

A New Perspective on the Presley Legend

ARE YOU LONESOME TONIGHT?

by Alan Bleasdale

Directed by Robin Lefevre

Designed by Voytek

Lighting designed by John Swaine

Musical direction by Frank Esler-Smith

Cast: Martin Shaw, David Franklin, Peta

Toppiano, Marcia Hines, John Derum,

Lynda Stoner, Mervyn Drake, Ron

Hackett and Jennifer West

Her Majesty's Theatre

A heap of foil-wrapped Cadillac bonnets (or is it crushed Cadillacs) form a stage upon a stage to set the mood for *ARE YOU LONESOME TONIGHT?*, Alan Bleasdale's play with songs about the life and death of Elvis Presley. On the lower stage, Graceland, the garish pink Presley mansion with its outrageous chandeliers, is portrayed. Here, on the last day of his life, is "The King", now ageing, bloated, pill-popping and wearing a purple jumpsuit and sunglasses. He watches his old movies and fumes because one of his trusted "aides" is exposing his secrets to a newspaperman.

In a series of flashbacks, Elvis relives his earlier experiences, the death of the twin brother whom he believes was his alter ego and stronger half, the death of his mother while he was a GI in Germany, and the adulation poured on him as the lean, sexy king of rock. His manager, Colonel Tom Parker, is portrayed as his manipulator, holding a Presley dummy and gloating over the profits.

Author Bleasdale wrote the play to achieve a personal vindication of Presley, for whom he had great admiration, following the publication of Albert Goldman's unfavourable biography. Like Marilyn Monroe, Presley was the subject of endless speculation and myth, much of it unfounded, and Bleasdale set out to counter it, to find "... some kind of balanced understanding of the man behind the myth", to quote the *Sunday Express*' Hirschhorn. Highlights of the show are the sixteen hip-swinging, pelvis-gyrating Elvis songs which brought overseas audiences to their feet.

ARE YOU LONESOME TONIGHT? won the West End Theatre Managers' Award for the Best Musical of 1985. The



Martin Shaw as the ageing Presley in *ARE YOU LONESOME TONIGHT?* and (inset) as himself

London critics were not always kind about it, but the audiences have been packing out the theatre for the past twelve months. Its director, Robin Lefevre, will also direct the Australian production.

Martin Shaw, who played the older Presley in London, will play the part in Australia. David Franklin, who is to play the younger Presley, has a long list of credits to his name in the theatre, television and films.

ARE YOU LONESOME TONIGHT? will open at Her Majesty's Theatre on August 23. Members are invited to purchase as many tickets as they wish at \$18.90 on Tuesday, August 26 (a saving

of \$9.00 per ticket). At other performances Monday to Thursday and Saturday matinee, a \$5.00 discount applies. Details of pre-theatre dinner on August 26 in August *Trust News*.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Aug 23 to Sep 20

Mon to Sat at 8 p.m.

Sat mat at 2 p.m.

AETT \$18.90 (Aug 26), \$22.90 (Mon to Thu), \$19.90 (Sat mat)

G.P. \$27.90

Pens/Stud \$18.90 (Mon to Thu), \$16.90 (Sat mat)

Two AETT tickets per member (except Aug 26)

Dance Theatre Piece

The April season of The One Extra Company's dance theatre work, **THE SHREW**, was all too short, so it's good news to hear that this fascinating piece is to be presented in Sydney throughout July at the Wharf Studio. Devised by artistic director, Kai Tai Chan, **THE SHREW** fuses Shakespeare's sixteenth-century **THE TAMING OF THE SHREW** with traditional nineteenth-century China (when women's feet were bound) and Australia's "liberated" 1986. At its 1986 Adelaide Festival Fringe premiere, **THE SHREW** won the Advertiser Critics' Fringe Award for Excellence. The company has just completed a tour of The Netherlands, Belgium and West Germany presenting **THE SHREW**, **MY FATHER'S HOUSE** and **AH Q GOES WEST**. A two-week season in Auckland follows the Sydney season.

BOOKING INFORMATION

AETT discount \$2.00
Bookings on 250 1777



Miki Oikawa in **THE SHREW**

New Ensemble Season

NEVER IN MY LIFETIME by Shirley Gee

Directed by Sandra Bates

Designed by Derrick Cox

Cast includes: Leigh Morgan, David Mackennall, Kate Raison, Felicity Soper, Gavin Stagg and Carol Willesee
Ensemble Theatre

The Ensemble Theatre's new subscription season starts off with **NEVER IN MY LIFETIME**, a play set among the turmoil and anguish of Northern Ireland. Written by Shirley Gee originally for radio, its stage adaptation won the

Samuel Beckett Award. The play is a modern day Romeo and Juliet story about Irish lasses from Belfast and two British Army Regulars who get caught up in the Irish Conflict. The play was mounted by the Melbourne Theatre Company last year and *The Australian* described the play as intensely human and intensely moving.

The final four plays in the series are a selection from the eight plays which make up Alan Ayckbourn's **INTIMATE EXCHANGES**. If you saw **THE NORMAN CONQUESTS** then you'll know how fascinating it is to have a series of plays exploring different aspects of a common theme. In **INTIMATE EXCHANGES** Alan Ayckbourn starts from the same point but five seconds later one character makes a choice which divides the plot into two different plays. Similar decisions later in the plot cause further subdivisions so that finally there are sixteen different endings from the same source. But, you will say, there are only eight plays. Ha, Ha, I say, but two endings to each play are performed at each session. Even the author describes the whole series as "a piece of theatrical lunacy" but it sounds like fascinating lunacy at that.

Members who wish to subscribe to the season should do so on the enclosed brochure. Alternatively single performance purchases for the first play are now available. And don't forget the Pier Restaurant at the Ensemble; it serves pre-theatre buffet dinners in a delightful harbourside setting.

BOOKING INFORMATION

NEVER IN MY LIFETIME

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)

Pens/Stud \$11.00 (Tue to Fri), \$9.00 (mats)

Two AETT tickets per member

Teenage Heartache

It isn't easy being a teenager and feeling you're ugly or being the kid that everyone does nasty things to. But perhaps it helps to know it happens to other people too. Debra Oswald, whose

previous credits include **PALACE OF DREAMS** for ABC TV, has written **DAGS** on just this theme. It has already been presented in Adelaide, Canberra and Melbourne and now a new production is to be mounted by Sydney's Toe Truck Theatre. One of Sydney's leading theatre-in-education teams, they presented the popular **DANCING IN THE STREETS** last year. Designed specifically for young people, **DAGS** has the distinction of finding enthusiastic acceptance among teenagers and elders alike. General public performances of **DAGS** can be seen at the Seymour Centre this month.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Wed Jul 23 to Sat Aug 16

Wed to Sat at 8 p.m.

AETT discount \$1.00

John Romeril Play

THE FLOATING WORLD by John Romeril

Directed by Richard Wherrett and Wayne Harrison

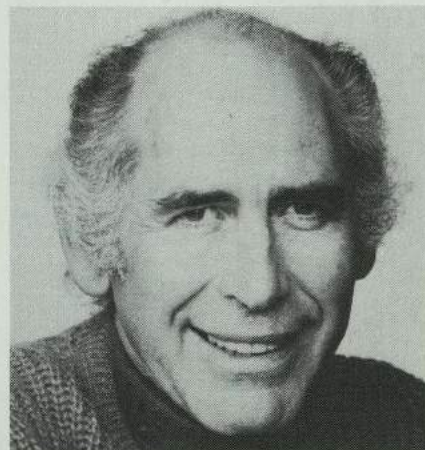
Set design by Geoffrey Gifford

Costume design by Terry Ryan

Cast includes Ron Haddrick, Gary McDonald and Melissa Jaffer

Drama Theatre, S.O.H.

John Romeril belongs to the group of distinguished Australian writers who worked out of the tiny La Mama Theatre in Carlton in the '60s and '70s. And of his contemporaries he stands out as the one most concerned to present the Australian not just in his immediate environment but as a social and political animal in a world context. **THE FLOATING WORLD** is a study of Australia's cultural isolation, aggressive racism and its "populate or perish" mentality.



Ron Haddrick

Superficially, **THE FLOATING WORLD** might be a parody of any organised cruise (in this case a *Women's Weekly* Cherry Blossom Cruise) but underneath the comedy is a portrait of disintegration as the world of Les Harding breaks up. An ex-prisoner of war of the Japanese, he still maintains his belief that the British betrayed the Australian troops and still smarts under the superiority of British social manners. The play was first presented in 1974 by the Australian Performing Group in Melbourne with Bruce Spence in the lead role of Les Harding. It is ten years since the play was seen in Sydney and the Sydney Theatre Company consider it timely that such an important work should be remounted.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Thu Jul 24 to Sat Aug 16
Mon to Sat at 8 p.m.
Sat mat at 2 p.m.
AETT \$21.00 (except Fri and Sat evg)
G.P. \$23.00
Pens/Stud \$18.00
Two AETT tickets per member

No Man's Land

BORDER COUNTRY by Anne-Marie Mykyta

Directed by Peter Kingston

Designed by John Senczuk

Cast includes Penny Cook, Marian Dworakowski, John Stone
Stables Theatre

The problems that migrants have adapting to a new life in Australia are not a new subject in theatre but few come as straight from the heart as **BORDER COUNTRY**, the next play to be presented by the Griffin Theatre Company. It is about the outsider caught in the "no man's land" between men and women, between Australians old and new.



Penny Cook

A first-generation Australian, Anne-Marie Mykyta knows the heartache of not belonging, of a childhood moving from one country school to another, of continually being rejected. And in this, her first play, she writes in semi-autobiographical style of the migrants' anguish. Members and their friends are invited to attend a Trust Members' night on Wednesday, July 16 when a \$3.00 discount applies.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Sun Jul 13 to Sun Aug 17
Wed to Sat at 8.15 p.m.
Sat & Sun at 5 p.m.
AETT \$11.00, \$9.00 (Jul 16)
G.P. \$12.00
Pens/Stud \$8.00
Two AETT tickets/member except Jul 16

New Murphy Work

NEARLY BELOVED choreographed by Graeme Murphy

Commissioned music score by Graeme Koehne

Set design by Stephen Curtis

Costume design by Anthony Jones

Drama Theatre, S.O.H.

The Sydney Dance Company returns to the Drama Theatre of the Sydney Opera House for its Winter Season from August 23 to September 27. After five months of extensive touring, including a tour of Greece and Italy, the Company returns with a brand new three-act work by Graeme Murphy — **NEARLY BELOVED**.

This work had its origins in a piece called **OLD FRIENDS, NEW FRIENDS**, seen at the Opera Theatre in late 1984. Graeme Murphy has taken the characters and the inspiration to create something completely fresh.

NEARLY BELOVED sees Murphy returning to an intrinsically Australian theme for his work — something at which he excels. He takes the characters in a country town, circa 1950s, and brings them to life on stage in a recognisable slice of Australian life. **NEARLY BELOVED** is another of those Murphy works, with its mix of humour and pathos, which subtly balances past and present to evoke reality and fantasy through the dreams and aspirations of the characters.

This time he has assigned his dancers a string of double roles — those they dance and those they portray in a full-scale



Janet Vernon in **NEARLY BELOVED**

Hollywood style gangster movie, when the on-stage characters literally "go to the movies" in the opening sequence.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Sat Aug 23 to Sat Sep 27
Mon to Sat at 8 p.m.
AETT \$19.50
G.P. \$22.50
Pens/Stud \$18.50
Two AETT tickets per member

Performance Work

Lyndal Jones is a Melbourne-based artist who has worked as a choreographer, dancer and theatre director. While critically acclaimed overseas, she has had little time to show her work in her own country. That situation is about to be rectified, for this month the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust, in conjunction with the Sydney Biennale, will present her "PREDICTION PIECE 8 WINTER/PASSION" at the Art Gallery of N.S.W. Developed by Lyndal Jones, "Piece 8" comprises a series of five twenty-minute stories predicting and playing out scenes of love, hate and isolation. The performance is presented with five Australian actors of diverse cultural histories. These blend with their diverse performance experience to create a powerful performance.

BOOKING INFORMATION

AETT discount \$1.00
Bookings on 357 1200

New Marian St Season

BREAKING THE SILENCE by Stephen Poliakoff

Directed by John Krummel

Designed by James Ridewood

Cast: Judi Farr, Dennis Olsen and Linden Wilkinson

Northside Theatre Company, Marian Street

Celebrating its 20th anniversary, the Northside Theatre Company launches its new season next month with **BREAKING THE SILENCE** by American playwright Stephen Poliakoff. Based on Poliakoff's grandparents' experiences it was first presented by the Royal Shakespeare Company last year and was a great success. It is a both funny and touching play.

BREAKING THE SILENCE is set in post revolution Russia where a Jewish aristocratic family adjust to the new order. They find themselves travelling the length and breadth of Russia on an Imperial Russian railway carriage as the father (played by Dennis Olsen) pursues his allocated task of Inspector of Railways. But the changing order is not only a political change: the mother (Judi Farr) is forced to take over the responsibility for the family and her emergence as a "modern" woman is a key development of the play. The father, unable to adapt as readily to the new order,



Dennis Olsen

emerges himself in his passion of trying to put sound on film.

ABSURD PERSON SINGULAR by Alan Ayckbourn is the second play of the season and will be directed by John Tasker. It is a behind-the-scenes look at Christmas party disasters in the three separate kitchens of three very different couples.

Bruce Myles will direct **TO BOTANY BAY ON A BONDI TRAM** which stars its creator, Beverley Dunn, and will be presented during the Festival of Sydney. It honours the multi-talented Dame Mary Gilmore and was compiled from her letters, poetry, interviews and private papers.

Ron Haddrick, Dinah Shearing, David Downer and Tony Sheldon will appear in Eugene O'Neill's classic, **LONG DAY'S**

JOURNEY INTO NIGHT, about a single day in the life of the Tyrone family. It will be directed by John Krummel and opens in March '87. John Krummel will also direct **NOEL COWARD IN TWO KEYS**, Noel Coward's last work for the theatre, which is comprised of two one-act plays, **COME INTO THE GARDEN MAUD** and **A SONG AT TWILIGHT**.

Northside Theatre Company is keeping up its tradition of making the last play of the season a "Surprise Production". Past surprises have included **DUET FOR ONE**, **EDUCATING RITA**, **MACHIAVELLI MACHIAVELLI** and **SIDE BY SIDE BY SONDHEIM**.

If you wish to subscribe for the full season, please ring Marian Street on 498 3166 for a brochure. Tickets for single shows will be offered to Trust Members throughout the year in Trust News. Don't forget that Marian Street has a very pleasant restaurant for pre-performance dinners and bookings can be made through the theatre.

BOOKING INFORMATION **BREAKING THE SILENCE**

Aug 24 to Sep 7

Tue to Sat at 8.15 p.m.

Sat & Sun at 5 p.m. Wed at 11 a.m.

AETT \$15.00 (Mon to Fri and mats except Aug 27/28)

G.P. \$18.00 (Tue to Thu) \$19.00 (Fri to Sun)

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

Two AETT tickets per member.

Making the most of your Trust Membership

The recent publicity campaign to increase public awareness of the Trust's membership programme has resulted in a large number of new members. It seems the right time to remind all our members about membership benefits and the best way to make the most of your membership.

- The best way to get the best seats is to book on the Trust's grey booking coupon as soon as possible after receiving *Trust News*. We obtain the best available seats and mail them to you. If the only seats available are ones which we consider to be unacceptable then we will contact you by phone to see if you wish to take them or to transfer to another night. If you book early this rarely happens as we

usually offer you tickets before general public bookings open.

You should mail your ticket requests *at least* two weeks before the performance date to allow for the time involved in processing and delivery. Should you need additional supplies of the booking coupon please ring the membership office on 357 1200.

- If you wish to book seats for another Trust member please quote their membership number alongside yours on the booking coupon so that you can obtain the extra tickets at the Trust member price. Although you are restricted to two tickets at T.M. price, there is normally no restriction on the number of tickets you may purchase at the general public or pens/stud price.

- Sometimes it is not possible to book in advance so you should then purchase your tickets directly from the theatre or Mitchells-Bass. Show your membership card to receive the Trust discount. If you wish, you can book by phone using your credit card facilities. The phone numbers for each Sydney theatre are given in *Theatre Guide* attached to your grey booking coupon. Please note that a service charge often applies to phone bookings.
- Before travelling interstate, call us for the local edition of *Trust News* so you know what's on at the theatre. Our interstate representatives will be pleased to arrange theatre tickets for you.

Up 'N' Under

Winner of the 1984 Laurence Olivier Award for Comedy of the year, **UP 'N' UNDER** is written by British playwright John Godber. It's a tribute to the kind of sporting players who give their all against the odds. For a bet, a determined trainer takes over the fortunes of a gormless seven-a-side rugby team with an unbroken record of defeat and brings it about that they win a victory over the best side in Yorkshire.

The climax of the play is the game itself in which the seven players play both teams and for which they are perhaps as worthy of tribute as the characters they represent.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Kinselas

Mon Jul 21 to Sat Aug 30

Mon to Sat at 8.30 p.m. (7 p.m. dinner)

AETT \$16.00 (Mon to Thu show)

\$28.00 (Mon to Thu show/dinner)

\$31.00 (Fri & Sat show/dinner)

G.P. \$18.00 (Mon to Thu show only)

\$21.00 (Fri & Sat show only)

\$30.00 (Mon to Thu show/dinner)

\$33.00 (Fri & Sat show/dinner)

Two AETT tickets per member

'86 Nimrod Season

WILD HONEY is the new title for Chekhov's first play which has been adapted by British playwright Michael Frayn (**NOISES OFF** and **BENEFAC-TORS**) into what City Limits magazine described as "a glorious and intriguing comic masterpiece". The play was mounted by the National Theatre of Great Britain in 1984. John Bell makes a guest appearance for Nimrod playing Platanov, the romantically haggard, gloomy schoolmaster who, by doing

nothing finds all the women around lying helpless at his feet. Oliver Goldsmith's comedy **SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER** has been a popular success since its premiere in 1773. It's the story of a man who feels quite at ease with barmaids and pros but becomes a tongue-tied stammerer with a "nice" girl. The girl in question disguises herself as a barmaid to "get her man".

BOOKING INFORMATION

York Theatre, Seymour Centre

Mon to Sat at 8 p.m.

Sat mat at 2 p.m.

WILD HONEY

Jul 14, 18, 19 (2 & 8 p.m.), 22, 23, 24, 26 (8 p.m.), 28, 29 & 30

Aug 1, 2 (2 p.m.), 4, 5, 6, 7, 9 (8 p.m.), 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 (8 p.m.), 18, 20, 21, 22, 23 (2 p.m.), 27, 28, 29, 30 (2 & 8 p.m.)

SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER

Jul 15, 16, 17, 21, 25, 26, 31

Aug 2 (8 p.m.), 8, 9 (2 p.m.), 11, 16 (2 p.m.), 19, 23 (8 p.m.), 25 & 26

AETT \$19.00 (Tue to Fri)

G.P. \$21.00 (Tue to Sat)

\$18.00 (Mon & Sat mat)

Pens/Stud \$15.00 (Tue to Fri)

\$12.00 (Mon & Sat mat)

Measure for Measure

MEASURE FOR MEASURE is one of Shakespeare's lesser-known works. A dark comedy, it is set in a bustling city where order and law have given way to corruption, licence and vice. The play is about a young woman who is forced to choose between her chastity and her brother's life. Fortunately a tragedy is prevented when the local nobleman intervenes and brings about a happy ending. John Howard and Susan Lyons play the lead roles.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Wharf Theatre

Wed Jul 9 to Sat Aug 16

Mon to Sat at 8 p.m.

Sat mat at 2 p.m.

AETT \$18.00 (Mon to Thu & Sat mat)

G.P. \$20.00

Pens/Stud \$15.00

Two AETT tickets per member

Corpse!

CORPSE! is fast-moving and convoluted comedy thriller — nothing goes quite as expected and it is as much a whodunit-to-whom as a whodunit.



Barry Creyton and Gordon Chater in **CORPSE!**

Barry Creyton plays a pair of twin brothers; one a rich businessman, the other a broke actor. Actor Evelyn plots to kill and then impersonate his well-heeled twin with the help of a drunken old reprobate called Powell (played by Gordon Chater). That's the plan, but when you're dealing with identical twins, anything can happen and the audience is kept guessing right up to the end.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Footbridge Theatre

Tue Jul 29 to Sat Aug 23

Mon to Sat at 8 p.m.

Mats: Wed at 1 p.m. Sat at 2 p.m.

AETT \$20.00 (Mon to Thu & mats),

\$22.00 (Fri & Sat)

G.P. \$23.00 (Mon to Thu & mats),

\$25.00 (Fri & Sat)

Pens/Stud \$15.00 (Mon to Thu & mats)

Two AETT tickets per member

Gulls

Opening at Belvoir Street Theatre on July 3 is **GULLS** by Australian playwright Robert Hewett, which was hailed at its London premiere by the London *Guardian* as the most outstanding play from Australia for many years. It's the story of Bill, a brain-damaged man who describes himself as "three years old going on forty", and whose sister has given up her career and marriage to look after him. This doesn't sound like a comedy but there is a good deal of warm humour in it. Jill Perryman, Simon Chilvers and Jeannie Drynan star.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Belvoir Street

Thu Jul 3 to Sun Jul 27

Thu to Sat at 8 p.m.

Sat & Sun at 5 p.m.

AETT \$15.90

G.P. \$19.90

Pens/Stud \$14.90

Two AETT tickets per member



John Bell

All Set and Nowhere to Go

by Michael Billington

In this article for the London Guardian, Michael Billington asks whether theatre is making a spectacle of itself. The article is reproduced here by kind permission of The Guardian newspaper.

Theatre at its best offers a democratic fusion of skills. If any one element — acting, writing, direction, design — takes undue precedence over others, the results may be exhilarating but decadence is never far away. And my hunch is that, at the moment, we are living through a period of Designers' Theatre in which people are attracted to the theatre as much by the excitement of spectacle as the exploration of content.

What in fact have been the peak moments in London theatre over the past 12 months? William Dudley's bounteous boat rocking, heaving, dipping in the dramatically under-powered *MUTINY*. John Napier's junk-filled trucks spinning on their axes to transform themselves from Parisian tenements to barricades in *LES MISERABLES*. Philip Prowse's black-clad figures processing through a looming, grey-panelled chamber in *THE DUCHESS OF MALFI*. Maria Bjornson's light-filled disc rising spectacularly from the earth in Stockhausen's *DONNERSTAG AUS LICHT*. And operagoers might add (though I have yet to see them in action) Gerald Scarfe's sharp-fang'd Parisian predators evoking the world of Offenbach's *ORPHEUS IN THE UNDERWORLD*.

It would be absurdly puritanical to deny the power of spectacle. And one has to confront several facts. One is that we currently boast some of the best designers in Europe (and I've not even mentioned John Gunter, John Bury, Ralph Koltai). Another is that advanced technology has helped transform set-design from decor into engineering. And a third is that, in an age of gloom and recession, audiences want circuses as well as bread. A night out is now an expensive business; and people both want to see where their money has gone and hunger for some transcendental moment denied them by the mini-realism of television.



Angela Punch-McGregor and Colin Friels in Kim Carpenter's refreshing production of *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM* — a production which successfully unified text, image and music

At its best, theatrical design can be both breathtaking and relevant: a classic example would be the sudden revelation of William Dudley's globular Ferris-wheel in *DOOMSDAY* filled with a vision of humanity writhing in torment. This was both apt and thrilling. But what nags me is the feeling that (particularly in musicals) design is being asked to compensate for the relative thinness of content. The more I think about *LES MISERABLES* the more I am struck by the immense gulf between the show's visual sophistication and dramatic paucity. On the one hand, a strip-cartoon reduction of a great novel; on the other, a

superb sense of theatrical effect as in the evocation of Javert's suicide by the raising of a bridge and a rippling whirlpool of light on stage.

I am not asking for a return to a brick-walled austerity. (I remember a very good designer telling me in the late 'sixties that William Gaskill pleaded with him to put some objects on stage because they had to pay him for doing something.) What I am seeking is a greater harmony between design and content. *STARLIGHT EXPRESS*, for example, does strike me as a decadent phenomenon in that Napier's roller-skating track and back wall of light is used to transform a flimsy

fable about racing trains into an ostensibly momentous event: this is pure Spielbergism in which size is somehow equated with spirituality. Even a design as dazzling as John Gunter's for *THE GOVERNMENT INSPECTOR* worried me a bit: it almost launched a pre-emptive strike announcing, before a word had been spoken, that this was going to be a play about a fly-blown bureaucracy in which everything was on a distorted scale. Design in Britain is often brilliant; but it has begun to acquire a self-advertising virtuosity unseen since the days of Sean Kenny's mobile towers in *Blitz*.

My notion of the designer as reigning Superstar is, however, challenged when I toss some of these ideas in the lap of William Dudley, whose recent work includes not only *MUTINY* but the recent NT double-bill of *THE REAL INSPECTOR HOUND* and *THE CRITIC* and the RSC *RICHARD III*. Dudley, a nice, nervously articulate man, paints a picture of the designer as an insecure free-lance operating in a kind of theatrical limbo: on the one hand denied a place in the power structure of the big companies, on the other regarded with suspicion by the actors.

"I would say," claims Dudley, "we have responsibility without power. We have the responsibility to spend budgets of up to £100,000 but we have little voice in the planning and operation of big companies. At the same time we know there is a growing resentment from the acting

profession about us. It's even there on jokey first-night cards. One I got for the National double-bill said 'Hope you grab all the reviews this time'. There's an underlying feeling of when are we going to get back to acting, and a hunger for some magical golden era when theatre used to be without any design. But, historically, this is untrue. Shakespeare's theatre, when it moved indoors to the Blackfriars, was very design-conscious. David Garrick imported a great European designer, Philip de Loutherbourg. Irving's Victorian theatre was full of big spectacular effects."

But even allowing for actor's sentimentality about the virtues of bare boards and a passion, I press the point that today visual spectacle is gradually superseding the power of the word. Dudley vehemently disagrees. "There are quite different strands in the theatre. You get a vital Fringe area with stark concentration on the presence of the actor and the text. Concurrently you're getting large spectacles which audiences love. The irritating thing for actors is that audiences do actually like this. I often pop in to the end of *THE CRITIC* when everything starts collapsing and people love the element of danger and surprise. And although it may look costly, it's mostly painted flattery which is the cheapest scenery of all. My theory is that audiences are changing and are more sophisticated visually than any audience that has gone before. They are better

educated in art history. They are bombarded with visual information of a richness previous ages could not have matched. Therefore when they come to the theatre they want to see something of great visual power; but it has to work with the actor and the text."

Dudley cites examples from his own and other designers' work that he believes enhance rather than obliterate the actors' contribution. His own use in *RICHARD III* of a light, white medieval set (based on a chapel in Westminster Abbey) to offset the small, black spider at the play's centre. His quirky, mechanical evocation of 1959 Thames Valley suburbia in *THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR* at Stratford which helped the actors' characterisation take flight. And John Gunter's set for *THE GOVERNMENT INSPECTOR* which he thinks was needed to match a big performance by Rik Mayall in a big space like the Olivier.

All this may be true. But there is another area of theatre where the set is the show and where the human element is less exciting than the mechanical; and Dudley, in a sense, concedes the point by recounting the panic he got into when working against the clock to create his marine masterpiece in *MUTINY*. As he says, "If the boat didn't work, there was no fall-back. It was like jumping out of a plane with only one parachute — it was this silk cord or nothing." In fact, at the heart of *MUTINY*, there is an interesting idea about the conflict between the rational Christian and the irrational Bligh. But if the hydraulic engineering packed up there would be no event, whereas *RICHARD III* could have gone on, even if there had been a lightning scene-shifters' strike.

I am not, however, attacking designers nor denying the pleasure of spectacle. I am simply suggesting that the eye is currently being better served than the ear and that there is an ever-present danger of statement replacing evocation. Great design (like Koltai's for *CYRANO DE BERGERAC*, Luciano Damiani's for *THE STROHLER TEMPEST* or, to judge from television, Richard Peduzzi's for the *CHEREAU RING*) is as much to do with space and light as it is to do with occupation of every inch of the stage. A designer once told me that there are unlimited possibilities for the destruction of the scenery; and I wonder whether we don't need to swing the pendulum back to the magic of simplicity away from the technology of showbiz.



Nancye Hayes in *GUYS AND DOLLS*, which has a spectacular set designed by John Gunter for The National Theatre of Great Britain

On Stage in London...

by Margaret Leask

Theatre-goers in London's West End this summer are being offered a wide choice of musicals, plays and plays with music — many with starry casts and production personalities. Besides many long-running shows, recent additions include the long-awaited *LA CAGE AU FOLLES*, at the Palladium with George Hearn and Denis Quilley, and *CHESS* — Tim Rice's new collaborative musical with ABBA's Benny Andersson and Bjorn Ulvaeus, starring Elaine Page and directed by Trevor Nunn at the Prince Edward. It depicts East-West confrontation at the world chess championship through a number of personal relationships and conflicts. The critics have found it an unsatisfactory piece, theatrically naive and lacking in a strong, sustained dramatic idea. No doubt it will run for a long time! At the Albery, Tom Hulce (Mozart in the film *AMADEUS*) has taken over from Martin Sheen for the transfer to the West End from the Royal Court of Larry Kramer's American drama *THE NORMAL HEART* (about AIDS) — in a production which has been highly praised for its sensitive and dramatic portrayal of homosexual relationships.

Other current transfers to West End theatres include Albert Finney at full stretch in another American play, *ORPHANS*, by Lyle Kessler at the Apollo Theatre (from Hampstead). In something like an American version of Pinter's *THE CARETAKER*, Finney gives his best performance in years as the drunken Harold who changes the domestic balance of power in the lives of two orphans. Meanwhile, the National Theatre production of Alan Ayckbourn's award-winning comedy *A CHORUS OF DISAPPROVAL* (not to be missed!) transfers to the Lyric with Colin Blakely in the original Michael Gambon role — behind the scenes in an amateur operatic company.

Outside the West End, for my money, the most exciting evening of theatre recently has been the RSC's Barbican production of the epic, *MEPHISTO*, adapted by Ariane Mnouchkine from Klaus Mann's novel of theatrical life in Germany during the 1920s as the Nazis came to power. Through the career of actor Hendrik Fhogen, the play examines the different roles theatre can perform in society, and the operation of a theatre community as a model of the outer

world. Production is by Adrian Noble with superb performances by members of the Royal Shakespeare Company, including Alan Rickman and Fiona Shaw. Another recent joy was *DALLIANCE* at the National Theatre — Arthur Schnitzler's *LIEBELEI* in a version by Tom Stoppard, directed by Peter Wood at the Lyttelton Theatre and currently in repertoire for the summer.

Forthcoming openings include *CHARLIE GIRL* at the Victoria Palace with Cyd Charisse and Paul Nicholas; Simon Ward in Terence Rattigan's *ROSS* at the Old Vic; Vanessa Redgrave and Timothy Dalton in *ANTONY & CLEOPATRA* and *THE TAMING OF THE SHREW* in repertoire at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket; *I'M NOT RAPPAPORT* with Paul Scofield at the Apollo and John Osborne's *THE ENTERTAINER* with Peter Bowles as Archie Rice at the Shaftesbury, which comes into London after a provincial tour.

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

Dialogue

by Carole Long, Membership Manager

Who was it wrote of "the best-laid plans of mice and men?" Perhaps we had been optimistic in expecting the half price ticket booth in Martin Place to open in June but the Gods certainly weren't on our side and unexpected hitches have forced its postponement until mid-July.

From London we hear good reports of the opening of the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust's production of the David Williamson play *SONS OF CAIN*. The play had overall good reviews and the Australian High Commissioner and his wife, who attended the opening night, said at the party afterwards that it made them "proud to be Australian". And as if to prove the point, Mrs. Parsons rang up the next day to take half a house in June as a benefit for Australian charities! But it isn't time yet to crack the champagne bottle. Hotel occupancy rates aren't the only sufferers in the fall-out

from the U.S. Libyan raid and London theatres are sorely missing the influx of American tourists. Still audiences for *SONS OF CAIN* are building up and that must be good news in the present climate.

I have been delighted to meet an increasing number of members in the younger age group at our receptions for new members. This is great news, for without their support theatre doesn't have a great future. But it has led me to think of the need to organise social functions specifically for this age group. You'll see under Member Activities that we've organised a pre-CORPSE! (no pun intended) dinner for the under 40s on Tuesday, August 5. I hope that those interested in younger set activities will attend and we might get together a core of people who can get some activities going. If you can't attend the dinner but would like to participate please give me a ring.

This month Sydney's Nimrod Theatre enters a bold new phase. Starting at the old Stables Theatre in 1970 (and who can forget the magic of those early halcyon years), the theatre moved to the old Salt Factory in Surry Hills and more recently to the Seymour Centre. Somewhere along the line it felt the need to regroup, so an eight-month recess to review and re-assess seemed like a prudent move. The result is a re-opening with new artistic director and four classic plays presented in repertoire by a permanent company of actors. It should add an exciting new dimension to Sydney's theatre scene and we wish the company well.

Carole Long

FORTRESS directed by Arch Nicholson
Produced by Raymond Menmuir
Screenplay by Everett De Roche, from
the novel by Gabrielle Lord
Starring Rachel Ward, Sean Garlick,
Rebecca Rigg and Robin Mason
At Hoyts

Front page news all over Australia a few years ago was the gunpoint hold-up and abduction of a young schoolmistress and her nine pupils from a classroom in northern Victoria. Crawford Productions have now made the movie from the book based on the event by Gabrielle Lord.

Teacher Sally Lord (Rachel Ward) and her charges were looking forward to the coming school holidays when they were plunged into a horrific nightmare. Four grotesquely masked and armed men kidnap them and imprison them in a damp dark cave, from which they manage to escape through an underwater exit.

It is a story of remarkable courage and endurance on the part of both teacher and children. Believing they are free they head for a farmhouse only to find their kidnappers waiting with the old farmer and his wife. The old woman is viciously attacked and the farmer is killed. Knowing their inevitable fate will be death at the hands of the thugs, Sally and the children plot yet another escape and after stumbling through the night find shelter in a cave, only to be found again, and taunted by the men. The cave becomes a fortress and a collection of penknives, scissors, sharpened pencils and a tomahawk their weapons. Their eventual victory over their torturers is not pretty, but their bravery is unquestionable.

A ROOM WITH A VIEW directed by James Ivory
Produced by Ismail Merchant
Screenplay by Ruth Praver Jhabvala,
from the novel by E. M. Forster
Starring Helena Bonham Carter, Julian Sands, Maggie Smith, Denholm Elliott,
Judi Dench and Rosemary Leach
Opening July 3 at Village Double Bay

A very fertile partnership began in 1961 when Indian producer Ismail Merchant, American director James Ivory and German-born author Ruth Praver Jhabvala first got together to make the film of Jhabvala's novel, **THE HOUSEHOLDER**.

Since then the trio have collaborated on more than 10 films, including Henry



Julian Sands and Helena Bonham-Carter in *A ROOM WITH A VIEW*

James' novel **THE BOSTONIANS**, Jean Rhys' **QUARTET** and Ruth Praver Jhabvala's much acclaimed **HEAT AND DUST**. Their new release is the film of E. M. Forster's classic, **A ROOM WITH A VIEW**, a gentle love story and social comedy set in Italy and England in 1907.

Director James Ivory said of the novel, "I liked the tone of the book . . . he wrote it when he was in his twenties and it was full of a young man's exuberant impressions of his first foreign trip. It was also full of some funny observations on people at home in England".

The story involves two young people, Lucy (Helena Bonham Carter) and George (Julian Sands), who meet and fall in love while visiting Italy; Lucy under the vigilant eye of her prim sister chaperone (Maggie Smith) and George in the company of his free-thinking, self-educated and "not quite nice" father (Denholm Elliott). The romance is frowned upon by chaperone Charlotte and Lucy returns to her comfortable and conventional English home and family to accept a proposal from a "suitable"

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.

young man. But love eventually overcomes the mores of the day, and the tale ends happily back in Italy.

FAIR GAME directed by Mario Andreacchio
Produced by Ron Saunders and Harley Manners
Screenplay by Rob George
Starring Cassandra Delaney, Peter Ford, David Sandford and Garry Who
Opening July, venue unconfirmed

The real star of this Australian outback thriller, in the vein of the **MAD MAX** movies and **THE CARS THAT ATE PARIS**, is an almost humanly malignant giant custom-built shooting truck, called **The Beast**.

Filmed in the scorchingly dry summer heat of the vast and desolate countryside near Burra, far north of Adelaide, **FAIR GAME** was an ordeal for the whole crew, but director Andreacchio wanted to capture the heat and dryness, "that sense of madness in the air".

Jessica (Cassandra Delaney) is a modern young woman, living alone on an isolated farm where she has a wildlife sanctuary, until **The Beast** arrives. This is kangaroo country and to it come a very nasty trio, Sunny (Peter Ford), ruggedly goodlooking but icy cold, Ringo (David Sandford), punk and trigger-happy, and the pudgy and crazy country boy, Sparks (Garry Who), plus, of course, their pet monster, **The Beast**, with its red headlamps, chrome horns, bullbar and protective steel piping.

It starts as a game for the kangaroo hunters when they sandwich Jessica's car between **The Beast** and their freezer van in a high-speed chase, but when they trespass on her land it becomes a fight to the death, and a dramatic and literally explosive ending.



Cassandra Delaney in *FAIR GAME*

What's On Out-of-Town

The John Godber comedy about Yorkshire rugby, **UP 'N' UNDER**, will be at the Canberra Theatre from Tuesday, July 15 to July 19, prior to a season at Kinselas. The story is based on a bet about whether the local team, the Wheat-sheaf, who do most of their training at the bar, can beat Yorkshire's finest.

At the Canberra Playhouse from July 4 to 26 will be the farcical English romp, **A BEDFULL OF FOREIGNERS** by Dave Freeman. It will be presented by the **Canberra Comedy Theatre Company** and directed by Peter Williams. The play is set in a continental hotel, where a mix-up in bookings for two couples results in inevitable confusion.

The younger fry are also catered for at the Canberra Theatre with two productions by the **Queensland Marionette Theatre** on July 24 and 25. **THREE LITTLE PIGS** is for the eight and unders, and **WALTZING MATILDA** for ages nine and upward.

The second production by the new Canberra company, **ETP Canberra**, is **GRANDFATHER IS DYING** by Sydney writer, Lissa Benyon. It will be at the

Arts Centre, ANU, from July 25 to August 9, and is directed by Carol Woodrow. The play explores the relationship between a young girl and her two grandmothers, her grandfather and a great aunt, with emphasis on people's perceptions of themselves and the relationship between the body and sense of self.

The **New England Theatre Company** has a treat for the young fans with **BRER RABBIT**, a pantomime adapted by Australian playwright Bob Herbert from Joel Chandler Harris' "Uncle Remus" tales of the deep south. It will be at the Armidale Arts Theatre from July 9 to 12 and will then tour the north-west districts from July 14 to August 2.

Human Veins' dance season **TRIPLE VISION** will be presented in Gorman House, Canberra, from July 9 to 12 and 16 to 19. Three new works will be staged: Graham Watson's **RITUAL AND SEDUCTION**, Gary Lester's **FRAGMENTS (ORDINARY LIVES)** and **RING AROUND A ROSY ROOM** by Julie-Anne Long. A new innovation for the company is bar service and supper for audiences.

The **Orange Theatre Company** is celebrating its 10th anniversary with a production of **CROWN MATRIMONIAL** between July 4 and 12. Directed by John Ash, it is about the family tragedy behind the abdication of Edward VIII. The Peter Williams production of the play had enormous success Australia-wide in the '70s.

Later in the month at the Orange Civic Centre the Sydney-based **Freeland Dance Company** will present two original ballets, **WHITE SHADOWS** and **JEUX DE GENS**. Ann Butt is artistic director of the recently formed company, which will also present several school performances.

David Williamson's **WHAT IF YOU DIED TOMORROW** is the **Hunter Valley Theatre Company's** July production. It opens on the 16th and continues until August 9. Directed by Brent McGregor, it is about a young writer trying to cope with parents, publishers and domestic strain.

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

Member Activities

SUNDAY AT GLEDSDOOD

Sunday, July 13

There are still a few vacancies on our visit to historic Gledswood Winery near Camden. There'll be an inspection of the house, wine tastings and lunch before a roaring log fire. Tickets are \$30 which includes bus transport, lunch and entries. Or if you make your own way tickets are \$21 each.

YOUNGER SET DINNER

CORPSE, Tuesday, August 5

If you're under 40 you're very welcome to join us for dinner at the Glebe Terrace Restaurant prior to seeing the production of **CORPSE!** Tickets are \$38.50 which includes a two course dinner with wine and coffee and your theatre tickets.

Theatre tickets will be booked as a group so you'll be very welcome to attend solo if you wish.

SPOLETO IN MELBOURNE

Fri, Sep 19 to Sun, Sep 21

Melbourne is to have a new Arts Festival — the Spoleto Festival. Named after the Spoleto Festival in Italy, it is actually an offspring of that world-renowned festival. Gian Carlo Menotti, founder of the first Spoleto Festival, is artistic director. Sydney Committee President Shirley Hay is leading a three-day visit to Melbourne during the Festival. It will be an opportunity to see some fine theatre but the visit will also include an inspection of the Arts Centre, dinner on the Yarra, and a full-day visit to Ballarat. Accommodation will be at the Regency

Hotel and the all-inclusive cost will be approximately \$650 per person. For Festival programme and more details please contact the Membership Office.

SCONE DISTRICT WEEKEND

Saturday, August 30/Sunday, August 31

Advance notice that Shirley Hay is organising another of her splendid weekends to the Scone district. As usual there'll be a visit to Belltrees Station and some of the other fine homes in the district that are not normally open to the public. This is always a popular trip to reserve your place now by ringing the Membership Office. All inclusive cost is expected to about \$170 per person.

Member Activities should be sent in on the same grey booking coupon as your theatre bookings. The handling fee does not apply to Member Activities.

Now Playing

Mort Sahl is a very funny man who takes the mickey out of the politics and politicians of our times. Now his zany humour can be enjoyed at **Kinselas** until July 19. No section of the community is safe from Sahl's biting humour, and he also has a go at the entertainment business, topical news stories and his own past. His closing remark at all performances — "Are there any groups I haven't offended?" — has become famous. Appearing with him on the Kinselas bill is Australian singer/songwriter Margaret Roadknight. AETT discount \$2.00 (except Fri and Sat show only)
Bookings on 331 3100

The eternal debate between discipline and compassion is at the heart of the **Griffin Theatre Company's** current production, **MORNING SACRIFICE**, by distinguished Australia writer, Dymphna Cusack. It is set in the staff room of a girls' high school just before the outbreak of the Second World War. A relatively minor indiscretion by one of the school students is the catalyst which reveals the frustrations, hypocrisy and downright bigotry of a section of the staff. And it takes a real tragedy to bring any sense of perspective back into their lives. It's a gripping play with a good deal of humour and some fine performances, notably from Helen McDonald as the deputy head and super bitch Miss Kingsbury, and her sycophant, Miss Bates, played by Barbara Phillipps.
AETT discount \$1.00
Bookings on 33 3817

There aren't many facets of modern Australian life that playwright David Williamson hasn't looked at and used to make his audiences laugh. **THE DEPARTMENT** is one of them and its revival at the **Northside Theatre Company's** Marian Street Theatre continues throughout July. The department in question is that of a technical college lecturer and the play satirises the absolute trivia in which bureaucracy can get bogged down. It stars John Clayton and Barbara Stephens and is directed by John Krummel.
AETT discount \$1.00 (except Sat evenings)
Bookings on 498 3166

Starring Robyn Nevin, Helen Buday ("For Love Alone" star), Robert

Menzies, Peter Collingwood and Norman Kaye, **THE SEAGULL** is the **Sydney Theatre Company's** second play in its 1986 subscription series. It's at the Drama Theatre, S.O.H. and is directed by Jean-Pierre Mignon of Melbourne's Anthill Company. By Anton Chekhov, it's set on a Russian country estate and on the surface seems to deal with art and talent; but its real subject is the tensions between the forces of creation and destruction.
AETT discount \$2.00 (except Fri and Sat evg)
Bookings on 2 0588

Neil Simon has always made people laugh and a favourite among his plays is **BAREFOOT IN THE PARK**, about a pair of newlyweds setting up their first home. Directed by Hayes Gordon, it is on at the **Ensemble** until July 19, and is the last play in the Festival of Laughter season. Although it is basically a light comedy, it also gently mocks the myth of wedding bells meaning happy ever after.
AETT discount \$1.00
Bookings on 929 8877



Sally Phillips, Gillian Axtell and Scott Ferguson in **BAREFOOT IN THE PARK**

July's programme for **The Australian Opera** season at the Opera Theatre, S.O.H., includes four AETT dates. Tickets for members are available for July 15 (**MADAME BUTTERFLY**), July 9 (**PETER GRIMES**), July 28 (**MAGIC FLUTE**) and July 29 (**AIDA**). Both **MAGIC FLUTE** and **PETER GRIMES** are new productions directed by Goran Jarvefelt and John Copley respectively. Other operas included in the season which continues well into October are **BARBER OF SEVILLE**, **BORIS GODUNOV**, **MACBETH**, **THE CONSUL**, **MANON LESCAUT**, **RIGOLETTO**, **DIE FLEDERMAUS**,

EUGENE ONEGIN, **FIGARO** and **LA FILLE DU REGIMENT**. Please check *May Trust News* for details or contact the Membership Office on 357 1200.
AETT discount \$6.00
Bookings on 357 1200

Continuing at the **Performance Space** until July 6 is a two-week season of dance presented in conjunction with the Sydney Biennale. Sydney's Dance Exchange will present **GISELLE 2000**, choreographed by their artistic director, Russell Dumas. Also included in the season are solo performances by international artists, including Pauline de Groote, Holland's leading avant-garde dancer, Balinese mask dancer Imade Djimat, Indian traditional dancer Daksha Sheth and American dancer Janis Brennet. For programming details contact the Performance Space.
AETT discount \$1.00
Bookings on 698 7235

"One hell of a show", "A perfect show" — that's what Andrew Tobin said in Adelaide's *Sunday Mail* of **Guys and Dolls**, which plays at Her Majesty's Theatre throughout July. It all takes place in Damon Runyon's low-life New York in the days of prohibition and is full of wonderfully named characters such as Nathan Detroit (Peter Adams), Miss Adelaide (Nancy Hayes), Harry the Horse (Stan Kouras), Sister Sarah (Angela Ayers), Nicely Nicely Johnson (Ricky May) and Sky Masterson (Anthony Warlow). The production is based on the National Theatre of Great Britain's production.
AETT discount \$2.00 (Mon to Thu & mats)
Bookings on 266 4800

Also running throughout July is the very popular **Cats** by Andrew Lloyd Webber and based on T. S. Eliot's "Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats". It has already worn out one chorus but a new one has replaced it to infuse new life into the show. Don't miss it, it will be talked about for many years, and there are some good seats available for Trust members.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Sat mat Sep 20 at 2 p.m.
Tue Aug 12 at 8 p.m.
Wed Sep 3 at 8 p.m.
AETT \$37.00
G.P. \$39.00
No pens/stud discount
Two AETT tickets per member
Discount unavailable at Theatre Royal

Trust News

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