

## Murray Bramwell's Reviews

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*Adam Cook, State Theatre Company's Artistic Director for 2005, removes the veil.*

It is midday on a Friday and the crowd is gathered in the Dunstan Playhouse

for the launch of the State Theatre Company's 2005 season. There's the usual mix of subscribers, sponsors, arts heavies and media, as well as actors, techs, artisans, luvvies and hopefuls, all with plenty to say about what should happen next for State Theatre, Adelaide and, of course, themselves. And this year, all eyes are on new Artistic Director, Adam Cook.

A free-lance director of distinction for the past fifteen years, Adam Cook has worked with all the state companies, including during the Chris Westwood years, our own. He has had a literary education - his adaptation of Patrick White's *The Aunts Story* played in several festivals - and is a graduate director from NIDA. His work in musicals and opera includes *The Ghost Wife*, *High Society*, *La Boheme* and *Carmen* (both for Oz Opera) and *Midnite* for Windmill and the Melbourne Festival.

To a fanfare of grooves and beats, Cook takes to the podium like a man whose moment has arrived. He is relaxed, urbane and assured and stands on the Playhouse stage like he belongs there. Introducing the new State logo, a clever little design from Simone Linehan, he talks about brands, visibility, and punch in the market place. It is marketing-speak but he is droll about it. The logo is like the airline safety demonstration, he quips, a whistle and light to attract attention.

And attention is what he wants for his season for next year. Anticipating the pressure to hire local talent, he hits the ground running by announcing that State's first show, and contribution to *Come Out*, is Gogol's darkly funny *The Government Inspector* featuring an all SA cast, including clever comics Paul Blackwell, Michael Habib and Geoff Revell.

After the successful season of *The Duck Shooter* this year, Brink Productions will return with a co-production of an early Brecht play *Drums in the Night* to be followed by *Influence*, a new work by David Williamson about a

radio shock jock. It features popular actors John Waters and Zoe Carides and is a Sydney Theatre Company production.

Two recent works likely to create flashpoints are *Frozen*, a play about a serial killer confronted by the mother of one of his victims, and *The Goat, or Who is Sylvia?* a man meets goat, man falls in love with goat story by Edward Albee. *Frozen* has had its controversies recently with charges that the UK writer Bryony Lavery has taken dialogue from a *New Yorker* article. She's saying nothing, leaving her characters to speak for themselves. As for *The Goat*, "it will polarise audiences," says Cook, "but that's a good thing." Adding - "there will be complaint letters. I've already written some of them."

Solo shows will also feature - all likely to make big impressions. Carolyn O'Connor will present *Bombshells*, which has already made a very large noise in Melbourne, Edinburgh and a recent season in the West End. Cook himself will direct Max Cullen in *The Daylight Atheist*, a New Zealand play about an Irish father by the talented comic writer Tom Scott. Also, as an adjunct to the season, Steven Berkoff returns to Australia with a program of Shakespeare's nasties - Iago and the Macbeths included.

Two other productions also directed by Cook are the children's opera, *Midnite* based on Randolph Stow's novel and, for the season finale, Michael Frayn's witty farce about a not-so-witty farce, *Noise's Off*.

Adam Cook is making a very good impression. From his gracious public tribute to predecessor, Rosalba Clemente to his readiness to meet and greet, he is reading the landscape well. Cook also recognises that this job has come at just the right time for him. He's here to live and work, and has even bought a house here. But his thoughts are already on other houses - preferably full ones.