Dramatic Exit

February 1, 2002 By Stephen Winter

Theater Down Under lost a towering figure on December 7, when Richard Wherrett, legendary founding director of the Sydney Theater Company, Australia's most prolific theater director and an HIVer for 12 years, succumbed to liver failure at age 60. With 127 theater productions seen by almost 4 million people, Wherrett is credited with having helped to build the profile of such international Aussie stars as Mel Gibson and Judy Davis. Flamboyant, gregarious and funny to the end, the impresario even scripted and directed his own funeral, a production that played to a packed house of more than a thousand devoted friends and celebrities and closed on Thelma Houston's frenzied disco hit "Don't Leave Me This Way."

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