

# BACKCHAT

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

October/November 2017 Vol.40 Issue 5



The winning team of 11 from **Huntington Hounds of Riverlea** display their trophies. The production by Robyn Chappell of *The Incident* by Leonid Andreyev won the Book of Honour, the SeleconDesign/ Technical Award and one of the team, Jono Freebairn won an Emerging Distinctive Talent Award.

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

## President Steven writes



September ushers in Spring in the Southern Hemisphere, and already blossoms and flowers are showing the resilience of surviving another winter. Theatre New

Zealand also blossoms at this time of year, as we celebrate the finals of our national Theatrefest'17. The Wellington Festival celebrated theatre in many genres, and from across the country. The workshops provided opportunities to hone theatre craftwork, and the cafes were the catalyst of many conversations.

I was humbled to be elected President of Theatre New Zealand for the second year at the AGM, and so grateful and proud of the rich heritage and support within our group. We have a positive and dynamic executive ready to listen to the concerns of the people we represent, do let us know how we can serve you.

Congratulations to all of the participants, and of course the winners of each category. The finals were well presented by our Wellington hosts, and expertly adjudicated by Jon Phelong. We were grateful to the many volunteers, audience members and supporters who created the energy and buzz of the finals weekend. We also acknowledge the International visiting team from the Gold Coast, who brought a demonstration play for our entertainment.

A special highlight for me were two forums held on Sunday morning. One was scheduled, and attended largely by adults interested in the logistics of theatre, and we opened up the floor to discussion. There was a lot to cover, including a possible re-consideration of the structure of TheatreFest levels, and a call for perhaps an investigation for some rationalisation of the cost involved. Other items of note included Health and Safety practice and policy, Copyright and advertising. All good stuff, and more will be shared as we work our way through these topics.

The second forum, which occurred quite spontaneously due to an unexpected break in the programme was attended by mostly teenagers. Here the mood was excited and jubilant, they spoke cheerily of the special times, relationships and friendships gained in touring a show, and the magical components of seeing other shows, working alongside adults, being treated with the respect offered a touring artist, and the excitement and pressure of performing under new conditions, different stages, and changing audiences. They were emphatic that the many stages of the festival were crucial and absolutely necessary.

The two forums illustrate for me the greatest of all tensions in the theatre world, and in any performing art - which is finding the balance among many competing factors. While finances and logistics must have their sway, the magic and excitement of the art must not be underestimated. What is it that we all do theatre for? There are few, if any, who come away richer financially, but almost none come away from theatre poorer in spirit.

Already we are seeking those who may be able to contribute to Theatrefest18 locally and regionally (run by Ewen Colman as National Administrator).

We will, in the coming months, as executive, consider the points raised at the forums, and discuss our next stages in growth and development to promote the absolute best we can for community theatre, because we believe in theatre - just as the plants around have realised that spring is here, and put their beautiful flowers on display.

### Welcome to New Members

A warm welcome to **Rangi Ruru Girls' School** Christchurch. Their drama teacher came to National Finals and was so enthusiastic about it that he has joined the school up ready for next year.

## Theatre New Zealand's Annual General Meeting

A well attended meeting re-elected Steven Arnold as President, Bryan Aitken as Vice President and Margaret Robertson as Secretary. David Cox becomes Treasurer. National Executive this year will consist of Lorna Ashton (Hamilton), Brian Byas (Dunedin), Scott Frater (Nelson) George Hollinsworth (Upper Hutt), Cameron Lines (Wellington) and Nik Rolls, (Auckland). Co-opted were Ewen Coleman, Festival Administrator and Mark Perry, Webmaster.

### Some of the pertinent points from President Steven's Annual Report

- 1) We are excited about the **Summer School** planned for January 2018, and we acknowledge the enormous effort by Bryan Aitken in bringing this together.
- 2) We are honoured to be hosting the winning team from **-Sunshine Coast Theatre Alliance**, at our own Finals this year. I am grateful to Ewen for setting this up.
- 3) It was pleasing to see that the phrase **Community Theatre** can replace **Amateur Production** in New Zealand productions as a requirement on publicity and performance announcements, We are grateful to Bryan again for this negotiation.
- 4) There are many opportunities opening up in 2018 and the **New Zealand Theatre Month**, September 2018 is a great initiative by Roger Hall and Malcolm Calder
- 5) We are using exclusively **ANZDA adjudicators**, and we will continue to ensure that upskilling of all parties ensures a sound understanding of expectations.

## Adult Residential Summer School 18 in Dunedin January 14 - 20

Have you enrolled yet? Closing date 1<sup>st</sup> December: [www.theatrenewzealand.co.nz](http://www.theatrenewzealand.co.nz) for all details. Note: Bryan Aitken's new email address is: [bryan.d.aitken@gmail.com](mailto:bryan.d.aitken@gmail.com)

### Obituary: Life Member Bob Cater, National President 1986 - 1988



It is with sadness we mark the passing of Bob Cater, a Theatre Federation supporter since the 70s. Bob loved theatre and he brought great skills as an administrator as well as at thinker and visionary. He could listen to a discussion and then sum up and propose a course of action with a carefully constructed motion.

He had a life-long love of learning (he had almost finished his PhD when he died) and he shared his knowledge in workshops for Wellington District Theatre Federation where he was on the committee from 1975 - 2015. He acted and directed and was able to pursue his interest in the arts in his professional life too in the Department of Internal Affairs with a responsibility for arts and culture and as Head of Arts at Whitireia Polytechnic College. His wise counsel and generous nature will be missed.



**Congratulation to all the teams that reached the National Finals:**

**Havelock North High School** *The Crucible* By Arthur Miller, an excerpt from Act II directed by Matt Bebner

**Dramatix Theatre Development Trust** *Bittersweet Love* by TJ Ramsay directed by Cameron Lines

**Pegasus from Invercargill Repertory** *All My Love Paul* directed by Gussie Johnson

**Wakatipu High School** *Can You Keep a Secret* by Winsome Pinnock directed by Kate Moetaua

**Huntington Hounds of Riverlea** *The Incident* by Leonid Andreyev directed by Robyn Chappell

**Dramatix Theatre Development Trust** *An Incident at the Border* by Keiran Lynn directed by TJ Ramsay

**St Andrews College** *Rules of Play* by Paris Porter directed by Paris Porter

**Country Players** *In the Tank* directed by Jen Amosa

And thank you to **Jon Pheloung** ANZDA for his assessment.



**Huntington Hounds of Riverlea** won the **Theatre New Zealand Book of Honour** for *The Incident* by Leonid Andryev (the team is pictured on the front page) and they also won the **Selecon Design/Technical Award**. Director Robyn Chappell with the hook clamp trophy and President Steven Arnold



**Pegasus from Invercargill Repertory** won **Best Adult Production** with *All My Love Paul* by Alan Mackay and Director Gussie Johnson is with donor Ewen Coleman.

**Best Youth Production** *Rules of Play* written and directed by Paris Porter from **St Andrews College**. Paris is with Bryan Aitken who gifted the trophy. Adjudicator Jon Pheloung is in the background



The **Denise Walsh Best Production of a New Zealand play** was won by Cameron Lines with *Bittersweet Love* by TJ Ramsay for **Dramatix Theatre Development Trust**.





# NATIONAL FINAL



TNZ Award for Best Male Actor was awarded to **Taylor Barret** as Paul in *All My Love Paul*



TNZ Award for Best Female Actor was awarded to **Brogan Campbell** as Leanne in *All My Love Paul* with Adjudicator Jon Pheloug.



Winners of the Jannat Aitchison Memorial Award for Emerging Distinctive Talent presented by the President. to **Jono Freebairn** actor in *The Incident*, **Cameron Lines**, actor in *An Incident at the Border* and director of *Bittersweet Love*. **Nic Cain** actor in *Rules of Play* was absent



Drama Development Award for Best New Director chosen at Regional Level **Paris Porter** for *Rules of Play* with Margaret Robertson secretary of DDT and Steven Arnold, TNZ President

Olga E. Harding Award for Best New Play Script as decided by playwright Dave Armstrong: **Bryan Aitken** for *Surrender to the Sky*



David Brockett Memorial Award for Backstage Achievement was given to **Alexander Southey** of Greytown Little Theatre

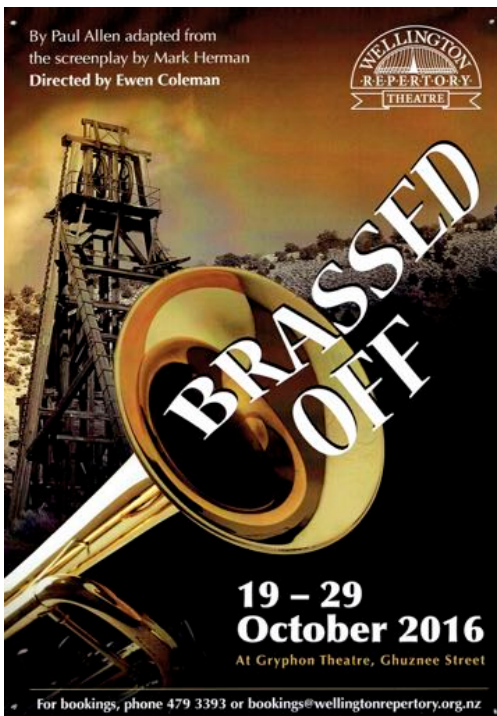


Director Richard Rubendra holds a Certificate of Appearance for his Sunshine Coast's team's extract from *Agnes of God* by John Pielmeir. At the opening ceremony, Richard presented a highly decorated Aboriginal grub stick and a woven food basket from Gubbi Gubbi elders as a gift to Rangimoana Taylor who had welcomed everyone in Maori before the Mayor opened the Festival.

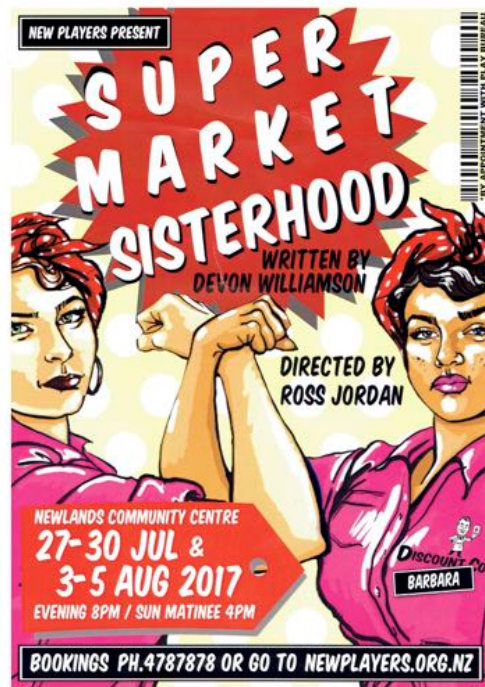


## WINNERS OF THE POSTER COMPETITION

### First Equal



Ewen Coleman designed this for his production for Wellington Repertory Theatre



Designed by Tim Gruar for New Players Theatre Company, Wellington

A very close second is this poster designed by Dan Mateer for his Feilding Little Theatre production



For the second year Steven Arnold was the National Organiser for Theatrefest. Some Statistics:

41 Entries	performed in 8 local Festivals; 8 productions from one company
Genre	Drama 70%, Comedy 46% (Can be in more than one category)
Duration	almost half under 20 minutes = new ruling has supported shorter entries, one third at 30 - 50 minutes.
New Director? Yes 58.5%	NZ play? Yes 36.6%
	Youth? Yes 51.2%

## What's On in October and November 2017

Dargaville Little Theatre	<i>'Twas the Fight before Christmas</i> by Devon Williamson	November 10 - 25
Howick Little Theatre	<i>Lock Down</i> by Nik Rolls <i>Book Ends</i> by Roger Hall	October 4 - 7 Nov 11 - Dec 2
Te Aroha Dramatic Soc.	<i>Remain in Light</i> by Stephen Sinclair	Oct 26 - Nov 4
Waihi Drama Society	<i>Fifties + Fabulous</i> by Sharon Butterworth	November 2 - 12
Katikati Theatre	<i>Tales from the Lockup</i>	to October 5
16th Ave Theatre, Tauranga	<i>Season's Greetings</i> by Alan Ayckbourn	Nov 22 - Dec 9
Detour Theatre, Tauranga	<i>Exit Laughing</i> by Paul Elliott	Nov 15 - Dec 2
Te Puke Repertory	<i>Snow White Pantomime</i> by Ben Crocker	November 15- 26
Hamilton Playbox	<i>Noises Off</i> by Michael Frayn	to October 14
Putaruru Theatre Players	<i>Murder on the Orient Express</i> by Agatha Christie	November 8 - 18
Rotorua Little Theatre	<i>Kindly Leave the Stage</i> by John Chapman	November 8 - 18
Centre Stage, Taupo	<i>Nell Gwynn</i> by Jessica Swale	October 18 - 28
Tokoroa Little Theatre	<i>Let's Party</i> (song and dance of 60s/70s)	Nov 30 - Dec 9
Gisborne Unity Theatre	<i>The Bach</i> by Stephen Sinclair	Nov 24 - Dec 1
Napier Repertory Players	<i>Snow White and the Seven Drag Queens</i> by Jonathan Smith R16	November 8 - 18
	AUDITION <i>The Ghost Train</i> by Arnold Ridley	November 19
Dannevirke Theatre	<i>Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Jersey Lily</i> by Katie Forgette	to October 7
Pahiatua Repertory Soc.	<i>Jekyll and Hyde, the Musical</i> by Frank Wildhorn & Steve Cuden	Nov 16 - Dec 2
Harlequin Theatre Masterton	<i>Kitchen Witches</i> by Caroline Smith	to October 7
Greytown Little Theatre	<i>Book Ends</i> by Roger Hall	Nov 22 - Dec 2
Performing Arts Tauramanui	<i>Heaven Help Us!</i> By Tim Hambleton	late November
New Plymouth Repertory	<i>Sleeping Beauty</i> adapted by Les Emslie	November 14 - 25
Cue Theatre, Inglewood	<i>Plaza Suite</i> by Neil Simon	November 1 - 11
Hawera Repertory Soc.	<i>Bombshells</i> by Joanne Murray-Smith	November 4 - 19
Foxton Little Theatre	<i>Ghost Writer</i> by David Tristram	Nov 17 - Dec 2
Levin Little Theatre	<i>Trouble in Pantoland</i> by Sharon Hulm	November 9 - 25
Kapiti Playhouse	<i>I'll be Back Before Midnight</i> by Peter Colley	November 15 - 25
Mana Little Theatre	<i>Bums on Seats</i> by Michael Snelgrove	November 19 - 25
Porirua Little Theatre	<i>Jack and the Beanstalk</i> by Amanda Stone <i>Rock of Ages</i> book by Chris D'Arienzo	October 10 - 13 Nov 18- Dec 2
Khandallah Arts Theatre	<i>August: Osage County</i> by Tracy Letts	October 12 - 21
Stagecraft Theatre	<i>Mr Foote's Other Leg</i> by Ian Kelly	November 1 - 11
Hutt Repertory	<i>A Kick in the Baubles</i> by Gordon Steele	Nov 29 - Dec 9
Nelson Youth Theatre	<i>Disney's Little Mermaid JR</i>	October 1 - 7
Marlborough Repertory	<i>Stones in His Pockets</i> by Marie Jones	November 8 - 18
Elmwood Players	<i>Heaven Help Us!</i> by Tim Hambleton	October 4 - 14
Canterbury Repertory	<i>Arsenic and Old Lace</i> by Joseph Kesselring	Nov 22 - Dec 2
South Canterbury Drama League	Timaru, <i>Mum's Choir</i> by Alison Quigan	October 6 - 13
	Mill Theatre <i>A Kiwi Comedy, Variety</i>	November 5- 25
Globe Theatre, Dunedin	<i>1917 Until the Day Dawns</i> by Keith Scott	October 5 - 14
Invercargill Repertory	<i>Calendar Girls</i> by Tim Firth	October 16 - 28

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





## NZ Theatre Month

Before the TheatreFest Awards Ceremony in Wellington Roger Hall launched his campaign to celebrate and elevate New Zealand Theatre in September 2018. He said that research has shown that attendance at theatre is higher than that of

any sport apart from Rugby Union yet media attention is dwindling. It does not make the news on radio or TV, let alone a museum display.

Yet, he said, our theatre history goes back to 1848 when the first New Zealand play *Marcelina* by James Marriott was written and performed. In 1862 two theatres were built in Dunedin. *The Land of the Moa* toured the country in 1898. In the 1930's NZer Merton Hodge's *The Wind and the Rain* ran in the West End for more than two years and the NZ branch of the British Drama League was founded and is still here today in the shape of Theatre New Zealand. In 1952 the New Zealand Players a professional company was established and toured the country till 1960. Then in 1964 Downstage was founded and along came all the other professional theatres. And professional companies brought NZ playwrights to the fore leading in 1973 to the establishment of Playmarket, the agent for playwrights. Roger's own play *Middle-Age Spread* ran for 15 months in the West End in 1979. In less than 20 years, we went from being slightly apologetic about putting on a local work to being proud of it. And audiences were the same: they went from avoiding New Zealand plays to seeking them out.

Roger summed up September 2018 as a chance for theatres, drama groups and teachers, libraries and museums to celebrate our theatre history with displays and open days as well as actual performances of NZ Plays, of which there are 3000 to choose from. [Here is a link to the NZ Theatre Month promo.](#)



Editor Margaret Robertson  
Technical Assistance Morris Robertson

**Deadline for December/January Backchat 20 November 2017**

Theatre New Zealand communications to [info@theatrenz.co.nz](mailto:info@theatrenz.co.nz)  
or PO Box 14041 Panmure, Auckland 1741