

ELLERSLIE THEATRICAL SOCIETY
PRESIDENT'S REPORT – 15 APRIL 2019

Introduction

In my report, I will take you through a review of the plays presented in 2018 with an overview of those being presented in 2019 followed by a report on the governance of the society.

Review of 2018



2018 opened with Daryl Wrightson directing Roald Dahl's classic **THE WITCHES**. A 'family friendly' play at this time of year was the perfect contrast to the Pop-Up-Globe and it drew in its own audience. The matinees were a sell-out and we had to put in extra rows of seats. The live music by Regan Crummer added the final touch. Occupancy was around 56%.

Main bill two was a new work by Ruth Mayo called **THE HOUSE OF ANGELS**. Sian Davis had been waiting to present this play for around three years while we found the right timing for it. Ruth made a special trip to New Zealand to see the premiere. Occupancy was around 34%.

Main bill three was **BEAUTIFUL THING** directed by Bruce Brown with a new style of set by Keith Harding complete with running water. Occupancy was around 31%.

The main bill year closed with Alan Bennett's **THE LADY IN THE VAN**. This play was to be directed by Des Smith however he had to withdraw, a week before the auditions, when David Blakey took over. Several directors had been approached however they had all felt there was insufficient lead time. At least David was exceptionally happy with the set designer's ideas. Occupancy was around 40%.

The plays for 2019 were set with enough time to create a draft Play Guide before the end of the year. With careful planning we were able to present excerpts from three plays being presented for 2019, along with an example of what could be included in the One-Act Play Festival, in a **Taster Evening** in November. It was lovely to see several hands going up to volunteer to design sets, design lighting and get involved in some capacity for the plays ahead.



The final event for the year was for the Ellerslie Business Association's Santa Parade held on the first Sunday of December. Congratulations to Renee Palmer, her large team of helpers and entourage of angels who created, dressed and adorned the float themed **ANGELS REJOICE**. We trialed running a raffle on the day, to raise funds towards purchasing a ticket printer and although we raised around \$70 it was not overly successful.

The current year – 2019



We have just closed Main Bill One with Stephen Sinclair's, **THE BACH**, directed by Annie Whittaker. We had fun coming up with a name for the location, Waitawauwau, loosely based on Maori for water in the middle of nowhere. Occupancy was around 33%.

Rehearsals are underway for Main Bill Two. This is the premiere of an Australian family story by Andrew Bovell call **THINGS I KNOW TO BE TRUE** being directed by Pam Browne.

Main Bill Three will see the return of **THE ELLERSLIE FESTIVAL OF ONE ACT PLAYS**. At the time of writing this report we have two confirmed directors and plays with a further two directors lined up making a selection from five plays. We have a little work do to do to complete the programme.

The last main bill of the year will be **ENCHANTED APRIL** to be directed by Jason Moffatt. Howick Little Theatre has kindly offered us access to their large quantities of wisteria and also provided us with discounted scripts.

GOVERNANCE

Budgets & Expenditure: Rona Colbert will shortly be presenting the 2018 accounts. Although we were very frugal with production and administration costs it is very hard to see this given the situation with the venue hire costs.

ETS received three grants in 2018. There was a grant of \$10,000 towards the costs of the venue hire from the Ōrākei Local Board of Auckland Council. A grant of \$500 from the Auckland Council Orakei Quick Response fund, facilitated by Ōrākei Local Board towards publicity costs. The third grant was from the Creative Communities Scheme facilitated by Auckland Council on behalf of Creative NZ which is from the New Zealand Arts Council for \$1000 also towards developing other forms of publicity. This grant is being used to trial street posters with Phantom Billstickers for the current play of *Things I Know to be True*. In addition to grants, we are exceptionally fortunate to get discounts and support from Brian Mott (our Honorary Accountant), Soar Print and Speedy Signs. ETS are exceptionally grateful to these people and organisations for their support.

Following a rule change at the last AGM we have been able to implement internet banking which has put in place with the current financial year. We are working through training to make this more efficient.

Management: The committee members elected at the 2018 AGM remained in place for the entire year. Jocelyn McQuaid will not be standing for committee this year. On behalf of the society I thank all the 2018 committee members for your dedication and enthusiasm in the governance of the society and additionally for giving much of your spare time and energy to the productions you have worked on. Each committee member has an area of the theatre to manage and this has been working well.

We are currently looking to fill three management positions; a Hospitality Manager, a Bar Manager and we will be looking at a Publicity and Marketing Manager with an aim to increase our audience numbers.

OPERATIONAL

Volunteers and Membership: The number of financial members decreased slightly in 2018 and the committee feels this may partially be due to the transfer from postal to email newsletters. There is a lot of information going out in each email newsletter and the membership renewal notice was overlooked. We have changed the order of this information going out and improved the methods for renewals this year and the results so far have been better.

We continue to run notices in Volunteer Auckland for stage hands and technical operators. Just when we think we have got one area of the theatre well covered with volunteers we lose volunteers in other areas and the recruitment cycle begins again. There has been a struggle to advertise for volunteers and then expect them to pay a membership fee and we have set up a sub-committee to look at members benefits and how we can make financial membership more attractive.

Health & Safety: The props and wardrobe room continue to be an area of concern. We have not been successful in our requests to the council to remove the 'hump' over the defunct air-conditioning ducting and additionally we had a swarm of wasps in there earlier this year.

Ticketing: Most of our grant application efforts over the last ten months have been concentrated on rental costs so we looked at other ways to fund a ticket printer.

We continued running a raffle during each play, which covers the cost of providing the audience with complimentary tea, coffee and biscuits and we can use the excess towards the printer. Additionally, we ran a raffle at the 2018 Santa Parade and called for donations with the 2019 membership renewal notice so now have enough money put aside to purchase the ticket printer.

Publicity & Marketing: We continue to promote and pre-sell 'Playhouse Nights' where we sell a full night at a discounted rate to a group who can then on-sell the tickets. We have one Playhouse Night purchased for *Things I Know to be True*.

Programme & Directors: The ETS Programming Committee closed submissions in June last year and were able to obtain performance rights without any declines for the 2019 seasons.

Keep this date - ETS is planning to host the 2020 Tasters Night this year and the theatre has been booked for three rehearsal evenings with the presentation being held on Saturday the 23rd of November.

Venue: Securing the stage area has not been completed by the Ōrākei Local Board team due to fire egress concerns. Work on this project is due to recommence with their new financial year after the 1st of July 2019.

You may have noticed the new chairs you are sitting on this year. The council changed these last year and we discovered they no longer fitted neatly onto our bespoke rostra layout. Unfortunately, we have had to reduce our seating by two on each row and our house capacity is now down from 100 to 90. We still have the original seating in the mezzanine upstairs as they missed these ones.

At the end of my AGM report last year I left you with a cliff-hanger regarding the venue hire costs. This is a separate topic on the AGM agenda, so I have not covered this in my report.

Summary

Although there are some concerns with the venue hire costs, Ellerslie Theatrical Society Inc. continues to be very healthy. With Rona's astute management of funds and the production teams' abilities to work with a minimal budget, we have maintained good working and contingency capital; productions are on track and we welcome new volunteers with each play. Thank you to everyone involved with the productions, support, and management of the society in 2018, you are the heart beat that makes our local community theatre.