

BACKCHAT

News from THEATRE NEW ZEALAND
Fostering Community Theatre in Aotearoa

August/September 2020 Vol.43 Issue 4



Snap! directed by Anne Manchester for the Butterfly Creek Theatre Troupe in Eastbourne, has been adapted from the Ngaio Marsh novel *Photo Finish* by Christchurch playwright Fiona Farrell.

Paparazzi, passions and murder collide in this New Zealand whodunit set in the 1960s.

Here, Opera Diva Isabella Sommita (Victoria Nelson) discovers yet another unflattering photo of herself published in the local paper. Her manager Montague Reece (Colin Orchiston) attempts to calm her hysteria.

www.theatrenewzealand.co.nz



Happy Anniversary Everyone!

Just because our planned events of a super-fired *TheatreFest* celebration of the 80th year of the One-Act Play Festival and the 50th Anniversary of the establishment of *Theatre New Zealand* didn't happen according to plan, doesn't mean we ignore it altogether!

Planning for these events is being re-activated and more will be revealed in the New Year.

But we still want to acknowledge our members who have contributed considerably over the years, (surely you do too) so on the next page you'll find a notice outlining how you can go about nominating worthy members for recognition from your group or area.

With Covid-19 retreated from our shores - indeed no longer community-based, it is heartening to see so many groups reactivating with productions and theatre workshops. Don't forget our Guarantee Against Loss (GAL) on workshops; see our website. Let's hope you haven't lost too much traction over the past five months.

Theatre New Zealand likes to feel it is a forward thinking and innovative body. The National Executive now meets face-to-face only twice a year and, by skype or Zoom four to five times a year. Such cost savings! And here's something new!

The 2019/2020 **Annual General Meeting** will not only be in Wellington for those of you who can physically make it, but it will also be on-line for those of you who can't. AGM Info is on page 4.

With re-planning of productions happening around the country - or if you are you simply stuck as to what to do next - I thought you might like a little help in focussing in on New Zealand plays in particular which have had successful seasons, or are a little different in their content, which could give spice or new interest to your programming. Refresh your perception of New Zealand works, read, read, read. Here is a mix of youth, adult, small and middle-sized cast plays:

Peninsula, by Gary Henderson

The Cape, by Vivienne Plumb (Male & Female Versions)

The Raft, by Carl Nixon

Wheeler's Luck, by Damon Andrews, Toby Leach and Nigel Collins

Wednesday to Come, by Renée

A Way of Life, by Roger Hall

Easy Money, by Roger Hall

Zero Inn, by *Bruce Mason (a new version adapted by John Smythe)

*[2021 is the centennial of Bruce's birth]

Blue Sky Boys, by Ken Duncum

Central by Dave Armstrong

Still Life with Chickens, by D.M. Mamea

Mum's Choir, by Alison Quigan

New Zealand scripts above may be hired or down-loaded from www.playmarket.org.nz.

A wide range of international works are held by www.playbureau.com

Nga mihi

Have a great time. Spring is approaching.

Bryan Aitken

National President

Notice of AGM

Notice is given that the 50th Annual General Meeting of Theatre New Zealand will take place in the Studio of BATS Theatre, 1 Kent Tce, Courtenay Place, Wellington on Sunday 6th September at 10am. On-line information on page 4.

Nomination Forms

For National Officers (President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary) and National Executive (6 places) are with this Backchat and on the website under Resources/Theatre New Zealand Documents. Return by 28 August either by scanning to info@theatrenewzealand.co.nz or posting to Box 22 249 Wellington 6441

Nomination forms are also available for **Service Awards** on the website under Resources/Recognition Forms

Awards for Service

In September every year members have the opportunity to honour those who have served their theatre community above and beyond what an ordinary member is expected to do. There are two ways of acknowledging outstanding service.

The David Brockett Award for

Backstage Achievement: This annual award goes to the one person who of the whole TNZ membership has excelled backstage during the past year. Their nomination will reflect an unprecedented contribution in a particular area during the year. This is NOT a life time achievement award as that is covered by the following award.

Meritorious Service Award: Every society has members who deserve tangible recognition for their long service to theatre. You can nominate someone who has actively contributed for at least 25 years onstage, out front, backstage, or administratively.

Closing date for both awards is 28th August and the names of successful recipients will be announced at the AGM, 6th September. They

will be featured in Backchat once they've received their badges/certificates.

Te Puke Repertory Society leads the way: their newsletter comes alive!



TE PUKE REPERTORY SOCIETY

JULY Newsletter 2020



The stage is set for mulled wine and poetry. Clicking the arrow, the reader is transported - images of 14 poetry readers with their accoutrements flash by in a jazzy way to upbeat music finishing with a screen saying "Te Puke Repertory Society bringing theatre to our community" and a list of ways to get in touch.

It's reported that the evening was such a fun night that they are thinking of doing it again soon. And here's another of their readers:



Even the end piece responds to clicks

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Litt Park Theatre, Park Lane - Te Puke, New Zealand

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What's On in August and September 2020

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|--------------------|
| Howick Little Theatre | <i>Love from a Stranger</i> by Agatha Christie | to August 1 |
| Te Aroha Dramatic Soc. | <i>Steel Magnolias</i> by Robert Harling | August 1 - 8 |
| Katikati Theatre | <i>Taking Off</i> by Roger Hall | Aug 27 - Sept 4 |
| 16 th Avenue, Tauranga | <i>When the Wind Blows</i> by Raymond Biggs | September 4 - 11 |
| Detour Theatre, Tauranga | <i>Mad Sisters</i> by Devon Williamson | September 4 - 18 |
| Rotorua Little Theatre | <i>Caramba's Revenge</i> by William Norfolk | September 16 - 26 |
| Gisborne Unity Theatre | <i>Calendar Girls</i> by Tim Firth | August 13 - 22 |
| Dannevirke Theatre Company | <i>Steel Magnolias</i> by Robert Harling | August 13 - 22 |
| Greytown Little Theatre | <i>Kelly</i> by Matthew Ryan | August 20 - 22 |
| Levin Little Theatre | <i>Cold Front</i> by Alan Robinson | August 21 - Sept 5 |
| Kapiti Playhouse | <i>Pick'n'Mix 2</i> four nights of variety | September 4 - 12 |
| Mana Little Theatre | <i>Death and Taxes</i> by April Phillips | September 9 - 19 |
| Khandallah Arts Theatre | AUDITION <i>Of Mice and Men</i> by John Steinbeck | August 22 & 23 |
| Stagecraft Theatre | <i>The Revlon Girl</i> by Neil Anthony Docking | August 26 - Sept 5 |
| Wellington Repertory | <i>Midnight in Moscow</i> by Dean Parker | to August 8 |
| Butterfly Creek Theatre | <i>Snap!</i> by Fiona Samuel | August 13 - 22 |
| Marlborough Rep/Boathouse Theatre | <i>Boeing Boeing</i> by Marc Camoletti | August 26 - Sept 5 |
| Nelson Repertory | <i>The Pink Hammer</i> by Michele Amas | August 26 - 29 |
| SC Drama League, Timaru | <i>Easy Money</i> by Roger Hall | August 21 - 29 |
| | <i>Giants in the Sky</i> Juniors Denver Casado/Kerry Kazmierowicztrimm | Sept 30 - Oct 3 |
| Remarkable Theatre, Arrowtown | <i>Cosi</i> by Lewis Nowra | September 10 - 19 |
| Fiordland Players | Variety Concert | Sept 12 & 13 |

Send information about 2020 productions and activities to info@theatrenewzealand.co.nz

TNZ invites you to a Zoom meeting

Topic: TNZ AGM with an Open Forum to follow.

Time: Sep 6, 2020 10:00am BATS Theatre, Wellington. The Open Forum will start at 10.30am

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81146866290?pwd=ZzZtMTZicmlPV0JtWEQwa0VXY2xqZz09>

Meeting ID: 811 4686 6290 Passcode: 224119

Snippets from newsletters received

Although we were all knocked sideways by the imposition of lockdown it could be that for some of us the arrival of Covid-19 was a blessing in disguise. 2020 has turned into the year to sort, spruce, archive or throw out. Theatre committees have had time to take stock and catch up with all those jobs that are always being put to one side because there's a production to be managed.

Rotorua Little Theatre's newsletter speaks of maintenance and repairs and tidying of props and wardrobe. Refurbishment continues at Repertory House in Hawera; the lounge is being extended to create a bar and kitchen area, new curtains and paint will be added in time for a celebration of 75 years of theatre.

Tokoroa Little Theatre now has new lights and seating among other improvements.

Khandallah Arts Theatre has moved things essential to their annual play in the park into a new storage facility and as well has put together a series of workshops to encourage to 10 - 14 year olds. Older teenagers have already shown their talents at a recent club night. *More newsletters needed!!*

Results of Theatre New Zealand Post Covid19 Financial Health Survey

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-TDF5YK9F7>

Overall it is pleasing to report that, judging by the responses received, Community Theatre in New Zealand is well placed to manage the financial implications of the COVID19 lockdown. This survey was completed over the weeks of level 3 lockdown May 2020.

While individual communities may be struggling, which is always difficult news, the survey identified some real strengths in our networks. The challenges were to keep the group together, and manage audience and expectations. Financial challenges were real, though most have established systems to navigate the crisis.

Summary data insights include:

- Few respondents were worried about the COVID impact on themselves; which is good news as people themselves, and their generosity with time and resources, are key to Community Theatre
- About $\frac{3}{4}$ of the groups were worried about the impact on the group itself
- Most groups found it difficult not being able to meet together in person during the lockdown
- The biggest challenges (over 50% of respondents) were accessing the physical workspace, and retaining and regaining audiences. Finances moving forward and getting enough physical connections within the group were also important (For 45% of respondents)
- Most groups felt comfortable about their ability to manage with current arrangements in the long term
- The leadership of most groups had enough confidence to manage the crisis
- Most theatre groups felt confident they had enough resources and benefits to get through the crisis
- Most groups felt confident that networks were in place to support the theatre group

Prepared and Presented by Theatre New Zealand Executive; July 2020.
Contact Steven Arnold for further detail.



Entries are now open for this year's Playwright's playwriting competition for a 7 - 10 minute play adjudicated by Eleanor Bishop. The entry fee \$25 is the price of joining the Association. Contact them at playwrightsnz@gmail.com. There's a general category and an under 25 category and the closing date is 30 September. Winning plays receive \$200.



Here is a sampler of the wide selection of plays we have on offer at Playmarket. Become a subscriber at playmarket.org.nz (\$40) to access as many manuscript titles as you like.

New Zealand classics

A WAY OF LIFE by Roger Hall. (5-8w, 7-16m)
Covering a span of 80 years, *A Way of Life* follows a major strand of New Zealand's twentieth century history, making this an important story for both reading and performance. From the land ballots after World War One through to the diversification of tourism in the 1990s, this poignant portrayal of rural life reveals the fortunes of three generations of the McDonald family on their farm. *Published.*

WEDNESDAY TO COME by Renée. (6w, 2m)
This powerful drama shows the effect of the 1930s depression on a family, who face unemployment and a personal crisis when the husband and father dies in a relief camp. Underlined with a rich vein of earthy humour, it is a powerful statement and a passionate celebration of the contribution women have made to the evolution of this country. *Published.*

PENINSULA by Gary Henderson. (2w, 3m)
Michael Hope is ten years old and sleeps on a volcano. Inspired by a new year and a new teacher, Michael sets out to map his home ground, charting his own history in the sheltering hills and bush. But not all volcanoes are extinct. Not everything is above ground. Rumbles in the adult world encroach into Michael's life, erupting, and throwing his universe into a chaos that will change him forever. *Published.*

Lots of laughs

MUM'S CHOIR by Allison Quigan. (4w, 3m)
The O'Reilly matriarch has a dying wish. When her five, now fully-grown, children hear what it is - what a furore! Returning to the homestead to arrange her funeral and wake, Jean, Noel, Cathy, Kev and pregnant Terri, bicker and reminisce while Molly's body lies in state in the lounge. Amidst sibling rivalry, Yorkshire pudding catastrophes and disorderly sing-alongs, will the family manage to pull themselves together in time to see their mother's last wish fulfilled? *Published.*

STILL LIFE WITH CHICKENS by D.F. Mamea
(1w, 1 any) Mama's proud of her flourishing veggie garden. So when she discovers a stray chicken enjoying her greens, her first instinct is to reach for the spade. But what starts as an all out war develops into a grudging friendship, as Mama opens up to the chicken about her struggles with her old man, her palagi daughter-in-law, her immigrant neighbours and the grandchildren she rarely sees. Through this unlikely friendship, Mama learns there's more to life than waiting for death. Beautiful, beguiling and very funny.

WHEELER'S LUCK by Nigel Collins, Toby Leach and Damon Andrews. (0-20w, 2-20m) For an Auckland developer on the lookout for opportunities, Bell End is a tourist mecca in waiting. But there's more to this bargain than meets the eye. Bell End's quirky, feisty inhabitants are determined to protect their own little piece of back water paradise. History and traditions can't be easily bulldozed. In the style of *Niu Sila* and *No 2*, *Wheeler's Luck* is told in 80 breathless, hilarious minutes featuring 55 characters and an entire beach horse race. *Published.*

& SONS by Emily Duncan. (1w, 1m)
A black tragi-comedy set in the executive office at a shoe factory.

FLYBABY by Ken Duncum and Rebecca Rodden. (3w, 1m) Phil and Nadine, terminally unemployable, are cursed by the birth of the new Messiah into their inadequate relationship and squalid bedsit. *Published.*

CHOOK CHOOK by Fiona Farrell. (4w) In a battery farm for hens, Valma, Chrissy, Georgia and Bron refer to their cages as 'compartments' and eat the same food day after day under the same continuous 'sun'. *Published.*

CAROL & NEV by Phil Ormsby. (1w, 1m) It's the great kiwi road trip. Carol & Nev are on the road, taking the family campervan to their daughter's wedding at the bay. Only catch is Carol died in 1984. Nev is comfortable, middle aged and has been resigned to 'getting on with the business of life' alone - until now. Has Carol returned from beyond the grave to haunt him for the journey? Or could Nev just be having a nervous breakdown on the eve of the wedding? Carol & Nev is the journey of a lifetime. He must convince her she's dead; she must convince him he's alive!

Stories behind theatre's well-known phrases and sayings

as published by londontheatre.co.uk
(and thanks to Gisborne Unity Theatre)

"Break a leg"

Though we know you should never wish an actor "good luck", there are many theories behind why we wish performers shattered limbs instead. One theory comes from a stage's 'leg line', a line on the stage beyond which a person could be seen. Once you cross the line, you are technically a performer and entitled to pay, so wishing someone "break a leg" would actually be to hope they were paid. Other theories include actor David Garrick being so enthralled by a performance of *Richard III* that he didn't notice he'd broken his leg, or that actor John Wilkes broke his leg when jumping on stage after assassinating President Abraham Lincoln.

"Get the show on the road"

This probably comes from the idea of a show starting on Broadway or in the West End, and then touring it to various local theatres around the country. The saying is also applied to circuses and fairs, which travel from town to town across the country.

"Don't say M*cbeth"

One of the theatre's biggest superstitions is that of The Scottish Play, the M-Word: 'Macbeth'. Some believe that during the three witches scene, real spells are cast unless the parts are played by real witches. But there are other reasons as to why people believe the play is cursed. Supposedly, the actor playing Lady Macbeth died at the premiere of the play when a real dagger was used instead of the intended prop, and the Bard had to step in to finish the performance. However, it could just be an old hazing ritual between actors. Whatever the reason, just don't say it. You have been warned.

"Bravo"

From the Italian word for 'good' or 'skilful', 'bravo' is used to express praise upon a performer. The phrase dates back to around 1761 when 'bravo' meant 'brave'. As an exclamation, it meant 'well done', much like it does when used today.

A 'show stopper'

When a part of a performance is so good, the audience reaction is enough for the show to be unintentionally halted until it calms down. This phrase was first used around the year 1916, and is now usually attributed to songs that bring the house down.

"In the limelight"

In the 1800s, stages were lit by heating the mineral lime, which created a bright white light for the performers to be seen by all. Therefore, if you're at the centre of attention, you're said to be in the 'limelight'.

"The show must go on"

This saying has its origins in the circus of the 19th century. If a performer hurt themselves, or an animal got loose, the ringmaster with his band would attempt to keep the audience calm by, well, carrying on. The show would distract those looking on from being spooked or panicking.

Whistling

This isn't strictly a saying, but something we felt you should know. Back in the day, backstage crews were hired from the crews of ships as much of the rigging in theatres was similar to that of a ship. The sailors would use codes in the form of whistles to communicate the scene changes. If an actor whistled backstage, it might confuse the crew into initiating a scene change, risking injury and even possible death of a performer. It's probably less likely to have that sort of effect nowadays, but still, don't whistle during a show.

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Technical Assistance Morris Robertson

Deadline for next Backchat Oct/Nov
20 September.

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Please include the Backchat Editor on your mail-out distribution list.

2020 VISION
CELEBRATING THE PAST CREATING THE FUTURE