

# PROMPTS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE HEIDELBERG THEATRE COMPANY



## Angels In America

A Gay Fantasia on National Themes

### Part One: Millennium Approaches

by Tony Kushner

directed by Bruce Akers

by arrangement with Hal Leonard Australia Pty Ltd, on behalf of The Gersh Agency, New York

## 9<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> July, 2008

Wednesday to Saturday at 8.15pm,

Matinee Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> July at 3pm

Subscribers requiring to alter their chosen night or reserve their booking are asked to call BEFORE Monday, 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2008.

This play contains adult themes and smoking

The Company is delighted to present the Australian non-professional premiere of **Angels in America Part One: Millennium Approaches**. The play is an epic in two parts and is considered a masterpiece of American theatre. It debuted on Broadway in May 1993 with **Millennium Approaches** with **Part Two: Perestroika**, joining it in repertory in November. The plays received Tony Awards for Best Play back to back in 1993 and 1994.

Set in the America of 1985: a time when a powerful Republican Party held office during the AIDS crisis, it is a witty, brave and life-affirming play that will whisk audiences through New York, Antarctica and Salt Lake City. Its subtitle, A Gay Fantasia on National Themes evokes an epic voyage through reality and fantasy alongside a cultural melting pot of Mormons, Jews, African Americans, gays, angels and drag queens.

We welcome back as director HTC stalwart Bruce Akers who has directed seven plays at Heidelberg including **A Streetcar Named Desire**, **A Perfect Ganesh**, **Sylvia** and **Side Man** in 2005. For the last three years, Bruce has concentrated on acting and starred in many HTC productions: most recently **Art** and **The Grapes of Wrath** and at Williamstown Little Theatre in **Gross Indecency** and **The Drawer Boy**.

Bruce has an exceptional cast on board to tackle such a complex production. There will be many familiar faces from HTC; Kate Bowers (**Side Man**; **Noises Off**), Angelo DeCata (**Cat on a Hot Tin Roof**), Juliet Hayday (**The Grapes of Wrath**), Paul Kennedy (**The Importance of Being Earnest**), Rhiannon Leach (**Dinner, The Memory of Water**), Justin Stephens (**Dinner; Noises Off**) and Peter Tedford (**The Grapes of Wrath**). The Company also extends a warm welcome to Tim Constantine and Glen Barton and hope that they enjoy the experience at Heidelberg.

**Angels in America** will be huge! Luckily a talented crew eagerly awaits to weave their magic behind the scenes and the list is growing daily! Chris McLean is Production Coordinator; Cameron South is Stage Manager with assistants Kate O'Keefe and Jacqui Westwood. George Tranter worked on set design (via email from Thailand!) and Leanne Cole on Set Décor. An indefatigable Dennis Pain leads the set building team. There are also several VDL winners amongst the crew: Jason Bovaird the Lighting Designer and Sebastian Bertoli on Sound (assisted by George Bissett and Tim McLaughlan) and Wendy Drowley and Lois Connor on Wardrobe. The accent coach is Beth Barclay; Properties are by Rose Capuano with Furnishings by Maureen McInerney. Julie Hall is the Rehearsal Prompt; Struan McGregor is operating the Lights and Sandy Green is keeping a watchful eye on the Director.

**Angels in America**: is a demanding, controversial and confronting theatrical experience. It's a huge challenge for the theatre company and it makes certain demands of its audience. AIDS is a disease still prevalent in today's society as is intolerance, prejudice and political corruption. The message of the play remains painfully relevant today, **Angels in America** promises to confront, challenge and delight audiences!

**NOTE:** A Rehearsed Play reading of **Angels in America, A Gay Fantasia on National Themes, Part Two: Perestroika** will be held after the matinee performance on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> July commencing at 8:00pm. The original intention was to read the play internally in order for the actors to appreciate the journey of their respective characters. It has since been decided to open a reading of the second play to the public with the proceeds going to the AIDS Council of Victoria. Admission is "gold coin plus"- hopefully leaning more to the "plus".

Preview by Bruce Akers & Suzannah Rowley

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# BOOKINGS & SUBSCRIPTIONS 9457 4117



# Review

## Over The River And Through The Woods

by Joe DiPietro

Directed by Geoff Hickey.

Reviewed by Diana Burleigh

Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> April, 2008 for 3CR's

*Curtain Up* – Sundays at One – 855AM

Joe DiPietro's **Over the River and Through the Woods** was written a dozen years ago and has been seen a few times in Melbourne's non-professional theatre, but last Thursday was my first chance to experience it courtesy of Jeff Hickey's production at Heidelberg.

Because of the large open stage at this venue, the first impression I had on entering the auditorium was of the set – a home, with path leading to the front door, living room with set dining table to one side.

It reminded me at once of Ron Elisha's **In Duty Bound** and when the play began I realised that there were similarities between them. Elisha's play is set in Melbourne and shows how a Jewish immigrant family's customs brought from the old home, stifle the Aussie born son of the house.

**Over the River and through the Woods** is set in New Jersey, adjacent to New York and deals with an immigrant Italian family who try to keep up the old traditions despite the attempt of the young grandson, who wants to move to Seattle.

In other words a universal theme for a young country. In both plays many of the scenes revolve around elaborate family meals and in both the olds invite an eligible young woman to dinner in the hopes she will bind the son to their traditions. It was interesting to see the way each play worked out its theme differently.

Both are extremely funny and this disguises a seriousness. While the rite of passage in **In Duty Bound** probably predominates, young *Nick*, in **Over the River** comes eventually to a greater appreciation of his heritage.

There are several passages in the play when the cast address the audience directly. This is an awkward device and often it is handled awkwardly by the cast who proclaim rather than converse and for me this was the main problem with the production. And not only in the speeches. I found the dialogue laboured.

It was treated like Chekhov, each word was given the same importance and emphasis. It needed a lighter touch, a swing to the chattiness, more volubility and with each character living in his or her own zone. Too often I felt that people were waiting for their turn to speak.

I did go to the second performance, which is often a little strained after the high of the opening night. With a few more performances the cast may have a chance to relax into the play better.

This apart, there is much to admire. The warmth and sheer good will of the four grandparents towards their recalcitrant off-spring is a delight. They create a good ensemble. Sandy Green is marvellous as the *Gran*, in fact an object lesson to other actors in playing one who is never happier than when she was feeding anyone who walked through the door.



By the way, congratulations to the props personnel who prepare what seem like innumerable plates of delicious-looking food.

Also enjoyable are the performances of Chris Hodson, John Keogh and Lena Minto as the other grandparents. Paul Mercuri is an attractive *Nick*, whose frustration with the family is entirely understandable and he takes us with him on his journey of understanding. I think he and Aimee Sanderson, the girl invited over to meet him, could show a little more charm to make them more likeable.

The company chose to use light accents and this is even across the cast, which helps with comprehensibility.

The set designed by Geoff Hickey, co-ordinated by Dennis Pain and constructed by members of the company, is superb. It captures the sense of time, place and social milieu perfectly. It has been dressed meticulously with period artefacts, right down to the statue of St Anthony of Padua.

Any reservations I may have had were swept away in the final minutes of the play, which were as moving as anything I have ever experienced in a theatre.



(above: the Cast & Crew of Shakespeare's Shorts)

**Review of the HTC Youth production, Shakespeare's Shorts** (unfortunately due to space restrictions Suzannah Rowley's Review cannot be included in *Prompts*. However the full transcript of her delightful and insightful Review can be accessed on the HTC Youth page of the Company's website.)

On May 16<sup>th</sup> 2008, HTC Youth brought the world of Shakespeare to a packed house at the Heidelberg Theatre Company. In five different acts from five different plays and with excellent support from the crew, the actors tantalised the audience with great performances from **Hamlet**, **Macbeth**, **Twelfth Night**, **A Midsummer Night's Dream** and **Romeo and Juliet**.

When you've read Suzannah's Review of the show on our website you'll want to be part of HTC Youth's next production, coming up in December 2008 –

**A Midsummer Night's Dream** by William Shakespeare.

Contact Jess for audition/production details on **0422 289 056**

# AUDITION NOTICE

## Don's Party

by David Williamson

Director – Peter Newling

Sunday July 13, from 1.00 pm.

and Monday July 14<sup>th</sup> from 7.30 pm.

at the Theatre, 36 Turnham Avenue, Rosanna 3084

Season: Wed 10<sup>th</sup> – Sat. 27<sup>th</sup> September 2008

(Matinee Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> September.)

by appointment only

For information, or to book an audition, contact the auditions co-ordinator,

Kate Bowers on 9029 8283, or via [katebo@iinet.net.au](mailto:katebo@iinet.net.au)

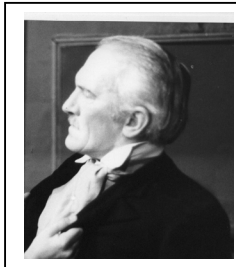
### Description:

Don's Party is a crass, warts and all snapshot of Australian life in 1969. It's bitingly funny, dark and sardonic, big and burlesque, and has been described as a "boozy, brawly romp". It follows one night in the lives of 11 characters, all in their 30s, who are moving through the transition from the unbridled idealism of university life and politics, to the more mundane humdrum of family and suburban existence.

### CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

**Age & Accent** All characters are in their late 30s or early 40s, with the exception of Susan, who is mid to late 20s. All characters speak with an Australian accent.

- Don** Don is a failed writer, who, through lack of any other viable options, ended up as a teacher. Popular and likeable, but struggling with the humdrum of life.
- Kath** Wife of Don. More concerned with the mini pizzas, and the distribution of savouries than the outcomes of the election. Rather harried, and a bit of a worrier. Very down to earth character.
- Simon** Liberal voting accountant. Mistakenly believes himself to be a lot of fun, but is really a bit of a putz. Needs excellent comic timing.
- Jody** Wife of Simon. Attractive and confident, which can come across as slightly arrogant. Conservative, upper-middle class upbringing. Would project a superiority over other characters.
- Mal** Psychologist and would-be politician. Probably the smartest of the characters. Bitterly disappointed by his life – he's still broke, and still married to Jenny.
- Jenny** Wife of Mal. A walking migraine. Dour and sarcastic.
- Mack** Psychologist with a penchant for taking lewd photos. Rather lecherous, dishevelled and grubby. Recently separated from his wife. This is the role made famous by Graham Kennedy in the film.
- Evan** Dentist. Serious, brooding and subdued. Not much fun to have (or be) around.
- Kerry** Wife of Evan. Flamboyant artist. Smart, attractive and a bit flirty.
- Cooley** Embodies what Williamson has called the 'awful Australian uniqueness'. Vulgar, selfish, thoughtless, cowardly, disruptive and a lawyer – yet curiously loveable.
- Susan** Cooley's bit of fluff. Not overly bright. A dancer (apparently).



**Vale  
BILL  
ROBERTS**

(left) Bill in his first role at HTC as *Hamilton Penworthy* in *A Tomb With A View* in 1979 and (right) the Cloisters Bill designed and built for Abelard and Heloise in 1991.



Sadly we announce the death of Bill Roberts, Life Member of HTC, actor, set-builder, stage device maker, who passed away quietly in his sleep on Tuesday April 29. Bill's first role with HTC was in 1979 in *A Tomb with a View*, his other shows were; 1981 *Lord George Knew My Father* and *Death of a Salesman*, 1982 *Death Trap*, 1983 *Royal Hunt of the Sun*, 1984 *Hobson's Choice*, 1985 *The Crucible*, 1986 *Romeo and Juliet*, 1987 *Insignificance* and *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby*, 1988 *Spare Me Bloomin' Days*, 1989 *Nic Nic II*, *Macbeth* and *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole*, 1990 *Amadeus*, 1990 *Ring Around the Moon*, and 1992 *Charley's Aunt*.

Currently on the HTC website there is a Remembrance of Bill's involvement with the Company, featuring photos and a Personality Profile which appeared in Prompts in 1992. With regret we say farewell to a fine man and a great supporter of the Company.

**DON'T MISS our PLAY READING of  
Angels in America  
A Gay Fantasia on National Themes  
Part Two: Perestroika  
at the Theatre  
Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> July at 8:00pm  
Admission is "gold coin plus"**

**Fancy being Front of House??**

Our Front of House crew at HTC are recruiting! If you are interested in becoming more involved with the Company or lending a hand – come and spend a fun evening with Patricia and our friendly crew.

HTC productions require three friendly people for evening productions from 7:15pm and from 2pm for matinees performed on the second Sunday of the runs. FOH volunteers assist in seating patrons, serving sherries pre-show and refreshments in the interval, clearing away and most of all enjoy fun moments to chat!

If you are interested in helping for the upcoming production of *Angels in America: Millennium Approaches* from July 9<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> Wed to Saturday plus the Matinee on July 20<sup>th</sup>, please contact Patricia on **9459 2235**.

by Suzannah Rowley

**WHO, WHAT, WHERE???** *ctd.*

Emma is also one of 600 volunteer "stewards" doing FOH at the Globe. There is no sentence in theatre, which cannot be improved by the addition of the clause "when I worked at the Globe....."

Leanne Cole, co-ordinator of the HTC Art Space, has an exhibition, *White Trash*, at the Dianne Tanzer Gallery in Fitzroy until June 28<sup>th</sup>. Your Editor greatly enjoyed seeing more of Leanne's creative work, do go along and see it for yourself.

If you saw the recent exhibition of tea cosies at Bundoora Homestead in aid of the Cancer Council's Big Morning Tea, you no doubt admired the huge 'lady cosy', made by the "Terrible Duo" Wendy & Lois, from 'bits'n'pieces' held in HTC Wardrobe.



**JUNE**

Tuesday 17 <sup>th</sup>	1.30pm	Heidelberg Film Society – Chocolat
	7.30pm	– The Big Steal
Saturday 28 <sup>th</sup>	10.00am	<b>Working Bee with Lunch</b>

**JULY**

Saturday 5 <sup>th</sup>	10.00am	<b>Working Bee with Lunch</b>
Wednesday 9 <sup>th</sup>	8.15pm	<b>FIRST NIGHT – Angels in America Part One: The Millennium Approaches</b>
Tuesday 15 <sup>th</sup>	7.30pm	Heidelberg Film Society – Gentlemen Prefer Blondes
Sunday 20 <sup>th</sup>	8.00pm	PLAY READING – "Angels Part Two"
Saturday 26 <sup>th</sup>	8.15pm	<b>FINAL NIGHT – Angels in America Part One: The Millennium Approaches</b>

**AUGUST  
9<sup>th</sup> -24<sup>th</sup>**

**Winter in Banyule Festival.** Check the official program or our Website for the times & dates of HTC's Festival events.

*What's the Goss?*

**WHO, WHAT, WHERE???**

The Company is indebted to John Rowe, an HTC Subscriber for many years who came along to **Over the River** on his usual night, the second Saturday of the run, only to find him self seeing the play not from his usual seat, but in the Lighting Operator's chair! Something went really haywire with the lighting roster and thanks to John stepping in that night and at the Matinee the next day, the show went on - with lights!

There was a recent and very unfortunate twist of events for actor Justin Stephens starring in HTC's upcoming production of **Angels in America: Millennium Approaches**. On May 1st, Justin broke his leg in a very serious motorcycle accident and was admitted to the Royal Melbourne Hospital for three weeks where he underwent two operations. Justin has shown incredible strength and commitment to his role in **Angels** by rehearsing from his hospital bed with the help of director Bruce Akers and under study Glen Barton! Justin has recently returned to Heidelberg Theatre and would like to thank his partner Rhiannon, his friends, Bruce Akers and the cast and crew of **Angels** for their wonderful support. The Company also sends Justin its support and wishes him a speedy recovery.

HTC Secretary and proud Dad, Brett Hunt, gave us an update on his beautiful redhaired daughter, Emma, who has done some stage managing at HTC and La Mama. She's in London on a working holiday and recently was stage manager and production co-ordinator for a farce by an amateur company, involving 28 scene changes!

**HELP!!!** needed at the  
**WORKING BEES**

for  
*Angels In America*  
**Saturdays**  
**28<sup>th</sup> June & 5<sup>th</sup> July**  
**from 10.00am**  
**lunch is provided**

So do come along, it's a great experience and a fun time too!  
**Working Bees not your style?**  
How about assisting  
backstage or foh  
**Like to know more – call the Theatre**  
**on 9455 3039**