HOROWHENUA STAR Ngā kōrero o Horowhenua

DESIGN by ID Media

PRINTED by Beacon Print, Whakatāne.

Online: horowhenuastar.com

ISSUE 27: ISSN: 3021-3630 (print)

ISSN 3021-3649 (online)

Next copy and advertising deadine: *Tuesday 5pm, August 5.*

Publication: *Friday, August 8.*

Delivery: If you don't receive your copy of *Horowhenua Star*, please text or call 027 2411 090.

The Star is published by ID Media Ltd 13 Te Manuao Road Ōtaki

The Horowhenua Star is a member of the NZ Community Newspapers Association

nz community newspapers

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Laugh out loud comedy as Stiff delivers the goods

By Paul Williams

The director of a side-splitting show that opens tonight at Levin Little Theatre says he encouraged the cast of *Stiff* to make each character their own.

William Gilbert says the cast were encouraged to take ownership and have a decent say on how they might interpret each character, to help bring them to life.

As a result, *Stiff* is the gift that keeps giving as cast and crew find new ways to enjoy and deliver what is a hilarious laugh-out-loud comedy.

William has been involved in theatre for most of his life, but this is his first shot at directing. He's taken what he has learnt over the years and tried to apply what he sees as the best of those techniques.

He says the challenge has been made easier with a great cast and crew.

"It's daunting, but it really helps when you have a great team," he says.

It's also the first time as stage manager, too, for theatre member Geena Collins-Oldham. It's a good challenge with no less than 12 scenes and a huge number of costume changes.

The entire cast are simply brilliant: Angel Delight (Talula Hodder), Swipe (Jeremy Skerman), Delilah (Rawiri Wehipeihana), Roxanne (Sarsha Forbes), Sherry (Jade Connell), Mrs Beaton (Faith Pearson), while Alejandro Vergara plays a couple of cameos as a lawyer and Mr Beaton.

Sarsha Forbes, Rawiri Wehipeihana and Talula Hodder onstage at Levin Little Theatre's showing of *Stiff*. *Photo Paul Williams*

The script for *Stiff* is very, very funny, and the theatre has done well to choose it. Written by New Zealand playwright April Phillips in 1996, it has been picked up and performed all over the world.

Without giving too much away, it centres around a group of working girls who take over a funeral parlour.

Stiff will have you rolling in the aisles.

Four-and-a-half stars.

What: *Stiff*, by April Phillips.
Where: Levin Little Theatre
When: Opens tonight, running Fridays (7.30pm), Saturdays (7.30pm) and Sundays (2pm) until August 16.

Tickets: www.trybooking.co.nz/xif

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