

News from Theatre New Zealand

BACKCHAT

Te Pūtoi Whakaari o Aotearoa

Vol. 45 - Issue 1



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Kia Ora Tātau

Resilience. That word has been used so much over the past two years. But here we go again.

The Theatre New Zealand National Executive were meeting in Wellington, the weekend our Covid Traffic Light System changed to Red. There we were when, having created Task Forces to propose and assess new ways forward, future-proofing our organisation, critiquing our website/data bases, TheatreFest management, wrestling with on-site word usage and inclusivity – when we were sent another curve-ball.

The exciting year of activity we, and you were planning, was yet again thrown into confusion. “At least it’s not a lock-down” I heard someone say. Maybe. But the corollary effect of it all, impacts badly on house sizes, budgets, programming and simply getting together as human beings, as is our wont.

Resilience. The new buzz-word of 2022.

Some of our friends in MTNZ staging large-cast large-budget musicals, in auditoria of upwards of 1000, have perhaps greater pain than those of us who were planning and six-cast gentle comedy in a Playhouse of 50. But it’s still relevant. Everyone suffers, somehow. The entire community.

Having been thwarted in the planning for our 2020 Celebrations, and again in our 2020+1 programming for last year, we sit and ponder.

But we won’t stop the preparation for 2022.

It may all be a little different than planned. It may take on a different shape.

But we will continue to prepare the projects set out. Because we are – Resilient.

This too shall pass.

Draw strength from each other.

Kia Kaha.
Bryan Aitken
National President

Our Patrons

Rawiri Paratene
CNZM



Jennifer Te Atamira
Ward-Lealand CNZM



1975 pic of our Co-Patron Rawiri Paratene at The Mercury Theatre, Auckland, not long out of graduating from NZ Drama School, Toi Whakaari.



LEFT: *The Mouse Man* by James McNeish. Mercury Theatre, 1975. L. to R.: Ross Duncan, Rawiri Paratene, Jan Bashford.

MERIT AND NEW YEAR HONOURS

We congratulate **Chris and Mary Collie-Holmes** for their service to community theatre for over 35 years. Their focus has mainly been Khandallah Arts Theatre, Wellington (read about KAT Theatre rebranding in this issue) but at times Mary has used her directing skills elsewhere and Chris has shared his technical expertise with other groups including the Theatre NZ National Final of TheatreFest many times over. Between them they have covered the whole range of what it takes to run an organisation that produces theatre from publicity to set construction. Currently Mary is President of KAT and Chris is Treasurer.

WDTF (Wellington District Theatre Federation) members acknowledged the couple's magnificent contribution at their annual Christmas gathering. They are each pictured with Margaret Robertson, TNZ secretary.



Margaret Robertson Chris Collie-Holmes



Margaret Robertson Mary Collie-Holmes

2022 New Year's Honours

Congratulations to patron **Rawiri Paratene** on his elevation to Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit CNZM in recognition of his advocacy for the use of Te Reo and the part he played in the Nga Tamatoa movement campaigning for the teaching of Māori in schools.

Congratulations too to Canterbury Repertory's **Brenda Hayes QSM** for services to theatre – you've seen her pictured looking for a prop on the front page of the June/ July Backchat last year.

John Cocking QSM another theatre practitioner was featured in the 2014 October/November Backchat when he won awards as an actor and playwright for Snap Time, a one act play produced by Napier Repertory Players. Twenty seven years before that he'd won NZTF's Shell Play writing Award for best New Zealand play with Maillot Jaune. John's contribution to Napier's annual Art Deco Festival has covered 20 years and was also acknowledged in his award. Congratulations to him.

ON THE BOARDS



Butterfly Creek Theatre Troupe's upcoming production of A Midsummer Night's Dream will be enhanced by Merilyn Moonen playing live. A teacher of many instruments including piano, recorder and violin, Merilyn has written a special score for the play using a variety of instruments - a medieval-style hurdy-gurdy, a rinkelboom percussion instrument, recorders, an orcari-na, shakers and drums. And she is supporting the actors by being at most, if not all of the rehearsals! She is a veritable one-woman orchestra and will do much to contribute to the magic of this special production. Performances February 24-26; March 3-5.

WDTF (Wellington District Theatre Federation) has already held a successful Stage Fighting and Sword Play workshop and have a 24 hour Play Challenge coming up 11/12 February that is attracting a lot of attention.

KAT Theatre The Sleeping Beauty Who Didn't gives a new spin to an old tale. The cast were involved in creating the script and here the incompetent Fairy, Cinnamon Machin wants to burn the ancient bit of bark and say magic bibbety bobbety words to make something happen but Princess Vicki Wolfe, recognises that there are instruction on it on how to leave the castle. A play in the park production over two weekends February 12- 20. KAT have been producing plays for children since the new millennium and their dedication to enabling the young to perform was recognised with a special award at last year's WDTF Christmas gathering.



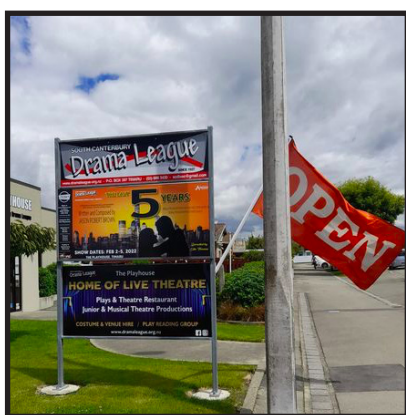
Stagecraft Theatre are going to run two free workshops on lighting and sound.

Masterton Theatre Company's Youth Group will start again 11 February and this term they're creating and learning through devised theatre and have big plans for a soulful drama mid-year as well as working on their entry for TheatreFest.



Further North Evolution Theatre, Gisborne have just finished East Coast Scribes, a staged reading of 5 new short plays, all successful entrants in their playwriting competition. This picture is from Rabbit Warns Gannet by Rex McGregor. Rabbit Julie McPhail, Gannet Matthew Hattten, Director Paula Hatten

In Tauranga **16th Ave Theatre** has just had a sell-out season of Twelve Angry Men by Reginald Rose. This theatre has been offering quality theatre since 1936 and has had its own purpose built theatre since 1954



In the South Island **South Canterbury Drama League** are open for business, see photo of eye-catching signage.

They're presenting The Last 5 Years by Jason Robert Brown (Feb 2 - 5). An emotionally powerful and intimate musical about two New Yorkers in their twenties who fall in and out of love over the course of five years, the show's unconventional structure consists of Cathy, the woman, telling her story backwards while Jamie, the man, tells his story chronologically; the two characters only meet once, at their wedding in the middle of the show.



PLAYMARKET SCRIPTS

Did you know that, by subscribing to Playmarket for \$40/year, you can download single copies of unpublished scripts directly from our website at any time? Become a member now at www.playmarket.org.nz/membership.

NEW NZ PLAYS (WELLINGTON THEATRE AWARDS)

Another Mammal by Jo Randerson (8-12 any)

Two characters, Y and Z, attempt to mend their relationship: one of them has a gun. Their duel quickly escalates from a tense standoff to a wild ride of unpredictable twists and turns, propelling us into the realms of the mythical and the absurd. Another Mammal investigates the persistence of violence as a default problem-solver. Can we humans find ways to live together with autonomy, dignity, and humanity? Why can't we all just get along?

White Men by Abby Howells (5w)

Five men (all played by women) are sitting on the top of a mountain. The sea laps at their feet. The rising tide has engulfed the whole world and only the most privileged remain. Soon the sea will envelop them, if they do not figure out a plan.

Lockdown La Ronde by Victor Rodger (4 w, 5m, 1trans)

Inspired by an 1897 German play, Lockdown La Ronde is a distinctly contemporary tale of ten LGBTQIA+ twenty-somethings as they connect—or at least try to—during lockdown. From a horny fitness instructor in Brazil to a gay chat room hustler in Wellington, the only things not on lockdown are their desires. Sexually explicit.

PLAYS BY NATHAN JOE; 2021 BRUCE MASON PLAYWRITING AWARD WINNER

Like Sex (4w, 3m)

Samantha wants to bang Ben, Ben is in love with Mandy, Mandy is dating James, James is flirting with Natalie, Natalie confides in Lisa, and Lisa is using Gary. In a series of episodic scenes, Like Sex captures the awkward, hormonal and selfish nature of teenage relationships in a real and honest way, with the characters revealing their lusty desires through the 'joys' of humanity's favourite taboo. A play for anyone who has ever been young, horny and confused.

Hippolytus Veiled or: Eros, Beware! (3w, 2m)

Love, lust and lies. Nobody did it better than the Greeks. When Phaedra, Queen of Athens, falls madly and desperately in love with her stepson Hippolytus, tragedy is inevitable. Nathan Joe takes Euripides' scandalous lost play and reimagines issues of consent and culpability for modern audiences. Winner of the 2015 Playmarket Playwrights b4 25 Award.

PLAYMARKET SCRIPTS

IMMINENT ELECTION PLAYS

The Surprise Party by Dave Armstrong (3m, 3w)

A satire about a small extreme left wing party that somehow manages to win a general election and is able to rule by itself, and thus enacts extreme left wing policies, which all seem disastrous to the rather ineffectual leader until magically they all start working brilliantly.

Fitz Bunny: Lust For Glory by Grant Buist (12w, 13m)

Shorter than Maui, pinker than Sir Edmund Hillary. Exponentially fiercer than Katherine Mansfield. The inspirational story of rock star Fitz Bunny, New Zealand's first rabbit Prime Minister (or mayor). A rousing tale of Bolshevik sheep, global thermonuclear war, and four-part harmony singing.

The Fifty Percent Party by Helen Varley Jamieson (4-28 w)

The year is 2018, the 125th anniversary of women's suffrage in Aotearoa. Three teenage girls are working on a school project about democracy which includes mock elections. They decide to create a women's party, called The Fifty Percent Party, with the mission of equality. As the girls develop policies and prepare their campaign they explore a range of contemporary issues, deal with the anti-feminist backlash and negotiate the fluctuating dynamics of group relationships. A series of historical figures from the Suffrage Movement and women Members of Parliament appear to offer guidance, context and humour.

ONE ACT WONDERS

A Lovely Day for a Boating Trip (and to kill your spouse) by Lindsey Brown (1w, 1m)

The open water, a small row boat and a marriage on the brink. Just how far would you trust your spouse?

Fold by Jo Randerson (3w, 4m)

The Whites have a birthday party for Karen, but the whole thing degenerates as the play progresses. A macabre black comedy of social manners amongst the white, middle class. This play is also a clever and very visual piece that would appeal to senior high school students.

2b or nt 2b by Sarah Delahunty (5w, 1m)

2 b or nt 2 b is a contemporary humorous take on characters from Shakespeare's Hamlet and Midsummer Night's Dream, Chekhov's Three Sisters and The Seagull, Sophocles' Antigone and Ibsen's Hedda Gabler. Hamlet and Antigone have dysfunctional families, Helena and Masha moon over unattainable boys and Irena and Hedda feel trapped in their boring lives. As present day teenagers they all end up on whatsthepoint?.com - a website for those searching for meaning in life – and the play follows their plans to meet up. At midnight on the Bridge to Nowhere.

Snooze by Duncan Sarkies (2w, 2m)

An extension cord factory foreman falls in love with his radio alarm clock. When Rae the heater gets the hots for him, things spiral out of control.

To request any plays and/or musicals, contact Isaac Martyn Script Coordinator/ Kaiwhakahaere Whakaari, on isaac@playmarket.org.nz

Playwright's Competition

Playwrights Association of New Zealand (Inc)
PANZ Play Competitions 2022

Enquiries and submissions to playwrightsnz@gmail.com

Website: newzealandplaywrights.wordpress.com

Rules

Only members of PANZ may enter the competitions. Membership is open to any person who lives in New Zealand or is a New Zealander. The annual membership is \$25. To join see the website or email, addresses above.

There is no additional entry fee for the competitions.

A member may submit one 10 minute play (7 – 10 minutes running time) and/or one One Act Play (30 – 50 minutes running time).

The name of the author(s) and or their contact details must not appear on the script.

The play must not have been performed in front of a paying audience before 31 August 2022.

Instructions

1. Entries open 1 July 2022 and close 31 August 2022

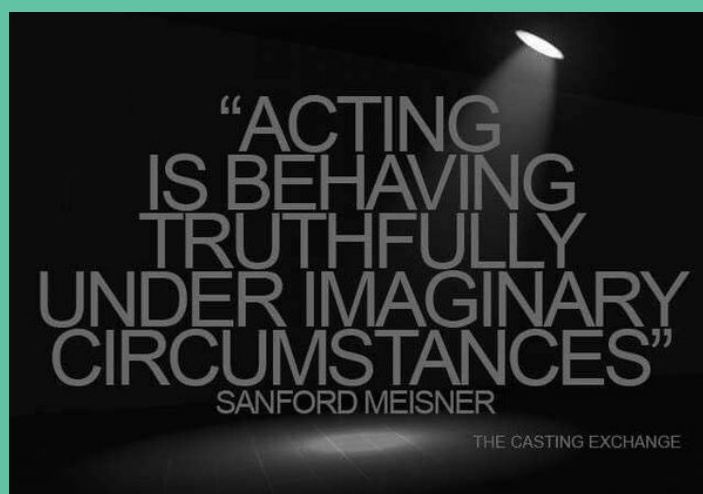
2. Send entries to playwrightsnz@gmail.com with the script as an attachment.

Prizes

10 Minute Play 1st prize \$100
 2nd prize \$50

One Act Play 1st prize \$200
 2nd prize \$100

All entries will receive brief feedback and the adjudicators will be announced during 2022



With thanks to the Masterton Theatre Company

REGIONAL ROUNDUP

Hamilton Playbox Geezers by Tommy Lee Johnstone March 26 – April 9

Te Aroha Dramatic Society Death and Taxes by April Phillips March 10 - 19

New Plymouth Repertory Dangerous Obsession by N J. Crisp March 22 – April 2

Napier Repertory Players Dancing at Lughnasa by Brian Friel February 16 – March 5

Dannevirke Theatre The Addams Family by David Levy & Donald Saltzman February 17 – 26

Butterfly Creek Eastbourne A Midsummer Night's Dream Shakespeare Feb 24 – March 4

***KAT Theatre** The Sleeping Beauty Who Didn't by Thomas Barker and Company Feb 12 – 20

Stagecraft Theatre AUDITION Translations by Brian Friel February 12 & 13, 10am – 3pm

Wellington Repertory The Spitfire Grill by Fred Alley, James Volcq March 23 – April 2

Havelock Community Theatre The Old People Are Revolting by Devon Williamson to Feb 5

South Canterbury Drama League The Last Five Years by Jason Robert Brown February 2 – 5

*Send information about productions in April and May
to info@theatrenewzealand.co.nz*

62 year old Khandallah Arts Theatre, Wellington has rebranded

- Gone is the suburban reference; cast, crew and audience come from all over
- Gone is the word Arts; art exhibitions and musical soirees are no more
- Gone is the 90's black mask logo designed by a teenage member
- Gone is the 2010 html website



KAT Theatre was launched a month ago

- A punchy short name
- A colourful fun image with theatrical spotlights developed by a graphic designer
- An accessible professionally developed website on Squarespace: kat-theatre.org.nz

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE REPORT

- Discussions covered a rewrite of the constitution and a revamp of the website.
- The entry fee for TheatreFest this year will again be \$80 per team with local organisers expected to cover the cost of adjudicator fees of \$75 per performance either from realistically priced tickets or a successful grant application. The entry form itself is being tweaked and will include the statement that all Government guidelines regarding Covid-19 are to be followed.
- Playmarket has offered to continue supporting the annual Olga E Harding playwriting competition and further details will be announced.
- A Residential Summer School in January 2023 is being looked into. It would cover acting directing, youth acting and youth tutoring. Watch this space!
- We will continue to be an Associate Member of IATA (International Amateur Theatre Association) and become associate members of Drama New Zealand (drama teachers) and ETNZ (Entertainment Technology NZ) an association supporting the NZ technical and entertainment industry through professional development, advocacy and safety. ETNZ's guidelines on health and safety are of particular importance to our membership.



National Executive at the end of a long day from left to right Paul Percy (Masterton), Steven Arnold (Auckland), Adrienne Hurley (Hawke's Bay), David Chambers (Christchurch) Tama Smith (Wellington) Ewen Coleman (TheatreFest Co-Ordinator, Bryan Aitken (President). Absent Deborah Steele (Dargaville), Lyn Doncliff (Treasurer) and Jake Hansen (Queenstown). Photo by Margaret Robertson (Secretary)

Welcome to a New Group Member

Northern Buller Communities Society

They describe themselves as volunteers working together to encourage people to get involved in community theatre productions in a supportive and fun environment.

Wax Lyrical is a sub-committee of the Northern Buller Communities Society Inc which also owns the Lyric Theatre in Granity which is being refurbished by volunteers. The purposes of the subcommittee are to develop theatrical activities and programmes within the Society's geographical area, to promote The Lyric as a venue for all and to encourage community involvement in Theatre as a whole. The community group is open to anyone who's keen to be part of the FUN! Both off and on stage.

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<https://theatrenewzealand.co.nz/>