

DON PARTIES ON

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MELBOURNE
THEATRE
COMPANY

Don Parties On was first produced by Melbourne Theatre Company at The Arts Centre Playhouse, Melbourne, on 13 January 2011, with the following cast:

DON	Garry McDonald
KATH	Tracy Mann
BELLE	Georgia Flood
MAL	Robert Grubb
RICHARD	Darren Gilshenan
COOLEY	Frankie J Holden
HELEN	Diane Craig
JENNY	Sue Jones
ROBERTA	Nikki Shiels

Director, Robyn Nevin

Set Designer, Dale Ferguson

Costume Designer, Jennifer Irwin

Lighting Designer, Matt Scott

Sound Designer, Russell Goldsmith

Assistant Director, Ben Winspear

CHARACTERS

DON, mid 60s

KATH, his wife

BELLE, 16, their granddaughter

MAL, 60s

RICHARD, 42, Don and Kath's son, Belle's father

COOLEY, mid 60s

HELEN, his wife, younger

JENNY, mid 60s, Mal's ex wife

ROBERTA, 30, Richard's girlfriend

ACT ONE

We're in a suburban house in the outer Melbourne suburb of Lower Plenty. The house has had modifications and extensions over forty years, but it remains unmistakably of its era, with pioneered beams and vaulted ceilings which now look quaint rather than modern. Downstage on one side is the living room with sofas. The other side is a dining area with a table. Upstage and on a higher level is a kitchen and a back entrance. There's a flat screen television set facing away from the audience downstage in the living area. It's not huge but big enough.

DON HENDERSON comes down from the kitchen area where he has been helping his wife KATH by cleaning wine glasses. KATH is preparing food.

DON takes up the television remote control, switches it on and stands in front of the television.

It's six o'clock on election night. At the sound of Kerry O'Brien on the ABC, KATH stops preparing the food and moves down to join DON in watching the screen. The feeling is tense. This could be a pivotal night in Australian political history.

KERRY O'BRIEN: *[TV, voice only]* Welcome to the national tally room in Canberra for 'Australia Votes 2010', where we're ready to take you on a fascinating ride on what will be a nerve-racking night for Julia Gillard, Tony Abbott and all their supporters. A night that one way or another is going to make history. We could even see the first hung parliament for seventy years. It's been a tumultuous three years, the end of the Howard era, the spectacular rise and fall of Kevin Rudd, the worst global recession in seventy-five years and the near collapse of the world's financial system, and the rise of Australia's first female prime minister. We're well set up to tell you the various stories as they unfold, fast and accurate. We've got Antony Green's magical computer analysis, Stephen Smith and Nick Minchin—

DON: [*turning on the mute in disgust*] Nick Minchin! Hottest year on record and he still thinks global warming is a left-wing conspiracy. Not that Labor's any better. Julia promises us we'll all *talk* about it if she wins. Not *do* anything. Just have a little chat.

KATH: She's got to live with political realities.

DON: What does she stand for? What did Rudd stand for? What do any of them stand for? All they do is parrot the catch phrases that focus groups and polling tell them might win them some votes. 'Great big new tax.' 'Let's move Australia forward.' 'We'll stop the boats.' 'Working families.'

KATH: Labor's not going to rip out over a billion from the education budget like the Liberals have promised to do. [*Indicating the television*] Could we have the sound on please?

DON: Nothing's going to happen for another hour!

KATH takes the control forcibly and turns it on. We hear Antony Green's voice.

ANTONY GREEN: [*TV, voice only*] You need seventy-six seats for one side of politics to be confident of governing in their own right. Both sides could end up with seventy-three or seventy-four seats with the balance in the middle there, then there'd be negotiations.

DON: Pray to God that doesn't happen. We could spend the next three years ruled by the whims of the mad Bob Katter.

KATH: Don't, please. [*She sighs. Polishing the table top*] I still can't work out why you decided to have this election night party. We stopped doing it twenty years ago.

DON: I was really hit when Mack died. I just wanted to see the old tribe together again. What's left of them. How much time have any of us got left? Remember that first party we had in 1969?

KATH: How could I ever forget. Cooley dumped the poor girl he brought and seduced Kerry the dentist's wife.

DON: [*laughing*] And got punched in the teeth by the dentist. What was his name?

KATH: Evan. Whatever happened to those two?

DON: I heard they got divorced.

KATH: Not surprising. Mal tried to grope every woman here while his wife Jenny had to watch. Then late at night you suggested a little wife swapping.

DON: It was a joke, but Mal was so drunk he took it seriously.

KATH: Then Jenny screamed at me for only feeding them chips and Twisties. [*Still indignant*] What about the pizzas?

DON: You'd just told her she was an extravagant spendthrift.

KATH: Thank God their marriage broke up. You continued to inflict Mal on me but at least we didn't have to see her anymore.

DON: Most of the parties in the old days were disasters, but for all that, they had passion. We still really cared who won. We still thought a change of government could change the nation. And we laughed and drank wine, not bloody mineral water. I yearn for a bit of that.

KATH: And you think this party is going to resurrect it? You guys will spend the night giving an organ recital. Which ones are about to collapse.

DON: Okay. Maybe it's more a case of misery seeks company these days, but there's a bonding that happens in those formative years that stays with you for life. You can say what you like about Mal, but if you sift through the bullshit, he's a genuinely original thinker.

KATH: You're obviously a better sifter than I am.

DON: Your enthusiasm for this party is overwhelming.

KATH: Just two rules, right? No Creedence Clearwater Revival and don't talk football.

DON: Hey!

KATH: Why can't you accept that Collingwood is never going to win a Grand Final and get on with life?

DON: What life? I'm a retiree.

KATH: More important things should be on your agenda. You probably haven't noticed, but your son has just left his wife to run off with a younger woman.

DON: Ten years younger.

KATH: Twelve.

DON: Ten.

KATH: [*ominously*] Like father, like son.

DON: That was over thirty years ago. How long does this have to go on?

KATH: As long as I want it to.

DON: For Christ's sake. I was back after a week.

KATH: Our son has obviously inherited your irresponsibility.

DON: Kath, that's—

KATH: [*pointing offstage*] His daughter—our granddaughter is in there.

What do you think it's doing to her? And our grandson?

DON: You can't really judge what a marriage is like from the outside.

KATH: That's just code for 'if sex is boring with your wife, move on'.

She brings a selection of cheeses and puts them on the table next to the dips and wafers that are already there.

Will you try and be a good host tonight?

DON: The food's there. The tap's over there. What else do they need?

KATH: You've been a lazy bastard for forty years. Why should I expect you to change tonight?

A smartly-dressed teenager, BELLE, sweeps into the room.

BELLE: I rang home and then Mum's mobile and they both went to message.

KATH: She might just want a bit of peace.

BELLE: She was crying again last night.

KATH: I just hope your father comes to his senses while she'll still have him back.

BELLE: I don't want him back. [*Worried*] I think I should go home.

KATH: Your mother wanted a few days to herself to think. Go and watch one of those videos you brought.

BELLE: Is the player Blu-ray?

DON: I'm sure our DVD player will play Blu-ray. It'll just be a tad fuzzier.

BELLE: No it won't. You have to have a Blu-ray player.

DON: I'm not going to race and buy one.

KATH: Have you got a DVD you could watch?

BELLE: [*with a sigh*] I guess. But Blu-ray's much sharper.

KATH: Another vampire movie?

BELLE: Granny, you don't take vampire movies literally. They're allegorical.