Theatre Australia: Australia's magazine of the performing arts 3(9) April 1979

Description

Publisher
Theatre Publications Ltd., New Lambton Heights, 58p

This serial is available at Research Online: http://ro.uow.edu.au/theatreaustralia/29
BOOKINGS MITCHELLS BASS

ROBYN NEVIN as the amazing Miss Docker

JOHN BELL director of the Venetian Twins

KATE FITZPATRICK as Marguerite Gautier
The national magazine of the performing arts

Theatre Australia

April 1979  Volume 3 No. 9

Departments:
2 Comment
3 Quotes and Queries
5 Whispers, Rumours and Facts
6 Noises Off
12 Letters
54 Guide — Theatre, Opera, Dance

Spotlight:
7 The Annual Meet — Ron Blair
8 Playwrights' Conference — From Strength to Strength — Mick Rodger
9 Stoppard — Collin O'Brien
10 Troupe — Guthrie Worby
11 Prospect's Grand Tour — An interview with Theatre Australia

Features:
13 Reg Livermore's Singular Burlesques — Peter Batey, Director
16 Dorothy Hewett — Kristin Green
19 Emerald Hill Theatre — Raymond Stanley
39 Children's Theatre: Pipi Storm Children's Circus — Murray Oliver
41 Writer's View: John Romeril

International:
47 Focus on Finland — Jacqueline Mulhallen

Opera:
49 Improved revivals; Don, Merry Widow, Mastersingers, and G and S — David Gyger

Dance:
43 Dance Extra: Graeme Murphy on Rumours, William Shubridge on Modern Dance

Theatre Reviews:
21 WA
   Romeo and Juliet — Collin O'Brien
   Great English Eccentrics — Margot Luke
   Makassar Reef — Cliff Gillam
   The Way of the World — Cliff Gillam
   Marriage of Figaro in Perth — Derek Moore Morgan
   Night & Day/After Magritte — Collin O'Brien

26 VIC
   The Bridal Suite — Jack Hibberd
   Jeremy Taylor — Margaret McClusky
   Garden of Delights — Suzanne Spanner

29 QLD
   Boadicea/You Never Can Tell — Veronica Kelly
   Irish Stew — Jeremy Ridgman

31 SA
   Hamlet — Guthrie Worby

32 ACT
   Man and Man — Roger Pulvers
   The Anniversary/The Flaw — Marguerite Wells

33 NSW
   Lost To The Devil — Lucy Wagner
   Sacred Cow — Dorothy Hewett
   Hancock's Last Half Hour — Robert Page
   The Murder Room — Anthony Barkey
   Lady of the Camellias — Roger Pulvers
   Cabaret — Lucy Wagner

Film:
51 Dawn — they've laboured in vain — Elizabeth Riddell

Records:
52 Treasures from a Seven Hundred Year Old Song Collection — Roger Covell

Books:
53 From the Maestro to a Master — John McCallum
56 Thespias Prize Crossword No. 10

National Theatre Opera Dance Guide
In Praise of the Perth Festival

The organisers of the Perth Festival had some justification for their "Eastern States" paranoia; the twenty seventh Festival, swelled by WA sequicentenary celebrations, was as large and high powered an affair as any Adelaide Festival, and as an event has been running longer. Yet general appreciation and media coverage bore little relationship to its importance.

Tom Stoppard, as the major festival guest, though, was covered by most newspapers, and indeed gave very good value for his week's stay. He performed with great humour, wit and intelligence for seminars, interviewers, TV and the theatres doing productions of his work. His changes to Act 2 of Night and Day were said to have caused some problems for the cast, but by opening night all seemed to be resolved. On the Sunday before his departure Stoppard captained "The Festival" vs "Tom Stoppard and the World". The final score is unknown.

Takang part with "The Festival" team was Director, David Blenkinsop who found time for relaxtion(?) among an incredibly heavy schedule. He and publicity officer Pauline Steele worked night and day to keep the Festival rolling,stars to meet at airports, press conferences to organise, receptions to attend, and with a staff apparently only one fifth the size of its Adelaide counterpart.

Perhaps one unfortunate result of this overwork was the apparent lack of a central organisation of theatres. Three of the major shows seemed to have got themselves in the wrong theatres; Prospect, for their intimate chamber pieces had wanted the 900-seater, thrust stage of the Octagon, but were stuck with the barn-like, ex cinema, The Regal, with all its lack of facilities and which caused their pieces to die a little; SA’s State Opera had the problems of music in the open air (not to mention some noisy and inquisitive peacocks) to cope with in the New Fortune, and would have been served better by the Regal; while Nimrod took a major Shakespeare to the city with the only reconstructed Elizabethan theatre in the world — the New Fortune — but performed in the Octagon.

That there should be such choice (and the theatres mentioned so far are only the half of it) shows how rich Perth is in theatre buildings, and how true it is that such riches are ignored by the joint grouping known in WA as the "Eastern States". Not only are there four professional theatres at the university, the National Company’s Playhouse and Green Room, the diminutive Hole in the Wall and the Regal, but the vast TVW Entertainment Centre which, though there is some controversy, should be of great interest particularly to Sydney-siders who will soon be having one of their own. And the Perth His Majesty’s, one of the few grandiose late nineteenth century theatres remaining in the country, is a project that deserves far greater attention than it has so far received. Architect Peter Parkinson, with Theatre Consultant Tom Brown, is in the process of converting His Majesty’s into a fully equipped modern theatre, while leaving its nineteenth century appearance almost completely intact. The project looks like costing up to $11 million, which may seem a lot, but set against the cost of demolishing one theatre and building another it is a considerable saving.

Sydney Theatre Company — Decisions Needed

Cost seems to be a problem bothering the Federal Minister of the Arts, Mr Eliott, in relation to the Sydney Theatre Company (see Quotes and Queries). Whether or not the interim Board of the Company is, as he suggested, subject to political pressure, is dubious, but it is certainly about time an Artistic Director was certainly about time an Artistic Director was appointed and new Board was elected, so that it can start running as a functioning company. Whoever the director is going to be, there are months of work awaiting him before he even starts his first season in 1980.

John Bell still seems to be uppermost in the majority of people’s minds as the most likely candidate for the job, although he himself seems increasingly non-committal about whether he is even interested. It seems that Nimrod would prefer to take on the responsibility of being the State Theatre Company without destroying their successful organisation and working relationships of the present structure.

The closing date for applications from potential artistic directors was 15th February, so hopefully some announcements will be made shortly (perhaps by the time this is published).
SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY FUNDING DEBATE


"The Federal Government has threatened to cut off funds to the newly formed Sydney Theatre Company unless an independent Board is established."

EVAN WILLIAMS, Director of Cultural Activities, Premier's Dept, NSW.

"I don't know Mr Ellicott's definition of the word independent. It may be that he has some personal or political objection to some of the people on the Board. I wouldn't like to speculate on this. I can only state my own confident belief that the Board of this Company is not only independent but thoroughly capable and professional in the approach to its responsibilities.

Mr Justice McClland and Mr Kryger have unmatched experience in finance, industrial and legal circles, and Mr Llewellyn Jones is an actor of undoubted talent. All three are known and respected throughout the community. They have taken prompt action to appoint an Artistic Director for the Company. They have ensured with the help of their administrator an outstandingly successful opening season at the Sydney Opera House Drama Theatre."

MR ELLICOTT, Federal Minister for Home Affairs.

"I regard it as crucial to the success of the Company that its Board should operate as an independent Board and not be subject to any form of political direction or patronage. I hope that Mr Wran understands that any future Federal funding of the Company will in part be dependent on it being established with an independent Board which participates in the choice of the Artistic Director and the formulation of its policy."

Mr Ellicott said that he felt Mr Evan Williams' statement was dealing with personalities and that he had no comment to make on those opinions.

Spokesperson for the Australian Council

"There has been no threat from the Minister to cut off funds from the Sydney Theatre Company. Council approved a decision to grant $350,000 to the Sydney Theatre Company for this calendar year at a meeting held on 2 Mar.

Mr Ellicott was present at that meeting and expressed the view that the grant would be paid to the STC even though it did not conform to clauses 4, 5, and 6 of the Council's standard Codes of Grant. The Council passed an exemption from the normal codes in order to allow for the fact that the STC Board is an interim appointment. How the structure of the Company will operate in 1980 is to be decided later this year. As soon as the Board has appointed a Director it must call a meeting to discuss the articles of association. The grant of $350,000 holds till 31st December 1979, to facilitate the Company till that time.

The Australia Council simply wishes to see that a theatre Board observes Council procedures and is elected democratically by members of the company."

HOLE NEW LOOK

JAKE NEWBY and COLIN MCCOLL

"One well-known actress in Perth has already dubbed the new management of The Hole in the Wall Theatre a 'youthquake'. Though the established actors aren't exactly shaking in their shoes, it's true to say that the appointment of Colin McColl, 30, as Artistic Director and Jake Newby, 29, as Administrator (both of whom have amassed considerable and diverse experience in their relatively short careers), is causing a few land ripples on the West Australian theatrical scene.

"Without totally alienating staunch Hole supporters, I like to see us attracting a younger, spunkier audience back to the Hole," says McColl. "an audience who come to regard the theatre as their theatre; because we speak their language, because we present theatre that is relevant to them and to Our Times (and by that I don't mean its all going to be angst drama and protest theatre) and because we can offer them a theatre experience unlike any other in Perth. With the demise of the Playhouse's Greenroom and the splendid work Mike Morris was doing there, the Hole is now the only alternative for people who want their theatre to be challenging, immediate and irresistible."

"I have always been a fervent admirer of the Nimrod, the energy and dynamism of its operations and, of course, Jake used to work there so that we found in our planning that were almost unconsciously emulating ideas used at the Nimrod. Can't be a bad thing, particularly as the kinds of plays Nimrod do — Makassar Reef, Gone with Hardy, American Buffalo — also happen to be the kinds of plays that work well at the Hole, but I hope we will eventually work towards a 'house-style' that is uniquely ours."

Already McColl and Newby have introduced an aggressive marketing campaign to reach secondary and tertiary students and have expanded the theatre's playing week from four to six nights.

McColl's first production Gone with Hardy opened mid March and this month Poliakoff's City Sugar opens at The Hole.

"People keep warning me that it hasn't been a success in our Australian productions," said McColl. "I can't believe it — Poliakoff is going to become the Chekhov of the 70's. His plays contain all the humour, bitterness, frustrations, devastating cruelty, depth of feeling and social comment of Chekhov. You wait."

Robert Lord's farce Well Hung is McColl's third production for the year, then Ray Omonde will direct The White Devil for The Hole. The programme of plays for the remainder of the year has yet to be finalised but it will include a Sam Shepard, D H Lawrence's The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd and the new Robert David MacDonald play about Eva Braun and Mussolini's mistress, Summit Conference.

Besides mainstage work, McColl is planning a late night season of sub-culture theatre (the plays of Copi, Eyen etc.) and a workshop season of new short Australian scripts. There will be low key, involving, participatory theatre for children in the school holidays (as an alternative to the flash Ey On Parade type fare often offered to Perth youngsters) and a Saturday morning Youth Theatre workshop, through the second school term, for secondary students. This will culminate in a full scale production of Capek's Life of the Insects, mounted entirely by the students and directed by McColl.

"I keep coming back to something Beverley Sills said when she took up directorship of the N Y City Opera," says McColl. "I quote; 'We don't want to be the second company in New York, (read Perth), we want to be the other company, the different one. I can't put it more succinctly than that.'"
MIXED SEASON

NICK ENRIGHT, Associate Director, STC.

“Ron Blair has returned to Sydney to take up his Literature Board grant, and Kevin Palmer and I have become Colin George’s Associate Directors. Kevin returns to the Company after several years guiding the NIDA technical production students.

My own year has started with Rosencrantz in Colín’s full-length Hamlet. Mike Siberry has the name part and it is exciting to share a stage with a classical talent of such presence and promise.

Then I tackle my first production in the Playhouse, directing Les Dayman, Colin Friers and Ted Hodgeman in American Buffalo by the brilliant young Chicago playwright David Mamet, whom we are introducing to Australian audiences. He knows the baroque twists and tricks of contemporary street talk and his play is a bleakly comic piece about three petty crims in a junkshop.

Another new play follows a local play by Rob George commissioned for presentation by Magpie during the Come Out Festival in the May school holidays. Rob’s play Grabbing It, is set in a SA country town in the late fifties and explores the idea of a community. Its half-dozen songs will be performed by Magpie’s fifties-revival band, The Hot Seeds.

Last in the season is Arms and The Man, my first Shaw, and my first collaboration with an old friend, our Head of Design, Hugh Colman. The play tours to Hobart after its Playhouse season.”

RETURN OF THE BASTARD

ROBIN RAMSAY

“Although Lawson had spent over a year in London at the turn of the century, his aggressive colonial personality had not gone down well. The new introduction to the English via The Bastard from the Bush of what Manning Clark calls the Christ cum larrikin figure, was to them a colonial personality had not gone down well. The Bastard from the Bush currently plays at the Nimrod Downstairs theatre this month.

TRIBUTARY READINGS

JUDITH ALEXANDER, Director

“Tributary ’79 started off on 9th January with two readings of new plays by Melbourne playwrights. The readings took place at South Melbourne, without an audience and were part of a new Tributary scheme, “Readings for Playwrights.” Company actors give a private reading of a play for the benefit of the playwright so that obvious problems can be ironed out in the hope that the play will then be suitable for public exposure.

This is a preliminary step in the process of taking new Australian plays from a limited workshop performance with a small audience to, hopefully, a full scale production. It was felt necessary after our experience in 1978, when the re-writing and workshop of new plays was sometimes hampered by the too pressing need to prepare the play for a public performance.

The first two plays to be read were River of Fire by Graham Sheil, and the Sound Mixers by Eric Scott. These were followed on 6th March by a reading of a short play, Seven Prisoners in Search of a Locksmith by Sydney novelist Colleen Klein.

The general consensus of opinion after each reading was that the scheme was helpful and worthwhile.

The first 1979 Tributary production was a play with music by Jan and Martin Friedl, entitled The Hypothetical End of Bert Brecht which ran from 19th to the 24th March at the Russell Street Theatre. The play, which featured Jan Friedl, Peter Cummins and The Composers’ Ensemble, was staged with some financial assistance from the Music Board of the Australia Council. During rehearsal of his Galileo, in Strif- torn Berlin, the ageing Brecht is forced to examine the relationship between his art and politics.”

FROM THE BUSH VIA LONDON

RODNEY FISHER, Director

“There was not only personal satisfaction and pleasure to be had from directing Robin Ramsay in The Bastard from the Bush at London’s Riverside Studios; there was also the haunting reminder that Henry Lawson went to London at what he called “my high tide” and began there a descent towards destruction from which he never recovered.

This is why the success of the show and amazing word of mouth publicity that led to extra performances was particularly gratifying. Ramsay has enormous rapport with the “Christ cum larrikin” side of Lawson’s character; the strong praise he received — accompanied as it was by a warm acceptance of Lawson the writer, 77 years after his visit — gave me a very good feeling that we were doing it for Henry.

The Bastard from the Bush currently plays at the Nimrod Downstairs theatre this month.

TRIBUTARY READINGS

JUDITH ALEXANDER, Director

“Tributary ’79 started off on 9th January with two readings of new plays by Melbourne playwrights. The readings took place at South Melbourne, without an audience and were part of a new Tributary scheme, “Readings for Playwrights.” Company actors give a private reading of a play for the benefit of the playwright so that obvious problems can be ironed out in the hope that the play will then be suitable for public exposure.

This is a preliminary step in the process of taking new Australian plays from a limited workshop performance with a small audience to, hopefully, a full scale production. It was felt necessary after our experience in 1978, when the re-writing and workshop of new plays was sometimes hampered by the too pressing need to prepare the play for a public performance.

The first two plays to be read were River of Fire by Graham Sheil, and the Sound Mixers by Eric Scott. These were followed on 6th March by a reading of a short play, Seven Prisoners in Search of a Locksmith by Sydney novelist Colleen Klein.

The general consensus of opinion after each reading was that the scheme was helpful and worthwhile.

The first 1979 Tributary production was a play with music by Jan and Martin Friedl, entitled The Hypothetical End of Bert Brecht which ran from 19th to the 24th March at the Russell Street Theatre. The play, which featured Jan Friedl, Peter Cummins and The Composers’ Ensemble, was staged with some financial assistance from the Music Board of the Australia Council. During rehearsal of his Galileo, in strift- torn Berlin, the ageing Brecht is forced to examine the relationship between his art and politics.”

ANPC DONATIONS REQUIRED

MICHAEL LYNCH, Administrator

“The seventh annual Playwrights’ Conference (to be held in Canberra, 6th to 20th May) is now in its final stages of preparation. As in the previous years the Administrator is attempting the ever more difficult task of raising sufficient money to make the Conference work. This has been made more difficult by cuts in some subsidy support. Private contributions are most anxiously sought no matter how small or how large. Organisations or individuals who might be interested in helping should contact the Administrator (Michael Lynch), ANPC, C: M & L Pty Limited, 49 Darlinghurst Road, Kings Cross, Telephone 358 3111. Any prospective donor should be aware that donations are tax deductible if paid through the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust.”

TRAVELLING PLAYHOUSE

TONY BARKER, Information Officer, UNE.

“Travelling Playhouse is a newly formed professional theatre company based at the University of New England and designed as a touring repertory to bring drama to the north-west region of New South Wales. Its formation has been assisted by the enthusiastic support of the University, the Armidale College of Advanced Education, and the Regional Office of the Department of Education, as well as by donations from commercial companies.

Professional actors have been selected and the company is assembling.

At 12.30 pm on Friday 9th March, a Press Conference was held at Elizabeth Bay House, Onslow Avenue, Elizabeth Bay, to introduce the company and its policies to those members of the press involved in the arts. Elizabeth Bay House was chosen because two performances of a Victorian Soiree were held there on the evening of the 9th March for friends of the new company. These performances were sold out and on the following day, two free performances were held for Senior Citizens.

Publicity to launch this ambitious venture will prove its virtual life-blood, in that it will help to keep faith with commercial backers — and may, indeed, encourage other more reluctant companies to follow suit.”

TOP END ACTION

GORDON BEATTIE, Director Tie Die Darwin.

“After having been a director for TYER (Theatre Youth and Education for the Riverina) and Lecturer in Drama at the Riverina College of Advanced Education, I have been appointed as director of the Northern Territory’s TIE Company.

The team has been in existence for four years now and this is the first time it has had a full-time director. In the past the direction has been on an ad hoc basis with various guest direction and self-directed shows. The company is based in Brown’s Mart, The Community Arts Centre.

The company will undertake an extensive

(Continued on page 56)
Indications are that there is likely to be much dissatisfaction over the renovated His Majesty's in Perth, and that certain promoters could even boycott it when the theatre finally opens. It seems that as a 1200 seater (with gallery for 200), it is likely to be too small for the purposes of some. And by operating that and the Entertainment Centre, TVW are creating too much of a monopoly in the city.

It looks as if Frith Banbury will be coming here to direct Deborah Kerr in *The Day After The Fair*. When she appeared in the play in London in 1972 Banbury co-presented it as well as directing....Hope it is true that Chris Langham is to make a return visit....If John Schlesinger does come out for the Melbourne and/or Sydney Film Festivals, it would be nice if one of the theatre companies took him up as well to lecture and give workshop classes for actors.

When David Hemmings was in Australia recently, I talked to him about *Jeeves*, the London musical he starred in four years ago. It had all the elements for a smash hit: presented by Robert Stigwood, based on the Jeeves stories by P G Wodehouse, with book and lyrics by Alan Ayckbourn and music by Andrew Lloyd Webber of *Jesus Christ Superstar* fame. The musical was tried out in Bristol, when it played for three and a half hours, which had been whittled down to two hours by the time it reached London. By opening night the whole cast knew it would flop; he had one key line to deliver which explained the whole play and, just as he was about to say it, the whole effect was spoiled by two people in the gallery yelling “Rubbish! Rubbish!” What David Hemmings did not say — and perhaps never knew — was that our own Lewis Flinder had turned down the role before it was offered to David. Lewis told me this himself, when out here for *Same Time, Next Year*.

Believe there could be a steady stream of Australians invited to ‘guest star’ at Auckland’s Mercury Theatre. Currently it is John Walton, in *Henry IV Pt I*. And the news from Wellington’s Downstage Theatre, which staged a full-scale production of *Candide* at the end of last year, is that its 1979 line-up includes David Williamson’s *The Club* and James Hadley Chase’s *No Orchids For Miss Blandish*, with *Deathtrap* under negotiation. Downstage’s artistic director, Anthony Taylor, tells me it is the largest theatrical enterprise in New Zealand and stresses that “long since gone are the days when New Zealand was a cultural backwater”.

What about Melbourne’s ‘new look’ Festival Hall, with new roof and ceiling and carpeted walls? Understand the people of Henry Lawson’s birthplace, Grenfell, are more than disappointed Len Teale’s Lawson show is not scheduled there. Maybe Robin Ramsay will take his Lawson evening there....Now that Graham Kennedy is a fully-fledged film star, are we likely to see him in a stage show soon? It is something he has long had his eyes upon, and his career surely will not be completed until he has also conquered this field.

Up in Queensland they are saying that that unfortunate actor/director involved in a car accident recently, resulting in thirty seven stitches to face and arm, was really hospitalized briefly for a face lift!.....London agent Cyril Berlin was in Australia recently, on about his twelfth visit, to look at some of the productions and also for the concerts of Des O’Connor, whom he manages. Cyril told me he considers the Australian productions of *Annie* and *Dracula* far better than those staged in London. Thought the promotion on *Dracula*, geared at it is to the younger people, very clever....Will John Meillon be playing the Jack Lemmon role in *Tribute* when it is produced here?

Ray Lawler’s *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* eventually became a trilogy, *Alan Seymour’s The One Day of the Year* a TV series, and now I hear that other leading Australian play of a couple of decades back, *Richard Beynon’s The Shifting Heart* is being adapted into a musical.....Some ten years ago Charles Tingwell wrote a comedy, set in Australia, in which he had a successful tour around England. Entitled *Five, Four, Three, Two One* “Bud” is now developing it as a screenplay, having received a grant from the Victorian Film Corporation to do so. He intends to produce and direct it himself.....Lunching with David Hemmings, I asked him which hat he preferred wearing: that of actor, director or producer? “Producing gives me the most worry”, he replied, “acting the most pleasure, but I find directing the most rewarding”. He was of course referring to films.

CORDON BLEU

AGENCY

for actors & musicians

(02) 29-7618
A DEVIL OF A SHOW
Last month I spent some time amid the man-
eating cane toads in far north Queensland,
sipping sour-sop cocktails and bending bananas
on a farm belonging to a well known Australian
actress. Although the thriving metropolis of
Cairns is not my idea of a holiday resort, the
time I spent on the farm and the flying visit to
Port Douglas was most enjoyable; so much so
that I lost track of time and the hospitality of the
friendly Cairns locals who met me at the airport
was so overwhelming that I found it impossible
to refuse their offer to stay an extra day.
I flew home on Thursday February 22 to find
that I had accepted an invitation to go to the
Gala Opening of the Music Hall's new show
Lost To the Devil that evening. However,
having just stepped from an aircraft and
suffering severely from jet lag (as one does when
flying south from Johsland in summer) I was not
enthused by the idea of a night asleep in a
theatre when I could be asleep in my own bed.
Fortunately it was the Music Hall, an establish­
ment at which you can be assured of always
having a good time ... and this night was no
exception.

MIKE'S MISHAPS
Mr Michael Edgley the immoderately
successful theatrical promoter from the great
West, land of the black duck, had a bad time last
month. Well known for his ability to bring to the
land of Oz international stars for highly
successful national tours, his last two ventures
must have been a little disappointing — to say
the least. Mr Edgley booked a tour for Mr Evel
Knievel, the internationally acclaimed dare devil
who carries more spare parts than the bionic
woman and is worth more than her friend. But
Mr Knievel had other plans after visiting Wagga
Wagga in NSW he decided it was time to go
home, and did. Mr Edgley's next promotion
was to be a tour by Mr Lee Liberace but like
Evel Knievel, Mr Liberace had other plans and
changed his mind at the last minute. I hope Mr
Edgley has no plans to open a computerised
ticketing organisation.

MORSE vs BANKHEAD?
Helen Morse will be treading the boards at the
Ensemble this month in Somerset Maugham's
Rain playing the luckless harlot Sadie
Thompson. I look forward to seeing this
production (then again I have probably already
seen it by the time you read this, but I'm sorry I
can't tell you what I thought of it).

Miriam Davis, (probably the most well known
face in Sydney theatre), who writes for the
Sydney Calender Magazine sent me the
following information about Tallulah Bankhead,
one of the Sadies of the past.
"It seems that the great Tallulah was signed to
do the London production when she was just a
raw young actress back in 1925. To be chosen to
play Sadie Thompson — an ageing whore —
was a tremendous challenge to the nineteen year
old Tallulah. When she heard that Somerset
Maugham himself was to attend rehearsals she
shook in her shoes. He sat poker-faced
throughout without speaking to her once; the
upshot of it all — she was asked to step down
from the role in favour of a more experienced
actress. Naturally she was devastated and for
years tried to get herself cast in the role to prove
she could handle it as well as Jeanne Eagels and
others.

Some years later Maugham was heard to
admit that not casting Tallulah as Sadie was the
greatest professional mistake of his career.
Ironically when, in 1935, Tallulah finally got
to play Sadie in a second run at the Music Box
Theatre in New York, she'd lost her thirst for
the part. Nevertheless her performance elicited
such comments from critics as “Miss Bankhead
is the best of all possible Sadies.” — (Good Luck
Helen).

ETCETERAS
The Day After The Fair by Frank Harvey will
be opening at the Comedy Theatre, Melbourne
in September and then coming to Sydney in
October. It will be produced by Paul Dainty and
Freddie Gibson. (So what you say) So Deborah
Kerr will play the lead. (So what? I agree.)

It seems there is another TV mag in the
melting pot, it will probably be called TV Guide
and I am told that the first issue will be out soon.
I hope that its format will be sufficiently
different to the others to entice a large
circulation.

McNeill & Sheenan
Pty. Ltd.
1ST FLOOR, No. 6 WHARF,
COWPER WHARF ROAD,
WOOLLOOMOOLOO. 201 1
PHONE: 357-1776

Staging & scenery builders
Lighting special effects
Stage props
Soft hangings

YOU NEED
OPERA AUSTRALIA
ALL THE NATIONAL NEWS
INTERVIEWS WITH VISITING PERSONALITIES,
BACKGROUND MATERIAL ON BOTH NATIONAL AND
REGIONAL COMPANY PRODUCTIONS.
THE COMPREHENSIVE MONTHLY
OPERA NEWSPAPER
SUBSCRIBE NOW: ONLY $4 ANNUALLY

To:
Circulation Manager,
Opera Australia
P.O. Box R223,
Royal Exchange, NSW 2000
I enclose my cheque for $ .......... 
Please send the next 12 issues of
Opera Australia to:
Name
Address
Postcode

Morse vs Bankhead?
The Annual Meet

Ron Blair raises some doubts about the Playwrights’ Conference

Australian playwrights tend to avoid each other. When they do meet again, or for the first time, it is most likely to be in Canberra in May at the Playwrights’ Conference. If they should happen to clash on some other occasion, the small talk over the tea trolley is likely to be about the Conference; should there be one at all? What does it achieve?

The idea came from America. At the Eugene O’Neill Centre in Connecticut a certain number of plays are selected from those submitted and these are workshopped by a professional director and cast and, after a couple of weeks, presented at a rehearsed reading to an audience of observers many of whom have been attending the Conference, watching how rehearsals work, surely one of the more esoteric forms of torture.

It is from these luckless voyeurs that the Conference raises mostly of the considerable amount of money it needs to fly into Canberra all those actors, directors, and management representatives — not to mention actual playwrights — and then fund their stay at Burton Hall on the A N U campus which is now a permanent fixture after the concentration camp horror of one of Newcastle’s “halls of residence”.

I was on the Script Selection Committee for the Conference in 1972 and I directed in 1977. Last year I observed for a week. Those who have been actively involved in a Playwrights’ Conference feel they have survived an ordeal, particularly the actors and directors who all work on any number of plays simultaneously. The great difficulty is that all too often at least one play will have been the work of a paranoid or pathological introvert who intended to write a seven hour oratorio for massed shoelaces but has only managed to finish the first eight pages. Pity the director stuck with him — or her.

Then there are the observers. They are, for the most part, a patient and long suffering bunch (Mrs Whitlam used to get all her knitting done for winter). But when observers are permitted to ask questions at the allotted time, the level is often along the line of: “Wouldn’t it have been better to set your play in Iceland?” The writer nods seriously; the director cocks and the actors grit their teeth. However, lip service is paid.

Ah, lip service!

The chief boast of the Conference is that a writer need not change one syllable of his play if he doesn’t want to. Here is, to my mind the chief fault.

Isn’t the purpose of the thing to give inexperienced writers a chance to obtain some of the basic crafts of playwriting? It won’t help a Samuel Beckett (“But Mr Beckett, why a wheel chair?”), but it will give someone who wants to write a play contact with some theatrical intelligence. The difficulty is that the
would be playwright is rather insecure and too often absolutely Wooded. He is not a wretched speech or that scene which boxes every one to stomach. Then you get the frantic re-writers who revise anything good in their play completely out of existence — those writers who think revision always means lengthening.

Once the play which is not changed or cut at the request of the director, is cut anyway (unless the author is a living winner of the Nobel Prize) or simply not performed.

Most playwrights have a clause in their contracts about nothing being altered without permission but as Harold Clurman says in On Directing “Experienced writers readily concur with suggestions which entail certain minor changes. Eugene O'Neill, extremely attentive to the integrity of his texts, agreed at his contracts about nothing being altered without his approval. The applause and rush of the National Conference finally dwindles to a tiny yawn. Far from showing the writer how a change might have improved his work, it has all too often merely confirmed him in his error. The trio had wanted to see the play as he had written it, to hear the words he had written regardless of fatalities and longeurs.

The Conference has been going for some eight years now. The question is not how many "successes" have come out of the Conference, but how many writers do we now have that we might have otherwise overlooked? Dorothy Hewett and Steve J Spears were both well known before they had won the Conference. The Faults in Merv Rutherford’s A Training Run were evident in the Nimrod reading before the Conference accepted the play; they were there still in the production at the Bondi Pavilion. Rockola looked lively and rough at the Canberra reading; it hadn’t changed all that much in production — it was no shorter either.

My own discovery from the 1977 Conference was the work of Roger Pulvers. My friendship with him had blinded me to his truly original talent. His are not plays to be seen in a smoke-filled room? Well, actors’ agents for a start, these travellers who go to Canberra for a weekend just to hear plays read in a smoke-filled room? While, actors’ agents for a start, there’s a couple of writers’ agents, a few TV people who’ve come to run a lefty eye over things. interstate garden gnomes who write crabbed prose for provincial newspapers and the occasional publisher of plays aimed at schools. Plays need an audience but does a raw, unfinished one need an audience as bizarre as this?

The order of the plays is sometimes juggled so that the one “Most likely to succeed” commercially is jockeyed into the time slot where it can be seen by the most people who can further its career. When a play is finally read, observers who have gone through the agonies with the writer over the past weeks, will take him aside and tell him that he has written a masterpiece and not to let anyone else say otherwise. And when the Conference is over, the poor writer, doubly convinced that he is not understood, returns to his home town where he might get the play performed by second rate actors. The applause and rush of the National Conference finally dwindles to a tiny yawn. Far from showing the writer how a change might have improved his work, it has all too often merely confirmed him in his error. The trio had wanted to see the play as he had written it, to hear the words he had written regardless of fatalities and longeurs.

The Conference has been going for some eight years now. The question is not how many "successes" have come out of the Conference, but how many writers do we now have that we might have otherwise overlooked? Dorothy Hewett and Steve J Spears were both well known before they had won the Conference. The Faults in Merv Rutherford’s A Training Run were evident in the Nimrod reading before the Conference accepted the play; they were there still in the production at the Bondi Pavilion. Rockola looked lively and rough at the Canberra reading; it hadn’t changed all that much in production — it was no shorter either.

My own discovery from the 1977 Conference was the work of Roger Pulvers. My friendship with him had blinded me to his truly original talent. His are not plays to be seen in a smoke-filled room? Well, actors’ agents for a start, these travellers who go to Canberra for a weekend just to hear plays read in a smoke-filled room? While, actors’ agents for a start, there’s a couple of writers’ agents, a few TV people who’ve come to run a lefty eye over things. interstate garden gnomes who write crabbed prose for provincial newspapers and the occasional publisher of plays aimed at schools. Plays need an audience but does a raw, unfinished one need an audience as bizarre as this?

The order of the plays is sometimes juggled so that the one “Most likely to succeed” commercially is jockeyed into the time slot

Spotlight

Theatre Australia April 1979

Playwrights’ Conference — from Strength to Strength

Reply from MICK RODGER, Artistic Director of the ANPC

Any theatre event as successful as the Australian National Playwrights’ conference has its detractors. Ron Blair is not the first, nor will he, I am sure, be the last. He is, however, the most ill-informed.

Ron’s assertions are either exaggerated or downright untrue. For example, to my knowledge over the four years I have been associated with the Conference no play has ever been "juggled" into a more favourable position. His picture of the Conference as a transient purgatory for aspiring playwrights is fairly ridiculous, and contrary to everything that such playwrights have said to me personally. In general the writers seem even more enthusiastic at the end of the Conference than at the beginning.

Similarly the image of a group of tight-lipped actors seems to be belied by the constant stream of actors who contact me in order to participate in the Conference.

Many more people attend the last four days of the Conference than Ron indicates. There is always a surprising cross section of the theatre profession present, and the Conference has now become a unique annual opportunity for theatre technicians in a large country, to get together and explore their problems.

From what I can gather, no one found particular inspiration in the last overseas guest who visited the Playwrights’ Conference. Meanwhile the ANPC goes annually from strength to strength, and this is demonstrated by the respect and support it receives from funding bodies, theatre companies and individuals throughout the profession.
Collin O'Brien

Lining up Tom Stoppard's first visit to the antipodes is generally regarded as a coup on the part of Festival of Perth Director, David Blenkinson. If John Osborne was the name to conjure with in the late fifties (briefly, before success turned him into a petulant, whingeing, right-wing shitbag) and Harold Pinter throughout the early sixties, certainly it has been Stoppard who has provided some of the most provocative new British playwrighting since.

Stoppard was given a fairly heavy programme for the ten days he was in Perth, but proved very amenable. He was very forthcoming about his work, articulate with a laconic wit, and never condescending. What follows was gleaned from three interviews he gave when I was in attendance.

What is fascinating about Stoppard's work is the diversity of techniques and modes he uses, ranging from the neo-Beckettian in Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead, the Monty Pythonesque absurd logic of The Real Inspector Hound, the hardnosed debate and verbal fireworks of Travesties, the imaginative inventiveness of the radio plays, especially Albert's Bridge and Artist Descending a Staircase, the boldness of concept of the play with an orchestra Every Good Boy Deserves Favour to the expert, tightly constructed realism of the television play Professional Foul. In the light of this, I was most interested in the way he went about his work, whether he worked from a situation, conjunction of characters or what-have-you.

As one might well predict, Stoppard is a playwright who starts out with a rather abstract idea of theme for a play. The toughest aspect of his work, he says, is finding the concrete action, characters and situation to embody the idea — in literary critical terminology T S Eliot's 'objective correlative', the action or situation which gives specific focus to otherwise abstract ideas or emotions. Stoppard has a rare gift of finding particularly striking and appropriate contexts for his ideas, such as the critics in relation to cliche play and audience in The Real Inspector Hound, or the fact of James Joyce putting on Oscar Wilde's The Importance of Being Earnest in Zurich in 1917 as the "action" around which he drapes the debate on the role of the artist in Travesties. Once the initial battle to find a context is over, Stoppard does not either work in feverish haste — like Alan Ayckbourn who thinks up the title first thence their often bland abstraction, such as Absurd Person Singular then works through on cigarettes and coffee right on the deadline — nor does he work laboriously slowly. He is a meticulous reworker and polisher, working towards greater clarity and elegance of expression.

It is interesting to note that he does not see himself as a good creator of character; he claims that all his characters use his sentence structure, that without the names against the speech one would be hard pressed in much of his work to know who is speaking.

He confirmed my view that he is not a writer of "message" plays, but aims to creating a dialectic, at putting the different points of view as strongly as possible. As an example he quoted the arguments for art as an anarchic force which he gives Tristan Tzara in Travesties. Stoppard remarked that he certainly did not personally agree with such a stand, but confessed that the more persuasive he made Tzara the more he could see his point of view! I would surmise that this conscious dialecticism on Stoppard's part mirrors his temperament. He seems acutely aware of the inherent ambiguity and uncertainty which underlies most moral questions, and this is of course reflected in both the level of debate and the sometimes startling verbal gymnastics he uses, as in Jumpers.

Without the least hint of false modesty Stoppard is very witty on the subject of his own ignorance; he calls the reading he does in preparation for a play "what I laughingly call research". He left school and went into journalism at seventeen, and so I think finds the seriousness and heavy intellectualism which some earnest academics bring to his plays amusing and a little uncomfortable. One of his "public" tasks he sees as being to cover up the thinness of his knowledge of some of the material he quotes in his plays. Be that as it may, and whatever the merits of tertiary education, one can only admire the astuteness of observation of the academic world Stoppard reveals in Professional Foul. It would be nice to be able to put it down to his long association with Oxbridge, but alas....

All in all, Stoppard's visit proved to be the highlight of this year's Festival, as it was planned to be. Amusing, accessible and never talking down to his audience he commanded both respect and popularity: his informal lunchtime forum at the Festival Club drew over a thousand people. It was a rare and welcome opportunity to meet and come to understand one of the most inventive playwrights working today.
**Moná Workman**

Makers of fine quality wigs, hairpieces, beards, moustaches, side levers. Made to Order.

- Wigs for hire for commercials at reasonable rates.
- For Film, Stage & TV.

Tel: (02) 31-9628
1st Floor, 108 Oxford Street, Paddington N.S.W. 2021

---

**Spotlight**

**Guthrie Worby continues his Adelaide Survey**

Troupe not optimistically calls itself a Co-operative Ensemble Theatre Company. Recently, after three years of lively hit-run activity it reconstituted its membership, held auditions and faced the world clutching a grant of $14,000. The money is a sign that both State and Federal funding bodies see, in Troupe, an "alternative" in both philosophy and option to STC at least. Audiences in Adelaide have known that for some time. The money officially designates the Company as one of the boundaries defining theatrical activity here. So what are they doing for $14,000? Well, half of them are "starving" according to Dave Allen who with Keith Gallash founded the original student group, Troupe.

Their intention is to become fully professional in the monetary, artistic, and standards sense of the word, and if the programming policy for the next six months or so is any indication, they intend to do it on a staple diet of locally written or devised work.

It's a fact of life that most "co-operative ensembles" tend to be known as one person's company. In this case the focal figure is Dave Allen (all fingers intact). It is probably fair to say that his success with the pen (Don't Listen to Gouger Gone with Hardy, Dickinson) has encouraged and set the local-content pattern. In the past eighteen months his fellow workers Keith Gallash and John McFadyan have also had their work produced by the Company, and during this year there is more to come. But the writing net has been thrown farther afield and Doreen Clark and Jenny Pausacker are also to be produced. So, the programme (it can't be called a season) looks like this: Dreams of the Absolute by Phil Motherwell has opened already at the Red Shed (which is "home" for the group). This play was first performed last year by the AGP and is described by the director, Gallash, as a "revolutionary thriller". It deals with the life of a double agent in the combat section of the Socialist Revolutionary Party — an execution squad operating in Russia in the first decade of the century. Their aim: to "pave the way to revolution by executing members of the Tsarist arisocracy and bureaucracy". The group believe the play continues to explore issues of commitment broached already in the play. Dickinson. Allen's Pikes Madness is currently in rehearsal. It's a comedy piece which pursues the "outsider" theme which has preoccupied him in his other works, and again uses the Englishman in Australia to explore the dramatic and philosophical substance of that theme. Allen suggests with a grin, that he has worked the "Hamlet" syndrome to advantage in constructing his play — a deliberate ploy to use the current STC production as a baseboard against which to bounce "alternative" ideas.

Allen, who is a member of the STC Board, sees Troupe as part of a theatrical spectrum of activity, not as the pretender or contender for paramountcy. Such a stance would be puny and pointless.

The third play slotted for presentation is to be a new work by Doreen Clark, Mc Clark is now a member of Troupe. Her first play Roses in Due Season was given a rehearsed reading by the STC a production by Troupe, and is to be revived in due season by that company as a "Year of the Child" play. The new (untitled) play however, deals with incriminate apple pickers in Tasmania. Like Roses it comes from the direct experience of its writer and explores a genuine working-class consciousness with which the group empathises. They point out that most of the "class" exploration that has occurred recently in Australian theatre has been middle-class, penned by members of the middle-class intelligentsia. Troupe's membership is hardly proletarian — at least not by birth — but if they cannot speak as class representatives, they believe that they can speak for and to that class, as well as the preponderance of middle class theateregoers.

In May, Troupe takes to the Great Western Highway with a play ("something new or created by the group") to be performed at La Mama. But there is more to come. Jenny Pausacker (Red Heads Revenge) will be writing a "women's play"; Keith Gallash has another to present; John McFadyan is writing one about local teachers and teaching. Don't Listen to Gouger is scheduled for revival and Allen has been approached to write another piece for the Year of the Child. Then there are "special projects" which will tour the suburbs.

Allen: "These are all new plays, original plays, innovative and we work them and work them up as time goes on — this is our whole point...to be flexible in this way"...so as to."Take into consideration the needs of our audience and the stage we've reached as a company at a particular time."

Troupe has the inclination, the time imminent, but not yet the money to be the kind of organisation it has in mind. Still, its new membership and an affiliation with Fliinders University Drama Centre training programmes will hopefully add resources and resourcefulness. This will allow them to pursue that nebulous but seductive "experimental" ensemble ideal, and if it yields half a dozen new plays a year for the lifespan of the Company, then Troupe will have done its job and done it well. Barbara McFadyan, the administrator of the group summed it all up when she suggested that audiences came to Troupe productions not knowing what to expect, but knowing that it would usually be worth the experience.
Prospect's Grand Tour

JANE McCULLOUGH and DON FRASER in interview with Theatre Australia.

Prospect Theatre Company, the foremost touring company of the UK, are in the midst of a six week overseas tour which takes them from Hong Kong to the Perth Festival; and from there in speedy succession through Melbourne, Adelaide, Sydney and Canberra. The fare they are presenting is three "entertainments", evenings on the subject of Lord Byron, the Reverend Sidney Smith, and the Grand Tour — that English past time of the 18th and 19th centuries.

The four actors (Derek Jacobi, Isla Blair, Julian Glover and Timothy West), arranged in a semi-circle of chairs — the furniture is changed nightly — predominantly read narrative, quotations or speeches from their hand-held scripts; a format that is reminiscent of the RSC's Hollow Crown. But the writer/compiler of the pieces, Jane McCullough, denies strongly that they are alike at all. "I hadn't even seen The Hollow Crown when I wrote The Grand Tour — which is the closest — but with Smith and Byron I've broken away from that recital format. I think they're pieces of theatre that stand on their own. In fact we're in a transitional stage at the moment; eventually the central character will drop the book entirely and make it a full impersonation. So Byron will have the black wig and Derek can return to a limp." Indeed, already Jacobi wears the romantic costume, and Timothy West as Smith and Julian Glover as Boswell are close to full dress and manner impersonations.

Jane McCullough and her collaborator, composer Donald Fraser, have planned twelve in the series. The next three will be composers (a contrast to the extravagant treatment of Ken Russell), Beethoven, Mozart and Elgar. The Mozart will cover his work in theatre and opera, but Beethoven will be treated as the man. "No one has given him this kind of exposure yet" explains Don Fraser; "they've all shied away from him so far." But the actor to portray this difficult character has yet to be decided upon — "no one springs to mind."

The Grand Tour was actually commissioned for the Edinburgh Festival, but following that, the choices of subject have been Jane and Don's Byron because "he's an obvious choice, and seeing Derek play Hamlet, well Byron's the other role he has to play." But Sidney Smith is Jane McCullough's "own private delight, because my father (Rev Joseph McCullough) is the modern Smith. He turned down a bishopric in Johannesburg, and all they could do was give..."
Dear Sir,

In the recent reference to my television sextet, A Place in the World, you seem to imply that the work was the result of a progressive commission from the ABC. This is not the case, rather it was sold by progressive speculation.

I wrote the first three plays with no more than a whisper of encouragement and sold them on delivery; I wrote the fourth and fifth plays with rather greater encouragement, and the sixth with encouragement close to pleading in my ears...but still no commission.

I believe this point is worth making since it proves that 'original drama' on television need not be a euphemism for work commissioned from the established battery of television writers, but can, at least in the case of the ABC, mean a genuinely open market.

One of my hopes for the series is that irrespective of response, some of our better writers may at least take it as evidence of the fact that television will look at individual drama, and a 'draama of ideas' at that, and will be encouraged to turn their attention to this challenging medium which offers access to a potentially vast audience.

The understanding that A Place in the World is an entirely original idea of my own, which was not dependant on a prior commission from the ABC, and which was not tampered with by that organisation, may reinforce that response.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Cove
Cobbitty, NSW

Dear Sir,

A word from the Top End to let you know that theatre is alive and prospering in the heat and rain of the tropics.

I have recently taken over as Artistic Director of the Darwin Theatre Group for an initial appointment of one year, thanks to financial assistance from the Theatre Board of the Australia Council.

This year the Group is twenty years old. Over the years it has built up a formidable reputation as a community performing group. In the past six years alone the company has presented five works by Shakespeare, a Brecht, a Beckett, plays by Stoplard, Bolt, Orton and others as well as several locally written shows and a handful of Australian plays. The Group has mainly performed in its home base, the wonderful old colonial building known as Brown's Mart, but has been just as prepared to work the local pubs, the Anglican Cathedral, the street and the Botanical Park.

The Group's inclination is towards a theatre rich in ideas and humour, strong in action and direct in its involvement with the community. This tradition we'll continue to foster in 1979.

A number of key people have given a powerful thrust to the artistic achievements of the Group, namely Directors like Ray O'mond, Brian Nason, Ric Billinghurst, Simon Hopkinson, Terence Clarke and Nigel Triffitt.

At present the Group are working strongly towards establishing an ensemble which will provide the basis for setting up a regional company. Simultaneously, the city fathers are involved with the planning of a community centre to contain a theatre for entrepreneurial ventures. Hopefully it will not be too big to effectively accommodate the creative work of the local regional company.

The first "package deal" of three plays is currently under rehearsal. We open with Orton's What the Butler Saw, followed by Pinter's Old Times and Jennifer Crompton's Crossfire. There is then going to be Macbeth and George Ryga's The Ecstasy of Rita Joe and a few more ventures besides.

The future prospects for performers in the Territory are challenging and many. Apart from work in Darwin there is the ever-present need to tour the outback, the islands, and so make contact with the many small communities in this potentially vast performing space. Already in Darwin there is based the NT TIE/DIE Team — one of the oldest running professional theatre-in-education teams working in Australia. At present five teacher-performers are employed under the leadership of Director, Gordon Beattie, former Director of TYER (Theatre of Youth and Education in the Riverina). A close liaison exists between the Group and the TIE/DIE Team in educational and performance work.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Kimber
Artistic Director, Darwin Theatre Group

Dear Sir,

TOWNSVILLE REPORT — THE SUMMERSTOCK PROGRAMME

As outlined in the November issue of TA the 'Summerstock Programme' aims at fostering and developing 'local talent'. If and when a professional company is established here, i.e. a touring company based in Townsville), it is hoped some local actors/technicians etc. will be ready for involvement. However, it is anticipated that initially such a company would principally be comprised of professional personnel, 'imported' from the south.

In the interim, the Summerstock Programme has engaged in the following activities.

(Continued on page 40)
PETER BATEY, DIRECTOR
ON
REG LIVERMORE'S
SINGULAR BURLESQUES

"Thank God we've all got our imagination..."
Way back in the early '60's, during a stint at the Melbourne Theatre Company, Reg, unknowingly, prophesied the future, with the wish of a dreamer — "Wouldn't it be wonderful to have our own theatre one day?"

Just prior to the opening of Sacred Cow he reminded me of that discussion — "Remember?" he said, "I suppose we can say now that we do have our own theatre". Not bricks and mortar, but all that the word conjures up and allowed to be created and delivered in a most personal and individual style.

However the culmination of that dream has not been the result of planning, or knowing ambition. Not even when Eric Dare originally masterminded the idea of a one-man show, in late 1974, was it considered that five years later Reg Livermore would be attempting and achieving yet another of his 'celebrations'.

And from the very beginning that is what we have set out to do — to make a theatrical event as far removed from the sort of theatre where you go to observe the goldfish in the bowl, eat your chocolates and probably go to sleep. We wanted to relate to the 'housewife over-the-sink' in the language of 'the man in the street', to undertake a head-on confrontation at an emotional and intellectual level that might lead them into unknown areas. But above all we wanted to entertain them.

The process has been, and continues to be, unique and fascinating.

Reg's talent as a performer had been apparent for years. What was unknown was his deep empathy of the human condition, and his ability to transfer that from his imagination, to paper, and eventually into flesh and blood — not merely as a mirror up to nature, but more akin to looking through the lens of a microscope, converting joy into a manicical explosion, and pain into the deepest crevasse.

Another surprise, and one that is usually overlooked by the critics, has been his emergence as a designer of both sets and costumes, the latter being as caricatured as the grotesques he portrays. So far all three productions have visually interpreted a "showbiz" feeling — the circus atmosphere of Betty Blokk Buster Follies; The Casino de Paris/Las Vegas look of Wonderwoman; and the side-show alley feel of Sacred Cow. Always an atmosphere of tinsel, glittering lights, canvas and paint — a world of 'make believe'.

His energy, strength, and concentration never ceases to be amazing, but I suppose more so in this country, where, to my mind, there seems to be a pervading sense of complacency, if not downright laziness, on the part of many performers.

In tracing the history and success of Reg's Shows there is a major point that must not be overlooked, and one that is fairly unique in itself. From the very outset our Producer has given us an unlimited budget without a trace of interference in the proceedings. This has meant the most extraordinary artistic freedom for the inspirational process — anything is possible. Imagination run riot, ideas are finally fixed, and then a firm hand is kept on the final costing, the main point being no restrictions to get to that stage.

It must be also remembered that the productions, which cost in excess of $100,000 each before opening night, are mounted by private investment, and therefore demand to be a success. Not a skerrick of public money is involved — those subsidies that subconsciously dull the need for total success, because you know in advance that you are comfortably in a losing position. I often wonder when, and if, the example established by such belief in the all-Australian venture at such a major level from the private sector will become the norm.

Imagine, therefore, the initial situation in which we found ourselves. (The 'we' is important — it covers the 'team', the 'family'.) They are the Heads of Departments —
musicians, stage management, technicians etc., who have been with Reg from the very beginning, chosen not only because of their professional efficiency, but because of their own individual creative urges, and, at that stage unspoken, understanding of the goal ahead.)

We set out to create an original full-scale theatrical production centred around the talents of one performer, having as its basis many of the elements of the variety theatre combined with the emotional impact of other forms of theatre.

Naturally, Reg as writer and creator is the major instigator of the end result, but such is the relationship between him and the rest of the team that ideas and suggestion spring from everywhere and are accepted or rejected on their value.

Quite often people are surprised that a one-man show requires a director. Perhaps that would apply to a performance by a stand-up comic, or readings from the classics on a bare stage. Reg’s shows are the equivalent of a full-scale musical production peopled with a variety of characters.

The approach, then, and the demand, is similar to that of any large production, the difference being that there is only one actor to concentrate on. This, in itself poses the problems of retaining interest at all times, and of what to do when the performer is off-stage. Hence the devices of film, projected visual effects, recorded messages, visual tricks—all methods of keeping the eye and the ear interested and alert continually and so surprise as Reg appears as yet another character.

Contrast, too, is all important in the overall orchestration of the production. Not only the contrast of the characters, but of their points of view—laugh at their idiosyncrasies in a sketch, and then hold your breath during the song that may follow as the finger is pointed at you, and you realise your own attitudes. This delicate balance often makes it difficult to make cuts when we have reached performance level.

One of the most interesting aspects of all three productions has been the evolution of the major statements, the moods and tones, that Reg leaves us with at the end of the performance. It is fairly amazing that they come through at all when you consider that the fabric is just a collection of songs and character studies.

During the initial stages of creation there is no set end result. For instance, Reg’s only comment on handing me the finished script of *Sacred Cow* was, “Well, I wonder what this one is all about?”

In the end it’s all about people— the way we feel and the way we think. It’s also about people in a theatre, and what happens to them while they are there. For they are as much the participator as Reg. The way they react evokes a counter-reaction and so the performance lives. For although there is a set pattern each night to guide them along the way, the creativity starts afresh with the amalgamation of the audience with a white-faced actor who they are prepared to accept as male, female, neuter, or even animal, if needs be.

A few people don’t get on the wavelength at all, some leave outraged or possibly bored, and others through their own small mindedness see the platform as an area that should only present their point of view— like the performance of *Betty Blokk Buster Follies* at the Adelaide Festival where two militant feminists literally dragged Reg from the stage into the stalls for their own particular brand of confrontation. (How often has that happened in a theatre in Australia?). Or even like the major morning newspaper who refused to send a critic to review *Betty Blokk Buster Follies* because they did not cover ‘drag shows’!!

Compromise has never been ‘the name of the game’— originality and individuality, coupled with a desire to entertain, are the overriding forces. Put them together with an extraordinary talent, a team of professionals and thousands of receptive people, in a situation of ‘make-believe’, and I suppose you could say that we have all made our own theatre.

Or to paraphrase the final line of *Sacred Cow*— “Thank God we’ve all got our imagination”!!
Australia has no uniform defamation laws. Which anomaly has been seized on by politicians and bookmakers alike for gre

Publishers must balance their commercial interests against freedom of speech and not surprisingly will often cave in before determined litigants. This presents a Catch-22 situation to the

Dorothy Hewett has lived on the edge of public outrage all her life. While still a student at an elite private girls' school in Perth she went rolling in the long grass by the river with a rough working class lover to whom she read Wuthering Heights to make him understand 'spiritual love'; she won a national poetry prize at nineteen, tried to commit suicide when her lover abandoned her, determined to become an actress as great as Sarah Bernhardt but joined the Communist Party instead, defied the restrictive morality of the Party with her sexual libertarianism.

She married a Perth lawyer then ran away and left him with their baby, lived with a Communist boilermaker and had three sons out of wedlock, worked in factories, travelled as a Communist Party delegate to Russia and China, gave fiery speeches in Sydney's Domain, narrowly escaped going to prison over the Communist Party Dissolution Bill, gave evidence at the Petrov enquiry, successfully repressed her creative writing urge for nine years because she believed this was the correct proletarian thing to do, then burst back into writing, picking up the threads of middle class intellectualism and becoming a controversial and very public literary figure.

Last year I wrote an MA Prelim thesis for the history department at La Trobe University entitled Dorothy Hewett — A Revolutionary Romantic. It was a biography, constructed from two sources - the public one, which included her plays, poetry, novel and the critical articles about her, and the private source, made up of narrative material such as diaries, letters and taped interviews, both with Dorothy and her friends and critics.

I was concerned with in what sense Dorothy Hewett was representative of the kind of life lived by middle class intellectual women of her time (1923-78) and how that was reflected in her poetry and plays rather than whether or not they were good poems and plays.

In February I was invited by the Fellowship of West Australian Writers to take some workshops at their Writers Week, part of the 150th anniversary celebrations in Perth. Because Dorothy Hewett had been commissioned to write a new play for this anniversary, I thought it might be topical to give a paper on her as well. This offer was enthusiastically accepted and I was sent a programme which included my scheduled lecture.

But when I arrived in Perth the lecture was no longer on the timetable. The Fellowship of West Australian Writers had, unhappily they said, decided that the subject was too risky. (It was odd I thought that they unashamedly handed me a copy of the constitution of their organisation which listed as one of its objects "To defend culture in Australia against censorship and all other attempts to restrict that traditional freedom of speech and free interchange of ideas which have hitherto characterised our Australian Democracy".)

Frenzied reaction to Hewett's work is certainly rampant in the west. At least two of her plays are not available for sale. As a result of High Court action one poem has been banned across Australia. And anyone who champions her either as a writer or a person is branded a sycophant. Rumours are that indirect political pressure has been brought on the State Theatre Company to prevent her latest play from being performed (Peter Ward, The Australian 26 Feb 1979).

At a noisy party someone sidled up to me as if he were engaged in a reprehensible and traitorous act of espionage and whispered, "There are some of us who support her over here. We want to make a test case, but will we get support in the East?"

A little later an academic confided "It's

Dorothy in China, 1952. "She assumed the role of a flamboyant angry young woman — a sort of female version of an Australian Mayakovskya..." (Patrick O'Brien, The Saviours)
HEWETT
REVOLUTIONARY ROMANTIC

serious writer. There is no apparatus to 'clear' a work before publication as in Eastern Europe. Despite her time in the Communist Party I doubt whether Dorothy Hewett would want that. So the writer publishes and waits for the writs to fly. Then comes the impotence that the legal system alone can induce.

Dorothy Hewett has been a victim of the defamation laws, and the inhibitions that they create were demonstrated to Kristin Green at the Perth Festival.

terrifying trying to teach her work when you're not sure which of the smiling faces in front of you is a spy for some future libel case."

There have been several defamation actions against Dorothy, her publishers and biographers recently, either because they have quoted "offending" lines of Dorothy Hewett's work in literary criticisms or reproduced them in some other way. One of the actions threatened was against the writer of a brief biography who had stated that Dorothy "separated from her husband Lloyd Davies". Evidently she should have said that Dorothy left him. Separation implies that he agreed to it.

When at a formal lunch for the guests at Writers Week, I was falsely, but flattering, introduced as an expert on Dorothy Hewett, an irate woman chased me through the car park shouting abuse about writers who went away and left their hometowns and still expected to get all the limelight when there were so many talented writers who weren't traitors and got no recognition at all.

I began to feel that certain misconceptions about Dorothy Hewett needed to be clarified. I didn't, as a matter of principle, feel like abandoning the lecture completely, particularly as lots of people taking the workshops had shown interest in hearing it. The Fellowship agreed to hold a committee meeting to which both I and Lloyd Davies would be invited so that we could discuss the possibility of it going on after all. (I felt optimistic about this meeting because he looked a cheerful enough fellow. Though I believe he had looked a bit stunned when my husband, meeting him for the first time at the opening of Writers Week, had said by way of polite conversation "I believe that my wife is to give a lecture on your ex-wife." )

The result of the meeting was that the lecture would go on; I agreed not to mention anything that might be interpreted as an invasion of Lloyd Davies' privacy and he agreed not to serve any writs on the Fellowship of West Australian Writers (of which he is a member). We parted amicably. (He even gave me a drink of iced water from his thermos.)

But delivering the paper was not quite the pleasant experience I anticipated. In fact it was a distracting ordeal. In the front row sat Lloyd Davies and his wife. During the whole hour of the lecture they were engaged in either taking extensive notes, talking and/or occasionally laughing.

As someone in the audience commented later, "It wouldn't have been tolerated in the East." But there is such widespread antagonism against Dorothy Hewett in Perth that the chairman sitting beside me apparently didn't feel justified in asking them to stop.

I cut the end of the paper, partly because there didn't seem any point in revealing the critical but rather positive conclusions I'd come to, in the face of such apparent scepticism, and partly because I felt too choked with rage and disappointment to reveal them anyway.

I was grateful for the people who came up to me afterwards and said how much they'd enjoyed it, despite the distractions, and how they wished they'd known things like that about Dorothy Hewett years ago. Generally however, the degree of hostility towards her in Perth is astounding. Even in one week I met a number of people who had neither met Dorothy nor read anything she had written, but who regarded her as something of an ogress. Certainly, she has some good friends in Perth but they are not, apparently, as influential as the enemies.

All this could be dismissed as unimportant if it wasn't for the fact that Dorothy Hewett, who is regarded as one of the most interesting woman writers in Australia today, is being subtly censored into oblivion in Western Australia and quite seriously threatened in other states.

When I talked to Lloyd Davies at some length before giving the paper in Perth I agreed with him that Dorothy's poem "Uninvited Guest" was unfair. She herself says that even though, as an artist, she felt she had to write it she shouldn't perhaps have published it.

That score has been settled and Dorothy has paid for it.

It is the continuation of the apparent activity

(Continued on page 38)
ERIC DARE proudly presents by arrangement with J.C. WILLIAMSON PRODUCTIONS LTD.

REG LIVERMORE'S
GLITTERING AUSTERITY BURLESQUE

with the
wellington bewts burlesk band

directed by PETER BATEY

"It's better than Betty Blokk Buster Follies and Wonderwoman ... one of the greats of entertainment" — Telegraph

"Sacred Cow is a hit ... I can think of nobody else in Australia and precious few abroad who can do so many things so rivetingly ... A great, repeat, great entertainer" — Sydney Morning Herald.

"Reg Livermore ... with all his talents blazing ... Knockout theatre" — The Sun.

"A triumph ... world class ... held the crowd spellbound" — Sun Telegraph

"Comic assault ... in the tradition of burlesque ... mounted with all the brassiness of costumes, special effects ... standing ovation" — The Australian.

"Hard edged brilliance of the performance and the glittering musical sound of the Wellington Bewts Burlesk Band" — National Times.

"Back in top form ... Reg is brilliant ... amazing ... inexhaustible energy and vivacity ... Long live Reg Livermore" — Daily Mirror.

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE SYDNEY — Season concludes May 12
HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE MELBOURNE — Commencing May 22 for 12 weeks only.
CANBERRA THEATRE CENTRE — Late August.

HUNTER VALLEY THEATRE COMPANY
Presents
"CABARET"
A Musical in Two Acts

Valerie Bader (Frau Kost); Linda Cropper (Sally Bowles); William Gluth (Cliff); John Hannon (M.C.); Henke Johannes (Ernst); Jennifer McGregor (Fraulein Schneider); Philip Ross (Herr Schultz);

Director — Ross McGregor;
Choreographer — Christine Koltai;
Set and Costumes — Sylvia Jansons;
Musical Director — Allan McFadden.

FIRST PRODUCTION IN THE NEW CIVIC PLAYHOUSE.
Tuesday-Saturday nights 8.15 p.m. Saturday Matinees 4.30 p.m.

Tickets $7.90. Concessions for Pensioners & Students $3.90
Party Bookings (20 or more) $6.40
Ring the Civic Booking Office (049) 21977
Presented by arrangement with TAMS-WITMARK MUSIC LIBRARY INC.
Emerald Hill Theatre

Before the days of heavily subsidised theatre, there existed in Melbourne a theatre which managed, in a hand-to-mouth fashion, to operate over the 1962-66 period. The brainchild of Wal Cherry, it was just a few years too early on the scene to be eligible for handouts.

Wal Cherry, as an undergraduate at Melbourne University, had acted in and directed university plays and impressed John Sumner enough to invite him to guest direct with the Union Theatre Repertory Company (now the Melbourne Theatre Company). Sumner left as head of the UTRC to work for the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust in Sydney, and for a year was replaced by Ray Lawler. Then both became involved with the Australia and international-wide tours of *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, and Cherry took over the reins of the UTRC in February 1956.

For three years Cherry was in charge at the UTRC, frequently sparking off controversy; and by the end of 1958 the company was very much in the red. The Trust agreed to underwrite the losses but laid down certain rules, one being that Sumner return to his old job, and simultaneously run the Trust’s activities in Victoria.

I got to know Cherry very well just after he left the UTRC, when he was full of plans to start his own ensemble theatre company. There were many occasions when he discussed his ideas with me at great length; at the time one felt they were mainly pipe dreams. The pivot of such a company was to be the four actors he then considered the best in Australia: George Whaley, Kevin Miles, Ron Graham and Ron Haddrick. Whaley joined his venture right from the start, and Miles came in for one production at a much later date, but Cherry never did get the other two.

Early in 1959 Cherry formed what was called The Melbourne Theatre Workshop and Actors’ Studio. Subsequent blurb for it said it was founded “to provide a centre for professional actors, or people who intended to become professional actors, to explore as many aspects of their art as possible. Sessions based upon the Stanislavskian method, as well as more modern developments, are given weekly, plays are kept constantly in rehearsal, and the physical activities of the Studio include judo, fencing, modern and classical dance and period dance and movement.”

Lacking a permanent venue, and calling his group Theatre 60, as an interim measure Cherry took over the National Theatre at Eastern Hill from August 20 1960 for a three weeks’ season. Drastic changes were made to the auditorium in order to present two Irish plays ‘in-the-round’ — Beckett’s *All That Fall* and *O’Casey’s Shadow of a Gunman*. The cast was drawn from the theatre workshop and actors’ studio and included Fay Kelton, Mark Albiston and David James. But it was George Whaley who stood out — as he frequently was to do later — as the senile, blind and warped Mr Rooney in the Beckett piece and afterwards as O’Casey’s young rebel poet. It was a vividly stimulating evening.

Late November, and no longer ‘in-the-round’, came Theatre 60’s next production, this time at Russell Street. This was Arthur Schnitzler’s *La Ronde*, and the cast included Albiston, David Mitchell and Kurt Ludescher, with Whaley as stage manager. Closely following the famous French film, there were several well directed scenes, but ultimately it was an evening of tedium. The best entertainment came from three singers rendering a ballad specially written by Cherry to link each scene.

After a fortnight the play was withdrawn and replaced by a revival of *All That Fall*, this time coupled with *Krapp’s Last Tape*, performed and produced by Peter O’Shaughnessy.

Cherry’s plans to form his own company seem not to have been widely known around Australia. Visiting Sydney and talking to Hayes Gordon, he informed me he intended transferring (or was it duplicating?) his Ensemble company to Melbourne, which he considered then to be a better city theatrically. On hearing of Cherry’s plans Gordon immediately changed his mind, saying he had too much admiration for Cherry to offer any competition.

At last, early in 1961, an 87-year-old building to house the company was obtained in Dorcas Street, South Melbourne. The entire construction of the theatre was carried out by members of the company, not least Cherry himself. I can recall one hot summer’s day towards the end of 1961 going to inspect the interior, finding Cherry there alone, sawing wood for the stage.

The end result was one of the most comfortable and elegant little theatres one has known. With tiered seating every member of the 135-strong audience could sit within 20 feet of the stage. A flexible theatre, it was designed for both prosenium and large open staging, and incorporated a revolving stage. The colour scheme throughout was in emerald green.

Reasons for the theatre and company were given as: (1) to house an ensemble of actors who want to work together towards a vital and coherent style; (2) to present exciting and stimulating theatre for audiences who like to see real people on the stage; (3) to give Australian playwrights the opportunity of developing plays through improvisation and collaboration with professional actors and producers and (4) to provide a small centre for a variety of activities which would not otherwise be presented by theatre organisations with large overhead costs.

Opening production on 16 March 1962 was an ambitious affair — a full-scale Australian musical, no less. *Not With Yours Truly* was written by Bill Hannan with music by Ivan Hutchinson (now HSV-7’s movie buff), and lyrics

---

Death of a Salesman

Breath on Breath.
to songs were provided by Hannan, Cherry and Hutchinson. The cast numbered 26, headed by Whaley as a fast-talking English confidence-trickster, with Cherry of course directing. The action was set in a St Kilda expresso bar, from which a call-girl racket operated; it also highlighted the suspicion most Australians have for migrants. Although in rehearsal for over nine months, and undergoing much re-writing, it was not good. Many of the cast were inexperienced students at the Studio, and the professionals in the company were not at their best singing and dancing. It ran for 34 performances.

Two months later came Molière’s The Would-Be Gentleman, which had been in rehearsal a year and resulted in 40 performances. Again the inexperience of most of the performers showed up; it was not Molière, most seemed to play in different keys and styles, and it lacked unity.

July saw the Australian premiere of John Osborne’s Luther. Cherry’s production contained some imaginative effects and was fortunate in having a powerful performance from Whaley in the title role, but elsewhere acting was not notably strong. It marked the debut with the company of Terence Donovan — playing Pope Leo X. Poorly attended, only 27 performances were chalked up.

The Emerald Hill’s strongest impact yet was made in September with Arthur Miller’s Death of a Salesman. Whaley played Loman, Patricia Kendall joined the company to portray his wife and Peter Adams and Terry Donovan were Biff and Happy respectively.

With Behan’s The Quare Fellow the company seemed to be getting into its stride. There was another notable performance from Whaley as an old lag, Donovan and James were again in the company, and newcomers included David Kendall and John Paton. But it did poorly at the box office.

1962’s final production, Wilder’s The Matchmaker, again did poor business, although with a stylish production. The actress playing the title role was too lightweight, but Marie Redshaw of Wang Pei-Teh, Barry Balmer. The young competition, but in performance seemed most

Kendall and John Paton. But it did poorly at the box office, there were only 17 performances.

In October came another Australian play — Albee’s The Zoo Story, directed and designed by George Whaley. Whaley himself gave an incredibly realistic performance as the maniacal Jerry in the former play. The Frisch piece showed up the weaknesses in the company — particularly bad time-keeping in chorus speaking — but at the same time proved to be gripping theatre. Again Donovan was outstanding and a number of people started to sit up at his performance. However, such was impact at the box office, there were only 17 performances.

In November the EHTC came up with its all-round strongest production yet: Albee’s The Zoo Story and Max Frisch’s The Fire Raisers, both directed by George Whaley. Whaley himself gave an incredibly realistic performance as the maniacal Jerry in the former play. The Frisch piece showed up the weaknesses in the company — particularly bad time-keeping in chorus speaking — but at the same time proved to be gripping theatre. Again Donovan was outstanding and a number of people started to sit up at his performance. However, such was impact at the box office, there were only 17 performances.

In October came another Australian play — John Hepworth’s The Last of the Rainbow which had won first prize in a local play competition in 1962 to assist an appeal for funds for the future Victorian Arts Centre. The setting was an old Melbourne pub where a wild assortment of eccentrics gathered to drink, fornicate, rollick around and play nursery games; characters included a pervert, prostitute, blind man, defrocked priest, amateur philosopher and 14-year old girl. At the time I thought it a nasty little play, but paradoxically it received superb staging at the hands of Cherry with outstanding performances from Albiston and Donovan.

The year’s final attraction was Billy Liar, directed by Whaley, with another stand-out performance from Donovan in the title role and John Durum making his first appearance with the group.

1964 was a better year all round for the EHTC. First up, in April were Sophocles’ Antigone playing alternate weeks with that of Anouilh for 55 performances — and to full houses. Terry Norris was a fine Creon in both productions, with Gerda Nicolson as Sophocles’ Antigone and Ismene in the Anouilh. Cherry directed the Sophocles and Whaley directed and played Chorus in the Anouilh.

June saw one of the company’s best all-round efforts — Jonesco’s The Killer, directed by Cherry with Whaley as Berenger and Gerda Nicolson as Dany. This was followed by a revival of Death of a Salesman, which played for 24 performances to full houses, with Whaley repeating his performance as Loman, Tern Aldred now his wife and Durum and Arne Neeme as Biff and Happy.

Next came a beautifully conceived production of John Arden’s Sergeant Musgrave’s Dance (the author was in Australia during the early stages of rehearsals and the cast had the benefit of working with him). Whaley was Musgrave and others in the cast were Derum, Neeme, Albiston, Paton and Gerda Nicolson. Unfortunately it did not attract the public and only lasted nine performances.

In November the EHTC branched out, quite successfully, with lunchtime theatre at the Curzon Cinema (now Australia) in the city. The plays staged were a revival of Albee’s Zoo Story and Pinetti’s The Dumb Waiter.

1965 began in February with a workmanlike production of Macbeth. Whaley was Macbeth (not one of his best performances) and Marcella Burgoyne Lady Macbeth, Derum was Malcolm, Albiston played Macduff and Neeme was Fleance and ‘an old man’.

With John Antrobus’s You’ll Come to Love Your Sperm Test, directed and designed by Whaley, the company ran into trouble with the dailies who refused to carry ads for the play because of its title. Eventually ads were taken for a production of You’ll Come to Love Your Whale Test, directed by George Spermy. Although critics from the dailies attended the first night, no review appeared. One weekly did review the play panning it, but failed to mention the title, referring to it as “John Antrobus’s goonish show.” The programme in the form of a medical certificate “concerning the death of modern playwriting.” Its cast of four consisted of Michael Boddy, Paton, Gerda Nicolson and Derum.

(Continued on page 40)
Just doesn’t come off

ROMEO AND JULIET

COLLIN O'BRIEN

Romeo and Juliet by Shakespeare. Nimrod Theatre, at the Octagon Theatre, Perth WA. Opened 20 Feb 1979. Director, John Bell; Designer, Kristian Frederiksen; Composer, Nicolas Lyon; Lighting Design, Graeme Murray; Monique, Keith Lee; Lady Montague, Sonja Tallis; Romeo, Mel Gibson; Benvolio, Michael Smith; Balltizar, Simon Burke; Capulet, Peter Collingwood; Lady Capulet, Anna Volska; Juliet, Angela Punch; Nurse, Kerry Walker; Tybalt, Peter Kowitz; Peter, John McTernan; Gregory, Craig Ashley; Prince of Verona, Matthew O'Sullivan; Mercutio, Drew Forsythe; Paris, Craig Ashley; Paris Page, Michael Smith; Friar Laurence, Gerry Duggan; Apothecary, Drew Forsythe.

(Professional)

It is thought that Romeo and Juliet was Shakespeare’s first smash hit, the My Fair Lady (or should I say West Side Story?) of the 1590’s. It has always been one of the most popular of the Bard’s efforts being, I think, filmed more often than any other except Julius Caesar. I would therefore expect that the popular notion would be that the play is comparatively easy to produce effectively, but such is not really the case.

Shakespearean scholar H B Charlton thinks it an experimental tragedy, but one which did not come off. After it Shakespeare did not touch tragedy for almost ten years until the Big Four, which must mean something, but confined himself to histories, comedies and the odd bedsheet and sandal epic such as Julius Caesar.

Young love overshadowed by family feud, powerful lyrical passages and verbal fireworks — on a conservative estimate (M M Mahood’s) the play yields one hundred and seventy-five false cleopatric quibbles — would seem a good formula for a successful play, so it is worth asking what stands in the way of possible success. Perhaps a couple of young teenagers with the hots (not quite the way Charlton expresses it, but let it be) are not the potential tragic figures that queens and princes are; the most colourful presence in the play, Mercutio, “gets his” halfway through (it has been nastily suggested that Shakespeare had to kill him off before he ran off with the play); perhaps forebodings about Fate and the Stars, being more “tell” than “show”, are not sufficient in themselves to inspire tragic awe; the play is at first too light and comic in tone, the darker notes not clear enough until the death of Mercutio; and finally there is just too much plot about, its solution being the work of a still journeyman Shakespeare not able to organise his material deftly enough. What I can say is that I have never seen a production of the play that succeeded triumphantly, although I- do believe that the stunning Zeffirelli production in the fifties must have come close. And before trying to discover why John Bell’s Nimrod production doesn’t make it, let me point the felicities.

Firstly there is Kerry Walker’s Nurse, the best I have seen (and I’m in good company, Prospect actor Julian Glover liked it too). She balanced perfectly the bawdry, peasant earthiness, shrewdness and slight sinister quality. Angela Punch’s Juliet, too, is full of potential and should grow in performance. She is particularly in command once Juliet gets a bit of independent action, from “Gallop apace you fiery-footed steeds…” I had seen both these actresses in what I thought the best Shakespeare I have seen in Australia (together with Ray Omodei’s Hamlet at the Hole in the Wall in 1976): the Jane Street As You Like It I saw in Sydney in August last year. It was that performance which could have held its head up with the best in Britain, which gave me such high hopes for this Nimrod production.
Another plus was the cutting of the text, I presume by director John Bell. He deftly knifed the clumsiest bits of unnecessary plot and excised some of the verbal infelicities. The set design also made good use of the Octagon's thrust stage, especially considering it all had to be planned from Sydney. The use of a large wall structure upstage centre, with windows and doors as required, allowed for rapid entry and exit without the huge long exits which can mar performances in this theatre. Also good among the actors were Peter Collingwood's Capulet, Anna Volska's Lady Capulet, Matthew O'Sullivan's rich-voiced Prince and a fine small part, John Mcternan as Peter.

It's when we come to the other actors that we strike trouble. I found the cod Italian green grocer accents for the servants acceptable (leftovers from Much Ado?), but for Drew Forsyth's potentially good Mercutio, a mistake. No other major role went for the accent, so that confined to Mercutio it was out of key with the other players, and it got in the road of the role's verbal brilliance.

The playing of the young men about Verona generally was marred by a stylistic device I had thought we had excorised from Australian Shakespearean playing, although it was alive and well into the sixties: what I (now) think of as the Norman Gunston handling of imagery. What it involves is underscoring the imagery by demonstrating it with gestures as you deliver. For instance, "Her eyes in Heaven ..." would involve first pointing at your eye, then at the roof. Sexual innuendo is accompanied by much Hetting of Cods, Dryrooting of Companions and Thursting of Forearms. It garners the laughs, but it also slows down the action too much, breaks up both the patterns of imagery and dramatic development. It is finally irritatingly condescending, as it assumes that the audience cannot understand the play without all the mimed pointing up of the text.

I was also unhappy with the conception of the role of Romeo. He was such a silly young fellow, a moonish youth, that we could not seriously believe in the (excised) second chorus comment that "passion lends them power". He played for and got more laughs in the balcony scene (by such means as a nervous look around on "let them find me here") so that not only the lyricism was lost, but Juliet had nothing to work to, which I think had much to do with Miss Punch's early difficulties.

Although there was much to commend in this production — a quick word of approval for Kristian Frederikson's costume design, especially for the Ball scene — and I liked aspects of the production more on reflection than at the time, it was a shame to see what I had every reason to hope would be a fine production by one of Australia's leading companies, just not come off. But the faults are not incurable, and as the play opened here on tour (never a happy way to launch a play) it may be more enjoyable by the time it opens in Sydney.

A bit of a disappointment

GREAT ENGLISH ECCENTRICS

MARGOT LUKE


Director, Toby Robertson. Smith of Smiths, The Lunatic, the Lover and the Poet, The Grand Tour. Actors, Derek Jacobi; Isla Blair, Timothy West; Julian Glover. (Professional)

"I'm fed up with airmail editions," said a disgruntled wit in the audience during the Prospect Theatre Company's presentation of the last of the Great English Eccentrics programmes. It is understandable, of course. Perth is less profitable than the eastern capitals, often missing out on overseas visitors, and therefore suffers a surplus of economy packages put together to bring Culture to darkest anywhere at all. So no matter how good the particular offering, there is by now a certain amount of consumer resistance to the format. This time theatre lovers asking for bread were given the merengues of three erudite concert parties.

This particular group of entertainments consists of anthologies of loosely strung together snippets from diaries, letters and poems, interspersed with song and a little dance. It deals in turn with poet Lord Byron, wit and cleric Sydney Smith, and the less intrepid travellers of the eighteenth century, with a certain bias toward James Boswell. Incidentally, Eccentrics conjuring up memories of Aubrey's Brief Lives is a misnomer. Possibly Eccenticities might have been more apt. One feels that in theatrical terms this is what the Book of Lists is to Anna Karenina. A great deal of research has gone into the painstaking compilation of the material, but to talk of dramatisation is nonsense. It would do very nicely as a bonus in a progressive English course to bring the set texts to life, or possibly as light relief for audience blessed with an overdose of solid drama. But as a three-programme offering by a company travelling halfway across the world it seems inadequate.
Unholy dullness

MAKASSAR REEF

CLIFF GILLAM

Makassar Reef by Alexander Buzo. The Hole in the Wall Theatre at the Festival of Perth 1979. Director, Edgar Metcalfe. Decor, Bill Dowd; Karin, Maggie Ogden; Wendy Oxtoc, Rosemary Barr; Camilla Oxtoc, Merrin Canning; Weeks Brown, Robert van Mackelenberg; Perrin Jackson, Renee Lee; Silver, Ivan King, Bev Frewood, Leith Taylor, Abiden, Michael Van Schoor. (Professional)

Makassar Reef (pronounce it how you will) is a first rate example, in theatrical terms, of the unfortunate and seemingly universal human tendency to the indiscriminate and dangerously wasteful use of energy. Apart from the force of this pernicious habit, I can advance no good reason why Makassar Reef should have absorbed the energies and talents of so many people, from Buzo himself right down to the humblest tea boy of the company which performed it at the Hole in the Wall as part of the Festival of Perth. That habit is to blame seems clear enough. Alexander Buzo is an established dramatist on the Australian scene, and part of the price of this success has been our accustomed ourselves to a new play by him every year or so. This expectation forces Buzo to accede (besides, the money is nice) and produce his annual (or thereabouts) offering. And why shouldn't he? He is certainly skilled in his craft; knows how to convey information deftly, how to organise scenes to maximise the unfolding of character and the development of plot, how to hold the audience's attention and entertain with witty dialogue. He is well practised in such basics. That no good reason for the execution of such skills occurred to him before demand prodded him up at the typewriter is not his fault perhaps, but ours. The piece of moderately slick vacuity unfolded nightly for a month on the Hole in the Wall stage might even be considered, if one were cynical enough, a subtle and peculiarly apt act of revenge on Buzo's part, revenge for the tyranny of such habitual demand. But if we grant Buzo subtlety of such Alexandrian dimensions, we must also assume that Edgar Metcalfe's
distracted direction of the play is prima facie evidence for his being privy to Buzo's motives, and a prime mover in the conspiracy to realise his intentions. Whether we deserve quite that much salt in the wound is another question.

The really irksome thing is not, in the end, the unholy dullness of the Harold Robbinsish saga Buzo has visited upon us, designed as it obviously is to be 'adapted' as soon as decently possible and lucratively packaged as yet more telemovie fodder for the insatiable video beast. It is not the stupefying naivete of the subplot, concerned with a motley collection of hippies, dope smugglers, sailing adventurers and inscrutably corrupt Eastern officials whose relation to reality would strain the credulity of a senile cretin. And it is not the characters of the main action, carved as they are from blocks of cheap soap with blunt psychological cliches. No, the really irksome thing, the genuine bamboo sliver under the quick, is that Buzo dares to hint, through the inclusion of one character rendered otherwise pointless by the absurd demands of his plot, that he might have written a very good play. In Abidin the radical Indonesian journalist there are hints that Buzo might have written a good, and much needed play about the curious obliquity which confounds even cordial intention in cross-cultural relations. Remember, back before he had the misfortune to become 'established' how Buzo caught attention with his treatment of the crudest aspect of the problem in Norm and Ahmed? He's much better equipped now of course and well able (if his skilful handling of Abidin's dialogue is any indication) to do something much more complex and subtle. That is, if he is given the time.

About Edgar Metcalfe's production it would be kindest to say nothing. After all, why should he have bothered trying to save a manifestly stupid play by actually directing it? Far better to let the actors have their head with a script that goes (very smoothly) nowhere than to attempt a futile con by imposing a direction upon it. The playwright provided everything necessary to convince the audience that (in Perth at any rate — change the names for other states) that was Merrin Canning pretending to be the ridiculous teenage daughter of the private (but oh-so-passionate) soul Rosemary Barr was pretending to be. And — Robert Van Mackelenberg pretended to be a high powered technocrat drowning his secretly sensitive soul in gin while Ivan King pretended, with much wringing of hands and sliding of accent to be an Evil Dutch Hippie. Well, at least Leith Taylor and Bevan Lee didn't pretend. They wore the costumes and spoke the lines but they'd clearly much rather have been doing something else. Only Maurice Ogden went so far as to send the whole thing up.

At least I assume that was the intention behind the grimace of jollity he had his face assume at every opportunity. Makassar Reef at the Hole in The Wall was a prime example of the Theatre of Unbelief, of lack of conviction. Deadly Theatre in fact, the Theatre of the Establishment at its worst. Buzo has been stricken with success, and he has displayed symptoms every bit as classic as those in the text book case of David Williamson's A Handful of Friends. As perpetrated at the Playhouse some time ago. God help Buzo to recover say I, because the Establishment, perpetual victims of terminal habit, will not.

STAGING CONSULTANTS PTY LTD

- SET DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION
- PROPS
- SPECIAL EFFECTS
- CREW
- COMPLETE PRODUCTION CO-ORDINATION

49 DARLINGHURST ROAD, KINGS CROSS, 2011.

357-1057
Because in Congreve the life of the play is in the aesthetic delight which of "pace" and "energy". These two qualities the jugement of many talents as a comic actress. (Let there be no doubt about it, she stole the show)."

"The Way of the World" springs from the inventiveness and grace, the precision and economy with which the playwright conveys through dialogue the details of an almost impossible complex plot. But more importantly it is through the dialogue, especially in the bounds of repartee and the brilliantly casual epigrams sprinkled so liberally among them, that the subtle but unmistakable air of sophisticated pragmatism, sane idealism, sensuality and aesthetic delight which is the Restoration milieu, is conveyed.

The greatest disappointment of Raymond Omodei's W A T C Festival production of the "The Way of the World" was the sacrifice of the rewards of such an attention upon the twin altars of "pace" and "energy". These two qualities the playwright conveys through dialogue especially in the bounds of repartee and the brilliantly casual epigrams sprinkled so liberally among them, that the subtle but unmistakable air of sophisticated pragmatism, sane idealism, sensuality and aesthetic delight which is the Restoration milieu, is conveyed.

The design, also by Raymond Omodei, was simple and on the whole effective, featuring a series of panels receding from left and right of an open semi-circular downstage area. The panels were framed closely strung with translucent (nylon?) cord, which allowed for some clever and quite subtle lighting effects by lighting designer Jake Newby. The one feature of the set which I did not much like was the naked stage, which sloped up to the rear of the set quite alarmingly. The set which I did not much like was the naked stage, which sloped up to the rear of the set quite alarmingly. From the rear of the steeply raked auditorium at the Hayman the reasons for this sloping stage were never far behind, adding considerably to the general fun and games.

"The Way of the World" was a big disappointment. One cannot blame Mr Omodei for acting on the quite valid supposition that audiences these days have largely lost the knack of listening with the concentration Congreve demands. Narrowly yet so totally missed both by pretentious and foolish hops like Petulant and Witwoud and by the envious and grasping Fainall. Mr Omodei pre-empted the right of his actors to use the dialogue to make such distinctions, choosing to make the point broadly through paint and costume. The breakdown pace of the production gave Bill Dunstone (Mirabell) no time to develop the subtle colouration so essential to the dialogue of his character, so that the grace and power of the famous contract scene between Millamant and Mirabell (in itself quite well played) seemed to reveal a Mirabell altogether other, and not, as it should have done, the worldly but true lover freed at last from constraint.

This same insistence on pace and energy to the exclusion of all else led to the eclipse of the role of Millamant, and given the fact that she is arguably one of the most captivating heroines in the entire corpus of English dramatic literature, there was thus something of a vacuum at the centre of the play. Nor did Pippa Williamson help her own (admittedly losing) cause much by succumbing, at least on the night I saw the production, to frequent fits of the verbal stumbles.

The emphasis of this production tended to favour the lesser roles, those conceived in the broad tradition of the humour, and Glenn Hitchcock and Peter Thompson, (Petulant and Witwoud respectively) seized on their opportunity and both turned in excellent performances. Jenny McNae managed, against the odds, to establish the complexity of the unfortunate Marwood and Steve Evans did an excellent job (again, against the odds) in making of the difficult role of Mrs Fainall something more than a supernumary cog among the wheels within wheels of the complex plot.

The design, also by Raymond Omodei, was simple and on the whole effective, featuring a series of panels receding from left and right of an open semi-circular downstage area. The panels were frames closely strung with translucent (nylon?) cord, which allowed for some clever and quite subtle lighting effects by lighting designer Jake Newby. The one feature of the set which I did not much like was the naked stage, which sloped up to the rear of the set quite alarmingly. From the rear of the steeply raked auditorium at the Hayman the reasons for this sloping stage were never far behind, adding considerably to the general fun and games.

"The Way of the World" was a big disappointment. One cannot blame Mr Omodei for acting on the quite valid supposition that audiences these days have largely lost the knack of listening with the concentration Congreve demands.

But the sad fact is that they must be made to listen, for no amount of high spirits and fun can compensate for the loss of Congreve's wit and style. Indeed this production had everything except grace and style. To lack these however, was to lose Congreve.

Generally strong vocal team

MARRIAGE OF FIGARO IN PERTH

DEREK MOORE MORGAN
The Marriage of Figaro by Derek Moore Morgan. The State Opera at the New Fortune Theatre, W.A. Opened, 12th, February, 1979. Director, Adrian Slack; Designer, Axel Bartz; Lighting, Ian McPhail; Stage Manager, Lynne Feeney.

The design, also by Raymond Omodei, was simple and on the whole effective, featuring a series of panels receding from left and right of an open semi-circular downstage area. The panels were frames closely strung with translucent (nylon?) cord, which allowed for some clever and quite subtle lighting effects by lighting designer Jake Newby. The one feature of the set which I did not much like was the naked stage, which sloped up to the rear of the set quite alarmingly. From the rear of the steeply raked auditorium at the Hayman the reasons for this sloping stage could be easily understood, but if, like myself you watched the play from the front seats of the auditorium, you were liable to be distracted from the action by a concern for the actors who looked, from the angle, to be involved in a constant and most discoconcerting effort to deny the force of gravity, which threatened constantly to pitch them into the laps of the front row customers.

Overall, this production of the "The Way of the World" was a big disappointment. One cannot blame Mr Omodei for acting on the quite valid supposition that audiences these days have largely lost the knack of listening with the concentration Congreve demands.
Disappointing play and star — and overkill at the Hole

NIGHT AND DAY AFTER MAGRITTE

COLLIN O'BRIEN

Night and Day by Tom Stoppard. National Theatre, Playhouse, Perik Opened 13 Feb 1979. Director. Stephen Barry; Designer, Sue Russell; Lighting, Duncan Ord; Stage Manager, Christine Randall.

George Guthrie, James Beattie, Ruth Carson, Honor Blackman, Alastair Carson, Sebastian Honley, Jeremy Syme; Dick Wagner, Alan Cassell; Jacob Mine, Alan Fletcher; Geoffrey Carson, Leslie Wright; President Magheris, Robert Forgetter; Frances, Igor Sis.

(Professional)

After Magritte by Tom Stoppard. Hole in the Wall, Perth WA. Opened 15 Feb 1979. Director, Edgar Meanie; Designer, Bill Dowd. Thelma Harris, Leith Taylor; Reginald Harris, Robert van Mackelenberg; Mother, Rosemary Barr; PC Holmes, Bevan Lee; Inspector Foot, Ivan King.

(Professional)

Tom Stoppard has never been the playwright to give the public the mixture as before. He completely flabbergasted those critics who gloatingly expected that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead was the work of a one-play playwright by serving them up The Real Inspector Hound. and from then on has continued to dazzle us with the virtuosity of his style, his uncanny ability to find the appropriate mode of playwriting for his particular theme reaching, for my money, a peak in what I find his best stage play, Travesties. Even in radio drama he has found formulae which exploit that most abstract and therefore potentially imaginative of dramatic media. With Professional Foul he showed a like facility with the densely packed realism which so suits television. So what of his most conventional realistic stage play to date, Night and Day?

Stoppard mentioned when he was here that the play was written on a promise to a West End theatre manager. It certainly fits into that genre, which would not matter if it were merely a matter of form, as I suppose the well-constructed, logically plotted, beginning/middle/end play is as legitimate as any other. But unfortunately the weaknesses of West End theatre thematically are also all present and correct, principally those of superficiality of treatment of serious topics and certain class assumptions such as a leaning toward the notion that strikers and closed-shop approaches are inherently bad or at best debased, and some easy laughs which keep the audience amused but hinder rather than forward the action.

Night and Day is set in an emergent African nation and centres around newshounds gathered to report on possible civil unrest. There is much discussion about freedom of the press, questioning whether the right to publish tit-and-bum on page three and for a millionaire to propagate his ideas is a necessary freedom after all. While objecting to a product approach to newspapers, Stoppard does seem to hold that triviality in journalism is the price of freedom. But the debate is carried on at a fairly superficial level.

There is also a love subplot, involving a journalist and a bored white African mum who let her hair down with him on a one-night stand in Knightsbridge, and involving her fantasy of being a famous photographer. Not much new there, I'm afraid. Stoppard uses his usual device: the lady in question speaks aloud her thoughts from time to time, the rest of the cast not, according to the convention set up, being able to hear her. I'm not sure it's not cheating in an otherwise straightforward realistic play, and in any case I didn't find that it worked.

Stephen Barry directed the play with suitable panache, and designer Sue Russell brought off the staging devices Stoppard calls for, no easy feat. Now for the players. Alan Cassell as the hard-nosed journalist and James Beattie as a ditto photographer were the best things in the show, and Leslie Wright in a less well-written role as White Man's Burden Carrier was adequate to the task. I have had occasion in these columns to praise the work of one of our young actors, Alan Fletcher, who here plays the part of a naive but committed young journalist who is also a former strike-breaker, or scab. Promising as he is, I think it time to suggest to Mr Fletcher that a few years training would do him no harm. If he doesn't take the trouble to spend some time both improving his technique and thinking seriously about the fundamentals of his craft he could well find himself stuck below his potential, as has been the case with too many West Australian actors. It is worth mentioning in this context an article which appeared in the local arts journal Artlook suggesting that we don't need a college of the performing arts here, because look at the wonderful actors we have got from the born-in-a-trunk school. A dangerous proposition that this isolated spot is the only one in the world where performers miraculously do not need the benefit of proper training.

(Continued on page 28)
Theatre Victoria

Director Reg Evans with Barry Dickins and Jill Foster who plays Vera in La Mama’s The Bridal Suite. Photo: Ruth Maddeson.

A playwright in search of a form

THE BRIDAL SUITE

JACK HIBBERD


Barry Dickins is one of the few Australian playwrights whose work carries the colours of the Theatre of the Absurd. He specialises in the mundane and fetishistic misfit who occupies a drear obsessive world of carpet slippers, Carnation Milk and Coon Cheese, a world where refrigerators are chained and padlocked, where psychiatrists are depicted as crocodiles, where God is as mortal as a leg of mutton, where speech is a lunatic catalogue of Australiana, humdrum defeats and improbable aspirations. These demented epiphanies of the ordinary make Dickins somewhat distinctive, particularly in a theatrical climate which takes the ordinary much too literally and seriously.

The chief difficulty confronting an absurdist playwright is the paradoxical one of how to bring to an arbitrary world dramatic shape and structure. Ionesco often solves this problem by utilising a traditional form, for example, that of domestic or detective drama, and wrenching the details around with a technique much indebted to Feydeau. Dickins, when in top form, can hit the detail but tends to misfire formally. It grieves me to say, because I am fond of his work, that a Dickins play is inclined to meander and finally dribble out. He is a playwright in search of a form.

The Bridal Suite is no exception. A monodrama, it features a crucial night in the life of a battling rustic widow, Vera. Strangely for Dickins, the scene, the physical details, the basic tenor, of Bridal Suite are highly naturalistic in character. I think this ill-fits his style and sensibility, encumbers the flow of the play. Because of the naturalistic template, the play veers erratically between authentic emotional power and bathos — some of Vera's emotional crescendi organ out incongruously given the conventions of the play. When Vera Takes off into her memories and fantasies, the writing is much more assured; when it comes to the 'real' world, Vera, like the playwright, gropes and clutches for something to do next.

Vera passes the night grappling with the spectre of Death, the death particularly of her husband Jack, an incomparable dag and truckie who had the misfortune to be wiped out in a head-on collision. She also grapples with isolation, grief, the bottle, monotony and futility. She raves on, at times comically, at times gravely, about her past, and achieves moments of independence by acting out imaginary scenes in which she is forceful, earthy, and socially in charge. She finally realises that the Slough of Despond wherein she paddles is spiritual death, and resolves to decamp from her squalid hutch and seek fresh vistas. Unfortunately she takes much too long to leave, and her departure is dramatically rather more downhill than up.

As Vera, Jill Foster hands in a pretty impressive performance, though the night I saw it she took some twenty minutes or so to knit together energy, rhythm, and character. Throughout the evening she struggled to connect sections, plausibly relating diverse action-clumps to domestic commonplaces. Yet in the end these problems reflect more on the writer and present the major challenge to the director, in this case Reg Evans, who didn’t ultimately surmount them. I would also question the technique of addressing the audience directly and so familiarly — it has the effect of making the theatre too homely and so diluting isolation and alienation.

When happy with the material, Jill Foster can be quite formidable and commanding, an actress who needs only to add a little refinement and nuance to her skills.

The set or non-set, by Walter Plinge, set a raw standard and was reminiscent of many an agreeable stint at La Mama. Hollywood Dave, a stalwart of Carlton theatre and infallible judge of the ridiculous, spent a highly enjoyable night, providing the bulk of the laughter, which says a lot in favour of the entertainment.

26 THEATRE AUSTRALIA APRIL 1979
Tepid confection of '60's politics

JEREMY TAYLOR

Knickers! Jockstrap! Female genitalia! Micturition! Male appendage! By this time you will undoubtedly be calling for the coup de grace. I bet you haven't laughed so much in ages! But Melbourne has. We've just had Jeremy Taylor at the Playbox.

Jeremy Taylor is a long, lanky, baby-faced Englishman, so laid back as to be almost prostrate. He's been described — in the programme notes, by an anonymous admirer — as 'witty and original', his songs 'like cartoons in words and music'. His show-biz credentials are impressive — co writer of Wait a Min, a year touring with Spike Milligan a season at the Young Vic., London. And he even recorded 'Jobsworth' in Cat Steven's basement! His political credits include having many of his songs banned in South Africa because of his anti-apartheid views. He's been variously described as folksinger, humourist, and social and political commentator, although Jeremy himself modestly suggests that people don't know where to put him. He'd like to give himself a simple label but it's not possible.

Which should all add up to a little more than the tepid confection of 60's politics and stand-up snigger of his Melbourne season.

He walked onto the stage as though into his own sitting room, wearing an ingenuous grin, rumpled cords, the sort of shirt a lot of men get for Christmas and wish they didn't — and a guitar. He kicked off with a rather good anecdote about Dr Christian Barnard (J T lived in South Africa for some time) and proceeded to sing a rather pointed song about animal organ transplants ending with that old chestnut about a politician's brain. So far, OK. The audience was definitely on side, one member showing signs of imminent hysteria.

Then, a rambling story, the point of which appeared to be to congratulate J T on being so naughty as to criticise South Africa. Which somehow, circuitously, lead him to "Lift Girl's Lament", a ditty composed apparently to illustrate that lift girls go up and down in lifts all day and get sore feet. To give that a little spice he added a subtle but substantial salt of sexism and a sly vicious jab at homosexuality.

Then it was time for another ramble into Taylorian immemorialia and another opportunity to congratulate JT on his contribution to an integrated South African language. And wouldn't you know it? The song "Ag Pleez Daddy" was banned. Then there was "U S Luv" all about a very laid back chappie trying to get it together with a female friend. While the rest of the audience rolled in the aisles, I deja vu-ed. Hadn't Captain Rock done something like that at the Fly Trap? And done it so much better? J T acknowledged his audience's enthusiasm with many an engaging boyish grin and many an off-the-cuff. Everything was going swimmingly. Who needs sophisticated patter?

The remainder of the programme was more of the same except for an occasional detour into romantic balladry — "Zelide" — which might have been moving had one not known that this genuine attempt at lyricism and social comment would be instantly defused by that huge don't-take-it-all-too-seriously grin. Indeed the whole performance was something of a race against that smile: J T seemed to suffer from a sort of artistic schizophrenia which dictated that expose — what fragment there was — should be followed by defusion of expose. The smile always won.

"New Stanley Grill" gave him the opportunity of performing the Upper Class Twit. "It's My Wife Doctor" was a not very good update of Cook and Moore's Psychiatrist. "Jobsworth" and "Whinging Pom" vindicated every prejudice we Aussies are meant to feel about our Antipodeans. The audience begged for more.

I suppose it's my fault that I didn't. I went along expecting a new Tom Lehrer, perhaps a guitar-toting Barry Humphries. That Jeremy Taylor has an entertaining act is clearly evidenced by the audience. There were few who could claim that they weren't amused. And they could also save their consciences. After all, he was making a relevant political comment wasn't he? And it's very important to be anti-apartheid, isn't it? And now that we're all so liberated, so tolerant of Gay Lib and women and we've found our nouvelle vague social, sexual and political identities, it's O K dialectically to go back to laughing at the mere mention of genitalia. Isn't it? And it doesn't matter if the politics are 60's vintage and the social comment soft centre and flaccid. Does it? So long as it is politics and social comment.

The Audience looked pretty sophisticated to me. But I think I must have only dreamt the nouvelle vague.
Deft and sensitive overall
GARDEN OF DELIGHTS

Suzanne Spunner

Garden of Delights by Fernando Arrabal, The Australian Performing Group, The Playhouse, The Pram Factory, Melbourne. Directed by Alison Richards; Set Design, Susie Ashbread; Music, Chris Wyatt; Costumes, Sharon Smith; Lighting Design, Geoff Fiddes; Lighting Operator, Cliff Keräft; Sidles, Jenny Mather; Special Effects, Daniel Smith; Stage Management, Mary During, Kerry Allen; Sheep, Louise Lavery; Set Construction, Laurel Frank, Suzi Potter; Browne, John Konig, Lyndal Dyke, Rod Williams. Lais, Charmayne Lane; Zenon, Jonathan Lindsay; Miharca, Glenda Lum; Teloc, Robert Thompson. (Professional)

Fernando Arrabal, the Spanish surrealist writer, grew up in a small, brutal village near the border of Spain and Portugal, where the life of the village was dominated by rituals and ritualistic behaviour. Arrabal believed that the origin of his theatre resided in his experiences as a child in that village. In Garden of Delights, he is concerned with the effect of Catholic morality on the imagination of a young girl, Lais. She could easily be speaking as Arrabal, when at one point in the play she says, “We are still the product of our childhood.” In a richly poetic text Arrabal teased out the relationship between the Church and the village. He sees the Church as the repressive, law-giving father who curbs the primitive vitality and wantson earthiness of the village. By making the main character a convent-bred girl enlivened by the same rebellious spirit as the village, he is not merely personalising the situation but firmly locating it in the patriarchal order.

In the character of Lais he traces the effect of self loathing and the guilt-ridden distortion of sexual expression on her developing psyche to its final violent and orgiastic rebellion. In the play his emphasis is less on the delineation of individual character and personality and more on the articulation of social forces through the individual — the process of acculturation. He shows that sexual repression is not an isolated and aberrant social form but part of a dense fabric woven from power, and materialism. The only way out is change or revolution — the overthrowing of the social order which can come either through politics or art. For Spain it was the Civil War, but for Arrabal and his childhood village it came through art — the making over of experience into rituals which exorcise the repressive forces.

Arrabal became a writer, the village devised The Burial Of The Sardine — an Anti-Lenten festival celebrating the flesh in a collective, symbolic interment of the power of the church. Lais is an actress and to the extent that her work is successful, she escapes her conditioning, but Arrabal shows that even at the point of triumph she is susceptible to the power of her past — her memories and childhood friends.

Alison Richard’s production concentrates on the mythic elements inherent in sexual politics — man as god, woman as supplicant, rivalry between women, the transformation of power through sex to power through work. In this way the bizarre, surreal elements are divested of strangeness for its own sake and the world is made concrete through metaphor. The actors she has cast are physical embodiments of the psychic dualities in the play; Lais (Charmayne Lane) is a finely boned, ethereal blonde whose fragility conceals a spritely tensile strength; her friend Miharca (Glenda Lum) is dark, athletic with the vital magic of a female Caliban and the scenes between them are as visually electric as a tussle between night and day. Similarly Teloc, Lais’ lover is a golden-bodied almost clowningly good looking man with an uncannily appropriate resemblance to Cocteau’s incarnation of masculine beauty Jean Marais, while Zenon (Jonathan Lindsay), Lais’ servant and caged pet, is repulsively cowering and animal like in his fidelity to her. Overall the acting was deft and sensitive but Charmayne Lane stood out particularly in the scenes of Lais’ initiative by Teloc into sexual knowledge. Soosie Adshead’s design, while inspired and imaginative in parts, with its giant papier mache sardine which extended beyond the acting space into the foyer, and Louise Lovett’s plaster Bunuel sheep was marred by tattiness and busyness, which often distracted from one’s enjoyment of the aesthetics of the actors.

Arrabal’s works are rarely performed here and after this production it is difficult to see the reasons for the neglect.

Theatre/WA
(Continued from page 25)

Except that he lost control and became incoherent when the character loses his temper, Robert Faggeter made a fair fist of the black dictator, which Stoppard mercifully did not write as a parody Idr Amin. Realistic credibility is not possible for a white actor who blacked up because the bonestructure is still wrong, and this made Mr Faggeter’s task well-nigh impossible. But lacking any African actors here, we must be satisfied with the best possible under the circumstances.

Which brings me finally to the question of our imported star, Honor Blackman. I’m afraid that for my money it was just that: a star performance. I got the impression that she was performing to us, rather than with the other actors. Mind you, they still do in the West End, as I found to my disgust when I visited there, and perhaps that is what was wanted from her. But I am too Stanislavski oriented when it comes to realistic acting, and found her work irritating. This first season of the year at the Playhouse was booked out early, and I’m sure that most of the GP went home happy. A number of my colleagues think I’m too picky, but I must say that I found both Stoppard’s play disappointing (I thought it could have been written by Terence Rattigan twenty years ago) and our imported star not worth the money.

To turn to vintage Stoppard, his short wild romp with some images of Surrealist painter Rene Magritte, called After Magritte. That painter’s work has a haunting dream — or rather nightmare — quality, with images such as burning tubas and lovers with clothes over their faces. What Stoppard does is to give a set of such images a man in dinner suit and wading boots changing a light globe, an old lady who plays Wagner on the tuba resting on an ironing table and a woman in a ballgown sniffing around on all fours a completely logical explanation.

Monographer Suzi Gablik has said of Magritte that “he did not contribute any formal inventions to the syntax of picturemaking”. His pictorial style is blind, lending power to the juxtaposition of images, drawing attention to the unreality of pictures by, for instance, painting a pipe and writing under it “this is not a pipe”, by showing a painting of a painting merging into the landscape, thereby drawing attention to the inherent falsity of the images of things. I felt that director Edgar Metcalfe could well have echoed this strain of blindness and therefore somewhat chilling understatement of Magritte’s in his production of the Stoppard play. I felt, felt, played absolutely for real, the bizarre being thereby underscored by the sheer ordinariness of the characters actions.

As it was the playing was all too strident, even comically larger than life, straining after effect. This was especially inappropriate in the smallness of the Hole in the Wall’s playing space. Perhaps the fact that Stoppard was there on the first night unnerved the actors, who all worked hard and combined well enough, but played at too intense a level. Although a very competent production, I am convinced that it suffered from overkill.

ASDA
The Australian Drama Studies Association

from Thursday 10 May to Sunday 13 May is offering a Theatre Weekend in Sydney when three or four shows will be attended. Tickets will be provided at party concession rates and, depending upon the number of members wishing to avail themselves of the offer, a possible additional ASDA subsidy of one or two dollars per ticket.

There is to be a meeting of ASDA on the Saturday morning at 11.00 in Studio One, Uni of NSW. Transport may also be provided to and from Canberra for those members who wish to attend the Shakespeare Conference and Australian National Playwright’s Conference in the following week.

All enquiries to
Christopher Ross-Smith
ADSA
University of New England
Armidale, NSW 2350
Musical excitement and cute, winning treatment

BOADICEA YOU NEVER CAN TELL

VERONICA KELLY

You Never Can Tell by George Bernard Shaw. Queensland Theatre Company, Brisbane Qld. Opened 7 Feb 1979. Director, Joe MacIvor; Designer, Fiona Kelly; Stage Manager, Peter Shoesmith; Lighting, Derek Campbell; Dance, Beverly Nevins. Dolphy, Rosemary Ricketts; Valentine, Trevor Kent; Philip, Peter Cousens; Parlormaid, Robyn Torney; Mrs Clendon, Carole Skinner; Glenda, Kate Sheil; Fergus Crampton, John Clayton; William, Brian James; Fench M'Cormic, Kit Taylor; Young Waiter, Duncan Watts; Cook, Judy Brown Beresford; Bobbin, Ken Bennett. (Professional)

You Never Can Tell was a rock opera, and rock opera is rock opera. But the first time you hear a rock opera in Brisbane, it's a bit of a shock. So imagine my surprise when I walked out of rehearsal with the words “You never can tell” ringing in my ears. It was a rock opera, and I was hooked. Eventually, I was able to see the show for myself, and I was blown away. The music was fantastic, the acting was superb, and the whole thing was just a joy to watch. I definitely recommend it to everyone.
kinky bra and corsets costumes to be forgotten. There is a whole gassy physical potential of Boadicea waiting to be explored, which this production was unable or else chose not to deliver.

The admirably clearly delivered lyrics articulate foreboding and debate, yet when confrontation and passion erupt through this texture the show really grinds. Such is the scene where Boadicea challenges Roman "justice", her humiliation and vow of vengeance — the musical electricity and dramatic tensions pick the show up to a real high. So too the lack of Londonin when the arrogant Procurator Decius is satisfyingly totalised by the leeni; the complementary spectacular dimensions otherwise kept from the forefront explode here beyond a literal and limiting three singers with make presentation.

Comparison keeps intruding of Boadicea and Livermore's Ned Kelly. Clearly Ned had buckets of cash spent on it which glittered gratifyingly in all aspects of the production, while the look of Boadicea clearly signals the make-do austerity of the committed but nearly skint. For all that Boadicea compares very favorably in that, despite its eschewing of star turns and show-stopping numbers, its attitude to its mythic material is more consistent and intelligently thought out, giving it an edge in the invidious comparisons handicap ahead of the value of the Australianness of the Ned material. The Evans-Stevens music with its evenly involving lyricism and exciting percussion needs to be realised further, preferably with just a few more funds and professional resources. Someone better consider doing Boadicea with the respect it merits, even if they gotta rob a bank to do it.

What a doower, after the explicable rough edges and corner cutting of Boadicea, to encounter in QTC's year-starter You Never Can Tell a species of subsidised apotheosised amateurism. The play itself, Shaw's first, is not vintage stuff, and waits until the fourth act for a string of Irish jokes — inefficiency and thickheadedness blown up to heroic proportions. From the first moments of the short, rather sedentary, first act, in which, huddling together around a table, the characters sit waiting to be interviewed by the trio of journalists, they belong to) in this fine mess add up to a string of Irish jokes — inefficiency and thickheadedness blown up to heroic proportions. From the first moments of the short, rather sedentary, first act, in which, huddling together for warmth and courage, they recap their plans and mourn the failures of their predecessors, we know they are doomed.

As the second act explodes into action, so the nightmare worsens. On the bridge a party is in full swing, with women and men dancing and singing. The dialogue flashes with wit and precision, the actors in long dresses should fail to survive them. Teeth 'n' tit playing styles raged unchecked. Some actors found a comprehensible path through the play towards characterisation and motivation, notably Kate Shell and Trevor Kent as the sparkish young couple, intelligently fleshing out a fairly traditional love action which is the reverse of the usual Shavian girl-gets-boy pattern. Brian James' confident William anchored the action in soliity amongst so much radical uncertainty to style and purpose. But it's not enough good you know, really it's not.

Potential never fully exploited

IRISH STEW

JEREMY RIDGMAN

Irish Stew by John Bradley. La Boite Theatre, Brisbane Qld. Opened 2 Feb 1979. Director, Sean Moir; Designer, Normunds Buivids; Stage Manager, Donna Ballinger; Ian, Tony Brown; Rae, Gary Cook; Allan, Gregory Silberman; Captain, Ron May; Crew, Brad Collet, Jeremy Head; Music, Kathleen Mahoney; Man, Chip de Deurwaerd. (Amateur)

John Bradley may well have been amused by the typographical error in last month's TA that led to his new play being restyled Fish Stew. Not only does he quite clearly have a keen eye for such howlers, but the typesetter's choice of substitute proved to be eminently suitable, since the fate of the would be hijackers of the Irish ferry is to be blown mercilessly out of the water, finally to sink slowly to Davy Jones' locker, no doubt amid a veritable bouillabaisse of stunned cod and herring.

The events that have landed the terrorists, Ian, Rae and Allan (guess what organisation they belong to) in this fine mess add up to a string of Irish jokes — inefficiency and thickheadedness blown up to heroic proportions. From the first moments of the short, rather sedentary, first act, in which, huddling together for warmth and courage, they recap their plans and mourn the failures of their predecessors, we know they are doomed.

As the second act explodes into action, so the nightmare worsens. On the bridge a party is in full swing, with no one at all intimidated by the trio and, to cap it all, the ship is carrying an all Irish crew and passengers. In a scuffle, the ship's wheel is broken off, the compass smashed for good measure and, as the forces of chaos gather, Ian, Rae and Allen make a last, desperate attempt to give their mission some symbolic significance by determining to interview every one of the three thousand aboard in the hope of finding one Englishman who can play hostage. By the time they have decided to surrender, the ship is being strafed by the RAF with the methodical disinterest usually reserved for the sinking of wrecked oil-tanks. Did I sense the ghosts of Stoppard's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern stalking the stage, as these anti-heroes, having 'been sent' to accomplish a suicidal mission, moved unwittingly towards their own fatalistic fate?

It would be tempting to imagine that the rough beast of the Absurd had slouched towards La Boite to be born again, but I feel there is more to Irish Stew than the now hackneyed metaphorical parable of man in a meaningless universe, etc etc. We seem to be in the far more realistically harsh world of Heller or M*A*S*H, a world of bungled strategies and moral irresponsibility. In this respect, the implications of the play emerge as profoundly political. Bradley juggles adroitly with the impersonal, pragmatic ammorality of the forces of 'good' and the naive puritanism and idealism of the criminals.

As the confusion mounts, the mission becomes an involuntary crusade to atone for a physically and spiritually warped upbringing and when one person does die at the hijackers' hands, it is Trixy, a good-natured lass off to England for an abortion. Affronted by her resigned promiscuity, Allan gams her down at point blank range. I wondered occasionally whether the play was getting the style it deserved, the production being both ingenious and well-engineered, but sometimes over sombre and lacking in theatricality. There is a long tradition of comic threessomes, reaching back to Feste, Augecheek and Belch and beyond, but here I felt this potential was never fully exploited.

The dialogue flashes with wit and precision, despite the occasional overstatement (Ian's "Why does the final hour always find me alone?" as his comrades nod off, hardly needs to be capped by "I'll have no Getsemanies here" for the point to be taken). Also, some of the Australian slang ("root", "go for your life" etc) clashes painfully with the dominant idiom. Nevertheless, Irish Stew is a funny, rich and resonant play, proving that John Bradley has that rare gift, an understanding of the technique of comedy combined with a bold, committed approach to its role.

SUBSCRIBE TO Theatre Australia

(See details on page 56)
In the land of the imagination

HAMLET

GUTHRIE WORBY

Hamlet by William Shakespeare. The State Theatre Company at the Playhouse, Festival Centre, Director, Colin George; Designer, Hugh Colman.

Claudius, Edwin Hodgman; Hamlet, Michael Siberry; Polonius, Leslie Dayman; Horatio, Robin Bowering; Laertes, Colin Friels; Rosencrantz, Nick Earle; Guildenstern, Peter Schwartz; Ghost, Bill Austin; Marcellus, Wayne Jarratt; Reynaldo, Tony Strachan; Francisco, Tony Prehn; Valdemar, Robert Grubb; Cornelius, John Saunders; First player, Poisoner, Bill Austin; Player King, Wayne Jarratt; Player Queen, Tony Prehn; Fortinbras, Robert Grubb; Norwegian Captain, Wayne Jarratt; Osen; Tony Strachan; Gravedigger 1, Bill Austin; Gravedigger 2, Leslie Dayman; Friar, Wayne Jarratt; Gertrude, Daphne Grey; Ophelia, Christine Mahoney; Ladies in Waiting, Katrina Forster, Nina Landis; Officers, Soldiers and Attendants, Dan Bell, Andre Murow, John Saunders, Michael Haliburn.

(Professional)

And now for the good news — it works!

I wonder if you’ve noticed that William Shakespeare has a kind of Tom Stoppardian quality about his writing? Colin George, Michael Siberry and Edwin Hodgman must have noticed it because they collaborated to present an absorbing four hours of deadly gamesmanship between a precociously intellectual (specs & all), but indolent youth called Hamlet, and a Machiavellian schemer called Claudius (who drinks a little). Make no mistake — it’s a deadly game. They play for the same stakes; the death of a father, the love of a mother, the power of a kingdom, the forgiveness of Heaven, the anticipation of Hell. They play the game for fear of the consequences of actions done or dreamed. Both are highly skilled manipulators, and ruthless with pawns. They are also martyrs to their own delight in mental torture. But Hamlet has a sense of humour.

In the first two acts Claudius has it all his own way. Hamlet is pathologically depressed... mostly about being depressed: about his father’s death, his mother’s marriage, his desire for Ophelia and his inability to do anything but talk about any of them. Then in Act III when his reading habit leads him to a well known passage on death and suicide, Hamlet decides that he will recover by contrivance the lost moment of action — of revenge. This is where things really start to move and the superb melodrama of Shakespeare’s writing appears. He’s better at melodrama than Tom Stoppard!

Hamlet dispenses his uxorious uncle of the throne even as he sits upon it, and of the running of the court, by penning a small piece he calls the mouse...trap. Suddenly the feigned madness in Hamlet is nothing to the growing mania of Claudius. “Madness in great ones must not unwatch’d go”. Claudius we know, dispenses particular blend of poison for the ear and dispenses it cunningly. Laertes, brother to Hamlet’s beloved but abused Ophelia is poisoned by him long before the well staged revenge play ravages of Act V, and we see the process. Meanwhile, this kingdom locked in interminable struggle and skullduggery, is under the shadow of the jackboot. Fortinbras, with all the charm of a Fascist traffic cop, is literally and metaphorically waiting in the wings to bring a martial and active stability to a land besmudged by the toils of the intellect. So watch out! Now read on....

This production has three strengths. The first is undoubtedly Michael Siberry. This young man is an intelligent and technically capable actor, and well deserves the bonus of a Hamlet. He will doubtless get another. The second is a production concept and control which has used the senior resources of the Company — Edwin Hodgman, Daphne Grey, Leslie Dayman — to great effect in the support of a youthful trio of Siberry, Colin Friels (a very good Laertes) and Chris Mahoney (a conventional but movingly mad Ophelia). The third is a design concept which does not, in general, get in the way of the play. The standard and stature is a considerable improvement on Cymbeline in fidelity to essentials and avoidance of gratuitous theatrical pyrotechnics. This production, appropriately, lives mostly in the land of the imagination.

This said, there are problems. The first lies with an aspect of the design concept. Hugh Colman has set the piece in an all but empty room. The second problem lies presumably with the director’s intention to give each scene a clear visual stamp and stylistic statement. The first two acts were almost straight-jacketed by the daguerreotype poses and tableaux which were used to establish court formality versus family familiarity, and Hamlet’s oddness in the context of both. Thankfully, this dissolved after the ‘nunnery’ scene, though statements were continually underlined thereafter, with trumpet, drum and gun. The play does indeed gather pace, but the dynamic I think, is more surge and ebb than prop and cop.

This production is likely to be attended by large numbers of secondary school students and they will see a Hamlet not only which but whom they know. So will their mothers and fathers.
Effective if too orthodox

MAN AND MAN

ROGER PULVERS


Ralph Wilson's productions expose a text. He gets from amateurs a clarity of presentation that is rare in non-professional theatre. Wilson has been directing plays in Canberra for over twenty years, especially unusual pieces which we have not had a hand in the formative training of such outstanding Australian theatre people as George Ogilvie and Malcolm Robertson.

"Man and Man" is an entire Brecht evening, largely devoted to a presentation of Puntila, the piece Brecht wrote whilst in Finland in 1940. Brecht based the play on a Finnish story. As such, it is one of his more traditional works, with a straight narrative, unfolding plot, and fairly orthodox character development.

The evening began with the actors reciting a few Brecht poems. The choice was good: poems he wrote about drama, about the Brechtian stance and the Brechtian attitude. Brecht negated the 'theatre of emotions', or rather the 'theatre of sentiment', where a play exists 'solely to stir inert feelings'. Here the word attitude is critical, for it is Brecht's way of objectifying the drama; the audience must never forget that the actors are taking a particular stance or attitude vis-à-vis their characters.

How did this work? From the point of view of the overall production, it was presented through visible scene changes, where the director himself, together with the stage hands, moved the props about, to a background of dissonant music and verbal sound tracks. This called attention to the working of the play, to the how of the play, so to speak. It was effective. On the other hand, the acting style was rather too orthodox, if not downright naturalistic most of the time, in gesture, movement, and vocal exchange. This, I feel, worked against the intended objectifying effect.

The part of Puntila is a big one. He is a lush, a sexist to the hilt, and a nasty little exploiter of the working class. Harry Schmidt's performance was impressive. But there was a bit of unrelenting bombast throughout. Not that the part has much subtlety. But that a more nuanced approach, with greater contact with the audience — rather than with the other characters — would have given that ironic edge to the part that I believe Brecht imprints upon it. Here was the problem in the acting style: that the actors largely failed to relate their character-roles directly to the audience, but rather interacted as if engaged in a naturalistic drama with the others on stage. So, some of Brecht's humor, which comes from the characters commenting about themselves to us, not to other characters, was diminished.

If some of the scenes were static, like the first one, in which Puntila and Matti just sit up stage and convey information about themselves to us, some were witty and theatrically dynamic. Especially the wonderful scene in the sauna, where Puntila surprises us by taking off all his clothes and dousing himself with a pail of water. The visual setting of this scene, too, was superb, with the sauna being made by turning around a wooden structure which was used as a house front. Equally, the final scene, where Puntila rails from on high, standing on the top of his beloved mountain, worked beautifully.

There was some excellent acting, especially from Harry Schmidt and from Pat Galvin as Matti, whose tense stances and powerful delivery brought out all the anger of a worker who has given his trust and sacrificed his integrity to a wicked and egotistic boss. The four women who played Puntila's betrothed worked well in ensemble, sending up the rogue all the while. The scene where they sit around and tell stories, however, was flat. It adds little to the piece and could easily have been excised. (The director had already cut out the sub-plot of Puntila's daughter and the attacke, which was also a wise thing to do.)

In all, this was a terse and effective production, and entertaining. So often amateur productions are Brechtian without intending to be. In fact, some professional productions, too, end up distancing us from the drama quite by accident. Here it was the intention, to create a Brechtian attitude. If it wasn't totally achieved, it was due, in part, to the play itself, which involves an audience empathetically in the big personality of Puntila, his treatment of the people around him, and his unenviable fate.

Extremely strong and unusually well-matched

THE ANNIVERSARY

THE FLAW

MARGUERITE WELLS

The Anniversary by Anton Chekhov, Fortune Theatre Company, Canberra Theatre Foyer, Canberra Theatre Centre, A.C.T. Lunchtime season. Opened 12 February 1979. Director, Pamela Rosenberg; Stage Manager, Malcolm Miller; Costumes and Deco, Thelma White. Visitors, Margaret de Mestre; Pamela Rosenberg; John Paisley; Tatania Alexayeva, John Cuffe, Thelma White, Pat Huchinson, John Thompson.

The Canberra Theatre Trust works in mysterious ways its wonders to perform. Later in the year, the Tuggeranong Amateur Players will, with Trust assistance, send the boards of the Playhouse to give us Black Chiffon. Meanwhile Fortune Theatre treat the unsteady rose of the Canberra Theatre Foyer in what promises to be their best lunchtime season so far. Mrs Worthington continues to triumph. Somehow, she gets to give her daughter a whirl on the real live stage of a real, live theatre, with lighting that goes on and off and wings to exit into, while the professionals perform under the elegant if untheatrical chandeliers of the foyer and choose between exiting through a brick wall, or else going back the way they came.

In The Anniversary, John Paisley and John Cuffe, as the twitty provincial bank manager, all rolling eyes and flapping hanky and violet cravat, and his surly, woman hating, full-up-to-the-neck-with-a-cold chief clerk, were a fine combination and would have been a better one if coaxed more into a single style, one performance a shade less caricatured, the other more so.

The bank manager is faced with the excitement of the fiftieth anniversary of the bank, a deputation coming to read him a speech he has written in his own praise, a wife returning inconveniently early from a visit to her mother's, a blockheaded petitioner who refuses to believe that the Army Medical Department does not lie within the bank's jurisdiction, and the necessity to get the chief clerk to finish the financial report before the shareholders arrive. The chief clerk, in the middle of the panic is wishing he could go to bed and nurse his influenza, and the two men end up in fury chasing the two women until all collapse from influenza, apoplectic frenzy, lunacy and fainting, piled on top of one another. The deputation arrives to read his speech glorifying the unmerit of the bank to a prostrate and most disreputable crew. The four actors rushed rather slowly round the tiny stage, trying not to hit any brick walls, damage each other or fall off, so the already rather far-fetched climax became a little further strained. A pity, but...
Bask in the brilliance of the stars

**LOST TO THE DEVIL**

*LUCY WAGNER*

Lost To The Devil by Stanley Walsh. Music Hall, N Sydney, NSW. Opened 16 February 1979. Director: Stanley Walsh; Designer: Tom Lingwood; Musical Director: Don Harvie; Dance: Michael O'Reilly.

Our critic Lucy Wagner says that after two years break, Stanley Walsh has returned to the Music Hall to write and direct their latest melodrama Lost To The Devil. In the meantime we have been treated to two pieces of Australiana by Michael Boddy; Lust for Power about colonial misdemeanours and debacles, and Crushed By Desire, a tale of wrongs righted on the goldfields. Both were evenings of rollicking fun, but made the more piquant by some apt comment on contemporary situations. With Lost To The Devil the Music Hall has returned to Olde London Towne, Dickensian Villains and "Knees up Mother Brown" — a style which precludes topical assemblage and a step back into the past in more ways than one.

But stepping forward as usual were the ladys and gentlemen of the company. Standards of performance have gone up and up over the past years, and this one maintains that trend; the level of ensemble and individual excellence is often stunning. The pity is that the actors are this time somewhat hamstrung by characters with no centre and situations that lead nowhere.

Protagonist of the drama is Alan Wilson as Jeremy Parsons, the most sweetly innocent hero yet, who appears in the Devil’s Acre — “the moral plague spot” of London — to find his long lost sister Emily. The bedraggled inhabitants of this plot reveal their true colours when they combine with him to fight the forces of evil — in the shape of Jardine Leachman (Ron Haddrick; Lui, Jenny Ludeke; Clement Hubbard, Des Rolfe; Captain Monks, Trevor Prior; Miss Prudence, Eileen Colocott; Ernie, Malcolm Pink.

(Professional)

After two years break, Stanley Walsh has returned to the Music Hall to write and direct their latest melodrama Lost To The Devil. In the meantime we have been treated to two pieces of Australiana by Michael Boddy, Lust for Power about colonial misdemeanours and demeanours, and Crushed By Desire, a tale of wrongs righted on the goldfields. Both were evenings of rollicking fun, but made the more piquant by some apt comment on contemporary situations. With Lost To The Devil the Music Hall has returned to Olde London Towne, Dickensian Villains and “Knees up Mother Brown” — a style which precludes topical allusion and a step back into the past in more ways than one.

But stepping forward as usual were the ladies and gentlemen of the company. Standards of performance have gone up and up over the past years, and this one maintains that trend; the level of ensemble and individual excellence is often stunning. The pity is that the actors are this time somewhat hamstrung by characters with no centre and situations that lead nowhere.

Protagonist of the drama is Alan Wilson as Jeremy Parsons, the most sweetly innocent hero yet, who appears in the Devil’s Acre — “the moral plague spot” of London — to find his long lost sister Emily. The bedraggled inhabitants of this plot reveal their true colours when they combine with him to fight the forces of evil — in the shape of Jardine Leachman (Ron Haddrick).

So impeccable are the credentials of young Parsons (“Almost Heavenly”), that the trusting spectator would put all belief in his ability to retrieve the runaway Emily. But somewhere along the line the plot loses impetus, and we have to put up with the fact that our hero’s timing is out; Emily has escaped Leachman’s white slave trade, but only by accidental death. Even the course of young love is rather strained. The most eligible female left for Parsons to pair with before the curtain falls is the trickster Maggie, who steals his heart as quickly as she earlier stole his suitcase. But without even a promise to go straight in future.

Ron Haddrick, a sight to behold dressed in mandarin costume, is a dastardly villain in the great tradition. He burlesques his pot smoking scene in The Club to great effect with the show stopping number “One little Puff...”. But in it we learn that Leachman’s evil interests have no deeper root than that “drugs bring out the worst in me”. His oriental servant Lui is played by a suitable pofaced Jenny Ludeke, in a severely black, Chinese-style Edwardian dress, but the bounds of credibility are stretched again when she inexplicably turns out in the denouement to be Leachman’s daughter.

Miss Prudence is amply personified by Eileen Colocott, as the extravagant madame with obvious interests in the flesh trafficking of Leachman, and in the flesh of the young men trying to thwart him. David Atkins’ chimney sweep Ginger, one of these young men, is the most sprightly in a very nimble-footed cast. He leaps and dances, and performs with great athleticism on a precariously seesawing drainpipe.

The scenery other than the trick drainpipe, is monolithic in its realism; Old Tote sets aren’t dead, they’re alive and well and revolving at the Music Hall. Tom Lingwood has produced a setting as impressive and as standard as the style of the melodrama. The grandiose has this year replaced the cartoon theatricality of, for instance, the crasher of last year.

As always, the Music Hall provides an evening packed with fast moving fun, a talented cast and direction that makes the most of every moment. Don Harvie’s music as usual highlights the times for oohs, aahs and hisses, and his song arrangements gave a certain freshness to even the best known cockney medleys.

In Lost To The Devil the response is always one of recognition, and though one must forgo the expectation of moral enlightenment, one can lie back and bask in the brilliance of the stars.
Livemore — our high flying bird

SACRED COW

DOROTHY HEWETT

Sacred Cow by Reg Livemore. Eric Dare at Her Majesty's Theatre, Sydney NSW. Opened 14 February 1979. Director, Peter Batey.

With Reg Livemore and the Wellington Burlesk Band. (Professional)

Reg Livemore's third one-man show at Her Majesty's — "a laughter filled performance" says Eric Dare — well, yes, but the tears and the horror lie close under the laughter. It is a celebration of life and death, by Australia's greatest white-faced clown, the inimitable Livemore, sweetheart and bawd, our own Doll Tearsheet of 1979.

For over the past four years and since Betty Blockbinder and Wonderwoman bruised our hands with applause, Reg has heard the chimes at midnight, and has come down out of the mountains again with the Ned Kelly lanterns tinkling around him to be Pfaf, Puck, Ariel, Pagliacci and Charlie Chaplin. For over three hours he is out there, persecuted, disgusting, vulnerable, whining, as determinedly cheerful as that cheery soul, Miss Docker, and as recognisable as the smell of ourselves.

For the heart of Reg's show is that we are forced to see the self, reeming with life and ransomed for death. With eyes wide open we acknowledge our kinship with every unlovely character. There is nowhere to hide, because out there is Reg exposing himself without fear or favour. As he stares at us through cushions of fat, from neurotic drag, and draggy dressing gown he is so terribly himself that he is everyone's nightmare, and everyone's dream.

Did the Sunday Sun really once say that Reg needs to rein in his imagination? He has an answer for that out of the mouth of Alice B. Morgan, in her huge pink kollypop track suit, "Thank God for my imagination..." And we should all echo it. Thank God for the flying lights, the film clips, the red lame, the bare half-moon of a bum, the gravelly voice, the hard-edged Wellington Burlesk Band hidden behind the poor man's Busby Berkeley staircase. For this is a glittering celebration of life, by Australia's greatest white-faced clown, the inimitable Livemore, sweetheart and bawd, our own Doll Tearsheet of 1979.

Airlines; Phil the Pill (in a country of women haters he voices the secret hatreds of every misogynist sitting out there); RSL Leonard in his mildewed bemuddled great coat, his slouch hat worn the wrong way round, his mouth slobbering the hatreds too deep to be articulate; Alice B Morgan in Wonderland; and not to be forgotten, a film clip of Yvonne Cawley in a TV ad (Reg in tennis dress and blackface).

The show is spaced with sad, edgy ballads, "Dance Band on the Titanic", "Down in the Depths of the 90th Floor", "Mr. Rockefeller", "Angie Baby", "Mr Livingstone", and the incomparable "She's a Star", which begins trad and then transmutes into pure Livermore; a window on a bitterer world.

"For myself I find Livermore sometimes too painful to watch, as indeed I do Humphries, and I wonder at the joyous reception", writes Katharine Brisbane in The Australian. But think back to Feste, Falstaff, Touchstone and his Audrey, Lear's clown. Bottom the ass in Titania's bower, to Mo, and Lenny Bruce. If the Tiv was still alive Reg would be up there with Mo. They have the same aggression, the same audience participation and identification. We want Reg to win, because he understands the loser in all of us.

"Cunts" says Reg, and the audience (uneasily) likes it; before they can take offence he's off skipping into a sailors' hornpipe or another downbeat ballad. He moves across Her Majesty's as if the place was his home, inhabiting the space with such grace, taking charge of it so effortlessly.

The sadness is there, the laceration, the bitterness, the grim memory of an Aunty Tom to tell us men have died before and worms have eaten them, but there is also the wide-mouthed grin, the beautiful muscular body, the joyful skip of his dance step, and when it's all over what Reg should all echo it. Thank God for the flying lights, the film clips, the red lame, the bare half-moon of a bum, the gravelly voice, the hard-edged Wellington Burlesk Band hidden behind the poor man's Busby Berkeley staircase. For this is a glittering celebration of life, by Australia's greatest white-faced clown, the inimitable Livemore, sweetheart and bawd, our own Doll Tearsheet of 1979.

"I hope we make it" he sings, and "it's going to be an endless flight like a flying bird".
Only a picture of failure

HANCOCK'S LAST HALF HOUR

ROBERT PAGE

Hancock's Last Half Hour by Heathcote Williams. Hoopla Theatre Production at Namrod Downstairs, Sydney NSW. Opened 9 February 1979. Director, Graeme Blundell; Designer, Peter Corrigan; Hancock, Bruce Myles.

Anthony Aloysius St John Hancock he called himself; an absurdly long name, seemingly a poseur's affection to which no one could live up. Yet few could be absolutely sure whether it was his real name or not. Was the character himself; an absurdly long name, seemingly a pretension, yet the occasional "Dear oh dear", that quintessential Hancock refrain, is spot-on, and Tony flashes momentarily into life before us.

But the play's time on the brink of suicide demands pathos, something which Hancock never allowed into his public role. Too often what we see, then, is just a portrayal of that equally well worn notion, the tearful clown behind the comic mask. And a pretty degrading exhibition of that it is too.

Peter Corrigan's setting has none of the pretensions of East Cheam; it is a grey, squalid room, a transparently walled receptacle for empty vodka bottles, fag ends, the encyclopedias from which a magpie mind stole gems of wisdom, and a played-out comedian in the last stage of life at forty four.

The direction emphasises the self-absorption of this final hour, where it might have carried bravado into the teeth of death as Hancock did in his shows. Graeme Blundell, to his credit, and despite the minute space, kept the business going unflaggingly for the uninterrupted span of this piece. From Myles first emergence from womb-like bedding, through the final act of thrusting handfuls of pills down his throat, the production is a masterpiece of detailed and inventive work.

If Myles plays Hancock and loses, it is not any reflection on his talent, nor on the director, nor on the designer; it is because Heathcote Williams has arrogantly striven too high, as Hancock continually did himself. But Hancock in a few minutes showed himself to be a comic genius, something which this play fails in over an hour to go anywhere near capturing.

Painfully Predictable

THE MURDER ROOM

ANTHONY BARCLAY

The Murder Room by Jack Sharyck. Marian Street Theatre, N.S.W. Opened 9th February 1979. Director, Peter Whitford; Designer, Michael O'Kane; Set Construction, The Sydney Theatre Company; Lighting Design and Operation, Michael Ney; Stage Manager, Frances Taylor; Edgar Hollier, Hilton H Pipin; Mavis, Elaine Lee; Lottie, Joan Bruce; Inspector Cranston, Tom McCarthy; Constable Howard, Phillip Hinton; Susan Hollier, Lottie Le Nay; Barry, Brandon Burke. (Professional)

Michael O'Kane's set, constructed by the Sydney Theatre Company, is excellent. Unfortunately, the night I was present, the door to the cellar yawned mysteriously open in the first scene and the front door tended to unlatch at inopportune moments...neither had anything to do with ghosts or the like. But that quibble aside, Marian Street and O'Kean are to be congratulated on their felicity to detail and design. The acting is mostly up to scratch as one might expect from a cast with such considerable experience...plum vowels bouncing, if I might mix metaphors, across the stage like well served tennis balls. And Peter Whitford's direction — his first excursion into the realm — is right in tone with the text. The Marian Street end stage is not exactly large but Whitford's know-how excelled in staging and movement patterns those tricky moments that might clarify or blur delivery. Moreover, the rapid one line exchanges are well paced, the word play is cleverly shuttled between the actors (though the odd smile or two betrayed a most unprofessional lapse of concentration) and the melodrama/purple patches are just that — melodramatic and purple!

Then there is the anagram in the programme...Philip Hinton and Hilton H Pipin! Now I realise that Conan Doyle would have been most unimpressed that one 'I' was not accounted for, but it didn't stretch the average sleuth's imagination to realise that Edgar Hollier and Constable Able Howard were one and the same character and actor. One assumes the anagram was playful and not designed to conceal. Certainly, even Dr Watson would have noticed that Philip Hinton was doubling up roles. So that put an end to the mystery! The programme implied that the play should be classified as a mystery-thriller and I suppose, in fairness, it belongs to the light-hearted genus. Simply, it wasn't thrilling. Nor was it especially funny...the play demands front-up acting and delivery, get-the-joke-folks, groan, you got it? I get it! You couldn't miss it. As ever, in this kind of play, most of the humour is graftied onto the line rather than emerging as an organic part of situation or, particularly, of character. It's the kind of play that might manage a longish run on Broadway or the West End.

I'll stand by the praise I gave the production in the first paragraph. As for the play itself...it's unsuable and basically silly, transparent and therefore painfully predictable. If you go to the theatre to relax, then go. But even the mystery-thriller buff will find himself, if you will forgive me, more buffed against the buffing!
Exquisite simplicity but lack of true tension

LADY OF THE CAMELIAS

ROGER PULVERS

Lady of the Camellias by Alexander Dumas fils. Text, Louis Nowra. Rex Cramphorn: Director; Rex Cramphorn: Set Design, Michael Pearce; Costume Design, Wendy Dickson; Music, Sarah de Jong; Lighting, Jerry Luke; Stage Manager, Maxine Le Guier.

Marguerite Gautier, Kate Fitzpatrick; Armand Duval, Ivar Kants; Prudence, Julie Hamilton; Gaston, Mervyn Drake; Baron de Vaubville, Arthur Dignam; Comte de Gray, Norman Kaye; M St Gaudens, Louis Wishart; Olympe, Michele Stayer; M Duval, Kevin Miles; Nanie, Annie Byron; Mme Hamelin, Victoria Garrett; Anais, Rebel Russell; Arthur, John Sheeran; Edmond, Steven Sacks.

There is an elegance about Rex Cramphorn’s productions. This is not an opulent or fidgety elegance, but rather an exquisite simplicity from which essential elements in a text emerge with clarity. This was none the less the case with The Lady of the Camellias.

Grand need not be big; and it surely need not be overblown. The tone of the tragedy as produced here was a subdued one. The result was, then, actually realistic, especially in the first three acts. Here Kate Fitzpatrick’s acid delivery, bordering on the matter-of-fact, set a mood for the surrounding performances: she, at least, is a person in control of her personal life. She likes what she is and she doesn’t worry about where it might be leading her. Her men are her slaves as she sings — in a very fine arrangement by Sarah de Jong — “My Little Pussy Song”, letting them know that they are hers, or more precisely, its. All the more shocking, then, is the appearance of blood from her lungs in the water pitcher, a scene of sudden effect done well. It is the first sign of her decline from her cool control into pitiful tension and a dull slowness at times. This was, then, actually realistic, especially in the way the Baron’s attitude at the end of play — all devil-may-care — was beautifully handled. But it would have been all the more ironic, and poignant, had the scene built to a more conventional density. After all, the main theme of the play may be the relation between sex and money. Throughout the production there is much talk of money, especially by the women who demand it. The Baron’s loss is, to him, the final realisation that he can never possess Marguerite.

The scenes of groups, parties, etc, were clear.

I especially liked the way the gambling scene was set up. The configuration of characters was so architecturally strong; and they weren’t falling all over the table in their excitation. But, the high drama of the Baron’s betting didn’t peak. Here is where that quiet elegance may be at odds with a particular effect. The Baron’s attitude at the end of play — all devil-may-care — was beautifully handled. But it would have been all the more ironic, and poignant, had the scene built to a more conventional density. After all, the main theme of the play may be the relation between sex and money. Throughout the production there is much talk of money, especially by the women who demand it. The Baron’s loss is, to him, the final realisation that he can never possess Marguerite.

The set was an excellently conceived environment for the piece. I liked the way the tall bed canopy was transformed into a kind of gazebo, and the mesh that appeared in it, as the lighting gave an outdoor effect. The colours, too, suited the directional tone and complemented the largely pastel or subdued shades of the costumes. The alcoves that stuck out on each side proved to be a bit of a bother. But this was probably because the staging was uncomfortably weighted to one side. In all, may I repeat, again, what someone versed equally in tautology as he was in redundancy once remarked: “It looked good, visually”. And I want to add that it was also pleasing to the eye.

The real dramatic success of this play, obviously, hangs on the pitiful transition of Marguerite from a woman in total control to one who later must say, “I’m not my own mistress. I go where I’m taken”. Presenting this transformation in a strong way, without hyperbolic stagy gesturing, is the achievement of this production. The text was clarified and reduced by the director and Louis Nowra working together. Some stark tableaux, confessions under a spot, and subtle interplay of wit and pathos added to the theatrical force of the production. There was a lack of true tension and a dull slowness at times. This was due in part to the mode of presentation. The other villain is that black hole in a stage, draining intimacy from every human contact and electricity from the air.

Theatre Australia wishes its readers

A Happy Easter!
Polished professional exuberance

CABARET

LUCY WAGNER


Sally Bowles, Linda Cropper; Cliff Bradshaw, William Gluth; Fraulein Schneider, Jennifer McGregor; Herr Schutz, Philip Ross; MC, John Hannon; Ernst Ludwig, Henk Johannes; Fraulein Kost, Valerie Bader.

The Newcastle cast was remarkably strong and held together admirably Masteroff's loose and really very shallow plot. John Hannon as the MC is as assured as his excellent singing and dancing should allow him to be. In a production which concentrates on the razzamatazz he provides the right level of sexual and cynical ambiguity.

As a very young Fraulein Schneider, Jennifer McGregor also avoids schmaltz while at the same time delighting the audience with her operatically trained singing voice, yet not upstaging the other singers. Valerie Bader makes her a perfect foil as Fraulein Kost; sultry, sexy and almost violent — most appropriate to her Nazi leanings.

Linda Cropper, on the other hand, lacked the physical fire that drives Sally Bowles (in no matter which version); the combination of innocence and rapacity which makes her the infuriating and yet endearingly vulnerable creation of book and film. But the musical does not give the same pre-eminence to the character of Sally, nor the time for the development of her relationship with Cliff. Though Ross McGregor has included several of Liza Minnelli's songs from the film, he has shared them among the other characters, and so has not increased her centrality. William Gluth, however, played Cliff touchingly and believably as the English (in this version), would-be writer, with depth to both his love and his politics.

Sailors, chorus girls, whores, Nazis and business men were played by an extremely well-drilled crew of local amateur actors, who ranged from the adequate to the excellent under Christine Koltai's choreography. She and McGregor have drawn a richness and visual excitement out of what Rex Cramphorn called a few months ago "a rather dismal piece of work". This Cabaret, if a little over-elaborate in places, is a polished, professional and exuberant musical; one that will keep audiences more than satisfied with their new local company.

Linda Cropper (Sally) and William Gluth (Cliff) in the HVT/C's Cabaret. Photo: Tony Rapson Coe

Christopher Isherwood's short story "I Am A Camera" has been transmogrified, as Cabaret, into stage play, stage musical and film, each step pushing the plot and ideas in slightly different directions. By the time the musical stage (no pun intended) had been reached, a liberal dose of polishing, professional with amateur chorus
in WA to intimidate her and those who believe in the right to read, perform and study her work that I find so unjust. I feel that some legal counteraction is essential to remove the threat of surveillance from one of our most courageous writers.

"To place limits upon her sexual and emotional exploration will not only stint her as an individual, it will finally be the annihilation of her creativity also."

(Sylvia Lawson describing Sally in the Introduction to The Chapel Perilous.)

"I would accept the possibility of any relationship that I might have with Dorothy being written about. I wouldn't enter into the relationship thinking about that, because a relationship is something of itself, but I would say that being written about is one of the things that might happen or might not."

(The late Professor Ian Turner, Interview with Kristin Green, 13 October, 1978.)

"I think I learned when I was quite a little girl that if you show enough courage, someone will protect you."

(Dorothy Hewett, Interview with Kristin Green, 11 January, 1977.)

"Talking to Dorothy Hewett one is forever glimpsing the eager, idealistic optimistic child. The child's need to confirm her own existence is one of the things that might happen or might not."

(Rodney Fisher, Theatre Australia, Nov/Dec, 1976.)

"I first heard of her when I read, in the immediate post-war years, a remarkable ballad, 'Clancy, Dooley and Don McLeod' which equaled anything Lawson or Paterson ever wrote and exceeded either of them in sheer poetic beauty... As well as being in the forefront of Australia's poets Dorothy Hewett has written one of the best first novels we've ever had."

(Frank Hardy, Introduction to What About the People?)

"Dorothy Hewett is an incurable romantic, believing always that there's a perfection out there somewhere and that if we can only wipe away the rules and restrictions of the past, of society, of art, we will achieve nirvana here on earth... The antidote to her romanticism is, of course, her sense of humour."

(Arthur Ballel, Theatre Director, Minneapolis, 1975.)

"She had the wit of a Dorothy Parker and she'd use it carefully, not to anyone's face. But she did make enemies outright. She was surrounded by wolves. They tear you down. She has much more to give yet. But she must never use her writing as a vehicle to attack — as a weapon. This is fatal."

(Alan Marshall, Interview with Kristin Green, 13 October, 1978.)

"Rapunzel in Suburbia... is the outstanding poetry collection of the year."

(Brian Kiernan, The Australian, December 13, 1975.)

"(The Chapel Perilous) is a work of art universal in its appeal..."

(Patrick White, Sydney Morning Herald, November 2, 1974.)

"She is the most relaxed, pleasant and least paranoid writer I've ever worked with. I find her work really exciting because she presents so much of the ideas of the last ten years in theatre — the whole avant garde. Her images are poetic and she's fascinated by the grand guignol characters in Australian society, like those Patrick White writes about and Barry Humphries portrays — gargoylish figures."

(Graeme Blundell, Theatre Director, Hoopla.)

"Acting in Dorothy Hewett's plays gives us a marvellous opportunity to show what we can do. She is such a poetic writer and such a female sort of female, very warm and supportive. Yet the audiences reacted strangely. A lot of women were in tears; they looked shattered and they walked out."

(Actress, Maggie Millar, Interview with Kristin Green, 23 October, 1978.)

"We are sympathetic to her subject matter. It is not so much that we are repelled by the thought of having menstrual blood flowing on stage, but that her language is a barrier because it's literary rather than dramatic."

(Carmel Powers, Playreader, Melbourne Theatre Company.)

"Only the intelligentsia seem to have missed the point and called this wonderful evening scrappy and formless and even tasteless... The intelligentsia can go fuck themselves. Pandora's Cross, its music and its uproarious characters, will long survive their petty footnotes, and dance the tango on their forgotten graves."

(Bob Ellis, Theatre Australia, August, 1978.)

"... it would have been better and more imaginative to have spent the money which was allocated to Dorothy Hewett's commission (to write a play for Perth's 150th anniversary festival) on encouraging one of the local writers who have not found Perth so hateful or hard to work in."

(John Harper-Neilson, Artlook, September, 1978.)

"She's still a parochial girl, a Perth girl, provincial all her life. That's why she took so long to leave the Communist Party. One of the clues to the understanding of Dorothy is that she's a girl from the bush making good... Although she is brave, witty and unshockable, she is also very humane and she bleeds."

(Stephen Murray-Smith, Editor of Overland, Interview with Kristin Green, October 11, 1978.)

"Dorothy is tired. She's had a long, hard thirty years of being involved in public radical activities — branch meetings, committees, revolutionary public speaking. She can say I'm not the great proletarian lady any more. I've got a well established literary background. I've finished acting out my beliefs. I can leave that to my daughters now..."

(The late Professor Ian Turner, Interview with Kristin Green, 13 October, 1978.)

Sally So is that all there is in the end, to accept oneself, to be finally and irrevocably responsible for oneself? Jude, I wanted to find in this dirty, scheming, contemptible world, something, some kind of miraculous insight... (To audience) I had a tremendous world in my head and more than three quarters of it will be burned with me."

(Dorothy Hewett, The Chapel Perilous.)
PIPI STORM went into recess after school tours in 1977/78 — They will be back from lunch in 1979 ... after a brief spell in the funding queue at the tuckshop.

MURRAY OLIVER on the

Pipi Storm Children’s Circus

Involvement is one of the keys to Pipi Storm’s success, absolute audience involvement. Circus itself is an obvious go-getter with children, and inside this circus framework Pipi Storm begins an absurd chain of events — an exciting musical entry, full of expectation, only to find that the tent hasn’t been erected, the show must stop and a tent crew enlisted, so it begins. Then follows a series of mistakes, lumps have taken the afternoon off surfing, deep breathing exercises, origami work in the heat, and the sixty five foot long caterpillar gets lost. This of course allows for more massive involvement which is interspersed and linked with Pipi Storm’s European clown style displayed in feats of comic daring, musical absurdity, and pure clown.

While underlining circus and involvement as important in Pipi Storm, it must be stressed that the people presenting the programme make it what it is. No one is employed by Pipi Storm. Everyone works in it together as Pipi Storm, the emphasis is that the people involved are “entertainers and educators” not just actors or performers. It should be remembered too that “Pipi Storm has grown out of an interest to provide good fun, entertainment, and education for children, not with a dominant interest in presenting ‘theatre’ for theatre’s sake” or for theatre in education’s sake, for that matter.

The group feels that theatre is surrounded by an archaic mythology which puts up barriers between audience and performer. They aim at breaking down these barriers through the open and intimate style of our shows and the dissemination of the performers’ skills in the workshops. All the programmes are counter sexist in nature and organization. Women and men share equal roles in performances and play an equal part in administration and workload.

As one of the more successful Theatre in Education teams working amidst the NSW Education Department’s apathetic TIE programme, Pipi Storm has visited over 500 schools and played to more than 100,000 children in the last two years. The group has spent the last three years establishing itself “on the scene”, bettering its relationships with funding bodies, increasing its reputation in schools (both with staff and students), and casting its net around as many as possible in the isolated areas of Australia.

Pipi Storm spends much of its time touring and the disadvantages of this are numerous. Life and friends are restricted, friendships made on the road are brief and seldom in depth, travelling can be monotonous etc etc, but the real value judgement can only be made with the continual excitement of the kids ringing in one’s ears. Choosing to tour was an easy decision “we just wanted to 'go west' where nothing like us was happening at all.” Isolated children need a continual flow of stimulation, small country towns are inbred and this is where Pipi Storm is concerned.

50 pairs of stilts, 80 juggling balls, 1 earthball, a tightrope or two, 3 unicycles, 200 metres of rope strung liberally through trees and cricket nets and $15,000 worth of musical instruments (loan from Boosey and Hawkes damaged stock list) complemented by amicable and personal people, that’s a Pipi Storm workshop. Kids walk on stilts in 30 minutes on average, some take 10, others 50, it’s easy. Juggling demands more concentration, but when captured the basics can be learnt by a ten year old in 20 minutes. Slowly the myths is worn away ... the group works with students, not for them. Student participation rather than student consumerism, is maximized on both an individual and group level. Workshops, which are felt to be of equal importance to the performance, allow group members to work closely with pupils and to discuss, experiment and exchange ideas with teachers.

Programmes are presented as whole day activities, commencing with a performance followed by optional workshops including one for teachers interested in learning more about using drama as a classroom method. Teachers are further supplied with information packs including ideas for follow-up drama activities or thematic extensions based on the performance.

1979 will be a big year for Pipi Storm, the expansion is threefold and encompasses the whole school spectrum, from kinder to senior high. Five productions are planned.

A) Infants — THE TV SCREEN — more organized play” rather than drama, it aims to create a better understanding of what goes on behind the screens.

B) Primary — 1. Bunyip Children’s Band — presents many different forms of music including rock, jazz, folk and classical. 2. Brigadier Blimp’s Big Brass Band — deals with a Germanic Ragtime band and allows for untold absurdity and large scale audience involvement.

C) High Schools —
1. The Mediamania Show — is a vaudeville/cabaret style performance utilizing live rock, jazz, folk and music, comedy routines, circus and satire to encourage a critical awareness of the media.
2. True Love — a comic yet searching look at relationships for senior high, the performance examines the dynamics of relationships and the importance they hold for the student.

All come as a package with a variety of workshops concerned with skills, musical understanding, thematic approach, and the all important personal approach of the performers.

Extra to this is a full blown Parks Program for the Sydney metropolitan area in school holidays and on weekends during term, involving a whole range of activities, drama, craft and fun based.

Thus far has been good for Pipi Storm and they’ve certainly earned a reputation for doing the job well. Funding from Government sources in 77/78 came from Schools Commission Innovations Programme ($25,935), the Australia Council — community Arts Board ($17,070), and the NSW Division of Cultural Activities ($2,000). The hat has been passed around again to the funding bodies for $100,000 and to the private sector for $30,000. What measure of support will be given is unknown at this stage but the much expanded group remains optimistic and like everyone Pipi Storm waits in the funding queue.
(Continued from page 20)

In June came Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* with Whaley in the title role, Gerda Nicolson as Jocasta, Boddy as Creon, Paton as Tereissas (a part he had played in *Antigone*), Derum taking several parts and Norman Yemm as the Chorus Leader. This was followed by *The Bed Sitting Room* and in October an impressive *Brecht on Brecht*, performed by Kevin Miles, Joan Harris, Gerard Kennedy, Lorraine Archibald and Gabrielle Hartley. The latter was revised and taken to the Adelaide Festival of Arts in 1966.

George Whaley by now was playing with the MTC and Jon Ewing, who had much experience at the Ensemble, was engaged to direct. First up in 1966 though came Cherry's production of two plays by Lewis John Carlino under the title *Cages*. They were taut and well performed by Brian Young and Eileen Chapman.

First job for Ewing with the EHTC was co-directing with Cherry *A Bunch of Ratbags* a musical adapted from William Dick's autobiographical novel with book and additional lyrics by Don Battye and music and lyrics by Peter Pinne. With much doubling up, the cast included John Kendall in the lead, Peter Adams, Syd Conabere, Brian Young and John Derum. For the mid-sixties it was pretty powerful and might have more appeal today, if revisited. At the time there seemed to be a lot lacking. It dealt with the psychiatric case of a juvenile delinquent, his wretched upbringing in slumlike conditions, his joining and eventually leading a gang of hoodlums, sex parties, acts of violence, blackmail and murder. It was extremely well done.

Next came a revival of the Sophocles *Antigone*, the title role this time being taken by Julia Blake, with Whaley as Creon and Brian Young, Peter Adams and Michael Laurence also in the cast.

In August came the news that Cherry had been appointed foundation Professor of Drama at the new Flinders University in Adelaide, taking up his position early the following year. At the time Cherry indicated that plans were being made to ensure the continuance of the company all mucked in and undertook all types of jobs: set construction, stage management, office work, etc. It was true dedication.

As Cherry now admits, one of the main reasons for the company's failure to attract support was its location in an out-of-the-way place like South Melbourne; had it been Carlton, in the area of the university, things might have been very much different.

One wonders how many of the subsidised companies of today could have lasted five years as the EHTC did without huge subsidies. As John Summer once said to me: "Subsidies make it possible to buy standards — and standards help to build audiences".

The Victorian Government could have assisted — but its drama grants were channelled to Gertrude Johnson's amateur, ineffectual and society-orientated National Theatre Movement.

Approaches were made to the AETT as far back as December 1961 and early in 1962 the Trust, through John Summer, offered a maximum guarantee of $300 for certain productions, and in fact two productions did receive $300 in 1963. Then in September the AETT agreed to pay a director's salary of $3,000 which Cherry accepted and then made sure it went in the company funds. By the middle of 1964 the salary was reduced, and then ceased. It was re-instated in February 1965 until the close of the company.

No other subsidies were granted to the EHTC. It apparently existed via the fees paid to the Actors' Studio, box office admissions (such as they were) and relied upon donations. Looking back one wonders just how the EHTC did survive. Members of the company all mucked in and undertook all types of jobs: set construction, stage management, office work, etc. It was true dedication.

Apart from the productions mentioned, there were frequent Sunday night performances from the Rex Reid Dance Players and Sunday afternoon concerts from folk singer Glen Tomasetti. A handful of Australian plays also received staged rehearsals on Sunday nights, in association with the MTC.

The company's last production was in November 1966. La Mama opened in August 1967, and led to the formation of the Australian Performing Group....

(Continued from page 12)

Running actor workshops at beginner and advanced levels.

Conducting a Residential Summerschool of Drama using local and imported staff, culminating in a workshop production.

Mounting productions of *Summer of the 17th Doll* (1750 patrons during its 4 nights season), and *The Sound of Music* (5,500 patrons during its 2 week season).

A zany Shakespearean Revue is currently in production. This "entertainment" has been devised with the Civic Theatre's first birthday celebrations. This will be followed by Don's Party.

Due to public and City Council response, the programme has now been extended for a further six months (i.e. till January 1980), at which time it is hoped the professional company may be a reality. However, it is anticipated that the Summerstock Programme would continue alongside its "professional counterpart".

Future Summerstock productions include *Wait Until Dark*, *Beaux Stratagem*, and possibly *The Threepenny Opera*. With the exception of *The Doll*, which toured here in the late 1950's, none of the plays in the programme have previously been seen in Townsville.

The other development is the establishment of the 'Summerstock Youth Programme (12-20 year olds) under the Directorship of Mr Gerry Lomas. This comprises a series of courses in theatre arts, and three productions to be presented in the Civic Theatre. The first of the planned productions is Shaw's *Arms and the Man*.

I feel the City Council and Theatre Management are to be congratulated for their support of Summerstock.

Ric Nelson
Director
Summerstock Program,
Townsville, Qld.
WRITER'S VIEW

John Romeril began writing plays at Monash University, one (Chicago, Chicago 1970) was published by Penguin, another (I Don't Know Who To Feel Sorry For 1969) by Currency. In 1968 he joined the La Mama group which was later to become the APG Collective, of which he remains a member. His masterpiece to date is The Floating World (1974).

John Romeril

TELEVISION, CAPITALISM, DEATH, THE THEATRE AND ME: EVIDENCE BEFORE THE HOUSE OF UN-AUSTRA LIAN ACTIVITIES DAY ONE.

The art we make is produced under capitalism and no matter what you do, it will be shot through with capitalism. If it isn't apparent at the level of production it will be obvious in matters of distribution. If it isn't obvious at the point of distribution it's implicit in the act of consumption, etc. Everything you make will be capitalist.

True, it's late capitalism, a capitalism fast out-growing its usefulness. Its essentially rapacious nature is proving a threat not only to the people it exploits and diminishes (half the globe) but to the survival of the planet itself. On the verge of collapse it survives on desperate transnational manoeuvres, on a declining ability to create and satisfy false needs, on war, waste, extravagence and the law of diminishing returns. In other words, it's very much alive.

True, buried in the brilliant chaos and confusion of our culture you can glimpse the possibility of a new order, a new civilisation, a new way of doing, being, seeing, feeling. But it isn't something you imagine yourself suddenly walking into two doors down.

Once capable of economic miracles, once a giant leap forward in humankind's productive capacity, capitalism is on the skids, yet — and this is my point — the reality of the embrace in which it holds us all is total. Like water to a fish, capitalism is to us a medium — it's the one we wear.

No. He had thirty years in the trade but no picture rail, the refrigerator, the kitchen cabinet. From his wardrobe, the bathroom towel rail, from his wardrobe, the picture rail, the refrigerator, the kitchen cabinet. When I think of my mother I think of her ironing what must have been 200 white shirts and happy conclusion? Would he get: tenure? Would that endless succession of bandstands, studios, pits, dives and dos be brought to a just return to.

I remember shirts.

For a long time every Tuesday night my father left for work looking like Abbot of Abbot and Costello in a check cowboy shirt — a lumber jack who carried a saxophone instead of an axe. Square dancing was the go — hence the Smoky Dawson outfit. You could tell what was keeping the mugs happy by the shirts my father wore.

Mostly the shirts were white. He had more white shirts than a bank manager. They loomed large — hanging from the kitchen door, from the bathroom towel rail, from his wardrobe, the picture rail, the refrigerator, the kitchen cabinet. When I think of my mother I think of her ironing what must have been 200 white shirts what must have been upwards of 5,000 times.

Then the shirts turned blue and pink and the nation's households. Television too I'll return to.

wouldn't, he did, over the long haul, work the equivalent of everybody else's forty hour week. We lived in the suburbs. We started to get through a car every four or five years. He acted patriarch to a nuclear family. All the trappings of a middle class existence were ours. We lived both the lie and the reality, or the reality of the lie of Australian social mobility. Yet not a day passed when my father wasn't obsessed by the certain knowledge that someday someone would pull the pin on it all. And five or six times somebody did, because that's show biz.

For my father, for me, for most artists, the insecurity associated with finding and keeping a job is compounded by the insecurity of having it. An example of what I mean is the irony of the fact that the most certain, regular, dependable gig my father ever worked (and he worked it for sixteen years) was also the choicest, most irregular, least dependable job in the business. Dennis Farrington books bands and when you work his circuit you can end up playing any hall, any home, any venue in Melbourne — and the surrounding countryside. You play to whoever is having a 21st, a marriage, a dinner dance, a fund raising, a premiership celebration, a going away, a coming home. You play with musicians you've never played with and musicians you've played with too often. Musicians you'll have to cover for musicians who'll cover for you. Every Friday and Saturday night spent on that circuit is an exercise in occupational improvisation, in making it happen anyway, possible no matter what. The demands that makes of a human being's bio-chemistry are immense — the risk of capitalism that connection has become glaringly clear.

The giant heart attack which sent my father back to the pavilion twenty years short of his three score and ten was occupationally induced. Other things helped — the war, the depression — but the chronic insecurity of being a professional musician was to blame. From an early age anxiety grew in his arteries like a monster in the sewers of a city. You could see it eating him away, turning him paranoid, bitter, sullen, miscreant. Having made him a neurotic, money anxious mess it finally consumed him. He became one of entertainment's martyrs, another ghost to haunt the opera house.

I once vowed never to let entertainment do to me what it did to him. What impresses and depresses me now is the uselessness of that vow. I feel myself being eaten away as he was — getting as ratty as hard to live with as exhausted. Despite differences of time, place and activity, the experience is the same. The demands that makes of a human being's bio-chemistry are immense — the risk of psychic damage huge. Few people escape unscathed. My father wasn't one of them.

What interests me is not that arts production gorges itself on your nervous energy and eats adrenalin like a black hole swallows stars. May it always did. Maybe it's always like that whenever the pen hits the page, or the brush the palette, or the instrument the lips — when something that wasn't suddenly is. What interests me is that under capitalism that surge, the buzz, the rush, the angst of that moment has become, for artists, a thing of fear and loathing. And while this happens to all free lance toilers — this fear that what they make the next moment and the next and the next will not be good enough to guarantee them a livelihood — with artists it's spooky because applying the laws of commodity production to artistic creation makes the uselessness of art so apparent.

In the final analysis art has no social utility at all. Call it ideology forming, value transmitting, social cement — the fact is drop somebody on a desert island and ask them to choose between having Eric Westbrook arrive once a day with Shearing of the Rams, or Ted the baker once a day with a loaf of dutch wholemeal and you know what the answer will be. Life doesn't depend on art — art depends on life and under capitalism that connection has become glaringly transparent. The process of commodification works well with coal and baked beans because no matter what, people will need coal and baked beans. But even capitalism can do nothing to change the fact that people consume art because they want to, not because they need to.

It matters little if art is a thing like a pot, or a service like performance, or a service-thing like a strip of film turning it into a package. That can be bought and sold only makes artists acutely conscious of their own uselessness and audiences ever more aware that art is something they can, pick up or put down. As never before artists have internalised their own vulnerability, the precariousness of their position in society, a process which does nothing for them and everything for the entrepreneurs who mobilise their production. It's no mystery why risk capital is attracted to entertainment — the prime attraction is a demoralised labour force that sees itself at risk and is prepared to cop the consequences.

The pressure must have been enormous and yet — despite the fact that my father was subject to the ruthless managerial techniques of the Packers — it could not have been all that different to the daily lurch from crisis to crisis that later in the APG has always been. The principles of worker control that we have instigated have, in short, done little to ease the fact that in the end what you get down to is a group of people hassling it through on the floor under enormous imperatives to produce and at great cost to their mental and physical well being. For that we have capitalism to thank and god knows when it's going to go away. While we have ameliorated the conditions and relations of production somewhat — and even there the advances have not been startling — distribution and consumption we have had not real control over. Nor do we look like having any. As over the social movements around us dwarf any so called 'alternative' strategies in this area. Such we're led to believe = life.
"A choreographer reveals so much of himself in rehearsal and so little of himself on stage"

How does a choreographer arrive at the successful formula — the right combination of music, themestory, design, cast and choreography? There is probably no such formula, and, if the results of a work are good, it's more likely to be from a measure of good sense in a choice of subject matter, a complementary musical score and a great deal of chance; the most exciting and vital element for me.

The frightening challenge in the staging of a concept like my new trilogy Rumours, is the possibility that ideas will not gel, that what you have tried to convey does not come across, that the results may be way off mark in terms of audience expectation and sometimes preconception.

I always have doubts. Sometimes a concept comes along which is so compelling that the impetus comes from the wealth of subject matter. I.e. Jean Cocteau, for the ballet Poppy. Rumours is different in that the inspiration comes only from my personal revelations and not from an existing subject. Yet the finished ballet may be very unlike the one initially pictured. I never come to a day’s rehearsal with the steps worked out, the form yes, but no steps. The work has to grow on and from the dancers, their contributions, and things that go wrong in rehearsals are often retained and developed. Good things can happen this way and, of course, and involved dancer will suggest something.

I am a fortunate choreographer in that I have my own company. Most of the dancers are into their third year with The Dance Company, as I now am, so I know them well and we're accustomed to working together. Somehow things never get stale as a result of this, they seem to get better. It's certainly easy for me to cast a work, but I'm always cautious not to create stereotypes. Dancers can often surprise you with a complete change of style, character and outlook and a choreographer must be able to gauge and exploit this.

Company and one dancer had a radical change in roles, while another character had to be completely deleted. The good thing about the dancers in the Company is the way they can adjust quickly to a problem — most good professionals can do this.

The choice of music for an idea can be a joy or a troublesome thing. With Poppy it was a great experience in that the score was commissioned from Carl Vine with whom I had worked successfully before (mostly I think of Tip), and it literally grew with the choreography. I knew where the music was coming from and I believed in Carl. I think it's generally known that in some instances, like the Tango in Act I, Carl would complete music before I started any choreography, and alternatively, with a section like the death of Jennifer Barry as the Tranny Girl in Rumours.
Raymond Radiguet, I actually choreographed in silence. Carl would come in with a stopwatch and take notes during rehearsal, so that later, when the music came, it was an extra dimension for the whole effect we were creating in that scene. I enjoyed it immensely, although it was nerve-wracking. You could never fully picture the finished work or its score; and we didn't really know if Poppy would work until it all came together. Of course this includes design too — design is becoming more and more important at The Dance Company.

The design for a new project, as well as the lighting, can sometimes make or break an idea when it gets to a stage. As a choregrapher, I often tend to work with a complete stage picture of mind, even down to the detail of a lighting effect which I know will help to strengthen the moment. With Lady Jane Beach when it gets to a stage. As a choregrapher, I very important to the development of lighting effect which I know will help to picture of mind, even down to the detail of a course this includes design too — design is becoming more and more important at The Dance Company.

It is the first time I have worked on a big project with an artist and enjoyed the luxury of detailed drawings for costumes and scenery in advance of the finished ballet. Not to mention the inspiration that creative people like Alan generate.

For Rumours I opted to find already existing music to fit the ideas I had developed for a work that is really a series of personal impressions of life and people in Sydney. I wanted to create three different and distinct moods in a full evening's work and I wanted the music, as well as the overall theme, to be the unifier.

I often try to use an Australian composer in a situation like this and I try to listen to a lot of contemporary Australian music, although occasionally a piece of music demands to be used and then the origin becomes irrelevant.

With Rumours I had, in the very early stages, fairly definite ideas for the second and third sections and I wanted to do Lady Jane Beach first. I was very pleased with Australian composer Barry Conyngham's Five Windows for this as it already had, in the music, the exact mood that I wanted and a sense of heat.

Conyngham's music had been used previously by our Resident Choreographer, Graeme Watson, for his work Water and Time, nonetheless I was nervous when Barry first saw the Lady Jane section at Ballet '78. I felt he could have been disappointed in the way I'd used the piece, as obviously Lady Jane Beach had not been his inspiration for the composition. He was very complimentary and we discussed almost immediately the possibility of using other short Conyngham pieces for the trilogy. Barry was very helpful, and gave me a list of short works to consider as well as earmarking several very short pieces which he felt could go well together.

Ultimately, I used four different Barry Conyngham works. Sky for the opening section, Snowflake and Ice Carving for the final section, and, of course, Five Windows for Lady Jane Beach.

Ice Carving too had been an obvious choice for me as it had the cutting brittle quality that I imagined for the old people in the final minutes of Rumours. I then started to choregraph to Ice Carving I found that the choreography ate up the music very quickly as I was working with the languid movements of old age. I wanted the long duet for the old couple to dominate during the last act and I chose Snowflake to expand my general ideas on old age as a background to this pas de deux. Throughout Rumours I have worked spasmodically, working the sections I felt I must choregraph, when I felt ready and able to tackle them, rather than persisting with a section that was giving me problems. This jigsaw approach to choreography is a method I have used quite frequently, especially with works of a longer duration. Eventually, when you bring it all together and it seems to work, that can become the most exciting time because the dancers too start to see it as a whole and become more involved in the finishing of the work.

I enjoyed the flexibility of contemporary dance — the fact that things can be modified, developed or completely changed as long as they are being performed. The work only becomes stable when it is no longer in repertoire, or when it is recorded by film, video or notation.

Normally I do not make radical changes, believing that often the first thoughts are nearer to the truth of the original concept. With Fire Earth Air Water for instance, I feel the work has taken on the particular qualities of the four women for whom it was created. It is now as much their work as it is mine and I would not consider changing it.

Completing Rumours has in some ways been more difficult than bringing Poppy to the stage. With the latter, there were definite myths, facts and data to be adhered to — an inbuilt discipline. With Rumours, the rumours that I care to spend are entirely my own. That for me sums up Sydney — they are my own personal experiences. There are no books to be read on the major physical, social or geographical aspects of this city that would in any way be relevant to my dance concepts, so one feels a sense of isolation in the work. During creation I sometimes had to answer puzzled dancers with a too revealing personal reference of Sydney. I often feel a choregrapher reveals so much of himself in rehearsal and so little of himself on stage. This I believe, is the reason for the incredible bond between the dancers and the choregrapher and perhaps occasionally, the alienation between the work and the audience. The audience can sense they are missing out on the most precious part of the work — the creation.
William Shoubridge

**EXCHANGE AND COMPANY**

"Increasingly ‘modernism’, has become equated with a movement towards minimalism, to what the art form and it alone can do particularly well"

The term “modern” dance is a problematical one, like nearly all blanket terms connected with the arts. There are so many definitions of what “modern” actually incorporates.

“The distinguishing feature of modern art”, wrote Andre Malraux, “is that it never tells a story”. A bit simplified perhaps but succinct enough to serve as an axiom. Modern art, according to these academic terms, is a retreat from the idea that art is obligated to represent anything other than itself and a scepticism about the aesthetic propriety of organizing experience in the form of a “story”. Increasingly in the past fifteen years or so, “modernism”, especially in the plastic arts, has become equated with a movement towards minimalism, a pining down of each art form to what it and it alone can do particularly well. The essence of the dance is, of course, the arrangement of the human body in motion, in space and thus, according to the modernist mandate, everything extraneous — decor, characterisation, costumes and story — must be progressively eliminated.

Martha Graham is consistently touted as the founder (along with Ruth St Denis) of “modern dance”. But Martha Graham doesn’t fit into this convenient category of “modernism”, nearly all her works, from Clytemnestra, Appalachian Spring and Medea to the later Seraphic Dialogue and Lucifer tell stories; characterisation, music and decor are important to them; and what is always uppermost in her concern is the human, dramatic content. Graham’s modernism was more specific in uncovering a different and hitherto untried movement vocabulary. It wasn’t new of course (it has always been a component of primitive dance) but her sense of weight, gravity and tensions was a reversal of classicism, it was “new” only as far as Western theatrical dance was concerned. Yet even the argument falls down. In 1925 George Balanchine created Apollo and in it he put many of the so-called trademarks of Graham’s style long before they became her trademarks; such things as contractions (the birth of Apollo) and isolations (the dance of the three Muses). Balanchine has since gone on to create a great body of works wherein the essential component is only music and the arrangement of bodies in space — Agon, Episodes, Serenade, Symphony in C and so on.

So, if we are to fall in with this definition of “modernism equals minimalism” the truly modern choreographer of this century is Balanchine and the disciples of Martha Graham are confounded.

In 1925, one year after the creation of Apollo, Ortega y Gasset published his major essay on what he saw as the basic tendencies of 20th century art, The Dehumanisation of Art. “Preoccupation with the human content of the work”, wrote Ortega, “is in principle incompatible with aesthetic enjoyment proper”. He insisted that the goal of “dehumanisation” is to create an environment for perception in which the act of seeing is unclouded by feeling (and in the sense he anticipates Brecht).

Applied to the dance, that means that what is required is a total subordination of the dancer’s personality to the formal demands of the work. No dramatic agonising, just clean efficient execution of a pre-determined choreographic plan.

Applied to a dance audience this means the subordination of expectations and the acceptance of the performance on its own (choreographic) terms. An audience must not be caught up personally or emotionally in the work before us and insist that it “be” more than what it is. This of course is almost impossible to achieve in actual performance, (most recent theories about the role of Art are impossible to achieve for the simple reason that they are too closely focused to admit the enormous scope and divergence of Art). Audiences will always react emotionally to such abstract forms of music or dance; they will always delight in their own emotions. But the nature of dance, like that of music, is essentially abstract, it will not pander to emotional “message”. What pray tell, has the intervallic arrangement of sounds or the three dimensional arrangements of limbs to do with emotions? This kind of Art is beautiful like a rose, you can admire it deeply and have feelings about it, but you cannot project your emotions into it. So what are all these aesthetic ruminations leading to? To a hand and heavily fought for appreciation, understanding and acceptance of the goals and systems of thought of the Dance Exchange, a small, loosely knit group of dancers, dedicated to widening the parameters and frames of the dance here in Australia.

The Dance Exchange gave one performance at the Dance Week of the Sydney Festival (with two more seasons in Sydney later this year) and it was truly instructive to watch both that performance and the reactions it evoked from the audience, which despite it being young and intelligent (definitely not your basic Opera House type audience at all), were largely negative and confused. It became apparent to me that the aesthetics of such groups as the Dance Exchange have an uphill climb ahead of them in this country.

In New York of course, the aesthetic is almost old hat. That city has been through the experience of the Open Theatre and Joe Beck’s Living Theatre and the eclectic catch-all of the Judson Memorial Church dance experimenters; and latterly the open ended twelve hour marathons of choreographer Robert Wilson. But here in Australia, presenting something like the Dance Exchange’s Blinky Bill to current audiences is like giving Finnegans Wake to someone who’s...
never got beyond Emily Bronte.

For a start, Blinky Bill is danced in silence, so there is no musical peg board to attach the movement to, the eyes have to watch and analyse and in most audiences these days the eyes are untrained; the mind has to concentrate and audiences hate that; and finally the kind of music (which grossly undercuts the performance) has to take over and support the movement.

For the first ten minutes of Blinky Bill, two men in ordinary tee-shirts and track-suits walk around side by side within a quadrangle taped to the bowling green-like expanse of the Town Hall floor space. One grows impatient, one wants something to happen, but in a small almost microscopic way things are happening. The rhythm of the walking speeds up or slows down, or becomes syncopated, the two men cross each other's path, the walk turns into a skip, the distance travelled becomes smaller, the usable space more restricted.

After a while a third man enters, the walking stops, feet kick the floor, one of the men takes from his pocket a rubber ball and diabolo-like mascara type of a case and perambulates along on them on all fours, the others collide and fall against each other. One notices the quality of weight and counter-weight, in the midst of all this, the moment when one of the men flies up on the shoulder or another comes like a crash in a quiet room.

Slowly and inexorably the expectations and interpretations of the audience are being shifted into a lower, smaller but more acute gear, the difference between watching Swan Lake and watching this is the difference between the construction of an office block and micro-surgery. It all netted the audience of course, the hermetic, interior language upset them.

Russell Dumas's Blinky Bill then, was a perfect example of the Modernist notion that the "purpose" of art (if art can be said to have a purpose) is to train and clarify perception, rather than convey ideas. And clarification is the purpose) is to train and clarify perception, rather than convey ideas. And clarification is the

The Dance Company of course maintains its position within the mainstream of modern ballet, that style and manner that has come to the fore, with most contemporary dance groups throughout the world since the rise of Cunningham, Paul Taylor and the Nederlands Dans Theatre (with their Van Manen/Glen Tetley mix of classical and modern techniques). It's a wide field of reference that uses weight, gravity and the floor, together with the space and momentum impelled formality of classical technique.

Ross Phillips's first ever attempt at choreography, Chore Blues is a case in point. For most of its time it veers and careers along in a wild sort of classicism, but here and there are mannered, modern configurations, a hold or turn, that goes to the floor rather than to the air, or a tight interconnection of weight that's usually foreign to classicism. Chore Blues is a sweeping, grandiloquent slice of partnering in a rather Montovani manner, yet it gets itself by freezing its two dancers into doll like shapes, as if the mannikins have a rusty joint here and there, or as if they're taking a rest from a chore. The work uses its space well, but Christopher and Glenda Morley haven't the technique yet to make it blossom as it should.

Chore Blues is a pleasant, witty and craftsmanlike piece of muscle flexing; what one looks forward to now is something longer, meatier and with greater application, thought and structure. First impression of Phillips' creative ability, on the strength of this present work, is promising, could do better if he tried, 6 out of 10.

Of Nina Verrevenikova's first piece Singles, I cannot say much because I forgot all about it as soon as it was finished. It was too static and pallid, as if the creator was terrified of letting go and putting it all on the line. I was indeed pleased to see an excerpt from Graham Watson's Random Harvest on the bill. I've always liked this work, and seeing that Kathy Chard is back in the company, one hopes that we will see the complete work revived before long. Chard is what makes this particular movement live, she brings to it a serence and sylliline grace that makes it meditative, bittersweet and memorable. The programme note says that she is dancing a soft lament and although the choreographer is entitled to his interpretation, it didn't seem particularly lamenting to me, rather a quiescent solo of contemplation full of soft, climbing extensions, calm turns and falls and fluid, seamless enchainments all seemingly blown in a gentle wind.

The entry of the solitary male (Watson himself) isn't in the least predatory or threatening but almost inevitable and wished for, and his partnering is restrained and supportive. There's a slight sense of loss and remorse in it somewhere (reminiscent of the Kingdom of Shades from La Bayadere) but is unobtrusive; the unravelled sleeve of care is folded up and conveyed into silence leaving soft sigh of remembrance.

Opinions will differ of Watson's The Perils of Pauline, a slick tongue in cheek look at the daffy plot turns and characters of the old flicks. All the characters are there, Tarzan, the Marx Brothers, a Dick Powell and Ruby Keeler type couple and the dancing is zappy, deft and humorous but nothing out of the ordinary. It's a great idea for a schools programme, but wears a bit thin after a while for an adult audience, and anyway the concept at least has been handled much better by Lindsay Kemp is his ballet The Parades gone By for Ballet Rambert.

Of the other Watson work on the programme...soft, but still firm. I cannot say very much, if anything, simply because the obtrusive setting by Vannessa Teahen (two strips of neon light, one white, one blue) blinded me so I could hardly see a thing.
Finland shares with Australia an inhospitable climate, large tracts of uninhabited country, a sparse and scattered rural population. A country slightly larger than New Zealand, it has a population of five million, but boasts thirty two professional theatres, many of them with two stages, making fifty seven in all. A large country centre of 20,000 people supports a theatre, perhaps two, and the capital city, Helsinki, with only half a million, has sixteen theatres. Although the Swedish speaking Finns make up only 7% of the population, there are five professional Swedish theatres. There are also over 400 amateur groups. Most Finns, therefore, are involved in some way with the theatre, and provide an intelligent and aware audience, theatrically-speaking.

The modern Finnish theatre owes its strength to the workers' movements of the 19th century which started workers', educational centres and workers' theatres. An upsurge of national feeling with writers beginning to write in Finnish and becoming aware of the strength of their own folklore, has never belonged to a wealthy minority or an intellectual elite. There was never any claims that things are perfect. Some directors feel that the effect of the security of employment and poor pay for actors in the theatre encourages the better ones to be concentrated in Helsinki, where there is more chance of films or television, leaving the provincial theatres with actors whose contracts they have to renew whether they want to or not. Yet the permanent repertory system does ensure that a company becomes used to working together and exploits the potential of the actor, avoiding the haphazard type-casting that results from the overcrowded market of the commercial theatre. A more obvious problem is that of finance. In common with the rest of the western world, Finland has been going through economic difficulties and most theatres find it difficult to manage on their subsidies which the Government has become reluctant to increase. Financial difficulties can also result in political ones. Many theatres are finding the councils are bringing political pressure to bear on what they perform: the town councillors want a right of veto, if not of choice, of the plays and even of the staff of the theatres.

The more avant-garde or rebellious a theatre is ... the less likely is it to receive subsidy

pensions, sickness benefit and two months' holiday a year. They do not, however, get well-paid unless they work in films or television. Directors, who belong to another, more efficient Union (The Theatre Workers' Union) get slightly better paid and none are unemployed.

No theatre worker in Finland, however, claims that things are perfect. Some directors feel that the effect of the security of employment and poor pay for actors in the theatre encourages the better ones to be concentrated in Helsinki, where there is more chance of films or television, leaving the provincial theatres with actors whose contracts they have to renew whether they want to or not. Yet the permanent repertory system does ensure that a company becomes used to working together and exploits the potential of the actor, avoiding the haphazard type-casting that results from the overcrowded market of the commercial theatre. A more obvious problem is that of finance. In common with the rest of the western world, Finland has been going through economic difficulties and most theatres find it difficult to manage on their subsidies which the Government has become reluctant to increase. Financial difficulties can also result in political ones. Many theatres are finding the councils are bringing political pressure to bear on what they perform: the town councillors want a right of veto, if not of choice, of the plays and even of the staff of the theatres.

Finland does need a determined Minister of the Arts who could carry through the legislation to extend the theatrical coverage of the country. The response of the people in the rural areas shows that it is not only desirable, but necessary.

Yet Finland's very problems show that it is far more advanced in its thinking about theatre than many other, and richer, countries which have not yet even accepted the idea that theatre should be available to everyone, regardless of economic or geographic situation, far from having a Parliamentary Committee to discuss the question! Australia, with many similar problems, would do well to consider the Finnish model. The strong support for the theatre from people in every walk of life in Finland shows that it need not be merely a middle class urban minority interest, but can be a vital concern for the community of the whole and Finnish solutions to problems of performing to remote and small populations show that these handicaps can be overcome.

Perhaps the most influential theatre in Finland is Tampere Workers' Theatre, since most of the directors in the country have spent some time working there. The present director, Lasse Poystti, is a very well-respected and well known actor and director. The theatre is now housed in a historic building, next door to the Lenin Museum in Tampere. The theatre is owned by workers' societies, but is one of the theatres designated to become completely state subsidised. A new theatre building is being planned which should be paid for equally by the town of Tampere and by the State. It will be extremely resourceful and exciting to work in. It can be restructured in a matter of hours from a prosenium stage to an arena theatre or an Elizabethan stage by removing seats and use of the several different levels. The present theatre has a large and a small stage.

Lasse Poystti divides the repertoire into three parts. One consists of plays directly about workers, their history, daily life and problems, with a strong political content. Another is light entertainment and consists often of the type of play popular in Finland based on 19th-century life (somewhat idealised) which they call "folk" drama. Tampere Workers' Theatre has made

Strindberg's Ghost Sonata at the Helsinki Kaupunginteatteri.
Photo: Kuva Pyydetaan Palauttamaan.
Awake and Sing for the small stage. But Oulu
obscured from the sides at certain places, so
able to afford the right kind of projector.
constant freshness about the productions.
is one city theatre which does suffer very much
large stage is very deep and the back could be
Ojala directed it for Alexis Kivi's centenary.
continue to perform, but with amateur status.
Karela, a modern Swedish play and
1973: It has a hydraulic stage, computerised
repertoire included very original interpretations
Swedish Theatre a completely new image.
During the season 1978/9 there will be two
plays by new Finnish Swedish writers in the
reertoire. Bengt Ahlfors uses free lance
directors and stage designers, so there is a
constant freshness about the productions.
Oulu is a smaller and more provincial town
than Helsinki or Tampere, although it is the
largest town in Northern Finland and used to
be a Haukkamaja. The Oulu City Theatre started
some forty years ago and absorbed some of the
actors from the Workers' Theatre, which
continues to perform, but with amateur status.
Alexis Kivi's play Village Cobbler was
performed here first 100 years ago, and Timo
Ojala directed it for Alexis Kivi's centenary.
The City Theatre is very new, only built in
1973: It has a hydraulic stage, computerised
cutting and a very modern sound system.
The large stage is very deep and the back could be
used for films, but so far they have not been
able to afford the right kind of projector.
Unfortunately, the vision of the audience is
obscured from the sides at certain places, so
they can never use the whole stage as it should
be used.
Timo Ojala came to Oulu from Joensuu, where he directed Caucasian Chalk Circle, a
play about the drift to the south set in North
Karela, a modern Swedish play and Village
Cobbler. At Oulu he directed Clifford Odets' Awake and Sing for the small stage. But Oulu
is one city theatre which does suffer very much
from interference by the town council, who
not only want to veto plays, but have recently
tried to make a political appointment on the
staff.
The Director of Vaasa Theatre, Taisto-Bertil
Orsmaa, wants to attract a young audience in
Vaasa, which is an old established town with a
sizeable Swedish speaking population, very
industrialised with some good modern
architecture and leafy streets. Although his
theatre is quite old, in contrast to Oulu, and the
actors' dressing rooms are extremely cramped,
there is a friendly atmosphere and Orsmaa
wishes to make Vaasa much more than a
provincial theatre. He is himself very much
influenced by theatre in Poland and the DDR
—the production I saw, which was of a
Swedish-Finnish classic, had recognizable
overtones of Sjama. The foyer is covered with
posters from other parts of Finland and from
Europe, and the company has toured the
DDR.
In the repertoire are quite a number of "folk"
plays, but he tries to do them in a completely
new way. In the 1977/78 season they performed a new play by a modern Finnish
writer, Laura Leskonen, and a traditional
"folk" play which were both being directed in a
style using film techniques and action taking
place on two levels. They were also performing
A Doll's House. They had a more modern setting, a room of songs and poems by Brecht entitled
Look Out. Vaasa quite often tours the countryside, although it is not yet subsidised
sufficiently to do so. Because of this they
cannot tour as often as they would like,
although their audiences come up to them after the performance and beg them to come again soon.
Kajaani is one of the towns where the
theatre has become an officially touring theatre.
It is an old town, of some 30,000
inhabitants with a castle built in the 17th
century to protect Sweden's interests from the
Russians. The theatre itself is a delightful old
wooden building, a former city hall, which has
been attractively and comfortably converted.
At present, people from the country towns
come into Kajaani and ask them to bring a play
on tour which has already been performed in
Kajaani; one of the changes the new system
will bring will be that the theatre will go to one
of these smaller towns and have a premiere there. The plays which have usually been
performed have been musicals and "folk" plays
and plays about local history, but they are
hoping to do more modern and relevant work
and at present are working on a production of
Dario Fo's We won't pay! We won't pay! In
any case, with the larger state subsidy they
should be able to employ more workers, enlarge
their repertoire and be relatively free from
interference from the town.
Apart from these institutionalised city theatres, there are in Finland a number of
other theatres known as "free theatres" which
summer 1978. Hallstrom had a group of
some of the best actors from all over Finland
formed a company, financed by a bank loan to
put on a summer theatre play, Pete Q, which
was very exciting theatrically. At Hallstrom,
who was the director, would like to continue
working in this way which he feels gives him
maximum freedom.
The danger as it appears in Finland at
present is that the City Theatres are financially
dependent on town councils which inhibit their
artistic freedom. Some of the members of the
large committees which decide the policy of the
theatre are hardly professionally qualified to do
so. The directors who are working as they want
to are lucky in having sympathetic or at least
tolerant councils. The more avant-garde or
rebellious a theatre is, politically or artistically,
the less likely they are to receive their subsidy,
and those pressures make it far more difficult
to work than shortage of money alone.
This unenviable political interference does
emphasise the strengths of the Arts Council
system, but it is to be hoped that it is neither a
necessary nor a permanent part of Finnish
theatrical life. With good directors resigning over
the question, the consequent drop in standards
may result in changes. It is, in any case, worth
noting that the argument is about how theatre
subsidies should be used, and not about
whether theatres should be subsidised at all!
The second half of this year's summer season at the Sydney Opera House consisted of three revivals; but the resultant undeniable shortfall in the repertory department was more than offset in the standard of performance department.

All three of the productions involved were being seen in Sydney for the second consecutive year, and the only significant cast change was the Sydney premiere of John Pringle in the title role of Don Giovanni in the Ogilvie/Colman/Fredrikson production which first saw the light of day last year.

Having seen Pringle several times before as the Don, including twice last year in this production before its Sydney opening starring James Morris, I have no hesitation in saying that my personal highlight of this particular summer season was the improvement in his portrayal of one of the classic, and most classically difficult, baritone roles in all opera.

His Don Giovanni would perhaps even now seem too low-key and refined to those who had seen only a Morris or his ilk in the role; I found it thoroughly convincing. Physically, of course, Morris is larger than life, though he disdains (or perhaps chickens out of) the near-nudity risked by Pringle at the start of the champagne arioso scene toward the end of Act I. Vocally too, Morris cuts a higher profile. His performances last year were memorable, and he was well worth bringing to Australia: in no way do I wish to imply otherwise.

But Pringle's Don Giovanni this year was a major step forward in the development of this particular man as artist. His Don cuts a less imposing vocal swathe through an audience, is less physically overpowering, but in a way this is no fault; for in so doing it acquires more proximity to the real world, peopleed as it is so overwhelmingly by mock-casanovas and men of ordinary physical dimensions.

Pringle is an excellent singer and actor who suffers from a tendency to be always identifiably Pringle on stage; but as he matures in a role he has an uncanny way of gradually making it his own. This has happened over the years since 1971 with his Count in The Marriage of Figaro — a character he has obviously stepped inside till he exudes it through the pores of his skin. Likewise, to a lesser extent, with his Papageno in The Magic Flute, though he has of course shared this role with Ronald Macanough.

But of the three major Mozart baritone roles I am talking about — the Count, Papageno and the Don — the Don is the biggest and by far the most complex. Indeed, Don Giovanni differs from all the other "big five" Mozart operas in that its success in the theatre depends so heavily on one individual's performance, rather than an ensemble of more-or-less equals. I found last year's Pringle Don Giovanni insufficiently flamboyant, dashing, bastardly, insensitive, noble, overhearing, condescending, irreverent, droll — all of which qualities, and more too, are revealed at one point or another in the ever-changing kaleidoscope of a stage personality that is Don Giovanni.

This summer's performances were not all that spectacularly different in their general concept, but they emphasised the Don's ever-changing moods and fancies just that sufficient extra bit so the character dominated the performance in the way it ought. Pringle had become Don Giovanni in the way he previously had become the Count.

All of which is not to imply that he alone was responsible for the success of this summer's revival of Don Giovanni: for even if this is untypically non-ensemble Mozart major opera, it is far from a one-man opera. Great support was forthcoming from Neil Warren-Smith's Leporello, as dramatically and vocally fine an interpretation of the role as I have yet encountered. The rest of the cast were very good without being exceptional; except for Gregory Yurisich's Masetto, which is a gem of feigned peasant morality and mentality — a bit dim, a bit strait-laced, very dangerous in the defence of any threat real or imagined to the honor of his betrothed. And Yurisich couples excellent characterisation with an ever-more-pleasing vocal instrument and an ever-more-trim physical figure and an ever-increasing stage stature that place him very high indeed on the list of maturing younger solo talents within the current ranks of the Australian Opera.

The current AO Don Giovanni also continues to mature as a production in toto. It is far and away the most successful of the four I can recall having seen put on by this company and its direct predecessor, the Elizabethan Trust Opera Company, in the years since 1956. In particular, it beats hands down Jim Sharman's mock-chessboard of 1967 and the 18 pink doors of 1974, the Australian Opera's first attempt at staging the work in the Opera House era.

It is not a production to rank with the very best the AO has come up with in its short life; at least not yet; but at least it is good enough to warrant a few years' revivals until something closer to the elusive ideal comes along.

Franz Lehár's The Merry Widow has already survived to the remarkable age, as Viennese operettas go, of 74; and some of the qualities that have been responsible for its survival were more evident in this year's summer season revival than last year's Sutherland/Bonyerge original at the Sydney Opera House.

The great individual improvement was in Ron Stevens' Danilo, which was better sung and much better acted than last year, though Stevens has yet to capture anything like fully the mixture of debonair flamboyance and soft-hearted sentimentality that is Prince Danilo. And this is crucial to The Merry Widow on stage; for the success of the piece as theatre depends a good deal more on the dramatic credibility of Danilo than the vocal prowess of the Widow herself.

Joan Sutherland obviously loves playing Anna Glawari, yet hearing her scale the vocal ramparts of The Merry Widow is akin to watching a world champion boxer take on a rank amateur.

Some, at least, of the interminable and largely unfunny dialogue seemed to have been cut from this year's Widow, but there was still a good deal more than enough left to make one itch for the chance to have a censorsom go at the remainder. The dance sequences and some of the visual effects stood up well to renewed viewing a year after the event; but less so did the overall effect.

Much though I enjoyed the enhanced stage relationship between Sutherland and Stevens, I found that the production overall was less finely
David Gyger

focussed; the moments of legitimate dramatic interest far fewer and further between.

The series of mini-confrontations between Paul Ferris’ St Brioche and Robert Eddie’s Cascada was even better than ever, as was Graeme Ewer’s rendition of Njegus’ aria; though both his and Gordon Wilcock’s spoken dialogue were even more grotesquely mannered than before. This was a gratifying detail of Lotfi Mansouri’s original production that has not become less grating with renewed exposure; it ought to be toned down considerably or — preferably — eliminated altogether. Beryl Furlan’s Valencienne, in itself a good effort, was no substitute for Isobel Buchanan’s last year. Anson Austin’s Camille and Heather Begg’s Zoso were once again considerable strengths in an overall effort which still has more than its fair share of weaknesses both in detail and as to its overall concept.

The revival of last winter’s production of Wagner’s The Mastersingers of Nuremberg showed a perceptible refinement of last year’s effort, which was very good indeed even then. This year’s summer opening benefited greatly from the presence of a much fresher Norman Bailey, in the pivotal role of Hans Sachs, than Byers, who coped quite well with the Prize Song. (The general and understandable relief that he had done so well under such trying circumstances caused Bailey to lapse into German for some minutes before he could reprogramme his thoughtstream into the English translation, but nobody minded that at all.)

When Cathcart had fully recovered, though, he gave his best local performances yet as Walther — producing an authentic Heldentenor sound that made me, for one, look forward to hearing him one day in one or both of the great lyrical tenor roles in the Ring cycle — Siegmund and Siegfried. Of the rest, Donald Shanks was unequivocally magnificent as Pogner, Marilyn Richardson as charming as before in the role of Eva, and Raymond Myers as grotesquely villainous as Beckmesser. In the one scheduled major cast change of this Mastersingers season, John Germain sang the two final performances of Beckmesser — and produced an interestingly underdrawn reading of the role which was finally just a little too sympathetic: we were inclined to feel a trifle sorry for Beckmesser at the end, which was certainly not Wagner’s intention.

The rest of the large contingent of principals, major and minor, was as well balanced and carefully characterised individually as before; the chorus sang beautifully, though the Act II brawl was decidedly half-hearted on opening night; and the Elizabethan Sydney Orchestra, obviously more at ease with the huge and difficult score than last year due to increasing familiarity, had mastered more of the details of the complex score almost from performance to performance.

Which leads finally, but most importantly, to the most vital figure in the whole exercise — the brilliant young English conductor Mark Elder, who put it all together and made it all happen. Elder’s talents obviously range far more widely than Wagner, as he has demonstrated in Australia most recently with last year’s rather good La Bohème; but the current Mastersingers and the open secret that he is conductor-designate of the Australian Opera Ring, whenever that may eventuate, means that he is the inevitably closest thing we have at the moment to a Wagner specialist.

In view of this, it was particularly welcome that a concert performance of The Rhinegold, a co-operative effort of the Australian Opera and the ABC through the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, could be arranged toward the end of March.

The final fully staged operatic event of the month was a double bill of Gilbert and Sullivan’s Trial By Jury and The Pirates of Penzance, which moved into the opera theatre of the Sydney Opera House for a brief season during the week following the end of the Australian Opera’s summer season.

It was a somewhat patchy effort overall, with considerable excellence in some areas incongruously rubbing shoulders with rank amateurism in others. For this reason, it was a less coherent evening than some put on before in the gradually evolving entrepreneurial liaison of the Opera House and the Sydney Gilbert and Sullivan Society.

But this was a welcome sort of unevenness if one views it from a little broader perspective than this one night or season, for there was no deterioration in any area, rather, there was significant improvement in some areas but not across the board.

One must give immense credit, if only in passing, to the gameness of the G and S society — which has been the only semi-professional group to brave the terrors of the Opera Theatre, he swallowed alive on first outing and persevere till it is definitely winning the battle. Even the fully professional late-lamented Old Tote only ever mounted one opera theatre production before retiring beaten and broken to peddle its smaller-scale artistry in more intimate venues.

Inevitably, the G and S societies of this world must do things on a much simpler scale than their heavily subsidised big brothers among the performing arts companies; but cheapness need not necessarily mean being ineffective or looking threadbare. One must obviously take into account the scale of one’s stage and auditorium when designing for any production, and the Prompt sets for these productions did just that; but at the same time one can design boldly, simply and cheaply, which these productions also did. They were colourful and effective visually, without being complicated or excessively durable for the demands of a brief season. The designers deserve full marks for their efforts.

Orchestrally, too, these productions were excellent under the musical direction of James McCarthy and to the instrumental backing of the so-called Sydney Opera House Theatre Orchestra — a newly formed scratch group which will hopefully be afforded sufficient engagements to ensure some sort of continuity. McCarthy rushed things a little, particularly during Trial By Jury; forced the soloists here and there to sacrifice clarity — even sense, sometimes — in order to maintain a whirlwind pace. But the ensemble sound was consistently pleasing, a considerable improvement in general
Elizabeth Riddell

Dawn — they’ve laboured in vain

The film Dawn may have been made on the assumption that Australians never lose interest in their sports champions as long as the myth of ill fortune attends them. Take Les Darcy, for instance, or even Phar Lap, or, in this case, the amazing three-time-gold-medal winning Dawn Fraser.

Les Darcy and Phar Lap were the victims of jealous alien forces, in other words the Americans. Dawn Fraser was, it is thought by those who ever think about it, the victim of the sporting establishment and the press. And also, as the film endevours honestly to show, of her own temperament.

The question is, will anyone over twelve and under fifty go to witness almost two hours of inquiry into a series of long ago sporting events with diversions into the swimmer’s semi-private life?

Nothing on the sporting side is new. What may be new is the acting out of a couple of love affairs, the implication of an over-emotional friendship with another woman and the heroine’s statement that a sexual bout enjoyed the night before a big race toned up the muscles, so to speak.

The film takes Dawn from her girlhood, about the time she left school because she was bored as the film endeavours honestly to show, of her own temperament.

Of the Olympics, Tokyo naturally gets the best exposure, and the incident in which Dawn makes off with the Olympic flag is given considerable footage.

The role of Dawn is taken by Bronwyn Mackay-Payne, who has little acting ability but who bears an uncanny resemblance to the original and makes do with a series of more or less sullen facial expressions and the occasional big smile. The other performers appear weighed down by the responsibility of their roles and/or the vacuity of the script. Characterisation goes by the board, except for a fleeting glimpse of something from Lynndall Barbour’s Edie. The line-up on paper is pretty good: Ron Haddrick, Bunney Brooke, Tom Richards, John Diedrich, Ivar Kants, Gabrielle Hartley. Yet none of them seems able to break out of the stereotype.

The film was produced and written by Joy Cavill, who has had a long association with the film industry between the end of the Second World War and the present wave. The director was Ken Hannam (Sunday Too Far Away, Summerfield) whose hands, in this instance, has lost its deft touch. Russell Boyd, director of photography, is a different man from the Boyd who did Picnic at Hanging Rock. Joy Cavill’s production notes state that Dawn is one of the most ambitious Australian Films ever undertaken. It was financed by the South Australian Film Corporation, the Australian Film Commission, the Seven Network and Hoyts Theatres.

On the whole, it can be said that they appear to have laboured in vain.
Any listener interested in choral music knows, or knows of, Carl Orff's Carmina Burana, a perennially fresh setting in a mainly simple and insistent style of words taken from a Burana, and songs. The collection was first rediscovered in modern times in the monastery at Benediktbeuren in Bavaria, a circumstance which accounts for the name by which this anthology is known. Some pages of the manuscript contain musical neumes (signs) which provide an indication of accent and inflexion but not of exact pitches, the neumes seem to have acted as a mnemonic. That is, they were an aid to memory for a singer who already knew the tunes.

No amount of guesswork and approximation will ever produce a satisfactory transcription from these neumes without some other aid: and for a long time it was believed that the tunes of the original songs would remain inviolably locked among the secrets of history. Orff, certainly, at the time he wrote his cantata, had no reason to believe that any of the songs he set would be sung in future to older melodies. The identification of some of these tunes has been made possible by the improvement in library cataloguing and the increased capacity for comparison between different musical manuscripts which have come about since World War II. Tunes for some of the poems in Carmina Burana have been found in other manuscripts notated with exact relative pitches. Some of these sources provide a similarly valuable source of music from the troubled fourteenth century (utterly unlike, for the most part, the style of Carmina Burana and troubadour songs) from the music incorporated in the devastating satire, Le Roman de Fauvel. Clemencic's recordings from this source have also been reissued by the World Record Club.

Two new film discs to reach me, again in World Record Club reissues, serve different purposes. One is a complete disc of music written by Bernard Hermann for the film Obsession, starring Cliff Robertson and Genevieve Bujold (R 05021). This presents a very full account of Hermann's characteristically forceful, uninhibited and accomplished music in a soundtrack recording conducted by the composer. It represents a high order of professionalism but seems to me to need some memory of the film to make much sense of it. The other disc (R 05021) is entitled Music from the Movies and is dedicated to recordings made by Louis Levy and his Gaumont British Symphony Orchestra, including the circus-like Music from the Movies March by Levy that used to blare out an introduction to Gaumont British newsreels.

They make up an interesting period anthology demands a high order of professionalism but seems to me to need some memory of the film to make much sense of it. The other disc (R 05021) is entitled Music from the Movies and is dedicated to recordings made by Louis Levy and his Gaumont British Symphony Orchestra, including the circus-like Music from the Movies March by Levy that used to blare out an introduction to Gaumont British newsreels. All the other pieces on the record are performed by Levy and his players and various soloists but are by other writers and composers. They make up an interesting period anthology without having much musical distinction in themselves.

EUROHAIR CENTRE
Suite 511, 5th Floor,
381 Pitt St., Sydney.
Telephone: 233-4125

Handmade in our own workshop
by experienced craftsmen.

COMPARE OUR PRICES
Telephone: 233-4125
From the Maestro to a Master

John McCallum

The Life of Noel Coward by Cole Lesley, Penguin Books ($3.95 rrp)
Pinter, Methuen Master Playwrights ($2.95 rrp)
The Rear Column and other plays, Simon Gray, Eyre Methuen ($7.50 rrp)
The Second Wave, John Russell Taylor, Eyre Methuen ($8.95 rrp)
Meyerhold on Theatre, trans, ed, Edward Braun, Eyre Methuen ($16.50 rrp).

Brittle, thin, trivial, flippant, frothy, flimsy, frivolous, shallow, self centred and superficial — any writer who can attract a gallery of derogatory terms such as this must have had something. Noel Coward would have been a contender for the title (unfortunately already awarded) of the best twentieth century writer ever to be seriously overestimated. He earned the antipathetic attention of some of the best minds of his time, and, along with Oscar Wilde, he could have said that his life was as important and as interesting as his work.

Cole Lesley, his secretary and a gentleman’s gentleman, has written a biography of him which suggests other adjectives: cruel, bitchy, petty, snobby. Noel’s personal panacea for all disturbances and crises was, says, Lesley, geographical distance. When things got heavy he ran away to sea, leaving loved ones and colleagues to fend for themselves. He once wrote a novel about a man who committed suicide because he was bored. It’s all terribly worldly and frightfully stylish. Noel could go to a party and wait for some obscure rendezvous. If it weren’t for him everyone could have gone home to their clubs in London well before the play started.

John Russell Taylor’s sequel to John McCallum’s biography of Pinter seemed to be more often studied and read than actually produced in this country (although Sydney recently had a special Pinter season) and it is for this sort of reader that this series is designed.

Simon Gray’s The Rear Column appeared last year and is now published along with Molly and Man in a Sideshow. It shows, among other things, the barbarous and frightful code of behaviour which the British developed to persuade themselves that they deserved an empire. A small group of officers is stuck in the middle of the Congo with a large party of Africans who are all dying. The play is held together by a mad commander who insists they all stay put and run away to sea, leaving loved ones and colleagues to fend for themselves. He once wrote a novel about a man who committed suicide because he was bored. It’s all terribly worldly and frightfully stylish. Noel could go to a party and start instant lifetime friendships with every one in the room, even if he hardly ever saw them again.

And yet Ivor Brown seems to have been wrong when he wrote “Within a few years the student of drama will be sitting in complete bewilderment before the text of Private Lives, wondering what on earth those fellows in 1930 saw in so flimsy a trifles.” The plays are respected not only by students of drama but in the theatre. Noel, as readers of Lesley’s biography feel entitled to call him, once wrote to a director that he did not think that amateur companies should do his plays because the style was so difficult, and yet these light, tripping comedies are still produced again and again. But then, the theatre is not a very important cultural force these days.

And even the most cynical have their favourite Coward anecdotes or lines. For what it’s worth mine is “I’m not very keen on Hollywood. I’d rather have a nice cup of cocoa really.” He did have some style.

Again according to Lesley, Noel respected Harold Pinter almost as much as he respected Alan Ayckbourn, so volume three of the Methuen Master Playwrights edition of Pinter’s work comes to us with some authoritative recommendation. The volume contains Homecoming, The Tea Party, The Basement, Landscape, Silence, and less familiar to the general reader the short story version of The Tea Party, a brief memoir of Anew McMaster and six review sketches.

Pinter seems to be more often studied and read than actually produced in this country (although Sydney recently had a special Pinter season) and it is for this sort of reader that this series is designed.

Simon Gray’s The Rear Column appeared last year and is now published along with Molly and Man in a Sideshow. It shows, among other things, the barbarous and frightful code of behaviour which the British developed to persuade themselves that they deserved an empire. A small group of officers is stuck in the middle of the Congo with a large party of Africans who are all dying. The play is held together by a mad commander who insists they all stay put and wait for some obscure rendezvous. If it weren’t for him everyone could have gone home to their clubs in London well before the play started.

John Russell Taylor’s sequel to Anger and After, The Second Wave, is revised and reprinted in paperback. Inevitably attitudes to writers have changed, and some of those to whom Taylor gives prominence seem less important than others who in the last eight years have developed...

The bibliographies at the back of the book to which the revision seems restricted, reveal large gaps in the text for writers such as David Hare, Alan Ayckbourn, Howard Brenton and Tom Stoppard, who had all barely started in 1970.

Nevertheless this is still a readable account of the work of the principal British dramatists of the sixties.

Also now in paperback is Meyerhold on Theatre, edited by Edward Braun. This excellent collection of Meyerhold’s writings, like Brocht on Theatre, gives a running commentary placing the selections in biographical and artistic perspective. When the book first appeared in 1969 it introduced to non-specialist English readers a man of the theatre with an awesome reputation but whom very few knew anything about. The book provides a fascinating range of material revealing him as Eric Bentley wrote, “as among the great masters of the modern stage.”
THEATRE AUSTRALIA APRIL 1979

A.C.T.

CANBERRA THEATRE (49-7600)

Romeo and Juliet by Groumd; Producer, Terence Clarke; Musical Director, Richard McIntyre; Design, James Riderow. 5, 7, 9 April.

The Kingfisher by Douglas Home; with Googie Withers, John McCallum, Frank Thring. 19-25 April.

CHILDERS STREET HALL (48-5346)

Australian Theatre Workshop
Waiting for Godot by Samuel Beckett; director, Ralph Wilson. 2-11 April.

REID HOUSE THEATRE WORKSHOP

(47-0781)

THE JIGSAW COMPANY

None's Nose, school tour. The Wind in the Willows, Childers Street Hall; director, Peter Wilkins. Opens 30 April.

CANBERRA YOUTH THEATRE

Drama Workshops all ages. Multi-arts workshop all ages. Contact Theatre for information.

Fools Gallery
Experimental theatre company; director, Carol Woodrow; full-time workshop.

THEATRE 3 (47-4222)

Canberra Repertory Co: Music Hall at Night, director, Rosemary Hyde. 10-12, 19-21, 25-28 April.

For entries contact Marguerite Wells on 49-3192

NEW SOUTH WALES

ACTORS COMPANY (692-0689)

Othello by Shakespeare; Director, David Goddard; with Monro Reimers, Lisa Peers, James Jablonski, Kathryn Thompson. Through April, Wed Sat 8pm; Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri 11.30am.

ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW SOUTH WALES (357-6611)

Touring programme; Alex Hood Australian Songs; Central west schools 26 Mar 20 Apr. Ethnic Folkdances; Hunter Valley and North West schools. To 27 Apr.


DANCE COMPANY (358-4600)

Drama Theatre, Opera House. Rumours; Choreographer, Graeme Murphy; Music, Barry Connyngham. Closes 21 Apr.

LES CURRIE PRESENTATIONS (358-4600)

Mike Jackson Traditional Bush Music. Tourism schools throughout April.

Mike McClellan. Touring high schools in North-West Hunter Valley and North Coast districts.

ENSEMBLE THEATRE (929-8877)

Rain by Somerset Maughan; Director, Jon Ewing; with Helen Morse, Brian Young, Judy Ferris, Norman Kaye. 6 Apr 2 Jun.

FRANK STRAIN'S BULL N' BUSH

THEATRE RESTAURANT (357-4627)

Thanks for the Memory; musical review with Noel Brophy, Barbara Wyndon, Garth Meade, Neil Bryant, Helen Lorain; Director, George Garden.

Apologies to Kay Powell for the apparent error in her name in the December issue.

GENESIAN THEATRE (827-3023)


Titus Andronicus by Shakespeare. Director, Margaret Riencke; Opens 28 April.

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (212-3411)

Sacred Cows Director, Peter Batey; starring Reg Livermore. Throughout April.

HUNTER VALLEY THEATRE CO. (Newcastle 26-2526)

Civic Playhouse Cabaret. Director, Ross McGregor; choreography, Christina Koltai. Throughout April.

KINETIC ENERGY DANCE CO. (20588)

Recording Hall, Opera House 1 Apr 8.15pm; 3 & 8 Apr, 11am and 8.15pm.

KIRRIBILLI PUB THEATRE

(92-1415)

Karrabull Hotel, Milsons Point. The Jungle Show by Paul Chubb, Patrick Ward and Richmond Young; Director, Richmond Young, with Patrick Ward, Laura Gabriel, Steven Sacks, Robert Merser, Penny Fallick. Sats throughout April.

MARIAN STREET THEATRE (498-3166)

Ten Times Table by Alan Ayckbourn; Director, Alistair Duncan; with Judy Nunn, Philip Hinton and Tom McCarthy.

MUSIC HALL THEATRE RESTAURANT

(909-8222)

Lost To The Devil written and directed by Stanley Walsh; with Ron Haddrick, Alan Wilson, Karen Johnson, Eileen Cobcott. Throughout April.

MUSIC LOFT THEATRE (777-6578)

On Together by Hilary Bamberger et al; Director, William Orr; with Lee Young, Anne Emery.

NEW THEATRE (519-3403)

Reedy River by Dick Diamond; Director, Frank Barnes; with Brian McNevin, Christine Logan, Jamie Stevens, Marty O'Neill. Closes 7 April.

Richard's Cork Leg by Brendan Behan; Director, John Armstrong; Opens 21 April.

NIMROD THEATRE (699-5003)

Upstairs: Romeo and Juliet by Shakespeare; Director, John Bell; with Mel Gibson, Angela Withers, John McCallum, Frank Thring.

Downstairs: The Bastard from the Bush from Ten Times Table by Alan Ayckbourn; Director, William Orr; with Lee Young, Anne Emery.

NIMROD THEATRE (699-5003)

Upstairs: Romeo and Juliet by Shakespeare; Director, John Bell; with Mel Gibson, Angela Withers, John McCallum, Frank Thring.

Downstairs: The Bastard from the Bush from Ten Times Table by Alan Ayckbourn; Director, William Orr; with Lee Young, Anne Emery.

SEYMOUR CENTRE (692-0555)

The Kingfisher by William Douglas-Home; Director, George Ogilvie; with Googie Withers, John McCallum, Frank Thring.

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE (20588)


Programme 2 — Coppelia

Drama Theatre, Dance Company. Closes 21 April.


THEATRE ROYAL (231-6111)

Deathtrap by Ira Levin; Director, Michael Blakemore; starring Denis Olsen, Robyn Nevin. Throughout April.

For entries contact Carole Long on 357-1200.

QUEENSLAND

ARTS THEATRE (36-2344)

Night Watch by Lucille Fletcher; Director, Jason Whiting. Designer, Peter Endmann; with Gerowyn Harding-Smith, Ian Greatly, Mary Sprawling. 29 Mar-28 Apr.

BRISBANE ACTOR'S COMPANY (52-7843)

Twelfth Night Theatre
Macbeth by William Shakespeare; Director, Jane Atkins. 19 Apr-May.

LES CURRIE PRESENTATIONS (02-358-4600)

Noddy Comes To Town. Written and directed by Gary Ginivan; Music, Carolyn Thomas; with Kym Goldsworthy and Kevin Manser. Touring QLD throughout April.

DARLING DOWNS IAE (076-30-1300)

Performance — The Killing of Sister George by Richard O'Brien; Director, David Googie Withers, John McCallum, Frank Thring.

THEATRE ROYAL (231-6111)

Deathtrap by Ira Levin; Director, Michael Blakemore; starring Denis Olsen, Robyn Nevin. Throughout April.

For entries contact Carole Long on 357-1200.
SOUTH AUSTRALIA

AUSTRALIAN DANCE THEATRE (212-2084)
Opera Theatre:
Black Angels by Christopher Bruce.
The Wedding by Jonathon Taylor
Songs of Innocence by Joseph Scoglio.
29 Mar-7 Apr.
Q THEATRE (21-5735)
Gigi by Anaita and Collette Loos; Director, Frank Gargro. 18 Apr-12 May.
STATE OPERA OF SA (51-6161)
Secret Marriage by Cimarosa (in English). Opens 30 April.
STATE THEATRE COMPANY (51-5151)
American Buffalo by Edward Albee. Company One; Designed and directed by Peter Tulloch. Touring lower secondary schools.
QLD ARTS COUNCIL (221-5900)
The Twenties and all that Jazz. QLD Theatre Company on tour.
QLD THEATRE COMPANY (221-5977)
Hedda Gabler by Henrik Ibsen; Director, Alan Edwards; Designer, Peter Cooke. 18 Apr-12 May.
For entries contact Don Batchelor on 269-3018.

TASMANIA

TASMANIAN PUPPET THEATRE (23-7996)
Palas Theatre, Melb; Kidstuff written and directed by Peter Wilson; Music, John Shortis. 2-6 April.
SALAMANCA (23-5259)
The Whale — The Biggest Thing That Ever Died by Ken Kebo; Director, Al Butavicius. Touring country schools in Tas through April.
THEATRE ROYAL (23-7996)
Kamahl 6-8 April. Two for the See-Saw. Chelsea Brown and Gus Mercurio on tour. 17 April. Under Milkwood by Dylan Thomas; Welsh Theatre Co. on tour 22-28 April.
For entries contact the Administrator, ACT on 223-8910.

VICTORIA

ALEXANDER THEATRE (543-2828)
ACTORS' THEATRE (429-1630)
ARENA THEATRE (24-9667/24-1937)
Sauscape by Edward Albee. Company One; Designed and directed by Peter Tulloch; Touring upper secondary schools.
He Who Would Say "Yes" Or "No" based on ideas of Bertolt Brecht; Company One; Devised, designed and directed by Peter Charlton. Touring lower secondary schools.
Winners by Brian Friell. Company Two; Designed and directed by Peter Tulloch. Touring upper secondary.
Paul Puiner and his Fight against the Universals by Ernie Gray; Designed and directed by Peter Charlton. Touring lower secondary.
ARTS COUNCIL OF VICTORIA (529-4355)
Five Funny Folk Tales by the Brothers Grimm. Adapted and directed by Don Mackay. On Tour. Just Making the Grade by Ian Catchlove; Director, John Wregg, with Francisca Henry. Touring primary schools.
Modern Mime Theatre; Michael Freeland. Touring secondary schools.
AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING GROUP
Pram Factory (347-7133)
COMEDY THEATRE (663-4993)
Dracula dramatised by Hamilton Deane and John L Balderston; Director, Robert Helpmann; Scenery and Costumes, Edward Gorey; with John Waters, Max Bruch, David Ravenswood, Lego Rowies and company.
CREATIVE ARTS THEATRE (877-4056)
Aqua Aqua Super Bath Touring metropolitan and country primary schools. 26 Feb-28 Apr. Who What When and Where? TIE Remedial drama project in primary and special schools. From 2 April.
HOOPLA THEATRE FOUNDATION (63-7643)
Playbox Theatre:
Gentlemen Only by Eve Merriam; Director, Graeme Bundell; Alison Mary Fagan; Director, Bill Zappa. Upstairs theatre, early April.
Notes from an Old Man's Diary adapted by Bill Schillig and Patricia Larmour. Opens 26 April.
HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (663-3211)
Annie Directed by George and Ethel Martin; with Hayes Gordon and Jill Perryman. Through April.
LAST LAUGH THEATRE RESTAURANT (419-6226)
Tricks devised and performed by Ross Skiffington; Director, Nigel Triffitt; Design, Trina Parker; with Mariette Rups.
L A MAMA (350-4593/347-6085)
Lolly Day by Malcolm Purcell. 5 Apr-22 Apr.
Run Run Away by Robert Kimber originally scheduled for March has now been postponed to late June/early July.
MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY (654-4000)
Russell Street Theatre:
Metamorphosis by Frank Kafka; Adapted, directed and designed by Steven Berkoff. Nimrod Theatre, Sydney, production. To 12 May.
Athenaeum Theatre:
Macbeth by William Shakespeare; Director, John Sumner; Design, Tanya McCallin. To 5 May.
PILGRIM PUPPET THEATRE (818-6560)
Peter Pan by J M Barrie, Adapted by Graeme Bent.
PRINCESS THEATRE (662-2911)
Crown Matrimonial by Royce Ryton; Director, Peter Williams; Design, John Hall. To 7 April.
Australian Opera Company: Madam Butterfly and Cavalleria Rusticana/ Pagliacci. Opens 14 April.
VICTORIAN STATE OPERA (41-5061)
Commemorative Concert 22 April. Elixir of Love Portland Civic Hall. 27, 28 April. Mildura Arts Centre Theatre, 3, 4, 5 May.
Twice Upon a Time Grimm's Fairy Tales adapted by Peter Narroway. Schools company.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

HOLE IN THE WALL (381-2403)
Gone With Hardy by David Allen; Director, Colin McColl. 14 Mar-14 Apr. City Sugor by Steven Poliakoff; Director, Colin McColl. 18 Apr-19 May.
NATIONAL THEATRE COMPANY (325-3500)
TIE: Kurlank by Jack Davis; Director, Andrew Ross; on tour.
THE REGAL (381-1557)
George and Mildred with Brian Murphy and Yootha Joyce; Director, Tony Clayton. 3-21 Apr.
WA BALLET COMPANY (335-6188)
The Playhouse: Three ballets by Garth Welch, Christine Parrott, Jonathan Taylor. 5-12 Apr.
WA OPERA COMPANY
The Beggar Opera by Benjamin Britten; Conductor, Alan Abbott.
For entries contact Joan Ambrose on 299-6639.
Q & Q

(Continued from page 4)

programme in Darwin as well as touring all the major outback centres in the Northern Territory. This year they will be involved in a number of special projects for the Year of the Child, as well as a number of adult community theatre projects."

MAGPIES SPREADING WINGS

ROGER CHAPMAN, Director, Magpie TIE

"Until the Come-Out Festival in May, when a new play by local writer Rob George was presented, the Magpies were busy performing four different school and community programmes.

Network, our highly successful and provocative participatory play about the media, continues to run for middle year high school students. Does Anyone Really Live Here?, a participatory programme about community lifestyles for upper primary school students, also continues.

In addition, the company took to Andamooka the community show Billy Gilligan's Grand Cabaret Reunion Do which toured the outback so successfully during November, 1978. Answering popular demand, Maggie is also bringing back Strike at the Port for a short school and community season. Set during the 1928 wharf strike at Port Adelaide, this play brought the company much critical acclaim when it was first performed in 1978.

The Magpie actors have been spreading their musical wings as that zany fifties rock group, The Hot Seeds, and have entered many different sections of the South Australian community, from our own State Theatre Company subscribers to workers and their families out along the Transcontinental Railway Line."

SYDNEY ACCESS GROUP

PETER CARMODY, Griffin Theatre Co.

"A small professional group has been formed in Sydney. We call ourselves the Griffin Theatre Company. So far the members include Jenny Laing Peach, Peter Carmody, Robert Menzies, Penny Cook, Rosemary Lenzo and Edie Kuryer.

Our first production is The Ginger Man by J P Donleavy, design by Andrew Blaxland. We’ll be running at the Kirk Gallery through April, every night excepting Sundays and Mondays. The Griffin company has been conceived as an access group. Interested writers, actors or directors are invited to submit ideas or proposals. Contact can be established either through Peter Carmody at NIDA or come and speak to us before or after performances at the Kirk Gallery, Cleveland St., Surry Hills".

Next Month

Sydney's Lost Theatres Richard Bradshaw
The Playwrights' Conference Reviews: Opera, Theatre, Ballet, Film, and lots more.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Australia:
$18.00 Post Free for twelve issues.
Give a gift subscription — and SAVE! $32.00 for two subscriptions.

Overseas:
Surface mail A$25.00
By air New Zealand, New Guinea A$45.00
U.K., U.S.A., Germany, Greece, Italy A$50.00
All other countries A$70.00

Bank drafts in Australian currency should be forwarded to Theatre Publications Ltd., 80 Elizabeth Street, Mayfield, N.S.W. 2304, Australia.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Australia:
$18.00 Post Free for twelve issues.
Give a gift subscription — and SAVE! $32.00 for two subscriptions.

Overseas:
Surface mail A$25.00
By air New Zealand, New Guinea A$45.00
U.K., U.S.A., Germany, Greece, Italy A$50.00
All other countries A$70.00

Bank drafts in Australian currency should be forwarded to Theatre Publications Ltd., 80 Elizabeth Street, Mayfield, N.S.W. 2304, Australia.

Across:

1. Bipedal, but nice enough to eat (6)
5. Gee, Derek cooks a classy breakfast (8)
9. One good man follows the point and becomes an empire builder (8)
10. Beer flows to a quiet river in Syria (6)
11. 18 the warriors who quench the flames (12)
13. Mix well in best iron container (4)
14. Ten stung painfully by rare metal (8)
15. Privation in a tough vessel (8)
18. "Thou art so fat-witted, with drinking of old..." (Henry IV Part II) (4)
20. I stream it and organise (12)
23. Diana, take it easy, or the consequences will be of the gravest (6)
24. Right deserts the incautious and makes him bold (8)
25. Orwell's language wakes pen somehow (8)
26. Steer with more around 5:00 (12)

Down:

2. Greeting a bitter lily, we hear (4)
3. Tendered freed prof, in exchange (9)
4. Bizarre wish about a bishop gives me a buzz (6)
5. An actress, Katherine, suits the Irishman? (4,11)
6. Pulling a horse in a gutter with string (8)
7. Permission to go for outside feed (5)
8. Former fairy goes to odd European community around the north to gain practice (10)
12. Shore of unusual Strine land (10)
15. In a funny way, depends on us to be hung (9)
16. Eugene's Anna and Brenton's in love! (8)
19. This boy's a gem (6)
21. Thoughts strange Sadie entertains (5)
22. First time a cone was restructured (4)
23. Diana, take it easy, or the consequences will be of the gravest (6)
24. Right deserts the incautious and makes him bold (8)
25. Orwell's language wakes pen somehow (8)
26. Steer with more around 5:00 (12)

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

Last month's answers.

Last month's winner was S M Roberts, Brighton SA. 