

# East Wind No. 23

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Official Newsletter of the World Blind Union – Asia Pacific (WBUAP)

“The Voice of The Blind and Visually Impaired in The Asia Pacific Region”

Please visit the World Blind Union – Asia Pacific website

[www.wbuap.org](http://www.wbuap.org)

## In this issue

Editorial .....	2
Two upcoming Workshops on the Marrakesh Treaty .....	2
Myanmar DPOs Prepare a Parallel Report .....	3
News from Thailand .....	4
Ebenezer celebrates 120 years with PRIDE .....	6
Japanese students visit New Zealand .....	8
Ballet in Action Through Words .....	12
Feeling Rubbish .....	14
Missing issues of East Wind.....	14
East Wind Editorial Team Contact Details.....	14

## Editorial

I am really pleased to bring you this issue of East Wind, with warm thanks to our several writers.

Neil Jarvis updates us about the Marrakesh Treaty. Alice, the translator in Myanmar, tells us about writing a Parallel (also know as Shadow) Report for the UN Committee on the CRPD. I was on the edges of reports about New Zealand that went to the UN Committee in 2014. I know something about how hard it can be to write these reports. And I know how rewarding it is to see reflections on the reports in the Concluding Observations about New Zealand.

Also in this issue we read about literacy through braille and some service innovations in Thailand. We celebrate an anniversary in Hong Kong. We travel a journey of discovery for some Japanese students who visited New Zealand. We go to the ballet. And we learn a little about "Feeling Rubbish".

There are many special things happening in our region from which each of us can learn. Please send your news to me. The next issue of East Wind is due out in January 2018. I would very much like to have your news and articles by Friday 29 December 2017. If you have any queries or comments, please raise them with me.

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## Two upcoming Workshops on the Marrakesh Treaty

The campaign for countries in the Asia Pacific region to join the Marrakesh Treaty continues. Five countries have already done so: Mongolia, Singapore, Republic of Korea, People's Democratic Republic of Korea and Australia.

Many others are preparing their countries to join the treaty, and some are very close. We heard for instance earlier this year that Thailand is in the final stages of the ratification process.

We want to promote two workshops on the treaty which will be held in Singapore in early November.

The first will be hosted by the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO). WIPO is the body which oversees international copyright law and which brought the Marrakesh Treaty into existence. It is keen to see as many of its members as possible join the treaty and become active in its operation. This workshop will be aimed at government officials, industry representatives from the publishing and rights-holder sector and, crucially, print disabled people from the ASEAN sub-region.

WIPO is very keen to have as many representatives as possible from the blindness sector from the following countries: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

WIPO is willing to fund the attendance of up to two people from each of these countries. We at WBU Asia Pacific are very enthusiastic about this event and hope that as many people as possible will be able to attend. Please contact Neil Jarvis if you are interested in attending or if you'd like to find out more.

The World blind Union's regional team here in the Asia Pacific also wish to hold our own workshop immediately after the WIPO one. We know that the WIPO workshop will be extremely valuable, but we feel we also need a workshop to cover specific advocacy techniques from a blindness perspective, which there simply won't be enough time for in a more generic workshop. We can also contribute towards the cost for attendees to extend their stay in Singapore beyond the WIPO workshop for a further two days so that they might take part in the WBU-specific workshop.

The WIPO workshop will take place from 1-3 November, and the WBU workshop from 4-5 November. Please contact Neil Jarvis: [njarvis@blindfoundation.org.nz](mailto:njarvis@blindfoundation.org.nz) for more information. He can also be reached by phone on: +64-21-912154; or via skype at: Neiljarvis

Meanwhile, there has been a lot of activity since the last edition of east wind.

A seminar on the treaty took place in Indonesia in August. Hosted by the United Nations development Programme (Asia Pacific) it was supported by the Indonesian Blind Union. Readers may recall that at the end of 2015, UNDP and WBU Asia Pacific jointly published "Our Right to Knowledge", a report on the readiness of selected countries in the region to join the Marrakesh Treaty. This workshop built on the issues in that report from the perspective of Indonesia, one of the featured countries. Those present urged Indonesia to ratify the treaty as quickly as possible: not least as it was one of the original signatories of the treaty in June 2013. Delegates were told by the Director of Copyright & Industrial Design that Indonesia does intend to join the treaty, and is currently aligning the country's legal and policy frameworks with the requirements of the treaty.

Another original signatory to the treaty in 2013 is Cambodia. Since then there has been little progress towards ratification by that country. Cambodia was another country featured in Our Right To Knowledge. There is also an active campaign being organized by the Copyright & Libraries Programme and supported internationally by Electronic Information For Libraries (EIFL), one of the key worldwide advocates for the treaty. UNDP has recently published a briefing paper in both Khmer and English which calls for ratification and explains the benefits.

In the Philippines, the Philippines braille Accessibility Network has written to the country's President calling upon him to assist in the speedy completion of that country's accession to the treaty.

And in New Zealand, Parliamentary examination of the Marrakesh Treaty has been completed, which is a major step towards accession in that country. What now remains is for an amendment to the current Copyright Act to be passed by Parliament which brings the domestic copyright law into line with the requirements of Marrakesh. An initial bill has been drafted and we expect to see it in front of the legislature early in 2018.

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## **Myanmar DPOs Prepare a Parallel Report**

**Ms. Aye Chan Aung has kindly translated this for us:**

Myanmar ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) on 7th December, 2011. In accordance with Article 35 (1) of

the Convention, the Myanmar government submitted the initial report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 17th November 2015. Now in 2017, disabled people's organizations in Myanmar are on the way to submit a parallel report reflecting on the state's implementation of the convention.

With the support of the Disability Rights Fund (DRF), the parallel report to the government's initial report was initiated in September, 2015 by the Myanmar Federation of Persons with Disabilities (MFPD), together with other disabled people's organizations like Myanmar National Association of the Blind (MNAB). The coalition carried out project activities including an advocacy workshop with the Department of Social Welfare (DSW). The project team also conducted a cooperative workshop with other organizations working on research and disability issues.

In the developing process of this report, a deep study of parallel reports from other countries was made to prepare the questionnaire based on the qualitative method. Then, those questions were edited and revised by pilot testing and discussions with DPOs. Technical assistance and suggestions were provided by local and international experts and organizations. Two training workshops were organized for the data collection team on using the questionnaire, including practice with the respondents of the disabled people in the field.

The data collection team cooperated with local DPOs and conducted the data collection in 10 states and regions of Myanmar. The questionnaire was used to collect data on personal experiences and real conditions faced by the disabled people in Myanmar. Interviews were conducted with the disabled people and their respective parents or custodians in person. In addition, direct interviews were made to the key persons of DPOs to investigate the cooperation and support of the government. Case studies were also documented to record the violations of human rights and ignorance of the rights of the disabled people. Focus group discussions were held to better understand access to public services for the disabled people in Myanmar. Related reports and research articles from other organizations in Myanmar were also used as some sources of information.

The collected data was analyzed and validated with the stakeholders. The main findings from the analysis were compared with the government's initial report with the help of DPOs advice and appraisals. Then, the report was written following workshops and discussions with the disabled leaders and DPOs. It was checked and approved by MFPD members. On 5th September, a launching ceremony was held and the report was distributed to all DPOs in Myanmar, local and international partner organizations, media and interested audiences. It will soon be submitted to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities together with a summarized report.

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## **News from Thailand**

### **The first project of guide dogs for the blind in Thailand**

**Thipyaporn Khempila writes:**

On September 15th 2017, the ministry of Social Development and Human Security signed the memorandum of understanding (MOU) providing guide dogs service for

blind people. This is the first project of guide dogs for people who have visual impairment in Thailand.

For achieving goals setting the permanent institution of guide dogs service in Thailand, Pol Gen Adul Sangsingkeo, Social Development and Human Security Minister, signed the MOU with the royal Thai army, agriculture and food conglomerate Charoen Pokphand Group, and the Thailand Association of the Blind in order to provide the initial stage of guide dogs service supporting the blind in Thailand. The minister said the government has an intention to develop the quality of life of Thai people with disabilities, support their rights and their welfare benefits, and prepare facilities to raise the independent living of people with disabilities.

In terms of responsibility of the Thai army, personnel and representatives from the army will be trained by foreign professional instructors how they can handle guide dogs. After that, they will become the expert instructors and will be able to train other Thai instructors by their knowledge. For the initial stage of this project, the army will arrange guideline for guide dogs training and take care of guide dogs and places for the training as well.

According to the cooperation through this MOU, Charoen Pokphand will support dog food and the Thailand Association of the Blind will seek and select the blind to participate in the training to handle guide dogs. This is one of the very best ways to improve the quality of life of blind people in Thailand and to support their independent living.

## **Braille Promotion in Thailand**

**By Dr. Issavara Sirirungruang**

It's time we in Thailand are preparing for our annual braille contest once again. In January every year, the Thailand Association of the Blind together with Ratchasuda College, Mahidol University co-host the annual braille contest. This is comprised of national, international and marathon braille contests in which over 200 blind students and adults all over Thailand and abroad participate.

This year, with the launch of the new braille handbook with the Unified English Braille (UEB) system, the National Fund to Promote and Enhance the Use of Braille under the Thailand Association of the Blind will organize the braille training of teachers, braille media producers, braille transcribers and educators nationwide. The training will be held during October and November 2017 and we expect to reach at least 160 people. In this way, teachers can go back and prepare their students for the 2018 braille contest.

We invite contestants from other countries to participate in the 5th international braille contest during 19-21 January 2018. Look out for the announcement!

## **Evo E5: The first EBook Player with Thai TTS**

**By Mr. Private Satansat**

In June 2016, the Thailand Service Co-operatives of the Blind Ltd. (TSCB) launched "Evo E5", the first EBook reader with Thai text-to-speech (TTS). It can read DAISY books and other files in Thai language with Thai TTS from Nuance Vocalizer. It has

two Thai and two English voices. It can use up to 7.5 hours for the best reading experience.

The main features are:

- Listen to the DAISY2.02 and 3.0, report duration time and total time, report book information such as Title, Author, Publisher, Publish date and Narrator.
- Supports document files in TXT,HTM,HTML,MHT,DOC,DOCX,EPUB,PDF. With Thai text to speech, and can convert reading voice to MP3.
- Supports heading navigation, reading by sentence, paragraph and fast page turning.
- Supports audio files in MP3, WMA,WAV, FLAC, APE, ACC, OGG, RA, M4A formats and video in RM, RMVB, AVI, MP4, 3GP, MOV, WMV,FLV, MPG, MPEG, DAT. It plays file after file in a folder in order as they are listed in the directory continuously until the last one, repeats playing point A to point B segment as well as reads aloud with English.
- Built-in powerful speaker that outputs quality sound.
- High bit rate digital recording, built-in microphone and external microphone jack are provided. Records in WAV, PCM formats, and noise cancellation.
- FM digital tuner stereo radio.
- Excellent text-to-speech reading functions, spoken menus, selectable Thai and English for option.
- File manager without computer, easy to cut, copy, delete and send to another storage.
- Say the Date and Time, time announcement, can set up to 5 alarm clocks, Voice reminder, Auto Power On and Auto shut down.
- Set bookmarks and Resume playback.
- Talking compass, Talking calculator, Talking Stop Watch and Countdown timer.
- FM Transmitting
- USB interface 2.0 high speed data transmission, Internal FLASH Capacity is 4GB, MICRO SD card slot for expansion(Maximum 32GB)
- Report charging and battery status.

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For more information, please visit <http://www.tscb.co.th>, or Facebook page <http://www.facebook.com/e5thai>

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## **Ebenezer celebrates 120 years with PRIDE**

**Editor's note:** Our thanks to Jess Shek in Hong Kong for sharing this article.

The year 2017 marks Ebenezer School & Home for the Visually Impaired's 120 years of commitment and dedication to serving the blind and the visually impaired (VI). Ebenezer is proud of our students and graduates and works hand-in-hand with our stakeholders and partners to bring to life our mission statement 'Nurturing PRIDE for a Better World'.

- P Purpose of life and Perseverance
- R Respect and Resilience
- I Integrity and Innovation
- D Dare to Dream and Determined to be Self-Disciplined
- E Empathy and Empowerment

Speaking at the Ebenezer 120th anniversary talent show, Chief Secretary for Administration of the Hong Kong Government Matthew Cheung said: "Ebenezer has been serving with dedication, commitment, love and professionalism the visually impaired people and students. We are glad to have Ebenezer as our close partner in nurturing our visually impaired talents."

Various activities were held in celebration of the 120th anniversary of Ebenezer, ranging from a talent show, a charity walkathon and Hong Kong's first international symposium on education for the visually impaired.

### **Ebenezer School's "Walk with Pride 120"**

On 11 December 2016, 700 walkers took part in Ebenezer School's "Walk with Pride 120", which aimed to raise funds for the visually impaired and increase public awareness of their needs. Participants were blindfolded at some points during the walk to gain first-hand experience of the difficulty navigating the surroundings with sight loss. The event has raised the public's awareness of the needs and capabilities of the visually impaired community in Hong Kong.

### **Hong Kong's first international symposium on education for the visually impaired**

In April, we organized Hong Kong's first international symposium on education for the visually impaired, where scholars of different fields including professionals from the Ebenezer community, the Education Bureau, local universities, as well as those from the Mainland, Taiwan, Germany, Indonesia, Myanmar, Thailand and the Philippines shared their work and research in keynote speeches and parallel workshops.

From the findings of our research study in partnership with the University of Hong Kong, speakers' presentations at our International Symposium and the trend of student intake and profile, we have identified some major areas for our further development as a Centre of Excellence. Our emphasis is on action research and building knowledge and delivering training programs for and with the Mainland and Southeast Asia, curriculum enrichment & delivery model, school-to-work and school-to-community transition, early intervention program, staff development, fundraising & public engagement through media, advocacy for policy change, facilities and assistive technology with information technology (AT/IT) & innovation.

### **Ebenezer 120th anniversary with Munsang crossover Ebenezer talent show**

This was held on 29th April 2017. Over 60 Munsang College Kindergarten children and our pre-school children; with the 60-member strong Munsang Primary School Orchestra, staged a drama which conveyed the message of how children with different abilities helped one another to overcome challenges of losing their parents in a jungle. Our overseas VI friends from Myanmar, the Philippines and Indonesia acted in the Show. They did their traditional dance and songs as the children passed through their countries in search of their lost parents. The assembly hall was filled up by over 400 guests and parents, who were so touched by the story and the performers.

## More about Ebenezer

Ebenezer, based on Christian faith, was founded in Hong Kong in 1897 by Hildesheimer Blindenmission (HBM) of Germany. Ebenezer is the only organization providing education for students with visual impairment in Hong Kong. Over the years, Ebenezer has served thousands of the visually impaired. Today, our services include the Early Intervention Program and Child Care Centre for pre-school children; Ebenezer School and Ebenezer New Hope School for visually impaired students with or without other disabilities, the Visually Impaired youth employment service, Christian Ministry, as well as the Care & Attention Home for the elderly. Visit the website of Ebenezer [www.ebenezer.org.hk](http://www.ebenezer.org.hk) for more information.

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## Japanese students visit New Zealand

### Editor's note

For a week in August 2017 New Zealand hosted a group of nine blind and vision impaired Japanese students. Their ages ranged from 14 to 25 years.

The Japanese organisation that arranged the trip, Pura Vida Japan, provides opportunities for young people to live and learn together through domestic and international training programs. They aim to help young leaders to understand global diversity, promoting an inclusive society where people can live together without discrimination regardless of their differences. They strive to empower participants to grow and to be independent. They decided to plan their programs (this is the 11th program) as “training” trips rather than just sightseeing trips. They also decided to allow the participants to set their goals so that they would be able to achieve something new and develop self-confidence.

### Tamae Saito writes:

#### August 9

The program for the blind school students is starting today. At the commencement meeting, the participants made comments such as:

“I want to feel the difference between Japan and New Zealand.”

“I want to improve my English.”

“I'm not fluent in English but I will try not to be shy and speak loudly.”

Now the journey is about to start!!

#### August 10

There was a three hour delay with the flight but everyone arrived safely in Auckland. The flight attendants on Air New Zealand were very friendly. They introduced themselves to our participants, explained about the food, and often came to check if they were doing OK. Having a good start to the trip made us feel certain that the program is going to be great.

After arriving in Auckland, we were supposed to meet with some Auckland university students for “supermarket walking,” but since our arrival time was late, we went straight for dinner. Everything was big in portion which surprised everyone.

### **August 11**

The participants prepared breakfast in their rooms this morning, and the “adults” visited their rooms to eat. They prepared bread, salad, fruits, and soup for breakfast. Some of them prepared their food for the first time, but watching them working together was as if we were visiting a shared house.

In the morning, we visited the guide dogs training centre and played with puppies and dogs-under-training. Some were afraid of dogs, but with the support of the staff, they managed to touch the puppies. “I touched a dog for the first time, and I had a sense of accomplishment,” a member said.

In the afternoon, we visited the Blind Foundation. The participants had an opportunity to have their songs recorded in the recording room, to play blind frisbee, and finally to walk around the sensory garden where they could enjoy various flowers and plants using various senses. The participants especially enjoyed the sensory garden because it was something they couldn't find in Japan. One also mentioned that in Japan, they can visit a garden where they can smell flowers, but there is no place like sensory garden where they can also feel and enjoy various plants too.

At the Blind Foundation, we all received a strong message “Please try and challenge anything beyond your limit.”

After the visit to the Blind Foundation, everyone went to a supermarket together to buy some souvenirs, and then headed for dinner.

During the reflection session in the evening, the participants made comments such as:

“I was able to make better communication today than yesterday in English.”

“Yesterday, I was very nervous but today, I was able to smile a lot.”

“Today's shopping at the supermarket was my first experience buying my things abroad. I was very nervous paying for the goods, but I liked the sense of achievement.”

### **August 12**

The homestay matching was held at the Blind Foundation. The participants seemed a bit nervous, but excited to see their families.

### **August 13**

The participants spent the whole day with respective host families. A student who has low vision stayed with a blind family, and she was inspired to see how a blind person lives a daily life. Another student enjoyed singing songs and playing instruments with her host sister.

The participants assembled at the Dove-Myer Park and took a long bus drive to Rotorua. It was amazing to see how the faces of the participants brightened up after the homestay, and that there was a non-stop laughter and chatting in the bus.

The group became friends, and the participants started to help each other at various scenes.

When we arrived at the Owhata Marae, we were welcomed by the people in a solemn atmosphere. After the traditional Māori welcome ceremony, we had tea together, and then joined an icebreaking game with some local high school students. The students were very friendly and kind, holding hands of the Japanese students and guiding them all the time. Everyone made a poi and learned how to use it.

In the evening, we listened to a talk by Uncle Brown, where he talked about how Māori people look after nature because nature always looks after human beings by providing food, water and air. He also talked about how Māori people respect their ancestors, the story about the Father Sky Ranginui and the Mother Earth Papatuanuku, and how to read the designs in the whareniui.

### **August 14**

The participants spent the morning with the high school students, starting with an icebreaking game, followed by a lecture on Māori traditional medicine and the native trees by our host, Tireni. After the lecture and learning about the native plants, everyone went outside to plant some trees in the backyard.

In the afternoon, the group visited Te Puia to see nature and culture unique to Rotorua and to New Zealand. Everyone was amazed by the biggest geyser in New Zealand blowing about ten meters high or more, and enjoyed watching the professionals perform poi and haka.

In the evening, we were treated with hangi for dinner. Knowing that Tireni and her family members and relatives prepared all the food and comfortable environment to stay in the Marae, all the participants expressed their deep gratitude.

At the reflection session, the participants made comments such as:

“I learned that Māori people respect their ancestors a lot. I also learned that the human beings are the youngest siblings of the animals, and that we shouldn't consider ourselves as being on top of nature but need to take care of it.”

“I realized that this program was made possible because of the connections of many people. I would also like to go outside and meet people around the world. This trip became a turning point for me to think about my future.”

“I think being able to speak English means being able to communicate with many people. I think this is the first step to expand my world, so I wish to be able to speak English more when I travel abroad next time.”

### **August 15**

We took another long drive back to Auckland Airport, stopping on the way for a short break. Some people experienced ordering a smoothie in English for the first time.

During the long flight to Tokyo, the crew members of Air New Zealand once again made us feel very much at home. The friendliness and kindness that we experienced at the beginning and at the end of the journey in the aircraft added value to our program.

The one-week program concluded, full of new friendships, experiences and learnings. We could observe those participants who were filled with anxiety and nervousness in the beginning, starting to smile more as they encountered a number of kind and friendly people in New Zealand. They experienced many things for the first time, including traveling abroad away from their parents, and from those experiences, they gained more confidence. It was our privilege to see those changes in the participants.

A reporting session was held in Tokyo three weeks after the program. Six students talked about their experiences in New Zealand, and their “changes and future goals” to the audience:

- I would like to study English and talk with more people in depth. For example, I would like to know about people with visual impairment in New Zealand, about their work environment and how to live independently.
- I started to appreciate many things. I would like to study English more, engage in international exchange, and expand my world.
- I would like to be involved in international exchange and international cooperation.
- I would like to expand my circle (network) of people and myself.
- I understood that I need to express myself more with my own intention, so I would like to study English more.
- I got good marks on my English listening test after returning home. I can respond to English questions better too. I would like to visit more countries, meet more people and learn about different ways of thinking.

This program started from no funding, and we used a lot of money out of our pockets too, however, in return, we received unimaginable amount of kindness, love, goodwill, and generosity from the people involved. This reinforced our belief that when we are doing the right thing, we will be able to receive supports so that our missions could be accomplished.

We are grateful to all the people who put their time, energy, and love together to make this happen.

**Áine Kelly-Costello from New Zealand writes:**

I had offered to be a homestay host for one of the blind Japanese students. K came into my home for the weekend. Before K arrived, I knew very little about her, so I was hesitant about making many plans. I needn't have worried.

As we sat down in my living room, I asked K if she'd like to see my BrailleNote. She was amazed to find that I could use this braille computer in conjunction with my iPhone, and she had fun having a go herself. Next, she asked me if I'd like to learn Japanese, kana braille. I determined to give it my best shot, and I was amused and delighted to listen to her name each Japanese syllable according to the corresponding English Braille contraction while I transcribed myself a kana cheat-sheet. We were patient with each other and laughed a lot. While K learned about my technology and I attempted to write arigatoo (thank you) in kana braille, we bonded over both our curiosity and our desire to share our skills. Through braille, K glimpsed

new possibilities of independence and efficiency, while I, in turn, felt a little further into her world.

This story illustrates how K and I, as blind people who had never met and came from very different cultures, could find something we had in common and then have a conversation, learn from each other, have a good time and be all the wiser for it. I want to contribute to a world where these sorts of healthy, nourishing relationships are the foundation for change.

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## Ballet in Action Through Words

**Editor's Note:** Áine Kelly-Costello, who is a blind student in Auckland, New Zealand, describes the many pleasures of going to an audio described performance of the Royal New Zealand Ballet's Romeo and Juliet with her mother. Áine is completing postgraduate study in Spanish and French. She has attended various audio described productions and concerts and loves to support initiatives that help to make Aotearoa [the Māori name for New Zealand] more accessible for everyone. The photographs in the Arts Access Aotearoa blog have not been reproduced in East Wind. Source: <https://artsaccess.org.nz/Arts+Blog/Ballet+in+action+through+words>

“I know who I can take to the Romeo and Juliet ballet!” I exclaimed to myself, while flicking my braille display down the to-do list I was days behind on. “I’ll take my mother.”

As we looped around The Civic car park for the second time looking for a park, I worried whether Mum would enjoy it. After all, her idols were the likes of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers.

Auckland Live and the Royal New Zealand Ballet were partnering to audio describe the ballet – a first for New Zealand – so that in itself made me happy. I suppose if I had any high standards, they’d have landed on the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra, tasked with bringing to life Prokofiev’s rich and evocative score.

My contemplations ended abruptly when we stepped inside the Aotea Centre foyer and were invited to begin a touch tour, provided especially for blind and partially sighted patrons. We were encouraged to feel and admire everything from the sack-like material of the commoners’ costumes to the elaborate velvet capes for the ball — not to mention the rapiers in the sword-fight scenes; the point shoes; and several of the intricate masks, variously featuring feathers, horns and decorative designs.

### The history of ballet

After the touch tour, we were treated to a talk by Pagan Dorgan from the RNZB about the history of ballet and an explanation of ballet terms. As we imagined ourselves back in the courts and large ballrooms of Louis XIV, she offered us the chance to try out a few dance steps for ourselves and provided mini mannequins with moveable joints for those less inclined to feel uncoordinated in public.

I was contemplating placing myself in the second category but my mother, who danced ballet for years as a child, encouraged me to stand up front.

“I got mine when I was nine,” she commented when Pagan explained that girls these days are advised not to wear point shoes till their bones have fused at 12 or 13 years. “I remember that day, I was so proud.”

In preparation for the start of the show, I fetched my earpiece, through which the audio description would be channelled. I listened attentively as Nicola Owen, one of the two audio describers (the other was Neha Patel), relayed us introductory notes about the costumes, the general character of the protagonists (e.g. flamboyant, elegant, has youthful flair) and some major scene changes.

These notes were also emailed to us in advance but there was so much information it was a relief to hear them twice.

During the show itself, I found the APO's precision, grace and concentration through such an epic score to be extraordinary – as was that of the ballet dancers, by all accounts.

### **Appetite whetted by words**

But what really stood out for me was not just the existence of the audio description, which ran through the entirety of the play and left moments for us to enjoy the music; that, of course, was a massive undertaking in itself.

What most stood out was the depth and abundance of descriptors and verbs that I and the other blind and visually impaired audience members were treated to. My appetite was whetted by words such as preening, shimmering, canoodling and rebuffing. There was such a plethora of expressiveness in the language employed by the audio describers that the plot really came to life via the description of its choreography.

“That pas de deux,” said Mum rapturously, as we lined up for ice cream after Act 1. I smiled. I too had experienced the initial hesitancy of the lovers, their youthfulness and their graceful oneness.

I studied classical flute at university so I can begin to imagine how hard the APO worked on such a technical, nuanced and intricate score. I'm also a Paralympian so I can begin to conceive of the immense dedication required of the ballet dancers to stay on top of their game.

And I'm a translation student, so I can contemplate the mental effort, Thesaurus-checking and willpower that would have gone into making the audio descriptions so colourful.

### **“What it meant to attend a ballet with my mother”**

But I could not have known what it would mean to attend a ballet with my mother: to experience the whole show, not just the music. It was an artform I had subconsciously assigned to the “unreachable” pile.

“When you were two,” Mum reminded me fondly as we pulled out of the parking lot and headed for the motorway, “you could do all your arabesques, first position, second position, plié ... I always wanted to take you to the ballet.”

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## Feeling Rubbish

**Mary Schnackenberg writes:**

Around the world most of us are struggling with how best to get rid of all the rubbish we seem to have. This is especially so for household waste. Sorting rubbish and deciding what can be recycled and what has to go to landfill can seem hard if you're blind or vision impaired.

In my city of Auckland, New Zealand, our local council has the goal of zero waste going into landfill by the year 2040. Within the next three years, all Auckland households will have to pay each time our landfill rubbish bins are collected. So we need to learn what we can recycle and get practising before our costs start to go up even more.

The Auckland Branch of Blind Citizens NZ decided to write "Feeling Rubbish: a guide to reducing waste for blind and vision impaired Aucklanders". We won a grant from Auckland Council to pay for our writer and all the formats of the 70-page booklet on DAISY CD, in braille, large print and electronic file formats. For an accessible PDF version go to <http://makethemostofwaste.co.nz/media/1390/feeling-rubbish-accessible-pdf.pdf>.

As one of the people who worked on this project I've found out that sorting our household rubbish turns out not to be so hard after all. We hope you may find Feeling Rubbish as helpful as we have.

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## Missing issues of East Wind

We're really proud that we have been able to archive so many older issues of East Wind on the WBUAP website. This newsletter contains the history of this region, tracing our progress and successes. Also East Wind teaches us about the hard times so we may learn and do better for the future.

As yet we have not been able to find all the back issues of this newsletter. We are missing East Wind No. 11 which came out some time later in 2012 or early in 2013. And we're missing the first five issues prior to 2008. If you've got any early issues of East Wind, please let us know.

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### **Upcoming Dates for East Wind**

Issue no. 24 of East Wind is due out in January 2018. Please send your items to the Editor, Mary Schnackenberg, by Friday 29 December 2017. Mary's email address is [mary@aicomms.co.nz](mailto:mary@aicomms.co.nz).

Please also check out our website [www.wbuap.org](http://www.wbuap.org).

That concludes this issue of East Wind No. 23, October 2017.