

YOUR NATIONAL
CULTURE GUIDE



NOW SHOWING

Ideal Home (M)
Food, wine and travel feature in *Ideal Home*, in which English actor Steve Coogan as Erasmus Brumble, the flamboyant host of a television cooking show. His anxious director, Paul (American actor Paul Rudd), feels like the one under the whip. He and Erasmus are a couple. They seem to have a good life. Their home is a luxurious ranch in New Mexico. They have lots of friends. Their relationship is taken somewhere unexpected when a 10-year-old boy arrives at their door. He is Erasmus's grandson. Earlier we see his deadbeat father taken in by the police. "You f.k everything up," the boy says to him. It's what happens next that makes this movie, written and directed by Andrew Fleming, a bit different. Coogan and Rudd are believable as a gay couple. Erasmus is more camp, wearing a fur coat to a Taco Bell for example, while Paul is straighter-looking but more volatile. Both are proud of their sexuality. While the boy is the centre of the story, it's the relationship between the two men that taps some emotional depths.

STEPHEN ROMEI ★★☆☆

Brothers' Nest (MA15+)
Brothers' Nest, a film starring the Jacobson brothers, Shane and Clayton, is a clear departure from the brothers' previous work. In contrast to *Kenny* or the recent joke film *That's Not My Dog!*, this is an intimate suspense movie. It all starts as the siblings in question, Terry (Shane, pictured below) and Jeff (Clayton), cycle along country roads until they arrive at the isolated house where they grew up. It soon becomes clear that the duo is plotting to murder Roger, their stepfather, to prevent him from inheriting the house when their mother, who is dying of cancer, expires. Although *Brothers' Nest* feels very much like a short story uncomfortably expanded to feature length, it's not unentertaining. The Jacobsons, leaving behind the obvious laughs for which they are famous, convincingly portray a couple of conniving, murderous bastards, and the film, despite an obviously modest budget, is very efficiently made.

DAVID STRATTON ★★☆☆



NSW

STAGE

Impending Everyone
Michael Andrew Collins's *Impending Everyone* dramatises the happenings at a high school in NSW. An unknown figure has hacked into the students' tech history, including their private messages, and is threatening to publish all the found data. This pressure pushes the pupils to face their actions.

Griffin Theatre. 13 Craigend Street, Darlinghurst. Tomorrow, 7pm. Tickets: \$28-\$38. Bookings: (02) 9361 3817 or online. Until July 7.

QUEENSLAND

OPERA

Opera Romance
Presented by Opera Queensland, soprano Antoinette Halloran and tenor Rosario La Spina celebrate their careers, performing their favourite arias and duets. The pair also share their backstage stories. They perform alongside members of the Open Stage Community Chorus.

QPAC Lyric Theatre. Corner of Grey and Melbourne streets, Brisbane. Thursday, 6:30pm. Tickets: \$69. Bookings: 136 246 or online.



SOUTH AUSTRALIA

STAGE

Brothers Wreck
Line for line, Jada Alberts's writing is tensile and engaging. The opening scene of *Brothers Wreck* — with its lack of apostrophe: are we keeping count or is wrecking something brothers do? — is one of the most powerful and realistic evocations of shock and grief I have seen on a stage. Trevor Jamieson pictured above, plays David.

CHRIS BOYD

Odeon Theatre. 57a Queen Street, Norwood. Tomorrow, 6:30pm and 8pm. Tickets: \$34-66. Inquiries: 131 246 or online. Until July 14.

TASMANIA

CLASSICAL

Hough plays Rachmaninov
Pianist Stephen Hough performs Rachmaninov's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, Tchaikovsky's *The Tempest* and Dvorak's Symphony No 6. Johannes Fritsch conducts.

Federation Concert Hall. 1 Davey Street, Hobart. Friday, 7:30pm. Tickets: \$46-\$104. Bookings: 1800 001 190 or online.

VICTORIA

MUSIC

Summer Nights
The program starts with Gabriel Faure's *Madrigal*, followed by Ernest Chausson's *La Nuit*, Camille Saint-Saens' *Le soir descend sur la colline*, Hector Berlioz's *Les nuits d'été*, Jules Massenet's *Nuit d'Espagne*, and Claude Debussy's *Chanson Espagnole*, concluding with Massenet's *Chantrez*.

Melbourne Recital Centre. The Salon, 31 Sturt Street. Tomorrow, 6pm. Tickets: \$29-\$39. Bookings: (03) 9699 3333 or online. Duration: 1hr (no interval).

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

CABARET

Amsterdam to Mars
Amsterdam to Mars is performed by Dutch-German cabaret artist Sven Ratzke. The program includes his performances of songs by Bertolt Brecht, David Bowie and Rufus Wainwright, in a combination of styles.

His Majesty's Theatre. Downstairs at The Maj, 825 Hay Street, Perth. Thursday, 7:30pm. Tickets: \$45-\$65. Bookings: (8) 6212 9292 or online. Until Saturday.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

DANCE

4Seasons
Expressions Dance Company and Hong Kong's City Contemporary Dance Company present the triple-bill show *4Seasons*, featuring new works created by Natalie Weir, Dominic Wong and choreographer Kristina Chan. Excerpts of music by composer Max Richter are melded with Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*.

The Darwin Entertainment Centre. Playhouse Theatre, 93 Mitchell Street, Darwin City. Friday, 10:30am. Tickets: \$18-\$55. Bookings: (08) 8980 3333 or online. Ends Saturday.

Edited by Sophia Morrison
Full reviews of new films will appear in *The Weekend Australian* on Saturday

Send event information to listsings@theaustralian.com.au

No expense spared in triumphant blurring of social classes

OPERA

The Merry Widow
By Franz Lehar. Opera Queensland. Lyric Theatre, QPAC, Brisbane, June 22.

MARTIN BUZACOTT

Right repertoire, right director, right leading couple. Patrick Nolan sure demonstrates a deft programming touch in his first main house production as the new artistic director of Opera Queensland.

Franz Lehar's operetta *The Merry Widow* is a classic, but it's no gimme production-wise: its plot moves at the pace of a sloth under sedation and its music has to seduce through nuance and

rhythm, not just vocal pyrotechnics. And if you don't get the extensive ballet component right, you don't have a show.

So hats off to Nolan for choosing the legendary choreographer Graeme Murphy as director.

It pays off in a lavish and loving production where the many dance sequences are an absolute highlight.

Beautiful to look at, Michael Scott-Mitchell's set and Jennifer Irwin's costumes earn applause in Acts 2 and 3 before a note is sung, while Justin Fleming's new translation strikes a beautiful balance between lowbrow comedy and high-society pretence.

And that blurring of social classes is what the plot is all about, an uncomfortable romance between simple farm girl Hanna



STEPHANIE DO ROZARIO

Natalie Christie Peluso soars as farm-girl-made-good Hanna

(Natalie Christie Peluso), who marries well, and a loose-living Count (David Hobson) who's a

socialist. Credibility is no problem here, Peluso's fine acting ensuring she's equally at home in Parisian

high society and in mucking out the stable. Meanwhile, Hobson's trademark charm, charisma and clear-ringing tenor just make you want to hang out with him, chasing grisette showgirls in Maxim's Nightclub.

The production looks a million dollars, and presumably cost it, yet there's still plenty of room for locals to shine in the support roles. Jason Barry-Smith is commanding as the Baron whose wife, Valencienne (Katie Stenzel), seems unduly fond of Camille (James Rodgers). Virgilio Marino and Shaun Brown form an excellent comedy double-act of would-be suitors in search of the widow's fortune.

And local actor Hugh Parker comes close to stealing the show as the Baron's offside Njegus.

But it's Murphy's direction and choreography (assisted by Shane Placentino) that triumph over the necessary evil of an amplification system that magnifies any vocal imperfections.

At risk to life and limb, the diminutive Peluso is held aloft on a makeshift tray by three dancers as she hits the high notes in her signature aria *Vilja*. Maxim's really does look like the best place in town.

And Opera Queensland's Chorus and the QSO under Vanessa Scammell support admirably. Provided it doesn't send Opera Queensland bust, it's a triumph.

Bookings: 136 246 or online. **Tickets:** \$59-\$179. **Duration:** 2hr 50min, including two intervals. **Until Saturday.**

I've always been a dreamer, says Eliane Radigue

JANE CORNWELL

The composer Eliane Radigue lives and works in the 14th arrondissement of Paris, in a one-room apartment down a side street opposite a primary school, just up from a leafy patch of park. Musicians from across the world visit her here, lugging their instruments up two flights of stairs to take tea and musical direction from the charming great-grandmother, 86, a long-time Buddhist who spends most mornings absorbed in meditation.

No matter that the lift doesn't work or that, of an afternoon, the chatter of children returning home tickles the air. Impressed by Radigue's 60-plus years of concentrated creative practice in her commitment to accessing a cornucopia of delicate sounds, these like-minded talents bunch up on a pair of cream couches arranged at right angles or, as with 30-member French improvisation orchestra ONCEIM, colonise the space between an abstract bronze statue, a cat scratching pole and several remarkably lush houseplants.

"Some instruments don't fit in here easily," says the diminutive Radigue, a classically trained pianist who in the 1960s worked as an assistant to Pierre Schaeffer and Pierre Henry, founders of musique concrete (which used found sounds to create innovative music), before going on to New York and experimenting with feedback, loops and drones. She hung at out at Warhol's Factory, met practitioners such as choreographer Merce Cunningham, and got to know minimalist composers Steve Reich and Terry Riley, who turned her on to Tibetan Buddhism. A calm, dancing spirituality has infused her work ever since.

"An organ can't take a taxi, for example, so I meet the organist in a church," she continues, in reference to her 25th solo OCCAM, the name given to long acoustic compositions that unfurl slowly, expanding time, rewarding deep listening. "But most of these wonderful musicians like your (Australian composer and sound artist) Cat Hope work with me at home."

Having spent several intense afternoons with Radigue towards the end of last year, Hope, 55, will premiere their co-composed OCCAM XXIV for bass and flute in Sydney this week, as part of Carriageworks' sonically bold Open Frame season. "Eliane is a careful listener, and shares with you a way to find detail in your own sounds, that you then go away and develop," says Hope, whose new music ensemble Decibel premiered an OCCAM titled *Hexa II*, created with Radigue's close collaborator clarinetist Carol Robinson, at the Perth Institute of



Eliane Radigue today and, above right, in younger days; right, Cat Hope

VINCENT PONTET



MARC MOREAU



ORELIE GRIMALD

Time's on her side

Contemporary Arts in 2015. "Eliane has a unique approach to music-making that I feel privileged to be part of. Once you have an OCCAM from her it is yours, and you can teach it to others."

Before she began working solely with instrumentalists, creating her first OCCAM for progressive harpist Rhodri Davies in 2011, Radigue was one of the most important electronic composers of the 20th century. She is dismissive of the idea of being singled out for her sex: "I have had to avoid this question all my life or I would have done nothing," she says. "I come from a generation of wonderful women like Simone de Beauvoir or Simone Veil, who just did."

Radigue devoted more than three decades to developing an oeuvre comprised of variously hypnotic, impressionistic, startlingly bare but harmonically rich compositions created on her trusty ARP 2500, the hulking, hissing analogue modular synthesiser that she brought back from New York in 1974 and famously addressed as "Jules".

"Jules" used to live over there, against the wall. He is now living with a producer but he is still here, in a way. It was a very long love story. You can wave to his phan-

tom," suggests Radigue with a smile, so I do.

It's a longer love story than even Radigue's relationship with French-American artist Arman, a member of the nouveau realisme movement (which included Yves Klein), whom she met in Nice in 1950, married in 1954 and divorced 20 years and three children later (their son Yves died in a car accident in 1989, aged 34).

Radigue's final electronic

'If we are busy all the time we cannot learn from other cultures'

ELIANE RADIGUE
COMPOSER

work, *L'le re-sonante* (2000), is a sort of intergalactic bathing pool, all ripples, spirals and shimmering glissandi, a gorgeous swansong that preceded her first work for an instrument, an electric bass; in 2006, the year Jules went into storage, she crafted an instrumental with cellist Charles Curtis, who encouraged her to abandon electronics altogether.

"The shift to working with

(acoustic) instruments was not a big deal. It felt like an extension of my background in classical music," says Radigue, who has quoted the second movement in Ravel's Piano Concerto in G as a wonderful example of slow, propulsive writing.

"My work with musicians is similar to what I always tried to accomplish on Jules, alone. But now I get to share, and sharing is such a joy! To discover people who are looking for the same sounds that I want to find is so, just so ..."

She trails off, beaming.

Radigue had been thinking about crafting a series called OCCAMS since the 70s, when she visited a science museum in Los Angeles and was spellbound by a large wall map depicting wavelengths from the Earth to the sun and in between galaxies. Her reaction was visceral: a feeling of floating, with a touch of vertigo and an overwhelming sense of a consecutive past, present and future. "So when Rhodri (Davies) asked me to compose a piece for harp I thought it was an opportunity to bring this theory to my work."

Named after the 14th-century English Franciscan philosopher William of Ockham, who felt that the simplest option was always the

best, Radigue's OCCAM series includes 24 solo pieces, small ensemble works called OCCAM Rivers and OCCAM Deltas, and a single grand orchestral iteration, OCCAM Ocean, co-composed in 2015 with members of the aforementioned ONCEIM, whose CD release last year received a five-star review in *The Guardian*. Players including Davies and Robinson were commended for their mastery of what Radigue calls "the virtuosity of absolute control".

The octogenarian works closely with her instrumentalists, composing OCCAMS for them, not their instruments. Verbal instructions and on-the-fly recordings replace conventional scores.

Each new solo piece begins with a conversation during which Radigue and the performer choose a "secret" image associated with water. From mountain springs to raging torrents, raindrops on a mossy rock to a waterfall cascading into the sea (Hope has two images pertaining to oceanside Perth and Catania in Sicily), each visual inspires and frames compositions that evolve via a shared commitment to uncovering aural minutiae.

The overriding ocean metaphor works on several levels: ren-

dering the compositions more accessible to listeners; hinting at their worlds-within-worlds aesthetic, at the universe contained by the human body; underscoring the message in the music's swirls and spirals, to heed intuition and acknowledge our underused potential. Radigue hopes that experiencing an OCCAM might sufficiently slow us down and open us up that we will pay attention to the wisdom of ancient cultures, with their oral traditions and dialogue with the spirit world.

Indeed, in these increasingly fractious, fast-paced times, the renewed fascination with Radigue's work seems to indicate a want to take time out.

"It is not a want." Radigue's cornflower blue eyes spark. "It is a need! Our bodies and our minds are instruments, too, and we must look after them. People are not meant to be running everywhere. We are ignoring the fact that we have so much possibility, so many components, within ourselves."

She pauses, sighs. "We overlook this potential because we think it isn't rational, because we want everything explained to us in a bright, intelligent way."

"If we are busy all the time we cannot learn from other cultures; Australia has this great indigenous culture with the Aborigines that can teach so much. Now we are even killing the planet because we don't have this basic understanding of ourselves. Can you imagine the despair of being the last person on earth?"

"We have been racing along, putting aside other ways of thinking, rejecting things out of ignorance and suspicion, when what we need to reject is narrow-mindedness." Another smile. "If we are open and accept that we don't know everything, we will find a light in our mind, showing us a door that we can tiptoe towards, to see what is behind it. Maybe it is another door, and another."

She rests her gaze on a water-colour hanging on the wall opposite: a multi-hued flame painted by American abstract expressionist Paul Jenkins, who created the work in 1971 after attending Radigue's first significant concert in the auditorium of the New York Cultural Centre. "To Eliane Radigue's sounds" reads the inscription in the left-hand corner.

Almost a half century later, Radigue still burns bright. "I am an old woman and I think most probably in the last part of my life," she says good-naturedly. "I have built up my identity and personality and now I don't have anything to prove. I can allow myself to be very primitive, very naive, whatever you want to call my music. I accept it all. I am a dreamer, and I have always been a dreamer."

She flashes a grin. "It just happens that now I have all these wonderful musicians who want to share this dream with me."

Open Frame is at Carriageworks on Thursday and Friday. Cat Hope performs Occam XXIV on Thursday.

Community offers salvation in face of horror as past and present blur

THEATRE

The Events
By David Greig. Black Swan State Theatre Company. Studio Underground, Perth, June 22.

VICTORIA LAURIE

In Black Swan's themed pairing of concurrent plays, *The Events* is a response to the more glamorous musical offering upstairs at the Heath Ledger Theatre: Stephen Sondheim's *Assassins*, about US presidential murderers.

The Events is, literally, a parish pump homicide that we are told unfolded as a priest, Claire, was holding rehearsals for her beloved multicultural choir and a

gunman entered the congregational hall. The play's audience is welcomed as if an extension of that choir, which consists of two dozen real choristers on stage. They punctuate the drama with choral songs and add scripted dialogue to what is effectively a two-actor play.

Directed by Black Swan's artistic director Clare Watson, the staging further blurs the dramatic edges between "the events" of the past and the present, and the mundanities of urns and teacups versus the inner turmoil of a Christian pastor who wonders why she survived when members of her singing congregation didn't.

As Claire, Catherine McClements (TV's *Water Rats*, *The Secret Life of Us*) conjures a likeable young pastor who is puppy-like in

her embrace of community activism. But McClements masterfully handles the slow unravelling of a massacre survivor whose faith — in religion and humankind in general — is sorely tested.

Actor Johnny Carr has the testing role of the angry gun assailant, referred to only as "the boy", whom we first glimpse loitering moodily in the theatre aisle. In other scenes, Carr alternately plays Claire's psychiatrist, her lover and other commentators on the massacre whose identity Carr adopts as he sits on a designated choir chair.

David Greig wrote *The Events* as a response to the killing of 77 young political activists on a Norwegian island camp in 2011.

The unspeakable nature of such events has no neat expla-

nation, as Claire discovers when she interrogates the boy for a motive. Instead, what comes through is the tiny salvation that community spirit can bring, the unity of a harmonious choir in full voice. Intensely pleasurable is the sight and sound of the choir itself.

Six Perth-based choirs alternate on different nights, with individual members asked to read scripted lines handed to them only minutes earlier.

On opening night, university-based choir Rhythms added poignancy with youthful faces reminiscent of victims from a Norwegian summer.

Tickets: \$35-\$55. **Bookings:** (08) 6212 9300 or online. **Duration:** 75min, no interval. **Until July 8.**



DANIEL J GRANT

Catherine McClements as the pastor/survivor Claire