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Theatre Australia

The Return of June Jago
Administration - Inspiration or Encumbrance?

Nationwide reviews including film, opera, books;
National guide.

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BY STEPHEN HALL
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COMMENT

This month’s focus has to be on Sydney - with Perth and Adelaide to get the focus with their festivals in February and March respectively. In the New South Wales metropolis not only are the annual city celebrations all set to get underway, but the Sydney Theatre Company begins its operations proper.

How appropriate that they should open on January 1st - not just New Year’s Day, but the beginning of a new decade. How appropriate, too, though sad that such things are still worthy of attention, that their inaugural production should be an Australian classic.

Artistic Director Richard Wherrett has obviously put a great deal of thought into his choices - both of personnel and plays. The Sunny South, for instance, is not only of indigenous interest, and perfectly appropriate to the holiday atmosphere generated by the time of year and the Festival, but is the first in a deliberate policy - as courageous as it is necessary - to establish a repertoire of the Australian classics.

Local and overseas writing are in a 50-50 mix (which must be a higher local content than any other state company) and the contemporary classic proportions are the same. New writing is being encouraged with, in the first season, our brightest young playwright, Louis Nowra, translating Cyrano de Bergerac - in itself an important move, to have sound modern Australian versions of world classics - and getting an airing in his own right with the premiere of The Precious Woman.

Other aims of the company are in standard setting, good theatre at low cost, relevancy whatever the period the plays are from, and overall to reflect our society in first class, theatrical entertainment that is “grand, vulgar, intelligent, challenging and fun”. That phrase sums up the better productions at Nimrod, from whence, of course, Wherrett comes.

His purpose is to achieve all this with “a light, flexible, committed company” - an aim which given the intolerable bureaucracy of the company’s predecessor will be important in the eyes of the profession. The Old Tote was both fragmented and hierarchical; the new emphasis is on interaction. To this end not only is the administration far from top heavy, the nucleus of an ensemble of actors (six) has already been established and is to be enlarged to some twelve or fourteen in June.

Some of the best directors and designers in the country have been signed up to help with the 1980 season: Fisher, Ogilvie, Clark, Rodger, and Kristian Frederikson, Ian Robinson and Shaun Gurton to name just some. John Gaden has been wooed from Nimrod to the appointment of first Associate Director to the Company.

One begins to muse at how the Nimrod as major rival will fare, lacking its main actor (who is also committed to a Limited Life Scheme venture with Rex Cramphorn) and having lost to Adelaide Paul lies who is known simply as the best administrator in the country. John Bell’s name is already down as a guest actor for the Sydney Theatre Company too...Good government provably happens when the opposition is good too.

The 1979 World Theatre Season proved that given the occasion, most of the city companies can rise admirably to it. Standards have been set which will be hard to live up to and many of the “poppy loppers” will be looking for weaknesses in the new set up. The challenges for Wherrett and his company are immense, but one way or another the Sydney Theatre Company will be the major lynchpin in the ongoing development of drama in New South Wales in the new decade.

TA wishes both Richard and the company every success.

Robert Page, Editor

Theatre Australia

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Bully's House...In a few weeks Tom Keneally's latest play, Bully's House, will be going on at Nimrod — their first major production for the year, directed by Ken Horler and designed by Michael Pearce.

The play is based on incidents that occurred in Arnemland in the 1950's, but telescoped into a shorter period, and represents an attempt by the elders of an aboriginal tribe to come to terms with white civilisation. Bully is one of the elders, whose house has been swept away by winds, and he believes that Wonga — the thunder man — and Christ will not allow him to rebuild until he has brought about a rapprochement between the two; between black and white, old and new.

Central to this is the ancient aboriginal custom of displaying the Ranga — the most precious tribal possession — to outsiders, and Bully persuades the elders to display it to the whites (represented by a missionary, a government official and an anthropologist). Keneally explains that "The tragedy of the situation, and of Bully himself, is that in return he expects a display of a white Ranga equivalent; he expects the white world to repay the honour with the key to white civilisation, as the Ranga is the key to black culture — the magic link between myths and the past, and the present. The anthropologist is destroyed by the knowledge that he can't give what is required, and Bully by the elders for his wrong decision."

Unlike The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith, there are no baddies in Bully’s House, and Keneally sees it as a progression in his work. "I have a number of hopes for it. I hope it's well made; visibly the work of a craftsman. In the early '60s I had a typical novelist's attitude, that plays were easy to write because they were just novels without the purple passages, which are the hard parts. A frightful mistake to make! I hope this will at least be a critical success, I don't know about commercial, so that in future when people refer to me as a playwright I won't have to cringe."

Big River. Alex Buzo's new play opens at the Adelaide Festival. An MTC production, it then goes to Melbourne, Canberra and Sydney. Speaking of it, Alex Buzo said "Despite its title, I think, with all possible objectivity, Big River is an A play not a B movie. If I had called it Little Creek or Tiny Brook I think the expectations of the audience would have been lowered to the point of no return. So Big River it is.

The river is the boundless Murray, one of the most ambitious of waterways, which nearly links the Pacific and Indian oceans among all its other feats. In its day it was seen as the Life Force and at the very least the lifeblood of the people who depended on it for transport and irrigation.

"Captain Hindmarsh retired from the Navy and went inland to explore the waterways. He bought a property outside Albury, brought up his family, and pioneered the taming of the big river. That his vision of a system of inland waterways to bring life to the Dead Heart was not shared by the colonial government is sad but understandable.

"The Captain dies in 1900, on the eve of Federation, and his children are left with twenty acres of vineyards, a large paddle steamer and a dream of progress. What can they do? How this second generation handles its position and how they resolve the influence of their pioneer father is the stuff of Big River."

Alex Buzo, author of Big River.

"As I always preferred True Love Ways' to 'Rave On' Big River is a romantic drama which features in the cast. I'm pleased to say, two stalwarts from Makassar Reef, Sandy Gore and Liddy Clark."
Rep recapturing progression ... Recently-appointed Artistic Director of Canberra Rep, Ken Boucher, already has one production under his belt at Theatre 3. December saw William Gillette's *Sherlock Holmes*, a well-made melodrama based loosely on the Conan Doyle stories, packing them in and Boucher hopes to continue the success with the season announced for the first half of 1980.

"I thought it essential to do new or little-known pieces for a start. This partly reflects my interest in the nooks and crannies of dramatic history but more my conviction that Rep needs to recapture its progressive image and to develop a continuing commitment to new writing."

David Allen's *Joseph Conrad Goes Ashore* in February/March will be followed by the Australian premiere of Stephen Poliakoff's *Strawberry Fields*, a fascinating if rather paranoid play about the National Front, in April. A revival of Louis Esson's *Mother and Son* completes the season in May/June.

"I'm very pleased with the season," said Boucher. "Both the new plays will test the audience here in different ways and the Esson revival will I hope be a revelation of the riches right under our feet.

"We're already thinking ahead to the second half of the year; there are so many interesting pieces that Canberra has never seen, or not seen within living memory that programming is unusually difficult. Only the most obviously commercial plays tour here (and not even all of them) so the field is wide open."

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**Versatile Pamela Gibbons**, singer, dancer and actress is back with the Ensemble Theatre playing in their production of Dave Hare's *Knuckle*, which runs through to mid February — or longer should they have another sell-out success like *Chapter Two*. Pamela actually trained at the Ensemble before her notable successes in *A Chorus Line*, *The Oracle* on ABC and with Norman Gunston.

Along with *Knuckle*, the Ensemble will be launched into the eighties with another Sydney Festival aided season of new playwrights at the Stables during January. As before, the Festival is assisting the Ensemble's Playreading Bureau to get some of their best scripts before the public. The first will be George Hutchinson's *No Room For Dreamers*, about Sydney eccentric William Chidley. It first saw the light of day at the 1977 Playwrights' Conference, and here will be directed by Lex Marinos.

*TET* is the name of the next piece, by new playwright John Misto and following *TET* come two one-acters by Graeme Nixon, *Edward's Unfortunate Alliance* and *Forbidden Fruit*. These will be directed by Fred Simms who directed Nixon's previous two short plays which were in last year's Festival of Sydney Playwrights.

The final new play is the latest by John Summons, *The Sewer and the Reaper*, about Van Gogh, which Summons wrote while he was playwright in residence at the Ensemble (with the assistance of the Literature Board). His last play which was produced at the Ensemble in 1977 was *Lamb Of God*. (Soon to be a TA free playscript to subscribers.)

Although the company have been doing remarkably well in his absence, they are much looking forward to the return of Hayes Gordon after the final season of *Annie* in Adelaide.
Peter Batey, Reg Livermore’s longstanding director, is trying his hand at some rather different entertainment this month. He has co-written and is producing and directing his own mini-musical at Sydney’s Bondi Pavilion Theatre. John Mulder is the composer/lyricist of the show, which is called Songs My Mother Didn’t Teach Me — it starts on January 22 for a limited season.

Exactly what one can expect is not being revealed at this stage; all the writers will say is that it could be described as a fictitious musical biography. John Mulder will play his own compositions at the piano and the rest of the cast is made up of Liz Harris and Karen Johnson. Karen has just returned from a three month study tour in the USA, and will also choreograph Songs...

Batey and Mulder say they “are gently confident that there has not been anything quite like this little musical to date”. Songs My Mother Didn’t Teach Me obviously inspires confidence in others too, as it is being backed financially by the Elizabethan Theatre Trust.

Judgement. Hoopla is presenting the Australian premiere of the highly regarded and challenging play Judgement by Barry Collins as its first offering in 1980 in the Upstairs theatre. First performed at the Bristol old Vic with Peter O’Toole, a production of the play was then mounted by Great Britain’s National Theatre with Colin Blakely in the leading role.

The play is based on a true incident that occurred on the Russian front during the closing stages of World War II.

In the Hoopla production, Malcolm Robertson, who will be remembered for his highly praised solo performance in Chekhov’s Notes From An Old Man’s Diary at the Playbox Theatre last year, plays the role of the Russian officer.

Peter’s A Boy... Robert Stigges’ and Gary Von Egmond’s production of Peter Pan will shock traditionalists; instead of Peter being played by the usual principal girl, this production stars seventeen year old Hugh Munro. Munro started his acting career with the Genesian Theatre in Sydney at the age of twelve and Peter Pan has given him a flying (literally) start to his professional career. The production was a sell-out success when it played at the Regent in Sydney during the August school holidays, and looks set to do the same when it opens on January 3 at the Comedy in Melbourne.

Sally Boyden who plays Wendy has been described as “Australia’s newest and brightest young film star”. She is just back from Hollywood where she starred in the Lassie series, and her next film, Little Dragons is due to be launched shortly, during the run of Peter Pan.

Robina Beard (popularly known as Madge the manicurist in the TV commercials) has directed the show, drawing on her experience in many musical comedies. David Bradshaw is Captain Hook with Stan Kouros as the dog Nana. The ten kids who play the children of Never-Never Land come from almost as many different countries — appropriate when you note that J M Barrie left all the royalties of Peter Pan to London’s Great Ormond Street Hospital for children.
New Artistic Director

of La Boite, Malcolm Blaylock has recently moved to Queensland from South Australia. La Boite is in the middle of a subscriber season which was programmed by outgoing director, Rick Billinghurst, but which includes in it a South Australian season of two plays, Blow Fly Blow by Stephen Neasday and Roses in Due Season by Doreen Clark (which will play in repertory in late February and early March). Blaylock says the S.A. plays are there by complete coincidence and not for the boys from his home state.

The first season he will have planned starts half way through this year and will include a large number of new Australian plays, and at least one new Queensland play. Works that are being considered at the moment are Dorothy Hewett's Man From Muckinupin, Steven Sewell's Traitors, Jack by Jim McNeill, Clem Gorman's Manual of Trench Warfare and plays by David Allen. There is also the possibility of commissioning a work from a Queensland writer based on the Queensland political scene; that will happen either this year or next, depending on people and availability.

Malcolm Blaylock will be following the La Boite policy of encouraging new and Australian plays, particularly ones which are "innovative and socially relevant, which look at issues of contemporary life and raise questions about the social and organisational ways in which we live."

He believes that La Boite has its own niche in Brisbane theatre: "we are certainly not doing the same kind of plays as the QTC, in fact there is probably very little overlap in our audiences. Twelfth Night has perhaps not yet established exactly what it is doing, and there may be some overlap there for a bit, but I'm sure it will sort itself out. La Boite knows exactly what it is doing and why, and will not change."

John Gaden has been appointed Associate Director of the Sydney Theatre Company. He muses..."Why did I ever agree to do it? I was very happy being an actor. I could give my single-minded attention to the play, the part I was doing. I could work obsessively on one thing. I did my homework, went to rehearsals, blamed others if it went wrong, complained about standards, conditions, money, my health, fellow actors; worked hard and enjoyed every minute of it.

"Why change such an agreeable state of things?"

"I suppose it's because there's a chance to do something about the things that have often worried me and a fascination to see if the 'ideals' can work. I want to be part of a company that will be exciting, relevant, innovative and committed. I want it to be a place where actors of all ages and experience can work with a real sense of their creativity, learn and grow. I want to see funds going first and foremost to the creative people in the theatre. I want to see a theatre using as much Australian material as possible, not in a parochial way, but to flourish our writers and work confidently. I want a company that is continually experimenting and working with new forms. I want a company that is prepared to rediscover the old forms and the real values of our best traditions.

"Those ideals are all very well. The problem is to keep those principles uppermost under the pressure of running a company. Sometimes, it's hard enough to remember that you are there to put on plays, let alone in the best possible way with the highest possible standards. There are days when the sheer weight of administration seems to be what it's all about. But on the good days, when you seem to be getting somewhere near the ideals, it's very exciting and there seems a real possibility that we will be able to give our public the kind of theatre that we hope will give them joy and enrich their lives."
LETTERS

STC OMISSIONS

Dear Sir,

Susan Vile’s notice of our Company’s production of Oh What A Lovely War, Mate! has one surprising omission and since part of Theatre Australia’s brief is surely to be a record of the present for the future, I would like to point out what Ms Vile neglected to mention.

She referred to the production as an adaptation, which indeed it is, but I think she should have made clear the scale and adaptation, which indeed it is, but I think we included five new scenes and revised as wanted to give prominence to Australia’s past in the Great War, and consequently myself.

Vile neglected to mention. I would like to point out what Ms Enright mentioned.

Yours sincerely,

C.L. Wells,
Production Manager,
Performance, DDIAE, Qld.

OPPORTUNITIES TO EXCHANGE

Gentlemen:

Both your June and July issues arrived recently — always by slow boat, but nevertheless, welcome. We at ACT were glad to read Alex Buzo’s account of his experience with the second production of Makassar Reef here at ACT.

Before he left, he told us that Seattle audiences had responded very much like those in Melbourne. I am glad that after reflection he still feels that way, because sometimes our plays don’t cross the ocean well, and are distorted or exploited badly.

Similarly, Aynde Reid’s account of children’s theatre in the July issue reminded me that this time last year Barbara Manning and the Salamanca Theatre Company spent two weeks at ACT. They had some happy exchanges with our Young ACT Company which was rehearsing our fall tour production, as well as lively responses from our children’s audiences.

I am convinced that there is a potential understanding and compatibility between our subsidised theatres and our non-profit resident theatres which is not generally realised. Our resident theatres are a different breed from the commercial theatre which both David Williamson and Gordon Chater experienced this past year.

We should look for opportunities to share and exchange more and damn the costs.

Sincerely,

Gregory A Falls,
Artistic Director,
A Contemporary Theatre (ACT),
Seattle, Washington, USA.

TRAVELLING NORTH

Dear Sir,

In Mick Rodgers’ review of David Williamson’s play Travelling North in the October issue, he suggested that he doubted if this new play would be regarded as a success. It is probably worth pointing out that Travelling North looks like being as successful as Williamson’s last play, The Club. Its first season at the Nimrod was a complete sellout and it grossed more than The Club. Critically it was exceedingly well received. The play immediately toured to Canberra where the box office receipts exceeded the budgeted figure and the play is now running in Melbourne.

It will return to Sydney for a further season at the Theatre Royal in January. In addition the play has been licensed outside Australia: it will open in London in May where it will be directed by Michael Blakemore. As a result of the Nimrod season three expressions of interest for an American production were received and it is highly likely that a production in Washington or New York will be organised late 1980.

The London production will be preceded by the Nimrod production of The Club at the Hampstead Theatre.

Yours sincerely,

Tim Curnow,
Curtis Brown (Aust) Pty Ltd,
Paddington, NSW.

HOOPLA RESPOND TO SUMNER

Dear Sirs,

Like Noel Coward’s Gentle Alice (“over the fields and along the lane”) John Sumner is at it again. Actually we are flattered by his frequent, though misguided, attacks. Persistent scratching indicates an itch. (Pits the AGP, John’s previous seven year itch, now relegated to his “respect”). Please allow me to apply the healing calamine.

John’s basic point is that Hoopla merely duplicates the MTC and that Melbourne, like Birmingham, can only afford one company (albeit with up to five theatres). I take it as a compliment if we’re duplicating this on less than one tenth of the MTC’s subsidy we must be very good indeed.

There is no question that John has created the biggest and best Birmingham Repertory Company in the world. With dedication and skill he administers it well.

Hoopla’s aims are different, our product is different and our style is different. Hoopla’s primary focus is on the development and production of new Australian writing. In under three years we have presented over thirty new Australian plays (a large percentage of them premiers). Hoopla has presented works by such Australian authors as Richard Bradshaw, Ron Edwards, Tim Gooding, Gordon Graham, Frank Hatherley, Dorothy Hewett, John J Lee. Roger (Continued page 59)
Raymond Stanley

Is there too much mis-representation in entertainment industry advertising? A couple of months or so back, ads for a certain venue in Melbourne, for instance, indicated a performance by Phyllis Diller would be "the comedy event of the century". Dennis Walters had a "voice of gold", described the elderly Frances Faye as "a dynamic piano vocalist" (whatever that may be!) and "the divine original". How many times have we seen those ads claiming someone is "live on stage"? Would anyone pay to see an artiste "dead on stage"?

Did you know English director Frank Hamlett, already working with the MTC, is the author of a slim volume of very clever poems entitled Dinosaur Days? Entrepreneur Cliff Hocking was so impressed, he passed his copy on to Cleo Laine. So it is more than possible that on Cleo's next Australian tour she will feature some of the poems... Cost of putting on even the most modestly-cast play in London today has risen to something like £40,000 - that is for a cast of two only!

Looks as if Roger Hall is becoming New Zealand's answer to Neil Simon and Alan Ayckbourn. Following on his Flexitime (original title in New Zealand: Glare Time), Middle Age Spread and State Of The Play, his latest, The Cabinet of Dr. G. at the Roundhouse, is his first premiere at Auckland's Mercury on May 2. It is about a group of English migrants to New Zealand, in their twenties, who set themselves the task of opening their own theatre company.

Almost without precedent, the London critics excelled themselves in their reviews when Carol Channing opened at Drury Lane a little while back. As newspaper critics in Britain, "You would be well advised to wear sunglasses...for the perpetual smile of its star Carol Channing is so dazzling that it could well damage your eyesight". "This surely is the dolliest Dolly of all the gravel-voiced, saucer-eyed Carol Channing" averred another reviewer, whilst a third asked: "Can you imagine Bo-Peep with gavest night of your life" and she and Walters were "the sexiest two in show biz"? And how many times have we seen those ads claiming someone is "live on stage"? Would anyone pay to see an artiste "dead on stage"?

By Norman Kessel

An orchestra pit to accommodate six musicians is a last-minute addition to the $400,000 facade being given to Sydney's only regional boulevard playhouse, the Marian Street Theatre. It was there that Dinosaur Days had its world premiere at Auckland's Mercury on May 2. It is about a group of English migrants to New Zealand during the years 1958 to 1968.

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By Karl Levett

The decade of the anxious eighties is dawning, but it seems that nobody has told Broadway. In the vicinity of West 45th Street, the theatre marquees proudly indicate that the forties and fifties are still with us.

Revivals of musicals of those two decades are returning with a vengeance. Already we have *The Most Happy Fella* and *Peter Pan* (with Sandy Duncan as Peter), and to come later in the season are *Oklahoma* and *West Side Story*. Planned for next season is *Can-Can* with Zizi Jeanmaire. There is even talk on the Rialto of revivals of *My Fair Lady* with Rex Harrison and *Camelot* with Richard Burton. The Grey Panthers seem to have a hand in all this.

Even the new shows seem to be caught in this time warp. *Sugar Babies* is a mock tribute to old-time burlesque and features Mickey Rooney as the top banana and Ann Miller tapping her tip-top toes. The show is a clever mixture of brass and bad taste, and almost succeeds in dispersing the suspicion that the true burlesque was never quite like this.

The 1940’s *Radio Hour* is a further looking back through Nostalgia’s distortion mirror. We are in the golden age of big time bands as we watch the participants in a Christmas 1942 broadcast of a tacky radio show. The strength of the show is the score by Kern, Arlen, Rodgers and all, sung by a talented team of Broadway newcomers.

The Fifties was the era of the innocent sex comedy and the Moon is Blue tradition is currently well represented by Bernard Slade’s *Romantic Comedy*. Mr Slade seems to favour Big Names and this time around he has Anthony Perkins and Mia Farrow as a pair of collaborating playwrights. We watch Ms Farrow as a mousey fourth-grade English teacher from Vermont meet, on the very day he is getting married, a playwright she has long idolised. They team up to co-author Broadway hits and flops, spending 10 years trying to decide between love and friendship, while she grown from school marm to sophisticate and he goes from Mr Clean to slob.

In the first scene Mr Perkins backwardly bares himself and so all too soon does Mr Slade as the play’s creaky construction exposes all the cliches of the genre. Credibility soon evaporates and neither of the play’s stars has the requisite charm or skill to blind us to the play’s shortcomings.

Mr Perkins alternates between bitchy wit and petulance, while Ms Farrow demonstrates that during her two years with the Royal Shakespeare Company she at least learnt to speak up loudly and clearly. In the circumstances it isn’t enough. There is just no chemistry between the two players so that *Romantic Comedy* offers little romance and even less comedy.

It is significant to note, however, that the play looks like being a bona fide hit. The public in its present hunger for comedies “as they used to be” is obviously ready to forgive a great deal.

Glancing backward has never been the sight line of Off-Broadway, but in several of this season’s new plays there is a discernible trend towards Ibsen style naturalism.

Ibsen probably never pictured himself in a Brooklyn taxi garage which is the setting for Howard Waxman’s *Knuckle Sandwich*. The title is slang for a punch in the mouth which is what Fate seems to be doing to the play’s hero as crisis follows crisis in his brawling, affectionate and loud Jewish family. The play as yet is rough hewn but Mr Waxman has an ear for Brooklynese and an ability to create a set of characters that are varied and convincing. He also succeeds in catching a recent period, 1975 and the end of the Vietnamese War, while spotlighting the specific problems of his hero Harry, a perennial Sixties child.

Sense of period is also one of the several strengths of *Ladyhouse Blues* by Kevin O’Morrison. We are in a kitchen in St. Louis in 1919 watching a widow and her four grown daughters during a heatwave. They wait for the son of the house to return from war. If the situation looks languid and sentimental, the play is certainly not. It is charged with energy, while displaying wonderfully natural variations in mood and colour. The five woman cast is exemplary with Jo Henderson as the mother giving a fireworks performance. *Ladyhouse Blues* is clearly the best new play of the season so far and Mr O’Morrison is someone we should get to know better. His clear vision of that 1919 St. Louis kitchen and its occupants is a backward glance that is filled with vitality, affection and truth. By providing an ordinary picture composed of many details of character, time and place, Kevin O’Morrison reminds us that looking back can provide a special vision of its own.
The return of June Jago

By Pamela Ruskin

For those of us who saw the original production of Ray Lawler’s *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, June Jago is indelibly printed on our minds as Olive, though she played many other roles too for the Elizabethan Theatre Trust, Williamson’s, for Garnet Carroll and for Kenn Brodziak. When John Sumner took the MTC, or the UTRC as it was then, production of *The Doll* to London in 1957, almost two years after its Melbourne opening, June Jago went with it, with the rest of the cast at Olivier’s behest, to open at the New Theatre (now the Albery). It ran for seven and a half months and, says June, “It could have run much longer but it was taken off for transfer to Broadway where it wasn’t understood by American audiences and flopped in a three and a half week season.”

While playing in London, June was offered another role and decided to stay on, “not so much by intent but because work was offering. I decided I wanted to study classical work and there wasn’t much around in Australia at the time.” She remained in England until mid-1979, returning only with Keith Michell’s Chichester Company for a brief tour a couple of years ago.

She decided to come back to Australia after talking to John Sumner during his 1978 sabbatical. He asked her to join the MTC for the following year’s season and she was cast as Mrs Malaprop in *The Rivals* at Athenaeum 1, as Gertrude in Sumner’s production of *Hamlet* in the small upstairs Athenaeum 2 theatre, and will open in early February as Maggie in Harold Brighouse’s celebrated play, *Hobson’s Choice*, to be produced by English director, Frank Hauser. Will she stay beyond one season? It looks like it: “I expect I will because John intends to reproduce *Hamlet* in the large auditorium of the Athenaeum, probably in April.”

June Jago herself, has changed somewhat since she left Australia. Unless my memory has played me false, she has fined down considerably and is today a very svelte woman. She is elegant, articulate and full of enthusiasm for the changed scene in the Australia theatre.

We discuss the main changes she observes after twenty years away. “The plays that are being done now would not have been possible then. The public only wanted plays that were light and entertaining. One never heard plays discussed as one does now. I don’t think young people were as interested in the theatre as they are today. There is an enormous difference too in the standard of design. The dressing and sets are impeccable. It seems to me the changes in twenty two years are far greater than I would have thought possible in that time.”

June believes that all this says a lot about Australians as well as it does about the theatre. “I find the young actors here have a marvellous vitality and energy. They are so hardworking and very imaginative and creative and I think that is a reflection of Australians generally.”

Working in England for so long gave June a vast range of experience, working with outstanding companies and remarkable directors. “Possibly the experience that taught me most was working with the Experimental (Continued over)
Group attached to the Royal Shakespeare Company. Peter Brook was the director and he made us question everything we had ever said or done and everything we were doing at the time. A continuing influence was Robin Phillips who is now Artistic Director of the Stratford Ontario Theatre. I first met him when I was working with the Bristol Old Vic. He was only about twenty, just graduated from the Bristol Old Vic school but he knew more about every facet of the theatre even then than I shall ever know. He directed me in a very difficult Lorca play, The House of Bernarda Alba in which I played the title role. It was a superb production. The play had been translated by Tom Stoppard and in the cast were Penelope Keith and Mia Farrow. I also worked with him at Chichester in a lovely production of Christopher Fry's The Lady's Not For Burning and also The Beggar's Opera.

We discuss the advantages of working in England particularly in the classics. "I think the most impressive and valuable aspect is that you work with a nucleus of actors who never put a foot wrong. Even if the script and the director are bad, they still turn on a marvellous performance."

What then are June's pluses as far as Australia is concerned? "It is good to be working with John Sumner again and, it is also marvellous to be with Ray and to see him acting again after so long. It's almost a miracle to have been involved in a production like John's Hamlet. What was different about it? Well, firstly the proximity of the audience in a small theatre that seats only 100 people. It was a very vital performance and although it ran for three and a half hours, people said that the time passed very quickly. As an actor, I could feel the attention and concentration of the audience as if we were all bandied together."

Olive in The Doll remains one of June's favourite parts and one of the best she thinks she's ever done. "Yes, I'd love to do it again. I've never seen the trilogy because I was in England when it was done but I read Kids and recently and I said to Ray that I felt I was reading something I'd lived through. I had imagined Olive as a young girl. Other Times didn't have that impact because I'd never really thought of Olive as she was during the war. The Doll itself is a wonderful play because it is universal — it is about the terrible reckoning of middle age when you realise that your dreams haven't been fulfilled and you haven't really achieved what you hoped and expected to achieve."

Looking to the future, June hopes to do more classical plays here because they are more demanding and more rewarding. One always finds something new in them. In the meantime, when not working she likes to swim which she thinks is the most marvellous and relaxing exercise, to walk and to talk to people with gardens about their gardens. "I haven't got a garden of my own at the moment but I hope to have one in time. I really love gardening and talking to experts about them." A brisk, very fit woman, June Jago is full of laughter and good humour. She listens to me as I somewhat guiltily express a faint-hearted attitude to all forms of physical fitness. "That just isn't good enough! Now you must start walking and swimming! It's most important." Suitably cowed, I make promises I have not the faintest intention of keeping.

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Donald McDonald — AGC Paradine

By Robert Page

A partnership between one of the Australia's biggest financial houses and an entrepreneurial company set up by world media personality David Frot makes the result, AGC-Paradine, a major operator in the commercial theatre world.

Last year they had the Debbie Reynolds Las Vegas Show, PS Your Cat Is Dead with Robin Ramsay, and Robin Archer in Tonight Lola Blau. The original company Paradine Patterson had largely been concerned with promoting rock concerts and the change came, not when AGC entered the arrangement, but when Donald McDonald replaced Pat Condon as managing director.

The finance company went into the entertainment business for the public relations benefit of associating themselves with the pleasurable things in people's lives, and name exposure. But AGC did not want to be passive patrons, they chose instead a much more active role. McDonald thought their image should be more diverse and he was at first appointed to develop a classical music and theatre division. As things turned out he was running the whole box and dice within six weeks.

Not only did McDonald's vision suit his own interests — "my knowledge of rock music isn't famous" — but the move to more middle market product coincided with the pop concert business becoming increasingly unreliable. Now, though he works to a board of representatives from both partners, McDonald is the lynchpin.

For all that he is a modest, quietly spoken, svelte figure just over forty. His formal training after a commerce degree at the University of NSW, is as a chartered accountant. "But even then there was a foreboding of the future with my principle client being Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer." Despite having left the Opera amidst circumstances as stormy as those leading to the resignation of Hemmings — "I was part of the famous or infamous list of Opera GMs which is now getting to be fairly longish" — and still giving evidence about Computicket, his scrupulous integrity and outward reserve have kept his reputation intact.

The phrase "I can never see myself as playing a dramatic role" sums up his modus vivendi.

As a manager he sees his job as one of administrative control to allow as much freedom to creative persons to fulfill their function "Without seeming to or seeking to interfere with that artistic freedom." It was such an approach which led to the establishment of the Sydney String Quartet, though characteristically he adds "but their success if of their own winning", the Australian Chamber Orchestra, of which he remains a director, and his involvement with the Australian National Playwrights Conference as the administrator of the 1980 event.

Passing remarks on the companies he has worked for should be recorded:

On the Elizabeth Theatre Trust: "In 1969 it was the twilight of one heydey — I'm sure it will have several — but that was when it lost centralised control of the opera and dance companies."

(Continued page 15)
By Donna Sadka

The first four plays in which Richard Tulloch performed, while a Melbourne law student circa 1970, were all early Hibberd — which may or may not be a significant clue to the kind of work he now does so successfully in Theatre in Education.

He never practised law but subsequently did a Dip Ed. during which he undertook a project making plays each morning with fifty 4 to 6 year olds in a high rise flat area in Carlton.

He says it all seems very basic now and fairly rough and ready but they involved the children by devising a series of different situations using the same characters. Each session was followed by workshops, painting and making things. It was his entry into children’s theatre.

Joining the Magic Mushroom mime troupe in 1975 expanded his range, working with pre-school to teenagers, at community centre, schools, and prisons, presenting “fairly structured things,” to events. Regular work with improvisation teacher David Lander provided the other necessary skill.

At that time Tulloch says there was a big surge of interest in children’s theatre. “People recognised the value of getting kids involved and participating and of watching what they did in performance rather than just the spot reactions of panto. From there it moved to having them play roles, of thinking themselves into situations. Improvisation allowed actors enough flexibility to be aware and sensitive to the kids’ thoughts and actions rather than concentrating on their own performances in a tightly scripted play. In improvisational performance you can talk to each kid in character, draw them out and keep them going.”

Later in England he saw the development of “fairly political” groups doing issue plays on such topics as pollution or the unions which were aimed at making the children socially aware. Although only an observer most of the time he saw a lot of groups in action and became aware of the great importance of feeling as a teaching aid. He calls it the guts of drama, which, combined with information, can get children to identify and to learn.

He admits he’s rather suspicious of documentary theatre “with all the laughs coming from theatrical tricks and dance routines. If you’ve real characters and keep them strongly representing one point of view it’s very effective, despite possible flaws like over-simplification or melodramatic situations.”

Although Dorothy Heathcote’s visit to Australia was a big factor in increased recognition of TIE he believes we’ve still a long way to go before it is fully exploited in schools.

“There are a lot of drama teachers being trained but I think it’s still not really accepted by the other staff members as being important. They see drama as the fun period, like sport or music. Kids still go to drama periods, instead of drama teachers being got in to help with social studies projects for instance. There are very few schools where a group of teachers can work with a group of kids, sometimes in two or three classes, and combine their resources with a drama teacher.”

An actor and musician as well as a writer, Tulloch spent eighteen months with The Mime and Modern Dance Troupe in Holland and this year played the juvenile lead opposite Noni Hazlehurst in the premiere of Dorothy Hewett’s Man From Muckinapin at the Playhouse. He has been with the TIE team there for two years — first as their writer and subsequently taking over as director when Andrew Ross left.

He sees a constant need for TIE practitioners to keep themselves fresh and alive by seeking new writers, new themes and new theatrical forms.

The Playhouse team has three shows currently in performance all of which he has written and directed — The Dick and Dora Show, Kaspajack and The Real Mr J — but he obviously derives especial satisfaction from the two plays he has done dealing with aboriginal problems. Both are set in WA and both used some aboriginal performers. Although he wrote the first, Red Earth (a lively enactment of the pressures on both blacks and whites in the early days) he found working with aboriginal writer Jack Davis on Kullack (Home) intensely rewarding.

“Jack’s background knowledge was so different. He’s quite strong on dialogue and knew about all sorts of things we (he and Ross) couldn’t have a hope of knowing. Our job was to make it vivid with visual ideas and relating it to the kids.”

Something similar to this is one of his priorities for 1980 — to work with a writer who need know nothing about theatre but “a lot about something else” (women in society? unemployed youth?), and to act as theatrical interlocutor between him and the children.

He also wants to do one play with special schools or deaf children, “something with a particular project that can’t possibly pay for itself.”

“Ideally I’d like three companies. The demand is so constant we can’t hope to meet it. Our shows are booked out almost within days of being advertised.”

Which may be frustrating for the company but says a lot for the quality of the work which he and his team have to offer.
On the Opera Company: "The problems have been viewed in personal terms...but I think they actually spring from a failure to basically conceptualise what sort of company it can be within the resource framework and the geographical demands of this...As it stood then and as it stands now it's an equation that can't be balanced...and GM's will continue to come and go. It was so unhappy for me that I nearly decided to leave the whole entertainment field."

On Musica Viva: "When it was set up it was the result of far sighted vision...it proved to be a period of enormous professional happiness for me."

On Computicket: "Intellectually I believed and still believe in computerised box offices...but I realised fairly early on that I had committed one of those classic sins of miscasting myself in a role."

The twin major problems which McDonald sees for commercial theatre, are, firstly the size of the market — Sydney though comparable with a mid-west US town in population mounts immensely more theatre — and secondly the "gross revenue potential", when top ticket prices on Broadway are now $26 compared to $13-14 here. He feels that there must be an increase, something the Ballet and Opera have already recognised, but needs the co-operation of the subsidised drama companies if prices are to be raised to an economic level. AGC-Paradine itself does not consider money of over riding concern though they would "prefer not to lose too much".

Looking to the future, McDonald was asked if Ken Brodziak's announced retirement affected their thinking. "It's hard to imagine Ken Brodziak ever completely retiring...but there is a potential vacuum...and I wouldn't deny that his going is a factor in long term planning."

So what are they lining up for 1980? AGC Paradine are managing the Sydney season of the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra and in March/April the Komische Opera Ballet from Berlin in a major joint venture with the Adelaide Festival Trust. "It's a whole new direction," says McDonald, "for AGC Paradine to be involved with a major European dance company."

Their major theatrical venture is They're Playing Our Song by Neil Simon, Marvin Hamlisch and Carol Bayer Sager, "the current gold-plated hit on Broadway," scheduled to open in Sydney, in July.

It's a two hander which marvellously integrates the songs in that the characters are a lyricist and songwriter, and is a genuine musical comedy with plenty of laughs. Singer actors of the standing needed, with the length of the run and tours envisaged, means that already two casts are being sought.

AGC-Paradine has no clear policy on Australian content but it is one of McDonald's own concerns to be involved in as much local product as possible. At the moment there are negotiations going on for a slice of an existing Australian musical. That kind of joint venture with other promoters here and a decrease in the present hectic competition, will, he believes, be a major new step in the eighties.
Tommy Gun and Jezelle Morgan play Sid Vicious and Nancy in a scene from 'The Rock and Roll Death Show'.
Nothing so popular as vaudeville could ever really die. Now it has raised its head again in a form that is descended from the Tiv and is as up to date as tomorrow. Outrageous, bawdy, and filled with theatrical camp it looks unstoppable and on the brink of major public exposure. Here Johnny Allen looks at what led to the most important grass roots movement since Ben Fuller switched off his circuit.

Fifi L’Amour and Jandy Rainbow. Photo: Marise Thorby.
Geoffrey Clendon and Boom Boom La Bern. Photo Marise Thorby.
Cabaret Conspiracy began in February 1979 as a response by performers to the lack of venues, opportunities and management for their art.

Some ten or a dozen acts came together and began regular Sunday night shows in a back street coffee shop called Garibaldi's in Darlinghurst.

The old style vaudeville format of individual artists presenting their acts caught fire, and the Sunday night shows soon became packed. The cabaret quickly gained a reputation for bawdy, outrageous shows, sometimes awful, but with flashes of real brilliance and showcasing the best new talent in town.

The early shows gained much of their flavour from the two drag comperes, Doris and Mel, using bad taste and sexual innuendo (sometimes as subtle as a sledge hammer!) to make its points, in the best tradition of cabaret. Doris Fish had established Sylvia and the Synthetics, Sydney's original drag-mime outrage, and had performed with The Tubes in San Francisco - good qualifications for the anarchistic, anti-establishment stance taken by the cabaret.

As more performers and artists were attracted by the spirit of the cabaret, it began testing its strength with massive downtown shows - "with a cast of thousands and a budget of twenty cents."

For a while the cabaret brought back to Sydney what it had been lacking since the good old days of Revue - a sense of daring, outrage, and grandiose attempts at the impossible.

Sometimes the results were horrific, sometimes spectacularly successful, but always interesting! A new genre had been born, with its roots in the traditional cabaret of Paris and Berlin in the thirties, but an eye and an ear for the eighties.

The character of the cabaret changed when Doris left, first to take a role in the Gay Theatre Company's production of As Time Goes By, and then to return to San Francisco to work with cabaret groups there.

During those hectic six months, the cabaret gave over one hundred and fifty performers their ten minutes of stardom on the tiny stage at Garibaldi's - some fledgling amateurs, some seasoned troopers; some never to be seen again, others to go on and establish remarkable careers.

One of the early highlights was the arrival of two members of the Lindsay Kemp Company from England - Michael Matou and Kevin English. They quickly established a following within the cabaret, and combined with one of its stars and founding members, Fifi L'Amour, to form their own company Sideshow.

Sideshow went on to become one of the most exciting new companies in the country, producing Cafe Debris in November, and opening for a six week season with Burlesco at the Nimrod in December.

Geoff Kelso and Lance Curtis, the comedy duo responsible for the Dr Poo series on radio station 2JJ, went on to do their own highly successful two man shows in many venues around Sydney.

Boom Boom La Bern catapulted from a near-disastrous first performance with the cabaret to becoming one of its greatest stars, mounting her own one-woman show and creating a following which indicates a major career in the making.

To cope with this expansion of its performers and their talents, the cabaret started its own agency in July, and opened its own showcase venue, Palms at Taylor Square, in August.

In three months, Palms presented over thirty individual shows, including Sideshow's The End of the Road Show, Kelso and Curtis' Small Furry Animals, Mike Mullins' Kitsch: Or But Please Be Careful, and presented visitors from interstate including Tim McKew from Melbourne and Limbs Dance Company from New Zealand.

The cabaret undertook its first tour to Melbourne in August, playing the Flying Trapeze, the Pram Factory, the Crystal Ballroom and the upstairs room at the Last Laugh.

In November /December the cabaret toured to the Australian Drama Festival in Adelaide, and participated in a three states shows with performers from Melbourne and Adelaide.

The cabaret has dispersed as various members have become more professional and more focused on their aims. It still continues its monthly "new faces" show, and has had the effect of opening up other venues around town.

As this article goes to print, we await the return of Doris Fish, this time with an entire new show from San Francisco - Sluts A Go Go!

The parent body of the cabaret, Aquarius Youth Service, has been granted a lease on the old Gladstone Hotel in William Street at Kings Cross, and the intention to turn the ground floor into an alternative cabaret-style venue, where the shows can be put on a more sound financial basis, and visiting companies from overseas and interstate can be given a home. Shows under negotiation include Alan Pentland's Sherazz Cabaret and Michael Drennan's Absolute Pop from Melbourne, and the return of the irresistible Busby Berkelyes from Europe.

In the nine months of its existence, the cabaret has produced over one hundred new shows, and for all its infant arrogance and rawness has succeeded by sheer enthusiasm in creating a genuine new theatre movement in Sydney. Alternative theatre is alive again, and with its ability and willingness to take risks, is preparing the way for the theatre of the eighties.

The wedding of Doris Fish on Cabaret Conspiracy - Doris Fish, George Sima Photo: Marise Thorby.
THE FESTIVAL OF SYDNEY

BY STEPHEN HALL
The Festival of Sydney is only four years old and, therefore, the youngest in Australia.

When I was invited to consider a festival for Sydney in late 1975 I had to give a great deal of thought as to whether a city as large and as varied in its day-to-day artistic activity needed a festival at all, and, if so, what sort. It was very clear in my mind that there should be no attempt to recreate another arts festival when cities such as Adelaide and Perth already did this sort of thing extremely well and were by their size a more intimate arena in which such arts festivals normally flourish.

The idea of duplicating a Sydney Moomba did not appeal either, although I thought this might have been the right course to follow when the then Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, suggested that a new festival for Sydney should perhaps be called "Symba"!

In the ensuing months before a formal proposal was put to my parent body, The Sydney Committee, I had talks with the directors of various arts organisations, with gallery directors, with tourism, hotel and restaurant leaders, and with retailers and other business leaders.

Research was carried out into our population patterns, holiday patterns, weather patterns, and any other factors that could conceivably affect the time and type of festival we should have.

It was a dictionary definition of a festival as, "the time when a city or place celebrates itself with feasting, cultural events and sporting events" that led me to my first conclusion. Any new festival for Sydney would have to take place at a time when the city was at its best.

As Sydney is predominantly an outdoor city and a city of the harbour, high summer presented itself as a logical period. High summer seemed also to fit many other criteria. It is a time when the bulk of our population is on leave and by bulk, I mean the 55 per cent of the population under the age of 25. This period also appealed to retailers, hoteliers and the tourist industry in general. As for arts organisations, I heard the old catch cry that "nobody goes to the theatre in summer", quite ignoring the fact that since 1973-74 when the Australian Opera mounted the first of its now annual Summer Season, this hoary old theatrical chestnut had been disproved.

Another factor that finally clinched our choice of January as the month in which to hold the new festival, was the fact that summer in Sydney coincided with the northern hemisphere winter and even four years ago one could confidently predict that international air fares would come down in price and that Sydney could become a popular destination for visitors from northern climes.

The logical curtain-up provided by a giant New Year's Eve celebration around the Opera House and the grand finale on the Australia Day public holiday at the end of the month provided me with the theatrical framework I felt the month needed. But what sort of festival was the Festival of Sydney to be?

During part of 1975 I had spent many nights visiting outer suburban high schools assessing the schools' performances of musical plays on behalf of the Arts Council of New South Wales. During these months I had the opportunity to talk at first hand to many would-be young performers and I quickly realised how few of them ever visited the inner city itself or ever attended a professional performance in a city theatre.

Some festival directors have been heard to say that they are unashamedly elitist but as somebody who had worked for the past thirteen years in opera, I had come to realise that the sight of full houses every night can lull one into a sense of false security and even make one believe that a large section of the community is enjoying the performances. Regrettably this is not the case; the man in the street, raising a family on an ordinary wage, does not have spare cash to attend live theatre unless as an occasional treat.

So in many ways the Festival of Sydney began with two aims: one of a genuine artistic nature, the other of a social kind. We determined that instead of trying to graft overseas attractions on to an already full theatrical life, we would endeavour to encourage additional local artistic activity at the highest level. We would also aim, and here our social conscience came in, to present as many performances as possible free to the public at large.

How have these two policies succeeded? That our first year had problems is well known but lessons learned are best not repeated and mistakes made in that first year were costly in personal and financial terms. In the subsequent two years significant advances have been made and I would say the highlights of these have been the opening each New Year's Eve at the Sydney Opera House which has been an almost unqualified success from the outset and to quote Premier Wran, "the first time the Opera House was truly opened to the public of Sydney".

The success of the Hyde Park Festival Village concept, where throughout the month performers and all types from chamber musicians and dancers, to mime, puppet and street theatre groups, perform in an atmosphere of easy conviviality in light, airy structures, or just under the trees, has also been very successful. Provision of numerous activities for very young children has made it possible for thousands of families to spend a happy and even instructional and uplifting day together in Hyde Park. Last year an estimated 900,000 people attended the hundreds of performances and activities that took place there throughout the month.

The use of Clark Island for presentation of plays for children sponsored by the Festival and produced by the Nimrod Theatre has again provided many thousands of
families with an unique opportunity to enjoy one of the loveliest aspects of their city and at the same time share a theatrical experience.

The growing popularity of the Sydney International Jazz Festival, which this year will take place at the York Theatre in the Seymour Centre, has been a refreshing expansion of an important area of musical expression.

Similarly, the 1980 Festival will see the third Festival of Folklife with top folk performers from overseas and Australia giving ten concerts in the Concert Hall of the Sydney Opera House.

Last year's funding of four new Australian plays, which were presented by the Ensemble Theatre at The Stables, gave four Australian writers professional productions of their works that might otherwise not have taken place. This highly successful experiment will be continued this year with another four new Australian plays.

In 1980 the Festival will break further new ground in presenting two new chamber orchestra groups to the Sydney public. Called respectively The Sydney Virtuosi and The Festival of Sydney Orchestra, these groups will give a total of six concerts in the newly air-conditioned Sydney Town Hall.

Roger Woodward will perform the complete cycle of Beethoven piano sonatas over eight concerts and his choice of this programme marries well with the ABC's two Festival concerts in which five young Australian pianists will play the five Beethoven piano concertos with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

The way the city's art galleries have got behind the Festival to mount special exhibitions on our behalf has also been heartening. Here again, the impetus has largely been local and inspiration has not always been sought from overseas. Two years ago an exhibition of private treasures culled from New South Wales homes produced one of the most successful exhibitions ever mounted at David Jones' Gallery. This year, the Australian Women's Weekly's collection of 31 works by Conrad Martens will be shown to the public for the first time at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, together with The Bulletin's unique collection of antique silver.

But all of the above are items of relative public interest only; the greatest success of The Festival of Sydney has been its series of public events. In addition to the vast numbers who have daily attended the Hyde Park Festival Village, tens of thousands have turned out to each of the weekend spectaculars we have staged.

Finally, therefore, I express the opinion that, to be a total success, a Festival must appeal to all tastes. Promotion of new plays, new music and new dance are important; however, it is equally important that the Festival must appeal to all tastes. Promotion of new plays, new music and new dance are important; however, it is equally important that the Festival belong to its people and seek its inspirational sources from their roots. As well as our cultural activities we have tried unashamedly to entertain, divert and stimulate the man in the street.

Only time will tell whether this formula has been truly successful and of lasting impact. For the moment all we can say is that the people seem to like it an, in the words of a Sydney Morning Herald editorial, "Sydney has taken its Festival to its heart."
The Sunny South works. That's reason enough for the Sydney Theatre Company to launch itself with this almost antique goldfields' melodrama. It's not just that The Sunny South was a great hit of the Australian stage, or that it's set in Australia, or that it's densely populated with Australian types which justifies revival. The point is that The Sunny South is a wonderful, cranky, awkward and spectacular piece of theatre.

Richard Wherrett says in the blurb in the company's subscription brochure that theatre, "must exist in the present tense." It's stretching the point with The Sunny South, but you can see what Wherrett is getting at. Every time the dandified servant Smiffers enters (with his head in The Times) to start the show against all the rules of his class with a string of (dreadful) bon mots, the tense is the present. It is alive now.

"I troubles my patrons very little with my serceity," says Smiffers as the servants bells ring unanswered. "I lets 'em 'elp themselves as much as possible. It does 'em good — gets hoff their superlous fat!" And somehow against all the laws of good sense, and some of the fundamentals of dramatic development, The Sunny South gets itself living and breathing from Chester House, England, to the goldfields, through brushes with bush rangers, unexplained love entanglements and a few songs to the final ambush on the Zig Zag railway.

The spectacular possibilities of The Sunny South attracted directors to the play before Wherrett. It was published in 1975 (for the first time - from a text found in the Lord Chamberlain's office) by Currency in a beautiful edition by Margaret Williams. A couple of years later there was a season by SUDS at Sydney University. Jim
Sharman toyed with the idea of launching the Paris Company with *The Sunny South*, but it waited for Wherrett to stage the first full-scale production for eighty years.

It needs a huge production. In the 1880s and 1890s handbills offered FIVE HUGE SENSATIONS in Darrell's Anglo-Australian drama — The Diggings Scene! The Bank Smash! The Battle in the Bush! The Bushranger's Lair! The Zig Zag railway!

It was this last scene in which Darrell surpassed himself. The colony was immensely proud of the vertical shunting yard that pulled and shoved trains up the west face of the Blue Mountains at Lithgow. Darrell set his "scene of unparalleled grandeur" there in the dead of the night. Just as the true lovers, married at last, were setting out for England with their gold nugget in the boot, their farewells are interrupted by the morse: STOP CHESTER'S SPECIAL TRAIN AT ALL HAZARDS. DANGER!

"Morley (hero): You'd better stay to look after the girls."

"Ivo (of the genus new chum): I beg your pardon!"

"Morley: You'd better stay to look after the women."

"Ivo: No. I think not — we'll leave Ben."

"Brewer (a representative digger): No. I'm a digger I am, and I'll be darned if you do."

"Chester (an English gentleman): Morley, this is a foolish risk you're running. Leave the authorities to deal with the scoundrel and his gang."

"Morley: And perhaps lose a chance of catching him? No — there's no satisfaction for me or mine while that villain lives. 'Tis a duel to the death between us and I'll not baulk him of this meeting. (To Jinks - a son of the soil) Telegraph that our special will go on as arranged and let their train meet us at the foot of the Zig Zag."

But if *The Sunny South* were just an evening of this heroic stuff it would be stale before interval. Two things come to its rescue. The first is Bubs. Bubs Berkley (bred in the bush) is tough and resourceful but with impeccable manners. Carried through the Maori wars in an ammunition box and raised by her father's best mate, Bubs is every inch a lady. She may offer to throw the bailiffs into the fishpond, and have an easy familiarity with the goldminers, but rough times have not obscured her qualities. And when the bushrangers (who are in cahoots with the bailiffs that threw the Chesters out of Chester House) kidnap Bubs, she shows remarkable pluck.

"Duggan (a bushranger): Hold on you. Stand where you are. Try the bolting dodge, and woman or no woman, I'll drop yer a stiff in yer tracks. You know me."

"Bubs: I do."

"Duggan: Ha ha! You do! Ha ha! And that frightens the run out of you."

"Bubs: It does not."

"Duggan: It does. Why don't you bolt now?"

"Bubs: Because the blood that's in me won't let me run even from such a cowardly thief as you."

"Duggan: What! Curse it, the old pride that thwarted and beat me from the start."

(A note to Ph D students who in the next few years will no doubt cluster round this only extant Darrell text: 24 THEATRE AUSTRALIA JANUARY 1980
university controlled research indicates that Bubs was named after The Blanche Barkly, a nuggett of 1,743.13 oz discovered Kingower, 27 August, 1857.)

Bubs sets The Sunny South apart. But there is something in the feel of the text that also rescues it from mere heroics. Margaret Williams in her introduction to the Currency edition puts this down to the tradition of Australian melodrama.

Perhaps life just didn’t seem so black and intense to a healthy young colony enjoying a new affluence and sophistication, and beginning to romanticise its own past. If there is one distinctive quality of Australian melodrama it is geniality, a relaxed good humour which pervades the whole and makes the contortions of the plot and machinations of villainy looked rather unnecessarily fanatic by comparison.

This sunny geniality is established by a wonderful parade of stock figures: Narrow Creek Joe (a tintinabulist), Clarice Chester (born in the purple), Monte Jack (a three card man), Black Tracker Jim (a native companion), but again there is something more to it than that. The Sunny South taps a theme as old as Australian literature which is still, in subtle disguises, potent today: that we may live in Australia, but we’re not missing out.

In The Sunny South we are not cut off from English society: Matt Morley, hero, is the nephew and heir of Worthy Chester. We’re as close to the Queen on the diggings as we would be in Pall Mall: in distinction to all that Eureka business George Darrell has his miners toasting Victoria at the bush picnic. We’re not, obviously, missing out on money —

"Ben: I’m a digger, I am, and I aint much on palaver, but what I says I means and what I says I does, and what I says, old pal is as how we’ve struck it hot — that’s what we have, struck it hot.

"Bubs: Good for you, Benny old man. We’re in."

And at the end, in the days before darkies made life hell for Conservative governments and before even the working holiday was abolished, the heroes and heroines of The Sunny South could go home at the end of it all. There was no resentment; it was expected of the better sort —

"Jinks: You’re all going with lumps of money and a galaxy of beauty. You leave many friends behind you who wish you well, but there is one young gent — eh hem — who wishes you well, who can’t say much but who thinks the more, for he’s losing the best friend he has in the world, and his heart’s up in his throat and the briny’s in his eyes, and he says goodbye and God bless you, and — and his loot is on his native land, and his name’s Jinks."

The Sunny South takes a terrible toll of blood capsules, pistol caps, smoke pellets, body black and train noises. It is a challenge to any company, and its naivety masks great technical difficulties. For Sydney audiences, no matter how splendid Wherrett’s production may be, the real test will be the Zig Zag. What “Never, never, never, never” is to Lear, and hell is to Don Giovanni, the Zig Zag derailment is to Sunny South. How will he do it? And will the Opera House of 1980 meet the challenges the Sydney Opera House took in its stride at the premiere in 1885?
Most writers look back on their first works in embarrassment. So do I. But with Pirates at the Barn I look back also in continuing, unabated astonishment.

A few years ago someone described this little play for kids as an "Australian children's theatre classic". In that it is 32 years old this year, I suppose it has acquired a patina of venerability and, in that it must have been seen by more people and performed more times than any other Australian play — bar none, it must have achieved some sort of status. But to me the whole thing is best described as an astonishing fluke.

Theatrically, the late 'forties when Pirates had its birth, was a rather astonishing period. One is amazed by the amount of promise it held, and depressed by the way it fizzled out. A lot of this theatrical burgeoning was due, no doubt, to post war nationalism and the "Golden Age" optimism which Chifley promised, part of which was an official enthusiasm for a "national theatre". Everyone was talking about it. We all believed it was about to happen. With the rumours of the granting of subsidies floating all over Sydney, the standard of "little theatre" was surprisingly high. The Australian play — bar none, it must have been seen by more people and performed more times than any other children's theatre classic. In that it is 32 years old this year, I suppose it has acquired a patina of venerability and, in that it must have been seen by more people and performed more times than any other Australian play — bar none, it must have achieved some sort of status. But to me the whole thing is best described as an astonishing fluke.

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A surprising piece of luck was finding a child's theatre people agreed emphatically. Their ideal was to present first class theatre to children wherever they could reach them, to tour city and country and eventually found a national children's theatre with branches throughout the Commonwealth...if not the world. It was a daunting ambition. I won.

Knowing nothing whatever about writing plays for children, I decided to be pragmatic. There was no option. I was asked to try to give the play some "educational" veneer — to get Education Department support, make it local, to get local council support...and could I please limit it to their assets of three flats, a second-hand backdrop and a twenty pound budget? Bang went any idea of a Max Reinhardt spectacular. The answer to all this seemed to be a local period piece based on some local incident and with enough fast and furious action to stop the audience becoming bored with the scenery. A necessarily frenetic pace nicely got rid of any idea of music and dancing which the local School of Ballet considered a prerequisite of children's plays. I didn't.

A surprising piece of luck was finding a story of pirates and buried treasure in Mosman Bay — so the traditionalists were somewhat mollified. From then on, I was on my own. Not knowing what to expect from child audiences, I desperately bunged in everything — chases, fights, sneakings around in the dark, and every farce trick I could think of. The script was written, in the main, among coffee cups in Market Street Repins.

Then enlisted the help of my friends — Elsie Dayne, Alan Herbert and Zell Wilkinson from Mercury, young David Nettheim, some acquaintances from the New Theatre, my landlord (a retired English actor) and as a last resort for the boy lead, my protesting schoolboy brother.

The first reading at the Mercury Theatre was slightly hysterical. Elsie said she'd never produced a play like this before, and to me it seemed it was destined for a fate worse than death and its career would end after the three performances if it got that far. Even the nine guineas did not compensate for the embarrassment.
and humiliation about to descend on me. I
couldn’t act. I couldn’t write plays. What
was there left for me in the world?

What happened on the afternoon of
August 14th, 1948 took us all by surprise.
After a quiet and suspicious start, the
intensity of the audience involvement
mounted with the action. A friend beside
me at the back of the Mosman Town Hall
auditorium muttered “Oh, my God!” and
clutched her ears. Someone nearby was
saying “There’ll be a riot! There’ll be a
riot!” In Act Two, a small boy was literally
rolling in the aisle yelling “A dog in an over
coat, a dog in an overcoat!” (a line from the
script). Nice little girls in starched organza
were jumping up and down on their seats
screaming, and when it seemed the pirates
were about to escape, half the audience
rushed to the footlights and tried to
clamber on stage. Alan Herbert faltered in
his villainy until they were hauled off.

There surely never had been and
certainly never will be again an audience
like this. They were not an undisciplined
mob: the actors never lost control and the
audience reaction was in context. This sort
of spontaneous, wholehearted, surprised
and excited reaction to something new is
probably gone forever. Nothing is new to
kids these days and probably nothing
surprises them.

“You must be gratified” said a visiting
English playwright. I wasn’t. I was
astonished.

I wrote two other plays for the Mosman
Children’s Theatre — or the Children’s
National Theatre as it hopefully became.
But by 1951 the boom was over. No
“national theatre” of any sort was
established and no subsidies eventuated.
The “Golden Age” was stillborn — and for
many of us the trek overseas had begun.

But during all these 32 years, Pirates has
continued to show signs of life. It has been
toured everywhere, been transmuted into
an overblown panto at the Minerva,
written about in the Literary Pages, viewed
by overseas educationalists, produced by
theatre groups from the Solomon Islands
to London’s East End and from Cairns to
Albany, WA. It has bounced through
productions by small boys at Tudor House
School, and large girls at the Parramatta
Girls’ Training School.

Now the Nimrod Theatre has
transferred Mosman Bay, its pirates and its
buried treasure to Clark Island in the
Harbour as part of the Festival of Sydney.

I remain astonished — and admittedly
somewhat nostalgic, with memories of
those brief years of hope and excitement,
of some great performances and great
performers...and one small nine guinea
romp for kids which quite unexpectedly
was the beginning of a career. And the
tragic epic on the windswept beach is still
unwritten.
Moments of extraordinary power

YAMASHITA
By Kyle Wilson

Director, Roger Pulvers.
George Chow, Howard Stanley; Yamashita, Robert Stephen; Janitor, Will Gluth.

Watching Roger Pulver's own production of his play Yamashita I found accumulated impressions of his work concealing into an opinion: as a director he's one of the best we have, with a really fecund imagination and almost unerring sense of what works. This production had some moments of extraordinary power which lifted the event to a very high plane indeed.

Yamashita is both original in content and eclectic in form with weird, frightening mimetic sequences thrusting through its surface of dialogue to reveal the true relations between characters. Its author gives it a taut, disciplined, visually absorbing production highlighted by the occasional coup de theatre and one extraordinary performance. A key invention is a three-bladed fan revolving sluggishly in the tepid air of a dingy classroom in Hawaii, that is, halfway between Japan and the USA, between Yamashita and Eisenhower cultures, the encounter of which forms the historical background. George Chow, a melancholy academic, a pathetic hybrid of the two cultures, bedevilled by his insoluble links with the old, eastern one and his desperate need to be accepted by the new, western men. This is an extraordinary performance by William Gluth, who sensibly and skilfully avoids vulgarising the character in the direction of fascist stereotypes.

In a sort of manifesto in Theatre Australia October 1979, Pulvers stated that the language of theatre has its own logic, words acquire new and different meanings, and a play makes sense only if 'the viewer is drawn into the internal order of the logic of the language'. In Yamashita Pulvers creates this new language, with odd juxtaposition, parodies of usage and cliche, startling similes, all informed by his own eccentric brand of humour. Unfortunately, the incubus of our cultural and linguistic background remains, and while the logic of his language may be transparently clear to its creator, it is often beyond us. Further, Pulvers occasionally overstates his case: some of his black humour has the subtlety of a blow with a sledgehammer, the tone becomes excessively didactic.

Nonetheless, there are moments of great power, the most remarkable being a sequence in which Janitor-Judge Gluth, crazily crooning a litany of exalted patriotism, mimes the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, while Chow (another fine performance by Howard Stanley) claps two blackboard dusters over Yamashita's head, enveloping him in 'fallout'. Here the rampant symbolism of the three-bladed fan suddenly strikes one. Despite reservations, ideas such as these make for great theatre.

Successful but not succinct

ON OUR SELECTION

By Barry O'Connor

On Our Selection, a dramatization from the books of Steele Rudd by Bert Bailey — directed and rewritten by George Whaley. The NIDA Jane Street production transferred to the Nimrod Upstairs; opened 28 November, 1979.

Director: George Whaley; Designer: Kim Carpenter; Musical Director: Roma Conway; Choreographer: Keith Bain; Lighting Designer: Peter Smith.

Cast; Dad, Don Crosby; Mother, Henrietta White, Kerry Walker; Kate, Julieanne Newbould; Sarah, Vivienne Garrett; Dave, Geoffrey Rush; Joe, Jon Blake; Lily White, Noni Hazelhurst; Sandy Taylor, John Howard; Terence Maloney, John Clayton; Billy Bearup, the Reverend McPherson, John Smythe; Old Carey, Jim Carey; Barry Otto, Cranky Jack, Robert Menzies.

On Our Selection, NIDA's mid-year success at Jane Street, is back and playing at the Nimrod for Christmas. With no claims to being a writer, director George Whaley put the whole thing together from an early twentieth-century dramatization of Steele Rudd by Bert Bailey (the original "Dad"), the four "Selection" books themselves, and his own bush boyhood. Perhaps the wealth of sources proved to be an embarras de richesses, since, even after some cuts in the transfer, the play is still four acts and three hours long. Hardly faithful to Rudd's characteristic economy of style. The detached and discontinuous narrative of the original books lends itself admirably to the variety of theatrical styles used in this NIDA production. After all they pioneered and defined this so-called uniquely Australian kind of theatre in the Legend of King O'Malley. Selection, unfortunately, has struck an imperfect balance between the melodrama and the comedy, the farce and the vaudeville in this story of farming life on the Darling Downs. If there were less sense of narrative progression, the flaws in the romance and the melodrama would be less obvious and less distracting.

The onus is on the music to give the production the episodic character it requires. As it is the songs and dances have been relegated to marking the scene changes, and sending up the warblings of Jeanette McDonald and Nelson Eddy, when the romance is seen to have no life of its own. Generally speaking, too, the musical numbers are arranged and presented with an artlessness that is supposed to disguise art. This is all right so long as it doesn't descend to tedious awkwardness; and remember, to be able to spoof Jeanette and Nelson you have to be able to sing almost as well if not better yourself. The duet between Geoffrey Rush and Noni Hazelhurst works well because it is in character, in time, and incredibly well done.

Whatever one thinks of Whaley as a playmaker, his genius as a play director is undeniable. His stage business is remarkably inventive. Sarah, the Rudd's eldest daughter and a "real rough diamond", carries suitcases by her wrists in order to preserve her new gloves; earnest Dave steps under the fixed gaze of two romantic leads as if it were a strand of barbed wire. The snake bite scene is a riot, as is the one where Cranky Jack runs amok with his axe. And Dad and Mum's trying to recall whatever happened to so-and-so pokes marvellous fun at that laughable...
The acting is within the tradition of character acting in the best sense of the term. Don Crosby is Joseph Murtagh Rudd, the august paterfamilias, suitably be-whiskered and absolutely believable. Kerry Walker as Mother is by turn wonderfully warm and devilishly ironic, making homespun platitudes sound like Wildean epigrams. Less happy is her doubling as Henrietta White, whose excesses were not contained by the natural discipline of this fine actress. John Smythe, who doubled as the parson and the simpleton suitor, didn't get too carried away by the licence of playing the latter role in a falsetto voice. Nor did Noni Hazelhurst yield to her grinning, blinking Lily White, whom she rightly portrayed as not being entirely stupid. As good old Dave, Geoffrey Rush brilliantly hangs a masterpiece of biomechanics. Vivienne Garrett and Jon Blake give extremely fine portraits of the rougher Rudd siblings. John Howard and Julieanne Newbould make the most of the love interest, and Robert Menzies is wonderfully possessed as Cranky Jack.

On Our Selection, the play and the story, finds its strength in its characterisations. Rudd saw us as we like to see ourselves: a nation of battlers, beset by blood-sucking commerce, a rapacious "establishment" and a useless government. It may or may not be accurate but it is accepted myth, and the making of excellent entertainment at the Nimrod this Christmas.

needs a total rethink

SISTERS

By Robert Page

Sisters music and lyrics by Michael King, Ken Moffat, Terry O'Connell, Myles O'Meara, Debra Weedon and Craig Maclean. Meryl Petein.

Maran, Lucy Charles, Elizabeth, Jill Floyd, Jennifer, Kim Hardwick, Katharine, Meryl Petein.

Musicians: Blair Greenberg, Michael King, Alan Matthews, Peter Mercer, Myles O'Meara, Debra Weedon.

A musical called Sisters might conjure up a picture of the Crosby/Kaye duet and the accompanying Hollywood pizzazz. Nothing could be further from this production or the intention of the Music Box Theatre.

Here the emphasis is on the small-scale — single set, four performers, few costumes and studio theatre venue. The purpose seems to be to offer style as a surrogate for all that is lacking in the usual stock-in-trade of the form. "We believe there is a need and an audience for original Australian musicals that do not necessarily copy the formats or the budgets of the big Broadway type musical."

The problem is that the result looks like a well meaning, highly thought through but awkward student offering. We are asked to be concerned about four girls who ended up as nursing sisters in the Pacific war zone and ultimately prisoners of war in a Japanese camp, but whose early country town upbringing left them woefully ill-prepared for the experience.

Many of the problems centre around the style. In the first act the four biographies, laboriously outlined in turn, are played in a mannered, pseudo-Japanese fashion. Kimonos, faces of relatives painted on fans and umbrellas, bamboo wing flats. For a moment one thinks ah yes, hands across the water. Australia is realising its position in South East Asia. Yet the clash between style (oriental) and subject (country town life) soon screams its inappropriateness — especially when the style is that of these girls' eventual captors and killers. Had it all been flashback from the prison camp...perhaps.

The whole production is marred by such jarring conjunctions. For instance on the flimsy excuse of cheering up one of the quartet suffering a near breakdown in the camp we get a fantasy number on The Girls in the Chevrolet. In general the songs pendulum crazily between such touching numbers as a hymn to the return of freedom, peace and justice, and comic songs like "Mike the Malarial Mosquito". Nowhere in the writing is there the acerbity which would grip attention.

The audience should feel some empathy with the experience of the girls, but there is never the opportunity for a full response. The tendency of the musical as a form is to trivialise and sentimentalise - traps which this falls into headlong, making it a disturbingly unworthy tribute to the people who went through WW2.

A gutsy approach to the characters might at least have given the impression of greater depth, but the actresses, largely fresh from Ensemble training, were unequal to it. Julie Andrews smiles and acting class touchings are no substitute for truth of feeling. Responsibility for inadequacies and repetition in the movement must, one felt, be theirs, not the choreography of Nancye Hayes.

The set, mixing blues of sea and sky, flecked with the white of surf on a sandy platform and framed by huge bamboo fans with hints of war scenes painted on, proves Anthony Babici's richly imaginative talent with non-naturalistic designs. Sad that the production lacked such flair.

Music Box's original premise about small scale musicals may be true (eg The Twenties and All That Jazz), but Sisters overall does nothing to help establish it. It looks not like a work in progress, but a rushed rewrite and expansion of the original Riverina Trucking Company forty-minute late show, in the need for public product. Though packed with ideas, what it needs now is a total rethink to find a coherent theatrical approach, truth in the experience and a mature fullness in its vision. At the moment it appears a long way short of what is required for a big city airing.
Moments of excellence and delight

PARADISE REGAINED/SEESAW

By Anthony Barclay


Director, Max Iffland; Designer, James Ridewood; Musical directors, David Mason-Cox & Kevin Bennett; Movement, Leigh Chambers.

Jesus, Robin Jolley; Satan, Mark Hembrow; John the Baptist, Graham Lowndes; Mary, Mary Haire; Archangel Gabriel, Darrell Hilton; Belial, David Wheeler; Simon, Ray Coughlan; Andrew, Robert Thompson; Lust, Lynne McGranger; Desire, Eilis O'Beirne. Chorus: Mark Bulger, David Hoey, Kathleen Willis. (Professional/Amateur)


Director, Alastair Duncan; Musical direction, Guy Simpson; choreography, Peggy Watson; dance director, Keith Little; design, Michael O'Kane.

Gittel Mosca, Bunny Gibson; Jerry Ryan, Paul Maybury; David, Keith Little; Sophie, Dolores Ernst; Japanese Waitress, Carmen Tanti; Oscar, Alan Royal; Ethel, Yvonne Adams; Rod, Rod Dunbar. (Professional)

It is difficult to find a spiritual Eden in the Penrith wilderness and in the Q's current Paradise Regained one is inclined to side with Lucifer and his Hell's Angels... the hell with goodness, Eden and St Marys Penrith for that matter. But to the point: David Mason-Cox, Kevin Bennett, and Max Iffland, co-authors of last year's St Marys Kid — a moving statement on the plight of Sydney's outer western suburbs' kids-in-the-wasteland — have come up with another winner. Paradise Regained is good, in fact after a bit of a slow start is mostly very good and at moments excellent (especially Christ's nightmare scene and Satan's song 'Paradise Lost').

Rock operas, despite their vitality and athletic entertainment, strike me as hangovers from the sixties. Themes restated, situations revisited and the search for a relevant 'hero'. We've done JC to death, Ned Kelly won't ride again and so on. Obviously the search for rock heroes occupies more than just the writers of rock operas or today's youth and in a fast fashion society it's all a bit of a crash course for the ravers. In Paradise Regained it struck me that Lucifer (contra Milton) wins the day. The relationship to Milton's poem seemed at best fortuitous. Maybe that was not the point and I'm happy to be corrected on this. But as various slides of supermarkets, cops, road signs, grog shops, car wreck yards (all locally Penrith) flashed onto the stage against jean clad youths or leather clad 'deviates' one wondered if the plight of young people was not up for grabs a la St Marys Kid. Christ offered LOVE, patience in the future, and he unobserved, Home to his mother's house private returned. Lucifer offered SEX, DRUGS, FAME, POWER! Was there a message here? Since the show relied on song and visual effect with no verbal narrative it was difficult to establish full characterisation for all concerned. The general weight of the show, song for song, routine for routine, musical arrangement for musical arrangement carried in Lucifer's favour. Yes it was all high energy and fun. But if there was a 'message' it was garbled. The alternatives posed: rosey-faced, clean living kids versus cliched and dated decay; don't really offer serious alternatives to Sydney's youth who face rather grave social problems. I guess my answer is to forget about church, forget about drink-drug parties and go to the Q to release one's energies constructively. (And I do not intend that last statement to be facetious).

Those quibbles aside it really was Mark Hembrow's show. His Satan Lucifer was superb. Theatrical in both the best stage and rock sense: looking for all the world like a thin-white-dude David Bowie or a manicual Lou Reed. Impeccable timing, seemingly unlimited energy, excellent comic gesture and stance, high powered singing...the stage was his. His demonic band aided him well; David Wheeler, oh so punk-vicious, and the gyrating, snakey disco ladies Lynne McGranger and Eilis O'Beirne. Robin Jolley had the voice and range but lacked in stage experience. Generally all the the vocal work was excellent but the movement needs more attention...it was too repetitive, it needs to be expanded. David Mason-Cox's band played some of the tightest rock styles I've heard in many a year. The Q hope to transfer the show to Sydney next year but lack funds. It would be great to see someone take the initiative here and help them out...it would be an assured success.

Alastair Duncan's SeeSaw at Marian Street by comparison is a slick small scale production of a Broadway musical play. The 'seesaw' is a brief but passionate affair between Gittel Mosca (Bunny Gibson) a dancer with not much future and lawyer Jerry Ryan (Paul Maybury) temporarily estranged from his wife. The fortunes of the seesaw see Gittel left on her ownsome, Jerry returned to his wife, and Gittel's dance teacher David (Keith Little) appointed assistant director to a Big Broadway choreographer. There is little to fault in this production. Bunny Gibson is very much at ease with the four foot eight Gittel...comedy and song are very much her strengths and she offers some very delightful moments. Paul Maybury and Keith Little take their parts with ease. Yvonne Adams carried many of the vocal harmonics with flair. Michael O'Kane used the limited stage space well to create the various scenes.

But as with the Q, limited stage space affected some of the dance routines by cluttering and inhibiting. This is not a criticism of Peggy Watson or Keith Little's work but more a matter that one would have liked to see the very capable cast be able to be more expansive. While the show was well paced I must admit I preferred the raw energy of the Q's Paradise Regained and while that is really a matter of personal taste not criticism I should add that I loathe rock operas.
As a popular theatre market phenomenon, *Sheer Luck Holmes* deserves no less recognition than Hibberd’s *Dimboola* gained from another audience, and it is likely to score just as well in royalties. A receiver’s job on such occasions is to applaud with thousands of others (in time) that special insight that senses an unsatisfied public appetite and serves it in a spirit of sheer fun. The calculation is so obvious in retrospect that it is easy to under-value the achievement.

With *Man of Steel*, a send up musical about Superman, now published by Playlab Press and produced more than sixty times, with the imminent success of *Sheer Luck Holmes*, and with the final musical in the hero trilogy drafted, Denver and Dorricott are set to become the Rogers and Hammerstein of the high school hall.

*Sheer Luck* is superbly crafted for the annual school musical slot in every way. Simon Denver’s book is an hilariously extravagant spoof of the great detective genius. This Holmes’s amazing powers of deduction are likely to derive from a letter he receives in advance. The ghastly secret of Greystone Manors is solved by a process of elimination which is not his, but results from sets of criminals bumping one another off till none are left — twenty-two murders in all. In the process, lines and situations of such flamboyant corn are hurled at them that the audience is reduced to groaning with delight.

Ian Dorricott’s music admirably reflects the spirit of the thing. It is totally unpretentious and the concerted stuff is well suited to the capabilities of non-specialist high school singers and musicians and certain to appeal to them. There are only nine numbers (a virtue in itself); take out the scene setters, a finale, and a pot-boiler lover’s duet, and you are left with several spirited and clever pieces, chief of which is the wild and wacky “Beware the Yellow Peril”.

For all its notable qualities, though, *Sheer Luck, Holmes* was utterly out of place in the main house programme of La Boite which has a reputation with critics for following a responsible and significantly serious play policy. One can only assume that in his swan-song season Rick Billinghurst wanted to balance the budget and give recognition to two fine young talents.

It is not merely a question of the show’s content; there are over forty named parts, which is an asset in a school, but caused La Boite to dig to the bottom of its acting barrel. Dedicated amateurism is part of the fun on a speech-night stage; it is an embarrassment for a playhouse with aspirations.

There were saving graces. Greg Silverman as Holmes was head and shoulders above the rest and Barry McGowan (when not missing cues) was an amusingly understated Watson.

Sean Mee’s production managed the problems of so large a cast and so complex a plot with clear, simple and tasteful design and direction.

However, La Boite must remember that choosing plays is a matter of horses for courses. It’s rudimentary, by dear Watson!
By Susan Vile

LAST DAY IN WOOLLOOMOOLOO

By Susan Vile


Director, Colin George; Designer, Axel Bartz; Lighting, Nigel Levings.

Cast: Doreen McNab, June Bronhill; China O’Brien, Edwin Hodgeman; Eric, Leslie Dayman; Matt, Robin Bowering; Ted, Kevin Miles; Dave, Robert Grubb; Lenny, Nick Enright.

STC’s contribution to the Australian Drama Festival was Ron Blair’s new play, Last Day In Woolloomooloo. Despite some heavy-handed theorising, this naturalistic piece, with its touches of the bizarre, is entertaining and thought-provoking.

It concerns the lodgers and manageress in a Woolloomooloo boarding-house which Dave, university-educated young landlord, has decided to sell. China O’Brien coaxes his simple wartime mate, Eric, to make a stand with him and resist eviction. It’s a vain endeavour, and, after a few extraordinary events, the several inmates go their separate ways.

In his treatment of the derelicts, China and Eric, Blair demonstrates on one hand the injustice of a society where one man’s profiteering causes another’s homelessness, and, on the other, the inanity of these protesting ‘workers’, who only talk and grow crazed with drink. When they do act, it’s an absurd, pathetic gesture, but one which is the natural outcome of stubborn belief in an outdated ideal. Mateship is irrelevant. As Doreen, the manageress, indeed, I found Lenny’s role superfluous. Ted, too, the key to the soul and the supernatural, is sketchily drawn, though his function in the play is important.

As the two mates, Leslie Dayman and Edwin Hodgeman were in their element, supported with spirit by June Bronhill as Doreen. Colin George’s direction was unwavering; Axel Bartz’s set superb. Often, though, I found words difficult to catch. Is this a fault of the theatre?
THE MATCHMAKER

By Susan Vile


I suppose Thornton Wilder's The Matchmaker is best known for its realisation in film. Hello Dolly is not my favourite movie, nor is its original my favourite play. On the one hand, the homely moral tone is too generalised to be taken seriously; on the other, the comic possibilities are continually undercut by this very attempt at moral seriousness.

Nevertheless, it is a marvellous vehicle for a comic actress, and there are some scenes which are as funny as you'll see anywhere. Directing with a sureness that had evaded him in Twelfth Night, Nick Enright saw and exploited many of the comic possibilities. A Barbershop Quartet kept us amused during scene changes, and the scenes themselves often moved with an alacrity mounting towards frenzy, which made for hilarity. How disappointing, then, to find that he was again let down by a misjudgement in casting. Lois Ramsey had neither the technical flexibility nor the sheer panache necessary to bring off the role of Dolly Levi.

As a result, our interest shifted from the matchmaker to her matches; in particular to the quartet of clerks and milliners. Colin Friels and Linden Wilkinson displayed a delicious feeling for comedy. Motivations were clear; timing was right; voice and movement (especially faces) well coordinated. Colin Friels, especially, invested his character with an extraordinary sense of discovery which gave a genuine freshness to the most hackneyed platitudes. A delight to watch, even if it did mean that he had unintentionally altered the emphasis so that the play might have been more aptly named 'The Story of Cornelius Hackl'.

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Unconvention but Not All Gutsy

AUSTRALIAN DRAMA FESTIVAL/ ADELAIDE, NOVEMBER 1979


By Susan Vile

Costumed characters mingling with passers-by. Shoppers' faces flickering with puzzlement, curiosity, amusement. Cheers at the public cutting of a giant cake. The first national Australian Drama Festival had begun.

Publicised as a 'gutsy bag of Aussie shows', the festival aimed from the start to attract audiences other than the regular theatre-goer. Its success will not be known until the festivities end (still more than a week away as I write). I hope it is not indicative of overall attendance that the performance I had intended to see of APG's Give The Shadow A Run was cancelled through lack of support.

When I did see it, it proved to be a most important feature of the festival. Important for the personal commitment to theatre that one senses from this group, whether they are taking tickets, serving coffee, shifting props or acting.

It's a matter of taking risks. To move an audience from room to room, with insufficient seating and difficult sight-lines is a risk; to push naturalistic speech to the limits of intelligibility is a risk; to spill beer, break glass, crash doors, step on cigarettes in the elegantly painted, tastefully carpeted surroundings of a colonial mansion is a risk.

Informed by hazard in this way, theatre can easily fail. When it does not, it is threatening, electrifying. Phil Motherwell's three plays, The Fitzrov Yank, The Laughing Bantam and The Surgeon's Arms, all had moments which were lost on an audience, but, equally, combining the immediacy of realism with the precision of technique, they startled and shocked with disturbing frequency.

Just as unconventional, but in a manner hilariously bizarre, is the writing of Barry Dickins, whose Goon-like humour gains as much from audience contact as it does from pre-scripting. Consequently, The Rotten Teeth Show, which he performed himself with Ross Dixon, was more successful because of spontaneous shaping and quick-witted 'adlibberie' than the less...
ensemble interplay and one extraordinary lady (Kathryn Porrill) of foghorn voice, rolling eyes and face like rubber, they sang, acted, juggled and cavorted their way through two documentary shows.

The first, *Australia*, looked with irreverent freshness at the progress of our sunburnt country. Constructed around a number of stock figures and situations, which recurred as history was seen to repeat itself, it had tightness and unity. The second piece, *Says Who?*, on the mass media, was looser. Arguments lost point through repetition, and central issues were often side-tracked. Still, any lapses were readily compensated by animated playing and the inventive direction of Errol O'Neill.

Direction did nothing to help Steve J Spears' new play, *The Death of George Reeves*. Written with no more depth than a first draft for an extended revue sketch, it was directed by Aarne Neeme for Stage Company as a heavily meaningful tragi-comedy. The result: theatre at its deadliest.

Perhaps aiming for *The Elocution of Benjamin Franklin* Mark II, Spears has repeated ingredients of that early success: flabby, middle-aged man alone in his room; telephone the only contact with outside world; lonely because public image the opposite of private self. Only this time, the public one is all fantasy and the private conventional and ordinary. For George Reeves is the aging actor who was Superman.

Add to that the confusion of a man who has achieved the ultimate in fantasy struggling to come to terms with the existence of God, and you have the germ of a marvellous idea. But germ it remained. John Noble looked right and battled manfully with the main role. Judy Dick was a delight for some moments. There was an amazing Jesus machine and a splendid comic-book cremation effect. But anything else lost out to slack writing and ponderous pace.

*C J Dennis could never be called slack. His unfaltering ear for the rhythms and cadences of Australian speech never fails to amuse, as John Derum found in his one-man show, *More Than A Sentimental Bloke*, produced by Australian Stage Company and Decorum. The prose writings are less interesting, though, and the programme suffered from a surfeit of these, as well as from a diffidence in the direction by George Whaley and Wal Cherry which often left John Derum moving about without much purpose, or else reading into books. Besides, this type of programme is bound to invite comparison with Robin Ramsay's masterly presentation of Henry Lawson, and John Derum does not have the versatility or clarity of playing to equal that.*
State Rep/Suzanne Spunner

Exciting and notable evenings

HAMLET

By Raymond Stanley


Two productions of Hamlet in the one city at the same time. Something of a record in itself. And probably by the time this is published many views will have been aired, claiming one production to be better than the other, with assessments not always made on critical grounds. Some chauvinists will place the MTC first; the fact that the other is a British company, headed by an internationally acclaimed actor, will be sufficient for others to rate it top.

As for me...well, really my mind is not made up. The MTC's workshop production was brand new and one could expect it still to be in the fumbling stages; the Old Vic's was well worked in, and a certain amount of stillness might have been anticipated. But in retrospect there is no justification for any such claims.

In both productions Gertrude really was old enough to be Hamlet's mother (frequently in private life she is younger, ie Googie Withers and Michael Redgrave). The two Queens were played very differently. June Jago's for the MTC was gentle, warm, loving and subdued. The OV's Brenda Bruce harsh, domineering, self-centred and fiery. Both equally effective.

It perhaps the OV's Horatio was lagging behind the MTC's (Michael Edgar managed to make him more significant than usual), and David Ravenswood's Marcellus left the OV's nowhere, then Julian Glover's Claudius received more approval from me at least than Simon Chilvers' Sally Cahill's Ophelia for the MTC disappointed in the early stages, but came well and truly into her own with the mad scene; Jane Wymark was with it right from the beginning.

Previously alerted that many consider Robert Eddison's Polonius the best ever seen. I found myself heartily concurring. For once Polonius is not a bore, but a very human character whose every word one actually relishes. In contrast Jonathan Hardy's is a more youthful interpretation, with balaclava stuck firmly on his head throughout he strangely reminded me of Chico Marx and played the role strictly for laughs, which were forthcoming.

Although I preferred the OV's Laertes, the duel scene seemed more exciting at the Athenaeum.
the time the play is presented downstairs at one is hearing them for the first time. B v expressed to me the opinion that he make some of the soliloquies sound as if and without any obviousness, manages to it was only the intimacy of Athenaeum 2 inclined towards to much ranting: I believe freshness and earnest eagerness to the role of Hamlet indeed. Several have Walton, who is verging on being a very notable Hamlet amongst the best Hamlets I have seen. satisfying and would rank Jacobi as a man" passage straight Ophelia, and actually reading the "What a and everywhere, finding and injecting humour throughout, daringly addressing his "To be or not to be" soliloquy direct to him who was growing a beard). And so to the two Hamlets... Derek Jacobi's has already been justly acclaimed internationally. His is vivacious and everywhere, finding and injecting humour throughout, daringly addressing his "To be or not to be" soliloquy direct to Ophelia, and actually reading the "What a piece of work is a man" passage straight from a book. I found it thoroughly satisfying and would rank Jacobi as amongst the best Hamlets I have seen.

However, not far behind is John Walton, who is verging on being a very notable Hamlet indeed. Several have expressed to me the opinion that he inclined towards to much ranting: I believe it was only the intimacy of Athenaeum 2 which made this seem so. He brings a freshness and earnest eagerness to the role and, without any obviousness, manages to make some of the soliloquies sound as if one is hearing them for the first time. By the time the play is presented downstairs at the Athenaeum 1 fully expect his Hamlet to be on a par with that of John Bell's, and Bell usually is reckoned to have been Australia's best Hamlet.

I liked the intimacy of the Athenaeum 2 production - one almost felt involved in the action. But the sheer pageantry and larger scale of the OV's also appealed to me. The OV was certainly assisted by the more traditional and attractive costumes and simple set and minimum of props. The winter-type rehearsal clothes of the MTC - mainly corduroys and jumpers - were initially distracting.

Lacking in the MTC production - particularly in the early scenes - was pace (surprising for Summer). In contrast the OV went at a rattling speed. Although playing different versions, I doubt if the MTC's was more intact than the OV's (which had more mime anyway), yet the MTC production last half an hour longer.

If comparisons are to be made, then one would like to know how much better or not the OV production which came to Australia was to the one which opened in England in April 1977. Apart from Jacobi, I understand only the Horatio and Laertes remained. And one wonders what changes there will be when the MTC's is reproduced for the downstairs theatre at the Athenaeum. One would suggest that David Ravenswood be upgraded to the role of Polonius, or else Claudius.

Two really very exciting and notable evenings in the theatre I look forward with much anticipation now to the Hamlet production downstairs at the Athenaeum.
of boring let's get on with the narrative scenes), the mots are juste, the epigrams pointed and the middle class theatre audience titillated as they haven't been since Don's Party. In this account of the educated bourgeoisie, Travelling North scores high in gasps of recognition. You could almost hear the audience say That's Me!...I said something nearly as funny as that once!...My daughter's just like her! And you can feel them not looking at their spouses (should that be spice?)

Although I thoroughly enjoyed the play, admired the performances especially Jenny Hagan and Julie Hamilton, liked the women, was stabbed by a few barbs, and laughed a lot, I couldn't help but think how downright conservative the whole thing was.

Ask yourself: what's it about?

Answer: Old people can fall in love and have sex. Parents are sometimes selfish and rotten to their children; and vice versa. Crusty, irascible old men of the type often played by George C Scott have hearts of pure caramel. It is possible to die with wit and dignity.

The sum of these ideas, as worked through in Travelling North, is as sentimental a comedy, as English as Noel Coward. And perhaps that is the kind of writer we will have in Williamson. An Austral Noel Coward, wickedly witty, but uncompromisingly romantic. The rough diamond; the native finally colonised.

Perhaps success breeds sentiment, but it's nevertheless curious how entirely inappropriate this is for our times. But then, maybe the theatre can once again serve as an escape hatch to fantasyland.

Failing in Love Again

By Suzanne Spunner


Directors, Robin Laurie, Nano Nagle; musical director, Elizabeth Drake; sound, Rose Wise; set, Cazza Porter.

Singers, Jan Cornall, Terry Darmody, Di Duncombe, Evelyn Krape, Robbie McGregor.

Funded by the Literature Board grant. Jan Cornall has been writer-in-residence at the Pram Factory this year and her first full length piece, Failing In Love Again, a feminist musical has been the result.

It is described as 'not a play in the normal sense...but a theatricalisation of what could have been a concept album on the theme of the failure and disappointed consequence of romantic love'. In near on ninety minutes and twenty four songs sung by five singers — three women including Cornall herself, and two men — the varieties of love (splendid and otherwise) are catalogued and subjected to rigorous critical examination. Unlike other contemporary operas — Hair, Jesus Christ Superstar, Tommy, Evita... — Failing In Love Again, does not develop particular 'characters' for the individual performers, nor do the songs tell a story in the narrative sense. Rather, Failing In Love... is a cabaret in which each of the five singers develops a distinctive musical personality and style of performance, and a biting critique of the pitfalls of romantic love is developed in the lyrics and the order and arrangement of each song. Cornall describes her music as an exploration of the gap between Jazz and Punk and her lyrics are a witty and acerbic attack on what she sees as an oppressive and patriarchal definition of sexuality and love. The performers describe themselves in the opening number 'I.N. L.O.V.E.', as 'all casualties of Love', and they then spend the rest of the show revealing their sexual and romantic frailties. Whether it is Terry Darmody, singing to the accompaniment of an incongruously mean, rasping harmonica — I'm a weakling, I'm not a real man...My mother wore the pants and spoiled my chance at romance' in a wry comment on the potential consequences of role reversal; or Evelyn Krape slinking about in an Eartha Kitt parody and bemoaning her inability to be, 'happy like everyone I know and have a nice stable relationship that's nice and boring and slow...I'm just a sad masochist/who'll never be kissed by the right person at the right time/in the right place with the right line', or even Robbie McGregor jogging after dark, in a camp send up of get-fit fetishism, 'especially now it's fashionable to be gay', they are all falling victim to the trap and letting 'orgasm validate their existence'.

In a succession of songs about jealousy, guilt, self doubt and the inability to be 'alone and self sufficient' the causes of these maladies are dissected. In all of these songs 'Spilt guilt It's like an oil slick, slow killer you've gotta keep it in check/It's like petroleum/spilt guilt' Cornall focuses on the central problem — heterosexual coupling. This bracket leads into the next song, 'Monogomy/Homosexual, transsexual, lesbian, bi...The more you...
know, the more you wanna try: Asexual, Trisexual, celibate, het. The more you try the more you get.' Two songs stand out in the show as having the greatest sense of irony and self criticism — they are High Heels and Gotta Get Out Of The Ghetto. In High Heels, Evelyn Krape, in what must vie with the show stopping number, sings of, 'high heels, make me feel tall, high heels make me feel sexy...make me feel beautiful...make me feel like I could be,' and each of the claims is matched by a response, '...though they're a bit uncomfortable...though they're bad for my spine...' and the plaintive question is posed: 'who am I dressing for anyway?'. In Gotta Get Out Of The Ghetto Di Duncombe begins to question the values of the immediate world from which the show itself, and Cornall's writing emenates the monkey-gripped in-bred inner suburbs...everything I say gets said in a different way by everyone else...I've been lovers with everyone I know.'

The lietmotif of Failing In Love could easily be summed up in the phrase, better dead than het, as it would seem that ultimately for Cornall, heterosexuality even more than capitalist possessiveness, is the great and all encompassing evil. In the final bracket of songs, Cornall tries to link the various forms of sexual expression to a frame work of capitalist exploitation and its servant, mass media manipulation. However this connection which for her is axiomatic, is not teased out in its implications and thus has a gratuitous tacked-on feel about it. The problems of making concise and complex political points are exacerbated by the requirements of the purely musical form of the show, nevertheless the critique of heterosexism is a bit glib. There is no evidence in the lyrics to the contrary, that the sexual utopia envisaged in: 'two is nice/but it's better with three/do you mind if I bring a friend with me?', is not just as riddjed with the same repressive attitudes and merely different jealousies and guilt. Put another way it is ironical in a show ostensibly about sexual insecurities; for as many as are exorcised, as many others are created in their place.

Leaving aside the ideological loopholes, what of the show? Given that it was purely, and one dare hardly say, 'simply', a musical there were undoubtedly problems in terms of finding singers who could also perform with the required razzamatazz as actors and dancers. However skilfull directing by Nana Nagle and Robin L.auric almost covered up these obstacles, and perhaps with a little more rehearsal the whole thing would have been as swish and slick as it was intended. Nevertheless it was a challenging enterprise on all fronts and what it lacked in sappy choreography it made up in energy.
ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST

By Margot Luke

On Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest by Dale Wasserman, based on the novel by Ken Kesey. The Hole in the Wall Theatre, Perth W.A. Opened 21 November, 1979. Director, Edgar Metcalfe; Designer, Bill Dowd. Cast; McMurphy, Alan Cassell; Nurse Ratched, Jenny McNae; Chief Bromden, Dennis Schulz; Harding, James Beattie; Billy, Alan Fletcher; Dr. Spivey, Edgar Metcalfe; Rutley, Frank Johnson; Warren, Maurie Ogden; Williams, Michael van Schoor; Candy, Sally Sander; Nurse Flinn and Sandra, Alisa Piper.

State Rep./Joan Ambrose

Miraculous direction

physical challenge of manipulating a large cast in scenes of frenetic activity on a small stage area within arm’s length of the audience, psychologically the play is full of dangers: it could have been too sick, too repulsive, too clinical, or else too didactic, too facile. But no single mood is allowed to spill over — the characters are inmates of a mental institution shown simultaneously as people and textbook cases; as individuals as well as representatives of humanity at large; as tragic as well as extremely funny. The pacing of the scenes was masterly — one thinks particularly of the climax at the end of Act 1, with McMurphy comping an imaginary TV ball-game, sweeping his lethargic fellow-inmates along on a wave of excitement. It’s a long time since one has seen such a pure feeling for “theatre” in Perth.

Alan Cassell brings more than brash energy to the rebellious McMurphy, whose tendencies to insubordination land him in the institution and whose compassion for his fellow-sufferers prevents him from beating the system and escaping. The blending of hard-boiled and soft-centre is just right, and the relationships between McMurphy and each of the other characters clearly established and sustained.

With a cast as large as this it is impossible to define each performance: clearly Jenny McNae’s Nurse Ratched looms large. (Pronounced as Nurse Ratshit throughout, there is, of course, the more polite word-association of “wretched”, as well). The performance draws on a subtle repertoire of poisonous smiles and bracing exhortations which mask the lethal sadism presented as good-will and professional competence. Edgar Metcalfe, as the gentle, well-scrubbed, ineffectual Doctor Spivey presents a suitable foil — the epitome of putty in ruthless hands. The victim figures are all memorable in their own way, given room to develop, or more correctly, act out their problems, and reach breaking point: Alan Fletcher, as the stuttering Billy, James Beattie, as the urban, sardonic Harding; Dennis Schulz as the monolithic Chief Bromden. One is grateful for Ivan King’s endearingly batty portrayal of Martini, who hallucinates invisible card-players and conversation partners with a mesmeric glare. He lives so much in his own world that he escapes the attacks of the “healers”.

Individual portraits and their interactions make up the dramatic pattern, whilst the grim metaphor in which the Institute equals Society is strongly present throughout.

A bonus is the unusual programme, in the form of a “confidential report” on both staff and patients at the Institute. It manages to inform and at the same time act as a memory capsule of the play.

News is out that henceforward the Hole will be under the direction of Edgar Metcalfe, and it is a pleasure to take the opportunity of this production to say Welcome, Willkommen, Bienvenue, or words to that effect...
Amadeus and Ola

By Irving Wardle

Hidden within a high-backed chair in the corner of a magnificent eighteenth-century drawing room, a gentleman in silk sits devouring a glass of sugared cream. Two other resplendent figures, a boy and a girl, come running on in a cat and mouse game that finished up on the floor with the boy on top emitting infantile giggles and a torrent of excremental jokes. The Olivier Theatre audiences began by laughing at these, and then sat on in appalled silence, for the speaker this plump, overgrown page with his absurd wig and obscene smirk — is that chaste high-cultural idol Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Filthy Mozart to the life!

The concealed observer, too sickened to finish his dessert, is that other musical notability of the Viennese Court of Joseph II, Antonio Salieri: a composer known to history not for his forty one operas but his alleged confession of having poisoned Mozart. There are other works on this cause celebre, but Peter Shaffer’s Amadeus differs from Pushkin and the Rimsky-Korsakov opera in that it ignores the question of physical poison and simple professional rivalry.

Shaffer’s Salieri is not the kind of venomous Italian charlatan jeeringly pilloried in Mozart’s letters. He is a man of sober God-fearing principle who has risen in his profession in the belief that artistic achievement comes as the reward of a virtuous life. He is a pattern of eighteenth century moral excellence: fully accepting his servant status, faithful to his pudding-like wife, tirelessly devoted to charities, all on the assumption that he will thereby gain the privilege of glorifying his betters with a divine “palace of sound”.

What happens to such a man, Shaffer asks, when he encounters a licentious, toadyng, foul-mouthed upstart like Mozart who unaccountably enjoys direct access to the music of the spheres? Answer: he declares war on his unjust god, and sets out to block the immortal enemy by destroying his earthly spokesman. As Shaffer works the plot out, Salieri — as Court Composer — acts remorselessly to prevent Mozart’s advancement, to drive him into the dire poverty of his Viennese decline, and finally to masquerade as the mysterious patron for whom Mozart believed he was writing his own Requiem.

The final scenes of the play, furnished in Peter Hall’s production with towering silhouettes, masked spectres, and blasts...
from the statue scene of Don Giovanni, rise to a pitch of grotesque melodrama of which E T A Hoffmann would have been proud. But neither here nor elsewhere does Shaffer relinquish his precise grip of character, period, and intellectual conflict.

Much of the play is extremely funny, especially where it involves John Normington's affably non-committal Emperor ("You're coming along nicely, Mozart" after The Marriage of Figaro), Simon Callow's Mozart, a superannuated Cherubino, always overdoing the courtly flourishes, insufferably thin-skinned and vainly trying to put things right with bursts of falsetto giggles, is a wonderful comic creation too painful for laughter. And Paul Scofield's Emperor, has also surpassed himself the audience of posterity.

Shaffer relinquish his precise grip of technology and tribal magic.

True, the Australian land commissioner whose one objective is to cajole the natives back to plantation work, gets short shrift. But most of Lan's energy goes into demonstrating the impossibility of arguing the destitute cultists out of their belief that if they are not getting cargo from their ancestors, then the whites must have stolen it; and that the way to regain it is to copy the white man's rituals — as by sitting at an oil drum and battering it like a typewriter. Where Lan rises above anthropology is in the creation of his name character, Ola, who has served in the white Army and now acts as the commissioner's deputys, until he discards the promise of "progress" as a colonial fraud and joins his own people in their demands for a just inheritance. Even without Norman Beaton's superb performance, Ola would have proved his point.

The Year of the Woman

By Karl Levett

This year of grace, 1979, might come to be recorded by theatrical historians as the year that "the liberated woman", both as creator and performer, finally made some impact upon the Broadway and Off-Broadway scene. At last, plays and musicals about women or by women — or better still both categories combined — are proving box office successes. Prophets can be ignored by theatrical producers — but not profits.

On good ole cautious, conservative Broadway the impact so far has been minimal. Although Evita allows Patti LuPone the opportunity to be dynamic in Harold Prince's splashy production, Eva Peron is a dubious champion to carry any kind of banner. Of more significance is the fact that TV star Mary Tyler Moore is now replacing Tom Conti as the paralysed victim in Whose Life Is It Anyway? The English playwright, Brian Clark, says that he has changed very little except to give the play an American setting and to retain the "sexual tensions" by transforming the female doctor played by Jean Marsh into a male counterpart.

While Broadway plays it safe, Off-Broadway, however, is celebrating Womanhood. This celebration is one that has been long led by the much more radical stages of Off-Off-Broadway. But these efforts are often extreme and blatant and thus non-commercial. A current offering by a group called the Working Feminists, Sevist Pig — My Darling, gives you the idea.

The grandmother of present productions is Vanya. Now in its third year, this comedy about three Texan cheerleaders who grow older but not wiser, is reaping a fortune for its young author, Jack Heifner. This has come from a proliferation of productions in regional theatres and colleges throughout the US.

Another surprise success, and one with clearly didactic intentions, is the musical I'm Getting My Act Together And Taking It On The Road. A night-club singer with strong feminist views celebrates her thirty-ninth birthday by auditioning her act for her dismayed manager. Written by a two-woman team, Nancy Ford (score), Gretchen Cryer (book and lyrics), it opened for a short season at The Public. Now many months later, the show has settled into the downtown Circle-in-the-Square. Gretchen Cryer herself originally took the part of the singer, presently being sung very well by Virginia Vestoff. Audiences seem quite happy to swallow the show's message, wrapped as it is in a pleasant soft-rock score.

Joseph Papp's Public Theatre has also nurtured the black poet playwright Ntozake Shange whose Colored Girls was a big success for The Public, Ms Shange's latest work Spell No 7 is a mosaic of recitations and music and dancing set in a bar frequented by black actors and actresses. The women's monologues easily outshine the men's and often sparkle with wit and imagination, but these highlights cannot hide the fact that the pieces of mosaic just don't fit together. Still, poetry in any form is a scarce theatrical commodity these days and the show has found an increasing audience, particularly among the young. It has already been running several months.

Literary heroines are also in vogue. An unexpected success, now moving to a larger Off-Broadway theatre, is Marty Martin's melodrama Gertrude Stein Gertrude Stein Gertrude Stein. The success if due
principally to the performance by comedienne Pat Carroll (another refugee from televisionland). It is a tour de force of verve and — even better — variety. A remarkable and eccentric feature of the show, incidentally, is that not one original word of Gertrude Stein’s is heard. Poet Sylvia Plath is also being honoured at the American Place Theatre via her correspondence to her mother, in Rose Leiman Rosenberg’s Letters Home.

But the play that best demonstrates 1979’s feminine ascendancy is Marsha Norman’s Getting Out. Ms Norman’s play (her first) premiered in her native city of Louisville, Kentucky, by one of the country’s leading regional theatres, The Actors Theatre of Louisville. Set in a rundown section of that city, it documents the emotional and psychological traumas of a female inmate on the first day of her release from prison. We see the heroine as two persons: as Arlie, the young tough delinquent sent to prison, and Arleen, the mature woman struggling to release herself from her past. The two conflicting identities of the same character share the stage together in interwoven scenes that are remarkable both for their tight structure and their theatrical tension. The play is a series of dramatic confrontations, climaxing in the one between Arlie and Arleen, as to whom will gain dominance. It has that rare combination of tough-minded realism and theatrical flair. As a first effort it is considerable and points to Ms Norman as a dramatist of genuine talent.

Perhaps, when a play with the impact and craft of Getting Out plays Broadway, you’ll know that the Decade of the Woman has truly arrived.
It is something of an axiom in the performing arts, and in opera perhaps more than any other manifestation thereof, that to see a company at its very best you must see it at home.

Home, for better or worse, for the Australian Opera these years being the Sydney Opera House, it follows inevitably that it is in Sydney that the company does its best work. And that axiom still holds true, by and large, even when away-from-home venues are in themselves better than home.

Familiarity with the limitations one knows, however severe they may be in themselves, tends to minimise their impact because a company knows, as it were, all the ways to get round them.

Yet the Australian Opera has a national franchise, and so long as it has that franchise it must face up to an obligation to take its physical presence to the provinces: for which, in this context, of course, read the whole of a continent barring the privileged hinterland of Sydney, a hinterland extending, to be generous, maybe 20 miles or so from the Opera House in all directions.

There are those who would argue, sometimes quite vehemently, that the AO presence ought to permeate a good deal further than the capital cities which, by and large, have been its actual parameters over the years — and even then, with only token presence in such remote capitals as Hobart and Perth.

Admittedly, one must add to the short list of four metropolises, which comprise the usual limits of the term, Canberra — which, though it is far from metropolis in population terms, undoubtedly has more culturally oriented people per head than any other Australian city — and also has the considerable appeal, to the planning officers of any heavily subsidised institution such as the Australian Opera, of being the national fountainhead of financial assistance.

In the past two years, though, during the period when Hemmings-style decentralised evangelism held sway, there has been one single notable exception: Newcastle, New South Wales. Yes, there have been forays to Hobart and Launceston and even a fleeting foray into the northern near-backblocks of New South Wales, in a cooperative enterprise involving the University of New England and the Queensland Theatre Orchestra.

But Newcastle was apparently chosen — quite rightly — as an appropriate venue for establishing an AO toehold in the provinces. Although it is only 160 km from Sydney, it is very much a city in its own right rather than satellite; and it has, in the Civic Theatre, a venue reasonably suitable for modest-scale opera with orchestral backing.

It was in Newcastle and Brisbane, where the Australian Opera was presenting brief seasons of The Marriage of Figaro and The Abduction from the Seraglio before moving on to whirlwind seasons of The Merry Widow, The Queen of Spades and Madame Butterfly in Adelaide and Melbourne to end its year, that I caught up with the company early in November.

NEWCASTLE FIGARO

The Newcastle Figaro held particular interest, of course, because those two performances were the only Figaros presented by the AO during 1979; and, further, because they marked the debut with the national company of Fiona Maconaghy, daughter of the perennial bass-baritone John Pringle as Almaviva in AO's Figaro. Photo: William Moxley.

ventures even 160 km from home base one more than likely must put up with less favourable conditions.

EXCESS CHARACTERISATION

For a piece like Figaro, of course, the physical proximity of my seat to the stage was absolutely marvellous. It enabled me to observe every nuance of the individual characterisations, every twitch of Neil Warren-Smith's eyebrow as Bartolo, every lascivious smirk from Robert Gard's Basilio.

It also blew up to brobdignagian proportions every excess in the acting department, every flaw in the orchestral detail, every slight sin in the delivery of the recitative.

EXCESS CHARACTERISATION

For a piece like Figaro, of course, the physical proximity of my seat to the stage was absolutely marvellous. It enabled me to observe every nuance of the individual characterisations, every twitch of Neil Warren-Smith's eyebrow as Bartolo, every lascivious smirk from Robert Gard's Basilio.

It also blew up to brobdignagian proportions every excess in the acting department, every flaw in the orchestral detail, every slight sin in the delivery of the recitative.
And marvellous a comic masterpiece as it is, Figaro is fiendishly difficult to bring off on stage: every one of the eleven principals must balance on a knife edge, in the acting department, between enriching his or her performance by the addition of comic detail and destroying it altogether by allowing it to topple into the abyss of vulgarity and burlesque.

And even consciously allowing for the fact that I was sitting so close to the action I felt the Newcastle Figaro I attended was quite a few notches down the Mt Olympus of artistic achievement from the best performances of this production I have seen in the past.

Rightly or wrongly, I felt that part of this descent was caused intentionally, or at least subliminally: because the performers knew they were in the provinces, feared lest some of the jokes might be overlooked. But whether or not that was a factor, it was quite clear that these performances could not be among the least flawed the production has ever had — simply because they arose from the coming-together of a large number of performers for only a couple of performances of a long and complex work in a relatively unfamiliar venue.

REASONABLE FACSIMILE

Rehearsal time cannot have been extensive, nor could even the most elephantine memory be expected to retain every detail of several of the roles without the constant jogging of recollection afforded by regular repetition. So finally the Newcastle Figaro could best perhaps be described as a reasonable facsimile of the AO’s best.

Of the individual performances, John Pringle’s count and Nance Grant’s countess came across best — his as good as ever, hers better than I had ever seen it. Jennifer Bermingham’s Cherubino was decidedly at the raucous end of her spectrum: all puppy love and mock-heartbreak, bouncy and roley-poley; never for a moment even a potential threat to the virtue either of the countess or Susanna as the ideal Cherubino must be if there is to be any dramatic sense in the annoyance, even jealousy, he prompts at various moments both in the count and Figaro.

Ronald Maconaghie’s Figaro was as dramatically and vocally fresh as ever, but seemed to suffer here and there from momentary lapses of detail — the odd lost bit of recitative, false gesture, that sort of thing. Cynthia Johnston’s Susanna was pleasing without being definitive.

Peter Robinson conducted with a clear sense of direction, was obviously dead on the wave-length of the work, his principals and the orchestra. A bit more rehearsal time, it seemed to me, would have eliminated most or all of the slips of detail that occurred in the performance I attended.

Warts and all — and I admit I have dwelled in perhaps cruel detail on the warts of what was by and large a thoroughly acceptable Figaro in Newcastle — the Newcastle exercise of the past two years has been a thoroughly rewarding one. Two sold-out Figaros this year to follow two well-filled Don Giovannis last year have proved there is a demand for fully professional opera in the area.

Yet there is doubt if the innovation will
survive even into next year; for the 1980 performance schedule of the Australian Opera as revealed so far shows no Newcastle season at all. But I gather there is still a possibility that a couple of performances may be infiltrated into the schedule even now.

Certainly, such whirlwind tours cost more to present than they can hope to recoup at the box office, lose more, to be brutal, than presenting the same number of performances of the same works at home base, because of the additional costs involved.

They can only be justified in the name of evangelism; and the question, literally a million-dollar one, is What Price Evangelism? What is it worth to reach a few new potential opera converts in the

Evangelism? What is it worth to reach a few new potential opera converts in the national company away from home base, and particularly in the "minor" cities on its touring schedules, is that one has an opportunity to see the odd new face on occasion.

At the Newcastle Figaro, it was Peter Robinson — not the first time I had seen him conduct, of course, but one of the few times this year. In Brisbane, it was David Kram: my first, I think, encounter with him at the helm of an actual performance, though he had surfaced as accompanist at operatic events organised by the NSW Friends of the opera company.

And Kram's Brisbane Seraglio was musically quite impressive: he actually was able to extract some real frenzy and excitement from the fledgling Queensland Opera Orchestra, which excelled its own quite respectable standards by a significant degree.

It was the same Seraglio cast seen in Sydney earlier this year, and most were in better form than when I saw them at the Opera House — some of them, in particular Paul Ferris' Belmonte, assisted by the smaller size of the theatre.

The only major worry was Glenys Fowles' Constanze; she seemed to be having difficulty in coping vocally, did not always produce beautiful and accurate sounds even though she was clearly working very hard at it.

Anson Austin's Pedrillo had loosened up dramatically from its original, reinforcing my original impression that it has been good for him to play the part because it forces him to let his hair down in a way that many romantic tenors needn't.

It was particularly interesting to see Rhonda Bruce's Blonde so soon after her Sydney Patience: there was an obvious carryover of detail from the one to the other, and an enormous improvement in the dramatic aspects of the Blonde. But of course the big hit of the performance was Donald Shanks' Osmin, and not only because in Brisbane he is the home-town boy: it really was good... better than ever, one might almost say, despite the odd vocal flaw.

But if it was a mistake to put Seraglio back into the original German in Sydney after presenting it originally in English, as it most certainly was, it was ridiculous to do it in German in Brisbane.

"What a woman," exclaimed Shanks at one particular moment during the proceedings, expressing Osmin's frustration at the difficult-to-deal-with Blonde. But this brief English lapse in the midst of a positive ocean of unintelligible German, to most of the audience, might equally well have expressed the frustration of the whole cast at having to try to convey comedy through an all but impenetrable language barrier.

The QOC Don Giovanni had the advantage, of course, of being performed in the vernacular and thus being much more approachable for an audience than the AO Seraglio. But Paul Neal's portrayal of the title role was not nearly flamboyant enough, and the whole production served more to highlight the excellence displayed by the company in its three previous productions during 1979 than to provide present enjoyment.

ADELAIDE
The Australian premiere of Massenet's Werther, presented by State Opera in Adelaide on October 29, was a triumph all round but particularly for producer Anthony Besch and designer John Stoddart.

Steven Haas was an outstanding Werther dramatically, capturing all the tortured agony of the character marvellously; he was a good deal less impressive at times vocally.

Cynthia Buchan was a ravishingly beautiful Charlotte, vocally and physically, and Roger Howell a strong, impeccably virtuous, cruel Albert. Myer Fredman extracted a polished performance of the difficult Massenet score from the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra.

And a new minor company emerged into public view for the first time in Sydney during the period under review, with the Australian premiere season of Haydn's L'Infedelta Delusa. Called the Sydney Young Opera Company, the new group has associations with the NSW Conservatorium, where its inaugural season took place.

Andrew Green conducted with style and sometimes inspiration, and Amanda Thane turned in a stunning performance in the marvellous role of Vespina. The rest of the cast varied from good to adequate, which would the best one could say of Paul Kelly's production.

Hunter Valley? Would it be better to bus, truck or fly them to Sydney to the venue where they would see the AO at its very best?

Clearly, there is a good deal of enthusiastic appreciation, among Newcastle opera-lovers, of the fact that they have been so favoured by the physical presence of the AO in the past two years: some even hope for an expanded season such as Canberra gets; a week or so of two or three works in repertory.

Whether they will, or should, get it is a complex question on which some light may be thrown during the current Australian Concil inquiry into opera and music theatre. But of course the final determinant of the question, as always, will be money: whether subsidy funds can be found to fuel the enormously expensive organism that is a fully professional opera company, with orchestra, on tour.

BRISBANE MOZARTS
The other AO performance of my month was a Brisbane Seraglio, half of a Mozart mini-festival which included also a revival of the Queensland Opera Company's Don
By William Shoubridge

**Australian Dance Festival and Don Quixote**

The Australian Dance Festival settled itself nervously into the Sydney Opera House this year for the second time in a row.

The various State dance companies and Limbs from New Zealand paraded their wares before the bemused dials of the audience who ran through a shopping list of what they did and didn't like and that, as they say, was that. No analysis, no follow-up, next to no cross-fertilisation and no enquiry. The Dance Seminar on the Sunday following the Festival decided, by general consensus that the Festival should and must continue in whatever changing audience who ran through a shopping list of wares before the bemused dials of the choreographic identities were presented, at pains to avoid the nitty gritty questions of what that format should be were enquiry. The Dance Seminar on the Sunday following the Festival decided, by general consensus that the Festival should and must continue in whatever changing format, but no concrete statements as to what that format should be were forthcoming and most of the speakers were at pains to avoid the nitty gritty questions of funding, responsibility, change of venue or the areas on which the Festival should concentrate.

The State companies presented interesting and diverse works of varying quality within a strictly prosenium arch format, that being the most familiar setting for them. In the event, no totally new choreographic identities were presented, works performed coming from either the Artistic Directors or already tried and tested choreographers.

While I've always firmly believed that a watched pot never boils, it seems a shame that some dancers don't have enough confidence in themselves to try their hand at choreography for this all important annual get together. Nevertheless, the majority of the works were encouraging, even if no conceptual boundaries were burst.

**QUEENSLAND BALLET**

Dance Space II (set to Grieg's Holberg Suite) is the first work by the Queensland Ballet's Artistic Director Harold Collins I've ever seen. It evinced a clean, unfussed flow but there was so much more to my mind that could have been made of it. Collins, placing his protagonists down in an open space that was suspiciously close to Dances at a Gathering territory, fashioned for them and their intangible "encounters" a fairly basic series of rolling, swelling enchangesments looking for a lyric momentum and an emotional backbone. But they didn't find them and the work became colourless as a result.

With its single, stylised tree as a background, the airy expressiveness of the movement and the rustic costumes, one could have expected the stamp of character dance, but the piece floated along on an amiable, vague, one-dimensional level of clean, classroom steps. One could feel that these dances wanted to break out into a wider world, that the waffly strands were trying to coalesce but Collins' choreographic dramatic timidity disallowed all that and his own estimable promise betrayed itself. The work dissipated into an aimless jumble of entries, partnering, promenades and exits.

The dancers, all of them musically reactive, tried to articulate their roles as best they could, but they kept running into the wall of unsubstantiated incident and for all their vigour couldn't save the piece. They did however, by virtue of their ensemble conviction save the more vivid and pretentious moments in Norman Hall's Floating World.

The work, basically a "fish ballet" dressed itself up in Alan Hovhaness's bloated tone poem "And God created Whales", a quote from some Japanese proverb with notes about Japan's invaded feudalism to give it a gloss of learned literary chic and over and above its commonplace theme of schools of fish cleaved apart by marauding sharks. As there wasn't really any specific Japanoiserie in the choreography the audience wouldn't have had a clue about the implications if it hadn't been for the programme note.

The dancers, whether swinging from suspended rings (an interesting but underused innovation) or grovelling about in unimaginatively piscine movements gave the work a great, dramatic, swirling flourish, but they (again) could have been given more material to work with; perhaps something like the abstraction of aquatic movement that translates reality rather than just copying it. As it was Floating World essentially finished about fifteen minutes before it actually did, the rest was padding.

**AUSTRALIAN DANCE THEATRE**

There was no padding in ADT's Labrinth whatsoever, and the work could gain ground as one of the most powerful in the company's repertoire and one of Christopher Bruce's most concise and dramatic works. It has a place in his oeuvre along with Black Angels and Weekend; a human maelstrom where nobody is ever at peace and no true resolution is ever reached.

Labyrinth (set to Morton Subotnick's The Wild Bull) is a double barrelled work. It can be seen as a stylised recounting of the Theseus and Ariadne story, a myth intensely physical with its "Attic" poses, clashing diagonals, tight angles and dancers career ing through ever diminishing corridors. It is also a spiritual labyrinth of the mind, a dark territory where the female male, victim; victim roles tend to blur and where whole aspects of sexuality are called into question.

Julia Blake's Impromptu (set to the Schubert pieces of the same name) is a bittersweet filigree of dance in a cool, serene landscape. Unfortunately, it is all much of a muchness, elegant, craftmanlike, but finally vacant. Its saving grace is an extended pas de deux of clingings, retreats and rather Ashtonian air-walks.

**WA BALLET**

Christine Parrott's piece of bucolic flummery for the West Australian Ballet, Catherine's Wedding started off with plenty of unforced, breezy gusto but gradually started winding around itself, ending up strangled and overlayed. Its motley collection of Breughel peasants, gathering together to kick over the traces for Catherine's nuptials were one-dimensional and either tiresomely hearty or gormless. What was rewarding was the way Parrott got these arch yokels doing something even while they weren't dancing which gave the whole work a lovely sense of spontaneity and community feel, as if all the ballet peasants had crowded into Giselle's house for a knees-up.

Balanchine's Concerto Barocco kept getting in the way of my enjoyment of
Barry Moreland's *Spiral* (both works are set to the Bach *Double Violin Concerto* but I could still appreciate the way he captured the prancing rhythms and soaring instrumental lines to delineate his choreography of floor turns, crisp footwork and stretches. It was a bright unforced piece that showed off the WAB dancers excellently, finely matched as it was to their corporate ability.

**LIMBS**

The Limbs company from New Zealand was zippy and ingratiating but that was about all. Mary Jane O'Rielly's *Games* had more developed ingenuity than Jannides' *Busy*. Her work used movement in a carefully filed way to expound theme, while Jannides' piece utilised steps to give it a lift.

Jannides, at the Dance Seminar, harangued us all about the Australian companies' elitism in using "classical" music and movement. If they wanted to capture a young audience he said, these companies should use music and ideas that were "relevant" to that audience. Well fine, if a choreographer wants to use rock music for his work (let's cast a veil over the "relevant" ideas whatever they may be). Primarily a choreographer should not worry about his audience when he creates a work; the music and ideas should be suitable and relevant only for him and his ballet. To dictate that rock music be eminent in modern dance is just as limiting and snobbish as insisting on the classical.

Limbs have brought up a lively Kiwi following with their jazzy rock ballets and I wish them well. I have a feeling however that if they ever try to develop beyond this aspect (which they must if they want to grow), their "with it" manner may be their downfall and their present audience could well evaporate, having been fed a variety-club, bend-stretch diet and unprepared for new directions.

One thing cannot be denied about the Festival as a whole, however, and that is that it must continue in whatever guise. It must also broaden its outlook and widen its field of activities. The State companies' greatest bug bear is isolation and the Festival helps bridge that gap, but the works at a Festival must not be performed in isolation either, there must be follow-up, concentrated analysis and discussion. That is really what the Festival is for.

**AB'S DON QUIXOTE**

The big, bold colours and sweeping jollity that were always a part of the Australian Ballet's *Don Quixote* are still there ten years after the work was premiered. The nuances and character touches that gave it a deeper power, however, have nearly all been washed away. The ballet looks more of a creaky patchwork everytime I see it. I hose fiddly amendations and additions that Nureyev stuffed into the work, supplying carousing moments at every turn, expose the seams and fabric of Petipa's structure more now than was apparent years ago.

Ballet mime is a tricky animal, especially when the performers aren't versed in the intricacies, but it is an indispensable device for a 19th century ballet, it provides the only connecting thread on which the tarrago of dance set pieces can be suitably strung. The Australian Ballet casts, even when they did occasionally handle the mime bits adequately, let them all drop when it came to the dancing per se, so that all those little character inflections that give a picaresque work like *Don Quixote* its unique flavour were left for dead.

I saw three casts in the present season and while all of them contributed something different in terms of actual dancing, there was a general monotony of attack and feebleness of characterisation.

The opening night of Kelvin Coe and Christine Walsh had a buoyant ease (especially in the case of Coe), but I could never believe them as lovers, nor as the least bit Spanish. Coe filled his variations...
Kelvin Coe and Christine Walsh in the AB's Don Quixote. Photo: Branco Gaita.

with some technical embellishments, with a lazy, smiling gallantry, and steered the big pas de deux in the right direction, but practically nothing could be read into his dancing. Christine Walsh as Kitri was demure and stonelike throughout as if she were bored by the whole affair.

Terese Power and Paul de Masson, recently promoted to principal rank, danced the lead roles for the first time ever in a second cast and, all things considered, did a good job of it. There weren't any tricky elaborations or transitions in de Masson's solos and the pas de deuxs were somewhat simplified, but there was some feeling of familiarity and togetherness when they danced.

Terese Power has a silky, flexible spine and wonderfully stretched extension, but allegro dancing gives her trouble. In both Acts 1 and 3 her variations tended to get cluttered half way through, but in the lovers duet in Act 2 she gave a wide arching amplitude to the movement that convincingly conveyed her love for Basilio. Perhaps she was just stiff from nerves in Act 1.

She got continuous support from de Masson, however, which gave the whole evening a lift. Although de Masson's solo were simplified, he looked good in them and that was far better than losing an intricate variation on him that would make him look bad. He has a secure musical style, but should give more attention to his ballon, phrasing and port de bras; there was an unnerving tendency at times to falter in mid movement which depleted the image of its edge.

The third cast of Christine Walsh and Gary Norman looked very perfunctory. No commitment to either the story or each other, and the Act 3 duet was wildly rearranged. This run of the mill execution communicated itself to the rest of the cast with the result that Rex McNiel's Espada, Lynnette Mann's Street Dancer and Stephano Teresi's Gypsy Boy were dreadfully limp.

None of the performers in the title role (Brian Ashbridge or Joseph Janusaitis) got beyond a vague sketchiness of the part; one missed Sir Robert Helpman's acting ability. Ashbridge at least, by virtue of his subdued manner, suggested the Knight of the Doleful Countenance, but he never was anything approaching the sad and movingly idealistic character than Don Quixote should be.

The Enchanted Garden of the Dryads serves the same focus and purpose in Don Q as does the Kingdom of the Shades scene in La Bayadere. It is a timeless, chivalric realm of perfection symbolised by the Euclidian symmetry of its layout. The music may be pure beer-hall oompah, but that doesn't change the rapturous beauty of the allegory.

Joanne Michel was the queen of the Dryads at all the performances I saw and she suited the part to perfection, just as she did "Prayer" in last year's Coppelia. They are both soft, lyric parts and her wide, seamless bodily articulation surmounted by that immobile alabaster face is ideal. Michel owns her technique, finds her placement and uses them as a point of focus in sweeping surely and economically between poses, which is one description of perfect grace. Her solo, with its attitudes en tournant was spun on a single thread of silk. She has the long, precise image of Suzanne Farrell and the tender poetry of an Antoinette Sibley.

It remains to be seen whether she is good in other styles (character or dramatic) but no doubt we will have the opportunity to judge in due course. Suffice it to say that the precision of the corps de ballet and the hauteur of Michel made this scene one of the most sensual and exquisite pieces of dancing I've seen from the AB for some time, and it made the whole ballet worthwhile.

Now, when are they going to mount the kingdom of the Shades?
In 1950, designer Kenneth Rowell left Australia for London on a year's British Council scholarship. He had been preceded a year earlier by designer Loudon Sainthill. A few years later, John Truscott took off to America and Barry Kay went to London. These four young Australians all made it to the top as designers for theatre, ballet, opera, and in Truscott's case, film. It says a great deal for the reservoir of talent in this country that they represent four success stories. There are today several designers working in Australia who would have gone overseas and achieved. I'm sure, the same success, if conditions here today were as bleak as they were in the fifties and early sixties. Fortunately for all of us, they are not.

It is this changing condition of the performing arts in Australia since he left for London that impresses Kenneth Rowell, visiting Australia to design his fourth production for the Victorian State Opera. It is Rossini's lesser known work, Count Ory, his first wholly original French opera, a comedy that he composed in 1828 with a libretto by Scribe and Delestre-Poirson.

Says Rowell, "When I left Australia, there was very little scope and even less money for designers. What was even more frustrating was the lack of workshops and technicians to carry out set and costume designs. One of the great pleasures for me when I got to England was to work with people with these special skills. Now I find them here in Australia. We have here first class technicians and excellent workshops and the making of sets and costumes is first rate. In the old days, I had to do much of the work myself but now I only have to explain what is needed and supervise the work. The team of the Victoria State Opera which is made up of only four people, to be augmented by another two a little later, is doing a superb job."

Supervising wardrobe and sets is what brought Rowell back to Melbourne in early October with his designs and the model he has made for the set of Count Ory. He remained for three weeks and returned again in January to see how the work of translating his designs into actual costumes and a full-size set was progressing and to watch over costume fittings and the setting up of the set to see that it works. It is a case of bridging the gap between theory and practice.

Offenbach's La Belle Helene was Rowell's first production design for what was then called the Victoria Opera Company, the name being changed in 1976. This was a small budget affair but delightful, and a tribute to the designer's ingenuity. Next came Pelleas and Melisande with a slightly larger budget, followed by the rather disappointing production from many points of view of Orpheus in the Underworld. That was in 1978 with a much expanded budget, but still very small by Australian Opera or most overseas standards. Count Ory is a much more elaborate production with a more generous budget, but designers generally seem to regard their budgets as minimal and consider that they have pared their needs to the bone — and Kenneth Rowell is no exception. Nevertheless, with the prospect of the Victorian Arts Centre before it, the Victoria State Opera has to grow now in the quality of its productions both musically and visually and Count Ory, with its fairy-tale setting and its cast of elaborately dressed nobles and ladies, must look rich and beautiful, and that costs money.

Rowell's set model for Count Ory is really exquisite. With some final research, it took him a month to make. "I've tried to absorb the essence of the period rather than copy it. In fact, the opera is set in the early 13th century but the clothes then were rather rough and crude so I've based my designs on 14th century costumes, which are still mediaeval but much more elegant and beautiful. To capture this period I've based my designs on 14th century illuminated manuscripts and tapestries. For three months, I worked intermittently on the opera, researching the architecture and costumes.

The castle grounds are enclosed in walls that are a transparent grille ornamented with fleur de lys, and against them is a magic garden of delicate shrubs and trees. The first act (Continued page 52)
**ADMINISTRATION**

**Inspiration or encumberance?**

**By Elizabeth Sweeting**

"The state of the arts" seems to be a topic always good for newspaper articles and the attention of the media, particularly when they see occasion to deplore it. This is understandable by reason of the age-old criterion of calamity being newsworthy while unobtrusive steady success attracts no attention till lightning strikes. Then the occasional failures can easily be generalised into prevailing malaise, debilitating to the whole body artistic, not to say political. To counter this, perhaps we in the arts should be less impulsively defensive and take a good look to see if we can discern the truth in the hysteria. In recent times, we must admit that a dominant theme, wrangles and wrangles in the administrative area, is certainly not to our credit. An example of such publicity came from Sir Robert Helpman in an interview with the Adelaide Advertiser's Arts Editor on Saturday 30 June 1979. He expressed his view in his inimitably colourful way about "administrators thinking they are artists and general managers thinking they are God — indicting also Boards of enthusiastic amateurs.

This should cause us to think hard, in the light of other criticisms and, more importantly, other disasters, about the implied blurring of the definitions and duties of the key figures in the situation. Do they always remember that they are there essentially to support the arts, to enable the creators to reach and communicate with their audiences, viewers and users, not to confuse this all important purpose by administrative muddling and meddling? Thirty years fortunate experience as an administrator working with gifted artistic directors and helpful boards in the conduct of an opera company, an international festival and a lively repertory theatre in England with a mixed programme having a fine professional company at the core, has convinced me that creative harmony for the common purpose is perfectly possible, not an impossible dream. The artistic and administrative sides of the arts are inextricably complementary. They are a formidable combination provided that they operate within their territorial limits, making appropriate contributions, with a bit of give and take on both sides, to the corporate purpose.

What, then, are these territorial limits? They can be quite briefly stated. There is basic truth in Sir Robert's dictum that "every great and successful company in the world has been run by just one individual — think of Balanchine, Rudolf Bing, Joffrey". It would not be difficult to think of names associated with notable artistic enterprises in Australia, and they would be those of the creative individuals whose vision and dynamism has given the achievement an image, so that the image conjures up the name, and vice-versa. The role of the Artistic Director is easily identifiable, the visionary, the instigator, with a driving purpose.

We have to look again at the word "run" used by Sir Robert. Unfortunately life was more straightforward in the days of Balanchine and his like. They could combine the roles and practice of artistic director, administrator, guide, philosopher, friend, fund-raiser and policy maker, and so become benevolent autocrats (perhaps the most satisfactory form of government?). The facts of life today make it impossible to go it alone in the grand manner. The arts are enmeshed in the paraphernalia of government funding, for instance. They have to be run in a quasi-democratic manner, set up on the sometimes not entirely appropriate models of business practice, with Boards, committees, 'experts' to run each department, with the consequent involvement of a little army of people with different training, background and, above all, attitude. It is not surprising that among so many there are some who find themselves cast for parts in a continuing drama without rehearsal, of which they understand neither plot nor purpose. They do not know whether they are Hamlet, Horatio or the ghost of Hamlet's father, so they copy roles other than their own and pinch each other's lines. It is no wonder that the plot is murky.

To return to the more mundane, let me re-state the principle that the Artistic Director, though he can no longer "run" the whole thing, is of paramount importance. But he too must be aware of the limitations of his role and of the administrative network which is not an elephant trap but a safety net as for a high-wire walker. So we come to the Administrator who weaves the net. He must share the motivation of the Artistic Director and translate it into practical terms. He must impart it to the support staff and ensure that they are directing their skills and training to the corporate purpose.

Board members are perhaps the most confused about their roles. Too often no-one has spelt out their manifold responsibilities in legal, professional and personal detail. They cannot always be wholly blamed for interference, damping of artistic aspiration, lack of communication, lack of comprehension, but they too must be aware of their relationships in the microcosm. This understanding, like that which has to be nurtured in the staff structure, can finally depend on the right relationship between Artistic Director and Administrator. Their correct combination can dispel the myth of the mad artist hell-bent on taking the company at break-neck speed to the bankruptcy court or shocking the bourgeois. The Board can then be supportive, not repressive.

The Battle of the Board Room and the power struggle between Artistic Director and Administrator have hit the headlines so often that "administration" is now a bogey word. The notion of training in arts administration may unfortunately also be regarded with suspicion as appearing to aggravise the role of the dreaded bureaucrat who gobbles the artistic director alive. Far from it, the confusions, the uncertainties, the
recreminations, point unanimously to the need for trained "creative" administrators. Given the basic enthusiasm for the arts which makes a good administrator tick, he can and should acquire the best technical skills available to enable him to give full support to the artistic enterprise, knowing how not to overweight his operations, how to make the best use of available and desirable resources, human, material and financial, how to seek and use expert advice, how to communicate, how to read the signs of social and economic change and respond to them and to their influence on his company and his audience. All this in the context of artistic excellence, not necessarily equated with opulence but appropriate to the corporate purpose and resources.

These skills cannot now, to be fully effective, be picked up by trial and error. They have to be imparted by experts in the fiercely competitive worlds of the arts and of business, which are drawing ever closer together for mutual benefit and which must be able to respect each other.

Arts administration training as a specialist subject has long been a sine qua non in the United States, notably at Harvard, but in hundreds of other universities and their business schools, in Canada and in Britain, where they were set up at the instigation of the Arts Council of Great Britain, about fifteen years ago and are going from strength to strength. Having been associated all that time with them as planner, teacher and examiner, it was heartening to be Chairman of a conference on the subject held in Adelaide in 1972, from which strong recommendations emanated for the setting up of training in Australia. When I came back briefly in 1974, my enthusiasm was rather dampened by the lack of any such initiative, but I am happy to report that, as the result of an invitation from the Arts Development Division of the South Australian Government to return in 1976 to do something about it, such a course is now alive and well and happening in Adelaide, in its second year.

Drawing on the models of other countries, but backed by research and testing experience and opinion in the special conditions of Australia, it is a Graduate Diploma Course in Business Administration (Arts) in the School of Business Administration, SA Institute of Technology. It is open to graduates and to others with equivalent experience or qualifications in the arts or other professions, and entry is restricted to a small number. Subjects such as management accounting, industrial relations, organisational behaviour and management framework are shared with business administration students and are taught by the specialist staff of the Institute, who use examples and case-studies from the arts as well as those drawn from business practice. In addition, there are special arts-oriented subjects, covering topics such as the economics, spread and supply of the arts, theory and practice of subsidy and private funding, etc in Australia, the US, Canada, Britain and elsewhere; the administration of arts organisations, including music, the visual arts and crafts, community arts etc, with staff structures, policy making, financial planning and control etc. These are taught by seminar and discussion with the arts administration students by the Court Director, at present myself, and by practitioners from arts organisations in Australia and visiting from overseas. There is emphasis throughout on what is actually happening in the arts world in Australia and overseas, with discussion on particular events as they occur. This is also reinforced by periods of secondment to arts organisations, where the student is expected to take an active part or perform a particular job required by the host organisation, not to be a passive observer.

The content and methods are being adjusted as staff and students learn by experience, and we all hope the course, throught its teaching not only of skills but of attitudes, may be a help in righting some of the faults in the system, which, as Sir Robert Sweeting, School of Business Administration, North Terrace, Adelaide, SA, 5000, observes, are seen in the illuminated manuscripts of the period and give an effect of lightness and a magical other-world romanticism.

When the crusaders return, there are two flats in a grid fleur de lys design which hang high from the back of the castle's great hall with the banners of the knight's insignia making a brave display. The crusaders sail in around the moat in a beautiful little ship, the hull covered in the grid design and with sails furled. This is fairy-tale stuff, not realism so one doesn't ask how a moat is open to river or sea for the ship to sail in — all things are possible in such a tale.

For Count Ori, Rowell has designed some eighty-eight costumes, most of them sumptuous and elaborate. There are even two chargers designed some eighty-eight costumes, most of them sumptuous and elaborate. There are even two chargers

(From page 50)
BOOKS

The Economics of the Performing Arts by C.D. Throsby and G.A. Withers. Edward Arnold (Australia) rrp $37.50.

This is a significant book. Here we have the most comprehensive theoretical analysis of the economic basis of the live performing arts to date, plus a detailed examination of the empirical data, plus a discussion of the issues raised for public policy and company administration. It is in three parts: economic theory, then facts, then policy issues. The facts and policy issues are rooted in the Australian experience, with extensive reference to the United States, Great Britain, Canada and to a lesser extent New Zealand.

It took three times as long as expected to complete this work, it has been well worth the wait— all power to the authors and their "longsuffering wives"! This book is not easy reading; it is not meant to be. It sets the economic framework for the future in the performing arts, especially in Australia.

It is in many ways an economics test. Let us hope it will be used in our tertiary institutions so that the next generation of economists and business managers will have an understanding of the functioning and importance of non-profit arts organisations in our society.

Nevertheless, to provide accessibility to the general reader, the first section in every chapter is in non-technical language, although it includes the results of the formal analysis. The second section is the formal analysis for the professional economist.

Part I looks at the theory of the firm, demand for the product, the nature of the industry and patronage. It clearly distinguishes the nature and behaviour of commercial and non-profit companies, and the implications for subsidy. Subsidy to commercial organisations should be on a project basis if it is not simply to add to profits; whereas the non-profit company objectives of quality and quantity will best be served by lump-sum subsidy, supplemented by selective consumer subsidies where a broadening of the demand base is seen as socially desirable. A broadening of the demand base may also provide a more secure financial situation in the long run.

Changes in price, the price of complementary activities and substitutes, income, leisure time, the cost of leisure, and education are all factors influencing demand for the performing arts. In the short term demand is seen as likely to be relatively unresponsive to changes in price because it is in some respects an acquired and addictive taste. This also underlines the importance of education for the long term.

The major problem of the industry is seen as the every-widening gap between costs and earned revenue because of the limited applicability of technological change to the performing arts. This can be staved off temporarily by various one-off measures, but only temporarily.

The non-profit sector has the further problem of an inability to attract and hold sufficient able managers. Personal incentives and greater scope for entrepreneurial activity could help overcome this. Organisations need a stronger capital base to make this possible. Effective training is also a critical need.

Part II examines empirical data for the twelve years 1964-76. The data are insufficiently complete across categories and countries for the coverage to be as thorough and systematic as may be desired. But it is a marvellous start.

It indicates that audience for the live performing arts is much larger than commonly supposed. Roughly one quarter of Australians and Americans over 14 years of age are reached by the professional live performing arts each year.

Both performers and audiences are more highly educated than the community average, and education would seem to be a more significant factor than income in determining likely attendance. This augurs well for future demand if the arts become more central in the school's curriculum, but not as a simple result of increased prosperity.

Australian data confirms the likelihood of an increasing real income gap, highlighting the need for greater unearned income support from all sources. The national government is currently the primary source of funds in all countries other than the United States.

Part III analyses the social benefits arising from performing arts activities over and above the direct benefit to a member of the audience, and looks at the implications for assistance policy. It underscores the solid economic justification for government assistance because of market inefficiencies in the valuation of external benefits, and because of merit good considerations.

The Conclusion discusses important reports from three countries. It points to the confused logic of the Australian Industries Assistance Commissions (IAC) Report on "Assistance to the Performing Arts" (1977) which after accepting the consumption externality argument as the principle ground for subsidy, recommended a revolutionary rearrangement of subsidy which ignored this principle ground.

The authors focus on the objectives of the patron as the reason for subsidy, not the financial plight of the companies. In particular the economic arguments for government support suggest the following objectives: the definition of national identity, the promotion of social criticism, the widespread application of the arts, the pursuit of excellence, the encouragement...
of participation, and the development of education. Given that resources are limited, the relative emphasis on quality and quantity may well vary over time, but the pursuit of quantity without reference to quality (the IAC approach) would seem to be totally self defeating. The IAC failed to heed the warning of the economist Lord Keynes in "Art and the State", 1936; "experience has plainly demonstrated that these things cannot be successfully carried on if they depend on the motive of profit and financial success". This is just one of the many very excellent quotations throughout the book.

Another quotation from Lord Keynes the year before his appointment in 1946 as first chairman of the Arts Council of Great Britain, to my mind sums up the achievements of this book. "I give you" he said, "the toast of the Royal Economic Society, of economics and economists, who are trustees not of civilisation, but of the possibility of civilisation". Throsby and Withers have given us an excellent basis for assessment and planning, to open up these possibilities through the performing arts.

Best of British

By John McCallum

Are the British best at theatre, as they often say? Trevor Nunn in his introduction to Royal Shakespeare Company 1978 says that he would like to revive the World Theatre Season to see, after a particularly good Latvian production he saw in Riga. Certainly there can be few companies in the world which could produce a large format 100 page year book of their work, and have it so fascinating.

The RSC now has four theatres - the RST and The Other Place at Stratford, and the Aldwych and Warehouse in London. They have an annual season in Newcastle Upon Tyne and a small touring company. Their repertoire is rich and varied - in 1978 they did 35 productions, including eleven Shakespeares. Their new London theatre centre, the Barbican (already famous before it's even built) will open this year, and they have plans for a third venue at Stratford, an Elizabethan-style space. Their policy of letting work on new plays feed their productions of the classics and Shakespeare, and their distinctive textual explorations, have given them a style of their own which enable them to talk continually in this book about "our variety of theatre".

RSC 1978 is an uncritical account of the work of a great company, listing production details and giving resumes of the critical responses. Numerous, usually small, black and white photographs sometimes give some idea of the visual impact of the productions. The book, by extension, gives considerable insight into British attitudes to theatre in general, if only because the RSC represents such a large slab of it. There is also a certain gloating in the summaries of the critics, whose insights are acknowledged when adulatory, but whose self-indulgent commentary is scorned when unfavourable. Bernard Levin seems to be particularly unpopular.

A rather different sort of company is Inter-Action, which includes the Ambiance Lunch Hour Theatre Club and Dogg's Troupe (street and children's theatre) under the direction of E D Berman. For his children's writing Berman uses the penname Prof R L Dogg: so that when in years to come academics

...
Thirst — fails to entertain

Thirst, by F G Film Productions, is in the category of fright films which do not involve major catastrophes such as fire, plague, flood, avalanches or the emission of enough poison gas to finish off a nation. The fright elements are on a personal, physical and mental level of aberration. In Thirst a young woman is kidnapped by the leaders of the Hyma Brotherhood and the most noticeable prop is a large quantity of liquid that looks like blood, drunk as freely as coke. When not actually being siphoned from one lot of people to be drunk by another lot — at the Blood Farm — it circulates through kilometres of transparent tubing before being decanted into facsimiles of milk cartons which are then taken over by the milk-o, or blood-o.

Being thus confined to a small scale, Thirst joins The Exorcist and Omens I and II and indeed Patrick, which was made by Thirst’s progenitors, Anthony Ginnane and William Fayman. Harping as it does on the rich red tomato sauce and the ravelled brow of Kate (Chantal Contouri), it fails to entertain as much as Patrick did, perhaps because it lacks the weirdly comic talents of Robert Helpmann as the mad doctor. The doctor in Thirst, played by David Hemmings, seems far from mad, more like your average family physician or a zombie form of television’s Dr Cameron.

A short rundown on the plot: Kate is an advertising executive in love with Derek, an architect ("I can’t possibly see you yet, Kate. I have to finish these plans."). Dr Fraser, Dr Gauss (Henry Silva) Mrs Barker (Shirley Cameron) and Mr Hodge (Max Phipps) have got it into their heads — and they may be right — that Kate is the descendant of the Baroness von Kreutzner and that to keep the Hyma Brotherhood of blood-slurpers going they need her for mating. That is, with Hodge. They try to persuade her, then kidnap her, then humiliate her, all the time keeping the nourishing draughts of blood up to her. She almost, but not quite, escapes. Hodge masquerades as Derek, takes Kate on a picnic and makes love to her on the river’s edge (the Yarra?) in full view of some swans. Adjusting his clothing, he snatches off his false moustache and says, "You have done me great honour". Kate screams a lot, Mrs Barker sneers, Dr Fraser looks awkward and Dr Gauss demonic.

Presumably David Hemmings was imported to give the film a name recognisable, beyond these shores. Why Henry Silva was required from the US is another matter. Any Australian actor could have done as well, or as badly, with the role of Dr Gauss. Rod Mullinar in the role of Derek scarcely registers. As played by Shirley Cameron, Mrs Barker parodies every sinister housekeeper in British films.

Chantal Contouri is an intense actress. To put it tactfully, she is not one to let well alone, but over-emphasises every gesture and expression. Her voice is unfortunately flat in tone and her diction such that audiences beyond Australia might have some trouble in understanding what she is saying. But then Australians often have trouble with overseas intonations.

The film is directed by Rod Hardy, written by John Pinkney photographed under the direction of Vincent Monton, with music by Brian May. F G Productions financed Thirst with investment from the NSW Film Corporation and private cash. GUO Film Distributors are handling Australian release.
MUSICALS FOR AMATEURS AND SCHOOLS
Choose from a wide selection of old favourites and recent successes including "Man of La Mancha", "A Little Night Music", "Brigadoon", "The Desert Song", "The Sentimental Bloke" and many others, including "Vamp" — the new vampire musical which can be performed with a small rock group; also the pantomimes "Dick Whittington", "Cinderella" and "Puss in Boots".

Enquiries to Mr. John Bryson, Comedy Theatre, Exhibition Street, Melbourne. Phone 663-3211.

COSTUME HIRE
A large range of period and fancy costumes is available for hire to cover all musicals and plays.

Contact Mrs. Gwen Rutledge, JCW Hire Dept., Cohen Place (Rear Her Majesty’s Theatre), Melbourne. Phone 663-3211.

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Props, furniture and cloths available for hire for the stage, films, publicity, etc.

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FIRST STAGE THEATRE
COMPANY (82 1603)
The History of Theatre in Dramatic Form by Gary Baxter; directed by Chris Lewis with Angela Bennie, Damien Corrigan and Gary Baxter. Touring to public institutions throughout January.
FRANK STRAIN'S BULL N'BUSH THEATRE RESTAURANT (357 4627)
Thanks For The Memory: a musical review from the turn of the century to today; with Noel Brophy, Barbara Wyndon, Garth Meade, Neil Bryant and Helen Loram; director, George Carden. Until mid January.
GENESIAN THEATRE (55 5641)
Blithe Spirit by Noel Coward; director, Tony Hayes; with Dennis Allen, Pat East and Anne Power. Throughout January.
HUNTER VALLEY THEATRE COMPANY, Newcastle (26 2526)
In rehearsal.
KIRRIBILLI PUB THEATRE (92 1415)
Kurrabill Hotel, Milson's Point
The Western Show by P P Cranney; director, Richmond Young; music by Adrian Morgan; with Patrick Wood, Margie McCrae, Jane Hamilton, Paul Clubb and Ros Hohnen. Throughout January.
LES CURRIE PRESENTATIONS
On Clark Island:
Sawdust by Martin Ganguin; directed by George Carden. Throughout January.
NIMROD THEATRE (699 5003)
Second Season 1980
Upstairs: The Middle Ground by Porter Hodge; director, Barry Viner; music, Jo McLean and Alvin Hoxby. Throughout
Queens: The End of the Earth Show by Slater Smith; director, Anthony Barclay. Commences January 2.
PLAYERS THEATRE COMPANY (660 6254/6203)
Orient Hotel, The Rocks
The End of the Earth Show by Slater Smith; director, Anthony Barclay. Commences January 2.
St Patricks Hall, The Rocks
The End of the Earth Show by Slater Smith; director, Anthony Barclay. Commences January 2.
SHOPFRONT THEATRE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE (588 3948)
Free drama workshops in school holidays; includes playbuilding, mime.

Ron Amok by John McKellar and Ron Frazer; director, Bill Orr; with Ron Frazer. Throughout January.

NEW THEATRE (519 3403)
All My Sons by Arthur Miller; director, Paul Quinn. Commences early January.

NIMROD THEATRE (699 5003)

PLAYERS THEATRE COMPANY (30 7211)
Bondi Pavilion Theatre
New production opens January 21 directed by Peter Batey. Contact theatre for details.

269 PLAYHOUSE (929 6804)
Those Fabulous Years 1901-2001 created and devised by John Howitt based upon one of the original 680 mime shows; director, John Howitt; with John Howitt, Louise Howitt, Bill Young, Jane Hamilton, Doug McGrath, Peter Parkinson and Jenni Ogle. Throughout January.


Q THEATRE (047 21 5735)

THE ROCKS PLAYERS
(660 6254 6203)
Orient Hotel, The Rocks
The End of the Earth Show by Slater Smith; director, Anthony Barclay. Commences January 2.

St Patricks Hall, The Rocks
Toad of Toad Hall by A A Milne; director, Julia Dunsmore with Jeffrey Truman, Frank McNamara, Justin Byrne and Jenny Morgan. Commences January 3.

THEATRE RESTAURANT (357 4627)

Thanks For The Memory

Michael Bond and Alfred Bradley. Throughout January.

49 2895.

John Mulder. Director Peter Batey; music John Mulder with Karen Johnson and Liz Harris. From 22 January.

ENSEMBLE THEATRE (929 8877)

Knuckle by David Hare; director, Jon Ewing; with Stephanie Browne, Glenn Faye, Frank Gallagher, Pamela Gibbons Paul Mason, Anne E Morgan, John O'Brien and Stanley Walsh. Throughout January.
dance, sculpture, puppetry, design, radio and video. Shopfront Caravan touring country centres.

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE (2 0588)
Getting to Know About Drama. Children's presentation from January 7 to 25.

SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY (2 0588)

THEATRE ROYAL (231 6111)
Travelling North by David Williamson; director, John Bell, with Carol Raye, Frank Wilson, Jennifer Hagan, Julie Hamilton, Anthony Ingersent, Deborah Kennedy, Graham Rouse and Henri Szeps. Commences January 4.

THEAUSTRALIAN PERFORMING GROUP (347 7133)
Pram Factory: A Night With Venus, the Shoestring Band. Jan 23 - Feb 3.

COMEDY THEATRE (663 4993)
Peter Pan by J M Barrie; director, Robina Beard; with Hugh Munro and Sally Boyden.

HOOPLA THEATRE FOUNDATION (63 7643)

Downstairs: Quadrophenia by Ted Neisen. From late Jan.

HER MAJESTY'S (663 3211)
Up In One with Peter Allen. From Jan 19, for three weeks.

MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY (654 4000)
Russell Street Theatre. Once A Catholic by Mary O'Malley; director, Ray Lawler; special return season to Jan 26.

Betrayal by Harold Pinter; director, John Sumner; with Elizabeth Alexander, Neil Fitzpatrick, John Stanton and Edward Hepple. From Jan 30.

Athenaeum Theatre: Cinderella, a pantomime for adults; director, Frank Hauser.


MAJOR AMATEUR COMPANIES
Basin Theatre Group (762 1082)
Clayton Theatre Group (878 1702)
Heidelberg Rep (49 2262)
Malvern Theatre Company (211 0020)
Pumpkin Theatre (42 8237)
Williamstown Little Theatre (528 4267)
1812 Theatre (796 8642)
PILGRIM PUPPET THEATRE (818 6650)
Circus Strings and Things by Burt Cooper.

For entries contact the Editorial office on (049) 67 4470.

THEATRE ROYAL (34 6266)
Programme unconfirmed. Contact theatre for details.

For entries contact Carole Long on 356 9311.

ARTS THEATRE (36 2344)
The Murder Game by Constance Cox; director, Jason Savage. Continues to 9 February.

LA BOITE (36 1622)
Bingo by Edward Bond; director, John Milson (courtesy of TN Company). Commences 1 February.

QUEENSLAND THEATRE COMPANY (221 5177)
In recess until February.

For entries contact Don Batchelor on 356 9311.

ARTS THEATRE
Angas Street.

FESTIVAL THEATRE (51 0121)
Anne, the musical; director, George Martin; with Hayes Gordon, Jill Perryman Ann Grigg, Ric Hutton and Kevin Johns. Jan 7 - Feb 16.

PI PLAYHOUSE (51 5151)
Find The Lady by Michael Pertwee; director, Ted Craig; designer, Shaun Gurton; with Molly Sugden, Jan 16 - Feb 23.

Q THEATRE
Lady Be Good by George and Ira Gershwin. To Jan 19, Fris and Sats.

THE SPACE (51 0121)

For entries contact Edwin Relf on 223 8610.
CONCERTS

PALLADIUM THEATRE (534 0675)
Johnny Mathis in concert. From Feb 5.

THEATRE

BUNNATTY CASTLE (699 2864)
Irish Banquet

COMEDY CAFE. Fitzroy
Comedy

DIRTY DICK'S (26 2837)
Elizabathan

FLYING TRAPEZE (41 3727)
Original local entertainment.

GAY NINETIES, Geelong
Music Hall.

LADY DRAUGHT
Variety productions

THE LONDONER
West End style revue

NAUGHTY NINETIES (818 7567)
Musical Comedy.

SHUFTY'S (818 2894)
Tivoli style revue

STAGE DOORS (26 2531)
Wartime revue

TIKKI AND JOHN'S (663 1745)
Vaudeville

For entries contact Les Cartwright on 781 1777

WA

THEATRE

HOLE IN THE WALL (381 2403)
Joseph Conrad Comes Ashore by David Allen; director, Terry Clarke. 21 January - 23 February.

CONCERTS

CONCERT HALL
Australia Day Free Concert: The WA Symphony Orchestra, conductor, David Measham with Greg Moore at the piano.

For entries contact Joan Ambrose on 299 6639.
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THESPIA'S PRIZE CROSSWORD
NO. 19

Across:
1. Foul mad avid author (5,6)
10. Steal as little as possible (5)
11. Fanatical peer loved photographic equipment (9)
12. Epigrammatist the scribe or I confused (9)
13. Flew away from the South, then skulled (5)
14. The game is all to do with likenesses (6)
16. Sounds like a lobby against space (8)
18. Grill a short fellow who follows the network (8)
20. Cleric involved in quiet fire-raising (6)
23. Confess to possession above (3,2)
24. One missing from NSW? (9)
26. The interminable philosopher and the economist join forces in providing security (9)
27. Transfiguration of the decapitated lady into an archangel (5)
28. Parents in favour of the information I sort incorrectly (11)

Down:
2. Subdue by removing the joule from the gourd (5)
3. One Darwinian sea-bird caught and imprisoned (7)
4. Having a comedian to serve one is very fashionable (6)
5. With a crowbar, raising the First Lady found lying in the heather (8)
6. Release the French roue (7)
7. Piece of the buoyant planet (8,5)
8. Birds in ranks under the mast (8)
9. Chiefly, any model print-out (13)
15. Electronics study via coins? (8)
17. Caressing the orphan you abandoned (8)
19. Mate sprite with overweight queen and get someone obtrusive (?)
21. "Sent to my...... With all my imperfections on my head " (Hamlet) (7)
22. Ragamuffin on the rocks? (6)
25. It's colder in the Arctic, I erelong discovered (5)

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

Last month's answers.
The winner of last month's Crossword was Mr A J Taylor, 32 Woodbine Crescent, Ryde, NSW 2112.