



New Players News

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New Players — for quality community theatre

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You can get *New Players News*

by e-mail as a pdf file instead of by post. (Files are less than .5 Mb.)

To change, please e-mail the editor

Thank you to our contributors: Marie Thomson, Irene Miller and Marjorie McKee.

RolePlay AUDITIONS

6.00 p.m. Sunday 28 February

Our next production, *RolePlay* by Alan Ayckbourn (pictured), to be performed between 6 and 15 May at the Newlands Recreation Centre, will be directed by Ewen Coleman.

Auditions will be held at the Newlands Community Centre. Full details are on page 3.



Barry Lakeman finds that *RolePlay* has an interesting background.

The afterthought that became a success

RolePlay is the third in a trilogy of plays called *Damsels In Distress*, which began as an experiment to revive the repertory system that had operated at the Stephen Joseph Theatre in Scarborough, where Ayckbourn was Artistic Director between 1972 and 2009. Since the theatre started in 1955, plays had been chosen and written around the actors available. In 1996, after moving to their remodelled building (that had been the Odeon cinema), the system had largely ended, with the theatre relying more on actors hired for single roles. In 2001,

partly because of the ongoing financial pressure on the theatre, Ayckbourn chose to write a set of plays which could be performed by the same company of seven actors then available.

Until *GamePlan* was premiered in May, the plan was that *Damsels in Distress* would be two plays, *GamePlan* and *FlatSpin*. During rehearsals for *FlatSpin*, Ayckbourn considered extending the "repertory company" idea, and wrote *RolePlay* (which was written in the week after *FlatSpin* began performances) and the programme was rescheduled to include it late in the season.

The *Damsels In Distress* trilogy uses the same seven actors and the same set: a flat in the London Docklands (where Ayckbourn owns a flat). Common themes arose from this setting: flats owned by well-to-do Londoners who know little of their neighbours or what they do, and seedy vices left behind from London's old East End coming back to haunt them. Each play is set in a different flat. The set includes a living area, kitchen and balcony over the river, all of which have different functions in different plays.

Continued on page 3.



The Stephen Joseph Theatre, Scarborough

INSIDE:

are Marie's Manifest, details about auditions for *RolePlay*, information about proposed changes to the Festival of Community Theatre and ANZDA Accreditation Seminars, photos of some of our longer term members at Marie's big events, even some advice from Albert Einstein, and our regular features: New Players people Out and About, the Crossword and the Theatre Calendar.

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Greetings to all, and a Happy New Year!

I hope you all had a wonderfully restful Christmas, New Year and are now happy in your work!

We are so looking forward to our first production in the new venue:

**** "ROLEPLAY" by ALAN AYCKBOURN!!!! ****

Auditions are Sunday 28 February, at 6.00 p.m. There are more details on page 3.

There are still a few spaces on the Production Team, so get in quick and ring me!

We have ordered stage curtaining; WCC has ordered ½ modules of the staging, so there will be a completely safe area to work/walk on; we haven't sighted the security wall, yet, but we're assured it'll be there; we haven't heard about our storage, either, and we're still working on the Memorandum of Understanding!

If any of you feel you are missing out on all this excitement, please ring me or a committee member and tell us how you'd like to help - every little bit helps!

Question Of The Week, from our granddaughter, Lori:

"Mummy, why does it rain?"

"Ask your John"

"I don't want to ... "

"Why not?"

"Cos he tells me everything, and I just want a little answer!"

God Bless

Marie



Marie talks about her 40th Wedding Anniversary on page 4.

New Players News

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e-mail: lakeman@paradise.net.nz.

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NEW PLAYERS PEOPLE OUT & ABOUT

Marie Thomson is playing the Mayor and **Paul Langham** is also in the Khandallah Arts Theatre production of *King Rat the Wicked* by Rose Hudson, their "Play in the Park" this year. The season runs from 6 to 14 February, at Khandallah Park. See our Theatre Calendar for details.

Marjorie McKee and **Barry Lakeman** are in a show called *Irrepressible Urge* at BATS during the Fringe Festival, from 22 to 25 February. See our Theatre Calendar for details

The *Play With your Food* team, which now includes **Don Blackmore, Belinda Clarke, Andrew Edgar, Barry Lakeman, Marjorie McKee, Paulette McIndoe** and **Jeff Osborne** are coming to Johnsonville on Saturday 27 March. The performances, in aid of the Salvation Army missions, will be at the Salvation Army theatre.

Some rather late news is that **Don Quiring** returned to Canada for good on 1 March last year. He says he "was blessed with many opportunities to see and perform in many fine amateur productions" — he had 8 roles with 5 companies. He thanked us "for making the process of knowing about theatre events through your newsletter so easy." Apparently Don has been getting New Players News a little late: he received the October issue in December, via the Canadian High Commission.

Jacquie Vaughan, **Angela Vaughan's** mother, was awarded the QSM in the New Year's honours list. (Angela was last on our stage in *Together Now* and *Shakers Restirred*.)

Barry Lakeman's play, *Waiting For Jim* was accepted in the Auckland Short and Sweet competition, putting it as one of the top 40 of 1100 entries. Directed by Rachel Forman, and with a cast of Donogh Rees, Josephine Stewart-Tewhiu and Olivia Tennet, it was in the first week's performances, from 19 to 23 January at the Herald Theatre. *Waiting For Jim* is part of the *Play With Your Food* programme, usually with **Marjorie McKee, Belinda Clarke** and Anna Beccard. This is Barry's third play to be accepted by Short and Sweet: the others were *Just Add Water* and *Echoes* in Melbourne and Sydney. The play was the judges' second choice from the first week, and would have gone through to the Gala Finale show on Sunday 31 January, but unfortunately Donogh was offered work at the Fortune and was unable to be in the final, so the play was withdrawn.

We've noticed that the first production team for Alan Ayckbourn's *RolePlay* was: Director - Alan Ayckbourn, Design - Roger Glossop, Lighting - Mick Hughes, Costumes - **Christine Wall**, Music - Keith Jarrett. Has our successful director Chris been moonlighting?

Are you, or someone you know, doing something that might interest other New Players people? Do you have photographs of recent performances?

Please let the editor know.

FEB



2010

AUDITIONS for our next production: *RolePlay* by Alan Ayckbourn.

Auditions for *RolePlay* by Alan Ayckbourn, directed by Ewen Coleman (pictured, right), will be held at 6.00 p.m. on Sunday 28 February 2010 at the Newlands Community Centre. The production dates are 6 to 9 May and 13 to 15 May 2010.



RolePlay is a hilarious piece of theatre with dark undertones - a vintage 'dinner-party from hell'. Playwright Alan Ayckbourn is a master at writing about people divided by class, accent, habits and race and *RolePlay* is no exception.

Synopsis

A young well-to-do couple, but mis-matched in love, Julie-Ann and Justin, living in a posh London docklands apartment, have planned a dinner party at which they hope to introduce each other's parents and also announce their engagement.

Into this rather intense environment arrive two unexpected guests, one a lap-dancing gangster's moll, the other her burly gun-toting minder.

What Julie-Ann's parents (the bigoted northern stereotype and his dim twittering wife) and Justin's mother (who is toy-boy chasing and drink-soaked) find when they arrive shows us that the bourgeois guests, under their respective veneers, are far more frightening than the interlopers.

Although a comedy with farcical elements *RolePlay* nevertheless says something about how we all play roles and make assumptions about other people's roles.

A quote from one of the many reviews of the original production:

"One of Ayckbourn's greatest skills is the mixing of the accidental and the improbable with the inevitable and the realistic, and in *RolePlay* he displays it with magisterial cunning. The writing is as funny, nimble and lethally observant as ever".

Is there a part for you?

Characters (the ages are approximate only)

Justin Lazenby: about thirty, a software developer. Serious, kind, eager to please, anxious, nervy, indecisive.

Julie-Ann Jobson: early twenties, Justin's somewhat mismatched prissy girlfriend. Sweet and conventional but an obsessive perfectionist.

Paige Petite: late twenties, an ex-lap dancer and a boxing promoter's moll living in a penthouse upstairs. A sexy Cockney blonde.

Micky Rale: early forties, an ex-boxer and Paige's "minder". An intellectually challenged monosyllabic Neanderthal bruiser.

Derek Jobson: late fifties, Julie-Ann's right-wing joke cracking father. An unforgiving racist Yorkshire businessman.

Dee Jobson: late forties, Julie-Ann's dippy, dim witted and twee mother.

Arabella Lazenby: fifties, Justin's stylishly alcoholic acid-tongued mother. A glamorous, gravel-voiced, sophisticated soak from Surrey.

Dates and details

Auditions: 6:00 p.m. on Sunday 28 February at Newlands Community Centre, Batchelor Street, Newlands. There is no need to book an audition time. "Prepared pieces" are not required.

Production dates: 6 to 9 and 13 to 15 May.

Contact details for the director: 027 428 849 or edcoleman@xtra.co.nz.

Afterthought became a success. Continued from front page

As with most Ayckbourn plays, they were originally performed "in the Round" for its original production at the Stephen Joseph Theatre and adapted for proscenium theatres.

Following performances at Scarborough, the production toured. The first West End performance was at the Duchess Theatre on 7 September 2002, with the same cast and production team. The success of *RolePlay* over the other two plays eventually led to it dominating the run.

RolePlay, though "the afterthought", was the most successful of the three: it gained the most praise during the original Scarborough run, the tour, and the later West End production. Some saw it as a revival of 'classic Ayckbourn'. Paul Taylor wrote in *The Independent* that it "returns to vintage Ayckbourn territory: the dinner party from hell." Michael Billington of *The Guardian* said of the trilogy that "it shows Ayckbourn moving beyond his familiar terrain of suburban angst to deal with metropolitan madness and moral confusion" and called the cast "The Magnificent Seven".

Alison Pargeter won Best Newcomer in the Critics' Circle Awards for her role as Paige (and for her roles as Kelly in *GamePlan* and Rosie in *FlatSpin*).

WANT TO HELP?

Do you have some free time to help to keep New Players ticking along? The committee will welcome whatever help you can offer. Call Marie Thomson on 478 4305.

Albert Einstein said:

"Imagination is more important than knowledge, for knowledge is limited while imagination embraces the entire world."

"When I examine myself and my methods of thought, I come to the conclusion that the gift of fantasy has meant more to me than my talent for absorbing positive knowledge."

"If I had only known, I would have been a locksmith."

"The secret to creativity is knowing how to hide your sources."

"Put your hand on a hot stove for a minute, and it seems like an hour. Sit with a pretty girl for an hour, and it seems like a minute. THAT's relativity."

"Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new."

"Do not worry about your difficulties in mathematics. I can assure you mine are still greater."

Your editor asked some people what they did on their holidays. Surely no-one can beat

MARIE'S BIG EVENTS



I had a very busy few weeks over the holidays - starting with the preparation of our 40th Wedding Anniversary Luncheon on 13 December 2009, Christmas, and then John's 70th Birthday on 13 January 2010!



A small crowd of close friends and family gathered together for an informal lunch at the Newlands Community Centre. Our best man was able to come down from Auckland, and family came from Palmerston North, Tauranga and the Hutt. Lots of new friendships were made among the throng and also lots of reminders, as many attendees were also at the wedding. A friend (who shall remain nameless) said to me, "That fellow, Jim, what's his name, again?". I said, "Thomson - it's John's brother!" "Oh", he said, "I play golf with him ...". They were both at the wedding, too - talk about a small world!

We were to have renewed our vows, but our Priest got called out to the Hospice. As he came to us for lunch on Christmas Day, he gave us a Blessing, then.

For John's 70th birthday, we had a small dinner at home where 2 ex-New Players members gave us a little light entertainment. Peter MacKenzie did two recitations from Robbie Burns, then danced the Highland Fling! His wife, Delwyn, sang a couple of songs and Peter finished off doing the Sword Dance over a pair of dining knives!

I slept well that night. I was exhausted just watching him!

Celebrations for NZTF's 40th Birthday

At the National Final/AGM weekend 2010, which will be held at Te Whaea: National Dance and Drama Centre, Newtown, Wellington, the NZTF plan to have as many past Presidents, Administrators and those associated with NZTF in attendance as possible. Included in the celebrations will be an exhibition of memorabilia and a cake cutting ceremony at the AGM, followed by an Open Forum / Q and A session with a panel of highly qualified speakers covering Promotion, Advertising and Marketing. During the afternoon of the National Final/AGM weekend a number of workshops are planned to run concurrently on various aspects of theatre and stagecraft.

ANZDA Accreditation Seminars

The Association of New Zealand Drama Adjudicators will be holding accreditation seminars in February in Wellington and Christchurch.

If you have over ten years consistent experience as an actor, director or teacher/tutor, and would like to seek accreditation, or you would simply like to learn more about the process and criteria of adjudication, email Bryan Aitken, the ANZDA President, bryanaaitken@paradise.net.nz, as soon as possible.

ANZDA recognizes the need to refresh the gene pool. If you are accredited, you will join a band of specialist practitioners who will mentor you through your first experiences.

Q "The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man."

George Bernard Shaw

FEB

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Above left: Marie and John. Left: Eddie and Anne Conroy. Photos: Irene Miller. Above: Marie snapped Peter McKenzie.



Festival of Community Theatre

The New Zealand Theatre Federation runs this festival, which usually consists of one act plays.

Dates for 2010

Regional Finals

North Island: 27/28 August venue to be advised

South Island: 3/4 September in Canterbury

National Final: 17/18 September at Te Whaea: National Dance and Drama Centre, Newtown, Wellington.

Changes proposed for 2011

The proposal is to do away with the Regional Finals and have only a two tier system: a competition for at the District/local area level and a National Final. Each District/local area would be eligible to send forward a set number of entries to the National Final weekend. The finalists would play out over Friday night, Saturday afternoon and evening, with a maximum of 10 - 12 plays. Groups would have no rehearsal time except for a basic technical rehearsal but would have been informed of stage dimensions and technical details beforehand. Sets and props would be minimal. The AGM / Conference would be held at another time during the year.

THEATRE CALENDAR

OPEN NOW

The 39 Steps by John Buchan and Alfred Hitchcock, ad. Patrick Barlow from concept by Simon Corble and Nobby Dimon, dir: Peter Hambleton, with Serena Cotton, Cohen Holloway, Tim Spite and Julian Wilson. 4 actors, 139 roles, 100 minutes. Return season. Circa One to 13 February.

Ninety by Joanna Murray-Smith, dir: Susan Wilson. Isabel has ninety minutes to get her ex-husband back. Circa Two to 20 February.

OPENING IN FEBRUARY

There will be a lot going on in the Fringe Festival but we can't tell you about them, because they don't want to announce anything until their "Launch", which will not happen until after we have printed this issue.

- 2 **Pirates vs Ninjas** by Anja Tate-Manning (NZ), Fringe at BATS to 15 February.
- 2 **Currency.** 3 new works by Wellington playwrights Jo Holsted, Melody Nixon and Ruby Topo (all NZ), with Anna Edgington, Lyndsey Garner, Dominic Da Souza, Walter McGinnis, Liz Kirkman & Jonny Potts. Music by Hermione Johnson and Nell Thomas. Happy to 6 February. Book: greenshootsproductions@gmail.com.
- 4 **Vernon God Little** by DBC Pierre, ad. Tanya Ronder, dir: Willem Wassenaar & Sophie Roberts. Vernon is 15. His best friend just massacred 16 classmates before killing himself. The town wants vengeance and turns its sight on Vernon. Long Cloud Youth Theatre at Downstage to 13 February.
- 4 **What's in a Man?** by Josh Samuels (NZ). Fringe at BATS to 12 Feb.
- 4 **The Immortals** by Martin Amis. Dan Slevin plays an unusual adaptation of the story every Thursday to Saturday. Fringe at The Pit Bar, BATS to 11 March.
- 6 **Play in the Park: King Rat the Wicked**, by and dir: Rose Hudson (NZ) with Shelly Reet, Jack Dryden, Lynn Coory, **Marie Thomson, Paul Langham**, Suzanne Dobbs, Joy McLeod, Ella Wilson, Shannon Dobbs, Hanna Cockerill, Elena McIntyre-Reet, Liberty McIntyre-Reet, Daniel Cockerill, Lizzie Boyle and Ruby Hudson. Khandallah Arts Theatre at Khandallah Park, to 14 February.
- 10 **84 Charing Cross Road** by Helene Hanff, ad. James Roose-Evans, dir: Tabitha Arthur for Stagecraft, to 20 February.
- 10 **Ladies A Plate - The Return Season** by & with Geraldine Brophy and Bea Joblin (NZ), dir: Ross Joblin. Stories of love, food, family and the perfect puff pastry! A warm-hearted slice of kiwi life. Caf-friend Cafe, Petone to 13 February. Book: 5705791.
- 12 **Summer Shakespeare - Sir John Falstaff & the Merry Wives of Windsor.** Sir John Falstaff's spin-off show, plus one of Shakespeare's most ridiculous and accessible comedies, like a cross between Fawlty Towers, Black Books, Blackadder and The Simpsons. Studio 77 Amphitheatre, 77 Fairlie Tce, Kelburn, to 27 February. Book through Downstage at www.downstage.co.nz or 8016946.
- 12 **Busting Out!** returns, with Emma Powell & Bev Killick. The Opera House, to 13 February.
- 12 **Fringe Festival** starts, and runs until 6 March. There are lots of things to see, in many different venues. Some of them are listed here. For more information, see www.fringe.org.nz.
- 13 **Fractur** by David Foote (NZ), dir: Vanja Draganic. Fringe at BATS to 16 February.
- 14 **Jangle** by Mitch Tawhi Thomas (NZ), des. Jhan Lindsay & Jen Lal, with Clare Wilson and Guy Capper Darkly funny. Fringe at BATS to 18 February.
- 16 **Measure for Measure** by William Shakespeare, dir: John Marwick for Butterfly Creek Theatre Troupe. Muritai School yard, to 20 Feb.
- 16 **Who's Neat? You!** by Lucy O'Brien & Ralph McCubbin Howell (NZ): with them is Alex Lodge. In a truck outside BATS, Fringe to 16 February.
- 16 **Aphelion** by Francesca Mountfort (NZ): an ethereal puppet show filmed live and projected to live cello. Fringe at BATS to 19 Feb.
- 17 **Back/Words** (NZ). Fringe at BATS to 21 February.
- 19 **Strassman: Ted E's Farewell Tour.** The Opera House, to 20 Feb.
- 19 **Buffoon's Birthday** (NZ). Fringe at BATS to 22 February.
- 20 **Gods & Heroes** (NZ). Fringe at BATS to 24 February.

- 22 **Irrepressible Urge** (NZ), dir: Brooke Smith-Harris. Cast includes **Marjorie McKee** and **Barry Lakeman**. Fringe at BATS to 25 Feb.
- 23 **A Love Tail** by Aroha White, Matariki Whatarau & Kate McGill (NZ). Fringe at BATS to 3 March.
- 25 **The Blackhole Menagerie** (NZ). Fringe at BATS to 28 February.
- 26 **Sometimes I Don't Like Yellow** (NZ). Fringe at BATS to 2 March.
- 26 **New Zealand International Festival of the Arts.** Some events are listed here. Various venues to 21 March.
- 26 **Sound of Silence** by New Riga Theatre / Latvia, Dir: Alvis Hermanis. A play without words set to the soundtrack and narrative of Simon and Garfunkel. A colourful, humorous, and exuberant portrayal of human existence. TSB Bank Arena to 5 March (NZIFA).
- 27 **Apollo 13: Mission Control.** (NZ) Winner of 2 2008 Chapman Tripp Awards. 3 astronauts are trapped in space. Audience members seated in an authentic 1970s replica of Mission Control must make the decisions needed to bring them home. Downstage to 9 March (NZIFA).
- 27 **Mary Stuart** by Friedrich Schiller, ad. by David Harrower, dir: Ross Jolly. The relationship between Mary Queen of Scots and her cousin, Elizabeth I of England. Circa One to 3 April. (NZIAF).

AUDITIONS

Late February / early March **The French Lieutenant's Woman** by John Fowles, ad. Mark Healy, dir: Sue Miller for Wellington Repertory Theatre for season 26 May to 5 June.

28 **RolePlay** by Alan Ayckbourn, dir: Ewen Coleman, 6.00 p.m. at the Newlands Community Centre. The season for this New Players production is 6 to 15 May. More details are on page 3.

If you know of (or especially if you are involved in) a show that could be listed here, please let the editor know.

BJL

Websites

Try these "www"s:

What's on: bats.co.nz, downstage.co.nz, nzlive.com, wotzon.com, circa.co.nz, stjames.co.nz, theatrefed.wellington.net.nz, newplayers.org.nz, expressions.org.nz.

Reviews, news and forums: theatreview.org.nz, lumiere.net.nz/reader (Click "Arts": site opens on "Film"), thebigidea.co.nz

Plays etc.: doollee.com, buddybuddy.com, playmarket.org.nz, playbureau.com.

Shakespeare: www.bardwire.gut.edu.au

Fun: www.freequiztrivia.com

If (after you have done the quiz) you have an idle moment, visit thebigidea.co.nz, read the blogs by ex-pat New Zealander James Hadley in London (*Sets and The City*), and the interview with Geraldine Brophy, and get hooked!

Q U I Z

In 2002, Alan Ayckbourn heavily criticised the West End for casting cinema, pop and television stars instead of theatre actors, particularly their lack of voice projection. He singled out his harshest criticism for casting Madonna in David Williamson's *Up for Grabs*, saying:

"You might as well have put her on stage eating a plate of spaghetti and put a rope round her chair instead of putting her in a theatre where she wasn't at home and was struggling."

