

Lauren Bacall in Sweet Bird of Youth — Australian Tour

SWEET BIRD OF YOUTH by
Tennessee Williams
Directed by Kenneth Ives
Designed by Eileen Diss
Lighting design by John Rayment
Cast includes Lauren Bacall and
Colin Friels
Her Majesty's Theatre

“Harold Pinter’s production establishes the piece as one of Tennessee Williams’ very best. Bacall blossoms into magnificent iridescent colour, like a prize orchid. This is a splendid revival and the British theatre with the help of Lauren Bacall has done a great service to Tennessee Williams’ reputation.” London Financial Times.

“... slinky as a lynx, hot as pepper, cool as rain, dry as smoke. There’s considerably more to (Bacall) than staying sexy at 60.” London Observer.

Harold Pinter’s production of SWEET BIRD OF YOUTH opened in London in July this year to critical acclaim. Australian audiences will have an opportunity to see this remarkable production and to see Lauren Bacall in the starring role when it tours Australia early next year. The premiere season will be held in Sydney at Her Majesty’s Theatre from January 28.

SWEET BIRD OF YOUTH is the story of a Hollywood drifter who brings a fading Hollywood movie queen (played by Bacall) back to his hometown only to be cruelly and bloodily revenged by the father of a girl he had seduced. Colin Friels stars with Miss Bacall in the role of the drifter, Chance Wayne. It is a role which launched Paul Newman to international stardom on Broadway in 1959.

Lauren Bacall is a distinguished actress who became a Hollywood legend through her performances in the film classics TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT, THE BIG SLEEP and GENTLEMEN PREFER BLONDES. She has received two Tony awards for best actress — in WOMAN OF THE YEAR and APPLAUSE (in which she was most recently seen on the London stage). Her autobiography “By Myself” has become a bestseller.



Lauren Bacall in SWEET BIRD OF YOUTH

Acclaimed British director Kenneth Ives, who has worked extensively with Britain’s National Theatre, will mount the production in Australia based on Harold Pinter’s London production. Only twenty-four performances will be presented in Sydney so Members are urged to book promptly to obtain good seats.

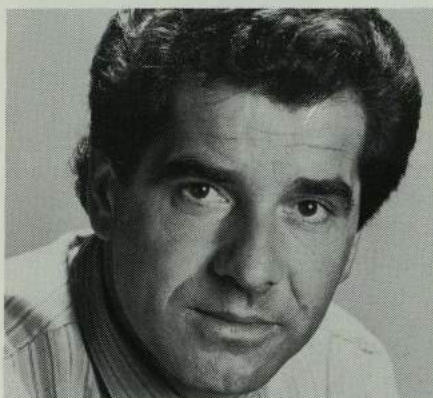
BOOKING INFORMATION

Tue Jan 28 to Sat Feb 8
Mon to Sat at 8 p.m.
Wed and Sat mats at 2 p.m.
AETT \$34.00 (Mon to Thu evg), \$31.00 (mats)
G.P. \$38.00, \$35.00 (mats)
Pens/Stud \$19.00 (mats)
Two AETT tickets per member

Wrecked Ruggers

ON THE BLIND SIDE by John Collins
Directed and designed by Sandra Lee Paterson
Cast includes John Orcsik, Reg Gorman, John Cousins, Clive Marshall and Bill Young
Ensemble Theatre

ON THE BLIND SIDE is set in the changing room of a Golden Oldies rugby team, the sporting equivalent of a Parramatta Road car wrecker's yard. It is a comedy but with more than a touch of pathos as the players face the fact that they are "over the hill". The players' mouths are still working but the rest of the machinery is beginning to pack up . . . legs pickled by drink, lungs kippered by smoke, the Oldies struggle against age, joined by macho camaraderie, obsessed with sexual mishaps and basic bodily functions.



John Orcsik

The setting may be rugby, but the problems the characters face are not exclusive to rugby; they are those of anyone, of any sex, trying to stave off the reality of the tail end of life. The play is about tackling and in turn being tackled by our own limitations, fears and dubious achievements of our past.

Although playing at the Ensemble Theatre, the production is not by the Ensemble but by Sandra Lee Paterson who also designs and directs the cast of eleven men.

BOOKING INFORMATION
 Sat Nov 9 to Sat Nov 30
 Mon to Sat at 8.30 p.m.
 Fri and Sat at 6 p.m.
 AETT \$15.00
 G.P. \$17.50
 Pens/Stud \$14.00 (Mon to Thu)
 Two AETT tickets per member

Opera Mode

LA VIDA BREVE by Manuel de Falla
 L'HEURE ESPAGNOLE by Maurice Ravel
Conductor: Edith Rens
Director: David Pross
Tom Mann Theatre, 136 Chalmers St., Surry Hills

Under the general title ESPANA, Opera Mode will present two milestone 20th-century operas — one very Spanish and set in Madrid, the other very French but also set in Spain. Both operas will be sung in English.

LA VIDA BREVE premiered in Nice in April 1913. It is Falla's first published work and it quickly established his paternity in the Spanish Musical Renaissance. LA VIDA BREVE is a rich appeal to compassion for the perilous state of pre-revolutionary Spain. L'HEURE ESPAGNOLE premiered at Covent Garden in 1919. This opera is Ravel's dramatic statement that opera should be propelled into the 20th century. It is a witty romp championing the honest poor. ESPANA continues Opera Mode's policy of presenting the finest 20th-century operatic works at easily accessible prices.

BOOKING INFORMATION
 Nov 22, 23, 28, 29, 30 at 8 p.m.
 Sun Nov 24 at 5 p.m.
 AETT discount \$2.00
 Bookings on 871 2223
 Two AETT tickets per member

Stomping Ground

American dancer Carole Johnson visited Australia in the late sixties with the Eleo Pomare Dance Company from the USA. She returned to Australia in the early seventies and founded the Aboriginal Islander Skills Development Scheme with the view to giving the young Aboriginals of Redfern an interest and training in dance. The Scheme is funded by the Aboriginal Arts Board and the Theatre Board of the Australia Council, the NSW State Government and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. The dance group's annual production is being held at the Belvoir Street Theatre between November 14 and 24 and is called STOMPING GROUND.

The company has developed its own style of contemporary dance using Aboriginal themes and choreographed by

well-known Sydney dancers. This year the contemporary dance element will be complimented by small traditional dance groups from the Torres Strait and Yirrkala.

BOOKING INFORMATION
 Thu Nov 14 to Sun Nov 24
 Thu to Sat at 8 p.m., Sun at 5 p.m.
 AETT discount \$1.00
 Bookings on 699 3273

At the Q

REEDY RIVER by Dick Diamond
Directed by Jennifer West and Ben Gabriel
Designed by John Senczuk
Q Theatre

The Australian musical classic REEDY RIVER makes another welcome return at the Q Theatre, Penrith, later this month. It will be the first professional production of the play. Set just after the breaking of the 1891 shearers' strike, it's a tale of mateship among the shearers and love between Joe and Mary. Many favourite Australian folk songs such as "Click Go The Shears, Boys", "Reedy River" and "My Old Black Billy" are included.

BOOKING INFORMATION
 Nov 20 to Dec 15
 Wed to Sat at 8 p.m.
 Wed mat 11 a.m., Sat mat 4 p.m., Sun mat 4.30 p.m.
 AETT discount \$1.00
 Bookings on (047) 21 5735

L.A. Comics

If you want a night out before Christmas with some laughs, Kinselas is offering a package of a fixed menu dinner and a show by three leading L.A. stand-up comics. There's also dancing during the interval and after the show with the Vitabeats, an Australian couple who combine funk, comedy and big beat and have had several national hits. A limited number of show-only tickets are available at \$12 less than the package price.

BOOKING INFORMATION
 Mon to Sat at 7 p.m.
 AETT discount \$2.00
 Bookings on 331 3100

Ballet Book Offer

By special arrangement with the publishers, Macmillans, we are able to offer Members the biography "*Peggy van Praagh: A Life of Dance*" by Christopher Sexton for the reduced price of \$19.95, including postage.

A key figure in the founding and development of The Australian Ballet, Peggy van Praagh came to Australia first in 1960 as artistic director of the Borovansky Ballet. In 1962 she became artistic director of the newly created Australian Ballet and remained with the company until her retirement, in con-

troversial circumstances, at the end of 1974. She returned to the post for the whole of 1978 and earlier this year produced *COPPELIA* for the company. With the assistance from Dame Peggy, the biography is rich in detail about Australian and British ballet over the past 50 years.

Trust Biography

Trust Members will be interested to know that Brian Adams, the respected television producer and official biographer of Dame Joan Sutherland, has been commissioned by Methuens

Publishers to write the story of The Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust from the time of its inception in 1954 until the present.

Mr. Adams, producer of many of the Australian Opera/ABC Television simulcasts, has had a long association with the arts in Australia. He has produced television documentaries and literary publications which, in addition to the highly successful "*La Stupenda*" include a biography of the painter Sir William Dobell and a history of the Australian cinema. Mr. Adams is currently interviewing key figures in the Trust's history for his book due for publication in 1987.

New Directions

Comedy of our Times

OPERA OPERA!

Directed by Larry Buttrose
Presented by the A.E.T.T.

Cast: Mandy Salomon, Geoff Aldridge, Sally McKenzie, Paul Livingston and Miss Many More
Belvoir St. Theatre Downstairs

A few words from style consultant, Fiona Smout, about Opera Opera!

"Hi, and a big Xmas Kiss to all members of the Trust.

"Let me tell you a bit about OPERA OPERA! at the Belvoir. In this farce, the anti-hero, Geoffrey, has the unfortunate Social Security number of 0000000000000001 which doesn't quite match up to his blood alcohol level; his nickname is 'The Brewer's Little Mate'. His other hobby is the pursuit of the fast buck. Mandy, his wife, is sometimes a Christian, sometimes an Orangeperson (or whatever colour they are these days). What she really wants to do is join the AFC (that's the Anarcho-Feminist Commune in Annandale, not the Australian Film Commission).

"Sharing their Darlinghurst squat is Sal, the heroin addict, former prostitute and failed actress, who due to a rather

unfortunate visit to a bar once, is also a single mother. Two new arrivals join the inmates — Miss Many More, piano teacher, formerly of Railway Terrace, Lewisham, and Ludwig Leichhardt the Fifth, a central European refugee from Communism obsessed about making money out of opera in Australia. At this point, having given you a taste of the ingredients, I think I'll leave the plot to you and chance."



Mandy Salomon

BOOKING INFORMATION

From November 26
Tue to Thu 8 p.m., Fri 9 p.m.,
Sat 6 p.m. and 9 p.m.
AETT \$11.00
G.P. \$12.00
Pens/Stud \$6.00
Two AETT tickets per member

Kinetic Energy's Jubilee

DONG Xi conceived by Graham Jones in collaboration with Peter Snow, Jepke Goudsmit and Don Reid

Presented by Kinetic Energy
The Performance Space

Kinetic Energy is celebrating its 10th Birthday since its founding in 1975 by Graham Jones and has just acquired newly renovated studio premises in Newtown.

New work to be presented at the Performance Space this month reflects this change in direction. DONG Xi (Chinese for "east-west") is based on the four winds and Chinese calligraphy; it includes a birth poem and a knitting dance performed to the rhythm of a text based on knitting patterns. Both these are read by Jepke Goudsmit and were written by Peter Snow who is writing for the company under a Literature Board grant. Original music for DONG Xi is by Don Reid who has worked with Kinetic Energy for some years.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Wed Nov 6 to Sun Nov 24
Wed to Sun at 8 p.m.
AETT discount \$1.00
Bookings on 698 7235

Opening Soon

Bathroom

Northside Theatre Company at Marian Street Theatre has a cheerful frolic for this month, set in, of all places, a bathroom. Harry and Tess celebrate the completion of their new bathroom by throwing a party and it all turns into a sort of bubble bath of confusion. The guests won't get out of the new bathroom and some unexpected guests, like an ex-wife and a mother, add to the froth. It's the premiere of Donald Macdonald's second play — his first was the successful *CARAVAN* — and takes a wry look at relationships and cleanliness. Donald Macdonald is also directing.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Sun Nov 3 to Sun Nov 17
Tue to Sat at 8.15 p.m.
Sat and Sun at 5 p.m., Wed at 11 a.m.
AETT \$15.00 (Mon to Fri and mats
except Nov 6/7 evg)
G.P. \$17.00 (Tue-Thu), \$18.00 (Fri-Sun)
Pens/Stud \$12.00 (except Fri and Sat evg)
Two AETT tickets per member

Sydney Dance Company

The Sydney Dance Company presents its final 1985 season this month at the Opera Theatre, S.O.H. Two brand new works will be presented, *SHIMMERING* and *BOXES*, both choreographed by Graeme Murphy. *SHIMMERING* is a short work to live music composed by Karol Szymanowski and will feature Andrea Toy and Alfred Williams. The score for *BOXES*, which is a major work, was commissioned from Australian rock composers Iva Davies and Bob Kretschmer of the band Icehouse. Davies and Kretschmer will perform their music on stage as an integral part of the ballet.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Thu Nov 7 to Sat Nov 23
Mon to Sat at 7.30 p.m.
AETT \$20.50, G.P. \$24.50
Stud/pens \$19.50
Two AETT tickets per member

The Australian Ballet

The Australian Ballet's final programme for the year will follow the Sydney Dance Company into the Opera House from November 29 to December 19. It will be a double bill with renowned Danish dancer Erik Bruhn presenting his production of August Bournonville's *LA SYLPHIDE*. Bruhn is artistic director of the National Ballet of Canada. In contrast to the classical *SYLPHIDE*, Paul Taylor's *AUREOLE* will be the second work of the programme. It is a contemporary ballet and danced to the music of Handel.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Fri Nov 29 to Thu Dec 19
Mon to Sat at 7.30 p.m. (except Mon Dec 16 at 6.30 p.m.)
Sat mat at 1.30 p.m.
AETT \$35.00, G.P. \$38.00
Pens/Stud \$28.00
Two AETT tickets per member

Member Activities

ANNUAL ART EXHIBITION

Friday, November 15 to Sunday, November 17

Members and Friends are warmly invited to attend the Opening Party of the Sydney Committee's 1985 Art Exhibition to be held for the first time in the Exhibition Hall of the Sydney Opera House. The Exhibition will be opened by Noel Ferrier at 7 p.m. on Friday, November 15 and will continue from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. As usual there'll be a wide range of paintings and pottery by the well-known potter Conchita. Tickets for the opening night party are \$16.00.

VICTORIAN ARTS CENTRE TOUR

Friday, November 22 to Sunday, November 24

There are still places available to join Members Committee President, Shirley Hay, on her visit to Melbourne. The tour is arranged primarily to sample the

delights of the new Arts Centre but there'll be opportunity too to see something of Melbourne and the Victorian countryside. The weekend will include performances of *LOHENGRAN* by Victorian State Opera and of The Australian Ballet's *THE MERRY WIDOW* at the Centre. There'll be a day trip to the Dandenongs and dinner on Melbourne's famed tram car restaurant which takes you around the city as you eat! The cost for the weekend, which includes airfares, accommodation at Melbourne's elegant Regency Hotel, lunches, dinners, opera and ballet tickets and the country tour, is \$595.

CAMDEN PARK SON ET LUMIERE

Saturday, December 7 at 6.30 p.m.

To celebrate the anniversary of Camden Park, the Macarthur Stanham family invite the public to join the festivities by attending a rare and novel evening's presentation. This will involve a tour of the property, a three-course dinner with

wine on the lawns and a professional Son et Lumiere performance written especially for the celebrations. We are arranging bus transport and pickups will be made on the North Shore and at Strathfield and Liverpool. Members are welcome to make their own travel arrangements and meet us there if they wish. The coach will depart Kings Cross at 4.45 p.m. Tickets, which include transport, dinner and the Son et Lumiere are \$52 by coach or \$45 if you use your own transport.

TEA WITH THE MARIONETTES

Thursday, November 28 at 10.30 a.m.

Join us for a pre-Xmas get-together in the convivial atmosphere of the Sydney Sailors Home surrounded by all their delightful puppets. We hope we might persuade the puppeteers to work a few of them for us! For those who'd like to make a day of it in The Rocks we'll be arranging lunch afterwards at a local restaurant. Morning tea tickets are \$5.00 each. Friends are very welcome!

What's On Out-of-Town

Playing from November 5 to 9 at the Canberra Theatre is the ever-popular **ROCKY HORROR SHOW**. This spoof of B grade movies by New Zealand writer Richard O'Brien has itself been made into a film which has gathered a cult following. Peter Batey directs this touring production which stars Joe Daniels in the central role of Frank-N-Furter.

Following at the Theatre Centre on November 21 is **Tempo Theatre's** production of **HELLO DOLLY!** starring Lola Nixon and Simon Gallaher. With music by Jerry Herman, Hello Dolly! has become the third longest-running musical comedy on Broadway. Based on Thornton Wilder's play **THE MATCH-MAKER** it tells the hilarious adventures of Dolly Levi, a matchmaker in New York at the turn of the century.

Ken Granneman, who is well known to patrons of Theatre A.C.T., has devised and will direct a new musical theatre

work, **THE BIG APPLE**, at the Playhouse, Canberra from November 19 to 23. The musical looks at the way people try to excite themselves and in a series of musical vignettes follows the progress of Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden to the city. It is being staged in a particularly interesting way, commencing with a fairly sparse set which draws on the audience's imagination. But as the production develops so too does the set — put together by a group of Droids — while the action on stage continues.

Meanwhile, at the A.N.U. Arts Centre, Black Ink is mounting a production of **JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAMCOAT** which will be presented from November 22. Written by Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber it is a dazzling rainbow mix of music, song and action which appeals to all age groups. The Canberra production is directed by Paul Corcoran.

One of Theatre South's most successful productions in 1984 was Carmel Power's **WONDERFUL WOLLONGONG**. A new revue by the same author, **EVEN MORE WONDERFUL WOLLONGONG**, opens at the Bridge Theatre on November 14. The production includes skits, music, dancing, and a play within a play with the title, wait for it, **PASSION IN THE PLATE MILL**.

Children under eight years who live in the Wollongong area have a special treat in store for them when Melbourne's renowned **Australian Nouveau Theatre** presents **PUPPY LOVE** at the Bridge Theatre from November 16 to 29. Bruce Keller plays a puppy who shows the children the world through the puppy's eyes.

AETT discount applicable all performances. See local press for booking information.

Focus on Films

BURKE AND WILLS directed by Graeme Clifford

Screenplay by Michael Thomas

Produced by Graeme Clifford and John Sexton

Music by Peter Sculthorpe

Starring Jack Thompson, Nigel Havers and Greta Scacchi

Opening November 7 at Hoyts Centre

Melbourne's big year of celebrations for its 150th birthday includes the Royal Premiere of **BURKE AND WILLS** before the Prince and Princess of Wales on November 1. Victoria is a fitting choice for the premiere as one of Burke's commissions during the fated trip was to grab land for the Victorian land barons before fellow explorer and rival, John McDougall Stuart, did the same for a South Australian syndicate.

A true tragedy that should be familiar to all Australians, the Burke and Wills expedition set out with vast resources of men, animals, wagons and equipment only to be soon forgotten and neglected by their fickle backers in Melbourne.

Much of the film's interest lies in the contrast in the personalities of its two main characters, the imperious Irish cavalry officer turned policeman Burke (Jack Thompson) and his second in command, the stoic and gentlemanly Wills (Nigel Havers), disciplined by his English public school background. Greta Scacchi plays the beautiful soprano, Julia Matthews, who is to marry Burke when the expedition returns. Jack Thompson says he accepted the role of Burke because *"the script is about winners and being proud of the human spirit these men so obviously had"*.



Nigel Havers as William Wills

BOOKING INFORMATION

Concessional vouchers can be purchased from the AETT and exchanged at Hoyts, Greater Union and Village cinemas for tickets. The vouchers are open dated but some Saturday/Public Holiday restrictions apply to their use. See vouchers for details.

G.U. \$5.50 (\$1 saving), Hoyts \$5.00 (\$1.50 saving), Village \$5.00 (\$1.50 saving). Please note, no handling fee applies to film vouchers and members may purchase as many as they wish.

Discounts are also offered at the Dendy Cinema, Martin Place (\$2.50), and the Academy Twin, Paddington (\$2.50), at all performances except after midday Saturday. Members should present their membership card at the box office. Discount available on one ticket per member.

Bullie's House in America

by Irvin S. Bauer

It seems like an eternity, although only 1980, that I attended the opening night of *BULLIE'S HOUSE* by Tom Keneally at the Nimrod Theatre in Sydney. I felt wired. I couldn't remember when I had been so excited in the theatre. Tom Keneally, with seven characters and one simple set had put his finger delicately on the pulse beat of humanity in a dramatic and thrilling way. His language, emotional as well as literal, fascinated me. It harked back to the ritual beginnings of mankind, and if that's not the markings of true theatre, I don't know what is.

Alas, the critics were less thrilled than I was and the play was discreetly dismissed. Of course there were things wrong with it. It was uneven, confusing in places, wordy, unintelligible at times. Simply put . . . it didn't work. But I felt it could be fixed and if it was . . . what an exciting evening's theatre it would be. I told Tom that I would option the play but I wouldn't produce it the way it was. I would bring him to New York where I would conduct a non-performance workshop to make the necessary adjustments in preparation for production in the United States. My experience convinced me that the sheer power of the work, the revelation of the Aboriginal culture and uniqueness of the piece would appeal to American audiences.

It took two years for me to get Tom to New York. Gordon Chater, gracious as always, consented to participate (in the workshop), as did Michael Allison, who replaced Rex Harrison in *MY FAIR LADY* and Larry Lott, a fine actor who had spent a number of years in Oz and knew the sound. Since there are no Aborigines roaming the streets of New York, I used East Indians for the Aboriginal roles. Their sound was close enough and their demeanor suited the play. Tom was wonderful in workshop. Collaboration, like marriage, when it doesn't work can be horrendous. This one worked. It was useful, lucid, productive . . . and fun. All that stuff about plays being fixed in production, forget it . . . it never happens. You have to go into production with the play pretty



Left to right, back row: Josef Sommer, Tommy Lewis, Richard Walley, Kathleen Norris, Justine Saunders, Peter Allen and Ernie Dingo
Kneeling: Paul Pryor, Ron Frazier

much ready and then the director can do what he or she is supposed to do . . . direct. It was during the workshop that Ken Frankel, Associate Artistic Director of The Long Wharf in New Haven, Connecticut became interested in the play. I invited him to attend a session and he was intrigued and asked to see the revised script which he was immediately sent. He and The Long Wharf were enthusiastic and finally . . . as usual, it all came down to money. If funds could be found to transport the Aboriginal actors, then The Long Wharf would schedule the play combining three American actors with the four Aboriginal actors and one musician to play the didgeridoo, which was germane to the play. Thank God for the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust, who, after reading the new version and putting up with my ear bashing, allocated funds to bring Ken Frankel and myself to Australia to gain the co-operation of the Aboriginal Arts Board, to do what research we could, and hopefully cast the play for The Long Wharf.

It took another trip but Ken Frankel cast the Aboriginal parts and on a day in March, 1985, Ernie Dingo from Western Australia, Paul Pryor from Queensland, Justine Saunders, the only member of the original production of *BULLIE'S HOUSE*, Tommy Lewis — a real Ozzie film star — the lead in *THE CHANT OF JIMMY BLACKSMITH*, and Richard Walley, an accomplished musician from Western Australia, who would play the didgeridoo and act as Assistant Director, boarded a plane for the U.S. of A. The group's arrival in New Haven was auspicious. Flash bulbs popped, TV cameras blazed . . . news conferences were scheduled. It was certainly a media event and the press and TV gobbled it up. Even the New York Times did a three-column piece.

Rehearsals started immediately. The first read throughs, with halting explanations on Ken Frankel's part, were tense and tentative. The American actors were friendly, calm, helpful to a fault. The Aboriginal actors were spontaneous and

frightened. It was like two boxers feeling each other out in the opening round with the referee desperately trying to stay out of the way. I'll never forget that first week of rehearsal. Tommy Lewis attacked the play, learned all his lines in the first days. He was a professional, wasn't he? And if Tommy had done it . . . could Ernie Dingo, Paul Pryor or Justine Saunders do less? So by the end of the fourth day the Aboriginal actors were off the book. The American actors walked the scenes, book in hand, groping, stammering, struggling for meaning, while the Aboriginal actors bounded about performing up a storm. The fact that the lines were wrong most of the time or just weren't there . . . pause . . . pause . . . pause . . . was the price. 'Twas a huge mess. Then there was the eight or ten hour rehearsal day. It soon became apparent that the Aboriginal actors, due to experience, temperament . . . living habits, were finding the long hours confining and a bit claustrophobic. Little by little the adjustments were made. Books were taken in hand once more, although I don't think Tommy ever picked up his again.

The rest of the rehearsal period proceeded in the usual way . . . long . . . repetitive, an occasional bright moment when something came together, when a little magic happened, when an actor made the lines work. And it all happens very slowly, with painstaking concentration. (Then) after weeks of intensive rehearsal, we were finally approaching The First Preview. A week of preview performances had been scheduled before opening night to test the play in front of audiences. As the big night, Friday, April 26 arrived, everyone was tense and anticipatory. Would it all fall together . . . it was with all kinds of jangled nerves that I walked into the Green Room, the actor lounge, attached to the dressing rooms, outside the Long Wharf II and bumped into the whole group clustered around the coffee urn listening intently to Chicka Dixon, the Chairman of the Aboriginal Arts Board, who had materialised as if from nowhere. Nobody knew he was coming, yet there he was, big as life. *"The first night my kids were playing in America . . . he told me later, no way I wasn't going to be there."* He was telling the Aboriginal actors how important what they were doing was for the Aboriginal community. He said that it wasn't just a play . . . but for all the little ones back home they were examples . . .

Chicka was inspiring, and they were thrilled that he had come to be with them. His timing couldn't have been better. And they went off to do battle charged. We got through in great fashion. Nobody went up. The play remained intact . . . it even made sense and better still, the audience responded very well.

Opening night is always something special . . . There were presents for the actors. The table in the Green Room was full of bottles of champagne and wine and flowers and plants. Everyone wished everyone congratulations and good luck. A night of loud ovations and small touching gestures. The audience was enthusiastic, triumph was in the air. Arvin Brown, Artistic Director of The Long Wharf Theatre, had this to say . . . *"I view BULLIE'S HOUSE as a completely successful experience for The Long Wharf Theatre. Our audience encountered a totally foreign set of cultural symbols, became acquainted with a new vocabulary and responded with great excitement to the individual performances of the Aboriginal actors. The members of our company found themselves becoming unofficial interpreters of our theatrical system and the American way of life in general. The stretch towards each other, of the visitors and the locals, was not accomplished free of stress, but contact was made, and made powerfully. The event will not be forgotten for a long time to come."*

Massachusetts, to cover the play for The Boston Sunday Globe wrote: *"Wonger, Wonger", "Djangawal", "The Wawerlog Sister", and I think, "Oopsie Doopsie". These are among the first words spoken in "BULLIE'S HOUSE" which, according to Mr. Kelly's sensibility, "is a nearly incomprehensible play". But then we have immediately afterwards, Kathy O'Connell's retort in her review in the Middletown Press . . . "Thomas Keneally's BULLIE'S HOUSE can really only be taken on its own terms. Though it does employ all the traditional elements of modern drama, it's sensibility is something else again. Unless you do a bit of studying beforehand — arrive early to read the glossary of Aboriginal terms posted in the lobby (though not in the programs, which would have been far more sensible) at Long Wharf's Stage II and read the program notes carefully, you're as likely to come away from this disturbing and revealing play as confused as the Boston Globe's Kevin Kelly. Kelly ordinarily a very sensible critic called 'BULLIE'S HOUSE' 'nearly incomprehensible' and while it is not as though Aboriginal culture is as readily accessible as say that of certain regions of Africa, it's not incomprehensible at all if you can grasp the most important tenet governing the lives of the Aboriginal characters: there is a reason for everything, and a spirit controlling that reason."*

R. C. Hammerich, the Springfield Morning Union said, *"It is a powerful*



Left to right: Paul Pryor (Richard Walley in background), Tommy Lewis standing over Ernie Dingo

The audiences had loved us, could the critics be far behind? The next morning was the moment of truth. Kevin Kelly, who came all the way from Boston,

play. The cultural and emotional points it makes are strong, and it's theatrical impact is impressive." Ruth Lesser in the New Haven Journal Courier said, *"The*

plot of *BULLIE'S HOUSE* is absorbing and the production is impressive and effective, from design through special effects." Then there were those like Mr. Kelly, who didn't get it, were baffled, didn't like it . . . couldn't recommend it. Owen McNally in the *Current*, "Australian Aboriginal traditions run head on into modern white culture with tragic results in *'BULLIE'S HOUSE'*, an interesting but laborious play." Leah D. Frank in the *Standford Sunday Advocate*: "American audiences have been raised on the rapid pacing of television and films. Legitimate theatre dies if the audience, geared to quick-paced action, knows immediately what's going to happen."

Some liked it . . . some didn't get it . . . all for the same reason. I guess the proof of the pudding is in the eating. As far as *BULLIE'S HOUSE* was concerned it translated into bums on seats. And I can tell you that people came. The houses were packed. The audiences were enthusiastic. And that wasn't the end of it. Offers were made to move the play. Howard J. Barnett, a Broadway producer, came to see it, was so taken with the play that he wanted to move it to the Annenberg Arts Center, one of the leading arts complexes in the States, located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and then move it to the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., where he felt it would be very well received because of the diplomatic community residing in Washington. He felt that after the Washington run it would be a natural to move on to Broadway. Mr. Barnett said that the reason he was so impressed with the play, was that "It didn't beat it's chest . . . had dramatic appeal about important basic truths, truths that we, all of us, need to be reminded of. To me, it was not just a play about Aborigines and their problems but was a situation everybody faces throughout the world every day." We all knew that there was no chance of moving the show then but it was nice to know we were wanted. Arrangements with Actors Equity provided only for a limited run of six weeks at The Long Wharf and that was it.

A lively six-week run it was, I'll tell you that. Members of the audience lingered in the theatre after the play ended to continue the experience. They would wait by the stage door for a chance to talk to the actors. They wanted to know everything — about the "Dreamtime", life in Australia . . . how Richard got that

wonderful sound out of the didgeridoo . . . was the dance that Paul did really part of a ritual? And the audiences weren't only local. All kinds of people trekked the two-hundred-odd miles from New York City to see the play. Peter Allen, one of music's superstars came because he had worked with Richard Walley in Australia, was curious about the play, and I think, as a sign of solidarity. You could tell that something significant had happened in New Haven at The Long Wharf Theatre.

Then all too soon it was June 9. It was all over. Before this last performance, I had walked around the dressing rooms, for what I knew would be the last time, saying my "thank you's" to the actors. They were, each and every one of them — Ernie, Justine, Tom, Paul and Richard — simply terrific. They didn't go up in smoke as promised, walkabout, no catastrophes, performances were not cancelled, "because of" as predicted. Like any other actors, they did their jobs. They were on time for and played every performance. They were always themselves, simple, open, friendly, sometimes moody, proud of being Aborigines . . . and proud to be Australians.

Of course, some performances were better than others . . . But that is true of any long run and four weeks rehearsal, and six weeks of performances is a long run. And there's more. Performances grew and were enriched. Justine for one, never stopped working. Her work as an actress was a surprise. I had been told, with knowing assurance, that she was adequate and experienced. We would be safe to take her. Again the pundits were wrong. She was terrific. She kept working her role long after opening night . . . looking for insights . . . asking questions . . . trying for deeper shadings. And her work and concern showed in her increasingly fine performances. Ernie Dingo made something noble out of Bullie and the more he put himself into it, for Ernie Dingo is quite a piece of work, the richer, bigger, fuller the part of Bullie became and the clearer the meaning of the play was felt. Tommy Lewis channelled his frustration and homesickness into a smoldering, angry performance that often electrified the audience. Paul Pryor found a reservoir of humour in the old man he played, extraordinary for an actor twenty-six years young. Richard Walley, without saying one word, became an incredible haunting presence

on stage. He anchored the play and the rich tones he found on the didgeridoo were the perfect counterpoint and fulfilment of the plays silent meanings.

What a special group of Australian Aboriginal actors. What a special group of actors. This is not to say that the American actors were not wonderful as well. No group of actors I have ever worked with tried as hard, cared as much or performed more valiantly. They continually displayed their long training and abundant skills in the service of the play. One small "but" . . . they never really got the Australian rhythms . . . so some things never played right. Some of the humour implicit in the text was lost in language. Some of the drama was muted. This pertinent aspect of the play's fulfilment was compounded by the fact that Ken Frankel, experienced and perceptive a director as he was, didn't know that the rhythms were wrong and so didn't hear or see the need for adjustments. And then if you carry this line to its logical conclusion . . . since the American audiences didn't realise that there was anything wrong, they enjoyed the production for what it was and further believed that they were seeing a fully conceived rendering of what was meant by the text.

That last night, as Tom and I watched from the light booth, the audience *en masse* rose to their feet cheering. Tom quietly turned to me, "I'm very touched," he said, "to discover that American actors and audiences understand the spirit and dynamics of the play . . . The play actually encouraged people of diverse cultures American, Australian, Aboriginal, to come together . . . to reach out to each other . . . to understand and feel for each other . . . to think about each other. That was worth doing." I don't know where it came from but I found myself saying "Too right Digger . . . that was worth doing."

Irvin S. Bauer is a Playwright-Producer based in New York where he heads THE DEVELOPMENT STAGE, a place where the Writer is encouraged to fulfil the potential of his work. He is the New York correspondent for Trust News, writing "On Stage in New York" which appears bi-monthly.

On Stage in London...

by Margaret Leask

As promised in my last column — a brief report on Alan Ayckbourne's new comedy at the National — **A CHORUS OF DISAPPROVAL**. A highly entertaining play and production now in the Olivier Theatre's repertoire, **CHORUS** is a superb demonstration of Ayckbourne's talent for wringing laughter out of despair. Set around an amateur operatic company's production of **THE BEGGAR'S OPERA**, we follow the fortunes of Guy from his first tentative audition to his shunning by the company (including the Welsh director, wonderfully conveyed by a shambling Michael Gambon, and his neglected wife — with whom Guy has an affair), after various business and personal deals which have gone on "behind the scenes". One of Ayckbourne's best plays, it shows "how art consumes, shapes and organises life, leaving its participants sadder and wiser". (The Guardian.)

Also at the National, following what appears to be irreconcilable differences between director (Peter Hall) and author over casting, John Osborne's **THE ENTERTAINER** has been withdrawn from the current repertoire (before going into production) and replaced by Shaw's **MRS. WARREN'S PROFESSION** with Joan Plowright. Meanwhile, Alan Bates



Amanda Waring plays the lead role in **GIGI** at the Lyric Theatre



Gerard Murphy as Theseus and Glenda Jackson in the title role of **PHEDRE** at the Aldwych Theatre

opens on November 25 in the Olivier in a new play by Peter Shaffer — **YONADAB**, directed by Hall.

In the West End, at the Lyric Theatre, Lerner and Loewe's musical **GIGI**, directed by John Dexter, has just opened with Amanda Waring (Dorothy Tutin's daughter) as the initially gauche Gigi who moves to womanly maturity. Re-written as a stage musical, especially for the Lyric Theatre, it has four new additional songs and new orchestrations (from the film version adapted from Colette's best-selling novel). With Beryl Reid, Sian Phillips and Jean-Pierre Aumont also in the cast, it is already booking into 1986.

At the Aldwych until December 14, Philip Prowse's production of **PHEDRE**, translated from Racine's drama, returns to the London stage after an initial success at the Old Vic last year. Glenda Jackson repeats her stunning performance as Phedre, passionately and tragically in love with her stepson. Philip Prowse is one of the principal talents of the remarkable Glasgow Citizens' Theatre in Scotland and was recently much acclaimed for his production of **THE DUCHESS OF MALFI** at the National Theatre.

The Arts Council of Great Britain has just launched a campaign to obtain more funds for the arts from the Government at a time when metropolitan borough councils, who have contributed considerably to the arts in the past, are being dissolved. The Arts Council has produced a prospectus entitled **A GREAT BRITISH SUCCESS STORY** by which it seeks to show that arts subsidy yields substantial financial and economic returns. It suggests that most of the money invested by the Government in the arts is quickly recouped in taxes, that the arts increase the employment count more cheaply than any other measures, and that they regenerate the depressed inner cities. It seems, however, that these arguments are falling on unsympathetic ears — the new Arts Minister in Mrs. Thatcher's Government has already begun to make it clear that the Government, despite the fact that it is dissolving the metropolitan councils, does not feel any obligation to contribute more to the arts subsidy. Can the belt be any tighter?

Margaret Leask is a former editor of *Trust News* now living in London where she is an artist's agent.

Brighton Beach Memoirs

“One of the finest comedy-dramas American theatre has ever had” is how Variety described **BRIGHTON BEACH MEMOIRS**, playing at the York Theatre, Seymour Centre, during November. The hero is the teenage son of a Jewish family in Brooklyn during the depression. Played by Miles Buchanan, Eugene has two ambitions — to be a writer and to learn about sex. Against the family background he comments to the audience on events as they take place. It is an autobiographical play, both funny and sad, by Neil Simon, which won the Best Play Award of the 1983 N.Y. Drama Critics Circle. The first play in a trilogy, the second part **BILOXI BLUES**, is playing on Broadway and recently won the 1985 Tony Award for Best Play. American director Ron Link is directing **BRIGHTON BEACH** and the cast includes Jill Perryman and Judi Farr.

AETT discount \$4.00
Bookings on 692 0555

The Real Thing

Jeremy Irons played the lead in the Broadway production of **THE REAL THING**, the new Tom Stoppard play at the Opera House Drama Theatre. The Sydney Theatre Company production stars John Bell and Jacki Weaver. The play has strong overtones of the Coward style of barbed wit, with nice lines like *“I abhor cliché. It’s one of the things that has kept me faithful”*, a quote from the play within the play. That’s what **THE REAL THING** is about — the theatre and there’s so much play acting going on that it’s hard to distinguish what’s real and what isn’t. Hence the title. Henry, played by John Bell, is a playwright, successful, sophisticated and a polisher of epigrams. His wife, Charlotte (Jacki Weaver), is an actress and leading lady in Henry’s current West End success. Add the leading man in Henry’s play and HIS wife and the romantic complications are endless.

AETT discount \$3.00
Bookings on 250 1777

Tears Before Bedtime

Dame Edna is with us all this month as she continues her season of **TEARS BEFORE BEDTIME** at Her Majesty’s Theatre. She brings us no less than three new songs created by her alter ego Barrie Humphries. The show’s curious title comes from the traditional mother’s exhortation *“Don’t get too excited or there will be tears before bedtime”*. AETT discount \$3.00 (Mon to Thu)
Bookings on 266 4800

Jonah Jones

Set in Redfern in the early 1900s, the new Australian musical **JONAH JONES** is a mirror of the seamier side of Sydney life in that period. Commissioned in 1979 by the Sydney Theatre Company, it was adapted for the stage by John Romeril from the Louis Stone novel *“Jonah”*. Originally envisaged as a play, it “grew” into a musical and Romeril selected Alan John to compose the score. **JONAH JONES** is a hunchback who works as a part-time bootmaker by day but is the leader of the feared Botany Bay Road Push at night. Enraged that his employee will not give him sufficient work to keep his wife and child, Jonah opens his own shop and as *“Jonah the Boot”* becomes a successful business man. It’s at the Wharf Theatre throughout November and stars Simon Burke as Jonah with Peter Carroll, Michelle Fawdon, Tony Taylor and Geraldine Turner.

AETT discount \$3.00
Bookings on 250 1777

Bouncers

Running continuously in the UK since its premiere in 1983, **BOUNCERS** plays at the Downstairs Theatre of the Seymour Centre throughout November. The rituals of the provincial English disco scene are not pretty or decorous so the show won’t appeal to the easily shocked but author John Godber has portrayed its habitues in the way that Time Out described as *“hideously funny”*. The four actors work hard in this show; they play a total of 50 roles varying from nightclub bouncers to working-class girls.

The Downstairs Theatre has been transformed into a disco with tables and chairs and disco music to set the atmosphere for the show.

AETT discount \$3.00
Bookings on 692 0555

Cats

If you don’t like those noisy, nocturnal prowlers with their furry, flattering ways, I suggest you don’t go to the Theatre Royal because it’s full of them and they won’t be put out with the milk bottles. I’m talking about **CATS** of course and they are in full voice with Debbie Byrne leading the pack. It would be nice to be able to book for next week but with this show it’s just not possible. The only way to get seats is to book ahead and we’ve set aside prime Stall seats for performances in the New Year.

BOOKING INFORMATION

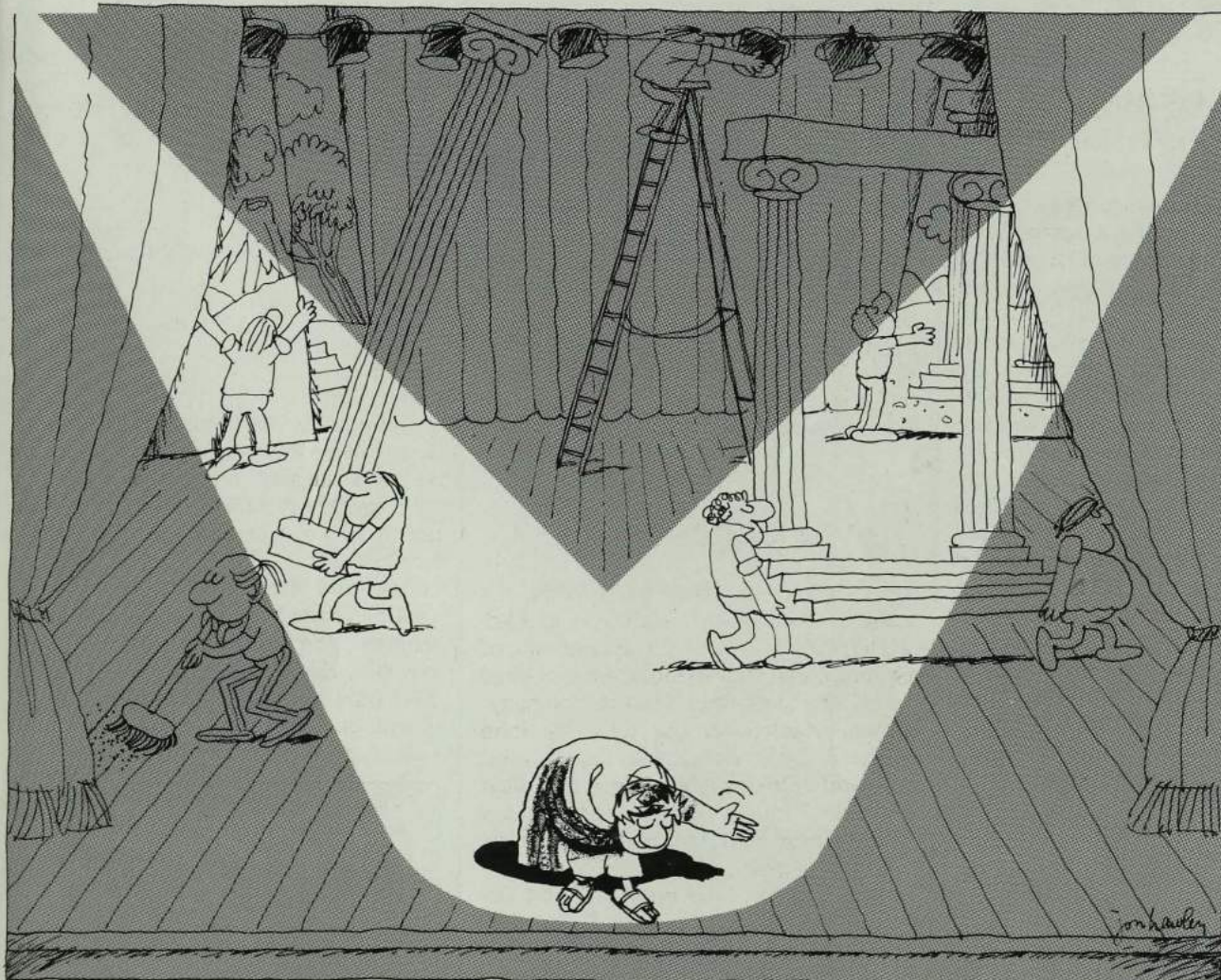
Mon Feb 10, Tue Feb 18, Wed Feb 26 at 8 p.m.
Sat Apr 5 at 2 p.m.
AETT \$37.00, G.P. \$39.00
No pens/stud discount
Two AETT tickets per member
Discount unavailable at Theatre Royal

Crown Matrimonial

The abdication of Edward VIII was not only a worldwide sensation, it was also a private family crisis in the House of Windsor. **CROWN MATRIMONIAL** portrays the turbulence within the Royal Family circle in 1936. The play is directed by Peter Williams at the Opera House Playhouse. In the cast is John Hamblin who, like June Salter and several other players, was in the original production. It will continue throughout November.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Tue to Sat at 8 p.m.
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The Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust receives financial assistance for its activities from:

The Music, Theatre and Aboriginal Arts boards of The Australia Council a statutory body of the Commonwealth Government.

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