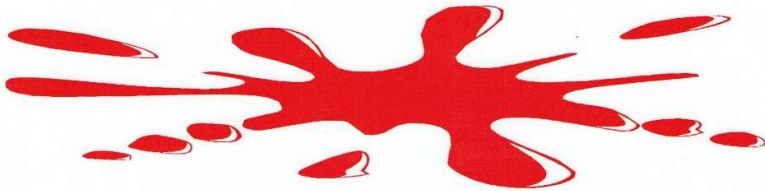


COMPANY THEATRE

presents the

**Auckland Premiere
of the Comedy Thriller****NATURAL CAUSES**

by Eric Chappell



Directed by Neil Burgham

Only 6 PERFORMANCES**Opens Sat. April 1 1995 8.00pm**

Matinee Sunday April 2 at 2.00pm

Wed. 5th April - Sat. 8th April at 8.00pm

Bar Facilities available

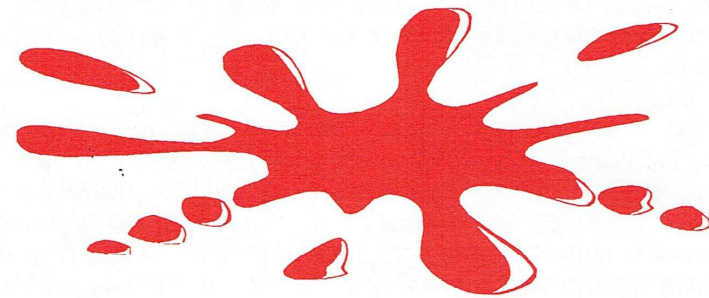
At the Rose Centre Theatre, School Rd, Belmont.

Phone Bookings: 445.9900 (Mon - Fri Mornings) OR 445.6939 (Evenings)

Company Theatre presents

Natural Causes

by Eric Chappell



Directed by Neil Burgham

A black comedy thriller

***The Rose Centre Theatre
Belmont******April 1st - 8th, 1995.***

Director's Notes

As this was to be my last opportunity to involve myself in a Company Theatre production, I was fortunate, and grateful to be offered this particular play to direct. In many ways it has all the elements of the plays I have enjoyed in my past productions for Company - a little drama, strong dialogue, farce, and the prospect of some fun. For those of us who put ourselves through the hoops of putting on a play or musical as well as trying to earn a living in today's work environment, it has to be fun at least.

This production has been fun, but it has also given us the outlet we seek for creative expression, and I have been fortunate again, to have been offered a strong cast. Although I invariably seem to either act with or direct Yvonne, it has been too long since I worked with Peter and I am grateful that the part of Vincent tempted him back into a major role. It is good to see Angela in an acting role once more (we first worked together in "Not Now Darling"). A perennial problem for groups like ours is finding candidates for the male roles, and "Natural Causes" was no exception. Nevertheless, good fortune and Sherry Ede found us Richard and through Richard, Anthony (as well as two very able props people, some scenery and props) and consequently this production has become by default a joint effort with, and considerably enhanced by, the assets of Torbay Dramatic Society.

I hope you enjoy our interpretation of "Natural Causes", or at the very least can follow its convoluted plot (I'm not sure we have!), and by the time we have finished, can answer twenty questions on who did what to whom, why, and who paid. Have fun.

About the Director

Neil Burgham's association with Company Theatre began twelve years ago when he was persuaded to take a supporting role in a production of Noel Cowards' "Blythe Spirit". Although a few years of study prevented further involvement, on stage at least, Neil was then well and truly hooked, and since 1987 has either acted in, or directed, some ten productions. These range from music hall to pantomime, to Ray Cooney farces, to light drama.



Highlights have been his role as Philip Markham in "Move Over Mrs Markham", which followed his debut as a director with "Fifty Fifty" in 1986; as well as his direction of "Whose Life is it Anyway?", "Wait Until Dark", and "Map of the Heart".

In between all that, Neil managed to spend just over five years as a committee member, two of which were extremely busy ones as President and as Company's representative on the committees who with NSCC, were responsible for the building of the ROSE CENTRE in which Company Theatre now has its home.



Backstage with the Cast

Peter Segrove

Peter has a long history with Company Theatre both administratively and creatively. He was instrumental in Company's relocation to the Rose Centre and directed Company's first play in their new home, "Habeas Corpus". Peter is regularly sought after for theatrical advice, and asked to perform as Compere, and Master of Ceremonies, - roles in which he is relaxed and professional, (he also makes a very good cup of tea). Onstage or backstage, he is never upstaged!

Richard Parmee

We are pleased to welcome Richard to Company Theatre. Richard has been involved with Torbay Dramatic Society for the past 7 years, most recently playing Clive in "Seasons Greetings" at the Pumphouse, Lloyd the director, in "Noises Off" (where the opening lines were delivered by Richard from the Auditorium) and Matthew in "The Sex Fiend". "The Sex Fiend" has been Richard's most challenging role to date. Maybe we can change that!

Anthony Whitehouse

We welcome Anthony to his first production for Company Theatre. Working on and off stage for about twenty years now, Anthony has done "a bit of just about everything", but says that comedy is his preference. Anthony's most recent work includes direction of "Seasons Greetings" at the Pumphouse in 1994 and roles in "Joseph", "The Sex Fiend", and "Nonsense". Watch out for Anthony's work as director of "No Sex Please, We're British" at Torbay in August.

Yvonne Burgham

Company's acquisition of Yvonne as a member occurred in 1983 when she was cast in a leading role in "Blythe Spirit". Since then she has been very busy for us in support roles, back stage, front of house, and in building up our membership and customer base. However, she will be best remembered for her two favourite parts, the lead role in "Move Over Mrs Markham" and as Barbara in "Fifty Fifty". Yvonne makes her final appearance for Company Theatre as Celia Bryce, as she and Neil prepare to move to KeriKeri.

Angela Redmond

Angela has been a member of Company Theatre since 1989. She first appeared in "Death on the Nile" followed by the very funny "Not Now Darling" in 1990. Angela has been a regular performer in Company's Music Halls, and also appeared in "Cowardly Custard" (a revue of Noel Coward's music) in 1993. Angela performed last year in North Shore Operatic's "Funny Girl", and she welcomed the invitation to perform in another comedy. When not performing on stage, Angela enjoys ballroom and Latin American dancing.



The cast during rehearsal, are (clockwise from centre: Peter Segrove, Yvonne Burgham, Richard Parmee, Angela Redmond, Anthony Whitehouse)

The Cast

<i>Peter Segrove</i>	~	<i>Vincent</i>
<i>Richard Parmee</i>	~	<i>Walter</i>
<i>Anthony Whitehouse</i>	~	<i>Withers</i>
<i>Yvonne Burgham</i>	~	<i>Celia</i>
<i>Angela Redmond</i>	~	<i>Angie</i>

A Synopsis

<i>Act 1 Scene I</i>	~	<i>Walter & Celia Bryce's library ~ morning</i>
<i>Act 1 Scene 11</i>	~	<i>The same ~ midday</i>
<i>Act 11 Scene 1</i>	~	<i>The same ~ mid afternoon</i>
<i>Act 11 Scene 11</i>	~	<i>The same ~ early evening</i>

*There will be an interval of 20 minutes between
Acts. Enjoy complimentary tea and coffee.
The bar will be open.*

The Production Team

<i>Director</i>	-	<i>Neil Burgham</i>
<i>Production Manager</i>	-	<i>Doug Bourke</i>
<i>Lighting Design</i>	-	<i>Peter Fitzgibbon</i>
<i>Lighting Operators</i>	-	<i>Chris Garmondsway</i>
	-	<i>Jeff Marsh</i>
	-	<i>Edwin Knight</i>
<i>Wardrobe</i>	-	<i>Cathie Sandy & Gail Carran</i>
<i>Furniture/Properties</i>	-	<i>Ros Clews</i>
	-	<i>Sue Gross</i>
	-	<i>Linda Whitehouse</i>
<i>Stage Manager</i>	-	<i>Trish Worrall</i>
<i>Set Construction</i>	-	<i>Tony Sandy & Doug Bourke</i>
<i>Prompt</i>	-	<i>Cindy Schofield</i>
<i>Publicity</i>	-	<i>Sherry Ede</i>
<i>Programme</i>	-	<i>Lyndall Frost</i>
<i>Photographer</i>	-	<i>Tony Scott</i>
<i>Bookings</i>	-	<i>Ruth Segrove</i>
<i>Front of House</i>	-	<i>Shane Sweeting</i>
<i>Bar</i>	-	<i>Tony Sandy/Garry Glanville</i>

Acknowledgments

*Betty Wrightson
Mason Price
Robert Letcher
Torbay Dramatic Society Inc.
Devonport Library*

SHORE arts & entertainments

Death by delivery



The cast of *Natural Causes* - top, Peter Segrove and Yvonne Burgham, bottom from left, Anthony Whitehouse, Angela Redmond and Richard Parmee

Natural Causes, by Company Theatre at the Rose Centre, Belmont, until 8 April.

This black comedy offers more giggles than belly-laughs, tiptoeing its way through the story-line in a typically restrained English fashion.

Perhaps too restrained, as the subject matter is death. Whether that death will be suicide, murder or accident is for the audience to find out.

Our main protagonist is Vincent, the failed undertaker turned deadly-potion pedlar, played by Peter Segrove.

Segrove makes this role his own, his thin frame and hunched shoulders painting a picture of the man who takes pride in being professional - at death.

Vincent brings his "all natural, made from common garden plants" suicide potion into the stately Bryce residence where the oh-so-upper-class Celia lives under a cloud of depression, while her writer husband Walter dallies with his secretary, Angie.

Angie decides to give Celia a hand carrying out her threats of suicide, but Walter - played as a wonderful portrait in worry by Antony Whitehouse - doesn't have the backbone to help carry out the plan.

As Walter, Richard Parmee has hand-wringing and looking anxious down to an art. Any lack of charisma can be put down to the character, still fond of his wife, mesmerised by his mistress but too spineless to do anything decisive.

As Celia Bryce, Yvonne Burgham shines as she drifts from depression to cunning plotter once her husband's duplicity is revealed.

The play promises real bite but is a little too gentle to deliver.

Jacqueline Nunan

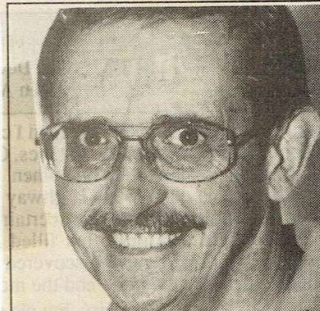
In brief...

North Shore actors Company Theatre will present the Auckland Premiere of Eric Chappell's black comedy *Natural Causes* from April 1.

In a six-performance run directed by Neil Burgham, the play will be staged at the Rose Centre Theatre in School Rd, Belmont.

Tickets are \$12.50 for this adult tale of a professional suicide merchant.

LAG TAFF 30 MARCH 1995



Natural Causes

Neil Burgham directs Eric Chappell's black comedy thriller for the Company Theatre. There are six performances, on Saturday 1 April, on Sunday for a matinee at 2pm and from Wednesday to Saturday 5 to 8 April, at 8pm. Bookings 445-9900 or Ruth Segreve 445-6939.



GOOD COMPANY: The cast of Company Theatre's production of *Natural Causes*, clockwise, from centre: Peter Segrove, Yvonne Burgham, Richard Parmee, Angela Redmond and Anthony Whitehouse.

Company Theatre presents black comedy at its best with the Auckland premiere of *Natural Causes*.

The play is written by British playwright Eric Chappell and will open at the Belmont Rose Centre on Saturday April 1.

It tells the story of a professional suicide merchant, played by Peter Segrove.

For a reasonable fee he will make house visits any time, day or night.

He comes complete with his fully tested, tasteless and painless suicide potion, the only sensation being a gradual creeping coldness beginning in the toes.

Has Walter Bryce requested the potion for himself or is it really for his wife Celia?

An hilarious mix-up of intentions follows.

Peter Segrove is one of Com-

IN BLACK COMPANY

pany Theatre's most experienced actors.

He appeared in the sell-out season of Art-Throb Theatre during the Devonport Arts Festival.

He is joined by Richard Parmee, Yvonne Burgham, Anthony Whitehouse and Angela Redmond.

The production will be a swansong for Company Theatre director Neil Burgham who is moving to Keri Keri.

Burgham has directed and acted in many of Company Theatre's productions.

Natural Causes opens on Saturday April 1 at 8pm and runs for one week with a matinee on Sunday April 2.

Bookings, phone: 445-9900 mornings or 445-6939 evenings.

Page 2 DEVONPORT BULLETIN Thursday April 6, 1995

Final curtain for director

Devonport director Neil Burgham gives his swan-song production for Company Theatre this month.

His role as director for *Natural Causes* at the Rose Centre, is Neil's last involvement with Company Theatre before he moves north to Kerikeri.

Neil's early theatrical experience was in musicals. He was brought up in New Plymouth and

sang in many musical comedies. He is a trained baritone singer and this year marks a 20 year association with the Auckland Choral Society of which he is a member.

He moved to Auckland and joined Company Theatre in its early formative years at St Michael's Hall in Bayswater. His production was a small role in Noel Coward's *Blithe*

Spirit in the early 1980s.

With his second wife, Yvonne, he soon became involved in Company Theatre productions. They often played the parts of husband and wife including *Move Over Mrs Markham* in the mid 1980s and *Why Me?* in 1990.

Neil has always had a preference for directing plays that are not just entertaining but have

something to say to an audience.

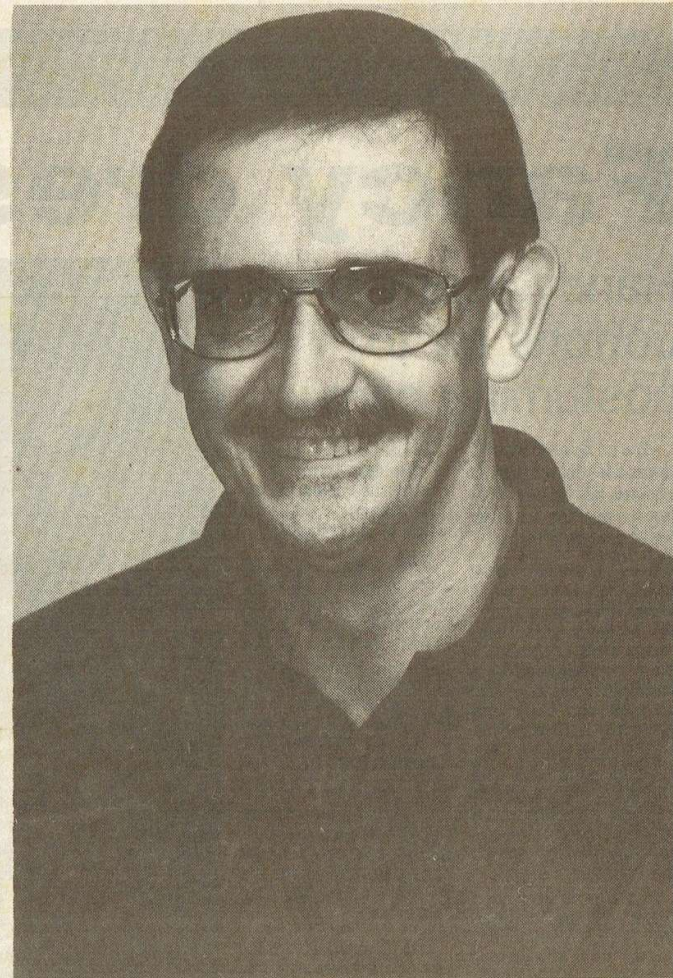
His first production was the famous Roger Hall play *Fifty Fifty* in 1988. He then chose the powerful drama *Whose Life Is It Anyway* in 1989 followed by the thriller *Wait Until Dark* in 1990.

Neil's input helped the dream of a permanent home in the Rose Theatre for the Company come to fruition. He wanted to change the image of the company from a small group in a church hall to a confident amateur group in a theatre.

His growing reputation as a director was recognised when Howick Little Theatre asked him to direct their premiere production and in that busy year of 1993 he also directed the highly acclaimed *Map of the Heart* for the Company Theatre at the new Rose Centre.

Natural Causes, which finishes on Saturday, is the Auckland premiere of a very funny black comedy and it will be his last show. The Company Theatre will miss his contribution and his friends at Company consider Neil as a man who sees the overall shape of things and is not hindered by the detail.

He allows actors to explore their own individual characters and will only interfere if he feels they are moving too far away from the overall vision of a play, say his friends at Company Theatre.



NEIL BURGHAM



YVONNE BURGHAM



Angela Redmond, Anthony Whitehouse, Peter Segrove, Yvonne Burgham, Richard Parmee



Neil and Yvonne Burgham's Farewell