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THANKS TO THE ABOVE FOR THEIR GENEROUS SUPPORT

Patronage entitles you to attend social events plus the annual patrons' evening at which you are entitled to vote in the selection of one of the plays for the following season.

At a minimum of £1.50 p/m (£18 p/a), patronage is for up to two people, so those of you signing up individually are welcome to bring a guest to social events and to the patrons' evening.

If you would like to become a patron, please get in touch with Martin Smith on 01902 651828 or studio61martin@gmail.com

PATRONS' EVENING 2024

The annual Patrons' Evening will be on an as yet undecided evening in August 2024. This evening is exclusively for patrons of Studio 61.

In addition to the announcement of two pre-selected 2025 plays you will also be treated to a series of rehearsed play reading excerpts and given the opportunity to vote for your favourite as the Patrons' Choice production.

More details in your next newsletter.



PICNIC AT HANGING ROCK

BY JOAN LINDSAY
ADAPTED BY TOM WRIGHT



14TH - 16TH NOVEMBER 2023
NEWHAMPTON ARTS CENTRE

STUDIO61.ORG.UK
NEWHAMPTONARTS.CO.UK

This amateur production of "Picnic at Hanging Rock" is presented by special arrangement with Nick Hern Books.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Welcome to Studio 61's performance of "Picnic at Hanging Rock". It has been an invigorating and exciting journey of discovery bringing this production to fruition and I have many brilliant and committed people to thank for making it possible.

First and foremost, my wonderful and talented actors who have worked so hard on what is a tremendously challenging play. Their characterisations have developed and blossomed through their own determination to offer to you their very best performance. As the director, I sort of point them in what I hope is the right direction, but they have, each and every one, taken their role - or rather roles, most of the actors play more than one part - and made them come alive, imbuing their character with expression, gestures, emotion, energy and, above all, soul.

Nothing would happen without a team of indefatigable back-stage sloggers - my thanks to each one, but especially Anna Wright (Studio 61's very own, behind the scenes, rock), Jane Alsop (up there at the sound and lighting desk for the first time, give her a wave!), Maggie Smith and Ann Bickley who've shouldered all the hard work. And most definitely huge thanks to Chris Porter and Jane Fosbrook for making the beautiful costumes, which, I'm sure you will agree, are stunning. Not forgetting either our front of house crew who will have welcomed you here this evening.

I love reading, especially contemporary literary fiction. Fiction melds together knowledge and meaning. The Danish philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard said, "Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards". Consequently, in life, our memories make fiction out of the past, because it is only in recollection that we can apply meaning to events.

However, fiction allows us to apply meaning in real time; as a reader we can only understand the narrative through the lens of our own experiences. I first read the novel, "Picnic at Hanging Rock", many decades ago and it was only while re-reading it recently that I started to get a deeper insight into the themes the story encompasses.

When I started to consider those themes I had to stop myself at twenty:

social class, education, myth, tradition, empire, sexuality, colonialism, landscape, the natural world, voice, violence, isolation, mental health, memory, guilt, perception, loyalty, bullying, obsession, dreamtime, Australia itself... the list goes on. Such a wide range! When I read Tom Wright's stage adaptation of Joan Lindsay's 1967 novel, I straightaway resolved to ask if the play could be included in Studio 61's 2023 programme.



Ford, William. At the Hanging Rock. 1875, oil on canvas. National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

The play covers the events, and especially the consequences thereof, that take place on a day trip visit to Hanging Rock made by a group of schoolgirls and their Mathematics and French mistresses from Mrs Appleyard's private College for Young Ladies on St Valentine's Day in 1900. Sara has missed out on the trip.

I'd encourage you to watch this evening's performance holding in your mind one or two themes, either taken from my list or of your own choosing. The play is performed by five actors who take on a variety of roles throughout the action, while Mrs Appleyard, the college headmistress, is portrayed exclusively by a sixth actor.

Thank you for your attendance. It's you, the audience, that keeps amateur theatre alive and allows Studio 61 and our associate companies to endure. We hope to continue to serve our local community and your support is critical to that aim.

The play you are about to see is mysterious, dramatic and perhaps a little challenging. I hope you will find it both enthralling and entertaining. Please enjoy!

KEVIN PORTER

EXTRACT FROM THE AGE

14TH FEBRUARY 1913



*The front page of the Melbourne newspaper The Age from Friday 14th February 1913
Source: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/>*

WARNING: THIS EXTRACT CONTAINS SPOILERS FOR THE PLAY

Although Saint Valentine's Day is usually associated with the giving and taking of presents, and affairs of the heart, it is exactly thirteen years since the fatal Saturday when a party of some twenty schoolgirls and two governesses set out from Appleyard College on the Bendigo Road for a picnic to Hanging Rock. One of the governesses and three of the girls disappeared during the afternoon. Only one of them was ever seen again.

The Hanging Rock is a spectacular volcanic uprising on the plains below Mount Macedon, of special interest to geologists on account of its unique rock formations, including monoliths and reputedly bottomless holes and caves until recently uncharted [1912].

It was thought at the time that the missing persons had attempted to climb the dangerous rock escarpments near the summit, where they presumably met their deaths; but whether by accident, suicide or straight-out murder has never been established, since the bodies were never recovered.

Intensive search by police and public of the relatively small area provided no clue to the mystery until on the morning of Saturday, 21st February, the Hon. Michael Fitzhubert, a young Englishman holidaying at Mount Macedon (now domiciled on a station property in North Queensland), discovered one of the three missing girls, Irma Leopold, lying unconscious at the foot of two enormous boulders.

The unfortunate girl subsequently recovered, except for a head injury, which left her without memory of anything that had occurred after she and her companions had begun the ascent of the upper levels.

The search was continued for several years under great difficulties owing to the mysterious death of the headmistress of Appleyard College within a few months of the tragedy. The College itself was totally destroyed by a bushfire during the following summer.

In 1903, two rabbiters camped at the Hanging Rock found a small piece of frilled calico, thought by police to be part of a petticoat worn on the day of the picnic by the missing governess.

A somewhat shadowy figure appears briefly in this extraordinary story; a girl named Edith Horton, a fourteen-year-old border at Appleyard College, who had accompanied the three other girls for a short distance up the Rock. This girl returned at dusk to the other picnickers by the creek below in a state of hysteria, and was unable then, or ever after, to recall anything whatever that had occurred during the interval. In spite of repeated enquiries over the years, Miss Horton recently died in Melbourne without having provided any additional information.

Countess de Latte-Marguery (the former Irma Leopold) is at present residing in Europe. From time to time the Countess has granted interviews to various interested bodies, including the Society for Psychical Research, but has never recalled anything beyond what she was able to remember after first regaining consciousness. Thus the College Mystery, like that of the celebrated case of the *Marie-Celeste*, seems likely to remain forever unsolved.

THE LAST ROSE OF SUMMER

Thomas Moore (1805)

'Tis the last rose of Summer,
Left blooming alone;
All her lovely companions
Are faded and gone;
No flower of her kindred,
No rose-bud is nigh,
To reflect back her blushes
Or give sigh for sigh!

I'll not leave thee, thou lone one,
To pine on the stem;
Since the lovely are sleeping,
Go sleep thou with them.
Thus kindly I scatter
Thy leaves o'er the bed
Where thy mates of the garden
Lie scentless and dead.
So soon may I follow,

When friendships decay,
And from Love's shining circle
The gems drop away!
When true hearts lie withered,
And fond ones are flown,
Oh! who would inhabit
This bleak world alone?



PICNIC AT HANGING ROCK

BY JOAN LINDSAY, ADAPTED BY TOM WRIGHT



CAST

MR HUSSEY, POLICEMAN,
MISS MCCRAW Caitlin Sayce
EDITH, ALBERT Chelsea Wale
MARION, MICHAEL Immy Wood
MIRANDA, SARA Katie Hallam
MRS APPLEYARD Nikki Ellis
IRMA, MADEMOISELLE Suzanne Smith

CREW

DIRECTOR Kevin Porter
STAGE MANAGER Anna Wright
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER Maggie Smith
PROPERTY MANAGER Anna Wright
SOUND AND LIGHTING Jane Alsop
PROMPT Ann Bickley
COSTUME Chris Porter
ASSISTANT COSTUME Jane Fosbrook
SET CONSTRUCTION David Bickley
FRONT OF HOUSE MANAGER Jane Fosbrook
FRONT OF HOUSE Members of the Society

SETTING

Australia, Valentine's Day 1900

The total running time will be approximately 110 minutes.

This will include an interval of 20 minutes.

Please ensure that all mobile phones are turned off during the performance.

In the event of an emergency the front of house staff will guide you to the emergency exit.

CAITLIN SAYCE

Caitlin is a drama teacher and University of Wolverhampton alumni. "Picnic at Hanging Rock" marks her second production with Studio 61 following playing Hermia in "A Midsummer Night's Dream" earlier this year.

She has previously performed in theatre productions such as "Road" (with fellow cast member Chelsea), "Hamlet", "The Cherry Orchard" and "A Handbag". Join us as she shares her passion for the stage.



KATIE HALLAM

Katie has been with Studio 61 for a few years now and enjoys every aspect of the theatre having turned her hand to puppetry for "Gormenghast", and sound and lighting for "Nigel Slater's Toast". She was drawn to "Picnic at Hanging Rock", not just for the chance to practice an Australian accent, but because of the way this intriguing mystery is presented. The true crime enthusiast in her appreciates the way it feels like a reconstruction, and the performer in her enjoys the opportunity to switch between characters.



CHELSEA WALE

Introducing Chelsea, a drama student from Dudley College, making her first appearance with Studio 61 in "Picnic at Hanging Rock".

She has previously performed in theatre productions such as "High School Musical" as Sharpay, "Road" (with fellow cast member Caitlin) as Dor and "Man of Substance" as Coviello. Chelsea has reignited her hobby by joining our group. Her favourite picnic food is potato salad.



NIKKI ELLIS

Nikki has been with Studio 61 since 2019 but covid paused her chances to perform until 2022 when she took on the role of Rita in "Educating Rita". Since then she has performed in "Nigel Slater's Toast" earlier this year and now takes on the role of Mrs Appleyard. Nikki loves to act and has done since a young age. In her 20s she worked professionally as an actor, touring the UK with different companies. Acting is her passion.



IMMY WOOD

Immy is originally from North Yorkshire but ventured to Wolverhampton three years ago. Immy works as an actor on different projects in both Theatre and Musical Theatre. She also works at Wolverhampton Grand backstage donning a hard hat and high-vis to build shows and work as stage crew and sometimes a dresser (sans hard hat). Immy was first with Studio 61 for our most recent play, "A Midsummer Night's Dream", as Puck. She is very excited to bring the Australian landscape to the NAC with a lot of eeriness.



SUZANNE SMITH

Suzanne has acted and directed with Studio 61 for nearly 20 years. She enjoys many different styles of theatre from Shakespeare and Webster to Stoppard and Pinter. She's excited to be in this production as, while it deals with a topic from the 1900s, it is a very modern and challenging play both physically and in terms of its plot. She especially likes the open-endedness which allows for great discussion and debate. Favourite picnic foods include chicken drumsticks and pork pie and mustard.





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BECOME A SPONSOR OF STUDIO 61

Are you interested in becoming a sponsor of Studio 61 and having an advertisement in our programmes? For more information, please contact Anna Wright at annakwright10@outlook.com.

JOIN STUDIO 61: UNLEASH YOUR CREATIVITY ON AND OFF THE STAGE!

Discover the world of theatre and find your place at Studio 61. Whether you're interested in acting or working backstage, our inclusive community welcomes individuals of all levels of experience and backgrounds. Join us in exploring the exciting realms of artistic expression and teamwork.

At Studio 61, we hold rehearsals twice a week on Monday and Wednesday evenings at the Bradmore Arms pub on Trysull Rd, Wolverhampton. Our supportive and engaging environment offers a space to develop acting skills and immerse yourself in storytelling. If you prefer working behind the scenes, we have opportunities in stage management, set design, costume creation, lighting, sound, and more.

Membership at Studio 61 starts at just £3 per month, ensuring accessibility for all. We encourage anyone interested to attend our rehearsals without obligation, getting to know the company and finding out if we're the right fit for you. We produce three productions each year at Newhampton Arts Centre, entertaining audiences in the Spring, Summer, and Winter.

In addition to our performances, Studio 61 hosts various social events, including the Patrons' Evening. Connect with us on our website at www.studio61.org.uk or through our social media handles: Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, and TikTok (@studio61drama) for updates, behind-the-scenes glimpses, and more.

Join Studio 61 today and become part of a vibrant community where passion meets creativity. We look forward to welcoming you!





NEXT PRODUCTION

The Children

by Lucy Kirkwood

22nd - 24th March 2024

"Retired people are like nuclear power stations. We like to live by the sea."

Two retired nuclear scientists in an isolated cottage by the sea as the world around them crumbles. Together they are going to live forever on yogurt and yoga, until an old friend arrives with a frightening request.

"At our time of life we simply cannot deal with this shit."

STUDIO 61'S AFFILIATES

Discover a wealth of outstanding amateur theatre in our local area. Treat yourself to a show presented by one of our affiliated groups.

Pattingham Drama Group

The Ghost Train

by Arnold Ridley

15th - 18th November 2023

Box Office: 01902 700748

www.pattinghamdramagroup.co.uk



Dudley Little Theatre

Sleeping Beauty

by Joshua Clarke and Lewis Clarke

30th November - 3rd December 2023

Box Office: 07954 424555

www.dudleylittletheatre.org



Wombourne Players

Entertaining Angels

by Richard Everett

15th - 18th May 2024

Box Office: 01902 881184

www.wombourneplayers.org.uk



Stafford Players

To Be Announced

Gatehouse Theatre

2024

Box Office: 01785 619080

www.gatehousetheatre.co.uk



Wordsley Amateur Dramatic Society

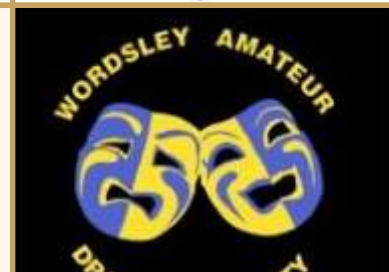
To Be Announced

Crestwood School, Hagley Community Centre

2024

Box Office: 01902 700748

www.wordsleyamdram.co.uk



MORE PRODUCTIONS IN 2024

An Experiment with an Air Pump

by Shelagh Stephenson

June 2024

1799 - The house buzzes with scientific experiment, furtive romance and farcical amateur dramatics.

1999 - The cellar of the same house reveals a dark secret buried for 200 years.

Terry Pratchett's Wyrd Sisters

adapted by Stephen Briggs

November 2024

A wicked duke and duchess, the ghost of the murdered king, dim soldiers, strolling players, a land in peril. And who stands between the Kingdom and destruction? Three witches. Granny Weatherwax, Nanny Ogg and Magrat Garlick.

