

TEACHERS' NOTES

*THE ONE DAY OF THE YEAR*

BY ALAN SEYMOUR

### The One Day of The Year Synopsis

“I’m a bloody Australian, mate, and it’s because I’m a bloody Australian that I’m gettin’ on the grog. It’s Anzac Day this week, that’s my day, that’s the old Diggers’ day.” – Alf

*The One Day of The Year* follows the Cook family during the week of Anzac Day. While ex-WWII soldier Alf Cook and his friend Wacka Dawson are preparing for Anzac Day celebrations, they reminisce over a few drinks, much to the ire of Alf’s wife Dot. Hughie, Alf’s son, is a university student; his higher education means he finds it difficult to communicate with his working class parents. Whilst Alf clings to Anzac Day with pride, seeing it as the one time of the year old Diggers can get together and be commemorated, Hughie regards it merely as an excuse for them all to get drunk.

Hughie and his new North Shore girlfriend Jan Castle set out to do an article for the university paper, with Hughie taking photographs of intoxicated Anzac Day revellers. When Alf sees the article, even Dot cannot bring peace to the family and the chasm between the two generations grows even more unbridgeable. The story raises poignant questions around class, education, inter-generational communication, free expression, respect for people and history, and our attitudes towards war. It is, above all, an excellent study of Australian character.

### Overview

Alan Seymour wrote *The One Day of the Year* in 1958, inspired by an article he had seen in the University of Sydney newspaper criticising Anzac Day celebrants. The play raised hard-hitting questions about the significance of honouring an act of war, and held a mirror up to the excessive drunkenness and violence that seemed to accompany this national holiday.

In 1960 the Adelaide Festival of Arts was offered the chance to premiere Seymour’s new play but rejected it on the grounds of causing offence to the RSL. Later that year the Adelaide Theatre Group performed an amateur production of the play, which was forced to have a policeman stationed at the stage door following a highly emotive public reaction. At its first professional rehearsal in Sydney, the venue was evacuated due to a bomb scare. Nowadays, in less conservative times, the play is considered a classic Australian piece and is widely studied and performed.

The most recent significant professional staging was the Sydney Theatre Company’s 2003 season at The Wharf Theatre starring Max Cullen.

In 2015 Australia’s Premier Theatre Touring Company HIT Productions which is headed by Christine Harris and has a proud history of touring Australia since 1999 (HIT Productions is now on its 68<sup>th</sup> tour in Christine Harris’ 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary year as a significant Australian producer) is set to mount a new production and tour it to metropolitan, regional and remote venues Australia-wide. As with all HIT shows, *The One Day of the Year* will be a medium scale production and will be designed with regional and remote touring in mind.

### Director’s Notes

Award winning director Denis Moore will direct this production supported by an award winning creative team. He has assembled a stellar cast of acclaimed, seasoned actors complemented by two rising theatre performers to inhabit the diverse characters of *The One Day of Year* and to engage new audiences for this important piece of Australian theatre history. HIT has had great success with Denis Moore at the directing helm of a multitude of HIT touring productions by Australian playwrights, both classic pieces and newer works, since 2008 and once again we look forward to the quality that he will bring to this production.

*“It is always a privilege to be asked to direct a classic Australian play. Alan Seymour's *The One Day of the Year* stands with Ray Lawler's *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* as a landmark work of the late 1950s. For the first time on the Australian stage, Seymour's play had the courage to cast a searching eye over one of the nation's sacred symbolic days - Anzac Day - and to examine, with honesty tempered by compassion, the rifts that open up between family members, generations and classes as a result of this veneration. To revive this great play in the context of the 100th anniversary of the Gallipoli landing is entirely appropriate and will, I'm sure, secure strong houses for the production and induce in audiences a mood of thoughtful celebration.*

*How does one approach such a piece? To my mind the first requirement is respect. Respect for the characters drawn by the author and the historical integrity of the period presented in the work. The characters must not be condescended to by either actors or director nor should any unnecessary updating of the play occur. In my opinion the great value of presenting past works is the challenge they make to present values and ways of living. This approach has to be balanced however with a playing style that is both vital and immediate. Set, costumes and lighting should combine with the immediacy of the actor's approach to expel any whiff of museum theatre.*

*I believe these slightly non-realist elements are there in 'The One Day of the Year' and can be released by the above approach to increase its relevance and immediacy as a piece of theatre for the here and now while retaining its historical integrity.*

Denis Moore, Director

### **Historical Reviews**

*Seymour treats the Australian psyche rather like a kitten treats a ball of wool. First he fondles it, then he playfully rolls it around a bit before really getting in among it and tearing it to pieces. Finally, he tries to roll it up tenderly into a complete ball once more. The result is a compelling piece of theatre and one which no young Australian should miss.*

Michael Morton-Evans, *The Australian*, 1987

*It's a wonderful play in a very fine production. The STC deserves plaudits for its decision to revive classics of the Australian stage from time to time.*

Sydney Morning Herald, 2003

*The One Day of the Year occupies an important place in Australian Theatre. [...] Perhaps *The One Day of the Year* holds a clue to Anzac Day's contemporary appeal among younger Australians: not sentimentalising war but sharing compassion for the sacrifices made by all who have fought in war.*

Philip O'Brien, *Times2*, 2010

*The One Day of the Year in whatever form, is an ever-green.”*

Verity Masters, *The Australian*, 1984

*“Alan Seymour's play *One Day of the Year* is as relevant in its social issues now as it was when he first wrote the play 25 years ago – possibly more so today, as people have a greater sense of national pride.”*

Mosman Daily, 1987

*“The homely setting and characterisations in this warm and witty piece of Australiana, 60's vintage, will cross the barrier and evoke real memories.”*

Carol Payne, *North Shore Times*, 1987

*“It will strike a chord with all Australians, especially those who experienced the era of the six o'clock closing*

*swill at pubs.”*

Mark Henderson, Daily Mirror, 1987

*“The immediate story is of differing attitudes towards Anzac Day but it is timeless because it represents the eternal clashes across the generation gap.”*

Taffy Davies, The Sun, 1987

*“[...] as it progresses one realises that what Alan Seymour has wrought is in fact a play of enormous intricacy, as pertinent today as it was 27 years ago.[...] Seymour’s play, now 28 years old, has qualities of human and social interest that remain unimpaired by time and change.”*

H.G. Kippax, The Sydney Morning Herald, 1987

*“Now it re-emerges as both a fascinating social document of its time and a warmly human comedy-drama.”*

John McCallum, The Sydney Morning Herald, 1994

*“[Seymour] took exactly the right amount of care over the right dramatic stuff. Within the play’s unmistakable sense of time and place, Seymour’s passionate intensity and unselfconscious dramatic instincts generated a residual core of timelessness [...] It inspires a feeling of quiet exhilaration to see its characters leap that great gap of time and resonate in the present .”*

Bob Evans, The Sydney Morning Herald, 1994

*“The One Day of the Year’s place in the history of Australian drama is not based on notoriety but on its universal relevance. Sons will still fight with their fathers, no matter the cause, and family dramas are potentially the most gripping. Also, did I mention it is often very funny?”*

Ron Banks, The West Australian, 1996

*“Seymour’s writing, with its innate humanity and gritty sincerity, is still vigorous. One Day of the Year survives the decades with triumph.”*

Pamela Payne, The Sun Herald, 1996

### **Rationale behind presenting the production**

HIT Productions has chosen to produce a trio of outstanding Australian works in the important year of 2015 – the centenary of the Gallipoli landing – a time that Australians will be focused on their heritage and identity as a nation. Proposed along with this classic Australian drama *The One Day of the Year* will be Jonathan Biggins’ modern comedy *Australia Day* and the new Australian work *All My Love* by AFI award winner Anne Brooksbank (based on the novel of the same name).

The three plays cover 100+ years of Australian history. *All My Love* is set from late 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century; *The One Day of the Year* examines a defining moment in WW1 while being set around Anzac Day in the 1960s; and *Australia Day* explores our national heritage and identity in a contemporary setting. They all have a natural, topical and timely synergy in their presentation in 2015.

Producer Christine Harris canvassed members of HIT’s Artistic Advisory committee about the perceived success of the show in a national tour. She also canvassed further venue managers from HIT’s established regional and remote network, who supported the choice.

It was decided to produce this play for a number of reasons, most notably because of relevant timing. With 2015 being the centenary year of the Gallipoli landing, there is huge leverage to revive this famous work. Anzac Day falls midway in the February to June tour, so it became clear that HIT’s production of *The One*

*Day of the Year* is anticipated to become the focal point around which commemorative community activities will take place. Although Australian theatre presenters are looking for variety and an eclectic range of productions to program, the one constant every year is their request for strong dramatic works of this nature to provide a backbone to their programming, and *The One Day of the Year* fit this bill perfectly.

HIT has had great success with Denis Moore at the directing helm of a multitude of HIT touring productions by Australian playwrights, both classic pieces and newer works, since 2008 and once again we look forward to the quality that he will bring to this production.

### **The Tour**

HIT has toured a range of productions over the course of its 15+ year touring history. This 16 week tour of *The One Day of the Year* to four Australian states will encompass 38 venues and 60 performances and has an anticipated audience attendance of 13,073 theatre patrons. A brand new touring production, it will offer this much loved drama to an expansive audience in the centenary year of the Gallipoli landing. Whilst HIT's research shows comedy is the most popular of genres for regional audiences, strong narratives well told (as is the case in *The One Day of the Year*) are also demanded by regional and remote presenters and their audiences.

HIT Productions builds all of its shows with the explicit intention of enacting a high quality product within regional and remote community venues – this is the focus of our company.

*The One Day of the Year* tour schedule supports the initiative to take this highly relevant piece to regional and remote communities. A breakdown of the tour reveals that 8% of scheduled venues are remote, 24% outer regional, 32% inner regional and 37% metropolitan. The 19,539km tour is exemplary of HIT's continued commitment to equitable delivery of high quality theatre product no matter the postcode.

### **Adapting the production for touring**

*The One Day of the Year* creative team have all worked on a multitude of HIT's extensive touring productions before and are therefore well aware of the requirements and know how to build for quality that will be maintained throughout the entirety of the tour. The set will be designed to withstand deterioration despite the demands of a lengthy tour with frequent stops, and it will adapt to the demands of playing multifarious venues over many months.

Director Denis Moore describes *The One Day of the Year*'s production style as poetic realism. The set will represent the kitchen, living and bedroom areas of a simple working class home of the period. These spaces however will be presented not in laborious detail but in an impressionistic manner against a scrim of open sky and stars to cover the needs of realism demanded by the play but also to poetically touch upon the mythic nature of the human struggles depicted. To strive for absolute truth and justice in their characterisations the actors will be challenged to present the play's characters as of their time both physically and psychologically.

*Touring plays always requires a more pared-down approach to the set. I have found this to be immensely valuable for interpreting plays in general but particularly ones like 'The One Day of the Year' that were written in a more realistic/naturalistic style. For touring only the most essential items can travel so productions often assume the more concentrated approach of the ancient Greek and the Elizabethan theatre of Shakespeare where the text and the acting are front and centre and the audience's imagination is a major ingredient. Also less realist and more expressionist elements that are often latent in many works are brought to the fore by this enforced approach having been camouflaged by excessive 'realistic' scenery.*

To accommodate long-term touring, the set will be lightweight but sturdy so it can be handled regularly by venue crew with minimal damage impact. It will be designed to fit snugly in a 3.5 tonne truck with blanketing, bubble wrap and so forth. LX and audio gear will tour in road cases; costumes in port-a-ropes that allow clothing to hang vertically on hangers whilst travelling. Other practical requirements are implemented in the design process: costumes are selected that are durable over many washes; jewellery will be selected that is robust in its construction; the set's colour palette will utilise widely available tones to enable easy and quick touch ups for spot damage; set construction will utilise finger tightening bolts and pinning, in order to minimise power tool usage which can be time consuming; and all set elements will be braced and weighted independently so as to avoid any requirement to screw into the venue stage.

The set is designed and built to ensure the show is adaptable enough to be successfully realised in all venues. This allows for compression in small venues but is generous enough that it will not be overwhelmed by the spaces of larger proscenium arch theatres on the tour, and can utilise the existing standard theatre masking.

The show's technical specifications require venues to pre-rig the day prior, and the design enables same day bump-in, performance and bump-out when required, making one-night stands a viable option (bump-in the day prior will only be required if the first performance is a matinee). The swift bump-in also enables small distances to be travelled on the same day, which allows for a tighter tour schedule and therefore lowers the performance-to-cost ratio without sacrificing quality. Otherwise designated travel days are scheduled between venues. The length of bump-in time and bump-out time listed is reflective of HIT's recent touring production of David Williamson's *Managing Carmen* which toured extensively around Australia in 2014. *The One Day of the Year*, by the same designers, will have similar requirements to this production – a model that streamlined technical and design elements to enable efficient touring. HIT's established crew who have worked on many HIT tours will support this.

A fly system will not be required and, whilst a pre-rig will be required, it will be an adaptation of standard LX rigs, with two size options (24/36 and 60 channels) of the LX design available to cater to the scale and lamp list/dimmer range of the venues. A small number of onstage practical lamps and a 12-channel dimmer rack may be toured to support capacity in the smallest venues. HIT will tour its own lighting desk. Audio will consist of laptop-based playback of incidental music and sound cues, with a standalone sound desk and powered speaker system that can complement the in-house PA. There will be no pyrotechnic effects in the production.

To maintain this quality throughout the tour, director Denis Moore will attend a performance in Brisbane, to give further notes to the cast. Throughout the tour he along with the entire creative team, the producer and relevant HIT personnel will also be updated with daily show reports from the stage manager describing all aspects of the production.

## THE ONE DAY OF THE YEAR

### CREATIVE BIOGRAPHIES

#### **PLAYWRIGHT – Alan Seymour**



Alan Seymour is an Australian playwright and author. From 1953 to 1957 he was theatrical director for the Sydney Opera Group. His first play, *Swamp Creatures*, premiered by the Canberra Repertory Society, was a finalist in the London Observer play competition in 1957.

His best-known play, *The One Day of the Year* was written in 1958 for an amateur playwriting competition, inspired by an article in the University of Sydney newspaper *Honi Soit*, lambasting ANZAC Day. The play met with huge controversy on its release. Initially it was rejected by the Adelaide Festival of Arts Board of Governors in 1960, but was first performed on 20 July 1960 as an amateur production by the Adelaide Theatre Group. In April 1961, at the first professional season at the Palace Theatre in Sydney, a bomb scare during a dress rehearsal forced police to clear the theatre. Later that year the production was staged at the Theatre Royal Stratford East, in London. Since then it has been staged regularly throughout Australia and internationally. It is also studied in various school curricula.

*The One Day of the Year* dramatised what Seymour imagined to be the growing social divide in Australia and the questioning of old values. The character of Alf in the play is based on Seymour's brother-in-law, Alfred Crothers. Despite the criticisms of ANZAC Day expressed in the play, the term has since been adopted as expressing the importance of ANZAC Day.

Although Seymour is best known in Australia for *The One Day of the Year*, his international reputation relates not only to this early play, but also to his many screenplays, television scripts and adaptations of novels for film and television.

#### **PRODUCER – Christine Harris**



Christine Harris is the Managing Director of Melbourne based company HIT Productions Pty Ltd. A Penguin Award-winning actress (*Carson's Law*), she was a regular on our television screens in the 1980s and 1990s. In 2014 Christine celebrates her 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary as a significant Australian producer. Since Christine's first tour of *Hotel Sorrento* in 1999, she has delivered some of the most extensive tours ever staged in Australia including *Menopause The Musical*®, David Williamson's *The Club*, *Travelling North*, *Let The Sunshine* and *When Dad Married Fury*, Louis Nowra's *Cosi* and Joanna Murray-Smith's *Love Child*. Since 2007 alone Christine's productions have contributed \$20 million of turnover to the arts sector in Australia.

#### **DIRECTOR – Denis Moore**



Denis' career as an actor and director spans over 30 years. Denis has worked extensively in both capacities for companies such as the Melbourne Theatre Company, Sydney Theatre Company, STCSA, Playbox and the Malthouse Theatre, La Mama, Melbourne Workers Theatre, Theatreworks, and Red Stitch. Denis has directed over 40 plays, including *A Hard God* for STC, *Bedlam Autos* for MTC and *Harvest* for Red Stitch, for which he received Victorian Green Room Awards for Best Direction and Best Production in 2006. Denis directed HIT Productions' *A Stretch of the Imagination*, *Cosi*, *Driving Miss Daisy*, *The Sum of Us*, *Let the Sunshine*, *Diving for Pearls*, *It's My Party (And I'll Die If I Want To)*, *The Club*, *When Dad Married Fury*, *Managing Carmen* and *Just The Ticket*.

#### **SET DESIGNER – Shaun Gurton**



Shaun has designed for major theatre and opera companies in Australia and internationally since the 1970s. Recent productions include *Scarlett O'Hara at the Crimson Parrot*, *Entertaining Mister Sloane* and *Bombshells* for MTC, *Yes, Prime Minister* national tour, *Equus* and *Taking Liberty* for Perth Theatre Company and *Red Dog* for Black Swan. He has won Green Room Awards for *Steaming*, *Masterclass*, *Rivers of China*, *Festen* and *Richard III*. In 2003 he was awarded the John Truscott Award for Excellence in Design and was Helpmann Award nominated for *Inheritance* and *King Lear* (MTC). Shaun has designed numerous shows for HIT Productions, including *Motherhood The Musical*, *Let the Sunshine*, *Diving for Pearls*, *It's My Party (And I'll Die If I Want To)* and *When Dad Married Fury*.

### **COSTUME DESIGNER – Adrienne Chisholm**



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, Playbox, Polyglot Puppet Theatre, Gasworks, Chookahs Festival, Spiegelent Uniforms for the Victorian Arts Centre, fortyfivedownstairs, Follies Company and STC. She won a Green Room Award for set design for *The Burlesque Hour*, and was a founding member of *The Keene/Taylor Theatre Project*. Adrienne has designed costumes for many HIT Productions shows including *Motherhood The Musical*, *Let the Sunshine*, *It's My Party (And I'll Die If I Want To)*, *The Club* and *When Dad Married Fury*, *Managing Carmen* and *Just The Ticket*.

### **LIGHTING DESIGNER – Jason Bovaird**



Jason Bovaird has been a freelance lighting designer and production manager for 20 years. His recent designs include *HAIR – The Broadway Revival* (VIC tour), *The Phantom Of The Opera* (Tasmania), *About Tommy* and *Roam* (Red Stitch), *Equus* (Mockingbird Theatre), *Out of the Water*, and *Goodbye Miss Monroe*. His designs for HIT Productions include *They're Playing Our Song*, *The Club*, *When Dad Married Fury*, *The 39 Steps*, *Managing Carmen*, *Love Letters* and *Just The Ticket*. Jason has received three Victorian Music Theatre Guild Awards, a Green Room Award nomination, three Victorian Drama League Awards and most recently the 2013 Silver Victorian Drama League Best Lighting Design Award.

### **Sound Designer – Chris Hubbard**



Chris Hubbard has enjoyed an extensive career as a sound designer and operator, having worked on more than 60 plays and musicals across nearly two decades in Australia and London. His shows include *The Producers*, *Les Miserables*, *West Side Story*, *Into The Woods*, *Hello Dolly*, *Carousel*, *Guys and Dolls*, *The Crucible*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Chicago*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Bye Bye Birdie*, *Company*, *The Music Man* and *The Lion In Winter*, open-air productions of *Twelfth Night* and *Camelot*, *The King and I*, *The Boy From Oz*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Wicked*, *Jersey Boys*, *Chicago*, *Mary Poppins*, *Love Never Dies* and *Rock Of Ages*. For HIT Productions, Chris has been engaged as sound supervisor on tours of *Motherhood The Musical*, *Menopause The Musical®*, *The Sum of Us*, *Menopause The Musical® IN CONCERT*, *Let the Sunshine*, *When Dad Married Fury*, *Diving for Pearls*, *It's My Party (And I'll Die If I Want To)*, *They're Playing Our Song*, *Managing Carmen*, *Love Letters*, and *Just The Ticket*.