11-1980

Theatre Australia: Australia's magazine of the performing arts 5(4) November 1980

Ardyne Reid
Editor

Lucy Wagner
Editor

Follow this and additional works at: http://ro.uow.edu.au/theatreaustralia

Recommended Citation

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: research-pubs@uow.edu.au
Theatre Australia: Australia's magazine of the performing arts 5(4)
November 1980

Publisher
Theatre Publications Ltd., New Lambton Heights, 50p

This serial is available at Research Online: http://ro.uow.edu.au/theatreaustralia/48
Australia’s magazine of the performing arts. November 1980 $1.95*

Theatre Australia

RICHARD WHERRETT
BUILDING A COMPANY

JACK HIBBERD
ON HIS NEW PLAY

CABARET/ THE NEW POPULAR THEATRE
LOUIS NOWRA’S

THE PRECIOUS WOMAN

SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY

DIRECTED BY
RICHARD WHERRETT

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

NOVEMBER 11 – DECEMBER 13
DEPARTMENTS

3/COMMENT
4/INFO
9/WHISPERS RUMOURS AND FACTS
45/GUIDE (THEATRE, OPERA, DANCE)
48/THESPIA'S CROSSWORD

SPOTLIGHT
10/A SHAKESPEARE COMPANY
11/TED CRAIG
12/JEANNIE LEWIS
13/JACK HIBBERD'S A MAN OF MANY PARTS
14/SYDNEY DANCE THEATRE

FEATURES
15/POPULAR THEATRE/Ralph Kerle/John Allen
18/BUILDING A COMPANY/Richard Whenett

INTERNATIONAL
20/CONCERNING VARIOUS VIEWPOINTS/Irving Wardle
21/A MENU OF WARMED OVEN MUSICALS/Karl Levett

FILM
23/STIR/Elizabeth Ridell

DANCE
24/THE DANCE SCENE IN EUROPE – PART II

OPERA
27/RUNS AND REVIVALS/David Gyger

REVIEWS
29/NSW/MERRY WIFE'S/Barry O'Connor
ERROL FLYNN/Anthony Barclay
VOLPONE/Hugh Craig
FAILING IN LOVE AGAIN/Michele Field
MUSIC BOX THEATRE
35/QLD/CARMEN/Robert Kingdom
36/SA/WHAT THE BULLET SAW/TRAITORS/Michael Morley
38/VIC/PIAF/Colin Duckworth
DUCK VARIATIONS/BALL GAMES/Cathy Peake
PRIVATE ON PARADE/Ray Stanley
42/WA/BETRAYAL/Private Lives/Collin O'Brien

BOOKS
44/On Books and Cities

COVER: MICHAEL MATOU. PHOTO/MICHAEL COOK.
Four Plays for $28 (Students $16)
In association with Winfield

CELLULOID HEROES

by David Williamson
director John Bell, designer Larry Eastwood with, in alphabetical order

Kate Fitzpatrick
John Gregg
Robin Ramsay
Kevin Smith
Barbara Stephens
Peter Sumner
Henri Szeps
Alan Wilson

by arrangement with the Shopfront Theatre

Errol Bray's the choir

director Neil Armfield,
designer Eamon D'Arcy with
David Atkins, Simon Burke,
Tony Sheldon, David Slingsby

by Anton Chekhov,
director Aubrey Mellor,
designer Kim Carpenter with
John Bell, Cathy Downes,
Michele Fawdon, Drew Forsythe, Barry Otto

TEETH 'N' SMILES

by David Hare,
director Neil Armfield

with Michele Fawdon

Telephone 699 5003
for your free copy of
the Nimrod Banner
with full subscription
details.
The idea that a theatre company is more than a bureaucracy for putting on shows has taken an amazingly long time to catch on in this country. Any regular theatregoer knows that even the way ushers show you to your seat reflects their position in the power structure of a company. The total experience of going to a theatre is determined not only by the individual talents which contribute to a production, but also by the personal and political interrelationships between those talents. It shows.

A large part of the success of Nimrod during the last ten years has been in their identity as a unified company, in which all members have some say. More of that next month. This month we have Richard Wherrett discussing the aims of the Sydney Theatre Company, and the problems of building a large company with an identity of its own.

For comparison there is the Australian Performing Group — the only company in Australia to have made a serious attempt to incorporate the collaborative nature of the theatre product into the running of the workplace. The most articulate spokesperson for the A.P.G.'s industrial ethics is John Romeril, this year at large with a new hierarchy of people who speak for the A.P.G.'s industrial philosophy. But, on a different scale, that is what the S.T.C. is attempting. Well-known expatriate Victorian Graeme Blundell referred in these pages four months ago to their "exciting and open government".

The trouble with all those committees, as many idealistic Artistic Directors have found, is that they cannot be imposed from the top, and that some people are better at them than others. Everyone is articulate in a different way, and there is the danger of replacing the old institutional hierarchy with a new hierarchy of people who speak well at meetings. The great task, and the most important, is to find a way of giving everyone a chance to have their influence in the way that suits them best, rather than the way which suits a set institutional structure.

The process takes time, of course, and an awful lot of the work in meetings which Richard Wherrett refers to in this issue. Over the years the A.P.G. have spent a great deal of time searching for procedures that will allow it to happen, and their meetings are the subjects of a hell of a lot of visual material supplied for this magazine, the publishers and their agents accept no liability for loss or damage which may occur. Unsolicited manuscripts and visual material will not be returned unless accompanied by a stamped address envelope. Opinions expressed in signed articles are not necessarily those of the editors.

SUBSCRIPTIONS:

The subscription rate is $21 per year within Australia. Cheques should be made payable to Theatre Publications Ltd and posted to Theatre Publications Ltd, 80 Elizabeth Street, Mayfield, NSW 2304. For institutional and overseas subscription rates see back page.

Theatre Australia is printed by ADM Paramac, Alexandria. The magazine is produced by Soundtracks Publishing Pty Ltd (Tel: (02) 357 4276). The magazine is distributed by Soundtracks Publishing Pty Ltd (Tel: (02) 357 4276). The magazine is distributed by Soundtracks Publishing Pty Ltd (Tel: (02) 357 4276).
CHRISTOPHER JONES has been appointed co-ordinator of the second Australian Drama Festival which is to be held in Adelaide in April 1981.

The festival which was last held in December 1979, is one of the main activities of South Australia's Association of Community Theatres. Prior to taking up the position of co-ordinator, Christopher Jones was working for the Arts Council of New South Wales. He was earlier the Administrator of the Riverina Trucking Company in Wagga. He says:

"I see the festival as being two main things, first there is the aim to celebrate achievements in Australian theatre both in the past and present, and we aim to do this by presenting as many productions as possible during the 18 day festival. Then there is the opportunity to get performers, writers, directors and audiences together to discuss both formally and at late night sessions, aspects of Australian theatre. This sort of interchange can only help to increase our awareness of what Australian theatre is about and which way it might be heading."

The list of the committee for the Australian Drama Festival carries such names as Paul Iles from the State Theatre Company of South Australia, Chris Windsor from the South Australian Department for the Arts, Sue Averay from the Carclew Arts Centre and Max Wearing of the Adelaide College of Arts and Education.

"With this sort of back up, the festival is off to a great start. The assistance I've received since arriving has been tremendous. We've planned to make it a real celebration — 18 days where there will be Australian works and without it being boring!"


YOUNG PLAYWRIGHTS... The 4th National Young Playwright's Weekend, which was held from Thursday 28th of August to Sunday 31st, was a definite success.

Thirty-five young playwrights from Sydney, Melbourne, Queensland, Adelaide and Perth gathered together at the Shopfront Theatre in Carlton Sydney to learn as much about writing as they could in four days.

The weekend was organised by Errol Bray, who managed to get such people as Bob Ellis, Bert Deling, Julie McGregor, Bryan Brown, Michelle Fawdon, David Atkins, Ralf Coterill, Lex Marinos, Janis Bolodis, John Stone, Alex Buzo and David Slingsby to attend the workshops and help however they could.

Some of the plays were video-taped or performed on stage by the resident actors at Shopfront.

It was worth every effort that went into organising the weekend, and there should be many more of its kind!

LA BOITE... La Boite has announced the details of its programme for 80/81.

In a Season described as 'a show-stopping season of variety' plays include David Williamson's Handful of Friends; the Edinburgh Festival Award Winner Errol Flynn's Great Big Adventure Book for Boys by Rob George; The Runaway Man by Mick Barnes; Colonial Experience by Walter Cooper; Occupations by Trevor Griffiths and as a New Year Bonus Sheik, Rattle 'N Roll or A Daring Desert Date with Destiny by Simon Denver and Ian Dorricott.

Sheik, Rattle 'N Roll is the final play in the highly successful musical trilogy by Brisbane writers Simon Denver and Ian Dorricott — "Catch the number 57 camel train and come for a trip across exotic, blazing sands to high adventure with the ultimate dazzling hero — the Prince of Araby!" It sounds just the thing for the New Year.
FOOLS GALLERY THEATRE...
The Fools Gallery Theatre Company's presentation of the first part of their series *Images from the Background* 'Standard Operating Procedure' opened in Canberra on September 25th. *Images* deals with the way we are conditioned by cultural myths which create and continue the destructive separate roles of men and women. Each piece in the series is individually devised and self-contained though it links in theme to the others through recurring symbols and images.

Workshopped by the group in an experiential process determined by the specific mythical background and the type of images to be presented, the four parts of the series will open in different cities. 'Standard Operating Procedure' and 'Sleeping Beauty' open in Canberra and, together with 'Original Sin' will be performed in the Cleveland Open Space in Sydney in January. 'Being' the fourth of the series will be added in Melbourne in April/May next year.

The Fools Gallery are reaching out theatrically with this venture and their work, based on group creation, should create different performances — living theatre.

The series needs to be seen from the beginning for it is the first of the series that really marks through history the essence of man's fear of women; and the myths created to justify men's atrocities against women. "Rape" says one Vietnam veteran was pretty SOP.

ADELAIDE'S HISTORIC WARNER-MAJESTIC... Major film groups and theatre companies around Australia have joined forces with the Save the Warner-Majestic Theatre Group. Headed by Mark Sobels and Stephen Measday, they are making an effort to save Adelaide's 124-year-old theatre from demolition by the Commonwealth Banking Corporation who plan to build an 18 storey banking complex on the site. On the eve of demolition the Australian Heritage Committee placed the theatre on their interim list, but it has now been taken off and is at present only saved from demolition by a ban on the building by the Builders and Labourers Union.

The Warner-Majestic has a dress circle of cantilever design, Victorian Theatre boxes and Victorian gold picture-frame proscenium, a fly tower and splendid acoustics — said one hundred years ago and repeated twenty years ago, to equal that of any theatre in the southern hemisphere. It holds approximately 800 people.

Numerous Australian theatre companies and film groups have written and said that they would be pleased to use the theatre, were it preserved. So, with management, it need never be dark.

The Warner-Majestic has had a chequered but fascinating history over 124 years. From 1856-1880 it was White's Assembly Rooms and Concert Hall, then Garner's Theatre (1880-1882); Garners Rooms (1884-1892); Bijou Theatre (1893-1900); Tivoli Theatre (1901-1913); Star Theatre (cinema) (1914-1916); Majestic Theatre (1916-1968). It became a theatre-restaurant in 1968 (the Celebrity Theatre) before becoming the Warner Theatre in 1969-

THE PROFESSIONAL-AMATEUR LINE becomes increasingly fine and seems to meet in some excellent co-operation especially in documentary programmes.

May we draw Sydneysiders attention to New Theatre's *Willie Rough*. *Willie Rough* is set at the outbreak of WWI in the Clyde and deals with Willie's disenchantment with the political shenanigans of the time.

Victorian readers will be interested in the 1812 Theatre's production of the John Wregg entertainment based on Ned Kelly's hanging — with a gala performance on the 11th (the actual date in 1880 when Kelly was hanged).

And all Newcastle (and NSW) should see HVTC's *The Star Show*. Written by Peter Mathieson and John McCallum, it will include the actual film footage taken on 'that' night.
AUSTRALIAN AND EUROPEAN THEATRE ... Rick Billinghurst's report for the Australia Council on his recent trip overseas makes fascinating reading. The report in full is available from the Australia Council, 168 Walker Street, North Sydney, NSW 2060.

Two sections of particular interest are from page 2.

"Of course there is a great paradox waiting to snare the Australian involved in travel study of Euro-American theatre. While there is much talk of our being a multi-cultural society, and we are geographically closer to Asia and the Pacific than to Europe, this is hardly reflected in our theatres.

For almost anyone who has grown up in Australia it is still easier and certainly cheaper to traverse the detailed terrain of Euro-American style performance, script and performers, direction, design, production and rehearsal right here in Australia — from the comfort of a seat at any one of our major subsidised, or indeed alternate, theatres.

We may accept the need to have fringe multi-cultural immigrant community theatre but not the possibility that say, the Indonesians, our own Aborigines or indeed any non-European could offer better ways of seeing ourselves and the world. In so far as there is any debate, via the Australian playwright, it tends to rely very heavily on the second hand Euro-American form, style and experience. (Has anyone noticed that our actors are naturally better at moving than speaking?)

To appreciate fully the sad depth and delight of this irony perhaps it is necessary to crown sixteen years of passionate involvement in the advancement of an Australian theatre with a journey of 45,000 kilometres — so that one can truly measure the dimension of our unbelievably theatrical achievement — that of an all embracing Europ-American colonial enclave within the rich tradition and fabric of Aboriginal, Asian, Pacific and immigrant cultures.

For, as I was to discover, the clue to the real truth of this paradox lies not only in the yearning for the cultural life of Europe and America, but in the very distance that we find ourselves from those epicentres; that only in making a journey across that gap is it really possible to understand how much we in Australia are like excited astronomers witnessing the living presence of a star's supernova which has long since disappeared in the firmament we applaud the echo, but never its substance.

And a paragraph from page 7.

"Theatre in Europe does not necessarily answer our Australian needs because the important things that go to make up our society and concerns here, are actually at depth quite different to those of Europe and even America."
STEPPING OUT... People who saw and enjoy Best Boy the Ira Wohl film that was so popular at the Film Festivals, will probably also find Stepping Out a film to see.

An extraordinary film Stepping Out is the celebration of a remarkable event. It explores the lives of a unique theatre group of mentally handicapped people, who have lived in an institution since early childhood, as they prepare for their first public performance — at the Sydney Opera House.

It takes us inside their lives, inside their relationships, as they gradually take on responsibilities and discover talents and abilities in themselves which everyone had assumed were beyond them.

Stepping Out, a deeply moving statement about the potential of human beings to break through the limitations set for them by others, is sponsored by the Australian Government, the New South Wales State Government, and Australian industry, with the Australian Film Commission for 1981 International Year for Disabled Persons.

Chris Dobbin in Stepping Out. Photo: Jane Hanckel.

ST MARTINS - A NEW STYLE FOR THE TEENAGE MARKET...

Under the direction of Helmut Bakaitis and his staff, St Martins Youth Arts Centre in Melbourne continues to develop and market its distinctive style to the teenagers and kids of Melbourne and Victoria.

The new Youth Arts Centre opens in September '81 with four new plays, two of which emerged from St Martins' Young Playwrights' Seminar held earlier this year: S лиve of the Service by Bill Marshall and The Flat A Temporary Thing by Andrew Macpherson.

St Martins is currently touring its new show, The Quick Eze Cafe: Style & Control — A New Wave Artaudian version of Lower Depths.

The show currently being developed for touring is Who Killed Gloria Marshall? — a terrorist fantasy dealing with the massive exploitation of young people by marketing campaigns.

Boy Oh Boy! is a musical piece being written and performed by a group of 9 to 14 year olds re-examining traditional sex roles within the family.
SOUTH AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

ARTS ADMINISTRATION
Graduate Diploma in Business Administration (Arts)

Applications are now being called for 1981 entry into Australia's only Post Graduate Course in Arts Administration. The course may be taken in one year full time or two years part time and is designed for administrators in all sectors of the Arts (Theatre, Dance, Music, Opera, Ballet, Community Arts, Crafts, Visual Arts).

Entrants are required to have a degree or diploma, or equivalent, and appropriate work experience.

Write for further information to
Mr. P. Brokensha
Course Co-ordinator
Elton Mayo School of Management
South Australian Institute of Technology
North Terrace
ADELAIDE SA 5000
WHISPERS
RUMOURS
& FACTS

by Norman Kessell

Establishment of a permanent Musical Comedy Company recently re-surfaced as a letter-to-the-editor topic in the Sydney Morning Herald. I do not know if any of the writers were aware of efforts over the past few months to create an Australian Musical Theatre Company similar in structure and operation to the Australian Opera and Australian Ballet.

It is not easy. It was the spiralling costs of musicals that helped to put J.C. Williamson Theatres out of business. As Michael Edgley has said, big musicals are no longer an attractive economic proposition unless you have a blockbuster like Evita.

However, response to shows like Annie, The Best Little Whorehouse In Texas and even a small-scale musical like They're Playing Our Song proves the audience potential is still there — people not attuned to opera or ballet, but hungry for quality light entertainment such as provided by shows like Oklahoma! (already a smash-hit revival in London), White Horse Inn, Kismet, Viktoria and her Hussar, Lilac Time, Music In The Air. It is old-time winners like these the supporters of the permanent company concept want to put on, not the million-dollar modern musicals.

First positive move in this direction came from actor Noel Ferrier, who launched a one-man campaign with the slogan, "Let’s Hear It For The Musical". His plan was for 50/50 funding from government and public sector sponsors to launch a company operating on a repertory policy and staging four or five musicals a year in all capitals.

Ferrier had the moral support of Home Affairs Minister Bob Ellicott, but so far has had setbacks in financing his scheme. A long-promised "pilot" production of White Horse Inn has yet to appear. However, last time I spoke to him he told me an announcement would be very soon forthcoming. It may already have emerged by the time you read this.

In another more ambitious move last year, Actors Equity sponsored a public meeting attended by representatives from most theatre companies as well as interested groups and individuals. A committee formed at that gathering and subsequently held many meetings seeing ways to get the project off the ground.

It examined a proposition from one established Sydney theatre, but talks eventually broke down over the question of control. The theatre wanted one man, the committee a board of directors.

Next, the committee explored the setting up of a Musical Theatre Trust, along the lines of the Australian Elizabethean Theatre Trust. This came to naught when the Australia Council ruled it would not subsidise either a trust or a single company. What it would do was establish a fund from which it would invest in approved single productions submitted by any commercial company — an operation similar to that of the Australian Film Commission and the various State film corporations. The council would invest up to 25 percent of production costs initially, with a possible further 25 percent towards running costs. It would be reimbursed proportionately from profits, if any.

Some members of the committee thereupon decided to invest in and form such a company in order to qualify for Australia Council funding. Plan is that the company, capitalised at a suggested $3 million, would be registered on the Stock Exchange, giving opportunity for all who had indicated interest to become investors.

It is envisaged the company would first acquire premises and equipment, then apply to the council for investment in its first and subsequent productions. A longer-range project is a tie-up with the Registered Clubs Association and the staging of specially designed musicals on the club circuit.

Freddie Gibson’s idea for a subscription season at the Theatre Royal next year has, I hear, had to be deferred. I believe the plan was for a four-show package, at spaced dates through the year, which would have included Warren Mitchell in Death of a Salesman; U.S. playwright Mark Medoff’s successful Children Of A Lesser God, about the romance and marriage of a deaf pupil to her “hearing” teacher, and a musical. All these are still likely to be programmed for 1981, but as one-off offerings.

Talking of musicals, whisper is that the Bob Fosse American hit, Chicago, could be in the Sydney Theatre Company’s 1981 line-up, with Nancye Hayes and Geraldine Turner in the roles created by Chita Rivera and Gwen Verdon.

And talking of the Theatre Royal, this year’s most excited showbiz personality must have been manager Pat Boggs, who took off on Oct. 26 for her first overseas visit — seven weeks in Europe and Britain. Five percent business and 95 percent pleasure, she told me.

An esteemed colleague, in his review of a recent late-night show at the Downstairs Nimrod, said it had taken since 1965 for Michael McClure’s scatological play, The Beard, to reach Sydney. Not so. I saw it at least 10 years ago at what was then a dropout rendezvous at Kings Cross called the Yellow House. It was staged by Nigel Triffitt. Patricia Jones, from the Ensemble, played Jean Harlow, but I cannot remember who played Billy the Kid.

The London Sunday Telegraph critic who nominated George Hutchinson’s No Room For Dreamers as the best play at this year’s Edinburgh Festival also called The Tarnished Phoenix, a play by Roger Pringle about D.H. Lawrence and starring Ian McKellen, the festival’s “biggest disappointment”. Makes you wonder further about the refusal to allow David Alen’s Upside Down At The Bottom Of The Garden to be performed in Britain.

While producer Hal Prince was in Melbourne recently to put his Evita company members through their paces, he saw his alternate in the title role, Mariette Rups, in performance for the first time and expressed himself well satisfied. Though his visit was cut short — an urgent call to Chicago for another production of Evita — he saw Robyn Archer in A Star Is Torn and an alternative production to his own, Stop Crying, Eva Peron.
A SHAKESPEARE COMPANY

by Rex Cramphorn

Ruth Cracknell, Rex Cramphorn, Arthur Dignam, Drew Forsythe, John Gaden, Ron Haddrick, Jennifer Hagan, John Howard, Robert Menzies, Kerry Walker and Jim Waites have come together for a period of six months to form A Shakespeare Company.

The aim of the company is to study in detail and perform a text or texts of Shakespeare's. The project is being pursued away from the time and money pressures of the five-week rehearsal period which has become the tradition in Australian professional theatre. The company is attempting, first, to come to an understanding of the text(s) in the light of as much of the vast body of Shakespeare research and criticism as can be absorbed in such a relatively short period and, second, to translate that understanding into a simple and direct performance of the text(s), with minimal interpretation and explanation beyond what is essential to convey that understanding.

The project is funded by an Australia Council Limited Life grant with a view to giving leading Australian theatre artists an opportunity to pursue a line of research which will enrich their subsequent contributions to the theatre. The work is on a full-time basis for all concerned and is taking place at the old Darlington School behind the Seymour Centre. The project also has the assistance of Sydney University’s Theatre Workshop.

In its general survey of Shakespeare’s work the company has limited itself to a consideration of the early plays, the comedies, and the late plays, leaving the histories and the major tragedies aside. Work was begun on a neglected early play — The Two Gentlemen of Verona — and almost two-thirds of the time spent on text work has been spent on it. Immediately after the open rehearsals, however, work was begun on Measure for Measure. It was felt that the detailed study of such aspects as verse structure, staging intentions and the mechanics of Shakespeare's approach to what we now think of as 'characterisation', undertaken in relation to The Two Gentlemen of Verona, would enable the company to move more quickly with Measure for Measure. Thus, the company is currently continuing work on The Two Gentlemen of Verona and, at the same time, rehearsing Measure for Measure in a period not much longer than that allowed for a commercial production. Public performances of both plays will be given in the Everest Theatre at the Seymour Centre during November to mark the conclusion of the project.

Apart from the study of Shakespeare and the texts, the company has devoted some time to examination of its own infra-structure and working principles. The project has been a test of the ability of all concerned — actors, director, research assistant — to accept the disciplines and responsibilities of research undertaken for individual as well as collective development and conducted without the conventional role hierarchy of the rehearsal process.

And running parallel to the determination to avoid imposed interpretation at the directorial level has been an awareness of the need to avoid imposed characterisation at the acting level. Perhaps the most interesting insight arising from the company's study of The Two Gentlemen of Verona has been into the way 'character' is built up by addition and modification from scene to scene throughout the play, rather than being fully stated at the outset.

Allied to this insight has been the practical realisation that the age, sex and physical type of the actor are in no way related to the creation of a Shakespearean character. Most of the company have prepared at least three roles in The Two Gentlemen of Verona and at least three different castings of the play will be presented in the November season. These castings include, for example, Jennifer Hagan as Valentine, Ron Haddrick as Julia, Kerry Walker as Proteus and John Gaden as Sylvia. There can hardly be a more vivid demonstration of the ability of the text to create the character. Measure for Measure, on the other hand, has been cast much nearer to conventional 'type' and only one casting is being rehearsed, owing to the comparatively short time being spent on this play.

The minimal setting and costuming devised by the company for the presentation of the plays also reflects its intention to present nothing that is not directly demanded by the texts themselves.

ARThUR DIGNAM, RUTH CRACKWELL, DREW FORSYTE IN REHEARSAL.
Ted Craig's success as a freelance director — by October 8 he will have productions running simultaneously in New York, the U.K. and Melbourne — has left him surprisingly sensitive about being based in London, and occasionally worried that his growing reputation overseas could antagonize people here. "I would hate to be seen as someone who just flies in and picks the teeth out of theatre in this country" he says. "I don't. And at the moment, I just feel that my base has to be somewhere else."

Born in Melbourne, he worked first in television at GTV9 and later at ADS7, Adelaide. He was a director by the time he was 20, and has been freelancing both here and overseas since 1975.

Well known for his productions as Director in charge of the programme for the Drama Theatre, Sydney Opera House during 1978-79 where the repertoire was mainly classical, and for his earlier work at the Old Tote, one of his few regrets is his very slight working acquaintance with Australian plays.

"They were never channeled to me — I suppose I must have looked as though my area was the classics, and particularly the classical comedies. But what I really like best is a close working association with the author — actually getting a play on which exposes the best of the writing and is a constructive process of cooperation between writer, actor, and director. It's something I wish I could do more often."

Despite all this, he remains enthusiastic about Australian writing. "Once we were always apologizing for it. Surely the best thing now is that Australian work gets presented on an equal footing with overseas work. It's almost as if you have to argue for the overseas piece being as good as the Australian product. There is a feeling now that if something is special enough to bring from London or Broadway, then it has to be very good indeed."

Talking to him at the M.T.C. where he is currently directing The Elephant Man for Russell Street, there can be no doubt that he feels Richard Pomerance's play falls into the latter category.

"The Elephant Man is a dramatic treatment of the life of John Merrick — a cripple afflicted with neurofibromatosis who 'went on' to become the most famous professional freak of the nineteenth century. It is set in the 1880's."

Ted Craig says that one of the most interesting things about the play is that 'some of its most theatrical moments are actually true'.

"At one time Merrick was being exhibited in a converted grocer's shop which happened to be opposite the London Hospital in the Whitechapel Road. Dr Frederick Treves was passing by and couldn't believe his eyes. He payed the sideshow operator, took Merrick over to the hospital and lectured on him.

"Once he was there, and this is really what the play is about, Treves found Merrick to be possessed of a marvellous native intelligence and, perhaps, most remarkably of all, no trace of bitterness or anger about the cruel exploitation to which he had been subjected."

Research for the play led Ted Craig to the copious literature about Merrick and to the London hospital where his skeleton is still preserved, as are the hat and mask which he was obliged to wear in public.

In his script, Pomerance has Treves say to the sideshow operator: "If he's all papier mache and paint, I'm not interested." The playwright himself has taken an identical line and in his script he stipulated that the way not to do the play is with papier mache and paint.

"The way to do it most effectively is to use an almost elemental theatre technique of having a good-looking, totally normal actor play the Merrick role. The more ordinary the actor — the more effective the piece is theatrically."

He agrees that to some extent this interpretation of the main character is similar to the one used by Steve Birkov in his adaptation of Kafka's Metamorphosis, and claims its advantage is that 'the audience is made to work in a way that they love working. They must use their imagination right through the play', he adds, "though at one stage they are confronted with the full horror of Merrick's appearance.

"During Treve's lecture, slides of the real Merrick — prepared from original material from the London Hospital are shown. And as they progress, Robert van Mackelenberg distorts himself slightly as if to mimic the physical outline and posture of Merrick."

After The Elephant Man has opened, Ted Craig will return to London, and then go on to New York where a film, directed by Lindsay Anderson, is being made of his Off Broadway production of Look Back in Anger, starring Malcolm McDowell. Early next year he will be directing Goldoni's A Servant of Two Masters at a small festival of classical theatre in Southampton. "It's not in London, and it won't earn me much money, but I can't wait to do it because its Commedia dell' Arte, it's theatrical, and it's stylish."

A tour in England of a play yet to be decided, and another production in New York are also in the offing. "I think, finally, as a freelance director, what one is always doing is going after the theatre that really interests you," he said.
"Piaf is my Idol"

by Pamela Ruskin

Even when she was a small girl, she dreamed of being a revolutionary heroine. Probably she still does. She’s a romantic all right, is Jeannie Lewis. She thinks that Piaf was a romantic too because she dreamed great dreams and made them come true. The dreams turned sour but that’s the fate of many romantics if that is, in fact, what Piaf was, which is open to debate.

Jeannie is Piaf — the great, the incomparable Edith Piaf, the Little Sparrow who climbed out of the gutter to glitter among the stars but had that ‘nostalgie de la boue’ which ensured that she never lost touch with the gutter and gave her a vocabulary rough enough to make a Marseilles fisherman blush. Jeannie has been playing Piaf in Pam Gems’ play that started small in London and on Broadway and, like Topsy, ‘just grewed’ so that it moved in to the big theatres as a hit.

Jeannie isn’t easily scared. She’s pretty tough in lots of way but she was scared to death of tackling Piaf, so much so that she had to be almost literally pushed to audition for the role by her friends. Because it meant the first straight acting role, working with other actors. Before that she’d only sung at concerts, either alone or with groups. No! That was a worry but not the real one. “Piaf had always been my idol. To step into her skin — to try to BE that extraordinary woman with a voice that is known and loved by millions — that really scared me.”

“I’ve always felt a special affinity with her — because she was an underdog, because she literally grew up in the streets of Paris, poorer than the poor and I’ve been fighting for the underdog all my life.” “Piaf,” I suggest, “Didn’t care a damn about the underdog. She was totally self-absorbed, as egocentric as are almost all great artists.” “That’s true, but she had strength and she had guts and she not only became great herself, she helped other people like Yves Montand and Charles Aznavour on the path of success.”

Who then is this revolutionary-manqué called Jeannie Lewis? Is she beautiful? By no means. But she has something even apart from a remarkable voice that spans three octaves.

With a voice that is well-suited to Piaf because “I can only sing songs in which I feel involved — music that is honest and Piaf sang songs like that, songs that were the very essence of her spirit.” Songs in fact, that used to and still do tear the heart out of you.

Jeannie is dark, with brown eyes and brown hair that she sometimes wears in a single plait. She was known only to a comparatively few people before she became Piaf. “I’ve always sung, at least since I was three. My father was the great influence in my life. He was a Jewish trade union leader. My mother isn’t Jewish so neither am I but I think that strain has given me my temperament and my emotional make-up.

In 1967, Jeannie went to Cuba, the only Australian among fifty singers, chosen from all over the world. “I was very impressed with what I saw. There artists are paid a weekly wage. They have security but they don’t earn huge salaries like some of the pop singers and film stars do and the difference between the highest paid and the rest is not very great. I like that. I fell in love with Cuba. I also fell in love twice in five weeks. It was my first trip outside Australia and it was wonderful.”

The romantic revolutionary heroine came home. She wasn’t interested in commercial success but in making her own kind of music. She sang to audiences of young people, gave many concerts to students with groups. She sang to the misfits, to the unemployed, to people who were her kind of people.

Then in 1977, Jeannie realized one of her childhood dreams that had stayed with her all through the years. She was given a travel grant to study experimental voice. She spent seven months on the West Coast of America, five months in Europe and a year in Latin America. “Most of that year was spent in Mexico City.”

“I felt I had come home. I speak Spanish and French — I had majored in French which has been a great help for Piaf. In Mexico, I was supremely happy. I will go back there one day. I learned a lot about music and a lot about people.”

Playing, singing, living Piaf has been a tremendous experience for Jeannie and she says she couldn’t have done it without the help and encouragement of the rest of the cast and producer Murray Copland. Only about 50% of the songs have been sung in French. “We followed the English production in that when Piaf talks or when she sings in English, she uses a cockney accent.”

One can’t imagine Piaf as Oz.

“Pam Gems has made Piaf a working-class heroine.” “Which she wasn’t,” I says. “Which she wasn’t,” agrees Jeannie. “But the play has captured her earthiness. “It certainly is earthy. Some of the language is so raw that it shocked Jeannie herself at first. “I couldn’t believe I could use it but it was the kind of language that Piaf used and it was right for her and I soon overcame the shock but it did offend sections of the audience wherever it played.”

It isn’t going to be easy for Jeannie to find a role that will compare with Piaf but then the Little Sparrow with the big voice is a very hard act to follow — as many French chanteuses have learned.
by Cathy Peake

Jack Hibberd’s new play *A Man of Many Parts* ‘a night in the life of a godforsaken actor’, opens on October 29 at the Universal Theatre. A dramatic monologue or monodrama, it will be directed by Rick Billinghurst and will star Frederick Parslow as Noah Hope.

The play premiered at the Perth Festival earlier this year and plans to tour it to Canberra next March, and later to Sydney and Brisbane are already under way.

In terms of his other work, Hibberd sees *A Man of Many Parts* as the most extreme and daring piece of theatre he has written, particularly in a formal sense. “It’s totally without narrative content and conventional scenic structure. Its structural principle is that of association. Things connect associatively.”

It is also, like Noah’s ‘port’, full of comic impedimentia, and its strength lies within its intricate, teasing and often wildly comic world of self reference.

Hibberd himself calls it ‘a mental aria’ and ‘a theatricalized slice of the brain’ and it is certainly theatre which, like conceptual art, frames its own propositions and is best explained in relation to itself.

At the very end of the script, Noah Hope recovers from a mental crack-up in an aggressive and assertive frame of mind to proclaim: ‘I am my own invention. A conundrum dum-bum’.

Well, he is and he isn’t. He is certainly a composite character and if it’s hard to pin down his real context and decide whether he is in a theatre giving a comic performance, is totally unhinged, is in a pub on tour, or is just surviving in inhospitable digs, it is partly because Noah is also a vehicle through which the playwright is advancing some wide-ranging propositions about the state of Western culture.

Unlike his earlier monodrama *Stretch of the Imagination*, which is full of quotidian detail, and where Hibberd says he was trying to create a ‘distillation of Australia through the composite character of Monk’, *A.M.O.M.P.* is conceived more in terms of a theatrical entry into the complexities of mind or consciousness.

“At the same time, Noah is in search of a coherent and authentic self which he can’t find. I believe there is no such thing as an Australian identity. His quest therefore, is intended to be an image for the strong, underlying stress, the lack of cohesion and the cultural despair that is abroad in this country. We are a highly secular society, and it is very difficult to find a secure, deep-rooted cultural location here.”

Hibberd sees that state of affairs as one of the chief reasons why many Australian writers turn to the dramatic monologue, or monodrama as he prefers to call it, and to characters who ‘can fabricate a culture’, who ‘own’ a certain kind of history.

“Our culture is very derivative. Noah Hope wants to be au fait with Beckett, Satre, Einstein. He wants to be culturally enfranchised with the important figures of our century. His need to conjure them up is an aspect of that twentieth century phenomenon known as the dispossessed mind. It also helps me underline the fact that everything in the play is in the form of theatrical shards, and of shards of the ego.”

Hibberd started writing the play three and a half years ago, and says its evolution has been the longest of any he has written. “It was also the most difficult. It started with the idea of a highly isolated character who, right from the start, was an actor. In the first draft he was called Shirtfront von Punch.

“With later drafts, the canvas expanded, the play took on a more apocalyptic tone and Shirtfront became Noah who is, perhaps, the last actor in the world, and the last human being.

“Now survives through performance. He is a manic depressive who picks himself up off the floor by getting into another act. His world is essentially comic. It has to work primarily at a comic level, but it is also intended to be disturbing.”

In order to focus the audience’s attention onto the graver side of the play, the script uses music from Liszt (Benediction di Dieu dans la Solitude), Schubert and Purcell. “I chose the Liszt to ironically bracket and frame the play because it has an intensely serene and transcendental quality. Where Noah is manic, wild, dislocated and fractured, the music is exactly the opposite. And it also reinforces the sense of Noah’s quest or journey.

“Now is a kind of mad lens through which a lot of theatre history and intellectual life is focused and refracted” says Hibberd, and it will be fascinating to see just how Billinghurst and Parslow bring him to life.
A Busy Year Of Touring

by Janine Kyle

Glancing around the foyer of Melbourne’s Princess Theatre during the Sydney Dance Company’s last week of performances in the Melbourne Debut Season, I was reminded of the wonderful cross section of the public that the Company seems to attract these days. The mixture of age groups is immediately striking and it is refreshing to observe the large numbers, apparently coming to dance performances for the first time, mingling with the familiar enthusiasts.

It also struck me that 1980 was quickly drawing to a close. I could vividly recall when our touring plans for the year were just dates on a schedule and the demands of such a tour on dancers and staff were still under contemplation. Since the first major season in 1977, under the Company’s newly appointed Artistic Director Graeme Murphy, our interstate touring schedule has grown more ambitious each year. During 1980 the Sydney Dance Company has been as far north as Cairns and as far south as Hobart. Our first tour to North Queensland took place in April with a week each in Cairns, Townsville and Rockhampton. We presented two programmes including Graeme Murphy’s trilogy Rumours and shorter works such as Dialogues and Sheherazade. This tour was followed by an eight week season in the Sydney Opera House which became our most successful Sydney season to date. Also the most arduous, with a cast of eighteen giving fifty-two performances of three separate programmes with little or no scope for understudies in the event of injury or illness.

One week before the end of this season dancer Carl Morrow developed glandular fever and had to be quickly replaced in his role of Daphnis in Graeme Murphy’s newest work Daphnis and Chloe, by Murphy himself. It was not until late in the Melbourne season in mid-August that Carl was able to begin working again, starting with less strenuous roles and gradually building stamina.

It is impossible, of course, for an audience to realise that the performances they have just witnessed may have featured a cast of dancers nursing either injuries or colds. These problems occur in any Company but become matters of great concern for a small group such as the Sydney Dance Company.

On July 28 the Company travelled to Canberra for a week only of the length work, Poppy, based on the choreographer’s impressions of poet Jean Cocteau, was remounted especially for the Melbourne Debut season. In addition, we included each of the shorter works given at the Sydney Opera House earlier this year. We were delighted with the warm appreciation of the Melbourne audiences and look forward to returning in 1981.

We arrived in Hobart on September 15th for our third annual season at the Theatre Royal followed by performances in Launceston’s Princess Theatre the following week. This year our repertoire for Tasmania included Animus, Dialogues, Viridian and Sheherazade. All of the Company was looking forward to the warmer weather we would enjoy during the Brisbane season that was to follow. Many of the dancers and staff had been the victims of a flu virus during the Melbourne season and we had, of course, been working in cold conditions since May. In addition, dancer Bill Pengelly had injured his foot on the second night of Poppy in Melbourne. The injury occurred during class and Ross Philip had to quickly step into the role of RaymondRadiguet at very short notice. This meant too, that Bill Pengelly was not with us on the Tasmanian tour, leaving us short of male dancers. Nevertheless, we enjoyed Hobart and Launceston again in 1980 as much as we had in previous years. The audiences, the countryside and sight-seeing were again delightful and the Company benefited from our most successful season in Tasmania to date.

The Sydney Dance Company will complete its Australian touring commitments in Brisbane from October 1-4, performing at the S.G.I.O. Theatre with Sheherazade, Viridian and Daphnis and Chloe. In early November the Company will embark on its first overseas tour with engagements throughout Italy. The tour will take us to at least eight cities including Rome ending on December 8th. Both dancers and staff agree that this is an exciting way to end a busy year. Many will take the opportunity to holiday in Europe before returning to Australia to commence work on January 5th, 1981, in preparation for seasons in Australia and a tour to the United States in April/May.
A NIGHT AT THE CABARET CAN BE...

by Ralph Kerle, Graduate Drama Faculty, Victorian College of the Arts; Proprietor, Flying Trapeze Cafe.

A night at the cabaret can be spontaneous, emotionally uplifting, physically brutal and just plain fun, or at its worst it can be self-indulgent, embarrassing, amateurish and very dull.

What makes a good night of cabaret?

There are numerous elements that cannot be easily defined because the audience is an integral part of a successful evening as opposed to traditional theatre where the audience simply comes along to watch and the combination of booze and food and an audience of non-theatre goers with little respect for theatre conventions, can prove electric or lethal and the outcome is that the cabaret performer is much more vulnerable.

At Cabaret Conspiracy, before a predominantly freaks and gay audience, a born-again Christian on stage attempting to deliver a message was given about 90 seconds before the crowd realised what she was attempting to do and called for the MC to remove her.

In another more serious incident at the Flying Trapeze Cafe in Melbourne, dancer Bob Thornycroft was abused by a rowdy police clerk patron during a nude scene. The manager intervened and had his nose broken!

But more positively, when comic Rod Quantock was two minutes into a 40-minute stand-up routine, he was thrown a one-line interjection by a middle aged Edna Everage housewife and the whole show developed into a battle between the dowager and Quantock.

They traded line after line - the audience cheered for 10 minutes and Quantock walked off - defeated. Cabaret in its finest hour.

Traditional theatre cannot talk of these experiences, though experimental theatre attempted to capture some of these dynamics by artificially setting up the conventions for these things to happen.

"Let's write an audience participation bit in here."

At the Flying Trapeze Cafe, comic Rod Quantock is a true stand-up comic. He strolls on stage with his hands in his pockets looking like a ragbag late '60s hippie. There's the inevitable Hawaiian shirt, blazer covered with badges, white straw hat, patched jeans and sneakers.

He opens by testing the metal of his audience - cajoling or insulting them to join in.

He's famous for his one liners to the innatentive or the reticent - "the remedial group" as he terms them.

"I'm sorry I had the feeling I woke you... I suppose you'll be wanting your rice bubbles now".

He is an exponent of the Comedia del arte style - setting off on a seemingly simple comedy monologue and apparently letting the audience throw him off course through their continual interjections.

His brilliance lies in his ability to pull in the threads at the end, tying his performance in a neat package.

Quantock does not use a character - he is a performer.

David Argue is a free-form comic, but he has a number of stock characters - his favourite "Deepdene Rutledge" wears inch-thick bifocals which render him almost blind.

Argue has a sparse stock of one liners - "There's a thong in my heart" - the rest of his performance is totally improvised.

Because he is unable to see he listens acutely. A cough in the audience may result in an unintelligible rave about the state of the health of the nation or his doctor joke.

"I went to the doctor and he told me I had three minutes to live.

"He asked if there was anything he could do for me.

"Er... um... you could boil me an egg."

He deliberately sets up chaos on stage and then thrives on it. Sometimes instructs his theatre technicians to play the wrong sound-effects tapes and then rants at them for 10 minutes, then just as the audience is questioning its sanity, Argue throws off his glasses, breaks into a 40-volt biz grin and mimes Peter Allen's I Go To Rio.

He uses his movement skills as an
icskating champion and those cucumbers as castanets.

Other solo comedians who work in cabaret are Alan Pentland, Tim Scally, Simon Hill, Steve Blackburn, Geoff Brooks and Tony Rickards.

All these comics present their own original material and work on a very high level of involvement with their audiences. And they all manage to come up with the goods under adverse conditions.

Regrettably there are no women comics in cabaret. Perhaps it is because women must face a whole set of prejudices which makes success much harder. Being a solo cabaret comic is not easy.

At least comedy duos have each other to cling to when things get rough.

Sydneysiders Geoff Kelso and Lance Curtis perform a series of short, sharp sketches well suited to radio or television. They are famous for their "Dr. Pooh" series on 2JJJ FM radio. During their show they will meet a moralistic French film director, a manic Scottish advisor on nuclear war, Norwegian cricket bat makers and laconic Ozzie bushmen.

They make use of the traditional theatre skills of highly developed characterisations and a remarkable facility with language. What puts them outside mass appeal is the off-beat content of their performance.

Los Trios Ringbarkus, by their own admission, are a "total disaster act". These two shell-shocked artists, Steve Kearney and Neil Gladwin, perform what can only be described as a ritual humiliation of their audience. With a drum, cymbals and woeful piano accordion, they murder everything from the Broadway hit Mama to The Trogg’s Wild Thing.

After Los Trios country and western and punk will never be the same!

They recite dog distemper poems, tell ghastly baby jokes and insult the short, fat and infirm, unfortunate to be sitting close by.

Los Trios play with taboos. They say they want to bring out the untapped, repressed part of the audience's nature. Given that freedom, the audience is able to respond the way they probably never have in a theatre before.

Other two-handed cabaret acts are Sydney's singing Lobotomy Brothers; Con and Vince, two sleazy fun, massage and funeral parlour operators; and Rob Meldrum and Doug Tremlett whose skills extend to tap dancing, magic, mime and comedy.

Australian cabaret has definitely evolved from being rough and raw into something more professional. Now many of the performers are studying or have studied drama at a tertiary level, but that in no way makes them any more valuable to the scene than those who walk in off the street, for when the rough and raw meet the slick professionals then a synthesis occurs that is very special.

Because of its commercial success cabaret is now able to offer a viable alternative to those who, for whatever reasons, want to work outside traditional theatre.

Over the past three years cabaret audiences have also changed from being predominantly students, gays and freaks into a much broader cross-section of the general public.

Cabaret in Australia, denied mainstream outlets like big theatres and regular television appearances has something of an underdog mentality. Believing it has something unique to offer cabaret hustlers, Keen to show off its talent it is a prolific organiser of profitable events, going it alone without any form of Government subsidy. And through these events the media has recognised that a new, mirile movement is afoot. The proof that the public agrees is seen in the drawing power of recent festivals. Sydney's first Cabaret Festival drew about 3,000 people over ten nights and at Melbourne University's "Humour-iversity" — a one off event, 1,000 people turned out.

The audiences defied categorisation — the only thing they had in common was that they enjoyed themselves.

The continued recognition of the
expansion of the scene is seen in the opening of a new 270-seat venue in November in Sydney, "The Tivoli". The special magic of cabaret lies in the wide variety of skills it embraces. Comedy is as important as song, dance, mime juggling and magic and these are presented in a wide variety of ways by solo and ensemble artists.

**BACK TO VAUDEVILLE – THE NEW TIVOLI**

by Johnny Allen

Every so often, the theatre throws up a figure who challenges the very notion of what theatre is about, and usually enrages the establishment by so doing.

Such a figure is Michael Matou, who has been working on the fringe of Sydney theatre for the past two years with his productions of *Burlesco*, *Cafe Debris* and *Beauty and the Beast*.

Matou has been conscientiously snubbed by the critics, and three times his application to the Theatre Board to stage his own version of the Wedekind *Berg Lulu* has been rejected.

An unannounced act from Sydney "Fingers Dermain" and Melbourne's "Real Magic" Doug Tremlett. Fingers offered some legerdemain worked into some of the fastest "Noo Yoik" patter heard and Doug as usual, wowed everybody with magic that has him regarded as one of the best up and coming magicians in Australia.

David Argue's Peter Allen mime proved his brilliance to a somewhat cynical late-night audience. Alan Pentland's heavy satirical monologues were delivered in fine style. But perhaps the highlight of my two nights was Los Trios Ringbarkus. Call me a one-eyed supporter if you like, but at the completion of their act, Sue Hill, Nimrod's Theatre manager said, "I've waited for something like this for years, I could watch them every night."

Friday and Saturday nights were hosted with the ever-popular singing Jack Caroleon and his sleepy dog Chien. The audience, in true Countdown style, sang along with Jack and his ukelele to hits like "YMCA" and "Turning Japanese" (sung in Japanese).

I did not catch Sunday night's "Quantock meets Curtis and Kelso", but believe it was an amazing night. The beyond capacity crowd of about 400 asked for four encores.

Yet Matou has continued to build a dedicated and increasing following, usually drawn from people who would not be seen at a conventional play in a fit.

Now Matou has attracted commercial support, and one of the most exciting ventures in Australian theatre for the last decade is about to be launched.

On November 1, the New Tivoli opens in George Street with Matou's burlesque follies, the Hi Spots revue, described as having "follies glamour, Parisian swank and the cheeky tang of Berlin cabaret".

One of Matou's real strengths is that he looks beyond conventional theatre for his raw material. Included in the cast are the superb stripper Elizabeth Burton, Cabaret Conspiracy superstar Boom Boom La Bern, and Simon Reptile, whose "Simon and the Diamonds" was a latter day version of "Sylvia and the Synthetics", and the closest Australian equivalent of "The New York Dolls".

Costumes are designed by Teresa Green, star performer of Patch's, and literally out of this world in her sense of costume and design. Choreography is by Christine Koltai, the talented choreographer who has worked with major dance companies and more recently with Mike Mullins and his Space Dump Performances.

The show truly represents the cream of the Sydney underground and avant garde, and no doubt Matou will produce a show comparable to any in the world.

Is Sydney ready for it?

The formula could well be one of mass popular theatre, such as only a few performers like Reg Livermore have been able to create.

And the critics have been wrong before.

It could well be that we have another Diaghilev in our midst. Matou's work is certainly closer to that of Maurice Bejart and his Ballet of the Twentieth Century, or for that matter to Ziegfeld and his follies, than to anything in Australian contemporary theatre.

It could well be that it contains that mysterious ingredient which makes people see theatre not as a duty or a respectable pastime, but as sheer magic.

And magic is the first requisite of a truly popular theatre.
THE MAKING OF A COMPANY

BY RICHARD WHERRETT

Five years working in England (1965-1970) left me, ten years later, with three particular sources of inspiration for the beginnings of the Sydney Theatre Company. I hoped for theatrical events which would manifest the spontaneity and risk of Joan Littlewood from Stratford East's Theatre Royal, the theatrical flair of John Dexter from the National Theatre, and the intellectual discipline of Bill Gaskill from the Royal Court.

Other basic aims should perhaps be elaborated on here.

I feel we must achieve a basic standard of production that is interesting, honest, competent, economical, sensible, and identifiable. Sometimes as well we might also be inspiring, brilliant, revolutionary, extraordinary and unforgettable.

We aim for great acting. Acting that requires passion, sensitivity, imagination, judgement, honesty, generosity, spontaneity, discipline, activity (not passivity), energy (not labour) and self awareness (not self consciousness).

In other words, above all else the quality of the product matters.

A COMPANY

Theatre is a collaborative effort — the group is paramount. The ego of the artists involved must be made a positive force by the mutual understanding that the individual is better off when the group is better off. It is tempting to romance with examples from the great theatrical companies of the world — the Berliner Ensemble or the Royal Shakespeare Company for example. Certainly we can take inspiration from these, and most of all in the need for an acting company. The word "company" has three points of reference for us:

(a) the company members incorporated in the legal sense who have the right to vote for representation on the Board of Directors,
(b) the permanent staff and
(c) the actors.

I feel it is essential that of the third group, a certain number be contracted to the company on a permanent basis. Without such a group, I question, as regards a theatre company, the validity of the term. Certainly Sydney has not experienced such a company for some years. Such a group of actors provides continuity, a point of reference, a core of compatibility, a lead in risk taking, and a guiding hand to all other actors joining the company on a one-off basis. These conditions must prevail for the possibility of great acting to arise. I like the concept of a theatre season, the rhythm of it, and the sense of occasion which ensues. This is very often devised on an annual basis so that it seems fair enough to coin the euphemism "permanent" to describe an actor employed for a twelve month contract.

So far our success is a measured one I think. It is very difficult. The company should play the leads, but leading actors are reluctant to commit themselves for long periods of time. With only, at this stage, six productions a year in one venue it is difficult to find the actors with the range that allows them to find a role in the range of plays offered. I think we have a particular problem in this country of preparing our younger actors for leading roles. A Hamlet or a Hedda Gabler takes years of preparation before the technical demands of such roles are realised. It is too easy for our actors to be seduced by the quicker and richer gains of film and television. We are a complacent country.

Nothing can be created in a state of tension. So it is essential that the company as a whole, hardworking, pressurised, and committed, be relaxed, convivial and open. This is so in particular as regards relations between the various departments within the company — administrative, technical and acting. This depends on how the company is governed.

GOVERNMENT

The term "Director" as regards the company also has a number of senses — there exists the Director of the company as well as those directors of the company who exist on the Board. The position of Director of the Sydney Theatre Company, as defined by the original advertisement for the position and my contract, functions as a chief executive of the company (and thus the term was preferred to that of Artistic Director). Given the responsibility of that position to the Board, it was quite clearly spelt out from the start that the chief executive held the ultimate responsibility within the company, reflected most of all in the
power to hire and fire all other positions. How this works in practice of course depends on the individual. Given that theatre is a collaborative effort it follows that I believe that the ultimate responsibility be exercised only after consultation with all departments, and the unequivocal delegation of responsibilities to the heads of all the departments. It is at this moment (September, 1980) much more stimulating and encouraging to be devising the 1981 programme with a group of people who make up the executive of the company than it was a year ago when there were just two of us. This group of people — Director, the General Manager, the Production Manager, the Associate Director, Productions Assistant, the Promotions Officer and a representative from the acting company — meet automatically every Thursday morning at 9.00am. This meeting formally, with the assistance of a secretary, minutes, an agenda etc, discusses and resolves issues which have been in some form or another in process all week. In turn the company as a whole meets every fortnight to discuss company matters, impart information in a two-way dialogue, hear suggestions, make demands, etc. It is true that I am fond of meetings. Our organisation abounds with them. Apart from these two, we have production meetings weekly, a post-mortem on each production, a meeting for the marketing of each show, and so on. But the word is only the formal one which describes the means by which we talk together. It is out of the free and challenging discussion that the best ideas arise. In this way we may achieve surprise in our ventures. And surprise, the not knowing of what is going to happen next, as in life, is the essence of theatre.

The Board. The final factor in the government of the company is of course the Board. The long process by which the full Board takes over from the Interim Board was completed on September 23 when the new Board met for the first time. It has been a long process for the simple reason that it required the re-writing of the Articles of Association which were done originally in great haste to give the company an immediate legal existence. Given the history of Boards in arts organisations in this country, it was with great care and thought that the new Articles were drawn up in an attempt to ensure every circumstance was accounted for.

THE FUTURE

Are we to be a writers theatre, an actors theatre, a directors theatre, an avant-garde or a classical theatre? Clearly we have cause to do what no other company in Sydney is doing. Yet I believe we must be all of these. In terms of subsidy we are the largest company in the State, we are regarded as a "State Theatre Company", we play in a venue which provides a singular focus on our activities, and the demands of that venue mean that the scale of our work must sometimes be bigger than the other companies. So it seems to me that we must provide the focal point for theatrical activity in this State. The rest is history. By which I mean history yet to be made. The development of a house style, the devising of a unique programme of work, the creation of a distinctive company entity will take more than one season of plays. This has nothing to do with being "better" or "worse" than our fellows. Quality being assumed, I believe we must strike a balance in our programming and in our presentation, providing other companies with the means to be extreme, specialist, peculiar, unique. Our uniqueness must lie elsewhere, which is balanced in both its variety of content and in its meeting the budget. There must be more meaning to the choice, an overall concept or aim, either in form or content, which links each play into an integrated whole.

This is our next step in programming. The Wharf. We have been looking for a venue in which to mount secondary activities. From the outset I have reiterated my belief in the essential inclusion of such activities in order to complement and contrast main house activities. Meanwhile we are also in search of a home — that is a permanent base for our administration, workshop, and wardrobe departments, which ideally will include in it rehearsal spaces. It has been rumoured for some time that we are negotiating for a wharf in the Rocks area. The rumours are true, and we have every hope that with the assistance of the Premier’s Department through the New South Wales Government Division of Cultural Activities and the Department of Public Works, with the help of the Maritime Services Board, that such a wharf is being made available to us for conversion into a home with a small theatre space included. I include this purely because in the first year of our existence the process towards obtaining premises and the detailed work as regards plans and budgets for it have taken a huge amount of time. I have no doubt that the company we will be in the future will be directly linked to the gaining of these premises. While we are happy in the Drama Theatre, and I believe have gone a long way towards improving its reputation, nonetheless the fact is that we rent the building and cannot expect to do with it what we would want if it were our own home. The wharf and everything about it has the means to reflect exactly what the company is in physical terms.
Concerning various viewpoints

by Irving Wardle

I can't say that reviewing plays has been much help to my social life but there have been one or two bonuses: and whenever I wish to give my ego a little treat I have only to remind myself that it was I who first introduced Alan Ayckbourn to Ben Travers. This summit meeting between Britain's two greatest living comic writers took place three years ago in a Victoria restaurant: Ayckbourn then in his late 30s, Ben pushing 92 and rather peevish about the delayed production of his new play, After You with the Milk. They got on like a house on fire; and afterwards Ayckbourn wrote to say that he'd been thinking his career was half over — but now he realized it was just beginning.

Evidence that this was no idle courtesy to a senior colleague is contained in Ayckbourn's latest West End show, Taking Steps (Lyric). Not only is it dedicated to Ben Travers but to a large extent it is a Travers play. Set, like Thark, in a crumbling and supposedly haunted mansion, featuring (like Cuckoo in the Nest) a gormless romantic lead, its very title asserts the common comic viewpoint of the two writers: their mockery of bullying, and particularly of those who apply strong-arm tactics to personal relationships.

This being an Ayckbourn piece, the title also has another meaning, built into Alan Tagg's set which squashes a three-storey house elevation to floor level so that the cast are continually dashing up and down invisible stairways or practising bedroom entrechats in the midst of a living room conference.

The house in question belongs to Roland, an alcoholic and thrice-deserted hardware tycoon, determined that his fourth wife will not get away. He sees her as a "frigid telly-commercial go-go dancer with a giro account in Swindon." She sees herself as a frustrated artist, and is taking steps to regain her freedom after three sleepless months on the orthopaedic bed. Her brother Mark is another managing male, regaining custody of his errant girlfriend after an alleged charge of soliciting. Also in continuous attendance is Roland's landlord who will take any steps to sell him the property, short of starting the day on black velvet.

These three are bound together by an interlocking pattern of self-interest; and they are placed in unsympathetic contrast with the girl friend, and with an inarticulate young conveyancing solicitor, Watson, who have no clear purpose beyond a reluctance to being pushed around by other people.

As you would expect from this combination of set and situation, much of the fun comes from hustling separate groups through the house, missing each other by split seconds. And on this nuts-and-bolts level, the play and Michael Rudman's production are well up to the expected virtuoso standard. In terms of character, though, the compliment to Travers goes too far. There is a sense of Ayckbourn, the most relaxed of comedians, straining towards farce: introducing extravagant bits of plotting, costume (the landlord's all black motorbike kit), and high-pressure grotesques who turn out more disagreeable than amusing. Travers and Ayckbourn both take their stand on absolute truthfulness of character in taxing situations; but the attempt to follow this prescription through in the Travers manner has led Ayckbourn, for once, to falsify human nature and produce anachronistic stage types instead of people. There is some exceedingly forceful comedy from Dinsdale Landen and Nicola Pagett, but the performance to remember is Michael Maloney's Watson, solemn in suit and horn-rims, spreading stupefied bewilderment among all who try to follow his beautifully timed scrambled lines, and steadily transforming a mere verbal joke into a completely realized character.

I imagine that news of the great Macbeth row has already hit the Australian Press, and there is nothing much for me to do but spit on the grave. Peter O'Toole's return to the classical stage after a gap of 17 years, assisted by a director and designer both coming fresh to Shakespeare, was quite as dreadful as anything you may have heard about it. Equally dreadful was the management's craven attempt to dissociate itself from the show, and the director, Bryan Forbes', upstanding manoeuvre to off-load all the blame onto the actors. Meanwhile, queues and telephone bookings continue to besiege the Old Vic Box Office; and the show is all set to embark on its Arts Council-backed provincial and European tours. What can be said in complete certainty is that O'Toole has added a permanent chapter to the history of the world's unhappiest play. And strengthened the cause of "director's theatre" by demonstrating afresh that actors, left to themselves, always get it wrong.

While we are at it, two other theatrical legends have just gone up in smoke. Ron Daniels' Japanese-based Timon of Athens (The Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon) has finally restored this unloved Shakespearean torso as a blazing masterpiece. And the Palace Theatre revival of Oklahoma! unmask (Rogers and Hammerstein's supposed evocation of the American age of innocence as a racially self-serving lynch-law fable. I am surprised the Indian lobby did not turn out to stone it.

A menu of warmed-over musicals

by Karl Levett

Hollywood, almost since its inception, has been fed and sustained by the creative talents of Broadway. Today still, the phrase "movie rights" has a magical ring for any playwright with a Broadway success on his hands. Hence when the process is reversed — when Hollywood feeds Broadway — it is something of a phenomenon.

Two new musicals of the season have this distinction, if distinction it is. Charlie and Algernon is based on the film of the late sixties, Charly; with
The reason for this change in creative flow is probably an economic one. With the costs of musicals constantly escalating, producers are looking for tried and tested material. The ideal is a revival; the rash of these last season speaks for itself. The next best thing is a creation that has already proved popular with a wide audience. It has a certain “safety” and the fact that it is already known seems to be an asset, rather than a disadvantage. The prospect for the eighties of a continuing menu of warmed-over musical dishes is none too cheering.

The premise for Charlie and Algernon seems original matter for a musical. The story of a pair of scientists who transform idiots into geniuses, starting first with a mouse, Algernon, then moving on to Charlie, a brain-damaged bakery worker — well, it’s not The Student Prince. It proves, however, just as predictable and as sentimental. As soon as I heard Sandy Faison, as Charlie’s teacher singing “Have I the Right to Change a Life?” I knew we were in for a moral fable about those Big, Bad, Scientists. There is also a basic uneasiness about this material that the show never surmounts.

Along the way, however, there are some pleasures. The music by Charles Strouse contains several superior songs, although the lyrics by David Rogers reduce their sprightliness to a pedestrian pace. P.J. Benjamin as Charlie does well in the later scenes and particularly in the title number, a well-conceived vaudeville turn. In this he shares the stage with Algernon, the spiffiest white mouse in the business. Algernon here does a soft-shoe and succeeds in charming where other...
stage animals have failed. (He has an understudy? What were the auditions like? The mind boggles.)

If Algernon had been in 42nd Street he would have had to learn to tap. 42nd Street is the type of musical where the cast bursts into a tap dance and the audience bursts into applause. It is billed as “The Song and Dance Fable of Broadway”, which looks suspiciously like a way of getting round the corner aspects of the 1933 film.

This production has itself become a fable. The show’s producer is David Merrick, one of Broadway’s more eccentric and fabulous creatures. The director and choreographer was Gower Champion. Lots of scrapping on the road, where Champion became ill. Into New York, where Merrick would not allow the previews to play to an audience. At last the opening night. Merrick steps forward after the final curtain to announce to audience (and cast) the secret he had kept all day: Gower Champion was dead. He had died of a rare blood disease earlier in the day. The cast and audience were first stunned, then from each side of the footlights there was open weeping. The bitter irony was that 42nd Street, which is rife with showbusiness cliches, had been upstaged by its own circumstances.

The loss of Gower Champion is indeed a blow to Broadway. He was probably the most talented director the post-war musical theatre has produced. Even with mediocre material he succeeded in supplying a gloss that deflected too penetrating an examination. And when he was in full sail, say as in the waiters’ dance in Hello, Dolly, he was unsurpassed.

His magical touch is evident in the dances in 42nd Street. My favourite is everyone tapping their hearts out on huge silver dollars in “We’re in the Money”. The dances are witty and have a surety of tone not too evident elsewhere in the proceedings.

The other strength of the show is the score. A whole songbook with music by Harry Warren and lyrics by Al Dubin has been strung together to provide the show with a musical backbone to see it through its sillier moments. Harry Warren is one of the unsung heroes of American popular song; he has never quite received the acclaim which is his due. Perhaps this will bring him into the spotlight again.

42nd Street is a big show, and in these days of the mini-musical, it’s rather refreshing. It has a cast of about fifty, and there are lots of scene changes designed by the ever reliable Robyn Wagner. The larger-than-life style of the piece is best caught by Jerry Orbach (the producer), Tammy Grimes (the star) and Carole Cook. For tongue-in-cheek style the juvenile, Lee Roy Reams, best demonstrates how to walk the tightrope between period musical style and high camp. Perhaps 42nd Street is not the musical Gower Champion would have chosen as his swan song. Still, he does it proud. It’s a pity the show doesn’t quite return the favour.

No doubt 42nd Street is going to make a lot of people happy — and David Merrick, rich.
STIR — Close to being great

Anybody who sees enough films over enough years is bound to discover one unpalatable truth: he/she can take almost without flinching any realist depiction of the lower depths in a foreign country, for instance Taxi Driver and Mean Streets from the US, Pour Cow and Scum from the UK, Las Olvidados from Mexico, La Strada and Umberto D from Italy.

But when it comes to our own backyard, that's different. So I expect about 95 per cent disapprobation for Stephen Wallace's Stir, which is having a token showing to make it eligible for awards and will then go back under wraps for a while.

Stir will not make a nice Saturday night at the movies. It is full of terrible physical violence and repetitive dirty words. There is nothing about a prison to give audiences a vicarious thrill. There are no women to take attention away from enraged men on both sides of the bars. I don't know what other people at the press preview were doing but I spent some of the time with my hands over my eyes as the bashings proceeded.

Having said all that, and having the gravest fears for its success at the box office, I think it is a good film and that parts of it come close to being great. It is the first feature of an immensely talented director, the same Stephen Wallace who made Love Letters from Teralba Road and Con man Harry and the Others. I can only wonder why he set himself such a punishing task, first off, and how he persuaded the NSW Film Corporation to give him the money to make it. It can hardly fail to attract some flak.

Stir, as the title indicates, is set in a prison where there is an extremely bad relationship between inmates and guards. Perhaps the relationship is always bad, everywhere. It becomes worse with the return to gaol and to old friends and enemies of China Jackson, a toughie determined to do his six months with as little trouble as possible and get out. The difficulty is that he is in a bad gaol where warders and prisoners make it impossible for him to lie low and say 'nuffin. He is flushed into action, almost against his will.

The big set piece is a riot which achieves catharsis for some prisoners and a burned gaol for all. There is no hope, and not even any anger left when it is over.

The appalling events of Stir are made bearable because Wallace's direction is so imaginative, crisp, unsentimental, non-heroic, often witty and even occasionally funny. I imagine he has got it pretty right, since the script is by Bob Jewson, who happened to be an inmate of Bathurst Gaol at the time of the 1974 riots, the ones that have since been so heavily publicised in NSW newspapers.

Wallace has assembled a formidable cast, some of them with unfamiliar faces. The most familiar one belongs to Bryan Brown, who must be the busiest actor in Australia.

Brown plays China Jackson, humiliated in prison for shoplifting. His enemies see this crime as demeaning, and China indeed looks bashful when it is mentioned. Brown's style of acting won't go out of fashion because he has so few mannerisms, apart from a stone-hard stare. But then we have not had much chance to see him except in the context of a harsh environment. Cathy's Child being the exception.

China Jackson is quite a complex character, strong but desperate and defeated, unable to equate his position — back in gaol again — with what he expected of life the last time he got out. But Brown's China Jackson does not dominate the performances.

Dennis Miller gives a remarkable portrayal of a wily crook, cynical seducer of a young clerk (Michael Gow) who has been backing slow horses with the bank's money. Max Phipps inspires contempt and pity as a warder who regrets earlier brutality and tries to explain himself to China, who casts a cold eye on him. Ted Robshaw and Paul Sonkkila, little known until now — Robshaw, an Englishman, has been working as a teacher — are quite mesmerising as different types of prison officers. Gary Waddell gives an inspired portrait of instability, the man on the gaol slack-wire.

There is a notable lack of cliche in the characters and characterisations; perhaps Chalmers, the sensible veteran warder, is a near miss, but we have to assume that Jewison knows best.

The film was produced by Richard Brennan, edited by Henry Dangar, photographed by Geoffrey Burton with music by Cameron Allen.

It occurs to me that people who think that Ronnie Barker's Porridge series gave a fair presentation of prison life are in for a bit of a shock.
The Dance Scene in Europe — part 2 — a tribal scene

Ever since the early '60s, when his own company The Ballet of the 20th Century first performed his versions of *The Rite of Spring* and *The Mass for the Present Time*, Maurice Bejart has been known as the master showman of European Ballet. His aesthetic embraces pure classicism and bright show dancing, deep obscure ritualism and oriental philosophy and a host of elaborate stage techniques.

If his ballets have since become something closer to the Folies Bejart rather than a new école de danse to re-energise European ballet, it is because his straining for effect and sensation, and a search for a sensual theatre as against pure choreographic ways and means, have watered down the effect of each component and made what is increasingly becoming a mere hysterical mish-mash of empty gestures.

In the earlier days, when he created, as well as the above mentioned Rite (still the greatest extant interpretation in my terms) such works as *The Firebird* and the *Beethoven Symphony* No 9, the force and freshness of approach was refreshing for those becoming stupified by the tardy but earnest performances of the Paris Opera Ballet.

The rot started to set in when he widened his scope to go beyond the material of dance and incorporate other’s disciplines into his work. He has always fancied himself as an opera producer as well as ballet master and indeed has mounted versions of Berlioz’s *Damnation of Faust* and Verdi’s *La Traviata*, both of which are still remembered and argued about today, so controversial were they. He has mounted the Venusberg scene for Bayreuth’s *Tannhäuser* and is still determined to produce a version of *Tristan and Isolde* there.

But the Ballet of the 20th century is his creation and the major cultural export of its home country, Belgium.

However, the striving after shock and effect is paying diminishing returns. Vánsky, *Clown of God*, went over the top in trying to summon up the aura of the man as well as the themes and ghosts that haunted him. Bejart used a huge arena stage set in a sports stadium in Brussels and covered it with a seemingly endless supply of dancers. His huge audiences (17,000 at one sitting in the sports arena in question) applauded and yelled and screamed their approval and ever since then, Bejart has forced himself to live up to their expectations as an enfant terrible. Now the heartfelt messages of his earlier works have become redundant and empty theatrical gestures. Gestures of Cosmic consciousness, human rights, Free Love etc and any handy bit of mass culture agit prop that comes along.

His rather cloying sentimentalism and over played theatricalism is drippingly apparent in works like *Golestan* (based on Sufi mystic poems) or *Trionfi de Petrarch* Vast amounts of money and PR and endless streams of ravishingly gone mad with the idiocy and brutality of the world into which she was born.

But Bausch has an ironic sense of beautiful dancers are put at the service of
pageants wherein the choreographic element settles down to simple repetitions and what is strained for is a scenic upheaval bent on creating an 'orgasm of the soul'. Nowhere is this more apparent than with the two works that I managed to see at the Brussels Foret National. Dichterliebe, a work that culminates in Jan de Gac parading around in bejewelled leather shorts and feathers (a la Elton John) as the incarnation of poetic feeling, or the vast glittery and woolly expanse of his Notre Faust a very free adaption of the second part of Goethe's metaphysical drama of the same name.

One realises that Bejart thinks he is leading his audience into new realms of experience, a heightening of spiritual awareness and, for the limited awareness of the Kahil Gibran Lord of the Rings set he probably is, but to anyone willing to push through his concept to its culmination and analyse his means, it emerges as a very sentimental, simplenicked and sensual reaction to very austere and spiritual themes. The actual dancing is that which we have got through in high class caberets and TV specials for years, for all his intentions. The dancers are presented as entities in their own right, they do not enact his cosmic thesis, they sell it, with as much sexual allure as possible. All of this night club excess trying to package itself as mystical revelation is rather repulsive, but although he tries to stretch the barriers of theatrical form etc he obeys one cardinal rule of showmanship, he never tries to outrun his audiences, he gives them what they expect and then some.

Five years ago, the Wuppertal Dance Theatre was a minor provincial dance group that was hardly taken any note of outside of Germany. Now, the company, along with Jiri Kylian's Nederlans Dans Theatre is regarded as one of the most powerful and unique forces in European dance. It is not just that Pina Bausch is a staunch feminist and every one of her works espouses the battle of the sexes as a veritable cause. It is because the works created (and they are a group effort really) are put across with such gutsy raw power that you are thrown back in your seat and veritably forced to watch them, transfixed even while your hair stands on end.

Pina Bausch first came to prominence when her version of the Rite of Spring was created. It is not a pleasant work. She sees it not as a elemental evocation of rebirth and regeneration, but takes the huge upheaval of the music as the last desperate spasms of a society at the verge of collapse and self-immolation. The solitary woman at the ballets end, dancing herself to death and literally tearing at her body, is not seen as the virgin sacrificed in a fertility ritual, she is the last survivor of the Holocaust, humour epitomised by her version of The Seven Deadly Sins of the Middle Class. On the occasion I saw this ballet it had Sylvia Sass as the singing Anna and Australian Ballet ex dancer Meryl Tankard as the dancing Anna. Deadly Sins is a laconic put down of a ballet.

There are shimmies and shakes and bumps and grinds, all of them set up to reveal how society puts a low value on a woman as an entity and a high grade upon her mythic qualities as hand maid to Men. A person can laugh at a ballet like this, but it still sticks in the throat.

A few evenings with dance like this convinced me that the dance scene in Europe, although it may beg borrow and steal from each other, still uses the best of each other to create something of its own, its a tribal scene, cannibalistic but energetic.

Far more lively than the opera scene that pumps out tired old pieces in tired old versions, or the European straight theatre scene that relies more on the evocative power of its scenic designers than the natural energy of its actors or its scripts.

Nowhere is this more apparent than with the new and transmogrified Nederlans Dans Theatre which came to the fore once again due to the rejuvenating power of Czech born Jiri Kylian. The company no longer has modern dance classes, it is given over to classical ballet classes, but the way that Kylian has reworked that vocab is a major achievement.

Kylian states as the two greatest influences on his style, his first ever teacher Vera Zemborovc, who now teaches mime at Flinders University Drama School and who is in my opinion, the single greatest asset that school has and John Cranko and Anne Wooliams of the once great Stuttgart Ballet.

Kylian is a creator out of the traditional mould, and like Cranko and Balanchine, stretches the boundaries of what we think classic dance forms can encompass even further.

He uses classical ballet technique in a way that looks fresher and more original than anything a lot of the so called 'modern school' could ever imagine.

Clagolitic Mass for example utilises folk dance and folk mannerisms that gradually develop beyond the ethnic into almost a semaphore of human feeling. Touches of the mazurka or horniose are used as a starting point for digressive classic ballet excursions.

Kylian, like Balanchine doesn't give any programme notes to exploit his ideas (unlike Bejart), but, (unlike Balanchine) he is not so much concerned with the body perse, but with the humanitarian ideals and hopes of people and their predicaments, young and old, that can have such a rich form and mode of expression in the dance.
An exciting finale to the 1980 season of the Australian ballet.

Following on the successful tour of The People's Republic of China, and the inaugural tour of Australian cities and major country centres of The Dancers Company, the Australian Ballet is embarking on a guest star-filled last three months of the year in Melbourne and Sydney.

In Melbourne the first thrill is the presentation of Russian defector Aleksandr Godunov in the role of Prince Siegfried in Swan Lake. It was in this role that Godunov made his debut with the Bolshoi Ballet and began his spectacular ascent to international fame. While with the Bolshoi, he also danced Vronsky in Anna Karenina, Don Jose in Carmen, Basil in Don Quixote, and Albrecht in Giselle.

Since his defection last year, he has become a member of American Ballet Theatre and regularly appears as guest artist with major western ballet companies.

The Melbourne season of Swan Lake will consist of seven performances (9-15 October) at the Palais Theatre, St. Kilda, and will also feature Michela Kirkaldie and Joanne Michel in the role of the Swan Queen. Joanne Michel's debut in this role is the result of ballerina Marilyn Rowe's unexpected indisposition, and is surely in the tradition of "theatrical breaks". 21 year old Joanne is a soloist in The Australian Ballet and first claimed critics' attention with her appearance as The Queen of the Dryads in Don Quixote. Since then, she has danced the Leading Ballerina in Ballet Imperial (replacing injured Michela Kirkaldie at the last minute), and several leading roles with The Dancers Company on their recent tour. The double role of Odette/Odile is the greatest challenge of her career to date.

The season of Swan Lake will be followed in Melbourne, by a week of Cinderella (17-23 October) featuring Sir Robert Helpmann in his inimitable interpretation of one of the Ugly Sisters, with Ray Powell as the other.

The role of Cinderella and the Prince will be danced by each of the company's principal artists alternately.

SYDNEY

During the period of rehearsing of Swan Lake and Cinderella, and in a separate studio altogether, some thorough preparation is being made for the special 6 performance non-subscription season in Sydney's Regent Theatre, of Anna Karenina. This season will serve as the Australian debut for beautiful Russian ballerina Valentina Kozlova, who relinquished her status of Principal Artist in the Bolshoi Ballet when she and her husband Leonid Kozlov defected in the U.S. after the Bolshoi's last performance in Los Angeles. Kozlova is one of those fortunate beings in whom the gods seem to have combined extraordinary facial and physical beauty with a strength and tenacity which enables her to tackle any role, ranging from those requiring the utmost lyricism to the greatest virtuosity. Anna Karenina will indeed be a treat to those who will be seeing in Sydney (27 October - 3 November).

Also at the Regent Theatre, Sydney and immediately following Anna Karenina, The Australian Ballet will present Sir Frederick Ashton's Cinderella, featuring Sir Robert Helpmann once more.

Spanning the seasons in Melbourne and Sydney, rehearsals for the new 3 act ballet The Three Musketeers have been going on. The production department in Racecourse Road, Flemington have been in high gear for months, working on the 160 costumes, special effects and scenery for this mammoth new production from Andre Prokovsky. The Three Musketeers is created by the same team who gave us Anna Karenina (Prokovsky, Peter Farmer, Guy Wolfenden) and the result promises to be every bit as colourful, exhilarating and popular with audiences, as that work is. — Andrew Prokovsky has dreamt up some wonderful sword fighting sequences and hilarity for the Musketeers themselves and the "action" is interspersed with some magically beautiful pas de deux. While this will, I think, prove to be a real mens ballet, in that it will show off to great advantage, the strength of The Australian Ballet's line-up of male dancers, it will also help to bring into the public eye an up and coming young soloist, Sheree Rayment, who is dancing the role of the Queen of France (originally intended for Marilyn Rowe).

The other female principal roles are those of Milady, (Michela Kirkaldie) and Constanze, (Ann Jenner) lady in waiting to the Queen of France.

The seven male principal roles are: d'Ariagon (Kelvin Coe), Buckingham (Gary Norman), The Musketeers (Dale Baker, David Burch, Paul de Mason), the Cardinal (Colin Peasley), The King of France (Ken Whitmore).

There are seventeen scenes in the three acts, which include peasants, waitresses, beefeaters, beggars, children, the Cardinals' guards, and even fire-eaters.

The Three Musketeers will premiere in the Opera Theatre of the Sydney Opera House on 28 November and will run until 23 December. In Melbourne it will play 9-15 February 1981 in the Palais Theatre, St. Kilda.
Continuing runs and revivals monopolised the efforts of the Australian Opera during September, as the company prepared to launch its new production of Mussorgsky's Boris Godunov which looked on paper as if it could well prove to be the unequivocal highlight of this year's winter season at the Sydney Opera House.

None of the other three new productions was exactly a disaster at opening, but none was exactly a triumph either. I Masnadieri was plagued by ill health which emasculated Joan Sutherland's male support, or at least reduced it from spectacularness to ordinariness; Manon Lescaut needed a considerable running-in period and a new Manon before it achieved its own best form; Katya Kabanova fell far short of achieving the potential it ought to have achieved largely because the incredibly versatile and appealing talent of Marilyn Richardson was for once at least overstretched if not actually miscast.

All had their moments before they completed their runs of the season, but there were no electrifying evenings in the theatre of the sort that one naturally hopes for with every production but so seldom experiences.

Yet perhaps the greatest and most significant test of the mettle of an opera company is its ability to cope with a grim opening performance: to digest the deservedly bad reviews it inevitably draws, and go on to retrieve the situation. And such was the achievement of the AO with this year's Sydney revival of The Barber of Seville, which I commented upon adversely in these columns last month.

Cast and conductor changes had yet to affect this year's Barber revival by the time I saw it a second time at a matinee performance, but the improvement was so great it was very hard to believe it was the same production. The sparkle that had been so appallingly absent at opening was there in abundance — from the three central characters in particular, all of whom had been badly deficient before; but far more importantly, in the final analysis, from conductor Peter Seymour, whose improvement between the two performances could only be described as spectacular.

The overture, which had been interminable on opening night, simply bubbled along with the effervescence of champagne at the matinee — as it ought; and the correctness of style established before the curtain went up was maintained almost all afternoon.

The odd imperfections were still there, the momentary lapses of ensemble that are all but inevitable with works like The Barber; but the feel of the performance was consistently right.

And the improvement in the guidance of the helmsman was complemented at many turns by significantly better performances from those on stage — in particular the two men who are so crucial to the effectiveness of any performance of The Barber.

John Copley's 1977 Fra Diavolo also re-entered the AO repertoire during the month under review, featuring so many cast changes it was almost a new theatrical experience. Judged by the harshest criteria, it ought to have been a pale shadow of its original self since none of the cast changes could objectively be considered an improvement on the original — either on paper or in the event.

Originally, it almost seemed that the production was being mounted as a vehicle for the considerable virtuoso talents of Robert Gard in the title role and Isobel Buchanan as Zerlina; but it succeeded this time round not only without them but without the considerable talents of Dennis Olsen in the major supporting role of Lord Alistair.

The new Zerlina, Angela Denning, is no Buchanan either in the bell-like clarity of voice department or the immediate visual appeal sweepstakes; but she is a considerable asset to the company in the virtuoso soprano field and she proved it resoundingly in this series of Diavolos.

Her performance seemed pale, at times, only when viewed in the retrospective context of Buchanan's in the same role; more important, in the context of this particular season it succeeded quite nicely. In particular, her big Act II aria was a viable display of technical virtuosity that was quite dazzlingly effective even if one could have wished for more sheer vocal power; but that will no doubt come with increasing maturity, and cannot be forced prematurely without grave risks.

Similar comments could be made about Denning's dramatic realisation of Zerlina: what there was of it was quite good, but it never quite managed to be larger than life, which is what any fully matured stage performance must aspire to one way or another.

Fra Diavolo is the sort of role that tenors like Anson Austin, who look inherently good and sing quite well but are prone to woodiness in the acting department, ought to be given because of the pressure they inevitably exert on a performer to loosen up and act with commitment.

Austin is not yet in the class of Robert Gard as an actor/singer, and may well never be — which is no insult, of course, for Gard is an exceptional all-round performer despite the fact that he is given so few major guernseys by the AO's casting moguls that it is evident they disagree with this assessment.

Nevertheless, Austin's Fra Diavolo was a very considerable personal success: well sung, predictably, but — not so predictably — acted with a flamboyance not seen from this performer before, he even managed to twirl the odd revolver round his index finger while singing to his Laurel-and-Hardy-style henchmen; a feat akin to patting one's stomach and rubbing one's chest simultaneously I should think; or propelling a spinning wheel and singing simultaneously, as is required of the leading men in Flotow's Martha, about which I shall say more in a moment.

Austin, of course, was the original romantic tenor lead in this production, the none-too-bright sergent Lorenzo; a role...
taken over this time round by Paul Ferris quite well but in no way memorably.

Ferris is normally a convincing actor, and seemed on this occasion to have perhaps fallen into the trap of trying to make Lorenzo into a flesh-and-blood human being rather than the caricature he needs to be — at least in this Copley production. No doubt there are other ways of looking at Fra Diavolo, but this production is as purposefully superficial as its blatantly phoney sets and exaggerated costumes; with the result that everyone in it must play the same game.

The other major new face in the cast for this series of Diavolos was Gordon Wilcock, taking over the role of Lord Alloash originally created by Dennis Olsen. Wilcock still had the marvellous foil afforded Olsen in the Lady Pamela of Heather Begg, and made a very good fist of the part. His performance lacked something of the comic appeal of Olsen's, but then Olsen is something of a genius in this area.

And the costume department of the AO, and perhaps the original designer Michael Stennett, deserve special credit for coming up with a marvellously eccentric dressing gown for Wilcock that was at the same time quite different to that designed for Olsen's skinny shape three years ago, and equally effective in sending up Wilcock's aggressive rotundity.

It almost goes without saying that Begg herself, always a marvellous actress as well as singer, recreated Lady Pamela with all the joyful flirtatiousness of yore; that delicious little scene in which she and Diavolo edge themselves together under Lord Alloash's very cup of tea come off nearly as well this year as it had before, with Olsen and Gard playing the men of the piece.

And Graeme Ewer made as nice a mock-Hardy as before, and John Germain a nice mock-Laurel of a newcomer; and Richard Bonyngue put the whole thing together with considerable good humor — enough to satisfy fully, probably, anyone who had not seen the original version, and to provide a good many moments of pleasure even to those who had.

Don Pasquale and Martha were presented in Brisbane by the Queensland Opera Company for an overlapping season late in September and early October, with considerable artistic success but disappointing results at the box office.

Perhaps because it is anyhow the greater work, I found the Pasquale more satisfying than the Martha — particularly because of Russell Smith's absolutely spot-on portrayal of Pasquale himself and the spot-on direction of John Milson.

This Pasquale, of course, borrowed Tom Lingwood's sets and costumes seen originally a few weeks earlier in Adelaide where Lingwood also directed the piece for State Opera. But the scrum bearing the notice of marriage between Sofronia Malatesta and Don Pasquale was thankfully less in evidence in the Brisbane reincarnation and many details of the production itself had been changed for the better.

Smith was a skinny-as-a-rake Pasquale rather than the more usual rotund one, but he was also an immensely human one though not lacking in humor when it was required. Paul Neal turned in one of the best performances I have ever seen from him in the important supporting role of Dr Malatesta: he had just the right mixture of deviousness and good humor required to bring off the part effectively.

Sally Robertson's Norina was intermittently effective, particularly at the vital moment when Pasquale drops his guard momentarily to reveal he has really been wounded by her carryings-on: expertly directed by Milson, no doubt, she responded by a brief show of compassion for great effect. But she sang nicely rather than memorably, and there were moments when her characterisation lapsed dangerously.

The Martha featured nice performances from Phyllis Ball in the title role and Margaret Russell as her companion Julia, and a nicely foppish Sir Tristram Mickleford from Geoffrey Crook.

But Anthony Benfell's Lionel, though nicely sung, lacked something of the panache that should enable the character more-or-less to sweep Lady Harriet, slumming as Martha, off her feet at first sight. Denis White's Plunkett, on the other hand, was quite excellent all round — good humored, strongly sung, dramatically convincing. It was by far the most satisfying performance I have yet seen from him.

John Thompson's production had some nice touches — particularly the intrusion of the regiment of huntresses of Wagnerian proportions into the tavern scene, brandishing spears about with all the fervor of the Valkyries; and the sets, uncredited in the program, were particularly picturesque, varied and effective.

The other major regional production of the month was State Opera's realisation of Franz Lehár's The Land of Smiles in Adelaide — an effort that had many merits, in the final analysis the inbuilt problems of the work itself made it less than wholly satisfying.

Peter Cooke designed a marvellously picturesque Peking for the second two acts, supplemented by appropriately beautiful Chinese costumes; but his Act I Vienna was insufficiently sumptuous, due no doubt to constraints of the purse strings. Anthony Besch's direction was excellent, concealing many of the inherent weaknesses of the piece and unfailingly emphasising its strengths.

Faults and all, The Land of Smiles proved to be a marvellous vehicle for Thomas Edmonds in the central role of Prince Sou Chong, the Chinese noble who falls in love with a Viennese girl and eventually sacrifices her on the altar of his official position.

He sang quite beautifully all night, and managed to convey effectively the dilemma in which Sou Chong is enmeshed.

Judith Henley was adequate as the girl in question, the Countess Lisa; though she did not fully exploit the potential of the part either in dramatic or vocal terms.

William Bamford provided excellent support as the man waiting in the wings of her life and Andrew Clarke was a delightful caricature of a eunuch.

Henry Krips conducted with meticulous Viennese style; which was as it had to be, and ought to be — for there is scarcely a bar of orientalness in this operetta, even if it does purport to be set in China two-thirds of the time.

DAVID GYGER is editor of Opera Australia.

We have moved
But there's still no business like ... SHOWBUSINESS BOOKSHOP now at our new enlarged premises 1ST FLOOR, 20 22 MCKILLOP ST., MELBOURNE 3000 PHONE (03) 67 5391 • 4 LINES


CONTACT VIN FOSTER FOR PROMPT ATTENTION

Mona Workman
Makers of fine quality wigs, hairpieces, beards, moustaches, side levers. Made to Order.
- Wigs for hire for commercials at reasonable rates
- For Film, Stage & TV

Tel. (02) 33-6628
1st Floor, 108 Oxford Street, Paddington N.S.W. 2021

Dance. Dramatic Pub Co We carry Theatre Australia.

CONTACT VIN FOSTER FOR PROMPT ATTENTION
Picturesque and entertaining

THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR

by Barry O'Connor

The Merry Wives Of Windsor by William Shakespeare. Sydney Theatre Company at Sydney Opera House. Sydney, NSW. Opened Sept 18, 1980. Director, Mick Rodger; Assistant Director, Jennifer West; Designer, Kristian Fredrikson; Lighting Designer, Jamie Lewis; Stage Manager, Julie Warn.

Cast: Robert Shallow, Redmond Phillips; Abraham Slender, Bruce Spence; Sir Hugh Leans, John Allen; George Page, Vic Rooney; Sir John Falstaff, Max Phipps; Pistol, Alexander Hay; Nym, Alan Robin; Bardolph, Brandon Burke; Robin, Jon Blake; Margaret Page, Jennifer Claire; Alice Ford, Carol Raya; Anne Page, Diane Smith; Peter Simple, Bill McCluskey; Hostess of Garter Inn, Jennifer West; Mistress Quickly, Janice Finn; Rugby, Brandon Burke; Dr. Caius, Lex Marinos; Fenton, Andrew Tigue; Frank Ford, Robin Ramsey; Robert, Andrew Tigue; John, Brandon Burke.

Conventional wisdom has it that Elizabeth I wanted to see that ever popular and over-larded knight, Sir John Falstaff of the Henry IV's, in love. Accordingly she commanded a court performance of a play at Windsor. The play, The Merry Wives of Windsor, seems to have been rather begrudgingly churned out by Shakespeare, exploiting the disguise love comedy genre that succeeded much better in As You Like It, Much Ado About Nothing and Twelfth Night.

Falstaff plans an amorous assault on the wives of two Windsor gentleman — Ford and Page — whose purse strings they control. The wives learn of the plan and set about to have some fun at the old knight's expense. Two rather repetitive screen-scene assignations result in the basketing and dunking of Falstaff, on the one hand, and the swinging of him dressed as the "fat woman of Brentford", a suspected witch, on the other. This Falstaff, hardly the resourceful figure of the Henry's, allows himself to be further gulled as Herne the Hunter in Windsor Great Park. Wearing a set of outlandish horns, like a commodious Actaeon looking for his Diana, Falstaff is ambushed, set upon and mocked by a band of disguised fairies. Finally, he is exposed by the Mistresses Page and Ford. Left alone, the gross knight slides forward off his stool, emitting a loud fart. The play ends with a whimper not a bang.

There is an underplot, too, in which Anne Page — "Oh, sweet Anne Page" — is wooed by an unlikely clutch of suitors. A quack, a fool and a lacklustre swain.

The whole thing fails to come together as a play. It has all the disadvantages of a sequel and none of the spirit and vitality of an inspired work. Verdi's Falstaff makes more sense as an opera.

However, I suppose it behoves the STC — the company who can do anything — to attempt the Merry Wives. I liked especially Mick Rodger's updating Elizabethan Windsor to high Victorian pastoral. A cock crows, the play opens, splendidly evoking the atmosphere of those diaries of untold country parsons, which marked the end of the nineteenth century. The last blush of innocence. The Victorian milieu, too, nicely accommodates the belief in fairies which is important to the play. Lewis Carroll and Charles Kingsley would have approved.

The production is most beautiful to look at. Kristian Fredrikson, designer, and Jamie Lewis, lighting designer, are a happy partnership who bring us the earth and wood tones of rural Windsor, the regency elegance of the interior intrigue scenes, and...
the green dreamland of Windsor Great Park by night. The atmosphere is as fresh as a soap commercial, except for Falstaff’s lodgings which rise in all their down-at-heel glory from the bowels of the stage.

The acting is highly competent, although, in some instances one suspects, compensating for the material. This Falstaff is a mere costume cipher, but Max Phipps brings elegance and wit to the part. Janice Finn is very much in control of Mistress Quickly, and most enjoyable. John Allen, the Welsh parson, and Lex Marinos, the French doctor, do very well as the two linguistic jokes of the piece. Mr. Marinos is imaginative, clever and nicely understated: by my "Trots"! Robin Ramsay’s Ford, afraid of being cuckolded, is disappointingly frantic. Redmond Phillips’ Justice Shallow, (in a Bath chair), is well observed and very funny, as is his nephew, Bruce Spence’s Abraham Slender. Bill McCluskey’s servant to Slender, Peter Simple, is a disciplined understated: by my “Trots”! Robin Ramsay’s Ford, afraid of being cuckolded, is disappointingly frantic. Redmond Phillips’ Justice Shallow, (in a Bath chair), is well observed and very funny, as is his nephew, Bruce Spence’s Abraham Slender. Bill McCluskey’s servant to Slender, Peter Simple, is a disciplined understated: by my “Trots”! Robin Ramsay’s Ford, afraid of being cuckolded, is disappointingly frantic. Redmond Phillips’ Justice Shallow, (in a Bath chair), is well observed and very funny, as is his nephew, Bruce Spence’s Abraham Slender. Bill McCluskey’s servant to Slender, Peter Simple, is a disciplined understated: by my “Trots”! Robin Ramsay’s Ford, afraid of being cuckolded, is disappointingly frantic. Redmond Phillips’ Justice Shallow, (in a Bath chair), is well observed and very funny, as is his nephew, Bruce Spence’s Abraham Slender. Bill McCluskey’s servant to Slender, Peter Simple, is a disciplined understated: by my “Trots”! Robin Ramsay’s Ford, afraid of being cuckolded, is disappointingly frantic. Redmond Phillips’ Justice Shallow, (in a Bath chair), is well observed and very funny, as is his nephew, Bruce Spence’s Abraham Slender. Bill McCluskey’s servant to Slender, Peter Simple, is a disciplined understated: by my “Trots”! Robin Ramsay’s Ford, afraid of being cuckolded, is disappointingly frantic. Redmond Phillips’ Justice Shallow, (in a Bath chair), is well observed and very funny, as is his nephew, Bruce Spence’s Abraham Slender. Bill McCluskey’s servant to Slender, Peter Simple, is a disciplined understated: by my “Trots”! Robin Ramsay’s Ford, afraid of being cuckolded, is disappointingly frantic. Redmond Phillips’ Justice Shallow, (in a Bath chair), is well observed and very funny, as is his nephew, Bruce Spence’s Abraham Slender. Bill McCluskey’s servant to Slender, Peter Simple, is a disciplined understated: by my “Trots”! Robin Ramsay’s Ford, afraid of being cuckolded, is disappointingly frantic. Redmond Phillips’ Justice Shallow, (in a Bath chair), is well observed and very funny, as is his nephew, Bruce Spence’s Abraham Slender. Bill McCluskey’s servant to Slender, Peter Simple, is a disciplined understated: by my “Trots”! Robin Ramsay’s Ford, afraid of being cuckolded, is disappointingly frantic. Redmond Phillips’ Justice Shallow, (in a Bath chair), is well observed and very funny, as is his nephew, Bruce Spence’s Abraham Slender. Bill McCluskey’s servant to Slender, Peter Simple, is a disciplined understated: by my “Trots”! Robin Ramsay’s Ford, afraid of being cuckolded, is disappointingly frantic. Redmond Phillips’ Justice Shallow, (in a Bath chair), is well observed and very funny, as is his nephew, Bruce Spence’s Abraham Slender. Bill McCluskey’s servant to Slender, Peter Simple, is a disciplined understated: by my “Trots”! Robin Ramsay’s Ford, afraid of being cuckolded, is disappointingly frantic. Redmond Phillips’ Justice Shallow, (in a Bath chair), is well observed and very funny, as is his nephew, Bruce Spence’s Abraham Slender. Bill McCluskey’s servant to Slender, Peter Simple, is a disciplined understated: by my “Trots”! Robin Ramsay’s Ford, afraid of being cuckolded, is disappointingly frantic. Redmond Phillips’ Justice Shallow, (in a Bath chair), is well observed and very funny, as is his nephew, Bruce Spence’s Abraham Slender. Bill McCluskey’s servant to Slender, Peter Simple, is a disciplined understated: by my “Trots”! Robin Ramsay’s Ford, afraid of being cuckolded, is disappointingly frantic. Redmond Phillips’ Justice Shallow, (in a Bath chair), is well observed and very funny, as is his nephew, Bruce Spence’s Abraham Slender. Bill McCluskey’s servant to Slender, Peter Simple, is a disciplined understated: by my “Trots”! Robin Ramsay’s Ford, afraid of being cuckolded, is disappointingly frantic. Redmond Phillips’ Justice Shallow, (in a Bath chair), is well observed and very funny, as is his nephew, Bruce Spence’s Abraham Slender. Bill McCluskey’s servant to Slender, Peter Simple, is a disciplined understated: by my “Trots”! Robin Ramsay’s Ford, afraid of being cuckolded, is disappointingly frantic. Redmond Phillips’ Justice Shallow, (in a Bath chair), is well observed and very funny, as is his nephew, Bruce Spence’s Abraham Slender. Bill McCluskey’s servant to Slender, Peter Simple, is a disciplined understated: by my “Trots”! Robin Ramsay’s Ford, afraid of being cuckolded, is disappointingly frantic. Redmond Phillips’ Justice Shallow, (in a Bath chair), is well observed and very funny, as is his nephew, Bruce Spence’s Abraham Slender. Bill McCluskey’s servant to Slender, Peter Simple, is a disciplined understated: by my “Trots”! Robin Ramsay’s Ford, afraid of being cuckolded, is disappointingly frantic. Redmond Phillips’ Justice Shallow, (in a Bath chair), is well observed and very funny, as is his nephew, Bruce Spence’s Abraham Slender. Bill McCluskey’s servant to Slender, Peter Simple, is a disciplined understated: by my “Trots”! Robin Ramsay’s Ford, afraid of being cuckolded, is disappointingly frantic. Redmond Phillips’ Justice Shallow, (in a Bath chair), is well observed and very funny, as is his nephew, Bruce Spence’s Abraham Slender. Bill McCluskey’s servant to Slender, Peter Simple, is a disciplined understated: by my “Trots”! Robin Ramsay’s Ford, afraid of being cuckolded, is disappointingly frantic. Redmond Phillips’ Justice Shallow, (in a Bath chair), is well observed and very funny, as is his nephew, Bruce Spence’s Abraham Slender. Bill McCluskey’s servant to Slender, Peter Simple, is a disciplined understated: by my “Trots”! Robin Ramsay’s Ford, afraid of being cuckolded, is disappointingly frantic. Redmond Phillips’ Justice Shallow, (in a Bath chair), is well observed and very funny, as is his nephew, Bruce Spence’s Abraham Slender. Bill McCluskey’s servant to Slender, Peter Simple, is a disciplined understated: by my “Trots”! Robin Ramsay’s Ford, afraid of being cuckolded, is disappointingly frantic. Redmond Phillips’ Justice Shallow, (in a Bath chair), is well observed and very funny, as is his nephew, Bruce Spence’s Abraham Slender. Bill McCluskey’s servant to Slender, Peter Simple, is a disciplined understated: by my “Trots”! Robin Ramsay’s Ford, afraid of being cuckolded, is disappointingly frantic. Redmond Phillips’ Justice Shallow, (in a Bath chair), is well observed and very funny, as is his nephew, Bruce Spence’s Abraham Slender. Bill McCluskey’s servant to Slender, Peter Simple, is a disciplined understated: by my “Trots”! Robin Ramsay’s Ford, afraid of being cuckolded, is disappointingly frantic. Redmond Phillips’ Justice Shallow, (in a Bath chair), is well observed and very funny, as is his nephew, Bruce Spence’s Abraham Slender. Bill McCluskey’s servant to Slender, Peter Simple, is a disciplined understated: by my “Trots”! Robin Ramsay’s Ford, afraid of being cuckolded, is disappointingly frantic. Redmond Phillips’ Justice Shallow, (in a Bath chair), is well observed and very funny, as is his nephew, Bruce Spence’s Abraham Slender. Bill McCluskey’s servant to Slender, Peter Simple, is a disciplined understated: by my “Trots”! Robin Ramsay’s Ford, afraid of being cuckolded, is disappointingly frantic. Redmond Phillips’ Justice Shallow, (in a Bath chair), is well observed and very funny, as is his nephew, Bruce Spence’s Abraham Slender. Bill McCluskey’s servant to Slender, Peter Simple, is a disciplined understated: by my “Trots”! Robin Ramsay’s Ford, afraid of being cuckolded, is disappointingly frantic. Redmond Phillips’ Justice Shallow, (in a Bath chair), is well observed and very funny, as is his nephew, Bruce Spence’s Abraham Slender. Bill McCluskey’s servant to Slender, Peter Simple, is a disciplined understated: by my “Trots”! Robin Ramsay’s Ford, afraid of being cuckolded, is disappointingly frantic. Redmond Phillips’ Justice Shallow, (in a Bath chair), is well observed and very funny, as is his nephew, Bruce Spence’s Abraham Slender. Bill McCluskey’s servant to Slender, Peter Simple, is a disciplined understated: by my “Trots”! Robin Ramsay’s Ford, afraid of being cuckolded, is disappointingly frantic. Redmond Phillips’ Justice Shallow, (in a Bath chair), is well observed and very funny, as is his nephew, Bruce Spence’s Abraham Slender. Bill McCluskey’s servant to Slender, Peter Simple, is a disciplined understated: by my “Trots”! Robin Ramsay’s Ford, afraid of being cuckolded, is disappointingly frantic. Redmond Phillips’ Justice Shallow, (in a Bath chair), is well observed and very funny, as is his nephew, Bruce Spence’s Abraham Slender. Bill McCluskey’s servant to Slender, Peter Simple, is a disciplined understated: by my “Trots”! Robin Ramsay’s Ford, afraid of being cuckolded, is disappointingly frantic. Redmond Phillips’ Justice Shallow, (in a Bath chair), is well observed and very funny, as is his nephew, Bruce Spence’s Abraham Slender. Bill McCluskey’s servant to Slender, Peter Simple, is a disciplined understated: by my “Trots”! Robin Ramsay’s Ford, afraid of being cuckolded, is disappointingly frantic. Redmond Phillips’ Justice Shallow, (in a Bath chair), is well observed and very funny, as is his nephew, Bruce Spence’s Abraham Slender. Bill McCluskey’s servant to Slender, Peter Simple, is a disciplined understated: by my “Trots”! Robin Ramsay’s Ford, afraid of being cuckolded, is disappointingly frantic. Redmond Phillips’ Justice Shallow, (in a Bath chair), is well observed and very funny, as is his nephew, Bruce Spence’s Abraham Slender. Bill McCluskey’s servant to Slender, Peter Simple, is a disciplined understated: by my “Trots”! Robin Ramsay’s Ford, afraid of being cuckolded, is disappointingly frantic. Redmond Phillips’ Justice Shallow, (in a Bath chair), is well observed and very funny, as is his nephew, Bruce Spence’s Abraham Slender. Bill McCluskey’s servant to Slender, Peter Simple, is a disciplined understated: by my “Trots”! Robin Ramsay’s Ford, af...
Stimulating but puzzling

VOLPONE

by Hugh Craig

Volpone by Ben Jonson, Nimrod Street Theatre Company, Sydney, NSW. Opened October 1, 1980. Directors: Neil Armfield and John Bell; Designer: Kim Carpenter; Lighting Designer, Nigel Leving; Composer/Musician: Alan John; choreographer, David Atkins.

Cast: Volpone, John Bell; Mosca, Paul Bertram; Corvino, Barry Otto; Celia, Linda Cropper; Corbaccio, John McTernan; Bonario, Colin Friels; Peregrine, Colin Friels.

The Nimrod's new Volpone, directed by Neil Armfield and John Bell, is a stimulating, puzzling production. It solves problems about lesser characters — about how the play's unmitigated villains and spotless innocents can be brought to life on stage — while it leaves questions about the relationship and motivations of the two central characters unanswered.

The plot revolves around Volpone, a wealthy gentleman of Venice, and his servant Mosca. Volpone aims to become even wealthier by pretending to be on his last legs, so that the suitors who hope to inherit his money bring him expensive gifts to ingratiate themselves. Things start to go wrong first when Volpone is smitten with a passion for Celia, the wife of one of the suitors, and is caught by Bonario trying to rape her, and then when (after convincing a court with the corrupt help of the suitors that he is innocent and that Bonario and Celia are guilty) he feigns his own death to enjoy the spectacle of the disappointment of the suitors who find that he has left all the money to Mosca. Mosca takes advantage of the situation to step into his master's shoes, and won't let him back. With the partnership broken, the deception is exposed in court, the guilty are punished and the innocent rewarded. A sub-plot involves Sir Politic Wouldbe, who is convinced that the most ordinary events are part of a fiendishly intricate Jesuit plot, and Peregrine, another Englishman, who plays up to Sir Pol's fantasies.

Of the three suitors hoping to inherit Volpone's wealth, Corbaccio must be a broad comedy part in any production, and his decrepitude was played here for all it was worth by John McTernan (his glasses were so thick that he took his own reflection in a mirror to be Volpone). But Barry Otto's Corvino was a real discovery — Corvino is a stagey villain, and looked right in waxed moustache, Spanish heels and a flounced dress shirt; he gritted his teeth and grimaced outrageously when his civil plans were thwarted, trembled till the veins stood out in his forehead and even fell quivering to the floor in his frustration.

Voltore (Tim Elliott) was a slow-witted Dracula, turning stiffly to Mosca's manipulation and ponderously effective as advocate to the court.

With such luridly coloured characterisations around them Bonario and Celia, Johnson's virtuous young pair, no longer seemed to have wandered in from another kind of play altogether (as it sometimes appears). They belonged rightly in a gallery of stock types. Colin Friels' Bonario, especially, was funny and fitting — a schoolboy with Clark Kent glasses, a plastic cover on his boater and a jaw habitually dropped like Jerry Lewis's. Admittedly, Celia's lines did seem to be fewer problems for Linda Cropper as Linda Cropper as Volpone and Mosca. Their relationship remained a puzzle. Volpone was rapaciously affectionate and Mosca cosily capable, like an unctuous curate with his bishop; where we might have expected a hint of treachery anticipating the setting of the 'Fox-trap' in which he snares his master, Paul Bertram as Mosca gave us a tubby Ariel, intent on performing and out-performing his master's wishes. When parasite and patron did fall out, it was with conviction but without venom.

John Bell's Volpone was a restless, even tortured character. He touched great heights as the 'grand voluptuary', juicily evoking fleshly delights to Celia and revealing a harem costume under his gown to prove that the Turk was indeed no more 'sensual in his pleasures' than Volpone. Yet sickness and torment shackled him, too, in the cramps brought on by his act of feebleness before the court and in the agony of Lady Pol's relentless attentions. A curious sense of inertia attached itself to him, born of his role as a feigned geriatric and as passive spectator of Mosca's entertainments, an inertia which his energetic performance outside his disguise (as the mountebank Scoto and as the court servant) did not quite overcome. But if the audience's reaction to this Volpone remained one of wary (if admiring) speculation, perhaps all that proved is that this is the right way to present the central character of Jonson's robust but disturbing play.

These songs made a raucously sinister Kurt Weill number ("Free from all diseases") out of their warm-up for Volpone's pitch as Scoto of Mantua.

The unanswered questions were about Volpone and Mosca. Their relationship remained a puzzle. Volpone was rapaciously affectionate and Mosca cosily capable, like an unctuous curate with his bishop; where we might have expected a hint of treachery anticipating the setting of the 'Fox-trap' in which he snares his master, Paul Bertram as Mosca gave us a tubby Ariel, intent on performing and out-performing his master's wishes. When parasite and patron did fall out, it was with conviction but without venom.

Volpone was a restless, even tortured character. He touched dark heights as the 'grand voluptuary', juicily evoking fleshly delights to Celia and revealing a harem costume under his gown to prove that the Turk was indeed no more 'sensual in his pleasures' than Volpone. Yet sickness and torment shackled him, too, in the cramps brought on by his act of feebleness before the court and in the agony of Lady Pol's relentless attentions. A curious sense of inertia attached itself to him, born of his role as a feigned geriatric and as passive spectator of Mosca's entertainments, an inertia which his energetic performance outside his disguise (as the mountebank Scoto and as the court servant) did not quite overcome. But if the audience's reaction to this Volpone remained one of wary (if admiring) speculation, perhaps all that proved is that this is the right way to present the central character of Jonson's robust but disturbing play.
Failing in Love Again

By Michelle Field


Surely the best cabaret never appears at the elusively expensive New York night-spots, but at the New York equivalent of the Nimrod Downstairs. However, the Nimrod Downstairs is rarely right for the nuances of cabaret — there’s too much “theatre” there and too little smugness towards an audience for that kind of show.

To quibble, before I confess my own admiration for Jan Cornall and Elizabeth Drake. I must say that they fail to live up to their reputations as shocking lyricists and spunky disrupters of sexual peace. I think that they are tough-minded enough to cut through the cottonwool of their own gags, but they haven’t the edge to do so. There is an air of an early Reg Livermore performance about Failing in Love Again. Either Cornall and Drake can learn to be more irritating — a finger not on the pulse but on the raw nerve — or they can drift in the direction of more sight-jokes, more falling off bar stools, and more of those refrains which wear one day like slogans.

But Elizabeth Drake and Jan Cornall are also the next-best thing — and I myself am not sure “next-best” to what, except that they both have talent close to the top of what Australian cabaret can offer and it will unsettle the competition. I worry that Jan Cornall may be trying to be “next-best” to Robyn Archer, and that would be a mistake — not because Archer’s inimitable but because Cornall’s talent is to be smug, even hostile with genius. In fact, it is when Cornall tries to act (as Robyn Archer can act) that the show starts to struggle. Cornall’s best “act”, I think, is to lay bare her own ambivalances towards the audience, especially towards the men in the audience, and towards her partner Elizabeth Drake. The little skits in the “Imagine if I were...” vein are disappointing.

Although other reviewers haven’t tried, I doubt if I can properly persuade anyone who hasn’t been to the performance that it’s also Elizabeth Drake’s show. Drake buries herself behind the electronic Yamaha for an hour, but she has allowed herself some wonderful lines which spill out slowly, in a motherly, modulated voice that is a perfect counterweight to Cornall’s casting about for heavy emphases. I thought Drake’s voice was a great parody of the male keyboard-strummer who sits in a Cocktail Bar, conjoles the drinkers, and strikes a mood that FM-disc-jockeys will try to copy.

The show’s best features are the lyrics — but only a third of the lyrics, the ones that are not hammered down in several refrains. However, I thought Failing in Love Again nearly as good for the two characterizations that these women create for themselves. It works as a “stage relationship”, as they say, and the gist of the relationship is the way Elizabeth Drake always plays at being a pensively appreciative but definitely less enthusiastic about Jan Cornall’s songs than the audience itself are. In other words, they use the audience as a third party in their own relationship on stage. Perhaps that is one of the secrets of successful cabaret.
MAD SCENES
by Anthony Barclay

Mad Scenes. Music Box Theatre, Cleveland Performing Space. Designed and directed by Terry O'Connell; Music Sound by Michael Carlos; Choreographed by Chrissie Koltai; Lighting by Michael Elliott; Stage Manager: Ruth Aldridge. Cast: Roxanne Royale; Valerie Bader; Gene: Kim Deacon; Holly de Ville; Julie Godfrey; Laurence: Greg Radford; Oskar G. Herrman; Stephen Thomas. (Professional).

"FRINGE THEATRE IN THE METROPOLIS' Take One. Action.

A rapid shift from the circus of childhood and the party continues with a new game. 'I guess who you are'. Under the firm hand of Oskar G. Herrman, the world's greatest director, we begin to strip away the surface identity of each of the five shadowy figures imprisoned on the black and white chess floor of an asylum. We move to the stage, to Hollywood...to empty space. To Laurence, the declaring actor in the grand style cum clown questing for a 'perfect profile' ('the great scene eludes me still'), a desperate search among his own jumpers...behind them, white pianos, women, swirling in a hall of mirrors. Image upon image. Roxanne's plea is unheard and she is drawn back by disembodied hands as Oskar decides she is his 'perfect instrument'. Two angled lines of neon tubes light up towards the heavens as Oskar reaches the climax of his dream...a shriek, a cry. The lights dim to Michael Carlos' haunting piano melody and Gene the nurse rejoins the solitary, dim figure on stage. She suggests he join the other patients upstairs and his body sways limp and back into the wheelchair, back to the asylum. A slight light catches his face as he is wheeled out...a fixed, maniacal but tortured grin accompanies the words "Sometimes I find entertaining... so tiring". The wheelchair passes between two grooves and very contemporary; one cannot find direct antecedents but, up to a point, one is inclined towards a writer like Handke for parallels. Here stunning and skilful theatricality addresses itself to the audience, not the inherent narrative logic of the well-made play. Words, movement, gesture and visual arrangement of performers combine with music, sound, dance and lighting to create a logic of their own, one that reverberates with sensuous intelligence against its audiences' experiences. The risks of such theatre — apart from lack of appeal are manifestly esotericism, obscurity; but when it works it is sheer magic.

There is an instant quality to Mad Scenes: an immensely impressive exploration of acting crafts from the five performers — Valerie Bader, Kim Deacon, Julie Godfrey, Greg Radford and Stephen Thomas. Chrissie Koltai's choreography encompasses a range of dance styles and mimetic statement that supports the visual and verbal textures of the work. One area that is lacking in much of our so called 'Fringe Theatre' is simply skills — here skills are in abundance. I found some moments lacking in clarity or the need for closer examination (e.g. the use, perhaps, of the puppet motif) but these are very minor quibbles. Michael Carlos' music and sound added stunning dimensions to the work...the haunting, evocative piano of Holly's victory waltz instantly touching on the powerful romanticism of music scores from the Hollywood greats; or the electrifying synthesized introduction to the circus scene. John Paramor's devised dialogue is witty and remarkably adroit as it meanders through stereotype Hollywood images and situations. The audience were able to respond quickly to the early scene...Roxanne Royale's breakdown on the set of 'Murder in the Metropolis' or the clawing rise and wicked fall of Holly de Ville. Then a thoroughness in attention to detail that proved breathtaking. Each of these elements commanded interest on its own but the totality provided more, much more.

The ostensible setting of Mad Scenes is an asylum for actors. The work is entitled 'fantasy': the action moves around a birthday party and farewell for Oskar with a number of interlocking scenarios. The initial scenes, as I said, provide no problem of recognition. But there is an overlapping of statement and a blurring of identities that provide clues to its more serious intent. The whole forms a ballet like flow that stubbornly refuses to conform to our usual narrative conventions. Prolepsis of word and gesture, music and image spark cliche into poetry. As asylum becomes
circus becomes studio set, fantasy and reality become elusive entities. The hall of mirrors is a prism of refracted dramatic statements at once beautiful and poignant, tortured and wildly funny. Family, love and sexuality; career, envy, success, humiliation and failure; madness, freedom and death were all touched on ... and this is no idle praise. Of course interpretation becomes subjective at moments but I found it interesting on my second viewing to note the gasps of recognition from various audience members during the performance as immediate context transformed into poetic statement.

Terry O'Connell devised and directed Mad Scenes but is the first to stress the tremendous pooling of skills at work here. The Limited Life Grant which has funded Music Box Theatre (the grant is from the Theatre Board of the Australia Council, with assistance from the Music Board) is near its end. The grant has allowed Terry to produce four shows — Sisters, The Depression Darlings and other Victims, now Mad Scenes and shortly to come a completely renewed Depression Darlings.

The first two shows attracted a lot of flak tempered by the occasional strong praise. Coherence and strength of dramatic definition were lacking so much so that Robert Page wrote after Sisters “... what (Music Box) needs now is a total rethink to find a coherent approach... it appears a long way short of what is required for a big city airing” (T.A. January 1980). Page’s point was well taken and Terry O’Connell admits it was a very large step to move from the highly successful creation of the Riverina Trucking Company to the metropolis Murder. But while esotericism and moments of self-indulgence were marks of the earlier work I would add that the very situation of Limited Life Grants is make or break. Diverse creative inputs need time to hone in on projects.

Terry O’Connell would like to extend the work done on Mad Scenes to an exploration of set texts or works such as The Seven Deadly Sins or Angels Descend on Paris. He cites the influence of Glasgow Citizens on his style... an up-front, visual theatre, full of statements by the performers. Of course such a style requires considerable skills and skills generate well in ensemble work. The establishment of high quality Fringe theatre is the direction he seems most likely to take following the cessation of the Limited Life Grant.

The Cleveland Performance Space has many limitations — not the least of which can be keeping the audience away in droves — but it has removed a lot of the pressure encountered in the Seymour Centre. Terry makes this point not as a criticism of established venues rather in the context of the privacy essential to creative improvisation. The fertilisation of skills and development of new skills is a delicate enough matter and that seems to have worked well at Cleveland Street. As we talk the actors are learning to play various musical instruments for the new Depression Darlings.
Billed as the first local production of Grand Opera in Toowoomba, the first collaboration of the heads of Theatre, Music, and Visual Arts departments at the D.D.I.A.E., this production of Bizet’s *Carmen* is also the last major production statement of the Arts Theatre Company for 1980 and the last production mounted by David Addenbrooke who leaves the Institute to return to Perth in November.

Addenbrooke’s three-and-a-half year stint with the D.D.I.A.E.’s School of Creative Arts has forced the Performance Centre and the Institute into significant prominence. Through a mixture of impressive work and a mammoth publicity machine, Addenbrooke established the Arts Theatre Company as Queensland’s first major theatre company in a provincial centre. The fear of this writer is that it will be a difficult position to maintain without a leader of Addenbrooke’s charismatic presence and drive. As a swan song for a big man, *Carmen* is about as big as you can get. It takes some panache to pull such an enterprise off, let alone get away with it with a professional production team heading a student orchestra and a chorus of non-singers. Somehow or other the Addenbrooke-Rorke-MacGowan trinity manage it.

Basically this production is a teaching exercise combining students from the three disciplines of the School of Creative Arts — Music, Theatre and Visual Arts. As a part of their studies, theatre students take a subject called ‘Music Option’ — in which they get to play chorus in a musical production. In 1980 the vehicle is *Carmen* — with a chorus of forty. You have then a class project enriched by the presence of a professional production team and two visiting professional soloists.

The opera has been drastically cut to an overall length of two hours, strung together by a suitably unobtrusive narration. The result is described by Addenbrooke himself as ‘Hits from Carmen’, it is both musically and theatrically robust. Both the performers and the audiences (in their droves) have a splendid time. John Detering and Ian Cousins were obviously a great boon to the student chorus, who held their own far better than many a chorus of amateur would-be singers. All the ingredients spell for a popular success which the production is.

What makes this *Carmen* worthy of special note is the performance of Maria Lurighi in the eponymous role. Maria is a graduating music student who has spent a good deal of time walking the boards of the Arts Theatre in ‘straight’ productions (among other things, she has played Yerma). She has a remarkable voice combined with solid performing ability. The performance is rivetting, the talent is great. One hopes that, in seeking to develop her voice she will be able to maintain her commanding stage presence. If so, we stand to gain a major star of the music theatre.

The main point of this review is unashamedly to herald a great new talent in Maria Lurighi, in the hope that when, in the future, she ventures forth, someone may be interested to see something interesting from the deep north. It takes a man of David Addenbrooke’s vision and daring to give this artist a significant vehicle to display her skills — even at the cost of upstaging his exit from the D.D.I.A.E. — as a demonstration of the extent of his achievement over the past three years.
Anarchy and revolution

WHAT THE BUTLER SAW

by Michael Morley


Director, Kevin Palmer; Designer, Vicki Feitscher; Lighting, Nigel Leving; Cast: Dr Prentice, Robert Alexander; Geraldine Barclay, B-J Cole; Mrs Prentice, Daphne Grey; Nicholas Backett, James Laurie; Dr Lance, John Frawley; Sgt Match, Simon Burvill-Holmes.


Director, Nick Enright; Designer, Richard Roberts; Lighting Designer, Nigel Leving; Movement, Michael Fuller; Cast: Anna, Susan Lyons; Ekaterina, Anita, Vanessa Downing; Mother Dybenko, Nadezda, Maree D'Arcy; Joseph Rubin, Tom Considine; Giorgi Krasin, John Noble; Kolya Lebeshev, John Saunders.

The very title of What the Butler Saw hints at the major concerns in Joe Orton's work: cliched suspense which can suddenly topple over into menace and mayhem; the cracks beneath the veneer of established social systems; the lashings of lust and libido, sometimes leery, sometimes laboured, which he scatters throughout his dialogue.

Kevin Palmer's production is mostly well cast, and, in the second act especially, goes along at a cracking pace. But if it manages the farcical aspects of Orton's play reasonably well, it cannot be said to do the same for the first element mentioned above. The world of Orton's plays, for all their links with the commercial farces of Ben Travers and Brian Rix, is closer to that of Ionesco and the Absurdist. The audience's reactions should be much like those of poor Geraldine Barclay, arriving for a secretarial interview and ending up with her initial naive giggle closer now to nervous hysteria.

Of course the menace and violence in Orton's lines are not easy to bring out: but more could have been made of them. The decision to play so many of the obvious laugh lines straight at the audience seems miscalculated: obviously, some of Orton's more outrageous one-liners demand that sort of delivery. But there was too often the suggestion that the characters realised how neat and funny their lines were - a convention that Orton himself was always opposed to. After all, even in classical farce (Feydeau, Courteline) the characters are to be seen as quite serious, and for all the ludicrousness of their situation, real.

Robert Alexander's Dr. Prentice came closest to this view of character, especially in the second act where Prentice, who begins as the typical sex-obsessed psychiatrist and hen-pecked husband, becomes the only fixed point in a world of total lunacy. The character's practised efficiency crumbles away but he emerges, thanks to Alexander's precision, as possibly the least unbalanced of the cases on view. John Frawley's Dr. Lance, all pompous pedantry and pseudo-Freudian expostulations, was suitably manic and hyper-active; while Daphne Gray's nymphomaniacal and nubile Mrs Prentice, though not quite catching the frightening rapacity of this harpy, was a well-observed characterisation. Both James Laurie and B.J. Cole seemed more at ease in their drag roles than in their real identities, and each had good moments — especially the former's first sweeping entrance in wig and leopard skin dress. Simon Burvill-Holmes' policeman was the only real weakness, with the performer having some difficulty with accent as with the character's dim stolidity.

Vicky Feitscher's design was outstandingly effective, consisting of a series of flats at right angles which enabled Dr Prentice's office to be broken up into three playing areas — an essential requirement when one is dealing with a work where
unobserved entrances and exits are frequently called for. The set also enabled the action to be pushed out into the auditorium — previously a problem in one-room sets in this theatre.

While anarchy and sexual shenanigans were the order of the day in the Playhouse, the rest of the company were offering revolution (sexual and political) and sublimation (ditto) at their alternative venue, Theatre 62. Steven Sewell's *Traitors* arrived with positive reports from Melbourne and Sydney and maybe it was only these high expectations which occasioned my ultimately negative response. Though it may seem trite or even patronising to say so, these expectations were reinforced by the author's programme note which deftly and succinctly sets out the major historical and ideological issues. But the play itself proceeds neither at this level of intellectual debate nor indeed does it offer characters who embody in convincing form the major issues.

In fact in one respect the play seems to come up with a profoundly conservative and un-Marxist statement on the whole question of revolution and the way that power replaces ideals, and people become dispensable. The familiar quotation from the Eighteenth Brumaire about history repeating itself firstly as tragedy, secondly as farce, is cited in the text, yet seems at odds with the play's presentation of history and the implied conclusions on the relationship between the movers (Stalin, Trotsky and Zinoviev) and the moved (the mass of the population and ultimately Trotsky and Zinoviev). At the play's end we are left with a negative view of the revolution and the suggestion that little could have changed it or will change it. Now this may be so, but it surely needs to be presented with rather more rigour than Sewell's characters manage in their exchanges and monologues.

Moreover, the play's prologue and epilogue, for all that they make a necessary historical point, seemed contrived and clumsy. Flashbacks are difficult to bring off on the stage and the audience's sense of the then, now dialectic is confused by these two scenes which are historically relevant but call for a more focused theatrical realisation.

So too, some of the characters seemed somewhat flat and one dimensional. John Noble's Krasin, the exterminator/interrogator, was an effective and at times powerful reading of the role; but such juxtapositions as the move from violence-directed - at - the - prisoner (Rubin) to violent-sex-in-a-standing-position (with Anna) seemed obvious in their linking of the old Freudian questions of sadism and sexuality. It may be that the short rehearsal period for the play prevented the actors from exploring the complexities of the personal/political betrayals the situation suggests.

Sue Lyons tackled what can be seen as the most difficult role in the play with a good feel for the character's directness and strength. But the scenes which explored the relationship with John Noble's Krasin, though they began well, tended to wander - a problem which is at least in part attributable to the line the author follows. The other roles seemed never less — nor, indeed, more — than honest and attentive performances.

Sewell's tackling of propositions like the Revolution consuming its own children calls however for more than that. For while there were individual scenes of power and vividness — the scene in the railway carriage suggested simply by the actors rocking in time with the train's motion, while the lights sway to and fro; the superbly staged scenes of violence between Noble's Krasin and Tom Considine's numbed and bewildered Rubin — the scenes exploring the dynamics of the personal/political equation and the question of sexual and social roles seemed grey and at times even listless. The production in fact seemed more like work in progress than the finished product: but Sewell aims high and the play's concerns and arguments could have been better served in a venue other than Theatre 62 — which demanded front-on playing throughout — and during a longer process of coming to terms with the play's structure and characterisations.

*John Noble and John Saunders in SATC's Traitors.*
Accolades for Jeannie

PIAF
by Colin Duckworth

PIaf by Pam Gems. Playbox Theatre Company production at the Comedy Theatre, Melbourne, Vic. Opened September 20, 1980. Director, Murray Copland; Musical Director, Michael Tyack; Designer, Jennie Tate; Choreographer, Leigh Rowles; Lighting designer, Fred Wallace. Cast: Piaf, Jeannie Lewis; Toine and Marlene, Kerry McGuire; Leplee, Georges, Marcel and Angelo, Frank Gallacher; Josephine and Madelaine, Joan Millar; with John Clayton, Warwick Comber, Murray Crawford, Brian Hannan, Robbie McGregor, Robert Bell and Peta Doran.

The history of the artist as victim of a rejecting or exploiting society is vast and unending. Piaf is part of it, but even more she is an example of the self-destructive urge of the creative spirit which finds life just too monstrous to bear.

Pam Gems was interested in Piaf for her "quality of expression, the truth in her work, miraculous in a commercial genre." She admires her because — unlike Jessie Matthews and more like Gracie Fields — she refused to jettison "attitudes she respected" and espouse bourgeois success. Piaf didn't let success spoil or improve her. Pam Gems' script shows her moving (not developing) from hard little trouper to hard little bitch with a soft spot only for well-endowed males. The sheer futility of Piaf's selfish, self-indulgent and unpleasant nature, and the details of her unsavoury life, are not worthwhile staging unless some sense is made of it all, unless some perspective is created by the storyteller. This Pam Gems signally fails to do, although she certainly wanted to, judging from her comments on Piaf. How could it have been done? For example, by showing what Piaf's songs and performances meant to ordinary, unhappy, suffering people, whose needs she always expressed. Yes, the life was a "tragedy" (in the popular sense of a wasted mess), but Piaf's artistry could be shown to have a positive value transcending the trivialities and tiresome four-letter words, and avoiding the overall impression of downward drag in the final anti-climactic scenes.

There is one moving scene in which Piaf reveals to her lover, the boxer Marcel, the source of her artistic strength and of her inability to cope with life: the only thing in the world that counts is performance out there, on your own. But afterwards, "what is there to come off for? You're only on your own again."

If the show were intended to be just entertainment, we should have been well pleased to have Jeannie Lewis doing an evening of Piaf songs. The shaky episodic structure that is punctuated by the songs takes for ever to start and finish (although I don't recall looking so hopefully at my watch at the RSC production at the Aldwych). No doubt by now the pace has improved, spurred on by the energy and sheer conviction of Jeannie Lewis; perhaps the sound system (notably in the last scenes) was not up to the task.

There were notable performances by Kerry McGuire as the tough but warm-hearted Toine and — could there be a greater contrast? — as the suave Marlene. Frank Gallacher also showed great versatility, and the other parts (albeit ephemeral) all came over as distinct characters. All one could ask, I suppose, except a lot more zest and a new script. As for Jeannie Lewis and her difficult impersonation of the Parisian sparrow, she mastered both the "Panam" and the Cockney idioms very well, put over the songs with infective vigour and urgency. I never cared for Piaf's singing, but was won over by this performance, both musically and dramatically.

Jeannie Lewis as Piaf. Photo: Jeff Busby.
Ambiguities of human existence

**DUCK VARIATIONS & BALL BOYS**

by Cathy Peake

*Ball Boys* by David Edgar, at the Playbox Upstairs, Melbourne, opened September 25, 1980.

**Cast:** Rupert, Cliff Ellen; One-Eye, Malcolm Robertson; Varec, Cliff Ellen.

**Duck Variations** by David Mamet, Playbox Upstairs, Melbourne, opened September 25, 1980.

**Cast:** George S. Aronovitz, Malcolm Robertson; Emil Varec, Cliff Ellen.

For both plays: Director, William Gluth; Stage Manager, Tessie Hill; Designer, Sandra Matlock; Lighting Designer, Robert Gebert.

(Professional)

In the most recent production Upstairs, William Gluth directs two short plays, both of which nearly, and probably unintentionally, qualify for the theatre of the absurd.

For though neither David Edgar's *Ball Boys* nor David Mamet's *Duck Variations* have the economy, the pace, or the blistering wit of, say, an Albee, both attempt to uncover the ambiguities and iniquities of human existence via dialogue that is both ordinary and yet strangely dislocated from any conventional context.

*Ball Boys* — a 'two-and-a-half-hander' played by Cliff Ellen, Malcolm Robertson and Nick Holland is the more lively play. In the author's own words, (reprinted in the programme and impossible to ignore) the play is: 'an attempt, through the story of two unlovely orphans in a tennis club locker-room, to expose the essential contradictions inherent in late monopoly capitalism, to analyse the role of neo-colonialism in confirming the repressively-tolerant ideological interface between superstructure and base (while remaining not unmindful of the need to be fully cognisant of the essential dualism of the decaying bourgeois apparatus), to express implacable hostility to the running dogs of craven reformism in the labour bureaucracies, and to stress the vital need for alternative modes of leadership to pose the essential question of state power'.

He concludes by suggesting that 'in this project the play is not totally successful'. And well he might.

Though *Ball Boys* ends with a rousing speech from One-Eye in which 'ageing taylors run amok in dark boutiques' is part of its subject, the real strength of the piece is in its clipped and colourful detail, its structure, and the pauses and the breaks through which Rupert and One-Eye act out their humiliation by the glamorous Swedish star Svenson, and conjure a revenge whose motivation is not unlike that of Genet's 'Maids'.

In the tiny space of the Playbox Upstairs, Sandra Matlock's tennis court locker-room is functional, if rather dull. The direction is generous to the point of fault, and most of the impetus for the piece tends to come from One-eye whom Malcolm Robertson plays quite slowly, but with all the freewheeling passion and calculated rhetoric of a soapbox orator.

By comparison, Cliff Ellen's Rupert is rather flat. His character might have been reading Marx on Feuerbach, as he claims; he may also be the author's chief mouthpiece for the fictitious scenes of 'worship' on the central court and his vehicle for the final revenge, but here he seems to be too limp, too banal, and on opening night at least, he failed to engage the audience's sympathy.

David Mamet's *Duck Variations* is set simply on a park bench beside a lake. It is Spring, and as George S. Aronovitz (Malcolm Robertson) and Emil Varec (Cliff Ellen) converse, it becomes apparent that their shifting and often gentle dialogue about the vicissitudes of life for ducks is really a cover-up for their private alienation and profound detachment from the city's daily affairs.

The 'dark mystery' of the ducks mating, the discussion as to whether ducks fly at birth and what the recent discovery of lung cancer among ducks means, all form part of a meandering, aimless and impressionistic world where everything, including their tentative friendship, has to be constantly fabricated and reinvented.

If the pair are restrained and subdued, they are also endlessly imaginative, and to this productions' credit, both very much give the sense that this is a ritual which will be continued for just so long as they can stagger to their bench.

William Gluth has paced the sometimes faltering dialogue with a sensitive ear to its nuance and often intricate verbal rhythms, and if it is sometimes rather slow, the fault seems to lie with the writing rather than with the performances.

For, in general, this play is much closer to Mamet's *The Woods* than it is to his caustic and overtly theatrical *Sexual Perversity in Chicago*. Here the playwright's interest appears to be chiefly with the shapes of fantasy and argument, and the subject of the ducks is always offered as gratuitous, and as a species of irony. At one level they are simply the occasion for the 'variations', but they are also the agents for its mostly taut and compelling dramatic strength.
Four FREE Playscripts
each year with your Theatre Australia subscription.

In addition to the convenience of having your copy of Theatre Australia mailed to you each month, as a subscriber to the magazine, you receive 4 FREE playscripts in the Theatre Australia New Writing Series published by Currency Press.*

BONUS FOR NEW SUBSCRIBERS!
If you subscribe now you will receive a free copy of one of the scripts published during the last year. You can choose from:

- BOY'S OWN McBETH by Graham Bond and Jim Burnett
- A MANUAL OF TRENCH WARFARE by Clem Gorman
- LAMB OF GOD by John Summons
- DEPARTMENTAL by Mervyn Rutherford

* Assisted by the Literature Board of the Australia Council

Only $21.00 post FREE for twelve issues
Or
Buy two and SAVE even more.
—a gift subscription to Theatre Australia is a present that keeps on coming.
$40.00 for two.

MAIL TO: THEATRE PUBLICATIONS LIMITED
80 Elizabeth Street, Mayfield N.S.W. 2304.

Name ................................................. Name .................................................
Address .............................................. Address ..............................................
State ...................... P/code ............

Please send me my FREE
Playscript, ticked as follows:
□ BOYS OWN McBETH
□ A MANUEL OF TRENCH WARFARE
□ LAMB OF GOD
□ DEPARTMENTAL

Please debit my BANKCARD account No.

4 9 6

State ...................... P/code ............

Expiry Date

40 THEATRE AUSTRALIA NOVEMBER 1980
Privates On Parade

By Raymond Stanley


Director, Bruce Myles; Designer, Paul Kathner; Lighting designer, Jamie Lewis; Choreographer, Joe Latona; Musical Director, Graham Clarke.

Cast: Major Giles Flack, Frank Wilson; Acting Captain Terri Dennis, Simon Chilvers; Sergeant-Major Reg Drummond, Peter Curtin; Flight-Sergeant Kevin Cartwright, Johnny Quinn; Corporal Len Bonny, Robert Essex; Lance Corporal Charles Bishop, Gary Down; Leading Aircraftman Eric Young-Love, Michael Edgar; Private Steven Flowers, Patrick Frost; Sylvia Morgan, Amanda Muggleton; Lee, John Bowman; Cheng, David Letch.

Described as 'a play with music', this divertissement was first staged by the Royal Shakespeare Company more than 3½ years ago, when it apparently was highlighted by Denis Quilley's performance as drag queen Terri Dennis. Perth pipped the rest of Australia earlier this year by presenting its premiere in this country, importing Tim Brooke-Taylor for the Dennis part and casting Bill Kerr as Major Flack.

If rumour is to be believed, reason for delay in an Australian production is that the Adelaide Festival Centre Trust at one time held the rights, intending to tour it with Gordon Chater as Dennis, but eventually deciding it would be too costly to stage.

Chronicling the adventures of a British Army entertainment troupe in Malaya in 1948, it is a strange piece to come from the author of A Day In The Death Of Joe Egg. The concoction mixes revue items with army comedy, sex and moralising, farce and pathos. Its arrangement is untidy, with characters coming forward and relating letters home. Some of it even appears naive. Nichols shies away from delving too deeply beneath the surface; he appears not to want to become too involved in political issues.

The characters are recognisable, but sometimes border on caricature. There are homosexual displays of the old time Music Hall 'hands-on-hips' and 'limp-wristed' brand. The 11-member cast possesses only one female: a civilian in the troupe, with Welsh-Indian parentage. In dramatic scenes two of the people get killed.

Fun for many Melbourne audiences is to see MTC regular, chubby-faced Simon Chilvers (probably little known outside the Victorian capital) as the effeminate, hair-dyed and heavily rouged and mascaraed Terri Dennis, endeavouring to impersonate Marlene Dietrich, Noel Coward, Vera Lynn and Carmen Miranda. Director Bruce Myles has drilled his cast well — wisely making it a team effort, rather than star turns — and without exception each actor turns in a creditable performance. Inevitably one has one's own preferences. Mine (in no particular order) are Amanda Muggleton who as always seems never to strike a false note, Frank Wilson as the placid moralising Major Flack with a surprisingly 'thin' voice, Patrick Frost as the innocent newcomer who takes command and Peter Curtin in a very different role for him as a nasty Sgt.-Major.

Most of the cast possess reasonably acceptable singing voices and — thanks to TV choreographer Joe Latona — manage not to disgrace themselves in the dance numbers. There also is a useful three-piece orchestra unobtrusively onstage. The pastiche music itself is — perhaps suitably undistinguished.

Not least in listing the production's credits, mention must be made of the sound work contributed by Paul Kathner in designing the many sets and constant changing backcloths. It is Kathner's debut with the MTC, but Melbourne playgoers with long memories will recall he took over from the great John Truscott as the St. Martin's Theatre Company's permanent designer in the mid-sixties, and never let the side down.
Pinter and Coward

BETRAYAL
PRIVATE LIVES

by Collin O’Brien


Director: Stephen Barry; Designer: Steve Nolan; Lighting: Duncan Ord; Stage Manager: George Tsousis.

Cast: Emma, Leith Taylor; Jerry, Alan Cassell; Robert, Maurie Ogden; Waiter, Ross Coli.

PRIVATE LIVES by Noel Coward. The Regal, Perth, WA.


Cast: Sibyl, Jenny Davis; Elyot, Edward Woodward; Victor, Vic Hawkins; Amanda, Michele Dotrice; Maid, Faith Clayton.

(Professional)

Harold Pinter’s latest play, Betrayal, has received a mixed press, so I looked forward to judging for myself, even resisting the temptation to read the text beforehand.

It is certainly not top-drawer Pinter, and the reasons are interesting. Pinter’s forte has always been the creation of a peculiar unease, not only in his characters, but in the audience (and confessedly himself) due to his eye for the uncertainty of relationships, of memory and of language as a means of communication rather than a device of deliberate evasion. Although what people feel about each other is as nicely unclear here as in other plays (but I must add more in retrospect than at the time of watching), the other terrifying uncertainties are less in evidence than usual; in short, we know where we are, or rather find out eventually. Dare I suggest Old Times with the Pinter drained off? Or perhaps, more precisely, this is the text to which Old Times is the subtext.

The central action of the play is a love affair between a married woman and her husband’s best friend. The play moves backwards in time from the moment she tells her lover that she has told her husband of their affair, (which incidentally ended two years before), to the beginning of things nine years previously. It is a good ploy, neatly exploited, nicely dissecting the way people deceive each other and at the same time betray their own integrity. The title thus has meaning on a number of levels. This is highlighted in a scene where the lovers assure each other that they have been faithful to one another — other than with their respective spouses that is, although neither actually says so. The fact that each is aware of the irony of this is the sort of thing which gives the play its depth. We also have those little evasions and deceits which such relationships entail: the compromising letter misplaced, the coverup of illicit meetings and so on. I can only think that Lady Antonia Fraser and Vivienne Merchant must have sat spellbound!
I was particularly impressed with Steve Nolan's design for the play: it had the restraint, elegance and point necessary for Pinter. This is, I think, the first time I have seen of Mr Nolan's work and I look forward to more. Stephen Barry's direction was unobtrusive as it should be for such a play, and the three principal actors - Leith Taylor, Alan Cassell and Maurie Ogden - worked easily together with the full rapport Pinter demands. Ross Coli made a good fist of the small part of an Italian waiter, neatly poising Mediterranean unhappiness and insolence.

Betrayal, as a move on Pinter's part toward Coward, but offers greater depth, it may not be my favourite Pinter, but is still a considerable play. Although it is not, I suspect, getting the houses it deserves vis-a-vis other offerings about the town, it is still one of the more enjoyable productions given us by the Playhouse this year.

The Manford Thornton stable (Associated Theatre Producers Aust.) continue their laudable enterprise of combining overseas drawingcard actors with local talent to provide successful commercial theatre, as full houses and a bursting box-office for this production of Private Lives doubtless testify. Edward Woodward and Michelle Dotrice are the big-name leads, backed by local actors Jenny Davis, Vic Hawkins and Faith Clayton. Director Edgar Metcalfe, designer Bill Dowd and the rest of the company are also locally based, so there is no call for parochial disquiet at the mixture.

I have never before seen a production of Private Lives (terrible admission for a theatrophile) but have read the text and know the outstanding recording of some scenes by Noel himself and Gerrie Lawrence. I cannot admit to being a great fan of Coward's plays, although I like his wittiest piece.

The play itself lived up to expectation: lightweight, yes, but a witty, sophisticated upper-class comedy (no-one worth a damn in a Coward play works for a living). Edward Woodward's Elyot was a well-timed and nicely pointed performance, though without the elegance and sophisticated ease of the Master himself, but I imagine that the problem with the part is to make it other than surrogate Coward. Michelle Dotrice's playing on the other hand seemed to me far too broad, even melodramatic, a degree of overplaying more suited to farce than sophisticated comedy. Vic Hawkins and Jenny Davis performed creditably as what are virtually little more than feed or second banana parts, and Faith Clayton handled the gallic maid nicely, one-liners in French being hardly the stuff to steal the show.

Edgar Metcalfe is a confessed Coward fan, and has given us in the past a very creditable Elyot, so I was surprised that his directing did not achieve the cool, laid-back elegance the play seems to demand. It is certainly in part the sheer daunting size of the Regal, but the play seemed broader in tone than necessary. Bill Dowd's set got the period right without being stunning, and one or two of the costumes did not help the actors' images. But my disappointment that this production did not offer the degree of polished elegance and sophistication that is the Coward stamp was clearly not shared by the public at large, who flocked along, nor, I should think, by the promoters laughing their way to the bank.

Sartre's hell

No Exit

by Cliff Gillam


As a tribute to the recently deceased Jean-Paul Sartre, The Hole opened its third (and final) season for 1980 with a production of his best known play, Huis Clos (144) and a dramatized 'brief life', adapted from his autobiography Words (and related biographical material) by Michael van Schoor. About this adaption, titled A Man Of His Words, little needs to be said except that it was brief, and might just possibly have encouraged one or two people in the audience to buy Words.

No Exit remains the most revived of Sartre's plays, probably because it's one of the shortest and least wordy, and because its central conception, the redefinition of Hell as psychological torment inherent in the very idea of human society, is so neatly executed. For all that, it's still too wordy (Sartre was never afraid to labour a point) and despite the neatness of execution, somewhat static.

No acknowledgement is made in the programme for Edgar Metcalfe's production of the translation used, but I would guess, from the stilted quality of many of the lines and a sprinkling of 50's idiom, that it's a fairly old one. In any case, the translation used compounded rather than alleviated one's sense of an excess of the overly-obvious in the writing.

It has been claimed that watching No Exit performed can be a 'terrifying intellectual experience'. It should be said that there was nothing either terrifying or even very intellectual about this production. As an experience I'd rate about the middle of the scale from ho to hum. Given the inherently claustrophobic atmosphere of The Hole, it's hard to understand why one wasn't more involved in the play, since proximity to the action of the kind provided there ought to have aided that sense of suffocating enclosedness Sartre seeks to generate from the action.

As it was, I found myself involved in diabolically strenuous efforts to fend off a sense of the suffocating irrelevance of what was going on stage. I might be wrong, but I didn't think it was Sartre's intention to provide his audience with a basic training in ennui.

In which case the buck stops at the director's desk. I'm certain Edgar Metcalfe did not set out to bore me witless. I'm not so certain that he cared very much for the play, for had he done so the casting may have been a little less peculiar, and the acting a good deal less mechanical. I am a great admirer of the talents of Rosemary Barr, who is a most accomplished performer and has delighted me in many roles in the past. But as the sweet young baby-killing thing, Estelle in this production, she isn't fooling anybody, and Metcalfe should have known better than cast her in the role. To the role of Garcin, Peter Morris brought just the wrong amount of tart petulance to take the edge off a dispirited performance. Gillian Lomberg did a good deal of standing around with her teeth gritted and her fists clenched, but there were times when one suspected her Inez of actually feeling something. In the circumstances, no small triumph.

In the midst of the evening's proceedings, I did feel a real thrill of terror as my mind wandered to the possibility that when the longed-for curtain came I'd find that The Hole had no exit, and that I was condemned to this Deadly Theatre forever. Now, that would have been Hell. As it was, I got out alive, and am now in the process of forgetting the whole dismal experience as quickly as possible.
On Books and Critics

The Great God Mogadon, and other plays, by Barry Oakley (University of Queensland Press).
The Robyn Archer Songbook (McPhee Gribble).
Creativity in Dance, by Coralie Hinkley (Alternative Publishing Cooperative).
Gross Intrusion, and other stories, by Steven Berkoff (John Calder).

These remarkable plays — this achievement — this empurpured work this incisive comment on modern Australian life (I quote from the front flap) — the surrealism realism absurdism quasi-naturalism (with overtones) Catholicism, upper case (I quote from the back flap) — even to talk of isms is a solecism — categichism — lyricism — witticism... I bring to you, gentle reader, the Amazing Mr Barry Oakley, in something of the style for which we would all like him to become famous.

I refer to The Great God Mogadon (that pill of a play, to borrow yet another phrase from Mr Graeme Blundell) And Other Plays. This slim volume, as they say, contains six fountains of bubbles from the champagne intellect of a witty, cultivated, compassionate, quirky, wry, sceptical, coolly intelligent old survivor of the Australian stage. (I should point out that these epithets are third-hand, coming as they do from Blundell’s Introduction, and not directly from Oakley’s own “Notes and Cribts for Lazy Introducers, Makers of Toasts, Quips, etc” on which that Introduction was based.)

The plays are: Witzenhausen, Where Are You?, an early play about a crazy office-boy who makes his anti-bureaucratic gesture by locking himself in the only staff toilet; The Hollow Tombola, that professional theatres will be interested in them as well. And if you haven’t got a theatre then a reading lamp will do.

Almost.

The characters stagger across the Australian institutional landscape pathetically waving the sword of their humanity at every bureaucrat they meet. Best of all is Scanlan, bumbling through a lecture on his second great love, the poet Henry Kendall. He is funny, pathetic and moving. aware of his failure and the triviality of his interest, but clinging like a vanquished knight to his humanity. Scanlan, bumbling through a lecture on his second great love, the poet Henry Kendall. The gesture is one of spiritual triumph in worldly defeat.

Having opened with a paragraph ripped off from Oakley’s book, I wish I could follow with a song from The Robyn Archer Songbook. But failing that, we did all sing “The Shits” (“a hymn of praise to ideological unsoundness”) one night, and, as the book suggests, it’s a song where everyone should add their own verses. We sang:

You Responsible Critics on opening night.
You never have fun, but you know what to write.
You’ve got “critical standards”, but you don’t really care.
You can see what is missing, but you can’t see what’s there.
It’s sung to the traditional melody which ends “With a too-ra-li, oo-ra-li, oo-ra-li-ay.” (“If there’s anyone thinks that I ain’t divine”) Archer says. “The only basis of inclusion is that whoever the verse is about should have at some time, no matter how praiseworthy and grandly or unreasonably and pettily on the author’s part, given you the shits.”

The book is a collection of songs from The Ladies’ Choice, The Live-Could-Possibly-Be-True-One-Day Adventures of Supercrman, Size Ten, Captain Lazar and Songs From Sideshow Alley as well as some more private material. They range from good old tub-thumping political songs to gentle but tough love songs. Through them all emerges an extraordinary personality — hard-thinking, warm and strong.

For the nostalgic there is Being A Chum Was Fun, a rambling series of anecdotes and memoirs by Nancy Lee. The book covers the great days of Australian radio, with Chatterbox Corner during the ‘30s and ‘40s, and up to the ‘50s, when Nicky Lee on 3UZ drew 73% of the ratings in Melbourne.

Creativity in Dance, by Coralie Hinkley, presents a rich mixture of theories, ideas and suggestions for teaching dance in education as an expressive art form. The book covers the author’s work in Sydney secondary schools. It shows, particularly through examples, how the discipline of modern dance and exploration of new ways of movement can be used in class to tap students’ creative resources and get them earnestly expressing their experiences through Art.

Gross Intrusion, and other stories, by Steven Berkoff is not my sort of book. If you think you can handle a series of stories of unrelieved intensity all about the more violent and gory aspects of sexuality then you can probably also cope with the obsessively and aggressively vulgar prose style.
ACT THEATRE

CANBERRA THEATRE (49 7600) Canberra Philharmonic Society, Oklahoma, November 20, 21, 24-29.
CANBERRA THEATRE FOYER (49 7600) Canberra Theatre Centre presents:
by Oscar Wilde;
Harmlessness of Tobacco
by Anton Chekhov; Director, Joyce McFarlane. To November 7.
Canberra Youth Theatre: REID HOUSE THEATRE Travesties by Jigsaw Company; directed by Malcolm Frawley, music by Gary Smith; with Tony Harvey. Throughout November.
The 700,000 Windows in Jim A Stopford, Images from the Okla-
primary and secondary; NSW country throughout November.
Wayne Roland Brown, multi instrumental for infants, primary and secondary; North Coast, Hunter and metropolitan areas until November 21.
LIVING FLAME LUNCHTIME THEATRE (357 1200) Monica by Pauline Macaulay; directed by Felicity Gordon; with Robert Coleby and Ron Ratchiff. Until November 7.
MARIAN STREET THEATRE (498 3166) Kiss Me Kate by Cole Porter; directed by Alastair Duncan; with Ron Stevens, Patsy Hemingway and Karen Johnson. Commences November 7.
MUSIC LOFT THEATRE (977 6588) At the Loft, with The Toppan family and Lorrae Desmond. Throughout November.
NEW THEATRE (519 3403) Willie Rough by Bill Bryden; directed by John Williams; with Elwyn Edwards, Christopher Howell, Peter Cowan, Ian Rutherford, Mark Wilkinson, Chris Bodan, Monica Walker and Michelle Facchin. Until November 9.
A Topical Satirical Revue by Foveaux Kirby and Peter Stephens; directed by Ian Tasker; musical direction by John Short. Commences November 15.
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF DRAMATIC ART (663 3815) NIDA Theatre: Strife by John Galsworthy; directed by George Ogilvie; with third year students. Until November 9.
NIMROD THEATRE (699 5003) Upstairs: Volpone by Ben Johnson; directed by John Bell and Neil Armfield; with Paul Bertram, Paul Chubb, Peter Collingwood, Bill Conn, Tyler Coppin, Linda Cropper, Tim Elliott, Colin Friels, Pat McDonald and John McTernan. Until November 2.
Downstairs: A Lucky Dip by Tony Sheldon and Tony Taylor; with Tony Sheldon, Tony Taylor, Deidre Rubenstein and Robyn Moase. Commences November 5.
Late Night Show: Sleep Never Rough with Ward, Johnson, Kelso and Curtis. Throughout November.
PARIS THEATRE (264 7033) Sideshow Allen by Robyn Archer; directed by Rodney Fisher, with nancy Hayes and Maggie Kirkpatrick. Throughout November.
Q THEATRE (047 26 5253) Happy End by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weil. At Penrith until November 15.
THEATRE AUSTRALIA NOVEMBER 1980 45

NSW THEATRE ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW SOUTH WALES (357 6611) School Tours: Jim Stoppard, repites of Australia for infants and primary; metropolitan area until November 14.
AXIS THEATRE PRODUCTIONS (969 8202) Court House Hotel, Taylor Square: Pure as the Driven Shus by Tony Harvey, Peter Meredith and Malcolm Frawley; directed by Malcolm Frawley, music by Gary Smith; with Tony Harvey. Throughout out November.
Ramada Inn, Crows Nest: The Billie Baca Show by Tony Harvey and Malcolm Frawley; directed by Peter Meredith; music by Gary Smith. Throughout November.
BREAD AND CIRCUS COMMUNITY THEATRE (67 1994) Wollongong Workers Club Theatre Restaurant:
The Down the Mine and Up the Spout Show written by the company; directed by Frank Barnes. Into November.
ENSEMBLE THEATRE (929 8877) Golden Pathway Through Europe by Rodney Milgate; directed by Brian Youngs; with Paul Bertram, Paul Chubb, Peter Marten, Dennis Allen and Timon Bennett. Commences November 1.
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 Bawly, Alfred Sandor and Mona Richardson. Throughout November.
HUNTER VALLEY THEATRE COMPANY (26 2526) The Star Show by John McCallum and Peter Matheson. To November 15.
THE KING O'MALLEY THEATRE (33 817) The Stables Theatre.
The War Horse by John Upman; directed by Steven Wallace with Willie Fennell, Mervyn Drake, Robert Hughes, John Hannon and Victoria Battese. Until November 2.
The Siege of Frank Sinatra by Dennis Whaitborn; directed by les Marinos. Commences November 6.
KIRKIBILLY PUB THEATRE (92 1415) The Robin Hood Show by Perry Quanton and Paul Chubb; directed by Perry Quanton; with Leonore Smith, Michael Ferguson and Ross Hohnen. Throughout November.
LES CURRIE PRESENTATIONS (358 5867) Colony: Devised and performed by Colin Douglas and Tony Sutor for infants,
THEATRE

ARTS THEATRE (36 2344)
Shock by Brian Clemens; director, Jenifer Debenham; To Nov. 15.
Treasure Island by Bernard Miles and Hal Schaffer; director, Jay McKee. From Nov. 20.

Childrens Theatre: Little Black Sambo by Eugene Hickey. To Nov. 15.
LA BOITE THEATRE (36 1622)
A Handful Of Friends by David Williamson; director, Jennifer Blocksidge. To Nov. 15.
Errol Flynn's Great Big Adventure Book For Boys by Rob George; director, Malcolm Blaylock. From Nov. 21.

QUEENSLAND THEATRE COMPANY (221 5177)
SGIO: Crushed By: Desire by Michael Boddy; director, John Milson; designer, Graeme Maclean. From Nov. 21.
For entries contact Don Batchelor on 356 9311.

STATE THEATRE COMPANY (51 5151)
The Playhouse: A Month In The Country by Ivan Turgenev; director, Nick Enright; designer, Sue Russell. To Nov 22.
The Ships Whistle by Barry Oakley; director, Kevin Palmer; set designer, Sue Russell; costume designer, Richard Roberts. Nov 28-Dec 13.
THEATRE GUILD (22 3433)
TROUPE (31 0764)
At The Red Shed: Judgements by Barry Collins; director, Peter Dunn. Nov 4-22.

OPERA

FESTIVAL THEATRE (51 0121)
The Australian Opera: Boris Godunov; conductor, Peter Seymour; producer, Elijah Moshinsky; designer, John Bury; Music, Libretto Mussorgsky. Nov 20, 22, 25, 28.
Patience by Gilbert And Sullivan; conductor, Geoffrey Arnold; producer, John Cox; designer, John Stoddart. Nov 21, 24, 27, 29.
Lucia Di Lammermoor by Donizetti; conductor, Richard Bonynge; producer, John Copley; designers, Michael Stennett and Henry Bardon; with Joan Sutherland. Nov 19, 22, 26, 29.
STATE OPERA (352 3788)
The Opera Theatre: Eugene Onegin by Tchaikovsky; director and designer, Tom Lingwood; conductor, Myer Fredman. Nov 1, 4, 6, 8.
For entries contact Edwin Rdf on 223 8610.

DANCE

ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER DANCE THEATRE (20588)
THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET (357 1200)

TAS

THEATRE

POLYGON THEATRE COMPANY (34 8018)
Theatre Royal, Hobart: Side By Side by Sondheim; director, Don Gay; with Patricia Ashcroft, Don Gay, Noreen Le Motte, and John Phelps. Nov 6-8.
SALAMANCA THEATRE COMPANY (23 5259)
Touring Schools: I've Got A Name by John Lonie; director, Richard Davey. Taking Shape by Mark Bromilow; director, Peter Townsend. Performances in Burnie and Hobart.
THEATRE ROYAL (346266)
The Victorian State Opera presents
Rigoletto; with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra. Nov 1-3.

For entries contact Anne Campbell on (049) 674470.

VIC THEATRE

ALEXANDER THEATRE (5432828)
Viva Mexico by Phil Park and Bernard Dunn; Performed by Heritage Musical

GROUP (3477133)
Dunn; Performed by Heritage Musical
Two performances by third and final year
throughout November.

THEATRE AUSTRALIA NOVEMBER 1980 47

national TIE Festival
FLYING TRAPEZE CAFE (413727)
Los Trios Ring Barkus, with the extremely
talented Elsa Davis.
HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE
(6633211)
Evita. Directed by Harold Prince.
Choreographed by Larry Fuller. Composed
by Andrew Lloyd Webber. Lyrics by
Tim Rice. Musical Direction by Peter
Casey.

LA MAMA (3476085)
Skelta presents four short plays:
No Quarter, by Colin Robinson. Wake, by
Graham Henderson. Bitch Heart by
Daniel Keene. Lane Streets by John
Eros In Satyrph — a play in multi media.
Written and Directed by Daniel Kahans.
With Bruce Kellor and Lyn Pierse.

LAST LAUGH THEATRE
RESTAURANT (4196226)
The Whittle Family in The King Size Whittles. A country and western musical
comedy.

UPSTAIRS: Shows changing weekly.

ARTS COUNCIL OF VICTORIA
(5294355)
 TOURING throughout November:
The Nutcracker by The Queensland Ballet.
Jigs and Sing, in colonial folk tradition
with Michelle and Mike Jackson. Touring
Primary and Secondary Schools.

COMEDY CAFE (4192869)
Tram, with Mary Kennally, Steven
Blackburn, Geoff Brooks and Rod
Quantock. Directed by Tim Robertson.
Pianist, Danni Bourne.

CREATIVE ARTS THEATRE
(8706742)
Christmas at Catastrophe Creek. Written
and directed by Jan Jason Gunzburg.
Touring Primary and Secondary schools

DRAMA RESOURCE CENTRE
(3475649)
Tour to London to the Newham Inter-

THE NATIONAL THEATRE
(5340221)
Cold Storage, directed by Hayes Gordon.
Nov 11-22.

PLAYBOX THEATRE COMPANY
(6348888)
Return double bill:
DOWNSAIRS: Upside Down At The
Bottom of the World by David Allen.
Directed by Murray Copeland, with Lindy
Davies, Carillo Gantner, Kirsty Child and
Peter Paulsen. A play about D.H.
Lawrence in Australia, focussing on
Lawrence's domestic life with his wife
Freida. Nov 6-30.

UPSTAIRS:
Hosanna by Michel Tremblay. Directed by
Murray Copeland, with Robert Essex,
Vernon Wells. Two transvestites on their
way home from a drag Halloween party.
Nov 25 to Christmas.

THEATRE WORKS
Eastern region Community Theatre
Company (6169328)
Dee Jay View by peter Sommerfeld.
Directed by Richard Murphet. A story of
eight 'original teenagers' who first heard
rock'n'roll in 1956, and are now forty. Nov
11-23.

PHOENIX THEATRE, BURWOOD
STATE COLLEGE
UNIVERSAL THEATRE (4193777)
A Man of Many Parts by Jack Hibberd.
With Frederick Parslow. Directed by Rick
Billinghurst. Oct 29-Nov 19. Late show to
be announced.

VICTORIAN STATE OPERA
(415061)
Tasmanian tour of Rigoletto by Verdi.
Conducted by Richard Divall. Directed by
Peter Jordan. Designed by Malcolm
Steed. With John Woods, Geoff Harris,
Rosemary Boyle, Paulene Ashleigh and
John Marum.

WEST COMMUNITY THEATRE
COMPANY
Girls. A song and dance performance by
Linda Waters. Performed for community
groups especially women's groups. Nov 1-

DANCE

NATIONAL THEATRE
Australian Contemporary Dance
Company. Children's performances daily
Evening performances of new Australian

MAJOR AMATEUR THEATRES:
- Basin Theatre Group (762 1082).
- Clayton Theatre Group (878 1702).
- Malvern Theatre Co. (21 1 0020).
- Pumpkin Theatre (42 8237).

For entries contact Connie Kramer on 267 5938.

**WA THEATRE**

**HIS MAJESTY’S THEATRE**

(321 6288)


**HOLE IN THE WALL**

(381 2403)


**PLAYHOUSE**


**OLIVER**

(321 6288)


**WA ARTS COUNCIL TOURING PROGRAMME**

Theatre-in-Education Team: Tour of Eastern Goldfields’ Primary Schools with same programme as listed above — *Pow Wow, St George and the kangaroo* and *Num Lagger*. November 3 to 14.

Photographic Tour Rothman’s National Photographic Press Awards — tour of North West of Western Australia.

**OPERA**

**HIS MAJESTY’S** (321 6288)


---

**SUBSCRIPTION RATES**

**Australia:**

$21.00 Post Free for twelve issues

Give a gift subscription — and SAVE $36.00 for two subscriptions

$25.00 for institutions

**Overseas:**

Surface mail A$30.00

Institutions A$35.00

By air

New Zealand, New Guinea A$50.00

U.K., U.S.A., Europe A$55.00

All other countries A$70.00

Add $12.00 for institutions to air mail rates.

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

---

**THESPIA’S PRIZE CROSSWORD**

No. 27.

**Across:**

1. Brother keeps an instrument for nothing (5)

8. A widowed doe is cruel, it’s said (9)

9. Judge of classic beauties (5)

10. See a French play then have dinner gradually (9)

12. Place a wager on one on form, even though he has no responsibility (11)

16. Pain in the sacroiliac, he maintains (5)

17. Many leave secret open (5)

18. Elected Scotsman? (4)

19. Varied various corn, like lions and tigers (11)

22. Deck out a 9 in the music school (9)

24. Verbose victory at Dee Why (5)

25. Glutton’s tendency results in bad taxidermy (9)

26. Lawrence, in a fight, is wet (5)

---

**Down:**

1. Salaam can perhaps indicate site of Wellington’s victory (9)

2. Dispersed point to fuss over and showed the way (4)

3. He’s fabulous, some say, yet I fear him (4)

4. In a trice, prove this fruitful urge (11)

5. See the seamy side on the quiet during the decline (5)

6. Find an Irishman in the oriental league (5)

11. Williamson’s men running a take-away service? (11)

13. “What! will these hands ne’er be — ” (Macbeth) (5)

14. Shock about strange manners incurs evaluation (9)

15. What a villain, to scorn duel thus! (9)

20. Divide some land to make Hal very cross (5)

21. Ward off a blow from the composer (5)

23. Throw out a sofa for the louts (4)

---

**THEATRE AUSTRALIA NOVEMBER 1980**