

Australian stage classic delivers compelling love story

A CLASSIC Australian play from the 1950s highlighting parallels with today's fly-in, fly-out workers takes to the Old Mill Theatre stage in June.

Written by Ray Lawler and directed by Trevor Dhu, *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* is considered by literary scholars to be the most significant in Australian theatre history because it provided a turning point where distinctly Australian life and characters were openly and authentically portrayed.

Two itinerant cane cutters, Barney and Roo, have spent the past 16 summers off with two ladies in Melbourne.

Every year, Roo has brought a tinsel doll to his girl Olive, as a gift to symbolise their relationship – but this 17th summer is different somehow.

All four lovers come to face certain unpleasant truths about themselves in what is described as an unusual, compelling love story, hailed by critics in New York for its vigour and integrity.

"The play is similar to our fly-in, fly-out workers and the women they meet when they return, trying to continue a relationship over an extended period of time," Trevor said.

"In *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, the relationships are stretched by time and the untimely weakness of growing older and making a commitment too late between a man and a woman.

"On the surrounds of all this are friendships and new dominations of youth and regret.

"The ending is not what the lovers intend and the comforts of friendships and homeliness are destroyed – lovers part, and so do friends, and all lose."

Involved in the performing arts for as long as he can



The cast of *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, clockwise from bottom: Phil Barnett, Anna Head, Jarrod Buttery, Jennifer McGrath, Patrick Whitelaw, Jesse McGinn and Shirley Toohey.

Picture: www.liquidpixel.com

remember, Trevor has worked with Patch and Playhouse Theatres, Perth City Ballet and did extensive professional work with the Australian Dance Theatre in the eastern states.

More recently, he has directed, choreographed and acted in various productions at the Mandurah Performing Arts Centre – most notably *West Side Story* and *Jesus Christ Superstar* – and also performed and directed at Harbour, Roleystone, Old Mill and Melville Theatres.

One of Trevor's friends inspired him to direct *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, along with the raw realities of the characters he found after reading the play.

"It's a classic but events like this from the past are still real today," he said.

"There are FIFO widows and plenty of stories of people who had it all and blew it. We always do the right thing but it's too late."

Summer of the Seventeenth Doll plays at 8pm June 5, 6, 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19 and 20 with a 2pm matinee June 14.

It is the third show in a year of all-Australian plays at the Old Mill Theatre to commemorate the centenary of the Gallipoli landing in 2015.

**Tickets are \$25, \$20 concession – book at <http://oldmilltheatre.com.au/tickets>
Alternatively, call 0402 249 249 or email oldmilltheatre@inet.net.au**



Barney (Jarrod Buttery, centre) and Roo (Phil Barnett, right) come to blows in *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* as Pearl (Jennifer McGrath) looks on. Picture: www.liquidpixel.com



AUDITION: Dolls From The Sky

Director: Mary Wolfla

Auditions: June 7

Location: Old Mill Theatre

Season: September 4-12

Dolls From The Sky forms part of the theatre's Anzac-themed one-act play season. Auditionees will be required to cold read from the script.

CAST REQUIRED (all stage ages):

BETTY BROWN, 55 to 65. A gossip. Bigoted. Hypocritical. Nosey. Her ignorance shows. Puts on airs and graces.

MARGARET WILSON, around 40. War widow. Mother of three. Broad Australian accent. Warm. Friendly. Aussie battler type. Hides her pain.

ANNA BAKOWSKI, mid-30s. Polish. Speaks softly with an accent. Still dealing with her past.

TOM JOHNSON, around 40. Traumatized from his wartime experiences. Unpredictable. Tough exterior.

This piece is set in Perth, 1953. The war is over. Stalin is dead. Queen Elizabeth II comes to the throne. Polish post-war migrant Anna Bakowski is housekeeper for ex-serviceman Tom Johnson.

Anna is paid a visit by local parishioners Betty Brown and Margaret Wilson. Tensions rise and truths are revealed as Margaret and Tom's pasts intersect. Is the war truly over?

To book an audition time or for more information, please contact yvette.wall@gmail.com or on 0408 471 060.

AUDITION: The One Day of the Year

Director: Brendan Ellis

Auditions: July 4

Location: Old Mill Theatre

Season: October 2-17

The One Day of the Year explores the universal theme of father-son conflict against the background of the beery haze and the heady, nostalgic sentimentality of Anzac Day.

The likeability and genuineness of the characters give the play its memorable qualities: Alf, the nobody who becomes a somebody; Mum, the anchor of the family; Hughie, their son, with all the rebelliousness of youth; and Wacka, the Anzac, with his healing wisdom.

To book an audition time or for more information, please contact Brendan at brenellis@yahoo.com.au.

Reviews: HAIL MARY

"...some lovely moments of comedy..."
"...certainly a hilarious play..."

Extract by **KIMBERLEY SHAW**

Source: www.stagewhispers.com.au

Hail Mary is a new comedy about nuns, billed as "a story about everyday miracles..."

Written by local playwright Noel O'Neill, it is set in Western Australia and is being very well-received in its world premiere run in South Perth.

Set in the present, these rather progressive nuns, unusually clad in pre-Vatican II habits, make the ladies from *Nunsense* or *Sister Act* look quite sedate as we follow their quest to save their convent and the way they deal with an appearance of the Virgin Mary on the roof.

There are some very impressive performances: Caroline McDonnell delivers what I feel is her best performance to date as forthright Sister Abbott, Valerie Dragojevic is enigmatic as sassy Sister Vinnie and Jesse McGinn is genuine as fragile Sister Rosa.

Norma Davis continues her run of being cast as dotty old ladies, as the decidedly daffy Mother Theresa.

Vivienne Marshall is convincing as faith-challenged Sister Francis and Julia Trefeli had lovely presence as Sister Marilyn.

Rounding out the cast were Noel O'Neill

Extract by **GORDON THE OPTOM**

Source: www.ita.org.au



Hail Mary is the latest comedy written and directed by WA's Noel O'Neill.

Irish-born university lecturer Noel has a real penchant for writing deeply moving plays but it is the comedies for which he is mainly known – and this is one of his funniest. Noel is now destined never to pass through the Pearly Gates.

The scene is Father Costello's office in a WA convent. The walls are limestone block – another impressive piece of theatre art work from Tim Prosser and his construction partner Phil Barnett.

Sister Abbott (Caroline McDonnell – hilarious) sips at another glass of communion wine, as she tries to do some book work in the convent's office. Across the room, Sister Marilyn (Julia Trefeli) takes another pathetic swipe at some balls of tissue with the golf putter she has pinched from Father Costello (Noel O'Neill – brilliant).

Meanwhile, Sister Francis (Vivienne Marshall) is having severe doubts about her commitment to the Lord and the convent, especially when her Mother Superior (Norma Davis) thinks she is Julie Andrews in the *The Sound of Music*.

The housemaid (Dale James) has just topped up the drinks trolley when Father Costello returns from his round of golf – half drunk. The Father seems to have no qualms about working his way



The cast of *Hail Mary*: Julia Trefeli, left, Valerie Dragojevic, Norma Davis, Vivienne Marshall, Caroline McDonnell and Jesse McGinn.

as alcoholic Father Costello and Rex Gray as Archbishop Monticello.

Tim Prosser and Phil Barnett's set design is solid with aged gravitas and the convent is effectively lit by Ben Davis' well-considered lighting design.

The capacity crowd at the mid-week performance I attended loved the show and very much enjoyed the humour, forgiving some line flubs and not always cracking pace.

Hail Mary is a fun night at the theatre, with some lovely moments of comedy.

through the many sins mentioned in the Bible.

The trendy nun, Sister Vinnie (Valerie Dragojevic), who has red trainers and a gold chain around her neck, reminiscent of TV's Mr T, announces that the Archbishop (Rex Gray) has arrived with bad news.

The convent is in a dire financial state and must be closed. However, an incident with the new shy and very nervous nun Sister Rosa (Jesse McGinn – superb) might save the day.

Noel has gathered a very strong team together. Dry, subtle humour can be a little difficult for some actors to perform but in this show they all worked together beautifully and the laughs just kept coming.

With perfect costumes by Jenny Prosser, Claire Wynne and Cathy Puzey, it was hard to believe you were not a fly on the wall of a real convent.

In the past, when Noel is acting as well as directing, he has been known to miss the odd line of dialogue, giving the impression he was still supervising the directing instead of concentrating upon his own part. Here Noel knows he has a talented cast, with great characters, and just went for it. Slightly over the top, he really milked every line. Exceptionally funny.

This is certainly a hilarious play, definitely worth going out on a wet autumn night to see. Highly recommended.



Colour your world: check out the colour version
of this edition at www.oldmilltheatre.com.au

BUBBLES OF FUN!



IF YOU haven't guessed, the above pictures are from the Old Mill Theatre's annual champagne breakfast back in April where there was an abundance of - you guessed it - champagne, breakfast delights and awesome chef's hats.

OMY! success School holiday drama camp returns in July



FOLLOWING the success of the inaugural OMY! (Old Mill Youth) drama camp during the April school holidays, it returns July 14-16 for children and teenagers.

From 9.30am to 2.30pm each day, Maree Grayden is running classes for children aged 6-10 and another for those 11-15.

It's a great opportunity for kids and teens to learn and embrace their creative side during the school holidays.

"People often think these courses involve playing a lot of drama games, which have their place, but this is more of an opportunity to practice professional skills," Maree said.

"I think we underestimate children and need to raise the bar when it comes to education.

"If you expose them to good acting techniques taught by some experts, that is when the real learning happens."

For enrolment, course details and prices, contact Maree on 0407 936 800 or mlgrayden@gmail.com.

NEPAL

AFTER the devastating earthquake in Nepal, the Old Mill Theatre recently donated \$1000 to assist with much-needed aid in the region.



If you would also like to contribute, please consider the following organisations:

- www.oxfam.org.au/nepalearthquake
- www.redcross.org.au/nepal-earthquake-2015.aspx
- www.unicef.org.au/Donate/One-off-Donation/Nepal-Earthquake-Childrens-Appeal.aspx

Phone problems!



THE Old Mill Theatre is currently experiencing problems with its main phone number 9367 8719.

In the interim, please contact the theatre using 0402 249 249 or oldmilltheatre@iinet.net.au.

If you wish to book tickets, we strongly encourage you to use our online booking system at <http://oldmilltheatre.com.au/tickets>.

WHAT'S ON ELSEWHERE?

THE TEMPERAMENTAL ARTIST
Phoenix Theatre, Hamilton Hill



A classic cult horror film on stage!
8pm May 28, 29, 30, June 4 & 5; 2pm May 31 & June 6. Book at www.phoenixtheatreinc.com.au

SNOOPY! THE MUSICAL
Limelight Theatre, Wanneroo



Musical based on the Peanuts comic with Snoopy and Charlie Brown.
7.30pm June 12, 19, 26 & 27;
3pm June 13, 14, 20, 21, 27 & 28; 11am June 20. Book at www.limelighttheatre.com

MASKERADE
Latvian Centre, Belmont



A Terry Pratchett Discworld tale spoofing Phantom of the Opera.
8pm July 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 16, 17 & 18; 2pm July 5 & 12. Book at www.trybooking.com/HRRP.

INSIDE JOB
Melville Theatre



Three killers, three motives... only one possible outcome.
8pm July 10, 11, 16, 17, 18, 23, 24 & 25; 2pm July 19. Book at www.meltheco.org.au.

BUGSY MALONE
Phoenix Theatre, Hamilton Hill



Musical comedy loosely based on the events of the Prohibition era.
7pm July 11 & 17, 5pm July 12, 14 & 18 & 1pm July 13, 16 & 17. Book at trybooking.com/GQRE

Coming soon: **WOLF LULLABY**



IS THERE intrinsic evil in the world? Lizzie is not the only one who is changed forever by the act.

Old Mill Theatre's August production *Wolf Lullaby*, written by Hilary Bell and directed by Alida Chaney. The adults around her, bewildered and full of denial, find their accepted beliefs crumbling around them in a play that explores the sources of violence and its legacy.

In a bleak, remote town, a small child is murdered. *Wolf Lullaby* will run from July 31 to August 14.

Suspicion falls on nine-year-old Lizzie. Convinced her daughter is guilty, Lizzie's young mother must make the torturous choice between ignoring her intuition and presenting Lizzie to the police. Advance bookings can be made on 0402 249 249 or oldmilltheatre@iinet.net.au.

For updates, go to www.oldmilltheatre.com.au.

The Old Mill Times
PO Box 1390
South Perth WA 6951

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2016: We want you!

WELL, we want you to direct a play to be more precise.

The call is out for potential productions at the Old Mill Theatre in 2016.

Planning ahead is important so, if you have a production you might like to stage, download the submission form from www.oldmilltheatre.com.au, fill it in and send to the address or email provided.

On the website, click 'About', then 'Get involved' and scroll down to click on the submission form link.

For enquiries, please contact Norma Davis on 0402 249 249, oldmilltheatre@iinet.net.au or davisnl@iinet.net.au.

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