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(Wellington, New Zealand) 31 March 2008

NEW ZEALAND'S FIRST PODCAST NOVELIST TAKES ON THE BARD

New Zealand artists have been taking the entertainment world by storm over the past few years. Peter Jackson led this invasion by bringing to life J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. The Conchords were next as their comedy and music won them new audiences everywhere with *The Flight of the Conchords*. With her own sultry combination of blues, jazz, and hip-hop, Hollie Smith is about to take her sound to the United States. And now, author Philippa Ballantine, intends to bring to the world her award-nominated tale of manipulative goddesses, friendly Tricksters and William Shakespeare through the exciting new medium of podcasting.

Podcasting is nothing new to Philippa as in 2006 she was the first New Zealand author to podcast a novel, *Weaver's Web*. This introduced her work to a global audience while she herself never left her home in Wellington. Even after the novel's conclusion, she continued to explore podcasting with *Whispers at the Edge*, her monthly audio journal of writing tips and looks at life in New Zealand. "I was doing this for fun and was hoping that my podcast was reaching out to others. Then the podcast was nominated for the 2007 Parsec Awards' Best Writing Podcast. I was thrilled. It was when I attended a convention in Atlanta when complete strangers would say to me 'You're Pip! I know you from your show.' Simply amazing."

After loaning her voice to other podcast novels such as *Murder at Avedon Hill*, *Metamor City* and assuming the lead role as Askana Moldarin in *Morevi: Remastered*, Philippa now brings Dragon Moon Press' *Chasing the Bard*, her own Sir Julius Vogel nominated novel, to life. This dark fantasy epic place William Shakespeare in the midst of his own midsummer nightmare, and a dark goddess plots to use his bardic powers to save her world whether he want to or not. This ambitious project will feature an international voice cast of other well-known podcasting personalities. "When Pip asked me to be the voice of Shakespeare, I couldn't say no," says American writer, actor, and podcaster, Tee Morris. Also an author with Dragon Moon Press and co-author of *Podcasting for Dummies*, Tee first discovered *Chasing the Bard* in 2005. "It was launched alongside a novel of mine, and suggested to me by Gwen Gades, Dragon Moon's publisher. I was a fan of the book soon after. This is a real treat to help bring the book to life."

“I not only hope to introduce my work to new readers, but I also hope to show the international reach of this new media,” Philippa states. “Podcasting is very exciting that way as it is an instant connection with the world. I am proud to be a literary voice for New Zealand, but I’m also having a lot of fun with my friends from around the world.”

Chasing the Bard is a free podcast of the entire novel and will also include new scenes and commentary from the author herself about novel and its production. The podcast will launch on 31 March and be made available on iTunes or directly through its website, www.chasingthebard.com. *Chasing the Bard*'s sequel, *Digital Magic*, will be available from Dragon Moon Press in August 2008. Philippa Ballantine is available for interviews and comment, and can be best reached at pip@pjballantine.net. You can find the podcast at and further information on the writer at www.pjballantine.net