DIVING FOR PEARLS
2012 STUDENT RESOURCE KIT

A Production by Christine Harris & HIT Productions
Australia’s Premier Theatre Touring Company

Diving for Pearls
by
Katherine Thomson

It’s not personal, it’s just business

Starring Kevin Harrington
(Seachange & Neighbours)

Contains Strong Language and Adult Themes

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THIS TOURING PRODUCTION OF *DIVING FOR PEARLS* IS PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY

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Introduction

This study kit is designed to assist you in addressing expected outcomes in your studies. It contains:

- Contributions from the playwright, director, set designer, costume designer, lighting designer, sound designer and actors.
- The specific roles and diverse backgrounds of these individuals.

Consider these notes as starting points that, together with discussion, will assist you to develop your own responses, interpretations and conclusions. You will find a lot of varied personal opinions and you should ask your teachers to further define guidelines and discussion points.

This production – as with every production – continually develops and evolves and all information within these notes, which was compiled before or during rehearsals, will need to be read in that context.

While watching Diving for Pearls, you could be asking yourself:

- How was the production of this piece realised?
- What themes does the director draw on to realise the production?
- Does this production vary from the original script? How?
- How does the set and lighting contribute to the production values?

We hope you find this study kit answers some of those questions, with helpful and interesting points. We hope it poses some questions as well as assists you with the analysis and evaluation of the play. And of course, we hope you enjoy this production as much as HIT Productions has enjoyed presenting it to you.
Production information

Synopsis

All great plays are of their time and for all time. Katherine Thomson’s Diving for Pearls satisfies both these counts. It is of its time in that it vividly and dramatically records a significant period in the history of industrial Australian communities. Economic globalisation of the 1980s and recession in the early 90s was a time of great upheaval that had huge consequences for the lives of working men and women. Australians are still living through the repercussions of that period.

It is for all time because it deals with the eternal theme of change. From great industries to solitary individuals, change is inescapable – but how best to deal with it?

The story is set in a coastal city with a long tradition as an industrial town, that is turning into a glamorous seaside resort. Its main characters are the feisty, brittle Barbara and her boyfriend, quiet but stubborn Den. Both are being forced to reinvent themselves in order to stay in work. Their lives are further complicated by the arrival of Barbara’s irrepressible daughter Verge, her snobbish sister Marge and Den’s upwardly mobile brother-in-law Ron.

Given the desperate nature of the characters’ circumstances, the play is often dramatic and moving, but this is tempered by a wry, sometimes hilarious and very Australian sense of humour.

HIT Productions considers it an honour to be able to present this classic piece of Australian theatre.

Cast

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Actor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Den</td>
<td>Kevin Harrington</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ron</td>
<td>Christopher Bunworth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>Heather Bolton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marge</td>
<td>Catherine Hill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verge</td>
<td>Marissa Bennett</td>
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Creatives

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Playwright</td>
<td>Katherine Thomson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Producer</td>
<td>Christine Harris &amp; HIT Productions</td>
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<td>Director</td>
<td>Denis Moore</td>
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<tr>
<td>Set designer</td>
<td>Shaun Gurton</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lighting designer</td>
<td>Richard Vabre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Costume designer</td>
<td>Adrienne Chisholm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Composer/sound designer</td>
<td>David Franzke</td>
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Production
Stage manager      Stephen Copeland
Touring technician Liam O’Keefe
Touring mechanist  David Grinstead
Tour manager       Kim O’Connell
Associate producer Robina Burton
Marketing & development manager Tan Allaway
Marketing consultant Dean Drieberg
Marketing coordinator Sarah Hiam
Finance manager    Andrea Tuckett
Tour consultant    Janice Haynes
Administration officer Tara Wimhurst

Performance duration 2.5 hours (including one 20-minute interval)

Audience warning Strong language and adult themes

Facebook www.facebook.com/divingforpearls
Please join our Facebook page by clicking the link and pressing LIKE.

Promotional video Click here to see the promotional video for the 2012 Australian tour, or go to this URL:
http://vimeo.com/hitproductionsaustralia/divingforpears2012promo
Historical reviews

"Diving for Pearls will be remembered as one of the highlights of the 90s. … a production not to be missed"
Peter Ward, The Australian, October 1992

"Katherine Thomson’s unique and perceptive script... the characters are warm and endearing... with a great emotional wealth... Katherine Thomson is a major new talent and deserves to be well recognised for such an intense and impressive work; full of vision, warmth and depth of emotion"
Krissie Scuds, Rip it Up, October 1992

"A Pearler for current times…one of the ten best plays in the country"
Gail Kavanagh, Time Out, October 1992

"Katherine Thomson braves the deep end and comes up with a play for the times… Pearls is a play buoyed up from harsh beginning to harsh end with the wry, bitter yet ultimately heartwarming humor of survival"
Brian Hoad, Belvoir, October 1992

"Katherine Thomson’s potent play is a heroic... howl for justice in the workforce. Diving for Pearls gives hope to the Australian Theatre"
Peter Goers, The Mail, October 1992

"A strong sense of purpose and warmth… enjoyable and life affirming"
Myk Mykyat Arts Magazine, October 1992

"[It] combines all that makes great Australian theatre... clever poignant writing sensitive acting; bold direction"
Phil Kafcaloudes, B.M.G. Review August 1995
### 2012 National touring schedule

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<td>Moonee Ponds</td>
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<td>Coffs Harbour</td>
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<td>Redcliffe Cultural Centre</td>
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<td>Capella Cultural Centre</td>
<td>Capella</td>
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<td>Proserpine Ent Centre</td>
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<td>Mandurah PAC</td>
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<td>Oct 24</td>
<td>Bruce Rock Shire Hall</td>
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For bookings please contact the venues listed above.
Questions to the director:
DENIS MOORE

1. In the play’s first production, at the Melbourne Theatre Company in 1991, you played the part of Ron. How does it feel to return to this play as the director and has your previous experience assisted you in your work on this production?

It is a new experience for me to come back to a play I have acted in, albeit in a different capacity. I still remember the first production very well. I feel the passing years have deepened my appreciation of the play – particularly the detail and complexity Katherine Thomson bought to the characters and generally how emotionally moving the play still is. Although my approach is very different, the template of the previous production is still in my mind and has definitely informed some of the casting and setting in my production.

2. Do you think the play is still as relevant to audiences today as it was back then?

Unfortunately I believe the play is still highly relevant. I say ‘unfortunately’ because, as anyone who follows the news would know, workers in the manufacturing areas of the Australian economy are losing their jobs daily. Like Den, many workers are being thrown onto the scrapheap daily with little hope of re-training. As in the recent case of Toyota in Melbourne, this can often happen after an extensive auditing process similar to the one Ron conducts in the play.

3. When you first read a script, what do you take from the pages as a director? Was there anything different or striking when reading Diving for Pearls for the first time?

I find the structure of the play interesting. The play occurs over seven months but the author has chosen to depict only the key moments in this time period. The effect of this is like a living collage with different pieces contrasting and colliding with each other. This creates an overall structural and rhythmic conflict which parallels and reinforces the character conflicts within the scenes.

4. What was the process in developing Diving for Pearls from the text before rehearsal began with the actors? Did you undertake any specific research beyond the text?

As mentioned above I have been closely following the jobs fallout in the manufacturing sector over recent months. My previous performance knowledge of the text was also important. The process of casting and set design forced me to focus and re-read the text many times, which deepened my understanding.

5. What drives this piece?

All of the characters are searching for their particular ‘pearl’. Barbara is seeking the pearl of transformation, Den is looking for his voice, his courage to speak and to speak out. Verge is seeking a mother and a family, Ron excellence in his job and Marge perhaps a remedy for her
loneliness. All of these actions combined – both clashing and, at moments, in unison – drive the play. All of them are strong and demanding needs – perhaps Barbara’s being the strongest and the one that often ignites the others.

6. **What do you see as being the most important themes?**

There are many themes. The way an over-emphasis on economic matters can override human concerns; the way our dreams for a better life can have negative consequences unless they are grounded in reality; the decline of traditional values like family, home ownership, equality, mateship, love and compassion – often the first things sacrificed in a dog-eat-dog world; the fight for individual identity and pride in a world indifferent or actively hostile to these things.

7. **What motivation does each of the characters have?**

Den: to find his voice
Barbara: to transform, to stop being herself
Verge: to tell the truth and to have the truth told to her
Marge: to save the family – or what’s left of it.
Ron: to excel at his job, to live up to Jeannie’s expectations

8. **The text is the source – the bible, so to speak. Have the actors changed/informed/altered your initial approach to the productions direction?**

Every actor brings their own experience, rhythms, life force etc. to bear on the script. This constantly informs and changes one’s approach throughout the rehearsal period. The tricky task of the director is to take on board these influences but also to make them part of a unified vision where every actor is both highly individual yet part of a coherent whole.

9. **Once rehearsals begin, how often do you revisit the script?**

The script is our constant companion and guide throughout the rehearsal process.

10. **How does stagecraft contribute to the storytelling?**

Everything seen and heard by the audience must contribute to the storytelling i.e. setting, acting, lights, sound, music and of course the text itself. Anything that does not do so must be eliminated. The superfluous is always distracting and impedes the clarity of the story.
Questions to the set designer:
SHAUN GURTON

1. When you first read a script, what do you take from the pages as a set designer? Was there something that particularly stood out when you first read Diving for Pearls?

I have been fortunate to design Diving for Pearls before this production. In 1993 it was staged by the State Theatre Company of South Australia in the Space Theatre of the Adelaide Festival Centre. On first reading the play two images were very powerful. The strength of the steelworks and the power of the landscape. I tried in that production to use a minimal epic technique to create a rolling landscape and a powerful overhanging symbol of the steelworks. It was staged in a large open space with the audience watching the action from two sides. The production didn’t tour so the set could be both epic and intimate. Denis Moore and I have taken a different approach for this production. Because we cannot create epic spaces for the actors we have contained the action into a small aged industrial environment.

2. What themes have you called upon from the text in this set?

I have concentrated on the themes of longing for the past and the future. The transience of existence and the yearning for home and stability. Each of the characters in the play tries to hang on to a sense of place and belonging.

3. What constraints or challenges did you face in designing for this touring production?

As in all HIT Productions work, the set must tour to many locations and styles of venue. It is essential to create a setting that can retain its intensity and vision in any venue. The set needs to be erected in a day so it must be practical as well as giving the audience a sense of place.

4. How does stagecraft contribute to the storytelling?

The director and I have tried to present the playwright’s wishes that the set be multifunctional, allowing an easy flow between locations. By using simple theatrical set elements, lighting and props we can take the audience to a sea landscape, a steelworks, a boarding house etc. The actors can drive the action within the one space.

5. When the audience first steps into the theatre and views the set, what feelings or images are you hoping it will evoke?

On entering the theatre, the audience will see a series of images that are the visual landscape of the play:

1. A rough wooden platform suggesting a series of palettes as used on a building site. These are locked together to create a stage for the action.
2. A rusted steel arrangement of girders representing an aged steelworks.
3. Stacked timber cable drums, to be used as furniture.
4. A faded backdrop depicting a traditional trade union banner as used in marches etc. This cloth/scrim provides a sense of pride in the past and allows us to use simple lighting to change locations and moods.

5. A small electric train runs on a track at the front of the platform. The train travels around a depiction of a model-scale town. It evokes childhood memories, a sense of place and the constant journey of the characters’ lives.

6. **Is there one key image that sums up the entire play?**

Near the end of the play, Den stands and finds his inner strength in the face of extreme hardship as Verge reaches out to him and her hope for the their future together. One must go on.
Model of set design
Questions to the costume designer:
ADRIENNE CHISHOLM

1. What is your process in coming up with the costume design, from script to first sketches?

When I first read a script I am looking for clues that tell me as much as possible about the characters. This may be the language they use, the decisions they have made or are about to make, their personal circumstances that have helped shape the person they are. I am interested in how this could be reflected through their clothes and the way they wear them.

Sometimes I do sketches – I love to sketch – but sometimes I like to search for clothes that tell me a story. I like clothes that have a history. I find shopping for old clothes inspiring because quite often I will stumble across a piece that tells its own story and will lead me off on a tangent that I hadn’t first considered. Somehow, this works for me in my character exploration. I might discover a jumper that has an unusual stitch or band, a dress with a poorly made collar or a coat with sun-bleached sleeves and odd buttons. These are details that are often difficult to replicate but tell us so much about a person’s life.

After a few weeks I begin conversations with the director. We discuss the play, its themes, the characters. We talk or hypothesise about their lives in and around the storyline. Together we build a detailed picture of their lives and their history that leads us to the decisions they have or haven’t made about their clothes.

I buy costume pieces and build a stock of things that I eventually start to try on the actor. Some work, some don’t, but it’s an interesting place to start.

2. Did you undertake any specific research before commencing your designs?

When I begin working on a play I read the play at least two or three times over the course of a few weeks. I like to take the time to really think about the story and the characters, look through books or even watch films that might relate to the era, or the social history of the time. I usually refer to my stock of design books to check on period detailing of the time.

3. What themes have you called from the text that you think drive this piece?

The themes that struck me most about Diving for Pearls are those of aspiration, loneliness, love and isolation.

4. Discuss the process of working with the rest of the creative team.

The creative team working on Diving for Pearls are designers and directors I have worked with more than once over many years. Having that familiarity helps create a strong working relationship because you have an understanding of the way that person often works and a language has already been established between you. This means there is a greater trust.
between you all, giving you the ability to create more interesting or challenging work, or to take risks.

5. How does stagecraft contribute to the storytelling?

Stagecraft contributes an enormous amount to the work; it can heighten or embellish meaning.

Questions to the lighting designer:
RICHARD VABRE

1. Will this production require a complex level of lighting or simple subtle lighting in order to work? Why?

The lighting in this production will work to indicate time, place and setting while having a unified aesthetic. The set will create a total world for the piece to exist within – its own little island world. The lighting will contain the play – sometimes in small, discreet areas, sometimes in more open, wider areas. The transitions between scenes will become important visual moments to indicate dramaturgically where the piece is going – either as a time or a location or even as an emotional tone. There will probably not be too many cues or changes of lighting during scenes, just between scenes.

2. What themes are you drawing upon from the script to give you ideas for the lighting design?

The lighting will incorporate elements of the emotional tone of the piece – especially the sense of a change from one era to another; from the comfort and security of the past to the very uncertain present and future. Also, the sense of location and space that is so strong in the script will be addressed in the lighting design.

3. How much of what the actor does dictates the way you treat your lighting design and how will the lighting complement the actor’s performance styles and other theatrical conventions such as the set design?

The emotional pitch of the actor’s work will dictate the look of the lighting design, as will their physical presence (or blocking) on the stage. This will also be determined by the director’s vision. The lighting will also endeavour to address and treat the architecture of the set design.
Questions to the composer/sound designer:
DAVID FRANZKE

1. What influenced your sound design for this production?

The director Denis Moore, the text and my penchant for all things even vaguely nostalgic

2. Do you think this play will require a complex sound design or a more simple approach in order to work? Why?

For a touring show I will always intend to make a simple and direct soundtrack. This one will mainly consist of single stereo files. This is because it needs to be easy to operate, easy to set up quickly, and easy to reproduce constantly.

3. What themes are you drawing upon from the script to give you ideas for the sound design?

Coal trucks, coastlines, tubas/brass bands, machinery and melancholia.

4. What did you use to create the sound scapes (a particular computer program, instrument, etc?)

I sketch most music out in a program called Pro Tools and record with Pro Tools, similarly with all effects and ambiances. I will record most of the atmos with a sony PCM-D50 handheld digital field recorder.

Any additional sound effects will be sourced from my SFX library – I have been collecting sounds for about 20 years now!
Questions to the cast:
Marissa Bennett (Verge)

1. When you first read the script for Diving for Pearls, what stood out the most?

I think I was most struck by the language and how specifically Australian it is, both in rhythm and sensibility. When you read Diving for Pearls there is a sense that you could be nowhere else but in Australia. I love the Aussie vernacular and it’s wonderful that it’s so celebrated in this text. I find it very refreshing.

2. How do you develop your role as you come to familiarise yourself with the character?

For me, developing a role starts with the text. I might make some notes regarding my initial gut reaction to the character but I also mine the text for solid clues. The playwright, a good one in particular, will always provide hints about a character, whether in a detailed character description at the beginning of the play or in the body of the text itself. When I get a script I like to write down everything my character says about herself, everything she says about other people and everything other people say about her. I try and take note of what the character may want over the course of the play and what they may want in any given scene.

I also pay particular attention to the rhythm of the language. Just like music or poetry, the text in a play has an inherent rhythm and a lot can be discovered about a character through the rhythm of the words they speak. It can allude to their state of mind, their attitude to themselves and others, and this in turn can inform their physicality.

When approaching a character it is important for me to be able to find a way to relate to them, to personalise the character and make them more familiar and real to me. In doing so I like to consider anything my character might remind me of. Perhaps it’s an elemental quality like fire or water. Perhaps it’s a figure from literature or a film, or even (for me) happens organically during rehearsal when I get up on stage with the other actors. I find it important to make strong and bold decisions but to also remain flexible and open to how another actor may affect me and how that may evoke physical and emotional changes in the character. After all, that’s what human beings do, they shift and change according the circumstances they find themselves in and the people they’re surrounded by.

3. Did you undertake any specific research outside the text?

In the early stages of rehearsal we spoke briefly about the political and social climate in NSW at the time the play was written. I researched any references I didn’t understand, for example, some colloquialisms I was unsure of as well as poems and songs that are mentioned throughout the play. In relation to the role of Verge I did do some reading on brain damage acquired from birth and the various symptoms that can manifest. I also drew on my own experience working with people with special needs.
4. Do you intend to change anything from the script to portray your role in a particular way?

As I write this we are still relatively early on in the rehearsal process. It is suggested in the character outline that Verge may have a physical deformity and at this stage I’m not really sure that this is something I’m going to take on. That said, with still a few weeks of rehearsals ahead, anything could change!

5. What is your favourite scene in the text and how has this been translated from script to stage?

There are two scenes I’m particularly fond of: the scene between Den and Verge with the train set and also the one when they’ve been bird watching. I love how Den and Verge’s relationship develops throughout the play. I find it very hopeful.

6. If you had to associate one key image to Diving For Pearls what would it be?

I think the geography and the landscape of the town in which the play is set is very important, but so are each of the characters and their relationships with one another and with themselves. In my mind I see an image of each of the characters lined up on a cliff-face overlooking the sea. I think this speaks to the fact that each of the characters are immensely affected by ‘place’ but are also facing or dealing with something big on a personal level.
The production team

Production manager

The production manager’s role consists of overseeing all production elements prior to the tour, during the rehearsal period and throughout the tour. They support and assist key personnel and acts as a central information point for the project. They also manage communications with technical companies such as sound, lighting and set building, as well as hiring equipment. They provide venues with technical specifications and then liaise with them to make sure the show can be staged successfully within the parameters of each individual space. In addition, the production manager maintains tour schedules and makes accommodation and flight bookings for the cast. Their job is to make sure the logistical side works to a touring budget, and that the general administration side of the tour is kept in order.

Stage manager

The role of the stage manager is divided into two parts. One is to make sure rehearsals run smoothly, by setting up the rehearsal environment, from marking up the space and collecting props and furniture to coordinating costume fittings and publicity calls with the rehearsal schedule. At this time the stage manager becomes the link between the rehearsal room and the other departments. They also assemble the prompt copy, which is the definitive record of the production.

Production week starts when you bump-in (put everything into the theatre, such as set, lights etc) and ends with the opening night. The stage manager spends part of production week in the theatre again, acting as the link to the rehearsal room because most of the people putting on the set will not yet have seen a run of the show. During this week the set is completed, lights are focused, sound levels are set and plotting takes place. Plotting is when the director and the lighting designer decide which lights to use, when they come on, and, once recorded, these ‘lighting cues’ are called to the lighting operator in each performance.

Part two is to make sure the show runs as the director and set designer have agreed during production week. The stage manager also liaises with front-of-house staff to make sure the show starts at the right time, giving the actors a countdown call to the commencement of the show. The SM is also the person who takes charge if there is an emergency.

Touring technicians

Touring technicians travel with the production to all scheduled venues. Responsibilities of this role include maintaining the smooth running of the production on tour, having responsibility for loading, unloading, packing and setting up of all the equipment. They manage the bump-in and bump-out, realising the technical specification to suit each individual venue. This is usually in the form of creating lighting plans and adjusting the lights, audio levels and communication systems as per the director and set designer’s vision. In this instance the touring technician is responsible for all the on-road documentation of the project and keeping to budget guidelines.
Glossary

ASM Assistant Stage Manager
Generally looks after props and costume maintenance and is always backstage helping the actors.

Atmos
Background sound effects used to create a sense of atmosphere.

Blocking
The process of planning actors’ movements throughout a performance.

Bump-in
The period of time where the theatre is prepared for the actors. Set, lighting and sound are installed, lighting plotted and all technical elements finally meet.

Bump-out
Bump-out is the mad scramble to get everything out after the final performance.

Epic theatre
Theatre that covers a grand scope, a series of events, and/or a long period of time. Devices are employed to relate directly to the piece.

Front of house
Staff hired to look after audience before seating for a show. Staff includes ushers, box office staff, and so on.

Media release
Information sent to all media (television, press, radio and on-line) to launch the production and to generate media interest.

Prompt copy
Also known as the ‘bible’ of a production. The SM starts to assemble the prompt copy during pre-production (prior to commencement of rehearsals). At the end of a season, the prompt copy contains a copy of the script which includes lighting and sound cues, script changes and blocking (a shorthand form of recording actors’ moves). This script is used to ‘call’ the show. It also contains all rehearsal and production schedules, all information relating to lighting, sound, set, props and costumes. It will also contain a theatre program, show poster and or flyer (if relevant) and a copy of the sound tape/disk. The prompt copy is kept on file should the company wish to remount the production at a future date.

Prompt corner
Generally where the stage manager sits during the show. In most theatres this will be offtage left and downstage. Sometimes the SM will sit in the control booth with the lighting and/or sound operators.
Scrim
A piece of such fabric used to create the illusion of a solid wall or backdrop when lit from the front, or a semitransparent curtain when lit from behind.

Stage left/right
These directions are from the actor’s perspective when facing the audience. An actor’s left is actually the audience’s right.

Upstage/downstage
Upstage is away from the audience. Downstage is towards the audience.

Gobos
A gobo is a stainless steel cutout that, when placed in a pattern projecting light fixture, will project that image onto a wall or other flat surface. Gobos are patterns for lights, and come in a wide range of sizes.
Cast biographies

DEN – Kevin Harrington

Since graduating as an actor from the Victorian College of the Arts, Kevin has been continually employed in the arts/entertainment industry for 28 years.

Although best known for his television roles in Seachange, Neighbours and Underbelly he has a long and varied history in over 30 theatre productions for such companies as Melbourne Theatre Company, Playbox, the Malthouse Theatre, Sydney Theatre Company, HIT Productions (for their tour of Talking Heads), Hothouse, Theatreworks, the Victorian Arts Centre, La Mama and the West Australian Theatre Company.

Kevin has been nominated for two Green Room Awards for his work in Aftershocks for the MTC and as Bottom in A Midsummer Night’s Dream.

Constantly in demand as a voiceover artist and for guest roles in television programs such as The Man from Snowy River, All Together Now, Talkin’ about my Generation, Blue Heelers, City Homicide and Winners and Losers, Kevin is also an accomplished writer, having had work produced for theatre, television and radio.

His acting was also featured in Working Dog’s smash hit film, The Dish, Australian Rules, Guru Wayne, Tom White and Red Hill. The highlight of his film career so far was his AFI award nominated performance in the lead role of the film, The Honourable Wally Norman. He has recently completed the lead role in an ABC Telemovie about Cliff Young. Last year he began teaching Camera Acting with Shane Connors for their business, The Actor’s Coach.

BARBARA – Heather Bolton

Heather is a highly experienced film, TV and theatre actor. She also recently directed The Dream Life of Butterflies for Melbourne Theatre Company.

She has worked in the film and television industry both here in Australia and in New Zealand. Heather won the LIFTA Best Supporting Actress for Illustrious Energy (1988), the GOFTA Best Supporting Actress for Arriving Tuesday (1987) and the GOFTA Best Actress for Mr Wrong (1986). Her more recent film work includes The Tragedy of Hamlet Prince of Denmark. Other film credits include Rainbows End, Angel Baby and Evil Angels.

Heather’s television credits include Mystery of a Hansom Cab, Phryne Fisher
Heather’s theatre career includes for the MTC: The Gift, Into the Woods, Assassins, Away; Malthouse/Playbox Theatre: Porn Cake, Ruby Moon, Miracles, Strangers in the Night; Ranters: Affection, The Wall, Roulette, St Kilda Tales. Also The Lower Depths for Ariette Taylor, Andrew Bovell’s Speaking in Tongues, and Melbourne Festival’s Dictionary of Imaginary Places for Anna Tregloan. Heather has also had theatre roles with the Bell Shakespeare Company and STCSA.

Heather worked previously with HIT Productions in their inaugural 1999 tour of Hannie Rayson’s Hotel Sorrento.

RON – Christopher Bunworth

Chris co-founded The Telluride Repertory Theatre Company (THE REP) in Telluride, Colorado in 1990. Performing numerous roles from the classical canon with Macbeth, Petruchio and Tartuffe proving highlights, he played the titular role in THE REP’s adaptation of F.W Murnau’s Nosferatu which toured to the US and India in 2000.

Since arriving home he has continued working across stage, screen and film. Recent TV credits include roles on Beaconsfield, Winners and Losers, Underbelly, Killing Time, Bed of Roses and Neighbours and his film credits include Cryptopticon, 3 Dollars, The Independent, Em 4 Jay and Scrapple.

As the Artistic Director of Larrikin Ensemble Theatre, Chris continues to tour his critically acclaimed solo performance in Trio by Dina Ross. His most recent foray on the stage was in John Patrick Shanley’s The Dreamer Examines His Pillow at Little Feat.

Chris trained at Dell’Arte International School of Physical Theatre in Blue Lake, California as well as recently studying with revered acting coaches, Ivana Chubbuck and Larry Moss.

MARGE – Catherine Hill

Catherine is a graduate of the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts and works as an actor, director and script editor.

As an actor she has worked for the Hunter Valley Theatre Company, Theatre West and in numerous theatre co-ops. She has had guest roles on Neighbours, Blue Heelers, M.D.A., Flying Doctors, Embassy and the new ABC series Nice. She has appeared in the telemovie Witch Hunt, and feature films My Year Without Sex, Johnny Ghost and Blinder.

Her directing credits include the original productions and national tours of Elizabeth Coleman’s Secret Bridesmaids’ Business and It’s My Party (And I’ll Die If I Want To), An Evening with Richard Frankland for the
Sydney Opera House and Adelaide Cabaret Festival, Max Gillies Live at the Club Republic, national tour, and more recently, A Number by Caryl Churchill and Homesick! by Abe Pogos. Catherine is a recipient of the Ewa Czajor Award for female directors and the Peter Summerton Award for directing.

VERGE – Marissa Bennett

Marissa studied at the Victorian College of the Arts. Her stage credits include Distant Lights From Dark Places, Season at Sarsaparilla, Our Country’s Good, The Cherry Orchard, Cosi and The Crucible.

Marissa is an ensemble member and Artistic Associate with The Artisan Collective, for whom she has appeared in Two, Self-Torture and Strenuous Exercise and Breathe a Little and Call it Life.

In 2011 Marissa made her directorial debut with Mirror Mirror for Watch Them Wonder and The Artisan Collective.
CREATIVE BIOGRAPHIES

PLAYWRIGHT – Katherine Thomson


Katherine wrote the documentary Unfolding Florence – the Many Lives of Florence Broadhurst which was directed by Gillian Armstrong. It screened at Sundance Film Festival and won the AWGIE Award for Best Documentary and Best Television Script at the QLD Premier’s Literary Awards in 2006. Katherine also wrote the AWGIE nominated documentary mini-series on the life of Charles Darwin called Darwin’s Brave New World for ABC/CBC Canada in 2009 and an episode of the mini-series documentary, Accidental Country.

Katherine’s numerous and critically acclaimed theatre credits include Diving for Pearls, Barmaids, Fragments of Hong Kong, Navigating, Kayak, Mavis Goes to Timor, Wonderlands and Harbour. In 2006, Katherine was awarded the Australian National Playwrights Centre Award for her substantial contribution to the Australian theatre industry. Her most recent play King Tide premiered to critical acclaim at Griffin Theatre in 2007. She is currently in development on numerous film and television projects.

DIRECTOR – Denis Moore

Denis has been a director in the theatre and an actor in theatre, film, television and radio since the mid 1970s. In that time he has directed over 40 plays.

His most recent directing credits have been Kenneth Lonergan’s Lobby Hero (Red Stitch), Jack Hibberd’s classic A Stretch of the Imagination, Louis Nowra’s Cosi, Alfred Uhry’s Driving Miss Daisy and David Stevens’ The Sum of Us, all for HIT Productions.

In 2006 Denis’s Red Stitch production of Richard Bean’s Harvest won Victorian Green Room Awards for Best Director and Best Production in the Major Companies category.
SET DESIGNER – Shaun Gurton

Shaun began his career as an actor and director before becoming a designer in the early 1970s. As a freelance designer he has designed many productions for the major theatre and opera companies in Australia and internationally. From 1990 to 1994 he was Associate Director/Designer for the State Theatre Company of South Australia. In 1991 he was invited to design a production for the Shanghai People’s Theatre.


Shaun designed Cheech in 2006 and Romeo and Juliet in 2007 for The Centaur Theatre in Montreal Canada. He has been nominated many times for the Green Room Awards and has won for Steaming, Masterclass, Rivers of China, Festen and Richard III. In 2003 he was awarded the John Truscott award for Excellence in Design. In 2004 and 2006 he was nominated for the Helpmann awards for his designs of Inheritance and King Lear.

Shaun has designed Travelling North, A Stretch of the Imagination, Cosi, Driving Miss Daisy, Furiously Fertile, The Sum of Us, Motherhood The Musical, Let the Sunshine and Diving for Pearls for HIT Productions.

COSTUME DESIGNER – Adrienne Chisholm

Originally trained as a graphic designer, Adrienne later went on to complete a post-graduate diploma in Theatre Design at the Victorian College of the Arts in 1996.

Since then Adrienne has designed sets, costumes and puppets for such companies as Back to Back Theatre, Melbourne Workers Theatre, Spanda Productions, Circus Oz, Danceworks, The Wiggles, The Eleventh Hour, Platform Youth Theatre, Playbox, Petty Traffikers, Paradigm Productions, Polyglot Puppet Theatre, Yana Alana and the Piranhas, Lunchtime Theatre, Gasworks, Chookahs Festivals 2005 and 2006 and Speigel Tent uniforms for the Victorian Arts Centre, Ivanov, The Lower Depths, Progress and Melancholy, and Café Scheherazade for 45 Downstairs, Syncopation and Café Rebetika for the Follies Company. The World’s Wife and Poor Boy for Melbourne Theatre Company and Andrew Bovell’s Holy Day for The Sydney Theatre Company.

She was also the recipient of a Green Room Award for her set design for Finucane and Smith’s The Burlesque Hour which has toured extensively both Australia and internationally, and was a founding member of the highly acclaimed The Keene/Taylor Theatre Project, designing sets...
Adrienne has designed costumes for HIT Productions’ Così, Motherhood The Musical, Furiously Fertile, The Sum of Us, Let the Sunshine and Diving for Pearls.

**LIGHTING DESIGNER – Richard Vabre**

Richard is a prolific Green Room Award winning lighting designer, having designed over 55 productions throughout his career. He has worked for companies such as Melbourne Theatre Company, Malthouse Theatre, Red Stitch, Fulltilt Theatre, Chambermade Opera and Arena Theatre.

Notable works include for the MTC: The Colours, The Apocalypse Bear Trilogy; Malthouse Theatre: Autobiography of Red, Apples and Ladders, A Quarrelling Pair, A View of Concrete, The Black Swan of Trespass; Red Stitch: After Miss Julie, Motortown; Arena Theatre: Australian Marriage Act, Girl Who Cried Wolf, The Eisteddfod; Melbourne Workers Theatre: Diatribe, The Call; Chambermade Opera: The Children’s Bach; Polyglot; The Big Game, Check OUT!.

In 2004 he was awarded the Green Room Award Association’s John Truscott Prize for Excellence in Design and this followed with two further Green Room Awards in 2005 for Smashed, Test Pattern & The Black Swan of Trespass and in 2009 for Progress and Melancholy.

**COMPOSER /SOUND DESIGNER – David Franzke**

David Franzke has been a vibrant and versatile collaborator with theatre and film-makers, performers and DJs in Melbourne and Sydney since graduating from the Victorian College of the Arts. His sound designs, compositions and compilations have formed an integral part of many acclaimed performance works and installations, and his innovative approach to combining sound and vision has earned him high praise.

He received the Victorian Green Room Award for Outstanding Contribution to Design and Technology in Fringe Theatre in 2000, and has been nominated for Best Sound Design at the Helpmann Awards of 2006 for The Odyssey (Malthouse Theatre).

David’s work has been featured at the National Portrait Gallery of Canberra, in collaborations with Cologne-based composer Bernd Friedmann (contributions include compositions, soundscapes and atmospheric textures) and in numerous installations, performances and films with such artists and companies as Anna Tregloan, MTC, Malthouse Theatre, Ranters Theatre and the Melbourne International Arts Festival.
PRODUCER – Christine Harris & HIT Productions

Christine Harris is the Managing Director of HIT Productions, a Melbourne-based company formed in 1993. A Penguin Award-winning actress (Carson’s Law), she was a regular on our television screens in the 1980s and 1990s. It was her commitment to provide a platform for female actors that led her initial drive into theatre with her first Melbourne-based season of Duet for One (1993 at the Victorian Arts Centre), Crimes of the Heart (1995 at the Universal Theatre) and Hotel Sorrento (1998 at The CUB Malthouse).

In over 18 years of running HIT, Christine’s achievements have been recognised in numerous business awards and accolades. These include the 1997 Telstra Victorian Entrepreneur of the Year Award, 1998 and 2000 finalist for the Telstra Business Women’s Awards, the 1998 Executive Woman of the Year Award (National Small Business Owner Category) and her inclusion in the 1999/2010 Business Women’s Hall of Fame. In 2000 Christine was one of 80 business and community leaders chosen to be a delegate at the Growing Victoria Togetherness Summit held at Parliament House, Melbourne, and she was included as one of 32 successful Australian businesswomen in Pru Goward’s book A Business of Your Own.

HIT’s theatre productions also garner extensive critical and industry acclaim and have featured some of Australia’s most high-profile actors including Jacki Weaver, John Wood, Max Gillies, Helen Morse, Debra Lawrance, Janet Andrewartha, Samuel Johnson, Amanda Muggleton, Noelene Brown, Maria Mercedes, Frankie J Holden, John Deidrich, Joan Sydney, Terence Donovan, Collette Mann, Kevin Harrington, Henry Szeps and John Jarratt. The company is now recognised as Australia’s Premier Theatre Touring Company.

HIT is committed to touring outstanding mainstream productions, with a major focus on Australian playwrights, to capital city, outer metropolitan, regional and remote venues Australia-wide.

Since its first tour of Hotel Sorrento in 1999, HIT has built up a remarkable body of work. Between 1999 and the end of 2011 HIT delivered 50 major theatre tours across 665+ weeks. HIT Productions has presented some of the most extensive tours ever staged in Australia, including Patrick Edgeworth’s Girl Talk (2000-2001, 29 weeks across 69 venues), Neil Simon’s Last of the Red Hot Lovers (2003-2004, 23 weeks across 60 venues), David Williamson’s The Club (2007-2008, 35 weeks across 80 venues) and Jeanie Linders’ Menopause The Musical® (2008-2011) which ran for a phenomenal 132+ weeks across 235 venues. Tours completed in 2011 have been the Australian premiere of Motherhood The Musical (45 weeks), the world premiere of Furiously Fertile (13 weeks), The Sum of Us (23 weeks) and Menopause The Musical® (16.5 weeks).

2012 once again sees the company touring extensively in Australia with Let the Sunshine, Motherhood The Musical, Menopause The Musical® IN CONCERT and Diving for Pearls. The year also mark HIT’s first international tour, with Menopause The Musical® IN CONCERT heading to New Zealand.

From 1995-2003 HIT Productions was the market leader in the provision of sponsored educational/motivational talks. Its highly successful education programs such as Dream and Achieve™ and Follow Your Dreams™ reached 5,700 schools and over one million students.
Poster artwork

Diving for Pearls
By Katherine Thomson

HIT
A Production by Christine Harris & HIT Productions
Australia's Premier Theatre Touring Company

Diving for Pearls
by
Katherine Thomson

It's not personal it's just business
Make it personal!

Australian Government
Funding Australia
Contains Strong Language and Adult Themes
Katherine Thomson's Diving for Pearls dramatically records the moment Australia joined the vast world of globalised economics in the 1980s. The story is set in an industrialised coastal city at the cusp of change and how this affects a working class couple - the feisty, irresistible Barbara and her would-be boyfriend, the retiring but stubborn Den. Their lives are further complicated by the arrival of Barbara's outspoken daughter Verge, her snobbish sister Marge and Den’s uppishly mobile brother-in-law Ron. Given the desperate nature of the characters’ circumstances, the play is often comic, but this is tempered by a very Australian sense of humour. Throughout the play you can glimpse the pearls of wisdom gleaming beneath the turmoil of their everyday lives. Diving for Pearls will tour in 2012 to capital city, metropolitan, regional and remote theatre venues throughout Australia.

CAST

DEN
KEVIN HARRINGTON

BARBARA
HEATHER BOLTON

RON
CHRISTOPHER BUSWORTH

MARGE
CATHERINE HILL

VERGE
MARISA BENNETT

CREATIVES

PLAYWRIGHT
KATHERINE THOMSON

PRODUCER
CHRISTINE HARRIS & HIT PRODUCTIONS

DIRECTOR
DEAN MOORE

LIGHTING DESIGNER
RICHARD VADE

COMPOSER/SOUND DESIGNER
DAVID FRANZKE

COSTUME DESIGNER
ADRIANNE CHISHOLM
The cast on their first day of rehearsals
Production photos