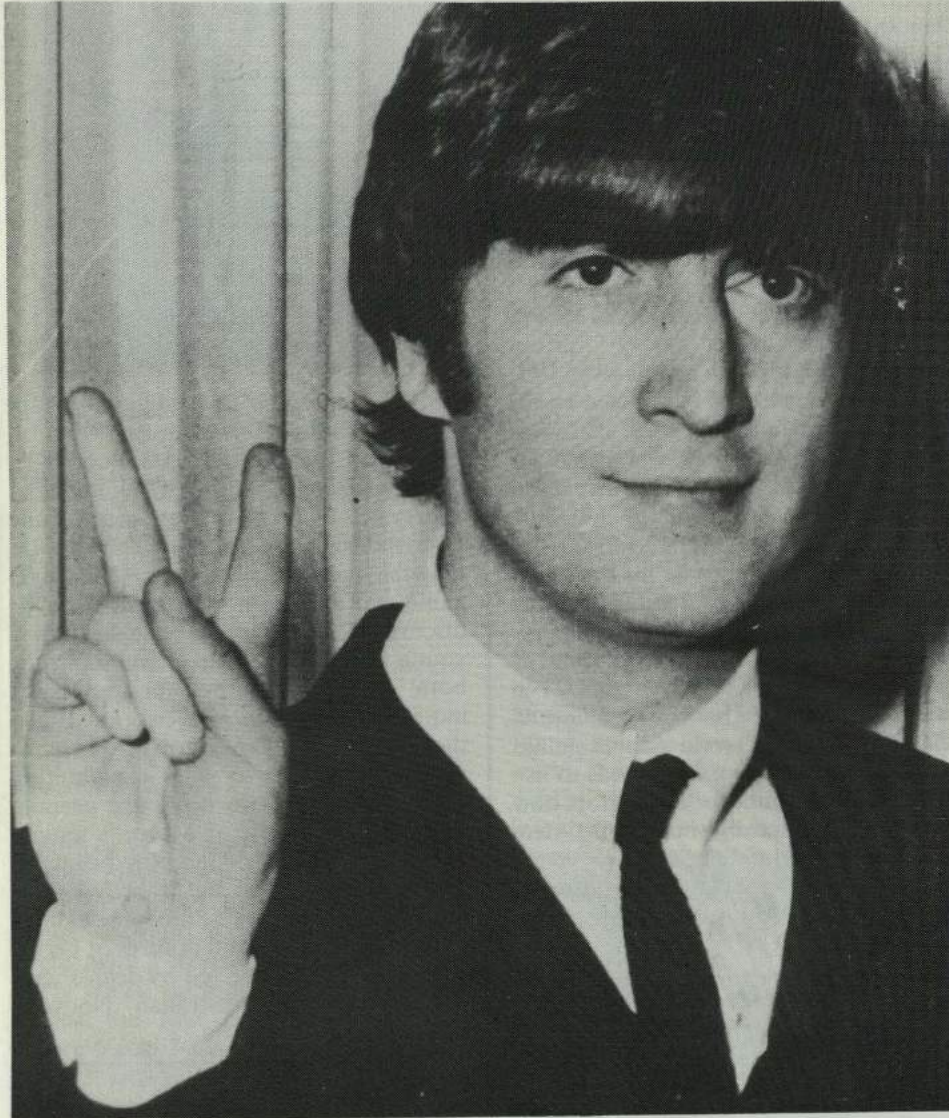


Lennon — The Musical of the Legend



John Lennon

LENNON by Bob Eaton
Directed by Clare Venables
Musical direction by Chris Monks
Designed by Michael Scott-Mitchell
Enmore Theatre

John (Lennon) had a unique capacity for taking on new ideas about how to live. He made colourful mistakes but he was extraordinary." Thus director Clare Venables shows her enthusiasm for the man and the era "celebrated" in the musical LENNON, opening in Sydney in October. It will be mounted by the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust, who will then tour it throughout Australia.

LENNON was written by Bob Eaton immediately after Lennon was shot and killed outside his New York apartment. It was staged as a remembrance for Liverpool, his home town, at its Everyman Theatre where Eaton was artistic director. Clare Venables restaged it at the Crucible Theatre, Sheffield, and later it went to London, playing the Astoria Theatre at the "Redfern" end of Shaftesbury Avenue. There standing ovations were the norm and the production was voted Best Musical of 1985. Noel Ferrier, Executive Producer of the Trust's Musical Theatre Division, saw the musical one cold afternoon when he had nothing better to do with his time. To his

surprise he found himself standing and cheering too. LENNON was on its way to Australia.

LENNON tells the warts and all story of the most famous Beatle from his childhood to that fateful day in December 1980 when he was killed. Its dialogue is derived from interviews with Lennon or from interviews with people who were close to him. Thirty-two Beatles or Lennon musical numbers illustrate different events in Lennon's life.

"It's very difficult to describe because it's all on its own, it doesn't have any theatrical links really," says Ms. Venables. *"The nearest is a documentary. It's like a cross between a documentary, a cabaret, a straight play and a rock concert. It unites the generations very powerfully because people of my age who lived through that period have that passion reactivated and young people who didn't live through it are feeling that themselves."*

Auditions were recently held in Melbourne and Sydney and the casting was far from easy. There are 40 roles in LENNON played by a cast of nine, seven men and two women. Each member of the cast has to be able to play at least two instruments, sing, act and, above all, master the Liverpool accent. Against the odds nine very talented people were found to fill the bill, even a left-handed bass player for the role of Paul McCartney.

LENNON opens at the Enmore Theatre on October 16. Trust Members are invited to purchase tickets on Tuesday, October 21 and Wednesday, October 22, at a \$9 discount and may purchase as many tickets as they wish. See Member Activities for details of post theatre supper on October 21.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Thu Oct 16 to Sun Nov 16

*Tue to Thu at 7.30 p.m.

*Fri and Sat at 5.30 p.m. and 9 p.m.

*Sun at 5 p.m.

AETT \$21.00 (except Fri and Sat 9 p.m.)

\$16.00 (Oct 21/22)

G.P. \$25.00

Pens/Stud \$17.00 (except Sat evg)

*Provisional times to be confirmed

Two AETT tickets per member except
Oct 21/22

Political Games

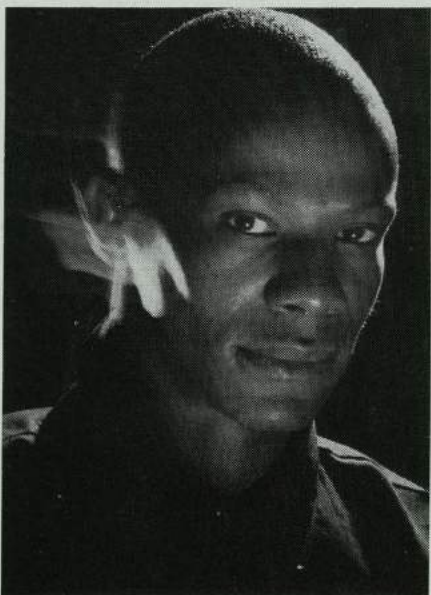
THE AMBASSADOR by Slawomir Mrozek

Directed and designed by Bogdan Koca
Cast: Patrick Dickson, Wenanty Nosul, Bert Charles, Bogdan Koca and Kris McQuade
Bay Street Theatre

Riding high on a wave of success after their highly acclaimed Adelaide Festival and Sydney Opera House seasons of *HAMLET* and *THE MARRIAGE*, Thalia Theatre Company opened their latest production last month at the Bay Street Theatre (formerly off-Broadway)

THE AMBASSADOR is directed and designed by Bogdan Koca, who is also artistic director of Thalia Theatre Company. Born in Poland, he worked as an actor, teacher and director before coming to Australia four years ago. He has since striven to bring the Anglo-Celtic tradition of theatre face-to-face with other theatre forms and in so doing has developed a company with a unique theatrical style.

Bogdan Koca describes the play as a "political cultural satire" although he is hesitant to put the play into any one category. It is a "Yes, Minister" with bite — an absurd exploration of Twentieth Century political games.



Bert Charles

BOOKING INFORMATION
 Until August 16
 Mon to Sat at 8 p.m.
 AETT discount \$2.00
 Bookings on 692 0964

Jim McNeil Tribute

JACK and THE OLD FAMILIAR JUICE by Jim McNeil

Directed by Rob Steele
Designed by Jack Ritchie
Stables Theatre

Jim McNeil's career as a playwright lasted only a few years. Imprisoned for armed robbery he wrote his first plays in Parramatta Gaol as a debating society exercise. He had never been to the theatre and the first play he ever read was his own. When he was released from gaol in 1974 he was hailed as a "prison playwright". Although he was given wide coverage, the press was distracted by his criminal record and his literary worth was all but ignored. He was ill-prepared for life outside prison and died a derelict in 1982.

THE OLD FAMILIAR JUICE (generally considered to be his best play) and *JACK* are being presented by the Griffin Company in the hope that they will focus public attention on one of Australia's foremost playwrights. The first play turns the prison cell into a microcosm of the world and examines what bare necessities a man needs to live with himself and others. It describes how men are brutalised by the prison system and the seduction of a new, young inmate. *JACK* demonstrates his changed attitude to life outside a prison environment.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Sun Aug 24 to Sun Sep 7
 Wed to Sat at 8.15 p.m.
 Sat and Sun at 5 p.m.
 AETT \$11.00
 G.P. \$12.00
 Pens/Stud \$8.00
 Two AETT tickets per member

Kids' Stuff Returns

KIDS' STUFF by Raymond Cousse
Translated from the French by Katharine Sturak

Directed by Jean-Pierre Mignon
Starring Julie Forsyth
Belvoir Street Theatre Upstairs

Those of you who missed the opportunity to see one of 1985's finest productions, Julie Forsyth in *KIDS' STUFF*, will be delighted to know that it is to return to Belvoir Street in September.



Julie Forsyth

KIDS' STUFF is a charming and captivating solo performance which recreates a French boy's childhood — a whole world of people portrayed through his eyes. Warm and innocent, Julie Forsyth becomes a little French boy who tells the audience all he sees. The boy's name and age are never given. What is discovered, however, is that he has a young friend called Marcel and that they both have a healthy, pre-pubescent inquisitiveness about the world. When they aren't peeping over the fence to watch the butcher at work slaughtering his animals, the two boys are peeping through the keyhole of Marcel's sister's bedroom. The end of the play begins to expose the source of the tragedy of life through the child's eyes; the senselessness of adult hypocrisies and failures of nerve. *KIDS' STUFF* is directed by Jean-Pierre Mignon for the Australian Nouveau Theatre.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Tue Sep 2 to Sun Sep 14
 Tue to Sun at 8 p.m.
 AETT \$13.00
 G.P. \$15.00
 Pens/Stud \$10.00
 Two AETT tickets per member

Pirandello Play

A FAULT-LINE by Luigi Pirandello
Directed by Richard Lawton
Cast: Dasha Blahova, Brandon Burke, Tracey Callander, Danny Mitchell and Wenanty Nosul
Downstairs, Seymour Centre

The Theatre Studies Service Unit of The University of Sydney is mounting Pirandello's last completed play, *A FAULT-LINE* ("Non Si Sa Come") this

month. The production is timed to coincide with two major conferences, the ADSA conference on performance analysis and the Frederick May Foundation conference on Italian Culture and Italy today. Delegates attend rehearsals and observe the whole process involved in the transformation of a dramatic text into a stage event. Performances are then opened to the general public.

A FAULT-LINE has been described as a "lyric tragedy" and is an intense personal drama dealing with human guilt and responsibility. One man's "innocent crime" totally disrupts the lives of those around him.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Wed Aug 20 to Sat Aug 30
Mon to Sat at 8 p.m.
AETT discount \$2.00
Bookings on 692 3511

Ayckbourn Marathon

AFFAIRS IN A TENT by Alan Ayckbourn

Directed by Sandra Bates

Designed by Tom Bannerman

Cast: Gillian Axtell and Brian Young
Ensemble Theatre

Intimate Exchanges is a related series of eight plays (each with two alternative endings) devised by British master of comedy, Alan Ayckbourn. The play begins with a woman faced with a small, fairly trivial decision. Should she resist having the first cigarette of the day before 6 p.m.? On some nights her will-power is strong enough, on others it isn't. At the end of the first scene, another character has to make a further decision, this time of a slightly more important nature. As each scene ends, further and more crucial choices have to be made. The result is that, depending on whether or not Celia Teasdale decides to have a cigarette in the first five seconds, several people are divorced, start affairs, have children together, die and even, very occasionally, live happily ever after.

The Ensemble Theatre will present four of the more irresistible of these plays between September and January, starting with AFFAIRS IN A TENT. Both endings of each play will be presented at all performances. The series will be a tour de force for the actors, Gillian Axtell and Brian Young, who play a myriad of roles throughout the season. Brian Young has

had a long association with the Ensemble and Gillian Axtell played in their recent success BAREFOOT IN THE PARK.

BOOKING INFORMATION

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

Adrian Mole's World

THE SECRET DIARY OF ADRIAN MOLE by Sue Townsend

Adapted by Sue Townsend

Directed by Terry O'Connell

Cast: Miles Buchanan, Debbie Newson
and Amanda Muggleton
Footbridge Theatre

Opening in Sydney in September following seasons in Melbourne and Perth is the Michael Edgley production of Sue Townsend's THE SECRET DIARY OF ADRIAN MOLE. This funny and heartwarming look at the world through the eyes of a teenager, Adrian Mole, has been on the best-seller lists since it was written.



Miles Buchanan and Bernadette Ryan

Adrian sees himself as qualified to make judgements of the wider world of politicians and international affairs due to his self-assessed status as an "intellectual". He believes that when he grows up he will be on a par with the likes of James Joyce. That is when he is not too cast down in desperation about the development of yet another image-threatening pimple.

The role of Adrian Mole is being played by Miles Buchanan, who had such a success earlier this year playing Eugene in the Neil Simon play BRIGHTON BEACH MEMOIRS.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Wed Sep 17 to Sun Sep 28
Tue to Sat at 8 p.m.
Wed at 11 a.m. Sat at 2 p.m.
Sun at 5 p.m.
AETT \$18.90 (except Sep 23)
G.P. \$23.90
Pens/Stud \$16.90
Children (under 12) \$13.90
Two AETT tickets per member

STC Premiere

ON TOP OF THE WORLD by Michael Gow

Directed by Peter Kingston

Design by Robert Kemp

Cast: Ron Haddrick, Lois Ramsay, Greg Saunders and Lorna Lesley
Wharf Theatre

Michael Gow is rapidly acquiring a formidable reputation as a playwright, and director Peter Kingston has enjoyed being associated with him from the outset. He considers himself fortunate to have been at the Playwrights' Conference when Gow's first play THE KID was read, and directed the successful production of AWAY at the Griffin earlier this year. The Sydney Theatre Company season of ON TOP OF THE WORLD will be a world premiere.

The play is set on the Gold Coast on the roof of a luxury apartment where father (played by Ron Haddrick) has retired. The action, which is continuous within the time frame of the play, takes place at a family birthday party where the characters reveal their long pent-up frustrations and anger. It is not, however, a domestic drama but a bitter-sweet comedy with some achingly funny moments. Michael Gow himself describes the play as "A post baby boom family comedy with epic overtones"!

BOOKING INFORMATION

Tue Aug 26 to Sat Sep 20
Mon to Sat at 8 p.m.
Sat mat at 2 p.m.
AETT \$18.00 (Mon to Thu and Sat mat)
G.P. \$20.00
Pens/Stud \$15.00 (Mon to Thu and Sat mat)
Two AETT tickets per member

Theatre for Young People

It's school holiday time again soon and we publish for your information a summary of the theatre available for young people. Because of the low prices associated with young people's theatre, a Member price concession is not normally available.

PACT theatre offers activities for both teenagers and 3- to 9-year-olds at the Corn Exchange, 173 Sussex Street. The first week of the holidays there will be workshops for teenagers which include both theatre skills and performance experience. The second week at 11 a.m. and 1.30 p.m. young children are invited to see PACT Youth Theatre's production of **THE DO IT YOURSELF PANTOMIME KIT**. It's presented without a defined stage area to allow for the maximum interaction between audience and actors. Bookings on 29 8239.

Holiday activities at **Shopfront Theatre** in Carlton will centre on juggling with plans for both juggling workshops and performances by Shopfront's own juggling troupe. Other activities at Shopfront over this period include the presentation of **DECADE**, a play written by Errol Bray to commemorate Shopfront's tenth birthday; a tour to Newcastle for the Mattara Festival of **PIECE BY PIECE**, a group devised play about peace which toured to Canada and the U.S. last year; a Show Day on August 23 with shows, activities and stalls being run to raise funds to expand Shopfront's premises; and the 10th National Young Playwrights' weekend from September 11 to 14 when the work of young playwrights will be workshoped. Enquiries on 588 3948.



*A scene from Shopfront's **PIECE BY PIECE***



The Marionette Theatre of Australia has a treat in store for both adults and children alike when they mount their new production of **THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS**. Val Donlon has written the script and written the melody lines for the eighteen songs. Judy Bailey wrote the music and will perform it along with Errol Buddle. Norman Hetherington as puppet maker and Michael Creighton, director, complete the team. Performances will be given at 10 a.m. and 12 noon during the holidays and on Saturday afternoons throughout September when birthday parties are catered for after the production. **THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS** is suitable for 4- to 12-year-olds. Bookings on 27 3274.

The Australian Theatre for Young People which has recently moved their base down to The Rocks Theatre will hold their usual workshops for young people at The Rocks, Mosman, Parramatta and Sutherland. The workshops which last a full day (10-4 each day) include mime, improvisation and theatre crafts. Enquiries on 251 3900.

THE BEE AND THE BUTTERFLY was one of the most popular children's productions that **Northside Theatre Company** has mounted. It's the delightful story of a bee that is tired of being busy and a butterfly who's tired of being a beauty with no purpose in life. They meet and agree to change places for a day. The result is a light-hearted look at coming to terms with who you are. As

usual the production is presented downstairs at Marian Street on a small podium which allows for lots of audience participation. It will be presented at 10.30 a.m. and 1 p.m. during the holidays and on Saturday afternoons from August 9. **THE BEE AND THE BUTTERFLY** is suitable for ages 3 to 9 and bookings can be made on 498 3166.

Down at the Opera House holiday time means story, time and these holidays the storytelling will be with music. Both traditional and contemporary stories are presented in an hour-plus programme. It will be presented at 11 a.m. during the first week of the holidays and is suitable for 4- to 8-year-olds. The previous week (August 18 to 22) the storytelling is geared to the 8- to 12-year-old age group and is presented at the same time. Bookings should be made on 250 7111 (Bennelong programme).

The three little pigs certainly aren't what they used to be. Appearing as Elton John, John Denver and Dolly Parton they'll take the lead roles in **Phillip Street Theatre's** holiday pantomime **THE THREE LITTLE PIGS GO COUNTRY AND WESTERN**. Directed by Peter Williams, the panto has lots of audience involvement and will be appreciated by adults and kids alike. Geared for the 3- to 12-year-olds, performances are given at 10 a.m., 12.30 p.m. and 2.30 p.m. Monday to Friday and Saturday at 1.30 p.m. Booking is essential on 232 4900.

What's On Out-of-Town

Canberra's theatre scene will receive a boost with the re-launching later this month of Canberra's professional theatre company, **Theatre ACT**. Don Mamouny has been appointed artistic director. The first production of the new company will be presented later this year and has been tentatively named **NOT ANOTHER APOCALYPSE**.

Following its Sydney premiere last month, the **National Institute of Dramatic Art's** production of Louis Nowra's new play, **THE GOLDEN AGE**, will open at the Canberra Theatre Playhouse on August 6 for four evening performances. It is directed by Neil Armfield. **THE GOLDEN AGE** is the haunting story of the discovery in the wilds of Tasmania of an unknown community of people, who have their own history and traditions and whose origins are a mystery. The play was written for the Melbourne Playbox Theatre Company and had its world premiere at the Victorian Arts Centre in 1985. The actors are the graduating students of NIDA.

From August 13 to 16, the **Queensland Ballet Company** will be presenting a triple bill of new works at the Canberra Theatre. The major work is **FRANKI**

AND JOHNNY, which is danced to a jazz score and was a popular success when it was premiered earlier this year in Brisbane. It is choreographed by Andros Toppe who has choreographed a number of works for the Sydney Dance Company. Other works in the programme include **SHAMAN** by Rosetta Cook and **LA MER** by Pamela Buckman.

Visitors to Canberra may think that our national capital is a beautiful but dull place full of public servants, confusing circular roads and rather boring dormitory suburbs. **E.T.P. Canberra's** new production, **AN OCEAN OUT MY WINDOW**, proves the myth wrong as five strangers, all ordinary Canberra residents, get involved in a series of bizarre meetings. It will play at the Canberra Theatre Centre Rehearsal Room from August 6 to 16.

The **Hunter Valley Theatre Company's** production of one of David Williamson's early plays, **WHAT IF YOU DIED TOMORROW**, continues until August 9 at the Playhouse. More than a shade autobiographical, it portrays a young writer battling the problems of parents, publishers and domestic strain in the set-

ting of middle-class Australia and the permissive society.

Theatre South, Wollongong, will present Bernard Slade's **SAME TIME NEXT YEAR** from August 8 to 30 at The Bridge Theatre. Directed by Des Davis and designed by Jill Halliday, it is about a couple who meet briefly once a year over a period of 25 years in a cottage in northern California. It is a hilarious and often touching play which was made into a movie with Alan Alda and Ellen Burstyn.

The Riverina Theatre Company will be moving from its Hely Avenue Theatre to the new Riverina Playhouse in the spring. To celebrate the end of a 10-year association with the Hely Avenue Theatre, the company is presenting **BEACH BLANKET TEMPEST** from August 13 to 30 as their last show. Written by Dennis Watkins and Chris Harriott, **BEACH BLANKET TEMPEST** is another Shakespearian spoof (the R.T.C.'s first production in 1976 was **HAMLET ON ICE**) based on **THE TEMPEST**. It's a rock musical set on the coral island of Avalon which is caught in a time-warp and ruled by fading rock star Tony Prospero.

Dialogue

by Carole Long, Membership Manager

The Trust's head office in Kings Cross is an old warehouse with loads of character. That's real estate jargon for a building that doesn't have a lift and was definitely built before sound proofing was even thought of. This particular shortcoming was amply demonstrated recently when hordes of hopeful young musicians came to audition for **LENNON**. The building reverberated to the sounds of "Love, Love Me Do" — quite entertaining the first few times, but five days later? . . . Rehearsals start on September 8 so we'll all have to get ourselves equipped with ear plugs. Pity the Theatre of the Deaf, whose rehearsal room is directly underneath the **LENNON** studio. They'll be rehearsing their new adult production, an adaptation of **WAITING FOR GODOT**, which opens in Sydney in October.

October will be quite a month for the Trust with four productions opening in Sydney. Full details of the musical

LENNON are given on page one. It's a major undertaking for the Trust and plans have already been made to tour to Brisbane and Melbourne following the Sydney season. Two weeks later the AETT production of **SUGAR BABIES** opens at Her Majesty's Theatre prior to a national tour. Those of you who keep up with theatre overseas may perhaps remember the Mickey Rooney/Ann Miller production on Broadway six years ago. It's a celebration of the wonderful era of vaudeville, burlesque and variety. Details of this production and the Chinese spectacular which opens on October 13 will follow in September T.N.

I mentioned the Trust's head office above. I wonder how many Members realise that we are a national organisation and have offices in all mainland States. They each produce their own editions of Trust News and provide similar membership services to our own. If you plan to be interstate on holiday or business we can

send you a copy of the interstate edition of Trust News so you'll know what's on before you get there and, if you wish, arrange tickets for you.

Those healthy types among us who are taking part in this year's City to Surf should keep an eye open for members of our Elizabethan Sydney Orchestra. Not quite where you'd expect to find members of an orchestra, but thirteen of them led by Stephen Hague are taking a break from accompanying The Australian Opera to run in support of the N.S.W. Cancer Council. They're looking for sponsors; anyone willing to back them should ring Penne Dawe on 357 1200.

Carole Long

The Role of the Theatre Critic

by Jeremy Eccles

The role of the critic is a matter for continuing debate between the critic and the theatre practitioner. This month T.N. invited Jeremy Eccles to present the critic's view and John Gaden that of the theatre practitioner.

Theatre critics in Australia are a pretty confused bunch at the moment because recent events have given us cause to think seriously about the job we do. A major event was a pair of meetings for critics, with theatre and newspaper people, held in Sydney last year and in Adelaide during the recent Festival. They were initiated by the Australian Theatre Studies Centre of the University of N.S.W., and helped in Adelaide by the Adelaide Festival Centre Trust.

From a tremendous variety of views put, it remains uncertain as to whether we exist to add some acid sparkle to the readers' or listeners' breakfast cornflakes, or whether we're there to pontificate at length about what theatre (and life) ought to be like? It could also be that we should nurture a young Australian theatre through buckets of TLC? And maybe we're just filling a hole in newspaper or radio programme? You see why we're confused.

Of course everyone, apart from the critics, is quite sure what they want from a review. The artists want understanding. The theatre-going public wants guidance as to whether a show is worth seeing. The non-theatre-going public wants to be stimulated and perhaps amused by writing that aims for the heights of a Shaw or a Tynan. And the newspaper just wants to sell copies.

Well, perhaps not all newspapers want to do it as baldly as that. The Age and the Australian Financial Review emerged honourable from the conferences as newspapers which accepted that their journals would be incomplete without responsible coverage of the arts — whether readers actually bought them for it or not. The Adelaide Advertiser, on the other hand, informed us that readers

actually placed arts criticism behind hobbies, gardening, handyman hints and the women's page in their order of priorities. Depressing stuff!



"Judy Davis' Hedda, dazzling in its display of variety and contradiction," said H. G. Kippax in The Sydney Morning Herald . . . the sort of critical acclaim which can do so much to help a show's box office sales and which caused the STC's HEDDA GABLER to sell out within days

But, as most Australian theatre critics have emerged from journalism (rather than moving over from theatre itself or academia), we're a pretty resilient mob. We may be depressed that newspapers cut and hack away at our brilliant copy with shears rather than nail scissors, and we may pray for an arts editor who is there long enough to win both our and their employer's respect — but we have a passion for the theatre that sends us off head high to every single opening.

And that passion, I can assure you, is pretty necessary as a substitute for hard cash. Most Australian theatre critics are

Jeremy Eccles is a writer and broadcaster whose work has appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald, the Financial Review, The Australian, Arts National and The Bulletin; and on ABC radio stations in Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne and Brisbane. Currently he is working to establish two national theatre magazines.

freelances, i.e. not on the staff of the newspaper or radio station where their work appears. You cannot live by writing even four reviews a week — and therefore other work has to be found which takes up the time which might have been spent researching a play, or just thinking about its production.

It's hardly likely therefore that any critic in Australia is going to match the power and authority of such full-time greats as Clive Barnes in New York or Michael Billington in London. But is that necessarily bad? Most Australian cities are more like New York than London . . . we do not have a variety of up-market newspapers offering a plurality of views. So Michael Billington's dislike of a production in the Guardian won't kill a show. Clive Barnes can, and does.

Here, most critics have enough respect for the immense collective effort it takes to put on a show not to want to kill it on one person's say-so . . . however confident they are of their own rightness. We accept that however much effort we've put into our evaluation of the production, we don't have the right to objectively judge its success or failure. Our views are inevitably subjective.

But you — the reader or listener — all too often invest our words with an aura of objectivity . . . "if he says it's bad, that's good enough for me". It may just be an excuse not to pay out money or make the effort to go out, but it's rarely the writer's or broadcaster's intention. Of course we have our blinkers. I myself often wonder why on earth I've wasted three hours at an evening of stylish and glossy entertainment which hasn't engaged my mind in the slightest. Other critics can't abide what they dismiss as Marxist or feminist "tracts".

Interestingly, a difference emerged in Adelaide between newspapers and radio in the way our views are received by the public. The black and white immutability of a newspaper adds god-like gravitas to the written word. But on radio (or, if we

should ever get reviews on the tele), the tone of the reviewer's voice reminds listeners that he or she is but a human being, and may be accorded only the same authority as a woman at the office or the man in the garden next door.

So, all we can hope to do is to be honest, to mediate between the audience, the playwright and the production, and to send you along to the production well enough informed to get the most out of it. We, in the words of visiting English guru John Drummond (Edinburgh Festival, the BBC and a critic), can only be by-standers . . . the witnesses who come into court and say how the accident happened. You are judge and jury.

The following is an edited version of a paper delivered by John Gaden to the Adelaide Festival Theatre Critics' Symposium. John is the Artistic Director of the State Theatre Company of South Australia, which had just opened Stephen Sewell's DREAMS IN AN EMPTY CITY. John Gaden starred in the production.

I don't think I am going to be able to give you a definitive answer to the question "Does the Australian Theatre need changes in the Australian Press?". The only thing I can say is that I would think we would need to first resolve the wider question of whether Australian society needs changes in the Australian press. Because of the demands that are made on the press, the kind of role it performs in our society of being an instant reflector of events of sensationalism, something like the arts page, theatre criticism and theatre reporting, are bound to suffer along with that malaise.

But, nonetheless, the daily battle goes on. It has to exist because within the theatre I don't know of an actor, or director, or theatre company that puts on plays irresponsibly. None of us do that. We pour our heart and soul into things . . . it's like our daily bread.

But the mere fact that we pour our heart and soul into things shouldn't affect what you and the audience finally see there . . . and that is part of the conflict that exists between us. It is a real problem, because it's like most of the time being in a state of war, and the standard of appreciation on both sides doesn't really go very deep.

I suppose the way in which we ought to think about criticism is that it is going to help us all to get an objective view on things that we often find it hard to be objective about. If I may take DREAMS IN AN EMPTY CITY. This was an immensely difficult play. When it arrived with us, it was a big play. The rehearsal period was five weeks. We worked from 9.30 in the morning until 9.30 at night, six days a week. We spent most of the time in the room; it was extremely long, extremely arduous. There was a great deal of passion flying about. I think anywhere that Stephen Sewell is, there will be argument, debate, of a wonderful kind. There was input from all kinds of people — not least the actors — and the process was one of enormous ferment, vigour, intensity. Now, you don't come out of that very objective — you simply don't. You hope that the momentum that you've developed will in some way propel itself on to the stage, and into the audience's mind. And, to some extent, I think that happened. But also, to some extent, some of the criticism has been perceptive of the problems we couldn't see, and I think it will be useful to Stephen in further writing.

There is a chance for criticism to be of great use to the system we're all involved with. Perhaps it would be good if we worked more together, and critics came into the theatre, if we briefed them, if they came to rehearsals. But that also has problems. For I think the critics' job is to maintain some kind of separateness.

So I think we have to sort out where the critic's responsibility lies. Is it to the

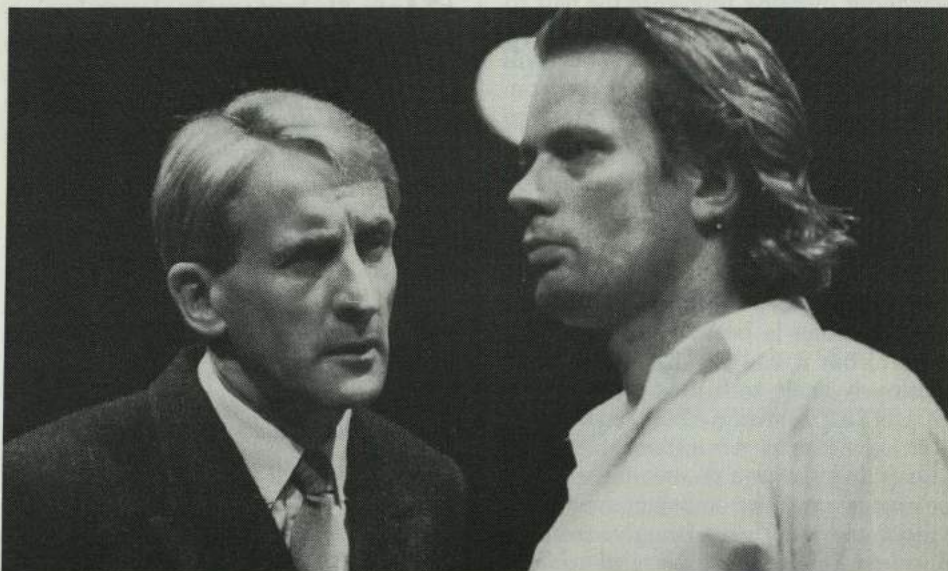
audience? Is it to be simply the voice which says, "I came along like you did; this is what you can expect to find when you go to the theatre". That, to me, is an area of journalism.

I think the role of the critic requires very special qualities . . . of understanding, of perception of wider issues beyond what they're seeing in the theatre that night. I think it requires toughness. It's tough to have it meted out to you, and it's quite tough to mete it out.

Now I'm saying all this in the light of the reviews of DREAMS IN AN EMPTY CITY — which is a new play, a difficult play, by someone who, to me, is one of the most important playwrights working in the world. I wouldn't for a moment say that what we are putting before the public is perfect. It has many flaws. But I do believe that new plays that are by serious writers should be given some special consideration, because this particular play would benefit enormously from production elsewhere.

But some of the criticism it's received will not help that to happen. And it's of major concern when something reviewed at the Adelaide Festival won't be going anywhere else as a result of reviews sent to Sydney and Perth newspapers. It means that an enormous audience has no ability to enter into debate about the play. They simply have the word of one person that it was no good.

I want to finish off by saying that you, the press, are our posterity in a business that is so ephemeral. You are the only record we will have. And that's our posterity. There is a duty to get it right.



John Gaden and Russell Kiefel in the State Theatre Company of South Australia's production of DREAMS IN AN EMPTY CITY

Now Playing

David Williamson is back with perhaps his best play, **THE DEPARTMENT**. Drawing on his experiences of life as a technical college lecturer, the play satirises the trivia in which bureaucracy can get bogged down: if you've ever been to a staff meeting you'll have no trouble identifying with this play! John Clayton and Barbara Stephens star in **THE DEPARTMENT** which is directed by John Krummel. At the **Northside Theatre Company's** Marian Street Theatre, the play will close on August 16.

AETT discount \$1.00 (except Sat evenings)

Bookings on 498 3166

At the Ensemble Theatre, the new subscription season has just opened with **NEVER IN MY LIFETIME**, a play set among the turmoil of Northern Ireland. Written by Shirley Gee originally for radio, its stage adaptation won the Samuel Beckett Award. It's a modern Romeo and Juliet story of Irish girls from Belfast and British Army regulars, caught in the Irish conflict. Intensely human and moving, it is directed by Sandra Bates, and will run throughout August.

AETT discount \$1.00

Bookings on 929 8877

Continuing the Belvoir Street Theatre's 1986 programme is **PELL MELL** — a comic and poignant look at a girl growing up in Myrtle Bank, Adelaide, during the 1960s and '70s. Written by Melanie Salomon, the play portrays the characters of that world from the old next-door neighbour dwelling forever in the past to the head prefect peering down the corridors of the future. You will doubtless recognise some of them from your own school assembly, or even amongst your next-door neighbours. Until August 17.

AETT discount \$2.00

Bookings on 699 3273

Migrants adapting to a new life in Australia is not a new subject for theatre, but it can not have been more sensitively dealt with than in **BORDER COUNTRY** by Anne-Marie Mykyta. As a first-generation Australian, the author knows only too well the heartache of not belonging and of moving from one school to another, being constantly rejected. This gripping piece of contemporary Australian theatre is directed by Peter Kingston for the **Griffin Theatre**

Company and stars Penny Cook. It continues at The Stables Theatre until August 17.

AETT discount \$1.00

Bookings on 33 3817

The Guardian hailed **GULLS** as the most outstanding play from Australia for some years when it premiered in London. Written by Robert Hewett, it deals with Bill, a brain-damaged man whose sister has given up career and marriage to look after him. He ultimately finds freedom in the only way he can, in flight. The subject is serious, but there's a lot of warm humour and excellent performances from Jill Perryman and Simon Chilvers. At Belvoir Street Theatre until August 10.

AETT discount \$4.00

Bookings on 699 3273



John Howard and Ben Franklin in *MEASURE FOR MEASURE*

MEASURE FOR MEASURE is one of Shakespeare's lesser-known works and certainly one of his darker comedies. Set in a bustling city where law and order have given way to corruption, licence and vice, a young woman is forced to choose between chastity and her brother's life. The play brings John Howard and Susan Lyons together again for the first time since they starred together in **NICHOLAS NICKLEBY**. **MEASURE FOR MEASURE** is directed by Nick Enright for the **Sydney Theatre Company** and continues at the Wharf Theatre until August 16.

AETT discount \$2.00 (Mon to Thu and mats)

Bookings on 250 1777

There can be few people who have not enjoyed seeing George Bernard Shaw's **PYGMALION** in one form or another — on the stage, as an early

motion picture production by Gabriel Pascal in 1938 or more recently when it was adapted as a musical, **MY FAIR LADY**. It is the story of a phonetics expert who wagers he can transform a flower girl with a cockney accent into a lady and pass her off in high society. At the **Phillip Street Theatre** with Wendy Strehlow and John Gregg, it will run until early August.

AETT discount \$1.00

Bookings on 232 8570

Nimrod's season continues at the Seymour Centre with **SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER** by Oliver Goldsmith and Michael Frayn's adaptation of Chekhov's **WILD HONEY**. **SHE STOOPS** is one of the masterpieces of eighteenth-century comedy, full of good humour, vivid characterisation and deals brilliantly with the age-old theme of money, love and marriage. **WILD HONEY** is a comedy of love and despair which stars John Bell as Platanov, a gloomy schoolmaster, who finds women lying helpless at his feet.

AETT discount \$2.00 (Tue to Fri)

Bookings on 692 0555

Sub-titled **YOU'LL DIE LAUGHING, SCORPSE** continues throughout August at the Footbridge Theatre, with its thrills, surprises, tricks and laughter. Set in London, it tells the story of twin brothers, one of whom plots to murder the other in most unusual circumstances. Needless to say, plans do not go as they should, nor are things quite what they seem. The twins are played by Barry Creyton, with Gordon Chater as the hit man.

AETT discount \$3.00

Bookings on 692 9955

GUYS AND DOLLS has stood the passage of time well since it was first produced in 1950. Damon Runyon's well-known musical is full of characters, unforgettable music and all the colour and life one associates with New York City. The characters feverishly lie their way through life, desperately searching for a crap game, equally desperately trying to avoid matrimony. The director is David Toguri, who staged the London production. Until August 16 at Her Majesty's.

AETT discount \$2.00 (Mon to Thu and mats)

Bookings on 266 4800

UP 'N' UNDER by John Godber won the 1984 Laurence Olivier Award for Comedy. For a bet, a determined trainer takes over a gormless seven-a-side rugby team with an unbroken record of defeat and leads them to victory over the best side in Yorkshire. The final scene has the seven actors playing **both** sides in a very funny seven-a-side match. It's at **Kinselas** until the end of August.

AETT discount \$2.00 (except Fri and Sat show only)

Bookings on 331 3100

The year 1974 sees Les on a Women's Weekly Cherry Blossom cruise to Japan with his wife Irene. Superficially John Romeril's **THE FLOATING WORLD** could be the beginning of a parody of any organised cruise but

underneath the comedy is a portrait of disintegration as the world of Les gradually breaks up. An ex-prisoner of war of the Japanese, his mind is a time bomb, ticking towards detonation. It's a **Sydney Theatre Company** production at the Drama Theatre, S.O.H. until August 16.

AETT discount \$2.00

Bookings on 250 1700

To a teenager, or the parents of one, the word "dag" is all encompassing — it means boring, inept, an outsider, someone who doesn't fit in, and is applied to themselves or to others. But is it once a dag, always a dag? **Toe Truck Theatre** is one of Australia's leading theatres for young people and their production of **DAGS** highlights the teenage

anguish finding enthusiastic acceptance among teenagers and their elders alike. It's at the Everest Theatre, Seymour Centre until August 16.

AETT discount \$1.00

Bookings on 692 0555

The **Australian Opera's** winter season continues at the Sydney Opera House throughout August. Tickets have been set aside for members for productions of **MACBETH** on August 19 and **THE CONSUL** on August 20. Verdi's **MACBETH** stars Marilyn Zschau as Lady Macbeth and Malcolm Donnelly in the title role; the new production of Menotti's **THE CONSUL** stars Lone Koppel and Heather Begg.

AETT discount \$6.00

Bookings on 357 1200

Member Activities

YOUNGER SET DINNER

CORPSE, Tuesday, August 5

A final reminder, if you're under 40, to join us for dinner at the Glebe Terrace Restaurant prior to seeing a production of **CORPSE!** Tickets are \$38.50 which includes dinner *and* theatre tickets.

ARE YOU LONESOME DINNER

Tuesday, August 26

Do join us for dinner at the Central Plaza Hotel, just next to Her Majesty's. The cost is \$20, which includes two courses and wine or juice. Theatre tickets should be ordered separately.

SCONE DISTRICT WEEKEND

Saturday, August 30/Sunday, August 31

Weekends in the Scone district led by Sydney Committee President Shirley Hay are always popular because of her knowledge and contacts in the area. Visits are arranged to some of the fine homes in the area which are not normally open to the public, including famous Belltrees Station. The cost which includes bus transport, all meals, entries and accommodation is \$165 per person for twin share. A \$50 per person deposit should be sent with your booking.

SPOLETO IN MELBOURNE

Friday, September 19 to

Sunday, September 21

Interest in this major new arts festival in Melbourne is growing apace with a wide range of exciting theatrical presentations. Shirley Hay will lead a three-day visit to Melbourne to see some of the festival but also to take in other activities. There'll be a dinner on the Yarra and a full-day visit to Sovereign Hill at Ballarat. Accommodation will be at the Regency Hotel and the all-inclusive cost will be \$695 (including airfare) per person twin share. A \$50 per person deposit should be sent with your booking.

RACE DAY AT RANDWICK

Wednesday, October 1 at 11.30 a.m.

The Spring Carnival at Randwick will be upon us before long and as usual the Sydney Committee is arranging for Members and their friends to spend a relaxed day there on Ladies' Day. Lunch and afternoon tea will be provided in the Doncaster Room of the Members' Stand with plenty of opportunity to enjoy the racing in between. Tickets are \$30 which includes lunch, afternoon tea and entry to the Members' Stand.

BREAKFAST AT MISCHA'S

Thursday, September 11 at 9.45 a.m.

Mischa's Restaurant at Balmoral Beach is a delightful spot at any time and our last function there two years ago was booked out early. There'll be a delicious breakfast to eat and a parade of fashion clothes from the Mimi Finley boutique in Mosman to entertain. Tickets are \$18.00 each.

LENNON SUPPER

Tuesday, October 21

Following the Trust Member night performance of **LENNON** on October 21 (see story p. 1) there'll be a supper at the Enmore Theatre for Members and friends to meet with each other and members of the cast. It'll be a special night for us as **LENNON** is a Trust show so we look forward to seeing a lot of Members there. Tickets are \$8.00 each.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Unless otherwise stated bookings for 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.

Opening Soon

Presley Musical

Author Alan Bleasdale wrote **ARE YOU LONESOME TONIGHT?** to achieve a personal vindication of Presley, for whom he had great admiration. It's a play with songs which opens with "The King" on the last day of his life — ageing, bloated, and pill-popping. Then in a series of flashbacks Elvis relives his earlier experiences, the death of his twin brother and of his mother and the adulation poured on him as the sexy king of rock. The play includes sixteen Presley numbers which brought audiences to their feet in London. Martin Shaw, who starred in the London production, will be the older Presley, with David Franklin as his younger self.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Her Majesty's Theatre

Aug 23 to Sep 20

Mon to Sat at 8 p.m. Sat mat at 2 p.m.

AETT \$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

Breaking the Silence

The Northside Theatre Company launches its 20th anniversary season on August 20 with **BREAKING THE SILENCE** by American playwright Stephen Poliakoff. Set in Russia after the revolution, it is both funny and touching. The play deals with the material and spiritual adjustments a Jewish upper middle-class family have to make when forced to live in a railway carriage for many years. The father spends his time (and government money) whilst ostensibly employed as a Telephone Examiner, trying to record sound onto film. Meanwhile the mother copes with everyday existence. Directed by John Krummel, it stars Judi Farr and Dennis Olsen.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Marian Street Theatre

Aug 24 to Sep 7

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 Aug 27/28)

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

Pens/Stud \$9.00 (except Fri and Sat evg)

Two AETT tickets per member

SDC Season

After five months of touring, the Sydney Dance Company returns to Sydney this month with a brand new three-act work by Graeme Murphy — **NEARLY BELOVED**. Murphy takes characters from a country town in the 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. The dancers have been assigned a string of double roles — those they dance and those they portray in a full-scale Hollywood style gangster movie, when the on-stage characters literally "go to the movies" in the opening sequence.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Drama Theatre, Sydney Opera House

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

What's On in New York...

by Irvin Bauer

This has been yet another strange season on Broadway. Dull would be more apt. Bob Fosse won the coveted Tony Award for choreography, honoured for his work on **BIG DEAL**, a disaster of a musical which has already closed. When you look at his sensational choreography for the revival of **SWEET CHARITY**, one can understand the depths we have fallen to. **SWEET CHARITY**, a wonderful score in search of a conceptual book, is doing strong business based on entertaining elements rather than an overall satisfying whole. Classic numbers like "Big Spender" and "If My Friends Could See Me Now" are Broadway musical theatre at its best... now if there was only an idea to tie them together... but alas...

The best musical of the season is **THE GOLDEN LAND**, playing off-Broadway at the Second Avenue Theatre. With six

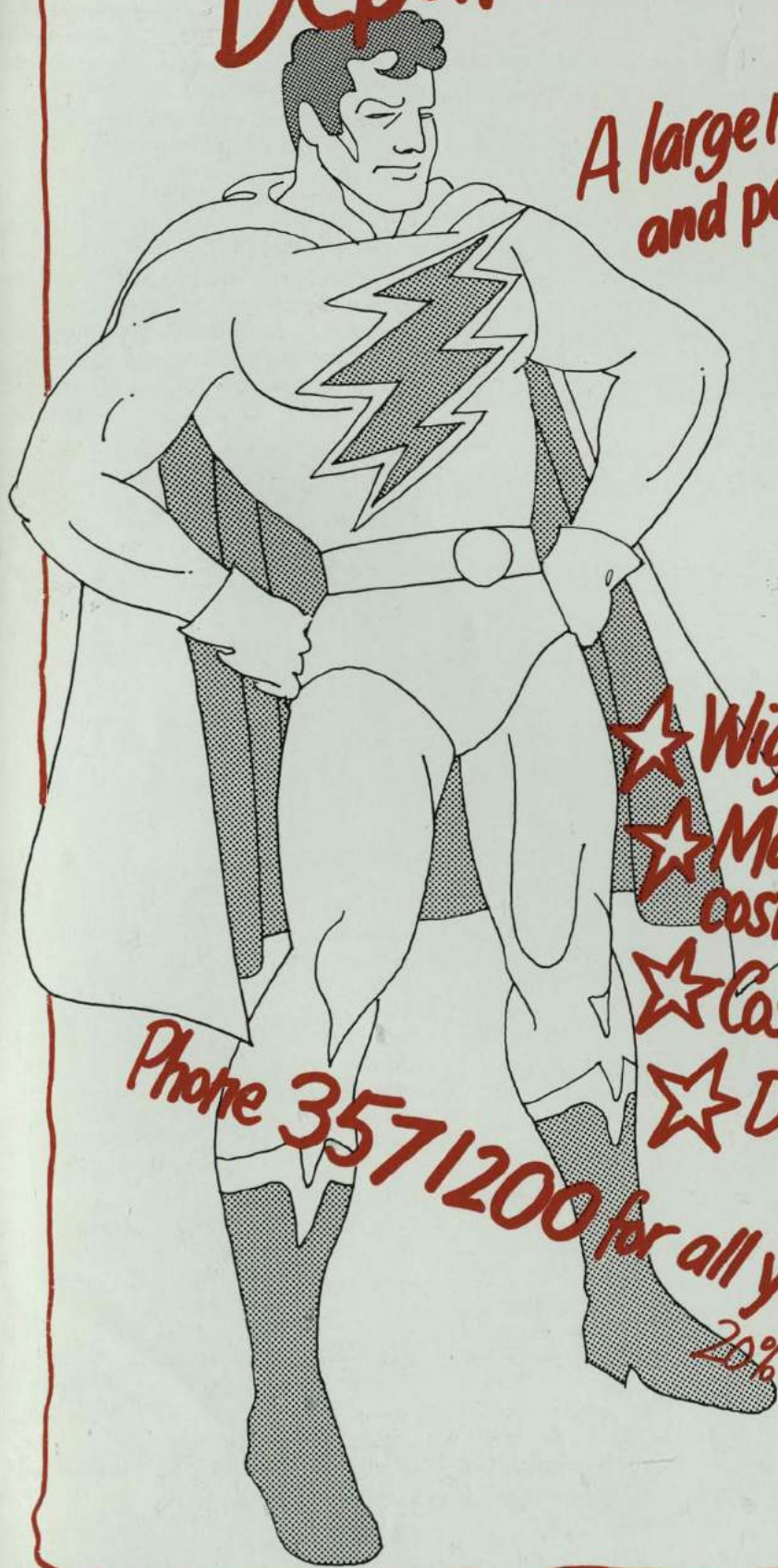
characters this mini-marvellous musical creates the epoch of the immigrant experience in America. It is a wonderful, soulful, humorous look at what it meant, felt like, to come to a new country without money or language... nothing but a heart full of hope, and survive and... ultimately... flourish. It makes you smile, and at moments is affectively poignant and touching... real sentiment rather than sentimentality. I liked it a lot.

Another delight is **MUMMEN-SCHANZ**. What is it? A revue... a theatrical mish mash? Who knows, but it is delicious. It is imaginative, innovative, and amusing for all ages. The audience was full of children who seemed as enthralled as their parents. The six performers, from Switzerland, use lights and all sorts of technical devices to create shapes and assorted absurdities to our constant amazement. Terrific.

Just so you'll know that New York has a serious side, two straight plays worth talking about are the revival of **THE HOUSE OF BLUE LEAVES** by John Guare, playing at Lincoln Center. It's open at last... A wonderful cast is headed by Swoozie Kurtz, who is extraordinary in her Tony-winning performance as Bananas. But the big difference in this production is the direction by Jerry Zaks. He very much deserved the Tony he received for his fine and insightful work. Off-Broadway at the Roundabout Theatre, one of New York's finest and most reliable theatres, is **MASTERCLASS**, David Pownall's play about power and its abuses. Superbly directed by Frank Corsaro and artfully played by Werner Klemperer, Len Cariou, Philip Bosco and Austin Pendleton, it is ensemble playing at its best.

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