

Theatre

October 25, 2021

I just reread my previous article, which I wrote on 11 May and started with “After a slowish start the theatre scene is almost back to normal”, and the shows I mentioned, which were about to play, have subsequently all been cancelled. We are now in a similar position with theatres starting to reopen.

The last time I was in a theatre with an audience was on 22 May at The Ros Packer Theatre to see *Fun Home*, which is based on a graphic novel by Alison Bechdel. The home in which she grew up was also a funeral home (hence the title) and in which she realised she was attracted to girls which was not well received by her father.

And, it is a very good musical. Alison, the novelist, tells the story from onstage as she draws and narrates while two other actresses play her as a child and young adult. They are all on stage for the duration of the show and carry the story which is mainly about her conflict with her father.



It is clever, poignant and very funny. It is a co-production of the Sydney Theatre Company with the Melbourne Theatre Company and will open as part of the Melbourne Theatre Company’s 2022 season.

Most Sydney companies will be announcing their 2022 seasons within the next few weeks but in the meantime, there are plenty of shows to see. *Hamilton* is playing at the Lyric Theatre until February, when it will move to Melbourne and *Come From Away* is at the Capitol Theatre. Again, I highly recommend this as the best “feelgood” show and boy, do we need this.

The newly refurbished Theatre Royal will reopen on 2 December with *Jagged Little Pill* based on the Grammy award-winning album from Alanis Morissette. Early next year *Girl From The North Country* opens with a top-line cast to deliver the story with songs from Bob Dylan.

Meanwhile, Belvoir will be playing a new pantomime written by Virginia Gay *The Boomkak Panto* from 20 November. Ms Gay can do nothing wrong in my eyes and she has written a new version of *Cyrano* which played for just one night before the Melbourne lockdown. Hopefully it might get a Sydney gig. The Sydney Theatre Company will restart with *Julius Caesar* directed by Kip Williams. It will play at The Wharf in the round from 15 November with just three actors, Geraldine Hakewell, Ewen Leslie and Zahra Newman.

The New Theatre recommences with *The Lovely Bones*, Hayes Theatre will play Sondheim’s *Merrily We Roll Along* which, like *Cyrano*, was affected by lockdown, as was *Six*, which will open at the Opera House. *The Phantom of The Opera* has been delayed until later next year but will play at the open-air Handa Opera on Sydney at Mrs Macquarie’s Chair. Later in the year, a new experience will be a production of *Carmen* on Cockatoo Island.

Melbourne will re-open with *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* and *Moulin Rouge*. The Broadway production just won 11 Tony Awards.

So, please get back to our beloved theatre where we can enjoy the hard work of our artists who were so badly neglected during the lockdown. I have watched a number of recorded shows at home but it is not the same as being there in an audience and live. Finally, I want to pay tribute to Betty Milliss — a stalwart of New Theatre — who died recently. RIP Frank Barnes is getting excited about getting back to the theatre