

THE ONE DAY OF THE YEAR—REVIEW

'It's Anzac Day this week, that's my day, that's the old Diggers' day.'

Alan Seymour's best-known play, *The One Day of the Year* met with huge controversy when it was first released – Seymour received death threats, and a policeman had to be stationed at the stage door to ward off the angry public. At the first professional season at Sydney's Palace Theatre in April 1961, a bomb scare during a dress rehearsal forced police to clear the theatre. Over the intervening years it has become an iconic piece of Australian theatre, which Kucom Theatre is proud to present this week at Paxton's on the River to commemorate the centenary of the ANZAC landing at Gallipoli.

[*The One Day of the Year*](#) is a play to make us question a standard institution – Anzac Day, the sacred cow among Australian annual celebrations – but it is the likeability and genuineness of the characters that give the play its memorable qualities. For the current production, director Jim Kelly has sourced a formidable array of local talent to explore the universal theme of father-son conflict against the beery haze and nostalgic sentimentality of that conglomeration of legend, mythology and national celebration that is Anzac Day.

Ex-serviceman Alf (Bill Wall) is appalled by the fact that his University student son Hughie (Connor Bashford), with posh North Shore girlfriend Jan (Sabrina Williams), has written a newspaper article portraying the 'real' celebration of the day: ex-servicemen passed out in alcoholic stupor. The highly emotional and sometimes violent exchanges between Alf and Hughie provide some of the finest scenes and most telling moments in the play.

In the midst of this turmoil Alf's long-suffering wife, the dry and laconic Dot (Donna Kellion), with her endless cups of tea, displays a steely inner strength and toughness as she strives to keep the peace between father and son. Brian O'Neill turns in a deeply moving performance as Alf's mate Wacka – a true Anzac, the frail, painfully limping veteran of two World Wars – who resists the mythology around Anzac Day to describe in gruesome detail the horrifying and inglorious realities of the battlefield.

Be prepared for strong language, and don't expect political correctness – this play was written in 1958, when 'Poms, Yanks, and bloody Eyeties' were regarded with deep suspicion by old diggers like Alf Cook.

The venue for this production is ideal. Paxtons provides a large and fluid space where the generously proportioned set embraces the audience and draws them right into the action of the play.

If you are Australian, you must see *The One Day of the Year* in this ANZAC centenary year.

It's on Thursday 23rd, Friday 24th and Saturday 25th April at Paxtons on the River, starting at 7.30pm. Bookings through www.trybooking.com.au/128568.

For all other enquiries, please phone Kucom Theatre on 0408 980 022 or e-mail to admin@kucom.org.au.