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*With dry mouth and trembling fingers, the terrified "Gems" editor sits before his dreaded computer to attempt to eke out another edition...*

### Don't Forget Our One Act Plays This Month

Four very different and interesting OAPs are on from Thursday to Saturday April 30-May 2 at 8pm and Saturday and Sunday May 2-3 at 2.15pm:

*The Cylinder*, written and directed by Horrie Leek  
*The Portrait*, also written and directed by Horrie Leek  
*Warriors*, written by Hayley Lawson-Smith and directed by David Lawson-Smith, and  
*Phantom Call* by Chris Hodson, directed by Laura Bradley  
Tickets are \$15; bookings details on the heading above, or at the door. Don't miss this nicely varied programme!

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### Other Dates to Remember...

**Play Reading No.1** - for *Lend Me a Tenor* (our Season Three production), Monday **May 4** at **7.30** in the theatre. Details from David Lawson-Smith on [dlawsonsmith@bigpond.com](mailto:dlawsonsmith@bigpond.com). Great way to get to know the play if you are thinking of...

**Auditions** for *Lend Me a Tenor*. Four males and four females. Season 3, August 7-22. Contact the Director, Loretta Bishop on 0447 716 911 or [ljbishop@bigpond.com](mailto:ljbishop@bigpond.com) for more details.

**Play Reading No.2** - See next column...

**Season Two** - "*Shush*" by Elaine Murphy, directed by Richard Keown. June 12-13, 17-20, 24-27 at 8pm, Sunday 14 and Saturday 20 at 2.15, Twilight Matinee Sunday 21 at 4pm. Bookings as per the heading above.

**Monash One Act Play Festival**, hosted by Peridot. September 18-20 when theatre companies from all over Victoria come along in friendly competition. Adjudicator Peter Newling.

**Season Four** - "*The God of Carnage*" by Yasmina Reza, Director Tim Long. November 20-21, 25-28, December 2-5 at 8pm. Matinees Sunday November 22 and Saturday 28, Twilight Matinee Sunday 29 at 4pm.



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### We Would Like Your Feedback

Dear Peridot Supporters,

We are arranging a small Survey about the sorts of plays you enjoy and would like to see us perform for you. We'd also like you to tell us what plays you might have seen elsewhere and would perhaps like to see us perform at the Unicorn. It is a very short questionnaire, but we would appreciate it if you would have a good think about what you would like to see.

The Survey forms will be emailed to those of you who get your "Gems" that way; for those who get it by post you should find the Survey with your May newsletter, which will also give details of how you can send us your thoughts by mail at no cost to yourselves.

We hope we get a good response from you all; remember, Peridot is your company and we want you to have your say.

### Care to Join Us for a "Shush" Set Build?

Fancy coming along and joining us in creating our next set? If you're handy with tools, a paint brush etc. or would prefer to help out with catering - contact our organiser Helen on 0403 797 709 if you are interested.

We'll be banging away on Sat 16/ Sun 17 May (mostly painting), Sat 23/ Sun 24 May (construction and painting) and Sat 30/ Sun 31 May - construction and painting to complete the set. You will be most welcome.

### Our Play Reading Number 2

Our Play Reading Guru Alison Knight will be holding a Play Reading at the theatre on Wednesday May 27 at 7.30pm. However, Alison is keeping it a secret, a mystery you can only unravel if you turn up. For more information contact Alison on [a8knight@bigpond.net.au](mailto:a8knight@bigpond.net.au).



Tickets available at the door or through Trybooking at <http://www.trybooking.com/HIWZ>



Sorry, I just had to put this in: The Richard III Camping Goods Store in Leicester, England, and the brilliant little adaptation of the first line of Shakespeare's play "The Tragedy of King Richard the Third".

## "Of Romantics, Distance and Water"



Peridot Committee Member Helen McIntosh's very talented daughter Alison is a member of Ensemble Goldentree and Helen would like to bring to your attention a concert, *Of Romantics, Distance and Water, Concert 1*, which the Ensemble are performing next month.

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Ensemble Goldentree brings together the sonorous combination of horn and voice to create a unique and very engaging musical experience.



Concert 1 brings one of the most well-known works for horn, voice and piano to life. "Auf dem Strom", by Schubert, is a beautiful romantic trio depicting the separation of lovers on the current of time. Lachner's wonderfully evocative trios and Berlioz' plaintive "Le Jeune Patre Breton" form a metaphorical and musical foil to this work.

Ensemble Goldentree will be presenting this programme on **Sunday May 3** at 2.00pm at St. Stephen's Anglican Church, which you will find in Church Street, Richmond. Tickets \$20 Adult / \$15 Concession, Children under 12 free. Afternoon tea will be provided following the concert.

## Behind the Scenes at Peridot: Front of House



*Alison Knight reports...*

As the theatre door closes, just before the house lights go down, our audience is invited to "sit back, wiggle its toes and enjoy another fine Peridot performance".

For many people, part of enjoying another fine Peridot performance involves enjoying another fine Peridot sandwich in the interval. I spoke to our Front of House Manager Ian Carlsson and our Roster Manager, Bev Matthey, to find out just what goes on behind the scenes.

Probably the most challenging aspect of the job is organising the FOH roster, which Bev does most capably. With 13 performances, plus a Charity Night, she needs to fill over 50 spots. Several weeks before the production opens, she contacts everyone on her volunteer list. Bev says she is very grateful for her faithful regulars but there are times when there are still vacancies a few days before opening and she has to send out urgent emails, and then the roster is filled "and the world is beautiful again!"

Ian also has plenty to keep him occupied. Before each season, he audits our supplies and then informs our Purchasing Officer, Warren Burford, what else is required. Ian purchases alcoholic beverages on-line and buys the confectionery when it is on special at retail outlets. He also liaises with the caterer about the number of sandwiches (or scones for the Matinees) we require for each performance. The quantities can be difficult to gauge at times.

Additionally, Ian liaises with our cleaner (and fine actor) Glenn Hunt to ensure that the auditorium and foyer are cleaned and vacuumed before Preview Night. He also organises a working bee to make certain that all is in good order in the kitchen and dressing room. Board of Management Member Kate Deavin checks that the First Aid Kits are maintained and up-to-date.

As with any job, there are trying moments. Bev can laugh about it now, but she won't ever forget the Preview on a hot summer night, with a full house, when the air conditioner went on the blink. She knew there would be a run on cold water at interval but she also had to provide hot water for tea and coffee. Ten minutes before interval, she and Simon Preest started to fill the pots with hot water only to discover that the tap had broken and would not turn off. Water was gushing everywhere. Simon called for help. We ended up in that little kitchen with three men on their knees with their bums in the air and their heads in a cupboard under the sink desperately trying to turn the tap off. Meanwhile, one volunteer was bravely trying to supply thirsty patrons in the foyer with tea and coffee single-handed while Margaret Venning had to climb over the men on the floor to get the cold water out of the fridge. "We really did have the hot and cold of it!" concludes Bev.

Despite the occasional off-stage drama, both Bev and Ian, along with their band of volunteers, find FOH very rewarding. Ian is happy that "our efforts to serve and please our patrons have been realised". Bev says that "I have met so many wonderful people and I enjoy contacting them and talking to them".

We thank all the FOH team, especially Ian and Bev for all their hard work and we are always looking for new

volunteers. (Did I mention all volunteers go home with a Toblerone?)

If you would like to try your hand at Front of House, please contact Bev on 9882 9985 or [sheoaks@bigpond.com](mailto:sheoaks@bigpond.com) and she'll happily have a chat with you.

## No Turn Unstoned indeed!



The lovely British actress Diana Rigg, who many will recall her from her roles as Emma Peel in the classic English TV serial *The Avengers*, in *Game of Thrones*, as a "Bond Girl" in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* and lots of other roles, which include many appearances in the Royal Shakespeare Company over the years, was not immune to the occasional bad review. Perhaps the worst was when she in the drama *Abelard and Heloise* at the Wyndham's Theatre in London in 1970. She had to do a brief nude scene and in a review critic John Simon rather caustically wrote: "*Diana Rigg is built like a brick mausoleum with insufficient flying buttresses*". She recalls making her way to the theatre the following day, darting from doorway to doorway and praying she wouldn't meet anyone she knew. The cast behaved with supreme tact and pretended they hadn't read the review.

A close friend of Diana's, Joseph McCulloch, once mused "A critic is a man who leaves no turn unstoned", an accurate remark which gave her the idea to write a book about particularly caustic remarks, often made by people who have never been on stage about people who never deliberately give a poor performance and are indeed trying their best. She liked the phrase *No Turn Unstoned* and consequently compiled a book back in 1982 with that clever title, in which she collected from all her theatrical friends dozens of bad reviews. Her friends sent them quite cheerfully, almost proudly! They make great reading; here some of the best (or worst?!)..

**\*Richard Burton** as Caliban in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*:

"As for Richard Burton's Caliban, there is no possible explanation, so I will attempt none. He looked like a miner with a tail coming up from a coal face".

**\*Simon Callow** in Peter Shaffer's *Amadeus*:

"Mozart, played by Simon Callow as a goonish cross between a chimp and a donkey..."

**\*Julie Christie** in a Birmingham Rep., where she had to sing a blues song alone on stage:

"Julie Christie should never, ever, be allowed to sing unaccompanied on stage again".

**\*Diane Cilento** in *Naked* by Pirandello:

"Diane Cilento, an attractive but unreal blend of Nefertiti and Sheila Hancock, wages a losing battle to convince us that we ought to care".

**\*Anthony Hopkins** in the title role of *Coriolanus* by Brecht:

"Hopkins was dressed like a cross between a fisherman and an SS man, evoking a Welsh rugby captain at odds with his supporter's club".

**\*Wilfred Hyde White** in *Not in the Book* by Arthur Watkyn:

"Precise, half-desiccated and very wary, Wilfred Hyde White prowls around the stage in search of laughs with all the blank single-mindedness of a tortoise on a lettuce hunt".

**\*Penelope Keith** in *The Apple Cart* by George Bernard Shaw:

"Miss Keith plays Orinthia as though she has lost the last race at Goodwood. (*A famous horse race-course in England*).

**\*John Mills** in *The Uninvited Guest*:

"...and John Mills wanders around the stage at the St. James' Theatre looking like a bewildered carrot". (John said he was wearing what he thought was the best red wig that Wig Creations had ever made!)

**\*Kenneth More** in *Rookery Nook* by Ben Travers:

"He went so fast, he disappeared in his own dust".

**\*Roger Moore**, in his first film, starring role with Lana Turner in *Diane*:

"Lana Turner came on as Diane to the clicking of high heels and fluttering of false eyelashes, followed by a lump of English roast beef".

**\*Paul Scofield** as Sir Thomas More in the stage version of *A Man For All Seasons* by Robert Bolt:

"Unfortunately, Mr Scofield's performance for over half the evening is so bad that it obscures the play's merits. His face frozen, his voice dull and level except at the end of a sentence, when the pitch falls like a bad violinist's 'glides', he makes every line sound like a platitude and extinguishes every spark of fire that Mr Bolt manages to blow into

brightness. Towards the end, when he is bowed and grey but unbroken, Mr Scofield comes into his own, for greyness is then needed. But until then, his playing bores the doublet and hose off me". (He couldn't have been that bad – he was cast to play the part in the film version, for which he won the 1966 Oscar for Best Actor).

**\*Katharine Hepburn** in *The Lake*:

"Go to the Martin Beck Theatre and watch Katharine Hepburn run the gamut-t-t of emotion from A to B".

**\*Richard Briers** in *Hamlet*:

"Richard Briers last night played Hamlet like a demented typewriter". (*Richard commented, "I may not have been the greatest Hamlet but I was about the fastest!"*). And also as Hamlet, **Ian McKellen** scored the review, "The best thing about Ian McKellen's Hamlet is his curtain-call".

**\*Laurence Olivier**, of all people, didn't escape either. In *King Lear*, reviewer Hubert Griffith wrote, "He handicapped himself by wearing a beard and a mane so stupendous that his voice came to me as though he were talking through a tree".

**\*Peter O'Toole** as Macbeth:

"His performance suggests that he is taking some kind of personal revenge on the play". And, also as Macbeth, **Ronald Pickup** scored: "This Lady Macbeth understandably committed suicide to escape the ranting of her husband, played by Ronald Pickup". Poor **Ronald** also didn't impress reviewer Michael Billington either when playing Cassius in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, who said "Ronald Pickup plays Cassius like a malignant ferret snapping at the air".

**\*Glenda Jackson** as Cleopatra in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* was "dressed in a number of chic outfits more suggestive of Chelsea than the Nile, Miss Jackson's danger of succumbing to absolute passion was no closer that Mrs Thatcher's likelihood of weeping at Cabinet meetings". And, "Except for her final death scene with Antony, she gave me the impression that he didn't really appeal to her".

**\*Poor Janet Suzman** copped it twice as Cleopatra. In a Royal Shakespeare Company production at Stratford-on-Avon a reviewer said "where Shakespeare had written the word 'O', she favoured us with an extended imitation of a hurrying ambulance". And in a television version, reviewer Clive James said "I occupied the spare time in several of her speeches by counting her teeth".

**\*John Barrymore**, who, at the height of his powers, was widely held to be among the finest actors on either side of the Atlantic. His *Hamlet* ran for many performances in both New York and London, but he still copped it from reviewer J. Ranken Towse: "His performance was not without its synthetic appeal. It was the work of an attractive, earnest and intelligent comedian..."

**\*Edward Woodward** in *Cyrano de Bergerac*:

As swashbuckling Cyrano, Mr Woodward's performance buckles more than it swashes".

**\*The lovely Dorothy Tutin** got a couple of gongs: as Madame Dubarry in *Reflections* by John Peacock:

"Her performance trundles on, firing on all pistons, like a combine harvester reaping an empty field", and in George Bernard Shaw's *St Joan*:

"Dorothy Tutin played St Joan like a beatnik in a coffee-bar".

**\*Michael Redgrave**, in *Hobson's Choice* by Harold Brighouse:

"Some have seen overtones of Lear in his portrayal. I would have thought that a somewhat bad-tempered Father Christmas would have been nearer the mark".

**\*Alec McCowen**, in *Luther* by John Osborne, got this from reviewer Maurice Richardson:

"...an inspired piece of miscasting...a frail schizoid pixie in a robust cycloid role...it helped if you shut our eyes" and this from reviewer Allan Massie when he played Satan in *Paradise Lost* by John Milton:

"Worst of all was Alec McCowen as Satan. This Satan oscillated between being a peevish housemaster, a coy old lady, and the Demon King of Pantomime".

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There are many more reviews in this very entertaining book, so if you see it anywhere and you have a good sense of humour, (the actors certainly did because they cheerfully and readily sent them to Diana) it's worth getting.

The critics also had some harsh reviews about the actual play might need. And then, when **The Basin** had to sadly cancel and many of these are also in Diana's book. Perhaps we might their March production due to an illness, **Charles Dance** rang share some of these next month. to generously offer the use of their theatre should we need it.

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"No Turn Unstoned: The Worst Ever Theatrical Reviews"  
Compiled by Diana Rigg" Elm Tree Books 1982.

### **\*WhatsOn\*WhatsOn\*WhatsOn\*What**

May is always a big month for non-professional theatre in the Eastern Suburbs (unfortunately not for us this year) and these are some suggestions if you want to support local theatre in our neck of the woods:

Opening on May 1 through to May 16, the **Heidelberg Theatre** is presenting Anton Chekhov's *The Three Sisters*, as translated by Julius West. You can book on 9457 4117.

**Sherbrooke Theatre** is offering *Driving Miss Daisy* by Alfred Unry from May 8-23 at its home at the Doncaster Playhouse, 679 Doncaster Road, Doncaster. Adapted to an Oscar Winning film in 1989, it's a real charmer. Book on 1300 650 209.

The **Brighton Theatre Company** is offering *Caught in the Net* from May 21 to June 6. The play was written by Ray Cooney so it's guaranteed to be hilarious; book on 1300 752 126 or go to [www.brightontheatre.com](http://www.brightontheatre.com).

A great favourite is Elizabeth Coleman's comedy *Secret Bridesmaid's Business* (which we successfully staged in 2005) and you can catch it at the **Lilydale Athenaeum Theatre** from May 25 to June 6. Bookings on 9735 1777.

Down in Upper Ferntree Gully, the **1812 Theatre** is presenting *The Book of Everything* by Richard Tulloch from the original children's story by one of the Netherlands most popular children's authors Guus Kuijer. This delightful play will run from May 28 to June 20 and you can book on 9758 3964.

The **Eltham Little Theatre** is putting on a season of One Act Plays by Australian playwrights from May 7-15 and they will be presenting *Dreams of Justice* by Michael Olsen, *Too Close for Comfort* and *Something Old, Something New*, both by Chris Hodson and *Somewhere in the Middle of the Night* by Daniel Keene; bookings here on 0411 713 095.

**Last, but certainly not least, the Basin Theatre Group is presenting a terrific comedy *Nobody's Perfect* by Simon Williams, which is being directed by our old friend Bob Bramble (he of *Caravan* and *Key for Two* in recent times at Peridot) from May 15 to June 6. You can book on 1300 784 668 (7-9pm only).**

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### ***Why is the one above in block letters? Well, there's a Peridot/Basin Story about "Nobody's Perfect"...***

We had planned to stage *Nobody's Perfect* as Season 1 in February 2003 but due to a stupid mindless act of vandalism that destroyed much of the splendid Mt. Waverley Secondary College only nine days before Opening Night, we had to decide whether to cancel the play, or put it back a month and hope for the best. It was dreadfully disappointing for the cast, Ron Kofler, Wendy McRae, Tom Travers and Vanessa Hewett who had rehearsed and worked so hard on their parts and were all ready to go. We decided to try for a March Opening as fortunately the theatre had largely escaped the damage, though sadly Vanessa had to pull out. Tegan Higginbotham stepped in at very short notice and worked incredibly hard on her part, and happily the show went on. It is a very funny play and the audiences loved it.

The fire happened around 2am and within hours of the news getting out (it was reported on the ABC early that morning and Jon Faine came along for an outside broadcast in which he mentioned Peridot), our friends in the non-professional theatre community were offering help. **The first to contact us, around 8.30 that morning, was Richenda Papps from The Basin Theatre**, offering help, props, costumes and anything else we

We were very touched by, and have never forgotten their concern and offers to help, and we sincerely hope their production of *Nobody's Perfect* is a huge success.

*...the last word*

*Enough about theatre and acting; let's have a few silly but apparently true stories...*

Early this year, some Boeing employees on an airfield decided to steal a life raft from one of the 747s. They were successful in getting it out of the plane and home. Shortly after they took it for a float on the river, they noticed a Coast Guard helicopter circling, and then it hovered right over them. It turned out that the chopper was homing in on the emergency locator beacon that activated when the raft was inflated. They are no longer employed at Boeing!

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A man, wanting to rob a downtown Bank of America, walked into the local branch and wrote this message on the back of a Bank of America paying-in slip: "Put all your munny in this bag.". While standing in line, waiting to give his note to the teller, he began to worry that someone might have seen him write the note and might call the police before he reached the teller's window. So he left the Bank of America and crossed the street to the nearby Wells Fargo Bank. After waiting a few minutes in line, he handed his note to the Wells Fargo teller. She read it and, surmising from his spelling errors that he wasn't the brightest bloke in town, told him that she could not accept his stick-up note because it was written on a Bank of America deposit slip and that he would either have to fill out a Wells Fargo deposit slip or go back to the Bank of America across the road. Looking somewhat defeated, the man said, "OK" and left. He was arrested a few minutes later, whilst he was waiting in line back at the Bank of America.

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A motorist was unknowingly caught in an automated speed trap that measured his speed using radar and photographed his car. He later received in the mail a ticket for \$40 and a photo of his car. Instead of payment, he sent the police department a photograph of \$40. Several days later, he received a letter from the police that contained another picture, this time of a pair of handcuffs. He immediately mailed in his \$40.

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A guy walked into a little corner store with a shotgun and demanded all of the cash from the cash drawer. After the cashier put the cash in a bag, the robber saw a bottle of Scotch that he liked behind the counter on the shelf. He told the cashier to put it in the bag as well, but the cashier refused and said, "Because I don't believe you are over 18?". The robber said he was, but the cashier still refused to give it to him because she didn't believe him. At this point, the robber took his driver's license out of his wallet and gave it to the girl. She looked it over and agreed that the bloke was in fact over 18, and so she put the Scotch into his bag. The robber then ran from the store with his loot. The cashier promptly called the police and gave the name and address of the robber that she got off the license. They arrested the robber two hours later.

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A pair of Michigan robbers entered a record shop nervously waving revolvers. The first one shouted, "Nobody move!" When his partner accidentally stumbled, the startled first bandit shot him.

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It seemed another idiot wanted some beer pretty badly. He decided that he'd just throw a brick through a liquor store

window, grab some bottles, and run. So he lifted the brick and heaved it over his head at the window. The brick bounced back, knocking him unconscious. It seems the liquor store window was made of a flexible and strong Plexi-Glass. The whole event was caught on camera and the police arrived just before he regained consciousness.