



BLITHE SPIRIT

Surely Noel Coward's most whimsical and intriguing comedy.

by Noel Coward directed by Wendy Drowley

11th – 27th July, 2013

Evenings at 8.00pm

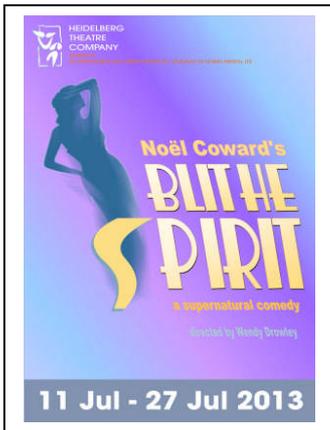
Matinees: Sundays 14th & 21st July at 2pm

Subscribers requiring to alter their chosen night or reserve their booking are asked to call BEFORE Wednesday, 26th June, 2013.

PROMPTS

61st Year

No. 3 June, 2013



Blithe Spirit was first seen in the West End of London in 1941, creating a new long-run record for non-musical British plays of 1,997 performances. It also did well on Broadway later that year, running for 657 performances. Coward adapted the play for film in 1945, starring Rex Harrison and Margaret Rutherford, and directed a musical adaptation, *High Spirits*, on Broadway in 1964. It was also adapted for television in the 1950s and 1960s and for radio. The play enjoyed several West End and Broadway revivals in the 1970s and 1980s and was revived again in London in 2004 and 2011.



From left: Production Team, Wendy, Melanie and Sheelagh.

Cate, flat out during rehearsals for **Blithe Spirit**.



And now is your chance to see it live for the first time on the HTC stage

As with most of Coward's work, **Blithe Spirit** is renowned for its dialogue. The play is a delightfully satirical comedy about ghosts. "*Do you mean you can't see her?!*" Spirit characters have been part of theatre since its Greek beginnings.

It's a fun theatrical concept, perhaps now over-used in plays, television, and movies. After all, how many sappy sitcoms feature a protagonist that talks to a ghost who no one else can see? But **Blithe Spirit** still feels fresh today and goes beyond the comic mix-ups inherent in most supernatural comedies. The play explains love and marriage more than it explores the afterlife.

We are delighted to have Wendy Drowley directing the show. Wendy's previous credits include directing **The Importance of Being Earnest** last year during our 60th Anniversary Year and in 2002, and in our 50th Anniversary Year she directed George Bernard Shaw's **Pygmalion**. These are but two of many productions Wendy has staged at HTC during her long and fruitful association with the Company. Wendy has also designed the set for this delightful production.

Heidelberg is pleased to see Cate Dowling Trask, Tim Murphy and Ian McMaster back on its stage and is pleased to welcome newcomers to HTC, Jeanne Snider, Clare Hayes, Jess Battersby and Madeline McKinlay.

Our backstage crew has been working tirelessly to ensure this production will be a visual treat. Owen will be leading the set building team, with Doug, Paddy, Des, Neville, Mal and Ian working together to construct an amazing set.

Melanie Belcher is again at the helm as Stage Manager, Assistant Stage Manager is Sheelagh Belton, George Bissett will design the sound, Deryk Hartwick is designing the lighting, Bruce Moorhouse is helping with the mechanics of the props as well as assisting in the bio-box and Dianne Brennan will be leading the wardrobe department. And with Bronwyn Parker assisting with décor and props, this is shaping up to be a gorgeous production.

Blithe Spirit is proving to be a popular show so book now to avoid disappointment and join us for a great night of hilarity and high farce.

BOOKINGS – Online at www.htc.org.au or call 9457 4117

36 Turnham Avenue, Rosanna
P.O Box 141, Rosanna VIC 3084

Enquiries 9455 3039
Email htc@htc.org.au

web: htc.org.au
Inc. No. A008432X

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Review

August: Osage County by Tracy Letts

Directed by Joan Moriarty.

Reviewed on Saturday 4th June, 2013 by Ewan Crockett of Theatrecraft published by the Victorian Drama League.

Sometimes it is very difficult to write a review without becoming a critic, so I shall simply tell you about what I saw. This play has won many awards and I can understand why, sort of... It's a very well written piece, reminiscent of Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, Eugene O'Neill and that ilk. It deals with family hierarchy, competition and jealousy, together with a whole raft of social problems that nobody wants to recognise and that everybody uses to their own advantage. It is well written, but it is also overwritten, over-long and angst-ridden.

Here we have a dysfunctional family turning over an interminable number of rocks to discover an interminable number of horrible, but entirely predictable, family secrets which take an interminable amount of time to resolve, and not to everyone's satisfaction. If you are prepared to immerse yourself in the hideousness of this family, you will enjoy this play. Obviously a lot of people are prepared to do just that; it ran 648 performances in its first staging and hasn't been out of production since.

The main protagonists are the three sisters of the Weston family (I could have done with a couple less), their various spouses, partners, relations and their overbearingly nasty, drug-taking mother. The family is headed by Beverly Weston, the overburdened husband who kills himself early in Act One — I don't blame him. This scene is meant to set audience understanding of the situation, but it didn't because it didn't flow. It was disjointed to the point where I wondered if some lines had been cut. There seemed to be an uncertainty with lines; this was true generally among the cast. There seemed to be a lot of casting about for lines and positioning, and a lot of ad-lib to bring the thing back on track. Emotions switched on and off without appropriate build. I felt that this production could have benefited from another couple of weeks' rehearsal. That being said, the scenes where the actors were confident were exceptional and displayed the strength of direction you would expect of Joan Moriarty.

The cast is too large to mention everyone individually in the allotted number of words and I also think it would be unfair of me to remark upon, or criticise, the performance of actors in what was an under-rehearsed production. Suffice it to say that given a few more performances this might have been an excellent production. In the scenes when actors were sure of themselves and of their fellow actors, their talent shone. I am familiar with the work of most and commend them for working in what must have been harrowing circumstance.

The set, whilst being beautifully contrived, was expansive and lost the closed-in and almost claustrophobic feel that the play demands. Lighting was excellent, delineating areas well and contributing to the claustrophobic feel that the set failed to achieve. The play does not call for many sound effects, but those there were appropriate and certainly enhanced the production. No faults with costuming, all were dressed according to the period.

All in all this was not a memorable production, and what has happened to the usual warm and welcoming feeling one has when visiting HTC? As a general patron I felt that the front-of-house staff were afflicted with the same uncertainty that was displayed on stage.



The cast and crew of August: Osage County by Tracy Letts

Email received by Joan Moriarty director of August: Osage County from HTC patron Katy Richmond

Dear Joan,

I thought I would write to you about **August: Osage County** which we saw last Friday night.

I have some comments, but only very small critical comments. I have been attending live theatre for 55 years, & have been a subscriber to MTC for decades. We have seen some NY & London productions too on our travels.

The fact that I can remember the play a week later speaks for itself. Many MTC plays I can't remember the next day (and some I want to forget). However we saw the MTC production of this play, so that probably helps me remember most things very clearly from last Friday.

Acting I thought all the acting was superb, some of it quite wonderful. There was no-one in the cast who was less than excellent.

Casting The actors were on the whole well-chosen, though perhaps Steve wasn't quite right, & Violet's sister was a little on the dour side (compared with the MTC production, where she was more feisty & there was more obvious conflict with Violet).

Direction I thought the direction was fabulous, & some of the scenes were remarkably good. I remember especially the young girl talking to the Indian servant upstairs, & the young girl frolicking with Steve, & also the dinner table scene (hard to do when the audience can't clearly see everyone at the table). Good idea to have a small side table (or was that in the script?). The only thing I thought should have been improved was the opening scene. We the audience weren't quite sure why the young Indian woman was sitting motionless at the table, & it really took 5 minutes to work out that Beverly (the father) was interviewing her. I thought maybe she could have knocked on the door & been let in & maybe there might have been some way of having her move around the table or the chair — drinking water perhaps? So that she didn't look so strange.

Sets I thought the stage set was pretty good, especially the use of the upstairs bedroom & the two upstairs doors. And I liked the front door arrangement — the actors talking outside the door but visible to the audience.

Lighting I am well aware the professional theatre companies can afford good technical equipment which was probably not available to your company. But I thought the lighting could be improved. The whole idea of lighting is to make the changes invisible, or not noticeable by the audience. But for this production I did notice a few leaps in the change of lighting, especially lighting coming on suddenly. I wonder if there should be greater use of a dimmer? And perhaps a few lamps which could be turned off & on gradually?

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AUDITION NOTICE

Heidelberg Theatre Company's production of

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

Adapted by Dale Wasserman from the novel by Ken Kesey

Directed by Chris Baldock

Auditions will be held at the Theatre

36 Turnham Avenue Rosanna (Melway ref: 32 A1)

Sunday June 30 at 7.00pm

& Monday July 1 at 7.30pm

Play Season: 12th – 28th September, 2013

Weeknights and Saturdays at 8:00pm, Sundays at 2:00pm

About the Play

Boisterous, hilariously devilish and ultimately shattering, **One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest** is the unforgettable and much-loved story of a mental hospital and its inhabitants. When a brash new inmate arrives, the rigid program of the ward, headed by the tyrannical Nurse Ratched, is thrown into chaos.

In a world where sanity means conformity and following the rules is the only way to survive, "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" is a powerful exploration of both the beauty and the danger of being an original.

A much-celebrated and awarded modern classic, Cuckoo's Nest will thrill, move and entertain in an unmissable theatrical event.

Characters

RANDLE PATRICK MCMURPHY: shaggy, long side burns. A devilish grin and a face battered and scarred across nose and cheekbone with a red neck biker attitude, bull in a china shop. Lazy, lecherous, and a con man; born leader. Charismatic. LEAD ROLE. 30'S -UP

CHIEF BROMDEN: huge, bull muscled Indian who stands six and a half feet tall, but carries himself like a small man that the system has struck down. Mute to his fellow inmates and ward staff. Monologues exhibit a wise and sensitive, spiritual man. The heart of the show. LEAD ROLE. 30'S -UP

NURSE RATCHED: a handsome woman; her age is hard to tell. A stern, all business, perfectionist who smiles for the patients in a professional therapeutic manner. She expects her world to be just so and will do all it takes to keep it standardized. Nemesis to Mc Murphy. LEAD ROLE. 30'S UP

DALE HARDING: the head man until R.P. enters the scene. Intelligent, well spoken, somewhat flamboyant. One wonders why he is in the mental institution until the nurse unravels his insecurities in group meetings. Wears his robe like a uniform. Rival and friend to Mc Murphy. LEAD ROLE. 30'S UP

BILLY BIBBITT: a child man. A frightened rabbit in a den of wolves. A soul tortured by a domineering mother and low self-esteem; affected with a terrible stammer and the desire to be one of the boys. An immediate worshipper of RP. LEAD ROLE. 20'S -UP.

SCANLON: balding, determined, and mostly quiet in his routine of assembling his imaginary bomb and feeding his paranoia delusions. SUPPORT ROLE. 50's

CHARLES CHESWICK: short, chubby, crew-cut hair style. His manner alternately truculent and cringing. Sarcasm and criticism are a normal diet in his speech. 30's / UP

MARTINI : impish, agreeable, easy to laugh, and completely delusional. He is prone to buddying with imaginary friends. He has a lot of heart and wants badly to please and to end his nightmare. 30's /UP.

DR SPIVEY: the administrative piece in the puzzle. A tired, unimaginative, worker bee for the state hospital. A man dying to experience life in a grander scale but confined to a desk and rules, who sees RP as a bold experiment, a breath of fresh air. 40's/ UP

RUCKLY: a seriously damaged man. Chronic mental patient. He requires constant care full time and does not speak except for a bark of obscenity he uses to comment with. He is forever in a Christ-like pose against a wall and through misty eyes he surveys his fellow sheep. AGE OPEN

NURSE FLYNN: a mousey, high strung, proper and professional novice in over her head. Attractive and yet non sexual, non threatening lackey for the big nurse. 20's UP

CANDY: RP's good time girl from the outside. A hot, sexy, free spirit of the era. A kind and extroverted young woman looking for the next big adventure. Her best friend, Sandy, bar hops with her and she is loyal to R.P. She changes Billy's life. 20's/UP

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SANDY: Candy's partner in crime. A party girl to end all party girls. That one that everyone talks about the next day. Bottle in hand at every occasion and first to dance. Unlucky in love. 20's /UP

AIDE WARREN: a strong, bullying, in charge worker bee to the big nurse. He loves a good b.s. session with co- worker Williams, and harassing deaf and dumb Bromden. 20's/UP

AIDE WILLIAMS: not as sadistic perhaps as his fellow aide, but eager to push people around under the radar of the rules. 20's/UP

TURKLE: part night watchman, part janitor, all boob. A good ol' boy just trying to skate by with as little effort as possible. Smells a kindred soul in R.P. 30's/UP

**by Appointment only - For further enquiries
please email the director, Chris Baldock, at chris.baldock@gmail.com**

Vale



AILEEN WEINBERG – HTC LIFE MEMBER

We were saddened to only recently learn of Aileen's death in late 2012. Aileen first exhibited with HTC as Guest Artist in 1982 at the Company's new theatre in Rosanna. The play was **Deathtrap**, and from then until 2003, Aileen took over organizing the art displays. In the twenty plus years she curated the displays for the Heidelberg Theatre Company she persuaded over 80 very eminent artists to display their works. She and her husband Harold were enthusiastic members of HTC from the very early days in Ivanhoe. She was made a Life member of the Company in 1999.



JOYCE SHARP

Joyce Sharp died early in 2013. She was Ticket Secretary for HTC from 1967 to 1971. From **The Marriage-Ground to Who is Sylvia?** - six plays per year - so 30 plays plus Pantos. In those days the phone booking number was YOUR home number and all members of the family were schooled in taking bookings. Very dedicated members in those days. Joyce joined the Committee and reorganized some of the procedures. She was a talented, vibrant and a well-regarded member. Thank you Joyce, one of the many valued subscribers who have made HTC great.

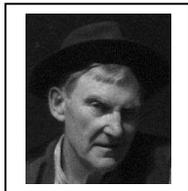


BRUCE SKEGGS - After a long and incapacitating illness Bruce Albert Edward Skeggs OAM died on 21 March 2013. Cartoonist, Journalist (who conceived and first edited TV Week), Politician (in Local and State Governments), Quiz Kid on national radio, and, of course, internationally renowned Trotting/Harness Racing Caller, Bruce was a big man in more ways than one.

The Bruce I knew was the man behind the establishment, and inaugural President, of *Inner North East Community Radio Inc.* (96.5 Inner FM) based in Heidelberg.

As a former mayor and councillor of the City of Heidelberg (now Banyule) Bruce was instrumental in providing financial support for HTC during the 80's - most memorably in the construction of the huge workshop and toilet space behind the dressing room - erected between the 1987 and 1989 seasons of **The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby**. Bruce also gave considerable support to the Heidelberg Film Society which used to present monthly movie screenings in our theatre.

Bruce and Evelyn Skeggs were often seen in our audiences where they were usually honoured guests of the theatre. *David J Small*



BOB CRAWFORD

Bob died in March this year. He acted in three plays at HTC: **Orphans** in 1990, **Cat On A Hot Tin Roof** in 2006 and in 2007 he played *Pa Joad* in **The Grapes of Wrath**. Bob is sadly missed by all his friends in the Melbourne non- professional theatre scene.

HELP needed at WORKING BEES

for **Blithe Spirit**

**Saturdays - 29th June & 6th July
from 10.00am lunch is provided**

So come along, it's a great experience and a fun time too!

Working Bees not your style?

How about assisting backstage or front of house.

Like to know more – call the Theatre on 9455 3039

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Music I did wonder about the music. Some of it sounded like a TV film of an Agatha Christie story – jaunty, funny, rollicking – which I didn't think was appropriate. I also thought the chosen music should have had more consistency – it seemed to come from all over the place.

Accents The accents were perfect, literally not noticeable, which is the way it should be.

Costumes All good.

Please, I hope you can forward this email to members of the production, cast & technicians.

Best wishes, Katy Richmond.

JUNE

Saturday 29th 10.00am **Working Bee** with Lunch

Sunday 30th 7.00pm **Audition** – One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

JULY

Monday 1st 7.30pm **Audition** – One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

Saturday 6th 10.00am **Working Bee** with Lunch

Thursday 11th 8.00pm **OPENING NIGHT** – **Blithe Spirit**

Saturday 27th 8.00pm **FINAL NIGHT** – **Blithe Spirit**

**2014 is your chance to
edit HTC's magazine,
Prompts!**

Like to know more?

call: **0409 550 444**

or email: htc@htc.org.au