Contemporary Plays Season 2012

The Season at Sarsaparilla
Written by Patrick White
Directed by Naomi Edwards

Duration
120 minutes, one interval

Admission
$12, bookings are essential

Note
This performance contains nudity, adult themes, violent scenes, coarse language, and lighting effects.
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Cover Image Credit:
Image courtesy of Contemporary Plays project teams.
Welcome to the School of Performing Arts, at the VCA. A place of vision, investigation and discovery. The School encompasses the departments of Dance, Production and Theatre, and is committed to offering intensive training for emerging artists, through excellent teaching and research practice within a vibrant, productive and collaborative atmosphere. Each department has its own unique training programs, which honour both contemporary and traditional developments in the performing arts.

Students train to be dancers, choreographers, theatre makers, animateurs, directors, actors, stage managers, production artists and technicians. Our teachers and guest directors, designers and choreographers are practising artists, selected for their commitment to learning, a belief in the individual, and a vision for the future. The School’s aim is always to present work that is both challenging and inspiring to our audiences and many of our graduates are making a significant contribution to the profession at an international and national level.

We hope you enjoy the Season and look forward to seeing you again.

–  Geraldine Cook, Head/School of Performing Arts
Welcome to the 2012 Contemporary Plays Season, presented by the School of Performing Arts at the VCA. The project is performed by second year Actors in collaboration with Production students. The project you are about to witness is one of a number of projects that we entitle ‘teaching text projects’. These performances are an integral part of the training itself: the area of work within the course which focuses on the detailed investigation of theatre texts. They are an opportunity to integrate public performance into the training of the actors and to begin to introduce the actors to the kinds of models and processes they may experience in professional theatre.

In addition to their theatre making classes and projects, the key teaching text projects for these theatre students in their first year have included scenes from *The Orestia*, *The Cherry Orchard* by Chekhov and a scene study using *The Doll Trilogy* by Ray Lawler. Now in their second year, these students have recently completed an American scene study, and in this project, engage with the longer form of an Australian contemporary text with a focus on character and plot. As actors in a full-length performance they learn how to tune into the progress of the text and its rhythms, and to make choices about their role/s in transmission of the dramatic intention of the whole play. The students are required to engage with professional directors who bring an extraordinary depth of skill and experience to the project. In this season, the actors will have worked, for the first time, in ways that differ from group to group depending upon both the demands of the play and the working processes of the director.

Next semester these students will have the opportunity to work with Postgraduate Directors on a One Act Play and will perform scene studies from Shakespeare and from contemporary writers. In their third year, they will work on a full-length Shakespeare play, a devised work and several other projects with full public performance seasons.
The plays chosen this year are all Australian contemporary classics. Each of these plays seeks to expose the complexities of the Australian experience in various contexts from the outback to the suburbs. Each has a particularly Aussie feel and sound to it, yet each investigates our cultural identity and colonial European heritage from different perspectives and from various periods in our young history. The quality of the writing in these plays demands from the actors and creative teams an enormous attention to detail and a commitment to authenticity in order to offer the audience fresh and surprising insights into our cultural landscape and psyche.

I hope you enjoy the work of these students both on stage and in design and production roles. My thanks to you for your support of them and also to the academic and professional staff at the VCA, and lastly but by no means least, to the three directors, Jane Woollard, Paola Unger and Naomi Edwards, who have brought such wonderful commitment and talent to the work.

– Rinske Ginsberg, Lecturer/Theatre (Movement)

The training programs at the VCA are by no means an “ordinary” university course. They are immersive, fiercely collaborative and personally and professionally challenging for everyone involved. Working with Australian scripts provides valuable opportunities for students to engage with the history and voice of Australian theatre, and stories told by Australian playwrights about the experience of being Australian.

The subject matter and practical demands of these productions serve to mirror the sort of theatre that many graduates aspire to create in future careers. Theatre made with limitations but immense amounts of energy and imagination. Emerging independent Melbourne theatre companies like The Hayloft Project and Four Larks Theatre are heavily populated with VCA graduates working to develop their theatrical voice.

The production teams charged with realising these projects are drawn from second and third year students across the production disciplines of Design Realisation, Theatre Technology and Management. These teams of adaptable, pragmatic, committed, independent artists have combined the perceived limitations of small venues and limited budgets with a wealth of energy, commitment and imagination. The remarkable production values you see on stage are the result a pragmatic interrogation and refining of ideas between all involved.

– Mark Postlethwaite, Lecturer/Production (Props and Scenery)
Director’s Note

The Season at Sarsaparilla

Delving into suburban Australia in the 60s shows us the mirror to now. The routine and ritual of the domestic life contained in the triple front brick box has changed but is compelling the same. As Melbourne sprawls, so does the need to explore how we choose to live. The neat comfortable suburbs hold our aspirations and our impulses. In this tension, Patrick White’s keen observation and poetry lies.

— Naomi Edwards, Guest Director
Contemporary Plays
Season 2012

Program

The Season at Sarsaparilla
Directed by Naomi Edwards

Cast

Ernie Boyle - Tristan Barr
Mavis Knott - Ally Bjornstad
Rowley Masson - Benjamin Clements
Judy Pogson - Brianagh Curran
Harry Knott/Ron Suddards - Samuel Duncan
Roy Child - Rory Godbold
Deedree/Julia Sheen - Sarah Gaul
Clive Pogson/Mr Erbage - Daniel Klemens
Nola Boyle - Rachel Perks
Girlie Pogson - Vivienne Perry
Joyleen “Pippy” Pogson - Jemimah Townsend

Set Designer/Builder - Leah Popple
Costume Designer/Maker - Rebecca Dunn
Lighting Designer/Operator - Julian Williams
Stage Manager - Gemma Simpson
Assistant Stage Manager - Caitlyn Livingston
Set Assistant - Stacey Wellman

Crew Coordinator - Kate Kelly
Roving Technical Crew - Kate Kelly and Aaron Cananzi
First Year Roving Crew - Bryn Cullen, Siobhain Beaney, Aaron Garcia and Leslie Ding

Production Manager - David Lang
Set and Prop Builder - Colin Orchard
Acknowledgements

Thank you to the Costume Department - Jen Knight.

A special thank you to the MTC Props Department

MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY
Leah Popple was a circus performer before her creative mind and practical senses led her to pursue a career in Theatre Production. She is currently a third year student at the Victorian College of Arts, majoring in Stagecraft and Set Design. Leah will generally be found in the Stagecraft Workshop constructing, commanding and tinkering with various projects. Her most notable roles at VCA include Workshop Manager and Head Set Builder on *City of Angels* and Design Assistant on *Doubt.*

Gemma Simpson is in the final year of her course at the Victorian College of the Arts, where she is majoring in Stage Management. Her most recent position for the VCA was Assistant Stage Managing for *A Mouthful of Birds,* in late 2011. Gemma has also been involved in other VCA productions, which include *dancescape 2011,* *The Hollow* and *Ghetto.* Earlier this year, Gemma completed a secondment with the Melbourne Theatre Company on their production of *Tribes.* In correlation to theatre, Gemma enjoys teaching swimming to children in her local area.
2012 Graduating Production Students’ Biographical Notes

Julian is undertaking his final year of the Bachelor of Production at Victorian College of the Arts, specialising in Lighting. Notable projects include Sound Design for *End of Year Dance 2010* in first year, Head Electrician on *dancescape 2011* and recently Lighting Designer for Anna Smith’s *8 Minutes, 29 Seconds* and Tracie Mitchell’s *And Then They Landed* in the *End of Year Dance 2011*. Julian has worked with Arts Events Management Australasia and recently with the St Kilda Festival 2012. He is currently Head of Lighting at Enjoy Church, and projects include Lighting Design for the Enjoy Carols Spectacular 2011 and the Enjoy Summit 2012 Conference *Sacrifice*. 
Dean/Faculty of VCA and MCM
Director/Victorian College of the Arts
Head/School of Performing Arts
Manager/School of Performing Arts
Lecturer/Production (Audio)
Lecturer/Postgraduate Dance
Lecturer/Theatre (Acting)
Lecturer/Dance
Lecturer/Production (Design)
Snr Lecturer/Theatre (Voice)
Snr Lecturer/UG Coordinator/Theatre (Acting)
Honorary (Senior Fellow)
Lecturer/Theatre (Physical Performance)
Snr Lecturer/Postgraduate Coordinator/Dance
Assoc Prof/Undergraduate Coordinator/Dance
Honorary (Professorial Fellow)
Lecturer/Production (Lighting)
Snr Lecturer/Postgraduate Coordinator/Performing Arts
Snr Lecturer/Theatre (Acting)
Lecturer/Production (Props and Scenery)
Lecturer/Production (Stage Management)
Lecturer/Production (Postgraduate Design)
Lecturer/Theatremaking
Lecturer/Dance
Lecturer/Theatre (Voice)
Lecturer/Dance
Lecturer/Theatre (Acting)
Lecturer/Dance
Snr Lecturer/UG Coordinator/Production (Costume)
Technical/Facilities Officer
Snr Technical Officer
Administrative Officer
Projects Officer
Stagecraft Workshop Coordinator
Production Manager
Musician
Wardrobe Officer
Foundations Coordinator
Stores Officer

Professor Barry Conyngham
Professor Su Baker
Geraldine Cook
Sara Koller
Dr Roger Alsop
Dr Don Asker
Melanie Beddie
Meredith Blackburn
Greg Clarke
Geraldine Cook
Tanya Gerstle
Max Gillies AM
Rinske Ginsberg
Helen Herbertson
Jenny Kinder
Prof Shirley McKechnie OAM FAHA
Joseph Mercurio
Dr Paul Monaghan
Richard Murphet
Mark Postlethwaite
Annie Reid
Leon Salom
Leisa Shelton
Anna Smith
Tony Smith
Nina Veretennikova
Robert Walton
Jo White
Kym Williams

Naomi Adams
Monique Aucher
Annie Dolan
Bianca Durrant
Kate Elliott
Darren Golding
John Grayling
Georgia Johnson
Lorraine Little
Duraan Reid