



VANE LINDSAY

Years of New Theatre

Melbourne N.T. 1936-86

AGAINST THE STREAM

MELBOURNE NEW THEATRE 1936-1986

by Angela Hillel

What New Theatre Means to Me

by Dot Thompson,

President, New Theatre 1986

This history has been compiled from Melbourne New Theatre archival material and the memories and memorabilia of New Theatre members: Meg Arrowsmith, June Bennet, Lillian and Dick Diamond, Hugh Esson, Chris Gaffney, Itsak Gust, Nicki and Don Munro, Rae Green, Dot and Ted Thompson, Eve Harris, John Hillel, Shirley Robertson, Betty Roland, Mona Brand, Oriel Gray, Frank Huelin, John Robertson, Sue and Sam Saffir, Marj. Adamson, Margaret Walker, Charlotte Hinton and others.

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WHAT NEW THEATRE MEANS TO ME

by Dot Thompson

NEW THEATRE PRESIDENT, 1986

My first introduction to New Theatre was the production of *Bury the Dead* at the Apollo Theatre in Bourke Street (now a revival centre). I was absolutely stunned. I have never forgotten it. It was a time of unemployment and there was the threat of war. This play vividly portrayed what life was about, in contrast to the drawing room comedies in the commercial theatre.

To see this meant being part of it. To me, this was what theatre was about - the ordinary people and their struggles. It was important to be involved, to find out more about this theatre and the members in it. I became part of it. This history is about such people and such plays. There have been directors, actors, technicians, set designers, builders, secretaries who have made New Theatre a positive force in the theatrical world, presenting plays that tackled social and political problems.

Of the many people who became involved in the first half of its existence, two people stand out. Their contribution has had a lasting effect on the theatre. Firstly, Lillian Diamond with her total commitment, her talent and leadership and above all her warmth of personality cannot be forgotten. The other, Hilda Esson, set an artistic standard that others have tried to emulate. She was a woman with a wide knowledge of theatre, a person who pioneered theatrical techniques and methods and introduced us to the world of Stanislavski. We owe a debt to both of them.

What is it, then, that has kept New Theatre going for half a century? It is not money. We are the poor theatre: we work from show to show, our members are working people (many unemployed, of course), we put on shows at a minimum of costs, without the benefit of expensive media exposure.

It is people who have kept it going. Even though some leave, there is always someone new to get the next play on. Sometimes we have a great success, sometimes a failure, but we do go on. There have been many people involved in this last half of the theatre's existence, and one stands out - Don Munro. A fine actor and experienced director, Don has held fast to the principles of New Theatre.

Nettie Palmer, a close friend of Hilda Esson's and a friend of New Theatre was once asked at a theatre discussion night: 'How do you assess a play?' She replied: 'By what the play says, and how it says it.'

If I have anything to pass on to young people from my forty odd years in theatre it would be this: don't allow yourselves to be compromised. No matter what you do in film, television or theatre, don't let fame and fortune overshadow your artistic principles and moral and political beliefs.

We always need people, and we always need plays. More than ever today we need this theatre with its forthright commentary and its pungent criticism of the world around us. The following says it so much better that I can:

ENTERTAINMENT

must be one of the main weapons
of struggle against war
and an international means
of safeguarding peace
throughout the world.

True entertainment
is the best means of
communication between people.
It reveals and makes
their innermost feelings understood.

STANISLAVSKI



Dot Thompson (Right) and the cast of SANDISTA, 1985



AGAINST THE STREAM

NEW THEATRE MELBOURNE 1936 - 1986

by Angela Hillel

This year New Theatre Melbourne turns fifty, making it the longest continuously running theatre company in Victoria. On August 11th, this solely non-professional company celebrates half a century of unbroken tradition, in that it has not only continued to present four or five plays each year over the past five decades, but has also remained consistent to its charter of presenting "theatre with a purpose", designed to politicize its audiences on social injustices of the day. New Theatre is and always has been unashamedly 'left'; a community theatre movement for working people which is anti-bourgeois, anti-elitist and believes that theatre can and should be a force for social change. As such, during its history, it has invariably been against the stream - at odds with the ruling parties and classes of the day in whose interest it has been to preserve the status quo by maintaining the powerlessness of ordinary people.

THE ORIGINS OF THE NEW THEATRE MOVEMENT

The origins of the New Theatre movement are to be found in the workers' theatres which developed in England and the United States in the twenties, often inspired by the Soviet agit prop theatre troupes. Some groups became affiliated with the Soviet led International Workers' Dramatic Union. In the main these groups were shortlived but they were an important response on the part of working people and socialist 'intellectuals' to a period of social and economic uneasiness.

After 1929, the spread of world wide depression and the evidence of embryonic fascist movements gave added impetus to these groups. In 1932, the League of Workers' Theatres was formed in the United States, and affiliated with the IWDU; by 1935 this group became the New Theatre League. In the Spring of 1933, a number of British workers returned from the first International Workers' Olympiad in Moscow; on their return they formed the Rebel Players.

In 1935, the Comintern declared a Popular Front which called for an alliance of liberal to

left elements of all classes in a fight against war and fascism. This gave new stature and respect to the burgeoning leftist socio-political theatre, and groups in England and America opened their doors to include a wider social and political group. In 1936, the Rebel Players joined with other smaller groups to become Unity Theatre with the policy "to foster and further the art of the drama in accordance with the principle that true art, by effectively presenting life as experienced by the majority of people, can move the people to work for the betterment of society". In America, New Theatre dropped all pro-soviet slogans and concentrated on an united fight against "war, fascism and censorship". It extended its work to include a theatre school, play publication and made an attempt to co-ordinate the activities of the many amateur leftist groups across the country. The movement was to "present a drama that reflects the immediate and collective problems of both the past and the present...the extension of democratic rights, the right to organize trade unions, against war, against facism."

In Australia, too, workers' cultural groups sprang up in the capital cities, in part encouraged by reports of Communist Party members who had returned from the Soviets. The Workers' Art Club "a co-operative organization of students and workers" was formed in Melbourne in 1932. Its earliest ventures included an exhibition of Jack Maugham's drawings, and a production of Toller's *Masses and Man*. The programme notes give some indication of the aims of this embryonic group:

While Capitalism in its dying hours thus gurgles forth a last hymn of frustration, the growing vitality of proletarian or workers' art manifests itself. Born out of the living stuff of reality, out of the day to day struggles and aspirations of class conscious workers, fighting towards emancipation, proletarian art necessarily makes its chief appeal to workers. No longer need workers bow to the patronage of bourgeois art.

Other theatrical expressions tended to be agitational sketches, performed at factory gates, shopping centres and union nights. The group adopted the slogan "Art is a Weapon", and was short lived.

THE WORKERS' THEATRE GROUP

The Workers' Theatre Group was born under the auspices of the Friends of the Soviet Union. Frank Huelin, then an organizer-secretary for the International Labour Defense proposed the establishment of a theatre group to "dramatise and expose phases of the class struggle" but the idea was rejected. Subsequently Frank approached the FOSU who agreed to the idea and rehearsals for some agit-prop style sketches began at the

FOSU hall. At this time Betty Roland returned from two years in the Soviet Union, and joined the developing group as writer and director along with some of the members of the disbanded Workers' Art Club. The early group presented agit prop sketches and a few plays at Union meetings, factory gates and suburban halls. These earliest performances included Harold Brighouse's *The Price of Coal*, and a play by Frank Huelin, *To Mildura per Rattler*, about unemployed itinerant workers. In its earliest days the members of the group were avid readers of the International Theatre Magazine and ran a wall newspaper on such themes as propaganda in art, social realist theatre and Stanislavsky's method acting.

Other Australian States also saw the development of similar organizations: the Workers Art Club in Sydney in 1933, the Workers' Theatre Group in Perth in 1936, and the Student Workers' Theatre in Brisbane in 1936. The agitational propaganda presentation used by these groups was stylized, loosely constructed of episodes, and offered satiric cartoons instead of realistic characters; it spoke directly to its audience, and called upon it to participate in the show.

WAITING FOR LEFTY - THE FIRST PRODUCTION

In 1935, the New Theatre League in the States sprang into real prominence with its discovery of *Waiting for Lefty*, a one act play about a New York Taxi-drivers' strike by young communist writer Clifford Odets. Odets, a member of the Group Theatre, persuaded this group to perform his play at a New Theatre benefit night for the strikers on Sunday, January 6th of that year. The play consists of six scenes depicting the crucial moment in each workers' life which brings him to the strike meeting in the final scene, when Agate, the strike leader, makes his appeal to the "stormbirds of the working class". With its compelling realistic language, its revolutionary spirit and dramatic inventiveness of actor-plants in the audience for the final rousing cry to strike action, the play was an immediate success and was taken up enthusiastically by workers' theatre groups world-wide.

In Melbourne it became the first public production of the Workers' Theatre Group, soon to become New Theatre. *Lefty* was performed at the Central Hall on August 11, and, much to the surprise of the groups' members, drew considerable favourable response from the critics.

TILL THE DAY I DIE - THE BANNING

Late in 1936 the group, along with its Sydney counterpart, decided to tackle another Odets play, *Till the Day I Die*, an anti-Nazi one acter. The Sydney group were ready first, but on the opening day a notice was received that the play had been banned, following a protest from the Hitler's Consul General to the Federal Government. The Melbourne group decided to proceed, despite the ban, but found every theatre and hall in the city closed against them. Finally a loophole was found in the ban, and a private performance was arranged in the unregistered Collingwood Town Hall on November 18. When the players arrived, they found the hall locked and bolted. The progressively minded mayor, Councillor Marshall, attempted to force a side window with tyre levers before he was stopped by the police. When someone finally gained entrance it was to find all the chairs had been removed.

After efforts to produce the play on a vacant lot nearby were abandoned on the advice of the police, the crowd of several thousands dispersed quietly. Amid cheers, the play's glamorous producer, radio actress Catherine Duncan, announced that the Workers' Theatre group was determined to present the play: "The Collingwood Council, the Government and the censors need not think for one moment that we are going to accept their dictum. We will fight for freedom of expression in Australia even if it takes till the day we die". Applications to present the play were sent to a number of municipalities, and finally the Brunswick Council agreed to allow a performance in its Town Hall in February, 1937. Even then there were attempts to sabotage the play with a very noisy air conditioning plant. The ban on this play was not lifted until well into the war, when New Theatre performed the play at the Princess Theatre for a week in November, 1941. The publicity from the 1937 Till the Day I Die incident brought many new members to the Theatre, and it was at this point of time that the group decided to affiliate with the American New Theatre League.

Workers Theatre Group

Programme

1. FINDING FREEDOM

A sketch specially written for the W.T.G.

Scene: Office of a High Official

Characters in order of appearance

High Official	1st Member of Deputation
His Assistant	2nd
His Typist	German Gentleman
Parliamentarian	Worker

The characters in this play refer to no living person

INTERVAL

2. TILL THE DAY I DIE By Clifford Odets

Scene 1. An underground room
 Scene 2. Office room in the Columbia Brown House
 Scene 3. Baruch's room, Brown House
 Scene 4. Office room
 Scene 5. Tilly's room
 Scene 6. Underground meeting room
 Scene 7. Carl's room

The action takes place in present day Germany

Characters in order of speaking

Carl Tausig	2nd Storm-trooper
Baum	3rd
Ernst	4th
Tilly Westerman	Boy
Zelda	Old man
Detective Popper	Another prisoner
Orderly one	Major Dubring
Orderly two	Frau Dubring
Captain Schuel	A Detective
Aldolph	Secretary
Zeltner	Arno
Edsel Peliz	Stivalitz
Weiner	Julius
Young storm-trooper	A woman
1st Storm-trooper	

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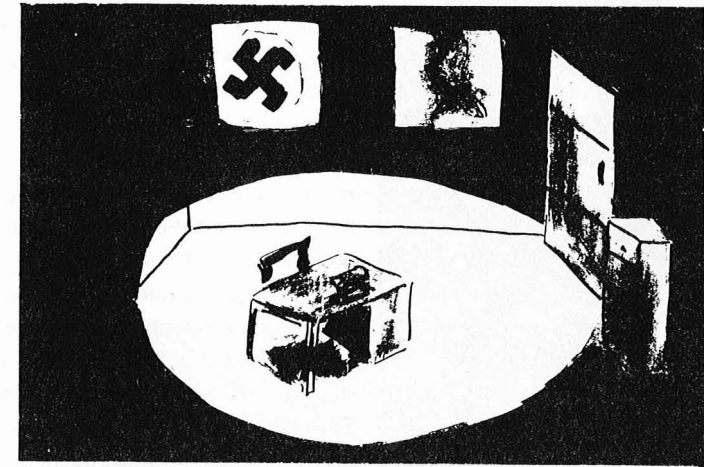
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Programme TILL THE DAY I DIE, 1937



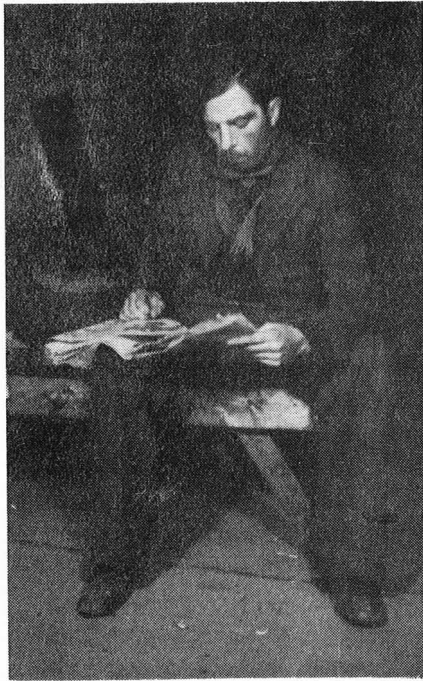
Set Design for Till The Day I Die, Scene 4

NEW THEATRE - THE FIRST TEN YEARS

The first production as New Theatre was *Thirteen Dead*, a dramatization of the Wonthaggi mine explosion by members of an affiliated group, the Melbourne Writers' League. The play was written by Alan Marshall, Kim Keane and Catherine Duncan. After considerable success at the King's Theatre in Melbourne, the group decided to tour to Wonthaggi where the play was a failure because no-one in Wonthaggi wanted to see the tragedy so realistically depicted on stage.

Encouraged by the success the Sydney group had had with their own theatre, the Melbourne New Theatre established their first theatre in a disused loft above a garage in Flanigan Lane. Members and supporters 'bought a plank' for 2/- with which the stage was built. Flanigan Lane opened in November, 1937 with *Till the Day I Die*, operating as private clubrooms to beat the ban and health regulations. Everyone joined the club for a shilling and there was no entrance charge. The first production was an enormous success with people queuing to see the play.

The club spent about eighteen months in Flanigan Lane where it established a reputation for itself as a small company providing quality plays about contemporary issues. During that time the club produced *Waiting for Lefty*, *Where's That Bomb*, *The Eternal Song*, the struggles of a poor Jewish family, *Rehearsal*, a play within a play set backstage in an American Labour theatre during work on a mass chant, *Bring me My Bow*, a satire on re-armament by Sydney Box, and the first Brecht to be produced in Melbourne, a play about the Spanish Civil War, *Remember Pedrocita*.



Eric Reiman In TRANSIT, 1938

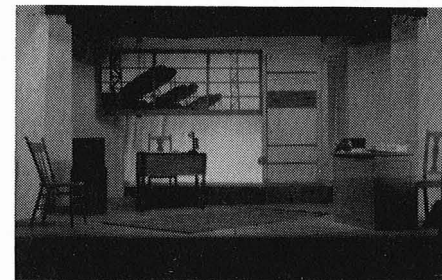
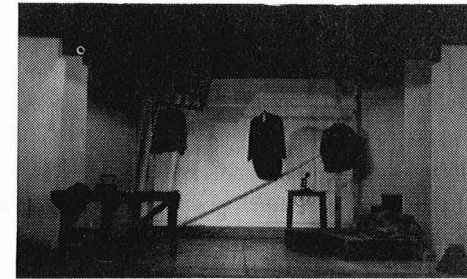
Because the theatre was small and not a public venue, big productions were performed in other venues. Perhaps the most successful of these was *Bury the Dead*, Irwin Shaw's anti war play about six dead soldiers who refuse to be buried. The Club negotiated with Garnett Carroll to perform at the Princess theatre with a 60%/40% split in proceeds, with Carroll receiving the 60%! The play was produced by Florence English, a member of the prestigious theatre group associated with Dolia Ribush, one of the leading professional directors of the time. Florence was playing the lead in a Chekov play by that group which opened the same night as *Bury the Dead* in a theatre around the corner. Members remember that her heart was really in the show she had directed, rather than the one in which she was acting and she 'fluffed' her opening lines. Both shows received excellent reviews.

Below: Programme I'D RATHER BE LEFT

Early in 1939, the Flanigan Lane rooms were condemned as unsafe and the club began looking for alternate premises. Eventually the group found a room in Queen Street and opened with *Cannibal Carnival*, a satire on capitalism. This was followed by *Colony*, about sugar plantation workers in the West Indies and an Australian double, *On the Skids* and *Workhorse*. In 1941 New Theatre produced its first living newspaper style play, *Soak the Rich*, written by Dick Diamond as a satire on Fadden's Soak the Poor Budget. *Showdown*, a Soviet thriller followed, and *I'd Rather Be Left*, the first in New Theatre's series of political revues. *I'd Rather Be Left* was written by three Sydney members, John Reed, Jimmy McCauley and Alan Crawford



and was a merciless satire on the United Australia Party government. The best known of its songs, "There'll always be a Menzies" became a popular hit in factories. *I'd Rather Be Left* and *Till the Day I Die* which concluded the 1941 program were both financial as well as artistic successes, and by the end of that season the club was well and truly in the black and on the way to establishing itself as a force in Melbourne's theatre scene.



William Constable's settings from SHOWDOWN, 1941

During its first five years the theatre developed as a people's theatre basing itself on the organized labour movement. Speakers went out to address trade union groups and publicity was circulated through factories. The constitution of the theatre listed its aims as

- The establishment of a people's theatre;
- The presentation of social drama... serving as a force for progress and democracy;
- The development of a National Drama and the encouragement of Australian playwrights;
- To establish classes in all branches of theatre technique...

THE WAR YEARS

In 1941 with the attack on Pearl Harbour and the invasion of Malaya, the war began in earnest. During the period from 1941 to 1945, the Club concentrated on presenting plays which assisted the war effort in defeating fascism. By now the Soviets had joined the allies, and press attitudes to Russia changed overnight. In October, Fadden's brief lived government collapsed, and Curtin's Labour government came into office. For a short period of time the club was swimming with the tide. Despite this, club membership and audiences both dwindled because actors and technicians alike were involved in the war effort. Scripts from America were no longer arriving, and it was a struggle to continue, despite the development of a concert party which was toured to army camps. Towards the end of 1942, in an effort to bolster the club, Dolia Ribush, a director of considerable reputation, was brought in to direct *Distant Point* with some professional actors included in its cast. Confident that this would put the theatre back on its feet, members financed the play themselves. The play was performed in the Union theatre and while it was a great artistic success, it was a financial disaster and left the club bankrupt.

FLINDERS STREET

Its operation as a Club had been something of a hindrance to the group. Late in 1942 they came upon premises which had the necessary entrances, exits and so forth which would allow for the possibility of operating as a public theatre. 92 Flinders Street was originally "a dingy cafe with a big, bare factory at the rear".

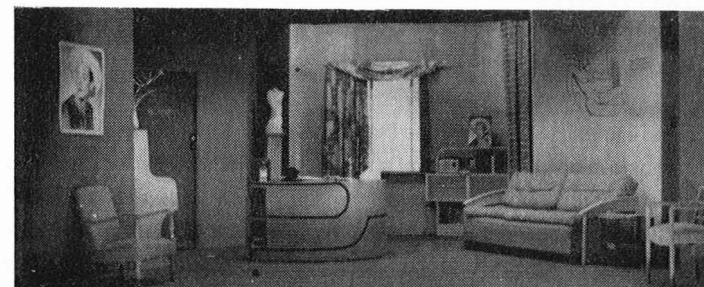


Between December 1942 to February 6th, the opening night, members threw themselves into the process of converting it into a fully equipped theatre. Donations came from all sources and trade unions gave practical assistance in building. The shop front was converted into a foyer with a theatre entrance. At the far end of the factory an end stage was constructed. As the audience came in for the first night of *Sabotage*, a play about the struggles of the French underground, actors and backstage workers were still hammering the nails into the set. 92 Flinders Street was to be the theatre's home for the next sixteen years.



Above and left, members building Flinders Street Theatre

From 1942 onwards, the theatre increased its success with the production of about six plays a year, ranging from new plays through to classics. With this new stability standards were lifted and a period of prosperity followed. In 1943 the theatre followed *Sabotage* with *Blood on the Moon*, a play about antisemitism set in Nazi Germany, and *House on the Hill*, written during the siege of Leningrad and one of three plays sent by the Union of Soviet writers. It was translated by a Melbourne man, Mr Saffir. *Heart of a City* was set in London during the Blitz and illustrated the courage of the girls working at the Windmill Theatre during the war. Two more plays about war, *Counter Attack* and *The Eve of St. Mark* were presented in 1944, followed by *Tomorrow the World* which considered the attempted rehabilitation of Hitler youth. In 1945 plays from overseas included Chodorov's *Decision*, Ted Willis of Unity Theatre's *All Change Here* (about London Clippies), *Boy Meets Girl*, a satire on Hollywood by Sam and Bella Spewack and Priestley's *I Came to a City*. Because of the war, however, quality scripts were becoming harder to come by.



Eve Harris' setting for BOY MEETS GIRL

One of the positive results of the source of overseas scripts drying up was the impetus it gave to the development of Australian Drama. During these first ten years, Melbourne New Theatre presented Catherine Duncan's *The Sword Sung* (1939), the premier production of her prize-winning *Sons of the Morning* for the CEMA (Council for the encouragement of the Arts) Autumn Arts Festival (1945), Dick Diamond's *Soak the Rich* (1941), and *Jack the Giant Killer* (1947), a political pantomime, *Lawson* (1944 & 1945) by Oriel Gray, Henrietta Drake-Brockman's *Men Without Wives* (1944), *Call Up Your Ghosts* (1945) by Miles Franklin and Dymphna Cusack, (the winning entry in a New Theatre one act play competition), Landen Dann's *Fountains Beyond* (1946), one of the earliest plays to consider the aboriginal question, George Farwell's play about the shearer's strike of 1891, *Sons of the South*, and local writer and journalist Jim Crawford's one-acter on the housing shortage in the immediate post-war period, *Welcome Home* (1946).



A scene from the revue, LET'S BE OFFENSIVE

During these years the theatre continued to offer satirical revues developed by the writers' group on topical issues. Despite the problems of war rationing, these were invariably carefully produced. *Let's Be Offensive*, for example, involved the use of 65 costumes with 49 changes.

HILDA ESSON

In the war and immediate war years the theatre gathered a number of skilled directors and designers who developed a substantial artistic policy. Perhaps the most influential of the directors was Hilda Esson. In her private life she was Dr Hilda Bull, Medical Officer in charge of infectious diseases for the Melbourne City Council, and married to playwright Louis Esson. Hilda Esson came to the Theatre with the experience of University theatre and the Pioneer players behind her, and introduced Stanislavski's methods.

During her ten years in the theatre she directed many plays, including *Men Without Wives*, *Sons of the Morning*, *Tartuffe* and *Spanish Village*, and was head of the production committee. In one of her many articles for the New Theatre Review, she describes her attitude towards direction:

I believe that reciprocity of feeling between actors and audience is essential and that the art of the producer is to stimulate the creative imagination of the actors. They should be able to give back not only the suggestions of the producer, but something more, something of their own that has grown out of their association with each other, with the situations, and with their deeper realizations of the spirit and meaning of the play. It is curious to watch what appears to be an ill assorted bunch of individual actors suddenly begin to form a unity...The more complete this feeling of communal effort, the more caught up the individual actor is in the group spirit, the more satisfactory the production.

Other directors during this period included Bob Mathews who was a foundation member of the group, Hugh Esson, and Shirley Robertson, who was also a highly talented actress. Vic Arnold, originally from Sydney New Theatre, joined after the war and took over a considerable amount of the direction.

NEW THEATRE DESIGNERS

Working in close collaboration with these early directors was a small group of dedicated and talented designers who made New Theatre one of the earliest Australian companies to give credence to the notion that theatrical production should be unified in terms of its visual artistry as well as performance. These artists included John Bainbridge, Bill Constable, Jeb Bucklow, Eve Harris, Erica Rathgeber and perhaps the best known, Vane 'Blue' Lindsay who designed in his own highly distinctive style until the theatre left Flinders Street. It is significant that while social realism remained the dominant artistic mode for the proletarian artist, the New Theatre sets during these first two decades venture into a broad variety of styles from the constructivist sets designed by William Constable for *Showdown* to the clever stylization of Vane Lindsay's designs for Moliere's *Tartuffe* and the political revues. These designs were illustrations of the two elements Vane Lindsay saw as fundamental to good scenic art: economy of means and a feeling for the theatre. As well, as the sketches and photographs illustrate, they are works of art in their own right. The artists of the period were committed to the theory as well as the practice of their craft and the theatre was lively with discussion of design theory as it was with production and acting styles and the nature of an indigenous drama.



Vane Lindsay Costume Designs for TARTUFFE (1946), above
and NIGHT OF THE DING DONG (1959), below

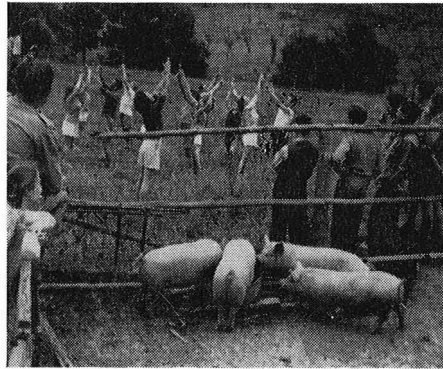
During these years, theatre membership included a good number of talented actors, a number of whom were involved in 'professional' radio or stage work as well. These actors included June Bennett, Bill and Terry Juliff, Hazel Gilmartin, Marjorie Forbes, Jean McLeod, Nancy Fryberg, Jon Kerr, John Bluthal, Bill Griffiths, Norma Farrow, Les Foxcroft, Rae Green, Alf Jones, Charlotte Hinton, Charlie McCormack, Sam and Sue Saffir, Bill Phillips, Ken and Margery Otway, and John and Shirley Robertson.

In 1943 the New Theatre established its own publication outlet, *The New Theatre Review*. *The Review* evolved from a wall newspaper which had been established in Flanigan Lane days. This was always more than just a notice board and it gradually expanded to include fairly lengthy articles of general interest, critiques of plays and so on. It was pinned up in the foyer, and with the large audiences attracted in Flinders Street, there were complaints that there was never enough time to read it. The first issue of the *New Theatre Review* was in May 1943 and a small editorial committee was set up with the responsibility of producing an issue to correspond with each production. Lillian Diamond took on a major part of the editorial responsibility. Vance and Nettie Palmer, Frank Dalby Davidson, George Farwell, Miles Franklin and Frank Hardy were among those who contributed to the *Review*, as well as a steady flow of material from members about theatre happenings. Overseas publications, such as the *New Masses* also provided articles of interest.

Below: The New Theatre Singers



The magazine was sold only in the theatre at the cost of sixpence which enabled the theatre to make a small profit. By the late forties, rising costs and declining audiences and sales (as a result of the cold war) meant the *New Theatre Review* was no longer economically viable and publication ceased in July, 1949. In February 25, 1945, the theatre began a 15 minute radio program or 3KZ at 2.30 every Sunday afternoon which included a guide to the films and variety entertainment.



Members at a N.T. Summer School

Another feature of New Theatre life were the summer schools held at 'Koorngang', Warrandyte where classes were held in acting, movement, script reading, writing and voice as well as providing a social focus for the club. The first of these schools was held in 1943-4, and they continued until 1948. When New Theatre affiliated with the other State groups to become a National organization, Summer conferences were hosted by the various state groups. As an adjunct to its other activities the New Theatre singers were formed under the direction of Bill Juliff and performed at a variety of functions which included Union nights. Also formed was the Unity Dance Group, trained by Melbourne ballet dancer Margaret Frey. Ballets by this group were often incorporated in productions such as "White Justice", from the revue *Coming Our Way* or "The Marquis' Dilemma" which was a curtain raiser for *A Physician in Spite of Himself*. Unity Dancers also developed a folk dance repertoire which they performed at a variety of functions. A writers' group worked on the development of playlets, sketches and radio features, under the direction of Dot Kellet.



Shirley Robertson and Jon Kerr in *A PHYSICIAN IN SPITE OF HIMSELF*

NEW THEATRE REVIEW



Acknowledgments to GROPPER.

MAY,
1943

PRICE
SIXPENCE

The front cover of the first issue of New Theatre Review



A Membership Drive leaflet

THE COLD WAR PERIOD

As Hilda Esson wrote in her summary of the 1945 season, it was "a tribute to the vitality of the Theatre as a communal activity" that it managed to survive the war years so well. The Theatre had seen some of its greatest achievements accomplished during those years with the establishment of the New Theatre Review, associated singing and dance groups, annual summer schools and conferences, as well as regular classes in all aspects of the theatre. It had also managed to establish a distinctive New Theatre repertory style with the encouragement of Australian Drama, the varied overseas plays on issues of social concern, and the biting satirical revues developed by New Theatre writers. In 1946 the theatre appointed Vic Arnold, a member of Sydney New Theatre in its early days, and recently demobbed, as a part-time employee of the Theatre with a responsibility for taking acting classes and working on the production committee.

1946 started very successfully with Hilda Esson's production of *Spanish Village*, Ted Willis's *God Bless the Guvnor*, a 'morality' play on the 'evil effects of Drink and Trade Unionism on the Good Working Man'. By the end of the year the theatre had 169 paid up members. Hilda Esson's production of *Tartuffe* followed, the first in a series of Moliere plays to be performed in the next three years; this production was characterized by the brilliant settings and costume design by Vane Lindsay. The revue, *Coming Our Way*, a lead up to the elections that year, was developed by the New Theatre Writers' Group and was memorable for the New Theatre ballet piece, "White Justice", in which three workers representing the Trade Union Movement denounce a court which has wrongly accused two aboriginals of a crime committed by a white squatter. The theme of the ballet was the need for equal citizen rights, and included some members from the The Australian Aboriginal League. The Theatre was to consider the plight of the aboriginals again that year with a production of Landen Dann's *Fountains Beyond*, a story of aboriginal communities struggling to survive on the fringes of white settlements. The curtain-raiser for this play was *Welcome Home* by Jim Crawford, merchant seaman, journalist and a member of the Brisbane Proletarian Players in the early thirties. In 1948, Jim's second play, *Rocket Range*, on the establishment of rocket testing grounds on aboriginal lands, was produced as a curtain raiser to *Waiting for Lefty*. This play, which indicates the white boss's total ignorance of aboriginal ways, was tossed out of a drama festival because of its merciless criticism of white society.

In 1947 the Theatre established the schedule of performing Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights for six weeks instead of sixteen consecutive nights. (This practice has continued to the present day.) The year began well, but the consolidation of the right wing forces into a single party, and the beginning of the cold war led the Theatre to realize that the links with the Trade Unions needed to be re-established, and a Mobile Group developed to assist in publicity and in the building of a new and predominantly working class audience. The Mobile group were to take theatre to factory gates and street meetings.

The next two years saw the production of two Moliere plays, *A Physician in Spite of Himself*, and *The Imaginary Invalid*, two Russian plays, Leonid Leonov's *The Ordinary Man* and Simonov's *The Russian Question*, a Ted Willis play about divorce, *What Happens to Love*, Dick Diamond's political pantomime, *Jack the Giant Killer*, and Mona Brand's first full length play, *Here Under Heaven*, a social drama which tackled a number of issues: the efforts of a Singapore refugee married to an AIF soldier to adapt to life on a Queensland sheepstation, the psychological problems of a young man who is lame, and the aboriginal and half caste problem. By the end of 1948 audiences were beginning to dwindle and there was an unevenness in the standards of playing. The cold war, with its associated increasing public hostility towards the left was beginning to take its toll on New Theatre.

The Flinders Street theatre was shared with the Realist Film Association who were the only group to organize screenings of overseas and 'art' films for the Melbourne public. Films were shown every Sunday night and for series of consecutive nights in between major theatre productions.

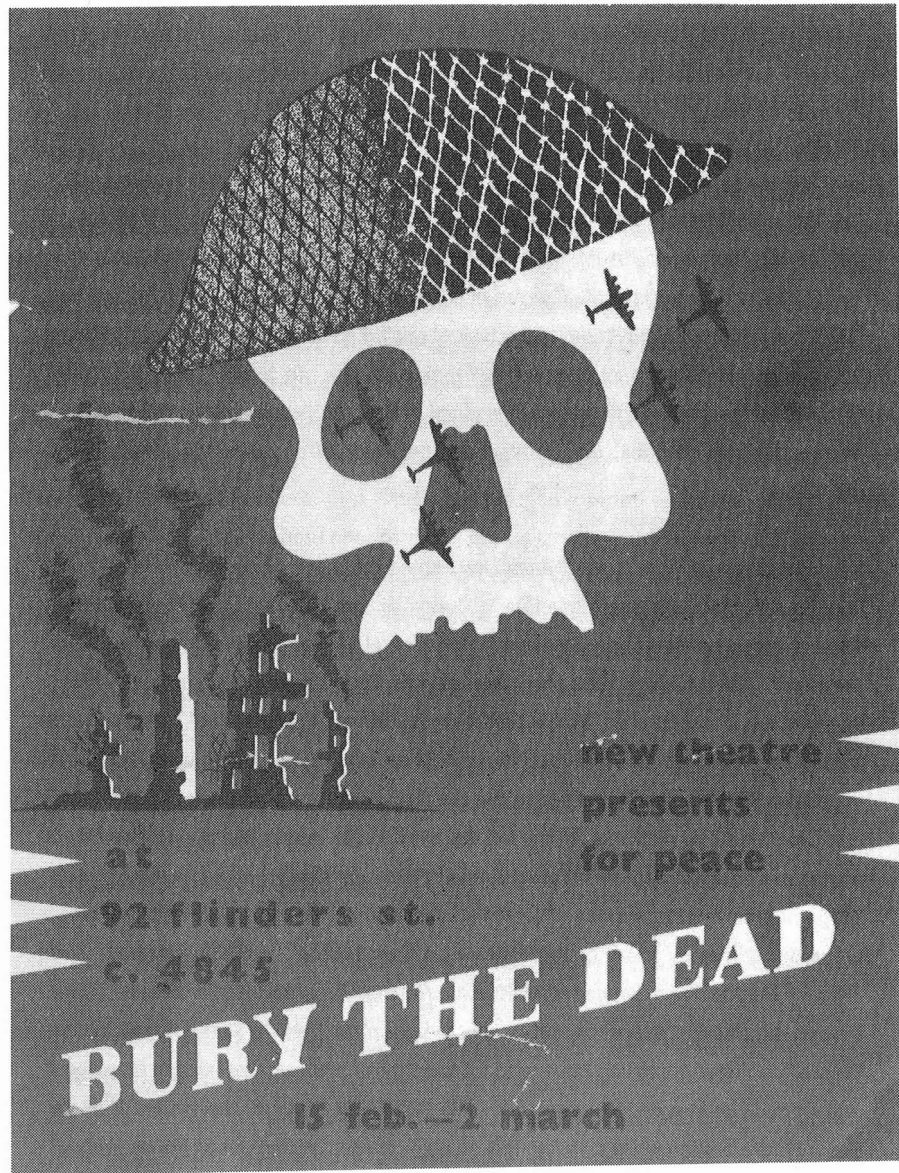
Politically, 1949 was a year of increasing conservatism, and one that saw many setbacks to the work of the left: the cold war had further intensified, Cecil Sharpley betrayed the Communist Party by selling out to Murdoch, the miners' strike was broken by the Chifley Government, causing an even greater rift between the left and the Labour Party, the Royal Commission on Communism pushed left-wing activity further underground. Almost inevitably, Menzies was returned to power in December of that year. 1950 was also a year of struggle: Menzies introduced the Communist

Party Dissolution Bill in April, a bill with powers to wipe out civil liberties generally, and there was considerable discussion about impending war. In June the Korean War broke out.

THE PEACE MOVEMENT

Responses to these issues were in the development of the Democratic Rights Council, a united front organization which spearheaded the opposition to Menzies' bill and its rejection by the Australian people in September, 1951, and the Australian Peace Council, an organization which was 'banned' by the ALP in both Victoria and NSW and which was dedicated to the task of raising petitions to ban the atomic bomb and develop a peace pact between the major powers. In March 1952, the Youth Carnival for Peace and Friendship took place in Sydney, despite efforts to sabotage it by the banning of halls, and preventing the entry of some of the international delegates.

New Theatre members threw themselves behind the movements for peace and civil liberties. In 1950, the Australian Peace Congress was held, and the Theatre lent its support with a season of peace plays from a revival of Irwin Shaw's compelling *Bury the Dead*, Albert Maltz's 1933 play, *Peace on Earth* to a revue, *Peacemeal*, which included the finale number "We've Got A Lovely Bunch of Signatures". Peace work was to be a dominant issue throughout the fifties, and the Peace Council lasted into the sixties when it was subsumed under the Congress for International Co-operation and Disarmament. Attitudes to the left were so hostile during this period that actors names are not recorded on the programme of *Bury the Dead* and a few actors used 'stage names' in programmes which listed cast names. In 1951 and 1952 the group presented plays by three of the Hollywood Ten, Dalton Trumbo's comedy, *The Biggest Thief in Town*, a second Maltz play, *Private Hicks*, and Howard Fast's *Thirty Pieces of Silver*, a play about a 'stool pigeon' to the Un-American Activities Committee. New Australian Plays also followed these themes: Oriel Gray's Play about racial prejudice in a country town, *Had We But World Enough*, *Nail on the Wall* by Frank Hardy, written while awaiting trial on libel charges arising out of *Power Without Glory*, Nance MacMillan's play about Korea, *Christmas Bridge*, a new production of Lawson, and Mona Brand's 'banned' play about Malaya, *Strangers in the Land*.



Poster for BURY THE DEAD

Longitude 49, a play about a democratic mutiny on an oil tanker was a topical comment on Menzies' attempts to hamstring the Seamen's Union through amendments to the Navigation Act. The advance publicity for this play, written by one of the more innocent members of the group, decried it as an "earthy play about seamen". The newspapers recorded this gaff with delight!

Longitude 49 was the first show in which veteran New Theatre actor Don Munro appeared. Don's involvement with Theatre now spans more than thirty years during which time he has performed a range of roles in an enormous variety of shows from Shakespeare to revue.

Other members of the group during this period included John Paton, Eric Colladetti, John Robertson, Judy Dean, Len Dowdle (actor and writer), Rae Hollis, Ted Thompson, Jim Buchanan, Ron Pinnell, Mark English and Jeff Underhill. John Gray (Eric Grayson) joined the group from Sydney New Theatre and was involved in both acting and production.

Throughout the fifties all papers but the left wing press were highly critical of the ostensibly 'propagandist' social commentary inherent in New Theatre plays, despite a grudging recognition of the theatrical skill with which they were performed. In Sydney there was a boycott on reviewing New Theatre plays by the major news syndicates, Melbourne also suffered from the dominance of the press by right wing newspaper barons throughout the fifties and sixties. These were years of total commitment by members towards a united effort with little positive public feedback; the theatre was now as much against the tide as it had been in the early years of the war.

New Theatre Presents.

WOOD JUBILEEVIT!

AN HYSTERICAL REVUE
OF OUR HISTORY
CHARACTERS IN
CARTOON:
NED KELLY IN PERSON
HARRY S. TRUEGUN
J. EDGAR DOOVER
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8.15 p.m.
Every night till Sat., Dec. 15
NEW THEATRE
92 Flinders St. C. 4845

1951 Revue

NEW THEATRE AUSTRALIA

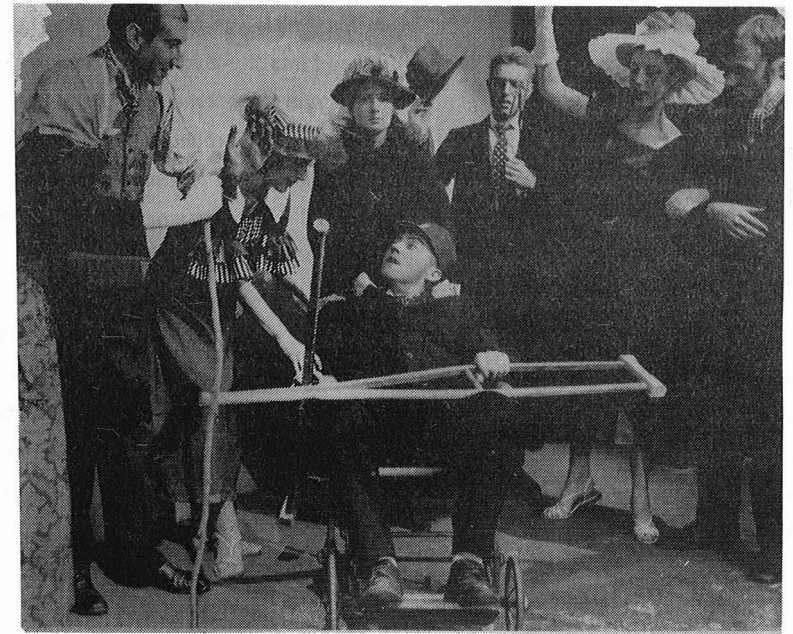
For some time New Theatre had been advocating the development of a National theatre, particularly through the *New Theatre Review* and CEMA meetings. The development of a professional theatre as an offshoot of Unity in London was an inspiration. In Easter 1948 Sydney New Theatre convened a meeting of progressive little theatre groups from the various states in an effort to form a common policy for the fostering of a people's theatre.



DEEP ARE THE ROOTS 1955

Special attention was given to the syndicated 'pulp' literature, music and films infiltrating the country from America. The policy began with the statement: "the theatre identifies itself with the people, aiming to participate fully in their life and struggles, working amongst them and attracting them to our Theatre".

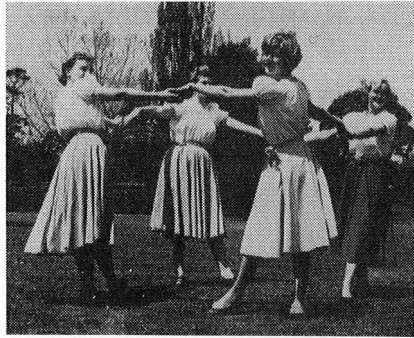
This first meeting led to the establishment of an organization known as New Theatre Australia which linked the groups in the various states. Each Easter, conferences were held to establish policy, exchange plays and information. As well, each Christmas a National drama school was held, hosted by one or other of the state groups. New Theatre continued as a National body into the sixties when the New Theatres in Perth, Brisbane and Adelaide folded. Unfortunately the Theatre's hopes for a federally funded National theatre were never realized. CEMA became the Arts Council of Australia in 1948 but never established a Commonwealth Theatre. In 1951 the Victorian Drama League was established and Melbourne New Theatre participated in its one act play competitions for many years. While the group was invariably praised for their entries into these competitions, they were only ever placed second. From their first entry in 1952, the Theatre entered *Behind the Beyond*, *Rocket Range*, *Lawson*, *The Pioneers*, *The Comedy of a Man Who Married a Dumb Wife* and *Drive a Hard Bargain*. The production of *Lawson* was initially given a scathing criticism by the English adjudicator. This was followed by an outcry from the audience that he had been unfair and on the final night he apologized and re-assessed the play, but gave it second place rather than first.



THE GOOD SOLDIER SCHWEIK, 1957

REEDY RIVER AND THE FOLK MUSICAL

In 1953, after difficult years, the New Theatre had its most outstanding success with the folk musical *Reedy River*. This play began with actor John Gray's collection of traditional bush songs. From the dozens of songs collected about ten were selected as sufficiently different in rhythm and mood, but linked thematically so as to form the basis for a production. The Melbourne New Theatre was approached with the idea and Dot Thompson called a meeting with Unity Dance Group, Unity Singers, John Gray, and Vera Bonner who was to arrange for a small orchestra. Singers, dancers and musicians began rehearsing before there was a play. Various scripts were submitted, but none of them proved suitable. Dick Diamond was then approached and reluctantly agreed to put a script together. The actors rehearsed the scenes as Dick Diamond finished them.



Unity Dance Group members

March 1953 saw the world premiere of *Reedy River* with the Unity singers, Unity Dance Group and a small orchestra conducted by Miles Maxwell. The bush band was to be introduced into the Sydney production later that year and to become an integral part of every subsequent production. *Reedy River* made theatrical and folk music history and dominated the New Theatre repertoire for the next four years.

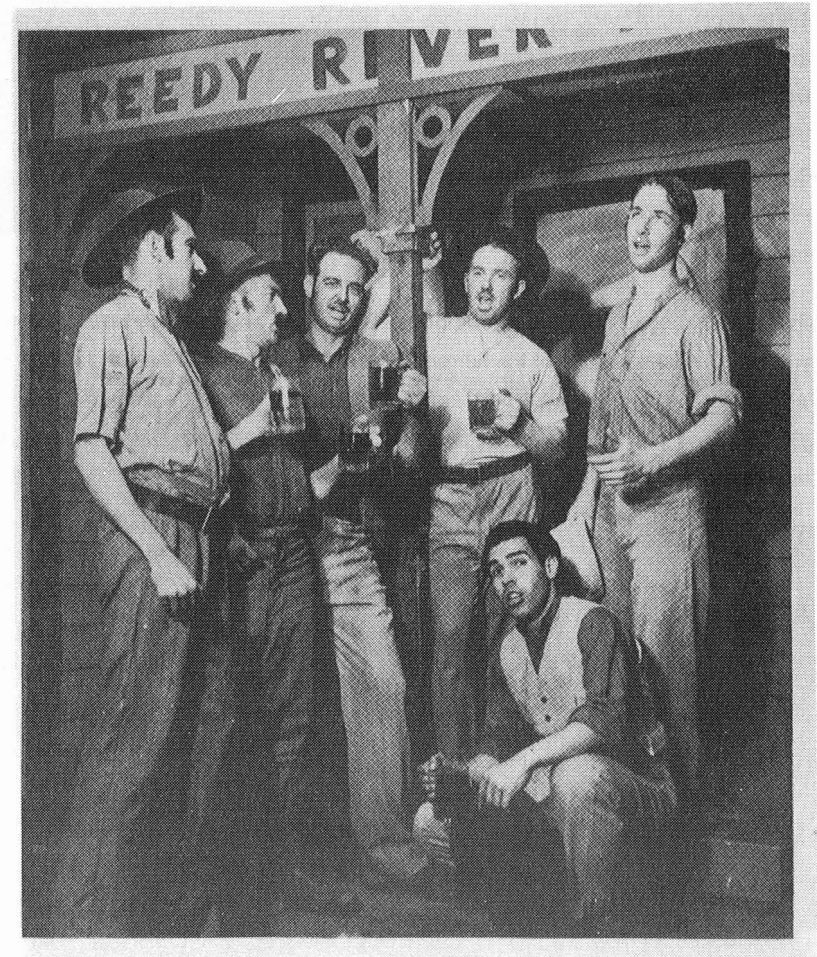
Here was a play which fulfilled the theatre's purpose of presenting issues (the play is set after the shearer's strike of 1891), but managed to appeal to the broadest possible spectrum of society. The theatre in Flinders Street was booked out nightly, and audiences queued for blocks to gain entrance. Extracts from the show were taken to the World Youth Festival in Bucharest. Despite the enormous public acclaim, the press were still against the theatre, and one paper vindictively described *Reedy River* as "only a trickle". In reality it was a flood!

Reedy River was performed again by the theatre in 1954, 1955 and 1956 during which time it completed an extensive tour of country areas, despite the fact its actors were almost all employed in full time jobs. *Reedy River* was subsequently played by New Theatres in every State. The Melbourne tour alone played to an audience of 5,000 over 23 shows, one of which was drive-in theatre when the Emerald Progress Association built a stage at the end of a football field and the audience drove their cars onto the oval.

Between 1954 and 1956 further national and international events were to cause concern amongst left people and provide more opportunity for 'red-baiting'. These were the Petrov affair in 1954, the infiltration of the Unions by the right wing Industrial Groups, culminating in the Labour Party split in 1955, Khrushchev's exposure of Stalinist purges in February 1956, and events in Hungary in October the same year.

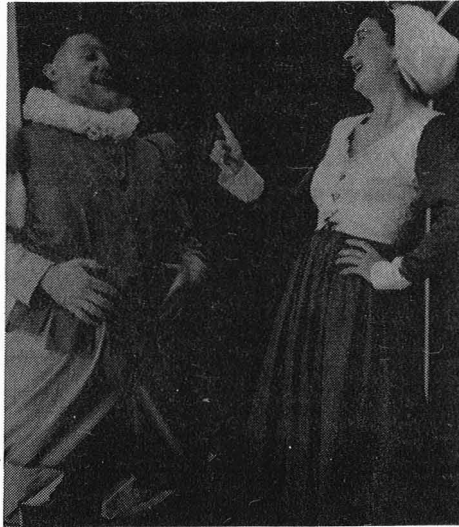
Sadly *Reedy River* was to be the only great success during that period; attempts to recapture the formula with Len Dowdle's *Song of '54*, to celebrate the anniversary of the Eureka stockade, and Dick Diamond's second Australian musical, *Under the Coolibah Tree*, about a Murray River paddle boat that runs aground, failed to capture the public's

imagination to the same extent. *Under the Coolibah Tree* was performed during the Olympic Games, and was memorable because there was always an international contingent in the audience. During this period, optimism was high in Melbourne and racial and political differences were forgotten, for a time at least.



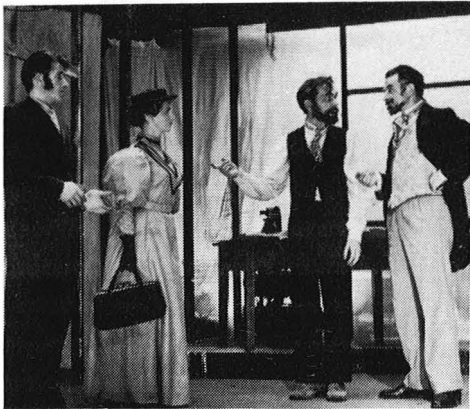
from the original production of REEDY RIVER, 1953

During the last few years of the fifties the Theatre never again attracted large audiences as *Reedy River* had done, despite considerable artistic success and innovative programming on issues of topical concern. In 1955 it produced two plays about American racism. *Calypso Isle*, a musical by Ralph de Boissiere, a West Indian living in Melbourne, on the topic of American Imperialism in Trinidad, was ahead of its time in its introduction of calypso music. *Deep Are the Roots* told the story of a Negro war hero returning home who 'violates' the colour bar by falling in love with a white girl and is framed on a theft charge.



Bill Griffiths as Falstaff in MERRY WIVES

Other plays ranged from the issues of the Bikini Atoll and war in *Pacific Paradise*, Dymphna Cusack's expose of the horrors of atom bomb testing in the Pacific, and *The Good Soldier Schweik*, to the McCarthy purges in the Rosenbergs' story, *Trial by Falsehood* and *The Crucible*, to classics such as *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Juno and The Paycock* and Moliere's *The Miser*.



Oriol Gray's THE TORRENTS

In 1958 the Theatre undertook the premiere production of Oriol Gray's *The Torrents* which had won equal first with *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* in the Playwrights' Advisory Board competition. The production failed to generate any of the public enthusiasm given to *The Doll*. At the end of that year the Theatre threw itself into a large production of a new musical by Jeff Underhill, *The Ballad of Angel's Alley*, in an effort to revive the theatre's flagging spirits.

The play, which included professionals in the cast, was performed at the Flinders Street Theatre. Unfortunately this was the year of the worst heat wave in Melbourne ever and

people stayed home. The show showed a considerable loss, and the Theatre found itself in dire financial straits.

In 1959 audiences slumped still further, partly because of a continuing political boycott, but more because of the effects of television. *The Biggest Thief in Town* was one of the greatest successes artistically but drew virtually no audience. Similarly, the Realist Film Group were losing audiences to television and a few commercial cinemas which were beginning to offer alternatives to Hollywood pulp. Eventually, rising rental costs made it clear that the group would have to leave the premises it had occupied for so long. Efforts were made for all the groups who used the building to purchase it but the idea fell through. The last play performed at Flinders Street was the story of the Tolpuddle martyrs, *The Six Men of Dorset*. The Realist Film Association stayed on for another six months before they too left. In more ways than one it was the end of an era for New Theatre.



John Robertson (Captain) and John Paton (Joxer) in JUNO AND THE PAYCOCK

NEW THEATRE ON THE ROAD

After leaving Flinders Street the Theatre once again tackled the question of how to develop a broad based but predominantly working class audience. Since the war the population of Melbourne had shifted out to the suburbs; that and the pull of television meant attendance at the smaller inner city theatres had dwindled. The group decided that it was appropriate for the theatre to go to the people, and in 1960 began a season as a touring company playing in suburban halls. The Theatre's various effects were taken out of the Flinders Street premises and stored in the Eureka Youth League Hall in Queensberry Street. New Theatre were given an office and operated administratively from there during the touring period.

Recent outbreaks of anti-semitism in Melbourne convinced the group that the first production should be a play on this topic. When nothing suitable was found, John Hepworth suggested doing a production on the history of the theatre, and began work on *Writing on the Wall*. The form was a play within a play; members arrived at the theatre for a rehearsal to find the place ransacked with swastikas and slogans painted on the wall - the play's director draws the cast's attention to the many other times in the theatre's history when these issues have arisen, and the cast work through scenes from *Waiting for Lefty*, *Bury the Dead*, *Till the Day I Die* and so on. The second part of the show was a Living Newspaper piece on issues of the day. The first few performances were played at the EYL rooms. A set of stage rostrums came from Wal Cherry's Union Repertory Theatre and a stage was built 'in the round'. The show then toured the suburbs. Venues and audiences were arranged by organizations such as Peace Groups, Community Groups, Union and Party Branches; the Theatre printed tickets and performed the show. It was only through the collaborative action of the theatre and the working people that it maintained considerable success throughout this period.

Writing on the Wall opened on April 27 in St Kilda and played all over Melbourne until July 30th. The second show to tour was Oriel Gray's *Lawson*, updated and with the addition of songs. In each of 1961 and 1962 two more plays were produced and toured; Arthur Miller's *All My Sons*, a topical revue, *Polling Daze*, Miller's adaptation of Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*, and *The Good Soldier Schweik*. This period was an eventful one in the Theatre's history - it was hectic and the group learned a considerable amount about theatre during that time. The purchase of a truck made

touring considerably easier. While the plays were a reasonable financial success, the costs of touring over a long period of time consumed any profits. Because so few shows were done during these years it was difficult to hold new members.



THE LONG AND THE SHORT AND THE TALL on the N.T.'s portable stage

CENTRE 63

In 1963 new premises were found in the city, off Latrobe Street, at the corner of Sutherland Street and Guilford Lane, and named Centre 63 with the intention that it become a place where the many arts allied to the theatre could meet. Centre 63 was a long narrow room with nothing in it - certainly an almost impossible theatre venue in the theatrical context of the early sixties! The group brought in its portable stage which it moved around to suit each production. The most recent touring show, *The Long and the Short and the Tall* came into Centre 63 for its first season.

A variety of plays was performed in the first years at the new venue, including a *A Raisin in the Sun* which included Jack Charles in the cast and was the one of the earliest involvements of aboriginals in Western-style theatre. (Aboriginal people were involved in "White Justice" and *Fountains Beyond*..) Inspired by Jack's success in the play, the Theatre went about developing an aboriginal ensemble around Jack Charles, but this was not really to come to fruition until the seventies. *A Raisin in the Sun* was followed by a dramatization of three stories by Yiddish humourist Sholem Aleichem (with Jack Charles playing a black angel) for the centenary celebrations of Yiddish literature, and a new play by Len Dowdle, *The Rocket that Jack Built*.

The sixties saw a considerable change in the direction of the theatre in that the theatrical and political milieus in which it functioned changed considerably from the mid-sixties onwards. In Australia, the traditional left movement was splintered by the revelations about Stalin and the Soviet/China conflicts, and many socialists felt there was a need for a new beginning for the left. The mid-sixties onwards saw the establishment of a New Left which attracted many young people as well as socialists from a broad social and political spectrum. The sixties was a period of liberalization, politically, sexually and artistically. But just as the formation of a new 'popular front' who were committed to progressive ideas for a variety of reasons gave new life to the left, it also further clouded the issues. The many groups seemed too diverse and with too many ideological differences to develop a permanent movement.

There was one issue, however, on which all groups came together, and this was the Vietnam Moratorium, established in 1969 after a meeting of representatives of peace movements and Labour politicians, students and church groups. The Moratorium's objective was a nationally co-ordinated campaign to stop the Vietnam war. Marches, demonstrations, student 'sit-ins' and draft card burning became the order of the day.

Theatrically, too, there were revolutions world wide. A new regional working class theatre developed in England; 'absurdist' plays, structurally and ideologically confronting, were popularized in Europe; a generation of off-beat American writers and actors were establishing a theatrical counter-culture in off-off-Broadway ventures like La Mama, the Living Theatre and so on. Street theatre, 'happenings' and improvisation were catch-words in a decade of experimentation. In Australia a response came to these overseas trends with the development of new funded theatres, and a host of

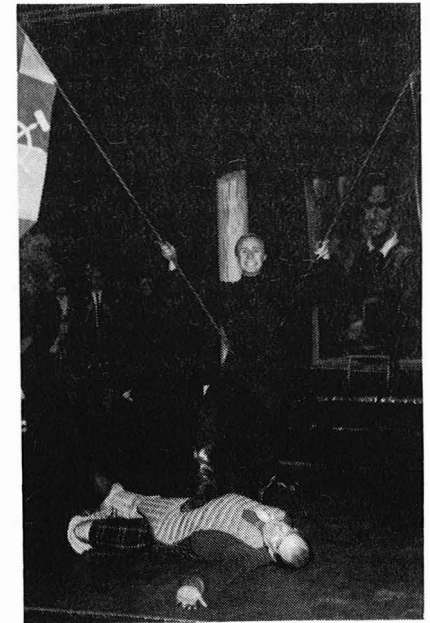
'experimental' groups, often developing within the universities and, in Melbourne, around Carlton. While New Theatre found itself more ideologically at home in the progressive sixties, it also found it more difficult to find a specific expression for its particular kind of 'left-ness'.

In the latter half of the sixties the Theatre repertoire was indicative of the new progressive theatre, but not as significantly different as it had been in the previous two decades. In 1965 the Theatre began to re-establish its audiences with an American negro play, *Purlie Victorious*, a Brecht/O'Casey double, and a Jewish play, *The Troublemakers*.

Eventually the theatre got enough money together to put on *Reedy River* which it produced at St. Peter's Hall, and this was followed by *The Wall*, a play about an uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto, also performed at St. Peter's.

1967 and 1968 proved to be particularly successful years for the Theatre and re-established it as a force in Melbourne theatre. In 1967 Dick Diamond, then working in North Vietnam, sent a few pages of an exciting new American satire in an airmail letter the rest of the script arrived in a few more letters. The play was Barbara Garson's *MacBird*, a Shakespearean satire on the Kennedy Assassination, with John Ken O'Dunc (Kennedy) being liquidated by President MacBird (Johnson). As they had done for *Reedy River*, audiences queued for blocks to see this notorious but playful satire which offended critics and politicians alike, but was an unprecedented success with the public everywhere. The house was full every night.

Macbird was followed by a thematically related Living Newspaper style play, *On Stage Vietnam*, devised by two Sydney New Theatre writers, Mona Brand and Pat Barnett. *On Stage Vietnam* was another considerable success although it did not maintain the



Terry Ward and Don Munro in *MACBIRD*

audience levels of *Macbird*. One unpleasant incident gave evidence that even in the liberal sixties there was a pro-war faction who did not believe in freedom of speech. On the opening night the cast arrived to find the theatre had been broken into and selected costumes had been taken. The play was performed in makeshift costumes but it went on!

OBSCENITY AND SHHH.....

The following year the theatre was to maintain its high profile with a production of Claude van Italie's satire on capitalism, *America Hurrah*.

To an extent its production and subsequent censorship paralleled the experience the theatre had had with *Till the Day I Die*. The Melbourne New Theatre was in rehearsal with the production when the vice squad raided Sydney New Theatre. Subsequently, *Motel*, the third part of the trilogy of *America Hurrah* was banned in New South Wales on the grounds of obscenity. Melbourne decided to go ahead and this generated an incredible amount of debate in the press on censorship, providing valuable pre-publicity for the play. A celebrity audience was invited for the opening night, including a large press contingent. The company was told the play could be produced, "provided certain offensive passages are removed". On the afternoon of the opening night director Don Munro was visited by the vice squad and warned that if *Motel* was performed they would be charged under the Police Offensive Behaviour Act. He made a decision not to perform the third act that night. The audience was told the circumstances and an open discussion on censorship followed. The vice squad members stayed throughout. The Theatre knew they could not show the play at Centre 63 because they did not have a licence to perform, so the play moved to Emerald Hill after that theatre was granted a licence. A private showing was held at the home of Jean McLean of the Save Our Sons Movement to which the press and politicians, including the leader of the opposition, Clyde Holding, were invited.

THE WAR IN VIETNAM

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by **Mona Brand and Pat Barnett.**

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THE AGE

Monday, August 19, 1968

Vice squad hurrah

UNTIL last week, we thought Victorians had long passed the point where they could be surprised by 'the labyrinthine minds of the people' supervise censorship in the State. We have been surprised again, rather nasty way. This episode with the controversial play *America Hurrah* which the vice squad has derided someone else made a decision vice squad 'is p' have public pe- 're

the play had been performed. They arrived late at night during the course of a dinner party and caused some embarrassment. Second, the vice squad along Mr. Holding for an appointment, and fully interviewed him in his office in Melbourne. We can understand the police questioning a reputable Melbourne theatre company quite knows what the 'corner. But we 'rader of the 'treat- we

Theatre may test vice squad ban

The Melbourne New Theatre is considering making a legal test case of the Vice Squad's "ban" on the controversial American play *Motel*.

The play's producer (Mr. ... said yesterday ... ally loath to ... ges in the ... require- ... The first two plays deal with the social and intellectual effects on television and with the ...

Melbourne theatre ... Street Viaduct, in ... following has ... men ...

VICTORIA CAN SEE MOTEL PLAY IF CUTS ARE MADE

ALIAN Tuesday August 6 1968

Victoria will not follow South Wales in banning controversial play, 'Motel' cuts are arranged

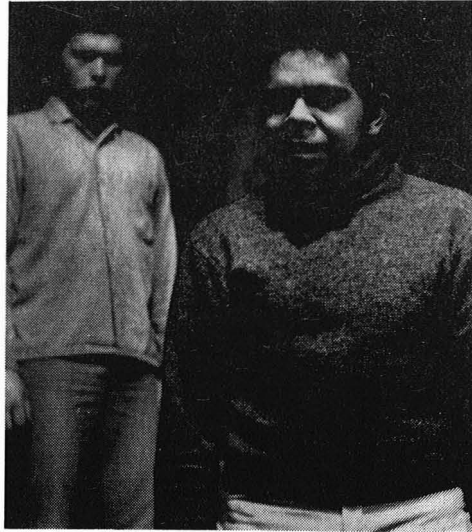
Press reaction to AMERICA HURRAH

As a result, there was even more discussion by the press and the issue became a cause celebre. Ultimately the play was performed nightly at Emerald Hill with some minor alterations to the script and the vice squad in attendance every night.

After these successes the Theatre produced a series of socially pertinent plays which were not, again, significantly different from those being performed by some of the new generation theatre groups springing up in universities and other venues. The mainstream was catching up with New Theatre. By now it had, however, established itself as a vital contemporary group, and seasons of new plays were supported by experimental workshops, classes and 'instant' theatre.

By the end of 1970 the theatre was drawing excellent audiences. The year began with Spike Milligan's zany comedy, *The Bedsitting Room*, re-written for Melbourne New Theatre. Its final play that year, *Blood Knot*, with aboriginal actor Jack Charles in the lead, and the first Fugard to be performed in Victoria, played to a full house every night. Inspired by Jack's continuing success as an actor, the Theatre went about developing

an aboriginal ensemble around Jack as an offshoot of the theatre. This culminated in the development of the show, *Jack Charles is Up and Fighting* with Bob Maza and Oleg Lewinski working with Jack and using scripts by Bill Reed, Frank Hardy and others. The show played at the Guild theatre independently of New Theatre, and then toured the Universities and on to Canberra. The Nindethana Theatre, as the group was called, subsequently received Australia Council funding and moved to Sydney where they developed a black theatre.



Jack Charles and Oleg Lewinski In BLOODKNOT

THE PRAM FACTORY, THE APG AND THE NEW

It became evident that Centre 63's small auditorium and location were no longer appropriate. In 1970 Dot Thompson located the Pram Factory and New Theatre negotiated sharing arrangements with the newly formed professional co-operative, the Australian Performing Group. New Theatre took *Bloodknot*, into the front theatre upstairs, again built by members. New Theatre assumed it would perform its next show, *If There Weren't Any Blacks You'd Have to Invent Them* in the front theatre. The APG, however, took over the front theatre for *Marvellous Melbourne* so New Theatre built the back theatre and performed the first show in that. By the end of 1970 the APG were becoming very successful and took over both upstairs theatres. New Theatre moved downstairs and converted the storeroom into a theatre for *A Doll's House*, and a Chekhov double.

Unfortunately, while their repertoires and artistic ideologies were not entirely dissimilar, the established, committed New Theatre company and the youthful, professional APG were not the most compatible of tenants, so the New Theatre found itself looking yet

again for suitable premises. In 1973, New Theatre performed two shows in the Guild Theatre and returned to the Pram Factory for *A Sunday Walk*. *The Rocky Rogue Show* toured the beach resorts over Summer. *The Proposal* and *All Live Colour Revue in 3D* were performed at the Carlton Community Centre. *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* was performed at Princess Hill High Theatre and was a success of as great a magnitude as *Reedy River* and *Macbird*. The Theatre was packed every night and made enough money to convert its next premises. *Female Transport*, Steve Gooch's play about women convicts on the ship to Australia was the final play performed at an 'occasional' venue, the Why Not Theatre.

The sixties and seventies were difficult years for New Theatre, and times of change. Special tribute must be paid here to Dot Thompson, who joined the theatre in the forties and has maintained a consistent commitment to the group and its ideals. During these years Dot took on a leadership role as administrator, director and teacher. Without her the theatre could have folded, as did the groups in Brisbane, Perth and Adelaide. Dot was assisted by Don Munro who also shouldered a good deal of the production work.

ESTABLISHING THE ORGAN FACTORY

In 1976 some members of the Collingwood council, (ironically the same council which had supported the theatre's efforts to stage *Till the Day I Die* forty years earlier), suggested their municipality needed a theatre. Theatre members found the Organ Factory, which was to be shortly opened as a community centre. Negotiations were completed and once again members found themselves with the task of building a theatre from scratch. The entrance to the upstairs where the theatre was built was a narrow steep staircase. There was a large open area where the organ pipes had been constructed which had to be filled. Members worked solidly to build a stage, a bio-box and an auditorium to seat seventy.

New Theatre opened its Organ Factory premises with Steve Gooch's *The Motor Show* on Saturday, August 28, 1976.

THE LAST DECADE

New Theatre's most recent decade has been as varied as its first. The theatre scene in Melbourne has been accommodated by an increasing number of professional and semi-professional groups, many of whom have, in part, taken on the role that New Theatre had held solely for so many years. As a consequence, New Theatre has had to re-assess its position and its production policy. The commitments to remain a non-professional theatre, and a people's theatre producing plays with a sociological and political purpose, have been crucial in this re-assessment.



THE MOTOR SHOW, 1976

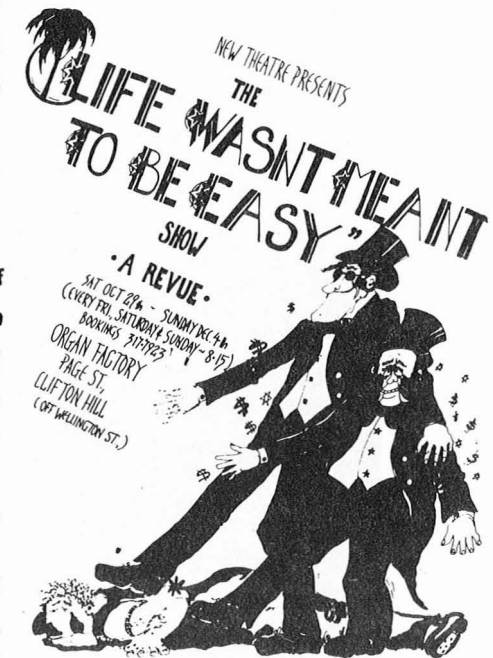
Since 1976, as in every other decade of New Theatre, one of the greatest tasks has been the search for new plays which are of dramatic merit as well as being politically and socially relevant for ordinary people. It has been imperative in these years, as it has always been, that the theatre did not descend into working with texts that were shallow, artificial or trivial.

The theatre moved into the Organ Factory with *The Motor Show*, an episodic play interspersed with vaudevillian style song and dance. This show, a satirical history of Mr. Big and his motor car company, was in rehearsal as members built the Organ Factory theatre. This production gathered a new generation of New Theatre members - particularly young people who had been horrified by the sacking of Prime Minister Whitlam the year before, who were alarmed by current Liberal Party policy on uranium and employment, amongst other things, and who believed theatre could be a vehicle for change. *The Motor Show* was a significant success and the theatre embarked upon the equally successful *Elizabeth I*, by Paul Foster of La Mama fame, a play within a play based on a scrubby group of travelling players performing their version of the life of Elizabeth. The cast of twelve played over five hundred characters (including the ships

taking part in the Armada) with energy and wit and just a basket of costumes to assist them to put on and off their various roles. The decade in the Organ Factory began with vital new membership, a new theatre, and considerable artistic and public success

1977 began the year well with a two-hander entitled *Survival*, which included *The Speechmaker* and *The Culprit* by Chekhov; the second half of the programme consisted of a collection of anecdotes, songs and poems by Brecht, put together by the director, Dot Thompson, and cast. *Survival* was followed by two classics, *The Crucible*, and an incredibly successful revue, *The Life Wasn't Meant to be Easy Show*, which addressed the gamut of contemporary social issues - pollution, unemployment, drugs, religion and advertising, uranium mining and political chicanery.

One of the important local issues in Collingwood was the opposition to the building of the F19 freeway; New Theatre members threw themselves into this work, manning the barricades and performing extracts from *Life Wasn't Meant to be Easy* at anti-freeway demonstrations. *Life Wasn't Meant to be Easy* was the highpoint of success for the theatre during the first five years of the decade, but it was during this show that the theatre began experiencing some of the internal difficulties which were to continue for the next few years. These difficulties included a lack of real unity amongst members in articulating and carrying out a united artistic and ideological line for the company, with the associated problem of inconsistent membership.





New Theatre Members at an anti-freeway demonstration.

In 1978 the theatre produced one of the earliest feminist shows to be seen in Melbourne, the result of the development of a 'women's group' in the theatre, who were concerned about the lack of opportunity and material available to women. *Roleplay* was semi-revue style, consisting of a collection of short scenes and songs, followed by a one acter, *The Victim*, written by members Sue and Chris Gaffney. Other plays that year tackled various issues: Peter Barnes's *The Ruling Class*, a hilarious British satire on the hypocrisy, snobbery and cruelty of the Upper Classes; *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, on the horrors of incarceration in 'mental asylums' and

Durrenmatt's absurdist comedy about three insane nuclear scientists, and the moral dilemma of who should have the responsibility for the application of nuclear research.

New Theatre Daytime, a professional theatre-in-education group, was developed in 1974, two years before the theatre moved into the Organ Factory. An off-shoot of the main company, it was developed as a response to the realization that young people entering secondary schools had virtually no exposure to either theatre or literature. The first productions were a simplified *Macbeth* and a variety compilation of Australian pieces. This group went from strength to strength after the establishment of a permanent home. Under the direction of Dot Thompson, the group took shows to schools, offered after school and holiday programmes as well as a Saturday morning theatre group for children. It still operates a very hectic schedule of performances in schools of cleverly revamped classical or Australian material to suit primary or secondary school audiences. Its aim is to make dramatic literature accessible, which it is currently fulfilling with the show *Clowning Around With Shakespeare*.

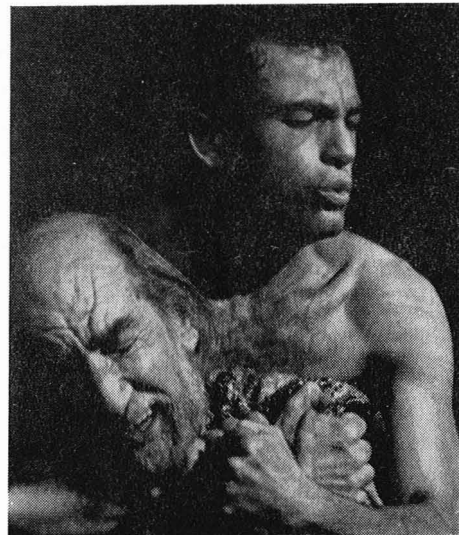
The next two years saw the company faced with a declining membership and a real dearth of suitable scripts. Two plays in 1979 were locally written by a member, Martin Willoughby Thomas: *Night Out*, which was performed with Barrie Keefe's *Gotcha*, a double about modern youth, and *Dole It Out*, a revue-style show on unemployment. During these years the theatre included three New Theatre classics in its repertoire in an effort to revive the company's flagging spirits - *Lawson*, *Bury the Dead* and *Reedy River*. Classes were re-introduced on Saturdays along with a series of play readings. The theatre's difficulties during these years were a sign of the times, but the company failed to find a strategy with which to cope. The most pressing problem was the lack of commitment from all but a few of the stalwart members. Actors would join for a show or two and then, after having gained experience, move on, often to an ad-hoc 'professional' group.

In 1981 the company held a play competition in an effort to promote Australian plays. While there was a considerable number of entries, the best six of which were performed as a play reading, it became evident that very few writers were tackling the issues which were important in a left theatre group with responsibilities to provide a people's theatre. The exception was the winning play, *Work- A-Day World*, by Graham

Shiel. Set in an opticals factory, it considered the impact technological change was having on traditionally skilled craftsmen. During that year the theatre tackled *We Can't Pay, We Won't Pay*, introducing Melbourne audiences to the work of Italian satirist Dario Fo. *Yobbo Nowt* by John McGrath followed, the first significantly working people's play the Theatre had come across for some time. *Yobbo Nowt*, a British musical play about a woman who has to find a means to support her family after her husband leaves was gutsy but sincere. With its scenes set in the social security offices, and its recognition of the problems of the single mother, it might have been set in Collingwood Melbourne.

In the next three years the theatre was to experience one of the lowest points of its fifty years. In 1982 only two plays were produced, *This Story Of Yours*, a psychological study of a policeman and the man he is convicting, and *Savages*, Christopher Hampton's play about American imperialism in South America. While *Savages*, directed by Dot Thompson, was a considerable artistic success, opening the 1983 season and establishing a new membership for the theatre, its effects were short lived. In 1983 considerable extensions were undertaken at the Organ Factory. While these made a marked improvement to the foyer, stage and auditorium areas, they significantly disrupted the year's work. The next few programs were hastily put together and standards were abysmal. **Below: Rob Wallace and Don Munro In TIMON OF ATHENS**

Babes in the Wood, a locally written play about the Wobblies (International Workers of the World) was well intentioned, but dogged by cast changes at the last minute. A second Graham Shiel play, *The New Australians Rehearse the Working Mans Paradise*, about William Lane's experiments in Paraguay, was produced without sufficient attention to the re-writing that was necessary. In this year because of renovations and declining membership, resources were stretched and there were no classes and little overseeing of artistic quality. At the end of the year members



met for a long discussion to review the theatre and re-establish some guidelines, the most important of which was to ensure that artistic standards were lifted.

Enormous efforts went into the next production, *Here Comes Kisch!*, the premiere of Mona Brand's play about Egon Kisch, the Czech who came to Australia in 1934 to speak against War and Facism, was prevented from entering, jumped ship, was excluded again on the grounds that he could not speak Gaelic, and ultimately gained much more publicity than he ever would have had his entry proceeded without comment. The play was a success but, as had happened in the previous year, the rest of the season went downhill. *Magnificence*, Howard Brenton's play about house squatters had several performances cancelled because of electricity strikes, and the trilogy of plays which followed had little artistic merit and virtually no audiences.

In the last eighteen months, as the Theatre has considered the significance of fifty uninterrupted years of performance, Theatre members have again re-assessed the roles and aims of the New Theatre in Melbourne. The Theatre has needed to reconsider both its audience, and the social and political milieu in which it now operates. After the political ferment of the late sixties and early seventies when the anti-conscription and anti-Vietnam movements mobilized a groundswell of people, there have been virtually no issues which have sparked the development of a collective front of progressive people. Even the anti-nuclear movement has lost some of the energy which fired it a few years ago. Rather, during the long period of conservative government since 1975, working people have seen a gradual whittling away of their conditions and rights as the standard of living slips lower and lower. Hawke's labour government has done little to redress this. Similarly, world-wide, the powers of the monetarists, the multi-nationals and a self-satisfied middle-class have increasingly and insidiously gained ground. The left movement in Australia, fragmented into shards since the sixties, has found little common ideological ground on which to take a stand against these issues.

One of the gravest problems for New Theatre has been the dearth of good scripts which accomodate the theatre's current aims to reflect the "socialist aspirations of the working class". Furthermore, while it has never been artistically intimidated by financial difficulties, the theatre has not had the assurance nor the broad publicity given to the

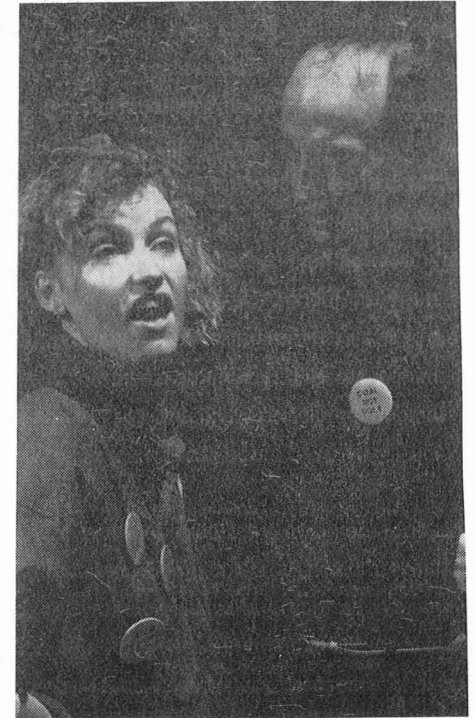
funded professional groups with whom it now must compete for audiences, and to some extent for actors and writers. The theatre has needed to reconsider what makes New Theatre unique in the Melbourne theatre scene. It remains the revues, the encouragement of Australian writing within the theatre and plays about the working people which continue to distinguish New Theatre, and which also attract its most faithful (and largest) audiences. The past eighteen months have seen considerable success for the theatre in fulfilling this recognition of its role. Last year during a performance of *Sandinista*, a dramatic history of the Nicaraguan revolution, an excited South American audience stood up during the final scene where actors sing the FSLN hymn and cheered the cast with a chant of 'non pasaran'; it was an exciting experience of revolutionary solidarity. *The Living Room War*, Ron Hoenig's play about the traumas experienced by a Vietnam veteran moved to tears those in the audience who had fought in Vietnam. The play is an exposition of the lack of Government concern or support for these men, often conscriptees, and their families.



The Final Scene from SANDINISTA, 1985

The plays produced in 1986, our anniversary year, have been artistically and publically successful. Our first show was Don Munro's production of Athol Fugard's *Statements*, a semi-documentation of the investigation of a relationship between a white librarian and a coloured teacher. This play is an important exposition of the total abuse of civil liberties in contemporary South Africa and played its part in developing a public awareness that sanctions must be imposed against this dangerous regime. The most recent production *With the Sun on Our Backs*, a play which closely parallels recent events in New South Wales, as it gives an historical perspective on the British

coalminers strike through the experiences of one family, brought a vigorous response from working people at a strikers' benefit night, just as *Waiting for Lefty* did fifty years ago. This play can be read as a comment on the current debate about the right of unions to exist, an issue basic to the struggles of working people. New Theatre members took extracts from the play, along with some revue pieces, to a demonstration by members of the Builders' Labourers' Federation against the Master Builders' Association's annual dinner at the Hilton Hotel. This gathering recalled New Theatre activities of decades ago. At the conclusion of the formal presentation by New Theatre, striking workers joined the cast in the hymn of solidarity while police looked on.



WITH THE SUN ON OUR BACKS
Wendy Meddings and Chris Gaffney

For New Theatre the recent successes seem to indicate a turning point in the theatre's fortunes, or perhaps they illustrate that history is cyclical. For its anniversary production in August/September, 1986, New Theatre has received a Victorian Ministry grant (its first ever) and a professional director, Lois Ellis, writer, Peter Dickinson and designer, Neil Greenaway are devising a show on its history - so far - a history in which the theatre's concern with the working class and its struggles against war, fascism and the capitalist system have invariably seen it performing and fighting 'against the stream'.

MELBOURNE NEW THEATRE
A COMPLETE LIST OF PLAYS

* denotes Australian plays

1936

Central Hall

WAITING FOR LEFTY
Clifford Odets

1937

Brunswick Town Hall

TILL THE DAY I DIE
Clifford Odets

King's Theatre

***THIRTEEN DEAD**
Melbourne Writer's League

Flanigan Lane

TILL THE DAY I DIE
Clifford Odets

1938

WAITING FOR LEFTY
Clifford Odets
TILL THE DAY I DIE
Clifford Odets
WHERE'S THAT BOMB
Roger Cullan & Buckley Roberts
THE ETERNAL SONG
Marc Arnstein
TRANSIT
Phillip Stevenson & Albert Maltz

Apollo Theatre

BURY THE DEAD
Irwin Shaw
THE ETERNAL SONG
Marc Arnstein

Princess Theatre

BURY THE DEAD
Irwin Shaw
BESSIE BOSCH
Peter Niki

1939

Flanigan Lane

TILL THE DAY I DIE
Clifford Odets
REHEARSAL
Albert Maltz
BRING ME MY BOW
Sydney Box
REMEMBER PEDROCITA
Bertolt Brecht

Central Hall

PLANT IN THE SUN
Ben Bengal
***THE SWORD SONG**
Catherine Duncan

Queen Street

1940

CANNIBAL CARNIVAL
Herbert Hodge
REHEARSAL
Albert Hodge
COLONY
Geoffrey Trease
ON THE SKIDS
anon
RENEGADE
J.H. Pollock
WORKHORSE
anon
TROJAN WOMEN (excerpts)
Euripides
OTHELLO (excerpts)
Shakespeare

1941

***SOAK THE RICH**
Dick Diamond
SHOWDOWN
Tur Brothers & L. Sheinin
***I'D RATHER BE LEFT**
Revue

Princess Theatre

WITH HONOUR
Ben Bengal
TILL THE DAY I DIE
Clifford Odets

1942

Queen Street

SHOWDOWN
Tur Brothers & L. Sheinin
ACCORDING TO PLAN
Geoffrey Parsons
***GIGGLE SUITS AND OVERALLS**
Camp Concerts
LIFE IS CALLING
V. Belarseckovsky

Union Theatre

DISTANT POINT
A. Afinogenev

Flinders Street

1943

SABOTAGE
John Bish
BLOOD ON THE MOON
Paul & Claire Sifton
***LET'S BE OFFENSIVE**
Revue
HOUSE ON THE HILL
W. Kaverin
HEART OF A CITY
Lesley Storm

1944

***LAWSON**
Oriell Gray
***THE DROVERS**
Louis Esson
COUNTER ATTACK
Jack & Phillip Stephenson
***THE AYES HAVE IT**
Revue
***MEN WITHOUT WIVES**
Henrietta Drake-Brockman
THE EVE OF ST. MARK
Maxwell Anderson
TOMORROW THE WORLD
James Gow & Armand D'usseau

1945

DECISION
Edward Chodorov
***SONS OF THE MORNING**
Catherine Duncan
ALL CHANGE HERE
Ted Willis
BOY MEETS GIRL
Sam & Bella Spewack
***HENRY LAWSON**
Oriell Gray
***CALL UP YOUR GHOSTS**
Miles Franklin & Dymphna Cusack
THEY CAME TO A CITY
J. B. Priestley

1946

SPANISH VILLAGE
Lope de Vega
GOD BLESS THE GUV'NOR
Ted Willis
TARTUFFE
Moliere
***COMING OUR WAY**
Revue
LOVE ON THE DOLE
Ronald Gow & Walter Greenwood
***FOUNTAINS BEYOND**
George Landen Dann
***WELCOME HOME**
Jim Crawford

1947

A PHYSICIAN IN SPITE OF HIMSELF

Moliere

***SONS OF THE SOUTH**

George Farwell

WOMAN BITES DOG

Sam & Bella Spewack

WHAT HAPPENS TO LOVE

Ted Willis

THE ORDINARY MAN

Leonid Leonov

***JACK THE GIANT KILLER**

Dick Diamond

1948

WAITING FOR LEFTY

Clifford Odets

***ROCKET RANGE**

Jim Crawford

HOME OF THE BRAVE

Arthur Laurents

***HERE UNDER HEAVEN**

Mona Brand

CANNIBAL CARNIVAL

Herbert Hodge

THE RUSSIAN QUESTION

Konstantin Siminov

THE IMAGINARY INVALID

Moliere

1949

THE STAR TURNS RED

Sean O'Casey

THE WHOLE WORLD OVER

Konstantin Siminov

VOLPONE

Ben Jonson

***MINER'S RIGHT**

Jim Crawford

***TAKE IT AS READ**

Revue

1950

BURY THE DEAD

Irwin Shaw

***HAD WE BUT WORLD ENOUGH**

Oriol Gray

PEACE ON EARTH

Albert Maltz & George Sklar

STICK TO YOUR SEATS (PEACEMEAL)

Revue

***WELL I DECLARE**

Revue

1951

THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER

Howard Fast

***THE NAIL ON THE WALL**

Frank Hardy

PRIVATE HICKS

Albert Maltz

THE BIGGEST THIEF IN TOWN

Dalton Trumbo

THE CIRCLING DOVE

Leonard Irwin

***WOODJUBILLEEVIT**

Revue

1952

***LAWSON**

Oriol Gray

***CHRISTMAS BRIDGE**

Nance MacMillan

BEHIND THE BEYOND (VDL Fest.)

Stephen Leacock

LONGITUDE 49

Herb Tank

***UNTITLED**

Revue

1953

***REEDY RIVER**

Dick Diamond

***VARIETY SHOW**

Revue

THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

Nikolai Gogol

***STRANGERS IN THE LAND**

Mona Brand

***ROCKET RANGE (VDL Fest.)**

Jim Crawford

***COP THIS**

Revue

1954

TRIAL BY FALSEHOOD

Eric Paise & William Bland

MOTHER RIBA

David Berg

***SONG OF '54**

Len Dowdle

***LAWSON (VDL Fest.)**

Oriol Gray

1955

***CALYPSO ISLE**

Ralph de Boissiere

***REEDY RIVER**

Dick Diamond

***PIONEERS (VDL Fest.)**

K.S. Pritchard

DEEP ARE THE ROOTS

Ronald Gow & Armand D'Usseau

1956

***REEDY RIVER**

Dick Diamond

***PACIFIC PARADISE**

Dymphna Cusack

***UNDER THE COOLIBAH TREE**

Dick Diamond

THE END OF THE BEGINNING (VDL Fest.)

Sean O'Casey

1957

THE GOOD SOLDIER SCHWEIK

Jaroslav Hasek

THE CRUCIBLE

Arthur Miller

JUNO AND THE PAYCOCK

Sean O'Casey

COMEDY OF A MAN WHO MARRIED**A DUMB WIFE (VDL Fest.)**

Anatole France

THE MISER

Moliere

1958

***THE TORRENTS**

Oriol Gray

THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR

Shakespeare

THE SQUARE FELLOW

Brendan Behan

***THE BALLAD OF ANGEL'S ALLEY**

Geoff Underhill & Bruce George

***DRIVE A HARD BARGAIN (VDL Fest.)**

Oriol Gray

1959

***FISSION CHIPS**

Revue

THE BIGGEST THIEF IN TOWN

Dalton Trumbo

***REEDY RIVER**

Dick Diamond

***NIGHT OF THE DING DONG**

Ralph Petersen

THE SIX MEN OF DORSET

Miles Malleson & H Brooks

1960

***WRITING ON THE WALL**

John Hepworth et al

***LAWSON**

Oriol Gray

1961

ALL MY SONS

Arthur Miller

***POLLING DAZE**

Revue

1962

AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE

Arthur Miller after Ibsen

THE GOOD SOLDIER SCHWEIK

Ewan McColl after Hasek

Centre 63

1963

THE LONG AND THE SHORT

AND THE TALL

Willis Hall

1964

RAISIN IN THE SUN

Lorraine Hansberry

*THE ROCKET THAT JACK BUILT

Len Dowdle

THE WORLD OF SHOLEM ALEICHEM

Arnold Perl

1965

PURLIE VICTORIOUS

Ossie Davis

THE EXCEPTION AND THE RULE

Bertolt Brecht

THE END OF THE BEGINNING

Sean O'Casey

THE TROUBLEMAKERS

George Bellak

1966

*NONCENTS

Revue

*REEDY RIVER

Dick Diamond

THE WALL

Millard Lampell

1967

THE DEATH OF BESSIE SMITH

Edward Bond

*LAWSON

Oriol Gray

*THREE AUSTRALIAN ONE-ACT PLAYS

Oriol Gray & Terry Ward

MACBIRD

Barbara Garson

*ON STAGE VIETNAM

Mona Brand and Pat Barnett

1968

THE FIRERAIISERS

Max Frisch

AMERICA HURRAH

Jean Claude van Italie

1969

LYSISTRATA

Aristophanes

NEIGHBOURS

James Saunders

SOLDIER FROM THE WAR RETURNING

David Campton

THE INDIAN WANTS THE BRONX

Israel Horowitz

THEM CALL IT THE SUGAR PLUM

Israel Horowitz

THE SERPENT

Jean Claude van Italie

AFTER THE FALL

Arthur Miller

1970

THE BEDSITTING ROOM

Spike Milligan

THE MERCHANT IN REHEARSAL

Shakespeare (adapted)

THE RESPECTIBLE PROSTITUTE

Jean Paul Sartre

BLOOD KNOT

Athol Fugard

Pram Factory

1971

IF THERE WEREN'T ANY BLACKS

YOU'D HAVE TO INVENT THEM

Johnny Speight

THE ASCENT OF EVEREST

Arthur Kopit

THE DAY THE WHORES CAME OUT

TO PLAY TENNIS

Arthur Kopit

THE DOLL'S HOUSE

Claire Booth Luce after Ibsen

THE BEAR

Anton Chekhov

THE JUBILEE

Anton Chekov

1972

THE MEASURE TAKEN

Bertolt Brecht

THE EXCEPTION AND THE RULE

Bertolt Brecht

1973

CORIOLANUS

Shakespeare

NARROW ROAD TO THE DEEP NORTH

Edward Bond

1974

A SUNDAY WALK

Georges Michel

THE PROPOSAL

Anton Chekhov

Various Venues

1975

*THE ROCKY ROGUE SHOW

Revue

*ALL LIVE COLOUR REVUE IN 3D

Revue

ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST

Dale Wasserman after Ken Kesey

1976

FEMALE TRANSPORT

Steve Gooch

Organ Factory

THE MOTOR SHOW

Steve Gooch

ELIZABETH I

Paul Foster

1977

SURVIVAL

Chekhov & Brecht

THE CRUCIBLE

Arthur Miller

*THE LIFE WASN'T MEANT
TO BE EASY SHOW

Revue

1978

THE RULING CLASS

Peter Barnes

ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST

Dale Wasserman after Ken Kesey

*ROLEPLAY

Susan Gaffney et al

THE PHYSICISTS

Friedrich Durenmatt

1979

GOTCHA

Barrie Keefe

*NIGHT OUT

Martin Willoughby Thomas

*DOLE IT OUT

Martin Willoughby Thomas

STRAWBERRY FIELDS

Stephen Poliakov

*LAWSON

Oriol Gray

1980

THE EFFECT OF GAMMA RAYS ON
MAN-IN-THE-MOON MARIGOLDS

Paul Zindel

BURY THE DEAD

Irwin Shaw

*REEDY RIVER

Dick Diamond

1981

WE CAN'T PAY, WE WON'T PAY

Dario Fo

THE LOWER DEPTHS

Maxim Gorky

*WORK-A-DAY WORLD

Graeme Shiel

YOBBO NOWT

John McGrath

1982**THIS STORY OF YOURS**

John Hopkins

SAVAGES

Christopher Hampton

1983**SAVAGES**

Christopher Hampton

***BABES IN THE WOOD**

Rob Cutting

RUFFIAN ON THE STAIRS

Joe Orton

SEVEN PRISONERS IN*SEARCH OF A LOCKSMITH**

Colleen Klein

NEW AUSTRALIANS REHEARSE*THE WORKINGMAN'S PARADISE**

Graeme Shiel

1984***HERE COMES KISCHI**

Mona Brand

MAGNIFICENCE

Howard Brenton

NO EXIT

Jean Paul Sartre

THE STRONGER

August Strindberg

***EDEN**

Ross Brisbane

1985**THE SEAGULL**

Anton Chekhov

SANDINISTA

The Great Canadian Theatre Company

TIMON OF ATHENS

William Shakespeare

***THE LIVING ROOM WAR**

Ron Hoenig and Jon Firman

1986**STATEMENTS**

Athol Fugard

WITH THE SUN ON OUR BACKS

Tony Stevens

***AGAINST THE STREAM**

Peter Dickinson et al