Theatre Australia

Interview: Noni Hazlehurst
Theatre & Feminism
Special Report: Soviet Theatre

SPECIAL TV FEATURE

FESTIVAL OF PERTH

Australia's magazine of the performing arts. February 1980 $1.95*
at the 1980 Festival of Perth
22 February - 15 March

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11, 13, 14 March

The Netherlands Wind Ensemble (Holland)
26, 28, 29 February

The Fires of London (U.K.)
6 March

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8 March

Arensky Piano Trio (Aust.)
24 February and 2 March

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9 March

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4 March

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10 March

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15 March

Bob Fox and Stu Luckley (U.K.)
1, 2, 6 March

‘Northern Drift’
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23 February — 15 March

Jasper Carrott (U.K.)
25 February

‘Fool’s Fire’
Bob Berky (U.S.A.)
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Spike Milligan (U.K.)
27 February — 15 March

‘Take Me To Your Lieder’
Richard Stilgoe (U.K.)
23 February — 4 March

Gisela May (W. Germany)
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22 February — 15 March

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Heartache and Sorrow Theatre Company (N.Z.)
5 — 15 March

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Chris Harris (U.K.)
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Hole in the Wall Company
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* MORE SHOWS TO BE ANNOUNCED.
COMMENT

The Perth Festival is a major event, the more to be applauded for being annual, having run for several decades and being mounted in so isolated a venue. For whatever David Blenkinsop may say (see this article), Perth is not simply analogous to the smaller cities of Europe, eg Edinburgh, where festivals seem to work, more so than in the capitals. The difference is accessibility.

Edinburgh is, after all, not too long a train ride from London — probably less than an hour by air — and Salzburg is again a focal point in a continent containing some hundreds of millions of people.

Perth's situation is merely a microcosm of the general problem of being in Australia. Internally, of course, we suffer not just from a miniscule population from which to draw the standard 2% who are culturally inclined, but the dispersion of that market over a vast land mass. And externally, where London theatre — and even the Edinburgh Festival is patronised by a large percentage of tourists, this country will have to wait for a Laker type air fare structure (which with OPEC greed looks increasingly elusive) before overseas visitors become even a pinprick on ticket sales charts.

It is remarkable, then, that festivals are successful to any degree. That they are has come to depend on substantial funding from the private sector — keen to be associated with the cultural banquet served up in an atmosphere of citywide celebration. The other ingredient is of course the audience. Naturally festivals are mounted in the vacation period, with the event both drawing on and itself fermenting the exuberance of the holiday mood.

Yet finally, what makes such events work, and what makes them utterly indispensable, is the quality of the artists who can be enticed to appear. Festivals give the impetus for local companies to give of their very best, an interchange of work, and what makes them utterly successful to any degree. That they are has been a modus operandi of the commercial theatre for some time, but it is becoming an increasingly risky business with the failure of Deathtrap and Tribute to name just two. The locally repackaged West End or Broadway hit is not longer a certainty — and is a very expensive way of failing. Evita and others are coming up without the protection of readymade festival audiences and private sector subsidy. More prospects for this probable million dollar production next month...

As directors are increasingly realising, if the festival provides the initial venue, additional exposure and benefit for more of the country can then be gained from touring their attractions elsewhere. With directors working more in concert the development of civic theatre touring circuits and the new coming together of subsidised theatre companies (ADAP1 — see Info) this sort of movement of both local and overseas artists should increase. The crucial factor here — and it seems too obvious to mention — is in seeing the artists at first hand: the viewing of international productions in their original state, rather than reproduction to a formula.

More and more the subsidies and audiences which festivals can virtually guarantee, are tempting their directors into generating material from scratch. So Robyn Archer's Sideshow Alley on the one hand and Stoppard's Every Good Boy Deserves Favour on the other, are being produced in Adelaide.

Reproducing overseas successes has been a modus operandi of the commercial theatre for some time, but it is becoming an increasingly risky business with the failure of Deathtrap and Tribute to name just two. The locally repackaged West End or Broadway hit is not longer a certainty — and is a very expensive way of failing. Evita and others are coming up without the protection of readymade festival audiences and private sector subsidy. More prospects for this probable million dollar production next month...

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THEATRE AUSTRALIA FEBRUARY 1983 3
Queensland Musicals

Both professional companies in Brisbane are due to start off their seasons with big musicals — of very different types, but both with commercial appeal within their own policies.

The QTC has Gypsy opening on March 7, which will star June Salter in the first stage role she has agreed to undertake since her great success as Queen Mary in Crown Matrimonial. The TN Company is countering with Brecht's Threepenny Opera from 22 February, hoping to appeal to “music fans and playgoers” with the “Mack the Knife Show”.

Following these, the seasons move in very different directions. At the large SGIO Theatre audiences will be seeing Playboy of the Western World, Richard III, played by John Krummel, Travelling North with Ron Graham and Joan Bruce, Mourning Becomes Electra, a 'yet to be announced' follow up to Deathtrap, Shaw's Candida (hopefully with a "famous and internationally acclaimed actress") and finally Michael Boddy's melodrama Crushed by Desire last seen at Sydney's Music Hall.

At Twelfth Night on the other hand, comes Alex or the Automatic Trial — Ian Watson's version of Clockwork Orange; Rob George's Errol Flynn — in "wonderfully bad taste"; Summit Conference, Waiting for Godot and John Romeril's white vs aboriginal play Bastardy.

June Salter

Berlin Komische Oper Ballet in Swan Lake.

Berlin Komische Oper

Achievements in opera and dance at the Berlin Komische Oper have become legendary over the past thirty years. Seemingly limitless supplies of time and money have poured into the company since its foundation in 1947 in order to achieve a perfection of ensemble performance, of visual and technical effects, and great depth of artistic integrity and inspiration. The awe in which the Oper is held has been compounded over the years by the consistent refusal of both opera and dance companies resident there to perform outside their own home.

The Komische Oper was founded in 1947 by Walter Felsenstein, one of the greatest stage directors of the 20th Century, and the Komische Oper Ballet was established in 1965. It was set up under the artistic direction of choreographer Tom Schilling, but like everything else at the theatre, came under the perfectionist dictate of Felsenstein, that dance, like opera, must be good theatre, dramatically and visually convincing in every detail.

There will be two programmes shown during the Australian tour; one, the complete Swan Lake, the other a programme of four complete one-act ballets featuring John Cranko's Jeux de Cartes together with three Tom Schilling ballets, Youth Symphony (Mozart), Evening Dances (Schubert) and La Mer (Debussy).

The tour involves an investment of $2 million; the entire 60 dancers are coming, to be accompanied by Australian orchestras of at least 52 musicians. They start in Melbourne on March 11, and will go on to Adelaide, Canberra and Sydney.
Up In One...is the name of singer Peter Allen's cabaret show that is currently playing at Her Majesty's in Melbourne, and will be in Sydney from February 13.

We haven't seen Allen since 1977 when he toured the country in response to the phenomenal local success of his song "I Go To Rio". Up In One has been a smash hit on Broadway, winning accolades from the most hardened critics for "cabaret at its finest". The Art Deco set alternately hides and discloses a madcap group of musicians, sequins and mirrored costumes, special effects keep surprising and the changing backdrop scenery alone is worth the price of admission. Allen's partner is Lenora Nemetz, who in the course of a busy career once stood in for Liza Minnelli.

Peter Allen started off in Tenterfield in the late 50's and still has vivid memories of that time. "When a rock show passed through, it was like a circus coming; my parents had to lock me in my room to make sure that I didn't run away with them. I just sat in my room and cried and tried to tear the door down...I could sing before I could walk and when I was nine my mother used to take me to pubs on Saturday afternoons. The men would drink in the bar and I'd play piano in the lounge while the ladies sang all the old songs."

Hoopla are launching into the new decade with a new subscription campaign and an obvious determination to remain in the public eye. "Hoopla has clearly demonstrated the consistent artistic quality of its work in 1979," said Chairman Lloyd O'Neil, "We produced some of the best theatre in Australia. Now we have a new season to boast about and we're going to make sure everyone knows it. We offer energy, experience and entertainment. We've got the combination."

Their first play of the year is Ted Nielson's Quadraphenia, to be directed at the Playbox by Charles (Bud) Tingwell, and apparently, a "witty, sparkling comedy about contemporary relationships". Other Australian plays scheduled are Australia Majestic by Roger Pulvers, about the clash of cultures when a large hotel is transformed into a hospital during the Pacific War, David Allen's Upside Down at the Bottom of the World and Clem Gorman's A Manual of Trench Warfare.

Roger Pulvers has been appointed Writer in Residence Dramaturg with Hoopla for 1980. As well as working on new plays, he will work with other writers in script development and be involved in all aspects of Hoopla's artistic planning. Pulvers will be directing A Manual of Trench Warfare for the Playbox Upstairs.

Modern Comedy... The third Limited Life scheme (the other two being Rex Cramphorn's company and Terry O'Connell's Music Box) is taking place in Melbourne under the direction of Charles Kemp. With him the four permanent actors plan to:

"Promote live theatre among new audiences by presenting accessible and portable productions and encouraging theatrical activity within the community.

"Broaden the actors' and director's awareness of the place of live theatre in this community by testing audience reactions to a range of theatrical styles and conventions.

"Develop fresh theatrical forms and skills with which to assert the vital presence of live theatre in a society which, on one hand, has culturally disintegrated (pluralism), and, on the other, is increasingly dominated by rationalism and technological uniformity."

To do this the company will prepare a programme of plays called A History Of Modern Comedy, ranging from Chekhov to Ionesco and probably including recent Australian work. The plays will then be presented in an area between Collingwood and Kensington, and the company will also be involved in workshops, reading and discussions which "will stem from a consideration of the body as a communicative medium."

Auditions for the four acting places will be held in late February; further details can be obtained from Charles Kemp, Ormond College, Parkville, 3052.
Playwrights in Residence... Last year the Australia Council Literature and Theatre Boards were calling for applications for their scheme to have playwrights in residence at various theatres, and they have now made their decision. The two boards (who jointly fund the scheme) were very impressed with the quality of the applications submitted and found it somewhat difficult to work within present budgetary restrictions. The majority who were successful were seen as either providing theatrical experience for promising playwrights or offering educational enrichment for young people through the medium of theatre.

The successful applicants are: Stephen Sewell, with the APG Co-op; Peter Matheson at Freewheels TIE Company; La Mama has Barry Dickins; Mary Gage is resident writer with the National, Perth; Inge Knight with the Theatre of the Deaf; Mil Perrin will work at Nimrod; John Stone goes to the Q, Penrith; the Reid House Theatre Workshop in Canberra has John Romeril; Salamanca Theatre Company have John Lonie and then he goes on to the Tasmanian Puppet Theatre; F J Willett followed by Alan Seymour will be working at the STC Adelaide; the Marionette Theatre will have Richard Tulloch; and Ron Blair will be at Toe-Truck.

The Boards were reluctant to assist companies that intended employing as playwrights people who were working with those particular companies in a salaried capacity, and to assist the employment of writers who had already enjoyed considerable experience in the theatre.

The Trust is involved in bringing out two great British comedians over the next few weeks: Spike Milligan is bringing out a new zany show called An Alarmingly Funny Evening With Spike Milligan and Friends, the friends being songwriter Mike McLennan and accompanist Carl Vine — which starts at the Theatre Royal in Sydney on February 11.

And the next is Robert Morley, opening on March 13 in an Alan Bennett play called The Old Country about an exiled spy, based on the Kim Philby story. The play had a successful run in the West End a couple of years ago with a very different actor in the lead role, Alec Guiness. This will be Morley's first appearance in Australia since his tour of How The Other Half Loves in 1973, and his first serious acting role since he played Oscar Wilde in the classic British film about Wilde's life. He hopes to take this production of The Old Country to Broadway after the tour here.
National Secretariat

Following the original meetings about an Association for the Development of Australian Professional Theatre (ADAPT — see Comment, November '79) a meeting of representatives from all performing arts companies was held in Canberra in late November. The meeting elected a steering committee to prepare a report on the structure, funding, functions and staffing of such a cooperative service organisation.

The steering committee consists of Stephen Barry (National Theatre, Perth), Alan Edwards (QTC), Carrillo Gantner (Hoopla), Jeffrey Joynton Smith (AETT), Justin MacDonald (Australian Opera) and Stuart Thompson (Marionette Theatre).

Carrillo Gantner commented: “This is a vital step in the development of the performing arts. The cooperative spirit of the organisation is most encouraging. Companies from the whole spectrum of the non-profit performing arts — drama, opera, dance puppetry and youth theatre — have expressed their support.

“The national secretariat will be a self help body. Its functions will include the joint development of arts policies, the safe-guarding of ongoing financial support, and the development of shared services and information.

“Lobbying governments and the community will be a primary function. We must stress the importance of the performing arts in Australia’s cultural and economic development. We can support the Australia Council’s work in this regard.”

Nimrod are the first with another innovation in the subsidised theatre establishment; they have just appointed writer and children’s theatre expert, Christine Westwood to the position of Special Projects Person.

Christine’s definition of the job is dealing in the theatre with everything that is not white, middle-class male; that is blacks, women, children, education, ethnic communities and people for whom English is not the first language.

The work to be done is to go two ways: both getting these groups into the Nimrod more, and to take the work of the theatre to them. No specific modes of operating have yet been decided upon, but somehow Ms Westwood will be attempting to dovetail these minorities into the programme of traditional Nimrod shows as well as going out to collect new material, and producing shows from and with this. Her particular hopes are to lock into celebration days of communities, and especially to involve more young people so they grow up with the concept of theatre.

“The establishment term is ‘democratising the performing arts’, but it boils down to greatly improving access to the high quality, government subsidised arts. Nimrod is in an ideal geographical position to do this.”

The position will last as long as the money holds out.
PLAYLAB SUGGESTION

Dear Sir,

We would like to ask — what was the purpose of the Queensland Theatre Company's National Playwright's Competition held to celebrate its 10th anniversary?

Was it a competition to find a promising Australian playwright? Or simply a competition to find a ready made vehicle through which the Company could display its support for Australian playwriting?

In either event, according to the three judges (Courier Mail Tuesday 4th December and The Australian) the competitors were simply not good enough.

What then has been the value of the exercise and can the matter be allowed to rest there? We believe not. Already the cost has been considerable: three professional people have given a significant amount of their valuable time to reading these plays. 148 writers have contributed their writing time; and there remains the question of the prize money — $5000.00.

The problem appears to be one of quality.

In the opinion of the judges, none of the playwrights competing could be said to have "arrived"; none of the plays were considered "worthy of winning", "of sufficient quality", "of national significance"; and there was no ready made vehicle upon which the Queensland Theatre Company was prepared to "stake its reputation".

So the competition might be seen to have failed.

The questions we must now ask are how can the investment already made in the venture be supported, and how can the quality of Australian playwriting be improved — without relying on the names of the "top ten or fifteen"?

Before suggesting an answer, we would like your readers to know a little of the feelings and opinions of both playwrights themselves, and others involved with theatre in Queensland.

At the second Queensland Playwright's Conference held earlier this year, sixty such people unanimously agreed that Australian playwriting would stand a better chance of improving if some emphasis was given, and money channelled towards the playwright's need first — to be part of a theatre company and second — to receive sympathetic workshopping of a promising play from a company prepared to programme the work for eventual production.

Competitions alone were not enough.

With respect then, may we suggest that the Board of the Queensland Theatre Company consider the following: that the prize money of $5000.00 be paid to a theatre company of their choice — anywhere in Australia and suitable to the playwright, who is prepared to offer a sympathetic workshop period and eventual public production to any one of the four plays that the judges considered worth a "fourth reading".

This we believe would be a truly worthwhile outcome of the Queensland Theatre Company's tenth anniversary competition.

Glyn Davies — President — Playlab

(Queensland Playwright's Laboratory)
Jennifer Blackside - Immediate Past President (La Boite Theatre)
Alrene Sykes - Senior Lecturer, English Department University of Qld.
Richard Fotheringham — Senior Tutor, English Department University of Queensland. Theatre Director and Critic
Rod Lumer — Chairman Playlab Press
Jill Shearer — Writer
Steve Sewell — Writer
John Bradley — Writer
Lorna Bol — Writer
Ken Methold — Writer
None of whom entered the competition.
Signed — on behalf of and with the permission of the above.
Jennifer Blockside

OPEN LETTER TO THE THEATRE BOARD

Dear Mr Adams,

We wonder what the motives of you and your Board might be in reducing the funding of La Mama.

Why them? Their total grant is, absolutely and compared to other companies, a drop in the wine glass at lunch time, loan of a few wigs, the cancellation of two advertisements, the more efficient working of one Board meeting, or the loss on one of the sillier productions seen this year.

What sort of perversity is it that the most cost and artistically efficient theatrical body in the country should have 40% of its legs, or heads or hearts cut off?

Could it be that the La Mama alumni don't have the clout that success once brought them? Could it be that your Board is ignorant, not only of the importance of the joint in the past, but its continued importance in the present? Don't they like the kind of work people do now? Or are they just a little forgetful, somewhat absent minded, and will rectify this absurd situation pronto?

It all the theatre people, the artists, the film makers and the poets who have been well served by La Mama over the years came and stood around your Board table, we should soon see where excellence and excitement stood. It wouldn't be sitting down.

Give La Mama her money, Scrooges.

Just because it's little doesn't mean it's not great.

Sincerely,
Garrie Hutchinson
Phillip Adams

E. Brunswick, Vic.
Besides needing to re-charge their batteries in front of audiences and gaining immediate response, their name obviously are bigger box office draws. Maybe they should insist on having a clause in their contracts that they can do at least three months' stage work a year.

For those enraptured by the singing voice of Katherine Hepburn, on the latest Ben Bagley produced album — Cole Porter Revisited Vol IV — she is heard intoning 'Thank You So Much, Mrs Lowsborough — Goodbye', 'The Queen of Terre Haute' and 'A Woman's Career'.

A letter from John Diedrich, very pleased with the notices he has been receiving for his performances as Curly in the English revival of Oklahoma! "Didn't find many differences in the way they work here," he writes, "if anything not as disciplined as in Australia, but that I am sure is open to debate. Ray Cook was musical director, absolutely brilliant. I think I learnt more from him than anyone. He has wonderful musical knowledge and a superb skill in passing it onto the artist. Jamie Hammerstein (Oscar's son, who directed it) was very good. Very intense direction, treated the libretto and songs as one, just like he was doing a straight play, which I think is exactly how it should be done." Incidentally, playing the role of Aunt Eller is Australian Madge Ryan.

Wonder if our own Lewis Fiander will be cast in the title role when Stephen Sondheim's Sweeney Todd opens at London's Drury Lane around next July. He was Sondheim's original choice for the Broadway production, but vetoed by American Equity.

What a fascinating career Robin Stewart has had. I met him recently on the Adelaide set of the new John Lamond film Pacific Banana, in which he and Graeme Blundell plays sex-hungry pilots (and he was doubling this with MacArthur in the ABC's The Timeless Land series). He started as a child actor (together with Sean Scully) in Disney films, was the young boy at the end to whom Richard Burton sang in the original Broadway production of Camelot, Ralph Richardson's son, in the West End production of Graham Green's The Complaisant Lover, did six years as Sid James's son in the TV series Bless This House, plus a great many other things. He has a wealth of anecdotes about some of the big show biz names in Britain with whom he has worked and who are friends of his. Now that he has settled here, let us hope his talents are fully utilised.

Although currently on a six months' leave of absence from the Hoopla Theatre Foundation, where he is co-executive director, am wondering whether Graeme Blundell will return there. Now that he is married to English-born Margot Hilton, he is free to work in England, and his ambition seems to be to commute freely between the two countries, wherever the work is offering.

For the record, two marriages occurred around the festive season which did not receive all the publicity one might have expected: entrepreneur Paul Dainty to TV critic Suellen O'Grady and actor John Waters to actress Sally Conabere.

Carol Channing, now playing in Hello Dolly! in London, was asked if she ever got sick on a plane. "Only when they are showing Barbra Streisand in Hello Dolly!"., she replied.

AUSTRALIA COUNCIL
Theatre Board Grants, 1980:
DANCE, DRAMA, PUPPETRY, MIME
(including youth activities)

The Theatre Board has limited funds available for projects in 1980, and invites applications in the following categories:

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

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

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

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

For details and application forms contact:
The Secretary
Theatre Board
Australia Council
PO Box 592
NORTH SYDNEY, NSW 2060
Telephone: (02) 922 2122

Closing Date: 15 February, 1980—Decision advised by 30 April, 1980.
pattern for commercial theatre in the '80s as short, in and out seasons at high prices at the largest capital city arenas. Instead of the present eight or nine month runs in Sydney and Melbourne, he suggests, it will be eight weeks each in Sydney and Melbourne, four weeks in Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth. "I think there will be enough people to support a policy, certainly with musicals, of big stars, big arenas and high prices," he says.

Kenn predicts also that commercial theatre will be subsidised in the 1980s. Talk about wishful thinking! The government has a sticky enough job selling taxpayers the doctrine of subsidised non-commercial culture. Commercial theatre? NEVER!

On programmes, he notes that J C Williamson Productions, in association with Derek Glynne and Michael Edgley, will stage Shit Your Eyes And Think Of England (with Derek Nimmo) and Whose Life Is It Anyway? Malcolm Cook and Hayden Price. Attractions will present the world premiere of a musical based on Seven Little Australians, plus revivals of The Kingfisher and A Star Is Born. AGC-Paradine's big one will be the Neil Simon hit musical, They're Playing Our Song.

Michael Edgley, writing for the same issue of Variety, says he and probably other promoters will concentrate in the '80s on small, intimate plays with a big star, big-name contemporary attractions like Elton John and giant family spectacles such as the Moscow Circus. He adds that it is no longer profitable to mount musicals, instancing that while it cost $300,000 to stage A Chorus Line and $400,000 for Annie, the producers of Evita will be up for more than $1,000,000 before the curtain rises in April.

The Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust's entrepreneurial policy for 1980 is geared closer to the concept of its founders 25 years ago — "a theatre of Australians, by Australians for Australians". Marketing and promotions manager John Little says Australian production accounts for a major portion of the year's line-up.

Big-name stars will be imported for some shows — Robert Morley next month for The Old Country, Leslie Caron and Louis Jourdan in June for the Feydeau farce, 13 Rue de la Morte — but directors, supporting casts, technicians and staging will be Australian. Fully imported attractions will include a Spanish puppet theatre, La Claca (March); The Dance Theatre of Harlem (June) and the Buddy Rich Big Band with Mel Torme (June).

I read recently that an Australian actress unknown to me had returned from America with two plays she plans to present here. I hope she doesn't think they are new to Sydney. One is Charles Dizeno's The Drapes Come, which I saw back in 1972 staged by the short-lived Jimandi Mini Theatre Club as a lunch hour show in a specially fitted large shop in the then-new Edgecliff Centre. Players were Molly MacLeod and Mirren Lee.

A propos of which, I hear two well-known showbiz people are looking for a venue to launch a new lunch-hour theatre in Sydney. Here's hoping.

Sydney actor Valerie Newshead is off to New Zealand later this month to appear at the Christchurch Arts Festival from March 8 to 15. Christchurch Repertory Company has invited her to play again the Jewish mother she has portrayed in each of the several productions of Morrie Swerdlin's Same Difference. She will also appear in lunchtime performances of Claire Booth Luce's Slum The Door Softly.

Sydney Opera House attendance figures, presented in the Opera House Trust's last annual report as percentages of capacity, afford some interesting comparisons. Appropriately enough, classical music consistently tops pop music and drama.

Heading the list is the long-awaited inaugural organ recital, which achieved the ultimate 100 percent attendance. Then comes opera, peaking at 99 percent; the Gilbert and Sullivan Society at 98; chamber music at 95; ballet at 91; choral concerts at 89.

Most successful in the lighter field were Geoghe Zamfir at 87 percent and the Shell National Folkloric Festival at 75, but in contrast the Ronnie Scott Quintet drew only 55; the twilight concerts 39; the people's concerts 31; a single disco night a mere 29 and David Gray 22.

Drama managed 82 percent for evening performances, but only a 57 for matinees.
A friend of mine recently commented that 1980 seemed likely to become "the year of Noni Hazlehurst". This statement reveals no real gift for clairvoyance, as one merely has to look at the lady's schedule to appreciate its probability: after the highly successful Jane Street 'Nimrod' season of On Our Selection, Noni plays Mrs Finn in Maurice Murphy's film version of Fatty, Finn, returns to the Nimrod for a principal role in
Steve Sewell's *Traitors* with Penne Hackforth-Jones, Colin Friels, Max Gillies and Barry Otto, under the direction of Neil Armfield, then co-stars with Mel Gibson for the Sydney Theatre Company in *No Names — No Pack Drill* with a cast including Ron Falk, Julie Hamilton, Al Thomas, Janice Finn and Brandon Burke.

Not a bad line-up for any actor, and in Noni Hazlehurst's case, well-deserved. Having played in only four shows in seven years, this attractive blonde singer/actress has already established herself as one of the most interesting and capable performers in the country. She's a worker, and undoubtedly will continue to refine and expand her talents, as befits her heritage...

Noni is the product of a rather sprawling theatrical family, consisting of high-wire and trapeze artists, singers, organists and ice-skating champions. Her mother, Lita Lee, was a tap dancer and ingenue in British touring shows when she met her future husband, singer/comedian Ray Canada:

"He was in India all through the war entertaining the troops; he'd come on dressed as an old tramp with funny make-up and do a stuttering act, lots of falls and tripping over...then he'd break into an aria from an opera with this amazing tenor voice. He'd kill 'em, they just fell over. I've got a record of his singing "Trees" which he recorded when he was twenty eight...he hits Top C at the end and it's not falsetto, and he holds it for about forty eight bars. An extraordinary singer."

Noni's parents gave up the business and migrated to Australia on the £10 scheme in 1950 to have children. They were determined that Noni and her brother Cameron should enjoy the benefits of a full education: nonetheless, Noni was given singing lessons from her father and coached in ballet and piano from an early age:

"I never considered doing anything else other than singing and acting. But I never wanted to work as a kid...my family forced me into auditions for *Swallows Juniors*. I didn't really want to test myself because I always had visions of myself being an older person and getting all the work. I did things like learning accents at an early age; when you know what you want to do from that age then everything becomes towards that end and later it's really easy. Also, being surrounded by show business, you never have any illusions about how wonderful its going to be.

After graduating from a Melbourne Presbyterian Girls College, Noni auditioned for NIDA, but John Clarke felt she was perhaps "too young" to cope with the rigours of Sydney, so she enrolled for the Drama course at Adelaide's Flinders University. There she happily lived on campus and studied mime, singing, fencing, ballet, Commedia and Noh drama with such classmates as Bob Baines, Laurel McGowan and Basia Bonkowski:

"We had an amazing teacher called Yutaka Wada (who did *Rashomon* at St Martins in Melbourne)...he was one of five students chosen from around the country to study at the Moscow Arts school under a pupil of Stanislavski. it was a seven year course and he spent the first two years learning Russian, that's how heavy the course was, so with hisJapanese inscrutability and the Russian discipline...! He had directed at the Berliner Ensemble and he came out to Flinders under vastly false pretences to take the third year performance group. Well, there was this swag of layabout Adelaide hippies confronted by a little man in a gingham shirt, white shorts, white socks and white shoes saying, 'The only excuse for lateness is death or fatal accident'. We all laughed a lot but he meant it! We broke him down a bit by the end...and we'd come up a bit, too. He's now Peter Brook's assistant; were very lucky to have him."

During her third year at Flinders, Noni appeared in the chorus of *Winnie the Pooh* in her summer holidays. A successful audition for Crawfords Productions led to a string of appearances in *Matlock, Division 4, Homicide* and ABC-TV plays, culminating in a continuing role in *The Box* — all within six months.

"I copped a lot of flak from the guys back at Flinders though. After that kind of training, it was considered selling yourself cheap and doing rubbish...not seen as a means to an end at all. But I've since met up with them again in Sydney; they're doing the same things as me, so it's come the full circle, which I assumed it would anyway."

Noni's television career has continued to flourish: most recently she scored as the heroine's hard-bitten best friend in the ABC's *Ride On Stranger* and as a naive night-club singer in the award winning *TV Follies*. Children are familiar with Noni from her regular appearances on *Playschool*.

"Playschool is my favourite job of all; you have to be yourself so you have to decide who you are, if only for half an hour. And you have to play to one child only; you can't say 'Children' in case there is a child watching alone...It requires a lot of control, and since doing that show I've never been afraid of a camera again."

June 1977 found Noni back on the boards at Jane Street in *Don't Piddle Against The Wind, Mate* and *The Ripper Show*; her performances prompted critic Frank Harris to predict: "Watch out for Noni Hazlehurst. She's an entertaining young actress with assured potential...not only a clever actress but a fetching singer with instant appeal. Her comic song, "I Married A Monster". was a show-stopper."

However it took almost two years for Noni to find her way back on stage, this time at the 1979 Playwrights' Conference:

"The Conference was the breakthrough for me for theatre; having done all that television I had to make my bed and lie in it. I couldn't meet people in Sydney, nobody knew I was living here, except for Grundy's, and the Conference really gave me confidence for a short burst. I found I could articulate some of the things I wanted to say, and everyone actually listened to you, which was wonderful."
Immediately afterwards, Noni was back at Jane Street, this time as Lily White in George Whaley's smash hit production On Our Selection. Then came the lead role in the Australian premiere of The Man From Muckinupin by Dorothy Hewett:

"It was commissioned by Stephen Barry for the Perth Playhouse — they also asked Alan Seymour to submit something but they chose Dorothy's — Rose Lilly, Dorothy's daughter, saw me in Selection and made an inspired guess...it was just one of those things that was amazing for me. I played both Polly Perkins and Lily Perkins, and Lily is a half-caste, but there were no books other than picture books that I could look at, so I had to get out and meet some aboriginals in Western Australia. That was a great help, it was everything. The case said 'Oh no no no, you don't want to go down to the pubs.' So I asked if anyone knew any aboriginals — 'Well, I do, but he'd be no help...' Eventually I got onto a little girl who helped me and she was terrific. The Western Australians don't consider Aborignals at all.

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When Malcolm Blaylocke first dropped into the artistic director's chair in October, La Boite was already enjoying a run of success which must have seemed hard to surpass, let alone redirect. Four out of five of the local awards (made by the *Telegraph*) had gone to the theatre for its productions in 1979, it was averaging a healthy 60% attendance, and was finishing the year with two smash hits, *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* (in which the
there was transformed from foyer to backstage corridor into a '30s dance hall) and a splendid Christmas romp Sheer Luck Holmes.

There were even those who were claiming to have heard the bell toll. The previous artistic director Rick Billinghamurst had left in some frustration. His vision of a totally professional company had not eventuated, and across town Rick's comrade in arms John Milson was already moving the reborn professional TN Company into the same kind of repertoire. Already the TN have beaten Blaylocke to the rights for Errol Flynn's Great Big Adventure Book and he has had to negotiate with them to get Man From Muckinupin.

So the delight and the danger of Malcolm Blaylocke's appointment is that he intends to push La Boite further along the tightrope they've been successfully treading the last few years and make the theatre a mecca for local playwrights. He's come to Brisbane with his reputation resting squarely on the years he spent as co-founder and director of South Australia's Circle Company, which first brought the plays of Rob George and Steve Spears to national notice.

Since arriving in Brisbane he has contacted Steve Sewell, whose Traits was successfully premiered by the Pram Factory in 1979, and Errol O'Neill, whose scripts for the Popular Theatre Troupe have re-established him as a writer as well as actor. They and others will be contributing to a Brisbane version of Bullsh! in 1980, and Blaylocke's power of positive thinking (he reels off a string of other South Australian playwrights whose work he directed for the Circle Company) could well be the catalyst that Queensland writers have long needed.

Malcolm Blaylocke summarises his policy with two brief dictums: "As much local playwriting as possible" and "La Boite ought to go further than just entertainment". The danger in this bold approach is that La Boite's success with audiences has come almost in spite of its reputation as a place for new writing and new thinking. Noel Coward's Fallen Angels was the hit of '79, and Louis Nowra's Visions the wooden spooner.

Of other Australian scripts only John Bradley's Irish Stew had what I imagine Blaylocke is looking for—substance and success, though The Hills Family Show and Sheer Luck Holmes could be justified on other grounds (Hills as an experiment in group devised vaudeville and Holmes for exposing local writer Simon Denver's work and providing a training ground for a large young cast under professional direction).

Blaylocke's response to this dilemma has been to announce a 1980 season of all Australian plays, but including at least three (Traits, Muckinupin, Bullsh!) with a good track record. Dave Allen's Dickenses has also been programmed, and space left for another local script. And so he is out and about, talking to writers. He's hoping for a writer-in-residence later in the year, and to revive the group documentaries which Rick Billinghamurst introduced but which lapsed after Happy Birthday East Timor. With consistent programming and active proselytising he's hoping the Noel Cowards won't be needed. Fingers crossed.

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Later this month Perth will celebrate its 28th Festival of Perth and it is perhaps an appropriate time to look back on the achievements of Australia’s oldest Arts Festival. Since the last War there has been an explosion of arts festivals all over the world and whilst many of them are genuine enough there are others whose credentials are of a more spurious nature gaining their inspiration from commercial or self motivated interests and having scant regard for the communities upon which they are imposed.
The Festival of Perth grew out of the very real desire to provide entertainment of quality to the visitors to The Adult Education Boards' Annual Summer School at the University. Entertainment to which other members of the public were warmly welcomed. The undoubted strength of the Festival of Perth lies in roots which were planted in such a meaningful way by its visionary founder, Fred Alexander, in the summer of 1953. Writing in the foreword to that first Festival, he wrote: "The hope is expressed that the programme offered in this first Festival may encourage West Australians to draw on real advantages of scene and climate to offset disabilities imposed by distance. The aim in subsequent Festivals will continue to be to offer the best that is available from British, European, American, Asian as well as Australian sources and, as time going on to link these cultural services with tourist and sporting activities."

Of course Perth at that time was seldom a port of call for visiting international attractions due largely to the lack of suitable facilities and although there have been many changes in the intervening 28 years the Festival has never lost sight of its obligation to the community and almost certainly the constraints imposed by the geographic isolation of the city have given the Festival the special strength and purpose which other festivals so often lack.

It is not a coincidence that in the Northern Hemisphere the greatest Festivals have been established in the smaller and more isolated cities and towns like Edinburgh, Helsinki and Salzburg whilst attempts to create similar events in such huge cities as London and Paris have nearly always been disastrous.

Perth is more obviously fortunate in other respects. It enjoys an unparalleled situation and climate and only the barrier of distance saves it from becoming a shangri la for tourists. It boasts a widely spread collection of splendid venues for its arts activities — can there be another university in the world so beautifully situated which enjoys the use of six such spectacular auditoria? If Perth in fact lacks anything as a Festival City it is in the area of the lyric theatre. His Majesty's Theatre is this year still out of commission due to an increasingly elongated renovation programme and this has regrettably resulted in our having to abandon our plans to include opera in our programme.

The Festival has traditionally been an annual event and whilst there has been much heart searching particularly amongst our minuscule staff on the subject of change to a biennial pattern the event remains a hardy annual very much in the tradition of Edinburgh.

The programming of the Festival throughout its history has embraced five main areas of activity — music and dance in all their many and varied forms, theatre, film, the visual arts and crafts and community activities. Balance and innovation have always been the most important considerations in planning.

Undoubtedly the greatest pitfalls of all are the ever present temptations to provide a surfeit of riches in one area at the expense of another or to repeatedly re-engage successful attractions. It is equally dangerous to provide a ten course banquet when the public is satisfied after eight. Festival themes too can easily collapse between conception and harvest as the main pillars of your construction fall in wayside of your planning.

Quite clearly we believe that we have not only an important contribution to make to the national arts scene but an equal responsibility to ensure that our international imports are not only of the highest possible merit but that they are seen by as many people as possible including those in less accessible areas of the country.

The 1980 Festival has been heralded by Sir Russell Drysdale's strikingly humorous poster depicting a Pierrot directing the capricious choreography of a seemingly "tipsy" black swan. The painting is the apt forerunner of a programme through which courses a
rich vein of humour, comedy and wit. In the theatre programme Chris Harris (Kemp's Jig) presents the Australian premiere of his new show That's The Way To Do It — a history of the seaside as seen through the eyes of three generations of Punch and Judy men. Bob Berky, America's leading mime and clown artist, making his first appearance in Australia will present his zany entertainment Foolsfire, winner of a special award at last year's Edinburgh Festival.

The National Theatre Company will present the Australian premiere of Peter Nichols’ bawdy musical comedy Privates on Parade (directed by Stephen Barry) and the WA Theatre Company will present Cliff Green's Cop Out! (directed by Bob Faggeter). Arch-goon Spike Milligan, Jasper Carrott, Richard Stilgoe and the BBC's Northern Drift team of Henry Livings and Alex Glasgow complete the lunatic line up.

The major international drama offering will be provided by John Houseman's Acting Company of New York who will present their highly-acclaimed Broadway production of Elizabeth I by Paul Foster, whilst the Heartache and Sorrow Theatre Company from New Zealand will present the Australian premiere of The Case Of Katherine Mansfield by Cathy Downes, another award winner at last year's Edinburgh Festival. The Hole in the Wall Company has chosen two new Australian plays for their Festival season. Doreen Clarke's Roses in Due Season and Jack Hibberd's A Man of Many Parts — specially written for Perth actor Neville Teede.

Bridging the gap between theatre and music programmes will be two virtuoso performers in the pleasing shapes of Cathy Berberian and the legendary Gisela May of the Berlin Ensemble who makes her first ever appearance in Australia. Miss May is to present two Brecht programmes (Playhouse and Concert Hall) and her famous Berlin Cabaret programme as a late-night special in the Festival Club.

The music programme features three great ensembles from Europe - the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra, the Netherlands Wind Ensemble and the Fires of London under their founder-director Peter Maxwell Davies. Additional recital concerts will be given by Jane Manning, the Arensky Trio and Lidia Grychtolowna. Jazz will again be a prominent feature of the music programme with the legendary Stan Getz, Tania Maria and the National Youth Jazz Orchestra of Great Britain all making their first appearances in Australia at the Festival.

The visual arts programme includes exhibitions from Germany, Japan, China and Britain. The highlight here will inevitably be the Treasures of London Exhibition from the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths' in London.

For the rest, there is the Film Festival (which includes fifteen award winning films), many street performances, visits from Britain's Raree Show Company, the Marionette Theatre of Australia, Gourmet Festivals, great sporting attractions and an increasingly bleary-eyed Festival staff.

Why not come and see how the West is won?
The ABC — Into the Eighties

Next month March ABC-TV’s drama department has two major series, both “time pieces”, ready for screening — Timelapse, an adventure which takes us into the future, and Timeless Land, an epic love story set against Australia’s founding.

Timelapse, written by Peter Yeldham and based on Eleanor Dark’s trilogy, will have taken six months of filming and costing something around $1.5 million it is their biggest drama undertaking to date. (See separate story).

Timelapse stars Robert Coleby, Katie Sheil and John Meillon. Conceived by writer Colin Free, it concerns an electronics engineer who discovers that the Premier and his henchmen plan to limit individual freedom by introducing new laws. Aware that their plans have leaked our hero is quickly put to rest. But thanks to a doctor friend his body is put on ice, literally, and is revived 10 years later. And in 1991 he wakes up to take on the leaders of a State which is becoming more totalitarian by the day.

The 13 one-hour episodes constitute a series which, says the ABC, is futuristic, not sci-fi.

Both Timelapse and Timeless Land are part of a formula laid down last year, to produce essentially quality Australian works which have included series, one-off plays, trilogies and also TV versions of theatre plays. The pattern is to be closely followed for 1980-81. Within the spectrum, says head of drama Geoff Daniels, there will always be an adventure type series.

“He'll have an offside,” said Daniels, “who's a woman, but with no romantic interest. You won't be seeing rugby league, or Aussie rules featuring. It will be international sport — golf, tennis, athletics.”

The series is being written by Peter Yeldham (Run From The Morning, Timeless Land etc) on an idea by ABC-TV producer Ray Alehin.

Another series (of similar length) on the drawing board for 1980-81 is Pastoral. It will be written by actor Michael Craig who also wrote the award-winning, The Fourth Wish. Daniels describes it as “a vehicle for social comment. It’s about an inner-city Roman Catholic priest and how he handles human frailties against the panoply of a suburban congregation.”

In the books area, the ABC intends adapting three Alan Marshal books — I Can Jump Puddles, This Is The Grass and Beautiful Are The Feet — into a series of 10 one-hour episodes.

“They'll be presented as a progressive story. Each episode will be an entity in itself with no cliffhangers. We'll possibly show those at 7.40pm

(Continued over page)
on a Sunday night," Daniels said.  

The ABC has also bought Louis Stone's novel *Jonah* which will be adapted into four parts. *Jonah* tells of a hunchback boot repairer and is set in the Sydney suburb of Redfern round about 1910. In addition, Frank Moorhouse's *Conferenceville* — a collection of stories — is also being looked at.

Michael Cove, who last year gave us the sextet of plays *A Place In The World*, will be providing a trilogy which centres on three women — a girl, her mother and the grandmother. "A wedding is the catalyst," Daniels said.

In line with the 1979-80 format, forward planning includes six more theatre plays, a batch of single plays and six plays to be directed by those with little, or no, previous experience — a move, says Daniels, to unearth new directorial talent.

The six theatre plays will include, at this stage, *Going Home*, *Hard God* and possibly Sumner Locke Elliott's *Rusty Bugles*. At the time of writing negotiations were still going on for *Rusty Bugles* and the three remaining plays had not yet been decided.

And in addition to a big children's series to come out of Melbourne, there's a possible co-production of *Coral Island* with Britain's Thames TV.

Output of drama hours for TV will have dropped to about 62 hours for 1979-80 due mainly to *The Timeless Land* commitment. Output will return to the norm, about 80 hours, for the coming year, says Daniels.

Ever since Garry McDonald as Norman Gunston quit the ABC and went commercial the light entertainment department have never quite got us laughing again. They are trying. Their *Tickled Pink* series of plays was launched to see if they could unearth some comedy. Of the seven plays, all of which have been screened, only two made it into follow-up series. One was *One Day Miller*, which failed; the other was *Neutral Ground*, renamed *Trial By Marriage* for the series which finished production just before Christmas. The series, written by actor-turned-writer Michael Aitkens, will be shown this year. Featuring Jacki Weaver, Peter Sumner and Bill Kerr, it promises to be the funniest show coming out of the ABC for years.

Light entertainment have made a second series of *Tickled Pink* plays, again with a view to discovering possible series' spin-offs. They, too, will be screened this year. The line-up is: *Three Blind Mice* (Jacki Weaver and Peter Sumner again, plus Martin Harris and Arthur Dignam); *Waterman* (Max Gillies, Frank Wilson); *A Change of Lifestyle* (Peter Whittford, Noelene Brown); *Tag — The Advertising Game* (Arthur Dignam, Carmen Duncan); *Desert Foxes* (Max Cullen, Gordon Poole and Ron Falk); *Honeymoon, Honeymoon* (Donald McDonald, Jacki Weaver, Mel Gibson and Jennifer Hagan); and *A Day Over Thirty* (Michael Aitkens and Tina Bursill).

In a bid to further develop their comedy the ABC earlier this year got together with Thames to prepare two 30-minute pilots.

Thames provided three British writers, Johnny Mortimer and Brian Cook (*Man About The House, George and Mildred* etc) and Vince Powell (*Bless This House, Love Thy Neighbour* etc), plus two producers, Michael Mills and Mark Stuart. They all came to Sydney and put their heads together with writers this end in a workshop situation.

One pilot, *Home Sweet Home* by Vince Powell, has been made and production of a series, seven by 30-minutes, written by local writers begins next month (March). Basically it's about the three generations of an Italian family living together in Australia: the children are becoming more and more Australian and grandma can't speak English! The main role was written by John Bluthal who stars in the pilot.

At this stage no move has been made on the other projected pilot, *Never Too Late*.  

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*After 10 years in a frozen state Hardy (Robert Coleby) is thawed out and brought back to the living by Dr Fallon (Kerry Francis) in ABC-TV's new adventure, Timelapse. Looking on is Hardy's woman friend, played by Katie Sheil.*
ABC's

**Timeless Land**

**Romantic Blockbuster**

Ray Alchin, producer of *The Timeless Land*, sees the series — ABC's big one for 1980 — as "a great love story".

In his office, bordering on bush country, he moves about answering calls and checking schedules. Alchin has been with the show almost four months now. He doesn't want to push the eight hours of drama "as historical". Presumably that would have a dulling effect. Certainly there are strong threads of romance weaving their way through the series adapted

by Peter Yeldham from Eleanor Dark's trilogy of novels.

There's a great deal of history, too. *The Timeless Land* spans 23 years, beginning with the founding of the first British colony in Australia in 1788. The First Fleetters, convicts, soldiers and Aborigines form the backdrop to the eight one-hour episodes which, admits Alchin, he'd like kids to see for the historical events — "I don't think the odd topless wench is going to offend anyone."

It's a lavish, colourful production which only the ABC could take on at a cost approaching something like $1.5 million. And it's a production — 15 days of shooting for one hour of film — which they'll want to sell overseas. And it was with that in mind that they initially went overseas in search of a couple of "stars". Names like Edward Fox and John Thaw were bandied about, but it appears they couldn't come to the party.

There are about 20 substantial parts with the three key roles being played by Nicola Pagett (she played Anna Karenina in the BBC classic), Michael Craig and Angela Punch, who now wishes to be known as Angela Punch McGregor. As Australia's roots unfold, the storyline revolves round Ellen (Angela Punch McGregor), a convict who becomes housekeeper to Stephen Mannion (Michael Craig), an Irish free settler and a man of property. And there's Conor (Nicola Pagett), brought from Ireland by Mannion to be his wife and mistress of Beltrasna.

There are many other characters who "come and go", says Alchin. For the proclamation scene there were about 200 cast and crew on set.

Casting the support roles hasn't always been easy. One of Alchin's headaches has been to find actors who'll take on the many cameo roles. "Some of them thought the parts were too small for them. Their prerogative, I suppose."

Other parts in the series, which should be completed by the end of next month and ready for screening in May, are played by Chris Haywood, Robin Stewart, Patrick Dickson, Peter Collingwood, Peter Cousins, newcomer Genevieve Picot, John Fitzgerald, Noel Trevarthen, Ralph Cotterill, Don Barkham, Olive Bodill.
Anna Volska and more.

Six months was spent on research. Alehin would have liked more time: "Especially with a series like this when we have to build three solid locations. The Georgian era caused us problems with props. We had to buy a lot of antiques through antique dealers because the stuff just isn't generally available. We're going to auction it all off afterwards," Alehin said.

"And we couldn't get the red material for the uniforms in Australia. So we had to import it from England."

And according to Rob Stewart (he's directing six episodes, Michael Carson the other two) rounding up carriages and carts of the period caused problems, too. Some had to be rebuilt, others were hired out — at $400 a day.

Of course, someone had to make the definitive piece. Alehin reckons the producers of Against The Wind, the top-rating, locally-made series, cut their costs by keeping out of town which the ABC have had to recreate.

Their replica township had been erected at Kellyville, near Richmond in NSW. This is Sydney in its earliest years, reproduced with lots of plastic sheeting. In two months the mock Government House will have been pulled down. And there's the other two locations — Beltrasna, the Mannion property and the convict tent town.

Bush fires in late December could put production back somewhat. They burnt out the camp to which Johnny (Chris Haywood), the son of Ellen, runs to when told to get off the Mannion property. The fires even threatened the ABC film studios at French's Forest, just north of Sydney, the base headquarters of The Timeless Land production unit. Much of the bushland leased by the ABC, for general outdoor filming, went up in flames. The township used for Ben Hall and Rush has gone, too.

Authenticity has been carried through to the characters themselves: "Peter Collingwood is the spitting image of Governor Phillip," says Stewart. "He really is a look-alike. Peter comes from a naval background and takes a great personal interest in Phillip. I think he's played him a few times. And John Frawley is incredibly like Governor King."

Historically the series takes us through a period where Phillip tries to make friends with the Aborigines, his association with Bennelong, Governors King and Bligh (played by Ray Barrett), the rum rebellion and the crossing of the Blue Mountains.

But, as Ray Alehin would have it, don't forget it's all a setting for some strong love stories.
Seven — back to Australia

In an attempt, no doubt, to repeat the success of their drama series Against The Wind, Seven this year will again be looking to early Australia for high ratings points.

The writers of Against The Wind, Ian Jones and Bronwyn Binns, turn to the "true story" of Ned Kelly for a new series, The Last Outlaw. Production of the eight hours of drama, no one is too sure how it's going to be presented at this stage, should be finished by July and shown on our screens later this year.

We're told it won't be just a tale of an armour-plated bushranger on the run and shooting up the local constabulary. The Last Outlaw will also look at "the underlying frustrations and injustices" of the time and study the character of Ned Kelly.

The lead role — played by Mick Jagger in the movie and by John Waters in the ABC-TV's dramatised documentary — will feature John Jarrett with Sigrid Thornton as Kate Kelly, Ned's sister.

Henry Crawford, producer of Against The Wind, begins production of another major series for Seven this year. He will be making what is claimed to be the most expensive mini series (perhaps ABC-TV would contest that with their upcoming $1.5 million Timeless Land) based on Nevil Shute's book, A Town Like Alice.

It will take us further, says Seven, than the successful movie which
starred Virginia McKenna and the late Peter Finch.

At the time of writing only Bryan Brown had been cast for the series which reportedly has already been pre-sold to the BBC. Local and overseas actors will be used, but the producers are having trouble finding enough Japanese actors for the show which is set in Malaysia during the Japanese occupation.

At this stage Seven still has to determine whether the completed package will be screened as three two-hour episodes or six one-hours.

Seven's other new locally-made shows for 1980 include two comedy series: Kingswood Country, a sit-com by Naked Vicar writers Reilly and Sattler, and a Gunston series.

Gunston may not be new, but his latest effort, in the process of being made, certainly has a fresh concept. If all is on schedule Norman (actor Garry McDonald) should, as you read this, be flying around the country in a chartered 38-year-old DC3.

With a back-up film crew, he'll spend almost two months trying to find his roots. The producers have decided on a change of format — probably not before time — and have taken Norman out on location for the series of eight 30-minute shows.

His flying pad will take him to some of the remotest parts so that he can uncover the real Australia. He'll talk to kangaroos, crocodiles and anyone who'll listen to him. And he's promised to have a look at some of those stones Harry Butler has overturned!

Scheduled for showing this month (Feb) is the RS Productions' (that's Reilly and Sattler) Kingswood Country, a spin-off from the Naked Vicar Show. It was developed from sketches in that show which featured bigot Ted Bullpitt (Ross Higgins) and his long-suffering wife Thel (Judi Farr). Ted has a narrow outlook on life — everyone's all right, as long as they own a Holden Kingswood!

Ted and Thel live at Wombat Crescent with their two children. Craig (Peter Fisher) is 21 and sister Greta (Laurel McGowan), 27, is married to Bruno Bertolucci (Lex Marinos), an Australian born Italian.

As the "wog who raced off with my daughter", Bruno causes Ted much concern. But worst of all, his son-in-law owns a purple Valiant. Both Ross Higgins and Laurel McGowan were regulars in the Naked Vicar Show. The series will be 13 x 30-minute episodes.

With consistently good ratings Seven's police show, Cop Shop, will continue through 1980. Not such a bright future is forecast for their other soapie, Skyways, also made by Crawfords.

Seven committed themselves to 78 episodes of Skyways and they run dry next month (March) some time. If the ratings haven't picked up by then....
Seven will surely jettison the show, a product that never really got off the runway.

The new year's line-up, says Seven, also includes two other series, but both have been on the shelf for some time. Bailey's Bird (26 x 30 mins) is a young people's show which follows the adventures of a pilot and his son who run a charter operation with their ageing amphibious aircraft. The series, a co-production, stars Hu Pryce as Bailey.

Love Their Neighbour In Australia does, as the title suggests, bring the egocentric Eddie Booth (Jack Smethurst) to Australia to give Sydney some of his expert tongue-lashing. Although the series (13 x 30 mins) was made in Sydney during the first half of last year, it was written by the writer of the British series, Vince Powell.

Despite running off with a few TV awards last year for some of their telemovies — made in conjunction with Film Australia and the South Australian Film Corporation — the Nine network is not venturing into any new major drama projects for 1980.

It is, however, taking one children's telemovie from the packagers, the Grundy Organisation. Written by film man Terry Bourke and devised and produced by Roger Mirams, it began production in early December.

At the time of writing no one was too sure what to call it. Take your pick from Secret Valley and Ghost Town Gang. Whatever, Grundy's would like to see it spin off into a long-running series.

Adults featuring in the two-hour show include Max Cullen, Tom Farley, Hugh Keays-Byrne, Katy Wild, John Hamblin, Ray Meagher and Dennis Grosvenor.

Thirteen child actors play a group of kids who band together to help a

(Continued over page)
farmer save his coastal property which harbours an old ghost town. Displaying some business acumen the schoolchildren turn the ghost town into a weekend holiday camp for their city counterparts. And then, presumably, the fun starts!

Nine has become generally regarded as the "showbusiness" network with its local personality image (Don Lane, Mike Walsh and Paul Hogan) and its US light entertainment line-up.

It won five of the eight ratings surveys last year (Seven two, Ten one) and its ongoing local drama, The Young Doctors and The Sullivans, helped it on its winning ways.

With the new season these two shows will be entering their fourth year on air and look set to challenge the record set by Number 96 which ran for more than five years.

While the good-looking set appear to pop in and out of the Young Doctors' cast, The Sullivans seem to have been at war forever. But as the serial closed for 1979 we had, in fact, reached July 1944 with the Sullivan boys freeing themselves of the Changi prisoner of war camp.

In its three years the show has taken us half-way round the world to Greece, Crete, Yugoslavia (in the telemovie The John Sullivan Story) and Malaysia. Early on in the piece this year the Sullivans venture into Europe, first stop Holland. Unable to recreate authentically things Dutch in or near Melbourne, the producers took a handful of the cast over there for filming.

And with the European scenes fans will encounter a number of old favourites reappearing on screen. The new season of surprises begins with a 90-minute special and new into the serial comes actress Liddy Clark, playing the part of a Tivoli showgirl.

Ten enters the quality field

Network Ten (its new title), recognised more for its output of soap operas, has entered the quality field. It has invested in the $1 million plus series Water Under The Bridge, based on the award-winning novel by expatriate Sumner Locke Elliott.

The book, which won the Patrick White Literary Award in 1977, has been adapted by Eleanor Witcombe and Michael Jenkins into nine hours of drama and presumably will be shown on TV in nine, one-hour parts.

The series is currently being made in Sydney and Melbourne and should be completed mid-way through the year.
Set against the backdrop of Sydney Harbour Bridge during the 1930s, it features Jacki Weaver, Robyn Nevin and David Cameron in the lead roles. It’s David Cameron’s first major role after playing many support roles in series including Power Without Glory, Truckies, Against The Wind and The Sullivans. In Water under The Bridge he plays Neil Atkins, an aspiring actor. Other investors in the series — which is being produced by former BBC man John McRae — include the Victorian Film Commission.

For the past two years Ten have greeted the new season with a serial. There was The Restless Years (1978) and Prisoner (1979), and this year they’ve launched into 1980 with Arcade. It comes out of the same studio and from the pens of those who produced Number 96 — Australia’s longest-running soap opera to date.

The million-dollar question is, of course, can it live up to the successes achieved by Number 96? For many years Number 96 had little opposition in the soap opera stakes, it being the virtual pioneer. Today, however, Arcade joins a plethora of serials cum soap operas filling our screens.

Ten obviously believes there’s a large enough audience — and timeslots — to assimilate all. But with The Sullivans, The Young Doctors, Prisoner, The Restless Years, Cop Shop and Skysways there’s a hint of overkill.

Arcade is being produced at Ten’s Sydney studios where a large set representing a shopping arcade has been built. It will have 22 regular parts who include Lorrae Desmond, Mike Dorsey (formerly of 96), Aileen Britton, Danny Adcock, Peggy Toppano, Christine Harris, Patrick Ward, Anne Semmler, Garth Meade and Maggie Stuart.

A number of the cast have had limited experience on TV, but that didn’t seem to hold back the success of The Restless Years in viewing terms.

It’s reported that Arcade will not, like its predecessor, rely on explicit sex scenes and scandal to keep it moving. It is, we’re told, to be essentially a comedy.

As you would expect the continuing story will revolve around the shop owners who between them run a boutique, a jewellery shop, a health food shop, a gymnasium and a Chinese restaurant.

Mike Dorsey returns to a regular spot on TV as Vic Marshall, who manages a pin-ball parlour. He’d grown a beard for the part which should, hopefully, rid him of that Number 96 “daddy” image. Lorrae Desmond is cast as Molly Sparks, an effusive extrovert who runs a bookshop with her introvert sister Miriam, played by Peggy Toppano, looking on.

As with all soap operas, set in an environment where characters can come and go, there should be work for many more actors and actresses — that’s assuming, of course, that Arcade gets the required viewer response.

Ten won’t know that until the first results of the ratings surveys are released.
When *Betty Can Jump* was staged at the Pram Factory in 1972, it was the first sortie into women's theatre in Australia and marked the beginning of a new era of increasing involvement by women in theatre as actors, directors and writers, although it was another two years before the Women's Theatre Group (WTG) was formed in 1974. The impact of New Wave feminism on the arts in Australia led to an upsurge of theatre activity in Melbourne which was centred on the WTG, while in Sydney feminists became involved in filmmaking.

The reasons for this are obvious — Feminism brings with it a critique of patriarchal society which is then applied to the prevailing situation, and in Melbourne in the early seventies a form of radical theatre had evolved and women were part of it. The advent of feminism meant that women were able to critically re-evaluate their role in it.

Feminism as a critical social theory was first articulated as practice vis-à-vis theatre through the formation of the WTG. The cast of *Betty Can Jump* had been drawn from the ranks of the Australian Performing Group, where the women were frustrated by the lack of significant, non-stereotypical roles available to them as actors, in the work of the male writers who were then writing for the APG.

When the WTG was formed its members included some APG women but the group was open and provided an opportunity for any interested women to participate. In fact many of the women who joined the WTG had had no previous theatre experience. Thus while the group was united by its commitment to feminism it was divided in its attitude to professionalism. However balancing the contradictory aims of process and product only became divisive in the later years when the group was safely established.

In the beginning when the group was embattled, survival was a priority and all that mattered was that women were working and learning, and that the show went on. As it was originally conceived the WTG aimed to open up theatre to more women by the learning and exchanging of theatre and technical skills, and to create a new depiction of women within a new form of theatre. During its existence the WTG was an agent of social, political and personal change, it disseminated ideas about theatre and feminism and provided a unique space and opportunity for women to work out many of the questions which feminism raises about theatre practice.

Between 1974 and 1976, the WTG staged more than ten shows in the Pram Factory as well as a number of street theatre and travelling shows in factories, shopping centres, at demonstrations and in schools. In the main, shows were developed through group improvisation and in workshops. Suitable pre-existing scripts by women writers were few and far between, although strenuous
efforts were made to search out scripts and encourage writers.
In 1975 during International Women's Year when the group was at its most active stage, a season of three short plays was produced from scripts specially written for the group. However scripts devised from within the group were its mainstay, and these provided a useful means of politicising the women who worked on a particular show.

By 1976 when the group had moved into their own theatre, The Space, in Faraday Street Carlton, they had become a totally autonomous group, distinct from the Pram Factory and their main production that year, Wonder Woman's Revenge was distinguished by the fact that no APG women acted in it. However by the end of that year the group had declined as a viable force in the theatre community. In assessing the reasons for its demise it is difficult to separate the decline in interest in developing theatre/communicative skills from what had by then, become a separatist, internally self-justifying feminist ideology. The WTG pioneered experiments in non-scripted group devised performance; non hierarchial group organisation; collective direction of productions and the breaking down of amateur/professional dichotomies in theatre. However these issues were also the cause of much friction and critical self evaluation within the group. Ultimately these became the crucial dividing issues which sifted out of the WTG those women who wished to pursue a form of separatist women's theatre, from those who wished to pursue feminism in the theatre world at large.

Nevertheless the WTG had a profound and lasting impact on theatre in Melbourne and it significantly contributed to a climate in which theatre made by and about the experiences of women became publically acceptable, even fashionable. So that by 1978 when the WTG, while not officially disbanded, was in a state of strategic withdrawal, women were more visible than they had ever been in the Melbourne theatre world. Everywhere you turned it seemed there were plays by and about women: For Coloured Girls When The Rainbow Is Not Enuff was playing to packed houses at the Comedy Theatre and at Russell Street Dusa Fish, Stas and Vi was playing to capacity audiences, while at La Mama Savage Sepia, a locally written, all woman production, was also enjoying good houses and sympathetic reviews. By the end of the year two of the most successful shows staged by the APG were Kerry Dwyer's production of Fassbinder's The Bitter Tears Of Petra Von Kant and Fay Mokotow's production of Susan Griffin's Voices — both Dwyer and Mokotow had been members of the WTG and the acting and production credits for The Bitter Tears...read like a veritable roll call of ex Women's Theatre Group members.

In 1979 this trend continued and has been compounded by the emergence of a number of women as directors, most of whom have come out of the APG as a result of their policy last year to discriminate positively in favour of greater opportunities for women.

The Melbourne Theatre Company is not one to be left behind, and Judith Alexander, the director of Tributary productions began directing productions upstairs at The Athenaeum, while Nano Nagle has just recently been assistant director to

Valerie Kirwan, writer in residence with La Mama in 1979.
John Sumner on Pinter’s *Betrayal.*

However perhaps the most significant change this year has been the emergence of a number of women writers. It is significant because getting women to write for theatre, while it was always a primary aim of the WTG, was an ideal of the group that was never fully realised. In a recent interview, Dorothy Hewett, the best known and most prolific woman playwright in Australia, spoke about the difficulties facing women playwrights:

“If you think about women playwrights in English Literature, generally, there’s not very many of us. I don’t know what this says. Does it say that the whole mechanics of which plays are constructed are difficult for women? Does it say that they find it difficult to work within theatre structures? I think probably the second is true, that it is difficult to work because of the existing theatre structures and also maybe that intense co-operative effort is made difficult for women because of their past experiences and their timidity.”

Of the four women writers whose work was produced last year — Val Kirwan, Jenny Kemp, Margot Hilton and Jan Cornall — only Kemp and Cornall expressly identify themselves as feminists. Kirwan and Hilton are concerned to be seen as writers and eschew even the term “woman writer”. Kirwan has been writing and producing her own work at La Mama since 1974 and she has been writer-in-residence there last year. Nevertheless her production in August of *The Art of Lobster Whistling* in its exploration of sexual fantasy and its richly evocative visual style betrayed an interest in themes and images which are shared by feminist artists and writers. Both Margot Hilton’s *Potiphars Wife* and Jenny Kemp’s *Sheila Alone* were one woman shows, which in stylistically very different ways explored the attitude of a contemporary “liberated” woman towards herself and her lovers. Both works had an unambiguous autobiographical reference and in the use of their own experience made over, the writer’s concerns fall within the range of those articulated by the WTG.

*Potiphars Wife* was staged at The Nimrod and according to John Willett, it was “rambling and self indulgent” while *Sheila Alone* was staged in the Back Theatre of the Pram Factory and directed by Kemp herself. Kemp has been working with the Stasis Workshop for some years and like their work, *Sheila Alone* is very much theatre by actors about the process of acting. Kemp described it as, “not a naturalistic play” but, “a study on observation of the rhythms of the female mind...The playwright is concerned with developing theatre which is expressing female creativity and which is liberated from pre-existing forms and structures.” While Kemp does not claim Sheila as “her vision of theatre” she is, of the four playwrights, the one most concerned with exploration of form and the attempt to forge new forms to delineate the specificity of women’s experience.

As John Romeril said in the January issue of *The Perambulator*, in an article entitled “On Not Being Treated As A Minority”,

“Second wave feminism will change theatre, in fact change art production of every sort...Would men write for an institution that consistently contrived to reduce their sex? Change that and the plays will come. The point though is not to wait for them. We’re locked into a time and a place. Very real cultural momentums have dumped us here. The problem for women will be learning how to write for a theatre they’ve been locked out of.”

This sense of being locked out of traditional theatre manifests itself in women’s writing in a number of different ways and while it limits the possibilities open to them, it also frees up others. For instance the three act naturalistic, Williamssonian play has so far proved not to attract new women writers and this fact raises for me questions about the constituents of patriarchal form. On the other hand one-person monologues which allow unlimited interiorisation for the movement of the unconscious mind and support a non-naturalistic imagistic form of theatre are proving to offer exciting potential for women writers. Similarly poetry and song have been taken up with renewed vitality by women writers. Susan Griffin (Voices) and Nozake Shange (For colored Girls...) are both poets and these plays are theatricalised poems.

In Australia, Dorothy Hewett is the major woman poet writing for theatre, but her work is as strong as theatre as it is poetry. Song has been the basis of two of the most successful shows by women this year — Robyn Archer’s *A Star Is Born* and Jan Cornall’s *Failing In Love Again.* Arched used well known songs by legendary women singers which she strung together with a commentary on the lives of the women who made the songs their signatures, to make a psychobiographical history of the female celebrity/performer. While Cornall wrote the twenty four songs which constituted *Failing In Love Again* around a critique of romantic love and early seventies sexual liberation. The form of both of these shows was characteristic of much of the new feminist art in its fragmentatation and allusive discursiveness.

Thus while there has been a considerable upsurge in women’s writing in the past year a fully fledged feminist writer for theatre has not yet emerged, but this is hardly surprising when you consider that the roots of feminism and theatre in Melbourne were with the WTG which was a performer oriented rather than a writer oriented theatre.
ONCE A CATHOLIC
SHERLOCK HOLMES


Director, Anne Godfrey-Smith; Designer, Peter Harris; Mother Thomas Aquinas, Pamela Rosenmberg; Mother Peter, Joyce Glynne; Mother Basil, Margaret de Mestre; Mary Mooney, Tamara Ross, Mary McGintey, Shani Wood; Mary Murphy, Kerreen Harper; Mary Flanagan, Edda Massimini.

This unambitious choice of two mediocre plays by Canberra's leading drama groups reflects the exigencies of theatre economics in the national capital. Fortune theatre, a semi-professional company working to a shoe-string budget, cannot afford to make a mistake in repertoire, and they know that the only plays that succeed financially are those that are light-weight entertainment type, usually innocuous and banal, that emphasise familiar aspects of life and affirm populist values.

plays are similar in setting, their humour is based on the same tension between Catholic mores and popular morality, but Blair achieves poignancy and profundity, because his character has psychological depth. A fast-moving and uncluttered production by Anne Godfrey-Smith and some skilfully judged underplaying by the remarkable John Cuffe as Father Mullarkey and Tamara Rose as Mary Mooney didn't succeed in resurrecting this stillborn, highly forgettable play.

It remains a truism that one man can make or break a theatre — its director. Since it lost Ross MacGregor, Canberra Repertory Society has been searching for just such a creator, finally settling on Ken Boucher, whose directorial debut has been eagerly awaited. His choice of play was intriguing, for period pieces such as William Gillette's Holmes Lives Again, in which all characters and situations are so familiar to us that there can be no textually-generated suspense, present particular problems, especially when the audience's feeling for the period has been conditioned and refined by innumerable films and British television series.

Obviously a fresh and imaginative approach is required. Boucher attempted this by presenting the material in a non-tricksey, naturalistic fashion, scrupulously avoided cliched devices and cheap laughs. Alas, this was insufficient: the three fine performances by Jan Smith as Holmes, Helen Nield as the French maid and Bill Ginnane as Moriarty's henchman, revealed that acting of a very high standard is required if these stereotypes are to grip us. Further, the approach proved that as the audience cannot be expected to take this cops-and-robbers ritual seriously, only a high degree of stylisation, of bold strokes and theatricality will enliven such mediocre material. Pace was lacking, undermined by a too-fussy set, sluggish mise-en-scene and inefficient set-changing.

The naturalistic set and lighting robbed even the murder scene of any real suspense, again indicating that a far bolder, overtly theatrical approach is demanded: the stark expressionist film The Cabinet of Dr Caligari and David Lean's Oliver Twist spring to mind. It would be unfair to judge Boucher's potential on the basis of one production, particularly as the broad, open stage of Theatre 3 is notoriously difficult to use; but one hopes that future productions will be marked by the degree of imagination that obviously informs his repertoire policy.
revived in 1898. The comedy, extravagant characters and spectacle make it a play worth reviving for the 1980's, when we are all pondering where we're going. The Sunny South lightheartedly reminds us why our ancestors and our predecessors came here in the first place.

It's a big play staged in a big way with no apologies, and except for some initial plodding exposition, Sunny South really gets going after we leave England's sombre halls for the Australian goldfields where the third, fourth and fifth acts are spent—among the New Chums, diggers, bushrangers and other wild colonial types. The 1880's were times of quick fortunes, petty exploiters, and a mixed, mostly immigrant population which expresses fierce loyalty to the Crown. Irishmen beware! In fact, the show stopper of the night was the poignant rendition of those old jingo-jingles, "Britons Never, Ne-e-e-e-ee-ver, shall be slaves", and "God Save the Queen". Arresting musical arrangements from Terence Clark.

The goldrushes hold out hope for the Chester family honour. When we last saw the Chesters (Acts I and II), they were in danger of losing their family seat, name, and only daughter Clarice, beautifully played by Geraldine Turner. Eli Grup (a Devilish villain by Robin Ramsay) is about to foreclose when hope arrives in Matt Morley (John Hargreaves' golden-haired, Anglo-Australian hero) from the Australians, where he's been burying blacks and digging up nuggets. A timely telegram announces salvation in gold, so off they all go, villains and all in different guises. Old grudges and New Chums meet in the diggings, where we also encounter a new villain Dick Duggan, assistant director John Gaden's hilarious bull-frog bushranger, who is behind the robberies and abductions that ensue.

The final showdown (there's no equivalent in the local vernacular, is there?) between Matt and Duggan is a fantastic coup de theatre, spontaneously applauded, when a full-size, hissing steam locomotive trundles on stage. Good and Evil fire on each other repeatedly, with all the accuracy of those old matinee westerns, until, well you know who wins. Richard Wherrett directs with the right amount of candour and wit; so that neither actor nor audience is embarrassed by the obviousness of the melodramatic form. Just the nicest amount of tongue-in-cheekiness; of boldness where necessary. Stylised characterisations work well for Ronald Falk's Plantaganet Smifers, Janice Finn's Rebecca Hann, Lynette Curran's Bubs (bred-in-the-bush) Berkley and John Allen's Perfidy Pounce. Angular and exaggerated movements help the actors to capture character and reduce the cinematic scope Drama Theatre stage to playable proportions. Peter Carroll's Ivo Carne, the open-hearted New Chum who is always willing to have a go, is a magnificent creation. Controlled, clever and compelling, Carroll's presence is always singular on a stage which boasts a proud ensemble.

Much of this production's magic, too, comes from Ian Robinson's settings, which are both remarkable as art and in the way they change before your eyes as they were historically expected to do. The bushrangers' mountain lair, together with its atmospheric sound effects and lighting (Jerry Luke), is absolutely wonderful.

Sunny South is an ideal choice for a company which promises to bring vigorous and exciting theatre to its audiences. It augurs well for theatre in the eighties and for the STC.
Brought home with force

KNUCKLE

By Tony Barclay

Knuckle by David Hare. Ensemble Theatre, Sydney, NSW. Opened 7th December, 1979.

Director, Jon Ewing; Designer, Tom Bannerman; Curly Delafield, Paul Mason; Jenny Wilbur, Pamela Gibbons; Grace Dunning, Anne E. Morgan; Patrick Delafield, Stanley Walsh; Max Dupree, Frank J Gallagher; Barman, John O'Brien; Policeman & Stooreman, Stephen Browne; Porter, Glenn Faye. (Professional)

"I come to England maybe once a year. It's a shabby little island, delighted with itself..." reflects the very cool Curly Delafield in David Hare's Knuckle. And while we are more inclined to Curly's view of things, he does not speak down from any moral pulpit for he is well and truly stamped in the mode of a Mickey Spillane anti-hero. Cosmopolitan, mercenary gun supplier, squat and ugly, yet cool and attractive, Curly fails romantically and sexually with Jenny Wilbur, the only girl worth attention. (Yes, he's sexist too).

When younger he treated society with the anarchistic relish of a punk rocker. He apparently pissed in a bottle and sold it as martini ("It sold like a bomb") and whenever he stood up there were two greasy patches on the seat of his chair. Displaced youthful energy has become calculated, careful exploitation: in a brief cameo scene Hare explicitly draws our attention to Curly's gun-running. Curly is now drawn towards the power of the Establishment, relatively free of its double-standards, because he has learnt the quality of self-control. But his repeated assertion "I came back because I'm ready" does not mean to imply that Hare departs from the moral complexities of a Pinter, Stoppard or Orton; it is more a question of styles that make his work slick yet confronting, entertaining yet demanding.

Hare's a dramatic language of, for want of a better word, "newer" or more recent idiom and consequently shifts in its perspective of cause and concern. Michael Coveney remarked of Fanshen that it was the nearest any English contemporary playwright "has come to emulating Brecht". In Knuckle it is the idiom of the B grade movie, the slick, rapid image of pop corruption and lassitude, beneath the surface, a point made astutely by the scenic links is more akin to television than called for by the text. Indeed the flow of scenic links is more akin to television than stage but there's a point in that too.

Knuckle requires considerable audience concentration and that concentration should not be blurred by its slick thriller surface, a point made astutely by the English critic Michael Billington, contra several local critics.

Ewing's production gave great attention to detail and idiom with economy and flair. The production played well clear of any tendency towards self-indulgence, something that can be all too tempting with a play of this kind. My only quibbles concern occasional repeated blocking and one or two dramatic pitches too underplayed; I find more tension in the script than I found coming from the stage. The matter of dramatic pitch is purely interpretational; but to me the play's final scene was slightly underscored, in its initial and middle stages. But these remain quibbles.

Paul Mason's Curly was excellent. He unravelled the many sided Curly with sustained and concentrated intelligence; the cool, the probing wit, the concealed sensitivity — no small feat for someone who is on stage for almost the entire play. Pamela Gibbons, apart from some vocal awkwardness, provided a perfect foil as Jenny; sensual and aware, yet the only real survivor of Guilford pasts. Indeed, the production generally moved with neatly understated tensions around their relationship. The other important relationship — Curly and his father Patrick: that is, Curly's relationship to his birthplace of Guilford, after an absence of fifteen years, to investigate the disappearance of Sarah, his sister. But this becomes more a personal odyssey as Curly moves about Guilford focusing his attentions on Jenny's (significantly named) Shadow of the Moon Club. The plot itself is fairly slight and even the more bizarre and eccentric details are not intended to distract us from the issues Hare raises.
Definitely Treasurable

PIRATES AT THE BARN

By Norman Kessell


Director, Neil Armfield; Designer, Wendy Dickson; Stage Manager, Margie Wright.

Kathy, Louise Le Nay; Amelia Snizzle, Maggie Kirkpatrick; Samuel Snizzle, Paul Bertram; Black Bill Bluster, Brian Blain; Matey, Leo Bradney-George; Michael, Tony Taylor; The Stranger, Simon Burke; Sergeant, Russell Newman; sailors, Stuart Campbell, Peter Fisher (Professional)

After invading Clark Island in Sydney Harbour during previous holiday season, Jim Hawkins, Long John Silver and his band of cut-throats were "resting" this year, but meanwhile, "on another part of the island" — to borrow Shakespeare's stage direction for Act II of The Tempest — the Nimrod Theatre and the Festival of Sydney were presenting splendid "alternate" theatre with another parade of pirates.

This time it was Eleanor Witcombe's Pirates at the Barn, first of her famous plays for children and as fresh and pleasing today as when first presented at Mosman Town Hall in 1948. Since then it has been staged scores of times, both here and overseas, the most recent in Sydney being at the New Theatre in January, 1978.

For this, probably first, open-air production, it was especially rewritten by the authoress. Based on an actual historical happening in which Australian children discovered pirates in Sydney Harbour, it is great fun, rich in the clowning, slapstick comedy and audience participation so beloved by children.

This was all most skilfully exploited by fast-rising young director Neil Armfield, whose deft inventiveness, both in incident and characterisation, was a constant delight.

The chosen new site of the island was ideal — a natural, enclosed amphitheatre comfortably accommodating the 300 to which each audience was limited.

A much more compact production than Ken Horler's Treasure Island of happy memory, all the action took place on a spacious, elaborate and solidly constructed stage supporting a couple of four-square structures, the two-storey barn and Amelia Snizzle's boarding house. The barn, adorned with such "graffiti" as "There is not now and there never was any treasure here" and "Definitely No Treasure", served effectively for much hilarious chasing round and round, with the audience yelling traditional warning each time Black Bill Bluster hove in sight.

Added thrills and excitement were provided by characters climbing up and sliding down a pulley rope from the upper floor of the barn, while in the free-for-all finale the young hero, Michael, escaped through a trap in the roof.

Having lost six shows through rain, the excellent cast was battling a bit for cohesion at the performance caught, but there was no lack of pace and energy. Tony Taylor and Louise Le Nay paired beautifully as the youngsters, Michael and Kathy, hoping to find the pirates' gold so they could get away to Sydney. Brian Blain, who joined the company as a late replacement, was a toweringly dark and menacing Black Bill. Maggie Kirkpatrick, prodigiously padded, clowned delightfully as Amelia Snizzle and soon had the kiddies, not to mention the oldies, echoing her lines in a running gag about "working her fingers to the bone".

Subtlest performance came from Paul Bertram as the vain and dandifed Samuel Snizzle, a cleverly comical characterisation some aspects of which undoubtedly eluded the littlies. But here is an actor to watch, which will be possible this year because he is one of the Nimrod's contract players for 1980. (I learned later that because performances ran half an hour over time, the director cut slabs of the exchanges between Mr and Mrs Snizzle, the wit and puns of which were not registering with the children anyway. These will be restored if a planned one-off adult performance is eventually staged.)

Simon Burke looked good as the variably disguised Stranger, but despite his film success and a pleasing performance last year as Jim Hawkins, he seems still to have much to learn about stagecraft and projection.

An interesting feature of these island shows, almost certainly not duplicated anywhere else in the world, is to see the number of children accompanied by obviously doting grandparents. I was told also of the many older generation who came alone, just for the pleasure of watching the children's enjoyment — a pleasure shared by your reviewer.
Ludicrous! Scapino

By Alan Youngson


Director, Robert Kimber; Designer, Peter Dean. Scapino, Ken Conway.

What do you get when you transpose a 17th century French comedy, The Tricks of Scapino to a 20th century Italian cafe? The answer is a LUDICRISSIMO SCAPINO!

If a comedy best operates in that middle zone between the serious and the absurd or as Aristotle defined it, the "ludicrous", then Darwin Theatre Group's updated adaptation of Scapino vibrates with the energy and life of that humorous spirit.

Director Robert Kimber cleverly modernises the characters and incidents of Commedia dell'arte to improvise and re-create the Italian street theatre with its 1920's razzamatazz, Neopolitan love songs, community singing, dancing, fun and games. Undoubtedly, Moliere would have applauded this adaptation since he sought the same spirit for his entertainments.

That festive atmosphere encompasses the audience the moment they enter the washing-lined Neopolitan Sidewalk Cafe, beautifully designed and executed by Peter Dean. This sportive spirit is developed by "Godfather" Argante's flamboyant introduction of the Scarpinetti family and troupe which leave the audience in no doubt that the ensuing far-fetched plot of thwarted lovers, the angry carryings-on of tyrannical and small-minded fathers and the scheming antics of Scapino will all end happily ever after.

In the difficult double-dealing role of Scapino, Ken Conway works very hard at making the contrived tricks seem spontaneous and is most successful at changing accents in the famous sack scene. However, he has not yet thoroughly acquired the light roguish touch that would endear him to audiences.

The outraged fathers, portrayed by Peter Darton and Simon Hopkinson, are well contrasted, consistently witty but don't rise much above caricature. On the other hand, Colin Jacobus and Marjorie

Frystack, as the lovers, strive quite successfully in giving their stock characters a three dimensional quality. But the most authentic creation is Marilyne Hanigan's seductive long-lost gypsy daughter, Zerbinetta.

However, what ensures the enjoyment of the audience and their willing participation in "That's Amore" is the energy and excitement which flows from remainder of the cast in the musical numbers, chase sequences, and emotional family pleadings.

This spirit of comedy celebrates our capacity not only to endure our tragic fate (in Darwin), but to overcome it with energy and exuberance. It is these two qualities which earmark Bob Kimber's sixth and final production for Darwin Theatre Group which he has blended performers of varying talents into a harmonious and enthusiastic ensemble.

Darwin Theatre Group's Scapino. Photo: Gilbert Herrada.
World War Two, but its special strength is the fusion of these levels in fantasy and an emergent violence which denounces and implicates the ignorance of bigots everywhere. Jim Daly as Chow and Tony Allison as the Janitor had opted for different styles of acting; nonetheless, their interplay showed no signs of strain.

Interplay and unity of purpose characterised another evening of strong emotions and some passion at Theatre 62. The Italian Folk Ensemble held an important place in the Festival as the one representative of Australia’s ethnic communities. Padrone Mio, Ti Voglio Arricchire (Dear Boss, I Want To Make You Rich), was a collection of work chants, prose statements, and social and political songs, performed entirely in Italian, with a view to acknowledging the significance of popular culture in the lives of Italians. A programme of fervour and earnestness, touching off laughter and tears.

In addition, there were play-readings to attend, besides street happenings, pub shows, youth theatre, radio drama and a Forum. A veritable feast?

If to include several world and State premieres is to succeed, then the first Australian Drama Festival was a success. If to attract companies and personalities from interstate is to succeed, then, again, success. If to achieve simultaneous offerings in Australian drama from most of the leading theatre groups in Adelaide is to succeed, then, once again, success...

But if to produce quantity is to temper

State Rep./Susan Vile

Australian Drama Festival

Troupe at the Red Shed.
La Mama.
Italian Folk Ensemble, Theatre 62.

By Susan Vile

Perhaps I expected too much from Troupe’s Festival contribution, a group-written play on the problems of aging in Australia. Rather than shake the complacency of a society which allows its aged to wither away unnoticed and unheard, What Day Is It? Who Is The Prime Minister served instead to reinforce and finally depend on the very cliches it purported to expose.

Confined by a thin plot-line, stereotyped characters and loose construction, the play didn’t begin to confront the issue, preferring to settle for predictable situations and surprisingly simplistic solutions. The actors could do little to flesh out their roles. Paula Carter, as the central figure, was the exception. Acting with the pain of humanity, she was most moving in moments of quiet understatement. But overall, the lack of depth and inventiveness was more than disappointing.

Far more theatrically powerful and intellectually exciting is Roger Pulvers’ play, Yamashita. Directed by Bruno Knez at La Mama, it gained from the intimacy of this small end-on theatre where the dimensions of stage and auditorium together are no greater than the classroom in which the action is set.

The play’s several levels allow the author to comment specifically on American-Japanese relations before, during and since
enthusiasm with frustration at small houses, then success is more doubtful. Adelaide is not a large city. It can accommodate the biennial Festival Of Arts and the Children's Festival, Come Out, in off-Festival years. But to expect backing on a large scale at a time of year when attendances are in any case low is asking the theatre-going public to spread itself too thinly.

Perhaps the organisers should rethink their support for Australian theatre either along the lines suggested at the Forum, that capital cities host the Festival in turn; or else by instigating something like an "Australian Play of the Month" scheme, where publicity and funding would be given to one group at a time, enabling them to take risks with Australian drama (new or old) which might otherwise not be performed. This would maintain a continued focus on Australian drama and, at the same time, largely eliminate the situation where simultaneous shows prevent participants from seeing each other's work.

The Australian Drama Festival included two revivals of "period" plays. Peter Kenna's The Slaughter of St Teresa's Day emerged as a fine piece of Australian theatre in an excellent presentation by Adelaide University's Theatre Guild. Jim Vile directed a first-rate cast with sensitivity and an appreciation of the period; there was an acceptable blend of sentiment and gutsy Australian humour. The play's central character, Oola Maguire, was played with great strength and perception by Jo Peoples. She was more than ably assisted by a very real Auntie Essie played by Jean Rigby. The best scenes in this outstanding production were those between these two actresses. However, the rest of the cast gave admirable support.

Betty Roland's The Touch of Silk has aged remarkably well. The theme of a migrant's loneliness and frustration is as powerful now as it was fifty years ago when the play was first staged.

Michael Baldwin's direction allowed the Panorama Players to get dangerously close to soap opera caricature at times. However, the style of writing and some melodramatic climaxes contributed to this. Overall it emerged as a thoroughly entertaining piece of vintage Australian theatre and acting honours must go to Elaine Sharpe and Brian Knott. Betty Roland, now 76 and present at the first night, must be justly proud that her play was included in the Festival.
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On the pulse

GIMME SHELTER

By Ken Kelso


Director, Richard Meredith

Why call a trilogy of plays Gimme Shelter? As they say in the vernacular, those who are hip to what’s going down, know where Barrie Keeffe is coming from. They are already wise to the intention of the title.

The uninitiated audience will confront this performance about young people, unprimed by the rock culture source and its implications.

Gem and Gotcha, initially two separate plays, form with Getaway, the trilogy Gimme Shelter. The pivotal character Kid, excellently realised by Les Winspear, from the central piece Gotcha, meets by chance, the characters from Gem in the final segment Getaway, which Keeffe devised for the Soho Poly Theatre Club in London in 1977. The strengths of this trilogy, in the writing and performance, come from the evolving workshop nature of its inception.

Gimme Shelter works for two important reasons. Firstly by presenting two separate situations — in Gem and Gotcha — and at the end, by commenting upon what has transpired in the lives of the characters who at the outset are either at the end of schooling or the beginning of their working life, the audience are able to approach a common theme from several directions. It is a good theatrical device. The trilogy conceit disguises the polemic; we are meeting new characters and are intrigued to see what happens when situations combine. But the double perspective leaves us in no doubt.

Like a ground swell we feel it, a profound and perhaps insoluble dilemma confronting youthful populations in a world where political, economic, social and, most particularly, educational strategies are incapable of fulfilling the very expectations they engender. There is a cumulative effect in the performance and in this Salamanca Company presentation an especially powerful second part, involving the failed school leaver who threatens to ignite the petrol tank of his motorcycle while holding the principal and two teachers hostage, sent reverberations back through what we have seen and forward into the concluding sequence. The clear desperation of Gotcha becomes relevant to the less dramatic daily round of Gem and, by extension, the situation we see youth in today.

The second reason the Salamanca performance was successful, was that the company were at a point where such a play was exactly right. And their judgement to present it matches Keeffe’s reasons for writing it. I was excited to see theatre arising from the experience of working close to the pulse of society. It’s not just to do with matters of job opportunity — though Tasmania is in a more parlous position than perhaps any other Australian area — but has to do with a small company, after a gruelling year face to face with youthful audiences, being unable to block their ears to a very clear cry. I believe more sedentary theatre has a lot to learn from the experience of travelling youth theatre in this country. When actors get the chance to “speak to their tribe”, they are fulfilling one of drama’s greatest functions. In this case, the Salamanca Theatre’s director, Barbara Manning, Gimme Shelter’s director, Richard Meredith and the cast have been listening carefully and their judgement was spot on.

The highlights of performance for me were in Gotcha and the concluding piece Getaway, where I felt the cast were really shifting their straps. Iain Lang as the young worker Kev caught between the class he was born into and the one his education has condemned him to. Allen Harvey as the headmaster, not only out of touch with his students and their world but more frighteningly, annually destroying lives by his sheer presence in a system that simply confirms the status quo, and Les Winspear, the destroyed youth, Kid, were memorable. I was also impressed by David O’Connor’s interpretation of the physical education master — I have met that sort of violence in our high schools, albeit muted, but unmistakeable. Michael Cummings, Libby Wherrett — whom I believe had the hardest character to handle and was not aided by writing that was unable to realise a female as well as the male characters — and Peggy Wallach, all gave good performances which gained strength as the play progressed.

The audiences realised they had attended a piece of theatre with very relevant implications. In a smaller community like Hobart, where at times there is a tendency to avoid anything too close to home, Gimme Shelter could have been discreetly ignored. It wasn’t and for me was a heartening indication that now is the time for theatre to go to the market place. I can only commend the work of the Salamanca Theatre Company.

Les Winspear as Kid in the Gotcha segment of Salamanca’s Gimme Shelter.
Production makes up for content

CINDERELLA

By Raymond Stanley


Director, Frank Hauser; Designer, James Ridewood; Choreographer, Colette Mann; Musical Director Score Arrangements, Robert Gavin. Cinderella, Jane Scali; Buttons, Gary Down; Elvira, Frederick Parslow; Cornucopia, Noel Ferrier; Baron Hardup, David Ravenswood; Socko, Warwick Comber; Nockem, Nick Lathouris; Dandini, Roger Oakley; Gumble, Jonathan Hardy; Prince Charming, David Downer; Queen Mother, Betty Bobbit; Fairy Godmother, Sandy Gore; Marjie, Suzanne Dudley; Village Children: Cinnamon Clark, Michelle Crockett, Susan Davey, Karen Knight, Amanda Long, Natalie Lynch, Cindy Machalek, Vanessa Martin, Damien Murray, Robyn Murray.

Drum Kit Percussion, Peter Farmer; Bass, Grant Walls; Woodwind, Chris Mackay; Pianist, Robert Gavin; Rehearsal Pianist, Michael Tyack (Professional)

When the MTC broke new ground by including a pantomime in its subscription series one naturally assumed, since most of its subscribers are adults, it would be an adult pantomime. Had the intention been to attract the tiny tot audience, one imagined a special production would be mounted playing mornings and afternoons. And when news leaked out that Noel Ferrier and Frederick Parslow were cast as the Ugly Sisters, one's appetite for seeing an adult panto was well and truly whetted.

But not so. It is really a panto aimed at the weenies and so at the performance viewed one had the incongruous situation of a mainly grown up audience on the receiving end of the stage banter aimed at children, plus the occasional communal participation.

Plotwise Hauser has come up with an above-average original conception. With great differentiation between the two Ugly Sisters - Elvira the oldest selfish and villainous, Cornucopia influenced by her sister but actually possessing a heart of gold - they are not the usual stereotypes. The Baron also takes on more substance by being a Heath Robinson sort of inventor.

There is an additional character in Gumble, the Prince’s Uncle, who stands to inherit the throne if his nephew does not marry before a prescribed time. And tradition is broken by having an actor (in this case David Downer) play Prince Charming in preference to a buxom lass.

This could have been a first class pantomime with some really good dialogue, clever wit and rattling good tunes. But alas, the dialogue is very ordinary, the wit not very original and frequently - when consisting of local topical references - falling very flat. The music is most undistinguished.

Although something may be lacking in the panto’s content, Hauser has made up for this by providing a sparkling production and a first rate cast that in many cases could hardly be bettered. Sets and costumes are another asset and Colette Mann’s choreography - using six endearing tots each performance as chorus - is a decided highlight.

One can hardly imagine funnier Uglier Sisters than those of Parslow and Ferrier. One feels certain that later in the season they will be outrageously ad libbing and introducing stage business of their own that will be absolutely hilarious. In the evening’s best segment - a send-up of Western movies - Parslow’s impersonation of a salon singer a la Dietrich is nothing short of brilliant (so much more entertaining than Danny la Rue or Debbie Reynolds’ cruel send-ups!) And it is doubtful if there is a naturally funnier man in Australia than Ferrier.

Not far behind this talented couple is Jonathan Hardy as Gumble, the ugliest and most evil of villains, full of smirks and eye-brown raisings; it is one of Hardy’s finest characterisations. The Buttons of Gary Down is also a stand-out, bordering on a music hall personality, similarly the Baron of David Ravenswood. On several occasions, though, Down seems about to lift the roof off with a song but alas Hauser lets him down badly with the material, which results in the number simply petering out.

A pity there could not have been two editions of this panto: the present one to play matinees and another, largely re-written by Ferrier and Parslow, to play evenings. Just the same, it should prove a most popular attraction.
Pursuit of avant garde

END TO END
COUNTERSPACES

By Catherine Peake

End To End by Denis Oram, produced by Russell Productions at La Mama Theatre. Opened December 1979.
Garf, George Dixon; Scrum, Lola Russell
(Pro/Am)
Counterspaces by Daniel Kahans; director, Daniel Kahans; music, Geoffrey Boyd (cello), and Ben Kahans (electric guitar). Opened December 1979 at La Mama Theatre.
Soprano and mother, Joan Dargavel; Daughter, voice over, Josephine Barnes; movement and film, Rhonda Brand; Artist, Mary Stylianou; multilingual poetry quartet, Rasa Lipsys, Miriam Sztajn, Daniel Kahans, Josephine Barnes
(Pro/Am)

The link between these two plays is their conscious pursuit of an avant garde theatre. They are accompanied by a small booklet of programme notes - mostly pertinent to the second play - which make much ado about the scope of performance art, and multi-lingual sound poetry.

The first, End To End, by Denis Oram, (whose Castaways was also produced in tandem with Kahan's Kaitos and Chronos in February 1979), announces itself as a species of the Theatre of the Absurd right from the first line.

It is a closely charted, sometimes incisive examination of the marriage between Garf and Scrum. But the relationship is mostly abstract, rhetorical and curiously unengaging. As each attempts to prod the other into an awareness of separate realities, they founder on all kinds of philosophic reefs and misunderstandings.

He wants to "flood" her "with the images that flow from my mind". She is more anguished and at one point laments that there is no "place for love's illusions". Finally she joins him in the bath tub and the play ends. But End To End is not all rhetoric.

Some of the play's achievement lies in its ability to convey the world of formalised ritual - the sense that this 'play' has been performed many times before with small variations, and that its highs, lows and resolutions are to some extent premeditated on both sides.

The performances of George Dixon and Lola Russell do credit to the rather thinly conceived script and together they manage to keep a semblance of tension humming through the dialogue. Dixon's Garf is arid and wry - a man whose passions bloom and wilt simultaneously as he moves through a repertoire of restraint, tyranny, and concern for his wife's welfare.

Lola Russell as Scrum is probably stronger when she is playing victim, than when she is aggressor. Her character is slightly bewry and confused - a nascent rebel and the possessor of a sharp tongue, though she would rather play dunce than use it.

While its images, such as Garf discoursing whilst sitting fully clothed and hatted in the bath, certainly make their point, End To End is a play that has become unduly self-conscious and serious about its own incongruities. It seems to have one foot in the absurdist tradition, and one foot somewhere else, and could benefit from some editing.

By contrast, Daniel Kahans' Counterspaces is more like an essay in visual and tonal poetry. Billed as a multimedia ensemble variously moved by forces beyond their control and to which they relate as expressive puppets.

Thus its dominant theme - the "mother's" death by cancer - becomes a powerful image of mutilation and chaos, but it also sets up a stage where the only possible "space" for the cast is one of impotence or reaction that verges on the sensational. More like an exorcism, or a psychodrama with specifically therapeutic ends, than a play, Counterspaces is a sort of orchestrated and exuberant happening. Its staple of sound, colour and repetition are definitely of a kind that encourages identification and assent, rather than interpretation.
Menopausal farces

By Irving Wardle

Amid the general sound of panic and collapse, 1979 may also be remembered as Britain's year of menopausal farce. As the London unveiling of Neil Simon's ten-year old Last Of The Red-Hot Lovers (Criterion) goes to show, this genre cannot be claimed as a recent invention, but the comparison with Mr Simon's saga of a detumescant New York fish-restaurateur is decided in favour of his current successors.

The success of Roger Hall's Middle Age Spread (which I reviewed last autumn) took everyone by surprise. Of Brian Thompson's Tishoo (Wyndham's), I had even higher hopes during the first thirty minutes wherein a scientist on the verge of discovering a cure for the common cold after eighteen years' research, sees his work to be scrapped to make way for a car park.

This deliciously long-awaited collision between the forces of enlightenment and the growing bureaucratic barbarism subsequently undergoes a regrettable dilution as Mr Thompson brings in the Martian younger generation, the world of power politics, the hero's personal eccentricities (he is a long-range telephone freak), not to mention the preening genie of menopausal sex. But the play gives Alec McCowen his best part since the Gospel of St Mark, and the dialogue is stunning. How could any woman resist a lover who asks: "Who was it who joined up every mole on your back with a felt pen?"

Simon Gray, after the failure of one aspiring West End play and the summary withdrawal of Close Of Play from the National Theatre repertoire, has joined the menopausal chorus with a frankly moneyspinning thriller, Stage Struck (Vaudeville). Rigorously assembled from stage prototypes, this is the one about the ailing theatrical marriage, and the home-loving husband's revenge on the callous leading lady who tries to boot him out of the house. It also supplies a splendid pretext for the aggressively ironic talent of Alan Bates (the star of Gray's two most successful plays) as a stage-manager killer who organises the blank cartridges, the frothing blood capsules, and the dangling corpse from the flies when his pheasant dinner is spurned. The whole play is most cunningly balanced between an imitation of life and a theatrical game; and for anybody who felt that inbred theatrical thrillers had reached their death-rattle with Anthony Shaffer's The Case Of The Oily Levantine, it goes to show that it is authors who get worn out, not styles.

A female outsider in this company but much the most affecting of the group is Bernice Ruben's adaptation of her novel, I Sent A Letter To My Love (Greenwich). Set in a benighted Welsh village, the play concerns a middle-aged woman who has devoted her life to looking after her paralysed brother, both of them hopelessly exiled from marriage. She places an advertisement in the lonelyhearts column of the local paper and receives a reply. It is from the brother. And so begins an impassioned exchange of love letters, conducted in complete fantasy on the brother's side, and in full understanding by the sister, while their humdrum domestic existence continues as usual.

If Miss Rubens's development of this wonderful idea does not entirely achieve its heart-breaking potential, the piece remains a memorably articulate offering to the emotionally destitute, and I can think of no other recent British play that is more likely to win international recognition on the Arbuzov circuit.

The National Theatre rounded off its best year since moving to the South Bank with a pair of extremely workmanlike revivals. That is rather faint praise for Robin Lefevre's production of J B Priestley's When We Are Married, wherein a single joke (three stuffy couples celebrating their silver wedding anniversary discover they have never been married at all) is prolonged to the length of three acts. On the Lyttleton stage this easy assault on the hypocrisies of pre-1914 Yorkshire takes on almost the appearance of a classic thanks to a director who extracts successive comic surprise from the mechanical plotting, and a company who convince you that these purse-prudish worthies and uppity servants (the play was written in 1938) have been drawn from life.

It takes some time to get a bearing on Christopher Morahan's production of The Wild Duck (Olivier) for which Ralph Koltai has supplied a conceptualised photographic setting with mutton-chop whisker Ibsen going on inside it. But once you have adjusted to this dischord, the old-fashioned virtues of intricately nuanced characterisation predominate, particularly in the duet between Stephen Moore's still boyish Hjalmar and Michael Bryant's clammy benolent Gregers: not to mention Ralph Richardson's Old Ekdal, who serves at once as comic survivor of disasters still past and a prescient chorus on disasters still to fall. This is also Richardson's spryest performance for years: at this rate, he will certainly be with us throughout the eighties.
Robin Bailey (Albert Parker) and Leslie Sands (Joseph Helliwell) in the National’s When We Are Married. Photo: John Haynes.

Stephen Moore (Hjalmar) and Michael Bryant (Gregers) in the National’s Wild Duck. Photo: Zoe Dominic.
Imported versus Domestic
By Karl Levett

The seasonal invasion of imported British plays to New York points up a curious domestic vacuum. American plays concerning pressing moral or political problems are a very rare species with the result that the current conscience for Broadway and Off-Broadway is a British import. Instead the local playwright seems to have rejected political immediacy and is perhaps reaching for an overview that provides wider social implications.

The Manhattan Theatre Club's production of The Jail Diary of Albie Sachs, dramatised by David Edgar, admirably demonstrates the imported conscience. As we follow the unlawful imprisonment of a white South African lawyer, a further instructive and cautionary lesson on the destructive effect of apartheid is given. Didacticism rather than drama is at the heart of the play. Here we have a new Stoppard concerned with a contemporary issue, the role of the press, and arguing wittily for both sides. The skilful writing almost hides the fact that this is a moral fable that totes a heavy message.

Night And Day indicates a new departure for Tom Stoppard. With this play he has deviated into the mainstream of drama to emerge as a latter-day Shaw. Here we have a new Stoppard concerned with a contemporary issue, the role of the press, and arguing wittily for both sides. The setting is an imaginary African nation and former British colony, where a rebel group has taken over the copper mines and threatens the country.

At the centre of the play is the mine owner's wife, and as played by Maggie Smith, she is bored, promiscuous and totally charming. It is with this character Stoppard plays his games. She addresses the audience and lives out fantasies — with the result that the character outstrips the play, particularly in Ms Smith's remarkable hands. The character and the play's central issue do not meld, even though, in the best Shavian tradition, she is given the crucial final comment.

Incidentally, Paul Hecht plays an Australian reporter in an accent that is completely acceptable here, but hardly even strays below the equator. (The vexed question of domestic actors in imported parts will have to wait.)

Although by a young American playwright, Martin Sherman, the presence of Bent on Broadway is almost certainly due to its earlier London success. Mr Sherman has taken on an unlikely and provocative topic: the Nazi regime's rounding up and extermination of homosexuals. In a series of clumsily constructed scenes we see Max and his dancer lover hunted, caught, and put on the Dachau train where Max has to witness the beating to death of his lover. In Dachau Max finds a new lover, integrity and eventual salvation. In the prison scenes of the second act, Sherman has taken some real chances and there are a couple of scenes of blazing theatricality. Despite the play's original subject matter, this is at core a melodrama with a mushy heart, stark but sentimental. Richard Gere, a current contender for matinee-idol status in Movieland, is to be commended for taking the controversial role of Max, and although the part demands greater variety and detail, it is a worthy performance.

Probably the best current example of American social comment sans didacticism is Michael Weller's Loose Ends now ending a healthy run at the uptown Circle in the Square. Weller's Moonchildren is generally regarded as the definitive play of the American 1960's, and forms with Fishing (1975) and Loose Ends a trilogy of a generation from 1960 to 1980. Loose Ends follows a central couple through their romantic Peace Corps days as the seventies begin to the harsh carecrism that destroys their marriage as 1980 approaches. Mr Weller has a talent for taking the temperature of the times plus a very accurate ear. This is a linear play filled with well written scenes and confirms Michael Weller's place as an important American playwright.

A domestic production that truly has a champagne quality is Peter Parnell's The Sorrows Of Stephen at the Public Theatre. It is totally without any redeeming social value, as it follows its young hero's pursuit of Manhattan romance. With Goethe's The Sorrows Of Young Werther as its mentor and lietmotif, it is light, bright and charming in a setting by Stuart Wurtzel that is itself a witty comment on the action of this sweet comedy.

Imported or domestic? Let's be grateful to have the luxury of choice.
Special Report: Soviet Theatre

By Kyle Wilson

The melancholy history of the theatre in the Soviet Union must be understood if the difficulties and achievements of the small group of directors struggling to drag it from its dreary backwater and debouch into the mainstream of world theatre are to be appreciated.

After an efflorescence of great innovators in the 1920's free creativity ceased in the 30's. The Stalinist regime wanted a conventional and politically controlled theatre which would promote social cohesion by constantly reaffirming the dictatorship of the Communist Party. It dreaded revolution in form and content alike — for change implies discontent and criticism — and insisted that all theatre productions conform to 'Socialist Realism'. In accordance with certain tenets of Marxism Leninism, all plays had to be keyed into the realist mode and had, moreover, to be overtly optimistic about the 'bright future' of Soviet society.

Production style had to conform to a pseudo-Stanislavskian system, in which the irrational and mystical elements of that director’s symbolist period were suppressed, while the naturalistic and didactic elements of his theories were emphasised. Dissenters and heretics were driven from the new temple. A generation of geniuses became martyrs, including the greatest Soviet director Meyerhold, and the greatest dramatist, Mayakovskii. Those who survived the 30's fell prey to a fresh wave of persecution after the war, and by the time Aleksandr Tairov's celebrated Kamernyi teatr, already long emasculated, was closed in 1949, Soviet theatre was reduced to cringing puerility.

That such a subjugation was considered necessary, and that despite a certain degree of liberalisation in the post-Stalin years the state of thraldom continues, indicates the key fact of the relations between the theatre and the state in the USSR: the theatre is feared. This is an exotic idea for Australians who, apart from an eccentric minority, roughly comprising the readership of Theatre Australia, simply don't take theatre seriously and may find draconian Soviet control puzzling.

For the Soviet regime, the arts are part of the media: the theatre is perceived as a powerful and potentially pernicious social influence, a disseminator of ideas, a moulder of men's minds and behaviour. Art can be both benevolent and malevolent, can either legitimise society's institutions or undermine them. As it is the...
freedom puzzling and naive; and Soviet dissenters and restrictions on creative expression in a style called Socialist Realist dramatics of war sagas, are given a crisis in egg production, and the pressure of authorities' conventionality of taste, their predilection for illusionist representation, ideological conformity and artistic mediocrity are zealously maintained by a bureaucratic gorgon medusa, or rather hydra, the multi-faceted organism of state control of the arts, before whose vigilant gaze must pass all new plays, new translations, all repertoire plans and all new productions. Dress rehearsals are attended also by Party cultural watchdogs, who like their colleagues in the Orwellian-titled Ministry of Culture, are highly sensitive to ideologically unsound implications or nuances that in any way question Marxism-Leninism. For instance, the line 'It was in 1938. They were good times' was recently expunged from a play by an ironic coincidence of cultural motivations and irritation with dabbling in the metaphysical, would find such theatre quaintly old-fashioned and crudely didactic. Ideological conformity and artistic mediocrity are zealously maintained by a bureaucratic gorgon medusa, or rather hydra, the multi-faceted organism of state control of the arts, before whose vigilant gaze must pass all new plays, new translations, all repertoire plans and all new productions. Dress rehearsals are attended also by Party cultural watchdogs, who like their colleagues in the Orwellian-titled Ministry of Culture, are highly sensitive to ideologically unsound implications or nuances that in any way question Marxism-Leninism. For instance, the line 'It was in 1938. They were good times' was recently expunged from a play by an ironic coincidence of cultural motivations and irritation with dabbling in the metaphysical, would find such theatre quaintly old-fashioned and crudely didactic.

Igor Liubimov directs at the Taganka Theatre.
Moscow 1978.

Ibsen's Brand, Rainis Theatre, Riga 1977.
works in cellars, warehouses, backstage of certain theatres and in private flats; the latter occasionally belong to members of the elite intelligentsia.

The repertoire of one group whose work I managed to see, comprising actors from the Satiric and Taganka theatres, included two Pinter plays, The Dumbwaiter and The Caretaker, Ionesco's Les Chaises and Richard III, staged in an absurdist manner. Their activities had inevitably come to the notice of the KGB, who questioned the director about his work; three weeks later he was dismissed from his position as a television producer. Nonetheless the group is currently preparing plays by Beckett and Handke. Another group of young actors from one of Moscow's most venerable theatres is staging a serialised adaptation of the Bible; another, led by one of Moscow's most talented 'bards', (writer composers of satirical songs), was preparing Goethe's Faust in early 1979.

The most interesting and impressive theatre in the Soviet Union is to be found on the periphery, in particular in the Baltic republics, where the exigencies of the 'Nationalities Problem' have compelled Moscow to permit a degree of unorthodoxy and experimentation unthinkable elsewhere. For the Balts have a largely exotic cultural tradition, closer to those of Poland and Germany than to that of the Slavs, and if frustrated rebellion is to be avoided and the ultimate goal of Russification facilitated, concessions must be made. Consequently, one encounters a repertoire bristling with 'decadents' and 'antihumanist pessimists' such as Strindberg, Beckett, Albee, Pinter and Wesker. Moreover one encounters an eclectic and overt anti-illusionist production style which has more in common with the work of Meyerhold and Grotowski than with Socialist Realist models.

Moscow informants urged me to see Ibsen's Brand directed by Arnold Linnins at the Rainis Theatre in Riga (when this production was shown in Moscow in 1977, theatre goers actually stove in the doors of the theatre in their eagerness to obtain tickets). Jaan Tooming, who works in the Vainemuir Theatre in Tartu, is considered by Moscow representatives of the liberal camp to be the other innovator of genius. His production of Ibsen's Little Eyolf combined elements of symbolist and expressionist theatre with his own brand of biomechanics. The vital difference is, of course, that such productions acknowledge and deal with metaphysical questions, such as non-phenomenal reality, and thus openly challenge state ideology.

It is precisely this freedom to question which is denied directors and playwrights in Russia proper, and which is the ultimate goal of all their efforts. Under the circumstances it is hardly surprising that the Soviet theatre remains far from the reputation it enjoyed in the 1920's. Despite the fact that interest will continue to centre in non-Russian theatres, it is probable that its future will be decided in the great metropolitan centres of Russian culture, where a small group, surrounded by predominantly state theatrical activity, strives for rejuvenation.

**AUSTRALIAN CENTRE INTERNATIONAL THEATRE INSTITUTE**

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**POPULAR THEATRE ROMAND, LA CHAUX-DE-FONDS**, is preparing its VIIth Biennale, to be held in June 1980. The theme will be Theatre Training and the topic of Training in an immediately interesting way. Theatre pedagogy will be treated in workshops and discussions as well as productions.

Interested theatre schools and theatre groups which are engaged in trying out original forms of expression are asked to contact ITI in Sydney, or to write direct to Marie-Agnick Duchard, Theatre Populart Romand, case postale 88, CH-2301 La Chaux-de-Fonds, France.

**THEATRE OF THE NATIONS**

Mr. Paolo Grassi confirmed the wish of the Italian ITI Centre to hold the 7th world season of the Theatre des Nations in Rome in 1981. The Netherlands Centre is organising the 6th season in Holland in 1980. The British Centre has offered to host the 10th world season in 1984 in Great Britain.

**NINETEENTH ITI CONGRESS**

Responding to the wish of the Spanish Centre of ITI and of the cultural authorities in Spain, it has been decided that the 19th ITI Congress is to be held in Madrid in 1981, if possible near the date of the Theatre of the Nations festival in Italy that year.

**OBSTACLES TO FREEDOM**

The ITI's Executive Committee has decided to send a telegram of protest to the Czechoslovak authorities on the subject of the playwrights Vaelav Havel and Pavel Kohout. Vaclav Havel was recently condemned to 4½ years gaol and Pavel Kohout has been exiled.

**PUBLICATION**

*The London Theatre Scene*.

Scenes, Hotels, Wining, Dining, Dancing, Shopping, Sightseeing, Transport. Published 1979 by Frank Cook, edited by Susan Elms, illustrated by Clive Desmond, typography by Berney Baughen. (Martins Press, London) Price £1.50 plus postage. This unique guide to the West End theatre will be very useful for anyone planning a visit to London. Details about the services of Theatreland Tours are contained in the first section of the book. They will take you behind the scenes of London's West End Theatres and would be happy to provide an automatic discount of 10% on all their services to accredited members of the ITI. Their office is only two minutes walk from the British ITI Centre; 10 St Martin's Court, St Martin's Lane, London WC2, Tel. 01-940 0915.
DANCE

By William Shoubridge

Anna Karenina

Full length ballets that are unified are
unified in much the same way, whereas
ballets that are divided against themselves
are divided in their own way.

The confusions and divisions in Andre
Prokovsky's Anna Karenina arise not only
from the shortfall between intention and
achievement but also that between form
and means. The format of Anna Karenina
is ostensibly that of a full length work, but
the resulting mish-mash is like three single-act
ballets tenuously strung together.

A lot of the trouble comes from
Tolstoy's novel for it cannot really be
parcelled out — just as War And Peace
becomes quite ridiculous as an opera. The
conventions and artificialities of ballet are
galaxies apart from the social detail that
makes up this great novel. But ballet
administrations being as parsimonious as
they are all around the world, think that
the public wants full length ballets, and the
public goes to these full length ballets for a
nice emotional massage with musical
accompaniment. The actual choreo-
graphic enterprise is demoded because
these audiences are actually scared of
movement and incapable of seeing.

Choreographers, for some reason, feel
that to create a full length ballet is the
pinnacle of achievement, regardless of
whether they have the aptitude for the
form (like Cranko) or not (like
Prokovsky). Last year alone we had Valery
Panov creating a balletic version of
Dostoievsky's The Idiot and the same
choreographer will this year be mounting a
ballet based on War And Peace; Roland

Marilyn Rowe (Anna) and Gary Norman (Vronsky) in the AB's Anna Karenina. Photo: Branco Gaica.
Petit has created Pique Dame for Barishnikov and the like. What is it about Russian novels that draw choreographers to them like moths? If this keeps going we’ll see a ballet version of Resurrection, and then this adaptive stupidity will be complete.

Anyway, Karenina is Prokovsky’s first attempt at a full length ballet and his inexpertise at handling dramatic structure over an extended period of time is glaringly evident. Some of my colleagues have gone into print bemoaning the fact that the choreography lacks invention, but here I would disagree; taking it enchainement by enchainement the steps are very inventive. Unfortunately they’re done for the wrong reasons most of the time, or else done in the wrong place, by the wrong person with the wrong emotional connotations.

The reason why Anna Karenina dwindles so quickly from the mind is that these dance moments aren’t tied to the ebb and flow of dramatic momentum within the story, or the shifting moods, emotional states and events within the pinned-and-tucked Tchaikovsky score. Putting it simply as a member of the Australian Ballet did — Prokovsky cannot produce and he should stick to the innocuous plotless, single-act stuff that he’s had a modicum of success with in Britain.

The logistics of a full length ballet are more complex than and more different to those of a plotless (or even plotted) single act work. Such a ballet demands the setting up of a believable milieu in terms of movement, form and arrangement (viz the opening scene of Cranko’s Onegin). It also demands that the main characters be presented almost immediately in recognisable and distinctive form with the innate capacity to grow as human beings as the work progresses.

A full length ballet needs a strong resilient fabric of event outside the main concern of the principle characters so as to anchor the work in actuality (as well as give something for the corps de ballet to do).

Prokovsky’s protagonists in his ballet are one dimensional and the soap opera incidents of love, infatuation, adultery, disillusion and self immolation are strictly Reader’s Digest. The wide social fabric and the majority of referential characters in the novel are dispensed with or downgraded to “relief” adjuncts. It would seem that there is almost no reason to call the ballet Anna Karenina anyway, so little does the ballet really have in common with the Tolstoy novel, and the Russian character of the work is conveyed solely by props, costumes and a smattering of “ethnic” dance in Act 2.

Now I am perfectly well aware that the theme of Anna is universal and can apply at any time and in any situation (except for the social disgrace bit which would hardly cause a ripple these days). But so many moments in the work are botched because Prokovsky has not translated them into dance conventions — he has taken great hunks out of the novel and translated them. You can almost hear him saying “How can I treat this scene of this character or even this novel?” instead of “Why should I treat this scene, this character or even this novel?”

The feeling of a producer’s inability to convey character or encounter is evident at the very beginning of the work, in the depressingly inept scene at the railway station. If it weren’t for the programme note, we wouldn’t have a clue as to who’s getting off the train, who’s meeting and who is what. Everybody just wanders majestically about flourishing their capes andvalises for the matrons in the audience.

The first actual meeting between Anna and Vronsky is dilated into one of those corny “love glances across a crowded room” routines and things don’t improve any in the Park scene. Vronsky is manoeuvred into being there, the choreographer decides it is about time they had a duet, and so they do — after much desultory protestation and reservation. Anna backs off after this one and Vronsky launches into a Snoopy dance of unbridled ecstasy. Realism is dispensed with and romantic fantasy takes its place.

But Realism pops up again in the next scene set in the country dacha of the Karenins and a few cursory gestures are meant to convey the cold, loveless marriage that Anna is trapped in. The same sort of cursory gestures are meant to convey Dolly’s love for Vronsky in the Park scene too, and after a while this log-pile of nods and stares becomes downright absurd, but I digress.

Vronsky has of course raced after Anna to the country retreat to claim her. She allows him her company after Karenin has left, and she has done with hugging the child playing with a kite — this little touch courtesy of Ashton’s A Month in the Country. He once again protests his love for her, she lets herself melt and they go into another duet, this time replete with some rather messy, contrived and awkward lifts.

The passion of the two lovers, the social background and the domestic troubles all come to a head in the inevitable ball scene. Anna wants a good time and so Karenin stumps off in a rage; the lovers unable to contain their passion one moment longer rush off home, throw off their outer garments and into another extended duet of orgasmic fury and impetuousness. We then get a bridge passage showing us Anna in Vronsky’s bed writing Karenin a letter and returning to him her wedding ring.
By rights the first act should end there; it is a beautiful and poignant moment, but no, Prokovsky, for some curious reason feels he must dot all i’s and cross all t’s, so we’re sent back to the Karenin’s house. Anna does some more hugging of the child; Karenin forces her to take back the ring, denoting that he refuses a divorce, then parts her from the child. Anna is left stricken and staring into the darkness.

It is a very limp and downer ending.

Act 2 is set entirely on the country dacha that presumably belongs to Vronsky, since the usual all-purpose ballet peasants are continually kowtowing and forelock-tugging towards him.

The two lovers enter and immediately stare out into the darkness presumably at some idyllic vastness (just as the peasant does at the very opening of that Jerome Robbins ballet). The whole of this act is meant to denote the passing of a year and the cooling of the lovers’ affair. It is done in continually kowtowing and forelock-tugging towards Vronsky.

Anna and Vronsky enter and immediately she is cut dead, while Vronsky is welcomed with open arms. This of course is in line with the atrocious hypocrisy that Tolstoy illuminated in the novel. But Tolstoy did it so much better, because he described the social reaction to Anna in such detail; all Prokovsky can manage is a feeble illustration of it.

He has the men staring stonily ahead an the women fluttering behind their fans, in fact so feeble is the suggestion of social outrage that you’d swear the only thing wrong was that Anna had a grasy stain on her blouse. But the reaction is sufficient for Anna to throw herself about the foyer after the lovers are repulsed and banished by her husband and searches the streets in despair. She hears the train coming and throws herself under it.

Which makes for an extremely downer ending to the whole evening.

That this is an extremely facile, gib and innocuous reading of the story I know, but so is the ballet. Nothing can save it. Not the music, butchered and arranged (as is the latest ballet custom) by Guy Woollenden; nor the excellent, subtle and supportive designs of Peter Farmer; nor the vast talents of Marilyn Rowe, Galina Samsova (who lets face it, the work was written for) or Ann Jenner (who was totally miscast).

Later this year Mr Prokovsky will be creating a ballet on the Dumas novel The Three Musketeers. It isn’t a new idea, there are two versions of it still around, one by the Soviets and one by Flemming Flindt for the Royal Danish Ballet. Neither of them are very successful. I don’t want to prejudge, but I feel Prokovsky is going to have to learn a lot more about choreographs if he doesn’t want his version to join those other two in obscurity.
Amalgam of excellence and amateurism

The month under review was an almost non-existent one on the live opera front, with the national company trailing off its year with brief season in Adelaide and Melbourne before going on holidays and all the regular regional companies in recess till the new year. The only new live productions during December were those presented at the Innisfail Opera Festival in tropical Queensland - an unusual double bill of Von Suppe's *Beautiful Galathea* and Gilbert and Sullivan's *Trial By Jury*, and a production of Donizetti's *Don Pasquale* which received two performances in Townsville following an equally brief season at the Innisfail Town Hall.

But, as is prone to happen at year's end, the long-awaited ABC telecast of the 1978 Sutherland/Bonyenze production of Bellini's *Norma* for the Australian Opera took place on the night of Sunday, December 16 - and, as it so happened, is to be followed this month by a literal feast of home-grown electronic opera on ABC radio.

**ABC Norma**

Predictably, Sandro Sequi's production of *Norma* came over a good deal better visually on the box than it had originally in the theatre, as did Fiorella Mariani's designs; for both their efforts suffered from a tendency to treat the piece rather more like semi-staged oratorio than fully fledged opera and this serious defect mattered a good deal less in the confined visual working space of television than it did in the theatre.

The liberal use of close-ups made it possible for the TV cameras to avoid dwelling very long at all on the full stage picture, which was seldom impressive and very often quite self-defeating, even funny, in the incongruous way it tended to send up admittedly flimsy plot and stage action. Likewise, TV viewers were spared the consistent full-length vista of the highly eccentric costuming in favour of a good many close-ups of the central characters, which helped to underscore such limited dramatic impact as can be extracted from the piece - even if it also threw the hideous headgear into even more prominence than it had on stage.

And - most important of all in this area, perhaps - the denouement was presented much more effectively in the television version than it had been on stage. There, the two central lovers had strolled off the stage hand in hand toward a vaguely flickering reddish glow that looked more like the glow of a distant bushfire or a vaguely wonky attempt at a scenic sunset than a fiercely blazing funeral pyre. On TV, they ended the opera clasped in a firm embrace in the centre of a screen otherwise engulfed in fierce flames, and the embers of the pyre continued to burn themselves out during the visual list of credits following the end of the music proper. It was a much more effective denouement than this production ever managed in the live theatre context.

All the central characters had at least as much impact, dramatically, in the video *Norma* as they had in the staged version; and the singing, given the severe limitations of the medium in the reproduction of sound, came across very effectively. As in the theatre, the vocal honours were very much split between Joan Sutherland and her mezzo offside, Margreta Elkins, who sang the important supporting role of Adalgisa: Elkins blended beautifully with her illustrious colleague when required vocally, but was also wholly capable of establishing her own independent character as required. Clifford Grant's Oroveso was also as impressive as it had been in the flesh.

But the Pollione of Ron Stevens, only passable in the vital vocal area though there were never any qualms about his ability to play the role with telling dramatic effect, came across very much better on TV.
than in the flesh: fairly consistently, his basically character tenor assumed quite impressive lyrical proportions. This was somewhat more than a mere function of the narrower sound spectrum available for TV transmission, though that clearly helped to narrow the basic gap between his voice and those of his colleagues; he seems to have been in particularly good voice for the TV performance, yet another plus for this Norma as seen on television as opposed to the way it came across in the theatre.

All in all, this was one of the rare occasions when the box proved it really did have something positive to offer qualitatively in the area of opera to its undeniable capability of getting both sound and picture to the TV transmitter.

Particularly commendable in this month’s ABC effort is that it is much more than a mere celebration of the achievements of one opera company. In particular, it affords national exposure to the work of no less than three of the State companies as well as that of the Australian Opera and the ABC itself in the role of a producer of studio opera. It also includes two contemporary Australian music theatre pieces, one each from the State companies in Melbourne and Adelaide, and it is undeniably dominated by the relatively new and off-beat at the expense of the standard repertory.

Interesting as it is in itself, however, the ABC festival is far from an accurate representation of operatic activity in Australia these days: four of its thirteen performances originated in the studios of the ABC itself and another four with the State Opera of South Australia. Two each came from the Australian Opera and the Victoria State Opera, and the thirteenth from the Western Australian Opera Company.

Clearly, the AO is under-represented in this lineup, though one must hasten to add that practically all of its new productions are being broadcast these days on ABC radio, progressively, soon after their premieres. It is a good deal more serious omission that the work of the Queensland Opera Company is not represented at all, particularly since 1979 was a rather marvellous year for that group with most commendable productions of Lucia di Lammermoor, Hansel and Gretel, and Stravinsky’s The Rake’s Progress. And it is certainly not the very least highly debatable whether it was wise to present as a series a group of thirteen operas only one of which could be expected to be well known to most opera-lovers in this country; there is a very real danger that many opera-lovers will be scared off by the unfamiliarity of the terrain, where they might well have braved the uncharted waters had they been more evenly infiltrated among the calmer seas of the more well-known pieces.

The undeniable popular favourite of the ABC Festival of Opera is sure to the AM-FM simulcast of the new Australian Opera production of Donizetti’s Lucia di Lammermoor on Saturday, February 16, featuring Joan Sutherland, Richard Greager and Robert Altman in the major roles and the Elizabethan Sydney Orchestra conducted by Richard Bonynge.

Dates of the other broadcasts in this month’s series are: Sat 2, The Secret Marriage (Cimarosa); Tue 5, Fiery Tales (Larry Sitsky); Thur 7, Werther (Massenet); Sat 9, The Rape of Lucretia (Britten); Tue 12, Lucrezia (Respighi); Thur 14, The Triumph of Honor (Scarlatti); Tue 19, One Man Show (Nicholas Maw); Thur 21, Le Villi (Puccini) and Inner Voices (Brian Howard); Sat 23, The Immortal Hour (Rutland Boughton); Tue 26, The Bear (Walton); Thur 28, Orfeo (Gluck).

All the broadcasts commence between 7.30 and 8.15pm. The series is a must for adventurous lovers of the musical theatre, particularly since several of the works
being presented are not available on commercial recordings.

OUT OF TOWN

Each of the three live sub-Australian Opera productions seen during the period under review was a somewhat uneasy amalgam of excellence and amateurism. Sydney's suburban Rockdale Municipal Opera Company concluded its 1979 season with a production of Puccini's Tosca which started very shakily but ended up quite strongly. Kerrie O'Connor, not very well costumed and ill at ease both vocally and dramatically in Act I, developed immensely in Act II and ended up with almost as strong an Act III.

John Main also failed to convince in Act I, but was excellent after that in the role of the tenor hero Cavaradossi. William Toohey was a rather too low-key Scarpia, not nearly villainous enough to suit the part.

Canberra Opera ended its year with a rather triumphant production of Offenbach's La Belle Helene artistically, which nevertheless failed to draw very well at the box office. John Tasker's Canberra production, based on Kenneth Rowell's designs for the 1977 production of the Victoria State Opera augmented by Ron Butters, caught the spirit of the piece exactly, and conductor Keith Wilson provoked some very stylish playing from his orchestra.

The production was blessed by outstanding performances from Maureen Wright in the title role and Thomas Edmonds as Paris — unequivocally so in the comic interplay department, and almost unequivocally so in the vocal department. Edmonds, of course, is without doubt the best Mozart tenor on the Australian circuit and — given the right direction — can be an effective actor as well; the only significant flaws in Wright's performance came at the top of her vocal range, where she had some trouble coping with the more intricate coloratura squiggles in the demanding part of Helene.

This Belle Helene also featured a rather nice comic turn from Conal Coad as Calchas. Where it fell down, predictably, was in the casting of the numerous second-rank principals from the ranks of local talent; everyone turned in a workmanlike performance, but most were devoid of the comic flair that is essential to fully satisfying Offenbach operetta.

DON PASQUALE

The Innisfail festival production of Don Pasquale was also plagued, like Canberra's Belle Helene, by a good deal more meagre audiences than it deserved, though the main reason for the north Queensland result is a good deal easier to pinpoint: in a remote area where only one major opera production is mounted each year, to venture even a fraction of a step off the dead centre of the well-beaten track of the standard repertory is extremely dangerous.

This year's Pasquale was mounted at the specific request of the Governor-General, Sir Zelman Cowen, who attended the opening Innisfail performance; and it was produced by bass-baritone Neil Warren-Smith of the Australian Opera, who also sang the title role splendidly.

The rest of the principals were nothing to be ashamed of; indeed, as a group they would not have been out of place on any stage in Australia except that of the national company itself. But they did not excel in the way that Warren-Smith did; his presence, indeed, no doubt made them seem somewhat less adequate than they really were, by contrasting their less complete professionalism with his fully matured operatic artistry.

Norina was played by Lorraine Davies-Griffith, a very talented soprano from tropical Queensland who has chosen to split her energies between music and domesticity. She sang extremely well and conveyed the essence of Norina's character quite well; but there were times when neither her vocal technique nor her natural dramatic understanding of the role were able to come up with a fully matured performance. There is simply, I should think, not enough opportunity in northern Queensland for an operatic talent — no matter how promising in itself — to mature fully.

The role of Dr Malatesta was played with thorough competence by Paul Neal of the Queensland Opera Company in Brisbane, but without much in the way of memorable characterisation; and Ernesto, the rather slight romantic tenor lead of Donizetti's opera, was played extremely well by Glenn Winslade of Sydney who is obviously an up-and-coming opera talent to be watched.

The proceedings were under the ever reliable control of the artistic mainstay of the Innisfail festival, conductor John Curro, who brought everything together into a thoroughly satisfying whole — even in the sweltering atmosphere of the Innisfail Town Hall. A few days later, in the rather marvellous new air-conditioned Townsville Civic Theatre, Curro, his principals and his large and youthful orchestra were obviously much more comfortable — and the performance was several notches further up the ladder toward artistic perfection.

*DAVID GYGER is editor of Opera Australia.
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The New Barbarism

By John McCallum

Burn the Butterflies by Cliff Green. Currency Press, rrp $5.95.
Four Scripts by Cliff Green. Hyland House, rrp $7.95.
Eureka by David Young. Currency Press, rrp $3.95.

The prospect of the new decade holds terrors for many people. For many Australians, protected for the time being from gross disasters like famine, war or violent totalitarianism, there is still a growing feeling that Australia is moving towards what Professor E L Wheelwright calls a new 'barbarism'.

It has been argued in the 'responsible' press that the repressive changes in Queensland are a sign of things to come, rather than simply an aberration led by a comic premier. It has also been argued that the 80s will see a decline into spiritual poverty; as we sit back contented to sell off resources overseas, collect the lucre and ignore the wellbeing of vast sections of our population.

The most controversial of the resources which will enable this is, of course, uranium; and the most extreme view of the "barbarism" is that the vested interests who want it will eventually simply move in and take it, by covert — or overt — force, bringing to a natural conclusion the story of corruption and intrigue that has marked uranium-mining so far.

This prospect, and nuclear politics generally, is the subject of Cliff Green's television play, Burn The Butterflies, broadcast at the end of the last decade by the ABC. If the play has a fault, politically and socially, it is that many people claim to have found it frankly incredible. As a political thriller (even if you think it exaggerated) and as a succinct presentation of the uranium debate, it is one of the best television plays for some time, and worth taking seriously.

The play shows an Australian "Social Action Party" Prime Minister, Joe Delaney, who has been elected on an anti-uranium campaign, at a crisis point in his political life. To pursue a Rex Connor-like dream of social justice and welfare financed by the export of mineral resources, he wants now to lift the ban on the export of uranium, against the vote of Caucus. As he says, 'they say the best political in-fighters are lapsed Catholics or expelled Communists — and I'm both.' The ending of the play, and of Delaney's machinations, is startling, but convincing in retrospect — in the best tradition of such thrillers. It is well prepared for intellectually and formally.

There are two simultaneous actions in the play: the 'real time' world of Delaney in his office talking with his colleagues; and a documentary about uranium and the current crisis playing continually on a television set in the office. In post-production one or the other has been accentuated at different moments but while watching it the attempt to follow both together makes for exciting television. The ending brings a neat and satisfying completeness.

The publication of the script by Currency Press means you can read both scripts. It is also more successful than some of Currency's earlier 'documentary specials' in that the book becomes a coherent introduction to the uranium issue. There are extracts from pieces by Ernest Titterton and E L Wheelwright, and an intelligent account of the history of the Uranium Moratorium by Mary Elliott. One of Currency's best and most important books.

From Hyland House there are more plays by Cliff Green. Rather unimaginatively entitled 4 Scripts, the book contains the television plays, Shining Morning Face (broadcast as The Schoolboy) and End Of Summer, an episode from Power Without Glory (No 12, Divine Intervention) and the feature film, Summerfield. The publishers seem partly to intend it as a help to prospective script-writers — to see how it is done. It has an introduction by Green, talking about how he came to write each script, and describing the production process. It is a very useful book, from Australia's leading film and television writer.

Currency continues with issue-plays with a TIE script about one of the most over-exposed subjects in Australian drama — the Eureka Stockade. It is also a notoriously unsuccessful subject perhaps because it has no great heroes and it failed. (Although that should be no great discouragement to Australian nationalists.) No one has had the formal adventurousness to transcend these problems. David Young's treatment for children, Eureka, uses a lot of audience participation — with the children playing mill-workers and gold-diggers, and building the stockade themselves. It is a lively script and reads as if it would be quite fun.

It is good that Currency is publishing TIE scripts, although it is to be hoped that this one will not be given an artificial weight by being the only one.

Finally, and still from Currency, we have an addition to their National Theatre Series: Walter Cooper's Colonial Experience, edited with immense care and erudition by the seemingly indefatigable Eric Irvin. The play was first performed at the Royal Victoria Theatre, Sydney, in 1868 and is a comedy of colonial life; with rapacious businessmen, smooth swindlers, innocent new-chums, misunderstood heroes and devoted but confused heroines.

Currency has done the theatre here a great service by bringing to light many old plays, and their persistence has been justified by the renewed interest in them, in Sydney at least. There have been George Whaley's highly successful production of On Our Selection (a play which has been about to appear in the National Theatre Series for years, it seems) and Richard Wherrett's loving and stirring recreation of The Sunny South to open the Sydney Theatre Company.

It remains to be seen whether Colonial Experience will be added to what is becoming something of a repertoire of Australian theatrical classics.
ACT

AUSTRALIAN THEATRE WORKSHOP
Childers Street Hall. The Glad Hand by Snoo Wilson; director, Warwick Baxter. Last week Feb, first week March.

CANBERRA REPERTORY (47 4222)

FORTUNE THEATRE COMPANY
Playhouse (49 4488)
Da by Hugh Leonard. Feb 5.
Ashes by David Rudkin. Feb 19.

CANBERRA THEATRE (49 8211)
Boys Own McBeth by Grahame Bond and Jim Burnett; with Grahame Bond. Feb 18-23.

TEMMPO THEATRE
Theatre Three (47 4222)
Olliver! To Feb 9.

CONCERTS

ANU ANU ARTS CENTRE (49 4787)
The Human Veins, dance company in residence. Various performances and workshops. Feb 18 for 2 months.

CANBERRA THEATRE (49 8211)
Recital: Hakam Haggard, baritone, Feb 9.
Johnny Mathis in concert. Feb 12.
Dave Bomberg, folk concert. Feb 25.
Cilla Black, Feb 26, 27.
For entries contact Kyle Wilson on 49 5111.

NSW THEATRE

ANU ARTS CENTRE (49 4787)

CANBERRA THEATRE (49 8211)
David Yeats, Feb 4.
The Platters, Feb 5.
Recital: Hakam Haggard, baritone, Feb 9.
Johnny Mathis in concert. Feb 12.
Dave Bomberg, folk concert. Feb 25.
Cilla Black, Feb 26, 27.
For entries contact Kyle Wilson on 49 5111.

ENSEMBLE THEATRE (929 8877)
Knuckle by David Hare; director, Jon Ewing; with Stephan Browne, Glenn Faye.


FRANK STRAINS BULL N'BUSH THEATRE RESTAURANT (357 4627)
That's Rich a musical review from the turn of the century to today with Noel Brophy, Barbara Wyndon, Neil Bryant and Helen Lorain; director, George Carden. Commences end February.

GENESIANS THEATRE (55 5641)
A Talent to Amuse, a review based on the works of Noel Coward; director, Tony Mason, Anne E Morgan, John O'Brien Frank Gallagher, Pamela Gibbons, Paul Quinn; with Valda Diamond, Rob Thomas, Antoinette Blaxland and Michael Pentacost. Throughout February.

FRANZ ROD THEATRE (699 5003)

HUNTER VALLEY THEATRE COMPANY (26 2526)
Programme to be confirmed.

KIRRIBILLI PUB THEATRE (92 1415)
Kirribilli Hotel, Milson's Point The 1984 Show by P P Cranney; director, Richmond Young; music, Adrian Morgan; with Danny Adcock, Margie McCrae, Peter Corbett, Ross Hohen and Laura Gabriel. Throughout February.

LES CURIER PRESENTATIONS (358 5676)
Mike Jackson, traditional bush music for infants, primary and secondary schools. Sydney metropolitan from February 14 to 19.


Colony, a programme of folk songs and sketches describing colonial Australia for infants, primary and secondary with Colin Douglas and Tony Suttor. NSW country throughout February.

LEIDER SOUTHERN REGIONAL THEATRE (048 21 5688)

MARIAN STREET THEATRE (498 3166)
Closed for renovations.

MUSIC BOX THEATRE (82 2379)
Seymour Centre Dungeons: a musical by Ken Moffat and Terry O'Connell; director, Terry O'Connell; with Tony Sheldon, Valerie Bader, Toby Prentice, Bob Baines, Graham Lowndes and Maureen Elkner. February 13-23.

MUSIC HALL THEATRE RESTAURANT (909 8222)
Show unconfirmed. Contact theatre for details.

MUSIC LOFT THEATRE (977 6585)
Ron Amok by John McKellar and Ron Frazer; director, Bill Orr; with Ron Frazer. Until February 16. New show commences February 19.

NEW THEATRE (519 3403)
All My Sons by Arthur Miller; director, Paul Quinn; with Valda Diamond, Rob Thomas, Antoinette Blaxland and Michael Pentacost. Throughout February.

NIMROD THEATRE (699 5003)

PLAYERS THEATRE COMPANY (30 7211)
Songs My Mother Didn't Teach Me, director, Peter Batey with Liz Harris and Karen Johnson. Throughout February.

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 February.

RIVERINA TRUCKING COMPANY (069 25 2052)
Contact theatre for details.

SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY
The End of the Earth Show by Slater Lingwood; director, John Copley: Nabucco by Verdi; conducted by Geoffrey Arnold and produced by Tom Lingwood: Lucia di Lammermoor by Donizetti; conducted by Richard Bonynge and produced by John Copley: Patience by Gilbert and Sullivan; conducted by Geoffrey Arnold and produced by John Cox. Throughout February.

Hargreaves, John Frawley, Peter Carroll, George Spartels, Robin Ramsay, Ron Falk and John Gaden. Until February 12.

That's Showbiz produced and directed by Alan Lane, commences February 2. The Shopfront Caravan touring country towns.

THEATRE AUSTRALIA FEBRUARY 1980 57
THEATRE

ARTS THEATRE (36 2344)  
The Murder Game by Constance Cox; director, Jason Savage. Continues to February 9.  
Happy Family by Giles Cooper; director, Dorothy Bucknall. 14 Feb - 22 March.  
HER MAJESTY'S (221 2777)  
New York Actors' Co. Programme to be announced. February 11-23.  
LA BOITE (36 1622)  
Bingo by Edward Bond; director, John Milson (courtesy the TN Company). February 1-23.  
TN COMPANY  
The Threepenny Opera by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weil; director, John Milson; members of the Queensland Youth Orchestra; conductor, Georg Tintner. With Geoff Cartwright and Sally McKenzie. Feb 22 - March 15.

CONCERTS

ADELAIDE TOWN HALL  
ABC Prom Concert with Adelaide Symphony Orchestra; conductor, D Measham; soloist, Denis Olsen. Feb 16.  
Brian May with soloist Brian Porter (violin). Programme of music from TV and film. Feb 20.  
Concert of Dvorak and Elgar; conductor, Patrick Thomas; soloist, Deborah Patton. Feb 23.  
For entries contact Edwin ReIf on 223 8610.

QUEENSLAND OPERA COMPANY  
SGIO Theatre (221 5177)  
Maria Stuart by Donizetti; director, John Thompson; designer, Mike Bridges; the Queensland Theatre Orchestra conductor Graeme Young; with Henry Howell (by arrangement with the English National Opera) Phyllis Ball, Margaret Russell, Paul Neal, Dennis White, Sally Robertson. Feb 19, 21, 23, 28 March 1.

For entries contact Don Batchelor on 356 9311.

SA THEATRE

FESTIVAL THEATRE (223 8610)  
Annie. Director, George Martin; with Jill Perryman and Hayes Gordon. Feb 1-16.  
PLAYHOUSE (51 5151)  
Find The Lady by Michael Pertwee; director, Ted Craig; designer, Shaun Gurton; with Mollie Sugden. Feb 1-23.  
THE SPACE (51 0121)  
Boy's Own Me Beth by Grahame Bond and Jim Burnett; with Grahame Bond. To February 9.

TAS THEATRE

POLYGON THEATRE (34 8018)  
The Glass Menagerie by Tennessee Williams. In rehearsal.  
TASMANIAN PUPPET THEATRE (23 7996)  
Two's A Crowd with Doug Tremlett and Rob Meldrum. To March 10. A sleight of hand magic show with a difference.

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

VIC THEATRE

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It's Only A Bit of Green Glass  
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Two's A Crowd with Doug Tremlett and Rob Meldrum. To March 10. A sleight of hand magic show with a difference.  
HOOPLA THEATRE FOUNDATION (63 4888)  
Playbox Downstairs Quadrophenia by Ted Neilsen. World Premiere; Director, Charles Tingwell; designer, Tracey Watt. From 4 Feb.  
Playbox Upstairs  
Australia Majestic by Roger Pulvers. World Premiere; Director, Malcolm Robertson. From 28 Feb.  
HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (663 3211)  
Son of Betty starring Reg Livermore; director, Peter Batey; with the Wellington Bewts Band.  
LAST LAUGH THEATRE RESTAURANT (419 6226)  
The Whittle Show. Upstairs cabaret: regularly changing show.
THEATRE

DOLPHIN THEATRE
Take Me To Your Leader with Richard Stilgoe. 23 Feb - 4 March. 
Northern Drift (Australian Premiere). Presented by Merry Livings and Alex Glasgow. 23 Feb - 15 March.

HAYMAN THEATRE, WAIT (350 7026)
Cop Out by Cliff Green; Director, Robert Faggetter. 28 Feb - 15 March.

HOLE IN THE WALL (381 2403)
Roses In Due Season by Doreen Clarke; Director, Edgar Metcalfe. 27 Feb - 15 March.

POLYGOT PUPPETS (818 1512)
Multi-cultural puppet theatre touring schools and community centres.

PRINCESS THEATRE (662 2911)
Count (ry. Victorian State Opera. 
For entries contact Les Cartwright on 781 1777.

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Catherine’s Wedding. Choreography Chrissie Parrott. 
Concerto Grosso. Choreography Charles Czany. 28 Feb.

PERTH ENTERTAINMENT CENTRE
Ballroom Dance Pageant. 25 Feb.

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6. Creator shows a respondent (7)
7. Taxi at home in this hut (5)
8. Incendiary insect? (7)
9. Celestial luminary to the East gives impolite glance (5)
10. Send a peal in confusion on the sea-front (9)
11. Hand the after-dinner drinks, they're useful when travelling (9)
12. Spoil the endless coffer for many months (7)
13. Step met with disturbance, caused storm (7)
14. A turncoat in Prince Henry's wild flowers (9)
15. These omnivores do not sound interesting (5)
16. Van is empty, but contains liqueur (5)
17. Policeman in the South East has breadth (5)
18. Worker holds in after a refusal to apply ointment (7)
19. Safe as the house in which the banquet is (5)
20. Dread terribly the ship; it's where you live (7)

Down:
1. Red hero has two points in South Sea garland (5)
2. "But ... your courage to the sticking-point, and we'll not fail" (Macbeth) (5)
3. Spirit joins spiritual partners (9)
4. Loud deed takes a side (7)
5. Chemical compound as wage for unsocial hours (7)
6. Create shows a respondent (7)
7. Taxi at home in this hut (5)
8. Incendiary insect? (7)
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