

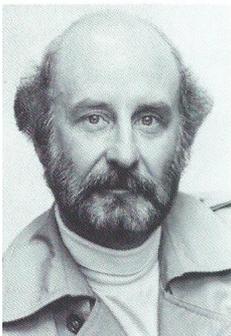
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Farewell to our Irish Ladies

Our Season Two comedy, the delightful *Shush*, came to an end on Saturday June 27 when we had to bid a sad farewell to the five lovely ladies who entertained us so well. Our production of Elaine Murphy's delightful play was a world premiere for a non-professional company to perform something about which we are very chuffed. So we say farewell to **Hayley Lawson-Smith, Janis Schneider, Carol Shelbourn, Jodie Sibley and Jeanne Snider** (below) and thank them for all their hard work and enthusiasm.



We also say farewell and a big thank you to *Shush's* Director, **Richard Keown** (left) who found and brought yet another fine

play to our theatre; we hope we will see Richard and each of these lovely ladies at the Unicorn Theatre again soon.

Of course, a successful play and a nice evening in the theatre doesn't end with the cast and the director and we should thank our splendid Stage Manager Michelle Barber and the set designer Steve Karandais, Kate Deavin and Kendall Brown for their splendid Lighting and Sound Operating, all the hard working Set Construction army and all the many other fine people named with sincere appreciation in the programme. And of course our lovely bunch of Front of Houser's who work hard at making everyone so welcome.

So, another production (our 120th) slips into history, but we will all be back in August with our next production, the very funny *Lend Me a Tenor* in August.

Getting ready for the September Festival

Our great friend Robyn Kelly, is already working hard at putting the September 2015 Monash One Act Play Festival together, as she has so wonderfully done for all the previous Festivals we have staged, and many theatre groups are already showing interest in being a part of this very popular (and extremely well-organized!) event. One of her many tasks is organizing the Awards and seeking some sponsorship. Over the years we have had many companies and Peridot friends who have generously come on board, for which we were most grateful, and so we are asking if we can be that lucky this year.

The awards for which the participating theatre companies and groups will be contesting are:

Best Production - \$300 & Trophy, sponsored by the City of Monash

2nd Place - \$250 & Trophy

3rd Place - \$150 & Trophy

Excellence in Direction - \$120 & Trophy

Excellence in Acting: Male in a Leading Role (The David Perkins Award) - \$120 & Trophy

Excellence in Acting: Female in a Leading Role - \$120 & Trophy

Excellence in Acting: Male in a Supporting Role - \$100 & Trophy

Excellence in Acting: Female in a Supporting Role - (sponsored by Gail Brackley) - \$100 & Trophy

2 Adjudicator's Awards - \$75 each & Trophies

Staging Award (sponsored by David Briggs) - \$50 & Trophy

Peridot Encouragement Award - \$75 & Trophy

Playwright Award - \$50 (Sponsored by ASJ Publishing)

VDL Encouragement Award - \$50

Anyone interested in sponsoring an award can contact Robyn on robynperidot@yahoo.com.au or on 0438 724 664. Payment can be made by cheque or credit card; cheques should be made out to Peridot Theatre and forwarded to Robyn at 58 Medway Street, Box Hill North 3129. All sponsors will receive two complimentary tickets to attend the final day of the Festival where they will be asked to present the award(s) for which they are sponsoring. We always get excellent audience numbers for this Festival so it is a great way for local businesses to promote their companies, or, on a



personal note, to acknowledge Robyn Kelly
someone special.



Loretta has her Company up and running



Loretta Bishop, the Director of our third production for 2015, *Lend Me a Tenor*, has gathered a fine cast around her for this hugely entertaining comedy which comes your way in August, several of whom we are sure you will recognise from previous Peridot productions. So get ready to see and laugh with:

Max... ...Tyson White
Maggie... ...Roxanne Tamlin
Mr. Saunders... ...Barry Baker

Tito... ... Glenn Baker
Maria... ...Cate Dowling Trask
Bellhop... ...Phillip Stephenson
Diana... ...Wendy McRae
Julia... ...Robyn Kelly.

Many of you will remember that very funny *Busybody* Loretta directed for us a couple of years ago, and she has produced some terrific plays elsewhere since then, so it is lovely to have her here at the Unicorn again. Because of the short period between *Shush* and *Lend Me a Tenor*, Loretta started her rehearsals just before *Shush* opened, so they are by now well on their way.

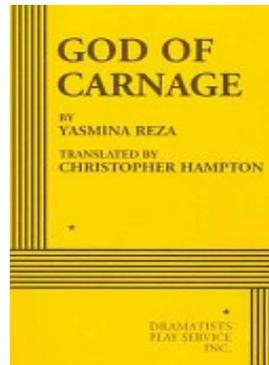
We welcome them all to our theatre, especially Peridot's wonderful stalwart (and Life Member) Robyn after far too long an absence from our stage, and hope they all enjoy their time with us.

Lend Me a Tenor opens on August 7 and will run until August 22.

If you're coming to our next play...

(and any others, come to that)

We'd like to remind our lovely patrons that the starting times of our productions are **8pm** for our evening performances, **2.15pm** for the Matinees and **4.00pm** for the Twilight show. We have recently had quite a few late comers (perhaps they still think we start at 8.15pm, which we did for a long time – but **not now!**) and latecomers may have to wait for a while until there is a suitable break in the play.



Snapped during the construction of the "Shush" set. Have you ever seen a sexier pair of Set Builders?



Our Next Play Reading

Our Play Reading Organizer, Alison Knight is holding a reading of Yasmina Reza's fine comedy *God of Carnage*, our November production, at the theatre on **Wednesday July 22 at 7.30**. Always a cheerful event for everyone, it is also a good way of familiarizing yourself with the play should you be thinking of auditioning for it in the near future, or just come along for the fun of it.

You can contact Alison on a8knight@bigpond.net.au if you have any queries.

Alison organized another Play Reading in May when a cheerful group thoroughly enjoyed *Bloody Murder*, as you can see below.



One of the readers, Emma Barber sent this small report:
On the 27th May a few got together for play reading of "Bloody Murder" by Ed Sala. Having braved the weather and venturing out beyond our heaters we were greeted with a play which kept us entertained and intrigued. Many of us were initially drawn in by what we reluctantly accepted to be the standard English manor murder mystery, complete with the usual suspects, the wealthy matriarch,

the wayward playboy nephew, the innocent ingénue, the distinguished war veteran, the inspector and some mysterious 'foreigners' to name but a few. As the read went on, we had the fun of playing around with roles outside our usual scope of age, race, class and in a few cases, gender. After enjoying a brief supper we settled back into the play and our initial thoughts of a stock standard English murder mystery were turned around. An interesting way by the writer to challenge the old standard play formulas which drew us all in. Thanks to Alison Knight for organizing such an entertaining evening.

Do any of our "Gems" readers enjoy Anagrams?

If so, you will surely like this one, based on an extract from *Hamlet*, one of Shakespeare's most famous soliloquies:

*"To be, or not to be – that is the question,
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune..."*
...is, believe it or not, an anagram of:

"In one of the Bard's best-thought-of tragedies, our insistent hero, Hamlet, queries on two fronts about how life turns rotten"

A hundred-letter anagram. Brilliant!

Reviews of our Season of One Act Plays

"The Cylinder", Written and directed by Horrie Leek.

This play opens with dramatic music to a simple but focused set: a screen, and a table with a cylinder of water. The action is set in a somewhat sci-fi futuristic environment. The actors deliver their lines well, and look suitably sci-fi-ish. At times the body language between the two troopers (Katie Macfie and Greg Barison) was very spatial, almost like two characters not relating at all; it worked best when these two interesting characters related to each other. Greg Barison came into his own when his character took control of proceedings. Russell Perry, who played the Commander, looked suitably threatening and dominant. Russell had a good stage presence.

The timing in the ending didn't work for me; Katie moves downstage and smiles happily, then we hear the rain. To my mind it would have been better to hear the sound effects first, giving Katie motivation to move downstage to witness the wonder of nature. The thunderclap at the end was effective.

*

"Warriors" by Hayley Lawson-Smith, directed by David Lawson-Smith.

This is the youth theatre production and all the actors acquitted themselves well-good – natural performances. In this production we are dealing with the real world and imaginary or other worlds, all through the prism of the angst of teenagers growing to adulthood and dealing with life's challenges. We first meet Zordana (Piper Van Hout), a somewhat mystical character; a well-sustained performance from Piper. We then meet Amy and her sister Belinda (played by Penelope Gordon and Simran Kaur); a very natural and enjoyable performance from both actors. Amy was the more challenging role, and Penelope handled it well. Her emotional moments were subtle and very believable. Next we meet brother and sister Peter and Maddie (played by Adrian Del-Re and Mollie Broadstock). Both actors were particularly engaging when they had to break through the fourth wall and talk to the audience – good, sustainable performances from all involved.

This production required many scene changes; the discipline required by cast and crew was excellent and it all flowed well. The structure of this play was somewhat surreal; the audience needed to work out in their minds what it all meant. Overall, a touching and competent production.

"Phantom Call" by Chris Hodson, directed by Laura Bradley.

Whilst the other three plays in this afternoon's entertainment deal, to some extent, with imagined worlds, this play comes directly from the world of British situation comedy/melodrama, with larger-than-life characters, fart and burp jokes, verging on political incorrectness – and the audience lapped it up. There is no serious intent in this play; it's all about fun and laughter.

The cast worked well as an ensemble. The play revolves around Charlie, played by Simon Laidler. This role gave Simon the opportunity to display his comic character acting talents – very enjoyable. Simon was well supported by Emma Barber, who played his wife, Marge. Michaela Smith developed an entertaining over-the-top character in Madame Zelda. Damien Vuleta, who played Mr. Crimmens, maintained a great hypnotic stare throughout the production – well done. The cast was completed by the guests, played competently by Fiona Clayton, Diana Stathis and Rachael Dewar.

This play required consistent pace, which was achieved for about 80% of the time. It fell somewhat flat after Troy the hairdresser came on board. Overall this was an entertaining and well-received production.

"The Portrait" Written and directed by Horrie Leek.

From a production point of view this was the most interesting of four plays. *Continued in the next column...*

The set and mottled lighting created an interesting and captivating atmosphere. The use of music complemented this atmosphere. This play also took us to a mysterious world, be it heaven, hell, or a psychotic mindscape, who knows; it's not really relevant. It was hypnotic and captivating, a short, succinct, effective piece of theatre.

Monica Greenwood as Woman One was suitably aloof and mysterious. Nicky Neville-Jones as Woman Two portrayed her naivety and innocence well. Brendan Allan put in a solid performance as the Man. Margaret Venning and Lillian Liu gave great support as the Portrait Women. Brendan, Margaret and Lillian all had to maintain a tableau freeze for a long time; not easy to do – well done. Congratulations to all involved in this production.

*

Peridot Theatre is to be congratulated for supporting local playwrights with a short season of One Act Plays, all four of which were written by people involved in local community theatre. Also embedded in this season was a youth theatre production. What a great opportunity for all involved to develop their craft. In addition, Peridot hosts the Monash One Act Play Festival in September – get along and support it.

Reviewed by Rod Nash for the June edition of the VDL's "Theatrecraft" newsletter

*

P.S. We'll have a review of our Season 2 play *Shush* from the VDL's *Theatrecraft* in the July *Gems*.

Whilst on the subject of One Act Plays...



One Act Plays seem to be getting more and more popular on the non-professional theatre scene of late and three local Companies have programmes scheduled for July which we would like to tell you

about:

The **1812 Theatre**, up in Upper Ferntree Gully, is staging its popular "Board Shorts" Festival for the seventh year, in which plays of around 10-15 minutes, mostly written by local playwrights, are presented (Peridot Committee Members Alison Knight and Hayley Lawson-Smith, plus our old mate Horrie Leek all have a play in the programme). Always popular and

entertaining, you can catch them on July 2-4 at 8pm and also at 2pm on the 4th. Tickets are just \$15; book on 9758 3964.

The **ARK Theatre** is staging, under the title ARKstralian, two very Australian plays, "Farmer Will Swap Combine Harvester for Wife" by Hugh O'Brien, and "Down Came a Jumbuck" by Ian

Austin at the Lilydale Heights College Performing Arts Centre, 17 Nelson Road, Lilydale (if you go, you should enter through Gate 2) . Performances will be on Fridays July 3 and 10 at 8pm and Saturdays July 4 and 11 at 2pm and 8pm. Bookings on 9513 9581 or www.arktheatremelb.com.

Hartwell Players, at their home in the Ashwood College Performing Arts Centre, Vannam Road, Ashwood, are presenting three OAPs under the collective title *Crossed Wires*: *Tangled Up in Blue* by Brad Boeson, *He Said and She Said* by Alice Gerstenberg (which is being directed by Peridot Committee Member Kate Deavin) and *Interviews with Loneliness* by Anthea Wuehler. They will be performed on July 3-4 and 9-11 at 8pm and you book on bookings@hartwellplayers.org.au or you can phone them on 9513 9581.

A famous theatrical actress
Played best in the role of malefactress
Yet her home life was pure
Except, to be sure
A scandal or two just for practice

If you want to connect our Ian...

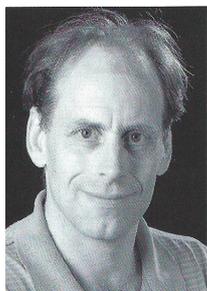


In the last (June) "Gems" we listed Peridot's current Committee, following the 2015 Annual General Meeting, with all their contact details should you want to have a word. Committee Member Ian Carlsson has advised us that there is a change to his details; he has a new email address which is igc5204@gmail.com

Ian (that's him on the left) has been our terrific and hugely enthusiastic Front of House Coordinator for several years and has done a fabulous job. However, he would like to move on to something else, so we are looking for a new FOH leader. Ian would be happy to train the incumbent and work in tandem for a while.

Making our patrons welcome and looking after them at the interval and after the show is an important facet of Peridot's activities - and it can be fun at the same time.

Have a word with Ian if you think you might be interested - you've got his new email address above!



Thanks Damian!

The VDL's excellent monthly newsletter *Theatrecraft* is always a great source of information for the theatrical community, and the June edition marked the fifth year that Damian Vuleta (left) has been its Editor. Damian has done a fine job all this time and we thank him for so reliably and enthusiastically keeping us so well informed.

Damian has also found time to get on stage from time to time, and we have seen him twice in recent times on the Peridot stage, in *Busybody* (2013) and recently in the One Act comedy *Phantom Call*.

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Whilst on this subject, your beloved *Gems* Editor knocked out his first "Gems" in July 2000, which means this edition marks fifteen years of his odd bits and pieces. One day he'll get it right!

*WhatsOn*WhatsOn*WhatsOn*Whats

Some interesting plays coming along around our neck of the woods in July which you might find appealing, such as:

Eltham Little Theatre is offering *The Little Mermaid JR*, which is a stage adaptation of a Disney Broadway production first staged in 2008.

It will run at the Eltham Arts Centre, 1603 Main Road, Research from July 3-12, bookings on 0411 713 095.

Encore Theatre is staging a good old English style farce, *Cash on Delivery* by Michael Cooney at the Clayton Community Centre Nelson Road, Lilydale, Cooke Street, Clayton from July 10-25 under Bill Irvine's direction. Bookings on 1300 739 099.

Also from July 10-25, **Heidelberg Theatre** is presenting *The Cripple of Inishmaan* by the very fine Irish playwright Martin McDonagh, which Bruce Akers is directing. Amongst the fine cast Heidelberg has assembled is that great Peridot trooper Sandy Green. Bookings on htc.org.au or 9457 4117.

The **Frankston Theatre Group** is presenting a classic thriller, *Something to Hide* by Leslie Sands from July 24 to August 8 at the Mt. Eliza Community Centre, Canadian Bay Road, Mt. Eliza under Rob Eliza's direction. This show will be in a cabaret style so it's a BYO drinks and nibbles event. Bookings for this one on 1300 665 377.

In the Richmond Theatre, 413 Church Street, Richmond from July 24 to August 7, the **Playhouse Players** are presenting the classic Australian play *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* by Ray Lawler, which is being directed by Susan Rundle (who you may recall was in our One Act Play *Peter Stone* last year). You can book on 0468 917 450.

The **1812 Theatre** obviously enjoys putting on plays based on those past terrific English TV comedies; in recent times they have staged *The Vicar of Dibley*, and *Dad's Army* and from July 31 to August 22 they are offering *Steptoe and Son* by Ray Galton and Alan Simpson, which our good friend Christine Grant is directing. Sure to be a lot of fun, book on 9758 3964.

...the last word

The actor's nightmare is drying; a teacher's nightmare is standing in front of a class with his flies undone. In the Broadway musical "Baby" a few years ago, actor Martin Vidnovic experienced the latter...

Vidnovic was playing one-half of an infertile couple with Catherine Cox in the scene when the doctor, played by John Jellison, had given them the diagnosis that Vidnovic was "just shooting blanks", a line which usually got a big laugh. But one night, Vidnovic noticed that the laughter did not stop, and it was so loud they couldn't continue with their lines. He figured something had gone wrong. Just before this particular scene he had one of those terribly rushed quick changes, and suddenly a dreaded thought struck him. He looked down, and, lo and behold, his huge brass zipper was wide open. The spotlight had hit it perfectly, throwing a reflection of light right into the audience. He crossed his legs immediately and there was another tumultuous explosion of laughter. He looked at his wife with an imploring expression of "help me!" and then he crossed his legs the other way - and this got another burst of laughter.

Meanwhile, the doctor was trying to continue with "Listen, Nick, what I would like you to do..." but Vidnovic butted in, just as if it had been written in the text "Wait a minute, Doctor, there's something I've got to do first". So he stood up, turned his back to the audience and, ham that he was, as he pulled up his zipper he became airborne for a second. Then he returned to his seat, there was another tumultuous applause, and they resumed the scene. The next day, the *Daily News* reviewed Vidnovic's ad-lib, calling it a major gaffe from which he had managed to extricate himself, whilst getting the biggest laughs of the evening!

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... And then there's an actor who fought back...

Actor Billy Rose liked to tell the story of his fellow showman Henry Miller when he was on the road playing in *The Great Divide*. The play had been panned originally during its tryout in Pittsburgh. Returning there, after a couple of successful seasons in New York, the play did well with both critics and audiences, but Miller was still sore at the city. So, when in the middle of a love scene with the actress Margaret Anglin he heard some of

the audience scurrying towards the exits, he stopped and came to the front of the stage.

“Get back to your seats” he yelled furiously at them. “You had already insulted me once, the last time I played this oversized smudge pot, and I won’t let you do it again!”

Some of the people did as they were told and returned to their seats, but a few minutes later others rose and tried to leave. Miller began screaming “Knaves and varlets...!” when Margaret Anglin grabbed his sleeve. “Stop acting like a jackass, Henry,” she shouted. “The theatre is on fire.”

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But sometimes you just can't take a trick, like Edward...

On numerous tours from the thirties to the fifties around the USA, the highly popular actor Edward Everett Horton had played Henry Dewlip in *Springtime for Henry* more than three thousand times. He thought he knew every trick in milking every laugh in what was a very funny play, but during a benefit at the Brattle Theatre in Cambridge, Massachusetts, none of his tricks seemed to be working, and the comedy was received by the descendants of the Pilgrims in hushed quiet. But after the show, when Horton was feeling very deflated, a rather embarrassed woman came backstage to congratulate him.

“You were so funny, Mr. Horton,” she said, “that we all had difficulty to keep from laughing.”

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