

# OUR TOWN



BY LESLIE WALFORD

IN A lively week, the Lord Mayor introduced new plans for the city — for Martin Place — and for giving us gardens wherever possible.

These plans, presented for public comment, were introduced by the planning team at the Town Hall on Monday.

So Sydney's rulers were active and jumping with cityscape ideas just as Canberra's new court was marching into the corridors of power.

One might add that Mrs Whitlam stole the limelight from everyone with her comments on why we need not "keep off the grass." Sydney, on the other hand, plans stone plazas of delight, shady cool with trees — but no lawns.

The Lord Mayor, Alderman Griffin, described the council's action plans as good news for Sydney, particularly for the pedestrian, and taking into account the idea of the City as a "work of art."

The Martin Place plan shows a series of plazas with different characteristics.

The next stage to be built will be the Pitt-Castlereagh Street section, to cost \$400,000. The remaining three sections up to Macquarie Street could be finished in four years.

Briefly, the already completed George-Pitt Street section has the Cenotaph, the flower stall and seating, as you know. The Pitt-Castlereagh section will have an entry to the railway station with shops leading underground, a multi-purpose recreation stage, slightly sunken, suitable for ice skating, outdoor theatre, concerts, demonstrations and displays, also a restaurant terrace and a fountain wall, an information centre, and more trees.

## Barter centre

The Castlereagh-Elizabeth section, with low sculptural forms and trees, will be for a street market like Paddy's Market, perhaps sometimes reserved for special purposes, for charity jumble sales or fetes, for the exchange of arts and crafts. It will be an attractive bartering centre.

The Elizabeth-Phillip section will contain a grove of trees, on three levels, providing in its folding landscape a centre of rest and relaxation.

The Phillip-Macquarie section will have a "top of the hill" feeling with, it is hoped, a tall fountain, trees, different levels. It will be a meeting place.

At the exit from the underground railway station there will be a restaurant/kiosk, with outdoor seating. Taxi ranks will be located on all the crossing streets.

As you see, Martin Place is intended to be busy, planned in sections rather than as one long grand plaza.

This project needs your careful scrutiny, open-mindedness and forward thinking.

Are the spaces lacking in inter-relativity, or too frivolous for a section of the City where we need calmer grandeur?

Actually, I think the planners intend the whole of Martin Place to be seething with activity, and, to have great diversity.

## Parklands

If this is the case, and if it works well, then my cry is for the eventual construction of one grand plaza, uncluttered and monumental, edged with trees, disturbed only perhaps by fountains, to be constructed on the site of Sydney Hospital, which I am certain should be, eventually, removed.

Such a ceremonial square would be flanked by the Courts of Justice and the Parliament, its fourth side opening, by steps, onto the green lawns of the Domain and facing towards the tree-surrounded Art Gallery.

## Our city renewed as a work of art



ARLETTE THEBAULT . . . taking back news of our Opera House.

Sydney Hospital is not a lovely building. Admittedly it is convenient for doctors, but the day is bound to come when the building itself deteriorates into an impossibly impractical structure, and a move to a new site will be necessary.

If the Martin Place idea is carried through, then Sydney certainly still needs a grand, serious, really open space as its ceremonial centre.

The second council scheme is the nibbling back at the roads to give us more parkland.

Little parks are to be made all over the City where there are unnecessary roads or badly planned crossings.

Scheme No 3 involves the whole gamut of street furniture being re-planned such as street signs, litter bins, bus shelters, lamp posts, mail boxes, historic markers.

All such a step in the right direction.

## Our vision

I have been through the Opera House once again, this time in the company of Arlette Thebault who visited Sydney as the chief representative of the house of fashion of Givenchy of Paris, bringing with her the two models, Valerie Lachaize and Eve Salembier.

I arranged for the girls to see our Opera House so they might take news of it back to their friends in Paris.

Incredibly fascinating are many of those tucked away 900 rooms backstage and underground.

But thinking only of what the public will see, the vision is already there, practically complete.

The tiers of seats to be used by the Queen on her opening visit are already selected.

Quickening into life is the mid-century's most extraordinary building. However it operates, it will make the New York Lincoln Centre look like a yawn.

After our Opera House visit we took the girls to the Summit Restaurant for a delicious lunch.

The menu was printed in honour of "Givenchy," with oysters, rolled turkey full of avocado, cheese and mushrooms, strawberries with passionfruit and cream, wines and coffee.

I sacrificed myself to this grand lunch for the good of our relations with France!

## Voluptuous

Every romantic, everyone nostalgia prone, should not let a heartbeat pass before booking to see "The Merry Widow" at the Elizabethan Theatre. The production is just marvellous, and the most lavish, I think, I have seen in this city.

Tom Lingwood's sets and costumes are surely the final word for this operetta with its beautiful music by Franz Lehar. Add Edwardian voluptuousness to art nouveau, and colour all black, orange, red and white.

Robert Gard is an excellent Danilo. Suzanne Steele as Anna Glawari is visually voluptuous and beautiful, even if at moments her voice was a touch too hard.

As de Rosillon, Henri Wilden can't act, but I'd forgive the ladies for swooning when he sings the "Love Duet."

This show should suit the majority with its overwhelmingly romantic mood, its glittering gaiety, and it gives you one hell of a happy night out.

As in the words of the "Merry Widow Waltz" — "I believe in magic."

## New revue

A whole new world has hit Manly. "The Music Loft" opened last week in the Manly Walk Arcade, No 7 The Corso — attractive loft-like room, air-conditioned, where you eat well and may drink during the musical revue, "The Manly Christmas Fairy."

It's in the tradition of Phillip Street theatre, which is to be expected as William Orr presents it and Ron Frazer acts with style (especially as Carol Channing).

William Orr started Phillip Street 18 years ago and everyone in Sydney knows him. Everyone certainly knows Ron Frazer too, as the funniest man we have.

## Fire-eaters

Roll of drums, take out the diary. Phone your friends. Organise! Don't dare miss the day we're all working for — the Art Gallery Society's grand Luna Park day.

That's Wednesday of this week — from midday till ten at night — everything you ever imagined, at Luna Park, all for free once you've paid for a ticket at the gate: \$5 single adult, \$4 single Art Gallery Society member, \$3 single Art Gallery Society Younger Group, \$2 single 17 year-olds and under.

It's worth the money. There'll be thousands there on that once-in-a-lifetime fun day before Christmas. All rides are free!

See the giant Christmas tree, sword swallows, fire-eaters, clowns, the paint-in, fashion parades, stars of stage, screen and radio.

And remember, you won't pay through the nose for it if you pay at the mouth!