

INTERVIEW – Carol Burns

What projects were you working on before working on *The Clean House*?

Work when I'm not in rehearsal for a play is quite piecemeal so I've been doing voice over's and presenting the *Night With The Artists* for the Queensland Theatre Company. The most consuming project since finishing a tour to Sydney and Melbourne of *Walking By Apple Tree Creek* written by Ian Brown has been promoting *The Hoop of the World*, an hour long, one act opera written by my partner Alan Lawrence with a libretto by David Harsent. He was writing it over an 18 month period and now it's looking for a production.

What do you enjoy about working on *The Clean House*? Is theatre more of a challenge to you than television or film? Do you prefer it?

I like working as an actor and director and after more than forty years I haven't lost my passion for the work in all its forms. My first and best love is theatre. I enjoy working in demanding quality driven environments and the team for *The Clean House* seem to be a like minded bunch. It's a strange gift we have as theatre people, for trusting each other very quickly and becoming a team, all striving to make each other achieve the best we can.

Tell us a little about your characters journey in *The Clean House*?

Virginia's is a journey of liberation. She knows herself and wants to share with the audience what she believes is important. But she has lost her way and not achieved what she wanted. I described her first to myself as the sort of woman who cleans her teeth with her mouth closed. By the end of the play, she is laughing - open mouthed and out loud.

When you are travelling for work, what do you do to make yourself comfortable in your transient environment?

Whenever I'm working away from home I seem to need extra kitchen gadgets. I'm vegetarian, so wisely brought my own vegetable steamer with me this time but I have bought a grater. Last time it was a bread board. You can never have too many.

This time, if you visited my digs, you'd hardly be able to tell I'm in residence. Whether it has anything to do with the character I'm playing or not I don't know.

Do you ever stay in character when you are at home?

I don't stay in character but I do stay 'in accent' for some time away from the rehearsal room with Virginia. I want to feel absolutely at home with the muscularity of the sounds and that takes time. In other plays I am often doing things in the way of the character of the play but in a conscious way, observing what it's like to 'live' in that physicality more than in a particular mind set.

Tell us one thing you find yourself doing as an actor that people might not realise you have to do.

Live on the smell of an oily rag is the short answer.

Actually, everything I do is 'as an actor'; what I observe and participate in in daily life is all gris to the mill and can end up in the mix of exploration to create a part. I suppose everybody knows you have to be very fit to be an actor so no matter what shape you are you must be in control of your vocal and physical palette. Maybe my neighbours are surprised by hearing me 'meowing' in the garage, practicing my twang when I'm doing vocal exercises. It's a horrible noise but it has to be done!