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Theatre Australia: Australia's magazine of the performing arts 3(4) November 1978

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Dimboola — Film
Googie Withers returns
Bruce Myles

Nationwide Reviews including
film, ballet, opera, records,
books; National Guide.

Bedroom Farce

Wagstaff — Actor
Producer

Miller — Just the Ticket
Nimrod Theatre
500 Elizabeth St
Surry Hills NSW 2010

Until Sunday
26 November
Nimrod Upstairs

A Visit With The Family
Greg Bunbury
director Richard Wherrett
designer Larry Eastwood
Lou Brown, Brandon Burke, Tom Farley, Gillian Jones, Margo Lee,
Helen Meaney, Robyn Nott, Peter Young

Until Sunday
19 November
Nimrod Downstairs

Kold Komfort Kaffee
devised by Robyn Archer
directed by Ken Horler
design by Martin Sharp
Robyn Archer, John Gaden, Sharon Raschke, Jerry Wesley

From Saturday
25 November
Nimrod Downstairs

Gone With Hardy
David Allen
directed by Richard Wherrett
designed by Anthony Babicci
Terence Clarke, Drew Forsythe, Henri Szeps, Kerry Walker

From Saturday
2 December
Nimrod Upstairs

JUMPERS
Tom Stoppard
directed by Ken Horler
designed by Larry Eastwood
John Gaden, Barry Lovett, Walter Pym, Geraldine Turner, George Whaley

Theatre Australia

November 1978

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Film Review.
Subsidy for dreams...

Everyone agrees that somehow the artists should come first. After all it is the fruit of their creative ability which audiences acclaim, and posterity recognises as characterising our age, and judges it by. But how to let our genius out of the bottle? The Australia Council Theatre Board has recognised that despite its high sounding principles it has more and more become just a paymaster and one increasingly of top-heavy administrative juggernauts. Rather like the Catch 22 of being in the union before you get the job, and having to have the job before you can join the union, many an artist has been excluded for not having the administrator's ability to quantify his dreams in the requisite quintuplicate. And so the big companies have had an in-built advantage with the result of an expansion of the existing rather than encouragement of the new.

The Theatre Board did keep an amount supposedly separate under the heading Special Projects — an umbrella term for "the rest"; all those companies which didn't get in in time to be established as an ongoing commitment. Thus for this league the result of the annual application became a matter of life or death with the competition steadily increasing.

On the other hand as inflation hit without a corresponding rise in federal funds the (necessarily) smaller groups saw their grant pool diminish to keep leeway for the established fletet. In the past three years, for instance, whilst the big companies have been asking for at least an indexed increase, the Council has been trying to cope with only half the inflationary increase of its funds and thus a decline in real terms. What can the artist do faced with such cold economic facts?

Two recent events and a new initiative bespeak a change in federal thinking. The first was the decision to withdraw funds from the Old Tote — suggesting that the Council would no longer merely dote out ever increasing amounts for companies offering less and less artistic return for greater and greater administrative expenditure. Their privately held view that had Bell's terms been accepted funding would have gone ahead suggests further that the Council is now convinced of the primacy of artistic control. This was endorsed by their decision to back Paris, blatantly and boldly a company of artists for artists, despite its questionable practicability as an ongoing operation.

Now comes the new initiative which seeks both to give the creators the backing to try out their ideas without becoming embroiled in company structures and at the same time provide flexibility in what looks like a steady state situation and a development pool at that.

The idea is to give substantial sums (up to $100,000 pa) to professionals, or groups of professionals, who wish to embark on an innovative or developmental programme of up to two years duration.

Limited Life — as the programme is called — offers several advantages. First of all the subsides are to be administered by an existing arts organisation for which a three per cent fee will be paid. This should ensure that the administrators have no power to cokk the creative bottle nor any danger of a new structure being created which may try to perpetuate itself.

Limited time allows artists to take leave of absence from existing commitments and not only explore possibilities otherwise denied to them but also to return, personally enriched, with new ideas and vitality for mainstream activities: what the Board in its economic jargonese calls "investment renewal based on personnel and product development".

Though projects may be significant income earners the concept is that total costs will be underwritten, with grants payments being reduced only by income actually achieved. This on the one hand frees artists from concern with box office goals and on the other ensures that the projects can be fully implemented so long as original budgetted expenditure is kept to.

Bob Adams the Director of the Theatre Board sees the scheme as encouraging everything from a beyond Artaud multi-media total theatre, to a Brook-in-Africa type group to take drama to the outback (and discover its essence?) — though at this stage no one wants to be too specific for fear of limiting the range of ideas put forward. But any project backed by well established professionals and bringing together the disparate areas of interest of the Board, dance, drama and puppetry, would, one assumes, have to be a frontrunner.

Though an application has been put before the government for special funding it seems unlikely that it will be successful. If so the money to pay for it will have to be drawn from across the board excise the pun. We have been assured that this will not be a case of the Special Projects' depleted coffers being raided again, but it does mean that any proposals under the Limited Life Programme will be competitive with all other Theatre Board considerations.

The idea, then, is to give grants for professionals to realise their dreams in the hope that if nothing else a generally invigorating effect will be felt throughout the performing arts. Certainly the Theatre Board, despite the subsidy spiral which so many of the major companies seemed locked into, is not looking to box office returns as a measure of success. It genuinely seems as if here the right to fail will be paramount.

Enquiries about riding high on cloud nine with a government grant should be made to the Australia Council.

And meanwhile the rest of us should begin lobbying our MPs to increase government spending on the arts, and reduce the need for such schemes within an otherwise depressing situation; after all someone still has to lose out even for Limited Life to happen. Let's get to it.
MICHALL AT THE PRAM

JOHN TIMLIN

“We’re hoping Warren Mitchell will be coming to do some work at the Pram Factory at the beginning of next year. The first show we plan to do is the Pam Gems (Dusa Fish Stats and Vij) show, Franz Into April. It’s not absolutely definite yet because when it was originally done at the ICA in London it only ran for an hour, so she’s written another twenty minutes to make it full length, but neither we nor Warren have yet seen the rewrites. Hopefully the show will be mounted by our entrepreneurial arm, Pram Factory Productions, to open at an as yet unnamed venue in Melbourne and then have a six to eight week tour. Warren Mitchell will play Franz, and we hope to draw the rest of the cast from the APG.

We hope, too, to get Frank Hatherley to come out and direct it, as he did the London production. We have also commissioned him to write a play about Ned Kelly’s sister — following his Ripper Show — so he can work on that with us too. I can’t yet say what other plays we may be entrepreneurial as we haven’t got the rights on them yet.”

BROTHER CAN YOU SPARE $2M.

KEITH DEVONPORT, Australian Ballet.

“We have an appeal going with the object of raising $2 million dollars to establish a new headquarters for the Ballet. It will include studios for the School and the Company, space for set design and production, administration and everything else. At the moment we’re housed in a disused tyre warehouse and operations are scattered throughout ten different buildings — although we’re now rated as the fifth ballet company in the world.

The appeal has been going for some months now, it’s going quite well, but money is hard to get these days and it’s a little slower than we hoped. It will run to the end of the year, then architects will be submitting plans and we hope building will start in about eighteen months. We have purchased the site — behind the Victorian Arts Centre — which is a big step, and things will go ahead one way or another. Whatever amount we have will supplement our normal income. We are one of the few theatre enterprises that is doing well; this year we’ve played more than 200 performances to over 90% houses, and we do keep over 300 people (dancers, orchestra and backstage crew) gainfully employed in theatre.

The Governments have been very generous too; the Federal Government has offered up to $1½ million dollar for dollar with state donations; the Victorian Government has offered up to $1 million dollar for dollar with donations within the state; the Queensland Government has done the same up to $25 thousand, and we’re waiting to hear from the others.”

WORLD’S BIGGEST FREE ENTERTAINMENT PROGRAMME

ROBERT KING CRAWFORD, Melbourne City Council.

“Free Entertainment in Parks began in 1972 with a $3,000 budget, nine production programme and eighty artists, and in the following five years the productions have increased 300% and the artists to 22,500. There are thirty individual Festivals, each with its own concept and area of the performing arts, which run for up to eight days. FEIP is an extension of the ancient Village Green meeting place for the community and its involvement in middle-of-the-road entertainment. The programme includes almost every area of performing arts, from opera to puppets to camp shows, and caters for almost every section of the community. FEIP acts as a showcase for the entertainment industry and is fully supported by the unions involved. Artists appearing in the programme invariably get flow on bookings, and often the programme is involved in giving amateur groups and young talent exposure. It is also often a training ground to give talent professionalism. Arts Branch Melbourne City Council is the only Council entertainment operation that we know of that produces, presents, promotes, compères, advertises, writes, directs, composes, choreographs, books, organises, designs and conceives its own programmes. A complete entrepreneurial operation. Sir Douglas Fairbanks Jr, Jimmy Edwards, Patrick Cargill, and Spike Milligan have all given their time and work free to the programme.”

BEDROOM FARCE

PETER WILLIAMS

“It has been absolutely marvellous, we had seven hundred in the audience on the second night and our advance bookings have been overwhelming, there are twelve thousand seats booked already from advance party bookings. The only thing I would like to know is how on earth these party booking people do it. If I knew the Reverend Sidney Smith, starring Timothy West; and 

PROSPECTING

DAVID BLENKINSOP, Festival of Perth.

“At the moment it seems more than likely that the Prospect Theatre Company will be coming for a short tour to Australia, starting with two weeks at the Festival of Perth. They are being brought out by the Festival of Perth, and Clifford Hocking of Melbourne. It will be a small company with three "enterprises", rather than actual plays. They are The Lunatic The Lover and The Poet about Lord Byron, which will star Derek Jacoby, Smith of Smiths on the Reverend Sidney Smith, starring Timothy West; and The Postillion Has Been Struck By Lightning about the Grand Tour, with the whole company. This includes Julian Glover, Isla Blair and musicians.

From Perth they will go on to Melbourne for a few days, Adelaide for another few days, Sydney for a week and finishing up at Canberra. The whole thing will last for about five weeks.”
Q & Q

CATCH 22 OF TIE

GORDON BEATTIE, Theatre of Youth and Education in the Riverina.

"Tyrer was formed in 1977 and got a Schools Commission Grant in February this year under the innovations grant system. This ran out in September and at the moment we don't know if the NSW Government is going to continue with funding in the new year. We seem to be in a Catch 22 situation there, with the Education Department saying it's the responsibility of Arts, and vice versa. This means that at the moment we're operating on a commercial level, doing an Arts Council — type tour, performing to audiences of 120 children, which is not the kind of work we want to do at all. Our technique is one that operates with one class using performance, creative drama, simulation game playing and above all participation, which you can't do with such large numbers. At the moment only the big schools can afford to book us, while the work we were doing before is especially related to the one and two teacher schools of which there are so many in the Riverina.

I lecture in drama at the Riverina CAE, so my capacity is mainly co-ordination and supervision, but of the three others two are ex-teachers and one has taken leave of absence from college, and have therefore made financial and other sacrifices to do this work. If we don't get a grant we have to come to a decision as to whether to go on working in the way we are now, or whether that's just not our thing. I've no idea what our chances are, but I think the Education Department should face up to its responsibility for this kind of thing."

THEATRE COMPANY FOR TOWNSVILLE

RIC NELSON, Director Summerstock Programme, Townsville Civic Theatre.

"In the past, due to physical isolation, lack of facilities, 'theatrical events' seen by audiences in the south have been denied to Townsville theatregoers. With the building of a fine theatre by the Townsville City Council and the urban population growth, the time appeared ripe to set wheels in motion leading, we hope, to the establishment of a professional theatre company in North Queensland. With this object in mind, an initial program of five productions has been devised, spread over a nine month period, principally involving local amateur personnel.

The material has been selected with a strong awareness of the general lack of theatre going tradition within the community. The program will commence in November with Ray Lawler's 'classic' play Summer of the 17th Doll. The remaining four productions will include a Shakespearean tragedy, a musical, a popular farce and a contemporary drama. Running concurrently with production periods, an actor workshop programme will be mounted, aimed at developing local expertise. It is hoped that we will be able to provide theatregoers in Townsville, not only with imported quality theatre, but also with local productions of a high standard."

WA TO USA

GEOFF GIBBS, Actor.

"I will be away from Perth for two years. I will be at the Ohio State University for the first twelve months, teaching in the Theatre Arts Department. Their request was for an emphasis on Australian drama. Basically my plans are to learn and to experience as much as possible in two areas — children's drama and summer stock. I will be right in the centre of the summer stock scene. With a bit of luck I hope to work in a company during the summer of 1979. The purpose in this lies in the fact that I have felt for a long time that summer stock would be very applicable to Western Australia. We have an ideal regional centre on the south coast, Albany, which has thousands of summer visitors, I envisage an actors co-operative company being very successful there.

The other involvement I'll be following is in children's drama. I'll be attending seminars by Geraldine Bayne Siks, University of Washington, Seattle, and then moving to the east coast to the Arts in Education Centre, Long Island under Professor Goldberg.

My programme is crammed. But there will be many insights to be gained which will extend my own development, and be of advantage in teaching my students."

BRILLIANT AUSTRALIAN MUSICAL

NEIL THURGOOD

"I recently directed the first production of a brilliant Australian Musical Comedy, The Canary Cage, which deserves far more than a short season with a country Amateur Musical Group.

Written by John Sherman and Charles Phillips with music composed by Les Patching, it is an imaginative & musical re-enactment of
incidents which really happened in Parramatta in the 1820's, such as the break-out by the women prisoners when their tea ration was cut, the marriage market, the corrupt aspects of Colonial life & the subsequent consequences. The late John Sherman was always interested in the history of the early settlements, so together with historian and writer Charles Phillips and composer Les Patching The Canary Cage was born. Charles has written several books on early Australiana and Les is a well known Melbourne musician & composer, they have collaborated in several musicals one of which, Captains Ladies, won the Elizabethan Theatre Trust's award for The Best Australian Musical. The Canary Cage is in my humble opinion far better and having directed it I can see so much that could be achieved with professional facilities and I hope that some enterprising entrepreneur will give me the opportunity of proving it.

NOEL MISSED AN OSCAR

RAYMOND STANLEY

This photograph seems to be the only memento of a one-man show which never happened: Noel Ferrier as Oscar Wilde. In June 1963, Ferrier announced he would be performing in a one-man show on Wilde. The production, devised by the late Jeff Underhill (who wrote book and lyrics for the Australian musical Ballad of Angel's Alley), was to include excerpts from Wilde's lectures, stories and epigrams, selections from his plays and poems, with emphasis on The Importance of Being Earnest.

The first performance was scheduled to take place at the Assembly Hall in Melbourne on August 10, where it was to play for eight performances. If the show was successful, the intention was for it to tour other States.

Ferrier even had a first night opening gimmick arranged. He was to arrive at the Assembly Hall in a horse-drawn hansom cab, alight from it in his guise of Wilde, and walk straight onto the stage.

Whether Ferrier (or someone else) had the idea of doing the Wilde one-man show as a result of the success of Michael MacLiammoir was not revealed. He did indicate, however, that his handling of Wilde would be very different to that of the Irish actor's. At the time it was believed MacLiammoir had been approached to tour Australia with his programme. Had Ferrier gone ahead with his show, it obviously would have harmed any tour by MacLiammoir.

MacLiammoir

Sometime between the announcement by Ferrier of his plans and the August opening date, there came the news that MacLiammoir was definitely coming to Australia. So Ferrier decided to cancel his show. MacLiammoir in fact toured Australia and New Zealand with The Importance of Being Oscar March-August 1964, receiving great acclaim for his performance wherever he went.

It is interesting now to speculate how Ferrier would have fared in the role of Wilde, whether his career might have taken different turnings had he performed it. Meanwhile there exists this unique photograph of Noel Ferrier in the role he never played.

MTC LATTER DAY VIRTUES

SIMON CHILVERs, Director, MTC's Arsenic and Old Lace

"Yes — peaceful. The virtues of another day — they're all here in this house. The gentle virtues that went out with candlelight and good manners and low taxes.

So says the Vicar in, I think, an accurate assessment of the charm of this play, in which benevolent murder is two gentle ladies' charitable contribution to the aged and lonely, in which a nephew self-appointed as Teddy Roosevelt digs the Panama Canal in the cellar, and another sinister nephew pursues the career of surgeon without training but with much private practice. To me all the signs are that the success of Arsenic And Old Lace grew from a workshop situation in which a team of actors (not directors, designers or even writers) contributed their individual talents toward creating a lunatic world in which only the sane are bewildered. It's melodramatic, it's farcical, it's good natured, nostalgic and it's very, very funny."
LONDON SEATS

Harry M Miller's Computicket organisation, so far set up in Melbourne and Sydney, can now sell you tickets to London Theatres. What's more, they are the second best seats in the house. I wonder if people in London can buy tickets to the theatre here?

WHAT NEXT REG?

The Reg Grundy Organisation after making a few dollars from merchandising during the not so recent ABBA tour, has acquired the merchandising rights to such Hollywood greats as Star Wars, Saturday Night Fever and Grease, not to mention the legend in his own time, Lief Garratt. That's right its Reg Grundy we thank for such things as badges, T-shirts and posters relating to these immortal heroes of the screen. I hear that negotiations are under way with the Robert Stigwood organisation so that Mr Reg Grundy can start printing badges, T-shirts and posters again. Only this time Mr Grundy will be a little more patriotic, the subject is the Bee Gees. Well, I can't wait to see the Sir Robert Helpmann badges.

ROGER WHO?

At a recent first night at the Marian Street Theatre in Sydney where in attendance there were several celebrities and of course a spattering of Upper North Shore social set, one of the latter walked up to Mr Roger 'This is Your Life' Climpson and introduced herself... "Mr Wagstaff isn't it?".

SAME OLD STORY

Casting has started for a movie to be made in WA early next year. A three hunder, two of the leads will be cast in Sydney. The story line reads — two boys grow up together in a mining town in the West. One of the boys dies tragically and the other buys a motorcycle, meets a girl and travels around the country-side. Such adventure. The title for this action packed movie has not yet been decided upon, but I am assured that it will be more patriotic, the subject is the Bee Gees. Well, I can't wait to see the Sir Robert Helpmann badges.

DAWN IS COMING

At this time last year production wound up on the feature film about the life of Dawn Fraser starring Tom Richards as Harry Gallagher, Dawn's coach. Dawn was to be released last April but for some unknown reason it wasn't. Tom then appeared in episodes R to Z of Grundy's Chopper Squad which was taken off the air around episode 5 and now Tom is doing a tele-play for the ABC called Money in the Bank, which should be aired very soon. Don't despair Tom, if Money in the Bank is canned for a while, I have it on good authority (no ho) that Dawn will be released in December and Chopper Squad will reappear on our screens about the same time.

BUSH THEATRE

I have received a letter from Klaus Villwock of The Basin Theatre Group informing me of their forthcoming production, Period of Adjustment by Tennesse Williams. Mr Villwock asked that we include his Theatre Group in the mags list of amateur companies, but where do we find The Basin Theatre Group? The only clue to its whereabouts is PO Box 51, The Basin, 3154, and a contact number — (03) 762 1082, and as the letter reads 'built in a lovely bush setting'.

SUFFRAGETTES?

What does a Feminist Film Worker do? Well, the Sydney Film Makers Co-op must know because they have just employed two — Jeni Thornley and Susan Lambert. Jeni's (or is it Ms Jeni's) film, Maidens received a Greater Union award and Susan's film Size 10 will be released in December at the Co-op's theatre in Darlinghurst, Sydney. Size 10 is a film about the attitude towards women's size and shape. I'll leave it to your imagination as to what Maidens is all about, but, if anyone can find me a size 10 maiden — let me know.

OPERA HOUSE BOURBON

The Jim Beam Bourbon Company has produced a bottle of bourbon in the shape of the Sydney Opera House (you could have fooled me) which went on sale last year. The purpose behind this idea is to generate funds for the Australian Opera. There will be a different opera bottle produced each year for the next ten years and as Mr Peter Walker, Jim Beam's public relations representative says — "This will mean a total donation of 1.5 million dollars for the opera." For 1979 it will be an Aida bottle, there will only be 1,000 made and they will go on sale in a few weeks for $200 each. $150 of this will be for the Australian Opera. "In the U.S. a similar bottle was produced for the Lyric Opera, sold for $200 and in twelve months was worth $1,000." said Mr Walker. So you'd better get in quick for these collectors' items.

NEW MOVIE

Bruce Beresford, one of Australia's better known film directors will be making Breaker Morant next year. Production will probably start some time in January. Bruce is thinking about bringing out a star from the UK but I hope he can find an Australian artist to fit the bill. Casting for the rest of the parts should be well under way by now but knowing Bruce he probably knew who he wanted some months ago.

VERSATILE ACTRESS

Candy Raymond, who is without a doubt one of the best actresses in the country, can be seen in Money Movers which will open simultaneously in fifteen cinemas through the country very soon and in Peter Weir's tele-movie, The Plumber early next year. Candy is really diversifying, she has teamed up with Ron Scott (her voice-over agent) to manage a six piece choir to be used as session singers. The choir consists of three male and three female singers who are individually probably the best session singers around. Last month they completed a Rosso Antico commercial for which three hours of studio time was allotted, yet the choir finished the job in a record forty-five minutes. Rosso's accountants were very pleased.

Send entries for this column to Brad Keeling at The Management Office.
Ray Stanley’s

WHISPERS RUMOURS & FACTS

I cannot recall quite so many starry names being kicked around for any play to be staged here as for The Kingfisher, which Google Wichers, John McCallum and Frank Thring are now going to do. List includes Anna Neagle, Griffiths, Constance Cummings, Joan Fontaine, Brian Aherne, Greer Garson and — who at one time seemed the hottest favourite — Myrna Loy. On Broadway it is Claudette Colbert and Rex Harrison. Apparently it needs star names to carry it.

One wonders whether Rachel Roberts’ journey will be really necessary. She is an excellent actress, of that there can be no doubt. But I do query her box office appeal in Australia for The Bed Before Yesterday; after all, she was no draw for Picnic At Hanging Rock. There are so many actresses around who could play the role as well in the Travers farce, and whose names would mean more to the general public. Offhand I can think of Betina Welch, Carol Raye, Margo Lee, Julia Blake, Jacqueline Kott, Judi Farr — and there must be many more. So why go to the expense of importing someone? Why does Equity continue to allow it? I cannot recall quite so many starry names being kicked around for any play to be staged now going to do. List includes Anna Neagle, Griffiths, Constance Cummings, Joan Fontaine, John Mills, Coral Browne, Vincent Price, carry it.

Time seemed the hottest favourite — Myrna Loy. Robert Helpmann, Emlyn Williams, Hugh Griffiths, Constance Cummings, Joan Fontaine, Brian Aherne, Greer Garson and — who at one time seemed the hottest favourite — Myrna Loy. On Broadway it is Claudette Colbert and Rex Harrison. Apparently it needs star names to carry it.

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Hear Gordon Chater is likely to be approached to play the lead when Privates on Parade is staged here next year... Also that Eric Dare has rights for Australia of The Unvarnished Truth, a comedy about love and death, which has Tim Brooke-Taylor starring in London. No date or venue yet fixed for presentation here. Rumours that Henry Fonda, Dustin Hoffman or Richard Burton likely to star in a play here next year. Sound like just rumours.

Wonder why Nimrod’s production of The Club was such a big flop on its return season to Sydney’s Theatre Royal... Have my doubts about the wisdom of launching a campaign to save the Mayfair in Sydney, seeing that until earlier this year it has not been used as a live theatre since the early 1930s... After his success this year in Perth and South Australia, Philippe Gentry and his puppet show will be back from April to October next year, brought out by the Adelaide Festival people, with the Victorian Arts Centre presenting him in Melbourne and Cliff Hocking in Sydney.

Was invited to three openings on one night in September: MTC’s Gone With Hardy, The Masters at the Comedy and Hoopla’s The Emigrants. With so many weeks of no Melbourne openings, one would have thought things could have been organised better. It can’t be good for the theatre with everyone vying for publicity and first night coverage... Am told I on Finlayson has been retained as consultant-director by the Tasmanian Fiesta for three projects: a New Year’s Eve three-hour open air show in Hobart, presentation of the New York Dance Quintet and the American play Bullshot.

After seeing the recent production of The Masters, with one half devoted to Ivo Novello, was reminded of the fact that now living in Melbourne is one of Novello’s leading ladies: vocal teacher Diane Dubarry. Diane took over from Mary Ellis in the West End production of Arc De Triomphe, thus repeating history as her mother — opera and musical comedy star of the 1920s and 1930s, Deseree Ellinger — also replaced Mary Ellis in the New York production of Rose Marie. And Diane’s first cousin, incidentally, happens to be film and stage director John Schlesinger.

Looks as if one of next year’s highlights will be The Prospect Theatre at the Old Vic Company, starting its tour at the Perth Festival and then, for Cliff Hocking, appearing in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth. Headed by Timothy (Edward VII) West and Derek (I Claudius) Jacob, the small company has several programmes to present, with each city likely to see at least two. One programme is called The Grand Tour and subtitled An Entertainment Also Entitled The Postillion Has Been Struck by Lightning, another about Lord Byron dubbed The Lord, The Lover And The Poet, one devoted to Shakespeare and another called Smith of Smiths.

It will be nice seeing Marion Edward back with the MTC after such a long time in Once A Catholic (which will transfer to Sydney). Also back with the company will be Christian Amor and Bruce Kerr and, making her MTC debut, Kim Deacon who was in the film The Getting of Wisdom and Livermore musical Ned Kelly... That play presented by Hoopla at the Playbox, The Next Greatest Pleasure, is the third by D M Scott. Understand his second, The Brass Band, is being staged by Nimrod early next year. Wonder what happened to his first.

What is the show the Australian general public would most like to see revived? White Horse Inn, if the talk back questions, when a leading impresario was recently interviewed on the ABC, are any guide... Understand the Adelaide Festival Centre Trust have acquired Australian rights to PS You Cat Is Dead!, the American play by James Kirkwood from his novel of the same name... Not all of the stars of Bedroom Farce apparently will be with the production when it tours to other capital cities.

Cleo Laine and John Dankworth are almost certain to be back next February and March. Cleo is a great admirer of Australian films, and I understand would not be adverse to appearing in one... Once upon a time in the late ’50s and early ’60s, General Motors—Holden used to present annually an award for something outstanding in the Australian theatre. What happened to the idea? Or is there nothing outstanding in the Australian theatre any more?

Lionel Bart’s latest musical, based on The Hunchback of Notre Dame and called Quasimodo, is likely to be staged in the West End early next year... See Anna Neagle plays Professor Higgins’ mother in a production of My Fair Lady, beginning an English tour in Leicester on November 9. Higgins will be portrayed by Tony Britton... And a recent production of Lady Windermere’s Fan had Moira Lister, Jessie Matthews and Wilfred Hyde White heading the cast.

My carrier pigeon from New Zealand brings me news that Auckland’s Mercury Theatre had a tremendous success in September with the Nimrod production of Christian Brothers with Peter Carroll, so much so that extra performances had to be staged... And on November 8 the Mercury is presenting Pippin, directed by Robert Alderton with lead being played by Rob Guest, who received New Zealand’s ‘Entertainer of the Year’ award.

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Theatre Australia November 1978
Dear Editors,

Are other writers meeting complete silence in efforts to trace playscripts submitted to the 1978 ANPC?

In my case receipt was acknowledged in Nov 77 and notice of non-selection received in early March 78. I am reluctant to be critical of the Playwrights' Conference but what is this paralysis that affects the recipients of a script? Why are they totally unable to slip it into the enclosed SAE and then into a letter box?

Conference aide, could theatre companies, through Theatre Australia, let aspiring writers know their attitude to unsolicited scripts? eg We don't want to know about them.

We will read and return them promptly with a helpful covering letter.

We pretend we want them but will return them unread, and then only when the requisite number of coffee rings and cigarette burns have been inflicted and the sae is sufficiently tattered.

NB On no account will they be returned until at least four letters of increasing fury have been received.

Yours sincerely,
Mary Smith
Ararat, Vic.

Dear Sir,

I was recently criticised by someone called Douglas Flintoff (Theatre Australia, June issue) for using subsidised companies to try out commercial plays. To set the record straight what I do is what London producers have done for years and what Australian producers should have done for years, which is to take plays from the subsidised theatres and tour them commercially. Its a very simple arrangement.

The subsidised theatres benefit in two ways: a) they get their productions aired in other states and b) they get a percentage of the gross with no risk which can amount to quite a substantial amount over a long tour, and helps offset their original production costs. I take a risk touring plays like Dusa Fish or Once A Catholic which may not seem all that commercially viable because I couldn't be bothered promoting rubbish like most of the other commercial entrepreneurs in this country so I don't need the extra headache of huge production costs.

Yours sincerely,
Wilton Morley
Parachute Productions
Melbourne, Vic.

Dear Sir,

I am getting tired of the complaints of offended commercial entrepreneurs, such as Parachute Productions and The Nimrod Theatre, who feel guilty about wanting to make money. (I would too, but let it pass...) If Mr Morley thinks he is "setting the record straight" by crying "risk!" as Mr Ils liled and "they do it in London!" (as Mr Ils liled) then he has missed my point utterly (as Mr Ils liled). I know they do it in London, and I know you are taking some risk, but neither of those is enough to justify the use of public money from one company to another, and look what happened to them.

The argument that the only way you can make subsidised theatre exciting is by making it compete in the market place is like the argument, heard recently, that health insurance should be earned according to your income. If commercial competition is the only way to make subsidised theatre interesting, then it's not working. And I'm sorry Mr Morley (who probably, as he claims, doesn't promote rubbish) will have to face the "extra headache" of paying for the productions he tours.

Yours sincerely,
Douglas Flintoff
Brooklyn, NSW

Dear Sir,

The September/October 1977 issue of Theatre Australia featured an article entitled "Musical Theatre in Australia" by Tony Sheldon.

I am anxious to obtain as many manuscripts of Australian musicals as I can lay my hands on and hope you can refer me to some-one from whom I can acquire information which will lead me to them, perhaps the author himself. I am especially interested in Australian material suitable for school productions.

Yours faithfully,
David M Brown
Narracoota High School, SA 5721

One of the first problems to confront Stuart Wagstaff in his new role as producer was a suitable venue to stage his play in Sydney. He had been sitting on the rights to the successful American comedy, Fathers Day, for some three and a half years. Finally the pieces started to fall together and a new production team was born when Stuart went into partnership with Louis Van Essen. "I wanted the Royal. It's a nice theatre, seats the right amount of people and is fairly prestigious. But it works out very expensive. Getting finance and private investors when you have no track record is hard enough, let alone paying out $10,000 a week for a theatre!"

So what happened then?

"Well we finally settled on the Mayfair, which was in a state of disrepair. Hoyts, who owned the building then, were marvellous; they did up the backstage area and the dressing rooms. It's like a real theatre again, which of course was some forty years ago."

Why did he choose an old film theatre in the first place?

"What other theatre in the centre of town is there? Her Majesty's -- too big and wrong end of town. The Seymour Centre -- you've got to set out to go and see the play, there's no passing trade. The Royal -- well as I've said, too expensive. Then of course, there's the old Elizabethan at Newtown and we can forget that! So the Mayfair it was and a whole new life for Stuart Wagstaff. The Sydney run was as successful as Wagstaff could have hoped and the play then moved to Melbourne in October for six weeks. After that it's off to Newcastle, Canberra and Brisbane. As I write negotiations are under way to also stage Fathers Day in Adelaide and Perth. To Stuart sometimes it is all like a dream.

"I am only a producer by default really, because no other management would touch Fathers Day. It doesn't read well. But I knew I was right," Stuart reflects.

"I wanted to do something like this twelve years ago," beamed Harry M Miller. Happy because twelve years and twelve million dollars later he has introduced to the theatre an efficient ticketing service. "The only unfortunate thing about it", he said "is that I have probably sent some poor little man who used to number and collate theatre tickets, out of business."

The idea behind Computicket is to make it easy for theatre goers to purchase a ticket to the show they wish to see and to aid producers by increasing attendance. Computicket opened in Sydney late in August this year and at last count there had been a "twenty per cent increase in theatre attendance."

The way it works is that by going to your nearest Computicket outlet (and there is soon to be one in all city suburbs) you can buy a ticket to the show you wish to see and have it in your hand as you leave. There are no blocks of seats allocated to each booking office which means it is first in first served for the best seats in the house and you do not have to race into the theatre box office and queue for this
Producers’ Day

Stuart Wagstaff talks to Barry Eaton

And what of the future? “Now we’re making money. If we make enough to repay our investors and make a small profit, then I can produce again. At the moment my future as a producer looks bright, if I can find the right play.”

How does he see himself as a producer?

“Too easy. I give in to actors,” he grins. “It’s very hard to switch from being an actor one day to becoming a producer the next.” Will he keep on performing himself? “I would like to think that I could gradually phase out from being a performer and phase into being a producer in the Kenn Brodziak style. But I don’t think I can, or deep down that I want to really. I enjoy pushing my face onto a stage or a television screen. I like it and I make a lot of money at it, which is attractive”.

However Stuart Wil would dearly love to have his own theatre to stage what he wants. Not necessarily his own productions all the time. He would keep in touch with all the theatrics in Australia, and if he found a good play, bring it into Sydney as happens in England. He would have a strict policy of comedy.

“Apart from the Music Hall, this doesn’t exist here”, he says. “If you go to a particular theatre in London, you know the sort of entertainment you are going to get. I would love to have the Comedy Theatre. If people go there they know there’s a farce, a comedy or something that’s entertainment. I don’t want to educate the public, improve their minds or put on the classics — I just want to entertain them”.

Wagstaff sees himself as joining a band of middle range producers, so important to this country. While the Brodziaks are always assured of a future, the smaller producer has to fight harder to survive. It’s all a matter of attracting and keeping the right investors, according to Wagstaff. Brodziak, apart from being clever and keeping his finger on the public pulse, has always looked after and cosseted investors; still the same ones he started with thirty odd years ago.

“That’s frankly what I’d like to do too”, he says very firmly. “If Fathers Day makes money, any shows I do from now on, the first offers will go to my present backers. They are my team, if they want to be, I don’t care if God comes in with a million dollars, I would give the little lady down the road who put in her thousand dollars, first offer.”

He plans to visit London to see two shows in particular, in which he is interested. But like a canny producer he is keeping his options and his eyes open. One of the shows is for Stuart himself to appear in — Donald Sinden is currently doing the part on the West End. (I can only assume that the play in question is the farce, Shut Your Eyes and Think of England, which opened at the Apollo about twelve months ago.) Apparently there have been many enquiries at the box office whether Stuart was appearing in Fathers Day, so he has decided to star in a future production.

“There is obviously an audience for me, which sounds slightly bumptious”, he says modestly, “but it’s also a fact”. But Stuart says he is doing too much work at the moment and if he were to undertake a play, it would restrict his activities. Does he need some outside influence to force this restraint? “Yes, it’s the old actor’s syndrome of accepting offers because you need the work. I find it impossible to say no to an offer of work — because it might be the last one!”

What are some of the benefits of being a producer?

One of the greatest joys was to conduct auditions so that the actors had some dignity and didn’t have to wait six weeks for an answer. I told them at the outset if they were not right, which I think they appreciated. Also the utter joy of ringing someone, telling them they were wanted and hearing the reaction at the other end.”

Harry Miller’s Computicket

Brad Keeling

privilege. For instance, last month in Sydney the forthcoming Bette Midler concert tour went on sale one Monday morning and three concerts were sold out by 1.20 that afternoon. Two more concerts have been sold out since then. There were no queues, no rush into the city and no hard feelings towards the promoters.

Computicket is the promoters’ dream. There is no need to stoop to the low tricks they had used in the past. For example, tickets going on sale at one outlet only and taking pride in the amount of publicity they were getting from fans queuing for days outside the box office, or cutting the number of concerts down because they could not be sure how many people would attend, or rather how many people would be bothered to queue for tickets.

At last these problems have been overcome and promoters can speculate as to the number of concerts they will need to put on without having to be so ill-mannered to their clients, their bread and butter. — the concert goes.

The Computicket system was developed in the USA by Computer Sciences Inc, and has been operating in South Africa since 1971. “I nearly brought the system here three years ago,” said Harry M, “but there were still some bugs I wanted ironed out. I wanted to bring to Australia a system that was highly sophisticated.” He has done just that.

The Harry M Miller organisation has moved into new premises in William Street in Sydney where there is an alternate power source in case of any sort of power failure; and, as Harry M says from his suite on the twenty second floor, “my computers have the best view in Sydney.” The staff of the Computicket set up is a highly polished and very professional team. People like Donald B McDonald,

Harry Miller
THEATRE AUSTRALIA NOVEMBER 1978

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Zygmunt Molik — Grotowski’s leading actor

Exclusive interview with Jeremy Ridgman

Zygmunt Molik, leading actor and founder member of Grotowski’s Theatre Laboratory in Poland, has been in Brisbane, conducting a series of workshops with acting students at Kelvin Grove College of Advanced Education. Such a visit, spread over two months and forming part of the students’ training is rare for a member of the Laboratory. I spoke with Molik in the presence of Bohdan Trukan, head of Kelvin Grove’s Acting Programme and began by asking him what was the purpose of his visit.

“I am trying to conduct work on voice and body in actor’s training. There is a kind of human search. A lot of people are like life seekers, in the same sense that a lot of people are job seekers. A lot of such people we can find in acting schools, because I know that everybody must have, at a certain time in his life, a kind of guidance; if not, he is like a feather on the wind, going to and fro, and not like a fir tree that can bend with the wind but stand firmly rooted in the soil. It is my saying sometimes that to be an actor, first of all we, people we can find in acting schools, are rooted simply in that soil. Whatever I do, I know that I am on my own, everything has to be mine. But I know that without these roots all would be quite different.”

How far had things developed then in the twenty years since Grotowski formed his Laboratory and the ten or so years since his ideas crystallised in Towards A Poor Theatre? “Entirely. Every year we have tried to find new responses to new questions that were put before us, and of course, before Grotowski himself.”

He agreed with Trukan’s suggestion that the Grotowski theatre had been through a number of “lives” in the past twenty years, each new theatre “having its roots in and being the extension of the theatre that was ending.”

Grotowski refers to two types of actor, the “courtesan” actor and the “holy” actor. How, I asked, did he interpret the “courtesan”?

Point taken, Molik is wary of theorising about theatre and puts more faith in practice and the act itself than in the attempt to explain, “there are others who explain things. Very often we do things that we don’t know in full; we might only practice and the act itself than in the understanding.”

Mary Magdalene?”

And what of “magic” in the theatre? Was there such a thing?

The magic comes or it doesn’t, and you must do simple things.”

kind of expectancy for something very peculiar in their life — that something can happen that is out of the ordinary. Only it is up to us to make the first step in this expectancy, in this peculiar waiting. So we are not waiting by doing nothing, but waiting by doing certain things, with the whole of our being. Even if we do the simplest physical exercises, they can not be done in a gymnastic way.”

Molik is sceptical about the notion of technique. It is something which “comes with practice — you don’t need real experiences for that. The first goal is to meet each other at all times, the second is to come out of this mediocrity, this everyday life which is so often uninteresting: everyone hates it, but he doesn’t know the way out, how to open new doors for himself, doors which have been closed so far. And to do all that, not in a very general, so as to speak, search, but to do all this on the tough ground of hard work on the voice and body; that is the point of our meetings.”

Would he see theatre then as a way of coming out of mediocrity, as a heightened form of living? “It is, sometimes; unfortunately, in recent days, not too often.”

I was interested in the connection nowadays between his work and the seminal ideas of Grotowski.

“Whatever I am doing” he told me, “whatever someone of our group is doing, it is all influenced very strongly by Grotowski and are rooted simply in that soil. Whatever I do, I know that I am on my own, everything has to be mine. But I know that without these roots all would be quite different.”

He’s a little bloke with unremarkable features. His hair has retreated to the point where you can’t even describe the effect as achieving a very high forehead. To compensate perhaps, he wears it long enough to touch his collar, falling straight and lank. He wears steel or silver-framed glasses, a flat, peaked Dutch cap has become his hallmark. His voice is soft, well-modulated but it can and does, dominate a stage. As an actor, he is decidedly low key. Think of Sir Henry Irving or the powerful oratory of Olivier and then go as far as you can in the opposite direction and you arrive at Bruce Myles.

He says that “I’ve being criticised often for the low key profile but I think it’s effective.” In 1973 Myles played the important role of Tom in John Powers rugged play The Last of the Knucklemen for the Poor Theatre Company. He played it superbly, a quiet, strong interpretation of the role in a very extrovert, hard-sowering, tough gang of men, working on a mining project in the north of Australia. He was the pivot of the play, the counterbalance to the rest of the brawling mob. He played it again in a return season the following year and was all set to go with it, with most of the original cast, to America for a Broadway season, when it all fell through. What happened? “I almost had my ticket, it was so close. The Australia Council had given $50,000 but we didn’t get the rest of the backing. The Americans wanted 5½ million.”

“I suppose”, I said, “You’re playing Tom again in the film that’s being made of it.” “No” said Myles. “Why not”? “I wasn’t asked” was the reply, accompanied by the benevolent, rather wistful smile that is part of his charm, and I gave up. I find this almost impossible to believe. I even find it hard to visualize anyone else in the role, but Bruce says that he’s never wa Playwright problems

Katharine Brisbane

Perth Playhouse director Stephen Barry has found himself in a hornet’s nest over the WA sesquicentennial celebrations planned for next year.

Being a forward-thinking man he sought and received his board’s approval earlier this year to commission works from the two best-known WA-bred playwrights: Alan Seymour (a London resident) and Dorothy Hewett (now living in Sydney). The news of Seymour’s commission was received without demur by local opinion-makers, despite the fact that he has lived abroad since 1960. But Ms Hewett’s was another matter.

The effect of the Hewett name upon the
Bruce Myles has been offered a film role and it is difficult to break into the rather tight circle of the film world. "Absurd", I say!

At the moment, he is in the directing side of the Melbourne Theatre Company. While John Sumner is overseas this year, Ray Lawler has been in charge of the company and Bruce and Mick Rodger are Assistant Directors, which hasn’t kept him off the stage. He played an excellent Richard III earlier in the year, one of his favourite roles. He has, however, found a good deal of satisfaction in directing, though "I prefer acting — if the right role comes along". He directed the very powerful play, Departmental, and when I talked to him was just beginning rehearsals as director of Bertolt Brecht’s Arturo Ui.

"It’s an interesting assignment for me because I played in it for almost three years. In Britain, I played it first in Glasgow in 1967. My son was born during that run. Then it went to the Edinburgh Festival, and later to the Saville Theatre in the West End in 1969." He says that his production won’t owe very much to the one in which he appeared, but it does give him the advantage of knowing it thoroughly familiar with the play. "Kim Carpenter’s designs are very simple, very effective, I hope, and take it right away from the British production". I ask him if he’s had any trouble casting it and if he has come from previous experience.

"When Ray Lawler and I were choosing the company for the year, we took each other’s plays into account and then cast them within that framework. I wanted Edwin Hodgeman for Arturo and Ray wanted him for The Playboy of the Western World. From Ms Hewett’s former husband and his wife to educators, librarians, booksellers, literary and theatre personalities, alleging libels and threatening to seek redress. There were at least 150 entries in the 150th Anniversary winner should have been announced on September 30 and it is not certain even now who the judging panel is — apart from Barry. Maybe the workshops will be a start in the right direction.

The public announcement last August of the two commissions brought on an attack of Artlook (the WA arts magazine) publication of the case that the public money so far invested in Dorothy Hewett had not produced the prototype Australian play; and claiming quite wrongly — that productions of her work at the Playhouse, the Opera House etc had been box office disasters. (Barry has cautiously done his homework and says their production of Bun Bons and Roses for Dolly did better business for the Playhouse than the plays before and after it).

The situation has been aggravated by the fact that Stephen Barry now finds himself drawn into two playwriting competitions with which he was not connected at the time of the commissions: the 150th Anniversary Play Competition and the Henrietta Drake Brockman award, donated by the Mount Na Sura real estate company with a first prize of $3,500. Both competitions have the same entry qualifications.

Widely held objections by prospective entrants are that both Hewett and Seymour are eligible to enter both competitions and indeed might have won; and that now Perth audiences will be asked to support the production of four new plays in 1979 — an unrealistic demand. And that Barry is virtually in charge of all these productions.

Barry says that the Playhouse has a primary obligation to Hewett and Seymour. Their commissions had come out of Playhouse funds (not $5,000 each, as The Australian had stated but nearer half that figure between them) and only the quality of the finished scripts, not any political pressure, would determine their public presentation next year. The drafts he had seen so far satisfied him that the Playhouse would get its money’s worth.

Lack of communication is what seems to be at the bottom of the current mess. The 150th Anniversary winner should have been announced on September 30 and it is not certain even now who the judging panel is — apart from Barry. Maybe the workshops will be a start in the right direction. And as for Ms Hewett: it is four years or so since Perth saw a play of hers — who knows, they might even like The Man from Mukinbudin, as it is presently called. Either way Barry remains determined and undismayed. A familiar stance by those in the line of fire aimed so often at Hewett and her work.
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THEATRE AUSTRALIA NOVEMBER 1978
looks through a literary lens at the making of

Dimboola
Play to Film

‘The Brutal Vulgarizing Director Versus the Creative Writer. Heigh ho!’

Tim Burstall

It has more than once been pithily observed that Hollywood is a graveyard of good writers, that cinema, because it is also an industry, tends too readily to assume all the characteristics of an intellectual snakepit or a board room of highly expedient and nervous retailers. Gore Vidal, beloved by all cineastes, defined his experience of screen writing as a form of indoor sport.

I must promptly record that my experiences in the long evolution of Dimboola screenplay were precisely the opposite — that is, up until the rejection of my third draft by the Australian Film Commission, when the creative ball-game and its tacit rules appeared suddenly to change, not to the extremes mentioned above but to a degree that could only cause some concern in a writer previously used to almost total control of his material. These changes seemed partly a response to a drastic practical situation, partly the growing manifestation of a relative lack of faith in my capacity to wholly write a comedy screenplay that would both work and attract funds (they are not necessarily the same), partly an investment of new faith in the director to achieve both these sometimes conflicting aims. I might add that the production company, Pram Factory Productions and its film company, was naturally acting within its formal rights in these matters, merely exercising proper judgement.

The importance of a film’s screenplay is self-evident, but it should always be seen as a variable factor in the film-making process — far more so, for instance, than in stage drama.’ — Keith Connolly

I commenced work on Dimboola the film in early 1976 with the execution of a synopsis and character litany for the AFC. On the basis of this, Pram Factory Productions received and administered a Script Development Grant to enable me to elaborate a screenplay.

The real labours started in May 1976. Right from the beginning I was determined not to base the screenplay simply and directly on the play, which I strongly felt relied too distinctly on the physically confined, social occasion, audience participation and purely theatrical rituals, for feasible filmic translation.

This draft was in retrospect the first long leg in a journey away from the play. I had to gradually and painstakingly get it out of my system. Initially I did this by expanding in time, by depicting events leading up to the reception and some immediately after it, by inventing a new society of characters and even eradicating some from the play (eg Mavis, the wife of Horrie, who is now a forlorn widower and intended as an ironic counterpoint to the central couple).

‘Unlike jam manufacturers or codgers who make a crust organising conventions for run-down paint salesmen in Albury you are on about intangible dreams’. —David Baker

In January of 1977 I returned to the desk, gnashed my creative teeth, and had a sceptical geek at it all. After some weeks of rumination I came up with the simple kernel idea of an outsider, an entirely fresh outsider, an Englishman, an anthropologist and Oxford don, who I contrived to be on his first visit here with the purpose of observing and recording in a tome the idiosyncratic customs and life of the local folk. His very first experience, substantial sustained experience of Australia, was to be a few days in my imaginary Dimboola.

Intrinsic to the conception, substance and life of Vivian Worcestershire-Jones was the notion that he would actively, in his Englishness, contrast comically and dramatically with the Australianness of the town, that his sometimes amused, sometimes stunned, sometimes appalled, responses to the individuals and events would render the community fresh and unique, imbue it even with a droll anthropological perspective.

To the forefront of my mind was an intense desire to avoid all the mundane naturalistic conventions of a Bell Bird interlarded and sprinkled with token comic events, gratuitous gags, and idiot one-liners. I wanted an integrated comic vision of an agrarian world where non-conformity and eccentricity surprisingly flourish in the firm context of conforming social forces.

Once inflamed by the personage of

John Duigan and Jack Hibberd. Photo: from the Warracknabeal Herald by Geoff Ward.
Worcestershire-Jones, his comic nature and dramatic function, the second draft flowed more felicitously. Characters assumed a more distinct life, the action tightened, there was a more coherent and rooted intermingling of comedy, gravity, and lunacy. Though still a little too long and at times dramatically maladroit or narratively creaky, Pram Factory Productions felt confident enough to call for directors.

The response was not overwhelming. It had been decided to appoint the director on formal and informal responses to the screenplay at this stage. Some directors seemed to feel this an insulting tactic, that he or she should have ineluctably been chosen as the right one. The rationale for this procedure was simply that recent Australian cinema seemed to lack a little in the comic department, that it was imperative to talk to a range of possible directors and respond to their ideas, or lack of them.

'The Producers and Directors Guild of Australia in Melbourne at one of its monthly meetings dinner meetings recently debated the question of content and its bias: human enrichment or commercial considerations? It was not much of a success'. — David Baker

We cracked two directors. John Duigan was presented with the golden gong, despite his utter lack of experience as a director or engenderer of comedy. He spoke keenly, persuasively, cogently, of approaches to filming the script, and won the day, even if his proclivities were finally to the side of sobriety and naturalism.

The resultant third draft was sent off to the AFC, not with a lot of confidence, as there was a general aura of disquiet about the fate of comedy at the AFC, a fear that they would reflexly slot it into the category of crude and distasteful 'ocker' comedy. Our fears were vindicated. Two of the 'assessments' were merely strident diatribes, full of snobbish fury and humourless platitudes, delivered by people patently incapable of or above handling comedy. It was felt that, if made, Dimboola would set back the Australian Film Juggernaut by 4-5 years, that it would besmirch Australia's image if it ever leaked overseas. The third assessment was favourable, felt that the script needed shortening and further cinematic refinement before being ready for production. One out of three is not enough, and the AFC rejected Dimboola as an uncommercial proposition.

'It believe directors should be committed to script and sufficiently committed to change it — if they think it is the right thing to do'.

— Tim Burstall

The views of the AFC were generally held to be preposterous. An air of gloom, temporary paralysis, and even panic, prevailed. The ramifications of the AFC decision on the subsequent fate of the script were substantial and fairly immediate, that decision, for good or for bad, in effect eroded and undermined my position as writer central to the project. Instead of resolutely following the advice of the third assessment, it was felt that something more radical, even additive, was required.

Crucial characters, characters who to me were essential to the drive, pith and amplitude of the film, now came under threat. The life of Worcestershire-Jones now hung in the exigent balance. Should he be expunged or amalgamated with Shovel (streetsweeper, band conductor and composer, local historian, loner and cyclist, intended as a weird soulmate and Australian character-contrast to the Englishman) who could be returning to Dimboola after some ten years absence or even a filmmaker there for the weekend? Mutton and Bayonet (possible father of the groom), two ribald vagabonds and parasites, as well as DDT Delaney (uncle of the bride and dipsomaniacal crop-duster) also came under threat. The purpose of these three characters, who maniacally zoom in on Dimboolo over the first few days, was to
be a centripetal dynamic force and to make Dimboola the centre of a comic cosmos. The arguments against this were that their mad gleeful journeys on motorbike and in plane didn’t conform with naturalistic tenets and that punctuating the film with shots of them was uncinematic.

This period of discussion and negotiation continued for a while, some sub-plots and counterpoints became weakened or token, while some were fruitfully dissected out and strengthened. These strengthenings, while important in themselves, did however go hand in hand with curtailments and rationalizations of the original broad comic world of the film.

The “Auteur” argument I used in the Symposium discussion (ie that the director is responsible for everything that goes into a film including the script) is I’m sure a red rag to most writers.

— Tim Burstall

Somewhere around this time Greater Union offered substantial support for the project, based on the third draft I believe and representations by the producer John Weiley. Also around this time the director, unopposed by the producer-complex, began to re-write, re-structure, re-scissor and add new written material of his own to the screenplay. These versions, not mere lauderingings angled towards the acquisitive impotence, I replied with versions of my own, in an absurd game of ping-pong in which one of the bats was loaded.

In a final script session, of my own arrangement, I argued successfully for the reinstatement of some things that had been lost, won compromises on others, and bargained away others again. The cinema as art, trade, and power. Not the sort of business for the sensitive artiste, particularly if the trading balances and the majority of fiscal corporations are against you.

I had always intended to be actively, positively, involved up until the shooting script stage, then leave the director, editor etc to their own creative filmic bent and devices. I was fortunate enough, however, in the Dimboola project to be allowed to take a part in casting and to attend as much of the ‘shoot’ as I wished. Needless to say, the general reluctance of the film industry to encourage the attendance of a writer at filming is one of the more philistine and precious bigotries operating in the art. How else can the writer acquire a working knowledge of those unique cinematic qualities which are so often used in argument against him? Unless of course there is a lot of defensive and territorial bulldust thrown around. Antonioni opined that you really only needed to know two or three thumb-rules to make a film. I just know that someone is going to say that his films show it.

The film was shot in a remarkable five weeks, with the invaluable and generous drive of an enthusiastic film and production, crew with the uninitiating open support of the Dimboola townspeople, in the face of unremitting grey days and a wet winter. The responses to open sessions of rushes were generally exhilarating, lab reports consistently confirmed fine quality.

At the time of writing (early September) the editor, director and producer ensemble are daily huddled over the Moviola, shortening I believe, then snipping and glueing in a gay frenzy, such is the abundance and range of material. Positive reports leak out. Let’s hope they are vindicated on the magically flickering screen, for the process, especially in the last half, was a bewildering, contradictory and often painful one for this particular writer.

‘To lose a scene in your script, I know, Jack, is like losing a limb or a child.... I have never yet known a writer yet who has been happy in his role in a film....’

— John Weiley

‘Today I’d be tougher. If a film were to be made of something of mine I’d be bor­­ingly and maddeningly underfoot pro­­tecting the home product so that it wasn’t deformed, decorated, blown up, pruned. “interpreted” by some mechanic and his gang of mechanics’.

— Hal Porter

‘It is easy to achieve proficiency and professionalism at a technical level — we’ve done that for years in our television commercials — but to make significant films you need content.’

— Philip Adams quoted by Keith Connolly

NB All the quotes in this article, except those of John Weiley, are taken from ‘Tension on the Reel’, Overland No.71.

Max Gillies (Vivian W.J.) taken attack by Natalie Bate (Maureen — the bride) in Dimboola. A Pram Factory Pictures Production. Photo: Ponch Hawkes.
Ray Stanley appreciates one of Australia's favourite stars

After six years away from the Australian stage, Googie Withers will be returning to the scene of former triumphs when, on November 29, she opens at Melbourne's Comedy in William Douglas Home's The Kingfisher. The season is scheduled to last eight weeks, followed by a similar period in Sydney.

Miss Withers — or Googie as she automatically is referred to by everyone — will find a very different theatre atmosphere to those days in the early and mid-sixties when she was virtually First Lady of the Australian stage. Commercial theatre has very nearly disappeared, and with it much of the kind of starry glamour and sparkle Googie provided.

Many of those who packed performances of a Googie Withers play obviously will want to revive old memories. Younger theatre-goers, to whom she is a legendary name, known by repute but not yet glimpsed, will want to see how the reality measures up to the legend.

The pity is that Googie will not be appearing in a classical role. It is a regret she herself must secretly be sharing, that is unless she has changed her mind from that day early in 1961 when I first interviewed her.

"In a way I see the theatre in Australia as a challenge", she told me. "I've no desire to appear continuously in one light comedy after another. "I'd like to play Hedda Gabler, portray some Shavian women, do Shakespeare and Chekhov — that virtually are unknown to the general Australian public".

We were in her dressing room at the Comedy, where she was resting after a matinee of Clifford Odets' Winter Journey. She had been much acclaimed for playing the role in London with Michael Redgrave and Sam Wanamaker, and was re-creating her performance for Australia. Brian James and the late Clement McCallin were her leading men; Noel Ferrier and Barry Creyton were also in the cast.

At the same time Googie was in rehearsal for Constance in Maugham's The Constant Wife. Originally performed in the 1920s, it was being back-dated to the Edwardian era to allow her to look in the 1920s, it was being back-dated to the Edwardian era to allow her to look

Googie's first introduction to Australia and New Zealand came in 1955-56 when the McCallums toured in The Deep Blue Sea and the Alan Melville comedy Simon and Laura. They endeared themselves to Australian audiences and the warmth of their reception probably influenced the decision to permanently settle and work in the country in 1958.

Before this, apart from the Stratford season, Googie appeared with McCallum in London in 1957 in Janus, an American comedy (Jessie Matthews was performing it in Australia) which, unworthy of the couple's talents, did not last long.

Soon after arrival in Australia they played together in Lesley Storm's light-weight comedy Roar Like a Dove, in which McCallum had appeared for nearly a year in London and now directed for Australia. It attracted capacity audiences.

During that 1961 interview Googie talked earnestly of her desire to assist in pioneering better theatre in Australia. She was aware it would be an uphill struggle. There was no national company and JCWs received no subsidies to offset any losses it might incur in staging the classics, which happened with commercial managements in London. JCWs did in fact establish its own touring Shakespeare company, inaugurated by McCallum, but apparently public response did not warrant its continuation.

With the Odets and Maugham plays, both directed by John Sumner, audiences saw a very dramatic Withers as well as an

Googie Withers in Simon and Laura and The Deep Blue Sea 1954

As Gertrude in the RSC's Hamlet. Stratford 1959

Withers & McCallum in Roar Like a Dove in 1960

Googie in The Complainant Lover with Michael Redgrave in New York

Googie & husband in Simon and Laura and The Deep Blue Sea — 1954

J C Williamson Theatres Limited, at that time the greatest theatrical empire in the Southern Hemisphere. There seemed little doubt that ultimately he would become the biggest figure in commercial theatre — and in those days commercial theatre meant professional theatre as opposed to amateur. Except for the UTRC (now MTC), there was nothing half way.

To some it looked as if Googie was making a big sacrifice in transferring her career to the other side of the world. Only
Expert performer of light comedy, two very different but equally polished and stylish performances.

Then came a break whilst Googie made her Broadway debut in Graham Greene's *The Complaisant Lover*, with Redgrave and Richard Johnson.

Back in Australia Googie's next portrayal, towards the end of 1962, was of a sloppy, good-natured, easy-going, middle-aged housewife in Ted Willis's *Woman in a Dressing Gown*. Originally a TV play, then film, Willis had revised it for the stage and, after its world premiere in Melbourne, the intention was for Googie to do it in London. It was a clever performance she gave, overcoming the tinitness of plot and lines, infusing humour into the part and even achieving moments of pathos. Audiences loved her in this mediocre play and it enjoyed a successful tour.

Instead of repeating *Woman in a Dressing Gown* in London, however, Google played Queen Marguerite in *Exit the King* at the 1963 Edinburgh Festival, transferring to London's Royal Court. Soon after her return to Australia, she told me it was her intention to appear in a play in New York or London every two years.

With McCallum now joint managing director, the intractable Peter Bridge (who had presented *The McAnums* in their last play together in Australia, *Relatively Speaking*) appeared in the first Ayckbourn play seen here, *Getting Married*, saw Googie playing Mrs George along with such luminaries as Moira Lister, Ian Carmichael, Margaret Rawlings and Alec Clunes.

Back in Australia the following year she played in Samuel Taylor's comedy *Beekman Place*, which personally I loathed, geared as it was to matinee-type audiences. Googie, as Lady Piper, walked through the play with her usual aplomb, head and shoulders above the rest of the cast.

In March 1966 she was seen in her one and only Australian play, *Desire of the Moth* by James Brazil. Highly melodramatic, and set on the homestead of a NSW sheep farm, it had Googie, as the wealthy property owner, having twenty one years before married a farm hand (Ed Devereaux) to give a name to the baby she was pregnant with by someone else. A 'Virginia Woolf' relationship had sprung up between the couple and, when her former lover — an alcoholic — appeared on the scene, she sent him to his death, afterwards lapsing into insanity.

Opening cold, the play required considerably more work done on it and needed all of Googie's skill to make it seem plausible; even then it sometimes was greeted with laughter in the wrong places. A big flop at the box office, stories afterwards circulated that Googie and the play were the cause of the disagreements between McCallum (by then sole managing director) and the JCW board, which led to his eventual resignation.

A 1967 all-star West End production of Shaw's *Getting Married* saw Googie playing Mrs George along with such luminaries as Moira Lister, Ian Carmichael, Margaret Rawlings and Alec Clunes.

Back in Australia the following year (playing for a management other than JCWs, Phillip Productions), she and McCallum appeared in the first Ayckbourne play seen here, *Relatively Speaking*, with Peter Adams and Rowena Wallace. It presented some first class acting.

Talking to McCallum in Sydney after the opening night, he informed me of his plans, in association with London producer Peter Bridge (who had presented *Getting Married*), to assemble a company with himself, Googie and Australian actors from England and Australia, and mount a
production of Wilde's *An Ideal Husband*. It would tour Canada, then Australia, followed, he hoped, by formation of a national company with government subsidies. The scheme never materialised.

Towards the end of 1969, Googie had one of her biggest Australian stage successes for several years: Neil Simon's *Plaza Suite*. In different acts she played a middle-aged woman trying to hold together her marriage, a flightly young blonde willingly being seduced by a former boy friend, now a successful Hollywood producer, and finally the mother of a reluctant bride. Never before had she displayed such versatility in one evening and it was all great fun. Her leading man, brought from America, was Alfred Sandor (now in TV's *The Young Doctors*).

Googie's sole Australian film, *Nickel Queen* (and her first movie for sixteen years), came in 1971. It did not call for her to exert much acting prowess, but merely displayed an extension of her off-screen self; she was photographed looking most attractive in a succession of glamorous outfits. The picture, directed by McCallum, with Ed Devereaux, Alfred Sandor, John Laws, Ross Thompson, Tom Oliver and daughter Joanna in the cast, was a disappointment.

Googie's last Australian performances, in 1972, were with the Melbourne Theatre Company: Madame Ranevsky in *The Cherry Orchard* and Mrs Cheveley in *An Ideal Husband*. Both productions were highly praised by most critics, but I was dissatisfied.

On the first night direction of the Chekhov play seemed to me most tentative and, instead of ensemble playing, appeared geared to Googie as its Star; later, in the TV version, she and the production seemed a great deal better. The Wilde play disappointed even more. Googie (on opening night at least), seemed to have been misdirected and to have prior awareness when delivering an epigrammatic line. Despite further attempts to make her the Big Star, she was greatly overshadowed by other members of the company. I rate Mrs Cheveley right at the very bottom of all the performances I have seen her give.

Regrettfully I did not see her Lady Kitty in Maugham's *The Circle*, which she played first at the Chichester Festival in 1976, then for a year at London's Haymarket. From all that I have read and heard, it must really have been something.

We are now booking for 1979.

**Note:** Two capacities available. Standard 1066 seats. Divider curtain and moveable proscenium converts theatre to 382 "intimate" capacity.
How many theatres can claim to have staged a play down a mine with the miners' head lamps switched on to provide the footlights?

In 1952, to the advantage of American oil corporations, the Menzies Government closed down the shale mine oil refinery at Glen Davis in NSW. The miners reacted with a stay-in strike that had been in progress for two weeks when the Miners Federation invited Sydney New Theatre to perform their current play *The Candy Store* below ground.

The experience at Glen Davis was one of the highlights of the theatre's last years at the Castlereagh Street address. The major event however was the first season, commencing in 1953, of *Reedy River*, Dick Diamond's Australian folk musical play that had had its world premiere at Melbourne New Theatre not long before. Its plot revolving around a shearers' strike of the 1890s, *Reedy River* introduced to Australian audiences a number of traditional folk songs and some new ones in the folk tradition with music and lyrics by several contemporary composers and writers — for example the theme music for the *Reedy River*, song by Chris Kempster to words by Henry Lawson and "The Ballad of 1891" with words by Helen Palmer and music by Doreen Jacobs.

There is little doubt that *Reedy River* featuring the Bushwhackers Band and popularising songs like "Click Go The Shears", "My Old Black Billy", "Eumerella Shore", "Widgiegowere Joe" and many more gave the then infant Australian folk song revival its most important impetus. An LP record of songs from the show sung by members of the Sydney production was issued by Diaphon and soon became a hit when played over a number of radio stations.

New Theatre groups in Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth and later Newcastle, all mounted their own *Reedy River* productions which like Sydney and Melbourne, they performed not only in their normal venues but in numerous city, suburban and country halls. It is estimated that some 450,000 people saw these New Theatre performances of *Reedy River* and that 350,000 of these saw Sydney New Theatre productions. Publication of the play by Heinemann's has introduced it into schools, where it is often put on by pupils.

When the Masonic Club purchased the building, Sydney New Theatre was compelled to leave 167 Castlereagh Street and *Reedy River* completed its successful season at the Waterside Workers Federation hall in Sussex Street, where for the next nine years thirty-three New Theatre productions were staged "under the auspices of the Waterside Workers Federation."

*The Sydney Morning Herald* critic's praise in 1948 of *The Star Turns Red* by Sean O'Casey was soon followed by their refusal for a number of years to accept a paid advertisement. Today's New Theatre Secretary, Miriam Hampson, recalls that a cheque sent as usual with the advertisement two weeks in advance, was returned. When the theatre queried this and made efforts from time to time to submit an ad across the counter, the explanation given was "lack of space". It was only after a personal discussion took place in the early 1960s between a *Herald* top executive and the late Jim Healy, Secretary of the Waterside Workers Federation, that advertisements and reviews of New Theatre shows returned to the columns of that paper. (The story goes that Jim Healy mentioned the fact that wharfies load and unload newspaper.)

Advertisements did appear in the less influential classified section of the *Daily Telegraph*, but the scarcity of reviews of New Theatre productions in the Sydney dailies between 1948 and 1960 removed the name of this group from general public notice. Only *Tribune*, some trade union papers, an occasional mention on the radio — plus all important "word of mouth" — informed theatre goers during those twelve years that twenty-one new Australian works were presented as well as plays of world renown like *Six Men of Dorset*, *The Alchemist*, *Juno and the Paycock*, *An Inspector Calls*, *The Young Lady in White*, and the *Man*, *The Crucible*, *The Biggest Thief in Town*, *Nekrassov*, *The Quare Fellow*, and many others. And in those days few of these plays could be seen elsewhere in Sydney.

These publicity difficulties were symptomatic of the 1950s. In America *McCarthyism* reached its peak with the execution in 1953 of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg on charges of espionage still considered by many to have been fabricated. The theatre and film world had suffered the gaoling of the "Hollywood Ten". Comparatively minor reverberations in Australia included the 1954 Petrov and Fehrenbach affair, considered by many to have been fabricated. In America *McCarthyism* reached its peak with the execution in 1953 of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg on charges of espionage still considered by many to have been fabricated. The theatre and film world had suffered the gaoling of the "Hollywood Ten". Comparatively minor reverberations in Australia included the 1954 Petrov and Fehrenbach affair, considered by many to have been fabricated. In America *McCarthyism* reached its peak with the execution in 1953 of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg on charges of espionage still considered by many to have been fabricated. The theatre and film world had suffered the gaoling of the "Hollywood Ten". Comparatively minor reverberations in Australia included the 1954 Petrov and Fehrenbach affair, considered by many to have been fabricated...

New Theatre expected Establishment disfavour, but some of it was surprising — for example the last minute cancellation in Sydney in 1954 of a western suburbs town hall that had been hired for a performance of *Reedy River*. In the same year an attempt was made to prevent the showing of *Better A Millstone* (a play about juvenile delinquency) in a church hall in North Sydney.

But 1962 saw a definite upswing in New Theatre's fortunes. That year John Barnard's production of *The Long and the Short and the Tall* by Willis Hall won first prize in the NSW Arts Council Drama Festival. The theatre repeated this triumph the following year with their entry of *Our Dear Relations*, my satire on the commercialism of Mother's Day with a cast including Martin Harris, Mark...
One performance of Reedy River in the Rose at Newcastle by the Players in 1957 led to the formation that year of Newcastle New Theatre. During its twenty-one years this branch has staged some forty-five major productions and holds regular workshops, play readings, poetry readings and film nights. Between 1962 and 1972 their home was "The Dungeon" — once a beer cellar in the basement of the Trades Hall. Performing sometimes there and sometimes at the University, and in recent years at the TPI Association's Scott Street rooms where they are tenants, their productions have mainly been the same as those performed by other New Theatres. Their most recent production is the world premiere of the rock opera, Everyman and His Dog by one of their own members, Gary Roberts.

An organisation known as New Theatre Australia was formed in the early 1950s to link theatres in a national body that held conferences every Easter to establish policy, exchange experience and plays, organise participation in the international peace movement and to plan New Theatre national drama schools. These six-day schools were held each Christmas for ten years in a different city between the branches. Among leading theatre personalities invited to address the schools were Robin Lovejoy, Ron Haddrick, John Bell, Zoe Caldwell and Brian Syron. As New Theatres in Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth disbanded leaving only Sydney, Melbourne and Newcastle, the need for a national body became less important and it ceased to function. But mutual assistance between the remaining groups continues in the form of play exchange, visits to each other's productions and the provision of acting classes.

In 1963 the Sydney theatre moved to St Peter's Lane near Kings Cross where members and friends had converted a former indoor car park to an intimate theatre. The ten years spent there were marked by many successes and some good press coverage of The Waltz, The World of Sholem Aleichem, Andorra, Mother Courage and many other productions including the six months season in 1967 of On Stage Vietnam. This ensemble effort by writers, director, choreographers and actors was almost certainly the first of the Australian documentary musicals. On Stage Vietnam in 1967, and Going, Going, Gone in 1968, used music, drama, narrative and vaudeville treatment of politicians to introduce a new type of format that was soon to be seen at the Jane Street, the Nimrod and the APG.

But the St Peter's Lane event causing the biggest public sensation was John Tasker's production in 1968 of Jean Blue and Lorna Leslie. Those who have both directed and acted include Jerold Wells, Jerome Levy, Edmund Allison, John Armstrong, Robert Bruning, Marie Armstrong, John Hargreaves, while guest directors and set designers who have helped to create standards for the New and consequently for the wider Australian theatre scene are Lloyd Lambie, John Tasker, Margaret Barr, Stanley Walsh, Brian Symon, William Constable, Elaine Braams, John Main, Central Flower, Roderick Shaw and John Cervinka.

But despite present publicity problems Sydney New Theatre last year reiterated its determination "To continue its role as a socially relevant and committed theatre" — a policy that is harder to carry out today than in the past because of the difficulty of obtaining first Australian rights for the sort of plays that not many years ago New Theatre would have performed. But although this provides new problems, it also brings new challenges; at the same time it is a source of satisfaction to New Theatre members that the pioneering role of their theatre has helped to open the way for a wider general acceptance of socially relevant drama.

*FOOTNOTE
All three parts of American Hurrah satirise the worst aspect of the American way of life. In the third segment two big dolls scrawl obscenities on the walls of a motel room.

All photographs in this article have been supplied by the New Theatre, kindly loaned by Edmund Allison.

*FOOTNOTE
All three parts of American Hurrah satirise the worst aspect of the American way of life. In the third segment two big dolls scrawl obscenities on the walls of a motel room.
Definitely requires more re-writing

GONE WITH HARDY

RAYMOND STANLEY


According to a programme note for Gone With Hardy "although the initial idea for the play was generated by an actual relationship in the early life of Stan Laurel, David Allen has imaginatively supplied all the details and this is not a biographical work".

It would be interesting to know what facts the author had to work upon originally, and perhaps indication of what researches he made. Despite the programme note, it is likely to create false facts about Laurel, which ultimately many will believe to be true. It is almost like trading in on a person's name. If a play is really good, then there is no reason why it should not rest on its own merits with a fictitious character.

Stanley Jefferson is presented as a north country comedian working on the same vaudeville bill as Scottish comic Jock McTavish and Australian singer Kate Laurel. Kate and Stan become a double act with he writing the gags, devising the act and directing; soon she becomes his de facto wife and he takes the name 'Laurel' from her. She apparently has a husband back in Australia, which McTavish discovers and blackmails her into giving him favours on threat of telling Stan.

Stan eventually ends up in Hollywood where the possessive Kate proves a liability. McTavish, now a Hollywood producer, persuades her to return to Australia to obtain a divorce, with Stan indicating he will then marry her. In the meantime he teams up with Oliver Hardy. Soon after Kate's departure he marries the first of his five wives and she attempts a comeback in her native land, fully realising Stan has 'gone with Hardy'.

The piece is structured to afford opportunities for the three to perform variety numbers solo, in duets or trios. For the most part it holds together and, with more work, could become quite a durable vehicle and achieve success wherever the great film comic's name is known. It most definitely requires more re-writing though. One suspects that, since the play's director is playwright Ray Lawler, he presumably will have knocked it into better shape than its original script.

The problems of opening a play 'cold' here are of course as well known as the fact Broadway hits frequently have the advantage of a 'doctoring' try-out tour. I suggest the MTC could at least have 'work-shopped' this one; better still, it could have been given a Victorian country try-out. Whilst it is admitted dramatic licence has been taken with Laurel's life, certain misfacts come out in production which careful checking could have eliminated. There is really no excuse and director Lawler must share the blame.

For instance: Ella Shields' "Burlington Bertie" seems to have been confused with that of Vesta Tilley, "The Road to Gundagai" was certainly not around in 1910 and Kate is far more likely to have performed at the Tivoli in Melbourne rather than the King's. In 1912 Charlie Chaplin would not be known for his bowler, twirling cane and facial contor-
A champagne and caviar evening

THE MASTERS

RAYMOND STANLEY

The Masters, combining some of the works of Noel Coward and Ivor Novello, compiled and written by June Bronhill, Dennis Olsen, Brian Crossley and Rex Wrennall. Opened 21 September 1978. Comedy Theatre, Melbourne, Vic. Produced by Geoffrey Bell and Rex Wrennall; Director, Brian Crossley; Lighting and design, Rex Wrennall; With June Bronhill and Dennis Olsen. Piano accompaniment, Freddie Phillips. (Professional)

It is becoming quite fashionable to stage pot pourri attractions devoted to the works of particular composers such as Noel Coward, Cole Porter, Rodgers and Hart, Stephen Sondheim and (in Melbourne) George Gershwin. Such programmes can contain a lot of familiar and not so familiar songs of the composers, plus biographical details and anecdotes about them. The field is wide and the appeal enormous.

As far as I know there has not been such a programme featuring Ivor Novello, although at one time one was rumoured for the Mermaid (to be directed by Robert Helpmann I believe). Then a few months ago in Hull a new musical was staged entitled Novello, tracing his life and containing sixteen of his songs: but it does not appear to have been successful.

It is therefore a surprise one should originate in Australia, where only Novello's The Dancing Years has ever been professionally staged. But then perhaps not so surprising considering one of the originators of the idea — June Bronhill — has starred in several English productions of Novello's musicals.

She is who, along with Dennis Olsen, presents Novello as part of a double composer programme entitled The Masters. Maybe they had doubts about the world war one — the war Stan was in, the one time that he and Ivor Novello worked together. But in the end they decided not to include any wartime numbers.

Both acted on stage and in films — frequently in their own work — contributed material for revues, and were the only British composers to provide full scale musicals in the '30's which had mini-operettas encased. Novello was noted for his sentimental music, although Coward had the edge on Novello in this genre. But the two are not so far apart as one might think.

Coward had the edge on Novello in that he also sang in some of his shows and revues, and always wrote his own lyrics. Except to send himself up (as in Careless Rapture), Novello rarely sang, and Perchance to Dream was the only musical he also contributed the lyrics; Alan Melville supplied them for Gay's The Word. Christopher Hassall for all his other big musicals.

Apart from interpersed medleys of both at the beginning and end of the show, the first half is devoted to Novello, the second to Coward. There are two grand pianos on stage (it has an elegant, tasteful setting), with Freddie Phillips at the keyboard of one most of the time, with just occasionally — when enacting a scene with Bronhill — Olsen having opportunities to display another of his many talents: pianist. The two talk, sing, dance, relate anecdotes and act out scenes, all beautifully entertained without any Anderson-ian over-done 'business'.

Probably because less is known about Novello here, a general run-down of his career is given, broken up by numbers from his musicals. There are the inevitable songs like "Keep the Home Fires Burning", "We'll Gather Lilacs" and a full scene (plus songs) from The Dancing Years. There is also an over-long montage of numbers from Gay's The Word, with some rather over-done 'business' intended to be funny, which could be deleted with profit. (Cis Courtneidge's show-stopper "Vitality" says because the original featured names of past English greatests and — rightfully — the devisers have substituted these for people like Evie Hayes, Queenie Paul and Gloria Dawn. But the impact is lost.

Highlights in the first half are Bronhill singing "Some Day My Heart Will Awake", The Dancing Years' numbers and an off-beat "Shanty Town" (originally sung by Elizabeth Welch), with Olsen scoring in "And Her Mother Came Too".

The Coward tribute manages to avoid the trite material already featured in Cowardy Custard and Oh Coward!, but hardly any of it is 'unknown'. There are several speaking oddments familiar through the recordings made by Coward with the late Margaret Leighton. Also there is a less familiar scene from Private Lives, exquisitely performed, but perhaps holding up the action. However, it does serve to highlight the fact Bronhill possesses quite a flair for light comedy and some managements might take note she can do more than sing.

Outstanding are Bronhill's rendition of "Melanie's Aria" in French from Conversation Piece. Her almost music hall interpretation of "Chase Me Charlie", the duo's music lesson from Bitter Sweet and a very funny cockney rendition by the two of "That Is The End Of The News" (written for Joyce Grenfell and the only number she performed on stage not written by herself), which gained most applause on the second night.

For me the evening produces three rarities, each perfectly executed by Olsen: "I'll Make Myself at Home, Dear" written by Novello for the 1916 musical Theodore & Co, Coward's "She Was A Good Girl Then" and "Auntie Jessie".

All in all it is a champagne and caviar evening in the theatre, a delightful experience seldom encountered in these message-ridden and obscurity-minded seventies. Highest marks to all concerned.

It is to be hoped a double LP souvenir of the evening will be issued, plus perhaps a couple of TV programmes made.
Black's Ballet

Included in the range of ballet books from A & C Black are:

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A competition for children's plays.

We are seeking scripts dealing with contemporary Australian subject matter portraying everyday life. The plays should be suitable for the 10-14 age group.

Scripts are welcomed from professional and non-professional writers, young and old, individuals and groups.

A first prize of $1,000 is offered with a second prize of $500.

Cast size should be limited to five or six. Preference will be given to full-length scripts (about 90 minutes).

It is expected that the winning entry will receive a fully professional production, and the Victorian Film Corporation will consider the suitability of adapting the winning script to the film or television media. It is hoped that the winning script will be of a sufficient standard to be considered for publication.

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The judges are drawn from people active in children's theatre - Helmut Bakaitis, Artistic Director, St. Martin's Centre, Peter Tulloch, Artistic Director, Children's Arena Theatre and Don Mackay, Director, Victorian Arts Council.

The competition is jointly funded by the Goethe Institute and the Victorian Ministry for the Arts, and is being administered by the Victorian Arts Council.

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What we see when we look at Smith's group from the point of view of 'real' revolutionaries is a bunch of fellow travellers. These are people who are not involved in any political process, revolutionary or otherwise, who use the ultimate argument of degenerate hippies to support the claim that is intolerable and their own thing, and who can fairly be regarded as armchair revolutionaries. They talk but do not act. They are dedicated followers of fashion. They change their theatrical style like other people change their socks.

The text of Motherwell's play deals with Russian terrorists in 1905 whose objective is to prove themselves against a pure ideal: if they kill an autocrat they die themselves. Smith's group are well aware of Smith and his group's admiration for terrorism, and although it's not turned on its head to treat them sympathetically. And thus become rubbish.

Phil Motherwell's play has to be regarded as a serious attempt to view the daily lives and paranoia of a tiny terrorist group, and as such deserves serious consideration. What is (apparently) equally serious is Linzee Smith's attempt in his production to twist the play into something it is not. Smith appears to accept terrorism, and although he is not really germane to this production, his activities and pronouncements indicate that he quite likes the emotional energy of terrorists and punks. Indeed this intentionally punk production is a good chance to see the theatrical poverty of that species of religion; thus martyrdom is a legitimate form of interpersonal relationship. The text is based in books based on diaries of the police and the double agent of the group. He is a most interesting person, one who managed to survive emotionally intact and to tell his comrades to the cops and cops to the comrades. Motherwell's play about loyalty and revolution, idealism and death is potentially very interesting.

However Smith's production with its punk intentionalism, and its non acting, and its homage to the detective story (cops and robbers, Bogart and Marlowe) lets it down badly. Smith in his search for immediacy and pace has only shown a dependence on outdated fashion, a voyeuristic belief in white working class zombies: punk. It used to be called fascism.

What is great though is Peter Corrigan's design. His superb ramped, red constructivist set shows that he, at least, has read and understood the context of a coterie audience who is interested in audience's response to the play. The production itself is well aware of Smith and his group's admiration of terrorism. Thus a play which is critical of the romantic/idealist motives of these 1905 Russian anarchists is turned on its head to treat them sympathetically. And thus become rubbish.

Smith's production lets it down badly.
Comin of Flinders, *The Emigrants* is chiefly remarkable for its homely folk-siness and sentimentality. Essentially it presents a series of native songs and letters, supported by scenelets, announcements, signs, and narrative flicks. This is a respectable form of theatre, but disappointing when the matter and its presentation borders on the earnest, the humourless and melodramatic.

*The Emigrants*, with its songs, its story, with its incipient themes of uprootedness, alienation and exploitation, screams out for a Brechtian or tough, ironic, highly theatrical treatment, otherwise all the perils are those of an abject Vale of Tears. The theatre should theatrically, dramatically, earn its tears, not merely present them in a flask of Chianti. On the other hand, to quote BB, a theatre that can’t be laughed in is a theatre that should be laughed at.

The music, traditional Italian songs and dances, arranged by Dominic Muldowney (Musical Director of the National Theatre, London) was incorrigibly supportive and expressively naive — never commenting or making distinct statements of its own. The musicians, led by Michael Morley (who has written a book on Brecht), were coyly and conventionally hidden from view.

The actors were more themselves or mere singers rather than actor-singers and creators of characters. So in a Brechtian or comic sense they had nothing to break out of, comment on, or transform into. With a paucity of character or stereotype, naturally the drama lacked focus and comprehensible development, not to mention theatricality. The most inventive part of the evening was the use of props, materials, and elements of costume, as organically transforming expressive devices, a procedure that has been successfully exploited by some of the best new theatre over the last ten years.

The only recent event I can compare *The Emigrants* with, because of its central song-structure, is the APG’s *Back to Bourke St*. Though without the potentially substantial themes of the Australian Stage Company show, *Back to Bourke St* was much superior in its wit, edge and effervescence, its commenting coloration and buoyant theatricality.

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Inordinately, unreasonably funny

**BEDROOM FARCE**

GREG CURRAN


Ernest, Ron Haddrick; Delia, Ruth Cracknell; Nick, Barry Creyton; Jan, Carmen Duncan; Malcolm, Peter Rowley; Kate, Jackie Weaver; Trevor, Shane Porteous; Susannah, Kate Fitzpatrick.

(Professional)

Shane Porteous was always an earnest sort of actor, keen it seemed, to impress himself upon a part, or the consciousness of an audience. In a review I wrote in 1971 about him as Thoreau, I noted that, “as the part incorporates much gangling and bright eyed cheerfulness, it’s small wonder he’s something less than riveting”.

In the British import Alan Aykbourn’s Bedroom Farce, Porteous has a chance to go the whole hog in this particular brand of acting. And by way of paradox, he’s much less resistable, far more pleasing. He plays Trevor, a thumb sucking mother’s boy married to the gypsy-like Susannah, a demented miss with wild hair and brightly jumbled attire who recites a secret litany for self confidence at moments of extremity (delicious Kate Fitzpatrick).

Trevor is pathetically anxious to please, not only his wife, but his former girlfriend (Jan), and the friends whose housewarming party he and Susannah have cleared with their domestic carry on. But he still manages to ruin everyone’s evening. In an engulfing raincoat left by a departing guest, he looks engagingly goofy. Despite the fact that his very presence spells trouble, that he’s a walking disaster area, no one can resist him.

The mummy in the case (ie Trevor’s) is Delia (Ruth Cracknell). She’s suburban, prosperous, middle class cozy but sometimes unpredictable, a bit domineering in a nice way (she doesn’t really approve of Susannah as a daughter in law but keeps that to herself and husband Ernest) relentlessly proper about unmentionables (discuss marital maladjustments with your doctor she says, they take an interest in such things, indeed her own doctor takes a gruesome interest) formidable inner rituals (making up for an anniversary dinner accounts for almost an entire scene).

The acquiescent Ernest is a comfortably successful man on the surface. Privately he’s rather dithery about anything out of the ordinary; high points in the rich tapestry of his existence include checking the damp in the spare room and eating pilchards on toast in bed. No particular reason why the son should be such a specifically obvious wreck, but this is a certain type of comedy, perhaps even a farce. Requests for vital info, dramatic coherence and so on will be treated as so much nit picking, and therefore ignored.

The party wrecked by the embattled couple has been given by housewarming cuties of wedded bliss Malcolm and Kate (Peter Rowley and Jackie Weaver) Susannah has caught hubby rather innocently kissing Jan (Carmen Duncan) and jumped to hysterical conclusions Trevor goes to Jan’s place to explain his innocence to her husband Nick (Barry Creyton) who is well-to-do and trendy, and therefore more or less calm and cool about what may or may not have happend. Nick is more interested in his own problems, he has back trouble and is laid up.

Susannah goes over and keeps Ernest and Delia up, and Jan and Nick are up. In fact everyone is up. On leaving Malcolm and Kate’s, Trevor said he’d come back and spend the night. Although he’s forbidden Trevor to darken the doormat, Malcolm bows to the inevitable and fills in the small hours making a do-it-yourself chest of drawers. Naturally Trevor comes back and wrecks that. The play does end at some stage.

In the Theatre Royal version the mechanism of the piece (which is too neat to survive a bare description) is not too obvious, the general performance is smooth, the timing spot on, and, since a deal of the dialogue is very good, much of the evening is very funny indeed.

Unfortunately it is not very meaningful. There is a lack of depth in the characterisation. This matters less in some cases
than others. A constellation of stars so bright it may have to be listed alphabetically is not the best start to the realisation of the play of any complexity unless they are all great actors as well. Moreover this staging (by Peter Williams) of *Bedroom Farce* has a method of overall presentation so bland and uncommitted, so unaccented and lacking in dramatic and geographic base that, despite a set which is said to be similar to that of the London production (or maybe the same as), one seemed in neither Sydney nor London, Eastern suburbs nor home counties.

An undertaking like this brings the $64 million question - will the stars play the roles, or the roles play them? On this occasion a bit of both. Carmen Duncan as Jan is as gracious and pretty as she's been on TV, but, except in the most general terms, very little in her performance tells me about the character she's playing. Moreover her readings of lines and physical gestures seem unassimilated, uncommitted, and accordingly unconvincing. As her husband Barry Creyton, relaxed and recumbent, is rather more successful, suggesting the smooth interior behind the smooth exterior. It's not a very interesting performance though, rarely simmering and boils and gets into a section of emotional gradations and inflexions within a tightly organised scenario: his skill in reproducing idiomatic dialogue, well demonstrated in *The Removalists*, here results in line after line of laconic humour, through which his characters cumulatively unfold their attitudes, ambitions and double-dealings. Thus *The Club* achieves in stylish fashion a dualeism compounded on the one hand of superficially slapstick comedy and of a struggle of ethics on the other hand, an achievement gained, I think, somewhat at the expense of a certain human quality in the writing. As with *The Removalists* so with *The Club*: exactness in dialogue and the search for telling theatrical gesture seem paramount.

In an excellent cast this production was

**THE CLUB, SISTERS**

ADRIAN WINTLE


(Mayplay)

Much as I resist indiscriminate use of the word “brilliant” it deserves to be employed in summing up David Williamson's *The Club* as performed by the Riverina Trucking Company under Terry O'Connell's assured and stylish direction.

Williamson's bitingly funny football play which incidentally lifts the lid on 20th century permissive boardroom politics drew from the Trucking Company cast the kind of inspired teamwork that has characterised the best of the Company's productions during its short and vigorous existence. One could only speculate, unfortunately, about the quality of the concurrent productions of *The Club* in New York and at Sydney's Nimrod Theatre, but I certainly can't imagine a more telling entourage than the actors under scrutiny, nor a production so crisp, honed and unified.

Like Williamson's earlier play *The Removalists*, which the Trucking Company produced last year and which explores police attitudes, *The Club* deals with a particular institutional subject, the world of pro football. Williamson locates his play in a club boardroom, uses six characters only, and bases dramatic interest on the machinations by board members to dislodge a failing president, a faltering long-term player and a reliable if expendable coach, achievements that will supposedly secure the premiership for the club.

Stated thus baldly, the play conceivably might have emerged as an Australian equivalent of a deadly earnest CP Snow epic, or as a vitriolic tub-thumping piece offering little relief from the opposition of stark black and white. Fortunately, Williamson has again engineered a stunning series of emotional gradations and inflexions within a tightly organised scenario: his skill in reproducing idiomatic dialogue, well demonstrated in *The Removalists*, here results in line after line of laconic humour, through which his characters cumulatively unfold their attitudes, ambitions and double-dealings.
One hell of a jump in moralities

ENTERTAINING MR SLOANE
AN EVENING WITH ADOLPH HITLER

TONY BARCLAY

Entertaining Mr Sloane by Joe Orton. Q Theatre, Penrith, NSW. Opened 29 September, 1978. Director, Richard Brooks; Design, Leslie Sharp; Lighting Design, Michael Cohen; Stage Manager, Trevor Connell; Lighting, Judy, June Collis; Sound, Ric Herbert; Kemp, Arthur Dicks; Ed, Peter de Sails. (Professional)

An Evening With Adolf Hitler by Jennifer Compton and Matthew O'Sullivan. Actors Company, Sydney. Opened 29 September, 1978. Director, Matthew O'Sullivan; Stage Manager, Peter Pitcher; Lighting, Eva Bruce; Beverly Blankenship; Ed, Matthew O'Sullivan. (Professional)

Joe Orton had a mind given to much mischief and not a little menace, and a language at once licentious and sharply arsipulte. That much was more than evident when his first major success, Entertaining Mr Sloane opened at the New Arts Theatre, London, in May 1964. The then odd affinities with Wilde and Pinter, together with an almost reckless attack on bland gentility, were dutifully noted. But Orton's dubious 'morality' troubled gentelie, were dutifully noted. But Orton's dubious 'morality' troubled gentility; the intellect and and offensive to Orton's voracious appetite for the sensual, the intellect and offensive to Orton's voracious appetite for the sensual.

Mr Sloane's own was 'the actual pivot of the play' and it's not difficult to see why. Ed's pass-key to life is his noxious sense of 'principles', his respectability ('the possessor of two bank accounts'), his aspirations to middle-class values — which barely hide a moral prude, a weakling who loved the sensual, the intellect and offensive to Orton's voracious appetite for the sensual. As one English critic put it (Ed always calls Sloane 'boy' (the counterpoint to Kath's Sloane as 'baby') — the moral voyeur of righteousness, 'amazed at Sloane's amorality while stalking him for his sexual prowess, de Silas's chain smoking, leather gloved, unsmiling, if fawning, brittle-faced Eddie was perfect. He conveyed why Ed always calls Sloane 'boy' (the counterpoint to Kath's Sloane as 'baby') — the moral voyeur of righteousness, 'amazed at Sloane's amorality while stalking him for his sexual prowess, de Silas's chain smoking, leather gloved, unsmiling, if fawning, brittle-faced Eddie was perfect.

But Peter de Sails' Ed was great. Orton himself referred to 'the actual pivot of the play' and it's not difficult to see why. Ed's pass-key to life is his noxious sense of 'principles', his respectability ('the possessor of two bank accounts'), his aspirations to middle-class values — which barely hide a moral prude, a weakling who loved the sensual, the intellect and offensive to Orton's voracious appetite for the sensual. As one English critic put it (Ed always calls Sloane 'boy' (the counterpoint to Kath's Sloane as 'baby') — the moral voyeur of righteousness, 'amazed at Sloane's amorality while stalking him for his sexual prowess, de Silas's chain smoking, leather gloved, unsmiling, if fawning, brittle-faced Eddie was perfect. He conveyed why Ed always calls Sloane 'boy' (the counterpoint to Kath's Sloane as 'baby') — the moral voyeur of righteousness, 'amazed at Sloane's amorality while stalking him for his sexual prowess, de Silas's chain smoking, leather gloved, unsmiling, if fawning, brittle-faced Eddie was perfect.
The need to fulfill the author's intentions

NIGHT OF THE IGUANA

WIDOWERS HOUSES

ROBERT PAGE

The Night of the Iguana by Tennessee Williams. Old Tote Theatre Company, Drama Theatre, Opera House Sydney NSW. Opened 30 September 1978. Director, Ted Craig; Designer, James Ridewood; Lighting, Jerry Luke; Stage Managers, John Frost, Ragini Warner. Sharron, Jan Needs; Pluck, Alex Pope; Maxine Faulk, Maggie Kirkpatrick; Pedi, Anthony Zeanze; Wolfgang, Mark Hembrow; Hotel, Prue Bassett; Herr Fahrenkopf, Frau Fahrenkopf, Doris Goddard; Hans, Peter Fishel; Addie, Judith Fellowes; Lynne Murphy; Hannah Jelkes, Judi Farr; Charlotte Goodman, Lorna Lesley; Nono Jiménez Coffin; Ronald Falk; Jake Lanta; Gordon Lishman. (Professional).

Widowers' Houses by George Bernard Shaw. Old Tote Theatre Company, Parade Theatre, Sydney NSW. Opened 4 October 1978. Director, George Ogilvie; Designer, Kristian Frederiksson; Lighting, Jerry Luke and Jonathan Ciddor; Stage Managers, John Whitham, Nicholas Schlieper. Winter, John Stone; Cokane, Norman Kaye; Harry, French; Ivan Kent; Santorius, Peter Collingwood; Blanch, Jane Harders; Pottor, George Leppard; Maid, Annie Byron; Luckchere, Ken Hannaman. (Professional).

Tennessee Williams is one of those rare writers who is "looking for sense wherever possibly there is none". Unlike the author of that line, Beckett, he does not pare the tapestry, albeit of misfits. Their refuge in this case is the Costa coast of Mexico. The setting reflects chaos encroaching jungle somewhere on the west coast of Mexico. The setting reflects chaos.
But upright Trench finds he too is tarred with the ironical/satirical tone, attuned to the sharpness and downright humour of Anouilh's style made the play appear an underwritten, unsatisfactory farce with the ironical/satirical tone, attuned to the sharpness and downright humour of Anouilh's style made the play appear an underwritten, unsatisfactory farce with the ironical/satirical tone, attuned to the sharpness and downright humour of Anouilh's style made the play appear an underwritten, unsatisfactory farce with the ironical/satirical tone, attuned to the sharpness and downright humour of Anouilh's style made the play appear an underwritten, unsatisfactory farce with the ironical/satirical tone, attuned to the sharpness and downright humour of Anouilh's style made the play appear an underwritten, unsatisfactory farce with the ironical/satirical tone, attuned to the sharpness and downright humour of Anouilh's style made the play appear an underwritten, unsatisfactory farce with the ironical/satirical tone, attuned to the sharpness and downright humour of Anouilh's style made the play appear an underwritten, unsatisfactory farce with the ironical/satirical tone, attuned to the sharpness and downright humour of Anouilh's style made the play appear an underwritten, unsatisfactory farce with the ironical/satirical tone, attuned to the sharpness and downright humour of Anouilh's style made the play appear an underwritten, unsatisfactory farce with the ironical/satirical tone, attuned to the sharpness and downright humour of Anouilh's style made the play appear an underwritten, unsatisfactory farce with the ironical/satirical tone, attuned to the sharpness and downright humour of Anouilh's style made the play appear an underwritten, unsatisfactory farce with the ironical/satirical tone, attuned to the sharpness and downright humour of Anouilh's style made the play appear an underwritten, unsatisfactory farce with the ironical/satirical tone, attuned to the sharpness and downright humour of Anouilh's style made the play appear an underwritten, unsatisfactory farce with the ironical/satirical tone, attuned to the sharpness and downright humour of Anouilh's style made the play appear an underwritten, unsatisfactory farce with the ironical/satirical tone, attuned to the sharpness and downright humour of Anouilh's style made the play appear an underwritten, unsatisfactory farce with the ironical/satirical tone, attuned to the sharpness and downright humour of Anouilh's style made the play appear an underwritten, unsatisfactory farce with the
Very little sense of ensemble

RICHARD II

KATHARINE BRISBANE


Richard: Robert van Mackelenberg; John of Gaunt: George Tseuite; Edward Langley: Ivan King; Henry Bolingbroke: Alan Cassell; Thomas Mowbray: Richard Williams; Aumerle: Chris Holden; Duchess of Gloucester/Duchess of York: Rosemary Barr; The Queen: Leith Taylor; Bardolph: Gardener: Eskin; Bevan Lee; Salisbury: Bagot: Groom: Gerald Hitchcock; Green: Scroop: Michael Loney; Bishop: Michael O'Rourke; Northumberland: Leslie Wright; Henry Percy: Richard Williams; Wallowas: Alan Fletcher; Exeter: Andy King; with Rhonda Flottmann, Julian Noel, Glenn Swift, Ian Tregonning.

Our first sight of Richard II in the current Perth Playhouse production is of a crowned figure clothed in white and gold, orb and sceptre raised, conjuring from the flies a golden throne. It descends, he takes his seat, and the quarrel between Mowbray and Bolingbroke which opens the play, proceeds.

Shakespeare’s Richard II is a play about kingship, a dialogue upon the weight and nature of the crown: the insubstantial appearance of that empty throne being whisked from here to there by the stage management remained with me for the rest of the evening.

For Robert van Mackelenberg’s Richard is a vain and theatrical man; one who listens little and talks much, giggles while his country burns and takes good advice from no-one. His court and his rivals think him a bore and an incompetent; and it is only too natural that as soon as the unjustly exiled Bolingbroke resets his feet on English soil the whole nation should flock to join the rebel forces. All this is to be found in the script.

But there is another, less tangible, element also to be found in the script; and in the context out of which the play originated: the king’s ‘second body’ as it was called, the divine nature bestowed on him by God at his coronation. It is this nature that makes rational men submit, awed, to unjust and undeserved punishment; that makes old York, the king’s deputy, tremble at Bolingbroke’s invasion; and that makes the usurper at the end take a crusade of penance to the Holy Land. Opposing common sense is the knowledge that the mysterious ways of God, of who the King is a part, are beyond our comprehension.

The play is most delicately balanced in its engagement of the human and the divine, the rational and the spiritual. Against Henry’s practical politics are Richard’s metaphysical conceits: the essential difference between the two men, in Shakespeare’s argument, lies in the mystical nature of the coronation.

The problem with van Mackelenberg’s performance — and Stephen Barry’s production — is that the divine dimension is missing. The play is conducted entirely on a rational level; and it leaves Richard without the resources to match the bluff, pragmatic nature of Alan Cassell’s Henry. This Henry is not very bright, nor does he have much imagination or humour; but he is transparently a better proposition as ruler than the tiresome young man who keeps holding up the action with sad stories of the death of kings.

The crunch comes in Act IV when the two men confront each other as Richard is brought to formally abdicate his crown. This is one of the great scenes in
Shakespeare as Richard makes the impatient Henry sweat for it, indulges himself in his last moments of royal power and at the same time weighs with great dignity the cares and responsibilities transferring from one king to another. The great ritualistic threnody (With mine own tears I wash away my balm, With mine own hands I give away my crown . . . ) may in one sense be a piece of self-indulgent peevishness but it is also a litany of undoing that transmogrification represented by the coronation. The Richard van Mackelenberg showed us in this scene was cold and relentlessly self-indulgent. Cassell's Henry treated him with imperium and contempt, as did the rest of the court, chafing with irritated boredom, searching begrudgingly for a mirror as Richard found one excuse after another to draw out the moment of surrender. The performance was admirable in its way; but it diminished both Richard and Henry. It showed them not as officers of a divinely created world order but individuals fighting for their place in the sun.

But there was a deeper problem in the performance than the interpretation I have described; and this is the verse. Much of the dignity of the royal characters lies in the rhythms of the verse; and it seemed to me that almost at no time during the performance were the rhythms given the weight due to them, nor the verse brought alive as drama.

There were moments: notably from Rosemary Barr as the Duchess of Glou­cester, Elizabeth Skevington and Leslie Wright as Northumberland; and the moment in Act V when the deposed Richard on his way to Pomfret Castle says a gentle farewell to his Queen (Leith Taylor). But on the whole I found it the kind of old fashioned Shakespeare production in which the director attempts to be 'real' despite the verse; and in which the minor characters, lavishly dressed, stand around in a semi-circle taking a polite but passive interest in the proceedings when

not required to speak.

The set, by Sue Russell, basically a circular turnable, putting out into the audience, also by its very flatness created unnecessary obstacles to the hierarchical nature of the play. The very structure of the play is a seesaw of one man's rise and another's fall. The verse is full of rising and falling imagery; and when the King says at the lists in Act I: "We will descend and fold him in our arms"; or in Act III, "Down, down I come; like glistening Phaeton, Wanting the manage of unruly jades", then it can only seem pomposity since he has nowhere to go.

Overall I found it a disappointing production: the politics confusing, the action slow and the speech uninviting to the ear. I felt very little sense of ensemble; and one has the right to expect this from a State company; or of a point of view projected by the cast. An empty and insubstantial royal throne of kings jured out of the flies.

Glorified project-lecture

KEEP ON TRUCKIN' FRANCESCA

CLIFF GILLAM

Keep On Truckin' Francesca devised and directed by Christine Randall; Stage Manager, Liz Donaldson. With Pat Skevington and Denise Kirby, (Professional)

Of all the "revolutionary" cultural movements which have emerged in the wondrous decade 'the Sixties', it has been the rise in feminist consciousness which most culture pundits of the seventies have fixed on as the most important, both in terms of its larger implications and its visible continuing impact on all our lives. The revolution has moved more slowly than some radical feminists would wish, too rapidly for some diehard male chauvinists but it has kept moving, inexcorably. A measure however of the distance it still has to go might be the fact that there has been as yet no noticeable change in the ratio of female to male dramatists. Keep on Truckin', Francesca does not itself contribute to any redress of the imbalance, since it is not strictly speaking a drama, and has not been so much written, as stitched together.

The show is basically a kind of docudrama - two performers give recitations from a range of feminist writing, (mainly poetry) and the recitations are linked together through the use of taped material and slide projections, as well as by passages of dialogue which sketch a relationship between a young radical feminist and an older woman whose life has been changed by the movement, but who is well aware of some of its shortcomings. The assembly of this material was undertaken by the director, Christine Randall, and the show is fittingly, an all female affair with Pat Skevington and Denise Kirby performing and stage management and design by Liz Donaldson.

Ms Randall has given us a concise overview of the various facets of the woman's movement, including material deriving from the pragmatist social-welfare oriented libbers and also from such extremist wings of Valerie Solinas' SCUM - The Society for Cutting Up Men. This sensible balance and generally non-hysterical review of the problems women face in a sexist society and the various ways which the movement has devised to cope with them encourages me somewhat in registering my dissatisfaction with the show, since an adverse criticism is unlikely to have an obviously sensitive to the shortcomings of the rhetoric of radical feminism, a simplistic accusation of male chauvinist prejudice.

I found the show, then, fairly dull largely because it seemed so static, non-dramatic. Various of the individual pieces were sensitively and powerfully delivered; and I particularly handled a marvellously lyrical, gently ironic and most moving passage on some of the deeper implications of sisterhood and female identity, a passage taken from The Three Marias', New Portuguese Letters, with telling virtuously. But on the whole, the range of feminist perspectives covered is by now familiar to most of us, even too familiar, given the effects of media over-kill, and not even the inclusion of a wryly satiric sequence from the parodic Heat Reports on Female Animal Sexuality, could sufficiently lighten the oh-so-serious tone of moral improvement which otherwise characterised the show. I thought that the original linking material, the dialogue between Experience and Youth, old and young Sisters, contained the inklings of a rather more dramatic treatment of feminism than the pageant-like pastiche which skein of recitations at first suggested it might point to.

As theatre, then, I'd have to call Keep on Truckin' Francesca a failure. But as a concise overview of feminism in the 60's and 70's and as an exercise in consciousness raising I can see a lot of point in such a show being toured to schools. I'm surprised that the Theatre in Education wing of the National Theatre does not seem to have any involvement in the show, and I would hope that they seize the chance to utilise the energy and good sense which has been put into it by performers and directors alike in the area for which at first suggested it might point to at which to strike a really powerful blow for the revision of sexist attitudes in our society must surely be in the immediately post-pubescent male and female consciousness.

Art which concealed the artifice

BETWEEN THE LINES

COLLIN O'BRIEN

Between the Lines by Marcus Cooney, Hole in the Wall Theatre, Perth 6 September, 1978. With Alexander Hay as Henry Lawford, (Professional)

"The art of the theatre" intoned Harley Granville-Barker, "is the art of acting first, last and all the time". His dictum seems to me fundamentally true, a recognition that at the moment of performance all other aspects of production such as lighting, design and even direction exist to maximise the possibilities of that actor in that particular role, consistent
Strachan — quality of all great clowns

THE SERVANT OF TWO MASTERS

MICHAEL MORLEY

The Servant of Two Masters by Carlo Goldoni, translated by Ron Blair and Nick Enright. State Theatre Company of SA, Playhouse, Adelaide SA. Opened 29 September 1978. Director, Edmo Fenoglio; Designer, Axel Barta; Lighting Design, Nigel Levings; Dance, Movement, Michael Fuller; Assistant, Kerrie McArthur; Stage Manager, Peter Kaukas.

Pulcinellas in State Theatre Co's Servant of Two Masters. Photo: David Wilson

Which brings me to Alexander Hay, unquestionably one of the finest actors around. His playing of Henry Lawson in the Marcus Cooney onehander Between the Lines gave me one of the most pleasurable evenings I have spent in the theatre. It was a performance for the connoisseur of acting, crammed with art which concealed the artifice. An Aust Lit student of mine, one who I suspect but rarely visits mummers, remarked that it was the first time he'd seen an actor who didn't come across as an actor playing a part, but seemed to be the person he was playing. An astute, perceptive comment; and I think he would have been even more impressed had he met Mr Hay in mufti — in unbuttoned mood, so to speak — and been thus made aware of just how much the actor's portrayal of Lawson was craft. Even the makeup was astonishingly like Lawson, as a quick check of a ten-dollar bill (if you had one) would confirm.

Alex Hay's playing conveyed with subtle conviction the fragility of an alcoholic near the end of his tether, every gesture and tone appearing completely natural. Mr Hay's voice has a richness of timbre and range reminiscent of Alec Guinness, but so skilfully are these qualities deployed that one never has the sense of artifice, of the Beautiful Voice, as change of rhythm, emphasis and tonal command lead us from moment to moment. Truly a remarkable and memorable performance.

Praise too for Marcus Cooney's script. He eschews the more obvious Lawsonia, the sentimental and the doggerel. The play is built on a novel and subtle idea, that of a reading of selections of his work by Lawson. But he slips from straight reading — which would make the show a simple reconstruction of a reading, la Emlyn Williams' Dickens — to reminiscence of both pleasurable and painful past events, accompanied and fuelled by half-bottles of spirits. We are thus an audience on two levels. I found it a telling device, deftly handled by both playwright and actor. I believe that the play has been presented only once before, and for a short season. It deserves to be toured, not only here in the Western Third, but all over Australia.

with one of the many valid interpretations of the script. It is because Granville-Barker’s claim is true that your aficionado of the theatre finally finds himself primarily actor-oriented. Certainly I would prefer to see a skilled actor at work on familiar material — say Rob Alexander as Jaques — than indifferent new work.
command of expressive gesture and movement, he lost nothing in comparison with one of my personal milestones in clowning roles — Ekkehard Schall's Arturo Ui for the Berliner Ensemble.

It was clear from the production as a whole that much of the credit for its strengths should go to the director. In almost every respect this was the most disciplined ensemble playing I have seen from this company. Lines were given point, attention was paid to style, blocking was always illuminating or offsetting the text, and movements had a precision and fluency that they have almost invariably lacked in past productions. There was a fine performance from Robin Bowering as Pantalone which avoided stock old man gestures and vocal mannerisms. His delivery of the lines and comic timing were equally assured and pointed. Full marks also to Chris Mahoney's ebullient, forthright and buxom servant Smeraldina: as a somewhat more sensible observer of the follies of her betters, she displayed a nice line in common sense and comic remarks. The director's treatment of the young lovers Clarice and Silvio managed to steer a path between exaggerated send-up and affectation which distinguish Fenoglio's treatment which sometimes marred other performances. Hedley Cullen's Dottore managed to be ostentatiously dull — a pity, as the part has more scope than was realised in this performance. And Brian James' Brighella was at times a little pale, though his and the director's view of the role was unusual and convincing. One of the finest moments in the entire production came when the older clown removes both his and Truffaldino's masks and shows the latter and the audience the glimpse of a world far removed from Goldoni's lively and colourful Venice. It was a sudden tableau of resonant stillness, both wintry and intensely human, in which the persona/actor tension became part of a Pirandellian vision of the stage-world relationship. If there were nothing else in the production, it would remain worth seeing for this image alone.

But there are other features of Fenoglio's treatment which distinguish this as the best designed and best-lit production I have seen at the Playhouse. The set is functional, effective, poetic and uncluttered: actors' carts are dismantled and become a wide ribbon of blue material (more care could have been devoted to the manipulation of this), Brechtian scene captions are flown in and we are always aware that is is a performance we are watching.

I have seldom seen a more imaginatively lit production; in particular, the tableaux at beginning and end were a visual delight in themselves. So too, the music was completely appropriate and not, as in the past, dropped in to prop up a production which elsewhere displayed a paucity of imagination. Of course there are flaws: the tempo sags before and after the interval, and there is the slight suspicion that Tony Strachan's performance begins with such energy that he has to work hard to find further momentum. The other performances are at times trifle too obviously concerned with style, more in the vein of arch comedy of manners than the rather earthier, more everyday milieu that Goldoni evokes in the text. But these are minor objections to a production which reflects well on all involved, and which shows that Adelaide can benefit considerably from the stimulus and imaginative discipline of a director like Signor Fenoglio.
The Queensland Festival of the Arts, now associated with Brisbane's annual spring festival, Warana, provides an appropriately civic-proud and religious framework for two dramatic events which exploit and celebrate the suggestive physical potential of non-theatre spaces. In the neo-Gothic St John's Cathedral, Peter Jordan's conflation of Coleridge's The Rime of the Ancient Mariner and Christabel produces a poetic and truly awe-full dramatic and musical spectacle which amply answers prior speculations as to how the theatricalisation of the potent Romantic symbolism of the poem could be effected. Well, they did it; The Ancient Mariner is the best thing that ever happened to me in a church. The show shares with Camerata's considerably more modestly conceived Oedipus at Colonus a radical emphasis on the dramatic value of a poetic text intelligently enunciated, exchewing temptations on the eerie simplicity of naked fire — torches and candles — for visual adjustment towards symbolic receptivity.

Good subliminal stuff, yet the many shivers up my spine in the Mariner were not merely caused by the pre-existent rhetoric of vasty arches and cavernous obscurities, but by passages of totally authentic dramatic realisations. The dance and death of the nature-sprite Albatross (Janet Goldsmith) were consummately presented, as was the pivotal moment where the Albatross (now incarnate in taxidermic form) "did fall like lead into the sea". These had the ritualistic force of the rare uncanny fusion of the spiritual with its appropriate physicalisation. Given the combined attack of Coleridge, the cathedral itself as both actor and ambiance, Prue Gibbs' evocatively evocative music (is there a record of it in the offing?) and the talents of some of Queensland's best non-institutionalised professional actors, how could The Mariner fail? With its large aspirations, it could have, but it didn't. The focal contributions of Victoria Arthur (Geraldine) and of Franch Gallacher as a Celtically haunted Mariner of superb conviction and presence, merit specific approbation in a uniformly distinguished ensemble.

Peter Jordan impressed three years ago with his Blake's French Revolution — also in a church — and his authority in the area of the Romantic mythic canon is now proven. I'm still slightly bemused as to the thematic rationale of the blending of the Gothic comic-book Christabel with The Mariner, but despite the rather esoteric link it made good dramatic material: an imagistic flow of tableaux with a powerful musical cohesion. The Mariner isn't afraid of subjectivity, and its spectacular theatre-poetry germinates in the imagination besides intriguing the intellect. When Jordan gives us his next church oratorio — Les Fleurs du mal? Prometheus Unbound? — let's hope the lucid impact of his ambitious theatricalisation isn't unnecessarily intricated by private glosses. And
let's hope too that we don't have to wait another three years for it; professional Brisbane theatre needs this brand of fine collaboration in an authentic theatrical statement even more than our pubs, currently, need Four-X. These titanic and seminal efforts should be more than triennial fiestas.

Meanwhile, in the frog and heron-haunted environs of the University of Queensland's lakeside forum, Don Batchelor's Oedipus at Colonus, directed for Camerata, beautifully exemplifies what can be done with amateur actors in putting the text into context as an integral event. By the time the lightning was striking, the ancient dauntless script plays with the conviction of a premiere, with female leads, masks, doubling, and a chorus which is indeed a Chorus and not an embarrassed pack of extras playing a crowd scene, the lovely Ode to Colonus, spoken against the competing cries of the resident waterbirds, drove home the sheer impact of the aura lent to any specific natural locale of which a poet has voiced, with love and pride, its pains and hopes. The City Dionysia would recognise this Warana offspring. The Athenians, of course, subsidised for a once-a-year blowout. The City Dionysia would recognise this Warana offspring. The Athenians, of course, subsidised for a once-a-year blowout. The City Dionysia would recognise this Warana offspring. The Athenians, of course, subsidised for a once-a-year blowout.

DRY RUN

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SPEARS’ PRESENCE HAS MEANT A DIFFERENT APPROACH

King Richard Dry Run

Richard Fotheringham

Richard by Steve J Spears. La Boite Theatre, Brisbane.

Qld Opened 23 September 1978. Director: Sean Mee; Designer: Michael Mallon; Graeme Johnston; Stage Manager: Phillip Duke.

"King" Richard Brown, Geoff Hlascoff; Dunstan, Brian Rigg; Sir Harry, Marmunda Bulwida; Staun Cobbie; Joe Podosky; Sue: Sorrell Edwards; Tony Basset; Jim Porter; Policeman: Terry Roberts; John Nugant.

[Note: cast and credits]

Steve Spears’ experiments in form have led him this time to the detective story genre, and his presence in Brisbane during the rehearsals for La Boite’s premiere season of King Richard has resulted in a production which is not only one of the major theatrical events of this year, but also one that is according to Spears himself very close to the style in which he would like to see the script performed.

The play concerns the power struggle between two men. The first is a Premier of Victoria hoping to make a vast fortune by putting his political clout to the bidding of money, and to win votes by appearing to effect liberal reforms in pollution control and prison reform. A simple car emission device (amazingly effective) has been invented. The Government has the patent rights, and is trying to get prisoners in Victoria to build them at negligible cost to the public. On this pretext the Premier is legislating to make the device compulsory on every car.

His opponent is ‘King’ Richard Brown, triple murderer and the leader of an unofficial Union of Prisoners. He begins by demanding award wages for the prisoners building the devices, but quickly becomes aware of further implications. The Premier hopes to provoke jail riots (most probably by arranging Brown’s death in his cell) after the legislation is passed, and then ‘reluctantly’ offer the contract out to private enterprise. Naturally the firm the Premier secretly controls will win the contract. Throughout the play the Premier tries to keep his plans moving, and Brown tries to collect the evidence he needs to expose the Premier, and get that evidence to the outside world.

This read is the more successful played as) an Australian version of The New Avengers or Callan; in other words stylish, humourous, but with a wink and a nod that there but for a little

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room set by Mike Bridges. I hope all find regular employment in the theatre profession; they deserve it. I can’t think of his other reason for mentioning play or production, and I’m sure no-one has worked on it for any other reason. That this however should be used as a practical example of why Twelfth Night should continue to receive major public subsidy stagers me.

SOFTNESS AT THE CORE OF THIS PRODUCTION

The Cherry Orchard

Jeremy Ridgman

The Cherry Orchard by Anton Chekhov. Queensland Theatre Company. QTC’s Theatre, Brisbane Qld. Opened 20 September 1978. Director: Joe McColgan; Designer: Fiona Reilly; Lighting: Derek Campbell; Dance: Beverley Newlin; Stage Manager: Annie Hansch.

Sponsored by Yves Leddicott; Lee Jabbe; Annette Keays; Tony Bailletti; Joe MacColum has quite rightly sought after the window. "Oh my childhood, my innocent childhood!” she intones, gazing wistfully across the wilderness of the SGIC stage into a forest of black drapes. The absence of any sign of that eponymous symbol of wealth, Russia, temps perdue, what you will, is a tangible manifestation of the softness at the core of this production, proof that the deeper, resonant layers of Chekhov’s masterpiece are being carefully avoided.

Other inappropriate concrete elements prove equally emasculating. The set for the first and final acts, a room of cavernous proportions, has clearly never been a nursery and in the play’s (sic) and its audience the garden scene is reduced to a paltry tapping barely audible beyond the third row.

Joe MacColum has quite rightly sought to emphasise Chekhov’s comic intentions, but unless the complexity of that comedy is realised, the panic behind the farce, and the disorientation beneath the eccentricity, then The Cherry Orchard is doomed simply to wilt and wither. The company is far from being an ensemble, something which shows in the lack of potential vibrancy of Chekhov’s comic intentions, but unless the complexity of that comedy is realised, the panic behind the farce, and the disorientation beneath the eccentricity, then The Cherry Orchard is doomed simply to wilt and wither.

Pat Bishop’s fascinating and ultimately sinister Charlotta and Gillian Hyde’s self-mocking Dunyasha provide perhaps the most compelling performances of the evening. As she proved recently in Clowneronies, Miss Hyde has all the makings of a true comedian.

The Cherry Orchard is arguably the greatest drama the 20th century has produced, but I fear for its life. If it is not to be relegated to the ranks of untouchable classics, it needs more committed representation than this.
Strongest cast
Fortune have fielded

LUNCHETIME SEASON

MARGUERITE WELLS
Fortune Theatre Company, Luncheon theatre season, Canberra Theatre Trust

The Centenarian by Philip Ryall. Director, Ralph Wilson. 
Clive, John Cuffe; Matt, Maggie Cody; Gran, Pat Hutchinson. 11-15 September.

Nathan and Tabileth by Barry Bernance, Director, Pamela Rosenberg. 18-22 September.

The Father by Howard Brenton. Director, Philip Ryall. 25-29 September.

The Education of Skinny Spew by Howard Brenton. Director, Pamela Rosenberg; Costumes, Thelma White; Carpentry, Colin Vassakes. 1 November.

Rock, John Cuffe; Brian, Bill Ginnane; Megan, Pat Hutchinson. 25-29 September.

I do think it will be so nice, when the covered way between the Canberra Theatre and the Playhouse is glassed in, don't you? I mean the ladies in the box office will be so much better off out there. They won't have to sell tickets to the accompaniment of Fortune Theatre performing in their foyers any more, and they'll have a grandstand seat when the Governor-General arrives for the first nights of all those ballets and operas and things that get to go on inside the theatre. Of course, it might be better for Fortune Theatre too. They won't have to perform to the tune of the tinkling change in the box office, and since there might not be so much chance of their disturbing the real business of the theatre — making money — they might even be allowed to move their stage away from the wall.

It's one of those funny-if-it-weren't-so-tragic stages. You have your thirty feet wide and eight feet deep, decently tucked away in the corner with two floor-to-ceiling windows as a sort of mad environmentalist's parody of a cyclorama. Of course the windows are cunningly hidden with a black backdrop, but the glorious light of heaven still makes its presence felt. And best of all, stage left is uncompromisingly solid government-built brick wall. So with translucent black backdrop behind them, brick wall to the left of them and audience in front of them, close enough to touch, there is only one way for the bemuddled actors to get off stage — the way they came — stage right. One comes away suffering from a niggling ache in the suspension-of-disbelief. In the last season for instance, Ahmed, on his way home late at night, stopped for a chat with Norm, and when he decided that things had gone a bit too far, tried to continue on his way home by going back the way he came, thus implying that he had just dropped in under the lamplight in order to get bashed up, and he really must be going now. Only a niggling ache, but none the less, an ache which could easily be cured by moving the stage away from the wall. Undoubtedly there are reasons why this can't be done, reasons more probably connected with not looking gift foyers in their mouths, than with theatrical common sense.

Ralph Wilson, who directed Philip Ryall's The Centenarian, the first play in the season, has a magical knack. It is either a magical knack of squeezing good performances out of his actors, or else a magical knack of choosing good actors. Either way, John Cuffe and Maggie Cody, as the mortuary attendant and his wife inconveniently bereaved of an inconveniently long-lived Gran (Pat Hutchinson), three hours before her glorious hundredth birthday, were the strongest cast Fortune Theatre have fielded in their short professional life. The play, which was workshopped at the Playwrights' Conference this year, is situation comedy, and definitely inconsequential, except perhaps to the recently bereaved. Anyone hoping to be bereaved shortly should find it just what the undertaker ordered. It is a funny play and, as any public servant can tell you, what one needs at lunchtime after a dispiriting morning of public servanting is to be cheered up, no matter how ghoulishly. Plays that threaten the existential insecurity are definitely not for the two-parliamentary-questions-and-a-ministerial-before-lunch crowd.

As Nathan, a tremulous old man, his memory so far gone that only Tabileth's climbing into bed with him convinces him that she is his wife, John Thompson gave what must have been the performance of a career. His usual, rather supercilious man-of-the-world suavity is not endearing, but then directors will insist on casting no-one but themselves. A Tabileth's 'old soldier', living half in placid content, half gently but wildly lost in anxiety for confirmation of his own sensations, John Thompson was truly touching.

Pat Hutchinson (Mrs Spew), Bill Ginnane (Skinny Spew) and John Cuffe (Mr Spew) in Fortune's The Education of Skinny Spew.
Fortune Theatre stresses that the Foyer is ideal, because they can use 'representational' sets. Unfortunately, in Nathan and Tabitha this meant a great deal of mime which demanded more technique than the cast had to give. Doors which were opened, but not closed, are, in the normal course of events, even in a 'representational' production, still open five minutes later. Simple mime takes only a little thought and concentration, and a little deftness in establishing an invisible set, can save an 'informal' production from becoming a slipshod one.

In Heads the only piece of action which was not just talk, took place behind flats, inevitably, I suppose, since it consisted in the chopping off of Brian's highly intellectual head, and the placing of it on Rock's highly physical body. Megan, discontent with one brainy weakling lower and one brainless muscular one, thus created a brainy muscular man with a brainless weakling, and girl loses both boys in the end. The whole thing is not much more than an amusing conceit, and, if you'll pardon the pun, a highly cerebral one at that.

Bill Ginnane as an anything-but-skinny Spew made the sort of robust and hideous baby that any besotted mother would dote on spite all. The billowing white sheet that any besotted mother would dote on spite all. The billowing white sheet which represented the sea in which the infant fiend drowned his parents was not a good device: the whole play lent itself more to visual representation than Heads had done, but once again that representation was more slipshod than informal.

Undoubtedly, Fortune Theatre's lunchtime seasons in the Theatre Foyer are a success, since people come to one play and come back again. Undoubtedly also, this is partly because people will go to see a play at a theatre even though it is not in the theatre.

There's nothing quite like being legit, even if it means paying the price of spending the whole season making sure you don't walk through that blasted brick wall.

In a word, trivial

FLEXTIME

ROGER PULVERS

Flextime by Roger Hall, Canberra Theatre Trust in association with CTC 7, Playhouse, Canberra Theatre Centre, ACT. Opened 28 September 1978. Director, John Tasker; Assistant, Wally Wright.

New Zealand has produced a variety of rather fine playwrights. Max Richards and Alma de Groen are probably the best. Robert Lord, who had a play workshopped at the first Playwrights Conference, and Jennifer Compton are theatrically less ambitious than Richards or de Groen, Roger Hall, to judge him by Flextime, is the least interesting of all. He is a kind of micro-Williamson.

Flextime is, in a word, trivial. It is unoriginal formulative drama, the longest string of one-liners I've seen. Adding to this is a startlingly mediocre production by John Tasker, in which he fails to energise his cast for the barb-throwing and witticising throughout.

The story recalls four days in the life of a Public Service office. All of them are there: the young nasty joker, the veteran; the foreigner (here a Welshman); the neophite who knows more about drink and sex by the end of the play; and the fat lady. She is the brunt of a lot of jokes about her size.

To make a long story short, they are all revealed to have mini-tragedies lurking. The veteran's wife has left him. The foreigner's wife also leaves him, to go back home. The neophyte is frustrated by religious conviction. And the fat lady has a mum at home. There is also the boss who comes in from time to time, giving the others a chance to snigger behind his back and abruptly shuffle papers.

All of Hall's characters aspire to the stereotype. In that sense, it is precisely that brand of caricatured satire which is perfectly palatable to the real people he is depicting, in this case public servants. They can laugh at themselves and feel utterly tolerant. This is the liberals' accommodation to satire, more a celebration than an excoriation.

Two of the actors displayed an ability to cope with the timing. Jim Wright plays the technician who bolts in on occasion to grab chairs from under people, or to take orders. Every time he entered, the play began to kick. He enlivens it, as a character, in the same way the removalist does in Williamson's play.

Paul Corcoran as the neophite was excellent. He managed to make a human being out of a cliche.

John Tasker chose a completely naturalistic mode for this play. It is what is usually done in Australia when the piece is seemingly realistic. After all, the logic goes, don't people in an office sit most of the time? We want this to look

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The problem here, though, is that there is little real about five people speaking for two hours in one clever line after another. This kind of comedy distills reality; and its logic goes, don't people in an office sit most of the time? We want this to look real.

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Roger Hall was originally an Englishman, and the programme explains that this is one reason why he can write 'with such humour and compassion'. In a sense, New Zealand has suffered as we have. Certain polished modes of expression from England have become our paradigms of theatricality. In the long run, this stifles national expression more than it stimulates it.

Bernadette Vincent (Beryl) and Paul Corcoran (Michael) in CTT's Flextime.
DAVID ALLEN

David Allen was born in Birmingham, England in 1936. He completed an honours degree in English at Liverpool University in 1958 and spent seven years teaching drama and English in secondary schools.

From 1966 to 1970, David Allen worked in Uganda, East Africa as an education officer. He was involved with writing for education television and teaching. He founded "Theatre Ltd" with African playwright Robert Serumaga, and directed plays by Serumaga, Athol Furgard and Shakespeare. Returning to the UK in 1970, David Allen took the professional directors course under Hugh Hunt at Manchester University. He directed productions at Manchester School of Theatre and Theatre 69 and was appointed assisted director of Manchester Library Theatre.

In 1972, David Allen was appointed lecturer in drama at Salisbury College of Advanced Education, South Australia. He has written and directed for the College and for various Adelaide groups, including Adelaide University Theatre Guild and Adelaide La Mama. David Allen co-founded Troupe, Adelaide's 'Alternative' Theatre group, in 1976. He has written — and had produced — four plays by Troupe: a version and adaptation of Henry V. If Ever I Get Back Here I'll Stay, Behold The Gay Marsupial and various Adelaide La Mama. He has written and directed for the College and for various Adelaide groups, including Adelaide University Theatre Guild and Adelaide La Mama.

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**ACT ONE**

Spot on Stan. He is in his late twenties and wears baggy trousers and shirt. It is the year 1910. He is on the stage of an empty theatre in a small town in the mid-west of America, experimenting with comic characteristics.


Jock: (sings)
I've got a furry sporran
And I call it Little Ben!
And I've had it here for fifty year —
I'm an artiste...

K ate: (offstage) Jesus Christ, ma goggies! Stan: (half to Stan) I'm no bloody Scotch harlot...

K ate: (offstage) Jesus Christ!

K ate: He won't touch me again...

Stan continues entangling his legs. Kate watches him. Stan grins at her.

K ate: Does that old wreck belong to you?

Stan: The one in the kilt and the tam o' shanter?

K ate: The one with the horny hands!

Stan: That's Jock. He's a Scot.

K ate: I'd never've guessed!

Stan: He likes big women, porridge with salt on it and Bell's Highland Whisky. He sings songs about his furry sporran and roamin' in the 'gloomin'.

K ate: He roams near me again he'll be singing 'If he roams near me again he'll be singing'...

K ate: (also deadpan) Great finale. (demonstrates) Rope round the neck. 'Such is life!' Down goes the trap. Choke, choke!

Stan: (also deadpan) You were there?

K ate: (also still deadpan) Gave him a kiss, a pat on the bum and pulled the lever. Mother had to lift me up, of course...

Stan: ...of course...

K ate: ...I was only a young thing at the time. Pause

K ate: (friendly) What are you doing in America, Kate?

K ate: The same as you.

K ate: Nobody's the same as me.

K ate: Cocky! I heard you were looking for a partner.

K ate: I've got a partner!

Jock: Light up on Jock, caught swigging a bottle.

K ate: You can do better than that!

Jock: What's that? Do better than me? Yer tight buttocked old bag! I can't let you sinhing! Six years ago — when I first came here — nineteen hundred and four that was — I was earning...well never you mind...but it was more money than you've ever seen! Aye! (twings) They rolled in ter see me and me sporran. The New York City Music Hall was so packed they had people sitting on the stage behind me! What about that then? People were paying two dollars just ter get a glimpse o' ma arse! Points behind with his bottle and almost falls over. Staggers out of spot.

K ate: Is all that true?

K ate: Most of it. He was making two thousand dollars a week.

Stan: Two thousand! Him?

Stan: Him. He made them pay him every week.

Gone With Hardy was given a workshop at the 1978 National Playwrights' Conference and first professionally performed by the Melbourne Theatre Company at Russell Street Theatre on September 21st 1978. It was directed by Ray Lawler and designed by Steve Nolan. The original cast were:

Stanley Jefferson
Kate Laurel
Jock McTavish

Characters in the Play

Stanley Jefferson
Kate Laurel
Jock McTavish

In America, just before the First World War, an English comedian teamed up with an Australian singer and dancer to form a vaudeville act.

They called themselves Stan and Kate Laurel. Later, Stan went on to become one half of the famous comedy pair — Laurel and Hardy. Kate was shipped off back to Australia.

This play is about Stan and Kate.

There is no particular setting. The mood is 'backstage', film lots, agents offices, provincial theatres 1807-1924; America and Australia. Costume and lighting changes show the passing of time and place. There should be a rack of costumes on stage for the actors' use, and all props should be readily available. Wherever possible, the actors should remain on stage.

Gone With Hardy
by David Allen

ACT 1

DAVID ALLEN
Kate: Where did it all go?
Stan: On porridge with salt, Bell's Highland Whiskey and big women.
Jock: Kangaroo shit. I reckon.
Kate: (Flicks some into a tent)
Stan: (Stern) Corruption is genuine.
Kate: (with dignity) Only after they'd purchased a bottle.
Stan: You name it! Frequently.
Kate: Yankee buggers! You can't do that. I'm no that bad! I've got all my own teeth!
Stan: Panama! You were talking rubbish, old son. I've had my fill of the stuff.
Kate: Pam and Eddie?' Stan practises various clown faces.
Stan: Who told you I needed a partner? Eddie Varley, eh?
Kate: Yes. He said you used to work with him.
Stan: He used to work with me. (hard) Him and his wife. Pam. That was his wife's name: Pam. Called ourselves Eddie, Stan and Pam.
Kate: Not Stan, Pam and Eddie?
Stan: No.
Kate: You weren’t first?
Stan: I’ve said.
Kate: Why not?
Stan: Eddie, Stan and Pam sounded better. My idea.
Kate: Oh yes?
Kate: Get you!
Stan: I like to run things.
Kate: Do you?
Stan: You may get to find that out. (pause) Where’d you meet Eddie? In a bar?
Kate: How’d you guess?
Stan: I know Eddie.
Kate: Wrong. He wasn’t drinking.
Stan: That makes a change.
Kate: He was serving: we both were. Between engagements you see.
Stan: I see.
Kate: He talked a lot about you.
Stan: Bet.
Kate: No, he was full of compliments. He said you used to do imitations of Chaplin. Stan stops doing the general clown faces.
Stan: That’s right. I did Charlie: I demonstrated: With a hula-hula to get in this case. Kate. Kate plays up appropriately I was his understudy once.
Kate: Understudy? You!
Stan: Don’t be cheeky. We all have to start somewhere — even Australians!
Kate: Why’d you break with Eddie?
Stan: What did he say?
Kate: He didn’t.
Stan: I was too good.
Kate: Oh you kid!
Stan: I kid not. That’s why we broke up. I was getting all the laughs. They were just feeds. Eddie didn’t like that.
Kate: And Pam?
Stan: She was with me.
Kate: I bet.
Stan: All the way.
Kate: You don’t say.
Stan: So Eddie started hitting the bottle.
Kate: And Pam?
Stan: That’s better, girlie! I know you, by Christ! I’ve played Down Under. All those dusty towns, all those wet-thighed, wide-eyed corrupt little virgins...
Light change.
Music: ‘Road To Gundagai’ very fast.
Jock: (changes tack) Anyhow, one night in New York Eddie took over the set: the gags, the direction...
Stan: Jock, you’re a whore, Stanley. I should know! I kid not. That’s why we broke up. I was getting all the laughs. They were just feeds. Eddie didn’t like that.
Kate: You let him?
Stan: (picks up a drink. Spills some on himself)
Kate: (dirty laugh) Aw c’mon! It’s a bit late for that sort of thing in America — especially New York. You dim Yankee buggers! You’d had a few of course.
Kate: Of course;
Stan: (almost to himself) Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me.
Stan: Just a thought. And here’s another. I don’t think you’d do.
Kate: You haven’t tried me properly. You haven’t seen what I can do!
Stan: I’ve seen enough. And I got a feeling...
Kate: Lucky you! I’m going to sing... Sets herself up.
Stan: No, you’re not...
Kate pushes him aside and does the first verse of “Gundagai”. As she passes Stan the second time, he grabs her ankle and... (appause) What a lovely name! Come on, Nellie Kate! Come and get it! (feer).
Kate: “Gundagai” Jock is off. Light change. A hint of domesticity. Kate is seeing a hole in Stan’s pants or socks.
Stan: You changed your name.
Kate: Nellie Kate Wintulich! Wouldn’t you?
Stan: My father was A J Jefferson: England’s greatest showman.
Jock: Scotland’s...! Stan: ...and Scotland’s. Yes, Arthur J Jefferson, the impresario. I’m proud of his name.
Kate: What did the “J” stand for?
Stan: Nothing. The old man just thought a different. Anything different!
Stan: I had my difficulties, you know. Kate: (reflective) I was determined I was going to conquer the world. So I went to Brisbane. Got my first dancing job there. I felt marvellous. I’d never seen Nellie Wintulich! I said to myself. No more drudgery! No more: ‘Nellie, where’s me dinner?’ No more: ‘Nellie, have you seen me bloody boots?’ God! I hated that name: Nellie Kate Wintulich! Wintulich. Where did “Laurel” come from?
Kate: (coming out of reverie) What?
Stan: Laurel? Where did you pick that name up?
Kate: My mother’s name: Lorelei. (pause) Lorelei = Laurel. Get it.
Stan: Got it!
Kate: Her maiden name was Lorelei Brandt.
Kate: Very pretty. German.
Kate: Clever. (pause) Father was a real Frizee. A peasant. Mother hated him. She was a schoolteacher, a pastor’s daughter. They met at a church social. The one graceful thing he could do was dance. She was swept off her feet. (Laughs gently at joke) There’s a photograph of him with her on his arm — very still, with a great shining well-scrubbed face. I suppose she mistook it for elegance. She soon learnt. He was an animal. He ruined all the boys. When he died, she burnt all his clothes and sold the bed they’d made together. She soon learnt. He was a real Fritzie.
Stan: ‘Laurel’ does sound better.
Kate: Nice for sure! You weren’t called Nellie Katerina Wintulich were you? You weren’t brought up on a cattle station with a mob of rough men. You weren’t hungry for something different. Anything different!
Stan: I was determined I was going to conquer the world. So I went to Brisbane. Got my first dancing job there. I felt marvellous. I’d never seen Nellie Wintulich! I said to myself. No more drudgery! No more: ‘Nellie, where’s me dinner?’ No more: ‘Nellie, have you seen me bloody boots?’ God! I hated that name: Nellie Kate Wintulich! Wintulich. Where did “Laurel” come from?
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Stan: (impressed) Crikey! (does his head scratch) Kate: (imitating him) Crikey! They look at each other.
Kate: (seductive) Want your back rubbed, sport?
Stan: (eas) Crikey! Freeze. Light change. Stan and Kate very close, perhaps sitting on bed.
Stan: Stanley Jefferson and Kate?
Pause. Kate snuggles up to Stan.
Kate: Kate Laurel and Stan?
Pause.
Stan: You must be crackers. (uncertain)
Kate starts to undress Stan.
Stan: (thinking about it) Stanley and Kate Jefferison?
Kate: In ecstasy.
Kate: Stone cold.
Kate: You can’t be serious. (even more uncertain)
Kate: ‘Laurel’ sounds better.
Kate begins to unbutton her blouse. Stan realises “Laurel” does sound better.
Stan: Laurel and Kate?
Kate stops undressing.
Stan: (very quickly) Stan and Kate Laurel!
Kate considers for a moment. Then smiles and continues undressing Stan.
Blackout. In blackout.
Kate: Confrontation?
Stan: Masochist?
Kate: You should take something for it. Like me!
Spot on Jock. Train sounds. Train music. Jock does travelling routine. Towards the end, he is joined by Stan and Kate.
Jock: (train rhythm chant)
Big theatres, little theatres, Large and small.
Come and see Americky, Come and see it all.
Chug a lug to Tennessee Puff along to Maine Slide across to Arkansas Then it starts again —
Texas, Kansas, Oregon, Nebraska, Iowa, Michigan: burlesque and double talk! Illinois, Connecticut — you only have ter ask er And she’ll tag along behind yer until yer reach New York!
Train whistle.
(Jock, as porter) New York!
Kate/Stan: New York! (to audience) 1912?
Blackout. Lights up on Kate and Stan. Stan talks to imaginary agent.
Kate: Good afternoon, sir. We are vaudeville artists looking for employment in your theatre. You may have heard of us. My name is Kate Laurel and this is —
Silent Film’ music. Routine with a strong element of ‘Laurel and Hardy’ in it.
Kate turns round to introduce Stan. He is looking the other way. She looks where he is looking. He is obviously eyeing up some girl. He waves to her and she clearly waves back and beckons him. He points to himself: Me? Kate watches angrily. Arms akimbo. Stan does his loose-limbed walk over to the girl. Kate gives a ‘Hardy’ look at the audience and follows. Stan sits by the girl and chalks her up in mime (more

Colette Mann as Kate Laurel in Gone with Hardy.

THEATRE AUSTRALIA NOVEMBER 1978
Kate: and this, as I was saying, is my de facto husband. Stanley. Stan does cry babies face.

Kate: Working on a routine.

Stan: (pause) Gi' me a kiss?

Kate: Smoke your pipe.

Stan: (pauses) grace on his knee)

Kate: O.K. ! (Pause) *Dyer* mind if I smoke my pipe?

Stan: Do you what like.

Kate: Puts his hand up her dress. She pushes it away.

Kate: Except that?

Kate: Where's Stan?

Kate: Working on a routine.

Stan: Gi' me a kiss?

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Stan: (pauses) grace on his knee)

Kate: O.K. ! (Pause) *Dyer* mind if I smoke my pipe?

Kate: Do you what like.

Kate: Puts his hand up her dress. She pushes it away.

Kate: Except that?
with two or three actors daubed in pig’s blood rolling round the stage and screaming their heads off. Trouble was the lion was harmless and looked it. Nae teeth. Could hardly stand. So they had to have a boy in the wings wi’ a long pointed stick poking it up the arse to make it roar. Only the sound was more like a feeble moan — and the pitiful animal never moved. Just stood there. (pause) The public rolled in. (pause) Terrible show. (pause) Stan was the boy with the stick.

Kate: He’ll come back home with me — to Australia.

Jock: (sings) I’ll take you home again, Stanley. To where the wattle meets the sea.

Stan: Yes. I’ve had an education, yer ken tell. Aye well, I won’t come back here, and I’ll cook them.

Kate: (looks) He’s hungry. Stan ignores her, he’s hungry. He still ignores her. As he lines up for another run she grabs him by the trousers at the back. Classical comedy restraint. Stanley!

Stan: Cook something.

Kate: Why don’t you ever do the cooking?

Stan: You’re better at it.

Kate: You’re not. I’m a rotten cook. I just do it. You never offer.

Stan: Let’s eat out.

Kate: No. We’ll stay in. And you can cook.

Stan: (exasperated) What? Cook what?

Kate: (sang) Whatever there is.

Stan: (thining up for another run) I fancy ham and eggs.

Kate: No ham.

Stan: Eggs.

Kate: One left.

Pause.

Stan: Tell you what. Kate. You go out. Buy some more ham — and some more eggs. Bring them back here, and I’ll cook them.

Kate: No. Stanley. You go out and buy them. Bring them back and cook them.
Miracle arise; that sums me up. (Turns bun to audience and lifts kits for a quick flash) Enjoy that did yer? Well, enjoy it while you can. Nineteen Fourteen. You'll be out there soon. you sons of Australia, shaking the shit from your shoes, eating rat pie, tossing in the trenches. We're here comes a whirl hang! Oooh! A bit of a shrapnel up the kit (does funny walk) and bang goes yer whizzers — and yer prospects. (Shouts) What about your prospects Kate? Things still going well for you in America? Kate is writing. Stan enters, skittish.

Stan: I say, Kate, mate! Kate: Go away, Stanley. I'm writing. Stan: (leaning over pretending to read) Dear Muvver, I miss you a lot — and the sheep — but I have found the love of a good man called Stan. Kate: Get away, you larrakin. Stan: Larry Who? Kate: I'm writing to Ted, my brother. Stan: Poor Ted. Kate: He's joined up. Stan: I hope he is. Otherwise he'll leave bits of himself all over the place. Kate: He's going to fight. Mother will miss him.

Stan: (sings serious)
Oh mother, I'm going to fight for the King.
Oh mother, the bells are ringing, the drums do sound.
In a month and a half I'll be lain in the ground.
I have found the love of a good man called Stan.
I say play them! (Kate and Stan half heartedly pretend to play the brooms)
Stan: We might not even go... Kate: And then we'll march you back... Stan: We'll march you to Gallipoli and the Somme... And maybe we'll march you back... Kate: That is not a trombone! I know what he said. Stan: That is a broom! I know what he said.

D'yer want ter join the army, D'yer want ter fight the Hun? D'yer want a go at Johnny Turk? Yer'll have a gang of fun!

Kate: Then lift yer trusty rifle and Yarmouth bent, And march you to Gallipoli And then we'll march you back.

Stan: We'll march you out to Flanders, We'll match you to the Somme, We'll march you strong, and march you long, You Aussies, Scoots, and Pom.

All: We'll be cold in the trenches! We'll freeze from head to toe So, lads, we think, on second thoughts, We might not even go...

Kate: Speaking! Yes, considering our prospects here!

All: (loud) We certainly won't go! Blackout.

END OF ACT I
Ballet '78

William Shoubridge

In Sydney this year from November 2nd to November 4th there will be, in the Opera House, a gathering of all the performing dance companies in Australia brought together under the title of Ballet 78.

Hitherto the series has always played in Canberra under the aegis of the Canberra Times. Just why the change should come about now I'm not sure. Presumably it's because the Opera House offers scope for a larger audience to look at the different companies, it seating more than does the Canberra Theatre.

This year the companies taking part will be the Australian Ballet, the Dance Company (NSW), the Australian Dance Theatre, The Queensland Ballet and the West Australian Ballet. New to the venture this year, and hopefully from now on as a permanent component, will be the Aboriginal Dance Theatre from Arneamland. Only the Dance Company and the Australian Ballet will be presenting works especially created for the event, the other companies offering works that are already within their respective repertoires. Financial difficulties (amongst other things) making it impossible for them to premiere works.

Frankly this depresses me. The original idea for the Ballet Festivals was to act as a showcase for new and/or promising indigenous choreographers. It was an opportunity to see works performed out of the "workshop" situation, to see them and dissect them and to talk with their respective creators. Now it has changed its emphasis onto the companies as such. Now presumably what we will be asked to comment on will be the differing and relative qualities of the dancers within each group and the overall "image" they are projecting. It would seem that there aren't any new faces around worth showing off.

It is also noteworthy that only the national and major state companies are represented, the smaller, eclectic and "fringe" companies like the Dance Exchange and the One Extra Dance Company aren't even getting a look-in.

To a certain extent, even the new works are hardly in the way of being unknown quantities. Graeme Murphy will create something new for the Dance Company and his "style" is already familiar to Sydney, Canberra and Brisbane audiences; the only total unknown (to me at least) is Gerard Sibbritt who'll be choreographing on the Australian Ballet.

Perhaps the various companies don't have faith in the untired choreographers; perhaps they can't find them; perhaps there aren't any. Maybe I'm judging the whole venture in the wrong way. Sydney at least has never seen the companies from Queensland, Western Australia and the Victoria/South Australia shared Australian Dance Theatre
and it will be a fine opportunity for audiences to acquaint themselves with them.

The whole Festival will also be an excellent opportunity for the companies involved to meet, see, and appraise each other—greatly to discuss their differences and similarities; and for critics and Artistic directors to get an indication of where the dance in this country is going at the moment. It isn't very easy. The companies to a great extent work in isolation, there isn't the furious cross-fertilisation there is in France and Germany. It is important to get those involved the chance to formulate their manner and style in their own time and according to their own volition. It can also hold back a lot of growth and inhibit stimulation from other styles and the sense of competition.

A Dance Festival cannot, however, be judged in the same way as say the National Playwrights Conference, the logistics are more involved. It is one thing to sit down and pull apart a script and another thing to create a ballet with a body of dancers out of the air as it were, especially if there is no money. But with works still being picked up and put into a repertoire. One hopes of course that this sort of "work in progress" facet will happen but, within the short space of the Festival, with the bother of setting up the Opera Theatre for the various performances and the time taken up with rehearsals, I doubt if there will be much opportunity.

From what I gather, there is going to be a seminar of sorts during the event where dancers and invited critics (including Clive Barnes) will be able to discuss the works and argue the toss about the state of Australian Dance. As with all kinds of Festival of this sort most of the interesting and fruitful discoveries will be made away from the stage, during those chance discussions and seminars.

On paper it looks like a fairly wide cross section of works are going to be performed at the Dance Festival. The Queensland Ballet, for example, is resurrected in 1976 under Jonathon Taylor will present Flibbertigibbet, a droll piece of knockabout choreographed by Taylor. The ADT is essentially a "modern" company yet one, gathered at least from past evidence on a classical technique. The ADT has a vast repertoire, with some very potent works in its. Flibbertigibbet however doesn't strike me as being either a very worthwhile dance piece or hardly ever doesn't strike me as being either a representative of the ADT.

The Queenslland Ballet, based securely on a strict classical style will present Garth Welch's The Visitor—a piece that's been with them for some time but never seen beyond that state's boundaries. The Queensland Ballet has a wide enough structure to be able to incorporate both such work's as the Bournaonville classic La Sylphide and A Little bit of what you fancy by Lech. The Ballet is being the only subsidised company in Queensland and it is not out of the question to be an eclectic company, Welch's The Visitor merges both contemporary and classical styles within a dramatic framework. Not all companies can or want to manage that, it will be interesting to gauge their degree of success.

The West Australian Ballet will be bringing over Night Songs choreographed by Jacqui Carroll, a person who has already received attention and has choreographed for most of the various companies in Australia. Night Songs is a lyric piece for three boys and six girls according to the minimal explanation offered me by the company and as such presents their entire company on stage.

The Western Australian Ballet, like the Queensland group has to be eclectic, it has to offer a glimpse as many styles and formats as possible. It has to cover an enormous geographic area and for a lot of its audiences, act as their first introduction into the dance world. The company also gives, like all the companies apart from the national one, classes and performances for schools. This company has a repertoire that can spring from the feathery divertissements of Flower Festival at Genzano to the "dramatic" stylizations of Peter Darrell's Prisoners. It, again like the Queensland Ballet is hampered by having to make every performance a mixture of old and new pieces and it has been proven that such erratic backgrounds rarely engender truly creative work.

It is unfair to prejudice of course, but I feel that this Dance Festival, in trying to keep its options open and its spectrum as wide as possible is in danger of being too diffuse to pass as the Chichester Festival. The Dance Company, as I have said, will be presenting a new work by Graeme Murphy, currently the great White Hope of Australian Dance. It is the only one that is offered to chance to be totally contemporary in style and to follow its own light as to what it wants to perform, the style it is going to adopt and to choose the choreographers who are going to shape its definite, perceivable future.

As mentioned earlier, The Aboriginal Dance Theatre has for the first time been invited to perform at a strictly choreographic and graphic Festival. The piece (various tribal dances from Arnhemland) are going to be appraised and judged, for better or for worse purely dance terms. In the past such things have been a token gesture, an unarmed stroll at our native dance heritage. Therefore this appearance is quite a breakthrough for them. The Aboriginal Dance Theatre has hopes of building upon its traditional pieces and gradually getting newly choreographed works mounted especially for them and maybe with time finding choreographic talent within its own ranks. It has a shining example before it of what Arthur Mitchell in America fashioned out of the Dance Theatre of Harlem. Basically Ballet 78 is concerned with the companies it has at hand at the moment. It is trying to find a common arena for all these different styles and performance groups with their unique environment here in Australia. It is not trying to do any ground-breaking at the moment but rather to offer a chance for dancers et al to meet and work together, to air their gripes and to offset the danger of having individual talents working in uprootive isolation.

AUSTRALIAN BALLET

Alan Brissenden

The Board and Management of the Australian Ballet had plenty of reason to feel pleased with certain aspects of the Adelaide season in August of this year. Anne Woolliams' new version of Swan Lake attracted full houses at the Festival Theatre and, more surprisingly, the second week's programme, all modern works, roles won in need of a first dramatically orientated producer to make them aware of the content of those roles, to bring them into rapport with each other and to infuse some sense of urgency into their performances. Ross Stretton and Michela Kirkaldie were in these respects better, particularly Stretton, who even managed to do something with the closing scenes in which the action just fades away, as if Miss Woolliams had had enough of it all halfway through the fourth act and leapt for the ending without enough explanatory steps in between. Kirkaldie is not Kirkaldie but generally performing to the best of her abilities it is a pity she did not manage to bring them into rapport with each other.

On these performances, it appears that the company does not now have a ballerina of sufficient dramatic and technical accomplishment to present Odette-Odile satisfactorily. This despite the fact that in her debut last year, when partnered by Kelvin Coe, Marilyn Rowe gave a performance that was as remarkable for its delicacy in the white acts as it was for its bravura in Act III. As well, in several other aspects, however small, the production has lapsed. The chandeliers in Act III were hanging scattered instead of being focused on the action. Programme II showed the Kylian's Night Songs performance.
Symphony in D is a lasting success, neat, amusing and just right for the zippy classicism that the young dancers of the company can handle well. Falco’s Caravan doesn’t wear so happily; despite Ross Stretton’s zany and lissome performance in the leading role, the ballet is too long and the finish too diffuse. Robbins’s Afternoon of the Fawn had an excellent performance of cool sophistication by Rowe and Norman, soft romanticism by Jones and Burch and too much detachment by Kirkaldie and Sterling.

And the one original work for the whole 1978 season — Graeme Murphy’s Tekton: as the revised version of Poppy has shown, Murphy is a choreographer who needs to be continually working on his ballets while they are in performance. Even though the Australian Ballet flew him to Adelaide for two days’ rehearsal before it went on, Tekton is still, as it was at its premiere in Sydney, a rather muddled work, with too little clear direction of thought and too much aimless running around. It was as if the choreographer, given so many people to use, felt he had to do something, anything, with them, but hadn’t worked out just what. The most exciting Australian choreographer at present, Murphy was nevertheless not the right choice for the Australian Ballet this year. (Jacquie Carroll’s Lotos-eaters for the Australian Dance Theatre is far more satisfying than Tekton, more thoroughly thought out, more economical, more complete.) Not that Tekton is an utter failure; the choreography for the two leading couples particularly is characteristically interesting and inventive, and received fine performances.

But with just one work in a whole year, where is the encouragement to the development of dance in Australia that there should be? Just one work in a whole year which includes revivals of Fille Mal Gardée, and Coppélia and a blockbuster Spartacus by a visiting choreographer — an appalling record for the national company. It is bad for the audiences, bad for the dancers, who are getting no infusion of creative ideas, and bad for the state of dance in the country as a whole.

In his report for 1974, the company Administrator, Peter Bahen, remarked, ‘It is essential that new and experimental works should be introduced from time to time. Like oysters or asparagus these may need an acquired taste. But it is up to us to see that the public is given a chance to acquire this taste as painlessly as possible. Otherwise we would be falling down on our job’. Four years later he had changed his view, saying that the dancers are classically trained, that the public has shown ‘a marked preference for the traditional classical and romantic story ballets’. He went on, ‘We cannot afford to disregard their wishes. This does not mean that we have constantly to repeat ourselves and concentrate only on 19th century works. Certain contemporary pieces based on the classical technique, such as Onegin or Romeo and Juliet, The Merry Widow and The Display, and indeed such masterpieces as Glenn Tetley’s Gemini and John Butler’s Threshold, both based on a “free” technique will always be part of our repertoire. But whether we should also be doing the way-out type of modern experimental work (sometimes consisting of obscure plot, cacophonous music, contortions and writhings) seems more and more questionable.

Particularly as, in recent years, a number of developing State dance groups who employ modern techniques such as those of Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham have been catering for audiences with a taste for the avant-garde. We should not try to compete, for instance, with the Australian Dance Theatre in Melbourne and Adelaide or with the Dance Company of New South Wales. But it is absurd to think of the Australian Ballet with its 63 regular and six guest artists, ‘competing’ with either the Dance Company NSW or the Australian Dance Theatre, each of which has fewer than 20 dancers.

The Australian Ballet is the one national touring company, the only one to be seen in all States and abroad. It must accept its responsibility to develop ballet in all its aspects, to inform instead of merely indulging the current taste of its audience, and to fulfil the obligations of its subsidy to advance the art which it serves. The new Artistic Director has a significant and challenging task, and must be supported in a forward looking policy by the Board and Administration if the company is once more to succeed artistically as well as financially.

Alan Brissenden is dance critic of the Adelaide Advertiser.
AUSTRALIAN
DANCE THEATRE

Alan Brissenden

The revitalized Australian Dance Theatre celebrated its first anniversary with a two weeks season in June at the Festival Centre's Playhouse, the best theatre in Adelaide to see this company. And, before the end of the fortnight, audiences had begun to build in a way which showed that these dancers were at last gaining the attention and understanding that their achievement demands.

They made their first appearance in May 1977 at the children's festival, 'Come Out', with a lively presentation of dance history, The Rise to Fame of Vaslav Smith, which is now a regular part of their programme for schools. But their real debut was at the Playhouse in June, with an ambitious season of three programmes, the repertoire completely English — ten new and reproduced works by the Artistic Director, Jonathan Taylor, and his chief assistants, Joseph Scoglio and Julia Blakie, and two by other former Ballet Rambert colleagues Christopher Bruce and Norman Morrice. There was no doubt in the minds of anyone seeing them then that the new company was already technically polished, well-groomed and intelligently able to express the content as well as the form of the works they were presenting, but audiences were thin.

After appearing with the other Australian companies in Ballet '77 in Canberra, the Australian Dance Theatre toured country districts in Victoria and South Australia — it is funded jointly by both states — and made its Melbourne debut in October, distinguished by Jonathan Taylor's new Australian work Bull Creek. Developing his intention to encourage local choreography, in November Taylor mounted a workshop season of seven new ballets in the Space, which produced an outstanding work by Jacqui Carroll, which should go into the repertoire, a successful comic ballet by Julia Cotton and a fast moving, lightweight piece by the visiting American Sara Sugihara. Only one of the seven, Tony Strachan's pretentious expression of Australian attitudes to women, was a failure. Cheryl Stock's experiment with electronic sound created by the dancers as they moved on wired platforms was interesting rather than effective, but Pamela Buckman's solo for Joe Scoglio showed a choreographer in the making. The development of choreographers within the company will be slow and mistakes must be allowed to be made, but this season was a fine start.

Jonathan Taylor's dances for Tippett's Midsummer Marriage at the Adelaide Festival in March this year were a dazzling highlight of the opera, even though they did not bring out clearly enough the female predulatory quality called for in the sexual relationship represented. The dances will unfortunately never be repeated because they were choreographed for a particular stage setting — a setting extremely dangerous to dance on, composed as it was of a series of tilted circular ramps, covered with hessian, rising from a highly-polished, slippery stage floor. Taylor in his choreography and the dancers in their performance coped so superbly with these extremes that one reviewer of the opera declared that the set was obviously designed for them. (It was not: two of the dancers had injuries during the brief season.)

The company's own Festival season was a disappointment, as William Shoubridge has already noticed in an earlier Theatre Australia, and Taylor himself admits to some regret, while pointing out that people would like to get from America, such as Jetley, Elliot Feld or Twyla Tharp, are all very busy and very expensive. Next year Christopher Bruce is coming to produce one of his current works, Black Angels, and choreograph another on the company. Bruce's Weekend and Wings are already among the most durable of the company's repertoire, and it was especially good to see Wings again in the most recent Playhouse season. Its images of flight, its transmuting of relationships by putting them into an avian instead of a human mode, have an effect which is both disquieting and reassuring. It reaches into the deeper recesses of consciousness in the way that great art and music does.

The other repertoire works in the two programmes were Flibbertigibbet, enriched with more matter, and even better than before, Bull Creek, given for the first time in Adelaide and, in retrospect, satisfactory rather than stunning, Star's End, not seen since Ballet Victoria's final tour, and Listen to the Music, a macabre, really funny work which has gained with increased performance. The value of building the repertoire and nurturing the company as an ensemble is becoming very clear.

New in the first programme was Womb Walk, Julia Blakie's second work for the company, which has been included in the Melbourne season ending on 2 September. The music, The Body, is by Ron Geesin and Roger Walters, of Pink Floyd, but the ballet begins with the sound of a body being dragged along a floor. A heavily pregnant young woman and her husband are on stage and are gently assailed by a group of characters (called the 'Jumblies' by the choreographer) who represent the spiritual, outer regions of the couple's emotions and memories. The body is taken away then returns, having had her child: the man becomes absorbed in himself, so that there is a separation between them. The image of isolation develops as the man is enfolds in a silk cloth by three others and then bundled up on a table towards the back of the stage. The woman is left surrounded by her own feelings and ideas, but she is reunited with the man again and they are taken by the six other dancers who sit them down on a comfy lounge in front of the telly, give them cups of tea and go off. Surprisingly and amusingly the television set blows up. Left to themselves — their memories.
emotions and other selves outside the room — they turn to each other and kiss.

In developing her theme of human relationships Julia Blaikie spends too much time on arranging movement for its own sake and not enough on refining the expression of her ideas through the movement. The ballet has been shortened since its first performance, however, and the images may have become more sharply defined, but it is still rather fluffy and undeniably lightweight. Michael Pearce’s pastel costumes and scrim walls, which finally drop down to separate the couple’s reality from their non-material selves, are in tune with the gentle air of the work as a whole.

There is more intellectual toughness in The Lotos Eaters, Jacqui Carroll’s new work, choreographed to early Webern music (four of the ‘Five Movements for String Orchestra, Op 5’; ‘Passacaglia, Op 1’ and Nos 3 and 4 of the ‘Six Pieces for Orchestra, Op 6’), which had its premiere on 27 June. It begins with six dancers lying apart from one another on a darkened stage, curled around coils of rope which ascend to the flies. A man and a woman, separate from the group, gradually bestir themselves and dance together, languourously, emotionally almost passive. The ropes are drawn up so that they dangle, just more than head high. The others emerge from their torpor one by one and relationships seem to begin to form. The men swing the girls on the ropes gently. Passions almost rise, but never to more than smouldering point, conflicts develop, but fail to reach a climax. The principal pair are left alone on the stage. The man clowns, hanging upside down on the rope. The others return, the conflicts are renewed but suddenly the ropes fall with an ominous rattle and the dancers are left almost, it seems, unsupported. They sink to the ground again.

This satisfying and haunting ballet, which Melbourne may have to wait until January 1979 to see, is performed with sensitivity and extraordinary control by a group led by John Nobbs and Julia Blaikie. The choreographer, responding with great delicacy to the music, plays the dancers and the audience like a taut string of elastic, now tightening, now relaxed, using a range of movements which blend into one another so subtly that the patterns seem continuously evolving, yet each section being allowed to be complete in itself. Like Wings, The Lotos Eaters is a work which will become richer in its evocations with succeeding performances.

Between its Adelaide and Melbourne seasons, the Australian Dance Theatre had the most successful country tour by a dance group in South Australia and Western Victoria in recent years, perhaps ever. In South Australia the sponsoring Arts Council was delighted with the average attendance of 348; the five towns visited were Port Lincoln, Whyalla, Broken Hill (NSW), Loxton and Millicent. At Mildura, in northwest Victoria, people had to be turned away and two performances were planned there on the next tour: Portland, Robinvale and Horsham were the other Victorian centres visited and after its Melbourne season the company went on to Albury, Shepparton and Bendigo.

It would seem that the country is being more perceptive than the city in its appreciation, but word is gradually reaching those who enjoy dance and they are discovering that the Australian Dance Theatre really is good. After dancing in Brisbane for the first time and giving a Young Choreographers’ season at its own Balcony Theatre in Adelaide the company joins everybody else at the Sydney Opera House for Ballet ‘78 before returning to Melbourne for a season at the National Theatre, 13-25 November, this time a workshop programme. But don’t be fooled — the Adelaide ‘Workshop’ season at the Space last year was a full professional performance of new works, and all but one of them was worth presenting, and worth seeing.
The New York City Ballet

William Shoubridge

New York, it would seem, has these days gone dance mad. There are now over five thousand disquothiques in this city from the plush, Lanvin-scented glossiness of Studio 54 and Regine's to the scruffy little lofts in Soho or up in the Upper West Side. The Turning Point is one of the highest grossing films in the city (along with Saturday Night Fever) and two of the highest grossing shows on Broadway are A Chorus Line (still) and Bob Fosse's new show Dancin' (of which more later).

Just peruse some of the daily listings at the Ticketron outlets (you can't scan the papers of course at the moment) and on any one day there are over thirty different dance performances you can attend. There is always an overseas ballet company enscouted somewhere, from the Royal Ballet doing a tour of the US or the Ballet of the 20th century at the Felt Forum. There are small "experimental" one man/one woman shows at those self same Soho and Upper West Side lofts and Dance Umbrella Festivals in Central Park.

There, as always, right in the middle of it all at the core of it is the resident crown in the jewellery, the New York City Ballet. It has been there so long that many people began to take it for granted and a few years ago the NYCB was passing a crisis with musicians strikes and falling subscriptions. That has changed (except for the strike), the black market is having a field day in tickets to the New York City Ballet there is a constant queue at the State Theatre box office and why?

Because the NYCB has a "Staff Dancer" one of the greatest male dancers in the world today and one of the stars of The Turning Point, Mikhail Barishnikov.

NYCB audiences these days are strangely divided. There are those who have stuck with the company for years, knowing it to be one of the best in the world, and there are those people, the uproarious renegades from the American Ballet Theatre, who have transferred their affection to the City company and are there to swoon when Barishnikov makes even the slightest flick of his hand in the back row of the cast of say, Symphony in C. These swooners are outraged at the fact that Barishnikov is in the sell same back row of Symphony in C: his place is on an empty stage alone they will tell you, not scaling down his talents to fit in with much lesser dancers. But this is what Barishnikov expected when he first joined the company (along with tendinitis), it was not expected, ever, that the staff dancer. The thing that comes first in mind when you mention NYCB is the NYCB and the NYCB is the choreography of George Balanchine (and Jerome Robbins).

The fact is however that Barishnikov is such a great talent that he can't be in the back row long, already he dances the lead part of Franz in Coppelia and is learning a part in Robbins' Dances at a Gathering. He is in fact a principal, not a corps member. But when it comes to that miracle of team work and group precision, Agon, he must bend his talent along with the rest, bury personal magnetism and become a glass through which the glory of the movement becomes paramount.

"I am thirty now so there are a few years left", said Barishnikov when he first announced that he would be joining NYCB. "I had the same (Leningrad Kirov) training that Balanchine himself had, I just want to dance the great works that Mr B has created".

There is always the hope that Mr B will create great new works on him, but here the downcast say Kirov training is phenomenal. There is also the hope that Mr B will create great new works on him, but here the downcast say Kirov training is phenomenal. There is also the hope that Mr B will create great new works on him, but here the downcast say Kirov training is phenomenal. There is also the hope that Mr B will create great new works on him, but here the downcast say Kirov training is phenomenal. There is also the hope that Mr B will create great new works on him, but here the downcast say Kirov training is phenomenal. There is also the hope that Mr B will create great new works on him, but here the downcast say Kirov training is phenomenal. There is also the hope that Mr B will create great new works on him, but here the downcast say Kirov training is phenomenal. There is also the hope that Mr B will create great new works on him, but here the downcast say Kirov training is phenomenal. There is also the hope that Mr B will create great new works on him, but here the downcast say Kirov training is phenomenal. There is also the hope that Mr B will create great new works on him, but here the downcast say Kirov training is phenomenal. There is also the hope that Mr B will create great new works on him, but here the downcast say Kirov training is phenomenal. There is also the hope that Mr B will create great new works on him, but here the downcast say Kirov training is phenomenal. There is also the hope that Mr B will create great new works on him, but here the downcast say Kirov training is phenomenal. There is also the hope that Mr B will create great new works on him, but here the downcast say Kirov training is phenomenal. There is also the hope that Mr B will create great new works on him, but here the downcast say Kirov training is phenomenal. There is also the hope that Mr B will create great new works on him, but here the downcast say Kirov training is phenomenal. There is also the hope that Mr B will create great new works on him, but here the downcast say Kirov training is phenomenal. There is also the hope that Mr B will create great new works on him, but here the downcast say Kirov training is phenomenal. There is also the hope that Mr B will create great new works on him, but here the downcast say Kirov training is phenomenal. There is also the hope that Mr B will create great new works on him, but here the downcast say Kirov training is phenomenal. There is also the hope that Mr B will create great new works on him, but here the downcast say Kirov training is phenomenal. There is also the hope that Mr B will create great new works on him, but here the downcast say Kirov training is phenomenal. There is also the hope that Mr B will create great new works on him, but here the downcast say Kirov training is phenomenal. There is also the hope that Mr B will create great new works on him, but here the downcast say Kirov training is phenomenal. There is also the hope that Mr B will create great new works on him, but here the downcast say Kirov training is phenomenal. There is also the hope that Mr B will create great new works on him, but here the downcast say Kirov training is phenomenal. There is also the hope that Mr B will create great new works on him, but here the downcast say Kirov training is phenomenal. There is also the hope that Mr B will create great new works on him, but here the downcast say Kirov training is...
Dance all the way from balletic pageantry (not very well done), right through courtship tangos and disco jive. A high spirited show, a happy antidote to the heavy message of *A Chorus Line*.

I left New York elated but tired with the pizzazz of the place and headed off to Europe (Germany) to see Bejart’s company, The Hamburg Ballet and Chereau’s production of Wagner’s *Ring* at the Bayreuth Festival, but that will all have to wait till next month.

Peter Martins as Franz in the Balanchine/Danilova *Coppelia*

Photo: Martha Swope
Problem month for AO: Seymour and UNSW successes

After the long string of early season triumphs reported previously in these columns, it was possibly only to be expected that the Australian Opera would falter a little during September — and so it did. No new productions were premiered during the month, only revivals of La Bohème and that old warhorse of a double bill, Mascagni's Cavalleria Rusticana and Leoncavallo's Pagliacci. Neither opening night was anything like an unequivocal success, and things, in the case of La Bohème at least, were destined to get a good deal worse before they got better.

This year's AO Mimi, Leona Mitchell, copped an unwarranted share of the blame in some critical quarters for the failure of this series of Bohèmes to succeed dramatically at opening. No doubt her performance improved as the production settled in, along with everyone else's; but she was far from solely responsible for the shortcomings of the first night. Much of the evening her Rodolfo, Lamberto Furlan, seemed more interested in what was going on in the third row of the dress circle than in her failing health which must be, after all, a focal point of any thoroughly successful Bohème. The horseplay among the bohemians, a vital foil to the serious side of the piece, barely convinced in the first act and not at all in Act IV, where it is even more important dramatically. Things were not helped by the fact that Alan Light's Alcindoro was not in good voice, an indisposition which clearly muted Etela Piha's Musetta.

Before I returned to a matinee of La Bohème on September 23, both Furlan and the scheduled Marcello for the entire season, John Pringle, had been temporarily floored by illness. Pringle was recovered by the matinee, as was Light; and Anson Austin, finished by this stage with his thoroughly successful series of Alfredos in La Traviata, was playing Rodolfo to great effect. He still has some way to go before he could be deemed a thoroughly relaxed actor, but he was certainly conveying the impression on this occasion that he cared about Mimi; and he was relating to the other bohemians; and he was singing very well indeed.

This year's conductor, Mark Elder, clearly did not have enough rehearsal time before opening to get Bohème to the level of excellence he would have liked, and there were musical flaws then which had been ironed out thoroughly by my second visit. It is to be hoped this talented young Englishman, who cut his opera conducting teeth in Australia a few years ago as a protege of Edward Downes, can be attracted back to Australia regularly over the next few years, for there is no doubt he is an extremely positive influence on the standards of the Australian Opera.

The revivals of Cavalleria Rusticana and Pagliacci, under the direction of Bernd Bendaak were plagued by illness and uncertainty in the rehearsal period, particularly in the tenor department where Robin Donald and his father, Donald Smith, were scheduled to share the limelight.

Donald did sing at a special pre-premiere performance, but was struck down between then and the official first night, forcing Reginald Byers to fill in on very short notice the night after filling in for Lamberto Furlan as Rodolfo in La Bohème. One must sympathise with him for having to perform two such major roles on consecutive nights when he had not been scheduled to sing either this year, and in the event he only managed to get through them with
extensive assistance from the prompter. Even allowing for that, though, the lack of dramatic tension between Byers' Turiddu and his Santuzza, Elizabeth Gretwell, was monumental. Both made some nice sounds, but never did the melodrama of the piece approach the gripping level which it must if this opera is to succeed as theatre.

Indeed, this performance lingers in my mind mostly for the excellent Alfio of Neville Wilkie, who sang very well indeed and came up with the most convincing acting performance I have yet seen from him. He has been mostly languishing in the chorus since leaving the Queensland Opera Company to join the AO, and certainly made much of this opportunity.

The Pagliacci was infinitely more successful all round than the first half of this double bill. Donald Smith, despite one or two worrying sounds early in the piece, proved to be in fine vocal form overall and as thoroughly convincing dramatically as ever in what is unarguably one of his best roles. The old thrilling Smith sound has lost none of its impact during his recent period of semi-retirement, and it is to be hoped we will be seeing more of him on stage in the next couple of years than we did in the last couple. In this regard, it is welcome to note that he is scheduled to sing both Dick Johnson in Puccini's Girl of the Golden West and Florestan in Fidelio with the national company next year.

John Shaw was in excellent form also as Tonio on the opening night of Pagliacci, but its overall interest and success were particularly enhanced by Elea Piha's Nedda. Hers is not a large or sumptuous or particularly beautiful voice; but it is accurate and not unpleasing, and she is an excellent actress. This has always made her Musetta in La Boheme a pleasing contrast to Mimi's voluptuous sounds, and — though she is the only female of importance in Pagliacci — suits the part of Nedda as well. In particular, the denouement had more impact than any previous production of this piece I have seen because of the explicit way in which Piha conveyed fear of Canio's rising passion at an earlier stage of the play within the opera.

Smith, of course, is himself marvellous at portraying the barely controlled mounting hysteria of Canio through an alternation of explosive barely controlled gestures. Unlike most Neddas I have seen, Piha appeared to be an excellent actress. This has always made her Musetta in La Boheme a pleasing contrast to Mimi's voluptuous sounds, and — though she is the only female of importance in Pagliacci — suits the part of Nedda as well. In particular, the denouement had more impact than any previous production of this piece I have seen because of the explicit way in which Piha conveyed fear of Canio's rising passion at an earlier stage of the play within the opera.

Smith, of course, is himself marvellous at portraying the barely controlled mounting hysteria of Canio through an alternation of sudden violent movements and seething explosive barely controlled gestures. Unlike most Neddas I have seen, Piha appeared to be legitimately scared to death at her husband's state of mind; composed herself tellingly for the few bars just before her demise where she consciously attempts to divert Canio by stepping aggressively back into her pretend role.

Paul Ferris was also an interesting newcomer to the secondary role of Ruggiero/Harlequin. Carlo Felice Cillario, to whose lot it has fallen to portray the barely controlled mounting hysteria of Canio through an alternation of explosive barely controlled gestures. Unlike most Neddas I have seen, Piha appeared to be an excellent actress. This has always made her Musetta in La Boheme a pleasing contrast to Mimi's voluptuous sounds, and — though she is the only female of importance in Pagliacci — suits the part of Nedda as well. In particular, the denouement had more impact than any previous production of this piece I have seen because of the explicit way in which Piha conveyed fear of Canio's rising passion at an earlier stage of the play within the opera.

Donald Smith (Canio) in the AO's Pagliacci.
Photo: William Moseley.

Benthaak's handling of the crowds in Cav: the children, devout girls and rascally boys, in particular. Pag too was different in detail though not spectacularly originally so. Desmond Digby's 1972 designs for both productions continue to wear very well indeed, proving themselves therapeutically adaptable to any directorial interpretation that may be superimposed on them.

Benthaak was also director of the brief series of performances of Verdi's Luisa Miller presented by Roger Covell's University of New South Wales Opera early in October. By and large, John Roberts' designs were good, though one could perhaps have done without the superfluous cross on stage right and hoped for more explicit visual recognition of the castle/peasant dichotomy that is so vital to the dramatic structure of the piece. The set was ingenious in the way it unfolded to reveal the interior of Miller's cottage; intriguingly semi-abstract for the decorative circles and vertical pipework that framed the performing area, a little confusing for the upstage shield that dominated the action throughout, apparently intended to symbolise the aristocratic father of the male romantic lead and Miller in turn, but not altered consistently enough to coincide with the demands of the moment.

The vocal and acting honors of this production were shared by Lyall Beven as Miller and Beverley Bergen as Luisa. I had not previously encountered Beven, and found his stage presence absolutely oozing the integrity the role demands, as well, he radiated the full-throated baritone warmth that characterises so many Verdi fathers. I also enjoyed Bergen's Luisa for the same reason: vocally, she was in fine form, dramatically unflappable in her portrayal of the conflict of filial obeisance and love for her chosen man.

Less successful was John Main's Rodolfo, which was markedly thin of vocal sound and stiffer of dramatic manner than one would have liked. Neal Easton's Wurm was realised excellently in its overall parameters, but could have done with a little more explicit self-assurance and vocal power. Penelope Bruce's Duchess Federica was excellent, both vocally and dramatically.

Rhys Daniel's Count Walter lacked the stature necessary to contrast effectively with Beven's Miller. Roger Covell's musical direction was less visually flamboyant than it has been sometimes in the past, but the results — aided by his usual talented contingent of Sydney Symphony Orchestra and ex-SSO players in the wind departments — were musically most stimulating.

Perhaps the ultimate accolade that can be paid to such an intrinsically shoestring budget performance of a relatively little known work by a great composer is that it can display the merit of the piece so clearly as to prompt wonder at its neglect by performing companies with greater resources; and this Luisa Miller did just that.

Benthaak's production, while in general excellent, worried me here and there for an excessive tendency to require actions to beat time to the music, and for permitting the scenes set in Miller's cottage to overflow their logical visual parameters by spilling over into the no-man's land of the central stage area.

Finally, brief mention must be made of that rapidly rising star of Sydney's musical firmament, the Seymour Group, for its realisation of Stravinsky's The Soldier's Tale late in September. This was only the last part of a triple bill featuring also a new piece by Alison Bauld and the concert debut of Carl Vine's music for Graeme Murphy's highly successful dance piece, Poppy, which was performed so memorably by the NSW Dance Company earlier this year.

Though some attempts were made to make the opening two-thirds of this programme into legitimate music theatre, and the Pitt Street Congregational Church is a marvellously evocative venue, the Bauld piece never really took off and the Poppy suite clearly needs tightening up and perhaps reorganisation if it is ever to win a legitimate place for itself out of its original fully danced context.

Blessed by a superlative interpreter of the spoken text, Natalie Bate, and a couple of fine instrumental soloists, notably Jill Pereira on the ideally important violin, the Soldier's Tale which formed the final third of this program was well worth waiting through the other two. It did not bother me for a moment that Bate, a female, was entrusted with portraying the soldier and the devil and the narrator — all of whom might quite properly be assumed to be male. Apart altogether from considerations related to a male chauvinist piggery, she was such a superlative performer as to transcend any considerations of mere sex.

There were admittedly flaws, some rather blatant, in the instrumental backing, but at no stage was the performance result, under the direction of Vincent Phuah, less than acceptable. Its overall impact was memorable.
Many people will have expected Tom Haydon's film, *The Last Tasmanian*, to be found on the nation's television screens rather than in the commercial cinema where it is now appearing. But Haydon obviously sees it as a film rather than a television documentary, and it is slowly making its way around Australia, from West End in Hobart to the Longford in Melbourne to the Opera House Music Room in Sydney, and so on. It is a film which, if it becomes a popular success, will have depended on word of mouth support rather than advertising hype. Even if Artis Productions, which made it, could have afforded the big splash, such a splash would have been quite unsuitable to the subject.

The subject. Well, as the title does somewhat more than hint, the film is about a dark period in the history of the colony when the curious stone age people of Tasmania were at the mercy of sealers and convicts and soldiers and settlers and bureaucrats with the result that they disappeared off the face of the earth. The author of the last round-up was the egregious George Augustus Robinson, called the Conciliator, appointed to settle differences between the European residents of Tasmania — which was even wilder and rockier and more cut-off than it is now — and the Aborigines.

Robinson was a do-gooder; he was the son of a bricklayer, a non-conformist lay preacher from the east end of London, raised above his station (as how many public servants since) by circumstance. He thought it his duty to Christianise and educate the three hundred natives who were left of the four thousand or so who had been around thirty years earlier. He settled them on Flinders Island, for their own good, gave them new names and left them there till 1847, when only forty four survived.

These forty four were transferred to Oyster Cove, near Hobart. They died off, in miserable circumstances and in 1869 there was only one, Truganini. Seven years later she too was dead.

Truganini's life is well documented, and Haydon's film is not really about her. It is about what happens to weak people who get in the way of strong people and it is also about the long painful meticulous search in which a Welsh-Australian archeologist and pre historian, thirty six years old Dr Rhys Jones, with his colleague Jim Allen, found out about the mysterious Aborigines of Tasmania, their way of life and the probable reasons for the fact that their evolution had become "fixed" several thousand years behind that of the mainland Aborigines.

Rhys Jones and Haydon, with Artis money and contributions from the Tasmanian Film Corporation, the Australian Film Commission, the BBC, the French government and a French production organisation, not to mention Cadbury-Schweppes, put together an extraordinarily interesting and moving film, without actors (although Rhys Jones can make quite an histrionic effect by simply walking towards a midden on the coast) but rather with a combination of landscape, old drawings and photographs and much appalling historical data, offered without sensational flourish.

The Tasmanian Aborigines had originally had a rather nice relationship with foreigners. In 1802 Napoleon sent an expedition to explore and perhaps lay claim to the territory, in the mood of conquest. A doctor and naturalist named Francois Peron filled his diary with descriptions of the blacks, and collected 100,000 animal specimens (among them 2,500 hitherto unknown species). An artist, Nicholas-Martin Petit, made pen and ink portraits of the Aborigines and the animals.

These drawings are wonderfully attractive. The blacks are not depicted as really black, but cocoa-brown, with long graceful limbs, woolly hair, and slanting eyes which hold a glint of a smile. There is often a sly expression on their large mouths upturned at the corners. They wore no clothes.

The Last Tasmanian was made in English, French and Welsh, the last an amiable eccentricity of Rhys Jones, who speaks the language. Artis Productions had to take this on trust, as nobody was able to check what he was saying.

It had a world premiere on the BBC in prime time last June and has been sold in the US, Canada, France, the Scandinavian countries, eastern Europe and Yugoslavia.

Tom Haydon's kind of film-making — *The Talpai Skull*, *Dig a Million*, *Make a Million*, *Beyond the Black Stump* — is minus picturesque or cosy appeal, and his name is by no means familiar to his countrymen. Or wasn't, until now.
Film Australia
Interpreting Australia At Home and Everywhere

THE FILM MAKERS

Film Australia is the production arm of the Australian Film Commission and operates from studios at Lindfield near Sydney. Its films tell Australians about themselves, the world about Australia and Australia about the world.

The studio complex contains editing rooms, sound stage, theatres, dubbing suites and has a staff of over 130. It is capable of film production of considerable magnitude. Outside film sound stage, theatres, dubbing suites and has a government-department sponsored, gained a Australian Film Commission and operates from documentary to short instructional films. About twenty-five audio visual programs are also produced each year.

Film Australia’s productions have won a great number of prizes and citations in international competition. In 1977, an animated film, Leisure, government-department sponsored, gained a Hollywood Academy Award. Between July 1977 and June 1978 eighteen international and nine Australian awards were won. In August of this year a Film Australia production the Growing Up series took the major prize in the documentary category of the 1978 Australian Film Awards.

A number of these films were government-department sponsored and are an important part of Film Australia’s on-going program. They can include programs on administration and training, road safety, Aboriginal affairs, social and health services, drug abuse, immigration, environment, management and defence subjects. In addition, with funds voted annually by Parliament, Film Australia produces its own National Program on far-ranging subjects relevant to Australian life which include history, education, microscopy, fauna and flora, tourism, sport, music, art, sociology, environment, ethnography and archival filming.

ASIAN NEIGHBOURS

Over the past eight years, Film Australia has produced a series of films on Asia as part of its National Program to acquaint Australians with the life-styles of her near neighbours. The Asian Neighbours series includes films on Indonesia, Thailand and India. It has been widely acclaimed for its capacity — without editorialising — to give an understanding of the subleties of different cultures. By attention to detail based on careful research, the films have an inner truth which enables audiences to make up their own minds about what they are seeing.

FILM AUSTRALIA IN CHINA

China is now to be part of the Asian Neighbours series. A Film Australia team, headed by director Bob Kingsbury, is currently making one of the most comprehensive group of human interest films ever attempted in China. The team has been given the opportunity to cover in depth and variety aspects of China hitherto unseen by both Western and Chinese audiences.

Preparation for Film Australia’s China project included the producer, Suzanne Baker, studying the Chinese language for two years and many months of research by herself and director Bob Kingsbury before they visited China earlier this year. Film Australia asked to be allowed to film each subject in a different area in order to give an idea of the variety of China’s landscape. This request was substantially met. Five of the films are approximately twenty-seven minutes long with a sixth, a language teaching film, ten minutes.

THE RUSSIANS

In 1977, with the unprecedented cooperation of the Soviet State Committee for Radio and Television, Film Australia made The Russians on locations throughout the Soviet Union. This is a series of three documentary feature length films for television release. The purpose of these films is to answer the simple question: How do the ordinary Russians live? The first film deals with the life of people living in cities. The second with rural life and life in the New Frontier, Siberia.

The third deals with three important people — the people who exert great influence on ordinary Russians: the director of a coal mine in the Don Basin, the secretary of the Communist Party of a gravel-washing enterprise in Siberia and the Trade Union Chairman of a refrigerator factory in Minsk. The Russians was produced by Tom Manefield and John Abbott and directed by Arch Nicholson.

The final part of the series takes viewers out of the cities for a remarkable no-holds-barred look at one of the most sensitive and controversial aspects of Soviet Society-life on the Collective Farm.

NOTABLE PRODUCTIONS 1977-1978

Other notable productions during 1977-1978 include the three telefeatures Cass, A Good Thing Going and Say You Want Me. These drama telefeatures were made as co-productions with the Channel 9 Network.

HOSPITALS DON’T BURN DOWN (24 minutes) is a disturbingly realistic film about a fire in a high-rise hospital made as a training film for the Department of Veterans Affairs. It has stimulated nation-wide and overseas interest and sales, and has won awards at international festivals. It is a Film Australia production made by Kingcroft Productions Pty Ltd.

THE CLAIM (83 minutes) Concerns some of the processes of industrial negotiations. In a vividly dramatic form the progress of a log of claims is followed from its inception in the workplace, through its many stages of direct negotiation with the employers, or through the processes of Conciliation and Arbitration. Produced by Film Australia for Australian Trade Union Training Authority.

BELONGING (89 minutes) is a film intended for students in the social sciences and intimately portrays the lives of four men in a small New South Wales country town, and their rituals of friendship and association.

THE AUSTRALIAN EYE SERIES, NO 1 (5 films — 45 minutes) was produced in collaboration with the Art Gallery of New South Wales and the Art Gallery Society of New South Wales. These films examine in detail five important Australian paintings.

A SMALL BODY OF STILL WATER (16 minutes) A fresh water pond, a small body of still water, looks lifeless until examined under the microscope. Dietmar Fill (director/ cameraman) by the use of microscopic photography, looks deep into a pond and produces a fascinating film on the life in and around its edge.

At the 1978 Australian Cinematographers’ Society Awards Dietmar Fill won the “MILLI” — Cinematographer of the Year Award, and the Tripod Award in Category Two for his distinguished work on A Small Body of Still Water.

WHERE THE FILMS GO

Film Australia’s product is sold and distributed through the Marketing and Distribution Branch of the Australian Film Commission to cinemas, television, libraries, schools, universities and colleges, government departments and other interested outlets. Copies are lodged with all State and educational libraries and with the National Library. Videotapes of films are available for purchase and licences for videotape multi-copying are negotiable. World distribution is handled by representatives in New York and London and by agents in other countries. Australian diplomatic and trade missions have prints available for screening, as do many libraries throughout the world.

Rozamund Waring
Director of Film Australia’s China series, Bob Kingsbury.

THEATRE AUSTRALIA NOVEMBER 1978
Greek for Actors


Yet another translation of The Oresteian Trilogy would usually only stir the arcane imaginations of classical scholars, but this Oresteia is different — from the start it was tied to the theatre. Rush Rehm's translation of The Oresteian Trilogy (Hawthorn 1977) is designated 'a theatre version' meant to be put on stage and not on a library shelf. It should be acted as radical in its implications: 'If the choruses fail the production is doomed.'

Both the translator and the director vigorously and imaginatively pursued these objectives and put themselves on the line by playing the three plays straight through. The production started at 6.30 pm each evening and lasted until 11 pm with an hour break for a meal between the first and second play.

Even before comparing particular speeches from Rehm's version of The Agamemnon with other translations (Philip Vellacott, Louis Macneice) the ribs of this one are clearly pronounced. Rehm utilised the strengths of everyday language interleave with the precision of poetic metaphor and imagery and in addition sought something that could be said and in the saying made alive. Clytemenstra's famous speech describing the beacons which brought the news of Greek Victory home to Greece, fairly jumps off the page as it did in the actual production. It begins with the climactic single utterance: 'Fire!' and bursts forth enacting the passage of the beacons in the alternating lines in which the action, like the light darts from one point to another, they are followed by lines which spread the light till it is picked up in the next line by the next beacon.

But it is in the choruses that Rehm's translation most radically departs from previous versions. He employs two quite distinct poetic styles to render the chorus and these are signalled in this edition by the use of italics. Abandoning the formal structure of metrical response that characterises Greek lyric and the literality which emphasis aphorisms and objective comment, Rehm translated the rhetorical response sections into clear blank verse and as it were set the expressive imagery and rhythm of the music. He was then free to weave complex internal rhythms and weighty words. Even on the page these sections look alive and moving. So in The Eumenides when Orestes calls on Apollo and Athena to defend him for the matricide of Clytemenstra, their response looks like this:

CHORUS Apollo Athena their strength will not save you Damned forgotten your joy gone forever, a bloodless shadow after...
“Few commercial managements have suffered from the financial uncertainties endured by those non-commercial ones who looked to the government or other philanthropic bodies for help. Little stales faster than yesterday’s idealism.”

The chaotic financial meanderings of the Old Tote this year, and, one gathers, the Hole-In-The Wall more recently, make this a startlingly topical comment. Applied to Australian theatre it could have two implications. One is obviously that the whole structure of short-term public funding is uncertain. Theatre companies have often asked for long-term financial commitment from their funding bodies, such as universities used to enjoy, to make planning easier and give it a more secure basis. Whether this would have helped the Tote is another question.

The other is the more alarming thought that there is something endemically wrong with the whole concept of a publicly subsidised theatre which attempts to engage in expansionist commercial activities, as was suggested by Douglas Flintoff in these pages a few months ago. The comment above in fact comes from John Elsom and Nicholas Tomalin’s *The History of the National Theatre* (Jonathan Cape, rrp. $24.80), wherein is discussed the long, tortuous history of the movement for a National Theatre in the UK. It is a book which should be read by everyone interested in theatre here. The issues of the unscrupulous use of the power of subsidy by the government and of the subsidies themselves by the theatres, of artistic freedom versus bureaucratic organisation, of the patronisation in the idea of ‘culture for the people’ have been discussed at length in England for the last 130 years. If Australians were to study the arguments it might clear a lot of dead wood in a public debate to which Mathew Arnold, Harley Granville Barker, Henry Irving, William Archer and others made valuable contributions nearly a century ago. As a brief example there is Barker and Archer’s proposal, which is still of interest. They wanted a rent-free, untaxed company with a large guarantee fund but no further subsidy.

“If a theatre, freed from the burden of rent, etc, cannot at least clear its working expenses season by season, the probable deduction is that the management must either be culpably extravagant or conducted on some mistaken principle. A theatre which appeals to no public or to a very narrow one, cannot be a National Theatre in any sense of the word.”

There was no mention of economic growth.

Also to be mentioned in this shortened review are the *Directory of Australian Music Organisations*, which is a useful reference work published by the Australia Music Centre; *Theatre Profiles/3* (Theatre Communications Group, NY) which is a directory of non-profit professional theatres in the US, giving statistics, a brief history and description of some 150 companies; and *Russian Plays for Young Audiences*, edited by Miriam Norton and published by New Plays, an American firm specialising in plays for children and books about theatre in education.
CANBERRA THEATRE (49-7600)
Canberra Opera
The Magic Flute by Mozart.
Director, Brian Bell; Conductor, Ayis Toomydles; Designer, Quentin Hole with John Main as Tamino.
November 1, 3, 4
Canberra Philharmonic Society
The Fiddler on the Roof.
November 16, 18, 22-25.

CANBERRA YOUTH THEATRE (47-0781)
The Seventh Seal by Ingmar Bergman.
Director, Joe Fleming.
Nov 23-25, 30 - Dec 2.

HIBISCUS THEATRE RESTAURANT
Blue Hat Productions
From Rags to Ritz or Life wasn’t meant to be sleazy. With Gordon Todd, Maureen Adamson, Jili Todd, Tamara Ross, David Bates, Mark Boast and Diane Hayes.
Fridays and Saturdays (continuing).

THEATRE THREE (47-2222)
Canberra Repertory
Martello Towers by Alex Buzo.
Director, Michael Lanchbery; Designer, Russell Brown.
Nov 1-4, 8-11.

TIVOLI THEATRE RESTAURANT (49-1411)
Vaucluse Capers
Fridays and Saturdays (continuing).
For entries contact Margarette Wells on 41-3192.

NEW SOUTH WALES

ACTORS COMPANY (660-2503)
An Evening with Adolf Hitler by Jennifer Compton and Mathew O’Sullivan. Director, Mathew O’Sullivan. To 15 Nov.
Cabaret by Masteroff, Kander and Ebb; with Anne Phelan, designer, Steve Agnew. From 15 Nov.

ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW SOUTH WALES (357-6611)
School Tours: Bennelong Players. West metropolitan area to 17 Nov.
Wayne Roland Brown, multi-instrumentalist, metropolitan area to 17 Nov.
Adult Tours: Mike McCIelian Show — singer, touring with Geraldine Doyle. NSW country area to 26 Nov.

AUSTRALIAN THEATRE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE (699-9322)
Saturday Morning Workshops — National Institute of Dramatic Art, from 10 am to 1 pm. Age limit: 12 to 22, throughout Nov.

AUSTRALIAN BALLET (20588)
Opera Theatre
La Fille mal Gardee, premiere — presented by The Australian Ballet, choreography, Frederick Ashton: music, Ferdinand Herold.
8 Nov to 28 Nov.

BALLET ’78 (20588)
Opera Theatre
The Australian Ballet Festival
Programme 1: Thursday 2 Nov 7.30 pm and Sat 4 Nov 4.30 pm, Aboriginal Dance Groups, The Australian Dance Theatre and The Queensland Ballet.

CANBERRA OPERA
The Magic Flute by Mozart. Wagga 10, 11 Nov.

LES CURRIE PRESENTATIONS (358 5676)
Mike Jackson, folk singer, will tour infant, primary and secondary schools in Western NSW, Riverina and South Coast districts. Throughout Nov.

Modern Mime Theatre with Michael Freeland and Bob Eustace, written and devised by Michael Freeland. Touring infant and primary schools in Sydney metropolitan area. Throughout Nov.

ENSEMBLE THEATRE (929-8877)
Lamb of God, by John Summons; director, Hayes Gordon. To 4 Nov.
Flesh and Blood by William Hanley; director, Robin Lovejoy; with Ron Graham, Judy Ferris, Don Reid, Joanne Dawson, Maggie Platt, John Hageman. Throughout November.

FRANK STRAINS BULL ‘N BUSH THEATRE RESTAURANT (31-3023)
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)
A Woman of no Importance, by Oscar Wilde, with Tammy Hayes, Marlene Harsell and Margaret Morrison. Directed by Margaret Rieneck. Throughout November.

HER MAJESTY’S THEATRE (212-3411)
Dracula, director, Sir Robert Helpmann; starring John Waters. (Continuing).

KIRIRIBILLI PUBTHEATRE (929-1415)
Kirribilli Hotel, Milsons Point.
The Over the Rainbow Show by Rick Maier and Malcolm Frawley, director, Malcolm Frawley, with Paul Chubb, Laura Gabrielle, Richard Young, Susan Asquith, Steven Sacks. Throughout November.

MARIAN STREET (498-3166)
A Lad ’n his Lamp, an adult pantomime; director, Alistair Duncan; with Bunning Gibson, David Nettheim, John Fasson and Raymond du Par. (Throughout November).

MARGINETTE THEATRE OF AUSTRALIA (357-1200)
Music Room, Sydney Opera House:
Puppets — The Complete Mask? A Bennelong Programme, presented by Richard Bradshaw. 6 and 7 Nov.

MAYFAIR THEATRE (232-1377)
Crown Marriage by Royle Rytton; with June Salter and John Hamblin, director, Peter Williams. To 11 Nov.

NEW THEATRE (619-3403)
Knock, Knock by Jules Feiffer; director, Fred Simms, with Betty Milliss. Throughout Nov.

NIMROD THEATRE (699-5003)
Upstairs: A Visit with the Family, by Greg Bunbury, director, Richard Wherrett; with Helen Morse, Robyn Nevin, Tom Farley and Margaret Leigh. To 26 Nov.

QUEENSLAND

ARTS THEATRE (36-2344)
Prisoner of Second Avenue by Neil Simon; director, George Roberts; with Gwenneth Smith, Hugh Taylor. To 11 Nov.
Norman Is That You? by Ron Clark and Sam Bobrick; director, Kevin Radbourne; with John Frey, Paul Cowley, Brian Gentle, Dale Osborne. From 23 Nov.
Children’s Theatre: The Nutcracker devised and directed by Gordon Shaw. To 9 Nov.

LA BOITE (36-1622)
Heartbreak House by Bernard Shaw; director, Richard Fotheringham; designer, Di Heenan. To 18 Nov.
Mer Holod’s Christmas Pageant by John O’Toole; director, Jennifer Blackwould; designer, Luis Forzan. From 24 Nov.

CAMERATA
November programme yet to be decided.

DARLING Downs IAE
DDHAE Arts Theatre: Cinderella, director, Graham Byrne. 14-25 Nov.

OLD TOTE (663-6122)
Drama Theatre, The Lady from Maxim’s — a George Feydeau farce. Director, Ted Craig. Throughout November.
Parade Theatre: Widowers Houses, by George Bernard Shaw; director, George Ogilvy; with Peter Collingwood. Ivor Kantz, Norman Kay, Ken Hannan, Jane Harders and Annie Byron.

Q THEATRE, PENRITH (047-21-5735)
The Drunkard — a melodrama. Stage adaptation by William H Smith; director, Ron Hackett. Showing at Bankstown Town Hall throughout November.

RIVERINA TRUCKING COMPANY (069 25-2052)
John, Paul, George, Ringo and Bert. Director, Wily Russell. 2-26 Nov.

SEYMOUR CENTRE (692-0555)
3 nights: 5 Nights to Freedom by Alexandra Hynes. An International multi-media mime production by New South Wales Theatre of the Deaf; director, Adam Salzer; designer, Yoshi Tosa; lighting, Bargaran.

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE (20588)
Exhibition Hall:
The Bourdelle Sculptures and Drawings Exhibition, From the collection of the Musee Rodin, Paris. To 12 Nov.
The Art of Pierre Struyss. Exhibition and sale by international Dutch artist with works from his travels to central Asia and Siberia. 18 Nov to 7 Dec.

THEATRE ROYAL (231-6111)
Bedroom Farce by Alan Ayckbourn; director, Peter Williams; with Ruth Cracknell, Barry Creyton, Carmen Duncan, Kate Fitzpatrick, Ron Haddrick, Shane Porteous, Peter Rowley, and Jacki Weaver. To 25 Nov.
The Human Voice — one of Cocteau’s most magnificent works. Starring Liv Ullman. From 28 Nov.
HER MAJESTY'S (221-2777)

QUEENSLAND THEATRE COMPANY (221-3861)
Habeas Corpus by Alan Bennett; director, John Krummell; designer, Peter Cooke; with Wendy Blacklock, Monika Maughan, Alan Edwards. Barbara Winond, Alan Tobin. To 11 Nov.

TWELFTH NIGHT THEATRE (52-5880)
Mothers and Fathers by Joseph Musaphia; director, Bill Redmond; designer, Mike Bridges; by Joseph Musaphia; director, Bill Redmond; designer, Mike Bridges; with Terry Maguire, Elizabeth Alexander. To 11 Nov.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

AUSTRALIAN DANCE THEATRE (212-2084)
Ballet '78 Festival, Sydney Opera House 2-4 Nov. Then touring to Canberra and Melbourne.

BALCONY THEATRE
South Australian Creative Workshop: Blood Wedding by Lorca; director, Helen Cunningham. 2-10 Nov.

LA MAMA
Green Julia by Paul Ablame; director, Rob Kimber. Thur to Sun to 5 Nov.

THE SPACE (51-0121)
Hatrick: ACT season of New Australian plays. SA Creative Workshop: Happy as Larry by Malcolm Purcell. From 16 Nov.

STATE OPERA OF SA (51-6161)
The Marriage of Figaro. On tour, Loxton 3, 4 Nov.

OPERATION THEATRE (352-3738)
Australian Opera: Nabucco (Verdi), 2-4 Nov. Yeoman of the Guard (Gilbert & Sullivan) 1,3,4 Nov.

STATE THEATRE COMPANY (51-5151)
Playhouse: Cymbeline by Shakespeare; director, Colin George. 3-25 Nov.

VICTORIA

ALEXANDER THEATRE (543-2828)

ARENA THEATRE (24-9667)

ARENA THEATRE COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES — Youth Theatre, Wednesday 5-8 pm. Women's Theatre Group, Thursday 10-12 or Tuesdays 7.30-9.30 pm. Dance/ Movement Workshop Mondays 4.30-6.00 pm, Drama Workshop, Saturday morning for 13-15 year olds. After School Drama Workshops 9-12 year olds, Tuesdays 4-6 pm, 6-8 year olds Thursday 4-5.30 pm. CAT-CALL. Tuition scheme for schools (juniors and staff) SCAT Suitcase Activity Theatre (one actor/teacher drama experience).

AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING GROUP (FROM FACTORY) (347-7133)
Back Theatre: Lights Burning In Buckinghamshire by Caryl Churchill. To 9 Nov. Front Theatre: The Ship's Whistle by Barry Oakley. 8 Nov-23 Dec. Touring to schools and community groups, The Unemployment Show. The performers have all experienced unemployment and they devised the show with the assistance of Alison Richards, Claire Dobbin, and Alan Robertson.

COMEDY THEATRE (663-1822)
An Evening with Liv Ullman, starring Liv Ullman; with Michael Pate. 1-2 Nov. FLYING TRAPEZE CAFE (41-3727) Not yet available.

FOIBLES THEATRE RESTAURANT (63-7463)

HOOPLA THEATRE FOUNDATION (63-7463)
Playbox Theatre: The Next Greatest Pleasure by D M Scott; director, David Kendall; starring Frederick Parlow, Terence Donovan and Barbara Dennis, Maure Fields, William Glith, Bruce Kerr, and Jillian Murray. The Unspeakable Adams with Phillip Adams. From 22 Nov.

UPSIARS Playbox: Roma director, Carrillo Ganter; starring Maggie Millar. From 15 Nov.

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (663-3211)
Annie. Directors, George and Ethel Martin; starring Hayes Gordon and Jill Perryman.

LAST LAUGH THEATRE RESTAURANT (419-6226)

LA MAMA (350-4593-347-6085)
In conjunction with the Everyman Theatre Collective, 2 plays —

Major Amateur Companies: Please contact these theatres in the evenings for details of current productions.

CLAYTON THEATRE GROUP (878-1702) HELDELBURG REPERTORY (49-2262)
MALVERN THEATRE COMPANY (211-0020) PUMPKIN THEATRE, Richmond (42-8227)
TAURUS THEATRE, Ferntree Gully (796-5623)

For entries please contact Les Cartwright on 781-1777.
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

CIVIC THEATRE RESTAURANT (272-2595)
Five Past Christmas '78. Revue; director, Brian Smith. From 10 Nov.

HOLE IN THE WALL (381-2403)
No Man's Land by Harold Pinter; director, Stephen Barry; with Alexander Hay and Edgar Metcalfe. 11 Oct-18 Nov, Wed to Sat.

NATIONAL THEATRE (325-3500)
The Hostage by Brendan Behan; director, Mike Morris; with Joan Sydney and James Beattie. 19 Oct-18 Nov.
No No Nanette by Shevelove, Harbach and Mandel; director, Edgar Metcalfe. 21 Nov-23 Dec.

NATIONAL THEATRE TIE
Red Earth devised by Richard Tulloch and the Co.
Drink the Mercury, director, Andrew Ross.
Kaspajack by Richard Tulloch; director, Andrew Ross.

THE REGAL (381-1557)
A Hatful of Sykes with Hattie Jacques and Eric Sykes. To 4 Nov.

WA BALLET COMPANY
Ballet 78 Festival, Sydney Opera House. Night Songs by Jacqui Carroll. 3,4 Nov.

WA OPERA COMPANY
Perth Concert Hall (352-3399)
Tosca by Puccini, with Catherine Duval and Robert Bickerstaff. 10,16,18,25 Nov.

For entries contact Joan Ambrose on 299-6639.

THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL PLAYWRIGHT'S CONFERENCE
CANBERRA, MAY 1979
Scripts are now being received.
* Any play not previously professionally produced may be entered.
* Approximately 6 plays to be selected for workshop treatment by professionals.

CLOSING DATE: DECEMBER 7TH, 1978
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Next Month
Gone with Hardy Act II
Reviews: Opera, Theatre, Ballet, Film, and lots more.

25. Bob to aid the German writer become a ballet dancer (6,8)

Across:
1. Somehow lend meagre bull for Alvin (6,8)
9. Eats her differently and warms up again (7)
10. Church, alternatively beer, for group song (7)
11. Doctor returning after Amin for expression (5)
12. Addison and Steele's viewer (9)
13. Edible national park? (9)
14. Examples of luggage (5)
15. Footwear packs a punch (5)
16. Instrument to allow an electric atom (9)
17. Headgear for wear in Russia (9)
18. Zodiac crab conceals African capital (5)
19. Where the tea that's offered as a bribe is grown? (2)
21. Witch offers much changed eastern cereal (5)

Down:
1. Time returns to pitch and calms cricketer...(6,8)
2. ...otherwise his mate has no belief in God (7)
3. Paltry cares for bigoted mentalities (4,5)
4. Optimum gel might be revealed at 14 down (4,3)
5. Dirty in relation to article (7)
6. Right in pom's frog motto (5)
7. Coming back, the drunkard follows Jack Sprat's fancy for outhouses (4,3)
8. Oriental gift in food supply is act of portrayal (14)
14. Rise of drapes when the lights go down (7,2)
16. I fast in company for our Diane (7)
17. Opposed to an advantage for the saint (7)
18. Split the French for a popping sound (7)
19. Where the tea that's offered as a bribe is grown? (2)
21. Witch offers much changed eastern cereal (5)

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