

Review: Don Parties On by David Williamson

November 11th, 2016 | Posted in [Performance Arts](#) | Author: [Editor](#)

The opening night and Adelaide premiere for Don Williamson's sequel to Don's Party, *Don Parties On* was presented last night by the Red Phoenix Theatre at Holden Street Theatres. This newly-formed theatre troupe has an interesting penchant for conducting plays that have not previously been performed in Adelaide.

Don Parties On is set on the eve of the 2010 election. We meet the central characters of the first party 40 years on and find that over the decades some friends have stayed in touch, some marriages have broken up and, during this party Don's son, Richard (Brant Eustice) is in the throes of his own marriage crisis. Much of the time characters in the play reflect nostalgically on the past years, landing mostly on the rambunctious time that each of them remember from Don's (Wayne Anthony) first election party. However, stories of wife-swapping and unwanted pregnancies and other outlandish tales that emerge from the first party are revealed as having real-life consequences. Even in their retelling these consequences live on as first Richard and then Don's young granddaughter, Belle (Kate van der Horst) learn of the intimate details of their grandparent's past.

Williamson presents the boomer generation (his generation) in this play as privileged and as turning a blind eye to their rapid consumption of fossil fuels. The misogynistic Mal (Adrian Barnes) points out that warnings were made about an impending crisis presumably from the works of authors like Ehrlich (*The Population Bomb*) and Carson (*Silent Spring*) but that these warnings were never acted upon. So on this election night the Australian Greens are set to occupy the moral high ground and serve as a reminder to a generation that has presumably lost sight of its youthful posturing on social, environmental and political issues.

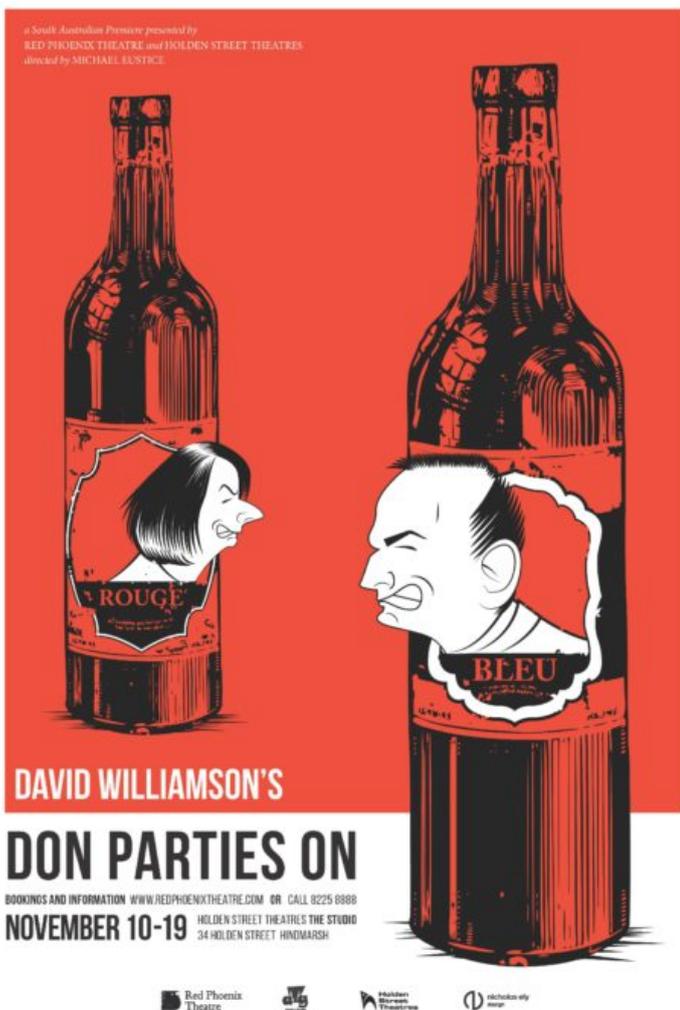
In the end there is something of an apology from a generation that had it all and in the end wasted so much, a generation of profligacy perhaps nowhere more apparent than under the leadership of boomer, John Howard. Don observes as much in his final comments. Yet it seems they all had visions of a different future and have ended up somewhere against their own volition. All of them harbor secrets gradually revealed. It seems it is time for this generation to be honest with those that followed.

The play contains no surprises or memorable lines and is jam-packed with platitudes. And it seems that Williamson is more enmeshed in the picture than standing outside in his rendition of the boomer generation. All his characters seem to hold back, giving only the glibbest attention to the state of modern politics in this country. Ultimately it presents as a generation in stasis, coming from nowhere and arriving at the same place sometime later.

No matter that groups of actors move on and off stage for the most spurious of reasons; to be shown another's flashy car or watch a vampire movie or deal with a hysteric mistress. Or that the actors who remain on stage become peripheral entities to the on-going dialogue. The snippets of television coverage on the night are similarly treated as peripheral and fleeting.

Director Michael Eustice does his veritable best with the stylised formalities that this work demands. And — despite the vapidness of characters — the actors give polished performances. Without their combined efforts things could have been quite different.

Reviewed by Mike Harrison for *Global Media Post*



Venue:

Holden Street Theatres

Cast:

Don: Wayne Anthony

Kath: Julie Quick

Belle: Kate van der Horst

Mal: Adrian Barnes

Richard: Brant Eustice

Cooley: Brian Godfrey

Helen: Victoria Morgan

Jenny: Lyn Wilson

Roberta: Jessica Carroll

Production Team:

Director: Michael Eustice

Assistant Director: Libby Drake

Lighting Design: Richard Parkhill

Props and Stage Management: Heather Jones

Lighting and Sound Operator: Joshua Mensch