

ST PAUL'S COLLEGE | WADDY PERFORMANCE CENTRE

MAY 4 2024

L.D.S.W.

HELLO POSSUMS! - VERY AUSTRALIAN! WE MISS YOU BARRY HUMPHRIES

Dear Warden,

We are clearly in a new age of college ENTERTAINMENT EXCELLENCE.

May I congratulate you and your team on a great fun afternoon.

May I also adopt and not repeat all the formal things that have been said.

Here almost goes some **NOEL COWARD:**

SINGS:

“ Don't put your **son** on the stage

Mrs Ve-Ve Waddy

“Don't put your **son** on the Stage!

“He's a bit of an ugly duckling,

I think we must agree...”

It is fabulous to be back on stage at College, and on its first permanent one!

Isn't this whole complex absolutely wonderful?

I hope you admire it as much as I do, and they can always change the name!

I have been very lucky the powers that be chose to use my **surname**, and wisely they avoided my various names when I was in College.

If you look at my VALETE in the Pauline for 1961, this centre could have been called: The “**Wing Commander Waddlesworth Hall**”.

With a dig at my nose and my role as Chapel Warden, and St Thomas à Beckett, King William's Archbishop of Canterbury it could have been, someone kindly wrote of me,

“**The St. Thomas à Peckit**” Hall. The king had his head cut off! That would deal with my proboscis once and for all!

Mind you there was even worse:

The **Grand-Nose** Hall;

The **Shnorkel** Hall;

The **Jabberwaddy** Hall; or

The **Ivan Enormovich Proboski** Hall!

THE THEATRE

I have long loved Theatre: it, too, always rebranded me.

[Of course?] in my only musical, at the age of 12 I was a treble in *The Pirates of Penzance*, and one of General Stanley's “**Elderly Ugly Daughters**”.

The next year, aged 13, I starred in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* as one of three nameless **WITCHES**: “*BUBBLE- BUBBLE*”, “*TOIL*” and “*TROUBLE*”.

There followed in **1954** a role as a busy-body old mother in 1400.

Do you remember Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who, misquoting the real title of the play by Christopher Fry, proclaimed of herself: *“This Lady’s not for **Turning**”*.

I was the mother figure, **Margaret Devise**, in the play *“The Lady’s not for **Burning**”*, who UNEXPECTEDLY brought the house down with the line, (apologies chaplain! This one played the violin!) *“The chaplain is **tuning his G-String by the (Church) Bells**”*.

GREAT PAUL’S ACTORS AND ENTERTAINERS

Let me just choose two internationally renowned: **John Gaden** and **Peter Cousens**.

YOU CAN LEARN SO MUCH ACTING.

I know our Paulines will greatly benefit from it. These include **audibility** and **timing**. Sometimes there are side benefits!

In 1957 my last School role, in *The Eagle Has Two Heads* I played a supportive role to Christopher, the elder son of Dr Felix Arnott, Warden of this College. Good review with small contribution. But Felix liked it. Later that year Felix invited me to lunch in the Lodge and invited me to come to College.

I skip a string of events, but here I came, and **Here** I have never really left!

I found Felix really loved the Drama here and fully supported the **MUMMERS**. While the College play that year of 1958 was Kingsley’s *“Detective Story,”* all males as policemen in profusion. As freshers Tony Albert, Will Wentworth and I had been in the police lock-up in Phillip Street earlier that year, I suspect we kept very low profiles.

We were the only three of the thirty Freshers trying to defeat premier Cahill opening his Cahill Expressway in his own name. In the end we only cut halfway through the ribbon before he did!

In Felix’s 1959 production of **Shakespeare’s** rarely-performed *Troilus and Cressida*. My longest role ever was as **Ulysses**, who talks on and on but with some memorable lines such as:

*“Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back,
Wherein he puts alms for oblivion, ...”*

“One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.”

The Sydney Morning Herald’s Review, after citing the long historical argument as to whether the play had been written as a tragedy or a comedy, decided the issue:

“Dr Arnott’s production established the play is neither a tragedy or a comedy: it is a farce!”

I had my longest role ever, as the play’s longest speaking character is **Ulysses**, a garrulous old goat, who never stops talking.

Sounding familiar today? Do I hear you saying: “Casting to type”?

The 1960 Mummies’ production was **Brendan Behan’s**, *“The Quare Fellow”* (which in Ireland means one about to be hung). Written by a former long-term prisoner himself, I cannot recall if I was a Priest or a prisoner!

All I recall now is the repeated line from an Irish prison: *“Get a bucket and bail yourself out.”*

In my final year of **1961**, Mummers chose **WINTERSET**, written by famous American Playwright **Maxwell Anderson**, which reflects on faith, truth, justice, love, and duty. It is a verse drama written largely in poetic form. The tragedy includes **Esdras**, a kindly and **Judaic-philosophising** old **rabbi**.

I enjoyed being that rabbi. But like **Ulysses**, he never stopped talking!

I was again cast to type I hear you say!

I haven't changed much, have I?

Mummers still flourishes and this hall is made for it, from stage or in the round. I believe the acoustics will be far easier to handle than our Great Hall.

LET ME turn to THIS CENTRE'S MUSICAL PROSPECTS

Last year the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust awarded a very valuable scholarship to one of our outstanding residential Paulines as he completes his PhD in music. As Chairman, may I say, in the last two and a half decades we have awarded scholarships and grants of well over 1 million dollars to hundreds of musicians.

As a charity we fully support this venture. We have offered a piano and some highly sensitive microphones. We record the further enthusiasms of our Board, and our General Manager, Mr Warwick Ross, to help, promote, record and place on the internet whatever merits such treatment.

It is obvious the College has come a long way from me chortling in the choir for four years. Before my cancer operation drastically affected my hearing, Edwina and I especially loved the opera. Today's superb college choir says it all.

VICTORIANA!

As for **VICTORIANA!**, I was forced to found and under-write it myself for the first few years. I could tell you some stories about my running of it overall, and as Master of Ceremonies from 1964 until my final night in 1998.

That year of 1998 was the only one conducted by a Judge, and after I was appointed from 1 July 1998, I felt I should honour my obligations to the show, and then perhaps abandon boy-hood. I think it's called "*Growing up LATE*"!

From the very beginning, we had superb College accompanists in **Chris Burrell**, **Bill Brooks** and international organist **David Drury**.

During the first two years of the show they gave me the song ***The Man Who Broke The Bank at Monte-Carlo***. Then they told me it had a tune!

I should change. So, for the next 30 years even I could manage ***Two Lovely Black Eyes***.

I am so delighted that **VICTORIANA!** still "***Draws 'em in***", as we might say! As I always did, I highly recommend the wines -any wines – before, during and after!

This a fabulous facility is a triumph for the College, and for all our Colleges, and maybe, if there are dates available, for the wider University. That we have such a place for our residents who are talented in song, jazz, classical music, bands, dance and what-have-you.

Our choir is now one of the finest. Carols and evensong are a complete inspiration.

Moreover, I believe this Centre will offer the ready opportunity to hear new, contemporary creations/compositions from within this College and all parts and cultures of Australia.

DEBATING

I have always loved debating. I guess this Hall will lend itself to Oxford-style public debates as well as the traditional ones. It is a wonderful way to meet people and enrich views other than your own. Everyone should try it, as only courage and practice can enrich many people afraid to open their mouths!

CONCLUSION

2024 is my 67th year associated with our College, from every one of which I have derived great happiness. With nearly half a century spent as a Fellow, I am deeply indebted to those who made it possible by re-electing me every time and especially to: **Edwina** my wife for all she has done to assist both me and the College; and also my mother, Ve Waddy, who was Hon Secretary of the Women's Organisation for 30 years.

So, too, my three daughters, Edwina, Charlotte and Antonia, who each chose **Frensham** and the **Women's College** to board, making so many friends, many invited today. I cannot guess where my grandchildren, **Georgina** and **James**, also here today, may complete their education!

Although I have spoken in the old State and Federal Parliaments, launched several books, addressed many Speech Days smashed Champagne on a few boats and yachts, this is the first facility I have been invited to open and name. It evokes a deeply emotional experience: joy, happiness, humility, gratitude, disbelief and honour.

I need a bit of help! I ask everyone present to stand and **WE** will all do it **together:**

WE now declare The Waddy Performance Centre open!