

Issue No 3



Nov 2025

R E P E R T O I R E

Newsletter of Adelaide's oldest theatre group

ADRIFT IN NEW YORK

by Addison Aulger
directed by Rose Vallen

By Arrangement with ORiGiN™ Theatrical,
on Behalf Dramatic Publishing Company, 1961.

*A Traditional Gay Nineties
melodrama. Boo the dastardly
villain, cheer the handsome hero,
sigh for the gullible heroine and
sing-a-long with old-time favourites*

13 - 15 Nov 7:30pm

16 Nov 2:00pm

19 - 21 Nov 7:30pm

22 Nov 2:00pm

Arts Theatre - 53 Angas St. Adelaide 8212 5777
Tickets now available at: [TicketSearch Online](#)



November 2025

Adrift in New York (or Her First False Step)

By: Addison Augler

Directed by: Rose Valen

A Melodrama

What a delight it was to go to the theatre and to be thoroughly entertained. If you are a fan of hilarious skits, a sing-a-long, melodrama and the odd dirty ditty, then you need look no further than 'The Rep's' latest offering. Here's the best Gay Nineties melodrama you've seen, and the more seriously the actors play it, the more humorous the audience will find it!

This marvellous show had a long and highly successful national tour in the USA, receiving excellent reviews as it was presented more than a thousand times.

The show begins at the Old Homestead where our Nell is enticed by the villain to go to New York and sing in a fine music hall. The second act is at a Bowery honky-tonk where she makes her New York debut. Then back at the Old Homestead, our Nell, having endured many trials and tribulations, comes home after walking from the railroad station through a terrible storm. And -- happy end -- she's still pure as the driven snow!



Above. Luke Foale - Our Hero
and Teagan Baker - The Damsel

At Right. Dylan Harr - The Villain



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About the play

'*Adrift in New York*' (or *Her First False Step*) by Addison Augler is directed by Rose Vallen. Her direction, combined with the stage management of Lance Morgan, sets up a hilarious and entertaining story with twists and turns galore. With the help of lighting and sound board direction, this team has craftily blended the stylings of both vaudevillian and soap opera humor to create an immersive adventure that invites the audience to play along.

This 18th century melodrama centres on the story of a young, naive girl Nellie (TJ Baker), who lives on her family's old farm with her father, Silas Weston (Russell Ford), her Aunt Sarah (Jude Hines), and her sister Martha (Abigail Papps). Until the hilariously villainous Francis "Desperate" Desmond (Dylan Haar) enters with a devious plan with his affiliate Jim Burke (Mike Leach) to steal Nellie away to New York and swipe her family farm from under their noses. That is until the heroic and honourable Jack Merriwell (Luke Foale) goes to rescue her.

Combined with dramatic lighting cues and a crowd of "boos" from audience participation, this show creates a perfect blend for a dastardly villain that will entertain from beginning to end.

The cast truly proves themselves versatile with performers transforming from humble and quaint farm folk to brassy and sassy bar workers in the big city. The cast comes together for a lively and outrageous performance of various little diddies from the ages. With hilarity and enthusiasm abounding, it's truly an entertaining way to spend an afternoon or evening.

This performance is filled with heart, comedy, drama, song, dance, and lots of snow. With cheers and boos encouraged, the show will carry modern humor with old fashion twists. Truly a show you won't want to miss.

'*Adrift in New York*' (or *Her First False Step*) runs through November 13th, 14th, 15th, 19th, 20th and the 21st starting at 7.30 pm with matinee performances on November 16th and 22nd at 2 pm at the ARTS Theatre, 53 Angas Street, Adelaide,



Visit [TicketSearch Online](#) to purchase tickets.



Above. The Dastardly Duo, Jim Burke (Mike Leach) and Francis "Desperate" Desmond (Dylan Haar)

R E P E R T O I R E

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Cast

Aunt Sarah Weston	Jude Hines
Martha Weston	Abigail Papps
Silas Weston	Russell Ford
Nellie Weston	Teagan (TJ) Baker
Jack Merriwell	Luke Foale
Francis "Desperate" Desmond	Dylan Haar
Jim Burke	Mike Leach
Hi Perkins	Lindy LeCornu
Dan Fogarty	Malcolm Walton
Maggie Clancy "Old Mag"	Penni Hamilton-Smith
Mulligan	Chris Meegan
Sadie May	Rebecca Mason
Monty "The Dip" Moran	Hazrry Passehl
Chorus + Understudy Nellie	Katya Zirnsak
Chorus + Understudy Martha	Eva Yoxall-Vale
Chorus + Understudy Aunt Sarah & Mags	Paula Gallagher



What is a Melodrama you may ask?

A melodrama is a dramatic work in which the plot, typically sensationalised for a strong emotional appeal, takes precedence over detailed characterisation. Melodrama is "an exaggerated version of drama". Melodramas typically concentrate on dialogue that is often bombastic or extremely sentimental, rather than on action.

A brief history of Melodrama

Melodrama developed in the 19th century in France, thanks to the work by French playwright Rene de Pixerecourt. Melodrama quickly became a favourite theatrical form around the Western World for the next century, and thousands of plays have been written in this style. They were a mixture of violence, romance, and sentimentality, with short scenes full of action keeping a fast-paced tempo. They use spectacular settings, music, exaggerated acting and encouraged audience interaction to promote audience engagement.

Melodramas have simple moral plots that are easy to follow and enjoy; generally, the story shows a battle between good and evil and will finish with the restoration of a morally correct and just society. The plays rely heavily on opposites, to capture the audience's attention and ignite reactions, such as justice and revenge, honesty and dishonesty, or innocence and corruption. A traditional melodrama plot includes the following elements:

- introduction - the first scene introduces the characters and establishes the time and place
- provocation - the initial cause for the narrative/journey to begin, for example jealousy or greed forces- an evil character who steals something
- pangs - the suffering caused to the good and innocent characters who are impacted by the evil action of the villain
- penalty - a twist of fate in which the evil villain has their plans foiled and receives a punishment for their actions

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Stock Characters

Melodrama characters are not meant to be particularly life-like. Instead they are intended to have identifiable types of personalities – these types are referred to as 'stock characters' and are known as:

- a hero. Handsome, strong, brave, honest and reliable.
- a heroine. Beautiful, courageous, innocent and vulnerable.
- a villain. Cunning, without morals, dishonest, cruel and evil.
- a villain's accomplice. Usually provides comic relief because he/she is a bumbling sidekick.
- a faithful servant. Also offers comic relief, and also does the dirty work. He/she usually discovers evidence against the villain.
- a maidservant. A female character who is lively and who flirts with the faithful servant.

Acting Style

- Exaggeration – this acting style requires intense facial expressions, large movements and gestures, and clear and well-projected delivery of lines. Melodrama actors concentrate more on showing emotions rather than feeling them. The actor also overemphasises words or syllables they think essential to their character.
- Audience interaction – actors encourage audience interaction by improvising lines and telling topical jokes, and will help the audience to boo or hiss at the villain. Cue cards are also used to get the audience involved as it prompts a clear response.
- Asides – an aside is where any character speaks directly to the audience to reveal a thought or plan that is kept secret from the rest of the other characters. The actor's delivery of the aside instills a feeling of secrecy and draws the audience's focus away from the other action and onto their 'secret.'

Elements of Production

Melodramas use spectacular settings, elaborate costumes and music to increase their impact and appeal. The plays are always accompanied by music to heighten mood and atmosphere; hence, the name "melo", short for melody.

Moore St Parking

\$10.00 Undercover parking
6pm 'til midnight

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Become Involved Why not be part of the Rep Team

You don't need to be an actor to be involved with the Rep.

Every production is supported by teams of behind the scenes volunteers.

We need people who can prompt, paint, design, construct, show people to their seats; move sets, or sew costumes.

People who like to play with sound and lights, people to make tea and iron costumes.



Email your details to

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BLAST FROM THE PAST!

Previous Melodramas produced by The Rep

"The Mystery of a Hansom Cab" 2013

This melo referred to the famous 1886 detective novel by Fergus Hume and the various adaptations it inspired, most notably the 2012 Australian telemovie.

The story, set in 19th-century Melbourne, followed the investigation into a high-society murder that uncovered scandalous secrets about the city's wealthy elite and their hidden lives.

The central mystery involved a deceased gentleman found in a hansom cab, and the subsequent search for the killer, which brought to light a complex web of deceit and social divisions.



"Only an Orphan Girl" 1958 and in 2015

The 1958 production was held at the Unley Town Hall (the ARTS Theatre, home of the Adelaide Repertory Theatre was not built until 1963). This exciting melodrama was written by Henning Nelms! Fifty-seven years later, the Adelaide Rep brought back the fun loving production in 2015.

Below Left. Jack Mitchell as the villain and Phyl Skinner as the Femme Fatale in 1958.

At Right. Barry Hill OAM as the villain with Sophia Bubner as the heroine. Phyl Skinner also appeared (57 years later) in this production performing her hilarious Salvation Army routine.



BLAST FROM THE PAST!

Previous Melodramas produced by The Rep

"Palace of Varieties" 2017

In "Palace of Varieties", wonderful toe-tapping tunes were provided by pianist Sandi McMenamin and drummer/percussionist Rowan Dennis. Dressing the part, they are just as much a part of the show as the actors on stage. Rowan and Sandi are back by popular demand in "Adrift in New York". Also back by popular demand (we couldn't have a melo without it) the utterly hilarious, side spitting Balloon Dance starring Lindy Le Cornu and partner.

Playwright Walter Boughton is responsible for the melodrama component, Virtue Always Triumphs or Life in the Wicked City. It provides the main action of the production and is marvellously cast.



It is a tale of a damsel in distress named Charity, who takes refuge in the Truharts' house during a raging blizzard, whilst trying to escape from the perfidious Warrington Chadbourne. He is after her because she is the heir to a railroad fortune.

Director Pam O'Grady knows her genre well and drains every laugh from the attentive and co-operative audience. With so much going on, mistress of ceremonies Penni Hamilton-Smith does a fine job to steer the night's festivities, her sharp wit and improvisational skills on full display.

There was a time when music hall theatre/vaudeville was all the rage, a form of escapism that provided a good belly laugh. In this genre, everything on stage is overplayed, from the acting to the physical comedy.



Top. The full cast receiving a crowd cheer and huge applause for their performance.

Above. Toe-tapping tunes provided by pianist Sandi McMenamin and drummer/percussionist Rowan Dennis. Dressing the part, they were just as much a part of the show as the actors on stage.



The Adelaide Repertory Theatre Inc.

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Venue: ARTS Theatre, 53 Angas St, Adelaide 5000

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BLAST FROM THE PAST!

Previous Melodramas produced by The Rep

What the audience and critics had to say.

"Went to the show tonight with friends and it was fabulous. We laughed, we sung, we boo.....d and we hissed. So much fun, I've never been to anything like it. Well done, we all enjoyed it"

"I've seen nothing like it. This Olde Music Hall production has the crowd jeering, booing and jumping out of their seats for some of the most enjoyable hour and a half in my theatre life".

"Unashamedly unrefined, the Adelaide Rep's absurd melodrama effortlessly combines a classic show with sing-a-longs, musicians and artistes galore."

"A lovely show - everyone left laughing!"

"My favourite piece would have to be The World Famous Balloon Dance which was brilliantly performed by Lindy LeCornu and Christopher Evans who were dressed in sparkling silver tops over generous blue tutus, very generous in Mr Evans' case. The two actors managed to keep very serious, straight faces during the ludicrous manoeuvres with giant pink balloons. There were audience members, including me, with tears of laughter running down their faces by the finale of the dance". - Jan Kershaw, Glam Adelaide



Lindi LeCornu and Christopher Evans performing the world famous Balloon Dance

Are you having trouble finding a car park when you come to the theatre. Have you tried?

Car parking is near the ARTS Theatre around the corner at 14-22 Moore St.

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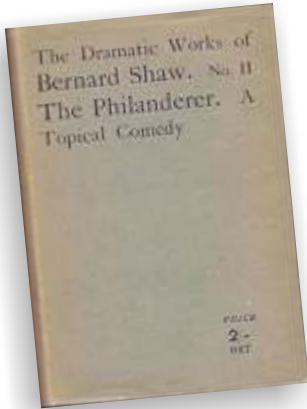
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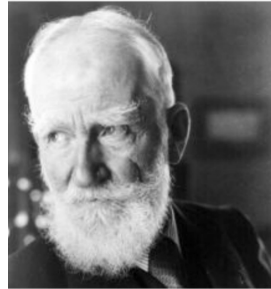
THE
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From the Archives - Risque Rep Shows in the early years

The Philanderer (1915)



Written in 1893 by George Bernard Shaw, *'The Philanderer'* is a comedy based on his offstage amorous adventures.



"It's well to be off with the Old Woman before you're on with the New."

George Bernard Shaw (*The Philanderer*)

The play satirises social conventions, eg. that men could behave with impunity while women were held to stricter standards. Because the play critiques marriage and includes sexual dalliances, it was subject to British censorship laws and not produced on stage until 1902. The Rep's 1915 production at the Unley Town Hall featured talented Beryl Kook.

■ Right. Beryl Kook was a life member of The Rep who performed in 66 shows from 1914 to 1963



Everybody's Husband (1918)

Like Shaw, Gilbert Cannan was an advocate of free love who opposed censorship. Cannan's work also critiques marriage, politics and the Anglican Church. His play *'Everybody's Husband'* was published in 1917, and the following year it was included in The Rep's production of three short plays at the Queen's Hall.



Produced by Wilfred Neill, (a founder and life member of the Rep), the gala performance of *'Everybody's Husband'* was in the presence of the Governor, Sir Henry Galway, Lady Galway and Dame Nellie Melba. The cast included Beryl Kook and George Whittle.



■ Above. The Queen's Hall 102a Grenfell St, which is now the Regent Arcade

■ Left. George Whittle was an original member of The Rep who performed in 25 shows from 1910 to 1958.

From the Archives - Risque Rep Shows in the early years

And So To Bed (1937)

'*And So To Bed*' continues the theme of men getting up to mischief. It's a comedy written by JB Fagan about married man Samuel Pepys who calls on Mistress Knight and then hides in a wardrobe when Charles II arrives.



Above. Vivienne Oldfield in the 1974 production of '*And So To Bed*'

The Rep's 1937 production at the Tivoli Theatre was directed by Thomas Nave with costumes designed by Mimi Mattin. It was Vivienne Oldfield's first performance in her long-running association with The Rep (1937 to 1993). She was President in 1990 and a life member who performed in 108 productions, including under her married name of Cundell.

Interestingly, Vivienne also acted in the 1974 production of '*And So To Bed*', which was directed by former costume designer Mimi Mattin.

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From the Archives - Risky Rep Shows in the early years

He Was Born Gay (1941)



'*He Was Born Gay*' represents a shift. Until the 1970s, the word 'gay' meant happy to most people, and discussions of same-sex relationships were less open. However, this play explores the rumour that Louis XVII was secretly homosexual. Written in 1937 by homosexual Emlyn Williams, it originally starred John Gielgud.

Co-directed by Thomas Nave and Ronald Peterson, The Rep's 1941 production at the Tivol included stalwarts Mimi Mattin, Beryl Kook and also Ronald Peterson.

Below. Ronald Peterson was a life member of The Rep who was involved with 99 productions from 1931 to 1979.



The play was well-received with a review headline declaring "Rep. Actors Do Well In '*Born Gay*'."

It was noted Maxwell Dunn, "himself a playwright" performed "superbly" in the lead role, "Robert Matthews, as usual, turned in a fine performance" and the large cast "all did everything the producers expected of them." (*News*, 24 November 1941)



This article is a taste of the many stories waiting to be discovered within boxes of photos, plays, theatre programs, posters and other memorabilia in The Rep's Thomas Nave room. It also includes information from Flinders University's AusStage database and the National Library's treasure Trove. Please email The Rep if you're interested in research and/or the preservation of theatre history. Our small team of volunteers are happy to assist with enquiries.

enquiries@adelaiderrep.com

R E P E R T O I R E

Newsletter of Adelaide's oldest theatre group

A hand holding a golden chalice filled with knights and a king, with a yellow flag flying from the top. The background is blue with white clouds.

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Choreographer
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November 2025