November 2017

The Artful DODGER

1.*n.* roystering young pickpocket from Charles Dicken's *Oliver Twist.* 2.*n.* Printed handbill full of tidings from the W.M.I&A.A. with a closing date for contributions of 25th of each month to David Tynan on 98445727 or davidtyn@gmail.com

Look at what we bought!

The recently commissioned portraits of Mechanic's Institutes from around Victoria includes our very own hall, and it seemed appropriate to purchase the original painting, which we have gifted on your behalf to the Cornell's as a constant reminder of all the joys he gave us, and that we gave him. A print of this picture also hangs proudly inside the hall.

Life Drawing classes

Marjorie's 90th Birthday season!

Various potters and committee members recently attended 'Landfall' to help Marjorie celebrate her 90th birthday. She was in fine form, and as feisty and witty as usual. Those assembled were treated to a lovely chocolate cake (thanks Noelene for making it!), high tea, asparagus fingers and cucumber sandwiches. Marjorie was attended by her two daughters, and we all felt very special. Luckily the potters had held a similar gig the week before so they didn't have to put the china away!

Group reports

Pottery News

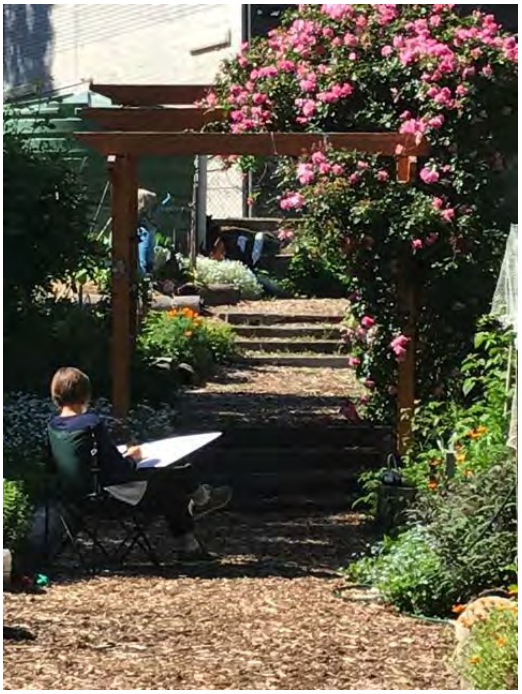
We had the joy of celebrating Marjorie's very special 90th Birthday(27/10) . We thoroughly enjoyed a delicious lunch, great chats , laughs and 'just being with Marjorie' . Sheryl created a marvellous super duper sponge cake. Term 4 Pottery is a buzz of activity, and the production of Christmas presents has begun !

Alison Beanland (on behalf of the Tuesday potters) for Marjorie Beecham

Group reports

Painting News

The painting group has had a few very good weeks. Some of us have been to Bradley's Lane, Domeney Reserve (I have been told the cloud formations were particularly good that day)and the Community Vegetable garden. Those who have stayed in have had an enjoyable time catching up on works in progress and chatting. Recently, I met the new owner of Warran Glen Nursery and he has given us permission to go there when the weather is suitable. Also, we have arranged permission to paint, with the owner of a property in Hall Road, so we now have a range of options available. The owner of the Warrandyte Cafe has also given permission to display some of our work.



Some of us are lucky enough to be still travelling far and wide, e.g. Africa, Western Australia and New South Wales. They should produce some great travel stories and hopefully, some great paintings. We have decided the last day for this year will be Friday 15th December and we will resume on 2nd February 2018.

Rhonda Stewart

Group reports (continued)

Theatre News

Well, it's nearly here, our brief encounter that is.Signs are up, flyers are out, paint's drying on the set and final tweaks are being made to the show. You have plenty of opportunity to come and see what is a highly original and innovative show that demonstrates what we can do at our theatre with the talent we have available. We open on Nov 17th.

There will be plenty more in the program but this has been a massive team effort with me, the director being able to call upon our full ambit of clever people to realise this project. In ascending order of distance from the Warrandyte bridge: Jock, Denise, Caroline, Bill, Lawrence, Callum, Susan, Alan. All of whom have had creative input into one or other of set, costumes, technicals, choreography, posters and program. See you at the show.

Red Carpet Ball

Another team is working hard to bring the end of year ball together. We hope you've spotted posters and flyers for this too. December 9th is the date which if not circled in your diary should be. An evening of entertainment for everyone with a variety of acts on stage but food and drink music and dancing and aimed at promoting the WTC to the wider community.

A grumble.

The person or persons who keeps pinching our signs from the northern end of the bridge will most likely not be reading this but we believe them to likely to be in possession of a growing number of star pickets, some of which are brand new! If anyone has a suggestion as to where we might erect a temporary sign to promote shows north of the river, please let me know.

Proof

While not to everyone's liking, (see Diary, October) our production of "Proof" was very well received by the Victorian Drama League reviewer (*see VDL review later in this edition*). It was pointed out (Diary) that the upcoming production will probably not contain bad language as it was written in a different era. Which raises the obvious point that when staging contemporary plays, many are likely to use language as it is used in society nowadays. We don't actually look at scripts and then sprinkle in a few additional oaths, we are faithful to the dialogue as intended.
Back to the review … further congratulations to Caroline and Lisa and their cast and team for producing such a well-received play.

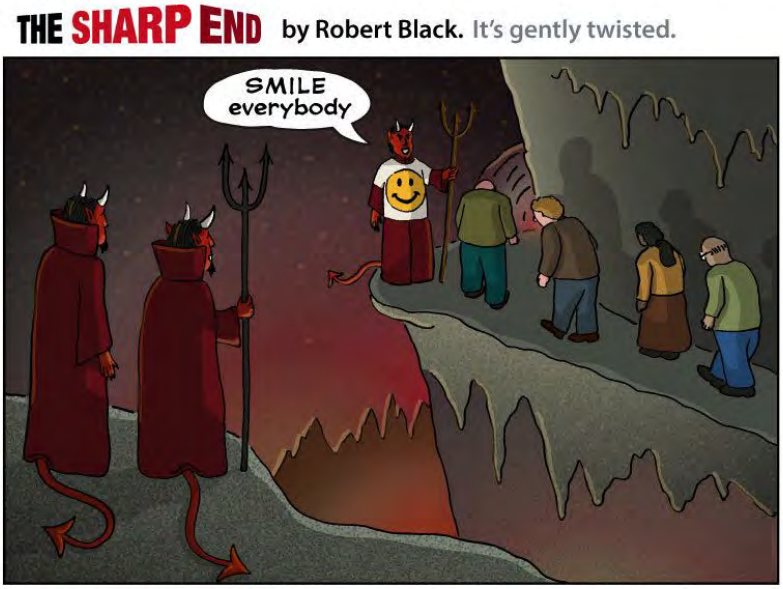
Adrian Rice

The Sharp End

One of our multi-talented members and WMIAA Web and all things digital guru Robert Black moonlights as a terrific cartoonist - you may have seen his work in other publications, including in the Warrandyte Diary. Robert generously permits us to publish one of his 'gently twist' cartoons each month - thanks Robert!

For more about the Sharp End, go to

http://www.robertblack.com.au/the-sharp-end



"You know… Sid *really* goes the extra mile to make this Hell."

Alan's Do – words and pictures

I recall that I first saw Alan on stage singing with Libby in the early 80's - to be fair I did notice Libby more than Alan ! After that he was a regular helping friend at the Theatre Company but I guess we really got more acquainted when I moved back to Melbourne over various weekends in late 1987. We have shared many a costume, both onstage and off. Onstage ones included the Frank Spencer sketch and Follies chorus outfits, and the offstage ones are famous for the same style backyard overalls and the odd dinner suit. We directed two Follies together, in 1989 and 2002, where we faced the usual challenges of casting and script decisions. I particularly want to acknowledge Alan's unflagging contributions to WMI&AA during all of my years on the Central Committee. Alan was always a great support and took over the editorship of the Dodger in 2006. This was a literary revolution of sorts and has certainly proved a hard act to follow for both David and myself. His significant contributions arose from his finely tuned word skills, his uncanny comedy instincts and his devoted loyalty to the cause of the Arts in the Warrandyte community. He has always been ably supported by his lovely wife, Jan, and together they will be sorely missed as regulars around town. Bravo, dear friends !

Speech given by former WMI&AA President, Ken Virtue, on the occasion of Alan Cornell's farewell dinner.

Shakespeare of Wattle Blossom

When asked to make a contribution to "the life and works" of our dear friend Al, I thought I'd pick the early years. So I'm going to delve into the years 1981 - 1995, from the very early *Follies*, the extraordinary production of *School For Scandal* in 1985 via that creative masterpiece, *Open Season* to *Cosi*. Now quite a lot of these memories might be fake because my memory isn't that good, and I'm hoping yours isn't either.

The first *Follies* was 1981, but I think this memory comes from the second *Follies*. It was a skit on a nappy ad, called *Dry Bot*. It involved a pram containing a fake baby and peanut butter. This set the tone of sophistication for the next 30 odd years.
Al has been an absolute constant in the blur of well over 30 years of Follies. He's been writer, actor, singer (who will ever forget his amazing double act with Kevin O'Mara for so many years), director and although it doesn't sound quite so glamorous, script editor. What Al did was to turn 100s and 100s of tedious, wordy, rambling, pointless scripts into hilarious, pithy little gems, usually without the original writers even realising it had happened, and usually with little or no acknowledgment.

School for Scandal in 1985. It was Al's first proper play, mine too, and why we ever came back for more I do not know. Directed by the …..um, mercurial, creative but totally disorganised and irascible Bob Karl in the days before the word BUDGET entered the WTC lexicon. *School for Scandal*, written by Richard Sheridan in 1777, is a comedy of manners about gossip and love tangles. Characters had such names as Teazel, Sneerwell, Snake, Backbite, Surface, Careless, Clackitt, Nicely, Prim, Evergreen and Simper. I think Al played one of the brothers Joseph or Charles Surface. He was dressed in white or pink, and adorned with furbelows, ruffles, frills and/or pickadils and probably a wig or ponytail with big bow! And a GINORMOUS COD PIECE which adorned the Supper Room wall for quite some time. Neither costumes nor set were anywhere near completion on opening night, and every performance more costume, props and furniture would appear. Bob insisted the leading ladies had proper bustiers, which were not to be found in the wardrobe and I seem to recall cost about $200 each. I found a large box of Queen Anne furniture legs in the ticket box some months later, which never made it to their intended bits of furniture. To complete the disaster, a BBQ was held at Doug and Shari's place (in Sommers RD?) as a social bonding party and Bob poured Kero on the wood fired barbie with inevitable results. I recall we all went home, but reconvened when Bob returned from Emergency some hours later!

BUT, Al (and I) came back for more -*Follies*, *Follies* and *Follies*, and eventually in 1994 *Open Season*, perhaps Al's most famous work. This was a collaboration with the Bushfire Press guys, Mark Leehy, Kevin O'Mara, Dave Billings and Lynne Bartlett. A local amateur theatre group hires a big city actor to stage their production of *West Side Story*. As we all know, West Side Story is based on *Romeo and Juliet*, so this is where the title of this speech comes from. There's obviously a direct line from the author of Romeo and Juliet via *West Side Story* to Open Season. The Cornell's were actually living in Stonygrad at this point, but I decided Shakespeare of Wattleblossom sounded better than Shakespeare of Hamilton Rd.

Open Season had it's genesis in a Follies sketch (written by Al of course) about hopefuls who never make it beyond the chorus. It had a song called something like "I'm a member of the chorus". There were parts for everyone, even a couple of elderly geezers called Ed and Megs. We all know Megs, but Ed was a special treat for this show only. He arrived every night by taxi from a "facility" - we never found out what sort. Geography was not their strong point, and one night they got a bit confused and ended up in the wardrobe instead of on stage. *West Side Story* of course had the gangs with their incredible dancing and singing full of verve and menace. *Open Season* had The Tappers! Backstage was organised chaos with cords, wires and computers, electric instruments with more cords and wires, costumes on hooks everywhere for quick changes, musicians and their instruments, actors, singers, dancers and The Tappers and not to mention in those libertine days of yore, generous quantities of indifferent red. Those were the early days of technology and *Open Season* had a whiz bang computer driven score. Computers were so old that when disaster struck, like someone tripped over the power cord, the operator had to re-boot, count to 10, do something magic with the tip of their nose, tongue and elbow, then trawl through the entire program from the beginning to find where we were up to. Ed managed to disconnect the computer once and The Tappers clipped too enthusiastically on stage one night to deathly silence. Not only did Al write lyrics, songs and music, but he starred as the director trying to get the play within the play up and running. Talk about art imitating life, imitating art. (Or something like that!) As mostly happens, the view from back stage and the view from the front are two very different things and with the utterly charming script, intriguing plot, delightful characters, lots of LURVE, great songs and music, colour and movement and energy and oodles of talent, it was a resounding hit.

Cosi is an amazing play - moving, edgy, and very funny - set in a mental asylum. Lewis, a naïve thespian friend of the in-house social worker, is keen to get the inmates involved in a play, but manic depressive Roy is desperate to be the star of the Opera, *Cosi Fan Tutti* by Mozart, and it must be sung IN ITALIAN. Some of those dragooned into the production are not cooperative. Enter Al as the arsonist, Doug. Doug is a pretty dark character, unpredictable, crass, a loner with an air of menace. Doug is in the asylum for setting fire to his mother's cat, which runs into her house, burning it down. Hence he's often taunted with the phrase, "go burn a cat".

Just to round out this amazingly musical wordsmith, we add some serious acting skills to his credits.

In Doug's words as he makes his final exit - "A wop bop a loo bop a loop bam boom".

Speech given by Gail Macrae and Cornell's thank you dinner, October 15, 2017

VDL Review – Proof

PROOF

by David Auburn
Warrandyte Theatre Company
Directed by Caroline Shaw and Lisa MacGibbon
Reviewed by Rod Nash – September 15, 2017

The program best sums up this play: "It is a portrayal of a brilliant young woman haunted by both the mathematical genius of her father and the mental illness she fears that she may have inherited from him". The play also deals with trust and love, sibling rivalry/concern, grief and a passion for mathematics. This is an intelligent and sensitive play which runs the gamut of emotions and timeframes. Some scenes are in the past, some in the present and others in the imagination.

The play is set on the back porch and in the garden of a house in Chicago. The set depicted this well, with the rear of a somewhat run-down shack upstage right, a garden setting centre stage and a swing chair upstage left; all giving the impression of a well-used but shabby house in Chicago. Set dressing was used cleverly to depict the various seasons. Lighting was even and used effectively to depict the time of day and the season. I particularly liked the subtlety of the setting sun effect. Sound was appropriate (apart from the occasional screech from the new sound system—I felt for the sound operator) and helped create the sensitive mood required. Scene changes were quick and efficient; congratulations to stage manager, Simone Kiefer, and her crew. I note that some scene changes did not have bridging music, which to my mind impacted on the flow of the change. This strong production was well supported by the excellent production/design team—well done to all involved.

The central character, Catherine, was played with great ease and depth by Reschelle O'Connor. She gave us a character who had a troubled mind, was sensitive at times, at other times cynical and angry. Catherine handled this complex character excellently—a very believable and captivating performance.

Catherine's father Robert (the mathematician), played by Tony Clayton, was at times real, imaginary, jovial and troubled. Tony captured these various aspects of the character well—another well-sustained performance. Michael Fenemore played Hal, Robert's student and Catherine's love interest, with a controlled but energetic performance. The rapport/tension between Catherine & Hal was well handled by both actors.

Catherine's sister Claire (played by Susie Kazda) was concerned for Catherine's welfare and vacillated between being caring and being meddlesome. Susie struck a good balance between these qualities, giving us another well-sustained strong performance. Just an aside: as mentioned, Warrandyte were having trouble with their new sound system with the occasional screech intruding into the performance. All actors handled the situation well, playing through the intrusion. Suzie in particular incorporated it into her performance with the line "is everything alright in there?"—well done.

This was a fine cast: no weak elements; we could identify with all characters; use of the stage area was excellent. This play requires sensitive direction and depth of character in the actors. Warrandyte's production certainly had these qualities.

Congratulations to directors Caroline Shaw and Lisa MacGibbon and their talented cast and production team for a moving and entertaining night in the theatre. It was a joy to watch.

Soundbath

Sounds of drums, bowls and harps have finished now for the year … from me anyway. Our last evening on October 28th was another beautiful Soundbath with David Jones and Carmen Warrington.

The attendees weren't packed like sardines this time with a smaller attendance but they were none the less entranced and enthralled with the evening and travelled from near and far to attend.

Concerts will return in 2018 with a return to folk and jazz. Michael Johnson will be playing with the Light Quartet as they tour his new CD "Water", the fabulous chamber folk ensemble Free Reign return and a new band for us ,Jawa Pitu, with their fusion of Indonesian/Arabic funk jazz will delight us for the first half of the year.

We look forward to continuing to share great music with you in this fabulous Warrandyte hall.

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