

Celebrating 50 Years



LILYDALE ATHENAEUM THEATRE
COMPANY INC

BACKSTAGE NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2026

SPOTLIGHT ON... KATIE-JANE AMEY



From actor to director to set-painter extraordinaire, Katie-Jane Amey is a very popular name here at the Lilydale Athenaeum Theatre. For this month's issue of *BACKSTAGE* we are delighted to write about the multitalented and multifaceted work of Katie-Jane.

First joining our company in 2003, Katie-Jane has a 23 year history at the LATC, covering almost every department of the performing arts that you can imagine.

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SEASON 3 - 2026: SLEUTH

We are halfway through 2026 and our third production of the year, Anthony Shaffer's **SLEUTH**, directed by Ian Frost, will open on **Thursday, 2nd July**.

Anthony Shaffer was an English playwright, screenwriter, novelist, barrister, and advertising executive. His best remembered play, **SLEUTH**, received the Tony Award for Best Play in its Broadway production.

SLEUTH finds us in a cozy English country house, owned by celebrated mystery writer Andrew Wyke, for the ultimate game of cat and mouse. He has invited Milo Tindle, a young rival, to his house.

Milo shares not only Wyke's love of mystery writing, but also shares his wife Marguerite, and has come to lay claim to her. Revenge is devised and murders are plotted as the two plan the ultimate whodunnit.

You may know **SLEUTH** from either of its film adaptations, in 1972 and 2007, both of which star Michael Caine.

Caine played Milo Tindle opposite Laurence Olivier's Andrew Wyke in the 1972 film; each being nominated for an Academy Award for their performances. In the 2007 film, Caine took the role of Andrew Wyke, and Jude Law took Caine's previous role of Tindle.

Intrigued? Don't miss your chance to see this thrilling mystery and book your tickets now.

Visit our website to book online: **lilydaleatc.com** or phone our very helpful and friendly Box Office staff on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Fridays on **03 9735 1777**



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2026 - SEASON 2

THE FEMALE OF THE SPECIES

BY JOANNA MURRAY-SMITH, DIRECTED BY FIONA CARTER

REVIEWS FROM OUR AUDIENCE

Wow! What a brilliant performance with fast dialogue, great acting and so many amusing quips. My friend and I thoroughly enjoyed Sunday afternoon's performance. Fabulous! - Betty

Wonderful, laugh out loud entertainment!
Fabulous cast and direction. Thank you!
- Geraldine

Brilliant! Amazing cast and hilarious script!
- Pam

Absolutely brilliant! - Belinda

Angela was fab! So incredible! Adam was equally hilarious! Love the set and effects!
Thanks for a fun theatre experience again!
- Chloe

Fantastic, and very fast moving. So many sayings that had a "double meaning" - I loved it. I'd like to come again. - Kerry

Great surprise ending. - Helen

Hilarious. Intellectual, yes, but easy to enjoy and a fun reflection of societal changes over recent decades. Loved Tess & Bryan (individually) the most! - Sam

I thought the actors were very talented, the script good and the delivery excellent.
Cheers - Margaret

Lots of fun, witty and clever. The characters were all fun & interesting. Love the surprise ending. - Francesca

Watching Angela Glennie for as long as I can remember. Today she has surpassed herself. Can't wait to read the newsletter. Eleven out of ten. - Trish

The acting was amazing! It's fun! I loved the actors. Their acting is cool! Very funny.
- Michelle



Photography by Steve Tanner



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AND THE WINNER IS...

For writing a review of **THE FEMALE OF THE SPECIES** the winner of the bottle of sparkling wine is:

Betty - Congratulations!!

"Wow! What a brilliant performance with fast dialogue, great acting and so many amusing quips. My friend and I thoroughly enjoyed Sunday afternoon's performance. Fabulous!"

Write a review when you next attend one of our shows and you'll be in with a chance to win a bottle of sparkling wine!
You never know unless you give it a go!

HOW OUR THEATRE CAME TO BE

from April 2025 issue

The Athenaeum building was built in 1888 and was used as a general-purpose hall from that time to 1975; but by 1974 the building had fallen into neglect, becoming practically dormant. Rumours spread that the council may recommend the hall to be condemned.

Fatefully, what was to save the Athenaeum Hall was a natural disaster that set in place a chain of events that would change the life of the building forever.

Cyclone Tracey hit Darwin on Christmas Day of 1974 and all of Australia wanted to help with relief efforts. Russell Johnson and Geoff Page, two members of Maroondah Players Theatre Company, began looking at ways of aiding the appeal.

"Geoff was in a play called 'Angels in Love' with the Maroondah Players and we approached them to put on that play at the Athenaeum Hall for the appeal. But it was so bad you couldn't do anything there, so we ended up using the hall at Kilsyth for the fundraiser." - Russell Johnson

Russell was inspired by putting on this event—the success of this play was evidence that there was an interest in live theatre in the area.

It led him to believe that there was an appreciation amongst the local audiences to have local theatrical productions on a regular basis.

At this same time the arts scene was being revitalised, beginning with the Whitlam government placing a greater importance on arts with subsidies and grants available to arts groups.

With this growing arts scene, Russell and Geoff decided to host a meeting in August 1975 at their shop *The Gift Box* in Main Street Lilydale to form a Lilydale Theatre Club. Thirty people turned up! The aim of the theatre club would be to develop local talent and bring amateur and professional groups to Lilydale.

The group found that the only place that could offer theatre facilities was the Athenaeum Hall. The Hall was at this time desperate for repair, so the Board of Management welcomed the theatre club's involvement with open arms. As a result, the group decided to call themselves the "Athenaeum Theatre Company".

The Shire Council had recently freshly painted the outside of the building, however the inside of the building was in a shocking state. It soon became evident that a lot of time, effort and money would be needed to successfully mount shows. With fund-raising and the support from the local community armed with buckets, brooms, paint brushes, and cob-web catchers, they were able to successfully mount "Swap" by Living Theatre and made a clear profit of \$500.

This \$500 profit marked the start of a thriving, award winning theatre in Lilydale.



Theatre Founders **Russell Johnson** and **Geoff Page**.

Top image - 1985 Plaque Unveiling (**Russell Johnson**, centre)

Bottom image - 1997 Australia Day Awards (Left to right - **Russell Johnson** and **Geoff Page**)



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THIS TIME FIFTY YEARS AGO

IT'S THE LILYDALE ATHENAEUM'S GOLDEN JUBILEE!

2026 marks an incredible milestone for us here at the Lilydale Athenaeum Theatre Company, we are fortunate to be celebrating our Golden Jubilee – 50 years of theatre. Whether you've been attending for one year or fifty, we thank you for your patronage and support of community theatre!

In celebration of our Golden Jubilee, let's look back on the LATC's first productions from 1976.

SEASON 1 - THE ANNIVERSARY - BY BILL MACILWRAITH, DIRECTED BY GEOFF PAGE



The Cast of **THE ANNIVERSARY** – John Broadway as Tom, Beverly Rowan as Shirley, Roger Hum as Henry, Margaret Wellington as Karen, Gerald Stock as Terry, and Flip Brudenell as Mum.

SEASON 2 - UNCLE HARRY - BY THOMAS JOB, DIRECTED BY DOUG BENNETT



The Cast of **UNCLE HARRY** – Sheila Fallon as Hester Quincey, Flip Brudenell as Lettie Quincey, Geoff Page as Harry Quincey, Vera Brooke as Nona, Lois Perry as Lucy Forrest, Doug Kelly as George Waddy, John Gould as Mr. Jenkins, Margaret Wellington as Miss Phipps, Roger Hum as D'Arcy, Gerald Stock as Albert, Kevin Harrop as Jimmy, Ricky Why as Mr. Blake, David Freeman as Ben, John Elliott as The Governor, Jim Brudenell as Mr. Burton, Mark McAtamney as Eccles, and Kaye Butler as Roberts.

SEASON 3 - SAY WHO YOU ARE - BY KEITH WATERHOUSE AND WILLIS HALL, DIRECTED BY FLIP BRUDENELL



The Cast of **SAY WHO YOU ARE** – Dick Tyler as David Lord, Jan Mill as Sarah Lord, Pat Robbins as Valarie Pitman, and Bob Walden-Mills as Stuart Wheeler.

SEASON 4 - LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET - BY H C HAZELWOOD, DIRECTED BY FLIP BRUDENELL



The Cast of **LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET** – Kaye Butler as Phoebe Marks, Gerald Stock as Luke Marks, Valerie Hunne as Lady Audley, Richard Tyler as Sir. Michael Audley, Marion Jelly as Alicia Audley, Robert Bramble as Robert Audley, Roger Hum as George Tallboys. Madames – Carmel Ryan, Rita Sandfort, Jean Ledgend, Jean Evans, Pam Burville, Carol Pearce, Cheryl Herry, Rosemary Mynard, Bobbie Nicol, Pam Max, Ruth Giddings, Judith Tinney, Val Reilly, Margaret Carey, Judy Hagan, Edith Murray, Lois Lancashire, Kay Lancashire. Misses – Gloria Green, Eleanor Herry, Caroline Bernard. Monsieurs – Ian Davis, Frank Tinney, Michael Lancashire, Allan Lancashire, Peter Lancashire, Max Makin, Keith Pickett, Tony Aspinall, Leo Henry, Mr. Campbell, Paul Mynard, Don Bucci. Little Girls in Blue – Sharon Kelly, Miss Bailey. Soloist – Edith Murray, Margaret Bishop. Youthful dancers – Elizabeth Angus, Kate Brett, Clare Cox, Janette Gould, Erin Hoiles, Marilyn Lagerway, Kathrin Marshall, Angela Ralphs. Solo performed by – Valerie Thomas.

50TH CELEBRATIONS

On Saturday 16th May, the theatre welcomed honoured guests to a celebration of our Golden Jubilee – 50 years of the Lilydale Athenaeum Theatre.

VIPs included Federal MP Aaron Violi, Shire of Yarra Ranges Mayor Richard Higgins, President of the Lilydale RSL Bill Dobson, Historian and Lilydale RSL Secretary Anthony McAleer, Yarra Ranges Regional Museum's Curator Madeline Reece and Curator of Collections Ruth McLean, VDL President Susan Rundle, and the Lilydale Athenaeum Theatre Board Members and Life Members.

Guests enjoyed light refreshments and birthday cake, as well as a beautiful array of live music provided by pianist Nathan Mancarella.

A heartfelt speech was delivered by theatre president Alan Burrows. Highlights of which included a look back at the history of the company—211 productions and over half a million people through the doors—as well as a reflection on the lives of Russell Johnson and Geoff Page, and Alan's personal journey at the Athenaeum up to present day as president.

It also saw the unveiling of a portrait of Russell Johnson and Geoff Page, our beloved founders of the Lilydale Athenaeum Theatre Company. The portrait, painted by Yarra Valley artist Lou Primavera, was unveiled by Cr Richard Higgins, Mayor of the Shire of Yarra Ranges, in a small ceremony during the celebration.



Above (L-R) – Emily Carter & Alan Burrows; Kevin Trask, Paul Glennie & Nicholas Ryan; Cr Richard Higgins, Lou Primavera & Bill Dobson; Ruth McLean, Alex Marshall-Roth, Fiona Carter & Madeline Reece.

Right Column (L-R) – Alan Burrows; Nathan Mancarella; 50th Birthday Cake from Yarra Valley Cake Company; Aaron Violi & Alan Burrows; Alan Burrows & Lou Primavera; Cr Richard Higgins; the LATC Board of Management with painting by Lou Primavera.



Photography by Alexandra Carter



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SPOTLIGHT ON... KATIE-JANE AMEY

(CONTINUED)



Arsenic and Old Lace (2003) saw Katie-Jane's first role at the Lilydale Athenaeum Theatre as Elaine Harper, a minister's daughter - wily, sassy, and absolutely sharp. This role marked the beginning of a diverse and long list of credits, currently having held over 70 roles across 24 productions.

Her other LATC acting credits include the wise and sharp-tongued photographer Elizabeth Imbrie in **The Philadelphia Story** (2006); the creative, fun and vulnerable middle child Debbie Patterson in **It's My Party (and I'll Die if I Want To)** (2007); the wealthy and elegant socialite Sheila Wendice in **Dial M For Murder** (2010); sisters Myra and Dawn and additional characters for **Ladies in Black** (2019); and the fiercely idealistic eldest daughter Lisa in **Family Values** (2023).

Acting is not Katie-Jane's only strength, she can be seen in all elements of the theatre, having also held roles as director, stage manager, director's assistant, backstage crew, props master, sound designer, set painter and scenic artist, scenic coordinator, and graphic designer.

She designs our programmes, which you receive on entry during our shows, and is the talent behind our incredible promotional artwork and posters for each of our productions.

She also holds a position on our theatre's Board of Directors and our Production Committee.

After being assistant director for 2018's **The History Boys**, Katie-Jane has directed six productions at the Lilydale Athenaeum Theatre - **The Wisdom of Eve** (2019), **The Full Monty** (2020), **Cosi** (2022), **The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged) [Revised] [Again]** (2023), **Clue** (2024), and **The Importance of Being Earnest** (2025).

Her productions have garnered over 70 Lyrebird Award nominations and 28 wins; including but not limited to Best Director for **The Importance of Being Earnest** (2025), Best Sound Design for **Clue** (2024), and Best Production for **The Full Monty** (2020). Her productions have also seen a number of Victorian Drama League awards and nominations, and Katie-Jane herself won the VDL Gold Award for Best Supporting Actress as Elizabeth Imbrie in our 2006 production of **The Philadelphia Story**.

Katie-Jane's experience extends beyond the Lilydale Athenaeum, she has worked both on and off stage for companies such as Fab Nobs, MDMS, DTC, and Babirra. By day she also serves as a secondary Drama and Theatre teacher, sharing her love for the performing arts with her students, she has produced and directed more than 50 productions.

Katie-Jane's next directorial work is our fifth production of 2026 - **One Man Two Guvvners** - a farce with music, written by Richard Bean.

If you have seen Katie-Jane's previous productions here at the LATC, you know that this is not one to be missed!



Katie-Jane starring in **Arsenic and Old Lace** (2003), **The Philadelphia Story** (2006), **It's My Party (and I'll Die if I Want To)** (2007), **Dial M For Murder** (2010), **Family Values** (2023); and Directing for **The Wisdom of Eve** (2019), **Cosi** (2022), **Clue** (2024), and **The Importance of Being Earnest** (2025)



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A VISIT FROM THE MELBA OPERA TRUST

Wednesday the 8th of April saw the annual "pilgrimage" of artists studying at the **Melba Opera Trust**.

As you may already know, Dame Nellie Melba performed on our stage four times in her 14 visits to the Athenaeum. She carried out several war-effort fundraisers in her time, but it was a 1909 Concert held in the Lilydale Athenaeum Hall that she held most dear. She wrote to her brother, C. J. Mitchell: *"Last night was the crowning success of my career. It was all so touching and sincere that I still have tears in my eyes. Please tell the dear Lilydale people how touched I am."*

Each year the artists from the Melba Opera Trust visit us here at the Athenaeum to grace the same stage as Melba herself once did. They also visit the Yarra Ranges Regional Museum next door to see some archival pieces of Melba's, such as clothing, jewellery, personal letters and much more.



HEARING LOOP

The Lilydale Athenaeum Theatre is proud to introduce the new Listen Auri system, enhancing accessibility and inclusivity for all patrons. This state-of-the-art assistive listening technology offers greater flexibility, allowing guests to either collect a headset from reception or stream audio directly to compatible Auracast-enabled hearing aids. By providing clear, high-quality sound, tailored to individual needs, the Listen Auri system ensures every audience member can fully enjoy the theatre experience.

The AURI Hearing Assistance Receiver headsets will be available to collect from the Box Office, where you will be asked to deposit your car keys as security.



UNDER 30S SUPER DISCOUNT PRICES

Under 30? Love theatre?
This special ticket price is just for you!

The Under 30's special ticket price is exclusive to the final Wednesday's performance of every production.
At \$22 you can't go wrong!

The offer for SLEUTH is for
Wednesday 15th July - \$22!



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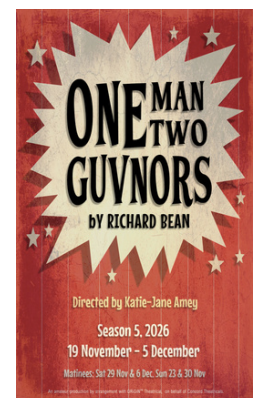
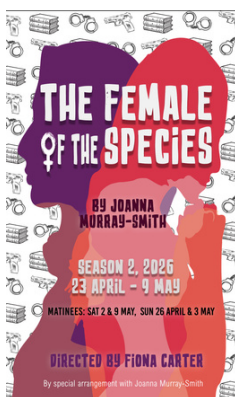


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Are you following the Lilydale Athenæum Theatre on social media?

Make sure to follow us on Facebook and Instagram so you don't miss out on audition notices, radio interviews, exclusive sneak peeks and teasers for our upcoming productions, and a chance to connect with other like-minded people who love our theatre!



Office Hours: MON, TUE, FRI 10am - 2pm



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