

Matamata Dramatic Society Inc.

## ON-STAGE NEWSLETTER

January-February 2021

Wishing you a **New Year** that's...  
sparkling with **fun**...  
bursting with **joy**...  
& crackling with **laughter!**

**Happy  
New Year!**

And, with the year that we have planned and COVID permitting, we should have plenty of fun, joy and laughter to raise spirits and entertain our audiences throughout the year.

After the challenges and changes of 2020, I decided that with the birth of a brand New Year which is going to be much more positive in every way, we should have a new image to match.

I hope our members and readers approve!



Talking of new beginnings

**CONGRATULATIONS  
To Emily, Talbert and  
Family!**

*"Hoera een zoon"*

A loving welcome to their new son Gordon Wietze de Jong-Meese. Who it appears, was in a bit of a hurry to be born.

This cute wee, man arrived on December 22 causing a bit of hiccup for Emily's health but I'm glad to say both are now home and doing well.

A little brother for young Ronald.



### 'Short & Sweet' Play on Tour

Jan Hill and Chris Chambers kindly offered to bring the ten-minute play which your truly wrote, 'Do You Miss Me Marty' to the Te Aroha Red Cross Christmas Meeting in December. Why you might ask? Well, the play was created from an elderly lady asking the Te Aroha Red Cross community transport service if they could take her to see her husband – who it transpired was in the local cemetery!



Jan and Chris did a wonderful job as always and the attentive audience loved their performance and showed their appreciation with their loud applause. Even when Jan had one of those dreaded blank moments, Chris bent down and whispered the line in her ear, it looked as though it was all part of the play. Consummate acting at its best so, bless you both for being there for our Red Cross members.

### THEATRE TRADITIONS

*Theatre folk are a superstitious breed!  
There are several well-known traditions still  
observed today, such as . . .*

**NEVER SAY GOOD LUCK,  
SAY 'BREAK A LEG'**

There are many theories on the origins of 'Break a leg', including, simply, that it was another way to say, 'take a bow'. It has also been traced back to 1766 when Samuel Foote, the Manager of the London's Little Theatre, was thrown from his horse and broke his leg. Foote had been riding with the Duke of York, who had given Foote a bad horse as a prank. The Duke of York felt so bad about the accident he granted Foote the theatre license he had spent years lobbying for. The Little Theatre became the Theatre Royal Haymarket and the saying 'Break a leg' came to represent achieving success out of disaster.

## FRIDAY FLICKS FOR THE FAMILY



Friday 15 January 2021  
at 6.30pm  
**Family fun with  
"Paddington" (PG)**  
All children under 15 need to be accompanied by an adult

### Please note the earlier time folks!

A young bear who can walk and talk travels to London from the jungles of Peru. There, he is adopted by the Brown family and goes through many adventures in the big city. Cast includes Ben Whishaw as the voice of the title character, with Hugh Bonneville, Sally Hawkins, Julie Walters, Jim Broadbent, Peter Capaldi, and Nicole Kidman in live-action roles.

Book online at [www.mds.org.nz](http://www.mds.org.nz)



Rehearsals for this play  
by the late Michele  
Amas begin on Jan 21  
at 7.00pm at the Little  
Theatre

We have a great cast  
who are raring to nail this  
production into a real hit  
as we begin another

exciting year of thespian delights and diverting  
distractions for our adoring audiences.

However, no cast can perform without the all-  
important production crew be they backstage, set  
builders, lighting/sound, stage manager, props,  
wardrobe and much more so please consider  
joining the team as we don't want to have to  
screw your arms or hit you on the head with our  
little pink hammers! If you can assist in any of the  
production areas please contact Wanda 027 486  
00049 or Korstiaan 021 931 750

And remember that we are all . . .



## A REVIEW

'Blithe Spirit' by Noel Coward, has always been a favourite play of mine so when a new movie came out recently I had to go and see it. Having seen the 1945 film of this delightfully witty and fantastical Noel Coward play I was intrigued to compare the two films.

The 1945 film of "Blithe Spirit" was directed by David Lean. The screenplay was by Lean, cinematographer Ronald Neame and associate producer Anthony Havelock-Allan. The film starred Rex Harrison as Charles Condomine, Margaret Rutherford as the delightfully zany Madame Arcati and Kay Hammond as the ghost of Charles's wife Elvira and Constance Cummings as his present wife, Ruth.



The film was not very successful at the time and Coward himself, thought it a disappointing adaptation.

Since then it has been notable for its Technicolor photography and Oscar-winning visual effects in particular. It has been re-released several times, notably as one of the ten early David Lean features restored by the British Film Institute for release in 2008. Mind you, I enjoyed this film, but then I adore the play.

The latest adaptation is a gem and if you enjoy a well-executed and well-acted comedy, then this 2020 film will be just the tonic you need to put you in the holiday spirit as we begin the year.

Dan Stevens (*Downton Abbey*) is superb as Charles Condomine and Dame Judi Dench who played Madame Arcati in her own inimitable way said she felt like a 'Marvel Superhero' when she had to shoot the flying scenes on pulleys! However, I have to admit I just loved Margaret Rutherford's characterisation of the rather dotty clairvoyant.

Isla Fisher plays Ruth and Lesley Mann the wickedly naught ghost Elvira. Both, to perfection.

As one reviewer stated - "Throw in a terrific Hollywood-set coda, some deliciously witty bon mots and a couple of clever twists and the result is a richly rewarding, relaxing romp."

## The Story Behind Masks in Theatre



As we know the origin of the theatre masks dates back to thousands of years ago. The comedy and tragedy theatre masks are the most popular inheritance from ancient Greek theatre, as most of the plays back then were either comedies or tragedies.

Tragedies were generally musical, and though the world today tends to look at tragedy as a more sophisticated and difficult form of drama, experts suggest that the ancient Greeks actually believed that comedy was the most difficult to portray, as well as more sophisticated than tragedy. I think many of us would agree with that today as well.

From being symbolic of the two Muses, Thalia and Melpomene (more of them later) to becoming universally emblematic of drama and acting, the two theatre masks certainly have come a long, long way. Every play had them. Without them, amphitheatres seemed incomplete. These two faces represented the two basic emotions of joy and sorrow.



They weren't human faces; they were masks. We are talking about those two faces that have together become the symbol of theatre

**comedy** and **tragedy** theatre masks.

Though the masks as symbols of theatre and acting, have become popular universally, the story behind their origin is relatively less famous. What is interesting however, is that the masks are always portrayed together. The origins of these masks can be traced back to open-air Greek theatre. Greek plays were performed wearing them. The intent of wearing the masks was to represent different emotions, and their look was exaggerated for the audience to be able to clearly distinguish between them.



### Masks in Ancient Greek Theatre and Dionysus – the Greek God of wine

It is widely believed that theatre masks have originally been attributed to Dionysus, the Greek God of wine, grape harvest, fertility, and theatre, and were used in ancient Greek theatre as a homage to him. These masks are said to have a dual meaning— the drunken joy that wine

brings, as well as a sense of loss, sadness, and tragic emotions that wine can conjure.

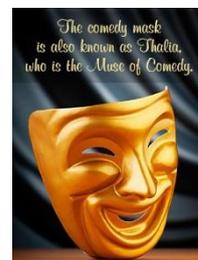
Symbolically, these masks were meant to allow the wearer to express his emotions freely, without any restraints. The comedy and tragedy masks have also specifically been attributed to two of the nine Greek goddesses, who each was the Muse of a creative expression. (In Greek mythology, a Muse was the protector of an art). Most of the ancient Greek plays were either comedies or tragedies, and hence, these two masks were the most popular ones.

Mythology aside, theatre masks were used by actors during performances so as to clearly depict emotions to every member of the audience, even one who was sitting in the seats far away from the stage. The large faces added a sense of exaggeration to the actors' emotions, which helped them convey their emotions to the entire open-air theatre. These masks also allowed actors to play characters independent of age and gender, as all the actors in ancient Greek theatre were always men.

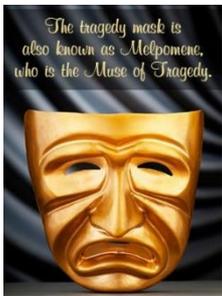
Theatre masks allowed them to play female roles with ease. Similarly, one actor could play more than one character with the help of these masks. Hence, we can conclude that theatre masks indeed played an extremely important role in ancient Greek drama.

## Meaning and History

The comedy and tragedy masks serve to show us the two aspects of human emotions— the comedy mask shows us how foolish human beings can be, while the tragedy mask portrays dark emotions, such as fear, sadness, and loss. The two masks are paired together to show the two extremes of the human psyche.



**Thalia** - The comedy mask is known as Thalia, who in Greek mythology is the Muse of Comedy and Idyllic Poetry. Thalia is the daughter of Zeus and Mnemosyne, and is portrayed as a happy, cheerful young woman crowned with ivy. Thalia is depicted with the comedy mask in one hand, and a trumpet or bulge in the other. Thalia and the comedy mask on stage were symbolized through thin shoes worn by actors in comedies that reduced their elevation on the stage, or wreaths made from ivy. Co-incidentally, ivy is also said to symbolize Dionysus.

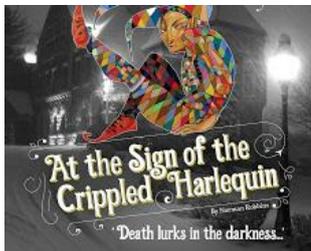


**Melpomene** – The tragedy mask is known as Melpomene, who according to Greek mythology is the Muse of Tragedy. Melpomene is depicted with the tragedy mask in one hand, and a knife or a club in the other. Actors represent Melpomene through an elevated stature on stage by wearing thick, raised boots.

Melpomene too, is the daughter of Zeus. Though Melpomene was initially the Muse of Singing, mythology tells us that Zeus's wife Hera cursed her in a fit of rage when she found out that Melpomene had been impregnated by Zeus, and had a daughter. Hera cursed Melpomene to become the Muse of Death. After Melpomene gave birth to a son, the second child of Zeus, Hera cursed her to become infertile, as also the Muse of tragedy. Melpomene is now known for the Muse of tragedy. She is portrayed with thick raised boots, known as a cothurnus.

### Our End of Year Production

Covid permitting will be **“At the Sign of the Crippled Harlequin”** by Norman Robbins and directed by Glenn Rosewell. Production dates are for 6 -13 November.

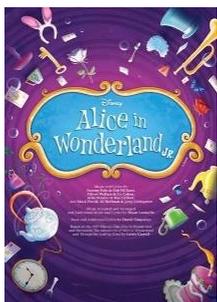


This is a comedy full of mistaken identity, dead bodies, a possibly haunted guest house in the Peak District in the deep winter snow, secrets aplenty.

There are mysterious guests, and the story is rich with shocks as well as laughs. It's also one of those thrillers where, unless you've seen the play before, you'll say *"I was not expecting that"* at the end.

Robbins is very good at writing interesting characters and there are eight very different characters in this play. With Glenn's directing talents I am sure it will prove another hit for MDS!

### WHAT'S ON AROUND & ABOUT



**19 – 23 January 2021**  
**Riverlea Theatre,**  
**Hamilton**  
 Tickets – phone 0508 ITICKET  
 (484-253)  
 online [www.riverleatheatre.nz](http://www.riverleatheatre.nz)



**Clarence Street Theatre**  
**26 February at 7.30**  
[www.clarencestreettheatre.co.nz](http://www.clarencestreettheatre.co.nz)

**PLUS**  
**MARCH 5-6<sup>th</sup> 2021**



Fresh from its 2019 world premiere in London, this fiendishly fashionable tour de

force pits **Jennifer Ward-Lealand** **CNZM** against **Anna Jullienne**, featuring **Rena Owen** (*Once Were Warriors*) in a rare stage appearance as the American First Lady's tough-talking press secretary. An Auckland Theatre Company Production.

**Te Aroha Dramatic Society**  
**‘The Vicar of Dibley’** directed by **John Watson**  
**12 – 20<sup>th</sup> March**  
**Enquiries 07 884 8004**  
[www.tads.org.nz](http://www.tads.org.nz)

### Cambridge Gaslight Theatre

**13– 27<sup>th</sup> March ‘Love from a Stranger’** by **Agatha Christie** directed by **Karen Carroll**  
[www.cambridgerepertory.org.nz](http://www.cambridgerepertory.org.nz)

### Morrinsville Theatre

#### Expressions of interest

Morrinsville Theatres first production for 2021 is the Play **"Menopause made me do it"** written by Devon Williamson and directed by Johanna Chase and Deborah May to be staged May/June. This is a comedy involving 5 women and one man set in a motel away for a weekend. We are looking at the end of January for auditions and there are scripts available if anyone would like a read. Expressions of interest can be made to Johanna & Deborah via email at [morrinsvilletheatrenz@hotmail.com](mailto:morrinsvilletheatrenz@hotmail.com)

*Overheard in the wings during 'Short & Sweet'*

My wife told me I had to stop acting like a flamingo.

So I had to put my foot down.

*Yours Theatrically*

Wanda

