

# Shine

GEOFFREY  
RUSH

Press Kit



The only career Geoffrey Rush has ever known has been as an actor, except for a few bleak weeks in London in the 1970s when he worked as a 'temp' office boy dragging racks of garments around the rag-trade district.

He joined the Queensland Theatre Company straight out of university and has worked constantly ever since, establishing a reputation as one of Australia's finest and most original theatre actors.

Signature roles include his performance as Poprishin in Neil Armfield's production of *THE DIARY OF A MADMAN* (Belvoir Street Theatre) for which he received the Sydney Critics' Circle Award for Most Outstanding Performance, the Variety Club Award for Best Actor and the Victorian Green Room Award for Best Actor, Dave in *ON OUR SELECTION*, Vladimir in *WAITING FOR GODOT*, Astrov in *UNCLE VANYA*, Allen Fitzgerald in *THE BLIND GIANT IS DANCING*, John in *OLEANNA* and Horatio in *HAMLET*.

In 1994 Rush received the Sidney Myer Performing Arts Award for his work in theatre. The award, one of the richest of its kind in Australia, is offered each year to an individual who has shown himself to be a fine, original artist, capable of initiative and daring in his work.

The theatre bug for Rush began early, when as a child his grandmother took him to a puppet show at the Empire Theatre in Toowoomba.

"I must have been about four or five at the time but I still have very strong memories of what went on.

I was fortunate to catch the tail-end of vaudeville and the travelling variety tent shows. I'd go to a panto on a Saturday afternoon with my sister while my mother played tennis. I could pretty much tell you the content of those shows from curtain up to curtain down. The impact on me was huge," he says.

Rush's family moved from country Toowoomba to Brisbane and he would regularly go to the Theatre Royal to see pantomimes such as *SINBAD*. He'd already begun making shoe-box theatres and cut-out back drops and now, in Brisbane, he had an ideal amateur stage under the floor of the family's Queenslander stilt house.

"I used to get the kids next door and we'd set up shows under the house...the Queenslander formed the perfect proscenium arch. We'd hang up old travel blankets as curtains and do the show. This was all pre-television which didn't start in Queensland until 1959," he says.

Rush went to Everton Park High School in suburban Brisbane: "it was very

average, slightly rough, and very new and there was no feeling that you could become a professional actor but given that, we had a fantastic art teacher, a fantastic music teacher and a series of English teachers who used to put on a play every year."

Rush and school friends also mounted their own productions and school concerts, writing their own sketches. "I looked the other day at some of the things I wrote at that time and they're actually really funny," he laughs.



**WAITING FOR GODOT** by Samuel Beckett  
- played Vladimir  
- directed by George Whaley  
(Jane St Theatre, Sydney 1979, opposite Mel Gibson)

Rush went to university because he couldn't think of a better idea, finishing his last exam for an arts degree on a Friday afternoon and starting work at the Queensland Theatre Company (QTC) on the following Monday morning in 1971. University had been a radical time. In theatre, the Pram Factory in Melbourne and the Nimrod Theatre at the Stables in Sydney were capturing public imagination.

Innovative theatre in Brisbane happened only on campus, the Springboks toured Australia, Australian soldiers were in Vietnam and John Bjelke-Peterson banned public marches.

"We were taking our clothes off and doing rock versions of the classics, we did a production of HAMLET on ice, and heavy political revues in an era when the rest of Brisbane tended to be a bit sleepy. Alan Edwards, the newly-appointed director of the QTC, saw a lot of those productions and asked me to join the company. His appointment had really polarised the town because as an outsider Englishman it seemed, in the cultural climate of the time, a very Anglophile backward step," Rush says.

"So my joining the QTC was seen as selling out to the enemy. We did things like LOCK UP YOUR DAUGHTERS, Shakespeare and YOU'RE A GOOD MAN CHARLIE BROWN. I played Snoopy which was one of my first good roles. But I knew that I wanted to be a professional actor and the QTC was the only professional acting happening in town."

Rush didn't consider going to NIDA in Sydney. Sydney, he says, seemed like another country. When he did make the move away from Brisbane it was to London where, in 1975, he completed the

Directors' Course (British Theatre Association). But England too seemed an alien place and Rush found himself much more at home in Paris, where he successfully applied to the Jacques Lecoq School of Mime, Movement and Theatre. He studied in Paris for two years focussing on the actor-based traditions of gymnastics, mime, pantomime, clowning and Greek chorus.



THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST by Oscar Wilde  
- played Jack Worthing  
- directed by Simon Phillips Melbourne Theatre Company  
(1988, Sydney and National Tour 1990-1991, Sydney 1992)

He spoke no French when he first arrived but his language skills 'rocketed', he says, in the second year when he had a French girlfriend. Back in London and feeling miserable "unloading frocks in the rain outside the Haymarket Theatre instead of being inside doing something fabulous", Rush got a call from an old friend from Brisbane who was directing a pantomime in Scotland. Jack had fallen off the beanstalk at a dress rehearsal, fallen down a well and broken both ankles.

"He said that if I got myself to Scotland I could have a job...not as Jack, but in the chorus replacing the chorus leader who was now Jack," Rush says.

The QTC, which had contributed towards the final year fees at Lecoq, then asked Rush to come home to play the Fool opposite Warren Mitchell in KING LEAR. The play toured to Sydney where Rush was offered a job teaching at NIDA. He was also quickly offered more theatre work.

"George Whaley rang me and said he'd like me to play Dave in ON OUR SELECTION and Vladimir in WAITING FOR GODOT, with this young actor called Mel Gibson, at the Jane Street Theatre," he says.

"I saw Dave as very much a part of the classic Australian clown tradition and Vladimir as one of the great European metaphysical clowns. It was the perfect double bill!"

Other members of the ensemble included Kerry Walker, Barry Otto, Robert Menzies and Noni Hazelhurst.

Around this time Rush also created his own show *CLOWNEROONIES*, meshing voices from his childhood memories with the contemporary clowning skills he learned at Lecoq.

Rush did some ABC Television work and had small roles in Gillian Armstrong's *STARSTRUCK* and in *HOODWINK* with John Hargreaves before moving to Adelaide as a principal member of Jim Sharman's groundbreaking Lighthouse Ensemble. He also spent two years as Director of the Magpie Theatre for Young People.

For the past decade he has worked regularly in Brisbane, Adelaide, Sydney and in Melbourne, where he now lives with his actor wife and their two children, appearing in many of this country's most acclaimed theatrical productions. Awards and nominations have been numerous.

He toured *THE DIARY OF A MADMAN* with the Belvoir Street Theatre to Moscow and St Petersburg with a triumphant return season at the Adelaide Festival in 1992.

"*MADMAN* was a bit of a turning point for me because of its tragic vision of the world. Until then, I hadn't had too many goes at looking at that side of life.

Being funny was easy, I knew what it was like to have the comic roar of approval from a crowd, but I knew that if I wanted to be a really good actor I had to explore both sides. Over the past few years I've done less and less laughs, although I've tried to sneak a few into *MERCURY*."



**SHEPHERD ON THE ROCKS** by Patrick White  
- played Archbishop Bigge  
- directed by Neil Armfield  
(State Theatre Co of S.A. 1987)

*MERCURY* is the new ABC TV drama series in which Rush plays the lead role of a daily metropolitan newspaper editor. For the past couple of years he's been expanding his work in film and television, reprising his role of Dave in the film version of *ON OUR SELECTION* and featuring in *CHILDREN OF THE REVOLUTION* with Judy Davis and Sam Neill.

He first read *SHINE* in 1992 at a time when he was determined to take some time off to spend with his new daughter. "I thought this film had to be done with me playing this part.

It was the first time I'd read a screenplay where I said, 'I can do this, this has got my fingerprints all over it'."

"I got home that weekend after reading the screenplay and by some strange coincidence, David Helfgott was advertised in the paper to be playing locally. I went to watch him and it was quite amazing to see him play. I knew then that I had to stay with this project until it was made - it was too good to let go."

**SHINE will be released nationally by Ronin Films on 15 August 1996.**

## THEATRE

- 1995 **HAMLET** Belvoir Street Theatre  
Director: Neil Armfield  
Played: Horatio
- 1994 **HAMLET** Belvoir Street Theatre  
Director: Neil Armfield  
Played: Horatio
- 1993 **OLEANNA** Sydney Theatre Company  
New Stages  
Director: Michael Gow  
Played: John
- 1993 **THE DUTCH COURTESAN**  
Melbourne Theatre Company  
Director: Roger Hodgman  
Played: Cocledemoy
- 1992 **UNCLE VANYA**  
Sydney Theatre Company  
Director: Neil Armfield  
Played: Astrov
- 1992 **THE DIARY OF A MADMAN**  
Belvoir Street Theatre  
Director: Neil Armfield  
Played: Poprishin
- 1992 **THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST**  
Melbourne Theatre Company  
Director: Simon Phillips  
Played: Jack Worthing
- 1992 **THE DIARY OF A MADMAN**  
Belvoir Street Theatre  
Director: Neil Armfield  
Played: Poprishin  
Tour: Moscow, St Petersburg
- 1991 **THE GOVERNMENT INSPECTOR**  
Sydney Theatre Company  
Director: Neil Armfield  
Played: Ivan Aleksandrovich  
Khilestakov
- 1990-91 **THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST**  
Melbourne Theatre Company  
National Tour  
Director: Simon Phillips  
Played: Jack Worthing
- 1990 **THE DIARY OF A MADMAN**  
Melbourne Theatre Company  
Director: Neil Armfield  
Played: Poprishin
- 1990 **THE COMEDY OF ERRORS**  
State Theatre Company of SA  
Director: Simon Phillips  
Played: Antipholus of Ephesus
- 1990 **MARAT/SADE**  
State Theatre Company of SA  
Director: Simon Phillips  
Played: Marat
- 1989 **THE DIARY OF A MADMAN**  
Company B Limited  
Belvoir Street Theatre  
Director: Neil Armfield  
Played: Poprishin
- 1989 **TROILUS & CRESSIDA**  
The Grin & Tonic Theatre Troupe  
Played: Thersites/Paris
- 1988 **THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST**  
Melbourne Theatre Company  
Plus Victorian Tour  
Played: Jack Worthing
- 1988 **LES ENFANTS DU PARADIS**  
Belvoir Street Theatre  
Director: Katrina Ivak  
Played: Baptiste
- 1988 **KING LEAR** State Theatre Company of SA  
Director: Gale Edwards  
Played: The Fool
- 1988 **TRISTRAM SHANDY - GENT**  
Melbourne Theatre Company  
Director: Simon Phillips  
Played: Tristram
- 1987 **THE WINTER'S TALE**  
State Theatre Company of SA  
Directors: John Gaden,  
Gale Edwards  
Played: Autolycus
- 1987 **SHEPHERD ON THE ROCKS**  
State Theatre Company of SA  
Director: Neil Armfield  
Played: Archbishop Wilfred  
Biggs

- 1987 **ON PARLIAMENT HILL**  
Belvoir Street Theatre  
Director: Robyn Archer  
Played: Mouldy 2
- 1986 **BENEFACTORS**  
State Theatre Company of SA  
Director: John Wood  
Played: David
- 1984 **NETHERWOOD**  
State Theatre Company of SA  
for the Festival of Sydney  
Director: Jim Sharman  
Played: Dr Eberhard
- 1984 **TWELFTH NIGHT**  
State Theatre Company of SA  
for Festival of Sydney  
Director: Neil Armfield  
Played: Sir Andrew Aguecheek
- 1983 **SUNRISE**  
State Theatre Company of SA  
Director: Jim Sharman  
Played: David
- 1983 **THE BLIND GIANT IS DANCING**  
State Theatre Company of SA  
Director: Neil Armfield  
Played: Allen Fitzgerald
- 1983 **PAL JOEY**  
State Theatre Company of SA  
Director: Jim Sharman  
Played: Victor
- 1983 **THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO**  
State Theatre Company of SA  
Director: Louis Nowra  
Played: Figaro
- 1983 **NETHERWOOD**  
State Theatre Company of SA  
Director: Jim Sharman  
Played: Dr Eberhard
- 1983 **A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM**  
State Theatre Company of SA  
Director: Jim Sharman  
Played: Oberon/Theseus
- 1983 **BLOOD WEDDING**  
State Theatre Company of SA  
Director: Jim Sharman  
Played: The Moon
- 1983 **TWELFTH NIGHT**  
State Theatre Company of SA  
Director: Neil Armfield  
Played: Sir Andrew Aguecheek
- 1982 **ROYAL SHOW**  
State Theatre Company of SA  
Director: Jim Sharman
- 1982 **THE PRINCE OF HOMBURG**  
State Theatre Company of SA  
Director: Louis Nowra  
Played: Field Marshall Dorfling
- 1982 **SILVER LINING**  
State Theatre Company of SA  
Director: Jim Sharman  
Played: Toozenbach
- 1982 **MOTHER COURAGE**  
State Theatre Company of SA  
Director: Jim Sharman  
Played: Soldiers
- 1982 **A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM**  
State Theatre Company of SA  
Director: Jim Sharman  
Played: Oberon/Theseus
- 1981 **YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU**  
Sydney Theatre Company  
Director: George Ogilvie
- 1981 **NO END OF BLAME**  
State Theatre Company of SA  
Director: John Gaden
- 1981 **REVENGER'S TRAGEDY**  
State Theatre Company of SA  
Director: Richard Cotterill
- 1980 **TEETH AND SMILES**  
Nimrod Theatre  
Director: Neil Armfield
- 1979 **ON OUR SELECTION**  
Nimrod Theatre  
Played: Dave
- 1979 **WAITING FOR GODOT**  
Jane Street Theatre  
Played: Vladimir
- 1979 **ON OUR SELECTION**  
Jane Street Theatre  
Director: George Whaley  
Played: Dave
- 1978 **CLOWNEROONIES**  
Queensland Theatre Company  
Devised & directed: Geoffrey Rush  
Played: Roy the Wonderboy

1978 **POINT OF DEPARTURE**  
Queensland Theatre Company  
Played: Monsieur Henri

1978 **KING LEAR** Queensland Theatre Company  
Played: The Fool

1977 **JACK AND THE BEANSTALK**  
Eden Court Theatre,  
Inverness, Scotland  
Played: Chorus Principal

1975-77 *Jacques Lecoq School of Mime,  
Movement and Theatre, Paris*

1975 *British Theatre Association  
Directors' Course, London*

1974 **PRESENT LAUGHTER**  
Queensland Theatre Company  
Played: Roland Maule

1974 **THE PHILANTHROPIST**  
Queensland Theatre Company  
Played: Philip

1974 **THE RIVALS** Queensland Theatre Company  
Played: Sir Lucius O'Trigger

1974 **GODSPELL** Queensland Theatre Company  
Played: Gilmer

1973 **HAMLET ON ICE**  
Gallery Theatre  
Played: Buttons

1973 **ALADDIN** Queensland Theatre Company  
Played: Abanzer

1973 **SUDDENLY AT HOME**  
Queensland Theatre Company  
Played: Det. Inspector Appleton

1973 **THE IMAGINARY INVALID**  
Queensland Theatre Company  
Played: Thomas Diaforus

1973 **NATIONAL HEALTH**  
Queensland Theatre Company  
Played: Rees, The Chaplain

1973 **EXPRESSO BONGO**  
Queensland Theatre Company  
Played: Beast

1973 **JUNO AND THE PAYCOCK**  
Queensland Theatre Company  
Played: Joxer

1972 **PUSS IN BOOTS**  
Queensland Theatre Company  
Played: Simple Simon

1972 **YOU'RE A GOOD MAN CHARLIE BROWN**  
Queensland Theatre Company  
Played: Snoopy

1972 **RULING CLASS**  
Queensland Theatre Company  
Played: Kelso Truscott

1972 **TWELFTH NIGHT**  
Queensland Theatre Company  
Played: Fabian

1972 **ASSAULT WITH A DEADLY WEAPON**  
Queensland Theatre Company  
Played: Hinchcliffe

1972 **LOCK UP YOUR DAUGHTERS**  
Queensland Theatre Company  
Played: Brazencourt

1971 **WRONG SIDE OF THE MOON**  
Queensland Theatre Company  
Played: Marshall the Raven

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**FILM**

1995 **CHILDREN OF THE REVOLUTION**  
Rev Kids Pty Ltd  
Director: Peter Duncan  
Played: Welch

1995 **SHINE** Momentum Films Pty Ltd  
Director: Scott Hicks  
Played: David Helfgott (adult)

1994 **FIVE EASY PIZZAS**  
Played: Allen Newman

1994 **ON OUR SELECTION**  
Anthony Buckley Productions  
Director: George Whaley  
Played: Dave

1994 **SMALL ROOM CONFESSIONS**  
Played: Don

1985 **TWELFTH NIGHT**  
Twelfth Night Pty Ltd  
Director: Neil Armfield

- 1981 **STARSTRUCK**  
Director: Gillian Armstrong
- 1980 **HOODWINK**  
C.B. Films  
Director: Claude Whatham

## TELEVISION

- 1996 **MERCURY** ABC TV Drama Series  
Played: Bill Wyatt
- 1992 **THE BURNING PIANO**  
ABC TV Documentaries  
Director: Jim Sharman
- 1980-81 **MENOTTI** ABC TV
- 1979-81 **CONSUMER CAPERS**  
ABC TV Education  
3 x 20 mins  
Played: Jimboy

## DIRECTOR

- 1992 **Aristophane's FROGS**  
Belvoir Street Theatre
- 1992 **THE POPULAR MECHANICALS and POPULAR MECHANICALS 2**  
Belvoir Street Theatre
- 1989 **THE WOLF'S BANQUET**  
Belvoir Street Theatre
- 1989 **LES ENFANTS DU PARADIS**  
Victorian College of the Arts
- 1988 **THE POPULAR MECHANICALS**  
State Theatre Company of SA
- 1988 **THE POPULAR MECHANICALS**  
Melbourne Theatre Company
- 1988 **PELL MELL** Adelaide Festival
- 1987 **THE POPULAR MECHANICALS**  
Belvoir Street Theatre
- 1987 **THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR**  
Royal Qld Theatre Company
- 1987 **PELL MELL** Melbourne Comedy Festival
- 1986 **PELL MELL** Belvoir Street Theatre

- 1986 **PEARLS BEFORE SWINE**  
Belvoir Street Theatre
- 1986 **THE 1985 SCANDALS**  
Belvoir Street Theatre
- 1984-86 **Magpie Theatre, State Theatre Company of SA**  
**ANIMAL ACTS** - Company devised  
**TEEN-AGES** - Company devised  
**CAROLS-BY-LAZERLIGHT** by Bill Harding  
**DEFINITELY NOT THE LAST** by John Romeril  
**UNREAL** by Bille Brown  
**THE SMALL POPPIES** by David Aalman  
(Adelaide Festival 1986)  
**CAROLS-BY-LAZERLIGHT** - Belvoir St Theatre
- 1978-80 **CLOWNEROONIES**  
Queensland Theatre Company  
Nimrod Theatre Company

## WRITING

- 1992 **Aristophane's FROGS**  
Co-adaptation with John Clarke  
Belvoir Street Theatre
- 1992 **CLOWNING AROUND**  
(Assisted George Whaley)  
Barron Films (TV) Ltd
- 1991 **THE GOVERNMENT INSPECTOR**  
(Co-translator)  
Sydney Theatre Company

## AWARDS

- 1994 Sydney Theatre Critics' Circle Nomination for Shakespeare Globe Centre Award for **HAMLET**
- 1994 Sydney Theatre Critics' Circle Nomination for Best Performance in a Supporting Role for **HAMLET**
- 1993 Sydney Theatre Critics' Circle Nomination for Rosemount Award for Performance in **OLEANNA**
- 1990 Victorian Green Room Award for Best Actor in **THE DIARY OF A MADMAN**
- 1989 Sydney Theatre Critics' Circle Award for Most Outstanding Performance in **THE DIARY OF A MADMAN**
- 1989 Variety Club Award for Stage Actor of the Year in **THE DIARY OF A MADMAN**

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