

PLAYS IN STOCK

What lurks in the Gauntlett vaults?

“Frank Gauntlett is a maverick playwright. He is not a member of the Australian Playwrights’ Club, presumably because he doesn’t pen the officially sanctioned homilies designed to have us all leave the theatre better people.

You don’t get lectured at in a Gauntlett play. But you are always entertained.”

PAUL MCGILLICK: Financial Review

Another Evening With John Lambert (REHEARSED READING)

Breaking Bard (UNPRODUCED)

The Case

The Corrector (UNPRODUCED)

Countess Bathory (REHEARSED READING)

Crunchy Armageddon Snaps (UNPRODUCED)

Dead End (UNPRODUCED)

Deeming

Eleven PM Sharp

The House On The Borderland (UNPRODUCED)

Indecent Exposures (REHEARSED READING)

Islands

Men Only (REHEARSED READING)

Neighbours

Nightingale with Michael Morton Evans (UNPRODUCED)

Pardon My Goat (REHEARSED READING)

Peter Pan/Pan

Punch and Judy

Rat Follies (UNPRODUCED)

the smouldering trousers (REHEARSED READING)

Tales of Dark Knitting

The Time Machine

Vapours

Vathek (REHEARSED READING)

Who Slew Reg Smedley?

Your Own Lee Young Once

ON THE SUBJECT OF PLAYS

Breaking Bard, The Case, The Corrector, Crunchy Armageddon Snaps, Dead End, Deeming, Indecent Exposures, Men Only, Islands, Punch And Judy, Rat Follies, Tales Of Dark Knitting, Vathek and Who Slew Reg Smedley? are all published by, and available from, AustralianPlays.org

**YOU ALSO GET A
FREE SQUIZ AT
THE FIRST FEW
MINS!**

YAYYYYYYYYYY!

Another Evening with John Lambert

Starring: JUSTINE SAUNDERS &
LEE YOUNG

Directed by: EGIL KIPSTE

Where: Belvoir Street, Downstairs.



JUSTINE and LEE at Belvoir Street

WHAT a way to start!

Couldn't have asked for a better bunch to conspire with for my first public outing as a playwright in Sydney.

Had a natter with Jenny and we simply decided to give it a go.

This was well before Your Own Lee Young Once! but Lee and I had been friends for years and he was an obvious choice for John Lambert.

*I'd known Justine somewhat but got to know her far better after she and Lee shared adjacent dressing rooms at the Sydney Opera House - Justine appearing in Richard Wherrett's landmark production of *The Crucible* and Lee in Peter Williams' jolly and very popular revival of *Arsenic and Old Lace*. They got on like a house on fire. We all did.*

How fortunate was I to have Egil Kipste agree to direct. No violence was used.

Honest!

Had heaps of fun. Justine and Lee were terrific. The house was good. The piece went nowhere.

JOHN Lambert is one of those celebrated old-school UK star performers who often used to tour Australian theatres with anecdotal memoirs of a life in film and theatre.

The tour grinds on in a routine sort of way until John meets his local 'minder' Sophie Durham, an Aboriginal woman cut off from her roots in much the same way as John is currently cut from his.

It turns out that Sophie Durham is quite as capable as John Lambert of taking the public for an entertaining ride.

BREAKING BARD

THERE'S fraud abroad.

In 1796 it took just one little prick to burst London's spectacular literary balloon.

His name was William Henry Ireland who, at 19, became history's foremost forger of bogus Shakespeare. Letters, poems, love notes, marginalia, slabs of signed manuscript, even entire new plays appeared and many believed them good - including Will's Shakespeare-obsessed, social-climbing father Samuel.

In the Irelands' museum-like drawing room it's April 1. Planning and wit's-end panic is in the air. Samuel sold Sheridan the rights to Master Ireland's hitherto unknown play, purportedly by William Shakespeare, and tomorrow night John Phillip Kemble opens in Vortigern And Rowena at Drury Lane Theatre.

A devastating assessment of Samuel's Shakespearean "relics" appeared the day before. Things are coming unglued and social climbers are plunging off the greasy pole in highly theatrical fashion.

Folk lurk awkwardly under the mounting pressure of soliloquies and colourful exposition. Wigs are optional but flounces are de rigueur. Can a triumphant reception for Vortigern And Rowena save the situation?

Sadly no. The play is a catastrophe, the fraud exposed and, as internecine conflict mounts, failed art and frantic artifice abounds, the mob mills without and cultured society turns its fickle back, it is for invaluable "housekeeper" Mrs. Freeman to oil troubled waters and kookie gofer Christobel Linley to dangle her feet therein.

HANDY HINT: cardboard cut-outs often make an acceptable substitute for costly suggestions of reality.



THE CASE



WHERE:
Stables Theatre, Darlinghurst, NSW.

WHEN:
June 1996.

Starring
ROY BILLING

Directed by
MICHAEL WREN.

Costume design:
WENDY CORK.

Lighting design:
TONY YOULDEN.

Tailoring:
TONY BONNICI.

Photography:
W. NEWELL PHOTOGRAPHY.

VICTORIAN actor and esteemed lunatic Bramwell Topp finds a measure of success entertaining medical students.

“One of the few playwrights in this town with real imagination, wit and theatricality.

Monodrama . . . is a genre brilliantly developed by Jack Hibberd and now taken up by Gauntlett with the virtuosity of a stage magician fully in control of his box of tricks . . . what a pleasure it is to sit in the theatre and enjoy the creative use of language.”

PAUL MCGILLICK: Financial Review

“An epic of agreeable silliness . . . theatre as pure entertainment . . . lovingly surreal grasp off language . . . a tall tale with just a touch of the pleasantly psychopathic.”

STEPHEN DUNNE: Sydney Morning Herald

“Crazy, off-beat, extravagant entertainment . . . roisterous fun. The Case succeeds.”

PAMELA PAYNE: Sun Herald

“An original, hilarious script builds nicely to (a) crescendo of catastrophe.”

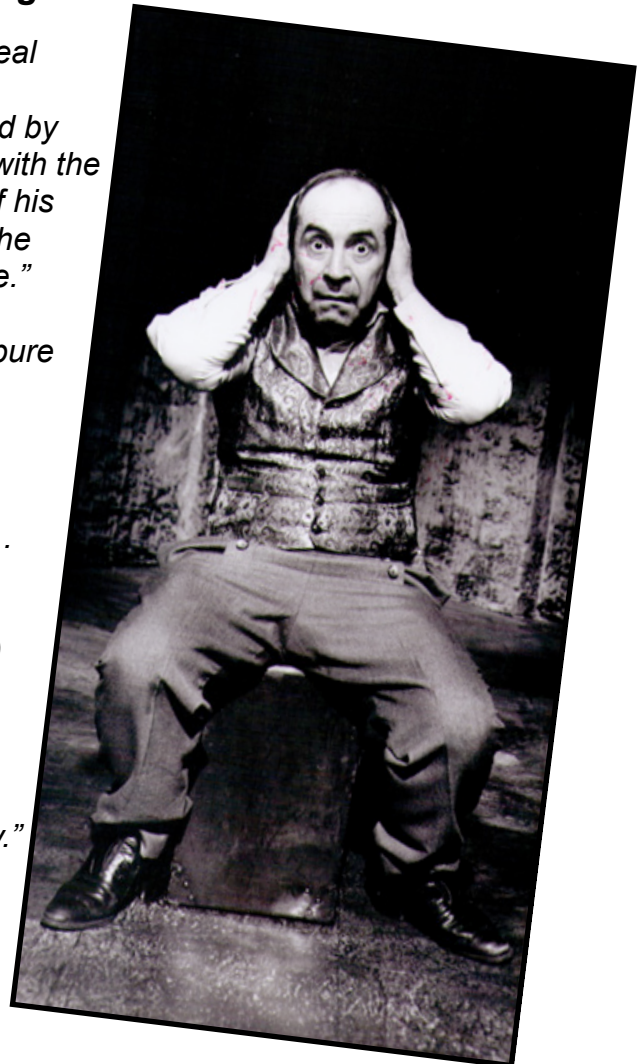
CARRIE KABLEAN: Sun. Telegraph

“Divine madness and irresistible pathos . . . a craggy, crumpled, endearingly poetic essay on a lifetime of hard luck and collapsing sanity.”

STEVE McLEOD: Sydney Star Observer

“A play that packs a myriad of mirth among the madness . . . a rollicking good time.”

MARGARET EDWARDS: Daily Telegraph



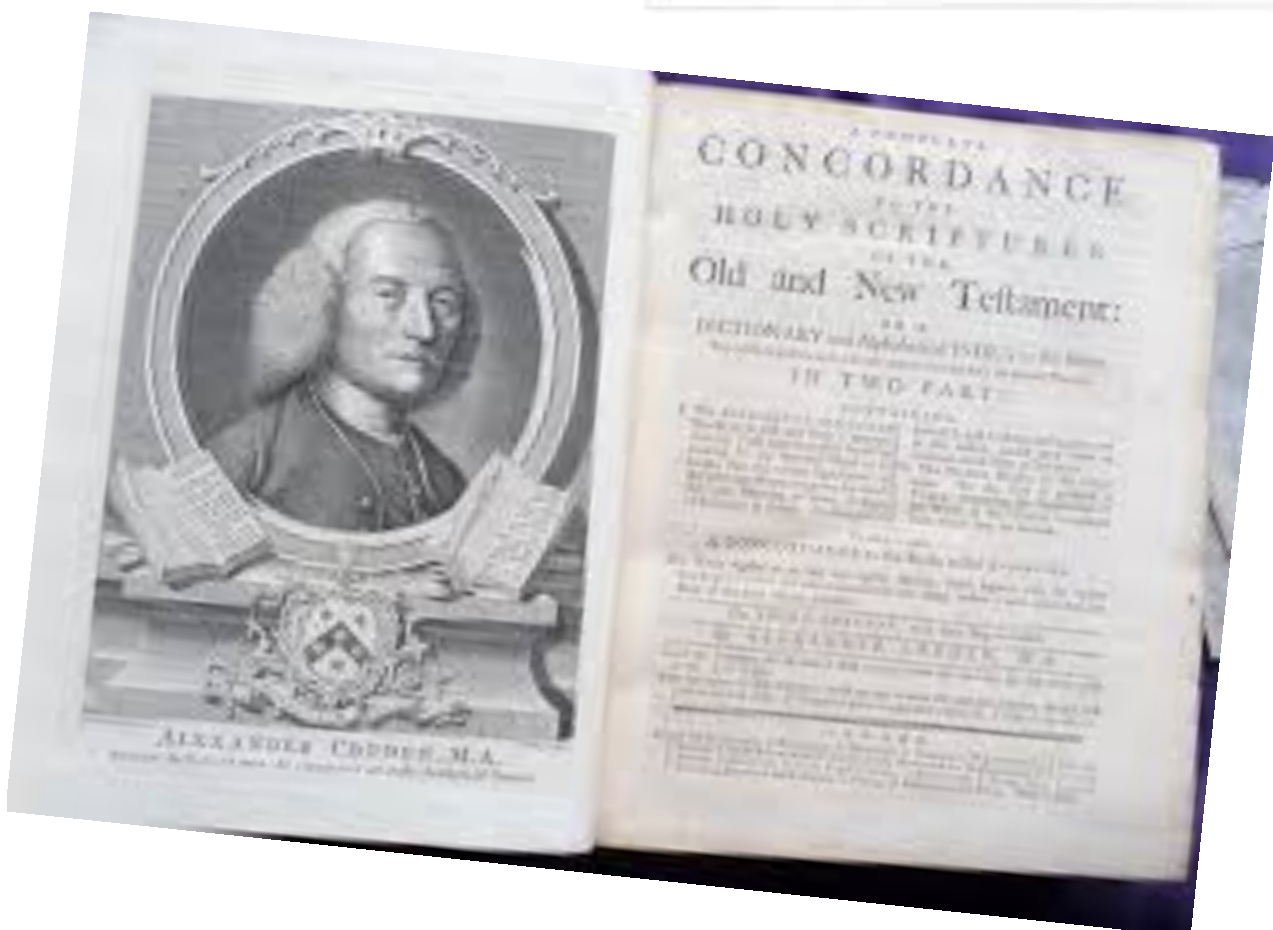
THE CORRECTOR

IN 1737 Alexander Cruden of Aberdeen published his mighty Concordance - every word in the King James Bible given location, context and, often, definition.

The book was more than three times the length of the Bible itself, all done with paper slips and ceaseless effort, and has never been out of print.

Widely known for his eccentricity and abject poverty, Cruden spent several spells in the madhouse, largely because of his catastrophic relationships with women - or was it the ceaseless torrent of words that drove him and/or drove him mad?

Alexander died at his prayers in 1770 and we become privy to the life that flashes before his eyes at the last. Inspired, gaga or both?





COUNTESS BATHORY

ONE of history's most flamboyant mass-murderers, renowned beauty Countess Elizabeth Bathory was quietly walled up in her apartments and, under constant guard, survived for four years to reflect on her bloody history and the family connections that spared her trial and execution.

Bathory's victims almost certainly numbered more than 600 - she stole, enslaved, farmed and slaughtered women in the belief that their blood would preserve her beauty and their broken bodies serve the black magic rites she adored.

Kin to kings, princess, cardinals, bishops, judges, sheriffs and governors, rich and outrageously powerful, she was well known for her remarkable level of education - and yet . . .

With only the ghosts of freshly executed henchcreatures for company, Elizabeth plots escape and it becomes increasingly clear that these exalted entities are not the fabulous beings they consider themselves to be.

INDELICATELY
drizzled with the
glittery dross of
vulgar
entertainment,
flecked with silliness
and generously
spiced with popular
insensitivities,
Crunchy

Armageddon Snaps
is a rollicking black

comedy pudding of divine intervention, phone sex, patter, absolute power, binge drinking, rollicks, faith and free enterprise.

From the cloudy, wafty bits of Heaven to the shabby pubs and half-arsed workplaces of Australia, drawing Pawns and Losers in their wake, minor Gods Bob Frith and Terry Whitton lurch drunkenly towards the end of civilization as we probably don't imagine it.

CRUNCHY ARMAGEDDON SNAPS

**DEAD
END**

WANNABE writer Grant Monk was the first to die - drugged, tortured and stapled to a table - just as he described in his own lurid screenplay Psycho Farm. And those extravagantly slaughtered corpses just keep on coming.

As Grant's slasher flick apparently comes to life, rising detective Carol Eldridge has two shady characters from Monk's milieu in her sights - Will and Christopher - but not simply as suspects. Carol has her own plans.





DEEMING

WHERE: King Street Theatre,
Newtown, NSW

WHEN: May/June 2006

Starring ANTHONY HUNT, EMILY STEWART
and PATRICK TRUMPER

Produced by STEVEN HOPLEY
with EMU PRODUCTIONS

Directed by STEVEN HOPLEY

Assistant director: LUCY BAILES

Costume design: CHANTAL JIM

Lighting design: JERRY RETFORD

Sound design: PAUL McNALLY

Graphic design: EMILY ELISE

**Lighting and
sound operation:**
LAUCLAN BARNES

*"Gauntlett's
play has it all.*

*Truth.
Imagination.*

*Crime fiction.
Theatrical
flamboyance.*

*Linguistic in
Technicolor, it
affords an
uncomfortably
vicarious
insight into
what I can only
think to*

*characterise
as sociopathic
evil. And that's
just the actors
at The*

*Alexandra.
Well-written.
Well played.
Well worth a
look."*

**LLOYD
BRADFORD
SKY: Crikey**

***THE world breathed a sigh of relief in 1892
when Frederick Bailey Deeming was hanged in
Melbourne Gaol from the beam that killed Ned
Kelly.***

***Some thought Deeming was Jack The
Ripper but the truth was no less remarkable—he
was an international thief, philanderer, swindler,
con man, bigamist and utterly ruthless murderer.***

***Born in the abject squalor of a British
madhouse and without formal education, Deeming
juggled scores of identities, frequently passing
himself off as a Lord. The case gripped and
appalled the nation and the world.***

***Meanwhile, at the lavish Alexandra Theatre,
actor/manager Alfred Dampier was desperate for a
success and came up with the idea of Reality
Theatre — a play plundering the Deeming story
that would change as the chase and case
progressed. Apparently by coincidence the cast
included one Alfred Harford who had known
Deeming in South Africa.***

***Dampier's melodrama, Willful Murder!, was
a smash hit but as the frantic season progressed
and the borders between terrible fact and
gruesome fantasy crumbled, an awful possibility
emerged linking the appalling urges of Fredrick
Bailey Deeming and the colourful characters
acting out his life—and all in the name of art.***

*"It's an
absorbing
concept and
written with
delightful wit
and Victorian
ornateness . . .
its laughs and
chills are
genuine and
the blurring of
lines between
fact and
fantasy, theatre
and reality, are
skillfully
handled. The
cast do a
stellar job. This
production of
Deeming has
the potential to
become
something
really special."*

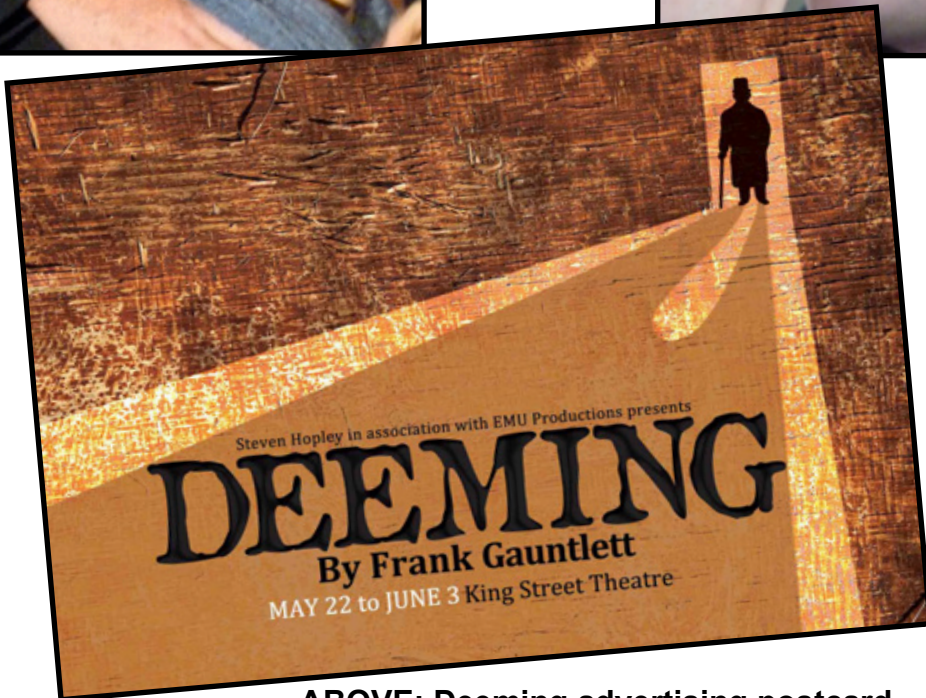
**GARETH
BEAL:
artsHub**

". . . themes regarding the lust for notoriety are as relevant now as ever."

—Stage Whispers



LEFT: Patrick Trumper and Emily Stewart. ABOVE: Emily with Anthony Hunt. RIGHT: Steven Hopley.



ABOVE: Deeming advertising postcard.

A LOVELY BUNCH OF COCONUTS: left to right it's Peter Fyfe, Annie Davies, Michael Beckley, Robyn Forsythe and Tom Weaver - Mr. Gilshenan seems to have got lost . . .



11 PM SHARP

WHERE: Stables Theatre, Darlinghurst, NSW.

WHEN: January 1992.

PRODUCER: Griffin Theatre Co.

Starring MICHAEL BECKLEY, ROBYN FORSYTHE, DARREN GILSHENAN, ANNIE DAVIES and TOM WEAVER.

Directed by DUNCAN WASS.

Musical director: PETER FYFE.

Written by MICHAEL BECKLEY, PETER FYFE, ME, ALISON HEATHER, JAMES OXENBOULD, STEVE J. SPEARS.

I WAS kindly bunged a credit on this late-night satirical sketch show despite contributing about eight consecutive words to the finished article. Sadly only dim memories of the event remain despite the excellent people involved.

Actor/director David McCubbin was running Late Night Things for Griffin Theatre and it's my bet he winched me in because, a few months earlier he directed a rehearsed reading of a peculiar musical theatre thing I was chipping away at called Bloom.

How the Bloom reading came about I now have no idea but one of many pleasures in it was meeting the altogether fascinating and convivial veteran actor David Nettheim - a lovely man whose vast experience, particularly in radio drama, saw him create remarkably rich and precise characters in the twinkling of an eye.

Peter Fyfe - he's the enthusiastic young showbusiness person on the left in the 11pm Sharp pic - had about three days to write several tricky Bloom songs and prepare to perform them in public. The man's a hero.

If some people have all the luck, Mr. Fyfe is not of their number.

I thought the reading impressive under the circs but there was some kind of communication snafu and many in the audience were under the impression that this embryonic script - little more than a first draft - was actually about to be staged.

The feeding frenzy was pretty unpleasant and Bloom wilted thereafter.

THE HOUSE ON THE BORDERLAND

WILLIAM Hope Hodgson's 1908 nightmare novel of inter-dimensional evil and psychedelic horror becomes a solo story-telling tour-de-force.

INDECENT

EXPOSURES

WHEN beautiful alien Sylvia Eureka and her parents beam into our dimension, they make two other grave mistakes: landing in a TV studio used for the soap opera Three Way Street and landing when media mogul Reynard Dobel is collecting incriminating evidence from a tryst with supermodel Claudia Persettimole.

With help from soapie favourites Bessemer Rune and Lorraine Wrist, Reynard creates an eccentrically authoritarian society on the Three Way Street set to keep The Story of The Century confused, captive and compliant.

But soon the studio is ringed with curious eyes: police, journalists, government agents, trade unionists and The Universal Fellowship of Leslie Cantwellites.

Something must be done! Reynard must act! Coo . . .



ISLANDS

WHERE:

Cat and Fiddle Theatre, Balmain, NSW.

WHEN:

March/April 2002.

Starring

*JENNIFER DON, ANDREW MEAD,
ROGER OTTER, STACEY GIAPRAKIS
and ALEXANDRA YOUNG.*

Directed by

Me

***IN a secret enclave for the
disgustingly rich and
disgustingly disgusting,
staff psycho-killer Pat
and resident sex toy
Ambrose find their
relatively comfy world
crumbling.***



TOP RIGHT: Alexandra Young and Andrew Mead

LEFT: Stacey Giaprakis

ABOVE: Andrew Mead, Stacey and Jennifer Don



THE MO THE MERRIER: Women in the Men Only rehearsed reading audience were supplied with “safety moustaches” because if the blokes discovered them hearing these untold tales . . . who knows what could have happened?!

MEN ONLY

YOU'RE in a bar, a real bar, drinking, perhaps listening to over-loud, blokey music, perhaps wondering why the women in the room are fondling false moustaches.

One by one, four men emerge from fellow drinkers, each with a remarkable, terrible, awful, fabulous, grotesque tale, or part thereof; each in your face, like operatic soloists, each offering strange glimpses of and into secret men's business.

First comes Mick: steely evangelist for the Norse gods, semi-derelict, drink taken and bludging for more, he preaches Odin's part in bringing poetry to the world.

Then comes W.A.J.C “Twirler” Lingfield whose bloody and bizarre experiences in the service of our land bring strange engagements and satisfactions.

Malfunctioning Robbie happily spend his final hours quietly in your company but the odious Cec - henchman of corrupt media mogul Clewster Neuting - feels a form of justice snapping at his heels and doesn't like than at all.

When you've met this quartet perhaps it will become clear why the blokes want these dark portraits and desolate landscapes kept to themselves.

MEN ONLY was recorded by Sydney's Eastside Radio 89.7fm as the entire Season Five of its Sonic Tales series with **Christopher Dibb** as Mick, **Nicholas Gledhill** as Twirler, **Harley Connor** as Robbie and **Kim Knuckey** as Cec.

It was produced by Gill Falson.

Men Only can be heard free on **Soundcloud** or **Eastside's website**.

NEIGHBOURS



WHERE:
Cat and Fiddle Theatre,
Balmain
WHEN:
June 2001
Starring
GEMMA BALL,
ANDREW CROWLEY,
JENNIFER DON,
PATRICK TRUMPER
and PENNY YOUNG.
Directed by
PENNY YOUNG.

When neighbours become good fiends

NEIGHBOURS was the opening gambit in acts of theatrical folly and youthful exuberance with me mate Mick Barnes in the old pokie room below Balmain's Cat and Fiddle Hotel.

Journalist, TV scriptwriter, theatre critic and playwright - you can find Mick's plays *Eleven Eleven* and *The Executioners* at AustralianPlays.Org.

Mick (right) once worked for a Brisbane news agency with a dog as CEO to avoid . . . well, anyone who wanted to be a nuisance really.

His plays include the Edinburgh Festival hit *Unit 46*; *The King and Di*, with Amanda Bishop and Russell Newman; *Conspiracy*; *Eleven Eleven*; *R.I.P. Ripper*; *The Runaway Man* and *Inside-Out*.

Rainbow Requiem, for Australian Writers' Theatre, starred the late Oodgeroo Noonuccle (Kath Walker).

Please Explain, a one-woman show starring Rhoda Roberts, featured in *Carnival* at Belvoir Street Theatre.



ABOVE LEFT: Jennifer Don and Andrew Crowley
ABOVE: Gemma Ball and Jennifer

IN odd outbursts of lunacy covering about two years, Corrine Maloney and I wrestled with a TV pilot based on Neighbours.

It was part of a wheeze to produce stand-alone low-budget entertainments and bring back Plays On Telly.

To avoid litigious confusion with the popular TV soap, which we kinda relished in the Pokie Room, the name was changed to Out Back - The Butcher's Cut.

The result had very nice bits but, over all, the whole seemed less than the sum of its parts.



AFTER a (modest) spot of R&D we made Neighbours' crucial climactic hat-full of brain matter out of extra-thick porridge laced with blue-dyed spaghetti and horrible tumor-like blobs of red food colouring.

Often it would hit the wall and dribble down in what seemed like a moment of tightly choreographed horror.

Like a gruesome little kid I absolutely loved it.

PARDON MY GOAT

PARDON My Goat! is the very model of a 1982 commercial touring production cast from the pages of TV Week.

It is an irredeemably silly comedy without worthy intention, concern for progress or interest in any social reform at any stage.

Whimsically eschewing meaningful narrative resolution for a coarse farrago of cheap laughs and loose ends we join thoroughly eclipsed soapie star Dirk Swelling pretending to be a doctor and head of Dangling Lodge - a "safe house" owned by Channel 13 for the quiet rehabilitation of the less-stable celebrities in its celebrity stable.

These include fame-addled barrel girl Bambi Droppings; ancient actor Merriman Chook, lost amongst his countless character credits, and formidable stage dragon "Dame" Constance Blather.

It's a lot for newly-arrived nurse Florence O'Nightingale to take in - and she usually doesn't. Puerile smut? You bet!

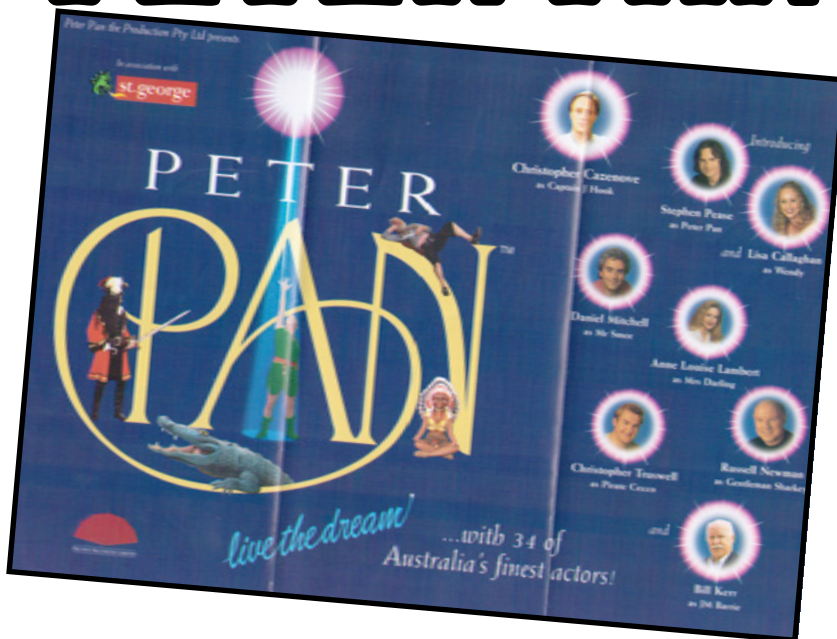
Often a result of cranial trauma almost everyone endures radical personality change but the real problems begin with the arrival of scandalous rock deity Lash Waffle - son of Channel 13-owing media mogul Kerry Waffle - purged of his profitably disgusting traits in an unseemly fracas, and epiphanic stage-dive, at the Sydney Entertainment Centre.

Can civilisation, as understood at Dangling Lodge, survive? Will Pardon My Goat! herald a 1980s fashion revival? See an actor whose pants have purportedly been eaten from his genuine living Australian legs by a goat! See it live! Or not.

“Like Cinderella or Snow White, Peter Pan has swirling Freudian depths, which this new version by Frank Gauntlett manages to keep actively in play . . . an unashamed espousal of some awful, but successful, jokes . . . Christopher Cazenove . . . exploits all the script's possibilities of Hook, from its amusing and pertinent echo of Hamlet, when on the verge of killing Pan . . . to a marvellously heroic death . . . retaining an element bordering on tragedy in a moment that Spielberg's Americanised vision of death could only render as accident and farce.”

GARETH GRIFFITHS:
The Australian

PETER PAN



PUNCH AND JUDY

WHERE:

Sidetrack Theatre, Marrickville, NSW.

WHEN:

July 1999.

Starring

*COLLEEN COOK,
RUSSELL NEWMAN* and DAVID
RITCHIE.*

Directed by *GERTRAUD INGEBORD.*

Set and lighting design: *TONY
YOULDEN*

**Punch and Judy was picked up by the Manly
Festival - what larks!*

*Russell was unavailable and his roles were
played by ANDREW HARRIS.*





**LEFT: Colleen
Cook as Judy
BELOW:
Russell
Newman as
hangman
Jack Ketch**

MUCH to everyone's surprise Mick Barnes found a lazy 600 bucks so we decided, as you do, to drink enthusiastically now and stage two plays at Marrickville's Sidetrack Theatre later.

Mick's play was called Unit 46 and mine Punch and Judy.

My further good fortune was to fall in with David Ritchie, Gertraud Ingeborg and Tony Youlden who basically took over and sorted everything while Self wafted around feeling tasty.

ANECDOTE LOOMS

Encouraged to stop making the place look untidy, large and ungainly self and scruffy Mick were ill-advisedly despatched with an absurdly long aluminium ladder, box cutters, string and a vast advertising banner to fix high in trees outside Sidetrack.

Within seconds the banner was all over the joint and somehow I managed to trap Mick's hand in the scissory action of the unwieldy ladder.

"You got ma fuckin' hand in the bastard ladder," said Mick surprisingly mildly for one in significant pain.

Such was my panicky concern for his welfare that I managed to stab him in the free hand with a box cutter and blood insisted on going everywhere.

Startled by this sanguine shower I managed to stab him in a few more spots for good measure.

Strange thing: Stan and Ollie meet Sam Peckinpah, it all happened in elegant slow motion and blood-drenched Mick and Self ended up in hysterics.

ANECDOTE ENDS (Phew!)



I was particularly pleased by Doug Anderson's Herald review - excellent chap - so I've put it here to feed the old ego.

Fun in murder and mayhem

PUNCH AND JUDY

Sidetrack Theatre; July 15
Reviewed by DOUG ANDERSON

Punch and Judy has long been recognised as a satirical vehicle for the lambasting of the state, governments and even society.

The familiar puppet characters originated in Italy in the 1600s and are first recorded in England in 1662. Mr Punch's sociopathic behaviour is hardly de rigueur in the age of political rectitude but somehow his violent response to problems and his devious behaviour remain endearing.

Frank Gauntlett's revision of the play is decidedly absurdist — jaunty, rumbustious and scathingly funny. It employs the perverse logic which propelled Thomas Middleton's *It's A Mad World My Masters* in 1604 and suffused Barry Keefe's refashioned version three-and-a-half centuries later. This is the surreal logic of the Goons and the Pythons, fused with the refractory attitudes of *The Young Ones*.

Mr Punch (David Ritchie), and his wife, Judy (Colleen Cook), are as dysfunctional a couple as you could find. Sourly struggling with crossword puzzles, Punch attempts to find obscene words to satisfy every clue — no matter that spelling must be altered to make his answers fit. If the answer is obviously Bradman, he'll manage to put horny quim bump in its place. Nipples

become nipples and doggie fashion transmutes into an oriental, *Do Gee Fash On*, such is the mercurial nature of his rationale.

Familiar elements of the puppet show are refashioned into a black and excoriating comedy, with Mr Punch confronting and dealing with assorted foes.

The (Australian born) Rev Ted Date is an evangelist with the full frontal approach of Monty Python's *Liver Collection Squad*. He attempts to coerce Mr Punch into accepting God by threatening to expose his unsavoury business dealings. And is soon despatched — bludgeoned to death and garlanded with a string of artificial sausages.

In the ensuing panic, Judy



David Ritchie . . . black comedy.

conspires with her husband to call Dr Binsted Garter, a brain surgeon with a yearning for celebrity status. He is terminated in a frenzied attack and his remains dumped behind the sofa for possible despatch to the Chunky Yummo petfood company. Judy is next to go, followed by Constable Lump, Detective Plod and the hangman, Jack Ketch.

Punch duly arrives in Hades but is reprieved by the devil, who suddenly shears into a thick European accent. For a fleeting moment, the lacerating silliness chokes into sinister suggestion.

There is another topical and pointed moment in a scene with Rev Date, in which the power of celebrity status and its potential for corrupt influence emerge.

But this is, overwhelmingly, sheer fun.

Gauntlett's sense of the language is sublime and pulsing with flavour. The cast of three, smoothly directed by Gertraud Ingeborg, soar with the delicious absurdity, delivering performances brimming with colour and sinew. Russell Newman's Jack Straw (and four other characters) are wonderfully sly and hugely entertaining.

This production, from the Thingamagiga Company, is a rough diamond from the edge of the ruck, produced and mounted with flair and finesse on the smell of an oily rag. It deserves a wider audience in the city.

SILLY BUNCH: as we said on the posters: "A hard-hitting tale of hard hitting. Contains sausages, nasty violence, mockery, a bloody lot of swearing, monosodium glutamate, iconoclastic innuendo, adult concepts, blunt instruments and very little scenery."

RAT FOLLIES

DARLINGHURST was Australia's heart of darkness in the burlesque aftermath of World War II - a heaving slum, home to prostitutes, gangsters, druggies, con-men, crooked cops, petty crims, sly grog, bent pollies, psychos and SP bookies.

The rest were honest battlers doing their best in difficult times. Or so it seemed.

Several battlers were further afflicted by spectacularly unpleasant Thallium poisoning, NSW being the only state where deadly Thallium-based rat poison could be purchased freely.

Unpleasant husbands, friends and surplus relatives fared ill on the statistical spike.

Rat Follies is based on the true stories of Balmain footie star and league international Bobby Lulham, who accidentally drank the suicide draught mixed by his remorse-wracked mum-in-law and lover Veronica Monte; down-to-earth Beryl Hague, driven to desperation by brutality; Yvonne Butler/Fletcher, who lost two unsatisfactory husbands to the cruel but effective rodenticide; and, above all, Darlinghurst's "saintly" grannie Caroline Grills who sent two step-mothers, a sister and brother-in-law to their reward while striving to murder a sister-in-law and two young friends in nearby Redfern.

As told from the deathbed of a relatively minor, not too trustworthy, cop, set in Sydney's gothic sewers, satirically seasoned and performed by a nimble ensemble of rat-like actors with rat puppet support, Rat Follies is epic entertainment, a dark circus tumbling on to the highest courts of the land and the tabloid-tailored trial of Mrs. Caroline Grills - Aunt Thally, Loony extraordinaire.

the smouldering trousers

WHEN late-night fringe performer Roger Otter is gunned down on-stage, the arts-led revolution is unleashed and the audience taken hostage by a gullible young man called Lester seeking to further hazy objectives of the Australian Cultural Front.

Can free-sheet journo Marnie Feeney prevent the situation degenerating even further?

*Will veteran actor Norma Fullerton escape unscathed?
It's not looking good.*

the smouldering trousers was, and still is, a silly, late-night thing written for the subterranean space at The Cat and Fiddle Hotel where our people were relentlessly doing things.

Actually The Cat and Fiddle period was drawing to a romantically impoverished and exhausted close when my friend Jo Brind in London came up with the thoroughly unexpected suggestion that he should film it in London quite without benefit of money.

He organised a reading, which went well, and started putting together a team of unmedicated thespians and allied craftspeople.

Somehow or other a splinter group arose, other people without money also wanted to make a film in London of the smouldering trousers.

Jo, being a good comrade, didn't want to stand in the way of me not making money so, with my bemused consent, he blessed both enterprises: not only a budgetless film of the smouldering trousers from London but another budgetless film of the smouldering trousers from London.

For at least a few seconds, mayhap precious hours, this absolute absurdity prevailed and then everything went quiet.

*Too damned quiet.
A discreet veil was drawn.*

TALES OF DARK KNITTING

WHERE:
Belvoir Street Downstairs Theatre.

WHEN:
March/April 1994.

Starring
*ROY BILLING
and SUSAN NEIL*.*

Directed by
BILL YOUNG.

Lighting by
SIMON JENKINS.

Poster design:
JANE COLLINGWOOD.



**LEFT: Roy and Susan
in Tales Of Dark
Knitting.**

**BELOW: Oddly
enough Roy And
Susan in Tales Of
Dark Knitting**

***Today Susan is known
as Susan Jordan**



*"One of the most original
and entertaining pieces of
pure theatre, a romp with
words and characters that,
like a literary puppy, lets
the audience get just within
touching distance before
racing away. One of the
most intriguingly
entertaining and constantly
funny works about."*

PAUL LePETIT: Sun. Telegraph

*"Leaves no sacred cow unrubbished . . . multi-layered and complex and drifts in and out of
the realm of insanity with disturbing ease. Funny, disturbing and concise . . . leaves the
audience with plenty to think about."*

STEWART HAWKINS: Daily Telegraph

*"Very funny (with) a disturbingly nasty twist to its tail . . . leaves mouths hanging open with
a combination of hilarity and desperation."*

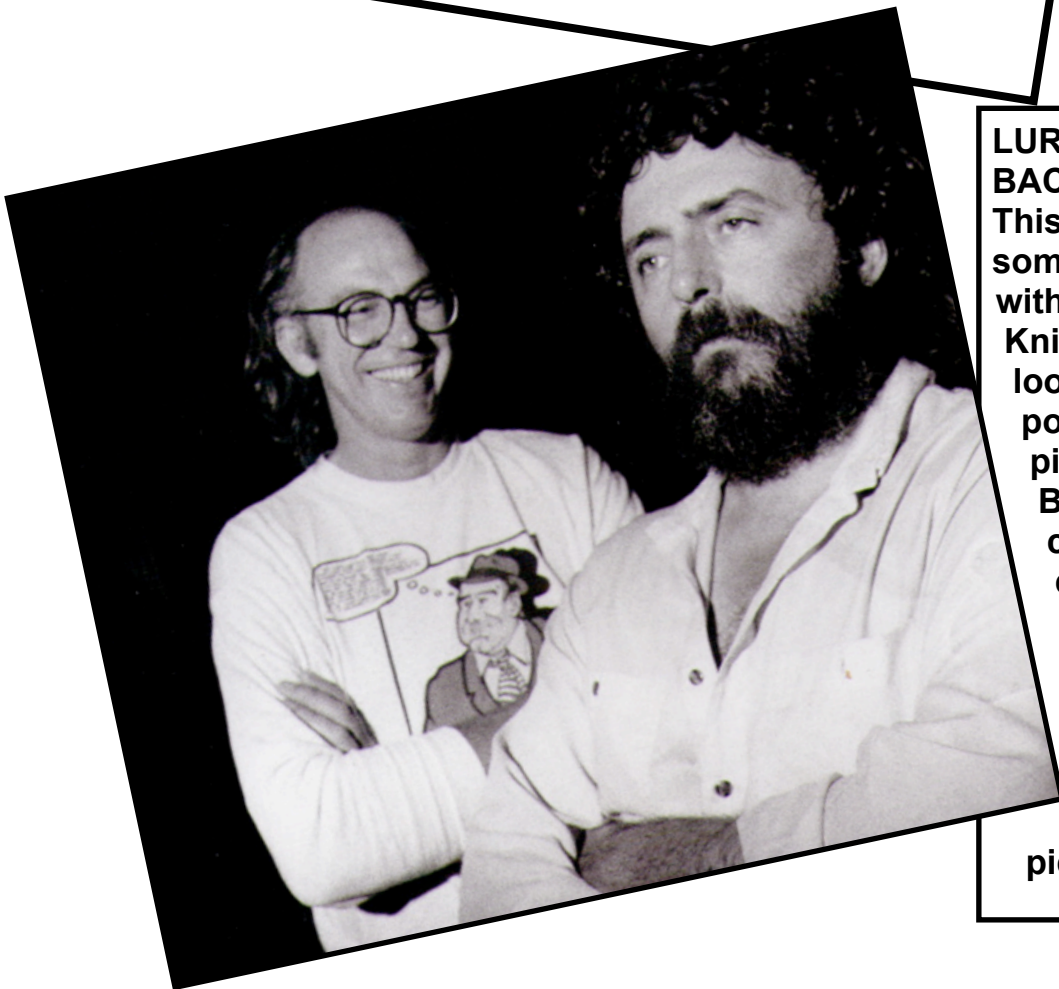
PAUL McGILLICK: Financial Review

OLD, sick and relentlessly rancorous, Lachlan and April spray bile about a crumbling domestic scene but evidence suggests they were just a dream or vision of self-proclaimed nutter, cheese enthusiast and Roman merchant Duncan Webb or, then again, perhaps less probably, Stephanie the notorious Kept Woman or, possibly, little-known Cleaner.

Apparently an artists' agent, Tina only knows of the individuals we know as Lachlan, April, Duncan and Stephanie through the apparent work of Ray, apparently an artist - or so it seems.

There is every reason to believe that a key figure in the story of these individuals is Taxi Driver and aspiring writer Ian Proctor who spends two days trapped in his taxi with librarian Angela - much to the annoyance of her media hostile husband Don.

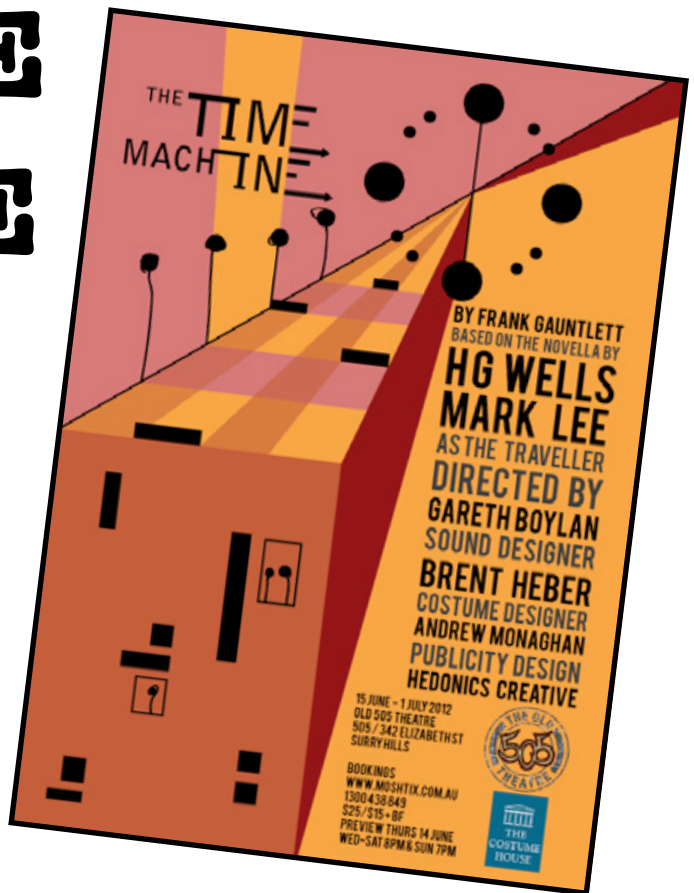
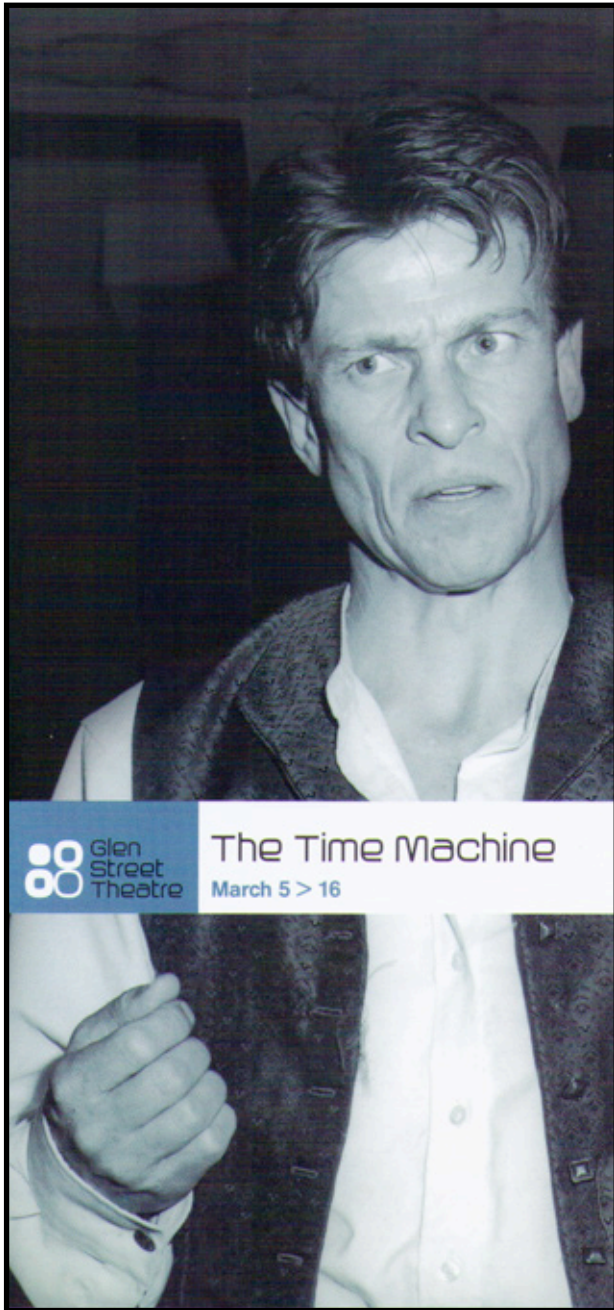
Don seems to know nothing about the mysterious secrets of his librarian spouse but when Angela's shrieky Mum finds her son-in-law stabbed through the windpipe, and dead to boot, Detective Gurr must untangle her twisted suburban tale . . . or



LURKING IN THE BACKYARD:

This was something to do with Dark Knitting. Me looking like a pompous pillock and Bill almost certainly extracting the nitrogenous waste. Jenny probably took the pic.

THE TIME MACHINE



WHERE:

Cat and Fiddle Theatre, Balmain, NSW,
Old 505, Glen Street and NIDA.

WHEN:

August 2001.

Starring:

MARK LEE.

Directed by

PENNY YOUNG.

Costume design:

ANDREW MONAGHAN
of THE COSTUME HOUSE.

Production manager:

ANDREW CROWLEY.

From the H.G. Wells Novella

A MOB of us were drinking dinner and Mark and I were waffling on about H.G.Wells: enthusiasm for.

Fox-like I pounced to plug The Time Machine adaptation lurking in The Drawer.

Lee, like putty in the mitts - or mitt-putty as we used to call it Out East - immediately sold his soul for a go. Ha ha!

What larks!

Lovely Penny Young came in to direct.

Lacking finance of any significant sort we lived on youthful enthusiasm, he quipped.



Someone - must have been Mark - found Andrew Monaghan from The Costume House who created a flawless cozzie. Audiences loved it. I loved it. It was great. The Glugs loved it and nominated Mark for a best actor award. A sci-fi mega-brain came about six times and loved it. Guys running Glen Street Theatre in French's Forest loved it and arranged a short season up there - for money! Money, I tells ya! About the only person who didn't love it was the pre-teen daughter of a friend well traumatised by all the in-your-face scariness. She had to be taken out and calmed. I confess, I secretly loved that as well. Mark and I worked on a film version - I still think it would be excellent, but then I would - and there was some (mainly

overseas) interest that didn't happen.

Blow me, kind sir or madam, ten years flashed past in an eye-twinkle and there's young Mark on the phone waxing lyrical about a new, independent, gun director in town.

Some called him El Directivo others just nodded knowingly as he passed. Most called him Gareth Boylan but we usually settled for Gareth.

Gareth, Mark and a relatively mighty host were doing Breaker Morant at The Seymour Centre and then proposed to revive The Time Machine at the richly idiosyncratic Old 505 Theatre in Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills. Whacko the chook!

Time had changed, distilled and strengthened Mark's Traveller; the urgency was palpable, tension and drive relentless, the conclusion absolutely chilling.

It's rare and wonderful to see something grow like this.

Another top moment coalesced one night when a young woman approached Mark at the 505 - it was our friend's daughter all growed up, no permanent damage, delighted to be there to catch the end of the show.



Adam at NIDA with Mark.

Tim Stackpool's Blog observed: "A tour de force. Lee propels himself through the gamut of emotions ranging from love, despair and sometimes madness . . . watching him makes you wonder where the man ends and the character begins. Lee reminds us about human nature, about segregation and about how times have never really changed since Wells put pen to paper. Apart from witnessing a superb performance, you come away reflecting on society today, which is exactly what Wells intended."

Then, a couple of years back, came mighty producer Adam Lieberman and Strange Duck Productions - a new version at Sydney's NIDA Theatre - and what a cracker it was. Directed again by Gareth with design from Derrick Cox, artwork by John Kratovil, Martin Kinnane's lighting and costumes from Christine Mutton.

I loved it sick!



Taylor and David in Vapours

VAPOURS

WHERE:

Lookout Theatre, Woolahra.

WHEN:

April-May 1995.

Starring CHRISTOPHER DIBB, DANIEL LUXTON, TAYLOR OWYNNIS and DAVID WOOD.

Directed by

DIANA DENLEY.

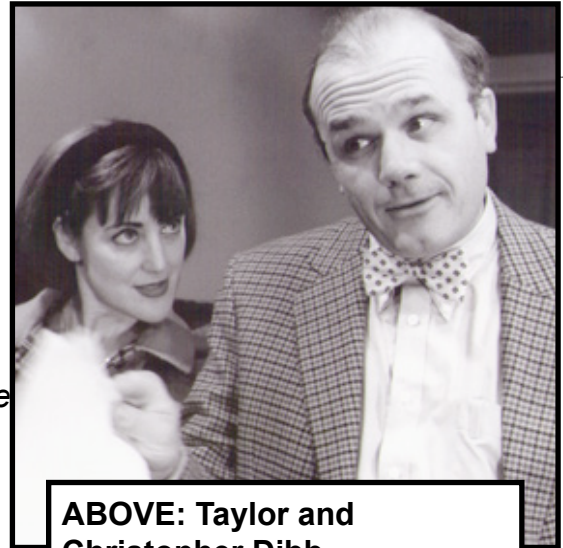
Lighting and design by

TONY YOULDEN.

Photographs:

CORRIE ANCONE.

Three writers get seriously lost in the creative woods when funded to collaborate



“Ve

**ABOVE: Taylor and Christopher Dibb.
LEFT: Dan Luxton and Taylor**

along nicely as a droll comedy before descending into deeper, darker moods and ending as a gothic thriller. Highly recommended.”

STEVE McLEOD: Sydney Star Observer

“Gauntlett keeps . . . initial scenes prickle light . . . but subtly and insidiously . . . propels this play into dark, disturbing territory.

Teasing, intriguing theatre - with a diabolical theme.”

PAMELA PAYNE: Sun Herald

“Sharp and very funny . . . succeeds brilliantly (moving) from comic rivalry to an unexpectedly sharp tension in the final scenes.”

CARRIE KABLEAN: Sunday Telegraph

“. . . dark and unsettling points about creativity and sexuality . . . (a) menacing feel underlying the profane and comic surface . . . Vapours is an enjoyable and cerebral work with an innately sinister core.”

STEPHEN DUNNE: Sydney Morning Herald

“The play, in fact, is a thriller but Gauntlett’s coup is to have us only realise gradually that there is a grim mystery to be solved. It is only at the gruesome end that we fully grasp what has been going on.”

PAUL McGILLICK: Financial Review

“All the laughs have a cutting edge which adds to the underlying darkness . . . builds to a shocking climax . . . a gripping piece . . . the humour is black.”

STEWART HAWKINS: Daily Telegraph

“The writing is brilliant . . . some of this is very funny , but a dark side emerges . . . The direction of Diana Denley is very skilled . . . and it worked brilliantly. I found the performance always interesting, dramatic, sometimes funny and never, never boring, which is not only to praise the writing but the very talented cast.”

BRENDA SENDERS: Radio 2 SER

VATHEK

WHERE:

Leichhardt Uniting Church.

WITH

*Alan Cinis, Renee Dallow, Jennifer Davis, Margaret Davis, Roy Eldridge, JP Gauntlett, Corinne Maloney, Jovana Miletic, Stephen Ratcliffe and **Patrick Trumper** as Vathek.*

*FABULOUSLY wealthy and spectacularly eccentric, William Beckford (1759-1844) produced his glittering gothic masterpiece *The History of Caliph Vathek* at the age of 22.*

With rare empathy for the world of Islam, Beckford charts the operatic decline of his Faustus-like anti-hero literally from the summit of his gigantic tower on the fabled site of Babel to the appalling subterranean halls of the fallen angel Eblis and eternal damnation.

Urged on by his appalling mother Carathis, and pawn to the terrible, bloodthirsty demon Giaour, Vathek's ambition, greed, vanity, lust, blasphemy and sensual excess drive his epic journey to disaster.

This fast-paced adaptation offers a fear and wonder-filled showcase for bravura performance, bold direction, shrewdly sumptuous design, puppetry, trickery, dazzling light, dance and wild theatricality.

“Such is, and such should be, the chastisement of blind ambition.”

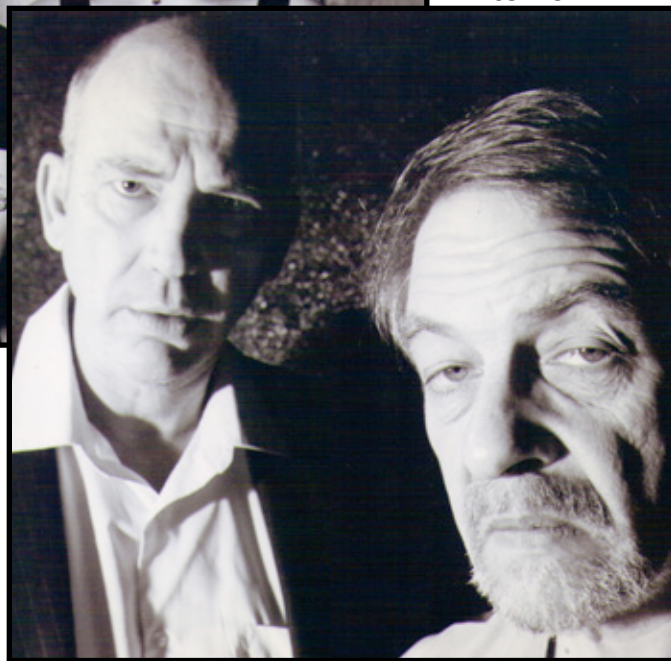
*LIKE a slightly dotty Fairy Godmother, and born in 1898 no less, Colleen Clifford, tiny, tireless and much-loved lady of the theatre, came to the opening night of *Vapours* shortly before her death in 1996. She was in her mid-90s.*

What a pro. Colleen was thoroughly asleep before houselights were down and remained so throughout the in-your-face, fairly shouty proceedings only waking, to a considerable extent, as the cast received its much-merited

WHO SLEW REG SMEDLEY?



L-R: Gertraud Ingeborg, Bill Young, Tania Ginori, Patrick Trumper, Jemima Godsall and David Ritchie.



***SIX kidnap victims
have little in common
- a dead greengrocer
called Reg and a will
to survive***

***“Gauntlett is a wonderful
wordsmith . . . This black
comedy is rich in its
horribly funny dialogue and
character development.”***
CARRIE KABLEAN:
Sunday Telegraph

WHERE:

Lookout Theatre, Woolahra.

WHEN:

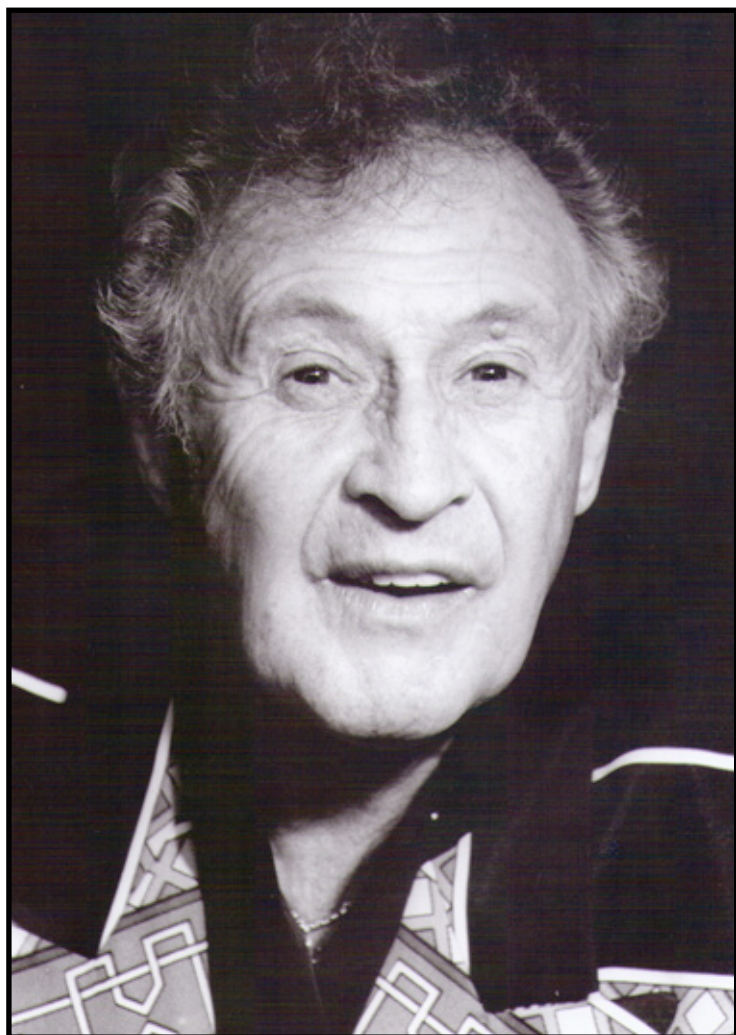
April-May 1997.

Starring: TANIA GINORI, JEMIMA
GODSALL, GERTRAUD INGEBORG,
DAVID RITCHIE,
PATRICK TRUMPER and BILL
YOUNG.

Lighting and design by
TONY YOULDEN.

Photographs:
CORRIE ANCONE.

YOUR OWN LEE YOUNG ONCE



WHERE:

Lookout Theatre, Woolahra.

WHEN:

April-May 1995.

Starring

LEE YOUNG

Musical director and accompanist:

MICHAEL HUXLEY.

Directed by

DIANA DENLEY.

Lighting and design:

SIMON JENKINS.

Photographs:

CORRIE ANCONE.

*“A delightful show
introducing
you to a wonderful man
of the theatre.
Deserves capacity
audiences
throughout the season.”*

BRENDA MORRIS: 2SER

*“Bookshops are lined with the stories
of the stars, but what about the stars’
suspenders, the jockstraps of
entertainment, the supports.*

*“After more than fifty years in the
theatrical profession . . . well, I leave it to
you to decide what you make of my
story and *This Supporting Life.*”*

- LEE YOUNG in YOUR OWN LEE YOUNG ONCE -



"I'll forgive him the dreadful pun of the title for his lovely celebration of the working life of what can only still be described as a vaudeville artist . . . he sings, he tells jokes, he dances . . . and plays the castenets quite superbly. "

ALANNA MACLEAN: Canberra Times



LEE (Just above Larry)
BACKSTAGE
AT THE
ROYAL
ALBERT with
Orson Welles,
Olivier L.,
Danny Kaye
and sundry
others.

"Young may be nudging 70 but he's a dab showman, selling a song or serving up a fine tap routine.

This is old style showbiz, oozing with charm and skills at "working an audience".

PAMELA PAYNE: Sun-Herald

I got a co-writer credit on this one but Lee did most of the work and often wafts off into some glorious yarn ad lib. Gotta love him!

YOLYO has bobbed up at The Lookout, Queanbeyan School Of Arts Cafe, on cruise ships, motor buses, holiday resorts, pubs, posh joints, clubs, theatres and restaurants.

It grows or shrinks to suit the circs, gets slightly ruder if the traffic allows and has given people a lot of pleasure - me included.

Initially I had nothing to do with YOLYO. Lee performed an early version at the Manly Music Loft. I muscled in to deliver a general nip and tuck and occasional heritage joke implant.



UP THE CONVICTS!
Lee's great friend and colleague for many years Frankie Howerd called Lee in when he made *Up The Convicts* in Australia - and that's near-mythic Aussie actor Frank Thring looming on the left.

TOURING: War-torn North Africa, post WWII, Lee with Frankie, his sister Betty, Eric Sykes and assorted matelots - their truck was blown up by local cheeky blighters.



Director Diana Denley oversaw what, in retrospect, was an unusually cheery gestation: fine wines, stories, song and dance from Mr. Young and the inimitable Mr. Huxley on goanna. Occasionally we even got around to rehearsal.

Lee loves the idea that he was born on the same day as Mickey Mouse - May 14, 1928. He was born James Stevenson Young in Glasgow near the shipyard and he loved showbusiness forever.

He is one of the finest people I've met - generous to a fault, talented, strong, courageous, funny, loyal, gentle, tenacious and a pleasure to be with. He's Peta Toppano's godfather and, in a non religious sense, our son JP's godfather as well.

Lee is loved by people all over the world and rightly so.