Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, Tennessee Williams' third significant play (following The Glass Menagerie [1944] and A Streetcar Named Desire [1947]), was a huge commercial success, running for 694 performances on Broadway. It won Williams his third New York Drama Critics' Circle Award and his second Pulitzer Prize (his first being for Streetcar).

It is the story of an affluent Southerner, Big Daddy Pollitt, who is dying of cancer. The family gathers at the Mississippi mansion for his birthday, aware that this may be his last. Big Daddy does not know, however, because the family doctor, eldest son Gooper, and his wife, Mae, decide to keep the fact concealed from him. Two other family members join the clan for the party, Brick, the youngest Pollitt, and his beautiful wife, Maggie.

Gooper and Brick are the only heirs to Big Daddy's enormous estate, and Gooper is well aware that Brick is the favorite son. In an effort to win Big Daddy over, Gooper and Mae make a display of themselves and their children, hoping the patriarch will notice that they will provide heirs for the estate and they are out to discredit Brick and Maggie, who do not have children.

The Company is delighted to welcome Geoff Hickey back to direct the show. Geoff has a fine reputation as a Director in the Melbourne non-professional scene. It is ten years since he has directed at HTC, when he produced M. Butterfly and before that in 1994 with Take Me To The Five And Dime, Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean and in 1992 he directed Summer Of The Seventeenth Doll. Geoff was last seen on stage at HTC much more recently when he played Larry in Eugene O'Neill’s The Iceman Cometh in 2004, winning the VDL Best Actor Award for his performance.

Geoff has gathered together an experienced and enthusiastic cast for Cat. Faces well known to HTC audiences are Sandy Green, Leeann Cairnduff, Bob Crawford, Dan Purdey and Ron Chapman, and, newcomers to our stage are Deborah McKelvey and Angelo De Cata.

Behind the scenes is another great cast; Wayne Pearn is Production Co-Ordinator and the Set Building Team for the show is being lead by Dennis Pain with Deanne Cole doing Scenic Art. Lighting Design is by Kirsten Mander and Brian Marriner, with Bruce Parr designing the Audio, Rose Capuano is hunting out Properties for the production while Julie Hall is the Rehearsal Prompt and Wendy Drowley is designing and gathering together the costumes for the show.

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof has all of the earmarks of Williams's unique dramas, involving as it does emotionally biographical themes, disaffection, and difficulty in maintaining intimate relationships. So don’t miss this opportunity to see a great production of this classic American drama.
Art
by Yamina Reza
Directed by Wayne Pearn
Viewed Wednesday 5th July and Reviewed on Sunday, 9th
July, 2006 by Diana Burleigh for
3CR's CURTAIN UP – Sundays at One (855 AM)

About 8 years ago a friend told me that her
daughter had just returned from her first overseas trip to
London. She mentioned the daughter had wanted to see a
West End play but had been very disappointed at her choice
of Art. I couldn’t understand why, especially as I was just
about to leave for an overseas trip of my own and Art was
on my “to see” list.

As I walked down Charing Cross Road, I saw the
theatre marquee which advertised Art and noted that the cast
included Tom Courtney and Albert Finney and was
impressed that two such luminaries would be together on
stage. However for whatever reason I did not go then. A
few weeks later I was in New York and did see the play, this
time with Alan Alda in the cast.

I was not disappointed but did understand what my
friend’s daughter may have felt was lacking. The play is one
of talking heads. Nothing very much happens, no plot as
such, it is about an intellectual debate ranging over a number
of topics the catalyst for which is a painting, a piece of art.

I relate this because it brought home to me that this
play is not an easy one for either the actor or the audience.
This may be why star actors were cast in the West End and
Broadway; to bring in the punters but also because it maybe
takes an actor above the average to undertake presenting the
play and the ideas within.

The play is written by French dramatist, Yamina
Reza and has been played round the world in over thirty
countries. It is about a friendship which is threatened when
one of the three companions has bought a painting which is
basically just a blank canvas – white on white! The English
translation is by noted British writer, Christopher Hampton.

Parenthetically, Heidelberg always has an
exhibition in the foyer during its plays, sometimes sculpture,
often paintings. I noticed with amusement that those for this
play were all entirely white and wondered how they
managed to obtain them so serendipitously. Did they
contact artists and ask if they had any white-only pieces or
did they just happen to know someone who had these?
Whichever, a very clever cross-reference.

Anyway, one of the friends, Serge, a dermatologist
with obviously a large and profitable practice, has bought a
painting which cost two hundred thousand francs (even if we
don’t know what the now-obsolete franc to dollar ratio is, we
know that is a hell of a lot of money). Marc (played by
Bruce Akers) is outraged. All he sees is a white canvas. He
is not only convinced that it cannot be worth that much but
also that no one would buy it for its aesthetic value. This
purchase has to be motivated by something else, perhaps a
form of hubris, or a desire to pretend to be more learned in
art than his fellows or a number of other possibilities. The
third friend, Yvan, (Barry Lockett) is a more pliable
personality; if Serge values the painting, then he is prepared
to admire it too, to please him. Marc believes this is just a
desire to ingratiate and a flaw in this man’s character.

The men meet together or in pairs to hold discussions,
they also speak directly to the audience in monologue. There
is little chance for action, as I said at the top of the review, a
play of talking heads. It was a bold choice for an amateur
company and one that possibly only Heidelberg and a couple of
other local groups could get away with. They know their
audience can accept the challenge.

The actors are well-cast, Chris McLean as the art-
owner, suitably superior in attitude, Bruce Akers belligerence
comes from his bewilderment at the motivation of his friend and
Barry Lockett is wonderfully neurotic. Bruce, I think, has the
more difficult role as it is Marc’s angst which pushes along the
subtext of the play and he copes admirably.

Wayne Pearn’s direction is crisp and keeps the central
themes in focus. He uses the stage in a play without much
movement, in a well-thought out manner. I admire George
Tranter’s set design, giving the contrasting styles of the 3 men
in their own spaces and bringing the angular modernity of
Serge’s taste to the fore.

I went to this play last Wednesday, the opening
night, and am a bit constrained in making some of my criticisms
because I detected a “first nightish” feeling several times. The
cast did not seem to have eased into their roles; something
which may well have happened by the time anyone listening
goes to the play. I did not believe in the fight scene, it wasn’t
sufficiently motivated. It worried me that most of the lines were
delivered with the same intensity; more variety would have
made the play easier to follow. I also would have liked some
variations of pace – at times it was slow but it was consistently
even, which is not a compliment. Nevertheless the humour of
the dialogue was well-brought out, the audience were obviously
listening with involvement and although the running time is
nearly an hour and a half without interval, it never dragged.

Once again, Heidelberg has produced something of
worth and worth-seeing.

Diana Burleigh

Play Reading of The Front Page – All Welcome
Sunday 27th August at 6pm at the Theatre

This play reading is an opportunity for anyone who is
interested in a sneak preview of The Front Page. Actors
interested in auditioning can come along and take part, but we
will need audience as well! A great opportunity to enjoy a classic
piece of theatre and have a get together afterwards.

Snacks will be provided and the bar will be open. Hope
to see lots of people there.
AUDITION NOTICE

Sun 17th - 2pm – Scout Hall
Mon 18th Sept – 7:30pm – at the Theatre
Season: 15th November – 2nd December 2006

The Front Page
by Ben Hecht and Charles Macarthur
Director: Maureen McInerney

Auditions will be open due to the large cast required, but contact with the director to give an indication of time will be appreciated. Please ring the Director for details - Maureen McInerney on 9458 3358.

The Play
Set in the Press Room of the Criminal Court building, Chicago, in 1928.
American accents required. Rapid fire dialogue will be the order of the day.

Hildy Johnson wants out of the newspaper business. He has come to the press room at the Criminal Court Building to bid one last farewell to the crew of barking newshounds and ink rats who have been his companions for many years, and escape the clutches of his ruthless and manipulative editor, Walter Burns. He is off to New York to marry his fiancée, but the nuptials are put on hold when the scoop of a lifetime presents itself in the person of escaped criminal Earl Williams.

Characters

The Reporters

Hildy Johnson, Reporter, Herald Examiner
30s. Ace reporter, envied by other reporters. Engaged to Peggy Grant, attempting to leave the sordid newspaper world.

Wilson, Reporter, American
40s. Once sold a piece to the “Mercury”, and is thinking of trying a play.

Endicott, Reporter, Post
20s+. Recently married and inclined to complain about the job.

Schwartz, Reporter, Daily
40s. Has the worries of the world on his shoulders.

McCue, Reporter, City Press
30-40. Another hard case, a tough nut.

The Mayor,
60s. Self-serving, politically corrupt.

Sheriff Hartman, known as Pinky
60s. Again, self-serving, and politically corrupt, but a bit weak and manipulated by others more powerful.

Woodenshoes, some sort of court gopher.
40ish. Knows a bit of history and who’s who. Treated like a servant and a bit dumb, but has a lot of theories on psychology and the criminal mind.

Earl Williams, convicted criminal
30s. Slight build, terrified escapee.

Mr Pincus, court worker/messenger, small man, delivers documents from the Governor.

Diamond Louis, Chicago gangster
as the name suggests, a gangster.

Mrs Schlosser
30-40. Hard done by wife of a reporter who we never see, comes to look for him.

Jennie, Scrub Woman, 40-50 years.

Mollie Malloy
40s. Faded prostitute, not as young as she used to be, has taken pity on Earl Williams.

Peggy Grant
20s. Hildy’s fiancée. Anxious to take him away from all this to get married in New York, making plans to leave that night.

Mrs Grant, Peggy’s mother
Suspicious of her daughter’s choice of fiancée.

Deputies, Carl and Frank
20-30. Smaller support roles.

Plus 2 extra policemen.

Locations:
Heidelberg Theatre Company - 36 Turnham Ave Rosanna, (Melways ref: 32 A1 - Opposite Rosanna Station)
Scout Hall - DeWinton Park, St James Road Rosanna - round the corner from the Theatre - (Melways ref: 32 A2).
HTC Committee Members

It’s been sixteen years since we last ran a series of profiles of our Committee members, and yes, thankfully, many who served then are still serving now. But first up we want to introduce a relatively new member to the Committee, and that’s our Secretary and Subscription Secretary, Brett Hunt.

Brett and his wife Jenny had been Subscribers for about 10 years when in 2004 Brett responded to an ad in Prompts for a Secretary. He wasn’t long in the position when another ad was run in Prompts, this time for someone to take on the Committee position of Subscription Secretary. After nobody turned up for the Subscribers job, so Brett took that on too.

All these duties have meant “a very steep learning curve” – his words - especially in terms of computer software and ability, but he now thinks he’s got both jobs under control. And we can attest to that as Brett recently had the horror experience of having to rebuild the Subscription database after it crashed! Brett’s next challenge is to improve the physical layout and some of the process, involved in administration at the Theatre. He says he’s happy lurking behind the scenes and has no ambition to act or direct.

In the rest of his life, he has a wonderful wife and two incredibly beautiful grown-up daughters. He is 59, lives in Rosanna and works as a GP in Reservoir, and also does a little medical teaching and examining.

It’s a pleasure to introduce Prompts readers to Brett and to have the opportunity to say, “Thanks for a fine job Brett”. 

HTC CELEBRATES Winter in Banyule

Winter in Banyule kicked off at the Theatre on Saturday 5th August with a very successful Reading of Anne Rutherford’s new play, ‘The More We Change’. Anne introduced the play and set the scene for the audience, as well she sang a number of the songs during the Reading and other music was provided by HTC’s own Sound Designer and Operator, Struan McGregor. Anne thanked Struan for the great job he did in arranging the music to support the Reading and the audience too showed their appreciation for his artistry.

The capable and committed cast of three women; Jillian Scott, Marisa Rowlands and Karen Wakeham played various roles, with the actors changing characters as well as ages as the drama unfolded. The play opens in 1939 and follows the lives of three generations of women until modern times.

Anne was pleased how enthusiastically the audience entered into question time following the Reading and appreciated the feedback relating to her work, particularly the suggestion to expand the roles of the three daughters in a scene that occurs later in the play. ‘The More We Change’ will be produced in Bendigo next year.

And then on the 19th August it was off to the Theatre’s Open Day, and really the photos below say it all. Except I was there early in the piece and I am sure that the racks and baskets of finery would be very much depleted come 4 o’clock.

All the action was not in foyer however, the set building team were hard at work on stage constructing the set for Cat as members of the Company took visitors on tours of the Theatre. Congratulations to the City of Banyule and HTC for another great Festival.

HELP!!! needed at the WORKING BEES for Cat On A Hot Tin Roof Saturdays 2nd & 9th September from 10.30am 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