



# SHAKESPEARE GLOBE CENTRE NEW ZEALAND ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Shakespeare Globe Centre New Zealand's (SGCNZ) has had a fulsome year of our annual programmes and events and additional activities. For the plethora of unsolicited responses, as well as the required Reports from the students selected to attend SGCNZ National Shakespeare Schools Production (SGCNZ NSSP) and comprise SGCNZ Young Shakespeare Company (SGCNZ YSC) 2025. Touching all corners of the motu, those participating and our Alumni in NZ and internationally, continuously endorse their appreciation of the 'kick-start' and mentoring, both at the time and then on-going, from which they have continued to benefit. A few excerpts from these are quoted in this Report.

## *Context: SGCNZ's Vision & Objectives*

SGCNZ's vision is to transform lives by mentoring potential through experiencing Shakespeare. In line with this, our key objectives are:

- **Manaaki** – to provide opportunities for personal and professional development.
- **Pūkenga** – to develop life skills.
- **Hauora** – to build resilience and wellbeing.
- **Whanau** – to connect people, regionally, nationally, and globally.
- **Tautoko** – to include and unite people from diverse backgrounds.
- **Mahi hou** – to inspire creativity and innovation.
- **Atawhai** – to cultivate empathetic communication.
- **Mana** – to enhance confidence with gravitas.

SGCNZ's activities include learning experiences and opportunities for all ages, which provide transferable life-enhancing skills, with mentoring being a vital aspect. This includes making the aspiring young actors with whom we interact, aware of the extent and importance of the whole collaborative team who are involved pre-, during and post-events. One only needs read programmes fully, and sit until the end of the film credits, to see the rafts of teams who are actually responsible for making productions happen, to present the cast as seen on stage or screen. Our Alumni frequently feature in these various capacities.

Through our programmes, we provide challenges to spark imagination and insights into the range of careers paths involved, and training and courses of study to prepare for them. To name but a few, in addition to the obvious roles of actors and directors, are the playwrights / scriptwriters; production team – producer, designers of costumes, set, props, composers of music and soundscapes; arts administrators – event organisers, sponsorship & fundraising, ticketing, preparation of PR material – writing and disseminating media releases, advertisements, posters, fliers, and many more. Without influencing any preferences, helping young people to understand between which tertiary training provides what and assists them in making informed choices to match the careers they wish to achieve, including 'back ups'.

Having Alumni give talks, most with Q&As, at our Festivals, SGCNZ National Shakespeare Schools Production (SGCNZ NSSP) and to the SGCNZ Young Shakespeare Company when in the UK, offers the rangatahi the chance to hear their trajectories, with all its real-life issues and challenges of SGCNZ YSC.

*The connection to the arts and global performing industry is immense, and I am thrilled to see where it takes me in life. I can only hope for the same life changing experience for the generations to come. It wouldn't have been possible without SGCNZ's generosity and opportunities - S*

Appreciating that not all will 'make it' as professional arts practitioners, note is made of the value of participating in their school productions and community-based performances, in the multiplicity of roles they offer.

At the same time, the benefit of creating informed audience members, who can critically appraise performances

## **Benefits**

Primary benefits are of developing creativity, innovative, imaginative and ingenious approaches to the Bard's works, ability to communicate, interaction and reaction, how to collaborate and cooperate. Self-confidence, self-management, self-presentation are all direct highly beneficial outcomes, especially for this age demographic.

The sense of camaraderie, team building, leadership, especially with regard the student directors, is greatly valued. Casts create networks, so building a wider whanau and increasing tolerance and problem-sharing opportunities. Being with like-minded peers is empowering. Our policy of inclusivity of diversity and positivity creates a safe environment, which helps towards dispelling anxiety, and increases the feeling of self-worth and resilience. Overcoming challenges and achieving end results, sometimes even with awards, provides a great sense of satisfaction.

Appreciation of literature and enhancing of literary skills, including close reading and comprehension, the richness of the language, awareness of figures of speech including, but not only, allegory, alliteration, puns, double entendre, how many of Shakespeare's words and phrases are in the common vernacular, are just some of the ways these young people benefit and relish and so much.

## **Health Issues**

'Life-changing' and 'lifesaving' are commonly used expressions about the benefits to health. The endorsement of self-belief and widened whanau, developed through working in teams to create their scenes for both the Regional and National Festivals, living in with the 48 students selected for SGCNZ National Shakespeare Schools Production (SGCNZ NSSP) whanau and 24 SGCNZ Young Shakespeare Company (SGCNZ YSC) each year. Many of these are maintained long beyond the events during which they were developed. Messenger groups are currently their preferred mode. Discovering they are not alone with their issues is powerful in itself, with many discussing the techniques which have worked for them.

This even includes poignant recitative and songs many have written and performed at *What You Will* during SGCNZ NSSP. These up to 3-minute items about anything non-Shakespearean – and are very cathartic.

Mental health conditions continue to be prevalent among the Rangatahi, with all talking about how much the SGCNZ course had helped them. This included yet again, stated 'turn-arounds' of those with suicidal intents.

## **Inclusivity**

Inclusivity of the LGBTQIA+ community is fully respected, and recognition given of where they are at in relation to their gender identification. The Arts Community in particular provides a supportive environment.

Equally, all ethnicities are embraced. This is evidenced in the number of different cultural influences in the scenes, especially those which are student-directed. This facilitates these students being in control of how they wish to portray themselves through their interpretations of Shakespeare's scenes. In 2025, between 78% and 85% were student-directed.

The universality of Shakespeare is well recognised, with his works being performed in more than ¾ of the 195 countries in the world, and over 100 translated into other languages.

In the Festivals, inclusion of Te Reo is continuing to increase, and themes interpreted through aligning scenes with Māori influences. These, and Pasifika imbued scenes, often incorporate their dance and music, as well as translated lines through to whole scenes. The dynamism is exciting!

Our 2300 volunteers nationwide are hugely valued and appreciated. With only two full-time paid staff, SGCNZ is reliant on them at all levels, from Board Members to our 24 Regional Representatives, Interns, regular weekly and other volunteers of all ages from 10 – 90. Mentoring is given to them in the plethora of roles and work experience they undertake. This benefits their potential career paths as well as volunteers realising the importance of volunteering, particularly in a country of this size. The live performance sector alone benefits from \$1.2 billion in volunteer skills and expertise.

## **SGCNZ VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON REGIONAL SHAKESPEARE FESTIVALS (SGCNZ VUW RSF)**

*As I reflect on my time in high school, I think about all of the opportunities I've had. A highlight for me has been participating in the Shakespeare Globe Centre New Zealand Regional Shakespeare Festivals. These festivals are a true gift. As an aspiring young performer living in a small town in a small country, my opportunities are limited. The Shakespeare festivals have opened doors, providing me with experiences and chances any young performer could have only dreamed of. - K*

**Accessibility:** SGCNZ maintains a policy of individuals not paying to participate in our Festivals.

This ensures that students can be from all socio-economic sectors.

Just over 4000 students performing 450 scenes nationwide in 2025.

These comprised rangatahi from Year 7 – 13 from:

\* 270 schools

\* Community youth drama groups, from formal organisations or temporary groups, formed for this purpose

\* Home-school clusters, which have grown exponentially since Covid

\* New charter schools.

\* As some regions have schools with several hundred students wanting to participate, a 'Prologue Festival' category has been instituted, whereby those schools have an internal 'play off', whittling down the groups to up to 12 scenes being chosen for their Regional Festival.

Each school pays an SGCNZ School Friends Membership subscription of \$225 and the groups an SGCNZ Group Friends Membership of \$120, for which they may enter multiple scenes (up to the limit of 12), plus as many of our allied arts Competition entries as they wish. (See more information on these below.)

Benefits for Friends include not only the ability to participate, but also a 10% discount on Shakespeare's Globe London's on-line (and physical) shop, which has a rich collection of educational resource material. The books include ones written by leading specialists in Shakespeare and Race, Women, Diversity, Environment and other highly topical issues. There are discounts to SGCNZ performances.

Friends receive the four issues of our magazine, *Accent on Shakespeare*, (available on-line or in hard copy), which contains resource material, a quiz (often used in classrooms), articles, information about future SGCNZ activities, as well as at the Globe, and in other countries, profiles of Alumni and regarding opportunities.

**Our Regional Representatives:** They are fantastic!

One of the Regional Festivals did not take place this year; again, the West Coast (South Island) Regional Representative took up a position in another part of the country. Annie Millard, already Regional Representative for the Nelson/Tasman region, has very kindly taken on coordinating the West Coast Festival too for 2026.

As volunteers, the Regional Representatives were superb, each coordinating their Festival to the blueprint provided by the CEO, to ensure consistency of the branding, ethos of our objectives and quality of delivery of the event in all respects.



**Selections:** As usual, one 5-minute and one 15-minute scene was selected from each Region for the National Festival. Because of the West Coast not participating this year, the two extra slots at the National Festival were easily filled by regions with the Board's Policy of a 'threshold' for larger ones. This states that if there are either 300 or more individuals participating, **or** more than 15 different schools, **or** 50 or more scenes in a Regional Festival, the Assessors are permitted to select 3 groups to attend the National Festival. At the same time, if there are only two schools and less than 15 scenes, only scene may be selected – a 5 or 15 minute one.

The Assessors were briefed to approach their selections with a 'level-playing field'. The 2-minute set up, and same length strike time after their scene, precludes groups from even trying to have elaborate sets. Our Festivals always have the full spectrum of socio-economic sectors. Exploring ideas, concepts, creativity and innovation are more important. Acknowledging elements which demonstrate understanding of the text, interaction with the audience and each other, raw energy and potential, rather than 'gimmicky spectacles', is what matters.

One student not in a group selected for the National Festival, but outstanding, may be selected from each Regional Festival as a Direct Entry student for SGCNZ National Shakespeare Schools Production.

**The Process :** In January, we sent a hard-copy mail out to all the Principals of schools with Years 7-13, plus to directors of Community Youth Drama Groups and coordinators of Homeschool clusters of the Regional Festival Guidelines and Criteria and 6 allied Competitions (detailed further in this Report).

Frustratingly, over 150 of these envelopes were returned to sender by NZ Post. Although they said that this was because those schools did not have a post box at the gate or their P O Box was closed, many we contacted said they do have these. This wasted a lot in postage and printing. More use of electronic communications will be used in 2026.

**Migrants & Refugees:** Many students from migrant families who had arrived in New Zealand appreciated the chance to be in the Festival, as a means of being accepted into the school and whanau of the cast and crew. With one group doing the *Sir Thomas More – A Stranger's Case*' scene (written and extant in his own handwriting) in the Wellington Regional SGCNZ VUW SF, which is directly about refugees leaving and arriving on foreign shores, and performed by 12 of the 14 cast being young refugees, there was a large contingent of audience who came to watch them. It was superbly performed and of course, chosen for the National Festival, where an even larger contingent from the NZ Refugee Council and some Ambassadors were present in the audience. This was both truly embracing of the students and audience development at the same time.

Typically, from non-English-speaking families, they also used performing in the Festivals to enhance their understanding of not only English but also Te Ao Māori and tikanga. Often, they incorporated some of their own culture to their scenes. International exchange students are also delighted to have the opportunity to express their cultures and delve into the similarities and differences of others with whom they interact when co-devising their scenes.

*Thanks for all of the amazing work you do to keep SGCNZ thriving – it is so inspiring and thrilling to see so many young people throughout the country so passionate about Shakespeare and the arts. - H*

Schools pride themselves on their participation and mentions in their ERO Report evaluations with positive acknowledgement of these extra-curricular activities the school undertakes.

All groups performed their scenes to their school at assembly and sometimes for other occasions. Through the above, audience development was fostered, with approximately 206,000 students throughout the country watching the scenes, in addition to the audiences actually attending the Regional and National Festivals.

Signage outside the grounds of schools congratulated the groups and individuals from their schools which were selected to perform in the National Festival and/or participate in SGCNZ NSSP.

# SGCNZ VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON NATIONAL SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

From the final date at the end of term I - 11 April 2025, by when all the Regional Festivals must be held, there were just under 7 weeks in which to do the huge amount of processing of the information for the National Festival participants. These comprised the 798 performers and non-performers, including Competition finalists, SGCNZ NSSP Direct Entry students, Regional Reps, SGCNZ Young Shakespeare Company members, groups and individuals wishing to pay to attend the Workshops, Performances, Talks and Tours (some of which were free – for others we secured discounts).

**The Schedule:** A Mihi welcomed all selected participants who could attend the nau mai te huihuinga – social gathering in The Hub at Te Herenga Waka-Victoria University of Wellington, kindly co-hosted and organised by Professor Sarah Ross on Thursday afternoon 29 May from 4pm. Provost Bryony James welcomed all with a Mihi Whakatao – with a continuous looped slide-show of Alumni of both SGCNZ & the University.

In spite of having to brave intense rain, some 250 enthusiastic students and teachers mixed and mingled, already making friends and sharing their journeys to date with others across the motu. So began this enriching 5-day experience of personal and professional development including and uniting people from every type of diverse background.



The next morning all participants gathered at Wellington East Girls' College from 8.30am-12.45pm for the official Welcome.

**The Workshops:** The students, and lots of the teachers, then moved into the 20 allocated spaces for the wide range of Workshops, presented twice so that all could attend two. See list attached, Appendix 2, noting the wide range of different skills being offered, both to provide the young people with insights into careers they might not have even known existed and to further hone skills of those who have their journeys underway already. Mentoring by the high calibre arts practitioners we engaged shared their skills and expertise, and guided those who lingered to ask for advice on their next steps and hear valuable reality checks.

Many tutors notice students, who can be seen soon after involved in their next productions in some capacity or other. With there being over 154,500 Alumni, this occurs often.

The Workshops also provide employment for the theatre practitioners (many of whom are Alumni), who both give and gain experience, as they interact with a wider audience from all over the motu.

Longer term, many collaborations 'pan-years' of Alumni result.

*"This year it was incredible to sit in a workshop and unpack what directing through a Māori lens means, as well as seeing how many other ethnicities were there to tautoko te o Māori. It gave everyone a safe space to explore a cultural perspective, which was amazing to be part of." A*

**In the St James:** At the same time on Friday morning 30 May, the St James Theatre was configured by riggers, other crew on stage, while volunteers and staff member transformed the Foyers with our allied Competition Finalists' winning entries on the fogo boards, merchandise, a refreshments bar, pre-loved books available for a koha, various display material.

**The Crew & Mentoring:** Adam Walker was again our incredibly loyal Production and Stage Manager – his 21<sup>st</sup> year in this capacity. Being so au fait with the idiosyncrasies of our Festivals, Adam's mentoring many others has been invaluable.

Josh Wiegman was Deputy Stage Manager (DSM). Formerly a crew volunteer for SGCNZ from Kuranui College for 4 years, Josh, while still at University, established his own technical supplies and personnel organisation, Cue-Go in Dunedin and another branch in Palmerston North; a huge achievement for someone so young. Completing the base core of this team are the lighting technician and Front of House Manager (an Alumna), Ruby Parker.

It is very special to have this solid team wanting to return every year. Each mentors the relevant members of groups coming to perform to help them learn more about those roles. Many of the participants are from small towns, with only a basic community or school hall.

Over the years, many schools report that their sound and lighting boxes have been set up by these Alumni, utilising with the advice from the professionals involved at the Festivals. They then feed into the amateur and professional theatres around the country as well.

**Placing Calls:** 'Placing Calls' - "What are they?" people ask! As there is simply insufficient time for each group to have a full technical rehearsal, each of the 48 groups has prescheduled 10 minute Placing Calls to explore where they make their entrances and exits, how long it takes to get across the stage and whether to come through the auditorium and up the stairs onto it. In addition each group has a 5-minute mandatory Health & Safety briefing.

Adhering to the strict timing of their scenes – 4-5 Minutes in the Student-only directed scenes, 10-15 Minutes in the Student- or Adult-directed ones, is essential, as overrunning (or under-time) makes them ineligible for scene awards. (The timing of the scheduling is necessarily tightly arranged scheduling, in order to fit everyone in.)

The Placing Calls also include audibility Sound Checks and how to 'work' the stage and audience.

Mentoring for young people in the various roles gives them all an appreciation of the complexity of what is involved in putting on a production – and real-life experience.



**Tours, Talks & Visits:** On Friday afternoon, weaving around their Placing Calls at the St James Theatre, the groups attended the discounted or free tours including of theatres, various other tertiary institutes, attractions and activities. 'Teasers' of these were collated and sent out to the groups attending the National Festival in advance so they could schedule their time, and book if necessary.

As usual, the Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings were kept free for the students, from all over the motu could attend professional theatre or various other arts genre taking place over King's Birthday weekend. Many are from small towns with little theatre-life, and flood into whatever is in offer in Wellington at the time; several directors and casts add extremely beneficial Q&As for them. As always, most of the productions contained Alumni in some capacity or other – on stage, backstage, front of house, in administrative or production roles. An extensive list of theatre performances (most with negotiated special price reductions) were also in their National Festival Information Packs as soon as they had registered after selection at the Regional Festival.

**Special Session:** There were 4 'Special Sessions', to facilitate SGCNZ YSC Alumna, Maddie Brooks Gillespie, to welcome and mentor attendees at the Festival who were 'solo' ie not in performing groups, as to how to maximise their time there, what to expect, when and where to go, and buddy them up where appropriate. Non-performing participants who were not Competition Winners, NSSP Direct Entry or SGCNZ YSC members, paid only a minimal amount of \$13 for each Workshop and \$15 day-long ticket entry.

**The Scene Performances:** For the performers of the scenes in the selected groups, it was a thrill, reiterated many times, to be in the St James Theatre again. The students' standard 'stepped up', as they appreciated the opportunity of being in this prestigious venue.

*The St James Theatre has such a good feeling on stage; as a performer it makes me feel like I am part of something bigger than myself. It is a beautiful and special venue. - J*

There was virtually no evidence of Covid this year, with only one group having one substitute cast member subtly 'on book'.

**Atawhai:** The rangatahi embraced the challenge of close reading, analysing the text and using the many available methods to quickly understand the essence of the play. That made it easy to transpose the words into whatever period, culture, social or political times and situations they conceived. They discovered the beauty and power of the language. They were astounded at how many of the Bard's words and phrases are in common vernacular, even if often paraphrased. Literary figures of speech and devices were explored from alliteration to allegory, puns to prose, close reading to cognitive processing, direct address to dissection of the text.

The students spoke of how much they gained through how Shakespeare's plays revolve so much around the human psyche and how people react and interact. Benefits of this were valued as methods of dealing with states of mind and exploring different outcomes, through the way thoughts were expressed and reactions to them.

The students gained, through Shakespeare, the understanding of the power of the spoken word and face to face communication – a far cry from 'hiding behind' devices.



**Pūkenga:** Casts care about each other. Through whomever their characters were, the cultural differences and other causes of intolerance dissolve.

For the many scenes with ethnic influences, wider whanau were brought in to advise, creating greater inclusivity of the often newer migrant families and communities. This helped dispel cultural differences.

Acceptance of all forms of neuro-diversity was prevalent, as it is so much more in the arts.

**VIPs:** It was very special that the Performance Sessions of the Festival, were opened by Councillor Ray Chung on Saturday 31 May. Eight Ambassadors attended at various times; several Central and Local Government politicians accepted invitations to attend over the two days. We were delighted that Katie Nimon MP agreed to be MC on the Sunday evening for the Presentation of Competition Prizes and Scene Awards, along with our Board Chair, Paul Foster Bell and other Board and VIPs.

**Festival Scene Assessors & NSSP Selectors:** The 3 Scene Assessors were Grace Hoete - Arts Administrator/Director; Professor David O'Donnell - Academic/Author/Theatre Director/ Actor; Jade Eriksen - Actor/Director/Tutor. While the 3 Assessors collaborate on the Reports, they are responsible for compiling comments for only a third of them each.

The 3 SGCNZ NSSP Selectors were Alumni - Carys Chapman-Vari SGCNZ YSC 2023 Alum/Actor; Rio Futschek Ryan - SGCNZ YSC Alum 2022/Actor; Sam Lewis - SGCNZ YSC 2022 Alum/Actor/ Director . The 24 students they chose to complete the full complement of 46 for SGCNZ NSSP, including the Regional selections, proved to be a superb troupe – cohesive, caring and eager to contribute, learn and achieve.

**Student-Directing:** Over 78% of the scenes were directed by students, with mentoring freely encouraged so that a total learning experience was gained for all the rangatahi. The resulting transferable skills included leadership of their peers, teamwork, listening, evaluating and accepting – or not – contributions, analysing and re-imagining Shakespeare, recreating interpretations, encouraging curiosity, innovation, with self-and time-management being essential qualities.

Visualising their performance in advance and working out how to realise the process to get it that stage, are invaluable skills.

**Inspiring Showcase and Presenters:** As the Assessors and Selectors left to start making their respective selections at 4pm on the Sunday afternoon, a screen was moved on stage for the Inspiring Alumni section.. It began with the inspiring story of SGCNZ alum Māhanga Mitchell, in conversation with the university's director of Theatre and Performance Studies, Dr Nicola Hyland, as he described his journey from SGCNZ Festivals and the Globe Theatre, London, to the stage of Studio 77 at Te Herenga Waka-Victoria University of Wellington.

Scarlett Clemmet-Jones, from Blenheim, was again selected from the Marlborough Regional SGCNZ VUW RSF present Miranda's Monologue from *The Tempest Act 1 scii*. This charming dance/drama performance is what Scarlett was chosen to perform at the World Championships of Performing Arts in Hollywood. Fostering this 11 year old's ability and versatility demonstrates the breadth of SGCNZ's wider community impact.

Isaac Fox, a member of the cast from Palmerston North Boys' High School who is studying Trinity College London Speech and Drama Grade 8, was interviewed by SGCNZ Alum/MC, Eli Hancock, on stage about the benefits of his training through Trinity to his acting. Isaac performed *A Fairy Song*. – to prove it!

Sarah-Jane Chaplin, a Year 7 at Chilton Saint James in Lower Hutt, was selected from our late 2024 Dance *Nimble Soles* programme to perform another item inspired by *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – a charming dance as Peaseblossom.

Every year, someone emerges with their 'achievement in spite of adversity' they want to share as an example to the rangatahi peers. An Alumnus from Te Tai Tokerau spoke of how he coped through his mother's ill-health and diversity issues, navigating hospital visits, interruptions to his schooling, though to being chosen to be a member of SGCNZ YSC to pursuing his goals across the world to Britain, America and beyond. This included being awarded a significant scholarship to an overseas university. It was hugely impactful role-modelling.

**SGCNZ YSC 2025 Performance:** On the Sunday evening, SGCNZ Young Shakespeare Company 2025 performed *Shakespeare Night Live* - smorgasbord of Shakespearian treats from the awesome SGCNZ YSC 2025, directed by Kerryn Palmer a Senior Tutor at THW-VUW who has undertaken various roles for SGCNZ over the years. Their session, from 7.00-7.45pm, ended with their haunting Waiata and Haka.

**Presentations of Competition Prizes and Scene Awards:** After the decision-making by the Assessors and Selectors, there was the usual flurry of entering names onto certificates and lists to be read, aligning of book prizes and readying all for presentation on stage. We were honoured that the Honourable Nicola Willis agreed to MC this whole section of the Festival, announcing all the recipients – a feat in itself.

The winning designs in our Costume Design Competition, constructed by professional costumier, Tina de Bes, were photographed by our photographer, Brian Scurfield, being modelled in the Te Papa bush. These were collated by SGCNZ YSC Alumna/now Animator for Weta Digital, Jacyntha Scurfield, who used the winning music entries from our Music Composition Competition as background 'soundscape' to accompany them. This film was shown on the screen while the costumes were being exhibited by models on stage, alongside their designers.

The Minister went on to announce the placings. The Costume prizes were given to the designers by sponsor Nicole Barker. The Music Prizes were presented by the SGCNZ/Morrison Music Trust Shakespeare Music Composition Competition Judge, Michael Vinten. The winners of the SGCNZ /Ida Gaskin Essay Competition~With English at VUW were presented with their awards by Prof Sarah Ross, (VUW Head of School, English, Film, Theatre, Media and Communication, and Art History). The prizes for the SSGCNZ/Adam Foundation Static Image, Poster and Video Title Card Competitions were presented by SGCNZ Board Chair, Paul Foster-Bell.

Every school or group in the National Festival was presented with a Certificate, as was every Student-Director. The 45 Scene Awards were then presented by various VIPs, donors of awards and sponsors.

For the first time! Te Herenga Waka-Victoria University of Wellington generously presented two Raukaraka - Performance school-leaver entrance scholarships of \$5000 each to outstanding participants in the SGCNZ VUW National Shakespeare Festival. These were selected and presented by Professor David O'Donnell (Theatre) and Professor Sarah Ross, to Charlotte Hardiman and Kaprice Mita.

The supportiveness of everyone to each other throughout the evening as they celebrated each other's successes, was outstanding.

It is noted that SGCNZ has a policy of there being no placings at the Festival; instead Awards are given to acknowledge various aspects of excellence, innovation, inclusivity and creativity. Almost all are sponsored.

**Feedback Session & Guest Assessor Talk:** On the Monday ('King's Birthday') 2 June, Prof Sarah Ross kindly hosted all those who could stay to attend, this invaluable Scene Assessors' and NSSP Selectors' Feedback Session, in a Lecture Room at VUW. This was followed by Guest Speakers/Assessors, Professor David O'Donnell & Grace Hoete, about their *Inspiring Careers ~ Page to Stage to Page*. This included David's very recently released book, *Acting in Aotearoa*.

The Festival concluded with a Whakamutunga & Karakia at noon on the Monday.

**Outcomes:** Echoed throughout the Festival and since, were pleas for it to continue, with every stage of it valued. Some had started their 'Festival journeys' with performing in our annual SGCNZ Primarily Playing with Shakespeare (SGCNZ PPWS). For others it began as soon as they became eligible ie Year 7 through to Year 13 in our Regional Festivals >selected for the National Festival > SGCNZ NSSP > SGCNZ YSC and along with that, the pinnacle achievement of performing on the Globe stage.

Ecstatic and grateful responses from participants, teachers and audience alike made it clear that the continuation of the Festivals and their flow-on activities are not only enjoyed, but keenly valued and eagerly anticipated.

*It is so inspiring and thrilling to see so many young people throughout the country so passionate about Shakespeare and the arts. - D*

## *Benefits of the Festivals*

*"O brave new world that such people in it..."* – The Tempest

This year, for the first time ever, all but one of Shakespeare's full canon was performed (albeit in their 5 or 15 minute scenes) throughout the motu! (In fact, the missing one *Troilus & Cressida*, was one of the subjects of Assessor, Grace Hoete, at the National Festival. She was a co-director of it at the Globe when the *Maori Troilus & Cressida* opened the Globe's 2012 season of performing all the Bard's plays in different languages.) The certainly manifests braveness and the joys of delving deeply into the texts.

**Interpretations:** They are not only translated into over 100 different languages, and performed as plays in over 150 countries, but also are recreated in music, opera, song, musicals, rap, ballet, film, television series, story-lines of thousands of books, art works...whether in a pure representation or as an influence, as is seen in so many different renditions.

There were again scenes with sections in Te Reo, French, Italian (with a Mafia influence in *Julius Caesar*), Pasifika languages, Welsh, German, and other not actually identified in their Regional entries, but anecdotally advised by the Regional Representatives.

### **A 'snapshot' of a few of the many and varied presentations:**

An absolutely undeniable award-winning scene in the Wellington Regional Festival was the one from ***Sir Thomas More ~ The Stranger's Case***. Performed by 12 refugees of our stipulated age demographic of 11-19 years old (school Year 7-13) from the NZ Refugee Youth Council, plus two from Director, Tama Smith's Mamaku Community Works youth drama group, it was full of pertinence and poignancy.



As a straight monologue is not permitted as a scene, Sir Thomas' speech on refugees (the only page of writing extant in Shakespeare's own hand), was divided up amongst the full cast with a few lines translated into their own various languages and pre-checked in accordance with our rules.

Inclusion of handing out of life-jackets, 'getting into a boat', a rough crossing, during which a baby was 'lost overboard', along with a male passenger who went to her assistance, getting out at the other end of the trip, life jackets off, and then, after being briefly entertained by a dancer to calm them (power of the arts) midst the bewilderment of the "What next". After that powerful moment of 'mental reprieve', the actors split, with half leaving the stage down one set of stairs, the rest down the other into the auditorium ...where audience members spontaneously stood, went up to them and hugged them, with caring embraces. Incredibly powerful and moving. Such is the eternal relevance of Shakespeare expounded.

Of course, it was selected for the National Festival, and where it received the same ending reactions, again of rapturous applause and a standing ovation accompanied by copious tears and hugs.

The 'blown away' Assessors were, from THW-VUW, Senior Lecturer, Dr James Wenley and Hauora Māori Lecturer, Fran Kewene.

The rangatahi say how much they enjoy the tangential learning, a few even reporting on their dabbles into Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, on which some of Shakespeare's writing was influenced. They eagerly gather up pre-loved books we make available to them at events – irrespective of whether a koha is forthcoming or not! (We are given many by deceased Shakespeare devotees' relatives.)

Two Year 9 wahine students in Picton chose the scene from *King Lear*, between Kent and Oswald, to student-direct and then sought out skills they required from throughout the community. These included sword fighting, having some stocks made, and gaining advice from appropriate locals, resulting in an award-winning outstanding scene, with incredible depth of understanding and maturity of presentation.

Cambridge High School gave a quirky twist to the scene when Othello prepares to kill Desdemona. Onstage is a 'Film Director', who has a looming onset of a mental breakdown. The additional tension of whether he could breathe life into the scene, or whether his film would succumb to the same fate as Desdemona, created a whole new, and totally valid dimension. Clever – both on conceit and delivery.

By complete contrast, the Macleans College student-directors created a 1950s, Elvis-themed Benedick flirting with Beatrice in their scene from *Much Ado About Nothing*.

The two Kaitaia College student-directors set their scene, from *Romeo & Juliet* of Mercutio and Benvolio having a drink, in a bar in the 2000s. Tybalt entered and tried to pick a fight. Romeo intervened and Mercutio was murdered by Tybalt.

Smacking of gang fueled interaction of today, it was not surprising to hear after it, audience saying that it was "...fantastic – but a shame they didn't stick to Shakespeare's text". In truth, they did – every word of it!

*I particularly valued the "Othello" I saw with its team of lagos. What a brilliant staging idea to convey his dreadful malevolence – using a group of hissing and evil lagos - instead of just one. It also made the enunciation of each word more clear and deadly. Clever indeed! – E & Jw*

Looking at the website of our official photographer, Brian Scurfield –

<https://www.memoryoflight.co.nz/Galleries/SGCNZ/SGCNZ-Nationals-2025> illustrates the wide range of settings, cultures, costuming and creativity of these innovative young people.

**Audience Development:** Audience development is another key objective. In addition to viewing each other's performances at the Regional and National Festivals, having the opportunity to see theatre in Wellington by professionals and emerging artists gives many experiences unavailable in their own hometowns.



Many scenes nationwide were directed by SGCNZ Alumni, some of whom are still at school. Participants also benefited from the knowledge gained by having Alumni from SGCNZ's Teachers Go Global, and in the sadly no-longer available valuable programmes at the Globe, SGCNZ / SG Emerging Theatre Practitioner Programme and Shakespeare's Globe International Actor Fellowship, endorsing these programmes as well.

Most SGCNZ UOSWSF Alumni who have gone on to participate in NSSP and YSC have been awarded School Colours and Cultural Awards for their excellence in the arts. There is much personal, school and community pride associated!

## *Festival Registration*

Almost all the schools and other groups now use the online registration process for the Regional Festivals. Because in some schools there are so many students wishing to participate, *Prologue Festivals* are held in their own schools to whittle down the scenes from sometimes as many as 40 (performed by 300-400 students) to a maximum of 12 per school or group.

The Registration platform, which was upgraded and migrated onto SGCNZ's website by a programmer/AI expert, worked well. Regional Representatives were able to print the programmes and lists directly from this. Other useful information and statistics were able to be captured through this as well.

Adam Walker, Production Manager and SGCNZ Volunteer for the past 21 years, also maintains the programme he has created in FileMaker, in which information for the National Festival is entered. This is brilliant, with all information able to be entered and utilised in a variety of ways to produce all the documentation and paperwork required, from printing of the performances section of the programme, certificates, the Presentation of Awards and final media list, sorting the choices of Workshops, so that everyone is placed in 2 of their preferences, and much more.

This year Sharepoint was used extensively to disseminate information, reducing printing and postage. What was extremely upsetting was the number (some 150) of the only hard copy mail out of 800 C5 envelopes to each school Principals being returned to sender. NZ Post responded with advising they no longer deliver to schools without mail boxes at their gate. The stated courier option costs 3 times as much – a prohibitive amount. Next year we will make this entirely electronic to Sharepoint, unless hard copies are specifically requested.

The Questionnaires and scheduled Regional Representative Meeting at the National Festival were very positive, with just a few minor tweaks suggested. These will be evaluated and implemented if applicable. The National Festival venues have all been booked for 2026, with the St James Theatre secured with a deposit already.

*"On returning to school, the group was met with an overwhelmingly positive response from the school and wider community. They were celebrated as heroes, and the support they received reinforced the value of arts education and community pride." BD*

## *SGCNZ Allied Competitions*

To provide an introduction to career pathways other than acting, or in conjunction with it, the following allied Competitions were again held in association with the Festivals.

*"...concerning the prize for the competition. Thank you for the incredible opportunity provided by SGCNZ. I thoroughly enjoyed trying a new style of music and working with a medium I otherwise would have overlooked." S*

The six Competitions comprised:

- SGCNZ/Morrison Trust Shakespeare Music Composition
- SGCNZ/Dawn Sanders Shakespeare Costume Design
- SGCNZ/Adam Foundation Poster Design
- SGCNZ/Adam Foundation Static Image Design
- SGCNZ/Adam Foundation Video Title Card Design
- SGCNZ/Ida Gaskin Shakespeare Essay Competition with English at VUW



The benefits of these Competitions are that they can be done in class or independently, in far-flung areas and in schools where with a lesser focus on the arts. They serve as a wonderful way of encouraging the rangatahi in exploration into a wider range of career pathways, exploring longer term occupations and gain valuable mentoring from the Judges.

A number of the schools do these as class projects and send in the best as entries into the respective Competitions.) Students from Year 7 to 13 submit creative essays, striking costume designs, and incredibly innovative art works and music items. The rationales required to accompany each entry describe the evocative elements and relevant references they have chosen.

Very generously, the sponsor of the Music Competition, Julie Nevett, and of the visual art Competitions, Verna Adam, increased the value of their prizes this year.

**Essay Competition:** A generous bequest has enabled us to continue to fund this Competition, in association with THW-VUW and SGCNZ YSC Alumna, Michelle Linterman 2002.

Category 1 topic was: Write an essay on *The "importance of timing" in a Shakespeare play of your choice* Length 750-1000 words.

Category 2 topic was: Write an essay on *"Many of Shakespeare's plays achieve their drama from a tension between the desire of the individual and aims of the state, family, or other grouping."* Use at least 2 plays in your discussion. Length: 1000-1500 words. These are for Years 11-13 (though younger students may enter them).

We are ensuring that funding will also continue to be sourced of the Junior Competition (Years 7-10), which comprises: Option a) *Write a short story incorporating at least 20 phrases from Shakespeare's plays, poems or sonnets* Option b) *Write and illustrate a short graphic novel, creating a new story by drawing together Shakespearean characters from at least two Shakespeare plays* Length 300-500 words (6-12 pages).

Judging of all of the entries in the Essay Competition was by the Head of at THW-VUW. The 1st Prize winners' essays were again lodged in Shakespeare's Globe Archive in London.

The Competitions provide opportunities for students with other artistic skills to utilise their creativity. Their rationale as to how their designs or compositions relate to the Shakespeare play/character/setting is given as much weighting as the design itself. Some of the former Competition winners are now employed internationally. One 4-time former Costume Winner, Amanda Yu, is excelling in the Design Degree at the University of Sydney.

Competition entries, like the performers at the Festivals, are seen without bias pertaining to race or creed, or socio-economic level of the students, meaning that they span the wide intersectional demographics in New Zealand. These will all be offered again in 2026.

Twenty costumes from over the years were again selected by the organisers of the Stratford Shakespeare Festival, Taranaki, organisers to display in local shop windows for a month from mid-March in the lead up time, throughout and until soon after their Festival ended after Easter. They also invited the SGCNZ CEO to present a Lecture there.

In our Competitions in costume design, music composition, static image, poster, Video Title Card, Essay there were 201 entrants (these are those pre-culled to be 'semi-finalists', sent by the schools/groups/homeschool clusters). The decrease was inevitably because of the mail issues.

These provide students who may be frequently not performers, the chance to utilise their creative skills to create costumes, music, writing and visual art – all potential occupations and essential adjuncts to performances. The Costumes may be for any Shakespeare character, from any era or inspiration. However, the young designers need to imagine the whole cast being empathetically costumed, and for them to be able to move in them easily on stage, without inhibiting other actors' movements – ie not 'WOW' costumes!). The 3-minute Music compositions can be inspired by or written for any Shakespeare play, for one to as many instruments or voices as they like. The Poster Competition is valuable as all shows need promotion, whether in hard copy posters or digital ones. These skills are useful when designing for their own school or group's productions. The feedback in their reports is particularly useful.

Static Images are particularly useful for social media, front covers of magazine or newspapers, evocatively designed to be alluring. Some are great art works to hang on walls. Many a career lies in the development of these.

Video Title Cards are used not just to introduce each of the scenes in our Festivals; these are required in some form or other in all films. A growing number of our Alumni are also young filmmakers.

A strong benefit of these Competitions is that they can be done either individually at home or school, or as class assignments. Monetary prizes are awarded. In our Competitions in costume design, music composition, static image, poster, Video Title Card, Essay there were 201 entrants (these are those pre-culled to be 'semi-finalists', sent by the schools/groups/homeschool clusters). The decrease was inevitably because of the mail issues.

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## *SGCNZ National Shakespeare Schools Production 2025*

From the 4000+ in our SGCNZ VUW Regional Shakespeare Festivals, the participants in this much sought-after 9-day intensive course – SGCNZ NSSP, comprised one outstanding young actors and student directors from 22 Regional Festivals of the who were not in a group selected for the National Festival, and a winner of our Costume Design and Music Composition Competitions.

The 9-day SGCNZ National Shakespeare Schools Production course took place from Saturday 20 September to Sunday 28 September in Wellington, residentially at St Patrick's College, Silverstream.

The 48 SGCNZ NSSP 2025 troupe of 46 young actors and student-directors, plus a winner of our Costume Design and Music Composition Competitions was exceptional. They 'gelled' extremely well, respecting cultural and gender diversity throughout. Their generosity of spirit was evidenced throughout the course, with impromptu assistance with line-learning, caring conversations, 'noticing' and being helpful without being asked.

The 3 Directors - Prof David O'Donnell, Jade Eriksen and Jacqui Coats, of *As You Like It*, *The Tempest* and *Julius Caesar* respectively, are all to be hugely congratulated as well. Their 15 or 16 person-casts were extremely appreciative of being treated as young professionals, and rose to the challenges, creating two highly creditable public performances of each of the three 40mins of each play. It is to be reminded that they were cast, had to learn their lines, be blocked and rehearsed in just 5 half days! They finished with 2 songs from their Singing Workshop, finish with a Waiata and Haka. St Patrick's College Silverstream again proved a very satisfactory venue for this 9-day residential course.

With the paucity of venues of 330-1000 seats available in Wellington, we were pleased to be able to hire the Riley Centre in Wellington High School and to be generously hosted by Te Herenga Waka-Victoria University of Wellington (THW-VUW) in its Memorial Theatre. Provost Professor Bryony James warmly welcomed all to the performance there, while Professor Sarah Ross spoke enthusiastically at the conclusion of the performance and assisted with the Presentation of Certificates.

We are also very grateful to THW-VUW for also hosting the 48 SGCNZ rangatahi to a fascinating talk to help by Professor Ross and Alumni to lure them to study at the University. This was followed by a lunch provided by the University and a performance by third year students currently studying at the University.

Although our troupe knew about some of this event at the University in advance, the *Mystery Tour* that followed was that – a 'mystery'! I was lucky enough to secure a backstage tour of WOW! at the TSB Arena, again free of charge. A key objective of SGCNZ was to introduce our rangatahi to the wide range of roles involved behind the scenes to facilitate this mammoth event. Some 300 staff, contractors and volunteers are involved. Seeing the 100<sup>th</sup> of a second synchronised timing display screens made them truly acknowledge the importance of timeliness! Our rangatahi asked lots of questions of the staff there in the Q&A session, and inspiring several to think differently about their career paths.

After this, one of several 'curved' balls resulted in a top-level person, who had indicated that it has highly likely that they would meet with our troupe for the next session, was suddenly unavailable. Fortunately, Moira Waimara responded very positively and even located an approved space for us in Te Papa to have her provide her exceptional story telling skills, relating the Maori legend of Maui pulling up the giant fish - Te Ika-a-Māui, (the North Island) and particularly of its head – Te Ūpoko o te Ika a Maui (Wellington). Moira spoke of her amazement at the students' extremely focused engagement and level of questions in the Q&A at the end. Even more arts skills were introduced to the rangatahi.

A special dinner was negotiated with ChouChou in the Circa Foyer, after which they attended *A Ghost Story 2:22* currently playing in Circa One Theatre, followed by a related Q&A with more excellent questions. Two of the cast were Alumni!

As always, the Workshops were very popular, some never having experienced them. They included: *Singing* – Babara Paterson, *Intimacy* – Ace Dalziel, *Stage Combat* – Simon Manns, '*Stop Acting to the Exit Light*' – Rachel More, '*Release & Play*' – Perry Piercy, *Dance* – Sacha Copland, one taken by each of the Directors, with David O'Donnell giving one on the background of all 3 NSSP 2025 plays, and I gave one on *Shakespeare's England*. Yet again, other career paths – or 'add-ons' - were introduced, given the realities of the amount of actual acting roles available.

The decision making of whom to choose for the SGCNZ Young Shakespeare Company 2026 was not an easy choice. They were phoned, as always, as the weekend after NSSP ended to allow for 'flip flop' time of a few of the selections and to enable all to relish in the fantastic time they had enjoyed.



The link to the Radio NZ item: <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/574750/funding-cuts-threaten-youth-shakespeare-programme>

**The Schedule:** At the end of the first full day of rehearsals and workshops, exceptional qualities and aptitude were shown in the students' *What You Will* items.

*"The most memorable part of our nightly activities was What You Will, an opportunity where everyone demonstrates their immaculate talents, extending beyond drama into music, dance and even stand-up comedy which was no doubt the highlight of the night."* DS

During the week, half of most days was spent doing rehearsals in their three groups; the other half was spent with the full complement of 46 young actors doing Workshops; meanwhile the Student Costumier was busy creating indicative costume accoutrements, with only \$200 to spend in total (in \$2 and op shops), and the Student Composer devised music as requested by the Directors. These self-directed roles provide considerable personal development as they were weaving their way between arranging contact with the Directors and their innovative endeavours. What they produced was outstanding – such a credit to them.

**University Involvement:** Although Te Herenga Waka-Victoria University of Wellington did not contribute funding to this course, they did kindly contribute use of its VUW Memorial Theatre for the whole day and evening of the final performance, complete with an on-site technician. THW-VUW Welcome Packs and promotional material and other inclusions for the students when they hosted the students for a lunch followed by a performance by students from the Theatre Programme in the small theatre at 77 Fairlie Terrace. Several of the staff were Workshop Tutors and assisted in other ways. We were delighted to have Provost, Bryony James, speak warmly at the conclusion of the final performance and for Professor Sarah Ross present certificates along with our Chair, Paul Foster-Bell.\*\*\*



### **Selection of SGCNZ YSC 2026:**

At the end of each day, the 3 Directors and CEO met to discuss the progress of each of the participants.

The penultimate difficult decision-making phase took place by this team at lunchtime of the final day, after the students were all transported to their points of departure by the wonderful bevy of volunteers who had collected them on the first day.

Leaving a week for them to 'relish' memories of SGCNZ NSSP, and for the list to be consolidated, 24 were phoned to advise them that they have been selected to form the even more-hotly sought-after SGCNZ Young Shakespeare Company,. It is invaluable. After a week of consolidating 'The List' of SGCNZ Young Shakespeare Company 2026, I spent the weekend contacting all the successful members.

The list of the students chosen to form SGCNZ YSC 2026 is also attached. This year's troupe had a greater % of tane; next year's has more wāhine. Overall, they were an outstanding group, very empathetic and cohesive.

The ShortList has, as always, had to be dipped into as untoward family situations have arisen. Of note, half are of those chosen to be in YSC 2026 were from Regional Festival selections and, in complete contrast to this year, a higher majority are females in the Company. All are extremely excited!

**Diversity:** SGCNZ always incorporates New Zealand's multicultural and neuro-diverse communities. Rangatahi from the Rainbow community state how 'safe' they feel in SGCNZ's activities. To begin with, the embracing of all without prejudice, is a stated premise from the outset.

It is widely known that all roles in Shakespeare's day were performed by males. This leads to natural acceptance of cross-gender casting, and appreciation of the variations in the LGBTQIA+ community.

At NSSP week, we provided a space for all to write their preferred pronoun on their name tags, and accommodated their preferences in rooming in dorms.

**Supervision & Observations:** The CEO and a Co-Supervisor lived-in with the students. This enabled them to view the students in social settings and assess other behavioural aspects, vital to the evaluation for the 24 chosen to form SGCNZ YSC. In any career, the especially acting and being in teams of any kind it is the other '50%' ie coping with it, that counts.

The CEO also observed and met with the 3 Directors almost every day to note the attitude and progress of each student and note keenness to learn and absorb, be empathetic and considerate to their peers and all the adults with whom they interact, including hostel staff.

**Empathy:** It was a privilege to hear some of the heart-wrenching 'back-stories' some of them chose to share. Their backgrounds were hugely differing – from lowest-socio-economic levels, with only one or no parent present, through to those from more affluent situations – though not necessarily 'trouble-free'. Recent passing of a family member or friend, sometimes intentionally, are very moving – and frequently subjects of *What you Will* items, in the form of songs or recitative.

Two Reports from SGCNZ NSSP are attached. These demonstrate the life-changing impact of this event, and the Festivals which lead up to it. The rangatahi do, in turn, give back to their communities through their newfound techniques and capabilities.

## ***SGCNZ YOUNG SHAKESPEARE COMPANY***

SGCNZ YSC travelled to the UK in the July holidays for 2 weeks fulsome programme of workshops, talks and rehearsals at Shakespeare's Globe, culminating in a public 'Midnight Matinee' performance to an invited audience. There are additional activities organised by me and our Travel Agent in London and then Stratford Upon Avon for 3 more days of Shakespeare related experiences. It is invaluable.



**SGCNZ YSC 2025 arrival in London:** On 3 July at 5.55am, the SGCNZ Young Shakespeare Company flights arrived safely at Heathrow. The planned five-hour coach tour around London was, as always, a great way to start. However, this year, traffic congestion was magnified by the thousands on the Pride Walk. The Coach Driver negotiated the street closures and cones very deftly, while the wonderful Guide's extensive knowledge of London historically, currently and what is on at the various theatres (especially musicals) whetted the SGCNZ YSC members' appetites for what was to follow! Even seeing London 'heaving' was exciting for them.

**At the Globe:** The Globe experience began on the Sunday afternoon, with a fun, lively rendition of a Western style *Romeo & Juliet* – the play which the SGCNZ YSC were about to rehearse and perform less than two weeks later.

The 24 SGCNZ Young Shakespeare Company (YSC) 2025 began their course the next day at the Globe. They were very fortunate to have their superb Director from 2024, Hal Chambers, working with them again. His ability to extract the best out of each individual while rehearsing them in their 'vignette' groups was exceptional. At the same time, the others were busy helping each other learn their lines, in other spaces. All the Globe Practitioners were par excellence, and the troupe itself, extremely empathetic, caring and an outstanding group of rangatahi. They were a credit to o empathetic and 'gelled' brilliantly with their respective companies. Alumnus from SGCNZ YSC 2005, Sam Smith, was my excellent co-Tour Leader.

### **The Schedule:**

*From voicework and costuming to stage combat and sexuality in Shakespeare, everyone in the company resonated with something in the workshops.*

*What we learnt from these workshops not only helped us in performing our role on the global stage, but most of these lessons/exercises are what I still use today in my own acting pursuits. – R*

Among the thought-provoking talks on the schedule were ones on Shakespeare and Race and Shakespeare and Women.

All were astounded by the *Heaven to Hell* tour, and to learn of how much was achieved in the 'tight spaces' above, behind and below the stage and icon 'planted' in nooks and crannies backstage each year. They appreciated the contrast when viewing the backstage facilities in the National Theatre and Royal Albert Hall on those visits, among extra components which Kerry Maher and the CEO added.

Again, we were generously hosted for a Reception by the NZ High Commission, where we were warmly addressed by Acting NZ High Commissioner HE Guergana Guermanoff. SGCNZ YSC member, Hune Edwards, responded, followed by the Waiata and Haka, with many NZHC Staff slipping in to watch. Kai followed, as the Deputy High Commissioner mingled with the students.

A talk at the Rose Theatre gave all an insight into the proximity of its competition to the original Globe. They were able to view the lit outlining of the Rose footprint. The talks were embellished by footage filmed of famous actors, adding their weight to its restoration, as much as will be possible, given the building above it.

A talk with Q&A on the auditioning process in London was given by SGCNZ Alumnus Kieran Rayner, a baritone, now working internationally, including at Wigmore Hall in London. Kieran provided valuable mentoring, through realities of audition processes, disappointment, and how to sustain oneself, emotionally as well as healthily. Then the coping with being cast and embracing a whole new regime.

In between, all devoured as any shows and plays, to make the most of what London offers, the volume and quality of which is simply not, or only very seldom, available in NZ!

**The Midnight Matinee:** The end of two intensive weeks of excellent workshops and rehearsals culminated in the



*Midnight Matinee* on Thursday 17 July. This comprised scenes from *Romeo & Juliet*. The students' performance was outstanding. They used the space brilliantly, commanded a strong presence on stage, and interacted superbly with the audience. Several parents and teachers travelled over to watch this!

**In Stratford Upon Avon:** The troupe travelled to Stratford Upon Avon on the Friday afternoon. After packing into the charming Guesthouses these, where they were served with dinner, they enjoyed an

hilarious performance that night at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre of *The Constant Wife*. The next day there was a Backstage Tour of the RST, and Walking Tour of Stratford, including the Birthplace. In the evening, as the scheduled Preview performance of *The Winter's Tale* was cancelled, we managed to find an 'amdram' company performing at the Beat Pit.

After a touch of additional drama in the theatre beforehand, we all thoroughly engaged by the poignant verbatim stories of 7 Polish families, who arrived there last century. The cast very kindly spent 20 minutes afterwards doing a Q&A with our ever-curious young rangatahi. The response of the cast to the Waiata and Haka performed by our troupe to say "thank you" resulted in tears and hugs all round. A very memorable evening. Sunday began with a visit to Anne Hathaway's Cottage, followed by Warwick Castle.

**En route to Heathrow:** On the final day, the Coach took all to Oxford for a guided tour, on to Windsor, and then the 'bitter/sweet', emotion-filled farewells, and more Waiata and Haka on the way and at Heathrow...and for those returning to NZ, at Auckland Airport.

*"As a Samoan and Dutch student from New Zealand, I felt proud to bring my culture and perspective with me. Being on stage at the Globe showed me that Shakespeare is for everyone. That realisation has made me want to share what I've learned with others back home, especially Pasifika students who may feel like Shakespeare isn't*

*for them. The skills I gained are transferable to everyday life, including public speaking, teamwork, leadership, and confidence, and they are valuable to my wider community. I want to share my new understanding of Shakespeare in ways that make it feel exciting and relevant for others. Whether through performance, workshops, or leadership, I hope to give back to the community that has supported me. A life-changing journey.” – AM*

A full set of their Reports is available on request.

## *SGCNZ Primarily Playing with Shakespeare - As You Like It*

In its 12<sup>th</sup> year, this programme continues to grow in popularity. In part, this is because of the ease of the rehearsals in their own schools/venues until the performance day, when they come together for one run of the scenes, a practice of the Jig and then the public performance from 12.30pm-1.30pm. As the uptake was so high this year, we have increased to 3 sets of 5 groups, each doing 2 or 3 scenes.

SGCNZ Alumnus, Dryw McArthur was appointed as the SGCNZ Co-Director/Mentor, who edited the script of *As You Like It* to make it age-appropriate (Year 1-8). Part of his role was to select the colour of each character's garment or adornment, to that the audience could follow through each one when played by the different school casts. Dryw was funded to visit each of the schools/groups twice to oversee the teachers and progress.

In the first of the 2 performances, there were 125 tamariki from Clifton Terrace Model School, Karori West Normal School, Miramar North School & Ridgway School, who performed their hour-long performance at the VUW Memorial Theatre on Thursday 6 November. The second included groups from: Te Kura o Wilford, Te Aro, Otari School – Te Kura O Otari, Kenakena School with 120 tamariki performing their rendition of the play sequentially in the Members' Gallery at Sky Stadium. Both performances ended with the Jig, specially choreographed by Sarah Burton. They were absolutely delightful! What a way to be introduced to the Bard and, for some, having performed in the programme for several years, a perfect introduction to, in due course, meeting Shakespeare on the curriculum while they are at secondary school.

Alumna of this programme from its early days, Ian Crawford, was Narrator for both of these performances.

Our official photographer, Brian Scurfield, has photographed all of them over the years. To view them, visit: [www.MemoryofLightPhotography/Galleries/SGCNZ](http://www.MemoryofLightPhotography/Galleries/SGCNZ) - Programmes/Primarily Playing with Shakespeare.

A few of the many comments from this year's SGCNZ PPWS:

*Shakespeare, for me, isn't exactly a topic of interest, but when I started acting in it, the way it told tales and stories were really enthralling. I think that the narrator really tied everything together, and I like how he talked. – Lila Yr 6*

*I personally liked being able to perform on stage, but as a background character, despite not having a major role, it was super interesting to see the action on stage. There were some funny moments, other dramatic. It was what made my Shakespeare experience enjoyable. – Sophia Yr 7*

**The Process:** Rehearsed throughout Term III and Term IV in their school or halls by their own teachers or theatre professionals, till the performances on 5, 7 and 12 November, the groups had freedom of where they set and style of costuming their scenes. It brought delightfully varied interpretations and reimagining of the Bard's work.

The SGCNZ PPWS Jig (captured on You Tube) provided a highly spirited finale, with over 100 tamariki dancing en masse to conclude the performance - in true Globe style!

*"Shakespeare, for me, isn't exactly a topic of interest, but when I started acting in it, the way it told tales and stories were really enthralling. I think that the narrator really tied everything together, and I like how he talked." I*

There was a total of 392 – audience, supervisors & SGCNZ staff.

The expansion of this programme into other regions is currently being finalised for 2026 – in Manawatu, Wairarapa, Blenheim, Nelson, Whanganui, Auckland.

**Cost:** It is free of charge for the children to participate, though as with our Festivals, each school/homeschool cluster/community drama group is required to pay an SGCNZ Group Membership Friends fee. With SGCNZ PPWS being for Years 1-8 and SGCNZ's Regional and National Shakespeare Festival for Years 7-13, students who can fit into both categories, may perform in both through the school/group's Membership Fee. It is a wonderful segue for them.

*I loved doing Shakespeare this year and last year. It was definitely one of my highlights of the year. I also love the language. - F*

## **SHAKE ALIVE PERFORMANCES**

### **Shake Alive Event - Love Birds**

We were delighted to be invited again by the Wellington City Council to be part of the Wellington Spring Festival at the Botanic Garden, again closing it.

As our SGCNZ Costume Design Competition has a collection of 100 of the winning 4 constructed costumes from each year since it began in 2020, it was easy to find 5 couples amongst them of 'love birds'. Alumni came and had fitting prior to the event, resulting in Romeo & Juliet, Titania & Oberon, Lady Macbeth & Macbeth, Kate & Petruchio and Hamlet & Ophelia. In addition, the TIC (Teacher in Charge) of her group annually in our SGCNZ *Primarily Playing with Shakespeare* programme, Katie McDonald from Kena Kena School, brought 3 more adorable 'Love Bird' couples from Year 5- 8 in to perform as well!

In their pairs, the Love Birds spent from 10.00am - 11.15am and 1.00pm-2.15pm wandering around the Garden, quoting excerpts from their play to visitors wandering or sitting around. As they left, each invited the visitors to join them on the Duck Pond Lawn from 11.30am and 2.30pm respectively for half and hour of 'exploded' sections of scenes including their quotes. Alumna Tessa Smith MCed and invited audience members to participate, reading from cue scripts!

The performances finished with the actors judging the Best Bird Attire Competition. The 4 winning children were thrilled with their flamingo and cockerel headdress prizes!

As I was organising the final performance of SGCNZ National Shakespeare Schools Production at the time, with it being at VUW Memorial Theatre, I was able to pop down briefly and was delighted by all, including the way Tessa has also risen to her appointed role as Co-ordinator. This fits well with our Vision of 'Mentoring potential through Shakespeare'.

### **Shake Alive Events – Wellington Heritage Festival**

From 26 October to 17 November, the Wellington Heritage Festival took place in Wellington and the Wairarapa. A diverse range of over 170 visits to historic places, events, talks, tours and performances were presented throughout the whole area. Among these were 5 in which performances by SGCNZ Alumni were incorporated. Being part of the **Wellington Heritage Festival** increases publicity of our events, at no extra cost. With our concerted aim being to 'cast the potential funding net' as widely as possible, these events will assist in increasing our visibility and breadth of reach and in some prestigious venues.

Having made site visits to both Government House and Wardell's Homestead, it was easy to align Shakespeare scenes to match.

### **- Shakespeare Live in Government House**

At Government House, Tour Guide Richard Chapman, took me round the rooms, delivering his narrative relating to anecdotes and realities of life in 'The House'. Again costumed from our SGCNZ Costume Design Competition constructed Winning Entries, our Alumni moved seamlessly alternating rooms to 'pop out', re-costumed as the relevant characters, and delivered their 3 to 5 minute apposite excerpts from the Bard's plays. These included Governor General Lord Jellicoe, who enjoyed 'play-fighting' in the Foyer of 'The House'...interpreted by our young actors as a vignette from *As You Like It*, with 3 of the actors manipulating a dummy of Charles the Wrestler (from the play) performing the fight on the stairs-landing. Charles ended up tumbling down the stairs!

Another was the delivery of the Sir Thomas More speech about refugees – the 'Governor General' to a 'visiting dignitary!'

There were 4 other brief scenes, concluding with the masked ball in *Love's Labour's Lost* in the gracious Ballroom.

### **Shakespeare in Wardell's Homestead**

At Wardell's, its welcoming new owners, Andy and Ann Foster, hosted a 'pre-scoping', so that appropriate scenes could be selected to suit and reflect the environment. It was logical to choose ones from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *As You Like It* to match the bushy, wooded outdoors, plus two relating to ghosts – from *Hamlet* & *Julius Caesar*. (The Homestead is purported to be haunted!) Seated on chairs or standing on the lawn, the audience delighted in the close proximity of the actors and even the weather 'graced' the event.

## ***SGCNZ Sponsors, Funders & Donors***

SGCNZ could not operate without its raft of funding sources.

In 2025, the third of three years of funding from the Ministry of Youth Development were hugely appreciated.

Sadly, we were declined at the ROI stage.

The Ministry of Education money has virtually all been expended. Through investment of the lump sum, we achieved an additional amount in interest, which has been very helpful. Unfortunately no further funding has been achieved from that source yet.

We were grateful to have had the funding from the University of Otago for 18 years, though, of course, sad that it was not longer able to continue it. Negotiations with a replacement funder are in process. As with any significant amount, it will take a few months.

Having the new funding from the Raye Blumenthal Freedman Trust confirmed again for next year is greatly valued. We were delighted to have the Chair of that Trust come from Auckland to Wellington for our Regional Festival. (He knew already he would unfortunately not be available to attend the National Festival.)

We appreciate the Wellington City Council through its support from its Arts and Culture and Venue Subsidy grants.

Other funders include Aotearoa Gaming Trust, Otago Community Trust, Lion Foundation, NZ Community Grants Board, Trinity College London, NZ Community Trust, Sheilah Winn Trust, Morrison Music Trust (and Julie Nevett), Nicole Barker & Tessa Ratcliffe, Mary-Annette Hay Bequest, The Fame Trust, The Adam Foundation, The Baines Family Trust, Speech New Zealand, Theatre NZ, in kind from KPMG, Eftpos, L'Affare, Wellington East Girls' College, Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School, plus our 1000 Club members, donors – from the regular Automatic Payments to annual or one-off payments to help fill our coffers and make it possible to offer all the programmes we do.

## *SGCNZ Supporters, Interns, and Volunteers*

SGCNZ thrives thanks to the commitment of its volunteers and their willingness to support our Festivals and other projects. There were around 80 volunteers assisting throughout the National Festival, and approximately 2000 nationwide in the Regional Festivals.

Note that there are 24 Regional Festivals, with 50 – 100 people helping in one capacity of another. This is from the Regional Representatives, in their all-consuming roles in the first term especially, plus the ones either side, and those they 'rope in' to assisting with the wardrobe, props, rehearsing, helping with line-learning, through to publicity distributing posters and flyers, promotion - especially social media, and other administrative roles from enveloping to making name tags and many other essential task prior to their Festival. Then there is packing in and out of the Festival venues, selling tickets, tea & coffee (if available), ushering, crew, looking after the Assessors, RRs and crew.

At the National Festival, students from Wellington Girls' College, Wellington College, Wellington East Girls' College (in spite of the Festival not being at their schools), Wellington High School, Queen Margaret College and a few from other schools, crewed information desks, sold merchandise, served food, assisted with transportation and undertook other tasks backstage and front of house. The community involved members of the Wellington Shakespeare Society, Rotary, Interactors, Shakespeare devotees, plus, of course, SGCNZ Friends and Alumni adding to the significant teams of volunteers. A total of 80.

In spite of its tiny staff of the full time CEO and short term /part-time Assistants and 1-3 month Interns, the network created by SGCNZ helps us engage a number of different partners to help make our events successful for all. We are grateful of our constant two once-a-week invaluable mature, skilled volunteers - Brian Pearl and Alison Stephens.

As always, we are eternally grateful to those SGCNZ Alumni locally and those who travel from outside Wellington to help with our Festivals and other events, including, from time to time, performing at *Shake Alive*, 'all-inclusive' performances.

The annual total of volunteers across all our programmes is approx. 2300 volunteers nationwide.

In addition to assisting SGCNZ to carry out its work to the highest degree possible, they also develop their own transferable life skills and learn techniques for the plethora of associated tasks which are integral to any event, company or organisation.

*"I think SGCNZ is a really good opportunity to connect, bringing together students from all over the country. I look forward to volunteering every year to get to know new people from the far reaches of NZ. Being part of scenes, working backstage, directing and performing has made me a better leader and a more considerate person."* - BC

## **NUMBERS**

**SGCNZ VUW Regional Shakespeare Festivals:** 4005 Regional (SGCNZ VUW RSF) participants

**SGCNZ VUW National Shakespeare Festival:** 1013 (active participants – includes their crew and student directors, teacher directors, NSSP Direct Entry students, SGCNZ YSC 2026 performers, Regional Representatives, Competition Winners, Teachers Go Global, staff.); Audience – 2408 which included complimentary tickets to donors, sponsors and VIPS (public come and go throughout the weekend – between scenes). Comps were given to Board Members, 8 High Commissioners and Ambassadors, students from the Chinese Embassy, Central and Local Government Politicians, donors, and sponsors with multiple entry during the course of the weekend in many cases, as is permitted with the tickets and passes. Therefore, doubling the number over the course of the weekend is a realistic estimation.

**Competitions:** In our Competitions in costume design, music composition, static image, poster, video title card, Essay there were 172 entrants (these are those pre-culled to be 'semi-finalists', sent by the schools/groups/homeschool clusters).

At any one time, there were approximately 250 general public, sponsors and guests in the Dress Circle. As it is acceptable for audience to enter, leave re-enter between scenes, numbers were 'fluid' throughout the weekend. On the Sunday evening for the Prize-Giving and Scene Award Ceremony, the Stalls and Dress Circle were full.

All the performing students are required to watch each other's performances, as a vital part of the whole learning experience.

## **SGCNZ National Shakespeare Schools Production 2025**

Participants – 48; Audience - 515

**SGCNZ allied arts Competitions: 172** (In many cases, the 'finalists' from schools.)

### **SGCNZ Primarily Playing with Shakespeare:**

In PPWS in 2025, 245 children between 5 & 13 participated over the 2 performances.

In addition, there were 504 audience, plus 22 supervisors, 9 volunteers & 2 SGCNZ staff, plus the photographer and videographer, a total of 539.

### **Shake Alive 2025 events:**

**Love Birds:** There were 92 audience members in the 2 seated on the lawn sessions of *Love Birds* with approx 200 passing by the actors as they wandered during the first sections. There were 10 SGCNZ Alumni and 6 tamaki PPWS Alumni Actors, 2 WCC staff and Volunteers. Numbers were down because of the cycleways taking up all the car parks. Botanic Garden staff attest to this as well.

**Shakespeare Live at Government House:** Participants 33; Audience 60 (limit of 15 per group)

**Shakespeare Live at Wardell's Homestead:** Participants 18; Audience 42

**Full Totals:** SGCNZ has now had approx 144,500 participants in our Festivals nationwide over the past 34 years, with another 8000 approx across our other activities. A grand total of \$154,500.

## *Media and SGCNZ*

In recent years, several videos have been made on the backstory of the SGCNZ UOSWSFs and Competitions. Special acknowledgment to the University of Otago and the Ministry of Youth Development for their assistance with these. SGCNZ YSC 2023 Alumna, Libby Frazer, created a superb promotional film, capturing the views of several past participants. This was deservedly highly graded towards her Media Studies NCEA Level 3.

The link: <https://youtu.be/HTw5zjsmV4w?si=w-V7cDKIGVIXO2jA>

The videos are available to view on YouTube – see our website – [sgcnz.org.nz](http://sgcnz.org.nz).

In addition to this, almost all of our previous UOSWSF's have been filmed and most are stored in the Ngā Taonga; Sound and Vision, where they have been digitally recorded. These create a valuable record of SGCNZ's legacy, and are sometimes requested for viewing by school groups visiting Ngā Taonga.

Many years of the Festivals and NSSP are available via Glass Gecko Films on Vimeo – Video on Demand. More recent ones are on *Memory of Light Photography/Galleries/SGCNZ*

An excellent article in Education Gazette 22 July 2024 Vol 103 *Interpreting Shakespeare through te ao Māori*

Website: [sgcnz.org.nz](http://sgcnz.org.nz)

Instagram: [@SGCNZ](https://www.instagram.com/SGCNZ) [instagram.com/SGCNZ](https://www.instagram.com/SGCNZ)

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## Evaluation

As always, a large number of unsolicited communications start arriving only minutes after the Festival ends - a very few of which are quoted in this report. These were received from all sectors - participants, those assisting and assessing, workshop tutors, teachers and audience members, via texts, Facebook, e-mails, cards, letters and phone calls.

Questionnaires were given to all participating schools and Regional Organisers and recommendations are being given full consideration and changes made where appropriate.

*"I love SGCNZ because it has inspired me and given me opportunities I never thought I would get, and has helped shape what I want to do for a career beyond college. I used to think it would have been too hard to go into the performing arts as a career, but SGCNZ has given me the belief that it is possible."* B

## Conclusion

We are delighted to hear about Shakespeare being included in the Education curriculum again. There are thousands of written endorsements of the benefit of what we provide which has certainly kept Shakespeare alive. It is a natural return in some guise into the curriculum which marries with this.

We are extremely grateful to the Ministry for providing this three year funding to support us to achieve our objectives, which mirror yours: to nurture the development of young people, encourage enquiring minds, literacy, close-reading, comprehension, appreciation and enjoyment Shakespeare, as well as entrepreneurship, creativity, curiosity, collaboration and transferable skills which will enrich this country and further afield, in whatever the students' chosen fields of endeavour.

Being able to understand, interpret and perform Shakespeare is like 'learning the whole alphabet' – once understand it is a foundation block for whatever follows.

With more very warmest thanks for your support,



Dawn Sanders ONZM, QSM

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