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The Manawatu (International) One-Act Playwriting Competition 2008

Results

National playwright, Stuart Hoar, who was the judge of the 2008 Manawatu International Playwriting Competition, was struck by the range of subjects and the diversity of the plays that he read. Playwrights were asked to write under the theme of 'New World' and to present material that had an experimental edge. Hoar, who also teaches Media Scriptwriting in Massey's School of English and Media Studies, said that the winning six were all of completely different tone and structure, yet they all came to grips with the 'New World' theme in their different ways.

Despite the fact that this is the first time that the playwriting competition has run, it attracted 33 entries from New Zealand and overseas. Writers from Britain and Australia are represented in the final selection. The six prizewinners were:

1st: The Thought Experiment by David Collins

An interesting and evocative drama, well written, and experimental in the sense of being a dramatic thought experiment.

2nd: The Cleansing Fire by Denis Edwards

A well-written, well structured play which takes a historical figure and creates an imaginative black comedy in a way that manages to dramatise the required new world theme.

3rd: Icarus by Jan Watts

A playful imaginative scifi satire that takes the new world theme seriously and that is verbally inventive.

4th: Deception River by Peta Tait

A deceptively simple yet well-written and thoughtful play.

5th: Mask by Renee Liang

A stylised play which uses mask in an imaginative way in a play about generation clash and cultural change in contemporary NZ.

6th: Lamb by Lesley Martin

A strong if conventional play with a powerful end which if staged well should raise the climax beyond pure melodrama.

David Collins, the winning writer was so excited when he heard the news that his response was a mix of 'stunned rigidity and crazed gymnastics'. David attributes some of his success to papers he has studied at Massey University. 'If not for discovering the English and Media Studies Expressive Arts papers, I doubt I would have ever found a love for acting, theatre and yes - writing.'

The successful writers of this year's competition will have their plays staged at the Festival of New Arts in Palmerston North in October. The Festival, that has always been a showcase for original works in all disciplines, will be staging the competition winners along with other art works, in various venues throughout the city including the Back Room at Centrepoint Theatre, The City Library, Square Edge, The Globe Theatre, and Massey University. Angie Farrow, the Festival's Artistic Director, says the decision to run the competition has already raised the stakes in terms of community involvement: students as well as people from the wider community are getting behind the event. Massey continues to be the main sponsor of the Festival of New Arts and Angie believes that it is fitting that the university should be supporting new creative initiatives and emerging artists in this way.

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