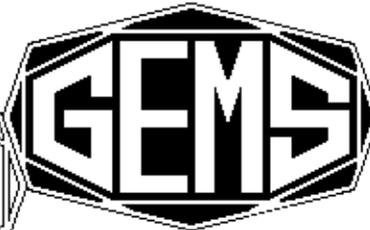


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General Correspondence:
PO BOX 2100,
Mt. Waverley 3149

www.peridot.com.au

All Bookings, Ticket Enquiries, Returns,
write to PO BOX 1026, Box Hill 3128 or
peridotboxoffice@yahoo.com.au



PEOPLES CHOICE 2013

Please pick your favourite production for this year in order of preference (i.e. 1 for the best, 2 for the next best and so on)

Once again we are inviting you to let us know which production you really liked at Peridot in this year. What was your favourite – for any reason: which play moved you, made you happy, sad, laugh, thoughtful, whatever? Yes, it's People's Choice Time.

Enclosed with this edition of *Gems* (or attached to your email one if that's how you get it) is your Voting Form and, provided you have seen all four major productions for the year, we ask that you let us know what was your personal favourite by filling in the form and leaving it in the box which we will cunningly place in the foyer during the run of *Easy Virtue*. If, of course, you may want to think about it for a while, just fill the Form in at your leisure and post it to Robyn Kelly at P.O. Box 1036, Box Hill 3128.

There will be further slips left at the theatre should there be more than one subscriber in your family or group who is eligible to vote or should you mislay (or muck up!) this one. Just ask the friendly Front of House person there if you need one or more.

We are very keen to get your feedback to this year's programme as it goes a long way to telling us what sort of plays you like and which can help us when we are shaping our future programmes. And, as an additional incentive, one completed Voting Form will be drawn after the votes have been counted and that slip will win a double subscription to Peridot for 2014. Not bad, huh?

We are happy to report that 2014 Subscription Forms are already beginning to flow in a very healthy fashion, for which we sincerely thank you all. Our Ticket Manager John Kelly will begin processing them once "Easy Virtue" is finished but would like to reassure you that they will be handled in the same order as they are received. So, if you haven't sent yours in yet, you'd better buck up if there are specific dates or seating you prefer.

Looking forward to 2014 already

Hallelujah – we have our cast!

Auditions for our first production next year, the American comedy *The Hallelujah Girls* went well with a very healthy number of people coming along. The play's director, Annie Blood was able to find an excellent cast, which we are delighted to bring to you:

Sugar Lee...	...Phillippa Adgemis
Nita...	...Christine Bridge
Bunny...	...Sue Gooding
Crystal...	...Jennie Kellaway
Mavis...	...Joan Krutli
Carlene...	...Cathie Lee
Bobby Dwayne...	...Greg Barison
Porter...	...Paul de Freitas.

Three of the above have already graced our stage this year: you may recall Phillipa as the shy Sister Mary Amnesia and Jennie as the Reverend Mother Mary Regina in our very successful *Nunsense* in May, whilst those of you who came along to the Monash One Act Play Festival in September would remember seeing Joan Krutli (taking a break from hosting "Theatreland" every week on Golden Days Radio) in Adelphi Players' entry *Down Came a Jumbuck*. Cathie and Paul have also been on stage at Peridot before and we warmly welcome those and the newcomers to the Unicorn theatre and sincerely hope they enjoy their time with us.

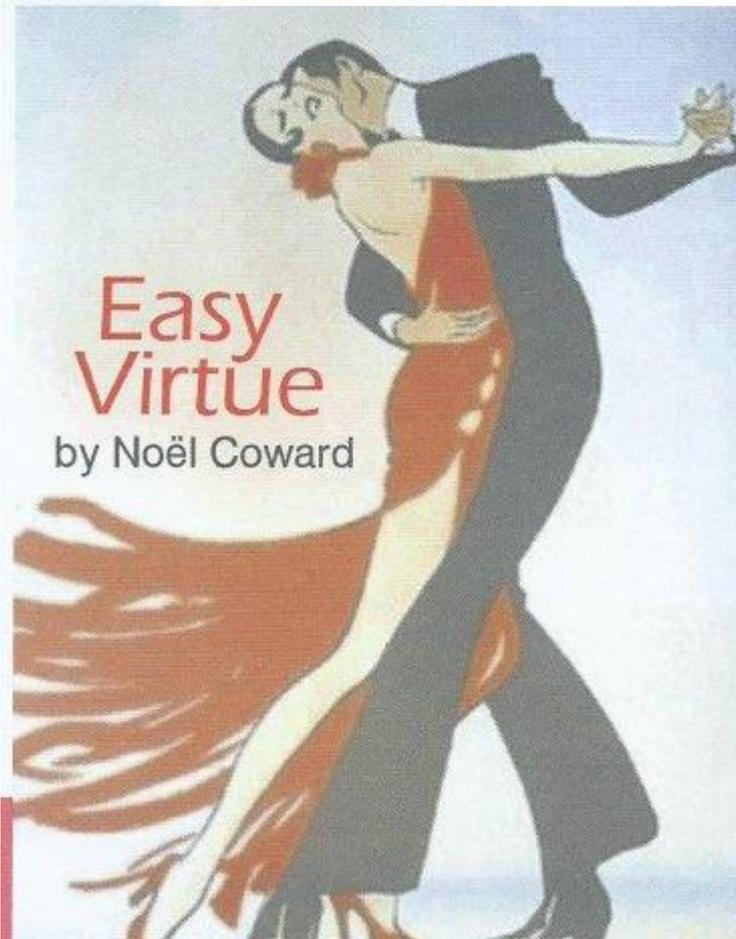
Farewell to an old friend

It was with great sadness that we remember a good friend of Peridot, Anne Rendall, who died on October 8. Anne was a very skilled costume designer and maker and had worked on many productions at Peridot as well as other companies, particularly at our friends at Clayton's Encore Theatre, where she and her husband Bill were long time stalwarts.

Our thoughts are with Anne's family; she will be sorely missed in our local non-professional theatre family.

Sad to say that Bill hasn't been too well himself of late and we wish him a full recovery. A great bloke, he can turn his hand to just about everything and has helped us on many occasions with our set building. Regulars at Peridot might also recall seeing some bloke at the back of our theatre, usually in the last week of a run, filming the production for our records – that's Bill, being very useful as always!

OUR NEXT PRODUCTION



To finish off another fine year of theatre we are delighted to present Noël Coward's witty and satirical comedy *Easy Virtue*, which will be directed for us by a highly regarded and experienced Horrie Leek and who has directed many fine productions for us at Peridot over the years, the last one being a lovely production of Terence Rattigan's *Separate Tables* in 2009. *Easy Virtue* tells what eventuates when the only son of a wealthy English family returns to the country estate with a woman he has married while on the Continent; the family are scandalized as they considered she fails to measure up to their long standing and very 'County' standards in every way.

*

Coward wrote the play in 1924 when he was 25 years old, and it was his 16th play. The play had a successful first run in New York in 1925, and then opened in London in 1926. It has been revived several times since and made into a film twice, in 1928, directed by a young Alfred Hitchcock (though ironically, given that Coward was famously known for his sharp wit and clever dialogue, it was a silent film!) and more recently, in 2008.

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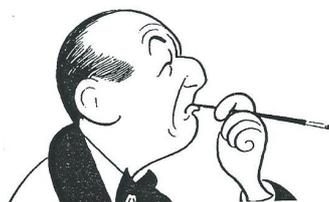
In tone and style, *Easy Virtue* is essentially a drawing room melodrama, with flourishes of the signature wit which would later be identified with Coward. The central characters of the play are John Whittaker and Larita, the American divorcée he has just married, much to his mother's great disapproval. Horrie has been a long-time admirer of Coward's works, which he has directed on many occasions and he is delighted to be bringing this not-often seen comedy to our stage. This will be the fourth Coward we have presented, following *Waiting in the Wings* (1995), *Nude with Violin* (2001) and *Blithe Spirit* (2003). It's certainly about time we did another play from this superb and much loved playwright!

*

Easy Virtue will run from November 8-9, 13-16 and 20-23 at 8.00pm, with Matinees on Sunday November 10, Saturday November 16 both at 2.15pm, and a Twilight Matinee on Sunday November 17 at 4.00pm.

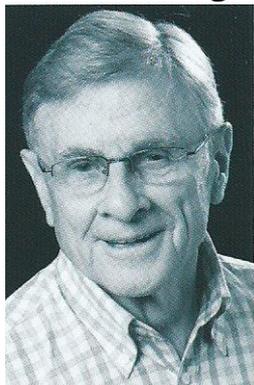
Bookings can be made on 1300 138 645 (toll free) or 9898 9090 if using your mobile, or you email peridotboxoffice@yahoo.com.au if you prefer.

On page three you can read some musings of Horrie Leeks about this delightful play.



Mr. Coward awaits you at Peridot!

Some Thoughts About "Easy Virtue..."



When the cast of our upcoming production of "Easy Virtue" by Noel Coward assembled for their first call, our Director, Horrie Leek (left) shared with them some background notes on the play, the author and the period on which it was written and first produced that he had prepared. We thought you might be interested too.

*

"Easy Virtue" was one of Coward's early successes and had its premiere in New York in 1925. It is a clever satire on the manners and morals of English society in that time and the play's themes of social barriers and snobbery are still quite relevant today.

Now, some of you may not be familiar with the extraordinary career of Noel Coward. Sure, we've all heard of him, but perhaps you're not aware of just how great his talent was and how popular he has remained for all those years since his death in 1973. His plays are constantly in production throughout the English speaking world.

Coward rose to fame in London's West End and on Broadway in the 1920's and 30's and continued until his death. He was a playwright and actor and he wrote the music and lyrics for revues and musicals, often appearing in his own works. These included an endless list of popular songs. Later, he wrote for film- particularly during World War 2 when he was commissioned to write and direct a film which was specifically created to boost public morale in the dark days of that war. The result was "In Which We Serve".

In his later years, Coward re-invented himself as a character actor in movies, both in England and Hollywood, and most surprisingly, as a cabaret artist in Las Vegas at the Nevada Inn and in Paris at the Cafe de Paris.

He was the confidante and friend of celebrities and royalty, particularly the late Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother and the German/American film star Marlene Dietrich

Coward was gay, which of course, was not mentioned in polite society during his lifetime: in spite of this, he was accepted everywhere, but it prevented him from receiving a Knighthood until almost the end of his life, when he became Sir Noel. So, we have a lot of reputation and acclaim to live up to in our production.

"Easy Virtue" is a clever satire on the morals and manners of English society at that time. If you saw the film, forget it! It bears little resemblance to our play.

This is a great opportunity for us to present this early work by Coward. "Blithe Spirit", "Private Lives", "Present Laughter", "Hay Fever" and "Waiting in the Wings", have all had numerous productions by the amateur community; to my knowledge, *Easy Virtue* has not been produced in Melbourne for several decades. So, we have the opportunity to bring to life an important Coward work for an audience that will have no preconceived expectations about it.

We will have a lot of fun and a lot of hard work in the process and I know that the end result will bring pleasure to us and to our audience.

Chookas

An update on the Cast: Jillian Britton was scheduled to play the role of Sarah but due to a clash of commitments, she had to withdraw. Sarah will now be played by Nicky Neville-Jones. Also, the role of Charles Burleigh will be played by Andrew Ferguson; we warmly welcome them both to the fold.

WhatsOn*WhatsOn*WhatsOn*WhatsOn*

You will all of course be flocking to our Unicorn Theatre to see *Easy Virtue*, but should you fancy another night of excellent local theatre in our Eastern Suburbs vicinity, there is plenty of good stuff on offer as many other companies stage their final production in November. Such as...

Malvern Theatre is presenting *The Light in the Piazza*, a musical based on a novella by Elizabeth Spencer, from November 1-16. Bookings on 1300 131 552.

Lilydale Athenaeum Theatre is staging *Are You Being Served?*, a stage version of a popular British TV comedy series by Jeremy Lloyd and David Croft from November 6-23; you can book for this on 9735 1777

From November 7-16, you can catch *Agatha Christie and the Village Hall Murders* being presented by the **Mooroolbark Theatre Group**. Bookings on 9726 4282.

Our great friend Helen Ellis is directing *Dusk Rings a Bell* by Stephen Belber for the **Brighton Theatre Company** from November 7-23. If Helen's involved, it's sure to be good. Book here on 1300 752 126 or on you can go to

www.brightontheatreco.com.

The terrific comedy that we presented as an Australian premiere production a couple of years back, *The Dixie Swim Club* by Jones, Hope and Wooten, surfaces again at **Mordialloc Theatre** down in Parkdale from November 8-23. Book on 9587 5141 or on www.mordialloctheatre.com

Warrandyte Theatre is offering *The Thirty Nine Steps* adapted by Patrick Barlow from the book by John Buchan and the film by Alfred Hitchcock; this will run from November 15-30 and you can book on 0488 333 575 or by going to www.trybooking.com.

If you like the work of Australian playwright David Williamson you might like to consider trotting along to **Sherbrooke Theatre's** production of his *Face to Face* from November 15-30 at their home in the Doncaster Playhouse. Booking on www.sherbrooketc.org.au or on 1300 650 209.

The **Frankston Theatre Group** is presenting three One Act comedies from November 16-December 1 at the Mt. Eliza Community Centre, Canadian Bay Road, Mt. Eliza: Bookings for these are on 1300 663 377.

Heidelberg Theatre is presenting the often staged and popular *Steel Magnolias* by Robert Harling from November 21-December 7. Bookings on 9457 4117 or www.htc.org.au.

Wait there's more: the **1812 Theatre**, up in Upper Ferntree Gully, is presenting another David Williamson play, *Scarlet O'Hara and the Crimson Parrot* from November 21-December 14. Bookings on 9578 3964.

Something there for everyone – as long as you come along to Peridot as well!



Here's a true little story just for Sandy Green...

Wales is the well-guarded preserver of its natural and principal species-the amateur.

Some years ago, someone suggested that Richard Burton, then at the height of his fame and career, be invited to lead a National Welsh Theatre. A distinguished leader of the principality asked what were Burton's qualifications. It was explained to him that Burton had played Henry V at Stratford and a Hamlet at the Old Vic, plus had made many successful films, for which he had received numerous Oscar Nominations. The reply from the leader, which evoked no surprise, was, "Yes, I see that. But what has he done in Wales?"

Briefly...

A Nice Theatrical Christmas Present Idea?

If you have a friend or a family member who likes good theatre and you're stumped for a present, how about giving a Peridot Gift Certificate. You can get them for a full year's subscription or just for an individual play. Give our Ticket Manager John Kelly a ring on 1300 138 645 or email him on peridotboxoffice@yahoo.com.au for more details

*

About those Adjudicators...

Further to our mentioning the People's Choice for 2013 on page one, we should also thank the three Adjudicators who will have seen all the plays this year and will decide the various nominations and winners at our Peri Awards Night, Marion Egerton, Doug Bennett and Raleigh Robinson. All three have had a long association with non-professional theatre in all fields and with Peridot, and we are grateful to them for given up their time and their experience. The Awards will be handed out at our Peridot Awards Night in early December and we'll let you know how things turned out.

We are also happy to tell you that the three Adjudicators for the 2014 Peri Awards will be the very experienced and highly regarded director Richard Keown, who had directed many fine plays at the Unicorn, that splendid actress Carol Shelbourn, who has appeared on numerous occasions for Peridot, and *Gems* Editor David Briggs, who just sits in the audience a lot.

*

Whilst on the subject of Adjudicators, we were highly delighted to have that fine actor and director Helen Ellis judging our Monash One Act Play Festival this year and, for 2014, we are equally delighted that another excellent actor, director and all round good egg, Peter Newling, has agreed to be our Adjudicator. Peter has appeared on our stage on many occasions and has also directed here several times, and we will be lucky to have him here.

*

Some nice news...

Our good friend Ange Ellis (seen here in *Nonsense* earlier this year) and husband Glenn delightedly told us that they had a boy, Alfie Oscar on October 29, a brother for Charlie. Our congratulations to this lovely couple.

*

Preview Nights Update...

The Preview Night for *Easy Virtue* will be for the benefit of the South Vermont Lions. We have a good relationship with them as they have for some time helped us with our 'bump out' (the dismantling and removal of the set after closing night), and we are always happy when this bunch of burly blokes turns up on the Sunday morning armed with drills, hammers and other weapons of destruction.

*

Let's hear something from you...

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 or you can drop a line to David Briggs, 43/15 Fulham Road, Rowville 3178.

...the last word

A couple of stories concerning the great Rex Harrison.



We hope nothing like this happens at Peridot! Rex was half-way through his solo song *I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face* near the end of a performance of *My Fair Lady* when a very heavy set which had been 'flown' – hoisted above the stage – fell immediately behind the front cloth where he was performing. There was a thunderous crash; splinters and quite large pieces of wood came flying under the cloth, which had

billowed out, almost knocking him into the orchestra pit.

When he recovered from the shock, a matter of a few seconds, he found the stage littered and in total silence. The orchestra had stopped; the conductor had had such a fright that he obviously had forgotten to keep his arms whirling about. Rex had a moment of desperation, then, he supposed because he was hell-bent doing the number to a full house, recovered quicker than the conductor (at whom he said he still dare to look) and called loudly for a clarinet – mostly, he said, because it was about the only instrument in the orchestra he could think of – as he needed an introductory chord to get him back into the action. There was a pause, then up came, rather shakily, from the pit the notes he needed, and he finished the number to tumultuous applause.

When he came off he didn't know what he would find. It was a shambles, but incredibly nobody was hurt. The show had been running for nearly two years by then and apparently the ropes that supported the very heavy set had frayed. It was a ghastly thought that, had it fallen three or four minutes later Rex and the cast would have been taking their curtain calls and a great number would have been very badly injured, if not killed.

*

Even the greatest can have an unpromising start...

As a very young man, Rex Harrison was cast as a native, Jimmy Kanaka, in a play by Eugene O'Neill called *Gold*. The thrill of getting that part stayed with him forever: seeing his name on the call board inside the stage door, not as an understudy or a walk-on, but as being actually in the play with the other members of the company was, to him, like winning the Victoria Cross. The scene he had was with a lot of bearded, rough sailors on a desert island, and he was naked except for a loin cloth and a few sharks' teeth around his neck. It took some hours to black up his body so that not a spot of white could be seen anywhere, even between his toes. At the centre of the stage was a palm tree, which he had to climb during the scene to sight a ship.

It was Opening Night and his big moment. His mother, father and sisters were out front and, as it was the first British production of the O'Neill play, many critics had come to see it. But the palm tree was his undoing. Nobody had thought to tell him that it had been fireproofed just before curtain up time and was still wet. He went up black, and came down almost completely white. He sat cross-legged, trying to expose a piece of himself that was still black to the audience, but, alas, without success. He was completely unnerved; instead of making an exit like a noble savage, he slunk off like a whipped dog, still trying to cover the white spots with his arms.