Theatre Australia: Australia's magazine of the performing arts 3(6) January 1979

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Australia’s magazine of the performing arts

Theatre Australia

Pat Kennedy’s Brilliant Career
Actors at Sea
Chinese Theatre
Blue Fin

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27 January
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designed by Wendy Dickson
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The State Debate

Now that NSW Premier Neville Wran has announced his government’s decision to “support” a new state theatre company in New South Wales, to “fund it so far as possible, encourage it and maintain it,” the debate is on. What sort of company should it be? How funded? Statutory or limited by guarantee? Who should lead it? Ad hoc employment of actors or a permanent company? What venue should lead it? Ad hoc employment of actors or a permanent company? What venue should be built? What is the legal basis of the company? What sort of national culture will it have? What sort of national character will it have? What sort of local character will it have? What will it do? How will it do it?

Wran, from his opening address to a public seminar held in November, appears to realise that such a huge venture cannot simply be conjured out of the air by the magic wand of legislative fiat, as equally as he desires quick results. His modus operandi is to tap the expertise and experience of professionals already working in the state, the appearance of Robyn Nevin, John Bell and Harry Kippax on the same platform, not to mention the almost exclusively theatre practitioner audience of over two hundred, suggests the approach will work.

An interim board, consisting of Justice James McLelland, stockbroker Gilles Kryger and actor Tony Llewellyn Jones, has been established, but, significantly, were not to hold their first meeting until after the public forum. The size and composition of this board is intended to give it the effectiveness of a tight team coupled with built-in competence on the legal, business and theatrical fronts. It has already pledged itself to provide are spot on. To review them:

1. A classical programme of international quality.
2. An Australian play programme taking equal ranking.
3. A balance of some of the best work of moderns outside Australia.

It is interesting to note that in the case of SA State Theatre Company, of which he was the Chairman, he admits to a failing as regards the second of these.

Theatre Australia gratefully acknowledges the financial assistance of the Australia Council, the Literature Board of the Australia Council, the New South Wales Cultural Grants Board, the Arts Grants Advisory Committee of South Australia, the Queensland Cultural Activities Department, the Victorian Ministry of the Arts, The Western Australian Arts Council and the Assistance of the University of Newcastle.

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QUEENSLAND QUERY

GEOFF SPENCER

“What will the Theatre students of Brisbane’s Kelvin Grove College of Advanced Education do if their lecturer Bohdan Trukan leaves in February? They answered with shrugs and silence. The protest marches within the college grounds (not in the street, remember it is Queensland), the political lobbying and plenty of media coverage were all part of a campaign to reverse a decision not to renew the contract of their lecturer. However the pressure group tactics seemed to be in vain as the college administration remained as steadfast in the decision as it did silent about it pending action by the state ombudsman. The reasons for the nonrenewal of the contract are shrouded by explanations. However the results are clear: Trukan will accept one of his many offers from Europe leaving a deep loss for the students who have completed half of their full time course. In desperation ten students resigned from the college as a final sacrifice for a decision change.

Mr Trukan admitted his methods were considered unorthodox by some only because the methods were “too professional” for normal standards. “For this college I have aimed too high” He said, “but if you do not aim for the top you will only reach the bottom.” By bringing people such as Stanislavsky’s Vladek Sheybal and Growtowski’s Zygmunt Molik (Lady Redgrave had agreed to come next year) into the course Mr Trukan hoped to plant a spiritual degree of theatre involvement that would remain with the students.

“By bringing these people to my students I have done the impossible,” he said, “that is the main reason for not renewing my contract.”

The students felt that Trukan’s “impossible course” was not the only reason for their predicament, although the college director (Dr P D Botsman) had told them that Trukan had not adhered to the course guidelines. They suspected staff friction was the basic issue. Whatever the reasons, the students are the victims only because they have remained dedicated to a course to become professional actors. Their creative process is being destroyed. “Perhaps this year has just been a waste of time,” one student said as she picked up her banner and rejoined the demonstration.

It is rumoured that Bohdan Trukan’s students were in fact taking part in a non degree two year course of which theatre studies were only a part; because they have remained dedicated to a course outline he had earlier submitted to the college. The classes were apparently conducted behind closed doors and windows, and only one performance to a select audience of 20 people was given in a year as an indication of what work students were doing. It is also said that they were not encouraged to mix with other students by Trukan, in their Grotowskian pursuit of excellence, as Trukan did not with other staff, and this did not fit in with the college’s general approach. Bohdan Trukan’s contract expired at the end of 1978, and Kelvin Grove CAE, as was within their rights, decided not to renew mainly on the grounds that what he was teaching the students did not conform with the course outline.

However none of this can be confirmed as Dr Botsman is unavailable for comment to the press.

THEATRE/FILM LINK UP

JULIA OVERTON, Film and TV School.

“The Australian Film and TV School, through its Open Programme, is organising a film training course for established directors for the stage. This will provide practical training in film technique and lead to the production of several short films. Gil Brealey, Executive Producer of the course, has spoken to many people in the theatre and the course has been widely advertised in the national press. Selection of the nine participants takes place on Friday 15th December. The selection panel is drawn from those experienced in the world of theatre and film.”

POCKET SIZED HOLE

COLIN McCOLL, Artistic Director, Hole in the Wall, Perth.

“People keep telling me, rather apologetically, “it’s a very small space, you know”. However, I am quite used to working in pocket sized theatres, so no doubt I’ll feel quite at home. The actor-audience rapport possible in an intimate theatre like the Hole is enviable and the staging limitations force you into being all that more inventive.

I’m in full accord with the Hole’s original policy that the theatre should be young, vigorous and more than a little radical, and I’d like to see it developed even further than it has been as a theatre experience alternative to that offered by the other Perth companies. Also, I hope programming won’t become too rigid; I think the Hole can afford to be fairly flexible in its programming, something that is not always possible for theatres committed to subscription seasons.

In the past I have been involved in workshop directing new plays. It’s an area of the work I find particularly rewarding and would like to continue it in some way at the Hole in the Wall.”
TRUCKING ON

DAMIEN JAMESON, Director, Riverina Trucking Company.

"I hope to continue the company's present policy of presenting a variety of interesting work, rock shows, new plays, and a company devised work. We hope to tour more, both within the region and to capital cities — in the region with main productions and a TIE team. I am keen to set up a youth performing group and to have a playwright in residence with the company. I'm very excited to have been chosen for the job and will be doing my best to maintain the company's present high standard."

DRAMA LEAGUE PROGRAMME

MONTE MILLAR

"The Victorian Drama League opened up a fresh channel for the amateur theatre in Melbourne during October with a new programme on 3 CR. Known as Applause Applause the thirty minute magazine type programme broadcasts news of forthcoming productions and auditions, reviews of productions, interviews with actors and directors, show music, requests for props and so on, as well as VDL news. Producer and presenter is Diana G Burleigh, who trained in London, and worked Applause even evening at 9 p.m., the programme will be moved world desire and the National Library?" There has been a good response from groups so far."

WILL PINAFORE SEDUCE TOURISTS?

June Bronhill and Denis Olsen are going to do HMS Pinafore for a New Year holiday season in the Canberra Theatre, opening 12 January. The second production entirely mounted by the Canberra Theatre Trust (the first was Flextime, Pinafore has two aims — to fill the usual January dead spot and to provide some popular theatre for the estimated flow of 300,000 visitors to Canberra at this time of the year. Brian Crossley is the director, and local conductor Don Whitbread the musical director; the rest of the cast will be from Canberra and the set comes from the State Opera of South Australia.

Terry Vaughan, Director of the Theatre Centre, who was M D for June and Denis's last Pinafore at the Princess in Melbourne, says the Trust is keeping its fingers (and legs) crossed, as the production is turning out to be mightily expensive. And the big question is will the tourists come? Or will they slump down exhausted in front of their motel TV after their all-day delights at the War Memorial, the Mint and the National Library?

BODIES

BRUCE MYLES, Director of "Bodies" for the MTC.

"James Saunders is a writer of fierce integrity. Never content merely to supply West End fodder, he as doggedly pursued his own course, experimenting with form, and tackling a wide range of subjects. He has his own severe standards and will not compromise or cheapen a play in either theme or characterisation for the sake of selling it."

WORLD PLAY SEASON

JUDY CLIFFORD, Govt NSW.

"We are selling the 1979 season of plays in the Drama Theatre of the Sydney Opera House as the World Play Season as we have plays from Australia, France, England, Germany, America and Italy. The Paris Theatre Company starts off with the Australian play, Patrick White's A Cheery Soul in which Jim Sharman will direct Robyn Nevin. They continue with the French play, Kate Fitzpatrick playing the Lady of the Camellas in an adaptation of the play by Louis Nowra. Rex Crampshorn is directing. Q Theatre is taking on GB Shaw for the English play, The Devil's Disciple directed by Doreen Warburton and John Clark and Aubrey Mellor are directing Brecht's Caucasian Chalk Circle for the German offering.

An American director called Robert Lewis is coming from the US to direct a production of O'Neill's A Long Day's Journey Into Night and the final production will be Nimrod with John Bell directing another Goldoni, the Twin Venetians.

The Season starts with A Cheery Soul on 17th January and ends on 1st December."
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THEATRE AUSTRALIA JANUARY 1979

6

A FESTIVE THEATRE

Late November last year after the winding up of the Old Tote, the driving forces behind the concept of a NSW State Theatre company were deciding who would be involved and what they would call the new company. At the time of writing no name had been released, but a decision had just about been made. An interim company, the NSW Drama Company, is to be formed and the first production will be directed by Jim Sharman. One of the many names they were throwing around was The Festival of Sydney Theatre Company. In my opinion this idea is the best, especially if the Festival organisers, the Sydney Committee were to head the company. Stephen Hall, executive director of the committee has one of the most theatrically commercial heads on his shoulders I have seen. Let's hope that a company headed and funded by the Sydney Committee will eventuate — my guess is that it will.

FROM EAST TO WEST

The Festival of Sydney winds up on January 29th and is followed on February 9th with the Perth Festival which is shaping up to be equally as sensational. Perth is a beautiful city well worth visiting, especially with the line up of attractions for February, and Ansett is already booking holidays. Unfortunately Perth is the city of the Black Duck Lager, my most unfavourite beer, but don't let this deter you, I am assured that there will be copious quantities of other refreshments for the more civilised palate.

A NEW CLASS OF ACTING

Tom Richards and Gary Keane, both actors, are now venturing into the world of teaching. They started acting classes late last year with five pupils consisting mainly of people wanting to gain a little self confidence. Gary Keane is experienced in teaching as his sister runs the Lynda Keane Junior Talent School in Sydney and Gary has been helping her with the running of the school. He has also just finished a video pilot for a television show he hopes to sell to one of the networks. It is Time Machine but the difference is that all the cast are under 11 years of age.

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ABloody Riot

That's just what it was like during the last week of Dracula at Her Majesty's in Sydney last year — a bloody riot. Hundreds of screaming, giggling teenage girls in the theatre during the show (I'm sure they didn't see anything on the stage except John Waters) and then milling around outside the stage door after the show hoping to get Mr Waters' autograph. However, Dracula opens this month in Adelaide and it should do very well during its five week run before going to Melbourne. And it's worth putting up with Drac's fans, because the show is great.

TELEVISION DROUGHT

Well the 1979 television ratings start again next month and with the ratings come decent television series and movies that are worth watching. Unfortunately, every year we are subjected to poor quality productions from November to February that can only be described with one word — but if I print it I'll be sacked! As for Christmas viewing, if I have so sit through The Little Drummer Boy again this year I'll throw a brick through the screen.

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NOISES OFF

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John Waters

FORGED TICKETS

Last year's David Bowie concerts were plagued with sharks selling forged tickets. The answer to this problem is simple — don't buy tickets from anywhere other than the accredited agencies. Computicket for instance produce tickets that to the naked eye seem quite normal but under a black (uv) light the Computicket logos prove their authenticity. Let's hope things don't get to a stage where all tickets will be checked at the gate.
Ray Stanley's

WHISPERS RUMOURS & FACTS

There's nothing like wandering around a film set for picking up pieces of news, as I discovered recently when visiting Queanbeyan, not far from Canberra, where My Brilliant Career was being shot... Firstly Wendy Hughes, who reminded me that she hadn’t been on stage since her days with the MTC. And, yes, she most certainly would like to get back to it, preferably in the classics. We talked about what Shakespearean role might suit her, an obvious one like Beatrice has been done around the country in recent years. Wendy favours Lady Macbeth, but there is still plenty of time for that. But what about Rosalind — except for the recent Sydney production, I can’t recall it being played in Australia, not for the last 20 years at least, yet it is frequently seen in England. So what about it MTC, SATC or QTC? And what about her partner, Chris Haywood, as Touchstone?

Then I met the new screen heart-throb, Sam Neill. A New Zealander (he was in the NZ picture Sleeping Dogs), the role of Harry in Career is his first Australian work but, judging from the talk around the set, we’re going to hear a lot about Sam Neill in the future on screen, TV and stage. So remember the name.

There’s also young Judy Davis, playing the part of Sybylla — she also was impressing everyone on the set. She told me she’d joined the South Australian Theatre Company straight from NIDA, played in Nowra’s Visions in Sydney, and then landed the lead in Career. And a fellow NIDA student who was engaged along with her by the SATC was Mel Gibson, who has the title role in Michael Pate's film Tim. Seems as if Colin George might have a knack of picking them because Robert Grub, who plays Frank in Career, had come straight from NIDA, and then was going to join the SATC.

I missed Patricia Kennedy on the set. She plays Aunt Gussie, and already had played most of her scenes at Camden, outside Sydney. But I did meet Aileen Britton, who’s Grandma Bossier of her scenes at Camden, outside Sydney. But I

in Ken G Hall’s Blue Fin. I am the right age to play their mother” admits Elspeth, who seems really annoyed she only looks like an older sister...And speaking of young Greg Rowe, he told me he would very much like to get some stage experience. So, over to you Colin George — why not fit him into something at the SATC this year?...Surely John West’s wonderful coffee table book Theatre in Australia is the definitive we’ve yet had on the subject. Highly recommended.

One is constantly amazed at some of the extravagant claims made by managements. Latest is The Last Laugh’s programme for its excellent L O Sloan’s Three Black and Three White Refined Jubilee Minstrels which, announcing its next attraction refers to Ross Skiffington as “Australia’s finest young magician”. What do all the other fine magicians around have to say to that I wonder? And anyway, Skiffington is a New Zealander!...The Adelaide Festival Centre Trust is negotiating with a London music publishing firm to create an Australian production of a very successful one-woman cabaret show from Vienna, entitled Tonight: Lola Blau, Ior Robyn Archer.

And finally, am very impressed with the Universal Workshop complex in Fitzroy, on the edge of the city of Melbourne. The whole conception is really wonderful: restaurants, shops, venues for entertainers, cinema — and a 350-seater live theatre. And not a cent of subsidy in the set-up! So, it can be done.

more into the entrepreneurial field. It will be mounting its production of PS Your Cat Is Dead mid-1979 and hopes to sell it to other managements interstate for an approximate 20 week tour. A top Australian director is likely to direct and an American guest star cast in one of the two main roles.

The AFCT also has David Mamet’s A Life in the Theatre, which will be staged in Adelaide’s Space later in 1979, with a major imported star and New York director Gerald Gutierrez likely to re-stage the play here. The other leading actor will probably be a top Australian TV name...Coincidentally the SATC will be staging another Mamet play in the coming season, American Buffalo, directed by Nick Enright...Didn’t know Simon Burke had played at Nimrod before (and after) appearing in The Devil’s Playground. He told me he intends making a career out of acting and wants to concentrate on stage work to gain more experience.

Understand from Wilton Morley that after the New York run of The Execution of Benjamin Franklin, he’ll be presenting a return season of the play around Australia — with Gordon Chater of course. Wilton Morley has quite a few projects lined up (including a one-man show by Alec McCowen, co-presented with Robert Sturgess), and is hoping his father Robert will be making another tour...Hear whispers that Lorraine Bayly is coming out of The Sullivan’s in March, that she is going overseas for a year, and when she gets back will probably be returning to stage work.

Good that Australian talent is being recognised again overseas with Pamela Gibbons taking over her old part of Sheila in A Chorus Line in the London production...If somebody doesn’t hurry and sign up Michael Aitkens and his wife Veronica Lang to a long contract soon, both afterwards seen on Broadway.

It’s not often an actress bemoans the fact she looks too young for a role, but such is the case of Elspeth Ballantyne who plays Liddy Clark and Greg Rowe’s mother in the film of Blue Fin. "I am the right age to play their mother” admits Elspeth, who seems really annoyed she only looks like an older sister...And speaking of young Greg Rowe, he told me he would very much like to get some stage experience. So, over to you Colin George — why not fit him into something at the SATC this year?...Surely John West’s wonderful coffee table book Theatre in Australia is the definitive we’ve yet had on the subject. Highly recommended.

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More details on page 12.

THEATRE AUSTRALIA JANUARY 1979
Dear Sir,

Apropos of your article in the November issue of Theatre Australia re: the 269 Playhouse, I wish to clarify a few points which might give rise to misconceptions.

Firstly, I am not the Manager of the 269 Playhouse (formerly the Independent Theatre). I have been official 'caretaker' while Mr John Howitt has been away overseas.

Mr Howitt, as we know, has been the sole guiding light of the very successful Killara 680 Coffee Theatre which ran for eleven years before closing down at the beginning of 1978.

He leased the Independent Theatre, renaming it the 269 Playhouse, and also established the 680 Drama School.

His main policy for the 269 Playhouse will be to use it as an experience-gaining ground for your professionals who have been properly trained, as no system — such as provincial rep in England or Summer Stock in America — exists in Australia. Mr Howitt feels that this policy will give young professionals a chance to practise their craft — before facing the test with the large established subsidised theatres.

This is what I meant by my statement concerning 'the establishment of a rep policy' as, at this stage, Mr Howitt cannot compete financially or technically with the large subsidised theatre companies.

Olive Bodill
Wollstonecraft, NSW

Dear Sir,

I was very interested to read the review by Mr Tony Baker of my play, A Manual Of Trench Warfare, and would like to make a few comments.

Your typesetters have rendered some sentences in the review unintelligible, but the gist comes through alright, and, by and large, it is not an unfair review. I am grateful at least that Mr Baker took the trouble to actually review the play, instead of merely abusing it as did Peter Ward in The Australian.

May I start by clearing a misconception? It is not an anti war play. I am neither for nor against war; it simply happens, that's all. Life itself is struggle, and war is a fair metaphor for that. I agree with Thomas Hardy in The Mayor of Casterbridge that happiness is only an occasional episode in a general drama of pain. If my play has any statement to make, it is that. Moon and Barra seek what joy, what genuine communication, unsullied by lies, compromises and propaganda, they can in the midst of the reality of universal, or as it was called, World War. To find this they must seek within themselves, break down barriers, and find love where it lies, as the song says. The play has nothing to say about the nobility of man, as Mr Baker claims, because I do not believe in any such construct. We survive, that's all, and love, wherever we find it, is merely a tool for survival.

In the Adelaide production some passages, describing some of the gorier actions of the real Gallipoli campaign, were cut. In my opinion this weakened the statement of the play by diluting the picture of war.

It is true that the play is sentimental. I am sentimental. I value sentiment. I distrust intellect. I regret the almost universal prejudice, to which Mr Baker evidently subscribes, which equates 'sentiment' with 'mawkish'. Though perhaps I should not be surprised, knowing my own country fairly well, that an Australian reviewer 'fidgets' when men embrace.

Men do embrace, Mr Baker, mark my words, when everybody else is throwing lumps of lead at each other, well they might.

Incidentally, a point of fact. Barra is not summarily flogged, nor flogged at all, when taken offstage by Corporal Byron.

Finally, may I say how pleased and relieved I am that Mr Baker assured us, very earnestly, that the ancient conjunction, if I may use that word, of homosexuality and warfare did not shock him, definitely not. I would not like to have been responsible for introducing Mr Baker to something new.

Yours faithfully,

Clem Gorman
London UK
Patricia Kennedy’s brilliant career

looked at by Ray Stanley

1978 could be said to have been actress Patricia Kennedy’s year. During it — apart from many radio engagements — she played Amanda in The Glass Menagerie and Doll Tearsheet in Henry IV for the South Australian Theatre Company, Judith Bliss in Hay Fever for the Old Tote, was nominated best supporting actress in the AFL film awards for her role of Miss Chapman in the picture The Getting of Wisdom, played Aunt Gussie in the recently completed film of Miles Franklin’s My Brilliant Career, and finished the year portraying Martha in the Melbourne Theatre Company’s Arsenic and Old Lace.

In my mind there is no doubt whatsoever that Patricia Kennedy is the finest actress we have in Australia. She is cast very much in the mould of Peggy Ashcroft and the late Edith Evans.

Several of her performances I rate amongst the finest I have seen anywhere in the world — Mrs Alving in Ghosts for instance, The Countess in All’s Well That Ends Well, and Agnes in A Delicate Balance. In fact she probably is the only actress in the world to have played that role in the Albee play for four different companies: the MTC, SATC, Glasgow Citizens and Bristol Old Vic.

Patricia is an actress who has fought against type-casting. Her answer to people who say they do not see her in a particular part is quite simply: “I’m an actress”. Just the same, she tends mainly to be offered regal ladylike roles.

When in charge of the SATC in its early days John Tasker, more discerning than some other directors, followed up her Agnes in the Albee play with a charwoman in Hopgood’s The Golden Legion of Cleaning Women. The SATC’s present director, Colin George, also did it with Doll Tearing. Then a few years back, in the MTC anthology Some of My Best Friends Are Women, she was able to display all sides of her versatility, surprising quite a few people. I myself relish seeing her as the sophisticated ‘madame’ of a high class brothel in the Albee version of Giles Cooper’s Everything in the Garden.

People talk in awe about her Miss Madrigal in The Chalk Garden when Sybil Thorndike, so impressed with Patricia’s performance, insisted she had equal billing to Sir Lewis Casson and herself. Dame Sybil at the time told her she should play Peggy Ashcroft type roles. Patricia received an Erik award for her performance in that play, which was seen all around Australia and New Zealand in the late 1950s.

Patricia, whose career spans more than forty years, is perhaps best known for her outstanding work on radio, a medium in which she has played many varied parts, including a considerable number in the classics. On stage her credits include Portia, Lady Macbeth, Candida, Lady Briomart in Shaw’s Major Barbara, both Lady Sneerwell and Mrs Candour, Mary Tyrone in O’Neill’s Long Day’s Journey Into Night, the wifes in both Arthur Miller’s All My Sons and Death of a Salesman and Mrs Hardcastle.

A highly intelligent, articulate, honest and dedicated artist, who always strives for perfection, Patricia has been known to be too outspoken for some over-sensitive directors who have failed to measure up to the high standards she sets herself. She is in fact very critical of her own work and, where possible, will go to great lengths in the realms of research before undertaking a role.

Patricia Kennedy is probably one of the most unselfish artists upon the Australian stage, and extremely helpful to young players. Frequently I have seen her nobly assist an inexperienced performer — often angling a particular scene his or her way — only to find unobservant critics give the other player the highest words of praise and pass Patricia over in silence, almost completely failing to perceive how she has guided that performer.

Few actresses I have seen in this country have been able to get so completely into the skins of their characters as Patricia does. Her major asset as one would expect from the First Lady of Radio — is her voice. Anyone who heard her reading the morning serialisation on radio of The Getting of Wisdom, must have marvelled as I did at the different girlish tones she achieved, as well as the headmistress and various teachers. It seemed like a veritable band of different accomplished actresses. She is also expert in dialects.

Like Dame Edith Evans, whenever the occasion presents itself Patricia will still take coaching to keep up her vocal standard.

Had this actress been resident in England for the last quarter of a century, she would probably have made recordings of poetry and been involved in other speech LPs, plus much television and film work. Like Edith Evans, the film world seems to have discovered her late in life, now that it has, let us hope she will be given the opportunity of leaving much of her art to posterity.
One of the great advantages theatre enjoys over its rivals in the entertainment field is its flexibility. Companies can go out after their audiences and not just sit and wait for people to come to them. Over the years in Australia we have seen plays presented in theatres, school halls, open fields, tents and anywhere else people can be persuaded to gather. In the last couple of years the unsuspecting tourists aboard the S S Fairstar have provided the theatre with a brand new audience. Here they come aboard merely anticipating two or three weeks of eating, drinking, a few deck sports, drinking, a bit of night life, the inevitable fancy dress ball and of course a bit more serious drinking. Then they find a bonus. A whole lot of those funny theatricals are on board and they’re doing some plays in the picture theatre. Funny, they didn’t do that on board any of the other cruises.

Sitmar Lines came up with the idea of a floating theatre a couple of years ago and approached the Royce Forster Organisation for ideas. Three plays were selected for their entertainment value, a cast selected for a three month stint at sea, and the Sitmar floating theatre was born. Two years and several casts later, it is all a roaring success.

The producer, Ron Folkard, says “I’m just amazed, because some of the customers are pretty ocker. Not all of them. The cruises vary, sometimes you get an older bunch. For instance, the Japanese cruise they’ve just gone on now, we call that the geriatric cruise. Well after all, they can afford the time and the money. The kids have got the money, but they haven’t got the time. So you get all shapes and sizes on board. But even on some of the ocker cruises, it’s just amazing how they take to it.”

The cast perform three different plays on a cruise — Norman is that You?, Butterflies are Free and The Mind with a Dirty Man. Usually each play is given two performances, but there is often an extra performance due to popular demand. The old cargo hold was converted into a theatre with a dress circle and stalls and a capacity of about 360. It is used as a cinema at other times. The audience is charged a token sum of 20c, with the proceeds going to the Actors’ Benevolent Fund.

What kind of reaction do they get on board?

“Oh the place is jammed”, says Ron Folkard, “We very rarely have an empty seat. People don’t seem to worry too much about the films being shown, but we nearly always play to capacity”.

The director James Fishburn never has any trouble getting a good cast together. “They’re all excited by the challenge of getting away and playing three entirely different roles in rather odd circumstances. Particularly with an audience that’s not used to seeing theatre. Probably over 90% of the passengers have never been inside a live theatre.”

With only something like 2% repeat business, there has been no need to change the repertoire in the first two years. Next year, though, changes are being planned. Ron Folkard is looking at replacing Butterflies are Free with There’s a Girl in my Soup. The other two plays could also be dropped next September and replacements are being considered at the moment.

Life on board for the cast is pretty relaxed with only an average of six performances per trip. Graham Rickeby has done several cruises and says the only danger is the feeling of unreality that can overtake the cast. The long separation from the rest of the world can often make things difficult on the return to harsh realities of life ashore. Life on board ship can also have its moments, especially in rough water. During one performance it got so rough that an actress opening the refrigerator nearly fell in. Unfortunately it was in a serious scene as well!

As director, Jim Fishburn seems to have the scene pretty well sown up. As each new cast goes out at the beginning of their three month season, Jim goes along to keep things ship-shape. With the prospect of four cruises a year in the line of duty, no wonder Mr Fishburn looks pleased with life. The future for Sitmar’s floating theatre is very bright. With the resounding success of the theatre on board the Fairstar, it seems only a matter of time before the other ships of the line are similarly equipped.
Liv Ullman travelling alone

by Miriam Fleischman

Rapunzel, masquerading as actress Liv Ullmann, arrived fifteen minutes late for her Sydney press conference. She does look the part, a golden-haired princess shining from health and scrubbing, regular hours and good food. Her manner is anything but royal; her first words being "I'm sorry I'm late, it was the train," and as she answered questions it was soon clear that this princess knows that princes don't climb to the tops of towers these days, so she has learned to amuse herself with her own real and varied talents.

In Sydney for a 17 day run at the Theatre Royal she was appearing with Michael Pate in a Chekhov farce The Bear and solo in Jean Cocteau's The Human Voice. These dual offerings were directed by New York theatre director Jose Quintero, who is, in Ullmann's words, "A marvellous director to work with. A heart on legs. I'm sure we will work together often in the future."

Ullmann's distinguished career began with The Diary of Anne Frank on stage in Norway, where she went on to play the great female roles: Juliet, Ophelia and St Joan. She also appeared in Norwegian films, but it was her work with Swedish film director Ingmar Bergman — Persona, Face to Face, Scenes from a Marriage, Shame, Cries and Whispers — which brought her awards and international acclaim. Bergman is also the father of her only child, twelve-year-old daughter, Lyn.

Ullmann's roots are in theatre, her territory a stage; she does not consider herself a film star. "The golden moments spring from contact with an audience, when many people laugh or cry together, experience the same thing together. Making a film is quite different, you can think and the camera catches it for you. One of the reasons Norwegian films are not distributed internationally, aside from the language, is that the directors there are limited and it is the director who must pull it all together." She feels her collaboration with Bergman worked so well because together they had a telepathic understanding by which she knew what to do without his having to direct her.

Asked if there are two Liv Ullmanns, she said she does not look at herself as a star. "I understand the celebrity thing. After all I am sitting here at a press conference, which is easier for me since I am shy and it is hard for me to talk privately. Lyn and I have our home in Norway. Our dog and cat are there. The neighbours take care of them when we travel. She comes with me, this is the first time I am travelling alone."

About being a woman, Liv replied, "It is still difficult for women to know who they are, what they want to be and do. Women get in their own way. My generation still have guilt feelings. That's one of the reasons I wrote my book (Changing) to explain myself to my daughter, as a person not just as a mother. In a sense we are stuck with our upbringing, to be good girls. In these matters Norway is ten years behind even Australia. Perhaps my book has helped other women in similar circumstances. The greatest personal challenge was when I found myself turned into another person, doing everything I never thought I would do. I divorced and I had Bergman's child. Now it is not as unusual. Maybe I made it easier for other women. The frame is not important, it's what you put into it."

Did she enjoy working with Ingrid Bergman in Autumn Sonata? "It was fantastic. She is 62 now and a woman of great courage. Very proud. No looking back. She came to work every day, even when not well. She never complained. I think she gives the best performance I have ever seen."

After Sydney Miss Ullmann returns to New York to begin work on a musical being made from I Remember Mama. "Richard Rogers is doing the music. I had planned to speak the words, like Rex Harrison and Katherine Hepburn. He asked me to sing so he could hear my range. He is 80 now and not well. When I finished singing Happy Birthday he was almost 100." She smiles, "It will be all right. I play Mama, a wonderful woman, earthbound with five children, a husband who loves her."

We are all smiling.

"I think I've been very fortunate with my career. I wanted to share with others, like a family, and I've had the chance to do that. Am I afraid of failure? I'm ashamed of failure, if people at home see it. But I accept it because you can't succeed all the time. Yes, I plan to write another book. I love to act, to write, to read, to watch movies. Your late movies on TV are great."

Rapunzel, we are enchanted. Even when you let your hair down, you're a real princess.

Liv Ullman
In Townsville the Council Gets Into The Act

Eyebrows were raised back in March last year when national advertising for the then forthcoming US production For Colored Girls... was placed. The tour listed the playdates as Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and... Townsville.

For Colored Girls... was one of the first ventures at the new Townsville Civic Theatre, financed from the City Council's entrepreneurial fund. The production played a six performance season at the Civic Theatre (plus two performances in Cairns) and with 80% capacities on a 1,066 seat house returned a surplus to the fund.

Since then the Council has backed over twenty different productions, including the "Summerstock" program, which is mounting productions using local talent.

The administrative director, John Lamb, who is responsible for programming the theatre says that the entrepreneurial fund has been an essential feature of the theatre's success. "We use it to keep the theatre open when it would otherwise be dark and to provide attractions which would otherwise not be seen in Townsville. We also aim to show an operating surplus for entrepreneurial activity over each twelve month period."

So far all three objectives are being met. January and February, two months during which northern theatres are normally dark, will see a two week season of The Sound of Music being produced under the "Summerstock" program, a one week season of the PUK puppet theatre from Japan, and a two week season of a rock musical. All of these ventures are being sponsored by the Council Entrepreneurial Fund.

In the "wouldn't otherwise be seen" category programs have included the Bomfa/Burrows Brazil Concert, the Long Island Youth Orchestra, the Nimrod production of the Christian Brothers, concert pianist Hans Richter-Haaser and for the 1979 season Count Basie and another concert pianist, Russian Irina Plotkinova. Financial results have varied but overall surplus balances have exceeded deficits.

To give the necessary flexibility the Council has delegated full authority to negotiate with director Lamb. Decisions to commit funds are taken jointly by Lamb and Cultural Committee Chairperson Alderman Sheila Keeffe. Advice of decisions are then reported to the Committee at the regular fortnightly meetings. The Council has further decided to appoint an advisory Committee to monitor the entrepreneurial activities thus "removing artistic policy decisions one step away from the political arena" to quote Lamb.

The top priority at the local level according to Lamb is to move from the amateur "Summerstock" program to a regional professional company. "This of course, will require funding from State and Federal levels and to that extent we are dependent on decisions of the Australia Council and the State Cultural Activities Department. At the moment "We are working on a formula that we think will attract the necessary funding and I would expect a professional company to be operating in North Queensland by late 1979 or early 1980", says Lamb.

From what has been seen so far, Townsville City Council would appear to have made some positive steps in an area that Local Authorities are notoriously reluctant to move in at all. "No question of that" says Lamb. "Many council's regard the provision of a theatre facility as the ultimate goal — what happens inside is up to somebody else. We are very fortunate in Townsville. As equal emphasis has been placed on programming as on the facility itself."
Save the Regent

Richard Fotheringham

Strap hanging home on a rush hour bus, crawling up Roma Street, you depend on the railway billboards to occupy the idle mind. JUMBO TO LONDON said one (Elephant appointed Queensland Agent-General . . . ) and then, swiping across two huge billboards: SAVE THE REGENT. Not graffiti, but twilight appointed Queensland Agent-General. .. ') and then, swiping across two huge billboards: SAVE THE REGENT. Not graffiti, but twilight appointed Queensland Agent-General. .. ') and then, swiping across two huge billboards: SAVE THE REGENT. Not graffiti, but twilight appointed Queensland Agent-General. .. ').

There were of course placard protests outside the theatre, but even these had a difference, not the least of which was a jazz band. When Queensland police cars pull in to the kerb and the burly trio get out, come over, and sign your petition, then you know where popular sentiment lies. Even policemen kissed their first girl once upon a time, and if you grew up in Brisbane between the thirties and the sixties then it was probably in the sixpenny stalls at the swishest picture palace in town.

It would have been easy to dismiss the Save the Regent Campaign as being no more than this; a romantically futile piece of nostalgic fun. I realised it wasn't while on that same crowded bus, for my afternoon Telegraph informed me that at the eleventh hour the Campaign had persuaded the Building Workers Union to place a green ban on the demolition of the theatre.

Kent Chadwick, Jack Kershaw, and Gavin Patterson are no fools, and behind the public showmanship and publicity stunts a careful analysis of where power lay had been made and acted upon. "The petition proved we had public support," commented Kent Chadwick, "but there was no use presenting it to parliament. We had to find out who we were fighting and then decide how to fight".

The land and building ownership of the Regent is complicated; simply speaking it is owned and administered by both Hoyts Theatres and the trustees of the estate of the late Dr James O'Neil Mayne. The beneficiary of the Mayne estate is the University of Queensland, and the terms of the will require the trustees to consult the University Senate to ensure the most profitable return to the University. There was part of the theatre which Hoyts could demolish without consulting anyone, so the Campaign directed its serious lobbying efforts at both the University and the Union movement, and in the week before demolition was due to start it drew a favourable response from both.

Central to the Campaign's efforts were two excellently produced booklets which were delivered to each Senate member before Senate meetings. They prompted the Senate to set up its own sub-committee inquiry into the financial viability of Hoyts' four cinema proposal. The result was astonishing. Not only did the University not get any returns whatsoever till 1990, but it also stood to lose $1 million dollars in rent from other Mayne estate properties which was to be diverted into funding construction of the new cinemas. As the sub-committee report Drily noted, it was an unsatisfactory proposition.

Simultaneously the Campaign set out to show that the Regent was still viable in its present form. Not as an architectural monument (the mistake the National Trust made) nor as a cinema, but restored for a comparatively modest $¼ million investment to its original function — live theatre. The success of the Sydney Regent and of similar theatres in Canada and the USA were documented; Michael Edgley and Kenn Brodziak wrote supporting the Campaign by announcing their intention to book shows there if it was made available; and a list of shows Brisbane was missing out on (Dracula, Annie, Chorus Line, Shirley MacLaine . . . .) was drawn up. Brisbane will never have another live theatre venue seating 2,600, for even the new Cultural Centre when opened will seat only 2,000 in its largest auditorium. (A fact already commented on with dislike by commercial entrepreneurs).

The Campaign was able to interest several organisations who have now submitted firm proposals to lease the Regent as a live theatre venue; the Senate and the trustees are studying these. If one is accepted, the Campaign will have won.

The final factor which has made the Save the Regent Campaign such a force to be reckoned with is that it is a protest by professionals: architects, lawyers, musicians, actors, plasterers — experts of every relevant kind. Experts who know the facts and who can refute the lies of those who had hoped to line their pockets at the expense of the community. And lies and dirty tricks there have been by the dozen, carefully documented by each succeeding booklet and press release. The prospects look bright as I write (mid-November) for Saving the Regent. Win or lose, this Campaign needs to be studied and recorded in detail for the benefit of everyone who might sometime in the future find themselves organising to stop the wreck of history.
David Williamson
My Life and Times in the Big Apple
This is an account of how I journeyed amongst the most savage critics in the world, armed only with an Australian play, and survived. I left Melbourne with my wife and family in January and returned in September. This nine months absence is the longest time I have spent away from the land of my birth, and should, according to commonly accepted myths, have given me new perspectives on life, on drama and on Australia. I came back with the conviction that Denmark is colder than Australia, that Greece is sunnier, and that nothing much had changed here while I'd been away. I opened my Theatre Australia to find that the theatrically informed were still clamoring for the death of naturalism, that four hundred year old noxious theatrical stinkweed that dares depict humanity as it almost is and refuses to go away, and that the Old Tote had died but was to rise again under a different name.

Crafting, and generally having a great old writing, painting, sculpting, composing, wank. Homosexuality isn't yet mandatory, but a bisexual married couple we met admitted that they were being ostracised by the more committed of their gay friends because you're unknown, we haven't got a business, New York loathes". It's apparently a cheap show, we've got the cast assembled and Annie is making a fortune." (The Kennedy Centre was a large investor in Annie.) "Why is it," I asked nervously, "that things that work here are not liked in New York?" "Because there are a lot of smart-arse critics in New York who like to think they're the toughest in the world — and they are".

The third portent occurred while I was at a quaint and rather beautiful old guesthouse outside of New York, which I'd fled to with the family during the rehearsal week to escape the awfulness of Manhattan. On the day we arrived we looked at the notice board and found that the evening's activity was a lecture by a well known Broadway drama critic Alvin Klein. My temples raced and my wrists pounded. My first encounter with the man's self-effacement was awesome.

However next day, having gone through his paces and earned his free weekend, he reverted to type, dispatching his family imperiously in the direction of Lake Minnewaska while he held court to ten or so admiring stage struck women, showering them with definitive opinions and tolerating no dissent.

"How did you get your job?" said one of the minions. "I kept reading the obituary columns," he answered. I realised what I was in for.

After the play had opened and the hundred and five first night critics from TV, Radio, the weeklies and the Press had been and gone and done their worst, Clive Barnes, their doyen, was honest enough to tell me what I'd always known was true. "Critics, including myself," he said, "are damnable people. You have to be an egomaniac to believe that the world and his dog want to read your opinions, but it gives one a sense of power, prestige, visibility and status and I like all of those, his dog want to read your opinions, but it gives one a sense of power, prestige, visibility and status and I like all of those, and New York, with its plethora of obsessive creators and their endless creations is the perfect feeding ground for the craft."

Still, who could pretend that it wasn't a little flattering for a lad from far Australia to sit there watching those hundred and five scribble on their little pads.

"We try and split them up," said the dapper PR man. "If you sit them together in a block they have a deadening effect of the house."

He pointed across at one of them. "There's John Simon," he whispered in awe. John Simon is New York's number one hatchet man. A New York artiste was recently reported to have taken out an insurance policy of a million dollars against the possibility of meeting Simon on
the street, because he felt that if he did there was no way he could prevent himself from killing him. The week I arrived Simon named three actors who he hoped he would never see again on a New York stage. He hoped that he would never even see them playing Father Christmas in a department store. I just received the last of the hundred and thirty odd critics back in the post the other day. What did all this massive effort in time, money and newsprint add up to?

ON THE PLAY'S UNIVERSALITY
"Players never transcends the football field. With its half dozen cardboard characters."

H A Erstein. The Columbia Flyer.
(Mr Erstein headed his crit 'Foul Play from down under')
"... the plays strength — the Universality of its well kept jungle"

Clive Barnes The Metro. (A Strike Paper)
"Players has humour, character insights and admirable team playing by the actors. Unfortunately all of this remains too much in the confines of the clubhouse."

"The power struggle of his characters is emblematic of all people, in every time, place and language."

Deborah Carr Arlington News.
"The drama is never so compelling as to overcome the overall irrelevancy of rugby to an American audience."

Jeffrey Lyons WPIX TV
"While the action takes place in Australia it could easily have happened anywhere in the world."

Virginia Woodruff Ch 10 TV

ON THE PLAY'S CONSTRUCTION
"Contrived"

Mel Gussow Ch 13 TV
"This is a subtle play whose tangled and conflicting emotions are deftly and sympathetically resolved."

John Quinn WOR TV
"Nothing more than a creaky obvious melodrama"

Dennis Cunningham WCBS TV
"A cracking fine true and humourous drama from Australia. Tightly written and splendidly played."

"Rather too pat and contrived"

John Beaufort The Christian Science Monitor.
"His comic drama has truth, intelligence and skillful plotting."

Stuart Klein WNEW TV

ON THE PLAY'S DEPTH
"If you do not ask for more than light entertainment from the theater, you could do worse than this"

John Simon New York.

"These grown men quarrelling so fiercely and so unscrupulously amongst themselves are like savage children... Mr Williamson shares with old Henrik (Ibsen) a dark view of humankind."

Arend Gill The New Yorker.
(Whose review was headed 'Ibsen in the Antipodes')
"It is written in a popular vein"

Harold Clurman The Nation.
"There is never any question that William­son is after serious stuff. Players is a prototypic liberal drama."

Terry Curtis Fox Village Voice.
"Slight" Mel Gussow Ch 13 TV
"Players is no more a comedy than Deep Throat is a film about nursing... Above all it's about the compromise of personal and institutional integrity for personal greed and gain."

Richard Carter The Prince Georges Post.
"A rather innocuous work."

Jeffrey Lyons WPIX TV
"And what indeed is that ever glorious essence in Williamson's ingenious mind? It is the very heart and soul of human life as it courageously struggles with that age old battle of the flesh (Human lust and power) and the spirit (Human virtue and honour)"

Norman Charles New York Graphic.
(Even I, partisan though I am, was a little embarrassed at that one.)

ON THE PLAY'S HUMOUR
"The humour is forced, leaden, the wit clumsy."

Jaques Le Sourd Reporter Dispatch
"replete with dialogue that often sparkles like fireworks"

Didier Delaunoy The Black American
"Innocent battiness"

Manfried Trogitt Cue
"there is genuine humour here. It is a vulgar humour, though not without sophisticated undertones."

John Simon New York.
"The dialog is colorful, funny and at times dramatic."

Paul Variety.

All these critical contradictions and many many more led me inexorably to the law of criticism I mentioned earlier: "As the number of critics approaches infinity, the probability of reaching any meaningful consensus, provided that the work rises above a certain level of competence, complexity and originality, approaches zero."

Williamson 1978 or in its alternative formulation
"If a play rises above a certain level of complexity, competence and originality, the reviewer will always reveal more about his own theatrical and personal attitudes and beliefs than he will reveal about the play."

Williamson 1978

The total effect of this critical barrage was liberating. I came home to face that redoubtable giant killer Greg Curran with equanimity. The Removalists, he thundered in these pages, is not a well made naturalistic play. The Sergeant is full of inconsistencies and is therefore not a credible character. He tells the recruit there is no graft at his station and later on we find there is. He says that he never makes arrests and the first thing he does is make one.

I could have told Mr Curran that The Removalists wasn't a well made naturalistic play eight years ago, and that the Sergeant, because of his inconsistencies, wins plaudits for every actor who plays him, but what the hell. Better that he's tapping away happily on his typewriter than making a nuisance of himself out on the streets.
Hoopla! 
A Theatre in Search of an Audience

Hoopla has a lot of nerve. To begin with, it began as the third professional theatre in a city which did not know it needed one.

Melbourne had been resting rather comfortably on its permanent reserved seat at the MTC. And while not so uncomfortable on the austere benches of the old Factory for the APG productions up the street, the loyal mob there was fairly supercritical, also, to the point of becoming an establishment within itself.

Hoopla, what is more, is strongly in favor of supporting Australian plays. It also believes in bringing to Melbourne some of the best productions from interstate.

As a kind of dress rehearsal for what would be its approach when it started "properly" at the Playbox, it borrowed late in 1976 the Grant Street Theatre and put on two Australian originals, being Chidley by Alma de Goen, and The Golden Oldies, by Dorothy Hewett who had never before been played professionally in Melbourne.

Then, for its launch at the Playbox, it staged do Rock-Ola by Tim Gooding which, despite raves by almost everyone at the Playwrights' Conference in Canberra the previous May, was a dazzling flop, an event which left them with enough money for only one more show.

They would never again have such an enormous error of judgement, even though a few people, this writer included, believed Rock-Ola to be outstanding and congratulated them for having the guts to have a go, in spite of mutterings-off about the need to be "practical". They tried.

Yet the situation of being just one play ahead of the cleaners would continue. These days, though, the position is considered normal, even hopeful, for they have come to accept life on the edge.

And positive they have been.

They did another bold thing, after the Rock-Ola reviews shredded it. They called all the critics in for lunch and asked them where they thought Hoopla had gone wrong in choosing such a show.

Everybody was, understandably, a bit nervous, including the critics, most of whom had given it an almighty serve. One fellow even brought his daughter along to back him up and show his judgement was accurate. In a roundabout way he was showing he was not square.

What emerged through the cask wine and the take-away quiche and the somewhat stiff-legged circling around each other was the fact that apart from needing
 revision Rock-Ola had withered for want of an audience.

Since then Hoopla has continued to search for that elusive entity which refuses to be identified, which comes and goes as quicksilver, sometimes in hundreds, then only by the handful. God help us for those wet Wednesday nights when the rest of Melbourne is home, except for a few in the stalls there seemed to be more people up there on stage — hanging on, hanging out.

Hoopla is both professional and cheeky. It is also necessary in a city which takes itself too seriously at the wrong times and not seriously enough at others.

The company, with all the appeal of being an outsider in a city where being inside is helpful, is outrageous in its own quiet way. Its talents and its wit have meant survival, against fairly fearsome odds.

The idea really started about the end of 1975, the post-Whitlam beginning which some saw also as the end of the world.

A group of individuals, though, thought it should not all stop simply because the euphoria had gone. They included Carillo Gantner, Graeme Blundell, Bruce Myles, David Williamson, Peter Oysten, John Wood, Dave Kendall and Gazza Hutchinson.

All had different theatre experiences, thought they should share what was happening in Australia — and what was not.

From under that umbrella emerged a few grand schemes for some sort of theatre complex. They spent many months putting them to various groups. They encountered some interest, many knock-backs and quite a bit of scepticism. One leading theatre personality when asked about their chances, reportedly replied: “At this stage Hoopla is purely a matter of romanticism of running your own lemon-ade stall.”

But the big Melbourne jelly wobbled a bit more and they got a $6,000 grant from the Victorian Ministry for the Arts and the MTC let them run out its lease on the Grant Street Theatre and they staged Chidley and The Golden Oldies.

There was a fairly bright response, but they lost money on it, including about three grand of their own. But still they wanted to continue, believing there were many good local plays to be done. Besides they had learned a lot from that experience.

The three of them, Carillo, Graeme and Garrie, went ahead and formed the Hoopla Foundation, set up as a non-profit organisation. How literal that would be remains to be seen.

The board was set up with Gantner, Hutchinson and Blundell as the founding directors. Their backgrounds were:

GANTNER — professional actor and administrator. Trained in USA (Master of Fine Arts, Stanford, and Diploma of Harvard Institute of Arts Administration). Worked as a professional actor in the US Formerly assistant Administrator Adelaide Festival of Arts, Drama Officer Australia Council and General Manager of the Melbourne Theatre Company (1973-75).

BLUNDELL — actor and enthusiast, leading figure in the drama renaissance which took place at La Mama and Pram Factory 1969 - 1975. Has featured in many leading Australian TV series and films.

HUTCHINSON — poet, producer, critic, writer, advertising in daylight hours. Prominent in La Mama, and Pram Factory’s most creative period.

Other members of the board included Lloyd O’Neil, its chairman, book publisher and ardent Australian theatre supporter; Fred Schepisi and David Williamson.

The preliminary season behind them, Hoopla kept looking for a home. They proposed a multi-media theatre centre be established in Gordon House, a fine old structure in the middle of the city which had been used to accommodate homeless men before it was shut down. Back in the 1880’s it had been a home for ageing actors.

But it was not to be for any actors now, on the grounds it would be too costly.

Instead, the Victorian Government offered Hoopla the Playbox, a small theatre just around the Exhibition Street corner on the Chicago end of Collins Street — (it used to be called the Paris end until the wreckers moved in).

The Government said Hoopla could have the place rent-free for three years, starting June 1977. They took the offer which was worth $40,000 a year.

The Playbox, which has had a mixed past, was empty at the time and ideal for them. It was well situated, in the centre of the city (even if most of it did close down at five o’clock), and was well shaped. Big enough for Godspell if not quite high enough for Momma’s Little Horror Show. And small enough for a lot of other shows.

It has an upstairs gallery, as well as a room on the second floor where small plays are performed.

The old building has more ghosts than space, with the Hoopla office being three small rooms, one of which is used for making the tea and coffee, storing costumes and giving interviews. To the uninitiated it had . . . charm.

But it needed more, and the State Government gave them another $20,000 for refitting the place.

They soon learned the reality behind the romanticism of running your own lemon-ade stall.

Simply to keep the doors open cost $1,000 a week, for staff, telephones, cleaning etc.

Carillo and Graeme take $180 a week each salary and Garrie a bit less. They did not take anything until September 1977. Actors are paid the same during performance and $160 a week in rehearsal. Everyone gets between $150 and $180, including office staff, who consist of Angela Dawes, who assists with the administration as well as managing the theatre, a secretary, a part-time PR, a box office person and an electrician.

Asked about the success of their aims, Graeme said: “We might not have set the world on fire, but we have had some of the best acting this year.” Their response to questions about the company is always enthusiastic, at times incredulous, sometimes amusing, often original, and
occasionally intense. I remember one night Carrillo fixed me with a blow of his eye in the foyer after a show and insisted that if I wasn’t going to have a drink with him then at least I should go and write a good review!

So they had a theatre and equipment but no money.

They used it for The Elocution of Benjamin Franklin on 10 per cent and with 90 per cent full houses in the 22-week run cleared $12,000 when the smoke and praise had cleared.

Then came a kids’ month over Xmas in which they lost money, but gave people a good time with the brilliant Richard Bradshaw and his puppets.

Downstairs they kept going with a couple of outstanding shows, The Christian Brothers by Ron Blair and Let Me In by Ted Neilsen, both of which received good notices. Hoopla was fulfilling itself.

Upstairs, as an extra bonus, the small room was used as a second theatre, staging such early successes as Hancock’s Last Half Hour, by Heathcote Williams and Dutchman by LeRoi Jones. The room was ideal for small shows of such intensity.

Outside, Hoopla was also busy, putting on Roger Pulvers’ Yamashita which was also acclaimed at the Playwrights’ Conference, and being associated with a brilliant staging of The Cherry Orchard at Monash University’s Alexander Theatre.

The Theatre Board of the Australia Council gave them $29,000 for the first financial year. They had asked for $43,000.

Rock-Ola cost them $40,000 loss, including overheads.

Why did it fail, and so badly? The management says they tried to sell it on the line of it being a star-studded flash/flash number, while the audience went along thinking it would be a big musical such as Godspell. In fact it was a requiem to rock, the death of the dreams of the sixties, and nobody much wanted to know. People are still arguing about how it was lost in a gap between generations. Still, it is something of a cult piece, according to Graeme Blundell who describes it as being seminal.

By the time they staged Let Me In, after the success of The Christian Brothers, they had about $25,000. They lost $7,000 on the show, plus overheads.

Three times now they have wondered whether they should/could/would go on. But they are more or less doing what they want, are having a gradual spiral of success and are surviving.

Nobody could call them fat or even comfortable as they continue on with enough always for one more show. In fact it becomes pretty prickly when you do not know whether to cast a show or not, and in the case of Bullsh! the collection of Australian yarns which they took exactly one week to cast. (Still, says Graeme, they are glad they did it. “It was nice to deal with the past in a friendly way.”)

They call their way of coping with our past encounter politics, which they say is just as valid and effective as the more violent stuff. They are happy to keep away from naturalistic slice of life dramas. They want to develop a poetic theatre and out of the three in Melbourne they are well ahead.

They are still chasing to define their audience. Initially they sought to attract the left of the MTC and the right of the APG. They have succeeded, they think, with the second but not with the MTC. No doubt this has been hard with such blood and guts brute stuff Gordon Graham’s Freaks, another Australian play about the use of force, or with the evocative if slightly silly The Emigrants to help celebrate Italian Week but seemed unacceptable to both new and old Australians. Again a weird gap in appeal.

The Australia Council helped them with $12,000 for The Emigrants and the Victorian Government gave them another $40,000 to see them through from June to Christmas.

The directors say they are still trying to find their audience. The process is satisfying both politically and professionally, and if talking about something being “commercial” sounds too much like opportunism, they’ll quickly tell you they are not interested in self-destruction.

Another area in which they have experimented has been the Sunday night monthly readings of new Australian plays, co-sponsored by The Age newspaper and Penguin books. Out of these have come half a dozen plays which have been subsequently staged by Hoopla. Included have been Let Me In, The Next Greatest Pleasure by Don Scott, The Propitious Kidnapping of the Cultured Daughter by John F Lee and Bullsh! by Bill Reed and Ron Edwards.

But it’s hard dollar. Bullsh! for instance was considered a hit, and its six-week season made $30,000 at the box office. But that was also about what it cost to stage.

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Either on the kamikaze system of a theatre being given just enough money to kill itself in one glutinous gulp, or in slowly starving away as yet another dead dream in the smouldering fire and dry ice of making it in Melbourne.
Mike Mullins, artistic director of Theatre in Sculpture
This is a concept of theatre within a concept of living sculpture. The concept was initially explored in a year of workshops at Theatre Workshop at Sydney University. They were called Theatre in Class.
After the workshops, the simple sculpture was taken to the public. The first showings were at the Eternity Balls at Paddington Town Hall. We then took them to Armidale where we performed them to students at the University and also at the local coffee lounge to a totally unprepared audience. We did the same in Wagga Wagga where we were participating in the student festival — F.A.S.T. In Wagga we also took them to the streets. These were the most interesting moments of the experiment.
"Montage" was the first major showing of the work. This was an exhibition of 13 individually mounted sculptures.
"Shadowline II" is the first attempt at a major sculpture, as it is an exposition of the style of the work. It is a series of tableaux or impressions on one basic structure. It explores man and woman against a background of Catholic expressionism. One needs religion and having rejected "the belief" one still reaches out for "something" to make sense of it all. This is explored in the first part.
In the second part, the religion of self is explored. A philosophy one might call "romantic existentialism" is expressed.
Theatre in Sculpture will present "Shadowline II" again in March '79 and will be presenting a new work for the Sydney Biennale in May. We shall be based at Theatre Workshop at Sydney University. Peter Holderness took the photographs.

Performers:
Don Ferguson
Rhys Martin
Maureen McGrath
Well, where were you when the Beatles started up? For the moment, I'm not referring to the Australian premiere season of Willy Russell's *John, Paul, George, Ringo... and Bert* presented during November by the Riverina Trucking Company, but to the group's beginnings in smoky Liverpool some fifteen years ago.

As a peripatetic music teacher in a large South London comprehensive school in 1963, I experienced at first hand the incredible explosion of popularity that greeted the Beatles in their rise from Merseyside anonymity. Stockwell Manor School, in common no doubt with every other London school, was aswarm with swooning teenage girls; "We three kings of Orient are, John and Paul and Ringo Starr" was a favorite Christmas carol that year; Beatles Fan Clubs proliferated; and I quickly found that a breathless response to classical music could be guaranteed by slotting Beattle songs into the final five minutes of each music period.

You will appreciate from my inclusion of this minor reminiscence that the Trucking Company's latest production was consistently vital, directed with imaginative authority and resurrected the nostalgia of that whole era in captivating style. Willy Russell's play proved to be a small masterpiece of carpentry and joinery in which a narrator, a Merseyside companion to the Beatles, follows the changing fortunes of the group, the narration serving as coat hanger for the portrayal of major events in the lives of the Liverpool lads, the Fab Four who changed the face of popular music in the West.

In his final RTC production before leaving the Riverina, director Terry O'Connell was proudly served by his Beatles, who interacted fluently as a quartet but also had individual integrity and distinctiveness. Thus Ken Moffat (as McCartney the peacemaker and anointer of bruised sensibilities), Toby Prentice (a cynical, fatalistic Lennon), Warwick Peters (a Ringo of quirkish, darting humour) and Myles O'Meara (long of limb, glassy eyed on the banks of the Ganges) recreated vividly the reported personalities of the Beatles, and gave us vibrant theatre as well.

Of course, there must have been a great deal more to it than playwright Russell has put into his play: on the whole we glimpse rather than explore the thinking that activated the Beatles, and their family relationships are scarcely mentioned. And although canned and live music were used generously in this production to establish the group's musical credentials, the play fails to give so much as a single nod in the direction of the Beatles' composing and improvising ability. I've often wondered, ever since those heady South London days, whether the Beatles stumbled on modal progressions accidentally, the result perhaps of aimless fret-to-fret strumming in some hotel bedroom. Posterity has long since conferred on the Beatles the commercial glamour that eluded Palestrina for use of dorians, phrygians and the rest.

You can't have everything, and what Willy Russell's play loses on the swings of complexity it gains on the roundabouts of theatrical balance. Sharp editing preserves the main events in the Beatles' rise to fame, contrasting episodes are interpolated patchwork-fashion, and the result in terms of theatre is zestfully managed rondo form, an ideal grid for the inventive Mr O'Connell to flesh out with his casting.

Mick Genner was appealing as the all-time loser Bert, stuck in the back blocks of the Merseyside city, vicariously enjoying memories of his brief early association with the Beatles and generally relishing a wry fatalism. David Gilbey played Epstein in a simple, low-key fashion so that the man's managerial commonsense and quiet authority were predominant, leaving one feeling that the
Little to distract one

**CABARET**

**REX CRAMPHORN**

CABARET book by Joe Masteroff based on the play by John van Druten and stories by Christopher Isherwood; music by John Kander; lyrics by Fred Ebb. Actors' Company, Ultimo Sydney (Professional). The last time I went to the Actors' Company I saw Rosenzweig and Gudelstern are Dead and the Naked Hamlet. At the time I was surprised at the size and enthusiasm of the audience I found in the little theatre in Ultimo. Now, at least a year later, only the play has changed. I found a similar audience — about sixty or seventy people in an indulgent and vaguely partisan mood; a similar stage arrangement — reminiscent of the old Nimrod with two diagonally placed seating banks facing one another across a roughly triangular acting area with entrances at both the narrow end and the wide end of the triangle; and the same somewhat makeshift foyer and seating arrangements — like a younger version of the Ensemble. Now, while I think Rosenzweig and Gudelstern are Dead is a good play and Hamlet not bad as well, whatever the version, Cabaret seems to me a rather dismal piece of work. The Isherwood books (Goodbye to Berlin and Mr Norris Changes Trains) were great favourites of mine when I first read them as a schoolboy. And the Julie Harris film (I Am a Camera) seemed a more than adequate realisation — her performance captured the pathos of Sally Bowles' silly, definitive sophistication, her talentless aspirations as a performer, the childish effrontery that seemed to the extent of making it more central than the Sally Bowles material. Not only that, they've consecrated to it five wholly forgettable, generally 'serious' libretti. The material songs of the kind that you wish musical writers wouldn't feel obliged to include as proof of their artistic good intentions. Not satisfied with their excruciatingly tediously sung parts in the Sally Bowles material. Not only that, they've consecrated to it five utterly forgettable, generally 'serious' libretti. The Isherwood books have also turned Sally and the Isherwood character (Cliff Bradshaw) into a sort of seedy spectacle that Bob Fosse was obliged to include as proof of their artistic good intentions. Not satisfied with their excruciatingly tediously sung parts in the Sally Bowles material. Not only that, they've consecrated to it five utterly forgettable, generally 'serious' libretti. The Isherwood books have also turned Sally and the Isherwood character (Cliff Bradshaw) into a conventional toy-girl affair. Such time as was lost over from disliking Cabaret was taken up with being torn between a sort of anger with the audience for not expecting more from what they were seeing and a sort of embarrassed defensiveness on behalf of the actors — they were so close, so utterly exposed. I thought I would have difficulty believing in the truthfulness of someone walking across this space and sitting on a chair, let alone these people pretending to be English writers, German Jews and proto Nazis in the year 1930 — and singing and dancing as well!!

Few would not be thoroughly entertained

**GONE WITH HARDY**

**ROBERT PAGE**

Gone With Hardy by David Allen; Nimrod Downstairs Theatre, Sydney, NSW. Opened 25 November, 1978. Director, Richard Wherrett; Designer, Anthony Bebbico; Musical Director, Terence Clarke; Musical Clarke; Musical Director, Joseph Jefferson; Dore Forsythe; Kate Laure, Kerry Walker; Jock McTavish, Henry Szepl; Piano, Terence Clarke. (Professional)

Real Epstein might have been a more forceful character; Bob Baines was responsible for no fewer than eight vigorous executed cameo roles, of which his Hitler had fine swagger and spleen, though the Ambassador tried too hard for plummy effect; and Lynne Erskine was both pretty and funny as the Liverpool floozy Alice Flynn. The two rich-voiced singers (Kris Ralph and Heather Wall) were part of an effective musical group including Peter Percussion), John Rosenberg (keyboards), Rober van Delft (guitar and flute) and Stan Wright (bass). Yesterday, performed live, became a moving aubade in the Beatles' funeral procession mourning Epstein: the robe lighting produced a pulsing excitement notably in the scene where Epstein celebrates with the group the signing of their first recording contract; and Terry O'Connell used placards and stage groupings skilfully to build up the sensation of crowd activity. Other notable elements were Julie Hulme's onstage quick color sketches of typical Beatle scenery, and Eleanor McSorley's superb, especially the skin-tight black jumpsuits for girls, the authentic looking grey Beatle suits and the strikingly colorful Sgt Pepper gear worn in the show's stunning finale.

David Allen's Gone With Hardy is a hugely enjoyable experience in the theatre, but the replacements retain enthusiasm once outside in the thick humid air.

In Waiting for Godot vaudevillean routines are pieces in the metaphorical mosaic of helpless marking time; in Young Mo, dare I suggest, they are the form in which the subject of how theatrical myths are created is explored; here they are much more an end in themselves. In tune with documentary/theatralist style of the play the use of the admittedly inventive and superbly executed routines is linear rather than organic. They are links in a chain of events which follows the ups and downs in the story of Arthur Stanley Jefferson and Kate Laurel; he, from his arrival in America (actually as an under-study to Chaplin in A Night in an English Music Hall, 1910) to the brink of the big time where he teamed up with Hardy in 1926; she, the Australian hack, from finding him after coming fresh from the mountebanking shows to losing him to the movies. During the course of it, many nuggets are thrown up but no vein is thoroughly worked. Overall there is the juxtaposition of the hard-working, single-minded and developing talent of Stan set up against the brash, has-been and stagnant approach of Kate. The more she hangs on and has just carried the more the relationship stagnates. At First they need each other — in the words of the Brechtian narrator, vaudevillean ham, no-nonsense, jockish, the outrageously earthy Jock who is both Brechtian narrator, vaudevillean ham, no-nonsense.
film director and finally metamorphoses into Hardy himself. As the drole piano player (and musical director) Terry Clarke is astonishingly apt.

Kate is flowsy, buxom and insistent in Kerry Walker’s portrayal. Her own brilliance is apparent in the gags which she has to make work and look passe at one and the same time.

As Stan, Drew Forsythe again showed himself to be a comic actor of a very high order. He is always riveting to watch and painstaking in technique. Nonetheless, without demeaning him, one wonders if he is ever convincingly Stan, or was meant to be. He lacks the defensive laughter and that fluid elasticity of movement of Laurel (and which John Allen captured exceptionally in the part at the Playwrights’ Conference). Unlike a Gary Macdonald perhaps his own style is too strong to be subsumed in impersonation.

For all its strenghts, and it should be said again that few would not be thoroughly entertained, the production does little to counter the nagging criticism of Nimrod as “brash”, stylish and superficial”. Be that as it may David Allen is certainly a playwright to watch out for.
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Immediately there was a different feeling in the theatre. Michael Lanchberry has presented an exceptional Godspell, performed entirely by young actors, most of them without experience. The word to describe it is refreshing, and I want to add excellent.

The bare stage itself is a break with Rep tradition, where painstaking detail in ultra-naturalism in the set more often weighed a play down than gave it flight. Also, the actors were dressed in everyday gear, which changed from time to time in variation with the mood of a scene, but which always kept them a part of today. Any lavish costuming of the coat-of-many-colours variety would have put the production back in the school hall. This production would have no part of that.

Another thing which distinguishes this production from so many in the past is the originality of the choreography. It was definitely miles from Broadway. In many amateur musicals, steps are copied from Oklahoma or wherever and the kids just can't handle it. I felt that, throughout, these actors were moving in ways they knew.

Andrew Kay's direction of the music was spot-on. The band didn't overpower the singers, some of whom couldn't muster quite enough volume for their parts. The work of the percussionist, especially, stood out.

It is not so much that this production seems to be a break with Rep tradition (which I think it is). By using all young actors, by making the production effects and theatrical elements relevant to them, and cutting the usual staginess, the director has managed to make his message clear: that if the material is truly relevant to the performers, it is automatically relevant to the audience.

Equally interesting was a season of The Seventh Seal at Reid House, directed by Jo Fleming. Here the task was more difficult, as the heavy symbols of the text are alien to young people in this country. But here, too, the young actors presented this adaptation of Bergman's story rather brilliantly. When the going was getting a bit heavy, they put in comic overtones in parody of the gruesome message.

The ending — merely a long passage of the cast in gauze masks before us — was stunning.

I came away from these productions feeling very good: that a theatre experience is truly moving when the performers find personal commitment in their work.

I think, too, that it is a good sign for theatre in Canberra in 1979. Peter Wilkins, from Adelaide, is taking over the Youth Theatre. And Carol Woodrow, certainly one of the most original directors in this country, is forming her own theatre laboratory to perfect a new method.

Maybe we in Canberra are finally learning that we should stop imitating little Totes and big MTC's and be ourselves instead.
The month of January is traditionally considered the most unpredictable month of the year for theatre in Melbourne. The fact that January happens to be both the middle of summer and the height of the holiday season, make theatre companies overtly pessimistic about attracting audiences. By the number of theatres scheduled to be closed during the month, January is living up to this reputation. The theatres closed are Playbox Theatre and La Mama. Pram Factory and Comedy Theatre are also closed for the greater part of the month.

As if to challenge this theory, the Melbourne Theatre Company is presenting the Australian premiere of *Bodies* by James Saunders at the Russell St Theatre on 23rd January. This production will mark the first professional presentation of a play by James Saunders in Victoria. In fact, this playwright, who has built up an enviable international reputation, has been sadly neglected in this country. His plays *Next Time I’ll Sing To You*, *Neighbours*, *A Scent Of Flowers* and *Games*, a play based on the My Lai Massacre, have all received much critical acclaim in both Europe and the United States.

*Bodies* was first presented at the Hampstead Theatre Club in March, 1978. The play deals with the reunion of two couples, who ten years ago swapped partners temporarily. One couple have just returned from America where they have found “therapy”, while the other couple, in England have stagnated as they have surrounded themselves with middle class mundanity. The play examines the differences between existentialism and romanticism. The dilemma of the four protagonists in the play is to try to come to terms with the problem of whether humanity is more than just bodies existing in an environment. James Saunders has always been an uncompromising playwright in his search to discover the relationship of the theatre to the day. All his plays seek to explore how the theatre can best communicate its message to an audience so that it is always an exciting experience. *Bodies* is the most important contemporary play from overseas to be presented by the Melbourne Theatre Company since David Rudkin’s outstanding, *Ashes*. This initial production will be directed by Bruce Myles and designed by Steve Nolan. The cast of four will be Jennifer Hagan, Simon Chilvers, Michael Edgar and Ann Haddy who will be making her first appearance with the Melbourne Theatre Company.

Another important event for January will be the graduation of the first group of students from the School of Drama at the Victorian College of the Arts. Following the philosophic thrust of this school, the greater number of the graduates are going out into the community to set up companies that will integrate themselves within that particular community. The first of these companies to be formed is WEST which will have its base in the Western suburbs of Melbourne. In 1977, four Essendon housewives and four women from the Arts Drama School formed a group called West Essendon. With a grant from the Victorian Ministry for the Arts and the Essendon City Council, this group collectively wrote and produced a one woman play, *Roma* which deals with the life of a middle aged woman living in the suburbs. This play has just completed a season at the Theatre Upstairs in the Playbox Theatre for the Hoopla Theatre Foundation. Since the initial production of *Roma*, WEST has devised a programme for primary schools in the Essendon district entitled, *Snake, Rattle and Roll*. This production was funded by the Goethe Institute and the Essendon City Council. The Essendon Council have now approved the permissive occupancy of a centrally located hall for the group; so that they can continue to develop their community.
theatre in the district. The driving forces behind WEST are Jan McDonald, Ian Shrives, Phil Sumner and Linda Waters. The aim of WEST is to create theatre specially orientated to the Western suburbs of Melbourne and the company plans to play in schools, pubs, clubs and parks in the area to accomplish this aim.

The Murray River Performing Group is another community based group to emanate from the School of Drama. Over the last three years moves have been formulating to set this company up in the Albury-Wodonga Area. The success of the Fruit Fly Fun Festival in 1977 accelerated the drive to establish the Murray River Performing Group. This festival was organised by the students of the School of Drama. The aims of this company are to write and encourage within the community the writing of new Australian drama based on the contemporary and historical experience of the region and to extend the average audience attendance for live performances in the area. The company has received initial support from the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation. The first three members of this planned company of eight actors are Robert Perrier, Lloyd Sutter and Mark Sherrifs.

Closer to home, three students from the School of Drama have jointly bought the Flying Trapeze Cafe in Fitzroy. The Flying Trapeze Cafe has the reputation of being the major innovator in entertainment among theatre restaurants in Melbourne. This month the Cafe is celebrating its fifth anniversary. To mark the occasion, the new owners, Sue Greaves, Ralph Kerle and Wayne Wood are organising a Festival of the Flying Trapeze Cafe which will chart the progress of the Cafe over the last five years. In conjunction with the Flying Trapeze Cafe, Rodney Bain, another graduate student from the School of Drama, has formed the Flying Trapeze Touring Theatre. This company is touring through the holiday centres of Queenscliff, Lorne, Apollo Bay and Warrnambool during January. Steve Spears has written a new musical, Showbiz, telling the story of the development of the rock industry for this tour.

Traditional forms of entertainment have not been entirely neglected in Melbourne this month. At the Princess Theatre, IceCraft are mounting Sleeping Beauty on Ice and at the Alexander Theatre Company, John M Barrie’s Peter Pan is being revived for the first time in eight years. John Alsop has revised the original script, Bruce George has written the music and Marie Cumisky is directing. The musical Annie is cheerfully continuing its successful season at Her Majesty’s Theatre while the Melbourne Theatre Company’s Christmas “cracker”, Arsenic and Old Lace is playing at the Athenaeum Theatre. John Pinder’s first imported show, L O Sloan’s Three Black and Three White Refined Jubilee Minstrels ‘cake walks’ through January at the Last Laugh Theatre Restaurant. The return to more serious things in the theatre is hopefully heralded by Alison Richard’s production of Arrabel’s Garden of Evil at the Pram Factory at the end of January.

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ONCE A CATHOLIC

JACK HIBBERD


Mother Thomas Acquinas; Mary O’Grady; Father Mullarky; Mary Murphy; Nano Nagal; Mathew King; Bruce Kerr; Tony Tripp.

The design by Tony Tripp was spacious but the cast as a whole performed ably and entertaining enough, though in the final count it struck me as somewhat facile and unanalytic. Mary O’Malley handles her materials nimbly in terms of theatrical technique. The brisk use of short scenes and sharp ironic contrasts shows that she has not been untouched by modern models. This mode is a most apt one to apply to the social and emotional history of a year in the adolescent lives of a class of Catholic girls. Kantor’s Dead Class, where we witness the funeral agonies of a culture, is another kettle of fish (I quote) entirely, as is Blackboard Jungle with its acidic protest. There is little agony or protest in Once a Catholic, though there is some potentially alarming detail.

One refreshing aspect of Once a Catholic, I imagine, is its female dominion in number, an almost tactful counterpart to the necessarily male-thick Arturo Ui. Mary O’Malley is a comic writer without a disturbing or unconventional view of the world. Furthermore, her kind of comedy functions regardless of gender. Obviously no sapphic separatist, she writes facile and unanalytic. Mary O’Malley contrasts the economic harshness of Mary Mooney’s homelife with the economic demands of the school, even its social pretensions. Mary Mooney is mocked because of her inability to afford a proper uniform. The production softens this into agreeable eccentricity or buffoonery. Mary Mooney embodies social deprivation, sexual crassitude and passive gullibility - she is the perfect victim and nebuch.

She is national fall-girl to the girlish aggression of her fellow pupils. She is a natural target for the example-setting zeal and peremptoriness of the nuns. The system makes it impossible for her to create and command a life of her own in the real world. Her one refuge is to retreat behind walls, the walls of the system. She is the classic invisible woman. Only in this case dependent not upon a man and his house but upon a deity and his temples. Her rather dubious vocation is thwarted when she is falsely accused of committing a blasphemy upon the groin of God the Son in a chapel — victim once again. The comedy of all this is reasonably captured the awfulness in and around it is lacking.

These strictures aside, and evening at the Theatre which boasts a first half of some 85 minutes and doesn’t have one comatose at interval must have a few things going for it. After all the Captains of Film, that superior and infallibly less mesmeric art form, aver that 95 minutes is the magic span for the ordinary five dollar homo sapiens. I surmise it was the unsentimental humour and deft theatricality of Once a Catholic that kept me alert and non-supine till the inevitable curtain-wank.

The cast as a whole performed ably and even within the prescribed limits. Half of the male cast (Mathew King and Bruce Kerr) however were allowed the plenitude of over-acting and caricature, a beatitude not bestowed upon the ladies. Or putting it another way, the women were generally better. Two of them had the nerve to present portrayals uncannily like the real world. Their miming, mainly by tweaking my ears and functional, but finally I found it agreeable eccentricity or buffoonery, the male cast (Mathew King and Bruce Kerr) unable to see much of the merry-go-round. Mary Mooney, especially for some women. It’s a mandala, especially for some women. It’s a kind of carousel, a never-ending vicious circle dependent not upon a man and his经济 demands of the school, even its undistressing tendencies in the text; certainly one didn’t gain much idea of what the women in the cast thought or felt about the theme and its treatment. Contradictions, which can be strengthened for ironic purposes or somehow resolved, are simply left to puzzle or annoy; for example, the chasm between the bold personality of Mary McGinty and her highly conventional attitudes to marriage.

The production also chose to ignore virtually a firm strain of social comment, a strain that does not flatter the Church. Mary O’Malley contrasts the economic harshness of Mary Mooney’s homelife with the economic demands of the school, even its social pretensions. Mary Mooney is mocked because of her inability to afford a proper uniform. The production softens this into agreeable eccentricity or buffoonery. Mary Mooney embodies social deprivation, sexual crassitude and passive gullibility - she is the perfect victim and nebuch.

While the APG and Hoopla are struggling to half-fill their houses for some productions, the Melbourne Theatre Company appears to be in the throes of a bumper year — all, paradoxically enough, in the absence of their gubernator nonpareil, John Sumner. The night I attended Once a Catholic, they were literally packing them in the aisles. I’m sure before the season is concluded many a Catholic and Protestant, unable to secure a pew, will be reduced to lashing box office staff with either the beads or sectarian imprecations.

Any play that competently couples religion with ethnicity is assured of box-office success: they are potent shaping influences on large blobs of the popula-
More justice could be done.

THE SHIP'S WHISTLE

RAYMOND STANLEY

The Ship's Whistle by Barry Oaklay, Australian Performing Group at the Pram Factory, Melbourne, Vic. Opened 8 November 1978. Director, Paul Hampton; Stage design, John Koning; Lighting design, Jeff Fiddes; Costume design, Rosa Chang.

Richard Horne, Max Gillies, Charles Dickens, Terry McDermott, Alfred Beesow, Rev Fox, Batson, Reg Evans; Colman, Old Corf, Planoff, Bulter, Stevenson, Cappis, Barry Dickens, Kate Horne, Judy Woodruffe; Nottage, Man, Dight, Defendan, Tony Taylor; Hark, Arramang, Ask Kemp, France, Frisco, Kim Gringelli, Adraer, O'Donnell, Ogden, Huthan, Sailer, Crayford, Master of Ceremonies. Roger Oaklay, Madame Vieburn, Claire Debling; Cara Burnhil, Fay Mokotow.

(The Professional)

The Ship's Whistle is about Richard Horne who, according to the author's programme note, was "the most distinguished English literary figure to come to Australia in the 1850s".

Horne's main claim to fame apparently is an epic poem called "Orion", which he wrote at 41, sold for a farthing, and spent the next forty years writing rubbish.

The play shows him as a friend of Charles Dickens, who apparently urged him to go to Australia where his talents would be better appreciated. Somewhat strangely his wife also encouraged him to make the journey, whilst she remained in England.

Depicted as a hammy ranter, Horne is appointed a gold fields commissioner and bumbles his way along in Australia, having outlandish adventures and encounters and finally lodging with an ex-dancer, Madame Vieburn, who becomes his mistress.

Meanwhile, back in England a drunken Dickens makes advances towards Kate Horne, is repulsed, then gets her employment as a photographer's assistant. Once Dickens has made a conquest of the lady he rejects her, much to her chagrin.

Horne returns to England, leaving a distressed Madame Vieburn behind, seeks out his wife through Dickens (who by now is enamoured with a young actress) and when he discovers her — now the photographer's model — finds she no longer wants him. Broke, he finally 'sells' Kate to the photographer for fifty pounds.

As written the play has a great many scenes and characters, which the APG does its best to overcome with endless doubling up and — with the audience lengthwise on two sides — trundles along ingenious wooden sets representing ships, rooms, stages etc. It is a good idea, but the end result probably is the play is not seen at its best and would have more coherency behind a proscenium.

Divided into two halves, the discrepancy in construction and writing between the two is incredible. Whilst the first half is confusing and seems to be going nowhere in particular, the second becomes quite gripping, moves forward nicely and has some finely written scenes to it.

Another more professional company could probably do better justice to Oakley's play, and one hopes one such as the Nimrod will take it up. As directed by Paul Hampton it is burlesque one moment, satire the next, knockabout comedy, and sometimes a few quieter moments — all accomplished without any style or semblance of polish. With a noticeable lack of any real direction, a lot of it seems very unprofessional with some self-indulgent performances, bad over-acting and vocal inadequacies.

Max Gillies as Horne in particular seems in need of some real direction. Everything is mostly done in too broad strokes, relying upon staring eyes effects, and seldom showing the inward 'real' Horne. In the first half especially he takes the easy way out and rants outrageously (more than the role calls for), but as the play proceeds he does tone it down and becomes more subtle and consequently not only more moving but actually funnier. Frankly he was much better playing Dead-Eye-Dick, a somewhat similar character, in the Eskimo Nell film.

Terry McDermott, not ideally cast as Dickens, also improves and the rejection scene between he and Kate is very good indeed. Judy Woodruffe, after a rather tentative start, is really fine as Horne's wife.

Best overall performances from the multi-doublings, in my opinion, come from Roger Oakley (no relation to the author apparently!), authoritative in everything he does and possessing a fine voice obviously suited to classic roles. The other members of the cast, although hard-working, just do not 'measure up' and ill-serve their author.
Now seems a good time to ponder the direction the subsidised theatres are taking in Perth. I leave to the future an analysis of their performances based on the statistics for the year.

We have had Stephen Barry as Director of the Playhouse for the best part of a year now, and of at least equal importance a change in philosophy on the part of the Board of Management, including the decision not to put actors under contract but pick them up show by show. Also John Milson has just resigned from the directorship of the Hole in the Wall, and Mike Morris from control of Youth and Community Activities at the Playhouse.

In September, while John Milson was off being a guest director in Queensland, the Hole committee realised that it was in some financial straits (who isn’t?). They decided not to proceed with the proposed plays of Pinter’s No Man’s Land and Arms and the Man — but to substitute the mystery thriller Who Saw Him Die? and Neil Simon’s California Suite. You can see their thinking: Pinter is a risk, even with Alex Hay, and the replacements should be more popular. John Milson has been considering moving off for a while now, thinking that four and a half years running a theatre such as the Hole is enough, that both he and the theatre would benefit from a change. The change of programme was the occasion but not in itself the reason for his resignation the Hole was not, with these plays, his scene and he was leaving at the end of the year anyway. He and the Hole Board parted amicably, indeed he is on the committee for as long as he is in Perth. I surmise that Mike Morris also is in search of greener pastures, perhaps in the Playhouse for the best part of a year, the statistics for the year. An analysis of their performances based on the same time as not, in the short run, necessarily bringing in the great unwashed in droves. I know that this has been Milson’s experience time and again. I remember him putting on Pulitzer prize-winning Broadway success That Championship Season for the GP, then Tom Kenneally’s An Awful Rose because it was worth doing although he didn’t expect a good response. He was wrong. Championship Season bombed, both critically and with the public, and the Kenneally play was a huge success. I also think we will find when the figures are in that Mike Morris’ production of the all-female Waiting for Godot did better business than Who Saw Him Die? In short the ‘popular theatre’ myth is a myth. Business minds running the theatre end up with Broadway, with theatre everyone knows is pap but dare not do anything about. I’m not suggesting that either the Hole of the Playhouse is about to go all commercial, but there are dangerous signs of a change of balance I for one would not welcome.

Take this idea of not having actors on contract. We know the arguments: over exposure, the need to select plays to fit a restricted range of actors, sometimes blatant miscasting because the actor is there. But the pool of unemployed approach is even more dangerous as it tends to negate the great strength of a company: ensemble. In England in ’77 I saw Judi Dench in three major roles in as many weeks, but did I care? Further, give me the RSC’s Warehouse production of Macbeth, which cost less to mount than any Shakespeare I’ve seen in Australia, but had the said Dench, Ian McKellen and John Woodvine to see (if you could get in: I waited five hours in the cold for the first return booking), and cost the princely sum of three dollars to get into. That’s what subsidised theatre is about. What tends to happen if you don’t watch out is that you get big bureaucracies where permanent jobs are on hand for everyone from the ushers down, except the artists. True, there is no point having four actors on a contract; if I had my way I’d have fifteen, and work them to death, as the RSC does. The trouble with the present tendency is that you get an inbuilt lack of cohesion from catch-as-catch-can casting (it still shows in the West End, for my money). I think this definitely showed in the Playhouse this year. Financial instability, the pseudo-romantic bohemian starving-in-a-garret myth, just does not hold. You can make the challenges artistic ones rather than a question of where the next meal is coming from.

A final word on the new director of the Hole, Colin McColl. There was some flutter here, questions as to why one of the locals was not chosen etc. I checked with Hole founder and committee man John Gill. I was afraid he might take the cultural cringe line (we need someone from outside) as an answer to the parochial chauvinist one, but he lifted my spirits no end. The committee made its choice — an extremely difficult one — on the grounds of picking the individual who they thought looked the best to fit the bill in all areas. What more could you ask?

Although I have good reason to believe that Nyet, Nyet, Naniechka was not on the bill o’lare of Stanislavski’s Moscow Art Theatre, I’m not sure that some of the headwagging that is going on about the Playhouse doing it with our money is all that justified. True we have a commercial theatre in the Regal, but if you look into the setup there you will see that they are heavily into imported stars (usually TV personalities) and small-cast/one-set plays or The Joe Bloggs Show with supports, not full-scale musicals. Therefore, since it is in the Playhouse’s charter to cater for all tastes, a once-a-year Hello Dolly! or whathaveyou is defensible. Especially now, in the runup to the Antipodean Yule, that time of the ubiquitous thong, the stamping-in and hiss of kegs and that frightening symbol of our ultimate hedonistic decadence, the two-kids-a-week who will drown in swimming pools.

So let us see how this show went on its own terms . . . and we must say it was a show Firebirdal nerves and the terrible exposition problems of such works — it starts with the maid on the telephone, wouldn’t you know — did make for a sluggish beginning, but the cast quickly found its collective feet — literally. Everyone is saying ‘Hey, what about Jimmie Beattie tapdancing?’. And well they might, as L’il Ole Twinkletoes elbow
Astaire into oblivion. The chorus work and dancing in general matches anything I've seen here, or anywhere else for that matter. It must all be put down to the excellent coaching, encouragement and infused expertise of choreographer Barry Screigh, a man justly revered by the profession but one who, like many such toilers in the vineyard, does not always rate the credit he deserves. There is no question in my mind that it is the sound technique and assurance he gave the entire cast afoot which allowed that build in overall performance which lifted things to the point where 'they up there' were clearly enjoying themselves, as much as we in the stalls.

The director of the show, Edgar Metcalfe, would undoubtedly be the first to acknowledge his debt to Mr Screigh, but it would be unfair not to credit Edgar's work as well. He went in for a mixture of plangent nostalgia and subtle updating: I'm sure that no actor in 1925 would have danced in dress coat, shirt, bow-tie, sock-suspenders and pink underpants, and with three ladies of questionable reputation to boot Mr Metcalfe also assembled the best cast imaginable. We haven't seen John O'May live here before (I think), but he proved excellent in all departments. Also Alan Fletcher, who I didn't know could even hold a tune, must have at the least been a choirboy, astonishing us by bringing on a finely pitched and well controlled tenor.

Setting and costumes were appropriately gay, and Duncan Ord lit the show to good effect. I don't think much more need be said. Not even your most rabid searcher-out of hidden meanings is going to find much Kierkergaard in this number, it is sheer escapism. It will draw the large audience it is aimed at and deserves, and they will not go away disappointed.

A musically brave show

**TOSCA**

DEREK MOORE MORGAN

Tosca by Puccini, Western Australian Opera Company at Perth's Concert Hall.

**Tosca** by Puccini Western Australian Opera Company at Perth's Concert Hall.

Puccini's Tosca uses a three-sided base for its human story, enfolding this within the scenic triangle of church, torture-chamber ante-room, and castle battle­ments for its three acts.

Perth's November production of the gutsy opera by the Western Australian Opera Company was largely successful in overcoming the frightening theatrical limitations of Perth's Concert Hall (or any other concert hall, for that matter) with a basic set cleverly contrived to adapt to the three entirely different scene require­ments.

Height was well used to promote a sense of movement by the chorus, and it certainly increased the dramatic effect of the execution scene by enabling the semi-circular squad of soldiers to fire from above the captive. Tosca's death dive gained enormously in impact and realism from this same vertical dimension, and the colossal and solid-seeming statue dominating the battlements dwarfed the human figures to give a proper feeling of their physical insignificance.

Graham Maclean's work as set and costume designer contributed greatly to the period atmosphere, and producer Giuseppe Bertinazzo's long association with Milan's La Scala further accentuated the illusion of past glories and infamies. (Incidentally, the exhibition of over 200 rare posters, paintings, drawing and model sets on display at the Concert Hall to celebrate La Scala's bi-centenary made a satisfying foil to the performance itself, recalling the great days of grand opera).

Catherine Duval as Tosca deployed her richly-hued voice to great effect, especially at the extremes of her considerable range. Her command of gesture was somewhat limited, and word clarity was often at a premium.

Tenor Gerald Stern as Cavaradossi gave a vocally light-weight but sincere interp­retation which carried a lot of conviction. His diction was excellent and gestures and facial expressions had a natural quality...
Carvaradossi and the Guards in WA Opera Co’s *Tosca*. Photo: Bill Angrove.

about them.

In spite of his sinister costume, which manipulated black somewhat in the manner of Hitler’s secret police, Paul Neal as Scarpia succeeded only in conveying restrained dignity — beneficence rather than the requisite aura of sadistic cruelty.

The arias in Tosca all remain somewhat under-developed, and Puccini prefers to rely on a changing wash of orchestral colour, occasionally punctuating this with recurring themes such as that of Scarpia, with its menacing brass chording. Alan Abbott’s direction of the fifty-strong Western Australian Arts Orchestra was in tune with the opera’s needs, and highlighted the score with a generally taut yet flexible ensemble which kept the whole thing a-boiling.

Barry Preece’s sacristan added a touch of not always audible comedy, while other lesser roles were generally convincing.

The importance of the dimension of evil in *Tosca* can be measured by the fact that Sardou’s five-act melodrama was cut by Puccini to three acts, and the number of characters from 23 to nine in the interests of concision, but most important, perhaps, he added comedy in the shape of the sacristan, no doubt to throw into greater relief the foul deeds of Scarpia and his torturing henchmen.

This production, though short on the projection of malevolence, had a great deal to recommend it on other counts. Theatrically and musically it was a brave show.
South Australia had a year of considerable riches — most of them contained in the programmes for the year’s two major festivals.

The Festival of Arts in particular, contained a rich dramatic lode which local audiences diligently mined with capacity houses. Tadeusz Kantor brought his Cricot 2 company from Poland and gave the Festival its highpoint in its first week. Their production of *The Dead Class* exceeded all the pre-publicity superlatives; This was dramatic theatre stripped to its core — visually intense, wrenching, compelling.

Among other Festival highlights: Steven Berkoff’s *East*, which drew packed houses largely, one suspects, because of the moral-outrage-controversy which preceded it, but which fully justified its SRO status; The Kabuki company from Japan; the performances of Peter Kenna’s *Cassidy* trilogy.

The State Theatre (at that stage still the SATC, before it changed its name to avoid confusion with the local trotting club) flew the local flag triumphantly with its productions of *Oedipus the King* and *Oedipus at Colonnus*. This memorable Sophocles double bill thrived on Tanya Moiseiwitsch’s splendid costumes, Colin George’s haunting direction, and Dennis Olsen’s proud performance as Oedipus.

With a couple of exceptions, the State Theatre kept up this standard all year. The two productions which stick most in the memory were Colin George’s majestic realisation of *Peer Gynt*, and a buoyant rendition of Goldoni’s *The Servant of Two Masters* for the Italian Festival under guest director Edmo Fenoglio.

At the other end of the rainbow, the State Theatre found two pots of lead — Roger Pulvers’ *Cedonna* and Clem Gorman’s *A Manual of Trench Warfare*, both of which seemed like ideas in search of completion.

The Italian Festival provided another highlight — the University of Adelaide Theatre Guild Ensemble’s production of Goldoni’s *Mirandolina* [*La Locandiera*] which was a sprightly, enjoyable evening. Adelaide’s two self-proclaimed “alternative” companies, Troupe and The Stage Company, both had quiet years. Troupe, in particular, seemed bent on consolidating after last year’s dazzling emergence. They took an interesting, if not wholly successful gamble with Keith Gallasch’s *Gents*, and produced a play by a promising new local writer Doreen Clarke. The Stage Company is having its share of difficulties, but its membership is a tenacious one.

The State Theatre bore three brilliant young actors into the limelight during the year. Michael Siberry is surely the most powerful newcomer to the Australian stage for many years, judging on his performances throughout 1978.

Linden Wilkinson made a dazzling debut in *The Glass Menagerie*. And Tony Strachan, almost an archetype of the alternative theatre personality, moved into the professional world with an athletic debut in *The Servant of Two Masters*, which most people agree was the performance of the year.

But if one has to choose a theatre personality of 1978 for SA, it has to be Colin George. Under his direction, the State Theatre delivered most of what it promised.
QUEENSLAND OVERVIEW

VERONICA KELLY

1979 looks fair to be a time of significant innovations for Brisbane theatre, encompassing a creative appraisal of the trends and events of this year, and an examination of their implications for the future. New faces, new policies, new companies, new venues are entering the picture to form an expanded theatrical matrix with intriguing potential for theatre both amateur and professional, subsidised and commercial. At the time of writing, the exact details of the future remain necessarily unclear; but new year is traditionally the time of summaries, predictions and resolutions, and Brisbane's theatre world is applying itself vigorously in all these areas.

The state of theatre in Brisbane is to be assessed in conjunction with the houses in which it operates. Breakthroughs in this area include two innovations and one holding operation. The good news story of the year must be the rapid emergence, persistence and as yet partial success of the Save the Regent Campaigners. By winning the support of the Senate of the University of Queensland, Warren Mitchell, the unions and the community at large, the Campaign has so far managed to stop the proposed destruction of the theatre and convince the Trustees of the Mayne Estate that the Regent as a venue for profitable commercial live theatre is at least a proposition worth considering. The hope for the future is that the brilliant old theatre will rock again to the sounds of the live shows for which it was built. If so, Brisbane can look forward to a resurgence of large-cast shows, music theatre, dance and concerts in a mid-town venue, and, more interestingly, the national pattern of touring for subsidised and commercial entrepreneurs may alter with the availability of a large capacity house. Brisbane need no longer either miss out completely on "national" dates, or attend them in mediaevally inappropriately venues.

On a smaller but no less exciting scale, the University of Queensland Union is at last ready to go ahead with substantial modifications to the flexible area Cement Box theatre, a hitherto unusable space beneath the stage of the highly enviable academic and community. The house to watch will be the Twelfth Night Theatre building, administered since 1976 by the Twelfth Night Theatre Trust which is responsible to the State Government to make the building pay. As at 30 June 1978, the auditorium, has 42 weeks of bookings for 1979, starting in January with a local rock opera Boudicca, and encompassing everything from musicals and children's shows to the operations of two companies. The Trust hopes that this will be the year of breakthrough for building as a viable commercial proposition; indeed, the maintenance problems of the theatre are of jaw-dropping magnitude. The theatre complex (including premises leased to a club and restaurant) was built in 1971 by the dedication and donated money of the supporters of the then amateur Twelfth Night Theatre. The corner-trimming of those days has bequeathed a building with an inadequate stage, air-conditioning, wiring, a problematical auditorium that leaks like a chook-shed in moderate rain — all over the forestage. The Trust faces a formidable task in getting the theatre in a shape to fulfil the hopes and aspirations of Joan Whalley and the Twelfth Night members who slaved and sweated to open the theatre in a shape to fulfil the hopes and aspirations of Joan Whalley and the Twelfth Night members who slaved and gave that the Twelfth Night Company might find a permanent home; let alone a commercial proposition; indeed, the mainstay of the theatre at present is the performing requirements of hirers and financial imperatives of the State Government which, since its rescue operation June 1976, has been the only answer to the Theatre to the State's senior professional company. While the end of the eight-year tenure of Joe MacColum as Associate Director, his position has been filled by the appointment of John Krummel; a choice which at this point seems to promise continuity and consolidation of the Company's existing artistic policy. I predict that the crucial year for QTC will be 1980, when the competition of not one but two rival professional companies breathing down its neck will necessarily cause a recharging of batteries and overall rethinking of how the professionals relate to each other.

Meanwhile La Boîte is undergoing a thorough self-assessment of what it is, where it is, where it's been and where it's going. The run of the wit of Rick Billingham, its first professional Artistic Director, appears to finish in March, and the theatre is appraising the results of its three-year experiment with professional directorship. Artistic policy and administration are under discussion, plus financial status, the latter with a view to eliminating deficit and the patterns which cause it. The theatre is overhauling its structure and grants policy, and assessing its space needs for many projects in search of.
of a home. Gratifyingly, La Boite is well out of bed, in considering the probable outcome of the imminent pattern of local production outlined above and weighing up the consequences of the efflorescence of professional work. One of Brisbane theatre's bizarries is that QTC — the state subsidised company — has always imposed and had its artistic pace set by La Boite which, putting aside for the moment the latter's vital professional wing in the Early Childhood Development Project, must be a rarity in Australian theatre in that it is an amateur theatre which most nearly challenges the state company. Whatever the future holds, confidence is placed in La Boite for sensitivity to what it has done, can do and must do. My prayer for La Boite is that it never cedes its perch in cultivating and displaying Australian talent; the adventurous Queensland Playwrights' Season of 1977, Steve Sewell's The Father We Loved on a Beach by the Sea and the premiere of Spears' King Richard this year, shine like searchlights in a naughty world. Without La Boite, the heart sinks to one's thongs.

People, policies, subsidies, theatres — the spectrum, in alphabetical order, for Brisbane in 1979. In introspection, ferment, decision, adventure. The potentially most exciting and creative period in years lies immediately ahead.

**Gentleman, genuine and funny**

**THE PRISONER OF SECOND AVENUE**

**VERONICA KELLY**

The Prisoner of Second Avenue by Neil Simon. Brisbane Arts Theatre, Q1. Opened 19 October 1978. Director, George Roberts; Lighting Design, Jason Whiting; Stage Manager, Lorraine Crighton; Producers, Hugh Taylor, Edna, Gwenevere Smith; Eddy, Bob Lee; Pearl, Irma Vandenberg; Jessie, Theresa Linden; Bob, David Clendinning; Inspector, James Ridewood. Babette Babette, and Edna's solidity has frayed to a degree where she is right there with the tribulations of high-rise life in Manhattan. As the hero becomes "the prisoner of Second Avenue" his family decide that something must be done, and who else but the family's favourite, even for one hour. But for this? Freud is vindicated; the favoured son will always conquer. Shrieking with laughter the pair of them roll about together as the curtain closes; no longer need either be the sole mainstay, they will now prop up each other. Although the reality of the green and surreal farce here in the green and leisurely tropics (why do New Yorkers assume that living in their unique city is self-evidently the world's most absorbing subject?) the complicated bonds, pains, loves and strife are all there, the mainsprings connect warmly. The cast is excellent, their playing generous, genuine and funny. Arts patrons are being well done by.

**Amazement at its utter impossibility**

**CATCH ME IF YOU CAN**

**RICHARD FOTHERINGHAM**

CATCH ME IF You Can by Robert Thomas, Twelfth Night Theatre, Brisbane, Q1. Opened 17 November 1978. Director, Mark Johnston. One requirement for continued support from Federal and State Governments was audience growth; in this area he has had moderate success. The next step will be to examine the programme the next artistic director John Milson submits for 1979, a season of plays which the grapevine says will be much more substantial in nature. Already the Twelfth Night Company is having to seek bookings in other theatres because it can't get into the Twelfth Night building for much of 1979; it could also be that audiences will react against any change in the kind of plays they've come to expect.

Do I hear Mark Johnston quietly sobbing as he slips down the snake to Square One again?

A gift subscription to Theatre Australia is a present that keeps on coming!
STRIKE AT THE PORT
Nick Enright on how a theatre in education show hit the headlines.

Theatre news is rarely news. A threatened closure may make the front pages, or a stunning ballet costume; but ordinary news of the profession at work? Never! And theatre-in-education? Even the term still needs to be explained to many people.

Yet last July a good chunk of an Adelaide Advertiser front page was given to TIE. The "hot news" was Strike At The Port, a documentary devised by Magpie, the TIE team of the SA State Theatre Company; and all because we had advertised a free public performance down at Port Adelaide, in the very hall that fifty years ago was the scene of the events we dramatised.

In the winter of 1928, wharfies throughout Australia struck in repudiation of the conditions of the new Beeby Award. Nowhere was the conflict longer or more bitter than in Port Adelaide. Federal Parliament broke the strike by a "dog-collar act" which licensed wharfies at the state's pleasure, effectively nullifying the WWF's power. Before the end of the strike here in Adelaide four hundred police and a substantial civilian militia had gone into the Port to protect scab labour brought in by shipowners.

Roger Chapman and his Magpie team had been planning to make a piece on the Great Depression as a means of provoking thought and discussion among students about their own prospects. Magpie's researcher, John Lonie, suggested the 1928 strike as a focus for the TIE programme on the relationship between capital and labour.

John articulated the bones of the play, the events of August and September 1928. We fleshed them out by talking with the people who lived through the strike and the decade of Depression which followed it.

One couple, Angelo and Nora Congear, both now in their nineties and still living half-a-mile from the port, keep a clear memory of those times. Angelo lent us his wharfie's log-book, which starts at 1908. Its list of cargoes handled, hours worked and pay received is deeply shaming. Against the first three weeks of September 1928 he had written, laconically, Strike; a thick line drawn through the income column for those weeks told the rest of the story.

The programme had its first performance at Port Adelaide High School on July 10. It was always intended as a piece for schools, but our debt to the people who helped us led us to play it in the WMA Hall at the Port. That is where the Advertiser came in.

Did they scent trouble? A matter of public interest? Their reporter, Mr Brian Gill, came to see us. He would not read the script, or see the show in a school, but he came to write his story. We expected a squib in the inside pages. But on the front page, two days before the show at the Port, his story ran across four columns, surmounted by a large news photo from 1928.

Then the show hit the fan.

Mr Allison, the Lib Opposition spokesman on education: "For a group funded by the public to be inciting (sic) young people to compare the present unemployment situation with that of the great 1930 Depression is criminal." His Deputy Leader Mr Goldsworthy was less circumspect: "A pernicious bit of socialist propaganda".

This Day Tonight filmed scenes from the play and interviewed Roger Chapman and Mr Goldsworthy together. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition had found an odd ally in the State Schools Association President who said quaintly (according to the News of July 25), that drama was an effective way of learning SA history, but that a play like ours must be treated as history and not as a guide to what might happen in the future. What price salvation now?

The TDT story was Wednesday. Thursday July 27 was cold and wet, but the WMA hall at the Port was crammed, mainly with wharfies and their families, but also by those from the town whose appetite had been whetted by the news coverage. Neither Mr Allison nor Mr Goldsworthy came. Nor did Mr Gill of the Advertiser, though their drama critic Alan Roberts was there.

The night was extraordinary. We were touching history which was more recent and better remembered than we knew, yet some of the veterans told us later that we had "got it right". One demur from older wharfies: we could never show the harshness of the underlying class struggle, and the bitterness of a defeat which stilled the Union till after WW2.

By August we were old news. Strike At The Port is back in the schools, where the programme now leads to a workshop on the issues raised by the play. Some students are pro-union, some anti-union; all are aware of the uncertainty of their own economic futures.

Our brief flirtation with the headlines was no more than that. Its most gratifying result was the support from teachers and students: the staff of Christie's Beach High School rang the ABC after the TDT story to affirm the value of this kind of stimulus inside formal education.

Involved in Strike At The Port were: Lisa Hopman, Des James, Val Leykowicz, John Lonie, Chris Maas, Denis Moore, Jacqy Phillips, Colin Robinson. Strike At The Port was devised and written by the Magpie TIE team, and directed by Nick Enright.
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“A joyous celebration... a tonic of a show...
The audience loved every minute of it”
DAILY TELEGRAPH (LONDON)
In September-October 1978 Carillo Gantner, Executive Director of The Hoopla Theatre Foundation led the first group of Australian theatre professionals — actors, directors, administrators and academics — to visit China under the auspices of the Hoopla Theatre Foundation and The Committee for Australia-China Relations. In twenty days the group saw twenty-four live performances of traditional Peking Operas, regional operas, modern ‘dialogue’ plays, children’s theatre, variety programmes, orchestral concerts, in major venues and a variety of performances in factories, schools, “Youth Palaces” and rural communes. The group visited professional theatre schools, companies and film studios, and had meetings with actors, directors, writers and administrators at the national and provincial level in Peking, Nanking, Shanghai, Hangchow, Wuhan and Kwangchow (Canton).

Wang Yu-Chen is a senior artist with the Hupeh Province Song and Dance Ensemble in Wuhan and a member of the National People’s Congress. She had starred in a well-loved, melodic folk opera of the region, The Red Guards of Hung Ho Lake which had been created by the Ensemble in 1959. The opera had subsequently been filmed and made popular throughout China.

The disruption of traditional and folk arts, the mass oppression of individual artists and the tight censorship (the Chinese call it “cultural autocracy” which for years allowed more than eight hundred million people to see only eight ‘model’ operas) during the Cultural Revolution and the subsequent period in which Mao’s wife, Chiang Ching and “The Gang of Four” dominated Chinese culture (1966-1976) are all symbolized in Wang Yu-Chen’s account of her personal experiences during the period.

“I was born in a poor family in Wuhan. I was twelve or thirteen at Liberation (1949) and I stood in the crowd clapping the People’s Liberation Army entering the city. I loved singing from my early youth so I joined a contingent of art workers. In answer to Mao’s behest that art should serve the people we went to the country to learn from the workers, peasants and soldiers and perform for them. I was a member of “The Young Pioneers” at that time. We grew up with the new China.”

“I am just an ordinary actress. But I played a leading role in The Red Guards of Hung Ho Lake so the Gang of Four cursed me as a ‘black singer following a sinister line’. During the Cultural Revolution they tried a thousand and one ways to suppress me. I was forbidden to perform or even practice and my life was threatened. I was crowned with a tall hat and a sign was placed on my chest saying “bourgeois authority”. I was locked in a black room. I could only read newspapers and watch the leaves falling and spring come out. Anyone could come and parade me through the streets.

“When I got married they sent me a big card with ‘Happiness’ in black characters. Slogans were painted in the streets saying they wanted me to be hanged. At this time I hid in the homes of peasants in the countryside. At night peasants guarded the door as I slept. Sometimes when the people invited me to sing secretly they shut all the windows and doors. If the Gang of Four had heard, these people would have ended up in a slave army. The local fishermen could only sing the songs when boating on the lakes otherwise their neighbours would report them.”

“They said I was the leader of an organization called ‘An Army A Million Strong’. Many actors like me were persecuted in mind and body. If an actor doesn’t practice for even one day it is a great loss. I was about thirty at the peak of my ability and my time was wasted. It takes a long time to restore your skills and our work is still imperfect.”

“After the smashing of the Gang of Four one of the first things done by the Central Party Committee was the revival of our opera. We
International

called back artists from the countryside and after only one month’s rehearsal we did it again with tears in our eyes. The audience had tears too.

At Nanking University we learnt that followers of the Gang of Four were now receiving somewhat similar treatment, though with much greater cause as many teachers had had their libraries destroyed and some people were killed in the sacking of the University at the peak of the Cultural Revolution. In the pleasant, slightly scruffy campus “struggle meetings” are now held at which activists from the Cultural Revolution are paraded under guard and in handcuffs. Their actions are criticized in front of the crowd who shout slogans in response.

Elsewhere we were told that “sworn followers” of the Gang would be forgiven by the people if they mend their ways. Many had been “promoted by helicopter” (ie very fast and not on the basis of ability). As they were not qualified to do their jobs they were being relegated to the lower positions they deserve. The top echelon of the national Ministry of Culture, which was effectively controlled by Chiang Ching has reportedly been purged but, even now over two years since the Gang’s fall, the weeding and eradication process still appears to be going on at all levels of government.

There can be no doubting the enthusiastic support of Chinese theatre workers (and the mass of the population) for the overthrow of the Gang of Four and the restoration of political stability. In the theatre it has meant a rapid reawakening of traditional and regional artistic diversity. The vast repertoire of traditional operas is again being tapped and works famous before the Cultural Revolution, eg The Women Generals of the Yang Family and Three Attacks at the Chu Family Village, are now back on stage. The model operas are now excercised for variety performances but are not staged in their entirety (though I suspect they will return). New operas (Peking Operas and others in the multitude of regional styles) are also proliferating.

While Peking Opera is probably the best known form of Chinese theatre outside of China, the most popular form of live theatre in China now, or at least the form that provokes the most immediate audience recognition and response is the dialogue play (hua chu), the equivalent of our drama. It is acted in a style considered naturalistic in China (at least compared to the highly stylized and formal Peking Opera), with fairly natural makeup appropriate for the character rather than the symbolic opera style, without musical accompaniment, and in three dimensional, realistic settings reminiscent of our own contemporary theatre. The themes of these plays are often taken from modern life but they often still contain a substantial and overt ‘propaganda’ element that differentiates them strongly from the current Australian drama.

We saw the Shanghai Children’s Modern Opera Troupe in The Children’s Hearts, an adult and didactic piece highly critical of the Gang of Four’s education policies. It was extraordinary to see the juxtaposition of styles — the infinite attention given to small naturalistic effects such as falling autumn leaves contrasted with an actor miming a song and the simple eating of an apple.

Other popular ‘hua chu’ of the moment include The Newspaper Boy about Chou En-lai’s youthful resistance to the KMT forces; The Appointment, a comic piece involving the unscheduled mis-matching of lovers on a park bench (we saw scenes in a student rehearsal); The Story of The Red Heart, a highly regarded drama about doctors who resist the Gang of Four, and When The Maple Leaves Turn Red, a broad satire involving a group of scientific workers in opposition to the Gang.

In Kwanchow’s Cultural Park we attended a modern dialogue play in Cantonese dialect, Another Spring. The plot, the stage antics and the totally “bourgeois” escapism of this broad comedy were perhaps further from the pure revolutionary line of the Cultural Revolution than anything else we had seen but there was no denying its massive audience popularity. The plot revolved around a chemist who gives a woman laxatives instead of sleeping pills for her over-worked husband. While the dialogue had plenty of references to “model workers”, “the Four Modernizations” and “the Gang of Four”, the convoluted consequences of this error (involving chases through the audience, double takes, physical comedy and mugging) had all the logic and significance of the worst Australian television ‘soap’.

The Cultural Park itself is a monument to the mass appeal of the performing arts in a non-elitist setting. In downtown Kwanchow, the Park has several indoor theatres, two large outdoor stages (one of which a regional opera was playing, on the other one of Kwanchow’s stunning acrobatic troupes (I glimpsed 14 up on a bicycle), a basket ball stadium, a roller skating rink (complete with show-offs in stove pipe pants) a restaurant, aquarium, ferris wheel and a “television theatre” in the form of three black and white sets in a wall facing seating for about 200, each set showing the same dubbed Eastern European movie.

To widen distribution, current release feature films are now shown immediately on TV, but the Chinese do not express concern about the potential impact of television on their traditional culture. This must be due in part to the as yet limited private ownership of sets and the seemingly insatiable Chinese appetite for most forms of traditional and modern theatre.

For a theatre worker the real “culture shock” is not experienced in China but on return to Australia where live theatre is a relatively impotent, elitist and minority activity divorced from the lives of most people.

The very concept of a “cultural” revolution is inconceivable here amid the great Australian lassitude. I deplore the destructive excesses of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China and rejoice in the rufound freedom of artist such as Wang Yu Chen, but I can only be in awe of a society in which the arts truly are at the heart of the matter.
SWITZERLAND
The International School of Geneva will host a festival of original plays in May 1979. There is no requirement as to length and language, but the script must have social or political relevance and no prior professional production. Selected playwrights will be invited to attend the festival at the expense of the International School. Scripts must be submitted by December 1, 1978 to Rod Price, International School of Geneva, 62 Route de Chene, 1208, Geneva, Switzerland.

BUBBLES
The Bubble Theatre Company was founded in 1972 to bring live professional entertainment, particularly musical theatre, to new theatre audiences. Since 1973, the company has been performing in an orange plastic tensi-dome which seats 200 people and can be seen in parks and open spaces in London. Because of the response a larger dome has been commissioned. The company performs a wide selection of popular classics, Shakespeare, cabaret, rock music and children's shows from March through September. After September the Bubble Theatre is available for bookings abroad. For further information please contact: Fiona Dick, Administrator, The Bubble Theatre Co., 9 Kingsford Street, London S.W.3, England. Phone: (01) 485 3420.

SCRIPT EXCHANGE
Since the establishing of a clearing house for new plays at the Hungarian ITI Centre in 1975, 37 plays have been received at the Australian ITI Centre. These come from Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Israel, Netherlands, Norway and Poland. These plays are produced in manuscript form, complete with information on publishing and producing rights and three copies of each play are then sent to the national Centres. Copies are available for distribution to Australian theatres interested in considering foreign plays for production. Contact the ITI office for details.

INDIA '79
An "International Seminar-cum-Workshop on Mime, Movements and Gestures in Indian Theatre" to be held in January, 1979, in New Delhi. Dr Awasthi, the Asian expert of the ITI Executive Committee will be in charge. The address for more detailed information is: Shri Ram Centre for Art and Culture (Mr Rajinder Nath), 4 College Road, New Delhi 110001, India.

COMEDY CONFERENCE
With the help of the Polish ITI Centre, the Musical Theatre Committee will be holding a seminar on the training of musical comedy performers. A small international gathering of interested training experts will take part in this seminar, which takes place in March or April 1979, at Gdynia, on the Baltic sea. Please contact the ITI office for further details.

EUROPEAN DIRECTOR FOR NIMROD
The Peter Summerton Foundation — a foundation particularly for directors has sent out invitations to the following European directors to come to Australia to direct a play:

Franco Zeffirelli (Italy)
Giorgio Strehler (Milan)
Peter Stein (West Germany)
Peter Zadek (West Germany)
Roger Planchon (Paris)

It is hoped that one of these directors will direct a play at Sydney's Nimrod Theatre, with the condition that directors resident in Australia can attend in an observer capacity. The play will be chosen by the director and the Nimrod Theatre Co.

1979 ISSUES INCLUDE:

JOE PAPP a major study of the benevolent hug of the empire builder of the American theatre.

BERLINER ENSEMBLE full description and analysis of the renaissance of this internationally renowned company.

DAVID EDGAR young English author of the award winning anti-fascist play "Destiny" in interview.

"It's hard, adult, and uncompromisingly serious. To be frank, it's the first time I've found it absolutely necessary (and stimulating) to read a theatre magazine"

Peter Hall, Director, National Theatre Great Britain

Send for full details, rates and catalogue of other titles in stock
All in all, 1978 was an exciting and rich year for Australian Dance. Not merely for the fact that all the companies concerned continued to exist and actually expand their audiences, but that they were extending their ideas and concepts of dance.

The single newsworthy event of the year as far as new choreography goes would have to be the world premiere of the Dance Company's Poppys; not only the first newly conceived full-length modern ballet in Australia, but arguably one of the most appealing and interesting ones to boot. Personally I still find many things in it to quibble about and the basic flaws of the structure were hardly ironed out the second time around in Sydney, but the Company has had nothing but good reports about it and great enthusiasm from audiences. Perhaps the Company's visits to the USA and Europe over the next two years will make even more people sit up and realise that there is something potent and fresh going on here.

The Dance Company's second season in the Opera House Drama Theatre wasn't so successful. Two works, both portentous, lacking in fibre and dramatic point were disenchanting to anyone expecting (as they have in the past) good things from Graham Watson and Don Asker. But it at least showed that here were two totally individual minds at work on different concepts of dance, neither of them in the least overshadowed by Artistic Director Jonathon Taylor, although thankfully enlarged.

The Australian Dance Theatre goes from strength to strength in Adelaide and Melbourne, at last settled into its situation and working steadily on nurturing choreographic talent from within its own ranks. Artistic Director Jonathon Taylor (a pragmatist if I ever met one) is cementing the foundations of a strong repertoire on which to build, choosing some of the best works of Christopher Bruce as a point of departure. From there he's adding works by cementing the foundations of a strong repertoire Taylor (a pragmatist if I ever met one) is strength to strength in Adelaide and Melbourne, audiences, find its feet, take root and work out on which to build, choosing some of the best

Extremely laudable is the company's ongoing series of choreographers workshop performances in the Balcony Theatre in Adelaide (a spot coming to occupy the same opening and ambience there, as Place used to in London). The Balcony is the sort of rough, uncluttered and undressy place where people come only for one thing, to watch the dance and talk about it. The Dance Company used to have the same sort of setup in its Woolloomooloo studios but after one season there that seemed to have gone by the board, more's the pity.

A place like the Balcony is necessary for any company to give fledgling talent a tryout before the public eye. Closed workshops are good as far as they go (which isn't very far) but nothing gets the juices flowing like the "threat" of a public performance. Attempts at choreography cease to be a game and become a serious business. There will always be a few sinners of course, but a situation like this gives a tentative choreographer the room and the right to fail, pick up the pieces and try again.

At Ballet 78 (of which more later), visiting critic John Percival noted that the works the ADT came up with in a Balcony season that he witnessed were streets ahead of a certain inter nationally renowned modern dance company in Britain. It is all very praise worthy system and one would think that the AB could take time out from its box office desperation to set up something similar for its own dancers in Melbourne. But according to the programme note pontifications of Administrator Peter Bahen, the AB would be very happy to shut shop completely on such schemes and get on with the serious business of the next lavish costume drama.

Talking of the Australian Ballet, things are, regrettably, much the same there as last year. Standards are as low as ever, subtlety has gone out the window, triple bill works are passed off with a non-committal shrug (exception here being Afternoon of a Faun earlier this year but then that was because the corps de ballet was not involved). The one token work from an Australian choreographer commissioned by the AB, Graeme Murphy's Tekton, while being fuzzy and muddled in its own right, was shockingly served by a corps that couldn't give a damn.

Although it is laziness on their part, not all the blame can be laid at their door. For a start there are too few dancers called upon to do too many performances. A heavy performing schedule is not always a bad thing (The NYC thrives on it) but look at some of the things the AB corps are asked to do! On some nights they are asked to dash from the classic poses of Symphonies in D or The Dream and automatically switch gears into the loosely strung rubby ducky contortions of Falco's Caravan. Or witness last year's season in Sydney, here the corps was lumered with 23 consecutive performances of Ashton's Le Fille Mal Gardee (as near to death standing up as I know). Who wouldn't get demoralised with that sort of regimen. It is inconsiderate, public service planning of the very worst sort.

At the time of writing the AB has not released its plans for the 1979 Sydney season nor has any announcement about the new Artistic Director been made. The public appeal for funds for the new premises in Melbourne goes on apace. One hopes they reach their target soon so that this desperation for box office returns dies down a little and what money is made will be ploughed back into the company so they can finance some good works from overseas choreographers or at least get the permission to perform some of the classic works that overseas audiences can take as a matter of course but which audiences here have never even heard of. By this I do not necessarily mean "these avant guard works with their cacophonous music and contortions and wrathings". Just who is really making the "artistic" decisions in the Australian Ballet these days anyway?

Ballet 78 came and went without revealing anything exciting or even interesting in my opinion. Almost everyone came along with "the safest and nicest piece from our current repertoire" and I'm afraid all of them struck me as uniformly dull.

The ADT's Flibbertigibbet, choreographed by Jonathon Taylor, although thankfully enlarged and developed from when I last saw it, still seems arid and fey. Nevertheless, the ADT dancers (some of the best looking ones around) shone brilliantly in it and it was quite funny albeit in a rather gormless way.

The West Australian Ballet, presented Jacqui Carroll's Night Songs a very mellifluous, gentle on the eye piece of balletic recitalhe du temps perdu. It had some extremely elegant partnering and patterning mainly of the drooping, twining and catching sort, but overall it was too pallid; rather like a faded Edwardian watercolour.

Nevertheless, it being the first chance for me to see the Company, I was glad to see it used a stretched classical technique as its base and only made me wish that I could have seen the Company in some of the Bouronville pieces
that Hans Brena has set for them. This last also
begs the question, why has the Australian Ballet
neglected this great classical choreographer?

The Queensland Ballet came up with Garth
Welch's *The Visitor* and as much as I enjoyed
Mr Welch's performances as a dancer, I have yet
to see much strength in his choreography (with
the exception of his *Images* created for the late
and lamented Ballet Victoria). *The Visitor* using
a Tchaikovsky string quartet as its musical
background, portrayed a tense tangle of love and
intrigue between a mother and daughter and a
stranger. It is a theme pregnant with
opportunities for a great ballet (Ashton used it in
his *Month in the Country* for the Royal Ballet)
as well as "legit" theatre, witness its
undercurrent throughout Pinter, but Welch and
his dancers seemed to shy away from it all. The
dramatic structure fell apart alarmingly half way
through and the choreography lacked sufficient
impetus and invention to carry it through on a
strictly visual level.

Graeme Murphy's *Rumours* for the Dance
Company I have reservations about mentioning.
It is meant to be a part of a trilogy based on
Sydney life which will be seen in full in that
town later this year, and I would prefer to talk
about it in full then. Suffice it to say that I
agreed with Clive Barnes in that it was a "one
joke ballet" and far too specific in its references
to be interesting for a lot of people, although the
Eastern Suburbs trendy will no doubt love it. It
is set on Sydney's Lady Jane Beach (the nude
one) and catalogues all the vanities, foibles and
in the ballet at least affected violence of the
place. I somehow think that here Mr Murphy is
being just as fast and trendy as those he is
casting. The thing at the moment is an "in
joke" and alarmingly blinkered. It took me some
time to realise, with all those people clambering
down those two step ladders, that it was set on
Lady Jane and I practically haunt the place! I
also have yet to see anybody being gang banged
there, as Mr Murphy portrays. Nevertheless it
had some superb theatrical bits in it and I will
await the full trilogy with bated breath.

Of Gerard Sibbritt's *Sea Interludes*, using the
pieces of that name from Britten's *Peter Grimes*
as music, I cannot really say anything without
being unfair; it was so appallingly danced by the
corps of the AB. From what was barely
perceivable of the choreography in the midst of
the on stage horse race I would say that Mr
Sibbritt had tried his best, had not been too
outlandish in his choreographic demands, was
solid, secure and workmanlike (I'm trying).
There was nothing to hold the imagination; *Sea
Interludes* was swamped by its powerfully
descriptive music, so much so that the ballet was
extraneous, anecdotal and vague.

Was Sibbritt roped in as a last desperate
measure by the Australian Ballet because there
was nobody else to create something for them? If
so, I can only congratulate Mr Sibbritt on
making the best of a poor deal, but I'm afraid
that *Sea Interludes* vanished totally from sight
with the fall of the curtain.

Alongside this the Aboriginal Dancers from
Arnhemland were positively joyous in their
discipline and concentration, their theatricality
and acutely observed mimicry and, yes, their
hard won innovations.

If Ballet '78 really was the thermometer of
Australian Dance this year, then I would be
profoundly depressed; but it wasn't. Everyone
was too careful or too timid or too non-
committal. John Percival and Clive Barnes each
in their own way were enthusiastic about some
aspect of the Festival. I didn't share their
enthusiasm. But then I know the repertoires of
these companies. I hope I recognise the great
things they can do on their home ground when
they are not part of an official cultural fashion
parade, and therefore knew that Ballet '78 was
not a representative forum.

I concur with Mr Percival who hoped that
there would be a Ballet '79 and '80 and so on,
that the enterprise should grow and expand,
that there should be more companies involved
including the "amateur" companies. I also agree
that thought should be given to inviting a similar
overseas company in the near future, thereby
turning the whole endeavour into the exciting
melting pot like the Cologne Tanz Forum. It
will take time and money, but more to the point
it will take a hell of a lot more application than
there is at the moment (from everybody,
especially the administrators) if it is to be given
a fighting chance.
David Gyger

Opera

TV and 3d operas

My opera diet leapt downward a few notches on the professional scale with the end of the 1978 seasons of the State companies early in November, and Australian Opera concluding its year and brief forays to Adelaide, Melbourne and Brisbane following the end of its major winter season in Sydney.

The only live performances I saw during the period under review this month were in Canberra and on the outlying ramparts of Sydney, though ABC television came up with a rather intriguing series of four consecutive Sunday night offerings that together provided the most meaty operatic fare of the month.

Television opera, of course, is no serious artistic alternative to the real — that is, live — thing; nevertheless, it must be accepted that opera, inevitably the most inherently extravagant of all the performing arts for the simple reason that it involves so many more performers and back-up staff than the others, must rely increasingly on the electro-mechanical media if it is to reach the mass audience which is no doubt essential for its survival.

The ABC series was a perfect cross-section of the TV opera spectrum: half recorded live in performance, half studio work; half serious, half comic; three-quarters in English; three-quarters Australian-made. The success rating bore only the most approximate of relationships to any of the other factors involved in this fascinating series.

The only unequivocal success of the four was the AO's *Fra Diavolo*. Second was an Australian studio production of Ravel's one-act, *L'Heure Espagnole*. Third in order of merit was the AO's *Lucrezia Borgia*, starring Joan Sutherland; while the field was trailed by an unbelievably bad British production of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Trial By Jury*.

TV is inherently incapable, of course, of putting across either the full visual impact of large-scale opera or its full aural impact: the mini-screen obviously cannot cope with crowds without making them look like ants, and the quality of sound that emanates from your average home TV receiver is far below radio FM stereo — a strong plea for synchronised TV-FM stereo broadcasts which must increasingly come into vogue in the future.

Everything I am about to say, then, must be deemed to take into account such sweeping generalisations about the problems in general of televised opera.

*Fra Diavolo*, the better of the two productions recorded live in the theatre, was even more successful on TV, whereas *Lucrezia Borgia* was even less successful; but that is partly due to the differences in the works themselves. *Diavolo* demands no stage spectacle anyhow, and even in the flesh the AO *Lucrezia* ignored the opportunities built into the piece.

It gave me great pleasure, when the AO *Diavolo* first saw the light of day at the Sydney Opera House, to be obliged to withdraw my advance qualms as to its inclusion in the repertory of a national opera company like the Australian Opera. It was no surprise, but none the less pleasurable for that, when the TV version proved to be even more satisfying.

Highly intelligent camera work gave every TV viewer the opportunity to experience the sort of detail only a very small proportion of a live audience, those in the very front section of the stalls, could experience. Nuances of facial expression were captured in close-up, practically all the visual sight gags in the original were underscored. The few alterations of detail

Robert Gard (Fra Diavolo), Neil Warren Smith (Giacomo) and Graeme Ewer (Beppo) in the AO's *Fra Diavolo*
introduced during the transfer in no way
did disservice to the original coherence of
this intentionally cardboard cut-out pro-
duction.

Robert Gard's Diavolo was even more
effective dramatically than on stage,
though even the inadequacies of TV sound
could not disguise the difficulties he had in
reaching some of the stratospheric notes in
the score. Neil Warren-Smith and Graeme
Ewer were as lovable as pair of mock-thugs
as ever, even if deprived unnecessarily of
much of the visual humor of one of their
better scenes (the one where they hide
behind phoney washing hung out to dry
and interject with the aid of trap-door long
jobms etc). Dennis Olsen and Heather Begg
came over magnificently, as the cari-
catures of English nobility they are, Isobel
Buchanan's Zerlina was as sweet and
sweet-voiced as ever, Donald Shanks'
Matteo suitably towering of stature and
voice even within the inevitable mini-
context of The Box.

L'Heure Espagnole is a whimsical, slight
story set to music of higher stature, as
compared to the more equal artistic
wedding of whimsical plot to slight music
which is consummated in Diavolo. In a
way, L'Heure is a good piece for its
undeniable musical merit, but it is
well-nigh impossible to stage effectively in
the flesh in the absence of a competent
baritone who is also an expatriate strong
man from the local circus since he who
tackles the role of Ramiro the muleteer
must be able to cart a grandfather clock
stuffed with human cargo up and down
stairs.

Let it be said that the ABC scored a
couple of real coups in casting this
L'Heure Espagnole, one of which was
engaging John Pringle for this role: not
only can he sing the role very well indeed
but he has a sufficiently robust physique, I
should think, to be well able to make at
least a good stab at the clock-carrying bit.

The other coup was in engaging Gerald
English for the role of Torquemada the
clockmaker: for English is a superb
character tenor who is at his very best in
playing just this sort of skin-crawling
eccentric sort of role (witness his mem-
orable captain in Wozzeck at the 1976
Adelaide Festival and also, subsequently,
on ABC-TV).

The rest of the cast for this effort were
acceptable rather than memorable: John
Main was OK as Lover A, Conzalve the
poet, as was Grant Dickson as Lover B,
Don Inigo Gomez, the aging banker.
Beverley Bergen was quite good as
Concepcion, the bone of amorous conten-
tion, the female vamp on whom the success
or failure of the opera must rest.

Third on the merit list of this lot of TV
operas — and a long way behind the first
two — was Lucrezia Borgia. Its video
shortcomings reflected accurately the
shortcomings of the original AO live
production of which it was an all-too-
accurate record.

Joan Sutherland was of course superb in
the title role, as was Margreta Elkins in the
pants role of Maffio Orsini. Ron Stevens
was equally as successful dramatically as
he had been in the flesh, and no more
pleasing vocally; Bob Allman belted out
Don Alfonso's notes and produced overall
the fine standard of involvement which
characterises all roles I have ever seen him
play. Everyone else in the large cast of
semi-principal males was just grand.

The whole thing fell down badly, as had
its stage precursor, on the production front
— George Ogilvie's direction and Kristian
Fredrikson's designs came over no better
on TV than they had in the theatre. Well
perhaps marginally better, for TV is able
to excise many of the visual ennuis of a
production like this by discreet use of the
zoom lens and the close-up.

I had looked forward immensely to the
Trial By Jury imported from Britain to
conclude this series partly because I have a
special personal affinity for the piece (I
made my G & S debut and swansong in it
many years ago, as one of the jurymen in
an American high school production) and
partly because of the mouth-watering
prospect of seeing the piece done by a
top-line British cast all of whom have sung
with the English National Opera (Norma
Burrowes, John Brecknock, Eric Shilling,
Denis Dowling, Harold Blackburn) under
the baton of Australian expatriate con-
ductor Charles Mackerras.

In the event, it was awful. The designs
for this Granada Television production
belonged to the tizzy mock TV quiz show
genre. The performers, by and large,
seemed hell-bent on proving the old adage that G & S is a closed book to opera singers. There were moments when I suspected it was all deliberate; that they and their director, Peter Potter, had actually set out to create some kind of subtle spoof. But it was all so unbelievably wrong and gauche that I could only conclude, finally, that this was not the case.

Like the rankanest amateurs, all the players beat time all but visually with their entire bodies; produced a performance that was just about impeccable musically but reduced the text to an utterly monstrous sea of congealing clag. I could go on for some time citing specific grand faux pas; but there is no need — and anyhow I haven’t the heart.

On the live front, a flurry of year-end activity in Sydney produced more than its fair share of interest but not a great deal of memorability. A Conservatorium Opera School production of Otto Nicolai’s The Merry Wives of Windsor, directed by Ronal Jackson and conducted by Gerald Krug, provided just about conclusive justification for the present-day neglect of the piece.

Geoffrey Crook made a good fist of Falstaff in this Con production, and Glenn Winslade was a very impressive Fenton — particularly at moments during the overture. Brian Bell’s production was straightforward and mostly effective, though lacking any particular memorable masterstrokes: Quentin Hole’s stage settings worked well in conjunction with Peter Cooke’s costume designs imported from Brisbane following the August production of the Queensland Opera Company, where of course they were part of an overall Cooke design stint.

By and large, of course, the fascination of minor league opera is the perennial hope that one may encounter some previously unfamiliar talent on the brink of bigger and better things; it is virtually inevitable, if one clings to the highest standards of critical evaluation, that one will be disappointed at the Con, or Canberra, or suburban Rockdale. The Merry Wives I have just been talking about was basically a student exercise, and as such it was just about what one might have expected in advance.

Piqued by rather rapturous review in the daily press, I ventured even further off my usual beaten track a few days later to see another student production, this one presented by the third year graduating company at the National Institute of Dramatic Art. The work being staged was the Brecht-Weill classic The Threepenny Opera; the production and performance so far above the standards one has a right to expect under such circumstances as to provide one of my pleasantest operatic surprises in years.

Even from the very front row, where inevitably some of the stage illusion was lost — nothing, perhaps could have effectively disguised the fact that the Macheath of this production, Peter Cousens, was not quite mature enough of voice and manner to be a convincing highwayman — this was a remarkably effective realisation of one of the great all-time pieces of musical theatre; one which perversely defies pigeon-holing as to category, firmly plants one foot in the serious opera camp while at the same time never for a moment losing the common, even gutter, touch. Cousens’ inadequately disguised, and perhaps undisguisables, youth, was the only qualm about his portrayal of Mac the Knife... he clearly demonstrated he understood the character for the rather splendid mixture of strong-armed thuggery and human tenderness—despite—all that he is. Robert Grubb was a superbly awful Peachum, thoroughly believable as the totally unsavory proprietor of The Beggar’s Friend Ltd. Katrina Foster, as Mrs Peachum, and Diane Smith as Polly his daughter and Penny Cook as Lucy Brown were all marvellous caricatures of the characters they played.

None of the singing, of course, was really of operatic quality — but then, the piece doesn’t demand it anyhow. What finally could not fail to win admiration for this Threepenny Opera was above all the absolute involvement of the performers from beginning to end; that, coupled with an appropriately acceptable standard of dramatic and musical achievement throughout, made this one of the most stimulating evenings I have spent in the theatre in a long while.

The musical director, Roma Conway, did a magnificent job of bringing The Threepenny Opera to life with a band of four (she herself playing piano and electronic organ as well as co-coordinating the whole shebang); and George Whaley’s direction was clean and correct.

The major live offering I saw during the period under review, a Canberra Opera production of Mozart’s Magic Flute, suffered from some disturbing orchestral lapses — though it had its compensations, in particular in the chorus department (O Isis and Osiris, the night I heard it, was beautifully full-voiced and mellow, with not a scratchy edge to be heard anywhere). Individual acting and singing honors went to Colin Slater’s Papageno — quite a different character in appearance to the feathered Macanaghies and Pringles we have become accustomed to in the 1973. Australian Opera production designed by John Stoddart, but thoroughly convincing in all ways. Margaret Sim was a warm Pamina and John Main produced a pleasantly sung Tamino without ever unbending very much dramatically.

Joan Richards coped quite well with the fearsome vocal squiggles that fell her lot as Queen of the Night, and Bryan Dowling was an intermittently effective Sarastro who made some very pleasing, full-throated sounds but seemed to be having difficulty at times.

Brian Bell’s production was straightforward and mostly effective, though lacking any particular memorable masterstrokes: Quentin Hole’s stage settings worked well in conjunction with Peter Cooke’s costume designs imported from Brisbane following the August production of the Queensland Opera Company, where of course they were part of an overall Cooke design stint.

Ayis Ioannides was a mostly capable conductor who did, however, have some difficulty in maintaining ensemble at times — particularly at moments during the difficult, and exposed, overture.

John Main (Tamino) and Colin Slater (Papageno) in Canberra Opera’s Magic Flute

Photo by Ross Gould.
Blue Fin lacks the magic of Storm Boy

The South Australian Film Corporation has not got another Storm Boy in Blue Fin, perhaps because the Southern Blue Fin tuna is not, though a handsome enough fish, as quirkily interesting as a pelican. In fact pelicans do make a brief appearance in the film, but they are merely a token, while a great deal of footage is devoted to the catching and landing on the ship's deck of tuna, doomed to the can.

There are certain similarities in the films. Both are derived from books by the South Australian author Colin Thiele; both have scripts by Sonia Borg; both have as star, or at least as chief attraction, young Greg Rowe (now thirteen); and in both films the theme explores a difficult relationship between a son and his father. It could be added that both films are beautifully photographed in beautiful wild bits of the South Australian coast.

The difference between the two is a matter of tone, which may indeed be a matter of direction. Blue Fin lacks the mystery, the suggestion of a closed society, of Storm Boy. It is really a simplistic rather than simple story, and there's the rub. The people in it are making a living in a way they choose, so one cannot elect them heroes. When one of their lot is in trouble, everybody rallies but this is no more than what happens in, say, the cheese factory.

The most effective scene occurs when Snook (Greg Rowe) is tipped into the night-dark sea when another tuna boat, the Dog Star, (Dog Star pays for this by being burned at sea) swings in too close to Blue Fin. A crew man, Snook's sister's boy friend Sam, goes in after him. For quite a while there is no sound but voices calling in the dark. The waves are quiet, the wind has dropped. It is very eerie and the expectation is of a lurking shark, at the very least.

Some very clever things have been done to make a most realistic near-shipwreck caused by a most unrealistic "water-spout". Snook survives this and in a series of events that are distinctly gee-whiz — he pumps the water out of the boat, stops ammonia leaking from the freezer, makes himself a dish of cold tinned peas topped up with marmalade, finds the first aid box and gets a band aid for his his dad who needs rather more, having had his leg broken in the upheaval and suffered contusions and abrasions to the face, as police reports say. Snook then gets the engines going and, with a makeshift tiller, heads for home. Snook and his dad, played by the cuddly German actor Hardy Kruger (Sundays and Cybele, and lots of films in deserts, jungles and the German army) arrive back to find the inhabitants of Streaky Bay massed on the wharf, cheering them in. And not a word about the rest of the six man crew, lost at sea.

Hardy Kruger is quite effective as gruff daddy; Elspeth Ballantyne plays his wife with ingenuous charm, and John Jarrett makes a very appealing Sam. The musical score is by Michael Carlos, photography directed by Geoffrey Burton, direction by Carl Schultz. Matt Carroll is executive producer and the producer is Hal McElroy.

Greg Rowe is talented and appealing and I can see the film doing well, playing to children in Australia and worldwide. But it will not bring in any adults, as Storm Boy did. And though I suppose it is a noble deed to catch a big shiny fish while it is on a feeding rampage and cut it into little chunks and shove it in a can, such an operation lacks magic, a fact that may be reflected at the box office.

Greg Rowe and Hardy Kruger in Blue Fin
must find it surprising to learn how many distinguished and perhaps unexpected people have shared this affectionate regard for the recorder. Benjamin Britten was a keen supporter of the recorder club in Aldeburgh. The Scherzo he wrote in 1955 for some of his fellow players in this group is one of the well-chosen pieces which represent 20th century composition for the recorder in this set. Hindemith wrote a trio in 1932 which seems to have been the first piece written by an important 20th century composer for the then recently revived instrument. Hindemith took part in the first performance. This trio is represented in The Art of the Recorder, as demonstrated by Munrow and his colleagues.

An Australian piece also finds its way into this select company: Nigel Butterley's The White Throated Warbler, a bird piece using serial technique which he wrote for Carl Dolmetsch and Joseph Saxby during their Australian tour in 1965. It has worn the intervening thirteen years well and seems likely to hold its own among the best pieces written in modern times for this instrument. Peter Dickinson's Recorder Music is an interesting recent (1973) representative of a genre of recent composition in which pre-taped playing is combined with its performer's playing in real time.

Between the earliest pieces — and Munrow usually provides convincing reasons for appropriating them for his purposes — and these 20th century compositions the set takes in its stride chansons, dance pieces and a fantasy from the renaissance, Purcell's sublime and still very popular Cantata 208, (which the late Thurston Dart convincingly deduced was originally meant for three treble recorders with continuo), concertos by Vivaldi and John Lloyd, James Bowman and Martyn Hill are heard in one of a series of arrangements for soprano, two treble recorders and continuo. Richard Lloyd, James Bowman and Martyn Hill are the able singers employed in several pieces in this section.

It goes without saying — but I'd better mention it all the same — that Munrow and his collaborators used original instruments or instruments deliberately patterned after surviving instruments (string as well as wind and continuo and that Munrow employed instruments which make a clear distinction between the characteristic qualities of the renaissance recorder and its differently shaped baroque successor. The baroque recorder in the case we are looking at has been revived and is usually the form of the instrument available in cheaper plastic models. The renaissance recorder is less good at playing high notes and has a more restricted range but compensates for this with a stronger tone in its lower register.

Verdi's Simon Boccanegra will be back in the Australian Opera's repertory in its 1979 season. It will be interesting to see whether some changes of casting endow this production with the impact that Verdi's music deserves. The piece is notoriously dark in colour — excessively gloomy, as some listeners complain — but anyone who has seen a performance of it with first-class singers in each of the main roles and with a conductor of a high order to bring it all together knows that the opera can then seem not merely one of Verdi's interesting partial successes but a complete masterpiece. The standard HMV recording of recent years had the benefit of Tito Gobbi's performance in the title role, some moving passages in the singing of Victoria de los Angeles and some sonorous singing by Boris Christoff as Fiesco. It originally appeared in mono and was later reprocessed electronically to give a stereo effect. Though Gobbi's performance in particular will always be a musical-dramatic pleasure for one interpretation of the title role I feel that the set as a whole has been superseded decisively by the recent recording conducted by Claudio Abbado with La Scala forces (DGG 2740 169, 3 discs). Abbado on almost every page of the score establishes more vivid dynamics and more eloquent phrasing, than Santini did on the older set. Piero Capucilli has a far more evolved and interesting as Simon than he has been in some other recent parts. Mirella Freni is a lovely Amelia in sound and in general recorded presence, Jose Carreras is an energetic and involved Gabriele and the other bass and baritone roles are in the hands of Nicolai Ghiaurov, Jose van Dam and Giovanni Foihani. Abbado exercises his masterful influence on every role and every aspect of the orchestral and choral performance; and the quality of the sound is admirable in every way. This is the set with which to get to know the opera. Please remember, however, when you see and hear the Australian Opera's 1979 performances that not many theatre productions of the work are as consistently well cast as this recording. La Scala is one of the few houses in which a listener may hope to hear singing of as uniformly high standard as this, informed and governed, by thoroughly Verdian conducting.
The cover of Leslie Rees' *Australian Drama in the 1970's* (A & R, rrp $9.95) shows Tony Sheldon as Ivan in Louis Nowra's *Inner Voices*. That this exciting play, first produced at Nimrod nearly two years ago, gets barely four lines of comment inside is a sign of the presumption in publishing the book as *A History of Australian Drama* Volume 2. A few lists of plays as appendices do not turn this rambling series of plot summaries and personal reactions into the "historical and critical survey", which the title page boasts.

The neglect of Louis Nowra is not due to any lack of thoroughness on Rees' part. It is simply that the book restricts itself to a particular view of "new wave" drama — beginning in the late 60's and developing in the early 70's, exploring Australian life and character in a special, self-conscious way. If this was all there was to Australian drama two years ago, it is not now, and although one doesn't expect Rees to be able to be completely up-to-date in a book which has to go through the lengthy process of publication, perhaps he should have waited a little longer.

Within these limitations the book is fairly thorough, as a survey of plays, if not as an historical study. It is also highly personal, even idiosyncratic. Barry Oakley and Jim McNeil are given chapters of their own, while Boddly & Ellis, Kenneth Cook, Bill Reed, Ray Lawler (for Alibatross), Thomas Keneally and Ron Blair are lumped together under the rather strained principle that they all are concerned with Australian history or biography, and exploring the origins of that Snark-like entity the Australian National Character. It is Rees' preoccupation with the ANC which leads him to minimise the huge stylistic differences, and concentrate on what the plays are ostensibly about.

A self conscious Australianness is a large part of the "new wave", so Rees is an eminently qualified commentator. But his survey of plays, with chapters on different playwrights, ignores links and influences and does little to justify the claim that this was in any sense a "wave" of its own. He has chapters on "How the 'New Wave' Began" and the "Social-Cultural Background" followed by chapters on Jack Hibberd, John Romeril and the APG, Alex Buzo, the historical plays, David Williamson, female writers, Jim McNeil, Barry Oakley, Peter Kenna supported by various odds and ends and a concluding section. Other critics have tried to order the material — arguing, for example, that there are two distinct lines of development: the 'naturalistic' plays of sex and family life and the rough, comic vaudevillian tradition. Rees attempts little such explanation of his subject. The result is a smorgasbord of isolated points about isolated plays and playwrights.

This would not matter were it not that Rees is as yet the only book on recent Australian playwrighting. When other studies appear, to balance the view Rees presents, his will take its rightful and valuable place as an account of one theatre lover's progress through the exciting theatrical times of the early 70's.

A much more satisfying book is John West's *Theatre in Australia* (Cassell, rrp $19.95). It is a pity this did not reach us in time for the Christmas edition. It is a beautifully produced book, splendidly illustrated, which takes as its subject nothing less than the entire history of Australian theatre. It is published as a comparison to John Cargher's *Opera and Ballet in Australia*. Obviously it cannot hope to be completely comprehensive, nor is it intended as a critical or scholarly reference work. Considering that, it is remarkably detached, and for the periods I can comment on, substantially accurate, although I have heard doubts expressed. West has a modest disclaimer, "This book should be read with every other book already published about theatre in this country, and with the volumes yet to follow from other, and conceivably abler, hands. If anything in the following pages strikes you as being particularly interesting, it is a fairly safe bet that somebody told it to me."

Unlike Rees' book, this is one of many, of course, but it is by far the most comprehensive and for the general reader the best. The style is anecdotal and slightly breathless. At times the names and dates proliferate so rapidly, that you find yourself wondering where you are, and having to turn back. The book has the best collection of pictures from theatres, etc, available in Australia.
HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (212 3411)
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. Throughout Jan.

KIRRIBILLI PUB THEATRE (92 1451)
Kirribilli Hotel, Milsons Point. The Over the Rainbow Show by Rick Maier and Malcolm Frawley; Director, Malcolm Frawley, with Paul Chubb, Laura Gabriel, Richmond Young, Susan Asquith, Steven Sacks. Throughout Jan.

LES CURRIE PRESENTATIONS (358 5676)
Mike Jackson — folk singer; at The Festival of Sydney.

MARIONETTE THEATRE OF AUSTRALIA (357 1200)
At the Drama Theatre, Opera House: The Mysterious Potamus. 9 27 Jan.

MUSIC HALL THEATRE RESTAURANT (909 8222)
Crushed by Desire, written and directed by Michael Boddy. Throughout Jan.

MUSIC LOFT THEATRE (977 6585)
Encore, a musical revue starring the Toppo family and Lee Young. Throughout Jan.

NEW THEATRE (519 3403)
Reedy River, the Australian musical by Dick Diamond; Director, Frank Barnes and part of the Sydney Festival. Throughout Jan.

NIMROD THEATRE (699 9322)
an exhibition of children's historical antique books and toys. To 29 Jan.

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE (20588)
The Bed Before Yesterday, a Jason Savage production. 2 Jan to 20 Jan, 10.15 am and 2.00 pm.

QUEENSLAND

ARTS THEATRE (36 2344)
Lovers and Other Strangers by Renee Taylor and Joseph Bologna; Director, Ken Kennett. The Three Billy Griest Gruff — a Jason Savage production. 2 Jan to 20 Jan, 10.15 am and 2.00 pm.

BRISBANE ACTORS COMPANY at the CONSERVATORIUM THEATRE (349 1879)
The Human Voice by Jean Cocteau; Director, Bruce Parr; with Jennifer Flowers, Madame's Late Mother by George Feydeau; Director, David Clendenning; with David Clendenning and Jennifer Flowers. To 20 Jan.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Q THEATRE (223 5651)
Bill's Lie at Waterhouse and Hall; Director, Bill O'Day. Firs and Sats 29 Dec - 27 Jan.

VICTORIA

ALEXANDER THEATRE (543 2828)
Peter Pan. Children's holiday show. Director, Marie Cuminsky. 10 am and 2 pm Mon - Fri; Sat mat 2 pm. To 27 Jan.

ARENA CHILDREN'S THEATRE (24 9667)
Contact theatre for details of special holiday activities.

CREATIVE ARTS THEATRE (870 6742)
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HOOPLA THEATRE FOUNDATION (63-7643)
To be announced.

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

LAST LAUGH THEATRE RESTAURANT (419-6226)
I. O Sloan's Three Black and Three White Refined Jubilee Minstrels.

MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY (645-4000)
Russell Street: Once a Catholic by Mary O'Malley; Director, Ray Lawler; with Vivien Davies, Christine Amor, Katy Wild, Marion Edward, Jennifer West, Judith McGrath, Robert Essex, Matthew King, David Letch. To 20 Jan.
Bodies by James Saunders; Director, Bruce Myles. From 23 Jan.
Athenaeum: Arsenic and Old Lace by Joseph Kesselring; Director, Simon Chirivis. To 27 Jan.
Journey's End by R C Sherriff; Director, Mick Rodger. From 30 Jan. Tributary Productions: new workshop season to be announced.

MIXED COMPANY (24-9667)

PALAZZO THEATRE (94-0655)
Grand Adventure puppet show. 10 am and 2 pm daily.

PILGRIM PUPPET THEATRE (818-6650)
Peter Pan written and directed by Graeme Bent. 10.15 and 2.00 Tues to Fri, 2.00 Sat.
POLYGLOT PUPPETS (818-1512)
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PRINCESS THEATRE (662-2911)
Sleeping Beauty on Ice. To early Feb.

STAGE DOOR THEATRE RESTAURANT
Kiss Me Goodnight Sergeant Major.

TENT SHOW, Batman Avenue (663-4993)
The Flintstones on Parade. To 8 Feb.

TIKKI AND JOHN'S THEATRE LOUNGE (663-1745)

Amateur Companies:

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

For entries contact Les Cartwright on 781-1777.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

CIVIC THEATRE RESTAURANT (272-1595)
Five Past 79. Director, Hal Davies. From 5 Jan.

HOLE IN THE WALL (381-2403)
No Way. A revue; Director, Edgar Metcalfe. From 3 Jan.

WA ARTS COUNCIL
For entries contact Joan Ambrose on 299-6639.

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

Development: for companies, groups or individuals for special projects.
Training: for professional companies for basic and advanced training programs within Australia.
Regional Theatre: programs submitted must have both local and State government financial support.
Limited Life: for leading professional artists, temporarily brought together, to undertake innovative theatre performances or development activity. Maximum period two years; non-renewable.
Travel/Study: for full-time professional theatre personnel for work or study programs unavailable in Australia. Maximum $2,000 per grant.

Drama Directors'/Theatre Designers' Development:
for directors or designers of proven potential for personal development programs within Australia.

For details and application forms contact:
The Secretary, Theatre Board, Australia Council, P.O. Box 302, NORTH SYDNEY, NSW 2060. Tel.: (02) 922 2122;
and at worst intruders", a point which when coupled with the letter-box stage, oppressive ceiling and small number of seats in the Drama Theatre, make it far from an ideal venue. Most people grudgingly accept its use as a necessary political evil, but such crippling inadequacies cannot be so easily overlooked.

A major factor in Nimrod's success is the intimate and immediate actor-audience relationship of both its spaces, allowing an instant coupling of the electrical "theatrical circuit". Whatever the difficulties about the terms of the bequest, the Seymour Centre would surely make a much better set-up — and its rent could hardly be more than the reputed $14 million for the Drama Theatre. Showcase productions, as scheduled for most of 1979, with commercial shows interspersed, could maintain the financial and artistic viability of Bennelong, whilst use of the Seymour Centre would allow the consolidation of a State Company under a single roof, so vital to its success.

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THESPIA'S PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 7

**Name**

**Address**

**Across:**
1. Comparison like me in a grin (6)
4. Notes about sick Edward, he's boneless (8)
9. To get there one leaves the Riviera in a shambles (6)
10. Like 6, but used for gravy? (8)
11. Williamson's tradesmen (3,11)
13. Phones little Albert to get weapons and gives the alert (5,3)
14. Good man, in first class form for some bubbly (4,4)
15. Method of checking attendance sounds like the cry of a bun (4,4)
17. Military division given by philosopher above (7)
19. Dark ant mad for drink (7)
20. Is French female a Bibly lady? (6)
21. Learn hand joust differently for diva (4,10)
23. In such object nothing is restful (8)
24. Head of the union abandons the resurrected for lepers (6)
25. Southern deshabille in a summer frock (8)
26. Novice enters the teams and slips (6)

**Down:**
1. "This castle hath a pleasant..." (Macbeth) (4)
2. Third month will take place, much to Joh's chagrin (5,2)
3. Fifty four join a crazy county and become peevish (8)
5. Disrespect the quality of not being a vicar? (6)
6. The poet has us sitting in the lounge (6)
7. Trish embraces the street willy-nilly and wants some (7)
8. Assimilation of on site dig (9)
12. Shore PM atop the tepees causes disgruntled people (11)
15. Method of checking attendance sounds like the cry of a bun (4,4)
17. Military division given by philosopher above (7)
19. Dark ant mad for drink (7)
20. Is French female a Bibly lady? (6)
22. Employs in fungus estimation (4).

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

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**THEATRE AUSTRALIA JANUARY 1979**