

TRAC

News from the New Zealand Theatre Federation Inc.
www.theatrenewzealand.co.nz



Sheridan Hickey with Hazel Menehira
at the launch of Hazel's book
*Three Dramatic Decades 1970 - 2000 -
Wanganui's Four Season's Professional Theatre*

President's Column

Dear Members,

Now that we are all back in the swing of things it seems like we never had a break. I hope you are able to use some of the new ideas you thought of over the holidays and are enjoying working on this year's programme.

Don't forget to encourage new directors to enter the Festival, as it is a wonderful way to get experience and helpful advice. That is how I started out and I am so glad I did as the advice helped me to continue to go for excellence and understanding. I am still doing so because that is the great thing about drama - there are no limits.

That is why it is also important to belong to a National Group and not become isolated and complacent. The life long friendships made are wonderful and the feeling of being part of an active larger body working all over New Zealand is important.

We, on your committee, are trying to see how we can streamline some things, enhance other aspects and do the best we can for you. PLEASE DON'T FORGET TO USE OUR WONDERFUL LIBRARY - it is unique and its services are expanding.

You are wonderful vital people who keep the arts alive for yourself and your audiences. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the National Finals in Palmerston North (where you will be able to VISIT THE LIBRARY).

Yours in theatre,

Denise Walsh,

National President



Cover photo:

Sheridan Hickey is our Library Manager and Hazel Menehira ANZDA member adjudicated our National Final in 2000, our Diamond Jubilee Year Sheridan reviews Hazel's book on page 4.

NZTF Library

The New Zealand Theatre Federation Library, known as the May Ives Library.

Have you noted library contact details and passed them on to your members?

Email: nztflibrary@xtra.co.nz

Phone/Fax: 06 356 5565

Address: PO Box 329
Palmerston North Central
Palmerston North 4440

Location: Room 110 on the first floor of
Square Edge
52 The Square
Palmerston North

AND our website (it's on the front cover too)
www.theatrenewzealand.co.nz

Library Opening Hours:

Wednesday 4.30pm - 6pm

Friday 10am - 12 noon

Other times by arrangement. Use email or the phone to leave a message.

Note the new hirage charges on page 3, effective from March 1st 2009.

Festival Dates to Remember

National Final, a glitzy, black tie affair!

June 26/27 Globe Theatre, Palmerston North

South Island Regional

June 5/6 Logan Park High School, Dunedin

North Island Regional

June 12/13 Little Theatre, Napier

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New Hire Rates For Members

All prices are inclusive of GST

Single Perusal Copies

- Sketches \$1.50 per week + handling & delivery.
- One Acts \$3.00 per week + handling & delivery.
- Full Lengths \$4 per week + handling & delivery.
- Musicals/Pantos - same as Full Length plays.
- Musical Scores \$5 per week + handling & delivery.
- Reference \$10 per week + handling & delivery.

Production/Reading Sets

- Sketches \$1.50 per copy per week + H&D.
- One Acts \$1.50 per copy per week + H&D.
- Full Lengths \$2.00 per copy per week +H&D.
- Musicals/Pantos - same as Full Length plays.
- Musical Scores \$3 per copy per week + H&D.

A minimum hire period of two weeks applies to all orders.

Overdue charges \$5.00 per script/text per week or part thereof.

Hire rates for non-members is twice that of members.

Allow up to three working days for processing all orders.

Payment

You may now pay via internet banking.
Send payments, including the NZTF Invoice/Reference number to 030726 1486417 02.

Wanganui Repertory Theatre

want to know what or if other societies pay their directors. Please contact them at:

mjstreet@xtra.co.nz
or 4 Ridgway St
Wanganui 4500

Terms and Conditions of Hire

A minimum hire period of two weeks applies to all orders.

Sets

A production set is one copy for each named character plus two copies.

A reading set is one copy for each named character plus one copy.

Music scores will not be sent unless requested.

Costs

All orders incur a minimum of \$1.95 handling per order + delivery fee (ie. Postage or Courier, whichever is cheaper).

Courier parcels cannot be delivered to a box number.

All orders will be processed within three working days.

Penalties

A penalty hire of \$5 per week, or part thereof will be charged on all overdue scripts.

All pencil markings must be erased or scripts will be deemed damaged.

Damaged, highlighted or lost books will be invoiced at replacement cost.

Copyright

It is a breach of copyright law to copy part or all of a play by any means.

It is a breach of copyright law not to mention the playwright's name in all advertising and publicity.

It is a breach of copyright to produce or hold a reading of a play prior to making application for permission. Availability should be determined for rights and licence to perform prior to the commencement of rehearsals.

New in the Library

Devon Williamson (see Backchat Dec. '08) has donated copies of his scripts for perusal.

Three Dramatic Decades 1970 – 2000

Wanganui's Four Seasons Theatre

More than a hundred theatre practitioners and personnel gathered in Wanganui 7th February to launch Hazel Menehira's *Three Dramatic Decades 1970– 2000* which explores the history of Wanganui's Four Seasons Professional Theatre.

The book starts in 1969 with a young actor called David Smiles sharing his vision to establish a professional theatre in Wanganui with a young journalist, Hazel Menehira. Not only is their story told but also the stories of the many hundreds of people who "...lived, worked, visited, and loved that old building which became.... *Four Seasons Theatre*". This theatre became the base for a theatre-in-education troupe, Children's Art Theatre that travelled throughout the length and breadth of the country. We learn of the theatre luminaries who were part of this traveling company and their contribution to the development of Four Seasons as a professionally recognised theatrical institution.

Due to the lack of funding for the arts, in those days (some things just don't change, do they!) actors developed self reliance and proficiency at turning their hands to the many and various aspects of theatre ranging from setting up lights, designing and building a set or props, designing, making and launder-

ing costumes, training and tutoring. And because Four Seasons offered a dinner and show, often the actors cooked as well.

The black and white illustrations not only show the stages of the theatre's physical development but also the many faces of those who performed, volunteered, attended or worked at the theatre. A theatre curtain image surrounds each page with the year's performances.

Formerly of Wanganui, but now settled in Cairns, Australia, Hazel is a Fellow of Trinity College London and is internationally renowned as a performer, a director, ANZDA adjudicator, tutor of voice, speech and drama with fifty years experience. This background is allied with forty-five years in journalism in creative writing.

This self published soft cover limited edition of 250 copies is only \$40.00 plus post and packaging and can be purchased for \$40.00 plus post and packaging from Morris Richards in Wanganui morris.pam@clear.net.nz. A copy has been purchased for the New Zealand Theatre Federation's May Ives Library.

Sheridan Hickey

Theatre in the Bush One Act Play Festival

Regent Theatre, Pahiatua 29 April - 2 May '09

This festival was a wonderful success in 2008, with 8 entries and three nights of plays. We are looking for your entry to make this a similar success in 2009.

Our aim is to promote one act plays and to provide a venue as a build up to the New Zealand Theatre Federation Festival of Community Theatre season. Unlike the New Zealand festival this is a one off event, with awards being presented on the final night. There is \$2000 in prize money for the best productions and actors in both adult and youth sections. Our adjudicator this year is Kurt Lerps of Brisbane, who adjudicates on the Australian and Norfolk Island circuit. He is used to seeing New Zealand plays at Norfolk Island and is very excited about this opportunity to adjudicate a festival here.

We welcome entries from anywhere in New Zealand. For further information please contact Judy or Peter Lea at 06 376 7405, email pjlea@xtra.co.nz or Lesley Courtney 06 376 7405, contactlesley@actrix.co.nz.

We look forward to hearing from you soon. Places are limited so are taken on a first in basis.

Norfolk Festival 3 - 10 October 2009

AN INVITATION to Norfolk Island Festival.

Be in to win - great week - lots of theatre - workshops - sight-seeing - meeting new people.

Registration of \$100Aust
Closes 31 August 2009.

Contact for details:

monica@worldtraders.nf
or

Norfolk Island Theatre Festival
PO Box 158, Norfolk Island 2899

ENTER OUR NZTF FESTIVAL and then
ON TO NORFOLK. BE ADVENTUROUS!

Leslie Norman Emslie

January 1942 - November 2008

Life Member of New Plymouth Repertory Society

Husband of Emily, Father to Fleur,

Friend and Mentor of many.

Les began life in Yorkshire, England but it was in New Zealand that he met his English Rose, Emily whom he courted long distance between the cities of Wellington and Auckland.

In Wellington Les was actively involved with Wellington Repertory. He performed many roles both on and off stage as well as being part of a touring troupe performing pantomimes in the greater Wellington area.

Les and Em made their home in New Plymouth where Fleur was born. Les shared his acting talent with the Taranaki Theatres but it was at the New Plymouth Repertory Society where he laid down his roots. Over many years Les worked tirelessly for the Society as a committee member, treasurer and president.

In the artistic field he adapted and directed his own plays for the society. Les, Em and Fleur combined to provide a number of family shows for Rep. Les the writer and actor, Fleur the director and Em in charge of props created a formidable team. These plays delighted audiences and were enthusiastically supported by young and old alike encouraging many new people to join the Society.

We remember Les as a stalwart of our society, a man with a wealth of experience and knowledge always willing to help but most of all we remember a friend who shared with us a passion for theatre and a love of life.

In the words of Charles Dickens "He was as good a friend, as good a master and as good a man as" this society has known.

Thank you Les. We will remember.

John Wilkie

1923 - 2009

A lifelong love of everything theatrical.

ALL the world's a stage, Shakespeare said, and one of Timaru's long-standing thespians has exited stage right.

John Wilkie passed away in January aged 86, ending a lifetime love of theatre. The life member (since 1977) and patron (since 1986) of the South Canterbury Drama League had been an active member since 1948, and been involved in various capacities in all five sections.

He first stepped on the stage at Timaru Boys' High School in the 1930s and directed his first play when he was 28.

His first appearances were in answer to a teacher's summons along the lines of "Wilkie, you're going to be taking part in a play".

"That first time on stage is a thrill, hearing the audience respond to what you are doing, and there is a special something about the spotlights and the applause," Mr Wilkie said in a previous interview.

Over the years, Mr Wilkie took the lead role in many productions and then directing became an alternative to acting as the years rolled by and "the memory becomes less adept at coping with the learning of words".

In 1999, Mr Wilkie was made a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM) for his services to drama and the community.

South Canterbury Drama League president John Clarke said he was very, very sad to note Mr Wilkie's passing, "particularly as he has given such long continuous service right up until his untimely death.

From The Timaru Herald

Constance Patricia Stewart

March 1921 - January 2009

A much loved fairy takes a final bow.

As a force 6.9 earthquake rocked the lower half of the North Island in May 1990, few people guessed the epicentre was on the stage of Tawa Community Theatre's Olde Time Music Hall. Centre stage in her tutu and waving her wand Megastar Constance Patricia Stewart triumphantly plunged to the floor as she sang, "My splits are all the rage, but No-one Loves a Fairy When She's 40."

"I thought the applause was pretty weak," Con laughed later. "I didn't realise there had been an earthquake. Everyone was under their seats. The local paper wrote that my splits on my 70 year old knees, nearly brought the house down."

Con's love of the theatre and music began as a small child at home, where she could play the piano and sing with her family while her mother played the songs they all loved. She attended St. Mary's College in Wellington where she excelled in Music and Drama and was Head Girl and Dux. Later Con was to receive the N.Z. Musical Theatre Federation's Merit Award for outstanding service to Musical Theatre.

World War 2 broke out soon after Con left school. With her friends she helped entertain the visiting American Marines at Webby's Club and made friendships which lasted all her life. She never forgot the handsome young boys from the United States who were stationed in New Zealand from 1942 until 1945. The Community Hall at Titahi Bay, now occupied by Porirua Little Theatre, was a mess hall for Marines encamped in the area at this time. 50 years later in 1992 many of those American Veterans returned with their families for a reunion and musical celebration in the old mess hall. On to the stage twirled the Veteran Fairy and it was the applause from her 'dear boys' which nearly brought the house down on this occasion. She was extremely flattered when they asked for her autograph but, "they're all so old, and they've brought their wives," Con was heard to mutter later.

After the war Constance Patricia O'Neill married Jack Stewart, a happy marriage which lasted over 50 years. Jack was a banker and the family, which soon included Bruce and Prue, moved around the country from bank to bank until 1976 when they finally settled in Tawa.

Jack shared Con's love of music and the theatre and as a member of the New Zealand Theatre Federation he promoted live theatre where-ever they lived. While in Greymouth they helped restore the old Regent Theatre and directed several seasons of Old Time Music Hall at the Union Hotel. Con was the Music and Drama teacher at Patea College and to the bemusement of the older students directed a school musical with the unfortunate title *Little Gypsy Gay*.

Once in Wellington they immediately joined Wellington Musical Theatre, Wellington Repertory, Porirua Little Theatre, and the Tawa Linden Drama Society....now known as the Tawa Community Theatre. Con's theatrical Sunday Soirees became the talk of the town, attracting the Creme de la Creme of the local theatre world to their home for various refreshments and an ever popular sing-along around the piano.

Jack joined the Tawa Lions Club, and from there they managed to cast male chorus lines of handsome young and once young men, urgently needed for the wonderful series of revues and Music Halls Con had continued to direct until quite recently. "We've all been conned," one of the Tawa Lions lamented as he agonised his way through his first opening night. However the male chorus lines flourished with Con at the helm and many of her recruits found that life upon the wicked stage was not so bad after all and are still performing.

Con's final Soiree attracted a full house, every leading lady's dream. It was just a shame she was not there to take a bow as the final curtain fell.

Tribute by Rose Hudson

Turning 50 This Year

Gisborne Unity Theatre, Mana Little Theatre, Khandallah Arts Theatre

Calling former members of **Gisborne Unity Theatre** for a possible celebration in **November**. Contact Fraser Grout - dewstow-grouts f.grout@xtra.co.nz, 199 Stout Street, Gisborne or Heather McIntyre - heatherlmc@xtra.co.nz, 4 Norwood Road, Gisborne 4010.

Two Wellington District societies are also celebrating 50 years.

In Plimmerton, **Mana Little Theatre** will be celebrating its Golden Jubilee with two functions on **Saturday July 25**. The first function, in mid afternoon, will be a rehearsed reading of one of the one act plays which made up MLT's first stage appearance in July 1959, followed by the launch of the jubilee book, compiled by foundation member, Barbara Heath, and then a cocktail party. In the evening, there will be a dance.

Any former members of Mana Little Theatre who are interested in attending the jubilee celebrations or in purchasing a copy of the jubilee book, email rbryson@xtra.co.nz for more information, or leave a message on the theatre phone 04 233 1127.

Khandallah Arts Theatre's Golden Jubilee will be celebrated **Sunday 1 November** from 3 - 7pm: an afternoon for reunion, for fun and laughter, remembering when, with the aid of photos, scrapbooks, costumes, speeches, wine and nibbles. There will be performances too.

Reminiscences are being sort for a booklet being produced to mark the occasion. Contact katgoldenjubilee@gmail.com And if you know of any former members, ask them to please contact this email address.

What's On

Gisborne Unity Theatre	<i>Tom Jones</i> by Joan McAlpine	March 31 - April 4
Palmerston North Boys High	<i>Blood Brothers</i> by Willy Russell	March 26 - April 4
Harlequin Theatre	<i>The Reading of the Will</i> by the Cast	February 25 - 27
Greytown Little Theatre	<i>Hound of the Baskervilles</i> by Tim Kelly	April
Heretaunga Players	<i>The Woman in Black</i> by Stephen Mallatratt	March 12 - 21
Hutt Repertory	<i>Abandonment</i> by Kate Aitkinson	April 22 - May 2
Levin Little Theatre	<i>Table Manners</i> by Alan Ayckbourn	March 26 - April 4
Kapiti Playhouse	<i>Birthday Suite</i> by Robin Hawdon	March 25 - April 4
Mana Little Theatre	<i>Anton in Show Business</i> by Jane Martin	March 25 - April 4
Porirua Little Theatre	<i>Play On</i> by Rick Abbot	March 12 - 28
Stagecraft Theatre	<i>Necessary Targets</i> by Eve Easler	March 25 - April 4
Wellington Repertory	<i>Happy as a Sandbag</i> by Ken Wilson	April 22 - May 2
Marlborough Repertory	<i>The History Boys</i> by Alan Bennett	March 25 - April 4

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

Do you send out your newsletters by email? If you do please include the Backchat editor on your list: margaretr@vodafone.co.nz

Complete Workes 2009

The Shakespeare Globe Centre New Zealand has embarked on an ambitious programme to have the whole of Shakespeare's cannon performed this year to mark the 400th anniversary of the publication of the sonnets.

Three years ago the Royal Shakespeare Company attempted the same thing and one of its productions *Twelfth Night* had its second airing at the Tricycle Theatre in Kilburn London last year. The theatre, founded 1980 and rebuilt after being destroyed by fire in 1987 now comprises a 230 seat theatre, a 300 seat cinema, cafe-bar and art gallery as well

as several studios for educational use, a key priority. It specializes in new work with political themes, including plays by Irish, African-Caribbean, Jewish and Asian writers, reflecting the mix of communities in the area.

I saw this *Twelfth Night* production. The stage was set up for a music gig, the audience were elevated on scaffolding and the actors were in modern dress apart from a beruffed Sir Toby Belch. What we got was a 90 minute torrent of sound and music: Viola discovers she's in Illyria via a cellphone weather forecast storm warning; Sir Toby's nocturnal drinking session starts with a quiet song that gets progressively rowdier as audience participation is encouraged with the passing around of pizza and the

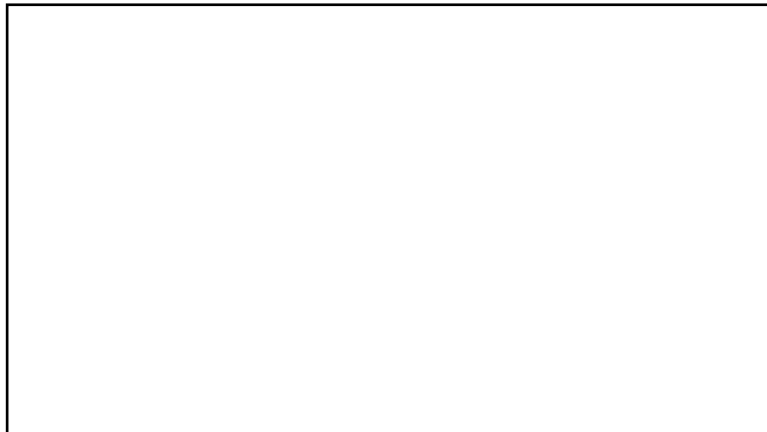
hurling of self adhesive coloured balls until Malvolio really does have some caterwauling to complain of. His cross garters were a mere adjunct to his very skimpy yellow soccer shorts. Twelfth night marks post Christmas celebration and this production was a riot.

There have already been innovative productions of *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Henry V* in the Capital this year and we look forward to A *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Twelfth Night* and many others. Wellington District Theatre Federation are holding Shakespearean workshops throughout the year to compliment the year's focus.

Margaret Robertson



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Editor: Margaret Robertson
Designer: Matt Norrish

Deadline for next issue of Backchat
April 11 2009

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or PO Box 329, Palmerston North 4440