

Chairman's report 2022

I began my report last year with “ *what an extraordinary year this has been.*” I fear I must repeat this.

I certainly believed we would have resumed a state of normality by now but the year has presented us with further highs and lows and covid related shut downs.

Luck was with us after our covid set back in ‘*Winding Up*’ and the rest of the 2021 year saw no further covid restriction until 2022 saw us tossed back into tight regulations and the second show of the year *Flagon and Foxtrots* was put “on ice”. The closure of the theatre for three months is onerous both financially and for those of us who love to be entertained but we are hoping for a great thawing in May with *The Girl on The Train* coming to the stage followed by the return of *Flagon and Foxtrots*.

We have now completed our first year under the new brand name *The Friends*. We rolled out our new name at the 50th Anniversary weekend. What a celebratory weekend that was. On April 23rd 2021, fifty years to the day The Court staged its first production, *The Pride of Miss Jean Brodie*, we began our celebration. All past staff and artistic members were invited to an Alumni Cocktail evening on the Friday night where they shared embraces, tears, yarns and lies. The fabulous extravaganza Gala Dinner followed on the Saturday night and Sunday saw The Supporters soon to be The Friends hold a celebrity debate. Roger Hall was a wonderful adjudicator controlling the very vocal contestants, Ross Gumbley, Kathleen Burns, Lara MacGregor and Jeff Clarke who debated; “*After 50 years of Court Theatre the World is a Better place*”. The launch of The Friends followed with a tee shirt strip bearing our new name and a cake cutting ceremony. The comprehensive story of Court's journey through half a century, *The History of The Court Theatre*, was compiled by Felicity Price and Derek Hargreaves and punctuated with wonderful nostalgic photos from Elric Hooper's archives.

The Friends committee continues with its unceasing dedication. One of our greatest assets is our 300 ushers. They provide approximately \$200,000 worth of service to the Theatre and are the Court's greatest ambassadors often the only face patrons meet at the theatre. Our usher convenor provides usher training, Chief Usher meetings, and improved communications that are all part of an ever evolving and more efficient theatre practice. Tessitura the new software replacing Patron Base is expected to greatly enhance the lives of our

Membership Secretary, Usher Coordinator, and Treasurer with its more efficient system and we eagerly await its full integration.

The Court Cues newsletter, the profitable Coffee Bar, Friends Events and the 2000 odd members subscription administration all require constant management by our team.

We continue to provide events for our members and this year we had a lively dinner with Mark Hadlow as the special guest. A mid winter festive lunch in the foyer where Cameron Douglas and Amy Straker fresh off the stage from 'Once', entertained us with their music.

Prior to Christmas we hosted a "Morning in Ohoka" when members were invited to the Ohoka Farmers Market then coffee in Richard and my garden. The weather was summery and everyone seemed to enjoyed the ambience of Ohoka.

Sometime ago *The Friends* agreed to sponsor a part of the new theatre and it was suggested they raise \$250,000 and put it towards the "Green Room". The Green Room was traditionally known as the meeting place behind the stage in which actors gathered before and after a performance to chat or entertain friends. In the new Theatre it will continue to be the gathering place, kitchen and the usher's station. Having had some generous bequests and donations we feel we should be able to reach this target by the time the building process begins. We are always enormously grateful for the ongoing donations that members add to their subscriptions.

During the year Steven Van der Pol stepped down as chairman of the Board of Trustees and Tony Feaver a member of our committee was elected as the new chair. A big congratulations to Tony who brings such dedication and precision to both the Board and the Friends Committee.

My nine year term as a Friends' representative on the board comes to an end in May as does David Mc Brearty's. We pass on this mantle to two new Friends trustees who will duly be elected. I have thoroughly enjoyed this time working with so many interesting projects and situations: A change of CEO and the Management team, the beginning of the long drawn out process of the new theatre, the destructive covid era, the 50th Anniversary and many other dilemmas, achievements and celebrations.

We say goodbye to two members of our Friends Committee. Wendy Carryer who has been part of the team for 23 years most of which she has spent so competently running our coffee bar. She was also served as an usher over a

number of years. We will really miss this hard working member of the team who has given so much.

John McSweeney also retires from the committee. John has served on the Friends Committee for 21 years with 5 years as it's Chair. He served on the Trust Board for 10 years and the Foundation Board for 7 years and has been an usher for 25 years. This is an astounding voluntary contribution to the Theatre and one we are eternally grateful for. John will be greatly missed . At the same time we welcome in two new members to the committee. Andrea Bankier and Jenny May and look forward to their contributions.

To conclude I'd like to thank you all for your love of our precious theatre, your passion, your loyalty, your patronage, your time and your donations. Without you we could never have reached this incredible 50 year milestone, an accomplishment no other theatre in New Zealand can claim.