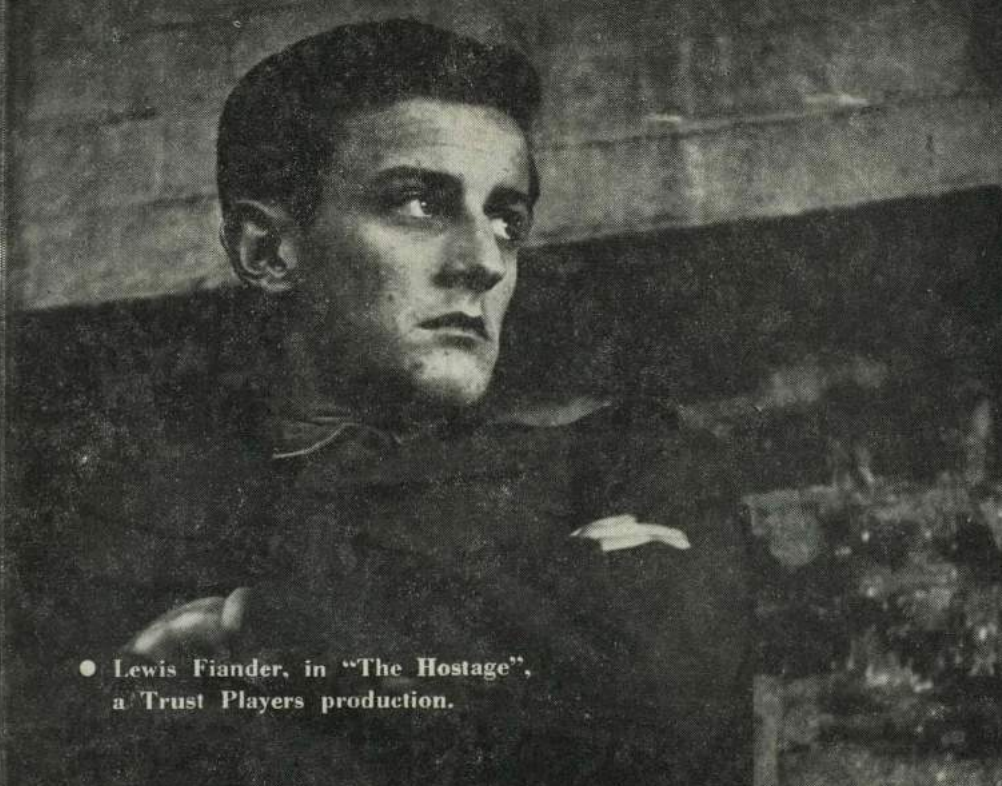


# TRUST NEWS

No. 5. August, 1960

- 
- Lewis Fiander, in "The Hostage",  
a Trust Players production.

● **A note on a prevailing  
theatrical trend**

# **“NASTY, BRUTISH, SHORT...?”**

**by NEIL HUTCHISON,  
Executive Director,  
Australian Elizabethan  
Theatre Trust.**

**T**HEATRE business, both in America and England, where I have just spent six weeks, has been taking some hard knocks. Australian theatre, too, is having its troubles. Television, no doubt, must take some of the blame, but there are other factors, too, which are contributing to the problem. Outstanding successes do as well as ever, but the number of these successes is getting smaller. Perhaps this is because the major playwrights have become preoccupied by problems which are not, on the whole, of primary interest to the theatre-going public. Contact seems to have been lost.

Some people say it is the prevalent preoccupation of playwrights with violence, brutality and sex which has led to this falling away of support. But we have only to look at “Oedipus”, “Hamlet” and “Othello” to realise that this must be only a half-truth. Perhaps the reason lies in the fact that many of the more able modern playwrights have become so specialised that they fail to portray the whole man.

Shakespeare knew that men were prone to envy, pride and lust, but he knew, too, that they were capable of self-sacrifice, compassion and love in the widest sense, and that all these contradictory qualities could co-exist in the same human heart. He lets us see people as they really are. He does not suggest that they are monsters of depravity without telling us the other side of the story.

**T**HE plays of J. M. Barrie are always telling us how good human beings are. They tend to leave out the bad. The novels of Zola reverse the process, and such modern dramatists as Mr. Tennessee Williams and Miss Lillian Hellmann follow in his footsteps. They take the matter further. They seem to deny the existence of a moral order (thus depriving man of his freedom of choice) and this, I believe, finds little acceptance among thinking people even though there may be differences of opinion as to the nature of the moral order and the sanction which lies behind it. The crude insistence upon the animal side of human nature (as if it had only recently been discovered!) is as dangerous as the assertion that the heart of man is wholly good—and even more wearisome. The labouring of the point loses—and deserves to lose—the audience.

Unless some of our modern playwrights take note of these things and exchange their clinical preoccupation with neurosis for a wider view of the whole human personality, there seems to be a danger that the theatre will have to face dwindling support or succeed in persuading us that after all life is the nasty, brutish kind of business which some dramatists would have us believe.

## **TRUST NEWS**

**No. 5**

**August, 1960**

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Cover photograph, of Lewis Fiander as “The Hostage”, by John Pearson.

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# The Magic Pudding



SAM SAWNOFF



BILL BARNACLE



BUNYIP BLUEGUM

Dear People,

Sam, Bunyip and me, now that we're theatricals, love having our pictures in Trust News. Mr. Lindsay drew them specially for the production, which is being put on by the Elizabethan Trust. He made a lot of bigger drawings, too, so that Mr. Scriven could turn us into marionettes.

It's great fun on the stage, after being characters for more than 40 years in a world-famous book. We're enjoying it. We can see and hear how much people like the story, and we love singing and dancing to the tunes that Mr. Hal Evans wrote for us.

Sam Sawnoff and me haven't had so much fun since our old sailing days. We're getting regular meals from the Puddin', and having regular fights with those rascals Possum and Wombat, who never seem to learn their lesson, and are always trying to pinch our Puddin' from us.

After we leave Sydney, we'll be going to Canberra, Tasmania, Melbourne and Adelaide. We'd be glad to see you all. (We have lots of adults in the audience. And in Sydney, although we don't like to boast, we gave three extra performances specially for grown-ups.) And if you'd like to see how we look on the stage, there's another picture on page 5.

—Bill Barnacle.



ABOVE: Allan Ferris, as Herod, pleads with Joan Hammond, the implacable Salome, in a scene from the Elizabethan Trust Opera production of the famous Richard Strauss opera, given its first stage performances in Australia during the 1960 season.

## a revue

from

## london

to open a new theatre

**W**HILE the opening of the Russell Street Theatre in Melbourne on Wednesday, July 20, adds another live theatre to the heart of the city, it will also allow the Union Theatre Repertory Company to start a new phase of its development.

In 1953, when the University of Melbourne formed the Union Theatre Repertory Company, some people looked on the venture with justifiable scepticism—Australia was not considered ready for professional repertory, and the Company's existence was considered measurable by weeks. To-day, although such scepticism has proven false, it is only after eight years that the Company has at last achieved continuous employment.

**by  
John  
Sumner,  
Manager  
for  
Victoria**

This is due to two factors. First, the intervention of the Trust, which a year ago agreed to a request from the University of Melbourne to help in the administration and the financing of the Company. Second, an arrangement with the Victorian Council of Education now allows the Company to play in the Russell Street Theatre during the five-month period when the Union Theatre is being used by University students.

Other professional organisations and entrepreneurs, like Garnet H. Carroll, will also use the Russell Street Theatre, as well as ballet and various amateur drama groups.

The position of the theatre, in the centre of Melbourne, could not be bettered, and its intimacy makes it especially suitable for revue. Thus, The Union Theatre Repertory Company's opening production will be the successful London revue, "Look Who's Here!", staged direct from the Fortune Theatre.



ABOVE: The ebullient Uncle Sid (Des Rolfe) does an alcoholic jig, while a delighted Nat Miller (Ron Haddrick) and a downcast Aunt Lily (Madeleine Howell) look on, in a scene from The Trust Players' production of Eugene O'Neill's "Ah, Wilderness!"

RIGHT: Sam Sawnoff, the penguin, and white-maned Bill Barnacle, the sailor, with their friend, Bunyip Bluegum, boil the billy while the dyspeptic Magic Pudding squats in front of the fire and the two professional thieves, Possum and Wombat, peer from the cover of the trees; a scene from Peter Scriven's marionette adaptation of Norman Lindsay's classic, "The Magic Pudding."



# THE HOSTAGE

## A CHALLENGE TO THE AUDIENCE AND THE ACTOR

WITH "The Hostage", the Trust players and their audience are meeting a new challenge in the most extraordinary play we have presented.

The author, Brendan Behan, and the play itself have both created much discussion

in the last two years. Both have been the subject of controversy. Behan has been labelled an undisciplined lunatic, and hailed as a genius; the play has been called "magnificent entertainment", and dismissed as rubbish.

Kenneth Tynan wrote in "The Observer": "It seems to be Ireland's function, every twenty years or so, to provide a playwright who will kick English drama from the past into the present. Mr. Behan may well fill the place vacated by Sean O'Casey."

The Trust Players company was formed 18 months ago with an ideal of service to the theatre-going community. It had—and still has—two aims: To provide a breadth of experience for its actors, and the greatest possible variety of plays for its audience. The ten plays presented so far have, we feel, fulfilled these aims.

THEY have ranged from untold manuscripts by Australian playwrights to the known grandeur of Shakespeare and Shaw; from the human agony of Eugene O'Neill to his softer nostalgia; from the flippant insouciance of "The Rape of the Belt" to the poetic austerity of "Murder in the Cathedral".

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by  
**ROBIN LOVEJOY,**  
*Artistic Director,*  
**The Trust**  
**Players**

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The opportunity to play a variety of roles in quick succession for a constant audience has indeed been rewarding for the actors.

Teamwork has developed to a marked extent, young talents have become mature and polished alongside experienced actors who have widened their own range. Guest actors of a high standard have been introduced, from home and overseas, and visually, our productions have been graced with a variety of talented designers.

Actors, producers and authors will appear, stay a while and then disappear—for variety is part of the growth of the theatre, stimulating it to new ideas, forms and expression. This has been mirrored in the audiences to whom we have played. The structure of the company and its choice of plays has been ever-changing; we hope that our audience will be ever-growing.



Ron Haddrick . . . "Monsewer".

# opera season a three-fold success

says **TOM BROWN,**  
**Manager of the**  
**TRUST OPERA COMPANY**

## **GRAND OPERA 1960**

**T**HE 1960 Season of Grand Opera has had three successes. The first is that after a break of some fifteen months, audiences have once again shown their great love for the Australian singer and for opera. An interesting feature of the audience reaction was the enthusiasm shown by the teenager. There is still a vast audience of young people whose knowledge and appreciation of opera has only been nourished by the long-playing record and the radio. To them, the old favourites were a new discovery when seen for the first time on the stage; for the more experienced opera-goer, "Salome" and "Trittico" provided a unique opportunity for witnessing rarely performed works.

The second success—and one that was shared by many—was the opening of the Trust's Opera Season during the Adelaide Festival of Arts. This remarkable Festival brought home forcibly Australians' great love of music and the musical theatre. Nightly, the opera and the symphony concerts had capacity houses; a bright and encouraging future for music.

The third success, and perhaps the most significant, was the final emergence of an all-Australian opera company led

by Miss Joan Hammond and Mr. Ken Neate, two Australian singers who returned from Europe for the season.

Throughout this season, the ensemble singing and playing of the company maintained a high standard, thus indicating its ability to sustain a wide variety of styles. The richness of talent was demonstrated in "Rigoletto", when it proved possible to have a change of principals during two successive performances.

The A.B.C.'s state symphony orchestras, under the musical direction of Karl Rankl, brought a fresh realisation and appreciation of Australia's great fortune and foresight in the establishment of permanent orchestras.

With the completion of the Sydney Opera House and the building of various cultural centres throughout the country, the future of Opera, after reaching this present standard, becomes most important. Until finance becomes available for the yearly maintenance of a major company, work of prime importance will be done throughout the various States.

At the end of this current tour, the Council of Adult Education in Victoria and the Arts Council of New South Wales, in association with the Trust, will be sending to many country centres a production of "Rigoletto", using principal members of the present company.

Opera organisations within the conservatorium and other State bodies will continue to provide the training ground for future stars and, at the same time, opportunities for principal singers within their own country.

Many of our Australian singers will go abroad. It is right that they should do so and, on their return, bring back with them the broadened international experience for the further enrichment of this most exciting theatrical art.

● the "Doll" on tour

## FROM THE ALICE to DARWIN

● by RONALD DENSON,  
*Producer for the tour*

PINE CREEK, 150 miles south of Darwin, has a permanent population of about 65, one hotel, one store, a police station and a handful of houses. But on May 15, nearly 200 people crowded its corrugated iron "Progress Hall" to see an Elizabethan Trust touring company play "The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll" on a stage which the local residents built themselves.

People travelled up to 300 miles to see us, by plane, car, rail bogey and on horseback. One man swam the flooded Daly River. Our audience included station hands, uranium miners, and nineteen aborigines who were admitted at half price. One of them said later, "Me plenty like—plenty much better than pictures."

This was, in fact, a history-making tour. We were the first professional troupe ever to tour in the Northern Territory; and "The Doll" became the first play ever to tour every State in Australia. The tour was arranged by the Trust and the Northern Territory administration as part of the centenary celebrations.

The tour began in Alice Springs on May 3, and continued up "The Track" to Tennant Creek, Katherine, Pine Creek, Batchelor and Darwin, where we played five performances to capacity audiences. Altogether, more than 4,000 Territorians saw the play, and the growing need for more first-class tours is very pointedly shown by the reception which we had.

When the tour was first planned, we decided that audiences must see the show as city audiences had seen it. We took a full set, lighting equipment, props and wardrobe. This travelled in a large truck and trailer. The cast—Letty Craydon, Margaret Roberts, Vaughan Tracey, Ben Gabriel, Joan Coombe, John Llewellyn and Patsy King—travelled in cars.

THE demands of full-scale staging brought us problems, particularly in places which were not really equipped for such a large show. In Tennant Creek, for example, we found that the stage in the local hall was much too small for our set, and there would have been no performance if the local people had not built us a stage in a nearby wool shed—out of planks, bags and 44-gallon drums.

But the difficulties, and the tiring distances, melted away in the warmth of our

We hope that all theatre-goers will find this issue of Trust News interesting and informative. If you know other people who would like to see it, we would be grateful if you could pass it on to them; we would be even more pleased if you mentioned that all members of the Australian Elizabethan Trust receive a copy of Trust News—as well as preferential booking, price concessions, and advance information about coming productions. The cost of membership is £5, which is deductible for income tax purposes, and application should be made to The Secretary, Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust, 85 Goulburn Street, Sydney.

## SHAKESPEARE in JEANS

● by JOHN TREVOR, producer  
*for the Young Elizabethan Players.*

THE Young Elizabethan Players—now in the middle of their third tour—have noticed a significant change in the attitudes of their huge school audiences. With theatre-going experience, children become less inclined to treat performances as a film in which noises and talk are general.

As children become more theatre-minded, they are prepared to surrender to disbelief more readily, and to become personally involved in the dramatic conflict. These are hopeful signs for theatre-going in the future; young audiences unconsciously developing a genuine taste for the live theatre, based on experience which in turn must stimulate critical appreciation.

The Northern Company of the Young Elizabethan Players began a five-weeks' tour of the Sydney metropolitan area in April, and a further week had to be allocated for Sydney in September, to follow the 13-weeks' tour of N.S.W. Rehearsals will begin immediately afterwards for the Queensland tour with "The Merchant of Venice" and "Hamlet".

The Southern Company began a five-weeks' tour of the Melbourne metropolitan area in June, will go to South Australia in August, return to Victoria in September and finish their tour in Tasmania in November.

audiences, and their tremendous support for the tour. None of us will ever forget, for instance, the night an old man came to the box-office and put down a £1 note. He was asked what price seat he wanted, and he said, "Oh, I don't want a seat. I just want to support the company. I think it's a good thing for the Territory."