

How is it that some plays attain greatness? Plenty of plays are fashionable for the moment, are seen, enjoyed and forgotten – while others can be revisited and reassessed time and again. Maybe the plays that survive speak to us in a more profound way and tackle the 'big questions' about the meaning of life. Certainly the best dramatists instinctively try to make some order out of the chaos or existence. Or question it at least.



ARTISTIC DIRECTOR Colin McGill

actors who came through Unitec and ATC's Second Unit; they are bright hopes for the future of NZ theatre and it's a delight to be working with them. Welcome too to Steve A Davis, Chad Hampson, Rudi Vodanovich and Nathan Whitaker who all make their debut with this production. Nathan and Rudi are third year students at Unitec School of Performing Arts. Many thanks to Jonathan Hendry, Head of Acting Discipline at Unitec, for working with ATC on developing the Student Secondment programme. This

Equus is a masterpiece of modern theatre. It survives because it deals with something fundamental to drama - humanity's need for ritual and transcendence.

Dysart's search to understand Alan's act leads him to doubt his own vocation and integrity. The closer he comes to understanding his patients motives the more confused Dysart is about how to respond to Alan and the mental world and cult of worship he has created. Dysart agonises over questions he has never before considered; by helping the children he sees become 'normal' is he actually harming them? Is his allegiance to science a defence against the passion and spiritual mystery that informs Alan's worship of *Equus* – the Horse-God?

I am very pleased to have gathered together a first-rate cast of experienced professionals to realise this powerful and compelling work for you. Welcome back to Peter Elliott, Ilona Rodgers, Catherine Wilkin, David Aston, Hera Dunleavy, Jon Brazier and Kip Chapman. Kip Chapman and Toni Potter are two young

programme allows ATC and other Auckland theatres to provide a great opportunity for actors-in-training to work with and learn from established professionals.

Many thanks and gratitude to my design team, to the mental health professionals who assisted us with this production, and to Jools Topp for sharing her knowledge and love of horses with us.

The next ATC production and first up in our Winter Season of Comedy is the ASB Bank Season of *Taking Off* by Roger Hall. It's an hilarious and untraditional mid-life adventure – as four intrepid kiwi women survive the perils of international travel, jet-lag, muggings, frisky landlords, handsome strangers, dodgy food, hostels, all night internet cafes and boring bus tours. A deeply funny and touching comedy that will appeal to all those who have done their OE and all who wish they had! It opens at SKYCITY Theatre in June - but take my advice and book early for good seats.

EQUUS

By Peter Shaffer

BY ARRANGEMENT WITH SAMUEL FRENCH LIMITED

Director Colin McColl
Designer John Parker
Costume Designer Elizabeth Whiting
Lighting Designer Phillip Dexter
Sound Designer John Gibson
Movement Design Shona McCullagh
Production Manager Andrew Malmo
Stage Manager Fern Christie
Operator Rhedgirl

Dr. Martin Dysart Peter Elliott
Alan Strang Kip Chapman
Frank Strang David Aston
Dora Strang Catherine Wilkin
Hesther Solomon Ilona Rodgers
Jill Mason Toni Potter
Dalton Jon Brazier
Nurse/Horse Hera Dunleavy
Nugget/Horseman Steven A. Davis
Horse Chad Hampson
Horse Rudi Vodanovich
Horse Nathan Whitaker

This is the second production in ATC's 2005 Season. Equus premiered this Thursday 14 April 2005 at the Maidment Theatre.

Equus is approximately x hour and x minutes long with a x minute interval.

Please remember to switch off all cell phones, pagers and watch alarms



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MONTANA
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PETER SHAFFER

Peter Shaffer, along with his twin brother, Anthony, who would also become a writer, was born in Liverpool, England, on May 15, 1926. Shaffer studied history on a scholarship at Cambridge University. He worked a number of odd jobs including coal miner, bookstore clerk, and assistant at the New York Public Library, before discovering his dramatic talents.

Shaffer's first play, *The Salt Land* (1954) was presented on the BBC, encouraged by this success Shaffer continued to write and established his reputation as a playwright in 1958 with the production of *Five Finger Exercise* which opened in London under the direction of John Gielgud and won the Evening Standard Drama Award. When *Five Finger Exercises* moved to New York in 1959 it was equally well-received and landed Shaffer the Drama Critics Award.

Shaffer's canon contains a unique mix of philosophical dramas and satirical comedies. *The Royal Hunt of the Sun* (1964) presents the tragic conquest of Peru by the Spanish, while *Black Comedy* (1965) takes an hilarious look at the antics of a group of characters feeling their way around a pitch black room - although the stage is, of course, actually flooded with light.

Equus (1973) won Shaffer the 1975 Tony Award for Best Play as well as the New York Drama Critics Circle Award. An electrifying journey into the mind of a 17-year-old stableboy who has plunged a spike into the eyes of six horses, *Equus* ran for over 1000 performances on Broadway.

Shaffer followed this success with *Amadeus* (1979) which won the Evening Standard Drama Award and the Theatre Critics Award. Amadeus tells the story of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and court composer Antonio Salieri who, overcome with jealousy at hearing the "voice of God" coming from an "obscene child", sets out to destroy his rival. When Amadeus moved to Broadway it won the 1981 Tony Award for "Best Play" and, like *Equus*, ran for over 1000 performances.

Several of Shaffer's plays have been adapted to film, these include *The Royal Hunt of the Sun* (1969), *Equus* (1977), *Amadeus* (1984) which won eight Academy Awards including "Best Picture".

<http://www.imagination.com/moonstruck/clsc69.html>

*Rehearsing a play is making the word flesh.
Publishing a play is reversing the process.*

Peter Shaffer



THROUGH THE EYES OF A PSYCHOLOGIST

The task of reading *Equus* from a psychological perspective is intriguing and challenging. There are many themes within the play which provide any reader or watcher with lots to ponder and question. The obvious question to be asked is how accurate is Peter Shaffer's portrayal of the relationship between adolescent client and therapist? Shaffer presents us with a very tense and fragile relationship where Alan forces Dysart to engage with him at a more personal level. The description of Alan's behaviour, his reluctance to engage with Dysart and the dance that they play around each other in the process of gaining and giving trust gives us a very real and true sense of the difficulties faced within therapy. Particularly if the client has not voluntarily engaged in the exercise!

Dysart is in crisis from the outset of the play. He is honest with the audience about his loss of confidence in his himself and in his role. Dysart questions himself, his profession and the social and moral order of society throughout the play. He becomes very focused on the issue of making his clients normal at the expense of passion. He questions his achievement as a psychiatrist and compares his own existence and passion to that of Alan's.

Dysart's burnout and his crisis of identity and confidence gives an insight into the nature of his work as a psychiatrist and the impact of therapy on the therapist. Shaffer's portrayal of the psychiatrist gives the audience a rich and sometimes chilling account of the process of working with a highly disturbed young person in an institutional setting. The techniques that Dysart employs in his work with Alan and the very institutionalised setting are dated. But the manner in which Shaffer captures the tension between the pair is believable and provides us with the chance to participate in the therapy and to share in Dysart's dilemma.

The play does not end on a neat and tidy note. We are left with many questions and to wonder what was the fate of Alan and Dysart. This ending is true of life and therapy. Unfortunately therapy rarely ends with all the ends neatly tied!

Amanda McFadden

Consultant Clinical Psychologist (Registered).

*There is no secret so
close as that between
a rider and his horse
- Robert Smith Surtees. 1803-64*

"In the course of the day I was amused by the dexterity with which a Gaucho forced a restive horse to swim a river. He stripped off his clothes, and jumping on its back, rode into the water till it was out of its depth; then slipping off over the crupper, he caught hold of the tail, and as often as the horse turned round, the man frightened it back, by splashing water in its face. As soon as the horse touched the bottom on the other side, the man pulled himself on, and was firmly seated, bridle in hand, before the horse gained the bank. A naked man, on a naked horse, is a fine spectacle; I had no idea how well the two animals suited each other."

Charles Darwin 1809-82



PETER ELLIOTT

This is Peter's seventh appearance on the ATC stage having previously performed in *The Bach*, *The Graduate*, *Noises Off*, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, *Take a Chance on Me and Art*. He has performed in numerous productions at most New Zealand theatres including The Court Theatre, The Mercury Theatre, Downstage Theatre, Fortune Theatre, and in Australia at The Melbourne Theatre Company.

His face is also familiar from more than 30 television productions and recently a number of acclaimed documentaries (*Explorers*, *Captain's Log*) which he helped create for TVOne.



KIP CHAPMAN

Following his graduation from Unitec's School of Performing Arts in 2002, Kip has appeared on our screens in *Shortland Street* and *Serial Killers*, and on the stage in a wide variety of performances including *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, ATC's *The Talented Mr Ripley*, his solo show *Arohatearua, A Clockwork Orange*, and Downstage's *Big River* for which he received the Chapman Tripp Award for Best Male Newcomer.

waiting for new
replacement
image



CATHERINE WILKIN

Since completing her acting apprenticeship at the Mercury Theatre some thirty years ago, Catherine's career has seen her perform in London, Oslo, Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Auckland, Christchurch and Wellington. Her landmark performance in the Downstage production of *Hedda Gabler*, directed by Colin McColl, was internationally successful, garnering an exceptional reception at the Edinburgh Festival. Her film and television work is equally extensive and has resulted in Silver Logie and Penguin awards in Australia and a Best Supporting Actress at the NZ Film and Television Awards. Her most recent performance for the ATC was as the hapless Isobel in *Middle Age Spread*.

DAVID ASTON

David has had an impressive and varied career as an actor with films *The Matrix* and *The Last Samurai*, and television appearances including *Street Legal*, *Duggan* and *Gloss*. David's recent stage credits include *A Clockwork Orange*, *Galigula*, *Closer*, *The Caretaker*, *Where Are You My Only One* and *Hamlet*. This is David's fifth ATC production.



ILONA RODGERS

Award-winning actress, in both New Zealand and Australia, teacher and director. Ilona Rodgers trained at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School and has worked extensively in theatre, film and television in the UK, Australia and New Zealand. Her theatre credits for Auckland Theatre Company are *Noises Off*, *Copenhagen*, *Wit*, *By Degrees*, *Three Tall Women*, *All My Sons*, and *Amy's View*. Ilona's television credits include *Dr Who*, *The Avengers*, *The Saint*, *Beverly Hillsbillies*, *The Sullivans*, *Prisoner*, *Sons and Daughters*, *Gloss* and *Marlin Bay*.

Ilona is a Board Member of the Auckland Festival Trust, and Chairperson of the Advisory Board for The School of Performing and Screen Arts.



HERA DUNLEAVY

When Hera picked up the Chapman Tripp Award for Best Female Newcomer in 1994 for *Beautiful Thing* it marked the beginning of a career that would take her the length and breadth of the country. She has performed for every professional theatre in New Zealand, as well as two appearances in the New Zealand International Festival of the Arts for *Ricordi and Ranterstantrum*. Film credits include *For Good and Best*. Her latest appearances for ATC have been *Caligula* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*



STEVEN A. DAVIS

Steven graduated from Unitec's School of Performing Arts with a Bachelor of Performing & Screen Arts Degree in 2002 and is also a trained stunt man, fight choreographer and dancer. In 2003 his Matrix fan film *Fanimatrix* was released on to the net and caused a sensation when it received 5 million hits worldwide and was later optioned for the Matrix DVD box set. Steven has worked as a fight choreographer for the Silo Theatre on several productions including *A Clockwork Orange*. His theatre credits include *Macbeth* and *Mr Kolpert* and we welcome this, his first appearance for ATC.



JON BRAZIER

Jon's recent theatre credits include *Under Milkwood*, *Cloud Nine*, *Shopping and Fucking*, and *Lolita* for Silo Theatre and *Middle Age Spread* for Downstage. He is most recognised for his role in the Sarkies brothers debut film *Scarflies*, as well as a long list of television appearances including *Mercy Peak*, *Shortland Street*, *Xena*, *Hercules* and *Mataku*. This is Jon's third Auckland Theatre Company production after *Waiting for Godot* and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*.



CHAD HAMPSON

Chad has recently completed a Bachelor of Performance and Screen Arts majoring in Contemporary Dance at Unitec. He is compelled to deepen his awareness of body and soul, exploring voice and movement, journeying into the magical essence of life, and the being and sharing of it.



TONI POTTER

Toni graduated from Unitec's School of Performing Arts in 2000 and will be a familiar face to Silo audiences after her performances in the acclaimed *Unidentified Human Remains and the True Nature of Love*, and Neil Labute's *Bash*. Toni appeared in ATC's Second Unit production *Play 2* and we welcome this, her first appearance for our mainbill.



RUDI VODANOVICH NATHAN WHITAKER

Rudi Vodanovich and Nathan Whitaker are studying for a Bachelor of Performing and Screen Arts. Currently on secondment to the ATC from Unitec's School of Performing Arts - Acting.



Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?

Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? the glory of his nostrils is terrible.

He paweth in the valley and rejoiceth in his strength: he goeth on to meet the armed men. He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword.

Job 39: 19-22

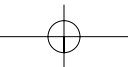


COLIN MCCOLL

One of New Zealand's leading theatre directors, Colin joined Auckland Theatre Company as Artistic Director in July 2003. He co-founded Taki Rua Theatre in 1983 and was Artistic Director of Downstage Theatre in Wellington from 1984 to 1992.

Colin is renowned for his innovative treatment of classic plays - particularly the works of Chekhov and Ibsen - and has directed for the Norwegian National Theatre and the Dutch National Theatre, as well as most leading New Zealand and Australian theatre companies. Colin won Best Director for ATC's 2001 production of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* and has won Best Director of the Chapman Tripp Theatre Awards several times – including his production *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* in 2002.

For ATC Colin has directed *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *Caligula*, *Goldie*, *Middle Age Spread*, *Waiting for Godot*, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, *Serial Killers*, *The Seagull*, *Uncle Vanya*, *Skylight*, *Daughters of Heaven* and *Honour*. Opera directing credits include *Quartet* (NZ International Arts Festival 2004), *La Boheme* (Wellington City Opera), *The Marriage of Figaro* and *The Prodigal Child* for the NBR NZ Opera.



JOHN PARKER

John has a long history of designing for ATC, including *Caligula*, *The Bach*, *Middle Age Spread*, *The Rocky Horror Show*, *Noises Off*, *Waiting for Godot*, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, *Into The Woods*, *Serial Killers*, *Art*, *Cabaret*, *The Book Club*, *Amy's View* and *Lovelock's Dream Run*.

Other work includes: *The Threepenny Opera*, *Chess*, *Romeo And Juliet*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Twelfth Night*, *F.I.L.T.H*, *Assassins*, *Waiora*, *Cat On A Hot Tin Roof*, *Decadence*, *On the Razzle*, *Chicago*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Barber of Seville*, *Cosi Fan Tutte*, *Evita*, *Trash To Fashion and Big River* (Winner the Chapman Tripp Awards Set Designer of the Year) at Downstage theatre.

John has also designed for The Louis Vuitton Ball and The America's Cup Ball, Bendon's *Next To Nothing*, Bellsouth *Pharaohs*, *Precious Legacy* and *Peru : Gold and Sacrifice* for the Auckland Museum.

He was awarded a Waitakere City Millennium Medal for services to the Community.

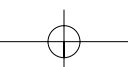


ELIZABETH WHITING

Equus is a play I have wanted to design for some time. It poses the designer with interesting issues. It was presented very successfully in the 1970's so the script and stage directions relate to that period. I feel it would belittle the power of the play to present it as a period piece as it is very relevant to our contemporary situation, but it must have 70's references. It has been an interesting process to find the right balance.

I have just finished working on *Verge* for the Royal NZ Ballet's *Tutus on Tour* with Shona McCullagh the choreographer for *Equus*. It is delightful to have the opportunity to work together again so soon. My other recent projects have been Michael Parmenter's *Commotion* and *Jack and the Beanstalk* for the Auckland Festival 2005.

I wish to thank my team Denise, Jo and Victoria for their support and skills. Here's to a thought provoking and wonderful second production in ATC's year.



PHILLIP DEXTER

Phillip studied lighting design in New Zealand under the guidance of Jacque Hardinge during the mid 80's while lighting a considerable amount of work including designs for the then Perkel Opera Company. His method, derived from the "hands on" approach, produces designers who are creative and imaginative while working efficiently.

In 1991 Phillip moved to London to study international approaches to lighting design. This was achieved by practical experience through holding senior posts in lighting at prestigious London theatres including Hampstead Theatre, The Royal College of Music Opera Conservatory, The Royal Opera House, and the recently opened Stratford Circus multiple auditorium performance complex.

During the early 90's Phillip developed his creative side further by working alongside such international designers as David Hearsey, Mark Henderson and Mike Hughes.





SHONA MCCULLAGH

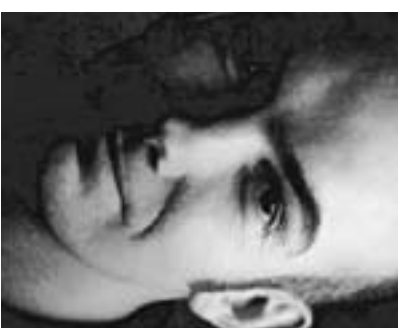
Shona holds a unique position in New Zealand as an outstanding dancer, choreographer, dance filmmaker and educator. Shona has choreographed many successful works for companies such as Limbs, Douglas Wright Dance Company and The Royal New Zealand Ballet. She was a founding member of The Watershed Theatre and created choreography for many theatre productions there.

In 2002 Shona was named a New Zealand Arts Foundation Arts Laureate and in 2003 she was awarded Creative New Zealand's inaugural Senior Choreographic Fellowship. She is currently completing her third dance film titled *BREAK*. In 2004 Shona created choreography for three feature films, *Perfect Creature*, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *King Kong*. She is currently focusing on her choreographic fellowship activities and is delighted to be working with the creative team and actors at Auckland Theatre Company.

JOHN GIBSON

John has composed original music for New Zealand theatre, film, dance and television. He has composed over 60 scores for theatre including *Ricordi* for the International Festival of the Arts. For dance he has written scores for Shona McCullagh and Ann Dewey. His most recent television work is the series *Party Animals* on TV2 and he is currently creating an original opera for NZ Opera. John most recently worked with ATC on the soundscape for *Calligula*.

waiting for new replacement image



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF...

ROY WARD: Associate Director, Artistic and Literary

1. You've just joined ATC as Associate Director, Artistic and Literary, that's a flash title - how did you get the job?

Yes, very flash title – I worry that it won't fit on the business card. How did I get the job? ATC needed someone to sit quietly in a corner and read plays. And I didn't ask for too much money. I've worked on and off in theatre for over twenty years, as an actor and a director and in script development so I guess my credentials stack up okay. It probably helps that I've worked with Colin McColl before, mostly as an actor. I came here from a job running the script department at *Shortland Street* - which may alarm some people, but I hope it doesn't.

2. What exactly does your job entail on a typical day?

There is no typical day but every day starts with coffee and a quick trawl of the internet for new theatre reviews and news etc. ATC wants me to know what's going on in London, New York and Sydney without wanting to send me there. I'm working on that one. I usually read about two plays a day. The interesting ones get passed on to Colin McColl for consideration for further development. I'm also directing The Kensington Swan Season of *Up for Grabs* later in the year, so I'm starting to cast that now. There are always other bits and pieces that need doing – and I'm still familiarising myself with some of the plays in this year's season.

3. Tell me a bit about the play readings...

We hold free public playreadings on the first Wednesday of every month, 6.30p.m. in the auditorium at the Art Gallery. These are new New Zealand plays which are just starting out on their hopeful journey to full production. ATC hires a director and actors to work with the writer over two days then presents the rehearsed reading. It's usually the writer's first opportunity to hear what they've written and get feedback. It can be incredibly beneficial. Not all of these plays will have a future life with ATC. Sometimes it's the writer's development we're interested in, not just a particular script. See page 14 for details of future play readings.

4. It must be hard rejecting playwrights' scripts when they've poured their heart and soul into the writing. How do you go about letting them down gently - assuming you do!

Every script comes with hopes and dreams attached. Saying "no" is the hardest part of the job and, of course, I try to do it gently. We don't have the resources to provide a full script assessment, so I always advise new playwrights particularly to go to Playmarket (the playwrights' agency) for that sort of help. Sometimes a play may be very well written but it just doesn't click with us - I always say that we're happy to see more work from that writer.

5. What's your vision for the ATC Literary Unit?

Simple. Lots of exciting new plays - for ATC and beyond.

6. Who is your favourite playwright and why?

I'll shock all my friends by saying Shakespeare – grudgingly, because I'm a bit cynical about the Cult of the Bard. But the plays have withstood hundreds of years of mostly terrible productions and every now and then some clever person comes along and extracts real magic from them. It doesn't happen often enough. But one of the best things I've ever seen was Barry Kosky's production of *King Lear* in Melbourne.

7. What's the one piece of advice you'd give to a budding New Zealand playwright?

Try television. No, seriously... tell me a story. And if you're telling me a story I've heard before, you'd better tell it in a new and exciting way. The standard piece of advice to writers is "write what you know" but I'm not sure about that – it's always seemed too limiting. "Write what you want to find out". I like the sound of that.

To join the ATC Playreading Elist for notification of our playreadings, email roy@atc.co.nz

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Metro
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 NZ Steel [logo to follow] who generously supplied the
 materials for the Equus set
 Amanda McFadden Jules Topp.