and added: "Arraoud tried to use his psychiatrists — or neurologists — of departure in his theatre work. That, of course, was a dis-bussiness-as-usual in the theatre. This, it seems to me, is the play — playwright and theatre-person: to disturb the business, to disturb the peace, the corruption, the habits, the comforts, etc., etc., active attitude: in the active one." In an address to be delivered...
SOUND AND THEATRE

Paul Charlier has recently joined the ANTHILL core group as resident composer. Previously he co-composed the music for ANTH's production of ARTAUD AND CRUELTY and worked as an actor-musician in Jean-Pierre Mignon's first production in Australia, 'ASTOUNDING OPTIMISMS'. He has been working in Sydney as a film and video tape editor, a composer and musical director for various productions, taught colour video production at the University of N.S.W., performed as an actor, played with the Sydney studio band 'Solkap' and on the forthcoming S.P.K. album, Paul's experience is a valuable asset for ANTHILL, fitting in with our plan to draw upon the talents of a variety of specialists. He has just finished composing the music and soundscape for our current production THE HAMLETMACHINE and will be working on further ANT productions in 1982.

PAUL There are fewer musicians working directly with theatre than there are with dance, films etc. Most theatre people tend towards digging up prerecorded music from the archives, though there are exceptions, such as the composer Sarah de Jong at the Nimrod. Even though the technical process of putting it all together is the same as in a studio, it is the process of creating music and sound for a performance that attracts me. In THE HAMLETMACHINE we are talking just as much care with the way the sound is reproduced in the space, for example: the sounds come from a juke box and speakers in front of and behind the audience. Although these possibilities are available in live concerts, in a performance you have the natural noises of the action and the actors' voices to build up a richer soundscape.

MICHAEL Do you feel that working with a group of people, other than musicians, such as actors, directors and designers can add an extra dimension to your music?

PAUL Well I hope that working with sound in this way adds an extra dimension to the production. Also working with people in the different fields of design and performance means that I push my work into areas and in directions that I normally wouldn't approach if I was working alone in a studio. Designers, directors and actors are usually a lot more interesting than sound engineers.

MICHAEL It is often difficult to find good musicians/composers to work in theatre, simply because when viewing an overall production, critics tend to ignore the music and concentrate upon the performers or the dialogue. In short, they often don't get recognition for their work, what made you turn to theatre as a means for expressing your music?

PAUL I think it will be more interesting working with these people because the workshops would cover recording and playback as well as the new music technology, which doesn't necessarily require musical background: a point in itself. Most of the music played on this equipment is decades behind the technology anyway and it would be great to expose people with a different sort of imagination to this equipment. It would also expose these people to possibilities and techniques that they normally don't have the opportunity to come in contact with. These workshops will ideally create the possibility for upgrading the use of sound in theatre, say on par with the amount of attention usually given to lighting and design.

an interview with Paul Charlier by Michael Watts.

MICHAEL Can you tell us a little about your work process, for example in THE HAMLETMACHINE, how did you work with the script and with Jean-Pierre? Where did your compositional ideas come from?

PAUL It starts with the mood, and that comes from both the script and from talking with Jean-Pierre, and most importantly, attending the rehearsals, giving me the opportunity to develop the music in conjunction with the rehearsal process. More than composing I see it as a matter of arranging sounds, building a sound montage out of music - both composed and treated, sound effects and treated sounds, all in different combinations. For example in 'Ballet of the Dead Women' (A scene from THE HAMLETMACHINE) the music is constructed from a tape loop of machine-gun fire, a synthesizer rhythm (the synthesiser I use does not have a keyboard), a guitar melody treated through the synthesizer, an intermittent noise which is designed to make the floor reverberate and treated screams and laughter.

MICHAEL Do you see yourself doing any other work at ANTHILL, such as sound installations?

PAUL It seems to me that the type of work ANTHILL is doing is closer to what is happening in music in Australia than most other theatre I have seen. Well, at least it is closer to the work that I want to do. ANTHILL also offers the chance to do different types of work rather than straight sound installations or Art Gallery sound performance pieces. I will be doing a piece which I would describe as sound-in-theatre rather than sound-performance. A piece in which sound, including voice, is highlighted to a greater extent than normal, and includes other taped, treated and live sounds. At first, I will experiment with a smaller late-night version and expand it later on to include sound environment aspects in, for example, the foyer and around the theatre. It will essentially be a play about sound, or around sound. I will also be running sound workshops at the theatre, concentrating on the uses of new sound technology in theatre and performance, showing people what is available now and, most importantly, how to operate it. I propose to gear the workshops towards directors, designers and technicians rather than musicians.

MICHAEL What sort of results are you hoping for, using people with little or no musical background?

PAUL I think it will be more interesting working with these people because the workshops would cover recording and playback as well as the new music technology, which doesn't necessarily require musical background: a point in itself. Most of the music played on this equipment is decades behind the technology anyway and it would be great to expose people with a different sort of imagination to this equipment. It would also expose these people to possibilities and techniques that they normally don't have the opportunity to come in contact with. These workshops will ideally create the possibility for upgrading the use of sound in theatre, say on par with the amount of attention usually given to lighting and design.

HAMLETMACHINE tech crew: Tanya Gerstle, Paul Charlier, Paul Newcombe, Bruce Keller.

photos – Brendan O'Brien
fools gallery theatre company
IMAGES FROM THE BACKGROUND
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first image

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Concessions $5.50 AETT, Actors Equity
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ANT - AUSTRALIAN NOUVEAU THEATRE
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Ministry for the Arts, and the Theatre Board,
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CALENDAR

THE HAMLET MACHINE
BY HEINER MULLER
31 MARCH - 24 APRIL

L’ETRANGER
ERIC EYCHENNE
WEDNESDAY April 28th

"LES CARACTERES"
de LA BRUYERE
ERIC EYCHENNE
THURSDAY April 29th
FRIDAY April 30th
SATURDAY May 1st
IN ENGLISH

"CHANSONS DE RIRES
CHANSONS DE PEINES"
de LA FRANCOPHONIE
le la Loire au Mississippi
TUESDAY May 4th

ANTHILL THEATRE
199 NAPIER STREET
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Telephone: 429 5843

N.B. Performances by Eric Eychenne may be arranged in schools for mid-April or early
May. For further information please contact Bernard Milley or Susan Faine.

L'ETRANGER
ERIC EYCHENNE

"CHANSONS DE RIRES
CHANSONS DE PEINES"
de LA FRANCOPHONIE
de la Loire au Mississipi

TUESDAY May 4th
8:30pm ANTHILL
2:00pm Collingwood ED Centre

N.B. All bookings for 2:00pm must
be confirmed by 27th April.
Schadenfreude
an interview with Paul Adkin

Q. Why was it written?
A. Well, I started work on the play at the turn of the decade when people were talking about the 'Desperate '80s'. Everyone seemed to be predicting the end of the world... the Nuclear threat... Nostradamus... the Jupiter effect etc. At that time 'Dying in the '80s', a not-too-subtle pun on the Skyhooks song 'Living in the Seventies', seemed like an appropriate slogan for this decade. The play was written to analyze these questions and attitudes, and events like Brixton, Punk Rock etc. Basically, to look at both the positive and negative sides of moral degeneration.

Q. Why did you change the title? What is 'Schadenfreude'?
A. 'Dying in the '80s' was just a starting title... It was actually the starting point for the play. I began with that title idea and worked from there. The first drafts were very loose structurally, and subjective. Through re-writing I wanted to objectify the original material, and create a more epic, wider world view. Schadenfreude is a German word which roughly translates as 'laughing at other people's misfortunes'. The play laughs at the world's misfortunes. I see this laughter to be positive; our greatest virtue is our ability to laugh at our problems.

Schadenfreude, as a title, also has an absurd, non-sensical value. It doesn't matter if the audience doesn't know the meaning of the title. The sound of the word in many ways expresses it's meaning. Its sound caught my imagination. The play is subtitled 'A History of a Future'. It has no setting. The play is not set in one place or time, but all places, all times. The play talks about Apocalypse, but what form this Apocalypse takes is never clear - it could be plagues, earthquakes, nuclear war, or invading armies.

Q. Who is the play written for?
A. The audience, I always kept the audience in mind. After the playreading last year at ANTHILL, most of the re-writing was to widen its scope for a wider audience. Working on dramatic levels and tensions. Decisions I make for the play and ultimately for the play's audience, have to be made, however, through what is true to myself. Otherwise you get a 'Miller and the Donkey' situation. You can't please everyone all the time. The creative dichotomy... How to entertain people? How to give audiences what they want to see without being commercial and uncommitted? And the same approach to absolute, how to express your own individuality and style without being elitist and self-indulgent? Of course the play has its own subjective message, its own torture and sense of loss. It assumes that others will be able to share this sense. Its failing will be in regard to how much of this I have assumed. It's not a pretty play, its humour is black and manic.

Q. There seems to be two sides to Apocalypse - it can seem inevitable and depressing, or its realization can help one to cope better?
A. The play certainly raises this question for me, and hopefully for the audience as well. The central characters are confronted by others characters who are preachers, prophets, and victims of a black future. However, are these preachers attitudes the cause or the effect of the problem? For example, there is a character towards the end of the play who wants to speed up the process of degeneration... 'All Hail Omega! Let's do it now, don't leave the responsibility to the kids! Let's blow up the world now!' This is extreme negativity. An extremist view. And the play deals with extreme situations. The majority of the characters may seem depressing and negative, but underneath the sadness and ugliness, hopefully, is a beauty.

Q. What kind of beauty?
A. Human virtues. The laughter, the joy of being with other people. The play displays the difficulty of this communication.

Q. The audience enjoys subjectively-which is implied within the word 'Schadenfreude'. What philosophies, and philosophers influenced the play?
A. Most of my influence, or material that I read, is classical rather than contemporary literature. As for philosophers, I've read bits of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Camus and Tolstoy. I like Tolstoy. I like the optimism of his Anarchism. In Camus' terms, 'absurdly' optimistic, because it is so idealistic. The question raised by the play is how much can idealism stand up in the 'real' world. If we can no longer be idealistic then what hope is left for the world? It is my belief that any ideal must be firmly recognized as 'absurd' before we accept it. Follow the ideal with a passion, certainly, but understand the ultimate futility of any human ideal. People's idealism has always been dangerous ground. The acceptance of ideals is probably humanities most tragic pratis. We have the resulting perversion of centuries of Christian morals, and the sadistic acts of Hitler, who displayed the absolute negativity of some very passionate ideals. Hopefully, we would never respond to an absurd ideal with the fervour that people followed and fought against Hitler. The progress of writing the play has been an 'objectification' of my own ideals. Against an idealist in the play you will usually find a cynic. The idea is to avoid dogma, so that the play doesn't become a didactic piece indulging in my own visions. I don't want to give the audience an answer to any problem. The
answers must be found by the audience not by the play. The play's function is to ask questions and its aims are to enable the audience to desire to answer these questions.

Q. It appears that the dynamics of the play - its tensions and energies - come from a duality... The idealism versus the cynicism, the positivity versus the negativity.

A. True. Another image in this mode is the Patriarch/Matriarch one. I was not aware of it when writing the play, yet in the rehearsal process it was being continually discovered. It was written subconsciously, and is now being revealed.

Q. I suppose that is one of the delights - and possibly dangers - of directing your own written work. Your last project - The Jack and Jill Story - was also written and directed by you.

A. The decision to direct plays I've written was a hard one. Directing one's own script can lead to self-indulgence, I try to remain objective. It is important that the actors make their own creative decisions and discoveries so that the work can be refined not through one set of eyes alone. The group members are all very diverse in their backgrounds and experiences. Everyone seems to have very different reasons for working on the piece. This can be very unhealthy, although it does cause many problems. I find directing my own plays very stimulating and a good learning experience. It is productive and beneficial to the work.

As a writer, you have to face what your words are saying. Directing puts you on a collision course with the audience. The writer/director must look through their eyes as well as be creative. More so than if one is doing one of the two jobs. Doing both intensifies the writing, the decisions and the responsibilities. As a writer there's the opportunity to blame the director's misunderstanding if the play doesn't work. Doing both roles doesn't allow you this excuse.

Q. Again, duality. One observes energies that arise from tackling the opposite problems of writer and director.

A. The Jack and Jill Story was very much much much much concerned with opposites. It dealt with the masculine and feminine side of people as opposite forces, and the struggle to find the balance in between. As with music... the music I enjoy most. The music I find most interesting is that which is able to create a discordant harmony... Opposites again. The idea of discord is very important in Schadenfreude: positive/negative, optimistic/pessimistic, maternal/paternal, nihilistic/idealistic.

Q. There must be a certain joy for a director, watching subconscious elements of one's own writing revealed through a rehearsal process.

A. Often an artist's work is exhibited, and the audience interpret it very differently from the artist. As a writer, it is only afterwards that I think on the meaning. But such a process can never compare to a rehearsal period. In rehearsal you get a very direct line of 'return views' from the actors. There is a very close involvement with the work - it is always with you. The process of creation is therefore: Writing - Analysis - Direction - Further Analysis from Cast - Production - Final Audience Analysis and then further writing. One learns to share. To give and take, to teach and learn. And I'm learning a lot from the cast. There are some actors in the cast who have much more direction experience than I have had.

Q. The Jack and Jill Story has quite a history.

A. Yes, it's had two productions in Melbourne - once at La Mama and once at ANTHILL, and it has been performed at the Mill Theatre Geelong, and at Queensland University. During March the play toured to Adelaide for the 1982 Festival of the Arts. The Queensland production came after a student saw the ANTHILL production during the 1981 FAST Festival. With the exception of the Queensland production, all have involved the same personnel, and we have reworked the script on each occasion. It's my philosophy to be constantly reworking and searching.

Q. And where does the audience come into this?

A. The inspiration to change from performance to performance, comes from the audience. Most changes were influenced by audience feedback.

Q. How did the productions of The Jack and Jill Story differ?

A. The production at La Mama was entirely different to the Adelaide one, yet no less valuable. Certain points were raised in the La Mama production, but then the piece was 'just born'. When we went to Geelong we learnt the necessities of reworking and how important the atmosphere of a space is. For the ANTHILL performances we aimed to add something new every night. I don't know that the La Mama production was any less valuable than the show at ANTHILL. As I said, at La Mama it was a baby. The audience should recognize the youth of a work.

Q. But couldn't this be seen as a justification for productions?

A. Perhaps. But the exciting thing about a new work is that it is growing. Its like talking to a child and then talking to an adult. One can get just as much out of talking to a seven year old child as they can from a thirty five year old if one accepts the age of the seven year old and aborbs what they say accordingly. One can learn from their simplicity and enjoy the process of growth. Similarly with a genuine and sincere work in progress.

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