

BACKCHAT

News from THEATRE NEW ZEALAND
Fostering Community Theatre in Aotearoa

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Greytown Little Theatre and Kuranui College have joined forces to present



A Midsummer Night's Dream,
one of several Shakespeare productions
being mounted over the next few months: see p8
Photo taken by Mark Beatty of Charlotte Penman (Fairy)
and AJ Southey (Puck)

www.theatrenewzealand.co.nz

The President's Pen



At our recent executive meeting we asked ourselves about the changing trends in theatre. The plays, the audience, the expectations, the social leisure competition. We combined our knowledge and some of our thoughts are recorded here. I wonder what you would add?

Theatre itself hasn't changed since the time of the Greeks, and before. People gather together in real time, in a real place, and watch a pre-rehearsed spectacle. The purpose is often to entertain, guide, and reflect on trends in society. People have always been interested in love and relationships and another strong theme is leadership, the whys and wherefores of important people. Other themes that have stood the test of time are myths, education eg *The Boy in Stripped Pyjamas*, moral preaching eg *The Crucible*, and self-reflection eg *Hamlet*.

The genres too have been static: comedy; including irony, dramatic irony - which is where the audience knows more than the characters, farce and political revues; drama in all its forms, and also tragedy - but this is less dominant now as we move from having only important people portrayed on stage. In 1957 *Look Back in Anger* is famous as the first kitchen sink drama, an early exploration of watching ordinary people on stage; people who hold a fatal flaw who will be ultimately undone by that flaw.

Technology has broadened the range of live theatre devices but many of the core elements such as the use of mask, puppetry, dance, special effects, and music remain.



What of the theatregoers themselves? Do they change? Many theatre goers need a) spare time, b) disposable income and c) an interest in theatre with d) possible earlier exposure and interest in the arts. In many cases this reduces the active theatre audience to a narrow range of society - with retired older people filling the seats from the stalls to the gods. This sometimes poses a challenge, as typically (with an arguably sweeping generalisation and stereotype) this group most frequently attends 'safe comedies'. These comedies have certain predictable happy-ever-after endings, with certain reliable plot devices, occasional contemporary references poking fun at social trends, and frequently the portrayal of bigwigs as buffoons. This sort of theatre will fill houses and therefore the coffers but it doesn't always allow for a diversity of acting opportunities, role types, plot twists, design and costume experimentation, lighting creativity or risqué social statement, which are all aspects that hold challenge and interest for theatre practitioners.

This can sometimes lead to a tension in choosing a play - do we do it for love or money? How does your group tread this line? It would be good to hear your own thoughts on these musings, and how you navigate this water. Has it always been thus? Or is this a trend for now, which may too pass.



Email the Editor with your thoughts and we will publish gems in subsequent Backchats. info@theatrenewzealand.co.nz

Steven Arnold

AN ODE TO THE COMMITTEE

by Joy Ramsay, President
Clyde Theatre Group

The vote went 'yes' so here we sit.
We try to make each show a hit.
We read them all and then we choose,
Trying money not to lose.
We meet each month, we chit and chat
Finding where the money's at
The play we do will show the folk
We are adept at every joke
We'll make 'em laugh, make 'em cry
We hope each ticket they will buy
Each person has a job to do
We need us all to pull it through.
Folk may wonder why it's done
Each year we say 'It's the last one!'
But back we come with vim and vigour,
Surviving the late nights takes rigour
We wash the dishes, paint and hammer,
While on stage we shout and stammer.
Our little group we do it all
One person acts and sweeps the hall
Another meets you at the door
They also are the prompt and more
Our numbers mean we delegate
Each person looks out for their mate
So once again we ask this question
What makes us move in this direction??
We ask ourselves that thing a lot
And here's the place that we have got...
We do it coz we love it all
But more than that, we have a ball
Collectively we are a team
We share the theatre nightmare dream
A club, a gang, a flock, a troupe
A herd, a gaggle, theatre group
Alone life is a grey old ride
Together here we are the pride
We look out for each one and all
And if one's down we feel the fall
If one is up we fly along
And being theatre, sing a song
We laugh and cry, don't act our age
As we put theatre on the stage
Out on a limb or up a tree
We are a theatre family.

*Editor: Joy Ramsay won Best Actor Female
at National Finals TheatreFest 2016.*

AN EVENING OF 10-MINUTE PLAYS?

from Colin Beardon, President PANZ

For the last two years the Playwrights Association of New Zealand (PANZ) has held a competition for 10-minute play scripts. Each year the Adjudicator has selected eight Finalists. In 2015 all eight were performed in a show called 'Bites' by Skin Theatre in Palmerston North. In 2016, Oamaru Repertory Company performed seven plays in a short season under the title 'Prizewinners', and Waihi Drama Society performed the top four plays under the title 'Petit Fours'.

I had the privilege of attending all these productions and it gave me great pleasure to see the work of so many New Zealand writers being performed on stage. Talking to the people involved it was interesting to hear how this kind of show brought new possibilities (and some new challenges) to drama societies. I know, from my own experience on Waiheke Island, that an evening of 10-minute plays involves a lot of people. It allows new members, and some who haven't participated for a while, to get involved in something that need not be too challenging. Many people also find it an opportunity to try something different. It is a great way to start being a director, for example.

In 2017, PANZ will once again be running a 10-minute play competition. Some of you may be interested in writing yourself, in which case see the PANZ website (newzealandplaywrights.wordpress.com)
Entries close on 30 April. See back page.

Or your drama society might like to consider putting on a selection of the best plays as an evening's entertainment later this year. The list of Finalists is known by the end of July and PANZ will cooperate with any group who wants to perform the plays. Just send me an email at cbeardon@ihug.co.nz

Meritorious Service Awards 2016

Congratulations to these 9 people for their dedication to theatre over 25 years or more!

Elmwood Players

Marilyn Ollett: director, actor, committee member and front of house

Hamilton Playbox

Lorna Ashton: committee member, on stage, back stage, directing, publicity, front of house and fundraising



Invercargill Repertory Society

Julia Adams: committee member, props master from first rehearsal to final clean up



Levin Little Theatre

Darryl Small: committee member and treasurer, key role in building extensions and improvements and front of house



New Players Theatre Company

Heather Conland: foundation member, secretary, archivist, props manager, front of house, set dressing, wardrobe and makeup.



Jean Slobbe: on stage, back stage, front of house, committee, makeup expert who has run workshops, co-writer and director of children's pantomimes.



South Canterbury Drama League

Mary Fitzgerald: properties custodian with constant presence back stage and kitchen worker "the invisible fairy".

Pictured: Mary on the left with Anne Ellis in the right.

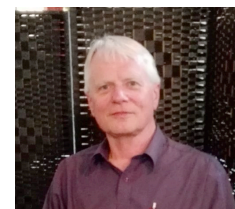


Tokoroa Little Theatre

Vanya Crocker: set designer and painter for 50 years, key role in club's 55th anniversary



John Ten-Velde: design and operation of sound and lights, set building and painting, stage management, director, office holder, organiser of a playwriting competition. club night coordinator and host



Reflections on TheatreFest 2016

prepared by Steven Arnold (National Organiser)

We took the step in 2016 to move our surveys to an electronic format. We have been reviewing and analysing the results. These are some of the highlights of our findings.

Gratitude: TheatreFest has become a strong tradition and this is down to many individuals. We are grateful to all levels of organising bodies, the teams, directors, the hosts and the audiences. Worth mentioning here are immediate recent National TheatreFest organisers: Anne Corney and Nanette Wright as their work has established a robust template to grow from. The Festival is active vibrant, and national. It reflects the feel of our aims and objectives.

Challenges: It is apparent that the TheatreFest model is not financially sustainable (this has been addressed in the 2017 re-modelling).

We recognise that programming changes during the festival are sometimes necessary, which can be challenging. We realise that more sensitivity to the needs of all groups in adapting or resisting these changes, requires some flexibility.

Strengths: We celebrate the following points:

National Event - 36 teams, 13 festivals, involving an estimate >250 people; 10 adjudicators, 5 Olga Harding Entries (1 withdrawal)

Entries spread all around the country - from Dargaville to Invercargill; from Primary and Secondary Schools, to established Theatre Groups, to spontaneous groups forming

13 Festivals across the country -

8 Local festivals: North Island - Dargaville, Hamilton, Auckland, Hastings, Wellington
South Island - Christchurch, Dunedin, Invercargill

4 Regionals: Dargaville, Hastings, Timaru, Dunedin. 1 Final: Invercargill

Entries: We were delighted with the range of productions (self-selected, and more than one genre available): Comedy 58%, Drama 61%, Play with Music 14%, Dance 3%, Other 6%

We also noted the diversity and range in the approximate playing times: Approximate playing time less than 10 minutes (2 entries), <20 mins (15), <30 mins (6), <50 (13).

We saw 16 new Directors, and 20 experienced Directors.

We enjoyed 27 New Zealand Presentations, and 9 international entries

Half of the entries identified as youth presentations with all actors under 20 years

Thank you New Zealand. TheatreFest is alive and strong.

We continue to grow and strengthen our systems.

Perhaps you have some useful thoughts? Please provide your reflections via email to the editor. info@theatrenewzealand.co.nz We are fully engaged in Theatrefest2017 now and we are keenly seeking groups to volunteer (with mentoring available) to organise Local and Regional festivals. Maybe this year it's your turn?

TheatreFest 2017 Financial Model

Members of the National Executive are planning to ring all member groups for a conversation about TheatreFest 2017. Are you going to be involved this year?

Theatre New Zealand Membership:

Each entry must come from a group. Any 3 or more people can form a group. Group Membership of Theatre New Zealand remains at \$100 (Individual Membership remains at \$40 but individual members cannot enter the festival other than as part of a group)

Festival Entry Fee

Each festival entrant pays \$140 if they are a TNZ member
Each festival entrant from a non member pays \$260 (Note it is cheaper to join as a member \$100 + \$140 = \$240)

There are no longer multiple entry discounts from the same group. However it is cheaper for multiple entries from one group to enter than to enter individually each from different groups.

Olga E Harding play writing competition \$70 per play

Local TheatreFests are autonomous and we rely on local people/groups to organise them. Productions at local level will be adjudicated by a qualified adjudicator from ANZDA and must be seen at least 2 weeks before the earliest Regional (18/19 August). A festival may be organised in your area or may not but you can still ask for an adjudication just for your production and the \$70 fee will be paid but you have to pay the expenses. Apply one month before your performance. The adjudicator will be able to assess whether you meet the standard to move on to a Regional Festival.

Regional Festivals

Upper North 25/26 August Hamilton Playbox
Lower North 18/19 August

Top of the South 18/19 August
Lower South 25/26 August

National Finals 15/16 September Wellington

Adjudicators

Regional North Island	Bryan Aitken
Regional South Island	Phil Peleton
National Finals	Hilary Norris



2016 Joy Ramsay

TheatreFest Organisers Steven Arnold, Hannah Kennedy and Nik Rolls
theatrefest.nz@gmail.com

Shakespeare Lives On



Shakespeare continues to be a popular choice throughout the country. This Backchat lists four productions under What's On, three of which will be performed outdoors and the fourth will be played indoors with the audience on three sides like the Globe Theatre in London.

In Christchurch **Top Dog Theatre's** annual 'Summer Shakespeare' is *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* performed in the newly reopened gardens of the Mona Vale homestead. A comedic tale, considered by some to be the bard's first ever play, it's set in the swinging sixties. The play introduces some of the main themes that are explored in greater depth in his future plays, love, friendship and infidelity, the conflict between friendship and love, and the foolish behavior of people in love.



Butterfly Creek Theatre Troupe in Eastbourne also mounts a Shakespearean production annually. Their 'Bard in the Yard' is performed in a school courtyard and their choice at the end of February will be *The Merchant of Venice*, "a drama full of relevant social and personal issues".

In **Greytown**, the **Little Theatre** is teaming up once again with Kuranui College and they are performing *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the grounds of the local Cobblestones Museum.



The Wellington region is particularly well served with numerous productions of Shakespeare's plays every year and as well as *Dream* and *The Merchant*, **Stagecraft Theatre** will produce *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in March in the round. Director Ewen Coleman says the production will be big, bold and physical as unfettered by set and props, actors will concentrate on finding movement within their dialogue. Ewen chose this play because unusually two of the lead actors are women and there is a large cast of older characters. It is also the only Shakespeare with virtually no verse. Written in prose, the play has a very clear and concise narrative that makes it not only easy for the actors to convey the meaning but for the audience to follow the story.

Unconnected with Theatre New Zealand, Wellingtonians can also enjoy the annual Summer Shakespeare's *All's Well The End's Well* starting 17 February in the Civic Square. In April TNZ member **Hutt Repertory Theatre** will produce their version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Summer Shakespeare goers in Tauranga were able to enjoy *Much Ado About Nothing* set in WW1 in their historic village in January. And coming up Aucklanders will be able to enjoy the Pop-up Globe again, 4 new productions, in a new theatre and new venue. *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Othello*, *As You Like It* and *Henry V* will be performed from February to May in the gardens of the Ellerslie Racecourse.

If any of these plays interest you we can email you the script, FREE, unless otherwise noted. If you have any particular requirements we can also make other suggestions - please contact clientpromotion@playmarket.org.nz with your queries.

BEARDS! BEARDS! BEARDS!

by Ralph McCubbin Howell (1w 2m)

From Charles Darwin to Abraham Lincoln, Karl Marx to Mr Twit, it is said that the secret to power and greatness is all in the size and shape of the beard. This is a tale of one young girl's increasingly inventive efforts to grow the world's most magnificent beard. Armed with bubble bath and canned spaghetti, join a madcap and hilarious musical romp as our plucky young heroine shakes up social rules and attempts to answer the questions that have puzzled mankind since the dawn of the beard.

BENEDICT CUMBERBATCH MUST DIE

by Abby Howells (3w)

A control-freak actor, a sex-crazed celebrity obsessive and a socially phobic fan fiction writer have one thing in common: Benedict Cumberbatch. When they hear that Holmes/Kahn/Smaug is making a trip to New Zealand, they devise a show in the hope he will come and see it and fall in love with them.

WOMEN WITH SWORDS

by Geoff Allen (6w 1m)

A western with swords set on the French Italian border in 1642. One last hidden valley remains untouched by the Thirty Years war. All the men have been killed. Only women are left. An army is coming. Six desperate women will fight to find the buried treasure of Count Carignano before that army reaches them. Only one will see the dawn. All are armed, all dangerous, all Women with Swords.

THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER

adapted by Mike Hudson (large cast)

Tom Sawyer is a force of nature with an unquenchable thirst for action and excitement. Mark Twain's immortal classic about growing up in a small town on the banks of the Mississippi is a joyous leap into the great river of time and memory. Conjuring all the mystery and magic of childhood, this famous coming-of-age story is full of twists and turns and adventures for the whole family.

THE PINK HAMMER

by Michele Amas (4w, 1m)

Four very different women answer a flyer for "The Pink Hammer Workshop" - a ladies-only woodwork class. They turn up expecting empowerment and sisterhood from the advertised tutor, Maggie Taylor... but when they arrive, Maggie's gone AWOL. Maggie's husband Woody certainly doesn't want a bunch of crazy women playing with his tools, but he doesn't have a choice!

TINY DEATHS

by Uther Dean (4-8w)

Twisted loved stories: A series of monologues about love. The woman who kissed a gnome. The girl who is also a bomb. The lady so obsessed with stationery she is prepared to kill for it. Or even worse: love for it. Wickedly funny and sumptuously grotesque, it's perfect for a first date. Or a last one.

STAG WEEKEND

by Dan Bain and Brendon Bennetts (4m)

A stag party in a West Coast cabin for four over-confident and under qualified city boys becomes increasingly hilarious (and dangerous) as they fumble towards the truth of what it means to be a New Zealand man in the age of the metrosexual. Limited availability in 2017.

A COLLECTION OF VERY SHORT PLAYS:

KIWIS IN PARADISE

by Susan Battye (2w 1m)

When American tourists, Bob and his wife, Stacey encounter teenager, Amy, the enthusiastic 'Save the Kiwi' collector at the Franz Josef glacier 'Visitors' Centre, they get more than they bargain for. Bob's plan to take home an Okarito Brown Kiwi goes horribly wrong. This comedy sketch was a finalist in the 2016 Saving Endangered Species International Playwriting Competition.

THREATENED PANDA FIGHTS BACK (2w 2m)

by Rex McGregor

As the World Wildlife Fund's poster boy for endangered animals, Ling enjoys a comfortable life full of adulation and all the bamboo he can eat. But when a rival species challenges him for the role, he risks losing everything.

TOIL AND TROUBLE

by Paul Maunder (1w 7m)

1931. Blackball is in uproar as the secretary of the communist party turns scab. A tense conversation between a miner and the scab's wife, in which fundamental issues in revolutionary politics are explored...

What's On in February and March 2017



Otamatea Repertory Theatre *You're Perfect, Now Change!* by Jo DiPietro & Jimmy Roberts - Various venues from March 3 - April 1
Dargaville Little Theatre AUDITIONS *Grease* by Warren Casey & Jim Jacobs February 12 & 15

Phoenix Theatre Belmont, Auck. AUDITION *Motel* by April Phillips Feb 1, 10am, 20th 7pm
Ellerslie Little Theatre *Boys at the Beach* by Alison Quigan/Ross Gumbley March 16-25
Titirangi Theatre *The Vicar of Dibley* adpt. by Ian Gower March 21-April 1
Howick Little Theatre *The Pink Hammer* by Michelle Amas Feb 25 -March 18
Holding the Man by Tommy Murphy March 22 -25
Waihi Drama Society *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* adapt from CS Lewis March 31 - April 8
Te Aroha Dramatic Soc *Enchanted April* by Matthew Barber March 30-April 8
16th Ave Theatre, Tauranga *Byron Bay and the Stone of Destiny* by Sam Martin to 28 January
Hound of the Baskervilles by S.Canny/J. Nicholson March 15-April 1
Detour Theatre, Tauranga *The Wedding of the Century* by Devon Williamson March 22-April 8
Te Puke Repertory Theatre AUDITION *Murder at the Prop Table* by Ed Basset January 28
Tokoroa Little Theatre *You Can Always Hand Them Back* by Roger Hall April 5 - 13

Napier Repertory Players *Verdict* by Agatha Christie Feb 16 - March 4
Pahiatua Repertory Soc. AUDITION *Play On* by Rick Abbot Feb 19, 10.30am
Harlequin Theatre, Masterton *Blind Eye* by April Phillips March 9 - 18
Greytown Little Theatre *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Shakespeare Feb 8 - 12
Quartet by Ronald Harwood March 22-April 1
Taumarunui Performing Arts *Bad Jelly the Witch* by Alannah O'Sullivan February 16 - 18

Foxton Little Theatre *Heaven Help Us!* by Tim Hambleton March 24-April 7
Levin Little Theatre *St Patrick's Night Entertainment* March 17
Mana Little Theatre *Pride and Prejudice* adpt by Jon Jory March 28-April 8
Porirua Little Theatre AUDITION *Seusical Jr* by Lynn Ahrens & Stephen Flaherty - January
Khandallah Arts Theatre *Cinderella* by Kate Umansky February 11 - 19
Stagecraft Theatre Stage Combat Workshop with Allen Henry Feb 11, 1.30pm
AUDITION *Daughters of Heaven* by Michelanne Forster Feb 18-19
The Merry Wives of Windsor by William Shakespeare March 15-25
Butterfly Creek, Eastbourne *The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare Feb 28 - March 4 -2

Elmwood Players AUDITION *All This Intimacy* by Rajiv Joseph February 19
Top Dog Theatre *Two Gentlemen of Verona* by William Shakespeare February 8-18
South Canterbury Drama League Timaru, *Hey Jude the Musical* February 8-11

Clyde Theatre Group *Cinderella Meets the Mother-in-Law* by Judith Prior April 1-7

Send information about your upcoming productions to info@theatrenewzealand.co.nz

There is a tide in the affairs of men
 Which taken at the flood, leads onto fortune:
 Omitted, all the voyage of their life
 Is bound in shallows and miseries.
 On such a sea are we now afloat,
 And we must take the current when it serves,
 Or lose our ventures

Further details at
newzealandplaywrights.wordpress.com

Email: playwrightsnz@gmail.com

PANZ PLAYWRIGHTS ASSOCIATION OF NEW ZEALAND
INVITES ENTRIES TO ITS **ANNUAL COMPETITION 2017** FOR

A) LONG PLAYS (AT LEAST 50 MINS)	PRIZES	B) SHORT PLAYS (7 - 10 MINS)
WINNER RECEIVES \$300 + \$1,000 TOWARDS A PRODUCTION OF THEIR PLAY		WINNER RECEIVES \$100
RUNNER-UP RECEIVES \$200		TOP THREE : WORKSHOP ORGANISED BY PLAYMARKET 8 FINALISTS PROMOTED AS A SINGLE SHOW

MEMBERS MAY SUBMIT UP TO ONE ENTRY IN EACH CATEGORY

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• ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP ONLY \$25
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20 March 2017

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