

Noël Coward's banned play a "three-sided erotic hodgepodge"

A NOËL Coward romantic comedy – initially banned in the UK – will take audiences on a wickedly witty journey from Paris to London and New York as part of the Old Mill Theatre's latest offering.

Directed by Barry Park, *Design For Living* is a provocative play that portrays three amoral, glib and stylish characters and their hopelessly inescapable, if also unconventional, emotional entanglement.

From 1930s bohemian Paris to the dizzying heights of Manhattan society, a tempestuous love triangle unravels between vivacious interior designer Gilda, playwright Leo and artist Otto – three people unashamedly and passionately in love with each other.

"They are trapped in what one of the characters refers to as 'a three-sided erotic hodgepodge'," Barry said.

"It's a lively and funny but also atypical play that looks at dazzling, egotistical creatures and their self-destructive dependence on each other.

"I'd describe it as a stylish and scandalous comedy, exploring themes of bisexuality, celebrity, success and self-obsession."

The main task, according to Barry, is portraying the three settings on stage.

"It's going to be a challenge to fit the sets and furniture on the small Old Mill stage but I've worked out a crafty way to do it," he said.

"There's a lot of rapid dialogue in the play and the cast is going to have to be really on the ball – particularly the leads, who are rarely off stage.

"It also offers some wonderful set and costuming opportunities, given the time period is the glamorous early 1930s."

Acting and directing since the 1970s, Barry has performed



Three's company in Noël Coward's *Design For Living* for Jeffrey Watkins, left, Nyree Hughes and Garry Davies. Picture: Linda Hewell

in a plethora of plays, musicals, pantomimes, minstrel shows, films, radio plays and television in Salisbury, Cape Town, Edinburgh, London and Perth.

He is equally at home performing in pantomimes and comedies such as *Black Comedy*, *A Laughing Matter* and *She Stoops to Conquer* as he is in Shakespearean tragedies such as *Hamlet*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*.

Several plays Barry has directed have won awards, including *M. Butterfly* which picked up gongs for best director and best play at WA's annual Finley Awards.

His productions of *Broken Glass*, *The Real Thing* and *Cat On a Hot Tin Roof* have also received several Finley Award nominations.

"I always choose plays that are well-written which I think audiences will enjoy," Barry said. "I've always loved Noël Coward's plays, which are clever, complex and entertaining and have previously directed *Blithe Spirit*, which I enjoyed immensely.

"*Design For Living* is extremely funny and witty but it has a dark side and was very risqué for its time.

"Today's audiences will still find its content amusing, yet somewhat confronting, and will appreciate the opportunity to see it because the play is rarely staged."

The cast features Nyree Hughes Jeffrey Watkins, Garry Davies, Neale Paterson, Julie Holmshaw, Charlie Young, Rebecca Caldwell and Praveen Hooda.

Noël Coward's *Design For Living* plays at 8pm April 21, 22, 27, 28, 29, May 3, 4, 5 and 6 with 2pm matinees April 23 and 30.

Tickets are \$25, \$20 concession – book at <http://oldmilltheatre.com.au/tickets> or phone 0475 895 701



Garry Davies, left, Jeffrey Watkins, Nyree Hughes, Julie Holmshaw, Charlie Young and Rebecca Caldwell in *Design For Living*. Picture: Linda Hewell



Dedicated booking number



THE Old Mill Theatre now has a dedicated booking number: 0475 895 701.

This is centralise things a bit more, ensuring bookings go to one area, leaving the theatre's landline 9367 8719 for general enquiries.

Of course, you can also book online at <http://oldmilltheatre.com.au/tickets>.

We now have a new ticketing agent, TryBooking, which may help some of you experiencing difficulties accessing the Old Mill website.

If the website isn't working for you, go to www.trybooking.com instead and search for the current show.

Click "Buy Tickets" and type in the name of the current show on the next screen, then click "Search".

If that doesn't work, type in "Old Mill Theatre" and search for the show that way.

And if all else fails, you can always send us an email at oldmilltheatre@iinet.net.au with your request.

FAT PIG: first-class, 'do-not miss-it' production; hard to fault

Extract by GORDON THE OPTOM

Source: ita.org.au

Fat Pig is a romantic comedy by the Detroit-born playwright, film director and screenwriter Neil LaBute.

In 2005, after its run on Broadway, *Fat Pig* won two major awards – one for outstanding play, the second for best new comedy.

As a young man, LaBute joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and studied theatre at Brigham Young University. Some of his plays were a little too near-the-bone for the church and some closed after their premieres. His being disfellowshipped from the church ensued.

In *Fat Pig*, 30-year-old accountant, Tom (Alex Ripper) grabs a table in a snack bar to eat his spinach leaves and egg salad. He finds himself next to an attractive, cheerful young librarian, Helen (Briana Dunn), who is ploughing her way through a tray of calorie-laden stodge.

Tom notices her weight but her busy body, smart outfit and pretty face rapidly wins him over. They arrange to meet again.

Unfortunately, the office gossip and stirrer Carter (Steve Hounsome) is passing the food bar and sees Tom with this generously-proportioned lady. He cannot wait to get back to work to tell all the staff about Tom's massive "fat pig" girlfriend.

First in line for the news is company auditor, Jeannie (Aileen Chew), who has fancied Tom for years, but their friendship has never quite developed. She is furious.

Poor Briana is called "fat pig" in this play and was known as "pig-tail girl" in her last performance. Let us hope she breaks the unearned tag.

LaBute's plays normally provide very few specifics about the characters and this



Tom (Alex Ripper), Jeannie (Aileen Chew) and Carter (Steven Hounsome) in *Fat Pig*.



Aileen Chew, left, Briana Dunn and Alex Ripper in *Fat Pig*.

puts a huge pressure on the director. However, Les Hart handled his cast with skill.

The result was superb. I saw this play several years ago but this production had far more feeling and chemistry. The characters were perfectly conceived, from bitchy to loving... the whole gamut of emotions was tastefully handled.

The male lead, Alex Ripper, stepped in only three weeks before opening night and was superb; he captured the shy, nervous and socially incompetent young man perfectly.

Briana Dunn was faced with a challenging and daring part but, as a past winner of best stage chemistry, it was no surprise to see her perfectly portray the bubbly, slightly flirtatious, attractive-but-plump girl.

Briana had a huge range of emotions to depict, all of which really connected with the audience. An exceptional performance. I have to admire the girls who accept this part given, every night of the show's season, they are mocked and abused. It must take great courage and self-esteem to survive such an onslaught.

Tom's girlfriend at work, Jeannie, was a nasty bit of stuff – an extremely jealous, conniving and cold woman, superbly played by Aileen Chew in her first major performance in Perth.

And then there is the totally unscrupulous Carter, who hounded his colleague relentlessly, smiling as he did so – the audience squirmed at his dialogue. Played by Steven Hounsome, making a welcome return to the stage after a few years break, he showed that he still has what it takes.

All of LaBute's plays are difficult to stage but this was a first-class, "do-not-miss-it" production that is hard to fault. Many congratulations.

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

10 tips from established actors

Extract by **JACK SMART, Backstage**

Source: www.backstage.com



1. Find the joy (Jonathan Groff):

“People create from different places,” he said. “Some love to create from a tortured place, some from a joyful place. And when

I feel like I’m a five-year-old kid in my backyard playing pretend, that’s when I’m happiest.”



2. Study, study, study (Enlisted actor Keith David):

“Study theatre, because theatre is the greatest training ground you can have,” he said. “There are people

who have never done theatre who can be wonderful screen actors but it all depends on your training. We all have great natural instincts but they need to be honed.”



3. Don’t worry about the casting director (Trophy Wife star Michaela Watkins):

“[Auditioning is] like dating boys when you’re a teenager,” she said. “You spend so much

time wondering what they’re thinking. They’re not thinking about anything! They’re not thinking about you.”

Having now cast several projects herself, Watkins can verify this from personal experience. “All you want is someone to come in and solve your problem. They can be as great as great can be but if they don’t solve your problem, you just wish them well.”



4. Risk failure to make truthful discoveries (Lupita Nyong’o, 12 Years a Slave):

“As actors, you become an expert at starting over,” she said.

“Every single role brings with it an ignorance and an insecurity, and so you have to approach it with the same curiosity and humility.

“I’m always nervous. Doesn’t matter how many times I do this. But I remind myself it’s because I care. It’s not about getting it right. It’s about getting it truthful.”



5. Believe in your goals – however lofty (Mad Men’s James Wolk):

“That blind ignorance is so important – otherwise, who would pursue acting? But if you believe it, it’s just like a self-fulfilling prophecy, right? Because if you don’t believe it, it’s definitely not gonna happen.”



6. Loosen up in the audition room (Sam Rockwell):

“You cannot try to get the job. Just go in there, have some fun, and do your version of that part. This is what I’m selling. If you want to buy it, that’s

cool. Have some adjustments for me? That’s fine, I’ll make some adjustments but this is basically what I want to do.”



7. Put faith in your director (James Franco):

“When I design a character, I’m doing it with the director. I view it as the director’s creation as much as mine,” he said.

“And I give credit to the directors as well: If I give a good performance, I give at least 50 per cent of the credit to the director. That’s just the way to work in a collaborative medium.”



8. Treat auditions like rehearsals (comedian Amy Schumer):

“The way I audition now, I just treat it like a rehearsal,” she said.

“I treat it like I already have the role and I’m just going to rehearsal.”



9. Follow what you love (actor-dancer Derek Hough):

“Try to be honest with yourself and not just sort of fall into something you think will make you popular or get respect from,” he said. “Ask yourself the right questions, you’ll get good answers.”



10. Auditioning is an opportunity to practice (David Walton, About a Boy):

“If you do good work, you start to make a name for yourself and things can come around. Weird little happenstances happen,” he said. “It’s just one of those things. Do good work and do it for yourself.”

WHAT’S ON ELSEWHERE?

ONCE UPON A MATTRESS
Koorliny Arts Centre, Kwinana



Hilarious musical based on *The Princess and The Pea*.
7pm April 7, 8, 14, 15 & 21;
1pm April 8, 15 & 22. Book at www.koorliny.com.au

THE MOZART FACTION
Melville Theatre



A community choir is trapped at gunpoint during a rehearsal.
8pm April 8, 13, 14, 15, 20, 21 & 22; 2pm April 9.
www.meltheco.org.au

IT RUNS IN THE FAMILY
Limelight Theatre, Wanneroo



Fast and frenetic farce.
8pm April 20, 21, 22, 26, 27, 28 & 29; 2pm April 23
www.limelighttheatre.com.au

LOVE ME SLENDER
KADS Theatre, Kalamunda



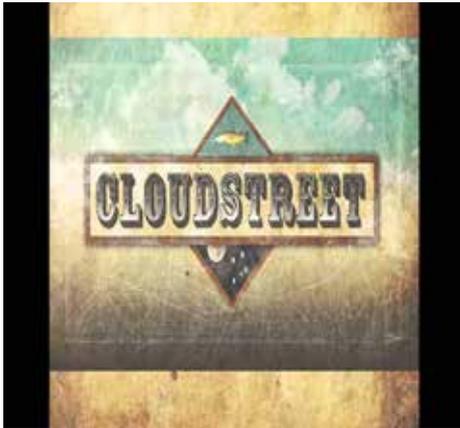
Not slim for today, not slim for tomorrow... but slim for life!
8pm April 21, 22, 26, 28, 29,
May 3, 5, 6, 10, 12 & 13.
Book on 9257 2668.

OKLAHOMA!
Roleystone Theatre



Famed Rodgers and Hammerstein musical, set in 1906.
8pm May 5, 6, 10, 12, 13, 17, 19 & 20; 2pm May 14 & 20.
Book on 9397 5730 or at www.roleystonetheatre.com.au

COMING SOON



COMING soon to the Old Mill Theatre is a sprawling stage adaptation of Tim Winton's award-winning novel *Cloudstreet*.

Written by Nick Enright and Justin Monjo and directed by Brendan Ellis, it chronicles the lives of two working class Australian families - the Pickles and the Lambs.

They come to live together in a large, rambling old house called

Cloudstreet in Perth from 1943 to 1963.

The 20-year tale follows the fluctuating fortunes of the two families as their lives become slowly intertwined and an epic story of love, happiness and drama unfolds that is both funny and uplifting.

Cloudstreet runs from June 16 to July 1.

For updates, visit www.oldmilltheatre.com.au.

The Old Mill Times
PO Box 1390
South Perth WA 6951

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IF YOU take a quick look to the right, yes, that's not the usual list of photos and board members.

Changes are afoot and as this issue went to press, these matters were still being finalised, following the annual general meeting.

We'll have a full run-down on the AGM and everything else next issue but the website will be updated as soon as possible.

In the meantime, enjoy these monkeys...

