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Editor

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A National Drama?

This is the month of the Adelaide Festival. One of its major offerings is Patrick White’s Signal Drifter, which, through a quartet of characters and a central relationship, examines the course of twentieth century Australian history and the post-war advance of the omniverous city.

Patrick White’s fortunes as a playwright are an indictment of our treatment of writers for the stage in this country. His plays are complex, poetic, serious; a canon which anywhere else would ensure a place in the national body of plays that are continually produced. Sharran’s revivals of The Season at Sarsaparilla and A Cheery Soul proved that, given the chance, the public would respond.

The MTC has proven, now many moons ago, the same thing with Ray Lawler and The Doll Trilogy, and is about to put on Lawler’s latest, Godsend; but is there generally, one wonders, both the commitment to our heritage and a coherent approach to content which builds a sense in the public mind of a national drama, in the way it existed, because of sheer tidal force of the new wave, in the ’70s?

Richard Wherrett did have as part of his platform for the STC directorship a policy of producing one outstanding play from the past each season — accordingly the company began with The Sunny South in the new year of 1980. Since then, though nostalgia plays are being mounted and will be again with A Happy And Holy Occasion, no more has been heard of the initiative to “establish a repertoire of Australian classics”; an initiative TA hailed at the time as “as courageous as it is necessary”.

Even the 50/50 mix of local and overseas writing seems similarly to have gone by the board. Is it the new belt-tightening — or is it that for the most part indigenous works is seen in the same light as experimental work and must be consigned to second venues, and the STC’s Wharf Project has been delayed?

The STC example is indicative of a wider problem; that the “eerie calm” Jack Hibbert noticed in 1979 has become a deepening depression. Certainly the burgeoning of writing in the early seventies was fuelled by, and reflected, a social and political upheaval of a spirited, optimistic kind. Its confidence was not in itself, but in being a part of an effective movement of change (the ending of the Vietnam war, for instance). Common causes make for unity.

Now the ’70s revolution has been absorbed into the mainstream — Romeril’s The Floating World is to be presented by the MTC (which reminds me of a Jon Hawkes crit which moaned “They were the opposition, and now they’re messing with our fucking plays”) — there is nothing to react and unite against.

Writers have turned their gaze to the outsider world: Louis Nowra’s Inner Voices, Visions, and The Precious Woman, Hibbert’s The Overcoat, Elisha’s Einstein and Sewell’s Tractors and Welcome The Bright World. Sewell is preaching, as Katherine Brisbane said in a discussion of this point, to an effete Nimrod audience that they ought to care, yet the credibility gap between the world of the play and that of the audience is enormous. Perhaps the humanness of monetarism has pushed people back into apathy.

The other possibilities seem at the moment to be nostalgic, escapist and epic dramas (hence Hewett has finally come into her own). Perhaps it is that the issues facing the world, economic crisis and the looming holocaust, are firstly too big and secondly not susceptible to dramatic expression. Whatever the reasons, our playwrights do not seem to have their fingers on the pulse of what is happening. They do not seem capable of defining where we are — in the way early Williamson and Hibbert and O’Malley did in their time, with the latter linking into the vaudeville/musical/poetic tradition while it was about it. David Hare talks in this issue of how what British playwrights have to say about the current state of their country and the world at large (and they have a lot to say) is eagerly listened to and respected by the general populous.

The problem is not, though, to be laid solely at the door of the theatre. But if our sense of a national drama is not to keep falling into decline, theatres must commit themselves not just to Australian content, but to it in a primary sense. English and American companies would not even entertain any other than a first and foremost approach to their national drama (here we context heritage gives; significantly, in 1981 American companies would not even entertain any other than a first and foremost approach to their national drama (here we context heritage gives; significantly, in 1981 Australian companies would not even entertain any other than a first and foremost approach to their national drama (here we context heritage gives; significantly, in 1981 Australian companies would not even entertain any other than a first and foremost approach to their national drama).
Peter Carroll

Peter Carroll will be returning to Nimrod, having finished his 18 month stint in *Evita* and starred as Chinchilla for the STC, to play "poor silly Semyon" in their first play of the new season, *The Suicide*. He follows in the footsteps of Derek Jacobi on Broadway and Graeme Blundell in Melbourne, though he himself hasn't seen the play performed. This will be the first time he has been directed by close friend Aubrey Mellor and worked on stage with Angela Punch-McGregor, though he both worked with Aubrey and taught Angela at NIDA.

Carroll will also be acting in two more plays at Nimrod over the next 12 months or so, and four over the next two years with the Sydney Theatre Company, though what they all are hasn't yet been decided. This year he will play Malcolm in STC's *MacBeth* and the lead in the new David Williamson play, *The Perfectionist*. These new, flexible contracts for top players who are not part of the permanent company are obviously of great benefit to company, actor and audience alike. For the actor they give a degree of security without tying them down completely, and for audiences it gives a chance to see the range of top actors' work without having to see the same faces in every production.

*The Suicide* was written in the late '20s, a play with tragic subject matter given farcical treatment to exhibit the madness of a society in which "only the dead say what the living may think". It went into rehearsal with Meyerhold, but was banned before the opening night and author Nikolai Erdman never wrote another play.

Carroll had a hard decision to make in that he was asked to got to Perth to act in Dorothy Hewett's *The Fields of Heaven* at the same time, but decided that "this was the nearest I'd ever get to playing Hamlet" so accepted Nimrod's offer.

PASCOE SHUFFLES THE PACK

As part of his "new broom" measures to upgrade the workings of the Australia Council, Dr Timothy Pascoe has re-organised its entire internal structure. At the time of writing the whole top layer of the management staff had been spilled. It sounds drastic, but in fact it is more a question of reshuffling than throwing the pack in the air the crying "off with their heads": they are to apply for five newly created positions that are being advertised only within the Council.

The reorganisation is fairly radical, with the six current Boards — Aboriginal Arts, Community Arts, Crafts, Literature, Music, Theatre and Visual Arts — and their separate staff to be abolished. Instead, the Chairman (Pascoe) and the Council (of the Council) will sit above five new departments (the directorships of which are the five advertised positions): Council Secretariat, Policy and Planning, Arts Coordination, Client Services, and Finance and Administration.

Finance and Admin, the Secretariat, and Policy and Planning will contain the obvious, plus in the latter the information, publications, library, research and contact with the Federal Government and state funding bodies. Under Arts Co-ordination come all the old Boards; each will have one employed Director with the current system of rotating unpaid members drawn from the profession. At present Board Directors will not change; that will happen as contracts end or people leave — the Music Board will be the first as the Directorship has just fallen vacant and will soon be publicly advertised. Eventually each Director is to be an ex-practitioner or proven expert in the field, and will be concerned not with the deployment of staff under him, but with the art form itself, its practitioners and requirements.

The current staff of the Boards will be found in the department of Client Services, where they will be dealing with Artist and Organisation Services — ie with the organisations and individuals seeking funding — with Projects and Innovation and Application Registration. Aboriginal Services will have a separate section in this department because of the cultural differences. Apart from a few well-qualified people, staff will not deal with specialised areas as they did under the previous Board system, so grant applicants will very likely find themselves dealing with a different project officer(s) than previously.

The major reason for this restructuring is to promote efficiency and maximum output with the falling number of Australia Council staff. The present organisation was...
designed for a staff of some 250; there are at present only about half that number and cutbacks certainly don't allow for increases.

Dr Pascoe wants the primary aim of the Council to be the getting of government money for the arts and the presentation of the issues involved to the public. Its other main aim is to service the arts and its organisations effectively, in terms of their needs; he is critical of the conservative way in which money has previously been allocated between the Boards, and thinks that the new structure will allow greater flexibility. At the same time, Pascoe says, the role of the Australia Council is to respond to needs, not to force initiatives (could he be referring to the Limited Life idea?), though he defends the Challenge Grant scheme as the fairest deployment of the reduced funding.

For further news of who will be doing what in the new-look Australia Council, watch this space...

**FUNDING RESTORED**

With the Federal Government's about-face on funding cuts to the Australia Council, the Theatre Board have been able to restore grants to some of the companies who were originally to lose all funding this year. The Hole in the Wall gets $56,000; the Ensemble, $57,000; La Boite, $18,000 (on top of the $32,000 already given for their Early Childhood Drama Project); and the SA Stage Company, $22,500. The Pram Factory did not resubmit its application and two Victorian companies, Why Not Theatre and Theatreworks, were rejected completely again.

Even the extra money from Government did not allow the Theatre Board to restore full, inflation-linked funding to everyone, although the money held back in the Challenge Grant scheme has been automatically released with a further amount available on Challenge.

**SHELL FOR PLAYBOX**

The Playbox have been quick to get underway in the search for private sector funding. They have succeeded in getting the Shell Company of Australia to underwrite their Upstairs program to the tune of $10,000 this year. Shell's sponsorship is the largest single private or corporate support Playbox has ever received and they will of course be able to claim $1 for $3 on the Australia Council's Challenge Grant scheme.

There was a small handing-over ceremony on the opening night of *Lonely Lenny Lower* by Barry Dickins on February 10.

**MTC SEASON**

The Melbourne Theatre Company has announced its first season for '82 and will be

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**NEW PLAY FROM RAY LAWLOR**

kicking off with Shakespeare at the end of the month. Sandy Gore will be playing Rosalind in *As You Like It* at the Athenaeum. At Russell Street Freddie Parslow will star in John Romeril's brilliant play about Australian xenophobia, *The Floating World*; ironic that the year this piece makes it into establishment theatre, the place where it was premiered eight years ago (the APG) has finally sunk beneath the waves. A new Ray Lawler play entitled *Godsend* will be premiering at the Athenaeum on July 20.

**LIGHTS ON UPSTAGE**

March 31 will see lights up at Sydney's newest theatre venue: Geraldine Turner and John O'May will open in *Moving Target* at Ken Lilian Horler's Upstage theatre restaurant. It's at 652 George Street, right in the heart of the movie mile.

**STC VERSATILITY**

The Sydney Theatre Company's *Chicago* goes on and on! It has to end its capacity season at the Theatre Royal on March 27 to make way for the STC's production of *Amadeus*. The Company has booked the commercial venue for a total of five months in '82 to supplement its reduced subsidy income.

It has also appointed Ralph Kerle, latterly of the Flying Trapeze in Melbourne, as Associate Director; his responsibilities will be to assist Donald McDonald on the administrative side and Richard Wherrett on the artistic. Clearly a versatile gentleman. He will also be in charge of developing second venue activities prior to the opening of STC's Walsh Bay headquarters.

The Artistic Director will also be showing his versatility when he directs Brecht's *Mahagonny* for the Australian Opera in June.

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**THE VERSATILE RALPH KERLE**

Upstage is to be a cabaret venue and it's ideally located and set up to house the solution to what the Horlers perceive to be the last big gap in Sydney's entertainment spectrum — an intimate, elegant space where one's wish to eat and drink well can be accommodated in the same place and on the same night as one's appetite for lively, stimulating entertainment. The Horlers should know, they put their money and their energies where they mouths were to set up Nimrod in 1970.

*Moving Target* is directed by Ken Horler, Max Lambert is Musical Director, Larry Eastwood set designer and Wendy Dickson will do the costumes. Expect to see Brecht side by side with Sondheim, Clive James mixing it with Cole Porter and Noel Coward, to name but a few.
**FLUX AT THE NATIONAL**
The National, Perth, seems to be in a state of flux since the departure of Stephen Barry at the beginning of the year. Guest directors Rodney Fisher and Edgar Metcalfe will be working on productions and Metcalfe will be interim company Director until the end of the March when we can expect a more permanent appointment to be made. John Toussaint, the National's Administrator, also left recently and hasn't yet been replaced, so Production Manager, Duncan Ord is taking responsibility for much of his work. Publicity Officer, Lyn Schwan resigned at the end of the year and has been replaced by the Don Franks Company. We await further developments.

**A FIRST FOR SYDNEY**
Griffin theatre at the Stables, following the current production of Ron Blair's *Marx*, is presenting what is believed to be a first for Sydney: an evenings theatre, presented by the author. *Sham — Delusion and other forms of Self-Destruction* is a program of three one-act plays by Mil Perrin, directed by Mil Perrin.

The three plays, as the title might suggest, deal with the ways and mechanisms by which individuals are manipulated, and manipulate themselves into socially terminal situations. Billed as “an evening of light tragedy”, the plays are: *Meditation*, an observation on that drive in all of us to live up to the sometimes absurd expectations of others; *The Rape of Lucretia McColl*, which looks at the way the socially disadvantaged are kept that way by the plastic images of the media; and *Job Lot* a sardonic parable of man's need to find a meaning outside himself.

If past experience of Perrin plays plays anything to go by, this Griffin venture into “social absurdism” should be, if not provoking, at least outrageous.

**THE Q IN 82**
1982 looks like being an expansive year for Penrith’s Q Theatre; construction of its new 300-seat theatre is underway with completion date estimated for July. In the meantime the company’s sixth season has been announced and includes Orton’s *Chat The Butler Saw*, Williamson’s *The Club*, Charley’s *Aunt* and premieres of two new Australian plays — *Safety in Numbers* by Philip Scott and Luke Hardy and *Molly Dies* by Martin Sharman. 

*Molly Dies* had a reading at the Q last August and *Safety in Numbers* is a four-hander with songs. Philip Scott is well known in Sydney for his musical direction and last worked for the Q in *Privates on Parade*. He’s currently touring with the *Rocky Horror Show*.

**TOMMY STEELE**
Tommy Steele is back in the country, currently performing *The Tommy Steel Show* at Her Majesty’s, Melbourne, and moving in April to the Capitol in Sydney. Apart from the soft pop music and variety shows he is best known for, Steele has also acted with the Old Vic as Tony Lumpkin in *She Stoops To Conquer*, and for Michael Codron in Goldoni’s *The Servant of Two Masters*. On TV he has played Feste with Alec Guinness and Ralph Richardson in *Twelfth Night* and wrote an unusual script in prose and verse for a program of an autobiographical journey through his early childhood in London which remains a classic. Steele is also an enthusiastic amateur painter and sculptor.

**LA BOITE BECOMING PROFESSIONAL**
A significant breakthrough has been made by Brisbane’s La Boite Theatre in the progress towards its target of a professionally based community theatre. At a recent meeting, the theatre’s Council unanimously carried two resolutions:

Council supports the policy of continuing growth of the professional resource staff of the theatre.

and,

Council supports the development of La Boite as a community theatre and accepts the need to employ actors and other theatre professionals — those professional personnel to be used in any of the theatre’s activities.

La Boite has always functioned as an amateur theatre, depending on its artistic director, administrative staff and the professional Early Childhood Drama Project wing for its pro-am status. The intention is that a core of actors will
eventually form the basis of community theatre work, offering experience and expertise to amateurs coming in to participate in productions and, perhaps more significantly, initiating projects involving sections of the community outside the confines of the theatre building.

La Boite Artistic Director, Malcolm Blaylock

OFF BROADWAY, SYDNEY

Chances are that a new venue in Bay Street, Ultimo, just off Broadway, could be opening before the end of the year. Jeremy Gadd (most recently of Marian Street) has bought the ex-Methodist Mission, ex-printery, between the two Grace Brothers buildings and has received $15,000 from each of the NSW Premier’s Department and the Theatre Board to run it as a venue — called Off Broadway — for hire to the smaller, homeless theatre companies of which Griffin and One Extra might be typical takers.

It would be a rough space with end-on staging; there’s a hall plus gallery and foyer with living accommodation above for the resident director. While it looks hopeful, results of a grant application for capital improvement has yet to be known to make the project a certainty.

It’s interesting to note that the State Government has decided to fund Off Broadway as an alternative Sydney venue, while the Cleveland Street Performance Space, championed by Mike Mullins, has had its grant application knocked back.

DREAMING IN BLACK

by Paula deBurgh

Jiri Srnc founded The Black Theatre Of Prague in 1961, and is still the company’s artistic director. His involvement with the company is all-encompassing — director, composer, author and, until 1970, leading actor. Srnc evolved and invented a technique which was loosely derived from the puppetry of ancient China, where objects appeared to move by themselves against a black background. He refined this early art form and introduced ultra-violet lighting, to create a theatre of illusion which has astonished audiences for twenty-one years. The company is called the Black Theatre because “those invisible, dressed in black, those who succeed in disclosing the hidden secrets of things among which we live, are the main actors of the Black Theatre”.

When Jiri Srnc seeks performers to join his company, he casts a wide net. Approximately one third of the company comprises puppeteers, one third is made up of dancers and actors, and a third, non-actors. During auditions, there are always people who come off the street to offer their services within the company. Srnc has found over the years that some of these “non-actors” are very good instinctive performers — so nowadays there are always some in the company. Once employed, the company members are contracted for one year at a time. The Black Theatre tours abroad for approximately nine months of every year. This has, in the past, created domestic upheavals and rifts for some of its members. In recent years this has been resolved by the employment of young, unattached performers, as well as involved or married couples — creating a greater stability within the group.

The Black Theatre of Prague has toured more than thirty countries and finds that Argentina and West Germany are its most enthusiastic supporters, although the work is embraced worldwide. Presently they are visiting Australia for the third time, having previously toured in 1964 and 1976. After Australia, they go to West Germany and Spain, before returning to Prague to relinquish their Week Of Dreams for another fantasy.

STOP PRESS...

BIGGEST EVER ARTS BEQUEST FOR NIMROD

Nimrod Theatre have just received the biggest arts bequest in history, and one which makes them the only theatre company in the country to own their own building outright.

The future of the company was unsure because the arrangement under which they payed a peppercorn rent on the old Cerebos Salt factory was coming to an end. Now a finance company, who wishes to relinquish their...
NIMROD SUBSCRIBE NOW . . .
to Australia’s most vibrant theatre and save up to $41.60 on a pair of season tickets.

The Suicide

NICHOLAI ERDMAN
Play 1. Nimrod Upstairs
OPENS Wed 24 Mar
CLOSES Sun 9 May

“Deliriously funny farce. In my opinion it is one of the masterpieces of this century” (H. G. Kippax, S.M.H.)

Starring Peter Carroll
Directed by Aubrey Mellor
Designed by Richard Roberts

The Struggle of The Naga Tribe

RENDRA
Play 2. Nimrod Upstairs
OPENS Wed 19 May
CLOSES Sun 27 June

A brilliant adaptation of the traditional Javanese shadow-puppet play. A satirical and very funny commentary on bureaucratic corruption.

Directed by Chris Johnson
Designer Richard Roberts

PARTY WALL

KEN HORLER
Play 3. Nimrod Upstairs
OPENS Wed 7 July
CLOSES Sun 15 Aug

An Australian political cartoon. This popular theatre-piece with music and songs set in the thirties, examines the phenomenon of ‘fortress Australia’.

Directed by George Whaley
Designer Axel Bartz

Tristram Shandy

Play 4. Nimrod Upstairs
OPENS Wed 25 Aug
CLOSES Sun 3 Oct

Based on Laurence Stern’s comic masterpiece and devised by Tim Robertson and the Nimrod Company, this mixture of Bartholomew Fair and Hogarth’s Bedlam combines music and spectacle.

Directed by John Bell
Designed by Richard Roberts

York Theatre, Seymour Centre

LEONARD BERNSTEIN’s

DEATH OF A SALESMAN

Warren Mitchell and Mel Gibson
York Theatre, Seymour Centre
OPENS Fri 9 July
CLOSES Sat 4 Sept

This American classic co-stars WARREN MITCHELL in his British Award-winning role of ‘Willy Loman’ and MEL GIBSON. Nimrod’s production will be directed by George Ogilvie.

Directed by George Ogilvie

Ring Nimrod NOW and we will send you a free brochure.
A major snag in the system is hereby illustrated. In past years the Ensemble has been able to give extended runs to the best of the works from its annual Festival of Playwrights. This year, two of the four plays staged are worthy of more time — Craigie Cronin’s ‘I’ve Come About The Suicide’ and Ken Ross’ ‘The Right Man’ — but there is no way either can be slotted in during the subscription season and while interest is still fresh. No other suitable venue appears to be available.

**George Ogilvie — directing Warren Mitchell and Mel Gibson in Death of a Salesman.**

The Sydney Theatre Company is offering alternatively a five, six or seven-play season; the Nimrod a four, five or six-play season, with subscribers free to make their own choice of plays. This, to some extent, meets a growing customer resistance to being committed to revivals they have no wish to see again, a “blind date” with untried new works.

This and rising prices are the main reasons for a falling off in subscriptions generally. Many now prefer to wait for the reviews and make single bookings for the shows they really want to see. By so doing they usually save more than the saving offered on a season booking.

Two of the Nimrod’s six plays are semi-commercial ventures to be staged at the Seymour Centre prior to national tours. They are the first Australian production of Leonard Bernstein’s Candide, directed by John Bell for an April 20 opening, and Warren Mitchell recreating his triple award-winning portrayal as Willy Loman in Arthur Miller’s Death Of A Salesman, directed by George Ogilvie and with Mel Gibson also in the cast. It opens July 9.

Well, Barnum has arrived and Chicago and They’re Playing Our Song are still going strong in Sydney; Oklahoma! is gearing up for an April opening in Adelaide and J.C. Williamson Productions Ltd is preparing the US musical I Love My Wife for presentation soon, in association with Louis Burke and Joan Brickhill, so things are flourishing on the musical front.

As I mentioned last month, there’s more to come. The nostalgic 42nd Street is a distinct possibility and JCW managing director Robert Ginn tells me casting difficulties which halted negotiations on Sugar Babies last year may now soon be overcome. Moreover, he may by now have been able to announce yet another major American musical to be staged here in April or May.
other pair. Feelers are out for an interstate tour to follow.


Which is my cue to mention that Piccolo Teatro di Milano’s opening night at the Seymour Centre on March 15 will benefit the Peter Summerton Foundation, which in July is bringing to Australia Yevgeny Lansky — a Russian defector now teaching drama at New York University — for a five weeks workshop for directors. The Foundation, set up after Peter’s untimely early death, has brought several of the world’s top directors here for seminars and workshop.

Piccolo Teatro, established in 1947 to preserve the Italian traditions of commedia dell’arte, is a Festival of Perth attraction and this two weeks Sydney season will be its only other Australian appearance. Tickets are $12. Phone Valerie Newstead (36-4442) or Jone Winchester (36-3242).

I like the STC idea of having the dead subsidise the living — that is, using money derived from plays out of copyright to encourage the writing of new Australian works. The Company has set aside $6,000 from the proceeds of its 1981 season of Hamlet and will allocate $2,000 towards the development to a production script of the three best “extensive treatments” — not finished plays — submitted.

Sought are non-naturalistic works, large in scale and epic in theme, that reflect the essence of the plays from which the money is derived. Acceptable scripts will be included in an STC season and usual royalties paid.

Wonder how many, if any, we will see of the spate of American plays on parochial schools apparently spawned by Mary O’Malley’s Once A Catholic. These include Sister Mary Ignatius Explains, a savage comedy by Christopher Durang; Do Patent Leather Shoes Really Reflect Up? John Powers’ musical satirising bans such as this because nuns said the shoes reflected up a girl’s dress; Catholic Schoolgirls, a comedy by Casey Kurtti, and Mass Appeal, I forget who by.

Expatriate Australian novelist Morris West has a new play opening on Broadway, his first since Daughter Of Silence in 1961. Titled The World Is Made Of Glass, it is inspired by Carl Jung’s haunting memory, mentioned in his autobiography, of a woman who did not identify herself telling him she had murdered her best friend in order to marry her husband. The murder was never detected. Local entrepreneurs will no doubt be registering interest.

New director Jim Sharman’s bid for greater exclusivity for this year’s Adelaide Festival has disrupted somewhat what was becoming established as a sort of Australian festival circuit.

Companies either invited by one of the cities or else visiting under their own steam were timing their tours to play the Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne (Moomba) and Sydney festivals in quick succession. Despite Sharman, it’s still a good enough ploy for the Black Theatre Of Prague and Stephen Berkoff’s London Theatre Group to include most of the “circuit” in their 1982 Australian tours.

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**“BARNUM will be 1982’s box office HIT in Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne!”**

The AUSTRALIAN — Jan. 15

Music by Cy Coleman
Lyrics by Michael Stewart
Book by Mark Bramble
Charting her own path to stardom is the unoppressed irrepressible

Robyn Archer

by Michael Le Moignan

Work is Robyn Archer's favourite four-letter word: she delivers it with a vehemence other people normally reserve for the other four-letter words. She believes in "work for the sake of the work" rather than work for the sake of the rewards.

She drives herself hard, with exceptional energy and enthusiasm. At 1am, after a full day of TV, radio and press interviews, she was unflaggingly good humoured about the prospect of packing and flying to Melbourne for more of the same six hours later.

Currently completing a national tour of two solo concerts, one of Brecht songs and one of her own favourites, she is more than ever conscious of the Australian public's regard and affection for her work, and conscious of the responsibilities involved in occupying "an amazingly privileged position".

Singers, she feels, have been more able than most women to break through the barriers set up by a patriarchal system. Personally, she is unoppressed and undiscriminated against; politically she is feminist and socialist, but as an artist her problem is to make a clear statement while maintaining a sense of ambivalence. There are no absolutes. "The answer is that there is no answer."

She quotes Brecht in support of her belief that it is necessary to attack corruption while remaining fiercely humanitarian. Even Margaret Thatcher, in many ways "an inexcusable woman", is a product and a victim of the patriarchy.

Her year of world travel has left her more determined than ever to chart her own course through the minefield of the star-maker machinery of popular and financial success. London gave her an opportunity to start again from the grass-roots, in a way she could not have done in Australia. It was a chastening process for the ego but also a process of regeneration.

She and her producer-manager, Di Manson, re-opened the Drill Hall Theatre in Tottenham with *A Pack Of Women*, which played to 98% capacity, was received rapturously by the critics from *The Times* and *The Guardian*, Irving Wardle (see Feb TA) and Michael Billington, and became the subject of a leading article in the trade newspaper, *The Stage*. She is sceptical about undue reliance on public subsidies, and her view was borne out by the response of the Australian High Commission in London, who offered a £100 guarantee against loss the day after the show closed.

A number of solo performances at London's National Theatre brought her into contact with the flourishing UK fringe theatre, for which she has the highest admiration.

There is, she says, no equivalent in Australia for this vast pool of talented and capable performers, writers and stage technicians, prepared to work for a pittance for something they believe in. "In Australia, everyone's comfortable; in London, everyone's hungry, but they don't care!" Our own theatre "needs a backbone: there's the potential here but where is it? There's no middle ground in Australia between Chicago and people buggering around in Woolloomooloo."

Ideally, she would like to do something more "up the alley", political cabaret for small audiences, but it seems unlikely that her own following will allow it. She returns to London in May to mount a production of her spectacular one-woman-show, *A Star Is Torn*, first at Stratford East, with a likely transfer to the West End.

In October, the Sydney Theatre Company will put on her play, *The Conquest of Carmen Miranda*, which she describes as "Kold Comfort Kafe with ten bananas on your head." Another play, *Il Magnifico*, about Lorenzo de Medici, which examines the whole area of arts sponsorship and subsidy, has been commissioned by Nimrod for next year.

The work goes on; the energy and commitment are astonishing. Of the present tour, she says "Some of it will be good, some will be shithouse and some will be interesting. You can't ask more out of life than that, Can you?"
SIGNAL DRIVER

PATRICK WHITE, and director, NEIL ARMFIELD discuss SIGNAL DRIVER with GUS WORBY

TIME: 9.15 am — a Thursday.
PLACE: A theatre library — an almost triangular room. No windows. There is a large scrubbed table at the centre. Sundry chairs.

Patrick White arrives early. We sit at the table and discuss the questions that might be asked. “Yes... Yes... Well, I couldn’t answer that. Maybe Neil...”

Neil Armfield arrives.

GW: Signal Driver is more than just a new play, or a new Patrick White play. It is the opening gambit for Lighthouse and an important element in Jim Sharman’s Festival. Can you talk about the play in both contexts?

NA: Well, the play shouldn’t be forgotten... as a new play. It is obviously very important for Jim’s company and for Jim’s Festival, and I think it probably needs to be seen in relation to a tradition of productions of Patrick’s plays that Jim has established — magnificent productions which gave an authority and a theatrical understanding to Patrick’s writing. Although I haven’t seen any other production of Patrick’s plays than Jim’s, I think it’s clear that they did allow Patrick’s work to be heard and to have an impact which has been a major landmark in Australia’s theatrical history. And I think beginning with a play by Patrick does set a standard for the Company which has been a kind of guiding influence in Jim’s approach to repertoire. Patrick is rarely seen in relation to a tradition in Australian writing, when in fact there is a very strong tradition — going into Dorothy Hewett and Louis Nowra and, I believe, Stephen Sewell — of Australian writers who look at relationships in terms of a much broader and wider context than the immediate surface of social interaction; who see figures in a landscape and see an interaction between the landscape, a society, a setting and what’s going on between people. It’s been called an epic style, I’m not sure what the best word for it is, but it certainly allows a breadth and a statement which is extremely broad in its scale and its scope.

GW: That is in relation to Jim’s season. What about in the Festival itself, in the way the Festival seems to be shaped?

NA: I don’t know a lot of the work that is in the Festival, but having seen some video clips of the Pina Bausch Company, and having looked at a book of Edward Hopper’s paintings, there certainly is, in Pina Bausch, a very
strong feeling of ritual — of the way that actions from the real world are taken theatrically and then explored, expressed, developed. In rehearsal yesterday we were talking about ritual in Signal Driver, and that there is a very strong feeling on the one hand of theatrical ritual and... a kind of theatrical history for me, in the Chorus of the play, who are two Beings. And there's a feeling that the platform on which the play happens — the kind of plinth, almost, on which the two human characters stand — is like a "tabula rasa" in which we look at certain human social rituals which are conditioned by age, by sex, by relationship, by expectation and by the condition of the stage and the history of the country in which they're living.

GW: Patrick White, have you any comment to make about that?

PW: I can't say that I'm an optimist. (laughs) But there's a lot of comedy in it.

NA: There's a great deal of comedy. One of the things that interests me in the 50 years that the play spans is that the first two acts are both set after quite major events and vastly changing incidents in Australia's history — the two world wars. The first act is suffused with an innocence, a youth, but which is also scarred by the war. One of the characters, Theo, has returned from the First World War, and his way of talking, his way of thinking, his way of relating, is all conditioned by his experience of war. By the time we come to the second act, which is after the Second World War, we feel a country that is very much in the hands of economic and social forces beyond the world, or beyond the immediate world in history, of the "vollscouple", the human couple of the play. And there is a feeling of where Australia itself, with these characters as representative of the country, maybe, at large; of where Australia itself has gone in the 20th century. By the time we get to 1980, the world seems quite inhuman — the world surrounding the people. But, strangely, the people themselves, the characters, seem to grow in humanity as the play develops, and the last act is an exquisite portrait of two human beings alone in a hostile and angry world.

GW: Can I pick up two points? Neil, have you already started to raise one of them.

PW: You seem to manage to work through corruption to a state beyond it — to some positive statement about a notion of beauty, particularly in love. And I gather from what Neil is saying that again this play pursues that course, that it resurrects. Is that right?

NA: I find it very difficult to talk about my plays, or anything I write, because I put down what comes up. And, I suppose a lot of it comes out of my unconscious, although of course you have to use your reason too, in the end, when you sift it. But initially I think it's an act of the unconscious chiefly.

NA: We were talking about this yesterday. That, Patrick, is what you see as the beginning point for a work of art. You do call Signal Driver "a morality play for the times" and... it seems very evident, particularly in the years since Gough Whitlam was Prime Minister, that you have been more and more conscious and vocal about the social role of the artist — well, the social role of any person in society — and the need to look and understand the world. I was wondering how much Signal Driver is an expression of wanting to say something very clearly about Australia?

PW: Yes, all through, but not directly. More obliquely than directly. It's not a propaganda play or anything like that. It has been described as a play about three generations of Australians, I saw somewhere. But it isn't that at all. It's really about the decay of Australian society as reflected in two characters — a man and a woman, husband and wife, from about 1920 to the present. And you get three phases in their lives. There's the youthful early-married days, the dangerous menopausal middle, and old age — the summing up of their lives together. And... well, you see the way society has gone in Australia. I see it as pretty chaotic and wretched, in spite of all the great hoohahs we are given all the time. Although I don't think it is an unduly pessimistic play, do you?
earthly "deros". But as supernatural beings they can shift back into the past and into the future in their commentary, as well as keeping an eye on the present. One minute someone shoots up to settle something between the present and the future. And... what else about the Beings? That sounds like something I arranged very deliberately (laughter).

GW: You obviously have a good relationship with your subconscious.

PW: (laughs) Yes, they came out of it, more or less, in the beginning — out of my subconscious. I also was rather frustrated some years ago. I was asked to give a composer ideas for an opera and I gave him the ideas. But he was rather horrified because he wanted something safe and Romantic... I think. Not something which would get him into trouble, and perhaps not be done by an established opera company. So that rankled a bit with me. And some of these ideas, and I suppose the chorus part of it, belonged to that area, when I was asked for the opera idea. And I think it is rather operatic... the play — with lots of songs in it and chants...

NA: (long pause — glances exchanged, smiles) Well, we didn't want to talk about this, but it probably connects. The immediate setting of the play is a public transport shelter in a landscape. The landscape changes around the shelter and the shelter itself is set in a theatre. Characters come from the theatre and move up into the performance space, and there is an intention ultimately in the play to link the theatrical and the audience space, in a gesture which goes to the heart of the play's direction, and the concerns which touch every character in the play. And that is that, despite the kind of pettiness that our lives are filled with; the play is very much in touch with something beyond us. This isn't presented as some kind of mystification, but it's located in relation to the human imagination. Patrick already talked about love, about the feeling that there is something that's maybe greater than us which is difficult to understand, but the force of which can be felt. In that sense, it's... well, I suppose a kind of historically Romantic "sense". Not that the play is looking at the world through any kind of rose-coloured glasses. Nor is it in any way sentimental. But there is a feeling of a force behind human beings, and behind the world which gives us a standard and a context for action.

GW: In terms of theatrical locale, then, and seeing the work evolve over a lifetime, we're talking about a progression from the country of the mind, through the suburbs of the imagination, to the shelter of love.

NA: Very clever. (general laughter) I think... PW: That's quite a lot about the play. Could we talk about the people involved in the production and the collaboration so far?

NA: Well, it's been a marvellous project to be involved with, because I have been able to talk to Patrick a great deal about the play from when he first finished writing it.

PW: Yes...

NA: Patrick has been involved in discussion with the designer and the composer. We talked a great deal for many months about casting. It has evolved on a very broad front, and each of the artists who have been involved in drawing the production into a theatrical shape have all taken a great deal of time to think about the play and Patrick's work.

GW: Patrick, Neil's talked about the benefits of collaboration from his point of view; can you talk about that gestation period as well? Obviously in one sense the writing has taken place over a lifetime, but has it now come to you quickly? Or in odd places, at odd times, as it appears have others of your...

PW: No, no, it did come quite quickly. Though I couldn't say how quickly it came (laughs). I can't remember exactly when I wrote it. I suppose about a year ago. So much happens so quickly when you're old. You can't remember when you did something. I have re-written the first act quite a bit — just recently, before I came here — which I think has improved it. It is a much more inward play than others I've written, I think. But at the same time I like to think that it's very visual. Certainly I've been lucky in getting Stephen Curtis as a designer, he's done marvellous designs for it, and Carl Vine, I think, has great understanding of what it's about; I haven't heard an awful lot of his work. I heard the music for Poppy, and — what else? —oh, some of the shorter ballets he did for Graeme Murphy, I think it was. But on the whole I haven't heard an awful lot, but I have been very impressed by the... he doesn't say an awful lot, but you feel he's very much in tune with the play, very sensitive to the words of it, so that's a good thing when it Comes to composing the music for the songs. I haven't had any dealings with most of the actors before. Only Kerry Walker. She was in a film Jim did from one of my stories... GW: The Night The Prowler... PW: Yes, and since then we've seen quite a lot of each other and I know her voice very well, and it was easy to write something for her. I had seen Melissa Jaffer in some film roles and been impressed by her (and had always been very sorry that she gave up the theatre for some time) and that she's come back in this. Oh, Peter Cummins I've seen in film roles and liked him in those. John Wood I've only seen in Lulu, in a part which I didn't think gave him much opportunity, but I think he's going to be very good in this. Those are the main things about the people who are working on it... Oh, and Neil... (laughter)... I have admired as a director over several plays I've seen him do. Inside the Island, which I thought was terrific... The Eyes of the Whites. I haven't seen the latest one, which sounds possibly the best thing he's done, Welcome the Bright World.

GW: In your self-portrait you talk fondly, but I think movingly, about Neil's generation, and Jim's generation... PW: Yes... GW:... as those who might be your spiritual children. That obviously pleases you.
PW: Well... I'd wish for them a world free from nuclear war, chiefly, because there's going to be no more plays, no more anything, if we're not very careful. And that, to me, is the issue which concerns me most nowadays, and which I try to do something about. Ah... and I think there will be more and more theatre and film about that issue. At least I hope there will be, without turning it into propagandist stuff... I think there is an increasing need to say something in plays, not just to produce elegant nothings which some theatres tend to do. Without naming them (considerable laughter).

NA: I have been fairly public and loud, during my time at Nimrod, about... well, a shared feeling with Patrick, that it is essential that our theatre reflects how we live our lives in the world, and comments on the way we live, and maybe helps us to confront life when we leave the theatre. I certainly share the feeling that the theatre, that any art, has the responsibility to look at, and to interpret, the world. Speaking about the inheritance that you mentioned from Patrick, I think that there's no question that there's been no greater writer and no greater influence in the history of Australian literature. Patrick's work is a huge monument to human spirit and to art, and to the power of the artist to interpret the world, and there's no greater challenge to respond to than the achievement of Patrick's life.

GW: Perhaps Patrick should have the last word. It seems that you've been coming home to the theatre for a long time. As a young man you existed on the periphery of it, wanting to find a way into it... Is that true?

PW: Yes....

GW:... Had a tilt at it 20 years ago, and now have come back with a real flush of enthusiasm, and preparedness for it... Is that true?

PW: Well... if someone takes an interest in my plays. For a long time, not many people did. The Adelaide Theatre Guild did, years ago. And then John Sumner did a couple of my plays. But it wasn't really until Jim Sharman took me up as a playwright, and saw things that he wanted to bring out, that I was really encouraged to write for the theatre. And since then I have written a couple of plays, Big Toys and this one, Signal Driver... and I would like to write some more.

1912: Born, London. Educated Australia including Kings School, Cranbrook, Mossvale.
1925: Returned to UK, Cheltenham College. Wanted to become an actor.
1929: Australia, working as jackaroo, writing poetry, sketches.
1932: Kings College, Cambridge.
1933: Plays performed at Bryant’s Playhouse, Sydney.
1935: Graduated Cambridge. Sketches and lyrics for revues arranged by Herbert Farejon and others at Little and Gate Theatres, London. Remained in UK; during war was Intelligence Officer with RAF.
1947: The Ham Funeral published.
1948: White returned to Australia to live permanently.
1961: The 1962 Adelaide Festival Committee rejected The Ham Funeral as "unsuitable" for the Festival. Adelaide University Theatre Guild produced the play.
1962: A Cheery Soul published. Premiere of The Season at Sarsaparilla by AUTG and also performed by Union Theatre Repertory Company in Melbourne. The Ham Funeral produced by Elizabethan Theatre Trust in Sydney and Twelfth Night, Brisbane.
1963: AETT produced Season at Sarsaparilla for Sydney; UTRC performed A Cheery Soul in Melbourne.
1964: AUTG premiered A Night on Bald Mountain.
1965: Publication of Four Plays.
1970: Nobel Prize for Literature.
1976: Revival of interest in White's stage work with Jim Sharman's production of The Season at Sarsaparilla for the Old Tote, Sydney.
1977: Wrote Big Toys which Sharman directed for Old Tote. Production toured to Melbourne.
1978: Big Toys published, Currency Press. Film of The Night The Prowler released, directed by Sharman for which White wrote the screenplay.
Major British playwright David Hare is here to direct the world premiere of his latest play, *A Map Of The World*, for the Sydney Theatre Company at the Adelaide Festival. He talks to Wayne Harrison.

David Hare paces about the Sydney Theatre Company office like an expectant father. This makes the pregnant receptionist uneasy, but gives everyone else a chance to roll out their “birth of a play” cliches. The sun has returned to Sydney and the office is flirting again with summer indolence. David is frenetic by comparison and comments wryly on “the brown bodies, everywhere I look.” Difficult birth this.

There are unusual complications. Forceps appear necessary to extract Roshan Seth, the Indian actor playing the novelist Victor Mehta in *A Map Of The World*, from New Delhi and get him to Sydney so that rehearsals may begin. The eighty seventh attempt at contacting him by phone succeeds and he’s on a QANTAS flight from Bombay as long as his internal flight connects. It runs four hours late of course, and QF1 departs sans Seth. More pacing about the office and contemplation of irony.

“See what happens when you write a play about internal chaos in India?”, says a well-known English playwright. The one bright spot in a trying week:
Greg Chappell’s seventh duck.

I use the elation the cricket has caused to steal the following interview. During it David resists two things: biographical details and A Map Of The World details. “I go to the theatre to be surprised,” he says. “You can’t destroy the mystery by revealing the play beforehand.” Nevertheless, certain information is making it into the press — and Penguin Australia will release the playtext prior to the world premiere at the Adelaide Festival.

Still, respecting the author’s wishes, I’ll restrict information on the play to the Festival program synopsis: “Set against the background of a UNESCO conference in India, A Map Of The World centres on a confrontation between a brilliant, cynical, Oxford-educated Indian intellectual (played by Seth) and a passionately committed young English journalist (Robert Grubb). An American woman, Peggy Whiton (Penny Downie) becomes the trigger for an ideological showdown that plays the world’s problems against the protagonists’ highly charged emotional stakes.”

David claims he’s having difficulty interesting Australian journalists in a play about a conference on poverty, but adds that attention is guaranteed once he mentions that the cast and crew are “flying in” from all over the world. Indeed, the “internationalism” of the production is impressive with the Australian majority being joined by Seth, Sheila Scott-Wilkinson from America, Keefe West from West Germany, co-designer Hayden Griffin and lighting designer Rory Dempster, both from England. And Hare, of course, who will also direct the STC production.

As for biographical details, a Cambridge graduate, David Hare is the author of Slae, Knmchle, Fanshen, Teeth ‘n’ Smiles and Plenty for the theatre, and Dreams Of Leaving and Licking Hitler for television. In the late sixties, he co-founded Portable Theatre with Tony Bicat, and in the same way that 16th century touring players constructed a circuit of towns they could successfully revisit, this company created a new network of regional outlets mainly in university towns where they could nourish a new type of theatre, a theatre of physical expression designed for an audience brought up on a television/rock concert diet. “The idea was to take theatre to places where it normally didn’t go,” Hare has said. “We weren’t to see that a variety of arts centres and groups would spring up to accommodate that. But when we started we played more army camps and bare floors than we were playing by the end.”

It was during the Portable Theatre days that Hare commenced his long association with Howard Brenton and Trevor Griffiths. With Brenton in particular he has had exceptional success, having co-written Brassneck with him (1973) and directed his Weapons Of Happiness (1976) at the National. The rise from “army camps and bare floors” to the comparative splendour of Britain’s National Theatre by a group of left-wing playwrights is surely one of the modern theatre’s most extraordinary phenomena, with middle-class audiences “welcoming” those writers who said in 1972: “Our aggressiveness is immensely conscious. . . it stems from a basic contempt for people who go to the theatre. It gets worse when we get near population centres. (We) loathe most people as individuals and, en masse, . . . find people particularly objectionable. But the aggression isn’t entirely spurious. We want to pick the medium of theatre and shake it by the scruff of its neck.” Having shaken it for over a decade, David Hare now prepares to infiltrate the Adelaide Festival Centre and the Sydney Opera House. What was the lure?

“I was asked to Australia,” he says, “by Jim Sharman, who was speculating that if he invited me out, I might write a play. I said that he certainly couldn’t rely on it, but if he wanted to gamble the Adelaide Festival’s money he could. When I first came out last October, Jim was keen that I write about Australia, but on six weeks acquaintance that seemed to me an impertinence. And so, my way of writing a play about Australia is to write about the subject Australians least want to know about, the Third World. Australians find it difficult to take the rest of the world seriously, and I think Eamon Darcy (the Australian co-designer of A Map Of The World) put it best when he said that many Australians came here to escape from the rest of the world.”

Hare brain for some time?

Not really: I’d written a great deal about England, spent seven or eight years — with time-out for Fanshen — writing my “decline of England” plays. There were about the various states of decrepitude the country found itself in, and the reasons for it. I passed through a stage where the critics accused me of being hysterical, of exaggerating England’s problems, to a stage where I was accused of merely repeating what other people had been saying for quite some time — i.e., I had passed from hysteria to cliche” without moving through any middle stage. It was time for a change. I also felt that with Plenty, a play that has not been seen in Australia, I’d ended that phase of my work. Plenty is an underlining of that phase. And so I spent 12 months in America, and was determined not to write until I felt moved to do so. The result is Saigon, about the fall of Vietnam — my American play — which Thames Television will produce later this year. The experience of having been in South East Asia many years ago suddenly became a focus of interest. Then Australia, India and Map.

What sort of research did the latest play entail?

People are very shocked if you admit this in public, but I have a sort of disdain for research. Well, I think there is a certain research which is useful, but any writer who is worth anything at all is going to guess, and guesswork is actually the basis of writing plays, not going out with a tape recorder. And it’s been my experience that whenever you guess intelligently you find your guesswork corroborated. So it was with Map. I would conceive the events and the atmosphere as I would like them to be, and then I would show it to people at the United Nations, to journalists from the Third World, or to Africa experts in England. They sort of moved things about, but basically they confirmed the accuracy of the guesswork. If you can’t guess, you shouldn’t be writing.

Does your broadening of subject matter represent a general trend in British theatre?

No, no. Writers don’t consciously move together. It’s up to people on the outside to say “Oh this or that is going
on” and “Writers are moving here or there”. Your own history is much more personal. Critics, or people who write about your work behave as if you have a lot of choice in the matter. They say “Why doesn’t he do this?” or “What we want is more plays about that”. But you don’t actually have any choice. The bucket goes down and sometimes it will come up with bond weed, and sometimes with clear, fresh water. You just find you are drawn towards what you sense are rich areas. The minute I come up with bond weed, and 

Is the rise to prominence of the British playwright to be explained totally in terms of social instability?

It’s mysterious. There is absolutely no doubt that anybody under 40 of any talent who wanted to write or express themselves artistically in England chose public forms, the theatre or television, whereas that certainly isn’t true in America or here where there are still great novelists. Your novelists are much better than ours, you still have some sense of private work being valuable. In England the novel is a non-existent form and why that is I don’t understand. What I do know is that a general mood of self-doubt is immensely helpful in getting a hearing.

What about the subversion of conservative theatre institutions like the National by radicals?

Both Howard Brenton and I, who, by the way, have been writing in completely different directions since 1975, always felt that the only way of writing about our own times was on a large scale, which has meant epic plays. Plays that move from scene to scene, place to place, time to time, that are free on stage and involve showing the whole society. However, if you attempt to show the whole society, inevitably you find yourself in need of a Shakespearean sized company, able to portray, as Shakespeare’s did, King, Lords, Higher Bourgeoisie, Lower Bourgeoisie, Peasants, Workers. To write about social things you need a company that size. And you need places with resources that can accommodate epic plays, ie, big theatre companies. And so these big theatre companies have been looted for the purposes of the writers.

I might add, however, that I have never joined in the criticism of those people who come to the theatre. I’m grateful for whoever comes. I hope they’re going to listen. I’ve never thought, “Ugh, what a horrible load of people.” Similarly, I’ve never had a complaint against the English theatre. My plays have always gone on. It is my wish, however, that I could get more people to come and see my works.

Certain factors have prevented this. I rely for dissemination of news of my work on the opinions of people who often misrepresent my work. These people are called critics, and they have let me down very badly. I am bitter about that. And while it is true that the writers have looted the theatre institutions, one is often at their mercy. It’s very difficult to present epic theatre outside these buildings, but these institutions lack the energy to find the working-class audiences — and they combat any suggestions you make to try and co-opt new audiences.

What has been the role of design in the formulation of your epic theatre?

The contribution that Hayden Griffin has made to that side of my work has been immeasurable, in that he gave me my eyes. I learnt from him how to run scenes in a way that enables you to truly compare them, which is a very difficult thing to do in the theatre. For example, if you say Scene One, America and Scene Two, Russia, people think that the audience is automatically going to connect. But it doesn’t. Audiences see things sequentially. The whole art of how to create a world from an evening, of how to tie all the epic strings together, I’ve learnt from Hayden. He is the only designer I know who picks up the text regularly. He has a wonderful sense of stage and playing space. He is also a master technician, of the type you don’t have here. He understands the machinery of the stage. From what I’ve seen it is the greatest thing missing from the Australian theatre. Although the writers are good, and a lot of the directors are good, and many of the actors are very, very good, young writers don’t get the chance to present whole worlds on stage because you’ve never had the designers to invent those worlds for them.

And details of biography?

The only thing I’d like to say is how beautiful the Oriana looked on Sydney Harbour. My father was purser on that ship, and to come to Sydney and see it was just fantastic. It was a wonderful glimpse from my childhood because: Where was my father all my life? He was in Australia or sailing back and forth on the Oriana. Australia was simply this place where my father was and so I had this poor opinion of it. Of course, the opinion is much better now.
What's new at the Playhouse, Perth?

Announcement of a stimulating 1982 series has brought a rush for subscriptions, doubling 1981 levels in a welcome vote of confidence. Following the triumph of *The Man from Muckinupin* (commissioned 1979), the N.T.C. now world-premieres another Dorothy Hewett masterpiece — *The Fields of Heaven*.

Warren Mitchell, last cast at the Playhouse as Willy Loman, went on to world-wide acclaim in the role and now returns to star with Robyn Nevin in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Then, in late April, Perth looks forward with delight to the brilliance of Timothy West in *Uncle Vanya*, directed by Prunella Scales. It's all proof that the theatre is alive and well.

**National Theatre Company at the PLAYHOUSE, Perth.**

3 Pier Street, Perth 6000.
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**WORLD PREMIERE SEASON**

**The Fields of Heaven**
by Dorothy Hewett (February 10 to March 6)
Directed by Rodney Fisher
With Natalie Bate, Lex Marinos, Joan Sydney

**Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?**
by Edward Albee (March 23 to April 17)
Directed by Rodney Fisher
Starring Warren Mitchell and Robyn Nevin

**Uncle Vanya**
by Anton Chekhov (April 29 to May 22)
Directed by Prunella Scales
Starring Timothy West

The National Theatre Company gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the Australia Council, the W.A. Arts Council, education authorities and business supporters.

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**SEASON ONE 1982**

**WAGGA LEAGUES CLUB**
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All subsidised theatre companies face funding cutbacks this year. CATHY PEAKE spoke to the major companies to compile this report on their attitudes to and strategies for coping with their straitened circumstances.

So far, reactions of the major companies to cuts in funding from the Australia Council to the Theatre Board for 1982 range from the severe to the nearly negligible.

Despite some additional money being released to the Board, and hence to the theatres (see info), most are keyed to the responses of their respective State Governments and to the buoyancy or otherwise of last year's box office.

But if the general mood around the country is one of determined survival and subdued optimism, it also seems clear that while the 1982 seasons will continue more or less as they were planned before the cuts were announced, there is considerable apprehension on the part of directors about the expansion of their companies' creative resources and their investment in future work.

Basically, the effect of the cuts has been an increased work load for smaller numbers of staff, and severe restrictions on the time and resources which, in a healthier financial climate, would be devoted to the development of new plays, community programmes, and skills within the resident company.

No money in the kitty, or the attrition of reserves accumulated last year, means that it is difficult to commission works, horizons are shorter and the risks of experiment are greatly increased.

All of the major companies report that they are now seeking private sector support more aggressively, though it is strongly felt that this is more readily forthcoming to the prestigious national opera and ballet companies. So internal economics are in the process of reconstruction. Salaries of permanent staff, workshops, the number of plays produced and the general marketing approach of the companies have all been affected.

And since it is clear that theatre programs cannot be tailored to court the multi-nationals, the major concern is to build up paying audiences at the box-office.

The Nimrod Theatre, for instance, has redesigned its brochure along more commercial lines in a bid for larger audiences, whilst the Sydney Theatre Company has increased its top ticket prices to $13.90 and has added a Wednesday matinee performance.

The Playbook system engineered by the Playbox Theatre, whilst not an initiative for this season, has been stepped up, and the Perth Playhouse is now looking for corporate subscriptions.

But the situation does vary very markedly from state to state. At opposite ends of the spectrum, perhaps, are the relative situations of the State Theatre of South Australia and the Melbourne Theatre Company, though the efforts both are making to increase revenue and cut costs are typical.

Adelaide is fortunate since its major funding (75%) comes from the State Government. Even there, however, whilst programming has not been affected, and the innovation of playing in repertoire with a company of 12 actors will go ahead, the scale and scope of productions have been affected.

Plans to include a number of musicians in productions throughout the season have had to be reduced, individual productions costs have been tailored and four vacant positions among the permanent staff have not been re-filled. Other members of the administrative staff have had to be relocated in the public service.

Whilst the company had tried to
avoid the impact of the cuts on the creative areas, plans for a country tour of one production have been shelved and it is felt that the hidden risks of the repertoire innovation — with fewer shows and longer seasons — have been greatly increased.

The Melbourne Theatre Company has already moved into the fund-raising area in a considerable way. The Friends of the MTC — set up the year before last — continues to hold monthly programs, a fund-raising consultant has been employed, and a special sub-committee of the Board has been formed specifically to make approaches to industry.

As is the case with the other companies, the toll on the time and energies of the company is felt to be considerable. As well as getting on with the business of mounting productions, the creative staff is now required to spend time trying to stimulate interest within the business community through activities which can only be regarded as peripheral.

The MTC will stage only two large-scale productions this year and whilst, as with the other companies, the Australian content of their season has not been affected, programming has been tailored to plays involving smaller numbers of actors and simpler sets.

Two plays have been dropped altogether, which means the added risk of longer seasons for the remaining productions, and a Theatre Campaign, where patrons will be asked to donate money and booths in the foyer, has been set up.

In a similar reaction, the Queensland Theatre Company have increased each of their seasons by four performances and say they can no longer afford to hire outside directors and interstate actors. A second resident designer and director have not been appointed, as was planned, and their Tangent Productions — devoted entirely to Australian works — has been trimmed from four to two plays this year.

One alternative open to the companies and adopted by the Playbox, Nimrod and the STC is the creation of second venue activity where it is hoped that commercially oriented seasons will generate additional revenue. The Playbox is currently touring Steven Berkoff, the Nimrod will stage both Candide and Death of a Salesman, with Warren Mitchell, at the Seymour Centre this year, and the STC has taken the unprecedented step of hiring the Theatre Royal for five months and has, in total, programmed nine months of additional theatre activity, feeling that the solution to current pressures is to be bolder rather than more tentative.

That decision to gamble with the need for bigger audiences, allied to the decision to maintain programming integrity and commitment to Australian playwrights is widespread, if uneasy. Despite the problem of raising sufficient capital from the private sector to make the Challenge Grant Scheme viable, no-one is panicking — yet.

Next month we look at the response and tactics of the smaller theatre companies to Getting Through '82.

MTC — fund-raising in a considerable way

Nimrod — two commercial shows and a bid for larger audiences.

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1982 SEASON ONE

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PLAY ONE
AUNTIE MAME
by JEROME LAWRENCE and ROBERT E. LEE
Directed by DON GAY

PLAY TWO
THE ELEPHANT MAN
by BERNARD POMERANCE
Directed by KEN CAMPBELL-DOBBIE

PLAY THREE
THE DEPARTMENT
by DAVID WILLIAMSON
Directed by JOHN UNICOMB

TASMANIA'S REGIONAL TOURING DRAMA COMPANY
Cargo Cult — Aeschylus at the National
by Irving Wardle

It is the belief of the Cargo Cult tribes that by assembling primitive replicas of aircraft with goggled dummies at the controls, the gifts of the white man can be induced to fall from the sky. Much the same simple faith often takes possession of theatre directors in quest of the lost treasures of Greek tragedy, but rarely on such a scale as the five-hour Oresteia which the National Theatre unveiled at the end of last year.

If Peter Hall had been tackling it at an earlier time in his career it is pretty certain that he would have sought some means of bringing Aeschylus’s world closer to ours: but that is no longer his approach. Pre-publicity for the production certainly dwelt on the feminist aspect of the Oresteia; but only to say that it marked the transition from matriarchy to democracy at the price of women’s rights! Not that any such line of thought was visible in the show itself, which came over, as usual with Hall’s recent classical work, as an act of reverence towards an approved masterpiece.

Underlying its every detail is the Cargo Cultist conviction that Aeschylus can best be invoked through an imitation of his own theatre. The Olivier auditorium at the NT is partly modelled on Epidaurus, and this resemblance has been heightened with a text-book Grecian stage. Analogues for the original music and text are supplied by Harrison Birtwistle’s score, which accompanies most of the action, and Tony Harrison’s barbarically rhythmic transformation of the Greek metres into the pounding alliterations of Anglo-Saxon verse. As in fifth-century Athens, the company of sixteen are all men, playing anonymously in masks.

Masks are central to the whole operation. According to Hall, the Greek theatre is itself a mask: periodically removed (when the upstage skene door opens) to expose the dreadful fruits of the action, but never the dreadful acts themselves. Likewise, for the actor, masks are supposed to furnish a liberating discipline for elemental emotion. Tony Harrison, whose highly formalised text is designed to serve the same purpose, even compares the stage mask to that of a steelworker, enabling him to look on sights that would otherwise burn his eyes out.

The main source of this theory is Hall’s old colleague Michel Saint-Denis who taught that to wear a mask successfully is to become possessed. The actor submits to it, and it is the mask that dictates his movements and the mask (if he is lucky) that learns to speak.

No matter how magically this process may have worked for Saint-Denis, it has not worked for Peter Hall. There are one or two performances — such as the gold and scarlet Clytemnestra — whose voices transmit the sense of a supra-personal rite and whose masks uncannily alter in expression according to changing events. But most of the masks have not learned to speak; and with them you find yourself identifying with the man inside and wishing he would take the thing off.

This is particularly the case with the Chorus. Making a series of spectacular entries as greybeards (in the Agamemnon), women (in Choephoroi) and Furies (in Eumenides) they are subject to precise operatic discipline. Their text consists of verse paragraphs, each conforming to one emphatic rhythm and fixed tempo whether the lines are distributed or delivered in unison. Meticulous care has clearly been spent on them; but except at moments when they break out of the form — as where Orestes falls into a nightmare waltz with the clinging Furies (pallid-visaged predators in seaweed draperies) — their impact is mind-killingly repetitious. Movement is inertly statuesque; and all too often the very sense of the lines is muffled by the masks and accompanying rhythms. Instead of receiving a line of impassioned moral argument, you are left with Mr Birtwistle’s time-bomb
ticking percussion and ominous harp chords which merely suggest that something nasty is coming down the pipeline.

The central contest between blood-loyalty and the loyalties of the human bond emerges in letters a mile high; but the style excludes detailed interaction and reverberation of the tragic debate. It is all very clean and antiseptic, and in the best of taste; qualities it would be easier to admire if only they had been called into existence to hold mighty forces in check. Royal Campbell summed up this empty cultural event in his lines about a man with a snaffle and a curb but no horse.

Theatres the world over wait for the next Broadway smash-hit musical. Our US correspondent KARL LEVETT assesses:

The state of the art form

The ubiquity of the Broadway musical throughout the world confirms it as the genuine American art form, one made-in-the-USA product that the wide world is waiting for. In Rio you’ll see a poster with someone fiddling on a roof and in Holland the non-existent hills are alive with the sound of music. In London last Easter it was a sobering sight on passing the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, to see The Best Little Whorehouse In Texas playing. In that large and venerable house was a musical with humble off-Broadway origins and one that, although vigorous and pleasing, was essentially mediocre.

Well, so it seems until you see some of the other nations’ entries. That’s when the American musical really looks like an art form. It is an art form that is now divided into two distinct categories: the big Broadway houses where the limitation is a matter of numbers and not creative effort. Sometimes the lines of the two categories get blurred and mini-musicals — Barnum and They’re Playing Our Song — cross over to the major league by dint of presentation.

As evidence that music hath charm for producers, on Broadway at present of the 31 productions, 19 are musical entertainments of some sort. Of the 19, 11 are long runs, with A Chorus Line in its seventh year leading the pack.

In this race for riches, casualties are constant and the most important one of this season was Stephen Sondheim’s Merrily We Roll Along. In tandem with Harold Prince as director, Sondheim over the last decade has been the single most important creative force in the progress of the American musical. Merrily We Roll Along is an adaptation of 1934 Kaufman and Hart play, a story of show-biz kids told backward. As a book for a musical, it was schematically awkward and dramatically uninteresting, and the show was doomed from its unfortunate inception. The score, however, was top-level Sondheim and already Frank Sinatra and Carly Simon have recorded songs from the show. The production is ended but the melodies may linger on. The sadness is witnessing Sondheim, the American musical’s resident genius, sending a couple of creative years down the drain.

Broadway needs all the Sondheims it can get, for the musical arena has become one of extreme caution — safe and mindless material presented spectacularly. Forty Second Street is an obvious example. In this conservative climate it is good to know that another risk-taker and creative force, Michael Bennett, is still astirring. Director—choreographer Bennett who gave us A Chorus Line this season has delivered Dream Girls. In Broadway parlance, Dream Girls is a “blockbuster”.

The musical describes the rise of a black singing group — clearly based on the Supremes, with the Diana Ross character here called Deena Jones — and how the group fares in the big, bad world of Show Biz. Although a couple of leading critics have claimed social significance for the tale, it is essentially another backstage story complete with goodies and baddies and a “the show must go on” mentality.

What it does have is the slickest and most dynamic production given to a musical in a long time. All that technology and the fertile mind of Michael Bennett can together create is used to drive the story along with the speed of a singing bullet. Everything seems to be on wheels — particularly Robin Wagner’s metal light towers and bridges that form a set that practically dances to the music. Add to this Tharon Wagner propelling computerised lighting schemes,
light years ahead of what we've so far seen. Indeed the whole look and style of the show is a technological marvel.

Happily, the players are strong enough not to be dwarfed by all this hardware. This is a large cast that is uniformly good and points out the remarkable reservoir of black talent available in the US to be used by enterprising directors such as Michael Bennett. The stand-out is the 21 year old Jennifer Holliday as Effie the round member of the group who is bumped when the singers homogenise for the white market. Ms Holliday's anguished singing of "And I'm Telling You I'm Not Going" at the end of Act I is the stuff that Broadway legends are made of.

Dream Girls, however, has two weaknesses at its core. The first is the structuring of Tom Eyen's book. In the second act the focus suddenly leaves interesting Effie and switches to slick Deena Jones and the show stumbles and never quite recovers its impetus again. The second failing is Henry Krieger's score which creates exactly the Motown sound but only once or twice rises above the serviceable. Krieger ambitiously uses recitative quasi-operatic style, but the lack of strong individual melodies makes one suspect that perhaps technology also had a hand in writing the score. Everything that a director could do to distract us from these inadequacies Michael Bennett has done. Flash, sass and fluidity are everywhere with Dream Girls being directed within an inch of its life. In production values at least this is a significant step in the progress of the Broadway musical.

After Dream Girls the revival of Little Me seems at first to be a little old fashioned. This impression soon fades as Little Me reveals that as a musical it also has old fashioned virtues — namely, a first rate Cy Coleman score and positively cream-of-the-crop lyrics by Carolyn Leigh. First presented in 1962, Little Me was an adaptation of Patrick Dennis' novel and styled for the talents of comedian Sid Caesar. The book's author, Neil Simon no less, this time has split the leading male role into two with the youthful characters played by Victor Garber and the older by James Coco. Neil Simon has added two new scenes for his leading men with Garber in a love scene on the sinking Titanic, and Coco as a William Randolph Hearst/Citizen Kane character in his San Simeon style dining room.

Little Me is a satirical comic book, a not-too-common stage example of Americans laughing at themselves (which might explain the original production's success in London). Neil Simon's one-liner style suits the fragmented story line admirably and director Robert Drivas has seen that the capable cast maintains a consistent tone of mockery. Tony Walton's light and imaginative sets are in perfect tune with the fresh Cy Coleman score and the wit of Carolyn Leigh's lyrics. In song after song (including the two new ones in this rewrite) Carolyn Leigh demonstrates lyrics of easy-going cleverness that are a delight to hear and to chuckle over. In these times to have the lyrics as the star of a Broadway musical evening is an unexpected pleasure.

Off-Broadway musicals also continue to proliferate. The Off-Broadway mini-musical differs from its bigger Broadway brother in being much more flexible in form and far more adventurous in subject matter. William Finn's The March Of The Falsettos which examines in song the plight of a family man with a homosexual lover is just not Broadway's cup of tea.

Musically too, the smaller stages offer, often in cabaret style, sounds not heard on Broadway. One such show that has proved very popular is Pump Boys And Dinettes. It features what you might call country-pop or rockabilly — a kind of accessible country and western with superior lyrics.

We're down South in the good ol' boy town of Frog Level where the pump boys run the local gas station and the dinettes the adjoining cafe, The Double Cupp. A series of songs tells us all, about the individual characters, about living in Frog Level. It is an unabashed salute to downhome values, rescued by the fact that the songs (most of them by Jim Wann who's in the cast) are original and pleasing, and the presentation is first rate. Wide-eyed innocence hides hard-edged professionalism. There's authenticity plus a knowing wink, as in the song "The Night Dolly Parton Was Almost Mine".

Should anyone inquire to its health, know that the American musical (both maxi and mini) if not actually blooming is at least alive and happily residing in New York City.

AUSTRALIAN CENTRE INTERNATIONAL THEATRE INSTITUTE 153 Dowling Street, Potts Point, NSW, 2011. Telephone: 357 1200. Director: Marlis Thiersch.

FORECAST OF PARIS THEATRE PRODUCTIONS

The French Centre of the ITI has sent a list of productions coming to major Paris theatres during 1982. This list is available from the Australian Centre of the ITI. It is hoped that more countries will follow the French example.

15TH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LIBRARIES AND MUSEUMS OF THE PERFORMING ARTS (SIBMAS)

The Conference theme will be Stage Design: problems of collecting, cataloguing and conserving documents. Participants are invited to lectures and workshops. Further details and application form from the Australian Centre of the ITI. It will take place at the Museum of the City of New York and the Library and Museum of the Performing Arts at Lincoln Centre, August 30 — September 3, 1982.

ITI COMMISSION FOR THE PROTECTION AND DEFENCE OF THE RIGHTS OF THEATRE ARTISTS

Members from the following countries have been elected to the Commission: Nigeria, Sweden, United States, Venezuela, Korea, Hungary, France and India. They are working to help artists who are being persecuted in many countries.

WORLD THEATRE DAY — 27 MARCH 1982

The essential aim of World Theatre Day is to unite the largest possible number of participants in order to affirm the ideals of peace and mutual understanding through theatre.

This year's celebrations should be appeals for actions "to transform some of our ideas and projects into reality", in the words of Lars of Malmberg, Secretary-General of ITI in Paris. ITI Sydney will supply a page of text written by him for interested people for reading on March 27 from theatre stages in front of audiences around Australia.

World Theatre Day was first suggested in Helsinki in 1959, and the proposal of the Finnish Centre was adopted by acclamation at the 9th ITI Congress in Vienna in 1961. Since then, on March 27, World Theatre Day has been celebrated in 80-100 countries with messages from many world famous theatre personalities such as Ellen Stewart, Helene Weigel, Arthur Miller and Peter Brook.

THEATRE AUSTRALIA MARCH 1982 25
Theatre Reviews

A.C.T.

Never better

ANNIE

by Ken Healey

ANNIE by Thomas Meehan, Charles Strouse and Martin Charnin. Canberra Theatre Trust ACT. Opened January 7, 1982. Director, Terence Clarke; Designer, James Ridewood; Costumes, Graham Maclean; Lighting, David Penhaligon; Choreographer, Stephanie Burridge; Musical Director, Colin Fischer.

Cast: Daddy Warbucks, Ronald Maconaghe, Miss Hannigan, Maggie Dence, Annie, Belinda Wellman/Melissa James; with Kate Peters, John Paisley, Colin Slater, Vivienne Arnold et al. (Professional)

Four years ago the Canberra Theatre Trust decided to tap the summer tourist market with a holiday musical each January. This year's show, Annie, attracted primarily local family groups, but was so fine a presentation that visitors from anywhere should have been delighted to encounter it.

It was instructive to see many of the best amateur and some professional talent from Canberra respond with such verve and style to Terence Clarke's direction. These are performers whose everyday standards vary according to the diverse directors with whom they work. That none of them ever looked or sounded better than in this show is a tribute to Clarke.

The star of the evening was undoubtedly the warm, magnetic Oliver Warbucks of Ronald Maconaghe, who never allowed the character to drift into caricature, mixing alchemically the proportions of fun and authority. Maggie Dence's mad-eyed Miss Hannigan turned all of the old maid's repressions outward is a display of finely focussed theatrical energy, while the Annie of Belinda Wellman had a little-kid honesty that was neither precocious nor cute.

Among the minor roles, Colin Slater revelled in his hayseed disguise as Annie's putative father, while singing up a storm in "Easy Street"; Vivienne Arnold's Lily St Regis was an hilariously uncorsetted performance, while Kate Peters was pure class in figure, movement, and speech as Oliver's secretary, Grace Farrell. Such was the depth of casting that Pat Galvin made a convincing President Roosevelt and John Paisley an amusing butler.

Musically, apart from the outstanding professional baritones of Maconaghe and Slater, the chorus of down-and-outs singing "We'd Like to Thank you, Herbert Hoover", was rousing. The number that drew most applause was (predictably) the chorus of orphans singing "You're Never Fully Dressed Without A Smile", for which choreographer Stephanie Burridge had them moving even better than they sang.

The sets by James Ridewood, hired from the QTC, kept the show moving, two-dimensional pieces being flown in full view. Only the Warbucks apartment might have been more lavish ideally. Grame Macleans' costumes (also from QTC) evoked period as well as social and economic levels most effectively.

Colin Fischer used a string synthesiser instead of strings, with appreciable loss of effect, in tandem with his fine band of wind and percussion. If this was an austerity measure, I'd prefer it to spreading the orchestral budget over a whole band of less professional standard. Musical tempi and rhythm were crisp and sparkling all night.

Finally, there's the show. It's not about an orphan seeking her parents, but about Annie melting the heart of Warbucks. It is therefore in the tradition of sustaining the romantic fallacy created by the American musical. As such it carries not only an irrelevance, but almost a dangerous falsehood today when the rich are becoming wealthier and another depression seeps in upon the remainder.

Nevertheless, any show that surmounts the double jeopardy of having both kids and an animal (in this case a mildly excitable Newfoundland dog) share the stage with the actors deserves some measure of success. Entrepreneurially the Canberra Theatre Trust chose wisely, not only in its musical, but in bringing Terence Clarke to town to show Canberrans how well the local talent can perform.

Ronald Maconaghe (Daddy Warbucks) and Belinda Wellman (Annie) in CTT's Annie. Photo: Graeme Watson.
Sydney Festival — three virtuoso performances


by Michael Le Moignan

Conductor, Richard Bonynge.
Cast: Joan Sutherland, Rosemary Gunn, Anson Austin, Graeme Ewer, Pieter van der Stolk, John Gregnan, John Wegner, John Shaw, Cynthia Johnston, Richard Jones, Vincenzo Nesci, Geoffrey Crook. With the Australian Opera Chorus and the Australian Elizabethan Orchestra.

Director, Steven Berkoff; Costume Designer, Silvia Jansons; Lighting Designer, Howard Harrison; Company Manager, Paula de Burgh.
Cast: Roderick Usher, Steven Berkoff; Edgar/Friend, Terence McGinity; Madeline Usher, Annie Stainer; Musician, John Prior.

No-Good Boyo at the Seymour Centre. Opened January 5, 1982.
Director, Susan Wilson; Designer, Grant Tilly.
Cast: Dylan Thomas, Ray Henwood.

I’VE COME ABOUT THE SUICIDE by Craig Cronin, for the Ensemble Playwrights’ Festival at the Phillip St Theatre, Sydney. Opened January 5, 1982.
Director, Alan Becher; Designer, Brian Nickless.
Cast: Sonja Tallis, Paul Mason, Ron Hackett, John Beaton.

The Right Man by Ken Ross, for the Ensemble Playwrights’ Festival at the Phillip St Theatre, Sydney. Opened January 26, 1982.
Director, Gary Baxter; Designer, Brian Nickless.

Indian Summer by Justin Fleming, for the Ensemble Playwrights’ Festival at the Phillip St Theatre, Sydney. Opened January 27, 1982.
Director, Martin Mouat; Designer, Brian Nickless.
Cast: Sonja Tallis and Ron Hackett in I’VE COME ABOUT THE SUICIDE — the best of this year’s offerings.

The Sydney Festival falls halfway between a people’s festival and an arts festival. In some areas there seems to be an unspoken wish to transform Sydney into Rio de Janeiro for the month, and in other areas a desire to emulate Adelaide as the Edinburgh of the South. In trying to be both it succeeds in being neither.

There is no reason why Sydney should be anything but Sydney; the city’s festival should exploit its uniqueness. Significantly, the most successful events seem to be the most original ones, such as the ferry-boat race and the Hyde Park picnic. Truly to succeed, the Festival must become more of a talking-point, it must challenge and excite the population more. And the arts should be at the forefront of this popular involvement. The Festival should somehow bind the diverse cultural interests of the city into a
Celebrating is an activity widely considered to be impossible without a glass in one's hand, but celebrating is what festivals are all about. We try to celebrate the best achievements in a wide variety of artistic fields, in the hope that enthusiasm and energy from one event will spill over into others. This is the theory. In practice, the events assembled are unconnected and scattered all over the month and the city. It is difficult to find any sense of unity in the Festival.

Cultural overkill is fortunately curable: the memory has a way of glazing over work that is not exceptional and focusing only on the best. For me, three images will, I think, remain vividly from Sydney 1982, of three virtuoso performances: Joan Sutherland in La Traviata, Steven Berkoff in The Tell-Tale Heart and Ray Henwood as Dylan Thomas in No-Good Boyo.

The Australian Opera's free, open-air performance in the Domain may well have been Joan Sutherland's finest hour. As the doomed, consumptive but astonishingly vocal Violetta, she was never more magnificently damely and imperial. The home-crowd of more than 10,000 ignored the drizzle and the curious fruit-bats winging their way to Centennial Park, and loved every note. From a quarter of a mile away, La Stupenda glowed like a great, green traffic light. The applause was rapturous, frequent and deserved.

Festivals are an opportunity to widen the circle, to draw in new audiences as well as pleasing the regulars. With the exception of the Ensemble's Playwrights' Festival and the Nimrod's Cocky of Bungaree, Sydney's theatre companies have failed to realise the Festival's potential. The Australian Opera is showing them the way, with a bold and brilliant move, which has brought the company's existence and work to the attention of a vast number of people who are not regular opera-goers.

Steven Berkoff achieved the unusual feat of upstaging himself, in two adaptations of stories by Edgar Allen Poe. The first, The Tell-Tale Heart, a chilling 25-minute monologue by a mad murderer trying to justify his crime, was a fascinating character study which had the first-night audience almost hypnotised. Berkoff exaggerated phrases and expressions and held pauses outrageously, but his concentrated energy demanded a rapt response.

The Fall Of The House Of Usher, which followed it, had too many similar resonances. Up to a point, the parallels were interesting and the productions cast a fair amount of light on Poe's bizarre beliefs and fears. Either play would have been sufficient: both together were a little rich, and in the second play the dramatic tension flagged.

Also at the Seymour Centre was No-Good Boyo, a superbly chosen and balanced one-man-show on the last binge of Dylan Thomas, by an expatriate Welsh actor from New Zealand, Ray Henwood. Henwood's perceptive selection from the poems, letters, lectures and bar-room stories painted a very funny, very moving picture of the poet's brave and boisterous but ultimately tragic life. He was completely convincing as Thomas, shifting mercurially from the beguiling, witty raconteur to the self-pitying artist, to the bardic thunderer. The most memorable lines of the show were the famous couplet written...
became inextricably bogged in dogma.

Comandra by John Smythe, directed by Jane Oehr, was an extremely silly play which got all its feet tangled up in puns and word play and promptly fell on its face. Somewhere submerged in the script was a warm and touching little romantic comedy, but whenever it dared to surface it was immediately torpedoed by the writer.

Perhaps the best of the Festival's fringe theatre was The Deranged Agent, a sharp-witted satirical revue by a New Zealand company called Cacophony, who have recently taken up residence in Sydney. The humour is in the style of Not The Nine O'Clock News and the principal weapon is parody, used with deadly effect in a number of quick-fire caricatures and sketches, notably by Sally-Ann Bertram and Michael Wilson. The musical accompaniment is lively and attractive, and the company has a first rate singer in Fionna Samuels. I suggest the Nimrod offer Cacophony a season Downstairs before some TV channel picks them up and spoils them.

The Ensemble's Playwrights' Festival at the Philip Street Theatre, which annually provides a one-week run for each of four new Australian plays, was a little disappointment after the successes of recent years, presenting no obvious choice for a full production at the main harbourside Ensemble Theatre.

The best of this year's offerings was I've Come About The Suicide, by Craige Cronin, directed by Alan Becher, an eccentric comedy about a millionaire who elects to have his body frozen for 160 years, out of curiosity about mankind's future.

There is the basis of a good play here. Workshopped at the 1981 National Playwrights' Conference in Canberra, the structure still does not effectively carry the writer's ideas, but I think it is worth further work. There are some excellent moments of theatre, but the characters are too obviously drawn and the final twist is not at all satisfactory. But the play was never dull, for the most part amusing and intriguing, and I particularly liked John Beaton as the Man and Ron Hackett as the Millionaire.

Ken Ross' political comedy, The Right Man, directed by Gary Baxter, started brilliantly, treating the audience as a party pre-selection committee, then made some interesting points about the scarcity of integrity in politics, but overstated its case and characters, finally losing all credibility.

Indian Summer, written by Justin Fleming and directed by Doug Anderson, did not match their success from last year's Ensemble Playwrights' Festival, Hammer. The story of the 33-day reign as Pope by John Paul I was an innovative idea which
Reflections on the sunshine state

THE QUEENSLAND GAME

FLOWERS

by Jeremy Ridgman


If Malcolm Blaylock, La Boite’s artistic director, is committed to steering the company in the direction of community theatre, then The Queensland Game might well be a taste of future delights. Six actors and director Sean Mee, most of whom spent their youth in rural Queensland, have collaborated to present a pot-pourri of songs, anecdotes, character sketches and scenes celebrating the folk mythology of country town life. This they do with skill and wit, cleverly steering a course between the Scylla and Charybdis of heartily in-joking and cynical condescension. Most of the obvious separatist cliches, such as Bjelke-Petersen’s vision of Queensland as the Australian Elysium and his wife’s secret formula for the perfect pumpkin scone, are cunningly dispached in an opening sound montage; having cleared the air of the obvious, as it were, Mee and his cast proceed to weave their own rich and comic tapestry of rural life.

If there are a few threadbare patches towards the end of the first half, they are redeemed by a pleasing sense of shape in what could easily have become a mere hodge-podge of “turns”. The performance begins with a moment of quite unpretentious intimacy as each actor “tries out” a personal reminiscence on the audience and cast, a brief warm-up for everybody: the finale finds us in the dying moments of a local hop, complete with Mexican Hat Dance and Lucky Spot contest, in which all, of course, participate.

The town hall dance in fact forms one of the unifying structures in the show and produces some beautifully observed moments; an awesomely dull rock group specialising in half-hearted riffs and drum rolls to punctuate the MC’s quips and announcements, some subtly tacky talent spots and an exquisite wordless sequence in which three local dudes breeze in and strut the unifying structures in the show and disport themselves with patently ill- obvious, as it were, Mee and his cast proceed to weave their own rich and comic tapestry of rural life.

The other principle setting is the local pub, with its unrelentingly familiar faces, anecdotes and minor rituals. Here the pace understandably flags as the daily round verges on an almost Beckettian gloom, but here are found some of the cleverest characterisations of the evening; the local grader driver obsessed with the minutiae of his heroic battle with a particularly intransigent lump of dirt, and a fresh young teacher who gets the come-on from a young lady and confidently chats her up, only to learn later that he will be meeting her next day, in his grade eight class.

One of the most memorable acts from the show is Tony Phelan’s brief portrayal of a country town housewife, a double-edged study in resilient optimism. Back from the week’s shopping, she battles with two invisible but obviously gigantic dogs, tuts over the sartorial blunders made by the relives in the new batch of family snaps and, in a frenetic telephone conversation with a loquacious neighbour, promises to provide once again her specialities for the annual fete (curler holders made from ice-cream cartons decorated with crochet work etc). There is not an ounce of depreciation in Phelan’s approach to his character; the laughter is that of recognition but the humour illuminates and partly ennobles the details of daily life. Perhaps that is what celebratory community theatre, like The Queensland Game, is partly about.

The arrival in Brisbane of Lindsay Kemp and his mime-dance company (to be reviewed later in more detail) was heralded by a fortnight of controversy and speculation following the Premier’s assurance that he would take steps to save Queensland from “moral degradation” by seeing to it that there was no “hocus pocus” (his words) on the stage of Her Majesty’s. One assumes that one of his unofficial moral advisors had, as frequently happens apparently, seen the admittedly provocative publicity brochure and made a quick telephone call and that in the light of Mary Whitehouse’s recent crusade against simulatedbuggery at the English National Theatre, it was mainly the thought of “pocus” that worried him.

The local press had a field day, with letters, leaders and lead-ups, as the spirit of Norman Staines stalked the Brisbane stage; would Queensland, in the face of worldwide approbation for Kemp’s artistic credentials, testify conclusively to the wowsersim that has become part of the state’s image? Fantasies abounded, in which burly policemen waded onto a stage swathed in smoke and lights and attempted to restrain and then arrest mercurial naked dancers. Alas, for some, it was not to be: a handful of police officers sat impassively through Flowers and next day it was announced that no Queensland law had been broken. (No-one seems to have asked what needed to have happened for an arrest to be made.)

Chris Burns and David Pyle in La Boite’s The Queensland Game — almost Beckettian gloom at the pub.
And what of the show itself? The 15 minute ovation testified to more than the bravery of the performers. Having seen Flowers six years ago in London, I was grateful and more than surprised that Kemp, with a company only two of whom are from the original cast, could still generate the same frisson. There have, in fact been salient revisions; lighting is more sophisticated and the central bar room scene, in which three whores pathetically attempt to lure the gamin-like Lady of the Flowers away from the coup de foudre gaze of Divine's lover has taken on a richly comic tawdriness. There is no gainsaying Kemp's showmanship, nor the mesmeric effect of his own uncanny presence as Divine, from the first glimpse of her gliding entrance to the last spasm of her voluptuous death-throes.

Rocks, grips, explodes

NED KELLY

by Fiona Perry


Director, Terry O'Connell; Musical Director, John Rush; Designer, David Bell; Choreographer, Aku Kadogo; Lighting Designer, Michael Elliott; Sound Designer, Ross Brewer.

Cast: Stephen Clark, Bob Baines, Wayne Pigram, John Rush, David Sandford, Kris Ralph, Margaret Moore, Joe Spano, Peter Barclay.

A new theatre company is always an exciting prospect, especially in an industry that has just seen such severe and disheartening cutbacks. The New Moon Theatre Company of central and northern Queensland may be the last of an endangered species.

In the deep north, the air is keyed with expectancy, risk, ambition and the irresistible hopes of a community who have had to import professional theatre for too long. Whether it be "wild-eyed angry young prophet converting in the desert" syndrome, a simple touch of the sun, the passion, violence, grief and betrayal, and emotionally charged rhythms that circumambulate vocally, instrumentally and bodily. Aku Kadogo's (For Coloured Girls) choreography relates intuitively to this. Steve Hart, the dandy, ronde de jambe's provocatively with his thighs, Joe Byrne moves far more aggressively, Commissioner Hare jerk it to an absurd goose-step. Slow motion miming recurs and has a hypnotic effect. At times, the raw edge of the music demands more abandonment. The passion, violence, grief and betrayal, they are always controlled. Only Ned breaks this tight shell.

The sound is basic but the singing never is. The actors also form the band although the audience is never aware of the scuttling that must go on backstage.

Technically unpretentious, the show is still very aware of itself, very studied. There is a mega-trendy smell lurking in the presentation; even the rocking horse is a little Steve Strange, the anti-authoritarian theme, just a little slick. It's saved from being just an extended film clip scenario with some moody stylisation, fantasy fulfilment and invertebrate profundities by the conviction that is Stephen Clark's Ned Kelly. The padded shoulders and sweatband could have ditched him into a shallow grave. They don't, because fierce, gentle, half romantic, always intensely real, he makes you care from the first what becomes of him.

Almost always on stage, he responds with his body, his voice, stabilising the dramatic environment, centring and mirroring all the emotions and he holds the interpretation together. This is as it should be, a terrifically cadenced voice and a powerhouse performance.

Joe Spano as Aaron Sherritt is the only actor to exploit the potential of his half-mask. Beneath it, his eyes show the wet glint.

From the first tableau where Ned Kelly takes off his mask, to be the only actor without, the production continues unmasking things about the legend, about Australia and the Ned Kellys who are still defiant, still on the run. The fugitive is pursued down three histories of persecution, the dark suffering of the Irish, the Kelly story itself and stabbing onto the screen, slides of troubled Northern Ireland, in the worn face of a sniper, the tension in a group of English soldiers.

From the first image of a black umbrella rising like a bird of prey to the final pointedly negative imprint of the noose, high over the execution scene, Ned Kelly punctures home. Life is a rocking horse that never stops, a mask that never comes off and if it does, the final irony inside the noose is the empty lives of those who rock, the final knowledge, "they'll hunt the Kelly's till the last one dies."
Exciting, confusing, compelling

BARNUM

by Gus Worby


Director, Choreographer, Baayork Lee; Musical Director, Noel Smith; Stage Manager, Wayne Jelly. Cast: Barnum, Reg Livermore; Charity, Gaye MacFarlane; Ringmaster, Dany May; with Michael O'Connor, Waldemar Górecki, Mona Richardson, Lance Strauss, Elizabeth-Ann Robinson, Peter Gray, John Saunders, Denise Wharmby, Wayne Scott Kermond, Chris Gregory, Peter Waller, Deborah Winterburn, Keiri von Nida, Brownwyn Truex, Troy Sharp, Arturo Trosti, Bethany Allridge, Narelle Vinson, Stephen Brown, Patricia St Clair, Elizabeth Lord.

P T Barnum was fortunate in many things. In particular he was fortunate in his partnerships. He knew when and how to get in with the strength and stay top of the bill. He's done it again on Broadway and now on the road. The newly formed partnership of Edgley, Barnum and Livermore is sure to succeed, for the master of attractions has become his own centrepiece: more amazing than Washington's nanny, bigger than Jumbo, bigger even that Tom Thumb. Barnum is back from the dead, sporting Mona Richardson. This cabaret and concert performer from Los Angeles impressed as the ancient and caricatured Joice Heth in the first part of the evening and later returned in another guise as the Blues Singer to grab the show by the scruff of the neck to strut and shake out both “Black and White”. Add an impressive and athletic Dany May as Ringmaster and sheer enthusiasm and attack from Wayne Scott Kermond as Tom Thumb and you have a core of principals which thrives amid tight and true singing, dancing, acrobatics and clowning.

As you might expect in a show for all the family, Barnum doesn’t rock the boat (except to the foot-tapping beat of half a dozen excellent Coleman/Stewart tunes) though it makes some gestures. The values are still apple-pie OK. It says that there is hope in the world for a dreamer and a fighter as long as he has a down-to-earth wife to sit out the emotional tangles and take the crucial initiatives. It shows that Politics is a lower class of Showbusiness and applauds the suckers of the world. It claims that freaks are special people. It says that there is a lower class of Showbusiness and applauds the suckers of the world. It claims that you gotta hook your show to the mood of the country — the people. I thought about that one as I stepped out to the tune of a marching band, towards a sign marked “To the Egress”, wondering as I went what attractions would be in store for me there. It was a still night outside.

Reg Livermore and cast in Barnum — the stuff that dreams are made of.
Three new plays by new writers ought to be an event to be welcomed, however Narrow Feint, Illuminated Ducks and Stefan in different ways are disappointing. All three have been presented by new directors in contexts potentially conducive to experiment and innovation, however they lack theatrical invention and the sense of discovery that can accompany new work.

Of the three, David Knight shows the most promise as a writer for theatre; he is an acute observer of character type and situation and has an ear for the cutting phrase and the telling epigram, but his character development and scenic structure are tentative and awkward.

Narrow Feint charts the progress of a bright but erratic student, Harold Quiddey, through a traditional school where he clashes with a cynical, frustrated teacher and a progressive school where he is taken under the wing of a female teacher. In the background are Harold’s ambitious parents and sundry psychiatrists all trying to understand what makes young Harold tick. In the second half of the play Harold has left school, and is working for the local council as a nurseryman; his father has died, the cynical teacher has become a successful television personality and Harold’s name has been retrospectively linked in a scandal with the progressive teacher. Or at least this...
is the stated scenario of the play, but unfortunately a major element is missing — the audience’s ability to believe that Harold was ever brilliant or particularly unusual. In fact Harold and Harold’s problem which led him to attempt suicide in the first act is the least engrossing aspect of the play, let alone the supposed contrast between the two teachers.

The only interesting and sustaining thing in the play is the development of the cynical master, Woodcroft, and one almost wished that the entire play had been built around him. As it was, one was left with a series of side-swipes at various institutions — schools, the media, advertising, and the helping professions, a collection of clever one-liners and a lot of gratuitous theatrical business. Rob Meldrum’s performance as Woodcroft had a manic energy and brittle edge that carried the play across the longeurs of the scenes without him. William Gluth’s direction was tight but ultimately unable to weld the flashes and fragments into a credible or satisfying whole.

If Narrow Feint strained too hard after cleverness, then the least that could be said about Illuminated Ducks and Stefan was that the writing was modest and unaffected.

Hazel Barry’s one-woman show, Illuminated Ducks, had a simplicity and directness in its address to the audience, as Connie a young wife and mother recalls her experiences in the Depression. Director Elena Eremin put Connie, played by Hazel Barry, in a naturally enclosed space in the backyard of Anthill and let her talk. Barry’s performance was as subtle and unpretentious as her writing but as a theatrical event the piece left much to be desired. It may as well have been a radio play or performed indoors on a bare stage because at no point was the integrity of the space ever asserted or the relationship of the actor to it ever explored, instead there was a sense of watching a recitation outdoors for no apparent reason other than it provided an “interesting” background.

Paul Caister’s play, Stefan, at La Mama was unaffected to the point of utter banality; had it been shorter the plot might have sufficed for a provocative advertisement for Christian television 15 years ago on the plight of unmarried mothers. Seeing it at exhaustive length in 1982, it was the stuff of an acutely embarrassing and boring evening at the theatre, made even more painful by its obvious sincerity and earnestness. To say that the portrayal of the young woman was misogynist imputes more considered intention to the writing than it merits.

There seemed to be a dim acknowledgement that the attitudes were passe in the fact that the play was ostensibly set in 1970, however as the details of idiomatic language and costume were naturally nondescript, the actual time the events took
place seemed quite irrelevant. Unrelieved by wit, insight or even minimal theatricality, Stefan was one of those plays that could go on for ever but fortunately only lasts for a couple of hours.

You have to laugh

BUS SON OF TRAM

by Garrie Hutchinson

_Bus, Son Of Tram_ Banana Lounge, Comedy Cafe, Melbourne, Vic. Rod Quantock, Mary Keneally, Steve Blackburn, Geoff Toll.

Well, you have to laugh, don’t you? I did, I really did, laughed into the night, over the vegetable crudities, the spicy sate and far into the selection of desserts.

I laughed at what Rod Quantock said inside the Banana Lounge, which as you know is above the X-rated Comedy Cafe, and then I laughed at what he said on the Bus.

He’d threatened us with the bus you see, but we didn’t really know whether it was a joke, as in a thing that doesn’t really happen, or a Joke, as in you actually get on the bus and drive around. It turned out to be a joke of the latter kind, that is we got on this very clean and comfortable bus and drove around. And laughed.

Prior to this as part of the first kind of joke, that is when we didn’t know whether we were going on the bus or not, Mr Quantock had looked extremely worried as to where we would go on the bus if indeed we did go.

The Myers windows had come down you see, it being well after Christmas. Well not the actual windows but the kinetic decorations inside the windows, a sort of tourist shrine for Melbournites for untold generations. That was where you used to go in the bus if indeed the threat or promise to go on the bus manifested itself in actual forward momentum.

So Mr Quantock, in the absence of the Myers windows seemed at a temporary loss as to other shrines, which reinforced the idea that we weren’t in fact going anywhere.

In other words he got us in.

We’re in the queue at the top of the stairs with our red tickets, the people with the blue tickets are still sitting and drinking and eating, and we’re still not sure.

Outside in the red light district of Fitzroy, in another queue, walking around the corner, we’re still not sure. Even on the nice and clean bus driven by sober Jim (at least I think it was Jim) we’re still not sure.

It drives off. Now we’re sure. But where are we going? Surely not to the naked Myers windows!!

Mr Quantock holds up a chook on a stick. Follow this chook whatever you do wherever we go. This chook could mean the difference between life and death. Keep the chook in sight.

We mean to, we really do because the bus has driven off down seedy Brunswick Street and turned left into the legendary Spanish End of Johnson Street, where Mr Quantock calls out “If you’re a Spaniard, hold up your hand!” And some do.

This goes on and on. Left up Nicholson, past the home of a friend of a former acquaintance of a mate of the daughter-in-law of someone who once saw Squeez Taylor and knew where he once laid his weary dead head. And then it’s Spring St of grotesque comedy troop.

We’re off to Captain Cook’s Cottage, not that it was his but someone said he lived in something similar. And the Fairy Tree. And the Model Tudor Village. All the sights.

There’s even a police prowl car sneaking through the bushes, looking for god only knows what or who, but certainly not us, we hope. And we hope that Mr Quantock and his pal Mr Toll won’t do anything to the policemen causing them to take an interest.

By jingo its fun though, in a big hysterical crowd in the dark forest. But what’s this looming, or illumining on the horizon? It’s the fabulously wealthy Hilton Hotel, and we’re going there, we’re going into the foyer and Mr Quantock is up at the desk asking for a single room for 50. We hope he doesn’t go through with it. They haven’t got one.

He doesn’t and we escape back to the bus and sober Goerge (was it George?) and back to the Banana Lounge via a verbal stoning of the Comedy Cafe’s seemingly prosperous rival The Last Laugh, and the Yugoslav district of Fitzroy.

I’d laughed and laughed. Funny as a ride in a bus with a bunch of drunks and a comedian. Sort of gets you out of yourself, you see.

But that wasn’t all. When we’d sat and drunk our room temperature beer there was more to laugh at.

Debbie turned up. Debbie’s a real joke, you know, especially when she’s with Tim. They’re both so politically aware you know, and culturally on the ball. Would you make fun of Robyn Archer? Gee, I wouldn’t. That’s like laughing at Australia. On the face of it, silly.

Anyway doubtless you know someone like Debbie who’s socially, ah, politically, ah, culturally, ah, interpersonally, womanly ah on the ball. Getting into things. Aware, you know, like wrapping her head around what’s meaningfully present in this space-time continuum, right? Not into happiness, right? Not a real time interface with where she’s positively at, right? More than a gas, less than solid, right?

We laughed, right? We had to. Mr Quantock, who is really Ms Keneally, who the real life incarnation of Debbie, right?, was sitting not one chair away, his hand on a nearby bottle. You’ve gotta laugh, don’t you?

Laugh?

Respect, that’s what we should have had. For a genuinely original, one-off, unique, bizarre, never been seen or heard of before except for Tram, naturally, Dad of Bus, non derivative sort of night out you can only have live, in person with the actual persons or person there undertaking it.

I mean it wouldn’t be the same as a movie or book or Fantale wrapper. You had to be there, and one day it’ll be possible to describe it. Laugh? I could have killed myself.
Spectaculars big and small

THE SERVANT OF TWO MASTERS

by Margot Luke

The Servant Of Two Masters by Carlo Goldoni; Mason Miller at His Majesty's Theatre, Perth WA. Opened January 7, 1982. Director/Designer, Raymond Omodei; Music, lyrics and Musical director, Denis Follington; Lighting Design, Robin Macrae. Cast: Truffaldino, Glenn Hitchcock; with Edgar Metcalfe, Terry Johnson, Ivan King, James Bean, Ailsa Piper, Frank Johnson, Caroline McKenzie, Gerald Hitchcock, Denis Follington. (Professional)

The Wizard of Oz adapted by Peter Morris University Dramatic Society, Dolphin Theatre UWA. Opened January 13. Director and Choreographer, Peter Morris; Designer, Henry Bateman, Musical Director and Pianist, Karl Dietrich, Percussionist and Sound Effects, John Crothers, Lighting Design, John Doyle. Cast: Kelly Newton, Pat Stroud, Penny Bladen, Martin Forsey, Duncan Sinclair, Tony Pierce, Norrie Watson, Sally Cooke, Wendy Green, Dighy Hill, Robert Haama, chorus and children. (Student)

In the prologue to Goethe’s Faust, the theatre director instructs the poet in the art of producing acceptable entertainment, and his top priority is “above all — make sure there’s enough happening!” The holiday shows would have met with his complete approval.

The big professional offering at His Majesty’s was designed to appeal to all ages and tastes. Cleverly adapted to contemporary nuances by Jake Newby and Raymond Omodei, Goldoni’s The Servant of Two Masters was a colourful romp, part farce, part pastiche, breathlessly lively, with music — according to the programme — from popular to very popular. This meant in practical terms that the action was helped along by send-ups of both opera and pop music, always with a sure sense of the appropriate style.

The complications of the plot — involving a servant hiring himself out to two masters who, as it happens, are lovers, incognito, and actually searching for each other — provide enormous scope for every style of comedy, with mistaken identities, mistaken motives and of course, mistaken sex.

Settings were brightly lollipop in appeal, and the costumes sumptuous: the appropriate pairs of lovers wore colour-matched outfits, and there were most satisfying visual effects of slowly gliding gondolas and atmospheric star-studded sky.

The indefatigable Glenn Hitchcock played the Servant in a frenetic style that has become his personal trade-mark; Caroline McKenzie was both decorative and debonair as his first “master”, and Ailsa Piper shone in the plum part of Smeraldina, a maidservant in love with the Servant. Not only was she one of the few members of the cast who managed to keep up the absurd Italian accent throughout, but she created a lively, gutsy character. Terry Johnson, continuing her holiday from grand opera, was a joy to hear, and the duets between her and Caroline McKenzie were particularly effective.

Individual characters were nicely differentiated: Edgar Metcalfe’s Pantalone, crotchety, small and fussy; Ivan King pedantic and legalistic; James Bean and Gerald Hitchcock both very much renaissance gentlemen but with the gestures of matinee idols of the 30’s. Denis Follington, who devised the music, also provided the excellent piano accompaniment and furthermore played “musicians, porters, waiters, gondoliers, crowds etc”.

Add to this that the whole thing was presented as a play within a framework of a mini-spectacular. The Wizard of Oz, although clearly done “on the cheap”, was a remarkable effort, making up in imaginative approach and design what it lacked in funding.

Aimed primarily at child-audiences, it kept the adults’ attention. It was interesting to observe the modern, telly-oriented kids’ reactions: the “Over the Rainbow” song proved too long and too slow, as did the longer dialogues and the “clever” lyrics of the Cowardly Lion’s song. The song-and-dance routines (“We’re off to see the Wizard”) were a hit, as were the chorus numbers, Munchkin children tripping across the stage in green bunched costumes, and the monsters and familiars of the witch were of major interest. Thunder effects actually scared the younger members of the audience (but only briefly), and the few opportunities for audience participation showed total involvement — evidenced by spontaneous screams of warning to the heroine when danger threatened.

Asking some youngsters later which had been the favourite character and the best bit — the Wicked Witch won hands down, especially her rendition of “Let’s Get Physical” near the smouldering cauldron.

The student players attacked their roles with gentle yet sophisticated humour, particularly Penny Bladen’s sequined and graciously condescending Good Witch was very funny, as was Pat Stroud’s gleefully evil Wicked Witch, whilst Kelly Newton as Dorothy had a pleasantly natural voice and an appealing air of friendly bewilderment. She was assisted by a charming, well-trained pomeranian, who seemed to take no offence at being toted about in a small basket and wearing an enormous pink bow. Her three companions were less happy about the singing — the music seemed unsuitably pitched — but they made up for it by getting into the character of the Lion, Scarecrow and Tin Man admirably.

It was clear that direction, choreography and design were of greater than usual importance here — working with an ad hoc company of experienced and inexperienced players, and presenting a “spectacular” on a very small stage. It was an impressive achievement.
Spectacular triumph

EQUUS

by Cliff Gillam


director, David Addenbrooke.

Cast: Dysart, Brian Jones; Alan, Simon Woodward.

The Pit Theatre group has, since its inception as an amateur workshop group and self-help theatre company in 1975, demonstrated an energy and persistence, and a determination to aim high, which has distinguished it among Perth’s “little” theatres. Past productions have included plays by Shakespeare, Pinter and Stoppard, unusual and ambitious choices for a group working with minimal resources in a suburban context, and it has to be said that the gap between aspiration and product has on occasion been yawning. But with their current production of Peter Shaffer’s EQUUS, a play fast assuming “modern classic” status, the Pit Theatre has come of age. I have rarely before seen any amateur group give so polished a performance of a challenging work.

Much of the credit must be given, of course, to David Addenbrooke who guested as director for this production. Addenbrooke’s past experience with professional companies, and as a developer of talent within formal drama courses at WAIT, no doubt contributed much to the degree of skilful and intelligent playing he was able to elicit from a cast including many genuine novices, but crisp and sensitive direction alone cannot make a silk purse from a sow’s ear. One must have talent on which to build, and here Addenbrooke was particularly fortunate in having two very talented actors in the central roles of Martin Dysart, the ambivalent psychiatrist/narrator) and Alan Strang, (the disturbed adolescent whose blinding of six horses is the trigger for the play’s action).

As Dysart, Pit founder and Artistic Director Brian Jones gave a studied and thoughtful performance. His technical skills brought an authority to the role which it had lacked in previous productions I have seen, and which was able to accommodate a tendency to extremity of emotionalism in his interpretation of the character. As Alan Strang, Simon Woodward gave a performance which stamps him, young as he is, as an actor of great talent and presence. It was gut-wrenchingly authentic playing, without ever becoming indulgent or undisciplined.

These two were supported by a cast in which the level of performance was uniformly high. Addenbrooke cast the play extremely well and supporting players like Lea Mendelawitz and Peter Saunders (as Alan’s parents) and Maureen van der Heyden (as the stable-girl, Jill Mason) maintained, in the moments of the play’s focus upon them, the production’s overall power and finesse.

Mention should also be made of Brian Jones’ direction of movement and choreography — the horse/men who are so central to this play’s stage imagery were, in their stylized grace, a feature of this production clearly superior to the (professional) Playhouse production of 1976. Indeed, this Pit production was in every respect at least the equal of that production and can therefore be counted, given the limitations under which the company works, a spectacular triumph for all concerned.
AUCKLAND FESTIVAL

MAGPIE (51 5151)
Theatre 62: The Cucumber King by John Lonie; director, Malcolm Moore; musical composer, Glen Heinrich; designer, Ken Wilby. A topsy-turvy household with the arrival of King Kumi and his subjects demanding political asylum. March 5-18.

PLAYBOX (51 0121)
Troupe Theatre: The Curse Of The Starving Class and Buried Child by Sam Shepard; director, Roger Pulvers. and Starving Class

STATE THEATRE COMPANY
Arts Theatre: White; director, Neil Armfield. A topsy-turvy household with the arrival of King Kumi and his subjects demanding political asylum. March 5-18.

STAGE COMPANY (223 6283)
Playhouse: Percy and Rose by Rob George; director, John Noble; designer, Bruce McKendry; with Dennis Olsen and Daphne Gray. March 10-20.

STATE THEATRE COMPANY
(51 5151)
Playhouse: Signal Driver by Patrick White; director, Neil Armfield. A chamber play for four actors in which a husband and wife are viewed through youth, middle and old age in the unlikely setting of a bus/tram shelter surrounded by the post-war advance of the ever-emerging city. March 5, 6, 15-20.

SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY
(51 0121)
Opera Theatre: A Map Of The World by Rob George; director, Peter Weir. Political comedy about the life and times of a young British journalist. March 6-17.

FESTIVAL FRINGE

THE ACTING COMPANY (274 0261)

ADELAIDE UNIVERSITY
FOOTLIGHTS CLUBS

CANBERRA YOUTH THEATRE
AMP Theatrette: Treatment. This play explores the lives and problems of three institutionalised, handicapped children. March 10-12.

CHILDRENS AREAN THEATRE

CIRCUS OZ
Pheonix Park Trotting Ground, Port Pirie: presented by the Arts Council Of SA. A family show with all the traditional acts of the circus, together with a rock band and some of Australia’s leading cabaret performers. March 24-27.

ELIZABETH PATerson
State Art Gallery: The 9 to 5er. The Merry-Go-Round Person and The Old Woman At The Window. March 8-12.

HOLE IN THE WALL THEATRE
Price Theatre: My Name is Pablo Picasso by Mary Gage; with Edgar Metcalfe as Picasso. March 9-13.

HOME COOKING THEATRE
The Stables, Carclew Arts Centre: I am Who You Infer. devised by Meredith Rogers and Barbara Ciszewska. March 2-7, 10-13, 16-20.

LA MAMA THEATRE

Q THEATRE
Gerald and Olive Live. March 5, 6, 12, 19, 20.

Pride and Prejudice. March 19, 20, 24, 25, 26, 27.

The Typists. March 9, 10, 11, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19.

SALTERAMCA THEATRE COMPANY

WEST COMMUNITY THEATRE
Jacki Weaver and John Waters. Throughout March.

MARIAN STREET THEATRE (498 3166)

What The Butler Saw by Joe Orton; director, John Wilson; with Ron Frazer, Joan Bruce, Reg Gillam. To March 13.

MUSIC LOFT THEATRE (977 6585)

Have A Ball devised by Peggy Mortimer; director, Peggy Mortimer; with Enzo Toppano, Dean Toppano, Gerry Gallagher, Janet Brown and Peggy Mortimer. Throughout March.

NIMROD THEATRE (699 5003)


Downstairs: Female Parts by Franca Rame; director, Faye Mokotow; with Lynette Curran and Jude Kuring. To March 28.

NSW THEATRE OF THE DEAF (357 1200)

Theodore for primary schools and The Deaf Man In History for secondary schools; director, Ian Watson. Throughout March.

PHILLIP STREET THEATRE (232 8570)

The Anniversary by Bill McIlwraith; director, Peter Williams; with June Salter and John Hamblin. Starts March 18.

REGENCY THEATRE (264 7988)

Barnym by Cy Coleman, Michael Stewart and Mark Bramble; director, Baayork Lee; musical director, Noel Smith; with Reg Livermore. Starts March 3.

RIVERINA TRUCKING COMPANY (069/25 2052)

Errol Flynn's Great Big Adventure Book For Boys by Rob George; director, Colin Schumacher; musical director, Tony Webb; designer, Colin Mitchell; with David Wilson, Joanne Campbell, Tania Urenne and Kevin Cox. Bawdy cabaret which celebrates the great adventure of Errol Flynn's life. Wagga Wagga Leagues Club to March 7 at 8pm.

SEYMOUR CENTRE (692 0555)

York Theatre: Einstein by Ron Elisha; director, Bruce Myles; with Frederick Parslow, Gary Down and Roger Oakley. Into March. Piccolo Teatro di Milano's production of Arlecchino e gli Altri with Ferruccio Soleri starts March 15.


SHOPFRONT THEATRE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE (588 3948)

Weekend workshops include playbuilding, mime, dance, puppetry, design, radio and video. Youth Theatre Showcase: Overgrown play built by the company; director, Errol Bray and Don Munro. March 12, 13, 19, 20, 26 and 27.

STUDIO SYDNEY (771 3333)

People Are Living There by Athol Fugard; director, Graham Correy; with Leila Blake, Frank Brennan and Richard Evans. Starts March 11.

SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY (231 6111)

Theatre Royal: Chicago by Fred Ebb and Bob Fosse; director, Richard Wherrett; musical director, Peter Casey; with Nancye Hayes, Geraldine Turner, Terry Donovan, Judi Connelli, George Sportels and J P Webster. To March 27.

THEATRE SOUTH (042/28 2923)

Wollongong Tech Theatre: We Can't Pay! We Won't Pay! by Dario Fo; director, Des Davis. Throughout March.

For entries contact Carole Long on 909 3010/357 1200.

NT

ARTS COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA (NT DIVISION) (31 5280)

Spare Parts Puppet Arts Theatre school and pub show. touring throughout the Territory. To March 12.

DARWIN THEATRE GROUP (81/8424)


TIE-DIE (85 0267)

Four Of A Kind by Simon Hopkinson; director, Tony Soszynski. Touring Darwin secondary schools throughout March.

For entries contact Tim Gow on 377 2519.

Qld

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (221 2777)

The Rocky Horror Show on Tour. Revival of the cult show that began it all. Starts March 24.

LA BOITE THEATRE (36 1622)

Back To The Cremorne; director, Graeme Jonson. Group-devised vaudeville show in the style of Brisbane's old Cremorne Theatre. To March 6.

Hell And Hay by Richard Fotheringham; director, Robert Kingham. Ironic look at the plight of Jewish internees in Australia during the 2nd World War. Starts March 18.

QUEENSLAND THEATRE COMPANY (221 3861)


THE TN COMPANY (352 5133)

Twelfth Night Theatre: Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare; director, Bryan Hanson. Shakespeare's perennially popular story of star crossed love. To March 16.

For entries contact Jeremy Ridgman on 377 2519.

TAS

POLYGON THEATRE COMPANY (34 8018)

Auntie Mame by Jerome Lawrence and Robert E Lee; director, Don Gay. The play follows the life of a wealthy New York socialite from 1928, through the Depression and into the 1940s. Tourd by Tasmanian Theatre Company to Theatre Royal, Hobart to March 6, Civic Centre, Burnie March 12-13, Princess Theatre, Launceston March 26-27.

SALAMANCA THEATRE COMPANY (23 5259)

The Forest Of The Night by Bertolt Brecht; director, Stephen Berkoff; with Nancye Hayes, Geraldine Turner, Terry Donovan, Judi Connelli, George Spartels and J P Webster. To March 27.

THE TN COMPANY (34 6992)


THEATRE AUSTRALIA MARCH 1982
VIC

ARENA THEATRE (240 1937)
Boots 'n' All devised by the Arena Theatre Company for secondary students 9-12. Director, Peter Charlton. Comedy focusing on that “Victorian obsession”, football. Touring throughout March.

AUSTRALIAN NOUVEAU THEATRE (699 3253)
Anthill Downstairs: Ruins by Michel Deutsch, director, Marc Adam. Drawing upon the madness of the German playwright Lenz, who purportedly ate himself to death in the Moscow gutter. To March 13. With Strength And Delicacy written and performed by Ikincy and Lyny. Two-woman show exploring feminine Australian reality from the '50s to the '80s. March 2-5. Downstairs. Hamlet Machine by Heiner Muller, director, Jean-pierre Mignon. Starts March 24.

BANANA LOUNGE COMEDY ROOM BYO (419 2869)
Skid: High Speed Night On The Town a comedy with Michael Bishop, Rob Meadows and Robin Giles. Throughout March.
BAWMAN AVE BIG TOP (654 2484)
Sesame Street with all 26 singing and dancing characters; directed and choreographed by Robina Beard. To March 21.

COMEDY CAFE BYO THEATRE (419 269)
Bus, Son Of Tram with Rod Wuantock, Mary Kenneally, Geoff Brooks and Steven Blackburn. Throughout March.

FLYING TRAPEZE CAFE (417 3727)
Tony Rickards, Patcho The Clown and Cabaret Singers. Throughout March.

HANDSPAN THEATRE COMPANY (41 5978)

LA MAMA (347 6085)

LAST LAUGH THEATRE RESTAURANT (419 6226)

LE JOKE (419 6226)
Potpourri of new generation of comedy talent from all over Australia. Tues-Sat.

MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY (654 4000)

MILL THEATRE COMPANY (052/22 2318)
Regular workshops for special interest groups including Geelong Prison, handicapped, disabled and unemployed groups. Mill Night for everyone Thur. 7.30pm. Mill Club for children Sat. 9.30am.

MURRAY RIVER PERFORMING GROUP (060/21 7615)

MUSHROOM TROUPE (341 7133)

PLAYBOX THEATRE COMPANY (63 4888)

Alternate nights, refer to newspapers.

THEATREWORKS (928 0444)
Storming Mount Albert By Tram from the prize-winning story by Paul Davies, director, Mark Shirreffs. In association with Moomba Festival. To March 14.

WEST (370 7034)
Final Siren, director, Jan MacDonald. One Man show with Phil Sumner. Performances in schools, football clubs, social clubs and community venues. Starts March 15. Whatever Snaps by resident clowns. Performances at Moomba, schools and community venues. Starts March 28.

For entries contact Coni Kramer on 861 9448 or Susan Trotter on 531 4422.

WA

BENT PIN PRODUCTIONS (335 9482)
Couples by Mandy Brown and Murray Oliver. TIE. Two young people explore role-playing and human relations while waiting at a bus stop each day; director, Ken Kelso. Touring schools throughout March. Public performances PIFT March 19-20 and 26-27.

HIS MAJESTY’S THEATRE (321 6288)
WA Opera Studio: The Swan River Stage Company in association with The Goethe Institute present Max and Milli by Volker Ludwig, adapted by Andrew Ross. A play for children with familiar themes, very theatrical and very funny. March 1-5, 8-12 at 10am and 12.45pm.

HOLE IN THE WALL THEATRE (381 2403)
Cloud Nine by Caryl Churchill and My Name Is Pablo Picasso by Mary Gage. To March 6.

PLAYHOUSE (325 3500)

Fields Of Heaven by Dorothy Hewett; director, Rodney Fisher. Hewett's latest play, commissioned by the National about romance and trauma in the wheatbelt. To March 6.

REGAL (381 1557)
Interstar and Michael Elliot by arrangement with Michael Codron present House Guest by Francis Durbridge; director, Val May; set designer, Gene Banducci. Starts March 22.

For entries contact Margaret Schwan on 341 1178.
COHAN ON CULTIVATING DANCERS

"Unless you have a place where artists can exist happily, you won't have a company. You will just be running a business," says Robert Cohan, Artistic Director of the London Contemporary Dance Theatre, on his way through Sydney to New Zealand to direct the first Gulbenkian choreographic course in this part of the world.

His conversation was peppered with such pertinent remarks, not delivered in any sense as a lecture but simply observations arising from his experience in running a close-knit company of dancers for just on 15 years. He went to London from America as a modern dance evangelist, bringing his skill as a Martha Graham dancer, but set on a policy of developing British dancers and choreographers: "What is the point of a British company doing American choreographers' ideas of dance?"

Starting with a school as the company's base, he was soon in the position of using only members of his own group to choreograph — notably Robert North, Siobhan Davies, Richard Alston and himself. But in the past few years — "We are now on our second wave" — the company has been looking outside for creative input, and going through a few changes that may provide an example for companies anywhere in the world.

"With 21 people in the company, we have a very flexible arrangement. We spend six months of the year performing in large venues, such as the Sadlers Wells Theatre in London. Then we might split the company in two, preparing the same program at the same time with both groups, but performing it in different theatres — smaller venues for five or six hundred people at universities and cultural centres.

"Alternatively, we work with a smaller company — 12 to 16 dancers — while others are teaching or going off on their own. The dancers have sabbaticals of up to three months every three years. They work very hard, and I know from my own experience that you can only do it for so many months and then you go crazy. You have to go to another company or school — or just go see."

This flexibility makes "an awful amount of administration", but it does appear to be a way to refresh the dancers and sharpen their creativity without losing them permanently — though when the artistic directorship of Ballet Rambert was offered to Robert North last year, there was, of course, no stopping him.

The school, which was set up in 1966 as a prelude to forming the London Contemporary Dance Theatre, has expanded into nine studios and a theatre. It has 150 full-time students and about 600 people a week passing through it in the variety of classes it offers. At the moment, it is awaiting validation of the BA Honours degree course it plans to offer in affiliation with the University of Kent.

"I have always felt that it was unfair to intelligent, talented dancers that they could not have a degree and be professional at the same time. The problem has been to do the practical work necessary, and the academic work. We have managed to devise a course that balances the two — and by cultivating yourself in aesthetics and other areas of the arts, you cannot help but contribute more to the whole concept of dance as a performing art.

"Dance has been a poor relation to the changing aspects of teaching that have appeared in the last 20 years. Dance has been taught by rote, sometimes by brilliant teachers who can give you a bit more... but I don't think it has been taught well. The dancer's study has always been a thing apart from what happens in the rest of society. Society has changed. You can't go on teaching the same way — people want more. The whole being of the dancer is not being cultivated, only the body."

He advocates the introduction of academic subjects into classes: for example, the teaching of anatomy as the dancers — who know their bodies better than any university anatomist — are using the muscles in question. "That would change the whole shape of dance teaching. Relating specific work to the artistic life of the students will help them learn quicker because they are bringing more of themselves to the learning process."

COE AT SYDNEY DANCE

Meanwhile, the Australian Ballet's greatest performing loss in 1981, Kelvin Coe, has been working enthusiastically with the Sydney Dance Company. Graeme Murphy made him a focal point in Homelands, his new ballet for the company's first program of their 1982 season in the Sydney Opera House.

SUCCESSFUL COURSES

The intensive two-week choreographic course which Robert Cohan directed in Auckland appears to have been a great success. Speaking to three of the four Australians who attended — Garry Lester, Wendy Butterworth and Beth Shelton — I heard nothing but praise for the opportunity they were given to work out their ideas with participating composers and dancers.

Naturally, there were the usual bouts of drama and despair associated with such concentrated creative effort. But the focus on the choreographic process and its refinement, without interference in the individual choreographer's style or ideas, seems to have given the impetus that the venture was designed for.

The fourth Australian choreographer was Helen Herbertson, and the two New Zealanders were Mary Jane O'Reilly, director of Limbs, and Peter Boyes, ballet master of the NZ Ballet.

The Royal Academy of Dancing summer school for dancers in Melbourne appears to have met with similar success over its three weeks. It had a high-powered team of instructors flown out from England, some of them well-known from their Royal Ballet performing days: Ronald Embden, Maryon Lane, Anne Heaton, Brenda Last, Julia Farron and Eileen Ward, who has already..."
made her mark on dance in this country through her time spent teaching with the Australian Ballet.

Both summer schools are expected to be repeated every two years, possibly adjusting this time span initially so that they take place on alternate years.

WHITLAM AND PAVLOVA
Margaret Whitlam, wife of the former Prime Minister, revealed a little known aspect of her life as a performer when she presented the 1981 Sydney Drama Critics' Award to the Sydney Theatre Company. Recalling her earliest memories of theatre-going, she told a rapt audience how, as a very young ballet student, she was taken by her mother to see Pavlova perform. "I embarrassed my mother terribly. At one point — when Pavlova must have been doing something very simple — I got up out of my seat and announced, 'I can do that'."

JONES LEAVES AB

HOTSEAT

The search for an artistic director for the Australian Ballet is on again after Marilyn Jones's announcement that she would not take up the option of her contract for 1983. Her decision did not come as a surprise to those who observed her increasing strain in trying to cope with a job for which she was not as well suited or prepared as she had been in her memorable dancing career. It is for her magical quality as a dancer that most people will remember her.

Let's hope that the selectors this time around will find an artistic director whose experience has shaped him or her to meet the demands of this onerous job, and that a strong team spirit can be built up between artistic and management staff. This will probably depend on the recommendations of the management consultant team employed by the company to look into its structure after the dancers' strike last year. Until these are known and implemented, it would be hard to ask anyone to take on the job.

OFF AGAIN, ON AGAIN

Barely had the beautifully designed and printed colour brochures for the Australian Ballet's 1982 Sydney season arrived, than word went out that one of the programs had been changed. Back to one of its starting points: Glen Tetley's Rite Of Spring. This had been part of an earlier idea — a Stravinsky centenary tribute. But "problems with the music" (that is, the cost of performing rights) put a stop to that, and Tetley's Daphnis and Chloe was substituted. In turn, "design problems" put that out of the running, and suddenly the "music problems" were solved. Rite is back on the program, with a selection of divertissements to help Vicente Nebrada's Our Waltzes fill out the time.
Isadora Duncan often springs up in Lindsay Kemp’s conversations. It’s not surprising, since her idiosyncratic ideas of dance have parallels with his, several generations later. Encapsulated, they revolve around the determination to ignore established concepts of what dance is, and isn’t — to present it as an unfettered expression of life and love.

“I started dancing like everyone else — in other words, as children do,” says Lindsay Kemp. “That wonderful first dance is one that I have fought to retain. Everyone tried to make me conform, to abandon that dance. Instead, I have devoted my life to perfecting that dance.

“From the beginning, I tried to invent my own steps. Then I was sent to learn tap dancing at the age of two. I was considered very cute, very talented — very amusing, in fact. By the time I was eight, dancing was an absolute obsession. I ate it and slept it.”

That was the age, he recalls, that he acted out Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* for his fellow pupils at school. He was, he says, “quite nude” and confidently in command of all the roles. The presentation was promptly banned by his school, in which “drama was severely discouraged” — thereby giving him his first taste of controversy as a key to publicity.

It was a lesson well learned, as those who remember his first tour of Australia with *Flowers* will know. Had it not been for the defenders of moral purity protesting against nudity and
Kemp style neatly, or by dance purists who object to his description of his company members as dancers when some of them patently aren’t, and when sung and spoken words can be as much a part of the action as movement.

“We dance with everything,” says Kemp. “With the voice and the eyes and the hands… There are no books about my kind of dance. That is the hardest thing. It is true dance. It is the dance of the human spirit. In what I teach and what I direct, I encourage people to release their feelings through their fingertips.”

In other words, Kemp creates largely by instinct, drawing from the pooled resources of his experience — his memories perhaps a little larger than life with the passing of the years, but all the more vivid for that. It seems valid, then, to return to his youth in England where his teenage years formed his ability to entrance an audience. He takes up the tale:

“My mother sent me off to boarding school, to a naval college, and it was there that I developed my power to hypnotise people, to put them under a spell. At this very tough school, I had to enchant them to survive… like Sheherazade. That meant I built up this wonderful repertoire — it is where Salome began. I remember being naked with yards and yards and yards of lavatory paper…”

Extra-curricular activities apart, naval college was obviously not the place for the young Lindsay Kemp, so he left to go to art school in his home town of Bradford. One of his fellow pupils was David Hockney, who took him to see the Sadlers Wells Theatre Ballet where Kenneth MacMillan’s Danses Concertantes and Ninette de Valois’ Rakes Progress were on the program.

The effect was immediate: “I decided that was what I was going to do, and that was that.” Dance as a career had crossed his mind before, and after sneaking off to secret ballet lessons he had auditioned for Ninette de Valois on one of her sweeps around the nation in search of talent. Her letter of refusal, declaring him “temperamentally and physically unsuited to a career in dance” had put him off.

This time, there was no stopping him. He set off for London and the Ballet Rambert, where he didn't last long. His theatrical dreams were filled with little girls in cream chiffon and the bald head of Robert Helpmann in the title role of The Rake's Progress: “I used to wear one of my mother's stockings over my head… and then later I shaved my head completely bald.”

One way and another, he managed to make a living out of performing. His work ranged from the risqué — Linzi the Terpsichorean Marvel in a strip show — to the educational: touring schools as a member of the Paul Mimes, a group that got its name from its director, Beryl Paul.

The adventures that befell him in the divergent aspects of his career would fill a book. In fact, he is working on one
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at the moment, a mingling of anecdotes and performance notes with autobiographical details. On the professional side, these have become increasingly impressive since he was last in Australia, as his company has toured in Holland, Canada, Venezuela, Switzerland, Belgium, Mexico, Spain and Italy. His greatest triumph, he says, was the conquering of Paris at the Theatre de la Ville.

Over those years, he thinks he has become more analytical of his work. He has also been inspired by the single-minded discipline of the dancers of the Ballet Rambert, for whom he created two dance works in the seventies, The Parades Gone By and Cruel Garden. But even as he muses on his intentions to work himself and his company harder and in a more disciplined fashion, he decides that excesses are essential for the blossoming of his creativity. He’s probably right.

The people he has in his company today seem to have stronger technical backgrounds than in the past — Francois Testory, for instance, used to be with Bejart — but his exasperation with classically trained dancers hasn’t lessened. “It is not the style, it’s the mannerisms. It’s the prettiness of the fingerness, the narrowness of the range of expressions — either their eyes are up to the heavens and their eyebrows tied together, or they are wearing the smile of the Auroras, that toothy grin.”

This time around, Australian audiences are being treated to the return of Flowers and a newer work, The Dream, which is evolving gradually in typical Kemp style from A Midsummer Night’s Dream. They finish their Sydney season on March 13, moving on to Newcastle on March 16 and Adelaide from March 26 to April 8.

After that, it’s back to Europe for their umpteenth tour of Italy and their first of Scandinavia. It’s not like last time, when the company stayed and stayed. These days, they are much in demand.
Choreographic confusions and clarity
by Bill Shoubridge
Don Asker's Human Veins Dance Company has been performing for over two years now, they've garnered enough interest to be able to support several big city seasons, a constant schedule of Canberra performances (their home base) and an extended tour of New Zealand.

This is an impressive track record for two reasons, firstly because this relatively new company is so small and secondly because it is devoted entirely to the output, output and choreographic/dramatic interests of one man, Asker.

Such a group is a common occurrence in a place like New York where there is a myriad of groups formed and nurtured under the light of one creator, but hitherto it has hardly ever happened here in Australia.

Certainly Human Veins has managed to attract quite a cultish audience for itself so far, but time will tell if this cult will remain and grow, and develop into a bigger audience appreciative of its style attitude and mannerisms.

The latest work to be seen in Sydney, the full length, The End Of A Dream had a strange and intermingled sort of audience the night I was there. Word had got about that the work was an attempted mixture of post modern dance and "straight" vocal theatre, as such there was an element of derring-do in some viewers who apparently aren't used to coming to dance performances and were intrigued by the attempt. The fact that they were more bewildered than enlightened (as were the "dance" crowd) is an indication of the weaknesses of the work itself, apart from the gulf of incomprehension between the two theatrical styles.

In their purest aspects dance and the spoken word make their communications to us in two different ways; speech is linear, allowing us to follow a line of argument, a progression of sense, while dance is divergent, a momentary illustration in space and time that scatters its sense through any number of interpretations.

What End Of A Dream fails to take into account is this basic difference; the two styles are like oil and water throughout the work, both forms are used but neither works in a dramatically synchronised way.

Taken as three distinct parts of a triptych, End Of A Dream has a lot going for it in terms of statement and expression; taken as a full length, continuous narrative, dragging its wispy strands of thought from one act to the next, the work is in dire need of readjustment and clarification.

The dancers themselves, while devoted to the school of Asker, could do far more themselves in getting the point across. They too, are stuck between the two stools of word and gesture. A good vocal coach wouldn't go amiss, while a more highly developed ability to encapsulate emotion and thought in the quality of their choreographic attack is something we could all look forward to.

As to the last criticism of the Human Veins Company, I thought while watching Ramachandra's evening of classical Indian (Orissi) Temple dancing, that Asker's dancers could do a lot worse than learn from such an ancient style.

Although the structure and form of such dancing may initially seem too rigid and over-disciplined, it is the wealth of personal detail and private style that makes it so rich, expressive and engrossing.

"Temple" dancing is not a stiff routine learned by rote, just as classical ballet is not "restrictive" or "outdated" in its strict adherence to principle. It is "restrictive" only to a restricted mind, be it the choreographer's or the beholder's.

No doubt our understanding of the concept and form of Orissi dance was greatly aided by a thoughtful spoken and visual explanation of each dance before it was performed, but in the final analysis it was the choreographic clarity of diction and wealth of personal detail that Ramachandra (nee Ramli Ibrahim, ex Sydney Dance Company) brought to his performance that made it so illuminating and communicative.

NSW
SYDNEY DANCE COMPANY continues its opening 1982 program, New Additions I, in the Opera House Drama Theatre (20588) with new works by Graeme Murphy, Andris Toppe, Carl Morrow. New Additions II opens March 10 in the Opera Theatre with a second Murphy work and new ballets by Graeme Watson and Barry Moreland.

THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET starts to catch up on its postponed 1981 subscription performances of Swan Lake — this time in the Concert Hall, a first for a full-length classical ballet production. March 16-23.

The Australian Ballet will open its 1982 subscription season with a triple bill in the Opera Theatre: Glen Tetley's Rite of Spring, Vicente Nebrada's Our Waltzes, and divertissements. From March 26.

LINDSAY KEMP AND COMPANY continue their season at the Capitol Theatre (212 3455) with Dream, his fantasy version of A Midsummer Night's Dream, opening March 2, moving to the Civic Theatre, Newcastle (2 1977) March 16-20.

TAS
TASMANIAN DANCE COMPANY (31 6878) will present its specially devised program of modern dance works in primary and secondary schools in Hobart and Launceston.

VIC
AUSTRALIAN DANCE THEATRE brings its new full-length work to National Theatre, St Kilda (534 0221) after SA premiere season, as above. From March 25.

THEATRE OF PINA BAUSCH will also move on from Adelaide at Melbourne's Majestys Theatre (534 0651) with 1980, her witty and sad reverie on lost innocence. March 22 then 24-27.

HUMAN VEINS DANCE THEATRE presents Don Asker's new full-length work The End Of A Dream, a breakthrough in setting an individual style for the company. Universal Theatre (419 3777) March 15-31.

WA
WA BALLET COMPANY at His Majesty's Theatre (321 6288) will present a season of Petipa's Raymonde, condensed by Garth Welch into a one act version; Ray Powell's amusing old-timer. One In
Five; Barry Moreland's beautiful, neo-classical Spirals; Paradise Gardens, a pas de deux by Walter Bourke to music of Ravi Shanker; Images, a contemporary classical work by Garth Welch to Rachmaninov's variations on a theme by Paganini. Starts March 17.

THEATRE OF PINA BAUSCH, an Adelaide Festival presentation (51 0121), provides a series of extraordinary dance-based theatrical experiences. Kontakthol, Thebarton Town Hall, March 7, 9, 12, 13.


AUSTRALIAN DANCE THEATRE Playhouse (51 5151), will show a new full-length work by Jonathan Taylor. While We Watched, to a musical score devised by Ray Cook from compositions by Stravinsky, Rachmaninov, Bernstein and others. March 9-13.

Fatal Johnny, Royalty Theatre (223 5765), is a few fantasy by Ariette Raylor for Mummy's Little Darlings and ADT, a combination which produced the much acclaimed Filthy Children. Presented by young performers for school and family audiences. Matinees March 13 and 20.

ADELAIDE'S FESTIVAL FRINGE for 1982 includes eight dance events at a variety of venues and times. Among them are: ONE EXTRA DANCE THEATRE with excerpts from The Cheated and Two Woman, Family Portrait, Eggs on Toast, at the Price Theatre; DANCE MACHINE DE PARIS and CANBERRA DANCE ENSEMBLE at the Balcony Theatre; the up-and-coming ENERGY CONNECTION at Union Hall; AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES, WOOMERA, Museum Forecourt, North Terrace. Full details. Fringe program (223 8300)

LINDSAY KEMP and Company begin their season of his fantastic versions of Flowers at the Opera Theatre (51 6171) on March 26.
PROBLEMS OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY

The Year Of Living Dangerously has been having an awkward time of it, not the least of its trouble being the difficulty of casting the role of a Chinese-Australian dwarf who in the Christopher Koch novel is the informer, adviser and fixer for the journalist who is the more-or-less hero, the role taken by Mel Gibson. But the financial hurdles at least appear to have been conquered with MGM funding. Feminine lead will be the American actress Sigourney Weaver, of Alien and Eyewitness. In the novel, she’s English. Oh, well.

STAR TREATMENT

Which reminds me that Mel Gibson, who does not see himself, so he said, as ever...

being a “star” had to have the crowds held at bay by extra police when he made a personal appearance in Perth for the launching of Mad Max 2. Will they still love him when he goes suave in a tropical suit for The Year?

ON FRIENDSHIP

If you want to become a friend of the Sydney Film Festival, which needs friends to survive like all other arts enterprises, telephone the SFF’s administrator, Lynn McCarthy at (02) 660 3909 and she will tell you about the benefits of being friendly. Bryan Brown is first endorser and Official Friend.

TRAVELLING CREAM

And the Travelling Film Festival, after touring Tasmania in February, travels on in March and April to Orange, Richmond, Armidale and Sawtell in NSW, Too­woomba and Pomona Queensland, and Darwin. The six films are the cream of the SFF 1981 program — The Boat Is Full (Switzerland) Beads Of One Rosary (Poland) The Fiancee (East Germany) which was voted best film, Blue Collar (USA), Mon Oncle d’Amerique (France) and Mama Turns 100 (Spain)
AN INNOCENT APPROACH

PHILLIP ADAMS, once known for his outspoken views, talks to ELIZABETH RIDDELL about his milder approach to the vagaries of the film industry.

“If there is one thing I hate and fear,” Phillip Adams said, finishing a conversation on the life and times of the Australian film industry and his own considerable part in it, “it is the mid-Pacific version of the mid-Atlantic film. For one thing, it doesn’t work as a commercial proposition. As the British, who attempted the mid-Atlantic film — Lord Grade, for instance — and the Canadians, found it is partly this that has left their local industry in tatters.

“We have to take notice of these events. If the British industry is making a comeback, a return to something of its great days, it is because it is making its own idiosyncratic films. One of the things that people overseas like about Australian films, and a quality that will get them audiences (but not make producers millionaires overnight), is their rather innocent approach. That phrase was actually used by Pauline Kael, the film correspondent for The New Yorker, in an impromptu interview, I think on the kerb outside a cinema where she had just seen an Australian film which she liked. It is a quality she has emphasised in her reviews of Australian films and it has been noted by other respected critics.”

Phillip Adams is head of an advertising agency, a writer of satirical articles for newspapers and magazines, a noted debater on communication, a source of good quotes on contemporary society and the Australian most often interviewed on the Michael Parkinson program. Or so it seems.

He is a producer in his own right (The Getting of Wisdom, and Grendel, Grendel, Grendel) and one half of Adams Packer Film Productions Pty Ltd. The other half is Kerry Packer of Australian Consolidated Press, Channel Nine, the late World Series Cricket, coal mining, ski-resorting and quarter-horsing. The word was, when the company was formed, that Adams would supply and organise the ideas and personnel and Packer would put up the money, but Adams says it was never the intention that Packer should just foot the bill. Adams Packer is in fact anxious to find investors from all over, including the US, so long as all the so-to-speak editorial rights stay with the company.

For instance, Adams could have raised American money to re-start the temporarily shelved The Dunera Boys, but it would have meant substantial American injection, including an American director. The director and scriptwriter is a Melbourne man, Ben Lewis, and, Adams says, “I wouldn’t have anybody do it but Ben. In any case the budget was creeping up to the $6 million mark, an unconscionable amount for an Australian film. This is unrealistic money. What is happening now to The Dunera Boys is that it is getting a major rewrite which will make it much more manageable, and it will soon go into pre-production.”

The state of the game in other Adams Packer projects:

*We Of The Never Never:* no release date, but the score was being put together in January.

*Fighting Back,* based on the novel, Tom, by John Embling, is being produced by Tom Jeffrey and Sue Milliken, with Lewis Fitz-Gerald and Chris McQuade in the roles of Tom’s parents. Paul Smith plays Tom.

*Lonely Hearts,* formerly called “Close to the Heart” (a title thought to be like that of Francis Ford Coppola’s newest $26 million film called One from the Heart) has got as far as a second draft of a script by John Clarke (Fred Dagg) and Paul Cox, who will also direct. It is the story of a mature couple — Wendy Hughes and Norman Kaye — who meet through an introduction agency, and what comes of it.

*Blockbuster,* a “cruel satire” on the US film industry with a script by John Clarke and players called Robert Redford, Paul Newton and the Marx Brothers who are not quite the way they sound.

*Abracadabra,* an animated film aimed at children, by Alex Stitt. It will be the first animated film to use a new 3D system invented by two Australians, Mike Browning and Volk Moll, which requires only one lens.

Stitt’s other animated film, Grendel, Grendel, Grendel — from which, Adams says, he never expected very much in the way of box office — ran for seven weeks in Melbourne and then went into the Sydney Opera House cinema. It suffered from a lack of target, an unidentifiable audience, but Adams says it has sold satisfactorily in Europe.

Another film of the future is Catelpa, a story about a whaling ship, to be directed by Bruce Beresford, at present
working in America after his assignment to R and R's Fortress fell through. Incidentally, and oddly, after what can be seen as the fairly sensational success of Gallipoli, R and R have announced no further production plans.

Adams Packer has several times been headlined as "taking on" the tax office in an endeavour to get the controversial tax deduction legislation revised or at least clarified, but Adams' private attitude seems to be that the difficulties will iron themselves out. He notes that both the Prime Minister and the Treasurer have been on the set of Kitty and the Bagman, at Forest Home Films, which features Liddy Clark and Val Lehman as two crime queens (presumably Kate Leigh and Tilly Devine) so that they could gain some understanding of the scale of energy (and money) needed to make a film.

"There is not much film investment cash about," Phillip Adams says "because there are plenty of other ways for people to play games with funny money, rather than putting it into films. And there are difficulties attached to the legislation, to put it mildly."

"But I believe that our industry survives, and will survive, through government. That is, directly through subsidy from the Australian Film Commission and the State corporations and indirectly through taxation concessions. The system needs to operate in the spirit of the legislation as well as the letter. And some extraordinary things are likely to happen."

In fact, the very day we spoke an extraordinary thing did happen. It was reported that the Department of Home Affairs had conferred a final certificate as an Australian film on The Pirate Movie, a variation on the Gilbert and Sullivan Pirates of Penzance, produced by JHI Production (principal Ted Hamilton, well known Melbourne variety performer, who spent some years in California) and costing an estimated $6 million.

The certificate means that it qualifies for some or all of the 150% tax reduction available to investors. The film has American male and female leads — Kristy McNicol and Chris Atkins — an English director, Ken Annakin, and other people from overseas including an art director, special effects experts and an associate producer.

Heatwave — a splendid thriller

by Elizabeth Riddell

Heatwave has a lot of power and a kind of headlong excitement and it is emphatic in a manner that has been noticeably absent from a good deal of the Australian product. It is a film that knows where it is going although the story, of course, does not proceed to a solution, seeing that the subject is competition for the use, or exploitation, of land regardless of who is sitting on it in little old-fashioned dwellings. It is a story that has no convenient end and one that will be repeated, with variations in the sequence of events and the moral and mental violence that accompanies these events, many times.

Under the evocative title, promising a steamy and/or explosive experience, a collection of more or less flawed people manoeuvre as a developer marshals his bulldozers and smart-aleck advisers against residents of an inner city block he wishes to demolish in order to build on it a multi million dollar housing project he calls Eden, ha ha.

The model of Eden is shown early in the film, set on a table in the office of the architect, but it was beyond my powers to comprehend what it would look like when translated into bricks and mortar, or rather concrete, glass and landscaping. As the model maker, Paul Pholeros, is also named as architectural consultant, along with Steve Lesiak, I expect he knows what he is doing.

The leader of the residents' action group is Mary Ford, who also publishes a little newspaper. Her supporter is Kate Dean, who works in a bookshop and has at first an amusing, quirky attitude to the fuss. When Mary Ford disappears this changes Kate until she is in the row boots and all.

Meanwhile the developer is running out of money and time, the architect of Eden is asked to cut corners, the site is being sabotaged with fire and water, the unions battle out a demarcation row and the police harass everyone except the developer.

And Christmas rolls on, the heatwave pounds sleazy, beautiful Sydney, and the sweat rolls down the faces and lodges in the armpits of rich and poor alike, except for those who can work, drink and sleep with air conditioning.

The plot we have just economically outlined may remind some people of certain unresolved incidents which occurred in the last two or three years around Victoria Street, which hangs high above...
Woollomooloo. I shouldn’t bother too much about that, but rather take _Heatwave_ as a splendid thriller with socially conscious under-and-overtones (and some holes in the script that are hardly noticeable at the time of watching), some very fresh performances from actors who are familiar to all of us from the TV screen, and the wonderfully subtle, many-layered portrayal of Kate Dean by Judy Davis. She builds Kate up bit by bit, logically, without ever exposing the mechanism of the development and without heroics. In the end Kate has some humour left, as well as rage.

Another outstanding performance in this film is that of Chris Haywood as the bumptious developer, Peter Houseman, a cockney with the usual boast of how he made his first dollar and nobody was going to stop him making his second, or millionth. Haywood has a wonderfully low boiling point. When blocked in his intentions he looks as if the blood is going to come spurting from the top of his head. The character is well written, and works successfully against the roles of intransigent resident, union leader, reporter, Mr Sin and Houseman’s fixer played respectively by Don Crosby, Dennis Miller, John Meillon, Frank Gallacher and John Gregg. The senior policeman who is calculated to curdle your blood with his sour-creamy smile and swiftly produced search warrant is Graham Rouse. Carole Skinner, Gillian Jones and Tui Bow do well as the mostly missing Mary Ford, Barbie the strip teaser, and a fiercely resistant anti-Eden-ite named Annie.

The hero of the piece is the architect Stephen West, played by Richard Moir, and here the structure weakens, not because Moir is not a good actor but because the character as written is not convincing. It is hard to see how he ever got mixed up with his partner, Robert Duncan (Bill Hunter) who appears not to be able to draw a straight line, much less participate in Eden. The writers have also given Stephen a wife, played by Anna Jemison, as unlikely as the partner. On second thoughts, perhaps Stephen just loves to be bullied, so acquired the wife and partner who can do it.

The director and scriptwriter, with Marc Rosenberg, of this film, which should give the local industry a good push in the right direction, is Phillip Noyce, who made _Newsfront_ and before that _Backroads_. _Newsfront_ deserved and got a big commercial success in Australia and is doing well abroad. Noyce and his producer, Hilary Linstead, have assembled a most accomplished group of co-workers, among them the cinematographer Vincent Monton, Cameron Allan for the music, production designer Ross Major and whoever helped the director set up that stunning penultimate scene of the New Year crashing in at Kings Cross.

The distributing company is Roadshow.

**WATCH FOR THESE**

**ON GOLDEN POND** is a celebration of the pains and pleasures of ageing, somewhat marred by an embarrassing performance from Katherine Hepburn and a 13 years old boy actor, Doug McKeon, whose chorus girl looks work against one’s sympathy. But Henry Fonda is there with all the best lines, and Jane Fonda with the best body.

**SOUTHERN COMFORT,** an uncomfortable film about National Guard soldiers on exercises in Louisiana swamps, seems to be making the point that educated volunteers react more bravely and sensibly in awkward situations, ie shot at by the swamp-dwelling, Cajun trappers, than your average peasant, or red neck. Keith Carradine and Powers Boothe star and survive.

**PRIEST OF LOVE** is a triumph for Janet Suzman as Frieda, DH Lawrence’s dynamic, aristocratic German wife and gipsyish companion, but everybody does well in this absorbing, exhilarating English film with Ian McKellen as Lawrence and Penelope Keith as deaf, bumbling, devoted Dorothy Brett.

**BLOW OUT** — all puff and no blow, somebody unkindly said, but it is a Brian de Palma film which means it is very well-directed for thrills, and to more than thrills de Palma (Carried, _Dressed To Kill_) seldom aspires. John Travolta actually stakes a claim as an actor with his portrayal of a sound effects man indulging his hobby of recording night bird calls who eavesdrops on a murder.

**TRUE CONFESSIONS** has Robert de Niro and Robert Duvall as brothers, a priest and policeman in 30’s Los Angeles, the city of sleaze... Remarkable performances in a story of shuddersome, but very entertaining, political squalor. From Gregory John Dunne’s novel, now in paperback, which he himself called “a mosaic of petty treasons”.

**MAN OF IRON** is so close to what seems to be happening in Poland that it would be a must, even if not superbly made by Andrzej Wadja, who continues his exploration of Polish history started in _Man Of Marble_. There is a lot of documentary footage taken at the time of the Gdansk strike. The hero is Man Of Marble’s son, and many characters in the earlier film appear.

**SHOCK TREATMENT** has a lot of crazy people in it, not crazy in the Three Stooges genre but spin-offs from _The Rocky Horror Show_ (including Brad and Janet) and expertly organised by Jim Sharman. The action takes place in a television show whose sponsor is named Farley Flavours. Among those present are Barry Humphries, Richard O’Brien and Rocky star Nell Campbell.

**CHARIOTS OF FIRE** — the sleeper of 1981 and still going strong before audiences which have been lured into the cinemas of all states by powerful word-of-mouth recommendation. But once gone, it may never come back, so hurry on down.
SUTHERLAND ON SUTHERLAND
Following the resounding success of the free open-air performance of La Traviata in Sydney’s Domain — a collaboration between the Festival of Sydney and the Australian Opera — the organisers have announced a return bout in 1983.

Despite the original date of January 16 being rained out and the event transferred to the following Monday, an estimated 20,000 people witnessed this historic performance and before the concert had even commenced Patrick Veitch, General Manager of the Australian Opera, announced from the stage “We’ll be back again next year”. Plans are already being hatched for as spectacular a follow-up next January.

Meanwhile, spurred on no doubt by the accolades showered on the event by the public and media, Alderman Douglas Sutherland (no relation to the diva), the Lord Mayor of Sydney, has gone into print advocating the construction of a permanent music bowl to house future such events.

Tunes from opera have been responsible for galvanising more than one political revolution over the years, why not move a City Council to provide a much needed public facility? Wonder of wonders, maybe even the ABC might venture out of its self-imposed concert catacombs to perform outdoors!

IAN CAMPBELL FOR THE MET
General Managers are back in the news again! Surprise of the season has been the sudden and totally unexpected announcement that Ian D Campbell, General Manager of the highly successful State Opera of South Australia since 1976, will leave the company in September for a position with the New York Metropolitan Opera. In October he takes up the post of Assistant Artistic Administrator there which will bring him into close and constant contact with the Met's mercurial Music Director, James Levine in the planning of repertoire and seasons and the casting of productions. He will be immediately responsible in this capacity to the legendary Joan Ingpen who over the years has developed more operatic careers than most of us have recordings.

Campbell's regime has seen the South Australian Company stabilise and grow in stature as well as in turnover and he leaves it in patently good shape. At the time of writing no decision had been made on a successor in Adelaide but it is believed that enquiries would be welcomed by the Board from prospective candidates.

THE BATTERED BRIDE
The operatic “Egg Bester of the Year” Award would have to go to the morning daily that found red-under-the-bed in the production team of The Australian Opera's The Bartered Bride. Lamentable, the production certainly was and I have certainly never been of the party that advocates that arts should be utilitarian, but that poor Mr Koci should have to be “a KGB agent” in order to be a bad opera producer seems naive. Brisbane audiences need have no fear, however, that their minds will be poisoned when the Australian Opera's season opens there on March 13. The production is in new hands. Young Australian producer, Andrew Sinclair, recently returned from London to remove it from the introspective, rather puzzled, no-man’s-land, where it had been left last time round and place it firmly back in its intended rustic charm.

Another welcome revival for Brisbane will be John Copley's superb production of Madame Butterfly which the producer has recently returned to Australia to revive. Audiences there will be particularly fortunate in having the opportunity of contrasting Joan Carden and the New Zealand soprano Lynne Cantlon who will alternate the role of Cio-Cio-San.

THE DIVALL DECADE
It is a measure in some ways of the instability, or at least lack of continuity in the arts in Australia, that it should be not only remarkable that Richard Divall is celebrating in this year the 10th anniversary of his appointment as Musical Director of the Victoria State Opera, but that no-one else can lay claim to as long a tenure in such a position with any other company. Divall, OBE, returns shortly from London, where he has been studying The Ring with Sir Reginald Goodall, which would seem to indicate that the company has not abandoned the idea of mounting it at some future date despite The Australian Opera's announcement of its own intention to proceed with The Cycle commencing in 1984. Meanwhile, soon after Divall's return, General Manager Ken McKenzie-Forbes goes to the United States to take up his Mobil fellowship awarded late last year.

Joan Sutherland — “back next year”.
It's curious how a number of quite isolated events can suddenly be seen to sum-up the spirit of the times. In three very different exercises in three different cities opera companies confronted the problem of dealing with a mass audience under very less than normal operatic conditions.

In early December Canberra Opera presented Verdi's war-horse *Aida* in the National Indoor Centre over two nights, playing to four thousand people on each occasion. In Sydney in mid-January the combined forces of the Festival of Sydney and the Australian Opera staged an open air concert performance of *La Traviata* in the Domain to twenty thousand people and on February 6 the Victorian State Opera also "went public" at the Myer Music Bowl with a free concert of highlights from opera and operetta. Each venture was a first for the company concerned.

It is not my purpose to review any of these activities as performances. Rather, it is as events coming so close together within a two month period that we should consider how extraordinary they were and speculate on what sudden rush of blood to the managerial head has brought them about. At a time when the "flagship" mentality of "National" companies seems to have a strangle-hold on Government thinking and, because of the apparently favoured treatment in their 10% increase to the Australian Opera (along with the Australian Ballet and Trust Orchestras), the mere idea of these extravagant fantasies in our cultural midst is an embattled one.

Justin Macdonnell looks at the massive audiences drawn to three recent community opera events

"Irrational" in Jonson's words was never more apparent than when literally hundreds of people got on buses and planes from all over Australia and, for all I know, came on foot to Canberra for *Aida* and between ten and fifteen thousand people remained standing in the drizzle to hear the last act of *Traviata*. The conditions at all of these events were less than congenial and yet they came.

There was in the two former cases an atmosphere almost of pilgrimage as we tramped over the recently bulldozed earth of the Canberra Institute of Technology or into the soggy Domain. Even the departure from the venue was made difficult by pouring rain. No one seemed to care. They had come to witness a miracle — a great collective event. It was somewhere between a VFL final and Fatima. In neither case did the Virgin Mary appear, though by and large the crucial goals were scored and the public was dazzled by the uber — marionettry of it all — the larger-than-lifeness which of the performing arts opera provides better than any other.

What does it all mean? In the context of the Inquiry into opera and music theatre conducted by the Australia Council in 1979/80, the committee commissioned a poll from ANOP that revealed that while 62% have never been to the performance of opera and 34% indicated that they thought it unlikely that they ever would, 74% considered that it was important that Governments fund opera.

One is, of course, inclined to be somewhat sceptical about statistics gathered in this fashion even though there is no reason on the face of it actually to disbelieve them. Events such as these mass concert activities do however go somewhat towards justifying the statistics' claim. They also provide some measure of access to that frighteningly high percentage who "thought they probably never would". When one considers that, in essence, the quality of choice involved is not all that different from saying that in the rest of their lives "they probably never would have a Chinese meal" these events develop significance to the future of the art form.

The need to go out into the market place and if not actually force feed the community then certainly tear down some of the barriers — whether they be opera house walls or barriers of the mind — and make the activities more welcoming is at last becoming foremost in opera management thinking. The
Australian Opera has already announced that it proposes to make “Opera in the Park” an annual event and Dame Joan Sutherland, who sang the role of Violetta in the inaugural concert, has said in an interview that she expects to be “back next year”. For better or for worse the egalitarian spirit she expects to be “back next year”. For concerts, has said in an interview that the role of Violetta in the inaugural announced that it proposes to make society than any other I can recall. a stroke went farther towards de­ educative programmes, that night at a genuine sense in which, more than all tortured a sentiment, was made very real to people by an event such as the Domain performance. There was a genuine sense in which, more than all the Friends, lunches, lecture series or educational programmes, that night at a stroke went farther towards de­mystifying the opera artist in our society than any other I can recall. There was a nearly perverse sense in which the audience almost wanted it to rain in order to test how the artists would react. They wanted to be reassured that despite their great artistry, and in some instances their exalted position in our society, that they were prepared to exhibit the classically alleged national trait of “sticking it out”.

But the spirit of the times is clearly as alive in Canberra and Melbourne as it is in Sydney and their performances too represented a striking relaxation in the relationship between performer and audience.

It is not a question in any of these cases of necessarily making new converts to opera who will immediately rush off to buy a subscription — though that may well happen. At Aida, of course, the audience had already bought seats — eight thousand of them! — the significance is that in all cases they are more a public celebration of the fact that the one area of the performing arts in which Australians have been acknowledged to excel — and indeed excel on the world stage for over a century — is singing and more particularly singing opera.

These events are a public tribute to that greatness and they draw on a vein of public emotion not at all unlike that which creates the public frenzy around Melbourne Cup Day when the people who would never dream of having a bet and would scarcely know one end of a horse from another go to parties, listen to the race and enter a sweep. These gargantuan nights of opera whilst certainly they entertain and hopefully stimulate, went further in that they reassure us of the importance of this great irrational amalgam of theatre and song in the context of the live arts, reiterating the blood sport element that is never far from any opera performance of worth. They publicly confirm our pleasure and pride in having it in our society even when we may not avail ourselves of it frequently or at all.

Whither now? The Australian Opera is determined to make its concert in Sydney an annual event. There has been talk by them of similar exercises in other cities. The VSO had not at the time of writing publicly stated its intention for the future, but in a city where “Music for the People” in the Myer Music Bowl has long been an important tradition it would seem logical for them to keep up what they have started so well. Especially as the inaugural effort has been supported by the State Ministry of the Arts.

Canberra Opera, maddeningly, has opted not to repeat their experiment in 1982. One understands only too well the enormous effort that went into the assembling of such forces — over 600 participants alone — for a company with miniscule staff and resources. But taking the bull by the horns is exactly what it is, or should be, all about after so spectacular a start, and I believe strongly that even the financial backing needed to stage concerts or productions of this kind can be found. Anyone who attended any of these spectacles would have come away expecting their organisers to be rushed with sponsor­ship offers from the commercial sector. I hope they will be because rarely could a sponsor be offered better value for the investment of its corporate dollar.

Much has been said, especially of late, of the need to involve the electronic media in the dissemination of opera. There has been considerable talk of the need to televise live production to make opera more accessible to the population, especially in isolated areas.

There would be few who would not applaud the principle and since it has been conclusively demonstrated that the techniques exist for this to be done at a very high standard one can only endorse the effort of managements to make it happen. But, frankly, if it ever became a choice between the great nights of mass spectacle of last December and January and opera on the box, my weight would be all on the side of the former. Opera is after all an urban activity that arose in the great centres of population, political and social hubub, and learning, and it is sustained by the continuing diversity of modern society, its interests and tastes in what is still mercifully an intel­lectually pluralist society. That too needs celebrating. I hope that for the sake of the theatre arts in Australia and their continued ability to “buzz” the community, our opera managements stick to their guns and push ahead with more great mass nights. The world needs them.
Summer season — some musical mundanities

by Ken Healey

Andrew Sinclair’s re-staging of Smetana’s The Bartered Bride is not only a creditable salvaging of the fiasco that passed for a production in Sydney last October, it is significantly funnier and stronger than the staging that Sinclair had managed to put together in Melbourne by November. Only the Sydney dancers are less convincing than their southern counterparts.

There is only one change in casting, Ron Stephens singing Jenic, the man whose bride is bartered, in place of Robin Donald. Stephens makes an intelligent schemer, but his voice was in poor shape judged even on its own standards. Donald looks more the village lad, and had sung beautifully, although pushing harder at the very top of the range. As Marenka, Glenys Fowles remains delicious. May she be seen more often in such roles, and not at all in future as a fake coloratura.

The opera itself showed its relative class by improving rather than growing more tedious on a return visit; the stuttering Vasek is probably Graeme Ewer’s most convincing comic character, while Geoffrey Arnold gave us a very quick overture that never faltered, and kept the Elizabethan Sydney Orchestra in good rhythmic shape and full tone. The sets are still poor-provincial in standard. But if The Bartered Bride without a name singer is barely worth the asking price of $35 (Donald Shanks as the marriage broker is good, without anything like the impact that he brings to patriarchal roles in tragedy), what is one to say of the comedies of three centuries which were also part of the AO’s summer season at the Opera House?

From the recording under Richard Bonynge which has been available for some years, I had concluded that Rosina by William Shields was a very poor pastoral compared with, say, Handel’s Acti and Galatea, yet Rosina comes from the decade of Mozart’s Figaro. Only Christopher Renshaw’s sense of style in direction and the golden corn of Kenneth Rowell’s design kept the audience constantly chuckling with, rather than at, the performers. Come to think of it, corn was ripe in the humour of the piece too. Only Jennifer Bermingham, a rotund yokel William by name, sang with the size and quality of sound one expects from this company.

Last month I asked some hard questions about the national company’s role. By keeping in employment most of the operatic kindergarten singers who sang in Rosina and Offenbach’s Ba-ta-clan which followed it, the company is perhaps assuring the future of the art form in Australia, while enabling more distinguished voices to be covered against indisposition in heavier operas. But only Jennifer McGregor and the upper reaches of baritone Michael Lewis sounded as though they should be cast as soloists in this company, which ought to be as far above its regional brethren in size and quality of tone as Covent Garden is above ENO or the Met above New York City Opera.

By far the most distressing aspect of Ba-ta-clan is the banality of the music. If a better composer than Offenbach had been guilty of this trash, it would still not be worth revival; half a dozen commercial hacks writing in Sydney now could surpass it. Yet it is given as the occasion for one of the wittiest productions (again by Christopher Renshaw) that one is likely to see on or off the operatic stage. What an irony!

Renshaw’s adaptation has pretended that Offenbach’s company, Les Bouffes-Parisiens” is touring Australia. The operetta is set in China, and is of a sleep-inducing awfulness to make Chu-Chin Chow seem as exalted as Turandot. Renshaw gives us a chorus of Chinese warriors costumed like Bondi lifesavers, a set (again from Kenneth Rowell) which comments articulately on the piece while never ceasing to believe in it, and some very funny stage business. To what end?

If the purpose of trying to revive or revivify the operatically stillborn was to serve as a long curtain-raiser to Walton’s
setting of Chekhov's The Bear, it was not artistically justified. Despite some ill-conceived "funny" sound effects in Walton's conventional, tuneful score, the opera does justice to the serious comic intent of Chekhov. This comedy is worth taking seriously. And it provided the only truly operatic singing of the night. Gregory Yurisich as the bear-like neighbour demanded payment of a debt, managed to

sing with extreme force without actually shouting — until he succumbed to the charms of the widow Popova (Heather Begg, who always sings and acts like an artist of the first rank). As her servant, Robert Eddie was also in fine, full voice. A conservative set and production, both seen before in Sydney, were complemented by an assured musical reading under the direction of David Kram. The tumultuous applause which greeted the final curtain was surely a grateful tribute to the singers for producing the sounds that make opera addicts of whole audiences. The earlier splendid productions of Christopher Renshaw which were largely wasted on musical mundanities would be better employed in the non-operatic theatre — unless Mr Bonynge can unearth neglected scores worthy of our consideration.

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**NSW**

**THE AUSTRALIAN OPERA (2 0588)**

Lucrezia Borgia by Donizetti (in Italian). Dame Joan Sutherland stars as one of the most fascinating and enigmatic women of history, the infamous Lucrezia Borgia, in this stunning new Concert Hall staging of Donizetti's compelling opera. Conductor, Richard Bonynge; producer, George Ogilvie; designer, Kristian Fredriksen. Cast: Joan Sutherland, Bernadette Cullen, Lamberto Furian, Robert Allman. March 1, 2, 5.

Norma by Bellini (in Italian). The nineteenth century saw the flowering of bel canto operas — literally "beautiful song" — and of these, Norma was one of the greatest. A magnificent orchestral score is matched by vocal fireworks as the story moves from the sacred groves of the Druids to the massive funeral pyre on which Norma and her lover are doomed to die. Conductor, Richard Bonynge; producer, Christopher Renshaw; designer, Fiorella Mariani. Cast: Rita Hunter, Rosemary Gunn, Anson Austin, Clifford Grant. March 2, 5.

Comedies Of Three Centuries: Rosina by William Shield (in English); conductor, Richard Bonynge; producer, Christopher Renshaw, designer, Kenneth Rowell. The Bear by William Walton (in English); conductor, David Kram; producer, Robin Lovejoy; designer, Tom Lingwood. Ba-ta-clan by Jacques Offenbach (French/English/Italian/"nonsense"); conductor, Richard Bonynge; producer, Christopher Redshaw, designer, Kenneth Rowell. Robin Lovejoy's exquisite production of The Bear, featuring Heather Begg's incandescent performance as Popova, is joined by two repertoire curiosities, Shield's Rosina premiered in 1782 and Offenbach's knockabout one-acter

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**QLD**

**THE AUSTRALIAN OPERA**

The Bartered Bride by Smetana (in English). Conductor, Geoffrey Arnold; producer, Andrew Sinclair, designer, Sarka Hejnova; choreographer, Astrida Sturova; with Judith Saliba, 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. March 13, 16, 18, 20.

MADAMA BUTTERFLY by Puccini with Joan Carden or Lynne Cantlon, Kathleen Moore or Jennifer Bermingham and Lamberto Furian or Sergei Baigildin. March 15, 17, 19, 20. Her Majesty's Theatre 221 2777.

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**SA**

**ADELAIDE FESTIVAL STATE OPERA OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

The Makropoulos Affair by Janacek (in English). The Festival production will be conducted by Elijah Moshinsky conducted by Denis Vaughan and designed by Brian Thompson (sets) and Luciana Arrighi (costumes). Elisabeth Soderstrom sings the enigmatic Emilia Marty in this Australian premiere. March 4, 8, 10, 13, 15. Festival Theatre — 51 6161.

Noye's Fludde by Britten. Musical director, Dean Patterson, producer, Brian Debnam, designer, Casey van Seville. This delightful Children's opera based on the medieval Chester Miracle plays promises to be one of the gems of the Adelaide Festival. From March 9 Scott Theatre.

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**ACT**

**CANGERRA OPERA**

The Elixir of Love by Donizetti (in English). March 17, 19, 20. Canberra Theatre — 49 7600.

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**VIC**

**THE AUSTRALIAN OPERA**


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**VICTORIA STATE OPERA**


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**WA**

**WA OPERA COMPANY**

Basically Brahms with W A Arts Orchestra. March 27. Perth Concert Hall — 325 3399.

JOBS FOR THE BOYS AND GIRLS

The arts in Australia have never been so volatile. With funding generally reduced and companies and organisations folding up there is a growing army of free-lance consultants available.

At the same time there are a number of interesting top jobs on the market:
- Director, NSW Conservatorium of Music (through the resignation of Rex Hobcroft, the great visionary who brought the "Con" into the 20th Century).
- Director, Music Board, Australia Council (the good Doctor d’ive apparently will write film music).
- General Manager, State Opera of South Australia (Ian D Campbell has landed the plum job of Assistant Artistic Administrator at the Met, although he won’t be taking it up until October).
- Programming Manager, Adelaide Festival Centre (Tony Frewin’s resignation before his tragic death)
- General Manager, Queensland Lyric Opera Company (Anthony Jeffrey is only baby-sitting for the moment)
- Manager/Librarian, Australia Music Centre (Yes, the Centre’s enforced holiday is about to end).

And who knows? Some of the new positions created at the re-vamped Australia Council may not be filled internally.

FOGG JOINS ABC

Anthony Fogg, brilliant pianist and Programme Adviser to the Seymour Group has joined the staff of the Federal Music Department of the ABC. Let’s hope some of his radical and innovative programming infiltrates to the sound waves.

PROCEEDINGS AVAILABLE

The proceedings of the WA Seminar on Music and Dance, presented by the Musicological Society of Australia, can now be ordered from the Music Department of the University of WA.

COHAN’S MUSICAL DIRECTOR “UNIMPRESSIVE”

The First International Dance Course for Choreographers and Composers (see Dance section) took place in Auckland in January, with funds from the Music and Theatre Boards, as well as the International Committee of the Australia Council, the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council and the

FIRES OF VICTORIA

There are persistent rumours that Christopher Lyndon-Gee, English conductor now settled in Victoria, hopes to form a new group "somewhere between The Fires of London and the London Sinfonietta" and with a music-theatre bias. Xenakis and Stravinsky is the first proposed programme.

NEW AO CONDUCTOR TO HOLLAND

Stuart Challender, the new young resident conductor at the Australian Opera, has made a striking impression with his large and romantic performances of Madama Butterfly. In a generous gesture of great confidence, Richard Bonynge has invited Challender to conduct Joan Sutherland in three performances of Lucia in Holland during March.

STEEL CONSULTANCIES

Anthony Steel, Consultant to the AETT has taken up two other consultancies of some note: to the Singapore Arts Festival and to the classical music arm of Michael Edgley. His company has also recently put in a feasibility study for a "celebration" in the greater western suburbs for 1983.
In addition to the vast amount of music performed in the concert halls in Australia, there is a considerable body of work being performed in Australia's theatres. It rarely carries with it a mention in a review, but it is likely that the public has heard more Australian music in the theatre than ever it has in the concert hall or even radio.

The Australia Music Centre’s Dramatic Catalogue of Australian Compositions, published five years ago, contains some astonishing lists:

**Incidental Music for Drama:** 59 composers in 227 productions.

**Musical Theatre (Musicals, operetta, pantomime, revue, rock opera, puppet productions, young people’s musical dramas):** 92 composers in 114 productions.

**Music for Dance:** 66 composers in 138 productions.

**Opera and Music Theatre:** 77 composers in 84 music theatre works and 133 operas and operettas.

The idea of a composer-in-residence is catching on. The Old Tote for many years invariably employed Sandara McKenzie in at least 25 productions since 1969. Helen Gifford has composed for the Melbourne Theatre Company during the 70’s and her splendid music has elevated many a production. Jim Cotter and Nick Lyons have worked with many theatre companies including the Nimrod. The new Lighthouse Company in South Australia now is working solidly with Sarah de Jong (Mrs Louis Nowra). The Sydney Theatre Company has already worked with Sarah de Jong and has recently invited Brian Howard to compose music for its new Macheth.

Every drama and dance company should have a music adviser. Not necessarily a composer (they tend to want to compose everything) but someone who can marry the most appropriate composer to a diversity of plays and who can tell an artistic director of a dance company that the music he or she wants to use (or an invited guest choreographer wants to use) is a disaster before too much time and money has been spent on it.

There is also the question of recorded music used in theatre. In the past, it has been too much tippy-toeing through someone’s record collection, and some appalling music has been inflicted on us in this way.

Another aspect is the use of Australian music. Better a third-rate piece of Australian music than a third-rate non-Australian work. Better still a first-rate piece of Australian music. More is around every year.

The situation with musicals (musical comedy) is still vexed. In the aborted Report to the Australia Council by the Committee of Enquiry on Opera/Music Theatre in Australia, chapter nine dealt with proposals for fostering musicals and recommended the establishment of a Musicals Development Fund.

Nothing came of it and in the meantime there are whole generations of Australians who have never experienced the classics of the genre. It has been left to brave entrepreneurs such as the Adelaide Festival Centre Trust and its colleagues to mount such works as Evita, Barnum and Ned Kelly. But where is Chu Chin Chow? By default, it has fallen to the amateur companies to present the older works, which often suffer from the amateur approach. The recent sparkling revivals in the West End, have proved their enduring vitality and appeal.

In comparison, contemporary opera has been reasonably served by the State Opera of South Australia, the Victorian State Opera and the University of NSW Opera, although no Henze opera has been performed in Australia yet, nor any major work by Malcolm Williamson or Peggy Glanville-Hicks. The astonishing track record of the State Opera of South Australia was charted by Justin Macdonnell in the last issue of Theatre Australia, which
Andrew Porter reports in the *New Grove* that the generic title Music Theatre was a convenient catch-phrase of the 1960’s “to designate musical works for small or moderate forces that make a dramatic element in their presentation, including small-scale opera” such as Alexander Goehr’s *Naboth’s Vineyard* as presented by the now defunct London Music Theatre Ensemble, formed within weeks of the Pierrot Players, in the late 1960’s.

For a while there was a healthy competitiveness between the two groups. Goehr directed the London Music Theatre Ensemble and Peter Maxwell Davies and Harrison Birtwistle were the co-Directors of the Pierrot Players, which after all had as its base that great and seminal 20th century music theatre piece *Pierrot Lunaire* in a remarkable performance by Mary Thomas. Then Peter Maxwell Davies leapt ahead in a series of astonishing works which indeed defined the genre for the 1970’s.

First there was *Eight Songs for a Mad King* with a text by Randolph Stow, and an amazing soloist with a voice range of over five octaves, Roy Hart. Here was the extended voice with a vengeance, capable of the most extraordinary expressionism. He could sing a chord, change it from the major to the minor, and descend in sixths. Other composers quickly scooped him up — Stockhausen and Henze first of all. Everyone said it was a freak and a once, not to be repeated. There now are some eight or nine performers of the work. When I took the great Cathy Berberian to Hart’s studio in 1969, she was astonished, but even she had to flee clutching her throat.

*Eight Songs for a Mad King* caused a sensation and quickly performances followed in the major European festivals. The same happened with Davies’ subsequent works, *Vesalii Icones*, for solo dancer and solo cello and small group, and based on the anatomical drawings to accompany Andreas Vesalius’ treatise on anatomy. Davies then related them to the 14 Stations of the Cross, and instead of Christ resurrecting, there appeared the Antichrist cursing the audience. At the first performance Rufina Ampenoff, Davies’ publisher at Boosey and Hawkes, fell to the ground making the sign of the Cross. The audience was visibly shaken. It was a great night.

This month a second version is having its premiere in London, with choreography by Australian Ian Spink and the role of the Christ figure taken by Mark Wraith, ex-Sydney Dance Company member. Why Wraith, after the original dancer was the world’s top black dancer? Because the role calls for a dancer who can play the piano, in the case of Vesalii, a honky-tonk piano. Wraith is an accomplished keyboard player, who nearly decided to become a professional musician rather than a dancer.

Maxwell Davies’ basic approach to Music Theatre is to build a piece around an individual usually *in extremis*, as it is the human condition which interests him. The famous Miss Domithorne’s Maggot illustrates this (also to a text by Randolph Stow) and it had a great impact when it was premiered in Adelaide for the Festival (Anthony Steel’s commission). There is no doubt in my mind, after many years producing, directing and travelling music theatre works to the provinces as well as the major festivals of Europe, that music theatre is immensely important as a medium for interesting, even exciting audiences for contemporary music. The recent evening of two performances of *Pierrot Lunaire* presented by the Seymour Group with male alto Hartley Newnham, proved a point. The first performance was a straight concert recital, and the second performance, after an interval, was staged, costumed and dramatically lit. Most of the audience found them to be almost two different works, and most preferred the staged version.

This in no way is to denigrate the straight version. I am dispirited and demoralised when I go to contemporary music concerts and find myself sitting huddled with 13 others. There is nothing more chilling than the sound of 28 hands trying to create enthusiasm.

I am depressed at the “first and final performance” that so many worthy new works get. But put that same piece in a theatre set to a dance work, have the same bite, gristle and warmth applied to a real music theatre work and something else takes over. Communication. Alas, a lost word (like entertainment) in the arts. The contemporary composers to their detriment and chagrin that labour at their art and forget those two words are going to be unhappy and frustrated human beings and most likely much lesser artists.

With the world-wide swing back to tonality, is coming a more relaxed attitude with composers to the concept of communication. A decade ago most composers would have been aghast if they were told that they were communicating to a large audience, now it has become high praise again. The composer has found it is delicious to be loved and wanted. And somewhere that is what most theatre is about.
Mostly Mozart but often others

by Fred Blanks

This year began with a bumper month for collecting Koechel numbers. Some people prefer collecting postage stamps. Others do it with matchboxes, cigar bands or car stickers. But for musically oriented collectors, K numbers beat the lot. They remain the universally accepted system of cataloguing the music of Mozart, and though they have needed frequent revision, and are in certain respects misleading, nobody has managed to outdo Koechel in supplying a framework within which Mozart's music falls neatly into place.

So who was Koechel? Born in 1800, and resident mostly in Salzburg and Vienna, he was not merely a musicologist, but a botanist and mineralogist. His magnum opus on the complete works, as then known, composed by Mozart (who had died nine years before Koechel was born) was published in 1862. Long before this, his work had earned him aristocratic orders and titles; he died in Vienna in 1877. A thoroughly revised edition of his Mozart catalogue was published by Alfred Einstein in 1937, and another edition with further corrections came out in 1947. But the immortality goes to Ludwig Koechel; the K numbers are his memorial. (Oddly enough, Domenico Scarlatti also has K numbers, but these stand for Ralph Kirkpatrick, the American harpsichordist born in 1911).

Musicology has proved that not all K numbers assigned by Koechel do in fact categorise Mozart works. K4, for example, belongs to a Symphony in E Flat by Karl Friedrich Abel (1725-87), and K444 belongs to the Mozart Symphony No 37 in G Major, which is actually by Michael Haydn with only an introduction by our good friend Wolfgang Amadeus. The K350 Wiegenlied is by Bernard Flies, and K81 refers to a D Major symphony, sometimes numbered 44 (and thus well outside the accepted Mozart canon of 41 symphonies) which may be by Leopold Mozart.

But let us not wander away from the subject. Which is Mostly Mozart. That is the name and concept — borrowed from America — which dominated the first week of the Festival of Sydney. Instead of Mostly it ought to — as one influential commentator suggested — have been Entirely, and instead of T-shirts the organisers, who were the Sydney Opera House Trust, sometimes in alliance with the
ABC, should have sold, just for a change, jeans — but even if originality was not a feature of this part of the program, there was no denying that the result was magnetic as far as attracting audience was concerned, and delightful with regard to musical results.

In 13 programs there were some 50 K numbers to be collected, and that excludes an all-day seminar headed by Christopher Nicholls and miscellaneous free open-air serenading.

My own share of the booty consisted of three concerts — one by the augmented Australian Chamber Orchestra conducted by John Harding (a few days later they were off to Europe to prove that Australia produces musicians as well as kangaroos), one by the Sydney Virtuosi, a wind ensemble led by clarinetist Murray Khouri, and one by Michael Dyer’s St Philips Chamber Orchestra, which pulled its socks up all the way to its T-Shirts for a program in which it chaperoned five soloists. Standards, not surprisingly, varied widely, as did program interest. The concert I enjoyed most was that of the Sydney Virtuosi; this octet resuscitated some more or less forgotten music by the London Bach (Johann Christian), Haydn and Mozart; if the authenticity was not above suspicion, the sound was graceful and enjoyable even though much of it went in one ear and out the other.

If you heard a ghostly gnashing of teeth during this Mostly Mozart week, it would have come from Salieri, whom no-one had the wit to represent. But there was one deft touch in some pre-concerts located in the northern harbour foyer of the Opera House Concert Hall, where students engaged in a kind of officially condoned and indeed managed busking, entirely gratis — and though the performances were mostly inferior, the idea of entertaining the audience before the main concert in this way was commendable, and another example of the friendly atmosphere which the Opera House generates — something hard to find anywhere else in the world.

After Mostly Mozart, the Festival of Sydney moved from Bennelong Point to what the Lord Mayor, presumably with tongue in cheek, calls one of the finest concert halls in Australia — to wit, Sydney Town Hall. Here there was a chamber-music series in the foyer, which seats about 250, and several other concerts in the Main Hall which seats 2000. Particularly encouraging in the chamber-music series were the New England Ensemble, a trio of violinist Andrew Lorenz, cellist Janis Laurs and pianist Wendy Lorenz; they played trios by Mozart, Brahms and Shostakovich with keen balance and individual merit. Also very professional was the Sydney Piano Quintet, an amalgam of players from the Sydney String Quartet and Mittagong.

Piano Trio plus a double bass; they gave solid, confident performances of Schubert’s Trout and works by Beethoven and Hummel. What both these groups had to contend with was an epidemic of wrong printed program information; the standard of the Festival of Sydney in preparing programs has been atrocious. This was especially so for An Evening In Vienna which spelled the city of Wien wrongly three times in two different ways, plus making many other bloomers. But the worst aspect of this entertainment, which attracted a full house to the Town Hall, was that the young Music Scheme Salon Orchestra, inexperience and unamplified, could barely be heard above the revelry and dancing; these babes-in-the-Vienna-woods could have been bowing curtsies and plucking chickens instead of string instruments.

Several other Festival of Sydney concerts which fell to my lot deserve honourable mention.

At some of these, the Town Hall’s fine Boesendorfer grand piano loomed large. Very large, indeed, in the hands of Roger Woodward, who played all five Beethoven concertos in two concerts with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra conducted by Myer Fredman. The performances which I heard combined a feeling for stature with a degree of eccentricity in some details, but the overall effect was bracing. Solo pianism of a characteristic kind also came from Isador Goodman, who celebrated the 50th year of playing before the public in Australia with an all-Chopin recital marked by smooth and graceful playing that tended to shun contrasts.

A recital by the Duo Geminiani (Stanley Ritchie, baroque violin, and Elisabeth Wright, harpsichord), a Haydn commemorative concert, several manifestations of the Flederman Ensemble which specialises in very recent music, a concert by soprano Rita Hunter and contralto Lauris Elms, and a double performance of Schoenberg’s Pierrot Lunaire from the Seymour Group with male alto Hartley Newnham, all indicated that the Festival of Sydney had treated serious music with considerable respect. And, encouragingly, most audiences either filled the venue or came very close to doing so.
ACT
COMMUNITY ARTS CENTRE, CANBERRA
The Canberra Festival will stage several musical events at this location, 6-15 March. Enquiries: Canberra Festival (062) 49 1277.

CANBERRA THEATRE
Elixir of Love by Donizetti (in English). 17, 19, 20 March. Enquiries: Canberra Opera (062) 47 0249.

CANBERRA SCHOOL OF MUSIC
Kontarsky Duo. 20 March. Enquiries: Musica Viva (062) 54 1097.

NSW
CAPITOL THEATRE (212 3455)

NEWCASTLE CIVIC CENTRE
La Nuova Compagnia di Canto Popolare. March 6.

SEYMOUR CENTRE
Kontarsky Duo. March 22, 24. Enquiries: Musica Viva (02) 29 8441

NEWCASTLE CITY HALL
Kontarsky Duo. March 23. Enquiries: Musica Viva (02) 29 8441

QLD
MORANBAH COMMUNITY CENTRE
Grimethorpe Colliery Band. March 16.

DYSART CIVIC CENTRE
Grimethorpe Colliery Band. March 17.

BLACKWATER CIVIC CENTRE
Grimethorpe Colliery Band. March 18.

SA
ADELAIDE FESTIVAL THEATRE
Kontarsky Duo, March 19. Enquiries: Musica Viva (07) 378 1953

SA
ADELAIDE FESTIVAL THEATRE
(51 0121)
Sydney Symphony Orchestra at the Adelaide Festival of the Arts. The Sydney Symphony Orchestra conducted by Ronald Zollman will premiere prizewinning works in the ABC/Adelaide Festival/Peter Stuyvesant Cultural Foundation Competition. March 5. On March 6 the Sydney Symphony Orchestra conducted by Ronald Zollman will present excerpts from Richard Meale’s new opera Voss together with Richard Strauss’ Thus Spake Zarathustra.

Igor Stravinsky Centenary Concert. The Sydney Symphony Orchestra will be conducted by Ronald Zollman. Enquiries: ABC (02) 339 0211 Music from America performed by the Australian Youth Orchestra. Music by Gershwin, Bernstein, Ives and Roy Harris conducted by Mark Elder. March 12. Enquiries: Adelaide Festival (08) 51 0121

Percy Grainger Centenary Concert. The Sydney Symphony Orchestra will accompany a piano roll performance by Grainger of Grieg’s Piano Concerto. Other Grainger works also. March 18. Enquiries: ABC (02) 339 0211

Damnation of Faust. Berlioz. Berlioz’ cantata will be performed by soloists Bruce Martin, John Treleaven and Sarah Walker, with a Festival choir and the Australian Youth Orchestra conducted by Mark Elder. March 20. Enquiries: Adelaide Festival (08) 51 0121

ADELAIDE TOWN HALL
The Kontarsky Duo, March 8. Enquiries: Musica Viva (08) 278 1481

VIC
DALLAS BROOKS HALL
Grimethorpe Colliery Band. The world’s most famous brass band in its first Australian tour. March 5, 9. Enquiries: Musica Viva (03) 26 5390

VICTORIAN ARTS CENTRE
La Nuova Compagnia di Canto Popolare. Seven singers and instrumentalists perform popular Italian music from the 12th century to the present day. March 22, 23. Enquiries: Musica Viva (03) 26 5390

WA
PERTH CONCERT HALL
Kontarsky Duo, March 4. Enquiries: Musica Viva (09) 386 2025

Dame Joan Sutherland Recital
The celebrated soprano Dame Joan Sutherland will be accompanied by Richard Bonynge. March 9. Enquiries: Western Australian Opera Company (09) 321 5869


GERALDTOWN QUEENS PARK THEATRE
Family orchestral concert; conducted by Measham, March 30. Schools orchestral concert; conducted by Measham. March 31.

WA ARTS COUNCIL
Touring Grimethorpe Colliery Brass Band to country areas. March 8-13. The assistance of the Arts Information Program of the Australia Council is acknowledged in the compilation of this Music Guide.
Learning through theatre: Essays and cases edited by books on Theatre in Education, establishment critics and historians. It has almost been totally neglected by important modern theatrical developments, called “A Little Louder Please”. Highly funny put-down of mime by Woody Allen, Marceau. The book finishes with a very detailed description of great acting and the historical context) but after Debureau it takes off. It is always exciting reading good movement by mimes, dancers, clowns, choreographers and critics which attempts to cover aspects of the art from ancient Greece to the present. It is very patchy up to the 19th century (and the introductory notes to the extracts don’t help give much historical context) but after Debureau it takes off. It is always exciting reading good detailed descriptions of great acting and the pieces here on Pylades, Debureau, Grimaldi and others alone make the book worth it. There are also frustratingly brief statements by 20th century greats, including Decroux, Barrault, Chaplin, Keaton, Lecoq and Marceau. The book finishes with a very funny put-down of mime by Woody Allen, called “A Little Louder Please”. Highly recommended.

Theatre in Education is one of the most important modern theatrical developments, and it has been almost totally neglected by establishment critics and historians. Learning through theatre: Essays and cases books on Theatre in Education, edited by John McCallum.

Every year in January I get to reminisce about the events of the year before last, with the appearance of the Performing Arts Year Book of Australia (Showcast Publications, rrp $8.95) and every year I seem to say the same things about the book. The latest is Volume 5, for 1980, and like before it is an interesting record of the year’s activity and a useful reference and scholarly resource, its organisation and coverage are better than last year’s, and it still has a few errors and eccentricities. Like every other volume except the first, the front cover is illustrated with a glittering modern, wildly expensive lump of architecture — an Arts Centre, potent symbol of contemporary Australian culture.

The Year Book is changed this year by the addition of a Recording section and by the reorganisation of the Theatre section into companies grouped according to cultural status: “Community Theatre” “Children’s Theatre” and “Significant Amateur Theatre” (all Sydney companies — is there no significant amateur theatre anywhere else?) In general it is a detailed, comprehensively illustrated resource, and if I carp at some of the errors (modesty forbids me going into the details) then that is a tribute to what we come to expect from useful publications such as this.

Mimes on Miming, edited by Bari Rolfe (distr., Second Back Row Press, rrp $8.95), is a collection of writings on dramatic movement by mimes, dancers, clowns, choreographers and critics which attempts to cover aspects of the art from ancient Greece to the present. It is very patchy up to the 19th century (and the introductory notes to the extracts don’t help give much historical context) but after Debureau it takes off. It is always exciting reading good detailed descriptions of great acting and the pieces here on Pylades, Debureau, Grimaldi and others alone make the book worth it. There are also frustratingly brief statements by 20th century greats, including Decroux, Barrault, Chaplin, Keaton, Lecoq and Marceau. The book finishes with a very funny put-down of mime by Woody Allen, called “A Little Louder Please”. Highly recommended.

Theatre in Education is one of the most important modern theatrical developments, and it has been almost totally neglected by establishment critics and historians. Learning through theatre: Essays and cases books on Theatre in Education, edited by John McCallum (Manchester UP), does not exactly rectify that, being written largely by practitioners and other interested parties, but it is an excellent and stimulating survey of the problems and solutions various TIE companies have faced. It has essays or comments on the features which make TIE unique — features which worry many conventional theatre critics. TIE mixes art and education in a way which some people think dilutes the artistic experience. Most of the work is devised by the company which performs it, and it is performed uninvited for more or less captive audiences. This, along with the drive for “significant” and “relevant” material, can easily make for gross self-indulgence and sloppiness. Books such as this are vital, therefore, in promoting objective discussion and pointing to standards which can be used to distinguish good TIE from bad. More generally they can bring the insights and techniques of TIE before a wider public. The arguments in this book in favour of devising your own shows and the need for continually new, communally important material, apply just as forcefully to adult theatre.

A less satisfactory collection of essays is contained in The Language Of Theatre: Problems in the Translation and Transposition of Drama, edited by Ortrun Zuber (Pergamon Press). It is a motley group of anecdotal and scholarly articles supposedly linked by the idea of “transposing” plays from one language to another, or from one place to another or from one medium to another — a vague theme which it would take a better book than this to hold together. There are a number of specialist articles on language translation of plays (few of which even bother to quote in the foreign original or target language) and some general pieces (including two by Alex Buzo and Dorothy Hewett) on problems of shifting plays around (it’s as vague as that). The book is full of insights such as “Communication becomes a problem as soon as the language of a text is no longer understood.” The whole notion that directing a script on stage is a form of translation is spurious, not helped by throwing in the word “transposition”.

Peter N Pinne and Don Battye’s Caroline, “A Rollicking Musical based on the life of Caroline Chisholm” (Playlab Press) will be useful for schools or amateur musical societies looking for local material with just the right amount of cliche and stereotype not to stir people up too much. It is a laborious romp through the life, trials and tribulations of the woman the authors archly call the “Lady on the Five Dollar Note.”

Tony Jackson (Manchester UP), does not exactly rectify that, being written largely by practitioners and other interested parties, but it is an excellent and stimulating survey of the problems and solutions various TIE companies have faced. It has essays or comments on the features which make TIE unique — features which worry many conventional theatre critics. TIE mixes art and education in a way which some people think dilutes the artistic experience. Most of the work is devised by the company which performs it, and it is performed uninvited for more or less captive audiences. This, along with the drive for “significant” and “relevant” material, can easily make for gross self-indulgence and sloppiness. Books such as this are vital, therefore, in promoting objective discussion and pointing to standards which can be used to distinguish good TIE from bad. More generally they can bring the insights and techniques of TIE before a wider public. The arguments in this book in favour of devising your own shows and the need for continually new, communally important material, apply just as forcefully to adult theatre.

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THESPIA'S PRIZE CROSSWORD NO 39

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

The first correct entry drawn on March 25 will receive one year's free subscription to T.A.

Last month's winner was S A Oakley, Toowong Qld.

ACROSS
1. Netted bag containing a foreign article — Tartar's head (10)
6. Liar confounded in the den (4)
9. Sort of garment? (6,4)
10. "We are dregs and ... sir," (Man and Superman) (4)
12. Group responsible for instrument I rested on at one (12)
15. Twice noted palinode in such poetry (4,5)
17. This royal a female graduate (5)
18. One Terry trod the boards (5)
19. Try a striker in a sporting engagement (4,5)
20. Exhumation finds princess is among chaps with a model (12)
24. Bird sets many to argument (4)
25. Runner may veto vet set (5,5)
26. Satisfy with an oriental dish (4)
27. Writing directions to make a sauce, we hear (10)

DOWN
1. "A ... by any other name would smell as sweet." (Romeo and Juliet) (4)
2. I leave fruit scattered in the grass (4)
3. Flouting fiercely direction by caring tenor (12)
4. 51 and 6 add up to a ruler's wife (5)
5. Irritable quality of 19? (9)
7. Planners stretch CIA resources terribly (10)
8. Norma's hanging idly round tub to see classical plumbing (5,5)
11. Sparing deficient analysis, I have no returned bills (12)
13. Postcards on board? (10)
14. Straits offer underworld psychic experience not resolved (10)
16. Backed away from retiring fawns around a titbit (9)
21. Doctor gives five to the queen — he can't keep still (5)
22. Fairy in cape, riding out (4)
23. Beast gives the good man silver (4)
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Shopfront receives assistance from the Premier's Dept. N.S.W. state
Govt. and Rockdale municipal council.
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.

A. B. Paterson

‘With the derricks up above us and the solid earth below, we’re waiting at the lever for the word to let her go’