



"I know you're there ... Miranda? Miranda!"

St Valentine's Day in 1900 is a blistering hot summer's day. Students and staff from Mrs Appleyard's prestigious girl's school set out for a picnic at Hanging Rock.

Growing tired of their classmates and yearning for adventure, four of the girls and a teacher abscond from the group and venture up towards the beckoning Hanging Rock.

All but one of the girls mysteriously disappear and are never seen again. So the nightmare begins.

Tom Wright's new 'spine tingling' stage adaptation of this Australian culturally iconic novel (famously filmed by Peter Weir in 1975) has won critical acclaim for its dramatic retelling of the story. It has played to sell-out seasons in Perth, Melbourne and

Edinburgh and now comes to Launceston under the direction of noted director, Peter Hammond.

The all-female cast struggle to solve the chilling mystery of the missing schoolgirls and their teacher while on that school excursion to Hanging Rock, making Joan Lindsay's summer classic 'more haunting than ever'.

"Written as a mystery & remains a mystery" – or does it?

Directed by Peter Hammond

Cast:

Mallory Schipper – AMBER
 Zoe Vandervelde – NIKKI
 Bindy Stephens – ELIZABETH
 Lauren Neal – HARRIET
 Anna Barber – ARIELLE

The members of the production team are:

Chris Jackson – Sound & Lighting Design
 Grace Roberts – Set Design
 Laura Eastley – Stage Manager
 Hamish Pickford – Assistant Stage Manager
 Linda Emery – Properties

TICKET PRICES:

Adult \$42.00, Concession \$38.00, Group of 6, \$36.00 per ticket, Under 16 \$30.00

All seats are "General Admission"; however there are a limited number of accessible seats for anyone unable to manage the stairs at the Earl Arts Centre - to book these please contact Launceston Players on 0439 498 119 or email alan.telford2@bigpond.com

Door Sales 1 hour prior to each performance

Performance Dates 2019

Friday 13th September	7.30 pm
Saturday 14th September	2.00 pm
Sunday 15th September	2.00 pm
Wednesday 18th September	7.30 pm
Thursday 19th September	7.30 pm
Friday 20th September	7.30 pm
Saturday 21st September	2.00 pm
Sunday 22nd September	2.00 pm

PICNIC AT HANGING ROCK REVIEW BY NICK TANTARO

Playwright Tom Wright adapted *Picnic at Hanging Rock* from the classic Australian novel by Joan Lindsay. The story on the surface is deceptively simple: on a St Valentines Day's picnic at Hanging Rock in 1900, three girls and a teacher disappear. Only one girl is ever found. While the author never admitted to the story being true or false, leaving it up to the reader, the mystery of the disappearances has taken on an almost mythic quality. The reason may also be due to the story's many layers that, in itself, is suggestive of the geology of the Hanging Rock landscape referenced in the novel. Themes include the nature of time and memory; the impact of western civilisation on an ancient land; the place of women and particularly schoolgirls in a rigid society and even, humanity's place in the scheme of things. The Wright play takes these ideas on board and then adds a poetic texture that only live theatre can deliver. At the same time, this adaptation demands a lot from its audience. As such, a director and cast have to work hard to carry the audience on a journey through a narrative of mystery and complex notions. Director Peter Hammond has assembled a strong all female cast in roles that necessitate them performing multiple characters along with directly addressing the audience. For most of the first act, the five performers do not move but only use their voices to set the scene while jumping from character to character with some characters shared by more than one performer. The cast do an incredible job of weaving their way through the text heavy act without any business (actions) to help them with their lines. Fortunately, the following search and aftermath part of the play allow the actors a greater opportunity to fill out their characterisations. Bindy Stephens' standout performance particularly in the role of Mrs Appleyard was wellnuanced and very much in the moment. Zoe Vandervelde's performance, notably as the bush policeman is equally impressive. Anna Barber's Sara delivers the vulnerability required for this pivotal and difficult part. Lauren Neal's characterisations were clearly defined. Mallory Schipper has also worked hard to create her various roles although she came across a little too intense in the role of Michael. While there were some uneven patches in the opening night performance, this ensemble cast worked well together. Lighting and sound designer Chris Jackson has taken on board the gothic quality inherent in this adaptation. Lighting is often stark, low key and the soundscape points strongly to the ominous quality both around Hanging Rock and the girls' school. My sad regret is not seeing these elements used to add greater dimension to this play. Lighting could have been used to bring set designer Grace Robert's trees to life in a way to suggest the power of the

landscape. For those familiar with the Peter Weir film of the book, you will not see the white Edwardian dresses on the schoolgirls but rather later style school uniforms. I suspect these costumes designed by Tracie Leslie is in keeping with Lindsay's belief that time is circular – that is the past, present and future are always accessible – which also has interesting indigenous overtones. An interesting aspect to this play are the messages that appear on a title board above the stage – at first setting the stage, the messages almost seem as though the production is commenting on itself –perhaps to imply that Hanging Rock is a living entity. Launceston Players are to be applauded on taking on this production – quite honestly, it's not everyone's picnic. But, for those who want more than fast food entertainment, this production with its multiple layers will provide the sort of nourishment that will keep your mind pondering for days. Be mystified.

The Examiner article Friday August 30. 2019 by Cassie Harrex -

LAUNCESTON Players are back with another stellar show, and this time the iconic Picnic at Hanging Rock is set to enthral theater-goers. Tis much-loved Australian story follows a group of school girls and teachers from Appleyard College who, on Valentine's Day 1900, go on a picnic at the scenic geological formation Hanging Rock. By the end of the day, some of them have disappeared, never to be seen again. Joan Lindsay's novel and the subsequent movie directed by Peter Weir have become part of Australian legend thanks to their mystery, touch of the supernatural and juxtaposition of Victorian schoolgirls and the Australian bush. Taking this work to the stage has been a labour of love for the Launceston Players, who have been running continuously since 1926, making them one of the country's oldest theatre companies. This will be the Launceston premiere of Tom Wright's 2016 theatrical adaptation and will be running at the Earl Arts Centre from September 13-22. Te performance will also mark a return for director Peter Hammond, who has a long history of working with the Players in a relationship that goes back to the 1980s. President Grahame Foster said it's the combination of local talent, passion for the work and Hammond's vision that ensure this production is one not to miss. "Tis is a great opportunity for the audience to see a new take on this classic work," Mr Foster said. "Te play is a totally different representation of the story, and is another powerful performance that we're thrilled to bring to Launceston," he said. Te play begins in modern-day Melbourne and follows five schoolgirls retelling the events of that fateful Valentine's Day. These fve actors embody all the characters, shifting between characterisations, places and time periods throughout the performance. Director Peter Hammond said this retelling offers anew lens to view a work that is firmly a part of the Australian literary canon. "In this presentation we witness an exciting unveiling of irreconcilable concepts of time and space," he said. "Without giving away too much of the plot, the play poses can the past be in the present." Adding to the tension is the intimacy of the Earl Arts Centre whose layout means theatre-goers will be kept on the edge of their seats throughout its 85-minute showing. "It's an intimate space where the audience is upclose and can feel exactly what's happening on stage," Mr Foster said. For ticket information and further details visit launcestonplayers.com.



Anna Barber



Bindy Stephens



Lauren Neal



Mallory Schipper



Zoe Vandervelde