

Presidents Report 2021

Kia ora and welcome to our delayed AGM for 2021. What another eventful year we had. Covid continued to decimate live theatre. Through passion, hard work, and resilience, the HLT team has delivered so much through such challenging times. To the committee - we survived, and I know it has made us stronger as a team and that good times are here now. Thank you all here today and our theatre whanau for your commitment to making HLT the leading community theatre in New Zealand.

Health, Safety & Wellbeing

Health, Safety and Well-being are always our first priority.

Our Covid policy for protecting our cast, crew and audiences was continually adapted based on government guidelines. We communicated these changes through iTicket, theatre emails and on our website. Lockdowns meant the cancellations of productions, acting classes and workshops. Where possible, we moved to online zoom rehearsals and meetings.

Although this report is for 2021, I would like to announce that the committee approved adopting Equity's Code of Conduct this month. For HLT to thrive and be a creative space, everyone must feel confident that they will be protected from emotional, cultural or physical harm. We all share that duty to respect and support each other.

Throughout 2021 consultation on the new Incorporated Societies Bill continued. Laurie Mills kindly agreed to track the Bills' progress through parliament and identify the potential changes required of HLT's Rules. The review is underway, and we expect these changes to be formally adopted at our 2023 AGM. Laurie will talk to this point in General Business.

I would like to thank Vic Leilua for his contribution to the committee during the last 6 six years as he steps down this year as our Health and Safety Officer. You have our trust and utmost respect for everything you do quietly in the background to make sure that HLT is a safe place. We will continue to see Vic around the theatre on the production side and I look forward to working with you as a director for Howick Little Plays in October.

Productions

In 2021 due to restrictions, we staged 5 of our 8 planned productions:

- The House, directed by Ashton Brown
- The Girl on the Train, directed by Matthew van den Berg
- The Viewing Room, directed by Ian Milnes

and our Studio Productions

- Dinner with Friends, directed by Tracey Holdsworth
- Tiny Beautiful Things, directed by Beate Wiebel

Thanks to our hard-working Play Selection team, Alison Mudford, James Calverley, Jo Crichton and Laurie Mills, for their success in a balanced and varied season. Congratulations to Andrew Gordon for his leadership of HLT Studio and the opportunity given to 2 new female directors to join the family. We will continue to use Studio to bring in new talent and focus on new offerings to increase audience numbers.

Thanks to our adjudicator, Clare Kelso, who noted: "the skill and commitment of all productions were clearly evident. The standard of acting and direction stays high and the enjoyment of the audiences, obvious." As an "outstanding ensemble piece", Clare awarded THE GIRL ON THE TRAIN Production of the Year for 2021.

Communications

We continued for another year without a Communications Manager. We are lucky to have much of our marketing led by Charmaine in her role as Office Manager, supported by Alison Mudford as newsletter and website editor. During lockdowns, Charmaine developed a new social media marketing plan, and we reached out for a social media coordinator to help gather content and stories. This role is yet to be filled. We are keen to connect people with their passion and interests and encourage you to reach wider to family, friends, and social groups to encourage them to join us.

We lost Emma Love as our creative designer during the year due to other commitments. Thanks to Alison Mulford in her role as Artistic Advisor for exploring alternative options in trying times. We were delighted to have Emma return, as her posters and artwork are recognised as high quality and impactful in promoting HLT.

In 2021, we could not host our usual in-person season launch at our October' Preeves' night. Thank you to Nik Rolls for your hard work coordinating with our directors to create our first online season launch video, which was well-received.

We were also excited to launch TV marketing in the Blue Room, and thank you to Dylan Day for your help getting the technology working so well.

Membership & Events

Jenny Connors joined the committee in 2021 to face a challenging year with limited opportunities for the committee and members to meet in person to explore ideas and build our member offering. However, her enthusiasm and ideas for the future are already coming to fruition. We have launched new membership cards, branded merchandise (t-shirts, caps and mugs) and planned member events, including new Theatre Tours, working alongside our theatre services and production teams. Watch out for these in 2022.

Grants & Funding

I would like to thank Howick Local Board and Auckland Council for their continued financial support and an additional funding boost in 2021 to minimise Covid losses. Without funding, we would be unable to exist as a community theatre. Our fixed costs to run theatre services steadily increase yearly, including staffing, ongoing maintenance costs for an aging building and facilities, and ensuring we meet health and safety regulations.

Additional grants we received in 2021 were gratefully received from

- Pub Charity - Workshop Garage Door Motor and Roller
- Lion Foundation – New foyer furniture
- Auckland Council / Howick Local Board - Switchboard and Emergency Lighting Board Upgrade
- Creative Communities – Workshops
- Howick Local Board – New document centre.

We continue to seek a support person to focus on future funding, grants, and sponsorship to continue to invest in our people and assets and ensure that we remain a financially sustainable theatre.

Roger Mudford, as Treasurer, using our new Xero finance reporting system, ensures a close eye on our daily finances and enables conversations around how we can move to recovery and break-even models. Thank you for your wise counsel.

Education

We continued with acting class terms between lockdown periods, and encouragingly, class sizes continue to grow. It was a delight to attend the children's acting class showcase, some as young as six years old. We remain passionate about encouraging the next generation into the world of theatre and the many skills it brings to personal development. Thanks to Terry Cooper, who stepped down as adult class tutor due to other commitments, and a huge thank you to Ruby Love for stepping up to lead all classes.

We managed to slot in 2 workshops in 2021: "Screen Naturalism" with director and acting coach Miranda Harcourt. In addition, "How to Find an Audience for Your Creative Work", with Paris Kirby and Elisabeth Vaneveld, was attended by the majority of the HLT committee and other community theatres and received great feedback. We remain committed to workshops, training and mentoring to grow the skills of our team and the wider community.

Production services

Trevor Hynes, our Production Services Manager, continued to work with our technical crew and set builders. A big thank you to David Gifford for taking on the role of Handyman. Thanks to Hanneke Beets, Tony Simmons, Dylan Day and the team for their work on the new electrical switchboard and for coping with the changes as lockdowns rolled on.

Theatre services

Like Jenny, Judith Clarke stepped up into the role of Theatre Services during Covid. Much has been in the planning phase due to the theatre being dark but look watch out for a return to our FOH/Bar and Set Build thank you lunches, Xmas party, new Theatre Tours for the community, a FOH training programme and a push on playdates. Thanks to Laurie Mills, Judy Rankin, Marion Wood, Sue Mist and Ngaire-Ann Hobson for all the work you do on props, wardrobe, bar and front of house.

There are many others to thank, and if I've missed you, please know your support is recognised. A special mention to Ginny for supporting Charmaine in the office. And to Charmaine, the glue that holds us all together, we thank you.

Thank you

In closing, Covid continues to significantly impact HLT. However, we are optimistic that better times are coming. Recovery will be long, but if we all work together, support each other and bring our love and passion for the arts, HLT will remain the powerhouse of community theatre. Kia ora, and thank you.

Deborah Lind

President

22 May 2022