

B A C K C H A T

News from the New Zealand Theatre Federation Inc.



Levin Little Theatre's Christmas pantomime
Arabian Knights by Richard Lloyd.
Saladin (*Julian White*) seizes Richard the
Lionheart (*Jessica Reeves*).

President's Column

Dear Members,

Here we are again - new plans, new dreams, new resolutions. Most of these fall by the way side but usually in our theatre world we manage to bring in something new to our lives - that is what theatre is about - innovation built on tradition thus creating new traditions.

So I am going to go on a learning curve and start a trial video competition for schools - there - I've said it in public so I will have to do it. The ideas in my head will have to become reality by the beginning of next year. No doubt there will not be many takers at the start but it will be a start. Theatre Federation has been a unifying body for like minded people for a long time and it is time to become a catchment area for new people who soon will be our next leaders. If you have an active school in your area encourage them to join in.

Your Christmas shows will be well under way ready to bring joy to a lot of people. May you get a lot of satisfaction out of a year ended well. It is great that so many groups do such a variety of genres embracing so many different talents.

Thank you to all the Presidents, Secretaries, Treasurers and committees that work hard to make your groups a cohesive whole. You are a vital part of the theatre world and I know the people you work for are truly grateful.

I am glad I belong to New Zealand Theatre Federation and I am glad you all belong too. Have a safe, happy Christmas and don't forget to make a resolution you just might be able to keep!

Here's to a great 2009

Denise Walsh, President.



Festival of Community Theatre 2009

Announcing the adjudicators and venues for next year's festival:

National Final 26/27 June at the Globe Theatre, Palmerston North*.

Bryan Aitken

South Island Regional June 5/6 Logan Park High School, Dunedin.

North Island Regional June 12/13 Little Theatre, Napier.
Natalie Ellis-Wilson

*The Annual General Meeting of NZTF and Grand Opening of the May Ives Library will be held at Square Edge; meeting in the morning and celebration in the afternoon at 2.30pm.

Christmas is Coming

Christmas is traditionally pantomime time, time for getting lots of people involved. Levin Little Theatre's *Arabian Knights* had over 30 actors all very colourfully dressed, performing against appropriate Middle Eastern backdrops.



Contents

- Cover
- Editorial
- Advantages of Participating in the NZTF Festival of Community Theatre.
 - The Best Christmas Cake Ever...
- Devon Williamson, Playwright
- Production Calendar
 - Advertisement
- Season's Greetings

Advantages of Participating in the NZTF Festival of Community Theatre

by Bryan Aitken

A STAGE FOR EVERY AGE

Society Members

The benefit of being assessed by an ANZDA Accredited Adjudicator, so your individual work and the production can develop to a greater degree.

Adjudication can validate the standard to which you are aspiring.

The accent of Adjudication is on creativity, direction and acting.

Net-working within the non-professional environment, including societies, directors, teachers and practitioners in all fields of theatre.

You can enter a piece of between 15 and 50 minutes duration – regardless of genre, style or author.

The Festival format exposes participants to several styles of theatre in one evening.

An ideal forum for practising your craft in a supportive atmosphere.

A positive environment for young or new theatre practitioners to develop.

Awards recognise endeavour.

An environment in which both adults and young people can mix, work and learn off each other.

Productions incorporating music and dance are eligible.

Physical constraints regarding venues, technicals and travel, help to focus concept.

Progressing on to Regional or National Finals brings mana to your group.

Secondary Schools

The fostering of inter-school relationships.

Projects from your drama programme can be entered in the Festival.

Meets the performance requirements of NCEA Drama Achievement Standards:

Level 1; 90006, 90007, 90008, 90009, 90010

Level 2; 90300, 90301, 90302, 90303

Level 3; 90608, 90609, 90611

Ensemble-devised class projects are eligible for entry and make good theatre.

It creates a forum of opportunity regardless of socio-

economic situation.

Progressing on to Regional or National level inspires your team to step-up.

Raises the profile of your school and drama course in the community and nationally.

Travelling to other centres places Performing Arts on a par with sporting activities.

Awards and cups can sit in your school alongside those of sporting achievements.

The Best Christmas Cake Ever...

1 cup butter	1 cup sugar
4 large eggs	1 cup dried fruit
Nuts	Lemon juice
1 tspn baking powder	1 tspn salt
1 cup brown sugar	1 or 2 quarts of whiskey

Before you start sample the whiskey to check the quality. Good isn't it! Now go ahead....

Select a large mixing bowl, measuring cup etc. Check whiskey again as it must be just right. To be sure the whiskey is of the highest quality pour 1 level cup into a glass and drink it fast as you can.

Repeat.

With an electric mixer, beat 1 cup of butter in a large fluffy bowl. Add 1 tspn of thugar and beat.

Meanwhile make sure the whisy is of the finest quality. Cry another tup. Open 2nd quart if nec.

Add 2 arge leggs, 2 cups dried fruit and beat until high. If druit gets stuck in beaters, just pry it loose with a screw driver. Samole the shisky again, check for tonscisticity.

Next sift 3 cups of salt or anything... it really doesn't matter. Sample the whiskey again.

Sift 1/2 pint lemon juice. Fold in the chopped butter and strained nuts. Add 1 babblespoon of brown sugar or whatever colour you can find and wix mel.

Grease oven and turn cake pan to 180 gredees. Now pour the whole mess into the coven and ake. Check the shisky again and go to bed.

Best of luck - hope you sober up in time for Christmas.

Devon Williamson, Playwright

Backchat editor Margaret Robertson fired off some questions to Devon Williamson. Here's what he had to say about his work as a playwright...

How long have you been writing and where did you train?

I trained with a touring theatre company in the late 80's and early 90's. They treated theatre as a trade. The hours were long, the work rigorous, the training thorough and the touring very intense. We learnt to act, write, direct, create props and set, promote and organise ourselves and above all survive! The directors had been trained in this fashion in Canada. I'm still putting into practice the values and skills that were introduced back then.

How do you approach your writing?

I approach my writing not just thinking as a writer but also as an actor, director, producer and audience. I am conscious of creating story lines, characters, conflict and situations that are enjoyable for everyone involved in the production process. I look for titles and themes that help Producers sell the play to their audiences.

I predominantly write comedy. Stuart Gunn (Artistic Director for Absolute Theatre) has been kind enough to say that my plays are "Hilarious, dramatic and insightful... winners for the producer and audience alike". I think that sums up perfectly what I aim to create with every script. Inspiration is found in people, conversations and situations found in everyday life. I take that inspiration and intensify it with diverse characters, unusual situations and plenty of conflict. In *Understanding Women* three men spend a weekend in a garden shed with beer, girlie magazines and holy book to try to understand the women in their lives. In *Crazy Ladies* five old school friends stage their own reunion and kidnap the janitor. In *Lost for Words* an award winning radio announcer for Classical Music FM is transferred to Radio Reggae at the same time that his wife leaves him.

Who has produced your plays?

A highlight this year was attending two productions of *Understanding Women* in the same weekend. On the Friday night Theatre Whakatane opened their production and on the Sunday I was at Tokoroa Little

Theatre's production. It's always intriguing to see how actors and directors put their own stamp on my plays. Next year will see the premier of the second *Crazy Ladies* script *Crazy Ladies in Menopause* in Tauranga. The first show was so successful that the original cast demanded I write a second script with the same characters 10 years later! How could I refuse? Absolute Theatre premier the new version of *Lost for Words* after a very successful production of *Understanding Women* this year. A number of other theatres from Auckland to Southland are considering my plays for 2009 and 2010. There has also been interest from High Schools in producing the plays.

How many plays have you written and have they all been produced?

I have written four full length plays, numerous short sketches and another half dozen or so one act plays including *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and *Pinocchio* (children's theatre). All have been produced or have premiers in 2009.

What are you writing now?

My new play has the working title *Getting it Up* and is comedy about three woman fixing a husband's D.I.Y. disaster. There will be power tools live on stage... so I may have to look for an ear muff sponsor for the audience! I imagine it will be mid year before the script is ready for production. Contact me if your theatre society wants to premier a new New Zealand play in 2009!

Are you associated with a particular theatre? Do you also act and direct?

I am currently employed by the Detour Theatre Trust (which I co-founded in 1996). My role is to write, direct and tutor theatre. I escape every so often to direct for other theatres. In the past year or so I've been contracted to direct for Absolute Theatre (*C'mon Black!* by Roger Hall), Te Puke Repertory Society (*Steel Magnolias* by Robert Harling) and Tauranga Repertory Society (*Arcadia* by Tom Stoppard). I've directed about 20 shows and acted in many more.

How can you be contacted?

Website: www.plays.co.nz

Email: info@plays.co.nz

November/December Productions 2008

Gisborne Unity Theatre	<i>Taking Off</i> by Roger Hall	November
Greytown Little Theatre	<i>Cinders- the True Story</i> by David Tristram	Nov 12 -22
Harlequin Theatre	<i>Shirley Valentine</i> by Willy Russell	Nov 5 - 8
	<i>Are You Being Served?</i> by J. Lloyd & D. Croft	Dec 8 - 19
Hutt Repertory	<i>A Bench in the Sun</i> by Ron Clark	Nov 13 - 23
Kapiti Playhouse	<i>Who Wants to be 100?</i> by Roger Hall	Nov 19 - 29
Levin Little Theatre	<i>Arabian Knights-The Panto</i> by Richard Lloyd	Nov 13 - 22
Mana Little Theatre	Triple Treat: 2 one acts and music	Nov 19 - 22
Porirua Little Theatre	<i>Bat Boy The Musical</i> by Farley & Fleming	Oct 29 - Nov 22
Stagecraft	<i>Cold Comfort Farm</i> by Paul Doust	Nov 5 - 15
Wellington Repertory	<i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i> by Oscar Wilde	Nov 26 - Dec 6
Top Dog Theatre	<i>Shakers</i> by John Godber	November
SCDL Repertory	<i>Watch Out for Children</i> by Carol Angland	November
SCDL Mill Theatre	<i>A Little Bit of How's Your....</i> arranged by Kirsty Peffer	November

First Up in February 2009

New Plymouth Repertory	<i>Love in the Title</i> by Hugh Leonard	Feb 19 - 28
Napier Repertory	<i>Dangerous Corner</i> by JB Priestley	Feb 19 - 28
Butterfly Creek Theatre Troupe	<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i> Shakespeare	Feb 17 - 21
Khandallah Arts Theatre	<i>How I Became a Pirate</i> by Alan Cardarelli	Feb 6 - 15
Top Dog Theatre	<i>Love's Labour's Lost</i> Shakespeare	Feb 19 -

For inclusion in this column send in your newsletters name the **production, playwright** and **dates** of your production.

Looking for a New Zealand Play for 2009?

Order a Perusal Script Now!

"Brilliant fast moving script.... Fun to stage, hilarious to watch..."

Toni Henderson
Director for Tairāngia Musical Theatre*

"I looking for a NZ play that will pull in the crowds? This is it!"

Phil Urmsby
Artistic Director Hawke's Bay Theatre

"Ideal comedy for the Repertory Theatre!"

Gregory Brownless
Past President Tairāngia Repertory Theatre*

"Hilarious, dramatic, insightful. Williamson's plays are winners for the audience and producer alike".

Stuart Gunn
Artistic Director Absolute Theatre

Outrageous NZ Comedy!

"Another winner from the writer of Crazy Ladies!"

Understanding WOMEN

Mike, Dave and Julian spend a weekend in a garden shed determined to break an age old mystery. Armed with a case of beer, a box of girlie magazines and a holy book they are going to "understand women". What they discover is not quite what they expected.

By Devon Williamson

Hilarious NZ Comedy!

Crazy Ladies

An outrageous comedy! Five school friends stage their own reunion after 25 years apart. Friendships are rekindled, secrets are revealed, a janitor is kidnapped! Hilarious and uplifting.

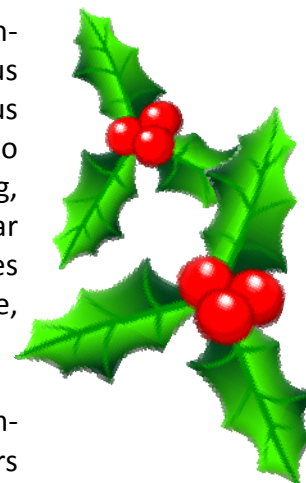
By Devon Williamson

For perusal scripts and information contact: | Email: info@plays.co.nz | Ph: 07 5710752

www.plays.co.nz

Season's Greetings,

Best wishes for an environmentally conscious, socially responsible, low stress, non-addictive, gender neutral, summer solstice holiday, practised within the most joyous traditions of the religious persuasion of your choice, but with respect for the religious persuasion of others who choose to practise their own religion as well as those who choose not to practise a religion at all; plus, a fiscally successful, personally fulfilling, and medically uncomplicated recognition of the generally accepted calendar year 2009, but not without due respect for the calendars of choice of the other cultures whose contributions have helped make our society great, without regards to the race, creed, colour, religious, or sexual preferences of the wishes.



(Disclaimer: This greeting is subject to clarification or withdrawal. It implies no promise by the wisher to actually implement any of the wishes for him/herself or others and no responsibility for any unintended emotional stress these greetings may bring to those not caught up in the holiday spirit.)



**Postage
Stamp**



Editor: Margaret Robertson
Designer: Matt Norrish, Logan Park High School

**Deadline for next issue of Backchat
February 11 2009**

**Send contributions for next issue to:
nztflibrary@xtra.co.nz
or PO Box 329 Palmerston North 4440**