



BANBURY CROSS PLAYERS



Convicts leaving for Botany Bay - Unknown artist c. 1790

Our Country's Good

by Timberlake Wertenbaker
based on *The Playmaker*
by Thomas Keneally

2nd - 5th March 1994

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CAST

ARTHUR PHILLIP, Captain RN, Governor-in-Chief of NS Wales Paul Sleet
JOHN WISEHAMMER

ROBBIE ROSS, Major of Marines Peter Bloor
KETCH FREEMAN

DAVID COLLINS, Captain of Marines, Advocate General Bob Clement
ROBERT SIDEWAY

WATKIN TENCH, Captain of Marines Jeremy Turner
JOHN ARSCOTT

JEMMY CAMPBELL, Captain of Marines Tony Neale
MEG LONG

Reverend JOHNSON Julie Robinson
MARY BRENHAM

GEORGE JOHNSTON, Lieutenant of Marines Janice Lake
DUCKLING SMITH

WILL DAWES, Lieutenant of Marines Jane Shanahan
LIZ MORDEN

RALPH CLARK, 2nd Lieutenant of Marines Chris Lawrence

WILLIAM FADDY, 2nd Lieutenant of Marines Mary Braybrook
DABBY BRYANT

HARRY BREWER, Boatswain RN, Provost Marshal Roger Pinkham

AN ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIAN Rob Pinkham
CONVICT

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆
SINGER Louise Fransella
VOICE OVER Alick Macnair

The play takes place in Sydney, Australia in 1788/89.

There will be an interval of 20 minutes.

Act One

- One **The Voyage Out**
- Two **A Lone Aboriginal Australian Describes the Arrival of the First Convict Fleet in Botany Bay on January 20, 1788**
- Three **Punishment**
- Four **The Loneliness of Men**
- Five **An Audition**
- Six **The Authorities Discuss the Merits of the Theatre**
- Seven **Harry and Duckling go Rowing**
- Eight **The Women Learn Their Lines**
- Nine **Ralph Clark Tries to Kiss His Dear Wife's Picture**
- Ten **John Wiseshammer and Mary Brenham Exchange Words**
- Eleven **The First Rehearsal**

Act Two

- One **Visiting Hours**
- Two **His Excellency Exhorts Ralph**
- Three **Harry Brewer Sees the Dead**
- Four **The Aborigine Muses on the Nature of Dreams**
- Five **The Second Rehearsal**
- Six **The Science of Hanging**
- Seven **The Meaning of Plays**
- Eight **Duckling Makes Vows**
- Nine **A Love Scene**
- Ten **The Question of Liz**
- Eleven **Backstage**



Twenty per cent of the children in a certain elementary school were reported to their teachers as showing unusual potential for intellectual growth. The names of these twenty per cent were drawn by means of a table of random numbers, which is to say that the names were drawn out of a hat. Eight months later these unusual or "magic" children showed significantly greater gains in IQ than did the remaining children who had not been singled out for the teachers' attention. The change in the teachers' expectations regarding the intellectual performance of these allegedly "special" children led to an actual change in the intellectual performance of these randomly selected children who were described as more interesting, as showing greater intellectual curiosity, and as happier.

Pygmalion in the Classroom - H. Rosenthal & L. Jacobsen

Note: The information on these pages was printed in the original programme.

REALITY – Many of the events and characters portrayed in Our Country's Good are based on historical fact ...

DABBY BRYANT - The Great Escape

Dabby (alias Mary) Bryant had been sentenced to be hanged at the Lent Assizes at Exeter in 1786 for highway robbery in that she feloniously assaulted Agnes Lakeman, spinster, put her in corporal fear and danger of her life, and feloniously and violently took from her person one silk bonnet value twelve pence and other goods value eleven shillings and eleven pence, her property. She was later reprieved and then sentenced to seven years transportation.

Within twelve months of the performance of The Recruiting Officer, she - together with her husband, her two small children and seven other convicts - stole a boat and managed in ten weeks to sail north to the island of Timor in the East Indies - a distance of over 3,000 miles. Her husband and children died of fever on the voyage. She was re-arrested and sent back to England for trial as an escaped felon.

In London, her case was taken up by James Boswell and, as a result of his efforts, she became somewhat of a celebrity - known in the press as "The Girl from Botany Bay". Finally the Home Secretary responded to Boswell's persistent plea that a just government could not return this bereaved heroine to a thief-colony, and Dabby was granted an unconditional pardon in May 1793. Boswell then settled an annuity of £10 a year on her and she went back to live in Cornwall.

A quaint and touching souvenir of this episode survives in the Boswell archives at Yale ... a small packet of wild tea leaves which Dabby brought back with her from Sydney and gave to her benefactor.

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I sentence you to I know not what; perhaps to storm and shipwreck, perhaps to be massacred by savages, perhaps to be devoured by wild beasts. Away! Take your chance; perish or prosper; suffer or enjoy. I rid myself of the sight of you!

Jeremy Bentham

These words (of a fictional judge passing sentence of transportation) well express the Eighteenth Century attitude to this form of punishment. The Courts were becoming ever more reluctant to hang people for seemingly trivial offences and transportation - in the early part of the Century, to America - seemed the ideal way of getting rid of criminals. With the Declaration of Independence in 1776 all this came to an end.

As a result, the convict population grew alarmingly in spite of the fact that the Courts, faced with the choice between hanging and acquittal, were becoming more and more resigned to the latter. This increase in acquittals gave rise to a perception that law and order were breaking down. Faced with a public outcry and not knowing what to do, the government acted like all governments in similar circumstances. They adopted certain measures – such as the introduction of prison hulks - which could all be characterised as "too little, too late".

In this situation the scheme to send convicts to newly discovered Australia, provided an opportunity which was too good to miss. Nobody knew anything about the territory, but that did not deter the authorities from sending 750 men, women and children 15,000 miles across the globe to start a new life there.

An Eighteenth Century Dream

Political expediency was, undoubtedly, a major consideration in the founding of the new penal colony, but many involved in the project acted with higher motives. In the first place, it was genuinely felt that the re-introduction of transportation provided a punishment more humane than the only other practicable alternative - hanging. This was appreciated by many of the convicts; those, that is, who were not overwhelmed by the immense and incomprehensible distances which were to separate them from their nearest and dearest. Furthermore, many saw the project as a genuine opportunity to form a new and model community on the far side of the world and, in their idealism, they did not find it bizarre that criminals should be forced into becoming the founding fathers of a modern Utopia.

In the event, the scheme went awry not through political cynicism nor naive idealism but bureaucratic incompetence. The original settlers were absurdly ill-chosen for the task ahead of them. The colony would have to raise its own crops in unknown soil ... there was one professional gardener and he was a twenty-year-old apprentice. What little was known of the territory indicated that fish would be an abundant source of food ... there was one fisherman. The first major task would be the provision of housing ... there were two bricklayers and six carpenters. And this when, by all accounts, the criminal classes offered the broadest possible spectrum of trades.

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Criminal Records

ROBERT SIDEWAY - Watchmaker. Theft of property value Twenty-eight shillings: Seven years transportation. Seven months later, found at large still within the realm of Great Britain: Death, commuted on condition of transportation for life.

JOHN WISEHAMMER - No trade. Stealing snuff from Messrs. Ricketts & Load: Seven years transportation.

JOHN ARSCOTT - Carpenter. Burglary and breaking and entering the dwellinghouse of Phillip Polkinghorn and then the house of George Thomas, there stealing watches and tobacco: Seven years transportation.

MARY BRENHAM - Servant. Feloniously stealing stuffed petticoats, a pair of stays, four and a half yards of cloth, one waistcoat, one cap, one pair of cotton stockings, one pair of nankeen breeches and one cloth coat, the property of John Kennedy - value Forty shillings: Seven years transportation.

DUCKLING (supposed name ANN) SMITH - No occupation. Stealing silverware value forty shillings: Death, commuted to Seven years transportation.

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THE VOYAGE

13 May 1787 – Depart Portsmouth

3 June 1787 – Teneriffe

5 August 1787 – Rio de Janeiro

13 October 1787 – Cape Town

20 January 1788 Botany Bay

Total: 8 months 7 days – 15,900 miles

Note: The information on these pages was printed in the original programme.

THE RECRUITING OFFICER

by George Farquhar : first produced 1706

The play deals with the humours of recruiting in a country town - Shrewsbury. Captain Plume makes love to women in order to secure their followers as recruits. Kite, his resourceful sergeant, assumes the character of an astrologer for the same purpose. Silvia, the daughter of the local magistrate - Justice Balance - is in love with Plume but has promised not to marry him without her father's consent. She runs away from home disguised as a man, gets herself arrested for scandalous conduct, is brought before her father and delivered over by him to Plume, as a recruit. Captain Brazen, a rival recruiting offer, who boasts of battles and friends in every quarter of the globe, endeavours to marry the rich Melinda, but finds himself fobbed off with her maid.

In *OUR COUNTRY'S GOOD*, the cast is:-

CAPTAIN PLUME	Ralph Clarke
<i>(taking over from Henry Kable)</i>	
SERGEANT KITE	John Arscott
CAPTAIN BRAZEN	John Wischhammer
JUSTICE BALANCE	James Freeman
SILVIA	Mary Brenham
MELINDA	Liz Morden
LUCY, her maid	Duckling Smith

PRODUCTION TEAM

DIRECTOR	Tony Neale
STAGE MANAGER	Dennis Haward
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGERS	Sue May & Rob Pinkham
LIGHTING	John Hicks
SOUND	Mark Neale
SET DESIGN	Tony Neale
SET CONSTRUCTION	Richard Ashby & Members of the Society
MAKE-UP	Peggy Lester
COSTUME	Jane Shanahan
PROPS	Gill Huband
FRONT OF HOUSE	Dave Ellis
BOX OFFICE	Alan Woodruff
PROGRAMME	Mark Neale
PUBLICITY	John Brine & Graham Wilton

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Worcester - **Programme Information:** *The Fatal Shore*, Robert Hughes (Pan).
The Playmaker, Thomas Keneally.