

Derwent Valley Players

Present

Joseph Kesselring's

Arsenic & Old Lace



New Norfolk War Memorial Hall

~

May 2019

A word from the Director....



After attending drama classes for three years in Sydney and "performing" in a couple of small plays, my drama teacher, Bill Pepper, asked me, in the nicest possible way, if I had ever thought of directing. With his encouragement, I attended the British Theatre Association's course for directors and teachers in London. I returned to Sydney to help found The Rocks Players who went on to become a very successful troupe working in The Rocks area of the city. We performed several of Shakespeare's plays, original works by one of our members, street theatre and many other works.

I moved to New Norfolk in 2009 and joined the Derwent Valley Players a couple of years later. I have directed several original works with the Players since then. Tonight's play is a major departure for the Players from their previous works in Pantomime and smaller plays. I hope you enjoy the play tonight as they have worked extremely hard to bring this entertainment to you.

Vivienne de Bressac

Who are The Derwent Valley Players?

The Derwent Valley Players are a local band of thespians, artists, stage managers, sound and lighting technicians, costume designers and directors. For many years the Players have produced and performed a Christmas Pantomime for the children of the valley and the young at heart. They have also performed original plays written by Sharon Hutchison, and Aldo Fabian, which were staged at The Barracks, Willow Court and also at the Autumn Festival. What they lack in money they more than make up for in enthusiasm and talent and are always looking for like minded folk to join their troupe. For more information visit our website: **www.derwent-valley-players.org**

If you'd like to get involved please contact us via email:
dvp@drsc.com.au

“Arsenic and Old Lace”, by Joseph Kesselring

A play in 3 Acts.
(Two Intermissions)

The Story...

Meet the Brewsters: spinster sisters, Abby and Martha, dedicated to charity, family, and “helping” lonely, old men with their homemade arsenic-laced elderberry wine. And who can forget their loving nephews? Teddy, who thinks he’s Theodore Roosevelt, Jonathan (a Boris Karloff look-alike psychopath), and Mortimer, a likable drama critic who navigates his homicidal family, his fiancée, and the Brooklyn PD.

Characters (in Order of Appearance)

The story takes place in the Brewster Mansion, Brooklyn, New York, USA

Abby Brewster	Linley Hopkins
Rev. Dr. Harper	Les Whittle
Teddy Brewster	Michael Smith
Officer Brophy	Bryce Rieper
Officer Klein	Ruth Montgomery
Martha Brewster	Sharon Hutchison
Elaine Harper	Nadia Lobb
Mortimer Brewster	Reece Bradley
Mr. Gibbs	Theron Russell
Jonathan Brewster	Nigel Davidson
Dr. Einstein	Martin Bennett
Officer O’Hara	Simon Rolfe
Lieutenant Rooney	Les Whittle
Superintendent Witherspoon	Michael Rieper



Arseenic &



Linley Hopkins has been with The DVP for 12 years. Did some plays in her (remote) youth, & some school stuff. Lin enjoys “being someone else for a brief while on the stage”. She likes frocking up and arseing about.



Sharon Hutchison has been involved in professional & amateur theatre since the 70's, both in Canada & New Norfolk. Also a playwright, Sharon focuses on The Derwent Valley, & particularly the Willow Court Precinct.



Reece Bradley is a late-bloomer to the stage, getting “the bug” after winning a competition to appear as an extra alongside Michael Shanks in the Hobart-filmed movie “Arctic Blast” (2010). Reece has served six years with the DVP.



Nadia Lobb debuted in a high school production of Oscar Wilde's ‘A picture of Dorian Grey’. Joining The DVP in 2016 you may remember her as Wendy (“Peter Pan”), or Dorothy (“Wizard of Oz”). “I like acting because we take an imaginary circumstance & for just a little while it becomes real.”

Kesselring's

Old Lace



Les Whittle says that the pinnacle of his on-stage career, the apex of his acting life, is his work with The Derwent Valley Players. This is where he has received his greatest accolades. indeed the DVP is the only company that tolerates him.



Simon Rolfe started acting in a High School musical (no, not *The* High School Musical) & continued for a couple of productions in Beaufort, Victoria. Since joining The DVP six years ago, Simon has been seen in a variety of roles and dresses in the much-loved annual Christmas Pantomime.



Michael Smith is a new face and very welcome addition to The Derwent Valley Players. "I have always enjoyed theatre and looking forward to my first outing onstage, rather than backstage."



Bryce Rieper has been acting with the DVP for one year now and this his first production with them. Prior to joining the dvp he has been in two high school productions.



This is **Nigel Davidson's** third show in as many years, following Hobart Rep's "Playing the Palace" (2017) & "Appointment with Death" (2018). Nigel labels himself a performing artist (his other disciplines being violin & legal advocacy. Tasmanian-born, Nigel is recently returned from 10 years service with a United Nations mission in East Africa.



Ruth Montgomery began her amateur theatre career with The Indee Theatre group - Eumundi, QLD 10 years ago. Previous roles included Alice Tinker in The Vicar of Dibley. Her first role for the DVP was in panto as The Munchkin Queen. She may never tread the boards again...



Martin Bennett claims to trace his ancestry back to Porky Pig (he's been a ham all his life, as his long-suffering mother will attest). Performing first in The Don College production of "Little Shop of Horrors", he joined The DVP as The Wizard in "The Wizard of Oz" in 2010, & did it all again in 2017.



This is only **Michael Rieper's** second stab at acting. In-between set construction he *says* he has had a good time, and hopes that "Arsenic & Old Lace" is a hit



Theron Russell has been with The Derwent Valley Players since 2015(-ish, and known to have a foggy memory). He appeared in "Alice in Pantoland" as Prince Rumme. Theron was born last century, and is apparently rumoured to still be living"

The Derwent Valley Players would like to thank:



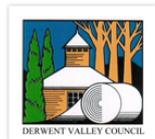
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Arsenic and Old Lace is presented by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc.

Original Broadway production by Howard Lindsay & Russel Crouse.

The DVP would like to acknowledge the kind support of...



Arsenic & Old Lace Creative Team

<u>Director:</u>	Vivienne de Bressac
<u>Assistant Director:</u>	Hazel Bridges
<u>Prompt, Costumes & Set:</u>	Valarie Costarelli
<u>Production Design & Sound Effects:</u>	Doug Smith
<u>Lighting:</u>	Roz Chapman & John Davidson
<u>Photographs:</u>	Candice Lopez
<u>Make-up:</u>	Alison Butterworth
<u>Posters & Programs:</u>	Martin Bennett

Special Thanks to Michaella Duffin for provision of medical tools & case,
And all our wonderful Support Crew



Valarie Costarelli



Doug Smith

About the author



JOSEPH KESSELRING was an American writer and playwright best known for tonight's play 'Arsenic and Old Lace' which he wrote in 1939 and originally entitled 'Bodies in Our Cellar'. Kesselring was born in New York City in July 1902 and spent much of his life in and around the theatre. In 1922 he began teaching vocal music and directed stage productions at Bethel College in North Newton, Kansas. After two years, Kesselring left teaching and returned to the stage, working for two years with an amateur theatrical group in Niagara, New York. He began working as a freelance playwright in 1933, completing 12 original plays, of which four were produced on Broadway. Kesselring died in Kingston, New York in November 1967 at the age of 65.

A few things you may not know about "Arsenic & Old Lace"

- 1) The title "Arsenic and Old Lace" comes from the term Lavender and Old Lace; a phrase used during the Victorian era to describe the homes of genteel ladies that were decorated with lace curtains, lace dollies, and smelled of lavender.
- 2) Although Boris Karloff, an icon of horror films, originated the role of Jonathan on Broadway, he did not appear in Frank Capra's movie version. His cast mates Josephine Hull & Jean Adair (the Aunts), along with John Alexander (Teddy) did. The producers insisted Karloff remain with the show on Broadway because his star power was a box office draw. Karloff was replaced with Raymond Massey, most famous for playing Abraham Lincoln, in an inspired bit of casting.
- 3) The first version of this play was called "Bodies in Our Cellar" & was a melodrama/horror play. Kesselring mailed it to actor Dorothy Lindsay, thinking she might be good to play one of the murderous aunts. Her husband, playwright & Broadway producer Howard Lindsay heard her laughing riotously while reading the script. He read it & concurred: it would make a fabulous farce if they pushed it farther in that direction. Howard Lindsay & producing partner Russel Crouse (best known as the team behind The Sound of Music) can take a lot of credit for turning the play into the hit comedy Arsenic & Old Lace.
- 4) The "murderous old lady" plot line may have been inspired by actual murders that occurred in Windsor, Connecticut in the early 20th century. Amy Archer-Gilligan, ran a home for the elderly, promising her boarders full care until they died. After paying their \$1,000 fee for lifetime care, their lives proved remarkably short. She is estimated to have killed over 40 people with Arsenic and other poisons.

