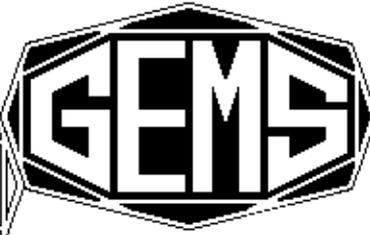




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Our One Act Play Season Went Well Again!

Our annual June One Act Play Season was held from June 12-15 and we were delighted that close to 500 people came along to see the three short productions on offer.

First up was *In By The Half* (a backstage theatrical term for how long was there left before curtain-up), about a retired, demanding and rather self-centred actress living in seclusion with her ex-dresser whose comfortable existence was disrupted when her estranged daughter (herself an actress though not very successful) re-entered her life with news that would change everything. A gentle comedy directed by Alison Knight, it was all built around a strong performance by Patricia McCracken as the Madam.

Next up, in complete contrast, was a drama *Peter Stone* by Alison Knight, which was directed for us by Bruce Cochrane, which told the store of a dark secret from the past that cast a devastating shadow over the lives of a Melbourne family headed by an English immigrant (David Lawson-Smith) and his Australian partner (Susan Rundle), a play with a powerful and unsettling ending.

The third play was totally different: a comedy, *No Strings* by John Tilbrook directed by Lisa McNiven, about a married couple, both suffering from marriage fatigue and who have unknowingly connected with each other through an internal dating site. Things get a bit explosive when they actually meet after arranging a date through the site but it all worked out in the end. Cathie Lee and Greg Barison (he of the sexy legs earlier this year in *The Hallelujah Girls*) made a fine couple.

Both Lisa and Bruce were unfortunately rather ill leading up to the performance dates but their casts pulled together well to produce a couple of fine plays for which the two directors had already laid firm foundations, so a big thank you to all.



Madam (Patricia McCracken) on the right, and her ex-dresser Doris (Cheryl Ballantine-Richards) in "*In By The Half*". More photos on page four.

Another Play Reading Coming Up

Our Season Four production is the terrific comedy *Key for Two* by John Chapman and Dave Freeman which will kick off on November 14 but first up, cunningly not too long before the Auditions, is our Play Reading, which will be held at the theatre on **Wednesday July 23 at 7.30pm**. This very funny farce at has all the classic elements of this kind of play – actors dashing in and out of bedroom doors like cuckoo clocks, mistaken identity, a bizarre plot, and some very funny lines - so be prepared for many a chuckle. No experience necessary to come along to a Peridot Play Reading, just bring your voice along, although coming to the Reading is a great way of getting to know the play if you are thinking about auditioning for one of the seven roles (three males and four females) that our Director, Bob Bramble will be looking to cast in August (see below).

For more information, contact our Play Reading Queen, Alison Knight on a8knight@bigpond.net.au

...and while we're on the subject

Auditions for *Key for Two* will be held at the theatre on **Sunday August 10 at 6.00pm**, and Bob Bramble will be looking to cast the following:

Harriet: Vivacious and optimistic, mid 30s-40s

Anne: Harriet's best friend, bright and cheerful, mid 30s-40s

Gordon: suave, married business man, Harriet's lover, mid 40s-50s

Alec: North Country fisherman, married, also Harriet's lover, mid 40s-50s

Richard: Anne's husband, a drunken vet, mid 30s-40s

Magda: Gordon's wife, mid 40s-50s

Mildred: Alec's wife, North Country, no-nonsense type, mid 40s-50s

All except Alec and Mildred have standard English accents, Alex and Mildred have North Country accents.

Precast Characters: Nil

Synopsis: Harriet, a divorcee living in an elegant flat in Brighton, solves her financial problems by entertaining two married gentleman callers different days of the week. Each man thinks he is the only one in Harriet's life and she orchestrates their comings and goings with elegant artistry. The scheme faces collapse when her friend Anne, whose marriage is failing, arrives at the flat hotly pursued by her husband. The confusion that ensues builds to a rich complexity of mistaken identity, splendidly farcical situations and a climax of comic wizardry.

Enquiries to Bob Bramble at bobbbramble2013@gmail.com.

Peridot's Bits and Pieces

Some congratulations:

To our friends at the Basin Theatre Group, who have just clocked up sixty years of fine theatre in the Basin, just outside Boronia. Your Beloved Editor has enjoyed many a good production and lots of warm welcomes in their delightful theatre in its lovely bush setting.

And to Peridot favourites Donna Pope and Robyn Kelly for their splendid performances in Sherbrook's recent excellent production of the comedy *Sylvia*. Donna played the role of Sylvia, who is a street-wise New York dog, with exuberance and humour and was so convincing your BE wanted to throw her a dog biscuit and take her for a walk, whilst Robyn was convincing as a Counsellor trying to straighten out Sylvia's besotted owner.

This fun play was beautifully directed by Bob Bramble, who seems to specialize in comedies (remember his terrific *Caravan* at our place a couple of years ago?); we are delighted to mention that he will be directing our Season Four comedy *Key for Two*, coming your way in November.

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For people who like One Act Plays there are quite a few OAP Festivals around the state every year, including of course the Monash One Act Play Festival which we host every September. There's an interesting new one on the horizon: the Bright Alpine Actors are getting ready for their first One Act Play Festival, to be held in the local Bright Community Theatre on August 16-17. It is being sponsored by the Alpine Shire and local MP Bill Sykes; we're told that the festival is already generating plenty of local support and will hopefully create interest throughout Victoria.

Our good friend and fine play Director Richard Keown is a regular Adjudicator at Festivals around the State (he is one of Peridot's Adjudicators for the 2014 Peri Awards) and he is off to Bright to judge this new event, so if you fancy another spot of entertaining theatre – you could perhaps make a weekend of it in this beautiful corner of Victoria – contact Gerard on 0455 471 402 or Kathy on 0432 020 462 or email gerard214388@gmail.com

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We are happy to tell you that our Charity Preview Night for *House Guest* on Thursday August 7 will be Wavecare. Wavecare provides support to people who are in need of assistance due to illness, grief & loss, abuse, trauma, suffering, distress, homelessness, crisis, misfortune, disability, relationship issues and isolation. Wavecare also provides innovative services to children, adolescents, adults, families, couples, schools, groups and the business sector and we are happy to support this fine group. For more information on their splendid activities you can contact them on 9560 6722.

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Thanks to Marion Egerton for running the Stage Management Workshop on June 21 at the theatre. It was fascinating and detailed insight into the skills required, and a good chance to socialise with friends from other theatre companies.

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We are well into our preparations for our August production, Francis Durbridge's drama *House Guest*, and work has

Peridot's Bits and Pieces – continued...

started on building the set. Last weekend saw several people getting stuck in but there is still quite a lot to be done, so if anyone feels they would like to join in, we will be at the theatre next weekend, June 28 and 29 and probably the following Saturday July 5. No real skills are compulsory, just a bit of enthusiasm and time.

For more information, contact Helen McIntosh on 9807 3216 or 0403 797709

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One of the nice things about coming to see a play at Peridot are, we think, the little extras, like the welcoming sherry before the play, a glass of wine after, and the spot of supper (or the Devonshire Tea at a Matinee) that we like to lay on, all provided by our cheerful bunch of Front of House volunteers. With thirteen performances to cater for and at least four people needed for each show, our amiable FOH roster compiler Bev Matthey has a big task, often having some difficulty in get a full deck for the whole season. She would dearly like to be able to extend her list of volunteers a little, so if anyone would like to come on board and help out for perhaps just one play per season, she would be ever so grateful. It's not hard work, around three and a half to four hours and helping make an enjoyable evening or afternoon for our audiences can be a pleasant experience, and we know that the audiences really appreciate the lovely Front of House folk.

If you think you might be able to help out, ring Bev on 9882 9985 or email her on sheoaks@bigpond.com

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Don't forget the Monash One Act Play Festival being held at our theatre over the September 19-21. Several companies have signed on already so we think this year will be as successful and entertaining as all the previous festivals. As before, tickets are available at the door for each session for \$10 or you can book on line if you prefer at www.peridot.com.au. The festival is general admission with no seat allocation, all very casual and friendly! And lots of fine theatre!

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Whilst on the subject of the Monash One Act Play Festival, we told you earlier this year that our old friend Peter Newling would be the Adjudicator for 2014. Unfortunately Peter is unable to come along due to a clash of dates so another old Peridot friend, Malcolm Sussman, himself a fine actor and director, has kindly agreed to come along.

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We would also like to remind you that this is **your** Newsletter, so if you have any comments, criticisms (we won't feel hurt!) or suggestions, if you have any little stories or you find an interesting article somewhere (preferably something to do with theatre) that you would like to share with everyone, send it along to your beloved Gems Editor. You will find him lurking behind tawnyowl1@bigpond.com (just put "Gems" in the subject line so he'll know it's not one of those dodgy e-mails!) or you can drop a line to David Briggs, 43/15 Fulham Road, Rowville 3178

“Does My Bum Look Big In This?”



Alison Knight, girl reporter (of advancing years) exclusively goes behind the scenes at Peridot to look at Costumes.

The thing about actors is they like to look good on stage...or, if not exactly good, to look striking. However, the restrictions imposed by the actor's natural limitations, coupled with the requirements of the play, can provide quite a challenge to those charged with costuming a production. To find out more about Costume, I put some questions to two of our Peridot experts, Chris Bartle and Helen McIntosh.

Chris enjoys costuming both modern and period pieces. Her mantra is that the costume should suit the character and the character should suit the costume. She explained that the “look” for the production is generally agreed through discussions between the Director and the Costume person. Colours are chosen to reflect a character's personality, while styles need to take into consideration such factors as whether the actor needs to make a quick change. For instance, a dress which has to be shed in a hurry must not disturb a hairstyle or dislodge a wig. Chris also considers it important that the actor feels comfortable in the costume, and I can personally attest to Chris's concern. When I was in *A Chorus of Disapproval* some years ago, I had to wear a wired corset. During one performance, two wires worked their way up through the material and lodged themselves painfully in my underarm. Chris very kindly hand-stitched repairs to the offending garment, not once but twice, thereby earning my undying gratitude!

Like Chris, Helen also finds costuming period pieces the most challenging, but is grateful that Peridot is well resourced. However, given the variety of shapes and sizes in any cast, it can still be difficult to find something to fit everyone. For Helen, an important consideration is that costumes should not blend into the set so she always finds out what colour the Director wants the flats painted first. Helen is a committed op-shopper who spends hours sourcing costumes for plays. It can be frustrating when she finds just the right thing and then the actor announces that they just don't wear blue – sigh: actors! – but both Helen and Chris reckon that their powers of persuasion have acquired a fine edge over the years. Helen's personal bugbear is sewing tutus. Can you remember the last Peridot production to feature tutus? No? Well, now you know why.

Both Chris and Helen have received numerous nominations or awards for Costume, in the Lyrebird, the Victorian Drama League and Peridot's Peri Awards for instance. I asked each of them what had been their proudest moment. For Helen, it was when a group of teenage girls bought her a bouquet of flowers for making their costumes, and when an actor announced on Facebook how thrilled

she was with her costume. For Chris, it was receiving a Lyrebird Award for the costumes – and there were so many of them – for 1812 Theatre's production of *The Thirty-nine Steps* in 2012.

What'sOn*What'sOn*What'sOn*What's

A trio of plays opening by our friends in July in the Eastern Suburbs which might tempt you:

The **Heidelberg Theatre Company** is presenting *Little Murders* by Jules Feiffer, a black comedy about a New York everyday dysfunctional family, which will run from July 3-19. If fancy this, you can book on htc.org.au or on 9457 4117.

Encore Theatre is offering that classic comedy *Arsenic and Old Lace* by Joseph Kesselring in its lovely theatre in the Clayton Community Centre, Cooke Street, Clayton from July 11-26. This hugely enjoyable romp was first performed over 70 years ago but never grows old! Bookings on 1300 739 099.

The **Eltham Little Theatre** is staging one of the most popular musicals of all time, Lionel Bart's *Oliver*, from July 11-27, which will be directed by our good friend Amy Jenkins. Bookings for this perennial favourite can be made on www.elthamlittletheatre.org.au or on 0411 713 095.

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And something a bit different at 1812 Theatre:

Our good friends at 1812 (down in Upper Ferntree Gully) are holding their annual *Board Shorts* season in their intimate bakery@1812 venue. With its unique blend of comedy and drama presented through a program of short 10 minute plays. *Board Shorts* features work by talented local writers, many of whom have won plaudits for their work in national playwriting competitions. Most of the writers will be well known to patrons of previous *Board Shorts* productions – John Tilbrook, Chris Hodson, Kylie Rackham, Sarina Cassino, Horrie Leek Carmen Saarelaht and Peridot's own Alison Knight (who has a new play, *Rigel and Vortex* being staged there which she is also directing) to name a few. Another Peridot connection – our President, Damian Jones (last seen as the Doctor in the recent One Act Play *In by the Half*) is in the cast of Horrie Leek's entry *Day Must Break*.

If you haven't been to a *Board Shorts* performance previously, it's well worth a visit. It runs from July 3-5 at 8pm plus a 2.15pm matinee on the 5th. Bookings on 9758 3964, tickets a mere \$15..

Perhaps the final word about our May production "Heroes", from a long-time subscriber...

I intended writing straight after attending the play 'Heroes' (but as usual got caught up in other priorities) to congratulate the actors for their wonderful performances, conveying much humour and sincere warmth for their comrades as they navigated the twilight years of their lives. They also did a great job presenting the story with a French accent, maintained throughout.

But I would like to make particular mention of my amazement when I saw the quality of the very realistic set. It was hard to believe it wasn't manufactured from real stone and concrete. The eye to detail was commendable and the alcove with the statue of St Francis, the statue of the dog and the lovely garden beds each added beauty to an otherwise plain building (albeit professionally constructed). We all have an opportunity of speaking with, and congratulating, the actors whilst sharing a wine after the show but the set designers and constructors miss out, so I would appreciate you passing on my congratulations on a job very well done.

Sincerely,

Jim Ball (and my wife, Helen, concurs)

Some more photos from our One Act Play Season



An anguished moment in the drama "Peter Stone" with Peter (David Lawson-Smith) and his partner Martha (Susan Rundle).



A quieter moment in "Peter Stone" with Susan's mother Rose (Lynne Elphinston-Gray) and her grandson Kane (Robert Warburton)



A frantic moment in the comedy "No Strings" with Glenn (Greg Barison) and Jenny (Cathie Lee).

...the last word

Just for a bit of a change, a few little radio stories...

Back in the mid 1960s, when the BBC reorganised its radio channels and introduced Radio 1 and Radio 2, it adopted a policy of rounding off each news summary with a light-hearted item.

Peter Latham, an Australian newsreader, was given a story about an American woman who had been granted a divorce on the grounds of the unreasonable behaviour of her husband's pet boa constrictor. Apparently, the poor woman had gone through hell with this serpent, but she finally reached the end of her tether when she bought some expensive new chairs and the snake had crushed them. Peter Latham endeavoured to read the story with the gravity that befitted a BBC newsreader but had to keep switching off his microphone in order to stop himself laughing and to pull himself together. The pauses in the news bulletin grew longer and longer, and the snatches of news bulletin between pauses grew shorter and shorter as Latham struggled desperately – and not always successfully – to suppress his giggles. It was probably the longest news item the BBC has ever broadcast.

*

One ABC newsreader's bulletin got off to a dodgy start when he gravely read the opening line: "The State weekend road toll rose to ten last night when three people were seriously killed on the Hume Highway", whilst another ABC announcer based in Adelaide was waiting to pass to his reader once the national bulletin had finished. When it was time, he switched on his microphone and dreamily said "And now here is the news from South Australia, read by Alice Springs."

*

Panel operators in the radio newsrooms were notorious in setting up the newsreaders. Denis Gibbons, a newsreader at 3AW, was caught several times by letting his guard down and reading an "urgent" piece of paper thrust under his nose whilst he was in the middle of his reading the bulletin, such as when one note started with "The Victorian Railways are surprised to announce that the Daylight from Sydney is unexpectedly running on time..." and another, "Forecasters at the Bureau of Meteorology have drawn lots to decide tomorrow's weather..."

John Sheed was reading the news on 7HO Hobart and was in full stride when a panel operator rushed into the studio and handed a piece of paper to the announcer, Keith McGowan. The item was headed NEWSFLASH and Keith had barely glanced at the first line before John Sheed reached across the desk and snatched the piece of paper. He then announced "Here is a news flash just to hand" and started to read it out loud with great urgency. "A policeman has been shot in Hobart. The policeman was well-known identity, Mr. Plod. Noddy is being held for questioning..." and his voice then kind of faded away. Needless to say the rest of the bulletin was a shambles.

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Listeners hoping to hear themselves on the radio get totally confused because their conversation is delayed by a few (usually about seven) seconds. They say 'Hello', and because they can't hear the 'hello' on their radio, they panic and repeat the hello plus sometimes several other similar greetings, so the switchboard operators are given strict instructions to tell the callers to turn their radios off.

One caller rang 3AW some years ago. 'Have you turned your radio off?' asked the switchboard operator.

'No, but it can't be heard', replied the listener – a standard reply.

'I'm sorry', said the operator, 'but you HAVE to turn it off'.

She waited five minutes until the caller returned to the phone, completely out of breath. 'You must live in a very large house', said the operator.

'I live in a flat', said the caller, 'but it's around the corner. I'm ringing from a public phone box'