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# THEATRESCOPE

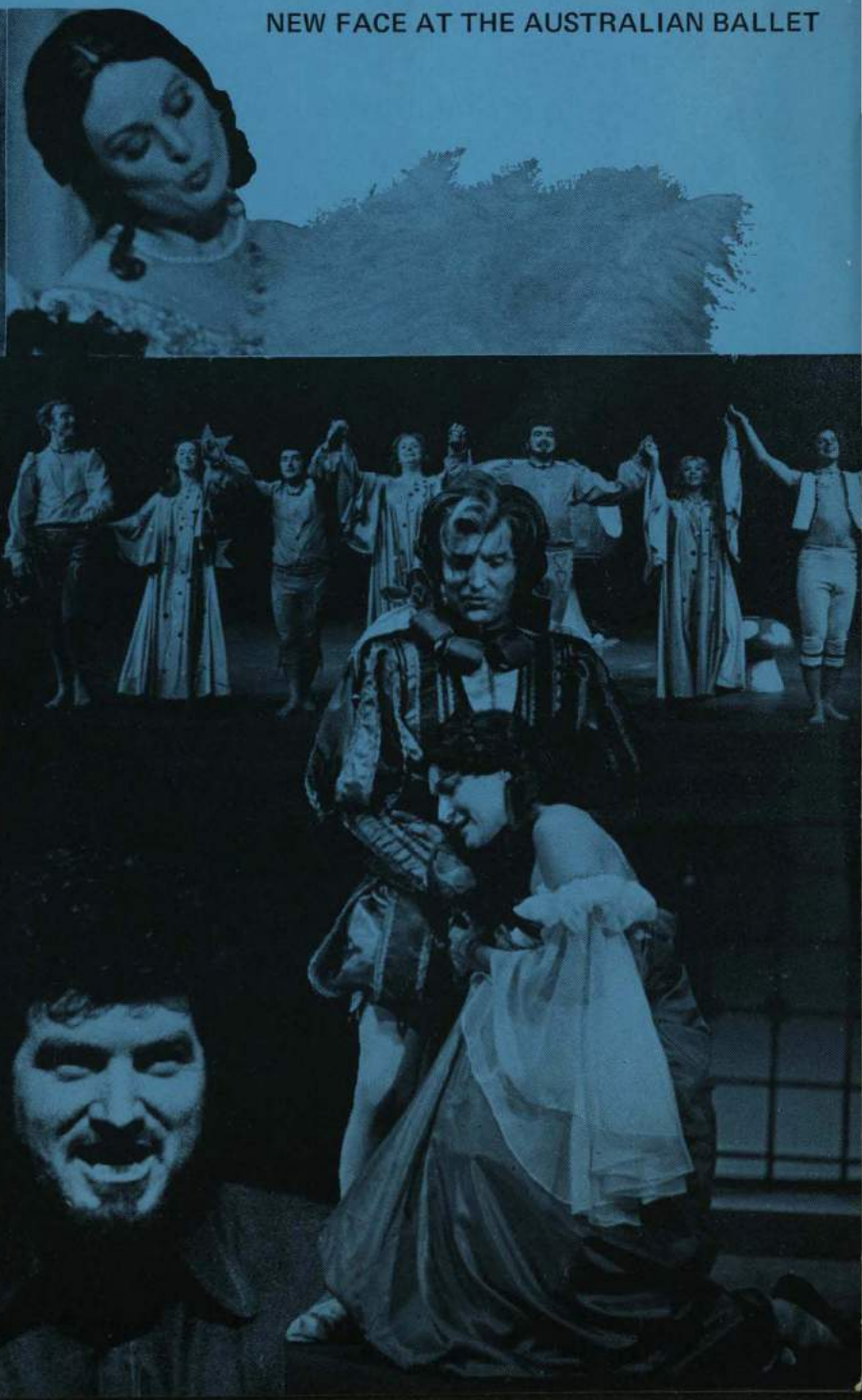
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THE HIGH COST OF OPERA

TWO FACES OF MELBA

THE MTC AT GRANT STREET

NEW FACE AT THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET





# THEATRESCOPE

Number Two (formerly Elizabethan Trust News)

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## EDITORIAL

Welcome to the new Theatrescope. In this issue, David Gyger looks at the high cost of producing opera, and the financial battles being fought by most of Australia's opera companies; Pamela Ruskin talks to Anne Woolliams, new Artistic Director of the Australian Ballet; and there are articles about the MTC's recently opened Grant Street Theatre, the Elizabethan Theatre Trust's Production Division, puppetry, a new Melbourne comedy group, and an interview with producer/director Peter Williams. In addition, in the first of what will be a new series of "think pieces", playwright Mil Perrin wonders why people go (and don't go) to the theatre, or indeed, whether we need theatre at all, in his *Monologue on the 5.30 from Central*. Readers' comments on and reactions to this piece will be very welcome.

A new feature, FOCUS, attempts to give readers a bird's eye view of theatre activities throughout Australia, while old features such as BOOKS and SHOWGUIDE will continue.

Next issue will feature a special report on theatre restaurants, a look at the new face of the Festival of Perth, and a summing up of the years' activities around Australia with *Critics' Choice* - and some other exciting stories are in the pipeline, too.

Contributions and suggestions are welcome at all times - please address all material to The Editor, Theatrescope, P.O. Box 137, KINGS CROSS, NSW 2011. **Angela Wales.**



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# 'WORLD OF MIME'

Canadian Mime Theatre visits Australia.

"There is a widespread misconception about mime," says a Canadian critic writing in the *Hamilton Spectator*. "Most equate it with a small Frenchman in white tights twirling to stage centre in ballet slippers and dipping ever so gracefully to the floor to deposit a single rose."

"That kind of stylized mime still exists, but it is not at all the free form mime in which this company excels."

The Canadian Mime Theatre, of whom he is writing, sees itself as belonging more truly to the tradition of Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton than to that of pantomime blanche or Commedia del'Arte - although it draws on these traditions, too.

"The Canadian Mime Theatre is an experiment of the premise that theatre is a popular art form, and that mime is a special theatre art form," says founder/director Adrian Pecknold.

"We are not purists, and will add props and costume pieces, music and light effects to the extent that they enhance the theatre of the piece."

"From this liberal approach we aspire to eventually evolve a form which will be our own 'style', economic, meaningful and dynamic . . . our contribution to the continuing evolution of contemporary mime."

THE WORLD OF MIME, the programme at present being presented by this company in Australia, is a series of vignettes and sketches based largely on recognisable every day situations - with titles like MANNEQUIN, FIRST DATE, DOCTOR'S WAITING ROOM and THE PUB. And there are others, more fanciful - Harro Maskow's piece LONE RANGER, in which he plays all the parts in a good old fashioned western, from good guy to bad guy and bar room pianist to Diamond Lil, has won him much popular and critical acclaim.

Sound and lighting effects are exploited to the utmost. In RECITAL, five members of a concert audience, intent upon the music, lose concentration bit by bit as one develops hiccoughs, another the giggles, until the last to succumb is finally forced to blow his nose. Offstage, the music stops, there is the sound of a banging piano lid, and footsteps recede into the distance. In FACE OFF, the hilarious movement of an unco-ordinated ice hockey game is very efficiently captured with the aid of strobe lighting.

There are five performers touring with the company - Adrian Pecknold, Harro Maskow, Robin Patterson, Paulette Hallich and Larry Lefebre, and most have been with the company for several years.

Adrian Pecknold, Canadian Mime Theatre's co-founder and Artistic Director, was originally an accountant. When in 1961

he was offered a scholarship from the Manitoba Theatre Centre and the Stratford Festival Theatre, he decided to make the theatre his profession. It was while studying at Stratford that he met Brian Doherty, founder of the Shaw Festival at Niagara-on-the-Lake, with whom he was eventually to found the Canadian Mime Theatre.

After Stratford, Adrian enrolled at the Ecole Jacques Lecoq in Paris, and completed the two year course in one year. On his return to Canada he performed in every major Canadian theatre, and also became well known to young television audiences. But a mime theatre for Canada had always been his dream, and in 1969, he and Brian Doherty, who was anxious to further the claims of Niagara on the Lake as an artistic centre, set up the company.

One of the founding members was Harro Maskow, whom Adrian had met at the Ecole Jacques Lecoq in Paris. Harro had worked in France and Germany, and had taught for two years at the National Theatre School in Montreal. Now established as an expert in mask techniques, Harro is the associate director of the Canadian Mime Theatre, and will become the Artistic Director when Adrian Pecknold retires at the end of this year.

Since its foundation, the Canadian Mime Theatre has established a solid reputation, and has toured throughout Canada, in the United States and in Europe. The company represented Canada at the second International Youth Theatre Festival in Bulgaria in 1972. Their visit to Australia is part of a world tour which is funded partly by the Canada Council, and from Australia the company will continue on to Asia and Europe.

Arts Theatre, University of New England	5/10/76 - 6/10/76
Sutherland Civic Centre	7/10/76 - 8/10/76
Seymour Centre, Sydney	11/10/76 - 11/10/76
Orange Civic Centre	18/10/76 - 20/10/76
Childers St Hall, Canberra	21/10/76 - 23/10/76
Alexander Theatre, Monash Uni, Vic.	8/11/76 - 13/11/76
The Space, Adelaide Festival Centre	15/11/76 - 20/11/76





# Crises in Opera

The Australian Opera is not the only one with enormous financial problems. Throughout Australia opera companies large and small are struggling to keep afloat within ever decreasing budgets. DAVID GYGER reports:

In all seven of Australia's capital cities, the operatic chips are down and everybody involved in this most complex and expensive of the performing arts knows it: no matter who you talk to, words like "crisis", talk of survival, phrases like "holding operation" are never far from the surface.

Everywhere in the nation's three-tiered opera structure the well-publicised \$1.5 million crisis of the Australian Opera is mirrored, albeit in more modest terms. In the State companies they talk in tens of thousands, in the minuscule Sydney companies they measure their woes in mere thousands or even hundreds; but the money drought makes its presence felt just as intensely in the provinces as on Brickfield Hill, Sydney, where the national company has its headquarters.

For better or for worse, expectations mushroomed during the Whitlam era. Expansion was the name of the game: opera companies grew dramatically in size and ambition, achieved new artistic pinnacles, attracted new audiences. When the crunch came, many were caught at a most embarrassing stage of development; unable even to consolidate ground recently won without more money to offset inflation, yet threatened with reduction of subsidy even in dollar terms.

Things have worked out best, in recent months, for the official State companies in South Australia, Queensland and Western Australia; for they are blessed with State governments already firmly committed to their existence as a matter of principle and pride. Life won't be easy until there is a real upturn in economic conditions, but survival is not in doubt.

Below that rung on the nation's opera ladder, things are a good deal bleaker. The newly renamed Victoria State Opera, just emerging victorious but debilitated after a long-winded behind-the-scenes struggle with the Australian Opera, which wanted to start an offshoot in Melbourne at the expense of a grass-roots company, knows if it goes out of budget it will go out of business. The Tasmanian company struggles on within an inadequate budget, and Canberra Opera admits it survives only by going cap in hand to various supporters who are literally out of pocket after each production. And except for ever-reliable Rockdale, which has already staged a G & S production (PRINCESS IDA) and a DON PASQUALE and plans to do Saint-Saens' SAMSON AND DELILAH in November, none of the minor Sydney companies were heard from during the first eight months of 1976.

Roger Covell's University of New South Wales Opera had planned to participate in the U.S. bicentenary celebration, but was forced to cancel for lack of subsidy; but it will

be quite busy during the last four months of the year, with two Australian premiere seasons - of Peri's EURYDICE, the earliest surviving opera; and Benjamin Britten's newest opera, DEATH IN VENICE, at the end of November.

Evelyn Klopfer and Kenneth Webber's Sydney Opera Company plans only one production this year, a MADAME BUTTERFLY in November, after a much more ambitious programme in 1975 which was not successful at the box office. Music Theatre (formerly Young Opera) is restricting itself to school touring until the financial situation eases.

Inevitably, things are best - perhaps least bad would be a better way of putting it - in quarters with the most ready access to a public purse of some sort or other. The AO's problems may be measured in millions, but the depth of the national public pocket into which it can theoretically delve is measured in hundreds of millions. And so on down the line.

But subsidies come in many forms; very small companies rely on the generosity and personal effort of supporters; the Rockdale company gets invaluable assistance from its municipal council in the form of a rent-free venue and a wide range of donated goods and services; so does the University of NSW Opera through the institution whose name it bears. When you reach the exalted top tiers of opera in Australia, where access to subsidy funds is relatively easy, the demands are immense because the livelihood of professional singers and production staff is at stake and their wages are bound to escalate, especially during times of inflation.

The question inevitably has to be asked, and seriously considered even by those who are passionately convinced of the importance of developing opera as a vital part of our national culture; how much opera, and at what standard, does Australia need and/or want at this stage of her development? In answering this question, the following statement - made by the chairman of the Australian Opera, Charles Berg, on July 26 last - simply must be taken into account: "The minimum subsidy necessary to maintain the present range and quality of the opera company's personnel and its standards of performances is in excess of \$3 million, or 48% of its expenditure for 1977."

In a recent letter to the editor of the Sydney Morning Herald, Professor Robert Quentin, who was the first general manager of the Elizabethan Trust Opera Company (precursor of the Australian Opera) when it was set up in 1955, said it was a grave error to create a national touring company at that time instead of several regional companies. Pointing





State Opera, S.A.— John Gaden & Robyn Archer in "The Elephant Calf."

to the example of the ABC orchestras, he suggested that even now the matter ought to be reconsidered; and, if money were no object, he might well be right.

But when you are talking of fully professional grand opera, money can never *not* be an object. And funding six orchestras is a far less financially draining activity than funding six opera companies at anything like \$3 million each a year. If the AO has had desperate trouble in getting an extra \$1.5 million for 1977 what hope would there be today . . . or in the foreseeable future . . . of extracting anything like \$18 million to support six companies at a similar level; (Of course, the \$18 million is an excessive figure; but no matter how you look at it at least \$10 million would have to be forked out if the best companies were to be even roughly comparable to the present standard of the AO.)

Despite what its critics say, the simple facts about the AO speak for themselves; in relation to its numerical strength, the number and quality of performances it puts on each year is absolutely staggering. Like all big organisations, it wastes some money, of course: in particular, it has been the subject of some criticism recently for the lavishness of some of its productions, for importing big-name stars at the expense of local talent, for not adequately employing the talents some of its own principal singers.

Tom Lingwood, resident designer for the AO who also co-produced AIDA last year, reproduced DER ROSEN-KAVALLER this year and has just designed and produced this year's new CARMEN within a strict budget limitation, thinks briefs to designers must be tough - managements must set a budget and stick to it, every penny spent on a production should show. But one must remember, he says, that AO productions ought ideally to have a 10-year life span, and that actors and actresses are often required to do far more strenuous things on stage than people ordinarily do in real life.

The AO recently produced figures to prove that big name stars such as Joan Sutherland and Kiri te Kanawa, far from being an economic drain on the national company, in fact ease its economic plight because they sell out performances at greatly inflated prices; only when they sing, in fact, does the company make money.. Some of its own resident soloists are admittedly underemployed, but day-to-day uncertainties as to funding too often make it impossible to



Victoria State Opera— "Orpheus and Eurydice."

plan far enough ahead to release them in time to sing with regional companies.

Though he is a senior member of the national company, Lingwood is very much on the side of the lesser companies in their fight for survival. So is the new musical director of the AO, Richard Bonyngue, who is also patron of the tiny Sydney Opera Company. "All these companies serve a major purpose in the training of young singers," he says, though it's a bit silly for them to be tackling Carmens and Traviatas. They should be working in a different area, concentrating on expanding the repertory rather than competing with the major companies.

Everyone in the AO hierarchy, from the general manager, John Winther, on down, also admits the desirability of curtailing the physically demanding and financially burdening touring activity of the national company, though they concede it will not be possible politically for some time - if ever - for it to retire to the Sydney Opera House despite the fact that Sydney could support a full-time opera company.

If and when it achieves triennial funding, the AO will be able to assist the regional companies in real terms a good deal more than it does now: in particular, by releasing principal singers temporarily to sing major roles elsewhere. This would undeniably help improve relations with the other companies, many of which have been seething with resentment in recent years at what they consider to be unnecessarily monopolistic moves on the part of the AO. Most spokesmen for the secondary companies feel it is quite wrong that John Winther, as the executive head of the largest client of the music board of the Australia Council, is a member of that board; but as regular supplicants to that board they are understandably not prepared to rush to print on the subject.

James McCarthy, one of the four directors of Sydney's Music Theatre, speaks for many opera people when he says the AO is "trying to be all things to all men . . . plug up all the holes . . . gather all operatic activity in Australia under the one roof." He is particularly critical of the AO's opera studio, which, he says, got the best people from the regional companies and took them to Sydney only to inflict on them a useless period of inactivity without the compensation of a meaningful programme of personal development.

He bemoans the "destruction of several companies as a result



of power play." He also says that Sydney's Young Opera was lured out of its amateur status during the period of massive Federal arts spending; when the money stopped, it stopped too. Its successor, Music Theatre, hopes to make a comeback in the field of light opera and use this as a springboard for increasing serious content once again.

In Melbourne, Richard Divall, musical director of the Victorian State Opera, plans an ambitious programme for 1977 after a very limited amount of activity this year: two offerings in which, he says, musical standards were very high but production was done on a shoestring and looked like it. Next year he hopes to do Offenbach's *BELLE HELENE*, Tchaikovsky's *EUGENE ONEGIN*, Debussy's *PELLEAS AND MELISANDE*, Monteverdi's *ORFEO* and Handel's *XERXES*.

"We are tremendously optimistic just now," he says; "we have reached take-off point. But we know if we go out of budget we go out of business."

From Brisbane, John Thompson, executive director of the Queensland Opera Company, points out that box office receipts "are generally down in all areas of entertainment - here, at least - and I have reason to believe over the whole country. Only 'star' or international attractions such as Derek Nimmo, currently, have been able to stimulate the market.

"Even up the eastern seaboard matters are not good and we have been obliged to cancel a northern orchestral tour of *DON PASQUALE* because of the economic climate. It is patently obvious that people are saving mostly to cushion the effect of diminished employment prospects."

Federal subsidies have remained the same in 1975-76, which could have been disastrous except that Queensland Government assistance has increased markedly over the two-year period and enabled some degree of expansion.

From Perth, Vincent Warrener, chairman of the Western Australia Opera Company, points out that his State Government has virtually taken over opera funding from Canberra in the past seven years: while the Federal grant increased from \$12,000 to \$45,000 between 1969 and 1976, the State one increased from \$6,000 to \$138,000, including a \$15,000 orchestral grant.

But like all the others, he knows his company must exercise



Qld Opera Co.—Max Orwin & Sally Robertson in "Don Pasquale."

careful husbandry if it is to survive. In 1975 it did a total of 75 performances and incurred a deficit of \$3,000 on an overall budget of \$269,000. "I have no idea how we will end up this year," he admits; "but we are very much alive and kicking . . . lots of kicking."

The new general manager of the State Opera of South Australia (formerly New Opera), Ian Campbell, reports a similar subsidy position. In 1977, he expects less from the Australia Council than the \$65,000 which was granted for 1976.

"Considering that our total expenditure in that year will be approximately \$500,000, the Federal subsidy is hardly considerable," he says. "On the other hand, the State Government, under Don Dunstan, recognises the value of this company, and for the financial year 1976-77 is likely to commit more than \$250,000 toward our expenditure."

The repertory of his company in future "will be based solidly on Mozart as the foundation and to that we will add Donizetti, Rossini, perhaps Monteverdi and others in the short term. But I would hope that when a secure audience base is assured, one in four of our operas each year could be a lesser known or contemporary work."

In Hobart, Michael Lanchbery, administrator of the Tasmanian Opera Company, says his big problem is that he must rely totally on the Tasmanian ABC orchestra, whose availability restricts his activity to a major extent; and his big complaint is that the subsidising authorities "don't see they have cut me below skeleton staff. The Tasmanian Opera Company is not getting its fair share of the cake available," he says.

Larry Ruffell, administrator of the Canberra Opera Society, says that to counter cost pressures his company has had to keep strictly to budget. "Extra requirements are made up by going cap in hand to various supporters . . . which is tenuous and must be undertaken afresh for each new production. One result of this effort in 1976 is that for major opera productions we have probably the highest box office/production cost ratios in Australia - over 70%.

"Many people and groups are literally out of pocket after our productions," says Ruffell. Their efforts are "wholly admirable but cannot be expected to continue indefinitely and withdrawal of this support would mean the end of our major productions unless it can be replaced with financial support."

A pessimistic summarising comment comes from Roger Covell of the University of NSW Opera (though perhaps many would prefer to term it realistic instead). "Next year," says Covell, "will be a sort of survival period - but we are determined to continue. I feel in a sense we may be faced momentarily with a healthy case of survival of the fittest. There's been a bit of playing at opera in recent years . . ."

But no doubt the last word ought to go to Alderman R.W. Rathbone, chairman of Sydney's suburban Rockdale Opera Company. "We're staggering from once crisis to the next," he says ruefully; "but then . . . we have been for 30 years." ☆



# Monologue on the 5.30 from Central

Why don't people go to the theatre? For that matter, why do they go? Do we really need theatre, now that films and TV are fulfilling the function ascribed to it by Aristotle so long ago? Musing on these and other points, a Canberra writer recently found himself listening to the following monologue on the 5.30 from Central...

"Well, Chinese acrobats and Siberian Cossacks are one thing ...like you only believe it when you see it in the flesh... but plays and so forth, what they call drama...well we don't really need it, do we? Would we notice if it wasn't there?

I for one very seldom go - once or twice a year at most, and then it's mainly for Martha's sake, so I don't suppose if it suddenly disappeared it would be any great loss to me personally...I don't think...

I mean when all's said and done, it isn't all that popular, is it?

There *are* some people, and I do know for a fact that its a very small percentage of the population, something like two or three percent, who do go regular, but when you think about the amount of money it costs it does seem like a bit of an esoteric luxury enjoyed by the few at the expense of the many. I mean if all the rest of us thought it was all that good we'd be there, wouldn't we?

To tell you the truth, I find it a bit boring. Y'know these plays and things.

And actually, I sometimes wonder if those people who do go regular are all as impressed as they seem.

Martha and I went to see some Russian thing a couple of months ago, which was supposed to be very good. We went with a couple from her office who're really into this kind of thing. Anyhow, I sat there, and it was all very nice, nice costumes, nice sort of setting, the acting seemed to be O.K., but I just couldn't seem to...I don't know...get interested or something. It all seemed a bit of a cultural exercise. Anyhow, at the interval we were having a drink and this couple were waxing on about the universality of the situation and its total relevance to present day society, and so forth. And they went on and on and on, till she turns to me and says, "Isn't it exciting to think that we can come along here tonight and be stimulated in exactly the same way as the first night audience was a hundred years ago?"

Well by this time I was getting pretty brassed off with the whole thing, especially since I'd just shelled out \$3.60 on the smallest rum and cokes you'd ever seen. So I thought bugger it, I've gone along with this performance long enough. So I said, "No, it isn't. In fact I think the whole thing's pretty bloody boring."

Well you should have seen her face ... And the look Martha gave me...



Well *he* cut in then saying, "Of course it wasn't as good as the '74 production," by somebody or other. And she sort of agreed, and one thing led to another and before we knew it, we were back at my place watching the late movie on the new colour TV.

Now the point is, if I didn't say what I did, we could all be still sitting there, in the name of culture or whatever, watching something we didn't want to see anyway, and wouldn't really affect us one way or the other if we never saw it again.

I mean you think about it, what is it? It's pure ritual, isn't it? Trot along once a month, wear the right gear, say the right things. I wouldn't mind so much if there was something interesting on but it's the same sort of stuff all the time. Even the new plays are all the same, see them any night on telly. And that's what makes me wonder about the money that's being lashed out on it, and if we're actually getting anything out of it. I mean is it just for the sake of having it? Or maybe it's one of those things we need, deep down, and don't realise.

Now there was a bloke on Four Corners or one of those shows the other night, talking about social ritual and how necessary it was to a stable community. He talked about churches, and footy, and courtship and then he got on to theatre, as a ritual of self congratulation, where the actors go through their preparations: rehearsals, making up, and performing, and the audience get dressed up, meet their friends, have drinks and say certain things at the interval. And the performance itself is heavily dosed with ritualistic gesture and conventions of form, and of course when it's finished, everybody concerned responds in the conventional manner, and goes home quite satisfied, provided of course that the professional side of this transaction has satisfied the conditioned expectations of 'a night at the theatre'. Well that's what he said, and he might have a point.

This could be why we keep getting all these old plays, classics, coming back time and time again. They satisfy this need.



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**"Don't expect me to believe that only 3% of the population are interested in being mentally stimulated."**

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But then again, if you think about the vast bulk of the population satisfying this need, if it is a need, by watching television and going to the movies, it makes you wonder just what useful function theatre does perform.

I mentioned this to Martha the other night on the way to the drive-in. She reckoned it was all rubbish - she never saw the bloke on TV - and that theatre was a living art form and not just a dead ritual, and that it was the only live medium for the expression of ideas and intellectual stimulation, which is fair enough if that's what it does, but does it. I mean if it's so alive and stimulating, how come people are staying away in their thousands? Tell me that. And don't expect me to believe that only 3% of the population are interested in being mentally stimulated. There's more people than that doing Transcendental Meditation. They're interested in ideas, why don't they go to the theatre? Maybe they did, once.

It's the people like Martha that I can't quite work out. Now she isn't a stupid person by any means. She's very well educated. In fact too well educated in some ways; like this theatre business.

She was brought up really to believe...well what she said in the car. And she really believes that theatre is alive and stimulating etc., but, she doesn't stop to consider if what she believes is in fact true. Now somebody like you or me, who isn't steeped in this great tradition of English theatre, goes along and gets, I think, a much more objective view of the whole thing. You see Martha gets what she's been conditioned to expect. She's a tame audience. Whereas I, who have no tradition of dramatic appreciation to cushion me against the slings and arrows of outrageous boredom, judge a show as a new and total experience. And if it's an unremarkable experience, I naturally think it's an unremarkable show.

It might be me of course. It might be that Martha's greater sophistication in this area allows her access to pleasures which are acquired over the period rather than spontaneously. There again, I can, without a second thought even, say that Shakespeare's boring or that George Bernard Shaw's out of date, because most of the blokes I work beside would probably agree - they wouldn't go either, but Martha couldn't say that to any of her friends - she'd get crucified on the spot as a vile heretic. But supposing she really did think that, what could she do? Nothing! Same as me. Stop going. And supposing everybody discovered that they were bored and stopped going - what would happen then?

All the theatres would shut down, then that's left, and that would be that. But what difference would it make, to the likes of you and me? We'd save a few cents in taxes....

Wouldn't look too good in the papers though, especially overseas. They'd think what a mob of uncultured bastards we are, but there again I don't suppose it would have much effect on the world price of wheat. So what if they think

that, they've been thinking it for years anyhow - though I don't suppose you can blame them.

I mean what have we done? All we've done is more or less trot along behind the English, doing what they do best and saying how beaut it is that we can do it almost as good. It's like developing an Austrian accent in the hope of becoming a respectable skier. This might take a trick or two in the ski lodge but it isn't terribly useful on the slopes.

O.K. so we've done a few Australian plays - how many - were they any good?

I don't know what you think, but I've seen a few, in fact they were the only things I would go to eventually, and they were terrific; real dinkum stuff - y'know the real Aussie accent - hearing it on the stage for the first time. All the blokes chuffing off down to Bondi to pick up a few sheilas and a dozen frosties - it was real good. But after a while it seemed to... I don't know... but I got bored again. It was just like your English plays all over again, with Aussie accents put in. It wasn't all that different when you thought about it.

Now don't get me wrong. I'm not knocking English theatre, far from it, all I'm saying is that it isn't ours, it's their's. They built it up, they made it, it's theirs and this is fair enough, they've done a real good job, and still are, but you've got to remember that this isn't England. Things are different here.

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**"All we've done is more or less trot along behind the English, doing what they do best and saying how beaut it is that we can do it almost as good. It's like developing an Austrian accent in the hope of becoming a more respectable skier."**

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So when your English theatre comes out here, first off, it's out of its natural element, and secondly, it's second hand. It doesn't directly reflect Australian values.

Now I'm quite sure that a whole lot of people who don't go to theatre, even if they haven't thought about it like this, deep down somewhere, they're vaguely aware of it, and this could be another reason why they aren't all that interested in going.

You've heard of the 'colonial mentality'. Well I don't go along with it either, but in this case they just might have a point. I mean supposing somehow or other some sort of theatre movement got started, y'know something really different, you'd have 'colonial mentality' down on it like a ton of bricks for having the impertinence to cut away from the apron strings of the mother tongue. Or probably they just wouldn't go, and by the time anybody else got interested, the thing would have folded from lack of cash.

I don't know - maybe the best thing would be to let the whole thing die a natural death and we could use the money to concentrate on film and television.

I don't know - I reckon deep down most people would be pretty sorry to see it go - me too probably, even if it was just for Martha's sake.

Mil Perrin



# RAZZLE DAZZLE and the BUSBY BERKELEYS



Probably the most talented new comedy team to burst onto the Australian scene in the last few years has been Razzle Dazzle and the Busby Berkeleys, who took Sydney by storm earlier this year when their show **BONDI PAVLOVA** opened without too much notice at the Bondi Pavilion and later, also without too much notice, transferred to the Stables Theatre.

Nobody in Sydney had ever heard of them. But discriminating Melbournites who happened to be in Sydney at the time could have told them.

They were two groups, once. Razzle Dazzle started off in Melbourne University revues and their first independent show was **HOW MANY SUGARS DO YOU HAVE IN YOUR NOSE, VICAR?** at the University's Guild Theatre. Then in July 1974 they did **THE SENNITT'S ICE CREAM SHOW** at the Pram Factory, which resulted in a contract to appear regularly at the Reefer Cabaret, which they did for eighteen months, as well as performing at universities, private functions and events - including the Flying Trapeze Cafe.

Early in 1976, the original group of seven now reduced to three, Razzle Dazzle joined forces with the Busby Berkeleys. The Busby Berkeleys was just Noel Busby and Henry Maas doing a top hat and tails routine at the Flying Trapeze - that is, until they met pianist Peaches La Creme and songwriters Louis Nowra and Sarah de Jong, who wrote them a completely new act.

Peaches La Creme, Henry and Noel are now the Busby Berkeleys half of the group - the others, (Razzle Dazzle,), are Geoff Toll, Rod Quantock, and Mary Keneally.

Mary has a law degree, an ex supreme court groupie who retired from practice after being accused of impersonating Lady Chatterley's Lover (Leavis v. Lawrence). She got her big break falling downstairs.

Geoff Toll of Richmond once held the All American School-

boys Gridiron Drop Kick Field Goal Record. Other than that he's rather boring. But he plays on a drum.

Peaches La Creme plays the piano, the french horn and another drum. She also trains Icelandic racing bricks.

Noel Busby is English by birth and an original member of the Mersey Beats. He was once a member of the Black and Decker Minstrel Show.

Henry Maas started his show business career as a hat check boy in his parents' St Kilda Cabaret. Most people think he's fat, but actually he's a five stone weakling . . . it's all done with mirrors and clever tailoring.

Rod Quantock was born in a Vaucluse hospital, and before beginning an acting career designed telephone numbers. He is best known as the star of the Australian feature film "Hanging at Picnic Rock."

Members of the group admit that they are not trying to say anything in particular, nor are they trying to prove anything; they just want to be funny. And funny they are. Whether it's the droopy lidded, gum chewing Peaches ambulating expertly through her piano numbers, or Rod as MC auctioning a \$2 note ("Gone for \$2.10 to the lady in the red dress. Ten cents over the threshold of stupidity") or Henry in tight waistcoat looking genuinely heartbroken over his failure at the marriage bureau - to say nothing of his expert tap dancing - their work is always tight, talented and faultlessly timed. And marvellously professional.

Visitors to Melbourne can see Razzle Dazzle and the Busby Berkeleys performing their new show **DER WUNDERKIND ROCKETSHIP SHOW** at Melbourne's new Last Laugh Theatre Restaurant. After that, there will be more theatre restaurant work, and hopefully an ABC comedy series.

With any luck, they'll be making it at theatre restaurants in most capital cities within the next year or so - so watch for them. They're about the most exciting theatrical experience around.

A.W. ☆



# The MTC at Grant Street

Despite Australia-wide cutbacks to theatre and the arts, the Melbourne Theatre Company are bravely expanding - but they are only too well aware that they will need the essential "bums on seats" for the experiment to survive.

The anonymous, long, red brick building opposite Prince Henry's Hospital in Grant Street, South Melbourne, houses two separate and quite different activities: one half contains the Victorian Mounted Police Indoor Riding School while the other half, separated by a single course of bricks, has recently become Melbourne's newest and most inventive performing space - the Grant Street Theatre.

The theatre, formerly the Police Drill Hall, has been converted to its present use by the Victorian College of the Arts. The architect is Vivian Frazer who was responsible for the Nimrod Theatre conversion. The transformation of the building took four months and on June 7th the Prime Minister officially opened the theatre. Eight days later the Melbourne Theatre Company 'christened' the theatre with Alonso Alegria's *CROSSING NIAGARA* the first production in an eight month programme of 'contemporary' theatre by the MTC.

Simon Hopkinson, Director of the 'MTC at Grant St.' programme, explains the concept behind this programme: "For some years the MTC has been looking for a venue which would allow greater flexibility in production style and more immediate contact with the audience than is possible at our two existing conventional theatres - Russell St and St. Martin's. At the same time, we were aware of the dangers of stretching the company into a third house. The most obvious of these dangers is that the third house could very quickly become the 'B team' with a product only distinguishable from the rest of the Company by its lack of quality. Another concern was that this third venue would take over from the rest of the Company all responsibility for adventure and innovation. Consequently, in devising the 'MTC at Grant St.' operation we believed that it was most important that the project should be independent of, but still related to, the rest of the company's work.

The main criteria governing our selection of productions for the first eight months was that each play either could not be properly presented on a proscenium stage or would gain enormously by being presented in a more immediate

Simon Hopkinson





relationship with the audience. In other words, our programme is a response to the kind of space we are working in. In fact, two of the plays being presented at St. Martins in the second half of this year were initially proposed as projects for Grant St., but we could see no reason why they should not be presented on a proscenium stage.

The second important point about the Grant St. operation is that we are not a 'try-out' house. We present plays which we are convinced have the potential of exciting theatre and we cast actors who we are sure have the craft and art to evince the maximum from the text.

The 'MTC at Grant St.' is deliberately operating without Government subsidy. This is because we believe it is possible, through careful budgeting, to be self-sufficient and, also, that in the future theatres are going to have to learn to live off their box-office takings if they wish to survive. Of course, we are in effect subsidised by having the expertise and experience of all the members of the MTC available to us for nothing.

If our opening programme appears not adventurous enough for some tastes it is because our initial objective has been to secure an audience for the new theatre. However much we might wish to develop a different audience from other theatres we are still faced with the reality that our life-blood at present comes from people who are used to going to the theatre. As we are only too well aware, existing audiences are more ready to support something which they are familiar with than that which appears 'strange'.

However, we are constantly examining our artistic policy and, since much of our present programme was decided on a theoretical basis before the theatre had been opened, it is certain that over the next few months we will be attempting to make a more exact definition of the project in terms of not only its artistic policy but also its role within the community."

The Grant St. Theatre is amazingly flexible. Many of

Stephen Oldfield and John Finlayson in *CROSSING NIAGARA*



the seating sections can be broken up and removed, enabling theatre-in-the-round, thrust and multi-staging. The plays presented at the Grant St. Theatre have continued this trend of flexibility and variety.

For the first production, *CROSSING NIAGARA*, by Peruvian Alonso Alegria, the theatre was converted into a circus ring. *CROSSING NIAGARA* tells the story of Blondin's fifteenth crossing of the Niagara Falls on a tightrope when he attempted to carry a young assistant, Carlo, all the way across on his shoulders. *CROSSING NIAGARA* starred Jon Finlayson and Stephen Oldfield (as Blondin and Carlo respectively), and was directed by Mick Rodger. For the next production, *THE FOURSOME*, by E.A. Whitehead, eight tons of sand were piled into the centre of the theatre and the seats set up on all four sides. Set on a lonely beach, *THE FOURSOME* is about two young blokes and their pick-up dates from the previous night at the pub. It is a play about sexual attitudes and the loss of innocence. With its savage explicitness and stark economy of dialogue it made a sharp contrast with the florid theatricality of *CROSSING NIAGARA*. The play was directed by Simon Hopkinson and starred Liddy Clark, John Wood, Greg Zukerman and Kerry Dwyer, who took over the part of Marie from Sue Jones, who collapsed four days prior to the play opening.

The current production, running until October 2nd, is Nikolai Gogol's *DIARY OF A MADMAN*. Jonathon Hardy stars in this one man show adapted from the famous short story. It is directed by Andrew Ross. This time the theatre has been re-shaped to become the interior of a mental asylum in St. Petersburg in 1830. Or is it the interior of a public service office in Australia in 1976?

On October 5th, Michael Cove's *THE GIFT* opens for a 5-week season. This will be the first play by Michael Cove to be presented in Melbourne, although he has had two plays workshopped by the MTC: *KOOKABURRA* in 1973 and *GINGERBREAD HOUSE* in 1974. *THE GIFT* will be directed by Ted Craig. Following *THE GIFT* the MTC at Grant St. will premiere a new play by Simon Hopkinson.

☆

John Wood, Liddy Clark and Greg Zukerman in *THE FOURSOME*





# King Lear— without words



David London plays The Fool

KING LEAR without words may be difficult for the hearing to imagine - but the N.S.W. THEATRE OF THE DEAF will present a unique version of this Shakespearian play at the Seymour Centre from November 10th to 27th, Wednesday to Saturday.

The play has been especially adapted for the company by David Gillet, and captures the poetic quality of this dramatic story through the medium of narrative mime and dance.

The Company of 20 members has been rehearsed under the professional guidance of Adam Salzer, their Artistic Director. Michael Fuller, lecturer in movement at NIDA and one of Sydney's leading theatrical designers, Arthur Dicks.

"The production is set against a background of celebration and carnival and leads to penetrating and new interpretations of Shakespeare as a popular and compassionate playwright," says director, Adam Salzer.

Trust Members should see the enclosed insert for booking details.

## Letter to Trust Members

Dear Trust Member,

The purpose of this letter is to give Trust Members a more complete picture of the activities and aims of the Elizabethan Trust Ladies Committee, in the hope that you will be encouraged to give these activities your full support.

The Ladies Committee arranges many fund raising functions for specific purposes associated with the Trust. As a result of recent fund raising efforts, the Committee have presented a Contrabassoon to the Sydney Orchestra, and a Bassett Horn each for the Sydney and Melbourne orchestras will be presented soon.

Plans for the remainder of 1976 are as follows:

LUNCHEON OCTOBER 11 Wentworth Hotel, 12.30 p.m. Guest of Honour at this luncheon will be MR. DAVID CONNOLLY, MHR, Member for Bradfield and NSW Representative on The Committee assisting the Prime Minister on matters relating to The Arts. Guest speaker to be advised. Tickets \$7.00.

LUNCHEON NOVEMBER 11. Wentworth Hotel, 12.30 p.m., with guest speaker MS JILL HICKSON, Qantas Airways Executive, on "Women in Management". Tickets \$7.00.

We have arranged the venues and times of these luncheons to enable businessmen and women to attend, and if they are found to be successful we will arrange further luncheons next year.

MEDIEVAL CHRISTMAS PARTY, Friday, December 3, 8 p.m. at Rehearsal Room 1, 153 Dowling Street, Potts Point. Numbers for this function will be limited, so please book early. It is hoped that members will come in Medieval costume, and special discount rates have been arranged with the Trust's Costume Hire Department for members wishing to hire costumes for this function. Entertainment and supper included - tickets \$15.00 per double.

All bookings for the above and other Ladies Committee functions (which will include two ballet theatre parties in October and a supper party with the Canadian Mime Theatre) may be made with our secretary, Miss Cheryl Cahill, AETT, P.O. Box 137, Kings Cross, 2011 or with our ticket secretary, Mrs Fern Baudish, 40 Greenfield Avenue, Middle Cove, 2068. Phone 406 4036.

WORLD TOUR OF THEATRE AND MUSIC CENTRES. It is proposed to arrange a special tour of ballet, opera and music centres of the world in April and May, 1977. Tour leader will be Mr William Reid, Musical Director of the Elizabethan Trust Orchestras, and centres to be visited will include SAN FRANCISCO, LOS ANGELES, WASHINGTON, NEW YORK, LONDON, PARIS, BERLIN, MUNICH, STUTTGART, SALZBURG, VIENNA, VENICE, MILAN, FLORENCE, ROME and HONG KONG. A cocktail party will be held for tour participants before departure. Would all members who are interested in taking part in this tour please contact me c/o the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust, P.O. Box 137, KINGS CROSS, NSW 2011, for further details.

The Governors and Ladies Committee of the Trust would be pleased to have suggestions from all members as to the type of activity/function they would be interested in attending in 1977.

I look forward to meeting many more Trust Members in the future, particularly country and interstate members who may be in Sydney when functions are being held.

Yours sincerely,

MRS GARTH HAY  
Chairman, NSW Ladies Committee.

### LADIES COMMITTEE SOUTH AUSTRALIA

A Trust Members' Picnic at a winery is being planned for November. Please contact 714 993 or 742 065 for details.



# Animating the Inanimate...

**RICHARD BRADSHAW**, Artistic Director of the Marionette Theatre of Australia and well-known shadow puppeteer, was one of three one man puppet shows to be invited to perform at Moscow's recent International Puppet Festival. (The others were Germany's Albrecht Roser and New York's Dick May). Here, Theatrescope talks to Richard about his trip - about present trends in puppetry and how these trends will influence the Marionette Theatre's new production **ROOS**, scheduled to open at the Opera House in January.

"WHAT really comes out of an experience like Moscow", says Richard, affectionately straightening the tail of a half-constructed Parma wallaby, "is the realisation of how very difficult it is to put on a good show. Even many puppeteers themselves aren't quite aware of what they're up against. I saw some really wonderful performances in Moscow, but there were a surprising number of disappointments.

I think the best thing I saw was a play in Obratov's Theatre - Obratov is considered to be Russia's best puppeteer, and he has just been elected president of the International Union of Puppeteers - called **THE MYSTERIOUS POTAMUS**. It was a simple, charming children's story about a lion who sets out to look for a friend - he has been told to look out for a Mr Potamus - and is joined on the search by Hippo. They have many adventures together, meeting many other characters in their search, and Hippo saves the lion's life on more than one occasion; finally risking his own life to save the lion from a crocodile. It is then that the lion realises that Hippo, whose second name is Potamus, was his friend all the time.

Then I saw another rod puppet show called **THE TALE OF THE DEAD PRINCESS AND THE SEVEN KNIGHTS**, which is Pushkin's version of the Snow White story. It was a beautiful elegant performance with some amazing effects, such as talking clouds and the knights' cloaks billowing in the wind - all done in an oval proscenium. In a way I suppose it was rather old-fashioned, but I liked it.

The Leningrad Bolshoi put on an excellent performance of **THE GOOD SOLDIER SCHWEIK**. Many people consider that the Leningrad Bolshoi is the best puppet theatre in Russia; they do a lot of work for adults. I first saw them when they did **BEAUTIFUL GALATEA** in 1964. This present production was a full stage affair which made use of masked human beings as well as puppets. What distinguishes this theatre's work, I think, is its great spirit and lively tempo.

One of the notable things about Obratov's performance was that the puppets were worked from beneath, and there were no controls at all that you could see. There is a marked tendency now to introduce live actors onto the puppet stage, and this was very evident in Moscow. But all too often it just doesn't work, because the puppeteers have forgotten the basis of puppetry - the animation of the inanimate.

For example the Czechs did a show where a group of people come on to the stage and find some dolls in an attic. They use the dolls to start acting out the Cinderella story, with some marvellous visual effects - cupboards turning into brightly lit palaces and so on - but the puppets never come alive, they always remain uninteresting.

**ROOS** and **HANDS** will have their world premiere in the Drama Theatre of the Sydney Opera House on January 3, and will play to January 29. Trust Member price is \$2.50, children \$2.00. Watch the press mid-December for booking details.

Although I was the only Australian invited to perform, there were about ten other Australians observing at the Festival - including Norman Hetherington, who does Mr Squiggle - and altogether there were over 1000 people there. They came from everywhere.

And there were about the same number of people at the Puppet Festival held in New London, Connecticut, which I attended on the way home. There were many disappointments there too, but I did see two really outstanding shows.

One was a girl called Kathy Piper, who did a one-woman **PUSS IN BOOTS**. She operated the puppets in full view of the audience appeared onstage with the puppets, operated the lights, strobes, sound effects, voices, everything. One-man shows compare very well with larger scale productions, and it's probably something to do with the sense of unity. I think unity is important in puppetry.

The other impressive show at Connecticut was done by Bruce Schwartz, a young man from Los Angeles who goes from ribald high comedy in **THE RAT OF HUGE PROPORTION**, to pathos and tragedy in other items. The rat story is about a lady who has a passion for cheese, and her lover decides to masquerade as a large rat to cure her of her passion . . . Bruce is having great success with small late-night adult audiences. He's only twenty years old, and very talented.



Big Red, the Kangaroo

**ROOS**? Well actually we're putting together two shows at the moment, of which **ROOS** is one. The other is **HANDS**, a series of items in which the puppets will be seen to evolve on the puppeteer's hands. This is a group project involving the whole company.

Without giving too much away, **ROOS** introduces different members of the Kangaroo family, telling in a fanciful and entertaining way the story of the Parma Wallaby, which was thought to be nearly extinct until a colony of them was discovered on Kawaii Island in New Zealand. An early Governor, Sir George Grey, had been a keen amateur naturalist, and in fact was responsible for the introduction of a number of Australian wild-life species to New Zealand.

**ROOS** is a dramatic departure for both the Marionette Theatre and for me . . . we will be using rod puppets in a method that is influenced both by Japanese Bunraku and Black Theatre which can be dangerous, as I pointed out before - but we are relying on very strong characterisation and a strong fast-moving story line to distract attention from the operators. Also, their faces will be hidden.

And we do have some strong characters - a big red kangaroo who sings *Freedom on the Wallaby*, a decadent koala who is addicted to gum leaves, a tree kangaroo who swings through the trees in Tarzan costume to the tune of *That Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze*, Ocker the Quokka from Rottnest Island, complete with singlet and thongs - oh, yes, and two kiwis do a Haka."

A.W. ☆



Behind the scenes at the Trust.

## 'If we don't have it, we'll make you one'



Costume designs by Virginia Mort

The house lights dim, the curtain rises. The stage lights go up on an Edwardian tea party - graceful gowns, fine bone china, chaise longue, escrivtoire, gilt framed portrait of Grandpapa.

Or you've joined the crowds at the annual Rocks Festival. Ladies in shawls and straw bonnets mingle with musket brandishing soldiers, complete with breeches and red coats. A convict, ball and chain on his ankle, shuffles on to the next pub.

Or, at your local shopping centre, Santa Claus, resplendent in red and white trim, is ensconced on a large gilt throne.

You've probably never thought very much about where the chaise longue or the soldiers' uniforms or Santa's gear and throne come from - but chances are they are on hire from the Theatrical Hires Department of the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust.

The Department occupies three floors of the Trust's large premises in Dowling Street, and employs a total of nine people - two wardrobe staff, one machinist, two carpenters, two electricians and two administrative staff. All come under the supervision of Mr Sydney Irving, one time Sydney General Manager of J.C. Williamson Theatres Ltd, and now head of the Trust's Theatre Services Division, of which the

Theatrical Hires Department forms a part. The division also includes the Subscription Department, which processes over two million dollars' worth of ballet and opera tickets each year, and the Trust's Theatre Booking Office.

First (and top) floor of Mr Irvings's small empire is wardrobe. That's where you hire the costumes. Rack upon rack of velvet gowns, frock coats, togas, kimonos, military uniforms, hoop skirts, smocks, chain mail, widow's weeds, britches, bodices and blouses are stacked from rafters to floor in never ending rows. Here's a dress worn by Judith Anderson in MEDEA; and there's one worn by June Bronhill in COSI FAN TUTTE; here's a suit worn by Corin Redgrave in BETWEEN WARS; and gowns worn by Joan Sutherland, Margaret Rutherford and Rachel Roberts.

An amazing pink confection, all tulle and sequins, rubs shoulders with an original eighteenth century frock coat. Elsewhere, carefully packed in tissue paper, fine 100 year-old kid gloves are boxed beside an early nineteenth century parasol. For although most of the costumes are all that now remains of some show or other, many pieces in the collection are authentic period pieces.

"Actually the original costume stock came from the Trust's past productions - the drama company as well as the opera. So we have costumes from the old Trust productions of SUMMER OF THE SEVENTEENTH DOLL, LOLA MONTEZ, HAMLET, ST JOAN, THE RELAPSE, HENRY V - oh, lots, as well as a lot of the opera productions, too - like MADAM BUTTERFLY, RIGOLETTO, TANNHAUSER, LA BOHEME, COSI FAN TUTTE....." Michael James, Wardrobe Supervisor, expertly guides a heavy duty sewing machine along a split leather seam as he talks. "But we've added a lot since then. Altogether now we've about 5000 garments, and we add to the stock at the rate of about 400 a year - which doesn't sound very much, but it really is a lot.

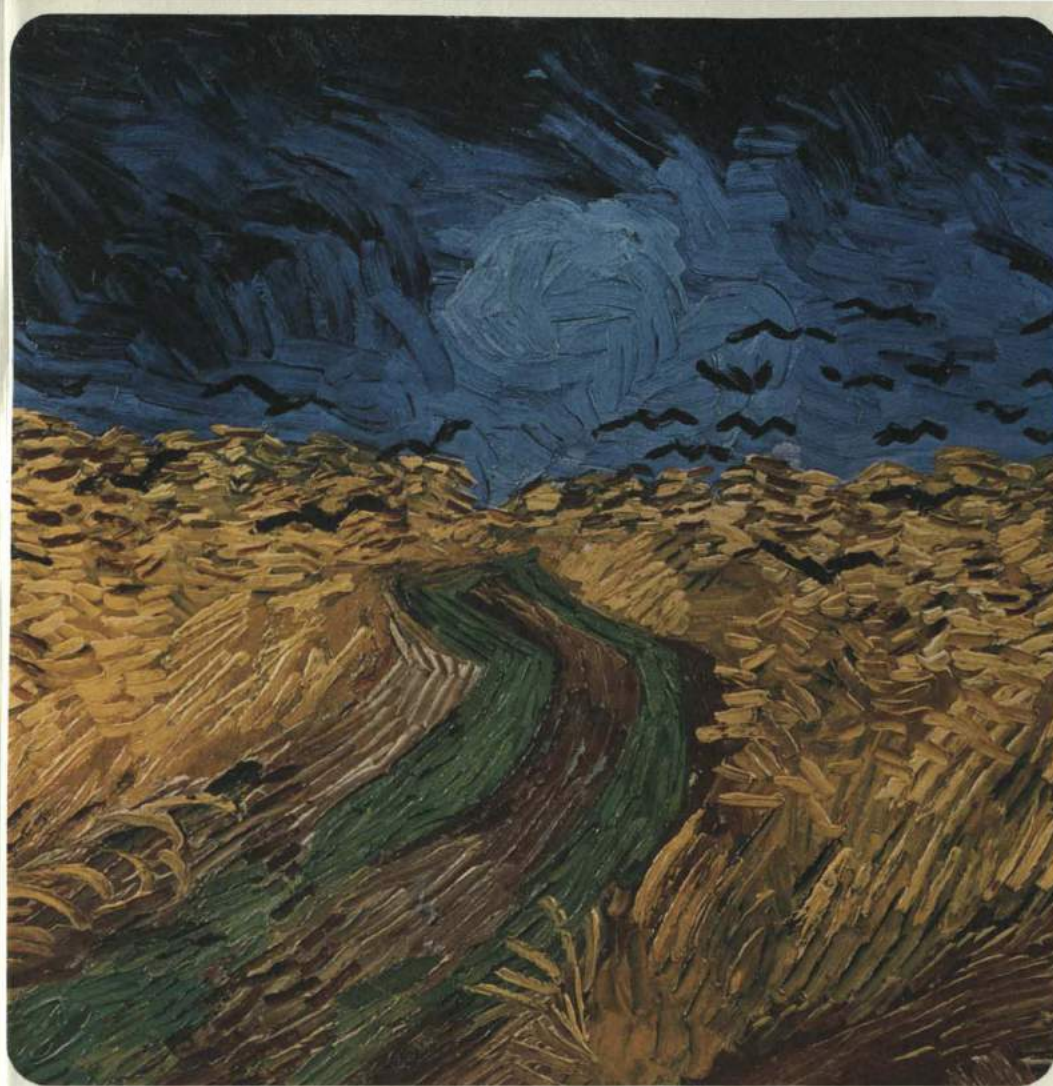
"Most of the costumes we buy are from films. We have all the costumes from PICNIC AT HANGING ROCK, and most from BETWEEN WARS, BREAK OF DAY, THE CARS THAT ATE PARIS, the TV series LUKE'S KINGDOM... it's a good way of adding to stock, because when a film or production is over, the costumes aren't really of much use to anyone else. But if we buy them, then not only does it ease the production budget a little, but it also ensures long life and maximum usage for the costumes. We go to auctions and sales, too. We went to Harry M. Miller's auction, and the Richbrooke Theatre's auction when it closed down... and of course people donate costumes, or offer them for sale. We get some nice period pieces that way."

Michael has been working in the Trust's wardrobe department for five years now, and has been Wardrobe Supervisor for three. Besides being responsible for the purchase of additional costumes for stock, he also makes new ones. "We have a pretty comprehensive collection ranging from the Roman period until Edwardian times" he says "but there are quite a few gaps in the twentieth century. So at the moment I'm concentrating on making twenties clothes. Virginia Mort, who has designed many of the puppets for the Marionette Theatre of Australia, has designed some really lovely twenties and thirties dresses."

He's also been making some restoration gowns, Edwardian skirts, frock coats - and Santa Claus costumes.

"We went to a lot of trouble over the Santa Claus costumes. We had special beards and wigs made, so they're not just cotton wool, and special belts, too. And we invested in really





*Wheat Field with Crows, Auvers, July 1890*

# How much do you see when you look at this painting?

Study it for 10 seconds - then read the following paragraph from *The World of Van Gogh*...

the hat room. Gold and silver crowns, boaters, bowlers, berets, straw bonnets, are neatly stacked and ranged along rows of shelves. Next door, in Michael's workroom, a large cutting table edges out rolls of cotton, velvets, worsteds, felts, silks, and satins - and rows of paper patterns, buttons, beads and braids,

In yet another room boxes piled to the ceiling are neatly labelled.....spats, straps, stockings, socks, sashes.....mob caps,

....tights, tiaras, ties...reticules, cloth caps, collars, coifs, corsets, ves, garters....wigs and wimples.

wing and I make a hasty exit.

and props. That's where you hire gh and Harry Vandy, accomplish you up with profile spots, fresnel floods - or maybe some stereo ler - or, if you fancy, strobe lights, fire and snow effects disc - and a whatever that may be. And, of es and clamps.

nger's delight. Here you can find wheels, screens, scythes and scabnets, baskets of all shapes and tles, beds and bathtubs....potted plastic greenery in profusion, ushions and clocks....thrones, ts, trays and telescopes.....chaise ens, chests and champagne y, crabs, carcasses, coffins and d armour.

east? Crab, lobster, roast beef, oranges, apples and pears....silver dishes.....and a three tiered blue strepiece? (It's a bit dusty, but it

n get curtains, legs and borders, ps and cycloramas...." And if we it for you." says Roger Taylor, nager. "We also have some stanout we'll paint you one to spec2. And we have one complete set n is very popular."

ness. The Department makes and d borders, cycloramas and gauzes es for theatres, television studios civic halls. Joyce Bowman, the e two or three sets a month when ets, heavy duty cottons, sharks erials are imported directly from ls at a time. When Joyce is not ie's kept busy mending, patching or the wardrobe department.

ery workshop, fully equipped to r opera or ballet or simple sets nent also tenders for the building ums and platforms, and also for es, studios, and halls. Don Hume, building theatre sets for thirteend in the manufacture of some of e seen in Sydney in that period. ony Rogers.

he urge to appear at the office dressed as Napoleon, or turn up at the Jones' slide night in a rickshaw (yes, there really is one!) or feel your living room could do with that discotheque touch for the christening party - it might be worth your while to call in (or ring or write, for that matter) to 153 Dowling Street, Potts Point.

By the way - there are concession rates available for certain types of organisations, and also for long term or bulk hire - so ask before you despair. A.W.☆



Behind the scenes at the Trust

'If we don't  
we'll make



Costume designs by Virginia Mort

The house lights dim, the curtains go up on an Edwardian tea party china, chaise longue, escritoire Grandpapa.

Or you've joined the crowds at Ladies in shawls and straw bo brandishing soldiers, complete with A convict, ball and chain on his next pub.

Or, at your local shopping centre in red and white trim, is ensconced

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**“Signs of Van Gogh's grief – and his fears – abound in this emotional work. The sky is deep, angry blue. The foreground is uncertain – an ill-defined crossroad. A grass track curves into the wheat field only to disappear at a dead end. The horizon rolls relentlessly forward. In this picture Van Gogh painted what he must have felt (in the final days before his suicide) – that the world was closing in on him and his roads of escape were blocked.”**

(From *The World of Van Gogh, Time-Life Books*).

## The World of Van Gogh Volume 1 of the Time-Life Library of Art Yours to examine for 10 days FREE!

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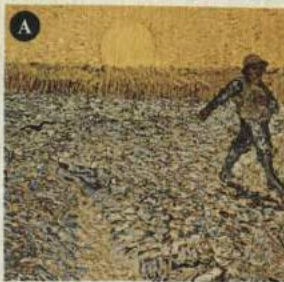
He's also been making some restoration gowns, Edwardian skirts, frock coats - and Santa Claus costumes.

“We went to a lot of trouble over the Santa Claus costumes. We had special beards and wigs made, so they're not just cotton wool, and special belts, too. And we invested in really

The World of Van Gogh







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...tights, tiaras, ties...reticules, cloth caps, collars, coifs, corsets, ves, garters....wigs and wimples.

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nger's delight. Here you can find wheels, screens, scythes and scab- nets, baskets of all shapes and tles, beds and bathtubs....potted plastic greenery in profusion, cushions and clocks....thrones, ts, trays and telescopes....chaise ens, chests and champagne y, crabs, carcasses, coffins and d armour.

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the nat room. Gold and silver crowns, boaters, bowlers, berets, straw bonnets, are neatly stacked and ranged along rows of shelves. Next door, in Michael's workroom, a large cutting table edges out rolls of cotton, velvets, worsteds, felts, silks, and satins - and rows of paper patterns, buttons, beads and braids.

In yet another room boxes piled to the ceiling are neatly labelled.....spats, straps, stockings, socks, sashes....mob caps,



Behind the scenes at the Trust

'If we don't  
we'll make



Costume designs by Virginia Mort

The house lights dim, the curtains go up on an Edwardian tea party china, chaise longue, escrivitoire Grandpapa.

Or you've joined the crowds at Ladies in shawls and straw bonnets brandishing soldiers, complete with a convict, ball and chain on his next pub.

Or, at your local shopping centre in red and white trim, is ensconced

You've probably never thought the chaise longue or the soldiers and throne come from - but chance the Theatrical Hires Department Elizabethan Theatre Trust.

The Department occupies three floors of the Trust's large premises in Dowling Street, and employs a total of nine people - two wardrobe staff, one machinist, two carpenters, two electricians and two administrative staff. All come under the supervision of Mr Sydney Irving, one time Sydney General Manager of J.C. Williamson Theatres Ltd, and now head of the Trust's Theatre Services Division, of which the

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# Remember these paintings?



Le Divan Japonais, 1892.  
Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec.



Tahitian Women with Mango Blossoms, 1899. Paul Gauguin.



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the Marionette Theatre of Australia, has designed some really lovely twenties and thirties dresses."

He's also been making some restoration gowns, Edwardian skirts, frock coats - and Santa Claus costumes.

"We went to a lot of trouble over the Santa Claus costumes. We had special beards and wigs made, so they're not just cotton wool, and special belts, too. And we invested in really



good quality fabric. They were quite expensive to make, but they should bring in quite a good return during the season."

Michael makes costumes on request, too - individual gowns or outfits for a whole production. He counts a rabbit suit he made for a production in Adelaide as being the strangest request he has catered for so far. Sometimes people buy the costumes he makes to order outright, or sometimes they make an arrangement whereby the Trust will "buy back" the costumes after they have been used - it's a lot cheaper that way.

"I really wish I had time to make more" he sighs. "I've plans to make lots more animal costumes, and Batman and Robin, and space suits .... but I seem to be so busy."

The telephone rings. "Six centurions' helmets? Yes, we can do that. In Bathurst by next Monday? Yes, that'll be alright...."

While Michael is taking down the details I watch Max Donithorne-Sims, costume hires manager, zipping a pretty young thing into a sleeky lame flapper dress - it's for her twenty-first birthday party. "Just a moment" he says, and disappears into a side room. In a moment he is back, with a large ostrich boa and a bejewelled headband sporting a cheeky arrangement of feathers. The combination is stunning.

This girl will pay \$12 for the hire of her costume, which she can keep for a week. She will also pay a deposit of \$20, which will be returned when she brings the costume back undamaged. On its return the costume will be automatically dry cleaned, and returned to the racks to await its next wearer - maybe an actress or a model, or maybe another partygoer.

Max says that about 50% of the hires from the wardrobe department are for fancy dress parties. He pulls out a sheet of statistics. In 1975 the department provided costumes for 50 school productions, 350 fancy dress parties, 85 amateur theatrical productions, 45 professional theatre productions, 25 television commercials, 24 television shows, 12 television films and 16 cinema release films - as well as costumes for displays, department store windows, festivals, shop and restaurant openings, fashion parades, street parades and street theatre, exhibitions, centenaries and promotional activities. It works out to over 100 costumes a week, says Max "but I'm usually too busy to count."

Michael returns from the phone and starts taking down and dusting centurions' helmets. "We get a lot of requests from the country" he says "and also from interstate. We have sent costumes as far as Darwin and Alice Springs, far north Queensland, New Guinea, Norfolk Island, Tasmania, New Zealand....quite a few to Western and South Australia.... we have the largest collection of costumes for hire in Australia, you know....which probably means the largest in the Southern Hemisphere!"

A crowd of NIDA students appear at the counter to be fitted for a production, and chaos ensues. I wander into the hat room. Gold and silver crowns, boaters, bowlers, berets, straw bonnets, are neatly stacked and ranged along rows of shelves. Next door, in Michael's workroom, a large cutting table edges out rolls of cotton, velvets, worsteds, felts, silks, and satins - and rows of paper patterns, buttons, beads and braids.

In yet another room boxes piled to the ceiling are neatly labelled....spats, straps, stockings, socks, sashes....mob caps,

muffs, masks, mantillas....tights, tiaras, ties....reticules, ribbons, ruffs....cravats, cloth caps, collars, coifs, corsets, cummerbunds....girdles, gloves, garters....wigs and wimples.

The invasion is still in full swing and I make a hasty exit.

Ground floor is electrics and props. That's where you hire the "hardware". Tom Gough and Harry Vandy, accomplished electricians both, can fix you up with profile spots, fresnel spots, follow spots and floods - or maybe some stereo equipment or a tape recorder - or, if you fancy, strobe lights, a fog machine or a cloud, fire and snow effects disc - and a Tubular Ripple Machine, whatever that may be. And, of course, cables, colour frames and clamps.

The props room is a scavenger's delight. Here you can find shields, swords, spinning wheels, screens, scythes and scabbards....banners, butterfly nets, baskets of all shapes and sizes, bells, birdcages, bottles, beds and bathtubs....potted palms, picnic hampers, plastic greenery in profusion, postboxes....candelabra, cushions and clocks....thrones, tables, telephones, trumpets, trays and telescopes....chaise longues, stuffed chickens, chests and champagne buckets....crookery, cutlery, crabs, carcasses, coffins and carts....armchairs, arrows and armour.

What about a wedding feast? Crab, lobster, roast beef, stuffed fish, french loaves, oranges, apples and pears....silver trays, tureens and chafing dishes....and a three tiered blue iced wedding cake as a centrepiece? (It's a bit dusty, but it comes up quite well.)

On the same floor you can get curtains, legs and borders, scenery flats, rostrums, steps and cycloramas...."And if we haven't got it we'll make it for you," says Roger Taylor, scenery and props hire manager. "We also have some standard painted backdrops, but we'll paint you one to specifications, too - for a price. And we have one complete set for HMS PINAFORE, which is very popular."

Curtain making is big business. The Department makes and sells curtains, tabs, legs and borders, cycloramas and gauzes in different colours and sizes for theatres, television studios and school, college and civic halls. Joyce Bowman, the Trust's machinist, can make two or three sets a month when the pressure is on. Velvets, heavy duty cottons, sharks tooth gauzes and other materials are imported directly from England, hundreds of yards at a time. When Joyce is not making curtains or cycs, she's kept busy mending, patching and making new costumes for the wardrobe department.

In the basement is the scenery workshop, fully equipped to manufacture lavish sets for opera or ballet or simple sets for small halls. This department also tenders for the building of permanent stages, rostrums and platforms, and also for their installation - for theatres, studios, and halls. Don Hume, master carpenter, has been building theatre sets for thirteen years and has been involved in the manufacture of some of the biggest theatre sets to be seen in Sydney in that period. He's assisted by carpenter Tony Rogers.

So....next time you feel the urge to appear at the office dressed as Napoleon, or turn up at the Jones' slide night in a rickshaw (yes, there really is one!) or feel your living room could do with that discotheque touch for the christening party - it might be worth your while to call in (or ring or write, for that matter) to 153 Dowling Street, Potts Point.

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A.W.☆



# ANNE WOOLLIAMS

The Australian Ballet's new Artistic Director took up her appointment with the Company on September 1. She follows in the footsteps of two major world ballet personalities - Dame Peggy van Praagh, and Sir Robert Helpmann. Although she is well known as the Director of Germany's Stuttgart Ballet, and was in Australia in 1974 to produce the Australian Ballet's ROMEO AND JULIET, the Australian ballet world is still not quite sure what to expect . . . PAMELA RUSKIN talks to her.

Anne Woolliams' career in ballet has by now been well-publicized. She has been dancing since she was about 3½ years old. She studied with the fabled Vera Volkova, left school at fifteen and joined the Russia Opera and Ballet Company in England for two years until it folded. She has been a dancer, teacher, designer and producer - so that she brings to The Australian Ballet an experience that covers every aspect of ballet. She joined John Cranko's Stuttgart Ballet in 1963, became in time Ballet Mistress, co-founder and Director of the Stuttgart Ballet School, Assistant Director of the Company and after John Cranko's death in 1973, joint Director.

"Why then", I asked her, "having achieved so much with the Stuttgart did you resign and decide to come to Australia?"

"I had worked very closely with John Cranko and together I felt we had achieved a great deal. My first wish was to stay with the Company and carry on what we had begun. But there was a lot of sensationalism about his death which was distressing. Then there was the demand for a new choreographer, and Glen Tetley was appointed. I found it hard to do with and for him what I had done for John. Also," and here she flashes a sudden smile, "I am adventurous and I like my own way. So I decided not to be sentimental, to accept the fact that John had died and that the time had come for me to carry on in a new place. I had, as you know, come to Australia in 1974 and liked the country very much. I felt it had something that Europe had lost. I had learned a lot from John and now I feel I will be able to use that experience and knowledge here with The Australian Ballet."

The Stuttgart Ballet has earned itself a reputation as an innovative company in the sense that John Cranko, a brilliant choreographer himself, introduced many modern ballets of exciting young choreographers into the repertoire. In spite of the fact that The Australian Ballet has relied more on classical ballets, Miss Woolliams sees many similarities between the two companies. "The two companies are the same age. John Cranko, Dame Peggy and Sir Robert are all Royal Ballet trained in the classical tradition. They have built up their companies with young dancers, most of whom are graduates of their own ballet schools. Both have the same hours of work and more or less the same approach to it. Both companies have come of age, have achieved a considerable reputation overseas. With the Stuttgart it just happened. Cranko was a very creative artist, a very human man. It sometimes happens that the right people are in the right place at the right time and that's what happened with the Stuttgart."

Because the Stuttgart has had a considerable number of  
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modern ballets in its repertoire, some choreographed by Cranko (though essentially he was a classical choreographer) I ask Anne Woolliams if she intends to introduce many modern ballets into the largely but by no means entirely classical repertoire of The Australian Ballet.

"I don't want to re-create the Stuttgart here, if that's what you mean. That would be a big mistake. But there are some ballets of John's that I would like to produce here. One is EUGENE ONEGIN which will be performed first in Sydney in December and in Melbourne during the return season in March. I'd like to do too, THE TAMING OF THE SHREW. I think it would prove to be very popular with Australian audiences, and there are some 1 Act ballets I'd like to try, but I'll hasten slowly".

"I know that there are many people within and outside the Company who feel that more modern ballets by young Australian choreographers should be performed by the Company in order to interest young people and bring them into the theatre; but the answer is always given that it is the spectacular classical ballets that fill theatres and set the cash registers ringing, a leit-motif that no company of any kind can afford to omit from the score. Is this in fact true?"

With a rueful sigh, the new Artistic Director agrees that it is. "It is ballets like GISELLE, SWAN LAKE, LES SYLPHIDES and so on that people will come to see again and again. There's a lot of nostalgia involved. The music is familiar and they are beautiful to look at, but they are not necessarily good art".

"Does that mean you'd like to phase them out eventually?" Miss Woolliams sits up very straight and looks me firmly in the eye, no doubt having visions of being quoted as a kind of balletic Lewis Carroll Duchess, "Out with them all! Out with them all!" She says, "Certainly not! Classical ballets are to ballet what Shakespeare is to drama, and Verdi and Puccini are to opera. No art form could possibly be richer without them. Classical ballets are wonderful training for dancers but one needs a balance of modern works too."

So I wonder whether a classically trained dancer or a dancer trained by a Modern Dance Company would be the better able to dance modern ballets well? The reply comes quickly and decisively. "A classically trained dancer would have the edge every time. Even Martha Graham has now introduced classes in classical ballet into her training". Martha Graham's name, of course, is synonymous with modern dance in America, so the point is well taken. What else is needed for modern dance?





"Musicality, technique and identification but the disciplines of classical dance are needed too."

"Now that you are here and have started to work with our dancers, frankly, please Miss Woolliams, what do you really think of The Australian Ballet?" I say 'frankly' because rightly or wrongly in the brief length of an interview I have judged her to be extraordinarily honest, clear thinking and too deeply involved in her work to offer me sweet platitudes. So I'm sure she is quite sincere when she says that "I am really very pleased with what I have found here. The dancers work very hard and very well." What about discipline? "Practising, working out every day, attending classes, dancers have to have self-discipline. It isn't something imposed on them. If they don't work hard, they're not good. If they're not good, they don't get jobs and that means they don't remain professional dancers. It's as simple as that."

Remembering the extreme youth of the De Basil ballerinas, 'stars' at 15 and 16, I ask whether it is bad for a dancer to be dancing major roles while she or he is still very, very young. Anne Woolliams thinks for a moment before she says, "All dancers are different and some mature or reach their peak early. Some of them blossom very young and burn themselves out. Some like Fonteyn blossom young and sustain their talent. Little Pavlova in the Bolshoi is really exquisite and she is only twenty now. It depends."

One of the things that has delighted Miss Woolliams, particularly as it is something no new 'Boss' can take for granted, is "that my two Assistant Artistic Directors have given me real loyalty and support. I find that very encouraging."

It isn't hard to imagine why this is so. Anne Woolliams is the complete professional, prepared to work as hard, if not harder than everyone else. She is intelligent, articulate and although strongwilled, I suspect she will achieve her aims by accommodation rather than confrontation.

Finally, just what does she want to achieve with her new company? Buried in her answer, one can read an understanding of some of the difficulties that have arisen within the Company.

I want," she says, "To keep the company internally enthusiastic, that's the only way they'll dance well. If you want to achieve success, you must put your house in order. I am interested in the image of the Company, not the image of myself." This is one of the reasons that she has said already that she is against guest artists appearing as 'stars' of the Company overseas.

Ultimately, of course, the image of The Australian Ballet is the image of its Artistic Director and vice versa. Dame Peggy van Praagh's supreme achievement is The Australian Ballet and its remarkable success is hers too, with Sir Robert Helpmann's assistance. Now Anne Woolliams is captain of the ship and though she will chart perhaps different voyages - follow the course she chooses using her own gifts of experience, expertise and strength of purpose - it will remain essentially the same ship. It would seem that The Australian Ballet is in strong, safe hands. ☆



Who was Melba? Two Australian playwrights seek out a legend - and Garrie Hutchinson and Ivor Wren comment:

## TWO FACES OF MELBA

MELBA. Nowadays the name is more of an incantation than a recollection of anything musical. Living well before the revolution in taste and knowledge brought about by the long playing recording, Melba stands as a symbol of greatness, a gold standard even, untrammelled by much knowledge of how she sounded. Indeed, for the people with access to archival recordings, she is a singer of renown but not necessarily of quality. But for people who have not heard her, but only of her, she is not only a singer of the first water, but an Australian to stand with the best of the rest. She is an incantatory mantra that brings to mind all that is supposedly great about Australians and Australianism. We need look no further than the speech made by the Prime Minister of the time, Stanley Bruce, on the occasion of one of her retirements. 1924: "Long before Australian soldiers blazoned the name of Australia throughout the world, you were her great ambassador. Art knows no nationality. It has no barriers. Tonight it is not only the people of Australia bidding farewell to Melba, it is the people of the whole civilized races of the world."

A Melba season, whilst analogous to the hysteria and smugness of a Sutherland one, had perhaps more of a scent of saintliness. At another of her farewells, Nevin Tait said she was more than a singer, she was "a national possession." And, like Sarah Bernhardt before her, Melba was not really real when she was on stage, she was a figment of the imagination. Listening to her sing in Australia was supposed to be something like First Holy Communion. Of such stuff are made the myths of nations.

It is fitting that Jack Hibberd should write the play that puts Melba in her contemporary context, because more than most other writers it has been Hibberd who has helped lay the ground rules for the contemporary theatre here. Hibberd's theatre reaches back to the stuff that Melba left behind when she forsook the Austral shore: melodrama, narrative, and what one might call the theatre of surfaces, where what one saw was precisely what was meant.

Hibberd's play *A TOAST TO MELBA*, first performed

Geraldine Turner plays Melba in the QTC's *A TOAST TO MELBA*.



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by the Australian Performing Group at the Adelaide Festival in March 1976, and currently doing the rounds of the state theatre companies, has an attitude to Melba that is at variance with her legendary status. Hibberd's Melba is no Goddess descended from Olympus to bless the folks with her golden voice, but a gum chewing gold digger with various attributes she knew how to use. One might guess that the real Melba (is there such a thing?) was closer to the larrikin than the angel. She certainly knew on which side her bread was buttered for most of her life. The other thing about Hibberd's Melba is that she remains antipodean throughout his account of her life and legend.

When challenged by the dreaded John Norton to account for her drunken self, Hibberd's Melba says "Actually I don't mind the occasional snort. Stretched out on a large soft bed, a pie in one hand, a sprig of wattle in the other, feet tingling, lazy, languorous, my goblet attended to by some young Turk. . ."

Melba is shown as being, if not an ordinary person, then at least one with recognisable human characteristics; and a talent that surrounds her with all manner of fops, degenerates, idiots, well-meaning friends, and lackeys. All the way through, the anti-historical approach of Hibberd ironically confirms the legendary status of Melba (perhaps she is beyond history) by weaving fiction around a minimal basis of fact. This is an attempt at a sort of folk theatre, where heroes and heroines have their lives embellished by succeeding generations - what Hibberd calls 'popular theatre'. I don't think that there is any prospect, though, of Melba becoming Ulysses or King Arthur - Hibberd has concentrated on Melba's feet of clay.

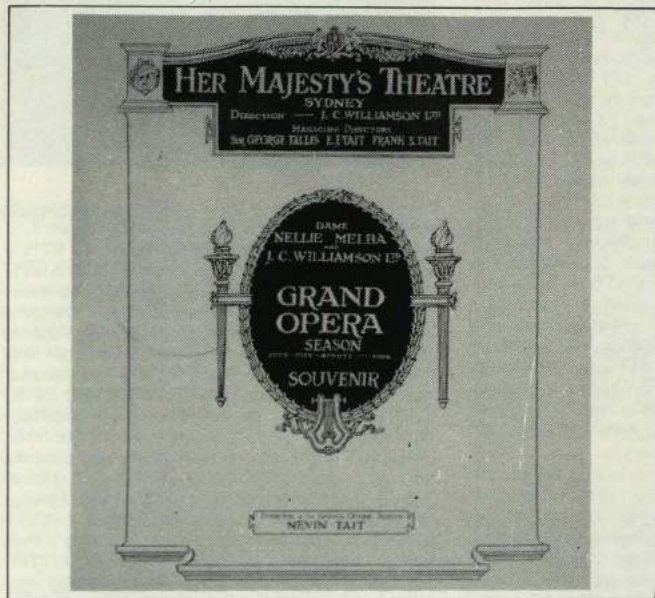
If a *TOAST TO MELBA* is anti mythical, then it is also anti operatic. The real Melba made her name in this most arty of arts. But when Hibberd comes to put her in the theatre in 1976, he characteristically uses the methods and assumptions of poor theatre. No scenery, no tricks, little costume, no wigs, no orchestra. He does call for an actress who can sing to play Melba, which is necessary, but also (again) ironic. She, in the context of the play, is Melba, and her voice is Melba's, in the same way that in the land of the frogs Johnny One Note is king. So the audience, has something of an operatic experience. They are thrilled by the voice of a larrikin legend in a non operatic situation.

And of course, *A TOAST TO MELBA* is anti psychological, in that it does not explain the motives of anyone, least of all Melba herself. She is presented. She is part of a narrative (her life) which is what holds the play together. This passion of Hibberd's for storytelling is something that marks him out from the other Australian playwrights.

*A TOAST TO MELBA* is a remarkably successful play in a small, intimate open space theatre, where the character of Melba can take over and dominate not only the rest of the cast, but also the theatre - where one can start to believe



that the person playing Melba is more than a fair facsimile. In a larger theatre, the talkativeness and lack of image and action starts to tell. Nevertheless the character of Melba is a very attractive one. She is a person who, put in a situation where the non-theatre going public might see her, might prove as durable as the real thing. G.H. ☆



Paul Sherman's MELBA originally appeared as a Playlab rehearsed reading at Brisbane's Twelfth Night Theatre in 1973. In September of the following year, after some re-writing and general polishing, the play was given a full production at the Brisbane Arts Theatre. Now, two years later, the Queensland University Press has seen fit to publish the play as No 6 in its Contemporary Australian Plays series. It is perhaps not entirely coincidental that this should have occurred at a time when Jack Hibberd's A TOAST TO MELBA is making the rounds.

The play is not, and does not purport to be, a biography. Indeed, there has scarcely been a satisfactory story of the great Diva's life, for her extreme reticence where personal matters were concerned makes the task almost impossible other than in anecdotal form.

What this playwright has done is to take some salient incidents from Melba's life, particularly those touching upon the Australian scene, and moulded these into a play which is both readable and eminently stageworthy. Only occasionally has the author strayed from this continent - as in the early scenes which introduce such figures as Mathilde Marchesi, Melba's Parisian mentor, and the inimitable Bernhardt.

Mr Sherman has done his homework well. The authenticity of his dialogue content is clearly supported by considerable research, lifting what might have been a light, frothy and somewhat pedestrian play into a mature and at times penetrating study of Dame Nellie Melba.

Beverly Nichols, Melba's confidante, secretary and ghost

writer of her memoirs - MELODIES AND MEMORIES - is a good character study. His scorn for Australia's lack of cultural appreciation matches Melba's own - although, as Mr Sherman admits, he often championed the country's cause in the face of Dame Nellie's vituperative outbursts. His quick wit and easy facility with words are also reflected in the script - they were to be recognised internationally in later years.

Dame Melba herself is a commanding figure as she must have been in life. She dominates every scene as she should, while other characters, Nichols excepted, pale into insignificance while she is about. Behind her back they develop as personalities, but in the great presence they are reduced to mumbling incoherence or gauche bravado.

And it is an interesting selection of characters. Aside from Melba and Nichols there is Helen Daniel, the American singer rechristened Elena Danielli by Melba (just as Melba herself had been metamorphosed from Nellie Armstrong, the Mackay cane-farmer's wife, by Madame Marchesi); Tom Targett, initially a young eager journalist from the Sydney STAR and later a mature writer from Melbourne's AGE; Stella Power, a young and promising protegee, dubbed "the little Melba"; and Stella Power's husband, Bill O'Rourke, whose knowledge of and love for opera are strictly limited, to say the least.

Basically the play is a pot pourri of some of the highlights of Melba's life and essentially what might be called the Australian Connection. It is a briskly written play which shows a devotion to accurate historical detail and a wealth of research time expended in seeking authenticity. And there are some wonderful lines - for instance, Melba's tart reference to Florence Austral: "Madame Austral is blessed with a voice whose cutting edge would ringbark a full orchestra of fortissimo trombones!" but also some clumsy ones. And there is a good deal of over exposition, especially with regard to some of the minor characters.

While some of the dialogue requires rewriting to rid it of redundancy and certain grammatical solecisms, by and large the Diva emerges as a sharply-etched human being possessed of all the inevitable foibles and weaknesses attaching to anyone who has reached the pinnacle of success in her field. Like many great artistes she has her failings, but with a voice like that Melba can be forgiven anything - even the apocryphal "All I can say is - sing 'em muck! It's all they understand!" which she is reputed to have said of Australian audiences to Dame Clara Butt.

Perhaps Dame Nellie was the first to recognise the ockeratic fringe, the remnants of which still cling tenaciously to us so many decades later.

Paul Sherman's MELBA gives us a thoroughly believable Dame Nellie. Perhaps the greatest problem will lie in the discovery of an actress of sufficient stature to play the role. Despite Mr Sherman's wide knowledge of opera from the technical point of view, a fact which gives the script immediate authority, he is naive enough to assume that a soprano with "exceptional purity of voice" can be found to either play the role or to provide backing tapes. Yes indeed. But from whence? I.W. ☆



# FOCUS

## Drama . . .

J.C. WILLIAMSONS are withdrawing from production at the end of the year, but in the meantime things are alive and well. After a successful Melbourne season at the Comedy, their production of *SAME TIME NEXT YEAR* with Australian actors Lewis Fiander and Nancye Hayes is at present drawing in the crowds at Sydney's Theatre Royal, and another production opens in Melbourne at the Comedy on October 15. English actors SUSANNAH YORK and BARRIE INGHAM will star in Noel Coward's ever popular *PRIVATE LIVES*, and with a cast like that it should be an enormous box office success. The production transfers to Sydney for a four week season at Her Majesty's on November 17.

While he is in Sydney Barrie will give one performance of the one man show *THE ACTOR*, an entertainment devised by Terry Hands - at the Opera House Drama Theatre, 8 p.m., November 28.

And the Firm? Kenn Brodzia of Aztec Services, who will lease the name J.C. Williamson Productions Ltd, has guaranteed 20 weeks occupancy in each of the three theatres for one year. After that, it looks as though the theatres will go to the highest bidders - if anyone can find 20 million dollars, which present estimates calculate they're worth.



Jenny McNae - *THE TRIAL*

MALCOLM KEITH's adaptation and production of Kafka's *THE TRIAL* at Perth's Hole in the Wall Theatre has caused quite a stir in theatrical circles there. The play - partly in mime - is mounted completely in black, with only painted white half masks for relief. Six players begin as the tormentors and captors of Joseph K - a man accused by someone unknown of a crime which is not disclosed to him - and change from time to time to people in his past life and others who are part of his nightmarish present.

John Milson plays K, while Ivan King plays the lawyer and Jenny McNae plays the landlady and also the lawyer's amorous secretary.

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Mary Haire plays the prostitute, and Andy King an artist with connections - while all of them play in one scene a band of terrible children reminiscent of the child prostitute in Durrell's *JUSTINE*.

As the play progresses K's stark white face is gradually painted by the others until he too takes on their semi-human look and sinks into their half world and his final terrible fate dawns upon him. (George Mulgrue).



*AFTER KID STAKES - OTHER TIMES*. The final play in *THE DOLL* trilogy, Ray Lawler's *OTHER TIMES*, will be presented by the Melbourne Theatre Company in December. Set in the uncertain and questioning days of 1945, just after the war, the play features the main characters of *THE SUMMER OF THE SEVENTEENTH DOLL* and *KID STAKES*, together with a schoolgirl Bubba Ryan and a Jewish refugee from Europe. Although *OTHER TIMES* is a complete play in its own right, the MTC are arranging brief revival runs of *THE DOLL* and *KID STAKES* to coincide with its production so that all three plays may be seen in sequence.



JIM SHARMAN, Australia's international director extraordinaire, is at present back in Australia to direct *THE SEASON AT SARSPARILLA* for the Old Tote.

Since leaving Australia in 1972, Jim has made his name internationally with the London productions of *JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR* and *THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW*, as well as several productions for London's Royal Court Theatre (he directed the London production of David Williamson's *THE REMOVALISTS*) and the New York and Los Angeles productions of *THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW*. In addition he now has three feature films to his credit, the latest of which, *SUMMER OF SECRETS*, is due to be released soon.

Jim has always felt a strong commitment to Australia (as is witnessed by his frequent trips home) and it looks this time as though he may stay for a while. Let's hope so.



## Song and dance . . .

BETTY BLOKK BUSTER may be dead, but rising from her ashes is *WONDERWOMAN*, Reg Livermore's new one man/woman show which opened at the Balmain Bijou on September 23. With him are the old team of director Peter Batey and musicians The Baxter Funt Augmented Band and the Reginas. Initially conceived as a requiem for women's lib, the show is probably now more accurately described as Reg Livermore's view of the Battle of the Sexes. Songs include those by Barry Manilow, Lewis Furey, David Bowie, Elton John, Bill Joel, Harry Chapin, Kurt Weill and Puccini.

Betty will be a hard act to follow - let's hope *Wonderwoman* makes it.



COLLEEN CLIFFORD launches into her third one-woman show on November 1. To be called *A NIGHTINGALE STILL SINGS IN BERKELEY SQUARE (OR ARTISTS I HAVE SUFFERED FROM)* the show will be staged and directed by Peter Williams in the Space Theatre of the Adelaide Festival Centre. Amidst lots of razzamatazz Miss Clifford will sing, recite and play the piano. Numbers will include *BIG SPENDER*, *THE WAYWARD WIND*, *MAKING WHOOPEE*, *IT HAD TO BE YOU* and *SEND IN THE CLOWNS*. The production is a joint venture between Peter Williams and the Festival Centre Trust. Hopefully the show will be seen in other cities before the end of 1977.



LUCY JUMAWAN, dance teacher for the Careers in Dance project of the Aboriginal Islanders Programme, will take a group of 15 Aboriginal dancers to Mornington Island in October to study the dances and music of the Lardil culture. While on the island the students will teach the rudiments of modern dance to school pupils there, and Lucy will record and collate Lardil dances and music material for future use by Margaret Walker's Dance Concert. It is hoped that some of the dances collected will eventually be included on the dance syllabus of NSW schools.



## Kids . . .

DR NORBERT MAYER, formerly Director of Munich's Jugendtheater and leading practitioner in the field of theatre for young people, is conducting workshops for teachers and those involved in youth theatre in Brisbane, Sydney and Adelaide during October. Dr Mayer is well known for his method of training actors, which integrates interaction training and role-playing. This method is not only applicable for actors and other theatre people but also for teachers, group leaders, social workers and other people working in the field of education and counselling. For further information about the workshops contact Twelfth Night Theatre, Brisbane, Margaret Leask at the Elizabethan Theatre Trust in Sydney or Christine Westwood at the Adelaide Festival Centre Trust.

While in Brisbane Dr Mayer will also direct a production of the children's play *SCHTOCKERLOCK AND MILLIPILLI* for Twelfth Night.



ROGER CHAPMAN, Resident Director of the theatre in education team at the Leeds Playhouse, and leading expert in theatre in education, has been appointed Director of Youth Activities at the South Australian Theatre Company. Mr Chapman's expertise in his field is recognised throughout the world. In 1971 he directed the first major international children's theatre festival, involving the participation of 40,000 children.

Mr Chapman will be responsible for developing the SATC's present youth activities programme, and expanding into new areas of theatre in education.



## Happenings . . .

THE INDEPENDENT THEATRE, Sydney, is bravely struggling on to raise funds for its complete refurbishment, which is indeed necessary if the theatre is to continue to function at all. Earlier this year the theatre went dark because of complete lack of funds after failing to receive an expected grant from the Australia Council. AN EVENING WITH SONDHEIM on August 8 raised \$3,000 towards the cause, and Sunday rock concerts, an art exhibition and an auction are still raising small amounts. In addition, Peter Williams Productions have donated a four week season of Athol Fugard's HELLO AND GOODBYE. But the theatre needs somewhere in the region of \$100,000 to complete renovations. Tax deductible donations may be made through the AETT - apply to the Trust for details.



COLIN GEORGE, formerly Artistic Director of the Sheffield Playhouse and of Sheffield's Crucible Theatre, and at present head of the newly established Drama Department at the University of New England, will take over as Artistic Director of the South Australian Theatre Company from George Ogilvie in December this year.

Mr George arrived in Australia with his family last year in order to establish UNE's Drama Department, and one of his first actions there was to commission the writing of three one-act plays by Australian authors - Ron Blair, Michael Cove and Bob Herbert. The production of these plays has been a major activity for Theatre Foray, the on-campus theatre club formed by Mr George, and has also formed part of the Drama curriculum.

The inaugural performance of the plays took place in Armidale on August 12, 13 and 14 and by all accounts was a great success. Michael Cove's FAMILY LORE is a warm and sympathetic look at the emerging independence of the two children of a contemporary Jewish family. Ron Blair's PERFECT STRANGERS is an absorbing piece of keenly felt observation of two people going through the final agonies of separation ending a long standing relationship. The third play, Bob Herbert's A MAN OF RESPECT, is an interesting experiment in updating the Orestes myth to a modern-day Italian family living in Melbourne.

MICHAEL BLAKEMORE, renowned director from Britain's National Theatre, was in Australia recently conducting a directors' workshop for the Peter Summerton Foundation. Although he is Australian, Mr Blakemore has never worked as a director in this country, save for a brief visit with the National Theatre's THE FRONT PAGE in 1974.

Since its inception seven years ago, the Peter Summerton Foundation's small but hard working committee, whose principal aim is to stem the theatrical "talent drain" overseas by bringing top directors here, has managed to raise money enough to bring Bill Ball from San Francisco's Observatory Theatre, Stella Adler from New York's Actors' Studio, and now Michael Blakemore. They also held a workshop with director William Gaskill when he came to Australia to direct LOVE'S LABOURS LOST for the Old Tote.

The most recent workshop (July 19 - August 6) took the form of professional rehearsals of the first act of Chekhov's THE THREE SISTERS, with a limited group of directors observing. Despite an initial difficulty in settling in to a rehearsal atmosphere, the observers very quickly became part of the group and contributed greatly to the discussion at the end of each rehearsal period. The play was read through both at the beginning and the end of the three week period, and it was felt that a great deal had been achieved even by working on just one act. Apart from the opportunity to work with a first rate play and a first rate director in an atmosphere removed from final performance pressure, those involved indicate that they learnt much about the very practical sides of the direction process. To quote Blakemore: "Actors are called so because they act. If it was all about feeling they would be called feelers."



ARMIDALE'S FIRST ARTS FESTIVAL organisers have lined up quite an impressive programme. The Festival happens October 1 - 10, and includes performances by the Stuttgart Trio, the Canadian Mime Theatre, the New England Ensemble, the Margaret Barr Dance Drama Group and the University of New England Players, as well as lunch time happenings, exhibitions and an international carnival.



CALLING FOR SCRIPTS . . . The International Musical Theatre Forum, which will be held at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music from January 16 - 23, 1977, is at present calling for scripts of musicals of all kinds (including those for children) for consideration for inclusion in the Forum's working sessions. Please send material to the Festival of Sydney Committee, State Theatre Building, 49 Market Street, Sydney 2000. Closing date is November 30.

And the Australian National Playwrights Conference is calling for scripts to be considered for workshopping at the 1977 Conference, planned for Canberra in May. Application forms are available from the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust.

AUSTRALIAN THEATRE STUDIES CONFERENCE. An outline of the theatre policy of the NSW Government was given by the Hon. Paul Landa, NSW Minister for Planning and Environment, to the 50 delegates of the Conference, which was held at the University of New South Wales on the last weekend in August. For three days Australian university teachers and scholars in drama and theatre studies discussed their academic aims, activities and problems. During the final session, an Australian Drama Studies Association was formed, whose inaugural meeting may be held in South Australia next year, with Professor Jordan of Newcastle as convener of the Steering Committee.



The Shepherd Restaurant

CULTURAL EATING. . . No-one designs a theatre complex these days without putting in a restaurant or two. "Dinner and a show" preferably on the spot, seems to be the order of the day, despite drastic variation in standards. Adelaide Festival Centre serves excellent food in both its restaurant and the Bistro, while the food offered at the Sydney Opera House can be embarrassingly bad. But the Grill Room in Perth's Concert Hall comes up with a pretty decent plate of fish and chips.

Latest to join the "eat on the spot" brigade is Sydney's Seymour Centre, whose recently opened Shepherd Restaurant is now open for lunch as well as dinner.

Sensibly, they have kept the menu small and select - quiche, pate, homemade soup, with a selection of two or three main dishes and the same number of puddings and a cheese-board. The quality is well up to par, and at around \$5.00 per person for a three course meal it's very good value indeed. Watch the licensing laws though - at lunch time it's bring your own, and in the evenings they are only licensed to serve liquor to theatre ticket holders (and that's only an hour before commencement of the first show). Otherwise, bring some with you.

Hours: 12.00 - 2.30 p.m. and 6.00 - 8.30 p.m. Monday to Saturday and after show suppers Friday and Saturday.



THE W.A. OPERA COMPANY'S palace revolution seems to have been headed off, and the organisation returned to something like rationality. It seems that there was a division of policies within the company itself, with one camp believing that both administrative and artistic reigns should be held by one person (the capacity in which Vincent Warriner was appointed) and the other believing that the two functions should be separate and held by a General Manager and Musical Director respectively.

The revolution began when those of the latter opinion, soon after the current Musical Director's contract lapsed, called an Annual General Meeting, which they stacked with enough new members to vote out the old committee. A new committee in favour of the two-headed policy was voted in, which apparently favoured keeping the Musical Director in lieu of a General Manager in the event of there not being enough grant money forthcoming to support both jobs.

Now the new committee has been declared unconstitutional by an interim committee made up of representatives of both bodies plus some of the governors, and a new election has voted to bring the old committee back. Presumably Mr Warriner will now be able to continue in the position for which he was employed last January. (George Mulgrue).



BRISBANE is to have a new Community Arts Centre, established by the Australia Council and funded by the Federal Government. The Centre will apparently be equipped with a 150 seat live theatre, a 200 seat cinema, a display gallery, rehearsal and workshop space and facilities for video and other arts.

And the Queensland Government has bought the city's Twelfth Night Theatre, which has solved some, but not all, of the company's financial problems. TNT will remain the theatre's major tenants at least for the time being - but the future remains uncertain.



PERTH'S leading actress, Joan Sydney, has caused quite a local stir there by standing up for the rights of professional actors. Joan refused to take part in the National Theatre's production of HABEAS CORPUS when she heard that Geoff Gibbs, one of the State's leading actors, was playing opposite her in the lead role of Arthur Wicksteed. Mr Gibbs is a lecturer at one of the State's Teachers' Training Colleges, and only takes parts when it is possible. He is therefore thought of as being a semi-professional, even though he is a full member of the Federal Actors' Equity.

Miss Sydney believes that it is bad for the professional theatre when people who have dedicated their lives to making a career on the stage are passed over for others, no matter how gifted, who really do not need acting work to gain their livelihood. It is bad for them, she insists, not only economically, but also psychologically.

Mr Gibbs supports her theory that the state needs a core of full time professional actors, and he says that contract players are essential for the running of a National Theatre. He agrees that career actors should be used whenever possible, and says that he felt himself that there were other members of the Theatre's contract staff who could have played the part equally well. However, he insists, if the director of the play has cast a particular actor, there is nothing that can be done. He does not agree that a professional actor, any more than a member of any other profession, should expect full employment at all times. (George Mulgrue).



IT LOOKS AS THOUGH though Brisbane might be left without a large live theatre by the end of the year, if JCW's give up their lease on Her Majesty's and the City Council go ahead with their decision to turn the Regent into a cinema. This will mean that both the Australian Opera and the Australian Ballet, to say nothing of large visiting companies, will be left without a suitable Brisbane venue.

## shoestring, newcastle

That's our telegraphic address, and that's how we exist: on a shoestring.

**WHO WE ARE** The Hunter Valley Theatre Company is the first and only regional professional theatre company in Australia. We are a small company of twelve people employed full-time. We are based in Newcastle.

**WHAT WE'RE DOING** We present productions of full-length plays - often Australian - changing every four or five weeks.

We conduct a vigorous community programme, presenting one-act plays in town and wherever we're asked, and taking lecture/demonstrations to schools.

We act as a drama resource centre for the region, conducting acting and workshop classes, giving professional and technical assistance, and so on.

**WHY WE NEED YOU** HVTC is a non-profit company. It is entirely a community venture relying on box-office, and individual and commercial support, to survive. Theatre depends on people: small as we are, our wages bill alone for the year will approach \$100,000. We have received special projects grants from the Australia Council and the NSW Department of Culture, and we are grateful for these. Many of the companies that were willing and able to help us two years ago when planning began are still willing but, owing to changed economic circumstances, not so able. The world does not owe us a living: fortunately we know the need for live professional theatre here is keen, particularly amongst younger people, who can see our shows for as little as \$1.00.

**WHAT YOU GET** For just \$10 (more if you would like to give more!) you can become a Foundation Member of HVTC. Membership entitles you to vote at HVTC meetings, and to stand for the Board of Directors. We also offer each member a concession on tickets, a newsletter, special members' nights, preferential booking privileges - and the satisfaction of being involved in this pioneering community venture. (And a warm welcome when you come to Newcastle: we cherish our angels!)

**WILL YOU JOIN US?** We need your support - and we'd like your money too! For further information please write: HVTC, cnr. The Terrace and Tyrrell Street, Newcastle, N.S.W. 2300. Phone: (049) 26 2526; cables: Shoestring, Newcastle.

Terence Clarke,  
Artistic Director

Bernard Hartnell, C.B.E.,  
Chairman

## hvtc



Linda Jacoby talks to an Australian star in the making.

## YVONNE KENNY



"Have I been lucky? Very. It's a horrible thing to say, but I just seem to be in the right place at the right time. You do need a certain amount of luck, but you must have talent as well."

Speaking is young Australian soprano Yvonne Kenny, making up for one of her three roles in Hans Werner Henze's latest opera *WE COME TO THE RIVER* which opened at the Royal Opera Covent Garden in July.

Although Yvonne has been a member of the company for some time, this is her first appearance on stage. "I'm such a young singer that they are concerned I don't do too much too soon. One of the tragedies of Australia is that they tend to use up their young voices too soon by asking them to sing too much and too many roles which are too heavy for their voice type. I've seen quite a number of singers who lost all their quality at a very early age." Yvonne is twenty five.

It wasn't until she graduated from Sydney University that Yvonne had to make a choice between careers - science or music. Purely by chance that decision was made for her. She stepped into a role in Young Opera's production of *XERXES*. After that, as she puts it "much to my mother's dismay, I seemed to get more and more work and never got back to science."

In 1973 she was awarded a scholarship to study at the La Scala opera school.

"The worst thing for me of course was to learn how to pronounce Italian. It took an awfully long time with a very good teacher. Languages are so difficult for Australians because we don't have the sounds in our ears."

At the end of her stay in Milan Yvonne was refused further support from Australia. "They decided I should go home, but I knew that if I went back the time I had spent would have been wasted because I hadn't achieved anything. I knew I was on the way and had to continue."

"That's another thing that funding organisations in Australia don't realise. It all takes such a long time. By the time you get to Europe, settle in, find somewhere to live, get your bearings, half the year's gone. It's impossible to change your technique with the snap of a finger. It takes years and you have to be organised and settled."

London presented further complications and challenges. Arriving practically penniless Yvonne auditioned for Eric Vietheer who accepted her as a pupil and suggested where she should apply for assistance. She received 600 pounds from the British Arts Council and 1300 pounds from the Martin Scholarship Committee. With her financial problems solved she was able to devote all her energies to study. "The fact that I didn't need to perform for almost two years was a godsend. It has proved to be the most valuable period in my career. I was able to put my head down and concentrate on technique, languages and repertoire."

In 1975 Eric Vietheer was confident enough in his pupil to suggest she enter the prestigious Kathleen Ferrier Competition. Yvonne walked off with first prize. "I won 600 pounds which was very useful, but, more importantly, my name began to be tossed about in the right places."

In October 1975 her big chance came. At very short notice she was asked to take over the name part from Janet Price in Donizetti's opera *ROSMONDA D'INGHILTERRA*. Because the opera hadn't been performed before everyone was there - critics, agents, Lord Harwood from the English National Opera, Christopher Hunt from Covent Garden. Yvonne exceeded all expectations.

It was a direct result of this that Yvonne hurdled the final barriers to a career in Britain. For two years she had been trying to persuade the Home Office to grant her a work permit. Finally, her professional life was saved when the Royal Opera invited her to join the company. They organised the work permit, something she could never have achieved alone.

"It is incredibly difficult to actually begin to perform in Britain. There is simply an amazing number of very good singers, and an agent will only take you on if he thinks you have the potential and he can sell you."

Yvonne's immediate future is settled. She has a contract with the Royal Opera until the end of the 79 season with some understudying and small roles like the priestess in *AIDA* and the young boy in *JENUFA* - "the sort of roles Joan Sutherland used to do." She also has some very handsome guest appearances lined up. These include Pamina with the Scottish Opera and Sophie in the English National Opera's production of *DER ROSENKAVALIER*.

"My advice to young Australian singers? I was 22 when I left. Everybody thought I was much too young and that I wouldn't cope. But it was the best thing I could have done - I had to sink or swim. If I'd come later I'd have had even more to undo and relearn. I think they should come as soon as they can."

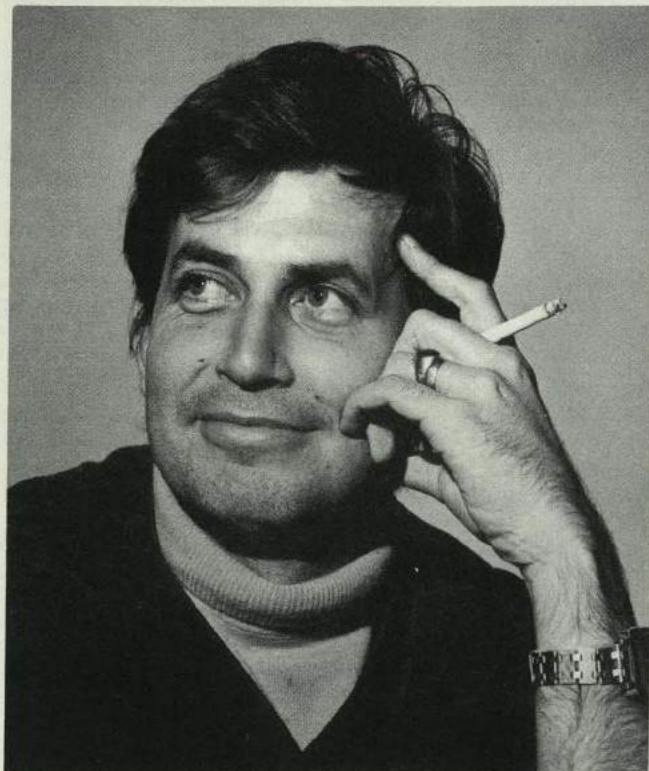
What she doesn't add of course, is that you have to be good. And tough.





Theatrescope talks to

# PETER WILLIAMS



**"Someone like me who can make money in the theatre is regarded as a bit of a pirate. But I regard theatre as a business. It's my living, it's what I have chosen to do because it's what I want to do - but I know that without bums on seats I can't eat."**

He arrived in Sydney four years ago - and Peter Williams Productions is only the half of it. He has also done very nicely as a free-lance actor, and free-lance director (among his notable productions being *RELATIVELY SPEAKING* at Sydney's Independent Theatre, and the recent productions of *LOOK BACK IN ANGER* and *CASS BUTCHER BUNTING* at the Alexander Theatre in Melbourne in July this year) and somewhere he has also found time to adjudicate local dramatic festivals - a task for which his background makes him ideally suited. But . . .

"Don't be boring and ask me how I started," he says "I just sort of happened, and everybody knows how I came from the country and all that. But that's probably the best experience, really - you learn absolutely everything, from making lights with jam tins to makeup and painting flats and just plain communication. Most people seem to start in theatre via the university or NIDA, which is often a rarified atmosphere where people can lose sight of what it's all about. I mean, I think you can be as intellectual as you like with a play but if the audience can't understand it then there's not much point in putting it on.

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Theatre is all about communication - not just the actors communicating on stage - something has to be communicated to the audience, so that they want to participate. By participate I mean that not only are they entertained, but also simulated into thinking and then into perhaps understanding human behaviour and the world in which we exist. I also think that theatre helps develop our powers of sympathetic imagination.

I always try to look at a play as though I am the audience. Too often a director can get too involved with his own vision of the play, and this can get in the way, stand between him and the audience. All the time during rehearsals I am thinking to myself "How is this going to affect the audience?" or "How is the audience going to react to this?" After all the audience is who it's all for.

The most vital and important part of a director's work is casting. Having the right people in the right parts is absolutely essential. That's why directors should see as much as possible, they should go to everything that's on. How else can they know what kind of work actors are doing, or who has potential - they can't really cast properly unless they are acquainted with as wide a range of possibilities as they can be. Anyway, one can't work in isolation - you have to know what's going on - not just in the theatre, but everywhere. You have to know what the man in the street is thinking and feeling. He is our audience, and he is also who we are putting on stage."

What criteria does he apply when he is looking at scripts with a view to production?

"Well, there are the practical considerations first. I can't afford to put on plays with large casts or elaborate scenery requirements, for instance. It's obvious that on my own I can't afford to take big financial risks - not at the moment, anyway. So I tend to stick to small cast plays with simple staging requirements in the first place.

Then I say to myself 'Can I sell it?' 'Which available actors will do this the most justice?' and 'Has it got a gimmick?' By gimmick I suppose I mean some selling point - PR is very important. For instance, *ALPHA BETA* was on while the Family Law Bill was being debated in Parliament, so it was very topical.

*BREEZE FROM THE GULF* had lots of selling points - it was about drug addiction, it was by Mart Crowley, who wrote *THE BOYS IN THE BAND*, and it starred Bunney Brooke from *No. 96*."

What about Fugard? "Oh, Fugard's selling point is not just his topicality, the fact that everyone is interested in what is happening in South Africa - it's also that he's such a good writer that his writing completely transcends this topicality, and that makes him great.

It's essential to think in terms of selling points, because you're really trying to sell your product. No one is going to go to a play if they don't know it's on and if there isn't something special or interesting about it to make them want to see it.



## Director/manager of genius or a "capitalist without any talent"?



Donald MacDonald, Andonia Katsaros, Barry Hill - LET ME HEAR YOU SMILE.

When I look at scripts I also look at the quality of the writing. By that I mean the language, and how it all sounds, but also the conviction of the writer. I believe a writer should write what he wants to write and not what he thinks people want to see. That way it's more honest, he's feeling what he's writing, and this comes out. You can't sit down with a portable Remington and a couple of cans one Sunday afternoon and say 'Now I'm going to sit down and write a winner, because I've got all the ingredients, I know the formula'. Some successful plays have been written this way, but they always need a big star or a big gimmick to carry them. That's why so many plays that were a big success in the West End or on Broadway flop in Australia - no stars.

Australia should have a star system. After all, that's how the West End and Broadway survive. It makes theatre glamorous - I think theatre should be glamorous, it should have some magic - and also people know what they are coming to see, it makes them feel safer.

I don't know why Australian managements don't capitalise more on good performers. In the film and TV industries now we have people like Helen Morse and Jack Thompson and Jackie Weaver who are stars - but who is a star in the theatre, except Reg Livermore, who had to put on a one man show before he could achieve stardom?

I think the star system has been discouraged here because when you have stars you have to pay them more money. Also, the profession doesn't like stars, especially in Australia, because it's so egalitarian here.

The repertory company situation works very well politically, but it will never put extra burns on seats - people come away from a play saying 'Gee, that actress who played Blanche was really good' or 'Was that the chap we saw play Hamlet last year?'.

And Australian actors have a work problem. There just isn't enough work around for them to be able to be selective in the parts they take. Too often an actor ends up in the wrong part, which in turn can do him irreparable damage. This situation works against the star system, too."

What does he think of subsidised theatre? "Look," he says, "the subsidised theatres through the Australia Council have performed a necessary function in the revival and stimulation of the Australian theatre in the last ten years, but I believe there is now a danger of them suffocating it. Everything is geared to them making the right amount of loss so that they can get their grant next year - they can't go out on a limb. What I'd like to see happen is the Australia Council subsidising companies dollar for dollar - otherwise it's just like spoiling a child.

Do you know what I think is wrong? Commercial is a dirty word in the profession in this country. The West End and Broadway is all commercial theatre - that's the popular theatre, that's what people will pay to go and see, it's what they want. But in Australia, where the theatre is mostly subsidised, potential audiences won't go, because they feel it's some kind of exclusive club and they feel they won't be accepted, and they won't understand the play when they get there.

I am regarded by the profession as a capitalist without any talent, yet people come to see my shows - I make money, my shows travel interstate. People think that anything in the theatre that makes money is automatically artistically suspect. But the professional people I have worked with are only too pleased to work with me again.

And look, there are two sorts of people in this world - doers and sitters. The sitters can complain and criticise all they like, but at least I'm doing something. I'm afraid I'm a doer."

A.W. ☆

### PETER WILLIAMS' PRODUCTIONS

January 1974	HELLO AND GOODBYE by Athol Fugard at the Australian Theatre, Newtown. The production went to the 1974 Adelaide Festival and then toured nationally.
May 1974	Presented Nancy Cole in GERTRUDE STEIN'S GERTRUDE STEIN at the Australian Theatre.
October 1974	ALPHA BETA by E. A. Whitehead at the Bondi Pavilion Theatre.
January 1975	LET ME HEAR YOU SMILE by Leonora Thuna and Harry Cauley at the Bondi Pavilion Theatre.
September 1975	A BREEZE FROM THE GULF by Mart Crowley at the Australian Theatre, Newtown and at Adelaide Festival Centre.
March 1976	BOESMAN AND LENA by Athol Fugard at the Adelaide Festival, followed by a tour to Melbourne, Canberra and Brisbane, with a six week Sydney season at the Seymour Centre.
August 1976	Return season of HELLO AND GOODBYE and BOESMAN AND LENA in repertory at the Adelaide Festival Centre.
September 1976	Return season of HELLO AND GOODBYE at Sydney's Independent Theatre.



# BOOKS



## THE CURRENCY LASS

by Edward Geoghegan.

Edited by Roger Covell. Sydney, Currency Methuen, 1976.  
(The National Theatre Series)

Recommended retail price : paperback \$4.50

"Currency" is a mid nineteenth century Australian expression meaning "native born" - hence, among other things, Currency Press. Although we have become used to a high standard of publication from Currency, this is undoubtedly their handsomest edition to date; not only in its fine colour reproductions of prints of early Sydney, but also in its period illustrations, songs and music, and the wealth of scholarly background information, notes and textual annotations. Roger Covell has indeed excelled himself in producing a thoroughly researched historical document.

One wonders, however, whether the play itself deserves such loving treatment, for it is a very slight piece indeed. Supposedly the first play written in Australia with a local setting, the plot revolves around a young man determined to marry a "currency lass" or native girl, and a rich uncle; who, thinking that native girl is synonymous with Aboriginal girl, is equally determined that he shall not. The young people have much fun at the expense of the uncle's peace of mind before he is apprised of his error and all live happily ever after.

Indeed, as Professor Covell admits in his introduction, the play is no masterpiece. The dialogue is formal and old fashioned, even for the time; "... though by the usual coquetry of my sex we are privileged to keep a lover in suspense, I will so far waive my prerogative as to confess that a compliance with your request will, well in short, will impose no great violence on my inclinations." Characterisation is scant and situation contrived.

Nevertheless, in the hands of the right actors and actresses, the play might very well provide a light hearted and entertaining evening at the theatre; especially in the hands of the right actress, for the part of Susan, the Currency Lass herself, requires a very talented performer - a character actress who can both sing and dance.

Despite weaknesses in the play itself, Currency Press and Roger Covell have come up with an interesting, entertaining and visually pleasing book which goes far towards giving us a picture of theatrical life in Sydney in the 1840's. For those interested in Australian theatrical history, it's a very worthwhile purchase. A.W.

## PINTER PLAYS : ONE

by Harold Pinter. London, Eyre Methuen, 1976.  
(A Methuen Paperback)

Recommended retail price : \$2.35

As suggested in the title, the plays of Pinter are to be released in a series of uniform paperbacks.

The first offering in the set contains the full scripts of Pinter's first five plays : THE BIRTHDAY PARTY, THE ROOM, THE DUMB  
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WAITER, A SLIGHT ACHE and A NIGHT OUT. The plan for this set seems, from this volume, to be to arrange the complete works of Pinter in chronological order. In this volume it means we get those plays written in the period 1957 - 1959.

Also included are two short stories, written before the author took to drama. Interesting in themselves, they give the reader a quiet peek at an aspect of the somewhat taciturn Mr Pinter, not necessarily seen in the dramatic presentation of his works.

Unlike most other publishers' offerings of this type, PINTER PLAYS : ONE is remarkable in its dearth of supporting material, i.e. technical, critical, and/or biographical treatise. An omission by design? The reader who knows his Pinter might easily see the justification for such editorial thinking.

Of the plays themselves, much has already been written, and doubtless much more is to follow. It is sufficient to note here that this reasonably priced volume tells us as much about the plays as we are ever likely to need to know.

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## STRINDBERG PLAYS

by August Strindberg, translated by Michael Meyer.  
London, Eyre Methuen, 1976. (A Methuen Paperback)

Recommended retail price : \$2.35

A slightly more informative approach places the Strindberg collection more in the category of "essential playgoer's reading."

This quite comprehensively annotated translation intelligently and in places entertainingly comments on what must be Strindberg's three most widely known works : THE FATHER, THE GHOST SONATA, and that great chiller, MISS JULIE.

Unobtrusively inserted by way of introduction to the individual plays, Meyer's notes describe the circumstances under which the respective plays were written, performed and received.

Wisely keeping himself well clear of the sensitive area of interpretation, the editor confines himself to extracts from Strindberg's correspondence on the matter.

Most of Strindberg's own comments on the work are of a technical nature regarding staging etc., and are of principal interest probably to prospective performers or Strindberg buffs. Of greater interest to the general reader are probably the numerous snippets on the reactions of contemporary society to the "outrages of this mad misogynist" : "... One hot summer evening, the theatre was almost empty. But in the front row, in lone majesty, sat Henrik Ibsen, who had been invited to attend and who had just returned to live in Norway after twenty seven years abroad. After the interval ... Ibsen had gone, and the theatre was completely empty."

The biographical material of Meyer's notes, while sketchy, is nevertheless sufficient to afford the reader an enhanced aspect of the work through an informed view of the background.

Considering that Strindberg hardly ever had a play get into double performance figures, and that the cast of THE CARETAKER received thirty four curtain calls of solid boos at its German premiere, it seems appropriate that these authors should be published in the same harness at this time. Who knows, we may even see some of the plays performed here.

Mil Perrin.



# SHOWGUIDE

A guide to theatres and productions offering concessions to Trust Members.

## NEW SOUTH WALES

AUSTRALIAN THEATRE, Newtown  
"The One Day of the Year" (Seymour)  
"The Star Spangled Girl" (Simon) in repertoire to October 9.  
Please phone 51 3841 for further details.

### BONDI PAVILION THEATRE

"Where's Vanilla?" (Sharp) opens mid-November.

### NEW THEATRE, Newtown

"The Changing Room" (Storey) to October 9  
"Falling Apart" (Merrick) opens October 23

### MARIAN STREET THEATRE, Killara

"Getting On" (Bennett) October 7 - November 6.  
"Tarantara! Tarantara!" November 11 - December 22.

### NIMROD THEATRE, Surry Hills

UPSTAIRS - "The Duchess of Malfi" (Webster) October 2 - November 6.  
"A Handful of Friends" (Williamson) opens November 19.

DOWNSTAIRS - "Plugged In" (McGrath) opens October/November. For further details phone 695 003.

### PARADE THEATRE, Kensington.

Old Tote Theatre Company. Concessions Monday to Thursday and Saturday matinees.  
"A Toast to Melba" (Hibberd) September 29 - November 16.  
"Rookery Nook" (Travers) opens November 24.

GENESIAN THEATRE, Kent Street, Sydney  
For details telephone 29 6454

### MUSIC HALL THEATRE RESTAURANT, Neutral Bay.

"The Beast of Belgrave Square" (Walsh)  
Concessions Monday, Tuesday.

## SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

OPERA THEATRE, The Australian Opera  
"The Abduction from the Seraglio" (Mozart)  
"The Cunning Little Vixen" (Janacek)  
"The Marriage of Figaro" (Mozart) in repertoire to October 9.  
The Australian Ballet  
"Eugene Onegin" (Cranko) December 1 - 22

DRAMA THEATRE, The Old Tote Theatre Company. Concessions Monday - Thursday and Saturday matinees.  
"The Doll's House" (Ibsen) to October 26.  
"The Season at Sarsaparilla" (White) November 3 - December 18.

The Marionette Theatre of Australia  
"Roos" and "Hands" opens January 3.

### SEYMOUR CENTRE, Cnr Cleveland St & City Road.

YORK THEATRE - The Old Tote Theatre Company. Concessions Monday - Thursday and Saturday matinees.  
"Equus" (Shaffer) to October 16.

EVEREST THEATRE - "The World of Mime" (Canadian Mime Theatre) October 11 - 16.

DOWNSTAIRS - "King Lear" (NSW Theatre of the Deaf) November 11 - 27.

### BALMAIN BIJOU

"Wonderwoman" (Livermore) opened September 23.

## VICTORIA

RUSSELL STREET THEATRE, Melbourne Theatre Company.

"A Handful of Friends" (Williamson) to October 30.  
"Arden!" (Anon./Roger) November 4 - December 11.  
"Other Times" (Lawler) opens December 16.

ST MARTINS THEATRE, Melbourne Theatre Company.

"The Nuns" (Manet) to November 6  
"City Sugar" (Poliakoff) opens November 11.

GRANT STREET THEATRE, Melbourne Theatre Company.

"The Gift" (Cove) October 5 - November 6.  
New play by Simon Hopkinson opens mid-November.  
Phone 654 4000 for further details.

### PALAIS THEATRE, The Australian Ballet

"The Merry Widow" to October 6.  
"Giselle" October 8 - 14.

PRAM FACTORY, Australian Performing Group.

"Overcoat" (Hibberd) to November 7.  
"Dudders" (Romeril/Timlin) November 11 - December 26.

### BACK THEATRE, APG

"Peer Gynt in Workshop" November.  
"Stretch of the Imagination" (Hibberd) December.

## QUEENSLAND

SGIO THEATRE, Queensland Theatre Company.

"And the Big Men Fly" (Hopgood) November 24 - December 11.

### TWELFTH NIGHT THEATRE

"Children's Day" (Waterhouse/Hall) October 26 - November 13.

### ARTS THEATRE, Petrie Terrace

"Collaborators" (Mortimer) to October 16  
"Rebecca" (Du Maurier) October 21 - November 20.  
"Carousel" November 25 - December 24

### LA BOITE, Hale Street

"Lysistrata" (Aristophanes) October 8 - 30  
"How Can You Believe Me When I Said I Was a Valet When You Know I've Been a Liar All My Life?" November 5 - December 4.

## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

THE PLAYHOUSE, National Theatre Company.

Black Theatre of Prague October 5 - 9  
"Tommy" October 14 - 20

THE GREEN ROOM, National Theatre Company.

"AC/DC" (Williams) October 10 - November 6. For further details contact theatre at 25 3344.

### THE HOLE IN THE WALL

"Days in the Trees" (Duras) to October 23.  
"The Maids" (Genet) October 27 - November 20.  
"Travesties" (Stoppard) November 24 - December 24.

### HAYMAN THEATRE - W.A.I.T.

Western Australian Theatre Company for details telephone 697 - 026.

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

THE PLAYHOUSE, South Australian Theatre Company.

"The Last of the Knucklemen" (Powers) to October 9.  
"And Miss Reardon Drinks a Little" (Zindel) October 14 - November 6.  
"Malfi" (Webster/Fisher) November 11 - November 27.  
"Happy Landings" (Cove) December 2 - 18.

### FESTIVAL THEATRE, The Australian Ballet.

"The Merry Widow" November 3 - 6  
"The Sleeping Beauty" November 11 - 13.

### THE SPACE, Festival Centre

"The World of Mime" (Canadian Mime Theatre) November 15 - 20.  
"A Nightingale Still Sings in Berkeley Square" (Clifford) November 1 - 13.

### SCOTT THEATRE, State Opera

"The Secret Marriage" November 23, 25, 27, and 30.

## A.C.T.

THEATRE 3, Canberra Repertory Society  
"Cabaret" November 25 - December 18.

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Please contact Trust state representatives for further information on concessions available.

### THEATRESCOPE

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