Theatreview 2020-21

***Theatreview***'s mission is to commission and publish reviews of the full array of forms and content within New Zealand professional performing arts practice, for:

* the public for whom the work is made and on whose behalf the critics write
* the professional practitioners who create publicly available shows and need to see what they make reflected
* ongoing audience and practitioner commentary, feedback and debate, and conversation of which its reviews, comments and forum discussions are parts
* the historical record of performing arts practice – an ephemeral art form too easily forgotten if it is not written into the record.

and to build a free, comprehensive, globally accessible and readily searchable heritage archive of professional performing arts practice in New Zealand.

#### Overview

***Theatreview.org.nz*** went live on 2 April 2006. It is the only performing arts review site in New Zealand that offers comprehensive nation-wide coverage and an easy-to-access archive. As such it provides an essential service within New Zealand’s performing arts infrastructure, offering a critically responsive record of the quality, quantity, diversity and trends of current performance and production across the spectrum of the professional performing arts.

***Theatreview*** *commissions and publishes reviews of professional performing arts productions whenever asked to do so, and reviews performance from Kerikeri to Invercargill.*

*Often* ***Theatreview*** *is the only publication to review the work of emerging artists, Fringe shows, return /developed seasons and successive seasons of touring productions. The site also posts links to other media reviews in order to broaden the ‘conversation’.* ***Theatreview*** *gives smaller regions a voice by commissioning reviews of local professional productions, touring productions and the performing arts components of ever-growing regional festivals. This offers fresh perspectives on shows from elsewhere and keeps all visitors to* ***Theatreview*** *informed about what is playing where and when.*

***Theatreview*** *sustains a nationwide sense of community within the performing arts world, being a hub of performing arts critical discourse, a virtual meeting place for the performing arts community and the 'go to' place for people from diverse sectors seeking informed commentary on current and past productions.*

*International seasons of New Zealand works are also reviewed wherever possible – e.g. NZ productions staged in London, New York and Australia have been reviewed, and NZ content in the Edinburgh Festival and Fringe individually reviewed and contextualised.* ***Theatreview*** *prefers to and will engage as much as resources permit with such events whenever and wherever they occur.*

*Because* ***Theatreview****’s objective is to accurately reflect professional performing arts practice from year to year, the statistics may fluctuate. What will continue to grow, however, is the heritage resource of reviews, production details, commentary, news and debate.* ***Theatreview*** *is in constant use by practitioners, the general public, politicians and their advisers, teachers, students, researchers, potential employers, directors, producers, potential audiences, and a wide range of arts and creative industries organisations*.

#### 2020-21

During 2020’s COVID-19 and its various levels of lockdown ***Theatreview*** supported the performing arts sector, heightened awareness of some of the many ways in which the performing arts found a way to flourish, and sustained public and practitioner appetites for performing arts experiences, by reviewing the explosion of innovative online productions as well as online archives in radio, dance and theatre both in New Zealand and internationally. As part of that ***Theatreview*** convened a ‘COVID-19 Lockdown Festival’ and the ‘COVID-19 Level 2 Festival’ online for local and global audiences. As public performance has gradually, haltingly, started again, ***Theatreview*** has celebrated that as well.

In 2020, despite the COVID-19 pandemic and the nosedive that live productions took as a result of the ensuing lockdowns, the website attracted 81,189 unique visitors.

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|  | **1 January - 31 December 2020** |
| **Unique visitors** | **81,189** |
| **Number of visits** | **113,559** |
| **Total Pages viewed** | **189,297** |
| **From:** |  |
|  **- New Zealand** | **61.73%** |
| **and internationally:** |  |
|  **- USA** | **11.24%** |
|  **- Australia** | **7.62%** |
|  **- UK** | **5.37%** |
|  **- India** | **2.29%** |
|  **- and others** | **11.75%** |

###### *Where the performances were*

**North Island**: Auckland (64), Wellington/Hutt (194), Hamilton (20), Palmerston North (12), New Plymouth (1), Tauranga (1), Hawkes Bay and Gisborne (19)

**South Island**: Christchurch incl. Lyttelton (31), Dunedin (17), Nelson/Blenheim (13), Wanaka/Hawea/Q-town/A-town (1), Invercargill (1)

**Internationally**: New York (2)

**Online free historical productions** (66)**:** RadioNZ, RNZ Ballet, Netherlands Dance Theatre, NYC Ballet, UK English National Ballet, UK Royal Ballet, UK National Theatre, UK Shakespeare Globe, Singapore (Good Company Arts), other

From the beginning of November 2020, funding for the editors’ work, apart from theatre in Wellington, and for management and the website stopped. Our treasured donors continued to support us and a grant in February 2021 supported website costs to enable the website to survive. Reviewing continued on the usual basis thanks to hundreds of hours of donated time, however for theatre outside the Wellington region it became restricted – although it remains in part (thanks to continuing donated hours) - from early 2021. [There have been 9 theatre reviews January to March in regions outside Wellington, covering Whangarei to Christchurch.] The search for funding continues.

#### The editorial team

**John Smythe**: Founder and managing editor for [www.theatreview.org.nz](http://www.theatreview.org.nz) and its senior theatre critic

 **Raewyn Whyte**: Associate Editor (Auckland)for ***Theatreview*** in 2010, and until the beginning of 2021 its Editor (Dance) New Zealand-wide, and its senior dance critic.

On Raewyn’s stepping down in January 2021, **Lyne Pringle**, who has been a senior dance/ theatre artist in New Zealand, Australia and New York has taken the role of Associate Editor (Dance).

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#### The reviewers

The reviewers are volunteers, willing to share their insights and expertise in return for two complimentary tickets, most with practical experience in the performing arts and many with professional training and tertiary qualifications in the sector. They are local. They can be:

#### peer-group practitioners, lecturers, teachers, graduates, students and people working outside the sector who wish to remain connected and contribute;

* core regulars, fresh voices, those who come on board for particular festivals and specialists.

Their experience and understanding includes relevant cultures, genres, generations, gender identity and sexual orientation.

#### The Theatreview Trust

Incorporated, and registered in 2011 with the New Zealand Charities Commission: CC45963.

As at February 2021 the Trustees are:

**Dawn Sanders** ONZM, QSM: Chair

**Marjorie McKee**: Treasurer

**Bette Cosgrove, Sally Thorburn, Brett Adam, John Smythe, Lyne Pringle**

**Consultant:** Margaret Belich

#### Funders

Thanks for funding support to:

 

Our donors

and in 2019/20  

#### Some of the supporters over 2020 and recently

Theatreview is a … resource bar none. The inventiveness and energy of this agency and the dedication to the theatre arts is outstanding. Regionally during the lockdown period, Theatreview kept patrons and interested parties…in touch with virtual activities and radio plays. In addition the agency has developed a regional network of top shelf reviewers and contributors and continues to be the gold standard for quality and reach…The archive is invaluable, recording theatre productions the length of the country.

**Steve Thomas, Executive Producer, Trick of the Light** *2020*

*Through the ever growing archive on Theatreview we have a potted history of our productions and our continued presence as part of the Wellington and New Zealand theatre scene, this provides a unique historical record, one not captured anywhere else***.** *Part of our company ethos is to tour: testing our work on the road, and finding new audiences outside the main centres of Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. Many of the places we have taken our shows Theatreview has provided the only possible platform for a review – the website is unparalleled in its scope across the country. Reviews are a key part of the eco-structure for theatre and live performance, and Theatreview is an essential resource for reviews within New Zealand.*

**Hannah Smith and Ralph McCubbin Howell, Trick of the Light Theatre** *2020*

Having invested in the audience atlas and the work around audience development. We know there is a sector of our audiences that relish the literary follow-up. Theatreview assist[s] us in providing some of this follow-up…allowing the audience to become involved in forums of discussion… With many local newspapers ceasing to exist, and theatre reviews being removed from greater view, we are more than ever reliant on Theatreview to connect us to the world and provide feedback on our work. Theatreview provides more than just reviews. It is the only managed hub (where) we can formally express opinions and ask to be taken seriously.

**Kate Louise Elliott, General Manager, Centrpoint Theatre** *2018*

To have a range of views and different voices in dance reviews is important for the growth and development of audiences of dance in New Zealand. Theatreview provides an essential vehicle and service for critiquing and reviewing dance across the country and in this regard the expertise of Raewyn Whyte to manage and develop the process of dance reviews is invaluable. Raewyn is an acknowledged expert in dance criticism, including attaining international tertiary study qualifications in this area of dance.

**Anton Carter, Chief Executive of Dance Aotearoa New Zealand (DANZ)** *2018*