the back wall, it provided an outside stairway and wall and sparse vegetation (as well as sky and moon), thus giving extra acting areas.

Many in the audience must have puzzled over words and phrases which frequently made it seem it was being performed in a foreign language. Words such as Shebeen, loy, poteen, streeteen, banbhps, crueen, supeen, turbarby, curag, boreen, drouth, skelp, hoosh, etc. It might have been useful had the programme included a glossary similar to that printed when the St Martin's Theatre Company (then the Little Theatre) staged the play in 1961.

The drama concentrates on two middle-suburban couples, Neil and Pam, Vera and Dennis, along with Dennis's emotional piranha of a mother, Marjorie. Neil isissy and recessive, Dennis isissy and manic, a braying middleclass twit and coward who spends most of his time tinkering in a garage/workshop. The women are suffocated by and alienated from their codless spouses. Pam responds by becoming ironic, tart and independent. Vera, with the extra burden of the possessive and captious Marjorie, cracks and retreats into herself.

The dominant physical image of the play is a small black car standing in the middle of the garage. It is Vera's hardly used and neglected vehicle; it is for sale. Neil wishes to purchase the car for his wife, who has no need of the workshop assumes all the overtones of a locked male world — the main portals are locked male world — the main portals are

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Dennis's mother is one of those unfortunate women for whom no wife is perfect enough for her son; she has never allowed the umbilical cord to be cut; worse still, she has wrapped it tightly around his personality and manhood. He dances to her every tune in a perpetual state of escapist semi-hystera, mulishly laughing at Vera's growing inadequacies, particularly her neurotic spilling and dropping of everything within sight.

Dennis's thickness is both demented and cruel. At the end of the play he offers his wife a miserable little birthday cake with a single candle. She blows it out, and so snuffs out her spirit. Paradoxically, Dennis has just freed the garage doors and offered the car as a gift to Pam and Neil. It is clearly too late. The stationary car, as female urban soul and human spirit, will certainly gather dust, rust, and disintegrate for the rest of time.

Not a cheerful play, but effective in that its themes are suavely and nimbly integrated there for the apprehension and not s"ematically or tendentiously imposed. It is an acid critique of the stultifying security-obsessed urban womb which makes passionless eunuchs of its sons and drives its bewildered daughters to the wall.

John Bowman (Neil), Dennis Olsen (Dennis), Jan Friedl (Vera) and Lynette Curran (Pam) in MTC's Just Between Ourselves. Photo: David Parker.
It is the bourgeois pen of the unweaned male chauvinist piglet. Admittedly, Pam gains some measure of freedom and selfhood at the end, yet will remain somewhat compromised as long as she is tethered to her indefatigable wet of a spouse. Foppery and bootless gags are kept to a refreshing minimum in this production. The cast are scrupulous in theirorchestrated deference to the essential seriousness of the play. The comedy only flags early on where it lacks sting and combat, a fault possibly more in the writing than performance and direction. Dennis Olsen, whose conception of Dennis is brilliant, tended to overshoot and misconect the right I saw the production, largely in the first half. This quibble aside, the whole of the cast is much more than satisfactory. If anyone has to be plucked out of an even team, it must be Jan Friedl for her strong, assured, affecting and ultimately poignant Vera. Just Between Ourselves is an excellent play with which to needle and confront the two-car margarine-loving Lumpen of the MTC.

Time to enjoy WHITTE FAMILY SINGERS

LES CARTWRIGHT

This is one of the original "new wave" theatre restaurants of Melbourne. It began four years ago in a renovated milk bar in cosmopolitan Fitzroy. The shop seats fifty and has a revolving mirro ball in the front window. Inside it is painted bright red and decorated with superb old circus posters. The food is home-made and freshly cooked and there is an excellent choice for each of the courses (eg main course: Roman Beef, Roast Lamb, Hot Clucking Crepes, or Cheese Pots). As well, delicious aperitifs are served to begin, and you are given ample time to talk and simply enjoy things . . . . a change from the galloping pace of other theatre restaurants. The table service too is both friendly and efficient.

Since its inception the Trapeze has been a training ground for top new talent and the present group. The "Whittle Family Singers" are not an exception. They are five actor-musicians who present a two-part show. The first part called "Old Faces", is a send-up of the traditional talent quest. Familiar faces include Tony Panadol Junior, Mack the Spoon, the Daring McFatsals, and singing duo Dull and Bored. In the second half the group become the Whittle family on tour in outback Australia.

The group have a good comic sense and rapport but I feel that a director (not performing) would articulate the comedy a little more keenly than it is at present: there is a need for them to be more co-ordinated, to save some of the energy lost through overlap of lines and action. Apart from this they show tremendous promise.

Commercial success and dull routine

CROWN MATRIMONIAL

HAY FEVER

GREG CURRAN

Crown Matrimonial by Royce Ryton. Peter Williams Productions, York Theatre, Seymour Centre, Sydney NSW. Opened 27th July, 1979. Directors: Peter Williams; Designer: John Hall; Lighting design: Joe De Abreu. Matbell: Paye Donaldson; Queen Mary: June Salter; Margaret Wyman; Kay Elsdon; John: Brian Hinslewood; King Edward VIII: John Hambling; Princess Royal: Fay Kelton; Duchess of Gloucester; Gai Smith; Duchess of York; Barry Marsh; Duke of York; Matthew O'Sullivan. Professional: Hay Fever by Noel Coward. Old Tote Theatre, Drama Theatre, Opera House, Sydney NSW. Opened 2 August, 1979. Director: Ted Creigl; Designer: Michael O'Kane; Costumes: Vicki Paichcher. Simon Bliss. John Warrnch: Sorel Bliss. Jan Hamilton; Judith Bliss. Patricia Kennedy; Doug, Bliss. David Nettheim; Sandy Tyrell. Barry Otto; Myra Arndell; Judy Nunn; Richard Lohrum. Roland Falk; Jacky Corioty. Suzanne Royance: Clara; Conne Hobbs. Professional: In Schiller's Mary Stuart, the imprisoned Queen of Scots comes face to face with her captor and rival, Elizabeth I! Not surprisingly the sparks fly. Historically it is false. The ladies never met. In the theatre, however, it makes for drama. Royce Ryton's Crown Matrimonial, is about the abdication of Edward VIII, the act that (eventually) gave us Elizabeth II. Mrs Simpson, the object of the King's attentions, is offstage ad infinitum, but referred to as a nauseam. She cannot appear, because Mr Ryton's writin' is impelled not by dramatic logic, but by protocol. Queen Mary wouldn't like it.

And besides it didn't happen did it? The future Duchess of Windsor and Her Majesty never knew each other. (Though they did meet once, at a reception for the Duchess of Kent. Queen Mary, in a scene cut in this production says, "I can remember nothing about her"). Crown Matrimonial canvases no new facts, makes up none, takes no sides, has no view of the abdication, nor Edward, nor Queen Mary (except that they were jolly good sorts, and that they had conflicts and problems), and after a while the obsessive tone and deadly conversations confirm all one's long held theories about the dullness of the royals.

The tale is told from the point of vantage of the family, in Queen Mary's private sitting room at Marlborough House, and the regal exchanges have all the resonance of dialogue ballons in a classic come. At one point, commenting on Mrs Simpson's adultery, Queen Mary exclaims "To do so once may be allowed in the most terrible of circumstances, but to break your marriage vow twice, to divorce twice, is unforgivable".

This olympian pronouncement, despite its no doubt unimpeachable source, might fairly be said to stand some way behind Lady Bracknell's "To lose one parent, Mr Worthing, may be regarded as a misfortune, to lose both looks like carelessness". However, a vagrant simile does note that The Queen may have seen The Importance of being Earnest at the Old Vic at some stage, a theory which, however trivial and unsupported by official records of the time, is a lot more interesting than anything in Crown Matrimonial. Going a bit further, perhaps it was that performance which made up none, takes no sides, has no view of the object of affection or the subject of interest, one moment, and then totally ignored. As Katharine Brisbane has pointed out, in The Australian the Bliss family is

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the old ensemble. "Brought up in a shared imaginative world, they are incapable of cooperation in everyday realities but fall, as if by telepathy, into harmony when playing out their games of emotion". Ted Craig's production doesn't suggest for a moment that Judith, David, and the two children share anything in common other than Michael O'Kane's artificial setting, and indeed artifice is what governs, not this odd family, as it should, but the superficial performances of the actors.

Another big problem is that, in Hay Fever, at least, Coward's lines are not all that funny on the surface. What is funny is the self absorption, and self dramatisation of the characters. It needs actors who can play off the lines, and sometimes a little away from what is being said. As Judith, Patricia Kennedy is all voice, she swoops and glides and grinds out the dialogue as if the text was an oyster bed of wit, as though articulation was all. She needs a director to tell her to take it easy, to throw things away, to relax. Then this actress might find the daffiness which makes Judith's vacillations between enthusiasm for the reality of her situation as a countrywoman and her fantasy about a return to the stage (with the attendant acting out of her old successes) so funny. Ms Kennedy needs to discover the silliness of this ex actress who is always "on".

However talented an actor or director is, he can't do comedy like this without a sense of the absurd. There's just no humour behind this production. Connie Hobbs as a maid proves that a breezy impertinence and a funny walk are not necessarily amusing. Moreover she has no English accent. Why, in a "major" company was this performance allowed? The Bliss father and children are innocuous. Barry Otto as the dim Sandy, has some good bits but is quickly forgettable. Ronald Falk, who can be outstandingly amusing, is merely adequate as the diplomat. And though Suzanne Roylance, as the flapper, is comical, her performance owes more to her fairy floss hair and grotesque make up than anything else; than Michael O'Kane's artificial setting, and indeed artifice is what governs, not this odd family, as it should, but the superficial performances of the actors.

Hay Fever, like the Old Tote has a deficit of laughs (though there are a few).

Why didn't the commentators who now mean about the possible demise of the Tote editorialise a whole long while ago, (indeed almost from the beginning of it's history), about the undistinguished standards, about the fact that while it became an "organisation", it never, except in brief periods, was a company; that it never had a great period, never developed a house style, never deserved to survive. Hay Fever is by no means the worst in a long line of dud "classic" productions. At least artistic standards, whatever the financial situation, might be a relevant defence against the actions of the Australia Council. But can one seriously suggest that, bar the odd production here and there over the years, the activities of the Tote have added much to the artistic life of Sydney? I rather think not.

Stature to the pleasurable

AS YOU LIKE IT

ROBERT PAGE

As You Like It by William Shakespeare. NIDA as Jane Street, Sydney, NSW. Opened 1st August, 1978.

Director, Aubrey Mellor; Designer, Allan Lees; Music, Roma Conway; Stage Manager, Anne Heath; Lighting Design, Bryan Jones.

Rosalind, Angela Punch; Celia, Vivienne Garrett; Orlando, Andrew Sharp; Jaques, Robert Alexander; Touchstone, Stuart Campbell; Duke Senior, Duke Silence, Duke Frederick, John Clatworthy; Charles, Silvius, Bill Chariton; Oliver, Conan, Ron Rodgers; Phoebe, Jenee Walsh; La Beau, Audrey, Kerry Walker; Adam, Amiens. William, Robert Menzies.

After a sober, highly acclaimed Mother Courage, Aubrey Mellor has given us an As You Like It which equally commands serious consideration. This production overall, was played in the modern ebullient style — as commonplace now as the high reverential manner of a decade ago.

It appears then, the line taken on the title is that here Shakespeare, with sixteen plays’ experience, was claiming an ability to please one and all. It has been treated as one of his "happy comedies", but its place in the canon, only one play between it and Hamlet, and its sophistication suggest a deeper response is required.

To me, and not alone, this is Shakespeare’s most acute and all-embracing exploration of sexual relationships. The
Golden Age arcadia but a place of "winter people that move in it, and the forest is no implied setting of course reflects on the nature" ideal before it was even voiced. and rough weather," where the proud stag of more fully conceived one than the fairy dell of duality — is at a stage further on than the relationships, the viewpoint is both wider and more hard-bittenly objective. Alan Lees' set, for all, as Arden, a useful, open acting space, landscaped luxuriously with a hay coloured carpet, had the visual effect more of a trendy rumpus room than a courtly hall and delightfully ravished with the coiled wires of Brook's Dream to suggest trees. Its effect on the production was to mute the felt sense of danger — no lions would prowl on its shaggy pile!

Given that, the relationships mellowed too. On the court level and the escapist because of Kerry Walker's brilliant portrayal of the hardly human lump Audrey — there is Touchstone's brilliant portrayal of the hardly human of human sexual proclivities. If this aspect was underplayed then the court/forest contrast was overplayed, and again much of the problem rests with the setting. For the court multiple venetian blinds willed to obscure and intrigue but which created tight line problems and cramped the area for the forest scene. A sound tape gave the whole the aural atmosphere of that expressionist nightmare of the city, Metropolis. On the one hand then Mellor seemed to try his hand too far and on the other not far enough. This — coupled with the exuberant manner which can look undiscriminating — made the director appear now and then unable to distinguish between sound ideas and gimmicks. For instance the danger of having Robert Alexander, as Jaques, play Beethoven's Pastoral in the forest made for one delicious moment in a performance, where playing Oliver Martext (Ron Rodger) as Orlando's wicked brother did not distinguish more than the Jack shall have Jill resolution. Shakespeare has rung all possible changes on the romantic ending has given us.”

The 'who-dun-it' genre is something we've indulged at one time or another: a late night's reading, TV dinner with a farce of a richly American flavour. The bedside reading variety is an insomnia’s placebo while he thoughtfully chews on an apple or fiddles with television; has considered the market with its inexhaustible supply of macho/good guy cops whose singular charm is to solve any and all puzzles. But live theatre holds the most promise — a direct engagement between spectator and actor, in the flesh intrigue, a race between the audience and the actor's confession that he has murdered Elizabeth, yet he is not Elizabeth, is an alluring sleight of hand engineered by director and actors before our very eyes. This, in a good production, is by no means settling for second best.

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Generally a well-tailored who-dun-it

Catch Me If You Can

ANTHONY BARCLAY

Anthony Taylor; Corban, as the title hammers home, belongs to the 'who-dun-it' genre — it is in addition one of those all too well made plays, spiced with comedy and farce of a richly American flavour.
Generally this is a well tailored 'who-dun-it'. Tom Bannerman's impressive set, expertly constructed by Mark Gover, sets the necessary mood of domestic familiarity, an aptly mute backdrop to the threads of mystery and farce on which the play so much depends. The original French script has been injected with a specifically American flavour to suit its Broadway run in the mid-sixties. Of course, a 1978 production loses something in this and I'm surprised that Robert Levis let some of the lines stay . . . who is Mr Magoo anyway? More to the point much of the comedy merges uneasily with the mystery, imposed by line rather than organically flowing from plot and situation. Ear marked jokes such as "We've been married for ten years and only had one fight . . . it hasn't stopped" are stamped with American bad taste: more predictable than plot reversals.

All of these things are forgivable if the acting is up to standard and, sadly, it is not. This reviewer guessed Corban's guilt early enough (but I swear to God I didn't guess Elizabeth was Levine's wife!) and so my focus was on individual performances. Helen Hough and James Beattie turned in workman like acting and Al Thomas, as always, was Al Thomas. But the pivotal relationship of Catch Me If You Can moves about Corban and Levine, the seemingly innocent murderer and the apparently genial but very on-the-ball cop. Serge Lazareff's Corban was uninspired and uneasy, a low key performance that left too much weight on Peter Whitford. Whitford, best known to theatre audiences for his portrayal of Butley, responded with an excellent performance. His treatment of Levine blended the raunchy charm and wit of Columbo (I mean the early Peter Falk-Columbo) with that comic edge that Walter Matthau best brings to these roles. Whitford was at ease with even the most banal of lines and gave a restraint to Levine that was unpredictably entertaining.

With much good theatre on in Sydney I wouldn't place the Marian Street's latest offering too high on my list of priorities. I understand the season is well booked and, if for no other reason than watching Whitford at work, its audiences shouldn't be too disappointed. And 'that's the end of that'.

Oddly stirring

ST MARY'S KID and
THE GLASS MENAGERIE

Greg Curran

There's a moment in St. Mary's Kid (Q, Penrith) that's pretty good. Suddenly, the back doors of the theatre fly open and from a backstage as big as a shower recess emerge five hundred people, kicking a football. Actually it's only fourteen school-kids, but the speed of it all, and the noise, and the kicking of a goal (the ball goes into the street outside) creates quite a charge. The whole manoeuvre chalks up some heavy scoring for this rock musical quite early in the game.

The cast is different teen ages, shapes, and sizes. In real life, some have left school, others are still at it, some will have come from St Mary's High, or the scholastic halls of Mount Druitt, Penrith et al. Certain of these bods are going to be real actors, some are not so good, others unashamed amateurs. But the notable thing is that on stage they really look like they come from the same school, the same class, and even the same football team! They act with a lack of inhibition, an ensemble charm you might say (and I will), that's very winning. For director Max Iffland and his spirited team naturalism obviously has a new meaning — act natural.

For those who don't know, St Marys is a town near Penrith where the Q performs and Penrith itself is at the feet of the Blue Mountains, so it's some way from the big...
Smoke. SMK is (I think) about the deadening existence in semi-country cum small urban communities, the lack of job opportunities, that void on Friday night, nothing to do and so on. In Australia today, deadening existence and lack of opportunity are hardly confined to St Marys and if you’re going to dramatise something like this you sure as hell better have something interesting to say. To a city slicker like me, SMK largely doesn’t.

But all is not doom and gloom in SMK on the contrary, far from looking down in the mouth, these kids seem to have a really good time. When they’re not at school we see them ogling each other at the coffee shop and elsewhere. There is no shortage of parties either. The girls get a particular charge from nude centrefolds, and they shriek and shake and tremble with repressed (and also mainly unrepressed) lust. The whole scene, indeed the whole mise en scene is enormously cheered up by the cheeky pop art designs of Anthony Babbicci, a big new talent I’d say. Babbicci has designed a milk bar that’s a collage of empty milk shake cups with the straws spent and dangling like — yes you’ve guessed it! These containers altogether form a big shape that’s symbolic of what this show sure has — a heart.

Babbicci’s hotel bar is a phantasmagoria of beer cans piled on high, and the home of Toby’s Mum is a Tupperware trauma.

Had to tell what’s wrong with young Toby, the “hero” of the piece. He plays the guitar too much, and football too well, and maybe his studies get a bit overlooked, but he seems a model kid on the surface. He’s not flighty, has a steady girl friend, loves his Mum. When his mate Frank urges variety as the spice and he goes off with Cheryl for the nonce, is this the start on the downward path, the beginning of the end, the gateway to instability? Not as far as I could see. So why is Toby always said to be in trouble with the teachers? Why is he alone to be blamed (by a cursing football chorus) for the loss of the Grand Final?

Well, because he had a row with Doreen (Ho Hum)

If Toby is a difficult case (and we have to take this on trust since we never see any of these teacher pupil confrontations apart from a contretemps with the coach which is entirely unconvincing) we have to ask why? Is his background to blame? Can the rap be pinned on his home life? There’s no father it’s true, but no one seems to mind that. Mum is a nice large blond (the sumptuous Ms Doreen Warburton) who’s partial to the gents but appears to do nothing about it: If Mum brought home men (shriek!) or got drunk on the living room carpet, life at home might be difficult, but all the lady really fancies is a trip to the RSL club (she’s also into supermarkets) True, she hasn’t been to Sydney for five years (a telling stroke) but she’s not out of touch. And the good lady takes as much interest in her boring son as everyone else does. Toby’s certainly not neglected. Indeed this lady is a fine Mum, a fun Mum, whose big number “I have to be seen to be believed” is the best thing in the show.

In a trumped up sequence Toby gets thrown out of school. And then he can’t get a job in the city (Sydney) the woman he is interviewed by tells him, in an uppity tone, that it’s not policy to use people from the west — it’s so far to come that reliable attenders are at a premium. Can he get a job in St Mary’s, she asks. No way says the lad, in St Mary’s there’s a waiting list for the dole. Yes but you see there’s another reason why he can’t get a job — his school record. Now can these reasons stand together? Are they connected? Does Toby epitomise lost youth in general or is he a special case? The script tries to have it both ways. SMK suffers from wooliness and generality when it should be clearer and more specific. In the end our hero becomes a pop star, and the evening forfeits any claims to dramatic credibility.
Further reservations. Greg Apps as Toby gave, at Penrith, an unnecessarily hard nosed performance. At the time I saw it he needed to cultivate some charm real quick, some directorial adjustments were needed, and I trust attended to, by the time this show hit Sydney (It opened at the Mayfair July 21). Hand mikes which certainly seemed unnecessary in the small space at Penrith managed to put the kibosh on any real choreography — the show needs dances. In a formal number sung by a rock singer the crowd are pushed back from the stage and that’s the only movement. Rather odd this. The lyrics do not hit the spot as often as they should.

For all that St Mary’s Kid is a jolly evening. It is for the most part, conspicuously well directed, with some charming performances. The score is good if not really striking enough. (Save for a really smashing rock number “What’s New in Sydney”, sung with terrific bravura by Kevin Bennett, one of the show’s co-authors). The choric contributions at the end (a tribute to something or other — perhaps Toby’s success) go up and up and on and on and get you in the way heavenly amazing illusion of the interiors and all props and other set accoutrements has never (as far as I know) had a runaway success, Delaney has reduced the play to a triumphantly successful) piece of casting, and the director Rodney Delaney, whose triumphantly successful) piece of casting, and the director Rodney Delaney, whose triumphant interpretation of Ruth shaped the play, and some nice moments were developed in the whole hog, but thanks to the work and initiative of Peter Rainey, local talent, and the Sheer professionalism, in the best sense, of the two fathers, Townsville audiences saw some very good theatre.

This was a rounded, coherent production of Pinter’s naturalistic play, but the sinister aspects of The Homecoming were toned down to give an essentially warm if still ambiguous interpretation.

It was good theatre, even for those who fidget over the longueurs of Pinter’s pauses. Peter Rainey gave a steady direction, preferring sly fun to sinister threat. What was lost in dramatic bite was probably gained in greater audience intelligibility. Even so a letter to the local paper cried “a more revolting and nauseating performance we have never seen” and decided that The Homecoming was not “worthy of our new Civic Theatre”.

Generally, however, the interpretation of the play as depicting violence and humour within family relationships worked well. Jon Ewing, Gordon Glenwright and Pat Bishop’s beautifully controlled performance for a young family, and sexually impotent), experienced in 1959 (unemployed, caring for his present educated and aware social radicalism. The tension between his father’s memories focussed principally on Pinter left Hamilton with the problem of not really being the loser as Teddy. And he did get across the idea that Teddy knew all along what would happen when he brought Ruth home.

Young local actor Brian Kneipp gave a classical character study of the gentle Sam, and some nice moments were developed in his relationships with the family.

Pat Bishop’s beautifully controlled interpretation of Ruth shaped the play, making Pinter’s resolution credible, and climaxing in a tableau centred on La Pieta in a scarlet dress.

The set exploited the dimensions of the Civic Theatre, and could have been brought forward for audience comfort. Pinter’s closed London room was expanded to a spacious Queensland size and held some good period furniture.

As Pinter, The Homecoming didn’t go the whole hog, but thanks to the work and initiative of Peter Rainey, local talent, and the Sheer professionalism, in the best sense, of the two fathers, Townsville audiences saw some very good theatre.

The Glass Menagerie at the Actors Company is a triumph for both Di O’Connor’s Laura, an unexpected (and triumphantly successful) piece of casting, and the director Rodney Delaney, whose work at Ultimo has never, in my experience, been less than good, but who has never (as far as I know) had a runaway success, Delaney has reduced the play to a platform and four white boxes, eliminated all props and other set accoutrements except for some slides, and, with the help of really superb lighting, created an amazing illusion of the interiors and exterior (a fire escape) of the Wingfield’s tenement flat. The play moves along beautifully — what a wonderful piece it is. This is the best production of a Williams’ play I have ever seen. I think even Tennessee himself would like it.

The Father We Loved On A Beach By The Sea

La Boit’s interesting but varied repertoire since Rick Billinghurst became artistic director has left it at the mercy of the daily paper critics. Since La Boite’s fare caters to theatre goers of widely differing tastes, and since they don’t know what to expect from one production to the next, audiences tend to flow in and out according to what they know of the current offering. Obviously this raises the overnight critic to the status of a maker or breaker of shows (a critical consideration which writing for Theatre Australia seldom invokes).

In this instance both the Australian and the Courier Mail damned totally Steve Sewell’s The Father We Loved . . , and it’s having a poor run. And yet putting on the work of new local writers is surely one of the most vital functions La Boite performs, and the category obviously deserves a special and sympathetic critical response. I also enjoyed the play, which helps.

I’d read an early draft a year ago. The ‘memories of a proletarian upbringing’ genre was predictable enough, as were many of the life situations presented. But I remember two strong qualities: sharp writing and observation, and an interesting approach to time and memory. The play selected time capsules from the past and present lives of father and son. The father’s memories focussed principally around a personal and social crisis he experienced in 1959 (unemployed, caring for a young family, and sexually impotent), a crisis which has led him to a bitterly anti-socialist position. His son’s memories ranged from his innocence at that time to his present educated and aware social radicalism. The tension between his memories of a kind and loving father and his inability to communicate with that same man as an adult was well and interestingly handled.

La Boite’s production retains some of these qualities, but has deviated from this focus and offers a very different script; one which I don’t think is an improvement.
The production illustrates two particular problems of working with new writers who haven't yet learnt to visualise their plays on stage, and whose scripts lack dramatic shape.

The first problem stems from the visual setting of the production. There is no designer in the credits, and no visual image to reinforce and facilitate the play's themes. Instead we see two specific settings — the family house (mainly in 1959) and the son's bedroom (in future time, as I'll explain later). This lateral separation of both space and time works exactly against the interweaving of time and memory which seemed potentially exciting in the first version. In that early script the processes by which expatriate and memory diverged were suggested, and in one interesting scene, father and son seemed to swap value systems, further mixing time, experience, argument, belief, and memory. In this production what both director and writer seem to think is an experiment in filmic techniques of flash-forward and flashback becomes instead two plays, uneasily thrown together at occasional moments.

The setting means that the son is physically isolated in one stage area for much of the play, and during rehearsals many scenes seem to have been thrown out and thereby written to occupy this character's stage time. He has become not just a young radical thinker of today, but a highly principled revolutionary of tomorrow, hiding from the law after a military coup has turned Australia into a fascist state. At the end of the play he goes into the Arthur as an overtly anti-communist and continue the struggle.

This new plot seems to me left-wing paranoia of a fairly pointless kind. Having clearly shown in the father just how far thinking of any kind, it's difficult to script might have rendered this unlikely to be a problem which needed the combined approach. This is an ambitious project led by Guevaras and Gramscis leading mass materialism and requires periodic self-flagellation as an act of expiation.

Over at Twelfth Night I had a talk to Jane Atkins, appointed this year as Director of the School of Speech and Drama (she readily agrees the name is antediluvian and talks of the "Youth Theatre"). Clearly her particular interest is in theatre itself, and she made quite an impression on the town with her young people's version of The Visit. What she has in mind is a place which offers young people a disciplined experience of theatre practice. Workshops there may be and something of the club feeling, but the focus is on making plays rather than on personal or social development.

At the Bee-hive there is another approach. This is an ambitious project master-minded by Jonathon Baxter and backed by a small group of interested citizens entirely without any grant money. Five professional people have been put in a garishly re-painted suburban cinema where they provide an array of activities on a seven day a week basis. There are musical activities, dancing, week-end plays with a monthly change of programme, films, a coffee-pot and eating place, drama workshops each afternoon, market stalls and more and more, all under one vast roof! Momentum for the first three months has been staggering, and publicity outstanding. The question is, can any five people sustain the pace, especially when the economic hassle must be a tough one. The August school holidays will boost numbers past the break-even point and may just be what is needed to keep this venture alive.

One venture that is off and flying is the publication by Playlab Press of Man Of Steel, a musical spoof by Simon Denver and Ian Dorriscott. Pioneered by the Middle Stagers at La Boite Theatre, this piece is tailor-made for the High School musical market. The book is fast-moving, full of broad caricatures and broad humour. There are plenty of roles and a generous helping of choruses. The score is orchestrated for an average High School band, through there is a piano version. A cassette of the music is also available. The best point of contact is through Playlab Press, PO Box 185, Ashgrove Qld 4060. When I consider all the things I have not mentioned, it's a wonder any young person could slip through to adulthood without some sort of theatre or drama experience. But they seem to manage.

The focus is on making plays

**CHILDREN'S THEATRE SURVEY**

DON BATCHelor

It seemed like a concerted assault. There were "children's" theatre people everywhere, and all urgently selling, "Why don't you come and review... Could you possibly do a piece on...?" and I wondered whether (for once) young people's groups were working together. So I looked it into it; scratched the surface would be more accurate, because it soon became clear how much activity there was in the field in Brisbane, and how much of it was of dubious value and indifferent quality.

This is, therefore, no comprehensive survey; just random reflections on work which came to my attention during recent weeks.

The first thing to remark, with one notable exception, is that far from attempted concert there is considerable isolation among the various groups. The notable exception was Ian Reece's so called "Theatre-in-Education Get-Together" being held 2-6 October as part of the Queensland Festival of the Arts. In this typically self-conscious and unassuming way, Ian intends to bring together inter and intra-state groups to work with "up to a thousand young people each day." Together he expects exchanges of ideas will occur naturally and informally. The concept of TIE is a wide one, and Ian is not the sort of person to go in for definitions; he just seems to think that one human sharing of experience is worth a dozen conferences.

Talking of adults working for kids, the Arts Theatre has just changed policy regarding their regular Saturday matinee shows. Instead of workshop kids playing to a paying audience of their peers, Jay McKee has directed an adult cast in The Plotters of Cabbage Patch Corner, and an admiring entertaining job it is — briskly performed and brightly staged.Regretfully, mindless yelling seems to have been regarded as some index of success, and the play itself is one of those queerly sentimental pieces of junior ecology. It strikes me there is something very sick about the way our society adores the god of materialism and requires periodic self-flagellation as an act of expiation.

**Salamanca tour and frozen audiences**

**TASMANIA SURVEY**

KARL HUBERT

Hobart's Salamanca Theatre Company, formerly known as "Theatre in Education", when planning its current tour of the United States asked itself how does one explain "Waltzing Matilda" to young Americans.

Director Barbara Manning decided it was a problem which needed the combined brain power of a think tank, and between performances and rehearsals the members of the company created a new play Billy Tea. One of its characters is Dave who offers the little Americans the following explanation: "This poor old bloke, the swaggie, was just sitting down having a bit of a rest under a shady tree. He must have been in a good mood like, 'cos they reckon he's jolly in the song; anyway he's shoved his billy on the campfire and he's looking forward to a nice hot cup of tea, and he's singing away about how he goes tramping around the countryside with all he's got in his holey old blanket, when out of the corner..."
of his eye he spots this jumbuck trotting down to have a drink at the Billabong.”

Whether the little Americans will understand remains to be seen.

The program for the US tour was compiled by two actors of the company, Josephine Lee and David O’Connor, and Anne Harvey, of Sydney. She wrote one of the company’s most successful productions, I’ll be in on that.

Tasmanian companies know from long experience that the Tasmanian winter with its ice and snow, can have a devastating effect on audience numbers; however, things were never as bad as this year.

The Tasmanian Conservatorium of Music had to cancel one performance of Die Fledermaus because it feared that people would be unable to reach the theatre of the College of Advanced Education on Mt Nelson. Apparently the cancellation was broadcast, but nobody bothered to put up a sign at the theatre and people turned up, waited past the hour of 8pm and were bitterly disappointed. It seems, public relations is not a strong point with the Con.

On the other hand, the Hobart Repertory Theatre Society which had a two-week season of Alec Coppell’s thriller Cadenzza decided that the show must go on, although on one evening the audience barely outnumbered the actors on the Playhouse stage. It was a good performance on that evening and there was a bonus for those who turned up, a free cup of coffee.

And Polygon Theatre, which was established in Hobart last year by Don Gay, and performed with a great deal of success also on Tasmania’s North-West Coast, has gone into the theatre restaurant business. It is staging What the Dickens at Hobarts premier hostelry the Lenna Motor Inn.

This means, that Hobart now has four theatre restaurants, Wrest Point, Explorer, Cedar Court at Handley’s, and Lenna, and all seem to be doing good business.

The issues are the same as today’s

SPRING AWAKENING

ROGER PULVERS

Spring Awakening by Frank Wedekind. Canberra Youth Theatre (Opened 21 July 1978. Director: Camilla Blunden; Design: Colin Veskeless, Julie Wood; Puppets: Ewa Czajer, Wenda Bergmann, Claire Duffy; Mrs Bergman, Sarah Baker; Melchior, James McDonald; Mortiz, Robert Rogers; Hans, Brendan Ryan; Ernt, Michael Brissenden; Lammermeyer, Matthew LaFferty; Thea, Penny Cole; Martha, Bridig Kitchin; Judge Gabor, Robert Quigglin; Mrs Gabor, Elizabeth Cherry; Mr Sietfeld, Pastor, Thomas McQuara; Man in mask, Richard Kavanagh; Ian, Cathy Langman; Puppet Manipulators, Sue Butler, Clare Bonham, Liz Heap, Maureen Burgess, Liz Eldridge; Associate: Annetour)

This is very much Munch’s Europe of the 1890’s: young passionate people caught between a tired tradition of duty and the impulses of their bodies and minds. It was not only a conflict between God-family and the pleasures of free love, free thinking, and free access to the personal.

Perhaps this is why the ACT Police felt compelled to attend opening night. The play had been advertised as a piece about adolescent sexuality. This issue, then, is no less political in Australia more than it was in Wedekind’s Germany. The only difference is that we lack the intense alternative of that time; and our playwrights, for the most part, avoid any political interpretation of the personal.

Camilla Blunden chose a soft-spoken naturalistic tone for this piece. One advantage of this approach was that it emphasized the awful grotesqueness of the Teachers, who appeared on stage as life-size dolls with enormous caricature faces. In this production, it is the young people who are the same ones, the balanced and normal people, while the educationists are the zanies, the mentally crippled. The singular theme, then, was clear. That education is an instrument used to protect society from change, and to repress and subjugate free will.

Given that this was the mode of the direction, Camilla Blunden might have asked for more bloated and hyperbolic acting from the actors playing the parents. The two mothers, especially, might have appeared more stern, more gross, for they were products themselves of that repressive code of education. Then the naturalism of the younger people would have been a contrast to all of the older characters, all of whom were using the children to justify their own wicked guilt.

The life-size puppets were operated from behind, attached to the manipulator at the feet. This is an effective puppet style, for it allows the manipulator to duplicate so easily every movement of his own body in the puppet. The puppet’s actions can be both big and controlled. It is good especially for satire. The voice-over for these grotesque teachers was distorted in various tones of voice, coming from a tape recorder.

The nearly two hours were played without an interval. This was a wise decision, and one which takes courage. In fact, it could have gone on longer for my money; some of the wonderfully poetic monologues of the play were rushed through as lines coming from a typewriter.

All of these actors are virtual novices. They handled the material well and knew at every step their motivations. The performance of James McDonald stands out. As the protagonist, he so clearly represented the Australian young man’s dilemma — torn between achievement in a repressive society or dropping out and disillusion.

Spring Awakening is one of Wedekind’s earliest plays. As with virtually all the others, it is about sex. Later on, the pieces become more and more expressionistic in their approach. The disconnected scenes, the poetry and cynical humour, the things we don’t understand overwhelming our mind and motivation. This production might have taken advantage of that development in style. A lot of the humour was lost in over-straight delivery. Lines like ‘People are good because they enjoy it, or because they’re scared stiff’.

One thing which was lacking in the production was clearly posed beginnings and endings to scenes. This weakened the visual impact of it. Any play, in no matter what mode, that has many short scenes...
requires a strong visual frame, so that an observer carries an image from a previous scene to the next. Especially in this play, it builds the narrative like blocks.

What is the dilemma of these young people, both then and now? For Melchior it is two souls inside him. The moral code of the time with its sick over-emphasis on duty as opposed to free will; and the conflict between his body and his mind. But for Moritz, the boy who suicides, it is more desperate than ever, as Wedekind says, 'like an owl fleeing through a burning wood'. To suffer or to inflict suffering? To overcome suffering may be the most beautiful thing of all, but that depends upon whether it is done to the detriment of society, or oneself.

Theatre/SA

Confirming what it purports to be showing up

CHEAP AND NASTY

MICHAEL MORELY


Why is it that the so-called "alternative theatres" feel they have to choose anybody but a draughtsman of the realism of the moment? A while back it was R D Laing, all twisted plots and knotted language: for Troupe's last production 'Cheap and Nasty' lends itself to some obvious word-plays from which I shall strive to provide a certificate of registration, and creativity as the basis for psycho-drama. To my perhaps uninitiated eye, neither the characterisation nor the script purports to be an entertainer" sings Philip (and it's always been comparatively rare. And people who can do one or more of these things even adequately have like to see realised.) Better far to aim for that than for "an authentic position in this modern world of misery" And the easy optimism of "Life in the suburbs can slip you so slowly by" only made me want to counter with "what about life any place else?" This sort of catchphrase aims at significance and ends up merely confirming what it purports to be showing up.

Troupe seems at present to be casting around for a new image to justify their 1977 Critics' Circle award. The company has energy and enthusiasm, but they seem to be running the very real danger of ending up as a group of players who are jacks of all trades and masters of none. Let the writer write, the actor act, the musician compose, the director direct. It may be admirable for someone to try his hand at any or all of these, but he should beware of thinking that that way lies sure success, let alone the ability to keep an audience interested. People who can do one or more of these things even adequately have always been comparatively rare. And Troupe might well observe Goethe's maxim "in restraint and control does the master reveal himself" — a more intellectual equivalent of "cobbler, stick to thy trade". That's a more helpful motto for a company than lines like what "Do you feel like doing? Just drifting. Tell me and the others about it" which cropped up with disturbing frequency during the evening. Psychodrama may, as the text assures us, represent a major turning point in the treatment of disturbed patients. But if this work is anything to go by, it certainly represents nothing of the kind for the theatre when all it affords an audience is a lengthy and not too encouraging viewing of a rather somnolent and repetitive group grope.

Grand, spare, radical, surprising

PEER GYNT

KATHARINE BRISBANE


Peer Gynt, Hossein, Michael Siberry; Peer, Solveig's Father, Strange passenger; Nolle Mittpark; Peer, Ibsen's Father, Eben, Brian James; Trol Kiag, Mr Conon, Nenght-feld, Lee Dayman; Endgemeen's Father, Fehai, Bason Modder, Robin Bowering; Steward, Trompereenaste, Captain, Paul Bonkilla; Aale, Man in moving, Wayne Jarrett; Mad Mein. Watch, Man in Grey, Tony Prahn; Cowgel, M Ballon, Nick Enligt; Cowgel, Michael Fuller; Cowgel, Mote, Slave, Patrick Mitchell; Asse, Solves, Daphne Gray; Solves, Michelle Stuyven; Morher, Kri, Mertyn Allen, Fiddler, Val Leekowk; Ibsen, Jace; Phillips; Green Woman, Solves, Chris Matheney; Unback, Noll, Chris Finley; Thief, Peter Schwarz; Receiver, Des James; Slave, Damien Moore; Cook, Peter Parragh.

The State Theatre Company of South Australia — formerly the South Australian Theatre Company — may in these stirring and controversial days fairly claim to justify single-handed the cost of government subsidy.

Its outstanding 1978 season is now climaxed by a monumental performance of Peer Gynt to mark Ibsen's sesquicentenary. (The reason given for a change of name is to eliminate confusion with the South Australian Trotting Club. Any association with horse-racing is perhaps not felicitous.)

Colin George's production of this four-hour epic is grand, spare, radical and packed with surprises. He has produced the play more than once before and his

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Two could not be more unexpected. Following Act One the curtain rise on Act flesh and guilt combine until they form a Heaven, commands belief. drives her in a sleigh to the gates of scene which ends Act One, in which Peer through to the end of the play. Peer real, vulnerable peasant whose comedy parent goodness which disdains sentimen­
tics philosophy (ie every phenomenon has a rational explanation, therefore whodunit is a question which must have an answer) is a clear setup for such a dramatic formula. As drama it is nevertheless a spinoff from the novel, indeed many of the plays were rewrites of novels, notably those of Agatha Christie. This was an age when Americans did go in for themes such as Blondes Don’t Kill, philosophically correct and its underlying natural­istic mode and its underlying natural­istic mode. The Elizabethan stage had a very different stamina from that of the early twenty-first century, and henceforth the only acceptable stage was that of the realistic, then of the real, though the boundary between black and white and technicolour are not so clear. The source of this act in Norwegian folklore is made very clear: Michelle Stayner’s Solveig has a trans­
bolic philosophy (ie every phenomenon has a rational explanation, therefore whodunit is a question which must have an answer) is a clear setup for such a dramatic formula. As drama it is nevertheless a spinoff from the novel, indeed many of the plays were rewrites of novels, notably those of Agatha Christie. This was an age when Americans did go in for themes such as Blondes Don’t Kill, philosophically correct and its underlying natural­istic mode. The Elizabethan stage had a very different stamina from that of the early twenty-first century, and henceforth the only acceptable stage was that of the realistic, then of the real, though the boundary between black and white and technicolour are not so clear. The source of this act in Norwegian folklore is made very clear: Michelle Stayner’s Solveig has a trans­

The advantage of the first decision is a tripling of the energy resources for a role beyond the stamina of most actors; and of the second a store of surprises within a picturesque framework. At the same time Hugh Colman’s design and Nigel Levings’ lighting are spare, erupting only now and then into bursts of extravagance; allowing a continuing flow of movement through the many scenes and much of it is done strongly upon the audience’s imagination in the manner of poetic drama.

A further advantage of the diversity was a real sense of the parochial stuffiness, ignorance and selfishness which Grieg’s music has softened and which he had the temerity to attack more blackly in later plays. Here it is pointed out ironically in a way admirably captured by Norman Ginsbury’s informal translation. The play opens with the cast in rehearsal dress doing a warm-up, during which they lay down ground rules for the audience. For the first act the stage is almost bare and grey as we meet the impetuous young dreamer and his gullible mother Aase, watch him kidnap a bride from her wedding for a date and meet the pure soul Solveig. As in The Wizard of Oz, the interior sets are almost as bare as the real, though the boundary between black and white and technicolour are not so clear. The source of this act in Norwegian folklore is made very clear: Michelle Stayner’s Solveig has a trans­

Realism/naturalism was not merely the dominant dramatic form, it was virtually the only acceptable one; and of course the mystery thriller with its fundamentally realistic mode and its underlying natural­istic philosophy (ie every phenomenon has a rational explanation, therefore whodunit is a question which must have an answer) is a clear setup for such a dramatic formula. As drama it is nevertheless a spinoff from the novel, indeed many of the plays were rewrites of novels, notably those of Agatha Christie. This was an age when audiences’s imagination in the manner of poetic drama.

As is most literary genres it is interesting to look back just to note how unreal, artificial, downright arbitrary are the unacceptably realist artistic forms. In the English whodunit, for instance, sex never reared its ugly head (so to speak). Well, it was a reason for killing somebody, but not for jumping into bed with them. That must mean something, but I shudder to contemplate what that meaning could be. Americans did go in for themes such as Blondes Don’t Kill, and eventually went on to more explicit sex, finally to the shafting of the shaft. But in the English thrillers everyone was so damn polite and knew their place, there was no room for even the mildest radicalism. The fantasies were built on an accepted class structure from outside the windows, a device which rightly drew applause. You don’t get that sort of effect at the RSC, mate.

During the second act, a store of surprises within a picturesque framework. At the same time Hugh Colman’s design and Nigel Levings’ lighting are spare, erupting only now and then into bursts of extravagance; allowing a continuing flow of movement through the many scenes and much of it is done strongly upon the audience’s imagination in the manner of poetic drama.

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PANDORA'S CROSS
By Dorothy Hewett

ACT 1

Photo by Branco Gaica
INTRODUCTION
Jim Sharman on Pandora's Cross

If one were to ask international visitors to list their points of interest in the city of Sydney their response would include the Harbour Bridge, Opera House, Bondi Beach and Kings Cross. Now while Pigalle, Soho, Times Square and their like have often been celebrated on stage and screen, Sydney's notorious square mile at the top of William Street, though often celebrated after midnight in drunken bars, had never pervaded the stimulus for a major dramatic work. For better or worse Dorothy Hewett's new musical play has altered this. Dorothy has created a mythical Kings Cross, with its bohemian past - post Vietnam bohemian past - and present. Sydney is falling, the kids are shooting for the stars. The moon rides high, the moon rides pale, the whores will say that love redeems. Either way it exists and, like two other remarkable Sydney institutions Dorothy Hewett and Darlinghurst Road, it cannot be denied.

Traditionally artists have always been associated with 'The Cross'. Old-style bohemian artists, stripey artists, drag artists, all sorts of artists. Dorothy would have it that most of those artists have been disillusioned and, in some sense, destroyed but their spirit lives on through 'The Cross'. In consequence she has crafted a poem for the stage that depicts conventions of formal storytelling and gathers the evidence of scattered poems (McAuley, Slesser, et al), bantering journalistic headlines and street kid interviews, second hand mythologies (Barton, Goossens, Neilson, etc.), wall graffiti, political sloganeering, Shakespearean offcuts and worse, then tossed this into a salad of regret and loss served to the audience with the authority and subtlety of a short order cook (if Dorothy will forgive the culinary metaphor). Most understandably audiences and critics (who prefer their salads culinary metaphor). Most understandably audiences and critics (who prefer their salads) have baulked a little at this meal of sadness and celebration.

So we move into the treacherous area of people's expectations. How do you like your Cross? Up front or laid back? It would seem from our experience that the expectation is definitely UP FRONT. The reality, as any 'barrister from the bush', emerging thirty bucks lighter from a Darlinghurst Road door-way could tell us, is LAID BACK. Ralph Tyrell's haunting score and Dorothy's sad soliloquies do not add up to an exuberant musical brimming with pizza and noon, no matter how much fun is used in the levelling. So we left with a strange evening in the theatre. Our walk along Darlinghurst Road and down Macleay Street has diminished those tremendous expectations created step by step walking up the big hill of William Street. Nasty incidents in side streets, too much bad language, not quite what we expected, a bawl we might have been involved in, gross jokes, tawdry glitter, seemingly a non-event, and yet... yet, we still seem to be talking, arguing about it, dismissing it, remembering it. Whether, as its apologists would have it, 'a sonata for a city' has been created or, as its critics would berate, a mere sentimental litany of forgotten names and events. Either way it exists and, like two other remarkable Sydney institutions Dorothy Hewett and Darlinghurst Road, it cannot be denied.

The Goose
Ancient ex-Philharmonic conductor, jazz pianist, pop legend, Grand Master of the coven.
Rudi The cross cowboy working for Mr Big.
Sergeant Tinkerbell (Tink) Still handsome policeman and drag queen.

ACT 1
Pandora's Cross was first performed at the Paris Theatre, Sydney on June 29th 1978. The Director was Jim Sharman and the Designer Brian Thomson. The music was written by Ralph Tyrell. The original cast were:

Arthur Dignam (Continuation)
John Gaden
Julie McGregor
John Paramor
Geraldine Turner
Steve J Spears
Nell Redfern

The set is divided into upstairs and downstairs sections, with an elevated platform for the Paris Theatre, Sydney on June 29th 1978. The original cast were:

The Goose's honky-tonk piano. The backdrop is a panoramic, moveable King's Cross skyline that lights up at night.
Upstairs: Pan's loft - cushions, a sword, two large candlesticks, drapes, masks, strange paintings...
Primavera's room containing a straight backed kitchen chair and an Early Kooka gas stove.
The Goose's piano and stool on a platform.
Downstairs: There is a staircase which can convert to an escalator. This leads into the Village ... a streetlight far left, a fountain playing, a sycamore tree backstage left of centre, and Prim's bar, neon lit with bar and stools.
Centre is Mac's, a cheap table, chairs, battered typewriter, reading lamp and booze.

CHARACTERS
Pandora (Pan) King's Cross witch and artist, black-haired sensualist, in her forties.
Mac Greene ex-poet from Chatswood, classical scholar, alcoholic bum, in his late thirties.
Primavera Ern's sister, withdrawn eccentric, in her late thirties.
Frangipanni Waterfall (Fran) Cross hustler, a teenager from Blacktown on mandies.
Primivera (Prim) Ex-stripper and club proprietor, a well proportioned blonde in her late thirties.

The Goose

You could try a little quiet murder.

Mac's right. I couldn't even

Pandora's Cross.

You'd like that wouldn't you?

The Goose: Swapping mandies in the bars, the kids are shooting for the stars.

Goose: Sitting there above the town, Pandora hears her crooked crown

She will intuit all your dreams, we lay and played at pitch and toss
They cross their legs and go to jail...

Goose: Like sleepwalkers the characters move to their appointed places, we lay our heads on his arms, Prim behind the bar. Fran under the streetlight. Rudi and Tink menacingly either side of the fountain. Far left upstairs the plain wooden kitchen chair with a copy of Ern Malley's poems on it, waits for Ethel Malley. The Goose stays at his piano like a shadow. Pan holds up her crystal ball.

Pan: (crooning) Light the candles, cast the circle.

Mac: ' Bastard from the bush', emerging thirty bucks lighter from a Darlinghurst Road door-way could tell us, is LAID BACK. Ralph Tyrell's haunting score and Dorothy's sad soliloquies do not add up to an exuberant musical brimming with pizza and noon, no matter how much fun is used in the levelling. So we left with a strange evening in the theatre. Our walk along Darlinghurst Road and down Macleay Street has diminished those tremendous expectations created step by step walking up the big hill of William Street. Nasty incidents in side streets, too much bad language, not quite what we expected, a bawl we might have been involved in, gross jokes, tawdry glitter, seemingly a non-event, and yet... yet, we still seem to be talking, arguing about it, dismissing it, remembering it. Whether, as its apologists would have it, 'a sonata for a city' has been created or, as its critics would berate, a mere sentimental litany of forgotten names and events. Either way it exists and, like two other remarkable Sydney institutions Dorothy Hewett and Darlinghurst Road, it cannot be denied.

The Goose

Ancient ex-Philharmonic conductor, jazz pianist, pop legend, Grand Master of the coven.
Rudi The cross cowboy working for Mr Big.
Sergeant Tinkerbell (Tink) Still handsome policeman and drag queen.

The scene opens on the night skyline of the Cross. High in the flies Sydney is falling, the developers are in and the sound of the demolition is deafening.

Suspended in blackness like an actor in the Prague Black Theatre the ancient Goose in verdigris coat tails sits at his honky-tonk piano. As he sings the panorama of the Cross unrolls behind him, faster and faster, so that an optical illusion he appears to be a whirling maestro of the skyscapes. Up and down the moving staircase the characters enter and move like ghosts, like waxwork figures:

Pandora's Cross. High in the flies Sydney is falling, the kids are shooting for the stars.

Pandora's Cross.

The kids are shooting for the stars.

Pandora's Cross.
agony, agony. torment and agony, this is the world my friends, Mac: 
promised, barren land. 
what to do. Goose:
Central... all that art nouveau glass. I always good week. I usta wash in the wimmens' lav at
were down on your knees, drawing a black panther fucking you in McLeay Street. 
That was my pitch. I made 19/1d in a good week. I ustwa wash in the wimmens' lav at Central... all that art nouveau glass. I always loved my sibling.
Mac: You took me in. My parents came across the Bridge foaming, and found me sleeping in itchy rags beside you. They accused you of unlawful carnal knowledge.
Pan: And you couldn't even get it up.
They laugh together.
Mac: I was always drunk or high on speed. I wasn't responsible.
Pan: That's what your mother said.
Mac: She tried to have me committed. I don't even know where she's buried.
Pan: And all you wanted was a freer more excitin' self (pause) So you made him up.
Mac: I didn't make you up Pan.
Pan: No, I made myself up, an old Cross ratbag. The self never changes.
Mac: I sometimes think you made us up as well.
Pan: I took you up, that's all... the child genius with the bad poems and the second'and Remington portable, and the ol' porn peddlar tickin' the ivories in Prim's place. Well, me favourites are still Brahms, solitude and havin' me back scratched.
Goose: And here we are gathered. The table rappers are out, the ghosts of the ouja board, the harpies licking their chaps, all trooping in, out and familiar.
As The Goose speaks the fountain starts to play, and the streetlight goes on, Prim's Bar lights up in neons. Mac's table lamp switches on, Frangipanni Waterfall walks up and down restlessly swinging her tote bag, and chewing gum. Rudi watches from the fountain, and Tinkerbell twirls his baton like a drum majorette. Prim lays out glasses on the bar counter. Frangipanni propositions Rudi. Tink moves away, swivels his baton, 'isself with iodine but, you see, he was never strong. The cross come sudden. He was that irritable. He passed away wiv Graves' disease at only twenty five. As he wished he was cremated at Rookwood.
Ethel: I am not a literary person meself. I don't understand what Ern wrote, but I loved him, and it would be a kindness if you'd let me know if you think there's anythin' there.
She holds out Ern's poems dumbly.
Mac: Fucking charlatan!
Ethel: The weeks before Ern died was terrible. If only he'd taken better care, it needn't have been fatal.
Ethel's voice breaks. She sits down stiffly in her chair. Mac goes back to the table, holds onto it for support. The piano backing cuts out. Mac looks up at Pan.
Mac: Our stage was always this house, the furniture watching, the cushions dancing like demons... Pan: You invented Ern, and set him up to love me, in your place.
Mac: groans and sits with his head in his hands.
Pan: You can't easily reverse the spin of the soul. There's the devil to pay...always.
Fran: Got any mandies Pan?
Pan: Don't use mandies. In the old days we was for support. The piano backing cuts out. Mac looks up at Pan.
Mac: She could never tell the difference.
Pan: Twenty one cards and o look, here's the fool, here's the young man unfaired on the edge of a Precipice, a dog at his heels. He looks towards the sky. He is the holy innocent, the free rani'g spirit. He is numbered o, and he enters the world to experience it.
As Pan fans out the cards she drops them and they scatter on the stage. She kneels, holding out her hands uselessly. She rises, becomes again the priestess. The circle stands motionless. Pan gives a sharp intake of breath.
Pans (chanting) The power raised here is neither good nor evil, moral or immoral. (pause) The circle is complete. I have left a gate for him in the North East. Bugger off
Mac: He's not coming.
Pans (chanting) O thou that standest on the threshold between the pleasant world of men and the terrible domain of the dead, have you courage to make this connection?
It is as if they are all waiting for the reply, and in the following dialogue Pan plays two roles, the priestess and her own ordinary self. She is like a medium using two utterly dissimilar voices.
Bugs (voice 1 whispers) Go back Ern, don't be a bloody fool, go back.
Bugs: Go back.
Pan (Voice 2 chanting) This path is beyond life and death. If you take but one step you must arrive, inevitably, at the end.
(Voice 1 whispers) Rudi, there's a good kid, back to limb. We're all too old for you anyway.
Pan: Go back Ern.
Pan (Voice 2 chanting) For I say it is better to risk the blade and perish than to make the attempt with fear in your heart.
(Voice 1) Oh! Christ, you was always such a pushy little bastard.
Pan: Go back Ern.
Pan (voice 2 chanting) Say after me, I have two perfect words, trust and love.
and ragged jeans. He stands spotlighted like a dark, slender, saturnine, dressed in leather jacket coming closer and closer as he sings. When Ern and in the silence the sound of light running hand to him but he ignores it. Ethel remains staring out front. Once Pan puts out her the focus of all their eyes except Ethel's. She

**Mac:** Out on a limb but hangin' in still, 

**Malley:** Malley's back in the town.

And the light will still burn in one small attic 

On the Eumerella shore, 

and Titty.

I'll die in the fiery dew, 

The high rise is hemming us in. 

**Ern:** You mean we're in danger of becoming fashionable. He takes a long drink.

**Prim:** (tremulously) I wouldn't worry too much Mac. Pan begins to weave a dream hypothesis.

**Pan:** I took too fourteen metres caps in four hours. Wow! all the city sounds was like a symphony. We was jailed, banned, beaten up, slept in storm-water drains, lived in Wynyard, Museum and St James, dived naked in the Archibald Fountain, jumped the roller, went on the track.

**Mac:** Nobody's into hardship anymore Pan. 

**Pan:** You're just a cynic that's all. Ern was never cynical. Ern's like me. He's a believer.

**Ern:** So what's wrong with Elizabeth Bay and Alphas?

**Ethel:** Don't you remember me? 

**Ern:** You was all mesmerized to hear Ettie baby. 

**Pan:** (defensively) Ern and I was realists, but we always loved style.

**Mac:** When I was twelve I wrote, "the sane and rational man is touched with aimless dread". I must have intuited something.

**Ern:** You still a witch Pan? 

**Pan:** Still got me cats, Mephitabel, Greymalkin 

**Ern:** I always wait up. I promised her I'd look after him. I always give him a nice, cut, Oslo lunch. 

**Mac:** That's alright matey. They been keepin' a vice in the likeness of a man. Ethel rises with a piercing scream.

**Ethel:** No, Ernie was a good boy. When mother died I promised her I'd look after him. I always give him a nice, cut, Oslo lunch. Mac raises the oiled bottle over his head and tries to bring it down on Ern. Tinkerbell and Rudi leap over and grab Mac to his chair with a straightjacket. Mac continues struggling and babbling.

**Tink:** That's alright matey. They been keepin' a committee of welcome for you out at the Reception House.

**Rudi:** So's 'ome sweet 'ome Mac.

**Pan:** (to Ettie) Oh my lady, Queen of Night and Sympathy, we walked the streets like angels on our good days.

**Ethel:** (to Ern) Then I met a boy in grey clothes with a cloven hoof.

**Mac:** (struggling) We descended from attics, we roamed with our company of players...

**Pan:** He told me his name was Ern Malley and I sold me soul, in exchange for so much riches.

**Mae:** Ecotopia issued from our mouths, men bowed, women kissed us...

**Ern:** And I said, there now, it's only Ern. Malley from Taverner's Hill, but there goes the devil himself in the likeness of a man. Ethel sinks down again. Mac begins to scream and rock from side to side.

**Mac:** Pandora! Pandora! Rudi hits him across the mouth. I'll drag him into a corner and dump him there. Mac curls up in a foetal crouch, whimpering. Ern moves to the foot of the stairs, moaning the Goose to play.

**Ethel:** (to Pandora) Pandora puts out a hand to him, moves to the top of the stairs. He puts one foot on the bottom stair and sings to her.

**Ern:** Spin the web and speak the words Pandora. That bring me back time and space to you.

**Pandora:** (in trance) Time stands still, the crystal ball is turning, the candle's burning. I taste your tears.
I see your face
Across the lonely years I am returning through time and space to you.
Ern comes centre stage and turns back to Pan, spotlighted on top of the stairs.
Ern: O will I find you still above that little street where once I loved you
the heat of countless feet,
the falling of the rain,
the beat of the candle's burning.
Ern: I will you be there for me again.
will everything stand still for us Pandora,
and I know that nevermore will I knock upon
A shadow crossed the moon tonight Pandora,
your door.
Pan moves slowly downstairs to Ern.
follow all the promise of your eyes.
Ern: the Terrace Bar at the Sheridan at two o'clock in the afternoon.
Pan: (to Pan) Do you remember what we were going to do? We were going to do a great pagan ritual or somethin'. I'd be committed, Ern.
Ern: Yeah. I'd be committed.
Pandora: Sleep with me tonight?
Pan: (to Pan) Think you're really somethin' sweetheart.
Ern: You're not goin' wiv him are you Ernie?
Pan: You was always such a good boy.
Ethel: Pan! Who's that after three drinks?
Pan: (to Pan) That's Greek for whore. I usta see Last Card Louis in the Kashmir. He'd buy you a drink and he'd say, "You was so square Prim. You was unbelievable. You was like Springtime." He wasn't a bad poor bastard, Last Card Louis.
Enter Tinkerbell, tettering on spike-heeled ankvelstraps, high piled blonde wig, dangling earrings, lame evening dress, feather boa, heavy make up.
Rudi: (laughing) Here's Sergeant Tinkerbell, here's a lady with a load on.
Pan: Where's Ern?
Tink: I left him at the clap clinic. It was so fashionable it was lovely. We had a knee trembler in the rotunda at Green Park.
Rudi: (drunkenly) Give us a song Tink. Give us a bit of the old magic. I wanna remember what it was like when I was a kid and run messages for Tilly Divine, when the whole town was jumpin', and all the whores in Palmer Street wore Jap. kirns, and had some style.
Tink: (archly) And I was playing Amateur Night at the Purple Onion.
He stands imperiously and beckons to The Goose.
Pan: Give me a note there dear.
Tink: The Goose his the note off key several times.
Tink: Why don't you get yourself tuned up pet.
Rudi and Tink fall about laughing. Tink holds up his hand. The lights dim, spot on Tinkerbell.
TINKERBELL
with roses and champagne, I’d like to wear your orchid it might help to dull the pain, so all you spunky boys on the game, you’re don’t fine, you’re don’t swell, but when the bars are shuttin’ and the young queens are out struttin’ spare a thought for Tinkerbell... spare a thought for the old queens, Spare a thought for the Has-beens, remember all the Girls don’t what they can, hangin’ in there, hangin’ in there, workin’ for the Man.

They all sing and dance, including Mac in his straightjacket, Pan in her handcuffs. Ethel joins them and they dance up and down the staircase. The Goosie is designed so that at the end of the song Rudi and Tinkerbell are left on top of the stairs, dominating the others below.

**All:** I'm just a pig, in a pig, workin' for Mr Big. I'm just a pig... just a pig, workin' for Mr Big. Ethel recoils. Mr Big says out, you move your asses.

**Rudi:** If Mr Big says OUT, you move your asses.

**Tink:** ‘Cause ‘e wants ter build some office blocks on ‘s some blue movie ‘ouses. Rudi: If land costs fifty bucks a foot, a course you finish up with high rise. Stands ter reason. You six or seven cats are all right but you’re trespassin’. You need progress, development.

**Rudi:** Ah, it’s just a few Cornmos an’ trend-makers, a few narks on the make. The ‘eroses always make it ‘ard for the rest of us, but we’ll find you all rooms. We’ll move yous inter.

**Ern:** We won’t move. We're part of the National Heritage. We’re not movin’ out ter Mt Druitt. What the fuck would we do in Mt Druitt?

**Rudi:** Ethel’s voice. He giggles, spreading his arms around the Pink Village. This is my Rome.

**Prim:** Where to?

**Ern:** And relax lady? You’d do a lot more good for yourself.

**Rudi:** Shut your big gob or we’ll shut it good.

**Pan:** We won’t move. We’re goin’ to bulldoze this whole bloody shit down, because it’s nothin’ but a ghetto. Tink twirls his baton.

**Prim:** I’m just a pig, I’m just a pig... just a pig, workin’ for Mr Big. I’m just a pig... just a pig, workin’ for Mr Big.

**Rudi:** I’m just a pig, in a pig, workin’ for Mr Big. I’m just a pig... just a pig, workin’ for Mr Big. Ethel recoils. Mr Big says out, you move your asses.

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**Rudi:** Ethel’s voice. He giggles, spreading his arms around the Pink Village. This is my Rome.

**Prim:** Where to?

**Ern:** And relax lady? You’d do a lot more good for yourself.
somethin'? It'd be like ter suffer?
Prim: I'm just a Mick, that's all.
Tink and Rudi get a drink at the bar. Prim starts humming.

Prim: (humming) Proddy cats sit on mats, catin' maggots outta rats, Catholic dogs jump like frogs in a dish of hot water.

Erm: I gotta find somebody to sleep with tonight.
Mac: Frightened of the dark?
Prim: You oughta know. How dya reckon you and I'd go Prim? You're still a good lookin' chick. Would you like to be one of my girlfriends? All you have to do is hold me.
Prim: I might make it with Ethel. Ethel needs a girlfriend.
Erm: Yeah! there's a lot to Ethel, but nobody ever finds out. I guess they never had much of a chance with me around.
Prim: I might ask her down for a drink.
Erm: Yeah, why doncha. She'd like that. Nobody ever asks her anywhere.

Mac: The village's restless. Erm: I've gotta find somebody for the night. (To Fran) You need another customer?
Fran: It's real quiet. Nobody comin' in.
Erm: I'm broke, got no bread.
Frau: Ah! I guess I could afford one on the house.

Delighted Erm moves across to Fran, puts his arm around her.

Erm: We'll go to Costellos and the Hooker Rex, and pick up some booze and some shit. Will you be one of my girlfriends Fran?
Mac: The world's full of all your old brides in their old wedding gowns.

While Erm sweet talks Fran by the fountain Rudi pulls his bar stool downstage.

Rudi: I wanted ter be a toecutter for the painters and dockers see, but I never had the skills. Then toecutters was real tough bas. I ustah wait down the end a whale outside the pick-up shed to be called for the roster. We was seagulls, see. If no union men showed we got the skills. Them toecutters was real tough babies. I wanna fish out my hands. Sometimes I think, why not practice on meself, Rudi pulls his bar stool downstage.

Erm: Why doncha take Rudi upstairs Pan, and give him one. Sweet talk him under your guttering candles, sacrifice y'self for us all. He's got them nice Nureyev checkbones.

Ern crosses bar with Pan on his arm.

Tink: Wait for me Erm.
Erm: You're not much of a screw Sergeant Tinkerbell.
Tink: And you're such a little turd aren't y'?
Such a fuckin' little floosie. Well, I don't wanna hear it.

Pan: Why doncha take Rudi upstairs Pan, and give him one. Sweet talk him under your guttering candles, sacrifice y'self for us all. He's got them nice Nureyev checkbones.

Ern crosses bar with Pan on his arm.

Tink: Wait for me Erm.
Erm: You're not much of a screw Sergeant Tinkerbell.

RIDE AROUND LITTLE RUDI
(Lyrics, Merv Lilley)

I'm Rudi Roderega, I'm a cowboy from the Cross,
I was born in McLeay Street a drene black boss,
Which tended to stumble causin' premature births.
But I rode it ten seconds before meetin' the earth.
All: Ride around little Rudi, ride around slow,
Rudi: I ran around the crossroads and crossed to the Cross.
To court Primivera for better or wuss.
Rudi: I'm Rudi Roderega, I'm a cowpoke from the

Cross, 
Cold night for a drunk.

Erm: Why doncha take Rudi upstairs Pan, and

give him one. Sweet talk him under your guttering candles, sacrifice y'self for us all. He's got them nice Nureyev checkbones.

Ern crosses bar with Pan on his arm.

Tink: Wait for me Erm.
Erm: You're not much of a screw Sergeant Tinkerbell.

Rudi: I'm Rudi Roderega, I'm a cowboy from the Cross,
I was born in McLeay Street a drene black boss,
Which tended to stumble causin' premature births.
But I rode it ten seconds before meetin' the earth.

All: Ride around little Rudi, ride around slow,
Rudi: I took my time at stonebreaking' with some grass,

I shot at a bullseye, hit a pig in the arse.
All: Ride around little Rudi, ride around slow,
Rudi: I'm Rudi Roderega, he's cutters in town.

And I blow the odd safe to make the big dough.
All: Ride around little Rudi, ride around slow,
Rudi: Tell where the stuff is or I chop off y' toe.

I'm Rudi Roderega I work for Mr Big
He can use a tough hombrew who can stick a pig.
I've tied up me bronco, took me poly saddle down,

Can't find Primivera though I've searched the town.
All: Ride around little Rudi, ride around slow,
Rudi: Watch for Primivera, she might be on the go,
Though the grass is all trammelled and the hitchin' rail gone,

You can ride round McLeay Street if you can raise a bone.
All: Ride around little Rudi, ride around slow,
Rudi: Watch for Primivera, she might be on the go,
Though the grass is all trammelled and the hitchin' rail gone,

You can ride round McLeay Street if you can raise a bone.

Rudi: Ah, pass off Queenie. Don't get y' tits in a knot.

Tink begins to sob.

Erm: Why doncha take Rudi upstairs Pan, and

give him one. Sweet talk him under your guttering candles, sacrifice y'self for us all. He's got them nice Nureyev checkbones.

Ern crosses bar with Pan on his arm.

Tink: Wait for me Erm.
Erm: You're not much of a screw Sergeant Tinkerbell.
Tink: And you're such a little turd aren't y'?
Such a fuckin' little floosie. Well, I don't wanna hear it.?
that no ending seems the right one.
Though the barrels are all empty, and their duelling days are over, she keeps on playing roulette just the same.

Chorus: For he was the Jack of Diamonds and he was the King of Glory, and she crowned him in the morning when her cards were on the table, never knew he was a Joker, and the Joker was a wild one, never knew he palmed the aces, and he was the Knave of Hearts. For her hands were ringed with silver and she wore her scarlet dresses, she travelled through the country like a devil and an angel, and she met him in the garden when it rained and when it thundered, she had lost the game and knew it, but the odds were still the same. Repeat Chorus. For she was the Queen of Diamonds, and she was the Queen of Glory, he had crowned her in the morning and she had the Knave of Hearts. Her cards were on the table, and she held a royal routine, she lay with him at midnight and never heard the chimes. Repeat Chorus.
And she thought about the time when she was free and didn’t know him, didn’t know the room where all the palm trees were a wonder. In her simple silver bracelet she saw that he’d never seen her and she knew the dream was over and she’d dreamt it all alone. Repeat Chorus.

END OF ACT ONE

(Continued from page 32)
which, in cane chairs sit the middle-aged Peer and his international band of capitalists in white suits. And behind them a splendid mechanical ship which in due course sinks to a rickety death with all hands.

As the first act is to do with dreams of physical prowess, so the second is concerned with power and luxury. After devoting his selfishness to the slave trade and other profitable occupations Peer becomes a tycoon with ambitions of empire; and by the end of the act these have led him to a madhouse where “reason died last night at eleven o’clock” and where he wins his crown of straw.

By Act Three the inspiration is death and decay as Peer makes his way home to his native land through shipwreck. There he encounters the Button Moulder, who wants his body to melt down with the old man portrayed by Brian James. Of the huge fine cast one further actor must be mentioned. Les Dayman is a really splendid character actor these days. Here his three roles: the Troll King, the southern tycoon Cotton and the German madman, Begriffenfeldt, are each in their way admirable creations. It takes time to build a company to a peak. With each director this company, like others, has had its ups and downs. After nearly two years of steady work under Colin George the whole unit is pulling together wonderfully. Long may it continue.

(Continued from page 4)

QUOTES & QUERIES

is as susceptible to rapid changes, to future shock, as any part of our society.”

"I object particularly to published statements that Sir Robert Helpmann is quickly getting the services of Kathyrn (sic) Hepburn and other overseas artists to get the Old Tote going again. (Bobby is inviting Katie and friends to help us out). Well, Australian theatre has come a long way since we needed this sort of patronage and construction highlighting the practical problems, but also describes the costuming for religious dramas.

Historic Costume for the Stage: Barton
Costumes from ancient Egypt to 1914 are fully described in this book including jewellery, motifs and accessories. For a complete list of theatre costume reference books, contact:

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373 Bay Street, Port Melbourne, 3207. Telephone: 64-1346.
Apart from being thankful for being able to see so many revered international dance stars working on one stage together, the Edgley extravaganza Twenty Stars of World Ballet, was a most welcome lift to me after having to endure the scrappy, on again off again performances from the overworked Australian Ballet. Here at last one could sit content, not worrying whether the dancers would make it through the night. Here one could witness relatively faultless, secure dancing of many differing styles.

To be fair of course, the entire international compote was made up of prima ballerina’s and premier danseurs, all of them at the top of their profession. In fact, upon reflection, one did tend to boggle at the audacity and logistics involved in the enterprise. Normally such a line up is reserved for a Covent Garden or Metropolitan gala first night. To have them together for a five week tour of the Australian continent takes a lot of persuasion, organisation and money.

Whatever I think of his paucity of talent in other fields, Sir Robert Helpmann has more than a nodding acquaintance with most of the superstars of the international dance world and must have done a lot of fast talking to interest all these people in a tour. But that’s the sort of charm he has in abundance. Perhaps it was the sheer novelty of the experience that prompted them all to appear together, these stars from Russia, Britain, Germany, Japan and America and Denmark (from all accounts the morning classes were a riot); perhaps the concept of a touring gala tickled their fancy or maybe just the draw of dancing in a new country. Whatever the reasons, the Edgley organization got them out here and managed by and large to bring all the promised personnel and keep them for the entirety of the tour.

Such an evening as The Twenty Stars of World Ballet acts as a bracer in more ways than one; for the critics it is a chance to see top line dancing from overseas by which to judge the local product (as they rarely get a chance to get overseas to judge the product on home ground). It offers audiences a quick peek at some works and styles of choreography that they hitherto have been ignorant of and for practically everyone it offers the welcome tonic of witnessing some different manners of dancing apart from the limp RAD method that seems to pervade the Australian Ballet.

There are a few gripes one could pass on about the whole venture. Firstly, on the experience of the opening night in Sydney, the programme, at four hours in length, is far too long. Towards the end Edgley’s could have resurrected Nijinsky and Pavlova and no one would have noticed, by then the whole thing had started to pall. Secondly, the selections were pretty boringly predictable with the usual Black Swans, White Swans and Don Q’s interspersed with a few off-the-beaten-track pieces it was however saved by having Flemming Flindt’s The Lesson danced by the original Danish cast apart from Anna Maria del Angelio.

It cannot be said of the different dancers and their styles, that one was better than the other, each one was representative of their training and
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existence) at other times looking like a class
anguished weighted dancing all rippling
evening as an evening, instead of letting it
Opera Ballet danced a rather old hattish paen to
uplifting as everything Bejart does.
ballet; sometimes looking like the dance of Shiva
pectorals and genital bulge. There were quite a
Adagio of Albinoni. You know the sort of things
become the balletic equivalent of a box of
Jumps and heart stopping catches and lasts for
Athenian (Squeaky Door) by Maurice Bejart.
Maina Gielgud in Forme e Ligne
(Squeaky Door) by Maurice Bejart.
Photo: Branco Gica.

exhilarating were they with the fleet and
dazzling all that's needed for Don Q. I hope I'm
not being patronising when I say that perhaps
their small stature and fine boned bodies helped
them to no end, especially when Yoko
seemingly flew up into a one handed lift with her
husband. Being lightweight has always been a
help in classical dance but I still got the
unsavouring feeling that this was a Don Q danced
by ceramic dolls. I wished that they hadn't been
type cast (like nearly everyone in this
performance) unravelled with ease by
Peter Bruer, coming from the Düsseldorf
Opera Ballet danced a rather old hatish paen to
the male body set to that terribly old hatish
Adagio of Alboni. You know the sort of things
anguished weighted dancing all rippling
pectoralis and genital bulge. There were quite a
few foggied up opera glasses leaning forward
around me, but it left me stone cold.

As I mentioned above, what saved the
evening as an evening, instead of letting it
become the balletic equivalent of a box of
Winning Post chocolates was Flemming Flindt's
The Lesson. Based on the Ionesco play of the
same name, it added a welcome dash of vinegar
and gall to the over sweetness of the programme.

Built slowly out of the conventions of a dance
class it turns chillingly into a stylised
rape/murder, a twisted parable of the dancer
dedicating himself for his tort in this here art.

What was even more welcome was to see it
performed by Flemming Flindt himself and his
wife Vivi tax the pianist both from the Royal
Danish Ballet. As the young ballerina who gets
the chop we saw Anna Maria del Angelo from the
New York Robert Joffrey company. Again
there was that brittle show biz edge to the
dancing, but here at least it was suitable. There's
not mean to be any heart in this Ionesco ballet,
it's all hard, cold, ironic and absurd just like
Flindt's other Ionesco ballet The Triumph of
Death.

Yoko Morishita and Tetsutaro Shimizu,
dancing the Don Q pas de deux had people
standing on their seats by the end, so truly
most economic gestures of emotion and form.
Fonteyn's line is still perfect, she always was a
lyrical dancer never a technician, and she always
worked best with a story or a theme.
Balanchinian mathematics were never her forte.
Added to that, she has always shone best when
dancing with an excellent partner and Nagy is
one of the most thoughtful partners in the ballet
today. Gregory, Markarova, Merle Park and
Fonteyn will all testify to that.

Skibine uses Berlioz's music for his R and J,
and only treats the balcony love scene, but it is
astonishing what he puts into it all. Adolescent
flirtation, youthful passion and mature
resignation all blend in. The two lovers twine
about each other like the proverbial ivy and the
vine and finally seem like a transfigured moment
in history. It was totally beside the point, while
watching her, to realise that Fonteyn is nearly
sixty years old.

The only pity here was that we couldn't have
seen Nagy dancing something more revealing of
his talent, like the La Bayadère pas de deux for
example.

Lastly we had Vladimir Klos and Birgit Keil
dancing two Cranko works, the pas from
Taming of the Shrew, a lovely humane, witty
and fiery love/hate duet, and the earlier Holberg
Suite. They both danced like a dream, but what
could one expect, they were both trained in
Cranko's style, and perhaps even better, Anne
Woollam and brought a brand new company, of
course Cranko's style would be second nature to
them.

What was even more heartening was that we
didn't have a stuffed and embalmed version of
Cranko's work, it was fresh and alive as if
cranko had been there watching the wings.

Sokos and duets always seem more natural
from Cranko, it's the mass scenes, where he has
huge forces to mobilize that he sometimes gets
stuck and invention flags. But in the Holberg
duet it was effortless and spontaneous, a dense,
lapidary choreography unravelled with ease by
Kiel and Klos. These two also brought the right
measure of bluster and rumbustious swagger to
the Taming of the shrew duet without allowing it
to fall into slapstick.

All in all it was an evening to remember and
savour for the future. The whole was
accomplished without exasperating the public.
At the end of the performance, the audience
stood up spontaneously and applauded wildly.
I've never seen an audience stand up to
applaud at an operatic or ballet performance.
Fonteyn is truly the greatest.
This month saw no dearth of interesting opera during July and early August in any of the five Australian capital cities I managed to visit, though I could not honestly express unqualified enthusiasm about any of the productions I was able to see.

The closest to a night of pure enjoyment in the theatre was the Australian Opera Don Giovanni as premiered at the Sydney Opera House on July 19, but inevitably the high profile event of the month had to be Joan Sutherland's Australian debut as Norma, which came in the same hall a couple of weeks earlier.

It was a night of unequivocal musical triumph for the two principal female soloists, Richard Bonynge and the Elizabethan Sydney Orchestra. It was a night of distinctly qualified success on the male vocalist front, and of the production itself the less said the better.

Sutherland has been quoted as saying Norma is her most difficult and demanding role, and it is easy to hear why. Those who grumbled at the fragmentation of Bellini's two acts into four scenes by the infiltration of three interminable intervals ought to have been utterly silenced by the no doubt improved — even if only marginally — standard of the singing which resulted therefrom.

There was no doubt at any stage that Norma is as suitable a vehicle for Sutherland's prodigious talents as The Merry Widow is not. Nor was there any doubt of the merit of either of the two supporting mezzos who shared the role of Adalgisa in these Normas. Vocally, Margreta Elkins, who opened in the part, perhaps blended marginally better than Heather Begg, who came into the role a little later. But Begg made more of the part dramatically — and besides, both are so good it is just about irrelevant and impertinent to make comparisons.

The male soloists department of these Normas was a good deal more equivocal. I have great admiration for Ron Stevens as a singing actor, but he is not by the wildest stretch of the imagination a bel canto tenor: he sang as well as I have ever heard him as Pollione, and cut a fine figure of a Roman proconsul in the dramatic department, but he was nevertheless not wholly satisfying in a part that cries out for as beautiful singing as Norma and Adalgisa.

Clifford Grant was a good Oroveso who improved considerably as he settled into the production. The chorus sang sensitively and/or lustily as required by the score.

All that said, though, this was a depressing night at the opera for those who demand more of the art form than beautiful sounds. Bellini may well be the epitome of the bel canto art form, but a piece like Norma — his masterpiece — is far from intrinsically undramatic. There are no visual coups in Fiorella Mariani's designs for this Norma, and a surplus of visual flaws.

The headgear for both sexes is most unbecoming. The gloom in portions of the first and last scenes verges on the stygian. The supposed cave of the middle two scenes looks a good deal more like a squared-off excavation for the mouth of some new multi-track railway tunnel. The denouement makes no attempt to present a funeral pyre on stage, merely has the condemned couple stroll hand in hand off stage toward a vaguely flickering fire that the uninformed viewer might easily have mistaken for a slightly wonky sunset.

Admittedly, the lightly orchestrated tunefulness of Bellini's score — like Donizetti's score for Lucrezia Borgia — is at serious odds with the dark events being portrayed on stage; but the right production can do much to establish works like these as credible drama. It is unfortunate that Australian audiences have had to endure such unsatisfactory stage realisations.
of both pieces in such quick succession, particularly when the singing and orchestral back ing in both cases have been so commendable, which grazed the stage of the Sydney Opera House closely in the footsteps of Norma, was infinitely better than during its opening seasons in Melbourne and Newcastle a few weeks earlier. Only the sets, costumes and chorus were the same, of course: nearly all the principals were different, not to mention the orchestra and the conductor.

There had clearly been some tidying up of stage clutter at various points in the production, but the main change was the injection of the towering presence of the young American bass James Morris into the title role. There was never any doubt whatever as to the merit of Morris’ Don: it was a big reading of the part in every way. Indeed, it was marginally too big for the house and the local company— one geared to the proportions of yawning abysses like the New York Metropolitan.

There were times when the very size of Morris’ interpretation swamped the others in the cast; there were more times when he seemed to provoke some of them to oversing, overstretch their vocal resources even, to engage in competitive singing to the detriment of ensemble.

But overall this production of Don Giovanni is now a marvellous achievement— far and away the best I have ever seen on stage, and miles in front of the five previous productions of the piece by the AO and its predecessors over the past twenty-odd years.

Joan Carden was a convincing and sympathetic Donna Anna despite some trouble at the top of her range on opening night. Lone Koppel-Winther was a suitably pathos-ridden and vixenish Elvira, and coped far better with the part vocally than I had dared to hope. Neil Warren-Smith was a forceful and convincing Leporello who never allowed himself to be swamped or upstaged by Morris vocally or dramatically.

Henri Wilden was a reliable Don Ottavio in all departments, and Isabel Buchanan a glorious Zerlina vocally if still a trifle ill at ease in the part dramatically. Donald Shanks was an imposing Commendatore. Only Lyndon Harrington, was suffering from a severe throat ailment which prevented him from singing most performances the was replaced by that marvellous and experienced AO exponent of the part, Robert Gard; the night I attended, Harrington did sing, and managed some very authentic Mozetian phrases which indicated he could do full justice to the part when in good voice.

The Traviata mounted by State Opera of South Australia late in June and early in July was the lone real disappointment of the period. Marilyn Richardson made some beautiful sacrifice scenes were all handled most effectively and pleasing. Outstanding among the singers were Phyllis White’s Speaker were all thoroughly satisfying, the three boys’ machine was airborne and suitably space-like, the ordeals by fire and water were handled with great visual effect, etc etc. John Thompson’s production was unfailingly to the point, Graeme Young’s conducting taut and the sounds produced by the Queensland Theatre Orchestra mostly accurate and pleasing. The production of Mozart’s Magic Flute mounted by the Queensland Opera Company was a brilliant design triumph for Peter Cooke: equally as excellent, in quite different ways, as John Stoddart’s for the AO of which I am a fairly enthusiastic fan. The star-blazing Queen of the Night really blazed on her first appearance, the three boys’ machine was airborne and suitably space-like, the ordeals by fire and water were handled with great visual effect, etc etc. John Thompson’s production was unfailingly to the point, Graeme Young’s conducting taut and the sounds produced by the Queensland Theatre Orchestra mostly accurate and pleasing.

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But Raymond G Horace’s production was not quite convincing me at any stage: he sang and acted very well but — like most performers capable of coping with the part vocally — simply cannot get away with portraying a rather innocent teenager.

Finally came a Gypsy Baron at Sydney’s suburban Rockdale, in which Jennifer Lindfield was an excellent Saffi and Kerry O’Connor a fine Arsina. John Colditz made a good fist of the rustic pig farmer Zsupan, and Andrew Reid was a most assured Barinkay who sang with immense gusto and acted with little subtlety. David Goddard’s production was quite good, and Cedric Ashton’s musical direction was as always eminently reliable.

Next month I will catch up with the Australian Opera production of Scarlatti’s Triumph of Honor, which I saw in Brisbane early in August.
Jimmie Blacksmith — a very serious film

The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith is a powerful, emotionally exhausting, professionally executed and so demanding in its theme and performances that attention never strays from the screen.

I am not going into the fruitless exercise of whether this is the "best" Australian film in this period of resuscitation but it has two or three things going for it that make it at least unique. One is Fred Schepisi's courage. He has made a film that a lot of people are going to hate. In the foyer of the Hoyt's Entertainment Centre where it had its first Sydney showing (Melbourne and Armidale, which was one of the locations, got it a few nights earlier) voices of an audience which, because it was an invited one, could be expected to be relatively on-side with the film industry were heard complaining of the "violence" and the "unnecessary sex".

I find it interesting that expressed revulsion against violence which started as being a valid protest has now come to be used against necessary truths. People who like nothing much but marshmallows do not differentiate between the violence of, say, Starsky and Hutch, which is designed to excite (though only moderately) people sitting in comfortable chairs in front of their television sets, and violence which is an integral part of a serious drama. Jimmie Blacksmith is a very serious film and I would have expected Fred Schepisi to have thought long and hard before translating the violence of Jimmy Governor/Jimmie Blacksmith from the pages of the newspapers of the times and from Thomas Kenneally's book on to the screen.

As for the sex, it is difficult to make the coupling of a slutish poor farm girl and a black man, conducted hurriedly in a stable during temporary escape from the censorship of the boss and his wife, a romantic interlude.

Later in the story, when Jimmie and Gilda are married and living together in a bleak little hut, the scenes between them are tender. There are, however, no tender scenes between blacks and blacks in the dilapidated settlements. Copulation here is taken like a drink from a bottle.

That gets the distraction (other people's, not mine) out of the way. Among the splendid pluses is the presence of Tommy Lewis as Jimmie; the sparkling, elegant, almost sweet performance of Freddy Reynolds as Jimmie's brother Mort; Ray Barrett's mentally corrupt physically decaying police sergeant Farrell; Ruth Cracknell's Mrs Newby, encased in the terrible righteousness of the ageing white, juiceless, well-meaning woman; Angela Punch's sniffing slut, a born victim whose face lights up in some semblance of flawed beauty when Jimmie is inarticulately kind to her.

In The Devil's Playground, Schepisi took an adolescent boy and made an actor of him (Simon Burke, who appeared, somewhat older, in The Irishman) and in Jimmie Blacksmith he has done the same with Tommy Lewis. Everybody in Australia who reads the papers must know by now that Tommy is, or was, an unemployed trainee motor mechanic, twenty years old, from Darwin, who was returning to his home after a trade school course in Melbourne when spotted by the Schepisis at Tullamarine. Unlike David Gulpilil, he had never been a singer-dancer-actor with the tribe. (He is half white, whereas Gulpilil is all black.) Yet Lewis is in almost every frame of Jimmie Blacksmith and is called upon to do the most prodigious and concentrated "acting." He has the advantage of a small-featured, handsome, composed face and an innocent expression which changes to appalling ferocity without contortion.

But the real advantage he has, of course, is the producer-writer-director, Fred Schepisi, who knows what to do with film. In the cant phrase, he knows what film-making is all about.

The film opens quietly, with keynote scenes before the titles (which are mercifully non-gimmicky and proceeds at a fairly leisurely optimistic pace. Jimmie wants a job, is anxious to please, will work for almost nothing, is continually defrauded of his wages and humiliated. It is plain that given a chance Jimmie will become a whiteman's Jacky. He even joins the police
force — but gets no boots, as the sergeant sardonically points out: only an uppy black, an object of white suspicion, wears boots, and the acquisition of a pair of boots becomes a milestone in Jimmie's aborted career — and when a black's camp is raided Jimmie lays about him, copying the white cops with a will. It takes a real racial shock to disillusion him about the police force.

And following the jobs for which he is defrauded, eviction from the farm property when his tribal cousins visit him, the marriage and the persecution it brings from white settlers disgusted and disquieted by such a match, Jimmie breaks. And when he breaks, it is total. He wields his murderous axe as if at tree trunks, and later uses the gun in the same way. A phrase comes back to him from a discussion in the farmhouse kitchen between the cook and a stockman in which the cook (played with greasy enjoyment by Thomas Kenneally) extrapolates on the fact that Britain has "declared war" on the Boers.

So, "I've declared war," Jimmie shouts from a great rock as he and Mort flee through the rain forest from the police and the farmers.

For about two minutes in this long film Schepisi allows himself a little preachment during a scene in which Mort and Jimmie and the schoolteacher taken as hostage are repairing a vandalised sacred spot on an escarpment. We don't need this reminder, because everything is contained in the script.

In photographing some awe-inspiring landscape, Ian Baker and Schepisi have avoided scenic clichés. Wendy Dickson's interiors, claustrophobic in farmhouse, rectory and blacks' camp make a pointed contrast with the home paddocks, spreading golden plains and towering bush-clad mountains.

The film cost $1.2 million, which is no surprise, and was bankrolled by Schepisi's own company, Film House. The Australian Film Commission, the Victorian Film Corporation, Hoyts Theatre (the first Australian film they have helped finance) and private investors.

**Newsfront — a triumph of casting**

Bill Hunter (Len Maguire) in *Newsfront*

I am going to find it very hard to explain why I think *Newsfront* is such a successful film, and will be so in terms of box office, because how do you convey the freshness, the liveliness and panache of a story which is really about a knobabout cameraman who has neither physical allure nor mental agility and who gives his all to his job, which is not much of a job anyway? It would have been more logical to have built a drama around the great Damien Parer, who is now a kind of saint of cinematographers. Of course Parer gets mutual obeisance, but it is clearly Len Maguire, the lapsed Catholic descendant of Irish immigrants, who is seen to be admirable, a stoical example of mateship and throw-away decency, played in a triumph of casting by Bill Hunter.

To digress for a moment, I don't see Hunter coming up as the Spencer Tracy of the new Australian film industry. He has the right cragginess. But there could not be a better Len Maguire.

The story is about the Maguire brothers who are rival cameraman-directors of Cinetone and Newsco, from just after the second world war up to 1956, the year Melbourne staged the Olympic Games. For Cinetone and Newsco you may read Cinesound and Fox Movietone, both Sydney based operations.) Frank Maguire is a go-getter, Len an occasionally inspired workhorse. Frank goes off to the US, Len stays at home. The story bounces off Len's domestic life, Frank's abandonment of his longtime girlfriend; Len's assistant, the pommery Chris; Frank's success in the States; Len's philosophical retreat from domesticity and the Church and his mostly latent hostility to his boss.

That is the "story". What is hard to convey is skill in which the political climate of those years has been filtered into the events and the private lives through subtle writing and direction. There is an especially good scene in the projection room at Cinetone when the narrator (the narrator was an important character and the Brian Henderson or James Dibble of the day) objects to a line in his script. He won't say it because it reflects on a government to which he feels he is beholden for other work. The tense little interlude between the narrator and the editor, a "radical Pom", is a highlight of the film.

The film is made in a mixture of black and white and colour; such of the material from the newsreel archives as has been used is of course in b and w. Other newsreel material has been recreated, with astonishing impact. It would be quite wrong to assume that the characters and "story" are simply used to fill space between the actual newsreels of such events as the Redex car endurance trials, the arrival of the first few hundred thousand immigrants under Arthur Calwell's postwar scheme, the return of Robert Menzies to power in 1949, floods, bushfires etc. These factual records are, however, likely to be the biggest attraction for two sections of the public; the people who were around when it was all happening will take a nostalgic interest, and obtain a certain pleasure from having their worst or best memories confirmed; and those who have just heard about it from parents or grandparents may be curious to see what it was really like.

There are some well-structured characters in *Newsfront*, and surprisingly, in view of the immense amount of action in the film, they are given worthy interpretations. Chris Haywood as Chris is extraordinarily beguiling, there is an interesting performance from Don Crosby as Maguire's boss and others from John Ewart, Wendy Hughes, Bryan Brown, Angela Punch (especially Angela Punch as the in-bitten Catholic wife who rationalises her distaste for sex into a case for Catholic scruples about contraception) and John Dease.

Gerard Kennedy, a patchy actor, is less successful as Frank Maguire, although the character itself is a valid exposition of the kind of Australian who was then, and is now, in thrall to the worst kind of American schlock.

The film is produced by David Elfick, directed by Phil Noyce, funded by the Australian Film Commission, the NSW Film Corporation (its first effort) and released by Roadshow. The idea for the story was said to have come from the fertile mind of Bob Ellis. *Newsfront* went into Cannes a sleeper, and emerged with some glory. It will screen at the New York film festival in September and will open London's festival in November.
Concertos and lieder’s last refuge

Violinists have never been satisfied with having only two solo concertos and one double concerto by J S Bach. Their awareness that Bach, in fact, composed more violin concertos than this has led them to search through his other concertos in the hope of finding lost violin concertos interred in them. They have been encouraged to do this because of Bach’s known habit of arranging his own and other people’s concertos in various forms. Prompted by enthusiasm and ingenuity, the violin enthusiasts have come to the conclusion that some of the missing concertos which they feel rightly should be theirs do exist in the form of harpsichord concertos. The object of several researches in this field has been to identify which of the harpsichord concertos might have been violin concertos and how they can be restored.

The harpsichordists, for their part, might seem a little indifferent at being deprived of sole ownership of some of these works. In support of violinists, however, it must be said that the harpsichord concertos are seldom effective in a modern concert-hall setting. It would be better if they were treated as chamber music, as it seems the performers intend. In some cases, there are more than one or two players to each orchestral part. The harpsichord is rarely effective in a contemporary concert-hall without amplification; the violin does have the necessary carrying power.

Some of the results of this process of restoration can be heard on a disc made by Nikolaus Harnoncourt’s Concerto Musicus of Vienna, with Harnoncourt’s wife, Alice, as soloist in two violin concertos in G minor and D minor (reclaimed from the harpsichord concertos in F minor and D minor, respectively) and with Jurg Schaeflein playing the oboe d’amore in a concerto reclaimed from the harpsichord concerto in A. Telefunken 6.42032]. It was kind of the researchers to restore an oboe d’amore concerto, especially as the oboe d’amore lobby could not be considered particularly powerful. The assumptions about the original character of these works, by the way, are based on considerations of range, typical figuration, passages which look like adaptation to fit a new medium and so on. They are, of course, open to challenge; and it may well be that we are far from hearing the last word on the subject of concerto restoration in Bach. Harnoncourt’s forces play on original instruments of approximately 18th century vintage or on copies of them and have no trouble in maintaining a satisfactory balance between soloist and orchestral group even without the aid of studio recording. Listeners who know this group’s work will not be surprised to learn that the performances are stylish and argue plausibly for the reconstruction attempt. Only time will tell whether the concertos become more popular in this form than in the harpsichord versions which have come down to us. I imagine that keyboard players will not give up the big D minor concerto at least without a struggle.

Pianists who record a series of Mozart piano concertos are inevitably self-selecting. The pianist who has no particular interest in or sympathy for this marvellous genre of music will be careful not to betray himself except in an occasional concert performance. My own current favourite series of Mozart concerto recordings is the one in progress on Philips involving the pianist Alfred Brendel and Marriner’s Academy of St Martin in the Fields. Although the practice of having the pianist as his own musical director can make an interesting effect in a concert I am not sure that there is much point to doing it on a recording. There are always small imperfections of chording and general ensemble, as can be heard on the latest disc in the Mozart concerto series undertaken by Murray Perahia and the English Chamber Orchestra.

The two concertos are the celebrated D minor, K 466 and the smaller-scale one in F, K 413. I think a conductor would have made sure that the orchestra characterised the fiery opening bars in the D minor concerto more effectively. The players follow Perahia very well; but there are passages where, with the best will in the world, they are not quite together. About Perahia’s own piano playing there need be no reservations at all. He is clearly among the best and most suitable pianists who have ever attempted a Mozart concerto cycle. I find him far superior to Barenboim’s often mannered performances and comparable with, though different in style from, the work of Alfred Brendel in the Philips series. One interesting movement on this disc is the slow movement of the F major concerto K413. Perahia takes it slower than usual; and the tempo works beautifully. It is a particularly memorable passage in a record which will give pleasure to Mozart-lovers. For the record will be the last refuge of the traditional lieder recital. This is a genre perceptibly dying in the concert hall, not for lacking of any intrinsic quality in the music but because the social assumptions of concert-going have changed. Some songs in the lieder tradition can be readily understood and enjoyed in every sense of the word by all listeners. Others do need extraordinarily close attention to the text and to the subtleties of the composer’s treatment of it. As the central part of the lieder tradition is as its name implies, in German this means that many who have attended lieder recitals have had to forego part of the enjoyment which ought to be theirs. At one time the attitude to the concert hall tradition in our community was such that some concert goers might have felt a certain virtue in feeling bored or unenlightened for parts of a lieder recital. I think that kind of stoic church-going attitude has gradually weakened in the last few years. This is not to denigrate lieder in themselves, merely to recognise that they constitute a particularly intimate art for which some of our larger concert halls are unsuitable and also to admit that there has been in the past an element of preciousity in the attitude of some singers and some listeners. The songs, or the best of them, are too good to lose; and recording offers an opportunity for listeners to study them and enjoy them at leisure with an opportunity to repeat an unfamiliar song until it becomes familiar and with no obstacles to reading a translation of the text in parallel with the original in a well-lit room without disturbing anybody else. The Dutch singer Elly Ameling has been particularly active in recording lieder of various kinds for Philips, usually in cooperation with that most experienced and adaptable accompanist, Dalton Baldwin.

Their disc of Romantic Lieder (Philips 850 230) is an appealing anthology which includes some well-known songs (Schumann’s “Devotion” and “The Nut Tree”, Hugo Wolf’s “The Gardener” and Richard Strauss’s “Serenade”, among them) but uses its period title to include the work of a few less familiar composers such as Max Reger, Robert Franz and Hans Pfitzner. Schubert, Mahler, Brahms and Carl Loewe are also represented on a disc offering an outstanding recording of songs which have clearly been chosen for their intrinsic appeal and which would be an unintimidating introduction to a whole genre of music at the same time as it is likely to be welcomed by a person with a well-stocked record library. The recording is outstandingly good. Elly Ameling has a cool purity of style which wears well and avoids the kind of coyness and fussiness which have become drawbacks of over-performed lieder. The performances are all in German but there is a well printed leaflet with parallel translations enclosed in the sleeve.

Roger Covell

Records
Sixteen new Australasian plays

When sixteen new plays from Australia and New Zealand come up for review in one month, then either the scene is very lively indeed, or the mud at the bottom of the pond has been stirred too deeply by enthusiastic publishers. It is a pity that so many of these plays are mud. What we have here mostly is interesting new publishers, not interesting new plays.

Playlab Press is a branch of the Queensland Playwrights’ Laboratory, and has just published its first four volumes, under the editorship of Rodney H Lumer. Queensland for years seems to have had more playwrights per head of population than any other state, but they have had little impact south of the border. Lorna Bol’s Treadmill had a production in Sydney recently but in general plays from Queensland don’t seem to travel well.

Treadmill, actually, is set in New South Wales — a rather heavy-handed small town drama which achieves some power through the vivid evocation of a fishing/resort town with the usual complement of madness and passion. As is typical of this sort of play all the action takes place offstage, but the births, marriages and deaths attendant on the plot are announced by breathless women who show a surprise at their pieces of news not shared by the audience or reader. Two One-Act Plays For Festivals (Ron Hamilton’s Vacancy and Paul Collings’ Churchyard) give an alarming insight into Queensland play festivals. They are both very heavy and rather obscure in intention — passions run deep in the Sunshine State. Helen Haenke’s The Bottom of a Birdcage is an odd play redeemed by a marvellous sense of place. It is set in an old warehouse, down by a river, hovering on the brink of a Dantesque pit. The play is called an “anti-thriller” apparently because you never find out what it’s all about. The characters are all very unpleasant, but there’s only one murder.

Finally, from Playlab, and most success­fully, is Man of Steel, by Simon Denver and Ian Dorricott — a “musical spoof” for schools all about Superman. It has a cast of thousands and a million awful old jokes such as are loved by schoolkids and, indeed, this reviewer. It has boundless energy and I hope a school near me does it soon.

Edward Arnold has started a series called “Monash New Plays”, edited by Mary Lord. Jill Shearer’s Catherine is about a convict who becomes the mistress of D’Arcy Wentworth on the ship out, and gives birth to the first WC (Wentworth). This part of the action is continually interrupted as the “actors” stop to discuss the psychological motivation of the charac­ters in a rather contrived “rehearsal”. The play is an attempt to have an historical romance as well as a bit of psychological and sociological comment without having to mix it together. Bill Reed’s Cass Butcher Bunting is about dying, according to the author. In it three men sit trapped in a collapsed mineshaft, saying and doing various incomprehensible and nasty things. It is very static and intense — nothing happens, most of the time you can hardly see the characters, there is no humour, no meaning but a lot of metaphysical obscenity. Doubtless edifying for audiences prepared to meet the “unremitting demands” the play makes.

BIAILA is a journal of creative writing published by the Prahran College of Advanced Education. Volume 2, 1977, contains a puff for the Australian Stage Company with Wal Cherry and two plays: Michael Cove’s The Gift and Bob Herbert’s Man of Respect. The Gift received attention in Sydney and Melbourne last year for its lively begin­ning, but without the delights of that production it is hard to see why the play was written. Martin, the suffering artist with nothing to say, could very well have written the play himself. The ending is a complete cop-out (“I am no prophet come to tell you all . . .”). Man of Respect is an Electra with modern Sicilian Australians, the mafia providing the blood. As with many other modern retellings of Greek stories the action is determined not by fate but by driving passions explained psycholog­ically. Electra naturally loves her dad.

Babel contains three plays by Karel Florsheim, and is published by the author. It seems unlikely that they will ever be produced, except perhaps the third play, Distances. The first, Requiem For Religion, calls for a revolve with three concentric sections which rise to form a giant cone shaped mountain, the whole of which takes off like a rocket ship distributed at the end of the play. Mr Florsheim has some talent but his humour is coy and aggravating and his demands on produc­ers prohibitive.

It is with relief that one turns to four volumes of New Zealand plays, published by Price Milburn. The four volumes are distributed in this country by Currency Press. Bruce Mason’s The Pohutukawa Tree was first produced there in 1957 and has since become a classic of New Zealand drama. Its subject is as old as the hills and as impressive. The dignity of the old Maori queen Aroha and her refusal to bow to the Western influences that have subjugated the rest of her people are very uplifting. The same author’s The End of the Golden Weather is a prose narrative about his childhood which he has performed over five hundred times as a dramatic monologue. The writing is a little rich in parts, but the central image — that summer is not just a season but a state of mind — is powerful and the piece richly evokes a childhood in a small New Zealand coastal town.

The Two Tigers of Brian McNeil’s play are Katherine Mansfield and John Middleton Murray. The story of their love and separation is told skilfully, energetically and with great feeling. The Europe at the beginning of this century which attracted so many Australians and New Zealanders is still food for fantasy for us all.

Roger Hall’s Glide Time is a clever and very funny bureaucratic comedy about life in the Public Service. It is full of topical New Zealand jokes but could do as well here as it has apparently done there, where it has been “one of the most exciting phenomena in New Zealand theatre history”. If we continue to import plays from overseas we could do worse than import some of these four. New Zealand is not so far away.

THEATRE AUSTRALIA SEPTEMBER 1978
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A. C. T.

CANBERRA THEATRE (49-7600)
Dance Company of New South Wales
Poppy. Sep 3 - 16.

CANBERRA THEATRE FOYER (49-7600)
Fortune Theatre Company
The Centenarian by Philip Ryall.
Sep 11 - 15.

Nathan and Tablets by Barry Bermanage.
Sep 18 - 22.

Heads and The Education of Skinny Spew by Howard Brenton. Director, Pam Rosenberg.
Sep 25 - 29.

CHILDERS STREET HALL
Canberra Children's Theatre (47-0781)
Winnie the Pooh adapted by the company from the books by A A Milne. Director, Carol Woodrow. Sep 1, 2, 4 - 9.

AUSTRALIAN THEATRE WORKSHOP STAGE (48 5346)
The Sunny South by George Darrell. Director, Warwick Baxter. Sep 4 - 7, 11 - 14.

PLAYHOUSE (49-7600)

THEATRE 3 (47-4222)
Canberra Repertory Society
Dance Concert Sep 18.

Little Boat, Sep 11.

Dale Woodward Rod Puppet Workshop
Schools Tours:— National Institute of Dramatic Art, from 10 am to 1 pm (Age limit 12 to 22)

A. LEX HOOD, JAN CARTER, AN EVENING WITH ADOLF HITLER, BENNELONG PLAYERS
Fridays and Saturdays (continuing).

ABSURD PERSON SINGULAR
Canberra Repertory Society
Dance Concert Sep 18.

by Alan Ayckbourne. Director, Kevin Gaden.

THEATRE OPERA DANCE

AUSTRALIAN OPERA (20588)
Opera Theatre, Sydney Opera House:
La Traviata (Puccini), La Boheme (Puccini), Mastersingers of Nuremberg (Wagner), La Boheme (Puccini).
ENSSEMBLE THEATRE (929-8877)
Lamb of God, by John Summons, directed by Hayes Gordon (throughout Sep).

FRANK STRAN'S BULL 'N BUSH THEATRE RESTAURANT (31-4627)
Magic of Yesterday: with Noel Brophy, Keith Bowell, Julie Fullerton, Neil Bryant, and Alan Norman, directed by Frank Strain, choreographed by George Carden. (continuing).

GENESIAN THEATRE (827-3023)
The Aspen Papers, by Henry James, directed by Ray Ainsworth throughout Sep.

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (212-3411)
Dracula, directed by Sir Robert Helpmann, starring John Waters (continuing).

KIRK GALLERY (698-1798)
Lovers, by Brian Friel, with Margaret Roberts, Geoff Usher, Andrea Kelland, Greg O'Connor, Jean Hadgraft and Ann Haden. Presented by Five Sided Theatre, (to Sep 17).

MARIAN STREET (49-3166)
Catch Me If You Can, adapted from the French by Jean Weinstock and Willie Gilbert, directed by Robert Lewis, To Sep 9.

The Waltz of the Torr regard, by Jean Anouilh, directed by Brian Young. From Sep 15.

MARIONETTE THEATRE OF AUSTRALIA (49-1341)
Wavveille Capers. Fridays and Saturdays (continuing).

For entries contact Margarette Wells on 41-3192.

NEW SOUTH WALES

ACTORS COMPANY (660 2503)
The Removalists by David Williamson, directed by Michael Rolfe, in repertoire with Halloran's Little Boy, by Thomas Keneally, directed by Steve Agnew (to Sep 23).

An Evening with Adolf Hitler, by Jennifer Compton and Matthew O'Sullivan, directed by Matthew O'Sullivan (from Sep 29).

ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW SOUTH WALES (31-6611)
Schools Tours:— Bennettong Players West metropolitan area from Sep 11.

Jan Carter, guitarist. Metropolitan area from Sep 18.

Dale Woodward Rod Puppet Workshop North coast area from Sep 11.

Wayne Roland Brown, multi-instrumentalist. North west and Hunter areas from Sep 18.

Dance Concert Riverina area from Sep 18.

Alex Hood, folk-singer, guitarist. South Coast from Sep 18.

Bob Sillman, magician, ventriloquist, puppeteer. Western New South Wales area from Sep 18.

AUSTRALIAN THEATRE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE (699-9322)
Window Workshops — Friday nights, Parade Theatre from 6 pm to 9 pm.

Saturday Morning Workshops — National Institute of Dramatic Art, from 10 am to 1 pm (Age limit 12 to 22).

AUSTRALIAN OPERA (20588)
Opera Theatre, Sydney Opera House:
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MARIONETTE THEATRE OF AUSTRALIA (357-1200)
Music Room, Sydney Opera House:
The Magic Tinder Box and St George and the Dragon, with a special appearance of Bill Steamschow, performed by the Norman Hetherington Puppets. To Sep 9.

MUSIC HALL THEATRE RESTAURANT (929-8877)
Encore, a musical revue starring the Toppoppo family and Lee Young (continuing).

NEW THEATRE (519-3403)
Enemies, by Maxim Gorki, directed by Kevin Jackson (throughout Sep).

NIMROD THEATRE (699-5003)
Metamorphosis by Franz Kafka, adapted for the stage, directed and designed by Steven Berkoff, costume designer Sylvia Jansons, music by Nicholas Lyon, with Ralph Cotterill, Richard Hayes Gordon, Jeff Ashby, Ron Graham, Barry Lovett, Drew Forsythe, Ivor Kants. From Sep 6 - 30.

ORANGE CIVIC THEATRE (62-1555)
Canberra Children's Theatre:
Winnie The Pooh adapted by the company from the books by A.A. Milne. Director, Carol Woodrow. Sep 15 - 16.

PARIS THEATRE (61-9193)
Visions by Louis Nowra, directed by Rex Crampoon, with Kate Fitzpatrick and John Gaden.

Q THEATRE, PENRITH (407-21-5735)

SEYMOUR CENTRE (692-0555)
York 'Theatre:
Crown Matrimonial, written by Royce Ryton, directed by Peter Williams, with June Salter as Queen Mary and John Hamblin as Edward VIII. To Sep 9.


Downstairs Theatre:
Palach, by Alan Burns and Charles Marowitz, directed by Mark Radvan, with the City Road Youth Theatre. Four performances on Sep 6 & 9.

The Theatrical Illusion, by Pierre Cornelle, directed by Rex Crampoon, with the Sydney University Theatre Workshop and French Department. From Sep 21.

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE (20588)
Exhibition Hall:
La Scala Bi Centenary Exhibition. Throughout Sep.

THEATRE ROYAL (231-6111)
The Club by David Williamson, with Ron Haddrick, Jeff Ashby, Ron Graham, Barry Lovett, Drew Forsythe, Ivor Kants. From Sep 6 - 30.

WHITE HORSE HOTEL, NEWTON (51-1302)
Brenda, devised and directed by Ian Tasker, written by Peter Stephen. Throughout Aug.

Queensland

Brisbane Arts Theatre (36-2344)
Murder on the Nile by Agatha Christie, directed by Jason Savage. To Sep 9.

Butley by Simon Gray; directed by Ian Thomson. From Sep 14.

Children's Theatre: Kedro the Kangaroo Boy written and directed by Eugene Hickey. From Sep 2.

Camerata (36-6551)
At University of Queensland by the lake.

Cedipus at Colorus by Sophocles, directed by Donald Batchelor.
TASMANIA

SAralmanca Theatre Company (23:5259)
(Tasmanian theatre in education)
Touring in USA until November 24.

TASMANIAN PUPPET THEATRE (23:7996)
Touring: Mamma’s Little Horror Show, Golden Nugger, North Wind and the Sun, Big Nose, Magic Brush.
The Space, Adelaide to Sep 9; Last Laugh Theatre Restaurant, Melbourne Sep 14 – Oct 27.

THEATRE ROYAL (34:6266)
Children’s Programme: Five Funny Folk Tales Sep 4 – 8.
For entries contact the editorial office on (049) 67 4470.

VICTORIA

ALEXANDER THEATRE (543:2828)
Painrite, Babirra Players. Sep 14 – 23.

ARENA CHILDREN’S THEATRE (24:9667)
Plays-in-Performance: lower primary, Story-theatre primary, Legends Alive touring metropolitan and country schools.
CAT-CALL: Tutorship scheme for schools (pupils & staff).
2. Crew four fruit cake, grades 2-6.
3. Truck a luck, grades 5-6.
SCAT: Suitcase Activity Theatre (tone actor/teacher drama experiences)
Saturday Matines, every Sat. For all ages: Majolo.

AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING GROUP (PRAM FACTORY) (34:7133)
Front Theatre: Footloose Hotel by Barry Dickens. Aug 15 – Sep 17.
Dreamers of the Absoluto by Phil Motherwell.
Back Theatre: The Bitter Tears of Petra Von Kant, Aug 8 – Sep 3.
Season of Women’s Films, Sep 19 – 24.
(Comedy)

FESTIVAL THEATRE (88:4626)
Camberwell Civic Theatre.
Applause by Camden and Green. Music by Strauss & Adams; director, Peter Tulloch; starring Val Lehmann. Sep 8-16, 8.15 pm.

FLYING TRAPEZE CAFE (41:3727)
To be announced.

FOIBLES Theatre Restaurant (347:2397)
Original comedy entertainment directed by Rod Quauntock, with Mary Kennelly, Steve Vizard, and Tony Rickards.

HOOLPA THEATRE FOUNDATION (63:7643)
Playbox Theatre: Freaks by Gordon Graham; director, Michael Morris.

HER MAJESTY’S THEATRE
Julie Anthony: Her own show. Sep 14 – 16.
Isn’t It Pathetic At His Age? Barry Humphries. From Sep 17.

COMEDY THEATRE (663:1824)
Isn’t It Pathetic At His Age? Barry Humphries. To Sep 16.
The Masters Dennis Olsen and June Bronhill. From Sep 17.

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WESTERN AUSTRALIA

CIVIC THEATRE RESTAURANT (272-1595)
Laughter Unlimited. Directed by Brian Smith.

HOLE IN THE WALL (381-2403)
Between the Lines — a play about Henry Lawson. Directed by John Milson; with Alexander Hay. Sep 6 - 30.

NATIONAL THEATRE (325-3500)

REGAL THEATRE (381-1557)
Dick Whittington and His Cat. Directed by Kenny Cantor. To Sep 8.

WA BALLET COMPANY
Short country tour during Sep.

WA OPERA COMPANY (322-4766)
Short country tour during Sep.
For entries contact Joan Ambrose on 299 6639.

LATE ADDITION TO N.S.W.

RIVERINA TRUCKING COMPANY
(069 25-2052)
The Club by David Williamson (by arrangement with Nimrod Theatre) directed and designed by Terry O'Connell. Cast includes Bob Baines, John Francis, Ken Moffat, Toby Prentice and Les Winspear plus late night performances of Broad Horizons by Terry O'Connell & Ken Moffat. Sep 14 - Oct 1.

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THESPIA'S PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 3

Name __________________________
Address _______________________

Across:
1. Dear Elf, muddled, favours central government (7)
5. Cads and bounders sounding putrid (7)
9. "I will"? Sounds like the place where you say it (5)
10. Mountains you could have a meal on (5, 4)
11. Effect hard to achieve with clue 13 (6)
12. Play is on film but in Hell (2, 6)
14. What you are right now (4, 6)
15. Teutonic god is Vienna woodman, we hear (4)
18. Test to stay as it is (4)
19. Ex king of France, currently a sun god writes plays here! (5, 5)
20. Grabs one, like a good performance (7)
21. Elvis was this type of king (6)
22. Sea lords and butterflies (8)
26. "... I heard a voice cried sleep no more" (9)
27. "Hither with crystal ..., lovers come" (John Donne) (5)
28. One with the stickiest beak? (7)
29. Ball set changed for dance dramas (7)

Down:
1. Female raced with twitch and became mad (7)
2. Ted's ute — it is down and out (9)
3. Superlative quality in pan pipes, but not in voice (8)
4. A rift in this is the beginning of the end (4)
5. Parisian lady or toting Cleopatra? (5, 5)
6. Panter to drill holes in heads (6)
7. Cut between two points and run away (5)
8. In spot to receive injuries (7)
9. Deluge with radiance as a theatrical aid (10)
10. Pause for refreshment and relief (8)
11. Dollars harm a concealed director (7)
12. A rift in this is the beginning of the end (4)
13. Regret, this is the beginning of the end (4)
14. Test to stay as it is (4)
15. Ex king of France, currently a sun god writes plays here! (5, 5)
16. Tooting Cleopatra? (5, 5)
17. Sea lords and butterflies (8)
18. A rift in this is the beginning of the end (4)
19. Ex king of France, currently a sun god writes plays here! (5, 5)
20. Grabs one, like a good performance (7)
21. Elvis was this type of king (6)
22. Sea lords and butterflies (8)
23. Meets and gives out justice (5)
24. A rift in this is the beginning of the end (4)
25. Bats return to strike a vicious blow (4)

The first correct entry drawn on August 25th will receive one year's subscription to TA.

Last month's answers.