

HARLEQUIN MUSICAL THEATRE INC ANNUAL REPORT 2009

It is with pleasure that I present the annual report for 2009.

Committee

At the last Annual General Meeting the following office holders were elected:

President	Sue Rossiter
Vice President	Dayle Hall, Colin Charles
Secretary	No nominations were received.
Treasurer	No nominations were received.
Members:	Claire Richards, Colin Franks, John Finnie, Neroli Gifford, Ruth Sharp, Vanessa Hales, Geofferson Wilshire, Tony Scarborough

At the first committee meeting Tony Scarborough was elected as Secretary. Doly Ngaripin offered to take the position as Treasurer in an ex officio capacity.

I wish to thank the above members for giving up many hours of their time to assist in the running of the theatre. We are very grateful for the time and dedication given by all the committee members and for those who are retiring, Vanessa, Tony and Claire thank you for your time and knowledge and we hope to see you at the theatre in another capacity. John Finnie retired during the 2009 year and many know John for his work behind the followspot and as stage crew on some of the shows. Geofferson Wilshire also retired early in the 2009 year.

Patron

We are delighted that Mrs Muriel Ashby has accepted the position of Patron for the 2010 year. Our thanks go to our past Patron Morrin Cooper for his input over the years. Muriel has been an avid supporter of the Harlequin for many years and can always be seen on opening night at every show.

50th Anniversary Dinner

In May 2009 we held an anniversary dinner at the Bucklands Beach Yacht Club to celebrate the inception of the Harlequin. We were honoured to have had Mr Frank Thompson, the first President of the Harlequin join us along with a number of other Presidents and members through the years. Sadly Frank passed away in November 2009 just prior to our final show of the year. Past and present members were entertained by Lisa Lorrell, who has appeared in Harlequin shows many times.

Productions for 2009

During the year Harlequin in conjunction with Amici Productions staged **Cats** at the Civic Theatre. This show was the most ambitious that the Harlequin had ever done. Directed by Grant Meese, musically directed by Penny Dodd and choreographed by Leigh Evans along with a 50 strong cast this show was a mammoth task and we are proud to say that over 30,000 people were treated to spectacular entertainment. We were also very proud to have Grant direct, as he has been part of the Harlequin family for many years. Our thanks go to the Amici team for their backing and support along with the sponsors. It was a time consuming, stressful, eventful, exhilarating, thrilling time for the Harlequin and to see the smiles on the faces of the people who saw the show was worth every second.

In keeping with our strategic planning for 2009 our next show was **A Day in Paris**. Written by one of our members, Linda Charles, this show was used as a training ground for not only the cast but also the production team. Linda was to be the Director as well as the author of the show but unfortunately took ill and was unable to direct. Susanne Dell directed in her place with Vanessa Hales choreographing and Catherine Carr as our musical director. Although audience numbers were down, caused in part by the recession the show was well received by those who did attend.

The end of our 50th year saw a strong cast give the story of the Harlequin theatre over the last 50 years with the show **Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow**. The script was written by Adey Ramsel and featured songs from our very first show Sally through to a sneak preview of our 2010 show *Witches of Eastwick*. Directed by Susanne Dell, musically directed by Campbell Downie and choreographed by Vanessa Hales this show was the perfect ending to our year.

Songs for You

This feature on the Harlequin calendar continued to be popular and our thanks go to Jean Wigzell and her team for their contribution – the last Thursday in each month is the day many of the community look forward to. It is with sadness that we must mention the death of Derek Wigzell, he was a strong supporter of the Harlequin and helped run Songs for You. Derek, along with Jean was also responsible for staging Music Halls at the Harlequin as well as other theatres around Auckland.

Hireage

The theatre was hired to the Bruce Murray for performances as well as the Court Jesters for their season of *The Graduate*. Some of the local dance schools also used the theatre for their concerts.

Strategic Planning

With Claire at the helm of the marketing area we are carrying on with our strategic planning.

The strategic plan is used as a working document and committee members are working on enhancing it as we move through 2010.

We are finding that our website is becoming increasingly popular and we are using it as a vehicle to keep in touch with members. Harlequin has also a Facebook page and this form of communication, together with emails to our growing email database, is also becoming increasingly popular.

As our website and Facebook pages have become more important we are very aware that we have 'fallen by the wayside' with our newsletter. This is something that is of a concern to us as we are aware that not all members have access to computers so it is a 'must do' on the part of the committee to improve in this area.

Repairs and Maintenance/Upgrade of Theatre

As with all buildings there is a continual need to keep the maintenance up on the building. This is a costly and necessary exercise and we have been reliant on many volunteer hours to do this.

Our thanks go to Terry O'Connor (a past President of the Harlequin) for his sourcing of the timber for the deck at the front of the building as well as supplying the labour to build it. Not only has it proved a godsend for cast and production team to relax on but it has also been another rehearsal space. At the final show of the year we had a marquee erected over the deck for the gala night and it provided the much needed covered area for the patrons. Thank you Terry.

As part of the upgrade of the theatre we received funding to purchase and install air conditioning in the building. We now have airconditioning in the auditorium and foyer, stage area, upstairs dressing room and greenroom. Funding was received from Trillian Trust, Lion Foundation and the Howick Community Board. The shortfall was made up from Harlequin funds.

Our next project, which is ambitious, is to upgrade the foyer and kitchen area for the comfort of patrons. This is a large project which could take up to 18 months to 2 years to obtain funding and complete.

Over many years we have had discussions with the Manukau City Council about the gum tree at the front of the theatre. The Council has recently written stating that the tree will remain and that they would undertake to ensure that it is pruned on a regular basis. As a committee we felt we had taken this matter to its end and agreed that as long as the tree was maintained the matter would rest.

Finances

With Tom Coup our previous Treasurer resigning, our accountant Doly Ngaripin took over the position in an ex officio position. In conjunction with Amici Doly had the huge job of reconciling the books for Cats and dealing with the Inland Revenue Department with our GST audit. The Inland Revenue Department thanked Doly very sincerely for the timely and efficient manner in dealing with them and we passed with flying colours. Doly has agreed to

continue as treasurer for the coming year. Both she and our auditor Noel Robinson are thanked for all their work in what has been an eventful year.

Capital Expenses

During the year we purchased a new fridge and couch for the greenroom. We also had another couch donated to us for the area.

A new bar fridge has been installed in the kitchen, and our thanks go to the donors for their generosity.

Marketing/Ticket Sales

We continued the selling of tickets through iticket and this has proved to be very successful, and also helped with the marketing of the shows, although ticket sales were down for the year as the recession started to bite and people started to stretch their dollar. We also purchased a ticket printer which allows us to keep the on-line bookings open for longer.

Jazz Night

In July 2009 we had a jazz evening with a live jazz band and although attendance was light it is a feature that we will continue on with in 2010 and build the audience base. Our next one is currently scheduled for 8th May, and we would love to see you all there.

Looking Forward – and Beyond

Our year started with sadness with Ian Carr our Director for *The Witches of Eastwick* passing away suddenly and his wife Catherine the Musical Director understandably deciding not to musical direct the show. As this was to be our major show for the 2010 year we were faced with the situation of trying to find an artistic team at short notice.

The theatre community in Auckland and beyond was fantastic and our thanks go to them for all their assistance. The committee reached the decision that we would stage *The Witches of Eastwick* in the November 2010 timeslot and in July stage a play, *Trivial Pursuits*.

We are fortunate to have the talents of John Fausett direct ***The Witches of Eastwick*** and Campbell Downie musical direct.

John was last seen at the Harlequin directing "Singing in the Rain" and we welcome him back with open arms. Campbell, of course was musical directing our last show and we are looking forward to working with him again.

Looking even further into the future, we have secured the rights for '**All Shook Up**' (April 2011), '**Joseph and the Amazing Technicoloured Dreamcoat**' (July 2011) and '**A Christmas Carol**' (November/December 2011). We have secured the musical directing services of Oliver Gilmore for 'Joseph' and are in negotiations with directors for both 'All Shook UP' and 'Joseph'.

Assistance

As with every theatre group we are struggling – for members and for assistance to run the theatre. We have a core group who put in time week after week and would dearly love to have others share the fun and passion (and hard work). Whether you join us by participating back stage, on stage or in the audience we would love to see you. Please not only join us but encourage your friends and family to share our passion.

In Conclusion

Many thanks to the current committee for all their work during the year and for those who have offered themselves for re-election. To the incoming committee members thank you for offering yourselves to assist in the caretaking of the Harlequin for current and future members.

Sue Rossiter
President
March 2010