

WHANGAREI THEATRE COMPANY
formerly
WHANGAREI AMATEUR OPERATIC AND DRAMATIC SOCIETY

A BRIEF HISTORY

It was a dark and dismal evening back in early 1946 when Alice Kildare (or Mice Matthews as she was then) while walking home after finishing work at her dressmaking business, decided that Whangarei needed some form of evening entertainment such as she had participated in while living in Hawera.

Next morning she told her dream to the late Mr Bill Vallance, who on her behalf, placed an advertisement in *The Northern Advocate* calling a meeting at the YWCA hall, of all interested in forming a Whangarei Operatic Society.

From such humble beginnings WAODS came into being, and to start off the finances, each newly elected Committee member put in 5 pounds.

Through an arrangement with the Whangarei Borough Council in 1946, the Society gave major assistance in organising and participating in the Borough Jubilee Pageant on the 15th and 16th of November of that year. In return, the Council allowed WAODS to use the Town Hall for our first stage show "*The Boy*" which was presented in October 1947.

Since that time, the society has become one of the most prominent entertainment organisations in Northland, with a reputation for excellence in quality of performance and standard of stage presentation. It has gained a reputation for presenting shows known for both the high quality of performance and stage presentation. In recent years, the society has received a number of NAPTA awards in recognition of the excellent standards in both chorus and individual performances, as well as for the stage sets, props, lighting and sound.

As with most Societies, a "home" is essential to allow it to rehearse and present productions effectively.

Our first 'home' was at 5 Armstrong Avenue.

Our second 'home' was the old Rowing Club clubhouse which was on the bank of the Hatea River where the Olympic Pool now stands.

The third 'home' was in Alexander Street but by the end of the 70's this was becoming too small for our needs, so in 1980-81 it was decided to build a fourth 'home' - on the riverbank in Lower Dent Street. Many hours of volunteer labour by members of the Society saw the development of the complex now known as 'The Riverbank Centre'. August 1987 saw us stage our first production in the 'Hatea Room' of the partly completed WAODS Riverbank Centre.

From the days of Alice's dream, the Society is well established and thanks must be accorded to the public of Whangarei and Northland who have given us their loyal support over the decades. This support has enabled a continuing programme of refurbishment and improvement throughout the theatre. This programme has included the change of name in 2001 from WAODS to Whangarei Theatre Company.