

# ORTOGRAPH

Otamatea Repertory Theatre Newsletter

Winter 2023

## Beginnings

Repertory Theatre began in Great Britain in the early 1900s with the intention of making quality theatre available throughout the country. Repertory companies were established and produced new “weekly rep” plays every week or two. These were not at first true repertory theatres because they presented a series of short, continuous runs rather than keeping a ready repertory of plays. They began receiving government aid in 1946 and by the 1960s had developed “true rep” much like the state-supported theatre of other European countries.

Archival notes from the Kauri Museum state that ORT had its origins in the Paparoa Drama Group in the 1950's (or earlier), with a name change to Otamatea Repertory Society in 1957. They bought some land on Church Rd, Matakoho in 1966 and built a storage and rehearsal “shed” before building began on the current theatre in 1982. This new theatre and the group eventually became what we now know as ORT.

Meanwhile, down the road, the Maungaturoto Entertainment Group was formed in 1963. In 1982 his group was approached by Otamatea Repertory Society suggesting amalgamation, but they declined and continued as they were for another 11 years. There is an earlier record of a programme advertising the “First Variety Concert”, presented by the Paparoa Entertainment Party in the Garrison Hall, Paparoa in 1948 but it is unclear whether that was what became the Drama Group.



## Jump to the future - which is now...

...and ORT is about to run our new show, 'Honk! JR.'

There will be eight shows so, if you haven't got your tickets, make sure you don't miss out!

Fri 7 July @ 7pm

Sat 8 July @ 2pm and 6pm

Sun 9 July @ 2pm

Fri 14 July @ 7pm

Sat 15 July @ 2pm and 6pm

Sun 16 July @ 2pm

Family concession rates. Check out by clicking on this link.

<https://OTAMATEA.sales.ticketsearch.com/.../salese.../109708>

Adapted for young performers, and with a score by George Stiles and Anthony Drewe, Honk! JR. is a heartwarming celebration of being different, that is sure to delight audiences of all ages with its sparkling wit, unique charm and a memorable score.

## 2022 - and the return of drama to ORT!

Late last year Sheri O'Neill directed *The Revlon Girl*, a play based on the Aberfan disaster in Wales, 1966 in which 116 children and 28 adults died under a mountain of coal slag. This heralded new beginnings for us with the innovative use of props being a humorous addition. To recreate the drip from the leaking ceiling in the script we suspended a medical IV bag over the bucket then swung another bucket in under the bag when the rain stopped. Very technical and ingenious!

Rather than include a review of the play we have let both the actors and audience respond to the experience of *The Revlon Girl*...



*I loved being part of telling and sharing an important story. It was such an emotive play and a unique experience bringing those feelings and perspectives to life. I loved working alongside an experienced cast and seeing how they navigated the challenges that we moved through and Sheri was such a wonderful, funny and supportive director. I am grateful to have had her help and encouragement during rehearsal and the show.*  
Sian McGregor, actor

*The experience ORT gave me is one I will never forget. Being part of a story like *The Revlon Girl* opened my eyes to a type of pain that I can only hope to never feel. Numerous times we all shed tears, it was a pleasure helping bring this story to the community.*

Steph Matich, production assistant and lighting operator

*We hadn't had any local theatre for a year or two and I enjoyed the way so many groups of people came to see the show, mainly women but men as well. They all were buzzing after coming out.*

Lorraine Rowlands, front of house

*The *Revlon Girl* production was a breath of fresh air for our theatre. We had new members join and we attracted a different type of audience to those who usually support our junior productions.*

Maura Flower, promotion, ticketing & ORT treasurer

*I thought the play was powerful and very moving and it was great to see that tragic true story come to life. The costumes and set were true to the 1960s and I really loved the authentic presentation of my mother's era. I enjoyed the play so much that I'm joining the ORT!*

Stacey Watson, audience member

## Blast from the past - Lachie McLean

I was asked to direct my first show for ORT in 1975 when I was in my early 20's. Having never had any directing experience before, I was lucky enough to be nurtured by an

experienced team consisting of Richard and Joan Kennaway, Shirley Paul, Christine Gunn and Robin Waalkens. These people, and others that came along later, helped me in many productions, teaching me the basic skills of directing musicals. The highlight for me was when the group decided to relocate from the clubrooms in Matakoho and build the present Theatre in Maungaturoto. To achieve the necessary funding we annually took our shows, not only to the local towns, but also to Whangarei. I have had pleasure watching ORT continue to flourish to the present day.

## **ORT Committee**

Our AGM in November saw some changes to the ORT committee. The new line-up is:

President: Peter Flower

Secretary: Sheri O'Neill

Treasurer: Maura Flower

Committee: Shar Schultz, Margie Baker, Tanith Stephenson, Nicky Scrymgeour, Sam Hartles, Josie Gritten

We have been holding regular working bees at the theatre and have managed to tidy up the props storage areas and disposed of several trailer loads of rubbish. There has also been a lot of work done by Peter to deal with some water seepage issues in storage areas right down in the foundations. There have been drains dug, concrete lips added to divert water, and wooden floors installed. The old woollen carpets are now on compost heaps and gardens and new synthetic carpet tiles have been laid. Excellent work everyone, particularly Peter for his many hours of work and to Maura for letting us have him!

## **Looking forward...**

The committee have been considering suitable plays for a possible dinner theatre production later in the year and have come up with a little ripper: *Mystery On the Orient Express*, by Mary McMahon, which is an audience interactive farce. "This very fast paced show will transport you all on a theatrical journey following the same route as the famous train through France, Italy, Switzerland and Austria. From the moment the passengers are seated, whether it be in the first class, second class, no class or baggage compartments, they will roar with delight as the bumbling Holmes and very different Watson, Inspector Gadget and Miss Marples all try to solve the mystery on the train. Marvel at Garter Hari's intrigue and sing along with outrageous waiters and glamorous Can Can girls." Expressions of Interest are invited to direct or to be involved in production. Please contact Sheri O'Neill 09 431 6907 [bogwood@xtra.co.nz](mailto:bogwood@xtra.co.nz) for details and script.

If you would like to join ORT please contact Maura Flower at [maura.flower@gmail.com](mailto:maura.flower@gmail.com)

We look forward to seeing you all at Honk! JR and future productions!

Ortograph is a digital upgrade of our earlier printed newsletter and will be circulated quarterly to current members and friends of the theatre. Please let us know if you would prefer not to receive it.

Ortograph is compiled by Deb Clapperton & Margie Baker on behalf of ORT Committee.