

THE BLIND GIANT IS DANCING

Stephen Sewell



Currency Press, Sydney

BELVOIR 

CURRENT THEATRE SERIES

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*To my friends
Anna Russell, Dan O'Neill and Marian Wilkinson*

*In memory of
Salvador Allende,
killed by fascist forces while defending the Moneda Palace
with his comrades, 11 September 1973*

‘In these dark and bitter moments, where treachery claims to impose itself, you must know that sooner or later, and very soon, large avenues will again open for men worthy of building a new society.
Long live Chile!
Long live the People!
Long live the Workers!’

President Allende, 11 September 1973

The Blind Giant is Dancing was first produced by the State Theatre Company of South Australia, Adelaide, on 15 October 1983 with the following cast:

GRAHAM WHITE /	
BRUCE FITZGERALD	Russell Kiefel
MR CAREW / GREG	Robert Grubb
MICHAEL WELLS	Stuart McCreery
ALLEN FITZGERALD	Geoffrey Rush
LOUISE KRAUS	Jacqy Phillips
JANE	Robynne Bourne
ROSE DRAPER	Gillian Jones
JANICE LANG / ROBIN	Melita Jurisic
BOB LANG / SIR LESLIE HARRIS	John Wood
RAMON GRIS	Igor Sas
DOUG FITZGERALD	Peter Cummins
EILEEN FITZGERALD	Kerry Walker

Director, Neil Armfield
Designer, Stephen Curtis
Composer, Alan John
Lighting Designer, Nigel Levings

This revised version of the play was produced by Belvoir at the Belvoir St Theatre, Sydney, on 17 February 2016, with the following cast:

MR CAREW	Michael Denkha
RAMON GRIS	Ivan Donato
BRUCE FITZGERALD	Andrew Henry
JANICE / JANE / ROBIN	Emma Jackson
DOUG FITZGERALD /	
SIR LESLIE HARRIS	Russell Kiefel
EILEEN FITZGERALD	Genevieve Lemon
MICHAEL WELLS	Geoff Morrell
ROSE DRAPER	Zahra Newman
ALLEN FITZGERALD	Dan Spielman
LOUISE KRAUS	Yael Stone
BOB LANG	Ben Wood

Director, Eamon Flack

Set and Costume Designer, Dale Ferguson

Lighting Designer, Verity Hampson

Composer and Sound Designer, Steve Toulmin

Fight Choreographer, Scott Witt

Stage Manager, Melanie Stanton

Assistant Stage Manager, Grace Nye-Butler

CHARACTERS

GRAHAM WHITE, a criminal businessman

MICHAEL WELLS, a Social Democratic Party secretary and
bureaucrat

MR CAREW, a Labour Hall functionary, American

ALLEN FITZGERALD, a social economist

LOUISE KRAUS, a feminist socialist, Allen's wife

JANE, a friend of Louise

ROSE DRAPER, a financial journalist

BOB LANG, a bourgeois economist and banker

JANICE LANG, wife of Bob

RAMON GRIS, a Chilean socialist exile

DOUG FITZGERALD, Allen's father, a steelworker

BRUCE FITZGERALD, Allen's brother, a steelworker

SIR LESLIE HARRIS, a capitalist

DIANNE, a secretary

GREG, a revolutionary

EILEEN FITZGERALD, Allen's mother

ROBIN, a worker at the women's refuge

PARTY GUESTS, THREE STEELWORKERS, FOUR THUGS

The characters and events in this drama are entirely fictitious. Any
resemblance to any person alive or dead is coincidental.

This play went to press before the end of rehearsals and may differ
from the play as performed.

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

Blackout.

Fade up the sound of a glass wind bell. A slight pause: someone pushes their way through a bead curtain. Another pause: a moan in the darkness.

Fade up lights on a heavily-covered MAN—unidentifiable. He appears to be looking through an expandable folder. A flopping sound, as of a man trying to rise. Fade up lights on a second man—GRAHAM WHITE—lying facedown on the floor. His head and shirt are covered with blood. He is moving.

The unidentified MAN moves to another folder. WHITE moans. There is a sudden tinkling of the wind bell as a gust moves it.

WHITE: [feebly] Help me...

The unidentified MAN moves to another folder. WHITE drags himself forward. A sudden tinkling of the wind bell as a gust moves it.

Help... help...

The unidentified MAN takes something from the folder—a sheaf of papers—looks at it briefly, then puts it in his pocket.

Help...

The unidentified MAN moves to WHITE, and takes a pistol out of his pocket. Quickly and without ceremony he stands over WHITE, puts the pistol behind his ear and shoots. WHITE's body leaps into the air.

Blackout.

A phone rings.

SCENE TWO

Michael Wells' city apartment. Night.

WELLS and CAREW are dressed to go out; CAREW is wearing a smart coat. He holds a glass of spirits. The phone stops ringing.

Lights up firstly on CAREW. Lights up on WELLS in the foreground, standing pensively next to the phone. A slight pause.

CAREW: What is it?

A slight pause.

WELLS: Graham White's dead.

A slight pause. CAREW sips from his drink.

CAREW: It's a nice apartment, Mike. How much did you pay for the Whiteley?

A slight pause. WELLS goes to pick up the phone.

WELLS: I'll have to ring the Premier.

CAREW: Why?

WELLS: He'll want to know.

CAREW: No he won't: you're the fixer, aren't you?

A slight pause.

What was it? Suicide? I heard he'd been under a lot of pressure since that land scandal.

WELLS pulls his hand back; CAREW looks at his watch.

We'd better hurry up: we'll be late for dinner.

WELLS: [*angrily*] What do you think's going to happen if the police start poking around Charlie Palmer's backyard?

CAREW: They won't.

He gulps his drink and picks up a copy of Militant Voice.

Keeping an eye on the left of the Party, I see. [*Reading the headline*] 'Michael Wells Blocks Anti-Corruption Committee'. You'd better watch out for this Allen Fitzgerald character, Michael. He seems to be a bit of a firebrand.

WELLS: He thinks he's still playing university politics.

CAREW: You can learn a lot at university.

WELLS: I don't know, I never went.

CAREW finishes his drink.

CAREW: We should go. Andrews is only in town till tomorrow. I don't think he'll like being kept waiting.

WELLS: If he wants to make a deal, he'll wait.

CAREW: Listen, Mike: TransOcean could buy and sell this state, so don't go in there acting The Godfather. I know you don't like Americans, but just think of all the trouble he's going to save you.

A slight pause.

WELLS: You feel pretty secure, don't you?

CAREW: You've got more to lose than me—that's all.

A slight pause.

WELLS: Where's my coat?

CAREW: Is it always this cold this time of year?

WELLS: No. There's something wrong with the weather.

CAREW: The same in the States—everything's upside down.

WELLS: You can't tell from Australia.

Blackout.

Immediately, the sound of a train in the underground.

SCENE THREE

Seven months later. An underground railway station.

ALLEN, holding a briefcase, is on his way home.

This is a transitional scene between Scenes One and Two and the body of the play. It should convey the movement of time, in addition to the sense of Allen's isolation and a perception of general social breakdown.

ALLEN walks past a series of disturbing vignettes, with the rhythmic sound of a train and a stark, flickering light adding to the atmosphere.

FIRST IMAGE

A poorly-dressed WOMAN with a baby; a DRUNK on the ground.

A VOICE sings: 'Zip-a-Dee-Doo-Dah'.

SECOND IMAGE

A punk GIRL and BOY go through the pockets of a bashed MAN. She says: 'Fuckin' hurry up'.

THIRD IMAGE

A DERELICT with the DTs. He calls out: 'Come on—where are ya? Come on!'

FOURTH IMAGE

A drunk EVANGELIST: 'And the Lord saith: "I am the Light and the Truth and the Way and whosoever follows me shall gain eternal life and he who spurns me..."'

FIFTH IMAGE

A FATHER looking for a lost child. He cries, distraught: 'Lisa! Lisa! Has anyone seen a little girl. Can't anyone help me? ... Lisa!'

A MAN in a tunnel cries: 'Heaven!'

SIXTH IMAGE

A BUSKER sings Bob Dylan's 'Baby Blue'.

A WOMAN screams in the distance.

SEVENTH IMAGE

LOUISE is drinking alone (as in the next scene).

The sound of the train increases. The lights change; we hear the train stop.

SCENE FOUR

Allen and Louise's house. Night.

ALLEN is cutting carrots on the kitchen table. A bottle of wine is standing on the floor. LOUISE, holding a glass of wine, moves behind him continually.

ALLEN has come home unexpectedly, half expecting to find LOUISE and JANE in bed. This is the subtext of the scene, and the major source of the tension. The central difficulty, as will become apparent, is that the agreement between ALLEN and LOUISE concerning sexuality, based on an understanding of capitalism and the family, prevents either from expressing clearly their anxiety and jealousy.

LOUISE: I just wasn't expecting you home.

ALLEN: I thought you were going out.

LOUISE: I didn't.

ALLEN: So why are you wandering around worrying about a play you saw a month ago?

LOUISE: It's just those Kafkaesque characters full of neurotic guilt—

ALLEN: There's nothing neurotic about Kafka's characters.

LOUISE: Why do you contradict me all the time?

ALLEN: You're wrong.

LOUISE: Are normal people frightened of turning into cockroaches?

ALLEN: I'm absolutely certain I'm turning into a cockroach.

LOUISE: I said 'normal' people, Allen.

ALLEN: 'Normal' people feel guilt and fear punishment. It's psychopaths like Nixon and Kissinger—

LOUISE: About what? What do normal people feel guilty about?

ALLEN: You're the Jew. You tell me.

LOUISE: I see: you married me so you could plug into four thousand years of neurotic guilt— Catholicism not mad enough for you, Allen?

ALLEN: Oh, for Chrissake: I didn't even see the play.

LOUISE: Listen, any schmuck can get up on a stage and say, 'Why are we here?' or, 'To be or not to be', and make the audience feel like they've had a religious experience for fifteen bucks: all I'm saying is it's bullshit!

ALLEN: So much for Western Civilisation.

LOUISE: People's anxieties have more concrete causes than the fact that those people exist: nuclear war, Allen, inflation, unemployment.

ALLEN: Sure. But they do exist, and they do feel guilty!

LOUISE: Why?

ALLEN: There's hunger in this country! There's suffering! I didn't cause that, but it makes me feel guilty. Is that neurotic?

LOUISE: Yes it is. It should make you feel angry; not guilty. What use is feeling guilty about it?

ALLEN: I didn't realise we were talking about the utility of emotions.

LOUISE: You're talking about capitalism, Allen: there's something we can do about capitalism. There's absolutely nothing we can do about existential guilt.

ALLEN: Yes, we're trapped.

LOUISE: Why should I negotiate with the bourgeoisie about their despair? If they feel so fucking empty and meaningless why don't they just piss off? The rent's due.

ALLEN: Pass the poison.

LOUISE: What are you doing?

ALLEN: I'm preparing my dinner which my wife, caught up in her deliberations about who's guilty and who isn't, neglected to prepare.

LOUISE: I thought you were eating at your parents'.

ALLEN: I didn't.

LOUISE: Well, why blame me?

ALLEN: Do you always get drunk when you're not expecting me home?

LOUISE: Why is it that when a woman drinks alone, she's a drunk; but when a man drinks alone, he's thoughtful?

ALLEN: I don't know, Mister Bones, why is it—?

LOUISE: I'm not drunk.

ALLEN: That's a pity—I thought it might have been a touching sign of affection.

LOUISE: I saw a rug we could— You didn't have to say that.

ALLEN: Say what?

LOUISE: You don't listen to me, do you? You just throw out these one-liners whenever there's a silence.

Pause.

I saw a rug we could put in here.

ALLEN: What's wrong with that one?

LOUISE: It was ruined when you left the doors open in the storm!

ALLEN: It looks alright to me.

LOUISE: Alright, I'll put it in your kennel. Don't you care what the house looks like?

ALLEN: If all you want to talk about is the fucking rug!

LOUISE: [*after a slight pause*] What? Why didn't you eat at your parents'?

ALLEN: Why? Did I disturb—?

LOUISE: No! You didn't. Were you able to talk to our man the Minister?

ALLEN: He told me what I told you: there's no money.

LOUISE: There's fucking money, alright. When he's off every month with his international junkets.

ALLEN: You got your budget.

LOUISE: You're the Auditor General now, are you?

ALLEN: You're not the only bloody women's refuge in the state.

LOUISE: Not yet. Maybe next year, eh? If we're good girls. Why are you defending him? Because he's supposed to be a leftist!

ALLEN: I didn't come home to be interrogated.