

## **Enter the New Wave - Abstracts and Biographies**

### **Graeme Blundell**

#### ***Panel – Enter the New Wave: Melbourne***

*Graeme Blundell (Actor, director, producer and writer) has been associated with many pivotal moments in Australian theatre, film and television. He has directed over 100 plays, acted in about the same number, and appeared in more than 40 films and hundreds of hours of television. He is also an award-winning director of TV and cinema commercials, a prolific journalist and a TV drama director. Blundell co-authored a biography of painter Brett Whiteley, *An Unauthorised Life*, and edited and compiled *Australian Theatre; Backstage with Graeme Blundell* for Oxford University Press. He is now the Television Writer for *The Australian*.*

*His latest book is the best-selling *King: The Life and Comedy of Graham Kennedy* which was published by Pan Macmillan Australia in 2003. He is now completing his autobiography which will be published mid 2008 by Hachette Livre Australia. He lives on the New South Wales Coast with writer Susan Kurosawa.*

### **Betty Burstall**

#### ***Panel – Enter the New Wave: Melbourne***

I was born and educated in Melbourne. While at university I met Tim Burstall. At an early age we moved to Eltham to build our house and raise our children. As soon as the boys were at school I started teaching. I got the idea for La Mama when we went to New York in the sixties. We were poor. It was impossible to go to the theatre - even to see a film was expensive - but there were these places where you paid fifty cents for a cup of coffee and you saw a performance, and if you felt like it you put some money in a hat for the actors. I saw some awful stuff and some good stuff. It was very immediate and exciting and when I came back to Melbourne I wanted to keep going, but no such place existed. I talked around a bit, to a few actors, writers and directors, sounding them out about doing their own Australian stuff, for nothing. In 1967 Carlton was a lively, tatty area with an Italian atmosphere and plenty of students... I found a building that had been an underwear factory. I rented it. A group of recent graduates responded to this idea and we started to put on original plays on Sunday nights. La Mama grew and after years it was possible to find government grants to support some of its activities.

### **Maryrose Casey, Monash University &**

### **Jodi Gallagher, University of Melbourne**

#### ***Lygon Street Limbo: The Disabling Myth of the New Wave.***

The terms of the celebration of the New Wave in Australian theatre parallels and is closely allied to the terms of other celebrations within Australian culture such as Anzac Day and the legend of Ned Kelly. The celebration of the New Wave has come to represent, in practice, the defeat of Australian cultural innovation and to represent a hurdle that confronts new theatre practitioners. The assumption that the New Wave defined and expressed *the* Australian voice is almost universally acknowledged. The reality is that the paradigm of acceptance of the New Wave has created a myth that erases the rich traditions of past Australian theatre practice and in effect blocks new

Australian work. This paper, whilst acknowledging the achievements of those associated with the New Wave and the importance of the New Wave in creating a particular vernacular tradition within Australian theatre will examine the ways in which the myth acts as a kind of cultural constipation, and ignores such pragmatic considerations as the establishment of systematic government funding for the performing arts that facilitated its effective dominance. The particular focus of this paper is on two groupings of Australian voices that continue to fight for a place within Australian mainstream theatre: indigenous voices and women's voices. We examine theatre practice that preceded, coincided with and survived in the wake of the New Wave.

In the spirit of the New Wave, we raise the middle finger and wave the myth a fond farewell.

*Maryrose Casey is an ARC postdoctoral fellow with the Centre for Drama and Theatre Studies at Monash University. Her publication credits include a range of articles and book chapters on contemporary Australian theatre practice. The majority of these focus on theatre by Indigenous Australian artists. She is the author of the multi award-winning monograph Creating Frames: Contemporary Indigenous Theatre 1967-97 (UQP, 2004).*

*Jodi Gallagher is a PhD candidate at the University of Melbourne.*

## **Suzanne Chaundy**

### **Director – The Chapel Perilous by Dorothy Hewett (La Mama 2007)**

The Chapel Perilous is a huge classic of Australian theatre. Largely autobiographical it received its first production in Melbourne in 1972 at Melbourne Uni directed by George Whaley. No doubt when Dorothy conceived the play she imagined it in a large space with a cast of at least 20. Fiscal reality made our recent production at La Mama a cast of 6 performing in one of the smallest spaces you will find! Undeterred, we strove for the full theatricality of this piece with the appropriate grand gestures, pathos and irony. We had so much fun making this work. Inspired by Dorothy's words in her introduction to GOLDEN VALLEY and SONG OF THE SEALS, we embraced the notion of "the endless possibilities of the divided self". When Sally Banner visits the Chapel Perilous (a mythical place of judgement from Arthurian legend) echoes of each phase of her life resonate into each new phase, as actors switch from headmistress to mother, schoolgirls to lovers, father to husband and a kaleidoscope of colourful characters that mark important moments in the work of art which is Sally Banner's life. In her writing, Dorothy Hewett embraces many alter egos – "Alice" in Wormland, "Rapunzel" in Suburbia and the girl who "wore her hair like armour" – Sally Banner. Despite the many similarities between Dorothy's life and that of Sally's (read WILDCARD, her autobiography, to see how close it is) – we constantly remind ourselves that she has chosen to make her experiences the centre of a fiction, a distillation and theatricalised realisation of a life, not a life presented in any naturalistic sense. We embraced the rollicking, anarchic spirit of the piece and updated with fresh compositions for the original songs by the brilliant Carolyn Connors. Masks of the Authority Figures preside over the action, designed and made by Viviana Frediani-Massara in her theatre design debut. We have striven to be true to the spirit and memory of one of the great icons of Australian Literature, Dorothy Hewett.

Excerpts performed by: Zoe Ellerton-Ashley, Jane Bayly, Carmelina Di Guglielmo.

**Suzanne Chaundy** graduated from the NIDA Directing course in 1985. Since then she has directed many areas of theatre: opera, including *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Don Pasquale* for the West Australian Opera, *La Boheme* for Opera Australia and *Così fan tutte* for the Victoria State Opera; musicals, remounting IMG's hit production of *West Side Story*; cross artform events for the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Melbourne Theatre Company, Victoria State Opera and Australian Ballet (the MODD shows – *Romeo and Juliet* and *Madame Butterfly*); during her time as Dramaturg and Associate Director of Anthill theatre: *Dream of an Unknown Drinker* (Poole), *The Maids* (Genet), *The Chairs* (Ionesco) and many highly challenging works at La Mama, including *La Musica* by Marguerite Duras and the world premieres of *Somewhere In Here* and *Henry And Louisa* by Ian Scott, *Deborah Levy's Baby Honey* and Tom Petsinis' play *The Drought* which was also part of the European Cultural Capital celebrations in Thessalonika. Most recently Suzanne directed *The Chapel Perilous* as part of La Mama's 40<sup>th</sup> Birthday celebrations. Suzanne has directed the majority of productions for *Strange Fruit*, Australia's internationally renowned outdoor performance troupe - *The Field*, *Flight*, and *The Spheres*. These shows have been performed in 40 different countries as part of over 300 international festivals.

## **Christine Comans, Queensland University of Technology**

### ***Brisbane's La Boite and the New Wave (or It Wasn't All About Sydney and Melbourne!)***

In 1967 Brisbane Repertory Theatre made a decision that was to change the city's cultural landscape in a significant and lasting way. Faced with crippling theatre rental costs, BRT found a realistic solution to its decade's old problem of 'a home of our own' by converting one of its properties – an old Queenslander - into a unique theatre space. The theatre-in-the box that emerged, aptly called La Boite, opened on 23 June 1967 with a production of John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*. This experimental space excited the imagination of a new, younger audience not previously interested in BRT's essentially conservative fare. It attracted a new group of directors, actors and writers keen to be part of a changing repertoire that embraced more radical, non-mainstream productions, some of which were of Australian plays.

The decade after 1967 was a period of change and development unprecedented in La Boite's history; since then the company has sustained and grown its commitment to Australian plays and the commissioning of new works, and always within the context of theatre-in-the-round. Although not unique in the Australian theatre landscape, this arch of achievement that dates from 1967 is at least distinctive.

To what extent was this most significance moment in La Boite's transformational journey influenced by southern 'new waves' of change? Or, with the benefit of hindsight, is it now time for a re-consideration of Brisbane's contribution to the New Wave? Might this lead to a deeper, more inclusive, understanding of that taken for granted term – the New Wave?

**Dr Christine Comans** is Drama Discipline Leader, Creative Industries Faculty, QUT. As lecturer in Performance Studies she teaches and supervises in the areas of Australian theatre, performance making and drama education. Her doctoral study, completed in 2006 is titled *La Boite Theatre 1925 to 2003: an historical survey of its transformation from an amateur repertory society to an established company*. *La Boite Theatre Company* continues to be her major area of research.

## **Tom Considine**

### ***Aspects of the New Wave in Australian Theatre 1967-1970***

I wish to consider the Melbourne New Wave by looking at three points in its trajectory. The first is the meeting between The Human Body (a Sydney group) and La Mama (Melbourne) in the late sixties. The second is the formation of The Pram Ensemble in 1979. The third is a production by Peter King (Usurper of the Plains) in November 1989. I hope to argue that the emergence of a new form of performance in the late eighties/early nineties in Melbourne has links to both the origin and decline of the New Wave, while repudiating the recognizable achievements of the Melbourne New Wave.

## **Susie Dee**

### ***Convenor/ Panel – White With Wire Wheels: Then and Now***

*Susie Dee has worked extensively in theatre as a performer, deviser and director both in Australia and overseas. She was the recipient of the 1995 Ewa Czajor Memorial Award. Susie has been the Artistic Co-ordinator of Melbourne Workers Theatre and the Artistic Director of the Institute Of Complex Entertainment (ICE), directing the award winning events -**Tower Of Light, The Teratology Project** and **Transit Camp**. Susie has worked with many independent companies and artists. She has worked extensively with writers such as Angus Cerini and Patricia Cornelius and Brian Lipson. In 2005 she directed **Berggasse 19- The Apartments of Sigmund Freud** for the Melbourne Festival. She is currently the Artistic Director of Union House Theatre at Melbourne University and is director of the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary production of **White With Wire Wheels**, Union Theatre 2007.*

## **Kate Donelan**

### ***Convenor – Theatre board of the University of Melbourne***

*Dr. Kate Donelan is Senior Lecturer and Head of Drama, Department of Language, Literacy and Arts Education at the University of Melbourne. She was the Vice President of IDEA and a former President of NADIE, Drama Australia. Her doctoral research was an ethnographic study of intercultural education through drama and the performing arts. Her current research focuses on the arts in schools and community education. She teaches qualitative research methods to post-graduate arts educators. Kate Donelan has held leadership positions in arts education organisations and played an active role in policy development in Australia and internationally for the past 15 years. She is currently an executive member of Drama Australia and Drama Victoria. She co-edited **Drama, Culture and Empowerment** (O'Toole and Donelan, 1996), a highly acclaimed book with contributions from thirty of the world's foremost drama and theatre educators.*

## **Bill Garner**

### ***Panel – Enter the New Wave: Melbourne***

*Bill Garner is a playwright, screenwriter and actor. An original member of the APG, he appeared in about 30 productions for the collective. For commonplace, he has co-created with Sue Gore Perfecting My Nature Strip, The Terms & Grammar of Creation, The Bull-Ant, The Ishmael Club, and Billy Maloney. His play Cake! - An Acland Street Comedy was the first production at TheatreWorks in St Kilda, and Sunday Lunch was produced by the MTC at Russell Street. A member of the original La Mama ensemble, he was Mal in White With Wire Wheels. He is currently at the Australian Centre, University of Melbourne, writing a PhD.*

## **Max Gillies**

### ***My Life with Monk O'Neill.***

Reflections on the 'monodrama' as a form and 'A Stretch of the Imagination' as a case in point. Revisiting the role of Monk O'Neill over the course of an actor's career; first at age 35, subsequently at 50 and then contemplating a further exploration at 65.

*Max Gillies (Actor/director) as a student on campus at Melbourne and Monash Universities. 1959-1969; Senior Lecturer, Drama & Theatre, Secondary Teachers College (precursor to Drama School VCA and Creative Arts at University of Melbourne). 1965-1970; Acting/directing with the APG at the Pram Factory. 1970-1980*

*Subsequent collaboration with various writers in political satire for theatre and television. Best Actor (National Critics Awards) 1976 for 'A Stretch of the Imagination'. Member of the Order of Australia (AM) 1990 for services to the performing arts. Currently Vice-Chancellor's Fellow, University of Melbourne.*

## **Adrian Guthrie, University of South Australia**

### ***Melbourne performance met its match in Sydney productions: the Jane Street seasons and the quest for the Australian play.***

Finding a great Australian play was a driving idea at the heart of the Sydney-based theatre activities centred at the University of NSW Drama Department, with its two major offshoots, the National Institute of Dramatic Art and the Old Tote Theatre Company. The success of John Clarke's production in 1972 of the Williamson's *Don's Party* brought a recognition (articulated by Brisbane and Kippax) of a meeting of the vitality of Melbourne performance-making with Sydney's capacity for style and gusto. *The Legend of King O'Malley* had given rise to two extraordinary theatre groups: the Performance Syndicate and the Nimrod Theatre. Both demonstrated an exuberant approach to theatre-making with a concern for surface and for the form of the event. It was the meeting of these values with the robust vernacular poetry of the Melbourne playwrights and the Melbourne actors who developed their scripts at La Mama and then at the Pram Factory that was the catalyst for a national drama.

*Adrian Guthrie is a playwright and stage director who began the Claremont Theatre – with readings at La Mama – in 1972. At the University of South Australia he is currently the Director of the Media Arts Program.*

## **Jack Hibberd**

### **Panel - White with Wire Wheels: Then and Now**

**Jack Hibberd** (Writer) was born near Bendigo, Victoria, and studied Medicine at the University of Melbourne. While practising as a doctor, Hibberd wrote poetry and plays, notably *A Stretch of the Imagination*, *Dimboola*, *A Toast to Melba*. *White With Wire Wheels* was first produced at the University of Melbourne in 1967. Jack Hibberd was a founding member of the La Mama Company, which became the Australian Performing Group and performed many of his early plays, also *The Melbourne Writers Theatre*. Jack has written over 38 plays as well as three books of poetry and three novels. He is married to actress Evelyn Krape and has four children.

## **Sue Ingleton**

### **Panel - White with Wire Wheels: Then and Now**

**Sue Ingleton** is a professional actor, writer and director. She was an original cast member of *WWWW*, and a member of APG at the Pram Factory. Sue is renowned for her standup political comedy and also her dramatic /comedic one woman shows including 'Near Ms's'. She is a recipient of the Sidney Myer Individual Performing Arts Award and the Gloria Dawn /Peyton Award. Twice nominated for a Green Room award, Sue has received major support from the Arts Council and Asialink, recently being awarded the R.E. Ross Playwrights Award. She has trained in shamanic theatre and teaches workshops in drama and creative writing using her unique training methods. She has her own company, Sack Red Theatre Co and works in Australia and Malaysia. She will be appearing at MTC in 'The Mad Woman of Chaillot' in November. Next year her latest hit, 'The First Step on a Tram is Hell' will tour regionally though Victoria.

## **Liz Jones**

### **Panel – Enter the New Wave: Melbourne**

**Liz Jones** graduated from the Australian National University with a Bachelor of Arts in 1965 and obtained her Diploma of Education at Sydney University in 1966. In 1973, Liz commenced working as both an artist and staff member at La Mama Theatre in Carlton. At the end of 1976 she became Artistic Director/ Administrator and has held this position ever since.

Liz was a peer committee member on the Australia Council for three years. She has served on numerous industry and Arts Victoria committees as well as the Victoria Commissions selection panel and the board of the Australian National Playwrights Centre. She is currently on the board of Chambermade Theatre and on the Victorian College of the Arts Drama Course Advisory Committee.

In February 2000 Liz was awarded the Sidney Myer "Facilitator's" Award, in February 2001 the Green Room Lifetime Achievement Award, and in 2002 her name was placed on the Victorian Women's Honor Roll. In 1999 and 2001 she travelled to Europe, UK and USA as a Churchill Fellow to study the relationship between theatre and the community in key cities.

*Liz has performed at La Mama and other Melbourne venues consistently since 1973. She is married to Lloyd Jones and has two children of her own, three step children and seven grandchildren.*

## **David Kendall**

**Panel – *White With Wire Wheels: Then and Now*  
*WWWW 1967: Some recollections***

**David Kendall** (Actor/ Director 1962– ): *Emerald Hill Theatre, Melbourne Theatre Company, La Mama, APG, Playbox Theatre, State theatre company of South Australia etc. Much TV and Film in 1970s and '80s;*  
*Director of University Theatre, Melbourne University, 1973-80;*  
*Head of Acting, Adelaide Centre for the Arts 1985-2006.*  
*Occasional reviews and articles on history, theatre, sport and miscellaneous interests.*

## **Ian Maxwell, University of Sydney**

***“A withering mistletoe on our gum-tree culture”  
Conditions of Emergence for the New Wave: Sydney Theatre 1968-1970***

In January 1970, Rex Cramphorn wrote, for *The Bulletin*, an overview of the theatre he had reviewed the previous year. He did not like what he had seen. Raising as a counterexample a film of Leroi Jones' play “Dutchman”, Cramphorn wrote:

A nation as politically and socially apathetic as we are is unlikely to have anything . . . serious . . . to say in a theatre—there is no spark to kindle an Australian Leroi Jones. And until theatre has something serious to say, or a distinctive stylistic statement to make—that is, until it demands to be taken seriously—it will remain a withering mistletoe on our gum-tree culture.

Educated in French neo-classicism, fired up by his readings of Artaud, Genet, Brook and Grotowski, and increasingly interested in the ‘vitality’ of Kathakali and Noh theatre, Cramphorn yearned for a new wave. Subsequently, he and his collaborators formed the Performance Syndicate, dedicated to realising a vision of ‘total theatre’, synthesizing techniques gleaned from a Xeroxed copy of “Towards a Poor Theatre”, Indian practices, popular culture science fiction and a commitment to the possibility of accessing universal relevance from a disciplined reading of Shakespeare.

Although, as Julian Meyrick has argued, to pit Cramphorn's ‘Holy’ theatrical aspirations in diametric opposition to the ‘rough theatre’ of the New Wave is to create a false antimony, nonetheless, those aspirations stand in a relationship of heterodoxy to the emerging field.

In this presentation, in order to develop an account of that heterodoxy, I will offer readings of Cramphorn's review writing for the *Bulletin* from 1968-1970, and in addition some documents he prepared in response to his attempts to establish a workable ensemble in the early 1970s.

***Ian Maxwell*** is Chair of the Department of Performance Studies at the University of Sydney. He has written extensively about youth subculture, and in particular hip hop as it was practised in Sydney in the 1990s. His edited collection of the writings of Rex Cramphorn will be published later this year.

**Aubrey Mellor, National Institute of Dramatic Art**

***The Director's Dilemma - the living, local playwright.***

For over a century and a half the actor-manager evolved into the all powerful director who was the last word on everything. Usually plagued by writers until it was easier to produce their play than resist longer, the director suddenly found that his word was not the last say, that it was even questioned by the ungrateful writer whose work was being produced. For the director, used to the writer being either long dead or far away on the other side of the planet, the writer in the rehearsal room was an alarming consequence of the public response to what I call the Fourth Wave – the time when Australian playwrights suddenly found that it was their scripts that were the main attraction.

Working around the Jane Street Seasons with *Legend of King O'Malley*, Buzo's *Rooted*, Williamson's *Don's Party* and with the Old Tote in the first Australian play season, I witnessed Dorothy Hewett told to leave the rehearsal room as she had dared utter a word that contradicted the director's interpretation. I also witnessed directors giving wonderful support to writers, from Jim Sharman on Buzo's *Norm and Ahmed* to John Bell on Kenna's *Hard God*. But almost all directors lacked dramaturgical knowledge and finally were not able to help when the search for an Australian identity lost its novelty. Time and again we made spectacular errors, the worst being the killer-commission of Hewett's *Jarrabin Trilogy*.

**Aubrey Mellor** is the Director of the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) and was formerly Director of Melbourne's Playbox Theatre – his fourth Artistic Directorship of a theatre company. He is well known as an acting teacher to a generation of acclaimed Australian actors, for his distinguished career in translations and productions of the classics, and as a leading proponent of new Australian writing.

He was brought up in variety circus, trained as a dancer, visual artist and musician and graduated from NIDA in 1969. He was associated with the founding of Nimrod, the first Sydney productions of *Legend of King O'Malley*, *Don's Party*, *This Old Man Comes Rolling Home* etc. He was the first Australian to study Asian theatre (Churchill Fellowship 1972). During a decade at NIDA as an acting teacher, he was also AD of Jane Street Theatre (Sydney) seasons 1978-9. With John Bell he was Joint Artistic Director of Nimrod Theatre Company (Sydney) 1981-83, freelance director in all states, Deputy Director of NIDA then Artistic Director of Queensland Theatre Company 1988 - 1993 and was Artistic Director of Playbox in Melbourne for eleven years.

He was awarded the OAM in 1992 for services to the arts and the community and the Japanese Government named him Artistic Ambassador for the Year of Exchange (2006). His other awards include the Australian Writer's Guild's Dorothy Crawford Award for services to Playwriting and the International Theatre Institute's Uchimura Prize for best production.

## **Paul Monaghan**

### **Convenor – Theatre board of the University of Melbourne**

**Paul Monaghan** lectures in the Creative Arts Program (Theatre Studies), School of Culture and Communication at the University of Melbourne. His specialist research area is Greek and Roman Theatre in performance and he has directed a number of Greek and Roman plays over the years. Paul is co-convenor/co-editor of Double Dialogues conference and journal (<http://www.doubledialogues.com>), an ongoing project linking academic discourse with arts practice, and co-convenor of the Dramaturgies Project, which examines dramaturgical practices in contemporary Australian theatre. Paul was also co-convenor of Close Relations: the Spaces of Greek and Roman Theatre, an international conference in Melbourne in September 2006 (<http://www.sca.unimelb.edu.au/close>). Before joining Creative Arts, Paul worked in the professional theatre industry for 16 years, in a variety of roles including actor, director, lighting designer, production and stage manager, general manager and artistic director. From 1994 to late 1998 Paul was General Manager / Artistic Director of Theatreworks, a theatre company and venue in Melbourne. He has directed performances in four different languages (English, French, Indonesia & Latin), and toured to a number of countries including Japan, Bulgaria, Indonesia and Austria. He also continues to work as dramaturge for numerous emerging artists.

## **Richard Murphet, Victorian College of the Arts**

### **Reading: Chicago, Chicago by John Romeril**

**Richard Murphet** was trained at Monash University and the University of Toronto where he obtained an MA in Drama. His career following this has seen him constantly alternating between professional theatre work and the teaching of drama and/or the training of theatre practitioners. Theatres he has worked in have included the Pram Factory, La Mama, the Mill, the Universal and Anthill (Melbourne), the Performance Space, the Australian and Nimrod (Sydney) and various theatres in Toronto, Montreal, New York and the Netherlands.

Colleges and universities where he has taught include Rusden, University of New South Wales, Monash University, Deakin University and the VCA and most recently a guest lectureship at the University of Utrecht. In his professional work he has been seen as an actor, director and playwright. Over the past 10 or 15 years he has been particularly focused on the creation of and/or the presentations of new theatrical work. This has either been through writing new plays himself (Quick Death, Slow Love, Tom, Frankenstein's Shadow) or the presentation of initial productions of plays, or working with theatre companies to create plays relevant to the concerns of the local community.

In 1993 he received a grant from the Literature Board of the Australia Council to write a play based on the 1950s movie The Three Faces of Eve, entitled Dolores in the Department Store. This received a creative development workshop by Handspan Theatre, Melbourne, in early 1998. At the VCA, Richard has undertaken the development of fully articulated three year courses in Directing, Writing and Animateuring. Most recently he has converted these courses to the Postgraduate level. In 1996 he received a National Teaching Fellowship from the Committee for the Advancement of University Teaching, for excellence in teaching.

The reading of *Chicago, Chicago* will be performed by VCA students: Tom Conroy, Andrew Dunn, Benedict Hardie, Hannah Liddy, Brendan McCallum, Sarah Ogdon, Meredith Penman, Josh Price, Anne-Louise Sarks, Nikki Shiels.

## **Jasna Novakovic, Monash University**

### ***Jack Hibberd, The Chapel Perilous and the Mythic Paradigm of Fertility***

Encouraged by Aarne Neeme, Hewett was working in the early 1970 on a new play, *The Chapel Perilous*. She completed the first act pretty quickly and then stopped. The writer's block persisted for quite a while, but then The Pram Factory came to Perth and Neeme said, "Let's give them a reading of the first act". Years later Hewett could still remember Jack Hibberd's loud laugh which acted "as a kind of impetus". The second act came out after that quite naturally, that is, all but the closing scene. Far from being a structural problem as often asserted in the past, it was a philosophical question that needed to be solved.

That the idea of *The Chapel Perilous* derives from the Arthurian legend is a widely acknowledged fact. Its reference goes, however, beyond the English context. The Grail romances enjoyed huge popularity in France and Germany throughout the Middle Ages. It is in these versions that the underlying signification of the quest paradigm, the hero paradigm and the fertility paradigm comes out clearly. Hewett explores persistently their timeless value and the possibilities they leave open to human kind play after play. *The Chapel Perilous* is perhaps the least ambiguous example.

A close reading of this play reveals that Hewett adhered to the myth of the Holy Grail with astonishing precision. Sally, the questing knight, rides in the Prologue through the land burnt by the bushfire, her Waste Land. The contemporary context in which Hewett sets out to investigate the nature of the Grail is the school run by the church, whose historic role is to shape the consciousness and help create the social order myth also seeks to impose. Sally's quest remains a timeless journey many a brave and inquisitive spirit has travelled in the past in a heroic attempt to 'burn' and then rebuild the chapels of social order that control human desire, that delusory anticipation of perfection. This paper will explore the implications of the mythic paradigms Hewett based *The Chapel Perilous* on and what Sally's decision to bow means for the future generations of women and men.

*Jasna Novakovic explored the dialectic of myth and subversion in the plays of Dorothy Hewett for her PhD degree from Monash University. Her research focused on the interplay of the sacred and the profane, tradition and the avantgarde, and the role of iconoclastic playwrights in Australia. Jasna is currently a lecturer and tutor at Monash University.*

## **Angela O'Brien, University of Melbourne**

### ***Convenor/ Theatre of the Old Wave: Mona Brand's On Stage Vietnam***

Mona Brand (1915 – 2007) wrote almost exclusively for the New Theatre, a radical amateur theatre company which began in 1935 and was associated with the 'old left' and the use of theatre 'as a weapon' in the struggle against capitalism. Brand was one of New Theatre's most prolific playwrights, producing plays from 1948 until the 1990s. Her 'total theatre' play, *On Stage Vietnam* (1967), written in conjunction with Pat Barnett, was one of the earliest theatre works to critique the Vietnam War and

reflected not only her political views but her time spent in Vietnam. The artistically prominent new left who became identified with the New Wave movement, were dismissive of the work of the 'old left', primarily because of its amateur associations; the place of the 'old left' has been overshadowed by the New Wave in our theatre history. This paper will introduce the works of Mona Brand with a focus on *On Stage Vietnam*. I will argue that Brand's play was as innovative as the New Wave plays written in 1967 in term of both content and form. Sadly, Mona Brand died this year on the 31<sup>st</sup> of July; this paper is intended as a tribute to Mona as well as a contextual analysis of one of her key works.

**Associate Professor Angela O'Brien** is Discipline Chair of Creative Arts in the School of Culture and Communication and Associate Dean, School of Graduate Studies at the University of Melbourne. Professor O'Brien is Chair of the Theatre Board at the University of Melbourne. Her research interests are in the social impact of the arts and Australian theatre. She has published widely on both of these areas, particularly on the New Theatre movement in Australia. She has developed an online database of student theatre at the University of Melbourne:  
<http://www.must.unimelb.edu.au/>

## **Alison Richards, University of Melbourne**

### ***Your History: Manning Clark's History of Australia and the end of the New Wave***

'History plays' were amongst the Australian Performing Group's most influential productions. From *Marvellous Melbourne* (1970-71) onward, a high-octane mix of theatre, history and politics fuelled a series of plays and other projects by members, ex-members and associates of the APG, including Soapbox Circus/Circus Oz and the MTC production of *The Sentimental Bloke*. These group devised, co-authored and sole authored plays and entertainments boasted a roll-call of the New Wave's key playwrights and performers. Although marked by significant differences in content and reference, they shared a house style, in Tim Robertson's words, 'rough and broadly physical, rooted in (some would say by) vaudeville' and a radical masculinist nationalism that came to define both the APG's public image and its personal and political alliances.

Erstwhile APG Administrator John Timlin and the stable of writers represented by his Almost Managing company sustained these networks and points of reference into the 1980s. The 'New Wave history play' reached its apotheosis in the epic Bicentennial production *Manning Clark's History of Australia: The Musical*. The failure of that production signalled a cultural shift. This paper identifies a combination of theatre practices, political allegiances, factional alignments, interpersonal networks and internal company structures as contributing to the decline and fall of the New Wave, its cultural moment and its theatrical discourses. It argues that the history of *Manning Clark's History of Australia* reveals an inability to deal with changing cultural references, new forms of popular culture and with the challenges of feminism, multiculturalism and Indigenous activism. By 1988, its positioning and production choices were in important ways a generation out of step with its intended audiences, despite the ongoing currency of Australian history, and the iconic figure of Manning Clark himself, as counters in battles that still rage in Australian cultural politics two decades later.

**Alison Richards** is a scholar, writer and theatre maker. A member of the APG and the Women's Theatre Group, her appearances at the Pram Factory included *Self Accusation*, *The Love Show*, *Journey into Space*, *Out of the Frying Pan*, *The Dudders*, *Phar Lap* and *It's A Mad World, My Masters*. She initiated the long-running community outreach show *The Young and the Jobless*; directed *The Garden of Delights* and *Women x 3*, and directed and performed in *The Mushroom Troupe's Savage Love*, the last show at the Pram in 1981. Alison has published extensively on contemporary Australasian theatre practice and its cultural and social contexts. Her current research focuses on issues in community cultural development and on the place of practice in drama, theatre and performance studies in higher education.

## **John Romeril**

### ***I entered LaMama a poet – left it a playwright***

In this waltz down memory lane John Romeril will explain his early connections with La Mama; his encounters with the poetry film and theatre artists drawn to that venue; how he threw in his lot with the ensemble destined to become the Australian Performing Group; and later still helped open and run The Pram Factory from 1970-1981.

**John Romeril** has authored or co-authored over eighty produced works of drama. Most have been for the theatre (*Chicago Chicago*, *Floating World*, *Carboni*, *Love Suicides*, *Miss Tanaka et al*); but others include tv or film screenplays (eg. *Everything's A Hustle*, *One Night The Moon*).

This year he has functioned as Literary Fellow at the University of New South Wales which included some work with NIDA's Playwrights Studio and cranking out a 140,000 word prose work. He recently began work as dramaturg with three up and coming playwrights for Melbourne Workers Theatre, and again as dramaturg has just completed a stint with Westside Circus. He is redrafting *GOING THRU* (a sleeper of his from the early 90s) for Malthouse. He is working as dramaturg-writer on a Torres Strait Islander project aimed at generating the script for a musical. He is Chair of *Strange Fruit*.

## **Laurence Strangio**

### ***STRETCH x 2: Jack Hibberd's "A Stretch of the Imagination" (episodes from a recreation-in-progress) [v.2.0]***

35 years ago Hibberd's Monk O'Neill crawled into the Australian theatre consciousness – ruminating and pontificating, obsessing and defecating – a solipsistic blight on the national landscape. After a surfeit of faithful interpretations this performance eschews all previous incarnations in favour of an idiosyncratic blend of language and technology – a diligent dissection, an insightful intervention, a passionate and perverse misconception. An ever-evolving linguistic and performative non-sequitur.

A stretch of the imagination that's unlike any you've experienced before.

Written by Jack Hibberd. Devised and directed by Laurence Strangio.

Performed by Matt Delbridge, John Flaus, and a whole bunch of books and technology.

## **Denise Varney, University of Melbourne**

### ***Political lessons of the New Wave: socially committed theatre***

This paper peers through two lenses: it reflects on research I conducted twenty years ago into the APG that focused on the period 1969 to 1974. Working from the APG archives in the State Library, I analysed its productions of *A Stretch of the Imagination*, *Don's Party* and *The Floating World*. I argued then that the APG was a significant new cultural formation whose aim was to wrest control of history, language and theatre from a conservative anglophone elite. Through its evolving in-house blend of iconoclasm and larrikinism, APG artists and activists, especially Jack Hibberd and John Romeril, hoped to revivify a moribund Australian theatre culture. While the APG as a collective of diverse individuals was an interesting, often contradictory and volatile mix of the experimental and the larrikin, its unifying force was its articulation of a collective opposition to cultural imperialism in the form of British and American (but not European) drama, to censorship, the Liberal Party and 'Vietnam'. Reflecting on those two time frames, that is, on the view from 1988 of the period of theatrical activism of the late sixties and early seventies, I now suggest that the APG's lasting radical impact was its promotion of Australian theatre as a social and politically engaged cultural force. It reshaped theatre as a political messenger, as a tribunal for the evaluation of social values and as a platform for dissent. I argue therefore that the APG legacy is its contribution to and popularization of the shift, already quietly underway, from classical and commercial to socially committed theatre.

Revisiting the production of *The Floating World*, this paper articulates how the text and its performance challenged dominant modes of theatrical representation and concludes by speculating on how its production helps us reflect on the challenges facing committed theatre practitioners in the contemporary period.

*Denise Varney is Senior Lecturer in Theatre Studies in the School of Culture and Communication, Melbourne University. She is the co-author with Rachel Fensham of The Dolls' Revolution: Australian Theatre and Cultural Imagination and has published essays on feminism and theatre, Australian theatre, Brechtian theatre, contemporary German theatre and performance documentation. Her new book, an edited collection of essays entitled Theatre in the Berlin Republic will be published by Peter Lang later in 2007.*

## **Gabrielle Wolf**

### ***Make It Australian: The APG, the Pram Factory and New Wave Theatre.***

Gabrielle Wolf will be reading an extract from her forthcoming book, *Make It Australian: The APG, the Pram Factory and New Wave Theatre*. *Make It Australian* is the first comprehensive, chronological, critical history of the Australian Performing Group (APG) and its productions written by an author who did not belong to the APG. This Melbourne theatre collective helped bring about a renaissance in Australian drama and nurtured the talents of a generation of writers, performers and designers who have become household names. The book traces the APG's development from its beginnings at La Mama Theatre in 1968 to its flowering at the Pram Factory and demise in 1981. Drawing on a broad range of sources, including original interviews with former APG members, *Make It Australian* examines the APG's personalities and their intentions and objectives, and the group's internal operation, conflicts, ideologies and attempts to create a home-grown theatre that instigated social

change. This book analyses the content and dramatic form of productions (including ocker comedies) that made the APG a leader of the New Wave theatre movement of the late 1960s and 1970s with its outpouring of avant-garde Australian drama. *Make It Australian* also examines critical and audience responses to APG shows, and the social, political and cultural context surrounding the APG and its work.

**Gabrielle Wolf** has a Bachelor of Arts (Honours), Bachelor of Laws and PhD from the University of Melbourne. She has worked as a Judge's Associate, solicitor, tutor and lecturer at the University of Melbourne and the Australian Catholic University, research assistant for academics, and on the editorial collective for the Melbourne Historical Journal. Gabrielle has published articles in *The Australian Literary Review*, *the Journal of Australian Studies*, *the Melbourne Historical Journal*, *the Australian Journal of Family Law*, *Stage Whispers: Performing Arts Magazine* and *Inpress*. She received a grant through the Manuscript Sponsorship Program of the Writing Centre for Scholars and Researchers in the School of Graduate Studies at Melbourne University to convert her doctoral thesis ('*Staging Marvellous Melbourne: Theatre and the Nation from the Federation Era to the New Wave*') into a monograph. Currency Press is publishing her book, *Make It Australian: The APG, The Pram Factory and New Wave Theatre*.