

# Rector's Assembly Address

Christine Leighton

Friday 31 May 2024



Nau mai, haere mai, tena koutou katoa. Talofa Lava.

This is the first assembly back in Gym 1 for a long time and it is good to be back in here. Welcome to whānau who have joined us this morning as we celebrate many achievements in recent weeks.

Congratulations to you all for the way you have started Term 2 after what seemed like a long-term break. It is good to see winter sports now well underway and you representing St Andrew's College with commitment, enthusiasm, and sportsmanship.

There are many awards to recognise today, and I thank Board of Governors member Mr Peter Nelson for attending today's assembly to assist with some presentations. Mr Nelson attended St Andrew's for 12 years from 1961–1973 and is the Presbyterian Nominee on the Board. While at school he was a member of the Pipe Band and his interest in rugby led him to becoming a very active senior rugby referee over many years and still involved in rugby coaching three Premier referees.

First up this morning I want to acknowledge and congratulate two Year 11 students who have been selected to represent New Zealand at the European Girls' Olympiad in Informatics. Informatics is a mathematics and coding-based competition which is to be held in the Netherlands in July. Ellie Zhou and Hannah Withers were selected as part of a four-girl team from New Zealand to participate in this competition which is an outstanding achievement in itself. I know they are very much looking forward to their trip to the Netherlands. Congratulations Ellie and Hannah.

Another group about to head away representing St Andrew's College and New Zealand are the Future Problem Solving (FPS) team of five Year 8 and five Year 9 students. At the end of last year this group participated in the New Zealand FPS finals and won their way to compete in Indiana, USA next month.

Each year the FPS Conference and highest level competition, brings together over 2000 champion problem-solvers and supporters from around the world. The Year 9 students are Genevieve Bainbridge-Smith, Alexa Collis, Alyssa Geddes, William Nicholls and Sophie Schouten. The group leaves this Sunday with Ms McBride and Ms Lewis and we wish them a wonderful trip and good luck for the competition.



At Easter weekend, St Andrew's students successfully competed in the Solo Piping Championships at Hastings with more than 100 competitors. At these competitions, pipers compete in many different events. One of these is the playing of Piobaireachd (Pee-brock). Piobaireachd is the classical music of the bagpipe with tunes that were composed, in many cases, over 300 years ago. They are complex pieces of music and it is the ultimate test in musical interpretation and technique. Sam Foote (Year 11) was runner up in the New Zealand Bronze Medal piobaireachd event.

In the New Zealand Championship Under 21 Piobaireachd event, Maggie McConnochie (Year 10) was the winner, with Lucas Paterson (Year 13) the runner up. A major highlight also was in the Comunn na Piobaireachd (New Zealand) Silver Medal event. This year Lucas Paterson was third and the winner was Maggie McConnochie. Maggie (Year 10) is an exceptionally talented piper and becomes the youngest ever piper to have won this coveted New Zealand Silver Medal. Both Maggie and Lucas are travelling to Scotland later in the year to compete at the prestigious Solo Piping competitions at Oban and Inverness.

It has been a busy time these last few weeks with our Performing Arts programmes. Nine rock bands competed in Rockquest last weekend, with bands Awthentix and Echo selected for the Regional final on Saturday 8 June. Two Secondary School Choirs, Staccoro and Stacchorus, will be competing in the annual Big Sing competition next Friday. Also last weekend some Music groups competed in the Christchurch School of Music May Music festival as a build up to the National Chamber Music competition. First place was given to '8 strings 88 Keys' Miu Kim (Year 12), Jasmine Hooker (Year 12) and Sea-am Thompson (Year 13). Well done to other groups who also took part.

An Old Collegian who has done incredibly well in performance, reaching the ultimate dream of many dancers of performing with the Royal New Zealand Ballet, is Josh Guillemot-Rodgers. At 26 years old, Josh is dancing as the male Principal in the Royal New Zealand Ballet, touring with *Swan Lake*. Josh studied at the prestigious world-class Juilliard Performance School in New York and won a place to dance with the Houston Ballet. Josh has returned to New Zealand and I know a number of you will have seen his magnificent performance at the Isaac Theatre Royal last week. Josh certainly exemplifies where talent, commitment, determination and a great deal of focus and hard work, can take you in pursuing your dreams.

At St Andrew's College we are proud of our Performing Arts programme and one of the highlights each year is the Senior College Production. Week 2 was particularly full on for the 57 students involved with the Senior Production of *Legally Blonde*. What a triumph this show was. In a show that explored a number of important life lessons, the six performances treated the audience to 2½ hours of entertainment that was fast paced, joyous, full of humour, and astonishment that school students could present such a professional show. Right from the start, the capacity audience was captivated by the vibrant and cleverly designed pink set, the talented band, and the meticulously costumed actors, all of whom

were accomplished singers and dancers. It was no surprise that those involved earned an enthusiastic standing ovation for each performance.

A huge congratulations to all involved: cast, stage and technical crew, and band. Thank you to Director Laurence Wiseman, Musical Director Duncan Ferguson, Production Manager Ginnie Thorner, Choreographer Hana Pearce and Costume Design and Construction Manager Sylvia Campbell, for another exceptional production. Joining the team this year is our new Theatre Manager, Stuart Lloyd-Harris, who brings a great knowledge of theatre, and technical expertise to the team.

Of course, this production was made extra special in that the opening night coincided with the opening of the new Ngā Toi Performing Arts Centre including the Gough Family Theatre and Fife Dance and Drama Studios.

Over many years, staff have dedicated their skills and time to nurture talent, promote culture and foster a sense of community spirit here at St Andrew's College. A proper theatre, built to support and encourage development of the Performing Arts, has long been a dream. It's been over two years since the Theatrette was demolished, and Drama classes and productions have been held in make-shift facilities.

You are the lucky ones who get to enjoy this wonderful new space; studios upstairs purpose built for dance and drama classes and a theatre of magnificent proportions, not only to stage productions, theatre and dance but also music and cultural events, speakers, films, meetings and performances.

A talented team of people have created this place. Teamwork, problem-solving and technical skill, combined with our St Andrew's value of Creativity is evident. Led by Architect Tony Hoare from Wilkie and Bruce, the construction took 2½ years. I sincerely thank everyone, staff and students, who were disrupted throughout this process for your patience and tolerance throughout this time. This short video captures a small glimpse of the opening ceremony.

Finally, I acknowledge our Performing Arts team who contributed so much skill and expertise to this project: Laurence Wiseman, Duncan Ferguson, Ginnie Thorner, and Dr Carolyn Cairns. This is a long awaited and long promised space and now it is yours to enjoy.

Today we honour the past of theatre at St Andrew's College, all those who have graced the stage in days gone by; we celebrate the amazing students of the present and think it is fair to say the future of Performing Arts at StAC is assured. By remembering those who have gone before and the magical times we have shared, we look forward to a future full of joy, discovery and creativity.

I was very pleased to hear the news yesterday that Mr Mark Wilson has been appointed as the next Rector for St Andrew's College. Mark is a highly respected colleague in the



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education sector whom I have known for many years. I congratulate Mrs Odlin and the Board on their very thorough and professional recruitment process, and know that Mr Wilson will enjoy his new position at StAC and bring impressive expertise and commitment to our school and community. Mr Wilson is genuine, caring, principled, engaging and a wise educator and leader who enjoys being around young people.

I will leave at the end of the year knowing our school is in great hands with Mr Wilson and the wonderful leadership, teaching and support staff here at StAC.

Best wishes to all for this long Kings' Birthday weekend at the end of a very busy few weeks. Congratulations to those who have participated in events organised to celebrate Samoan Language week.