



General Meeting for Members: Tuesday 2nd May 10am - 12 noon

GUEST SPEAKER: – Colin McColl ONZM

TITLE: – Life as a Director of Theatre



After working as an actor in England, Colin returned to his homeland, New Zealand, to become Associate Director of Downstage Theatre in Wellington forming a long association with the Theatre. In the late 1970s he moved to Australia where he was Artistic Director in Perth and Project Director in Sydney. After free-lancing in theatre, opera and television locally and internationally, Colin became the Artistic Director of Auckland Theatre Company in 2003. In his career as a theatre director he has produced and directed more than 50 plays. He is the first and only New Zealand director invited to showcase a production at the official Edinburgh Festival. His distinctly New Zealand version of "Hedda Gabler" played there to great acclaim in 1990. Performances followed at the Ibsen Festival, Oslo, the Covent Garden Festival, London, and the 1991 Festival of Sydney. He has also directed Ibsen productions for the Norwegian and Dutch National Theatre companies. Colin has won three Chapman Tripp Theatre Awards for Best Director.

In addition to theatre, Colin has a passion for opera. Credits include directing Wellington City Opera's 1988 production of "La Boheme", the NBR New Zealand Opera's 2002 production of "The Marriage of Figaro", chamber opera's "The Prodigal Son" and in 2009 he directed Rossini's "The Italian Girl in Algiers" for Scottish Opera and the New Zealand Opera Company.

Colin received an Arts Foundation Laureate Award in 2007 and he was made an Officer of the Order of New Zealand (ONZM) in 2010 for services to theatre, film and television. His latest achievement is the fulfilment of a dream and the fruition of the ATC's own theatre – The Waterfront Theatre in Auckland's Wynyard Quarter.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings

Our April general meeting proved a particularly enjoyable one. Gary Higgins gave us a fascinating insight into the work of the Ministry of Primary Industries in maintaining New Zealand's biosecurity and Geoff, John and Roy gave us an entertaining glimpse into some of the topics covered by the Inventors and Inventions Special Interest Group.

A contributing factor to the success of the meeting was the improved quality of the PowerPoint presentations due to the new projector we were trialling. For many months the U3A Browns Bay Committee has been discussing paint colours and researching screens and projectors. The problem became urgent as the pixels on our old projector started to fail, producing noticeable white dots on the screen. I am pleased to report that we have now purchased this much more powerful projector so we can give you larger, clearer pictures and words that can be read by people seated at the back of the hall.

The World Masters Games 2017 will certainly bring some colour and excitement to Auckland over the next week. 25,000 people (10,000 of them New Zealanders) from 85 countries are competing in 28 sports at 48 venues. People enter as individuals rather than representing their country and many compete for the fun of it without any expectation of a medal. At least 12 sports are happening at venues across the North Shore so there will obviously be

increased traffic and some road closures but events are free for the public so you could go along! Event and venue details are available online. You may even see a few of our U3A Browns Bay members who have signed up as volunteers!
Monette Ewen

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP NEWS

Active Travellers -

Sherryl took us on a tour of Chile, Argentina and Brazil highlighting many of the wonderful sights seen. Highlights included Santiago (Chile's capital city) and the stunning UNESCO Heritage port city of Valparaiso; Buenos Aires in Argentina, the "Paris" of South America where the Spanish influence is evident and the wealth abounds as does the poverty; the Recoleta Cemetery, home to the rich, influential and politicians plus the resting place of Eva Peron; the famous opera house, Teatra Colon and travelling along the Tigre Delta with its 6,000 islands and many homes on the waterways. Rio de Janeiro – up Corcovado to mystical Christ the Redeemer, cable car to Sugar Loaf, then special visit to the favelas, home to thousands of squatters. A major highlight in Brazil was visiting the magnificent Iguassu Falls from both the Brazilian and Argentinian sides. They walked around and over some of the 275 falls, as well as going under in a boat (freezing!), then spectacular viewing from a helicopter flight – awe inspiring! Eleanor Roosevelt, when viewing these falls for the first time, is reported as saying "Poor Niagara!"

Ancient Civilisations

Last month Gordon Edwards gave a presentation with a DVD about Egypt's Sunken Cities of Heracleion and Canopus which subsided into the sea about 8th Century AD probably due to liquefaction caused by an earthquake. They were forgotten though they existed as a Greek myth until explored by divers from 1996. Heracleion was a major port from 7th century BCE until gradually overtaken by Alexandria. It was the start of an important annual religious festival on the canal to Canopus during which offerings were placed in it. In the area, the Greeks built temples to Greek gods which were deliberately paired with Egyptian gods for common ground to the alien culture. Many treasures, statuettes and stele have been recovered and are displayed in Cairo. The Sais stele is older than the Rosetta stone.

This month - how old is Civilisation? Alex Wilson outlined the timelines for ancient history and then proceeded to contrast these against very recent research. Maps of the planet surface 12,000 years ago showed sea levels 400 feet lower and identified huge areas now flooded. Human habitation has been found dating to 300,000 BP. The great cataclysm of 11,700 BP and resulting floods destroyed most of humanity's former habitat and earlier records. Pictures of very large sunken cities near India, Japan and Cuba were shown, age unknown. Examples of civilisation up to 70,000 BP were identified and discussed. The oldest records found, from Sumer indicated over 300,000 to 500,000 years of civilisation.

At our last meeting we looked at the plight of the Akha people of the Golden Triangle. Originally from China in the Middle Empire the Akha have been progressively driven into the bordering hill lands of Northern Thailand and Burma. Originally slash and burn nomadic farmers, they are now tolerated so long as they stay in their designated area and are patrolled to ensure they are not growing opium or moving into the forests that are now designated national parks. With land acquisition restricted and modern technology infiltrating their villages the traditional Akha way of life is under threat. Our next meeting will look at the Yi of Sichuan.

Archaeology No report this month

Art History -

Patricia introduced us to the art of Alfred Sharpe, an often forgotten NZ watercolour artist of colonial times. Born in England he arrived in NZ in 1859 and made his name by painting landscapes of the Auckland region. Sharpe was passionate about preserving native trees and felt most at home in the bush. He railed against the destruction of the forest and his paintings often show the effect of logging. He was a prolific writer of letters and articles supporting his cause; one of our earliest conservationists. A number of his works are held by Auckland Art Gallery. During tea and coffee time we discussed Sharpe and looked at a book about his works. We then watched a DVD on Turner; another great meeting.

Art Pot Pourri -

At the previous meeting Claire spoke about finding by chance a beautiful sculpture in the front garden of Villa Fiorentino in Sorrento. This Villa was holding an exhibition of some of Arnaldo Pomodoro's works. He was a contemporary Italian sculptor known for his geometric bronze works. Claire showed a slideshow of her photos of La Colonnade del Viaggiatore (Voyager's column), Sfera con Sfera (sphere within a sphere), Disco 2014, Rilievo Luna and Rilievo Sole 2011, and many more of his works.

At our April meeting we all brought along something to share with the group. This resulted in us looking at a wide variety of items: silver jewellery from Finland, delicate wooden boxes made by 92 year old Reg Miles, Japanese dolls (an emperor and empress) made for a festival which is 1000 years old, a beautiful kaleidoscope made in Kerikeri, an aboriginal painting

from Australia's Northern Territory and a print of a Monet painting with a beautiful depiction of water. We also heard about the recent Street Art Festival in Tauranga.

Book Group -

John talked about *Reflections: the magic, music and mathematics of Raymond Smullyan* (Raymond Smullyan) and three of his other books. Then we discussed *Five go Gluten Free* (Bruno Vincent); *The Girl Before* (J P Delaney); *Vicious Circle* (C J Box); *Peggy and Me* (Miranda Hart); *Kill the Next One* (Frederico Axat); *The Nowhere Man* (Greg Hurwitz); *Triple Crown* (Felix Francis); *Broken Promise, Far From True* and *The Twenty-three* (Linwood Barclay); *Never Put All Your Eggs in One Bastard* (Peta Mathias); *Barkskins* (Annie Proulx); *House of the Rising Sun* (James Lee Burke); *Make Me* (Lee Child); *The Absence of Guilt* (Mark Gimenez); *I Know This to be True* (Ric Salizzo); *Darktown* (Thomas Mullen); *The Elegance of the Hedgehog* (Muriel Barbery); *Hidden Figures* (Margot Lee Shetterly); *A Star for Mrs Blake* (April Smith); *The Dinner Party* (Brenda Janowitz); *Notes on a Thesis* (Tiphaine Riviere); *The Boy Behind the Curtain* (Tim Winton) and *Katherine Mansfield: the early years* (Gerri Kimber).

China: Past and Present -

At our March SIG meeting we continued with our Yangtze River theme. Margaret S reported briefly on the massive South-North Water Transfer Project; pollution concerns along the river; Mao's historic swim in the river and the state of endangered Yangtze marine animals. Colin T followed with his introduction to the mighty Three Gorges Dam development; this subject will be continued next month. Fay W gave an interesting presentation related to Empress Wu Zetian (624-705) who was the only woman to rule China "in her own right". Despite rumours of her ruthlessness, she ruled China very effectively for many years and introduced many modern and progressive policies. It is said that the face of the Buddha in the Fengxian Cave of the Longmen Grottoes in Henan Province is her portrait.

Classical Music -

The concert pianist Flavio Villani entertained us on DVD with his playing of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No.2. We learned of the challenge this presented to him and his connection to the Auckland University School of Music. The DVD Crossing Rachmaninoff also showed us his family in Italy and his life before coming to New Zealand. Following this we read about some of Rachmaninoff's other compositions and listened to two of his Russian songs - Over A Brook and Oh, Vanka.

Creative Writing - No report this month.

Creative Audio-Visual -

The Creative Audio Visual Group, after a very enjoyable and successful day's photo shoot at Warkworth on Friday 31st March, met at the Bostons' for a technical meeting. The group welcomed new member Val Lloyd and decided that, as Val was not yet experienced in using ProShow Gold (our A/V program) we would go back to basics and look at how the program was used to produce a simple slide show. All members provided input and insights, resulting in a very enjoyable and instructive session for all. The next meeting is at Fay Weatherley's and is a challenge using the images made on the photo shoot.

Current Affairs -

With **five** weeks between our March meeting and this one, we were very aware of how hard it was to keep news 'current' because every day one major news item was replaced by another. We started our meeting with a quiz which challenged our memory of recent events; Heather led a discussion on 'Rights'; we were privileged to have Alan as a source of

information on the situation in Syria. Jon reviewed the book, *2017 War with Russia*, Stuart reviewed the recent publication, *Building the New American Economy* by Jeffrey Sachs, and both encouraged us to consider the possible relevance to New Zealand.

Cycling –

Despite the warnings about rain and more rain we found a window of fine weather on Wednesday 5th April to go cycling around the new 'building' site at Hobsonville Point and admire all the sculptures dotted here and there. Despite the huge amount of building, Te Onekiritea Point (Bomb Point), the jewel in Hobsonville Point's crown and approximately 11 hectares of rolling land with 270 degree water views is to be preserved as a park so that all can enjoy it - and we did just that. The rain came as we ordered our coffee, very timely. Thank you, Robyn, for another great ride.

Exploring Art for Fun – No report this month.

Film Appreciation –

Bette Davis was the subject of a DVD shown to the group. She was in the movies for 60 years and performed in 80 films. During this time her roles spanned from glamour to horror genre. She married four times and had a daughter and then adopted two children. She won two Oscars and two Academy Awards. We remember her in the films "Whatever Happened to Baby Jane" and "All About Eve". Recommended viewing in the coming weeks: "Their Finest", "Beauty and The Beast", "Bob The Cat", "Going In Style", "Denial", and "Beyond The Known World".

Français pour rire –

Carcassonne, situated in SW France is France's second most visited tourist attraction (after the Eiffel Tower). It is a twin city with a central medieval fortress, surrounded by a "newer town" founded in the Middle Ages. Because of its strategic military and trading route position, it was inhabited since the Neolithic period, then became a Roman Fortress, until taken over by the Visigoths. The Fortress has two outer walls, 53 towers and Barbicans which were never breached. Carcassonne fell into disrepair in Napoleonic times, was repaired and restored and is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, important for tourism and wine.

History of Europe – No report this month.

Inventors & Inventions –

We heard from Rob about the invention and development of ear tags for the management of farmed animals. Early tags were developed in America, and were metal with the animal's number on them. The method of attachment looked quite brutal! Gradually plastic tags were introduced with more information on, but difficulties with retaining the markings led to resin tags which now carry a large amount of relevant data including having the ability to be scanned for ease of data gathering. Terry began giving us a brief biography but his interesting work and varied career led to many questions from the floor about his life and work.

Literature – No report this month.

Local History –

April's presentation was entitled "The Actress, the Conductor and the Exotic Dancer" - a 1935 Auckland court room saga stripping away a theatrical couple's glamorous lifestyle, to the personal tragedy of alcoholism, drug abuse, closeted sex and death. The continuing investigation into the war years, lead to lively speculation, debate and questioning, both in the streets of Auckland and our SIG.

Mah Jong – New members welcome.

Making History –

Robert Jenkins was captain of Rebecca, a British trading vessel, which was boarded on April 9th, 1731, by the Spanish Coastguard from Havana, Cuba. They suspected she was carrying smuggled goods and demanded to inspect the cargo and its manifest. They indeed found contraband. As punishment, the Spanish captain drew his sword and severed Captain Jenkin's ear. In 1739 an ongoing dispute over the Spanish, Florida and British Georgia borders, and continuing permission for England to sell slaves in Spanish America made the retelling of this story in Parliament the last straw. However the war of 'Jenkin's Ear' resulted in heavy British casualties in North America and a step towards the abolition of slavery.

Medical Science and History –

The main topic of the month was the amazing advances in surgery over the centuries, considering how huge advancement was possible following the science of anaesthesia and aseptic techniques. Fascinating TED talks on various surgical aspects were viewed. Mini talks included tweaking the genes in the brain to prevent diseases such as Alzheimer's and a look at "Typhoid Mary".

Modern History –No report this month.

Play Reading – No report this month.

Music Appreciation and History –

Last month we listened to a CD called "The Most Beautiful Arias" which included music from composers such as Puccini, Catalani, Bizet, Verdi, Delibes, Mozart, Gluck, Handel, Rossini and Offenbach. Singing was by Domingo, Kiri, Callas, Cristino, Gallardo and many, many more. This month, at our April meeting, we watched part of the DVD "Classical Destinations 111: Ultimate Travel Guide to Classical Music". It covered Wagner and his Opera House, how Schumann was inspired by the Rhine Gorge, Bonn (the birthplace of Beethoven) and Cologne, finishing up in Amsterdam. We also covered a small section of the episode about Australia. All in all, a very educational and pleasant way to spend a morning.

Music – Mainly Classical –

Our April meeting at John and Margaret's home began with a tone poem by Eve de Castro-Robinson, who is composition lecturer at Auckland University. "Releasing the Angel" was scored for a wide variety of percussion and a solo cellist (Edward King). The effects generated by these instruments and the cello developed a mystical atmosphere. This was played at three concerts with the Opus Orchestra. Then followed a different genre - a DVD of the third Act of the opera "Turandot" by Puccini. This was a 1988 production from the Met. New York, featuring Placido Domingo in the lead role. It was a lavish and exuberant production with a huge cast and unusual costumes set in mystical Peking with staging by Zefferelli. The famous aria, "Nessun Dorma", was a highlight.

Renaissance – No report this month.

Travel – No report this month.

Walking –

Meet at Narrow Neck Beach car park at 9.30 am. The walk will include parks and walkways - nothing too strenuous, about 1 1/2 hours. Refreshments at Narrow Neck Beach Café afterwards. - **Northboro Walkway, Hauraki**
Meet and park by Bayswater Park (opposite O'Neills Point Cemetery) in Bayswater Avenue, Bayswater at 9.30 am. All the walkway is paved. We will stop for refreshments at Little and Friday in Eversleigh Road, then walk back.

