

Australian Classic Adapted For The Stage

AN IMAGINARY LIFE based on the novel by David Malouf

Directed and designed by Kim Carpenter

Music by Richard Vella

Lighting by John Rayment

Cast: Norman Kaye, Alexander Hay, Christine Mahoney, Mary Haire, Ira Seidenstein and Lorenzo Avolio

Belvoir Street Theatre

From the tinkle and chatter and glitter of the cocktail party circuit, a celebrated poet, the toast of the town, is suddenly plunged into exile. In coat and hat, he finds himself in a timeless barren world, so cold it freezes for eight months of the year. Its people are voluminously cloaked against the cold, and speak a language that is totally strange. In this alien world he is taken in by a family and develops some communication; he glimpses a wild boy who seems to represent the innocence of his lost childhood. Obsessed, he captures the boy and a touching relationship develops. From the Poet being the boy's protector, the roles gradually reverse and the boy opens the Poet's eyes to the beauty of his child's world.

When director-designer Kim Carpenter first read David Malouf's award-winning book AN IMAGINARY LIFE, three years ago, he didn't expect it to be transferred to the stage, but it stayed in his subconscious, and the idea of it being translated into a piece of visual and musical theatre gradually developed.

Carpenter's idea of the story being told through images and sound with minimal dialogue appealed to David Malouf. With the guarantee of financial and production support from the AETT's Australian Content Department, which is subsidised by the Theatre Board of the Australia Council, a workshop was set up in October last year with the six actors, composer Richard Vella, the stage manager and director-designer Carpenter to explore the book and consider its theatrical possibilities.

Norman Kaye who starred in the film MAN OF FLOWERS was, to Carpenter, the ideal choice for the role of the Poet.



During workshop for AN IMAGINARY LIFE. (Left to right back) Lorenzo Avolio, Mary Haire, Christine Mahoney, Alexander Hay (sitting), Norman Kaye, Ira Seidenstein

"He has a Jacques Tati quality. We had worked together before and there was a rapport and a lot of trust between us", he said. Skills in singing, dance and mime were a pre-requisite for all members of the cast.

To produce the mix of wordless human voices and instruments that composer Vella envisaged for the play, he used a computer and the facilities of the NSW Conservatorium to produce a tape to back up the live music and voices on stage.

AN IMAGINARY LIFE poses a lot of questions. Is the Poet's journey real for example or is he living out his next book? Carpenter claims that despite its serious underlying mysteries, the play has its light side. "There is a lot of irony and humour because it's a ridiculous situa-

tion; the absurdity of a man in a hat and coat stranded in the desert." AN IMAGINARY LIFE opens at the Belvoir Street Theatre on February 19. February 21 is Trust Members night when the Premier and Minister for the Arts, the Hon. Neville Wran who awarded AN IMAGINARY LIFE his literary prize in 1979 will be guest of honour. Tickets are \$20 which includes after show supper. (See Member Activities p. 8).

BOOKING INFORMATION

Tue to Fri at 8 p.m.

Sat at 5 p.m. and 8 p.m.

Sun at 5 p.m.

AETT \$11.00

G.P. \$15.00

Pens/Stud \$7.50

Two AETT tickets per member

Billie Whitelaw in Beckett Triple Bill

ROCKABY, FOOTFALLS, & ENOUGH by Samuel Beckett
Directed for the New York season by the late Alan Schneider
Starring Billie Whitelaw
Everest Theatre, Seymour Centre

Beckett aficionados and in fact, any keen theatre-goers, will be excited by the coming visit to Australia of Billie Whitelaw, the English actress who has been described as "the voice, body and soul of Samuel Beckett". After five performances at the Adelaide Festival early in March, she will present three short Beckett pieces (in the one programme) at the Seymour Centre from March 8 to March 29.

Since her first Beckett play in 1964, Billie Whitelaw has worked together closely with Beckett on each of his plays in which she has appeared. "Beckett says that when he writes he hears my voice. When I perform I hear his. So what you've got coming out of my mouth is a mixture of my voice and his, and I think that's unique", she says.

New York critics raved about her appearances last year in the triple bill she will present in Australia. "It's possible that you haven't really lived until you've watched Bill Whitelaw die . . . Mr Beckett and Miss Whitelaw make time stop and it's a sensation that no theatre-goer will soon forget", said Frank Rich of The New York Times.



Billie Whitelaw

The programme opens with her reading of a short story, ENOUGH, a monologue about a sometimes difficult, sometimes luminous, long-ago but well remembered relationship which might be construed as a love affair. This is followed by FOOTFALLS, in which, pacing endlessly in a small rectangle of light, she talks with the offstage voice of an aged and ailing mother. In frayed gown and bent-backed, she is a middle-aged crone trapped by circumstances and barely relating to reality except through the sound of her footsteps.

The final play, ROCK-A-BYE is a prime example of Beckett's playwriting genius. A woman in a rocking chair rocks herself to death; she speaks only one word, "more", repeated four times, but the words are interspersed with taped speeches, the tortured final convolutions of her consciousness and her desolation, waiting for death.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Sat Mar 8 to Sat Mar 29 (excluding Mar 17, 18 and 28)
 Mon to Thu at 8.30 p.m.
 Fri and Sat at 7 p.m. and 9 p.m.
 AETT \$18.00 (until Mar 21)
 G.P. \$21.00
 Pens/Stud \$16.00 (except Fri/Sat)

Thirties Musical Revived

ME AND MY GIRL by Noel Gay
Book and lyrics by L. Arthur Rose and Douglas Furber
Revised by Stephen Fry
Directed by Mike Ockrent
Set design by Martin Johns
Costume design by Ann Curtis
Cast: David Waters, Julie Haseler, David Ravenswood, Faye Donaldson, Jackie Rees, Tony Harvey and Ron Shand
Her Majesty's Theatre

The first production of Noel Gay's ME AND MY GIRL opened in London at the Victoria Palace in 1937 and ran for a phenomenal 1,646 performances. It featured a famous song, "The Lambeth Walk" which became a dance craze and a famous star, Lupino Lane in the central role of Bill Snibson. The show was revised and revived with great success at London's Adelphi Theatre in February last



Julie Haseler in ME AND MY GIRL

year and the Australian production opened in Melbourne early last month. The Australian production was mounted by the original London director, Mike Ockrent. Reviewing the production in THE AUSTRALIAN, Dennis Davison said, "the spectacular sets, splendid period costumes, the tuneful songs . . . the vigorous dancing, the crystal-clear . . . lyrics, the deft direction, all combined to produce a dazzling entertainment."

ME AND MY GIRL, is the story of a sharp-witted, lovable Cockney lad who turns out to be a long-lost earl. Along with his Lambeth sweetheart, Sally, he creates chaos at his ancestral seat, Hareford Hall as his noble relatives attempt a Pygmalion style integration. As well as a tap-dancing duet to the title song by Bill and Sally, the songs include the show-stopping "Lambeth Walk", "Leaning on a Lamp Post" and "Once you Lose Your Heart".

BOOKING INFORMATION

Mon to Sat at 8 p.m.
 Wed and Sat mats at 2 p.m.
 AETT \$23.90 (Mon to Thu), \$25.90 (Fri & Sat), \$20.90 (mat)
 G.P. \$27.90 (Mon to Thu), \$29.90 (Fri & Sat), \$22.90 (mat)
 Pens/Stud \$23.90 (Mon to Thu), \$18.90 (mat)
 Two AETT tickets per member

Graeme Blundell Joins Kinselas

Well-known Australian actor/director Graeme Blundell has accepted an appointment as artistic director of Kinselas nightclub. He remains associate

director with the Melbourne Theatre Company and will continue to visit Melbourne regularly. Graeme hopes to establish stylistic continuity at Kinselas so people know to expect a certain type of show there. The first show with which he will be involved will open at Kinselas in March. It is a transfer season of **BOUNCERS** which played at the Seymour Theatre Downstairs at the end of last year. **BOUNCERS** follows Kinselas current season of **SIRENS** by the Sydney Dance Company.

Further details will appear in March T.N.

Theatre of the Deaf Mounts New Play

The Theatre of the Deaf will add one new show to its theatre-in-education programme for the beginning of 1986. The new production, **SILENT VIDEO**, is the second play to be written for the company by well-known young people's theatre playwright, Richard Tulloch. It is designed for primary age children and shows the frustrations and difficulties of deafness and challenges hearing people's perceptions of what deaf people can and cannot do.

Tulloch's first play for the Theatre of the Deaf, **ODD BODS**, a very successful show for infants schools, will continue to run for the first term of 1986 along with the company's popular secondary school production, **THE BUNDLE OF STICKS**, by Greg McCart. All three plays will be available from Monday, February 24, plus demonstrations and workshops in the techniques of non-verbal communications and visual theatre for all ages. Bookings can be made with Susan Bell on 357 1200.

Alan Ayckbourn Season

Continuing their Festival of Laughter, the Ensemble Theatre will present a play by one of England's most popular and prolific dramatists. Alan Ayckbourn's plays have delighted audiences everywhere with their gentle humour at the expense of the English middle classes and their marital power games. **RELATIVELY SPEAKING** has its fair share of mistaken identities, white

lies, a mistress, wife, girlfriend, jealous boyfriend and husband, all combining to produce the style of comedy we have come to expect from Alan Ayckbourn. It is directed by Sandra Bates.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Ensemble Theatre
Mon Mar 10 to Sat Mar 29
Mon to Sat at 8 p.m.
Mats Thu at 11 a.m. and Sat at 5 p.m.
AETT \$14.00 (Tue to Fri), \$16.00 (Sat evg), \$11.00 (mats)
G.P. \$15.00 (Tue to Fri), \$17.00 (Sat evg), \$12.00 (mats)
Stud/Pens \$11.00 (Tue to Fri), \$9.00 (mats)
Two AETT tickets per member

The Foreigner — Australia-wide Tour

THE FOREIGNER by Larry Shue

Directed by Terence Clarke

Designed by Hugh Colman

Cast: Anne Tenney, Nick Tate, Val Lehman, Alan Docker, Philip Dodd, Russell Newman and Martin Redpath
Footbridge Theatre

The Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust has mounted a production of the American comedy **THE FOREIGNER** for an Australia-wide tour. The production opened in January in Newcastle and will have played in

Brisbane, Perth and Adelaide before reaching Sydney in mid-April. Reviewing the opening night performance in the Newcastle Herald, Mick Scanlon said "*Larry Shue's richly comic play THE FOREIGNER has all the ingredients of hilarity and seems set for a long run around Australia*".

THE FOREIGNER is set in Georgia where a British Army officer, a demolitions expert, comes to an inn on an assignment, bringing with him a friend called Charlie, whom he must leave there from time to time. Charlie, a shy man, is overcome with panic at the thought of having to make conversation with strangers and so pretends to be a foreigner who can't speak English. Soon all the occupants of the lodge are revealing secrets and inner thoughts to this man they think can't understand them. It is all rich fodder for comedy and the results are predictably hilarious.

Nick Tate plays the central role of the foreigner with Anne Tenney of **A COUNTRY PRACTICE** and Val Lehman from **PRISONER** in key roles. See Member Activities (p. 8) for pre-theatre dinner.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Wed Apr 16 to Sat Apr 26
Mon to Fri at 8 p.m.
Sat at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m.
AETT \$17.90 (mat \$16.90)
G.P. \$22.90 (mat \$18.90)
Pens/Stud \$17.90 (mat \$16.90)
Two AETT tickets per member



Val Lehman, Nick Tate, Alan Docker and Anne Tenney in **THE FOREIGNER**

From the Adelaide Festival

THALIA THEATRE COMPANY

Which is based in Adelaide was formed with the aim of closing the artificial gap between European culture — often perceived as intellectually sophisticated, visually brilliant, internationalist — and Australian culture, often denigrated as rough and ready, anti-intellectual and parochial. Born in Poland, award-winning director Bogdan Koca has rapidly developed a reputation in Australia for directing exciting theatre. For the Festival he is directing Shakespeare's *HAMLET* and *THE MARRIAGE* by Witold Gombrowicz. The latter is a 20th-century Polish classic about a war veteran's dream of family, friends and homeland, played in a swift, uncluttered style. Both plays will be seen in Sydney and star Koca's wife Gosia Dobrowolska.

BOOKING INFORMATION

HAMLET Apr 4, 8, 10, 14, 16, 18, 22 and 24 at 8 p.m.

Apr 5, 12, 19 and 26 at 2 p.m.

THE MARRIAGE Apr 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 15, 19, 21, 23, 25 and 26

AETT \$14.00

G.P. \$18.00

Pens/Stud \$13.00

Two AETT tickets per member

Recorder Hall, S.O.H.



Gosia Dobrowolska

The Indonesian Dance Company, **KECAK**, will present *THE MONKEY DANCE*, one of the most haunting and mesmeric experiences of South-East Asia. Seated in concentric rings around a single lamp, fifty men imitate the sound of monkeys with rhythmic chanting as their leader's incantation tells of a traditional Hindu story. They re-enact a battle described in the Ramayana, the epic poem of ancient India, in which hordes of monkeys come to aid Prince Rama as he battles against the evil King Ravana. Kecak will perform for one performance only in Sydney in the Concert Hall, S.O.H. on March 16.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Mar 16

AETT \$9.00

G.P. \$12.00

Pens/Stud \$8.00

Two AETT tickets per member

NEXUS, the world's top percussion group, draws its music from the traditions of Africa, India, the Orient, the Caribbean — sometimes soft and meditative, sometimes vibrant and danceable. Their collection of instruments from around the world includes rattles, bird calls, wood blocks and tin cans as well as xylophones, marimbas, Chinese gongs, Japanese temple bells and West African drums. With these they blend the sounds of East and West, ancient and modern, exotic and familiar, with incomparable virtuosity and unfailing good humour. Nexus will perform in the Recording Hall, S.O.H. on March 13 and 14.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Mar 13 & 14

AETT \$10.00

G.P. \$14.00

Pens/Stud \$9.00

Two AETT tickets per member

New Season For Q

Penrith's Q Theatre has just announced details of its 1986 season and subscription bookings have opened. Members who wish to subscribe (and

save \$25 on a pair of season tickets) should contact the Q on 047 21 5735.

The season opens in March with a new Australian play, *HIDDEN AGENDA* by Greg Elliot and Neil Quintrell. It's a comedy set in a conference centre where a group of people are attending a seminar on dynamics and communication. It will be followed by Dorothy Hewett's play *THE MAN FROM MUCKINUPIN* which follows the hopes and scandals in a W.A. wheat belt town at the time of World War I. The play was successfully produced by the Sydney Theatre Company a few years ago.

TREATS by leading British playwright Christopher Hampton is followed by *HAMLET* and a comedy thriller. *DEATHTRAP* by Ira Levin. One of the most successful comedy thrillers ever written, it concerns the relationship between an aspiring playwright and his mentor, a successful but rather jaded playwright.

Of the few plays Joe Orton wrote before his premature death, *LOOT*, perhaps his most well known will be presented at the Q in October. It is a black farce in which few things are sacred, complete with a body in a wardrobe, robbery and impotent policeman! The Q rounds off its year with that delicious pot pourri of Gilbert and Sullivan music *TARANTARA TARANTARA!* Further details of each production will be given through the year in T.N.

The Lion in Winter

THE LION IN WINTER by James Goldman, which is best known from its film version with Peter O'Toole and Katharine Hepburn, will open at the Genesian Theatre on February 8. Directed by Ray Ainsworth, the leading roles will be played by Bob Moore and Gaynor Mitchell. Allan Walpole has designed the sets. Performances will be at 8.15 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays and at 4.30 p.m. Sundays. The closing date is February 22.

BOOKING INFORMATION

AETT discount \$1.00

Bookings on 529 9190

AIDS — A New Perspective

SOFT TARGETS developed by the Griffin Company

Directed by Peter Kingston

Cast includes: Paul Hunt, Jim Bean, Chris Jeffrey, Lisa Kelly and Wanda Bodurka

Stables Theatre

The second play in Griffin's 1986 season touches on a highly emotive subject — that of Acquired Immune

Deficiency Syndrome. The production was developed by the company following interviews with people whose lives have been changed by AIDS. They heard stories that were not making the press — stories of personal break-throughs, the support network, the extraordinary work being done by nurses, volunteers and the family and friends of those who are fighting.

The play is directed by Peter Kingston who was appointed artistic director of the Griffin Theatre Company late last year. He had previously directed for Griffin

two of their most popular productions — THE FATHER WE LOVED ON A BEACH BY THE SEA and SLIPPERY WHEN WET.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Tue Feb 18 to Sat Mar 1

Wed to Sat at 8.15 p.m.

Sat & Sun at 5 p.m.

AETT \$11.00

G.P. \$12.00

Pens/Stud \$8.00

Two AETT tickets per member

On Stage in London...

by Margaret Leask

The decision-makers of the STANDARD DRAMA AWARDS and the LAURENCE OLIVIER AWARDS (the two major annual U.K. theatre prizes) were in agreement over the best actor for 1985 — Antony Sher, for his performance in the RSC's RICHARD III, for the Comedy of the Year — Alan Ayckbourn's A CHORUS OF DISAPPROVAL, and for the Best Director — Bill Bryden, who directed the National Theatre's much acclaimed (and recently shown on TV) THE MYSTERIES. The Standard Award gave Best Actress to Vanessa Redgrave for her performance in THE SEAGULL while the Olivier Awards acknowledged Yvonne Bryceland for her performance in Athol Fugard's THE ROAD TO MECCA which has recently returned to the National's repertoire. The Standard named the Brenton/Hare PRAVDA as Best Play while the Olivier Awards gave the same accolade to Peter Barnes' RED NOSES. Other productions receiving awards included Alan Bleasdale's ARE YOU LONESOME TONIGHT? (Best Musical, Standard Awards) with Martin Shaw receiving much praise for his portrayal of Elvis Presley in the last years of his life, LES MISERABLES for Patti Lupone's Best Performance by an Actress in a Musical, and the National Theatre won the Observer Award for Anthony Hopkins' much admired playing in PRAVDA.

LES MISERABLES, the RSC's "pop-opera" (The Sunday Times), transferred



Juliet Stevenson and Hilton McRae in AS YOU LIKE IT

in December from the Barbican to the Palace Theatre and has settled in for a long run. Despite some critical carping about trite lyrics etc, there is no denying it makes a strong theatrical impact on the audience, both technically and emotionally — it is hard not to be swept up in the excitement of such scenes as the storming of the barricades so effectively created by John Napier's set. I understand an Australian production is in the pipeline.

The RSC's new Barbican season (continuing until March), includes an "emotionally spell-binding" (The Times) production by Adrian Noble of AS YOU LIKE IT which has come to London from Stratford, and for which Juliet

Stevenson's Rosalind has been highly praised. Another RSC production not to be missed is now playing at the Comedy Theatre — Pam Gems' CAMIL E. Gems is the author of PIAF and her CAMILLE (Frances Barber) explores the life crisis of another "legendary" woman in a production directed by Ron Daniels.

There are a number of new plays in the West End — two at least of which are largely dependent on their star casts — THE DRAGON'S TALE by Douglas Watkinson with Penelope Keith, at the Apollo and INTERPRETERS by Ronald Harwood ("The Dresser") with Maggie Smith and Edward Fox at the Queens. INTERPRETERS exposes the humour and tension in a relationship between two interpreters — she's English, he's Russian.

In early December, Peter Shaffer's new play, YONADAB, opened at the National in a production by Peter Hall, with Alan Bates in the lead. Described by Yonadab himself as "A tale of hypocrisy, intrigue, family rows, incest and calculated murder", the play and production have received mixed reviews. The Sunday Times felt that like all Shaffer's plays it is theatrical without being dramatic, and Alan Bates "plays Yonadab like an old-fashioned panto demon."

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

Spotlight

Investing in New and Uncharted Territories — The Trust's Quiet Achiever

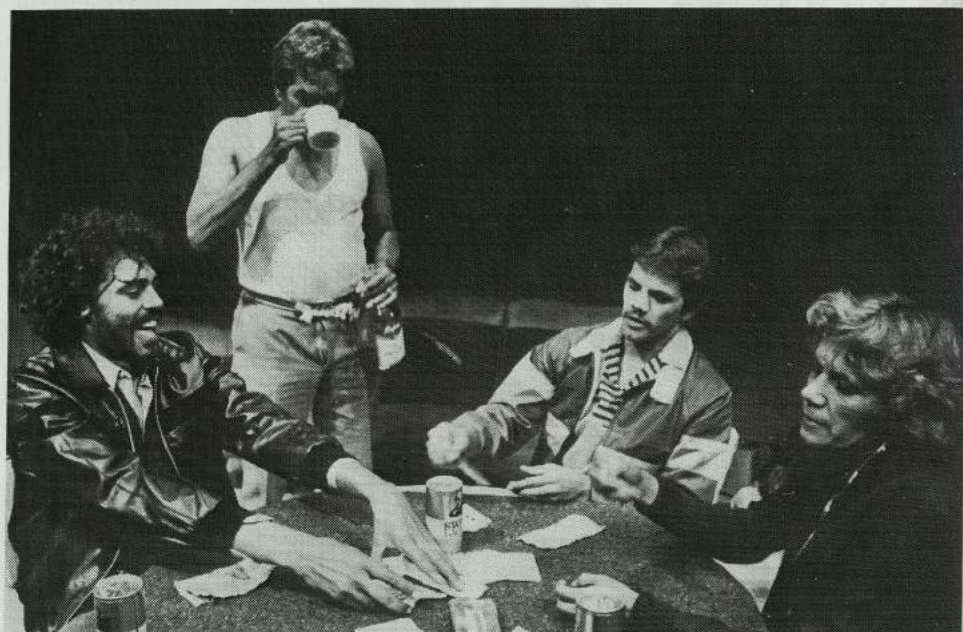
Everybody knows that the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust manages two orchestras, has a large service division that hires props, costumes and lighting equipment, and an entrepreneurial department that presents exciting commercial productions from both the international and local arenas. But what about its Australian Content Department? Wendy Blacklock, who has been with the department since its inception in 1982, talks about its growth and its plans for the future.

In 1975 the Commonwealth Government established the Australia Council to formulate and carry out policies aimed at raising the standard of the arts in Australia, to encourage more Australians to become involved in the arts and to make Australians and people in other countries more aware of Australia's cultural heritage and achievements.

A great deal has been achieved in the ensuing 10 years. Our feelings of "cultural cringe" have gone. This term coined by Arthur Phillips over 30 years ago, was seized upon back in 1975 and used to assert Australia's need to cultivate her own identity. The money poured into the arts by the Australia Council saw the proliferation of writers, companies and artists across a wide spectrum.

In 1982 the Theatre Board of the Australia Council stated that a percentage of its annual grant to the A.E.T.T. should be spent on the development of theatre, especially innovative theatre and the Australian Content Department (ACD) was created.

What you may ask is innovative? Robert Hughes has talked about the "shock of the new", but new doesn't stay new. It doesn't even stay shocking. So where to begin. Successful theatre cannot be made by committee. It is a collaborative art, but the collaborators must reflect strongly individual points of view. As the New York Shakespeare Festival's Joe Papp said, "*The worst thing in the theatre is one voice. It is the multiplicity of voices that makes us so interesting.*"



Ernie Dingo, Alan Kickett, Robert McGuire and Lynette Narkle in Jack Davis' *THE DREAMERS*, which ACD remounted following the 1982 Festival of Perth and toured around Australia for seventeen weeks

But there must be a continuing of artistic purpose — an impetus to creativity. And that seemed to be the role for the ACD . . . one of encouragement, support, and above all flexibility . . . combined with good management skills, administration, marketing, publicity and technical expertise.

We began tentatively, travelling, learning, meeting existing companies, constantly looking for unknown writers, young people with fresh ideas and unusual exciting projects. In our first year of operation we made a decision to focus on assisting existing companies which had insufficient funds or administrative back-up to tour beyond their home base. The Human Veins Dance Company, Circus Oz, The Flying Fruit Flies, and the Queensland Ballet were all able to reach new audiences with our help. We also kept our eyes open that year looking for other opportunities to assist in the creation of new work and new audiences. And one day an old friend, Brian Syron, walked into my office with the idea for what was to become our first Aboriginal project.

Brian wanted to remount a production of Aboriginal playwright Robert

Merritt's work, *THE CAKEMAN*. We agreed to help, and after many vicissitudes not only was the work remounted in Australia, but the company took the production to the World Theatre Festival in Denver, Colorado followed by sell-out seasons in Melbourne and the Warana Festival in Brisbane. I will never forget the previews at the Parade Theatre in Kensington, when I had worried that not many people had booked and suddenly hundreds turned up at a quarter to eight. The queue stretched out of the Parade grounds onto the street. Parents had brought children, even babies in arms, to give a tremendous send-off to the first Aboriginal play to be performed outside Australia. It was one of the many exciting evenings for myself and the department when the performance itself and the audience response to it make any production problems we might encounter recede into the background.

Our first year ended with a very ambitious piece of puppetry theatre presented at the Sydney Opera House. *FORBIDDEN FRUIT* was advertised as an adult fantasy combined with live performers and life-sized puppets and was based on a Christina Rossetti poem,

"Goblin Market." It had a mixed reception, but we believed in the production enough to re-present it the following year at the International Puppet Festival in Adelaide.

The ACD's work has never been uncontroversial. However, we have been sustained by the support of the Australia Council, and that of our colleagues within the industry. Every year I get dozens of proposals, and scores of scripts. Some productions develop however, not from a script but from an idea generated by an artist whose body of work is exciting. Such an artist is Mike Mullins.

Mike's *LONG LONG TIME AGO* must surely be among the most controversial projects the department has ever undertaken. It was originally planned for a season at the Sydney Opera House, but when the management heard that 26 tons of sand was to be used as the flooring, they started to worry about the airconditioning system, and the venue was changed to the Performance Space. By the time the sand was in there was little room for the audience, but those who did come stood or walked around to see the action. My favourite part of the work was the appearance of one performer who had been buried from the beginning, breathing through a snorkel until his "entrance".

We won our way back into the affections of the Sydney Opera House with *JACARANDA BLUE*. This stylish performance by the One Extra Dance Company was presented there in March 1983. One Extra had been performing for years in church halls, and the quality of their work made it clear that they deserved an injection of extra funds, and marketing and production support. Our investment paid off, since following the Sydney Opera House season the company made a successful tour of Melbourne and Canberra. Increased funding from the Theatre Board has followed, and the Trust is very proud to have been able to give this company a boost.

The ACD strengthened its program of innovation by presenting three more unusual shows. *SUSPENSE* combined the talents of circus performers, stunt artists and dancers, while *ECHO POINT* was the first work to show off the directorial skills of Meryl Tankard. Tankard is a perfect example of the type of performer who must be nurtured here in Australia, and whom the Australian

Content Department exists to serve. Meryl had worked with the Australian Ballet before touring the world with the renowned West German Pina Bausch Company as a soloist. Returning home she shared her knowledge with a specially chosen company of ten people. It is a source of great pride for me that Meryl's debut as a director was in Australia under the auspices of the Trust.

Our third show — the highly controversial 1984 *AD* was produced with our assistance in the Adelaide Festival, and then brought to Sydney. The brain child of Ljubisa Ristic (whose wonderful production of *THE LIBERATION OF SKOPJE* had delighted audiences at an earlier Sydney Festival) this was a very ambitious project that was loosely based on both Aeschylus' "The Persians" and Orwell's book. It managed to polarise both critics and audiences who either walked out or returned time and again to see it.

After several Sydney based shows it seemed time to hit the road and it was a great challenge to find new enthusiasts for the corporeal mime company, Entr'acte, who performed *REFRACTIONS* in four cities as well as holding local workshops for artists, architecture students, dancers and even models.



A scene from Handspan Theatre Company's production of SECRETS

This tour was followed by an even more difficult one with the Handspan Puppet Company's production of Nigel Triffitt's *SECRETS*. We took *SECRETS* to Wagga, Orange, Scone and Newcastle as well as Canberra and Brisbane and en-

countered all the problems associated with country touring — the pressures of one or two-night stands, the lack of suitable venues and the difficulties of promoting a show in half-a-dozen different venues at once. It was a production that had received international acclaim as Menotti had chosen it for the Spoleto Festival and it had been seen by 10,000 people in five countries.

Meanwhile, *NO SUGAR*, an Aboriginal play which ACD had commissioned from Jack Davis, had been completed and was mounted for the 1985 Perth Festival where it attracted great attention. It was subsequently chosen to represent Australia at the World Theatre Festival at Vancouver Expo '86. As this goes to press we are still trying to raise the funds to take it to Canada and to tour it around Australia. Jack Davis' children's Aboriginal play, *HONEYSPOT* (another ACD commission), has been seen in Cape Yorke, Port Pirie, Port Augusta and Adelaide as well as Melbourne and will be remounted in 1986 for further school shows.

And what of plans for 1986? We continue to be invited to send our shows overseas by interested Festivals and we are very excited at presenting Kim Carpenter's adaptation of David Malouf's novel *AN IMAGINARY LIFE* (see front cover story). This is a fine example of a combination of exciting talents brought under the Trust's umbrella to work on a special project.

The Department is proud that it is sponsored so strongly by the Theatre Board of the Australia Council, and that over the years it has also received assistance from the Literature Board, the Aboriginal Arts Board and the Music Board. I would also like to pay tribute to the enormous support given to me by Robin Lovejoy who died late last year. Robin was a director of the A.E.T.T. but the help he gave me was far beyond the responsibility of a board member. It was born out of the vision he had for an Australian theatre, a vision he had carried with him since his earliest days at the Metropolitan Theatre. We had been friends for many years, he had directed me as an actress at the Old Tote, and it was he who suggested that I go learn the "other side of the business" with the Trust. He will be sadly missed but I am positive he would join me and our first corporate sponsor, BP Australia, in reiterating *WE MUST INVEST IN NEW AND UNCHARTED TERRITORIES*.

Opening Soon

The Nerd

Recently opened in Adelaide to enthusiastic response from the public and most of the media is **THE NERD** by American playwright Larry Shue. It is the story of a dismally unfortunate chalk inspector from the American mid-West who arrives in the house of an architect to take up a standing offer of hospitality. In Vietnam he saved the architect's life and so he is greeted with enthusiasm; but this wanes as the Nerd exposes his full-frontal Nerdity and then announces that he has come on an open-ended visit.

Chris Langham, who plays the Nerd in the Australian production, has come to Australia with a formidable reputation in the field of comedy — the result of working with Spike Milligan, Monty Python and his own one-man shows that he toured here in 1978 and 79. Other cast

members include Penny Cook, Kevin Miles, John Derum, John Allen and Jennifer West. It is directed by Edgar Metcalfe.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Wed Feb 19 to Sat Mar 15

Mon to Thu at 8 p.m.

Fri at 6 p.m. and 9 p.m.

Sat at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m.

AETT \$19.90 (Mon to Thu & Fri 6 p.m.)

\$18.90 (Sat mat)

G.P. \$22.90

Pens/Stud \$14.90 (Mon to Thu &

Fri 6 p.m.)

\$13.90 (Sat mat)

Two AETT tickets per member

Benefactors

Michael Frayn's play **BENEFAC-TORS** which opens at Marian St. shortly has won all three major London

theatre awards. It is set in London in 1968 where David Kitzinger and his wife Jane are a busy and successfully married couple. The Kitzingers lend a hand to their near neighbours, Colin and Sheila, who are in less-fortunate circumstances . . . But who is really taking and who is really giving? The Northside Theatre Company production will be directed by Richard Cottrell and includes Jennifer Hagan, Neil Fitzpatrick, John Gregg and Jane Harders in the cast.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Sun Feb 9 to Sun Feb 23

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 Feb 12/13)

G.P. \$17.00 (Tue-Thu), \$18.00 (Fri-Sun)

Pens/Stud \$12.00 (except Fri and Sat evg)

Two AETT tickets per member

Member Activities

AUTUMN RACES AT RANDWICK

Wednesday April 2 at 12 noon

The Sydney Committee's luncheon at the spring races is always oversubscribed so we thought we'd give members a second opportunity this year to enjoy a day at Randwick. The luncheon takes place in the Doncaster Room in the members stand. Tickets are \$30.00 which includes luncheon, afternoon tea and entries.

1986 ADELAIDE FESTIVAL

Friday March 14 to Monday March 17

Sydney Committee President, Shirley Hay invites you to join her weekend visit to the Festival City. There'll be an opportunity to see some fine theatre as well as two day trips — out to the Clare and Barossa Valleys — and time to stroll around Adelaide to take in its Festival spirit. All-inclusive cost for the weekend is \$749 (for twin share) which includes airfares, accommodation at the Oberoi Hotel in North Adelaide, all dinners, tours and two luncheons. All you need to pay for separately is your theatre tickets which we will arrange for you. Ring the membership office on 357 1200 and we'll

send you the Festival programme and tour itinerary.

THEATRICAL TOUR OF CHINA

Wednesday June 4 to Monday June 23

The Support Committee of the Sydney Theatre Company has organised a China tour with a strong theatrical and cultural emphasis. Trust members are warmly invited to join the tour which will be led by former STC Board Member and Chinaphile Thea Waddell. The tour cost is \$3,500 on a share-twin basis which includes all China costs and bed and breakfast for the three-day Hong Kong sector. Booking forms are available from the membership office on 357 1200 or for further information please ring Thea Waddell on 337 4686.

SUPPER AT BELVIOR ST.

Friday February 21

The world premiere of David Malouf's **THE IMAGINARY LIFE** (see p. 1) is a special occasion for us so we're celebrating with a supper for the cast and guest of honour the Hon. Neville Wran.

We hope that many members and their friends will want to join us. Tickets which include **both** the theatre and supper are \$20.

THE FOREIGNER DINNER

Wednesday April 16 at 6 p.m.

Do join us for dinner at the Glebe Terrace Restaurant, 36 Glebe Point Road. It's easy walking distance from the Footbridge Theatre where the AETT's production of **THE FOREIGNER** will be playing. Dinner tickets are \$18.50 which includes two courses, wine (or orange juice) and coffee. Theatre tickets should be ordered separately.

HAYLEY'S COMET WEEKEND

Friday April 11 to Sunday April 13

There's so much interest in seeing this remarkable sight from a good vantage point that Sydney Committee President Shirley Hay is organising a weekend in the Bathurst/Orange/Parkes area. Full details will be in March T.N. but if in the meantime you'd like more information please ring the membership office on 357 1200.

A PRIVATE FUNCTION directed by Malcolm Mowbray
Screenplay by Alan Bennett from the original story by Alan Bennett and Malcolm Mowbray
Produced by Mark Shivas
Starring Michael Palin, Maggie Smith and Denholm Elliott
Opening early February at Academy Twin Cinema

Probably the last time a pig starred in a movie was in *Animal Farm*, but the pampered porker in *A PRIVATE FUNCTION* is more than just a porcine star, he is a catalyst in a Yorkshire town planning its celebrations for the marriage of Princess Elizabeth and Lieutenant Philip Mountbatten.

In the midst of rationing and austerity, three leading but villainous citizens are secretly fattening up the unregistered pig to be the centrepiece of an invitation-only banquet. Into town comes a timid chiropodist (Michael Palin) and his socially ambitious wife (Maggie Smith), who accidentally discover and kidnap the pig. To reveal more of the plot would be unfair, you will appreciate the potential of the situation when you know that Michael Palin was a member ("the quiet one") of the Monty Python team as well as a noted English comedy writer (*The Frost Report*, *Ripping Yarns* etc.).

"The best English comedy for years... the script crackles with perfect one-liners" said National Times reviewer, Harvey Mitchell.

PLENTY directed by Fred Schepisi
Screenplay by David Hare from his stage play of the same name
Produced by Edward R. Pressman and Joseph Papp
Starring Meryl Streep, Charles Dance, Tracey Ullman, John Gielgud, Sting, Ian McKellen and Sam Neill
Now playing Pitt Centre

When you put together a team like that assembled for *PLENTY*, it's a bit like reading a Who's Who of the cinema world — Pressman and Papp from whose Public Theatre N.Y. *HAIR* and *A CHORUS LINE* began their memorable runs, top American actress Streep, Sir John Gielgud, Charles Dance who starred in the TV blockbuster *JEWEL IN THE CROWN*, award-winning Australian director Fred Schepisi,



Meryl Streep in *PLENTY*

and two other talented Australians, composer Bruce Smeaton and director of photography Ian Baker, as well as New Zealand's Sam Neill and actor-cum-lead-singer-with-Police, Sting.

But it's not a movie that relies on big names only. As befits an actress of Streep's standing and ability, the leading character of Susan Traherne is no paste-up celluloid dolly heroine. A young Englishwoman working as a Special Operations Executive Agent during World War II, she can find no role for herself in postwar England and its days of plenty. Streep portrays Susan over a period of 20 years, in her wartime role and her affair with agent Lazar (Sam Neill), her marriage to diplomat Brock (Charles Dance), her friendship with Bohemian Alice Park (Tracey Ullman) and her relationship with Mick (Sting). But of far more importance is her portrayal of the character of Susan in her rebellion against the deceitfulness and emotional stultification she encounters and her outbursts against them which gradually lead to the ruin of her marriage and her own slide into instability and possible madness.

AGNES OF GOD directed by Norman Jewison
Screenplay by John Pielmeier from his stageplay of the same name
Produced by Patrick and Norman Jewison
Music by Georges Delerue
Starring Jane Fonda, Anne Bancroft and Meg Tilly
Opening February 20 at Hoyts Centre

Alone on a cold winter night, a young nun gives birth. Moments later the baby is found strangled. The novice has no memory of either the conception or the birth, and a forensic psychiatrist (Jane Fonda) is called in to determine if Agnes is mentally fit to stand trial for murder.

Much of the film revolves around the diametrically opposed attitudes of the psychiatrist and the Mother Superior (Anne Bancroft), a conflict between logic and faith, the scientific approach and the religious belief in the possibility of miracles.

Written originally for three actresses on a bare stage and since performed in 14 countries in seven languages, the film is set in a cloistered Quebec convent (in reality a former boys academy).



Anne Bancroft and Jane Fonda in *AGNES OF GOD*

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. \$6.50 (\$1 saving), Hoyts \$5.50 (\$1.50 saving), Village \$5.50 (\$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.

Now Playing

Only at **Kinselas** could you find such a mixed bag of femmes fatales as Pavlova, pop singer Madonna, Tennessee Williams' Blanche DuBois, Yma Sumac (or is it Amy Camus?) of amazing vocal range, and others.

They are all included in **SIRENS**, a cabaret specially designed by artistic director of the Sydney Dance Company, Graeme Murphy, to suit the restaurant theatre setting of Kinselas. Among the SDC dancers portraying the **SIRENS** are Janet Vernon, Victoria Taylor and Nina Veretennikova, supported by male dancers of the company. These irresistible ladies will be vamping their audiences throughout February.

AETT discount \$2.00
Bookings on 331 3100.

The Rocks Players opened their 1986 season last month with a double bill which continues until mid-February. Both plays are written by young playwrights (both under 21) and were presented at London's Royal Court Theatre. **RITA, SUE AND BOB, TOO** by Andrea Dunbar is about two babysitters who become involved with a married man. **GONE** by Elizabeth Krechowicka is about two holidaying girls who develop emotional entanglements. Both plays are directed by Derek Glenn and are presented Thursday to Saturday at 8 p.m. and Sunday at 5.30 p.m.

AETT discount \$1.00
Bookings on 569 0223

Regular readers of this column will know that **CATS** has taken out a seemingly permanent lease on space — it just won't go away and we're finding it harder each month to try and say something original! All there really is to say is that it's still at the Theatre Royal and that half the population of Sydney is still singing "Memories". Timelines for advance bookings are improving though and we can offer you tickets both this month and in March.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Wed Feb 26, Tue Mar 11, Thu Mar 20
at 8 pm

AETT \$37.00

G.P. \$39.00

No pens/stud discount

Two AETT tickets per member

Discount unavailable at Theatre Royal

That indefatigable writer of musicals, Stephen Sondheim, wrote **COMPANY** about marriage and non-marriage and the pros and cons thereof. It's a light-hearted look at the subject and the disagreements between those for and against, but both sides agree that the important thing is "Being Alive", one of the hit songs of the show. It's being presented by the **Sydney Theatre Company** at the Opera House, Drama Theatre, and is directed by Richard Wherrett.

AETT discount \$5.00 (Mon to Thu and mat)

Bookings on 250 1777.



John O'May and Jodie Gillies in **COMPANY**

Although the Festival of Sydney is officially ended, you can still catch **TOM FOOLERY** downstairs at the Seymour Centre until February 15. The wacky songs of Tom Lehrer have been collected together to make this show — if you aren't too young, you'll remember the success of his LPs in the fifties and sixties and his numerous nightclub and concert performances in various countries.

AETT discount \$2.00 (Mon to Thu)
Bookings on 692 0555

LAST DANCE, by Australian Terry Stapleton, continues at the **Ensemble Theatre** until mid-February. It is the first of three comedies — one Australian, one English and one Australian — which are being presented at the theatre under the title **FESTIVAL OF LAUGHTER**. Directed by Sandra Bates, **LAST DANCE** deals with the humorous side of marriage breakdown, separation and reunion. Bookings can be made for the full season or individual plays.

AETT discount \$1.00
Bookings on 929 8877

Under the title of **MIXED DOUBLES**, the **Sydney Theatre Company** is presenting six one-act plays during the first quarter of 1986 at the Wharf Theatre. Two plays are presented in each programme. From February 1 to 14 the company will stage **FAMILY FAVOURITES** by Australian playwright Linden Wilkinson and **POTTY PLOY** by Georges Feydeau. A political and social satire set in a Brisbane suburb, **FAMILY FAVOURITES** is directed by Robyn Nevin. It is a world premiere season. **POTTY PLOY** which is directed by Rex Cramphorn is a bedroom farce written in 1910. In the second half of February **FAMILY FAVOURITES** continues with Tennessee Williams' **SUDDENLY LAST SUMMER** directed by Michael Jenkins. The outstanding cast for the season includes Robert Grubb, Rhys McConnochie, Robyn Nevin, Deidre Rubenstein and Bruce Spence.

AETT discount \$2.00 (Mon to Thu & mat)
Bookings on 250 1700

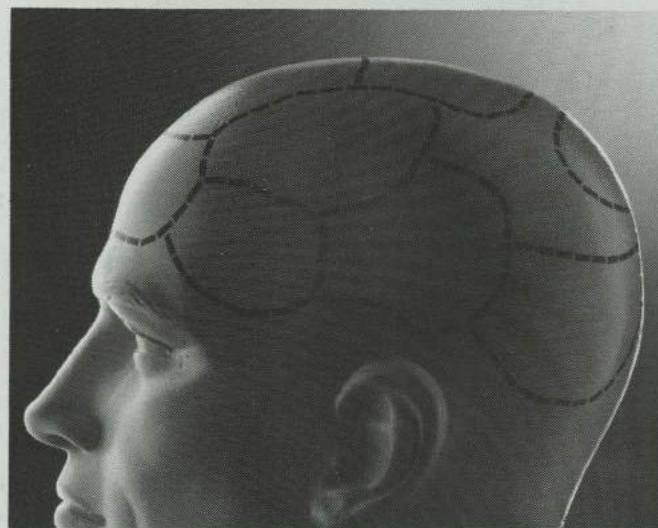
Rear dress circle seats are all that remain for the current season of **SWEET BIRD OF YOUTH** at Her Majesty's Theatre but it's still a rare opportunity to see such a distinguished actress as Lauren Bacall. Miss Bacall plays opposite Colin Friels in the story of a Hollywood drifter and a fading Hollywood movie queen. The production is based on Harold Pinter's original London production which received rave reviews from the critics.

AETT discount \$4.00 (Mon to Thu & mat)
Bookings on 266 4800

Michael Gow, whose outstanding play **THE KID** was presented at Nimrod, has a new play **AWAY** being presented by the **Griffin Theatre Company** at the Stables Theatre until February 9. Set at Xmas 1967 (when Harold Holt disappeared), **AWAY** follows the lives of three families in various states of collapse from the end-of-year play to the first day back at school in 1968. All these people had one thing in common . . . they all went **AWAY!** **AWAY** is the company's first production since Peter Kingston (who directs the production) became Griffin's artistic director and the company received a guarantee of continuity of tenure at the Stables Theatre.

AETT discount \$1.00
Bookings on 33 3817

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