12-1981

Theatre Australia 6(4) December 1981 - January 1982

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December 1981/January 1982, Volume 6, No. 4
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Comment

The need to protest

Money maketh art. Unquestionably the foundation of the Australia Council was the most significant factor in developing a national culture; its channelling of government funds to the arts was an irrigation scheme for the cultural desert.

From the beginning of recorded history the arts have needed patronage, from the chieftains of ancient Greece to the church and nobles of the medieval world and the city state rulers of the renaissance. When artists had to depend on box office in the nineteenth century the drama became moribund, the theatre sensationalist. Crowds went to see Carlo the Wonder Dog drag victims from a water tank, or see a 13-year-old, Betty "the infant Roscius", perform the classics, or Astley's horses or Boucicault's sensation scenes. But great drama died when those who "lived to please" had to please to live.

After the Second World War it became clear that for there to be any proper development of the arts the major burden would have to be carried by government; that, though not everyone would attend, that the nation as a whole would be in some sense better for having a healthy cultural life; that the nineteenth century example of "user pays" could only lead to the sham, empty and throw away.

No one could deny the obvious impact of the early days of the Elizabethan Theatre Trust and then the Australia Theatre Trust. Suddenly we had a national opera and ballet, major orchestras, state theatre companies and a whole flotilla of minor activities afloat around the flagships.

Now the Federal Government is drastically reducing the fleet. The only flags which it considers worthy of proper maintenance are the Opera and Ballet (and of course the film industry and anything pertaining to it). The Theatre Board alone.

Cuts across the spectrum were out. For many just could not sustain any reductions. Dance, for instance, and the state theatre companies; "there were so fragile that a cut would be catastrophic.

And so they tried to cut rationally: the major companies, it was decided, could just about sustain 20%, but no more (for the M.T.C., for instance, a $130,000 cut in cash terms). They also decided to cut brutally: 100% from one major-minor theatre in each state. The object was to create a furor in the theatre world and a wider political storm; and at the same time hope (as seems to be happening) that State Ministries will help them out.

As it turns out, so punch drunk is the arts world having seen its percentage of the budget dwindle by 50%, since 1975, that despite a march and other protests, "stunned acceptance" seems to be the general response, and press reaction has been minimal.

This attitude, though, of "life goes on" and "getting by" can only ruin the arts base of this country, just as the industrial base of Britain will never recover from Thatcherism. She, Reagan and Fraser, worshippers of the inhuman god Milton Friedman, as rulers of the Western World do not give grounds for optimism; but in the States, organised grassroots reaction is having some success against Reagan's arts cuts.

We need the same kind of protest here, the same grassroots mobilisation against the cuts. Acceptance and making do can only lead to a further downturn in the future. Money is the water of life; without it the cultural desert is come again.
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NEW SEASON: SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY

The Sydney Theatre Company kicks off 1982 with two musicals — a return season of Chicago at the Theatre Royal and Hart and Kaufman’s You Can’t Take It With You, to be directed by George Ogilvie, starring Jane Harders and Carol Raye. For their Adelaide Festival production David Hare will be coming out to direct his new play A Map of the World in which that excellent young actor Robert Grubb will appear with Roshan Seth. Richard Wherrett then directs Shaffer’s smash hit Amadeus, to star John Gaden as Salieri and next Macbeth with John Bell and Robyn Nevin as the infamous couple. Rodney Fisher will direct David Williamson’s latest, The Perfectionist, and the Newcastle play A Happy and Holy Occasion by John O’Donoghue will be directed by Terence Clarke. The season closes with Pirandello’s As You Desire Me, with Rodney Fisher again directing.

In spite of the cutbacks, the programme is bigger than that of 1981: Wherrett says “Our 20% cut in funding will not be met by a 20% cut in our activities, our energies nor our aspirations”. He is determined that the present financial climate should not intimidate the STC, that the programme planned before cuts were announced should be stuck to and that the Walsh Bay project, to house the company and provide a second venue, should happen this year.

NEW SEASON: OKLAHOMA!

The MLC Theatre Royal Company, with a number of other Australian en-preneurs including Edgley’s and the Adelaide Festival Centre Trust, plans a three cities tour of the musical Oklahoma! starting April ’82. John Diedrich will return from the London production to play Curly, but in spite of extensive auditions in October, no leading lady could be found to play opposite him as Laurey. James Hammerstein and musical director Ray Cook are now desperately searching for a suitable Australian singer in the USA and Britain!

NEW SEASON: STATE THEATRE COMPANY

The State Theatre Company’s first play next year will be their Festival contribution: a new play by Patrick White called The Signal Driver — not to be directed by Jim Sharman, however, but by Neil Armfield — which concerns relationships over three generations. Sharman’s first direction will come with the next play, a “dark reading” of A Midsummer Night’s Dream. Armfield is then to direct Louis Nowra’s latest, Spellbound, which is said to relate to the first act of Inside the Island; Sharman picks up with Mother Courage and Her Children and then a first play by Bill Harding called Silver Lining. Adelaide will be seeing Nowra’s first piece of direction, Kleist’s The Prince of Homburg and finishing up the year will come a Nowra written Company workshop piece called Royal Show.

All these productions will be playing in repertory throughout the year — a year which Sharman means to use to build up this most difficult kind of theatre. He will be employing 12 actors with whom he intends to develop a company style and is committed particularly to new work. The four in this season he feels will be led by the three classics. A through-line running through the ‘82 season is “the link of passion”.

Another change will be that the company will henceforth be known as the Lighthouse Company.
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**STALEY TO PLAYBOX**

Former Post and Telecommunications Minister, Tony Staley, has been appointed Chairman of the Playbox Theatre Company. He has spoken out against the arts funding cuts of the Federal Government, saying that several theatre companies will not survive them, but that Playbox "will not be deflected into backwaters of dull programming... will continue to take intelligent risks which are the essence of a successful and relevant theatre."

---

**ANNIE AT CHRISTMAS**

*Annie* seems to be the favourite musical for Christmas holiday entertainment this year. The QTC have revived their last year's production and put it on at a larger venue in Brisbane. The National, Perth, are producing it in the new His Majesty's Theatre with Jill Perryman. And the Canberra Theatre Centre's *Annie* will be playing throughout January, directed by Terence Clarke and with opera singer Ronald MacConaghie as Daddy Warbucks.

---

**CIRCUS HISTORY**

Mark St Leon, being a member of one of the oldest Australian circus families, has lived with circus all his life. But only in the last few years did he decide to make a detailed study of the whole area. He finished his research last year and has published a limited edition of his work, these are for sale to anyone interested in the history of circus in Australia; already several copies have been bought by libraries and universities — by all accounts they are not cheap!

---

**VENETIAN TWINS**

Although the Adelaide and Melbourne seasons of *The Venetian Twins* were by no means as successful as the Sydney run, Nimrod, with the AETT World Theatre Exchange scheme, is looking to tour the show overseas. Plans include the 1982 Edinburgh Festival and a venue in the States. The songs by Nick Enright and Terence Clarke are now also on record, *The Venetian Twins* album, released by Larrikin Records.
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La Salle Quartet (USA)
Vermeer Quartet (USA)
Die Kammermusiker
Zurich

...of Piano
Kontarsky Piano Duo
(Germany)
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...of the Orchestra
Australian Chamber Orchestra
Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra (Hungary)
University of NSW Ensemble

...of Voice
The Leonine Consort

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BABIES IN ARMS  
BEGGARS OPERA  
BELLE OF NEW YORK  
BELLS ARE RINGING  
BELLS OF CORNEVILLE  
BERLIN TO BROADWAY  
WITH KURT WEILL  
BLUEBIRD  
BOYS FROM SYRACUSE  
BRIGADOON  
BYE BYE BIRDIE  
CALL ME MADAM  
CAMELOT  
CANDIDE  
CAROUSEL  
CELEBRATION  
CHARLIE GIRL  
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CINDERELLA  
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COUNTRY GIRL  
DAMN YANKEES  
DESSERT SONG  
DO I HEAR A WALTZ  
DOWN RIVER  
THE DRUNKARD  
DUCHESS OF DANTZIG  
EARNEST IN LOVE  
THE FANTASTICS  
FIDDLER ON THE ROOF  
FIREFLY  
FLORA DORA  
FLOWER DRUM SONG  
FOLLIES  
FOLLOW THE STAR  
A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM  
THE GEISHA  
GIRL FROM THE SNOWY GOING UP  
GOOD COMPANIONS  
GONDOLIERS  
GRAB ME A GONDOLA  
GUYS & DOLLS  
HALF A SIXPENCE  
HALF IN EARNEST  
HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN  
HIGH JINKS  
H.M.S. PINAFIORE  
HOW TO SUCCEED IN BUSINESS  
I DO, I DO  
IOLANTHE  
JACK AND THE BEANSTALK  
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KISMET  
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LOLA MONTEZ  
LOVE FROM JUDY  
MAID OF THE MOUNTAINS  
MAN OF LA MANCHA  
ME & JULIET  
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THE MUSIC MAN  
NEW MOON  
NO GOLD NO WHISKEY  
NO STRINGS  
OKLAHOMA  
ONCE UPON A MATTRESS  
OUR MISS GIBBS  
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PINNOCHIO  
PIPE DREAM  
PIPPIN  
PIRATES OF PENGANCE  
QUAKER GIRL  
QUIKESILVER  
REBEL MAID  
RED MILL  
RIVERWIND  
THE ROBBER BRIDEGROOM  
1776  
SALLY  
SAN TOY  
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SMIKE  
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THEATRE AUSTRALIA DECEMBER 1981
By Norman Kessell

As 1981 draws to a close, Sydney theatregoers at least can look back on what has been a generally successful year. I cannot write first-hand of other States, but of our subsidised companies the Sydney Theatre Company and the Ensemble (despite the cruel blow it has suffered) should be well content with both their artistic and box office achievements; the Nimrod suffered a slight deterioration in programming and performance standards; the Q Theatre has well sustained the quality of its work; the new regime at Marian Street got off to a shaky start, but appears to have recovered somewhat with The Shiftimg Heart and its end-of-year staging of the musical, Once Upon A Mattress.

Of the commercials, the MLC Theatre Royal Company has obviously had its best year yet, but it is grievous to see Her Majesty’s dark at this time of year, following the earlier-than-hoped-for demise of Evita.

Of the others, the King O’Malley Company scored again, this time in association with the STC, in a first-rate repertory season of one-acters under the composite title, Shorts; the Players Company battles bravely on at the Bondi Pavilion and the New Theatre flourished with what in my book is one of the year’s most entertaining shows, Nick Enright’s On The Wallaby. My list of the year’s best shows would have this second only to Dorothy Hewett’s The Man From Makin-upin, followed by Chicago, The Dresser, The Liberation of Skopje, Hammer and I Ought To Be In Pictures.

It is still too early, at the time of writing, to know much of what is in store for next year, except that the two major musicals Australians will see are something old in Oklahoma! and something new in Barnum. Whisper is that the Elizabethan Theatre Trust, which is sitting on the rights to a few oldies, may also stage a revival around next August. Among the possibilities, I believe, are My Fair Lady, The Sound of Music and Showboat, of which my guess would be the last-named.

All AETT systems are still go, I hear, for visits next year by the American Ballet Theatre and the Sadler’s Wells Ballet.

One thing quite certain for 1982 is that ticket prices will rise all over. This was inevitable anyway, what with inflation and rising costs, but Theatre Board subsidy cuts made it an immediate reality for Sydney’s Ensemble, one of the eight theatres totally deprived of funding. For its production of Australian writer Mick Barnes’ Eleven-Eleven, which opened appropriately on Nov 11, it jumped its prices from $8.00 weekdays and $9.00 weekends to $9.90 and $10.90 respectively.

Because of their subscription systems, the Nimrod and the STC cannot follow suit until the new year, but the former will go up from $11.90 to $13.90 and the latter from $9.00 to $9.90. As the general managers of the STC (Donald McDonald), Nimrod, (Bruce Pollack) and Ensemble (Rosemary Jones) all say, they have long resisted ticket price rises as being counter-productive. Like their counterparts all over Australia, they will be seeking to limit such increases by employing every possible economy in production. What a way to have to live!

Chris Westwood, co-ordinator of Sydney’s Women and Theatre Project, has chided me for having elsewhere referred to this as being sponsored by the Nimrod. She writes that the project was funded by an Australia Council Limited Life grant and that the Nimrod “generously offered a small desk in a crowded room and access to telephones and photocopying”. She did not mention the Nimrod theatre space and its in-built audiences also made available, invaluable assistance no matter what were the financial arrangements.

This, however, is to salute the success of the project which by its completion this month will have 10 shows available to producers entrepreneurs, festivals and theatre companies anywhere. Heading the list is Desert Flanbe, a new development in comedy directed by Christine Koltai, music by Sarah de Jong, design by Melody Cooper and performed by Valerie Bader, Beverly Blankenship, Suzanne Dudley, Jenny Hope, Gillian Hyde, Deborah Kennedy and Jenny Ludlam. This will be presented jointly with the Nimrod Theatre for six to eight weeks from Dec 12 and again at the Adelaide Festival next March.

Sydney Theatre Company’s most successful production in 1980 was Cyrano de Bergerac, given a brief revival last month. The 49 performances of the original show at Sydney Opera House attracted an audience of 101.87 percent capacity. Next best was Simon Gray’s Close of Play, with a 99.07 percent capacity for 35 performances.

Actress Lynne Porteous has played so many tarts and trollopes that when she told friends she was going into a show called Once Upon A Mattress they said: “What! Again?” She had to explain that in this engaging musical based upon a fairy tale (at Sydney’s Marian Street Theatre until Dec 20) she is a princess. Hoydenish, maybe, but still a princess.

Terry Bader and Elizabeth Alexander in SHORTS
Rodney Fisher — Director of two of STC’s successful shows.
Barely Bach and never neckties
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6 great concerts
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Groups of student musicians will give pre concert recitals around the Concert Hall Foyers.

Saturday, January 2
Australian Chamber Orchestra
Artistic Director: John Harding
Overture: The Magic Flute, Mozart; Piano Concerto in G minor No.20, K.466, Mozart, soloist: John Winther, piano; Symphony in E flat K.543, Mozart.

Monday, January 4
Sydney String Quartet
Leader: Nathan Waks

Tuesday, January 5
Australian Chamber Orchestra
Artistic Director: John Harding

Wednesday, January 6
Sydney Virtuosi Ensemble
Leader: Murray Khouri
Sinfonia in E flat for Wind Sextet No.1, J.C. Bach, Divertimento in B flat (Feldpartita), H.I.43, Haydn; Divertimento in E flat, K.196e, Mozart; Serenade in E flat, K.375, Mozart.

Friday, January 8
Elizabethan Sydney Orchestra
Conductor: William Reid
Overture to The Marriage of Figaro, Mozart; Eine Kleine Nachtmusik, K.525, Mozart; Symphony No.1 in D, Op.25 ("Classical"), Prokofiev; Symphony No.41 in C, K.551 ("Jupiter"), Mozart.

Saturday, January 9
St Philip’s Chamber Orchestra
Conductor: Michael Dyer
With the Concert Hall organ.
Concerto in C for Flute, Harp and Orchestra, K.297c, Mozart; Andante in F, K.616, Mozart*; Andante con moto; Fantasia and fugue in B flat, Boely*; Concerto No.1 in G, Op.4, Handel*; *soloist: Michael Dudman, organ; Concerto in G for Violin and Orchestra, Mozart, soloist: Roslyn Streekfuss, violin; Motet "Exsultate Jubilate" for Soprano and Orchestra, Mozart.

Other Mostly Mozart attractions

Midday Music
Recording Hall, 11am and Noon
Saturday, January 3
The Sydney Piano Trio.
Harry Curby, violin; Hans Gyors, cello; and Beryl Potter, piano. Piano Trio No.4 in C, K.548, Mozart.

Recording Hall, 11am and Noon
Sunday, January 10

All day seminar
Reception Hall, 10am
Saturday, January 9
Presented by the Sydney Opera House Trust and the WEA. "The Life, Times and Music of Mozart" presented by a panel of WEA-experts headed by Christopher Nicholls. Tickets $20 (lunch and afternoon tea included) available at Opera House, agencies and WEA House.

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THEATRE BOARD CUTS — FLAGSHIP OR FLEET?

by Ken Horler

The bad news is that funds from the Australia Council to the Theatre Board for 1982 have been cut by 10%. The basic allocation for 1982 is $5,793,000 a cash reduction of $620,000. At its October meeting the Theatre Board faced with some hard decisions, withdrew funds completely from eight professional drama companies including Ensemble (NSW), APG/Pram Factory (Vic) and Hole in the Wall (WA) and made cuts across the board of between 15% — 20% to the major companies. The Melbourne Theatre Company, for example, was cut back by 20% to $623,000, the Sydney Theatre Company reduced to $264,000 and Nimrod was cut by 15% to $249,000.

The cuts to the Music and Theatre Board reflect a change in philosophy both in Canberra and within the Australia Council. Canberra argues that it has held the line so far as the arts are concerned by reducing the total vote to the Ministry of Home Affairs (that grab bag of a junior ministry that includes the arts and sport) by a mere 2%. What Canberra does not say is that the Australia Council's share of that vote has dropped from a 54% to 35% for 1982 and that this reduction is reflected in the cuts to the performing arts companies.

The cuts reflect the self-help philosophy of the Fraser Government. The new Minister Mr Ian Wilson's response to the wailing and gnashing of teeth from the companies was to say that there would be no supplementary grants and that he would not ask Cabinet for emergency funds. The Minister believes that the companies should try to solve any financial problems by earning more money at the box, by persuading state and local government to increase their subsidies and by soliciting sponsorship from individuals and corporate organisations, particularly big business.

This is cold comfort to the drama companies who have been doing all these things for years with limited success. The annual report of the MTC, for example, concedes that it has had little success attracting private sponsorship. The Challenge Grant Scheme which holds out the carrot of a further $322,000 to the clients of the Theatre and Music Board obviously has the Minister's seal of housekeeping approval. Significantly the Theatre Board itself composed predominately of theatre practitioners resisted, unsuccessfully, the imposition of the Challenge Grant Scheme.

A small number of high rollers get their funds direct from Canberra through a piece of fiscal sleight of hand called "single line appropriation". This means that the Australian Opera, Ballet and Elizabethan Trust Orchestras receive very nearly what they ask for. They are not accountable to the Council through its Boards and procedures, they can lobby Cabinet direct. This year the Australian Opera and Ballet each achieved a cash increase of 10% at a time when the Australia Council's total funds are 12% less in real terms and the Theatre Board itself was cut by 10% ($620,000).

If ever there was a time for the Australia Council to persuade the Minister and Cabinet that the Opera and Ballet should no longer have the privilege status and be made accountable to the Council, it is now. The new General Manager of the Australian Opera explains away a deficit of $700,000 as a mere 7% of turnover. Dr Pascoe, the Council's new Chairman, was not too alarmed at this figure. The Council, however, has consistently refused to allow drama companies to budget for a deficit and called upon them to explain their deficits before making next year's grant.

The Opera's special position continues despite the failure of the Melbourne season, the threatened sacking of 22 of its members and an announced season which contains no new Australian work. The Ballet is in disarray; the Sydney season of Swan Lake has been cancelled and the conflict between the dancers, the board and the administration seems incapable of resolution. And these are the two companies which the Minister claims are the "national flagships" that should be especially encouraged "in the pursuit of excellence". If anything confirms the philistines in their view of opera and ballet as an elitist activity sucking up a larger and larger share of the tax dollar, then it is the current management and policies of the Opera and Ballet.

The idea of "flagships" is offensive to many of the clients of the Council and has only been dreamed up after the event to give some respectability to the political clout of the Opera and Ballet with Cabinet. Dr Pascoe is not sanguine about changing the situation. As he says "Even if they were put under the Theatre and Music Boards, and we cut their grants, they'd go straight off to Canberra. It would all be on again". Sadly, he might be right, but it's worth a try. What is galling to the drama companies is that the Opera and Ballet, the so called "glamorous" majors are the best placed to attract big money from business. Corporations like to see their gifts up there on stage; no company is keen to fund a company for its general activities even with the available tax incentives. What point is there in having a flagship without a fleet?

MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY — 20% CUT

John Sumner, Director: "I think it is a pity that instead of trying to turn theatre companies into fundraising organisations, the Australia Council does not concentrate its energies upon fundraising in Canberra."

John Summer, MTC.
NIMROD — 15% CUT
Bruce Pollack, General Manager: "Mr Wilson can justify a 10% increase to the AO and the AB — "the flagships". Nimrod, the flagship of Australian drama, has done more to promote the indigenous performing arts here in Australia and overseas than any other company. Unless Nimrod can raise funds from other sources the company might have to cease carrying out activities such as workshops and readings of Australian plays, which do not pay for themselves."

HOLE IN THE WALL — 100% CUT
Edgar Metcalfe, Artistic Director: "Never in the 15 or so years during which I have worked in theatre in WA, have I known there to be such a large number of talented young actors, designers and technicians as are now emerging. How ironic that this should manifest itself during a year in which of the two subsidised theatres in Perth, one should be threatened with closure by the withdrawal of the Federal Government's annual grant. Great talent will, of course, always emerge wherever the handicaps — but we in WA must be forgiven for feeling that it is now more likely to emerge elsewhere."

STATE THEATRE COMPANY, SA — 20% CUT
Paul Iles, General Manager: "The consequences of a $45,000 cut to STC's general grant is injurious, but that applies to every theatre. There is a ray of hope: at last the performing arts can speak with one voice. The hitherto dilatory sense of unity has become a latenight bond."

SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY — 20% CUT
Donald McDonald, General Manager: "If the Federal Government recognises that the Australian Ballet and Opera need increases for inflation, how can theatre be so different? There is no logic to that. I also reject the spurious concept of the Minister, Mr Wilson, that the Opera and Ballet are "national flagships". Is theatre to suffer because it doesn't have a national company? Surely the state companies collectively represent a national theatre flagship."

QUEENSLAND THEATRE COMPANY — 20% CUT
Alan Edwards, Artistic Director: "The QTC gets a 20% cut which is a 32.5% cut in real terms. The most vulnerable work is the most interesting; I think any company can sustain cuts in the main house programme, but what we will probably have to sacrifice is our new Tangent programme of alternative work. This will be a disaster, it's the most important thing we have done recently. Basically the cuts mean conservative programming and that is not what we should be about."

CHALLENGE GRANT SCHEME
As an inducement to the companies, the Australia Council, of its own initiative, has set up a system whereby the companies may receive an additional $1 from the Council for every $3 cash the company raises. There is an upper limit of between 5%—7% of the total basic grant. For example Nimrod could earn a further $22,000, the MTC $58,000. The amounts available are relatively small — the total is $440,000 for the six boards. Of this, the Theatre Board's share is $282,000 with an amount of up to $100,000 set aside to promote the scheme nationally. The Council argues that if the companies reach their targets, then the extra grant plus the contribution from the private sector will just about put the companies back where they were before the cuts. The companies reply that they have already budgeted to raise a certain amount from the private sector and this has already been taken into account and cannot be seen as additional income.

More importantly, the companies point to a central dilemma. If the companies are energetic and raise their target amounts (or more) then the self-help government in Canberra would be entitled to say "Look, we told you there was private money out there. You don't need all that subsidy". If the companies fail to rise to the challenge, then the government could say "The arts don't have a firm community base or business support, why should the tax payer support them by subsidy". It could be a no win situation. The companies, however, accept the principle of private support to top up the grants, not as something in lieu.

Already the companies are looking towards more "commercial" seasons in 1982. The Sydney Theatre Company will produce Shaffer's latest hit, Amadeus, at the Theatre Royal, and Nimrod are planning a production of Death of a Salesman, with Warren Mitchell, at the Seymour Centre.

As part of a national campaign to restore the grants, the Confederation of Professional Performing Arts (CAPPA) is lobbying Federal MPs and arranged the national Theatre Crisis Day of Thursday November 19, with lots of hoopla and speeches at curtain up. The Australia Council which does not see the Challenge Grant Scheme as the strategy to meet a particular emergency has devised a badge for "angels" with a halo around it.
TALES FROM THE VIENNA WOODS

by ÖDÖN VON HORVÁTH, translated by CHRISTOPHER HAMPTON

director Aubrey Mellor • designer Vicki Feitscher • with Robert Alexander • Robert Baxter • Brandon Burke • Cathy Downes • Jon Ewing • Ronald Falk • Michele Fawdon • Ivar Kants • Barry Otto • Genevieve Picot • Deidre Rubenstein • Anna Volska

NIMROD UPSTAIRS • NIMROD UPSTAIRS • NIMROD UPSTAIRS • NIMROD UPSTAIRS • NIMROD UPSTAIRS

THEATRE AUSTRALIA DECEMBER 1981
30th Festival of Perth
Western Australia
5 February–6 March 1982

Great International Theatre Attractions

Black Theatre of Prague ‘A Week of Dreams’ Jiri Sruve

Estelle Parsons Australian Premiere
‘Miss Margarita’s Way’ Roberto Athayde

Le Theatre de l’Ombrelle
Australian Premiere
‘The Black Cat’

Piccolo Teatro di Milano
‘Harlequin and the Others’ Luigi Lunari
Ferruccio Soleri

London Theatre Group
‘Tell Tale Heart’ Steven Berkoff
‘The House of Usher’ Steven Berkoff
Terry James

Black Theatre of Prague
15–30 January
Perth
His Majesty’s Theatre
24 February–6 March
Canberra
Oval Theatre
3–23 February
Sydney
Playhouse Theatre
23 February–6 March

London Theatre Group
1–20 February
Melbourne
His Majesty’s Theatre
26 January–5 February
Canberra
Canberra Theatre
22 February–6 March
Hobart
Theatre Royal
6–17 March

Piccolo Teatro di Milano
24 February–6 March
Perth
His Majesty’s Theatre
Sydney
Playhouse Theatre
23 February–6 March

Le Theatre de l’Ombrelle
Australian Premiere
‘Harlequin and the Others’ Luigi Lunari
Ferruccio Soleri

For further information on theatre programme and details of
1982 Festival of Perth write for free brochure.

[Address details]
by Mardy Amos

The theatre programme for the 1982 Festival of Perth promises to be as stimulating as that of 1981, but with even more emphasis on European theatre. Presumably Festival Director, David Blenkinsop, was encouraged by the response in Perth to The Zagreb Theatre Company's The Liberation of Skojpe by Dusan Iovanovic and 1 Compangauni — the two modern-day clowns in the Commedia dell'arte tradition — for we are to get companies from Italy, France and Czechoslovakia in 1982 as well as artists from England and America.

The first production will be Le Theatre de L'Ombrelle's The Black Cat: using and adapting the traditional techniques of ancient Chinese shadow puppetry they will tell the tale — based on an old French nonsense song — of a little boy who lives in a dust-bin and who sets out on a fantastic voyage of discovery with his friend, a black cat.

The Black Theatre of Prague will present A Week of Dreams at His Majesty's Theatre with a ten strong ensemble under Artistic Director Jiri Smeč. The seven surrealistic dreams of a little taxi-driver make up the programme, which has received high critical acclaim.

Italy's most famous theatre company, Piccolo Teatro di Milano, was formed in 1947 to preserve and develop the great Italian tradition of commedia dell'arte and they will present Harlequin And The Others at His Majesty's Theatre. The play is a collection of cues and texts from Italian theatre from the Middle Ages to the 18th Century which tell the story of Arlecchino (Harlequin) the mischievous "poor servant" versus "the others", the authority figures of the times, and this theatre of masks will show the fundamental types of the various epochs.

David Blenkinsop rightly refutes the use of the word "elitist" in connection with the Festival and puts his money where his mouth is in a combined programme, Brass and Beyond, which will run at the Civic Theatre Restaurant, which has made a name for itself for popular comic entertainment. In the first half of the show French comedian Julian Chagrin mixes mime and the spoken word and the second half will be taken over by America's The Brass Band who are often referred to as a musical Marx Brothers and who provide highly polished brass music and visual comedy.

Also from America is Miss Margarida's Way by Brazilian playwright Roberto Athayde, an award-winning play which has had 55 productions all over the world. A one-hander, it features Estelle Parsons, probably best known here for her work in films such as Bonnie and Clyde and Rachel, Rachel. Miss Margarida is an apparently respectable teacher conducting an eighth-grade class, but as the lesson progresses she is revealed as being paranoid and sexually frustrated.

From England, and the Festival of Sydney, comes the London Theatre Group with its founding director Steven Berkoff.

Perth's local theatre companies are well represented in the Festival. The National Theatre Company at the Playhouse will present the world premiere of Dorothy Hewett's new play The Fields of Heaven which is set in the fictitious town of Jarrahbin in the Great Southern district of Western Australia and deals with the clash between old-established settlers and migrants and the threatened annihilation of a fragile ecology — and it also has a turbulent love story thrown in!

Although The Hole in the Wall Theatre has been refused Federal funding for 1982, they have been granted a temporary reprieve by the decision of the WA Arts Council to allow them to use their $53,000 grant for 1982 in the first six months of the year, thus enabling them to go ahead with their production of Caryl Churchill's Cloud Nine. This surrealistic comedy had great success at London's Royal Court last year and more recently at Nimrod. Also at the Hole in the Wall will be a late-night show — a play by West Australian Mary Gage, My Name is Pablo Picasso which is set in Montmartre when the painter was 26 and struggling for survival.

A new West Australian venture which aims to produce "new, innovative and indigenous theatre" will make its debut at the 1982 Festival; the Swan River Stage Company will present The Dreamers a second play by WA's leading Aboriginal write, Jack Davis (the first was Kullark). The play deals with the changed life-styles of a family of Nyoongahs, ie Ab-originafs of and from the South-west of WA who have little left of their traditions and way of life.

In addition to theatre, there will of course be a varied programme of music and film, which this year includes Moshe Misrachi's award-winning I Sent a Letter to My Love with Simone Signorett and Kazimierz Kutz's The Beads of One Rosary (Poland). On the lighter side artists will include Chick Corea and the husband and wife team of Cleo Laine and Johnny Dankworth who will be making their tenth visit to Australia.

The visual arts will be well represented — they are indeed already in evidence with the Festival Poster, designed by Sir Sidney Nolan, who will attend the Festival as Guest of Honour and who has created for it a new series of paintings entitled Kangaroo, based on D H Lawrence's novel of the same name, which will be exhibited at the Undercroft Gallery of the University of WA — a felicitous gesture for this, the thirtieth birthday of the Festival of Perth!
BERKOFF: FEASTS OF EMOTION

by Paula de Burgh

The irrepressible Steven Berkoff, who has been described in the London Press as "the last of the great actor-managers" and "the most obsessive of Britain’s few directors of vision", returns to Australia in January 1982 with his London Theatre Group, for a ten week tour — initiated and organised by the Playbox Theatre Company. The LTG will be performing Berkoff’s stage adaptation of *The House Of Usher* by Edgar Allan Poe, which began life as a "work-in-progress" at the Edinburgh Festival, and subsequently toured Holland and Germany, before playing in London at the Hampstead Theatre Club and the National Theatre. Berkoff will also perform Poe’s *Tell Tale Heart* — a piece that has not been performed in public before — as a short solo curtain-raiser.

Berkoff needs no introduction to avid theatre-goers. His blistering and satirical play *East*, which explodes the raw conflicts of East End life, arrived in a blaze of controversy for the 1978 Adelaide Festival. The then Opposition spokesman for the Arts, Mr Hill, wanted the "punk play" cancelled — "If this play is presented I believe the Adelaide Festival of Arts as a cultural festival will be tarnished for all time." (Adelaide Advertiser, 17.11.1977.) Nonetheless *East* proved a triumph with local critics, and attracted enthusiastic audiences later in four other capital cities.

Afterwards Berkoff stayed on in Sydney to direct his adaptation of Kafka’s *Metamorphosis* for the Nimrod Theatre, which opened in August. The same production reappeared in March 1979 at the Melbourne Theatre Company’s Russell Street Theatre. Within a week of opening, the Melbourne season sold out, and patrons were queueing to purchase aisle seats. This caused one critic’s "gorge" to rise so much, that six weeks into the season he facetiously wrote... “Tickets are so hard to get you’d be excused for thinking Russell Street was staging a show with the bill shared by Sutherland, Nureyev, Kamahl, The Royal Shakespeare Company, The Bee Gees and the Berlin Philharmonic. But all that is being presented is Berkoff’s adaptation of a novella about a clerk who turns into a dung beetle...” (Neil Jillett — The Age, 10.5.1979.)

In style, *The House Of Usher* is closer to *Metamorphosis* than to *East*. It tells the tale of a cadaverous shell of a man, Roderick Usher, who is on the point of extinction due to his own anxieties and fears. He shares the family home with his cataleptic sister Madeleine, whom he loves incestuously. Roderick has written a letter to his friend Edgar, asking him to come to visit urgently — and upon arrival Edgar finds the couple very much changed. Berkoff himself plays Usher, “a man holding onto his senses with a gossamer thread, exploding, raving, turning words into tumbledown despair. His ashen face is the mad mirror of his house, a house that depends upon the noble Usher for life and death.” According to Steven, “The House outwardly manifests the crumbling nature of Roderick’s inner decay.” Berkoff plays both Roderick and the House — “I always like plays where I’m put in an impossible situation, because it gives the greatest possibility for inspiration...” One theatre commentator stated in 1977 that "the epitome of the London Theatre Group’s work is manifested in *The House Of Usher*... when Berkoff appears as Usher, he passes from being man to house with frightening accuracy and ease.”

Berkoff acknowledges that his major influence has been the “ecstatic prophet of theatre”, Antonin Artaud, whose ideas for the “theatre of cruelty” and book of impassioned manifestos, *The Theatre And Its Double*, have inspired many theatre artists seeking alternatives to naturalistic drama.
Those well-known would include Jean-Louis Barrault (France), Jerzy Grotowski (Poland), Peter Brook (England), and Joseph Chaikin (United States). Steven Berkoff’s production of The House Of Usher juxtaposes Artaud’s ideal of pure, formal spectacle, with images of horror — and has elicited the following responses from British critics — “bizarre but brilliant”; “has the haunting fascination of a beautiful but horrifying dream”; “a highly perfumed gothic blossom”; “a fluent nightmare, consistently beautiful to look at”; “pure theatre”; "a phantasmagoric nightmare; unquestionably the most stylised and ritualized work to emerge from contemporary British Theatre…”

Since Steven Berkoff was last in Australia (1978/79), he has been highly productive, and his extraordinary versatility and energy have continued to amaze observers…

After directing Metamorphosis in Sydney in 1978, Berkoff flew to Israel to present it in Hebrew, and the production was voted the Best Production of the Year. Whilst in Israel he wrote a play, The Murder of Jesus Christ, an iconoclastic work which portrays Christ as a revolutionary figure whose misguided strategies lead to his downfall. In 1979 he was back in Melbourne for Metamorphosis, (still recovering from the wearying effects of hepatitis), before returning to the United Kingdom to stage his highly innovative Hamlet at the Edinburgh Festival, playing the title role himself. Around this time he wrote a play called Greek, which he loosely based upon the Oedipus myth, but set in the East End — and characteristically he gave the ending an unexpected twist. A return visit to Israel ensued to stage his Agamemnon, for which he again achieved “Best Production” status.

February 1980 saw the premiere season of Greek at London’s Half Moon Theatre, and the play re-opened later in the West End for a six week stint at the New Arts Theatre. This was the first time that Berkoff had directed the London Theatre Group in one of his own works, without playing a role himself. Between the two presentations of Greek, Berkoff’s Hamlet opened the Jerusalem Festival and played in Haifa, before touring kibbutzim — Ein Gev, Kfar-Saba, Ein Hashovet and Arad. The production then returned to London’s Round House for a four-week season. Concurrently an acceptable, less daring Hamlet was playing at the Royal Court Theatre and attracted the critics’ praise, whilst actors, directors and young people favoured Berkoff. Screen actor Dustin Hoffman saw the London Theatre Group’s Hamlet twice, and went backstage to offer his congratulations.

Early this year (1981) the same Hamlet was much acclaimed when it toured Germany and Belgium, and Steven has been asked to tour it through Europe during 1982. He returned to London after Hamlet, and wrote a new play, a two-hander titled Decadence — which is “a scurrilous, biting comic caricature of upper class manners and attitudes”, according to one reviewer. It premiered at the New End Theatre in July and was an outstanding success, with the season extending. Steven Berkoff played the dual role of Steve/Les, while Linda Marlowe played Helen/Sybil. After a visit to the Edinburgh Festival, Decadence transferred to the West End, where it is playing until Berkoff prepares for the Australian tour.

Apart from Berkoff’s own directing, writing and acting, Australian companies have staged two of his works during his absence. The Sydney University Drama Society (SUDS) presented the world premiere of West in April, 1981. West, which incorporates rock music, is (like East) a parody of East End life, but hung upon the rivalry of two adolescent street gangs. It is a pity that Peter Barclay’s stunning, imaginative production did not get a capital city viewing!

The House Of Usher tour has been organised by Melbourne’s Playbox Theatre Company and will be a highlight of what promises to be an exciting first season for 1982. The tour kicks off during the Festival of Sydney, before playing Perth, Melbourne, regional Tasmania and Hobart. Due to the Adelaide Festival, and Berkoff’s own engagements after the tour, Adelaide will not see The House Of Usher.

Steven Berkoff, who is regarded as an “undeniable original”, and the leading figure in British non-establishment theatre, describes his works as “feasts of emotion for anyone who can remember how to feel.”
REG LIVERMORE, about to star in *Barnum*, talks in New York of his life and times to KARL LEVETT.

The colours of my life Are bountiful and bold. The purple glow of indigo The gleam of green and gold.

As Phineas T Barnum, Reg Livermore will soon be singing these words eight times a week in *Barnum*. It is the hit tune from the show and seems most suitable to describe a professional career that has indeed been "bountiful and bold". Add to this the fact that Reg is also a painter who has held several one-man shows throughout Australia and the Cy Coleman song sounds tailor-made.

BIG APPLE RED

Reg Livermore spoke of his colourful career while in New York preparing for his role in *Barnum*. He has already spent several weeks here working with the New York School of Circus Arts which is the training segment of the Big Apple Circus. The star and entire cast of the Broadway *Barnum* were trained at the Big Apple Circus, as well as the National Tour and the London Company. "I'm the sixth," said Reg. "There was Jim Dale, Tony Orlando, Stacey Keach who did the national tour, Michael Crawford for the London production, Mike Burstyn who has now taken over the Broadway role, I'm doing tight-robe walking, juggling and other skills that I might be able to use in the show."

The results of the training have been mixed. "Basically it's the wire which I've taken to very well — in fact I've taken to it quicker than anybody, so they tell me, I'm supposed to juggle — not the best at it. I'm resisting that but I've promised myself I'll practice when I get home. There's a trick with a rope swinging out over the audience we're working on for the Australian production."

EARLY RAINBOW

Energy and physical dexterity have always been part of a Livermore performance. One of my earliest memories of Reg at age 15 is his own production of the pantomime *Mother Goose* at Mosman Town Hall, dressed in a large feather boa, riding a bicycle and singing "I'm Just A Girl Who Can't Say No". "I used to harness a group of school mates every year — on Boxing Day we'd start rehearsing. I was the prime mover, of course. I just wanted to act and I saw no one was going to offer me a job so I had to create my own situation."

During this period Reg began at the Independent Theatre School and attended there for about a year. "This was a formalised training process and I resisted it. I've always resisted things like that. I still do. I don't really like being told how things should be done. I think that in the theatre there are no rules." Whilst in class Reg began appearing in Independent productions — first *Children's Theatre productions*, then Shakespeare, Shaw and *Tobias and the Angel* with John Alden. "I treasure those times. Exposure and experience were suddenly his."

"By this time I'd reached leaving age I decided that the theatre was definitely my career and that's where I was heading. Of course, I knew it a long time before that. It was probably the first thing I ever knew."

Reg was then hired as general understudy ("and moving the scenery") for the Phillip Street revue *Round the Loop* covering for Gordon Chater, Max Oldaker and Barry Humphries. At the same time he began classes with Hayes Gordon, who was to have a considerable influence on the young performer. "Working with Hayes and my involvement with the Ensemble Theatre was probably the most important education that I had."

"I broke away for a trip to England to look around there. He worked as a chorus boy in a touring version of *Bless the Bride*. "I was engaged as a dancer — how, I don't know."

After a year he was back at the Ensemble Theatre. He worked there for the next two years in plays such as *The Drunkard*, *The Double Dealer* and *Miss Lonely Hearts*. "By 1961 I decided I wanted to step out. I was beginning to feel that I was locked into a dogma, perhaps I needed to get out and stretch my wings and apply what I had learnt in a broader theatrical situation. And I suppose I always wanted to make something of myself and Hayes made it very clear that he didn't want stars in his system. I believed, and still believe, very firmly that theatre can't survive without stars and the star system. All of us mere mortals want some sort of gods that we can believe in. And people have their gods in tennis, cricket and football and every other aspect of the performing arena. The theatre needs it. It also needs it to attract people into the theatre."

REPERTORY ROSE

Reg then joined the Union Theatre Repertory Company in Melbourne. He spent two years there doing a different play every three weeks. He did Shakespeare and Shaw as well as contemporary plays by William Inge and Ionesco. Reg's first effort as an author came with the Union Rep. He wrote the book and lyrics for *The Good Ship Walter Raleigh* — "a bastardised cross of *HMS Pinafore* and *The Pirates of Penzance* billed as a 'musical romp'. It didn't do awfully well, but it didn't deter me. I've had lots of that since then."

"Then I returned to Sydney and as I really hadn't made any mark on the Sydney scene, it was a matter of starting all over again. After sitting around I got my break at the Independent in *Oh Dad, Poor Dad* with Lyndall Barbour. From there to a replacement at the Ensemble, then to the Old Tote for *The Importance of Being Earnest*. "While doing *Earnest* I was appearing at the Ensemble on Saturday afternoons in *The Canterville Ghost* which was a concoction of mine and John Frazer's. It was colourful and proved very popular."

Reg was invited by the South Australian Theatre Company and appeared in the opening season. Included in the traditional repertory was Reg's second attempt at authorship.
with book and lyrics for West of the Black Stump, a Western musical.

From there back to Sydney for the John McKellar revue A Cup of Tea, a’Bex and a Good Lie Down. This was an enormous success, playing Sydney for over a year, and later Melbourne and Canberra. “I didn’t feel the stuff I had in it was terribly rewarding and I felt rather trapped. However, I stuck it out because I’m a professional if nothing else.”

All this experience in revue, repertory and composition had been gained by the time Reg had reached the ripe old age of 26. For a young performer, he already had a great deal under his belt.

TELEVISION GREY

“At that stage I was invited to do a children’s programme on ABC Television called Crackerjack which was a recreation of an English series of the same name. That went very well and on the strength of that, the ABC offered me a night time television show, called I’m All Right Now. It wasn’t exactly a variety show. They were billed as ‘mini-musicals’. I came up with the format and the ABC got a writer out from England. We didn’t see eye-to-eye at all — I felt he was writing a script that had nothing to do with me and my personality as I had conceived it. It was judged a failure and caused a lot of heartbreak. I went into a serious decline after that.” Well, for several weeks anyway.

A stint at the Doncaster Theatre Restaurant followed, on a double bill with Kamal “on his way up.” Then back on television in the last days of the Mavis Bramston Show. “When Mavis died, they did another show called Anything Goes — a replacement Mavis, but with even less freedom — but that too died very quickly and I was beginning to feel that I was some sort of jinx to these projects.”

With Peter Batey, an old friend, he produced the revue Gone Potty in Canberra — “as a way of surviving, as no one was offering us a job, we again had to create our own employment.” Back to the Doncaster for an updated version of The Mikado called Mikado ’69. Ironically while performing there, he was offered the comedy roles in the Gilbert and Sullivan operettas for the Elizabethan Opera’s Australia-wide tour. This was something he had long wanted to do, but he was bound to his contract for Mikado ’69. “I felt thwarted. Dennis Olsen got those roles and has been doing them ever since — with great success — and deservedly so.”

“By this stage, I seemed to have exhausted so many areas — the state theatre companies, television — it seemed to me from then on I was going to repeat myself.”

ROCK MUSICAL MAUVE

“In 1969 Hair came to Australia and my sister was in it and I was only interested because of her involvement. I didn’t want to know about it — in fact I felt that theatre was sliding irrevocably into the dunny. Ridiculous! Perhaps I was jealous because something new was being allowed to happen and I wasn’t part of it. However, when I saw the show, these prejudices vanished. I was emotionally worked over, and amazed by what I was seeing. Then I knew that I had to be in that show — I didn’t care how. I pestered my way into it — I was the last person they wanted — but I grew my hair and I went on as a member of the tribe at $70 a week.” Gradually he worked himself into larger parts.

The experience proved therapeutic both personally and professionally. “Suddenly my career, which I thought had come to a halt, took a side road maybe it was the highway, and I’d been on the side road up until then. I went off in a direction I hadn’t anticipated.” It’s interesting to ponder on what would have happened to Reg Livermore’s future if he had been able to accept that G and S contract he was offered.

Suddenly instead he rode on a new wave of rock musicals. Hair was followed by Jesus Christ Superstar — as a replacement for Herod. “Three minutes, I had, 48 minutes a week. But at the same time I’d started to extend that role to nine minutes and I was starting to feel guilty. Then I was given the Rocky Horror Show by Jim Sharman. Well, this was tailor-made for my sensibilities — or insensibilities. But also in that show by the time I left that after eight months I’d added half an hour of my own dialogue. It was naughty, but that was the reason people were coming. I wanted to see what I’d say that night. I found the part insufficient — there was so much more that the audience needed to know about Frank ‘N Furter, because he fascinated me — so I gave it to them.”

BETTY BLOKKBUSTER GOLD

“It was then that Eric Dare offered to star Reg in his own one-man show. “I’d never thought about it consciously, till he came to me.” Eric Dare had the Bijou at Balmain as a cinema. “Within three months of his asking me, the Bijou had been converted to a live venue, the material got together and on it went as Betty Blokk Buster Folilies.”

For Reg, this was One Giant Step. “It was the ultimate freedom. I was given open slather by Eric — it was like flying blind. Betty’s success wasn’t immediate. It didn’t get good newspaper coverage — some newspapers even refused to review it saying that they didn’t cover ‘that sort of show’. It took four months before it was really bringing in money. It was only that Eric had faith and believed that there was an audience out there, that the show survived. We did eight months followed by a seven months’ tour.

“I pursued a definite theme with Wonder Woman, my next show. I was examining the rise of the militant female. It was concerned with women rising above their hardships and domestic situations — taken to the point of absurdity. It was m mightily sympathetic to women and constantly I showed the crassness of the Australian male. The audience response to this ‘exploratory exercise’ was just as enthusiastic and it had a ten month run in Sydney and several months on tour.”
1

On Earth: Tom Dodd has 85 candles on his birthday cake this year, but he is not having much fun. Everyone says, “You’re too old for this! You’re too old for that!” “Just wait and see”, says Tom. And he blows out the candles, packs his bag and sets out on his adventures.

On Titan: TZ99 Zero Minus 4 has calculated her age to be 1,000 years, 4½ hours, 3 minutes and 26 seconds. To celebrate her 1,000th birthday, TZ99 Zero Minus 4 is sent to Earth on an important mission. What happens when the Titan meets Old Dodd?

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY: ANNE HARVEY
DESIGNER: CAROLINE JONES
AGE LEVEL: Infants and Primary
LENGTH: 50 minutes
PRICE: $1.00 per student or $2.00 per family
CAST: Two puppeteers

2

A selection from the fables told by the legendary Greek slave.

Aesop was the slave-storyteller who lived in Greece about 500 years BC. Some of the fables he told were original, others came from even older sources, probably Egyptian, Babylonian or Indian. Many ideas from these fables have become everyday expression. In this show a number of the fables, both popular and less well-known, have been turned into short entertaining plays for puppets.

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY: RICHARD BRADSHAW
DESIGNER: BEVERLY CAMPBELL JACKSON
AGE LEVEL: Infants and Primary
LENGTH: 50 minutes
PRICE: $1.00 per student or $2.00 per family
CAST: Two puppeteers

3

Written and presented as a comedy, the intention of this play is to encourage children to see that there are different attitudes to ownership, property and possession. The play is aimed at both infants and primary and combines music, songs and visual effects with an underlying storyline.

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY: ANNE HARVEY
AGE LEVEL: Infants and Primary
LENGTH: 50 minutes
PRICE: $1.00 per student or $2.00 per family
CAST: Two puppeteers

4

Puppet Power is a lively and inventive show during which the puppeteers demonstrate how to make and use a variety of puppets — finger puppets, rod and glove puppets, junk puppets and marionettes. Puppet Power has been devised as an entertainment which will stimulate interest in making and using simple but effective puppets.

DEVISED BY: RICHARD BRADSHAW
AGE LEVEL: Infants and Primary
LENGTH: 50 minutes
PRICE: $1.00 per student or $2.00 per family
CAST: Two puppeteers

Not available in N.S.W. country. Plays in Queensland (Term 1), Victoria (Term 2) and in Sydney (for one week only).
NED KELLY BLACK

Reg's next development was the musical *Ned Kelly* for which he not only wrote book and lyrics but also directed. "It was a very real step towards creating something Australian within Australia on a scale that had not been seen before." Its failure is a bitter memory for Reg.

What went wrong? "It opened in Adelaide and I believe and maintain that it was a political situation there — the Adelaide Festival Trust acts in an entrepreneurial capacity receiving government funds — there are factions in Adelaide who believe that funds should be given only to 'worthier causes' such as the State Opera Company, not to such trivia as a musical. I was angry that they were suggesting that the audience that might have enjoyed *Ned Kelly* had no right to, or to be even catered to. So the papers got onto it, and it was destroyed there in Adelaide. It did in fact go to Sydney but already word was out against it.

"So I had a rest for a year, then came Sacred Cow which I suppose was an ode to Australian apathy. It was about my anger — one of the papers had said in a review about *Ned Kelly* about me that 'some one should put a rein on this boy's imagination' — I thought it was one of the cruelest things said about anyone, anywhere. So Sacred Cow was about all those things people don't want to talk about. Same format, with black and cynical humour predominating."

Again, Reg found a responsive audience for this darker material. This time he played shorter seasons of three months in larger, commercial theatres in both Sydney and Melbourne.

"As a farewell gesture, I thought we'd have a nostalgic evening, a look-back in fondness" — so *Son of Betty* was born — "a concert of favourite bits."

LONDON BLUE

"Then after that I was taken to London by the Stigwood Organisation and I did a thing called Sacred Cow. Sacred Cow in my mind was Australia, Hal Prince had been out to Australia and he liked what I was doing and so between the London Stigwood office and Hal they got me on there." The London Sacred Cow was not the Australian show but rather like *Son of Betty* in being an amalgam of selected pieces from all the previous revues. The milder and the more universal of the numbers were chosen.

"Well it's now a well known fact that I wasn't a success. I certainly left my mark — it wasn't apathy, it was horror — the English were horrified." At one preview a more extreme sketch was tried. "On that particular evening a riot broke out in the theatre. Someone rushed down the aisle and shook his fist at me and said 'I'll give you a week in this town.' One side of the theatre was arguing with the other. I was standing there stunned — I still had 12 minutes of the sketch left. There was an Australian correspondent in the house that night, so that the local papers were filled with the horror of Reg in London.

"The theatre had a lot to do with it — it was real West End where they do all those safe plays. The sort of thing I was doing should have been done in an experimental house. Nobody had ever heard of me. It was a marketing problem and London theatre was and is going through a very slack period and they don't want my kind of thing. They want reassurance."

CIRCUS TINSEL

"While I was in London I was asked to be in *Barnum*. I was looking for an out from my one-man shows, at least for a while — and I knew I'd have to work again. And I was thinking about my following, the audience that attracted in Australia — I certainly wanted to take them with me.

"It's an energy performance that's required. I think the show's reasonably optimistic which is why I wanted to do it. It says to people don't be afraid of things, don't settle for dreary old lives when you can have something a little more spectacular if you want it. Despite the black comedy sometimes, all my shows have been optimistic statements — about hope and courage and survival."

FUTURE RAINBOW

"Yes, I think I'll go back to one-man shows — I feel it within at the present — I'm beginning to think about the things I want to say. I'd like to find a way to present them differently so that they were new and surprising all over again.

"I'm certainly interested in film. I haven't been offered anything as yet. But that's another area that I'll have to manufacture myself. Either I write myself or find some one who wants to write for me.

"Then there's the possibility of New York in 1983. Hal Prince is keen to present me here in a one-man show. Again, the marketing would be the problem. It would have to be Off-Broadway, I think."

Reg Livermore: colourful, creative, dynamic, ambitious. As Barnum he'll soon be singing:

*The splendour of a sunrise*
*The dazzle of a flame*
*The glory of a rainbow*
*I'd put 'em all to shame."

Give him half a chance and an empty stage and he'll do just that.
by Justin Macdonnell

How does one start to characterise any Festival? Some, of course, have a sufficiently specialist profile, whether it be jacarandas or choral singing which point a direction. Others, one can say are "about the Arts". But, in a Festival like Sydney's with over 500 individual events ranging from showjumping to Lieder, it is hard not to start talking about "tourism" potential and "low incidence of rainfall in the month of January" rather than come firmly to grips with this extraordinary celebration.

Sydney's Festival was born in 1977 as a great public bash of free entertainment in the parks and popular events for all ages and tastes. Commencing on New Year's Eve with a huge open-air concert on the steps of the Opera House and running its giddy way through to finish on Australia Day, traditionally, but not invariably, January 26. (This year as a result of some twisted bureaucratic thinking, it is February 1!) It has defied the knockers and in some cases gravity, to stay afloat and become a permanent feature of the city's year.

In a program which totals 29 theatre productions and over 40 art exhibitions alone, it's difficult to isolate characteristics that might make the Festival work in an artistic sense. An on-going aspect of the Festival since its second year has been the premiere seasons of new Australian plays presented in association with the Ensemble Theatre which in 1982 will be called "The Ensemble Festival of Playwrights" sponsored by Qantas. From a comparatively modest beginning at the Stables Theatre this important venture now plays to capacity audiences in the Philip Street Theatre with four plays being showcased week by week.

1982's line up is Indian Summer by Justin Fleming, which deals with the remarkable 34 days reign of Pope John Paul I; I've come about the Suicide by Craige Cronin; John Smythe's Conundra and a political comedy, The Right Man by Kenneth Ross.

One can, of course, philosophise endlessly about what one is trying to do in assembling a Festival package. Our primary venue, theatrically, in 1982 is the Seymour Centre and, considering what would happen there that might not simply be a duplication of other theatre in Sydney either at that time or through the year, we considered that if there should be a policy it would be something like "simple tricks done staggeringly well". We wanted to place in contrast two elements which seemed to be fundamental to an idea of the theatre. On the one hand the physical, if you like environmental, skills as one half of the playwrights' and actors' craft and, on the other hand the verbal literary aspect which is its natural concomitant.

Almost coincidentally, as it happens, our venue points to the contrast. Up-stairs, we have in the Everest Theatre a new production, A Week of Dreams, by the renowned Black Theatre of Prague. Next door in The York Street Theatre, Steve Berkoff's London Theatre Group at the beginning of an Australian tour, (in association with The Playbox Theatre) in Berkoff's adaptation of Edgar Allan-Poe's The Fall of the House of Usher. Both companies have, of course, been exposed in varying degrees to Australia before. It is interesting that these two companies coming from very different theatrical traditions still, however, use movement, the play of light and darkness and, to a certain extent, an almost physical neurosis as the basis of their communication.

Sir Thomas Beecham and Dylan Thomas must be considered, surely, in their very different spheres of activity as two of the greatest wordsmiths in English this century. They seemed a good starting point from which to develop the idea of the verbal and literary half of our theatre tradition. The Melbourne Theatre Company's Beecham starring David Ravenswood is almost a double entry in these stakes inasmuch as it is a highly verbal play about an extraordinary musician who,

Ironically in many quarters, is at least as well remembered for his use of the English language as for his music making.

Its companion piece in the Downstairs Seymour Centre is a production from New Zealand, No Good Bovo, with Welsh actor Raymond Henwood in the role of Dylan Thomas. The play itself, which draws closely on Dylan's own writing, is set in the New York bar where he spent his last, fatal, spectacular bender.

A tradition which the Festival, in association with Nimrod Theatre has developed over recent years has been the production of a children's play on Clark Island in the middle of Sydney Harbour. From 1978 to 1980 Treasure Island and Pirates at the Barn drew families from all over Sydney for their month-long seasons in this unique setting. In 1982, Nimrod will be presenting The Cocky of Bungaree by John Romeril in a production by Chris Johnston.

Tradition aside, let's look now at some of the innovations in 1982 which might themselves become annual events. The first and undoubtedly
most spectacular next January will be a concert performance by the Australian Opera of Verdi's La Traviata in the Sydney Domain with Dame Joan Sutherland in this, one of her most famous roles, with principals and chorus of the company together with the Elizabethan Trust Orchestra under the baton of Richard Bonynge. New York's Central Park has long been famous for its splendid summer evenings of opera out-of-doors. Whether it takes off and becomes an annual event or proves simply a great curiosity, it is an important first, both for the Festival and its collaboration with the Australian Opera. As well as showcasing structured work, however, it's important for Festivals, if they are to genuinely stimulate and encourage activity, to provide facilities for work in progress and for personal artistic innovation. Two new venues will assist this process in 1982. The first is the Festival Club to be located in the recently refurbished Plunkett Public School in Woollahra. The Club, which will operate on the basis of monthly weekly memberships and nightly admission at the door, will have a range of performance and workshop activities from photography and audio/visual through dance, mime, puppetry, drama, poetry and music. We hope that it will be a talking point and a talking place for artists, visitors and the public during the period. The venue will be licensed and have meal service.

The second new venue will be in the midst of Hyde Park, where City Scape, a semi-enclosed theatrical structure will, both physically and from a performance point of view, continually up-date during January our perceptions of life in the City. In the City Scape, the public will be encouraged to participate through marionettes, giant images and through the construction of a mural, to expand their daily experience of Sydney in active creative terms. At the Sydney Town Hall, which is the focus of the Festival's own music programme, another but much more small scale innovation will be taking place. Over a series of three nights the remarkably polymathic musical tastes and urbanity of James Murdoch will combine with the Seymour Group and a range of Australia's compositional talent to present three key concerts/colloquies on the state of Australian composition today. Five young composers, Trevor Pearch, Michael Smetanin, Richard Vella, David Joseph, Robert Douglas, will have their works (three of them premieres) scrutinised in the wider context of music writing today. Senior composer, Peggy Glanville-Hicks, whose musical horizons over the past 50 years have encompassed all the major musical/theatrical forms, as well as music criticism will construct a major retrospective of her life.

Electronic music composers, Graham Hair and Martin Wesley-Smith, will conduct "a public conversation" on where this crucial but often baffling area of music "is at" in the 1980's in the last of these sessions.

In the not-so-contemporary music area, we are also celebrating the Bi-Centennial of Joseph Haydn in a concert which will exhibit his mastery of form in a programme of two major concerti, the Symphony No 49 and the secular cantata, Ariadne on Naxos sung by the expatriate mezzo, Patricia Price. In the music-theatre area, we have what we believe may be a world first: Schoenberg's Pierrot Lunaire in association with the radical and innovative young Seymour Group under the direction of Stuart Challender (by courtesy of the Australian Opera). The Festival invites the public to take not one but two fresh looks at this essential masterpiece of our time. Firstly the ensemble, with male alto Hartley Newnham, in the title role, will present the work in concert. After the interval they will appear in a staged production by James Murdoch.

And, last but certainly not least, two extraordinary and totally contrasting divas will sing in their inimitable way. Soprano, Rita Hunter, whose name is almost a by-word for all that is biggest and best on the operatic stage, will give her first-ever recital in Australia in a programme of arias and duets (with Lauris Elms) from the roles that have made her a major star.

Robyn Archer, after an absence abroad of almost 12 months, working and studying in Britain, Germany and North America, returns for two major concerts in the Sydney Town Hall. The first, an all-Brecht recital of songs written by his three major musical collaborators, Weill, Eisler and Dessau. The concert will also coincide with the release of Archer's Brecht recording for EMI which she has recently completed with the London Sinfonietta. Her second concert nearer to home, is a programme of jazz and country in the style that's made her a major musical identity in this country.

Obviously, these are highlights only of what has become the activity that has transformed Sydney's summer into the liveliest. But, you don't have to take my word for it, ask David Jones!

* Justin Macdonnell is Entrepreneurial Consultant to the 1981 and 1982 Festivals of Sydney.
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On the razzle
by Irving Wardle

Whether or not British playwriting is in a healthy condition, we are certainly enjoying a golden age of theatrical adaptation. The first prize in this department goes unquestionably to David Edgar for the RSC's Nicholas Nickleby; but even without counting that heroic piece of work, there are numerous other writers — among them Christopher Hampton, Michael Frayn, Thomas Kilroy, Trevor Griffiths — who have promoted the craft of adaptation to a new level of artistic self-respect.

The reigning virtuoso of the group is Tom Stoppard, who specialises in acclimatising previously inaccessible foreign work to the English stage, and who has followed up his version of Schnitzler's Undiscovered Country with On the Razzle (Lyttelton) based on Einen Jux will er sich machen by the allegedly untranslatable Johann Nestroy. Thornton Wilder beat Stoppard to this text. But just as The Matchmaker comes as a revelation if you see it after Hello Dolly!, so does On the Razzle if you see it after The Matchmaker (no Dolly Levi, for a start.)

In the free-spending old days, a production like John Wood's with its five sumptuous sets and large cast teeming with farce specialists would have been enthroned in the West End. Only the subsidised stage can afford this kind of thing today, but the effect is still one of an outsize commercial hit. For this there is a penalty to be paid. Nestroy's Viennese idiom of local dialect and multiple puns has given Stoppard a springboard for his own verbal somersaults. But where Nestroy had good reason to cultivate wordplay as an anti-censorship device, in Stoppard it is there exclusively for the laughs.

Likewise his treatment of the main plotline in which two stunted stop assistants sneak off for a night on the town so as to acquire a "past" they can look back on in the long years of drudgery ahead. Any pathos this may have held for Nestroy's own audience is thoroughly purged from Stoppard's jocular version. However, its tone is absolutely consistent, and is instantly established in the person of Dinsdale Landen's Zander, the skinflint shop owner who keeps his employees in overworked penury and forbids the marriage that would remove his niece from the till, while paying preening court to a well-to-do milliner in his Grocery Company uniform. What Mr Landen does is to concentrate on Zander's absentmindedness and vanity, thus dispelling any notion that he might be a disagreeable boss. You can hear his spurs jingling a mile away, like the alarm-clock in Captain Hook's crocodile, but there is nothing to be feared when he does arrive.

Nor is there much sense that the truants are taking a risk. Their only moment of fear comes as the penniless escorts of two girls in a horrendously expensive restaurant; and they rapidly dispel it when the apprentice Christopher boldly puts in an order for oysters and champagne. Christopher is played en travesti by Felicity Kendal in the likeness of a small defiant boy; and if the spirit of rebellion lingers anywhere in the show it is in her marvellously quick-witted performance.

You could argue that by removing bullying and fear from the play, Stoppard has thereby snapped its farcical mainspring. The answer to that is that he has substituted his own kind of farce. I mentioned that On The Razzle contains plenty of jokes; but the point is that it contains nothing else. The whole text is made up of puns, syntactical misunderstandings, cadenzas of fantasy, and verbal distorting mirrors, which jointly conspire to create an atmosphere of spiralling lunacy once the piece gets into its stride. You cannot claim this as a new form of farce as we have no other writer who could attempt it. But it certainly counts as the most amazingly sustained firework yet to come out of Stoppard's box.

In flat contradiction to my claims for the adaptation boom, Brian Friel's version of Chekhov's Three Sisters plunged Dublin's autumn Theatre Festival into the old stage Irish bog. Presented by Field Day — the pioneer Derry-based company that created the masterly Translations (reviewed in the August issue of TA) — Stephen Rea's
production came as a crashing disappoint­ment — with its Captain Boyle-like Vershinin, its plonkingly underlined local references, and its total insensitivity to the breathing points in the text. It left me with only two positive memories. First, an immortal Irish line: "I'm starting there first thing in the morning one of these days"; and a scene where Niall Buggy's univer­sal snubbed Baron takes over the stage. At the doctor's newspaper quotation, "Balzac was married in Berdichev town," Irina and the young soldiers start making up a guitar song; the Baron then goes to the piano to join in and spoils it by getting the harmony wrong. "I'm lost," he says; "I can't play without music." That, I submit, is a genuine addition to the Chekhov heritage.

Beckett at 75
by Colin Duckworth

(Colin Duckworth was invited to partici­pate in the Beckett Colloquium at the Centre Pompidou, part of the 10th Paris Festival d'Automne.)

Paris has done Samuel Beckett proud for his 75th birthday — a little late, it is true (the dreaded day was 13 April) but better now than not at all. The city is strewed with bits of Beckettiana, largely due to the collaboration between the Centre Georges Pompidou (still showing its innards), the Renaud-Barrault Company, and New York University in France.

Live on stage we have seen Madeleine Renaud's Oh les Beaux Jours, directed by Roger Blin, Come and Go and The Lost Ones, directed by Lee Breuer, Premier Amour, directed and played by Christian Colin, Beckett's own production of Krapp's Last Tape with Rick Cluchey. To come are Textes, Fin de Partie (with Pierre Chabert), Rockaby, Ohio Impromptu, Dis Joe (directed by Alan Schneider, with David Warrilow), Textes pour rien, and Compagnie.

In all, six theatres are involved, as well as the Grand Foyer of the Centre Georges Pompidou, which is given over to a Beckett exhibition (posters of productions from several countries, but none, alas, from down under), and the Centre's small theatre, which is showing a number of film and TV productions of Beckett's works, notably Michel Mitrani's Tous ceux qui tombent. Film (US version with Buster Keaton, and English version with Max Wall), a splendid Goaler with Leo McKern and Max Wall, Shades (Ghost Trio, But the Clouds and Not I), Quadrat I and II (Beckett's latest work, which was first shown publicly, on German TV, on 8 October).

That does not exhaust all the offerings, but one can see the stress laid on new work and on adaptations of prose works. Two of these deserve particular comment, for good and bad reasons. David Warrilow's tour de force in The Lost Ones (which he is doing here in the French text, Le Depueleur) seemed to achieve the impossible task of making something theatrically valid out of Beckett's long anthropological description of the life and habits of dwellers in a cylinder. After being relieved of our shoes and coats, we were ushered into a totally black cylinder some thirty feet across, one half of which was a four-tiered amphi­theatre. Flooring of thick black foam rubber. For each spectator, a pair of theatre-glasses. With wry but sympathetic detachment Warrilow recounts the attempts made by the inhabitants to understand their environment, explore it and escape from it. From a box he produces a set of tiny human figurines and twelve-inch high ladders of wire, which he erects within a circle, never pausing in his account. Around them he places a broken half-cylinder. Only this microscopic world is now visible; through the glasses one loses all sense of size and perspective. Then the manipulator becomes one of the inhabitants himself, solitary and naked. A naked woman appears, crouching against the wall, mechanically exhibits herself, is swallowed by darkness again. Although I would have been happier to have Warrilow in an unobtrusive black costume instead of sloppy academic's gear, and am not convinced that the narrator/manipulator/human dweller are best done by one man, this was an intense and moving theatrical experience that we should see in Aust­ralia.

By far the most satisfactory of all the productions I saw was Premier Amour. Set, by Christian Colin, on a ship's deck, the narrator addresses not the audience (as Cluchey's Krapp does, wrongly I think) but an unseen auditor in a deck chair, back to audience. A woman in white is standing staring off backstage at the sea. She remains motionless until the final moments, but her role is justified by the constant expectation of interruption she provides. Colin's range of expressiveness, mastery of rhythm, blend of irony, self-mockery and acute sensitivity, made this a memorable performance worthy of its scaring and penetrating text.

The two colloquia ("Beckett in our Time" and "Beckett and Dramatic Expression") were hurried and left little time for each of us to develop more than obituary statements. Robbe-Grillet was lively and witty, Ruby Cohn deep and serious, John Calder and Georges Belmont full of insights based on years of close acquaintance with Beckett, the great Amer­ican director Herb Blau scarcely got into his fifteenth parenthesis before the whistle was blown on him. As for Beckett, he has left town, sending the organiser, Tom Bishop of NYU a letter similar to the one he wrote at Nobel Prize time, saying it was all just too much for him, etc, etc. He can safely return on 16 November.
Indian Dance
Advance notice of a festival seminar in Indian dance forms and their influence on contemporary theatre. The Indian hosts will try and arrange hospitality (but not fares) for a representative from each centre including Australia. Calcutta, January, 19X3.

Freedom Ain't No Bowl of Cherries
That's the title of Fourth Wall Repertory's latest production, a musical comedy about the relationship between nuclear power, the arms race and the comic dilemmas and heated problems of people living together. Touring Europe in the Spring of 19X2. Info from Fringe Theatre Service, Buiten Bantammerstraat 9, 1011 AX Amsterdam. (Tel. 020-24 4092)

New York's Other Theatres

Theatre in the San Francisco Bay Area
The Theatre Directory of the Bay Area 1981 includes profiles of 85 Bay Area theatre companies, listings of rental spaces, technical resources, workshops. Edited by Misha Berson, published by the Theatre Communications Centre of the Bay Area, 1182 Market St., San Francisco, CA 94102. SUS 7.65.

Theatre Tape Festival
This is a non-profit organisation whose collection of video cassettes documents current theatre in Europe. Programmes available as a travelling festival, and will be in Australia (Feb-March 1982), Cardiff (April), New York (June). The collection includes work by Laurie Anderson, Peter Brook, Club Teatro Roma, Norma Jean Deak, Dur-an-ki, Taduez/Kantor, Meredith Monk, Schaubuhne am Hallischen Ufer, Taller Amsterdam, Theatre of Mistakes. For more information: Chris Decon and Roland Helmer, Theatre Tape Festival, c - Fak Theatre, Fevendaal 150", 2311 JP Leiden, Netherlands.

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Director, Lois Adamson; Musical Director, Colin Fischer.

Designer, Keith Young; Choreographer, Keith Bain. (Amateur)

This was Canberra's first local G&S for some time; so it was surprising on opening night that the house was far from full, especially in view of Philharmonic's record of near-capacity audiences. Even the presence of the Governor-General, with entourage, did little to raise the emotional temperature.

The direction was routine, but just got by. Its chief virtue was the negative one of not getting in the way; its chief fault a lack of attention to detail. For instance, I can't believe that the Duchess of Plaza Toro would permit herself to disembark from a gondola unaided; and Garry Walbrook's Duke should never have been allowed to get away with upstaging his Duchess's song. There was also a tendency to plant the chorus in pre-arranged blocs around the stage, which did nothing to foster the illusion of spontaneity.

On the positive side were some good performances. Jim Pope as the Grand Inquisitor turned in a splendidly full-voiced performance; Judith Bauer as Casilda contrived to be simultaneously demure and sharp as a knife-edge; and Peter Wood's Marco was a study in innocence and grace.

Keith Bain's choreography was excellent, and well within the scope of an amateur company. (I'm giving him the benefit of the doubt and assuming that he was not responsible for the repellently coy hand movements that disfigured nearly all the concerted numbers.)

The design, by Keith Young, had a fundamental integrity that did much to enhance the production. The second act set in particular displayed just the right touch of absurd whimsy in its blend of the mysterious East and the Brighton Pavilion.

But apart from the general lack of lustre which can afflict opening nights, especially with an amateur company, there were problems which were unlikely to be solved with more performances or ripper audiences. The one that puzzled me most lay in the orchestra: when the Vice-Regal party entered to the strains of 'The Queen', I honestly thought that the basses and cellos had not arrived. A glance at the programme revealed that in a 28-piece orchestra there was one cello and one double bass. Admittedly, Sullivan's scores don't need a lot of bass tone — but this amounted to none at all, which called for some fine aural adjustments in the audience.

But the inaudibility of most of the singers can't be blamed entirely on conductor Colin Fischer. The hard fact is that these voices are not large enough for the Canberra Theatre. The diction suffered badly — an inexcusable failing in Gilbert and Sullivan — and even familiarity with the opera was no help.

All in all, this production was a mixed bag. The cast was not lacking in talent, and there was evidence of thoughtful hard work in the direction. But the enlivening spark of a creative imagination was missing.


Full of promise

EYES OF THE WHITES

by Michael Le Moignan

Eyes of the Whites by Tony Strachan, Nimrod Downstairs, Sydney, NSW. Opened November 4, 1981.

Director, Neil Arnfield; Designer, Bill Haycock; Lighting Designer, Jonathan Ciddor; Stage Manager, Glenda Johnson.

Cast: Juna Sambata, Roslyn Bobom; Peter Sambata, John Posikelli Alex; Tom Lashwood, Peter Whitford; Sara Lashwood, Christine Mahoney; Yuli Mbono, Ron Reeks.

If there are any good theatre companies still operating in Australia in the mid-eighties, it is a safe bet that they will be performing the plays of Tony Strachan.

The seventies was a rich decade of growth for the Australian theatre, and yet most of the plays of lasting worth were written by half a dozen people, with a few "one play writers". One major new playwright per year would be a very good average to maintain. The most recent to emerge from the creative chrysalis have been Louis Nowra and Stephen Sewell.

Eyes of the Whites does not quite signal Tony Strachan's arrival as a major playwright. It does announce that the Nimrod has once again discovered a new writer with an original voice and tremendous potential. I hope he will be able to allow his evident gifts to mature and flourish.

Most of the action of the play takes place in pre-independence Papua New Guinea in 1969. "Doctor Tom", who has spent twenty years building a lucrative business at the expense of the natives, is standing in a local election against the young son of one of his black servants, a member of Somare's Pangu Party.

The white master makes his first appearance dressed as Father Christmas, with a sackful of gaily wrapped bribes to buy votes. In twenty years of exploitation he hasn't bothered to learn pidgin, so communication with his electorate is limited. Doctor Tom's racism is barely disguised and Peter Whitford had the audience heartily loathing him from the first scene.

Two New Guinea actors, Roslyn Bobom and John Posikeli Alex, brought a wonderful intensity and pathos to the roles of Juna, the mother/servant, and her son Peter, the aspiring politician/revolutionary.

Juna's dilemma is exquisitely painful. In awe of Master Tom, she rejects her own son and campaigns for the white lifestyle she had learned to admire. She adopts the...
Searching and funny

MOVING IN

by Adrian Wintle

Moving In, by Matthew O'Sullivan. World premiere season at RTC Theatre, Wagga Wagga, NSW. Opened October 21, 1981.

Director, Colin Schumacher; Lighting, Roslyn Caldwell; Stage manager, Nicole Mitchell.

Cast: Justin Byrne, Kris Ralph, Wayne Pigram, Jenny Leslie, Stuart Carlin, Denise Tart.

(Matthew O'Sullivan's Moving In, a searching and funny play about the ups and downs of domestic relationships, enabled new RTC director Colin Schumacher to establish at one stroke definitive evidence of directorial process.)

The play is engaging, since it explores with relish and wit the verbal pingpong that marks any relationship. O'Sullivan's six characters in a Blue Mountains cottage bounce off each other in defining and adjusting their relationships, with the pivotal figures of a resolutely self-sufficient actor and his questing ex-wife providing a cantus firmus to the counterpoint of swift humorous dialogue.

O'Sullivan's ear in fact is tuned with batlike precision to the cadences of innuendo, revelation and assumption that give such piquancy to all relationships. There's froth here, a virtual cornucopia of laconic Australian wit; yet the play also has important and truthful things to say about communication between people, and how silence just as much as verbiage can create barriers to understanding between people.

Colin Schumacher paced his cast expertly, besides showing scrupulous attention to staging detail. The RTC Theatre has now been partially redesigned with a two-sided thrust stage flanked by tiered seating, and his achievement in acclimatizing his cast to this rather more revealing playing area was considerable.

Schumacher's players uniformly brought verisimilitude to domestic frivolities and predatory nuances alike. Justin Byrne's actor and Kris Ralph's ex-wife were entirely assured, bringing notably to the tensely orchestrated final scene a compassion and directness that touched the heart. Stuart Carlin's deadpan schoolteacher was a small masterpiece of controlled timing, while Wayne Pigram as a chauvinistic architect, Denise Tart as the schoolteacher's breathless girlfriend and Jenny Leslie as the chauvinist's wife were, in their various ways, equally entertaining.

daughter of the house, Sera (Christine Mahoney) as a surrogate daughter, as she has adopted what she imagines to be a white lifestyle and values, and she is betrayed by both.

Kerry Walker as Moira, the Master's long-suffering wife, balanced beautifully with Whitford's pig-ignorant, sanctimonious slob. Under the articulate direction of Neil Armfield, the cast complemented each other's dramatic moments in a very assured way. The performance I saw, which, to be fair, was not the First Night but a Preview, was peppered with long, significant pauses which wasted the energy generated, but doubtless the timing will tighten with rehearsal. There was an underlying control, an easy self-confidence about the way in which he enunciates and in the emotional directness he prevails. Sera's final sobbing fit I thought unnecessarily melodramatic.

The political argument — that colonial systems lead to exploitation, is incontrovertible but hardly original. Pre-Independence Papua New Guinea is depicted as a Garden of Eden and White Australia as a tainted Adam and Eve, to be removed as soon as possible. Before they contaminate the innocent local population with the acquisitive materialism of Mea culpa but so what! I kept hoping something unexpected would happen, but it never did.

The playwright has not seen his characters in the round, but from his own pre-determined point of view. Strachan was brought up in colonial New Guinea and there is something very authentic and deeply personal about the play, but he ultimately weakens his case by giving the opposition no strong arguments. Master Tom's blathering about private enterprise, when he is about to sell the villagers' land for a brickworks, can hardly be taken seriously.

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The one-sidedness of the play is a serious flaw. It lacks subtlety and surprises. Nevertheless, Eyes of the Whites is an impressive and powerful piece of theatre, full of promise.
Every Burglar Has a Silver Lining

La Veniexiana

by Suzanne Spunner

Cyrano de Bergerac
Every Burglar Has a Silver Lining
La Veniexiana


Director: Richard Wherrett; Set Designer: John Stoddart; Costume Designer: Luciana Arrighi; Lighting Designer: Keith Edmundson; Composer: Sarah de Jong; Stage Manager: Fiona Williams.

Cast: Cyrano: John Bell; De Gueuze: Robin Ramsay; Roxane: Robyn Nevin; Christian: Andrew McFarlane; Le Hect: Ron Haddrick; Raguenet: Rhys McGonagle; with George Shevtsov, Maggie Blinco, Andrew Tighen, Robin Bowring, Peter Flett, Robert Hensley, Rod Weaver, James Laurie, Alan Tolin, Derek Amer, John Sheerin, Barry Lovett, Graham Harvey, Sean de Ruyter, Craig Ashley, Diana Davidson, Rainer Skinner, Greg Ford, Victor Michalow. (Professional)

Every Burglar Has a Silver Lining by Dario Fo, translated by Tim Fitzpatrick.


Director: Mick Rodger; Designer: Peter Reeve; Lighting Designer: Walter Cavill; Stage Management: Peter Reeve, Paul Venables.

Cast: Burglar: John Allen; Burglar’s Wife: Lorna Lesley; Man: Bruce Spence; Woman: Lynette Curran; Anna: Barbara Stephens; Antonio: Michael Carman. (Professional)


Director: Mick Rodger; Designer: Peter Reeve; Lighting Designer: Walter Cavill; Stage Management: Peter Reeve, Paul Venables.

Cast: Prologue: Michael Carman; Julio: John Allen; Ona: Lynette Curran; Valeria: Barbara Stephens; Angela: Linden Wilkinson; Nena: Lorna Lesley; Bernardos: Bruce Spence. (Professional)

Sydney’s theatre is still reeling from the spiteful and unthinking cuts in funding administered by the Federal Government’s lackey, the Theatre Board of the Australia Council. For new and experimental work, the climate could hardly be less encouraging. Two of the bright spots in a bleak month have been return seasons for two previous successes.

At the Opera House, the Sydney Theatre Company has at last achieved a three week season in its rightful home, the Opera Theatre, for last year’s excellent production of Cyrano de Bergerac.

Despite some early problems with the acoustics, the play’s particular magic works well in the new venue—perhaps because it is suitably operatic in tone and theme.

John Bell’s Cyrano rewards a second visit: it is among his finest work, a creation of great subtlety and emotional power. The supporting cast is just that: Robin Ramsay, Robyn Nevin and the rest work valiantly to make us forget that the plot is flimsy and the characterisation (particularly of Roxane) unbelievable, but in the final analysis it is Cyrano’s play, his tragedy and his triumph, a romantic wallowing that is self-indulgent but irresistible.

Coincidentally, the other return season has the same combination of a talented company and a silly story. Two Italian plays, one from the nineteen-fifties, Dario Fo’s absurd Every Burglar Has a Silver Lining and an anonymous sixteenth century romantic satire, La Veniexiana, were presented earlier this year under the auspices of Sydney University’s Theatre Workshop. Full houses encouraged the cast to form their own co-operative to put on both plays again at the Seymour Centre Downstairs.

Every Burglar is a curious mixture of sophisticated comedy, farce and fairy tale. A burglar (John Allen) paying a professional call on a middle class couple (Bruce Spence and Barbara Stephens) gets involved in their extra-marital affairs and petty deceptions. The message appears to be that class corrupts. The play lacks the bite and well-aimed malice of Fò’s later, radical theatre, but there is an amusing naivety about the characters.

La Veniexiana is a slight but very intriguing play, which seems to offer a rare glimpse of another century’s sexual codes, a matter often glossed over by historians. Disappointingly, the potential is never fully realised.

The potential of the company is considerable, although they seemed at times to be trying a little too hard, forcing the lines. They deserve better material. In happier times, the Australia Council might have been expected to fund Mick Rodger and company on a limited life grant. Since the current Theatre Board apparently casts itself as bitumen to the Federal Government’s steam-roller, one can only congratulate the members of Gondola Productions as having the courage of their convictions, and hope they sell a lot of tickets!
Truly exceptional boredom

**Chinchilla**

by Michael Le Moignan


Director, Rodney Fisher; Set Design, Brian Thomson; Costume Design, Roger Kirk; Lighting, John Raymond; Stage Manager, Julie Warn.

Cast: Chinchilla, Peter Carroll; Mia, Jennifer Hagan; Reska, Robert van Mackelenberg; Leonid, Scott Higgins; Sergei, Matthew O'Sullivan; Vatza, Peter Cousins; Boris, Frank Garfield; Gabriel, Neil Fitzpatrick; Tamara, Jane Harder; Romola, Linda Cropper; Konstantin, Kerry McKay; Tancred, Aldo King; Clorindo, John Gofffredo; Paolo, Tristan Borrer.

**Chinchilla** is a dead bunny. The Sydney Theatre Company's final production of the year is a precious and pretentious string of inconsequential anecdotes about personalities and politics behind the scenes in Diaghilev's Russian Ballet Company (1909-1929). From a mass of merely dull, 70 year old gossip, playwright MacDonald has constructed a play of truly exceptional boredom.

There was Brian Thomson's set to distract the eye, for the first half hour, a brilliant optical illusion in black and white, a landscape stretching to the horizon which played games with distance and space, providing the characters with another dimension in which to move, almost another level of reality. Unfortunately, thanks to the turgid, esoteric text, it turned out to be a less interesting level. Fortunately, thanks to the turgid, esoteric text, there was Brian Thomson's set to distract the eye, for the first half hour, a brilliant optical illusion in black and white, a landscape stretching to the horizon which played games with distance and space, providing the characters with another dimension in which to move, almost another level of reality. Unfortunately, thanks to the turgid, esoteric text, it turned out to be a less interesting level.

**On Our Selection**

by Helen Musa*

**On Our Selection** a dramatisation of Steele Rudd's books by Bert Bailey, adapted by George Whaley. Q Theatre, Penrith NSW. Opened October 31, 1981.

Director, Kevin Jackson; Designer, Arthur Dicks; Lighting, Hugh Powell; Music Director, David Hallett.

Cast: Mother, Mrs White; Judith Fisher; Dad, Ben Gabriel; Dave, Jack Youens; Maloney, Alan Brel; Sandy, Alan Fletcher; Sarah, Deborah Masters; Joe, Martin Sharman; Parson, Billy Bearup; John Pratt; Cranky Jack, Peter Schwarz; Jim Old Man Carey; Bevan Wilson; Lily White.

When veteran actor-manager Bert Bailey first opened at the Palace Theatre, Sydney in May 1912 with his adaptation of Steele Rudd's *Selection* stories, the Sydney public warmed instantly to the characters of Dad, Dave and Mother, whom they recognised even from their city standpoint as true Australian archetypes.

Author Steele Rudd came down from the bush to see Bailey’s version and praised it as true to his conception. But from the outset even the most enthusiastic fans noticed some problems – for one thing, the melodramatic plot. Bailey had invented a couple of villainous squatters, a love story and a murder to hold the incidents together, and many found it weak. Worse, some of the characters were so exaggerated that they began to seem like “congenital idiots”. Paddy Maloney, the Irish neighbour appeared to *The Bulletin* “an utterly superfluous Hibernian”.

Here in 1981, Kevin Jackson’s Q theatre production does not escape these weaknesses. He makes an excellent go of the melodramatic plot, but we are simply not impressed with the truth of the bush characters.

Joe, the stuttering son of the Rudd family, for instance, seems not just a congenital idiot but an out and out maniac as played by Martin Sharman. He is scarcely distinguishable from the murderous Cranky Jack. The Scottish Parson and the Irish neighbour do seem superfluous, and the list of tricks and jokes surrounding them grows long and tedious.

The plot, however, survives very well. I particularly liked the boyish portrayal of Sandy Taylor by Alan Fletcher, although it had the effect of turning Laura Gabriel’s Kate Rudd into a woman of the world. Bevan Wilson as the squatter’s son Jim Carey carried off a deliberately rough version of Queensland suavity, although in his doubling role of the villainous father Carey he was heavy-handed.

Obviously Kevin Jackson had tried to evoke the spirit of Selection life in his cast, but it simply had not jelled. Some of his problems lay with the text being used, for the Q Theatre was using not Bert Bailey’s original stage version but George Whaley’s adaptation first seen at Jane Street in 1979. Whaley, disturbed by some dated aspects of the earlier version had rewritten it, taken some new incidents from the Selection stories, added some songs and updated the language to this era.

Whaley’s version does not work as well as one would imagine. When Dad, played with vigour by Ben Gabriel, lets slip out the word “bugger” in front of the Parson, one is struck by an obvious untruth, for a man of the bush would not have said it, least of all in front of Mother and his daughters.

When Bert Bailey played *On Our Selection*, he was said to have got a laugh on every line. Why did the Q theatre company come nowhere near that? Is it that the jokes are so bad? Possibly, but not likely given the spirit of the entertainment. It seemed to me that Kevin Jackson’s production was just so cluttered with business that the jokes don’t have a chance to work. The Q Theatre cast fell into the trap which awaits any performers of this play and overdid it.

But it must be said that the strength of Kevin Jackson’s production of *On Our Selection* was in the sentimental scenes. The plight of the drought-stricken selectors, the flight of Sandy and the love story between daughter Sarah and falsetto-voiced Billy Bearup all worked well. Whether such sentiment lines up with the rest of the play, however, is very doubtful.

*Helen Musa is editing Bert Bailey’s *On Our Selection* for Currency Press’s National Theatre series.*
Theatricality the essence
SHORTS
by Helen Musa

What distinguishes The King O'Malley Theatre Company from Others? Bad taste, vulgarity and true blue Australianism, says co-ordinator Les Marinos of the present season SHORTS shown at the Stables Theatre venue. And what is more, he believes, the company tries to break down the traditional barriers between departments and skills in the theatre and performance-media.

Thus in SHORTS we see Robyn Nevin and Liz Alexander trying their hands at directing and Phil Noyce moving from the screen to the stage as a director. Designer Brian Thomson directs too.

The season has been a huge success. An elderly gentleman was weeping over the phone because he couldn't get a ticket for his son, and people were fighting for tickets at the door when I was there. All in the spirit of the O'Malley Company, says Marinos, who relishes the intrusion of police-sirens into sensitive love scenes and alcoholic derelicts into rehearsals at King's Cross.

So what made them decide to put on a season of "shorts"? Firstly, says Lex. The King O'Malley Theatre Company was receiving lots of plays quite unsolicited, and so was the Sydney Theatre Company, but the funny thing was that most were short plays. It could be the television generation, he suggests, writers accustomed to shorter fare. It all led to the O'Malley Company getting an Australia Council grant which wasn't quite enough to carry the season off with style. This in turn led to the idea of the O'Malley getting together with its antithesis The Sydney Theatre Company ("Chalk and Cheese Productions"), says co-director Bob Ellis) to put on a full season of nine short plays.

Towering over the other performers as a personification of "Diversity, excitement, outgoing larrikinism" in the latest programme was John Hannan, who presided over Tim Gooding's Drums Along the Diamantina. A few compliments to the director ("That pushy little bastard Marinos"), a plug for NIDA graduates in the cast and a dig at Robert Hughes ("self-trained") and Liz Chance ("Method") were enough to distract from such plot as there was until the climax where Hannan executed the splits.

The essence of the evening was theatricality. Abraham the talking snake in Tim Gooding's play is straight from vaudeville ventriloquism. In Porn No Rape Trigger by David Knight everything led to a performance of superb timing which picked the packed house up and carried it along — light and sound effects at the flick of an actor's finger, and an enigmatic "Y" upstage added to the stageiness.

No matter that there was about as much substance as in a pavlova — the evening was an exercise in style. The best example would be in variations on the theme of death in Richard Murphett's Quick Death to Infinity, where Terry Bader reasserts himself as the funniest man in Sydney theatre and Liz Chance attitudinizes stylishly in all permutations and combinations of screen death, only spoiled by some dialogue at the end.

Most disappointing was Porn No Rape Trigger, in which a man and a woman play an infinity of roles from Malamud Yiddish to Shakespearean hero in order to attack each other. Get out of the auditorium of my being", says the woman to the man, hinting at a theme for the play. But it is a tired theme, and none of Marinos' directorial fireworks or the actors' versatility could disguise the fact. Quotations from Sir Thomas Wyatt and the "greats" weighed the play down with their pretentiousness, and by the time Mel Gibson tells Sandy Gore that her mother telephoned earlier we couldn't care less whether it is illusion or reality. But the tour de force acting in this play, divorced from the subject matter, was a treat. It is, as Marinos says, a wordy play.

Lex Marinos and his partners wanted to get together the most interesting group of people in Sydney theatre for this season of SHORTS. They have not failed to do so.
An anti-climax
MOVING ON, MOVING ON

by Sue Williams


Director: Robert Kimber.
Cast: Val Hammond, Annie Warburton, David Molesworth.

From the pen of Darwin Theatre Group's resident playwright has come a third play centred on the Territory. Simon Hopkinson's Moving On is a potentially funny play about two women on a coach tour from Darwin to Alice Springs. But, disappointingly, this play does not demand the usual attention of Mr Hopkinson's craft. Despite some delightful stereotyping the production missed and the play is not a success. There is no excitement.

Robert Kimber did not present a tight play: the action lagged and the opening did nothing to establish audience rapport. Moving On is reminiscent of the dated genre of drawing room comedy. And in places it is very funny situation comedy. For anyone who has added the dubious benefit of a coach tour to a list of regrettable experiences, David Molesworth as Neville (or Nev, but "never say driver") encapsulated the practised, automatic, jaded coach captain with considerable mirth.

But Annie Warburton's fading, frustrated, racy Marlene — the seasoned on-the-maker — was caricatured. However, her role did create amusement. As the housewife Jenny, making a precedence of independence, Val Hammond was perfectly frumpy, but dull. Jenny is the only character allowed any self-determination and while it is a subtle affirmation, Miss Hammond's performance was static.

This play is flat and almost nothing happens. At worst, it lapses into monotone; and the design gave no boost. The play demands intimacy — a sharing of the coach claustrophobia. But Browns Mart, the Group's home, was too vast. The high-vaulted space swallowed the actors. Technical problems with the slide projection simulating travel was slung far too high and only underlined the emptiness.

Commissioned for touring to Territory outback centres, the play was necessarily simple. But instead of a clean production it was dreary. Pruned of theatrical excess, it appeared stripped and drab.

It was an anti-climax for an anticipated season of substance.

Irony of fine performances

MARY BARNES
NEW SKY

by Jeremy Ridgman

Mary Barnes by David Edgar, La Boite Theatre, Brisbane Qld. Opened October 23, 1981.
Director, Malcolm Blaylock; Stage Manager, Julie Ann Willmns.
Cast: Mary, Jennifer Flowers; Eddie, Keith Avent; with David Olorenshaw, Jann Alcorn, Wesley Walker, Tony Colebatch, Nigel Rice, Toni Stewart, Michael Skelton, Ian Peters, Margo Alcorn, Brian Cavanagh, Jo Forsyth.

Designer, Mike Bridges; Lighting, James Henson; Music, Carl Vine.
Music performed by The Flederman Trio.

It was suitably ironic that on the first night of Mary Barnes, La Boite should have learnt that their fate in the hands of the Federal Government’s aggressive attack on the arts should have taken the form of a total withdrawal of their $20,000 subsidy. Ironic on two counts. Firstly, this singularly important play is the sort that, in an ideal world, would have found its way unhesitatingly into the programme of a major subsidised company; this is not the first time La Boite has demonstrated such wisdom and more than proven its funding credentials.

Secondly, one aspect of this complex play itself proved astoundingly apt. Not only does David Edgar, an ex-journalist, present a dramatised case study of the schizophrenic Mary Barnes, but his wider political achievement is to illuminate the compassionate and revolutionary ideals of the sixties, manifested in the alternative psychiatric community pioneered by R D Laing and Joseph Berke. Eventually, the experiment, of which Mary and her account are the living proof of success, is forced to terminate because, as the leader, Hugo, explains, the “worthy burghers” will not extend the lease on the East London house. Economic pragmatism (arguably motivated by cynical conservatism) rules the day. “Plus ca change,” the saying might go at La Boite, “plus c’est la meme chose.”

The play is a remarkable and ambitious statement, woven from various narrative and metaphoric strands. We witness the birth and growth of the community itself, visually realised in the gradual transformation of a bare room into a living area, furnished with comfortable messiness and littered with paintings, the fruits of Mary’s therapy. As the productive anarchy of the experiment crystallises around Mary’s “treatment”, its initiators are forced into increasingly self analytical postures; the liberal minded Douglas for example dabbles in the adventure but is unable to live without rules and leaves, symbolically donning the suit and tie he had so enthusiastically swapped for CND badge, sweater and desert boots in the first scene.

Then there is Mary Barnes’ own “journey through madness”, a desperate nightmare of guilt and self torture. No epiphany here, no miraculous turning point, but a brief story from Mary herself, to illustrate how her recovery emerges from the opportunity to give full range to her own maternal compassion and to see her experience objectively in the suffering of others. Such a fusion of epic parable and intense personal drama makes tough demands on the actor and the audience.

The production here, aided by Edgar’s specific and highly allusive use of sixties rock songs to punctuate the action, is well placed, but suffers from the need for long, dark moments of stage setting. The cast is strong, though there is the odd, aggravating mis-reading of a line and some of the actors fail to handle the peculiar blend of naturalistic ellipsis and flamboyant rhetoric in Edgar’s dialogue. Jennifer Flowers as Mary and Keith Avent as her therapist, Eddie, shine through however. Mary Barnes is as demanding a role as one could wish for and Flowers displays a stunning grasp of the character’s demonic power, foetal regressiveness and eventual determination; the parabola described by the path of the character through the play is crystal clear. Avent’s great achievement is to suggest continually the concern and sense of strategy lying behind Eddie’s energetic, laisser faire unconventionality. Two fine, complementary performances.

The QTC has fared better with the government cuts, but a 20% reduction in income might just be what was needed to see the curtailing of their “alternative” program, Tangent Productions: which again would be an irony, for after an auspicious start, the venture has come up trumps with a unique one-person show by Judith Anderson. It is a mixture of mime and mask, the style of which is adapted from her training at the le Coq school in Paris and the content inspired by conversations with migrants, at home and abroad.
Outstanding

NO END OF BLAME

by Michael Morley


Director: John Gaden; Designer: Stephen Curtis; Lighting: Nigel Levinge; Stage Manager: Malcolm Leech.


So End of Blame is a play which does not hesitate to tackle vast issues: the role of the artist within society, the responsibility of the artist to his own gifts or to the demands of those in authority; the question of the durability of art and its function within society; the role of the outsider, the gifted individual, who at times makes himself (needlessly?) intransigent and obdurate in the face of demands that he feels are inappropriate to his personal and political situation. These are all serious and worthy questions; but Howard Barker's great strength is to have addressed himself to them in a language which is flexible, concise, expressive, dense with argument when the situation calls for it and yet sharp in its satirical pointing of many of the arguments advanced. It is an outstanding, perhaps even a great, play: certainly, of all the contemporary plays I have seen in the last eight years, it has been the one which has most engaged my emotions and my mind.

Barker has been particularly fortunate in receiving a production as distinguished as John Gaden's. Having read the play in advance, I was convinced of the quality and interest of the writing in the first act, but somewhat dubious about the second act, when the principal character, loosely based on the Daily Mirror cartoonist Vicky, moves from central and eastern Europe to England. All of these doubts were swept away in the production. Scenes which had seemed a trifle muddled or even diffuse on the page came up in the hands of the director and the actors as alive, immediate and very funny.

Especially memorable were the scenes on the RAF base, where Bela (the cartoonist) arrives to address the air crew on some particularly lofty topic, following in the footsteps of Bertrand Russell as one of a series of distinguished guest speakers! Barker does not resort to coarse and obvious comedy centred on the idea of a distinguished speaker addressing men who are about to go off and probably meet death: his targets are at once larger and more varied than that. Moreover, he does not weight the scales in his protagonists' favour. And it is perhaps this which is the most distinctive feature of the play — the level of argument throughout, the way in which positions are restated and restated and then subjected to reappraisal and to relativisation from other characters.

In a strong cast, Geoffrey Rush as Bela and Deborah Kennedy, in a number of roles, stood out: the latter, in particular, made each of her varied characterisations completely convincing; and Rush's portrayal of the mature Bela, especially in the second half, was notable for its precision and careful observation. Robert Grubb's Grigor suffered a little from the fact that the dramatist allows him to swim out of sight for lengthy stretches of the play, but nevertheless his performance, especially in the earlier scenes, was up to his usual standard. And his portrayal of a Whitehall official in the second half was quite riveting and belongs in the galaxy of memorable characterisations he has provided over the last months. In short, all the cast deserve high praise, but particular mention must be made of Peter Crossley who, in two roles, showed yet again what strength and presence he can bring to apparently minor parts.

John Gaden's direction — his first major piece of work — was sure, subtle in places and displayed a keen ear and eye for detail and particularly for the comedy of the play. At the same time, it made no concessions to the arguments. The only note of criticism that might be levelled at the production would be at Stephen Curtis' design, which seemed somewhat overelaborate and fussy at times. There were some fine effects — notably the opening and closing sequences — but, in between, there were also some scenes which seemed to be slowed down somewhat by an excessive reliance on technical sleight of hand.
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No wider resonance

AMADEUS
A NIGHT IN THE ARMS OF RAELEEN

by Garrie Hutchinson


Director, John Sumner; Designer, Anne Fraser; Musical Arrangements, Helen Gifford; Lighting, Jamie Lewis.

Cast: Salieri, Frederick Parslow; Mozart, Bruce Myles; Frederick Parslow (Salieri) and Bruce Myles (Mozart) in MTC's Amadeus. Photo: David Parker.

It would be foolish to deny that Peter Shaffer is a master of his craft. For sheer theatricality, pace, performability, and use of the theatre's resources, images, imagination, grand themes; for achieving effects that can only be achieved in the theatre, ones that don't work on TV, film or in a book; for entertainment, value for money, he can hardly be beaten. Your Bonds, Becketts, Brechts, Brentons and Berkoffs, to think only of the B's, hardly measure up, do they? Narrow, ecletic, didactic, political, even.

Shaffer, on the other hand, goes for the big issues, or has, at least since he became a Big Playwright.

Royal Hunt of the Sun, Equus, and now Amadeus all made maximum use of the theatre's resources, and concerned themselves in various ways with the contrast between the savage and the civilised, Dionysian and Appolonian, God and Man, sacred and profane.

Big subjects, they certainly are. Big successes too.

Amadeus, as everyone knows by now, features a battle between the divine Mozart, and the worldly Salieri over two things. Firstly the injustice of God in giving Mozart such sublime talents but putting them in such a foul idiotic, foolish body, and not allowing Salieri to be more than an also ran, a forgotten Court bureaucrat. Secondly, Salieri's attempt at immortality through the killing of, or creating the profound music of, or the death of, Mozart, and because musically Salieri lies in Salieri's ultimate inability to achieve immortality as an assassin.

And the audience participates in learning (like those Disney Lives of the Romantic Composers) more about Mozart and Salieri, than they knew before.

Hardly anyone knows of Salieri, so profound has been his oblivion, or suspected that the divine Mozart was such a trollop.

The detective story, the contrasts, the scattering of bits of Mozart's music, the extremely good opportunities for the actors playing Salieri and Mozart (in this MTC production opportunities grasped and achieved by Frederick Parslow and Bruce Myles), the relative simplicity of the staging, and the occasional big effect where God speaks to Salieri, ought to make for a totally satisfying evening.

It doesn't. Shaffer is too glib, too neat and too symmetrical to be totally convincing.

His plays are about people who give in to the Dionysian, or who would like to. Mozart is portrayed as being in the hands of God, God's instrument, the creator of profound music with the all too human body. The problem is that Shaffer's portrayal of him stems from the opposite sort of artistic style. The tight, neat, clean, symmetrical, argumentative, Appolonian. Shaffer's plays come from the head not the heart, don't have the full-blooded commitment to the irrational in humans to entirely win over and move an audience or the profound arguments to convince them.

Still, you have to give him his due. Amadeus isn't boring, it tells you things you didn't know before, reminds you to buy some more Mozart, and offers the MTC an excellent production.

Apart from a few audio problems on opening night, John Sumner's direction is nicely paced, uses all opportunities for the proper effects, and gets full blast performances from Parslow and Myles, and a nicely simple, evocative design from Anne Fraser.

Much smaller in scale is Clem Gorman's A Night in the Arms of Raeleen. In this play, ex-bodgie, now teacher Moxy has a reunion with ex-gang members Rat, Bronx and the leader of the pack, the Kings Cross Yank. Moxy's married now, the daughter's left and there's trouble with his wife, Raeleen, aka The Painted Doll, formerly beloved by all the gang.

Moxy's not so much trying to recapture the past as reassure himself that they did indeed have a good time, the best time of
their lives. Along the way he does little experiments with the lingo of the day as a way of recalling specific exciting events and reinforcing a hopeful kinship with his fellow gang members 20 years on. Of course it doesn't really work.

Rat and Bronx frequently deny any knowledge of the things Moxy remembers and accuse him of not being there on the night of events they remember. It's clear that Moxy was an earnest hanger-on, not at the centre. Then, as now.

Neither Rat nor Bronx have made anything much of their lives, but retain a certain aggressive, larrakin presence. Rat especially. He has a great range of mannerisms, tics and jokes, indicating that perhaps he hasn't grown up all that far.

They're all waiting for the appearance of the legendary Yank. When he comes he's not what they expected. Not only does he claim he's been Born Again but he has an investment proposition. Turns out he's a not very successful con man, not the charismatic they remember.

One thing everyone present has in common is a memory of their last night as a gang, when there was a fight at Raeleen's flat, and some fought and some ran. No one can remember what really happened, except for Raeleen, perhaps. This was the night she and Moxy finally got together.

If that last night caused the gang to break up, then their recollection of it does it again. It causes Raeleen to tell each of them what she thinks and knows of them, and it is hardly flattering. Her destruction of all the men is especially poignant because they'd all been her lovers, in a fashion. She would have followed the Yank anywhere, he'd given her to Bronx and Rat, and Moxy won her on the last night, accidentally.

Raeleen remembers what it was really like when the gang was together, and what it's like now. Twenty years later she's leaving Moxy to sort things out.

There's a wealth of detail in the play, and a wonderfully detailed rat-like characterisation from Ron Challinor as Rat, but overall perhaps there's too much in it.

Too many themes, too much plot so that ideas aren't really taken up in depth. There's the language, the idea of recalling past happy times, the individual characters, the relationship between the men, the husband and The Painted Doll, notions about comradeship, cowardice, sexuality, growing up — it's all there, but too much is there.

There are also some structural problems. The revelation of each character's relationship with Raeleen is revealed in a spotlit soliloquy, which to me was a little clumsy. And Raeleen's cleaning up of everyone in turn at the end of the play was as well.

The play does evoke some of the emotions of lost youth, a golden era which wasn't but perhaps because of the caricatured nature of the people in the play, it didn't stimulate much sympathy or wider resonance for me.

Entertaining political theatre

MACARTHUR

NOT DROWNING MOTHER'S COURAGE


Director, Richard Bradshaw; puppets designed by Patrick Cook; stage design. Robert Dein; music composed by John Sturton; puppet maker, Ross Hill; Cast: General Douglas Macarthur, John Black; Native boatman, Australian soldier, Ross Browning; General Blant, John Curtin, Peter Cowan; Mayor of Darwin, General Blamy, Benjamin Franklin.

(Professional)


Can't Help Dreaming by Jenny Boul; Waking Up by Franco Raine & Dario Fo.

Director, Designer, Nicholas Tsoutsas; Sound, Derek Kreckler.

Cast: Peggy Wallach, Peter Cheslyn.

Mother's Courage devised and directed by Sue Ingleson, Banana Lounge, Comedy Cafe, Melbourne. Opened October 14, 1981.

Performed by Sue Ingleson; slides by Kate Gollings.

(Professional)

The figure and antics of General Macarthur have a grotesque, larger than life quality and his assault on Australia is an ideal subject for a puppet play. In General Macarthur in Australia, Roger Pulvers has brought together two of his thematic and stylistic preoccupations — the political and ideological effects of the American invasion of Australia and his interest in Japanese theatre forms. To this has been added the rare brilliance of the Australian Marionette Theatre under the direction of Richard Bradshaw, and Patrick Cook's cartoon character designs.

The ironical correspondence Pulvers draws between Macarthur and the commercial militancy of Colonel Sanders et al is borne out in Cook's conception of him in his personally commissioned, oversize hat emblazoned with the golden eagle, his hawk nose and permanently attached dark glasses, his chest festooned with freshly minted medals, marching about on short, faintly absurd puppet's legs. The play is full of witty sophisticated images and highly inventive puppetry: at one point Macarthur, having mistakenly landed at Mt Newman, encounters two Japanese business men who commit hari kari by ritually unzipping their stomachs from which they produce transistor radios and the odd plastic shark.

While the play utilises a number of different modes of puppetry, a contracted version of Japanese Bunraku is used for the main characters. In it the puppeteers are in full view of the audience — visibly invisible in their Khaki army fatigues just like the anonymous soldiers in the war games of the real Macarthur. The extra-ordinarily disembodied relationship of the puppeteer to the puppet is quite transfixing to watch, and the intensity of belief it creates without the distraction of illusion is remarkable. Robert Dein's sliding screens painted in bold outline and transparent colour, suggestive of Japanese wood-blocks, completed the distinct aesthetic of the production.

Pulvers' script explored not only Macarthur's personality, and his role here as an agent ambassador of military and industrial interests, but also raised the question of language and truth. Rhetoric and military double talk was shown to be an extension of Macarthur's inability to correctly name any of the Australian states he visited, and his penchant for renaming Australian cities after those of Texas. This attention to the devaluation of language firmly located the play in the context of contemporary relations between Australia and America.

Not Drowning But Waving is the third Melbourne production of the Adelaide based All Out Ensemble, and it consisted of two short, one-woman plays. Can't Help Dreaming, written by Adelaide writer, Jenny Boul, explores the suburban entrapment of a middle-class housewife in non-naturalistic, poetic language.

The opening of the piece was rich and suggestive — a room: a kitchen, vividly painted in distorted perspective suspended in space; standing inside a bride doll woman with a veil over her face, with every step she makes the kitchen just perceptibly swings against her; to the side and far outside the kitchen a man half naked, half suited encased in a clear plastic tube. In a flat, detached voice the woman states how...
to make a chocolate cake and how to marinate barbecue meat, then she slowly lifts her veil, raises her arms and tugs on invisible strings attached to the ceiling. The kitchen sways menacingly.

Unfortunately the piece achieved its peak in this opening sequence and the rest became a frustrating repetition of feminist cliches, which were all but drowned out by the incessant, maniacal swinging of the Alice in Wonderland model kitchen. At some point during this, the man smeared himself in tomato sauce and shaving cream but by then I was too irritated by the creaking to ponder what it meant.

Franca Rame and Dario Fo’s monologue about the early morning trials of a working mother, *Waking Up*, proved to be an unpretentious, sustained piece of comic, political writing that was direct and engaging from beginning to end. Nicholas Tsoutas’ direction was as conceptually arresting as in the first play without being as intrusive. The woman stood on a speaker’s podium with a microphone, beside her a colour television set was on, with the sound turned down and a man’s jacket draped across it, however the effect of a domestic Nuremberg rally was somewhat undercut by the sight of the much abused set from the first piece. Peggy Wallach’s performance in *Waking Up* was subtle, clearly felt, tight and unmannered — qualities which were obscured in the first piece.

*Mother’s Courage* is Sue Ingleton’s post-natal sequel to *From Here to Maternity* performed at The Comedy Cafe earlier this year. In it Ingleton devised the grotesque comic figure of Bill Rawlings, the pregnant man led astray by a thoughtless woman and abandoned to the brusque plastic gloved hands of a female “gynocolonist”. Five months later Bill has returned, the proud but embattled parent of a bouncing baby daughter.

He struggled onto the nappy sized stage of The Banana Lounge, weighed down with bouncinettes, bassinets and those queer quilted bags that new mothers invariably carry. Round his neck was a plastic feeder, and a cloth contraption of Asiatic origin designed to tie a baby to its mother dangled down his back perhaps not a happy man but decidedly wiser. Like a soldier returned from Gallipoli his story must be told — he has suffered the indignities of the stirrup, the elective caesarean, and the episiotomy performed with pinking shears.

Lactose poisoning has affected his once sharp mind — he has trouble getting out of his pyjamas in the morning, and has been unable to resist signing his life away to Vital Gym in a pathetic attempt to retrieve his figure. In the supermarket “the parent companies” — Heinz, Nestles and Johnson and Johnson — bombard him with products he can barely afford and never dispose of. What promised to be “a supreme peak experience” has turned as sour as his milk did when Collingwood lost.

Was it all worthwhile? Photographs don’t lie and we are treated to a full album of slides — verdict, baby beautiful; difficulties unimaginable; result hilarious. Ingleton again proves that she is a virtuoso comedienne who can make political theatre grossly entertaining.
Informal entertainment

UPSIDE DOWN

LITERARY LUNACIES

by Margot Luke


Theatre entries such as _UpSide Down_ at Hole-in-the-Wall, which opened in October, tend to be slightly uneven, and this production is no exception. It is a lively, paradoxical, irreverent look at D H Lawrence — in particular at the loving battle that was his marriage, seen from the perspective of his short stay in Australia.

Playwright David Allen integrates the two themes by presenting the story of Lawrence and Frieda in flashbacks, set into the present concern with their responses to Australia, especially their neighbours Jack and Victoria. Readers of _Kangaroo_ will recognize much of the situation. Jack is the beloved enemy of the Hole-in-the-Wall scores with the perfectly realized image of the "real" Lawrence, and his own interest in exploring the confrontation between Jack, the honest classless Aussie primitive, and Lawrence, the neurotic poor boy intellectual, deracinated by now, not to mention his aristocratic slut of a wife.

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ACT

ANU ARTS CENTRE (494787)
Old King Cole by Ken Campbell; director, Graeme Brosnan. A Jigsaw Production. Dec 11-19.

CANBERRA THEATRE (497600)
Annie; director, Terence Clarke, musical director, Colin Fischer. The Canberra Theatre Trust's summer season of the musical based on Little Orphan Annie. Jan 7-23.

ENSEMBLE THEATRE (9298877)

ERINDALE CENTRE (321122)
Production. Dec 11-19.

PHILIP STREET THEATRE (2328570)

THEATRE THREE (474222)
The Pied Piper. A pre-Christmas attraction presented by Kaleidoscope. Dec 1-5.

THE PUNCHINELLO THEATRE

THEATRE THREE (474222)

THEATRE RESTAURANT 93574627
For entries contact Janet Healey on 494769.

NSW

ENSEMBLE THEATRE (9298877)
Eleven Eleven by Mick Barnes; director, Brian Young, designer, Tom Bannerman. A new Australian comedy about the most famous or infamous day in our history — the eleventh day of the eleventh month. Throughout Dec and Jan.

Ensemble Festival of Playwrights 1982

FRANK STRAIN’S BULL N’ BUSH THEATRE RESTAURANT 93574627
From Hampstead to Hollywood; director, Frank Strain, musical director, Julie Symonds. Throughout Dec and Jan.

GENESIAN THEATRE (9092928)
The Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde; director, Dennis Allen. Starts Dec 5.

GRiffin THEATRE COMPANY (333817)
Stables Theatre: Cheap Thrills by Grant Faser; designer Jack Ritchie. Starts Jan 8.

HUNTER VALLEY THEATRE COMPANY, Newcastle (049/262755)

KIRRIBILLI PUB THEATRE (921415)
The Private Eye Show by Perry Quilton and Paul Chubb; with Zoe Bertram. Into January.

MARIAN STREET THEATRE (4983166)
Once Upon A Mattress; music by Mary Rodgers, lyrics by Marshall Barer and Dean Fuller; director, John Milson. Based on the fairly tale of the princess and the pea. To Dec 19.

MUSIC LOFT THEATRE (9776585)
Pardon Our Privates; director, Peggy Mortimer; with Ron Frazer. Throughout Dec and Jan.

NEW THEATRE (5193403)

NIMROD THEATRE (6995003)
Upstairs: Tales From the Vienna Woods by Odon von Horvath, translated by Christopher Hampton; director, Aubrey Mellor; with Cathy Downes, Michele Fawdon, Barry Otto, Deidre Rubenstein, Anna Volska and John Walton. Into January. Welcome The Bright World by Stephen Sewell; director Neil Armfield. Starts Jan 27.

NSW THEATRE FOR THE DEAF (3571200)
Theodore for primary schools and The Unheard World of Jasper Lawson for secondary schools; directors; Ian Watson and Nola Colefax. To mid Dec. Public performances at Union Theatre, Sydney University start end Jan.

O’MALLEY THEATRE COMPANY (333817)
Stables Theatre: The Best of Shorts, a season of three one act plays; with Terry Bader, John Hannon, Robert Hughes, Mel Gibson, Elizabeth Alexander, Sandy Gore and Elizabeth Chance. Throughout Dec.

PHILLIP STREET THEATRE (2328570)

Q THEATRE (047/215735)
On Our Selection by Steele Rudd. Orange Civic Centre to Dec 5.

SEYMOUR CENTRE (6920555)
Sydney Festival productions

SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY (20588)
Drama Theatre SOH: Chinchilla by Robert David MacDonald; director, Rodney Fisher, designer, Brian Thomson; with Peter Carroll, Neil Fitzpatrick, Peter Cousins, Jane Harders, Jennifer Hagan, Linda Cropper, Robert van Mackenberg, Mathew O’Sullivan, Frank Garfield and Scott Higgins. The life and art of
Diaghilev Nijinsky et al. You Can't Take It With You by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart; director, George Ogilvie; designers, Kristian Frederikson and Anna French; with Tyler Coppin, John Frawley, Jane Harders, Jim Kemp, Margot Lee, Tim McKenzie, Carol Raye and Geoffrey Rush. Starts Jan 2.

THEATRE ROYAL (92316111)

For entries contact Carole Long on 9093010/3571200.

NT

DARWIN THEATRE GROUP (815522)
You're A Good Man Charlie Brown by Charles M Schultz; director, Tony Sozsynski. To Dec 12.

For entries contact Phillipa Morris on 815522.

QLD

ARTS THEATRE (362344)
Behind The Arts; director, Ken McCaffrey. Collectively scripted revue. To Dec 19.

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (2212777)
Annie QTC's highly successful production returns to the capital after a state tour. To Dec 12.

LA BOITE THEATRE (361622)
The London Blitz Show by Frank Hatherley; director, Robert Kingham. Fun and games and the odd song or two during the Blitz. To Dec 19.

THE TN COMPANY (3525133)
Woodward Theatre, Kelvin Grove; Mother Courage and her Children by Bertolt Brecht; director, Bryan Nason; with Jennifer Blocksidge and Judith Anderson. Tragic loss and the business ethic in war torn Europe. To Dec 5.

For entries contact Jeremy Ridgeman on 3772519.

SA

THE ACTING COMPANY (2740261)
Space Movers by Nick Gill; director, Sue Rider. Two children are taken on an intergalactic voyage by the Space Movers. To Dec 18.

ADELAIDE FESTIVAL CENTRE TRUST (510121)

Q THEATRE (2235651)
The Fantasticks by Tom Jones and Harvey Schmidt; director, Peter Goers. The longest running musical in American history. To Dec 12.

THE STAGE COMPANY (2236283)
The Space, Festival Centre: Sandy Lee Live at Nui Dai by Rob George; director, John Noble. An Australian Country and Western singer on a tour of Vietnam; interwoven with an examination of attitudes to the war. To Dec 12.

STATE THEATRE COMPANY (515151)
Playhouse Theatre, Festival Centre: The Threepenny Opera by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill; director, George Whaley; with Marilyn Allen, Peter Cummins, Vanessa Downing, John Gregg, Robert Grubb, Jeannie Lewis and Deborah Little. Brecht's most popular musical set in backstreet London. To Dec 5.

Price Theatre, Centre for the Performing Arts: The Sad Songs of Annie Sando by Doreen Clarke; director, Margaret Davis, with Isabel Kirk, Stuart McCreery, Jacay Phillips and Christine Woodland. The new play about two women who seek refuge in a women's shelter, questions the effectiveness of the helping professions. To Dec 5.

SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY (510121)
Festival Theatre, Festival Centre: Chicago by Fred Ebb, Bob Fosse and John Kander; director, Richard Wherrett, musical director, Peter Casey, designer, Brian Thomson; with Nancye Hayes, Geraldine Turner, Terence Donovan and Judi Connelli. Smash-hit musical about corruption and media hype in the thirties. To Dec 2.

TROUPE THEATRE (2717552)
Curtis, Kelso, Johnson and Ward; with Lance Curtis, Geoff Kelso, Dan Johnson and Al Ward. A fresh dose of manic cabaret from this renowned comic group. January, season to be announced.

For entries contact The Association of Community Theatres on 2675988.

VIC

AUSTRALIAN NOUVEAU THEATRE (6993253)
Anthill Downstairs: Sculpture Exhibition by Loretta Quinn. Fantastic, bizarre, surreal additions to the normal. Throughout Dec.


ARENA THEATRE (2401937)
Until Ya Say Ya Love Me devised by the Magpie TIE Team for senior secondary students; director, Peter Charlton. To Dec 4.

Toes an "in schools" dance performance devised and performed by Jackie Migdalek, Robin McIntosh and Mark Gordon. To Dec 17. Youth Theatre and Dance Workshops also Adult Drama and Dance workshops on weeknights and weekends through Dec and Jan.
ARTS COUNCIL OF VICTORIA
(52943355)
BANANA LOUNGE COMEDY ROOM BYO (4192869)
The New Comedy Show; with Rod Quantoik, Mary Kenneally, Geoff Brooks and Steven Blackburn. Throughout Dec and early Jan. Tues-Sat, 8pm.

COMEDY CAFE BYO THEATRE

RESTAURANTS (4192869)
Carnival Knowledge by Hieronymous Boschi; Melbourne's newest comedy ensemble. This production explores the circus of male and female behaviour. Throughout Dec and early Jan. Tues-Sat, 11am and 1pm. Jan 4-29.

HANDSPAN THEATRE COMPANY (415978)
Kid's Theatre Festival at Rosie's Coffee Shop. Rosebud. Programme presented by Handspan Theatre Company and The Kooka Puppet Company. Jandy Malone and the Nine O'Clock Tiger

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (6633211)

Narrow Feint by David Knight; directed and designed by Bruce Miles. Starts Jan 13.
MILL THEATRE COMPANY (052/222318)
Regular workshops for special interest groups including Geelong Prison, handicapped, disabled and unemployed groups. To early Dec.
Mill Night for everyone. Thurs 7.30pm.
Mill Club for children Sat 9.30am. To Dec 17.

LA MAMA (3476085)
In The Dark sound and film by Chris Knowles. Dec 3-6.

THEATRE AUSTRALIA DECEMBER 1981
The advantages of having your American Express Card stolen.

There are many advantages in having an American Express Card. There are also advantages if you suddenly discover you don't have it.

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LAURENCE FILM JUMPS KANGAROO

While Kangaroo, the film which David Roe, Tim Burstall and Evan Jones were respectively producing, directing and writing, had to go into recess for a while another film, imported, relating to D.H. Lawrence will open at the end of January. This is Princes of Love which deals with some fairly sensational episodes in Lawrence's life. Ian McKellen plays the writer, with Ava Gardner, Janet Suzman and Penelope Keith as attendant ladies and John Gielgud as Britain's chief censor.

APOLOGIES TO ELFICK

Richard Brennan, co-producer of Starstruck tells me I was totally wrong when I wrote that David Elfick, his partner, was denied access to the set. On the contrary, he was there as often as he wished to be and there was no tension between the producers and Gill Armstrong, who directed. I apologise, Starstruck is scheduled for release in March, 1982.

A PINCH OF POISON

Anne Lambert, the beautiful blonde who portrayed Miranda in Picnic at Hanging Rock and left not long after to try her luck in Britain has landed the role of Lucrezia in BBC 2's dramatic series, The Borgias. Mark Shivas is the director. A writer in The Sunday Times says not much is known of Lucrezia, but on the whole he doesn't think she actually intended to be a bad girl, but was forced to become a poisoner by her family. Anne looks a bit like the Lucrezia of the Vatican frescoes. Her first film job, at 13 in Melbourne, was for a soft drink commercial.

STEPPING OUT

Chris Noonan's documentary, Stepping Out, has just picked up another award, having been chosen by UNESCO for part of the official closing ceremonies to be held in Parks in December. It has won five international prizes including best documentary at the 1982 Australian Film Awards and has been sold to television in 15 countries (but not, as I write, to Australian TV). The film's US distributors are looking for an Academy Award nomination in 1982.

THE CROP FOR 1984

If all goes well, these are some of the films you may see in, say, 1984. The Australian Film Commission has injected funds for script and production development: The Seul-Change of Melvin Brown from Rowan Ayers, former BBC producer specialising in access programs; Antidote from Michael Pate; Time's Rasing from Frank Moorhouse and Sophie Turkiewicz; Should I All Acquaintance Be Forgot from Anne Brooksbank; Boys With Bright Futures from Michael Cove; Miracle at Mulga Springs from Robert Brunning; and Indian Pacific from Michael Thornhill.

If some of the titles don't actually turn you on, remember that they will probably be changed before actual screening.

Contributing Editor:
Elizabeth Riddell

Anne Lambert. Photo: Barry Peake.

Gillian Armstrong
Mel Gibson, a very hot property since *Mad Max* and *Gallipoli*, has been resident in Australia for 12 years now. He has the US passport which may be useful if he accepts any of the offers coming in from his native land. So far, none of these has turned him on. He can be observed lately with a bundle of scripts under his arm as he moves between his home, the offices of his agent, Bill Shanahan, various theatrical enterprises and talks with the producer of his next film, *The Year of Living Dangerously*.

He finds it difficult to cope with so much 'because in normal life I'm not much of a reader. But I'm learning how to pick a script that will work, not only for the role offered to me — it's tempting to think 'that's great, I would enjoy that' — but as a film. I am getting a bit sharper at that kind of stuff.'

Being a hot property is not the same as being a star. The Australian film industry, unlike television, does not go in for stars, partly because it cannot really afford them. 'I don't see myself as a star,' Gibson says. 'I don't think it would work. I'm too anonymous. I wouldn't be recognized in the street, probably not even in the supermarket where you find more women than men just as you find more women than men at the cinema. Look at me. Who would pick me out?'

I looked at him — compact build, having lost the chubbiness of *Mad Max*; pale skin, regular features, a small scar on the right cheek, dark thick hair, khaki windbreaker, jeans, track shoes, equipped with a packet of cigarettes and two boxes of matches which he keeps stacking and unstacking, removing cigarette from packet but not smoking it, instead thumbing it loudly and theatrically on the desk to pack the tobacco together — a gesture I thought was used only by somebody's uncle — with lots of other quick movements of arms and hands, all of them seeming to express not so much tension as what is quite controlled energy.

But I think most people would identify the face and the grey eyes, lit as if from behind and watchful, if they had ever seen him in a film.
Williamson is writing the script. I play Guy Hamilton, but he won’t be quite as buttoned-up as he is in the book. He’s been turned into an Australian foreign correspondent instead of a British one. And they’ve actually solved the problem of the other key character — the Chinese-Australian dwarf.”

Gibson has done a small amount of television work. He is careful about it. “In television you have got everything against you — usually a miserable script, a director who doesn’t give a damn, no time to think about the character you are playing, and not enough rehearsal. So I think why push shit up a hill? There are actors — and I’m continually amazed at how they manage it — who do get a glimmer of truth into their performances. They can give credibility to the most absurd roles and can salvage something out of the mess. I’ve appeared in three ABC television productions and two of Crawford’s but I wouldn’t dream of getting locked into a series, if I were asked.

“One thing about Australian films, they really are a team effort, cast and crew really do work together. As for the money, it’s not great, but everybody is in the same boat. Nobody, however good they are on the performing or directing or designing or technical side, makes any real money. The best thing for an actor or a director to have would be a clause in his contract that gave him a percentage of the film’s earnings, but that’s a rare arrangement.”

“What about all this energy bursting to get out? How does he keep it in bounds?”

“Well, what I have to do is keep the energy stoked, keep it down to base, I have to watch myself all the time. The energy has to be used directly and specifically. I have to make a conscious effort to be still, to attain the neutrality of stillness, and build up from there.”

Late in 1981 Gibson did a season of one-act plays, with a company of actors, at The Stables.

“I was desperate to get back on stage for a change of pace. The stage is very important to me. Since I graduated from NIDA in 1977 I’ve been in Oedipus, Henry IV, played Romeo and

EXTRAGON in the Australian Film Institute Best Actor awards — for the eponymous part in Tim in 1979 and Frank in Gallipoli in 1981.
Wrong Side of the Road

by Elizabeth Riddell

Apart from its entertainment values, which are considerable, *Wrong Side of the Road* is a model for impoverished film makers who have something to say but suffer from an inability to say it without preaching. Audiences, even those who bring the utmost goodwill to a film, soon get tired of sermons. The producers, Ned Lander and Graeme Isaac, and the director Ned Lander have made a fascinatingly true and amusingly candid film out of a couple of days in the lives of two black bands, and their friends and relatives. The bands are Us Mob and No Fixed Address, names which themselves indicate the life style of the participants.

They work out of Port Adelaide up to Port Pearce in a truck and a car, harrased on the road by police, cheated by a hotel keeper, playing before cheerful groups of all ages in the odd community hall, drinking too much beer (too much for whom?), welcomed in unfamiliar houses because of the boundless, questionless hospitality of the black, playing jokes, brooding, getting into gaol and getting baileed out. They play driving rock and reggae, and one of them has reggae locks to go with the music. One is white enough in appearance to have a policeman recommend that he stay away from "those boongs" who will only get him into trouble.

In other words they are playing themselves on the road. The singer Vonnie takes time to visit her boyfriend in gaol and be told to clear out and not bother to come again. Leslie, raised by white foster parents, tries to discover her real mother's name, and may be successful. They stop off at a rodeo and one of them reluctantly mounts a bucking bronco and hangs on for the required three minutes, and picks up a bit of cash.

The film was nominated for the Australian Film Institute Awards for best film and best original music score. What it took out was the Jury Prize, and it is easy to see why. You do not have to make allowances for it. It was made on the smell of an oil rag but has none of the stumbling lack of professionalism one might expect.

Ned Lander, who made the extraordinary interesting short documentaries about uranium mining, *Dirty Cheap*, really knows his business. Graeme Isaac has worked with Circus Oz, the APG and at the Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music. *Wrong Side of the Road* was in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide in November and can be seen in Canberra and Perth early in 1982. Distributor, Inma Productions, 7 Leichhardt St, Glebe, NSW.
Indispensable tool of the trade

by Elizabeth Riddell

It would be a cliche to say that the Australian Motion Picture Yearbook edited by Peter Beilby (Cinema Papers, $19.95) is a tool of the trade that nobody connected with the industry — producers, directors, performers, crew, distributors, statisticians, film accountants and lawyers and certainly critics — should be without. Well, I've said it. As a bonus, the book is a handsome volume, easy to handle and read, precisely laid out and extremely well illustrated.

It can, of course, only be as good as the information it gathers, and as the plans of film mice and men gang aft agley, and time rodes these plans, there are a few gaffes, but not many.

A rundown of the contents list will give you an idea of the kind of ground the book covers. Part one is headed Film Industry Round-up, and it is just that, a readable kind of survey which takes in such sections of the local scene as production, government and the film industry, film education and film festivals, awards and competitions, censorship, newspaper and magazine criticism of the local product, in Australia and overseas, censorship, technology, investment, and even obituaries.

Part two is a record of feature films in 1980 and 1981, part three presents profiles of such significant figures as Bruce Beresford, Matt Carroll of the SA Film Corporation, David Williamson the playwright and now screen play writer, and part four lists producers, directors, scriptwriters, cinematographers, editors, technical people and musicians, with their credentials.

Part five is a directory of every organisation and supplier and technical skill in the business, part six has 16 pages on the media and part seven is a reference section that takes in everything the other departments have missed. Cross checking is easy and the whole thing is a delight to the eye.

Peter Beilby's associate editors were Ross Lansell and Scott Murray, assistant editors were Maurice Pereira and John Entensor and the book was designed by Keith Robertson. The NSW Government assisted financially in its publication, and NSW researchers were Lyn Quayle, Carol Hughes and Antonia Barnard, formerly with the Sydney Film Festival. Researchers in other States were Eva Schramm, John Dick, Debbie Cole, Daryl Binning, Jennifer Sabine and Robert Hazeldine.

WATCH FOR THESE...

A short list of films of more than usual interest, currently showing around Australia...

THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN: Is ravishing to look at, has Meryl Streep made to order for the Rosetti heroine, a fine upstanding new male star in Jeremy Irons, and a sub-film written by Harold Pinter in case an audience feels smothered in romanticism. Watch for it to sweep the Oscar board.

ATLANTIC CITY: Is a remarkable film, made by the French director Louis Malle (Pretty Baby) in America with Burt Lancaster, who always works well with European directors, Susan Sarandon and wonderfully woozy Kate Reid as a gangster's widow washed up in Atlantic City. It is suspenseful, tough, romantic and often very funny.

CHARIOTS OF FIRE: I have to remind you about Chariots of Fire because it is made by a new director and has two new stars of whom almost nobody has heard, and so could get lost in the blockbuster rush. The time is 1924 and the places London and Paris, where the modest little Olympic Games (what a shame it ever changed) are being held. Possibly the only face instantly recognizable is that of Sir John Gielgud, as a don.

EYE OF THE NEEDLE: A plot with more holes than a kitchen colander does not prevent Eye of the Needle from being great entertainment, much like one of those novels characterised by people as being "a good read". Donald Sutherland makes his steely way through the action, accompanied by beautiful Kate Nelligan. Good spy stuff, second-world-war vintage.

FROM MAO TO MOZART: Isaac Stern the violinist went to China in 1979 on a musical pilgrimage and the result is a beguiling film, From Mao to Mozart, winner of the Oscar for best documentary in 1982. What with the music and the smiles, it almost makes you believe in the brotherhood of man.

WINTER OF OUR DREAMS: Written and directed by John Duigan, gives nostalgia the back of its hand and informs and entertains us with a story of our contemporaries, people we know exist here and now. Overlooked in the no doubt well-deserved hoo-ha about Gallipoli, Winter has the best performance yet from Judy Davis and a performance by Geoffrey Rush which is superb.
DANCE FUNDING

Dance escaped the drastic cuts which overtook drama funding in the wake of the Federal Government's smaller allocation to the Australia Council in 1982. The Theatre Board decided its main priority is straitened circumstances would be to maintain its funding for dance and young people's theatre companies: "The few companies in these areas are of vital concern to the Board because of their strategic importance and financial vulnerability."

The amount channelled to dance by the Australia Council is considerably less than what goes to drama — $1,387,866 compared to $3,179,140 in the 1982 grant totals — and, naturally, there are always some worthwhile projects which miss out. The main recipients in the latest grant allocation are the Sydney Dance Company, Australian Dance Theatre, Australian Ballet School, Queensland Ballet Company, West Australian Ballet Company and the Tasmanian Dance Company. The smaller groups supported include One Extra Dance Theatre, Kinetikos Dance Company, Veins, the North Queensland Ballet Company and the Kinetikos Dance Company.

But — and it's a big but — there is also the Australian Ballet. The national classical company sidesteps the Australia Council and goes straight to the Government for its funding which, for 1982 is $1,602,000, plus a share of the two Elizabethan orchestras which have been granted $2,741,000 between them. It is a great deal of money and the Australian Ballet has enormous responsibilities to go with it — and it is up to us dancegoers and taxpayers to make sure they are carried out by observing and commenting when we feel the company is not contributing to the development of dance in Australia.

CHOREOGRAPHY CHOICE

The four Australian choreographers chosen to take part in the intensive two-week course for choreographers and composers in Auckland in January are Garry Lester, John Salisbury, Helen Herbertson and Wendy Butterworth. At the time of their selection, three of these young choreographers were working in Adelaide and one in Melbourne.

BARR ON FILM

Lois Ellis, who collaborated with the idiosyncratic creator of dance drama, Margaret Barr, to make the short film Women Climbing Mountains, expects to be in India in January to begin another film involving Margaret Barr. The footage shot in India would revolve around Ms Barr's research for a new dance drama on the subject of Gandhi. She plans to stage it in Sydney next September with Kai Tai Chan, Artistic Director of the One Extra Dance Theatre, in the central role.

The film, which would also be shot in Sydney after the completion of the dance drama work, is planned to reflect Ms Barr's fascinating background in dance — it goes back many decades to working with Martha Graham and at Dartington Hall in its early days — as well as the life experiences which have shaped her approach to her art.

GOAT MUSIC

The story doing the rounds of Melbourne dance circles about the Hunchback of Notre Dame, which includes a scene-stealing puppet goat in the cast, consists of a mock-horror complaint from the former Bolshoi dancer, Leonid Kozlov: "The goat has got the best music."

SYDNEY DANCE COMPANY NEWS

Ken Southgate, a former general manager of the Old Tote Theatre Company has been appointed administrator of the Sydney Dance Company. Since the Old Tote went into liquidation in 1978 after the Theatre Board of the Australia Council lost confidence in its viability and withdrew its subsidy, Mr Southgate has worked at a variety of jobs, including operations manager for Hoyts and as a theatre consultant.

The appointment was made by the Sydney Dance Company's board in the absence of its artistic director, Graeme Murphy, who was on tour with the rest of the company in London and Hongkong.

In their third overseas tour within a year, the company attracted enthusiastic audiences, but the London critics were far less delighted than their American counterparts earlier this year. In fact, some of them were positively aggressive in their dislike of the Australian group. Nicholas Dromgoole managed to skittle the dancers and the Australian audience in one sentence. He accused Graeme Murphy, "faced with an undiscriminating and easily pleased audience", of lifting "other people's ideas and styles wholesale." Yet in the same review, Dromgoole writes: "Murphy has a shrewd sense of theatre, his work is full of pleasant surprises... We are certainly not bored, and if the ideas are not fully realised, and the dance seems a little disorganised at times, at least the choreographic talent and the ideas still just about manage to hold our attention."

After the third program, Dromgoole said the SDC had "proved a likeable company, dominated by an inventive choreographer, Graeme Murphy, full of intriguing theatrical ideas but, like Tetley or Cohan, clearly not particularly interested in much rapport between music and movement, although still managing to fascinate in terms of movement alone, with occasional strokes of impudent freakish fun and a sense of dramatic impact."

John Percival, of The Times, described the company as "brash, beautiful, lively and unexpected as the city it comes from". He said that pure dance was not their strong point, "but as dance theatre, they leave English companies standing."

David Hurst (Quasimodo) in the AB's Hunchback.
Dance in Australia comes under close analysis in a report compiled and released by the Theatre Board of the Australia Council. While the report concentrates on the seven dance organisations given major funding by the Council, it also encompasses smaller established groups, looking back to the history of dance in this country and forward to its future.

The Australian Ballet, recipient of the largest subsidy from the Federal Government, comes in for the most criticism. Its current policies, while making impressive box office figures, are not considered compatible with all its stated objectives in its original charter. In particular, the following aim is singled out: "To develop a repertoire of one-third the three-act classics, one-third the contemporary classics, one-third the indigenous ballets with Australian choreographers, composers and designers."

In considering that objective, the report concludes: "In terms of the number of Australian choreographers, composers and designers represented in the repertoire 1975-1979, the national company is at present Australian in name only."

A breakdown of the figures for that period shows the Australian Ballet presented 62 works, of which 61 percent to 75 percent were full-length. No full-length original ballets by Australian choreographers were produced and the percentage of short work performances by Australian choreographers ranged from one percent to 10 percent in this period. No Australian ballets have been included in the repertoire of the Australian Ballet for overseas tours between 1975-80.

The report states that it is the responsibility of Australia's largest and most heavily subsidised dance company to help develop creative talent in this country. Significantly, it even goes so far as to suggest: "Earmarking funds within the general grant to the Australian Ballet could help to encourage the inclusion of more works by Australian choreographers, designers and composers and to ensure the continued development of such innovative projects as the new Dancers group and choreographic seasons. Funds could also be earmarked for the employment of additional dancers, resident choreographers, tutors and trainee conductors."

Concern is declared at the decreasing number of dancers in the Australian Ballet — 51 as 1981 draws to a close, which is considerably less than at any time during the last seven years recorded in the report — and the four changes of artistic director between 1974 and 1979. It gives an overloading of work because of the number of performances and extent of touring as one of the reasons for the uneven standards noted increasingly by the public and critics.

The Australian Ballet's preference for full-length spectacles such as The Merry Widow is condemned; but should they wish to persist, it is suggested that "the same level of expenditure, time and planning" be given to an Australian work. More attention to the selections and programming of repertoire is recommended — for example, a thematic approach to triple bills rather than a "something for everyone" philosophy. It is suggested that this could help broaden the company's appeal and attract new audiences, an area in which the Australian Ballet has fallen back over recent years, it says.

Anyone still wondering about the militancy of the dancers' strike against the company's administration and its interference in artistic policy may like to note two excerpts from Australian Ballet annual reports. Both come from the administrator, Peter Bahen.

In 1974, he wrote: ". . . presenting
nothing but programs of old favourites like *Swan Lake* and *Giselle* would quickly turn the Australian Ballet into a fading museum. . . it is essential that new and experimental works should be introduced from time to time."

By 1979, he had changed his mind: "We are a classically orientated company. . . This does not mean that we have constantly to repeat ourselves and concentrate only on 19th century works. . . But whether we should also be doing the way-out type of modern experimental work (sometimes consisting of obscure plot, cacophonous music, contortions and writhings) seems more and more questionable."

Since the Australian Ballet has never dared do anything that might approach such a description, even the most reactionary subscriber need not worry. Fortunately, other dancers are experimenting in Australia, and getting the backing of the Australia Council through the Theatre Board.

The most innovative projects are outside the scope of this report and don't get more than a passing mention in the 100 pages of prose and 210 pages of tables and references that make up this report — which is available, free, to members of the public on request to the Australia Council, PO Box 302, North Sydney, NSW 2060.

However, the regional companies generally get praise for their rise in standards since the mid-seventies and their concentration on Australian content and finding their own identities. In brief, its conclusions in that area were:

The Australian Dance Theatre is praised for high technical standards, good community access which it pursues energetically, and an estimable example of raising funds from the private sector.

The Queensland Ballet Company is complimented on being both sensitive to the preferences of Queensland audiences for classical ballet and beginning to diversify its appeal to build new audiences by the regular introduction of contemporary works.

The Sydney Dance Company is considered successful in building audiences for contemporary dance, and for establishing its own direction and identity.

The West Australian Ballet is said to have experienced "the most serious identity crisis between 1974-1980", but, given the financial support, is expected to build audiences and develop its own style.
Hunchback — unfulfilled potential

by Jill Sykes

The potential of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* remains the strongest thing about it after its opening season at Melbourne’s Palais Theatre.

Venturing into the dense activity of Victor Hugo’s 19th century novel about medieval Paris, the Australian Ballet’s team of creators have come up with some bold ideas — but they need a great deal more shaping and some restructuring as well if the ballet is going to make the dramatic statement that is intended.

Given the present troubles of the Australian Ballet at the time of writing, it is hard to predict the future of this ambitious full-length work, but I believe something powerful could come out of it if it were given the creative and rehearsal time it should have had in the first place.

The main reason for my faith is the way that George Ogilvie, who is responsible for the production and scenario, and Dobbs Franks, who selected and arranged the music by Bela Bartók, have deliberately ignored the superficial delights of a crowd-pleaser and attempted to explore the minds and social mores of the central figures.

Whether the choreographer, Bruce Wells — a craftsman rather than a creative artist from what I have seen of his efforts so far — can use these opportunities to express such intangible ideas in movement is yet to be proved.

The set designs by Kristian Fredrikson are strikingly dramatic and atmospheric — but his costumes are far too fussy. They simply accentuate the problem that besets the whole ballet so far: the lack of focus. The flurry of Act I, as it was presented in the Melbourne season, is a blur of flying fabric and over-active performers. At times, there were two conflicting layers of dance action against a background of writhing or rollicking beggars.

That can be relatively easily fixed. The uncertain focus on the principal participants will be much harder to correct, requiring a major shift of some scenes in my opinion.

To try to compress the epic story: Frollo, the Archdeacon of Notre Dame Cathedral, has both a warped mind and a desire for the street dancer, La Esmeralda; she, in turn, attracts the attentions of the young poet, Gringoire, and is attracted to Phoebus, the Captain of the King’s Archers. He is already engaged to Fleur-de-Lys, daughter of a suitably noble family. Quasimodo, the hunchbacked bellringer and foster son of Frollo, observes all and tries to equate his love for Esmerelda with his loyalty to Frollo, while coping with the kind of life his repulsive appearance brings him.

In successive scenes amongst the rich and poor of Paris — perhaps too many, but they are fast-moving — all kinds of murder and mayhem take place. Frollo, Phoebus and Esmeralda are all dead by the end of the story, and Quasimodo might as well be. The awful thing is that you don’t care. None of the characters has been developed sufficiently to provide the audience association essential to theatrical drama. Worse, the team putting the ballet together doesn’t seem to have been able to decide who to make the central figures.

Indications are that Frollo and Quasimodo are the pivotal characters, but these intentions are not carried through. While Frollo begins and concludes the ballet in the two states of his mind, we are not shown his sinister aspects early enough, nor clearly enough how they influence the lives of so many.

Quasimodo deserves our sympathy, yet it is not until we see him up in his bell-tower eyrie in Act III that the real impact of his personality is made. He would have been a much stronger character throughout the ballet if his private persona could have been established before we were presented with his public activities. His duet with Frollo and his solo in Act I don’t fulfil the promise of their placing or music, though the shape of the idea is there.

Conversely, Gringoire the poet gets more time and attention than his catalytic role in the action seems to deserve. Likewise Fleur-de-Lys, although the rationale for her long solo is two-fold: a sequence of pure dance and a chance to see what La Esmeralda is up against in her desire for Phoebus — a mock heroic character sufficiently, if briefly, represented by his choreography.

La Esmeralda is the least likely portrayal of the stream of gypsies and street dancers I have seen in classical ballet — and that is saying something. The lack of earthiness and sex appeal appeared to be due to antiseptic gentility in both performance and choreography.

The combination of compositions by Bartok provided an exciting score to my ears, though there were a few occasions, especially in Act I, when it was too subtle for the stage action. This also occurred in Act II when Quasimodo was being roughed up ... to a gentle pizzicato.

So far, this review reads like a catalogue of disappointments. But it would not have been worth writing about these if a great deal had not already been achieved in this 1981 transference of a great novel to the balletic stage, and it did improve as it went along. The quality of the choreography
As far as One Extra’s latest “main” offering, Freeway, is concerned, I get the feeling of sitting through a Robert Wilson/Phillip Glass “opera” filtered through an Australian experience. It comes down to such set pieces as “the Victorian Picnic”, which is a situation highlighted in Wilson’s Life and Times of Joseph Stalin.

A nice genteel gathering of persons, redolent with lace, swatting flies and singing Handel’s “Come ye sons of art” as an expression of totally displaced civility is one example — strangely reminiscent of a point already made in Weir’s Picnic at Hanging Rock. The recurring figure of the dancer and the tree on the horizon is another example of Wilson’s hallucinogenic theatre.

Kai Tai collects a gathering of Australian parrots as sets of marauding societies devouring their own kind for “inattentiveness”, a solitary night traveller as an Everyman, taken up and absorbed by variable people and experiences. He takes amiable experiences like the “Avon Lady” and turns them into all-devouring harpies.

He builds and builds his segments but sadly leaves them bereft; the culmination of the drama is of people clawing themselves to death only to be reawakened by a hokey Florence Nightingale touching them all back to life. It’s as is if Kai Tai had painted himself and his collaborators (who were in fact all of the company) into a corner and couldn’t get themselves out. It is that sort of attitude, that utilisation of dance “under” its theatrical aim that keeps One Extra alive. Whenever Kai Tai Chan or any of his other choreographers try to be dancey they, and their dancers strike the false, inexpert and dull.

That is what they will have to come to grips with and rationalise in the future and also something they will have to back, because, as I have said before, all these smaller “fringe” dance companies can’t aspire to a homogenous “dance” expertise. If they do, they will all look like each other and all go under together.

Kai Tai Chan’s One Extra Dance Company has got its own outlook and personality. All it has to do is pare down and eliminate what they cannot do superbly. The rest is their gift to the dance scene, and it is what is going to keep them going, no matter how many individuals come and go.

\[ \text{THEATRE AUSTRALIA DECEMBER 1981} \]
THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET

by Bill Shoubridge

That the internal affairs of the Australian Ballet should come to such a pass as an all-out, defiant strike by its dancers, is a sad indictment of the malaise that has been creeping over the company for years. Dancers, unlike some other members of the work force, don’t happily down tools at the least provocation. Hitherto, the AB dancers have shown their dissatisfaction by resigning. In October last they took a concerted, united final stand.

The rapport between Mr Bahen, administrator, and the dancers has never been cordial, past artistic directors, Helpmann and Woolliams, had always pointed to Bahen’s unwelcome interference as the reason for their resignation.

Ideally, it is the administrator’s job to keep the financial avenues open for the artistic director’s aspirations and ambitions, just as Lincoln Kirstein does for George Balanchine. It is this symbiosis that has helped make the NY City Ballet the greatest ballet company in the world.

In the Australian Ballet is apparently the dancers’ and artistic director’s job to struggle within the financial and artistic dictates of the administrator. It is a relationship that cannot produce good, lasting results. The Australian Ballet Foundation Board has never really made an attempt to reconcile the difficulties. Their attitude has always been a non-committal “steady as she goes” outlook. They have also never given a public account of themselves in the light of company policy.

Perhaps the best thing could have been a “double dissolution” of the company and Board and a later reconstitution under a new board, administrator, artistic director and policy.

It could also be healthy to have funding for the Australian Ballet put back under the control of the Australia Council. Whatever happens, if things continue as they have of late, the Australian Ballet will continue to be disheartened, slovenly, and third rate. A change could only be for the better.

NSW

THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET (20588)

KINETIC ENERGY DANCE COMPANY (2645909)
Chapter House, St Andrew’s Cathedral: Two Voices a collaboration by Tom Shapcott, Graham Jones and the company. Dec 4, 5, 10, 11, and 12. 8pm.

QLD

HER MAJESTY’S THEATRE
(2212777)
Lindsay Kemp and Company present a mime version of A Midsummer Night’s Dream – as you have never seen it before. Jan 19-30.

SA

AUSTRALIAN DANCE THEATRE
(2122084)
Australian Dance Theatre in co-operation with the Centre For The Performing Arts: Summer School for professional and advanced students, dedicated dance addicts, children and adults with little or no dance training. For bookings phone Rosa at ADT. Jan 18-30.

TAS

TASMANIAN DANCE COMPANY
(316878)

VIC

MOVING ARTS COMPANY (4195993)
Fantasy dance theatre. Fri Dec 4 then Thurs to Sund to Dec 20, 8pm, Sund 4pm.

NATIONAL THEATRE (5340221)
Laberinto Flamenco. Dazzling Flamenco dance with moorish undertones. To Dec 5.

OPEN STAGE THEATRE (3477505)
757 Swanston St, Carlton: Solo performances of Orissi classical Indian dance by Ramachandra. Dec 9-12, 8pm.
CARMENS TO BURN?

Can there be too much Bizet in the World? This year the State Opera of South Australia has premiered a new Carmen directed by Tito Copabianco with designs by Hugh Colman to great acclaim and full houses.

In 1982 Victorian State Opera, a mere 800 km away is to premiere a new Carmen directed and designed by we know not whom, probably also to great acclaim. To add a touch of difference the Victorians are casting a black American singer in the title role.

For reasons now lost in the mists of time, the South Australian production was unavailable to travel in 1982. Letters flew back and forth between General Managers, Boards, Chairman and ultimately Ministers of the Arts! To no avail. Two cigarette factories, each alike in dignity will ply their Carmenic trade independent of each other with ne'er so much as a prop packet of Craven 'A' passing between them. Sad.

It must also be a sign of the times that within weeks of SASO’s Carmen playing in Adelaide, the Queensland Ballet and the Australian Ballet also pushed through their versions of — you’ve guessed it — Carmen. What this country needs is not an Australia Council but an editor!

PETER JORDAN AT THE VSO

Australia has not exactly been awash with talented young producers of opera in recent years and one seriously had begun to wonder where the successors of the Ogilvies and Lovejoys were to come from.

One of the rays of hope on the horizon was Peter Jordan who, after getting his start in Queensland, was doing some most exciting work in Melbourne including that with the VSO. He then went to Britain this year on a shared scholarship/study grant to work at both English National Opera and The Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. It is good to know from a recent announcement, not only will he not be lost to us, but that he will be back to the VSO on a full-time basis as its resident director of production. Divall has been adept at picking talent in many areas over the years and one feels confident that he is on to a winner with this one.

ELISABETH SODERSTROM IN CONCERT

In all the flurry of the Adelaide Festival of Arts programme announcement in October, one gem became somewhat lost. Not only is that superb Swedish Soprano, Elisabeth Soderstrom, to sing the exacting role of Emilia Marty in Janacek’s The Makropulos Affair but also, during the Festival, give one recital only in Adelaide on March 19th.

Ms Soderstrom is undoubtedly one of the greatest living singing actresses in opera today and I personally would "walk over hot coals" to see her in any role. The fact that we are to have a bonus recital (accompanied by John Winther) is good news indeed. Her artistry on the concert platform is as rare and as exquisite as that of Elisabeth Shwartzkopf at her best.

RHEINGOLD FOR MELBOURNE

It seems that Melburnians will have the first glimpse of the long-awaited Australian Ring Cycle next year when Victoria State Opera premiers its new production of Rheingold there. The production to be designed by award-winning John Truscott will open the concert hall of the equally long-awaited Melbourne Arts Centre.

No producer has as yet been announced but the word is that baritone, Robert Allman, who has been resident with the Australian Opera for many years, will sing the role of Wotan.

Rather than merely sniping at the Australian Opera in their usual, rather tiresome, way over its inability — for excellent reasons — to mount a Ring Cycle today, critics might take time to consider that it may now well be that a stagione company, such as VSO could be better geared, in time, to undertake this ambitious project than an ensemble/repertory company like the AO where voices and stages have to fulfill many functions in a busy season and can rarely be occupied with one project only.

Robert Allman
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FROM $8 A TICKET
Which is primary in opera, the singers or the production? This is hardly a question that I expected to be asking myself during October, but at short notice I left Australia, where production values are generally high, and went to North America. There were international stars in the three operas I saw, and all of the productions were good. But in Canada and the USA the question of the primacy of the singer or the producer certainly presents itself.

As if to underline my own leading question, I find myself thinking in terms of the three singers who filled the principal roles in Turandot in Alberta, Canada, and of the very practised Butterfly of Marina Krilovici in Montreal. However, from San Francisco, where Teresa Berganza was probably the definitive Carmen of the generation, the memory is of nothing outside the context of the production of Jean-Pierre Ponelle. My question stands answered: in our time singers are at the service of productions in opera.

Posing a question about which comes first, the singers or the production, may seem as disingenuous as asking about the chicken and the egg. At all events, we all know that the music in opera begets the production. But I am not asking about music, which is obviously central; it is the star system which is under observation.

Turandot is an excellent choice for the Edmonton Opera Association, since it can afford to spend up to $C250,000 on each of its four productions each year, and therefore to import soloists of the highest quality. In fact, both Maria Pellegrini, who sang Liu, and Ermanno Mauro, the Calaf, are Canadians. Mauro was a motor mechanic in Edmonton before gaining international fame. He looks good, and has a strong, clear voice that fills the largest house with ease. I am afraid that his Calaf made me nostalgic for the sheer beauty of Donald Smith's "Nessun Dorma", which I heard wring applause from the very tradesmen who were refurbishing the old Elizabethan theatre in Newtown in pre-Opera House days.

The Bulgarian soprano Galina Savova was Turandot; like Mauro powerful if a little unsubtle. The 2700-seat, all-purpose auditorium in Edmonton is not acoustically kind, the amateur chorus and 50-piece professional orchestra both being somewhat overwhelmed. For its quarter of a million dollars, Edmonton did not even
get its own sets and costumes, but had hired a serviceable stage setting from Vancouver. Only in the palace garden, where Turandot's obligatory staircase had been reversed to look like the entrance to an underground railway, was there any hint of making-do. Irving Guttman produced capably, and Anton Guardagno was careful in the pit.

With *Madama Butterfly* to follow within a few days, I found myself marvelling at Puccini's ability to sustain an unbroken orchestral line while giving his singers short exchanges of dialogue, and even exclamations. This is particularly remarkable as emotional climaxes are gradually reached; one feels that a lesser composer would have arrived at too many climaxes, or none at all. After Janacek, it is easy to dismiss the less orchestrally dense Puccini, but *Turandot* demonstrates his mastery, and Edmonton did about as well as could be expected in the absence of a true resident company.

It is probably a little unfair to include *Madama Butterfly* in any consideration of singers versus production. If ever there was a one-woman opera, this is it. Since winning an international competition in Montreal in 1967, Romanian soprano Marina Krilovici has become as famous a Butterfly as Canada's own Maria Pellegrini, and justly so. She exhibits a quality of vulnerability aided by her petite figure, and not too much diminished by an irritating habit of keeping her arms horizontal, as though she were playing at toy aeroplanes. Let us hope that she does not see this as butterfly-wings, or even a crucified stance.

This time the settings had come up from Miami, and were notable for a projection of clouds and sea during Butterfly's vigil as though she were playing at toy aeroplanes. Let us hope that she does not see this as butterfly-wings, or even a crucified stance.

The single weakness in both of these Puccini operas which vitiates them to some degree for me lies in the story lines. The third act of *Madama Butterfly* simply moves too slowly towards the inevitable; how we wish that Pinkerton and Kate would come, and never mind Prince Yamadori. As for *Turandot*, who can any longer believe that even Calaf could transform the bloodthirsty Ice Princess? A performance like that of Madame Savova convinces as a heartless murderess, but fails entirely as a blushing bride. And anyway, poor little Liu, the nearest thing to a heroine in the opera, is dead before the ox-like stubborness of Calaf overpowers Turandot with that now somewhat discredited weapon, a loving kiss.

Canada does not claim to be at the forefront of world opera, and the incursions of Australia's Richard Bonynge into Vancouver during the 1970s did little to advance the art form. But in San Francisco they do pretend to greatness, and with this season's *Carmen* they have certainly attained it. Maestro Adler, about to step down after 28 years in charge, could hardly have retired to greater acclaim than that which will follow this production and Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* which preceded it.

Musically, the score was as close as possible to what Bizet knew, and how the great tunesmith glories in the excision of all that recitative of Ernest Guiraud. The spoken words were amplified for the vast War Memorial auditorium, and a number of striking changes were heard in the score, notably an extended fight scene between Jose and Escamillio, a man's chorus after that of the cigarette girls in Act I, and a most effective monotone immediately after the climax of 'The Flower Song'. The orchestra also played under some of the dialogue.

I am aware that the edition published by Fritz Oeser in 1964 raises more musicological questions than it answers, but Kurt Herbert Adler conducted this score with a sense of integrity, giving the stage action ample time, and following Bizet's instructions about soft singing in some of the opera's most telling moments.

It must already be obvious that this review is not going to concentrate on the marvellous Carmen of Teresa Berganza; there is still so much to be said about Ponelle's production. I found Berganza's Carmen uniquely right — neither slattern nor careful prima donna. This gypsy is highly intelligent, but lacks formal education. She is never dignified, but radiates a native dignity along with her magnetic quality of leadership. The voice is totally at the command of the role's demands.

So strong is this San Francisco cast that one never has any problem deciding that Carmen has three worthy suitors, Jose, Escamillo, and Zuniga, nor that the tall, extroverted toreador (Simon Estes) should be the man of her choice. Franco Bonsioli was a believable, bewitched Jose; the
Faust —
Marguerite’s triumph

by Ken Healey

The Victoria State Opera has done well to set Gounod’s Faust in the Victorian era. Despite its tunefulness the work has not worn well, and anyway was never close to the Dr Faustus of either Marlowe or Goethe. So the Vics have emphasised the nineteenth century nature of the piece and cast it accordingly.

At the centre of this opera is the soprano, Marguerite, and not Faust at all. In death she finally triumphs over Mephistopheles while Faust stands watching, a mere secondary figure. And with Joan Carden’s singing at once luminous in tone and ravishing in intensity, the opera found its ideal Marguerite. This was the sort of singing and acting that brings crowds to the opera house to hear a star; those who recall Miss Carden’s return to Australia ten years ago to sing this role for the Australian Opera will not be surprised at her triumph.

As a bonus, the Mephistopheles of Noel Mangin was so apt in the Victoriana setting that it is difficult to imagine him succeeding nearly as well in a traditional production. Mangin’s is an expansive, naturally jovial presence; indeed his Mephisto was of little more than pantomime naughtiness. Given Gounod’s music it hardly mattered, and Mangin sang the song of the Golden Calf with enough style and flair to have stolen musical honours from anyone but Carden.

I had missed young New Zealand tenor Keith Lewis as Nadir in The Pearl Fishers, and was both amazed and delighted at his vocal aptness for the French repertoire. Not a big man, he lacks the fat tone of Italianate tenors, but has a clearly focused, lyric sound with ample warmth and power. He sings a good deal of Mozart abroad.

Add to those excellent principals the unlikely but totally captivating picture of Suzanne Steele in the trowsers role of Siebel, Ian Cousins as an adequate Valentin in earlier scenes who died superbly, and a cameo Marthe of dramatic and vocal strength from Gloden Mercer. Then there was the chorus, youthful, well trained, and in fine, full voice. Richard Divall’s also predominantly youthful orchestra played committedly, but without the depth of string tone which the score needs. All in all, this was a fine production.

No concentration of praise upon singers should blunt the fact that their effect was made within the production of the renowned team of Besch and Stoddart. Without the large design budget of the national company, where their work is most often seen, this producer and designer have given us a visually unified set and spent their money wisely on well tailored Victorian costumes. Four columns topped by arches served admirably in most configurations to suggest the appropriate locale with a suggestion of Victorian gothic. A nice touch was the occasional appearance of walls of Melbourne bluestone around the stage’s edge.

I applaud also the restraint of Anthony Besch’s production; he avoided extravagant, nineteenth century “moments”, such as at the sudden appearance of Mephistopheles, the magical transformation of the old Faust into a youth, and the breaking of Valentin’s sword. All these were accomplished without fuss, which served to underline the tastelessness of a flying crucifix whose figure became a glowing skeleton.

Finally, though, the evening belonged to its Marguerite in a sense which might have been a pity in a better opera. The long soprano line of the final trio is seared on the memory of all who heard it; Gounod’s upward modulations may be unsubtle, but they tell us what a practical musician he was. He was well served by Richard Divall and his trio of principal singers.

WA’s Magic Flute

by Charles Southwood

Even so long after the event, I’m still excited by the WA Opera Company’s final production for 1981, Magic Flute. It’s an exciting sort of work, of course, but the same company this year achieved only a fraction of the success, for me, with other thrillers like Boheme and Tales of Hoffmann. What this production had that the others didn’t was that critical blend of ensemble, technical excellence, imaginative focus and emotional commitment which just explodes in the theatre. Following, as it does, an excellent concert performance of Act’s and Galatea by the WA University Collegium Musicum under David Tunley, it makes me wonder if there isn’t something special about 18th-century music-theatre for our performers. It’s a
crucial point because, in the presence of certain limiting factors, the performers' satisfaction becomes the onlookers'.

Opening night left strong memories: sensitive, passionate singing and sharp-edged orchestral playing, both greatly to the credit of musical director Gerald Krug; brisk progress through a plot which all of a sudden seemed perfectly shapely and clear; and overall a kind of sideshow gaiety which never obscured the seriousness of the matter in hand. I've always known the Immortals dwell in *Magic Flute*; I didn't know their laughter veritably resounds in its pages. Just think of it: the cheek, to treat spiritual processes of such import, symbols of such unspeakable significance, in a comic hardly three hours long. And not even a fully fledged opera; a *singspiel*! The enterprise echoes with irony from the start, and Jacobo Kaufmann's lighting and production and Andrew Carter's designs highlighted the fact in a presentation as gawdy and ambivalent as a dream. Sauced with cerise, gold and lime-green light, Carter's clipped and painted canvas had something of the style of fairground illusionism — but always an illusionism backed by the gods!

The best of it, though, was that the mainly local cast struck on a set of characterisations vivid and distinctive in themselves yet nearly perfect in overall balance. They had good material of course, and Kaufmann's hand was there in movement plotted to lend firm, discrete support to detail and grand design alike.

James Malcolm's Tamino was sensitive, articulate and markedly boyish, and this actually added scope to his pilgrimage from youthful impulse and vulnerability to maturity. Merilyn Quaife's grace and strong, fresh voice served her admirably as Pamina. Hers was really the best performance of the night. Young, beautiful, sensitive like Tamino, she made a vigorous counterpoint to Christa Leahmann's Queen of the Night, mature, silky, sexy and passionately bent on revenge. After the restraint of her Mimi earlier this year, Leahmann cut loose in a performance of astonishing power, proving just how dramatic and dagger-like that coloratura in Act II can be.

Ian Westrip was warm as Papageno, aided by a perfectly delicious Papagena in Maribeth Williamson. It's Papageno, of course, the man content with a mug of wine and a happy hearth, who anchors the transcendant business of *Magic Flute* in earthy reality, and this in turn gives his comedy its weight. Wittingly or not, Westrip played down the weighty side of the character in favour of cockiness, but without doing too much violence to the role's deeper resonances. He and a jet-black, leopard-skin-draped as Monostatos did much to give the evening its salty undertaste of "circus".

It's all a far cry from Bergman, of course, but not so far as the treatment of Sarastro. You looked in vain if you looked for Ulrik Cold's Sarastro-King. Instead Chris Waddell gave us Sarastro-retainer, steward, wise but visibly strained by the terrible responsibility placed on him by Pamina's father. The Keeper of the Sevenfold Circle of the Sun can scarcely be less than inspiring, however he is played; but intimations of fatigue (in testy asides about "women's chatter", for instance) came to reflect wryly on the impossibility, for a mere mortal, of what Sarastro has to do, namely, to shoulder and ultimately defend the awesome burden of the Eternal Masculine. On this point the Immortals laugh with Papageno. And so must we, if not as Sarastro himself then at least, humbly, at his helmeted chorus of priests, solemn, significant... but those noseguards! The irreverant suggestion of false moustaches simply would not go away!

I've not mentioned everyone that I should have. To the three Ladies, Genii, priest-soloists and the rest of the chorus, apologies and thanks! This was theatre as it should be: amusing, enlivening, surprising, curative. The production also shows what power lies with a local company alive to its limitations yet creative and committed in the face of a great work of art. So, I fancy, it must have been in the Golden Age, when Arcady's nymphs and shepherds mounted their own seasons of music-theatre! It's good to see it can happen that way still.
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THE AUSTRALIAN OPERA (20588)
Opera Theatre, SOH: The Bartered Bride by Smetana (in English); conductor, Geoffrey Arnold; producer, Premysl Koci; designer, Sarka Bejna Svobodova; choreographer, Astrida Sturova; with Glenys Fowles, Ron Stevens, Graeme Ewer and Donald Shanks. This disappointing rendition of the Czech favourite has been largely revamped for the summer season with hopefully happier results. Jan 11, 13, 19, mats 23 and 30.

Madame Butterfly by Puccini; conductors, Stuart Challender and David Kram, producer, John Copley; designers, Henry Bardon and Michael Stennett; with Rhonda Bruce, Joan Carden, Lynne Cantlon, Kathleen Moore, Jennifer Birmingham, Anson Austin, Jon Sydney, Sergei Baigildin, Lamberto Furien, John Pringle and Gregory Yurisich. Copley’s highly successful production is a mainstay of the AO’s repertoire and features a series of the company’s leading house talent. Jan 14, 20, 23 and 27.

Comedies of Three Centuries: Rosina by William Shield (English); conductor, Richard Bonynge, producer, Christopher Renshaw, designer, Kenneth Rowell. The Bear by William Walton (English); conductor, David Kram, producer, Robin Lovejoy, designer, Tom Lingwood and Ba-ta-clan by Jacques Offenbach (French/English/Italian/“nonsense”); conductor, Richard Bonynge, producer, Christopher Renshaw, designer, Kenneth Rowell. Robyn Lovejoy’s exquisite production of The Bear featuring Heather Begg’s incandescent performance as Popova will be joined by two repertoire curiosities. Shield’s Rosina premiered in 1782 and Offenbach’s knockabout one-acter Ba-ta-clan. Jan 28, 30. La Traviata;
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Music with paprika and other spices

by Fred Blanks

This has been Bartok Year.
All round the world the centenary of the Hungarian composer's birth has been assiduously celebrated, and nowhere more so than in his native country from which he departed for America in 1940. Intriguingly, Hungary has had some remarkable changes of opinion about Bela Bartok. His reputation as a musical pioneer was high there before the second World War, but afterwards with the change of regime his music was branded by the Communist authorities as formalist, arid, anti-people; for a long time its performance received little encouragement.

But then, when it became obvious, within a decade of Bartok's death under somewhat penurious circumstances in New York in September 1945, that he was rapidly becoming established as one of the most influential composers of our century, the Hungarian powers-that-were realised that Eastern Europe would be left out on a cultural limb if they kept making a social outcast or political heretic out of one of their potentially greatest assets in music since Liszt. (A similar situation had arisen in post-Stalin Russia with respect to Stravinsky; re-writing history involves contortions even in music.) And so Budapest got onto the Bartok band-wagon — and this year they have converted it into a triumphal chariot.

Sydney treated Bartok handsomely, not only on the level of front-rank professional music-making and what might be called prestige concerts, but in the student arena and around the musical fringes. For instance, the Opera House Trust exhibited Bartok memorabilia, and held a function to honour the publication of a handbook for teachers and students called Bartok — A Selection Of The Piano Music, commissioned by the Music Teacher's Association of NSW from Nancy Salas, the keyboard expert and educator whose enthusiasm has long been a pillar of the Bartok Society of Australia.
Among the performances worth noting in this Bartók year have been those of the string quartets played by the Bartók Quartet visiting for Musica Viva, the violin-and-piano music from Christopher Kimber and David Miller, the Violin Concerto No. 2 from Ruggiero Ricci with the SSO under Harold Farberman, the Viola Concerto from Winifred Dure with the Conservatorium Symphony Orchestra under Ronald Smart, the Piano Concerto No. 3 from Endre Hegedus with the SSO under Myer Fredman, the Divertimento from the Australian Chamber Orchestra, the Sonata for Two Pianos and Two Percussionists with Sonya Hanke, David Miller, Michael Askil and Richard Miller, and a lot of small-fry music including all the 156 pieces of Mikrokosmos.

Which brings us to the final substantial act of Bartók homage — the concert performance of his one-act opera Duke Bluebeard’s Castle. included by the ABC in its very well-patronised Saturday matinee series in the Opera House Concert Hall. Bluebeard is essential source material for vampires, spectres and psycho-analysts; it contains enough musical paprika to stimulate the imagination, and enough allegorical allusions to keep it occupied. The plot is minimal, and there are only two singers, so that concert versions are more frequent than staged ones. I have seen one of the latter and heard four of the former; the best of all these crossed my path in the Swiss city of Bern, where Charles Dutuit conducted the local orchestra and two leading Hungarian singers, bass-baritone Gyorgy Melis (who has visited Australia) and mezzo-soprano Olga Szonyi.

For the Sydney performance, Georg Tintner — the white-maned patriarch currently working in Queensland — was in charge, and it took him some time to develop sufficient thrust from the music, which up to about Door Four suffered habby episodes. But then, with the materialisation of an extra brass choir and the organ from on high, matters improved, though not without intermittent relapses. This is music which must get into the blood of its performers, and that it has had no time to do here. And while the use of an English translation certainly spread intelligibility, it also drew attention to the repetitive artificiality of rhythmic mouthfuls based on eight-syllable phrases; not quite unconsciously, one thought of a similar effect (with a different rhythm) in Taylor-Coleridge’s Haunatha. But vocally both singers were impressive, though he tended towards the end. Donald Shanks projected a sonorous resonance, while Margaretta Elkins honoured spirit and of the music throughout. Yet after all this gloom and doom, duly engendering respect for Bartók as composer-of-the-year (in 1982 it could be Kodaly or Grainger or Stravinsky or Manuel Ponce or Field or Pagamini, all born in 1782 or 1882) one could not help feeling a touch of sneaking admiration for Jacques Offenbach, whom the bloodthirsty tale of Bluebeard moved to musical hilarity.

Several other concerts this month raised more than fleeting implications.

Take Tessa Birnie, an apostle of ingenious programming. Her piano recitals have opened doors towards vistas not often frequented by other pianists. In 1968 she gave four recitals in the guise of a Concerts of Keyboard Music, visiting six-and-a-half centuries, 65 composers (quite a few of whom flourished before her grand piano was invented) and 14 countries. Then in 1978, the 150th anniversary year of Schubert’s birth, she devoted ten recitals to 450 Schubert works, apparently including every note (and probably a few extra ones magnanimously but erroneously attributed to him) that he ever wrote for a solitary pianist. This time, she gave a single recital of works by famous composers in the throes of teenage — Chopin and Scriabin at 15, Beethoven at 13, Faure at 17, Mendelssohn at 17 and so on. This sort of programming could fall flat from an inadequate performer, but Tessa Birnie is more than adequate, and indeed has an honest, musicianly approach which shuns showwomanship and percussive pianism. No wonder she attracted a full Opera House Recording Hall.

Then there was Anthony Fogg, a pianist of a very different musical persuasion, given to vigorous, well-studied readings of contemporary music. He used more fingers in a recital for the ABC and International Societies For Contemporary Music than there were listeners to hear him, but prophets such as he come before their time, and his selection of works by composers like the Australians Keith Humble and Barry Conyngham, American Barbara Kolb, Peter Schat from Holland and Michael Tippett from England filled a stimulating hour with sounds that sometimes demanded cool analysis (Humble) and at others shook your emotions by the scuff of their metaphorically mixed necks (Tippett).

If melodic seduction was what you craved, there was no better supply of it than from Schubert’s Overture, possibly the longest chamber-music work in the regular repertoire, beautifully played by the University of NSW Ensemble at their final 1981 series concert. Also in this program was the two-piano version of Rachmaninov’s Symphonic Dances (1940), played with a great outpouring of romantic clan by David Bollard and David Stanhope.

This was, more by temporal definition than idiom, music of the Twentieth Century. Which brings me to my final point. Not the least remarkable aspect of the ABC three-concert series Music Of The Twentieth Century, which began under the direction of Stanislaw Skrowaczewski in the Town Hall towards the end of October, was the fact that all nine composers on the programs are dead. The message seems to be that even in our own century, the only good composers are dead ones. It has been pointed out that we have only another 19 years to come to grips with the twentieth century before we have to start dealing with the twenty-first. But there were a lot of empty seats, and their absent bottoms missed a first-rate opening concert in this series, notable for a vital and largely accurate reading of the Symphony No. 1 by Shostakovich, the subtly beautiful Six Orchestral Pieces Op. 6 by Webern, and the chromatic, impressionist Staab Mater by a Polish composer who died in 1937 and is now coming back into fashion, Karol Szymanowski. More about this series next month.
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The stormy tale of Government help and hindrance in 60 years of film history — and of the heroes who won or lost the battles. By Ina Bertrand and Diane Collins.
Passionate plea for passionless Art
by John McCallum

On the Art of the Theatre, by Edward Gordon Craig, Heinemann, (rrp $11.20).

Edward Gordon Craig, the terrible prophetic child of 20th century theatre, is an object of some scorn to those who have never read him or have read him lazily and unsympathetically. His views on theatre management were autocratic and elitist. His high-minded devotion to an ideal Future in which the theatre could find new materials of its own and so do away with the need for the Actor:

I believe in the time when we shall be able to create works of art in the Theatre without the use of the written play, without the use of actors; but I believe also in the necessity of daily work under the conditions which are today offered us.

The qualification is important. Craig may have been a prophetic dreamer, but he also worked in the theatre himself. Nevertheless his ideal for the Future contains a challenge which is worth considering. He argued that to use a human being as a material was alien to the very spirit of mankind, which was to strive for freedom and independence of expression: "Today we have the strange picture of a man content to give forth the thoughts of another..." Similarly the words of a script were a poor substitute for the Voice which the future Theatre Artists would use to make his works.

Craig's constant aim was to find a pure new Theatrical Art which would do away with the bower-bird complexities of the theatre as it was and is. The aim is expressed partly in his contempt for naturalism and realism:

It is not a poor art and a poor cleverness, which cannot convey the spirit and essence of an idea to an audience, but can only show an artless copy, a facsimile of the thing itself... Realism is caricature.

The new Theatre Artist, for Craig, would take his place alongside the Poet, the Painter and the Musician as a Creative Individual, Master Craftsman of his material, unsullied by the "stupid restless details" which pervert the present theatre, continually searching for the perfect images which would express his ideas through the new materials of pure Action, Scene and Voice. The actual physical manifestation of Action, Scene and Voice Craig had not yet fully discovered when he wrote On the Art of the Theatre, but it is adumbrated in his idea of the Uber-Marionette — a pure human figure able to embody the Artist's design more completely and beautifully than an actual human body.

There are many people, of course, who find the communality, eclecticism, complexity and sheer chaos of the theatre one of its most exhilarating and exciting qualities. Craig's challenge, however, stands to be answered and no-one who takes theatre seriously should ignore this beautifully written, passionate plea for pure passionless Art.

It seems that in the absence of her miraculous voice (except for a few unsatisfactory recordings) we are to be condemned to an endless series of revelations about the private, social or political life of Dame Nellie Melba. The latest is in fact by herself — a reissue of an autobiography she wrote in 1925 for Liberty magazine, Melodies and Memories (Nelson, rrp $16.95). Melba seems to have taken the opportunity to settle a few old scores and change a few unfortunate details, but John Cargher's excellent clear-headed introduction and notes help put things back in perspective. As he says, she was not a particularly pleasant person. The book is most interesting as an evocation of a thankfully lost world of art dominated by high society.

Colin Chambers' Other Spaces is a brief history and analysis of the work of the Royal Shakespeare Company's "fringe" theatres: the Other Space in Stratford, and the Warehouse in London. In particular it is a tribute to the work of Buzz Goodbody, the radical woman director who managed to bridge the gap between the political and social ferment of the 60s and one of the world's most respected traditional (if also experimental) theatre companies. Goodbody is principally remembered in this country for her suicide just before the opening of her acclaimed "village hall" Hamlet. This book reveals more important reasons for remembering her.

The only book in this motley December collection which has obvious Christmas gift appeal is The Royal Ballet: The first 50 years, by Alexander Bland (Dist by Bookwise Aust, rrp $29.75). This is a semi-official history of this great company, and a richly illustrated and handsomely produced book.

Finally three books worth mentioning are: Changing Styles in Shakespeare, by Ralph Berry (Allen & Unwin, rrp $23.95), an account of influential modern productions of certain of Shakespeare's plays; a revised edition of Sonia Moore's Training an Actor (Penguin, rrp $3.95), an inside view, using the now familiar dialogue which many followers of Stanislavsky seem to use, of her classes teaching his "system"; and a re-issue of another, much lesser, American "how to" book — Hennning Nelms' Play Production (Barnes & Noble, rrp $5.50) the principle virtue of which is that it is comprehensive and very cheap.
Next production — the world premiere of
Dorothy Hewett's
THE FIELDS OF HEAVEN
to be directed by Rodney Fisher
February 9 to March 6

Set in a fictitious district in the Great Southern Area of Western Australia called Jarrahbin, THE FIELDS OF HEAVEN is an epic-style play covering the period 1929 to 1951. It tells of destructive love and the breakdown of a fragile ecology in which the interlocking lives and the conflicting values of the older settlers and the migrants clash, causing tragedy and exile.

THE FIELDS OF HEAVEN will be the Playhouse's contribution to the Festival of Perth.

ACROSS
1. The trouble with Galsworthy? (6)
4. Study and search for Norman's perhaps (8)
10. Game played with sea-horses (5,4)
11. A very soft French article used for temptation (5)
12. Hinted that the child was not honest (7)
13. Walk again, though you've got an old tyre (7)
14. Burdened chap with two different directions (5)
15. Past amount specified is too much (8)
18. Steward rounded one pair up for pardon (8)
20. Sudden rush at Baden Baden towards Lawrence (5)
23. Wheels round the pegs at the top of walls (6)
25. Cultivation up to a number of years (7)
26. Wrongdoer loses point in archery (5)
27. Presently character with tailless rodent becomes faceless (9)
28. Acts before model conclusions (8)

DOWN
1. Witnessed actor at logging plants (8)
2. Classified again, so wrote again (7)
3. It is alien to ignore ref rudely (9)
5. Play about with what we picked? (2,3,9)
6. Complete measure with a deficient stone (5)
7. Ruler for measure at printery (7)
8. Flecked and chunky like the river? (6)
9. Quaint old drains whole over the water (4,4,6)
16. One who shows up Sid the actor (9)
17. Palinode, well, almost, for slaverer (8)
19. Outlay former writers noted (7)
21. A bachelor isolated, living in a shell (7)
22. Save up for a large number mentioned in prescription (6)
24. Nanny will ensure somehow that 'e won't be there. (5)

SOLUTION No. 36.
The first correct entry drawn on December 21 will receive one year's free subscription to T.A.

The winner of last month's crossword was T Jones of Berwick, Victoria.
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With the derricks up above us and the solid earth below, we’re waiting at the lever for the word to let her go.

A. B. Paterson

Banjo Paterson penned these lines for a colourful poem over 80 years ago. At that time, he could hardly have guessed that they would aptly describe the feelings of oilmen now working in a region often frequented by himself.

In an area 600 kilometres west of Rockhampton – known to geologists as the Galilee Basin – there’s a tiny town called Isisford.

The local pub is called “Clancy’s Overflow”. The river nearby – the Barcoo – features in the well-known Banjo Paterson tale “A Bush Christening”.

It’s close to this town that has such strong associations with Banjo Paterson that Esso and its co-venturers are drilling the first test well in one of the largest on-shore oil exploration programs Australia has ever seen.

Together, Esso and its co-venturers expect to invest more than $60,000,000 in the Galilee Basin on seismic studies and a drilling programme. As with all such exploration programs there is no guarantee of success. Oil, however, is vital to Australia’s future, so the search for it – although costly – must continue.

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