Can’t Stop The Music—
Music Theatre Part Two

Louis Nowra—
Our Best New Writer

Nita Pannell—
WA’s First Lady Of Theatre

QTC’s Candida
SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY
PREMIERE SEASON 1980

THE SUNNY SOUTH
George Bernard Shaw
JAN.

CLOSE OF PLAY
FEB-MARCH

NONAMES...NO PACK Drill
APRIL-MAY

I'M GETTING MY ACT TOGETHER
DECEMBER

AND TAKING IT ON THE ROAD
APRIL-MAY

CYRANO DE BERGERAC
CECIL RICHARDSON
JAN

MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR
Shakespeare
SEP-OCT

THE PRECIOUS WOMAN
NOV

YOU ARE INVITED...
John Bell as 

VOLPONE

Ben Jonson

Paul Bertram  
Paul Chubb  
Peter Collingwood  
Bill Conn  
Tyler Coppin  
Linda Cropper  
Tim Elliott  
Colin Friels  
Pat McDonald  
John McTernan  
Barry Otto  

Directors Neil Armfield  
John Bell  
Designer Kim Carpenter  
Lighting Nigel Levings

NIMROD
When Hoopla opened in Melbourne in 1977 one of its declared aims was to "focus on the production of new Australian plays." In their first year they presented 22 Australian plays, in one form or another. Now that aim has fallen by the wayside (there is only one Australian programme in the current season of six), but Hoopla has survived to become Melbourne's third non-commercial professional theatre.

So naturally... Sydney needs one too. Recently people have been complaining about the similarity between the S.T.C. and Nimrod. The collapse of the Tote forced Nimrod into a role, of Sydney's leading company, which they had not originally looked for (but which they took on triumphantly.) Now Richard Wherrett is running the S.T.C., John Bell is moving between the two companies to play the great classic roles of Cyrano and Volpone, and each company has got itself a new Louis Nowra play, it is a scene rich in talent and achievement but a little poor in variety. If Graeme Blundell is right, and Sydneysiders really work at and enjoy their theatre, then the time is right for a new company. And especially one with the style and policy which the King O'Malley Theatre company is promising.

The name is auspicious, for a start. The Legend of King O'Malley revived a great Australian tradition in theatrical style — and led, in Sydney at least, a brief upsurge of rough, larrikin, vaudevillian theatre — a theatre of stories, songs, jokes and rages, with a rough acting style based on energetic new skills. In the mid 70s all this activity died in the bun, and one of the aims of the new company is to revive it.

The company will be doing only Australian plays: the opening production is the Sydney premiere of Errol Flynn's Great Big Adventure Book For Boys, and the rest are new plays — including another Ellis tribute to the Whitlam years (this time, we're told, a final farewell, like Melba) A Very Good Year. They will be using talents new to the theatre: Patrick Cook has designed Errol Flynn; Stephen Wallace will direct the second play, John Upton's The War Horse. And they will be doing plays with music and songs, which Dorothy Hewett wrote about in last month's T.A. Bob Ellis has said that 60% of successful shows in Australia have music, so with 2 out of 4 O'Malley only has 10% to make up to make a go of it.

Musicians can be a problem in the theatre, though, and it needs saying, O'Malley are using their own musicians so they're alright, but the dreaded 11.00 o'clock deadline, one minute after which you have to pay the average band another few hundred dollars, has led more than one artistic director off into the dressing room mumbling about parasites. This is the importance of the new skills, such as they respect in Carlton — actors must be able to accompany their own songs.

Dorothy Hewett wrote last month, "The play with music is different in kind to the musical, as Brecht discovered, for it enables both playwright and audience to keep one foot on the ground of realism and the other high kicking to the stars." With a song you can tell a new story, rage, move onto a new level, or into a new world, or link a rich mix of material using the universal appeal of a good score. Good luck to the King O'Malley Theatre Company. As Oscar Wilde said, "We're all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars."
TIMELESS LAND... The ABC previewed its major drama production for 1980, the series *The Timeless Land*, at the end of August to a very appreciative audience of press and luminaries. The preview was most appropriately held in the NSW State Library’s Mitchell and Dickson Galleries where photos of some of our best actors in settler costume did not compare badly in authenticity with the magnificent early Australian portraits and landscapes of Sydney side.

The series stars English actors Nicola Paget (*Upstairs Downstairs* and *Anna Karenina*) and Michael Craig, last seen here for *The Fourth Wish* and *The Irishman* as well as playing Prospero for the Old Tote. With equal top billing are Ray Barrett and Angela Punch McGregor as Governor Bligh and a convict girl, Ellen. Fine performances are also given by Peter Collingwood as Governor Philip, Adam Garnett as Ellen’s son and Charles Yunupingu as the aboriginal Benelong.

That *The Timeless Land* will be a success in Australia is unquestionable, but already the ABC have recouped production costs by selling all international rights to Paramount for the princely sum of $1 million. How widely the American company will distribute it in the rest of the world remains to be seen.

There seemed to be general agreement among the assembled viewers at the preview that Peter Yeldham’s adaptation of the Eleanor Dark novels had turned out to be the best drama work yet to emerge from the ABC.

NEW DIRECTOR FOR NIM-ROD... The Nimrod Board has decided that a third full-time play director is a necessary complement to Nimrod’s artistic directorate. The scale of regular house productions plus the increased number of tours and commercial ventures planned for 1981 have made this decision essential.

They recently announced the appointment of Aubrey Mellor as co-artistic director of Nimrod and the resignation of designer Kim Carpenter as an artistic director at the end of the year. Nimrod paved the way in appointing a designer as an artistic director and regret that now due to financial stringencies they cannot retain this practise.

In 1981, though, Kim will become an associate director and will also design two productions during that period. This year he has designed *The House of the Deaf Man*, *The Oresteia* and *Volpone*, he has supervised Nimrod’s design work, encouraged the contributions of new graphic artists, photographers and designers and masterminded such projects as the school children’s *Oresteia* mural.

Aubrey Mellor has been with NIDA for ten years as a tutor in acting and as a director. His most recent productions have been *Mother Courage* and *The Bride of Gospel Place* for Jane Street seasons.
ACROBATS OF CHINA... The Nanking Acrobatic Troupe from the People’s Republic of China has completed the Perth, Adelaide and Melbourne legs of its tour, is currently playing Sydney and will go on to Canberra and Brisbane later this month.

The Company is rated as one of the top three troupes in China, a country with a population of over 1,000 million, and understandably acrobatics is the most popular entertainment in China today.

The fifty member Nanking company includes daring high balancing feats, juggling, comedy, magic, vocal imitations, gymnastics, lion dances, trick cycling, contortionists and musicians as well as the amazing acrobats. Trained from early childhood the acrobatic troupe members form part of the ancient Chinese tradition that began and flourished as long ago as the second century BC.

The Nanking Acrobatic Troupe was founded in 1957 and as well as that tradition has drawn on the experiences of acrobatic arts of other countries. Over the past twenty years they have been to more than a dozen countries in Asia, Africa, Europe, Latin-America and the USA.

AUSTRALIAN SEASON IN ADELAIDE... The State Theatre Company of SA has announced its first season for 1981, and the Artistic Directors, Kevin Palmer and Nick Enright have shown an increasing bias towards Australian works.

They start mid-February with Kenna’s classic A Hard God (directed by Enright) and while the company is on tour to London with Hewett’s Man From Mukinupin they will host a guest production at the Playhouse.

Another new musical, especially commissioned will follow; the book is to be written by David Allen, music by Glen Henrich, research by Barry Plews and lyrics by Nick Enright. Ariette Taylor will direct and with such a combination of talent an exciting new work seems the inevitable outcome.

Kevin Palmer will direct Shaw’s Pygmalion with Dennis Olsen as Henry Higgins as the fourth production and the Magpie Theatre in Education team will perform a commissioned children’s play by Dorothy Hewett, provisionally called The Golden Valley. The final Playhouse production will be a commissioned adaptation by Louis Nowra of Wedekind’s Lulu, to be directed by Jim Sharman.

Continuing the company’s new policy of staging plays in smaller venues, Kevin Palmer will also direct David Allen’s Upside Down at the Bottom of the World and Farewell to Brisbane Ladies by Doreen Clarke at Theatre 62.

Despite grumblings from certain quarters in Adelaide the STC is to be much congratulated for its farsightedness and daring; it is the first state theatre company to put major emphasis on Australian plays, they are extending some of the best writers by their commissions and they are using top talent from SA and elsewhere. We will all gain from it and let’s hope it sets a trend further afield than Adelaide.
TN DECISIONS... after failing to renew John Milson's contract as Artistic Director earlier this year, the future plans of Brisbane's second company, TN, (once Twelfth Night) have been awaited with interest.

Now it has been revealed that a "special relationship" is being established between the theatre company and the Theatre course at Kelvin Grove CAE, which is to exist for a trial period of one year before review. In this unusual arrangement the two organisations will share facilities (including some office space), personnel and equipment. Don Batchelor, who is Acting President of TN and head of the KCAE Theatre Course, said "An organic relationship between a training institution and a vital young professional theatre company is of major significance in developing a theatre which grown out of the local community and relates all its developments to that community."

The new Resident Director of TN will be Bryan Nason who has worked for many Queensland theatre companies and run his own Grin and Tonic Troupe. Mr Batchelor will act as co-ordinator of the special relationship and supervise broad policy matters in close concert with Administrator Sue Tonkin and Mr Nason.

ON FALSTAFF... The Sydney Theatre Company's current production is The Merry Wives of Windsor, directed by Mick Rodger and with Max Phipps as Falstaff. It's a piece that Rodger has hankered to direct for years, because "it smacks of an author letting his hair down — a mixture of low and high comedy, and farce, which provides a diverting send up of acquisitiveness and xenophobia. Forget about the reverence due to "the bard!" Here the niceties of the court and the patriotism of history are replaced by the knockabout humour of a small, bourgeois country town — a rarity in Shakespeare. This is not the Falstaff of the histories. This one is a desperate con-man on the brink of failure — hedonistic failure."

Rumour has it that Shakespeare wrote the play in a fortnight at the express request of the Queen who wanted to see the fat knight in love, but Max Phipps thinks otherwise. "Falstaff is not in love! He wouldn't be Falstaff if he was. He's desperate for cash and fornicating with the Merry Wives is a pleasurable way of getting it (cash, I mean!). Our Falstaff is not a jolly, operatic Father Christmas, but a seedy, impecunious, grotesquely obese crook who farts his way through a labyrinth of preposterous plots doomed to disaster. He's Billy Bunter who never outgrew his self-delusions; or a caricature from Dickens. A fat, desperate Mr Micawber."

MICK RODGER (director) and Max Phipps (Falstaff) comment on The Sydney Theatre Company's forthcoming production of The Merry Wives Of Windsor.

MICK: "I've wanted to direct the play for years. It smacks of an author letting his hair down — a mixture of low and high comedy, and farce, which provides a diverting send-up of acquisitiveness and xenophobia. Forget about the reverence due to "the bard!" Here the niceties of the court and the patriotism of history are replaced by the knockabout humour of a small, bourgeois country town — a rarity in Shakespeare. This is not the Falstaff of the histories. This one is a desperate con-man on the brink of failure — hedonistic failure. Rumour has it that Shakespeare wrote the play in a fortnight at the express request of the Queen who wanted to see the fat knight in love — ".

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VICTOR BORGE... In 1951 Victor Borge was named "the funniest man in music"; in 1953 he created theatrical history by developing a one-man show; and in 1954 he was nominated "Comedian of the Year". Since then he has performed for kings, queens and presidents. He has been knighted by the Kings of Norway, Sweden and Denmark and has three times been honoured by the US Congress. In recent years Mr Borge has conducted scores of symphony orchestras in America and Europe, including the London Philharmonic, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, Philadelphia Orchestra, National Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra and St Louis Symphony.

Now he is just starting an Australian national tour lasting four weeks. The programme is called Comedy in Music and his special guest for the engagement will be soprano Marylyn Mulvey.

WOMEN DIRECTORS' WORKSHOP... There is a distinct lack of female theatre directors in the country and Nimrod feel this is a loss to the theatre scene and are setting out to remedy the situation. One of the reasons seems to be that women believe they lack the necessary background and confidence to move into the field, so Nimrod is holding a directors' workshop specifically for women.

Up to eight women will be selected, from people who have worked consistently for the past five years or so in professional theatre — be it directing, acting, administration, choreography, stage management or whatever — and who are committed to directing as a vocation.

The workshop will be five weeks long, from November 10, and will be run by eminent British director, Pam Brighton, (last here to direct Songs From Sideshow Alley). The first part will examine the function and operation of the directing role and the second will concentrate on working with actors. And Nimrod does not plan to abandon the directors with their new found skills, but will promote them to major theatres, which have agreed in principle to use the women in a directing capacity next year.

This valuable workshop was initiated by Nimrod's Community Officer, Chris Westwood.

O'MALLEY STRIKES AGAIN... Bob Ellis, Lex Marinos and Michael Lynch are the directors of the newly formed King O'Malley Theatre Company which will operate out of the Ellis owned Stables Theatre in Nimrod Street, Sydney.

They are currently presenting Rob George's Errol Flynn's Great Big Adventure Book For Boys and before the end of the year will produce three more plays: The War Horse by John Upton, to be directed by Stephen Wallace, The Siege of Frank Sinatra by Dennis Whitburn, and as the final show Bob Ellis' own farewell to the Whitlam era, called A Very Good Year.

Late night shows are also on the cards with possibilities at this stage being Conversations with Bea by James Ricketson and a new play by Errol Bray about young people on the dole in King's Cross.
The Victorian College of the Arts offers courses at undergraduate and graduate levels in 1981.

Applications close during October and early enquiry is advised.

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by Norman Kessell

The Ensemble Theatre will again stage a Festival of Australian Playwrights, its third, as part of the 1981 Festival of Sydney. As the Stables Theatre will not be available this year, the season will open at the St. James Playhouse on December 28 and end simultaneously with the Sydney Festival on Australia Day, January 26.

Play selection was almost complete at the time of writing, although contracts had not then been finalised. One work chosen is When In Rome, a first play by Ensemble Company member Sandra Bates. Also listed is Gidad Bags, by Patricia Johnson. Another work will probably have been decided upon by the time you read this.

I am pleased to pass on a prediction by Old Moore in his upcoming almanack: “Children, the theatre and the arts will be the creative focus for 1981.”

Full marks to the Ensemble Royal and its excellent stage crew for the mounting and handling of the intricate staging of Neil Simon’s They’re Playing Our Song, with its sliding screens and projections, flown drops and setpieces and revolving stage. This is the first time the Royal’s equipment and facilities have been fully extended since it opened in 1976. Both theatre and crew came through literally with flying colors. Only the sound system was a bit awry on opening night and that would have been soon adjusted.

Manager Pat Boggs told me all hands worked day and night for a week setting up the show. Wages and overtime alone totted up to $7,000. Production co-ordinator Sue Nattrass was so delighted with the result she presented a bottle of Scotch to every member of the crew.

I was the more pleased about the Royal’s success having just previously read that the owners of London’s Shaftesbury Theatre spent $200,000 to refit the stage “to cope with the show’s technical complexities”. Incidentally, the $600,000 London production starring Tom Conti and Gemma Craven (remember her in TV’s delightful Pennies From Heaven?) in the John Waters and Jackie Weaver roles, opened on September 18, nearly four weeks after Sydney.

What a magnificent record of Australian showbiz achievement is contained in The Performing Arts Year Book of 1979, the fourth such published by David and Chin Yu Williams’ Showcast Publications Pty Ltd. No wonder that at the well-attended launching at the Opera House Reception Hall, the volume’s more than 500 pages of text and pictures and its 41-page index, listing by my count some 9000 names of plays and players in theatre, film, television and concert, was described by guest of honor John Bell as an epiphany of national pride.

Having just presented half a lifetime’s collection of programs and theatre memorabilia to the Australian National Library in Canberra, these year books provide for me an invaluable replacement source of reference. There’s a great bonus offer for anyone else wanting to start such a shelf. If you buy Vol. 4 at $25, you can have the three previous volumes at $10 each.

John Bell elaborated on his mention of national pride by telling of a Scottish production which so stirred this emotion in the audience that one man cried out: “And whur’s your Wully Shakespeare the noo!”

Without doubt, one of the year’s best performances is now being given in Sydney by Brian Young in the Ensemble Theatre’s production of Ronald Ribman’s Cold Comfort, in which he is most ably partnered by Len Kaserman. But did you know that originally it had been hoped to cast Warren Mitchell and Henri Szeps respectively in this two-hander? It was Mitchell’s outstanding and extended U.K. success in Death of a Salesman that made this impossible and gave Brian Young the opportunity he has so brilliantly grasped.

Apart from its quality as a play, I suspect a measure of ulterior motive in Hayes Gordon’s choice of Cold Comfort. It must steal some of the thunder of the long-delayed Whose Life Is It, Anyway? Both plays are about courage in meeting death and the latter was such an obvious Ensemble-type play that efforts to acquire it quickly followed the London premiere. The Australian rights, however, had been secured by Derek Glyne (London) Pty Ltd. Latest word is that Whose Life will be staged here next year by the Elizabethan Theatre Trust, possibly in association with Paul Elliott. Variety reported recently that the Broadway production of Whose Life lost $142,000 of its $450,000 investment. This was after allowing for the $194,000 it cost to rewrite and rehearse the show when Mary Tyler Moore replaced Tom Conti in the lead role. However, the US version is expected to recoup all or most of the loss from a now-running national tour.

Another long-delayed production is Filumena, the award-winning Keith Waterhouse and Willis Hall 1977 adaptation of the comedy Filumena Marturano, written by Italian playwright-actor-director Eduardo de Filippo in 1946. This was not the first adaptation. G. Hugh Herbert did as earlier one which had a three-performance season in New York in 1956 under the title The Best House In Naples. Filumena is also an Elizabethan Theatre Trust prospect for 1981.

An Australia-wide tour is in the planning stage for the original Ensemble cast in George Hutchinson’s No Room For Dreamers on their return from overseas. The itinerary may include Darwin.

Female impersonator Chris Shaw is on tour in Spain with The Godmother, the show in which he was last in Sydney, at the Speakeasy.

One of my pet soapbox stances is that theatre is a two-way traffic, that an audience gets from a show in proportion to what it contributes. I welcome endorsement from no less than Sir Peter Hall, who said in a recent article in the London Daily Telegraph: “It is the audience which completes or enhances a play, makes it poorer or richer, flatter or funnier.” I like it. An English dramatic company which calls itself Mrs Worthington’s Daughters.
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JENNY McNAE

Jenny McNae swears she never wanted to be an actress. She had seen too much of what her elder sister ("an actress and a good one") had to cope with to have any illusions about the glamour of the footlights.

It was the technical side of theatre which interested her and when she left school she went into her local playhouse at Richmond, Surrey, as a student A.S.M. — "£1 a week, do everything you're asked to do, keep your eyes and ears open, and you'll learn a lot."

"I did too," recalls Ms McNae, "but of course the inevitable happened, the full fairytale bit. Four years later when I was stage managing a big Xmas musical at Bristol and the leading lady got tonsillitus I had to step in for the night, there was literally no one else. Well, all that praise and applause — I was hooked."

If the truth be told she never really wanted to come to Australia either. She was working in London and doing-very-nicely-thankyou when, ten years later, Frank Baden-Powell came to the U.K. looking for people for his then burgeoning Australian Old Time Musical Hall shows. She had been involved in the rebirth of OTMH in English clubs and pubs so in 1970 she agreed to do a six month season for him in Perth. She stayed a year before moving off into straight theatre again and has made Perth her home ever since.

She has worked as a leading actress at the Perth Playhouse, the Hole in the Wall, and Baden Powell Enterprises and done a lot of television, from Chopper Squad to Run From the Morning.

Although there is not much television made in W.A., she has narrated three of the half dozen programmes of the nationally distributed For the Juniors and regularly writes and presents Let's Join In on ABC radio. "So my voice at least is probably quite well known to Australian six year olds!"

She enjoys working with children and at the time of writing she is immersed in an intensive one week study course in remedial drama at the Claremont Teachers College to help her with her work as a practitioner/specialist in the performing arts studies workshops she gives at John Curtin High School.

"Drama is such an emotive thing with kids where dangerous things can come to the surface, and it's important to know how to handle them."

Although it would never, she said, wear her away from theatre completely, it clearly appeals to the creative artist in her. "Working with children is very freeing. Their minds aren't bound about like ours ... they can take off with the most wonderful fantasies from the basic topics you've started with. It's most inspiring."

It frustrates her a little that there are not more opportunities in Australia for her to direct. "In England there are a lot of highly regarded women directors and I did quite a lot and never found any resentment or problems."

Here there are less openings (noticeably all the resident directors of the major companies are men) and she seems to feel that it is almost a male/female thing that influences the status quo.

On the one or two occasions when she has had a chance to flex her directorial muscles she has demonstrated her ability, most recently and notably in a cheerfully vigorous westernised (as in wild) Taming of The Shrew for the Playhouse, which bore the stamp of her experience in musicals and music hall. It had very good notices but such jobs come her way rarely and she regrets it.

This month (September) she goes to Brisbane to play the lead in Candida for the Queensland Theatre Company under guest director John Milson, a contract she looks forward to. "It's a nice, simple piece (of Shaw), non-verbose, sort of an early Tea and Sympathy. Working with John will be a pleasure too. We've done a variety of productions together in Perth, Happy Days, Currency Lass, Days in the Trees, Small Change, and have a good professional rapport."

It is hard to pin down a definitive McNae style. A quiet and unobtrusive personality offstage, onstage she is as much at home belting out a song as a lamenting Adelaide in Guys and Dolls as she is adjuring her son as a maternally regal Queen Gertrude in Hamlet. Classics, from the performance point of view, are just another show.

It is perhaps indicative that of her highly thought of portrayal of Olga in Stephen Barry's production of The Three Sisters this year she remarks, "Olga is really the least notable, least histrionic of the women in the play, yet the performance seemed to work ... I empathised with her very strongly. I really don't approach those productions with a this-is-a-classic sort of attitude. I do every part as it comes — as a character, and a play, to find out about."
by Donna Sadka

Listening to West Australian actress Nita Pannell reminisce about her career one might think that the number of fortuitous encounters with people important to her work was something to do with the hand of fate. But it takes more than coincidence and good fortune to achieve the outstanding reputation which this veteran performer enjoys.

In a lifetime of theatre she has played fifty different leads in a wide field of drama and has created roles in premieres of four important Australian plays. She has had parts especially written for her by several writers, including Patrick White and Dame Mary Durack and although resident in Perth she has worked for internationally famed directors Sir Bernard Miles, Michael Langham, and Sir Tyrone Guthrie as well as top Australian theatre men such as George Ogilvie, Robin Lovejoy and John Sumner and Colin Ballantyne in Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide and London.

Now in her seventies her passionate zest for theatre is undiminished and she continues to work when occasion offers — although she remarks rather wistfully that nowadays it doesn't offer as frequently as she would wish — and she yearns for someone to stage revivals of plays like The Rivals or Juno and the Paycock which have good, strong character parts ideally suited, she points out, to an actress of her years.

As a young teacher in the late twenties she helped produce school performances of eurythmics, singing, and "bits of plays" but she did not come to grips with theatre until, as a doctor's wife in the small country town of Goomalling, she started a repertory group to cheer people up during the depression.

"We began with a farce," she recalls. "I got hold of a French's Acting Edition (I wondered what XL meant!) and worked it all out from there. After that the Perth Rep gave me some scripts, some helpful hints, and a book on makeup."

Back in Perth some years later, her husband in his city practice, she took some classes with Ida Beeby at Patch and from then on was on her way. In those days Perth theatre was all amateur but she was kept busy with both performances and productions for the Patch, the Repertory Club, the early Perth Festivals, the Gilbert and Sullivan Society and The Company of Four, of which she was a part founder.

It was appropriate to someone who had already contributed so much that in 1956 she was invited to produce the play Teahouse of the August Moon for the opening of the Perth Playhouse theatre — the first fully professional theatre in Australia.
But one of the most significant periods of her acting life began in 1957 when Robin Lovejoy and Hugh Hunt, in Perth for the Festival, dropped in on her production of *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* in which she was also playing Madame Jourdan. She was good and, as a committed theatremaker always prepared to recognise her limitations, she knew it. "By then I was plump and I looked right and I could do it on my ear."

Hunt wanted her to come to Sydney to do the Nurse in his Trust production of *Romeo and Juliet* and although that was subsequently cancelled she was remembered when, in 1958, Lovejoy came to Perth to direct the Trust's premiere of Richard Beynon's prize-winning play *The Shifting Heart*.

She says now that there was initially some opposition to her casting and the Playhouse insisted that auditions be held. But opposition, overt or otherwise, spurs her on and, deliberately gaining an additional stone in weight and learning the authentic accent from her amused Italian cleaning lady, she created a truly memorable Momma Bianchi. So great was the production's popularity that the Trust toured it for ten months through Eastern States capitals and 120 country towns between South Australia, NSW, Queensland, and Tasmania. It was the first really big Australian success since *The Doll*.

Over an after-the-show coffee during that tour one of the cast remarked idly that he felt "the great Australian play" would eventually be written by Patrick White. "To my everlasting shame I asked 'Who's he?'. Miss Pannell chuckles. At the next stop she bought a copy of *Voss* and promptly wrote the author a fan letter which she never posted.

In 1958 she was invited to play the Trinidad woman in *Moon On A Rainbow Shawl* at the first Adelaide festival — this time a West Indian accent, and a young newcomer called Kamahl as the calypso singer!

It was not until 1961 that she actually met Patrick White after a performance in the Sydney premiere of *The One Day of The Year*, which went on to make Australian theatre history by doing a London tour. He spoke to her about a possible production of *The Ham Funeral* and the character Mrs Lusy, but in the event the London season intervened.

In England a London agent offered his services and after the Australian play closed she went into Sir Bernard Miles production of *The Bed Bug* at the Mermaid. They wanted someone who could do a Russian accent.

White remembered her, however, and shortly after her return to Perth she undertook the part of Miss Docker for him in John Sumner's premiere production of *The Cheery Soul* in Melbourne. "It was brilliantly written," she says, "so much so that getting into the skin of that unsympathetic woman each night had a devastating effect on me. I suppose you can get above a part and make the character have these feelings with technique alone, but I must experience them. When I do a role I must feel what that woman is feeling. Poor Miss Docker inspired such loathing I could feel the hate coming back from the audience and it got me down."

The strain was great but the next White part she undertook was the perfect antidote — the old goat woman in *Night on Bald Mountain* — and she believes it was the best thing she has done.

In fact Miss Quodling echoed the days of her much later when in 1978 she undertook the role of Estragon in Mike Morris's all female production of *Waiting For Godot* in Perth. The concept of the production was a departure from her usual traditional approach but she was anxious to work with the innovative and exciting young Morris and Quodling and Estragon had much in common. Her performance in that splendid production as an androgynous little stoic in a battered felt hat, with Joan Sydney and clownish Vlad, was very fine.

It was Patrick White who unknowingly sowed the seed that eventually was to germinate into the other important area of her career and she says she is forever indebted to him. "During rehearsals of *Bald Mountain* he called out from the stalls, 'Nita, you should try disease work'." In this testing field in recent years she has demonstrated her considerable range and made the one woman play her forte.

Her friend, writer Mary Durack, wrote a piece for her about a remarkable Mother Superior at the school in Broome and it was while researching at the archives that further material that her greatest one woman success, pioneer woman Eliza Shaw, was discovered.

Much excitement, burnt steak and several hours later, Mrs Pannell recounts, it was mapped out. They worked on it together for some months and she tried out a scene or two for Sir Tyrone Guthrie, in Perth to do a programme at the Octagon. From him she learnt about the value of economy in writing dramatic scripts. "You see my dear," he told her, "you can infer that, you must leave it to the actress. It can be shown without describing it in words."

"I learnt a lot," she says, "and I still have his handwriting on my original script."

*Swan River Saga*, as it was finally called, played the Perth Festival to full houses in 1972, did several repeat seasons, and went on to a highly successful Eastern States tour.

For International Women's Year she presented a programme of dramatised portraits of three other pioneer women; Mary Durack's Mother Brigid, Caroline Chisolm (which she wrote herself), and Catherine Gavin, from the story by Rica Ericson.

In 1977 she was awarded the OBE. Since then she has appeared in the occasional film and assures her appetite for work with programmes for schools, societies and festivals. Many of these are from scripts she researches and writes herself, but she is now doing the monodrama *Empress Eugenie* by Jason Lindsey, which English director Marianne MacNaghten asked her to perform when she heard about Mrs Pannell in the UK. MacNaghten came to Perth to direct it for the Playhouse theatre in August.

Nita Pannell has seen big changes in Australian theatre since those days at Goonmalling. "I'm beginning to wonder if these days they've not gone a bit overboard with the decor and the dressing," she reflects. "I feel the emphasis should be more on the actors, the performance. Michael Langham would say, 'If you're doing your job properly, Nita, no one's going to look at that cupboard.'"
La Boite's Early Childhood Drama Project

By Richard Fotheringham

The ECDP "discovery" team in the week I join them is out at Sandgate, an old Brisbane bayside suburb with a declining birthrate and a fairly stable population. The Pre-School Centre is a bit run down, a bit under-equipped, but not swamped by kids. On Monday the four actor/teachers spend the day playing with both morning and afternoon groups; getting to know names and personalities, developing a working relationship with teacher and kids, finding out their interests. The focus for this team is the teacher/student relationship - "we started 'discovery' programmes when we realised that teachers were interested in developing things." In some places the teacher is an active participant, an actor in the show they'll devise over three days.

Problem One at Sandgate is that the teacher is old and conservative, appreciative but withdrawn - certainly unlikely to sign on with Roger, Hutch, the Tavern Keeper, and the Captain, and for a voyage of adventure. So on Tuesday they're back in the old house beside La Boite which serves as base, frustrated in one of their principal aims. They've noticed that there are few organised activities at the centre: "It's more like day care"; so they're aiming for a strong imaginative programme with maximum participation from the kids. They decide to use as a structure an old primary school show 'Voyage to the New Land' based on Captain Cook. It offers a sea voyage with the kids as crew, and ready made props and costumes. (Though they've been known to make them in a day too.)

"I'd seen 'Voyage' before, so when I join them back at Sandgate on the Wednesday I'm curious to see to what extent they can change it to suit new circumstances and different educational objectives. They begin by playing with the kids again, then ease into the show with deliberate honesty - "kids aren't ever told what structures they're being put in" - explaining the characters, the set, and disappearing one by one to re-emerge as the people in the story. They're instantly accepted as Roger, Hutch, the Tavern Keeper, and the Captain, and in ten minutes they've signed on a crew for a voyage in search of buried treasure on Skull Island.

After another twenty minutes the imaginations of the kids have taken over. A team member has hidden a box of treasure in the sandpit, but that's become quicksand, and they don't need it anyway because the kids have decided where the treasure is, dug up an imaginary box of pieces of eight, and are carrying it back to the ship. And then the four-year-old on lookout sights a storm which wasn't in the script either, but there's a box of percussion instruments handy for just such an eventuality. For an hour and a half the actors ride this wave of intensely concentrating young minds, never letting things get over-excited, knowing just when to push on to the next element of the plot. And when finally the story starts to fragment, they quietly close it down, one team member holding things together while the others exit, and return casually as themselves.

It's been an exhilarating, unique morning and having lunch on the lawn afterwards they talk about the most exciting moments and those that could be improved. I realise that they've been in role, thought as teachers and creators, and also observed what each child was doing. I'm left with the impression of a superb ensemble, totally dedicated to well thought through philosophies of education and pleasure.

The "action" team, when I catch up with them the next day, is out at Inala, a rougher, housing commission estate for industrial workers. Most first contacts with schools are made through this team; it's a package deal closer to community expectations of what theatre is. A class is poured in to the activities room where set and actors await them, and then poured out again to be replaced by another class. The actors fight to subvert this structure, again explaining who they are, how they made the set. They perform a new version of last year's most popular show, Dig. I'm not so sure about this one; it tries to combine an involvement experience of digging for gold with a social message about how bushrangers got to be that way. This performance is very avaricious, with real gold frost rocks instead of fantasy treasure chests, and the plight of Bunbling Bill seems a bit of an afterthought. But it's only the second day out after rehearsals, and I'm one of many laymen whose opinions they're politely considering.

For what it's worth, John O'Toole (whose recent book on drama in education surveyed some of the best English TIE teams) considered the ECDP one of the best teams he'd ever seen at work. They're bursting with new ideas, and crippled by being a professional company working under the auspices of an amateur theatre (La Boite). This situation denies them guaranteed annual funding, and puts incredible financial pressure on them. "Where else," asks one, "is a day spent talking to teachers criticised because it's not revenue producing activity?" They desperately need a youth director to provide a critical and creative sounding board for their work; this has been vetoed yet again by the La Boite board who don't want to see the theatre get further into subsidy.

But the ECDP is a company of national significance in its field. There are far too many TIE teams in Australia made up of would-be actors peddling second-rate poetry programmes, old British scripts, and older educational theories. I wonder if the La Boite board realises just how important the Early Childhood Drama Project is.
THE BEST LITTLE WHOREHOUSE IN TEXAS

BY CHRISTINE HOGAN

The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas posed a problem right from the start for its promoters, Cooke Hayden Price and Clifford Hocking.

It was the name of this musical, score by Carol Hall and libretto by Larry L. King and Peter Masterson, which provided the first of the problems.

Some radio stations bleeped Whorehouse out of advertisements for the show at Her Majesty's. Some publications refused advertising copy at first.

A rider was soon added: "But there ain't nothing going on."

So the musical, which opens with the history of The Chicken Ranch while in the background one of the girls carries on a transaction with one of the customers, was laundered.

Much of the bad language has been removed, along with much of the lustful intent.

What remains in this Australian production is a classic good versus evil situation, the real life story of how the "baddies" masquerading as the forces of good, attempted and succeeded in closing down a famous Texan brothel in 1973.

The formula seems inevitably successful.

Take one of Australia's favourite actresses in the form of Lorraine Bayly, who despite a formidable background in the theatre is best known as Grace Sullivan, matriarch (now deceased) of this country's favourite television family.

Add Alfred Sandor, whose voice must be one of the most heard in Australian advertisements, the urbane and competent chief of surgery at the Albert Hospital in another 9 Network serial, The Young Doctors.

Frankie J. Holden, Judi Connelli, Peter Whitford, Doug Scroope and Jon Sidney provide a solid and talented supporting ensemble, as the songs and Tommy Tune's choreography meld into what is in America that most desirable of things, a long running musical.

(A keen observer of the American theatre was moved to remark that in the US, the musical did well in three places: Broadway, and two centres in Texas. For the touring company, Alexis Smith's name was above the title, and she was promoted heavily. Apparently some parts of America had the same problems with the name and the subject.)

This "cheerful, cheering and follish" musical is set in the bordello in 1973.

The action of The Best Little Whorehouse begins when two new girls, Shy and Amber (Jane Beckett and Olga Tamara, last seen going down with the wreck of 10 Network's Arcade) arrive to take up residence.

The excitement for the new few days centres around a football match between the Texas Aggies and Texas U.

The winning seniors from the game are to be treated to a night out by their Alumni Association — a night out at the Chicken Ranch.

The house is relatively quiet, "nothin' much to see" according to the song A L'il Old Bitty Pissant Country Place, but suddenly it becomes the centre of controversy.

Farmers too poor to pay the price of dalliance with the ladies of the house brought along chickens and handed them over before the serious business of the house was allowed to proceed.

Miss Wulla Jean was the madam then: in the musical she has been replaced by Miss Mona (Lorraine Bayly).

Miss Mona was one of the inmates of The Chicken Ranch, to whom Wulla Jean bequeathed her property.

Miss Mona ran her little part of the world with an iron hand; among her rules were no narcotics, no drinking during business hours, no tattoos, good table manners, no cliques... and "beds are not meant to be wallowed in."

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Sheriff Ed strides downtown to confront his antagonists, where he becomes so enraged he clears the street with a pistol shot.

This of course does not stop Melvin’s campaign. The Governor (Peter Whitford) and a senator (Jon Sidney) are involved as the drama plays itself out.

There is more singing, dancing and conflict before the final curtain is rung down on the story of the Chicken Ranch.

The happy-ever-after resolution is not altogether possible. Real life interferes, but it does come close.

The over-all effect of the musical is one of humour and good songs. It is this, rather than the memory of the first, simulated sexual encounter, that most members of the audience will take away with them.

The arrival of The Best Little Whorehouse on to Australian stages is the second major musical production to open in Sydney in a month.

August saw the triumphant opening of Neil Simon’s They’re Playing Our Song, with lyrics and music by Carole Bayer Sager and Marvin Hamlisch.

This is an old-fashioned, boy meets girl musical with wit and style, a musical one could take grandma to see and not be one whit uneasy that the old girl would be offended.

Basically a two hander starring John Waters and Jacki Weaver. They’re Playing Our Song has a very clever book and some memorable songs.

Simon is now working on the screen adaptation of the musical with Hamlisch.

The opening of two new musicals in Sydney combined with the opening in August of the Melbourne season of Hal Prince’s production of Evita (by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice) and Jeannie Lewis’s casting in Hoopla’s Piaf indicates a continuation of the revival of interest in the musical theatre world wide.

Richard Wherrett plans a production of Chicago for the Sydney Theatre Company next year. Evita is due on Sydney stages early in the New Year, though if its run in Melbourne continues to be as successful as its opening month, that could be later.

All forms of musical theatre are enjoying the boom - the Australian Opera is doing very well, and the State opera companies report good sales. Cabaret flourishes.

In New York this summer, the focus of attention was on a production of H.M.S. Pinafore by Joseph Papp. In the leads he had cast Linda Ronstadt, known more for her Buddy Holly revivals than her Gilbert and Sullivan, and Rex Smith, a toothsome popster.

The boom in new musical theatre has had a welcome side-effect - old musicals are being revived.

(This can sometimes have a deleterious effect. Benti - a brilliant play by Martin Sherman - which starred Richard Gere initially on Broadway - was taken off in the West End. It was a difficult play, which dealt with the plight of homosexuals under Hitler. Its replacement - a revival of Oklahoma!)

In New York this summer, there has been a revival crop unequalled in previous summers.

At the Equity Library Theatre, there is a revival of Irving Berlin’s 1946 musical, Annie Get Your Gun. Over at the Palace, Oklahoma! delighted audiences.

Dick Van Dyke starred in The Music Man the 1980 revival of Meredith Willson’s classic about the goings on in River City.

The 23-year-old musical West Side Story one of Sondheim’s early gems, was directed and choreographed for this revival season by its original director, Jerome Robbins.

Only two years old. Your Arms Too Short to Box with God. by Vinnette Carroll, from the book of Matthew, also enjoyed a summer revival.

Still in New York, there are shows like A Chorus Line, Annie, Ain’t Misbehavin’ (a show based on the performing career of Fats Waller) Dancin’, Bob Fosse’s dance extravaganza, I’m Getting My Act Together and Taking It on the Road, Peter Pan (25 years-old now) Sugar Babies, the vaudeville entertainment of Mickey Rooney and Anne Miller in Sweeney Todd.

It is this last musical which Hal Prince is anxious to get on stage in Australia.

Probably the apogee of Stephen Sondheim’s craft. Sweeney Todd starred the delicious Angela Lansbury as the pie-making doll and Len Cariou as her supplier.

It opened in London with Sheila...
Hancock, but closed later in New York.

Whispers in theatrical circles said the budget was simply too high and the show had difficulty making up its original cost.

A great deal of those costs were devoured by knocking the proscenium out of the Uris Theatre, and building a set which dominated the action and unscored Sondheim’s 25 songs perfectly.

This musical was a perfect melding of theatre and music for heightened dramatic effect. It has already been taken into the repertoire of one opera company and the Canadian Opera Company is contemplating its possibilities.

Just how such an expensive and spectacular musical could be mounted here is hard to imagine. But Hal Prince has doubtless covered many of the areas in his mind and with Australian theatrical entrepreneurs.

As well as the revivals and the long runs, the future of musical theatre seems assured.

This singing-dancing form of musical theatre is curiously American (among the earliest musicals was John Philip Sousa’s El Capitan 1898) and it is on American stages that it thrives.

Among the newest offerings: Billy Bishop Goes to War, a two man musical by John Gray; A Day in Hollywood/A Night in the Ukraine; The Marriage Dance, An Evening of Farce by Brecht and Feydeau; It’s So Nice to Be Civilised; books, lyrics and music by Micki Grant; and One Mo’ Time, a salute to black vaudeville.

Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht are also enjoying a world wide revival, as any devotee of Australian theatre would realise, when in the small frame of Robyn Archer, this country possesses one of the greatest interpreters of those writers.

But throughout the world, other authors are turning their pens to other musicals.

With Jesus Christ Superstar finally off in the West End after a seven year season, Andrew Lloyd Webber has written another musical entertainment.

At the Dublin Theatre Festival at the end of this month, a new musical based on the life of Nora Barnacle Joyce will be premiered.

During a time when the life of a second rate Argentinian “actress” can provide the material for an award winning musical, who would mock the prospect of seeing the life and times of Mrs Joyce on stage.

With luck, it will have the ingredients of music and entertainment which theatre goers seem to crave at the moment.

It is a need some critics regard with cynicism.

Some even advance the theory that when there are no major issues to contend with, musical theatre comes into its own.

Musical Theatre is to its audiences what the circuses were to the Ancient Romans, they say.

That seems a bit cerebral, really. It should simply be entertainment.

That is what the audience is paying for.
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It occurred to me while watching my men. What was going on inside them... it would be a mistake to believe that what they experienced — the hallucinations — wasn’t a part of them. What they saw... the things that went on in their heads... can they ever see the world the same way they saw it before?

So the Captain in Inside the Island reflects upon the hallucinations of an outfit of Australian soldiers in 1912 — hallucinations brought about by a poisonous fungus in the wheat foisted on them by an uncaring landowner and which have resulted in an apocalyptic inferno of rape, murder and self-mutilation. And so Louis Nowra, surely the most imaginatively challenging of Australian playwrights, jumps the rails and takes his writing in a slightly different direction. Inside the Island is the last play in what he calls the ‘first coil’ of a spiral-like thematic development in his work as a whole, and the first in the second coil. As the titles of the plays in that first phase suggest, Inner Voices and Visions, Nowra has concerned himself with the visionary malgré lui, the conflict of some inner perception with the forces of language and imposed knowledge and the resulting power implications. Here at last, and as if to satisfy some of his critics, he places his action in Australia (though at a safe historical distance) and takes the road that turns his journey into the psyche in the direction of a quest for the Australian heart of darkness.

Yet we are not far from the world of Visions; Lilian Dawson, the matriarchal owner of a wheat farm, bears an uncanny resemblance to Madam Lynch, with her benevolently despotic sense of culture and refinement and the results of such genteel conviction are equally horrific in both cases. As its title suggests, Inside the Island forges the link between the individual and the collective, communal psyche. As the aphasic character at the centre of Nowra’s radio play, The Song Room, says, “We are islands full of blood/my head is still full of thoughts.”

Nowra is, in more senses than one, a writer of ‘vision’. Not only does he write about vision, but his whole dramaturgy is founded on an acute visual sense. What is more astounding however is the fact that he has such a remarkable vision of his work as a whole. He speaks and writes with the authority and perspicacity of an objective critic about his own work — although diffidently, aware of the scepticism with which an author’s remarks on his own output need to be treated at times. More significantly, he has a formidable sense of perspective, a sort of grand design in which each play, even his non-dramatic and non-literary ventures, is a stage in the development of themes and images. Even encountering his plays for radio, one realizes they are like finely wrought chamber pieces, akin to those of Schubert and Beethoven, in which thematic strands are teased out or developed in microcosm, to be amplified in broader terms in the works for the stage. One is reminded both of Ionesco’s principle of the play being a means of discovery for the dramatist, rather than of demonstration and of Edward Bond’s tendency to develop themes through cross reference, even contradiction between individual plays.

Inside the Island, then, besides shedding light onto some of the complexities of his earlier plays, begins his exploration of new territory. The potential for savagery and violence is a crucial theme in The Precious Woman, which will be performed by the Sydney Theatre Company in November and is to be developed in Nowra’s adaptation of Wedekind’s Lulu, which Jim Sharman is to direct next year. Nowra finds the existing version by Peter Barnes misogynist in its portrayal of a doll-like Lulu and with Judy Davis down to step into the shoes of the great Louise Brooks and Robyn Nevin to play the eponymous role in The Precious Woman. Nowra is consciously moving into the area of strong central female roles, of which he feels there is a dearth in Australian theatre. In The Precious Woman, the cosseted wife of a Chinese warlord learns of her husband’s infidelity and her son’s tyrannical cruelty and rising to become the figurehead of a rebellion. Nowra speaks with amusement of the feminist who bailed him up over the portrayal of Lillian Dawson in Inside the Island as destructive, but was placated by the more positive light in which Su-ling, the precious woman, was to be presented.

It is no coincidence that Nowra at one time intended to train as a painter and has had a fascination with cinema since childhood (he wrote the script for Rex Cramphorn’s recent experimental
film. *By Night* and although he has been approached to write many more, tends to turn them down in disillusion of the ‘war of attrition’ that can sometimes characterise the relationship between a writer and film director, with the writer’s vision gradually being sacrificed.) He works essentially through images and through a strong visual sense in which characters become ‘figures in a landscape’. Staging his plays is no easy task as a result, one production of *Visions* failed by attempting to perform it in the round, thus missing the essential pictorial quality of Rex Cramp horn’s flat, end-on design at the Paris, a quality Nowra likes for its strong sense of a point of view. This ‘emblematic theatre’ as he calls it, burgeons with strong, evocative images, sometimes bizarre, always memorable; in *Inner Voices*, an obese man being spoonfed by a dwarf, in *Visions*, a hill-top tea party from which a battle is being observed, in *Inside the Island*, a stunned, hallucinating soldier sitting amid the ashes of a ruined house and in *The Precious Woman*, a girl playing a violin to a gravefoul of people, buried alive.

Nowra has a keen eye for the image or event which fascinates by its allusive quality, its ability to suggest a hinterland of meaning. *The Cheated*, which he lightheartedly dubs a ‘coffee table book for depressives’ is a collection of newspaper items made by him over a number of years, each conjuring up a bizarre world of suffering or despair beyond, each a little window onto a dark new landscape of human experience. This habit of collecting images feeds into his playwriting, the macabre image of the zoo burning in *Visions* for example originating from a report of an event during the Cambodian war. Resonance emerges time and time again as the key to Nowra’s approach to writing and if, as Rick Billinghurst once remarked, he is one of the few Australian playwrights writing beyond ‘the limits of domestic patience’, it is only in search for the detached situation which will have a more resonant, ambiguous value.

One is not surprised to learn that Nowra is one of the most vociferous critics of the naturalistic tendency in Australian theatre. ‘Wonder’ is a quality he feels theatre should retain if it is to compete with other art forms; thus his ‘mentors’ range from the German romantic, Novalis, through Marquez to the mysterious quasi-expressionist film director, Werner Herzog. He is ardently trying to forge a drama capable of dealing with that area for the communal psyche so far only treated by novelists such as Randolph Stow and Patrick White, the latter a writer who has expressed great admiration for *Inside the Island*.

Metaphor and ambiguity are his intentions, rather than the polemical argument which gives reviewers their two column crit on a plate, he does feel that Australian audiences need to be assimilated gradually into a play’s atmosphere and situation, rather than shocked from the outset. He was brought up very much in the tradition of J.C. Williamsons; one of the only contemporary playwrights to come from a theatrical family in fact, for although it has not been exploited for publicity purposes, he is the nephew of Bob Herbert, whose *No Names*. *No Pack Drill*... has been staged by the S.T.C. in the same season as the forthcoming *The Precious Woman*.

Certain actors Nowra tends to find are peculiarly suited for his plays. He speaks highly of Tyler Coppin, for example, who plays the demanding role of Andy, the half-wit, in *Inside the Island*, and refers to the ‘pure, intense force’ of Judy Davis, who has already appeared in *Visions*, as well as *Inside the Island*. John Bell, director of the first production of *Inner Voices* and currently taking the Drama Theatre by storm in Nowra’s translation of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, he admires for his ability to ‘think physically’.

In his work with actors, indeed his formulation of roles around specific performers, Nowra might well be seen as coming in from the cold. He is one of the many theatre workers who have made the move to Sydney from Melbourne, his home city and the one where his work has not been performed. He is impressed with the ease with which collaboration and cross-fertilization can take place in the Sydney theatre, exemplified by the exchange of ideas and personnel between Nimrod and the S.T.C., where he is now engaged as an associate director. The opening of the S.T.C.’s new alternative studio theatre will involve him more in the job of directing, a development which, combined with his writing and translating (he is engaged in the long term project of translating the whole of Kleist’s work for the stage) will make him the nearest we have to the German model of a dramaturg: and such an introduction must speak volumes for the maturation of theatre in this country.
Dickens as People's Theatre
by Irving Wardle

When David Edgar's two-part adaptation of *Nicholas Nickleby* opened at the Aldwych in July, there were those among my esteemed colleagues who sat through the eight and a half hour performance which the RSC had been rehearsing for six months and then asked what it was all for. Why not stay at home and read Dickens instead?

I can think of two possible answers to that. In the first place *Nicholas Nickleby* is Dickens's most theatrical work. Apart from its direct treatment of the mid-Victorian stage through the Crummies family, the novel is densely peopled with role-playing characters. Squeers, the legacy-hunting Kenwigs, the villainous Sir Mulberry Hawk, in fact everyone along Nicholas's route including the finally unmasked Ralph Nickleby is obsessively concerned with the presentation of self in everyday life. To offer that collection of parts to an acting company is like throwing meat to a lion.

However previous companies have risen to the Dickensian bait and usually with lamentable results. Another, and much better justification for this magnificent RSC show is that, for once, the theatre has found a way of doing it.

The problems of staging this author are well known. Dickens writes on a scale that defies tight plot construction; the unity of his novels appear more through multiple and Victorian forms of behaviour, to cross-cut between parallel episodes, and generally to show a wide spectrum of mean, ridiculous, dangerous, alcoholic, and near lunatic citizens acting their heads off for personal advantage, and surrounding the Crummles family whose sovereign virtue is that for them acting is their acknowledged way of life. For this reason, there is more than simple fun in allowing the Crummleses to take the stage in the last act of their adapted *Romeo and Juliet*, complete with a dead-drunk Duke of Verona and a travesty of Benvolio who brings her beloved Paris back to life. The Crummleses, including their quarrelsome tragedian and the dreaded Infant Phenomenon, are a community, and nothing establishes the bond between them and the house more surely than their big patriotic number after the *Romeo* fiasco, with Graham Crowden as the manager whipping off his red property hat on the final cadence.

By contrast, when we get to the death of Ralph, we see the fate of a social exile. In novel after novel, Dickens leads up to a climax showing the despair of a man who has cancelled the human bond and is already as good as dead. How do you stage it? In this case, as John Woodvine wanders round London finding every door shut against him, the company themselves turn into the city: lining up to form streets of closed doors, dead ends, in an ever narrowing formation that ultimately drives him home to his wretched attic and the hook in the ceiling. At the end of its run, this production was stirring the audience into tears and standing ovations the like of which I have not seen for twenty years: no doubt this has something to do with our depressive plunge into the British past, but it certainly gives the lie to those who deny the possibility of recreating a "people's theatre."

Space allows me only to welcome Brecht's *Galileo* at the National Theatre as a beautifully clear and long overdue revival, and as yet another homecoming production for John Dexter who should never have gone away in the first place.

Music and Laughter
by Karl Levett

Music and laughter mixed in the right proportions is an elixir sought by many a producer. To a great number of theatre-
goers; these two elements are synonymous with — "Well, I mean, that’s Entertainment."

Three current New York productions that seem to have found just the right mixture are currently making many people (including their producers) happy.

Happiness is certainly evident at the Village Gate where *One Mo' Time* has settled in for a long run. The scene is the black vaudeville circuit in New Orleans in 1926. It is the concept of Vernel Bagneris (who also plays the male lead and directs the show) for us to see one complete performance, before and behind the curtain, of Bertha Williams and her touring company. The personal dramas backstage of the four-member company are punctuated by stage performances of a series of wonderful songs, helped along by an on-stage five-man jazz band, The New Orleans Blue Serenaders that includes Jabbo Smith on trumpet. The material has been lovingly selected by Bagneris and the whole evening, including the backstage shenanigans, has an authentic feel to it. Performed by a first-class company it is also very funny as well as very tuneful. In the cabaret setting at the Village Gate, with the audience encouraging the performers of *One Mo' Time* onto greater (and bawdier) needs, black vaudeville in 1926 New Orleans does not seem that far away. Vernel Bagneris is to be congratulated on this sunny and splendid re-creation.

Affectionate recall is also at the heart of *A Day In Hollywood/A Night In The Ukraine*. It's a spoof of thirties movies in general and the Marx Brothers in parti-
cular. The central conceit of this musical revue is that the ushers of Grauman’s Chinese Theatre, after treating us to some satirical thoughts and sentimental memories concerning thirties movies, become the cast in the main feature, a Marx Brothers comedy.

Written by two Americans, Dick Vosburgh (book and lyrics) and Frank Lazarus (music) Hollywood/Ukraine began in London, but as directed and choreographed by Tommy Tune, I suspect the show has a whole new look. The inventive Mr Tune’s maxim seems to be “When in doubt, dance it.” This policy provides the show’s best moment when the cast recites the Hollywood stock production code while executing an intricate tap dance.

While Mr Tune may be inventive, the creators of the material are much less so. A musical segment highlighting some movie goldies dangerously exposes the comparative paucity of Mr Lazarus’ melodies. In the Marx Brothers parody David Garrison as Groucho gets off some true Grouch-style non-sequiturs, but there are large arid patches were invention is nowhere to be seen.

The show also suffers from a classic case of “Broadwayitis”. This is essentially a little revue whose sophisticated enthusiasm and energy become its charms and one is ready to forgive much in the face of these amiable performers. Redesigned for a large Broadway house, the show’s meagre resources are inflated way beyond its means. Likeable but thin material is stretched even thinner and no amount of fast footwork can hide this.

The quality of the material is hardly the problem in Gilbert and Sullivan’s Pirates of Penzance. This new production at the Delacorte Theatre in Central Park (under the auspices of Joseph Papp’s Public Theatre) has attracted much attention through the casting of rock singer Linda Ronstadt in her first stage role. Another young rock singer Rex Smith, whose platinum seems to have passed me by, is cast as the juvenile opposite Ms. Ronstadt. Assisting this attractive young couple we happily have three rock-solid professionals: George Rose, Patricia Routledge and Kevin Kline.

The director, one of the Public’s regular stable, is Wilfred Leach. He has previously directed Shakespearean productions at the Delacorte, where with little respect for the text he vulgarised some of the comedies beyond recognition. He even succeeded in making Meryl Streep’s Katherine in Taming of the Shrew a noisy, boring one-note character. Without doubt he is a director with the common touch.

Leach is, however, a fount of comic invention, often inappropriate, but a fount nonetheless. His technique is to shoot a thousand arrows into the air knowing some will surely hit the mark. Irreverence is at the base of his style and where it didn’t work with Shakespeare it seems in tune with Gilbert and Sullivan. From the opening when a toy ship traverses the backdrop to become a full-sized pirate-carrying brig, the comic invention does not let up all evening. There are lapses, of course. The daughters in their opening chorus look and sing like refugees from the Big Spender number in Sweet Charity. But these misses are outnumbered by many witty hits. With the dynamic and discipline of Sullivan’s music to keep Mr Leach on course the production succeeds exactly in capturing the Gilbertian spirit of fun. The whole evening is a jolly romp.

This is not a production for purists. Songs are borrowed from other Gilbert and Sullivan shows; there are electric guitars on hand for Ms Ronstadt’s solos. What it does prove is that the piece is near indestructible and if the spirit is right the rest will follow. Ms Ronstadt trills prettily but walking and talking are yet to come; George Rose’s Major General is the very model of professionalism; Kevin Kline’s Pirate King again proves he is that rare combination of a talented actor, a deft comedian and a good singer.

The experiment has been a huge success and The Pirates will be sailing onto Broadway in December. Sullivan’s music and Gilbert’s laughter will be heard there for many months to come.
Two major films to be released in October have nothing in common apart from the fact that both may bring a blush to the cheeks of Joh and Flo, seeing that they have had an injection of Government money in the form of Queensland Film Corporation assistance.

They are Touch and Go, in which crime does pay, and Final Cut which features a good deal of bare female flesh and drug induced hallucination, blood seeping from bodies into a Surfers Paradise swimming pool, and lesbian kisses.

Touch and Go, written by Peter Yeldham, offers variations on a theme of robbery. A trio of young women apply the proceeds from bank break-ins etc to a hard-up friend in charge of a school for wayward children (or something like that) finding an additional incentive for crime in the fun they get out of it. Fiona is rich, married and bored; Eva is an actress specialising in kookaburra noises; Milli- cent runs a locksmith's business. Fiona is the leader, and when a really big job comes along - the chance for a big heist on a resort island off the Queensland coast - she masterminds an extraordinarily intricate operation.

It requires the services of several more girls — Gina, Sue and Helen — experts in underwater swimming, self-defence and telephone wire cutting. Which brings together a fair sample of female acting talent with Chantal Contouri, Wendy Hughes, Carmen Duncan, Jeanie Drynan, Liddy Clark and Christine Amor. I hope they all got well paid, because the exercise really does nothing for their reputations.

The men involved are Brian Blain as Fiona's husband, a businessman; Jon English, displaying a thick waistline, as a layabout gardener; John Bluthal as the owner of the resort; Vince Martin as a dim-witted cop.

The film was directed by Peter Maxwell.
Final Cut, written by Jonathan Dawson and Ross Dimsey and directed by the latter, is a fantasy about a fantasy. Nothing that occurs in the film is possible, nor are the characters in any way believable. It relies entirely on the myth that a number of ingredients such as the Gold Coast, big motor cruisers, (which they call yachts), blondes, topless bar-girls, film cameramen, journalists and high rise apartment buildings, if lumped together in a film will have a glamorous result, even if it is patently apparent that none of these is glamorous in itself. The film has something of the same spurious flavour of that late unlamented Michael Thornhill film, The Journalist.

The Cameraman is played by Lou Brown, who made his screen debut in The Irishman. In the time elapsed since then he has picked up some unattractive acting tricks. As the theme develops he tries to do a "cinema verite" (what crimes are committed in its name) programme on a sinister chap (he looks omniscient and quotes French poetry) who may be a drug-runner, or a procurer of girls for his friends, or simply rich and idle. His name is Dominic (very sinister) and he is played by portly David Glendenning. Others in the cast are Jennifer Cluff and Narelle Johnson, also a bit sinister, which can be translated as bisexual.

The action is pretty hard to follow, and a reading of the synopsis from Wilgar Productions Ltd, courtesy of Greater Union who are putting it out, did not enlighten me much further. Some people appear to die but don't, some die but don't appear to. The makers say it is written and produced in the European style. Well, who knows? There is more than one European style, but I can say that this is not Bergman's, nor Fellini's, nor Bunuel's, nor Bertolucci's.

It is rated M and runs for eighty two minutes.
The Dance Scene in Europe — part 1

Although the dance/ballet scene in Europe in the second half of 1980 is not the healthiest it’s ever been, it is at least a bit brighter than it was in 77/78. Then there was practically no great invention or originality anywhere in Europe. Jiri Kylian, having recently taken over the Artistic Directorship of the Nederlans Dans Theatre from Hans Knill, was still a relatively unknown quantity and elsewhere everyone was resting on their laurels. Now things are a little more animated, although to what extent this might have been due to the greater influx of tourists on the Continent as a spin off from the Olympic Games is not calculable.

But one can still sense a curious miasma of lethargy and lack of purpose within the dance world. It certainly doesn’t apply to the ballet world alone of course, one only has to take a look at the current theatrical offerings in London, or the opera scene all over Europe to realise that. Somehow, everyone seems to be waiting for a thunder crack to strike. Then again, the current economic/social climate being what it is at the moment, I suppose a visitor could be forgiven for reading such dark meanings into what is nevertheless, a malaise.

There are companies trying to keep the flag of new invention flying of course, like the NDT, or the Royal Dutch National Ballet, but elsewhere the Ballet of the Paris Opera, Royal Ballet, Royal Danish Ballet and others of their ilk are turning inward, going back to the tried and true, the costume dramas and the often banal ballet divertissement kind of works.

A useful case in point would have to be the Royal Ballet’s latest gift to the Royal Family, Frederick Ashton’s Rhapsody, created especially for the Queen Mother’s 80th birthday and choreographed for Leslie Collier and Mikhail Barishnikov. From an audience point of view it is an undemanding ballet, very prettily dressed and danced to pretty music (Rachmaninov’s Rhapsody on a theme of Paganini). It is plotless and abstract, yet not questioning and challenging like Balanchine’s plotless works; in short a suave, lyric ballet.

However, to be fair, the work is as much a gift to the Royal Ballet as to anyone else. The corps de ballet especially is given some grateful and expansive dancing, from the grand opening defile to the leaping, spinning sections for the men. All of it calls for a quick and agile understanding of the music, and svelte musicality has always been a strength of the Royal Ballet. In the final account, the work was created on Barishnikov and it is obvious a lot of it was built on his particular abilities, the huge leaps and effortless ballon and he certainly makes the most of it.

One wonders what will become of some of the Royal’s larger works as time goes by, Kenneth Macmillan’s Manon and Mavorling for example. Mavorling was created to fill an apparent clause in Macmillan’s contract that as resident choreographer of the Royal Ballet, he is expected to create one full length story ballet a year.

There are some glorious, swooning and passionate moments in the ballet, but the greatest stumbling block to total enjoyment is the intractability of the story. There are so many things happening, with so few of them adequately developed that one gives up making any sense of the work at all and just lets the dancing pass by. But that sifts down the dancing into so many segments of padding and elucidation. Big, glamorous they may be, but because the cause is not defined, the pattern, structure and development of them is not understood and the work as a whole remains out of focus.

Mavorling strikes me as a work, deliberately created to buoy up the Royal’s fading image as a company devoted to the grand manner of dancing, a repository of everything that is classical and grand in pure ballet. Say to say, on current evidence, both in terms of the works created and often in the way they are danced, that is a claim that is not being substantiated.

The Royal Danish Ballet on the other hand, is palpably containing that tradition, not by being a great magnet to all forms of classicism but by cherishing and rediscovering the works of their greatest choreographer August Bournonville, the centenary of whose death was celebrated last year by an entire week of his ballets performed in his old theatre in Copenhagen.

The ballets of Bournonville are exquisite
fragments; there are few works left that remain whole, the exception being the wonderful La Sylphide. They are based on a certain style and method of attack that have become enshrined as a complete dance technique in their own right. It is a style built on speed, lightness and airborne grace, yet one that also demands a thorough knowledge of the art of classical mime.

Most of the ballets are folk tales inextricably intertwined with telling characteristic cameos. The mime is an extension of the dancing and vice versa, it is a unique and delicate manner of communication and incorporation and, it hardly needs to be added, one that most other ballet companies are incapable of achieving without a long exposure to the manner and the training that is only available within the Royal Danish Ballet school.

Far From Denmark is basically a jolly mass of character dances. Being set in a distant port that is being visited by members of the Danish Navy, there are Spanish fandangos, tangos, gypsy dances and negro dances. There are some laughable caricatures of national types in the work but the overall feeling is of a lighthearted celebration of human diversity. It is all characterised in images of movement wonderfully connected and fresh, full of genuine touches of eloquent invention.

Kermesse in Bruges (created in 1851) is a simple tale of three brothers who are given magical gifts; a ring that makes one a great lover, a sword that makes another a brave soldier and for the third a lute that makes everyone dance. There are so many details, plot turns and so much infectious dancing that the eye cannot take it all in at once.

A Folk Tale (1854) is a work close to the heart of the Danes, dealing as it does with the comic/dramatic mingling of the world of humans and that of elves, fairies and trolls. The story is basically that of a girl Hilde, who has been exchanged with a troll child at birth but, after many adventures is reunited with her real family and to a young man (Junker Ove) who falls in love with her. Most of the character dancing comes from two troll brothers, Diderik and Viderik, one gentle and endearing, the other a vile, bad-tempered wretch, but there are scenes for both worlds to meet in and dance and the final image is of a community and a people at peace with themselves and totally familiar with the supernatural. As for the dancers, being totally at one with the theme and the dance style, they could be nothing else but superb and they are technicians of the first order. Rarely have I seen women so elegant yet so human, or men so graceful yet virile.

Next month I hope to give some mention to other companies performing in Europe, the NDT, Ballet of the 20th Century, Hamburg Ballet and Wuppertal Dance Theatre.
Music and dance - a national symposium at the University of Western Australia

by Terry Owen

If I was a betting woman, I’d have taken even money that Perth’s dance audience would never have expected to see a homegrown live performance of Les Noces, the ballet with words and music by the great Igor Stravinsky. But there it was on stage at the University of Western Australia’s Octagon Theatre, the highlight of the 4th National Symposium organised by the Musicological Society of Australia during the August University vacation.

The three-day symposium had as its theme “Music and Dance” and the Organising Committee under the chairmanship of President Professor David Tunley brought together a bunch of musicologists, anthropologists, philosophers, students; and international dance heavyweights like the Gulbenkian Foundation's Peter Brinsmead, to pontificate on and enjoy a wide range of topics which reflected the society’s aims of encouraging musical research in Australia.

There were a number of dance performances, beginning with an 19th century French Divertissement, Apollon, La Nuit et Comus, performed at the Conference dinner by the University’s Baroque Dance Ensemble under the direction of Margaret Mullins. The Stravinsky work was preceded by the Rippon Lea Renaissance Dancers of Melbourne directed by Helga Hill in an intelligently contrived but theatrically dull programme of dances of the Renaissance.

Les Noces is a celebration in four scenes of the ceremonies associated with a Russian village wedding, calling for a choir of some forty voices led by four soloists. It was played and sung by the University’s Collegium Musicum directed by David Tunley, using the original scoring for four pianists, seven percussionists, choir and soloists. Australian choreographer Don Asker, recently in residence with his small company Human Veins at the Australian National University in Canberra, was commissioned to choreograph a new production of the work for the West Australian Ballet Company’s twelve dancers, and he clearly found this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity stimulating but exhausting.

Speaking briefly before the performance, which was produced with financial assistance from the WA Arts Council, Mr. Asker emphasised the passionate humanism which infuses Stravinsky’s writing. As it happened, Mr Asker’s choreographic invention was most fruitful in those passages where in dance terms he was expressing the warmth and power of the village community’s rituals as they joined with each other in celebrating the wedding.

There was a lovely passage of writing for mother and daughter early in the work, but in other duet passages, notably the bridal duet at the end, the choreography seemed trapped by the enormous complexity of the score’s muscular rhythms into giving the dancers too much to do within each musical phrase. And the young dancers hadn’t had enough time or experience to expand into the characterisations and emotional truths of their roles, so the joy and the spiritual intensity of Stravinsky’s writing was muted.

Yet the evening was an exciting and satisfying one, with the energies of performers and the standing-room-only audience fusing in celebration of one of the great dance works of this century.

Equally satisfying and marvellously instructive for the musicologists in particular was a contemporary dance workshop on the symposium’s final day, with Don Asker and members of the WA Ballet Company taking a piece of music for gamelan orchestra by student composer Amanda Vincent and providing the rare experience of seeing choreography happen right before your very eyes. The six players of the University’s Gamelan ensemble, who are all students of distinguished British composer Roger Smalley, sat in a spread semi-circle around the small Dolphin Theatre stage instead of in the usual tight row formation. Each musician worked directly with two dancers, helping them identify his instrument’s distinctive sound and the shape of its musical phrasing. For an hour they worked from scratch on a seven-minute section of the 25 minute long piece while we, the audience, moved behind the around them on stage, watching the dancers worriedly trying to feel as well as hear their own music and begin to open up the movements Asker had devised for them.

At the same time each musician was learning to collaborate with his dancers and to maintain the music’s momentum and strict tempo. Asker moved from one group of performers to the next, persuading them to begin to express their own individual responses to the music, to feel the weight of the musical phrases, warning them when gestures became too “heroic”. It was an absorbing learning experience for everyone involved, particularly the audience, and gave powerful flesh and blood significance to the symposium’s title.
VSO’s Rigoletto and three AO Revivals

August was very much revival month for the Australian Opera, and almost no month at all for the rest of the nation’s opera companies.

Three AO revivals made their winter season debuts at the Sydney Opera House, and a couple of other productions premiered earlier in the season completed their runs.

By far the most fascinating event of the month was the premier in Ballarat of a new Victoria State Opera production in Rigoletto designed specifically for touring—an event which proved to be a personal triumph for baritone John Wood, playing the title role, as well as a considerable design success for Malcolm Steed and a conducting success for Richard Divall.

Rigoletto is far from an easy opera to stage for a series of one and two-night stands in venues with decidedly less than capital city facilities, and this production dealt efficiently and effectively with its difficulties on a purely technical level. More important, its vocal and orchestral standards were sufficiently high to be good evangelism for an art form whose flag is rarely unfurled in the provinces.

There is, of course, an artistically agonising decision to be made very time an entrepreneur approaches the problem of presenting opera outside a major city: an inevitable choice to be made between the artistically desirable and the economically feasible. Even in the major international capitals of the art form, not to mention Sydney and Melbourne, the artistic ideal is never—well, hardly ever—attainable because of the inbuilt extravagance of the costs involved.

In view of that perennial problem of the entire art form, then, how good ought to be deemed good enough for the bush—given the fact that opera can never be econom-
The revival of the AO's 1974 Barber of Seville on August 13 was virtually devoid of the champagne sparkle without which the piece can never succeed. The main culprit was conductor Peter Seymour, whose tempos (particularly in the first act) erred on the radically slow side. But nothing seemed to come right, at least on opening night, for a cast which featured a large number of new faces.

Glennys Fowles' Rosina was rather too sharp-voiced and fierce; Richard Greager's Almaviva, all hunched and lopsided of appearance, was grotesque rather than appealing; Gregory Yuriisch's Figaro was disconcertingly tentative though definitely promising of better things to come.

The supporting cast members were of course all veterans of earlier manifestations of this Barber, but I found Alan Light's Bartolo drained of its previous vitality and Grant Dickson's Basilio tame verging on insipid.

On the credit side, it was good to see the piece back in English after the aberration of its last revival in Italian, even if much of the diction was so wanting it might as well have been in Swahili for all most members of the audience could possibly have understood.

But it was unfortunate that Seymour had to make his AO conducting debut in a piece such as The Barber, for its specialist demands in the froth-and-bubble department are far removed from the usual demands made on a choral conductor - the area in which he has specialised with ever-increasing success over the past few years. His next scheduled conducting stint for the national company is the four performances of Boris Gudunov in Adelaide in November, an assignment that ought to suit him a good deal better.

Also during the month under review, three other AO productions I have already reviewed in these columns this year resurfaced, two of them with major cast changes for the better.

The Flute, as revived early this year during the summer holiday season at the Sydney Opera House, was showing its age rather badly - the magic was absent, the whole thing was something of an ordeal to sit through in the cause of improving one's soul rather than a celebration of the profundity that can be achieved within the parameters of the comic opera context, as The Flute is at its best.

But its opening night at the end of August was as close to a triumph as the summer season opening had been close to disaster. The main contributions to the improvement were made by John Fulford, a newcomer to the role of Papageno, and Isobel Buchanan, who was returning to the role of Pamina in this production after a considerable amount of overseas success in the same role.

I also felt that Robin Donald, though clearly not yet an ideal Tamino either vocally or dramatically, showed definite signs of potential as a Mozart tenor. At the opening he still seemed to be worried by the vocal rammarts he was required to scale, to the extent that he came close to shouting out the high notes so great was the effort involved in reaching them.

When he took things a little easier - in the dialogue with the Speaker outside the temples, for instance, and in the ensembles and the less arduous sections of his arias - he produced some very pleasing sounds indeed.

Buchanan has still to lose that fierce cutting edge at the top of her range that one might have expected to be dulled with increasing experience and maturity, but it is steel encased in velvet rather than raw steel, harsh and uncompromising; and besides she looks so stunning, particularly as Pamina, that one would be churlish not to forgive her the odd vocal blemish.

Other significant contributions to the success of this Flute reopening came from Rhonda Bruce's Queen of the Night, particularly the second aria whose vocal calisthenics she negotiated with greater skill and success, and less obvious effort, than ever before; and Neil Warren-Smith's majestic Sarastro, and Bruce Martin's earnest Speaker, and Graeme Ewer's perennial comic-villainous Monostatos.

But it was Fulford's night for pre-eminence in the personal honours department, for his Papageno established him in one shot as a major new acquisition for the Australian Opera. In no way did it suffer from comparison with either of his predecessors in the role in this production, Ronald Maconaghe and John Pringle, both of whom were quite outstanding.

The jokes were still basically the same, but at no stage did Fulford seem to be even remotely in danger of becoming imitative of the Maconaghe or Pringle interpretations of the role; surprisingly often, indeed, he found new nuances in the dialogue that had escaped them both. And he sang with a consistent power and richness of tone never achieved by either of the others. One can hardly wait to see him next year in the title role of The Marriage of Figaro.

Finally, a word of praise must to go Richard Bonyng, who conducted this opening quite marvellously, and to the orchestra and chorus who did what was required of them with great skill and dedication. Though this was a mini-opening one could only approach with some little trepidation, in view of the near-disaster of the summer opening, it finally turned out to be quite a memorable event.

Something of the same thing happened at about the same time when the Copley productions of Puccini's Manon Lescaut resurfaced with Marilyn Zschau in the title role led Leona Mitchell. Zschau brought all the loose ends of this promising production of one of Puccini's more flawed operas altogether for the first time - not so much for her singing, ravishing though it was, as for her consistently communicative acting.

She fairly palpitated with coquettness in her Act 1 encounter with Des Grieux; exuded boredom through stifled yawns in Act 2 and rudely enough provoked the dancing master during the tiny pas-de-trois to make it credible that he should stomp off stage in high dudgeon; practically slithered through the window of her prison during her passionate encounter with Des Grieux in Act 3; even managed to make the Act 4 aria vaguely credible despite the fact she is supposed to be singing at the top of her lungs while dying of thirst in the midst of a desert.

The Sutherland Bonyng concert hall version of Lucia di Lammermoor also resurfaced during the month under review, reconfirming the stunning success it had during the summer season at the Opera House before going on tour to Melbourne and Adelaide in a revised, prosenium arch version. I said a good deal about that in the April issue of Theatre Australia, and there is no need to repeat myself now: suffice it to say that seeing it again was akin to pinching oneself awake to reconfirm the whole thing wasn't just a mental aberration; was really as good as it had seemed originally.

If anything, it seemed even more lustrous second time around.

DAVID GYGER is editor of Opera Australia.
Genius, Thought and Magic

HURDY GURDY GHOST GUM
THE CRUCIBLE
JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOUR DREAMCOAT

by Marguerite Wells

Hurdy Gurdy Ghost Gum written and performed by the Jigsaw Theatre Company, Canberra Playhouse. Opened August 1980.

CAST: Robbie, Robyn Alewood; Trickster, Steve Payne; Carillion, Camilla Blunden; Fred Blogg, Michael White; Fred Blogg, Anne Yuille; Blink, Anne Yuille; other Blinks, Steve Payne.

Director, Joe Woodward; Musical Director, David Bates; Designer, Robyn Alewood; Production Stage Manager, Louise David; Promotion Administration, Catherine Beall, Anne Crotty; Lighting, John Williams.

(Professional)


Director, John Spicer; Stage manager, David Laws; Props, Stephan Nicholl; Set, John Spicer, Ian Croker; Lighting, Peter Humphries, Mark Wheeler; Sound, Brian Baxter, Alan McGowan; Costumes, Mary Spicer, Sue Pyne.

CAST: Betty Parris, Megan Lavelly; Rev. Skamuel Thomas Putman, Ted Light; Mercy Lewis, Kate Clements; Goodwife Ann Putman, Wendy Arnall; Giles Corey, Peter Humphries; Rev. John Hale, Nicholas Lidstone; Goodwife Elizabeth Proctor, Margaret Stapleton; Ezekiel Cheever, Tony Ryall; Marshal Herrick, Brad Nickoll; Judge Hathorne, Patrick Russell; Deputy Governor Danforth, John Spicer.

(Professional) 


Director, Paul Corcoran; Choreographer, Helen Jones; with Gary Prichard as Pharoah.

Canberra is surrounded by three small hills euphemistically called mountains. Black Mountain has recently been crowned with the Black Mountain Communications Tower, commonly known as the hypodermic syringe. The Jigsaw Company's children's theatre piece for the August school holidays, makes the startling revelation that Black Mountain Nature Reserve is infested by a bulbous, semi-anthropoid race of creatures known as Fred Bloggs (is it Freds Blogg?)

The city itself is infested with Blinks, twittering officious little persons three feet high, wearing legal wigs and gowns and dashing red waistcoats, who have their well-honed Pinnocchio noses stuck into every parochial cause from dog dirt on the nature strip to the price of petrol.

These delightful, nonsensical little characters were the stroke of genius in a production which was, in other respects, like the Jigsaw's production of Wind in the Willows last year, meandering and pleasant. But for small children, whose attention span is very short, it is the individual incidents that make the play a success, not the overall plot. The villain (The Trickster) wore a Doctor Who hat and raincoat that drew a hoot of recognition and laughter; his tie-dyed parachute silk cloak that swirled in a rainbow merry-go-round all over the large stage was fascinating; the tinselled Carillion, the spirit of the bell-tower in the lake, who cared for nothing but her collection of sound symphonies and her isolation, was touching in her self-centre innocence.

The Moral of the Story was that the bulbous hide-your-head-in-the-sand Freds Blogg, the twittering parochial Blinks and the selfish misanthrope Carillion could achieve anything, as long as they strove for it together.

The great American contribution to art and literature as well as to the theatre, appears to be the grand principle that Life is Real, Life is Earnest and Don't You Forget It. There is a concomitant conviction, very widely held in Australia, that "you can't understand something unless you've experienced it". (This is for instance the principle behind "hunger meals".) This principle is of course false. There are plenty of people who have a deep understanding of the most searing experiences of others without having gone through them themselves. For such people, a performance of The Crucible cannot be anything less than extremely unpleasant, while for others it is probably a salutary prophylactic. Seeing a second production of The Crucible within two months left me with no fingernails, but with a burning desire to get out and away from these appalling people. It was therefore a good production (I wished it hadn't been — I would have loved to have been able to laugh at it.) The small cinema-esque prosenium stage of the Leider Theatre means a conventional set every time but the personnel resources — the number of good actors — who live in or can be coaxed to this large country town are remarkable.

In this production the distinction between the professionals of the cast, was not nearly so clear as in their production of Pride and Prejudice. Tituba is a very difficult role, because it is so easy to produce a slick, racist caricature of a Barbados witch-woman. Mary Spicer was strong in the part and she, John Spicer and Nicholas Lidstone (the latter the visiting professional for this production) were all thoughtfully cast in less central and dramatic, but none the less important and difficult supporting roles, leaving the central, "heavy" roles for local actors who handled them with energy and conviction. This was very clever casting, calculated to give maximum incentive to the amateur actors who form the company's stock in trade.

The real joy of the month was the Last Ditch Theatre Company's production of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat. Choreographer Helen Jones draped a bare stage with a kaleidoscope of movement; director Paul Corcoran filled the production with good humour and gentle satire, and the cast, with pleasant, unaffected voices, performed without major oomph, but with deftness and an obvious certainty that what they were doing was worth doing and they were doing it well. They were right on both counts. Gary Prichard, a grave and pompous Pharaoh who did grave and pompous Elvis impersonations complete with pompous hip-swivels was exquisitely funny.

Human kind cannot bear very much reality, as The Poet says, and this production was this month's life-saving fix of unreality. It was shot through with all the magic and wonder that The Crucible self-righteously eschews and that the Hurdy Gurdy Ghost Gum had only in its Blinks and its bulbous Bloggs.
A considerable work

INSIDE THE ISLAND

by Robert Page


Director, Neil Armfield; Designer, Bill Haycock; Composer, Sarah de Jong; Lighting, Keith Edmundson; Stage Manager, Neil Simpson.

Cast: George Dawson, Martin Vaughan; Peter Blackwood, John McTernan; Lillian Dawson, Dinah Shearing; Susan Dawson, Judy Davis; Captain Henry, Tony Blackett; Sergeant Collins, Paul Chubb; Andy, Tyler Coppin, Mrs Harrison, Julie, Annie Byron; Private O’Neil, Bert, Private Watson, Colin Friele; Tom, Private Miller, Bill Conn; Reverend, Arthur, Martin Harris; Private Higgs, Warren Coleman.

(Professional)

Inside The Island is a gothic gargantuan of a play. A dozen actors must conjure dozens of roles, the set (designed by Bill Haycock) represents a multitude of locations on an isolated wheat property in New South Wales, and the style move from realism to grand guignol.

Political plays (meaning left wing plays, said writer Stephen Sewell) too readily depend on extreme metaphors for the present wretched state of capitalism. Their messages have the subtlety of hammer blows, the points are made not with the surgeon’s knife, but the sweeping stroke of the sickle. Radical playwrights plunder history for tales (witness The Women Pirates at NIDA) or find bizarre, gruesome nasty incidents of the modern world. Edward Bond, Nowra’s dramatic mentor, reaches back to the poet Clare, warps Lear into a symbol of class oppression, has a father involved in the stoning of his own baby and so on.

Whilst no one can deny the power of such plotting it seems to bear little resemblance to everyday humdrum, doth protest too much and gives no insight into Marxist dialectic as she operates today.

Nowra similarly relies on the dramatic in extremis; an heir of Catherine the Great’s kept in a prison of silence; the devastation of civil war resulting from the attempt to forcibly transpose European values on Paraguay. From his South American vision — elliptically commenting on this country — he has focused his sights inside the island of Australia. Once again the history method is used: once again the incidents are extreme.

It begins as a mildly racist and sexist “Dad” figure, portrayed with inner power and morning-after-the-life-before decay by Martin Vaughan, an honest-to-goodness Aussie, is reduced to drink by a marriage above his station. The baddies are the imperialist Brits imposing their culture and religion on the outback — epitomised by and embodied in Mrs Dawson (a superb performance by Dinah Shearing), matriarch of the property. Landholding and bible fervour has dispossessed the aborigines, causes the death of work in the white sherry like beer — and the callousness, rigidity, prejudice, petty and hypocritical moralising of class consciousness are points easily scored.

But where in Visions the whirlwind was reaped from a clash of attitudes, values and economics, here the holocaust is not only accidentally triggered, it jets what the play up to that point seems to be about. In an act of mean generosity (a true oxymoron) Mrs Dawson wittingly offloads inferior flour on the soldiers — but unknown to anyone it contains ergot, a body-rotting and mind-deranging organism. (Neil Armfield, the director, answered my scepticism about the possibility with a copy of a Times report of 1951 of an instance in France where four people had died from contaminated flour.) And what begins as that symbol of gentlemanly sportsmanship and fair play, the cricket match, erupts into a grand guignol episode of madness, mayhem, mutilation and murder.

In a welter of expressionistic lighting effects (from Keith Edmundson) and ear-splitting sound effects, demented characters wheel and cry before us like ghoulish satanic flour mills and prompts the suicides of single girls abused by “the Reverend”.

The portrait in the play would be Chekovian if its morality were not so rigidly black and white — with an inevitable stripping of dimensionality from the characters and a distortion of the truth, Australia being one of the most socially advanced countries at the turn of the century.

With the viewpoint secure in the early part of the play, the humour comes readily — for instance the sergeant of the recruits billeted on the region quaffing the Dawson

Judy Davis (Susan) and Martin Vaughan (Dawson) in Nimrod’s Inside The Island. Photo: Peter Holderness.

...
Richness with its charm

THEY'RE PLAYING OUR SONG

by Lucy Wagner/State Rep

_They're Playing Our Song_. Book by Neil Simon; Music, Marvin Hamlisch; Lyrics, Carol Bayer Sager. On behalf of AGC Paradine Entertainments, JC Williamson Productions Ltd. Theatre Royal, Sydney NSW. Opened August 23 1980

Director, Philip Cusack; Executive Producers, Robert Ginn, Royce Foster; Production Co-ordinator, Sue Nattrass; Scenery and Projection, Douglas W Schmidt; Multi-Image Producer, Wendall K Harrington; Musical Director, Dale Ringland; Choreography, Royce Moase.

Cast: Vernon Gersch, John Waters; Sonia Walsk, Jacki Weaver; with Leigh Chambers, Ray Coughlan, Michael Harris, Hartly Johnston, Rhonda Burchmore, Linda Nagle, Karyn O'Neill, Michell Anne Sullivan.

(Professional)

The latest Neil Simon play—a new musical by Hamlisch and Bayer Sager; a vehicle for two star performers; a staging that demands technical virtuosity; _They're Playing Our Song_ pulls focus on more fronts than most popular productions and so allows itself little room for imperfections. Every aspect presents itself for close scrutiny and no one ingredient can be dismissed as insubstantial or immaterial.

With this compartmentalised structure it blends so smoothly and lightly into a confection that even manages to combine some richness with its charm.

In Song, Neil Simon has virtually rewritten _Chapter Two_ for music. A couple in their early thirties (he a musician, she a lyricist) come together after previous involvements. This time it is the girl, Sonia, who is dogged by the past; not by a bereavement, but by the irrepressible Leon, living ghost of a dead relationship. Once more we are shown a comically problematic courtship, short period of co-habitation bliss, separation and return— but all in a more superficial, rapid-fire form, appropriate to the different genre.

Simon hasn't compromised, though, on a more sentimental character portrayal (the script is deficient, however, on their relationship _together_—the break up comes almost out of the blue), but his hard-edged, Manhattan style is toned down by the light, bouncy or ballad style Hamlisch music—for which Dale Ringland and orchestra produce a splendidly mellow yet precise sound—and by the more gentle delivery of Jacki Weaver and John Waters.

Not that the accents or anything are at fault, simply the natural Australian em­phasis are not so sharp as those of New York. Waters and Weaver's performances are inevitably different to those of the American productions, but the qualities they bring to the roles make them and the show their own.

As the retiring composer, Vernon Gersch, for whom music is his only self-expression. John Waters is predictably endearing. He manages to preserve the impression of physical ineptitude even while breaking into a sophisticated dance routine; his singing voice is strong and pleasant and his comedy easy and stylish. The reasons for Vernon's destruction of the relationship are not sufficiently articulated in the text, but there is throughout a slight bias in favour of his character, which appears the more vulnerable despite success, and which Waters makes the most of.

Jacki Weaver, though, brings her own lightness and charm to the role of Sonia—a typical Simon woman, infuriatingly disorganised and heavily into psycho-analysis. She dissipates the aggression with a wistfulness and general air of fun—perhaps at times a little too much (Lucie Arnaz on record is much harder), and when in top form sings and dances delightfully. Her acting is strong on the top and mid ranges, but lacks a little in the bass.

The two principals fill the stage so well that the device of a chorus of three look­alike alter-egos for each seems superfluous and intrusive. They make about half a dozen appearances, providing good vocal back-up, certainly, but move uncomfortably on the many small sets and divert attention from what works excellently as a _two (or is it three— Leon becomes a very "present" character) person_ musical.

Something else which is disturbing, and inexusable on the part of the producers, is the appalling sound system which spoiled several songs on opening night (hopefully it has now been rectified) by taking voices from distortion level to inaudibility within a single phrase, and which even got its own laughs when an embrace destroyed all amplification from the body mikes. It is grossly unfair on these two top performers who have more than enough to carry in this show without being made ridiculous by such penny pinching.

It seemed all the more unnecessary by contrast with the technical accomplishment of the many settings, produced by revolves, flying and rolling scenery, such props as a real car and splendid lighting. Only the spot operator seemed a little phased by the speed of movement—the script managed perfectly to accommodate all set changes with a constant succession of rendezvous.

Despite all the technical complexities, it is Weaver and Waters who bring Song to life, who infuse it with the energy, charm and pizazz that makes it one of the most enjoyable musicals of recent years. The name song in the first act is one of the highlights of their performance. A niggling feeling remains that Neil Simon's script does give more depth than is apparent in production, but perhaps it is part of the musical tradition that the song and dance and showmanship defuse any stings in a story's tail.
An awful lot has been happening in Newcastle this year, and a lot of it crammed into the last four weeks. The tireless Aarne Neeme has opened three shows. The Wherewhose Theatre has opened a full production of a local play. Three shows have turned up here (plus the King's College Choir). The local Mattara Spring Festival has produced a flurry of small productions. John Romeril is working on the university's Drama Department. And Freewheels T.I.E. has been touring its latest local schools' show, before closing down for the rest of the year. (A closure forced by theiggardly funding which seems to dog all Newcastle companies, including the H.V.T.C. and the local ABC television). It all seems rather a lot for a city of 300,000 not renowned for its devoted, regular arts patrons.

The H.V.T.C.'s productions of Bedroom Farce and The Threepenny Opera were originally planned for the opposite theatres. As it is, Threepenny Opera with a band, and a cast of 19, and a flying entrance, is in the tiny 200 seat Playhouse; while Bedroom Farce, with a cast of 8 mostly in bed, was in the 1600 seat Civic Theatre. Such is the power of economics in the theatre.

Aykbourn is an obvious choice for a regional company trying to woo a relatively inexperienced audience — so obvious that it's a wonder people don't steer clear of him. In the Civic Theatre, and with Willie Fennell and Pat McDonald repeating their roles from the touring production, the H.V.T.C.'s production was still not the runaway success they had no doubt hoped for. It would be nice to think that this is because Newcastle audiences instinctively recognise the remoteness of these obscure English goings-on from their lives. Aykbourn is clever, funny and observant — and, as people are continually pointing out, he is also very serious, exploring the nervous breakdowns people have over tea — but there is still something unsatisfying about him. Especially in the old-fashioned, richly decorated Civic Theatre Bedroom Farce seems rather distant.

There is nothing wrong with the production itself, unless you count the rather weary slickness of the stars, who, after all, have done it more than 200 times. Pat McDonald gives the sort of performance which gets its biggest laugh at the funny way she pulls at her pyjamas. Willie Fennell is engaging as the elderly husband preoccupied with his leaking roof. The company make up the rest of the cast, with local actor Jill Brisbane fitting in smoothly as Jan. The core company are gradually developing a personal following in Newcastle, and the lack of toughness of thought in the production risks foundering on the lack of thought in the script itself. On the opening night the first act was very slow.

And yet it all comes good. The play is reset in the '50s, at first sight another startling austerity (it wasn't a very lively time) but justifed in the end by what is said about bourgeois crime in "the age of despondency". The '50s were a great time for bourgeois and industrial crime, and the lassitude of the age allowed it to flourish. Aarne Neeme has dragged The Threepenny Opera from the hands of period campers and sentimental nostalgia, and given it a fresh, hard relevance which is — dare I say it — completely Brechtian.

The professional performances are evenly good — clear, simple and devoid of histractions, almost to a fault. Bob Baines and Beverly Blankership look right as Macheath and Polly. Su Cruikshank and Allan McFadden as the Peachums were disappointingly bland, knowing what these actors are capable of, but like the other two they came alive in the songs. The singing is some of the most direct and engaging I have heard for some time — due credit to McFadden's vocal coaching. Frank Garfield is a quiet Tiger Brown, emphasising the pathetic side of Brown, rather than the corrupt. Best of all is David Wood's bemused, gravel-voiced Narrator — a part he obviously enjoys and uses to link the whole show together with great style.
By Barry O'Connor

The Homecoming by Harold Pinter, Q Theatre, Penrith NSW. Opened August 15, 1980.
Director, Richard Brooks; Designer, Arthur Dicks; Stage manager, Caroline Mackie.
Cast: Max, Ben Gabriel; Penny, Malcolm Keith; Sam, Ron Hackett; Joey, Alan Brel; Teddy, Don Mamoney; Ruth, Louise Pajo.

Perhaps more than any other of Pinter’s puzzling and perplexing plays The Homecoming, which is considered by some to be his best, invites the need to search for meanings, look for explanations and try to tie up loose ends. It does this because of its apparent and disarmingly naturalistic surface.

However you explain The Homecoming, and you can fly off into the realms of the gothic, the ritualistic, the absurdist, the macabre in order to do so—it is a play, unlike any other play perhaps, that exists in and through its very nothingness. What a piece for actors! The tension, the underlying time-bomb of the action, makes this a most powerful piece of theatre, and that’s what I mean by the noyness of the play. The Homecoming is not naturalism to be interpreted but ritual to be felt, experienced and shared.

The play progresses through a series of power struggles. All very subtle and in that ineffable Pinter style. Battles are fought over glasses of water and cheese rolls. Victories are won or conceded, and the wounded bleed internally. Those who can’t play the game, or won’t, leave or expire blurring out their black secrets on the point of collapse. The others survive, amorously claiming their prize. The queen bee is back in the hive and the other bees sort out their relationships to her majesty, crawling over her, bawling for a kiss.

Louise Pajo’s mother/whore/wife, Ruth, has all the enigma and feline poise necessary to this pivotal role. She moves languorously, with quiet but definite sensuality. Ruth is more than a match for Lenny’s sinister machinations; but Malcolm Keith is equal to this creature of villainy and menace, cool in the face of violence and malicious in his self-appreciation as the stage-manager of the grotesque denouement.

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This is another considerable offering from the successful Q-partnership of Arthur Dicks, whose designs strike the right note of unprepossessing commonplace against which the outrageous can be contrasted, and Richard Brooks, whose recent Measure for Measure, has already demonstrated that he is a director who likes to get inside a play and reach for its soul.

Like all the best comedies Cold Storage is a joyous celebration of life and living. That’s the realisation the play reaches, but along the way come doubts and misgivings about the play’s intentions. Is this just another dark hospital drama, leavened by moments of wry and cynical wit? Made tendentious by sentimental wallowing? No, this is neither Whose Life is it Anyway? nor The National Health. Cold Storage is in fact a better play, a more human play, than either of its antecedents. And this Ensemble production gives that humanity its just expression.

Two men meet on a hospital roof garden in New York City. They might never normally meet in such intimate circumstances. They are both in the cancer ward. One is an art broker: the other, who is older and wiser, is, or was, a Greenwich Village fruiterer. The one has cancer and the other squirms defensively under the threat of cancer. One is in a wheelchair because he has to be; the other because of hospital regulations. ("It’s their way of getting you used to being a cripple"). One has spent his life in cold storage; the other in the very thick of life itself. The one brings the other to acknowledge life and to start to exist.

The play is a tour de force for the actors, especially for Brian Young who shows himself to be an actor’s actor. The parts are well written and consummately acted. Mr Young has all the best lines, but he also has the most demanding part. This is not to say that Len Kaserman’s is a lesser achievement in the very bottled-up role of Landau. Both actors play nicely in concert.

Larry Eastwood’s set, a marble, slab-like affair, reminds us both of the roof top garden where the action is played, and, at a more symbolic level, of a hospital operating table. The sterility and warmth contrasts beautifully with the warmth generated by Ribman’s drama. Hayes Gordon’s direction pays equal due to the play’s parry and thrust nature, while, at the same time, underscoring the human values which make Cold Storage such a rewarding experience.
Great force and coherence

MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA

by Veronica Kelly

Mourning Becomes Electra by Eugene O'Neill. Queensland Theatre Company, SGIQ Theatre, Brisbane, Qld. Opened August 8, 1980. Director, Robin Lovejoy; Designer, Graham Maclean; Lighting, James Henson; Stage Manager, Elaine Kennedy.

Cast: Ezra Mannson, Norman Kaye; Christine, Margo Lee; Lavinia, Sally McKenzie; Orin, Andrew James; Adam Brandt, Norman Kaye; Hurel, Robyn Torney; Peter, Terry Brady; Chorus, Douglas Hedge, Duncan Wass, Gwen Wheeler, Betty Ross, Jim Porter, Errol O'Neill.

(Promissional).

Ten years ago I sat through a fine Canadian production of the full uncut Mourning Becomes Electra, an experience Wagnerian in its epic solemnity, sulphurous grandeur and more than occasional longeurs. One such viewing of the play is probably sufficient for a theatre-goer to collect in a lifetime, hence I approached the QT's three-and-a-half hour version in the hope of getting the strengths of O'Neill's baggy monster of a script with the wearisome lapses discreetly spirited away. The programme does not identify the identity of the benevolent genius who has achieved this feat, but success is his, as under Robin Lovejoy's direction Electra emerges as theatre of considerable stature displayed in a production of great force and coherence.

With much of the steamy repetitions of subtextual "Freudianism" boiled off, the play's substance is revealed as meaty stuff indeed, fine melodrama which imposes its authority by cumulation of effect and emotional bravado. It is still easy to squirm at the spelling out in dialogue of obvious thematic links and the handling of inquisitorial scenes of exposition retailing the relevant past, yet most of such awkward corners are skilfully negotiated. Electra provides for audiences who usually must rely on Dallas et al for such fare the full theatrical rewards of melodrama; big moral themes, superhuman personalities in conflict, the psychic pandemonium of grief, love and revenge externalised fortissimo with unabashed rhetorical vitality. It is no bad thing for a production such as this to remind us of the range of theatre's big artillery.

Evan Kaye's Ezra Mannson presents not at all such a repressive and villainous Puritan as he's cracked up to be, which is dramatically appropriate as his mean-spiritedness, though under frequent discussion by others, is not actually displayed in action. This Ezra appears as a credible recipient of his daughter's worship, and a victim no less than the rest of the family of his own fear of love and freedom. For his alter ego, the bastard Adam Brandt, Kaye reverses the picture revealing an attractive figure of the doomed promise of liberty desired and always destroyed by the Mannsons.

After the demise of these two the male line is finely carried by Andrew James's Orin, who develops a sensitive progression from psychic youth to haunted age; the aspects of the role demanding Orestian possession are particularly good. Electra is rather like its Aeschylean prototype in that it threatens to collapse into relative anti-climax because of the splendour of the first play, but no danger of that here.

It is in the female roles that the big rewards are to be found, and these are splendidly cast. Robyn Torney achieves the feat of presenting a character who is truly good without being soppy, and with her brother (Terry Brady) provides the light background against which the mannons play out their sombre Gotterdammerung. Christine Mannon, O'Neill's rendering of the magnificent Clytemnestra, avenger of her daughter's sacrifice, lacks the heroic courage and resolve of the Greek original, whom one can scarcely imagine fudging a murder or blaming her plans to unfriendly ears. Margo Lee's Christine has both pathos and emotional narcissism, plus the sensual generosity and attraction which is so fatal to her screw-up kin—a believable assumption of a character one wishes the playwright hadn't so summarily dispatched to the enervating Furies of guilt and despair.

Presumably he was saving the full tragic stature for the daughter, and Sally McKenzie's Lavinia is, quite simply, grand. This is a female Hamlet-role with magnitude and depth beyond anything to be found in the nineteenth century melodrama tradition to which O'Neill so generously helped himself. Ever intelligent, always strong, varying from tense hatred to sensuous fluidity and warmth, she conquers the enormous demands of the role with style. Her final self-immurement in the family tomb is not given as a neurotic death-drive but as a full adult assumption of responsibility and guilt, perceived with ironic awareness by a true tragic character. To have seen such a performance is to have really seen Something.

The Chorus characters are colourful, varied and orchestrated with an eye to modulation of the overall effect. Douglas Hedge and Errol O'Neill contribute their comic talents as character actors, particularly in the scene of hayseed farce which usefully punctuates the oppressiveness of the haunted house aura:

Electra looks good, displays the Company working at top pitch as an ensemble, respects O'Neill's tormented and passionate vision and goes flat out for realising its full potential. This is public subsidy well spent, judging by the enthralled reactions of audience members around me who seemed ready to take all that the playwright could dish out and come back for more. Tremble, television, you can't compete.

Controlled energy

TRAITORS

by Jeremy Ridgman

Traitors by Stephen Sewell. La Boite Theatre, Brisbane, Qld. Opened August 22, 1980. Director, Malcolm Blaylock; Designer, Stephen Billet; Lighting Designer, Stephen Billet; Sound Designer, Lee Johnstone; Stage Manager, Delia O'Hara.

Cast: Anna, Jennifer Flowers; Ekaterina, Margaret Fraser; Mother Dybenko, Nadezhda, Barbara Garlick; Anita, Sharon Hills; Rubin, Mac Hamilton; Krassin, Michael McCaffrey; Leisheev, Gregory Silverman; Guard, David Nethercote; Leonte, Djordjev Mislin; Vizzard, Peter Donato.

(Promissional).

Traitors, which is surely up for the record of the most performed Australian play of the year and which soon opens in London, finds itself on home territory at La Boite—pace the A.P.G. and Nimrod—for it was here that Sewell's first major play was premiered in 1978. It is a bold 'return'; a mature, brave and forthright work, per­spicaciously selected for an all Australian season (prior to the Nimrod success) and handled with total commitment to the raw truth of its confrontations, polemics and unfolding passions.

The toughness and uncompromising
nature of Sewell's work comes from more than mere depiction of human cruelty; it is a feature rather of his fearless wrestling with the truths of history, his abstention from authodoxy and his tough analysis of human behaviour under the conflicting stresses of duty, love and self-preservation.

Malcolm Blaylock's production, stark and simple, matches this commitment: beginning with a bare arena, gazed down upon only by portraits of Stalin and Bukharin and others now shrouded and out of favour, he throws the emphasis continually on the human beings who make politics happen. The pace, atmosphere and purpose of every one of Sewell's tightly integrated scenes are established with unerring accuracy, from the brief flurries of activity to the extended, complex confrontation between the newly returned Krasin, ignorant of the purges and changes made in his absence, and his recently promoted but insecure ex-comrade in arms, Lebeshev.

In the absence of decor, Stephen Billet's assiduously researched costumes lend more than mere authenticity. They contribute in the most effective way possible to the definition of the characters; Lebeshev's new uniform fits uncomfortably around the neck; Ekaterina, in her development from innocence to experience and resolve assumes the tougher, more sombre appearance of her mentor, Anna. Out of the simplicity of Baylock's theatrical premise is born a fascinating and instructive richness.

If structure is a 'bête noir' of Australian playwriting, then Sewell must be one of the exceptions that proves the rule. His sense of juxtaposition and rhythm is masterly, especially in the build from the torture of Rubin to the suicide of Krasin and the apparent downbeat of the epilogue which follows. How complex the reverberations of that epilogue are, how fruitful its dialectic of defeat and resolve and its culmination of the emerging hopeful relationship between Anna and Ekaterina. And how well it is served here by the underplaying of the women's final exit to do battle with the Nazi enemy: no Soviet heroines here, just the business of getting on with the job of the revolution.

Sewell's characters are complex, enigmatic, never mere political stereotypes (a remarkable achievement, given the matrix of factions, figureheads and theoretical debate within which they exist) and the quality of the performances is superb. Jennifer Flowers strikes a magical balance between the feminism and Trotskyist resolve of Anna on the one hand and her desire for Krasin and love, born of comradeship, for Ekaterina on the other. Michael McCaffrey's Krasin moves from the strutting pride of the agent returning from an assignment in London through dawning realisation of the horrific contradictions in his post-revolutionary role to eventual suicidal despair; and his torture of Rubin displays a remarkable mixture of motives, passions and frustrations.

Mac Hamilton's portrayal of Rubin exemplifies the sense of controlled energy that pervades the entire performance of the play. It is there in the first secret meeting with Anna in the art gallery, and in the denial of shame and betrayal that crowns his martyrdom. Just why twelve members of the first night audience felt constrained to walk out during the admittedly horrific torture scene (though far more horrific in what it told than in what it showed) one will never quite know, nor why one of them left a gob of phlegm on the stage for us to remember him by. However, the commitment of the production and of the actors could have been no more evident than in the dedication with which Hamilton, momentarily taint by that crass demonstration with the indignity of a backstreet flasher, fought back with unwavering concentration to give one of the most moving performances seen at La Boite for a long time.

Clean and wrily witty

THE DEPARTMENT
by Elizabeth Perkins

The Department by David Williamson. Townsville Civic Theatre, August 20-23, 1980

Director. Rod Wissler; Designer. Lindy Crofts; Lighting. David Berker; Stage Manager. Honor Stevenson.


Townsville Civic Theatre's Summerstock production of Williamson's The Department demonstrated again that a play designed for the stage offers most when seen live on stage. Coming a few weeks after the ABC's Australian Theatre Festival television performance, this production faced audiences of whom an unusually large per cent had a recent knowledge of the play, and succeeded in satisfying and delighting them. Television close-ups and centering on individual moments lost much of the real point of The Department, which is about group relationships in a confined setting, and Rod Wissler's direction made the most of stage arrangement, grouping and body language. As the well-designed programme notes reported, Williamson says "My plays are studies of the collisions — funny and traumatic — caused by differences between individuals within a tight social context", and Townsville audiences, who live in a pretty tight social context themselves, appreciated the finer and warmer, as well as uncomfortable, points of the play.

The Department is closely written, its humour is subtle rather than broad, and the cast put it over with balance and timing. As in all Summerstock productions, the cast was largely amateur, with varying stage experience, but apart from an occasional inaudible line there was little uncertainty and no weak playing. Neil Tucker as Robby rose well to the second half, after some hesitancy in the beginning, and achieved that sense of low-key but complete control of his little empire that Williamson aims at.

The play was skilfully cast and the actors made the most of opportunities for establishing character and interaction. Peter Graham as Gordon, Roger Thompson as Al and Clive Roydhouse as Hans held attention first, but by the end of the evening, there was a comfortable feeling that one had seen a really well-rounded production. Lyn Megarry made Myra a strong-minded woman in a world of subordinate men, and each of the subordinate men conveyed that mixture of intelligence and impracticality that is the myth (and sometimes the reality) of academia. Williamson's plays, with their clear situations, defined characters, pointed lines, ensemble playing and demand for body acting are an ideal challenge for amateur actors. Expert, painstaking direction is needed, which Rod Wissler gave, and the effect was clean and wrily witty rather than heavy and sinister.

Lindy Croft's design of iron scaffolding, serpentine pipes and steamboilers realized visibly the threatening and claustrophobic elements of the play, and careful costuming and make-up helped to establish the irrepressible individuality of the characters inhabiting this world. Overall, a most enjoyable and satisfying piece of theatre.
Marvellously daring

THE MAN FROM MUKINUPIN

by Michael Morley/State Rep


Director: Kevin Palmer; Assistant Director and Choreographer: Michael Fuller; Musical Director: Jerry Wesley; Designer: Sue Russell; Lighting Designer: Nigel Levings; Stage Manager: Peter Kaukas.

Jack Harry: Tony Strachan; Polly Lily: Deborah Little; Clarey the Widow: Tuesday: Carmel Milhouse; Clemmy: Maree D’Arcy; Edie: Audine Leith; Zeek Eek: Edwin Hodgeman; Mercy: Daphne Grey; Cecil Max: Robert Grubb; The Flasher: John Saunders.

(Professional)

Reaffirming the commitment to Australian drama—though not to the exclusion of all else—the new artistic team at the State Theatre began its new season with Dorothy Hewett's The Man From Mukinuppin. And, if this "musical play" suffers in comparison with On The Wallaby in terms both of script and production, it was nevertheless far from the complete disaster some have taken it for.

Dorothy Hewett has never been a writer whose plays could be neatly categorised. Most are untidy, as likely to tip one moment into banality and the next struggling up into embarrassingly emotional flights of poetry. But there are always compensations for such flaws, as also for the at times perverse and willfully clumsy dramaturgy. At her best there is a wonderful energy and urgency about her writing, a refusal to take the easy way out, a wish to tackle both issues and characters on the author's own terms.

Mukinupin is probably her most (apparently) light-hearted piece, with its portrayal of small town life in the early years of the century. The characters could easily have stepped out of a cartoon strip: they are unashamedly two-dimensional, verging on caricature, but also enabling the author and performer to present individual yet recognisable traits. This type of characterisation is appropriate to the use of conventions of melodrama and the music-hall in the writing itself.

And yet there are also references to the "higher" dramatic genres—the masque, the play-within-the-play, even Shakespearean comedy. The latter is clearly reflected in the play's choice of two worlds for presenting the dark side of town and the charm of the cute Polly Perkins, the latter a black sheep who ends up as a drunken, shell-shocked war hero—was exuberant and engaging. However, he seemed more comfortable as the simple, open Jack than as the disillusioned, coarse Harry—a part which calls for more savagery and bleakness. Robert Grubb as the travelling-salesman-with-hopesfor-Polly's-hand, was suitably inept and fawning while maintaining his usual splendid line in ingratiating pomposity. He also tackled the role of Max Montebello, theatrical impresario extraordinaria, as if he were the principal tenor straight out of a bad, minor Italian opera—ie extinguishing, stupid and way over the top. Absolutely appropriate and hilariously funny, especially in the version of "The Strangling of Desdemona" with Daphne Grey as a Desdemona who deserved not so much strangling as something lingering, with boiling oil, for her wonderfully histrionic reading of the role. Deborah Little's Polly Perkins was endearingly naif and appealing—qualities none too easy to maintain without boring an audience. She also coped reasonably well with the role of Polly's half-castesister, Lily, though the part itself seems rather clumsy and contrived.

Once again, the company proved itself well capable of dealing with the demands of singing and acting roles. The work includes songs to music by Jim Cotter which range in mood from the lyrical to the comic. Undoubtedly, the musical high point is the closing song, "Carousel", snatches of which are used as a recurrent motif through the production. Most of the others seemed apt with the role of Polly's half-castesister. Lily, though the part itself seems rather clumsy and contrived...
King Stag for grown-ups and Pinter’s Middle Class Morality

PERICLES AND BETRAYAL

by Barry Plews


Directed and designed by commmaunal agreement among the actors with Nick Enright, Nigel Lesing and Richard Roberts. Stage Manager, Wayne Jelly; Assistant Stage Managers, Coralie Ashton, Di Misridjief, Head Technican, Bob Jesser.

Cast: Gower, Philip Quast; Pericles, Wayne Jarrett; Shakespeare's James Laurie; Simonides Cerimon Boult.

Early scenes are very suspect and are suspect scenes is tedious and slight. It usually disparaged as the product of the actors with Nick Enright, Nigel Lesing and Richard Roberts. Stage Manager, Wayne Jelly; Assistant Stage Managers, Coralie Ashton, Di Misridjief, Head Technican, Bob Jesser.

The STC's production is in many ways the most unsatisfying one. Some of the performances were quite good while others just did not come together. The brothel scene was probably the best. The staging and seating — with audiences on both sides of the stage — didn't help the performers. Too often it was a choice of which side to face for this scene.

The whole production appeared in many ways to be an experiment. Not only was it a different venue for the STC but the directing and acting seemed to be trying to arrive at a different relationship with each other. It might have worked but not with Pericles. Choosing a play for merely formal reasons is fraught with dangers. If Pericles was about something more important one might have forgiven the experiment.

Whilst the STC moved out to Theatre '62 for Pericles The Stage Company moved back into the city to the Balcony Theatre for the Betrayal.

Pinter once remarked during an interview that he was rather hostile towards audiences. Further, he said, it was a mistake to care too much about them for what was important to him was whether or not a particular performance of his work expressed what he set out to say. Given this view and the fact that later in the same interview he disclaimed any social function of any value in his work, it is difficult to assess the Betrayal. It is not a particularly inspiring play. The dialogue is often trivial and cliched. Moreover it would be quite possible for the characters to exchange their dialogue with each other without seriously altering the meaning of the work.

The morality of the Betrayal is very much the morality of well-educated middle class people. It is a kind of morality which many of us find difficult to comprehend and some of us find incomprehensible. Pinter's play ostensibly concerns the relationships between the marriage of Emma (Diane Chamberlain) and Robert (Leo Taylor) and a long-term affair between Emma and Jerry (Wayne Bell), and the friendship between Robert and Jerry.

The play commences with a meeting between Emma and Jerry some two years after their affair has ended at which she tells him that she has just discovered that Robert has had many affairs during their marriage and that she and Robert are going to separate. The play then proceeds backwards in more ways than one. Each scene precedes the scene before it in time until we arrive at the fateful night of the party where Jerry propositions or proposes to Emma — they both amount to the same thing — that they embark upon an affair.

The crux of the matter is that unbeknown to Jerry but known to Emma, Robert was aware of the affair between Emma and Jerry two years before it ended and said nothing to Jerry in all that time about it... Possibly this was because he was so engrossed in his own affairs or because his apparent friendship with Jerry was more important. The point is never made clear.

The problem with a moral tale is to choose a morality which is worth being moral about. There does not seem to be much point in following the meanderings of these interconnected relationships.

Despite the not inconsiderable limitations of Pinter's play and the inconsequential superficiality of much of his dialogue, The Stage Company's recent production of the Betrayal was worth seeing for the very tight acting by the quartet and the harsh spartan direction by Leslie Dayman. The Stage Company succeeds in parts where Pinter failed. Wayne Bell made Jerry believable. His scenes with Diane Chamberlain worked. Leo Taylor had the more difficult role of the squash player and all-round cardboard cut-out Robert. With Jerry, Emma worked but with Robert it was all up-hill. Alan Lovett's waiter tottered on the brink of humour and servile humility with just a hint of that well known Spanish exile. It was a good production. It isn't a good play. The idiosyncratic meanderings of middle class morality are just not that interesting.

Wayne Jarrett (Pericles).
Sprightly production

THE MATCHMAKER

by Colin Duckworth


Director, Simon Chilvers; Designer, James Ridewood.

Cast: Horace Vandergelder, Charles Tingwell; Cornelius Hackl, Neil Fitzpatrick; Barnaby Tucker, David Letch; Malachi Stack, Robert Essex; Ambrose Kemper, Patrick Frost; Mrs Dolly Levi, Marie Redshaw; Flora Van Huysen, Rosie Sturgess; Irene Molloy, Julia Blake; Minnie Fay, Vivien Davies; Ermengarde, Amanda Muggleton; Rudolph, Peter Curtin; August, Johnny Quinn; Cahman, John Bowman; Cook, Jacqueline Kelleher.

(The Professional)

The barely repressed groan inspired by the request to go and sit through a play by the creator of Our Town and The Skin Of Our Teeth was rapidly proved unjustified by Simon Chilvers's sprightly production of this hybrid period piece. In borrowing the plot laid down by John Oxenford's farce, A Day Well Spent (1835) and its Viennese version of Johann Nestroy (1842), Wilder had intended to write a parody and thus "shake off the nonsense of the nineteenth-century staging" by making fun of it. Why he should have wanted to bother to do this as late as 1954 is puzzling. The point of the parody is lost in these times when we are so far removed from its object.

What emerges now is a jolly good romp, some cliched social types very similar to those of Hobson's Choice, and the occasional moralising set speech to reassure us that the play is nothing so low as mere entertainment, but is "about aspirations of the young...for a fuller, freer participation in life," as Wilder put it.

Wilder's main innovation was the creation of the prime mover of the intrigue, Dolly Levi (so Hello, Dolly!...we now have the scenario of the film of the musical of the second version of the first version of the adaptation of the translation of the original play; will the real author stand up, please?).

The central problems of this well-made farce are slight enough, and hardly sustain the weight of Wilder's rather pretentious social message. Will rich merchant Horace Vandegelder be tricked or persuaded into marrying Dolly and into allowing his niece, Ermengarde, to marry her artist lover, Ambrose? As both the latter are pretty colourless characters and Horace changes his mind about them without reason in the final scene, the interest shifts to the minor love intrigue between Irene and Cornelius.

Lively and engaging as Neil Fitzpatrick is in this part, it is just too thinly written for him to make a worthy central character out of him. But Irene is a different matter: Julia Blake measures up to her Irish wiles with great aplomb and sureness of touch...enough to balance adequately the grand performance of Marie Redshaw as Dolly. "Bossy, scheming and inquisitive" she may be, but her qualities of fantasy, warmth and tolerance are strongly brought out, culminating in her statutory (for Wilder) final speech to the audience, informing us that money is like manure: it has to be spread around.

A good deal of the visual fun of this production emanates from David Letch's frantic attempts to cope with the ever-changing situations life presents Barnaby with. His gymnastic dynamism and controlled timing of movements are a constant source of comic delight.

As the traditional boss-cum-villain-cum-stooge, handed down to us from commedia dell'arte and beyond, Charles Tingwell gave us a very passable rendering of WC Fields which fulfilled the demands of the role convincingly: tetchy, uncompromising, mean, and yet sufficiently likeable to avoid becoming an object of contempt or hatred. One has the satisfaction of knowing he has met his match in Dolly.

Flora Van Huysen does not make her appearance until the last act, but Rosie Sturgess quickly establishes her as a fully rounded and formidable lady standing no nonsense from Horace. Indeed, with such formidable opposition as she, Dolly and Irene, a man would need the cunning of Casanova and the strategic brilliance of Napoleon to win.

The cameo parts were all done with a sure sense of character and liveliness without caricature. The barbers' shop quartet (Irene, Minnie, Cornelius and Barnaby) was tuneful and well trained. James Ridewood's design (slatted flats that will do for Phaedra Britannica when the MTC gets round to it) was pleasant and — especially for the Act 2 shop scene — versatile and airy.

One may not agree that the moral of the play is, as Barnaby is made to put it, that every mess is an adventure. But it is a good thought to go around with.

Patrick Frost (Ambrose Kemper) and Marie Redshaw (Dolly Levi) in the MTC's The Matchmaker. Photo: David Parker.
**IN DUTY BOUND**

**CLOUD NINE**

by Cathy Peake


Director, Judith Alexander; Designer, Peter Cooke; Lighting, Murray Taylor.

Cast: Fania, Marion Edward; Simkeh. Ray Lawler; Jack, Tim Hughes; Giza, Babs McMillan; Mordechai, David Ravenswood; Lenny, Robert Hewett; Suz, Margaret Younger; Hannah, Alix Longman; Christine, Margaret Cameron.


Director, Peter King; Producer, John Timlin; Designers, Curtis Weiss, Arthur Metesky; Set Builder, Mervyn Blessing; Costumes, Jo White.

*In Duty Bound* is a Jewish family saga, centred around the stresses and conflicts generated by son Jack, who, quite early in the piece, announces his intention 'to marry out'.

A great deal of the play is given over to the warmth and the vernacular of Jewish life — its wit, its dietary customs and its history. And the frequently repeated rituals of chicken soup and gefilte fish, prayers and religious ceremony all contribute to a busy and active stage.

At Russell Street, some changes in the cast and some re-working of the script have worked to its advantage. Under Judith Alexander's direction, its pace appears to be more naturalistic, and more sympathetic and restrained portrayal at the Pram Factory stage.

For Elisha clearly sees the culture which Fania and Simkeh struggle to preserve within the anonymity of Melbourne in terms of a strategy that is at once resilient and defensive, and he makes much use of the family album to evoke the past they can neither bury nor forget.

In this highly emotional milieu, son Jack's declared decision to marry a gentile nurse is tantamount to treachery. As played by Tim Hughes he is certainly a more various and interesting figure than he was at the Athenaeum, and the conflict he provokes is more deeply situated within the characters themselves where previously, it was more a conflict of types.

Metesky have given the play a surrealistic setting, using lots of clear plastic, screens, yellow paint and a wonderful dangling wedding cake. Presumably their point is to suggest the ultimate transparency of the barriers, the defences and the pseudo-rationalizations Churchill's characters use to solve their personal dilemmas with body and mind.

Churchill's play falls neatly into two halves. The first is certainly the more successful. There she explores the vices and the rigid morality which go hand in hand as the Victorian double sexual standard.

The family she describes all have something on the side and, for the most part, the wit of the piece is centred on their cover-ups, their fear, and their predilection for punishment.

But while the writing here is crisp and incisive, most of the performances leave much to be desired. With the exception of Denis Moore's Clive, the cast have great trouble with the Empire — a world which sits awkwardly on the Pram Factory stage, and it is certainly to the credit of director Peter King that it works at all.

The second half which takes place many decades later, and finds its amusement in the haphazard and selfish sexual mores of the '70s is much more confused. Though, with one exception, it is played by actors of the correct sex (unlike the first) and in style it is more accessible to that of the Ensemble, it is less than coherent, curiously dated and inward looking. In spite of themselves the Ensemble seems to have more felicity with the riding crop than with the free-for-all orgies of this section of the play.
Shepherd of dark pastures

**BURIED CHILD**

by Suzanne Spunner

*Buried Child* by Sam Shepard. Playbox Theatre

Upstairs, Melbourne, Vic. Opened August 14, 1980

Director. Roger Pulvers; Designer. Peter Corrigan; Stage Manager. Brian Holmes; Lighting Designer. Robert Gebert.

Cast: Halie, Indy Davies; Dodge, Robin Cuming; Eiden, William Gluth; Bradley, Geoffrey Clendon; Vince, John Arnold; Shelly, Michele Stayner; Father Dewos, Sean Myers.

(Professional)

With this production of *Buried Child* by Sam Shepard and the announcement of a production of David Mamet's *Duck Variations* later this year, it would seem that The Playbox is developing an unofficial cultural exchange between Melbourne and Chicago — to date it has only been a one-way exchange.

Both Shepard and Mamet are from Illinois and both set their plays in the Midwest: Shepard in its granary wasteland and Mamet in its urban capital. Both are Pulitzer Prize winners — Mamet most recently. Shepard has been around longer but this is the first professional production of any of his major works, in Melbourne; I will be surprised if it is his last.

*Buried Child* is not only an extraordinarily good piece of American drama, but a play consumately of the American tradition. For its subject and sensibility link it in an almost unbroken line with O'Neill by way of Tennessee Williams, and with the prose works of Hawthorne and Steinbeck. Yet it is not in the tradition of American naturalist drama and this may account for the relatively long time it has taken for Shepard's work to be appreciated in America; the fact that his rate of absorption in Australia has been similarly slow, could equally be explained in terms of our own well known proclivities for naturalism.

This problem is exacerbated in the case of *Buried Child* because a superficial or conservative reading of it allows and perhaps, for those so hell-bent, invites a naturalistic interpretation. For like O'Neill's *Desire Under The Elms*, it is about an intense, inbred, guilt-ridden farming family. Given our shared rural heritage at first it seems remarkable that Australia has not produced similar families in our dramatic literature (by comparison buz's *Big River* looks like *The Nelsons*, ie, Ozzie, Harriet, David and Ricky); while we may have been spared the Puritans and fundamentalist religion generally we have paid a fee culturally.

As seen in this play, Shepard's way is reminiscent of Chekhov's — nothing really happens but people spend a lot of time talking and dreaming about the past and all the important emotional pivots are conveyed in everyday banalities, tragedy clothed in wit and almost absurd non sequiturs. However Shepard allows his characters none of Chekhov's secular geniality; as integral as regret is to Chekhov, primal guilt and its redemption is to Shepard.

*Buried Child*'s director, Roger Pulvers is American born and possessed of a profound abhorrence for naturalism, so in many ways he is an ideal choice to realise Shepard's intentions. Moreover there is an uncanny affinity between *Buried Child* and the theme of Pulver's own work, *Bones*. Herein lies the key to the outstanding depth and richness of this production: while American audiences have been baffled by the narrative irregularities of the play when it has been forced into a naturalistic time logic structure, we were exposed to the play's full resonance and its poetic atemporality.

Peter Corrigan's design of paint and water spattered flats and plastic sheeting in muted greens and greys was similarly suggestive of the season-boundedness of Shepard's imagery and made even more startling the contrast with the real props — the golden husks of sweet corn in the first act, and the orange brilliance of the carrots in the second act.

*Buried Child* is a beautiful piece of writing and it was well served by the fine playing of what could now be described as The Playbox Pulvers Ensemble. For of the seven actors, three five have been in recent Playbox productions and three of them in Pulvers' own plays. Not only do they work well together, they have also begun to evolve a particular style of work which is physically and vocally centred and perceptibly intellectual in the best sense.

In addition two newcomers to The Playbox, Michele Stayner and Geoffrey Clendon, blend their performances in so well that one hopes to see more of them. Among so many fine performances — Robin Cuming as Dodge, the dying patriarch of this dying family, gave a sustained and subtly modulated performance that never tipped the scales toward or away from Naturalism.

With *Buried Child*, The Playbox has confirmed the trend that its Upstairs theatre is becoming a reliable source of challenging experimental theatre in Melbourne, and more than regained the credit lost with *Hosanna*.

![Lindy Davies (Halie) in Playbox's Buried Child. Photo: Jeff Bushy.](image-url)
Surface history

EMPRESS EUGENIE

by Margot Luke

Empress Eugenie a divertissement on the life of the

Last Empress of the French by Jason Lindsey.


Director: Marianne Macnaghten; Design: Steve

Nolan.

Introduced by Glenn Hitchcock. Empress Eugenie

played by Nita Pannell.

With Empress Eugenie another work is

added to the growing number of one-

person plays — character portraits

presented by actors with what must be

quite extraordinary stamina and powers of

concentration.

Nita Pannell takes on the formidable

task of playing the aged but extremely

lively Empress Eugenie, widow of Napol-

leon III, Emperor of France, as she sits

reminiscing about her long and eventful

life.

The time is 1919, the old lady is 93, and

she has decided to join a conducted tour

through the Chateau of Compiegne, which

was once her home. When they reach the

bedroom she opts out. Letting the others

continue on their way, she insists on

remaining behind and taking a rest, despite

the tourist guide's misgivings.

The character of Eugenie is understated

— there is a delightful feeling for irony in

her fondness for self contradiction: in her

old age she hates old ladies, who, she says

are never nice. She has dictums too: "Never

say never," she advises. She also feels that

"superstitions are unlucky," and pities the

Pope "Fancy having to be infallible all the

time — it would keep me awake." (Yet, on

the night of her fateful escape she can sleep

"as if the condition had just been invented!).

Some of the more amusing revelations

are the fact that when the crown jewels

were smuggled out of the palace it was in

dirty fish-wrappings, and in the splendid

old days the waste from the palace toilets

was recycled by the local vegetable

growers, their gardens proudly announc-

ing that they were "enriched by the

Imperial Family — by appointment."

The palace also used 300,000 candles a

month, and after the burning of the

Tuileries the insurance paid was 600,000

francs, not pounds as the Times apparently

had suggested. One can see why the Second

Empire eventually gave way to the Third

Republic, but it clearly was fun while it

lasted.

One cannot help wishing that Jason

Lindsay had been as good a playwright as

he must be a recorder of the minutiae of

history — one is given a wonderful intro-

duction to the surface, but permitted very

few looks into the depths of his character.
distinguish their performances by a greater emphasis on characterisation than is usually found. Bean makes the strolling jester an elegant, rather sophisticated young man with graceful movements and an airy disdain for the disadvantages of his profession. It is a very appealing interpretation of a character who is often played more bitter and self-pitying.

Waddell's Shadbolt is joyously crude and scruffy — clearly unwashed and unshaven: each time he comes close to his beloved Phoebe she flinches fastidiously, though, of course, eventually the intricacies of the conspiracy force her to tolerate his proximity and even pretend to like it.

The comic scenes are less frequent in this work, and therefore stand out the more for being so well handled — notably the stealing of the jailer's keys (Phoebe: Were I thy bride); the Cock and Bull duet (Jack Point and Shadwell); the trio "From morn to Afternoon" — Phoebe, Wilfred and Fairfax; and the duet between the reluctant Sergeant Merry and the determined Dame Carruthers: She: "Rapture, rapture!"; he: "Ghastly, ghastly!"

The two leading ladies, both excellent, are well contrasted: Megan Sutton, fair, and what in those days was surely described as "comely", combines a nice feeling for comedy with an unusually pleasing rich voice; whilst Terry Johnson, as always a trifle exotic and vivacious is perfectly cast as Elsie Maynard the strolling player who breaks poor Jack Point's heart. She adds this part to her other G and S successes and her voice becomes more powerful and flexible each time, heard here to great advantage in "Tis done, I am a bride."

James Malcolm sings the somewhat pale songs of the hero with style and beauty, and Desmond Lukey, who so often played heavies in previous productions is this time restrained and dignified as Sgt. Merry who masterminds the escape of the hero.

Minor parts are equally well presented — they all have a Song to Sing, and O, they do it beautifully!

RTC's Second Season

The Riverina Trucking Company's Second Season is now well underway with a highly successful production of the rock musical, Grease, just completed and a new 'one-man' show based on the classic Australian novel Such Is Life, in rehearsal. George Walley's adaption of On Our Selection to be performed in late November completes the programme.

Artistic Director, Peter Barclay, says the season is designed to foster greater community participation. Two out of three shows are large cast and will involve many talented young performers from the region. Also, it has been decided to perform in venues other than our own theatre — Grease was performed at Wagga Wagga Civic Theatre and On Our Selection is going into one of the local clubs as a Christmas show. Essentially, it's an experiment to capture a new audience.

He is particularly excited by Such Is Life, devised by Peter and Ken Moffat with Stuart McCreery as Tom Collins. RTC believe in a high level of Australian content and, in particular, developing shows with a local character identity. Furphy's grand satire of Riverina Bullockies seems just the right fare!
BOOKS

BY JOHN McALLUM

From social comedy to the fantastic

Middle-Age Spread, by Roger Hall. Price Milburn — Currency Press, r.r.p. $3.75.
State of the Play, by Roger Hall. Price Milburn — Currency Press, r.r.p. $3.75.
Spotlights on Australian Drama. Edited by Wayne Fairhead. Macmillan.
2 Unit A English Outlines, by D. González. Pergamon Press.
Enter A Dragon — Stage Centre, by Caryl Brahms. Hodder & Stoughton. r.r.p. $17.95.

It must be annoying to Roger Hall to be called "New Zealand's David Williamson" (as he was when he was first produced here) — just as it was annoying to Williamson to be called, as he used to be, "Australia's Neil Simon." And yet the Foreword, by Ian A. Gordon, to Hall's Middle-Age Spread is full of exactly the things people used to say about Williamson: the delighted recognition of the characters by audiences, the maturing skilful stage-writing, the serious undertones to the comedy, the sympathy for the characters, the wryly affectionate comment on society and the eminently playable dialogue. Social comedy such as this succeeds on the strength of its being accurate and firmly grounded in the social sphere from which its audience springs — but like Williamson Hall is finding that it travels well, to Australia, and, with Middle-Age Spread, to London.

Again like Williamson (sorry!) and like Ayckbourn, Hall is discovering the power of cross-cutting between different places or times. Middle-Age Spread cuts between a suburban dinner party, at which the great middle-class secret, adultery, is revealed, and earlier scenes which show the adultery developing. The lines are not quotable funny in the way Williamson's are but they are the sort that you laugh at uproariously in the theatre. The craftsmanship is effortless and assured.

Hall’s State of the Play has (to continue these odious comparisons) the sort of ingenuity which people (sometimes derogatively) ascribe to Ayckbourn. It shows a playwriting class with a once successful writer teaching a group of people how to create fully-rounded stage characters. In a series of readings of their class exercises (about their fathers) their own characters are revealed, and in the end the writer himself is goaded into an outburst about his father which reveals his character, and, incidentally, his reasons for setting the exercise in the first place. The play's cleverness almost, but not quite, overcame my personal prejudice against plays about writing plays.

Also from New Zealand is James K. Baxter's Jack Winter's Dream which has a rare and to me very attractive feature — it has a lot of weather in it. It is a radio play and uses very effectively the format and style of Under Milk Wood to show an old docker’s last rest in the ruins of a country pub. Snow and wind range around him as he dreams of the colourful old days of the pub — a Tale of Love and Murder. It's a very charming little piece.

I mentioned a few months ago the new respectability which Australian plays are finding on our school syllabuses. It is reaching alarming proportions with two new books for senior students. Spotlights on Australian Drama is an anthology of little scenes from plays with introductions and essay questions. The questions mostly ask students to write full life-histories for the characters or make prop lists or staging suggestions. The book is littered with minor inaccuracies and with cavalier summings-up of complex plays. It is hard to believe that students will really rush to read the originals, and without that it seems a pointless and even harmful exercise. A little learning is a dangerous thing.

Even worse is 2 Unit A English Outlines, which wouldn’t be mentioned here except that it is so retrograde, condescending (to playwrights as well as to students) and plain wrong-headed that it is a danger to the life of theatre in this country. Maybe the students at whom this is directed never go to theatre, but this book certainly won't change that. It will confirm whatever prejudices they have. If you see this book, close your eyes.

It is a relief to turn to Enter A Dragon — Centre Stage, which is a new novel by Caryl Brahms (Don't Mr Disraeli, No Bed For Bacon, A Bullet in the Ballet). It is a flowery, witty, embroidered life of the great Mrs Siddons (nee Kemble) — written in the service of the Higher Truth which James Agate defined as not what happened but what should have happened. Readers familiar with Brahms' earlier novels in collaboration with S.J. Simon will know what to expect. It is very jolly.

Finally there is Michael Fleck's long, sincere, intense adaptation of The Tempest. I'm afraid I cannot bring myself to describe it.
ACT

THEATRE

ANU ARTS CENTRE (49 4787)

CANTERBURY THEATRE (49 4787)
Director, Pamela Rosenburg. Oct 1-4, 8-11.

THEATRE 3 (47 4222)
Director, Jan Carter. Throughout October.

CANTERBURY THEATRE (49 4787)
Director, Jim Stopford. Reptiles of Australia for infants and primary; metropolitan area. Through October 15.

THEATRE RESTAURANT (357 4627)
Director, Camilla Blunden. Oct 4, 5, 9, 10, 28 - Nov 2.

CANTERBURY THEATRE (49 4787)
The Killing Game by Eugene Ionesco; directors, Michael White and John Oakley. Oct 2-5, 8-11.

CANTERBURY THEATRE (49 4787)
The Jigsaw Company: Me Jack, You Jill and 700 000 at various locations.

THEATRE 3 (47 4222)
Cantebury Repertory Society: Androcles And The Lion by George Bernard Shaw; director, Pamela Rosenberg. Oct 1-4, 8-11.

DANCE

CANTERBURY THEATRE (49 4787)

CANTERBURY THEATRE (49 4787)

OPERA

CANTERBURY THEATRE (49 4787)
Canberra Opera: The Barber Of Seville. Oct 8, 10 and 11.

For entries contact Marguerite Wells on 433 057 (v) or 480 706 (h).

NSW

THEATRE

ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW SOUTH WALES (357 6611)
School Tours: The Bushranger, Australian folklore for infants, primary and secondary; metropolitan area until October 20. Jim Stoppard, reptiles of Australia for infants and primary; metropolitan area. Throughout October.

Jan Carter classical guitar for primary and secondary; Riverina until October 15.

The Book Book Theatre Company, drama for infants, primary and secondary; South Coast. Until October 15.

Adult Tours: Flamenco Lobateria: Western Districts, Riverina and South Coast. Until October 5.

More Than A Sentimental Bloke by John Derum; Gosford, North Coast and Central West. From October 13.

AXIS THEATRE PRODUCTIONS (969 8202)
Court House Hotel, Taylor Square.

Pare as the Drunken Slush by Tony Harvey; Peter Meredith and Malcolm Frawley; directed by Malcolm Frawley; music by Gary Smith, with Tony Harvey. Throughout October.

Ramada Inn, Pacific Highway, Crows Nest:

The Billie Baca Show by Tony Harvey and Malcolm Frawley; directed by Peter Meredith; music by Gary Smith. Throughout October.

BREAD AND CIRCUS COMMUNITY THEATRE (042 671994)
Wollongong Workers Club Restaurant:

The Down the Mine and Up the Spout Show written by the company; directed by Frank Barnes. Throughout October.

BONDI PAVILION THEATRE (307 2121)

ENSEMBLE THEATRE (929 8877)
Cold Storage by Ronald Ribman; directed by Hayes Gordon; with Len Kaserman, Brian Young and Jennie Barber. To October 4.

Golden Pathway Through Europe by Rodney Milgate; directed by Brian Young. Commences October.

FRANK STRAIN'S BULL 'N' BUSH THEATRE RESTAURANT (357 4627)
That's Rich director, George Carden; with Noel Brophy, Barbara Wyndon, Garth Meade, Neil Bryant and Helen Lorain. Throughout October.

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 October.

GENESIAN THEATRE (55 5641)
Pygmalion by George Bernard Shaw; directed by Anthony Hayes; with Sarah Brosman, Gaynor Mitchell and Fred Cross. Throughout October.

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (212 3411)
The Best Little Whore House In Texas by Larry King and Peter Masterson; directed by Jerry Yoder; with Lorraine Bayly, Alfred Sandor and Mona Richardson. Throughout October.

HUNTER VALLEY THEATRE COMPANY (26 2526)
Theeepenny Opera by Berlioz Brecht; director, Aarne Neeme; with Sue Cruikshank, Beverley Blankenship, Allen McFadden, Myfanwy Morgan, Frank Garfield, David Wood, Caz Lederman. To October 4.

THE KING O'MALLEY THEATRE COMPANY (922 6205)
The Stables Theatre:

Errol Flynn's Great Big Adventure Book for Boys! by Rob George; directed by Lex Marinos; with Mervyn Drake, Sean Scully, John Hannan, Robert Hughes, Ros Speirs and Anne Cripp. Until October 5.

The War Horse by John Upton; directed by Steven Wallace. Commences October 8.

KIRRIBILLI PUB THEATRE (92 1415)
Kirribilli Hotel, Milson's Point.

The Robin Hood Show by Perry Quinton and Paul Chubb; directed by Perry Quinton; with Leonore Smith, Michael Ferguson and Ross Hohnen. Throughout October.

LES CURRIE PRESENTATIONS (358 5676)
Colonel, devised and performed by Colin Douglas and Tony Suttor for infants, primary and secondary; NSW country throughout October.

Alexandra Moreno, Spanish dancer for infants and primary; North West Hunter and North Coast from October 6 to 23.

Wayne Roland Brown, multi instrumentalist for infants, primary and secondary; North Coast, Hunter and metropolitan areas from October 20.

LIVING FLAME LUNCHTIME THEATRE (357 1200)
AMP Theatre, Circular Quay:

Blind Date by Frank Marcus; directed by Michael Morton-Evans; with Felicity Gordon and Robert Davis. Until October 12.

Monica by Pauline Macaulay; director, Michael Morton-Evans; with Felicity Gordon and Robert Davis. From October 13.

MARIAN STREET THEATRE (498 3166)
Family Circles by Willie Russell; directed by Alastair Duncan; with Tom Oliver, Elaine Mangan, Hilary Larkin, Jill Howard, Peter Snook and Terry Peck. Throughout October.

MUSIC LOFT THEATRE (977 6585)
At The Loft with The Toppano family and Lorrae Desmond. Throughout October.

NEW THEATRE (519 3403)
Willie Rough by Bill Bryden; directed by Jon Williams; with Elwyn Edwards, Christopher Howell, Peter Cowan, Jan Rutherford, Mark Wilkinson, Chris Boddane, Monica Walker and Michelle Facchini. Throughout October.

NIMROD THEATRE (699 5003)
Upstairs: *Volpone* by Ben Johnson; directed by John Bell and Neil Armfield; with John Bell. From October 1.

Downstairs: *Sexual Fervor* in Chicago by David Mamet; directed by Ken Boucher. Until mid-October.

Late Night Show: *Failing in Love Again* devised and played by Jan Cornell and Elizabeth Drake. Until October 25.

**NSW THEATRE OF THE DEAF**

by John Bell and Neil Armfield; with Colin Allen, Bryan Jones and Rosemary Lenzo. Metropolitan area throughout October.

**PARIS THEATRE (26 5253)**

*Shoeshine Alley* by Robyn Archer; directed by Rodney Fisher; with Nancye Hayes and Maggie Kirkpatrick. Commences October 6.

**Q THEATRE (047) 26 5253**

*Happy End* by Bertold Brecht and Kurt Weil. Commences October 17.

**REGENT THEATRE (61 6967)**

*Acrobats of China: until October 11.*

**RIVERINA TRUCKING COMPANY (069) 25 2052**

(For details contact Shopfront for Young People 588 3948)


**SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY (20588)**

Drama Theatre, SOH: *The Merry Wives of Windsor* by William Shakespeare; directed by Mick Rodger; with Jennifer Claire, Janice Finn, Max Phipps, Carol Raye and Robin Ramsay. Until October 25.

**SYDNEY UNIVERSITY DRAMATIC SOCIETY (692 0555)**

Downstairs Seymour Centre: *The Cherry Orchard* by Anton Chekov; directed by Lindsay Daines. Until October 4.

**THEATRE ROYAL (231 6111)**

*They’re Playing Our Song* by Neil Simon; directed by Phil Cusaek; with Jackie Weaver and John Waters. Throughout October.

**THE AUSTRALIAN OPERA (20588)**

*Fra Diavola* by Auber, conducted by Richard Bonynge and David Kram; produced by John Copley. *The Barber of Seville* by Rossini; conducted by Peter Seymour; produced by John Cox. *Boris Godunov* by Mussorgsky; conducted by Elgar Howarth; produced by Elijah Moshinsky. *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* by Benjamin Britten; conducted by William Reid; produced by Elijah Moshinsky. In repertoire until October 25.

**DANCE**

**THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET**


**THEATRE GUILD (22 3433)**


**QUEENSLAND THEATRE COMPANY**

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**THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET**


**THEATRE GUILD (22 3433)**


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THE COMEDY THEATRE (662 3233)

er; lyrics by Tim Rice. Throughout Oct.

VIC

THEATRE

ALEXANDER THEATRE (543 2828)

AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING GROUP (347 7133)
Front Theatre: New Ensemble Show. ARENA THEATRE (249667)
Chapel Perilous by Dorothy Hewett; with the Victorian Independent Theatre. Oct 3-18.


ARTS COUNCIL OF VICTORIA (529 4355)
Touring: Jigs. Dance And Singalong with Michelle and Mike Jackson. The Magic Pudding from the original story by Norman Lindsay; with the Marionette Theatre. Oct 10-21.

COMEDY CAFE
Brunswick Street, Fitzroy: Original Comedy entertainment starring Rod Quatorto. COMEDY THEATRE (662 3233)
Edith Piaf presented by Playbox Theatre Company; director, Murray Copeland; with Jeannie Lewis. Throughout Oct.

FLYING TRAPEZE CAFE (41 3737)


HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (663 3211)
Evita, director, Harold Prince; musical director, Peter Casey; composer, Andrew Lloyd Webber; choreographer, Larry Fuller; lyrics by Tim Rice. Throughout Oct. A musical based on life and works of Tom Lehrer. Director, Gillian Lynn. From October 20th.

WA

THEATRE

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE (3216288)

THE HOLE IN THE WALL (381 2403)
No Exit by Jean-Paul Sartre. Director, Edgar Metcalfe. Ends October 11.

Bent by Martin Sharmar. Director, Edgar Metcalfe. From October 15.

THE MAGIC MIRROR THEATRE COMPANY
The Daughter Of The Rubbly Dub Show — appearing in various night clubs around Perth throughout the month.

THE NATIONAL THEATRE (325 3500)
Betrayal by Harold Pinter. Director, Stephen Barry, with Paul Mason, Alan Cassell, Leith Taylor, Maurie Ogden. Ends October 11.


Coppelia with the National Theatre Ballet School. Oct 24,25.


PALAISE THEATRE (534 0651)


ALEXANDER THEATRE (543 2828)
La Belle Helene by Jacques Offenbach, performed by the Cheltenham Light Opera Company. Oct 10-25.

For entries contact Connie Kramer on (049) 9742470.

LAST LAUGH THEATRE RESTAURANT (419 6225)

Upstairs: Shows changing weekly.

MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY (654 4090)
Athenaum: Privates On Parade by Peter Nichols; director, Bruce Myles; set director, Paul Kathner; with Simon Chivers. Oct-Nov.

Russell Street Theatre: The Elephant Man by Bernard Pomerance; director, Ted Craig; designer, James Ridewood. Oct 8-Dec 6.


MURRAY RIVER PERFORMING GROUP (21 7615)

OPEN STAGE (34 8018)
Throughout Oct.

ARTEMIS THEATRE (249667)

POLYGON THEATRE COMPANY
Touring: Jigs, Dance And Sing along with John Thompson, Ian Taylor, Maurie Ogden. Ends October 11.

The Kangaroo — appearing in various night clubs around Perth throughout the month.

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The Same Square of Dust by Mary Gage. Early life of Charles Kingsford Smith. Director, Stephen Barry, with Paul Mason, Alan Cassell. From October 17.

REGAL THEATRE (381 1557)
Tom Fooleries, a musical based on life and works of Tom Lehrer. Director, Gillian Lynn. From October 20th.

W.A. ARTS COUNCIL TOURING PROGRAMME
THEATRE-IN-EDUCATION TEAM.
Tour of Eastern Goldfields' Primary Schools with Pow Wow, St George And The Kangaroo and Num Lagger. Finishes October 17, then another two weeks in November.

PHOTOGRAPHIC TOUR. Rothman's National Photographic Press Awards — tour of North West of Western Australia.

(Continued over page)
MUSIC

CONCERT HALL.

ABC FAMILY CONCERT — October 10.

VICTOR BORGE. October 13 and 14.

EIGHTH AND FINAL ABC SUBSCRIPTION CONCERT. October 24 and 25.

OCTAGON THEATRE

MUSICIANS IN RESIDENCE.

STEPHEN SAVAGE. October 6, 13 and 20.

OPERA

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE

(321 6288)

Seraglio by Mozart. W.A. Opera Company. October 2 to 11.

For entries contact Joan Ambrose on 299 6639.

Mona Workman

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THESPIA'S PRIZE CROSSWORD

No. 26.

Name ........................................
Address ........................................

P. Code ........................................

Across

1. Chap who involves the notice and me in a rip-off (5)
4. Loyal Irishman leads rebellion with one hundred (9)
9. New neckwear consists of decorative trinkets (9)
10. Shortly to train as a practitioner like St. Paul's (5)
11. Topless retainer returns with a fever (5)
12. Rise above various characters in fashion ... (9)
13. ... but ascend with difficulty to the heights around the author and the king (7)
15. End of sail of a length to provide weapons (7)
18. Fleecy Ballerina? (7)
20. Unsatisfactory joints among the Indians, we hear (7)
21. Only one of Oakley's mammals! (9)
23. Suzi, bizarrely attired, entertains the whole island (5)
26. When the enigmatic leave home, they become visible (9)
27. Poor lame lass — it's the ray of radiation that does it (5, 9)
28. Points to the journalist's requirements (5)

Down

1. Disagrees with studies based around the French language Institute (Capital Territory) initially (9)
2. Likes ducks? (5)
3. Plain classical version of deforestation (9)
4. Impresses athlete who loses his head (7)
5. You French examine the question in Italy (7)
6. "Oly men might swim in it (5)
7. "Thou art more lovely and more ......." (Shakespeare) (9)
8. In apher, it reads "Fish to Edward" (5)
14. Dilations could result in same ruins (9)
16. Copied again by trile Wren (9)
17. Scum deals crookedly in fruit (9)
19. Use sire in order to give out again (7)
20. Sounds as if the faithful have a tablet nasty! (7)
21. Upright comedian right with the small man (5)
22. Subject to international communist coming back (5)
24. Colour odd posterior in. that is (5)

The winner of last month's crossword was Mr Hugh Reid, of Valentine, NSW. The first correct entry drawn on Oct 25 will receive one year's free subscription to Theatre Australia.