

# on cue

## Black Swan State Theatre Company Newsletter

2009 Autumn Edition

### A NOTE FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



We have had a very exciting and busy time in the last few months at Black Swan. Sam Walsh, Chief executive of Iron Ore—Rio Tinto, has taken on the mantle of Chair of the Black Swan Board which is terrific news. Sam has already shown his passion and commitment for the

arts sector in Western Australia in many ways, including chairing the Western Australian chapter of AbaF. His guidance will be invaluable as Black Swan prepares to make its transition into the new State Theatre Centre of Western Australia. Richard Duldig has been Chair for the past three years and has been on the Board for the past ten years. Here at Black Swan we are very grateful for all that Richard has done to assure Black Swan's growth and for his role in the Company's transition to its status of state flagship theatre company.

Duncan Ord, Executive Director of the WA Department of State Development, who many of you will know as a past General Manager and member of the Board has returned to Black Swan to serve as one of two Deputy Chairs. Andrew Drayton, Rio Tinto's General Manager Procurement for Western Australia will serve as the other Deputy Chair. Robin Pascoe has stepped down as a Director and will be replaced by Vicki Robinson who joins newly appointed Director Prof. Alan Robson, Vice-Chancellor of UWA. We are particularly grateful to Robin for his contribution to Black Swan's education work, and for his passionate advocacy of the HotBed Ensemble.

Shane Colquhoun has also joined as General Manager. Shane brings a wealth of experience, as an artist cum arts bureaucrat, including GM of deckchair theatre and the West Australian Ballet, adviser to the Arts Minister, Sheila McHale and a senior manager of the DCA. We are delighted to welcome Shane to the Black Swan family, and are thrilled to have his expertise and leadership guiding the company at such a crucial time in its development. I am greatly looking forward to forming a strong dynamic team with Shane.

At the beginning of the year we were delighted to host the six directing students and the Head of Directing from NIDA, who came over to spend a week honing their craft with WA actors and tasting the delights of the Perth International Arts Festival. Adam Mitchell, our Associate Director, and Pippa Davis, Artistic Administrator arranged billeting for the directors and put together a company of actors, primarily members or alumni of the Hotbed Ensemble. Our NIDA visitors had a great time at the Festival, and were delighted by the quality of the actors they had the opportunity to work with. It was a great opportunity to expose emerging WA artists to the directors of the future. We were happy to provide a rehearsal room for workshops and dynamic exchanges of ideas, and we were delighted with the outcome. We are now exploring exciting future partnerships with NIDA involving senior designers as well as students.

We have also had a couple of visits from playwright, Hannie Rayson who has had a wonderful time working with WA actors on her new play. Hannie has been really impressed with the WA actors she has had the chance to meet. We made sure that Hannie combined developing her work with a visit to Stages and a seminar for WA playwrights which she thoroughly enjoyed.

In the meantime, I have opened *The Year of Magical Thinking* and *The Glass Menagerie*. *The Year of Magical Thinking* had a lovely season as part of the Perth International Arts Festival before it headed off on a tour that lasted over a month. At the end of the tour, the Governor and Mrs Michael invited Helen Morse, Melanie Robinson, Paul English and myself to afternoon tea at Government House. We had a lovely time hearing of Helen and Paul's adventures as they toured Western Australia. The response we had to the tour was terrific and it was great to hear that the people on tour had a wonderful time as well as their audience.

I had better sign off as I could go on for pages about all the activity that has been happening at Black Swan. I look forward to you joining us for a hearty laugh at *God of Carnage*.

Kate Cherry

### BLACK SWAN SNIPPETS

#### WELCOME AMANDA LUKE, OUR NEW COMPANY ACCOUNTANT

A big warm welcome to Amanda Luke. Amanda has been an Accountant for over 25 years and is a very valuable addition to the Black Swan team. We are thrilled to have her on board.

#### KATE CHERRY NOMINATED FOR A GREEN ROOM AWARD

Artistic Director, Kate Cherry has received a 2008 Green Room Award nomination for the opera *The Coronation of Poppea* she directed last year for the Victorian Opera.

#### PICA JOINS THE LIST OF SUBSCRIBER INCENTIVE PARTNERS

Black Swan Subscribers can now receive members' prices for all 2009 ticketed performances and events at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (PICA).

#### A NEW ADDITION TO THE MARKETING DEPARTMENT

We are delighted to welcome Marketing Intern, Chloe Bartle to the flock. Her bubbly go-getter attitude is a pleasure to have in the front shop office.



black swan  
STATE THEATRE COMPANY

## MEET OUR NEW BOARD CHAIR: SAM WALSH, CHIEF EXECUTIVE IRON ORE - RIO TINTO



All at Black Swan are delighted by Sam Walsh's new appointment as Board Chair. Sam Walsh has been the Chief executive of Iron Ore - Rio Tinto since 2004, and before that was the Chief executive of Rio Tinto's aluminium business between 2001 and 2004. In 2001, he was honoured as an Australian Export Hero and Western Australian Citizen of the Year – Industry & Commerce. He is a Director of West Australian Newspapers and the Committee for Perth; and the Chair of the WA Chapter of the Australia Business Arts Foundation.

At the time of his appointment Sam said "I am delighted to lead Black Swan's Board at this exciting time in its history. Artistic Director Kate Cherry has already had a significant impact on setting new artistic and production standards. She brings extensive relationships with other state theatre companies and artists nationally that will provide new opportunities for Western Australian audiences and artists to engage with world class theatre.

Western Australian audiences deserve to see the very best of international, national and Western Australian theatre. The new State Theatre Centre will provide a home for Black Swan in 2010 as it becomes the resident company within the Centre in Northbridge. I look forward to making a contribution to the Company's success over the next few years."

## SHANE COLQUHOUN: BLACK SWAN'S NEW GENERAL MANAGER



We are pleased to welcome Shane Colquhoun as our new General Manager.

Shane Colquhoun brings with him a wealth of experience in the Arts Industry. A professional dancer for 12 years in the UK, Germany and Australia, Shane completed his training at The Royal Ballet School, London. Following his retirement from full-time dance in 1984, he studied Arts Management at WAAPA. Over the last 20 years, his

arts management career has included positions within government and in the arts sector including General Manager positions with Western Australia's deckchair theatre (1987-89) and West Australian Ballet (1992-96).

Shane joins Black Swan at a critical and exciting time for the Company, as Black Swan continues to develop its role as Western Australia's State Flagship Theatre Company amidst challenging economic conditions and prepares for its move into the new State Theatre Centre of Western Australia in 2010.

## ON CUE LEARNS MORE ABOUT JOHN ATKINS, CHAIRMAN ANZ WA



We are excited that ANZ has joined Black Swan this year as the 2009 Leadership Partner and Production Partner for ***Much Ado About Nothing***. In celebration of this new partnership *On Cue* spoke to the WA State Chairman of ANZ, John Atkins.

**What do you find most rewarding about supporting the WA arts Community?** I am passionate about Perth and WA and ensuring the future of the city as a vibrant internationally connected city. For that to occur it is imperative that we are able to create an environment that is attractive and stimulating to people from all walks of life and all parts of the world. If Perth is to be attractive we must have a vibrant creative sector. For me the reward will come as the arts community takes its rightful position as a contributor to the future of Perth. On a more personal note I find it incredibly scintillating meeting and talking with people from the arts sector. Frankly, many of them think very differently to me and to people I deal with on a day to day basis. They open my eyes!

**In addition to being the production partner for *Much Ado About Nothing* ANZ is Black Swan's Leadership Partner. What does this partnership mean to ANZ and why is it important for the company?** ANZ is a leader in its sector. I want to ensure that in the WA community, ANZ is seen as making a real contribution. I think that it is incumbent on organisations like ANZ to not just be one of the pack, but to be seen as setting an example in all that it does. Excellence and collaboration are two of our core values. Black Swan is a leading arts organisation, so for me,

it makes a lot of sense to work with Black Swan to play a leadership role in enhancing the creative environment of our state. In addition I was very taken with the passion displayed by Kate Cherry as the Artistic Director of Black Swan. The opportunity for ANZ to work with her is both stimulating and interesting.

**Which of your achievements are you particularly proud of?** I don't really like to focus too much on personal achievement. I get the greatest satisfaction when I am working with groups of people who are passionate about what they are doing, are determined to succeed, are generally without ego and whose focus is external to themselves – they want to make a difference.

**Whom would you award a medal and why?** That is very hard. There are so many passionate committed people who have made a real difference to our community. I would like to single out someone who is not usually mentioned, Doug Paling, the CEO of Foodbank. Over 14 years he has provided extraordinary leadership and passion which has led to Foodbank saving 17,000,000 kilograms of food, preventing it from going into landfill, redirecting it to the needy and has fed many thousands of people. Foodbank also employs people with disabilities and gives volunteers in the community a chance to contribute where they can. This was all done from a zero base. Doug is a real hero!

**How do you relax?** I have four teenage children who keep us on our toes. I enjoy long summers on the beach or water. The occasional game of golf is an aspiration and a weekly tennis game is a good release. Finding time for other things is a challenge but I try to make time to enjoy new experiences too. I am looking forward to attending more Black Swan performances this year.

## THE YEAR OF MAGICAL THINKING REGIONAL TOUR WRAP UP

After its hugely successful Perth season *The Year of Magical Thinking* set off on tour through regional WA. The production visited 14 venues across WA from Albany to Kununurra providing a unique opportunity for the rural towns of WA to experience the exquisite theatre Black Swan has to offer.

The response from audiences was hugely positive and we have been overwhelmed with some fantastic feedback. Helen Morse, Melanie Robinson and crew returned to Perth earlier this month with smiles on their faces and many stories of their travels to tell.



Before setting off on tour, *On Cue* spoke to Helen Morse, who compellingly plays the role of Joan Didion in *The Year of Magical Thinking*.

**When you were approached by Black Swan to play Joan Didion in *The Year of Magical Thinking*, were you familiar with the play already and was it an easy decision for you to accept the role?** When

Black Swan approached me to play in *The Year of Magical Thinking* I had already read the book. It was profoundly affecting. I then read the play, which is, of course, slightly different from the book, but equally affecting. Taking on such a mammoth piece was not an easy decision but I knew I would be in good hands with Kate Cherry directing.

**This one woman play has 90 minutes of continuous mono-**

**logue which is highly emotional. Do you use a particular performance technique such as Stanislavsky's to realise the role?** The challenge for the actor of this monologue lies in the tension between the incredibly precise storytelling and the emotional subtext. Understanding this tension is very important. We use a 'technique' called layering – it involves, for example, connecting with the emotional subtext through empathy, imagination and references from your own life; 'imaging' specific scenes described in the story; and of course, specifying the objectives of the storyteller – why does Joan Didion need to tell this story? How does she structure her story? As an actor I have to work out what I am 'doing' in all the moments.

**If you could play any character in any production, what would be the role and why?** At the moment I regard playing Joan Didion in *The Year of Magical Thinking* as probably the most demanding role of my life!

## BLACK SWAN HEADS OUT TO WA'S RURAL SCHOOLS



workshops for the local students.

The first day consisted of workshops with year 11 and 12 students at Albany SHS and North Albany SHS. Students were led through various activities, centring on character awareness and body movement.

Day two arrived with a pre-show talk by Paul English at the Albany Town Hall Theatre. Students gained an insight into the life of Joan Didion and the adaptations in the set design between the

In conjunction with *The Year of Magical Thinking* tour, Black Swan's Associate Director Adam Mitchell and Education Manager Alena Tompkins headed down to Albany to conduct a number of theatre skills

Perth season and tour. That same afternoon, Adam conducted the second workshop for North Albany SHS, getting the rare opportunity to reflect with the students about the performance they had seen that morning. Students were amazed at Helen Morse's ability to recount such a long monologue and were inspired by her sustainability of accent and emotion.

On the last day of workshops Adam and Alena again visited Albany SHS with similar script and monologue analysis and reflection on the previous days performance. The final workshop was at Bethel Christian School with a group of year 8 and 9 students. This younger group were the most animated in reflection about *The Year of Magical Thinking* performance, which was interesting due to the fact that Black Swan do not usually recommend productions to such a young group. The students found the religious references in the text familiar, and feedback from Helen Morse also reflected a true connection with her younger audience.

## THE IMPROVISATION WORKSHOP IS BACK FOR TERM TWO



Due to overwhelming demand, the BSX Theatre—Thrills & Skills Improvisation workshop will be back for Term 2, this time led by Sam Longley and Damon Lockwood. Improvisation skills have many benefits for any age group including heightened confidence, improved public speaking skills, enhanced listening and observation skills, refined creative thinking abilities, improved decision making skills and team development skills. So learn to move beyond the script and immerse yourself in the art of improvisation.

For more information about Thrills & Skills workshops or to download an enrolment form visit [www.bsstc.com.au](http://www.bsstc.com.au).



## INTRODUCING THE 2009 HOTBED ENSEMBLE

A large number of high calibre performers were auditioned for this year's nine positions and with them they brought a wealth of talent and experience. After much deliberation we are very pleased to announce this year's piping hot ensemble of actors will include; Arielle Gray, Natalie Holmwood, Jacinta John, Will O'Mahony, Tom O'Sullivan and Kazimir Sas. Alicia Clements will take on the position as Set & Costumer Designer, Ben Collins as Sound Designer and Trent Suidgeest as Lighting Designer.

With the RAC's generous support, the HotBed Ensemble artists will be offered exclusive skills development and workshop opportunities, enjoy close contact with Black Swan artists and receive

professional wages during rehearsals and performance seasons.

This year the HotBed Ensemble will present two productions, both directed by Black Swan's Associate Director, Adam Mitchell. You may recognise Adam's work from past HotBed productions; *Portraits of Modern Evil*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and *The Laramie Project*. In 2008 Adam won the Perth Theatre Trust Equity Guild Award for Best Director for *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*.

The HotBedders are well underway with rehearsals for their first production for 2009, *The Dark Room* by Angela Betzien. In September the HotBed Ensemble will be back to present *pool (no water)* by Mark Ravenhill.



HotBed Artists: Arielle Gray, Natalie Holmwood, Jacinta John, Will O'Mahony, Tom O'Sullivan, Kazimir Sas, Alicia Clements, Ben Collins & Trent Suidgeest.

## THE HOTBED DIVE INTO THE DARK ROOM WITH ANGELA BETZIEN

Black Swan welcomed the 2009 HotBed Ensemble to spend one week in February working with Melbourne based playwright Angela Betzien. Black Swan commissioned the writer to produce the play *The Dark Room* that will be the first HotBed production for 2009. The plot follows 6 individuals who's mysterious experiences intertwine in the same motel room.

The week with Angela was spent dramaturging the script and completing the final draft before the project began rehearsal last month. The director Adam Mitchell says, "this project is full of suspense, it's set to be a real thriller".

*The Dark Room* opens at PICA on 1 May until 17 May. Bookings are available through BOCS ticketing on 9484 1133.



During this week long workshop year 12 students from Mindarie Senior College were invited to attend one morning of the HotBed Ensemble's dramaturgy workshop. Students were given a rare fly-on-the-wall insight into the world of dramaturgy in action. Playwright Angela Betzien was thrilled to have an audience for the script during the writing process.

The students were seated around the table with Adam Mitchell, Angela Betzien, and the members of the ensemble cast. The cast read sections of the script that Angela had re-written overnight

and then a round table discussion resulted in some interesting feedback from the students and cast alike. The students were articulate, mature and animated in their responses. They took valuable skills away from the workshop that they could then apply to their Original Solo Performance examination preparation.

Angela commented that she writes for younger audiences, so having the students feedback during the writing process was a great experience for her.

## THE HOTBED WELCOMES NIDA DIRECTING STUDENTS TO PERTH

Earlier this year HotBed Ensemble welcomed to Perth, a selection of NIDA directing students and Head of Directing Egil Kipste. The HotBed performers were put through their paces as the directing students practiced Active Analysis which is a system developed by Stanislavski to rehearse with actors. While it is a common approach in Russia very little was known about this approach in the West until recently.

The group was also lucky enough to work with Mikel Murfi, an

actor with the renowned Druid Theatre Company from Ireland. Michael generously ran a workshop about the architecture of space and shared his experiences of touring for many years on the festival circuit.

The group workshoped and rehearsed scenes during the day and enjoyed festival performances in the evening. Their visit was a great success and we can't wait to meet next year's NIDA students.

## TALENTED AUSTRALIAN PLAYWRIGHT, ANGELA BETZIEN TALKS TO ON CUE



During Angela Betzien's visit to Black Swan *On Cue* was lucky enough to snap up an exclusive interview with her and gather an insight into *The Dark Room*.

**What inspired you to write *The Dark Room*?** I was working on a community project in central Queensland visiting a small one teacher school located outside of Rockhampton. Many of the students who attended the school were foster kids living

with one or two foster families from the area. I spoke at length with the principal of the school about these kids and she told me there was a severe shortage in foster care placements and accommodation for young people at risk. These children are often supervised by Youth Workers in what is termed "commercial accommodation", until a placement in a foster home or residential facility becomes available. This can take several days. It is a last resort, but it occurs frequently.

This conversation prompted some further research. In Queensland, in the month of June 2006, 78 children on Child Protection Orders were housed in commercial accommodation, spending an average of 5.3 days there. Generally the children who end up in motels are those that are the most difficult to re-home; the kids who are seriously disturbed with severe psychological and behavioural problems. This was the starting point for the play.

The work is attempting to explore the notion that violence leaves

a stain or a memory within a place. Gothic literature personifies that notion in the form of the *ghost that haunts* a particular environment. I've always been obsessed with the gothic concept of the ghost as a form of repetition; of guilt. I think that this quote embraces the consciousness that underpins the work....

*Justice comes only when the living acknowledge what the dead have suffered.*

Only then can the ghosts of the past be released.

**The play is set in the Northern Territory, during the intervention. What was it about this particular Australian event that made you want to write about it?** I gravitate towards issues of social justice and so when I see gross injustice I want to write about it. I'm aware that many people have justified the intervention because the situation of Indigenous people in remote communities is at crisis point. It is an emergency absolutely, but how absurd to think these problems can be resolved through military intervention. One can make parallels with our invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan.

If this were truly the motivation for intervention/invasion then we'd send in armies of doctors and teachers and in doing so assist communities in establishing their own autonomy.

Having said all this the references to the Northern Territory Intervention are not overt in the play, I wanted those ideas and issues as well as the desert landscape to seep in to the world on a subtle level and to potentially resonate with the audience.

## GOD OF CARNAGE WINS 2009 LAURENCE OLIVIER AWARD

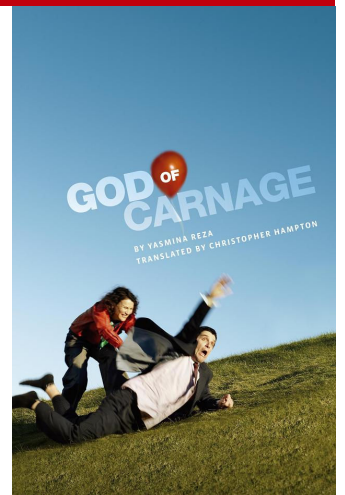
*God of Carnage* has just been awarded a Laurence Olivier Award for the Best New Comedy of 2009. The Laurence Olivier Awards are the most prestigious awards in London theatre.

This June Black Swan teams up with Queensland Theatre Company to present this side-splitting comedy by Yasmina Reza. When two sets of parents gather together to sort out who is responsible for one child's attack on the other, mayhem ensues. This is a hilarious exposé of parents behaving far worse than their children, resorting to childish games and toddler-like aggression over a playground altercation.

*God of Carnage* is Black Swan's first co-production with Queensland Theatre Company. Two outstanding comedic actors from

WA, Jodie Buzza and Benj D'Adario, will join two equally skilled Queenslanders, Andrew Buchanan and Veronica Neave in this unforgettable lounge room battle. Michael Gow, Artistic Director of Queensland Theatre Company, acclaimed director and playwright and winner of numerous awards, will direct this comedy of manners (or should we say, bad manners?).

*God of Carnage* is showing at the Playhouse Theatre 13 to 28 June.



## WHAT'S COMING UP FROM YOUR SUBSCRIBER INCENTIVE PARTNERS

## WA BALLET

*Giselle*

17 April – 2 May 2009

*Giselle* is the ultimate romantic ballet – a story of love, betrayal and forgiveness. Receive a 10% discount on full priced adult tickets.

## WA OPERA

*The Pearlfishers*

8, 11, 13, 15, 18, 20, 22

Aug

Don't miss Georges Bizet's *Les Pecheurs de Perles*. Save between 5% and 15% on 2009 WA Opera productions.

## WASO

*Russian Fire*

5 &amp; 6 June

Receive 10% off the West Australian Symphony Orchestra's concert *Russian Fire*, 5 & 6 June, Perth Concert Hall.

## CINEMA PARADISO

*The 2009 Spanish Film Festival*

20—27 May

A sensual celebration of Spanish Film, Food and Fiesta. Purchase \$13.00 tickets to films at Luna Palace Cinemas.

## MUSICA VIVA

*Katia Skanavi*

5 May

Musica Viva presents *Katia Skanavi* performing works by Schubert and Chopin. Receive 10% discount on full priced adult tickets.

To redeem your discount mention you are a Black Swan Subscriber at the time of purchase. Musica Viva, WA Ballet and WA Opera bookings through BOCS Ticketing. WASO bookings on 9326 0000 and Luna Palace Cinema tickets are available at the door.

**BLACK SWAN'S SOCIAL PAGE**

If you have seen yourself on this page and would like the photo visit the *Behind the Scenes* pages at [www.bsstc.com.au](http://www.bsstc.com.au) or Facebook page or email [Madolyn@bsstc.com.au](mailto:Madolyn@bsstc.com.au).

**The Year of Magical Thinking  
Opening Night  
@ the Dolphin Theatre**



Helen Morse



Ella Sayers-Anderson & Cam Worth



Sam Walsh and Richard Duldig

**The Glass Menagerie Opening Night  
@ the Playhouse Theatre**



Adam Gardnir, Linley Lutton,  
Sue Lutton & Matt Lutton



Joel Wallace & Julie Barker



Henry Boston & The Hon. John Day,  
Minister for Planning, Culture and the Arts.



Joe Fisher & Thierry Ryault

For more social pics visit the show *Behind the Scenes* page at [www.bsstc.com.au](http://www.bsstc.com.au).

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Much Ado About Nothing

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God of Carnage

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Memory of Water

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