



# Backchat

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



*Homeland* at Hutt Repertory. Ken Taylor now an old man has to be moved off the family farm and into a home. APRIL 2-12



## In The Spotlight...

- 2 President's Message
- 2 Subs Due
- 2 Membership Benefits
- 3 TheatreFest Dates
- 3 Performing Arts Taumarunui
- 4 Remembering Denise Walsh
- 5 Playmarket Scripts
- 6 TNZ brochure
- 6 Some April productions
- 7 What's On April/May
- 7 Directing Workshop
- 8 Outreach, Steven Arnold

*The Full Monty* at Porirua Little Theatre. The American musical version of the '97 British film. Six men work to present a strip show at their local club. TO APRIL 19



The Ugly Sisters (Richard Baker and Angus Long) in Performing Arts Taumarunui's production of Roger Hall's *Cinderella*. There's a profile of the group on p3.

April 2014 Volume 37 Issue 2  
[www.theatrenz.co.nz](http://www.theatrenz.co.nz)

## President



I've been talking a lot recently about regeneration. The regeneration of the Federation and the regeneration of your societies. But what about us, personally?

Theatre is people driven. Basically we are it, because theatre can happen in any space!

I've attended performances in living-rooms, small halls with the audience sitting on the stage. In 'the round', 'traverse', 'site specific', you name it. Even out of doors – that can happen a lot in this country of ours. I think we all accept it doesn't have to happen in an enclosed space with the audience in the dark, and the action behind a 'Proscenium Arch'. The parameters of performance are constantly being shifted and tested.

But if we do not renew ourselves as practitioners, refresh our methodology, extend our knowledge, find new stimulus – then not only the theatres we serve but also the playwrights we interpret and the actors we inspire – all slowly atrophy and die.

Yes Directors, I'm talking to you in particular!

When was the last time you attended a workshop, read a new book on theatre, took a risk in seeing some new enterprise you "thought you probably wouldn't like". Isn't that the reason for going? To challenge your own perceptions and find new stimulation – even if it is to confirm your own subjectivity.

I've seen some pretty mundane productions recently where clearly the director is stuck in a rut. Incapable of, or doesn't want to, move out of their comfort zone.

Nelson Marlborough is hosting a Directors Workshop this May in Blenheim. They have recognised that new directors are thin on the ground in their region. Some directors also feel they need a shot in the arm to revitalise their approach, pick up some new skills.

I've long held the attitude that 'we can only know what we are taught'. This also means that if you

are still teaching what you learned ten even twenty years ago, you are possibly stuck in a rut. The big question is, how and from whom did you learn? We all need an eclectic mix of inspirers to find different approaches to work, people from outside our immediate circle of practitioners.

Directors are also tutors. They have to lead from the front, coach, elicit, guide an actor through the script, their role and sometimes themselves. The days of the 'director dictator' are long gone. Theatre is a collaborative process. This doesn't mean you direct 'by committee'. Someone has to take responsibility for the final vision, the final decisions on presentation and the production's interpretation and staging – but these decisions have to be made from a position of knowledge, enlightenment and practicality.

Is it time for you to take up the challenge, to renew your practices? The stronger and more creative you are – the stronger and more creative your productions will be. Do you want a workshop in your region? Let us know and we'll help it happen.

Bryan Aitken  
National President

## April 1st Time to Renew Your Subscription

Renewal notices will be posted to you together with a booklet resplendent with our new Theatre New Zealand (TNZ) branding - see page 6. Subs are \$100 for a group, \$40 for an individual.

## Welcome

Dargaville Little Theatre, 50 years young, have joined us and we extend a warm welcome. They run an impressive number of acting and singing classes for children and adults annually.

## Benefits for TNZ Members

Play Bureau NZ now offer financial members of TNZ a 10% reduction in the cost of hiring sets. APRA have agreed that one payment for a music licence will cover an entry in TheatreFest through all its stages, local, regional and the national final.

## Local TheatreFests

Dates and Contacts  
Closing date 5th July

**Northland** 9/10 May  
[kathyr1963@hotmail.com](mailto:kathyr1963@hotmail.com)

**Waikato** 19/20 July  
[lornaashton@clear.net.nz](mailto:lornaashton@clear.net.nz)

**Bay of Plenty** 1/2 August  
[thompsonmowers@seaboss.co.nz](mailto:thompsonmowers@seaboss.co.nz)

**Hawke's Bay** 1/2 August  
[theatreworld@clear.net.nz](mailto:theatreworld@clear.net.nz)

**Manawatu** 1/2 August  
[joan.ford@fairfaxmedia.co.nz](mailto:joan.ford@fairfaxmedia.co.nz)

**Wairarapa/Wellington** 19 July  
[david.johnson@movingfrontiers.com](mailto:david.johnson@movingfrontiers.com)

**Top of the South** 2 August  
[anne.mcauley@outlook.com](mailto:anne.mcauley@outlook.com)

**Canterbury** 2/3 August  
[histenone@xtra.co.nz](mailto:histenone@xtra.co.nz)

**Bottom of the South** 1/2 August  
[oneactfest@gmail.com](mailto:oneactfest@gmail.com)

## Regional TheatreFests

**August 15/16**  
Feilding Little Theatre  
NASDA Studio Christchurch

**August 22/23**  
Otamatea Repertory Theatre  
TBA Dunedin

Steven Arnold will adjudicate in the North Island and Phil Peleton in the South Island.

## National Conference and Final

**September 12/13**  
Te Whaea, 11 Hutchison Rd Newtown,  
Wellington  
Adjudicator David Chambers.

## Profile: Performing Arts Taumarunui

From material supplied by  
Adrienne Till and Marion Johnston

Performing Arts Taumarunui was the name given in 2007 to a merging of the Little Theatre established 1948 and the local Choral and Operatic Society 1954. Buildings belonging to both groups had been burnt down in arson attacks and each group re-established itself in separate buildings but it became clear that a merger would make more sense with key people already members of both groups. Now they run a theatre where props and building materials are stored and have a separate place for the hire of their extensive wardrobe.

Each year they aim to produce a play near the beginning of the year and a musical later. Last year their choice was Roger Hall's 2006 version of *Cinderella*. They found the music challenging and were glad to have plenty of rehearsal time. The set consisted of swiveling flats which had been trialed in a small way in the previous year's *Sound of Music*. They report that it was absolute bliss to change a scene with the nudge of a finger.

This year they will start with a reading of *Are you Being Served?* for consideration as a future production. Following that they have a choice of two plays with music written by a new member. Every couple of years a director from outside is engaged to direct their musical as this gives members lots of new ideas to learn from. Meantime members who make up the choir are preparing to sing on ANZAC day and will later take part in the bi-annual Wanganui Lions Night at the Proms charity show. They will also sing at the local rest home and at Christmas time. Another goal for the group this year is to clear a room of accumulated costumes to make space for play rehearsals and choir practice.

**Performing Arts Taumarunui with its small group of active members is a strong and vibrant part of their community.**

# Denise Walsh: A Personal Perspective

by Nanette Wright,  
President 1999 - 2002

Our friendship goes back over thirty years, back to the late seventies.

I first saw a production of hers at a NZTF festival in Dunedin. It was innovative, exciting theatre, so different from the usual at that time. I knew then that I had viewed a rare talent in youth theatre.

Denise was able to catch the intonation, the thoughts and beliefs of adolescents in the many plays she wrote. She had a deep and caring insight into the problems young people face and this she displayed in her cleverly devised presentations. Anyone who has read *Spirals of the Mind* will know what I am saying.

We had a shared love of reading and collecting old books of all eras particularly those written between 1900 and 1950. The Regent Theatre Book sale will miss her passion for collecting. I was the recipient of many boxes of books over the years. And even after I had shifted from South Canterbury to Hawke's Bay I would receive her generous gifts. Our last meeting was at the finals in Wellington and she had brought up books for me then.

We always stayed together to save money and it was a great opportunity to share confidences and thoughts and perhaps a little gossip whenever we attended Theatre Federation meetings or festivals. One of our favourite treats when we were together was to indulge ourselves at a coffee shop and enjoy little fruit and custard tarts. Amazingly in Wellington in September we found a little French patisserie and there in a cabinet on a plate were two fruit tarts! Just for us!

I sensed then that this might be the last time we would be together.

Over the years we worked on many theatre projects together particularly The National Youth Summer Schools and The National Directing and Acting Residential Workshops at Lincoln University. We had such fun. Bryan Aitken, Marlene Le Cren, Denise and myself as manager under the auspices of the

Canterbury District Federation, with invited tutors such as Stuart Devinnie and K.C Kelly. The schools were wonderfully successful and fulfilled a great need in theatre at that time. We had a wonderful time and the future was very positive for amateur theatre.

We also served many years on the National Executive together.

I had the privilege of travelling to International Theatre Festivals in America, Japan and Germany with Denise and through her involvement with these was able to view some amazing and stimulating presentations. Eye opening indeed. Wonderful theatre experiences and memories to be cherished.

Denise was a practical and no nonsense person with a generous heart and she did not suffer fools gladly and I have her to thank for my growth in confidence in my theatre and community work and in my personal growth.

There is so much more I could say but I will finish with a quote from my daughter Antonia's letter to me when she heard of Denise's passing:

"I have no idea of how you must be feeling. Denise was truly an incredible lady. You are all a group of amazingly dedicated and talented thespians determined to share your passions with the world. I remember many of those plays. They were inspiring. I hope they are being used throughout the country. They have a significance to teens that is timeless. Loved that lady and love you."

I loved you too Denise and in the words of Katherine Mansfield "this is not a letter but my arms around you for a brief moment."

To quote Denise as she wrote to many of her friends, "Much Luv, Sweet Pea".

**Denise died on March 5th 2014.**

**She was National President 1995 - 1999 and 2005 - 2008 and awarded a MNZM, Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit last year.**

**We mourn her passing.**

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](mailto:clientpromotion@playmarket.org.nz) with your queries.

**PENALTIES, PINTS AND PIROUETTES** by Neil Troost  
(2w 8m)

Rugby, beer and... ballet??? Well, two out of three ain't bad, especially if you are one of the no-hopers from the Maungakaka Rugby Club. The guys reluctantly fumble their way into a PTA variety night, with the promise of a hot dance teacher called Kelly. Only thing is, Kelly is actually a gay man - he can only teach ballet - and it's too late to back out. While stumbling through rehearsals our reluctant heroes might work out that maybe Kelly and ballet are the best thing that's happened to them and their recession-damaged town. **"...nothing you may have seen prepares you for this brilliant play."** WANGANUI CHRONICLE

**CRAZY FOR YOU** by Neil Troost (2w 2m)

As David is about to go for the biggest job interview of his life, Bob, his childhood imaginary friend decides to resurface and creates havoc in his new relationship with Karen and his job prospects with his new boss, Elise. The pills prescribed by the psychiatrist that cured David as a youth eventually sort things out – or do they? A quick-witted comedy that stretches the boundaries between what's real and what's not.

**MOTEL** by April Phillips (4w 4m) \*Restricted availability

From the writer of the hit shows *STIFF*, and *Death & Taxe\$* comes *Motel*, a series of vignettes set in the same dingy motel room. Jenny needs the room to have sex with a stranger. Pearl and Harry need the room for peace. A travelling salesman who sees the world through rose tinted glasses is changed forever when he meets the motel manager. Annabel needs the room for a casual affair, but then she meets the housekeeper from Hell. **"We laughed-out-loud, we cried and at times we even gasped."** THEATRESCENES

**SNAP!** by Fiona Farrell (4w 6m)

A gripping murder mystery by Fiona Farrell, adapted from Dame Ngaio Marsh's novel *Photo Finish*. Opera Diva La Sommita heads to a secluded island to escape a persistent paparazzo, but when she winds up dead, inspector Roderick Alleyn must find out whodunit. Every clue the inspector finds is sure to leave you closer to the edge of your seat!

**PRIDE AND PREJUDICE** by Joy Hellyer and Amy Whiterod (8w 5m)

A sparkling and witty new adaptation of Jane Austen's classic novel that was a massive hit for Wellington's Stagecraft Theatre in 2013. This captivating period drama follows the lives and loves of a family of five unmarried daughters in Regency England. **Winner of 5 Antoinette Awards including Best Comedy 2013.**

**THE SPY WHO WOULDN'T DIE AGAIN** by Tim Spite, Gabe McDonnell and SEEyD (1w 3m)

1985. In a quiet Kiwi shed, a backyard inventor makes a breakthrough that could revolutionise the energy industry, inadvertently turning small-town New Zealand into the hottest battlefield in the Cold War. MI6's most available agent, Stephen St Clair, is on a desperate mission to stop the technology falling into the wrong hands – but a rogue British agent, ironically with no hands at all, has got there first. **"...quite extraordinary..."** THE DOMINION POST

**HOLDING COURT** by Tim Hambleton (2w 4m)

The viability of a small town New Zealand District Court is being considered by the Ministry of Justice. The local Judge, a somewhat eccentric character, battles with a humourless ministry official to keep the Court open, and is supported in that endeavour by two lawyers, a criminal, and the Court Registrar. In the meantime a female lawyer is trying to become a partner of her male dominated law firm, and an unrequited love story unfolds between the Court Registrar and the second lawyer.

**GOOD-NIGHT, THE END** by Jo Randerson (2w 2m)

Three bored and tired Grim Reapers are hanging out in the staff kitchen, counting down to Christmas, between professional stints posing existential questions to the public with a wave of their scythes. As Harvester deals with some difficult personal news, the others philosophise and grizzle over the Milo, stage puppetry and put up with appearances by their mad Italian manager, L'amministrazione. **"...unashamedly comic, rich in character and full of surprises..."** THEATREVIEW

**THE MOTOR CAMP** by Dave Armstrong (3w 3m)

From the award winning writer of *Le Sud* and *Niu Sila* comes the perfect play for summer. Two couples, two caravans, two teenagers arrive at a motor camp and have to park next to each other. As both families try to enjoy their holiday and keep their hormonal teenagers apart, a hilarious series of events unfolds. A glorious celebration of our annual Kiwi camping rituals. **"Funnier than a pair of budgie-smugglers on a sixty year old granddad, and just as shocking.."** THEATREVIEW

# Theatre New Zealand Brochure

## Participate- Educate- Innovate

Display our brochure with pride on a notice board in your theatre foyer, share its contents with your members, the Head of Drama at your local school or show it to another theatre group nearby that doesn't know about TNZ.

We are very grateful to Anna McKay Design <http://aboutme/annamckaydesign> for her great design work and to The Lite Site, Theatre and Event Lighting [www.lightsite.co.nz](http://www.lightsite.co.nz) for sponsorship. You will see reference to them in the brochure. Please support them.

## ANZDA Seminars

Seminars will now take place in Wellington and Christchurch in May. There's still time to register interest with secretary Bryan Aitken [bryanaitken@paradise.net.nz](mailto:bryanaitken@paradise.net.nz)  
Send a full CV.



## Lights on Action in April - details p7



(clockwise from above left): *Happy Birthday Dear Alice* at Kapiti Playhouse. Siblings Barry and Barbara have special reasons for travelling for their mother's 71st birthday.  
*Entertaining Angels* in Levin. Sisters Ruth and vicar's widow Grace fight while daughter Jo looks on.  
*Mum's Choir* at New Players. Mums' final request was for her children to sing Faure's Requiem at her funeral.

# What's On in April and May

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

<b>Dargaville Little Theatre</b>	<i>A Little Bit Musical Canapes, Cocktails &amp; Show</i>	April 3 - 11
<b>Dolphin Theatre</b> Onehunga	<i>The Priory</i> by Michael Wynne	April 12 - May 3
One Acts;	<i>After Miss Julie</i> by Patrick Marber and <i>Stones in his Pockets</i> by Marie Jones	May 10 - 17
<b>Howick Little Theatre</b>	AUDITION <i>4000Miles</i> by Amy Herzog	May 4 @10am
	<i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i> by Oscar Wilde	May 10 - 31
<b>Detour Theatre</b> Tauranga	<i>Over Paid, Over Sexed and Over Here</i> by Devon Williamson	to April 12
<b>Theatre Whakatane</b>	<i>Cats</i> by Andrew Lloyd Webber	May 9 - 24
<b>Rotorua Little Theatre</b>	<i>See How They Run</i> by Philip King	to April 12
<b>Gisborne Unity Theatre</b>	<i>The Lieutenant of Inishmore</i> by Martin McDonagh	April 29 - May 4
<b>Theatre Hawke's Bay</b>	<i>Le Sud</i> by Dave Armstrong	to April 5
	AUDITION <i>Grease</i> by Jim Jacobs & Warren Casey	April 5, 6
<b>Te Puke Repertory</b>	<i>Sex Please We're Sixty</i> by Michael/Susan Parker	April 30 - May 10
<b>New Plymouth Repertory</b>	<i>The Love List</i> by Norm Foster	May 6 - 17
<b>Cue Theatre Inglewood</b>	<i>The Dining Room</i> by A. R. Gurney	April 2 - 12
<b>Wanganui Repertory Theatre</b>	<i>Funny Money</i> by Ray Cooney	to April 5
<b>Levin Little Theatre</b>	<i>Entertaining Angels</i> by Richard Everett	to April 12
<b>Kapiti Playhouse</b>	<i>Happy Birthday Dear Alice</i> by Bernard Farrell	April 2 - 12
<b>Mana Little Theatre</b>	<i>Alice</i> adapted from Lewis Carol by Sue Mortimer/Stephanie Drew	April 16 - May 3
<b>Porirua Little Theatre</b>	<i>The Full Monty</i> book by Terrance McNally score by David Yazbek	to April 19
<b>New Players</b> Newlands	<i>Mum's Choir</i> by Alison Quigan	April 3 - 12
<b>Khandallah Arts Theatre</b>	AUDITION <i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i>	May 13, 15
<b>Stagecraft Theatre</b>	<i>The Cat's Meow</i> by Steven Peros	April 2 - 12
<b>Hutt Repertory Theatre</b>	<i>Homeland</i> by Gary Henderson	April 2 - 12
<b>Heretaunga Players</b>	<i>The Magician and the Fisherman</i> by Graeme Knowles	April 28-May2
<b>Marlborough Repertory</b>	<i>Anne Boleyn</i> by Howard Brenton	April 2 - 12
<b>Elmwood Players</b>	<i>Rabbit Hole</i> by David Lindsay-Abaire	April 23 -May 3
<b>Riccarton Players</b>	<i>Suite 16</i> by John Gadsby and David McPhail	April 23 - May 3
<b>SCDL</b> Timaru Junior Section	<i>The Jungle Book</i>	April 24 - 26
Repertory	<i>Calendar Girls</i> by Tim Firth	May 16 - 24
<b>Invercargill Repertory</b>	<i>Journey's End</i> by R.C. Sheriff	April 5 - 12

Do you send your newsletters by email? Please add Backchat editor [info@theatrenewzealand.co.nz](mailto:info@theatrenewzealand.co.nz)

If you send newsletters by post please change the label to Box 2585 Christchurch 8140

## Top of the South Director's Workshop May 10/11 with Pam Logan

Calling all new directors and directors looking for new ideas whether you are a member of a theatre society, a school drama teacher or a student with a passion for theatre and want to get started.

**Where?** Boathouse Theatre, Blenheim.

**When?** May 10/11 from 10am - 5pm

**Cost?** \$35 includes x2 lunch and morning and afternoon tea.

**Tutor?** Pam Logan - actor, director, adjudicator, registered teacher of speech and drama.

**Registrations?** [anne.mcauley@outlook.com](mailto:anne.mcauley@outlook.com) 03 578 6470 by 24 April.

The course will focus on finding and choosing a play, getting to know the text, analysis and research, the world of the play, auditions, working with actors, stages in rehearsal. Sessions will be interactive with plenty of time for questions and discussion.

# Outreach

By Steven Arnold, National Executive Member, on behalf of TNZ

Recently I visited a small semi rural community an hour from Auckland. It has only a few thousand inhabitants. BUT it has an amazing theatre history. The residents boast of their performing arts centre, which has a full sized stage in a hall, complete with rehearsal space, costume hire, lighting box, catering kitchen and so on. Since the original burnt down several years ago, the City Council in conjunction with various theatre groups have maintained a great theatre space within a community centre. It is used by many theatrical, choral, school and touring groups. It seems being semi-rural is no disadvantage to accessing a rich range of theatre. All communities, however, go through cycles. Sometimes membership and numbers are a problem, sometimes too much (or too little) artistic flair causes tensions; other times

suitable cast members or technical gurus are hard to come by. It sometimes occurs that well meaning committee members have disagreements or misunderstandings. Traditions sometimes inhibit innovation, or creativity loses its way in the practical world. Politics is no stranger to the rehearsal rooms around the country (no, really!) and so this experience reminded me that passionate people have passionate ideas - and often there are clashes. Theatre New Zealand hosted the community meeting, and the result is a great example of how communities who talk together, with members of different groups, can start to solve problems. We are looking for great changes, and enjoyed the engagement across the sector. A salient reminder to us all, to enjoy and share our hobby / obsession."



Editor: Margaret Robertson

Designer: Jade Gillies

Deadline for June Backchat  
**May 1st 2014 (NB early date)**

Send Theatre New Zealand communications to  
[info@theatrenewzealand.co.nz](mailto:info@theatrenewzealand.co.nz)

or

or PO Box 2585 Christchurch 8140 (NB adjust your records)