

# Performance in the park

by **TIM ESCOTT**

THERE is a classic tale about Brooklyn.

Two locals sit talking and joking in a Brooklyn Hotel. One is a barrister, the other is an oyster farmer's assistant.

Neither man asks what the other does for a living. Both just sit and merely enjoy their conversation.

The story epitomises the community feel of Brooklyn – and may go some way to explaining the popularity of its annual Theatre in the Park.

*Run for Your Wife* will be staged at Brooklyn Park for the fifth year on November 21.

It has been a raging success for its director Peter Hughes and producer Ray Bontoft (a teacher and soccer coach, and a Brooklyn Rural Fire Service captain respectively in their normal lives).

Last year 600 people crammed into Brooklyn Park to sit on picnic rugs and enjoy the show – and similar crowds are expected this year.

Part of the show's success lies in the fact it features ordinary people

alongside trained actors, which gives the show a raw and natural edge.

"The biggest thrill for me is taking normal people through the show as actors who've never done it before," said Hughes.

"They only get one shot at it with one show a year after seven or eight weeks training and when they get off stage they are usually feeling bullet-proof."

*Run For Your Wife* was also only on once a year, which meant it could not go stale, Bontoft said.

"Brooklyn continues to throw their support behind the show. Last year people stayed on until the early hours socialising and chatting about the show," he said.

Hughes said in recent years people had come to see the show from Queensland, the Blue Mountains and Newcastle.

The production is put together with a \$2000 budget. Hughes said other theatre groups were amazed at the level of success achieved on such a shoestring budget.



Stage presence . . . director Peter Hughes (left) and producer Ray Bontoft.

Picture: SARA NIXON

## RFS fund-raiser

■ *Run for Your Wife* will be staged at Brooklyn Park on November 21 for the fifth consecutive year.

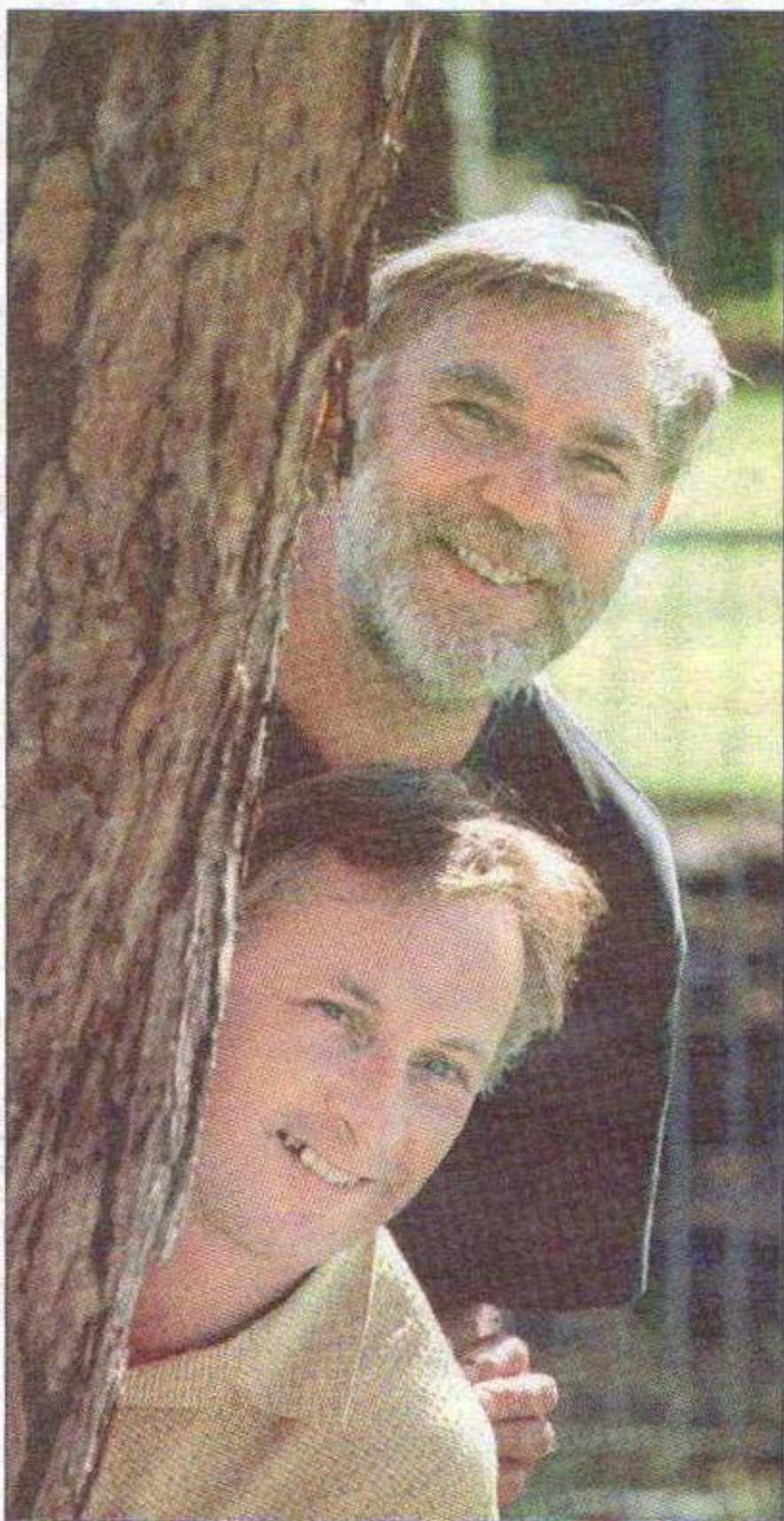
■ The production is put together with a \$2000 budget.

■ The show is a fund-raiser for the Rural Fire Service.

■ The cast are resident of the Brooklyn community.

■ Inquiries: 9985 7919.

# Park yourself in Brooklyn



**THEATRE IN PARK:** Producer Ray Bontoft and director Peter Hughes are ready for this annual Brooklyn night. Photo: SARA NIXON

BROOKLYN'S annual Theatre in the Park is on again tomorrow to raise money for the rural fire brigade.

Each year a team of residents band together for one performance only, under the stars, as a fundraiser and community night.

*Run For Your Wife*, a comedy by Ray Cooney, features Gary Robertson as John, who finds himself sinking deeper into a tangled mess of lies and half-truths as he deals with his wife Barbara (Ailie McMurdo), nosy friend Stanley (Steve Pearson) and wife Mary, while two policemen (Greg Upfold and Greg Wilson) and the neighbour from hell (Bernie Leo) complicate everything.

Peter Hughes will direct the play, while brigade members will set up the stage and man the gates.

Bring chairs or a rug, a picnic or buy food on the night.

Tickets: \$30 for a family, \$12 for adults and \$9 for concessions.

Inquiries: 9986 7662.

# Show 'em how it's done

TIM ESCOTT

THERE'S a classic tale about Brooklyn. Two locals sit talking and joking at a Brooklyn Hotel. One is a barrister, the other an oyster farmer's assistant – though neither asks what the other does for a living, they are merely enjoying the conversation.

This epitomises the community feel of Brooklyn – and may go some way to explaining the popularity of its annual Theatre in the Park.

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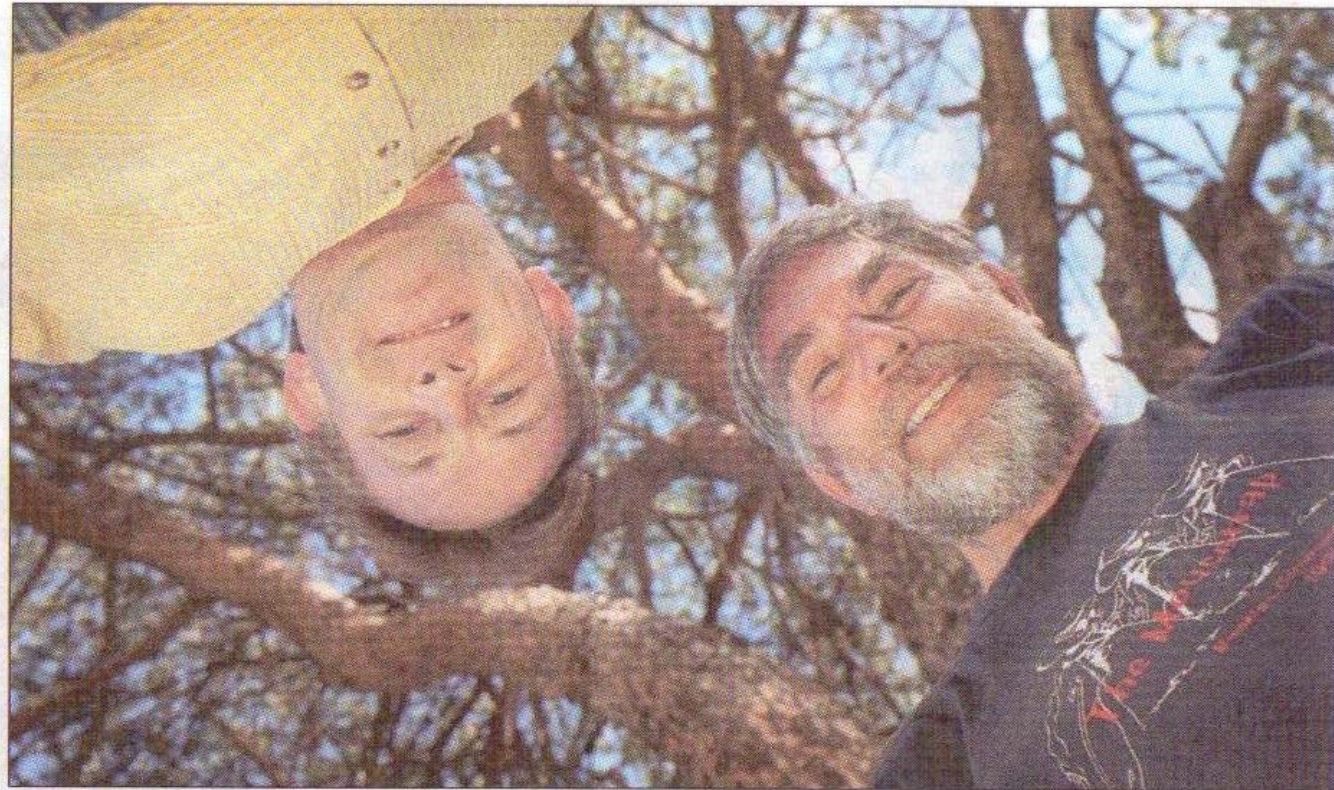
It has been a runaway success for director Peter Hughes and producer Ray Bontoft (teacher and girls soccer coach, and Brooklyn Rural Fire Service captain respectively, in their normal life).

Last year 600 people crammed into Brooklyn park to sit on picnic rugs – and similar crowds are expected again this year.

Part of the show's success lies in the fact it uses ordinary people and few trained actors to give the show a raw and natural edge.

"The biggest thrill for me is taking normal people through the show as actors who've never done it before," said Mr Hughes.

"They only get one shot at it with one show a year after seven or eight weeks training and when



TRADITION: Peter Hughes and Ray Bontoft get ready for the annual play.

Photo: SARA NIXON

they get off stage they are usually feeling bulletproof."

*Run For Your Wife* is also only on once a year, meaning it can't go stale, Mr Bontoft said.

"Brooklyn continues to throw their support behind the show – last year people stayed on until the early hours socialising and chatting about the show," he said.

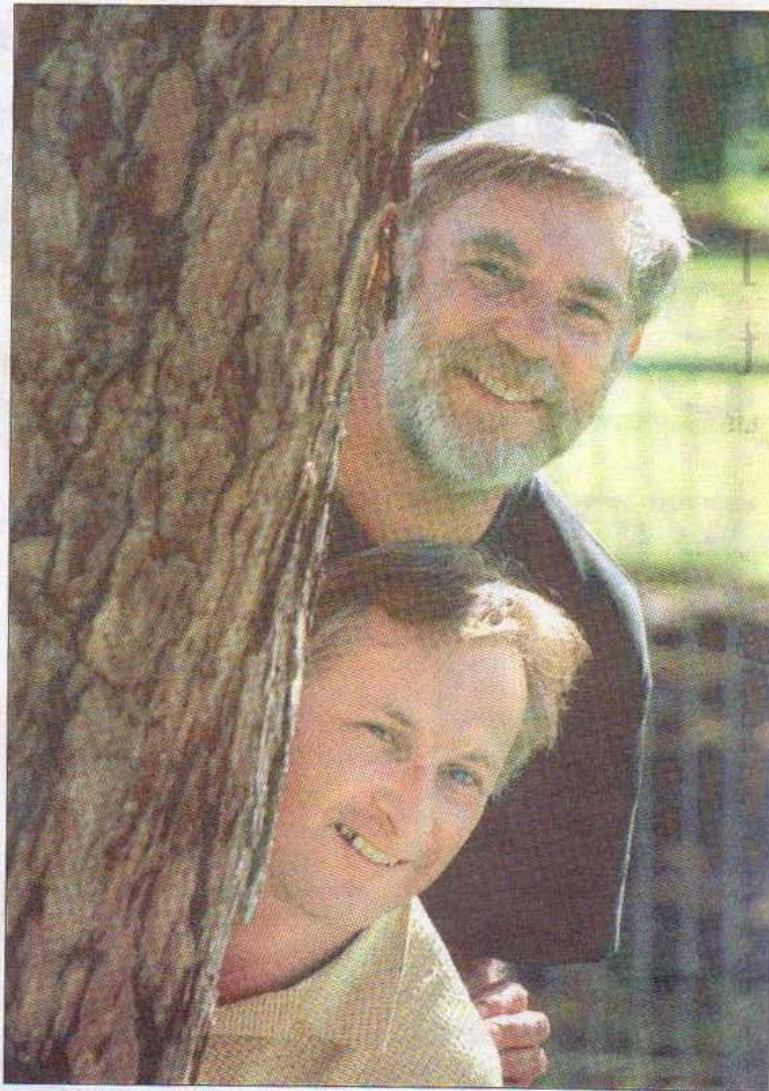
The audience isn't confined to locals. Mr Hughes said in recent years people had come to see the show from Queensland, the Blue Mountains and Newcastle.

The production is put together with a \$2000 budget – and has drawn attention from other theatre groups amazed at how such a success can be run on a shoestring budget, he said.

The show is also a fundraiser for the Rural Fire Service.

The show finishes off a big year for Mr Hughes, who became a local hero after coaching the girls' soccer team to the state championship – Mr Hughes and the girls received a tickertape-style welcome when they returned home.

Inquiries: 9985 7919.



**CURTAINS:** Ray Bontoft and Peter Hughes hope their play can raise money for the bushfire brigade. Photo: SARA NIXON

## A chance to play it again

BROOKLYN'S annual Theatre in the Park is returning on Saturday to raise money for the rural fire brigade.

Rain dampened the last performance of *Run For Your Wife*, a comedy by Ray Cooney, which was designed as a fundraiser and community night.

Normally 600 people cram into Brooklyn Oval to see the annual performance, but last year the rain saw a much smaller crowd of 150 dedicated viewers.

And so director Peter Hughes decided to bring back the performance under the stars for one night only.

*Run For Your Wife* features Gary Robertson as John, who finds himself sinking deeper into a tangled mess of lies and

half-truths as he deals with his wife Barbara (Ailie McMurdo), nosy friend Stanley (Steve Pearson) and wife Mary, while two policemen (Greg Upfold and Greg Wilson) and the neighbour from hell (Bernie Leo) complicate everything.

It has been a runaway success for Mr Hughes and producer Ray Bontoft (teacher and girls soccer coach, and Brooklyn Rural Fire Service captain respectively, in their normal life).

The performance starts at 8pm on Saturday. Brigade members will set up the stage and man the gates.

Bring chairs or a rug, a picnic or buy food on the night. Tickets are \$30 for a family, \$12 for adults and \$9 for concessions.

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