

PHILIPPA BOYENS
BA MNZM

Philippa graduated from Massey High School in 1980.

Her school records show that she was a talented student with a flowing essay style, displayed soundness in discussions, had an eagerness to question and excelled in English and History. She was also heavily involved in netball as a player, coach and administrator. She was a school prefect, in the drama club, debating team and on the ball committee.

On leaving school she trained at Theatre Corporate, spending the next ten years working as a playwright, producer and editor. She was the Director of the NZ Writers Guild.

During this time Philippa studied part-time at University and graduated from the University of Auckland in 1994 with a B.A. in English and History. She received a Distinguished Alumni Award from the University of Auckland in 2006.

Her work in film includes writing, producing, and composing lyrics for film scores.

Philippa is best known as principal script-writer, along with Fran Walsh and Peter Jackson, for the screen adaptation's of J.R.R. Tolkien's "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy. This is the largest film project ever undertaken in New Zealand and Philippa's work was honoured with an OSCAR and BAFTA Awards in 2004 for best writing adapted screenplay for "Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King."

In her career she has won 13 other awards and received a further 19 nominations, including being named in 2000 by Variety Magazine as one of their ten best writers to watch in the industry.

Other works include "King Kong" and Philippa has currently completed work as a writer and producer on the film adaptation of Alice Sebold's best selling novel - "The Lovely Bones" as well as beginning writing with Academy Award nominated director, Guillermo del Toro on the "The Hobbit", due for release in 2011 and 2012 respectively.

Her work has helped bring international recognition to the NZ Film Industry and this was acknowledged by her becoming a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit in 2004.

Unfortunately Philippa could not make it tonight but she has said that she would very much like to come back to Massey High School and receive her inaugural Alumni Award another time when she is in New Zealand.

Philippa has sent a response to be read out:

I can't believe I'm missing out on this night, it's been something I was looking forward to ever since Bruce contacted me last year. At the time, there was an outside chance I might have to travel to the States, but I was hoping that wouldn't happen. Unfortunately – it did, and so - I would like to send my sincere apologies for not being there tonight. I would also like to send my heartfelt thanks to the Board of Trustees, the Reunion Organising

Committee and everyone at Massey High School for naming me as one of the inaugural Alumni. I feel honoured to be in such talented company.

I have many wonderful memories from my time at Massey High, not least of which was meeting Jo Simon (nee Feather) and Janine Hedley who, to this day, remain my best friends. I'm sure there are a few teachers present who could tell some tales about Janine, Jo and I (all of them probably true.) I think it was Mr. Kaniuk who dubbed us 'the gleesome threesome'. That was one of the nicest things about growing up a Massey High student - the fact that you were allowed to have fun. I remember so many of my teachers having a terrific sense of humour. They seemed to know that high energy and high spirits were part of our West Auckland childhoods – a lifestyle which alternated between running around being noisy and lying around being lazy. It wasn't always easy being a small part of such a big environment – life for anyone at high school can get pretty miserable at times, but now I look back on it, I feel really lucky to have gone to a vibrant school full of so many different personalities, cultures and stories. I never once felt there was anything holding me back from doing something interesting with my life; I always felt encouraged by my teachers to explore and learn. Receiving awards from overseas is very nice, but some of my most cherished are the ones I got at Massey High School. They still make me smile, especially my award for coming 2nd in Seventh Form Art History ... there were only two of us in the class! I can laugh about it now, but something must have stuck because whenever I'm overseas, I always check out the art galleries in case there's a Caravaggio or a Vermeer I haven't seen on exhibition.

In the end, I think memories are far more precious than awards. I still, in my dreams, find myself sitting on the top field looking out over that crimson haze towards deep green of the Waitakeres. Its summer and they've cut the grass on the lower field and I'm surrounded by that strange quiet you feel in the school when everyone else is in doors, heads down, working at teaching or learning. I don't know what I'm doing sitting out there all alone ... I must be wagging class.

Have a great night – and again – thank you from a very proud ex-Massey High School girl.