

Annual General Meeting

Members of The Questors may like to be

reminded that the company's AGM is being held

on Monday 3rd Febraury in the Shaw Room at

7.45pm. All members are cordially invited.

coming programme

Studio

FRENCH WITHOUT TEARS by Terrence Rattigan. 18 Jan - 1 Feb '97

Playhouse

THE REHEARSAL by Jean Anouilh. 1 Feb - 8 Feb '97

Studio

FRANKENSTEIN 15 Feb - 1 Mar '97

Adapted from Mary Shelley's novel by Julia Bardsley.

art exhibitions

Grapevine Gallery WENDY LANE 14 Dec - 8 Feb

An exhibition of Landscapes.

Upper Foyer FRANK JOHNSON 11 Jan - 8 Feb

Worked for some years in the Exhibition Department of the Natural History Museum in London and became an Art Therapist in 1975, employed in residential and Day Centre settings.

Job sharing for the past 5 years allows more time for painting, and Frank now exhibit regularly in London and the Home Counties.

why not become a QUESTORS MEMBER?

Your membership includes at least ten FREE shows this season

I wish to apply for membership of The Questors Theatre

name phone no

address

signed date

*Individual Membership £35.50 *Joint Membership £60.00

*Senior Citizen £20.00 *Concessionary rate £14.00

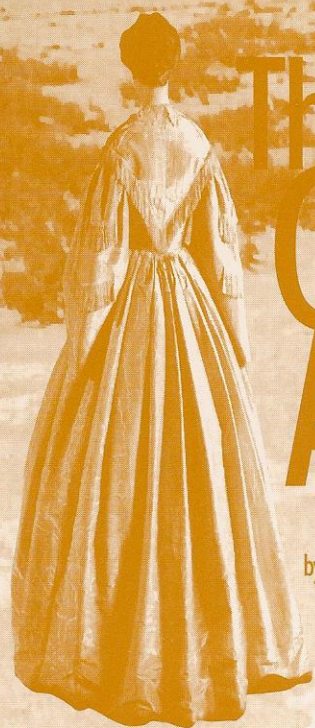
(Concessionary rate applies to students, UB40s and Leisure Pass holders)

Discount if you pay by Direct Debit- forms available from the Membership Secretary.

* Other membership categories available include: Family, Joint Senior Citizen and Associate.

Call **0181 567 8736** to find out more.





The Golden Age

by Louis Nowra



i n t r o d u c t i o n

In 1939, a lost tribe of white Europeans was apparently discovered in the Tasmanian wilderness. These nineteenth-century emigres suffered from serious genetic malformations, and the Australian government, fearing their condition could be used by Nazi propagandists, secreted the tribe in an asylum pending the end of the war. They did not survive the internment; all died of tuberculosis.

This grim tragedy is the basis for what is surely Louis Nowra's most accomplished play, a work which blends poetic language, historical fact, Australian folklore and Greek mythology. For *The Golden Age* is about history and empires; it is about humanity's responsibility to itself; and it is about the importance of language, art and tradition to that humanist vision. It is an ambitious work which does not betray its objectives.

The Golden Age is set principally in Tasmania, though it does move briefly to war-torn Berlin. It divides most of its time between Hobart and a wilderness described as 'one of the most unexplored regions on earth', as an 'underworld' and as 'the burial ground to nature'; a place so remote as to have allowed a group of people - a colony in miniature - to survive unmolested by the twentieth century. It is in this latter landscape that two young bushwalkers first discover the lost tribe, and it is their presence, evocative of a wider world, which convinces the matriarch of the colony to abandon the wilderness of exile and rejoin civilisation.

The conceit of the two worlds is a useful paradigm for Nowra's questioning of such values as are attached to the primitive, the civilised, the legitimate and the illegitimate. For despite the colony's archaic rituals, its genetic malformations, its infertility and imminent demise, Nowra can effectively contrast its world with the chaos of a civilisation which, despite its supposedly greater knowledge and sophistication, is nevertheless about to engage in a world war. The parallel begs the question: how can the modern world consider itself superior to supposedly simpler societies, when it cannot even save itself from the most simplistic of solutions to political complexities: war?

The play-within-a-play allows Nowra to demonstrate the tenuous position of great empires which are traditionally held up as examples of the power and merit of high culture. The Greek theatrical fragments show not only the pettiness and cruelty at the heart of these worlds, but also suggest that even they will crumble and degenerate. The force of time, or the darkness of the human soul, and not any generic weakness, is at the heart of humanity's inexorable decline. *Iphigenia in Tauris*, set in the crumbling Greek temple of a Tasmanian garden, prefigures the major themes of *The Golden Age* and comments obliquely yet relevantly on its meaning.

Of course, *The Golden Age* is not merely concerned with universals. It is also a frank study of the Australian landscape - its people and its history. The Tasmanian wilderness stands, in part, as a metaphor for the Australian unconscious, a representation of its dreams and hopes - the quest for freedom and fortune - but also of its darkest fears - the threat of isolation and imminent decay. The lost tribe, headed by the indomitable Queenie Ayre, stands as an uncomfortable reminder of all the 'good' untapped by, and all the possible tragedies available to, humanity. Because the colonists so unequivocally embody best and worst, however, they are difficult for society to bear; they are an embarrassment to be locked away in an asylum and forgotten.

cast (in order of appearance)

ELIZABETH, ANGEL, DR SIMON
WILLIAM, MELORNE
BETSHEB
MR TURNER, STEFF, PRIVATE CORRIS
PETER, GERMAN MAN
FRANCIS
AGNES, MRS WITCOMBE
MAC, GEORGE ROSS, JAMES
Servants, Asylum Attendants etc

GILLIAN KERSWELL
KEN RATCLIFFE
HELEN PARKINSON
DEAN MOYNIHAN
ANDREW LUMMIS
STEPHEN BROWN
ANNE NEVILLE
ROBIN INGRAM
VICKY BUTLER,
STEPHEN RAE,
IRENE VILLALON

The action of the play takes place in various locations in Tasmania between 1939 and 1945, and in Berlin between 1943 and 1945.

crew

DIRECTORS

SET DESIGN

LIGHTING AND SOUND DESIGN

LIGHTING OPERATOR

SOUND OPERATOR

The Stage Management, wardrobe and Props for the production were put together by the cast and the directors.

The coffin was kindly supplied by CO-OPERATIVE FUNERAL SERVICES, Hayes.

with thanks to

SARAH ANDREW, JULIA CRUTTENDEN, PETER KENNEDY, ERIC LISTER, JOHN STACEY and SYLVIA WALL.

First performance of this production, Saturday 11 January, 1997.

SPENCER BUTLER,
LIZ BROWN

SPENCER BUTLER

STEVE HAMES

PHILLIPPA FORSTER

ANDREW HUMPHRIES