

# Backchat

News from The New Zealand Theatre Federation Inc



May 2012 Volume 35 Issue 3

## In The Spotlight...

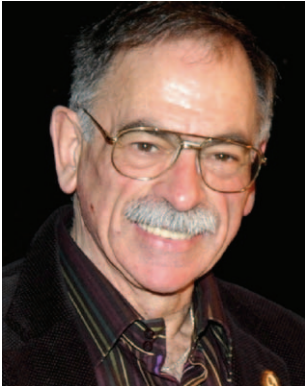
President	2
Notices	2
Wanganui Repertory	3
Papakura Theatre Company	3
Bryan Aitken	4
Youth Drama Classes	4
Radio Drama	5
Margaret Robertson	5
Playmarket Scripts	6
What's On June/July	7
Drama Development Trust	7
Advertisement	8



Wanganui Repertory Theatre's December '11 production of *Bliethe Spirit* by Noel Coward starred Kerry Girdwood as Madame Arcati and Andrew Fawcett as Charles Condomine. See page 3 for more about Wanganui Repertory Theatre.



## President



Now is the time for groups to be finalising their plans to enter the Festival of Community Theatre. With the availability of a travel subsidy for South Island teams to get to the National Final and the fact that we have an overseas adjudicator, Larry McCluskey from Ireland, hopefully we are going to

see an increase in entries for this year's Festival.

As stated in the information sheet about Festivals, although they are competitive, winning is by no means the sole purpose of entering. Festivals are an opportunity to observe and meet with one's peers and to learn through performance and from the adjudication process. Festivals are also an excellent way for new directors to "have a go" and get positive feedback on their work and for groups to try out new and different plays.

We are fortunate that while the overseas adjudicator Larry McCluskey is here, he will be running masterclasses for actors in Christchurch, 8/9 September and Wellington, 22/23 September. Details of course content, cost etc to come but note these dates in your diaries. There is also the possibility that he may be able to visit other areas to give talks but more on that later.

Plays entered in the Olga E Harding New NZ Playwriting Award are now also eligible for Playmarket's Adam NZ Play award so there is great incentive for writers to get their plays performed in a Festival.

We also hope that the National Final Weekend and Conference on 14/15 September in Hastings has been entered in everyone's diary and that many of you will be making plans to head over to sunny Hawkes Bay for what promises to be a great weekend of theatre.

I will be attending a number of Festivals over the next few months so it will be good to catch up with many of you involved in NZTF and see just what exciting theatre is being produced around the country.

*Ewen D Coleman*  
*National President*

## Notices

A very warm welcome to **new members** Drama Christi of Wellington, Columba College Dunedin, James Hargest College Invercargill, St John Paul College Rotorua West and Jocelyn McQuad of Mt Roskill, Auckland.

.....  
Thank you to those who have already paid their **subscriptions**. We look forward to receiving everyone else's very soon: groups \$100 and individuals \$40. Remember that entry in the Festival of Community Theatre, closing date of which is June 30th, is for members only.

.....  
Note that there is a **venue change** for the Lower South Island Regional 31 August - 1 September. It is now Repertory House, Invercargill. Refer to website for information on all local, regional and national final venues and dates. Or refer back to April Backchat.

.....  
Enclosed with this Backchat is a **poster** about the National Final weekend 14 /15 September in Hastings. Please put it on your noticeboard.

.....  
Calling all actors and directors; dates for your diaries. Larry McCluskey international adjudicator and trainer is taking **masterclasses** before and after the National Final. September 8/9 his class will be in Christchurch. Sept. 22/23 his class will be at Toi Whakaari, Newtown Wellington. Register your interest now at [info@theatrenewzealand.co.nz](mailto:info@theatrenewzealand.co.nz) There will be more details in the July issue.

.....  
One more preliminary notice: there's to be a **poster competition** at the National Final weekend. It's 2 years since our last competition so gather up the posters you are most proud of since then and maybe one of them will be judged the best in the country. All the posters will be displayed in the Lindisfarne Performing Arts Centre foyer. More details in July issue.

.....  
Finally it's time to be thinking of who deserves a **Meritorious Service Award**. Do you have someone in your group who has actively contributed for at least 25 years, onstage, backstage, front of house or administratively? A nomination form is attached/ enclosed to fill in and return by 1st August.

## Wanganui Repertory Theatre Profile

### Material supplied by Mark Rayner

Wanganui Repertory is 79 this year and it's thrilled to be going from strength to strength with an ongoing commitment to producing a diverse range of quality stage productions.

Having been happily ensconced in what was formerly the public library building in Ridgway Street since its inception in 1933, this long-standing amateur theatre company is extremely fortunate to have such a beautiful heritage building as its home and a strong team of dedicated supporters to ensure its continuing success. Such longevity brings further rewards with the theatre accruing over the years a magnificent collection of period costumes and clothing.

With a comfortable auditorium seating 120 and spacious stage and backstage area, the intimate theatre has played host to a number of in-house productions over the last year including *Abigail's Party* (Mike Leigh), *Habeas Corpus* (Alan Bennett), and *Blithe Spirit* (Noel Coward) and to coincide with the most recent Whanganui Literary Festival in September 2011, it staged a workshop presentation of *The Stars Go Down* by local writer Joan Rosier-Jones.



Its most recent production *Are You Being Served?* by Jeremy Lloyd and David Croft, staged in March 2012, broke all box office records, with most of the eight performances selling out in advance and its upcoming production of Alan Ayckbourn's *Absurd Person Singular* in August hopes to do the same.

As well as hosting Repertory's own shows, the theatre has also welcomed a number of national touring productions and one-off events from book launches, Community Education classes and an evening of one-act plays by local High School students. Happily, it's also now home to the Tall Poppies children's drama group, ensuring a new generation of theatre lovers for the future.

## Papakura Theatre Company Needs Help



### Material amended from an article in the Papakura Courier written by Lara Wyatt

Award winning Papakura Theatre Company has entertained its district for 58 years but a lack of funds could stop it in its tracks. President Barbara Hieatt is worried about the theatre's future.

"I wouldn't call us comfortable. We are holding our own but we are slowly eating into our emergency

fund", she says. "If we have to keep doing that, there will be no theatre club".

Mrs Hieatt says the theatre provides many opportunities for the community to be involved and it prides itself on its family friendly environment. "We have other theatre groups wanting to borrow our stage crew and set designer. We always make sure they know that they are on an elastic band and we want them back".

The company needs \$20,00 a year to keep running at the Off Broadway Theatre. That figure includes power, rubbish, water and cleaning costs. More people are needed to support their shows but there is stiff competition for the discretionary dollar with their close proximity to Auckland. A small profit was made on their April production of *Footrot Flats* and it is reported that the audiences loved it; "gales of laughter" resounded around the theatre.

# Another Member of National Executive

## Bryan Aitken, Vice President



Bryan has over 50 years experience in the theatre. A former Associate Artistic Director and original company member of The Court Theatre, Christchurch, he has worked as an actor or director for most of New Zealand's major Theatre Companies.

He has been awarded a QEII Arts Council

Major Travel Grant, a Trustbank Arts Excellence Award, and The 1990 Commemoration Medal for his work with youth and has a national youth award named after him that is presented at the National Final of the Festival of Community Theatre to the Best Youth Production.

Bryan's career includes being a radio drama director/dramaturg for the NZBC, Artistic Director of The Arts Employment Scheme, Christchurch, Artistic Director of the RoadShow Trust, and Course Director for the Diploma in Performing Arts, Nelson Polytechnic. He has been a guest Lecturer & Tutor at Western Australia Academy of Performing Arts in Perth (WAAPA), and the National Academy of Singing and Dramatic Art in Christchurch (NASDA).

Bryan is also recognized as one of the country's top Drama Adjudicators. He was recently appointed an Associate of The Court, an honorary position recognizing his length of service.

He's just directed *The Sound of Music* in Queenstown, surrounded by snowcapped alps and pine trees, an idyllic scenic backdrop, and is in pre-production for several productions through 2013.

Bryan enjoys gardening and reading novels when he has time.

## Youth Theatre

*A taste from around the country of what is being done to encourage younger members*

**Nelson Repertory** started a drama club for youngsters last term charging \$25 for an after school singing/ theatre skills activities group. Children have focused on developing skills for live performance in a fun, positive and encouraging environment. This term the class is in recess because all the students are involved with the society's pantomime *Little Red Riding Hood* in June. Details in What's On

**Kapiti Playhouse** believes that Youth Drama classes are an important tool to encourage local teenagers to become active members of their society in the future.

For \$60 a term 13 - 18 year olds learn all aspects of stage work, both on the stage and backstage acquiring confidence and self esteem under the guidance of professional dedicated and enthusiastic tutors. There are also guest speakers providing workshops for specific skills.

At the end of each year the students put on a Revue

Show made up of skits and monologues showing the skills they've learnt, and reflecting the hard work that they've put in.

**Young Unity Gisborne** Six dedicated tutors provide tuition in play reading and acting and stagecraft for young people. Classes run weekly from about the middle of March to the middle of August and cater for four age groups. This year 7-9 year olds will work towards a performance of *The Jungle Book* and *Cinderella*, 10 - 11years will work on *Porky Pies*, a play about what happens behind the scenes in fairy tales, 12 - 13 years will work on a Sherlock Holmes *Murder on the Casba* and 14 + year olds will concentrate on *The Tempest*, all for performance in August.

**Te Puke Repertory** Children who attend 'Stars on Stage' to learn the craft at the Litt Theatre from a Te Puke Rep member are involved in Repertory pantomimes eg *Cinderella* and *Little Red Riding Hood*.

## Limelight Launches Radio Drama

*Lynn Bushell - Vice President  
of Limelight Theatre Company,  
Carterton writes*

We wanted to involve our senior members more in theatre but found over many conversations similar reasons for disengagement persisted.

“We want to still be involved but we don’t want to drive at night; we don’t like going out in the cold weather; we don’t remember lines as easily anymore; if only we could rehearse during the day.”

Engaging this sector was definitely posing challenges. That was until I was introduced to radio drama through a Massey University script writing course and was involved in a live radio interview on community Access Radio station - Arrow FM. It was a light bulb moment – what about radio drama? – it ticks all the boxes.

Michael Wilson, Arrow FM Station Manager agreed to provide the professional training for our sound engineer and cast and Limelight’s Management Committee seeing this proposal as an opportunity to invest in the skills of our membership, agreed to foot the bill - our first radio drama production - Dylan Thomas’s *Under Milk Wood* had sprouted wings.

Auditions were amazing - over twenty people turned up. 75% had never worked with Limelight before and although the majority were 60+ the age range went down to mid 20’s. We were able to cast and we will be recording four sessions for broadcast in July.

Feedback from the cast has been positive with many being grateful for an opportunity to be involved in theatre once more and in some cases, for the first time. Already there is talk of the next production. An unexpected spin off has been the interest generated within our entire membership who are intrigued by something different and we expect that turnout for the next auditions will be even bigger.

I would recommend to any club looking for new ways to engage or increase their membership that they consider radio drama. It’s not often clubs can increase membership, reach a wider audience and have fun at the same time for very modest expenditure. Win, win all round.

## Profiling National Executive continues

*A penultimate introduction*

*Margaret Robertson,  
Secretary/Editor*



Margaret got hooked on theatre when given the part of Nora in *The Doll’s House* to read in class at school. She joined her local drama club after university and has been a committee member ever since. After an apprenticeship of thirteen years as secretary she was president for the next 13 and has enjoyed

many other roles, acting and directing included.

In the early 80s Margaret joined the Standing Committee of NZTF and spent every Friday in the Cuba St library amongst the scripts. When the library was moved to Christchurch in 1991 she moved onto the Wellington District Committee and has been its secretary ever since. She also continued her involvement with the national body, travelling to Christchurch as part of the National Executive.

Margaret has now been editor of Backchat for over ten years and as of last year when the new constitution was adopted is officially Secretary of The New Zealand Theatre Federation. Inc. These roles give her a chance to communicate with a large number of like-minded people who all enjoy working in a team towards a goal.

In 2010 it was a great honour for Margaret to be awarded a QSM for Services to Amateur Theatre and the Community. Her community involvement is with several organisations either weekly, fortnightly or monthly. She also delights in making regular time for her three young grandchildren who live close by.

### *Honest To God* By Philip Braithwaite

(2 W, 3M playing >42 roles; casting flexible)

In 1965, Lloyd Geering was principal of Knox Theological College in Dunedin. That year he published an article which led to a storm of controversy. Geering was put on trial for heresy.

Lloyd Geering's trial galvanised the public, and divided opinion. For the first time in New Zealand, the debates about 'Man's relationship to God' were brought sharply into the public forum. This is a dramatic version of Geering's life, from his early years to the trial and its culmination as a story as relevant today as it was at the time.

### *The Motor Camp* By Dave Armstrong (3w 3m)

(North Island amateur licence not available till August 2013)

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. *The Motor Camp* is a glorious celebration of our annual Kiwi camping rituals.

### *Miss Information* By Neil Troost (3w 3m)

An increasingly farcical comedy about childhood friends Larry, Tina and Rob, who now meet socially in a coffee house in the city.

Larry can't remember the name of the girl he's started dating - Sandra. While Larry, Tina and Rob try to find out Sandra's name a series of escalating misunderstandings produce the belief that Rob has been sowing his wild oats a bit too close to home. Meanwhile Larry's parents, while trying to make Rob honour his newfound responsibilities, question Larry's sexuality and the relationship he has with Sandra - as no one seems to know her name! Misinformation abounds.

### *A Shortcut To Happiness*

By Roger Hall (5w 3m)

Premiere at Fortune Theatre November 2011. Hall's premise for bringing a disparate group of mostly senior people together is international folk dancing classes, run in a bland church hall by Natasha, a Russian immigrant who also cleans houses but is desperate for conversation in order to improve her English so she can pass the language exam that will allow her to teach music, which is her greatest love. As with most romantic comedies, characters are destined for each other at the outset; but the road still has bumps in it!

### *Share The Dream*

By Dean Parker (2w 6m)

An extremely relevant theme - Bosco and Selena find love on the assembly line at South Seas Whiteware, only to be bitterly parted by the demands of the market. Very entertaining and thoughtful exploration of union/management practices set in a clothes drier factory.

### *Mike & Virginia*

By Kathryn Burnett and Nick Ward (3w 2m)

Mike and Virginia. Both single. Both competitive. Both lecturers in film studies. Her specialty is romantic comedy, his is monster movies. She thinks he's an arrogant knuckle-dragger, he thinks she's a bitter cow. The very worst thing they could do is fall in love. So begins this fast-moving romp of a play - a love story that is smart, funny and surprisingly tender. An evening of unabashed entertainment for lovers and cynics alike.

### *On The Upside Down of the World*

By Arthur Meek (1-3W)

An adventure story about a colonial wife, crippled by the habits of civilisation, who fosters a barbarian boy and awakes her inner savage. It's about the birth of the Pakeha, a person whose strength, wisdom and humour come from having exotic origins that take root and flourish in New Zealand; so much so that you can't imagine them existing anywhere else. Epic visual imagery and theatrical poetry wrapped in a heartbreaking story about falling in love despite your best intentions.

### *The Seven Funerals of Charlie Morris* By Chris Neels (1w 2m)

Charlie is young. Charlie is bored. Charlie is dying. After discovering that he has had a previously undetected, yet terminal illness, Charlie accepts his fate and decides to plan his own funeral. With help of his best friend Pete and a girl he met on the bus, Charlie embarks on an exploration of rites and passages from around the world in an attempt to plan a memorable 'final party'.

### *Checkout Chicks*

By Rachel Callinan & Julia Truscott (3w 2m)

A fast paced, high-energy musical comedy that celebrates loving your job. It looks at the themes of choices, success, and the pressure that high school leavers are under to choose the 'right' career. It works to dispel the 'stigma' that surrounds being a 'checkout chick'.

### *A Law Unto Themselves*

By Tim Hambleton (4w 11m)

A small town New Zealand law firm with incompetent lawyers is the subject of a takeover by a larger more modern firm. Financial troubles for one of the lawyers leads to an innovative solution and an unrequited love story mean things change in the office forever. By the writer of the very popular 'Heaven Help Us'.

# What's On June / July

• Titirangi Theatre	<i>Merchant of Venice</i> by William Shakespeare	June 5 - 16
• Howick Little Theatre	<i>As You Like It</i> by William Shakespeare	May 12 - June 2
• Waihi Drama Society	<i>Entertaining Angels</i> by Richard Everett	July 14 - August 4
• Detour Theatre	<i>Nana's Naughty Knickers</i> by Katherine DiSavino	June 7 - 23
• Tauranga Repertory	Tauranga: <i>Fawlty Towers 2</i> by John Cleese, Connie Booth	June 13 - 30
• Te Puke Repertory Theatre	<i>Around the World in 80 Days</i> by Mark Brown	June 6 - 23
• Gisborne Unity Theatre	<i>Scarlet Women</i> by Jan Beets	July 18 - 28
• Rotorua Little Theatre	<i>Heaven Help Us</i> by Tim Hambleton	July 4 - 14
• Hamilton Playbox	<i>Blackadder 2 - The Tudor Years</i> by Richard Curtis, Rowan Atkinson, Ben Elton & John Lloyd	June 13 - 23
• On-Stage Te Kuiti	One-Act Plays at Shambles Theatre	June 7 - 9
• New Plymouth Repertory	<i>Dad's Army</i> by Jimmy Perry and David Croft	June 9 - 30
• New Plymouth Little Theatre	<i>Death and Taxes</i> by April Philips	July 11 - 14
• Cue Theatre	<i>Don't Start Without Me</i> by Joyce Rayburn	June 5 - 16
• Hawera Rep Society	<i>The Weir</i> by Conor McPherson	July 11 - 21
• FAHS Feilding	Inglewood AUDITION: <i>Entertaining Angels</i> by Richard Everett	June 17 @ 11am
• Mana Little Theatre	<i>Dirty Dusting</i> by Ed Waugh & Trevor Wood	June 20 - 30
• Porirua Little Theatre	<i>Coaltown Blues</i> by Mervyn Thompson, extracts	June 19 - 20
• Stagecraft Theatre	<i>The River</i> by Angie Farrow, extracts	June 26 - 27
• Wellington Repertory	<i>Humble Boy</i> by Charlotte Jones	June 20 - 30
• Hutt Repertory Theatre	<i>The Producers</i> by Mel Brooks	June 7 - 30
• Heretaunga Players	<i>Ladies for Hire</i> by Alison Quigan	May 30 - June 9
• Butterfly Creek Theatre	<i>Private Lives</i> by Noel Coward	June 20 - 30
• Nelson Repertory	<i>An Ideal Husband</i> by Oscar Wilde	July 4 - 14
• Marlborough Repertory Society	AUDITION: <i>Hot Water</i> by Roger Hall	July 25 @ 7.30pm
• Elmwood Players	<i>For the Good of the Family</i> by George Douglas Lee	July 25 - August 4
• South Canterbury Drama League	<i>John Gabriel Borkman</i> by Ibsen	July 19 - 28
• Fiordland Players	<i>Red Riding Hood and the Three Pigs</i> by Chris Lane	June 29 - July 7
	<i>Lost in Yonkers</i> by Neil Simon	June 13 - 23
	<i>Habeas Corpus</i> by Alan Bennett	June 13 - 23
	<i>Triple Treat</i> short play season	July 26 - August 4
	Mill Theatre: <i>I'm Sorry, The Bridge Is Out, You'll Have To Spend The Night</i> by Bob Pickett & Sheldon Allman	June 21 - 30
	4 One-Act Plays	July 5 - 7

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

## Drama Development Trust

Grants are available from the Drama Development Trust to theatre groups affiliated to NZTF for their encouragement and support.

Applications can be made for a group activity, an individual scholarship or capital funding.

Send for details [margaretr@vodafone.co.nz](mailto:margaretr@vodafone.co.nz)

or

Drama Development Trust  
PO Box 22 249  
Wellington 6441

## Why English is Hard to Learn

*Thanks to Kapiti Playhouse*

1. The bandage was wound around the wound.
2. The farm was used to produce produce.
3. The dump was so full it had to refuse refuse.
4. He could lead if he could get the lead out.
5. When shot at the dove dove into the bushes.
6. I did not object to the object.
7. Since there is no time like the present he decided to present the present.
8. The soldier decided to desert his dessert in the desert.
9. We must polish the Polish furniture.

# Latest Releases from Devon Williamson



*"Hit New Zealand Comedy!"*

## How To Train Your Husband

**Cast:** 5 Female / 2 Male

**Length:** Two Acts (120 minutes)

**Genre:** Comedy

This madcap comedy addresses an issue close to every woman's heart –how to train your husband! Sound impossible? Not when you have a legendary Husband Trainer living right next door. The play follows the adventures of three generations of the Smith family as they attempt to turn their men into fully trained members of the opposite sex. Nothing quite goes according to plan and the result is a hilarious comedy with plenty of unexpected twists and turns.

## The Old People Are Revolting!

**Cast:** 5 Female / 2 Male

**Length:** Two Acts (120 minutes)

**Genre:** Comedy

"The Old People Are Revolting!" the new hit comedy about seniors seeking revenge! The residents of the Sunshine Retirement Village have had enough: they're revolting! Fed up with being ignored, and relegated to the sidelines of life they've decided to prove to the world just how dangerous seniors can be! Bursting with eccentric characters, and crazy shenanigans this show is now available after a sell out premiere season in Tauranga .



**Perusal scripts available at: The Play Bureau**

**Phone: 06 757-3103**

**E Mail: [play.bureau.nz@xtra.co.nz](mailto:play.bureau.nz@xtra.co.nz)**



Editor: Margaret Robertson

Designer: Jade Gillies

Deadline for next issue of Backchat

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