

Responses to Bloomsday 2012 from Patrons, Joyceans, Newcomers and Others

From Genevieve Rogers (unable to attend, but reporting on a large party that did):

My spies tell me that congratulations all round are due for yesterday. We now have two more converts to the Bloomsday cause so that's great. Everyone here enjoyed it immensely.

From Renee Huish, theatre practitioner, Bloomsday patron, occasional director and actor (18 June 2012) by email.

Berlin eat your heart out - here comes Melbourne

What a triumph.

Brenda really created an unforgettable piece of theatre - and the set designer, Julia, was an inspiration.

The Mollies, one and all, were just fantastic - hard to pick out a star performer.

The knitting was a masterstroke,(interested to see that Uschi knits in the European wa!!) . Stage presence, wow. All her performance was a knockout. I so related to her "been there done that!!" Suhasini, I just loved your portrayal of Mollie. Such a believable young love, but at the same time knowing!!! Jamaica, what a superlative command of the part, such dominance. I am so impressed.

The teamwork was great. Why do Uschi, and Jamaicaq, make me want to pack my bags and take off for Berlin in the morning. Drew, you are a star. Love to be in your brain whilst you are responding to this direction. Superlative.

This was the most wonderful piece of theatre I have seen

since "Terminus" in terms of its pure theatricality. Joyce is a great writer, but Brenda totally brought him to life in a contemporary sense in this production. I ask myself, why do we get dished up such a plethora of mundane theatre in Melbourne, imported a lot of the time at great expense. But for this homegrown theatre you have to be "in the know" to be able to access this kind of genius.

Hats off also to the writers, who so deftly wove Joyce's prose into this accessible masterpiece.

Frances. I salute you, and Bob, and Sian, and Roz., I don't know when I felt so alive.

Virginia Lowe, long-term patron, email to Frances Devlin-Glass on 17 June 2012

Dear Frances, what a triumph it was yesterday. I hope the evening performance worked as well as the afternoon one – no doubt it did.

You must feel so good now it's all over and went so well. Talked to a guy over arvo tea, who had been to your U3A classes too – he was raving about them. Wish I'd gone...

Do you mind a bit of feedback though – not on the performance or the lecture, both really good, and the Q and A a great idea too. It was only the food.

Virginia Lowe, long-term patron, email to Director and Actors, 17 June:

Dear Brenda, just a note to say how much we enjoyed your presentation on Saturday. It was inspired, the 'everywoman' concept! Worked really well – the part with

the baby particularly touching. You do do a wonderful job always, but this was really special – well done!

Regards, Virginia

James King, new committee member to FDG,

Frances

you must be relieved that B-i-M 2012 is over- maybe especially this one, but also you must be very chuffed at its success. The actors were nothing short of brilliant- the stage setting was wonderful, and I for one liked revisiting the Trade's Hall theatre. Please accept my warmest congratulations on being responsible for, and overseeing such a magnificent performance.

...

You and I know a fair bit about Joyce's Triestine period, and the Svevo/Joyce affiliation, and although there was little new for me in the seminar, I'm very glad I was there, to witness some elegant scholarship, delivered in such an eloquent and wonderfully self-effacing way.

Max Warlond, new patron, and attendee of U3A course, Introducing Ulysses (18 June 2012)

Dear Frances,

I just want to say a very big thank for introducing me to James Joyce.

In preparation for today's performance I re-read parts of Penelope (using the annotations which makes a tremendous difference) just so I would be familiar with the

chapter and could follow it. I knew there would be four different "Mollys," but for some reason I just thought they would come out one at a time and present Molly perhaps at a different stage of her life. I guess I should have known better.

What a wonderful introduction to Bloomsday and what an incredible production. What a brilliant way to present Molly! I am absolutely sure everyone who attended would have enjoyed it as much as I did. It is one thing to read Ulysses, and I thought listening to it was just great, but today took it to another level altogether. The cast and crew brought it to life in a way I would never have imagined. The invitation to stay on and listen to the cast and the director explain the way they saw it was just the icing on the cake.

Thank you so much to each and everyone that made this day possible. I have already marked June 16 on next year's diary.

Looking forward to catching up once again at U3A later in the year. We all are!

Regards,

Max

Susan Boyle Griffin, a new patron who came from Sydney for Melbourne Bloomsday, wrote an account on Tumblr blog about why she cares about Bloomsday, and also about Melbourne's Molly:

<http://bloomsday.tumblr.com/post/25350591249/why-bloomsday>

Imelda Carthy, long-term patron of Bloomsday on 19 June

Bloomsday 2012.

The highlight for me was the 'seminar'. The presentation was prepared, informed and fascinating. In past years there have been seminars, but I do not recall any of the 'guest' participants being as well prepared as the professor was on Saturday.

Thoroughly enjoyable too, were the readings over dinner.

≡

With regard to the performance itself I felt that the flavour was anger and anti-male, and not humorous and nuanced. Certainly for me it lacked the softness of the text. I can already hear the cries of 'philistine' – but I could not understand why one of the players was speaking in German – it simply added to the aggression.

Sian Cartwright. Secretary and Joycean

We were quite impressed with the performance, but acoustics in the venue weren't that good (this was seconded in feedback from Adrian and Imelda, and Silas, when I spoke to them). While I didn't mind the overlapping voices, as a dramatic technique it indicated continuity and difference between the Mollies, but it did mean that some of the text inevitably got lost, depending on which actor happened to be positioned closer to where you happened to be in the audience.

...And wow, what a fantastic seminar! How intriguing, and you can see the similarities between Italo Svevo/Ettore Schmitz and Bloom's characters and their humanity! Interesting note about Schmitz's wife being inspiration for Anna Livia Plurabelle!

Roz Hames, writer and Joycean, to fdg

And huge kudos to you for once again making it happen in every conceivable way! I don't know where you summon your energy and commitment, but we count our blessings for it.

I'm still distilling my impression of the performance. Initially, I was resistant to unthreading and untethering Molly's various modes from the episode. I was also dubious as to how it would work as an interpretive framework, and how it would work theatrically without dissolving into a cheesy rendering of feminist archetypes. However, this is why Brenda is a theatre director and I am not! I think some correction needs to be appended to Philip's article attributing most of the adaptive decisions to Brenda and the theatrical process rather than the usual script writers. The actors also brought further dimensions to the text and to Molly's multiple mental configurations. I was compelled by Drew's performance of an almost defeated Molly - so much pathos - and was equally captivated by Jamaica's cynical reflection of Suhasini's romantic. I "got" the mini skirt and the sneer. I loved the Marilyn choreography. The pieces, or Mollies, came together for me with the chorus of voices throughout the performance, and the minimalist approach to the staging gave much dimension to the performances. I also

enjoyed Brenda's intrusions: "More suitors!"

I was expecting lots of questions from Quin [aged 8] on the drive out to the airport afterwards, but all he had to say was "Drawers, drawers, drawers...Mum, that was sooooo crude." I think - hope - that most of Molly's rants flew over his head for now. However, I was at the ready to reassure him that Molly is not everywoman - not really...

Thanks for another brilliant Bloomsday, Fran. I'm at the ready for 2013 ...

Email from Marguerite Bourke to Sian Cartwright, 21 June 2012

Hi Sian

Thanks for this and a big thank you to you everyone involved in the Bloomsday production - it was such a great and memorable night- if it was on again I would love to see it for the second time. The quality of the production was amazing- I am an avid theatre "goer" I rank it as one of the best things I have seen.

Best Regards

Marguerite Bourke

Prof. John Gatt-Rutter, Seminar-Paper giver, and Svevo Biographer

Many thanks and congratulations for a superb Bloomsday. The dramatization of the 5 Mollies was dazzling. (I hope it can be made available in electronic form to the younger generation, who otherwise might not realize what they're missing.)

Joycean and long-term patron:

The seminar was absolutely fascinating. I enjoyed it a lot ...

Yes, Yes, Yes was entertaining and absorbing and very inventive in structure and presentation. Not one dull spot, really. Brenda sure puts an arresting show together.

However, for me Yes Yes Yes was too loud/frenetic and too often played for laughs - poignant moments such as Molly feeling alone in the big old place were often glossed over.

Sometimes the feeling and poetry of the language was sacrificed in the multi or over-voiced sections, especially in the final minutes.

The last few pages of the novel contain some of Joyce's tenderest language and deepest feeling and for me these were lost with the different Mollies reciting different words at the same time.

On the other hand, [spouse] thoroughly enjoyed it all, especially Drew's menstrual performance, and was entertained and absorbed for the duration. The audience sounded delighted, too.

The cast gave it all they had – timing, voice precision and being vocally in synch was so important in that show and their disciplined ensemble work was impressive.

Anne Vines, long-term patron, and reader. 22 June

May I second your congratulations...to Frances for a sparkling, thought-provoking Bloomsday, yet again. ... What a success again. A good turn up from our book group too, though not all are free or find it their thing, which is perfectly reasonable, Joyce being Joyce. A great event, defying Melbourne's weather. Bravo, (brava?!) to you, Frances.

Susan Braybrook, return patron, to Bob, on 17 June

Dear Frances and Bob,
Thank you and your team for a most entertaining and captivating performance yesterday of Joyce's Molly. I hope that the rest of the day continued as well for you as it started with the 1pm performance. It felt right to walk away quietly through grey Carlton streets reflecting on the past couple of hours. Yes! it was good.
Very best regards to you both.
Susan.

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Sent: Wednesday, June 27, 2012 2:47 PM
Subject: Bloomsday 2012

Hello

I wish to thank you so much for the fabulous Bloomsday play this year. The acting and the dialogue were hilarious and so naughty. It's even funnier when you see a large group of very respectable, slightly older people laughing at really bawdy language. Not the content, but the style of

the humor, reminds me of growing up with several aunts in the 1950's. Great fun.

Congratulations

Patricia O'Brien

Dear Mr. Glass,

Thank you for your kind email. I'm pleased to answer your questions.

I learned about Bloomsday from a friend of mine - a fellow American - who now resides in Sydney. She attended Berkeley in California, studied literature and her thesis was written on James Joyce. She posted on Facebook that she would be attending. When I learned that I would be back in Melbourne in June, I was only too happy to attend with her.

Yes, I would enjoy receiving emails regarding your events, even though I might not be able to attend. I love Melbourne, and want to know what's going on in the city.

By the way, I enjoyed the play very much. The adaptation was ingenious and the actors were wonderful. The afternoon lecture was not quite what I expected. While the professor's research was quite interesting, I would have preferred a more spontaneous lecture or discussion - perhaps a facilitated panel discussion.

In all, I was glad I attended the activities and enjoyed the day, and hope I can attend in future years.

Again, I thank you for your follow-up.

Best regards,
Kimbel

P.S. I wrote about Bloomsday on my blog. If you'd care to look, the address is www.RunNorthGoWest.blogspot.com. If this address doesn't show as a live link, you can copy and paste it into your browser. Bloomsday in Melbourne is the current post.