

Welcome to this introduction to **HYDRA** presented by State Theatre Company

The audio described performances at The Dunstan Playhouse will be on Saturday 11th May and Tuesday 14th May with the audio-description provided by Access2Arts.

On Saturday 11th there will be a touch tour at 1:00pm; the introductory notes will be read at 1:50pm and the performance will start at 2:00pm.

On Tuesday 14th there will be a touch tour at 5:30pm; the introductory notes will be read at 6:20pm and the performance will start at 6:30pm

The production lasts for approximately one hour and 20 minutes with no interval. Jo Ankor and Kari Seeley will give the live audio description for Access2Arts.

Synopsis

A decorated war correspondent and a talented young journalist meet, fall in love and set off on a global adventure, leaving scandal behind them in post-World War II Australia. It's 1956 and Australia's famous literary couple, George Johnston and Charmian Clift have moved to the Greek island of Hydra to focus their lives fully on their writing. Charmian, a burgeoning writing talent, creatively dominated by the tuberculosis ridden George, throws herself into this new community. Meanwhile, as George determinedly crafts what would become his Miles Franklin Award-winning masterpiece, "My Brother Jack," their marriage becomes increasingly strained and they discover that living in paradise has a price.

Told from the perspective of George and Charmian's eldest son Martin, Hydra is a sweeping tale chronicling the couple's time as the figureheads of the Greek island's bohemian expat community

Hydra is inspired by, and contains extracts from, "Clean Straw for Nothing" by George Johnston and "Peel Me a Lotus" by Charmian Clift.

Set:

Very tall, stark, whitewashed walls extend from the floor to approximately 8m high, framing two sides of the corner of an outdoor, paved courtyard, where all the action takes place. A sweeping staircase extends in a semicircle around the entire back of the set, from lower front right, tracing the two walls, to upper front left, with two landings, one in the centre away from us, about 2m off the floor, the other about 4m high, at the front left. A chain handrail is affixed to the back wall between the middle and top landings.

A large square whitewashed cavity in the wall, approx. 2m x 2m, is above, but slightly to the right of the first landing, & serves as an upstairs window or balcony, but with no direct access to the courtyard.

Single arched doorways, one on the front left under the highest landing, and one on the right, beside the stairs, provide the only entry and exit points.

White muslin curtains hang in the doorways.

The courtyard is at times an outdoor restaurant, a seaside promenade, living rooms and even the ocean by the sea wall.

Characters and costumes in order of appearance:

Martin Johnston is the son of George Johnston and Charmaine Clift and acts as narrator throughout the play; rarely leaving the stage, he reminisces on the time the family lived on the island of Hydra and occasionally speaks as the boy he was then. Now a young man, he is dressed casually in jeans, white sneakers and a grey t-shirt, with an unbuttoned green shirt over the top. His stubble beard and cropped hair are light brown.

Martin is played by Nathan O'keefe.

Anna Mcgahan plays **Charmian Clift**. At the start of the play, lively and energetic Charmian wears a blue- and green-patterned cotton dress with short sleeves, high waisted over a baby bump, and flat brown sandals. Her auburn hair is gathered sleekly into a low bun. In a flash-back to 1946, the dress is synched in at the waist with a narrow belt, emphasizing her slender build, and her shoulder-length hair is loose. Later, she wears a tan shirt tucked into a full skirt, patterned in soft greens and browns, and again her small waist is emphasized by a brown leather belt. Her swimsuit is a bright green, halter-neck one-piece. Lastly she is dressed in 1960s cream slim-fit cropped pants with a loose brown and tan blouse and beige ballet flats.

George Johnston, played by Bryan Proberts, is a skinny, world-weary war correspondent with thin, lank brown hair worn slightly long. He is dressed in a dark green shirt, loose black trousers and casual moccasin shoes. In a flash-back to 1946, he wears a suit jacket that is too loose and has the first of many cigarettes in his hand. Later he wears pajama pants and a white singlet. Finally, he is smartly dressed in a white shirt tucked into well-fitting dark trousers and black shoes.

Vic is a laid-back Australian artist living on Hydra and is played by Hugh Parker. He is tall and solidly built with dark brown, slicked-down hair and wears black loose-cut trousers, brown loafer shoes, a short-sleeved caramel-coloured striped shirt, large silver watch and a wedding ring. Later, he wears a smart grey suit with white shirt and striped tie.

Ursula, Vic's wife, is bouncy and assertive and dressed in the latest mushroom-pink 'pedal-pusher' cropped pants. Her sleeveless white shirt is knotted at the waist and she wears white strappy sandals and a wide white belt. Her short dark curly hair is as bouncy as she is. Later, she is dressed stylishly in a tailored black dress and jacket combination with white piping, and black low-heeled sling-back shoes.

Tiffany Lyndall-Knight plays Ursula and also the American Lorelei:

Lorelei, a visitor to Hydra, sports sunglasses and a bandanna headscarf on her head and wears a floor-length, halter-neck, shiny red ruffled dress and bare feet. Her large camera is looped over her neck, ready for use.

Jean-Claude, a Frenchman living on Hydra, has a suave Continental urbanity. He wears a loose cream shirt, open to mid chest, with white trousers rolled up

to the knee and brown leather sandals. Tousled curly dark hair spills over his forehead.

Cheerful local shopkeeper **Tony Katsikas** is dressed in tan trousers and light brown shirt with sleeves rolled up to the elbow, a large brown grocer's apron and a Greek fisherman's peaked cap.

Dr Anastosopoulos is distinguished by his white coat, stethoscope and wire-frame spectacles.

Jean-Claude, Tony and the Dr are all played by Kevin Spink.

The **Set Movers** wear light brown trousers and shirts.

Martin's **baby** sister is a bundled white blanket showing just a light blue head covering.

Production Credits

Cast

CHARMIAN CLIFT - Anna McGahan

GEORGE JOHNSTON - Bryan Probets

MARTIN JOHNSTON - Nathan O'Keefe

VIC - Hugh Parker

URSULA/LORELEI - Tiffany Lyndall-Knight

JEAN-CLAUDE/TONY KATSIKAS/DR ANASTOSOPOULOS - Kevin Spink

Production

WRITER Sue Smith

DIRECTOR Sam Strong

DESIGNER Vilma Mattila

LIGHTING DESIGNER Nigel Levings

COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER Quentin Grant

STAGE MANAGER Kat O'Halloran

LIGHTING OPERATOR Cameron Lane

SOUND TECHNICIAN Joshua Cartlidge

That is the end of this audio introduction. It has been produced by Jo Ankor and Kari Seeley for Access2Arts.

For more information on audio described performances please contact Jody Holdback at Access2Arts using the email address audio.describer@access2arts.org.au