

# BACKCHAT

News from THEATRE NEW ZEALAND  
*Fostering Community Theatre in Aotearoa*

December 2019 & January 2020 Vol.42 Issue 6



It's pantomime season and **Amuri Players** of Hanmer Springs are producing *Treasure Island* by Ben Cocker.

This is the opening scene in Benbow Inn. Genial but dim Squire Trelawney (Jonathan Gardiner) is confronted by Jenny (Sole Rosso), his wayward daughter while 'principal boy' Jim Hawkins (Stacey Flay) backs her up. The warm-hearted Dame, Mrs Hawkins (Trent Allison) tries not to be involved.

[www.theatrenewzealand.co.nz](http://www.theatrenewzealand.co.nz)

## HEALTH AND SAFETY CHAT BY PHIL JONES

Moving forward into the future under the various rules, regulations and governmental proclamations it is going to be tough for community-based theatre groups to stay viable, let alone compliant.

This column is about us as a collective sharing information, ideas and solutions around Health & Safety compliance. I would openly invite one & all to submit questions or solutions to this column. As the old saying goes, “the sum of the parts is greater than the whole”.

So, let’s kick off with the topic of Fire within the theatre space, looking at an enclosed venue to start with. From a straight Risk approach (& probably an insurance point of view), real fire/flame or a potential ignition source is a no-go. I know, I can hear the angst raising, how can bureaucrats make these rules, they don’t understand theatre etc, etc. Fire has been utilised on stage for years, whether it’s lighting a cigarette or even a candle.

From a simple Risk approach, if you can remove the hazard then this is the best solution. And to be fair there are several suitable replacements for a flame, whether it be a battery cigarette, a simple halogen/LED flickering fixture to the more expensive DMX multi LED flame effect silks. Or if the rights allow, change the scene to another action. But if you do decide to use an ignition source or open flame. What are some of the things you need to consider?

Feedback welcome, please email:  
[chronoshive@gmail.com](mailto:chronoshive@gmail.com)

- Use of flame-retardant materials, whether these can be sourced naturally (wool) or the addition of a retardant coating on any flammable materials.
- Safe place to light & extinguish the flame,
- Suitable fire suppression equipment readily available,
- Trained people who can operate/use this equipment.
- Trained Fire Watchers, not only during the use but after the extinguishing of the flame.
- Spill containment if flammable liquids are used,
- Do you need to notify the local Fire Service? Can you get them involved in creating a Safety Plan.
- Ensure users of the flame know how to handle the flame & what to do if it all turns to custard.
- What does my insurer say about fire in my policy?



Certainly, seems to be a lot of “to do’s” just to light a match! Surely this is bureaucracy gone mad. What has happened to common sense! Well folks, whether you agree with the rules or not, we need to ensure that we keep our people safe. And at this point in our evolution we need to prove that we have thought about & addressed all the areas of harm/risk. It is all quite do-able, we just need to stop, think & plan. Then communicate and train where needed. Feedback from your experiences with fire on stage will be shared in the next Backchat column. Email now!

## 2020 is Coming Ready or Not

# 2020 VISION

CELEBRATING THE PAST CREATING THE FUTURE

Next year we're celebrating the past; it's fifty years since the New Zealand Theatre Federation was established and 80 years since the first BDL one act play festival. And now, as Theatre New Zealand we're looking to the future with two introductions - new Patrons (see page 4) and a new TheatreFest logo that fits recent branding:



The TheatreFest Finals weekend **4 -6 September** will be held at the Court Theatre, Christchurch. It'll be 20 years since we were last in Christchurch when Hazel Menehira judged The Oily Rag Theatre of Christchurch winners of the Book of Honour for their production of *The Adjudicator* by Tim Barcode.

The National Executive would also like to introduce two new co-opted members: **Jake Hansen** passionate arts educator at Wakatipu High School in Queenstown and representing the younger generation **Sam Lewis** from Top of the South who comes ready to learn all about what makes us tick.

### Regional 2020 dates announced

Upper North Island 15/16 August  
**Hamilton.** Contact Lorna Ashton  
Lower North Island 8/9 August  
**Masterton.** Contact Paul Percy

Upper South Island 8/9 August  
**Westport.** Contact Tracey Mcewing  
Lower South Island 15/16 August  
**Queenstown.** Contact Jake Hansen.  
*More details next Backchat.*

### News from the South Island

Invercargill Repertory have a home-grown pantomime coming up but back in October they took a risk with a black comedy with echoes of Stoppard, Kafka and Brothers Grimm set in a totalitarian state, never performed by an amateur group in NZ. *The Pillowman* by Martin McDonagh. Here's their poster:



SCDL currently has locked-up-ladies - see What's On:



Riccarton too have had *Bad Girls* on the boards:



Canterbury's *Merry Wives of Windsor* have just had fun tricking Falstaff:



Boathouse Theatre too celebrated old England (1660s) with *Nell Gwynn*:



## Introducing our New Patrons

Jennifer Ward-Lealand  
CNZM 2018



Since training at Auckland's Theatre Corporate, Jennifer has worked extensively in theatre, film and television for over 37 years.

Jennifer was a founding board member of the Watershed Theatre and a co-founder of the drama school, The Actor's Program. She is President of Equity New Zealand, Patron of Q Theatre and serves as a trust board member of Actors Benevolent Fund. Last year she was named SPADA Industry Champion and this year was named the winner of the Arts and Culture Award for Women of Influence.

Her stage work includes work for ATC and Silo Theatre. She tours her Marlene Dietrich Cabaret *Falling in Love Again* throughout New Zealand and Australia.

Jennifer's film work includes acting in new NZ film *Vermillion* for which she received a Best Actress award Los Angeles Film Awards and an Award of Excellence: Actress in Accolade Global Film Competition. She has also had many roles in television and web series.



479 x 327

Rawiri Paratene ONZM 2013



Forty-Six years in the entertainment industry has seen Rāwiri win acclaim as an actor, writer, director, producer and tutor in

Theatre, Television, Radio and Film.

His career highlights include 10 year's involvement with Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London, especially as actor and producer taking *The Maori Troilus and Cressida* to open the Globe to Globe Festival in 2012, which featured theatre companies from all over the world performing all 37 Shakespeare Plays in the native languages of the country; and then joining the ensemble in the *Hamlet World Tour*, which toured to every country on the planet from 2014 to 2016. Most recently he directed *When Sun & Moon Collide* for ATC and performed in *Te Pō* at Q Theatre and *The Cherry Orchard* at ATC Waterfront Theatre.

Film highlights include the role of Koro in Niki Caro's *Whalerider* and his award winning performance in *The Insatiable Moon*. Television Highlights include being a Playschool Presenter.

Since being named the Robert Burns Fellow at Otago University in 1983, Rawiri has won many awards across all fields.

## Playmarket Accolade Winners



Back in 1987 **Sarah Delahunty** won the prestigious Bruce Mason Award honouring a playwright in the midst of their career.

At this year's ceremony Sarah, honoured with MNZM in 2015, was the winner of the Creative New Zealand Award/Playmarket Award (\$20,000) for her life's work in theatre - teaching, directing and writing. Many of her plays are for the young and many of you will have seen *2b or not 2b*



On a sombre note, this year's Bruce Mason Award (\$10,000) was made to **Nancy Brunning** who had passed away the day before. A heartfelt

waiata was sung and tears flowed along with words spoken acknowledging her far-reaching influence as a playwright and actor, "working to make visible the kinds of Māori women seldom seen on our stages and screens" said Murray Lynch, Playmarket Director.

Maybe some of you were in Hamilton in 1989 when Taupo-nui-a-tia Players won the NZTF Book of Honour for their production of *The Whale Rider* by Whiti Ihimaera directed by Gwyneth Glover. I was there and well remember Nancy as the luminous lead.

Her passing is mourned nationwide and there have been moving tributes in newspapers, on television and radio.

## News from the North island

Nine groups from the **Wellington District** are gathering on December 1<sup>st</sup> for the announcement of the winners of the Full Length Play Festival that's been running for 10 months. Nineteen entries have been reviewed by Adjudicator Shannon Tubman ANZDA.



**Gisborne Unity Theatre** had great fun with *Vintage Hitchcock* a radio play in September. Here Julie McPhail takes delight in killing a cabbage.

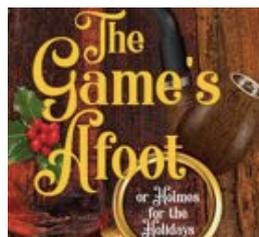
She's surrounded by other sound effect paraphernalia.

**Te Puke Repertory** has a call out for 10 minute plays to be submitted before 15 January. Up to ten plays will be selected for their Simply Short Play Festival later in the year.



**Te Aroha Little Theatre** has recently performed *The Cemetery*

*Club* by Ivan Menchell in which 3 widows face life without their husbands. It's been described as a delightfully funny, moving poignant play set in New York that epitomises the Jewish toast to life.



**Howick Little Theatre** have just finished a production of *The Game's Afoot* by Ken Ludwig, a glittering Sherlock Holmes whodunit in which hilarity and danger are nonstop.



Here is a sampler of the wide selection of plays we have on offer at Playmarket. Become a subscriber at [playmarket.org.nz](http://playmarket.org.nz) (\$40) to download a copy of as many manuscript titles as you like. To purchase a published script or a hardcopy of a manuscript see our online bookshop. For queries email: [holly@playmarket.org.nz](mailto:holly@playmarket.org.nz)

#### **Fresh TheatreFest ideas for 2020**

**WHERE THERE'S A WILL** by John Smythe. 1f, 2m. Two 'greybeards', James and Barry have been asked to audition for a Fathers and Daughters in Shakespeare anthology. But what are they really auditioning for? *Downloadable.*

**CASSIE** by Holly Gooch. 4f. Four pregnant women wait in an obstetrician's office. What goes on in the mind of a pregnant woman as she grapples with how a baby might change herself, her life and her future? Winner of the PANZ short play competition 2019. *Email Holly.*

**SEXY BUDDHA** by Geoff Allen. 1f, 1m. A cynical bartender is closing up when a Buddhist nun walks in. He explains his life to her through cocktails. She answers his questions through Buddhist stories. But why is she really there? *Downloadable.*

**ON THE RIGHT TRACK** by Tim Hambleton. 1f, 4m. A gang of four railway workers work on the Taitapu to Westing line – which is a cushy number since it hasn't had a train on it for years. They have managed to fly under the radar until an overzealous ministry official turns up to conduct an audit. *Downloadable.*

**WHITE MEN** by Abby Howells. 5f. Five men (all played by women) are sitting on the top of a mountain. The sea laps at their feet. The rising tide has engulfed the whole world and only the most privileged remain. Soon the sea will envelop them if they do not figure out a plan. A comedy. *Downloadable.*

**ELEPHANTS** by Alan Williamson. 3m. Three older men, down and out on their luck, have dinner. This play is a black comedy about the art of coercion. *Email Holly.*

**BABYCAKES** by Georgina Titheridge. 2f, 2m. A no-nonsense comedy about trashy weddings, a call centre, and people that are overly bent on being normal. And cake. Lots of cake. *Email Holly.*

**DROWNING IN LAKE VERONICA** by Phil Ormsby. 1f. A darkly comic tribute to the 1940's screen siren Veronica Lake. The hottest discovery in Hollywood in 1942, who ten years later was sued by her own mother and bankrupted by the IRS. *Downloadable.*

**SAVING GRACE** by Emma Rattenbury. 2f, 1m. A family dinner goes haywire. Tania thinks Dan is hiding something, Dan thinks Tania is losing the plot, and Grace just can't keep her food down. *Email Holly.*

**GHOST TREES** by Gary Stalker. 1m. A scientist who has lost his wife to cancer, throws himself into his work on protecting Kauri trees from dieback disease. A play about the indefatigable love for things lost. *Downloadable.*

#### **Theatrefest titles for young people**

**JENNY AND THE TENNIS NUT** by Hilary Beaton and Janet Shulman. 1f, 2m. Seven-year-old Jenny dreams of being the world's greatest circus performer. Meanwhile her Dad has visions of Jenny being a great tennis player... *Email Holly.*

**PRINCE CHARMING!** by Shaun Swain. 1f, 1m, 1 any gender. Ella, a Knight, has been tasked with rescuing a member of the royal family. Unfortunately, it's Prince Charming. Winner of the 3-8 year-old section of the Plays for the Young competition 2019. *Email Holly.*

**SHAKESPEARE JUNIOR** by Claire Ahuriri-Dunning. 5f, 7m. A young Will Shakespeare wakes up one day to hear that there's going to be a playwriting competition! But before he can enter his rival Marlowe has him kidnapped. *Downloadable.*

## What's On in December and January 2020

<b>Hamilton Playbox</b>	<i>Cowboy Christmas</i> by Michael Switzer	to Dec 14
	AUDITION <i>The BFG</i> adpt David Wood	Dec 14
<b>Tokoroa Little Theatre</b>	<i>Journey</i> , a musical	to Dec 7
<b>Performing Arts Taumarunui</b>	AUDITION <i>The Vicar of Dibley</i> by Richard Curtis and Paul Mayhew-Archer	Dec 10@7
<b>Gisborne Unity</b>	AUDITION <i>Calendar Girls</i> by Tim Firth	Dec 8
<b>Dannevirke Theatre</b>	<i>Ladies Night</i> by Anthony McCarten/Stephen Sinclair	to Dec 7
<b>Harlequin Theatre, Masterton</b>	<i>A Bunch of Amateurs</i> by Ian Hislop/Nick Newman	Dec 5-14
<b>Foxton Little Theatre</b>	<i>Gone to Seed</i> by Tim Hambleton	to Dec 7
<b>Mana Little Theatre</b>	AUDITION <i>Death and Taxes</i> by April Phillips	Dec 8 @5.30
<b>Drama Christi, Wgtn</b>	<i>Between the Lines</i> by Erica Glenn	to Dec 1
<b>Wellington Repertory</b>	AUDITIONS <i>Ladies in Black</i> by Carolyn Burns	Dec 15-16
<b>Butterfly Creek Theatre</b>	AUDITION <i>Othello</i> by William Shakespeare	Dec 8@2pm
<b>Havelock Theatre</b>	<i>Permitted Activity</i> by Kevin Parker	Jan 22–Feb 1
<b>Boathouse Theatre Blenheim</b>	AUDITION <i>Boeing Boeing</i> by Marc Camoletti	Dec 3@7.30
<b>Amuri Players, Hanmer</b>	<i>Treasure Island</i> by Ben Crocker	Dec 4 – 7
<b>Riccarton Players</b>	<i>Fifty and Fabulous</i> by Sharon Butterworth	Jan 15- 19
<b>South Cant. Drama League</b>	<i>The Jailhouse Frocks</i> by Devon Williamson	to Dec 7
<b>Invercargill Repertory</b>	<i>Stolen</i> by David Pottinger, a pantomime	Dec 6 – 8

Send information about 2020 productions to [info@theatrenewzealand.co.nz](mailto:info@theatrenewzealand.co.nz)

### You are invited

#### Playwrights Seminar: Writing the Short Play

The seminar will be run by a professional playwright and includes a reading of a prize-winning short play and the chance for attendees to develop their own writing.

Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> December 10am - 12.30pm preceded by refreshments from 9.30am.

The seminar will be followed by lunch at 12.30 and the PANZ AGM from 1.30 - 3pm

Venue: The Executive Seminar Suite in the old Museum building, entrance from Buckle Street, Massey University of Wellington.

Hosted by the Playwrights Association of New Zealand, a Theatre New Zealand Member.

Free for PANZ members; \$25 joining fee for non-members

RSVP and further information: [a.r.farrow@massey.as.nz](mailto:a.r.farrow@massey.as.nz)



Editor Margaret Robertson  
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