

The Q Sheet

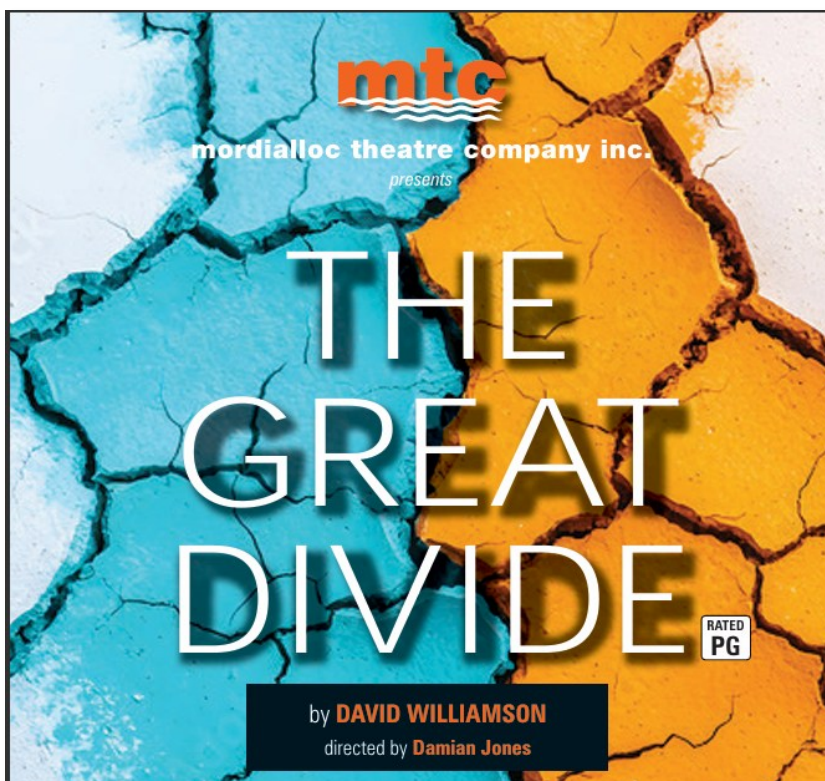
December 2025



Newsletter of
Mordialloc Theatre Company Inc
mordialloctheatre@gmail.com
PO Box 80, Mentone, 3194
Bookings 9566 4440

OUR NEXT PRODUCTION

SEASON 1, 2026 is a Community Theatre premiere



ROLE ACTOR

ALEX	KATE LAWSON
GRACE	ALISON CAMPBELL RATE
PENNY	KATHERINE CROUCH
RACHEL	MILLA PEARL SIEVERS
ALAN	GREG BARISON
BRIAN/JOEL	MICK MIKSAD

Director	Damian Jones
Asst Director	Claire Hutton
PC	Michael Kakogiannis

Golden sands, turquoise waters and a lush green golf course — Penny Poulter leads an almost idyllic life in one of Australia's best kept secrets, Wallis Heads.

But when this hidden coastal gem is discovered by the ruthless and immensely wealthy Alex Whittle, ambitious plans to put the town firmly on the tourist map spark a bitter rivalry.

Can this human bulldozer with money to burn ever be stopped?

'THE GREAT DIVIDE is a brilliantly written, fabulously portrayed and an exceptional piece of Australian theatre..... fantastically entertaining, emotional and truly hilarious!' – Theatre Thoughts

Shirley Burke Theatre, Parkers Road, Parkdale

Evenings: February 26, 27, 28 March 1*, 4, 5, 6 & 7****

Tickets at <https://mordialloctheatre.com.au/> or call 9566 4440 to book.

We Want to Hear From You!

Your voice plays an important role in shaping the future of our theatre. We invite you to take part in a short survey where you can share your thoughts on a range of important topics — from the plays we produce to the experiences we provide.

Your feedback will help guide our Board of Management as we plan for the years ahead. By taking just a few minutes to participate, you'll be helping us continue to grow, improve, and serve our community in the best way possible.

For instance, we recently asked how patrons felt about matinee performances starting at 2pm instead of 2.30pm. A number of you showed support for that change with no-one voicing disapproval for that change, so the Board of Management has taken this onboard.

We would encourage everyone to take part and let us know how we're doing— where we are getting things right and where you feel there may be areas of improvement.

As a thankyou for taking part, 5 lucky respondents, whose names are drawn from a hat, will receive a free ticket to a 2026 play of their choice, but to be eligible, you need to have submitted your response by December 24th.

Thank you for your support — and for being part of our story.

[CLICK HERE FOR THE SURVEY](#)



A big thank you to all the volunteers who helped with the bump out for Birthday Candles!

Geoff Arnold, Alan Rook, Jean Johnson, Jack Katzfey, Sheila Balis, Ivan Harris, Michael Kakogiannis, Winston McIntosh, Michael Tobin, Hugh Bramwells, Nicholas Bufalo.

If you're available to help us with our set for The Great Divide at 10.30 am on the weekend of Saturday February 14th, we'd love to hear from you. Contact us at <https://mordialloctheatre.com.au>

All volunteers will be provided with lunch, tea/coffee, and a complimentary ticket to the Members' Night performance.

Birthday Candles

Review by
Roderick Chappel (VDL)

Our last play, Birthday Candles, was extremely well-received and had some wonderful feedback from our audiences.

We also received a lovely review from Victorian Drama League reviewer, Roderick Chappel that appeared on the VDL website. We thought you might be interested to read it, so here it is, in its entirety below.

Most of us probably hope to live a long life, but even a long life can sometimes seem to go quickly. 'Birthday Candles' by the 47-year-old American playwright Noah Haidle, follows the life of Ernestine, from 17 years old until she was 101.

I knew in advance that the actress playing Ernestine would not appear to age physically, as her character aged. To me, this made sense symbolically. As each of us experiences our body getting older, and perhaps not quite so functional, we are still the same person inside. While thinking about this, I was reminded of Oscar Wilde's 1890 novel, 'The Picture of Dorian Gray', in which Dorian remains young while his portrait gradually ages.

The set which greeted Mordialloc Theatre Company's audience was striking. It represented a kitchen, with at its heart a workbench up centre, incorporating a sink. There were a small table and chairs down left, and on the right a small built-in divan. Against the upstage wall, right, were an oven and a refrigerator.

What made this domestic scene really impressive was that the walls were mostly invisible against a black background. Windows, upstage and stage right, were suspended from above. Up left and up right were white door frames – not doors. The play sometimes switched from realism to symbolism. As well as representing real doors, these empty frames allowed actors to make symbolic departures when lives ended. Had there been physical doors present, this effective device might have looked absurd.

The one piece of visible wall was an interesting square pillar, covered with what looked like wallpaper, by the stage left door frame. This had a purpose during the play, and it did not look incongruous. When the lights came up, they revealed a backdrop studded with stars.

This wonderful set was designed in concept by the Director, Helen Ellis, and her idea was brought to reality by Geoff Arnold and Nicholas Bufalo.

When the play opens, it is Ernestine's 17th birthday, and her mother Alice teaches her how to bake a birthday cake. Ernestine then bakes the same cake on every birthday of her long life. We visit Ernestine on several of her birthdays, as her life unfolds. We meet five generations of Ernestine's family, from her mother down to her great-granddaughter.

It is our common experience, if we live long enough, to experience tragedy, the loss of people whom we love, traumatic events and circumstances, illnesses, and turmoil in relationships. I will not give away too much of the plot by listing all the challenging life events that Ernestine lived through. However, there were rather a lot of them.

Cat Jardine gave an outstanding performance, energetic and sympathetic, as Ernestine dealing with life's twists and turns. She was convincing from the first moment when she appeared as a 17-year-old girl, trying to understand her place in the world, and auditioning for a school play. She was onstage throughout, in many different circumstances, sharing her life with many different people.

Birthday Candles Review (Cont'd)

Seventeen-year-old Ernestine is admired by her rather awkward young friend Kenneth, portrayed skilfully and sympathetically by Ed Kennett. Kenneth suffers disappointment when Ernestine marries someone else, but he returns as an important character throughout the play. Unlike Ernestine, Kenneth does not have the privilege of staying visibly young. Ed Kennett progressed Kenneth from age 18 to age 88 with skill and humour.

The other four actors, all of whom were strong, were Maree Barnett, Rob Blowers, Angelo Snell and Candice Sweetman. Between them they played ten characters, of whom seven are members of Ernestine's family. I particularly enjoyed Candice Sweetman's colourful portrayal of Joan, Ernestine's over-anxious daughter-in-law.

This may not be a problem that I share with many other playgoers, but I sometimes have difficulty following a story when actors move between different roles. It would have helped me if the programme had identified each individual character, e.g. 'Alice (Ernestine's mother), Maree Barnett', or 'Billy (Ernestine's son), Angelo Snell'. I realise, however, that such a programme listing would give away a little of the plot.

The play flows freely from one birthday to another, sometimes moving forward many years. I may not have picked up every change of birthday immediately, but I caught up. One year, the original old refrigerator was replaced with a newer one; both models looked familiar to me!

The play is held together by a number of recurring themes, of which the baking of the birthday cake is the first. One other important link is a goldfish, a gift from Kenneth to Ernestine when they were young. Swimming around its bowl on the table, with its own lighting, the goldfish watches the unfolding of Ernestine's life.

To my imagination, the goldfish represented both the continuity of life and its transient nature. A goldfish was always there, but periodically the fish died and had to be replaced. Each goldfish – like the rest of us! – proves to be mortal.

Technical support for the story unobtrusively supported the flow of the play. Familiar American music was woven skilfully into transitions. Billy, Ernestine's son, was heard to play the piano offstage – and to slowly improve! Scene changing was slick and unobtrusive, and usually consisted of a crew member walking quickly on and off stage to remove some props.

The Stage Manager was Leigh Thompson, assisted by Charlie Cane. Lighting design was by Michael Rowe, and sound design was by Tim Long and Helen Ellis. Many others contributed in different ways to this quality production.

I was beginning to think, before the end, that the play might have been better had the playwright sacrificed a scene or two. 'Birthday Candles' is advertised as running for 90 minutes without an interval. However, this performance – unless it started late, and I did not notice – ran for 105 minutes. I was not sure where time was lost, because I experienced the pace as good, and transitions as efficient. I saw the third of ten performances, and I expect that the play will have tightened as the season has progressed.

The cast were greeted with great warmth at the curtain call.

This is an excellent production at multiple levels, and director, cast and crew are to be congratulated.

What the BIRTHDAY CANDLES audiences said

Stephen W. *"Birthday Candles was amazing. I've seen almost all of the MTC productions during the last nine years, and while they are always good, this was the best ever. I'd like to think there wasn't a dry eye in the house. There was some particularly classy acting (so complements to the director too), and the set was as convincing as I've come to expect, regardless of how simple or complicated the design. So thanks to everyone involved, and here's to the 2026 season".*

Liam M. *"I just got home from Mordialloc Theatre Company and their latest production Birthday Candles. An American play in its Australian premiere season I believe. The premise of this play is following the life of Ernestine through a century of her life as shown in a series of her birthday celebrations. And what a wonderful journey this play took us on! You get to experience the highs and lows of a hundred years of existence (and even more goldfish) condensed into one play. New life, joy, love, betrayal, reconciliation, decline, loss and despair all rolled into a surprisingly coherent and well realised theatrical package. Filled with honesty, poignancy, poetry and oodles of heart. The work of the supporting cast in bringing multiple roles developing across several decades to life were fantastic in supporting Cat Jardine in her portrayal of Ernestine's epic life journey as she never leaves the stage. The performances were excellent across the board. Directed with a deft hand by Helen Ellis & tied together by some lovely sound design by Tim Long. Hats off to everyone involved in this production. "his is a play about life and the humanity that comprises it. It will tug at your heart strings. It will make you laugh with its wry and occasionally absurd sense of humour (oh Joan!). You'll smile at the connections made on stage and be brought to tears when they break. It will make you consider your own life & relationships, hopefully in a new light. Something the best art does. I'd say this was the best piece of theatre I've had the pleasure of witnessing this year. If you have the chance you should get along to the Shirley Burke Theatre and see it."*

Barbara C.: *"I saw the preview last night a beautiful play expertly directed with a terrific cast, don't miss it!"*

Lyn S. : *"Don't miss this! And take your tissues. Loved it. Fantastic!"*

David T.: *"Absolutely brilliant show, with an excellent cast and crew."*

Anonymous member 458: *"Highly recommend you go see this. Went to the show today. Amazing cast."*

Maria C.: *"The poignant storyline & the incredibly talented actors - Absolutely loved it."*

Giuliana J.: *"This show is beautiful, you'll laugh, cry and be reminded to live in the moment. Cast was amazing. Highly recommend Go! It's absolutely wonderful."*

Brian N.: *"This was a great show. Story, direction and acting were all excellent."*

David P.: *"What a great story. Really touched. Go and see it. You won't be disappointed. MTC is a real shining star."*

Juliet H.: *"One to warm the heart. Such a beautiful production. Helen Ellis has brought together a perfect cast and skilfully directed them to bring this Australian premiere production to life. Every element is pitch perfect. You'll laugh, you'll cry, you'll be enchanted by Ernestine's life journey. Congratulations to all involved, ending MTC's year on a high."*

Rochelle B.: *"Saw this play yesterday with my friends, was a very powerful story, great play."*

Suzy W: *"It was wonderful! We all loved it !! So witty, clever and funny, but very moving and tragic. I really liked the understated symbolism. I didn't actually cry - but I teared up more than once."*



Community News



Vale James (Jim) Bird

We were recently saddened to hear of the passing of one of the stalwarts of our set-build team.

Joining our company in 2014 at the ripe old age of 85, Jim spent the last ten of his senior years working at every set-build since then. Jim was much loved by all of us.

He brought a wealth of handyperson experience to the team, working with patience and precision, generously sharing his experience and expertise with the younger members.

With a heart of gold and always smiling, Jim's warmth and kindness touched all who worked with him.

He will be sorely missed by us all.

More Opportunities for Involvement

Dear members and patrons,

In the past, many of you have offered to become involved with our company in a variety of different ways. Here are two opportunities for you to become involved in 2026.

Front-of-House Roster Coordinator

Corinne Gibbs, who has been our Front-of-House Roster Co-Ordinator for some years now, is retiring from the position. There is now an opportunity for a new person, or persons to step into the position. The job can be done by one person, or it can be shared. The Board of Management will ensure that the new person, or persons, will be fully supported in the transition. Our treasurer, Lyn Laister will manage FOH for the first show of 2026, so the new Co-Ordinator(s) will take on the role from the second show next year.

Expressions of interest are invited. Please notify us if you wish to volunteer for this position by email to mordialloctheatre@gmail.com

Front-of-House Supplies Purchaser

Here is a second, related opportunity for involvement. Kelvin Rocks has managed the purchasing of the supplies required for our FOH operation for several years now. He has ensured that supplies have been available for our staff to serve patrons. We thank him for his contribution to the FOH operations, so valued by our patrons. He will be retiring from the position after Season 1 in 2026. Similarly, this job can be done by one person, or it can be shared.

Expressions of interest are invited. Please notify us if you wish to volunteer for this position by email to mordialloctheatre@gmail.com

The Board of Management are a very welcoming group and, needless to say, for all these positions, extensive support will be given. Even if you have never been involved before, this is a wonderful opportunity to learn the ropes and contribute to an important community activity

We look forward to hearing from you.

Michael Kakogiannis
President,
Board of Management.

Meet Some of Our Community

Winston is a young man who likes to be proactive. With a history of Theatre Studies and extensive experience with school productions, Winston reached out to a number of Community Theatres to see if he could get involved and observe what happens behind the scenes.



Mordialloc Theatre Company was more than happy to have him join us for the last couple of performances of our last play, Birthday Candles.

With a deep interest in tech production and sound, Winston was given a tour of the bio box by our light and sound technician, Veronica, and then he sat in the audience to watch the play to see how it all came together.

The following night, Winston, dressed in traditional "stage-management black" spent the performance backstage watching the stage management crew, led by Leigh, weave their carefully choreographed stage entrances and exits to bring on and take off props. He observed how all the props were carefully placed in their designated spots so everything was able to be sourced when

needed.

The cast of the play were extremely welcoming and spent some time chatting to Winston about his plans for further study.

Winston was even kind enough to make himself available the next day, on Sunday, to help with the set bump-out. His interest and efforts were appreciated, and we hope he decides to come back in the future to get involved with one of our productions.



Cat Jardine's portrayal of Ernestine in Birthday Candles won her great plaudits. It was a huge role that required the actress to be on stage for the entire performance and portray a woman who aged from 17 to in her hundreds.

What many may not know is that in her spare time, Cat enjoys drawing and painting, as a member of the Victorian Artists Society, and recently won ABC Brisbane's "Bradley Award" for her portrait of Gardening Australia's favourite, Costa Georgiadis.

As a beautiful gift to her fellow actors and crew, she took the time to paint this a memento of the play. It perfectly encapsulates the characters, the set and the mood of the play.

Simply stunning!

Artwork by Cat Jardine



End of Year BBQ!

Date: Sunday 14th December 2025
Time: from 12.30pm
Venue: Our lockup – Factory 8, 417- 419 Warrigal Road, Cheltenham

Dear Members and Volunteers,

You are invited to join us in celebrating another great year of plays.

Members and all those who have been involved, in any way, are welcome. (Onstage, directing, back-stage, lights and sound, set building and Front of House.)

Food and drinks will be provided.

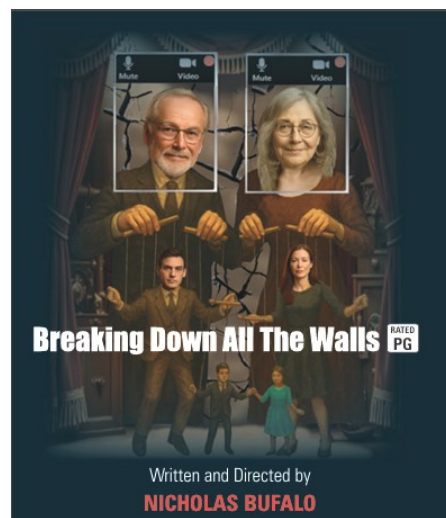
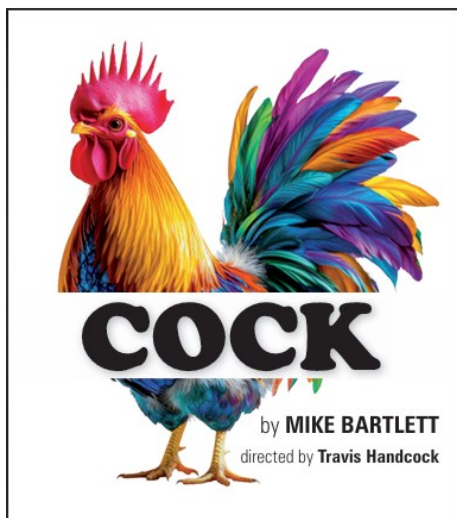
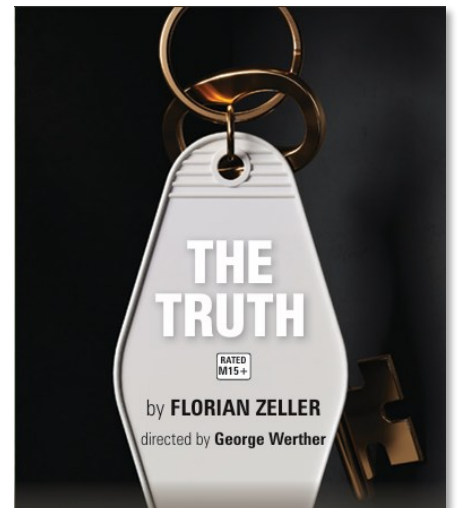
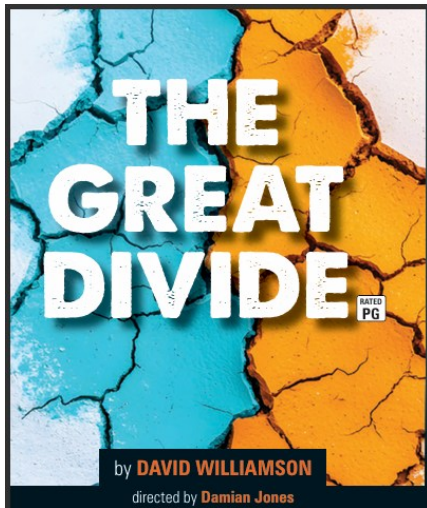
Please let Sheila Balis know of any dietary requirements.

RSVP by Wednesday 10th December to sheilabalis@bigpond.com or by phone on 0400 883 178.



Mordialloc Theatre Company

SEASON 2026



**As Christmas approaches, here's
the ideal gift for the theatre lover**

If you've been to one of our plays at The Mordialloc Theatre Company and are looking for the perfect Christmas present, have you thought about gifting someone a ticket to one of our 2026 season plays?

It could be just one ticket, or you could take advantage of the package of three or more plays at a discounted price. Book three or more different plays in one transaction for just \$27 per play - a saving of \$5 per play. This is only available for booking by telephone, not online.

Ticket prices:

Adults: \$32.00 Concessions (with id): \$30.00

Groups 10 or more: \$30.00

Children up to 15 years: \$28.00

Bookings: 9556 4440 or online at www.kingstonarts.com.au

All The World's A Stage...

Have you ever seen one of our plays and wondered how a set gets designed?

Theatre set design is a wonderfully creative but very practical discipline. It blends art, storytelling, engineering, logistics, and collaboration to shape the physical world of a play.

1. Reading & Interpreting the Script

Everything begins with the text. Understanding the story, themes, and emotional tone.

Identifying locations, time periods, transitions, and necessary physical actions.

Spotting any special requirements (e.g. doors that slam, furniture that must be sat on or broken)

2. Collaborating with the Director & Creative Team

Set designers don't work in a vacuum.

Meeting with the director to develop a shared artistic vision.

Aligning with lighting, costume, sound, props, and stage management.

Discussing staging patterns, blocking needs, and constraints (budget, space, safety)

3. Developing the Concept & Visual Style

This is the artistic heart of the job.

Creating a design concept that supports the story.

Deciding the visual language (naturalistic, abstract, minimalist, symbolic, heightened realism, etc.)

Considering colour palette, textures, materials, shapes, and motifs.

Producing moodboards, sketches, and reference images.

4. Drafting the Design

Turning ideas into technical drawings.

Ground plans (bird's-eye view of the stage layout)

Elevations (front views of walls, doors, windows, flats, platforms)

Sections and construction drawings.

3D models or digital renderings These must be accurate for builders, directors, and stage managers.

5. Budgeting & Materials

The practical side:

Estimating costs for lumber, hardware, scenic materials, paint, and labour.

Sourcing furniture and props.

Choosing materials that are durable, safe, and affordable.

All The World's A Stage...

6. Construction & Painting

Usually carried out by set builders, or in our case, the indefatigable set-construction team.

Scenic artists The designer supervises to ensure the build matches the design (scale, finish, colour, texture).

7. Tech Days & Final Adjustments

During tech days, the set is tested in real conditions:

Integrating lighting cues (how the set responds to colour and intensity)

Adjusting levels, heights, and sightlines.

Ensuring actor safety.

Making changes based on blocking, timing, scene transitions, and feedback.

8. Scene Changes & Practicality

A crucial part of design:

Ensuring the set is functional for quick, quiet scene changes.

Working closely with stage management.

Considering backstage space, cast movement, fly systems, wagons and storage.

9. Ongoing Maintenance Throughout the run:

- Repairs
- Repainting
- Replacing damaged props or pieces

In Short, theatre set design is the creation of a playable world.

It must be:

- Visually compelling.
- Supportive of the story.
- Safe and functional for actors.
- Buildable within budget and time.
- Integrated with every other theatrical element.



This is a still-frame from a computer-generated 3-D video showcasing the proposed *Birthday Candles* set before it was even built.

It was forwarded to the set-construction team before the build, so everyone had a clear idea of what we were aiming for.

This was later finessed to update the Director's vision of the colour palette and specific furniture.

VOLUNTEERS ALWAYS WELCOME



Have you ever wondered about working with a theatre company?

The Mordialloc Theatre Company is celebrating it's 80th year. That's 80 years of mounting plays for the community. Over that time we've had so many volunteers help with -

- *Building sets: skilled or unskilled.
- *Working Front-of-House: greeting patrons, preparing and offering refreshments.
- *Wardrobe: sourcing, adjusting or transporting.
- *Creating, modifying or transporting props- large or small.
- *Stage managing or assisting crew.
- *Sound and Lighting operation.
- *Marketing skills.
- *Distributing flyers.

If you think you might be able to assist as a volunteer in any of these roles, or if you have other skills that you could contribute, or if you would just like more information, contact us at mordialloctheatre@gmail.com