

MUCH REVUE ABOUT NOTHING

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dspress

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This edition published in 2021 by DSPress:
a division of David Spicer Productions - www.davidspicer.com.au

ISBN 978-0-9943473-3-6

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Layout and typesetting by PJTonline Solutions. www.pjtonline.com

DAVID SPICER PRESS
SYDNEY AUSTRALIA



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ABOUT THE SHOW

The Wharf Revue was created by Jonathan Biggins, Drew Forsythe and Phillip Scott as a late-night Revue for the Sydney Theatre Company in the year 2000. They first came together as a writing and performing team in 1987 on *The Dingo Principle* for ABC television. In the 1990's they re-formed to create *Three Men and a Baby Grand*, a pub revue at the Tilbury Hotel in Woolloomooloo, and it was this form of revue that they brought to the Sydney Theatre Company. Initially at least. Encouraged by Robyn Nevin, the STC artistic director, the show became more like their Dingo days and focused mainly on politics.

Revue as we know it has many antecedents harking back to the Greeks and Romans, the *Commedia dell'arte*, pantomime, music hall, vaudeville or variety, and it is variety that is the essence of a good revue. It has the luxury of plundering all other forms of theatrical entertainment. From broad slapstick to high drama, from farce to Shakespeare, Gilbert and Sullivan to Rodgers and Hammerstein, from the theatre of the absurd to film noir, from grand opera to rap. In Revue, parody is supreme. If it's out there, it's ripe for lampooning. Cast with whoever is in power or in the news.

The following pieces have been selected based on their durability. Most sketches that would make up a Wharf Revue tend to be focused on whatever is current with the use by date expected to expire soon after a good six-to-ten-month season. This selection offers a mix that would make up a ninety-minute show in a rough order that allows for, not only variety, but also, importantly, for some of the cast to change out of one sketch and to be ready for the next one while others are performing.

The sketches are, as the word suggests, generally brief and, like a cartoon sketch, tend to accentuate the obvious. Imbuing characters with the appropriate attitude often takes care of the rest. A selection of alternative sketches is offered as well, any of which can serve as a substitute for those in the main sketch list.

Have some serious fun.

Drew Forsythe.



Jonathan Biggins, Mandy Bishop, Phillip Scott and Drew Forsythe in STC's *The Wharf Revue, 2011, Debt Defying Acts!*. Photo: Tracey Schramm ©

SKETCH LIST AND SOURCE

1. OPENING NUMBER
Debt Defying Acts! (2011) - Large cast song
2. KOALA SONG
The Official Visitors' Guide to Australia (2000) - Monologue
3. PENSIONER SKETCH
The Year of Living Comfortably (2002) - Duologue
4. THE RETIREMENT VILLAGE PEOPLE
The Official Visitors' Guide to Australia (2000) - Large cast song
5. THE GUN SHOP SKETCH
Whoops! (2013) - Duologue
6. THE TREASURER'S SONG
Déjà Revue (2018) - Solo song
7. THE FRUGALS
Beware of the Dogma (2007) - Solo or large cast song
8. ANH'S BRUSH WITH PETER DUTTON
The Patriotic Rag (2017) - Duologue
9. THE JOB SEEKERS
Good Night and Good Luck (2020) - Quartet song
10. THE HISTORY OF FEDERATION IN CAKES
The Official Visitors' Guide to Australia (2000) - Duologue & easy song
11. BORIS' SONG
Unredacted (2019) - Solo song
12. UNDER MILK WOOD
Not Quite out of the Woods (2010) - Large cast sketch
13. BEES
Never staged - Duologue
14. THE WORRIED MAN'S SONG
Beware of the Dogma (2007) - Solo song
15. THE FRENCH REVOLUTION
Debt Defying Acts! (2011) - Four-person sketch & song with optional chorus
16. THE BRINGABEERLONG EXPERIENCE
The Official Visitors' Guide to Australia (2000) - Five-person (or more) sketch
17. THE PLASTIC WRAP
Unredacted (2019) - Five-person (or more) sketch
18. THE WHALERS
Not Quite out of the Woods (2010) - Four-person (or more) song
19. THE FINALE
Debt Defying Acts! (2011) - Large cast song

ALTERNATIVE SKETCH LIST AND SOURCE

20. OPENING NUMBER
Back to Bite You (2016) - Large cast song
21. THE PAULINE DOCTRINE
Good Night and Good Luck (2020) - Monologue
22. KEATING AND GILLARD
Open For Business (2014) - Duologue and duet
23. IVANKA TRUMP
The Patriotic Rag (2017) - Solo song
24. THE TALE OF EDDIE OBEID
Whoops! (2013) - Large cast song
25. ALAN (JAMES) JOYCE
Celebrating 15 Years (2015) - Monologue
26. THE BALLAD OF BARNABY'S CHOICE
Déjà Revue (2018) - Solo song
27. YOU CAN'T STOP THE KIM
The Patriotic Rag (2017) - Solo song
28. MUMMA RUSSIA
Good Night and Good Luck (2020) - Monologue or easy song
29. QUEEN ELIZABETH I
The Patriotic Rag (2017) - Monologue
30. VLAD THE IMPALER
The Patriotic Rag (2017) - Monologue
31. LOUIS XVI
The Patriotic Rag (2017) - Monologue
32. CARRY ON UP THE BREXIT
Back to Bite You (2016) - Five-person sketch
33. FAWLTY TOWERS
Good Night and Good Luck (2020) - Five-person sketch
34. THE GOON SHOW
Celebrating 15 Years (2015) - Up to nine-person sketch
35. THE POLICE INTERVIEW
Waiting for Garnaut (2008) - Duologue
36. THE RANDWICK RACE CALL
Beware of the Dogma (2007) - Monologue
37. REFUGEE SHANTIES
Red Wharf: Beyond The Rings of Satire (2011) - Large cast song
38. THE OMNIVORE'S DILEMMA
Red Wharf: Beyond The Rings of Satire (2011) - Large cast song
39. MAJOR DICK TINGLE
Revue Sans Frontières (2006) - Monologue
40. CLOSING NUMBER
Beware of The Dogma (2007) - Large cast song

1. OPENING NUMBER

There are many ways to start a Revue, but the easiest and most direct way is, in the best musical tradition, with an opening number. The following is the piece that was used for our show Debt Defying Act. (The original set resembled a circus tent, but it could be a local show or event). Originally sung to the tune of “Le Soleil Et La Lune” by Charles Trenet.

RINGMASTER OR MC

GIVE US A CHEER 'CAUSE THE CARNIVAL'S HERE
SO WELCOME AND SIT YOURSELVES DOWN.
MAYBE YOU'VE HEARD
WE'VE REPOLISHED THIS TURD
AND WE'RE ROLLING IT BACK INTO TOWN.

NOW'S THE TIME
TO FORGET ABOUT TAXES AND DEBT
AND THE WHINGING THAT DRIPS LIKE A TAP:
THE ENDLESS COMPLAINING,
IT'S DROUGHT OR IT'S RAINING,
YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'RE CAUGHT IN A TRAP

CHORUS

LIFE'S A NEVER-ENDING CONGA LINE OF JOKERS
AND A CAVALCADE OF CLOWNS
THAT NEVER MAKE YOU LAUGH;
CHARLATANS AND PETTY POWER BROKERS
WHO WILL SAW THE TRUTH IN HALF.



Phillip Scott in STC's *The Wharf Revue*, 2014, *Open for Business*. Photo: Brett Boardman ©

RINGMASTER OR MC

BUT NOT IN HERE SO NEVER FEAR
LEAVE YOUR WORRIES
AND YOUR TROUBLES ON THE STREET.
WE'VE GOT A SHOW, WE'RE SET TO GO
OUR MAKE-BELIEVE REALITY
IS VERY HARD TO BEAT.

CHORUS

IN A WORLD
WHERE THERE IS TOO MUCH INFORMATION,
THERE'S A NASTY LITTLE MONKEY
SITTING ON YOUR BACK,
THAT'S THE BUNKUM AND BAILOUT CIRCUS.

THEY SAY TAXING POLLUTION IS NOT THE SOLUTION
WE MUST LET THE MARKET DECIDE,
BUT YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND
WHEN YOUR HEAD'S IN THE SAND
AND RETAIL HAS CURLED UP AND DIED.

THERE'S THE RIOTS IN CLAPHAM,
YOU JUST WANT TO SLAP 'EM
THE EURO HAS GONE DOWN THE DRAIN,
AMERICA'S FADING, THEIR CREDIT'S DOWNGRADING
AND VIRGIN IS DOWN TO ONE PLANE.

YOU CAN'T AFFORD A SECOND-HAND BANANA
AND YOUR SUPERANNUATION
WOULDN'T FEED A MOUSE;
FORGET ABOUT YOUR DOLCE AND GABANA
'CAUSE THE BANK JUST SOLD YOUR HOUSE.

YOU BETTER GRAB, ANOTHER JAB
BEFORE A NASTY VIRUS TRIES TO HAVE A GO.
HEY WHAT THE HELL, YOU MIGHT AS WELL
SPEND YOUR LAST REMAINING DOLLAR
ON A TRAVELLING SHOW.

IN A WORLD WHERE THERE
IS TOO MUCH COMPENSATION,
AND THE ART OF CONVERSATION
IS PROLONGED ATTACK.
THAT'S THE SOUL-LESS BROTHERS CIRCUS.

RINGMASTER OR MC

SO, THERE YOU GO - WE'VE GOT A SHOW,
AND WE HOPE THAT YOU WON'T BOO US
WHEN WE'RE DONE;
WHEN THINGS GET TOUGH, YOU'VE HAD ENOUGH,
IT'S BEST TO JUST RELAX
AND THEN GO OUT AND HAVE SOME FUN.

IN A TIME WHERE THERE'S A LOT OF COMPLICATION,
EVERYBODY SEES THE WORLD AS WHITE OR BLACK,
IT'S THE BULLDUST AND WORTHLESS CIRCUS.

2. KOALA SONG

For a change of pace from the opening, a simple one-person piece either sung or recited works. This was done in our second show in 2001 and was performed by Jacki Weaver in a cute Koala suit. Played innocently and unhurried, it will always be topical, and it gives the rest of the cast time to prepare for the next piece.

KOALA

I'M A KOALA FROM SOFALA
 AND I'M FAR AWAY FROM HOME;
 LOST MY MUM, BURNED UP A GUM
 AND WANDERED ON MY PAT MALONE.
 RODE A SEMI INTO SYDNEY,
 JUST TO SEE WHAT I COULD SEE
 STARTED LOOKIN' FOR A PLACE TO CRASH,
 A EUCALYPTUS TREE.

FOUND ONE IN BARANGAROO
 BUT THEN THEY WENT AND CHOPPED IT DOWN
 FOR THE NORTH-WEST METRO STATION
 EVEN THOUGH IT'S UNDERGROUND,
 SAW A TASTY TINGIRINGI ON
 THE SHORE AT WOLLOOMOOLOO,
 BUT IT WAS POISONED OVERNIGHT
 BECAUSE IT BLOCKED A HARBOUR VIEW.

TRIED TO MAKE IT TO TARONGA
 AS I HAD A COUSIN THERE;
 HE'D BEEN BURNT OUT IN WODONGA

AND WAS TAKEN INTO CARE.
ALMOST MADE IT - GOT TO MOSMAN -
WHEN SOME WELL-INTENTIONED DILLS
TOOK ME TO THE KOALA CONCENTRATION
CAMP AT PENNANT HILLS.



Jacki Weaver in STC's *The Wharf Revue*, 2000, *The Official Visitors' Guide to Australia*. Photo: Melissa Latham (Tracey Schramm Photography) ©

WHERE YOU'RE FORCED TO POSE FOR TOURISTS
ALL THESE MIDDLE-CLASS CHINESE,
BUT THERE'S NOT THAT MANY NOW
'CAUSE OF THIS WEIRD BAT-SHIT DISEASE.
SO, I BUSTED OUT ONE NIGHT
TO JOIN A MATE IN LENNOX HEAD
BUT THEY WENT AND ZONED THE LAND
FOR REDEVELOPMENT INSTEAD.

[Dance break]

NOW EVERY BLOODY GUM TREE
ON THE EAST COAST OF THE STATE,
IS EITHER BURNT OR SOLD
TO BARILARO'S LITTLE MATE,
SO, I'M LIVIN' ROUGH IN BYRON BAY
WITHOUT MY KITH AND KIN,
EXCEPT THIS STRANGE KOALA
SHAKING MONEY IN A TIN.

NOW THE MORAL OF MY STORY:
YOU CAN BE AS CUTE AS FUCK,
BUT IT DOESN'T MEAN A THING
IF SOMEONE WANTS TO MAKE A BUCK.
WHEN YOU MEET A POLITICIAN
JUST STAY COOL AND KEEP IT CALM,
ALWAYS PIDDLE IN HIS POCKET,
NEVER PIDDLE ON HIS ARM.

3. PENSIONER SKETCH

OLD WOMAN PENSIONER sitting on a bench. OLD MAN joins her. They are jolly and content. A slide of Hyde Park or a local park could be shown on a scrim.

MAN: Mind if I join you?

WOMAN: Please do. Haven't seen you about lately.

MAN: It's my hip again.

WOMAN: Oh dear.

MAN: I had a fall a few years back.

WOMAN: Oh, yes?

MAN: Fell off the trapeze. I was working in the circus but I couldn't retire until I was seventy. Eyesight had gone, broke every bone in my body. Even my artificial hip. Can't complain though.

WOMAN: No-one'd listen.

MAN: Pardon? I went for a medical checkup. In Woolworths.

WOMAN: Cheaper than a doctor.

MAN: And you get your Everyday Reward points.

WOMAN: I might pop in about my terminal cancer. Can't seem to shake it.

MAN: It's going around.

WOMAN: I worked till I was seventy too.

MAN: Why seventy-two?

WOMAN: No no, till I was seventy... also.

MAN: Oh, I see. What line of work?

WOMAN: Prostitute.

MAN: Oh, yes. I've been thinking of trying that myself.

WOMAN: I wouldn't. I couldn't lie on my back because of my sciatica. And I've got terrible arthritis in both wrists. Didn't do that any good.

MAN: But I've got dentures and I thought that might be a plus.

WOMAN: You'd have to wear knee pads at your age. Still, things could be worse.

MAN: Oh yes! Imagine if they brought back that carbon tax! That'd hit us hard!

WOMAN: My word. And how are things at home?

MAN: Oh, I live here now. How's your family?

WOMAN: I do my bit to help with the kids. I hate them, but what's a granny for? Child care's so pricey.

MAN: How old are they now?

WOMAN: Young Jimmy is 38 and Maddison's 42. It'd be nice if they had jobs, but they fell in with the wrong crowd and went to university.

MAN: I'm still paying off my HECS and I didn't even go. Still, could be worse.

WOMAN: Oh yes. Imagine if they brought back that super profits mining tax!

MAN: Listen, would you care to join me for a cup of tea and a sandwich?

WOMAN: I can't - I'm on that five and two diet. Five days I can't afford to eat and two days I'm hungry.

[Enter BEGGAR.]

BEGGAR: Excuse me, I've got no money, no future and nowhere to live.

MAN: Are you a self-funded retiree as well?

WOMAN: You've got enough money for a piece of cardboard and a texta, you bludger.

BEGGAR: I took it from the office when they sacked me.

MAN: What office?

BEGGAR: I was a financial adviser for the Commonwealth Bank.

WOMAN: What happened?

BEGGAR: I took my own advice. Then they made me redundant.

Stupid idiots - I already was. You got any change?

MAN: No.

BEGGAR: I take cards. No Diners Club.

MAN: Do you do B-pay?

BEGGAR: Yes, but there's a transaction fee.

WOMAN: Can you tap and go?

BEGGAR: Yes.

[BEGGAR tap dances and exits.]

MAN: What have we come to?

WOMAN: A song hopefully.

4. THE RETIREMENT VILLAGE PEOPLE

Sung to a medley of Village People songs “You Can’t Stop the Music”, “Go West”, “YMCA”, “In the Navy”.

V/O or MC: And now, live from the Central Coast please welcome the Retirement Village People!

[THE RETIREMENT VILLAGE PEOPLE enter slowly on walking frames. THE LEAD SINGER addresses the crowd.]

1ST OLD PERSON: Do you want to rock? I said do you want rock? Then get the nurse to give you Jason recliners. *[A nudge.]*

ALL

EVERYWHERE WE ROAM,
THROUGH THE NURSING HOME,
THERE ARE PENSIONERS COMPLAINING
IT’S TOO HOT OR IT’S RAINING.

FOODS NOT FIT TO EAT,
MY DENTURES DON’T QUITE MEET.
THE FAMILY ONLY VISITS ME ON PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

OSTEOARTHRITIS,
DIVERTICULITIS;
THERE’S POLYPS IN MY RECTUM -
IF YOU LIKE, YOU CAN INSPECT THEM.
ONE THING WE WON’T FORSAKE,
THE RIGHT TO BELLYACHE,
IT’S WHINGING THAT KEEPS US ALIVE!

WHAT'S THAT AWFUL MUSIC?
CAN SOMEBODY STOP THAT MUSIC?
DON'T CALL THAT TUNE,
NOT LIKE CLAIRE DE LUNE,
NAT KING COLE COULD CROON
FAIRLY WELL FOR A DARK MAN.

PLEASE TURN OFF THAT MUSIC,
I CAN'T EVEN HEAR THE MUSIC.
IT ALL SOUNDS THE SAME,
DO YOU KNOW MY NAME?
CAN I COME HOME WITH YOU?

GO NORTH, TO MAROOCHYDORE!
GO NORTH, THE PENSION BUYS YOU MORE;
GO NORTH, SET YOUR RETIREMENT GOALS,
GO NORTH, PLAYING ENDLESS BOWLS.

GO NORTH, BY THE SUN AND SEA;
GO NORTH, LOST OPPORTUNITY.
GO NORTH, THAT'S BEEN HEAVEN SENT,
GO NORTH, THEN HEAVEN'S PERMANENT.

YOUNG MAN, WIPE THAT SMIRK OFF YOUR FACE.
I SAID, YOUNG MAN, IN MY DAY WE SAID GRACE.
WE HAD MANNERS AND WE ALL KNEW OUR PLACE,
TAKE YOUR ELBOWS OFF THE TABLE.

YOUNG MAN, WHAT'S GOING WRONG WITH TODAY?
I SAID YOUNG MAN,
THINGS WEREN'T ALWAYS THIS WAY.

IT'S ALL MONEY, NO ONE SMILES TILL YOU PAY,
AND YOU NEVER KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOURS.

WHY DID THEY HAVE TO SELL THE NRMA?
IT ALWAYS SERVED ME WELL, THE NRMA.
LOCKED MY KEYS IN THE CAR IN 1975,
MY DEAR HUSBAND WAS THEN STILL ALIVE.
HE WAS A MEMBER OF THE NRMA,
HE JOINED IN LATE SEPTEMBER.
DASH OH, WHAT WAS I GOING TO SAY?
THAT WAS DURING THE WAR
WHEN YOU COULDN'T GET MEAT
SO BE GRATEFUL BUT YOU'VE GOT FOOD TO EAT

YOUNG MAN, I THINK IT'S TIME FOR A NAP
I SAID...

[Snores]

IN YOUR 80S, I'VE GOT ARTHRITIS IN MY KNEE;
IN YOUR 80S, SALTY CRYSTALS IN MY WEE;
IN YOUR 80S, I'M ABOUT TO LOSE MY SIGHT;
IN YOUR 80S, I GET UP FIVE TIMES TONIGHT.

IN YOUR 80S, YOU GET BATHED IN KEROSENE;
IN YOUR 80S, YOUR UNDERWEAR IS RARELY CLEAN;
IN YOUR 80S, GET A DISCOUNT ON YOUR RATES;
IN YOUR 80S, ONE BY ONE YOU LOSE YOUR MATES.

FOR GOD'S SAKE STOP THE MUSIC!
I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU CALL THAT MUSIC!
THOSE INCESSANT DRUMS,
WORSE WHEN EDNA HUMS,
MY PANTS ARE FULL OF CRUMBS
CAN SOMEONE CHANGE ME?

I BEG YOU STOP THE MUSIC!
CAN SOMEONE KILL THE MUSIC!
'CAUSE WE NEED THE HALL
FOR THE BINGO CALL...
OH! I THINK THAT EDNA'S DIED.