

# *the elizabethan trust news*

March 31, 1973

25 cents



GEORGE  
OGILVIE'S  
EXPERIMENT

AN  
AUSTRALIAN  
ACTING STYLE

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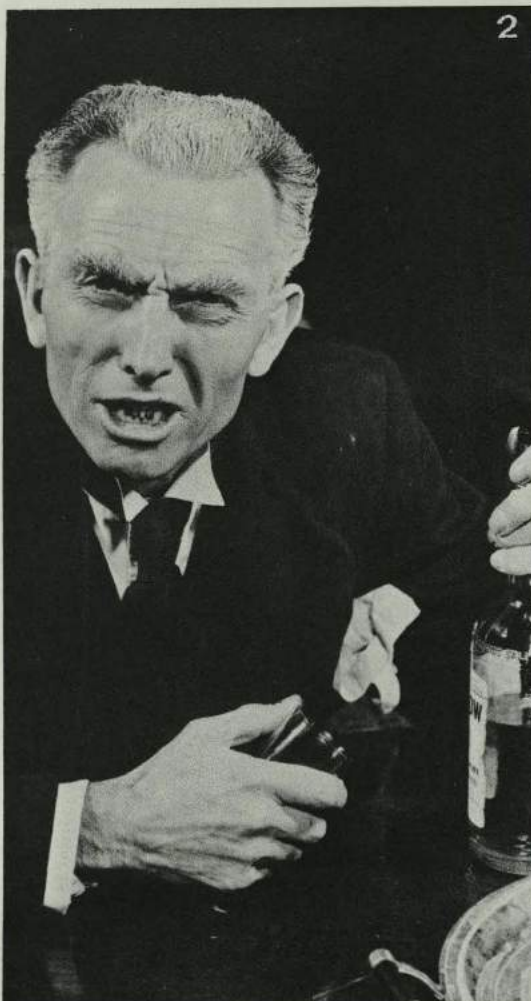
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Front Cover:  
Fotis Metaxopoulos and  
Nadia Fontana soon for  
Australia with *THE  
ZORBA SONG AND  
DANCE COMPANY*.



- (1) Graham Bond as Auntie Jack.  
(Reproduced by courtesy of the A.B.C.)
- (2) Frank Waters as he appeared as James  
Tyrone in the Trust Player's production  
of *LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO  
NIGHT*.
- (3) Gordon Chater as he appeared in *THE  
GORDON CHATER SHOW* as the Bikie.  
(Reproduced by courtesy of Channel 7,  
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# towards an australian acting style

by Kevon Kemp\*

In the past year or two Australian theatre has been showing the sort of vigour and quality that its best friends always thought it had. Not only has a whole new band of remarkable playwrights emerged but new buildings and audiences have been found to give the writers a secure market.

When all the new performing arts centres are completed, this country will have, from Brisbane to Perth, enough distinguished theatres and halls to (at last) withstand comparison with European countries of similar population. It has taken a long time, but the artistic elements of the Australian culture are now on the boil.

These days it is downright unfashionable to be chauvinistic, or talk of a nation's pride and a country's own singular national achievements, yet it is at this present stage of our artistic life, when things are really getting under way, that a certain amount of unashamed nationalism is absolutely needed.

I do not mean a return to that former Aussie boasting which was our national defence when abroad and beset by many superior things; that style went out a generation ago. We have managed now to get on even terms with the world scene; the next step is to shed all remaining inferiority feelings.

In the theatre, these inferiority feelings persist mainly as a widespread reluctance to be Australian. The last remnants of the old colonial snobbery remain with us in some sort of shame about our accent, feelings of fear about our stance, gesture and way of walking.

Old memories of the "right" thing to do, the correct way to speak, have been reinforced by so many imported acting performances and by the all-smoothed-out internationalism of Hollywood, that Australian actors have rarely indeed been able to find the proper style for performing an indigenous Australian play.

I was made very aware of this some months back, talking to that many-faceted and brilliant talent of our new theatre, Graham Bond. Bond was speaking of the opening benefit night for the Australian Theatre, now bravely backing the cause of new Australian plays in Sydney. What struck him was that of all the local star performers appearing, only late in the night did any one of them speak with an Australian accent. For the rest, as Bond said, "it was all those plummy old radio voices of the 40's". Any consistent theatregoer will know only too well what Mr. Bond meant.

Not much further back, one of our leading stage directors was telling me that Australian actors were the most versatile character players in the world—they could do any accent whatever . . . except their own, because they were never called on to "play Australian".

Certainly, the new playwrights, from Buzo to Hewitt to Hibberd to David Williamson are changing all this, but I know of no acting academy in the land that is yet devoting any attention to the basic arts of "acting Australian style". If our new plays and writers are to have their full effect, a new acting style has to be found to match the words.

Let us see clearly, first off, that there is nothing wrong in being quite nationalistic in theatre. Of all the art forms, indeed, theatre is perhaps the most nationalistic. The great plays and playwrights, of course, transcend national boundaries and settings, but their very ability to do this is based on a superb observation and deep understanding of their own national types.

It is the absolute "Russianism" of Chekhov's people that makes them capable of being universal; just as the Englishness of Noel Coward or the Yankee quality of O'Neill allow them, too, to speak to the world.

When an Australian stage director does a Chekhov, Coward or O'Neill play, like his colleagues in every country, he goes to an enormous amount of trouble to understand the nationalism, the habits, the characteristics underlying his script. Always, in theatre, we recognise on the working level just how nationalistic the art is.

Somehow, though, when it comes to being Australian it is all taken for granted, and any reasonably broad sort of semi-comic outback Aussie accent will pass, and any old sort of broad-comedy stance or walk will do.

What is the proper respect for Chekhov is also the proper respect for Patrick White; we must get down to devoting at least as much care and study to the Australian modes of behaving, walking and talking as we now do in our academies to other long-established national styles.

Our new Australian plays have sprung from Australian society and Australian landscape and Australian vernacular; our performing of them has to buckle down to the job of understanding our national life with love and completeness.

Where do our actors and actresses begin to look for the elements of this Australian acting style? So far, the Australian culture has thrown up only a few distinctive elements, but outstanding amongst them has been our painting. The tough and fiercely lit Australian landscape has gnawed at painters ever since the first of their company landed here.

Little by little the memories of English and European forms and styles were discarded. The light, the open space, the strength of the Australian natural forms took over, and whatever our painters may or may not have done to please the market in recent years, they have certainly shown us our country as it is.

Admittedly, the Australian society now consists mostly of large cities huddled on the cooler coasts, but the enormous vacuum of the inland still acts on the great cities. Every Australian is aware of wearing the outback on his shoulders, as it were. The big spaces haunt us all; our economy and our politics as well as our arts all mirror the vast spaces and the empty light and heat of the big country.

I suggest that in this sort of awareness of the physical effects of space and heat—the hot weather that leads to an utmost economy of gesture and movement and the need for "air" around people—are some clues to the acting style we are after. The Australian is also possessed of a vitality and physical handsomeness beyond most other lands. On the Australian



## towards an **australian** acting style

Ballet's overseas tours, the sheer health of the company and the beauty of its dancers' bodies are always remarked on. Even such a specialised judge as "Playboy" magazine gave a verdict after a photographic study of Australian girls that they were the most beautiful in the world.

Obviously, then, an acting style for Australia can lean very specially on physical attributes—not mere good looks, but the vitality and strength of the human body, its ability to meet challenge.

In many ways, this is an unafraid country, and something of the happy confidence that Australians have (even in our cities), something of the happy-go-lucky air of our people, even our famous "She'll be right" attitude ought to come through into our theatre.

Many of the things we have been apologising for in our national character are, in fact, the things we can be most proud of. Aggression and competitiveness are not the only ends of living; the basically easy-going Australian may well be much more the man of the future than the ulcer-chasing, system-ground American.

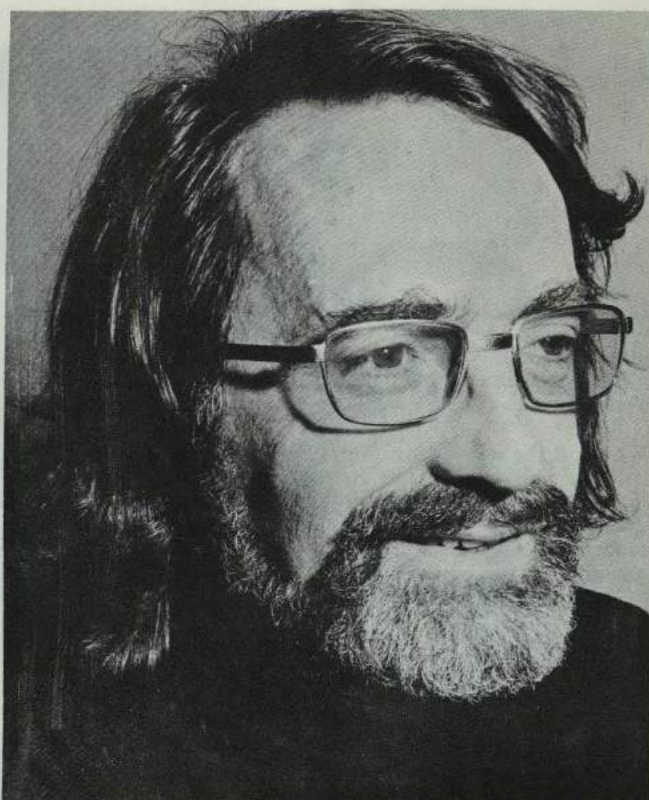
This is not the occasion to delve deeply into all the foundations of a new style of acting, but it is the time to point very strongly that all of our theatre professionals involved in training and production must get themselves into a positive and Australian frame of mind.

How successful such an approach can be, even with a classic piece of Shakespeare, was shown last year by the outstanding Robin Lovejoy production of *THE TAMING OF THE SHREW* at Sydney's Parade Theatre. With some faults, here we saw more than a glimpse of Australian style, and it was a genuine theatrical experience.

In the last issue of this magazine I argued the case for a National Theatre, and very clearly the evolution of a national style of acting would go along very well with the work and aims of a national theatre. One of the main purposes of any national theatre—in Russia, England or where you will—must be to focus and heighten the society's attention on its theatre. Just such a new intensity is needed, and right now, in Australian drama. We are rightly proud, almost unbelievably proud, of the new playwrights now in our midst, but we will not see them at full stretch nor appreciate their full impact until our acting is also newly and bravely Australian.

To this point we have been great enthusiasts for importing various modes of acting or production, and no one will deny that our actors should be able to consider all world movements in acting—but it is important to remember that almost all the famous theories sprang from a strongly nationalistic background and impetus in their own countries. The endeavour to show the very essence of this country by a new direction in the theatre profession's styles should become a paramount aim for us—and one worthy of subsidy far more than many ephemeral investments now made by funding authorities.

*\*Kevon Kemp is the Theatre Critic for The National Times.*



(1) George Ogilvie.

Experience has taught theatre people, like politicians, to be wary of new projects, to push other people first up there on stage; to follow the smell of success and to shake off, as quickly and unobtrusively as possible, the all-too-clinging aroma of failure.

And so the new theatre deal in South Australia is being eyed by the other regional theatres guardedly and with yearning by all those actors who have made the circuit around the subsidised playhouses and who wish, plaintively, that conditions were different from what they are.

Since 1968, the year the Melbourne Theatre Company first emerged as a mature ensemble company capable of presenting an original view of the classical repertoire, George Ogilvie has been carrying around in his pocket a plan for an Australian-trained company of actors.

In 1968, he said, he was told the plan was brilliant but impracticable. In 1972 it was accepted as it stood by the South Australian Theatre Company.

Time to think is the most precious commodity in a muddled, flashy, he'll-be-all-right-on-the-night industry like the entertainment business. Under pressure of one new custom-made model coming off the stocks every month—what a wasteful industry it is—necessity too often dictates more conventions than inventions, more old habits than new ideas. Once you are on the assembly line it is not easy to get off: cast the play, get it on, pay the rent—the choice is stay on or drop out.

Ogilvie, who has been more than most Australian directors purposeful about the progress of his work, has never made a secret of the fact that he gets no satisfaction from the assembly line style of production. His application for the job of director of the SATC he admits was a last-ditch stand. The choice was a new start here, he said, or going abroad again for good. As it happened he has been given the chance of a new start and the high quality of the band of directors from which the SATC board were able to choose was evidence of the desire among the established members of the profession for a fresh



# south australia's social workshop

by Katharine Brisbane\*

climate. The job has shown him, quite unexpectedly, that this is where he belongs.

Ogilvie has always regarded himself as a classical director. Self-educated in the history of the theatre, he has read and studied extensively European theatre, literature and methods; and he has lived, worked and travelled abroad, particularly in France and Britain, frequently since the 50's.

He was brought up in Canberra but his background is intensely Scots. He and his twin brother took part as children in highland games and dance competitions; their festivals and cultural associations were all pervaded by the mellifluous rhythms of Robbie Burns. "Time and time again," he said, "I have left this country, believing it to be forever believing I was going 'home'; and something has brought me back."

He was quick to understand the difference in pace between Europe and Australia and to interpret this in his productions; quick to hear the sympathetic rhythms that the writing of Chekhov, for example, has with the lazy Australian country town life. He was delighted by Terry Hand's production of *RICHARD III* at Stratford-upon-Avon in 1971 which showed him that not only the powerful, but the man in the corner pub can be a Richard. But it was not a classical play which fired him with a sense of his own identity but his first production for the new SATC, David Williamson's *JUGGLERS THREE*.

He chose it for his introductory production last October because he thought it a good play and appropriate to the occasion. But working on it he made two discoveries; first that he no longer had to take that leap of interpreting a foreign experience to his audience; and second that it was full of discoveries about himself and those about him. It came to him very suddenly, he said, that this Australia was where he belonged.

The newly formed company of 16 began in November a ten-week training programme which began with exercises, mental and physical, and developed around the first repertoire season. They propose to continue to run workshops on new plays,

the best of which will join the repertoire and by the time the company's new State Drama Theatre is ready for the Adelaide Festival in March 1974, the company will have a sizeable repertoire to display in their new home.

South Australia and Ogilvie have met very happily, with the optimum conditions for success. The degree of success or failure of this new project is a test case not just for those involved but for the spirit and strength of the subsidised theatre itself. What is the regional theatre for? Why is it that so much division and acrimony seems to surround the theatres in each State? Why have the grants of the big theatres quadrupled in five years, and why do they still cry poverty and the public complain about standards? Why do they adopt the rigid subscription system which forces so many first-class productions to be thrown away while people are still clamouring to see them? Why, on the other hand, when it gets its hands on a hard-core piece of commercialism like *DON'S PARTY* can the Old Tote suddenly abandon its subscribers for four months? *DON'S PARTY* is just completing a second revival at the Tote, which has been extended to March to enable Robin Lovejoy's production of *'TIS PITY SHE'S A WHORE* to open at the Festival of Perth on February 14.

All kinds of artistic issues are suddenly invading a territory once well surveyed, its battle lines carefully drawn between commerce and art. The effect has been rather like the onslaught of the permissive society—those not secure in their personal standards are swayed by the majority. Heavy pressures in the past year have been placed upon theatre companies by the Australian Council for the Arts to be more self-reliant, with rewards for success and punishment for failure—as the withdrawal of its annual grant in the last budget to the Independent Theatre in Sydney and the bonanza awarded the Community Theatre testifies. The result has been a noticeable sudden interest by the regional theatres in ways of making money, to the point where the smarter ones are using their subsidies to undercut commercial managements.

Last year a cottage industry, today the theatre is on its way to becoming a national product. And what the product is to be has now come into question. It is no longer the simple question of what is art and what is commercial. Groups which five years ago ostentatiously turned their backs on both the commercial and the classical theatre now find themselves being drawn irresistibly towards the centre. It is interesting and ironic that the two theatre representatives chosen to top-dress the new Labor Australian Council for the Arts are Betty Burstall, founder of the Cafe La Mama in Melbourne, not long ago the extreme, militant fringe, and the playwright David Williamson, both leaders of the Carlton collective of all-Australian alternative theatre. In the last year Williamson has found himself, to his own astonishment and without any drive on his part, the hottest property in the theatre business.

The experimental theatres, as they used to be called, are today very much in the mainstream. Chauvinism is no longer a catchcry of revolution. Instead they have turned towards the development of a genuinely popular indigenous style, which as it succeeds is demanding larger and larger premises. If one looks at the pattern it is not too wild to predict that the Nimrod Theatre, for example, which began in a stable capable of holding 200 people perched on rafters like battery hens and which will move soon to a capacious tomato sauce factory in Surry Hills, may end up playing in a stadium like London's Roundhouse (a former tram terminus) while the Council for the Arts devotes its subsidies to the rising maintenance and staffing costs of the gilt, so-called commercial theatre playing (oh how exotic) American musicals.

The advent of the popular vernacular style has naturally brought with it the vernacular expletives which have sung death-knell of the dying demands of Art. A belief in Art is the guiding light behind the whole continuing project of Government patronage of the arts, from the time of the establishment of The Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust.





The idea of Art has been a comforting thought for a cold day, like a carpeted room and a log fire, good prints of Titian and Renoir and the stereo playing a Brahms symphony. Civilised pleasures for civilised people.

But now, suddenly, pop art has hit us. We do not wish to declare our ignorance or our distaste for fear of being pointed at as old fashioned. The worst predicament of all is that it does not come with the public's seal of approval from the art centres of the world, but it is our own, to make of it what we wish. Not a comforting thought but possibly a profitable one.

The "world's best plays", mixed for reasons of economy with the world's most popular chestnuts which one could slip under the guard of the government patrons if it did not happen too often, has been the rough and ready policy of non-commercial theatres since they were invented in the post-Ibsen era. But original work does not usually survive because of government patronage but in opposition to it, as the recent history of our theatre has shown.

In the 50's the two leaders of the regional theatre movement, John Sumner, now administrator of the Melbourne Theatre Company, and Robin Lovejoy, now director of the Old Tote Theatre Company in Sydney, showed us that something of our own could be developed and in a very exciting way. Sumner, with his Union Repertory Theatre, under-financed and then just developing a semblance of a permanent company, produced *THE SUMMER OF THE SEVENTEENTH DOLL* from a member of this company and followed this with other plays to make the beginnings of the modern movement in Australian theatre. Robin Lovejoy was given the task of establishing the first national theatre company, the Trust Players, which lasted three years and was then given the chop. Of the embryo writers this first wave produced, nearly all went abroad (in some cases were given a one-way fare by the Trust) to become efficient script writers for the British Broadcasting Commission. Others, like Patrick White, shut their door on the theatre for good.

What went wrong is too complicated a story to tell here. Briefly, it was not the writers or the actors' fault, but wrong expectations by everyone. Looking back at these scripts one

(2) Don Barker, John Hargreaves, Martin Redpath and Barbara Stephens in SATC's *JUGGLERS THREE*.

(3) Nick Tate, Barbara Stephens and Allan Lander in the Old Tote's original production of *DON'S PARTY*.

(4) Cast from SATC's *CRETE AND SERGEANT PEPPER*.



## south australia's social workshop cont.

can see how tightly these original minds were being squeezed into the frame of the standard formulae, how ways were not found for the actors to rethink their work in terms of their own lives, nor were the audience led to the right expectations of this small beginning. It was a hot-house bloom, force-fed, exotic, which died in the open air for lack of roots.

Had the roots been set down then, the history of our theatre would have been different. Instead, as the theatres became more prosperous, the emphasis was placed, as it was with our music and our opera and ballet, upon the classical repertoire. Some attempts were made to assist the writer, but in the belief that he needed to be taught how to fit into the existing system. The idea of an alternative theatre was no more than a dream.

There must always be a system, even at The Pram Factory, into which the writer has had to fit. But in the last 12 months productions have emerged which have combined professional skills with the desire to find a way to give the author firstly, not the director, what he wants. And out of this has come the revelation that there are new ways, as there are new plays and these must be developed, that out of invention must finally come skills, out of spontaneity discipline and that the mature playwright has a place in the repertoire of the regional theatre.

This is the principle behind the new South Australian Theatre Company. Just as in 1968 the Australian Performing Group surged into Carlton determined to reject the system and make its own way, so the SATC, surviving its quarrel-ridden history, is determined upon a new start. Its position is unique because it has given the artistic director (the artist, not the administrator) clear, ultimate control. The company has been made a statutory body which, while still firmly under the thumb of the State Treasury which pays the bills, has its autonomy carefully guarded by the Premier, known for his active personal interest.

It has been able to put to advantage the one factor which in the past has militated against it—its lack of a permanent home. While its new theatre is being built, a relief from the costs of maintenance and continuous performance has enabled the SATC to embark upon its basic training programme of discovery, initiate a repertoire system (the first of its kind by a regional company) and an adventurous youth programme which will place emphasis for the first time upon schools drama developed and performed by the children themselves.

The round repertoire is the ideal theatre system to which every permanent company aspires. A repertory of several plays performed on consecutive nights means freedom from the rigid restrictions of the monthly season, freedom from the need to play out an unpopular play and cut short a successful one; freedom and leisure to mature the latter and the luxury of allowing the actor a night or two off a week and, if he is playing a major role, the rest and leisure he needs to accomplish it. But it is also the most expensive theatre system in the world. It requires a large permanent company of actors and it quadruples the stage management budget. Round repertoire would be out of the question in the present premises of the MTC and the Old Tote. They lack the facilities. The SATC's repertoire is being introduced currently to Adelaide with four plays being presented at two theatres.

This freedom, this lack of pressure both from the physical demands of the big city and the dissenting voices of its board and its public are what makes the SATC appear utopian. But there are a good many traps in the obstacle race ahead. The project at present is small and ideally so. Theatre companies are happy when they are small. Ogilvie is no administrator when it comes to paper work and politicking. He is a single-

minded artist who leaves undone those things which do not immediately pertain to his work. But as people like Robin Lovejoy have long ago discovered, as a company grows it is not so easy to remain a single-minded artist, to preserve those harmonious relations which one takes for granted at the beginning, or to attain one's goal. And with governments involved the pressure for expansion is constant. The Old Tote Theatre Company has never had time to solve its problems nor the autonomy to do so and the chances are now that it never will. It has never been a company in which the artist has had the freedom to be single-minded. Before one stage of development has reached maturity it has been pressed into higher ambitions. Now, just embarked on an investigation into a more popular style and as yet only a few degrees towards some kind of useful conclusion, it is being forced into the dazzle of the Sydney Opera House opening, its wares packaged before they are even designed and finished. The Melbourne Theatre Company is similarly ambitious. Its new theatre in the Melbourne Arts Complex is as yet years away but this year, with two commercial theatres on lease as well as Russell Street it will be the biggest commercial operation in Melbourne. It has signed up most of the potentially popular actors in Australia. Its aims are clear. But it no longer has the fire it had back in 1968 and what little fire there is, is dwindling fast. There is no longer time in these companies to put down roots, to investigate the complex artistic questions that are preoccupying their artists, of how to make and communicate what is really our own. All they can hope to do now is to buy the answers ready made like any other commercial management.

This is the challenge of the social workshop in South Australia. The first production of *JUGGLERS THREE*, which took advantage of the work already done at the Melbourne Theatre Company, was the only production of a work by one of the new writers done with depth, confidence and finish necessary before our work can be properly taken to the theatre centres of the world. In time—and please let us not be in a hurry this time—Ogilvie may just possibly come up with a Method. If he does it will be both Art and commercial.

\*Katharine Brisbane is theatre critic for *The Australian*.

- (5) Author Ray Lawler as Barney, a cane cutter, and Madge Ryan as Pearl, one of the barmaids, in the original production of *SUMMER OF THE SEVENTEENTH DOLL*.





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# what's on in London

Geoff Robertson reports

Reverberations from the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of John Arden's new play *THE ISLAND OF THE MIGHTY*—a four-hour epic based on the Arthurian Legend—will echo long after the production itself has closed. To recapitulate briefly: a story full of cautionary tales for directors, playwrights, "committed" productions and subsidised theatres.

Arden, with the assistance of his wife, Margaretta D'Arcy, dramatised the Arthurian Legend in order to illustrate the evils of imperialism. The R.S.C. mounted a production, and during the first six weeks of rehearsals Arden worked uncomplainingly with its Director (David Jones) and cast. Shortly before the opening, and immediately after Margaretta had seen the play in rehearsal for the first time, Arden declared that the R.S.C. interpretation was a travesty of his intentions: his political message had been turned inside out, and a play meant to denigrate imperialism was being produced in a way which glorified it. The Ardens pleaded to discuss their interpretation with the cast, which rejected their offer by majority vote—in part, no doubt, out of loyalty to the director, who argued that it was too late in the day to make radical changes. So the Ardens launched a protest campaign which saddened and embarrassed all concerned. At first they publicly condemned the production and picketed the Aldwych. The R.S.C. reply to this allegation of imperialist sympathies took the unwise form of a letter to "The Times" in which Trevor Nunn (Artistic Director) and David Jones maintained that the R.S.C. was "fundamentally a left-wing theatre"—an avowal which caused the instant resignation of the Conservative M.P. for Stratford from their Board of Directors. Arden's stand was supported by a petition of young British playwrights, who condemned the liberties directors were taking with other people's creations. Encouraged, Arden took to the Aldwych stage, shouting and tearing at the scenery in an attempt to halt a performance of his own play. As the audience booed him off, he thundered, "I'll never write for you again."

The fate of John Arden, spurned by the cast, company and audience, illustrates the powerlessness of even a famous playwright who demands some artistic control of his own play—even in a government subsidised, ostensibly left-wing theatre. Meanwhile his protest has an interesting commercial corollary in New York, where a director is suing for a share of the author's royalties for a play which he claims to have radically altered in production so as to make it a financial success.

**BEHIND THE FRIDGE**, a nice night's entertainment at the Cambridge Theatre by one-time satirists Peter Cook and Dudley Moore, is booking well into June. This collection of songs and sketches, many of which were given an out-of-town try-out in Australia last year, marks the attainment by Dud of comic stature in his own right—Pete is deployed for most of the evening as his straight man. Their mixture of situation comedy with clever parody has been labelled "déjà revue"—undeniably funny, but disappointing to admirers who hoped for a show as revolutionary as its 1961 near-namesake.



Mary in the London  
*SUPERSTAR*.



Sven-Bertil as Albert.

The theatrical mountain Jim Sharman created out of that musical molehill *JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR* seems likely to delight London audiences until the second coming. "Time Out," the city's leading guide to current attractions, summarises the plot endear-

ingly: "Small town hippy preacher gets lynched during a public holiday, much missed by a girl friend who hasn't time to get it together." Meanwhile an earlier creation of Tim Rice and Andrew Webber, *JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAMCOAT* has been rescued from the Sunday School circuit by that eclectic impresario, Robert Stigwood (whose other London interests include *SUPERSTAR*, *GODSPELL*, *OH CALCUTTA* and *THE DIRTIEST SHOW IN TOWN*) and accorded the full West End rock opera treatment. Coming in on the amazing technicolour coattails of *SUPERSTAR*, *JOSEPH* has proved a highly profitable spin-off.



Maggie Smith as she appeared in *PRIVATE LIVES*.

In John Osborne's latest offering *A SENSE OF DETACHMENT*, five actors sit waiting for their play to begin, killing the time with hardcore pornography (beguilingly read by Rachel Kempson) and snatches of verse from Shakespeare, Donne and Yeats. This literary kaleidoscope is given dramatic sense by the obtuse reactions of two characters planted in the audience—a tipsy football fan and a London theatre critic. Real critics have been less amused than most audiences, most agreeing with Ronald Bryden's assessment of the evening as "an opportunity for a superb cast to demonstrate with what compelling virtuosity they can read the telephone directory."

Which reminds me that the most obvious difference between West End and Broadway is the influence of leading theatre critics. Clive Barnes, of the New York Times, is acknowledged the most powerful Englishman in America, wielding a pen which can close a show at a moment's bad notice. But a recent survey revealed that of the 10 longest-running London shows, five (*PYJAMA TOPS*, *NO SEX PLEASE, WE'RE BRITISH*, *THE DIRTIEST SHOW IN TOWN* and *OH CALCUTTA*) were overwhelmingly panned when they opened, while *THE MOUSETRAP* received luke-warm reviews. Two of the others, *CANTERBURY TALES* and *MOVE OVER MRS. MARKHAM*, have found less favour with critics, leaving only *HAIR*, *SLEUTH* and *THE PHIL-ANTHROPIST* unscathed.

Royalty ranks behind sex and Christ as the West End box office success of the 70's: the abdication of Edward VIII is the excuse for a turgid play entitled *CROWN MATRIMONIAL*, while Queen Victoria's reign is sandwiched into two timeless but tuneless hours of John Schlesinger's spectacular production of the musical *I AND ALBERT*... the vogue for Noel Coward is evident on both sides of the Atlantic, but New York's tatty *OH, COWARD* is outclassed both by a superb Mermaid Theatre pot-pourri *COWARDLY CUSTARD* and Sir John Gielgud's deft production of *PRIVATE LIVES* featuring Maggie Smith and Robert Stephens... Alexander Buzo's *ROOTED* opens at the Hampstead Theatre Club in March, after Tennessee Williams' latest play, *SMALL CRAFT WARNINGS* moves to the West End... the same month will see Jim Sharman directing a new Sam Shepherd play at the Royal Court... a recent edition of British Theatre magazine "Plays and Players" notes acidly: Having lost nearly a million on *VIA GALACTICA* in New York, Peter Hall has agreed to become Patron of the Western Australia Theatre Company. We don't know whom to wish the more luck"

\*Geoff Robertson is an Australian living in Britain. He wrote *THE TRIALS OF OZ* and also writes for "The New Statesman."



# MELBOURNE THEATRE 1972 IN RETROSPECT

by ALEXANDER BUZO\*

1972 was unquestionably one of the most exciting theatre years that Melbourne has seen. The two leading professional theatres, the Melbourne Theatre Company and the Pram Factory (Australian Performing Group), each gave the world premieres of five new Australian plays, and La Mama continued its experimental work by providing an arena for diverse projects. St. Martins did not have a particularly happy year but under new administrator Christopher Muir this theatre has recognised the need to change direction and provide an alternative to the M.T.C. and A.P.G.

The fact that the "establishment" Melbourne Theatre Company and the "fringe" Pram Factory each took the plunge on five new Australian plays is one indication that the policy demarcation between them is not as strong as some people imagine. The idea that the A.P.G. is youth-oriented, lively, radical, super-amateur, and Australian, playing to a committed audience of unionists, revolutionary students and the Carlton elite, while the M.T.C. is senile, stuffy, conservative, super-professional and a dedicated cultural-cringer playing to a subscription list of august burghers, purple-rinsed matrons and heart specialists has been shown to be an aborted conception.

The most revolutionary play seen in Melbourne in 1972 was David Rabe's post Vietnam drama *STICKS AND BONES*, which received its Australian premiere at Russell Street. The M.T.C. has given opportunities to many younger actors such as Barrie Barkla, John Clayton, Gary Day, John Derum, Sandy Gore, Hamish Hughes, Wendy Hughes, Tony Llewellyn-Jones, Helen Morse, Sandra Lee Paterson, Martin Phelan and Sean Scully.

The A.P.G. in turn had a great success with *BRUMBY INNES*, Katherine Susanna Pritchard's 45 year old classic, with a cast headed by Dennis Miller, Lynette Curran, and Peter Cummins. John Smythe's excellent production was painstakingly intelligent and carefully worked out down to the finest detail.

The point can't be pushed too far—the A.P.G. is still a community-oriented, semi-radical group, although they refused an offer to mount a street theatre piece at a recent anti-Vietnam demonstration. The M.T.C. is a state drama company with no overall ideological slant, and aims at the best possible productions of classical and modern plays. Last September two extremes were evident in the M.T.C.'s comedy season of Googie Withers in *AN IDEAL HUSBAND* and the Pram Factory offering of John Romeril's *HE CAN SWAGGER SITTING DOWN*. But no theatre in Melbourne can be typecast, and its most striking quality is its unpredictability, and 1973 promises a similar mixture of excitement, sloppiness, professionalism, preciousness, sweat, boredom and dynamism.

Because of the size of Australia and its limited (though expanding) audiences, theatres are forced into carrying roles which are divided amongst several overseas companies. The M.T.C. does more and greatly varied work than the Royal Court and the National Theatre combined, while the A.P.G. encompasses a spectrum from the Public Theatre to the San Francisco Mime Troupe.



1. John Clayton  
Morse in *2*

2. Peter C.  
Evelyn Kra  
Mousey in *A*  
*ONE OF*  
*GENTLEM*

3. A scene  
MTC's pr  
*THE OLD*  
*JUICE*.

4. *HE CAN*  
*SITTING D*  
Gillies and  
son.

5. Sean S  
MTC produ  
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On other fronts, the commercial theatres in 1972 continued their policy of bringing out British TV stars (Peter Wyngarde, Harry H. Corbett, Sidney James) and plonking them in the driver's seat of square-wheeled vehicles, between fumes of nostalgia such as *GREASE* (an artistic and commercial disaster) and *NO NO NANETTE* (an artistic disaster). It is still a million miles (and dollars) from Drummond Street to Exhibition Street, and paradoxically one of the most entertaining comedians in the country, Max Gillies, is to be found working at the A.P.G. while Harry Secombe and Robert Morley headline at the Comedy and Her Majesty's. However, the M.T.C. will be presenting two Australian plays (*JUGGLERS THREE* and *BATMAN'S BEACH-HEAD*) and an Australian star, Gloria Dawn in *MOTHER COURAGE*, at commercial theatres in 1973, which just about amounts to an invasion.

Student theatre was seen at its best in a season of eight Australian plays presented by various colleges at Melbourne University. Dorothy Hewett's *THE CHAPEL PERILOUS*, directed by George Whaley, was a raw and moving event, and it was a pleasure to see student groups weaned from *PHAEDRA* and other necrophilia ready to tackle plays from their own environment. Melbourne University took a new direction with this season and was rewarded with a warm response. Burwood's Impact group unfortunately went down the mine in 1972 because the A.P.G. does that sort of thing better. Now that the professional theatres are taking on the plays that used to be left to amateurs, the smaller groups are forced to originate or perish.

Australian theatre is at the moment rather like the British theatre in the late fifties, with a huge wave of exciting and creative work being done. It is the theatre which is the focus of this energy and this is likely to remain so in 1973, as the television and film industries have not yet capitalised on the talent so much in evidence in the theatre.

#### PREMIERES OF NEW PLAYS IN MELBOURNE IN 1972.

Melbourne Theatre Company:

*MACQUARIE*, by Alexander Buzo.

*JUGGLERS THREE*, by David Williamson.

*THE OLD FAMILIAR JUICE*, by Jim McNeil.

*FATHER DEAR, COME OVER HERE*, by Ron Harrison.

*TOM*, by Alexander Buzo.

Pram Factory

*ASTRETCH OF THE IMAGINATION*, by Jack Hibberd.

*THE COMPULSORY CENTURY*, by Bill and Lorna Hannan.

*BASTARDY*, by John Romeril.

*HE CAN SWAGGER SITTING DOWN*, by John Romeril.

*BRUMBY INNES*, by Katherine Susanna Pritchard.

\*Alexander Buzo is resident dramatist at the Melbourne Theatre Company.



he theatre as we know it may yet stagger into the twenty-first century, but it will not get there unscarred, unchallenged and unchanged. One of the things that could well go is the star system. Even performance itself, our kind of performance, may be laid to rest. Today's young actors, directors, writers (who are nothing if not tomorrow's geniuses and virtuosos) question rather than accept such fundamentals as the value of straight performance. While no-one doubts that a great performance, a great play, a great production can enrich its audience, many young theatre people wonder whether the search for any of these is appropriate to the age. No matter how skilled, how effective, how profound—is there another way of doing things?

Geoff Hoyle (don't be surprised if you haven't heard the name) is a case in point, a potential virtuoso whose urge to become just that has atrophied. At another time in much the same place he would be bent on perfecting his performance skills and ending up a star. Not now, because things and people are refusing to become what they used to be.

Geoff Hoyle is a combined honours graduate (Drama and English) from Birmingham University, just one of the mass of drama school graduates who are presently helping to put cerebral teeth in that black gap known as the English stage—in fact, changing the whole complexion of the acting profession.

His student trophies include the prize-winning HAMLET SMITH (International Student Drama Festival, Nancy, 1966), and a notable appearance in *ACT WITHOUT WORDS*, the mime play Beckett tacked onto *ENDGAME*. This later transferred, Hoyle intact, to the West End.

For those up to their ears in mime, after studying movement in Denmark he completed two years' specialised mime training in Paris under Etienne Decroux. An apprenticeship has been served.

So much for the history, it's the histrionic that counts.

Geoff Hoyle struck me as the most gifted performer I saw in London's much-vaunted fringe theatre, and I say that on the basis of one show, his role in Ed Berman's film-mime experiment *TWO WHEELER*.

It's rare to find such a highly evolved personal style as his in a performer so young. Or such competence. Or such ease. If you looked the influences were doubtless there. Marceau or Barrault, perhaps. Certainly respectful borrowings from the silent movie comedians. Keaton for example. But he had taken everything that final, crucial step further and you sensed immediately that you were in the presence of an actor who knew his own body, his own timing, who had explored and begun to exploit for us what was uniquely his. It was a warm and generous, eminently skilful, memorable, virtuoso performance, but from someone who has refused to become a virtuoso performer.

Later, watching documentary footage of Inter-Action at work (and Hoyle with them) I was made acutely aware of a contemporary theatrical paradox. Here was a group of trained, skilled artists relinquishing their position centre stage. Instead of making plays for people they were busy making plays with them. Time after time they were satisfied with a place on the periphery while the audience tested its own skills, not those of the actors. The significance of that? Increasingly, gifted theatre people are putting themselves in new but still theatrical situations where to deploy their considerable gifts would be an admission of defeat. Their fulfilment as artists has come to depend, at least some of the time, on a far from traditional kind of intercourse with an audience. On not performing. That's the paradox.

To get Geoff Hoyle's measure it's essential to talk at some length about the group he works for. The kind of person and performer he is, and the kind of group, the kind of projects he allies himself with, combine to illustrate his artistic stance, and to illustrate the central themes of these articles: first, that the attitudes of a good many theatre people to their art are changing substantially—Geoff Hoyle typifies



'MOONMEN' with Geoff Hoyle—Participatory game play for young people.

this; and second, that the kind of performance structures these changed attitudes give rise to (new formal assumptions about actor-audience relationships, about theatre space, about the drama's content, and, most important of all, about its place and role in society) challenge our received idea of the theatre and serve notice of where the theatre is going, and must go if it has any pretensions at all to life and relevance.

Two quotes:

"The so-called revolution which happened in the late 50's at the time seemed a revolutionary thing. Looking back on it, it was a nothing. What happened was that a different class of people was put on stage. That was simply changing the content. *Theatre was in the same social and political context appealing to the same kind of audience in the same kind of environment.* It was a phoney revolution. You create a true alternative theatre by radically changing the 'where' and the 'how.' This is one of the basic principles that extends right throughout Inter-Action."

"Inter-Action makes perfect sense. Most people see it as an incredible jumble of bits, which they can't see the key to. The key is people, their willingness to work together. The discipline is Community Arts. But what does that mean? To most people it means somehow using the arts and crafts in a community. *To Inter-Action, Community Arts is the special discipline—or the arts and sciences—of creating community.*" The remarks are Ed Berman's, founder of Inter-Action. Ed Berman is a genius or a charlatan, but either way it doesn't really matter. As a charlatan he has the singular distinction of having acquitted himself like a genius. Who can do more? When content changes in the theatre it's important, more so than Berman implies, but he is right to argue that a change in content can, and usually does, leave the basic structure unaffected. Hence the irony of the 50's. Suddenly the working class was everywhere in the theatre except the seats. Changes in content hadn't made theatre more accessible. Theatre-going was still an upper and middle class habit. To alter that a strategy of fundamental change is called for.

There are short-lived underground groups who stand and fall, usually in a matter of months, on their abysmal book-



# where are the virtuosos to come from?

by John Romeril\*

keeping. There are underground organisations, Inter-Action is one (just one) of them, who realise that public money has to be properly accounted for and they play the subsidy game accordingly.

"Inter-Action's sound business approach and excellent planning procedures would make most businesses in this country envious," says David Henderson-Stewart, a management consultant. The same man serves on Inter-Action's twelve man council of advisers, an honorary council made up of interested, sympathetic people whose collective legal, business, administrative and publicity skills, not to say governmental influence, have done much to put Inter-Action on the map.

Having notables like Vanessa Redgrave and Peter Sellers as patrons has also helped. So has being registered as a charitable trust. So has attracting actors, writers, directors, administrators and film-makers prepared to get by on subsistence wages. Inter-Action's habit of living rent free in derelict buildings has helped as well, though over the years it has brought its share of evictions and anxiety.

Probably the claims made for the operation's business efficiency should be qualified. Inter-Action has a strategy for dealing with officialdom. It knows how to apply for grants and utilise its resources. It is nothing like as wasteful as the RSC or the National often are. Four years' experience—now nearly five—has taught its people a lot about realistic budgeting and programming. But more than once I turned up at venues where one Inter-Action company or another was to appear only to find a late cancellation notice. Besides that, their own theatre space, The Almost Free Theatre in Soho where you pay what you decide you can afford, was dark for an inconscionably long time in May and June. With rents what they are I wondered how they could afford not to keep shows on in such a central location.

Nonetheless, Inter-Action is an incredibly ambitious and significant and successful venture. It is this kind of operation that our new-breed performers, our Geoff Hoyles, are party to. Just before I left London, tying in with the innumerable borough festivals, Inter-Action's Fun Art Bus hit the road. For the sixteen festival weeks it was to tour all of London, an ordinary London Transport double-decker bus, running along normal bus routes, stopping at normal bus stops, but with some important differences. Inside the bus is the world's smallest cinema screening 8-mm films and slides; the world's smallest proscenium theatre boasting a cast of four; puppets, light shows, closed circuit television, posters, poetry, music and Geoff Hoyle. That's an example of Inter-Action attempting to change the where and how of theatre, and the expectations and assumptions of the audience, the passengers, it picked up along the way.

As impressive are Inter-Action's vast summer programmes—1968, 1969, 1970, 1971 and by now 1972. Here Inter-Action's pioneering use of art technology is especially edifying.

Under the guidance of Infilms personnel (Inter-Action's film and TV company) kids work with closed circuit television, or, to use the jargon, TV Kits. Sound Kits put electronic sound equipment at the disposal of young people. Cassette Kits are available so they can tape their stories, plays and poetry. Film Kits, noiseless movies, require a live audience to supply the sound track. And there are cases of costumes and masks (Theatre Kits) for the kids to muck around with, or to use together with the TV or Cassette Kits or Sound Kits or Inter-Action's Room Kits, which are simply portable rooms, each housing a different "set" or "environment."

Other schemes of note would be Inter-Action's 1969 summer camp where forty children, half of them "at risk" (from institutions or difficult backgrounds), half from more normal circumstances, co-operated in a number of creative play projects at Rotherfield Hall, a rambling country estate in Sussex.

A variation of this was their 1970 and 1971 Camp-In-Camden projects where a similar number of kids between the ages of 12 and 16, half again at risk, half from happier situations, camped urban style in derelict housing near Inter-Action headquarters. They lived communally, as Inter-Action do, took part in nightly Inter-Action meetings, and accompanied the Dogg's Troupe, some as play assistants, to various summer programme venues, as well as embarking on creative tasks of their own choosing.

These few things should, when you remember it runs two of the country's foremost fringe theatre groups, serve notice of the scope and seriousness of Inter-Action's intentions. Its own structure is as remarkable, as revolutionary, as the work it does and the areas it operates in. For instance, it is a co-operative, its 25 or so artist/workers live and eat together, share their troubles, their expenses and much of the decision-making. It is equalitarian, all staff from Berman down get paid £7 a week, what they'd get if they were on the dole. And all have spent a year's apprenticeship before joining Inter-Action as full voting members. That is the company Geoff Hoyle lives for. That is the group, and some of the projects, his rare talents have been expended on. Something is happening and we should start saying what it is.

Aesthetically Inter-Action is about expanding our traditional notions of what a theatrical event is and where it should take place. A lot of their work is aimed at young people so that yesterday's horizons don't pass unchallenged into the heads of tomorrow's audiences. Even their straight theatre pieces (e.g., *TWO WHEELER*) aren't only done in straight theatre spaces, but in a gauntlet of church halls and youth clubs. Often the texts themselves (Peter Handke's *OFFENDING THE AUDIENCE* for instance), as well as the production techniques, provide the group with the opportunities it wants to revise traditional attitudes to an audience and a space.

Its repertoire is based on a number of play-formats, tightly written, tightly performed texts being one. Second are written and rehearsed scripts which solicit the assistance of their audiences. The Dogg's Troupe, Inter-Action's Kids theatre group which Geoff Hoyle helped to found, regularly stages (hardly the word) a play about the English Civil War which conforms to this type. It seeks to inspire discussion about types of authority—Parliament and the Puritans versus the Monarchy ending maybe with notions of Democracy versus Dictatorship. Parliamentary protocol is explored by all and sundry through enactment (a match-stick or someone's shoe becomes the mace); party alignments are set up, and so on. Thus the performers have a general shape they can fall back on, and an awareness of what they hope to achieve, but it is the audience which decides how far the text will be taken, and ultimately the shape and rhythm the event will have.

The Dogg's Troupe also has in repertoire plays of a much more open-ended, less plotted sort. These are usually little more than play ideas fleshed out afresh each time according to circumstances and audience response. In one the Father Christmas Union votes to abolish Christmas because they don't build chimneys any more on council estates. It's done, of course, on a council estate. In such plays, in fact in all their work, attempts are made to stimulate significance and



# where are the virtuosos to come from? (cont.)

give some shape to the kids' responses. But the lessons that are there are buried in a game context, the project remains firmly rooted in the play rhythms of the kids and not the educative aims of the overseers. The emphasis is on having fun, on creating street (which is where they mostly work) games and street events that involve audiences. In a facility starved area like Camden, Inter-Action's home base, just showing kids how to play is a community service in itself.

Inter-Action regularly indulge in things they call Act-Ins, which are pure happenings. Completely scriptless, they arrive in a public place, a park, a playground, a council estate, using songs and patter, costumes and gag routines, to attract a crowd. In an improvised, we are utterly at the service of your invention, let's make a play kind of way—they combine forces with their audience to throw up themes and construct an on the spot event. Where, what and how it goes, and how much performance is demanded of the performers, is at the mercy of all comers.

In a sense, to call some of these cultural services (which is what they are) theatrical is to stretch our definition of theatre into uselessness. But what's involved are attempts to relate theatrical skills to new contexts, to use new spaces, to create new audiences, or more significant still, to create new modes of audience behaviour. The old definitions take a hammering because they no longer fit all the facts. Inter-Action is an agent of re-definition. Its people, in their life and performance styles, contribute to our understanding of what's new in the theatre today, and what the theatre of the future may well look like.

I've left till last one important feature of a Geoff Hoyle working week. He, like certain other Inter-Action members, is a trained group session leader, accredited by the Inner London Education Authority. In this capacity, perhaps the most selfless of all for a performer, they visit a number of mental institutions, young and old people's clubs, remand centres and orphanages, working with patients and inmates and ordinary folk whose lives have scarcely been touched by anything as grand as the theatre. The therapeutic and socialising effects of their techniques, based on theatrical role play, have long been recognised; and while miracles are rare this kind of theatrical social work is again an important and constructive community service, part of Inter-Action's thorough-going strategy to make the drama more useful and relevant to our society.

A Geoff Hoyle group session is not unlike a Geoff Hoyle performance. As the leader (centre stage) he sees himself as there to discover the needs of his group (the audience) and to elicit their group-wide participation. Their self-discovery is the focus, not his. The very last thing a group session represents for him is a chance to display his skills or entertain distressed souls.

Which leaves us where? Personally I'm tempted to see your new-breed performer (Hoyle), your new-breed theatre manager (Berman) and their new-breed theatre organisation (Inter-Action) as part of the great revitalisation of grass roots politics that is occurring not just in England but throughout most of the western world. I mean politics in its largest sense, as the grammar of all human relationships be they economic, social, artistic, whatever.

London, when I arrived and when I left, was a monopoly board (all that stuff exists, Bow Street, Pentonville Road, Angel-Islington) of vigilant, vociferous community groups. A staggering number of people are concerned with issues of power and control. Trade Union action is more and more action precipitated by the rank and file. Once unrepresented powerless sections of society, the unemployed is a good example, are organised to secure their rights. Tenants Associations are legion, and everywhere you look you see people organising themselves around specific demands which can be anything from improved playground facilities to rate justice. This ground swell is what I mean by grass roots politics revitalised, or grass roots politics period if you're

not prepared to admit that such intensely democratic activity was ever before a feature of our society.

Theatre too—or part of it—has taken the great leap forward. Moves are afoot to set its house in order. Inter-Action and groups like it are experiments in shared decision-making, one theatre-worker (actor, director, writer, electrician, administrator) one vote. From that the jump to jointly conceived, collaborative projects has not been great. Roles and traditional hierarchies have broken down. Actors, writers and directors have begun to work so closely they're virtually interchangeable, and in fact often function all three ways. These, of course, are changes of an internal sort and affect the way a company is structured. Perhaps the most significant change of all discernible in the thinking of the performers, writers, directors, administrators, etc., associated with such companies is in the way they confront the world around them.

"Community Arts" to re-quote Ed Berman "is the special discipline—or the arts and sciences—of creating community."

A good many theatre people have re-inherited their potency and become conscious of the role they can play in society's affairs, aware of the service they have to offer which lies precisely in the theatre's ability to focus and increase, even create, not just community awareness but an awareness of community. That is why groups such as Inter-Action go out into the world to divert, yes, to entertain, yes, but primarily to be useful, to become involved and to involve others in the life of their community. That is why, as a performing arts co-operative and as private political citizens, they focus much of their attention on local (Camden) issues. And that is why most of their performances are explorations as never before of the relationships that can exist between artists and audiences, of the communal bonds that a theatrical event can engender.

The drama everywhere is fighting for its life. Against television, against cinema, against public neglect, and against its own ossification. In this drive to create more utilitarian theatre forms lies some hope of salvation. The question is, of course, usefulness on whose terms. Does the theatre ally itself, perhaps unwittingly, with the forces that have created our demonstratively crisis-ridden society? Or does it become a weapon working for social change and health?

Next time: social workers and the theatre, much the same story but from a non-performing viewpoint.

**\*JOHN ROMERIL** was born in Melbourne in 1945. While an undergraduate at Monash University he wrote his first four plays: *A NAMELESS CONCERN*, *CHICAGO CHICAGO*, *I DON'T KNOW WHO TO FEEL SORRY FOR* and *KITCHEN TABLE*. He graduated a Bachelor of Arts in 1970.

While at Monash he was a leader in student politics and his political views are very much a part of his writing. In 1969 he joined the Australian Performing Group and for them wrote a great number of street theatre pieces which like all his plays have had their premiere with the A.P.G.

In 1971 he was commissioned by the Melbourne Theatre Company and wrote *REARGUARD ACTION*, which was given a workshop production by the Melbourne Theatre Company. It is expected to have its premiere at The Pram Factory, Melbourne, this year.

In 1972 he received a travel grant from the Australian Council for the Arts and spent six months abroad, mainly in England looking at the alternative and underground theatre. While in London he wrote *HE CAN SWAGGER SITTING DOWN*, an account of the political and private life of the former Governor of Alabama, George Wallace; this play was premiered by the A.P.G. in 1972.

His play *BASTARDY* (1972) was premiered the same year at The Pram Factory and he recently completed a companion piece called *AND THE BEAST*.

John Romeril has been writer-in-residence with the A.P.G. at The Pram Factory since the beginning of this year.



# books



**WALDMAN ON THEATRE.** Ancor Books, New York, 1972. Distributed in Australia by Tudor. Recommended retail price \$7.25.

Visually exciting, Waldman's compelling photography presents his way of seeing such New York productions as Peter Brook's *MARAT/SADE*. Waldman is not the conventional theatre photographer who lines up his camera in the front of the stalls and shoots. As Clive Barnes says in his introduction: "This is not a collection of Waldman's pictures, however agreeable such a collection might be, but quite specifically Waldman's view of contemporary view of theatre . . . Max can even restore a journalist's regard for photography—as an art, as a form of criticism, and as a monument to an all too easily forgotten stage . . . Waldman makes the image of the theatre live on the insides of our brains. And this is no mean trick." It's unfortunate that we in Australia have not had the opportunity to see the plays featured, but the book is well worth noting for the unique quality of the photography.

# STAGEWORLD

Rumour has it that Brecht's *THREEPENNY OPERA* will open the Old Tote Theatre Company's season at the Sydney Opera House. Jim Sharman has been signed on as director and famous Australian expatriate Keith Michell, of BBC *Henry VIII* fame, will star.

After the Independent Theatre's recent slap in the face—administered by the Australian Council for the Arts in the form of no grant for 1973—it is heartening to see that, after forty years of continuous operation, the Independent has no intention of closing its doors. Miss Fitton and Associate Director David Goddard started the year with an acclaimed production of *HOUSE OF BLUE LEAVES*, to be followed by *THE RULING CLASS* by Peter Barnes, *ENCOUNTERS* with Leila Blake and Kevin Howard, the Trust's presentation of *SWAN RIVER SAGA* and then John Osborne's controversial *A PATRIOT FOR ME* and Eugene O'Neill's only comedy *AH WILDERNESS*. The Independent Theatre Studio, a group of professional and semi-professional actors, has been formed as a nucleus for a permanent company and the backbone of all casting in the future.

Exciting news—Russia's famous *LENINGRAD KIROV BALLET* will visit Australia from July-September. The complete company of 110 dancers, accompanied by an orchestra of 45, will perform three classical programmes—the complete *SWAN LAKE*, a double bill of *CHOPINIANA* and *GISELLE* and *A GALA DIVER-TISSEMENT PROGRAMME* to include *LA BAYADERE* and excerpts from *DON QUIXOTE* and *THE NUTCRACKER SUITE*. The company's history goes back 250 years in which time it has gained an international reputation for innovating classical ballet as it is known today. Pavlova and Nijinsky danced with the company and classical ballet's greatest choreographer, Petipa, spent most of his career at the Kirov.

David Addenbrooke, Prue Skevington and Tony Trethowan are the Directors of the newly established Western Australian Theatre Company of which Peter Hall is Patron. Trust News wishes the company every success. Still in Perth, Edgar Metcalfe (former Artistic Director of The National Theatre at the Playhouse) is making his farewell appearance in *BUTLEY*. Mr. Metcalfe leaves Perth to take up the position of Artistic Director with the Thorndike Theatre in Surrey, U.K.

And in Tasmania the last Theatre Royal in Australia (and the oldest—built in 1834) is being restored by the Tasmanian Government to its original Georgian beauty. Let's hope other governments follow the Tasmanian example.

We hear that J. C. Williamson's has picked up the Australian rights to *COWARDY CUSTARD*, described by the New York Times as "unquestionably the best musical in London". Wendy Toye directs the smash hit which we understand was rejected by another leading entrepreneur because "Coward doesn't go in Australia". Just who's right we'll know when the cash register starts ringing.

Peter Brooke's much publicised R.S.C. production of *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM* has been recorded for television. According to ATN's Glen Kinging, the production will not be televised here before September—after the Aussie tour.

N.S.W. Members—group party bookings may be made through Miss Lorna King—357 1200.





# WELCOME



(1) (2) (3) *Three faces of Rena.*

(4) *Jimmy Makulis and Duke Ellington.*



# BACK ZORBA!

THE ZORBA SONG AND DANCE COMPANY will tour Australia for the second time in May-July this year. Forty strong, the company brings together Greece's top singers, dancers, musicians and actors to present a mirror image of ancient and contemporary Greece.

Undoubtedly, the star of the show is Rena Vlahopoulou, a talented and zany comedienne — a combination of Lucille Ball and Carol Channing. Miss Vlahopoulou is a star; immensely popular, she is mobbed by enthusiastic fans wherever she goes. For the past thirteen years she has been the leading attraction of Athens' famous Kotopouli Theatre.

Jimmy Makulis, another of the company's guest artists, is one of Europe's most popular singers and an entertainer of international repute. A favourite with audiences all over the Continent, his records have sold an astounding eight million copies. He has featured in fifteen major European films, a dozen TV variety shows and has won numerous international competitions, such as Eurovision 1971. Mr. Makulis sings in eight languages and has appeared as a top attraction in night clubs and theatres throughout Europe, Africa, Asia and the U.S.A. This is his first visit to Australia.

Production Manager and Choreographer will be Fotis Metaxopoulos who, together with his wife Nadia Fontana and eighteen members of his ballet, will perform various dances, modern and traditional. Mr. Metaxopoulos and Miss Fontana will be remembered for their performances during the 1971 tour when a critic said of them, "As the leading solo dancers Fotis Metaxopoulos and Nadia Fontana were ideal partners. The rhythm and sheer beauty of their bodies in motion made pulses beat as only very great dancers can do."

THE ZORBA SONG AND DANCE COMPANY will perform twice in Adelaide at the Apollo Stadium on Tuesday, May 15, at 5.45 p.m. and 8.45 p.m.; in Melbourne at the Princess Theatre from Thursday, May 17, till Sunday, June 3; twice in Canberra at the Canberra Theatre on Tuesday, June 5, at 5.45 p.m. and 8.45 p.m.; and in Sydney at the Elizabethan Theatre from Thursday, June 7, till Sunday, July 1. There will be no Monday performances. The evening performances will commence at 8.15 p.m., except on Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings when there will be two performances at 5.45 p.m. and 8.45 p.m.

## the melbourne scene

Virginia Duigan reports

The signs point to 1973 being a good sound year, if not yet a vintage season, for Melbourne theatre. Both the Melbourne Theatre Company and St. Martin's have run up glossy and enticing programmes to lure the subscriber; the recently divorced J. C. Williamson's and Edgley & Dawe have signed imports with proven mass-appeal; and fringe theatres like the Pram Factory are developing exciting plans of their own. The M.T.C. has brought out Peter James, a former associate director of the Young Vic, to direct Harold Pinter's OLD TIMES (he was apparently Pinter's personal choice for the play) and also Tom Stoppard's JUMPERS. Both are current, late-model plays which won wide critical acclaim in the West End. After watching over the first night of JUMPERS, James will jet back to London for a stint with the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Sydney actress Darlene Johnson is returning from London to play the lead role of Dorothy in JUMPERS, a part taken by Diana Rigg, of AVENGERS fame, in England's National Theatre production.

The Melbourne Theatre Company's resident playwright Alex Buzo is flying to London for the opening of ROOTED at the Hampstead Theatre Club. While in London, Alex will do some shopping for the Melbourne Theatre Company.

Three plays will be taken out to factories, unions, suburban shopping centres and charity auxiliaries this year, under the Melbourne Theatre Company's expanded theatre-in-education programme, on top of its regular schedule for schools. The repertoire includes THE STINKING DIRTY FILTHY POLLUTION SHOW (subject self-explanatory) and CUPID IN TRANSIT. All are directed by youth organiser Simon Hopkinson, who returned recently from a six-week overseas tour that took in a visit to Cuba.

St. Martin's announced radical policy changes late last year, with the appointment of Sydney Director Rex Cramphorne's Performance Syndicate as its permanent base company. Syndicate's first production of the season is THE COLLECTOR.

After an open-ended season this will be followed by a new run of THE TEMPEST, Rex Cramphorne's hit production that was seen here last year at Melbourne University. This will alternate nightly with THE MARSH KING'S DAUGHTER by Hans Christian Andersen. Seen consecutively, the two should provide interesting contrasts in style and treatment—on the way towards St. Martin's avowed aim of "total theatre".

This theatre's next scheduled production is a new Australian musical by Jeff Underhill called THE BALLAD OF ANGEL'S ALLEY, set in the gold rush period.

Williamson's are hoping for a third smash in a row (after GODSPELL, and NO NO NANETTE) with a very different musical opening at the end of March: TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA. With music by Galt MacDermott of HAIR, this play scored both the Tony and the New York Drama Critics' Circle Awards for the best musical of 1972. It is still playing in New York after premiering in December, 1971.

Extensive auditions were held in New York to cast the three leading roles for the Melbourne production. Three young black actors, Gilbert Price, Gail Boggs and Judd Jones, arrive here in mid-February to start rehearsals with the Australian cast under Sammy Bayes, who directed CANTERBURY TALES and GODSPELL.

Also in March, Sir Michael Redgrave will open at Her Majesty's in John Mortimer's West End success, A VOYAGE ROUND MY FATHER. Euan Smith of the Royal Shakespeare Company will guest direct, again for Williamson's.

Trust members receive concessions for TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA and A VOYAGE ROUND MY FATHER.

The Pram Factory's next production is something of a departure: a two-man mime and modern dance programme. THE



## the melbourne scene (cont.)

BOB AND JOE SHOW, starring Bob Thorncroft and Joe Bolza, is promised to involve "styles never before seen in Australia, with comic, abstract, dramatic and cinematic duos." Both men worked for several years with the Modern Dance Ensemble before going overseas to pursue their separate interests in 1970. Bob worked full-time under top modern dance teachers in California and New York, while Joe studied in Paris at the mime schools of Marcel Marceau and Etienne Decroux. This will be their first full-length professional production.

While this is going on in the main theatre, the A.P.G. plans a programme of short plays by Jack Hibberd and John Romeril in its back room. All plays which have been performed before but were "under-exposed", they will include Romeril's MRS. THALLEY F and Hibberd's ONE OF NATURE'S GENTLEMEN, which recently toured Tasmania. Later, we are promised a full-scale no-holds-barred production of Jack Hibberd's DIMBOOLA—the archetypal country wedding to end them all. "A catering firm will be employed to supply the cast and the audience with the necessary pavlovas, but it will be a BYO turn," says A.P.G. Chairman, Max Gillies.

Following this season the co-operative plans a Gay Lib play by Dennis Altman.

Trust Members will now receive a concession price of \$1.75 for all Pram Factory productions on presentation of their membership cards at the box office.

Over the river in South Yarra, the Claremont Theatre Company is working on two ambitious workshop projects. One group of 15 is researching the Comedie Del Arte techniques of Italian theatre, including dance, tumbling, mime, music, acrobatics and masks. There are plans to utilise these acquired skills in later productions, possibly in the areas of children's plays, street theatre, music hall and musicals. A second smaller group is working on Sophocles' OEDIPUS REX and the whole concept of myth. Oedipus itself will be produced towards the middle of the year.

## committees' diary

### YOUNG ELIZABETHAN MEMBERS—N.S.W.

AUSTRALIAN BALLET PARTY—Monday, May 28. Join us for a party with members of The Australian Ballet in the foyer of the Elizabethan Theatre after the performance. Take this opportunity to meet members of the company in an informal atmosphere. Our annual evening with the Ballet has proved to be very popular and is one of our most eagerly awaited and interesting events. Price \$2.50 each. Closing date May 21. All Trust Members and their friends are invited to attend and we hope that you will come even if you aren't attending the ballet that night. The party begins at about 10.30 p.m.

### PROPOSED FUNCTIONS:

AN EVENING IN GREECE with THE ZORBA SONG AND DANCE COMPANY on Saturday, June 16. Festivities and music begin after the performance in the foyer of the Elizabethan Theatre. Price \$2.50 each. Closing date June 9.

JULY—a surprise is planned to coincide with the Royal Shakespeare Company's avant garde production of A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

BOOKING PROCEDURES: Please send cheques made payable to Y.E.M.S. together with a stamped self-addressed envelope to Janice Iverach, 2/56 Orpington St., Ashfield, 2131. State clearly for which function you wish to book and the number of people attending. Further details available from Janice on 799-1248.

### LADIES' COMMITTEE—N.S.W.

The President, Mrs. John Sheehy, and members of the Elizabethan Theatre Trust Ladies' Committee are pleased to announce that the 1973 Elizabethan Ball will be held in the Ballroom, Menzies Hotel, Sydney, on Friday, August 24.

This will be the 20th consecutive ball given by the Trust Ladies' Committee in Sydney. If you are not on the mailing list but wish to receive an invitation to attend this gala occasion, please contact the Hon. Secretary, Miss Sarah Thompson, c/- A.E.T.T., 153 Dowling Street, Potts Point, ph.: 357-1200 and she will make the necessary arrangements.

# showguide

A guide to concessions and preferential bookings for members of The Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust.

## NEW SOUTH WALES

### ELIZABETHAN THEATRE

#### —Newtown

THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET  
April 6-June 4  
Mozartiana / Concerto / Carmen  
Giselle  
Yugen/Facade (New work by  
Glen Tetley)  
ZORBA SONG & DANCE  
COMPANY  
June 7-24

### INDEPENDENT THEATRE

"The Ruling Class" (Peter  
Barnes)  
"I Remember Mama" (John  
Van Druten)  
Leila Blake & Kevin Howard in  
"Encounters" (Two Plays by  
Malfi)  
"Swan River Saga" (Durack)  
"A Patriot for Me" (John  
Osborne)

### PARADE THEATRE

"'Tis Pity She's a Whore"  
(Ford)  
Till April 14  
"Arsenic and Old Lace"  
(Kesselring)  
April 19-May 26  
"Kabul" (Blair)  
Premiere June 1-July 7

### KILLARA COMMUNITY THEATRE

"The Queen and the Rebels"  
(Betti)  
April 11-May 12  
"And Big Men Fly" (Hopgood)  
May 16-June 16  
"The Rehearsal" (Anouilh)  
June 20-July 22

### RICH BROOKE THEATRE

"Godspell"  
CLASSIC CINEMA—Mosman  
Two tickets per membership  
card. Concessions Mon.-Fri. &  
Sat. Matinee only

### THE MARIONETTE THEATRE COMPANY

N.S.W. Country Tour  
"The Water Babies"  
March 12-July 14

### ELIZABETHAN TRUST SYDNEY ORCHESTRA

Chalwin Castle  
Chamber Music Concerts  
April 29 & May 27

### REGENT THEATRE

LENINGRAD KIROV  
BALLET  
July 16-August 4

## VICTORIA

### PRINCESS THEATRE

ZORBA SONG & DANCE  
COMPANY  
May 17-June 3  
MELBOURNE THEATRE  
COMPANY'S production  
"Mother Courage" (Brecht)  
June 18-July 14

### RUSSELL STREET THEATRE

MELBOURNE THEATRE  
COMPANY'S production  
"Jumpers" (Stoppard)  
March 19-April 28

### OLD TOTE THEATRE COMPANY'S

production "Don's  
Party" (Williamson)  
April 30-June 9

### ST. MARTIN'S THEATRE

"The Marsh King's Daughter"  
(Anderson)  
March 2  
"The Tempest" (Shakespeare)  
March 3

The two plays alternate daily

### PALAIS THEATRE

LENINGRAD KIROV  
BALLET  
August 6-25

### COMEDY THEATRE

VOYAGE ROUND MY  
FATHER (Mortimer)  
March 14-May 19  
A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S  
DREAM (Shakespeare)  
June 14-July 7

## UNION THEATRE

"Swan River Saga" (Durack)  
May 7-12

### HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE

"Two Gentlemen of Verona"  
Opening March 31  
Concessions for Members any  
performance except Fri. or Sat.  
evenings

### A.P.G. AT THE PRAM FACTORY

"Dimboola" (Hibberd)  
April-May  
"Gay Lib" (Altman & Prothero)  
June

## TRAK CINEMA

## QUEENSLAND

### S.G.I.O. THEATRE

### QUEENSLAND THEATRE COMPANY

"Juno & the Paycock" (O'Casey)  
Opens March 29  
"The National Health"  
(Nichols)

Opens April 26

### TWELFTH NIGHT THEATRE

### MARIONETTE THEATRE OF AUSTRALIA

"The Water Babies"  
May 8-19

### HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE

### THE AUSTRALIAN OPERA

May 18-June 9  
"La Boheme"  
"The Merry Widow"  
"Il Tabarro"/"Gianni Schicchi"

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

### THEATRE 62

"Swan River Saga" (Durack)  
May 1-5

### SOUTH AUSTRALIAN THEATRE COMPANY

"A Certified Marriage"  
(Griffiths)  
March 29-April 7  
"Occupations" (Feydeau)  
April 9-14

### HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE

### VOYAGE ROUND MY FATHER (Mortimer)

May 23-June 16

### APOLLO STADIUM

### ZORBA SONG & DANCE COMPANY

May 15

### FESTIVAL THEATRE

### LENINGRAD KIROV

### BALLET

August 27-September 8

## CANBERRA

### CANBERRA THEATRE

### ZORBA SONG & DANCE COMPANY

June 5

### THE AUSTRALIAN OPERA

June 15-July 7

"Il Tabarro"/"Gianni Schicchi"

"La Boheme"

"The Merry Widow"

"The Marriage of Figaro"

## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

### NATIONAL THEATRE AT THE PLAYHOUSE

"Child's Play" (Morasco)  
April 11-May 5

"Butley" (Gray)  
May 9-26

"Notes on a Love Affair"  
May 30-June 23

### CONCERT HALL

### LENINGRAD KIROV

### BALLET

September 10-18

## TASMANIA

### HOBART

### PLAYHOUSE THEATRE

"Swan River Saga"  
May 17-19

### TASMANIAN THEATRE COMPANY

"Rooted" (Buzo)  
March 23-April 7

## LAUNCESTON

### LITTLE THEATRE

"Swan River Saga"  
May 14-15



# PLANNING A PERFORMANCE?

Advance bookings can now be accepted for the Bankstown Town Hall Complex, which will open on 30th June, 1973. The Complex has been planned to cater for—

<b>Trade Fairs</b>	<b>Conferences</b>
<b>Meetings, etc.</b>	<b>Dinner Dances</b>
<b>Cabaret Balls</b>	<b>Exhibitions</b>
<b>Conventions</b>	<b>Seminars</b>
<b>Wedding Receptions</b>	

with special attention being given to the requirements of the

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**The Theatre**—A multi-purpose theatre to accommodate up to 450 persons with a 70'0" x 34' stage. A 19-line guided channel

counterweight system for the flying of scenery is supported by comprehensive lighting and sound control systems. Excellent dressing rooms are featured.

**The Gallery**—For Art Exhibitions.

**The Lansdowne, The Boronia and The Acacia Rooms**—Provide for Receptions and offer excellent catering facilities and liquor service for appropriate functions.

**The Auditorium and the Theatre**—Firm preferential bookings up to 31st December, 1974, are now offered to the Performing Arts. These bookings are available up to 30th April, 1973. Tentative bookings for future dates will also be accepted.

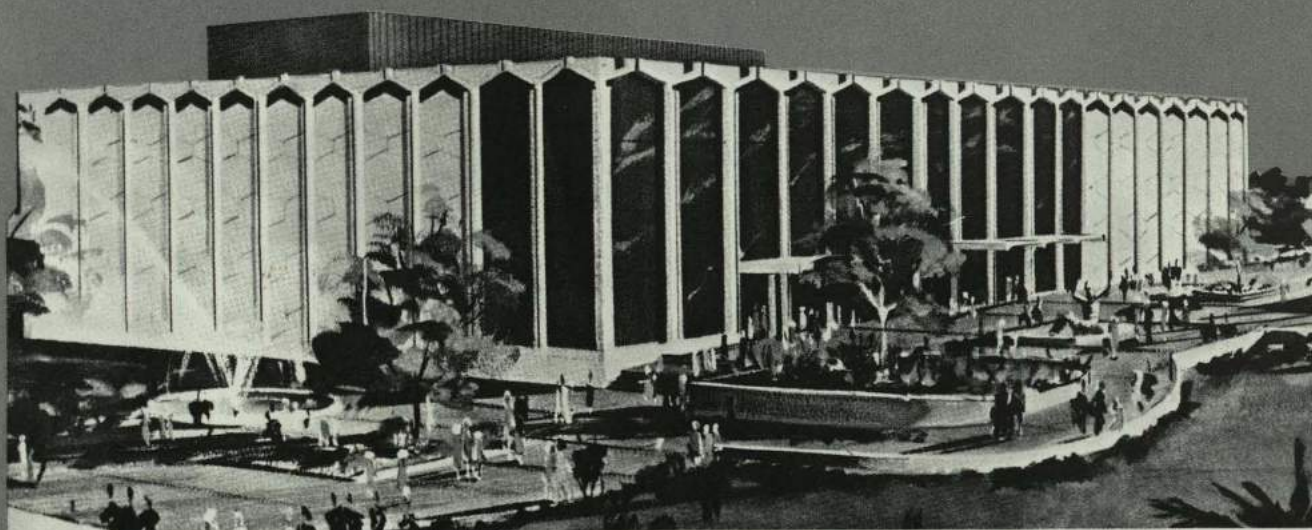
**Other Function Areas**—

Firm bookings are now open for dates up to 31st December, 1974.

Further information is available on request.

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