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## Christchurch Artist Doctors

# The all-singing, all-dancing doctors

01 / (from left) Rosie Grant and Tory Aebli  
 02 / (from left) Andrew Earl, Howard Livingston, Bill Olds, David Lovell-Smith, Nigel Salisbury and David Merriman  
 03 / (front from left) Morag MacPherson, Mike Hurrell and Angela Pitchford (back from left) Robyn Bisset and Tim Wilkinson (Orchestra)  
 04 / Mike Shaw  
 05 / David Roche  
 06 / Manpower

Christchurch medical professionals swapped a hospital theatre for a creative one last month.

Supported by MAS, the annual concert of the New Zealand Association of Artist Doctors was a chance for those working in medicine to flex their creative muscles, says the vice-president of the association, John Gillies.

“Very simply, the association has been established to promote creative activities among doctors and to bring members of the medical profession together to share their creative talents on a platform which takes them out of their comfort zone a little.”

The annual concert, held in Christchurch on August 18, showcased a variety of creative disciplines from orchestral and rock music to flamenco dance and even manpower strip tease. It was complemented



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## We want superb mediocrity.

by an exhibition of visual arts and crafts that featured painting, photography, drawing, weaving, ceramics and woodwork.

“The fostering of creative activities is very important, because here we are in a situation where medicine doesn’t have all the answers; creative minds are essential if we are going to offer a better service in medicine. This is one way we can do that.”

Gillies says the secret to the group’s success is that while they’re professionals in their careers, these cultural pursuits are hobbies where they don’t need to be perfect.

“We have some that are so incredibly good that they could be professional. Now, that

can be a problem. It sounds great, but if you stage people who are so good, what happens to everyone else? They look at it and say, ‘Oh, they’re too good. I shouldn’t be amongst this group. I would be terrible.’ So then it ruins the society. So my battle cry is ‘we want superb mediocrity,’” laughs Gillies.

As well as providing entertainment, and giving doctors the chance to perform, the annual concert also helped foster relationships amongst doctors at all levels of the profession, which helps them when they’re at work, he says.

“Whether you like it or not, there’s a hierarchical structure within medicine, and I guess there has to be. And the problem is that the people at the top are almost kind of remote in their ivory tower. And this breaks that down. You can’t be isolated. See, you have to show, ‘I’m a real person,’ and it’s so great.

“I can remember the days when I was on call, and middle of the night I would be rung up by another doctor who was having trouble with a patient. And it would be so-and-so who was part of our choir or something, and they’d ring up and say ‘Oh, so-and-so, how are you?’ ‘No, no. Oh, I’m fine.’ ‘Great. Look, what can I do to help?’ It changes the whole transactional process.”

MAS has supported the New Zealand Association of Artist Doctors for many years, and Gillies says without this support, it would be too expensive to put on the annual event.

“I’m so grateful for MAS for so many things, for their support over the years. It’s just incredible. And what really impressed me was, during the stressful times of the earthquake in 2011, they didn’t abandon us – they continued to support us – and that was magic.”