



LOUIS NOWRA was born in Melbourne. His plays to date are *Inner Voices*, *Visions*, *Inside the Island*, *The Precious Woman*, *Sunrise*, *The Golden Age*, *Capricornia*, *Byzantine Flowers*, *The Watchtower*, *Summer of the Aliens*, *Radiance*, *The Temple*, *Crow*, *Miss Bosnia*, *The Incorruptible*, *The Jungle* and *The Language of the Gods*. He has written a non-fiction work *The Cheated* and three novels *The Misery of Beauty*, *Palu*, *Red Nights* and a memoir *The Twelfth of Never*. Some of his radio plays include *The Song Room*, *The Widows*, *Sydney*, *Moon of the Exploding Trees* and *The Divine Hammer*. Besides translating such plays as *The Prince of Homburg*, *Cyrano de Bergerac* and *Lulu*, he has written the libretti for *Whitsunday* and *Love Burns*. Telemovies are *Displaced Persons*, *Hunger* and *The Lizard King*. He wrote the screenplays for *Map of The Human Heart*, *Così*, *Heaven's Burning* and *Radiance*. He lives in Sydney.

To Gerri Williams and Adam Cook. And, of course, Hilary Linstead—who was right all along.

Mozart was probably one of the sanest people who ever lived except for his preoccupation with scatology and his obsession that his wife may have been unfaithful to him

Joseph Feher
The Problem of Constanze Mozart's Fidelity

Così

LOUIS NOWRA



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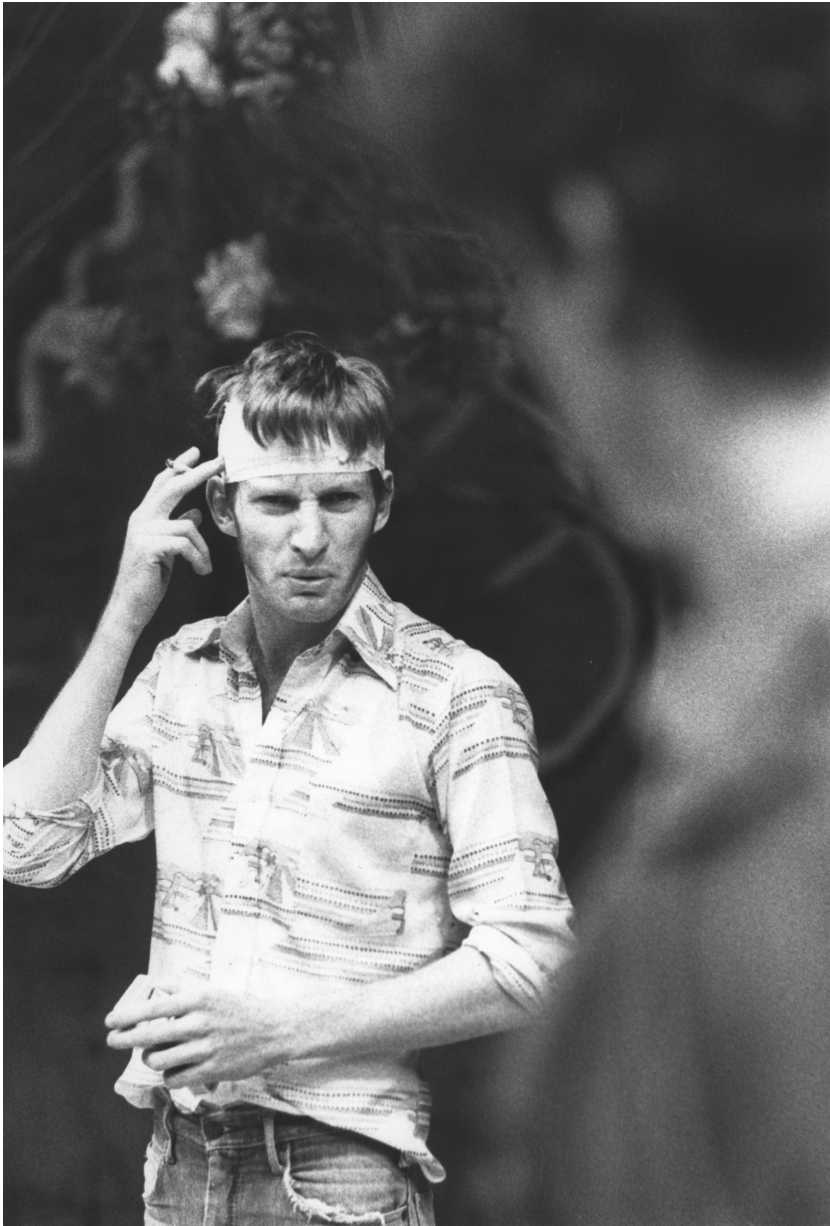
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Frankenstein's Mozart: the Making of *Così*

Gerry Turcotte

Havelock Ellis once wrote, 'Every artist writes his own autobiography', and with *Così* it is tempting to conclude that Louis Nowra has made the transition to such writing, a process begun with *Summer of the Aliens*. Indeed, there are numerous parallels between the life of the artist and that of the central character of these plays, not the least of which is the protagonist's name—Lewis. Of course, referring to *Aliens* and *Così* as autobiographical plays ignores two major factors. One is that earlier plays have always revolved around what Nowra has called 'a hidden... powerful undercurrent of emotional autobiography', which is what Ellis was really driving at. And the other is that one does well to remember, as Clive James insists, that 'Autobiography is a lying art'.

Nowra himself makes use of the image of Doctor Frankenstein to explain the process of autobiographical (re)construction. Each situation, each character, each emotion which surfaces in a particular text is drawn together from a myriad collection of differently and imperfectly remembered situations. And the very act of re-membling—of putting the Frankenstein's monster of the past together—is an act of subterfuge, of legerdermain, of crafty artifice. As Northrop Frye puts it, 'Most autobiographies are inspired by a creative, and therefore *fictional* impulse, to select only those events and experiences in the writer's life that go to build up an integrated pattern'.¹ Autobiography is at once deceitful and honestly revealing. One Australian critic has claimed that it 'is both a form of striptease and an archaeology of the self'.² Or, in Nowra's words, 'What I have done is act like Frankenstein. Like the doctor I have raided the graveyard of my memory and have created a monster out of the various limbs and appendages I could dig up.'

Although it may be difficult, if not ultimately futile, to try to establish where 'truth' and 'fiction' intersect, it is certainly possible to reflect on the change of direction Nowra's work is taking. In an act of parochiality, Nowra was attacked early in his career for not setting his plays in Australia—and hence for not dealing with 'homegrown' issues.

He was also criticised for painting on very large canvasses, turning to Paraguay or Russia for his settings, or probing the effects of imperialism through sweeping plays such as *The Precious Woman* and *Visions*. At the heart of both critiques was an inability on the part of many critics to see that Nowra was in fact incisively investigating his own culture, through metaphor, through parable and of course by inference.

Now that such accusations are less likely to be levelled, Nowra has ironically changed his emphasis. He has moved firmly onto Australian soil, and he has moved away from the large character studies of the past—as we find in *Sunrise* and *Capricornia* for example—to detail with frightening precision the tragedy and humour of everyday lives, through more intimate studies.

In *Aliens* and *Così*, the scalpel moves closer to the personal vein, and it also reveals a lighter side to Nowra's traditionally 'Gothic' vision—Frankenstein has a sense of humour, as it were. Not that his work has been without levity. But it is true to say that despite an often oblique sense of hopefulness, by and large Nowra's plays have been dark: Juana dies in *Visions*, Ivan returns to the prison of his mind in *Inner Voices*, and the fire rages ever closer in *Sunrise*. Even *The Golden Age* suggests the inability of humanity to pull itself together, and by extension, the fate of his major characters seems sealed.

There is an entirely different 'feel', however, to his more recent plays. Act One of *Radiance* is euphoric, although it hints towards a tragedy to come. *The Temple*, Nowra's most commercially successful play, is positively, frantically, comic. And in *Summer of the Aliens*, though particularly in *Così*, Nowra seems to hit a perfect register, using humour to move the plays along and to reflect critically on what is often a tragedy of human suffering. Not to put too strong a term to it, Nowra's humour in these recent plays is almost redemptive. It exposes weakness and stupidity, and, in Mordecai Richler's phrase, 'it ridicules our prejudices and popular institutions'—but it is not exploitative or gratuitous. The comic element here suggests a level of commensurability that links the suffering and existence of a wide range of individuals.

And it is this sense of commensurability of experience which anchors what is surely an absurd proposition: that a group of intellectually or emotionally handicapped individuals could mount a production of Mozart's *Così Fan Tutte*. A cynic would say that this is the profile of any

successful theatrical ensemble, although Nowra's digs seem targetted chiefly at directors. Roy—a manic depressive visionary—is given the best of such lines. At one stage he maintains that, 'All directors are tyrants', and at another he tells Lewis, 'For killing an actor he'd get life, for killing a director he'd get eternal gratitude.'

The premise of *Così*, then, is that a young, first time director, is hired to direct a play as part of a therapeutic program meant to keep the inmates of an asylum interested, and to 'bring them out of their shells', as Justin, a social worker, puts it. Unfortunately for Lewis, Roy has decided on Mozart's *Così Fan Tutte*, not just an *opera buffa*, but an Italian one. Of course, none of the few volunteers can speak Italian much less sing—indeed, some can barely speak. To make matters worse, the venue for this performance is a fire gutted theatre with a leaking roof and faulty wiring. The cast includes a pyromaniac, a junkie, a knife wielding romantic, a confused realist, a Lithium addicted pianist who hates Mozart, and a stuttering ex Lawyer who refuses to take part in the production. Lewis, needless to say, is slightly discouraged by the task at hand.

In *Così*, the burnt out stage is a metaphor for the world at large, and the drama which is enacted on its charred surface is a reflection of the larger drama taking place outside. In *Summer of the Aliens*, the Cuban Missile Crisis acts as the register for a world on the brink of disaster against which are played the smaller though no less important dramas of Lewis and Dulcie's coming of age, Pisano's madness and Norma's dead end life and marriage. In *Così*, it is the 1970s, and the Vietnam War frames the drama. As Peter Ward has argued in a recent review, as the production of *Così* develops, 'the war and anti war themes on the edge of the action's focus become a madness without, enclosing saner, if flawed, aspirations within'.³ Along the same lines, Frank Gauntlett has claimed that, 'when Louis Nowra places his fruitcake rich, riotously funny, beautifully conceived play *Così* in a Melbourne madhouse he has less to say about life within the rubber walls than without.'⁴

There are numerous elements of *Così* which are vintage Nowra: the use of an external threat to texture and enrich the principal drama; the device of the play within a play to create resonant ironies; even the juxtaposition of sanity and insanity to question and trouble the problematic nature of what is considered normal. As to the latter, in

Inner Voices greed and violence are the values inscribed on the *tabula rasa* of Ivan's mind; and in *The Golden Age*, the so called 'inferior' remnants of lost Europeans are effectively killed off in a Tasmanian mental institution which is meant to be their salvation. In each case, and again in *Così*, Nowra forces his audience to question what it means exactly to be 'normal', by showing that often the 'troubled' vision of his 'abnormal' characters is perhaps clearer and saner than those outside the institutions.

Mozart's *Così Fan Tutte* is an inspired choice as the centrepiece for the drama. For one thing, the enormity of the task makes the comedy that much stronger. For another, the aristocratic nature of the opera, combined with its frivolity and sexism, play well into many of the issues which Nowra's contemporary drama pursues. This is Roy's summary of the opera:

It starts off in a coffee shop in Naples. Italy. These two fellows are boasting how faithful their girlfriends are. So this old fellow, Don Alfonso, says to Guglielmo and Ferrando, okay, let's make a wager and test the girls' fidelity. So the young men pretend to go off to war, but they really don't. Instead they disguise themselves as Albanians and woo the girls... The girls won't fall for the Albanians and so they pretend to suicide and guess what?... Guglielmo's girlfriend falls for Ferrando and vice versa. Anyway, the boys reveal their disguises and things right themselves and Don Alfonso is proved right. Women are never true. Hence the title *Così Fan Tutte*: Women are like that.

(Act One, Scene One)

Così Fan Tutte is considered by some to be the ideal of opera buffa, or comic opera. Completed in January of 1790, it was said to be inspired both by actual events as well as by Mozart's own distress over his inconstant wife. Although considered by many contemporary critics as 'Mozart's most sumptuously beautiful opera'⁵, it was also described, in its day, as a scandalous piece. As Alfred Einstein puts it, 'No work of Mozart's has experienced such opposition and occasioned so many attempts to "rescue" it as *Così fan tutte*'.⁶

Lewis's mismatched players, one could say, are yet more in a long line of rescuers, re writing the libretto, and reinvesting the performance so that it reflects their own needs. Ironically, the production of *Così* is

opposed in much the same way that it was when it was first composed, although the reasons are different. In the 1790s the opera was considered immoral; in the 1970s it is a symbol of sexist attitudes, and a decadent indulgence in bourgeois romanticism, at a time of protest and political agitation. In fact, Lewis's flatmates criticise him for talking about love, not war. As Lewis explains to one of the inmates, his girlfriend 'hates me doing an opera about love and fidelity while thousands of Vietnamese are being killed by American troops.'

In its original form, *Così Fan Tutte* ran to three and a half hours, and moved between the burnt out theatre and Lewis's rented house beside a slaughterhouse. The play has been trimmed so that all the action now takes place in what is a veritable theatre of the absurd, a shell of a place which perhaps even hints at the destruction wrought by war. Lewis's act of bringing Mozart's 'music of the spheres' to life in such a sterile place, rather than Bertolt Brecht's politically correct *The Exception and the Rule*, is an act of inspired madness that suggests the insane potential of individuals to rise above the so called rationality of war, formulaic thinking and ordinariness. Perhaps Roy's dream for the opera says it best:

I had a dream ... There would be music, music of the spheres, colourful costumes, joie de vivre, a world that was as far removed from this depressing asylum as possible. A world that was like my childhood ... That's the world I wanted *Così Fan Tutte* to capture—recapture. But it's gone, the music too.

(Act Two, Scene One)

Louis Nowra's *Così* brings the music back to life.

University of Wollongong, 1994.

1. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, New York, 1968, 307. Italics added.
2. John Colmer, *Australian Autobiography: the Personal Quest*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989, 7.
3. 'Così', *The Australian*, Friday, July 23, 1993, p.12.
4. *Telegraph Mirror*, 23 April 1992.
5. See, for example, Henry Raynor, *Mozart*, London: Macmillan, 1978, p.116.
6. Alfred Einstein, *Mozart: His Character, His Work*, trans. Arthur Mendel and Nathan Broder, Great Britain: Panther, 1977, p.45

Trial by Madmen

Louis Nowra

Written at probably one of the most intensely difficult periods of my life, *Così* is one of my most lighthearted plays. Each morning when I climbed the ladder to my South Melbourne attic I had never felt keener on entering the world of one of my plays. Like *Summer of the Aliens*, *Così* is partly auto-biographical. Both centre on a character called Lewis (there, but for a vowel could be me). *Summer of the Aliens* was Lewis at fourteen, *Così* is Lewis at twenty-one. I suppose I chose those years because they were turning points in my understanding of people. Contrary to the opinions of those phrenologists of the 20th century—the psychiatrists—it is sometimes events and experiences after your youth that determine the way you view the world, and so it was with my experiences that are part of *Così*.

Both my grandmothers ended up in mental institutions. On my mother's side, grandmother undoubtedly was suffering from a form of senility. Having always prided herself on her mental abilities (she could recite, in order, all the kings and queens of England) she found herself falling into the darkness of mental illness. When I visited her in Mont Park asylum she seemed to me to be the same person, but more discursive and mentally unfocussed. There is a current theory that far from being like a computer, the brain resembles a jungle. If this is so, then grandmother's brain became an impenetrable jungle, swallowing up any explorer who dared to enter. On my father's side my grandma deliberately chose madness as a way of dealing with the fact that her seventy-year-old husband had run off with a thirty-year-old barmaid. When I visited her in Mont Park (years after my other grandmother was in there) she lived permanently in the year 1948. As far as she was concerned, I did not exist, because I hadn't been born yet and to complicate matters she thought I was my father. When she asked if I were to marry my mother, not only could I give the date, but I could tell her how many children I would have and so on. Some people would say that in having to pretend I was my father about to marry my mother

I was taking part in a Freudian nightmare, but I prefer to see it as my having fallen, like Alice, down a hole to end up in topsy turvy land.

So, unlike Lewis in *Così* I had experience of mental institutions. It is difficult to rediscover my motives for involving myself with mental patients. I suspect that the madness of my grandmothers gave me an intense interest in the subject. Madness both frightened and attracted me. This was 1971 and the era of R.D. Laing, a Scottish psychiatrist whose view of madness was oddly reassuring in a decade going crazy. One of his ideas was that labelling people mad was to stigmatise them, and that many mentally ill people should be allowed to go totally mad—once at rock bottom they would again find their true selves. This idea of true and false selves is such a philosophical, let alone a psychological flim-flam that it is not surprising that someone like myself, at twenty-one, was attracted to it. I even approached the mental health authority and proposed that I write a history of asylums in Victoria. Not having the intellectual rigour to do this, I decided to work with mental patients.

This was also the era when chemicals began to control many of the wilder excesses of madmen and saw the first influx of social workers, who like grass burrs, were attaching themselves onto our social fabric. One social worker asked a friend and myself if we wanted to do theatre with mental patients, ‘to bring them out of their selves’ (I suspect he meant ‘shells’). Having the confidence and certainty of youth I thought that theatre would be therapeutic.

One of the connections I feel with Lewis now, is my first day in rehearsals. Instead of feeling cocky, I felt a great terror. Facing so many faces, some earnest, shy and irritated, I suddenly realised I was responsible for these people. I wanted them to ‘come out of their shells’, but at the time feared what would happen.

So who was I then, and how much was I like Lewis? I was a person who was very much removed from what was around me. Working with mental patients seemed to me to be something to believe in, something far removed from the political rhetoric of the anti-Vietnam war protests of the late 1960s. Every day I would turn up at the Mont Park hall, to rehearse *Trial by Jury*. This was the added burden. I hated Gilbert and Sullivan but one of the patients wanted to do it. Some patients agreed with me and demanded more ‘singable’ songs, so we incorporated Beatles and Bee Gees songs into the show. As we rehearsed I realised

that although I was working with the most approachable patients, many were mad. No trendy philosophy can hide the terrifying nature of madness for both the sufferer and his relatives.

Once I had gotten over any impulses to be a do-gooder I began to enjoy rehearsals. There was only one performance. Some relatives of the patients came, but the audience was mostly other patients. Before the performance started a student radical came along. Here was a fellow who preached revolution and the equality of all, and this radical, let's call him Nick, started to sing into the microphone, as patients filed in, the song about madness 'they're coming to take me away, ha, ha!' I had never felt such anger towards anyone in my life.

The show was probably terrible. A curious, eccentric mixture of original songs, rock and roll and Gilbert and Sullivan. Yet, afterwards in the changing rooms, I felt exhilarated, as did the patients. It is a feeling I sometimes experience when I go backstage after one of my plays; a mixture of giggling, hysteria, cockiness and relief. Like the patients, I wanted to do another play, but we never did.

Someone who saw the first production of *Così* complained that I was mocking the patients. Certainly I did not set out to do that. I also had no intention of adding to the modern cliché: people outside the asylum are more mad than those inside. But one thing I am proud of is how the shy members of the *Trial by Jury* cast blossomed and gradually I lost any notion of Me and Them. *Così* is faintly based on that production and is a mixture of autobiography, fiction, and my more recent experiences.

Sydney, December 1993

Così was first performed by Company B at the Belvoir Street Theatre, Sydney on 21 April 1992, with the following cast:

HENRY	Bob Baines
JUSTIN, NICK, ZAC	David Field
LUCY, JULIE	Kerry Fox
CHERRY	Celia Ireland
RUTH	Elspeth MacTavish
LEWIS	Ben Mendelsohn
ROY	Barry Otto
DOUG	David Wenham

Director, Adam Cook

Designer, Stephen Curtis

Lighting, Mark Shelton

All photographs are by Stuart Spence from the Belvoir St production, 1992. page vi Ben Mendelsohn as Lewis, Celia Ireland as Cherry and Barry Otto as Roy. page vii Barry Otto (background) as Roy, David Field as Justin and Ben Mendelsohn as Lewis; page viii David Wenham as Doug; page 50 Ben Mendelsohn as Lewis and Kerry Fox as Julie; page 51 Bob Baines as Henry; page 52 Barry Otto as Roy; page 53 Barry Otto as Roy and Ben Mendelsohn as Lewis; page 54 Celia Ireland as Cherry and Ben Mendelshon as Lewis; page 55 David Wenham as Doug and Celia Ireland as Cherry.

CHARACTERS

LEWIS, 21, has just left university.

LUCY, 20–23, is doing an MA thesis and lives with Lewis.

NICK, 21–24, also doing a thesis and directs student productions.

JUSTIN, a social worker in his late 30s or early 40s. He is neat and precise.

ROY, 40–50, a mental patient who has spent much of his life in institutions.

HENRY, 40–50, a former lawyer who is now a patient. Like Roy, he has spent much of his adult life in institutions.

DOUG, 20–30, has a liking for fires, but has not been in institutions very long.

CHERRY, 25–35, has been in institutions for some time.

JULIE, 21–25, is in a mental institution for the first time because of drug dependency.

RUTH, 30–40, an obsessive personality, who is in and out of mental institutions.

ZAC, 25–30, the musician of the group who has been in and out of mental institutions.

SETTING

The time is 1971. The play is set in a Melbourne mental institution.

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

A burnt-out theatre. It is day outside but pitch black inside the theatre. A heavy door opens, a chink of daylight enters, as do three people: LEWIS, his girlfriend LUCY and his friend NICK.

LUCY: Where are the lights?

LEWIS: Don't know.

NICK: Maybe over there.

The door slams shut.

Damn! [*Fiddling with the lock*] Christ, it's locked from the inside.
LEWIS: I thought I saw a switch over there.

They fumble in the darkness for a light switch.

NICK: Smells like it hasn't been used in years.

LUCY: Burnt wood and mould. Are you sure you know what you're doing?

LEWIS: I need the money, Lucy.

NICK accidentally touches LUCY who cries out in alarm.

NICK: [*enjoying this*] It's a ghost.

LUCY: Nick, just find the light!

NICK: All theatres have ghosts.

LUCY: I can't believe you're going to do a show here.

NICK: Mad actors are bad enough, but madmen...

LEWIS: You said you were going to help me.

NICK: As long as you do Galileo with me.

LUCY: I wish you boys would learn to drive, I'm late for my tutorial.

There is the sound of breaking glass.

NICK: [*nervously*] What's that?

LUCY: Someone's breaking in.

NICK: Who is it? Who's there?

ROY: [*nervously*] Is that you, Justin?

LEWIS: No.

ROY: Who is it? Who's there? Answer me!

LUCY: [*relieved*] Found it!

The lights go on. A dismal hall is revealed. A silence as they stare at one another.

ROY: How did you get in?

LEWIS: The door.

ROY: It was locked when I checked it this morning. That's why I broke in. Didn't want to be late.

LEWIS: The superintendent gave me the key. Are you the social worker?

ROY: No, I'm a patient.

LUCY: I have to go now. See you at home, Lewis.

NICK: Lucy! Wait! I'm coming with you.

LEWIS: But you were going to help me.

NICK: [*taking him aside*] I will, but I just remembered I have to meet my thesis supervisor. He's on my back because I'm spending so much time organising the moratorium.

LUCY: Nick, I don't have much time.

NICK: Coming! [*To LEWIS*] Don't forget the *Galileo* rehearsals.

He goes after LUCY. LEWIS feels betrayed. He and ROY, shy of one another are silent until ROY decides to break it.

ROY: This is where I belong: in the theatre.

LEWIS nods, not knowing what to say. JUSTIN ANDERSON enters.

JUSTIN: Morning, Roy. [*To LEWIS*] And what ward are you from?

LEWIS: I'm not from a ward. I'm the director—

JUSTIN: Lewis Riley?

LEWIS: Yes.

ROY: I was expecting someone a bit older.

JUSTIN: Justin Anderson. Everyone calls me Justin. I'm the social worker who initiated this project.

LEWIS: [*looking at the theatre*] It's burnt.

JUSTIN: Coat of paint and it'll be fine.

DOUG: [*entering*] Hey, someone must have been in here before me.

He casts an expert eye on the damage.

Allowed the fire brigade plenty of time to get here. Must have been kids.

JUSTIN: I thought you were in C ward?

DOUG: First person to have ever escaped from the closed ward since that murderer. [*He notices JUSTIN's expression of horror.*] Having you on.

HENRY enters. He is very quiet and never looks anyone in the eye. His left arm is paralysed and he carries it as if it were in an invisible sling.

JUSTIN: Hello, Henry. You want to be in the play too?

He says nothing and sits on a chair.

ROY: Henry's part of my hand-picked team.

DOUG: We're the only ones who answered your ad.

ROY: [*paying no attention to DOUG*] Wonder where the girls are?

HENRY shakes his head.

JUSTIN: [*introducing ROY*] This is Roy, one of the patients who came up with the idea of doing a show.

ROY: [*shaking hands*] We're going to make a great team. What's your name?

LEWIS: Lewis.

ROY: We'll be like Jerry Lewis and Dean Martin.

JUSTIN guides LEWIS away from the enthusiastic ROY.

JUSTIN: [*sotto voce*] He loves the theatre apparently. A great enthusiast when he gets going. He has his down periods like a lot of people, but he's your support, your natural energiser. And this is Doug.

DOUG: So you're the director?

LEWIS: [*uncomfortably*] Yes.

DOUG: Done anything I might have seen?

LEWIS: Probably not.

DOUG: You're bragging. What about a movie? Done a movie?

LEWIS: No.

DOUG: Poofter?

JUSTIN: Doug!

DOUG: I want to know just in case he puts the hard word on me like Dr Simpson.

JUSTIN: And Henry.

LEWIS goes to shake hands with him but HENRY turns away.

Bit shy, the old Henry. Part of this project is to bring out people like Henry.

ROY: Shall we start now, Jerry?

JUSTIN: Hold your horses, we're waiting for the women. How many are there?

ROY: Great response, great response. We need only three and we got them.

JUSTIN: They take longer to get here because they have to come from the women's ward which is over the hill.

ROY: Where's the piano? Asylums are the most inefficient places on this earth.

DOUG: And when you want a lobotomy, you just can't get it, can you, Henry? Nod your head for a yes. Brilliant choice, Roy. Who does Henry play? A hero suffering from verbal diarrhoea.

JUSTIN: Doug!

DOUG: [*referring to ROY*] Mr Show Business here chose him.

ROY: Go burn a cat.

JUSTIN sees LEWIS's apprehension and takes him aside.

JUSTIN: You must feel a bit queasy. I know I was when I first came to work in an asylum. The thing is, and you'll discover this, is that they are just normal people, well, not quite normal, or else they wouldn't be in here, would they? But you get my drift?

LEWIS: [*uncertainly*] Yes.

JUSTIN: They are normal people who have done extraordinary things, thought extraordinary thoughts. You are getting a good hunch.

They'll be no real trouble: no carving knife against the throat. [*A beat.*] You might want to keep a close eye on Doug, though. I didn't know he had been released from a closed ward—being in C ward means the patient is never allowed out, day or night, until we're satisfied they won't harm others or themselves. But he should be all right if they've let him out—as long as he's taking his medication. He's a bit cheeky the way he won't take it sometimes.

LEWIS: Is this where we're performing?

JUSTIN: It looks a bit dispirited, I know—

DOUG: [*shouting over to LEWIS*] You get to fuck the actresses?

JUSTIN: Doug!

DOUG: I was told that's why people want to direct.

JUSTIN: [*to LEWIS*] The government bought the land next to the asylum last year and this theatre was on it. Someone set fire to it, but it's safe. A bit grungy, as we say, but safe. There's some lights up there—what do you call them in the theatre?

LEWIS *shakes his head.*

Anyway, we'll get someone on the staff to have a look at the wiring. [*He stares at the ceiling.*] Bit of a hole up there. Let's hope it doesn't rain on the night, eh? [*A beat.*] Any questions?

LEWIS: What if someone forgets to take their medicine and—

JUSTIN: Goes berserk? That's for the movies. They'll just act a bit extraordinary, that's all. If something happens get someone to call a nurse. [*Looking at his watch*] I wish the women would hurry up.

LEWIS: What sort of thing do you want me to do with them?

JUSTIN: A play. I thought you had been told.

LEWIS: No, I mean, what sort of play?

JUSTIN: Up to you. A panto? Excerpts from Shakespeare. Whatever you like. The important thing is to keep them interested. To bring them out of their shells. Give them something interesting to do.

The lights start flickering.

Oh, oh, trouble in the fuse box.

He goes to examine it.

DOUG: [*to LEWIS*] So, where do you live?

LEWIS: Excuse me?

DOUG: Digs. Flat. House. Burrow. Abode. Shack.

LEWIS: I live in a house.

DOUG: Ah, nice. A house is a nice thing to live in. Where?

LEWIS: Where?

DOUG: You're not deaf, are you? The last thing we want is a deaf director. So what district? Suburb? Locale?

LEWIS: Northcote.

DOUG: What street?

LEWIS: Near the abattoirs.

DOUG: Oh, yeah, bit of a whiff in the morning?

LEWIS: It stinks all right.

DOUG: Cattle? Pigs?

LEWIS: Pigs.

DOUG: Scream a lot?

LEWIS: Sometimes.

Pause.

DOUG: Shacked up with a few sheilas, are you?

LEWIS: No.

DOUG: So, you're a poof?

ROY: About bloody time!

CHERRY, RUTH *and* JULIE *enter*:

CHERRY: It's a long walk.

DOUG: Do you good, you can lose some weight.

CHERRY: Go burn a cat.

JUSTIN: Doug! Cherry! [*A beat.*] Cherry, this is Lewis, our director.

LEWIS: [*shaking her hand*] Hello.

CHERRY: [*referring to his weak grip*] I'm not fragile.

JUSTIN: Lewis, this is Ruth.

RUTH: [*softly*] Hello.

JUSTIN: And... I'm sorry, I don't know your name.

JULIE: Julie.

DOUG: Detoxed yet?

JUSTIN: I want you on your best behaviour.

DOUG: What have I done now?