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The best of the ADELAIDE FESTIVAL OF ARTS comes to the SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

**La Cla Ca Theatre Company of Catalonia, Spain.**
In the Catalan tradition of street theatre and festivals, Mori El Merma ("Death to the Bogeyman") is a carnival of mime and dance brilliantly created with masks and giant puppets painted by Joan Miro one of the greatest artists of the 20th century.

**The Netherlands Wind Ensemble**
This foremost Dutch chamber music group of 15 musicians has an established reputation for excellence (The I Musici of Wind instruments).

**Gisela May and company in BRECHT THROUGH FOUR DECADES**
Applauded by audiences and critics in every part of the world, Gisela May, the leading actress of Brecht's own theatre, The Berliner Ensemble, is the greatest living exponent of the songs and theatre of Brecht, Weill and Dessau.

**Alexandre Lagoya guitar**
Alexandre Lagoya is one of the greatest living masters of the guitar. He is noted for playing with elegance, intimacy and great virtuosity.

**The Prague Chamber Ballet**
Pavel Smok is the distinguished director and choreographer of this highly praised ensemble of dancers from the National Theatre in Prague. The repertoire is exciting, witty and intensely varied.

**Mabou Mines DRESSED LIKE AN EGG — from the writings of Colette**
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**CONCERT HALL**
Tuesday March 4, 8.15 pm
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Children, pensioners, students: A. $5.00 B. $4.00 C. $3.00

**CONCERT HALL**
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COMMENT

Bringing the Berlin Komische Oper Ballet to Australia has been a massive undertaking. Christopher Hunt of the Adelaide Festival, saw them in Berlin and contacted Donald MacDonald of AGC Paradise, who sent off their production manager to East Germany to see what could be done. It needed a consortium of the Adelaide Festival and this major entrepreneurial group, together with the sponsorship of BP, to bring out the sixty artists and arrange for the performances of Australian symphony orchestras of Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne.

This is not just a fine company presenting an excellent version of Swan Lake. This is a version more true to Tchaikovsky's original conception than perhaps any production since its first controversial performance. The prettification by nineteenth century sensibilities, conventionalised by more than a century of standard productions, has been cleared away to reveal the heart of the work — a story of romantic passion almost desperate in its urgency. Over a long period, meticulous research into Tchaikovsky's original score, story line and intentions formed the basis for this production.

It is well known that in both their sporting and cultural activities, the Eastern Block countries subsidise to a degree unheard of in the West. We need think only of the Berliner Ensemble, set up cost no object — for Brecht; or that Tadeusz Kantor, the star of the last Adelaide Festival, has produced no more than a handful of works in twenty years.

These two producer/director/writers (along with Peter Brook, about whom more later) have worked more in line with the modus operandi of contemporary dance companies than that of drama companies, in that they have been totally responsible, with their respective performers, for the creation of original works.

In this country, too, we notice that it is the dance companies who have taken the lead in generating performance works from within the group, and allowing themselves the time, as opposed to the constant turn-over of product, that makes this possible. In the Sydney Dance Company and the Australian Dance Theatre of Adelaide, both artistic directors — respectively Graeme Murphy and Jonathon Taylor — are also the major choreographers for their companies. Their works are specifically created with and for their own performers and take new strides not only in content, but also in form. Both choreographers seek inspiration from and representation of the Australian life they see around them — viz Murphy's Romours and Signatures and Taylor's Incident at Bull Creek — but also embrace universal themes as in Murphy's full length ballet, Poppies, on the life of Cocteau, or Taylor's extravaganza Wildstars.

In the theatre world a major practitioner of this approach in the West is Peter Brook, also to appear at Adelaide. Again there is the mix of the particular — namely Jarry's Ubu, though scripted, absolutely a performance piece in itself — and the general — The Iik and Conference of the Birds, which have been performed in Africa and Iran. There is also a deeper coherence in that a major aim is to discover a universal theatrical language. Brook is relevant here, for when the Australia Council's Limited Life scheme was first being aired, Bob Adams, Director of the Theatre Board, saw Conference of the Birds particularly as the model for the kind of enterprise the scheme would fund. As such, the brief was extensive in its implications, the funding only at best adequate and too short term, and the responsibility on artists involved enormous.

The one offering we have had so far seems to have sadly missed the mark. Perhaps putting all the eggs for this kind of work in one basket is mistaken. Rather the larger theatre companies (and Sumner's Atheneum 2 at the MTC may well be a step in this direction) should also find some way of accommodating group-created, performance-based work into their operation. The omniverous requirements of constant public performance should be set aside in this area.

Of course time and money are essential, but it is increasingly being noticed that our theatre scene is presently becalmed. If some new incentives are not found, either in this way, or in Jack Hiberd's idea of breaking down the monoliths into smaller, more vital groups, not only is there little sign of fresh wind to carry us out of the doldrums, but our big, subsidised theatre companies will continue their entrenched as service industries in the leisure field.

Asking for more money at a time of economic recession may appear naive, but public monies should not only be a recommendation of culture but also in form. Both theatre and posts to Theatre Australia. Cheques should be made payable to Theatre Australia. Cheques should be made payable to Theatre Australia Publications Ltd. 80 Elizabeth Street, Mayfield, NSW 2304. Subscriptions rates are page 61.

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Adelaide Festival Fringe activities, still collectively grouped under the curious misnomer, Focus, seem set to provide a varied and inexpensive alternative to the official programme. An early press release gives details already of over thirty events, grouped under the headings Dance, Drama, Street Performers, Music, Galleries and Exhibitions. And, since it is in the nature of Fringe offerings often to be last minute, spontaneous affairs, one imagines there will be more...

The scope is far-reaching. In drama alone there are such widely differing productions as Hancock’s Last Half Hour, Orton’s Crimes Of Passion, Congreve’s Way Of the World, late-night revue and a new play from Adelaide playwright, Anthony Thorogood; and this only on the local front. From interstate come Victoria’s WEST Community Theatre with rock musical Riff Raff.

Performance Iliad from Melbourne University, and the Flying Trapeze troupe who are to join with Adelaide groups in cabaret. Topping the Drama bill are the Cambridge Footlighters from UK’s Cambridge University, whose reputation goes before them, having spawned in the past the now legendary Beyond The Fringe programme, as well as other well-known names in British comedy.

Ian Spink, described as one of Australia’s most exciting young choreographers, is visiting the Festival in an official capacity to work for State Opera Company’s Death In Venice. His company, Spink Inc, will present “26 solos and Other Dances” for Focus. Alongside him in the areas of dance and mime are several groups and individuals from Adelaide and interstate. Street performers range from dance to puppetry and clowning. Sue Vile.

Carl Morrow, Graeme Murphy and Paul Saliba of the Sydney Dance Co.

Graeme Murphy and his newly named Sydney Dance Company are back in action after a five week holiday period boasting some exciting new talent for 1980. Dynamic Australian dancer Paul Saliba has returned home after two years with the Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance in New York to join Murphy’s company as dancer/teacher/choreographer. His first new work for the company will form part of the Sydney Opera House season which starts on May 22.

After seven years with the much acclaimed Stuttgart Ballet in Europe and elevation to soloist status, dancer Carl Morrow opted to return to Australia with his new wife Dorothea. After the Stuttgart’s successful New York season he headed for Sydney to see the Australian Festival of Dance where companies around Australia were on display at the Sydney Opera House. Murphy and the SDC performed two works at the Festival; Signatures and Sheherezade, both of which helped to achieve a new level of popularity for the company during 1979 and reconfirmed Carl Morrow’s suspicion that Murphy’s was the company for him.

The SDC’s season in the Drama Theatre for 1980 has been expanded to eight weeks with fifty-two performances comprising three programmes by the best Australian choreographers available, including Barry Moreland, an Australian resident in London whose works best known to Australian audiences include Prodigal Son for London Festival Ballet and Trocadero for the Australian Ballet.

The season includes the premiere of Graeme Murphy’s Daphnis and Chloe and Viridian, using Richard Meale’s beautiful score of the same name.

Eleanor Brickhill and Betsy Gregory in Spink Inc’s "26"
Richard Bradshaw will be creating the Circus by five puppeteers working from underneath. It is not a puppet show for children; "you'll laugh, you'll cry, you'll leave your children at home and you'll be glad you did," they say.

Members of the Circus include such characters as Trevor Wittgenstein, lately of Dresden, Professor of Applied Dyslexia, with a whale ventriloquist act; there's Brian the Giraffe King; a white cockatoo that sings Gilbert and Sullivan; and Morton Barmann, who has an uncanny resemblance to a certain prime minister, is a Master of the Ethnic Arts and has a koala act.

And with all this is music, produced by a group of four who will make up a jug band, euphonium, guitar and vocals, fiddle, mandolin and percussion.

The Combined Talents of puppeteer Richard Bradshaw, cartoonist Patrick Cook and singer/songwriter Robyn Archer are about to launch Captain Lazar and his Earthbound Circus on the world. They are inviting audiences to "gasp at the spectacular cast of dozens" in their puppet cabaret for the Marionette Theatre of Australia, which is premiering at the Adelaide Festival in The Space from March 10, and will then go to the Sydney Opera House Recording Hall for a month from March 19. If all goes well, Melbourne will see the show later, in June.

Captain Lazar will be well known to readers of the National Times where he sprung from the inspired pen of Patrick Cook. In puppet form his Earthbound Circus will be created by five puppeteers working from underneath. It is not a puppet show for children; "you'll laugh, you'll cry, you'll leave your children at home and you'll be glad you did," they say.

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Nancye Hayes is off to the Adelaide Festival this month with the Sydney Theatre Company. And what's the show?

"Over recent months when asked what I was doing next, the reply 'I'm Getting My Act Together And Taking It On The Road' has usually been greeted with 'Well, I always wondered why you didn't have an act. Where are you taking it?' The 'Act' in question is the subject of a musical by Gretchen Cryer and Nancy Ford currently playing its second year at downtown Circle in the Square, New York. At a performance I attended during my recent trip, it was enthusiastically received and engendered a lively discussion afterwards between cast and audience.

"When Richard Wherrett decided to include a musical in his first Sydney Theatre Company season I was delighted that more and more music theatre was beginning to take its place in the repertoire of our state companies. Musicals, on a large scale, are an expensive proposition, but the small-scale production such as Act lends itself to consideration. It has a cast of eight including the musicians who play a very active part in the show.

"With these new opportunities opening up for the presentation of musical plays I hope it will encourage the creation of original material to place Australian Music Theatre in the healthy state our plays now enjoy. Indeed, with the current export of our productions to London and New York, it would appear that at last we are getting our act together and taking it on the road."
As We Are... We can't alter the lights, they're all set up for Oklahoma next week..." said a stage manager in a Western Australian country town to actress Beverley Dunn. Now after a tour of five states Beverley will present her one-woman show, As We Are, at the Melbourne Theatre Company's Athenaeum 2, starting on March 31.

Beverley has made an extensive search through diaries, journals, letters and stories by Australian writers and devised As We Are to show the variety of the Australian people, from the early settlers to contemporary men and women.

"In choosing the material I have three criteria," Beverley said. "It has to entertain me, it has to move me, to make me think, laugh or cry. And does it have something to say about us as Australians?"

Using the writings of Australians like Rachael Henning, aboriginal poet Jack Davis, Georgina McCrae, Mary Gilmore, Patsy Adam-Smith, Nancy Keesing, Beth Parsons, Tom Hungerford and Mary McConnell, Beverley has woven a humorous, moving two-hour entertainment.

As We Are received its premiere at the Festival of Perth in March 1978 and Beverley has subsequently toured the production to Queensland, Tasmania, the Northern Territory, Victoria country centres and Western Australia.

As We Are is devised by Beverley Dunn and directed by Don Mackay.

The Music Hall opened its twenty-fifth production on Friday February 8; a re-run of East Lynne, their first and most popular show. This production is directed by Alton Harvey who also plays the villainous Sir Francis Levison.

But off stage there is a different villain involved in the affairs of the Music Hall, with whom they seem to be so unpopular that there is a distinct possibility that the show may have to close for the last time.

In 1978 there was a change in the Theatres and Public Halls Act which came to include the Music Hall, who had previously operated under the aegis of the Department of Justice. As the very first theatre restaurant, the only way they could get around regulations when they started in 1961 was to operate as a restaurant with a floor show.

Following such incidents as a fire at the Savoy Hotel, Kings Cross, theatre restaurants came under the Theatres and Public Halls Act for the first time and became subject to the more stringent safety regulations. Places like Bunratty Castle and the Manly Music Loft are also having difficulties, and the Killara 680 Theatre had to close some eighteen months ago.

George Miller at the Music Hall has done an enormous amount to comply with the requests of the Department of Services and the North Sydney Council. He has reduced his patrons to approximately four hundred; he has modified productions to fit the requirements, with the result that East Lynne is a much smaller production than we have been used to; there is no longer a revolve and indeed the whole stage area has been reduced from 100 to 50 square metres and is enclosed on all sides except the audience's in a "fire check" capsule. Added to this the dressing rooms have been altered and two fire escapes fitted to the theatre.

George Miller used to run a newspaper called The Northern News, which gave a good deal of exposure to the dealings of the North Sydney Council, including the notorious St Remo affair. He is now afraid that personal animosity is rearing its head in the shape of unreasonable requests, such as that the Music Hall should not have opened on February 8 on pain of Equity Court injunction, in spite of the fact that other demands are currently being met.

Miller has gone ahead, and intends to continue, but if such action continues he and his wife will regretfully sell, or close down, the theatre and rejoin his daughter in London.

If this should happen the hissing of the villain would become something other than the delightful entertainment it has been for the past twenty-five years at Neutral Bay.
Trucking into the Eighties...The Riverina Trucking Company has recently appointed Peter Barclay as its Artistic Director for 1980. Barclay has worked for Nimrod and the Hunter Valley Theatre Company.

"We are in the midst of planning our first season. It will reflect our intention to expand the progressive image of RTC through a commitment to new writing. We are extremely excited to be premiering an Australian piece by Mick Rodger about Dan (Mad Dog) Morgan — the picaresque figure from the colonial past of Southern New South Wales which will play in Wagga and then tour the region for three weeks with the assistance of the Arts Council."

Barclay recognises the importance of community involvement in regional theatre: "Besides maintaining our in-house activities we want to move into the streets and capture the imagination of the local community. We intend to start classes and have just appointed Gordon Beattie as Community Director. Gordon will begin a programme of community projects aligned to regional festivals and events such as the Wagga Agricultural Show."

At the moment RTC is negotiating tours in the region, and eventually hopes to find an opening for a short season in Sydney. The determination to take theatre throughout the state, and a commitment to school curriculum performance means that Polygon necessarily avoids large-scale productions in favour of portable ensemble pieces. Thus previous offerings have been "chamber" plays, musicals and theatre restaurant: though 1980 will see Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead and The Rocky Horror Show in Hobart. Both R and G and Glass Menagerie are HSC texts, as was 1979's She Stoops To Conquer. Polygon sees its educational role as being a vital one.

Don Gay hopes that future developments may include the employment of an administrator and possibly also a designer. He intends to continue expanding the programme and touring as much as possible (perhaps interstate as well as at home) and to perform material by local writers. His continuing nightmares include the lack of suitable performing spaces throughout the state; and naturally, the balancing of income and expenditure. Grateful as he is that TAAB have stepped in, he is vitally aware of the need to supplement their assistance from other sources. Bruce Cornelius.

Polygon Theatre company, based in Hobart, began its 1980 programme with The Golden Pathway Annual, touring Tasmania, and the second production, The Glass Menagerie which will also be seen in Hobart and on tour, opens in early April.

A healthy subsidy from the Tasmanian Arts Advisory Board for 1980 has been welcomed with relief by Polygon's director, Don Gay, who has steered the company since its formation in 1976. The subsidy means that Polygon is at last able to establish itself on a professional basis (albeit a modest one).

It is now virtually the only Tasmanian theatre company offering regular paid work to actors. Despite this, the limited population (accentuated by the northward migration of the aspiring young) can make casting problematic. Rehearsals quite often have to be fitted around filming, radio and television recording schedules, as the core of experienced actors in Hobart is small and they continually work across-media.

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Apologies to Melbourne photographer, David Parker, who unfortunately failed to credit for his superb cover shot of Noel Ferrier and Frederick Parslow on our Christmas edition.
Nimrod Upstairs
from Wednesday 12 March

THE HOUSE OF THE DEAF MAN

John Anthony King
director John Bell
designer Kim Carpenter
Paul Bertram, Brian Fitzsimmons, Joseph Furst,
Vivienne Garrett, Deborah Kennedy,
Brian McDermott, Kerry Walker

Nimrod Downstairs
until Sunday 23 March

Nimrod Downstairs
from Wednesday 16 April

TRAITORS

Stephen Sewell
director Neil Armfield
designer Bill Haycock
Judi Farr, Michele Fawdon, Colin Friels,
Max Gillies, Noni Hazlehurst, Barry Otto

Nimrod Downstairs
from Wednesday 23 April

PETER BROOK’S C.I.C.T. COMPANY

14 PERFORMANCES ONLY!

UBU (in French)
Alfred Jarry
director Peter Brook
8, 9, 10, 14 April at 8pm.

THE IK (in English)
based on Colin Turnbull’s book
The Mountain People
director Peter Brook
11 April at 8pm,
12 April at 2.30pm and 8pm.

THE CONFERENCE OF THE BIRDS (in English)
Dramatised by Jean-Claude Carriere after
Farid Ud-Din Attar’s 12th century Persian poem
director Peter Brook
16, 17, 18 April at 8pm,
19 April at 2.30pm and 8pm.

The tour by Peter Brook and C.I.C.T. has been made possible by the generous assistance of the
Association Française d’Action Artistique, the Australia Council and by arrangement with the Adelaide Festival of the Arts Inc.

Nimrod Street Theatre Company Limited. Artistic Directors Neil Armfield John Bell Kim Carpenter Ken Horler. Acting General Manager Sue Hill
Veteran actress and director Colleen Clifford's highly successful production last year of Goldsmith's She Stoops To Conquer has earned her an Australia Council grant to help in the presentation of a Restoration comedy, Sir John Vanbrugh's The Relapse, or Virtue In Danger. First staged at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, in 1697, it is now to have a four weeks season at the Cell Block Theatre, opening March 19. Cast includes Babs McMillan, John Warnock, John Fitzgerald, Frank Garfield and Michael Beecher.

On which of his own plays he liked best: "Edward My Son."

On whether he was disappointed by the film version of this: "Not at all. The money was lovely. But Spencer Tracey, who starred in the movie, came to my dressing room after watching the last night of the stage production and said: 'I'm afraid I've made a cock-up of your play. Nobody told me it was a comedy.'"

I was delighted to be told by Harold Jones that at the boarding house he and his wife, Ensembte Theatre general manager Rosemary Jones, stayed at in Stratford-on-Avon, each room had, instead of the usual Gideon Bible, a volume of Shakespeare's plays. Their landlord, an enthusiastic booster for the Royal Shakespeare Company, was nevertheless a perceptive critic. The production of The Tempest they saw was every bit as disappointing as she had told them.

A scoop is a scoop, as any honest scribe will tell you. Like, for instance, Maria Prerauer's artful revelation in The Australian — two days before Lord Mayor Nelson Meers' official announcement at the Theatre Royal — that Doreen Warburton and the Q Theatre had won the Sydney Theatre Critics Circle Award for 1979. This was unexpected acknowledgement of the Circle's importance, because naughty Marietta from the start opposed the National Critics Circle, refused to join it, attacked and ridiculed it on every possible occasion, and gloated when withdrawal of Australian Council funding killed it off. I mean, how sincere can you get?

Regrettably, a member of the Circle must have been indiscreet, but no such leakage marred the announcement of Sydney's other major award, the seventh annual trophy presented by The Glugs, a fun lunch club of showbiz oriented citizens. Decided by secret ballot, none knew the result till I woke up one morning to a letter from a slate held by a prompter off-screen.

None of these writers has had a commercial success, even back in the days when commercial theatre was a livelier proposition. They have made it only in fringe or subsidised companies. Even David Williamson's appearances in commercial houses have been in subsidised theatre productions.

Hummler said that for today's theatre intellectuals, popularity and quality are hardly synonymous, despite the fact that in the history of theatre most great plays were written for popular audiences. He added: "Serious' playwrights have always been leery of popular approval. If Sam Shepard woke up one morning to discover he'd written a Broadway hit, one feels certain he'd be one guilt-ridden playwright.
SPOTLIGHT

Sideshow Alley

By Jill Sykes

It's like one of those excuses for a lottery: fill in the letters to name one of the most exciting female theatrical talents in Australia... R - B - N. Except that there are two answers — Robin Nevin and Robyn Archer. So the prize would have to be a ticket to Songs From Sideshow Alley in which they both appear.

This is a late-night show commissioned by the Adelaide Festival. It has been written by Robyn Archer, who considers it a step between cabaret and a more substantial form of theatrical writing, which she is already tackling in the form of a play about Lorenzo de Medici.

For Robin Nevin, a straight actress whose many outstanding performances include the title role in A Cheery Soul and Blanche in A Streetcar Named Desire, it is a chance to use her singing voice. (Don't be fooled when she turns up on TV with a rich soprano as Nellie Melba: "I've just got used to miming other people's voices and I'm being asked to burst forth with my own").

The idea for Sideshow Alley came to Archer at the Intercontinental Hotel in Dacca, Bangladesh, when she was on tour last year with Jerry Wesley, one of the two musicians involved in the new show. "It was after the gig, about midnight, with the curfew around us and the soldiers parading up and down at the bottom of the hotel... But the elements must have been there for ages."

"What I was looking for was something which would involve more drama than Kold Komfort Kaffee, more actual acting, so there had to be some sort of story. I wanted to write it for Robin — just as Kold Komfort evolved because I wanted to work with John Gaden — so it was essential to think of some sort of human drama between two women.

"At the same time, I thought it would be interesting to look at two older women. I suppose it is as you get older yourself that you realise the value of talking to older women about their experiences.

"And then the carnival thing — I knew the odd carnie because Dad was in showbusiness. I remember the wife of an old vaudevillian in Adelaide called Pearl or Trixie or Dollie or something like that. And every time we went down to Glenelg to see the summer carnival, it was always quite a buzz for Dad to say hello. She would stand there with her pockets and a fag hanging out of her mouth, a rough old sheilah."

These general ideas sent Archer digging back further, not only into her own memories, but those of Bob Hudson's wife Kerry and of Jim Sharman, both of whom were born into sideshow alley. She remembered the traumatic childhood experience of finding her local sideshow attractions stripped of their familiar "freaks" — the pigmies and the half-man-half-woman — and their steady decline, since then. From Kerry and Jim, she built up a background of the alley people's determination to get their children out and educate them for something better, of the camaraderie and of the resentment when someone pulled out, the feeling that they were letting down an area of showbusiness that was all too quickly being replaced by pinball machines.

From these, and anecdotes her mother told her of young women in war time, she has sketched the

Robyn Archer
characters of Pearl and Trixie, two sideshow alley veterans in their late fifties. They were at their peak in the 1940s, in the days of anklet socks and canoodling in the dark corners of the alley, and their memories of that time still shape their outlook and appearance. In the Adelaide Festival production, directed by Pam Brighton, Archer plays Trixie, who is a bit butch and sees herself as totally

independent. But in reality, she is less radical and more dependent than Pearl (played by Nevin), who did the normal conventional thing of getting married and having children.

"Trixie is more the sentimentalist, aligning herself with the men of the show but having none of that admirable female rationale that some of those wonderful women do have. Pearl is actually the red-ragger," Archer explains. "Trixie is louder-mouthed, but much more the conservative."

Pearl's decision to leave sideshow alley sets the structure of the entertainment, which is basically a two-hander for the women with imaginary crowds and two real musicians, Jerry Wesley and Louis McManus, who will play a selection of violin, accordion, bass, guitar and percussion between them. They talk nostalgically about the past — bursting into song about a dozen times — and despairingly of the future for sideshow alley people. They canvass the reasons for the collapse of their business, pointing incriminating fingers at an anonymous Royal Agricultural Society that could be the one running the Royal Show in any of our capital cities.

Nevin, only one of the show's songs had been heard publicly — the "Backyard Abortion Waltz." This had been well received with the encouraging comment that it was taking women's issues at a contemporary level, but expressing them in music that sounded as though it was from the forties. "And it does depend on that a bit, as it is taking our view on a situation those women wouldn't have a view on."

Archer had put the script away for two months in order to come to it as a performer rather than the author. "I don't know how I would feel about going into a two-hander when the other person had written it. I want Pam Brighton to take it as a director, almost as if I hadn't written the script. I'd like to be as critical of it as I would be of anyone else's work."

They were both looking forward to being directed by a woman for the first time. But would the sex of the director really make a difference?

"I don't know whether it is important or not," says Archer. "But it might turn out to be very interesting, Pam providing the kind of sympathy for the material that a male director wouldn't have."

Nevin expands that view: "That is a problem I have come up against a lot in the theatre: working with men who simply don't have the understanding of the roles that have been written for the women. It can be very difficult. They tend not to trust the actresses — certainly in my experience, that has been the case — and I usually feel very strongly that I know. I just want to show them what I feel about a character, and they then can decide, but they tend to leap in at an early stage of rehearsal and tell you what to do."

The production of Songs From Sideshow Alley has been honed down to depend on its people — no fancy sets or elaborate staging effects to go astray. Brian Thomson is providing an all-purpose backcloth, Anna Senior is finding the costumes, Jamie Lewis is doing the lighting.

Archer looks on herself and Nevin as a vaudeville team getting their act together — and she is determined to increase her knowledge of straight acting in the process: "I haven't got time to go to NIDA, though I need to..."
**Neil Fitzpatrick talks to Ray Stanley**

Neil Fitzpatrick, appearing in the Melbourne Theatre Company's production of Pinter's *Betrayal* since last September, would surely qualify for inclusion on any short list of this country's top actors. Despite lack of media exposure (he hates being interviewed), as a regular performer in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide, he is better known generally than many whose work is restricted to one city.

Fitzpatrick is an actor whose work always satisfies, is rarely seen in anything less than "quality", who conscientiously builds up each characterisation into something realistically original (without aid of disguises) and never resorts to mannerisms.

His professional career began in 1956, playing opposite Dulcie Gray in *Tea And Sympathy* for the late Garnet H Carroll. He then resisted another offer from the Carroll management, preferring to remain in Melbourne for some two years, leaning about radio work (an actor's bread and butter in those days).

Next came a part in J C Williamson Theatres' production of *Not In The Book* with Edwin Styles and Sophie Stewart and, apart from a Phillip Street revue, Fitzpatrick has not worked in commercial theatre since.

"It's mainly because the commercial theatre became of less importance to the working actor," he says, meaning John Sumner's Union Theatre Repertory Company was employing professional actors and the Trust Players had been formed.

He worked in the fourth season of Sumner's company, joined the Trust Players (he is somewhat peeved none of the obituary notices on the Trust Players' occupancy of it), and also did another stint in 1961-62 with the UTRC. In 1964 he went to England where he worked at the National Theatre.

Returning to this country in 1969, Fitzpatrick has since played mainly with the Old Tote, Nimrod, MTC and State Theatre Company of South Australia.

It is in contemporary plays rather than the classics that this actor has made his mark and when, despite his playing Parolles in Tyrone Guthrie's production of *All's Well That Ends Well* for the MTC, I pointed out he seemingly had attempted few of the major Shakespearean roles, it was to discover that he was disillusioned in this respect.

He was Horatio to Tim Elliott's *Hamlet* for the Old Tote soon after returning, and says the Science Theatre was a terrible venue. Two years later, as Brutus in *Julius Caesar*, he found the acoustics of the Sir John Clancy Auditorium far from satisfactory. Topping this came his *Macbeth* in an experimental production of Rex Cramphorn's which, after much energy and soul-searching, was greeted by jeers from school children at performance after performance.

Then John Bell approached him to play Malvolio in his production of *Twelfth Night* for the Nimrod and, because he has a high regard for Bell, Fitzpatrick accepted. His performance was modelled on silent film comic Buster Keaton; designer Kim Carpenter had come up with a photograph of Keaton, and the role was taken from there.

Fitzpatrick admits he would like to play in Chekhov (he never has), Shaw (early in his career he was in *Man And Superman* and *Candida*) and Ibsen (he did play the middle-aged Peer Gynt in the STCSA production).

He admits to a great satisfaction at appearing in Australian plays.

"In *The Department* it was a revelation to just stand on stage in a play which really didn't appeal to me greatly on the page...To have the challenge of doing a part which I didn't feel suited for, to push myself into a shape I didn't think was me, was wonderful in itself. But then to stand in front of an audience and just feel them open up totally!"

Productions of local plays which have a successful premiere in one city, Fitzpatrick feels should be seen by the rest of the country.

"I am so sick and tired of having seen three or four different productions of the same Australian play happening in eighteen months all over Australia. I know economically it works out that way, but to me it's a dissipation of the growth of the Australian theatre in toto — that is, actors, directors and writers.

Much could be done, Fitzpatrick feels, to have more national interest in the theatre, pointing out that even actors frequently are unaware of what is happening in other cities or what fellow actors are doing.

"Maybe once every two years there could be some sort of grant for a company of absolutely the best available players from each state. They would have to be prepared sometimes to sacrifice their home lives to be part of such a project, to join the top actors in each state in a company for two or three interesting plays, presented in each of the capital cities around Australia for six months — like opera and ballet — as a showcase."

Many people will certainly agree there is a need for such a company. And there is little doubt it would have to include actor Neil Fitzpatrick.
By Katherine Brisbane

In contrast to the brooding air of the rehearsal room, the atmosphere in the nearby administrator's office of the Sydney Theatre Company's new premises in Dowling Street, Potts Point, was jovial. It was the lunch break of Simon Gray's Close of Play, and we were waiting for Frank Thring. He was in the wardrobe, we were told, and might never come out.

This proved untrue. Quite soon he emerged, in his characteristic black shirt and gold chain.

"What on earth," I asked accusingly, "possessed you to come and play in dreadful Sydney?"

"I thought you'd never ask," he replied. "As one of our national critics you will find it very interesting that this is the first time I have actually been asked to play in Sydney. I've worked here, of course, in productions for J C Williamson and Garnet Carroll; but these have been touring productions. No one has had enough about every aspect of casting, design and so on. And, one is delighted to say, that one has given one's best performances under Sumner's very, very strict direction."

Ruth: Which is why has he remained so successful for so long. I think Richard Wherrett is going to give this sort of feeling to this company — I'm quite convinced. But you are right in saying in the past it hasn't happened all that much. In Sydney, anyway. Frank: It's been happening with me in Melbourne for twenty five years with Sumner, who is, as you know, Queen Evil.

"May I quote you, Frank?" I asked.

"Of course. Haven't you read my preface to that macabre book on the MTC by Geoffrey Hutton? Sumner is really a remarkable man."

Frank Thring is one of the rare exceptions in the Australian theatre — an actor who has held his status as star in the workaday world of company life; who during the 50s and 60s when London and Hollywood were still the goals of every actor, managed to hold his place in both cities while preferring to make his home in Melbourne.

I tried to talk to him about his Gaev in the MTC's The Cherry Orchard — one of the most touching performances I can remember. "It wasn't to be sneezed at," he said momentarily contemplative; and then, "And you'll be delighted to hear that I'm wearing the same wig in Close of Play. I thought, everybody's bored with the shaven head and if I'm going to sit in the middle of the stage all night, let's have Frank Thring with hair!"

So we talked of the Simon Gray play instead. His role is not that of a villain this time — "in fact I'm absolutely charming, considering I have no dialogue..." He plays the imposing but silent father figure whose presence draws each member of the family in turn into self-confession. "It's not an easy play. There's nobody quite sure what it's all about. So consequently we all bring our own versions: rehearsal sessions are very argumentative."

I asked Ruth Cracknell what she thought about Simon Gray. She plays the adopted mother of the family.

"Simon Gray is writing something which is terribly, terribly painful, not only in a personal way but in a national. It must be very painful, I think, to be a writer in England now — and Britain is turning out some amazing plays — because it is reflected in their work. Every comedy, black or otherwise, has this edge of pain to it."

"What do you think the play's about?"

"I think," said Ruth, "that it's all about deprivation."

"Oh," said Frank, archly. "Is that what you think?"

"It's all about love and the way it has never been given at the right moment."

"There, you see," said Frank, "why we fight all the time?"

When we passed the rehearsal room, the director Rodney Fisher and the rest of the cast were buried in armchairs, brooding again. Fisher has just returned from meeting Gray in London. He did not reveal to me what secrets he had learnt there.
By Director, Christopher Hunt

Theatre dominates the programme of the 1980 Adelaide Festival, a contrast with recent years in which music has tended to dominate festival programme planning.

There are twenty-one new production festival’s twenty-three days (March 7-29), and that doesn’t include seventeen ballets, two operas, a variety of late-night cabarets and many other elements that are at least marginally connected with the theatre.

The programme is deliberately balanced evenly between Australian productions and overseas visiting companies and soloists. Attention has so far, perhaps inevitably, been placed very much on the foreign imports, with the first Australian visit of Peter Brook’s Paris-based company as a special highlight. But the balance has been planned to display both sides. The touchstone in choosing which companies to invite from abroad (apart from the fundamental question of availability) has been companies that have performing conditions parallel to those that may be found in Australia, so that the ideas and approaches of each may have the most direct possible relevance to theatre in Australia today. As with the rest of the festival’s programme, a second element has been to try to find productions which would be rewarding for those who are professionally involved in theatre in this country, but not so esoteric as to be meaningless to a general audience.

Adelaide drama and youth productions are important in the festival therefore, but the most important events for theatre-goers are likely to be the remainder of the drama programme. On the native side there are new productions from the Melbourne Theatre Company — Alex Buzo’s new play Big River, set on the River Murray at the turn of the century and reflecting specifically the underlying theme of the whole festival, which is setting out to explore through the arts. Aspects of Change and Man’s reaction to Change; and the Sydney Theatre Company will present a feminist musical I’m Getting My Act Together and Taking It On The Road. This gritty rock operetta, which was one of the unexpected success stories of New York during the past two years, take place in a cabaret club somewhere in America where the heroine Heather is celebrating her 39th birthday and the final rehearsals for her come-back after years of retirement since her early success as a middle-of-the-road singing star of the 60’s. But in the meantime she has become a troubled but determined supporter of Women’s Lib and the play portrays what happens during the rehearsal when her former lover and road-manager, who has set up her come-back tour, hears and is appalled by the new songs she proposes to sing.

Two productions are being presented by the Festival itself: Robyn Archer’s first full-length show in which she has written songs, lyrics and dialogue. It is a two-woman show which Robyn Archer will perform with Robin Nevin, directed by Pam Brighton. Set in the present against a backdrop of a seedy fairground alley, Nevin and Archer portray two women who have worked opposite each other for forty years.

The second Festival production is the much-discussed Australian premiere of Tom Stoppard and Andre Previn’s “play for actors and orchestra” Every Good Boy Deserves Favour. An example of Stoppard’s dazzling wit EGBDF also reveals that strong current of social and political protest that runs through all his work, however often it is concealed by the surface pyrotechnics.

For the first time two of Adelaide’s alternative theatre companies are included in the official programme of the festival, and both will present new works commissioned for the occasion: Troupe, at the Red Shed, have a new work by David Allen and Doreen Clarke called Coppin and Company, a critical and entertaining look at the origins of commercial theatre in Australia which revolves around the theatrical empire that Coppin, 19h century actor and entrepreneur, bequeathed to J C Williamson; and the Stage Company will present a new
musical by Ken Ross with Brian Debnam directing. *Lindsay and his Push* is a portrait of the life and times of Norman Lindsay; it will open in the new Price Hall Theatre in the Centre for Performing Arts where the Stage Company is to be resident drama company.

Adelaide's State Theatre Company will, as in the past, present two major new productions in their home, the Playhouse Theatre in the Festival Centre beside the Torrens Lake. Colin George has gone back to the earliest sources of European drama to create a four-hour spectacle based on the Wakefield Mystery Plays, that astonishing cycle of irreverent, yet profound dramas that developed out of English medieval traditions of street theatre and continued to be performed through until the disapproval of the Anglican government of Elizabeth I ended the run just 400 years ago.

The State Theatre Company's second production reflects another major aspect of Festival planning: throughout the three weeks there is to be a sequence of productions specially for children, with the Scott Theatre on the campus of Adelaide University given over entirely to young people's performances. The STC as their contribution to this side of the festival is presenting Carlo Gozzi's *King Stag*, updated by Nick Enright. A classic 18th century mixture of Commedia dell' Arte and fairy tale, *King Stag* is set in the mythical land of Serendip, and will be designed by Richard Roberts with Tony Strachan and Edwin Hodgeman joining members of the Magpie Company in both schools matiness and evening family performances.

In the Scott Theatre the young people's programme runs for the full three weeks of the festival, opening with the Australian premiere of Peter Maxwell Davies' opera *The Two Fiddlers* which Davies wrote in 1978 for performances entirely by children, both on stage and in the pit. It is directed by Helmut Bakaitis of St Martin's Youth Arts Centre in Melbourne, and the production designer is self-styled former wizz'kid Nigel Triffitt.

The Scott's second week offers what is probably the first visit ever to Australia by an adult theatre company specialising solely in performances for young people, the French company Theatre des Jeunes Annees, with a fable *The Lions of Sand* (Les Lions de Sable) that explores through the formalised manners of Grand-Guignol the way in which children are conditioned in early life to accept the traditional role-playing of Breadwinner-father and Housewife-mother, and yet manages to be humorous while concealing its didactic content.

The last week in the Scott presents two Australian plays, both given by the Melbourne St Martin's Youth Arts Centre company; Michael Mitchener directs *Zig and Zag Follies*, a show for small children based on the television characters of the late '50s; and Helmut Bakaitis directs *Cain's Hand*, a winner of the recent Goethe Institute play competition, which explores for teenage audiences the problems of boredom in suburbia in Australia (or any other urban environment for that matter) when fantasy can all too dangerously turn into attempted reality as teenagers seek for imagined thrills to enliven dead weekends.

Finally, on the Australian side, there is a new show from Patrick Cook and the Marionette Theatre of Australia directed by Richard Bradshaw. *Captain Lazar and his Earthbound Circus* is a savagely funny political satire that is quite definitely not the children-love-puppets kind of theatre with which marionette theatre is too often confused.

So to the overseas content, headed most obviously by the first Australian visit of Peter Brook's Paris-based company, the Centre for International Research. Brook needs no introduction to serious theatre-goers to whom he has been an all-too-unattainable legend for the past twenty years. But it is surprising perhaps that the vast majority of the public know little about this pivotal figure in twentieth century theatre, and the chance to see three of his
recent productions: in Adelaide they play in a disused quarry, typical of Brook’s determination to get away from conventional theatre surroundings and reactions. The CICT will present Brook’s version of Ubu, a compilation from the first two of the Ubu trilogy; this will be given in French with a liberal sprinkling of English that should give non-French speaking audiences all the clues they need to follow the ludicrous antics of Pere Ubu. Their second production, The Ik, justly celebrated in theatre folklore, should (like the final production) have an overwhelming impact in the starkly beautiful surroundings of the quarry. Based on Colin Turnbull’s book The Mountain People, The Ik concerns the total disintegration of an African tribe who have been denied their traditional existence as hunters and left to starve. It is a frightening parable for our times.

Finally, Brook brings his most recent production, that is also in some senses his oldest, since it is a theme that has both guided his search for theatrical reality for a generation and stands as a metaphor for his search for Truth. The Conference of the Birds, which was premiered at the 1979 Avignon Festival, depicts with wondrous beauty and power an epic and hazardous journey undertaken by a congress of birds whose flight symbolises the obstacles that beset the human soul in its unending search for ultimate truth. The title and origin of the piece stems from the epic poem of the 12th century Persian mystic Farid Uddin Attar.

If Brook’s three productions are sure to steal much of the theatrical thunder of the festival, the other overseas productions are in fact no less interesting. The nearest of them to more-or-less conventional theatre is the Acting Company of New York, now the resident dramatic troupe at the new theatre in the Kennedy Centre in Washington DC. Founded by John Houseman, the Acting Company is the only permanent touring repertory company in the United States, and has been the breeding ground for numerous distinguished theatre figures in the States. Mainly drawn from former students of the Juilliard School of Drama, the company will give two productions in Adelaide as part of their Australian tour. One of these, a horrifying modern-dress, punk-oriented version of Webster’s violent drama The White Devil, will be seen only in Adelaide. Directed by Michael Kahn, it is sure to cause one of the Festival’s customary outbursts from the conservative elements of the city’s population, though the relevance of its sceptic view of society is of course made all the more pointed by transferring its time to the present without, however, altering a word of the original text. The second Acting Company production will be by Roumanian director Liviu Ciulei, who is remembered in Australia for his one previous production here, a notable Lower Depths in Sydney in 1977. He has chosen a superb vehicle for his own special brand of theatrical inventiveness. Paul Foster’s surrealist drama Elizabeth I, in which numerous scenes hover between reality and imagination as a troupe of itinerant actors prepare to present a play about Elizabeth.

The two remaining festival offerings from overseas are both closely linked to the most recent developments in theatre both in Europe and the USA. From New York comes Mabou Mines, perhaps the most extraordinary of all the off-off-Broadway companies. Their production of Dressed Like An Egg, based on the writings of Colette, reflects both the company’s origins as a visual art performance troupe, and their interest in getting away from all conventional theatrical habits. A ghostly happening which contrasts rigidly formal, surrealism movements and images with a plainly naturalistic text, Egg parallels the conflicts within Colette’s own writings of feminist intellect and feminine emotion. With a specially composed score by Phillip Glass, and props and costumes designed by several of New York’s most significant younger artists, Egg has won accolades from all the critics in New York. Among the principals of this highly-cooperative company is English expatriot actor David Warrilow a noted exponent of Beckett’s drama and for whom Beckett has recently written a new piece, Monologue, which Warrilow premiered in New York at the very end of 1979.

Paralleling Mabou Mines from Europe comes the Catalan company of La Claca (’The Clacque’) with a unique event called Mori el Mertna, roughly translated as “Death to the Bogeyman”. La Claca is a young ex-puppet and mime company based on the traditions of Catalan street theatre; and Mori el Mertna, which is a loosely based version of Ubu Roi (given by Brook in the Festival) reveals those origins in its wordless (but not silent) pantomime parable of anti-fascism. The special interest that attaches to the production is that the great Spanish painter Joan Miro designed and painted himself all the immense and wonderful figures in or out of which the actors appear on the stage. Like a grotesque Miro painting come to life, the performance is a fierce denunciation of Dictatorship, and was the first such piece to play in Spain after Franco’s death.

So from medieval street theatre one comes full circle to Brook and La Claca. Each play or event makes some kind of comment on change, either through contrasting youth and age or through the forces of revolution. It is not necessary to see or realise the underlying thematic links, but they are there to be found if one wants, in a programme that sets out overall to cover the best representative examples of theatre today in Australia and within the American-European tradition, wherever it seemed to me to have most probably relevance to the possible forms of dramatic enterprise in the next decade. It is a programme that deliberately looks back at the past while perhaps pointing a way forward for theatre in the ‘80s.
WRITERS’ VIEW

This is your first play since 1972; what made you return to the theatre in 1980?

The very serious purpose of trying to write a good play. Novelists don’t have a very good record as playwrights: to say that is a truisim. There are a few exceptions—there is Patrick White, there is Gunther Grass, yet in both cases the men’s novels are more successful than their plays and the novels are what they are likely to be remember for. This is no accident because an entirely different discipline operates with the novel than operates in writing for the theatre.

Since 1972 and An Awful Rose, I’ve been promising myself that I would make another attempt at writing a play, but it’s hard enough getting a novel written within a year. I suppose I was more certain of the novel form both in terms of its artistic and financial rewards than I was of the theatre. And since 1972 the massive impact of David Williamson has occurred in the theatre; in fact An Awful Rose opened at Jane Street with his Don’s Party. I’ve always admired Williamson’s work for its sure wit, for the way it engages an audience, returns it gives Australians both culturally and as entertainment, but I can’t write like Williamson. I even felt that Williamson’s style of writing took audiences into a different direction than I was working in.

The fact that a new play called Bullie’s House is appearing in 1980 is, like most of these things, contingent and accidental. About eighteen months ago I read of an incident in the Northern Territory where some aboriginals decided to create a rapprochement between black and white by bringing forth certain secret objects called Ranga. The Ranga had never willingly been shown to white men and no women had seen them since the Dreaming without being subject to death penalties. In case this proposition sounds fantastic and objectionable, one only has to remember that as late as 1976, in the Williams case in SA, a tribal aborigine was acquitted of a charge of murdering his wife on the grounds that he killed her in the expectation that she was about to divulge tribal secrets.

The name of the central character in the play is Bullie and his house, which has been blown away by a freak wind, is of course a handy symbol for the instability of the relationship between the two races. Bullie believes he will not be able to rebuild until he brings forth the Ranga and displays them to the whites. He believes that the technological inequality between whites and blacks is due entirely to the fact that the whites are keeping their Ranga from him, as certainly as he is keeping his from them. After immense soul-searching he brings them forth expecting an overwhelming response from white society. In fact he gets nothing and these precious objects become so demythologised that the women of the settlement end up using them as clothes drying poles. His fellow elders turn on him...
and one of them murders him because he has so futilely given away the last remaining sacred possessions of his people.

To return to the question of 1980, in the middle of last year I called Ken Horler and told him that I had dreamed up this story line based on incidents that are recorded by the anthropologist R M Berndt in a monograph called "An Adjustment Movement in Arnhem Land". I asked him if there was any particular time that it would be most convenient for the Nimrod to receive a script like that and he told me that there was a space available in February 1980. The play was therefore written to meet this deadline; that had no effect, however, on the ultimate quality or otherwise of the play, but it created problems for Ken Horler, the director.

You spoke earlier of the direction that the Australian drama had taken since Williamson and that you could not really work in that direction. Could you expand on that?

Yes. I'd very much like to be able to work like Williamson. I can remember the impact of Don's Party, the touching gratitude of the audience on having themselves identified on stage. Something of a new experience for Australians. It happened with The Doll, but The Doll was still sort of Henry Lawson territory and it was about men from the bush who were slightly larger than the suburban variety. Larger and more mythical, whereas Williamson's people are identifiably the Australian middle class, who are the people that attend the plays. I can still remember the thrill of identification that the people had so recently as 1972 when Williamson's work made its largest impact in Sydney. A number of imitations of Williamson have since taken the Australian drama into the direction of a number of little social vignettes with quick situations and quick pay off lines, and that's the sort of play that not only I cannot write, but I do not want to write either.

Words are important to me, not just as implements to make an audience laugh. I've heard solemn young men in the Nimrod bar speak of drama as if you have to make a choice between actions and words, as if the purest form of play is one in which there is only action. Might I say I think this is not only naive, but even old fashioned. You cannot speak of words as if they were not human actions. It is a dangerous proposition that young playwrights seem to have picked up, probably from teachers who should know better, that there is a tension in a play, in fact something like a battle between words and action. I think words are among the best of human actions and I see no conflict.

I do recognise the problem in earlier drafts of Bullies' House that the words are too expository, too little supported by the action, but I hope as I speak to you here, the day before the play opens, that by now the words of the play are adequately and dramatically supported by what actually happens in the play.

Do you have plans for further plays?

Yes. I would certainly like to attempt a comedy. This afternoon I am taking off to America where, amongst other things I am preparing a workshop which will lead to a production later this year based on my novel Passenger. Passenger is the journal of an unborn child. It's rather a whimsical and crazy novel and I'm delighted that the people at the Mark Taper Theatre in Los Angeles can see this quality. They want to make it a musical.

The problem of the central character, or at least the narrator, being unborn is not a great one. Before they wrote to me I had already been tempted to write it as a play and I saw that the unborn child could be a little, adult actor sitting in a capsule above the action, commentating, interacting perhaps, and also singing songs about his parents, about the extra-uterine world. Well, that is something that I would dearly like to turn in to a decent play. If, of course, the Mark Taper people do it and it is successful, then I hope it would get an Australian production.

There are other projects in mind as well, but a novelist has to be careful approaching theatre, not only because...
The presence of modern Britain

By Irving Wardle

Should news of the Hull Truck Company not yet have sped round the globe, I should explain that this is an outfit set up in 1971 by Mike Bradwell to specialise in a genre then new to Britain, the improvised play.

The products, like Bridget's House, which rapidly put Hull on the national theatre map, have nothing in common with commedia dell'arte improvisation. In fact they are a complete reversal of the commedia procedure of working out a scenario to exhibit a group of stock characters.

Bradwell's method is to ask each member of his company to privately decide on a character and develop it in solitude in minute detail, and only then to bring the company together and set about devising dramatic circumstances to accommodate whatever random figures the actors happen to have created.

Besides this line of work the company have also begun turning out scripted shows; and it so happens that both sides of the Bradwell operation have lately been on view at his regular London base, the Bush, an extremely well-run pub theatre in Shepherd's Bush.

Wilfred, a scripted piece by the novelist Peter Tinniswood, tells the sad story of Shirley and Hallam, an unremarried couple who have acquired a poodle in the hope of pretending to care for people. Man and dog are two of a kind.

Commissioned by Bradwell, the play makes extraordinary use of stage invisibility, most obviously in the case of Wilfred himself who dominates an evening in which he only appears for thirty seconds at the end. But not only Wilfred is invisible; so is one of the Christmas guests, and so are even the visible characters when they have no active role. This is the first stage play I have seen that exploits the advantages of radio drama by leaving things that can be better imagined for the spectator to fill in for himself. And Bradwell's directorial trade-mark is seen in the performances (especially Philip Jackson's hairy, snarling Hallam) which begin as hard-edged caricatures and develop into fully-detailed realist portraits.

In Ooh La La, devised by Bradwell with the company, you see this quality stretched to the full by improvisation. As usual, the piece offers a fractured narrative with several groups of characters orbiting around a central theme. And, as usual, there is an expanded locale: in this case a Northern university town where the action shifts between tutorials, academic home life, illicit bedrooms, a school, and a folk club, so as to show the intellectual and personal lives of the community running in ironic parallel. There are three main groups: a middle-aged scholar visited by his maritally discontented daughter, a schoolteacher whose wife is on the point of bolting; and two working-class students whose friendship breaks up when the boy makes a pass. But the main dramatic agent is Martin (Stephen Warbeck), a young political science lecturer who brings the same cooly detached manner to outlining the fictions of the revolutionary French Left as to bedding the teacher's wife and the doting girl student.

Most of these people have some kind of gap in their life, such as a refuge from British stress, but it would be false to make too much of that (or the unfortunate title), as it is the company's method to develop a sequence of truthful individual scenes in the hope that they will gravitate towards a moral centre. We get closest to such a centre where the Glaswegian student erupts into an enraged tirade on Anglo-Scottish history only to run into Martin's academic stone-wall. Scene for scene these sketches of sexual and intellectual confusion show a deadly familiarity with the grooves of provincial academe, and are played with an extraordinary capacity for charging social stereotypes with an intense personal sub-text. It is a long time since I felt the presence of modern Britain so strongly from a British stage.

The Long Wharf Theatre of New Haven, Connecticut, under the direction of Arvin Brown, is considered one of the best of America's regional theatres. The Long Wharf has proved a faithful source for Broadway and several of its productions have transferred to Broadway with great success, notably David Rabe's Streamers, David Storey's The Changing Room and a revival of O'Neill's Ah, Wilderness! Ms Lillian Hellman obviously approves of Long Wharf as Watch On The Rhine is something of an event.

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The Love of

By Karl Levett

New York is currently offering a trio of prizefighting playwrights: Lillian Hellman, a champion of seasons past, Harold Pinter, a present powerhouse, and Thomas Babe, a contender for future honours. The current co-existence of this trio on Broadway and Off, provides an opportunity for an interesting comparison of changing styles.

Lillian Hellman has been the most vigilant watchdog of her own plays, any production requiring her personal approval. So a Hellman play such as the 1941 Watch On The Rhine is something of an event.

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Watch On The Rhine opened in 1941 as a strong anti-Nazi statement and a demand for American intervention in World War II. It is melodramatic, it is didactic, and yet the experience is surprisingly effective. The Long Wharf production is acceptable, but
only that — it's unnecessarily stolid and at times the pacing is quite flat-footed. Therefore the effectiveness of the play must lie elsewhere. Surely it can't be the play's theme? That has to have the label of "Dated" on it you'd think. Yes, but also No. Forty years on, the conflict between complacency at home and potential danger abroad is very much on American minds. And younger commentators have said the play provides a glimpse of America's history no one ever told them about.

Then the laurel would have to be hung on Ms Heilman's writing. To do that one would have to forget those preachy Third Act speeches, the literalness of the prose and the lack of poetry everywhere. One would have to concentrate instead on the craft whereby comedy (and there's a surprising amount of it) can shift gears into melodrama and back again. There is considerable craft in this, a craft that is essentially theatrical and indigenous to a proscenium stage. For me, the crafty coating of the pill was far more interesting than the pill itself. Not so a young lady seated next to me. As the Third Act closed she cried quietly but copiously. Ms Heilman would have loved her.

Harold Pinter's punching style certainly differs from Lillian Hellman's. Sometimes you're not sure with Pinter if you've been hit at all, even while you're admiring the skill of the attack and the fancy footwork. Pinter's Betrayal is now at the Trafalgar in a production by Peter Hall and starring three leading American performers, Roy Scheider, Blythe Danner and Raul Julia. This is Pinter without a puzzle at its heart, and although the play runs backward, it is (for Pinter) almost explicit. With the backward device Pinter eschews any hint of melodramatic revelation of the characters' multiple betrayals. The device instead creates a prismatic effect, there reinforced by John Bury's sets. Everything seems to be at a tangent including the characters' relationships to each other. And, of course, tangents and flashing facets of prisms abound in Pinter's dialogue. Again, the dialogue is a selection of banal conversations to create a verbal shorthand, with an undercurrent of threat and innuendo.

Unfortunately innuendo flies out the window if the accent is insecure and in this Mr Scheider is particularly at fault. His accent reaches valiantly without ever arriving in Britain. Those delicate vocal implications that one Britisher can on dump on another are lost. Blythe Danner, one of America's most versatile young actresses, catches the style best, while still conveying some emotional weight. Betrayal is an exercise in form rather than content and when the form is mishandled the loss is considerable. We are left with Tallulah's famous observation, "There's much less here than meets the eye."

Thomas Babe seems closer to Hellman than Pinter. He is a young American playwright who has been nurtured by Joe Papp's Public Theater which has produced five of his plays, all with a measure of success. With his ability to treat strong themes in a traditional but fresh manner Babe carries the twin tags of "promising" and "commercial". His latest effort, Salt Lake City Skyline, is unhappily neither.

The Man Who Never Died, which has played in twelve countries, and is currently in the repertoire of the Swedish National Theatre. (Joe Hill was a Swede.) The transcript of the trial is lost, but Stavis' play is a carefully researched, earnest salute to a hero. Babe seems to have played fast and loose with the facts, to create a fanciful and unfocused scrapbook of a play, that neither succeeds as documentary nor as fictional fare.

Babe will get off the floor to fight again. Meantime, Pinter looks a champion and its good to know Hellman can still deliver a worthwhile punch.
DANCE

By William Shoubridge

Modern dance in Australia

If there is one thing more encouraging to me than the increased performances of modern dance in this country and the attention and serious discussion that the myopic and slow off the mark press are at long last giving it, it lies in the fact that the growing audiences are gradually arriving at an understanding of the lexicon and language of dance (both classic and modern), that its values and methods are different from those of ordinary theatre and opera and, as such, dance cannot be seen and judged on the same terms or with the same expectations as the other art forms.

It is obvious that audiences have got to go further than this (and even more evident that certain “critics” and media commentators need to realise it), but a beginning has at long last been made.

Modern dance performances on a continuing basis haven’t been around in Australia for very long. 1965, the year that Elizabeth Dalman and Susanne Musitz founded the embryos of companies in Adelaide and Sydney respectively, can, for argument’s sake, be said to be the birthdate of “Australian” modern dance.

The Queensland, West Australian and Australian Ballets (and the now defunct Ballet Victoria) did from time to time include a “modern technique” piece in their repertoires, but before 1965 there was no company totally given over to exploring modern dance styles in this country.

While we thank and remember all those people who fought for years to get the style and manner accepted here, the achievements and enormous strides within the last three years are a complete vindication of their efforts, even if they no longer play an active part.

Dance in Australia, perhaps more than any other performing art form has come into its own in the last five years or so. This of course, is no doubt due to the watchfulness and caniness of the Artistic Directors both past and present of the Queensland and West Australian Ballet, but more so to the careful planning, intelligence and inventiveness of Graeme Murphy and Jonathon Taylor, directors of the Sydney Dance Company and the Australian Dance Theatre respectively.

At a time when the Australian Ballet has lost any real claim to be doing something for contemporary dance in Australia and has lapsed into a $5 million “operation” exploiting its “product”, it is these two companies that are getting the real notice and attention of the media and the younger (and in the long run more secure) audiences.

It is with these companies (small as they are) that the real future of dance in Australia lies. Size, pomp and dressiness don’t really matter at all in these things.

The Australian Ballet remains a “classics” museum (or a sometime repository of curiosities), let the important business of creation be left to the ADT and

The Beach Scene from Rumours II. Photo: Branco Gaica.
SDC, while not of course forgetting the West Australian and Queensland companies since they are becoming quite daring in programming these days, considering the lack of finance, conservatism and their tough touring schedule.

Now, to draw a comparison between the scene here in Australia and that in both West and East Berlin is invidious. Nothing construction will come of it and in any case it can hardly be done. The only vague similarity between the two countries could perhaps lie in the fact that for years neither country showed any great interest in home grown choreographic creations, the Germans preferring opera and the Australians...well I don't know what. That of course has changed dramatically in the last fifteen years. Audiences for all the arts are at an all time high now in Australia and the dance scene in the two Germanies is the healthiest it has ever been.

But in the field of dance Germany did have individuals almost right from the start of the century constantly working and experimenting and performing. Ettiene Dalcroze and Kurt Jooss are just two of the famous names from that country. Australia, apart from certain teachers like Joanne Priest in Adelaide, had no one who was even acquainted with what was happening in the modern fields of dance overseas, and therefore our audiences were kept in the dark.

While it is in some ways surprising that the SDC and ADT are getting such a strong following now, it is even more surprising that they exist at all, given the wilderness from which they have sprung.

The greatest influence on dance in Australia, as it is in most parts of the Western world, would have to be the pioneers and experimenters of America, and especially New York. Ever since the 1950's when New Yorkers had finally accepted the work of Doris Humphrey, Ted Shawn, Martha Graham and Balanchines "atonal evenings" with the NY City Ballet, that city has been the world centre of modern dance. The names that have piled up over the years are impressive: Merce Cunningham, Paul Taylor, Twyla Tharp, Meridith Monk, Robert Wilson and further myriads of avant garde performers.

Europe has witness the rise of Ballet Rambert, London Contemporary Dance Theatre, Netherlans Dans Theatre and the Wuppertal Dance Theatre among others.

Australia, because of distance and expense has had little chance to see any of these companies at first hand and the style of dance they proclaim. What has had is that style as translated and incorporated by its own choreographers.

In some ways this is poor because audiences should be exposed to the (quite estimable) tradition that surrounds the form, to see the way that it made a break with the constraints and attitudes of the classic dance and grew into a whole different manner and type of movement. On the other hand what audiences are now getting is a unique version of that dance style, something that has its roots in this country and cannot be said to be an import.

Numerous critics from overseas have remarked that the dance scene here is amazingly strong, when one takes the overall population into account. The vast areas of Australia all at some time are exposed to dance. The ADT especially has one of the most thorough and expansive country touring schedules of any performing art company in this country.

Every state has a professional dance company of some description and Sydney has in addition to the five month Australian Ballet season and the resident SDC, at least two fringe groups that regularly put on performances attended by ever enlarging audiences.

None of these companies or choreographers is working in a vacuum however, they all have certain backgrounds from here and overseas (in training or otherwise). Jonathon Taylor, while his background is that of Ballet Rambert has been concertedy attempting to understand the Australia cast of mind and attitude in some
of his works, *Incident At Bull Creek* and *The Wedding* for example.

Graeme Murphy is adamant that he and his company create something for Australian audiences, reflecting them as well as his own personality. Murphy’s *Rumours* was a fascinating and keenly observed work about Sydney life, portrayed in a series of telling vignettes. *Poppy* was a dance theatre “event” on Jean Cocteau that gave a new sophistication and intelligence to Murphy’s company.

There are Australian works because they were created in Australia and, in the case of the latter two, created by Australians. None of them are Australian by virtue of patriotic attitude or parochial tub-thumping; audiences have accepted and rejoiced in that, illustrating again the expanded aesthetic that has at last gained ground.

Music and dance are probably the two performing art forms that cannot be really bound by national borders, even if, in the case of dance, it may try to analyse the pocked-marked face and interior mind of its country of origin. Australian modern dance realises that its creations are to be placed alongside the works of anything from overseas and judged accordingly. What they say and how well they say it is dependent entirely on their choreographers.

There is not yet a distinctive “Australian” choreography; there is Graeme Murphy’s style, or Jonathon Taylor’s style, or whoever else may create, and one must also be wary of pinning them down too smugly since every creator is liable to make a volte-face and disrupt expectations—it keeps them and their audiences healthily aware.

There has been talk lately of completely changing the dance set-up in Australia. Mentions made of aligning the SDC with the Australian Opera and the Australian Ballet with the Victorian Opera, so that all four companies can have access to both art forms as well as a resident orchestra. This may sound promising, SDC performances would be wonderful in the Opera Theatre backed by an orchestra and all the set costume construction facilities at its command. But there is a danger always (as we have already seen) of Boards pulling their teeth of their artistic directors.

I’m sure that Graeme Murphy and his board would not wish to be enveloped by the Australian Opera board, with the possibility that they might be treated merely as an adjunct and their resources (including their Federal and State funding) exploited. No, the SDC board is far too forward looking for that. They, almost alone in boards of management of the lyric arts in Australia, are fully supportive of whatever Murphy and his fellow choreographers want to attempt.

It is for this reason that the SDC is now preeminent in Australia. Even more than the ADT, the SDC is adventurous. At one with Graeme Murphy it is at least willing to put itself on the line and risk failure.

People said that any attempt at a full length ballet (in modern style), especially when dealing with someone so unfamiliar as Jean Cocteau, would be a failure and the company would be on the brink of disaster. That has not proved to be the case: if anything *Poppy* has brought the company greater esteem and larger audiences and the same goes for the trilogy, *Rumours*.

That again was a complete breakaway into new territory, and diffuse and woolly as it is in places, can take its place as something by which Sydney people (and by allusion, Australians in general) can see themselves reflected. This year, Murphy will be trying again something different in tackling a hoary work of ballet legend that has been the downfall of more than one choreographer in its time, Ravel’s ballet *Daphnis and Chloe*.

The ADT on the other hand is dealing with a huge potential audience, by virtue of serving both South Australia and Victoria. What’s more, it is getting those audiences in, especially in the country areas. With a young and well trained company of enthusiastic dancers, the possibilities for improvement and expansion are almost limitless.

This year the ADT will be featuring at the Edinburgh Festival (probably taking *Wildstars* and a triple bill programme) and thence probably on to a regional tour of Britain.

The only other Australian company to appear there has been the Australian Ballet years ago, and it was their appearance there that put them on the world arts map. The same will undoubtedly happen to the ADT. Let us hope that before long the SDC will appear there too.
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 perhaps above all a depth of artistic integrity and inspiration rarely seen on a stage elsewhere.

The awe in which the Berlin Komische Oper is held has been compounded over the years by the consistent refusal of both the opera and dance companies resident there to perform outside their own home. It has become a place of pilgrimage for all those deeply involved in the performing arts. But now, in a major coup, AGC Australian Guarantee and David Frost, have joined with the Adelaide Festival whose initiative has persuaded the Berlin Komische Oper Ballet to undertake their first tour outside of Europe, a tour of Australia.
The Komische Oper was set up in 1947 by Walter Felsenstein, one of the greatest stage directors of the 20th-century. His terms for taking on the job were tough and demanding. Yet the government of the German Democratic Republic, whose support of the arts currently stands at about four times the level of that in Australia on a per capita basis, gave him all the time and money he demanded, and more. In the late 1960s, the Government built a new home for the Komische Oper entirely to Felsenstein's specifications. It is one of the most technically advanced theatres in the world.

So equipped, Felsenstein built up his dream of theatrical perfection. Months of rehearsal were used to perfect every smallest detail and implication of every dramatic situation on stage, whether in opera or dance. Sir Rudolf Bing, whilst general manager of New York's Metropolitan Opera, told of one of his visits to the Komische Oper when he witnessed a staggering performance of Verdi's Otello. Yet Felsenstein became furious from the moment the curtain went up. It turned out that for the opening storm scene alone, Felsenstein had been rehearsing the chorus for weeks, out at a local aeronautics factory before a wind tunnel blowing a force 12 gale. Now, fumed Felsenstein, here they were staggering around the stage as if only a force 8 gale was blowing. He was not only a perfectionist, but an absolute ruler as well.

The Berlin 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 it came under the perfectionist dictates of Felsenstein that dance, like opera, must be good theatre, dramatically and visually convincing in every detail. Felsenstein himself finally died at the age of 74 in 1975 at his home in West Berlin, for like those of time and money, Felsenstein's artistic outlook refused to recognise political barriers too, not least the Berlin Wall. But the Komische Oper, one of the most remarkable theatrical organisations in the world, remains a living monument to one of the most remarkable men of theatre.

Tom Schilling, born in 1928, started life as a dancer, moving into choreography whilst at Weimar in the 1950s, becoming artistic director and chief choreographer for the ballet company at the Dresden State Opera in 1965. Moving to the Berlin Komische Oper Ballet in 1965 he has since created some thirty works for the company.

One programme to be offered on the forthcoming Australian tour includes samples of some of the best of Schilling's shorter works over these fruitful years. The only other choreographer represented in the programme will be John Cranko with Jeu de Cartes.

Cranko, the founder, inspiration and director of the Stuttgart Ballet until his untimely death in 1973 was one of the few outside choreographers to be invited to work in the rather hallowed halls of the Berlin Komische Oper. Those who remember the sensational and revelatory visit to Australia of the Stuttgart Ballet in 1974 may grasp from this connection some sort of idea of the style, the theatrical integrity and the quality of performance which the Berlin Komische Oper Ballet will be bringing to Australia in 1980.

Swan Lake, Schilling's latest full-length creation for his company, premiered in Berlin on March 12, 1978 is, however, liable to be the most sensational and revelatory offering of the forthcoming tour.

Not another Swan Lake! And despite the seven complete versions of the work seen in Australia, the answer is no, not another Swan Lake, but the first realisation of Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake ever presented here.

Tom Schilling, in association with the general manager of the Berlin Komische Oper Ballet, returned to Tchaikovsky's original score, and explored his letters and diaries to discover his original dramatic intentions to present Swan Lake as it was meant to be. Now less than two years after its Berlin premiere Australia will have the opportunity to see this brilliant, profoundly moving, and faithful version of Swan Lake.

Its "new look" is not just in the choreography and dramatic re-shaping but also in the splendid designs of Eleonore Kleiber. There is not a classical tutu to be seen, instead the swans are clothed in beautiful floating chiffon costumes which contrast with the stunning magnificence of the court costumes.

So the Berlin Komische Oper Ballet are bringing two great programmes to Australia. One, the complete Swan Lake, the other a programme of four complete one-act ballets featuring John Cranko's Jeu de Cartes together with three Tom Schilling ballets - Youth Symphony (Mozart), Evening Dances (Schubert) and La Mer (Debussy).

This tour, involving an investment of $2 million, is visiting four Australian cities - Melbourne, Adelaide, Canberra and Sydney. The entire company of sixty dancers has come to Australia, and are being accompanied by Australian orchestras of at least fifty two musicians conducted by the company's musical director Lothar Seyfarth.
AGC, in association with DAVID FROST, are proud to be associated with some of the world’s finest artists.
NOT ANOTHER SWAN LAKE!

Background to the Berlin Komische Oper Ballet’s production of Swan Lake

The seven different productions of the work so far seen in Australia have not had much to do with the Swan Lake which Tchaikovsky created over the years 1875-76. Rather do they derive from the version staged in St Petersburg in 1895 in memory of the composer who had died in 1893. Compared with Tchaikovsky’s original concept, that version of 1895, contrived by the lackies of the court theatre to suit the frivolous tastes of the day is barely recognisable as the same work. The composer’s own brother, Modest, was brought in to alter the story line, while a hack composer, Riccardo Drigo, butchered the score accordingly.

What Tchaikovsky had done in 1975-76 was rebel against the concept of ballet as a mere court entertainment. In his music he revolutionised dance, lifting it onto a new level of dramatic intensity with a score which treated its subject on a fully integrated symphonic basis. The music might seem approachable enough today, but at the premiere at Moscow’s Bolshoi Theatre in 1877, the orchestra rebelled and even those who could play the music which Tchaikovsky had composed were reluctant to do so. Choreography, design and dancing were all at an equally incompetent level.

The Swan Lake of 1877 was a disaster.

That disaster was no doubt in mind when the court theatre in St Petersburg set about reviving the work in 1895. Drigo in particular wrought havoc with the score. He made a start by hacking out no less than 822 bars, about a third of the music Tchaikovsky had composed. He then shuffled the remnants around, rearranged, recomposed, even added a few little numbers of his own. It was the fine choreography of Petipa and Ivanov which has carried Swan Lake through to modern times as the very epitome of classical ballet. But it is a Swan Lake which has little to do with Tchaikovsky’s intentions.

Tom Schilling, in collaboration with the Berlin Komische Oper Ballet’s general manager, Dr Bernd Kollinger, returned to Tchaikovsky’s original score, first published in Moscow as recently as 1957. They explored his prolific writings in letters and diaries to discover the composer’s original dramatic intentions. And they explored Tchaikovsky himself, one of the most autobiographic of composers, to discover his state of mind at the time of composition. The rediscovery of Swan Lake turned out to be a long and difficult business.

If, in the past, it has been seen to revolve vaguely around the rather enigmatic figure of Swan Woman, Odette, Tchaikovsky’s Swan Lake now emerges with the prince, Siegfried firmly established at the centre of the drama. It is a drama, explains Schilling, not only about a man at odds with society, but one embroiled against his will in power politics. Siegfried is an outsider, a man who is not “as he is supposed to be”, who is not “as they all are”. On this level, says Schilling, Tchaikovsky’s own personal experiences, his own schism with society played a big part. But the central dramatic theme of the work, as Schilling now sees it is something else again. That theme involves “the manipulation and use of power - power to force humans either to submit or be destroyed. Both are possible and both are still happening in this world”.

Swan Lake as conceived by Tchaikovsky is a tragic ballet. The frivolous divertissements imposed upon it in 1895 have, in the new Schilling/Kollinger version, been removed. From the moment the curtain rises on the first act, audiences will be aware that they are about to see something new and different.

Restless and rebellious, Siegfried is seen from the start as a young idealist striving for a life of love, honesty and fulfillment in a decadent, soulless court.

His mother, normally seen as an aristocratic figure, vaguely gesturing from her throne, here takes on a far more active dancing role in the conflict with her son as she attempts to force Siegfried to accept his responsibilities, and conform.

She is aided and abetted by the so-called magician, Rothbart. In the traditional version of Swan Lake, Rothbart is another rather vague figure, flitting around the third and fourth acts of the ballet doing beastly things to swan-maidens in general. But here he is restored to his proper role, a dual role of malignant power not only in the realms of nature where he dominates the swan-maidens, but at court too where he dominates Siegfried’s mother, and is attempting to dominate Siegfried.

In the first Act, audiences were also introduced to Odile, the so-called “black swan” seen normally amongst the divertissements of the third Act, one of Drigo’s more blatant pieces of disregard for Tchaikovsky’s intentions. But now she has been reinstated and is introduced from the start as a court dancer, Rothbart’s chief tool in his concerted attack on Siegfried. Odile, as Kollinger points out, “represents art and artists who willingly work for a criminal political system.”

It is whilst in this situation of conflict and confusion that Siegfried meets up with the swan-woman, Odette. She represents, in Siegfried’s mind, not only an epitome of nature (the alternative to the world of sterile, stagnant conformity at court) but the representation of his longing for freedom. The challenge of breaking the power which Rothbart wields over Odette puts meaning and purpose back into Siegfried’s life.
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Another curious anecdote on Tchaikovsky's fascination with dance was to follow in 1875. On a commission from The Bolshoi he had already started work on the full-length Swan Lake when he met for the first time in Moscow the famous French composer Camille Saint-Saëns. "They took a fancy to each other" to quote a contemporary source. Amongst other things, they collaborated to compose a short ballet on the subject of Pygmalion and Galatea. It was performed that same year at the Moscow Conservatoire. Tchaikovsky danced the role of Pygmalion and Saint-Saëns that of Galatea.

But as work on Swan Lake progressed, it seemed to Tchaikovsky that the mood at the Conservatoire and throughout Moscow society in general was turning against him. In 1876, confronted with even more blatant gossip, he decided to marry.

Tchaikovsky's family, knowing his nature well, warned that marriage without love simply couldn't work for him. Yet the sort of love that Tchaikovsky so desperately needed was impossible to find, as he well knew: "Time after time I have tried to express through my music the intolerable anguish and supreme bliss of love". And in the finale to Swan Lake we can hear unmistakably the music reflect his bitter belief that love was to be found only against the direct opposition, and might even then be cruelly denied realisation.

Yet he reaffirmed his intention to marry. His main concern seems to have been to protect his family and friends from the disgrace of his being publicly branded as homosexual. After the disastrous premiere of Swan Lake in March 1877, his resolve strengthened further. A powerful sense of fatalism descended upon him, a mood reflected in the fourth symphony which he immediately started composing. In July of that same year he married.

He could not have made a more disastrous choice. Antonina Milyukeva, one of his students at the Conservatoire, was not only stupid and unstable but a raging nymphomaniac too. The marriage was a disaster from the start. He did not love her, he told his friends again and again. He found her physically repulsive. He grew to hate her. He considered killing her. Instead, in October 1877 he attempted suicide, unsuccessfully.

Tchaikovsky and his wife separated and never saw each other again, although she hounded him with ever more venom until his death in 1893. The authorities thereafter attempted, as it were, to clean up the legend of their most celebrated composer. Antonina was locked away in a lunatic asylum. And as a final twist to that fate which Tchaikovsky believed had dogged him all his life, his great tragic vision which was Swan Lake was revived and handed over to posterity, cut, softened and mutated almost beyond recognition.

Over the small single bed at Tchaikovsky's country retreat in Klin, some fifty miles out of Moscow, there still hangs his favourite painting. It is a painting of romantic, cloud-swept moonlight over a lake. His dream of Swan Lake was central to his being. And now, at long last, that dream has been realised to be performed for Australian audiences by the Berlin Komische Oper Ballet.
Some facts about the Komische Oper Berlin (DDR) and its Dance Theatre

Foundation of Komische Oper: 1947
Founder, first director and chief producer: Walter Felsenstein (d. 1975)
Director and chief producer since 1975: Joachim Hertz

Foundation of Dance Theatre: 1965
Director of the Dance Theatre and chief choreographer: Tom Schilling
Premieres since 1947: 120
Ballet premieres since 1966: 22
Members of the staff: 344 in 1947; 770 in 1979
Principal Dancers: 29 female, 18 male, and guest soloists

The Komische Oper is a fully subsidised State Theatre, with the character of a repertory theatre, giving about 220 performances annually of opera, operetta, musicals, ballet, and concerts. About fifty performances are ballet.

BERND KÖLLINGER studied ballet at the Leipzig School of Dance, and then at the University of Leipzig from 1965 to 1971, gaining his Ph D in Cultural Studies in 1972. He was appointed Director of the ballet of the Komische Oper in 1974.

He has published a book on dance, Dance — Ten Attempts (Henschel, Berlin 1975), and has written libretti for several ballets including Bernarda Alba’s House (music by Hans-Dieter Hosalla), Black Birds (music by George Katzer), The Divine Comedy (after Viganò, with music by Beethoven: The Creatures of Prometheus), The Human Comedy (to Vivaldi’s Four Seasons), these last two being given as a single evening of ballet under the title “Discovery of Love.”

Dr Kollinger is a board member of the DDR Association of People in Theatre, and in 1975 was awarded the Prize for Artistic Creation for the People and in 1976 the City of Berlin Prize.

TOM SCHILLING has been chief choreographer and head of the ensemble of the Komische Oper Ballet since its foundation.
Schilling was first a solo dancer with the ballet companies of Dresden, Leipzig and Berlin, then director of ballet and chief choreographer in Weimar and Dresden.

Among his widely varying choreographic achievements are the East German premieres of Assafajev’s The Fountain of Batchisera, Prokofiev’s The Stone Flower, Bernstein’s Fancy Free, and Henze’s Undine.

He has also choreographed the world premieres of The Nightingale by Otto Reinhold, Impulses by Uwe Koderitzsch, The Double by Fritz Geissler, Rhythm and Match by Siegfried Matthus, and Black Birds by Georg Katzer.

Besides these adventurous and abstract ballets, Schilling has also created a variety of realistic and naturalistic ballets including Egk’s Abraxas, Symphonic Fantastique to Berlioz’s music, Prokofiev’s Romeo and Juliet, Cinderella and Coppelia by Delibes (for the Berlin State Opera ballet).

He has choreographed his own La Mer for the Cullberg Ballet in Stockholm, as well as ballets for the Ballet de la Wallonie in Charleroi, the Grand Ballet Classique in Paris, the Vienna State Opera ballet, the Norwegian Ballet in Oslo, the Royal Opera ballet in Copenhagen, and the Poznan Dance Theatre in Poland.

Tom Schilling was awarded the Art Prize of the DDR in 1970, the National Prize in 1972. He is director of the department of choreography at the Hans Otto University for Theatre in Leipzig where he was appointed Professor in 1976.
HERMANN NEEF (dramaturg) has supervised all productions of the Company since 1973 in his capacity as dramatic advisor. Born in 1936 he is a graduate of the Humbolt University, Berlin in musicology and dramatics. He has extensive experience as a record producer and has published several books on the theatre.

ELEONORE KLEIBER (costume designer) has been in charge of costume design at the Komische Oper since 1968. She worked closely with Walter Felsenstein and has also designed for productions by Joachim Herz and Tom Schilling including The Marriage of Figaro, Lulu, Romeo and Juliet, Mahagonny and Swan Lake.

JOHN CRANKO was born in Rutensburg in South Africa in 1927. He studied ballet with Dulcie Howes in Cape Town, where at the age of sixteen he created his first work for the Cape Town Ballet Club. He went to London in 1946 to train as a dancer in the Sadler's Wells Ballet under Ninette de Valois and Peggy van Praagh. He soon gave up dancing to concentrate entirely on choreography, creating his first major ballet, Sea Change, in 1949 for the Sadler's Wells Ballet. In 1957 he created the first British full-length ballet, Prince of the Pagodas, to music by Benjamin Britten and with designs by John Piper. It was however only after 1961, when he became director of the Stuttgart Ballet, that his full talents were revealed; in the twelve years between then and his tragic early death in 1973 at the age of 46, he developed an entirely individual style, with special qualities in narrative ballets, that became legendary in his own lifetime and have continued to influence choreographers and dancers all over the world.

LOTHAR SEYFARTH (conductor) was born in 1931 and completed his studies in piano and conducting at the Leipzig Academy. Among the several important conducting posts he held are the Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra (1967-73) and the German National Theatre Weimar (1973-79). He is actively involved in the promotion of new music and is a frequent guest conductor in many European countries.

JOCHEN FINKE (set designer) was born in 1941 and studied under Professor Kilger at Berlin Weissensee Art College and subsequently under Karl Von Appen. Since 1971 he has been resident designer at the Deutsches Theatre Berlin, and apart from his work on Swan Lake for the Komische Oper he is a guest lecturer at the Art College.
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AETT 80/3
Some of the dancers

HANNELORE BEY was a pupil at the Palucca School, Dresden. She started her career at the State Theatre, Dresden, at first in the corps de ballet, later as solo dancer. In 1966 she concluded additional studies at the Waganova Ballet School in Leningrad. In the same year she joined the Komische Oper. In 1968 she gained third place and a bronze medal during the International Ballet Competition in Varna and, together with Roland Gavlik, the prize for the best pair.

In 1969 she was given the title of “Prima Ballerina”. The Government of the GDR honoured her artistic achievements by awarding her the Art Prize in 1970 and the National Prize in 1973. Hannelore Bey dances the main roles in ballets of the international standard repertoire as well as the choreography by Schilling of Abraxas, Cinderella, Undine, Symphonie Fantastique, Der Doppelganger (The Double), Romeo and Juliet, Black Bird, La Mer, Match, Swan Lake, Evening Dances and Pastorale.

HANA VLACILOVA received her training as a ballet dancer from 1968-72 at the Prague Conservatory. 1972-73 she continued her studies at the Waganova Ballet School in Leningrad in the master class of Natalja Dudinskaja. In 1972 she became principal dancer of the Prague National Theatre. There she danced all important roles of the international ballet repertoire like Swan Lake, Nutcracker Suite, Cinderella, Spartacus, Romeo and Juliet, Giselle, Chopiana. Guest performances led her to many European countries including Hungary, Italy, France, Greece. From 1973-75 she was a guest artist at the Komische Oper Berlin, dancing Juliet and in 1978 she danced Odette in Tom Schilling’s new Swan Lake production. At the Berlin State Opera she dances solo roles in the Balanchine choreography Symphony in C (Bizet) and The Four Temperaments (Hindemith).

YVONNE VENDRIG trained in Utrecht and The Hague with Sonja Gaskell and Rudi van Dantzig, amongst others. 1966-73 she was first principal dancer with the National Ballet, Amsterdam and 1974-75 she held the same position in Dusseldorf. She has been connected with the Komische Oper as a guest principal dancer since 1978. She performs leading roles in works of the classical ballet repertoire as well as works by Rudi van Dantzig and George Balanchine. She has participated in guest performances in Poland and Yugoslavia and many countries of Western and Southern Europe as well as South America.

JURGEN HOHMANN graduated from the Palucca School in Dresden in 1965 and began his career at the German State Opera in Berlin. In 1966 he became a solo dancer with the Komische Oper. In 1972-73 he worked at the Friedrichstadt Palace. Since 1973 he again became a member of the Komische Oper Company. He danced leading and principal roles in Fancy Free, Undine, Romeo and Juliet, Cinderella, La Fille mal gardee, Black Birds, Divine Comedy, Revue, Swan Lake, Youth Symphony, Evening Dances, Pastorale, Gajaneh, Jeu de Cartes. In 1977 he became first solo dancer with the Komische Oper.

VLADIMIR FEDJANIN studied in Leningrad. In 1967 he joined the Ballet Ensemble of the Kirov Theatre. In 1970 he changed over to the Stanislavski-Nemirowitsch-Dantschenko-Musich-Theatret in Moscow as solo dancer. In 1972 he gained first place at the International Ballet Competition in Varna and received the Gold Medal. As a leading solo dancer he danced the main roles of the classical repertoire and of many modern ballets. Since 1976 he has been first solo dancer at the Komische Oper. In Berlin and on tour he has interpreted leading roles with great success including La Fille mal gardee, Black Birds, Wuattrodramma, Revue, Swan Lake, Youth Symphony, Evening Dances, Jeu de Cartes, Lebenszeit, Pastorale, Gajaneh.

JUTTA DEUTSCHLAND trained at the State Ballet School, Berlin from 1969 to 1976 joining the Komische Oper in 1976 and performing solo roles since 1977. Leading roles in Human Comedy, Revue, Swan Lake, Youth Symphony, Lebenszeit, Pastorale.
ROLAND GAVLIK received his training at the Dresden State Theatre, where he began his career in 1962. In 1965 he continued his studies at the Waganova Ballet School in Leningrad, with Al Pushkin, amongst others. In 1966 he became solo dancer in Dresden. At the same time, he signed a contract with Komische Oper as a guest artist. From 1967 he was with the Komische Oper, and in 1978 he joined the State Opera. Together with Hannelore Bey he was awarded the Prize for the best pair at the International Ballet Competition in Varna in 1968. In 1969 he was awarded the title of "Meistertanza". In 1970 he was honoured by the Government of GDR by being awarded the Art Prize and in 1973 the National Prize. Roland Gavlik's repertoire comprises the important parts of the traditional ballet but his reputation is enhanced by his interpretation of the leading roles in Tom Schilling's productions such as Abraxas, Symphonie Fantastique, Cinderella, Der Doppelganger, Undine, Romeo and Juliet, Black Birds, La Mer and Match. At the Berlin State Opera he has been dancing leading roles in Spartacus (Seregi), The Three Musketeers (Seyllert), Carmen Suite (Alfonso), Creation of the World (Kassatkina, Wassijow). Guest performances as solo dancer as well as a member of the Komische Oper have taken him to many countries in Europe and the Near East.

MICHAIL GAVRIKOV attended Ballet School, Baku from 1949 to 1959, followed by Master Class of the Waganova Ballet School in Leningrad from 1959 to 1960. 1956-1976 he was first solo dancer with the Opera and Ballet Theatre of Baku, where he danced the male leading roles in Swan Lake, Nutcracker Suite, Sleeping Beauty, Giselle, Cinderella, etc. 1966-68 solo dancer with the Komische Oper. Leading roles in Abraxas, Symphonie Fantastique and Cinderella. In 1971 he graduated from the Science of Ballet course with the Leningrad Theatre Institute. 1972-76 coach with the Opera and Ballet Theatre, Baku. Since 1976 Chief Assistant at the Leipzig Theatre Academy (classical ballet and history of choreography). Since 1977 guest appearances at the Komische Oper (as coach and repetiteur-ballet-master).

THOMAS HARTMANN studied at the Palucca School, Dresden. Since 1970 he has been based at the State Opera, Dresden. Leading roles, amongst others, in Giselle, Die Versuchung, (The Temptation), Der Grüne Tische (The Green Table), and guest performances as solo dancer at the Komische Oper since 1979. Leading roles in Swan Lake, Evening Dances, Lebenszeit.

DIETER HÜLSE is a graduate of the Palucca School, Dresden. From 1970-74 he performed at the State Opera, Dresden. Since 1974 he has been solo dancer of the Komische Oper. Leading roles in Romeo and Juliet, Cinderella, La Mer, Divine Comedy, Human Comedy, Swan Lake, Youth Symphony, Pastoral, Gajaneh.
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This year's summer opera season at the Sydney Opera House got under way with an extremely low-key double bill from the national company; a coupling of works from the 18th and 20th centuries, Alessandro Scarlatti's *The Triumph of Honour* and William Walton's *The Bear*, which played in repertory for most of January with a guest revival of Bizet's *The Pearl Fishers* from the Victoria State Opera.

Not unexpectedly, it was *The Pearl Fishers* which brought out a rash of House Full signs, being as it was an excellent realisation of a piece by the composer of *Carmen* that had not been seen in Sydney for many years.

Artistically, though, there was nothing to complain about in the double bill. Indeed, it was one of the more commendable programming efforts the AO has come up with in recent years: an interesting complementary blend of the old and the new superbly performed all round.

**THE BEAR - BIZARRE ROMANCE**

Dramatically, of course, *The Bear* is merely an operatic reworking of a rather beaut Chekhov story about a bizarre romance between a young and attractive widow and one of her husband's creditors; the bear of the title.

Whether one was familiar with Chekhov's bear or only Walton's, this production (designed by Tom Lingwood and directed by Robin Lovejoy) should have satisfied. Only the lighting, by Anthony Everingham, was wrong (at least on opening night) in the sense of being too bright at the outset to convey the mock-mourning of Popova that dominates the opening pages of the opera. (This aspect of the production had improved immensely, along with several others, by the last performance of the season on January 26.)

Lovejoy came up with some nice touches of direction in handling both his leading players; something Walton's score demands for maximum effect in the theatre, since it only rarely delves even a little way beneath the surface of the story it presents. It is, indeed, fair criticism of Walton's *Bear* that it not only fails to add anything to Chekhov's but even falls short by a rather wide margin of doing justice to its source. To succeed, a performance of this opera requires two central performers dramatically proficient enough to have succeeded in the original one-act play, but who can sing as well.

The lion's share of the demands of *The Bear* — both as play and as opera — falls on the shoulders of the woman who plays the marvellously human part of Madam Popova, the young widow aggressively in deep mourning, if perhaps misguided as to the appropriate duration thereof. In fact, *The Bear's* great strength as a work of creative art lies in the fact that both of its central protagonists are in distress at the outset; distress which is transformed, in less than an hour of continuous interplay, first into quite violent antagonism and then to love.

It is immensely to the credit of Heather Begg the performer that she found it in herself to play Madame Popova so soon — a matter of only a few weeks — after she had lost her own husband in real life. And prove, in the event, the personal artistic triumph of the first month of this year's summer opera season for she supplemented her triumph as Madame Popova with a marvellous recreation of her hilarious Lady Jane in *Patience*, which opened late in January for a brief run of non-subscription performances.

Overall, *The Bear* was a thoroughly successful team effort even if the lion's share of the credit for its success must go to Begg. On opening night, Gregory Yurisich lacked the stature, both dramatic and vocal, to prove a satisfying foil to Begg's Popova. By the end of the season, he had quite justified the trust displayed by the AO in preferring him to John Shaw, the world premiere Smirnov who was presumably available to sing the role in this production had he been required.

Robert Eddie made as much as the production allowed him to make of the servant Luka. Perhaps one could conceive him to be a little less the buffoon and a little more the real-life personality than Lovejoy.
The other half of the year's opening double bill, Scarlatti's The Triumph of Honour, was less satisfying overall even if it had the benefit of seasons in Adelaide, Brisbane and Melbourne prior to its Opera House debut. There, it played on its own; but rightly was finally deemed too flimsy to satisfy an audience unaugmented: hence the Sydney coupling with The Bear.

There are no complaints to be registered about this production of The Triumph of Honour in itself: Peter Cooke's designs are workable and eye-catching; Franco Cavara's direction is innovative enough to eliminate at least some of the inherent tedium even in this Triumph of Honour.

Of the individual efforts, the most interesting, to me at least, was that of John Fulford as Erminio; for Fulford is a newcomer to the national company and I had encountered him in the flesh previously only as a member of the supporting cast in Brian Howard's Inner Voices for the Victoria State Opera last year — not a part where he had much opportunity to display his vocal wares to very much effect.

In The Triumph of Honour, Fulford sang strongly and pleasingly, and acted forcefully. Overall it was a performance to make one look forward with real anticipation to the Papagenos he is scheduled to do in The Magic Flute late in the year.

Ronald Maconaghy was an excellent Bombarda and Graeme Ewer's Flaminio the closest anyone in the cast, perhaps, came to the definitive despite some unnerving shades, at the outset, of his comic servants in The Tales of Hoffmann.

As the conventionally virtuous young ladies of the piece, Judith Saliba and Kathleen Moore were indistinguishably good. Cynthia Johnston provided some piquant comic asides as the worldly wise ladies of the piece, Judith Saliba and Kathleen Moore were indistinguishably good. Cynthia Johnston provided some piquant comic asides as the worldly wise maid Rosina, though she can't quite get away any longer with playing a teenage coquette as did Margaret Russell, the first person I saw in the role, in Brisbane early in 1978.

The disappointments of this revival were Elizabeth Fretwell's Aunt Cornelia, who was inclined to swoop on her notes like a dive bomber out of control that is a good deal more likely than not to miss its target altogether; and Paul Ferris' Riccardo which, though very well sung indeed, never convinced that Riccardo was a rogue and a rake instead of an eminently likeable romantic tenor lead.

Predictably, Richard Divall conducted with unequivocal commitment and unflagging energy and an immaculate sense of style.

Even while admiring the enterprise of the AO in devising this off-beat double bill and presenting it with such style, though, one finds it hard not to nod off when yet another of Scarlatti's proliferating repeats rears its soporific head. Finally, The Triumph of Honour — no matter how well done — must reluctantly be conceded to be something of an endurance trial to present-day audiences.

It was absolutely right to couple it, for this season, with a much snappier contemporary work like The Bear. If only one or the other half of this unusual double bill had had a bit more meat on its bones, the overall exercise might well have seemed in retrospect to be considerably more meritorious.

WELCOME RETURN OF PATIENCE

The other AO opening of the month was a welcome return visit of last year's John Cox production of Patience, wearing its (admittedly not great) age superbly and playing on a non-subscription basis to audiences who were quite clearly different from the last person from those who saw it in its original manifestation.

Yet as one who had seen it before I was not surprised bored by the proceedings. Instead, there were a host of nuances to be registered that had been overlooked in the initial impact of the original which was so different from run-of-the-mill Gilbert and Sullivan as to sweep many a cobweb out of many a brain and overwhelm one with the realisation that G and S can be infinitely more than a gaggle of cardboard cutouts adopting an interminable sequence of pre-ordained postures, the name of the piece being as interchangeable as the names and attributes of the dramatic personae.

Suffice it to say that of a cast that was identical to last year's I found particular pleasure in renewing the acquaintance of Heather Begg's Lady Jane, Robert Gard's Grosvenor, Rhonda Bruce's Patience and Dennis Olsen's Bunthorne in that order. They, according to me anyhow, were all magnificent; but some, of course, just a trifle more magnificent than others.
In closing, though, I would like to say just a bit more about the VSO Pearl Fishers mentioned at the outset. It was an excellent production all round of a piece that unjustly has received less than its fair share of exposure over the years since it was written, and it was good to see it getting that sort of audience response it managed to attract at the Sydney Opera House. It was a particular achievement for the VSO to be able to double cast it so strongly, even if with the admitted aid of some talent on loan from the national company. It was even more commendable as an effort from conductor Richard Divall, who moulded a scratch orchestra and a basically underpowered chorus and two lots of principals into coherent twin casts of a work which at its best can be ravishingly beautiful in performance.

I preferred the alternative cast to the one which got the nod on opening night; but I only saw the first cast when it was suffering from the combined disadvantages of under-preparation and a few technical mishaps.

As Leila, Yvonne Kenny was the epitome of the virginal priestess but seemed to flag a bit on the depth-of-erotic-emotion front. Glenys Fowles, though occasionally troubled vocally where Kenny was not, was much more down to earth and convincing.

John Pringle was a mild-mannered, low-key Zurga who never failed to please the ear but at the same time never managed to provoke one's sense of dramatic verisimilitude. Robert Bickerstaff sang with perceptibly less skill but exuded a marvellously rough-and-ready kind of stage presence that made him absolutely credible as the kind of chap likely to be elected chief of a rough-and-ready group of unsophisticated fisherman on a straw vote.

Keith Lewis was vocally ideal for the tenor lead of Nadir, whereas Justin Lavender's voice is inherently a bit small, at least as yet, for the part. The astonishing thing about the exercise was that both have so obviously been endowed with that most rare of operatic assets, a tenor voice of considerable beauty coupled with the ability to use it to considerable effect.

Noel Mangin's Nourabad was an equally great asset to both casts; but the overall result of the quality assessment exercise implied by the above must be that the alternative cast came over better than the premiere cast.

No matter how you look at it, the VSO Pearl Fishers added up to a thoroughly pleasing stage realisation of a work too seldom performed. But at the same time, a word of caution: it would be premature to hail the VSO, on the strength of this success alone, as a second AO or anything like it. Mounting a single production for a series of performances, and then going on to rehearse one's next effort during a period free of performance obligations — the usual modus operandi of the VSO and its ilk — is quite a different thing from fulfilling the function of a full-time repertory company which at any one typical moment in its working life must be performing two or three productions in repertory even as it rehearses for others due to open in the near future.

This is not in any way to belittle the VSO effort in restaging The Pearl Fishers so well at the Sydney Opera House in January; merely to emphasise that one or two productions, no matter how marvellous, do not of themselves a full-blown opera company make — any more than the advent of a single swallow, according to the old adage, proveth the arrival of a full-blown summer.

DAVID GYGER is editor of Opera Australia.
Excellent business

JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR
OLIVER!

By John Paisley

Jesus Christ Superstar by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice. Canberra Theatre Trust and CTC Channel 7 at the Canberra Theatre, ACT. Opened 10 January 1980.

Director, Terry O'Connell; Musical director, Keith Helgesen; Designer, Anthony Babicci; Choreographer, Kim Hardwick.

Cast: Asans, Tony Falls; Jesus Christ, Mark Jackson; Mary Magdalene, Elizabeth Lord; Herod, Andrew MacDonald; Judas, Craig Maclean; Caiphas, Gary Prichard; Pilate, Colin Slater; Musicians: Derek Brassington, Graham Brown, John Carrick, Liz Hemer, Ian McDonald, Peter McDonald; Phil O'Connor.

Oliver! by Lionel Bart. Tempo Theatre at Theatre Three, Canberra ACT.

Director, Joyce Macfarlane; Musical Director, Keith Radford; Choreography, Trevor Findlay; Set designer, Russell Brown.

Cast: Oliver Twist, Stuart Davy; Artful Dodger, David McCubbin; Fagin, Charles Oliver; Nancy, Kate Peters.

Tempo's production of Oliver! gives more (for less) than I'm used to expecting from local amateur companies. I was delighted by the efforts of this large cast and found more to praise than quibble over. Joyce Macfarlane's direction is intelligent and generous, allowing her cast plenty of opportunity to show their talents and encouraging them to play to their strengths. Thus Charles Oliver's high-camp Fagin was a surprising pleasure, making a new kind of sense of Fagin's ambivalence half exploiter, half protector. Russell Brown, also responsible for the effective and flexible sets, was a fine Mr Bumble but might have done better not to force his voice into the uncomfortable lower register. The voice I liked best was that of Kate Peters (Nancy). I regretted that she wasn't given a chance to sing unaccompanied (perhaps during a reprise).

But it's the children who carry the show and though there was a little slacking in the chorus work on opening night (tiredness?), they were obviously well rehearsed and directed. David McCubbin (Dodger) charmed his way out of a moment of uncertainty with remarkable presence of mind and otherwise displayed a very engaging talent. A little more detail and precision of characterisation wouldn't go astray however. As Oliver, Stuart Davy achieved a nice balance between pathos and pertness that suggested both the victim and the survivor.

The orchestra, unseen, and unable itself to see the full stage, did jaunty justice to a score which plunges from Oom Pa Pa to haunting street calls. A fine effort from Tempo; long may they prosper.
BULLIE'S HOUSE

By Barry O'Connor


Director, Ken Horley; Designer, Michael Pearce; Lighting Designer, Keith Edmundson; Stage Manager, Michael Manuell; Music, Philip Lanley; Properties, Brian Hocking.

Bulumbil (Bullie), Athol Compton; Garraga, Bob Maza; McLean, Bill Conn; Jabbawal, Kevin Smith; Duluma, Justine Saunders; Francis Cleary, Don Reid; Hugh Burton, Martin Harris; Musician, Philip Lanley.

Bullie's House marks novelist Tom Keneally's return to the theatre after an eight year absence and the modest success of An Awful Rose in 1972. The present play reintroduces the concerns of The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith; but instead of Victorian Australia and a rather cut and dried morality, Bullies House is set in the 1950's on a mission station in Arnhem Land where this tragedy of good intentions takes place. It's a small community, only three whites and four blacks, but it's a microcosm of the relations, and more to the point, irresolvable cultural antipathies of black and white Australia.

Bullie incurred the wrath of God in a fit of Old Testament bloody mindedness.

The house is not rebuilt, but a monument of tribal mysteries is erected in the middle of the mission compound in government cement. These Ranga are the most secret tribal totems, the embodiment of black wisdom derived from a time when mankind was at one with the planet. The Ranga are forbidden to white men and black women. And they have never before been seen publicly except for a fleeting five seconds, when the Ranga shared screen time with Mickey Mouse in a movie made by an American university team who boozed up a co-operative black into revealing his secrets to them.

This time the blacks have revealed the Ranga in the hope that the whites will reciprocate. The poignancy of Keneally's play is that the whites will not reciprocate. The poignancy of Keneally's play is that the whites will not reciprocate. The poignancy of Keneally's play is that the whites will not reciprocate. The poignancy of Keneally's play is that the whites will not reciprocate. The poignancy of Keneally's play is that the whites will not reciprocate. The poignancy of Keneally's play is that the whites will not reciprocate. The poignancy of Keneally's play is that the whites will not reciprocate. The poignancy of Keneally's play is that the whites will not reciprocate. The poignancy of Keneally's play is that the whites will not reciprocate. The poignancy of Keneally's play is that the whites will not reciprocate. The poignancy of Keneally's play is that the whites will not reciprocate. The poignancy of Keneally's play is that the whites will not reciprocate. The poignancy of Keneally's play is that the whites will not reciprocate. The poignancy of Keneally's play is that the whites will not reciprocate. The poignancy of Keneally's play is that the whites will not reciprocate. The poignancy of Keneally's play is that the whites will not reciprocate. The poignancy of Keneally's play is that the whites will not reciprocate. The poignancy of Keneally's play is that the whites will not reciprocate. The poignancy of Keneally's play is that the whites will not reciprocate.

Bullie's House is razed by a freak wind which mysteriously leaves the other houses the mission intact. The moral dilemma does Bullie rebuild against the advice of his wife, and defy the Wonga or thunder? Or does he go ahead, as the whites argue, confident that he is merely an eccentric meteorologist? (A scientific explanation is that)

Bob Maza, Martin Harris and Justine Saunders in Nimrod's Bullie's House. Photo: Robert McFarlane.

Athol Compton's Bullie has been handed the centre of the play by its author, but Compton will want a keener edge to

books in a desperate but well meaning attempt to make reciprocity. But the books are second hand and don't tell you how to marry a healthy wife. (Bullie had had trouble with a tubercular missus). What help can come from a world which progress has atomised, where communications are impossible, and there are no realities behind the labels any more.

The play is loosely based on historical events that took place in the fifties on an island off north east Queensland. Most of the important events have already taken place before the play begins, and the action is continually referring back to passed incidents. The levelling of Bullie's house; the coming of the American anthropologists; the drowning of the missionary's wife in Bullie's company. The result is a sense of non-event on stage - even the murder is barely seen to happen - which focuses attention on the issues Keneally presents after the manner of a Shavian drama of ideas. These ideas, however, are given breadth and humanity in the actors' handling of their characterisations.

Athol Compton's Bullie has been handed the centre of the play by its author, but Compton will want a keener edge to
stay there. Bob Maza's tribal elder and Justine Saunders' Doolie are fine. Kevin Smith's Wallie is very good as nature's clown and sympathetic fool. He is the only man of passion in the play; he is left languishing in the horrors of Fanney Bay for fratricide. Don Reid's Professor Cleary represents the usual academic anguish of knowing that something should be done. The government man, played by Bill Conn, embodies the average Australian attitude. He wants to be mates with the black bastards but only on his own petty suburban terms. A very good performance. The most interesting character, the Rev Hugh Burton, is not developed enough. It's a pity because Martin Harris shows that he has the resources to take the character where the dramatist dared not or cared not go.

Bullies House does not answer the many questions it raises. On the contrary, it shows that there are no answers, no easy ones anyway. Director Ken Horler's matter of fact, that is to say objective, handling of the play ensures that this is so, giving the whole piece a sense of improvised immediacy. Designer Michael Pearce and lighting man Keith Edmundson provide an unlocalised and timeless stagescape against which Keneally's questions of universal (not ist national) importance can be posed.

The play starts with a solitary djeridoo, soon followed by a church choir. At the end of the play the significance of this musical introduction is clear. After two hundred years the aboriginal scream of despair has the muted and maudlin tones of the djeridoo. Now the choric scream of European civilisation has been raised in response, and raised appropriately to distortion pitch at the Nimrod Upstairs.

Awesome vacuity

ELIZABETH I
BROADWAY

By Robert Page


Cast: Lisa Banes, J Michael Butler, Suzanne Costallor, Janet DeMay, Harriet Harris, Laura Hicks, Matthew Kimbrough, Robert Lovtiz, Tom Robbins, Charles Shaw-Robinson, Scott Walters, Claudia Wilkens, William McGlenn, Randle Mell, Richard Ooms. (Professional)

God Bless America. Huge in size, major consumer of the world’s consumables, a superpower by virtue of its destructive capability, the only country able to afford to give some of its people a holiday on the moon, creator of the jumbo jet; it is unignorable by virtue of statistics.

Presently the Acting Company — with a map of the place as its logo — is here to impress us. Again the statistics are trotted out: 37 plays in 165 cities in 37 American states before 735,000 people, travelling over 75,000 miles — and this year Australia! Citations and nominations for Critics Circle, Drama Desk and Obie Awards (but how many did they actually get?). It has been called "the finest repertory company in New York City" by the New York Times, which prompts the question, how many others are there?

Their programme must this month be judged on two out of three, for The White Devil, as I understand it, was considered too far out for Sydney. The Big Smoke is thought unable to cope with such an outrageous phenomenon as punk (but weren’t the multi-coloured rinses washed out and the razor blades surgically removed several years ago?). What we did get was Elizabeth I, American author Paul Foster’s romping proves that an actress can look at a queen, and Broadway, a revue which would be sub-Mickey Spill except that it’s too old even for that.

Imagine Man of La Mancha with that hint of wit, humanity and lar mind of Cervantes, or the play...
over all of Rosencrantz and Guildenstein Are Dead, and of course excised of any comment on the human condition, add in, with large measure, the approach and style of Godspell — even down to the rainbow coloured braces — and you have some vision of the awesome vacuity of this production of Elizabeth I. I would add that by report Sydney’s New Theatre apparently made a good fist of this piece several years ago, but should forbear on the grounds that to do so firstly may appear smugly parochial, secondly that it cannot be given first hand and finally that it is hardly conceivable.

It is one of those plays which leeches on the Great Figure of History,* but is fearfully modern, alienated and Brechtian in that it keeps breaking out of its true documentary purpose to being simply a group of players presenting a play about... So, we have to boot, actors playing actors in the tale of the long road to presenting their play about Elizabeth to Elizabeth — in which case, why, as period players, do they wear rainbow braces and jeans? It’s all too confusing.

Surprisingly the piece arrives under the name of Liviu Ciulei, who not only directed but won an award here for The Lower Depths, a fact which the errant publicity machine managed to overlook entirely. Talking of erring, it’s sobering to realise that even directors with such a high position on the Great Chain of Being as he has, turn out to be human after all.

High expectation can, of course, lead to hefty disappointments. Consider Wordsworth nurturing for years in the imagination, a vision of the towering majesty of Mont Blanc, but finding in actuality what amounted to only a lump of rock. If that explains my reaction to night one, the reverse effect should have operated for night two.

Nonetheless, despite trepidation, I did think if there is one thing Americans can do it must be a play about Broadway — after all that Walt Disney West End is their home ground. This time, even expecting a lump of rock was going too far — what we got was a pebble.

For whatever the name Broadway may conjure in the mind, this hasn’t got it. The setting is supposedly — though it is very oddly shaped — the backstage area of the Paradise Night Club, some kind of speakeasy in New York. The tale tells of a gangster killing a rival from expansionist motives (no significance for American imperialism in case you’re looking for bigger themes) and is finally shot by the man’s wife who has been undercover as one of the chorus girls all the time. Of equal non-importance is the story of the performer getting the girl who is temporarily bedazzled by the diamond slave bracelet from Tiffany’s stolen by — you guessed — the baddy.

The only interest in the show comes when the girls, at regular intervals, line up to make their entrance on the stage of the night club behind the one relentlessly forced on our attention. By first interval one couldn’t help being jealous of the night club patrons who seemed to be getting much the best side of the show. The point was proved when finally we were treated to the big finish.

Perhaps it was unfair of the promoters to put what is really — statistics or not — a group of drama students in a major commercial venue; but then the company’s air of having a right to be there absolves their entrepreneurs from blame. Mention of individual performances seems useless when all — as is new blood’s wont — equally clamoured for attention and were, mutatis mutandis, interchangeable in their mannered gestures and poses.

There was plenty of material here for Welcome Back Kotter, but, unless the style smothered genius, apparently little else. Most wearing was the consistent display of youthful charm which never deepened into a fullness of approach. If this is the crucible in which the future of American stage rests, there needs to be a lot more chemistry for optimism.
One woman musical

SONGS MY MOTHER DIDN'T TEACH ME

By Derek Peat

Songs My Mother Didn't Teach Me by Peter Batey and John Mulder Bondi Pavilion, Sydney, NSW. Opened 2 January 1980.

Director, Producer and Designer, Peter Batey; Choreography, Karen Johnson.

Nancy (a waitress), Liz Harris. Nancy (her alter-ego), Karen Johnson. The Piano Man, John Mulder (Professional)

Nancy, a good catholic country girl, comes to Sydney and falls in with a drag queen dance teacher. A successful dancer, she falls in love and then falls pregnant, but Jack, the father, shoots through. Years pass. Unable to support her son, she hears Jack is now a millionaire recluse. He rejects her again and dies leaving the son nothing. The child is taken into care, the mother remains lonely and hurt by love. But, she tells the blind piano man who listens to her story, all is for the best because her son is now a sailor.

Pretty amazing stuff, but then this is the plot of the musical Songs My Mother Didn't Teach Me and of such stuff are musicals made. After all, who would have believed the plot of Evita, and if there are cliches, wasn’t Pennies From Heaven full of them?

Dennis Potter’s outstanding series of plays attempted to explore how cliches, especially those of popular songs, could articulate the inner longings and passions of inarticulate, not to say repressed, characters, and it could laugh at itself. Songs My Mother Didn't Teach Me, however, does little with its cliches other than contain them, and if the comment about the sailor is meant as an ironic joke, it wasn’t played that way.

The show, billed as “a new original musical” has book by Peter Batey and songs and lyrics by John Mulder. In Mulder’s case, I found myself thinking of that stunning young man in the advert who used to be an accountant until he discovered Smirnoff. Mulder remains a solicitor by day; perhaps he needs some more vodka. He is certainly a man of mystery. When the lights came up on-stage he was already seated at the piano dressing in black, back to the audience. I waited for him to turn. I was to wait the entire evening. The white stick and the heavy framed dark glasses indicated he couldn’t see us and obviously we weren’t to get the chance to see him.

Not only was this piano man blind, but dumb too. His only response to questions was to tinkle on the keys. Since Karen Johnson did nothing but dance, that left Liz Harris, the remaining member of the cast, to do all the talking and singing — was this the point of “original”, a musical with one speaking part? If looking at a pianist’s back for an evening is disconcerting for an audience, it must be even worse for the actress who has to try to act with him.

With no chance of interaction on-stage, Liz Harris seemed unsure in the first half whether to direct her songs to the audience, frankly acknowledging their presence, or remain within the constrictions of the stage situation. She chose the latter, but it was only in the second half, when she seemed to talk to the pianist and sing for him that she seemed at ease. One guesses the audience are supposed to feel her isolation (she sings songs about loneliness and Jack the millionaire father living alone), but most of the time she seemed caught in a void between stage and audience.

The writers, aware of the problem they’d created, had provided her with an “alter-ego” (Karen Johnson) who appeared in various costumes from Nancy’s past and danced, sometimes with her and sometimes alone. Nancy’s taped voice was used to speak from the past and articulate inner thoughts, but most of the time Liz Harris had to do the work, dramatising stories in which she played all the parts, miming, singing and dancing her heart out. She’s a talented singer and dancer, but bereft of a supporting cast, her talent wasn’t enough. She needed lines and songs much better than those she was given to work with.

Not that the songs were bad. The standard was generally high and John Mulder’s playing was excellent. His songs tend to have frequent tempo changes with complicated internal lyrics, like this one from an amusing piece about a male in hot pursuit: “How do you lie, when you don’t want to lie with the guy who wants to lie with you.” The trouble is that while there were some excellent passages, the music was rarely catchy, nor even memorable. The book throws up the occasional comic gem, like this note from a boyfriend “Can’t come out tonight, got to drain me sump” or “Who wants to see a pregnant belly dancer and anyway I didn’t want the kid to be giddy for the rest of its life”, but the monologue hardly sparked.

Maybe in a different context everything would have worked. The setting was a deserted club in the small hours and I suspect that a cabaret situation with the audience on tables around the stage might have provided the “intimate” atmosphere a sign outside the theatre claimed. If Liz Harris had been able to play off an audience, and acknowledge that this was a one-woman show. I think she’d have been much happier. And it’s partly a matter of expectations. If a show is styled a “musical”, one expects more than a string of songs held together with amusing stories.

In case I’ve been less than fair, I should add that the lady behind me obviously loved the show. From beginning to end she kept up a monologue in competition with Liz Harris on-stage: “She’s Leonard Teale’s wife, you know”, “Beautiful figure hasn’t she?” “I don’t know how she remembers it all”, and her paring shot, “I could have listened to him play all night. Beautiful, just beautiful.”
By Don Batchelor/State Rep

Bingo but not jackpot

BINGO

By Claire Crowther

Bingo by Edward Bond. La Boite Theatre, Brisbane Qld. Opened 1 February 1980.

Director: John Milson; Designer: David Bell; Lighting: Rodney Therkelven; Sound: Leonard Bauksa.

Cast: Shakespeare, Ian Austin; Old Man, Bill Dunbar; Judith, Rainee Skinner; Young Woman, Amanda Webb; Old Woman, Eileen Beatson; William Combe, Stephen Billett; Son, Bruce Morley; Jerome, Brian Plumb; Joan, Rhee Hollyer; Wally, Lloyd King; Ben Johnson, Errol O'Neill.

"I think my plays are poetry. Poetry is what you have left when you take the prose away," so says Edward Bond of himself.

Despair, pain and thwarted humanity is what we have when we take away the verbal violence of his poetry. Take away the unique acting space of La Boite, so simply utilised by David Bell as a periphery of English garden hedge with the odd accoutrements of props, and you have left eleven actors exposed relentlessly under Rodney Therkelven's lighting, moving through a scenario of unyielding mental desolation and (mostly reported) physical desolation.

The playwright's intentions; his complexity of insight; the relationship between society and its subjects perverted by the social order; the concept of money and corruption all seem facile and heavy-handed in this production.

Shakespeare, who writes like a paragon of humanitarianism, the radical social analyst perceiving man's inherent contradictions, is presented unsympathetically in Mr Milson's production, more so than in Mr Bond's play, that one only feels empathy for his blighted family, represented here by the daughter (played by Rainee Skinner). As Shakespeare, Ian Austin provides vocal truth but the portrayal lacks a comprehensive presentation.

I wanted to sympathise with Will and could not in this production. No man is all demon, as was Bond's and Shakespeare's recurring thematic intent. The snow wouldn't melt in the hand of the Bard who laid prostrate in this winter mirror to face himself, and yet no sympathy was extracted by the production, despite the searching for purity and truth so evident in this soliloquy. Self-realisation is more potent than any potion supposedly given by Ben Johnson. Therefore, let us melt in Ian Austin's hands Mr Milson, even though the snow won't in Will's hand.

The contrasts within the production are all too stark; as simplistic as was the stylised hedge, yet the Old Man managed to reveal the cankers as well as the green shoots with his hedge clippers.

Despair, torture and the hell of life in the seventeenth century and now are sledgehammered home and then the light relief begins with Act II as Ben Johnson enters. Errol O'Neill sought the nuances of his "Fool" to Shakespeare's "Lear". One only wished he had entered earlier and stayed longer because within his despair were the seeds of an animus/anima relationship with Will, which the two actors tried for but did not quite achieve.

Shakespeare's corruption (the essence of his mortality) is more endearing than the didactic social morality of Bond. Bond so smacks of evangelism and the contradiction he would seem to deny in Shakespeare, upholding and upbraiding him for his paradoxes. Playwright and director seem confused in this production at La Boite.

Mr Bond has written that there are many ways for an audience to be got at while watching a play, for instance being shot in the back of the neck, but on that premise this production doesn't give me a twinge.

Errol O'Neill (Johnson) and Ian Austin (Shakespeare) in La Boite's Bingo. Photo: Carolina Haggstrom.
Technical certainty and uncertainty

FIND THE LADY

ERROL FLYNN

Find The Lady by Michael Pertwee. Playhouse, Adelaide, SA, Opened January 1980. Director, Ted Craig; Designer, Shaun Gurton; Lighting, Les Bowden. Cast: The Lady, Kathryn Fisher; Rosie Lake, Mollie Sugden; Mrs Pratt, Myra Noble; Tim Carmel, Gordon Poole; Miss Daintee, Phyllis Burford; Mark Anderson, Robbie McGregor; Desiree Pratt, Audine Leith; Doctor Ali, Monroe Reimers; Jean Smith, Diane Chamberlain. (Professional)


Michael Pertwee’s Find The Lady is firmly embedded in the English tradition of comic whodunnit summer season fare. Akin to this tradition is the standard TV half-hour comedy, with its recognisable characters, stock situations, rapid dialogue and (often) risqué laugh-lines. It comes as no surprise, then, to find Mollie Sugden, known for her role as Mrs Slocombe in the series Are You Being Served?, as leading lady and chief draw-card in this holiday production at the Festival Centre.

Such a play sets out to entertain, and entertain it did under Ted Craig’s direction. If the smiling faces and rollicking laughter around me were anything to go by. This was despite some sloppiness in the writing which left unexplained the activities of more than one character, and provided at times some rather weak links in the plot for the sake of a funny scene. One theatrically hilarious situation, for instance, concerning a body in a trunk, was marred by the lack of a convincing reason for the body’s being put there in the first place. And — a note of disgruntlement — it’s always disappointing if the “who” of a whodunnit is clear before the end.

Nevertheless. Mollie Sugden gave the audience what they had come for — Mrs...
Slocombe in the flesh — and with a greater vitality and physical agility than one suspects from the small screen. She has a sure knack of delivering the most unlikely lines as if they were expressly written for her broad, and often coarse, Northern accent, though she could not hide the incongruity of a script which made repeated reference to her role as a retired actress. In a play which depends on stereotypes, she did not sound like your stock ex-lady-of-the-boards. It was a point which seemed to me so peripheral to the plot as to be best omitted.

For the rest. As long as there was a strong vocal attack to impel the plot forward, then laughter occurred and suspension of disbelief ensued at will. However, the moment voices lost vigour, the pace and our interest let up, and it took the outrageous contortions of Ms Sugden or Myra Noblet’s study in miniature imperiousness to restore confidence. It is the mark of the technical certainty of these two ladies that they were able to do so.

Technical certainty I found disappointingly scarce in Stage Company’s holiday contribution in The Space. Perhaps it was a case of overconfidence; having done the rounds of SA and the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, Rob George’s Errol Flynn’s Great Big Adventure Book For Boys was close to notching up its 100th performance. On the evidence presented in this return season, I found it difficult to understand how it had come this far.

It is pure revue, blessed with a gift of a title to catch ever so little at the heart-strings of anyone who thrilled as a child to the words “adventure book”. Couple that with the romantic rake himself and your audience is spoiling for the delicious self-indulgence of a trip down nostalgia lane.

What can go wrong?

Those two words again. Technical certainty. Since depth of character was not the aim, the playing had to be funny, fast and slick enough to obviate the need for it. Around the constant figures of Errol and his intrepid but dull would-be biographer, Lois Tudor, there revolve thirty or so characters played by five actors. Don Barker is a past master of the living cartoon, and Rob George himself proved a dab hand at rapid personality change. But the others all had moments of imprecision where their many roles blurred and with them the story. Andrew Clarke looked and behaved like a believable Flynn, but suffered along with Nina Landis (Lois Tudor) from over-exposure as a two-dimensional character, so that his final moment of truth — aging actor regrets — slipped irretrievably into sentimentality.

After the exactness of Play Strindberg, I found the direction at times surprisingly vague. Scene transitions were clumsy, with the final punch-line often fuzzed by an awkward exit, and lighting could have done more to give focus to the wide stage area. Choreography was ordinary, while the downbeat quality of most of David Scheel’s music did not provide enough of a contrast with the stage mood.

At worst it was dull and run of the mill; at best, light-hearted fun. But isn’t it time both Rob George and Steve Spears moved on from the revue form that nurtured them and began to push beyond superficiality to something more lasting? Both have touched on themes which could take a deal of exploration in depth; both have made decisions deliberately to teeter on the surface. It has become something of a fashion lately to take a famous person and build a play around that. But a good play will stand whatever the name of the protagonist. In this case, call Errol Flynn John Smith and I wonder how successful his Adventure Book would be.
Depth and potential

By Colin Duckworth

To begin this evening with Beckett with a piece written for radio was asking for trouble, as whatever Beckett does is perfectly conceived for the medium he chooses for it. However, Embers (called, by Kenner, Beckett's most difficult work) was in fact enhanced by the powerful physical presence of Bruce Keller. Admittedly, some of the effects were missing or distorted: Henry clomping down the stairs and across the rostrum in squeaky boots did not give the impression of shingle on the beach. Having Ada's voice coming from the mouth of Marilyn O'Donnell just behind one's head, loud and clear, did not render the "low, remote voice" of the Ada within Henry's head. But even thought the constant teetering between illusion and reality implicit in the text and in better radio versions than the BBC's in 1959 once could not be maintained on stage, Keller's grim, grotesque, sardonic and clear-spoken performance held us completely, and led us to look forward with confidence to his Krapp. Andrew Bell's sound design, so vital to the creation of atmosphere, was discreet and precise: the muffled electronic-organ arpeggios faintly resembling, and yet "so unlike the sound of the sea", the unloved, unwanted child's excruciating palying on the broken down piano...all part of the haunting to which the mind of this old man, engulfed in solitude, is prone.

The stage was then littered with rubbish for a truncated version of what might have been better called Short of Breath: groan, breath, groan. Where was the newborn baby's cry? Without it this thirty-second encapsulation of the life-cycle makes no sense. The sweeping-up after was more rewarding to watch.

Not I began well. One eventually tracked down the source of the voice muttering; suspended apparently a couple of feet from the ceilign was the minutely-spotlit Mouth. But from this point on, the performance by any spectator who did not know the text.

With Bruce Keller's Krapp we were back on solid ground. Keller had made the sacrifice of his hair — necessarily at such short range — thus giving his 69-year old decrepit a startling realism. His voice matched, contrasting well with that of the 39-year old Krapp on tape. He introduced some nice initial gags (repeated banging of head on lamp, symbolic gesture of senile impotence with lowered head, mouth full of banana).

Building up his portrait of ironic, violent, frustrated rejection of nostalgia for his flagged pursuit of happiness, Keller drew both humour and compassion from this confrontation of present age and past youth. The contrast between his myopic, cataracted eyes of the now, and the occasional glared-over gaze recalling the then ("The face she had! The eyes!...Ah well...") revealed an actor capable of real depth and potential.

With two bullseyes out of four shots, Jean-Pierre Mignon should be encouraged that his French training and ten years' work in European theatres is beginning to bear fruit here.
Sheer caviar

THE OLD COUNTRY

By Raymond Stanley


Executive producer, Wilton Morley; Director, Robin Lovejoy; Designer, James Ridewood; Lighting, Walter Van Nieuwkuyk.

Cast: Hilary, Robert Morley; Bron, Margo Lee; Eric, Robert Van Mackelenberg; Olga, Louise Pajo; Duff, Wallis Eaton; Veronica, Bettina Welch.

Here is a play every intelligent theatregoer appreciating good thought-provoking theatre should rush to see. It is sheer caviar.

Admittedly, it is not easy to follow; it requires one's absolute concentration and memory of what has previously been said or unsaid. For full appreciation awareness is needed of people, places and things briefly referred to. And some of the references cannot be very familiar to Australian ears. But author Bennett never labours at any point and, if one is not quick to grasp it at first hearing, a second detail is likely to be missed later.

All seems veiled in mystery. Elderly Hilary lives with wife Bron in a book-cluttered ramshackled wooden place surrounded by trees. Where are references to Scotland, but not until Hilary's complaint well into the first act — "Of course the service is bad here. But then it always has been. Apparently one waited an age in a restaurant even under the Tsars. Nothing has changed" — is Russia specified as the setting.

The couple are visited by young Eric and his wife Olga. Eric, it emerges, is a draughtsman from Portsmouth Dockyard; his wife speaks with a slight accent. When the pair have left, Hilary remarks that he, Eric and Olga have nothing in common at all. "Except the one thing — you're all traitors," says Bron. Thus another clue is dropped.

Soon there arrive upon the scene Hilary's sister, Veronica, and her newly-knighted husband, Duff, who seems to be very influential and sits on various arts boards. It appears the two pairs are meeting for the time time in fourteen years. Apparently Duff's mission in coming to Russia is to persuade Hilary to return to England...he suggests a publisher could be interested in his memoirs. Olga it seems is in league with Duff to return her brother-in-law somehow to England. "The British have someone we want," she says. "We have no one they especially want, but you will do."

Hilary is apathetic about going...Bron less so. It is Eric who would like to return (he once apparently had a one-night stand with Duff), but he it is who remains on at the end.

There is little plot, but much talk. The dialogue is very rich and always worth listening to, scattered with jewels of wit. Frequently one is reminded of T S Eliot; and it would seem Bennett has been influenced by the plays of John Whiting, Charles Morgan and Harold Pinter. And — because of the setting — there is an overall feeling of Chekhov.

Robert Morley makes the role of Hilary seem tailor-made: throwaway witty lines fall from his lips as naturally as if they were his own words, delivered during an interview, aided and abetted by intense stares, raising of eyebrows and sense of the ridiculous. After seeing Morley in the part it is impossible to imagine Hilary being played by any other actor — and certainly not Alec Guinness, who created the role in London.

Bettina Welch seems just right for Veronica. Her entrance on stage is like a mild explosion and brightens up everything around. She points every line to maximum effect in her unique throaty voice.

With Margo Lee, looking every inch the faded wife, Bron, one sometimes has difficulty hearing ends of sentences. Fine as her performance is, one still feels there are more depths of her role to be plumbed.

A strange unrecognisable accent seems to hamper Robert Van Mackelenberg's playing of Eric, but as Olga Louise Pajo is spot on.

Robin Lovejoy has done a great job of direction: skilfully moving characters around in some very static situations. Occasionally though — on the first night at least — are some bad maskings.

And James Ridewood's set is really outstanding.
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JUDGEMENT

By Cathy Peake


Director, William Gluth; Designer, Robert Gabert; Costume, Wendy Robertson.

Cast: Andrei Vukhov, Malcolm Robertson

"Only a party to a case can really judge, but being a party, it cannot judge. Hence there is no possibility of judgement in this world, but only the glimmer of a possibility."

Judgement by English writer, Barry Collins, sits firmly within the terms of Kafka's paradox. His play is a fictionalised account of an incident in Southern Poland during the Second World War — an incident that George Steiner refers to in his Death of Tragedy.

Its broad details are as follows. A group of Russian officers were captured by the German Army and imprisoned in a deserted monastery without clothes, food or water. Two months later, the advancing Red Army discovered the two survivors — brothers, one of whom was demented by their survival through cannibalism, the other having retained his sanity.

After their rescue, they were given a decent meal, and then shot, "lest the soldiers see to what abjection their former officers had been reduced". Steiner.

The play is written in the form of a dramatic monologue, and is spoken by the single sane survivor. A deeply harrowing piece, its dramatic focus turns with great force on the moral ambiguity of Vukhov's sanity. The "judgement" he seeks is a judgement about his own composure, and his unnerving ability to present an articulate and logical account of the ordeal. As he says: "My own state of mind is my accuser".

The theatre is set up as a courtroom before which Vukhov stands virtually motionless, clad in white and with his hands behind his back. Beside him is a small deal table on which rests a sharpened human thigh bone — his "silent witness", and later identified as belonging to the remains of Officer Lubianko.

Vukhov asks: "Am I not the logical savage? Am I not a visitor returned from the last frontier? And the ensuing monologue is brilliantly tailored to the exploration of his fierce moral dilemma.

The real strength of this script lies with its refusal to allow the whole barbarous experience to degenerate into histrionics and voodoo. Vukhov's dual crime — to have survived through cannibalism, and to have survived sane is detailed with a control and a sensitivity that is quite shattering. Inevitably, the play raises wider issues of morality and "judgement".

Have we created a world in which survival depends upon strategies so barbarous and so inhuman that it makes nonsense to talk of a moral order? There is no answer to this question however, for as Vukhov insists: "My problem is with the facts. Yours is with the interpretation of the facts".

Malcolm Robertson brings a formidable effort of energy and concentration to his character. The images he creates over the space of two hours are drawn with an economy and an intelligence that is spare, and entirely unforgettable.

Using only his voice, he exploits the possibilities of reported speech to the utmost, teasing out the contradictions and the tensions of Vukhov's inner life, and finding a high precision and clarity for precisely that material which alienates and repulses his fellow men.

Robertson, and director William Gluth work within tight limits, and never lose sight of the fine rational lines which hold Vukhov's nightmare together. In the end, it is his miracle of logical exposition, and of accountability which triumphs. On opening night, they were rewarded. There was no applause, and when the lights went down the audience were just left stunned in their seats.
State Rep./Joan Ambrose

Intelligent, entertaining

GARDEN PARTY

By Margot Luke


Director: Raymond Omodei; Designer: Bill Dowd; Cast: Eleanor Sanderson, Rosemary Barr, Raymond Hitchcock, Gerald Hitchcock, Malcolm Worrs, Neville Tweed, Sally, his wife, Margaret Ford, Kate, Merrin Canning, Phillipa, Edgar Metcalfe, Maude Robinson, Joan Sydney, Nicholas, Michael van Schoor, Tony Robinson, Vic Hawkins. (Professional)

Edgar Metcalfe, long a dominating force in Perth Theatre, has entered a new phase. As an actor and director he has been sporadically showered with praise, awards and admiration. As a writer, he has been known for lightweight entertainments: revues and pantomime scripts of more than average wit have punctuated many end-of-year festivities. Although he is the author of three "straight" plays which have been produced in Britain, _Garden Party_ is our first introduction to Metcalfe the Actual Playwright.

Well before the first night the grapevine had prepared the cognoscenti that the play would be full of recognisable figures from the arts and academia, and provide a lively ingroup game of "name the originals." What in fact emerged, was a very funny, and perceptive study (bravely unfashionable in its masterly construction), of universally recognisable types with a certain local colouring. Each capital city of Australia (and for that matter their provincial counterparts in Britain) has its dragon-lady who collects ambitious and pliable young men to act as emotional props and cheap domestic labour; its boorish senior academics who tell aggressively tasteless jokes and hanker after vulnerable young women; its dim academic wives; its heart-of-gold earth-mother types - need one go on? Except that Metcalfe, contrary to the current fashion of making them drearier than life has made them more articulate, funnier or bitchier, as relevant. One is reminded at times of Coward, at other times of Ayckbourn. This does not imply that the play is derivative or imitative, but rather does it hint at the company of its peers.

Ray Omodei's production is an unqualified success. A strong cast moves smoothly through Bill Dowd's uncluttered set, which has the right touch of Perth "older suburb" elegance with gracious pot plants and booze. Pacing and mood-setting is subtle: the play's balance of serious social observation and hilarious comedy of manners depends on a sure feeling for the contrasts and rhythms, and the nine players, each of them an interesting character-study, are allowed their star-turns and to contribute to the total tableau of the not-so-beautiful people at play.

Within the deceptively simple framework of a Sunday garden party characters are introduced and revealed, relationships form and crumble, and a way of life is portrayed with mocking astuteness.

Metcalfe has a fine ear for the social nuances implied by trivia. The cosy cliches of his semi-deaf academic wife are spot on, as are the gloriously bitchy swipes smoothie, projects a suitably convincing quality of virile glamour.

The whole thing is enormously intelligent, perceptive, and thoroughly entertaining, and one hopes that despite the handicaps of critical fashion and Australian geography, the play will make its way beyond the tree-lined suburbs of Perth.
By Leslie Anderson

Whether it's endemic to all performing arts companies or just a desire not to be upstaged by the big boys, Western Australia has had its own behind-the-scenes drama in the music world. While not attracting national publicity nor involving international names the hassle has sadnessed genuine music lovers in this State.

In November the Western Australian Opera Company had just finished a five night sell-out season at the Perth Concert Hall. There was a poignancy about the final bows of musical director Alan Abbott and tenor Gerald Stern. Their bows were definitely final. Mr Abbott's contract with the company was not to be renewed. This also meant the end of his three-year association with the WA Arts Orchestra. Mr Stern's contract has also expired.

There was an irony in the success of Madame Butterfly which is in the late 19th century grand opera tradition. When a confidential review commissioned by the Western Australian Arts Council found its way into the daily press the Opera Company was publicly chided for being too ambitious. In the hullabaloo following the leaking of a review into opera and music theatre in WA it was alleged that the company had used the council report as a excuse to get rid of Alan Abbott.

This is vehemently denied by the general manager of the Opera Company, Mr Vin Warrener, variously described as "the best opera administrator in the country" or "the survivor". He has insisted that the funding for the company is so precarious it is in no position to offer long-term contracts to anybody. Mr Gerald Krug has been offered and has accepted a five-month contract.

Mr Warrener has said that short-term contracts are unsatisfactory artistically but existing funding arrangements rule out long-term contracts. He makes no secret of his bitterness about the opera and music theatre review undertaken by the committee of inquiry set up by the Arts Council.

"The iniquity of the report was that it was presented as a fait accompli," he said, "the recommendations were put forward without the company being given a chance to refute allegations or discuss proposed solutions. There have been subsequent discussions but it was an absolute denial of democracy.

"The Council gets quarterly reports and financial statements from this Company. They were never questioned. I find it a remarkable situation that a report could be brought down by a supposedly reputable body of people without the major company under scrutiny being asked for explanations. Whoever leaked that report to the press was no friend of opera in this State."

If Mr Warrener's reaction is bitter, the reaction of the retiring council chairman, Professor Frank Callway was concerned.

The review was publicised while he was abroad. Among other things it said:
- The Opera Company had attempted an over-ambitious range of productions.
- The Company had failed to follow a consistent artistic policy and had advertised too readily expected that subsidies should make up for deficiencies.
- Standards of professionalism did not match up to standards being obtained elsewhere.
- WA is not yet in a position to maintain a full-scale professional opera company capable of providing full-time employment.
- Professional and amateur groups should co-operate more.
- An association should be established between the WA Opera Company and the State Opera Company of South Australia.

The dust was still settling from this fracas when the news broke that Alan Abbott's contract was not being renewed. Meanwhile, in the absence of Professor Gallaway, the acting chairman of the Arts Council, Mrs Erica Underwood, released a press statement denying claims that the review into opera and music theatre had set out to undermine the work of the Opera Company. The Council reaffirmed its support for opera and music theatre within the State in style and forms appropriate to local circumstances and resources.

Mrs Underwood said the review had been prompted, in part, by the Opera Company's request for an additional $75,000 above its 1979 grant of $172,000 from the Arts Council and a grant of $40,000 from the Australia Council. The grant is the second largest grant awarded by the Arts Council in WA.

Professor Callway, on his return, set about soothing ruffled feathers with all the aplomb of a Sally Rand. (Experienced fan dancers, at times, have to protect both their front and their rear simultaneously.) He endorsed Mrs Underwood's press statement and the words "accountability", "public monies" and "responsibility" were used.

The committee of inquiry comprised Mr Derek Holroyde, Dean of the School of Arts and Design at the WA Institute of Technology, Mrs Judy Reynolds, honorary director of the Avon Valley Arts Society, Miss Elizabeth Sweeting, a former general manager of the English Opera Group and director of the graduate diploma course in arts administration at the South Australian Institute of Technology and Mr David Richardson of Perth, a partner in Coopers and Lybrand Services who studied the operation of the Australian Opera.

Mr Holroyde and Mrs Reynolds are members of the WA Arts Council. The committee was set up in March last year and called for submissions from the public. More than one hundred submissions were received and a report was presented to the Arts Council in July.

One could not question the courage of the committee. One should not question their integrity and goodwill for opera and music theatre in WA. But one could and should question the wisdom of Arts Council involvement in a review which, whatever its intention, read as an indictment of WA's leading musical organisation.

Perth's performing arts community is a small one with the usual jealousies and jockeying for position. This kind of brouhaha we have been witnessing only confirms the suspicions of politicians and public that art is a luxury, elitist area undeserving of the tax dollar.
SAVE THE WARNER THEATRE
Dear Sir,
The committee of The Association of Community Theatres protests in the strongest possible terms at the Commonwealth Bank's proposed demolition of the Warner Theatre.

Built for live theatre in 1856 it has been in continuous use since that time and is one of the oldest surviving theatre buildings in the country.

Australia's cultural heritage has been too often vandalised in the name of commerce. We call upon the Commonwealth Bank to preserve this theatre for posterity.

In other cities of Australia public buildings of beauty and importance to our heritage have been preserved through public outcry at their proposed destruction. The State Theatre in Sydney has been threatened but still stands. The Regent Theatre in Brisbane still stands despite many threats. Adelaide citizens remember with horror what happened to the Theatre Royal. Please do not let this happen to the Warner.

Public outcry will surely force one of Australia's largest financial institutions to reconsider and incorporate the theatre within the new building design. Theatre people and conservationists in other Australian cities have rallied before and stopped short-sighted demolition of a part of their city's history. Do Adelaide people care less?

Remember Edmund Wright House and let's get off our collective backside and tell the bank that we won't allow the destruction of yet another of Adelaide's historic landmarks. If the Commonwealth Bank will not reconsider may we suggest that theatre people, theatre companies, and concerned individuals consider where they bank and why.

For the committee of The Association of Community Theatres,
Edwin Relf (ACT Administrator),
Adelaide SA

AN OPEN LETTER TO MONAHEH DAYMAN ADAMS
Dear Messrs Hutchinson and Adams
We are disappointed that your Open Letter to the Theatre Board in February makes no reference to the explanation with respect to La Mama already given to you in our letter of 7 January 1980.

The simple facts are that La Mama, when applying to the Theatre Board in September, advised:

"We will be submitting the same budget to the Victorian Ministry for the Arts...."

Unfortunately when the Theatre Board met to consider La Mama's application on 28-30 November 1979, La Mama had still not submitted its application to the Victorian Ministry. The Theatre Board, therefore, made an interim grant to ensure that there would be no interruption in the activities of La Mama, and deferred to its March meeting a final decision on the total grant for 1980.

All your queries about motives and perversity seem to ignore the facts. The Theatre Board regards La Mama with many of the same sentiments expressed in your letter, and hopes that the important traditions of this theatre space will continue.

Yours sincerely
Bob Adams
Director
Theatre Board

POOR QUALITY PETER PAN
Dear Sir,
Recently I took my young niece to see Robin Beard's production of Peter Pan at the Comedy Theatre in Melbourne. I was annoyed at having to pay $4.00 for a two-year old child and $6.50 for myself, a student. However, I paid the money in the belief that the pantomime would be enjoyable and of reasonable standard, which is surely what one is entitled to expect at those prices.

Not so, however. I was appalled at the whole production. Perhaps with the exception of Hugh Munroe (Peter Pan) there was a complete lack of energy and enthusiasm generated by either the adult or child actors; the direction was terrible and the talent was noticeable only by its acute absence. Small wonder that we could tolerate it no longer than interval. One does not need to be a connoisseur of the theatre to realise just how bad this production was.

It amazes me that it even ran the length of its scheduled season; ripping off the pubic with a poor quality pantomime which would perhaps be just passable in a high school auditorium is not my idea of successful theatre.

Perhaps it is just that the Melbourne public — children in particular — is so starved of family theatrical entertainment that it will undiscerningly digest any amount of crap it is served up. There is ample evidence of the superb talent that abounds in this state, not to mention the rest of the country. One would wonder why better use is not being made of our excellent resources.

Yours sincerely,
Toni Vernon,
Moorabbin, Vic.

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By John McCallum

Calm before the storm?


I have before me this month two assessments of the present state of Australian theatre and drama, both of which find that, in the words of one, "the mood at the moment is one of eerie calm". Both are motivated by more than a turn-of-the-decade desire to sum up. Peter Fitzpatrick, in After The Doll, studies the last twenty-five years of Australian playwriting and concludes that we are in many ways still concerned with the same old debates — that in spite of the tremendous consolidation and maturation, particularly in the last twelve years, the central untested and limiting assumptions of our drama have barely changed. Jack Hibberd, in an article, "Proscenium Arch Blues," in a recent Meanjin considers that the changes and innovations of the last decade have been happily assimilated into the theatrical status quo, but that is all; the established theatre itself has not subsequently developed. Barry Dickins, in the same issue, provides a striking example of the truth of this conclusion.

I also have before me, however, the Currency Press edition of Alex Buzo’s superb play Makassar Reef, which at least shows that we are in a great place to be becalmed, but which also answers Peter Fitzpatrick’s reservations about new developments in Australian playwriting. I have always been a great admirer of Buzo’s work (as have many other people, in spite of a few cynics) and I find it difficult to understand the sour critical response Makassar Reef had.

Contrary to what many people seem to assume, Buzo is not a failed naturalistic writer, whose love of wit and style interferes with his characterisation, and whose use of specific social settings implies a cynical attempt to debunk Australian social mores. In a highly entertaining way (as even his detractors acknowledge) he uses familiar genres and his own sparkling line in wit and verbal dexterity to explore quite profoundly the quiet desperation of his leading characters.

These characters, like Coralie Landsdowne, Edward Martello, Weeks Brown, Beth Fleetwood and Wendy Ostrov, are in their different ways caught up in sophisticated moral dilemmas as they try to find ways of not hurting each other of finding stability in their relationships with each other, and of reconciling these moral claims with their own needs and ideals. This is naturally a complicated business, and Buzo is no simple moralist, so the plays demand great concentration. That concentration is assured by the witty and entertaining form, although some critics claim to find that they can’t see past the surface brilliance. (The problem is sometimes exacerbated by insensitive production, in Sydney at least.)

It is this formally precise and complex treatment of deeply human problems which seems to belie Peter Fitzpatrick’s guarded pessimism — Buzo at least, has moved well beyond the old debates of representing Australians to themselves and finding naturalistically truthful idioms with which to do so.

Aside from this particular argument with it, After The Doll is still a very useful and astute account of its subject. It does not overcome all the problems of writing a fully integrated social and literary history of drama — no work could — but it is interesting and provocative about the richest period of Australian drama. As is inevitable in a work with a literary rather than a theatrical approach, it places a great deal of emphasis on language. I am not altogether convinced by the argument that recent plays have in a special way been about language itself, but it is a sign of the book’s worth that one is able to respond continually and warmly to its arguments.

JACK HIBBERD’S argument, contained in a short, allusive article, is much moreleanly put, but no less provocative for that. The difficulty for me about it is that I believe him to be completely right — that much current Australian theatre is completely directionless, institutionalised and that its concerns lie outside the general social and cultural life of the communities in which they are pursued. And yet it is so tempting to point to the satisfactions we do get from the theatre, and say that if we have such plays as Visions, The Man From Muckinipin and Makassar Reef (and indeed The Overcoat) then things can’t be too bad. For this is perhaps the whole trouble — that justified enthusiasm for what we know turns too easily into complacency.

Theatrically Hibberd’s prescription includes what he calls polycentric theatre in a range of small community theatres “with their own personalities and rationales” — a “theatre republic”. This sort of theatrical decentralisation is of first importance if we are to break the monopolies of the existing large theatre organisations and the “cravat-necked Londoners”. I gather that this sort of thing is beginning to happen in Victoria. In NSW Aarne Neeme took over as Artistic Director of the Hunter Valley Theatre Company in Newcastle, and announced that Newcastle should theatrically become more than a satellite of Sydney. Barry Dickins writes in Meanjin, that his artistic roots are in Reservoir. I still think that a theatre scene which can encompass the huge, but hugely different talents of Barry Dickins and Alex Buzo has got something going for it, but certainly when we have rediscovered the human, social and sensual “sorcery” of theatre, and when, like Eugenio Barber, we can barter these mysteries with each other, then we will have a much more exciting theatrical life.
ACT THEATRE

ALPHA THEATRE
ANU Arts Centre: Life Pieces by Alan McKay; 3 one-act Australian plays. 12-15 March.

AUSTRALIAN THEATRE WORKSHOP

JAKE WILTON’S WANTONESSE; supper show. March 12-20.

CANBERRA REPERTORY (47 4222)
Theatre Three: Joseph Conrad Goes Ashore by David Allen; director, Ken Boucher. To March 15.

CANBERRA THEATRE (49 8211)
La Claca puppets: Mori el Merma. March 24, 25.

FORTUNE THEATRE COMPANY
Playhouse (49 4488)
Ashes by David Rudkin. To March 5.

CANBERRA THEATRE Centre: Lunchtime performances from March 17 for six weeks.

PLAYHOUSE (49 4488)
Leider Southern Regional Theatre: Catherine by Jill Shearer. March 4-8.

REID HOUSE THEATRE WORKSHOP (47 0781)

NSW THEATRE

ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW SOUTH WALES (357 6611)
School Tours: The Bandels, world of magic for infants and primary; South Coast until March 28.

Pinocchio, drama for infants and primary; Central and Far West throughout March.

Blinky Bill a children’s play for infants and primary; Riverina until March 28.

Jenny Hope mime show for infants, primary and secondary; North Coast and Hunter until March 28.

The Octaves, folk music for infants, primary and secondary; North West and Hunter until March 28.

Sonteguara, a renaissance musical ensemble for infants, primary and secondary, metropolitan areas from March 17.

Adult Tours: Flexitime by Roger Hall; directed by Don Mackay with Paul Karo, Anne, Phelan and Peter Cummins. Statewide from March 17.

COURT HOUSE HOTEL (969 8202)
Oxford Street, Taylor Square
Ockers in Orbit by Robert and David Landsberry; directed by Malcolm Frawley, music by Gary Smith with Susan Asquith, Steven Sacks and Kurt Jansen. Throughout March.

ENSEMBLE THEATRE (929 8877)
Was He Anyone? by N F Simpson; director, Max Phipps; with Lucy Charles Maggie Dence, Jon Ewing, Hilary Larkum, Bronwen Philips, Charlie Strachan and Greg Radford. Throughout March.

FIRST STAGE THEATRE COMPANY (82 1603)
The History of Theatre in Dramatic Form by Gary Baxter, directed by Chris Lewis; with Angela Bennie, Damien Corrigan and Gary Baxter. Touring to schools throughout March.

FRANK STRAIN’S 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, Garth Meade, Neil Bryant and Helen Lorain; directed by George Carden. Throughout March.

GENESIAN THEATRE (SS 5404)
The Deep Blue Sea by Terence Rattigan; directed by Nanette Frew. Commences March 15.

HER MAJESTY’S THEATRE (212 3411)

KIRIBILLI PUB THEATRE (92 1415)
Kirribilli Hotel, Milson’s Point The 1984 Show by P P Cranney; directed by Richard Young; music by Adrian Morgan, with Danny Adcock, Margie McCrae, Peter Corbett, Ross Holmnen and Laura Gabriell.

LES CURRIE PRESENTATIONS (358 5676)

Colony, a programme of folk songs and sketches describing colonial Australia devised and performed by Colin Douglas and Tony Sutter for infants, primary and secondary; NSW country throughout March.

MARIAN STREET THEATRE (498 3166)
Closed for renovations.

MARIQUET THEATRE OF AUSTRALIA (2 0588)
Recording Hall, S.O.H.

Captain Lazar and his Earthbound Circus written by Patrick Cook and directed by Richard Bradshaw with music by Robyn Archer. Commences March 19.

MUSIC HALL THEATRE RESTAURANT (909 8222)
East Lynne by Mrs Henry Wood; directed by Alton Harvey with Alton Harvey, Bernadette Houshagen, Mal Carmont and Christine Cameron. Throughout March.

MUSIC LOFT THEATRE (977 6585)
Caught In The Act, a variety review produced by William Orr with Queenie Paul, Darryl Stewart, Myke Parker and Peter McGowan. Throughout March.

NEW THEATRE (519 3403)
Brown Pelican by George Sklar; directed by Kay Nicholls. Throughout March.
NIMROD THEATRE (699 5003)
Upstairs: *Bull's House* by Thomas Keneally; directed by Ken Horler; with Athol Compton, Justine Saunders; Bob Maza, Kevin Smith, John Reid, Bill Conn, Martin Harris and Philip Lanley. Until March 2.

The House Of The Deaf Man by John Anthony King; directed by John Bell; with Paul Bertram, Vivienne Garrett, Joseph Furst, Kerry Walker and Anna Volska. Commences March 12.

Downstairs: *Traitors* by Steven Seewell; directed by Neil Armfield; with Noni Hazlehurst, Colin Friels, Judy Farr, Michele Fawdon, Max Gillies and Barry Otto. Until March 23.

NSW THEATRE OF THE DEAF (357 1200)
The "Shhh" Journey for primary schools and Actions Speak Louder Than Words for secondary schools; both directed by Ian Watson; with Nola Colefax, David London, Colin Allen, Bryan Jones and Rosemary Lenzo. Metropolitan area throughout March.

PLAYERS THEATRE COMPANY (30 721I)
*Songs My Mother Didn't Teach Me* by Peter Batey and John Mulder; directed by Peter Batey; with Liz Harris, Karen Johnson and John Mulder. Throughout March.

Q THEATRE (047 21 5735)
*Absent Friends* by Alan Ayckbourn; directed by Don Munro. For details phone the company.

THEATRE ROYAL (231 6111)
*Close of Play* by Simon Gray; directed by Rodney Fisher; with Ruth Cracknell and Frank Thring. Until March 22.

SYDNEY CONCERTS (36 1745)
*The Threepenny Opera* by Bertolt Brecht; music, Kurt Weill; producer, John Milson; designer, Stephen Gow; with June Salter. March 7-29.

THEATRE AUSTRALIA MARCH 1980 61

THEATRE

ARTS THEATRE (36 2344)
*Happy Family* by Giles Cooper; director, Dorothy Bucknell; designer, Peter Erdmann. Feb 14 - March 22.

BRISBANE ACTORS COMPANY (349 1879)
For details phone the company.

HER MAJESTY'S (22 12777)
*The Old Country* by Alan Bennett; producer, Wilton Morley; Director, Robin Lovejoy; Designer James Ridewood; with Robert Morley. March 4-15.

LA BOITE (36 1622)
*Blow Fly Blow* by Stephen Meadway; director, Nicky Bricknell. To 29 March.

POPULAR THEATRE TROUPE (36 356)
On tour.

QUEENSLAND THEATRE COMPANY (229 3031)
*Gypsy* by Synge and Sondheim; director, John Krummell; musical director, Brian Stacey; choreography, Jack Webster; designer, Stephen Gow; with June Salter. March 7-29.

TN COMPANY (52 8888)
*The Threepenny Opera* by Bertolt Brecht; music, Kurt Weill; producer, John Milson; designer, David Bell; with Geoff Cartwright, Duncan Wass, Judith Anderson. March 20-April 21.

DANCE

QUEENSLAND BALLET COMPANY (229 3355)
On tour.

QUEENSLAND BALLET THEATRE (229 3031)
*Sylvia*. March 17-22.

CONCERTS

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (212 3411)
Peter Allen until March 1.

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE (2 0588)
*Dressed Like an Egg* presented by Mabou Mines from March 25 to 29.

*Nunsenda* by Don Munro until March 8.

*The Threepenny Opera* by Bertolt Brecht; music, Kurt Weill; producer, John Milson; designer, Stephen Gow; with June Salter. March 7-29.

THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET (2 0588)
Programme 1: *Symphony in C* by George Balanchine; music, Béjart; *Scheherazade* choreography Mikhail Fokine; music Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov; and *Graduation Ball* choreography David Lichine, music Johann Strauss II. Commences March 21.

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE (2 0588)
Prague Chamber Ballet. March 10 to 15.

THEATRE AUSTRALIA MARCH 1980 61

CONCERTS

QUEENSLAND ARTS COUNCIL (221 5900)
*Fleetwood Mac*. March 15 and 16.

QUEENSLAND OPERA COMPANY (221 7749)
*Mary Stewart*; director, John Thompson; conductor, Graham Young; designer, Mike Bridges; with Phylis ball, Margaret Russell, Henry Howell. 19 Feb - 1 March.

WAYNE ROBIN BROWNE - touring Qld.

THEATRE AUSTRALIA MARCH 1980 61
For entries contact Don Batchelor on 356 9311.

SA

ADELAIDE FESTIVAL THEATRE

OPERA THEATRE (51 0121)
Acting Company of New York: Elizabeth I by Paul Foster; directed, designer Liviu Ciulei. March 7, 8, 10, 12. The White Devil by Webster; director, Michael Kahn. March 13, 14, 15. La Claca Company: Mori El Merma (puppets); director Joan Baixas. March 7, 8, 10, 12.

OPERA THEATRE (51 0121)
by Paul Foster; directed, designer Liviu and David Allen. March 10-15.

THEATRE ROYAL (3 4 6266)
State Theatre Co: Every Good Boy Deserves Favour by Tom Livingston; director, Ted Craig; with Molly Sugden. March 4-8.

CONCERTS

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

ALEXANDER THEATRE (543 2828) Theatre des Jeunes Annees: The Lion of Sand, presented by the Victorian Arts Council 10am, 2pm on selected days.

AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING GROUP (347 7133) Carboni, starring Bruce Spence. Sore Throat by Howard Brenton; director, Wilfrid Lasl and Richard Murpheit; with Wilfrid Last, Fay Mokotow and Marilyn O'Donnell.

COMEDY CAFE (Brunswick St. Fitzroy) Original Comedy entertainment starring Rod Quantock.

HOOPLA THEATRE FOUNDATION (63 7643) Playbox Downstairs: Quadraphenia by Ted Neisen; director, Charles Tingwell; designer, Tracey Watt. World premiere. That's the Way To Do It; with Chris Harris; a celebration of the comedy of Punch and Judy. From March 18.

Playbox Upstairs: Australia Majestic by Roger Pulvers; director, Malcolm Robertson. Upside Down At The Bottom Of The World by David Allen; director, Murray Copland; designer, Jennie Tate. From March 27.

HER MAJESTY'S (663 3211) Son of Betts, devised by and starring Reg Livermore; director, Peter Batey; with the Wellington Bevils band.

LAST LAUGH THEATRE RESTAURANT (419 6226) The Whittles With The Lot; starring the Whittles - Slim, Tammy, Whit, Acacia, Jack and Grandpa; director, Evelyn Krape.

MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY (654 4000) Russell Street: Betrayal by Harold Pinter; director, John Sumner; designer, Tanya McCallin, with Elizabeth Alexander, Neil Fitzpatrick and John Stanton. To March 22.

Athenaeum: Hobson's Choice by Harold Brighouse; director, Frank Hauser; designer, Hugh Colman; with June Jago, Douglas Hodge, Mark Whitley, Sallie Cahill, Kevin Colebrook, Sydney Conabere, Vivien Caires and co. To March 22.

Athenaeum 2: The Jail Diary of Albie Sachs adapted by David Edgar; director, Judith Alexander; with David Downer. To March 22.

Other activities: Curtain-Up and Tribute Readings for Playwrights.

PILGRIM PUPPET THEATRE

(818 6650) Circus Strings and Things; written and directed by Burt Cooper.

UNIVERSAL THEATRE (419 3777) Regularly changing programme of live entertainment.


OCTAGON THEATRE Acting Company of New York, Elizabeth 1 by Paul Foster. To March 5.

REGAL THEATRE (381 1557) That's The Way To Do It by Chris Harris and John Davis; with Chris Harris. March 6-15.

PLAYHOUSE (325 3500) National Theatre Co: Privates On Parade by Peter Nicholls; director, Stephen Barry; designer, Tony Tripp. To March 15.

PERTH CONCERT HALL An Evening with Jasper Carrott, REGAL THEATRE (381 1557) An Alarmingly Funny Evening with Spike Milligan and Friends, with Mike McLellan and Carl Vine. To March 15.

DANCE

PALAIS THEATRE (534 0657) Berlin Komische Oper Ballet. Swan Lake and Programme Two (four short ballets). March 5-18.

WA BALLET COMPANY Catherine’s Wedding by Chrissie Parrott, and Concerto Grosso by Charles Czany. March 6, 13. Touring in Northern and Central Wheatbelt March 24-April 3.

CONCERTS

PERTH CONCERT HALL WA Symphony Orchestra: First family concert; conductor, George Tintner. March 28. Other Festival Concerts include: Tania Maria Trio (Brazil) Stan Getz Quintet (USA) Netherlands Wind Ensemble Arensky Trio

For entries contact Joan Ambrose on 299 6639.

THEATRE AUSTRALIA MARCH 1980 63
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THESPIA'S PRIZE CROSSWORD NO. 21

Across:
1. Enchanted Scott is a prestidigitator (8)
5. Darkens Satan's head and Hell (6)
9. Darn tout out of line at the opera! (8)
10. Girl that is a prize bitch (6)
12. This idea occurred at midday, round a
tree (6)
13. Get a picture of the wine price, we
hear (8)
15. Actor sketched in return for a defective
instrument (4,8)
18. Venue for King Richard II (7,5)
23. Emancipists gathered river grass
around 10:00 in the marsh (8)
24. Vessel even old brew can fill (6)
26. At home with the second-rate
communist, it's inherent (6)
27. Playwright experienced a Southern
cold, and the Queen as well (8)
28. Welshman is an exciting melange of a
fish and a little old lady (6)
29. Avoided the interminable artist
(married) (8)

Down:
1. Joining priceless porcelain around a
model (6)
2. Whirl round a letter thrown into the
fireplace (6)
3. In a truth, the gloomy are able to
return (7)
4. Make a shy poet out of a non-starter (4)
6. Fireplaces right in the heart of the
moors (7)
7. This disgust is stated strangely (8)
8. Covers girl in the man's place (8)
11. A whale of a single fellow! (7)
14. Catch little in the meshes coming back
but sugar (7)
16. The good man I throw over is
oppressive (8)
17. Reminisce about the M.L.A. (8)
19. Exam in which I expire is the
neatest (18)
20. Playwright I haul on and out (7)
21. Shout at fifty gone in underneath (6)
22. Hardened, and ruined, utterly
ruined (6)
25. The best cards are in Sir Charles
Surface's hand (4)

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

The winner of last
month's Crossword
was Dr John Upton of
Eastwood, NSW.