



About Otago

Mō Ōtākou

Ones to Watch: Brent Caldwell

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Brent Caldwell says he joined the acting scene a little later than others.

Some of the greatest actors to cross our screens had long careers in other industries before pursuing their cinematic dreams. With an ever-growing number of careers one person can have in a lifetime, it makes sense to switch it up every now and then.

Currently completing his Diploma for Graduates, Brent Caldwell says he joined the acting scene a little later than others after a fulfilling career as a primary school principal.

“As a child and as a young teacher I was often involved in repertory and operatic theatre but the more demanding your job becomes, the less time you have for it. I went to see Head of Programme (Theatre) Dr Suzanne Little with the intention of commencing part time study. I left enrolled as a full-time theatre student.”

The mature student has had an eclectic career so far, completing his Diploma in Teaching at the Dunedin College of Education in 1984 followed by a Diploma in Teaching Children with Specific Learning Difficulties (dyslexia) at the National Hospital's College of

Speech Sciences in 1992. In 2007 he completed his Master's in Education after nine years of part-time study.

The Southland-born and raised teacher then spent time in the desert in Western Australia followed by six years in the UK working at Fairley House, London's day school for children with dyslexia.

"Teaching children with dyslexia made me a better teacher and reinforced the notion that for every deficit a learner has, there is an equal and opposite advantage, be it with creativity, music, dance, visual art, design, language or performing."



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After years of teaching and in the face of a global change, Brent decided he was ready to pass the torch to a new principal and pursue another dream, acting.

"The universe conspired to remind me there were other things I could be doing that would be better from my mental health and more in keeping with my inner compass and passions. Given the world we live in you must take the opportunities when they present themselves.

"My most recent dramatic experience had been in writing shows for school productions and I can see what a step up this study is. I envy the kids coming through now, they get to do drama all through school in purpose-built classrooms and performing arts spaces. It's so inspirational seeing some of the kids I started as new entrants now performing alongside me and in lunchtime theatres. There are some amazing opportunities in schools these days and I'm enjoying being in a place where I can have that experience to keep learning too."

Brent's overarching goal is to resume teaching in the future with his new skills in tow.

"Ideally my aim is to return to the classroom armed with the requisite skills to use drama and performance to enrich learning experiences for all children. The new history curriculum is one area that excites me. Drama is the ideal vehicle to place children in the heart of our nation's stories and to grow in understanding of all perspectives. That would be my ultimate."

You can catch Brent in the School of Performing Arts most days and recently, on stage for Summer Shakespeare's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Kōrero by Internal Communications Adviser, Chelsea McRae