

Tribute: Amanda van Zyl

It was with great sadness that the school learnt of the passing of Amanda van Zyl on the 1st May 2019 after a long illness.

Amanda joined the staff at Boys High after an extended career at the State Theatre where, amongst other things, she was responsible for public relations and Front of House management. She filled the newly-created role of Head of Cultural Activities which was set up to fill the growing need for an expanded cultural programme at the school. In addition, she took on the role of oversight of the existing clubs and societies, giving guidance and helping them grow.

She took to the role very quickly and, over the next fifteen years would make the position her own, fiercely guarding against other school events impacting on the cultural programme. The teachers in charge of these activities felt they had a champion who would actively promote this aspect of school life and she certainly did. Added to this responsibility were two further roles – that of co-ordinator of the Matric Dance and producer of the annual dramatic production.

Her Matric farewell dances were legendary with exotic and spectacular themes ensuring that the boys had the evening of their lives and certainly one to remember for them and their partners. Nothing was to stand in her way as she made sure that the themes were not only top-secret until the last minute but were meticulously detailed with careful attention given to each aspect of the event.

The annual production took on a greater importance in the last few years with collaboration with our sister school, Girls High, as we co-hosted major productions every two years, usually in the form of a musical. The enjoyment the boys and girls derived from these shows was a tribute to Amanda's drive and devotion. Nothing was left to chance and she made sure the shows were of the highest quality. From programmes to front of house to musical accompaniment to the backstage, she oversaw each detail to give the entire show a professional feel, based on her years in the State Theatre. She called on numerous contacts from the past to help and really came into her own with "her boys" who took part in these shows.

Amanda was fiercely proud of her role in the school and her boys and she would stand up for them at all times yet demand nothing short of excellence from them. It was made clear that she would do anything for them provided they committed to attending rehearsals, learned their lines and gave their best at all times. Many boys who took part in these productions grew in confidence and stature under her sometimes gruff but always caring guidance.

Amanda defined the word "passionate" in all she did and boys found a home in her "space". She had a way of getting the most reluctant of participant to join her shows! Yet – each time the boys would grudgingly admit that they had a great deal of fun. Perhaps her crowning moment was in the most recent show, Pirates of Penzance, when she persuaded a group of Form Vs to play the part of the policemen. They were truly wonderful in their performance which was an experience these boys would never forget.

Amanda battled with her health in the past few years, yet, despite numerous medical procedures, including amputation of her one foot, she never complained and never shirked her responsibility. Her kindness and compassion for others took first place in her life and she didn't want to be a nuisance to others. She retired early on medical grounds and we wish her a thoroughly well-deserved rest after 15 good years at Boys High

Thank you Ma'am for all you meant to our school and our cultural programme. The impact you had on our lives will long be remembered.

Tony Reeler