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Drama and Theatre in and for Schools: Referencing the nature of theatre in contemporary New Zealand

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Jane Isobel Luton

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Abstract
This thesis considers the nature of drama and theatre in and for schools and references the nature of theatre in contemporary New Zealand. Drama in schools in New Zealand has developed from the earliest school productions in the 1800's, through its perceived role to enrich lives, to becoming a discrete Arts subject within the New Zealand educational curriculum in 1999. During this development, theatre companies began to tour schools and arguments ensued regarding drama's role in education as a process or performance. This development is charted through a range of historical and current curriculum documents. The thesis references the importance of the Australian UNESCO Seminar on drama in education in 1958 which explored the relationship between the educational aspects of Drama and Drama as an art form, and which inspired New Zealand Drama teachers. The research contains interviews conducted during 2009, with Drama teachers, students and theatre practitioners, as well as considering examples of performances by schools and professional theatre since the advent of the new curriculum. The thesis investigates some of the many kinds of Drama work taking place in contemporary New Zealand schools, including co-curricula and curricula productions concerning a wide range of issues and utilising a range of dramatic styles. These include, an Intermediate School's collaboration and contribution to capital E's production of Kia Ora Khalid, and examples of devised and scripted projects undertaken at Secondary Colleges in New Zealand. The research explores the relationship which exists between schools and professional theatre practitioners, and establishes some of the ways in which the relationship is beneficial for the development of high quality Drama programmes in schools. The contribution of the Auckland Theatre Company's Educational Unit to schools is investigated, as is an example of the Artist in Schools programme at Pakuranga College in Auckland. The introduction of the National certificate in Educational drama in 2001 has undoubtedly contributed to the range and quality of work being undertaken in schools, allowing the contention that their Drama
performance work can, and often does, contribute to the cultural welfare of local communities and to a New Zealand theatre identity in general.
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This has been the culmination of a dream for many years, therefore, this thesis is dedicated to my father who passed away in 2005 always hoping I would undertake a Master’s degree. It is to my husband Tim that I also dedicate this work, to thank him for making it possible for me to concentrate on this project during 2009.
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Introduction

This thesis considers the nature of theatre being developed and performed in schools and for schools in New Zealand and its contribution to a New Zealand theatre identity. The exploration of this topic necessarily involves a consideration of a range of key contributing factors and practices. It is important to establish how Drama developed in the New Zealand educational curriculum; its rationale, its pedagogy, and its specialist language. It is important to establish what is understood by Educational Drama and to examine the different kinds of Drama work that is taking place in contemporary New Zealand schools. The relationship between schools and the professional world of New Zealand Drama and theatre must also be considered. In what ways has this relationship been improved and valued (intrinsically and financially) and is it seen to be beneficial to the development of a high quality Drama programme within schools? Does the Drama work that schools perform contribute in any way to a local community and to a New Zealand theatre identity? This study is supported by reviews and analyses of a range of Drama work taking place in schools, mainly at secondary level, but also including work at primary and intermediate levels.

Literature review

Prior to seeing a range of productions and carrying out interviews with Drama teachers and Theatre practitioners it was necessary to look first at two areas of documentation; the History of Educational drama and theatre, and the Development of Drama in the New Zealand Curriculum. There is much information available about the history of Drama in education within the United Kingdom, as it was from here that many of the theories and practice have evolved. This included the work of Dorothy Heathcote, Peter Slade and Gavin Bolton. Within the last twenty years there have been many useful books written specifically guiding teachers in their teaching of Drama at examination level including Kempe and Nicholson. There are
online documents available which chart current developments in Creative Partnerships and authentic learning in the arts in the United Kingdom.

There are several useful texts which contribute to a view of aspects of theatre History in New Zealand including *Shadows on the stage: Theatre in New Zealand, the first 70 years* by Peter Downes, and *The New Zealand Stage 1891-1900* by John Thomson. *The History of state education in New Zealand 1840-1975* by Cumming and Cumming(1978), and *The mother of all departments: the history of the department of internal affairs* by Bassett (1997), give an overview of education in New Zealand. It was interesting to note the development of educational theories, appertaining to child centred education, and the valued placed upon the Arts in education, in the early twentieth century.

The history of Drama in Education within New Zealand exists in many separate parts, requiring exploration of books including: *A Survey of the Arts* by E.C Simpson (1961), and the text of Susan Battye's report to the Drama New Zealand Conference in 2005. There are accounts of Theatre in Education work available in *Act* magazine, and the documents prepared by Paul Bushnell, in the early 1990s, give an insight into the evolution of assessment of Drama at sixth form level. Perhaps, one of the most exciting documents to located was the typed copy, available online, of the *Australian UNESCO Seminar on drama in education* held in 1958. It was a rallying cry for the development of drama in education, attended by several interested teachers from New Zealand.

Several of the documents that have contributed to this study have been found online, for New Zealand's educational departments, schools and theatres have embraced this method of communicating with teachers, students and the community. The New Zealand Ministry of Education’s Online Learning Centre (Te Kete Ipurangi), and The New Zealand Qualifications Authority, both place all documentation regarding learning and assessment areas on their websites. The Drama New Zealand website, hosts the online version of the *New Zealand Journal of Research in Performing Arts and Education* which contains many valuable accounts.
of Drama work taking place within schools. The University of Auckland's online forum for Drama teachers, known as Dramanet, provided current discussion about the topics that were engaging drama teachers throughout 2009. *The New Zealand Herald* and community newspapers for the Auckland area are also easily accessible and important in that they regularly review and discuss theatre and drama within the local community. This has helped to paint a picture of drama in and for schools during the past few years.

Structurally, the thesis poses the following questions:

- How has Drama developed as a curriculum subject in New Zealand?
- What is the role of New Zealand Drama in the curriculum?
- What kind of Drama is taking place in schools and can it offer a valid contribution to a Drama of New Zealand?
- What links exist between professional theatre and schools and how important are they to the development of high quality Drama programmes in schools?
- How has the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) in Drama contributed to the teaching and learning of Drama?
- Do schools make a contribution to a NZ theatre identity?

Aside from an article by Hogan and Readman, there was little literature available concerning this topic directly and so it was essential to carry out interviews with professional theatre practitioners, practising Drama teachers and students, conducted during 2009 and including:

- Ms Lynne Cardy, Creative Development & Education Manager of The Auckland Theatre Company,
- Mr. Anton Bentley, Head of Drama at Botany Downs Secondary College, and theatre practitioner at Howick Little Theatre, Auckland
- The Level 3 Drama Students at Botany Downs Secondary College, Auckland
- Ms Jacqui Hood, Head of Drama and Dance at Macleans College, Auckland.
The research took place in the form of questions and/ or a face to face discussion lasting about half an hour, with one exception that took place over the telephone at a more convenient time. All were teachers or practitioners with a wealth of experience and success in their field. In order to meet the ethical approval of The University of Waikato, all participants received a description of the research project and a summary of the types of questions that would be asked. They were informed that a transcript of the interview or copies of answers to the questions would be sent to them should they wish to add any more information, change their opinion or withdraw from the research up to a month after the interview. They were free to ask any questions and invited to express their opinions unreservedly during the interview. They frequently discussed ideas or themes that were of particular interest or concern to them unconfined by the questions. All participants consented to have their comments used and all engaged further in the process by later reading and adding or editing their comments.

The questions for teachers concerned the use of Drama within the curriculum, including the role of Drama in the school, the relationship if any that exists with professional theatre, the forms of Drama, curricular and co curricula, that are devised and produced within the school and the ways in which they think the performances contributed to Drama in the community and in New Zealand. The Level 3 National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) Drama students at Botany Downs College were interviewed during a Drama lesson with their teacher present. They were asked about their performance at the school of *Vinegar Tom* by Caryl Churchill, and discussed freely their process of preparing, rehearsing and performing the play. This included the research they had undertaken, what they had learnt from the work and the ways in which their performance contributed to their community or New Zealand theatre? The students
were not individually identified but all contributed enthusiastically to the
discussion and gave many valuable insights into their project. The two
theatre practitioners interviewed, Lynne Cardy and Nicole Jorgensen,
answered questions concerning the relationship between professional
theatre, Drama practitioners and the local school community. They
discussed the forms of Drama devised and produced specifically for
schools audiences, the range of professional training and workshops that
were available for teachers of Drama and how their work contributed to
Drama in schools. Everyone interviewed was enthusiastic and positive in
their belief that Drama was a vital and valuable curriculum subject.

Several school productions, and some examples of professional and
community theatre, were seen during 2009 in order to draw some
conclusions about the kinds of work happening in and for schools around
Auckland. These productions included:

- *Vinegar Tom* by Caryl Churchill at Botany Downs Secondary
  College,
- *Kia Ora Khalid* by Capital E Theatre Company
- *Our Country’s Good* by Timberlake Wertenbaker at Macleans
  College
- *Twisted* by Andrew Fusek Peters and Polly Peters at Macleans
  College
- *The Revenge of the Amazons* by Jean Betts at Pakuranga College
- Level 3 devised work on Immigration at Pakuranga College
- *The Pohutakawa Tree* by Bruce Mason at the ATC
- *King and Country* by Dave Armstrong at the Howick Little Theatre
- *Art* by Yasmina Reza at the Howick Little Theatre

Other work that has taken place in schools around New Zealand has been
referenced with examples drawn from a variety of documents and
exemplars shared by teachers with their peers. This thesis was originally
inspired by my own experience of teaching Drama in primary and
secondary schools in both the United Kingdom and New Zealand and two
of my projects at Saint Kentigern College, Auckland, have been included:
The production in 2003 of *Killed* by The Belgrade Theatre In Education,
and a Theatre in Education (TIE) project devised by Saint Kentigern NCEA Drama students for an Auckland Primary School.

In Sharon Hogan and Kylie Readman’s article, *Proposing a new model for school-initiated youth performance*, about a project in Australia which brought together teachers, Drama students and professional artists to devise Youth Theatre for performance in a professional venue, an important statement regarding the Drama work of young people is made:

Many Drama classes devise and present high quality, engaging and original course work for friends and peers in schools but it rarely receives the recognition and resources that other forms of youth participation seem to get in the public domain. Despite the abundance of performance practice generated in school contexts, it is difficult to find the words 'school', 'teacher' or 'student' in any policy material involving youth performance (Hogan & Readman, 2006, pp. 16-20).

They continue, pointing out that,

In existing definitions of youth performance, the relationship of the teacher, the professional artist and the student and the relationship between Drama curriculum, 'school' performance and 'public' performance are not acknowledged or explored. Perhaps this is based on the perception that what students devise in schools as part of the Drama curriculum has little value beyond the subject area or its contribution to a final grade. (Hogan & Readman, 2006, p. 48)

This thesis will acknowledge and explore some of the ways in which schools are creating and presenting such “high quality, engaging and original” Drama work and give them some of the recognition and acknowledgement that they deserve. In collaboration with their teachers, and with insights gained through seeing live theatre, or attending professional theatre workshops, Drama students in New Zealand are creating their own theatre and actively learning about their history, culture and society. Young people are becoming experts in theatre, creating the Drama practitioners and the audiences of the future. By performing their work publicly, students are providing Drama experiences that may not otherwise be available to their local communities. The long hours involved
in many of the projects, the creative insights shown and professional patina of the productions demand that they are given their rightful place in the canon of New Zealand theatre practice. These students are often led by highly enthusiastic, accomplished, creative teachers who are at the forefront of pedagogical practice. The fact that schools study Drama both theoretically and practically often requires professional artists to become involved in the teaching-learning process, thus developing further opportunities for Drama work to be developed, and performed. Since the development of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) in Drama, schools have actively engaged with New Zealand Drama and frequently perform plays which may not be seen in a professional theatre.

The thesis contains 12 chapters that explore Drama and Theatre in and for schools beginning, in Chapter 1, with an exploration of the development of Drama as a curriculum subject in New Zealand education; why and how it first come to be a subject taught in schools, and what led to it being included in the National Curriculum. Chapter 2 discovers how the Drama syllabus in New Zealand developed and ensured Drama took its place in the National Curriculum as a discrete Arts subject with its own assessment, language and pedagogy.

Chapter 3 investigates the ways in which New Zealand Drama has become an important part of the NCEA Drama syllabus and the ways in which students are engaging and performing the work of New Zealand playwrights. Many of these performances utilise New Zealand plays or demonstrate how students and teachers are shaping and recontextualising overseas work to speak to a New Zealand society.

Drama in schools has come a long way from the co-curricular play which “was the principal manifestation of Drama” (Greenwood, 2009) although co-curricular school productions are an important expression of Drama in schools. Chapter 4 investigates how teachers choose their material, audition their casts, rehearse, direct and produce what is often the largest and most time consuming event in a school year. With the development of
the NCEA Drama courses, curricula productions now provide many fine examples of Dramatic work in schools.

Chapter 5 considers a student performance of *Vinegar Tom* by Caryl Churchill. The play was chosen as a vehicle for NCEA student assessment, performed to a public audience and gained a performance award for one of its student actors. The discussion with the students demonstrates the high level of learning students can gain from their practical and theoretical study of Drama.

Chapter 6 examines how students’ devised work contributes to peer learning demonstrating their engagement in and performance of work that makes a valuable contribution to their own learning and that of their peers, younger students, their own families and communities. Examples are cited from different projects that have taken place in schools in New Zealand.

Over the years a closer connection has developed between professional theatres and schools and this is demonstrated in Chapter 7 through the work of The Auckland Theatre Company, Capital E’s educational project “Kia Ora Khalid” and the work of Nicole Jorgensen, a professional actress, employed in a secondary school as part of the Artists in Schools’ initiative. The Artist in Schools, described by Trevor Sharp as “a cutting edge and educationally rich project”, (T. Sharp, 2009a) was funded by the new Zealand Government. While researching this project in 2009 it was announced that the funding would be removed because “it does not contribute directly to” the “core education priorities” (Aronson, 2009). Those interviewed for the research spoke about the positive contribution the project made to student learning in Drama.

Chapter 8 describes how a student directed school production; *Revenge of the Amazons* by Jean Betts, was produced and performed at Pakuranga College, serving as a vehicle both for NCEA assessment and as the annual school production for the school and local community. It was interesting to note that several of the students had taken part in workshops as part of the Artists in Schools project, thus gaining professional insight
prior to directing the production. The relationship between professional practitioners and Schools has become more important as schools seek to give their students authentic educational experiences and raise standards of learning and performance.

The educational work of the Auckland Theatre Company is surveyed in Chapter 9 with an interview with Lynne Cardy, the Creative Development & Education Manager. This is the largest professional theatre company in Auckland which reaches over 10,000 students a year through its workshops, forums and productions.

Chapter 10 describes the work of another professional company, Capital E, and in particular its project *Kia ora Khalid* which involved research and performance collaboration with schools.

Chapter 11 examines the way in which NCEA has given Drama a status within schools through Levels 1, 2 and 3 and Scholarship. In 2008, according to the statistics on the New Zealand Qualifications’ website, and only seven years after the introduction of NCEA Drama, there were 61,959 students entered for Unit Standards and Achievement Standards in Drama at NCEA Level 1 – 3 (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2009d). In other words, there were over sixty thousand children aged 16-18 engaging and exploring some of the many facets of theatre and Drama, and this number does not include all those at Primary and Intermediate schools who now have the opportunity to experience Drama due to the placement of this subject into the curriculum as a discrete Arts’ subject in 1999.

Chapter 12 visits a community theatre production of a New Zealand play, *King and Country* by Dave Armstrong, and draws some links with a similar theme explored by Drama students at a local college in 2003. The production of *Killed* led to the further development of Drama facilities at the school, and to the creation by students of a New Zealand context for a British play.
The conclusion summarises the ways in which Drama is contributing to both education and creativity in schools and in what ways the relationship with professional practitioners is assisting in the process. It looks at the way in which Drama is developing the theatre practitioners and audiences of the future, as Alan Plater, the British playwright is quoted as saying, “the most valuable asset any nation has is the creativity of its children” (Arts Council England, 2003, p. 4). The future of New Zealand Drama may well lie in the encouragement and development of these developing practitioners.

It is important to recognise that the implementation of Drama within the curriculum owes much to the vision and drive of Drama New Zealand, the professional body of Drama teachers whose maxim is, “E hao kit e taonga pounamu: seek the revered treasure” (Drama New Zealand, 2005, p. 1). They have fought to progress the status and role of Drama in the New Zealand Curriculum and, as Janinka Greenwood describes,

It grew from a small group of activists who heard the trumpet call of Dorothy Heathcote’s reconceptualisation of Drama as a tool for learning and who initially worked in the corners and fringes of schools to an association that draws together a national body of strong, enthusiastic, mutually supportive and capable teaches who teach Drama as an established and assessed curriculum subject up to the highest levels of the secondary school” (Greenwood, 2009, p. 245).

Trevor Sharp, the Secondary Facilitator for Drama at Team Solutions, the University of Auckland encouraged Drama teachers in 2009 to look to the future,

...let us remember how far we have come since 2001 when we first became officially recognised as a subject. And remember that, in the next few years, we will have a new matrix of standards offering much more choice for the range of students we teach with their different interests and learning styles. There will be opportunity for the performer as well as the writer, the student with the penchant for theatre technologies and also for those who like to take a broad approach to Drama. (T. Sharp, 2009a)
In a recent article, Janinka Greenwood, discussing some of the developments in school Drama in New Zealand asked: “Is Drama in schooling obsessed by assessment? Are we more concerned with interpreting the minutiae of NCEA descriptors than exploring the role of the aesthetic?” (Greenwood, 2009, p. 258). This thesis aims to show how far Drama in schools has come in New Zealand since the first Drama productions in the 19th century and to demonstrate that Drama in and for schools, although justified by the National Curriculum and NCEA, is not limited by its objectives and descriptors. It is alive and well, flourishing with creativity and originality, and making a contribution to a New Zealand theatre identity.
Chapter 1: History of ‘Drama in Education’ in New Zealand

1937 - 1970

Drama has been a discrete subject in the New Zealand National Curriculum since 1999 taking its place as one of the four Arts subjects alongside Visual Arts, Dance and Music. According to a keynote address given by Susan Battye (2005) to the Drama New Zealand Conference, entitled *E hao ki te Taonga Pounamu: Seek the revered treasure a trip down memory lane and a peep into the future of Drama in education*, New Zealand teachers have been interested in using Drama to support their interest in child-centred education since the 1960s. The New Zealand government embraced the concept of child-centred education as early as 1937, inspired by the writings and lectures on education of John Dewey who was “an American psychologist, philosopher, educator, social critic and political activist” (American National Biography Online, 2009). In his book about Dewey, Boisvert summarises Dewey’s view that, “any system of schooling must build on a child's natural curiosity and interests. It must also recognize that the child is fundamentally an active participant, not a passive spectator” (1997, p. 72). His views were quite radical and dared to suggest that the traditional methods of educating children were not necessarily the best way to prepare children for a changeable future. According to Battye, the interest in child-centred education led to developments in the New Zealand curriculum which placed a higher emphasis on physical and artistic activities during the 1950s. Theatre companies toured the country in the 1940s and 1950s enabling children to see dance and theatre in their places of learning Battye, S. (2005).

Prior to 1937, there were forward-thinking educationalists in New Zealand. Looking at the development of education in New Zealand it is noticeable that drawing and singing had been in the curriculum since the beginning of the 20th century. George Hogben, the Inspector General for Schools and Secretary for State for Education in 1899, was interested in what he called the “natural” method of teaching (New Zealand Ministry for Culture and
Heritage, 1966). His 1913 curriculum allowed for plenty of singing and of drawing he said it was to be “regarded as a means of assisting expression in the child’s daily life and study and for this should be taught as a language rather than an art” (I. Cumming & Cumming, 1978, pp. 192-193).

In 1938 an article was printed in the Education Gazette entitled, *The Schools of 1938*, which according to John L. Ewing was the “first official statement of the period on the future of the curriculum” (1970, p. 195). The article hinted that the year ahead offered, “an excellent opportunity for exploratory work in curricula-making” and “history, geography, science of everyday life, music, arts and crafts – choral speaking, recitation and Dramatic work, will afford unlimited scope for originality” (Ewing, 1970, p. 197). This could possibly be the first actual reference to the use of Drama within the curriculum although we shall see that Drama has been used by schools since the earliest days of its colonial past.

In his book about the history of the Department of Internal Affairs, Bassett describes how, in 1946, encouraged by Heenan, the Under Secretary to the Department of Internal Affairs, the Government decided to combine funds into the “Cultural and Recreational Trust Account” which became known as the “Cultural Fund” (Bassett, 1997, p. 138). Bassett describes Heenan’s encouragement of the Government to support the Arts as,

…sensing that changing social conditions had reduced the assistance available from wealthy patrons, but also that art had an indefinable yet real contribution to make to the nations’ welfare, he positioned the government as the new patron of what became, over time, a major arts support system. (1997, p. 138)

According to Bassett, over the next three years, among the grants to arts groups, £6500 was paid to arts societies and the Community Arts service which employed actors to give performances in schools, and £1700 to the “New Zealand Drama Council to provide tutor organizers” (1997, p. 138). He concludes that, “The newly established cultural section was now
regularly in touch with the wider artistic community …. A new relationship between the State and the Arts had been forged”. (Bassett, 1997, p. 139)

According to E.C. Simpson, in his *Survey of The Arts in New Zealand*, undertaken on behalf of The Wellington Chamber Music Society, this led to the creation of the first professional theatre company to be formed in New Zealand; the Community Arts Service Drama Unit which in 1948 toured small towns in the North Island (1961). It was felt that after the war people had been deprived of cultural activity and the service was created to “supply examples of the arts by professionals” to “enrich” lives and to create a “desire for further knowledge of the arts” (E. C. Simpson, 1961, p. 126).

In 1956, the Player’s Drama Quartet began to tour secondary schools throughout the country. According to Simpson’s survey the tour was so popular that the Quartet visited many more schools than had been previously planned for. In 1957 the group toured 100 schools and by 1959 was touring to 120 schools. According to the survey, “in the four years, the Drama quartet had played almost four hundred performances to fifty thousand schoolchildren” (Simpson, 1961, p. 77). The Players encouraged young people to become involved in theatre through their workshops and Simpson wrote that,

...hundreds of secondary children have tried their hand at scene shifting and examined the properties and the set at close hand. A few have been put through their acting paces, while the class out in the stalls has offered advice and criticism. (E. C. Simpson, 1961, p. 77)

In 1958, the Southern Comedy Players toured their first programme of plays to schools in the South Island.

**Australian UNESCO Seminar on Drama in Education 1958**

Simpson records that in 1959 the Australian National Advisory Committee for UNESCO¹ organised a seminar to discuss Drama in education

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¹ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
New Zealand sent a delegation from the New Zealand Drama Council and from the New Zealand Regional Council of Adult Education to the seminar in Sydney where discussions centred on ways in which young people could be interested in theatre. The Australian UNESCO Seminar on Drama in Education took place, according to the typed records of the occasion, between the 16th and 22nd of August 1958 at the Sydney Teachers’ College (Australian National Advisory Committee for UNESCO, 1960). There were three hundred participants and a delegation of six from New Zealand who were thanked for “crossing the Tasman to give us the benefit of their NZ experience” (Australian National Advisory Committee for UNESCO, 1960, p. 16). According to W. J. Weeden, who wrote the foreword to the report, it was, “the result of several years of planning by a small group of enthusiastic people with a special interest in Dramatic work in education,” it was his expressed hope that, “the ideas discussed in so lively and profitable fashion at the seminar will continue to be spread”. (Australian National Advisory Committee for UNESCO, 1960, p. 3). The Seminar discussed a number of areas during that week in 1958 which included the relationship between Drama as an educational activity and Drama as an art form, the policy for Drama in education and the links between professional theatre and Drama education.

Professor H.W. Robinson spoke at the seminar on, “The relationship between Drama as an educational activity and Drama as an art form”. It was his view that just exposing children to public performance does not “usually answer the question of "why" or "how". He believed “education must dissect, analyse and attribute reason to values and then offer the opportunity to create based on these standards and under competent supervision.” (Australian National Advisory Committee for UNESCO, 1960, pp. 19-20). Professor Robinson made a powerful plea for theatre to be taught in schools but his statements also highlighted the need for specialists who were trained in Drama and theatre. He said in quite evangelical tones that theatre,

...is not an extracurricular activity to be administered in spare time by the untrained and insensitive.
submit that the theatre is an ideal methodology for education...The theatre is an art...Theatre should be taught in the schools...Theatre should be taught as a regular part of the curriculum...Theatre should be taught by trained personnel...it is the duty of the state and the universities to provide training for this development. These things I believe. (Australian National Advisory Committee for UNESCO, 1960, p. 20)

Another speaker at the UNESCO seminar was Mr John Allen of the School Broadcasting Department of the British Broadcasting Corporation. In the seminar on ‘A Continuing Policy for Drama in Education’, he expressed his view that one of the biggest problems for Drama educators in Britain was the emphasis put upon academic achievement: "This is used as an excuse to stop making any efforts to give children an imaginative life within school hours." He continued to express strong views that Drama in schools "is sterile, formal, unimaginative and uncreative" (Australian National Advisory Committee for UNESCO, 1960, p. 23). Professor Fred Alexander in his introductory address to the seminar felt strongly about the need for closer links between professional theatre and Drama work in schools. He stated that,

If one aim of Drama in primary and secondary education is to give children a love and an appreciation of Drama, there must be a closer link between schools and established theatres. Both professional and amateur repertory should be linked with Drama in schools or at least with Drama in secondary schools. (Australian National Advisory Committee for UNESCO, 1960, p. 12)

He felt that the value of the link would be obvious to teachers of Drama but wondered whether professional theatres would understand the importance, “yet these theatrical governing bodies should surely be alive to the potential significance for them of this education of their future customers” (Australian National Advisory Committee for UNESCO, 1960, p. 12). The contingent of Drama educators from New Zealand must surely have arrived back fired with enthusiasm for further progress to be made in the field of Drama in education.
In 1963, the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council was created in New Zealand and began operations on April 1st 1964 (Bassett, 1997). According to Susan Battye, the Arts Council has encouraged and supported much of the development of Drama and Theatre in Education in New Zealand (Battye, 2005, p. 15). She commented that the policy of the council was to, ...promote professional standards in the arts in New Zealand. The Council, in partnership with the former Department of Education, supported teachers, professional theatre practitioners, and theatre in education companies, which were known as Performers in Schools. (Battye, 2005, p. 15)

The first New Zealand handbook for Drama

According to Susan Battye, in her keynote address, a Drama handbook, Classroom Drama for Forms 1 to 4 was developed by John Osborne in 1966 and published by the New Zealand Department of Education. Battye stated that the “creative approach” to Drama was seen as outdated soon after the book’s publication (Battye, 2005, p.14). It must however have proved popular as the Director-General of Education, A. N. V. Dobbs, wrote in the book’s preface that a further reprint of over 500 copies had to be made because it was in such demand (New Zealand Department of Education & Osborn, 1973). The book was described as a “handbook of suggestions for teachers; it is in no way a prescriptive outline or course. It is a practical book for beginners, a source book of ideas to help teachers to introduce classroom Drama” (New Zealand Department of Education & Osborn, 1973, p. 2). It must be remembered that Drama was not a separate subject in its own right at this time and neither were the arts mandatory within the curriculum.

The author emphasised to teachers using the book that Drama “has a place in two distinct but complementary ways: it is a creative activity in its own right and it is a way of teaching and learning in any subject” (New Zealand Department of Education & Osborn, 1973, p. 2). When Osborn refers to Drama being a “creative activity” he sees children’s Dramatic play as an art form which is then utilised within classroom Drama. He regarded
‘Theatre’ as a distinct art form in its own right that requires actors and an audience and makes the point that the audience does not have to be present in classroom Drama. As such, students do not have to have wonderful theatre skills in order to take part (New Zealand Department of Education & Osborn, 1973, p. 12). However, he argued that since all children will gain by taking part in Drama, it will lead to an increased appreciation of “putting on a play” which “should result in a wider audience as well as a corps of enthusiasts for Drama, and should help to develop a more discriminating attitude towards Drama in all its forms – for example, television, cinema, ballet” (New Zealand Department of Education & Osborn, 1973, p. 14).

There seems at this time that to have been a general apprehension about teaching children theatre skills and assessing those skills. This may have stemmed from a lack of available training and expertise among teachers in the field of Drama. For those who were familiar with the work of educational Drama practitioners, Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton there may have been an uncertainty as to whether process or performance was to be emphasised in Drama teaching. As Shifra Schonmann writes in her article *How to recognize Dramatic talent when you see it: And then what?*

Bolton and Heathcote start at the child's present level and take him or her into a new area according to each child's ability. In practice, neither of them deals with or is interested in developing a child's talent for acting in the theater. Their writings, workshops, and videos appear to make it clear that their emphasis is on developing each student's intellectual, creative, socio-emotional, and sensory-motor skills. The fostering of Dramatic talent by itself, as a well-defined ability, is of no concern to them. (1997)

Osborn’s book may have emphasised the creative approach to Drama but it had many useful features that formed a backbone to the teaching of theatre forms and conventions in Drama. Subject-specific vocabulary was used that has since appeared in the Drama curriculum. For example, movement is analysed under space, time, weight and position, levels, tempo, rhythm, tension, all of which have become important aspects of
literacy in the Drama curriculum. The book also gave interesting examples of how the theatrical form of Documentary Drama could be developed from a wide variety of topics, themes and ideas, and how play texts could be explored.

1971- 1986

Educational Drama in New Zealand appears to have had some close links with professional theatre during its inception and development. In 1975, according to Susan Battye in her keynote address, Sunny Amey became the first Curriculum Officer for Drama appointed by the Education Department (2005, p. 87).

Amey was a New Zealander by birth and had extensive theatrical experience in New Zealand and the United Kingdom, working with Laurence Olivier at the National Theatre in London. She returned to New Zealand in 1970 (Smythe, 2004) and became the first female artistic director of Downstage Theatre in Wellington from 1970 to 1974. In 1971, she was the consultant director at the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council of New Zealand Interim Drama School known simply as “Drama school” (Gaitanos, 2006). Today the school is known as Toi Whakaari and is New Zealand’s premiere Drama school. Sunny Amey’s work at Downstage was described as having “led Downstage into a new age of professionalism” (Smythe, 2004, p. 156). In an interview conducted by Richard Cook in 1984 for his thesis entitled, Drama in education: Investigating the rationales, guidelines and activities of educational drama, Amey noted that her appointment was “a strong statement from the Department [of Education] that this was an area that mattered” (Cook, 1984, p. 55). It must have been an exciting moment for Drama educators to finally have a professional on board, someone who would understand and support the development of Drama within schools. In this interview with Richard Cook, Amey confirmed that during her time as Curriculum Development Officer more and more teachers experimented with Drama as a learning tool. Some were becoming frustrated at the limitations and wanted to take Drama further (Cook, 1984, p. 52).
The visit in 1978, of Dorothy Heathcote, the British Drama in Education practitioner, not only gave Drama a higher profile in New Zealand but, according to Battye, it also brought together a “network of Drama teachers” (Battye, 2005, p. 16). It led to the publication of the Drama Newsletter in 1979, and was followed by opportunities for teachers to travel to the United Kingdom funded by the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council to study two key educational Drama practitioners, Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton.

In 1984, Sunny Amey noted in the interview that “I think the time is ripe for a very big push in the use of Drama both as a learning medium and also the theatre side” (Cook, 1984, p. 53). As Amey looked to the future of Drama in education in New Zealand she felt that the networking of Drama teachers was of great importance. One of the methods by which this would be achieved was through the founding of The New Zealand Association for Drama in Education of which the founding president was Susan Battye. Battye herself says that the motto for the association should be “Network! Network! Network! For that is what we’ve all been doing locally, regionally, nationally and internationally for the past twenty years” (Battye, 2005, p. 11). Amey wanted to see teachers being trained in Drama as a learning medium and for there to be a team “based at a Drama or an arts complex who could saturate a school with ideas, teacher support and Theatre in Education – as well as have teachers and students in for workshops”(Cook, 1984, p. 56).

However, in her interview with Cook, Amey felt the future for Drama lay in the use of Drama as a learning tool with the emphasis on participation rather than performance. She felt that students in both primary and secondary school should be encouraged to devise and present their own work. Cook summed up Amey’s view in his thesis that, “the direction educational Drama in New Zealand is taking is towards non-performance Drama used as a teaching tool” (Cook, 1984, p. 57).
However, twenty five years later, the establishment of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement emphasised the importance of Drama and theatre in performance at Levels 1, 2, 3 and Scholarship. Students at senior level explore Drama through theory, text and performance. The performance of both devised and scripted texts is validated and encouraged at its highest levels.

The importance of Theatre in Education (TIE) to Schools

As Battye writes in her keynote address, one of the roles of the Curriculum Officer was to support Theatre in Education initiatives and develop a link between teachers and artists (2005). Touring theatre had been around for many years, however Theatre in Education was a new development influenced by the work of The Belgrade Theatre in Coventry, United Kingdom which was founded in 1965. Instead of touring a show to a school audience the company developed material that matched the needs of the curriculum and age groups of their audiences. Theatre in Education productions were performed with few props and sets and designed to be flexible in a wide variety of spaces which may or may not be intended for performances. Hence they become accessible to a range of schools. The Belgrade Company said of their work, “It was a groundbreaking project and word soon spread to other UK theatres and beyond. To this day it is an ongoing international success story, which continues to benefit millions of young people all over the world” (The Belgrade Theatre, 2009).

In New Zealand, during the 1970s the mantle of Theatre in Education (TIE) was taken up by two companies, Stage-Truck who were the Theatre in Education and Community Company of Downstage Theatre in Wellington and the Theatre Corporate, based in Auckland, who ran a TIE company both for primary and secondary schools. The aims and objectives of TIE in New Zealand were similar to those in the UK which was to take theatre to schools that was age appropriate, challenging and relevant to the curriculum.
Gillian Sutton of Theatre Corporate wrote in her article for *Act* magazine that teachers had many differing demands of their company,

…some still want texts elucidated and want to give pupils a chance to talk to someone who has delved into a particular character (Hamlet, King Lear or Katherine Mansfield for 1979) in more depth than possible at school level. Others want a full theatrical presentation for entertainment value only – to give their pupils a taste of ‘pure theatre’….Others want to teach the audience more about acting so they can use the skills in their own school production. We show an actor taking many parts; we use little scenery and few props so that the audience’s imaginations are set to work by skilful mime. (1979, p. 46)

Theatre Corporate’s work in primary schools supported the curriculum and allowed for teachers to continue with follow up work after the actors had left. Each performance lasted between an hour to an hour and twenty minutes in order to fit within the confines of the school timetable. The performance would be followed by discussions with the actors and a workshop where the students could involve themselves in improvisations arising from the work or develop further Drama skills. Sutton also noted in the same article that, “we also have a New Zealand programme to remind us of our heritage through indigenous literature placed in chronological order. Masks are used to highlight the mythological” (Sutton, 1979, p. 46).

Thirty years on, Theatre in Education is still an important educational tool to explore issues of relevance to schools. For example, Kids4Kids is an Auckland based Theatre in Education company that specialises in developing programmes for schools to suit the needs of the curriculum. Examples of the environmental issues they have explored are, *The Great Drain Game* and *Don’t Trash It, Stash It* (*Kids4drama, 2009*). Capital E National Theatre Company in Wellington is a company specialising in quality theatre for children. This company’s production of *Kia ora Khalid* is discussed elsewhere in this thesis. Their mission statement is “to give every young New Zealander the opportunity to experience the very best in professional performance art, through work that speaks of Aotearoa and our place in the world” (*Capital E National Theatre for Children, 2009a*).
The Company specialises in performances for the 2 to 12 year age group and their work is presented in theatrical venues to give students the experience of going to a live theatre performance. Their work differs from that of companies like Theatre Corporate in that children, usually, watch a performance developed for them rather than taking part actively through workshops and improvisations. Follow-up work is the responsibility of the teacher.

Conclusion

Both Professor Fred Alexander’s hope in 1960, and Sunny Amey’s in 1984, for closer links between schools and professional theatre have been achieved. Today there are theatre companies that carry out such programmes, supporting teachers and students with ideas. They see their work with schools as an important part of their vocation. The Edge, for example, is an Auckland based company which provides arts programmes for the community. Of their educational work, they write that their “programmes deliver curriculum-focused projects that provide children and young people with high quality, relevant and inspirational learning experiences in the arts” (The Edge, 2004). As we shall see in a later chapter, the Auckland Theatre Company places great importance on its role as an educator. In the 2009 Education Pack for The Pohutakawa Tree by Bruce Mason, the Company states that this work, “promotes and encourages teaching and participation in theatre and acts as a resource for secondary and tertiary educators” and confirm the importance of their role: “the experiences enjoyed by the youth of today are reflected in the vibrancy of theatre in the future” (McWilliams, 2009, p. 31).
Chapter 2: Development of the Senior Drama Syllabus

1986-1999

Drama first began to be taught as a sixth form subject in its own right in New Zealand with the introduction of Sixth Form Certificate in 1986, which replaced University Entrance. The certificate, according to the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, “was originally developed to allow schools to provide a more comprehensive range of courses than was available from University Entrance subjects” (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2009a) and was internally assessed by schools. In her keynote address to the Drama New Zealand Conference of 2005, Susan Battye said that these courses, “continued to grow to a point where almost a third of all secondary schools in New Zealand offered their own locally registered Sixth Form Certificate Drama Course” (2005, p. 18). In 1989, there was a government review carried out regarding the policy on education which became known as ‘The Curriculum Review’ (Battye, 2005, p. 18). This in its turn led to a decision to trial Drama as an ‘Essential Area of Learning’ in the Arts which included Music, Dance and Visual Arts.

In 1990, Paul Bushnell was involved in the development of grade related criteria by which to assess senior Drama. According to Bushnell, there had been a draft course statement for Drama developed by the Department of Education in 1989 (Bushnell, 1992a). In his introduction to The Development of Grade related Criteria in Sixth Form Certificate Drama, Bushnell describes the problems that face teachers striving to teach and assess Drama at sixth form level. For most, they had no specialist degree in the subject and possibly only a background experience in amateur theatre. They were more likely than teachers of other subjects to be teaching in isolation unable to share with others the work they were undertaking. The other issue was the broad range of views about how Drama should be taught in schools.
Bushnell pointed out that after the visit of Dorothy Heathcote to New Zealand many felt it was the process of Drama as a learning medium that should be the central focus. Others, who “had an enthusiasm for production have wanted to teach it in class time” (Bushnell, 1992a, p. 7). For this reason, it was therefore felt there was a need to develop assessment criteria for Drama which would not only assist teachers but bring with it a new consistency that would, “legitimise the existence of Drama as a curriculum area” (Bushnell, 1992a, p. 8). He believed then that, “if Drama is to have a permanent place as a subject in NZ schools it must feature ways of assessment which manifest the quality of the teaching and learning the subject entails” (Bushnell, 1992a, p. 40).

Bushnell and the teachers who took part in the development of Grade Related Criteria for Drama needed to identify what aspects of Drama were to be assessed. The process of developing the criteria would hopefully give “a clearer idea for the teachers involved in the project about what each of us is doing in Drama, achieved through the requirement to analyse and discuss what aspects of Drama are central to its assessment” (Bushnell, 1992a, p. 47). The Sixth Form Certificate Draft Course Statement lists objectives including growth in self confidence, confidence in sharing ideas, using language and communication skills, showing understanding and sensitivity towards “the contribution of both Maori and Pakeha to the culture of Aotearoa”, taking responsibility for learning, presenting course work in a “variety of appropriate and imaginative forms”, “participate in and understand the processes of Drama and Dramatic conventions such as improvisation and working in role” and “watch, appreciate and evaluate live performance” (Bushnell, 1992a, p. 43).

In Auckland and Christchurch there were differing opinions among the teachers developing the criteria as to which were important, although it was agreed to develop ten areas. In Auckland, it was felt the following were important: personal skills, group skills, language skills, voice techniques, movement techniques, awareness and use of Dramatic conventions, research, recording and reflection of Dramatic process,
technical skills and performance appreciation. In Christchurch, the ten aspects chosen were: knowledge of the Dramatic process, knowledge of Dramatic modes and genres, skill at role/characterisation, skill at using voice, skill at using movement, technical skills, skill at evaluation (of their own work and the work of others), attitude and cooperation, perseverance and self confidence. This work formed the beginnings of identifying specifically Drama related criteria which would not only assist with student assessment but focus teachers towards what could be taught in the subject of Drama.

Although cooperation and perseverance were amongst the criteria, the language that would become known as ‘Literacies in Drama’ is evident. The specifics of Drama such as role, characterisation, Dramatic conventions, and technical and performance appreciation were beginning to be identified for assessment purposes. This would require teachers to become adept at teaching these concepts. Drama was taking its place as an academic and practical subject with a pedagogy and theory.

Bushnell was critical of the state that Drama, as a subject, had fallen into in the UK under the government of Margaret Thatcher. It was an irony that while Drama in the UK failed to make it into the curriculum as a discrete subject in its own right it had achieved status as both a General Certificate of Secondary Education subject at year 11 and an Advanced Level Examination subject at year 13. Bushnell could see that even if teachers of Drama in New Zealand were relatively inexperienced and lacking specialist knowledge, the development of a clearer focus for them was paramount,

As the first of those initial Sixth Form Certificate Drama students graduate from their university Drama departments and complete their college of education courses, they will win specialist Drama teaching positions. Specialist training in Drama assessment and the use of grade related criteria will then be essential. (Bushnell, 1992a, p. 16)
The implementation, in 2002, of New Zealand’s new National Qualification for Senior Secondary students, the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA), embraced the use of a standards based assessment. Teachers now use achievement criteria to assess students rather than ranking them against their peers. It seems that Bushnell and the teachers involved in developing the grade-related criteria for Drama were forward thinkers. The NCEA Achievement Standards that were developed made teachers focus both on Drama skills and the theory, history, literature and performance of Drama.

Since 2000 Drama has appeared as one of the four arts in the Learning Areas of the National Curriculum for New Zealand. The rationale for Drama was explained as,

Drama expresses human experience through a focus on role, action, and tension, played out in time and space. In Drama education, students learn to structure these elements and to use Dramatic conventions, techniques, and technologies to create imagined worlds. Through purposeful play, both individual and collaborative, they discover how to link imagination, thoughts, and feelings. As students work with Drama techniques, they learn to use spoken and written language with increasing control and confidence and to communicate effectively using body language, movement, and space. As they perform, analyse, and respond to different forms of Drama and theatre, they gain a deeper appreciation of their rich cultural heritage and language and new power to examine attitudes, behaviours, and values. By means of the Drama that they create and perform, students reflect and enrich the cultural life of their schools, whanau, and communities. (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2007).

Each of the arts in the syllabus, including Drama, is divided into four “strands”; Understanding the Arts in Context; Developing Practical Knowledge in the arts; Developing Ideas in the arts; and Communicating and Interpreting in the arts (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 20).
Drama is, in 2009, firmly in the curriculum and available for senior students through the National Certificate of Educational Achievement. Students are now able to learn how to communicate through Drama and to discover what makes a piece of Drama effective, powerful, emotional, informative, or challenging. Students learn to be involved in a variety of aspects of Drama as actors, directors, designers, producers, writers and technicians. They learn how to critique Drama and to be members of an audience. Importantly, the study of Drama allows students to learn a shared language of Drama, described in the curriculum as Literacies. In The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum: a Background Paper written in 1999, the British Drama in education practitioner, David Hornbrook, is quoted from his book Education and Dramatic Art:

Drama specialists have a responsibility to equip those they teach with the skills, knowledge and understandings of Dramatic expression. Students engaged in the production process do not simply stumble upon the appropriate theatrical forms for the expression of their ideas, but must have demonstrated both the structures and the disciplines which can help them. If, for example, they are to appropriate forms of popular Dramatic expression, then they have at some time to be taught about documentary, street theatre, pantomime, the well made play, farce and so on. (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1999)

The Drama Curriculum has specifically categorised the terminology of Drama into distinct areas; the Techniques or “methods” of performance, Elements which are the constituent parts of Drama, Conventions described as the “established ways of working in Drama” or “established practices in Theatre” and Technologies, the “equipment that helps to create, present, explain, document, analyse, view, interpret, or learn about Dramatic work” (Arts Online, 2007). In part, the development and use of a specific language for Drama has come about to ensure the status of the subject along with giving both teachers and students a shared code with which they can discuss Dramatic work. The division of Drama into the areas of Techniques, Elements Conventions and Technologies, which then further subdivide, allow both students and teachers to use a
framework through which Drama can be developed, performed, and analysed. As the Ministry of Education states in its booklet *Drama in the Classroom*, “it is vital that teachers and students share a common language used to describe the body of knowledge that is particular to the subject”. (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2001, p. 6)

**Scholarship**

Drama has gained a higher status by its inclusion as a scholarship subject. Scholarship being the assessment for the “highest achieving students” (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2009a). This examination was first mooted in 1998 by the New Zealand government and finally began in 2004. According to the Government, students who undertake scholarship will have, “demonstrated, within complex situations, higher level critical thinking, abstraction and generalisation and the ability to integrate, synthesise and apply knowledge, skills, understanding and ideas” (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2009a).

The Drama Performance Standard for scholarship states that a scholarship student will demonstrate, “wide knowledge, experience and critical analysis of Drama processes, texts and theories to perform and justify challenging and creative Drama works (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2005b). The exam requires Drama students to perform three Dramatic pieces: scripted Drama from the Level 3 prescribed list of texts, devised work influenced by one of three theatre practitioners, Stanislavsky, Brecht or Artaud and an impromptu piece. The performances are supported by “oral explanation and justification” and the examination is videotaped and assessed by an external examiner.

Drama in the curriculum in New Zealand seems to have found a way to bring together the two sides of the Drama in education argument. On the one hand there is Drama as a process; at the opposite end is Drama as a performance medium and in a much closer relationship with professional
theatre. Reading Bushnell’s report almost twenty years later it is interesting to note that Drama has come a long way in its acceptance into the New Zealand curriculum and more positive outcomes occurred than were possibly expected at the time. As Bushnell wrote,

Few advisory positions in secondary Drama in education exist and there seem to be relatively little impending change by the New Zealand qualifications authority to the draft nature of the existing course statement. How Drama at sixth form level will fit into the new framework of senior education also remains to be seen. (Bushnell, 1992a)

Twenty years on, and Drama is available in New Zealand for secondary schools through Unit Standards and the National Certificate of Educational Achievement. In 2008, according to the NZQA report on results and statistics for the NCEA, a total of “61,959 students were entered for Drama at Levels 1, 2 and 3 and Scholarship” (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2009b).

Drama is now clearly rationalized as a valuable area of learning in schools, fifty one years after the UNESCO Seminar on Drama in Education in Sydney. In February 2010, the new New Zealand Curriculum will be implemented. NCEA Achievement standards in Drama are being realigned and a full overview has taken place comparing the requirements of both Achievement Standards and Unit Standards in relation to the Arts curriculum.

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Chapter 3: The Role of New Zealand Plays in the Curriculum

It is important for a country to develop, celebrate and use its own theatre and, through the introduction of New Zealand Drama into the curriculum; students in New Zealand schools are now becoming aware of and performing the plays of New Zealand. However, they are doing more than re-presenting work. Students of Drama in New Zealand are also constructing their own stories of New Zealand and reinterpreting plays from other continents to give them a place in the canon of New Zealand Drama.

According to an article in Playmarket News\textsuperscript{3} entitled \textit{A Small Vermin Free Island}, Mervyn Thompson\textsuperscript{4}, in 1975, caused,

\begin{quote}
...an uproar at an educational conference by simply suggesting that certain New Zealand plays might well be considered for study in our schools and universities. He was unable to finish his address ‘grown men and women leapt to their feet, shouting abuse at me, the chairperson and each other. (Atkinson, 2003, p. 5)
\end{quote}

Twenty nine years later, in 2004, New Zealand Drama finally took its rightful place on the NCEA Achievement Standard prescribed list at Level 3 enabling students and teachers to explore and use examples of New Zealand plays.

What is New Zealand Drama?

So what is New Zealand Drama? In the \textit{ESA NCEA Level 3 Drama Study Guide}\textsuperscript{5} written by Marthy Watson and myself, we summarized the

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{3} New Zealand's Playwright Agency and Script Advisory Service
\textsuperscript{4} New Zealand Playwright 1935-1992
\textsuperscript{5} ESA is a private New Zealand publishing company. Their NCEA Study Guides are written for students and cover all internal and external Achievement standards for each subject.
\end{flushleft}
Importance of Drama in New Zealand society and highlighted some factors that have led to its development,

Drama has been and is an important force in New Zealand culture. European settlers brought with them their Drama and their theatrical history. The development of New Zealand Drama has been influenced by a wide variety of factors including the country’s own history; its unique social, cultural and political circumstances, and even its location. New Zealand owes much to both its European and its Pacific culture. (Luton & Watson, 2008, p. 122)

For the purposes of the guide, we listed those qualities that make a New Zealand Drama and concluded from our reading that it is a broad category and can include all forms and styles from comedy to tragedy. A New Zealand Drama can be about New Zealand politics, society, religion, culture and economics. It may be set in New Zealand and concern New Zealand people. It is usually written by a New Zealander whether resident or citizen. An interesting feature is that New Zealand plays are frequently devised with the help of actors and workshopped prior to performance and publication. Many of the writers have been performers and understand theatrical possibilities, as in the case of Mervyn Thompson. The plays use the language and semantics of New Zealand. They often acknowledge New Zealand’s roots and history and celebrate its culture, traditions, way of life, ethnicity and society (Luton & Watson, 2008). Many of the plays bring life to the history of New Zealand, highlighting moments that contribute to the creation of a New Zealand people away from their colonial background.

**Brief historical overview of New Zealand Drama**

New Zealand has had an active theatrical history with performances taking place as early as 1840 when European immigrants first landed on these shores. One of the reasons for this may have been that far away from home and family the new immigrants sought out both culture and human company. Local theatre became a part of local life but touring theatre also formed an important backbone of the country. Visiting actors toured the country first in horse and carriage, and then with the advent of trains, in
1873, in slightly more comfort (Wolfe, 2002). Actors were welcomed in towns throughout the country. Buildings were erected that could accommodate performances and the audiences crowded in to see a range of performances. Theatre was seen by some in the early days as, “a school for immorality and an asylum for vice and prostitution” (McNaughton, 2008, p. 17). But others could see the benefits that theatre could bring to a developing society: “Fill the theatres and you empty the tap rooms” (Downes, 1975, p. 68). Drama even took place on the ships, as recounted by Katherine Mansfield’s mother, as she travelled on board the R.M.S. "Ruahine" from Wellington to London in 1898. She described how tableau entertainments took place on the deck using stage and limelight effects and how her fellow passengers frequently rehearsed and learnt their lines (Beauchamp, Beauchamp, Gordon, & Williams, 1998).

The earliest performance of a play was in 1841, in Auckland. A performance of The lawyer outwitted by Stephen Clarke, organised by Mr. David Osborne, a Professor of Elocution from Scotland, at ‘The Albert Theatre’ described by Peter Downes in Shadows on the Stage as “a penny gaff sort of place, roughly adapted in a room at the back of Watson’s hotel” (Downes, 1975, p. 11). Downes described the beginning of Drama in New Zealand as,

a time of genuine theatrical pioneering, when makeshift companies were spawned in the pubs and brought to a lusty adolescence, if not quite maturity, by a vanguard of hardworking professional enthusiasts, mainly in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. (1975, p. 7)

According to Bruce Mason⁶ by the 1880s most cities in New Zealand had a Theatre Royal (Mason, 1973). He describes how the professional theatre declined during the depression but this in turn gave rise to the role of the amateur theatre. Between 1920 and 1939 The Little Theatres and repertory theatres developed, although many of “their efforts were ignored, sometimes actively abhorred, by the good average kiwi” (Mason, 1973, p. 41).

⁶ New Zealand Playwright 1921-1982
Mason said of the amateur theatre that,

The work of the NZ amateurs has been invaluable to the NZ playwright because it builds up an audience with, here and there, a lively appetite for the Drama and a considerable critical judgement. (1973, p. 42)

According to Mason, although New Zealand had actors and theatres it lacked good quality New Zealand writing. This appears to have been due to the smallness of the population; it is a great risk to write a play as most playwrights would like to see their plays published and/or performed and this takes financial support. It may be that writers felt they needed to adhere to subjects that were familiar to them from Europe as that is what their audiences were looking for.

In the Act magazine\(^7\) the editorial on page 45 stated that “theatre in New Zealand must first be concerned with New Zealand and is for, of, and by New Zealanders. The rest comes second” (Atkinson, 1977). In 1980, in his book, All My Lives, Mervyn Thompson quoted Jonathan Hardy’s\(^8\) rant against the appointment of an Englishman as Artistic Director of the Mercury Theatre. However, his tirade acted as challenge to New Zealand to begin writing about itself,

Do you see people flocking to the theatre? Do you smell something in the air and feel a new sense of excitement? Of course you don’t – that only happens in a rugby game in New Zealand…New Zealanders ought to be the best in the world at playing New Zealanders – why not start there? New Zealanders have been brought up to feel lonely and isolated. We need art to enlighten us. But the people who hawk international theatre only make New Zealanders feel more lonely because they do not understand it – and neither do I. Every day we live we create experiences. These must be taken up by our writers. (Thompson, 1980, p. 95)

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\(^7\) Theatrical magazine published by Downstage Theatre, Wellington

\(^8\) New Zealand Actor, Writer, Director
In his prologue to *Downstage Upfront*, John Smythe writes about the importance of New Zealand writers and New Zealand plays,

> It is only when we make believe in our own voices, telling stories and revealing life from our own point of view, that we define and distinguish ourselves at home and abroad, it’s called growing up, achieving independence and making our own contribution. We give as well as take; sell as well as buy. Besides if we don’t tell our stories, who else will? And it’s a low level of craft practice to be just a ‘cover band’ for other cultures. (Smythe, 2004, p. 10)

Playmarket was founded in 1973, and is described on their website as,

> New Zealand’s only playwrights’ agency & script advisory service. We are at the heart of New Zealand theatre - our focus is the development and representation of New Zealand playwrights and their plays. (Playmarket, 2009b)

Playmarket has contributed to the development of New Zealand Drama and according to Alister McDonald’s speech at the Dunedin celebration of Playmarket’s thirtieth anniversary,

> It’s unceasing agency advocacy of local playwrighting and its script development activities have undeniably contributed in a major way to the flowering of New Zealand Dramatic writing which has occurred in the last three decades and been reflected on the local and world stage. (McDonald, 2003, p. 25)

### The prescribed list

Susan Battye has been a Drama teacher, actively involved in the development of Drama in the New Zealand curriculum and is also a New Zealand playwright. According to Playmarket she began writing plays as a Drama teacher, because, “she could find nothing to direct that came close to fitting their needs, and nothing in the curriculum that reflected the local community’s social history” (Playmarket, 2009b).

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9 The story of the first 40 years of Downstage Theatre, Wellington, New Zealand’s longest running professional theatre
In 2007, Battye wrote an article for Playmarket News entitled, *The New Zealand play in schools: Are we being treated seriously?* In the article she argues the case for New Zealand Drama to be included in the new curriculum and encourages playwrights to, “…not only appeal to the market place but also a school audience” (Battye, 2007, p. 20). She states that 499 students gained Level 3 Drama in 2006 (Battye, 2007). According to the NZQA statistics this rose to 1,734 students in 2009 (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2009b). In the space of three years, the subject has grown considerably. As Battye points out in her article, “NZ Drama is specifically mentioned in the Achievement Outcomes for levels 6, 7 and 8, which roughly corresponds to years 11,12 and 13” (Battye, 2007, p. 20). Battye was writing when the new curriculum was still in a draft state, however it has been confirmed that at Level 6 students will be expected to, “Investigate the forms and purposes of Drama in different historical or contemporary contexts, including New Zealand Drama” (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 4). At Level 7, this extends to include “Explore how Drama reflects our cultural diversity” and at Level 8, “Research, analyse, and critically evaluate how Drama, including New Zealand Drama, interprets, records, or challenges social and cultural discourse” (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 5).

Battye comments that New Zealand Drama should be in the curriculum because “the government’s own 2002 *Growth and Innovation Framework* prioritises the creative industries” (Battye, 2007, p. 20). Apparently, in 2005 the New Zealand screen industry recorded revenue of over $2.6 billion: “Without scripts and scriptwriters there would be no stage, film or television industry. So how does the Ministry of Education and NZQA actively promote playwrighting, reading, watching and performing?” (Battye, 2007, p. 20). She makes the point that it is up to the Ministry of Education to promote New Zealand Drama by placing it in the curriculum.

In 2004, three New Zealand texts were listed on the prescribed list of texts for the first year of the Level 3 90610 external examinations to meet the criterion “demonstrate knowledge of theatre form or period by analysing
and interpreting two scripted texts; these set texts were, *The Pohutukawa Tree* by Bruce Mason, *Children of the Poor* by Mervyn Thompson and *Purapurawhetu* by Briar Grace-Smith. By 2006, this list had more than doubled to eight plays by New Zealand writers. Of these, three were written by Pacific or Maori writers, *Niu Sila* by Oscar Kightley and Dave Armstrong, *Purapurawhetu* by Briar Grace-Smith and Hone Kouka’s *Waioroa*. In 2009, this list had increased to ten New Zealand playwrights representing all aspects of New Zealand culture and history, including, *Krishnan’s dairy* by Jacob Rajan and Justin Lewis, and two plays by Lynda Chanwai-Earle, *Foh Sarn* and *Ka Shue*. According to Battye, these plays are meant to reflect the “ethnicity and gender makeup of schools” (Battye, 2007, p. 20).

The criteria for plays to be on the prescribed list include being professionally written, published in a script form, and having been professionally produced and recommended by teachers. By introducing these plays to students, teachers and their audiences, surely everyone gains by having the opportunity to explore, discover and engage with the history, society and culture of New Zealand?

It is interesting to note that students appear to be becoming aware of New Zealand Drama. In an article written for Auckland’s Pakuranga College newspaper, ‘Pakage’, headed, *Scripted Drama Celebrates New Zealand Plays*, a student wrote about the Level 3 performances that had taken place at the school in 2009 for the Achievement Standard 90608: *Interpret scripted text and integrate Drama techniques in solo or paired performance*. The student pointed out that,

Theatre of Aotearoa is not performed very often in schools. When the level 3 Drama class found out they were going to be performing texts written by New Zealand authors from the depression era, they were excited and nervous. They had never seen any that had been performed before. They studied and wrote summaries on plays such as Wednesday to Come, *The Pohutakawa Tree*, *Squatter*, *Coaltown Blues*, *Purapurawhetu*, and *Right, You Lot!* (Glover, 2009)
Later in the year, Pakuranga College celebrated New Zealand Drama by producing *Revenge of the Amazons* by Jean Betts as their annual school production, which is discussed in a later chapter.

School Drama contributes to local communities, providing some often excellent opportunities for families to see pieces of live theatre they may not otherwise see. This may be because they do not attend theatre, or because school plays are more affordable, or because a school may well be doing a play a professional company is not performing at the time. However, not all these plays are written by New Zealanders or set in New Zealand, so does this make them any less valuable? Does a play have to be set in New Zealand to contribute to the New Zealand national theatre identity? In an interview in 2006 with Michael Daly for *Playmarket’s Newsletter for Independent Theatre Groups*, April Philips, a New Zealand playwright, was asked what she felt audiences should be seeing on New Zealand stages. Her reply referred to the lack of funding available saying, “it does seem that plays need to be obviously set in New Zealand with references to Kiwi culture to get produced” (Daly, 2006, p. 2). She felt that,

Theatre practitioners and audiences are now sophisticated and confident enough to have more exposure to wider topics and stories that are not so specifically “Kiwi” yet can still be related to by New Zealanders. It has been important for a long time that New Zealand stories are told, but now I think we’ve reached a point where, if the story is a good one and worth telling, then the location doesn’t matter so much. (Daly, 2006, p. 2)

Plays not written by New Zealand writers may well be framed in a way to reflect New Zealand’s own culture and society. Shakespeare, for example, has long been popular in New Zealand. A production of *Richard III*, by William Shakespeare at Pakuranga College in 2006, was described as “bicultural” (Daly, 2006) by Josh Young who played Richard the Third. According to an interview in the local newspaper, the production was set in the 1840s on a Marae and aimed to show how “two cultures can come together”. Josh Young said that part of the preparation process for the production consisted of a “four-day school camp on a Marae [which] helped bond the actors, giving them confidence to try different things from
the start of practice” (Daley, 2006). In an interview with Fiona Keith-Kirk, at the College in 2009, she spoke about the interpretation of the production,

For me there is a conscious decision to do New Zealand plays. With Richard III we ran ahead of where the community were at. I worked with a colleague in the Maori department. There was a lack of respect between cultures and racial tensions. I interpreted Richard III as a blinkered British racist who settled in NZ. We combined two characters in the figure of Elizabeth to look at the early settlers women. It was the women who carried us forward as settlers. It was the women who knew about medicine and talked to the Maori. Elizabeth became the British representative willing to work with Maori. It was a Shakespeare play but we gave it in a New Zealand context. It was referenced in the costumes. [There was] huge symbolism in the way we presented it. The English teachers still bring up that production. I am happy with the concepts but it was too difficult for the school. But on the other side we pushed the community. (F. Keith-Kirk, personal communication, September 9, 2009)

Drama students in New Zealand also have opportunities to devise their own work and frequently it is to New Zealand material that teachers turn. Examples of this are the students at Botany Downs College in 2009 who researched and performed their devised Drama pieces for Level 3 Drama at the Auckland Art Gallery, several of the pieces being based on the exhibition there of the work of Rita Angus. At Macleans College in 2005, students visited the Waikato Coalfields Museum to explore the Huntly mining disaster of 1914, later performing their devised work at the school. It is perhaps this devised work that often allows students to explore what it means to be a New Zealander and then share their insights and understandings with the local community.

**Conclusion**

In a 1977 issue of Act Magazine, Laurie Atkinson presents an exciting overview of New Zealand theatre. After describing the way in which people

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10 The devising process for this is described in the Level 2 Drama Study Guide published by ESA p101-115
see theatre in New Zealand including the perception that it is “an appendage of the West End and Broadway”, he writes,

Theatre is all these things. It has never been just a three act play behind a proscenium arch. At this moment it is playing to and with kids in the streets of Christchurch and arguing with bureaucrats in Wellington for an increased grant. It is using performance as a mode of teaching, of self expression and of remedial therapy. It is ballet, opera and modern dance. It is Close to Home and Theatre Corporate. And it is a three act play at Mercury or Downstage or Eketehuna. (Atkinson, 1977)

Perhaps then we can say that theatre in New Zealand is also all those productions, scripted and devised that take place in schools and colleges which are performed by the young people of New Zealand to their peer groups and local communities. Many of these performances, as discussed in later chapters, are high quality, exciting, imaginative and even experimental. Their work often creates a first impression of a school, and contributes to its public face. Drama certainly appears to contribute to developing confident creative communicators who can take up their place in New Zealand society.

In the same way that the Europeans settlers pioneered theatre in New Zealand, perhaps schools can be considered to contribute to the development of Drama in New Zealand and to a New Zealand theatre identity.
Chapter 4: Drama Productions in Schools

Why are productions done in schools?

The previous three chapters have traced how Drama has developed as a curriculum subject, and how New Zealand plays have been placed on the NCEA prescribed lists. Students are now learning how to explore and perform New Zealand Drama. However, Drama productions have long been a constituent part of the life of schools in New Zealand. Why are school productions such an active and important part of New Zealand culture? In their book, *Learning to Teach Drama 11-18*, Andy Kempe and Helen Nicholson advise student teachers of Drama that production work is, ...

...the most obvious aspect of extra-curricular work in Drama. It is certainly the most public and most likely to have an impact on time and resources of the school and indeed the local community’s perception of Drama there. Many schools regularly produce plays of which they are proud and productions often play a vital role in the life of a school. (Kempe & Nicholson, 2001, p. 162)

While Head of Drama at Waingel’s Copse School\(^\text{11}\), in the United Kingdom, I explained the importance of school productions for the 1994 Drama Department Handbook,

It is important to note that in order to effectively promote the place of Drama as a valuable subject in the curriculum, productions are vital. These require long hours of rehearsal to ensure a high standard of performance as well as detailed administrative arrangements. Productions frequently encourage pupils to pursue Drama to examination level as well as contributing to the academic and social life of the school. Productions have also contributed to the promotion of the school. (Charlton, 1994)

Chris Burton, the Head of Drama at Palmerston North Boys’ High School, believes productions give students the opportunity to learn about stagecraft and performance excellence and stated in a seminar on school productions for the Drama New Zealand Conference 2005,

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\(\text{\footnotesize 11 Waingel’s Copse School now known as Waingel’s College is a co-educational comprehensive secondary school (11-18) in Woodley, Reading, Berkshire.}\)
My reasons for driving annual major productions are: to give students one of their most memorable moments of school life, to share with others the love of musical theatre and performing, to see young adults learn about themselves, grow and blossom in a safe yet challenging environment with a deliberate team (rather than individual) focus. (Burton, 2005, p. 53)

**History of productions**

The Drama production has been lauded by schools since before the time of Educational Drama. The first instances of productions in schools date back as far as 1510 in England when schoolboys studying Terrence in their Latin lessons began performing his plays. (O'Brien, 2004)

In New Zealand, schools seem to have embraced productions from the earliest times, for example, the ladies of St. Francis Xavier's Academy in Wellington gave a performance of *Phyllis the farmer's daughter* in 1893 (J. N. Thompson, 1993). At King’s College in Auckland, a private college which has been in existence since 1896, there has been a long history of Drama productions that have taken place at the school as early as 1899 when a performance of *Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare was given. It was described as “a cultural highlight of the early years” (King's College, 2009a). However, it was not until 1951, according to their website, that, “the tradition of an annual, large scale production was established and with it a sequence of Shakespearean plays for the next 9 years, (King's College, 2009a). This was then followed by a refurbishment of the gymnasium into a theatre and this “saw the departure from the Shakespearean tradition to a selection that gave a 'variety of content and quality' (King's College, 2009a).

I believe that schools have generally been overlooked as places where important and vital theatrical experiences can be made and seen. However, there are exceptions and, in 2004, in New Zealand, schools could apply for the *ASB DramaMark* which was designed to be, “given to schools that display passion and skill in developing student talent and
ideas and promoting Drama within the school and wider community”. The ASB DramaMark was described as a “recognized quality mark” and was acknowledged by “a team of leading education and arts professionals” (ASB, 2004).

Another initiative to recognize the Drama work taking place in schools is Showdown, an Auckland Secondary School production competition, organised by the Auckland Community Theatre Trust and AMI Insurance in 2008 and 2009. The finals are held at the SkyCity Theatre in Auckland (Showdown, 2009). The competition is divided into categories with awards for Best costume design, Best set design, Best lighting design, along with the various awards for performances and choreography. The awards are not limited to musicals and include Best Supporting Male in a Play, Best Supporting Female in a Play, Best Leading Female in a Play, Best Leading Male in a Play, Best Director, and Outstanding Play.

In 2009, 23 productions entered into the competition. Of those, 12 were musical productions including The Wedding Singer (a musical comedy), Grease, High School Musical, Nunsense, The Mikado, Cabaret, Oliver, Bat Boy: The Musical and Beauty and the Beast (performed by two different schools). Drama productions included Pinteresque (two Harold Pinter plays), Adventures in the Skin Trade by Dylan Thomas (adapted by Andrew Sinclair), The Outsiders by Christopher Sergel, The Diary of Anne Frank by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett, The Crucible by Arthur Miller, Children of the Poor by Mervyn Thompson and Vinegar Tom by Caryl Churchill. The competition is one way in which college productions can be acknowledged for their high standards in a range of areas (Showdown, 2009).

**Putting on a school production**

Productions in schools adhere to many of the traditions and expectations of professional theatre. Advertising, posters and programmes are expected by the senior management to be of a high standard which reflect the values of the school. Newspaper advertising has to be approved. Programmes follow the layout one might find in any professional piece of
Theatre which often includes a note from the director, setting the play within its wider context. Productions involve auditions and then undergo a rehearsal period which involves the preparation of performers but also of the technicians. Many schools now employ interesting multimedia effects alongside the traditional role of sets and costumes. Productions might take place in a range of venues from halls to specialist auditoriums, tickets are prepared and sold, and an audience welcomed, usually at the traditional time of 7.30pm. School productions have high expectations of audience behaviour and model their conventions on a professional theatre process although with usually less budget, time, and possibly, experience.

**Our Country’s Good by Timberlake Wertenbaker**

In March 2009, at Macleans College in Auckland, a production of *Our Country’s Good* by Timberlake Wertenbaker was performed in the auditorium over three evenings. The director was the Head of the Drama and Dance Faculty, Ms Jacqueline Hood. The production was described on the school website as,

…the story of convicts and Royal Marines sent to Australia in the late 1780’s as part of the first penal colony there. It follows Second Lieutenant Ralph Clark’s attempts to put on a production of George Farquhar’s restoration comedy The Recruiting Officer with a cast of male and female convicts. The play shows the class system in the convict camp and discusses themes such as sexuality, marriage, punishment, the Georgian judicial system, and the idea that art, the theatre, can act as an ennobling force, enabling convicts to view themselves as human beings, part of a society and as individuals with a future within that society. (Maclesns College, 2009b)

The audience at the production comprised mainly students and parents of the school. According to the director, many of the students had never seen live theatre previously and, of those who had, most had only seen popular musicals. The etiquette of a performance was therefore new to many of them as she explained to me in an interview, “Students think theatre is like the cinema, they can eat and chat”. (J. Hood, personal communication, August 18, 2009).
At the commencement of the evening’s performance, Ms Hood addressed the audience and made reference to the discussion in class about theatre etiquette and reminded them about supporting the actors on stage by focusing and responding appropriately. Students were also asked to physically take out their mobile phones and switch them off. As we shall see in a later chapter, even professional practitioners, like Lynne Cardy of the Auckland Theatre Company have to be aware of issues regarding the behaviour of young audiences new to theatre attendance. I asked Ms Hood how she prepares students to see a piece of theatre and she replied that in this particular case it is a requirement of the Year 10 Drama course that the students see and review the senior school production. She then,

…took them into the auditorium and analysed the set with them, then I gave them a rundown of the play, advised them about some of the content and gave them a potted history of the convicts. (J. Hood, personal communication, August 18, 2009).

The students then discuss aspects of the set so that they have some sense of context, staging and plot prior to seeing the play.

**Choosing the play for a school production**

There are many factors that can affect the choice of a play for a school production. These could be practical matters concerning finances or cast numbers, they could be aesthetic choices dependant on the director’s personal interests and strengths, or they could be dependent on the values and ethos of the school in which the production is to be performed. Productions may also be chosen to suit the curriculum needs or the abilities of the students. Associate Professor, Patrick Gouran, of Iowa State University, cited in *The Handbook of educational Drama and theatre*, states that too often teacher directors,

...become schizophrenic in that we attempt to present a totally “artistic” event, fill the coffers at the box office, please the audience, mollify the administration and contribute significantly to the artistic and personal growth of the students. (Landy, 1982, p. 81)
Ms Hood chose *Our Country’s Good* by Timberlake Wertenbaker as the senior production because the play offered a large number of roles for boys which encouraged them to get involved with Drama. The previous year, the play had been balanced towards female roles. As a director, she loves the play as it, “is a ‘meaty’ play; it deals with issues, relationships and it’s Dramatic, it’s a meaningful academic script which you need for a senior production. (J. Hood, personal communication, August 18, 2009).

The play served the purpose of showcasing the abilities of senior students from Year 11 and above, and introducing younger students to a challenging, live theatre experience. The senior production has run for several years at the school and is auditioned at the beginning of term one, rehearsed, and performed in week 7. In the past four years, three New Zealand plays have been performed as part of the senior production and two plays have been chosen specifically because they were on the NCEA Level 3 prescribed text list. The choice of *Our Country’s Good* as the 2009 senior production was made for a number of reasons which affect such choices in a school; problems of casting, appropriate material and the budgetary constraints. Royalty fees have to be considered carefully for many schools which may be the reason Shakespeare is a popular choice.

However, Wertenbaker’s play serves an extra purpose as it celebrates the value and power of theatre to change people’s lives no matter what their situation. In scene six of *Our Country’s Good* the character of Captain Arthur Phillip states, “The Greeks believed that it was a citizen’s duty to watch a play. It was a kind of work in that it required attention, judgment, patience, all social virtues” (Wertenbaker, 1996, p. 207). Ms Hood felt this was one of the important themes of the play and like the Greeks, the audience could have their lives “enhanced by the events they saw onstage” (J. Hood, personal communication, August 18, 2009).

Ms Hood also contended *Our Country’s Good* had much to teach young people about,

…colonial rule and power even though it’s set in Australia. It’s about a new country and the impact
colonial rule had on the indigenous people. It is about the humanising fact of theatre as it teaches that there is more to life. (J. Hood, personal communication, August 18, 2009).

But it was not only the actors who gained from the experience as the audience knew little about the harsh realities of the lives of these people. It’s like Children of the Poor by Mervyn Thompson (Senior Production 2006) which shows a hard life. Students don’t understand the rights they have now are so different to the rights people had in the past, for example getting 11 years for stealing a loaf of bread. (J. Hood, personal communication, August 18, 2009)

Although New Zealand’s history differs in many ways to Australia, they share a common colonial past. As Ms Hood told the students, for most people making the journey to New Zealand in the 1800s, “there was very little chance to return so you had to be a positive force in the new land – you were either successful or you starved” (J. Hood, personal communication, August 18, 2009).

The student actors faced several challenges within the play, including the use of dialect and accent, understanding and portraying the emotions of the convicts, and playing the role of adults which college productions often require of their young performers. In the 2005 conference journal of Drama New Zealand, Chris Burton advised teachers who direct productions that, “kids want to be challenged and want to be a part of something they and others value” (Burton, 2005). Burgess and Gaudry make the same point in their book, Time For Drama: A handbook for secondary teachers: “the roles in the script should be challenging enough so that the student can experience new human perspectives rather than merely reproducing things already known” (Burgess & Gaudry, 1986, p. 257).

The language and themes within the play

The fact that the production takes place within a school means that the teacher director must be aware of choosing appropriate material. Unlike most professional directors, a teacher is limited in choices; Language and content can often be an issue because of the age groups involved and the
ethos of the school. However, it is important that powerful, challenging plays can be performed, albeit with care. Kempe and Nicholson (2001, p. 167) advise student teachers not to ignore concerns which Head teachers and Governors might have about the content of a production. Ms Hood, as director of Our Country’s Good, made the decision to cut some of the colloquial words in the play as she had to remain aware of the public audience in this context:

I would rather cut the language and have the audience come and see the piece of theatre. It’s the way you say the line that is important – you can be just as vicious and vitriolic without swearing at somebody. (J. Hood, personal communication, August 18, 2009).

Now that Drama is firmly established in New Zealand’s curriculum, teachers will often make choices of productions based on the prescribed texts at NCEA Level 3 Drama, or other texts written by the listed playwrights. For example, at senior schools in Manukau, productions of Children of the Poor by Mervyn Thompson, Vinegar Tom by Caryl Churchill, Medea by Euripides, and Revenge of the Amazons by Jean Betts were amongst those performed by schools in 2008 and 2009. They have often been performed as part of the extracurricular activities of the department but chosen because they supported the Level 3 NCEA Drama syllabus. As Kempe and Nicholson observe, (2001, p. 167), “the most appropriate ethos for a school production is to see it as complementing both the Drama curriculum and the work of the school as a whole”
Rehearsing the play

The production of *Our Country's Good* at Macleans College was rehearsed in seven weeks, auditioning in the first week of the college term and performing in week 7 (Macleans College, 2009b). If we compare this process with professional theatre we can see that teachers are often working with very limited opportunities to rehearse. A professional production like *The Pohutakawa Tree* by Bruce Mason, performed by the Auckland Theatre Company in 2009, took 12 weeks to produce with a four week performance period (McWilliams, 2009).

The director, Max Stafford-Clark, directed the first ever production of *Our Country's Good* in 1988 and worked closely with Timberlake Wertenbaker during the workshop and rehearsal process. He writes of his rehearsal time,

> From the puny Royal Court budget, we chiselled out eight weeks of rehearsal, including the workshop for *Our Country’s Good* and another five weeks for rehearsing *The Recruiting Officer*. In this time you can achieve a depth and detail to the work that is just not feasible in a conventional four week rehearsal period. (Stafford-Clark, 1989, p. xiii)

Ms Hood’s rehearsal process consisted of several auditions within the first week of the first term at school, which included workshop auditions to familiarise students with the context and themes of the play. The play was then cast and rehearsals began in week 2. These consisted of two 2½ hour rehearsals each week. Nearer the performance date, rehearsals increased to four ½ hours and included two all-day Sunday rehearsals. The students then gave three public evening performances.

The role of the teacher /director

The director of a school production is usually a teacher although occasionally schools are employing professional practitioners to direct productions. Teacher-Directors tend to have a range of Drama and production experience; some may even have been involved in professional or community theatre. Many school productions are classed
as a co-curricular activity and are considered to play an important part in the education of students. At Macleans College in Auckland students are expected to “participate in: at least one major sporting, cultural or service activity” because “we consider that taking part in co-curricular activities encourages: Loyalty and commitment, Self confidence and comradeship, Building of self esteem, Recognition for excellence” (Macleans College, 2009a). A teacher, however creative and experienced in theatre, has to bear in mind his or her responsibilities as an educator. According to the New Zealand Teachers Council, the role of a teacher is to, “show that acceptable learning occurs for all learners under their responsibility, within an environment that affirms the bicultural and multicultural nature of New Zealand” (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2009).

A professional theatre director may not have the same requirements or constraints as a teacher although they may feel, as Colin McColl, director of The Pohutakawa Tree does, “a responsibility if we’re interested in some sort of continuance of the theatre profession in New Zealand and the history of playwriting in New Zealand to keep these plays alive: they have to have performance occasionally” (McWilliams, 2009, p. 10).

Wendy Lesser, in her book about professional director, Stephen Daldry who is renowned for his challenging reinterpretation of An Inspector Calls by J.B. Priestley in the 1990s, describes the role of the director,

Theatre itself hinges on the art of interpretation. The director – and through him the actors, the set and costume designers, the lighting and sound people, and all the other collaborators in a theatre production – must first interpret the script, transforming it from words on a page into a living piece of theatre. Only then can we in the audience in turn interpret what they have given us. (Lesser, 1997, p. 2)
To be a director then requires far more than organising students on the stage and expecting them to learn lines. It requires a high degree of vision, understanding, creativity and patience. Perhaps this is not so far removed from the role of the teacher in the classroom.

In the context of a school production, the teacher-director aims to offer students a valuable learning opportunity, a creative process, and an occasion to perform in front of a wider audience. A teacher who has taken on the role of a director has not only to find creative ways to bring the text alive from the words on a page but also to ensure the play provides an “acceptable learning” opportunity (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2009).

A director of a college production often has to teach the skills of performance; basic movement and vocal skills, as well as attempting to give the students an insight into their roles and nurture them to perform with a degree of appropriateness and confidence. It must be remembered that the students are young people, their life experiences and acting skills are necessarily limited, and that they have not trained as professional actors. Although Ms Hood, director of Our Country’s Good, feels time is limited in schools and,

> We haven’t got time to do all the preparation we would like to. I do workshops as part of the audition process, I talk about the scenes, we discuss characters but then we have to get started on blocking. Students need to know where they are going to be first, and then I can deepen understanding to make it more subtle. It’s a bit like Drama by numbers – with students, subtleties come after the words – and then they can try out different things vocally and physically. If I had more time I would spend much more time off text. (J. Hood, personal communication, August 18, 2009)

The teacher-director, therefore, has to find the delicate balance between teaching Drama skills, interpreting the play and nurturing egos while attempting to produce a creative and proficient production.
**Student actors**

The college production often provides opportunities for a range of students, including those who are talented and gifted performers. The Ministry of Education in New Zealand produced a handbook for schools entitled, *Gifted and talented students: Meeting their needs in New Zealand schools*. Under the list of characteristic behaviours, there are some features that particularly apply to those students Drama teachers might see as talented,

…masters information quickly, likes intellectual challenge, reasons things out for her- or himself, produces original ideas, is prepared to experiment with novel ideas and risk being wrong, strives for high standards of personal achievement, communicates well with others, is self-confident, is socially mature. (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2000)

Some of the markers for a gifted or talented Drama student might include students who appear to have strong skills, physical and vocal, and who can learn lines and blocking promptly. Some students appear to have a maturity of emotional expression in the communication of their roles, as was the case of one particular student in *Our Country’s Good* at Macleans College. The student had studied Drama throughout college, taking part in several curricular and co-curricular productions. His performance stood out during the course of the play because of his ability to present his role with conviction, drawing the audience into the character in conjunction with the fact that he was audible and able to listen, react and move with belief to other characters on stage. Not all students are strong performers; some may struggle elsewhere in school. Drama productions however frequently provide opportunities for those students.

**Quality of productions**

The aim for teacher-directors is to produce a performance of the highest possible quality. They have expectations beyond line learning, audibility and a degree of focus. Drama teachers, especially those who have had extensive experience of seeing or being involved in live theatre, can recognise those elements that make a quality or ‘professional’ production.
I believe Teachers want their actors to communicate their roles with a degree of understanding, confidence, timing and commitment.

In their book, *Time for drama: A handbook for secondary teachers*, Burgess and Gaudry sum this up well when they liken Drama to art: “a senior art exhibition in a high school would seek to display works of the highest standard within the field”. They continue:

> The school play need not be banal or trivial, careful and considered selection, allowing for the development of characters with whom the audience can identify, will enable a meaningful and ‘successful’ production to occur. (1986, p. 257)

There are a wide range of books available to teachers, that attempt to show them how to aspire to a professional production, for example in *The essential guide to making theatre* by Richard Fredman and Ian Reade. In this book the two writers set out as one of their aims, “to provide an insight into professional theatre” (Fredman & Reade, 1996, p. 6). As a member of the audience, I have seen school productions at both comprehensive and private schools in the United Kingdom where students lost their lines, the prompter was more prevalent than the actors, students scanned the audience at inappropriate moments, and movement was limited. In New Zealand, I have seen and directed productions where students have engaged the audience, lines were owned, roles communicated with conviction, resulting in productions that I would class as successful theatrical experiences. As expertise among teachers has developed so Drama productions in schools have become more professional.

**Challenges for putting on a school production**

There are many complex organisational problems for teacher directors putting on productions in schools and these can involve personnel, liaison, budget constraints, space, and lack of time. Teacher-directors often find themselves in competition with colleagues for the student performers and technicians; sports, trips, arts and cultural clubs all compete for students’ attention. As Kempe and Nicholson list under their “costs” of the school play, “other staff may be aggravated by pupils being distracted from their
subjects or by Drama staff being allowed time away from teaching in order to manage the production” (2001, p. 165). For the teacher-director it can be a challenge to be creative in bringing a play to life after a day in the classroom surrounded by students and dealing with the daily life of a school. As Dr. Ken Robinson, Professor of Arts Education at the University of Warwick in the United Kingdom, points out in his 1989 report: The arts in schools: Principles, practice and provision,

Teachers themselves may be accomplished artists in their own field. The heavy demands of curriculum work often mean, however, that it is difficult for them to devote as much time as they would like either to their own work or to keeping abreast of contemporary developments in their specialist area. (Robinson, 1989, p. 117)

Teacher-directors, just like professional directors, need the time to plan creatively for the production. In his seminar to the 2005 Drama New Zealand Conference, Chris Burton describes this process for himself as “visualisation” (2005), which he does by listening to music.

Problems can also arise from lack of access to appropriate spaces for rehearsal and performance and from the limited availability of teachers who have responsibility for other aspects of the production. Susan Battye described some of the difficulties Drama teachers face in directing productions in her editorial essay for the first New Zealand Journal of Research in Performing Arts and Education: “In order to survive, Drama teachers have learned to ‘make do’ on the smell of an oily rag. Budgets for classroom Drama work and school productions vary enormously from school to school” (2008). Chris Burton highlighted the way in which Drama teachers, often working without a large budget, find interesting ways to compensate,

It is easy to lose sight of the production concept when set building; the most wonderful, labour-intensive set will not compensate for inadequately trained voices, actors, dancers, crew and musicians so a skilled company is our main priority. I have a phobia of ghastly sets which can limit the achievement levels of the company and expectations of the audience. Versatility is the most important
factor to me and mood can easily be created with some symbolic props and clever lighting. The focus should be the performances of the students and hence we believe good sound is essential and are now in a position to pay for it. (Burton, 2005, p. 55)

Versatility can result in creative approaches to solve problems, whether these are problems of technologies or performers. Although the director can often find interesting ways to work without an expensive set or costume, royalty fees must be paid, and in the case of *Our Country’s Good*, this cost the major part of the production budget. Ms Hood explained how she dealt with the problems of set with a budget of less than a $1,000, financed solely by door sales,

I like to use multipurpose sets in productions as without professional staging a technique, changing a set take time and interrupts the flow of a performance, so for this I use a static set and the actors had to help each other move a few chairs and tables. (J. Hood, personal communication, August 18, 2009)

At Macleans College, students were responsible for all aspects of the production, including building the set. Ms Hood describes how team work played a vital part in the process:

We found and used a boat and a specialist member of staff built us two large wooden trees. I had a student lighting team and I organised the costumes. The military uniforms were hired from First Scene in Auckland, the rest sourced from the costume wardrobe at the school. We have a great make up team who support us well and are very keen. (J. Hood, personal communication, August 18, 2009)

It is interesting to note that the ATC production of *The Pohutakawa Tree* at The Maidment Theatre in Auckland in 2009 used one location, as the designer Tony Rabbit described, “it’s just a clear space, which in a theatrical sense is as close as we can get to a rehearsal room” (McWilliams, 2009, p. 14). The various tables, chairs and other props were moved and removed by members of the cast not involved in the particular scene.
Use of technologies

Many Drama teachers have embraced the use of technologies in productions. At Saint Kentigern College in Auckland, the 2003 and 2004 productions used a wide range of multimedia. The production of *Machinal* by Sophie Treadwell\(^{12}\) used a range of complex lighting and data projectors ensuring both video and still images could be used to highlight the themes of the production. These technologies were controlled and operated by a team of students. Macleans College installed a new data projector for Drama productions in 2005 which has been used many times in both curricular and co-curricular productions. This has involved still images, video devised by students, and live feed during a production onto the cyclorama.

Conclusion: Valuing the production

There can be many positive outcomes from the school production, including the development of students’ performance skills, Drama facilities and the reputation of Drama within the school. The production can also promote the school in the local community. As Kempe and Nicholson in their book rightly sum up,

> A measure of success for many Drama teachers and pupils alike is when the audience leave talking about the play and its effect on them, whilst the remark that “they did really well for kids”, however well meant, is considered the most damming of criticisms. (2001, p. 168)

When the audience continues to discuss the play and how it has affected them, it implies that students and teachers have moved beyond the basic skills of performance and are bringing a play to life on the stage. The school production may not have professional actors or a large budget but it can be one that is capable of affecting an audience emotionally, and psychologically. Productions can also be an effective way to encourage students to consider Drama at examination level, as well as providing a

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\(^{12}\) Information and images about this production at Saint Kentigern College can be found in several chapters in the ESA Level 2 Drama Study Guide by Watson, M. And Luton, J.
cultural and learning experience for students and the school community. Through plays like *Our country’s good*, students and audience alike have the opportunity to experience Drama they may not see elsewhere, and that can offer insights into themes and issues of relevance to New Zealand today. As Chris Burton stated,

The future success of productions within your school community relies on those involved developing the credibility of performance as a discipline which firstly earns and later demands respect. (2005, p. 54)
Chapter 5: The role of curricular productions

The production of *Vinegar Tom* by Caryl Churchill at Botany Downs Secondary College directed by Anton Bentley July 2009: an example of curricular/assessment production.

A production which demonstrated both credibility, dealing with difficult issues and professionalism was *Vinegar Tom* by Caryl Churchill produced at Botany Downs Secondary College (BDSC) in Auckland, in July 2009. The production took place in the Panasonic Performing Arts Centre known as the PAC, a large warehouse style space approximately 20m by 12m with a height of 5.5 metres to the lighting grid, according to the Head of Drama, Mr Anton Bentley. The production was an example of a curricular production presented by the NCEA Level 3 Drama students. It fulfilled Achievement Standard 90611, which requires the ability to ‘Research and carry out a performance or technical/production role in a significant production’. The production was directed by Mr Anton Bentley and co-directed by the Year 13 Level 3 students. There were nine students in total, eight actors and one costume designer. Bentley entered the production of *Vinegar Tom* in the AMI Showdown Awards 2009 and in August learnt that the production had been nominated for several awards including: Costume Design, Lighting Design, and Lead Male in Play, Supporting Male in a Play, Supporting Female in a Play, Set Design, Direction and Outstanding Play.

Anton Bentley is an experienced director, designer and actor having involved himself for many years with the Howick Little Theatre (HLT), a community theatre which has been active in the area for over 50 years. In 2005 at HLT, Bentley was the designer for the production of *Strangers on a Train* by Craig Warner, and directed the production of *The Cripple of Inishmaan* by Martin McDonagh. In 2009 Anton took the lead role in *Humble Boy* by Charlotte Jones and directed *Art* by Yasmina Reza. Anton

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13 NCEA internal examination for 6 credits
Bentley is therefore not only a Drama teacher but a practicing theatre practitioner who has a range of experience within community theatre. An example of his design work for *Strangers on a Train*, and an interview with him is included in the *ESA Level 2 Drama Study Guide* Chapter 28\(^{14}\).

The play *Vinegar Tom* by Caryl Churchill is a powerful drama set in England in the seventeenth century and was originally written in 1976 for Monstrous Regiment, a feminist theatre company in the United Kingdom. (Churchill, 1996, p. 134). The play focuses on the theme of witchcraft, while dealing with a range of issues including the rise of the middle class and the role of women in society. It consists of twenty one scenes and 7 songs that may shock an audience but is an interesting, exciting choice for a school production. It is worth noting that Churchill’s play *Top Girls* is on the prescribed list for the NCEA Level 3 drama Achievement Standard 90610 2009 (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2009b).

The scenes were performed in the bare, multipurpose space in front of large blackboard flats on which were inscribed key phrases from the play. The audience sat on three sides of the large playing space. The piano was upstage left and a small platform ran along the back of the stage area. The blocking showed a high degree of sophistication and scenes flowed easily, contributing to the effective pace of the play. As locations changed, actors would bring on a small prop as required; for example, a cauldron, a butter churner or table. Scenes were interspersed with the songs and accompanied on piano by students in modern dress. Period costumes were used for the scenes set in the seventeenth century. The actors delivered their lines with a high degree of strength and emotion, all working in accents that supported the location and time of the play. One of the most difficult scenes in the play, scene fourteen, the pricking of Joan and Alice by Packer and Goody (Churchill, 1996, pp. 164-167) was played with great control and effect. The student actors playing the roles were laid in turn, on a table upstage with their heads flung backward, their knees raised away from the audience. The focus for the spectators became the pain on the faces of the two accused women. The scene was calm and

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\(^{14}\) ESA Publications NCEA Level 2 Drama Chapter 28 Task in Action: Interview with a designer: Anton Bentley Strangers on a Train by Craig Warner July 2005
slow and, in keeping with Churchill’s introductory directions to the play, “the pricking scene is one of humiliation rather than torture and Packer is an efficient professional not a sadistic maniac” (Churchill, 1996 p. 164-167). The scenes built to their climax where Joan and Ellen are hung from two ropes hanging from the grid. The content of the play is shocking at times but Bentley was uncompromising in using the full text of the play.

One of the reasons for choosing *Vinegar Tom* as the production for the 3.5 Achievement Standard was that the production is required by the criteria to be a “significant production\(^{15}\)”, which is defined as, “one that has sufficient depth and length, or that is extensive and important enough to merit attention, or with an established critical reputation” (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2009b). Bentley had suggested the students read the script as, “there are themes there that perhaps some might take exception to. I want to put the choice back with the students” (A. Bentley, personal communication, August 25, 2009). The students described it as “a bit of a challenge” and one that would “put us outside our comfort zone”.

The play was shocking to them at first reading but, “the shock factor made it all the more intriguing. The first time we read it through we thought what is this? The second time we understood the themes more” (BDSC Level 3 Drama Students, personal communication, August 25, 2009). The students felt that although they see films and television programmes that deal with difficult issues, “when we read a script we imagine us doing the roles. It is different acting it rather than watching it” (BDSC Level 3 Drama Students, personal communication, August 25, 2009). The students, 7 of whom were girls, commented that some of the themes were new to them and the way Caryl Churchill wrote about “the victimisation of women” (BDSC Level 3 Drama Students, personal communication, August 25, 2009) contributed to their enjoyment of the play.

**Rehearsal process**

The students approached the play using a theatrical process, beginning with casting. For this production Anton Bentley challenged the students to

\[^{15}\text{Explanatory Note 2 of the Achievement Standard 90611 (2006 version 2)}\]
look at playing roles outside their repertoire, as he said, “there were certain roles people tended to fall into so everyone chose a role they didn’t usually play. I wanted them to stretch themselves and go for the part they don’t normally play” (A. Bentley, personal communication, August 25, 2009).

The students seemed to enjoy the challenge of taking on new roles and this was followed by research into both the era in which the play is set and the context of Carol Churchill’s writing. One of the students demonstrated just how drama can be cross curricular,

> We looked at the era, quite a few of us do history and we were doing Tudor England in History. We studied witchcraft but also looked at Caryl Churchill. It linked across lots of our subjects. Some of us are even writing about it in English. (BDSC Level 3 Drama Students, personal communication, August 25, 2009).

As the play is set in rural England, the students took on appropriate English accents for the play, developed by watching a film and following audio links Bentley had given them. The students then addressed basic blocking needs of the play but found that once they had taken, “a break from blocking, and we had written our intentions, researched and learnt our lines, it made the role easier” (BDSC Level 3 Drama Students, personal communication, August 25, 2009). As part of the process the students are assessed not only on their final performance but are also required to keep a record of their process and in order to achieve they must,” Research relevant information” and “Record the development of role to show understanding” (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2005). It should be noted at this stage that student performances at this level require a great deal of supporting research, documentation and analysis.

**Staging the play**

Anton Bentley and the students chose to stage the play using a Thrust-stage configuration in the PAC, allowing the audience to sit on three sides of the auditorium. This was a new experience for the students who had previously performed in End-stage or Proscenium Arch setting, “about
10m away from audience through darkness” (BDSC Level 3 Drama Students, personal communication, August 25, 2009). They said it had been difficult at first as they had to be aware of sightlines for the audience. However, after making a decision to work on diagonals the students began to rise to the challenge,

We thought we’re going to do a challenging play let’s go for it all the way. We looked at different ways but we loved being so close to the audience, it’s so intimate. By the end I could imagine diagonal lines. (BDSC Level 3 Drama Students, personal communication, August 25, 2009)

One of the students discussed the way in which performing in a thrust space was different. Although she was “conscious that you are vulnerable from every side”, it had helped her to focus as the audience was only a couple of metres away. Another felt that,

You can play off the audience especially in the song Evil Women – you can see the shock in the audience so can use it to build the tension in the audience. We break down the audience fourth wall like Brecht. (BDSC Level 3 Drama Students, personal communication, August 25, 2009)

The students felt the audience responded well to the production. They had wanted them to be shocked because of the nature of the piece, but also to set them thinking. The play had been advertised in the local press and, according to Anton Bentley, aside from parents, there were several among the audience who had chosen to come to the play from the local community, as well as teachers and friends. One student described her feelings about the audience response: “I think it took a lot of people out of the perception that school has to be a PG rating – we are students, but we can do real theatre and do it well. We are young adults”. (BDSC Level 3 Drama Students, personal communication, August 25, 2009)

The students found the most difficult aspect of putting on a production at school was the lack of time available to them during the rehearsal process. Having only an hour each day meant that the process had only just begun before it had to end. Bentley also commented on “never having time to run
anything’ (A. Bentley, personal communication, August 25, 2009) as one of the most frustrating things about school productions:

The biggest problem and the students mentioned it themselves is that you have an hour to rehearse. That is incredibly frustrating. I would love to have a double period. You just get into the swing of things and then it’s over – never time to give notes. We have weekend or holiday intensives. The ‘Vinegar Tom’ kids did three solid days in the holidays. They see the value of this. You are expected as a Drama Teacher to give up personal time to meet the needs of the students. (A. Bentley, personal communication, August 25, 2009)

Learning outcomes

The students at BDSC have a close relationship with the Auckland Theatre Company and have seen several productions as well as attended forums. They feel that this has helped them develop their own work to a high standard, “it helps a lot with drama techniques and elements and the etiquette but we also see what they do with costume, set, we can use ideas from different plays we have seen. It helps, we can use it” (BDSC Level 3 Drama Students, personal communication, August 25, 2009). The students felt that they have learnt to be critical and to make judgements about drama work. As one student said, “we see a show and we apply it to us – if something isn’t working we don’t do it” (BDSC Level 3 Drama Students, personal communication, August 25, 2009). The study of drama history and theory has also added a dimension to the performance work the students do. One student summarised the way in which their knowledge was combined in their production,

Last year we worked with Brecht, this year with Stanislavsky and Laban’s movement. Now we have the theories – there is so much more depth to the performance. Vinegar Tom combines both Stanislavsky and Brecht. (BDSC Level 3 Drama Students, personal communication, August 25, 2009)
There is an understanding among the students about theatrical conventions and the use of space. The students took on many of the decision making processes for themselves and one student said,

There were hardly any stage directions in 'Vinegar Tom' – Goody coming in – three people on stage – who is she talking to? – We had to justify things for ourselves and make decisions. It was our own – no other play would be like that. We made decisions on set, lighting, costume, backstage – everything was in house – it was ours. It made it more professional. It was our play. We owned it. (BDSC Level 3 Drama Students, personal communication, August 25, 2009)

The students had a strong working knowledge of how a play is rehearsed and what steps an actor has to go through to develop a role for performance. Although only 17 or 18 years old, and without formal tertiary drama training, these students demonstrated a mature grasp of theatrical processes and, in particular the student actors understood the nature of the job. The play contained difficult scenes and may well be perceived by some as too difficult or inappropriate for a school to perform. One student commented that,

We have to commit to the play. It’s like everything in drama if I’m going to do it I have to do it well. We encouraged and supported each other. I want the audience to care not about me but the character. (BDSC Level 3 Drama Students, personal communication, August 25, 2009)

Another student had played the role of Albany Porcello in the previous year’s production, Children of the Poor by Mervyn Thompson. Like Vinegar Tom, this play brings with it challenges for young actors. Faced with the scene where Albany is abused by the Chaplain the young actor said,

...playing a twelve year old boy being raped; this kind of stuff happens and even though I haven’t got that experience, that stuff happens in the real world. I have to do it justice. I had to hate the chaplain’s guts. (BDSC Level 3 Drama Students, personal communication, August 25, 2009)
The students felt they had learnt a great deal by taking part in the production and were able to articulate some of the beneficial outcomes; one made the point that,

In history we learn about an era but in drama we are put in that situation. We felt what they did, for example, when the women were hung. In History we put our blood and sweat into an essay but in drama we put in our heart and soul. We can learn so much more in drama. (BDSC Level 3 Drama Students, personal communication, August 25, 2009)

Another student described how much her confidence had grown and that this would help her in the future, particularly in the university interviews she was facing. Another felt that the production had changed her as a person,

Drama opens up the person. We were so different from what we are now. We have explored different things. It has opened our minds how drama is capable of changing our perspectives, making us a more open all rounded person. (BDSC Level 3 Drama Students, personal communication, August 25, 2009)

Anton Bentley reiterated this point by saying,

The new key competencies are covered by drama. I have just had to write a reference for an ex-student and their ability in group work. This is one of the essential skills they learn in drama. People seem to think students only study drama because they want to be an actor but only 1% go off to be actors. It’s about developing personal skills, life skills. (A. Bentley, personal communication, August 25, 2009)

One of the students highlighted the fact that Drama is not only about teaching acting skills; the students have the opportunity to try their hand at other areas because of the nature of the NCEA drama course. As she said,

One of the great things about Drama – you might think you’re going to be an actor but you can learn a whole set of skills. I didn’t know I was going to write a monologue now I think I could accomplish writing a play. Drama opens up different things aside from
The students appear to relish the challenge of putting on a production and looking back over the work of the previous years could see how they had developed. As part of their course- work they are required to be videoed and then watch and analyse the performance of their play. One student commented that, “We thought we were so good in year 9 – each year pushes you a bit further. A few steps up then you look back down and now we have done a play that professional actors perform” (BDSC Level 3 Drama Students, personal communication, August 25, 2009). It is interesting to note that several of the students felt in some cases their own parents did not value Drama as a serious, academic subject. Many parents had been surprised at the level of commitment that was required of the students, both in rehearsal time and in the written work expected of them.

**A New Zealand theatre identity?**

In what ways does this production contribute to a New Zealand theatre identity? It is, after all, a British play, written by a British playwright, set hundreds of years ago, although performed by New Zealand actors in New Zealand. The students felt that aside from meeting the Achievement Standard Criteria, they offered a valid theatre experience for the local community. One of the students pointed out that by doing a play like *Vinegar Tom* the audience were seeing something they may not normally choose to see,

> Doing a play like Vinegar Tom – our parents and family are forced to come and see you – they wouldn’t go and see ‘Vinegar Tom’ at the Maidment – they wouldn’t jump to see that– but they are seeing new messages. (BDSC Level 3 Drama Students, personal communication, August 25, 2009)

The play appears to be rarely performed in New Zealand, so the students have performed challenging material that may not normally be available to the community. As one student pointed out, the play is about the
ancestors of a large majority of new Zealanders who emigrated from England. Another student pointed out that,

It's not about the setting, it's about the themes, the message that it's conveying. Everyone should be equal. Equal rights for men and women – not women are better than men. It's opening people's eyes to new things. Everything we have done has these themes. It's what makes it important for us and gives us conviction. NZ in general we are culturally rich when it comes to theatre – we do lots of it even if it's not funded. It's a key part of NZ culture. (BDSC Level 3 Drama Students, personal communication, August 25, 2009)

Another reasoned that the play is relevant today because; “it's about prejudices and stereotypes”. She continued, “It's a really challenging play – I would go and see it if it was ever performed again” (BDSC Level 3 Drama Students, personal communication, August 25, 2009).

Bentley strives to explore New Zealand works throughout the various Year groups at the school but this play was chosen because it met the needs of the group, as he said,

We get too hung up on NZ drama, Australian drama, the bottom line is; is it a good play? Does it speak to the audience in some way? We need to support our playwrights but we need to do something that works. Honestly, I could cast that play Vinegar Tom. I had 6 girls 2 boys. I don't want to break the play into scenes I want the actors to do the roles from start to finish so they can experience the whole play. I want it to stretch and develop the students I've got. (A. Bentley, personal communication, August 25, 2009)

Bentley also spoke about the contribution this play makes to a New Zealand theatrical identity, making the point that his school is in an area where there are immigrants from South Africa, Asia and the United Kingdom. He felt it is important that they, “need to know they are coming somewhere with its own history and stories. If you go to a new country you need awareness, appreciation and respect for those things” (A. Bentley, personal communication, August 25, 2009).
However, he feels that the prescribed list of plays for the Level 3 NCEA Drama course does not offer enough choice to him as a teacher. The production does not need to be chosen from the list but many teachers use the plays prescribed for the external examination 90612 (3.6) as their 3.5 productions. In this way students get to really know and understand the plays. Bentley said that,

> It is ludicrous that *Shuriken* has been struck off the prescribed list. What are boys’ schools going to do? The plays that are left are too specific in terms of race. We need more things that are across the board as we are a multi cultural country. Every school needs to be able to relate to the material. The kids need to relate to the plays. (A. Bentley, personal communication, August 25, 2009)

In an interview with Jo Tuapawa for the *Howick and Pakuranga Times* about his forthcoming production of *Art* by Yasmina Reza, Bentley said that, “directing a small show of three cast members is immensely different from large scale school production he has recently orchestrated” (J. Tuapawa, 2009c, p. 5). Bentley’s own work has often had to be set aside in order to produce plays to meet the needs of the students,

> I feel that in teaching there is a lot of good will exploited. My co-curricular was equivalent to a 0.5 job unpaid last year. In effect I gave $35,000 worth of my time to the school. We can’t say we are doing it for the good of the kids. There is a huge inequality in terms of expectations. Teachers can’t run departments, do productions, resource 5 year levels and write all the lesson plans for a management unit of $4000. (A. Bentley, personal communication, August 25, 2009)

Bentley feels that it is important that Drama teachers pursue their own work, so this year changed his schedule of productions in order to direct the production of *Art* by Yasmina Reza at the Howick Little Theatre. This was his first directing project outside of school since 2005,

> It’s really important for a teacher to have an outside life and interests but finding the time is not always easy. I can work on a different level than with the kids. I don’t think what the kids do is a lesser value or quality but I can push adults even further, which is
difficult at school. I can deal with more adult subject matter with more ease than at school. (A. Bentley, personal communication, August 25, 2009)

Working at the Howick Little Theatre allows Bentley to experience a supportive theatrical process, although it is apparent that school productions bring with them a sense of achievement,

If I work at HLT I direct but there are people to do costume, lighting, and publicity but at school everything rests on my shoulders. But the reverse of that – it is almost more rewarding because there is pride seeing students do a great performance when they are young and have worked so hard. There is a degree of satisfaction in that. (A. Bentley, personal communication, August 25, 2009)

Conclusion

The students who took part in the production undoubtedly benefit from having as their teacher a practising theatre professional. Bentley's willingness to try productions that are difficult and challenging show that such work can be successful in schools. The students themselves are stretched and given new opportunities to explore different roles and historical and social contexts. The students appear to have a strong understanding of what theatre is and can be, and see their own work as offering a valid theatrical opportunity to the local community. The Panasonic Performing Arts Centre is highly visible within the community as it sits opposite the Botany Town Centre. The production used the local media to advertise and this brought in an audience outside of the local school community. NCEA also requires that play be performed to, “an audience other than the class” (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2009c, p. 2). This particular standard seems to be encouraging some exciting work to be available for viewing by the local community. The

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16 Botany Town Centre is located in South-East Auckland

17 Explanatory Note 5 “For the performance of this production there must be an audience other than the class”. 
students were able to identify the way in which the play made a contribution to their lives by exploring the role of women, their victimisation in a society and by offering an insight into an historical event shared by immigrants from Britain.
Chapter 6: Drama process and performance: a method for peer teaching and learning within New Zealand schools

Drama now has a place in the curriculum and a variety of drama and New Zealand plays are regularly performed in New Zealand schools. But is drama process and performance a valid method for teaching and learning in the education system? By documenting two examples of New Zealand drama projects that have resulted in peer learning I will show how important the role of drama is as a teaching/learning tool within New Zealand schools.

Educational drama practitioners like Dorothy Heathcote in the United Kingdom have been working for many years using an approach now referred to as ‘Mantle of the Expert’. Heathcote’s view was that drama should show “man in a mess” (Smedley, 1971). She did not enter a school with predetermined ideas but rather facilitated a drama concentrating more on intensity of feeling among the students than focusing on facts (Smedley, 1971). Students learnt through their doing of drama without necessarily being taught theatrical skills or having an audience present.

Helen Nicholson, in ‘Theatre and education’, writes, “it is possible to learn from all theatre, of course, but that does not mean that all theatre is explicitly designed to be educational” (Nicholson, 2009, p. 5). Is it possible, however, for drama to become a tool for peer learning where students become both educator and learner with teachers reserving the right to step into the role of facilitator? As Piaget said, “Criticism is born of discussion and discussion is only possible amongst equals” (1999, p. 409).

Students working on a drama project may well critique and discuss each other’s work to develop the performance techniques used. Students may learn more about drama and theatre skills by participating in, creating, and performing drama. This may consist of devising drama from resources or working on a text, rehearsing, and developing it for performance.
In New Zealand, the NCEA Level 1, 2 and 3 Drama course requires students to devise and perform work as well as explore the theory and context of drama. Students regularly perform to their peers or their families and even the local community. Students who undertake all three years would normally have developed their performance skills as they rise through the levels meeting the differing assessment criteria. However, Drama may also be used as a tool to explore and gain knowledge about a wide range of subjects, people and issues and in particular those of New Zealand and in turn their work can contribute to New Zealand culture.

**Theatre in Education: devised by students for students**

In the spring of 2004, a co-educational group of year 12 Level 2 NCEA drama students were given the task of developing a Theatre in Education¹⁸ performance for a local primary school that supported an area of curriculum learning. The project was designed to fulfill the needs of the NCEA criteria, to “apply knowledge of a drama/theatre form or period through performing a role in a presentation” (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2002). The primary school children were in Years 5 & 6 and studying 'Outer space and the galaxy'. Two of the students involved in the process later wrote about it for the Saint Kentigern College Magazine *Piper*. It was their view that there was more to a theatre in education project than “meets the eye” (Cooney & Emerson, 2004). As Lucas Cooney and Jessie Emerson recounted,

> This was a comical piece developed to teach younger children about space and to teach different theatrical conventions. Interestingly, it happened that the majority of our group learnt more about space through teaching the children than we previously knew! The research involved was huge – whether through the internet or text resources. (2004, p. 11)

For the Saint Kentigern College students there was much research to be done, not only about the theatrical form of Theatre in Education but about

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¹⁸ The first Theatre in Education Company was formed at the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry in the United Kingdom in 1965, designed to develop educational material specifically to be performed in schools. It is often interactive.
the chosen topic. The students’ research coincided with a visit to the college by a portable Planetarium so arrangements were made for the Drama students to spend a session in the “Starlab” and develop their knowledge of space. The most difficult decision for the students was “interweaving the knowledge discovered into the act” (Cooney & Emerson, 2004, p. 11).

The students were also expected to develop a workshop with interactive activities for the pupils, to support the learning. During the workshop and performance, the Drama students found the primary students to be “excited and keen to take part” (Cooney & Emerson, 2004, p. 11). The senior students felt they had learnt a lot about “confidence and adapting to unknown environments” (Cooney & Emerson, 2004, p. 11). They continued,

We found it fascinating to watch different ways in which children learn. We were bound to come across the shy children a little difficult to communicate with and not wanting to take part, as well as the hyperactive kids also a little difficult to communicate with and very keen to take part! This situation was easily solved each individual child needed a different type of attention and a different incentive to focus on (Cooney & Emerson, 2004, p. 11)

It was interesting from a teacher’s viewpoint to see the students gain an understanding of different learning styles. The senior students highlighted one of the important roles that TIE can play in a school, that of developing the whole child and finding ways to communicate ideas to a range of children. As Cooney and Emerson wrote,

The purpose of TIE is to provide a piece of drama which entertains, whilst teaching a topic relevant to the audience. TIE gains its effectiveness by keeping the audience engrossed, while at the same time giving them beneficial knowledge that they can take away after the performance. (2004, p. 11)

There were several groups of students who developed work for this project and each took responsibility for a class. One group of five boys, whose main interest at college was sport, became very involved in the project and the teacher later expressed how pleased she was with the boys’
performance and commented on how much her class had gained from the experience. To the primary children, the boys were actors who had come to perform. The boys achieved at Merit and Excellence Achievement Levels and it seemed that the ‘higher’ status awarded to them helped them to achieve these higher levels.

**Developing a devised project about an issue: Break the cycle: A child is born**

Drama can also be used in peer learning to deal with challenging issues, with both the process and performance being important aspects of the learning. In New Zealand, according to report of a project in the New Zealand Journal of Research in Performing Arts and Education (Sutherlin & Greenwood, 2008,) a school in the North Island devised a project, A Child is Born, as an assessment component of a Drama and a Dance Achievement Standard at NCEA Level 2. The project is described in detail in the journal and clips of the performance were available on ‘You Tube’. The school was also involved in an education initiative to enhance the learning outcomes for students.

According to the report, the teachers spent a great deal of time prior to the devising process discussing, brainstorming and challenging their own ideas about the learning process and how they should control their classroom: Was their role to be teachers in the old sense of the word or as facilitators to guide the project? The devising process was instigated from a resource that had an impact on the students. In this case there had been a powerful news story about an abused child. The students felt strongly about the story so the teacher began to find ways for the students to develop a piece of work through improvisation and through the application of theory from both Stanislavski and Brecht. The teacher challenged the students to be responsive and involved in the devising process describing this as, “providing support structures, providing opportunities for reflection, and providing a stage” (Sutherlin & Greenwood, 2008). It is important that devised drama is supported by research so that the work becomes more than gratuitous introspection and contains valuable content. During the
devising process the teacher brought in the “school social worker, CYPS (Children and Young Persons Services) and Amokura (Family Violence Prevention Consortium- Tai Tokearau)” (Sutherlin & Greenwood, 2008). According to Sutherlin, the students were not only successful in making discoveries about the shaping of dramatic work but also about the issue itself,

They achieved because they cared about the work they were producing, they saw its relevance to themselves and to their community and they valued how the work gave them a voice in their community. They were passionate about their own performance and resolute in keeping each other up to the mark. (Sutherlin & Greenwood, 2008)

According to the report, the students performed the work to the local community on two evenings. Maran Sutherlin, one of the facilitators, described the piece as having a “collage structure,” because,

The participants had agreed it was important to show situations in their human honesty but not to get caught up in an emotional engagement with the characters or to wallow in depictions of abuse. So the scenes were short, juxtaposed with projected headlines from newspapers, rap sequences, dance, and several commentators, one who drew the analogy to slavery quoted earlier, another who threw out rapid harsh statistics about the incidents of child abuse and low percentage of cases brought to prosecution: “Our children are being killed,” she tersely told the audience, “not by war or by poverty but by our own abuse.” (Sutherlin & Greenwood, 2008)

On the second night the audience members were given the opportunity to speak. As Sutherlin recounts,

People stood up and spoke with their hearts. The parents of the students on stage talked about how they experienced the pressures of life and parenthood and used the work the students had offered as an important part of their discussion about the issues. The theatre was being used like a Marae where issues of importance to the community were being debated, and the students’ voices were being treated as serious contributions to the debate. Drama was not being contained in a box for assessment and schooling was regarded as an intrinsic part of the
It appears that not only were the students learning but they were also highlighting and opening up issues within their own community through the drama. As the report sums up,

...did the students understand the fullness of what they were doing? It probably cannot be easily answered. Perhaps they did: because this is an issue that concerns them greatly and they worked for some time at exploring it. Perhaps they only caught the shadow of their future understandings. And perhaps that is what our teaching, and our learning, is about? (Sutherlin & Greenwood, 2008)

It is understood nowadays that children need to learn in different ways. The old forms of listening and acquiring knowledge do not cater for everyone's needs. In Brain Compatible Learning, developed by Leslie A. Hart, children are required to feel safe in order to learn, be active in their learning, have lots of variety and good feedback and feed forward (International Association for Learning Alternatives, 2006). In a Brain Compatible Learning newsletter of 2006, teachers were told to,

Give the students lots of experiences, responsibilities and chances to try their wings. Students need to practice skills, to rehearse, to experiment, to role play, to learn through failures and successes, to learn experientially, to learn by doing. Use real life experiences! (International Association for Learning Alternatives, 2006)

Conclusion

Drama has strength as a peer learning tool whether it be used to teach communications skills, performance theory, history or literature or whether it be promoting issues or curriculum learning. Drama gives students variety, experience, and an experiential learning method. To give young
people the opportunity to teach or inspire others through their work gives students an ownership of that work as they have invested their own ideas and experiences. The learning seems to me to be no longer a one way street, that of teacher to student, but more of a meeting place where ideas are shared, exchanged, developed and where students, teachers, audiences and communities all gain in some way from the drama work. As the work at both Saint Kentigern College, and in the North Island show, the work of drama students can contribute something vital to the local community, and to a New Zealand theatre identity, as they find their own voice and utilise those methods that interest and suit their work.
Chapter 7: The role of professional theatre practitioners in schools

Nicole Jorgensen Professional Actress at Pakuranga College

The Ministry of Education’s *Strategic Plan for the Arts 2006-2008* highlights, as an area of focus, the collaboration between schools and Professional Arts Communities, “to nurture and support students’ learning in the Arts” (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 5). I was interested in finding out how the collaboration works and what the benefits are of two Government funded projects: The Arts Coordinator in Schools and the Artists in Schools programme. Can a professional theatre practitioner offer important insights to help teachers develop their students in the area of drama and theatre? This chapter looks at the work of Nicole Jorgensen, a professional actress who is both the Arts Coordinator and Artist in School at Pakuranga College in Auckland during 2009.

The school is described in the 2007 Education Review Office (ERO) Report as being a “large decile 9 coeducational secondary school located in the eastern suburbs of Auckland” (Education Review Office, 2007, p. 5). The school website describes its view of the Arts:

Art, music and drama have a strong following at Pakuranga College. The school has a reputation for presenting performances of a very high standard and has a dedicated drama studio which provides a professional and well appointed space. Cultural events and performances are also an integral part of school activities. (Pakuranga College, 2009a)

In the new prospectus for the school the role of the arts coordinator is obviously valued: “The College employs an arts coordinator to work with staff and students to reflect the importance of culture and the arts” (Pakuranga College, 2009b).
The role of the Arts Coordinator

The Ministry of Education began the task of implementing the Arts in the Curriculum in 2001, through professional development opportunities for teachers. One of the ways in which this was achieved was through the Arts Coordinators in schools. The aim of the project, described in the introduction and objectives of the report on the *Evaluation of the Secondary Schools Arts Coordinators Project to Support "The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum"* was to:

- enhance student understanding and achievement in Arts education in the four disciplines of The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum; encourage students to develop a better appreciation of the Arts; support and enhance school participation in Arts/cultural competitions or events; support links with the school's Arts community; and (where an Arts Coordinator is employed) provide coordination and administrative support for the arts curriculum.
  (Murrow, Kalafatelis, Ryan, & Davies, 2004)

It is as an Arts Coordinator that Nicole Jorgensen was first engaged at the college, with responsibilities embracing all four of the arts; music, dance, visual arts and drama. As she explained, it is her role to organise a professional artist to visit each of the year groups to ensure students are exposed to, and experience the arts (N. Jorgensen, personal communication, May 20, 2009):

> We try to get a range of different things- like dance, music, drama – it can be difficult to find Visual Arts performances though. This year we have Ugly Shakespeare. Strike (Percussion), Slapstix Ltd. (Commedia dell’arte toupe, Svargo (an Australian mime artist) and lots more. (N. Jorgensen, personal communication, May 20, 2009)

The senior students undertaking the Level 1, 2 and 3 NCEA Drama courses took part, in May 2009 in a devising workshop given by Massive Theatre Company. Of this Nicole wrote in the school newsletter,
This week all senior drama classes experienced working with Sam Scott from massive Theatre Company. Sam took the students through a series of vigorous physical theatre exercises to inspire them in devising theatre. The workshops are an introduction into a devising unit, which each class is working on this term. (“Artists in Schools”, 2009a)

Nicole is also involved in the promotion of the arts through various communications including the Arts Calendar, articles about the arts for the Pakuranga College Newsletter, and running the Arts Council, which is a group of approximately 30 students from Year 9-13 who arrange arts events at lunchtime for students who may not attend classes in the Arts. Nicole stated that the importance of her role as Arts Coordinator lies in the fact that she organises “the opportunities for students to experience the Arts” (N. Jorgensen, personal communication, May 20, 2009). Arts opportunities at the school are regularly reported through the newsletter.

The Artist in Schools Programme

As a professional actress, Nicole was also employed as the ‘2009 Artist in School’. This programme was described by the Senior Advisor for Arts at the Ministry of Education in Wellington as creating

...the opportunity for practising professional artists in the fields of dance, drama, music, and visual arts, to work with young people in New Zealand primary and secondary schools. It involves schools and communities in creative projects while providing students, teachers and artists with diverse and challenging learning experiences. The programme generates innovative ways to engage students from Year 1 to Year 13 across the arts disciplines within the curriculum. (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2009a)

In 2008 and 2009 the Ministry

...provided funding of $800 a week, up to a maximum of $8,000 (excl. GST), for an artist to work with students and teachers for a period of up to 10 weeks. Schools have been given a grant of $250 a week, up to a maximum of $2,500 (excl. GST) for the full 10 week period. The grant to schools covers
resources such as materials, costumes, or instrument hire needed for a project. (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2009a)

According to an article by Cathy Aronson, this funded 45 schools in 2009, at a total cost of $600,000 “although up to 200 schools applied for funding each year” (2009).

**Nicole Jorgensen: Actress**

Nicole has had close ties with the college for many years. It was as a student at the college that she became passionate about drama due to the enthusiasm and support of her Drama teacher who was himself a professional actor. The school provided a number of opportunities for her to become involved in drama productions. She took Drama from Year 9 to Year 13 including NCEA Drama at Levels 1, 2 and 3. From there she went to UNITEC\(^\text{19}\) where she studied for the *Bachelor of Performing and Screen Arts*, majoring in *Acting for Screen and Theatre*, which she completed in 2007.

Since that time Nicole has run her own children’s entertainment company, is a member of The Outfit Theatre Company, and has performed in work for Smack Bang Theatre Company. It was while working back at her old school as the Arts Coordinator that she decided, in consultation with the Head of the Drama Department, to apply to become the Artist in School and thus be funded by the programme. As a practising professional in the school, Nicole is involved in running drama workshops at junior and senior level, Drama Workshops with the Pegasus Unit\(^\text{20}\), Shakespeare workshops for Level 3 English, and junior/senior Dance where she implemented drama techniques into Dance. At the completion of her work, which results in over 15 hours a week teaching, she will provide the Ministry with a digital diary to be shared with the arts education community.

\(^{19}\) Unitec is an Auckland based Institute of Technology

\(^{20}\) A facility within Pakuranga College for students with an intellectual disability.
Arts events at the school through the Artist in Schools programme

In the school Newsletter of May 29th 2009, Nicole wrote the following about recent arts events,

It has been another exciting week with Artist in Residence, Nicole Jorgensen. Acting Masterclass students started learning acting technique and theory based on the Stanislavski System. They also had a guest acting tutor, Johnny Bright, who came to talk about his acting experience. Johnny recently worked with Oliver Driver and Michael Hurst in Silo Theatre’s Ensemble Project. As part of this visit, the students learnt about how devising works in professional theatre and had the chance to create a short performance based on a real news story. Year 13 English students also spent a lesson learning the rhythm behind Shakespeare’s text, Iambic Pentameter. The students practised a galloping technique, which some actors apply in rehearsal to help with the understanding of Shakespeare’s text, the rhythm and the characters. (“Artists in Schools”, 2009, May)

The Masterclass led by Nicole Jorgensen

During Term 2, Nicole ran several drama Masterclasses after school at the college. One particular class, held in May 2009, consisted of eight students, four male and four female, who were studying Drama at NCEA level. The class lasted two hours and focused on aspects of the work of Rudolph Laban21.

Nicole’s aim in her work was to develop opportunities to extend the students’ learning and to develop an ensemble group. She focused on professional acting techniques including work on voice, and introduced students to a variety of ways to develop and access character. It was intended, in future weeks, for other professional actors to provide further

21 Laban developed a “vocabulary of expressive movement which identified the basic factors of movement flow, with weight, embodying time and space” (Laban Organisation, 2009).
input to the classes. At the culmination of the classes an open session was planned where students would demonstrate some aspects of their learning to an audience.

Because the class lasted two hours, Nicole began with a vocal and physical warm up exploring a variety of exercises designed to warm up and concentrate the students' energies and minds. The students proceeded to engage in the workshop at what appeared to be a high level of involvement and focus, undertaking all physical and vocal activities without inhibition. The development of three characters, inspired by Laban's work 'Slasher', 'Wringer' and 'Flicker', began with movement work on the floor with students developing appropriate physicality guided by key words from Nicole. The students then proceeded to develop the characters further, using music before vocalising the characters within a situation specified by Nicole. Each development stage of a character was able to flow without interruption for approximately 20 minutes.

In one exercise, students explored their characters further through the use of Hot Seating. The students fully engaged in their characters and a drama began to develop within the hot seating situation which was fascinating to watch. Students took on characters of differing status, although almost all were close to their own ages, and tensions developed as the characters interacted. The students were then brought out of role and given a time to debrief and reflect on the roles they had developed physically and vocally, to demonstrate each of the Laban energies. Students were challenged to identify their own core energies and those of others in the group.

It was noticeable that Nicole was able to guide the students both as a facilitator and actress, encouraging their work. The class was subtly but

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22 Hot seating is described in the glossary for the drama curriculum as, “a process convention in which class members question or interview someone who is in role (e.g. as a character from a play, a person from history) to bring out additional information, ideas, and attitudes about the role. The class members may or may not be in role” (UNITEC, 2007).
well controlled with all students showing a high degree of concentration and commitment to the work. I found the students to be especially articulate, and one student was frequently able to identify the appropriate Laban energy from a range of dramatic characters from films and New Zealand Drama which had been studied. The class was supportive and positive in their identifications and there was a definite sense of an ensemble grouping within the work. After the workshop, Nicole pointed out that during the ‘Hot Seating’ exercise many of the students were playing roles quite different to their own personas.

Watching the students improvise the whole class scenarios containing their characters, it became obvious that they had developed the skill to instinctively use space and movement appropriately to the drama. Students listened and responded well to each other and demonstrated a range of conventions including grouping and freezing at the end of the drama. Throughout the session Nicole, using a quiet vocal register, gently encouraging students to create, discuss and reflect.

Working with senior students in a drama class during the school day can bring with it limitations; the constraints of time can force work to come to an early completion, and the space and location of the classroom can limit noise levels and movement. There was a noticeable freedom in the Masterclass because the entire space was available to them, there was a two-hour time frame, no noise limitations because of neighbouring classes, and the students were able to use appropriate and effective language in the development of roles. The two-hour time slot, unimpeded by a school bell, allowed for the natural development of work. These students showed an instinctive knowledge of performance skills and an ability to analyse and create a character. They were articulate; able to express their opinions about characters and analyse their work as well as make links beyond the studio to the world outside.

Nicole explained how the Artists in Schools project contributes to the development of the students and their work by bringing professional acting techniques into the classroom. These include work on voice, diction, warm
ups, and character development. She felt that the programme gave “new ways for kids to access drama” (N. Jorgensen, personal communication, May 20, 2009). She brings with her a range of knowledge and insight, having experienced professional training and performance. She is able to introduce students to more detailed methods of analysing script in preparation for production. I believe the importance of Nicole’s role was also enhanced by her being a professional actress. Students are able to have a different response and relationship with her than with a teacher, no matter how well trained and experienced the latter may be. She demonstrates that it is possible for students to progress through school and attain a professional level of expertise in drama. She has the experience of working on the stage and running her own entertainment company that she can share with students, teachers and parents.

**NCEA performance**

In July 2009 at Pakuranga College, an evening of devised work was held employing some of the students who had taken part in the Masterclass. The project was in fulfillment of the Level 3 Achievement Standard, 90609 *Devise, script and perform drama for solo, duo or trio performance*, and was based on stories of immigrants to the Manukau region. The performance took place in the Drama studio, in the evening, to a public audience. The studio was set up in the round and the seats placed in a configuration based on the British flag. The pieces showed a range of styles, from comedy to physical theatre and realism, which dealt with some of the stresses and tragedies that occur when families relocate countries leaving their families behind. The pieces, although individual, were linked by an opening and ending of physical symbolic images, as the actors entwined their bodies to show how their stories intertwined. The scenes were moving and humorous, and each was performed with energy and a confidence that engaged and compelled. At the completion of the performance, the actors remained onstage to answer questions, from the audience about the process involved in the devising. Some members of the audience spoke about their own experiences of immigration. This was a highly competent performance that touched on issues of relevance to
immigrant families, and was an example of how a school-based piece of work could make a valid contribution to the local community. It also served to demonstrate how much young people in schools have to say about the issues that surround them. Prior to devising the performances the students were involved in a research and interview process to locate their stories. Head of Drama, Fiona Keith–Kirk confirmed in an interview that all devised work done at the school was “related to society” (F. Keith-Kirk, personal communication, September 9, 2009). She described the Level 2 Drama devised project, where the plays were based on personal stories on the issue of racism. At the end of the project some students wrote in their reflection portfolios about the way in which

They have changed views and think more about how others feel. This is what Drama can do. It makes people think and have an emotional reaction. We need to awaken social awareness and realize how we impinge on people. It’s not all about money and economy. (F. Keith-Kirk, personal communication, September 9, 2009)

After her official time as an Artist in Schools had ended, but while she was still working as the Arts Administrator, Nicole reflected on how the Artist in Schools’ Programme had had an effect on the learning of students. She recounted a particular case of a student who appeared to be friendless and withdrawn. He attended the Masterclasses, which he was obviously very engaged in and she noted how his confidence grew: he constantly demonstrated new skills in character development. During the Masterclass process, as both Nicole and other professional actors had worked with the students, she was able to see the student group’s growth and described the series of classes as “like a mini drama school” (N. Jorgensen, personal communication, May 20, 2009). Nicole commented that her skills as a professional drama practitioner were of importance to the school.

One of the students attending the Masterclass has taken on the role of director of the college production in 2009, helped by a team of students acting as performers, technicians and administrators. Nicole is hoping to continue some classes next year with the school’s Pegasus Unit, with whom she has been working on a project which will result in a
performance later in the year. In her work with the English classes, Nicole has introduced students to the performance of Shakespeare, as opposed to the study of his plays as an academic literary study. She has been able to explore iambic pentameter with students through a “galloping exercise.” Nicole believes strongly that “drama can be implemented into lots of subjects”, and the students at the college now realise that “drama is not just fun and easy” (N. Jorgensen, personal communication, May 20, 2009). Her presence at the school has contributed to the students gaining a sense of the professional nature of drama. Some of her students have seen professional theatre, as a result of her work with them and her promotion of arts events. In the college newspaper, Pakage, she was described as a,

…fantastic role model here at our school, promoting and enhancing the arts programme and encouraging all students who have an interest in any of its areas, I would say we are quite lucky! Our brilliant new Arts Coordinator has lots of things planned for us, and Pakuranga College should make the most of every opportunity”. (Ganley, 2009, p. 7)

Demise of Artist in Schools Programme

During 2009 the Government announced cuts in the budget for education. One of the programmes to be axed is the Artists in Schools Programme. The government has stated,

In the current economic environment, the Government is seeking to focus effort and support for schools on the areas of highest priority and to achieve improvements in student learning through more effective use of core resourcing. For this reason funding for a number of discretionary programmes is being stopped. (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2009a)

The Artists in Schools Programme is to be cut because, “only 45 schools are involved each year” (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2009a). It is sad to note that there appears to be no insight by the government about the benefits that this programme brings to schools. In her article for the Big
Idea, School bell rings for artists, Cathy Aronson quoted Anne Tolley, the Education Minister as saying,

The decision to end the Artists in Schools programme was taken because in tough economic times, the Government is focusing on its core spending priorities for the education system - these are raising literacy and numeracy and increasing the numbers of pupils leaving school with educational qualifications. While this programme may well have had value, it does not contribute directly to these core education priorities.

(Aronson, 2009)

In New Zealand, the Arts are seen as an important component of children’s education. The very fact that the Arts are included in the curriculum should require the Government to support the methods that help student learn at the highest possible standards. For her article, Aronson spoke to Janet Jennings who was the Ministry of Education Senior Arts Adviser. Jennings clearly stated that, with the advent of the 5 Key Competencies in the New Curriculum, the teaching of the arts is vital,

These are the competencies that have been identified as central to every single student’s future. They enable all students to take their place in our community. Working effectively with other people and relating positively to others are competencies that are central to what adults do every day in the workplace. This kind of learning is essential.

(Aronson, 2009)

Barry Thomas, an artist and filmmaker, expressed his concerns about the demise of the Artists in Schools project on Dramanet:

As a long standing Arts practitioner it is a real concern for the basic employment of artists to lose this fine initiative... As a parent it is a real concern

23 An online community of creative practitioners in New Zealand

24 The key competencies, ‘Thinking’, ‘Using language, symbols and text’, ‘Managing self’, ‘Relating to others’ and ‘Participating and contributing’ are described as “the capabilities people have, and need to develop, to live and learn today and in the future”. (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2009b)

25 “email mailing lists open to all teachers of Drama and other interested educators”. (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2005)
that free thinking, professional artists will now not be supported by the Ministry to deliver valuable and inspiring learning for our youth. (Thomas, 2009)

Nicole Jorgensen’s view of the demise of the programme was that,

It is a real loss to the schools and to the artists. It is so different for the artists in the community to give something to the students. It is an opportunity for students to be exposed to a new way of learning; it’s not an everyday thing. It helps and inspires students - they could implement this into their learning. It makes them more passionate about the arts. (N. Jorgensen, personal communication, August 10, 2009)

The Head of Drama at Pakuranga College, who had worked closely with Jorgensen throughout the year, said that the Artists in Schools Programme had brought distinct benefits to the college. In her opinion, Nicole had:

... widened our scope, bringing in new knowledge which was valuable. The students were able to experience a professional quality of work and realise than an actor is an intelligent person. It gave students a realisation that it takes skills and understanding to become an actor. It’s not innate talent, you have to have skills” (F. Keith-Kirk, personal communication, September 9, 2009).

Ms Keith-Kirk said that although the students watch television, they do not realise that so much is dependent on the role of the actor. By experiencing a real actor at work they can see and hear:

...how they have used their artistry to become that citizen of the world or New Zealand, or how they’ve used it to address racism, all sorts of possible ills as well as highlights and joys. Arts are how we celebrate. (F. Keith- Kirk, personal communication, September 9, 2009).
Conclusion

The work of Nicole Jorgensen at Pakuranga College was obviously valued by both the Head of Department, Ms Fiona Keith-Kirk and the students. Nicole regularly used the school newsletter to inform the community about some of the exciting projects that were undertaken by her, and other professional Drama practitioners who presented workshops and performances at the school. The Masterclasses contributed directly to the training of the NCEA students, some of whom produced and directed the college production in 2009 demonstrating not only their Drama skills but a range of organisational and leadership skills. Her role as both Arts Coordinator and Artist in Schools did indeed “engage students”. It is interesting to note that even the scientists at the school benefited from the Artists in Schools programme. In the School Newsletter of June 26th a performance entitled Going Green was described: “Dr. Deane Hutton took the students through this educational and entertaining environmental performance, demonstrating a variety of experiments, in which some students were able to participate!” (“Artists in Schools”, 2009b).
Chapter 8: Student production at Pakuranga College: The Revenge of the Amazons by Jean Betts

In 2009, the major production at Pakuranga College was Revenge of the Amazons, a New Zealand play, by Jean Betts directed by a Level 3 drama student, Sam Tilling, who had taken part in the series of Masterclasses led by Nicole Jorgensen, and in the NCEA devising project. Other Level 3 drama students took on production and technical roles. In the Pakuranga College paper, Pakage, prior to the production the student reporter wrote that,

This year is a first for Pakuranga College, in that the production is entirely student run. This means they are responsible for how the audience perceives the play on the nights of the performance. (Perry, 2009, p. 5)

The student Production Manager, Amiee Glover, was quoted in the article as saying, “it’s a great opportunity for students who are looking into a career in the performing arts, because they are able to experience the ups and downs of running a production” (Perry, 2009, p. 5).

The play is described on the Playmarket website as “based on Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream, with the mechanicals as a female theatre troupe and Oberon falling for a ‘hard line feminist Easter bunny’ (Playmarket, 2009b). The production was publicised in the local newspapers, the Howick and Pakuranga Times, and the Eastern Courier, with half page articles and colour photos of some of the cast with the headlines “Revenge at Girls’ Hands” (Gardiner, 2009) and “Bard Gets a Feminist Workout” (Rapley, 2009). The articles contained interviews with the director Sam Tilling and members of the cast, and described the production as being entirely student run with “an egalitarian storyline, with no lead role” (Gardiner, 2009, p. 2).
Sam Tilling, the student director, speaking to the college newspaper, said that, “We wanted to perform something that no one really knew, because if we are successful, it is a bigger accomplishment than performing something well known and liked” (Perry, 2009, p. 5). The Head of Drama at the college, Ms Fiona Keith-Kirk, handed over the artistic decisions for the production and took on the role of “artistic consultant”; her role was to “help Sam when he needs assistance” (Perry, 2009, p. 5). The directorial interpretation was described by members of the cast as, “set in 1920s New Zealand, with some 1970s glamour thrown in for good measure” (Gardiner, 2009).

The Production

The production began at 6.30 pm, with members of the audience being guided into the school hall transformed into a wedding venue. Running along the length of the left side of the hall was the stage described by the Howick and Pakuranga Times reporter as, “shaped like an enormous, elaborate wedding cake, while the set décor is a dramatic black, white and silver” (Gardiner, 2009). To the right, were two rows of round tables laid with white cotton tablecloths with a small plate of home baked cakes in the centre. At the far end of the hall, on the traditional proscenium arch stage, in front of the curtains, stood a large brightly decorated wedding cake. The scene was set for the audience to take part as the wedding guests in this reworking of A Midsummer Night’s Dream. The audience was served coffee and tea in white china, at their tables, by students dressed as waiters. The audience chatted to each other as they might as guests at a wedding, which engaged them until the actors began.

The staging area was bright in its whiteness; white curtains hung on the back covering the hall windows, and onto these trailed streams of white Christmas lights. At floor level, on each side of the 3-tiered wide stage, were white cardboard cut-outs giving the appearance of a forest and, yet, in each tree’s shape could be seen the female form. White gauze hung over a number of the trees, and the floor was laid in white cardboard.
Through the top tier could be seen some holes from which, later in the woodland scene, emanated the fog of the forest which added further whiteness to the colour palette. It was a well designed, professional-looking set, with clean and clear lines, and a distinct production concept visible. It is interesting to note that in a review of a professional production of this play in Wellington the reviewer wrote, “The set does the job but is nothing outstanding. However, with an energetic cast of twenty and a live keyboard player, the play gets away with it” (Freeman, 2007). It is exciting to observe that a school production can pay more effective attention to the overall staging concept than a professional production. Apparently, many of the students involved were using the production to fulfill their NCEA Achievement Standards which includes, for 3.5, either acting or production role responsibilities. As Ms Fiona Keith-Kirk said, “they had to do research for the artistic concept. The 1920s, 1970s and how that reflects in the modern day. We were able to get lots of discussion and depth in the research” (F. Keith-Kirk, 2009 personal communication).

About 15 minutes before the announcement was made to switch off mobile phones, the fairies, dressed in white and silver, and sprites in black with highly decorated faces, crept on and moved gently among the forest peering at the audience. The audience gradually quietened until the rhythmical dance sequence by the Fairies and Sprites opened the play. This was followed by the entrance of the Amazonian Queen, Hippolyta, played by Amber Payne, and by Theseus, played by Radley Fenner. The director had obviously chosen his cast as physical and vocal opposites, to highlight the role reversal within the play. There was an immediate contrast between Hippolyta, tall, strong and loud, to her husband-to-be, who was small, petite and calm.

Each of the actors produced a strong performance not only vocally, but physically and I felt that the use of the space was particularly effective with actors remaining in role as they entered and exited the stage area. Demetrius and Helena demonstrated a strong focus, and in Helena’s case, a controlled physicality, able to hold the moment for comic effect before continuing. During the Mechanicals’ play at the wedding, which in this
reworking is a feminist play performed by the ‘The Fallopian Thespians’, the actors were obviously engaged in their characters. Their performances were detailed with thought and action, listening and responding to each other which heightened the effect of the comedy.

In their interview with the reporter of the Howick and Pakuranga Times, the Director and Production Manager commented that, “putting together a fully student-run play is no mean feat. It’s a big job, not for the faint-hearted” (Gardiner, 2009, p. 2). The audience appeared to enjoy the production, laughing out loud at appropriate moments, and listening attentively throughout. The production was energetic and fluid; the use of one set allowing the energy to be maintained between scenes. Line ‘pick-up’ and audibility were excellent and, as actors left the stage, the next performers had appeared and the scene continued. This gave the production a professional quality similar to the flow given to productions like Macbeth26 and Hamlet27 by Michael Hurst for The Large Group in Auckland.

This was another fine example of how students and schools can put on productions which not only reflect aspects of New Zealand culture but demonstrate a very high level of understanding of what theatre is. One did not have to be a parent of a student in the play to be entertained and educated. The production enabled students to experience the process of a production through its many and varied aspects, both backstage and as performers. Fiona Keith-Kirk stated that for the student director Sam Tilling,

> It opened his eyes to how many levels there are in putting on a production. Every area had a student in charge. They became far more aware of work; negotiation and discussion. It showed them the depth of thinking that is needed if they want to make the play of value to the audience. It’s not about doing it

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26 Macbeth by William Shakespeare directed by Michael Hurst performed at The Maidment Theatre by The Large Group in 2004

27 Hamlet by William Shakespeare directed by Michael Hurst performed at The Maidment Theatre by The Large Group in 2003. Reviewed by Peter Calder for the New Zealand Herald in 2003 he wrote “this is a stylish affair, indeed, in which characters enter and exit as if being faded in and out of a movie “ (Calder, 2003)
for their own glory. It’s all about communication. It was a huge learning curve for the students; practical learning and thinking skills. (F. Keith-Kirk, 2009 personal communication).

This production was interesting in that it was directed by students who performed, directed and produced a highly accomplished production, but the context of a wedding involving the audience as wedding guests gave the play a truly theatrical dimension; the whole ambience had been considered for the production. This is a good example of the way in which Drama that takes place in schools can take a lead in providing a whole theatrical experience through an effective production concept, for a New Zealand audience and specifically, in this instance, for the Howick and Pakuranga community.

Conclusion

The school productions explored in this and previous chapters demonstrate that there is a great deal of knowledge and passion for New Zealand drama and/or drama which has been adapted to provide a New Zealand context among teachers and students. Much of this knowledge has come from the introduction of the NCEA Drama courses which allow students to study drama as a specialist subject with its literacies, theories, history and practical knowledge. It is exciting to note that, according to Fiona Keith-Kirk some of her students will continue to further their drama studies in the future.
Chapter 9: The Auckland Theatre Company: The Education Unit

As Fiona Keith-Kirk, Head of drama at Pakuranga College stated, “it is important for Drama students to experience real actors at work” (F. Keith-Kirk, personal communication, September 9, 2009). The Auckland region is fortunate, having access to a number of professional theatre initiatives, the largest and most well known being The Auckland Theatre Company (The ATC). The ATC is New Zealand’s largest professional theatre company (Auckland Theatre Company, 2007b). The Company produces a wide range of dramatic work which reaches over 75,000 people a year. They also have a dedicated literary unit which encourages the development of new material described as “a core part of ATC programming” (Christian, 2009c), as well as an Education Unit. The ATC reaches a large number of young people during the year, in the Auckland region and beyond, through their productions, schools’ matinees, forums, workshops, Teachers’ Packs, Fact Sheets and an Ambassador programme. Their role is described as a “resource for teachers, students, theatre practitioners and anyone interested in theatre education and training throughout New Zealand” (Auckland Theatre Company, 2007b). Their work relates “directly to the Understanding of the Arts in Context (UC), and Communicating and Interpreting in the Arts (CI) strands of the New Zealand Curriculum” (Auckland Theatre Company Education Unit, 2006).

The educational aspects of the ATC have been an important focus of the company for many years. In 2001, Simon Prast, then Director of the ATC, said in an article in The New Zealand Herald that the Company had “set up a raft of training and education schemes to bring on the next generation of talent and audience” (Herrick, 2001). According to Lynne Cardy, the Creative Development & Education Manager, The Education Unit grew out of a number of initiatives launched in 2001 under the umbrella of what was called ‘The 2econd Unit’, originally developed by Oliver Driver, Frith Walker, T.O Robertson and Sarah Peters. The work they did led to the development of the Education Unit, under the leadership of Sarah Peters,
with an advisory panel of Drama teachers to help develop the work at a
time when Drama had only been a recent addition to the curriculum.

The ATC Education Department has been led by Lynne Cardy for the past five years. In an interview at the offices of the Auckland Theatre Company, Cardy discussed the work of the ATC Education and Creative Department. Geoff Cumming, in *The New Zealand Herald* wrote that over 50 schools from as far south as Wellington attended the ATC’s performance of *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller, in 2007 (G. Cumming, 2007). Cardy confirmed that schools travel from as far afield as Tauranga, Hamilton and Whangarei to see ATC productions and that, for the past two years, they have been fully booked. Every secondary college, approximately 200 in the Auckland region, receives information about the upcoming productions at the beginning of the year. According to the Education Unit’s report on school group attendances in 2008, a total of 6,244 students attended the productions; they came from 67 different schools in 12 different regional areas. The greater percentage of students is from the Auckland city area, with 2 schools in 2007 attending all the productions as subscribers (Auckland Theatre Company Education Unit, 2008).

The ATC programme is informed by the NCEA prescribed lists of texts, and by the school timetable, but not dictated by them. Generally, an original New Zealand play is performed at the beginning of the year. Often it is a light-hearted production to suit the summer season. This play, says Cardy, can be referenced by teachers with their students throughout the year. In February 2009, the production was *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, by John Buchan, adapted by Ross Gumbley. Cardy realised that the play would be very suitable for younger year groups as it was an action packed boys’ own adventure involving four actors playing 139 roles; the play was sold out. This is followed by a mid-winter classic performed in term time to enable schools to attend. In April 2009, *She Stoops to Conquer*, by Oliver Goldsmith, was followed by outreach work28 which was completed by the

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28 Outreach work often takes place in schools with students, and usually consists of workshops led by actors and/or directors, to explore aspects of the production.
end of term 2. In 2009, five of the seven plays were available as part of the schools’ programme, although in other years fewer plays have been suitable for schools’ audiences. Cardy pointed out that if the company had their own theatre venue they would be able to provide even more opportunities for young people and schools. She said “all the work has to be considered carefully, the sustainability of it, how meaningful, how useful the outcomes in growing the audience are”. (L. Cardy, personal communication, July 29, 2009).

The Ambassador Programme

One of the first aims of the ATC Education Unit was to focus on the Ambassador Programme which was designed to “support and nurture audiences”, (L. Cardy, personal communication, July 29, 2009). In 2002, Oliver Driver, who was involved in ‘The 2econd Unit’, had, according to *The New Zealand Herald* the “commitment to help to build satellite theatre companies, helping them to make the precarious jump to professional standards of performance” (Till). However, Driver felt the most important aspect of this work was “to make theatre appeal to audiences from 16 to 35 - to make it cool - and entice a new demographic into the audience pool” (Till, 2002). He commented that although students were now expected to take courses in dance, drama, visual arts and music, this alone would not automatically bring people into the theatre, “New Zealand has a sports culture and getting young people into the theatre takes a lot of doing” (Till).

Each school is given the opportunity to nominate one student to act as an Ambassador for the year. The students

...attend Auckland Theatre Company shows for free and take part in workshops and forums to discuss each performance with the actors, directors and the production team. Ambassador night is held on the first Tuesday of each new season at an earlier time of 6.30pm. A lower ticket price is available and this is also available for school groups. Each Ambassador also acts as the link between Auckland Theatre Company and their school. (Auckland Theatre Company, 2007a)
The Ambassadors were described in Frances Till’s 2002 article as the “most passionate Year-12 and Year-13 drama students in colleges around Auckland.” Driver hoped that “some will become professionally committed to theatre, while others become enthusiastic catalysts at their schools” (Till). According to Cardy, in 2001 there were 15 ATC Ambassadors, today there are over 60 students, annually, who act as Ambassadors forming a link between their school, their friends and the ATC (L. Cardy, personal communication, July 29, 2009).

One Ambassador, Sam Phillips, is quoted on the ATC website as saying,

I just wanted to say how incredibly appreciative I am of the ATC Ambassador programme. Being able to reap the benefits of other Ambassadors over the years and being an Ambassador this year has allowed me to see much more theatre than I would have otherwise and for this I am truly grateful. These opportunities have fixed in my mind that theatre is my industry. ATC’s plays constantly challenge me and leave my friends and I thinking and arguing for days and weeks afterwards. (Auckland Theatre Company, 2007a)

The Ambassadors, attending the production on Ambassadors Night, are not with a school group and Cardy feels this helps them “be individuals becoming dedicated theatre goers” (L. Cardy, personal communication, July 29, 2009).

The Ambassadors benefit from free entry and can bring friends at a discounted price. They also receive a reference letter acknowledging their contribution to the theatre company during the year. Cardy also said that many of the other long running programmes that were developed between the years 2001 to 2004 by ‘The 2econd Unit’, continue today through the Education Unit. These include training programmes, internships, school workshops, outreach programmes, teachers’ packs, the school matinee programme and post-show forums.

**The School Matinees and Educations Packs**

According to Cardy, school matinees have formed the backbone of the ATC’s education work. Matinees are scheduled for 11am to
“accommodate travel times and enable students to participate in our post-
show forum series where young people and their teachers discuss the
performance with cast and crew” (Auckland Theatre Company, 2006). The
post show forums last for about 30 minutes after the show. Cardy feels
that schools that stay for the Forum, and involve themselves in the
discussion with actors after the performances, gain more from their theatre
going experience. The pricing is kept low, at $15 a ticket.

Teacher’s Pack

Prior to the matinee performance teachers are sent a Teacher’s Pack
which contains a range of material to assist with further exploration of the
work. Some of their resources are “supported by the Ministry of Education
and are available online on “Te Kete Ipurangi – The Online Learning
Centre website” (Auckland Theatre Company, 2006). Over the years the
Teacher Pack has developed and gained importance, beginning in 2002
with an extensive and thorough document of 90 pages to support learning
about Waiting for Godot by Samuel Beckett (L. Sharp & Strauss, 2002).
Since 2005, the most recent Teacher packs have been available online as
‘pdf’ files through the ATC website. In 2007, for example, the Teachers’
Pack for The Pillowman, by Martin Mcdonagh, at The Maidment Theatre
contained a synopsis, information on the themes of the play, the director’s
approach, the design of set, costume, lighting and sound as well as
background information about the playwright, and included links to other
resources and areas of the curriculum. The pack was 13 pages long and
provided valuable material which supported the study of the Level 3 NCEA
Achievement Standard 3.6 (90612)29, which required students to “reflect
critically on drama performance” (New Zealand Qualifications Authority,
2007b). In 2009 the Education Pack to support the The Pohutakawa Tree
by Bruce Mason was published in an A5 book format by the New Zealand
Post, who sponsored the production. The pack contains a variety of
resources which follows the process of production, interviews with the cast

29 “Analyse drama processes in a new context and reflect critically on drama
performance”
and colour photographs of the play. The Education Unit intend to distribute this in hard copy, to all Auckland schools.

The education surrounding the conventions of theatre attendance is an important component in theatre education. In a previous chapter about the performance of Our Country’s Good at Macleans College, it was noted that students often have limited experience of attending a theatre performance, whether professional or amateur. Cardy feels it is the theatre company’s role to train the audiences of tomorrow, but teachers play an important role in this, briefing their students prior to the production about the play and how they can support the actors; different responses are encouraged but they need to be appropriate. For ATC productions, teachers are requested to refer to the “Auckland Theatre Company Guidelines for Theatre Attendance” (Cardy, 2006). It is a single page document which not only highlights five conventions for an audience to follow but gives reasons why each of these is important. It is a positive document which states that the actors “need your help to ensure that you and everyone else in the audience get the most out of the experience” (Cardy, 2006). Cardy tends to introduce matinee performances herself, to “discourage the over-excitement” that can sometimes adversely affect performances (L. Cardy, personal communication, July 29, 2009). She said that it is important to, “reinforce that the audience is a part of the performance”, and she tells young audiences that, “the actors will have a totally different show today than tomorrow because you are here. She also stated that evening performances “force students to be more mature” (L. Cardy, personal communication, July 29, 2009).
The Advisory Panel

The work of the Education Unit is underpinned by an advisory panel which has included in the past Dr. Peter O’Connor, and currently includes Trevor Sharp, Community Facilitator for Dramanet and Secondary Drama Facilitator at TEAM\textsuperscript{30} Solutions for Auckland and Northland (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2009c). Lynne Cardy frequently consults with Trevor about drama curriculum areas and sends him advice and feedback on scripts for potential productions. He is able to offer valuable advice on what teachers may like to see developed in production and in the Teacher Packs. He is supported by a group of teachers many of whom have been instrumental in the development of Drama as a curriculum subject in New Zealand and these include, among others, Kathryn Whillans, Jane Griffin and Verity Davidson. Another important advisor is Sally Markham who, according to her website, introduced a new approach to bringing schools into theatres at The Edge\textsuperscript{31} in Auckland by developing

\begin{quote}
... a programme that combined bringing schools into The Edge venues and taking artists out into schools, she forged deep links with the community and engaged with artists and performing arts companies in ways not previously tried. (Markham Arts, n.d.)
\end{quote}

Markham is an exponent of a style of learning known now as Authentic Learning and this has influenced the work of the Education Unit at the ATC.

Authentic learning

Authentic learning is described as an “arts residency project that placed groups of artists in schools” (Markham Arts, n.d.). It was designed to offer different opportunities, through which students could actively learn about the Arts,

\textsuperscript{30} TEAM Solutions is a part of the faculty of Education at The University of Auckland providing professional development for teachers in Auckland and Northland (University of Auckland, 2009).

\textsuperscript{31} The Edge comprises three performing arts facilities: Aotea Centre, The Civic and Auckland Town Hall and the outdoor space Aotea Square (The Edge, 2008).
Thirteen artists, six schools, two arts companies, and one music group were involved in Authentic Learning; creating a diverse range of performance pieces and dramatic work throughout the 2008 school year. In four schools, the residency worked towards a whole-school performance project. (Markham Arts, n.d.)

According to Markham, it was based on the United Kingdom’s Creative learning Programme, ‘Creative Partnerships’ which seeks to actively engage children in their learning through encouraging their creativity. The programme according to the Platform paper: A Sustainable Arts Sector, was developed in 2002, its aim to,

...raise young people’s aspirations, to increase the skill and confidence of teachers in working with creative practitioners, to influence schools’ attitudes to culture, creativity and working in partnership, and to contribute to the sustainability of the creative industries. (Hunt & Shaw, 2008, p. 22)

Creativity is defined as “the wider ability to question, make connections, innovate, problem solve and reflect critically. These are skills that are demanded by today’s employers” (Creativity Culture and Education, 2009).

The programmes have met with success and,

…schools who work with Creative Partnerships improve their [GSCE] results faster’, Authentic Learning aims to make a change in the lives of children and young people through an enriched arts education experience. (Markham Arts, n.d.)

Lynne Cardy said that one of the important features of an Authentic Learning opportunity is that the senior management of a school must fully support the collaboration between the artist and the school (L. Cardy, personal communication, July 29, 2009).

In 2008, the ATC commissioned, in conjunction with the New Zealand International Arts Festival, a new play, Where We Once Belonged by Sia Figiel, adapted for the stage by Dave Armstrong. It is described on the website as, “a hilarious, moving and heartfelt tale of desire and self discovery“ (Auckland Theatre Company, 2008). The play is a new New
Zealand work and combines the English and Samoan languages. It is performed on a traverse stage with the cast of six actors on stage throughout and provided material for outreach workshops. It was decided to use the production as the focus of an Authentic Learning experience to build an ongoing relationship with one school. The project was piloted at Tangaroa College, a co-educational secondary school in Otara, South Auckland where Drama was not a discrete subject. The project was managed by Sally Markham, working closely with ATC and the artists involved.

At the beginning of 2008, 150 students from the college saw the production, a drama group was formed at the college and from that 24 students took part in a series of workshops facilitated by Lynne Cardy with two of the actors of Where We Once Belonged. The first sessions were spent introducing the students to some drama games, improvisations and exercises. The actors took the lead in building the group dynamics using bilingual Samoan and English to work with the class. The group had been specifically gathered together for the project and, according to Cardy, were a “high energy” enthusiastic group of students, who were very eager to participate. She described it as a “nice marriage of artists and students” (L. Cardy, personal communication, July 29, 2009).

These sessions were followed by several workshops at the school by other artists, including workshops by Massive Company. The ATC then returned and work began on some short scenes from the play. At first, Cardy recalls, although the students enjoyed working with the scripts, they tended to recreate what they had seen on stage. However, it was not long before they began to experiment with the text. The students also worked with actors from the production of Strange Resting Places, by Taki Rua

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32 An ensemble theatre company based in NZ who perform both devised and scripted work. The company have been acclaimed internationally for their work (Massive Company, 2009).
Productions Theatre Company. In order to continue its relationship with the school, the teachers and the students, Lynne Cardy invited them to see the production of *Ship Songs* by Ian Hughes, which was held at a local venue, the Howick Little Theatre later in the year. The students were excited by the prospect of seeing the production and took part in the forum afterwards. According to Cardy, Tangaroa College has continued to attend ATC schools performances in 2009, and one member of the original Drama Group registered and auditioned for the Young and Hungry Festival and was cast in one of the three plays. A group from the school also attended all three of the Young and Hungry plays during the school holidays. Lynne Cardy reflected that the education unit provided an important link with schools:

If we didn’t have the link there would be fewer young people going to the theatre. We are offering tailor made associated events and outreach programmes that support the main-bill productions and are designed to make the work we do more accessible. We are already seeing an increase in young audiences to ATC shows; in the last two years over 10000 secondary school students attended an ATC schools programme performance. Associated events like this year’s Young and Hungry Festival (which is aimed entirely at 15 – 25 year olds) and well established initiatives like the ATC Ambassador Programme (which encourages young people to become dedicated theatre-goers and to promote theatre going to their friends and family) are also serving to increase attendance by young audiences. Hopefully in 5 to 10 years some of these young people who have attended ATC shows as students will still be coming to the theatre as adults and enjoying the experience for the same reasons they did when they were younger; it’s live, it’s vital and they are a part of it. (L. Cardy, personal communication, July 29, 2009).

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33 Taki Rua Productions is a professional Māori theatre company in New Zealand’s that produces Māori theatre works that tour throughout New Zealand and the world (Taki Rua Productions, 2009).

34 A festival which encourages new writing by young people which must reflect their own youth culture.
The Pohutakawa Tree by Bruce Mason at the ATC

In September 2009, the ATC presented The Pohutakawa Tree, by Bruce Mason, at The Maidment Theatre. The play was, until 2008, included in the NCEA Level 3 Drama (90610) prescribed list of plays. According to the artistic Director of the ATC, Colin Mc Coll, it is “seldom performed by professional theatre companies” because “there has been no one of the right age, experience and emotional range to portray its central character, Aroha Mataira” (Christian, 2009b).

In August The Weekend Herald describing theatre as a “passion which empowers” (Christian, 2009b) commented on the large number of students who would see the production, “1750 school pupils from 40 schools who will see the production described in the publicity material as a glimpse into New Zealand’s theatrical past” (Christian, 2009b, p. B7). Kathryn Whillans, the Head of Drama at Glenfield College, and one of the teachers planning to take students to see the production, stated that theatre is,

... an enriching experience and the students love going. It is essential for our students to see ‘New Zealand on stage’ because it enables people to think about our social and cultural past. By going to see the Pohutakawa Tree they can think about a number of issues which extend into our world today. It will provoke the students to ask question. (Christian, 2009b, p. B7)

According to The Weekend Herald, the production, “set a new box office record with more than 9500 people going along to see Bruce Mason’s 1955 work” and summarised that, “theatregoers are hungry to see New Zealand works” (Christian, 2009c, p. B7).

ATC Drama workshops

The ATC Education Unit supports their theatre performances by providing and facilitating workshops for schools. These also provide important
professional development opportunities for teachers. This is described on the workshop page of their website as,

ATC Education Unit assists several schools in coordinating professional development activities for their English and Drama departments and offers in-school workshops for students facilitated by theatre professionals. (Auckland Theatre Company Education Unit, 2007b)

In 2009 ATC facilitated a directing workshop held at the Auckland Theatre rehearsal studio, and a workshop supporting She Stoops to Conquer, by Oliver Goldsmith, to help teachers access texts through “games, exercises and approaches to opening up a text, characterization, creating the world of the play and connecting with other actors by focusing on key scenes and characters” (Auckland Theatre Company Education Unit, 2009). According to Cardy, the workshops for teachers were led either by actors or directors, but essentially by people who are good communicators. Cardy advises those leading the workshops not to encourage too many questions and to keep the workshop as active as possible, allowing time at the end for questions, reflections and notes. A Drama Curriculum specialist such as Trevor Sharp or Verity Davidson, for example, is usually present at the workshop to answer teachers’ questions pertaining to the classroom. There are no pre-notes available for the workshops but bullet points are supplied to teachers in the following week. As Cardy says, “people can go wrong with drama if they hold notes to teach. The most common feedback I get from teachers about these workshops is that it is a great opportunity for them to be able to play” (L. Cardy, personal communication, July 29, 2009).

After one workshop, Angela Clayton of Pinehurst School on the North Shore of Auckland, wrote that she

...loved the relaxed yet professional atmosphere and the opportunity to ‘do’. I would consider this extremely valuable professional development and can't wait to use the activities. (Auckland Theatre Company Education Unit, 2009)
Schools can book a visit by a professional theatre practitioner working on a current ATC production and in 2009, this included *She Stoops to Conquer*, for which the Education Unit provided 12 outreach workshops. The 24 students allowed at each workshop are taken through a variety of exercises, including “Rehearsal techniques, character-building, solo and group work” (Auckland Theatre Company Education Unit, 2009) to explore the themes and aspects of the play. This particular workshop and play was available for senior students but workshops are also available for younger students and in 2009, this included the production of *Oliver* by Lionel Bart. The ATC Education Unit explain that each workshop is “is custom designed with your school and needs in mind” (Auckland Theatre Company Education Unit, 2009) and it is this flexibility that is a particular strength for the company. The ATC are able to meet the specific needs of individual schools as can be seen from the Authentic Learning experience at Tangaroa College.

The ATC’s production of *The Crucible*, by Arthur Miller, in 2007, was seen by over 50 schools from as far afield as Wellington. This was a prescribed text for the NCEA Level 3 Drama Achievement Standard 90610, *Demonstrate knowledge of theatre form or period by analysing and interpreting two scripted texts*. The production was supported by workshops and Teacher Packs and funding allowed schools to experience workshops free of charge. According to the ATC’s report on their workshops, each session lasted two hours, involved about 30 students, and was facilitated by the assistant director of the production, Margaret - Mary Hollins, Lynne Cardy, and some of the actors from the play, who worked on key scenes with students. A wide range of approaches were taken which, according to the ATC report, covered “solo and group work, chorus, improvisation into text, the world of *The Crucible*, rehearsal exercise, discussion, feedback”, and also provided “an opportunity for students to engage first hand with professional actors in their school environment” (Auckland Theatre Company Education Unit, 2007c). No one workshop was exactly the same and, according to the ATC report, most were “dynamic participatory events”, two of the workshops took the form of a “discussion forum” (Auckland Theatre Company Education Unit, 2007c).
In total, 330 students took part in the workshops, and according to the report, most of these had seen the play at a matinee performance and this “enhanced” (Auckland Theatre Company Education Unit, 2007c) the workshop experience for the students. Apparently, students were highly involved and enthusiastic and able to “retell their versions of the play, to explore the characters involved”, and “students enjoyed discussing their responses to the world of the play” (Auckland Theatre Company Education Unit, 2007c). This work not only assists the students but helps to inspire teachers to develop their confidence and skills. Amongst the feedback received by the company was a letter from a Head of Drama, who valued the workshops and “follow up” saying,

I definitely want to work with the text next year and viewing the play and the subsequent workshop gave us a really good start. I have no doubts now about creating the mood behind the hysteria. (Auckland Theatre Company Education Unit, 2007c)
ATC Technologies workshops

The ATC have also been able to organise Production Managers, Lighting Designers and Set Designers to visit schools for specific workshops, designed to meet the requirements of the NCEA Level 1, 2 and 3 Achievement Standards in theatre technologies. The workshops are designed “to give an insight into the processes involved in making professional theatre,” (Auckland Theatre Company Education Unit, 2007c). This is an area which can be difficult for students to explore for a variety of reasons, including the lack of facilities and resources at schools, and the lack of technical expertise felt by the teacher. The ATC also advertise on their website that senior secondary students are welcome to contact the company to arrange work experience at the theatre in the various technology and administration departments.

Other projects in schools

The ATC Education Unit has recently been involved in an Introduction to Directing course that took place at Kings College in Auckland, with Year 10 students. The actors spent three days at the college working with seven different groups and three different plays. Prior to the course, teachers from the English department had taken part in a workshop led by Colin McColl and John Callen, as part of their professional development. The project at the college is described on the college website:

In early August, all English sets spent two periods under the tutorage of renowned director Cathy Downes, learning skills to aid their own dramatic presentations. Workshops were tailored specifically for each class with the actors presenting scenes from the play individual sets had studied. (Kings College, 2009b)

Cardy said that she encouraged the directors not to get “bogged down” in what the school is doing but remain open to what the year 10 students want to know,
We need to have a plan but with so much knowledge we have to remain flexible to what the group needs. We need to encourage workshop leaders not to talk too much - but let the learning be active. (L. Cardy, personal communication, July 29, 2009).

The Young and Hungry festival

In 2009, the ATC presented a “parallel season” (Auckland Theatre Company Education Unit, 2006a) of The Young and Hungry festival that has run for several years in Wellington. This festival encourages new writing by young people which must reflect their own youth culture. It also provides the opportunity for students aged 15 and over to be involved in performance and backstage in the production of the plays. According to Dionne Christian,

The festival matches top industry professionals with cast and crew aged from 15-25 years old. Working in teams, the more seasoned experts mentor the younger people who effectively receive free training and work experience. (Christian, 2009a)

Lynne Cardy had visited Wellington to explore other possibilities for theatre for young people and in an interview with The New Zealand Herald said,

If we’re going to do something specifically with young people in mind, this is it. Anything else would have been re-inventing the wheel and after 15 years, the Young and Hungry Trust has ironed out a lot of the logistical issues involved with a project of this nature. (Christian, 2009a)

Cardy felt that the festival had had been a “watershed”, as it offered young people a chance to get onstage and backstage with the company in greater numbers that had previously been possible. She described it as a “body of work for young people that the company is investing in. In the future we envisage touring successful Young and Hungry plays around the region” (Christian, 2009a).
Funding

Funding is vital for the Education Unit in maintaining the sustainability of a project. Cardy said that thinking about the type of work and the resourcing behind it takes a great deal of planning. In 2005, the ATC “Road Crew” took a 45-minute touring production of *King Lear*, by William Shakespeare, to schools outside of Auckland. The production was linked to the ATC main production, in September and October, of *Disgrace* by Carl Nixon which was described as a “An absorbing and compelling story of Lear” (Maidment Theatre, 2005), set in post apartheid South Africa. This work was developed in conjunction with the ATC Literary Unit. In their *School Workshop Activity 2004-2007 Report* the touring production of *King Lear* was described as a “model for touring theatre outside of traditional inner city theatres and into local community venues and schools”. It was seen to address “the need for high quality theatre experiences that are accessible to younger audiences” (Auckland Theatre Company Education Unit, 2007c, p. 2).

The production toured to 15 schools in Auckland, both private and state funded, and also performed at the Auckland College of Education. According to the ATC report, 1500 children, their families and teachers saw the production, which was designed to fit into the school timetable. The production was available to Intermediate students and provided year 9 and 10 students with “an accessible introduction to Shakespearean tragedy and simple drama conventions” (Auckland Theatre Company Education Unit, 2007c, p. 3). For senior students the programme offered a way to access the “features of Elizabethan theatre, a variety of drama conventions and approaches and an exploration of Shakespearean tragedy” (Auckland Theatre Company Education Unit, 2007c, p. 3).

The project was successful in engaging students and contributing to their understanding of theatre, as one letter received from the Head of Drama at an Auckland school summarised,

> What a wonderful experience for our students to see such an amazingly professional and inspired production of King Lear. The girls have all written
reviews of the work and many of them really loved what they saw and were able to comment very fully on elements, techniques and conventions used by the performers. It has also really helped them to understand the processes involved in making theatre that communicates – better than 15 lessons! (Auckland Theatre Company Education Unit, 2007c, p. 3)

However, although the project was successful, it could not continue as a further 3 years of funding would have been needed by the ATC to sustain the work.

Cardy raises some interesting points about the importance of the Education Unit’s work and the role of the ATC. She feels that the main difference

... between professional theatre and studying drama at school is that it is a collaborative art much more than being theoretical. It is fundamentally about communicating. Directors are looking for things that are compelling, fun and enjoyable. (L. Cardy, personal communication, July 29, 2009).

She believed that enabling students to work with actors allows the students to see the actors as real people: “It’s a job, a craft not a magical talent. They have studied it; it is a live art form so people are making discoveries all the time” (L. Cardy, personal communication, July 29, 2009).

**New developments at the ATC Education Unit**

Cardy is looking forward to the ATC Education Unit being better resourced in the future, although this is dependent on charities and foundations which play a large role in funding new education initiatives by the company. In 2010, there is to be a dedicated youth arts worker who will work with the Ambassadors to develop a focus group, providing them with more opportunities. The ATC Education Unit also hopes to consolidate
and make international connections with youth and arts education overseas during 2010.

**Conclusion**

The ATC is a valuable resource in the Auckland region, providing both professional theatre and the resources to help teachers and students of drama to access and experience the world of theatre. Exploring a play further with the actors, in a workshop situation, develops understanding of a play’s context, ideas and themes and allows teachers and students to gain insight into the rehearsal process and high standards required by professional theatre to communicate to its audience. The work of the ATC and its Education Unit receives regular positive feedback and both students and teachers are evidently engaged and energised by seeing and experiencing professional work. The numbers of students attending performances and the distances that some schools will travel to see professional theatre confirms the high quality of the ATC work. The ATC fill a need by teachers and students to have a relationship with professional theatre; its processes, artistry, creativity and communication. Of their work with schools, the ATC writes,

10,000 students from schools throughout the greater Auckland region are able to experience the best of professional theatre in New Zealand. ATC Education Unit demonstrates the Company’s forward-looking approach to nurture theatre audiences for the future. (Auckland Theatre Company Education Unit, 2007a)
Chapter 10: Capital E’s production of *Kia Ora Khalid* by Gareth Farr and Dave Armstrong performed at the TelstraClear Pacific Centre, Manukau

The ATC provide a valuable resource for teachers to encourage the audience of the future and allow students to see and learn about professional productions. During 2009, another professional theatre company completed an exciting theatrical project which actively used children from schools in Auckland in the performance. Capital E National Theatre for Children is based in a building in Civic Square, Wellington. They are described as the only company in New Zealand to give “children access to a wide range of creative technology and live performance” (Capital E National Theatre for Children, 2009a) and by the Mayor of Wellington, Kerry Prendergast, as celebrating “the talents of our young people by providing creative, fun and challenging learning experiences, while at the same time nurturing creativity and innovation” (Capital E National Theatre for Children, 2009a). The company tour nationally and internationally, and throughout the school terms and holidays provide a wide range of creative activities in which children can be involved.

In March 2009, at the Genesis Energy Theatre at the TelstraClear Pacific Centre in Manukau, Capital E performed their production of *Kia Ora Khalid*, an opera devised for children dealing with issues identified as being relevant to New Zealand. It was written by Dave Armstrong with a score by Gareth Farr, directed by Sara Brodie, and tells the stories of refugee children in New Zealand. Dave Armstrong wrote about the topic on his blog:

> I know we’re a small young country with relatively low numbers of migrants, but I have to reluctantly admit that with the notable exceptions mentioned above, a lot of literature in this country is pretty white-bread – comfortable white middle-class writers writing about comfortable white middle-class people. Now I’m as middle-class and whitebread as the next guy – but I do wonder if we’re missing out on something. Some of these migrant’s stories are so damned exciting.
And I don’t blame the migrants themselves. Most have English as a second language and New Zealand can be a very difficult country to ‘get on’ in. (Armstrong, 2007)

The play was developed over a period of two years (Capital E National Theatre for Children, 2009c) and part of the process had involved students of many different nationalities from schools in Auckland contributing their stories to Capital E Theatre Company. The stories were re-enacted using music, song, movement and visual images. The 600 children, who attended one of the performances, represented a range of nationalities. Two schools from the Auckland region, Pakuranga Intermediate School and Viscount Primary School, were involved in the process of both devising and performing. This production offers a synthesis and demonstrates a successful collaboration between professional theatre practitioners and schools in creating exciting moving theatre which contains powerful messages for today’s society.

Prior to entering the Genesis Energy Theatre for the matinee performance of *Kia Ora Khalid*, one of two theatres at the Centre, the audience could explore eight brown suitcases installed around a large box with the words “Refugee Stories” printed on hemp; on each suitcase hung a set of headphones. The brown suitcases were reminiscent of refugees in Europe during the Second World War. Each suitcase lid could be lifted and inside played a video of children recounting their personal refugee stories.

The audience seemed to have a sense of the ritual of theatre going. Talkative voices became hushed in the foyer, the students appeared excited and focused. Several members of their peer group were taking part in chorus roles. As we have previously seen at both Macleans College and the Auckland Theatre Company, theatre etiquette is a part of the learning process of seeing live theatre. On the TelstraClear Pacific Centre website, teachers have access to information about the behaviour which is considered appropriate for a theatre space. The performance formed an important part of the programme of work that takes place at the events centre. The schools’ brochure for 2009, available on the website, states,
The programme aims to provide learning opportunities that foster the creativity and talent of our students and promote participation and appreciation of the arts. We are committed to celebrating the cultural diversity and talent of the youth in Counties Manukau. (TelstraClear Pacific Centre, 2009b, p. 2)

Since 2004, the TelstraClear Pacific Centre has provided free workshops and opportunities for children to see and be involved in the arts (TelstraClear Pacific Centre, 2009b). Outside the building, which opened in Manukau in 2004, stands a Pou Kapua which is described as a, ...

...significant Maori/Pacific Indigenous cultural arts project. The Pou Kapua, carved from a magnificent ancient Kauri from the forests of the Iwi of Te Rarawa, stands more than seventy feet high, and is the largest totem of its type in the world. (TelstraClear Pacific Centre, 2009b)

The Pou Kapua is carved with, “the journeys of the adventures of our tupuna, and Maori and Polynesian nautical myths, legends and histories of migration to Aotearoa” (TelstraClear Pacific, 2009a). In 2010, drama and dance workshops are planned for students to explore the stories carved on the Pou Kapua. It is interesting to note that this building is also used for Manukau City’s New Zealand Citizenship ceremonies where people of a wide range of nationalities swear or affirm their loyalty to New Zealand as their new home. The theme of journeys to New Zealand was paramount in this particular production and for this performance to take place under the auspices of the Pou Kapua somehow strengthened its potency and relevance as valid New Zealand theatre. It made the theatre a particularly appropriate setting for this performance.

The Chairman of the Counties Manukau Pacific Trust, Noel Robinson, wrote that, “It is very important to come together as a whole community to celebrate our successes and move forward together” (TelstraClear Pacific Centre, 2009c). The production of Kia Ora Khalid showcased, celebrated and utilised the stories and talents of children from the local community. The schools chosen to take part in the devising process in Auckland were schools with large cohorts of refugee families. At this particular
performance, children from Viscount Primary School in Mangere played a variety of supportive chorus roles, from refugee children to the various characters within the stories of each refugee. Viscount Primary School is a co-educational primary school in the suburb of Mangere (Viscount Primary School, 2009). According to the school website, it is a decile one school with over eight hundred children who represent a wide variety of ethnicities: “40% Samoan, 26% Tongan, 12% Cook Island, 12% Maori, 4% Niuean, 6% Other” (Viscount Primary School, 2009). The school utilises the enquiry learning approach which encourages children to seek for knowledge and become lifelong learners.\(^{35}\)

**Production process**

*Kia Ora Khalid* was developed over a period of years. In an article in the *Howick and Pakuranga Times, Sharing Tales of War* (Jo Tuapawa, 2009a), Pakuranga Intermediate School described their involvement in the process: writers from Capital E interviewed children from the school and “extracted their war stories and experiences and then created the stage production” (Jo Tuapawa, 2009a). Once the play was written, the companies returned to the school, along with others in Wellington and Manukau, to workshop and rehearse the children in the role of chorus. According to the newspaper article, Pamela L'Estrange, the Performing Arts teacher at Pakuranga Intermediate School, felt that, “some of Kia Ora Khalid subject material is intense” but that, “members of the participating chorus understand the story and content” (Jo Tuapawa, 2009a). Of the students at the school she said, “although it is the Afghani children who relate more to the story, being a part of the production gives [all the children] insight into the environment the refugee children came from” (Jo Tuapawa, 2009a).

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\(^{35}\)“As a result of their learning the learner is required to take action or to cast new light or insight on to the topic under inquiry. It is about developing creative effective problem solvers whose learning outcomes benefit the entire community. (Viscount Primary School, 2009)."
At Viscount Primary School, Amy Charles, a Performing Arts specialist, was the teacher in charge of the project. The process had begun when Amy had taken 235 children to a drama workshop at the TelstraClear Pacific Centre. From this, she was asked if some of the students would take part in the process of developing a new drama. The Capital E Theatre Company was looking for children who did not speak English as their first language who could share their experiences of journeying to New Zealand. Two months later, she says the play was written using the stories they had collected from children, including her students. Charles was then asked if she would like to be in charge of organising some students to take part, with Capital E actors, in the performance and thus the next part of the process began. After the interview and writing period, Capital E returned to the school and held several rehearsals with the children over a period of four days, during November 2008. In March, the Company spent three and a half days at the school, rehearsing with the students who were to take part in the performance. Of the 26 children involved only 6 had previously been in any kind of professional production. Charles was impressed that, with such a short period of rehearsal and only 3 hours at the theatre preparing for the performances, the children were able to cope with the props, the costume changes and climbing the large container boxes.

The production

The Genesis Energy Theatre at TelstraClear Pacific Centre can seat an audience of seven hundred. For this production, a traditional Proscenium Arch format, complete with raised stage was used with a red curtain (TelstraClear Pacific Centre, 2009c) which opened and closed at the beginning and end of the performance. The stage was set up with three large container boxes representing a range of spaces from a Kabul bookshop to a container on a ship. These provided levels and texture as well as screens onto which the projected images could fall. There was a distinct intake of breath from the audience as the image of a large case of books appeared at stage left on the wall of the brown shuttered box. A dynamic use of the set established the flow and pace of the piece. Simple
props were used that had a magic quality in themselves. Hockey sticks became guns, and flowered paper umbrellas became the wheels of rickshaws and provided the colours of the countryside in Cambodia.

In her interview with the Howick and Pakuranga Times, Pamela L'Estrange, of Pakuranga Intermediate School, said, “Kia Ora Khalid is a really rich story for our kids and for all people now living in New Zealand to see” (Jo Tuapawa, 2009a). The play is certainly no gentle, sentimental children’s play, as it covers difficult, moving and at times quite shocking material. As one reviewer described her feelings prior to the performance, “I had a foreboding feeling I was going to be told that a big purple dinosaur loved me. When the curtains rose, it was clear I was in no such luck” (Luxton, 2009). As the lights went down and the red curtain opened applause broke out and very quickly died away as the audience focused on the performance. The production was sung throughout and used a range of multi media images projected onto parts of the set. The scenes took us to Afghanistan, Iraq, Cambodia, Samoa, Poland, Russia and New Zealand. The production explored the attitudes and backgrounds of four main characters Khalid from Kabul, Trang whose family was originally from Cambodia, Serena from Samoa and Tom, a boy who classed himself as a Kiwi.

In one scene, Serena’s Uncle, a Samoan working in Bagdad to earn money for the family, sees an old woman in the desert whom he sets out to help. He has been told all his life to “take care of the old” (Farr & Armstrong, 2009). The old woman turns out to be a suicide bomber who explodes her weapon killing Serena’s Uncle. Theatrically, this was a powerful moment dramatically underplayed, yet none the less shocking. As the song’s words describe what happened and the old woman, played by an actor in a black burka, reached out her hand, silence fell, the chorus moved to take up new attitudes while the audience looked at the two still bodies on the stage; at stage left the screen became fuzzy as if a television picture had been interrupted; immediately the next scenario begun. This was a shocking and confrontational moment. The song’s lyrics repeated “just because you’re a Muslim, doesn’t make you a terrorist”
(Farr & Armstrong, 2009). Here, the professional may have the advantage over a school teacher-director as the topic may be regarded as too contentious to be explored or performed within a school.

The production was the first professional opera written for children to be produced by Capital E and, according to one of the reviews by John Smythe and Pepe Becker, the production was refined during the process, and all the more impressive because it is Capital E’s aim to use,

...such projects to stimulate the creative interaction of children. In their programme they claim Kia Ora Khalid is “about and from material that doesn't speak down to its audience but greets them with open arms as intellectual equals” and quote renaissance writer Rabelais: "A child is not a vase to be filled, but a fire to be lit.” (Smythe & Becker, 2009)

The themes, which not only include the stated theme of refugees but also included bigotry, bullying, racism, sexism, and a multitude of other areas that have a direct relevance to both children and adults alike. It was interesting that, having real children on stage along with adult actors playing children heightened the theme of childhood. The four professional actors were engaging and energetic, and one, Nikita Tu-Bryant had previously studied NCEA Drama at Macleans College in Auckland.

The Company have also created an interactive Wikispace, described as a “living language arts resource where you can tell your story” (Capital E National Theatre for Children, 2009b) where the “visitors can view and respond to the initial recorded interviews, add their own footage and connect up with migrant / refugee networks” (Smythe & Becker, 2009). The videos used in the installation at the TelstraClear Pacific Centre foyer were still available to be seen in the foyer of Capital E’s building in October 2009. Smythe and Becker summed up the importance of this production as,

... taking positive, constructive action to overcome the cultural ignorance and intolerance that produces not only bullying in the playground but political extremism, terrorism and wars throughout the world. In short, Kia Ora Khalid is a masterpiece that contributes at many levels. (2009)
Charles confirmed that she and the Principal of the school were impressed by the performances, and Charles received positive feedback from the parents of children involved. Many of them had not expected their children to take part in drama, and one parent in particular felt that it had given her son a “passion – something on which to focus his energies” (A. Charles, personal communication, April 8, 2009)

According to Charles, children who had been shy showed a much higher degree of confidence and many seemed to have more purpose, focus, and an outlet for their emotions (A. Charles, personal communication, April 8, 2009)

The school has continued to develop its performing arts programme, and it was at this school that the Artist in Schools programme was launched.

**Conclusion**

The production was powerful and effectively combined the professional actors with the students, demonstrating that children can indeed perform at a high level. This performance contributed to a national theatre identity by confronting sensitive issues of relevance to a contemporary New Zealand audience as well as being written and performed by New Zealanders in a significant New Zealand space. The stories of immigrants to New Zealand linked the journeys of Maori, European, and 21st century travelers establishing them as a unique part of New Zealand culture. The play certainly celebrated “the culture, traditions, way of life, ethnicity and society of New Zealand” and acknowledged “its New Zealand roots and history” (Luton & Watson, 2009, p. 122). Not only did the play entertain and challenge, it fostered the creativity of local children and, from the feedback Amy Charles received, may well have fostered an interest for many of the children in the arts and New Zealand drama. It was an exciting example of collaboration between the professional Theatre practitioner and a school.
Chapter 11: The role of NCEA Drama: developing students access and involvement in devising and performing a drama for New Zealand

With the introduction of Drama as a National Certificate of Educational Achievement subject, a great deal of exciting and interesting work has taken place both in schools and, it seems, by professional companies who have realised and embraced the need to become a valuable resource. The NCEA Drama courses at Levels 1, 2 and 3 and Scholarship lay the foundations for students to explore a wide range of Drama theory and history. Students learn to create and perform, how to observe and analyse, how to critique and discuss using an accepted specialist terminology and, as a result, they are developing and performing work that makes a valuable contribution to their own lives, to that of their peers and the local community, as well as to a New Zealand theatre identity.

So just how far have students come in New Zealand since the introduction of the NCEA Levels 1, 2, 3 and Scholarship? As demonstrated in previous chapters, schools in New Zealand are presenting compelling and dynamic productions for both co-curricular productions and for the NCEA Achievement Standards in Drama. Students are working at an extremely high level not only in areas of focus, teamwork and understanding text, but in the performance of Drama. It is important, therefore, to understand what the NCEA Achievement standards in Drama demand of the students.

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) “co-ordinates qualifications in secondary schools and in post-school education and training, maintains national standards, ensures recognition of overseas qualifications and administers national secondary and tertiary examinations” (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2008). Drama is available as an examination subject at Level 1 in Year 11, Level 2 in Year 12 and at Level 3 and Scholarship in Year 13. Each Level is divided into Achievement Standards comprising, in 2009, of up to six areas, although with the introduction of the new curriculum more Achievement Standards
have been included in the draft standards. Each Standard offers students a range of credits towards the National Certificate of Educational Achievement, dependant on the amount of work required for its attainment; these range from 2 credits to 6 credits. Each Achievement Standard gives students the opportunity to achieve at an Achieved, Merit or Excellence, according to the criteria.

As discussed in an earlier chapter, Drama teachers were progressive when they first began to explore the use of grade-related criteria, led by Paul Bushnell in the early nineties. At each level, at least one Achievement Standard is an external examination, sat at the end of the academic year. Students are usually given up to 3 hours to sit the examination. The remaining Achievement Standards are practical components, allowing students the opportunity to be assessed in some of the following areas of practical drama: drama techniques (use of voice, body, movement and space), devising, structuring and performing a drama using elements and conventions, demonstrating knowledge of a drama or theatre form, and performing as either an actor or technician. The practical work is supported by portfolios that demonstrate student understanding of the work, although these may vary in form, from written analysis to a PowerPoint Presentation.

At Level 3, students have a prescribed list of plays from which two or more can be chosen to study for the external examination. As seen previously, this prescribed list has become an important template on which teachers often base their choices of work for both performance and theory. The Achievement Standards are assessed internally by teachers, and moderated externally during the year by an NZQA approved Drama moderator. All information pertaining to the Achievement Standards including specifications, Assessment reports, Moderator reports and past

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36 At Level 1 the draft version of the proposed changes lists 7 Achievement Standards, which include 2 external examinations (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2009a)

37 Chapter 2 The Development of the Drama Syllabus in New Zealand
examination papers are easily accessible by teachers, parents, students and Theatre practitioners on the NZQA website.

The external examinations usually require students to have experienced some live theatre throughout the year that they can analyse and discuss, along with reviewing their own work and analysing new contexts. It is a course which encompasses a great deal, giving students the opportunity to explore acting, technical and production roles, and develop analytical skills through seeing theatrical performance. Due to the requirements of NZQA, most practical work has to be completed by the end of term 3 of the 4 term year. The course is a demanding one, often requiring much preparation and rehearsal time outside of school hours to complete work to a high standard.

At NCEA Level 3 for example, a student taking part in the Achievement Standard 3.5 (90611) *Research and Carry out a Performance or Technical/Production Role in a Significant Production* will be expected to reach a performance standard at Excellence level that demonstrates they can, “Sustain a performance or technical/production role in a significant production, with outstanding skill and impact” (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2006a). To support the performance, students are also required to “Research, identify and interpret relevant information, record the development of role to show understanding and insight and to participate actively in the production process” (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2006a). The subsidiary notes further explain the criteria in the NZQA document, describing some of the areas of research a student might undertake to, “inform the performance or technical/production role”, and subsequently record the “documentation and evaluation of key decisions and development. This should be in a written and visual form, e.g. notes, blocking diagram, lighting plot”. The production itself must be one that has, “sufficient depth and length, or that is extensive and important enough to merit attention, or with an established critical reputation” (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2006a).
The requirements for students aged between 17-18 years old are fairly substantial. Students are required to research their roles, keep a running record of their analytical work, and to perform a role in a production. For those students carrying out a performance role, a teacher-assessor judges their performance with the high expectations that they can “sustain” the role and perform it with “outstanding skill and impact”. This is a challenging requirement, considering that at this stage students have not undertaken tertiary drama training.

Nicole Jorgensen, professional actress and the Artist in School at Pakuranga College commented on the demands the NCEA course makes of students, noting that, while studying to be an actor at UNITEC, it was process that was seen to be the most important aspect of the course, and her work journal was taken as evidence of how far she had progressed as an actress; it included research, pictures, artistic information and reflections (N. Jorgensen, personal communication, May 19, 2009). Written work is a more traditional measure of educational achievement, but it is the high demands of the practical work that support my view that students studying NCEA Drama are developing and performing work that stands in its own right as examples of valid New Zealand drama and theatre.

**Twisted** by Andrew Fusek Peters and Polly Peters

The production of *Twisted* by Andrew Fusek Peters and Polly Peters (Peters & Peters, 2001) at Macleans College, gave students studying Level 1 Drama the opportunity to achieve the standard *Perform an Acting Role*. This standard for 4 credits “involves preparing for and performing an acting role in a scripted production for an audience” (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2007a). The play is a British play written specifically for young people and is described in the programme by Ms Hood as, “set in a contemporary setting – it deals with the issue of bullying, lies and the challenges that face teenagers in terms of their

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38 See Chapter 7: The role of professionals in Schools

39 AS 90009 (1.4)
relationships, growing independence and parental influence and impact” (Hood, 2009). The production lasted an hour and employed all 30 students taking the drama course. In order to achieve at the highest level of Excellence students must show that they can achieve in three areas,

- Actively participate in the production process, showing a focused commitment,
- Communicate a role with impact, demonstrating appropriate, effective and accomplished use of voice, movement, and space
- Sustain a role throughout performance in a convincing way and with presence. (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2007a)

Even at the basic level of achievement, students must show that they are able to “sustain a role throughout performance” (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2007a). The students taking part in Twisted all appeared to be focused and committed to the performance and remained on stage throughout most of the production. The play allows for a large cast and this presentation utilised multi-role playing. It was presented on an almost bare end-on stage, using only a series of white cubes on which actors could sit, contrasted against the black floor, black curtains and black flats. The students all wore a uniform black shirt with printed details of the play. The title and some apposite quotations from the play were projected onto the cyclorama at the opening, highlighting some of the themes. The simple setting was effective in that it allowed the play to flow smoothly from scene to scene and this enhanced the pace of the production.

Students performed as an ensemble, and choral movement was used for a variety of scenes, in particular the recreation of the events that had taken place at a party that led to a young girl lying in a coma. This was presented as a flashback, and students worked together in small groups to show moments of bullying, drinking, dancing and bonding. Each of these was presented rhythmically, utilising stylized movement and choral speech. Two of the main roles were played at a very high level of delivery, eliciting spontaneous responses from the audience through the medium of
applause. The audience appeared to engage with the story line, and was responsive to the themes in the play.

High standards are obviously being expected from students who are in their first year of the NCEA Drama course. They still have two more years in school, prior to any further drama training any of them might choose to undertake to develop their performance skills. The performance of *Twisted* was certainly no ‘school performance’ suitable only for an audience of friends and family. There was an energy, and a power in the performance and a professional patina in the pace and flow throughout the play. Although originally a text from the United Kingdom, it dealt with issues of real relevant to students in New Zealand, and this may have explained some of the students’ high level of involvement and engagement with the content. Even though its primary purpose was to meet an Achievement Standard *Twisted* was a piece of valid theatre performed by New Zealand students for a New Zealand audience. It was disappointing though that with such a high standard of production, and with such valuable issues of relevance to the school community, the play could not be seen by a wider community and possibly celebrated by the school. This is probably the case throughout New Zealand; that due to the limitations of time, and a limited awareness within school, valid theatre productions of importance and significance to young people are being overlooked. They should be seen as opportunities for learning and celebration.

At this particular college, over the last few years, a conscious effort has been made to explore New Zealand; its social history and drama. Devised work has covered a range of New Zealand themes and issues, and these have included projects on The Tangiwai Disaster[^40], the story of Minnie Dean[^41], The Huntly Mining disaster[^42], the story of Amy Bock[^43],

[^40]: New Zealand’s worst railway disaster 24 December 1953
[^41]: The infamous “Baby Farmer” and only woman to be legally hung in New Zealand 1895
[^42]: A mining disaster in the Waikato coalfields at Huntly in 1914 which killed 42 men
[^43]: “Confidence trickster and criminal” (Farrell, 2007) A woman who dressed as a man and disguised herself as Sir Percy Redwood
explorations of body image, New Zealand’s part in the First World War as well as producing either extracts or complete New Zealand plays including *Shuriken, Children of the Poor, End of the Golden Weather*, and *Objection Overruled*, among others.

At Baradene College in Auckland, according to the *Education Gazette*, the Head of Drama, Verity Davidson, uses a range of photographs including a “pair of dirty and torn trousers, a century old dress woven from pandanus, through to Fred Dagg’s gumboots” as a “catalyst” for her students when approaching the devising project at Level 3 (“Picture This”, 2009).

Davidson described in the article how the pictures are used to help the students develop characters and deepen their work through research. She then helps the students through “improvisation exercises and working with props and costume” and feels that, at Level 3, “they are quite used to that process and you can go quite deep and expect a lot of them in terms of sophistication of character”. Davidson further commented that the students know that their performance is to be presented to an audience so ensure the work is complete. For most of her students she said, “they really identify with New Zealand and find that they can create characters that they know and understand” (Education Gazette, 2009).

**Conclusion**

Although this thesis has tended to explore the work of schools in the Auckland region there are many examples throughout the country of exciting and interesting drama taking place as a result of the introduction of NCEA Drama. Many examples exist of students developing their own pieces of New Zealand Drama, finding a New Zealand context for plays and performing New Zealand works. The NCEA Achievement standards are challenging both teachers and student to explore a wide range of drama forms, issues, performance styles and texts. The students are expected to demonstrate accomplished performances with roles presented

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44 Fred Dagg is a satirical “Kiwi Bloke” character created by John Morrison Clarke for 1970s television (Newman, 2009).
convincingly and with an impact being made on their audiences. Supporting this they must also show their understanding of the process and performance prior to leaving school. NCEA does appear to have contributed to the development of drama within schools in New Zealand.
Chapter 12: World war One: a theme explored by school and community theatre.

In this chapter, two productions will be discussed, a New Zealand play presented at the Howick Little Theatre, *King and Country* by Dave Armstrong, and a British play, *Killed* by the Belgrade TIE, based on a similar theme and produced and performed at Saint Kentigern College, Auckland. The two productions, although separated by a period of six years demonstrate the ways in which schools embrace the history and culture of New Zealand through drama.

From April 25th 2009 until May 16th 2009, *King and Country* by Dave Armstrong was performed at the Howick Little Theatre in Howick, Auckland. Its placement in the calendar was designed to celebrate Anzac day and the eighty-fifth anniversary of the beginning of the Great War. The playwright, Dave Armstrong, is described as “one of New Zealand’s most prolific and popular playwrights” (Auckland Theatre Company, 2007c). *King and Country* has won the best dramatic production in the NZ Radio Awards (NZ Bookmonth, 2008). The author has won several other awards including the Best New New Zealand play at Chapman Tripp Theatre Awards. His play, *Niu Sila*, co-written with Oscar Kightley is one of the prescribed New Zealand plays for NCEA Level 3 Drama.

The play was performed at the Howick Little Theatre, a local amateur theatre in the village of Howick, Auckland. The theatre has been in existence since 1954 and their mission statement is to, “produce high-quality, entertaining, accessible and enriching theatre and to engender an environment that encourages and recognises the artist in each of us”

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45 Author of *Kia Ora Khalid* presented by Capital E and discussed in Chapter 10

46 Anzac day commemorates the 25th April 1915 when Australian and New Zealand troops landed at Gallipoli. Thousands were killed but it contributed to a sense of nationhood by New Zealand.

47 NCEA Level 3 specification for 90610 “demonstrate knowledge of theatre form or period by analysing and interpreting two theatre texts”.
(Howick Little Theatre, 2009a). There is usually one New Zealand production a year and, since 1979, about 20 New Zealand plays have been performed (Howick Little Theatre, 2009b). The placing of the play in their calendar to coincide with Anzac weekend and the days following brought an extra poignancy to the production; many of the audience were wearing their commemoration poppies. The production provided an opportunity for the local community to see and experience a piece of well-produced live New Zealand theatre which both entertained and educated.

The Howick Little Theatre is a flexible performance space and, for this production seated 109 people. The stage, at floor level, was placed diagonally across the space with the audience seated, raked in an L-shape. Behind the actors, up-stage was a Proscenium Arch, specifically constructed for the play. When the curtain was opened the Smiths Locksmith Manukau City Brass Band, who provided live accompaniment, could be seen. The use and size of the space allowed for an intimate production.

The play *King and Country*, is described in the production programme as based on “personal accounts gathered from letters, poems and newspaper articles from the World War I era” (Howick Little Theatre, 2009c). The production used music and song in a documentary style reminiscent of Brecht48 to explore the lives of New Zealanders who volunteered to serve in the Great War. In a country of only a million, 18,500 people were killed as a result of this war (Howick Little Theatre, 2009c). The play tells the story of 6 New Zealanders who enlist to serve at the beginning of the war. Amongst these is a nurse, two Maori of the Pioneer Battalion, a mature career soldier who had fought in the Boer War, and two young, naive men, one of whom works for a newspaper. It is their direct address to the audience, through songs and dialogue that the audience engages in their stories, sometimes shocked, often crying and laughing with them. Some of the humour comes from the irony of their situation, and from the way in

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which the soldiers find humour within tragic circumstances. Throughout the
play official government telegrams beginning “regret to inform” are used to
evoke the wider picture of casualties and deaths. Death scenes were
stylized; as characters were killed, there was a blackout and the sound of
a shot made by the band’s percussionist which heightened the moment.
The play explores the class differences between the men, women, Maori
and Pakeha characters, who are sent overseas on a troop ship excited
and yearning for war. Nurse Rose McKenzie, a beautiful nurse dressed in
white, sets some of the soldiers’ hearts throbbing. She is there not only to
serve her country but to take care of her young brother Fred, a newspaper
reporter. Throughout the play, the relationships between those at the front
and those at home are highlighted in extracts from letters. Albert Burnett,
for example, takes care not to worry his parents as both he and his
brother, an unseen character, face the hazards of war. He expresses no
regrets in his letter home stating, “we are fighting a noble and just cause,
and my death is just one small essential step to victory” (Armstrong, 2006,
p. 43)

Lieutenant Terence Gilbert represents the experienced man of war, the
‘stiff-upper lipped’ older generation. He frequently comments that his wife,
Millicent, is glad to have him out from under her feet. In his letter home he
tells her he will return by Christmas, but facing battle on the Western front,
having survived Gallipoli, he says, “It seems I’ll be spending another
Christmas away. I did promise Millicent I’d be home for Christmas, though
I never said which year” (Armstrong, 2006, p. 38). The night before
Passchendaele, he reveals his love in unemotional and yet deeply
moving tones when he writes, “though I have never actually told you this,
life has been extremely good to me since I had the great fortune to marry
you” (Armstrong, 2006, p. 43).

In a scene of contrasts, Nurse Rose is seen writing to Hori Ratanui, one of
the Maori soldiers with whom she had begun a relationship. She
announces her decision to marry Captain Russell whom she has met while

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49 Passchendaele, an important battle in 1917 on the Western Front during World War One
nursing in England. Meanwhile, on stage, Hori writes his letter to Rose asking her to marry him. The short phrases are intertwined and contrasted, creating an especially poignant and heart-wrenching scene as Hori writes, “whatever your answer, you must know that I will never stop loving you” (Armstrong, 2006, p. 46). Hori’s status as a hero is confirmed when he dramatically saves the life of Rose’s critically wounded fiancé on the battlefield, raising questions as to whether for some it might have been better to die than to live a half life. Throughout the play, the Maori soldiers exceed the expectations of their officers through their humour, courage, ability and loyalty to country and to whanau.

The play has a great deal to say not only about war then and now, but about the way in which New Zealand is a country of many cultures, all interdependent and valuable. The play highlights the coming of age of New Zealand as a country in its own right, rather than as an offshoot of Great Britain, the “Motherland”. There is no happy ending and we know from our own knowledge of history that some of the characters will not make it home, and for those who do life will not be easy. Armstrong highlights the great divide that continued after the war between classes and races in the letter Lieutenant Gilbert’s writes to Private Muru’s girlfriend after his death: “my last act as commanding officer was to recommend that private Muru be awarded a medal for gallantry. General Godley turned me down” (Armstrong, 2006, p. 63).

One of the most moving moments is at the play’s conclusion; the actors step out of role to introduce themselves to the audience. Each recounts the involvement of one of their ancestors in war. For each production, all over the country, different yet personal stories are told. In Howick, the stories combined humour and sadness; Kate Evans playing the role of Rose McKenzie told the audience about her great grandfather who was shipped home from war with a bullet in his head. Expected to die he confounded all by living into his nineties.

Of the production a local reviewer wrote that,
King and Country is heavy on the facts. Its script uses many statistics throughout the performance which truly reinforce the number of Kiwi men lost and sets a dark tone for an evening at Howick Little Theatre. How could it not be dark? King and Country is a saga of young soldiers’ (and the play’s only woman, a nurse called Rose) endurance through devastating conditions, love and loss. (J Tuapawa, 2009b)

It is interesting that this reviewer has called the tone dark for, although the play is about a devastating part of New Zealand history, the stories challenge the audience, in particular concerning the treatment of the Maori soldiers. However, the humour and the songs from the era lift the play into an inspiring and enriching experience. The fact, that at the play’s conclusion the audience could express amusement at the actress’ tale of her grandfather demonstrated that, through it all, New Zealanders survived, and not only that but became a richer nation because of the role they played.

Comparing this production with Armstrong’s Kia Ora Khalid it becomes apparent that Dave Armstrong is not frightened to confront sensitive issues and enjoys using personal stories and histories to explore subject matters relevant to the present day.

**Theme of war in schools**

Professional writers in New Zealand continue to explore the issues surrounding World War One. On Anzac Day 2009, a new play, War Hero, by Michael Galvin based on Archibald Baxter’s account of his experience as a conscientious objector was performed in Wellington at The Downstage Theatre (Playmarket, 2009a). Other writers have explored New Zealand’s experience in the First World War, including Once on

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50 Discussed in Chapter 10

51 We Will Not Cease by Archibald Baxter, a New Zealand farm labourer tells of his “brutal treatment as a conscientious objector” in World War One (Baxter, 2003).
Chunuk Bair by Maurice Shadbolt. In 2009, at the Howick Anzac Day remembrance parade, Kathryn Armstrong, a senior student at Howick College, made a speech entitled Lest We Forget, reported in the Howick and Pakuranga Times. She said,

Anzac Day, to me, is more about understanding the essence of sacrifice and what that means to you and I, than about recounting what we have heard before in great depth. We will not try to comprehend our loss, great though it has been, by equating the lives of lost servicemen and women into numbers that makes it easier for us to grasp what has happened in our mournful history of conflict. That is unimaginable. Let it suffice to say that great loss has occurred and we must honour it as a token of the harm we are capable of doing to others and as a reminder of the need for tolerance, respect and love. (Taylor, 2009)

As a representative of young people, her speech demonstrated that the theme of war is a powerful one that still has value to explore with students. At Saint Kentigern College, in Auckland 2003, it was decided to use the play, Killed: July 17th 1916 by the Belgrade Theatre in Education, as the co-curricular production. The play, Killed, was performed on a Proscenium Arch stage in the Eliot Hall which can seat an audience of 1000, and has both a ground floor and a mezzanine area in which the audience can be seated. The hall has an extensive lighting and sound system including a data projector. The production used a multipurpose set including sand bags and straw bales, with static and video images back-projected onto the cyclorama. The cyclorama was moved downstage to the proscenium line so that the action took place on a large apron and this provide for a more intimate atmosphere. Songs from the era, a college piper and a trumpeter played live at significant moments.

Although British and originally devised as a piece of Theatre in Education, the play had relevance to New Zealand’s experience in the Great War. It concerns a young man, Billy Dean, who volunteers in 1914 to join the war

52 An independent Presbyterian boys’ college founded in 1953 which became coeducational in 2003.
along with his “pals” from Manchester, leaving behind his wife May. Throughout the play the scenes in France are contrasted with those of May and her friend Elsie in the local ammunitions factory. However, Dean is accused of, “cowardice in the face of the enemy” (Belgrade Theatre in Education Company, 1982, p. 44). When, instead of going forward into battle, he is found in the trenches, he tells the RSM\(^{53}\), “I just made a mistake, anybody could make a mistake out there. It was easy to make mistakes, you couldn’t see anything. You could have got lost” (Belgrade Theatre in Education Company, 1982, p. 55).

The play offered performance opportunities for both boys and girls. Students of differing abilities were able to take part, and the roles were adapted to allow for the largest cast. During the course of the play three students took on the role of the Regimental Sergeant Major and two actors with similar looks played Billy Dean. One Dean remains throughout the play, on stage in the barn on the Western Front, writing his last letter to his wife while awaiting his execution at dawn. The second Dean appeared in all the flashback scenes. The college newspaper wrote that “they shared enough of a resemblance to make the transitions seem almost seamless" (Farqhuar, 2003, p. 1). The number of soldiers was increased and crowd scenes added. The costumes were sourced at First Scene in Auckland and, during the rehearsal process; students were taught how to march and carry arms by a member of staff who had been in the armed forces.

**Student Research**

To assist the students in gaining an insight into the Great War, a visit to the Auckland War Memorial Museum was arranged, to see the Scars on the Heart\(^{54}\) exhibition where students were able to view documents and images, listen to a talk and touch some of the artifacts, including a gas mask. Students also spent some time in the exhibition’s trench display,

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\(^{53}\) The Regimental Sergeant Major

\(^{54}\) ‘Scars on the Heart’ is an exhibition at the Auckland Museum which includes several of the theatres of war in which New Zealand has been involved including World War One.
which included sound effects, where they attempted to gain a sense of the atmosphere. Later in the day, students spent time researching stories in the museum archives. However, the most powerful insight for the students came from an unexpected source; walking through the long gallery beside the rolls of honour on which the names of the dead of all New Zealand's wars are carved in stone, students were quiet, reflective, and obviously moved by the experience contemplating “the horrors that befell these young men so far from home, many not much older than themselves” (“Drama Production”, 2003, p. 39).

It is interesting to note that the director of King and Country at the Howick Little Theatre wrote of the difficulties for the cast of understanding why New Zealand got involved:

> We really had no idea why the squabbles of European dynasties outside of our own (for we were fiercely loyal to the British Crown) should have led to thousands of Kiwi men and a number of Kiwi women volunteering to serve King and Country on the other side of the world.....Explaining this, 95 years later to a youthful cast was challenging. But the beauty of Dave Armstrong’s drama has led us down many paths of examination, motivation and justification; it has been an enriching experience for us all. (Howick Little Theatre, 2009c)

The same questions raised in Armstrong’s play were asked by the students in 2003 but research at the museum engaged the students’ imagination and appeared to involve them in the themes of the play. However, what finally linked the story of Billy Dean to that of New Zealand soldiers was the discovery, during rehearsals, that, in 2000, the New Zealand government had issued a pardon to all 5 of their soldiers who had been executed for cowardice during the First World War by the British government. In order to draw attention to the links between the British and New Zealand stories of “cowardice”, static and moving multi media images and projected titles were used. The students also found information about their own relatives and their names were recorded in the programme to act as a dedication, thus drawing students further into the story. These relatives were among those gassed in Flanders, killed in action and active in Gallipoli.
In the final scene of the production the Last Post was played by a lone trumpeter centre stage, spotlights dimmed stage left and right on the flags of New Zealand and Great Britain, and an image was projected which stated the facts surrounding the soldiers shot for “cowardice” during the war. In a letter to the cast and crew of the play the Executive Head wrote,

Just a note to congratulate you on an excellent season thus far of your production of “Killed”. I have both enjoyed and been moved by your portrayal of the characters in the play. You have certainly worked very hard and prepared brilliantly for this week and I congratulate every one of you on the performances delivered thus far.

Together with your very accomplished on-stage performance, I am also aware of the high degree of technical expertise that is required behind the scenes and I am thrilled with how well the multi-media effect is working for you. This together with the great sound, lights, set, props and costumes is making the season a most memorable one. (W. Peat, personal communication, June 19, 2003)

To the parents, Warren Peat described the play as, “truly a cultural highlight of the year” (Peat, 2003, p. 10) and, in his report, Dr. Bruce Goodfellow, chairman of the School’s Trust Board wrote, “the students presented a very professional and moving performance of “Killed: July 17th 1916” (Goodfellow, 2003, p. 15).

**Conclusion**

The performance successfully introduced students and audiences to themes which I believe have relevance and meaning to New Zealanders, as well as providing a valid theatrical experience which contributes to the drama of New Zealand. Students made discoveries through research and engaged with the process and performance. The school used multi-media technologies as an integral part of the production for the first time, and as a result of this production the school further developed their Drama facilities and resources. One student auditioned for, and was accepted into the Performing Arts Course at UNITEC. From this point forward, the
school began to produce similar challenging plays alongside their large scale annual musical production.
Chapter 13: Drama and Theatre in and for Schools: Referencing the nature of theatre in contemporary New Zealand: Some Conclusions

Drama has held an important place in the New Zealand curriculum for many years and through the dedication and insight of teachers, who believed strongly in its value and importance, it has come to take its place as a vigorous, thriving subject. Janinka Greenwood, in an article about the development and practice of drama in the curriculum describes those early days,

Drama took place in New Zealand schools well before the first visit of Dorothy Heathcote. Many of us who are now in our sixties remember the plays and concert of our schooldays, and remember that they were not always re-hashes of the canonical or popular classics, but sometimes new works written specifically for us by our teachers, or even sometimes improvised by us. (Greenwood, 2009, p. 247)

She continues,

In Teachers Colleges and in isolated schools throughout the country there were a range of innovative strategies for using drama to understand theatre and of making social studies come to life (2009, p. 248).

So drama was already much more than an entertainment, it was seen as innovative and used to explore the social history of New Zealand. In the article, Why Drama?, published in 2005, members of Drama New Zealand55 wrote that,

The New Zealand Government recognises that culture plays an essential role in forming a strong and progressive sense of national identity for all New Zealanders. (Drama New Zealand, 2005, p. 3)

55 Drama New Zealand was originally called NZADIE and is an association which exists to provide one national voice for drama in education by representing drama educators at every level of schooling. It communicates the interests of drama in education to other bodies regionally, nationally, and internationally.
And in the new NZ Curriculum it is clearly stated, “The arts are powerful forms of expression that recognise, value, and contribute to the unique bicultural and multicultural character of Aotearoa New Zealand, enriching the lives of all New Zealanders” (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2009c, p. 20). In her paper to the UNESCO World Conference on Arts Education, Helen Cooper of the Ministry of Education, highlighted several key findings about the role of the Arts in the New Zealand curriculum and in particular made two important points: “The Arts are a critical entry point to school life for community and family” and that, “Students want to engage in subjects where contexts are relevant to their own lives and there is opportunity to express who they are” (Cooper, 2006).

By exploring some examples of Drama in schools, it is apparent that teachers and students are developing and performing high quality work which is relevant to their own lives and which makes a contribution to their own families and communities. The Educational Drama examples used in this thesis demonstrate the exploration of a range of themes, forms and styles and show that from primary to secondary level, students are able to perform at a high standard. The students at Viscount Primary School who took part in *Kia Ora Khalid* in 2009 performed capably and confidently alongside professional actors as they tackled challenging themes. Students at secondary level show a real depth and understanding of the work they perform and their process as performers. Communities are given opportunities to see some excellent theatre locally. Often because of the NCEA Achievement standards in Drama, students perform New Zealand drama or construct a framing device for a production that highlights themes of relevance to their own lives in New Zealand. Drama students are developing into, “Dramatic historians and social commentators” (Drama New Zealand, 2005) who can, ...place their own drama in the context of contemporary New Zealand society. They, consider past and present New Zealand drama and the drama of other cultures and other communities and societies, including Maori and Pacific Island cultures and groups. Their involvement in an historical perspective on drama helps students to understand how communities’ cultural and social identities are
shaped and how they function in today’s world.  
(Drama New Zealand, 2005, p. 2)

By actively engaging in drama and theatre, young people learn to create, perform and understand theatre. For many, they will become in the future, either practitioners or audience members whether it is in professional theatre or community theatre. By working with professional Drama practitioners they can gain a deeper more true experience of theatre and new ideas to extend their own work. They learn how to develop their creativity in a range of situations. In 1992, Bushnell\textsuperscript{56} claimed that in years to come there will be better qualified Drama teachers because Drama is taught in schools (Bushnell, 1992a).

**Excellence in Schools**

Many school productions and NCEA work are of a very high standard. In *The Arts Strategy 2006-2008*, the importance of excellence is confirmed: “Benefits of arts rich programmes are only tangible within high quality programmes” (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 11). The strategy also highlights that “Quality arts education tends to be characterised by a strong partnership between schools and outside arts and community organisations” (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 11). The NCEA Achievement Standards themselves have as their highest achievement, ‘Excellence’. The Artists in Schools Programme, Capital E Theatre Company, and The Auckland Theatre Company’s partnerships with schools encourage and help to develop quality drama. Trevor Sharp, the Community Facilitator of Dramanet\textsuperscript{57} confirms the value of programmes such as the Artist in Schools in the light of the debate about its demise due to funding.

\textsuperscript{56} Bushnell was involved in the development of a new form of assessment criteria for drama in 1990, see Chapter 2

\textsuperscript{57} Arts Online email forum for Drama educators
We may no longer have the possibility of government funding for employing professional expertise in our classrooms but I am reminded of the immense value of having a practising artist come to work with a class even for only one or two sessions. The students are exposed to someone employed in the profession with expertise that is current. (Trevor Sharp, July 28, 2009, personal communication)

The collaboration between schools and professional artists are now valued in the United Kingdom and the Arts Education document, *Drama in Schools*, summarises the many and varied benefits of such a programme,

Well-planned partnerships between schools and local theatre companies are mutually beneficial, offering expertise that could not be otherwise provided. They also offer potential young audiences to the theatre. Professional theatre artists can make a key contribution to the professional and creative development of teachers. They can provide theatre events/workshops that reflect cultural diversity, promote strong role models, introducing theatre forms and present practice that may be unavailable in individual schools. (Arts Council England, 2003, p. 27)

In his conclusion to an email sent to Drama teachers highlighting some of the examples of the Artists in Schools project Trevor Sharp writes,

Not one of these projects could have had the scope or enjoyed the success they did without the expertise and dedication of the practising artists who worked with the teachers and students. These were educationally rich, authentic experiences that have had a lasting effect on the fabric of the schools and the communities where they took place. (Trevor Sharp, July 28, 2009, personal communication)

**Authentic learning**

The word authentic has been used several times in this thesis and seems to offer a key to developing the work of young people. Drama is a subject which cannot be experienced through theory alone, it must be a practical, creative subject that actively encourages young people to experiment and explore. The work of the professional
Drama practitioner in schools in Auckland and elsewhere is often dependant on the availability of funding. As can be seen in the work of the professional practitioners discussed in this thesis, the collaboration between professional theatre practitioners and drama teachers and students in schools is a vitally important one. Their involvement, knowledge and encouragement contribute greatly to the more professional standards of performance and study of drama as a subject in schools. Conversely, each of these practitioners need to have a sense of what the Drama curriculum in New Zealand requires of teachers and students in order to link the authentic learning experience with the demands of the curriculum.

Professional productions frequently challenge and excite students, sometimes bringing to life a text that may be difficult to access in the classroom. Is it time though that professional and community companies did pay more attention to the prescribed list\(^{58}\) of plays and particularly those plays deemed to be New Zealand works? The ATC considers the lists but are not dictated by them. In 2009, there was much debate by Drama teachers on Dramanet about the exclusion of the plays from the NCEA lists. As an example, some teachers were frustrated that *The Pohutakawa Tree* by Bruce Mason, staged by the ATC in 2009, had been removed from the prescribed list for that year. Trevor Sharp, the Arts Online Community Facilitator of Dramanet, made the suggestion that teachers should be able to,

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\ldots \text{be radical and add plays that belong to the "significant" canon if they are being performed by a major company in any year. A case in point is ATC's production of *She Stoops to Conquer* this year. After all isn't it desirable that students be able to see plays they are studying in production? (T. Sharp, 2009b)}
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The work of Educational Units within professional theatre companies has been important for many years, and is recognised by professional practitioners as having importance. According to Colin McColl, Artistic

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\(^{58}\) The prescribed list is a list of texts students may study for NCEA Drama Level 3.4, 90610.
Director of the ATC, he was aware of the need to encourage young people
when he was the Artistic Director of Downstage Theatre in Wellington in
the eighties. Downstage ran drama classes for young people and
introduced a Festival of Plays by young New Zealanders. The theatre’s
funding application in 1986 to the Arts Council “stressed the need for this
kind of investment in youth” (R. Simpson & Ord, 1989, p. 35). The theatre
appointed a Community and Education officer, Jenny Wake, to develop
the work with young people that they took to both Primary and Secondary
schools in the Wellington area. As McColl is reported in R. Simpson and
Ord as stating,

There is an urgent need, on a national basis, for
strategies to nurture young audiences for the future
of live performing arts. One theatre company on its
own can barely scratch the surface. (R. Simpson &
Ord, 1989, p. 93)

Economic prosperity

The benefits of collaboration between professionals and schools not
only help students to become the audience of the future, but can also
contribute to the economic prosperity of New Zealand. In 1959, Dr.
W.B. Sutch in “Education for Industry” cited by E.C. Simpson, in The
Survey of the Arts states,

...encouragement should be given to the acting and
drama generally, to singing and all the arts. In all
fields we should nurture the best, one reason being
that we need it for our economic well being. (E. C.
Simpson, 1961, p. 162)

He continues,

To meet the New Zealand need, the film industry
must clearly expand so must the supply of good
actors and of all those experts who go to make up a
good ballet, opera or play. And these people should
be able to make a living in the Arts and not be part
times or amateurs. (E. C. Simpson, 1961, p. 162)

Susan Battye echoes this statement when she writes that “the
Government’s own 2002 Growth and Innovation Framework
prioritises the creative industries” (Battye, 2007, p. 20). The Ministry
of Economic Development recognised the importance of the creative
industries as, “important for branding New Zealand. They have the potential to present New Zealand as an innovative and vibrant country, helping to attract investment, open up new market opportunities, and attract and retain talented people” (New Zealand Ministry of Economic Development, 2003). In 2003 it was reported that,

The creative industries sector grew faster than the economy as a whole between 1997 and 2001. The creative industries are estimated to have contributed around 3.1 percent to New Zealand’s total GDP in the year ended 31 March 2001” (New Zealand Ministry of Economic Development, 2003).

The importance of creativity

Aside from economic factors, including the potential for contributing to the growth of economic prosperity through theatre arts practice, it is vital that young people are given opportunities to create their own drama for their own well being and that of their peers and community. Through the plays that they devise and perform, they gain a greater understanding of their society, history and culture as well as exploring those issues that matter in their lives. The Creative New Zealand document, New Zealanders and the Arts, concludes that, “The frequency of childhood art experiences is an important predictor of adult attendance and participation” (Creative New Zealand, 2009, p. 21). In fact it appears from the research that 72% of respondents to the survey said that it was teachers who encourage them to get involved in the Arts (Creative New Zealand, 2009, p. 77).

Virtually all of the young people that we surveyed (99%) have been actively involved in at least one art form in the past 12 months. Again, results demonstrate that schools are instrumental in getting young people involved in the arts. The vast majority (98%) of young people indicated they have participated in at least one art form at school or for school in the past 12 months. (Creative New Zealand, 2009, p. 40)
Schools as creators of theatre

Schools often advertise their productions to the local community and Drama teachers frequently inform their colleagues of upcoming productions. This is particularly useful when, for example, in 2008 Botany Downs Secondary College performed *Children of the Poor* by Mervyn Thompson; other local schools studying the play were able to attend. The production does not appear to have been performed professionally for some years in the Auckland region and thus the school’s production became a valuable resource.

Because of the prescribed lists and NCEA Drama in general, schools often perform drama that may not be given a professional showing thus contributing to their local community. It was stated in an article in *The Weekend Herald* that *The Pohutakawa Tree* by Bruce Mason is rarely performed professionally. Apparently the production has only been given two professional performances since its writing in 1957 (Christian, 2009b), (Christian, 2009a); the 2009 ATC production, and the one in 1984, at the Downstage Theatre, Wellington directed by Richard Campion (R. Simpson & Ord, 1989). It is pertinent to note, in this context, that according to Playmarket’s records, 14 school productions have been given of the play since 1998, and prior to that date the play was often performed by schools (K. Chandra, personal communication, August 31, 2009). The cast size requires 13 actors and for many professional theatres in New Zealand budgetary constraints would prevent its performance. When the play was originally performed it was in the rehearsal rooms of the New Zealand Players in Wellington. According to the transcript of an interview conducted by Janinka Greenwood with Richard Campion, he had concerns with financial success and felt the play,

…was trembling on the verges of [making] Pākehā resentful. Could we do it and would we get an audience for it? So all right, Bruce, we’ll do a tryout at the rehearsal rooms, but we’ll do it as a production, doing it as best we can. (New Zealand Ministry of
Conversely, the large cast provides an opportunity for schools to perform a play which requires several characters, thus allowing their larger classes to perform a substantial, important play. Colin McColl wrote that he “felt constricted at not being able to do ‘more risky, avant-garde and experimental things’” (Smythe, 2004, p. 310) while at Downstage Theatre because of the need to pacify the box office. Schools benefit in having a certain freedom from the worries of box office receipts. As discussed earlier, in Chapter 4, aside from the royalty fees, a quality production can be staged with a limited budget. Elaborate sets and costumes are not the answer to making a production professional, it is the creativity, theatricality and quality of performance which can bring a performance to life. As McColl is quoted in Smythe, “theatre has the power to represent things through theatrical devices in a way that can’t be done on film. Theatre is able to present difficult subjects that might otherwise not be tackled” (Smythe, 2004, p. 310).

According to Katrina Chandra, the Agency Coordinator of Playmarket, 656 licences have been issued to schools between October 1997 and the present day for performances of New Zealand plays (K. Chandra, personal communication, August 31, 2009). Schools may not always have the facilities or time but have several advantages over professional theatre; they often need to provide opportunities for large casts, and New Zealand Drama offers a valuable learning tool for students to make discoveries about the history and culture of New Zealand. Schools often tackle those difficult texts and subjects with their scripted and devised productions, as Botany Downs Secondary College did with *Vinegar Tom*.

Schools are also taking the opportunity to showcase their work, both scripted and devised to the general public. The production of *Vinegar Tom* at Botany Downs Secondary College, although a British play, was perceived by the students as relevant to a New Zealand society in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century. The students recognised that they were bringing a play
infrequently performed in New Zealand to the community. In Simpson and Ord’s book, *Downstage: A celebration*, Colin McColl is quoted as saying that he,

…used to feel guilty about the lack of New Zealand plays in our playbill – particularly as Downstage had pioneered regular professional productions of New Zealand plays and had masterminded the formation of Playmarket. (1989)

**The benefits of Drama as a curriculum subject**

Janinka Greenwood asks the question, “Are we more concerned with interpreting the minutiae of NCEA descriptors than with exploring the role of the aesthetic?” (Greenwood, 2009, p. 258). Considering the productions discussed in this thesis, much emphasis has been placed on the aesthetic. Teachers may have to deal with the finer points of NCEA, ensuring their tasks and assessments are correct for moderation, but drama teachers are managing, in collaboration with their students, to direct, produce and devise exciting material that goes well beyond the brief of an NCEA achievement standard. They take risks in their choices and fill a gap that often the professionals theatre cannot or do not want to fill. NCEA, in fact, gives students and teachers the opportunity and excuse to be creative, experimental and artistic.

The schools that have been discussed have produced plays about New Zealand immigration and about Abuse. They have produced plays that challenge including, *Vinegar Tom*, and *Our Country’s Good*. They have performed New Zealand plays including, *Revenge of the Amazons* and *Children of the Poor*. Students have devised Drama as a learning tool for peer groups and primary schools.

In Auckland, schools have many opportunities available to them to see professional theatre at, for example, the ATC, The Edge, the Telstraclear Pacific Arts Centre, and The Maidment Theatre. There are touring
companies and community theatres that also provide a range of opportunities for students. Perhaps it is also time for communities to see their local colleges as a venue where they may well find a quality theatrical performance. As a footnote it is exciting to note that a student, Rebecca Taylor from the production of Vinegar Tom at Botany Downs Secondary College, received the award for best Supporting Actress at the AMI Showdown Awards in 2009.

It is of course vital that teachers are supported, encouraged and given every opportunity to become the best drama practitioners they can be in order to further develop the work that is occurring in schools, as stated in the Arts Council of England, Drama in Schools document,

> All art forms are constantly adapting to the needs of the culture they reflect and represent. The nature of Drama in both content and form will undergo many changes in the years to come. For example, the influence and use of film and television, the growth of digital technology and the greater accessibility of high quality equipment mean that the moving image will take on an even greater importance in our schools. It is essential that teachers continue to seek ways of combining their existing skills and knowledge with the new technologies, so that they can enable our young people to go on creating and producing innovative Drama and theatre for the 21st century. (2003, p. 46)

New Zealand has good reason to be proud of the development of Drama in Schools since its inclusion in the National Curriculum and its status as an NCEA subject, including Scholarship. According to Drama New Zealand, one of the aims of the New Zealand Government when they introduced the Arts into the curriculum was that,

> New Zealand students, through an education in the Arts, can play a role in the cultural shaping of New Zealand. An education in drama can contribute to making this new vision for New Zealand’s community cultural development a reality. (Drama New Zealand, p. 3)

In Chapter 2, the rationale for Drama’s inclusion in the New Zealand Curriculum was discussed. By exploring a few examples of
performances by and for schools it is possible to see that students are gaining,

... a deeper appreciation of their rich cultural heritage and language and new power to examine attitudes, behaviours, and values. By means of the drama that they create and perform, students reflect and enrich the cultural life of their schools, whānau, and communities. (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 21)

Drama students and teachers are enriching the cultural life of their schools and communities; they are doing it successfully and often without large budgets or appropriate facilities, yet they find creative and artistic ways to succeed. Their collaboration with professional theatre practitioners further enhances the quality and nature of the work. Drama, in and for schools in New Zealand is thriving and, indeed, contributing to a New Zealand National theatre identity.
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