



Backchat

News from **Theatre New Zealand**
Fostering Community Theatre in Aotearoa



Napier Repertory Players, the winning team at Focus 14 TheatreFest National Final. Front from left: John Cocking - playwright, actor, Sharyn Hildreth - director, David Brock - actor. Back: Lee-Anne Freeman - sound, Peter Hurley - lighting, Jan Brock - crew, Terry Hidreth - crew. See page 3

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Anna Willows (Shirley Weston) and Scott Morrow (Ken Black) in Elmwood Players' latest production, *Gym & Tonic* by John Godber. The season ran from 1-10 October.

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President



Celebrating our Culture

Suddenly the year is running to a close – but theatrical activity still abounds!

The recent National Finals of *TheatreFest* in Wellington was one of the strongest in years. Adjudicator David Chambers had to

assess an enormous range of theatre – even an early Samuel Beckett mime-play. The extent of theatrical genre was a delight to see and demonstrates well, the undertakings and scope of creative theatre both in high schools and the community – one of the purposes *TheatreFest* was established to celebrate. Another production was group-devised from a class project, an aspect that has grown in strength since the education system recognised its worth.

In opening the Festival our patron Ray Henwood urged the players and audience not to underestimate the importance of one-act plays and the festival system for the developing playwriting, directing and acting, as well as trying out design and lighting techniques.

New Zealand playwright Dave Armstrong (assessor of the new play category) spoke after the Annual General Meeting about the growth in New Zealand theatre work, both from the pen and in production. If you are looking for something in the New Year that resonates in your community – it may well be one of his plays – they are witty, sometimes acerbic, and reflect this multi-cultural country, Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Many of you are now casting your end-of-year productions which I know will soon be in rehearsal, if not already. The Christmas festive fare is always a treat on so many levels. I see more theatre societies also finding plays with music – or mounting mini-musicals, with the traditional English pantomime starting to take a back seat.

Trends are indeed changing.

Bryan Aitken.
National President

Membership Welcome

This month we welcome **Mirth Worx**, a new group, established by Cal Lovell of Wellsford, who intend to mount satirical pieces. Cal went to our *TheatreFest* weekend and was pleased to be able to attend the marketing workshop.

A belated welcome too to **Tokoroa Little Theatre** who are over 60 years old. This year they have held a one act playwriting competition and produced *Motel* by April Phillips. They also foster musical events.

Focus 14 National TheatreFest & Conference

Thank you very much to the team from Wellington who mounted a most successful Conference weekend. They hosted 2 nights of enthralling theatre, organised 4 different workshops, the acting and directing ones being particularly well attended and gave attendees the opportunity to hear about playwriting in New Zealand after the AGM.

Representation at National Executive level remains the same as last year: President Bryan Aitken, VP Jade Gillies, Treasurer Blair Kershaw, Secretary Margaret Robertson with Steven Arnold (Auckland), Lorna Ashton (Hamilton) Ewen Coleman (Wellington) Anne Corney (Napier) Anne McAuley (Blenheim) and Garry Thomas (Christchurch).



The cast of Phoenix Theatre's recent production of *Murder on the Nile* by Agatha Christie. The season ran from 4-13 September at The Rose Centre in Auckland.

Focus 14 TheatreFest

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE WINNERS!



Napier Repertory Players with *Snap Time* by John Cocking, directed by Sharyn Hildreth won the **Book of Honour**. The team also won the **Best New Zealand Play** and the **Best Adult Play**. Playwright and actor John Cocking also won the **New Zealand Playwriting Award** and the Award for **Best Actor Male**.

Here John accepts the Olga E Harding Award from Dave Armstrong, Assessor



The **Drama Development Trust Award for First Time Directing** went to **Alison Young**, director of *Bonking James Bond* for Rotorua Little Theatre.



Theatre New Zealand Award for Best Actor Female was won by **Sheree Hawker** as Danica in *Verbatim* by William Brandt and Miranda Harcourt directed by Susan Cameron for Elmwood Players.

Tony Harvey from Hutt Repertory Theatre won the **David Brockett Award for Backstage Achievement**. This year he created a working kitchen on stage. He has never acted.



Avonside Girls' High School devised and directed *Cracked* and won the **Bryan Aitken Award for Best Youth Production**.



Robert Ormsby, director of Silent Majority Porirua Little Theatre's *Act Without Words (1)* by Samuel Beckett holds the **Selecon Design/Technical Award** hook clamp. He is pictured with David Chambers, Adjudicator.

Jannat Aitchison Memorial Awards for Distinctive Emerging Talent

presented by Nanette Wright, with President Bryan Aitken



Josh Penfold as Aaron in *Verbatim* for Elmwood Players. **Natalie Hunt** composed and played the music for *Act Without Words (1)*. She is pictured with director Robert Ormsby. **Robyn-Ann Rumney** as Betty Robertson in *Bonking James Bond* by April Phillips directed by Alison Young for Rotorua Little Theatre.

This month we bring you a selection of new titles. 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.

BOOK ENDS by Roger Hall (1w 5m)

Every Tuesday morning the Cabin Fever Club meet for coffee at The Sour Dough Café. All gold-card holders, they are literary types: one former editor, one freelance writer, an actor, a novelist, a playwright and a formerly famous poet. They are cantankerous, opinionated, envious, erudite, insecure and often amusing. What binds them together is their mutual love of books. But how long are books going to last?

IT'S YOUR ST** by Liz Breslin (3+w 5+m)

Freedom camping has been called everything from a human right to a blight that fouls our landscapes with human waste. Pulling up to their idyllic West Coast camping spot, English couple Kelvin and Lara Blethschild have no idea they're about to step into a you-know-what-storm. Local boy Jonno has had it with freedom campers and the mess they leave behind, and he's not going to take it any more. What follows is a black humour take (heavy on the humour, light on the black) on a serious issue, involving the Prime Minister, an international media scrum and a toilet carousel.

LITTLE TOWN LIARS by Josh Hopton-Stewart (7w 5m)

A satirical musical set in Louisiana, 1956. It's the Halloween fair and the town is abuzz with excitement. The Austin kids – Belinda and Jake, along with their good friend Shirley, venture into the woods to take what they think are just innocent herbal pills. 3 days later, they wake up. What begins as a simple cover-up, quickly snowballs into a case of mass hysteria within the town, where the excuse "I was abducted by aliens" becomes the popular excuse to cover up one's wrongdoings. First produced at the 2013 NZ Fringe Festival.

THE BONE FEEDER by Renee Liang (6m)

Ben, a young fifth-generation Chinese New Zealander travels to the present-day Hokianga to look for the bones of his great-great-grandfather. Driven by his father's dying wish, he encounters some unusual 'locals' – who may or may not be cheeky ghosts. It's also the story of Kwan, a man who emigrates to NZ in the 1800s and has to decide where he belongs.

LAST DANCE by April Phillips (6w 4m)

A full-scale musical show, featuring the hits of Donna Summer. Katie is a working class girl who dreams of fame and fortune but ends up working as a cleaner and singer in a nightclub. When the owner of the club is shot dead, Katie finds herself in prison accused of the murder. Her fellow inmates are thieves and murderers but none are as evil as the corrupt, drug-dealing prison guard, Walker. Katie must battle to prove her innocence. Restricted availability in 2015.

WHISTLE SOLO by Julie Hill (1-3w, 1-5m)

It's the 1980s. The wind of change blows straight into the face of time. Klaus from German hard rock band the Scorpions has a musical epiphany that could topple the Berlin Wall. Prime Minister David Lange can smell the uranium on your breath. And as President Gorbachev nuts out his vision of perestroika, kidnapped New Zealand teenager Pania prepares to deliver the world a terrible message. Nominated for Outstanding New NZ Play at the 2013 Chapman Tripp awards.

STOCKCARS: THE MUSICAL by John Lepper and Simon Ferry, music and lyrics by Dean Parkinson (1-3w, 5-10m)

Cameron Todd and Malcolm DuFresne were archrivals down at the track. It all came down to the final race to decide who would be the national champion. Only one man made it past the chequered flag that day. The other man would never race again. Fast-forward to 2013. Malcolm is now a highflying city councillor, trying to shut the Speedway down. Cameron is on the verge of losing his business if he can't raise \$25,000. The men are set to go head to head once more. Will Cam save his business and the beloved Speedway, or will the fat cats rule the day? First produced at Centrepoint Theatre, 2013.

WHO KILLED BLAIR PEACH? by Dean Parker (6 actors)

A dramatic presentation of the true-life story of New Zealander Blair Peach and his tragic death at the hands of the Special Patrol Group of the London Metropolitan Police.

ON THE UPSIDE DOWN OF THE WORLD by Arthur Meek (1-3w)

An adventure story about a colonial wife, crippled by the habits of civilisation, who fosters a barbarian boy and awakes her inner savage. It's about the birth of the Pakeha, a person whose strength and wisdom and humour comes from having exotic origins that take root and flourish in New Zealand, to the extent that you can't imagine them existing anywhere else. Its epic visual imagery and theatrical poetry wrapped in a heartbreaking story about falling in love despite your best intentions. Available from our bookshop for \$15

What's On in October and November

(Consult society websites on www.theatrenewzealand.co.nz/links for more details)

Dargaville Little Theatre	<i>Footloose</i> by Dean Pitchford/Walter Robbie	to October 11
	AUDITION Annual Kids Show	October 19 @ 3pm
Titirangi Theatre	<i>Cinderella</i> by Chris Lane	Nov 26 - Dec 6
Ellerslie Theatrical Society	<i>Journey's End</i> by R.C. Sherriff	November 6 - 15
Dolphin Theatre	<i>Closure</i> by Ron Blicq	Sep 21-11 October
	AUDITION <i>Blithe Spirit</i> by Noel Coward	November 2, 1.30
	<i>Ruthless! The Musical</i> by Joel Paley /Marvin Laird	Nov 15 - Dec 6
Howick Little Theatre	<i>White Gold</i> by Peter Boyes	October 8 - 11
	<i>Noises Off</i> by Michael Frayn	Nov15 - Dec 6
Hamilton Playbox	<i>Last of the Summer Wine</i> by Roy Clarke	October 11 - 25
Tokoroa Little Theatre	<i>Looking for Alaska</i> a gig	October 18 @ 8pm
16th Avenue Theatre, Tauranga	<i>Scarlet Women: Come Again</i> - musical interlude	Nov 26 - Dec 13
Detour Theatre, Tauranga	<i>The Vicar of Dibley 2</i> by Richard Curtis & Paul Mayhew-Archer	November 12 - 29
Te Puke Little Theatre	<i>Jack and the Beanstalk</i> by TLC Creative	Oct 30 - Nov 9
Theatre Whakatane	<i>My Inlaws Are Outlaws</i> by Devon Williamson	October 30-Nov 8
Rotorua Little Theatre	<i>Out of Order</i> by Ray Cooney	October 9 - 24
Napier Repertory Players	<i>Heaven Help Us!</i> by Tim Hambleton	October 8 - 18
	<i>Snap Time</i> by John Cocking	November 14-16
	AUDITION <i>The End of the Golden Weather</i> by Bruce Mason	November 23
Theatre Hawke's Bay	<i>Murder at Rutherford House</i> by Tom Chiodo & Peter Depietro	Nov 26 - Dec 6
Cue Theatre, Inglewood	<i>If I Were You</i> Alan Ayckbourn	October 28 -Nov 8
Feilding Little Theatre	<i>Secret Bridesmaids Business</i> by Elizabeth Coleman	November
Levin Little Theatre	<i>The Nutcracker Prince</i> by Linda Buckley	November 13 - 23
Mana Little Theatre	<i>Ugly Customers</i> by Joe Musaphia	Nov 26 - Dec 6
Porirua Little Theatre	<i>All Shook Up</i> by Joe Dipietro	November 12 - 29
New Players, Wellington	<i>The Old People Are Revolting!</i> by Devon Williamson	November
Khandallah Arts Theatre	<i>The Witness for the Prosecution</i> by Agatha Christie	October 9 - 17
Stagecraft Theatre, Wellington	<i>The Tempest</i> by William Shakespeare	November 19 -29
Wellington Repertory	<i>Blackadder Goes Forth</i> by Ben Elton & Richard Curtis	Oct 22 - Nov1
Hutt Repertory	<i>Arsenic and Old Lace</i> by Joseph Kesselring	November 5 - 15
Butterfly Creek, Eastbourne	<i>The AGM of the East Side Wolves</i> by Theo Nettleton	
	AND <i>Second Thought Smoko</i> by Mike McMorrow	Oct 24 - Nov 2
Heretaunga Players	<i>Ghost Writer</i> by David Tristram	November 12 - 22
Marlborough Repertory	<i>The Game's Afoot or Holmes for the Holidays</i> by Ken Ludwig	Nov 27 - Dec 6
Elmwood Players	<i>Gym and Tonic</i> by John Godber	October 1 - 11
Riccarton Players	<i>The Likes of Us</i> by Tim Rice & Andrew Lloyd Webber	Nov 7 - 23
South Canterbury Drama League	<i>Homeland</i> by Gary Henderson	October 10 - 18
	<i>Blackadder Goes Forth</i> by Ben Elton & Richard Curtis	Nov 14 - 29
Logan Park High School	Denise Walsh Naming Ceremony of School Auditorium	Oct 20 @6pm
	to honour a much loved and inspirational Head of Drama	

*"The actor has to develop his body. The actor has to work on his voice.
But the most important thing the actor has to work on is his mind."* Stella Adler

Do you send your newsletters by email? Please include editor@theatrenewzealand.co.nz

Poster and Programme Competition 2014

JUDGED BY BECK BLISS, INDEPENDENT DESIGN WELLINGTON

Eighteen posters were entered in this year's competition. Winner was Elmwood Players' *Thick as Thieves* designed by Glen Clark and FAHS Feilding High School's *The End of the Golden Weather* designed by Georgia Rubery was runner-up.

Ten programmes were assessed and Hawera Repertory Society who entered two programmes received both awards: *Four Flat Whites in Italy* - winner, in appropriate menu format and *Calendar Girls* - runner up, presented as a 2014 calendar. Many of the programmes were beautifully themed but the ones designed by Samantha Turner were outstanding.

Winners have received certificates signed by Becky Bliss.



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Deadline for December Backchat

November 12th 2014

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