

## Powerful tragedy in story of child who commits murder

A CHILLING play that looks at children who murder is the Old Mill Theatre's latest production, asking if there is intrinsic evil in the world.

Written by Australian playwright Hilary Bell, *Wolf Lullaby* explores the themes of parental guilt and responsibility and whether some people are just born evil.

Set in a bleak, remote Tasmanian town, a small child is murdered – and suspicion falls on nine-year-old Lizzie. Her mother is convinced her daughter is guilty and has to choose between her intuition and presenting Lizzie to the police while her father is in denial that his daughter could have been involved.

Playwright Hilary Bell was the inaugural winner of the Philip Parsons Young Playwrights Award in 1994 and is the daughter of John Bell, founder of the Bell Shakespeare Company.

"*Wolf Lullaby* has the disturbing subject of children as murderers but asks not only why it occurs but how do we deal with it?" director Alida Chaney said.

"As children, how close have we all been to doing something unbidden because we have not yet learnt how to control our anger and frustration? Is it luck or moral instinct that stops us?"

"The play also raises questions about getting children to tell the truth and whether they relay events honestly or the way they think we want them to."

Alida was inspired to direct *Wolf Lullaby* after looking for something dark to direct, which was also Australian – and Bell's script grabbed her attention right away.

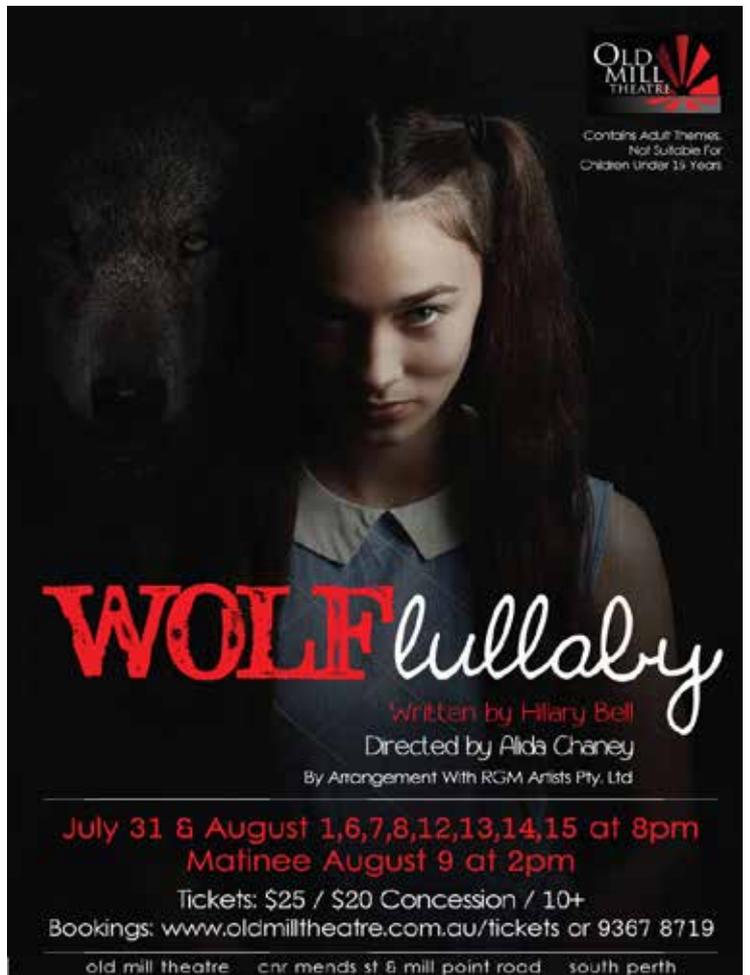
"It set my mind racing and left me wondering if a child could really be born evil?" she said. "That thought really struck a nerve but I refuse to believe newborn babies have that genetically stamped on their DNA. But what could cause them to do something so inherently awful?"

"The 1993 Jamie Bulger case in England left me reeling at the time – how could those boys deliberately cajole that little boy away from his mother and then brutalise him, causing death?"

"After speaking to Hilary, the author of *Wolf Lullaby*, she found that when she was researching the play, her colleagues and friends came out with stories of brutality committed by children and teenagers and it seems lucky it doesn't occur more often.

"I felt there was definitely a story to be told here and I wanted to be the one who brought it to the Old Mill Theatre."

First performing in the UK at age 11, Alida has numerous stage credits and has performed with a variety of theatres since arriving in Perth 17 years ago, also teaching musical theatre through her Alida Chaney



Tessa Bevilacqua, above, plays nine-year-old Lizzie, accused of murder, in *Wolf Lullaby*. The play also features Julia Hern, Dylan James and Dean McAskil. Performance Company.

Her productions of *Blood Brothers*, *Lost in Yonkers* and *The Rink* have received a variety of awards and nominations while she was also named best female supporting actor for her role in *Sordid Lives*.

Last year, Chaney scored six awards for *The Broken Slipper* at Dramafest including best director and best production and later staged it as a successful double-bill with *A Piece of Cake* at Fringe World.

Her main challenge with *Wolf Lullaby* was finding the right cast, after the "cream of the crop" auditioned.

"What it came down to in the end was the impact the actors had on me personally," she said. "This is the easiest job I've had to date, especially after my last production, *The Rocky Monster Show*, had more than 50 in the cast."

*Wolf Lullaby* plays at 8pm July 31, August 1, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14 and 15 with a 2pm matinee August 9. Please note: the show contains adult themes and is not suitable for children under 15.

It is the fourth 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](mailto:oldmilltheatre@inet.net.au)**



Director Alida Chaney, left, had the chance to catch up with *Wolf Lullaby* author Hilary Bell during her recent visit to Perth. You can listen to the conversation by clicking the link at [www.oldmilltheatre.com.au](http://www.oldmilltheatre.com.au).



## AUDITION: No Names, No Packdrill

**Director:** Tim Prosser

**Auditions:** 10am, Saturday, July 25

**Location:** Old Mill Theatre

**Season:** December 4-19

**CAST REQUIRED (all stage ages):**

**REBEL (24):** a US marine-deserter from Georgia. He is the product of a violent upbringing and claims to be a coward, despite having seen plenty of action. Hiding in Kathy's flat, he hadn't counted on falling in love. The actor needs to be athletic in build, capable of expressing a combination of desperation and self-effacing humour and be able to portray a convincing American Georgian accent.

**KATHY (26):** a no-nonsense, straight-talking Australian woman, well-versed in the ways of men and daily grind of city life. She endeavours to maintain her respectability as a married woman whose husband is away at the war. But she does find time for some enjoyment and will stand being led astray on occasion... but only so far.

**TIGER (mid-to-late 20s):** known as Tiger because his name is Kelly (a character from the Ginger Meggs comic), he is a fast-talking, street-wise profiteer, dealing in black market goods. The actor must be capable of portraying a cheeky, superficial cheerfulness with a definite, menacing edge.

**JOYCIE (19):** Kathy's unlikely younger friend, simply because they happen to work together. Not particularly bright and susceptible to being led astray by older men. Joycie is currently being squired around town by a middle-aged American Air Force corporal called Bernie. She and Bernie are the comic relief in the play.

**BROWNING (mid-to-late-40s):** Det-Sgt Browning is a fair-minded World War I veteran somewhat sympathetic to Rebel's situation and persuades the American Military Police to go easier on him than they otherwise would. The actor doesn't necessarily need to be of stocky build but will need to be capable of portraying the bearing of a senior policeman.

**WEBB (mid-20s to early 30s):** Det-Sgt Browning's offsider. Eager to appear competent and alert. Not a large role but, like Browning, must be convincing as a serious-minded policeman.

**LAMBERT (mid-20s to mid-30s):** Corporal Lambert, of the American Military Police, is well-built and business-like in his demeanour, though always courteous to civilians. American accent can be nondescript but must be consistent.

**WOOD (early 20s):** Private First Class Wood is Corporal Lambert's offsider. Not very bright but built for police work and eager to please. Not a large role but must be able to speak with convincing American accent.

For enquiries, please contact director Tim Prosser directly on 9361 1348 or email [mr.prosser58@gmail.com](mailto:mr.prosser58@gmail.com).

# Review: SUMMER OF THE SEVENTEENTH DOLL

**"...another treasure to seek out..."**

**Extract by GORDON THE OPTOM**

Source: [www.ita.org.au](http://www.ita.org.au)

**SUMMER of the Seventeenth Doll is a pioneering, groundbreaking, Australian play written in 1955 by Ray Lawler.**

The play is part of the "Doll trilogy" being preceded by *Kid Stakes* set in 1937, and *Other Times* set in 1945; the characters being the same in all plays.

Because of the authenticity of the people and the Australian way of life, this trilogy is considered to be historically the most accurate set of plays in Australian theatre. Even 60 years later, it still reflects the present-day FIFO life.

Olive (Anna Head), who is in her early 30s, still lives at home with her powerful and controlling – but loving – mother Emma Leech (Shirley Toohey).

The mother is awaiting the annual return of her two lodgers Barney (Jarrod Buttery) and Roo (Phil Barnett), a couple of rough-but-kind sugarcane cutters who work all winter and return to Melbourne for five months at the end of the harvesting season.

They have done this for years: this will be their 17th summer at Mrs Leech's house. This year, Barney's regular girl Nancy will not be there for him.

Olive, who can barely contain herself at the thought of seeing Roo again, is sitting on the settee chatting to her haughty, smartly-dressed friend Pearl (Jennifer McGrath).

Olive has arranged a blind date for recently widowed Pearl, with larrikin Barney; however, in fear, narrow-minded Pearl is close to backing out. Bubba (Jesse McGinn), the 22-year-old Woolies shop girl who has lived next door all her life, listens on in wonder.

When the lads arrive, Roo presents Olive with yet another kewpie doll, confirming his love for her.



The *Seventeenth Doll* cast take a break from the emotional intensity.



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

This year, instead of being flush with money to fritter on his beloved Olive, Roo is broke. To make things worse, he is depressed because another cane cutter, Johnnie Dowd (Patrick Whitelaw), may be after his job.

This summer is going to be very different to those of the past.

Director Trevor Dhu has proved over the years what a most capable and talented director he is; rarely does he tackle something simple such as a comedy, preferring to go for a complex character study or a highly dramatic script.

This classic is capable of being "acceptable" with very little input from cast or director but when you see it performed by such a highly-skilled amateur team, the result could be acceptable in any professional theatre.

The story requires the cast to change from being jovial friends to a situation of harsh tension and tragedy.

The cast has to bare the raw souls of their characters and, in today's climate, it was truly disturbing to see the sexism and domestic violence, along with the extreme depression and tension caused by financial problems only a couple of generations ago.

Trevor has guided his exceptional cast to give wonderfully powerful performances.

Andy Fraser's leadership with the confrontational scenes ensured the cast made the audience squirm in their seats. Exceptional performances by Shirley Toohey and Anna Head.

The play finished with no curtain call, an unusual choice to make, but one that seemed to work well, as the traumatic tension of the play could have been extinguished in seconds by a smiling lineup.

Gee, the community theatre standard is magnificent this year. Certainly another treasure to seek out. Many congratulations.

**Colour your world: check out the colour version of this edition at [www.oldmilltheatre.com.au](http://www.oldmilltheatre.com.au)**

# Also coming soon!

COMING soon to the Old Mill Theatre is the Australian classic *The One Day of the Year*, written by Fremantle-born Alan Seymour and directed by Brendan Ellis.

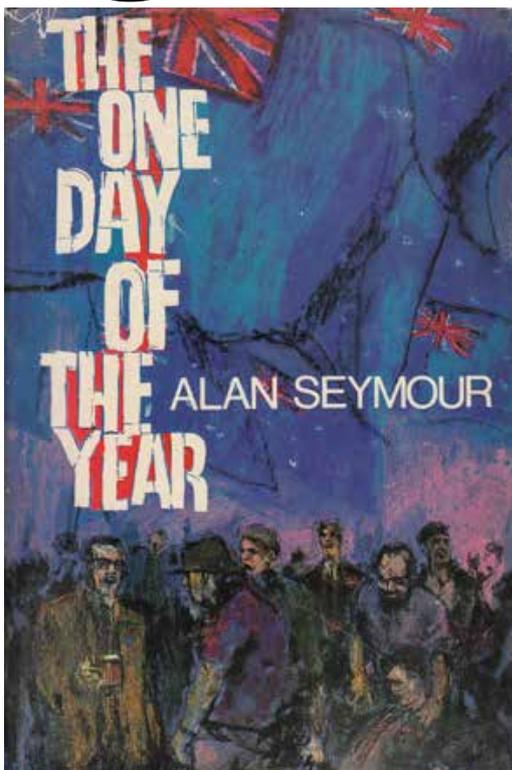
The play explores the universal theme of father-son conflict against the background of the beery haze and the heady, nostalgic sentimentality of Anzac Day.

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

Sparking huge controversy on its release in the '60s, the play's first ever production had a policeman stationed at the stage door to ward off the angry public.

A play that incites as much passion now as ever, *The One Day of the Year* looks at our national legend through the eyes of generation, class and character.

The cast features Chris Henderson as Alf, Tom Rees as Wacka, Val Henry as Dot, Matt Randall as Hughie and Carmen Miles as Jan.



*The One Day of the Year* plays at 8pm October 9, 10, 15, 16, 17, 21, 22, 23 and 24 with a 2pm matinee October 18.

Advance bookings can be made on 0402 249 249 or oldmilltheatre@iinet.net.au.

## WHAT'S ON ELSEWHERE?

**MASKERADE**  
Latvian Centre, Belmont



A Terry Pratchett Discworld tale spoofing *Phantom of the Opera*.  
8pm July 16, 17 & 18. Book at [www.trybooking.com/HRRP](http://www.trybooking.com/HRRP).

**GRUESOME PLAYGROUND INJURIES**  
Playlovers, Floreat



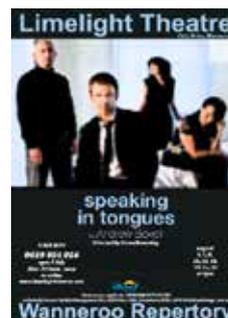
A darkly humorous drama  
8pm July 16, 17, 18, 23, 24 & 25; 2pm July 19. Book at [www.playlovers.org.au](http://www.playlovers.org.au)

**MOLIERE'S TARTUFFE**  
State Theatre Centre  
Studio Underground



A classic satire by Molière, one of France's most celebrated playwrights.  
7.30pm July 23, 24 and 25.  
Book at [www.actorshub.net](http://www.actorshub.net).

**SPEAKING IN TONGUES**  
Limelight Theatre, Wanneroo



Lust, lies and betrayal – the play that became the film *Lantana*.  
8pm August 6, 7, 8, 13, 14, 15, 20, 21 & 22. Book on 0499 954 016 or at [www.limelighttheatre.com](http://www.limelighttheatre.com)

Serial Productions is proud to present  
**Noises Off**  
A Play in Three Acts  
by Tony Award winning author Michael Frayn  
by arrangement with Origin Theatrical  
19th to 29th August 2015  
Adults \$27.00, Concession \$24.00 Group (10+) \$22.00  
Old Mill Theatre, Mend Street, South Perth  
Bookings: [www.trybooking.com/HRDX](http://www.trybooking.com/HRDX)  
Enquiries: 0416 565 135

Serial Productions logo

SERIAL Productions is back again this year, after staging several successful *Blackadder* productions, with *Noises Off* from August 19 to 29.

They've once again hired the Old Mill Theatre so, importantly, you need to book on 0416 565 135 or at [www.trybooking.com/HRDX](http://www.trybooking.com/HRDX) (don't use the Old Mill's usual number or website).

Directed by Joe Isaia, Michael Frayn's *Noises Off* centres on a third-rate English stage company performing a fifth-rate sex comedy called *Nothing On*, which boils down to not much more than sardines, slammed doors and a pretty girl in her underwear.

In Act I, we meet the creatives (a loose description) as a dress rehearsal reaches crisis point.

Act II revolves the set to focus on the backstage shenanigans of a disintegrating provincial tour.

Act III throws forward to *Nothing On*'s final performance, in which all of Frayn's expertly laid comic landmines are detonated, one after the other.

Says the Serial Productions team: "We are pleased to say we have assembled a fantastic cast and are confident you will enjoy an evening of hysterical laughter at the Old Mill Theatre."

# AN ANZAC TRIO: SHORT PLAY SEASON



FROM September 2 to 5, the Old Mill Theatre will have three short one-act plays for your viewing pleasure, all with an Anzac theme.

Presented under the collective banner of *An Anzac Trio*, it ties in with the theatre's year of all-Australian plays to commemorate the centenary of the Gallipoli landing in 2015.

The three short plays, all by local WA writers, are:

- *The Anzac Tapes*, written by John Lewington, directed by Phil Barnett. Featuring Kit Leake, Phil Barnett, Kirstie Francis, Travis Markham and Rex Gray.

- *Dolls From the Sky*, written by Yvette Wall, directed by Mary Wolfla. Featuring Kerry Goode, Leanne Chapman, Natalie Aung Than and Andrew Watson.

- *Armistice Day*, written by Noel O'Neill, directed by Valerie Dragojevic. Featuring Rex Gray, Travis Markham, Phil Barnett and Joe Duggan.

*An Anzac Trio* plays at 8pm, September 2, 3, 4 and 5 – all tickets are \$20.

Advance bookings can be made on 0402 249 249 or oldmilltheatre@inet.net.au.

For updates, go to [www.oldmilltheatre.com.au](http://www.oldmilltheatre.com.au).

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PP 642409/00009

## Ch...ch... changes

THERE has been a slight change of dates for the Old Mill's last two shows of the year.

Both *The One Day of the Year* and *No Names, No Packdrill* have both been moved back a week and will now play October 9-24 and December 4-19 respectively. Check inside this edition for more news on both.

And, from the start of 2016, the Old Mill Theatre will be doing two matinees for each season – the first and second Sundays.

As always, updates will continue to be provided at [www.oldmilltheatre.com.au](http://www.oldmilltheatre.com.au).

## Old Mill Theatre 2015 Board of Management



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