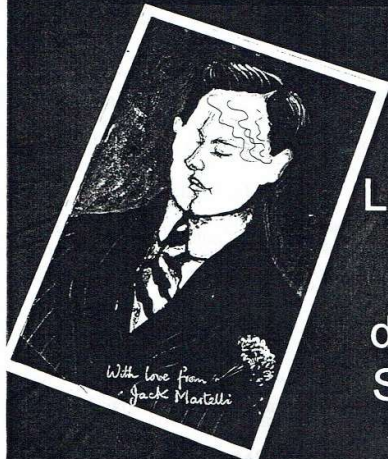


Company Theatre Presents

EUGENIA



by
Lorae Parry

directed by
Sian Davis

At the Rose Centre, Belmont
August 2000

Please note that adult content may offend

CAST

(in order of appearance)

An Italian landlady, ROSA BASSANI (1916)	Penny Skyrme
An Irish housekeeper, VIOLET DONOVAN (1916)	Ruth Flynn
A drama teacher, IRIS ROBINSON (present)	
A Cockney boarder, RUBY (1916)	Marie Ortquist
A detective, WALLACE (1916)	
A brickhill foreman, FINN (1916)	Nial Greenstock
A boarder, PUB JOE (1916)	
An Italian woman who lives as a man, EUGENIA (1916)	Erica Kroger
A deputy principal, GEORGINA MATHESON (present)	
Violet's ex-lover, VINCENT DUGGAN (1916)	David Berresford
A principal, COOPER (present)	
A girl student, LILY THOMPSON (present)	Vicky Davies
A girl student, VICTORIA STEVENS (present)	Marielle Le Couteur
A boy student, MURRAY (present)	Alexander Gandar
Mandolinist	Ted Smith

PRODUCTION TEAM

Director	Sian Davis
Production Manager	Doug Bourke
Stage Managers	Alastair Fletcher, Sheila Stevens
Lighting Design & Special Effects	Robot
Lighting Operators	Phil Searle, Jeff Marsh
Sound Operators	Helen Davies, Glen Winchester
Properties	Maureen Kenny, Mark Higgins
Choreographer	Dianne Wallace
Wardrobe	Cathie Sandy, Jill Howarth, Gail Carran, Amber Carran-Fletcher, Molly Clarke, Belinda Johnson
Wigs	Ruth Quinn
Publicity	Kathy Gent
Programme	Sheila Stevens
Poster Design/Production	Sian Davis/Kirsty Whitehouse
Photographs	Sherry Ede
Front of House	Doug Bourke
Set Construction	Tony Sandy, Doug Bourke, John Burton, Alastair Fletcher, Mark Higgins, Angie Holmes, Maureen Kenny, Caroline Parker, Sheila Stevens, Anthony Whitehouse, Jack Willetts

Penny Skyrme

Penny has appeared in a number of Company Theatre productions over the last thirteen years, the last two being *Lord Arthur Saville's Crime* and *Social Climbers*. She more recently had a chance to relive her misspent youth in *Christmas Hams*, part of Victoria University's centennial celebrations.

Ruth Flynn

After graduating from the National Academy of Singing & Dramatic Art in Christchurch she toured with the Whakarite Theatre Company for a year before heading for Auckland. Since her arrival here 2 years ago she has appeared in *Jackson's Wharf*, *Shortland Street* and stage productions *Scow* and *Richard III*. *Eugenia* has been a great experience for her, she has loved every "delicious, delectable, dirty moment of it"!

Marie Ortquist

After an absence of 12 years Marie returns to the fold of Company Theatre. Being the quiet, timid, shy girl she is, playing the part of Ruby is a huge s-t-r-e-t-c-h. Practice makes perfect!

Nial Greenstock

This is Nial's third production with Company Theatre, having appeared recently in *Straight & Narrow* and *Pain & Passion*. Nial plays three characters in *Eugenia* and, having played two characters in *Pain & Passion*, he feels his multiple personality is coming along nicely.

Erica Kroger

Erica has had a love for theatre since early childhood and has appeared in a number of productions on the Shore, most recently as Cleopatra in *Anthony & Cleopatra* at the Pumphouse. She last acted for Company Theatre in Neil Simon's *Chapter Two* and previously worked with Sian in *Hedda Gabler*.

David Berresford

David is beginning to feel typecast by Sian. Two years ago he played Judge Brack in her production of *Hedda Gabler*. The judge was suave, singularly unpleasant, upper class. Vincent in *Eugenia* reads like one of the judge's less savoury relations. Since *Hedda* he has played a variety of roles including Anthony in *Anthony & Cleopatra*, the womanising Bernard in Cannoletti's extremely funny farce *Don't Dress for Dinner* and the emotionally blocked gay choreographer Gregory in McNally's *Love, Valour, Compassion*. He is enjoying treading Company's boards once more.

Vicky Davies

Vicky has been acting since the age of 5, involved in plays and musicals with Junior Company and at school. She is enjoying the experience of learning about every aspect of a play, particularly directing, through the more 'long in the tooth' cast and crew. She hopes to study drama after leaving school.

Marielle Le Couteur

Marielle is an accomplished dancer (ballet and tap), pianist and actress whose enthusiasm for drama led her to attend a one week course in mime, improvisation and African dance with the New Zealand Drama School. She hopes to go to Performing Arts School after leaving Takapuna Grammar.

Alexander Gandar

Alexander (Squish) started acting at the age of 7 with Junior Company, joined an agency and appeared in a Maggi noodle commercial. He then progressed to more substantial roles in *Hercules* and *Shortland Street*. His dream is to pursue an acting career.

THE SETTING

"Eugenia", a play in 2 acts (with interval), takes place in a number of settings in two interwoven time-frames. In 1916, the play variously moves between a Nelson brickyard and Mrs Bassani's boarding house, Violet Donovan's flower shop, a police station, a courtroom, all in Wellington. In the present, the setting is a school hall in an independent secondary school in Wellington.

THE HISTORY OF THE PLAY

"Eugenia" is a work of fiction but has its origins in the lives of real women who have crossed the lines of gender and lived, loved, and been loved, as men. The play's primary source has been in the events that led to the notorious "Man-Woman" court case in Sydney in 1920, as told in *Eugenia - A Man*, by Suzanne Falkiner. Another has been the 1994 story of Brandon Teena, recently depicted in the film *Boys Don't Cry* and the subject of two recent TV documentaries shown in New Zealand.

The play was first performed at Taki Rua Theatre, Wellington in 1996. That production was presented at The Watershed, Auckland, and later travelled to Manchester, England.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

I give you two quotations to consider; maybe each says much the same thing - for not only this play, but about 'Theatre' at large, and what we go to find there in particular.

"... As truth is non-existent, it can never be anything but illusion - but illusion, the by-product of revealing artifice, can reach the summits nearer the unobtainable peak of Perfect Truth The impersonator is in fact a woman (truth), until she recreates herself as a man (illusion) - and of the two, the illusion is the truer."
(Truman Capote: "Answered Prayers" - adapted)

"You are more authentic the more you resemble what you dreamed you are."
(Agrado, in the film "All About My Mother". Directed by Almodavar.

I have many reasons for wanting to direct this play: probably the most significant is my belief in its power to make a difference. For most, this play is simply a provocative (as in "thought provoking") entertainment. But, I am also aware, for others it may touch them very nearly - personally or as "those who live alongside". These telephone numbers may be helpful:

Lifeline: 522 2999

Gayline/Lesbianline: 303 3584

Sian Davis

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Gianni Esposito, for his music assistance.
Silvia Filasto, for her assistance with the Italian pronunciation and accuracy.
Lloyd Whittaker of *Whittaker's Musical Experience*, Waiheke, for the mandolin.
Creative New Zealand.
Northbridge Community Arts Council.

COMPANY'S NEXT PRODUCTION: *Outside Edge* by Richard Harris, November 2000

NEWS

Drama tackles tricky subjects



CHALLENGING THEMES: Sian Davis directs *Eugenia*.

By NICOLE JELLARD

Cross dressing, lesbianism and murder are not commonplace in local productions but they happen in this one.

Company Theatre's production of *Eugenia* covers more daring material than the average amateur play.

It is directed by Beach Haven resident and artist Sian Davis who chose it because it is a New Zealand play and because it offers the audience a challenge.

Written by Wellingtonian Lorae Parry, *Eugenia* is set in Wellington in 1916 and the present. It is based on the true story of Eugenia Martelli, an Italian immigrant who lives as a man and marries a woman without revealing her gender. Eugenia's wife is murdered and Eugenia is tried for the crime.

The play asks the question, is Eugenia tried for murdering her wife or for the crime society believes she's committed against it by living as a transvestite and bucking social acceptability?

Ms Davis is known for making statements through her art. She made headlines for taking North Shore City Council to task over its laxity in dealing with the city's sewage problems. She created Shore Sunrise, a sign about beach pollution with a graffitied outline of Rangitoto Island and the sun scrawled across it.

Eugenia adds to her mission to give the arts a questioning, reflective voice.

"Perhaps my most powerful motive is my belief that here is a play that can genuinely make a difference. It is a very long way from the usual diet of English-derived inconsequential trifles that most am-dram theatre groups feel safe with. I have to say that Company Theatre has been moving on a decidedly more adventurous tack," she says.

Being gay or transgendered is brought into the open in *Eugenia*, which Ms Davis applauds.

"There's a lot of fear of difference in the average community and people get marginalised. Being gay or transgendered is something that isn't much talked about. It can be considered something to hide from."

She draws this conclusion based on personal experience. She worked with the gay community, as a New Zealand Aids Foundation volunteer buddy for people with Aids, on the Aids Hotline and as secretary of the Women's HIV Action Resource Network.

Eugenia's themes go beyond gayness and transgenderism though, she says. They are, in fact, universal.

"Everybody needs love and the love shown between characters in *Eugenia*, the conflicts and the brutality of some parts of the play have a broad relevance," Ms Davis says.

Content aside, the play is a challenge to stage because it is set in both the past and the present and the nine actors in it have to play characters in both times. There are quick costume and character changes, drawing

on the actors' strong abilities to adapt. Davis says that to her knowledge, none of the actors are gay either.

Erica Kroger, Ruth Flynn and David Berresford take the main roles. Other Company Theatre actors and three sixth form drama students from Takapuna Grammar are also involved.

Eugenia, the character, is a charmer, a con-artist, a womaniser and an outsider who lives life on the edge, Ms Davis says. On one level, her story parallels the story of Brandon Teena in the film *Boys Don't Cry*.

In the present element of the play, Iris, a secondary school drama teacher creates a school play based on Eugenia's life. The consternation this creates among the school's conservative board of trustees and the effect it has on the deputy principal add to the story of Eugenia in the past.

Eugenia was first staged in the Watershed in 1996 and enjoyed significant success. It toured Britain in 1998. The version being performed by Company Theatre is a revised version of a Manchester production.

Ms Davis also directed Company Theatre's *Hedda Gabler* and Mairangi Players' *Skirmishes* and has extensive theatre experience both in New Zealand and overseas.

Eugenia is on at the Rose Theatre in Belmont from August 12 to 26. There is a schools' performance on August 15 and the Auckland Mandolin Society will play on opening night. Phone: 445-9900 or 486-3835.

3rd Aug. 2000

ARTS

Cris-crossing Eugenia

Melanie Leaning checks out a new production of Eugenia, a play by Lorae Parry.

Eugenia: '...You cannot know what it is like, to be born in the skin of the wrong sex. To lie is the only way to live my truth. What is a man? Only what the world sees, what we feel inside. What did you love before that you cannot love now? I am still the same inside.'

Eugenia by Lorae Parry



Unless you were living in a cave around Oscar time last year you would have heard of that film about a certain transgendered person living in Whitetrashville, America.

What you may not know is that before *Boys Don't Cry* there was a New Zealand play written which deals with much the same issues.

Eugenia by well-known lesbian playwright, Lorae Parry, is a play set here in New Zealand both in 1916 and the present.

Basically, it's about the life of Eugenia/Jack Martelli - a female living in the early 20th century as a man - who marries a woman and is wrongly charged with her murder.

The drama shifts between events as they unfold in 1916 and the present day as a high school

drama class create a play based on Eugenia's life.

The impact of Eugenia's story on the drama students and on the deputy principal, who is forced to examine her own sexuality, are some other facets of this challenging play.

In terms of Eugenia's life, the content is loosely based on the true story of Italian immigrant, Eugenia Falleni, who settled here briefly early before moving to Australia in the late 1900's.

Falleni - her biographer, Suzanne Falkiner, claims - lived as a man in Australia, married a woman and was sent to jail for her murder.

Parry says she was inspired by Suzanne Falkiner's biography, *Eugenia - A Man*, as well as by an article on Brandon Teena - who's life was the subject of *Boys Don't Cry*.

'Both of their stories were a strong source of inspiration,' Parry says. 'But I think my play has a lot more redeeming end - it's not as depressing at the end as their lives were.'

Parry's *Eugenia* is being performed this month by the Company Theatre at the Rose Centre in Belmont on Auckland's North Shore.

Director Sian Davis says it's a play with subject matter that's outside the bounds of which most amateur theatre companies are willing to deal with.

A professional theatre company, of which Parry was a cast member, toured with the play to Wellington and Auckland, Sydney and Manchester.

Parry says the play was very well received on tour and that no one reacted negatively to the content.

'It actually changed perspectives of those who came with prejudiced attitudes,' she says.

Although Parry acknowledges that, before now, it's really only the universities who have been 'brave' enough to do amateur performances of the play.



Lorae Parry

delighted to hear the Company Theatre are doing it,' she says.

Davis says she encountered very little opposition when she approached her company with the idea to put it on.

'Those who have read the play understand the issues and are very on board,' she says. 'The play is multi-layered and the major theme is not about 'deviant' sexual psychology, rather it's about the fierceness of the human need for love.'

'It's also about intolerance,' Davis continues. 'Men, in particular, don't come out of it well.'

'They emerge as being sources of power and prejudice - it's a strongly feminist play.'

Davis says she hopes people will 'cross the bridge' to see the play and that a big cross section of society will attend.

'It's a play the gay community can be proud of,' Davis says. 'There's sensitive representation of the issues and it's very authentic.'

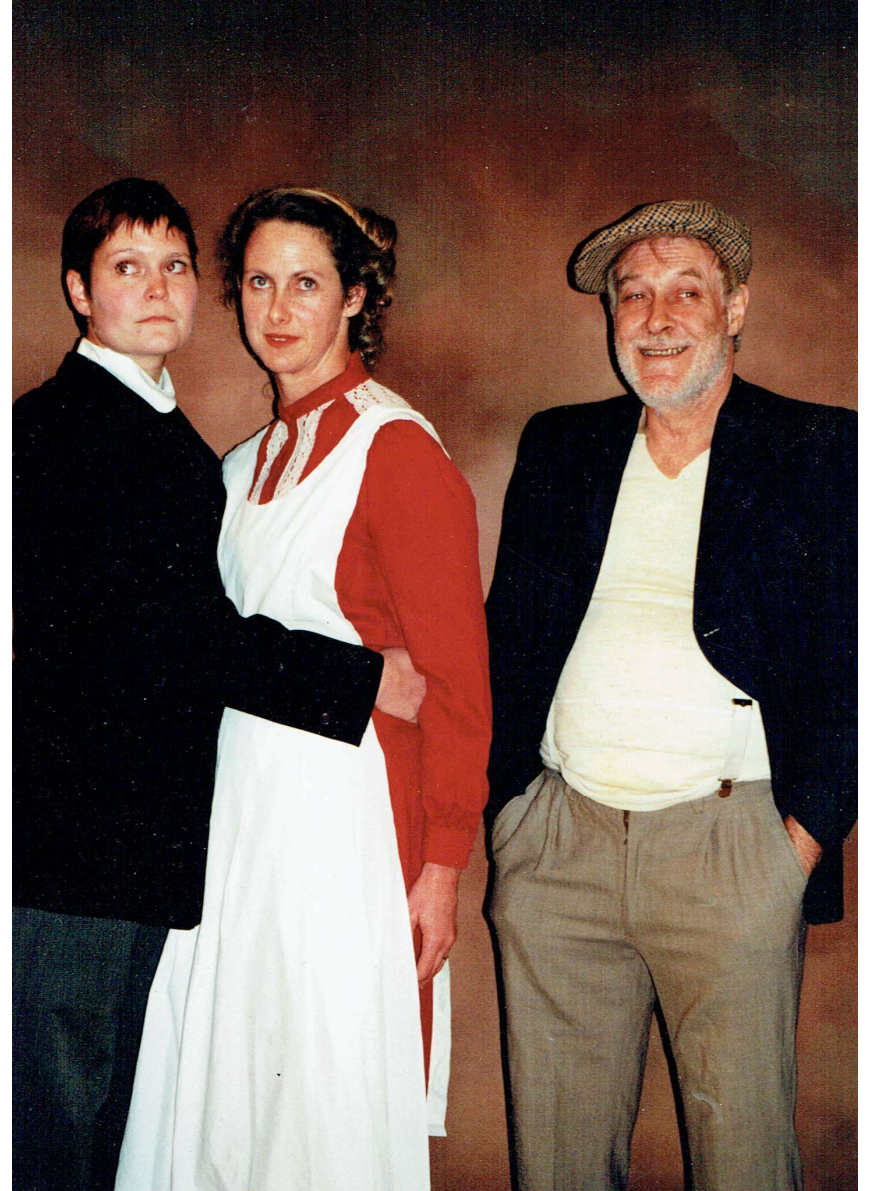
'Lorae Parry did a fantastic job.'

Eugenia is on at the Rose Centre in Belmont from 12 - 26 August.

Tickets are \$15 or \$12 (concession).
Phone (09) 445 9900 or
486 3835 for bookings.
Or email company@i4tree.co.nz



*Penny Skyrme, Ruth Flynn, Marie Ortquist
Erica Kroger*



Erica Kroger, Ruth Flynn, David Berresford