

Repertoire

JUNE 2013

Newsletter of Adelaide's oldest theatre group



Survival of the Fittest

Neville's Island

A comedy in thick fog

If you've ever worked in an office, chances are you've been on a team-building exercise. Hopefully, not one as catastrophic as this!

For the men of *Neville's Island* things go from bad to worse to downright hysterical in this British comedy.

Four out-of-condition, middle-managers from Manchester are sent on a team building exercise in the Lake District in the north of England. They succeed in becoming the first people ever to get shipwrecked on an island in the middle of a Lake! It really is a comedy of errors...

Described as *Lord of the Flies* meets *The Office*, *Neville's Island* is as relevant today as when it was first performed in 1992. The hapless characters have few skills between them, and are more suited to shuffling papers than chopping firewood. Needless to say, tensions rise as the unlikely campers find themselves stranded on the island. What should have been a bonding experience turns into a fight for survival.

The prime rift is between the drippingly sarcastic Gordon (Nigel Tripodi), who lost all his belongings in the lake, and the over-prepared Angus (Thorin Cupit), whose massive backpack is an endless source of extravagant camping supplies. Gordon's a bully with a string of insults. Angus is sweet, if a little dim. Neville (Paul Davies) is middle-management personified, in that bland, dreary kind of way. Roy (Peter Smith), a born-again Christian recovering from a nervous breakdown, is perhaps most kindly described as eccentric. The one thing that unites them is their lack of experience outdoors!

Tim Firth is a prodigious talent, writing plays as well as musicals, and scripts for film and television. In *Neville's Island* he explores how relationships can be changed forever by a weekend away in the country. Firth explains that *Neville's Island* has



"remained relevant because these type of team building exercises still happen and in fact has now become really popular on television with programs like *I'm a Celebrity... Get Me Out of Here*". He says it is "fascinating to see the dynamics when a group of people are thrown together like this. And these dynamics seem to apply anywhere - there is always a need for someone to come out on top and for bullies to take advantage."

Tim Firth's style as a playwright has often been compared with the legendary Alan Ayckbourn, and it's no surprise really. *Neville's Island* was commissioned by Alan Ayckbourn in Scarborough after he had been impressed by one of Firth's short plays. Since then he has come a long way. Firth has been celebrated for his Award-winning work, *Calendar Girls* (he wrote both the play and the script for the film), *Our House*, *The Safari Party*, *Kinky Boots* amongst others. He has won many awards, including an *Olivier* for Best New Musical, and has been awarded an honorary doctorate for his services to literature.

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Vanity Fair - like you've never seen it before!

Written By: William Makepeace Thackeray
Adapted by: Declan Donnelly
Directed By: Brian Knott

This adaptation of *Vanity Fair* is by Declan Donnellan of *Cheek by Jowl* fame. *Cheek by Jowl* was established in 1981 by Donnellan and Nick Ormerod who met at Cambridge University in the mid 1970s

The company's manifesto was to re-examine classical texts, avoiding directorial and design concepts, and to focus on the actor's art. So, in this production, 7 very clever actors play 32 different characters!

Thackeray subtitled his work as "A Novel without a Hero" which is widely considered to be apt because the characters are all flawed to a degree. *Vanity Fair* has been adapted countless times as a film and mini-series, the most recent being a Hollywood production starring Reese Witherspoon as Becky.

The story opens with Miss Pinkerton's Academy for Young Ladies, where Becky Sharp and Amelia Sedley have just completed their studies and are preparing to depart for Amelia's house in Russell Square. At Russell Square, Miss Sharp is introduced to the dashing and self-obsessed Captain George Osborne (to whom Amelia has been betrothed from a very young age) and to Amelia's brother Joseph Sedley, a clumsy and vainglorious/boastful but rich civil servant fresh from the East India Company. Hoping to marry Sedley, Becky entices him, but she fails because of warnings from Captain Osborne, Sedley's own native shyness, and his embarrassment over some foolish drunken behaviour of his that Becky had seen.

With an introduction entitled "Before the Curtain" and 67 chapters, the dramatic scenario creates the ideal narrative for the stage. In this new production, a cast of seven actors play the principal characters (and miscellaneous "others"), each taking the role of narrator in this fast paced, roller coaster of a plot, set during the Napoleonic war.

Cheek by Jowl premiered this adaptation at the Edinburgh Fringe in 1983 when it won a *Fringe First Award* before a successful international tour and a smash hit in London's West End. Critics have said that the seizure of Thackeray's commentary by the very characters about whom, in the novel, it is being made, adds a dimension of radical self awareness that transforms the whole exercise.

Director Brian Knott, is a familiar face (and voice) to Rep audiences. He made his directorial debut with the Rep's production of *Heroes* in 2010 and has recently directed *Visiting Mr Green* for St Judes Players. Brian said he is "very excited to have the opportunity to direct this play".

If you enjoyed the Rep's production of *The 39 Steps*, you are sure to enjoy this riotous comedy!

Vanity Fair opens at the ARTS Theatre on Thursday 5 September 2013 and runs until 14 September.

Booking Information

Phone: 8212 5777 or
Email: adelaiderep@e-access.com.au or
Book online
www.trybooking.com/48680

Congratulations Barb!

Arts Theatre Manager, Barb Messenger has just completed 20 years of running the Arts Theatre. Barb stepped in when the theatre was in financial trouble at the request of the Arts Minister and the President of the Adelaide Rep. Barb has overseen many changes at the ARTS, and has turned the theatre into a successful venue which is very rarely dark. Barb was instrumental in attracting Adelaide Fringe Festival performers to the ARTS which has enabled the Rep to maintain the theatre as a beacon of community theatre in Adelaide.

Barb recently celebrated her 70th birthday and is presently enjoying a well-deserved holiday overseas. She has set sail with her husband Brian (the intrepid Bar volunteer) on a European cruise.

While Barb is away, Life Member of the Rep, Norm Caddick, will be the Acting Theatre Manager.

Barb is pictured here with Mary Tobin (Fringe producer) and popular comedian Stephen K Amos.



Shipwrecked on Neville's Island

Neville's Island
20 - 29 June
by Tim Firth
directed by Michael Eustice



Four middle-managers who have peaked only mid-way through their careers and their lives find themselves lost in the wild and confronted with the need to survive not only the island but their own (and each other's) company.

Neville's Island is a tale of bungling incompetence as four middle-aged middle managers find themselves lost while on a corporate team bonding exercise, menaced by wildlife and cut off from modern civilisation.

What should have been a bonding process for Gordon, Angus, Roy and Neville turns into a muddy fight for survival. Bound by fog, the perfunctory middle-class activity turns into a carnival of recriminations, French cricket and sausages.

Audiences may recall Martin Clunes starred in a telemovie of *Neville's Island* in 1998 alongside Timothy Spall, Jeff Rawle and David Bamber. It is one of the most successful modern plays and has run almost continuously since it was first performed. It was nominated for an *Olivier Award* for Best New Comedy when it premiered in the West End.

It is now some years since Firth wrote *Neville's Island* and it has toured the world without any adaptations – until now! "No matter how many times it has toured I have never seen a need to update it," Tim Firth said recently. "Over the last ten years or so mobile phones have shrunk so much that a scene in which one of the men kills a trout by hitting it over the head with a mobile phone would no longer work. Today's mobile phones are just too small to kill a trout!"

As Firth puts it, "it may look like a team building exercise, but it is really survival of the fittest."

A comedy play with a very black underbelly.

DIRECTOR, CAST & CREW

Arts Theatre audiences will recognise the actors involved in *Neville's Island*, as the director has assembled a very talented cast. Paul Davies plays the title role of Neville, the quintessential middle manager. He is neither meek or particularly assertive, but he does rally the team. Nigel Tripodi is the infuriatingly arrogant Gordon. He spends the whole time injecting his two-cents wherever possible and generally being sarcastic. Thorin Cupit is the hysterically obsessive Angus, who has everything but the kitchen sink in his backpack! Peter Smith will climb to new heights in *Neville's Island* as the disconcertingly fundamentalist character Roy.

According to the show's Director, Michael Eustice, it is a story which audiences will not only enjoy but will largely be able to relate to as well.

"Having spent much of the last 17 years working in large corporates, I have been subjected to all-manner of excruciating team building activities," states Michael.

Experienced Stage Manager, Patsy Thomas has stepped in to assist the production and will lead the backstage crew. Many thanks go to our sponsors and volunteers who sourced props, some of which were a little unusual.

Booking Information

Adults \$22, Concession \$17
Special rates for group bookings apply.

Book online
www.trybooking.com/46611
(small booking fee applies)

Phone 8212 5777
or
Email: adelaiderep@e-access.com.au

Performances

Thursday 20 June at 8pm
Friday 21 June at 8pm
Saturday 22 June at 8pm
Wednesday 26 June at 8pm
Thursday 27 June at 8pm
Friday 28 June at 8pm
Saturday 29 June at 2pm
Matinee performance
Saturday 29 June at 8pm



Welcome to our new Office Bearers Seeking Volunteers

The Board of the Adelaide Repertory Theatre met following the Annual General Meeting and elected the following:

Chairperson: Penni Hamilton-Smith
 Vice Chairperson: Ray Trowbridge and Constantine Raptis
 Treasurer: Terry Smith
 Secretary: Michelle Hickey

The Board meets once a month as well as operating several committees which meet regularly to arrange aspects of our productions.

The next edition of Repertoire will provide you with some details about the new Board members. Please feel free to introduce yourself to any of our Board members at our next production. They can be identified at any of our shows as those wearing gold name badges.

The Rep is still taking expressions of interest from anyone who is interested in becoming a front of house (FOH) manager.

Ideally we would have several people who were capable of being FOH Manager so that shifts may be shared across performances.

FOH Managers are responsible for organising volunteer rosters, supplies for tea and coffee, as well as ensuring that audiences are seated in time for the beginning of performances. They are required to stay in the foyer until the end of the performances and should be good at problem solving and working under pressure. Customer service skills are essential.

If you are interested or would like more information, please have a chat to Michelle if you see her in the foyer during the season of Neville's Island. Otherwise she can be contacted on 0402 878 495.

A word from the Chair



I am very pleased to report that our recent production of *Dinner* was a critical success. Here are just a few of the comments from the critiques.

Peter Bleby of Australian Stage said "(t)he more you look, the more you know that there is an amazing abundance of excellent amateur theatre in Adelaide, and here is a clear example of that."

Samela Harris of Barefoot Review said "(t)he image of Helen Geoffreys in a stoplight red sheath dress set against a matching slash of backdrop light strikes straight into the memory and one knows that it will never leave. It's a genius stroke of design from director Dave Simms which instantly marks *Dinner* as a standout production."

And Tony Busch of the Adelaide Theatre Guide said it was "a great script and Dave Simms is to be congratulated on continuing to identify and present quality vehicles."


These are just some of the many comments we received for *Dinner* and I would like to take the opportunity to again thank Dave Simms and the cast and crew who made the play a success.

We are sure that you will enjoy our next production of *Neville's Island* just as much as *Dinner*! It is an hilarious script and full of send ups of the corporate world. Rehearsals are progressing well and we are looking forward to bumping in! Make sure you bring your friends and families to what will be an entertaining night at the theatre!

Penni Hamilton-Smith
Chair

It seems *The Glass Menagerie* is the hottest revival play around at the moment. Following the *State Theatre Company's* production last year (and *The Rep's* production in 2009), a new production is set to open on Broadway in September. By none other than *The American Repertory Theatre* (known by the acronym ART, just like our own humble theatre!).

Shakespeare's Globe is returning to the cinema, releasing three productions from their hit 2012 season in Australia, New Zealand and the UK. Local cinema *Palace Nova* is screening the series entitled *The Globe on Screen 2013*. Whilst *Henry V* has already screened, lovers of Shakespeare can see *Twelfth Night* on 22 & 23 June; and *The*



**THEATRE
WORLD**

Helen Mirren reprises her Academy Award winning role as Queen Elizabeth II in the highly-anticipated West End production of *The Audience*. Local cinema *Palace Nova* will be showing this as part of the National Theatre Live screenings. The play will be captured live in HD from London's Gielgud Theatre and shown around the world. Screenings are limited and will occur on July 5, 6, 7 & 10.

Carrie Cracknell's award-winning production of *A Doll's House*, starring Hattie Morahan, will soon transfer to the Duke of York's theatre following two sell-out runs at the Young Vic theatre. Morahan will reprise her award winning role as Nora in the production, alongside fellow original cast members Dominic Rowan, Nick Fletcher and Steve Toussaint.

Taming of the Shrew on 20 & 21 July. The Globe promises audiences the best seats in the house with this stylish filming.

LET IT BE, the spectacular West End show celebrating the music of The Beatles has announced an extension to its current run at the Savoy Theatre in London following an announcement last week that a production will also open on Broadway in July this year. The show is now booking until 18 January 2014. The show has established itself as one of the West End's most popular shows since it premiered in September 2012.

The Adelaide Repertory Theatre Inc.

Patron: His Excellency Rear Admiral Kevin Scarce AC CSC RANR, Governor of South Australia
 Vice patron: The Right Honourable The Lord Mayor of Adelaide, Stephen Yarwood

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