

Musical Theatre New Zealand Zone Four Report for year ended 31 December 2009

2009 has been a busy year for Zone Four although not always with shows.

Waimate Theatre Group had great success with "Stiff" which left the audience rolling in the aisles and they were also full on with entertainment gigs all year. Methven Theatre Company also staged "Stiff" this year and the reception from the audience was certainly along the lines of Waimate!!!

McKenzie Players didn't present a show this year but are in the throws of organising one for 2010.

Musical Comedy Division, South Canterbury Drama League began 2009 with "Brassed Off" in conjunction with the Municipal Brass Band and followed this up with "Hollywood-A Song & Dance Extravaganza" for this they acknowledge a great help from Emma at APRA. They are about to start on "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat" for 2010

Variety Theatre Ashburton started the year with lighting and sound workshops in March which were well attended. In May they staged "Les Miserables" directed by Robert Young with great support from sponsors and public alike resulting in a huge success for them. September saw "Allo Allo" hit the boards, not as successful as Les Mis but thoroughly enjoyed by the audience that went. October saw Ashburton hosting the South Island MTNZ meeting which was well attended and a good way for the South Island societies to get together and find ways of working together. They are about to begin rehearsals for "Salute To Broadway" compiled and directed by David Williams to be staged in May as part of their 50th Jubilee celebrations.

Showbiz Christchurch opened the year with "Miss Saigon" in April; this was extremely successful and played to a very appreciative audience. In September Showbiz welcomed their new General Manager Gillian Wess and have since been planning their 2010 shows which include "Joseph and the Technicolor Dreamcoat" in April, "Forbidden Broadway" in July and "Sweeny Todd" in September.

Amuri Players presented a play this year and have secured the rights for "My Fair Lady" for 2010.

Hokitika did a children's production "Robin of Sherwood" which was very successful, they also spent a lot of time working on their buildings.

Greymouth had a quiet year but are gearing up for "Back to the 80's" for May/June 2010.

Wakefield Country Players presented "Stiff" to a happy audience and also a play.

Nelson produced a well received "Cats" and has almost finished building their new 120 seat theatre complex including rehearsal rooms, wardrobe, and foyer and bar area. Takaka presented a pantomime which by all accounts was a great success.

Blenheim presented a brilliant "Blood Brothers" a very financially successful "Eurobeat" and made a lot of money for the local hospice with "Music Thru the Ages" They are now preparing "The Sound of Music" for 2010.

Our Corporate members in Zone Four have also had a very good year with sales, hires and technical services throughout New Zealand. Special mention of NZ Fire Shield on the awards they received for their gear used in Antarctica.

We also had the Combined South Island Meeting in Ashburton in early October. These meetings are a great opportunity for the South Island societies to get together and network and discuss issues and celebrate success and to also meet some of the Executive team (Ian and Kate), outside the annual conference. Also thank you to our new Vice President Lesley Reid, all the way from Napier, for attending at her own cost – it was very much appreciated.

My thanks to the Variety Theatre Ashburton team for their hospitality and also for the in-depth tour of their new event centre – their venue is certainly a testament to engaging the right professionals at the beginning of a project.

And thank you to those corporate members (Bounce NZ, Redd Acoustic Sales and from Zone Three, ML Consultants) and our major sponsor John Herber/NZ Fire Shield; who attended the meeting in Ashburton – we certainly appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedules to come to the zone meetings and it's great to have your expertise, experience and knowledge to call upon at these meetings. The 2010 meeting will be held in Oamaru on 18 September.

All in all a mixed year which has been used by many societies as a year to re-assess their objectives and to take a reality check of where they want to go now the recession is receding.

My thanks to societies for the tickets to your respective shows and invitations to your special nights, they are very much appreciated.

And finally, thank you to my fellow MTNZ Executive members and Kate for their friendship and advice over the year.

Ross Benbow
Zone Five Representative