

Summer of the Seventeenth Doll



By Ray Lawler

Director's Note

In 1955 Australians could wake each day and reassure themselves that the nation was at peace: no troops fighting in Europe, North Africa, South Africa, South East Asia, New Guinea or Korea. The economy was "booming", with coal and other minerals adding to national wealth, and the sugar cane industry mechanizing and expanding in Queensland. In schoolrooms across Australia children holding social studies textbooks listened to teachers talking about The Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric Scheme. Their parents might have been drawn to the new Holden cars, Victa mowers or Sunbeam mix masters. Betty Cuthbert and Dawn Fraser were in training for the Olympics coming to Melbourne. And in December Mr Menzies led the conservative coalition to another victory.

Late in 1955 *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* received its premiere at the Union Repertory Theatre of Melbourne. The first audiences met Olive, Pearl, Barney and Roo and heard the story of their relationship and seventeen-year ritual. They saw familiar 'types' but were not prepared – by anything in their 'regular' theatre-going experience – for the way the story played out. Ray Lawler had created a play that would transform the way they thought about Australian theatre and its potential, a play that – unlike anything Australian that had preceded it – would by the end of the decade have been seen across Australia, in London and in New York, and in a Hollywood movie adaptation, starring internationally famous actors. It continues to be presented by professional and amateur companies and would probably win a competition for 'Australian play most beloved by theatregoers.'

Never had an Australian playwright scratched a smooth surface and exposed such fragile foundations.

Never had we been confronted with the pride, defiance, need and despair that can lie behind the masks of "ordinary" Australians.

Never had anyone put 'mateship' on the stage in such confronting and emotional forms.

In June 2022 Ray Lawler was appointed an "Officer of the Order of Australia (OA) for services to theatre".

My special thanks to Barry Nielsen, Susan Carveth, and Tom Fahy for their kindness and creative support throughout.

My production dedicated to the memory of actor and pillar of Sydney's New Theatre, Marie Armstrong.

Director
John Grinston

Ray Lawler (1921 -) is an Australian actor, dramatist, producer, and director. His most notable play was his tenth, *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* (1953), which had its premiere in Melbourne in 1955. The play changed the direction of Australian drama. The story of *The Doll* is preceded by *Kid Stakes*, set in 1937, when the characters of *The Doll* are young adults, and then *Other Times*, which is set in 1945 and includes most of the same characters.

JOHN GRINSTON - Director For Genesian Theatre John directed the major production *A Murder is Announced* and several programmes of one act American and Australian plays. As an actor he has appeared in plays and musicals with the New England Theatre Company, Kinetic Energy Company, Sport for Jove, at the Stables, the New Theatre, the Old Fitz, the Seymour Centre and at Theatre Royal, and in 'theatre-in-education' in schools across Sydney and in regional New South Wales. On television his credits include 'Henry Lawson' in *Michael Willesee's Australians* and in the ABC TV's *I Spy* and in the Channel 7 series *A Place to Call Home*. At the 2013 Sydney Film School Awards he was named 'Best Actor' for his performance in *Magnum Opus*, directed by David Sprungli.

TOM FAHY - Set Design Tom has been involved with Set Construction at the Genesian Theatre for the last five years. This is his fourth foray into Set Design following *Towards Zero* in 2019, *Home Chat* in 2021, and *Lady Windermere's Fan* in 2022. He has worked, particularly in musical theatre, as an actor and director in Toowoomba, Queensland for many years.

SUSAN CARVETH - Costume Design Susan has worked as the designer/costumier on dozens of Genesian productions - a few favourites being: *Ladykillers*, *Persuasion*, *Figaro*, *Under Milkwood*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Three Musketeers*, *Far From the Madding Crowd*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *A Man for All Seasons*, *An Ideal Husband*, *Witness for the Prosecution*, *Hay Fever*, *Murder on the Nile*, *Richard III*, *Frankenstein*, *Twelfth Night*, *39 Steps*, *Forsythe Saga*, and *Blood Weddings*. She has also worked for Opera Australia, the ABC, and BBC as a costume coordinator, and costume maker for *Tall Poppeas* (Ondine Productions), *Opera Bites*, and *Deadhouse* (Blancmange Productions).

MEHRAN MORTEZAEI - Lighting Design Mehran has been involved in numerous shows as a writer, director, designer, stage manager, and actor in Iran, NSW, QL, and Denmark. His most recent light and sound designs were for and at *Dark Voyager* at the Pavilion Theatre, *Necrophilia* in Limelight Theatre, *My Night with Reg* and *Pygmalion* at The New Theatre, and *Persuasion* and *William Shakespeare's Long Lost First Play* at the Genesian Theatre. Mehran started his theatre journey while he was in high school and then continued it by doing B.A. and M.A. in Theatre and Performing Arts at the University of Tehran. He is a lighting design tutor at Excelsia College, and Technical Manager at The New Theatre and Actors Centre Australia. Genesian was Mehran's first theatre home in Australia and he comes back home anytime he has a chance.

MICHAEL SCHELL - Sound Design Michael has designed sound for over 200 productions ranging from children's plays (*Robin Hood Clemben* [Australian Tour]) to Opera (*Die Fledermaus* (Sydney Conservatorium) and nearly every form of theatre in between. He has worked with many major companies in Australia including Nimrod (*Upside Down At The Bottom Of The World*), Sydney Theatre Company (*Revenger's Tragedy*) and The Q Theatre (*You Can't Take it With You*). Recent productions include *Elephant Man* (PACT), *Deathtrap* (Exit Game Productions), *Vice* (Emu Productions), *Not About Heroes* (RGP Productions [Australia & New Zealand Tour]), *Sherlock Holmes & The Death On Thor Bridge* (Genesian Theatre) and *Rabbit Hole* (Chippen Street).



LIZ GRINDLEY - Emma For Genesian Theatre: *Lady Windermere's Fan* by Oscar Wilde (Duchess of Berwick), director: Jess Davis. For Hunters Hill Theatre: *84 Charing Cross Road* adapted by James Roose-Evans (Helene Hanff), director Maggie Scott; *Our Town* by Thornton Wilder (Mrs Webb), director Kaye Lopez; *Calendar Girls* adapted by Tim Firth (Chris), director Christopher Hamilton; *Moon Over Buffalo* by Ken Ludwig (Charlotte Haye), director Christopher Hamilton. For Tower Theatre (London): *The Changeling* by Middleton & Rowley (Tomasia), director Barrie Addenbrook; *Suddenly Last Summer* by Tennessee Williams (Nurse), director Barrie Addenbrook. For UNSW: *Vanities*, *Ghosts*. School productions: *The Visit*, *The Misanthrope*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

JODINE MUIR - Olive Jodine has a number of credits for stage and screen spanning an acting career of more than twenty years. Notable theatre credits include *The Spook*, *Cats Talk Back*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *Dying for It* (New Theatre); *The Realistic Joneses* (Limelight on Oxford); *Violent Extremism and Other Adult Party Games*, *Arms and the Man* (Depot Theatre) and *Plaything* (Sydney Comedy Festival). For television, she has appeared in *The Diplomat*, *Neighbours*, *Home and Away* and *Deadly Women*. She has featured in award-winning films *The Neighbour* (short film) and *Kairos* (feature film). This is Jodine's debut for The Genesian Theatre Co.



GRACE SWADLING - Pearl Grace Swadling is a 2020 graduate of Actors Centre Australia, where she performed in roles such as Liz Morley in *Our Country's Good* (dir. Adam Cook), Clytemnestra in *The Oresteia* (dir. Gale Edwards), Boyet in *Loves Labours Lost* (dir. Jenny West) and Meg in *Crimes of the Heart* (dir. Francesca Savage). She collaborated on devised pieces such as *The Man Who* (dir. Hanna Sandler). Grace is represented by Central Melbourne Talent and since graduating has been able to hone her previous dance and singing training as well as writing endeavours and acting in short films such as *Exposure* (dir. Caroline Leiven). Having portrayed Mrs Elton in *Emma* in 2017 (dir. Barry Nielsen), Grace is excited to be once again on the Genesian stage!

HEATHER TLEIGE - Bubba Heather began acting through involvement in workshops and acting classes with ATYP and NIDA. Following training and ensemble work with the Sydney Talent Company and Captivate, she was cast as 'Snug the Joiner' and 'Peaseblossom' in her first official production, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by the Holroyd Musical and Dramatic Society. Her theatre credits include 'Matron Raine' in *Forgotten*, 'Charlotte Brontë' in *The Lost Voice of Anne Brontë* and 'Mary Wilson' in *Brackenridge*. Heather's screen credits include 'Jess' in *The Cleansing*, Assistant Director in *Run* and 'Ellen Kenny' in *200 Years of Catholic Education*. She hopes to continue her training as an actor in 2023.





HARLEY CONNOR - Barney Harley Connor has acted with the Actors' Forum, at the New Theatre, at Factory Theatre, at the Seymour Centre and at NIDA. Plays include : *Hamlet*, Neil Simon's *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, Terence McNally's *Corpus Christie*, Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, Sartre's *No Exit*, Roald Dahl's *The Witches*, and David Earl's *Post Nuptials*. Film work includes the upcoming *Akoni*, *Sweethurt* and *Tomorrow When the War Began*. He has also recorded the soon-to-be-released audio book *The Wolf Queen of Japan*.

MARTIN GRELIS - Roo Martin has been treading the boards for over thirty years. His roles include leads in *How to Succeed In Business Without Really Trying* & *Little Miss Sunshine*. He's performed at The Darlinghurst Theatre in *Blue Surge* and with The Australian Shakespeare Co at The Botanic Gardens in *Wind in the Willows*. His Shakespearean roles include Sir Toby Belch in *Twelfth Night*, Prospero in *The Tempest* & Paris in *Romeo & Juliet*. On screen you may've seen Martin in *The Matrix*, *Mabo*, *Soft Fruit*, *Iron Sky*, *Scappelle*, *Home & Away*, *Young Lions*, *Water Rats* & *Rake*.



Martin is thrilled to return in the role of Roo for his third appearance with The Genesian Theatre Co. In 1993 Martin performed in *You Can't Take It With You* and in 1994 in *On Monday Next*.



HAMISH MACDONALD - Johnnie Dowd Hamish was born in England and raised in Scotland, before moving to the Sunshine Coast at age 10. Studying acting at the Australian Performing Arts Conservatory in Brisbane, Hamish then moved to Sydney and has performed in various stage productions including *Death of A Salesman*, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, and *12 Angry Jurors*. This is his second play at the Genesian Theatre, having appeared in Agatha Christie's *The Secret of Chimneys* in 2021. He is excited to bring Johnnie Dowd to life alongside this talented cast

and crew.

Production

Director

John Grinston

Set Design

Tom Fahy

Costume Design

Susan Carveth

Lighting Design

Mehran Mortezaei

Sound Design

Michael Schell

Production Manager

Barry Nielsen

Set Construction

**Tom Fahy, Peter Curtis, Paul Gilbert,
and Members of the Company**

Set Detailing

Barry Nielsen

Dolls by

Lisa Bransdon

Photography

Grant Fraser, Craig O'Regan

Graphic Design

Tom Massey

Ticketing

Tom Massey

Transport

Barry Nielsen

Audition Assistants

Helen Kohlhagen, Mary Abrahams

Acknowledgements

Christopher Flynn, Outhouse

Theatre, Lois Marsh, Sandra Bass,

Sahar Nabinik, Willoughby Theatre

Company

Crew

Stage Manager

Marica Fumanti

Lighting and Sound Operation

Cian Byrne, Ali Shad,

Mark Berriman, Emmanuel Said

Cast

Emma

Liz Grindley

Olive

Jodine Muir

Pearl

Grace Swadling

Bubba

Heather Tleige

Barney

Harley Connor

Roo

Martin Grellis

Johnnie Dowd

Hamish MacDonald

About the Genesian Theatre

The Genesian Theatre Company celebrates our 78th year as a company in 2022! For 68 years we have been operating from our home at 420 Kent St in the Sydney CBD. We boast among our alumni numerous household names in Australian theatre and film such as Angela Punch, Bryan Brown, Baz Luhrmann, Coral Lansbury, Judi Farr, John Bell, Peter Carroll, and Nick Enright. We are also just as proud of the hundreds of other talented actors, directors, stage managers, set and costume designers, lighting and sound specialists, stage and production staff who have contributed to Sydney's unique little theatre. We are particularly proud of all our members who volunteer their time to work Front of House to help you enjoy your visit to the Genesian Theatre.

Over the years the company has developed into a theatre providing a training ground for young theatre professionals and a place where those who love the theatre can meet, share, and extend their knowledge of the performing arts. The Genesian Theatre Company is one of Sydney's most active theatre companies. In addition to six main stage productions each year we run classes, workshops, and many other activities.

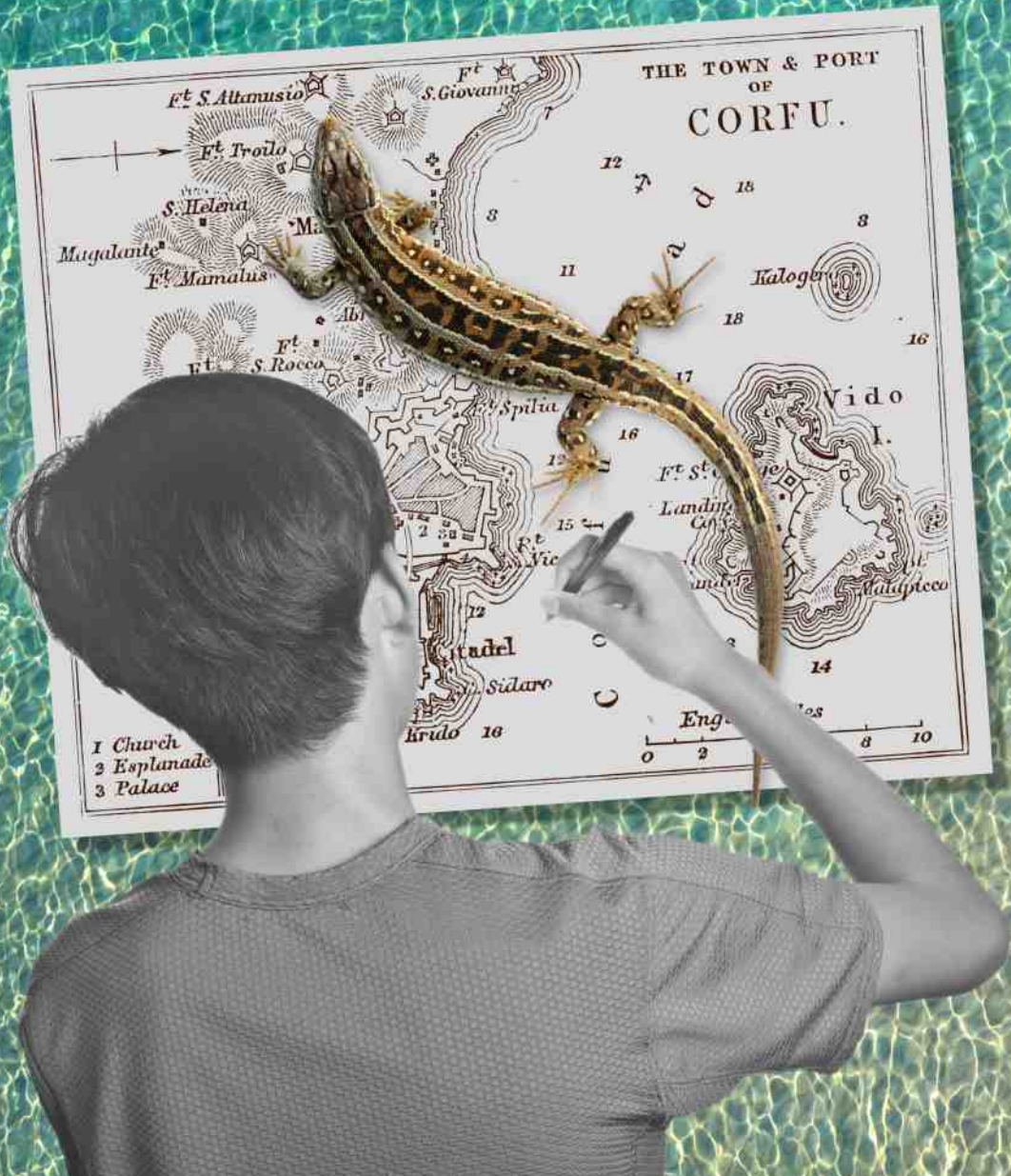
The building which houses the Genesian Theatre Company was originally St John's Church, and dates from 1868. It served as both a church and a poor school until 1932 when it became the Kursaal Theatre, housing the Sydney Repertory Company. In 1938 it became the first Matthew Talbot Hostel. Since 1954 it has been the home of the Genesian Theatre Company which was formed in 1944.

The Genesian Theatre Company acknowledges the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation as the traditional custodians of the land our theatre stands on.

Membership

If you're interested in acting, directing, stage management, sound, lights, publicity, admin, etc, or if you just want to experience being a member of the group, we would welcome you as a member. You don't need to be experienced, we can provide training and can cater to different levels of involvement. Please see our web site for further information.

Coming next...



THE TOWN & PORT OF CORFU.

- 1 Church
- 2 Esplanade
- 3 Palace

Eng. Miles
0 2 4 6 8 10