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St Norbert College drama teacher Kerri Hilton as her podcast's character Miss Patrice. Photograph — Aaron Van Rongen.

National honour for top teacher

• By Geraldine Alphonse

A local drama teacher has been awarded across two categories of the Australian Performing Arts Teachers Association National Awards Program.

For more than 35 years Kerri Hilton has demonstrated an undeniable passion for theatre and the arts.

The St Norbert College teacher inspired the judges with her demonstration of leadership, expertise, vocation for the performing arts and dedication to students.

Miss Hilton was announced winner of both the Cornerstone Award and Outstanding Mentor Award last week.

"I am very honoured to be given these two awards. I was amazed to be given them but very humbled by the beautifully kind words and letters of support that ex-students and colleagues wrote about me," she said.

Having directed and performed in more than 200 productions across her career, Miss Hilton said her mission

was to pass on her love for theatre to young people.

Her interest in the arts developed during her first performance back in Kent Street Senior High School, which was directed by the legendary veteran director John Milson.

For more than 20 years Miss Hilton has been involved in the Independent Theatre Association of Western Australia and she is also a judge for the Robert Finley Awards and sits on the committee of the ITA Youth Fest.

"Teaching theatre has changed over the years," she said.

"There are so many more avenues and opportunities for us to see what other people in other countries are doing so much more easily now than in years gone by, which I think is great.

"Having the opportunity to produce musicals and plays over the years that have given so many people the chance to be involved and develop their own love of theatre is one of the highlights of my career."



I love bringing in directors and actors to do workshops with my students

Miss Hilton also recently created a podcast called *Afternoon tea with Miss Patrice*, which is about a fictional teacher who doesn't know anything about drama, but decided to put on a production.

"She breaks the rules everywhere and I initially did it to try and show people what you can't do when doing a production," she said.

"I am starting to record my next series of the podcast and I will continue to try and instil a love of theatre into my students for as long as I can."



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