



REG LIVERMORE - A0

Reg Livermore, born December 11 1938, was stage-struck from the word go. Regular outings to see pantomimes at the famous Tivoli Theatre Sydney indicated the sort of productions he enjoyed, and hinted at the direction his career would eventually take. At the age of 13 he started hiring local halls to stage performances of his own pantomimes in aid of local charities, his casts made up of coerced neighborhood children and school friends.

As the size of the venues increased so did the expenses. Having hit his straps early on and fired with a strong sense of his own destiny he hired the Mosman Town Hall in 1955 and again in 1956 to stage *Snow White*, and then *Mother Goose*. More money was taken at the box office but profits were small. The young actor-manager began to appreciate the hit and miss nature of show business.

During his last years at school he worked hard at the drama club and worked nights at the Independent Theatre where he'd been attending acting classes, and as the opportunities presented themselves appeared in *Toad of the Hall*, *The Glass Slipper*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; his mind was on everything but scholastics and wisely he chose to leave school early rather than suffer humiliation at the hands of any examiner. More plays for the Independent followed, and in 1957, after a successful audition for well-known Phillip Street Theatre his professional career was underway.

Reg's first job was as understudy in *Around The Loop*, covering Gordon Chater and Barry Humphries; in the next revue, *Cross Section*, he shared the stage with Ruth Cracknell, June Salter and John Meillon. During this period he met Hayes Gordon and began acting lessons in earnest, becoming one of the select and privileged founding members of the Ensemble Theatre-in-the-round. Like many actors of that time he was drawn to the bright lights of London; rather than change the nature of his speaking voice and possibly his whole persona in order to satisfy the expectations of English theatrical producers and directors the assertive young Mr. Livermore returned to Australia and the Ensemble Theatre, by then re-located to a boatshed at the edge of Sydney Harbour in Kirribilli.

There followed an intense period of instruction and practical experience with his true teacher, Hayes Gordon. Reg appeared in Ensemble productions of *Orpheus Descending*, *The Drunkard*, *The Double Dealer*, *The Canterville Ghost*, *The Thracian Horse*, *Miss Lonely Hearts*, *The Physicists* and *The Real Inspector Hound*. He moved to Melbourne for a two and a half year stint with the Union Theatre Repertory Company, performing in the works of Rattigan, Ionesco, Shakespeare, Peter Ustinov, Bram Stoker and Patrick White. He also made his directorial debut in a new production of *The Shifting Heart* by Australian playwright Richard Beynon and wrote his first musical *The Good Ship Walter Raleigh*. At the conclusion of this very busy period, he returned to Sydney to re-establish his career in that very difficult city. He performed in the Independent Theatre production *Oh Dad Poor Dad*, *Mamma's Hung in the Closet* and *I'm Feeling So Sad* with Lyndall Barbour, followed up by *The Importance of Being Earnest* at the Old Tote with Sophie Stewart and Ron Haddrick.

During 1964/65 Reg starred as the Wicked Witch of the West in the *Wizard of Oz* at the Sydney Tivoli, and then played the lead role in *The Knack* for the Phillip Theatre management. He then became the first guest of the newly formed South Australia Theatre Company performing *Andorra* by Max Frisch and *West of the Black Stump* which he wrote with Sandra McKenzie. This was followed by the popular, *Cup of Tea*, *A Bex and a Good Lie Down* another Sydney Phillip Theatre show featuring Gloria Dawn and Ruth Cracknell. After fifteen months in this record-breaking show, Reg was invited to compare a children's program for

ABC TV called *CrackerJack*. On the strength of his success the ABC offered Reg his own Saturday night Variety show called *I'm Alright Now*. Next year he took over from Ronnie Fraser in the *Mavis Bramston Show*, and when Mavis was finally put to bed in 1968 stayed on at Channel 7 to participate in *Anything Goes*.

In 1969 Reg added to his list of musical credits roles in *The Mikado* and then *Hair*, the musical that suddenly and dramatically rocketed his commercial theatrical career. After two years starring in this liberating show he moved on to *The Tooth of Crime* by Sam Shepard at Nimrod, his own musical *Lasseter* for the Old Tote, and then *Jesus Christ Superstar* for Harry M. Miller. In 1974 he was rewarded with one of life's and his great roles: the original Australian Dr Frank'n'Furter in *The Rocky Horror Show*. In 1975 at the request of producer Eric Dare he conceived his first one man show, *Betty Blokk Buster Follies*, which played to record crowds in Sydney, Canberra, Perth, Adelaide and Melbourne. After the phenomenal success of this, he wrote and performed *Wonder Woman*, *Sacred Cow*, *Son of Betty* and *Firing Squad*. His trip to London with *Sacred Cow* in 1980 created an unexpected sensation: the audience tried to boo him off the stage but he refused to oblige them. The Sydney Daily Telegraph subsequently lamented that his appearance in the West End had given Australia a bad name. In 1982 he played the title role in the American musical *Barnum*, and 1984 saw him in a revival of *The Rocky Horror Show*.

After this Reg enjoyed a period of well-earned quiet tending his well-known garden property in the picturesque Blue Mountains, also mounting several exhibitions of his own colourful paintings. In 1989 he returned to television, as a member of *Burke's Backyard* for the Nine Television network, concurrently writing and performing *Wish You Were Here*, a one-man show at the Clarendon Theatre Restaurant in Katoomba. This subsequently played the Melbourne International Festival and a season at the Victorian Arts Centre. In 1991 he appeared in the Gilbert and Sullivan opera *Iolanthe* for Victoria State Opera and directed *La Traviata* for the same organization at the Ballarat Easter Festival in 1992. In that year he also wrote and performed his second one-man show for the Blue Mountains, *Santa on the Planet of the Apes*. This was followed by his performance as Major General Stanley in *The Pirates of Penzance*, again for Victoria State Opera.

During 1993 he toured regional Victoria with *Wish You Were Here* and in 1994/95 he performed the same play to ecstatic audiences at the Ensemble Theatre in Sydney. He also wrote and performed the highly successful *Red Riding Hood*, *the Speed Hump* and *the Wolf* at the Clarendon and the Ensemble Theatre, before receiving an Australian Artist Creative Fellowship through the Australia Council. In 1996 Reg was honoured as an Officer in the Order of Australia (AO).

Reg became a regular presenter on Channel Nine's *Our House*, a show that notched up nine years of television. In 1998 Reg wrote and performed *Home Sweet Home*, *Leonard's Last Hurrah* for the Clarendon Guest House, followed by a season at the Melbourne Festival, and then at the Sydney Opera House in 1999. In 2001 Reg enjoyed enormous success again at the Clarendon with *The Thank You Dinner – A Feast to Remember*, and in 2002 joined Opera Australia for their production of *Iolanthe* at the Sydney Opera House. Reg starred as The Lord Chancellor in a sell out, three times extended season.

Mid 2003 Reg auditioned in Los Angeles for Mel Brooks and director Susan Stroman, winning the leading role of Max Bialystock in *The Producers - New Brooks Musical* subsequently playing Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane to great acclaim.

In 2006 Reg played the Duke of Plaza Toro in the Gilbert and Sullivan Opera *The Gondoliers* for Opera Australia. 2007 Brought a return to *Pirates of Penzance* with Anthony Warlow at the State Theatre in Melbourne and *The Gondoliers* Sydney season at the Sydney opera House.

2008 introduced Reg to the role of Professor Henry Higgins for Opera Australia's production of *My Fair Lady* in Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra and Brisbane. Following this appearance and to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Ensemble Theatre in Sydney, Reg a foundation member of the this historical theatre is reprising his entertainment *The Thank You Dinner*, first performed at The Clarendon in Katoomba in 2001.

In 2011 Reg wrote and performed along side Nancye Hayes in the production *Turns*, produced by Christine Dunstan Productions. *Turns* toured Australia extensively, playing cities and regional venues.

Reg brought back from extinction to play the illustrious role of The Wizard of Oz in the 10th Anniversary production of *Wicked, The Untold Story of the Witches of Oz* at Melbourne's Regent Theatre in 2014 and Sydney's Capitol in 2014/15 winning a Helpmann Award for the role, and receiving the Sydney Theatre Awards Lifetime Achievement Award.

In 2016, Reg won the gift role of Alfred P. Doolittle in the Dame Julie Andrews production of *My Fair Lady* selling more seats at the Sydney Opera House than any other show in its history. In 2017, prior to seasons in Brisbane and Sydney, Reg was awarded the The Colleen Clifford Memorial Award for the Most Outstanding Performance by an Actor in a Supporting Role in a Musical, Glug Award for this role.

The recipient of many awards for his considerable achievements Reg's long awaited autobiography, 'Chapters and Chances' a coffee table style photographic history, was published in 2003 through Hardie Grant books. He is currently completing the second volume of biography titled 'There Are Things I Haven't Told You'.