

Annual General Meeting 10th March 2025

Chair's report

Year ending 31st Dec 2024

It is hard to believe the era of The Shed is drawing to a close. It has been a wonderful 'life boat' for us over the last thirteen years. We are so grateful for all those who have made the 'old' and the 'new' possible.

After beginning the year with some changes in leadership, the year has progressed from strength to strength.

Gretchen La Roche has been an exceptional leader taking us through the last year of the Shed and the move to the new theatre. Sadly, she is to move on and will soon lead Creative New Zealand. This is a very prestigious role and we wish her all the best.

The move to the new theatre is not just a change of address but it is a whole new concept of theatre. The opportunities to be the very best are open to the Court and we as Friends will be part of this evolution.

The ushers' roles will naturally change, encompassing two very different theatres. The dedicated Friends Lounge, that we have fundraised for, will be a wonderful private space, with its own bar and small kitchen in which we will be able to entertain our guests.

Over the year we have continued to sponsor the Education and Out Reach Programme. We are now working alongside the Theatre with a new sponsorship initiative for the coming year. "The Director Circle". Through sponsoring this we will have special access to the directors of each show. This access may entail them to speaking or hosting fund raising events.

Our new Honorary Solicitor, Samantha McArthur, has been put hard to work in her first year in the role. She has spent many hours revising and updating our constitution, which is a new requirement of the Incorporated Societies Act 2022. We are most grateful to her.

We welcomed two new members to the committee this year: Helen Crooks-Scarf and Carolyne Grant.

Jay Pollock will step down from the role of Membership Secretary which she has held for nearly 20 years. Her tireless dedication and hours given to the role are exemplary.

We were sad to hear this year, of the death of Richard Bromley one of our long-standing members and son of our founder Yvette Bromley.

During the middle of the year, we partnered with the Theatre in a major fund raiser: "Mark Hadlow Unleashed". This was a very successful evening of cocktails, auctions and a show with some of Mark's theatre contemporaries reminiscing about the years '*on the boards.*'

We continue to provide events for our members and this year our annual dinner with celebrity guest Paul Barrett was its usual success. The quiz too was a successful evening full of banter and laughter.

The Usher awards were once again a way of celebrating the amazing work our 300 ushers do. Our wonderful team of ushers continue to be the face of the theatre. Their professional friendly interaction with the patrons each night is the greatest advocacy the Theatre can have.

The Coffee Bar is to change hands. We have made the major decision to relinquish our ownership and running of the Coffee Bar in the new theatre. We came to the realization that it is more efficient for the theatre to run one bar with coffee, confectionery and alcoholic drinks from the same place. Although this was a major source of income for us, at the end of the day the income all goes to the same cause.

Car parking continues to be the elephant in the room. We have been spoilt for so long that we forget that the rest of the city has had to manage this problem for ever. Please consider the public transport system and the relatively cheap Uber rides option.

I would like to thank the committee so much for their work and dedication to our organisation. The Court Cues newsletter, the profitable coffee bar, the Friends events, the membership administration, and the financial records, all require constant management by our committed team.

In the words of Mark Hadlow. *"The theatre in New Zealand is in crisis. Christchurch has the best and most prolific theatre in the country and leads with the most supportive patrons in the country. Please continue to keep this alive by supporting every aspect of live professional theatre."*

Thank you all for your dedication to the Court Theatre as patrons, donors and ambassadors.

Annie Bonifant
Chair
Friends of the Court Theatre