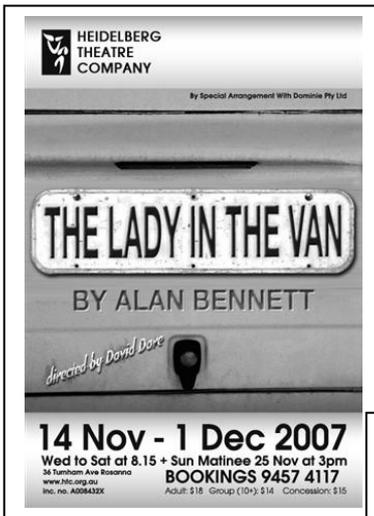


PROMPTS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE HEIDELBERG THEATRE COMPANY



Our Director thought our readers would be interested to see this photo of the 'real' Miss Shepherd.



The Company is delighted to welcome David Dare as director of **The Lady In The Van**. This is David's first directorial role at HTC, and he brings to this production a wealth of experience as a director together with finely honed production skills.

The Village Voice called **The Lady In The Van** "one of the finest bursts of comic writing the twentieth century has produced." It tells of an eccentric old lady who moves into a quiet street in Camdem Town. There she remains installed in her van in glorious self-sufficiency until the council instructs her to move on. A kind homeowner invites her to live in his garden.

A bizarre tale in itself, but even more bizarre when writer Alan Bennett is the homeowner and the woman stays for fifteen years!

What kind of bond could two such different people possibly form? Both fascinating and moving, Bennett recounts the unlikely story of Mary Shepherd, the nomad who took a unique place in his life for well over a decade.

In the cast are faces well known to HTC audiences; Joan Moriarty, Judy Appleby, Barry James, Brian Christopher,. And newcomers to HTC in the cast are Christine Andrew, Tina Pigliardo, Brian Moynihan Kristjan Mihaljcuk and Rod Horsfield.

THE LADY IN THE VAN

by Alan Bennett
directed by David Dare

14th Nov– 1st Dec, 2007

Wednesday to Saturday at 8.15pm,
Matinee Sunday 25th November at 3pm.

Subscribers requiring to alter their chosen night or reserve their booking are asked to call BEFORE Monday, 5th November, 2007.

The Production Team is shaping up well with Wayne Pearn as Production Coordinator and Brett Hunt as Assistant PC. David Dare as well as directing the production has designed the set and will paint it once the Set Building Crew lead by Dennis Pain, have done their work. Maureen McInerney is looking after Set Décor and Furnishings, Rose Capuano is seeking out props for the show – what a challenging task this will be even for our Rose! Wendy Drowley and Lois Connor are creating the Costumes. Adrian Valenta is the Stage Manager and Lighting Design is by Jason Bovaird with George Bissett designing the Sound. The Rehearsal Prompt is Julie Hall, Patricia Tyler is the photographer and Toni Tyers will produce the Program.

So a great team creating a wonderful entertainment set to delight and engage ends our 2007 Season, and if you thought the set for **Grapes of Wrath**, also designed and painted by David, was something, you 'aint seen nothin' til you see this one! Make sure you don't miss out!"

HTC Youth presents

New Works Project

4 New Short Plays

written by Members of HTC Youth

December 6th, 7th & 8th
at 8:15pm

at the Theatre

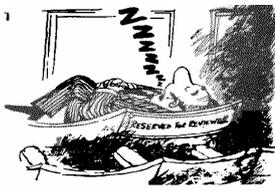
(a gold coin donation to support
the Company would be appreciated.)

for more information on the Project see page 4

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BOOKINGS & SUBSCRIPTIONS 9457 4117



Review

The Memory of Water

by Shelagh Stephenson

Directed by Chris McLean

Reviewed by Joan Chapman on 15 September 2007 on

Curtain Up – Sundays at One 3CR 855AM

The action of **The Memory of Water** revolves around a funeral. The chief mourners are three sisters with little in common except that they all still live with the legacy of their childhood with the mother they've come to bury. In the hours before their mother's funeral, the three sisters undergo a bickering, humorous and unsettling reunion. There is *Teresa*, the 'martyr', an obsessive over-organiser, *Mary* a discontented successful doctor with an equally successful married lover Mike, and *Catherine*, the youngest who binges on shopping for inappropriate clothes, go-nowhere love affairs, and drugs. There's also the about-to-be buried mum *Vi*. This vision in green taffeta is visible and audible only to *Mary*, though her influence and demand to be understood motivates the oldest and youngest sister as well. This play explores the pressure that parents exert on their children's lives even after they have physically departed.

Shelagh Stephenson's subject matter is hardly funny, yet she reveals the many ways in which death uncovers the absurd in life. **The Memory of Water** employs metaphors such as homeopathy to suggest the puzzling qualities of memory. The homeopathic theory is that water remembers things that it has been in contact with even after all traces of the substance have been removed. The unreliability of memory takes on dimensions that begin by seeming comic - was *Catherine* traumatised by being shut in a cupboard by her mother, or did she do it herself in a temper tantrum? But memories also have the makings of tragic potential. Some, such as the teenage pregnancy of *Mary*, amount to an attempt to suppress truth that is too painful to recall. The sisters capture the fast-talking exchanges of family discourse with pace and comic timing. They are cruel, sympathetic, unforgiving and loving.

The character whose concerns seem most important is *Mary*, the only daughter who can communicate with the dead *Vi*. Venetia Macken gives a very fine performance in this role, gradually deepening our knowledge of one whose suffering strengthens character. She has the last words in the play, as she expresses her intention to move forward. Rhonda Chung and Rhiannon Leach do outstanding work as the controlling *Teresa* and the manic *Catherine*. Rhonda Chung manages a scene of drunken revelations and accusations with great control, never falling into the kind of acting clichés that sometimes mark this familiar dramatic device.

Simon Fenn as *Mike*, *Mary's* married television doctor boyfriend and Paul Farrell as *Frank*, *Teresa's* husband, turn their minor roles into major achievements. Paul Farrell demonstrates that the unglamorous and overlooked male can have depth, while Simon Fenn manages to signal his unreliability from his first entrance. Even as she nags and criticises, in the tradition of ghost mothers in comedies, Laurel Gourlay's *Vi* turns a character who might easily be a stereotype into a real woman calling out for understanding.

Generally, direction by Chris McLean keeps everyone and everything moving and, interspersed with the quieter and more thoughtful interchanges between *Mary* and *Vi*, pacing



will improve as the season progresses. A couple of things that need looking at are speaking over laughter, and accents. It seems to me that if the three daughters were brought up in the same household, their accents would be consistent and sustained.

The set is solid and consists of a flowery bedroom with a symbolic crack over the bed and torn wallpaper, while Maureen McInerney fills Mum's wardrobe with dated party dresses for a sisterly scene when, instead of just packing things up for the inevitable post-funeral charity donations, they play dress ups and remember. Maureen also fills *Catherine's* shopping bag with aptly outrageous outfits, including a funeral outfit to end all funeral outfits.

The comedy in this piece comes from the fact that the subject material, namely the questionable validity of memory, and the setting, the period immediately preceding a parent's funeral, is (or will be) familiar to all of us, and the secrets and resentments that come to the surface are at once terribly funny and painfully familiar. Yet this play never ventures far into these depths or the true note of emotional pain and complexity, and remains within its genre of family comedy. Watched over by their boyfriends and deceased mother, each of the sisters indulges in a session of self-obsessed soul-searching. Their performances are confident and assured but on a structural level I felt no reason to care for these women's neuroses.

It's said that "all memory is false" but your memory of this play will be more of its strengths than its weaknesses. It's a play with high ambitions to say something significant, but which, for me, fails to deliver. The journey is quite entertaining all the same.

The Company acknowledges John McDougal's 50 years as a Subscriber



Mr John McDougal is pictured receiving a bottle of sparkling from HTC's President, John Gilbert at a performance of **The Memory of Water** to celebrate his subscription to the Company for the past 50 years. In that time Mr McDougal has only missed about ten productions.

Mr McDougal was suggesting that this may be his last year of subscribing as he finds driving at night difficult, so we suggested that he may consider the Sunday matinee.

AUDITION NOTICE

Bazaar & Rummage

by Sue Townsend

Directed by Kris Weber

Sunday 18th November at 2pm

Monday 19th November at 8pm

at Heidelberg Theatre Company, 36 Turnham Avenue, Rosanna.

(Melway 32 A1) (Opposite Rosanna Train Station on the Hurstbridge Line)

Preview: Tuesday, 19 February 2008 at 8.15pm

Season: 20 February 2008 - 8 March 2008

Wednesday - Saturday at 8.15pm –

plus a matinee on Sunday, 2 March 2008 at 3.00pm

ABOUT THE PLAY

Set in a Church Hall in Acton, London, **Bazaar & Rummage**, brings together an ex-agoraphobic do-gooder, a trainee social worker and three agoraphobics, who have been persuaded to venture out of their homes to organise and participate in a jumble sale. The play presents how five very different women relate to each other in their conversation, attitudes and reminiscences. As the group sort through the rummage - individual fears erupt and are shared. The result is very entertaining, witty and sometimes very poignant. This play contains some adult themes and smoking.

AUDITION FORMAT

This will be an open audition.

It would be advisable to read the script before hand and come to the audition with a sense of what the story is about; how the characters react to one another; an accent; some basic understanding of who the characters are, what they want and how they go about getting it.

CHARACTERS

Margaret: 40's working class vulgarian, agoraphobic for 15 years.

Bell-Bell: 40's middle class and is Scottish. An obsessively clean agoraphobic who plays the piano. Will not be required to play a sonata but some understanding of the piano is preferred).

Fliss: 20's a youngish trainee social worker (has been to university).

Gwenda: 30-40 a volunteer social worker, an ex agoraphobic.

Katrina: 30's an agoraphobic, ex-variety songstress. An ability to sing would be nice.

WPC: (Woman Police Constable) a woman who is terrified of community policing. (It is anticipated that this part be doubled by actor playing *Gwenda*).

ACCENTS: Accents will be English (*from West London - this is not cockney*), with the exception of the role of Bell-Bell (*Scottish*).

Accents will vary depending upon social status of the role.

REHEARSALS: At this stage, rehearsals are scheduled to begin early December on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 7.30pm to 10.30pm with all actors required to attend all rehearsals. Upon casting, a rehearsal schedule will be issued.

Auditions

For further details about the play and auditions, please contact the director Kris Weber via email kris@keweber.com or phone **9363 5909**.

Announcing HTC's 2008 Season

Your copy of the **2008 Playbill** will be included with the final issue of *Prompts*, coming to you in a couple of weeks from now. Details of Subscription Renewal, New Subscriptions, Gift Subscriptions, Gift Vouchers and Company Membership will be in the **Playbill**.

Bazaar & Rummage

by Sue Townsend directed by Kris Weber
Season: 20 February - 8 March (Matinee Sunday 2 March)

Over The River And Through The Woods

by Joe DiPietro directed by Geoff Hickey
Season: 23 April - 10 May (Matinee Sunday 4 May)

Angels In America Part One: Millennium Approaches

by Tony Kushner directed by Bruce Akers
Season: 9 - 26 July (Matinee Sunday 20 July)

Don's Party

by David Williamson directed by Peter Newling
Season: 10 - 27 September (Matinee Sunday 21 September)

The Woman In Black adapted by Stephen Mallatratt

from the novel by Susan Hill directed by Shane Ryan
Season: 19 November - 6 December (Matinee Sunday 30 November)



PADDY MORIARTY – SET BUILDER

January 1989. Joan Moriarty is directing **Same Time Next Year** and the rest of HTC is in New Zealand with **Nic Nic**. Joan called in family favours and Paddy built the set and has been doing so ever since! He was awarded the Bill Cherrey Award in 2000 in recognition of his years of service to the Company. And when not set building, as Dr Patrick Moriarty he researches transport, energy and the future at Monash.

Paddy had some interesting reflections on Theatre: the conflict between audiences who would like to see **Arsenic and Old Lace** for the third time while Directors long to stage **The Long Dark Tea Time of the Soul**; he votes **Grapes** one of the best plays we've done – a strong story and its power to move an audience; sets need to be more than 3 pieces of dangling canvas otherwise our Theatre looks like the bus depot it was; directors who want sets to be totally real, which he says accounts for the 100 doors stored out the back.

And the highlights: those Waverley Festivals, taking down the Doug Bennett sets at HTC and re-assembling them at the Alexander Theatre in the day and then pulling them down after the performance that night and storing them back at Rosanna at 5am! Madness especially if you ever saw a DB set! Another was building the set for **Molly Sweeney** in the foyer while renovations were made to the auditorium and stage. Paddy gives **Noises Off** the thumbs up for most elaborate set, and it wouldn't be a piece on Paddy without one of his jokes, so to close; Pad says he doesn't agree with lots of things George Pell says but like Pell he too opposes fornication on stage 'because it always leads to slamming doors—and that's a no-no for we set builders'.

What's on at HTC in NOVEMBER

| | | |
|----------------------------|---------|--|
| Saturday 3 rd | 10.30am | Working Bee with Lunch |
| Saturday 10 th | 10.30am | Working Bee with Lunch |
| Wednesday 14 th | 8.15pm | FIRST NIGHT – The Lady In The Van |
| Sunday 18 th | 2.00pm | AUDITION: <i>Bazaar & Rummage</i> |
| Monday 19 th | 8.00pm | AUDITION: <i>Bazaar & Rummage</i> |
| Tuesday 20 th | 8.00pm | Heidelberg Film Society – Salaam Bombay |

and DECEMBER

| | | |
|---|--------|---|
| Saturday 1 st | 8.15pm | FINAL NIGHT – The Lady In The Van |
| Thursday 6 th – Saturday 8 th | | HTC Youth presents |
| | 8.15pm | New Works Project |
| Tuesday 11 th | 7.30pm | Heidelberg Film Society – <i>Christmas “knees up” Dinner</i> |
| Sunday 16 th | 3.00pm | HTC Annual General Meeting & In House Awards |

HTC Youth's New Works Project

The 'New Works' project is an initiative aimed at facilitating young playwrights in getting their work produced on stage. The dedicated team at HTC Youth has chosen four one-act plays the authors of which are young people under the age of 25 who have an interest in writing.

The plays to be performed include the physical and sensory piece **To Heat You Up, Cool You Down**; Tony Cocking's feel-good, **The Dead Room**; the cheeky journey of **Pitching Alaska** and Izzi Mason's **A Death in the Family**.

This is the first time some of these innovative pieces have been seen on stage, and the performances will undoubtedly be interesting, witty and fresh. Don't miss it!

What's the Goss?

WHO, WHAT, WHERE....?

Sorry to report that Chris Baldock has been in hospital and hope he has a quick recovery and is soon back doing what he does so well in the new year.

Welcome home to Anne Smith, back from a 2 month jaunt overseas, not sure that theatregoing played a big part in the trip, but let's hope HTC can keep you busy now you are back.

Lola Wenn reports that Cameron is well and has been working in the USA since June. He is the Resident Director for the Arena production **Walking With Dinosaurs** which has just begun a two year tour of the States. Cameron started with the show when it was in Australia.

HELP!!! needed at the **WORKING BEES** for **THE LADY IN THE VAN**

Saturdays
3rd & 10th November
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