

CLASS ACT

Your newsletter from The Stirling Players - Winter 2016



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT – HEATHER JONES

Welcome to the winter edition of the Stirling Players' newsletter. I trust you are all keeping safe, warm and dry from the winter weather!

As this newsletter goes out, we are well into



preparations for *Our Country's Good* which opens on September 23rd and is shaping up to be a great play, again, with outstanding costumes.

The Players' read through took place in July and was kindly hosted by Debbie and John at their home in Balhannah. It proved to be highly entertaining as the members brought their characters to life with the funny play *Caravan* performed by the Players some years ago.

Well the Adelaide Theatre Guide recently released their nominations for their annual 'Curtain Call'

Awards and I am delighted that Stirling Players' production of *Zigzag Street* directed by Miriam Keane has been nominated for Best Comedy. We will, no doubt, have a group together to enjoy the night on September 10th.

My final words for this edition are dedicated to the late Peter Kentish. A stalwart presence on the Adelaide theatre scene, Peter delivered some fine performances for the Stirling Players including *Hotel Sorrento*, *Cuckoo's Nest* and *Inheritance*. Peter is remembered by all involved with Stirling Players with deep affection.

I hope to see you at our next production at our lovely theatre in the Hills.

Kind regards

Heather

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MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

President: Heather Jones

Vice-President: Debbie Tester

Treasurer: Maurice Kneen

Secretary: Viki Burrett

Committee Lori Nielsen, Mo Johnson, Jane Bleby, Glenys Foryth, Amy Greig, Rebecca Kemp, Kate Van Der Horst

Email correspondence to

stirlingplayerssecretary@gmail.com

Or post to PO Box 455 STIRLING 5152

www.stirlingplayers.sct.org.au

Social Events & Diary Dates!

A reminder that this year's Christmas Party and reasure Hunt will be hosted by Mo and Nick on



December 3rd. Please RSVP to the Stirling Players secretary!

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This year's ATG Curtain Call Awards Dinner is to be held on September 10th at the Adelaide Convention Centre. All the information is on www.theatreguide.com.au. You can make your bookings directly through this site and ask to be seated in the Stirling Players area. We hope you will join us for a fabulous night!

OUR NEXT PRODUCTION

OUR COUNTRY'S GOOD

by Timberlake Wertenbaker Directed by John Graham
Based on the novel by Thomas Keneally

1789. Sydney Cove. Supplies and morale are low. Governor Arthur Philip and some of his officers debate the purpose of imprisonment and the nature of criminals. When someone mentions that the convicts consider hanging to be "entertainment," Philip wonders if they could be offered something more civilised. Could they stage a play, perhaps?

1883. Stirling's beautiful Community Theatre is built "for the purpose of providing means of healthful recreation for the minds of the residents of Stirling West". A hundred years earlier, in grimmer circumstances, a similar idea leads to transported convicts being cast in an English play.

2016. Stirling Community Theatre, South Australia. The Stirling Players' will present Timberlake Wertenbaker's powerful drama about Australia's first play *Our Country's Good*, opening 23 September. The Players sense the thread of history winding back from their stage through two and a half centuries to our earliest brutal colony...

Young 2nd Lt. Ralph Clark (**Lee Cook**), homesick for his old life in London, and keen to make an impression on Governor Philip (**Peter Collins**) offers to direct George Farquhar's comedy, *The Recruiting Officer*. Never mind that he has only two copies of the script, or that the convicts are mostly illiterate, or that one of the possible leads may be about to be hanged. Some fellow officers are vehemently opposed, but a vote is taken and, with Phillip's unflagging support, auditions take place for what will be the first play performed in Australia.

We know this because Wertenbaker based *Our Country's Good* on Thomas Keneally's novel, *The Playmaker*, whose sources were the letters and journals of First Fleeters like Lt. Clark and other officers, who are the central characters of her play. In fact, most of the characters, convict and captor alike, were real people: Captain David Collins RM (**Tim Williams**); Provost Marshall, Midshipman Harry Brewer RN (**David Grieg**); Captain Watkin Tench RM (**Malcolm Walton**); hangman, James "Kidd" Fraser (**David Collins**); the first and only convict, Matthew "Kidd" (Gillman); the

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flamboyant pickpocket, Robert Sideway (**Nathan Brown**); shy Mary Brenham (**Jean Collins**); her outspoken friend, Dabby Bryant (**Ellie McPhee**); thief and prostitute, Duckling Smith (**Kate van der Horst**); Jewish thief, John Wisehammer (**Jakob Maddocks**); convict Black Caesar from Madagascar (**Jason Sardinha**); thief, John Arscott (**Patrick Marlin**); and ageing prostitute, Meg Long (**Mo Johnson**). Director, **John Graham**, has had his cast researching historical and biographical databases, with some fascinating findings.

Our Country's Good follows the progress of rehearsals, and the effect of their shared experience on the convicts and on Clark, himself. All the while, events are observed by an unnamed Aboriginal, who comments throughout about the effects of this brutal colony on *his* people.

Winner of the Olivier and New York Critics' Circle Awards for its West End and Broadway productions, and revived to rave reviews in 2015 by London's National Theatre, *Our Country's Good* is a powerful, moving, and surprisingly funny play about the possibility of redemption and the transforming powers of theatre. We think the founders of the Stirling Theatre would have been happy with our choice.

WHEN: Fri & Sat 23, 24, 30 Sept. & 1, 7, 8 Oct. at 8pm. Sun 25 Sept. & 2 Oct. at 4pm. Backstage tour, Q&A and meet the cast after the 25 Sept. matinee.

WHERE: Stirling Community Theatre, Avenue Road, Stirling.

TICKETS: Adult \$22, Conc. \$18, Groups of 10+, \$16. Suitable for ages 12+.

Adult themes, some coarse language

BOOKINGS: www.stirlingplayers.sct.org.au or from 11 August, phone Stirling Players' Ticketing **0414 075 413**



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Some interesting facts about the First Fleet

According to the history books, about 8 out of 10 criminals had been convicted of theft, including the poaching of game.

Crimes such as murder and political crimes were seldom represented.

Victims of theft crimes often tried to seek clemency for the convicted thief because sentences were so severe.

The first Governor of the new colony was Captain Arthur Phillip who commanded the fleet which arrived in New South Wales in 1788.

The fleet departed from Portsmouth on Sunday 13th May 1787 and comprised 11 ships. The flagship was named Sirius.

Some foods were grown on board ship including beans which were grown on dampened strips of cloth.

A young Jewish girl convicted of stealing some black lace married 2nd Lt George Johnston in 1814. Relationships between convicts and officers were not uncommon.

Floggings were a frequent occurrence, often given unnecessarily for 'slacking off at work'

In many cases the convicts were restrained in chains and were only allowed on deck for fresh air and exercise

Mary Bryant was one of the most famous convicts on the fleet

JUST FOR FUN – THIS EDITION'S WORDSEARCH BASED ON *OUR COUNTRY'S GOOD*

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ALL HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL!

CAPTAIN ARTHUR PHILLIP, DUCKLING, GOVENOR, THE RECRUITING OFFICER, CONVICT,
WERTENBAKER, FLOG, MEG LONG, MARY BRYANT, SCURVY, COLONY, BOTANY BAY, THEFT, SHIP,
FLEET, BEANS, BREAD, SIRIUS, BLACK CAESAR

We hope you have enjoyed this edition! If there is anything you would like to see more of in our quarterly newsletters, your feedback and suggestions are most welcome. Please contact Debbie on debbietester64@gmail.com with your comments!