Riccarton Players recent production of Tim Rice & Andrew Lloyd Webbers’s *The Likes Of Us*, the story of the life of Dr Thomas Barnardo, a man who was a fiery young medical student who gave up evangelical pursuits to become more entrepreneurial and philanthropic, and whose crusade to rescue children living on the streets, led to the foundation of the famous children’s homes and an organisation that bears his name to today.

Lady Weasel (Debi Walters) and Badger (Alister Williams) in Otamatea Repertory Theatre’s production of *The Wind in the Willows.*
Innovation is my key-word this month. Theatre New Zealand is continuing to meet the new practices of technology and communication.

Next year Backchat will be created in the new formatting of Campaign Monitor. This formatting will save hours of time for our creator and editor, Jade Gillies and Garry Thomas. It will still be email-able and be available on-line and will also be able to be printed off for your membership and interested parties if you need to. Big thanks to Margaret Robertson for her years of dedication as compiler and editor.

In an effort to pare back other expenses the Executive have also held its first Skype Meeting. A bit of a bother on a Saturday morning, as we all felt we had to dress! The National Final of TheatreFest and the Conference/Workshops have been confirmed in Hamilton for September 11/12 2015, with the Regional Finals being locked in as I write this column.

I hope you all have great festive end-of-year productions and a much deserved break before the new year.

Bryan Aitken
National President

I have a folder stuffed with cuttings gathered from your newsletters and elsewhere: theatrical tit-bits, wry jokes, wise sayings, masks and a collection of useful words in eye-catching fonts. This collection started at the turn of the century when I took over editing Backchat. In those days it was an in-house ‘cut and paste’ effort and the cuttings proved an invaluable resource. My husband Morris helped with production. Later I had help from Lyn Doncliffe in Westport, followed by Matt Norrish, initially one of Denise Walsh’s Dunedin students and for the last three years Jade Gillies in Invercargill has been in charge of the layout. I want to thank them all, all South Islanders with a flair for design.

This is the last Backchat I will be involved with. The new editor is National Executive member Garry Thomas editor@theatrenewzealand.co.nz who is also President of Elmwood Players, Christchurch. He and Jade plan to take Backchat in a different direction to fit in with changing times.

I have really enjoyed my contact with you over these last 15 years and shall miss getting in touch to find out what productions you are planning. Thank you to many of you for sending in information for profiles of your theatre; it has been good to get to know you better. As I remain secretary of Theatre New Zealand info@theatrenewzealand.co.nz I will still be in communication with you all but now it will be mainly about membership. And if you have a query or need some help I am just an email away.

I wish Garry and Jade all the best for the development of Backchat and my long-out-of-date folder is now in the recycling bin.

Margaret Robertson
Hi, and welcome to this issue of Backchat – it’s a bit of a transition period as I find my way, taking over the role of Editor from Margaret – I’m not too sure what I’ve let myself in for, with the great job that she has done in putting this newsletter together. Jade and I have a few ideas with regards to Backchat, and you will see this coming through from next year. I definitely want this newsletter to be informative, colourful and entertaining. I welcome your contributions, and would love to see some production photos that we can use – so send them in and let’s see what happens. As I said, this issue is a little bit of a transitional one, so it’s not quite bursting at the seams with info as I find my way, but come 2015 we’ll be in full swing.

Wishing you all a safe and Merry Xmas

Garry Thomas

Meritorious Service Awards 2014

(25+ Years of active service)

Congratulations to the following valuable recipients whose names were announced at the Annual General Meeting earlier this year:

Peter Baldock  Butterfly Creek Theatre Troupe
Lesley Tilley  Hutt Repertory Theatre
Barry Meyers  Khandallah Arts Theatre
Amanda Stone  Porirua Little Theatre
Ann Pocock  On-Stage Te Kuiti

A delighted Ann Pocock with her well-deserved Meritorious Service Award.

Poster and Programme Competition 2014

18 posters and 8 programmes were entered in this years competition, which was judged by Becky Bliss, Independent Design (Wellington). Best poster was Elmwood Players’ Thick As Thieves, designed by Glen Clark, and best programme was Four Flat Whites in Italy, designed by Samantha Turner, Hawera Repertory Society.

New Editor

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Wishing you all a safe and Merry Xmas

Garry Thomas

Thank You

A big “Thank You” to the Drama Development Trust for a cheque for $1000 given to President Bryan on stage at the end of the National Final to further the work of Theatre New Zealand.

New NZ Comedy

Written by Tim Hambleton & Directed by Phil Dean

11-21 June (Wed to Sat) 7:30pm
Tickets: $20 waged, $17 unwaged

Venue: Elmwood Auditorium, 31 Aikmans Road, Merivale
To book: Phone (03) 3558874
or online at www.elmwoodplayers.org.nz

A Glen Clark Design

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Start Close In

Start close in, don’t take the second step or the third, start with the first thing close in, the step you don’t want to take.

Start with the ground you know, the pale ground beneath your feet, your own way of starting the conversation. Start with your own question, give up on other people’s questions, don’t let them smother something simple.

To find another’s voice, follow your own voice, wait until that voice becomes a private ear listening to another.

Start right now take a small step you can call your own don’t follow someone else’s heroics, be humble and focused, start close in, don’t mistake that other for your own.

Start close in, don’t take the second step or the third, start with the first thing close in, the step you don’t want to take.

By David Whyte, River Flow: New and Selected Poems
Ideas are like rabbits. You get a couple and learn how to handle them, and pretty soon you have a dozen.

~ John Steinbeck