



Directors at this year's Top of the South One Act Play Festival at Wakefield Village Hall.

# Age no barrier for young directors

**Judene Edgar**

Reporter

[judene@waimeaweekly.co.nz](mailto:judene@waimeaweekly.co.nz)



Young directors showed that age was no barrier at the Top of the South One Act Play Festival held at Wakefield Village Hall over the weekend, with best overall play being taken out by 15-year-old first-time director Hayley Gibbs from Wakefield.

Four teams have been selected to attend the regional finals in Christchurch in two weeks' time, so for Hayley, who won Best Youth Play and Best Overall Play with 'In the Tank', it's back to rehearsals.

"I've done a lot of theatre, both backstage and onstage, since I was five," says Hayley, "so I think that the backstage work has really helped."

The plays dealt with a range of subject matter from life in Terezin concentration camp

during WWII to the ghosts of ladies executed in the tower of London, and two lobsters in a tank at a seafood restaurant discussing life.

For most of the directors this was their first foray into directing. Twelve-year-old first-time director Matthew Edgar, who won the award for overall Technical Excellence for his play 'No TV', says, "it helped me to understand how the director feels and what the director does long before people turn up for auditions."

"It was a very good environment - everyone was there to support each other's shows and there was lots of constructive feedback to help you improve your skills."

Many of the directors, as young as 10-years-old, had attended a four-week directing course run by Nelson Youth Theatre before tackling the competition, to give

them some tuition on lighting, sound, props, staging, costuming and casting.

Adjudicator David Chambers from Christchurch says, "these festivals are so important for the development of communities and of people's theatre skills and performance skills."

Best Adult Play was awarded to John Amosa from Wakefield Country Players for 'I never saw another butterfly'. "The difficult subject matter of life inside concentration camps was tackled with so much integrity," says David. Joining Hayley and John and their casts in Christchurch at the Regional Finals are 14-year-old Liam Brennan, Nelson, and Rick Edmonds, Havelock. Liam says that directing is a big step up and very stressful but is excited to have the opportunity.

"I was getting super nervous before the show - so differ-

ent to the nerves you get before acting."

"I got a great cast of really experienced actors who've worked together a lot which really helped."

Organiser Jen Amosa says, "the event was a fantastic success."

"I loved the number of youth entries and I'm really happy that the overall winning play was a youth director."

Jen will be off to the regionals in Christchurch also, but this time sitting on the sidelines watching her three children perform in 'I never saw another butterfly', which she and her husband acted in together at the One Act Play nationals, 22 years ago.

In addition to directing awards, four promising actor awards were presented to Jack Munro and Caitlin Brennan, Nelson, and Sarah Ching and Hana Sinclair, Wakefield.