

MR COLIN ROBERT ANDERSON

Citation for the conferral of a Doctor of Arts (*honoris causa*)

Colin Anderson was born in Newcastle NSW, an industrial city with limited focus on the arts. However, early evidence of a life-long inclination and auspicious career were heralded when, as a child and schoolboy, he gained work professionally with Radio Station 2KO in a children's serial and weekly variety program.

Later, reading English at the soon to become University of Newcastle, Colin focused on theatre and began to make it his life. He was a founding member of the Newcastle University Student Players and played a prominent role in the University becoming the focal point of the City of Newcastle in terms of theatrical entertainment. This group did everything from variety to the bard but spectacularly successful were the biting funny annual revues that were regularly sold out within hours of tickets being available. In 1962 Colin was made a life member of the Newcastle University Union for contribution to the development of drama at the University and twenty years later the University of Newcastle conferred on him the Brin Newton-John Award for continued innovation and creativity in the arts.

After completing his qualifications Colin commenced teaching English at James Ruse Agricultural High School in Sydney. He immediately introduced drama and play performance programs in that unlikely arena. This emphasis in the curriculum endures: the School established and maintains the annual "Colin Anderson Award" for best actor.

During this period (1963 - 1967) Colin worked extensively with the high profile Sydney University Drama Society and appeared in regular revues alongside such luminaries as Germaine Greer, John Gaden and Arthur Dignam. This work led to appearances on *The Mavis Bramston Show* that was breaking new comic ground on Australian television under the leadership of Gordon Chater.

This period also saw Colin performing in Sydney's first Festival of Theatre of The Absurd and Theatre of Cruelty; in pantomime at The Independent Theatre, North Sydney and forming a company to tour Victoriana Music Hall to other centres in NSW.

The period 1968 - 1969 saw Colin in London teaching and studying theatre and appearing in productions of Robert Bolt's *The Tiger and The Horse* and Jean Anouilh's *Dinner with the Family*.

By 1970 he was back in Sydney and at James Ruse. Colin's talents and expertise were now in demand by the NSW Education Department. He was extensively involved in in-service workshops and demonstrations as the Department sought to harness his talents for wider secondary education.

In 1972 he was lured from Sydney to Wagga Wagga and the fledgling Riverina College of Advanced Education by the then Principal, Dr CD Blake. He was appointed Lecturer in Drama. His brief was to design and introduce drama courses to service teacher education programs, to present productions, and most importantly, to bring town and gown together via theatre.

With characteristic energy and expertise gained from his, by now formidable, experience Colin set to. Most significant and immediate for College/City relations was his inauguration of the annual College Revue. No one who was present in those early years will forget the openings of those events. They featured early evening drinks on the lawn outside the Auditorium; the service by eager costume clad students; the hoards of College staff and citizens of Wagga Wagga desperate to see who would get a mention in the satire of the day - who would cop the lash of Colin and his students' wicked senses of humour and playfulness.

Over the next twenty years he mounted and managed most popular and successful programs in teacher education and subsequently introduced an independent Associate Diploma in Performing Arts course and later the Bachelor of Arts (Theatre) course. He presented a huge variety of productions, a frequent characteristic of which was to draw the most unlikely students into roles they'd normally have run from. His ability to cast and direct students in ways that induced life-changing self-awareness was one of the continuous hallmarks in his career as a highly successful and much loved teacher.

At the same time Colin made his energy and professionalism in both directing and acting available to the local community theatre scene, most particularly with the Wagga School of Arts. Among the many highlights were his portrayals of Littlechap in *Stop the World I Want to Get Off*, for which he won Best Actor award for the NSW Arts Council Drama Festival, Emcee in *Cabaret*, and Stuart in *Coralie Lansdowne Says No*.

The last mentioned production brought together the group of people who were to form a new professional theatre company: the Riverina Trucking Company, later the Riverina Theatre Company, which continues to flourish. Colin was invited to serve on the founding Board of Management and went on to feature in a number of Trucking Company productions. Particularly memorable were his portrayals of Sylvia in *Mates* and Limone in *A Toast to Melba*, productions that played a significant role in helping to broaden the minds of many Wagga townfolk. In 1994 he was made a Patron of the Company.

Other invaluable community contributions included his work with the Golden Gown Committee, his patronage and work for the Crippled Children's Society and his period as resident compere of the 1RTB Band Kapooka.

Meanwhile, in service of Riverina-Murray Institute of Higher Education Colin was promoted to Senior Lecturer in 1979. He provided valuable input and advice for completion of the Riverina Playhouse and was honoured at its opening in 1986 with a handsome photographic portrait that, along with Ms June Dunn's, still graces the foyer. In 1992 he was promoted to Associate Professor of Drama and ended a rich career with the, by then, Charles Sturt University when he retired as Head of Performing Arts at the end of that year.

Since retirement from University Colin has launched a new career as freelance director. This has seen him work in major Australian centres, most particularly and often in the very demanding Canberra where his frequent successes have once again made him a modern legend. But more particularly he has extended his reputation internationally. He had begun this in his years at University but independence provided more time to accept opportunities.

His international directing credits include seasons in Aarhus, Denmark; Kansas (twice); London; New Zealand; and Malta where he directed *Gulls* in the eighteenth century Manoel Theatre as an official aspect of Australia's Cultural Exchange Program for 1998.

Colin Anderson has had an exemplary career as teacher, creator, performer and ambassador. He has been a major contributor to the creation of highly successful theatre education programs in three institutions. He has acted as a consistently distinguished creative liaison between the institutions in which he has worked and the communities they serve. He has been an enduring force and major influence in the cultivation of theatrical entertainment and enlightenment in at least four distinct communities. He is a noteworthy Australian ambassador promoting Australian theatre on international stages. In recognition of his significant achievements he is this day admitted to the award Doctor of Arts (*honoris causa*).

Dated this Eleventh Day of May Two Thousand