#### Theatreview 2021-22

Against odds both the performing arts sector and Theatreview weathered what was at times a fraught 2021-22.

COVID-19 and its levels of lockdowns continued to impose varying levels ofrestriction for live performing arts. Many months of visions and hard work continued to crash under the limits, and practitioners continued to have to call on deep reserves of ingenuity and resilience. The number of productions which made it to performance - and review – again dived.

The ingenuity and resilience found ways to flourish, though. Theatreview too found resources with donations, some grants and an abundance of good will to support practitioners and productions by continuing to review, celebrate and record the work and visions which reached the stage or online, and to give prospective audiences context and inspiration. The archive continued to grow. A depth of talent among voluntary reviewers became obvious when cancellations, postponements and COVID self-isolations played havoc with reviewing schedules and still most productions were reviewed. Theatreview also took time to reflect and plan. Sustainable funding was and is a major issue. Refreshing and redesigning the website, when funding for it is obtained, is scheduled for 2022-23.

#### Some of the statistics

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| --- | --- |
|  | 1 January - 31 December 2021 |
| Unique visitors | 92,456 |
| Number of visits | 128,938 |
| Total Pages viewed | 212,129 |
| From: |  |
|  - New Zealand | 64.22% |
| and internationally: |  |
|  - USA | 9.20% |
|  - Australia | 7.38% |
|  - UK | 4.79% |
|  - India | 2.14% |
|  - and others | 12.27% |

###### Where the performances were during 2021:

**North Island**: Whangarei (2), Auckland (39), Hamilton (3), Palmerston North (9), New Plymouth (2, Hawkes Bay and Gisborne (7) Wellington/Hutt/Porirua/Kapiti (238).

**South Island**: Christchurch incl. Lyttelton (18), Dunedin (7), Nelson/Blenheim (3), Wanaka/Hawea/Q-town/A-town (1).

**Global** (2)

#### *AS AT THE END OF 2021*, 16 years since Theatreview went live at the beginning of 2006, the website holds about 13,000 reviews of some 7,500 productions.

#### Funding

Grant funding stopped in late 2020 for the editors’ work, apart from theatre in Wellington, and for management. Reviewing continued, on as close to the usual basis as possible, thanks to hundreds of hours of donated time, although for theatre outside the Wellington region it became restricted.

Our treasured donors continued to support us. Several gave larger than usual gifts, and Nalinda Properties very generously donated sufficient to enable us to meet a fee for the dance editor for almost two months. The Wellington City Council continued to support our theatre reviewing in the Wellington region. The Southern Trust (which later rebranded as the Aotearoa Gaming Trust) made a grant at the beginning of 2021 to support 6 months of our website costs and another grant in February 2022 towards a fee for the dance editor for 6 months. The search for funding continues.

#### The editorial team and the webmaster

**John Smythe**: Founder and managing editor for [www.theatreview.org.nz](http://www.theatreview.org.nz) and its senior theatre critic, John Smythe is a Trustee of The Theatreview Trust, as well as being its Editor (Theatre). *He has a Bachelor of Dramatic Arts from the National Institute of Dramatic Art and a certificate in screenwriting from the Australian Film Television and Radio School.*

*Starting in Gang Shows and David Tinkham’s Wellington Rep pantomimes, training in the Aro Valley with Nola Millar and her tutors, touring with the NZ Players Drama Quartet and participating in the early years of Downstage set John off on decades of wide-ranging professional experience as an actor, playwright, screen writer, tutor and theatre critic – in New Zealand, Australia then back in New Zealand. For many years now he has been Wellington-based.*

*He has served as a theatre critic for The Melbourne Times, The Australian, Theatre Australia Magazine – and, in New Zealand, the National Business Review and* ***theatreview.org.nz****.*

*John has served on the Board of Studies for Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School and as Vice President then President of the New Zealand Writers Guild (and before that the Australian Writers Guild), serving on a range on industry boards, and attending (and helping to host) a number of International Affiliation of Writers Guilds meetings in the process.*

*John’s non-fiction book titles include Downstage Upfront: the first 40 years of New Zealand’s longest running professional theatre (Victoria University Press, 2004) and The Plays of Bruce Mason – a survey (VUP & Playmarket, 2015)*.

**Lyne Pringle**, now Wellington-based, took the role of Editor (Dance) New Zealand-wide at the beginning of 2021. She is a Trustee and is Theatreview’s senior dance critic.

*Lyne began reviewing dance for Theatreview in 2007. Since 2019 she has also reviewed for the Dominion Post. Over 42 years as a dance/theatre artist in New Zealand, Australia and New York Lyne has gained a rich understanding of the needs and challenges of the sector. She has worked with many of the leading dance artists in Aotearoa, has received numerous awards and is deeply committed to the development of New Zealand performing arts.*

*Recent awards include a 2016 Life Time Achievement Award from the Dance Industry, the 2012 James Wallace Artistic Residency at the Pah Homestead, and the 2011 Otago University Caroline Fellowship - Community Dance.*

*Lyne now concentrates on supporting the wider sector, writing and social/eco activism. She is passionate about volunteering, her activities in this area include: leading Bring Back the Natives - a community planting project in her home suburb of Newtown; writing and advising about dance; kaka nest monitor at Zealandia; kaitiaki of community fruit trees in Newtown.*

*She is the Employee/Corporate Volunteering Manager at Volunteer Wellington.*

*As well as writing for other publications, she teaches dance studies at the New Zealand School of Dance, is an oral historian for the New Zealand Dance Archive and a member of the Artistic Advisory Panel for Footnote New Zealand Dance.*

**Sascha Monteiro** from PureJS has worked with Theatreview since 2008. He is an experienced engineer and developer. His skills include JavaScript, Java, PL/SQL, Servlet, JSP, PHP, HTML, CSS, SOAP, REST Linux, Oracle, Apex, Tomcat, VMWare, MySQL.

He ensures material can be placed on the website, maintains it, troubleshoots issues, and monitors and maintains site security.

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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 31 March 2022 the Trustees are:

**Dawn Sanders** ONZM, QSM: Chair; **Marjorie McKee**: Treasurer; **Bette Cosgrove, Sally Thorburn, John Smythe, Lyne Pringle**.

#### The funders in 2021-22 – with many thanks

 

**Our donors**

#### Some of the supporters over 2021 and recently

Theatreview is an indispensable tool for theatre audiences, practitioners, drama teachers and students at all levels of secondary and tertiary education. Theatreview’s comprehensive reviewing of theatre and dance across the country (and relevant overseas productions as well) has created a massive archive of New Zealand theatre which no other organisation can match. The website has maintained a platform for discussion of individual productions as well as many issues of wide-ranging significance to the health and sustainability of the theatre profession in New Zealand. Theatreview plays a vital role in disseminating information and discussion about theatre and dance, and if the site were to be taken down, it would be a massive loss to the profession and to the public interest. As an almost daily user of Theatreview, I am impressed by the professional way in which it is run. Reviews by Theatreview’s in-house reviewers are always posted in a very timely fashion, usually coming out before reviews in other media. Information about forthcoming events, job vacancies, new appointments, obituaries and numerous other significant events is professionally collated and disseminated. There is no other organisation or publication that does this work for the theatre community. In my role as a university teacher, I see the vast benefits that Theatreview brings to students and postgraduate researchers. The website enables students to research widely about particular playwrights, actors, directors and forms of theatre. Students sometimes join in Theatreview’s debates about controversial productions, and such debates have become the topic of heated tutorial discussion in the past. Young people engage enthusiastically in the on-line forum that Theatreview facilitates. The democratic basis on which Theatreview enables audiences to participate in public critical debates provides a unique forum and increases the relevance of live theatre among young people and in the wider community. Essays and theses on New Zealand theatre are often constructed around review quotes sourced from Theatreview. Some of our graduates from the Theatre Programme have themselves become reviewers for Theatreview. I often see quotes from Theatreview reviews in scholarly publications, as well as in funding applications for individuals and theatre companies. In my work as a researcher, I use the Theatreview archive when writing articles about New Zealand theatre. I know that many of my colleagues do the same. There are still many significant gaps in the writing of New Zealand theatre history, and the continuity of Theatreview is essential to this history being preserved, debated and analysed. However, on-line archiving is extremely fragile, and needs to be protected by further official recognition and funding.

**David O’Donnell, Professor of Theatre, Te Herenga Waka/Victoria University of Wellington** 2021

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, Centrepoint Theatre** *2018*