

Walk With Us: Untold Castlemaine

Into the Mix by Samantha Bews

Performance Notes

The play takes place on the forecourt of the RSL on Mostyn St.

Setting

Clarice begins sitting astride the wall of the veranda. In front of her is a trunk she is rummaging through. She puts the items she finds in the trunk into the carrier box behind her.

Latrice moves between the veranda and the flagpole. Sometimes she runs between the two as she talks to either Clarice or Alea. She is highly agitated and constantly moving.

Alea is up a tall ladder, as high to the top of the flagpole as possible. In front of her is the upper station of the pulley system on which sits her 'cauldron' – a metal box, crate or footlocker for example. She puts the items Clarice sends her in the carrier box into her cauldron.

There are two more ladders next to Alea's ladder, each shorter than the other – which creates a Goldilocks effect: a tall ladder, a medium ladder, and a short ladder.

A pulley system is rigged up between the veranda where Clarice sits, and the flagpole where Alea stands on a tall ladder. The bottom station of the pulley system is on the veranda behind Clarice. A carrier box, which could be cardboard, metal, or a dilapidated vintage suitcase, rests at this station. Clarice puts the items she finds in the trunk into this box. Eventually the carrier box will be winched up the pulley system by Clarice and received by Alea. Alea stands at the top station of the pulley system. At this station, in front of Alea, is her 'cauldron'. Once Clarice has winched the carrier box up to Alea, Alea takes the items from the carrier box and puts them into her cauldron. The cauldron has a false bottom, which is activated by a lever at its side. Near the very end of the play, at the climax of the ringing bell, Alea pulls the lever, and the floor of the cauldron falls open, dropping a large pile of soil on the ground.

The pulley system and boxes should look old, weathered, rusted etc. They have an otherworldly feel.

Chrono sits on a wooden chair to the right of the flagpole, outside of the main action but within the performance space. Beside her chair is the fire bell which she rings each minute on the minute (the minutes as timed within the logic of the play).

Characters

Four women.

The three speaking characters are of an indiscriminate age. Each is dressed a bit like a bag lady wearing a motley arrangement of clothes from various eras, though their costumes may hint at their 'time' eg: for Clarice perhaps the audience can see a petticoat from the 19th century, under a man's tunic from the 1940s, along with a top hat; while Latrice might have something modern in her dress.

Clarice is the guardian of the past. She has lived through many, many crises, she has seen the effects of war (two world wars, the crusades, the killing fields, the revolutions etc etc). She knows there is suffering, she also knows there is light within the darkness. She knows that small acts of kindness – moving toward the suffering, within suffering – lace together a net of forgiveness and healing. She knows this is important for the continuation of the world.

Latrice is anxious about the present. The present is very dark. There is the pandemic, youth suicide, the threat of global warming. Latrice is anxious about how the youth of today are going to cope. She is anxious that everything will collapse.

Alea is a visionary. She is contrary. She is fickle. She is hard-nosed. The future will come, this is the law of force. It is brutal but can also be an explosion of light, beyond comprehension. It is always evolving. It is as new as daybreak.

Chrono is 'time'. She is old, very old. She is dressed in lace, cobwebs, ethereal materials, that look like they could fall away as she moves. She moves very slowly or quickly (never in between) as the action demands.

Note

The dialogue in brackets is suggested subtext.

Into the Mix

Clarice sits on the veranda wall. She is looking through a trunk, picking out items and placing them in the carrier box.

Alea is up the ladder with a pair of binoculars. She is looking out toward the horizon.

Latrice is constantly moving, pacing, running from the veranda to flagpole. Her action takes place under the line of the pulley system.

As the audience gather for the play, Chrono gives a seedling to a child or young person, and asks if they will plant it in the soil at the end of the play. She tells them she will direct them when to do it. Then she returns to her seat.

Meanwhile the other characters are engrossed in their own worlds.

Chrono rings the bell once breaking their self-absorption.

They all respond at the same time.

Clarice: Ah! ("I lost track of time!")

Latrice: Ah! ("We're going too slow!")

Alea: Ah! ("We're a step closer!")

Clarice continues looking through the veranda trunk. Placing items from trunk into the pulley box.

Latrice: Quick Clarice, quick! What can you see?! What can you find?!

Clarice: Handkerchiefs, sweets, cocoa, eucalyptus oil ...

Latrice: Good! Thing of comfort, things of home!

Clarice: ... flannel shirts, hand knitted socks, cholera belts, scarves ...

Latrice: Things for the body, medical protection!

Clarice: ... all carefully made by the ladies, the Red Cross, CWA, the Rechabites ...

Latrice: What else Clarice? What else, we need much more, so much more!

Clarice: ... let me have a look ***she pulls out a pile of letters tied with string*** Letters! From home to the front and the front back home: the mothers to sons, girlfriends to beaus, soldiers wishing to be in the arms of those they love ...

Latrice: Oh yes, that's it! The longing, the desire, the yearning for well-being. That's love, isn't it?! That's love! Put it in Clarice! Put it in!

Chrono rings the bell. The three women respond at the same time.

Clarice: Ah! ("yes, the future will come")

Latrice: Ah! ("hurry, it's coming!")

Alea: Ah! ("It's coming! It's coming!")

Latrice: What do you see Alea? Is it there? Is it coming?

Alea: On the horizon! Whack! It'll smack us right in the face!

Latrice: Ahhh! But we're not ready. Everything's out of kilter. Nothing's in place.

Clarice: Worry wart.

Alea: It could go either way

Latrice: What else Clarice, what else?!

Clarice: Oh look! Mrs. Milford's Christmas cake. She sent them to the boys at the front and to this day they are remembered.

Latrice: Tradition! Oh yes. We forget about it, but it holds us up. It holds us all!

Alea: A flash of lightning!

Chrono rings the bell. The three women respond at the same time.

Clarice: Ah! ("Humph! Lighting flashes, lighting passes.")

Latrice: Ah! ("It's getting closer")

Alea: Ah! ("It could be splendid!")

Latrice: What else Clarice?! What can we draw on? What will hold them steady?

Clarice: (the following fellowships could be represented by certificates, newspaper articles, insignia, a plastic crown etc) Patriotic Fund, POW Appeal, Fathers of Soldiers, Chewton Mock Auction, Elphinstone Queens Competition, film nights, wood for widows ... Oh look, Eb Eagle got a band of men together to help Percy Pallas plant fifteen hundred trees!

Latrice: **to herself** There's so much darkness right now, it ekes in from every side, 2020 was a terrible year

Clarice: It's the community Latrice! Every little bit counts.

Latrice: Will they be alright?

Alea: Another flash! Blackness and gloom or a glimmer of light?!

Latrice: Pull Clarice! Pull!

Alea: What will it look be?!

Latrice: Pull! **to Alea** The past is coming! Put it in the mix Alea! We need it all!

Clarice begins to winch the box up to Alea.

Chrono rings the bell. The three women respond at the same time.

Clarice: Ah! (I forgot something!)

Latrice: Ah! ("Quick, quick!")

Alea: Ah! ("Here come the mix!")

Clarice: I forgot something!

Latrice: Are you mixing Alea?!

Alea: **unloading the box** Oh yes, this lot will stand them in very good stead

Latrice: Are you adding it to their energy, their passion, their wisdom, their skill?

Clarice: Send it back, I've got one more thing!

Alea: Bring it with you! **looking toward the horizon** It's nearly here!

Clarice runs out of the veranda and stands with Latrice

Latrice: The pandemic, political strife, climate crisis, will they be alright? Will the young ones be alright?

Clarice: Sacrifice. I forgot sacrifice.

Chrono rings the bell. The three women respond at the same time.

Clarice: Ah! ("It's nearly here!")

Latrice: Ah! ("It's nearly here!")

Alea: Ah! ("It's nearly here!")

A steady flow of single notes from the bell, rising to a crescendo.

Alea unloads the carrier box putting the items into her cauldron. She takes a mallet and 'mixes' everything together.

Alea: Into the mix! Into the mix!

Clarice and Latrice 'run up the flagpole': Latrice on the medium ladder, Clarice on the small. When they reach the top of their ladders they all look out, straining to see 'the future'. The ringing bell reaches its peak with a final clang!

All: It's here! It's here!

Alea pulls the lever at the side of her 'cauldron' box. The floor of the cauldron box falls open and a load of soil drops out.

They all shift from looking expectantly, excitedly, out, to looking disappointedly, bewilderedly, down.

Latrice: What? What? but ... what? The future is ... dirt? Dirty? Dust?

Clarice: Oh darling, never mind, we did all we could, we can never predict ...

Alea: Humph. I was hoping for a little more!

Chrono has meanwhile left her chair. She directs the child/young person to plant the seedling.

The young person plants the seedling then returns to the crowd. Chrono returns to her chair, rings the bell once.

The characters respond together.

All: Ah! ("I get it!")

Latrice: Oh! It is ... it is soil ... !

Clarice: ... the soil from which all things will grow ...

Alea: ... a future as deep and true as the desire to flourish

Clarice: Oh! It's marvellous!

Latrice: Splendid!

Alea: What a fascinating generation! Resilient! Imaginative!

beat

Latrice: They *will* be alright! They will be alright!

They climb down, chatting ('I didn't know if we'd make it', 'What happened to Mrs Mitford in the end?', 'Let's have a beer at this RSL one day' etc), as they wander along the RSL Soldiers' Memorial Path and exit.

Chrono returns to the audience and bows, then indicates the child/young person and directs them to bow. She follows after the others, humming as she goes.

The End