

President David Kabua with Professor Andrew Garrod in the President's office in March, 2020 for a donation handover by the President in support of the play that year.

Garrod hopes to do new play in early 2023

KAREN EARNSHAW

Professor Andrew Garrod, who has presented 17 plays over the past two decades in Majuro, has been making plans for a new production in early 2023. To achieve this, six weeks ago he asked colleague Bonny Taggart to reach out to the Ministry of Education with the hope of getting the green light to bring his production team to Majuro in January.

According to producer Taggart, Garrod asked Minister Wilbur Heine for support funding, with Heine asking for a budget and the timeline.

"After a review of the plans, Minister Heine indicated that he thought he would be able to identify funds to support the activity," Taggart said. This support funding, which has been a long-standing tradition, would be in addition to other smaller donations already promised by various groups, including the US Embassy and Garrod's own non-profit Youth Bridge Global.

Over the years, since Garrod's first production of Midsummer's Night Dream at Marshall Islands High School, hundreds of Majuro youth have taken part in the plays, either behind the scenes or on stage.

"Under Andrew's tutelage, the young kids blossom with many telling us that the experience was a life changer," Taggart said. Examples include Selina Leem, who with the late Climate Ambassador Tony deBrum spoke at the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris.

"She said that without having participated in the play, she would never have been able to do that," Taggart said. Another example is Bryant Zebedy, who played the lead in "The King and I" and has become a representative on the world stage for climate change and environmental issues in the RMI. "He also told us how shy he was before his experience on stage."

Professor Garrod believes that staging a musical in January would be a very uplifting experience for the kids after the stresses and isolation of the past two years due to Covid-19.

"He is hopeful that the Ministry will endorse and sponsor this exciting and motivational activity for the youth of Majuro in 2023."

How Professor Andrew Garrod's plays have affected Majuro's youth: See article, photos on page 28.

AROUND TOWN



Brek and the beauties

We were going to put in "fifth from left" words before Australian Ambassador **Brek Batley**'s name, but figure everyone can work out who is the ambassador in this photo. This photo also suggests that while no doubt demanding, the job of an ambassador has its high points.

With the ambassador is a team of this year's Miss Marshall Islands contestants, who were on hand to welcome the first Nauru Airlines flight earlier in the month.

From left: Miss Namdrik **Hemly Robert**, Miss Ailinglaplap **Jessica Kabua,** Miss Arno Andrea **Neitarmoj deBrum**, Miss Majuro **Priscilla Zedkaia**, Ambassador Brek, Miss Likiep **Carnie Reimers**, Miss Lae **Lyneovy Jatios**, Miss Wotje **Ramona Obeketang**, Miss Ebon **Ellen ChongGum** and Miss Mejit **Ruhiyyih Tahimalu Korean Aho**.

ABC allows your dreams to come true

"Dreams can come true, if you take a chance," says Australian Ambassador **Brek Batley** to young singers and musicians in the Marshall Islands.

The Australian Embassy this week said it is excited to announce in partnership with ABC Radio Australia the return of "Pacific Break" — the Pacific region's biggest music competition.

"How exciting to see this important competition return," said ABC Head of International Services **Claire Gorman**. "Past entries have been as diverse as the Pacific itself and we can't wait to see what this year will bring, offering a career-changing opportunity to the lucky winner."

Pacific Break unearths the best original and unsigned talent from across the Pacific. Singers and bands, of any age or experience, can submit a song into this year's competition. Anyone and everyone can apply from solo artists to groups or family choirs. It can be any genre of music and doesn't have to be professionally recorded – you can use your phone.

The winning song will be showcased on ABC Radio Australia throughout the region. The winner will also be flown — all expenses paid — to play at Australia's largest international music festival, WOMADelaide, in March next year in Adelaide. In fact, any songs that are entered in the competition may be played on ABC Radio Australia over the next few months.

"This could be one of those sliding door moments, where if you just take a chance, back yourself, and submit a song, you never know," said Ambassador Batley. "You might just change your career and life forever. After all, there's no harm in trying. You'll have the respect of your friends, family and community for 'having a go' as we say in Australia."

The first Pacific Break in 2008 was won by Vanuatu group 26 Roots.

The last competition in 2019 was won by PNG hip-hop artist **Sprigga Mek** with his song "Dodge the Bullet."

According to Sprigga Mek, "Winning Pacific Break has definitely been one of the highlights of my career. I met lots of amazing people and artists and would recommend anyone out there to get their entry in, no matter how it has been recorded!"

Contestants have to submit their song by November 27. This can be done by uploading it to Pacific Break 2022's Facebook Group, sending via email to pacificbreak@abc.net.au, or sending it via Whatsapp +61 447 310 986.

For those under 18 years of age, you must first get the permission of your parent or guardian before entering.

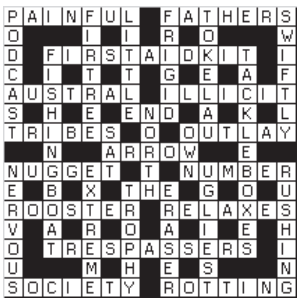
Find out more by visiting: www.abc.net.au/pacificbreak.

Who won Stardom for Wisdom?

This week's correct RMI Riddles were turned in by **Rang Gang, Amie & Brett, STEM-CMI** and **Tess Cristobal**. Congratulations go to all and their names will go into the hat for the Flame Tree dinner draw.

To be included in the ongoing big for Stardom for Wisdom, do the Riddle on page eight, check there's no blank spaces, take of photo of it and email it to marshallislandsjournal@gmail.com.

Please note that this week's Riddle is number 943, which means there's just 57 weeks until the Head RMI Riddler, a.k.a. the truly gorgeous yachtie, will provide you, dear reader, with Riddle number 1,000. Then the question will be, can she do 2,000?







Left, Eric Abo as Moti, Barron Noah as the Rabbi, and Selina Leem as Tzeital in Fiddler on the Roof. Above, the Professor in action at rehearsals at MIHS.

Plays a game-changer for youth

KAREN EARNSHAW

"Drama brings people together and unites different cultures and religions and even languages" and "(drama) creates joy as we work together to bring a play alive and ... it also makes me learn to be more confident and believe in myself." These are the words of Kami Mackphie, who played the character of Trinculo in Shakespeare's The Tempest. His director was, of course, the grand master of theater in the Marshall Islands, Professor Andrew Garrod.

Andrew and his former student Andrew Nalani have written an article on producing theater in Majuro titled "Be Not Afeard, the Isle Is Full of Noises: Expanding Youths' Aspirations Through Shakespeare and Musical Productions in the Marshall Islands."

The Be Not Afeard reference is a line from a speech in The Tempest. The article touches on many of the positive results experienced by play participants over the 17 years that Garrod has been staging productions in RMI: Eight Shakespearean plays and nine musicals. But at the forefront is the importance the authors give to polyculturalism: "The concept of polyculturalism acknowledges that, rather than existing side by side as discrete entities (as multiculturalism purports), cultures are fluid and constantly changing because of the influence they have on each other."

The authors explain that Shakespeare's works explore a "wide range of human affects, flaws, and motivations using evocative language"; the playwright's "comedies allow ample opportunities for dancing, singing, and acting"; and "the production team believed Shakespeare's plays would allow youth to explore aspects of their identity."

All the while, by using a bilingual approach, the two Andrews showed how the themes of the plays about human relationships and experiences were relevant in the students' own lives.

All of those who were in the audience of the professor's debut play at Marshall Islands High School in 2004, A Midsummer Night's Dream, will recall their amazement at how professional, how wonderful, how articulate each and every performer was. Assistant Attorney General Cutty Wase was one of those on stage "in the charming banana grove enclave at Marshall Islands High School that seated 300." In that play Cutty played Puck and went on to perform as Malvolio in Twelfth Night, Romeo in Romeo and Juliet, and Don Pedro in Much Ado About Nothing. He said to the professor: "These plays opened up the door to a discovery land where I saw many of my hidden potentials, one of which is the breaking of the barrier of shyness."

The article shows that several other youth pointed to transcending their shyness as a benefit of acting in the Youth Bridge Global's productions. "It is worth emphasizing the fact that they recognized shyness as a cultural barrier to actualizing their own potential." Kelyna Glanry, who played Sarah Brown in Guys and Dolls and Anna Leonowens in The King and I, observed that "Marshallese have a tendency to be extremely shy and that shyness forms a wall around our hearts."

Selina Leem, who played Tzeital in Fiddler on the Roof, revealed how taking on an acting role became a conduit for her self-expression. She wrote the following reflection: "I believe one thing I can do now is express myself verbally. Growing up as a Marshallese, we are not taught how to express ourselves ... we do not discuss the turmoil that we are going through with parents and family. Yet, as I allowed myself to let loose as I played Tzeital, I noticed how I was more able to express my feelings and emotions rather than just holding them back. Tzeital's speech and mannerisms and her desperation for her love were different from my life experience. Yet, in (learning) how I could act (her character), I thought I could act out my feelings too."

Both Selina and Kelyna, who attended Marshall Islands High School, won scholarships to attend the United World College Robert Bosch School in Germany.

The article tells of another actor, Bryant Zebedy now an Aquaculture Officer at MIMRA, who played Tevye in Fiddler on the Roof, Arvid in Guys and Dolls, and the King in The King and I, as well as Curly McLain in Oklahoma and Danny Zuko in Grease. He reflected on what he learned from acting: "Trying to be someone I am not and to understand their situation teaches me a lot about how individuals function differently around their societies." He likened acting to "going into the body of someone else and gaining knowledge from them as you are trying to impersonate them."

Continuing their story, the two Andrews write: "Like Bryant, Selina ... has become an unrelenting climate change advocate for the Marshall Islands. At age 18 — the youngest delegate at the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris — Selina described herself as "a small island girl with big dreams ... who has felt nervous about her home."

Speaking to delegates from the European Union and more than 195 nations, Selina held up strands of coconut leaf from the Marshall Islands to honor the story of "those of us whose identity, whose culture, whose ancestors, whose whole being is bound to their lands…"

The authors take great pains to note that they do not take any credit for Selina's and Bryant's advocacy or other youths' community leadership: "We revel in the opportunities we made available to them through our theater productions. They took advantage of these opportunities to cultivate their personal presence and voices, which are as compelling in delivery as they are unapologetic in confidence."

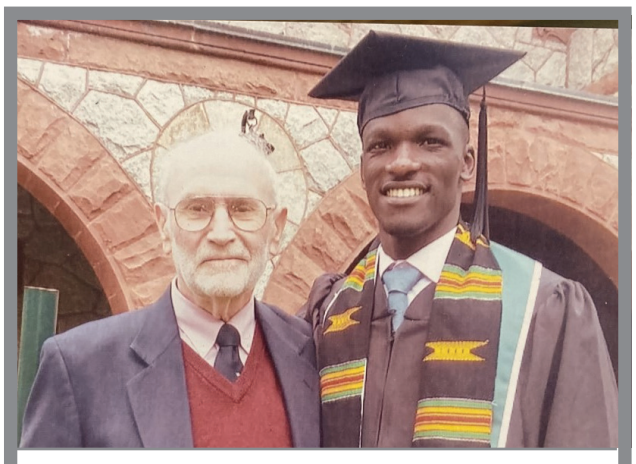
In closing, the authors point out that "the future of a world besieged by a global pandemic, unprecedented inequality, and looming ecological catastrophe may very well depend on young people's access to opportunities that expand the horizons of what's possible. Theater that is deliberately shaped to reflect the crisscrossing influences various cultures have on each other offers such opportunities. As we learn from Selina's comments, the story of these Marshallese youth is our story too."

**The full article can be read at https://doi.org/10.1080/15411796.2021.1972766*

Using theater as a tool to help the young

Youth Bridge Global (YBG) is a non-governmental organization co-founded and currently co-directed by Professor Andrew Garrod. "Though not always perfect, YBG's intent was to use theater as a tool to encourage critical reflection and action among youth to better their circumstances."

These productions were complimentary to a volunteer teaching initiative also under the Garrod's purview and in coordination with the Marshall Islands government whose intent was to foster bilingual competence in Marshallese and English. The initiative involved undergraduate volunteers from Dartmouth College in New Hampshire providing direct instructional support in the classroom for Marshallese students to develop their English proficiency and indirectly through relationships fostered between volunteers and Marshallese students during theater rehearsals and productions outside class time."



Professor Andrew Garrod with co-author Andrew Nalani during the latter's graduation day at Dartmouth College in 2016.

About the authors

Andrew Garrod is Professor Emeritus of Education at Dartmouth College, where he previously chaired the Department of Education. He co-founded Youth Bridge Global in 2006 to use drama and art to bridge cultural divides, connect youth across cultures, and provide educational opportunities to under-resourced regions of the world.

Andrew Nalani is a Doctoral Candidate in Applied Psychology (Psychology and Social Intervention) at New York University (NYU) Steinhardt. He holds a master's in Education from Harvard University and a bachelor of arts from Dartmouth College.