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*No 50*  
SPRING 2015

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# DIRECTOR'S WORD

ISSUE *No* 50

The first issue of *Playmarket News* was published in 1988. This issue is the 50th. It has appeared in a few different formats and evolved from being published quarterly to being an annual since 2010. It is now a comprehensive look at theatre over twelve months and includes in-depth articles examining some of the key issues for our theatre today.

This new format *Annual* moves from the previous five editions' focus on a different region of the country to the process of playwriting. How are we writing and why does it continue to matter?

The national theatre scene is in a state of transition: new companies are appearing and older companies are evolving and expanding their focus; new buildings are emerging and non-traditional venues are being utilised; and the play making process is broadening more than ever. None of these things add up to a

completely new state of things but it seems to me there is a greater shift than there has been for a while.

This annual covers a wide range of views on playwriting – not exhaustive but hopefully stimulating – on what draws playwrights to commit to the stage and their relationship to other forms of writing.

Mark Amery has once again impressively led the commissioning of a range of thought provoking articles and overseen the recording of the theatrical year. Along with my thanks to the Playmarket staff, in particular Salesi Le'ota who has worked tirelessly on the *Annual*, I offer my heartfelt thanks to Mark. Playmarket is also grateful to First Sovereign Trust for providing funding to assist in the printing of this edition.

**Murray Lynch**  
Director, Playmarket





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Margaret-Mary Hollins.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: *Famous Flora* by Elisabeth Easter. Image: Paul Lambert; *MAU*, Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School. Image: Philip Merry; *Caterpillars* by Thomas Monckton and Kallo Collective, Show Pony. Image: Stephen A'Court; The production team of *Have Car Will Travel* by Mitch Tawhi Thomas, Te Pou. Image: Adam Penfold.

COVER IMAGE: Writer in the house: Ralph McCubbin Howell photographed on writer's residency in the Robert Lord Cottage, Dunedin. Image: Alan Dove.

PAGE ONE IMAGE: *Stag Weekend* by Dan Bain and Brendon Bennetts, The Court Theatre.

# Why I Wrote the Play I Wrote

MEI-LIN TE PUEA HANSEN

*on The Mooncake and the Kūmara.*

There's plenty to write about with a family like mine: a grandmother I always knew I had but never met, children who may or may not have been born, relatives who talk too much, and those who hardly talk at all. Stories with consequences as grimy and lasting as the dirt under my toenails, others as monumental as the loss of language, customs and culture down the generations...

People ask what we're supposed to do with our family tales, but I'm not caught by that at all. A play! A play! That's what I did with them. I had a story to tell about my Goong-Goong from China and my Nan from the Waikato so I wrote a play – *The Mooncake and the Kūmara* – because it was the best way to share it with the people I wanted to share it with.

I had cousins come to *The Mooncake and the Kūmara* who'd never stepped into a theatre foyer before – that was a buzz. I caught up with family friends I hadn't seen in years. I reminisced with old school friends. I watched my tearful mother as she hugged the actors and thanked them for telling our whānau story. I met a woman from New Caledonia who was so excited by the play she wanted us to take it there. Throughout the eight-show season I was spoilt by a mini family reunion as my whānau, and the whānau of the six cast members came into the city (some from as far as Te Awamutu)

to share it. The sharing extended to the dramaturg, the production team, the director, the creative team and the actors too.

Before I started writing I would think about the tales *The Mooncake and the Kūmara* tells as a sort-of play. The entrances and exits weren't necessarily mapped out nor what the characters said, but the scenes between my grandparents ran like a play in my head. My Goong-Goong's wife in China was in all these scenes too, watching from high up somewhere, looking at what her husband was doing here in Aotearoa. These images were what I wanted to share.

All this sharing helped me to appreciate the wonder tied up in playwriting. It made me realise that play scripts are always in motion and that the words on paper are only the start. Play scripts are vital, elastic and alive in a way that no other writing can be. Every performance of *The Mooncake and the Kūmara* and each subsequent and new production re-energises the story and gets it moving again, shifting, changing and taking on new shapes. Plays help imprint things on the memory more effectively than other forms. I reckon this comes from the sharing of space – the now-ness, intensity and simultaneity of mood.

Happy circumstances got me to the point where I thought it'd be a good idea to share



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## AROUND AUCKLAND, PLAYS ARE SHAPE-CHANGING



my family's history as a play. From age 10 until my first year at University I'd been part of The Original Young Stagers, a community theatre group in Manurewa that put on their own original drama. It became an almost decade-long hobby. Later I completed a Diploma in Drama at the University of Auckland, where I was exposed to plays by Hone Kouka, Briar Grace-Smith, Riwia Brown, Renée, Lynda Chanwai-Earle and many others, and devised work by groups like Theatre Stampede and Te Rakau Hua o te Wao Tapu. Playwriting was also about community. My cousin Kiel McNaughton (with whom I earlier wrote a 10-minute version of *The Mooncake and the Kūmara*) was keen to write something with me about our grandparents. Between 2008 and 2014 I was able to draw on advice and support from many. Fiona Graham was my dramaturg and advice came from Stuart Hoar at Playmarket, Murray Edmond, Renee Liang, and Philippa Campbell at Auckland Theatre Company. I participated in the Pulse Programme for new producers. I met Yee Yang Lee of The Oryza Foundation, Dolina Wehipeihana and Auckland Arts Festival, who went on to produce my play.

A few weeks ago I attended Playmarket's Playwrights b4 25 award ceremony. I was so excited for these young, cool and on-to-it playwrights whose plays are already being produced. And there are other things that are keeping plays and playwriting on the tips of everyone's tongues, like the inaugural Ahi Kaa Festival in Wellington during Matariki, productions from new and established Māori playwrights, or the work of Okareka Dance.

I will write more plays because they are where the innovation is happening. Around Auckland plays are shape-changing. New possibilities are being explored and enjoyed. Audiences are displaying a hunger for stories about here, and they're keen to participate in the journey plays take to get to the stage, attending rehearsed readings, workshops and q and a sessions. They're feasting on zombie action, speed dating, fables, cabaret, fantasy, bios and (luckily for me) family stories and secrets. I don't want this momentum to stop anytime soon.

ABOVE: *The Mooncake and the Kūmara* by Mei-Lin Te Puea Hansen, Auckland Arts Festival and The Oryza Foundation. Image: Gate Photography.



# AUCKLAND

BY JANET MCALLISTER

The Muse of Music exuberantly kicked up her heels in Auckland over the past 12 months, giving us many of the year's most wonderful shows.

In the Basement solo piece *Stutterpop*, Sam Brooks cleverly punctuated demonstrations of his serious speech impediment with perfect drag lip-synching. His stories were funny and self-deprecating while his stutter gave the show an interesting rhythm – the audience learned to relax and expect gaps. It was unique, generous theatre from the city's best young playwright (and most uncompromising theatre critic – see the *Pantograph Punch* website).

At Q Loft, Benjamin Henson's *Earnest* fabulously re-imagined Wilde's *Importance* as an all-male 1950s dandy revel, throwing in several musical homages to Cher, with great insouciance about anachronism.

Impressively slick, North Shore Musical Theatre pumped up the dancing, charisma and costume changes in *Hairspray* at Sky City Theatre for the most feel-good fun of the year, but the biggest commercial success was Auckland Theatre Company's *Jesus Christ Superstar* at Q Rangatira. Madeleine Sami's character interpretation was the stand-out: instead of using a crown of thorns, her buffoon tyrant Herod staple-gunned a party hat to Jesus's head.

The *Superstar* team of musical director Leon Radojkovic and director Oliver Driver had a more innovative success with *Live Live Cinema: Little Shop of Horrors* at the Herald theatre. Four actors made all the noise – dialogue, foley sound effects and music – for the original 1960 *Little Shop of Horrors*

film, with predictably uproarious results.

In the non-musical camp, serious whimsy was well-served by the Silo Theatre/ Auckland Festival joint production *The Book of Everything* (both theatrically and intellectually satisfying) at Q Rangatira, Bernie Duncan's remounting of ...*him* (a meditation on news media and loneliness) at the Basement studio, and *The Two Farting Sisters*, a delightful puppet show at the Musgrove Studio, devised by Petit Workshop, based on the adaptation of a Chinese fable by Renee Liang.

Other successful local Chinese-themed plays included Liang's *Under the Same Moon* – a gentle contemporary comedy – and Mei-Lin Te Puea Hansen's *The Mooncake and The Kūmara*, a poetic Auckland Festival historical drama: Māori girl meets Chinese boy at a market garden.

We were offered an impressive number of plays by well-known New Zealand theatre practitioners including Victor Rodger, Nancy Brunning, Arthur Meek, Red Leap Theatre and Toa Fraser – with mixed results. Rodger's *At the Wake* received good reviews, but many of the drawcards were slightly disappointing, needing clearer purpose, better characterisation or tighter editing; our raised expectations are a testament to their creators' past successes. However, Emily Perkins' stylish reimagining of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* for Auckland Theatre Company mercilessly dissected Auckland's neurotic obsessions with status and real estate. While it divided audiences at the Maidment – some felt its realistic crassness was too obscene, others were distracted by the perplexing set of toy pandas – it was so assured that it deserves its own name.



## MISSING BUT NOT MISSED THIS YEAR WERE THE OUT-DATED, FOURTH-WALL DOMESTIC DRAMAS

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP  
LEFT: *My Bed, My Universe*  
by Gary Henderson and  
MassiveCompany. Image:  
Andrew Malmo.

*Uncle Minotaur* by Dan Bain,  
Young and Hungry. Image:  
Andi Crown Photography.

*Pure and Deep* by Toa Fraser,  
Auckland Live. Image: Andi  
Crown Photography.

*Hauraki Horror* by Thomas  
Sainsbury and Chris Parker,  
The Basement Theatre. Image:  
Andi Crown Photography.

*The Best Possible Album Party  
Anybody Has Ever Been To* by  
Kate McGill and Frith Horan,  
Alacrity Productions. Image:  
Marshall Bull.

*How the Kiwibird Lost Its  
Wings* by Daya Czepanski,  
The Hawkins Youth Theatre  
Company and The Hawkins  
Silver Stage Company. Image:  
Mina Sabour.

*Rangi and Mau's Amazing Race*  
by Tanya Muagututi'a, Joy Vaele,  
Ave Sua and Raniera Dallas,  
Pacific Underground. Image:  
Posenai Mavaega.

*The Little Yellow Digger* by  
Betty and Alan Gilderdale.  
Adapted for the stage by Tim  
Bray, Tim Bray Productions.  
Image: David Rowland One-  
Image Photography.

PREVIOUS PAGE: *Hikoi* by  
Nancy Brunning, Auckland  
Arts Festival and Hāpai  
Productions. Image: Gate  
Photography.

Missing but not missed this year were the outdated, fourth-wall domestic dramas (mostly British) with no pertinence to New Zealand that came out in a rash two to three years ago. Plays by privileged Kiwi bullies making fun of minorities also seem to be on the wane.

Instead, the Basement gave us a surprising, welcome mini-trend in plays about recent New Zealand history. Phil Ormsby's *Wild Bees* was a fascinating fictionalised account of a union falling victim to Rogernomics, while Bronwyn Elsmore's *Fallout: The Sinking of the Rainbow Warrior* stuck even closer to the facts – it would be a great play for high schools.

Elsewhere, *Whales* – an interactive pop-up event in Aotea Square that allowed all-comers to be part of a collective fantasy of helping in a crisis – assisted the always-exciting Binge Culture Collective to win 'The Spirit of the Fringe Award' at the Auckland Fringe Festival.

Māori theatre got a boost with the opening of Te Pou in April in New Lynn. Called "the Auckland home of Māori theatre" and based on the kaupapa Māori fundamentals of aroha, manākitanga and whanau, it has been founded by Ruia Taitea Creative and is headed by Tainui Tukiwaho.

After eight years, the St James Theatre re-opened in Queen Street in May, taking the city's tally of performance spaces within two blocks of the Auckland Town Hall to 12. Meanwhile, The Basement bid a fond farewell to its "founding father", the irrepressible Charlie McDermott who jetted off to study in New York in July 2014.

And what of the first Auckland Festival since its annualisation was announced? Its support of Māori theatre – *Mooncake* and Brunning's *Hikoi* – was well-placed, although it was a pity their short seasons overlapped so much. The overseas choices were safe ones, but a second round of shows from proven audience favourites Groupe F and Roysten Abel weren't as captivating as their Auckland debuts. Still, a South African production of Verdi's opera *Macbeth* set in the Congo was utterly compelling. And hopefully it inspired some edgy local adaptations – *Dirty Politics* or the Urewera Raids are surely ripe for operatic or Shakespearian interpretation.



# WHY THEATRE

*Dean Parker on why you write and why it matters.*

Why you write changes as life proceeds. At first you do it because it's cool. Well, I did. I'd see movies in Napier of stage plays like *Look Back In Anger* and *A Taste of Honey* and then at the Lido in Wellington of *The Caretaker*. So cool. And, I mean the idea of the writer... ultra, ultra cool.

Then you do it because it's a means of avoiding proper work.

Then, if you're *still* at it, along comes phase III — Satan appearing before you in the desert and leading you to a high place from where all the kingdoms of the world can be seen and saying, "All these things I will give you..."

That is, you start smelling an income.

Now unless you're Roger Hall or Dave Armstrong this tends to involve a shift into TV and movies. And this can be financially rewarding. With my companion I paid off an old house in Ponsonby on the back of movies and TV; meant I was mortgage and rent free, a huge advantage when it comes to surviving

as a writer (a huge advantage when it comes to surviving as anything in Auckland).

There's also a creative reward — you enter the exciting juggling, jigsaw, mosaic world of the screenplay.

The drawbacks, though are the frustrations. So little of what you write actually gets produced —though unlike the stage it does get paid.

And in New Zealand so much of a television or movie screenplay can be crabbed, cribbed, confined and smothered by the concrete layers above you of executive producers, programmers and distributors.

That trick of expressing yourself while at the same time fulfilling others' expectations of the box office or audience share of Household Shoppers 18-49 is a rare thing and to be admired; it's what Shakespeare managed.

The actual hands-on producers you work with can be inventive and even inspired. I remember reading a comment from the English playwright John McGrath that Harry Saltzman, the street-



wise movie producer he worked with on *Billion Dollar Brain*, knew more about story-telling than just about anyone he'd met.

I've found the best screen people are way savvy. I've seen locally written main venue stage plays that have been hailed by critics but whose flaws would never, never have survived the sort of grilling you get from a TV producer/script editor, and I reckon over the last twenty years the best dramatic writing done in New Zealand has been for TV and movies. By a long chalk.

But... the drawbacks to screenwriting are hard ones and you may find yourself retreating from it, or rather it retreating from you, though it always remains there, shining, shining...

So, you go back to the stage—and on returning you find you're now writing not because it's cool, or a way of avoiding honest work, or offers the prospect of dough, but because it has become a way of life.

It's become something you do every day, routinely, like a priest reading his breviary.

Sure, it's the process by which you rove and rummage through the world all human worth and wickedness to prove, but possibly more importantly it's the process by which you examine your conscience, that spiritual exercise you do before making a full confession.

---

## THE PROCESS BY WHICH YOU ROVE AND RUMMAGE THROUGH THE WORLD

ABOVE: *Dog* by Ben Hutchison, Wolfgang Creative. Image: Andi Crown Photography.

In this state you don't really write for an audience, you write for yourself. And you hope that an audience will come along with you for the ride. I've read my good friend Roger Hall's ringing words, "I know my audience and they know me." But I don't. I don't know my audience and I don't really know me. Writing discovers both. For me, anyway.

I have a tiny office in the Auckland Trades Hall on Great North Rd. In the morning I walk 30 minutes to it and write. I do this five days a week. There is no modem on the computer there. It functions simply as a word processor so I can't distract myself with emails or YouTube clips.

I do three or four hours, then I walk home, a walk during which I find my switched-off mind resolves any problems that might have been frustrating me during the morning's concentrated effort.

I then do a bit more work at home on an on-line machine which allows me to attend

to emails and stuff I've had to Google up.

I suppose on average I work six hours a day over a five-day week. So that's a 30-hour week. No one should work more than that in any occupation. I remember reading that the economist John Maynard Keynes predicted in the late 1920s the increases in productivity brought about by modern capitalism would see his grandchildren working 20-hour weeks. Ha ha.

### A PLACE OF ASSEMBLY

Sometime last year a columnist in the English *Guardian*, Paul Mason reflected upon the various indexes and league tables that regularly appear listing the world's "most liveable" cities. When he imagined who the compilers were, he wrote, he saw in his mind a terrified monogamous young couple dressed in fashionable labels.

He made the observation that liveability was not necessarily predicated on political stability.

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“Speaking from experience, Istanbul during the Taksim Square protest and Athens during the indignado camp of 2011 became, momentarily, better places to live.”

He then got down to specifics, to list what would make up his ideal city, the city he would most like to live in. It had to be near the sea, a sea warm enough to swim in. There would be hipster neighbourhoods. The finance sector could attract global capital without being dominated by it. There would be trams and bicycle lanes. There would be a massive ecosystem of sleazy hangouts, “for it is a truth unacknowledged by those who make the official league tables that Joe Corporate, with his squash racquet and sober suit, and Joanna Corporate, with her nanny and pushchair, really want to live many other secret and parallel lives.” It would be happy with its Victorian and Edwardian architecture. It would be ethnically mixed and hospitable to women. Its slums would at least have hope. It would have a democratic political culture of loud arguments in small public squares with the police kept in check.

And finally — “and this is crucial” — it would have theatres. Plays.

Paul Mason’s argument for theatre was that “the city has to have recognisable demos.” Demos is the common people, or the Assembly of the common people. Like so much else political it comes from the ancient Greeks.

---

## THAT TRICK OF EXPRESSING YOURSELF WHILE AT THE SAME TIME FULFILLING OTHERS’ EXPECTATIONS

ABOVE: *Wild Bees* by Phil Ormsby, Flaxworks Theatre Company. Image: Phil Ormsby.



## New from VUP

*The Plays of Bruce Mason* is the first comprehensive survey of Mason's dramatic works.

In this critical overview, John Smythe interrogates each text to reveal a master craftsman's artistry, at the cutting edge of socio-political awareness.

Revelations about Mason's private life, necessarily secret at the time, and the discovery of a very personal play text, add to our understanding of his works. This book makes a strong case for Mason's plays being re-evaluated and taking their rightful place in contemporary New Zealand theatre.

John Smythe is the author of *Downstage Upfront* and founder of [theatreview.org.nz](http://theatreview.org.nz)

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In the Assembly the people would gather, listen to, discuss, and vote on decrees that affected every aspect of their lives. In the same way, they would gather at dramatic festivals sponsored by the city state, festivals of open debate, free of censorship or political interference with the state paying the entry fee for those too poor to afford it themselves.

Everyone would watch the shows, take them in and discuss the issues raised. Sometimes the discussion didn't wait till the end. Euripides was famously confronted by audience members early on in one of his plays, upset at a provocative speech. Sitting in the amphitheatre, he had to plead with his assailants to taihoa until all the characters had spoken their fill and the debate brought to its conclusion.

Theatre wasn't just another part of the entertainment scene, it was a community event with a civic function. It was valued by its audience because it told them something about the world and about themselves.

Theatres, whether they're the Fortune, The Court, BATS, the Mangere Arts Centre gather citizens together to watch, listen and think.

Television doesn't do the trick. It's not a place of assembly, its audience is fragmented

and isolated, it's aimed at market segments and household consumer demographics, it has ascending layers of moral and political guardians, it's shot through with propaganda from the market-place, it allows no time for reflection.

And movies? Movies are fantasy worlds where dreams come true for 90 minutes—no bad thing, of course.

Sure, there's a young audience out there, and other segment audiences, all of them wanting to be entertained by seeing themselves on stage. And there's an older audience that wants to patronise the arts and display its wealth and discrimination. But theatre seems not to have that audience of *citizens* that should be there. Theatre seems so marginal to what's going on. It didn't used to be. Or is that just the glow of past deeds?

If you want to know what's happening in a country, what the undercurrents are, theatre is where you should be watching and listening. If you're concerned for the country, that's where you should be writing. If you're running a theatre, this should be your priority.

ABOVE: *Wake Up Tomorrow* by Everybody Cool Lives Here, Circa Theatre. Image: Philip Merry.



# HOW TO MEASURE SUCCESS?

*Arthur Meek goes in search of the recipe for writing satisfaction.*

I'm currently renovating the most ambitious, most disastrous play in the history of New Zealand theatre: George Leitch's *The Land of the Moa* (1895).

I relate to George. After a couple of semi-successful forays into writing for the mainstream stage, he's fallen on hard times. After deep consideration of his circumstances and options he decides, as have I much more recently, that the fastest way he can dig himself out of his financial pit is to write, produce and star in a play. To maximise box-office he tries to portray the New Zealand landscape and culture in all its glory. He believes this will appeal to local and international audiences and investors. Entire tribes are roped in to perform haka on stage, and the climax of the melodrama is

an on-stage recreation of the Pink and White terraces being destroyed in the eruption of Mt Tarawera.

Need I say it doesn't work out? In shooting for the stars George winds up in the gutter and earns nothing but notoriety and debt.

120 years later, I'm trying to make the same show but better. I like what George was trying to do, and I think his folly has good bones.

I also think he made some poor decisions that I'm uniquely positioned to identify. I have the feeling that I can revamp it into the hit that he couldn't quite get. But perhaps I'm just insane.

I don't actually know why I write plays.

Perhaps it's just a nasty habit. I don't know why George and I both feel that writing a play is a solution to our problems or the way



to fulfil our ambitions. But one thing I don't think George had time to do was examine his motivations. Before I embark on his journey, I thought I'd try to examine mine. I talked to some friends and colleagues from different colours of the theatre rainbow. I asked the playwrights how they set about writing a play, and audience members what makes a play appealing to them. I wanted to use their insights to figure out whether, how and why I should write my *Moa*.

The first person I wanted to talk to was Emily Perkins. She insists on the following disclaimer: "First of all I would have to say I'm really not qualified to be interviewed by you for this piece. I'm happy to do it because I'm always happy to talk about myself, but I'm a complete newcomer to this form so I just have to say that before I say anything else." OK. She's new to the game, best known as a novelist. But whether it was beginner's luck or innate talent, her adaptation of *A Doll's House* for Auckland Theatre Company set me off on the journey that would lead to George's door.

---

## I HAVE TO ACCEPT THAT I'M NOT DOING SOMETHING NEW

ABOVE: *On the Conditions and Possibilities of Hillary Clinton Taking Me as Her Young Lover* adapted from the book by Richard Meros by Arthur Meek and Geoff Pinfield, Theatre Beating. Image: Goldthorpe Creative.



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## I THINK AND SPEAK IN A LANGUAGE THAT I'VE BORROWED

ABOVE: *A Doll's House* by Emily Perkins, adapted from Ibsen's original, Auckland Theatre Company. Image: Michael Smith.

By hitching her wagon to Ibsen, I felt Emily unburdened herself of the hassle of inventing character or plot from scratch. She became free to investigate the far more important question of how the ideas, themes, characters and spirit from *A Doll's House* exist in NZ today.

Most cleverly of all, from her audience's point of view, she took all the risk out of seeing a new New Zealand play. Safe in the knowledge that Ibsen's good, the question of Emily's ability becomes an interesting add-on, rather than the play's primary selling point – which it is whenever I invent a plot. Thanks to her, I decided my next play had to be an adaptation.

She made it seem so easy. I asked her what was tricky? "I think what was tricky is accepting that you have to serve the play."

I really like the idea of this. It totally contrasts with a different pressure that I feel and hate: the imperative to 'find your voice.' I've never known what that means. I think and speak in a language that I've borrowed wholesale from my neighbours and forebears. There's literally not an original idea in my head. Why have I been wasting so much time looking for my voice, when I could be locating the central idea in *Moa* and bringing my little talent to its service? That central idea – the thing that draws me to *Moa*, and to George – it might not be my individual voice but it's a sound that resonates with me.

Given that a big part of me operates in the hope that I might be able to get rich off writing this play, Roger Hall seems like a good person to talk to.

What's his formula? How can I turn my *Moa* into a hit? Roger provided me with a fascinating *to-don't*.



“I sometimes wonder if people get grants too soon, either in their writing careers or too soon before they’ve done a real amount of work (on the play). I think you should brood over plays for quite a long time, having two or three ideas on the go and eventually one comes bursting through and says ‘now’s the time to write me.’”

This was fascinating to me. Over the last few years I’ve expected the process to work like this. 1. I get a whiff of a good idea – say, adapting *Moa*. 2. Someone else pays me to explore it. I wonder if seeking significant buy-in from others at the pre-script stage may lead my plays in some strange directions. Besides, how can I convince anyone, let alone myself of the worth of a play, until I’ve written the damned thing?

That was how Roger wrote *Glide Time* (1976). It’s how he writes almost all of his plays. That’s how Roger gets bums on seats. In the late-seventies and eighties the audiences for a local hit were enormous, by any standard. And not just for Roger. Greg’s *Foreskin’s Lament*, Danny and Stephen’s *The Sex Fiend*, and Stephen and Anthony’s *Ladies’ Night* were moving from their premiere seasons in small theatres to runs at the Opera House. These plays were such a part of the public consciousness that they could be referenced in editorial cartoons. As for the money? If you had a smash hit like any of those, you could buy a house.

So what’s different now? Roger remembers that “in the late seventies early eighties new New Zealand plays were the talk of the chattering classes. Things like my first few plays and *Foreskin’s Lament* and then *Wednesday to Come*. People were aware of NZ drama.”

I think it’s fair to say this is no longer the case. Not in the terms that Roger was talking about. So given that, does he feel like my job as a playwright now is any different to what his was when he was starting out? He does not. Now, as then, Roger believes that “the playwright’s job is to fill the theatre.”

## Why Write:

STEPHEN SINCLAIR

### THEN

“I started out writing poetry, I still do actually for my sins, but it was quite dramatic poetry, and I became interested in oral poetry, so I thought ‘why not convert it into drama?’ Then the ‘81 Springbok tour came along and radicalised me and I decided that theatre needed to be a means of political change. I was making agit-prop theatre with a Pacific Island company I formed, Taotahi – a single-headed spear. We did one full length play, *Le Matou* – as far as I know the first stage play that explored the Pacific community. We got huge crowds along, we got hundreds of people turning up at these community centres and church halls around Wellington, in Porirua, it’s hard to believe now but it was recognised that drama was a means of promulgating political ideas.”

### AND NOW

“I don’t see people using theatre as a means of promulgating their opinions. We came out of a tumultuous time politically. There was a big push by feminism and issues of Māori sovereignty. Now, the issues are actually bigger. We’re staring down the barrel of self-annihilation, pollution and the geopolitical shift is a cause for concern. There’s not the same kind of hysteria about the Cold War or Nuclear proliferation but there are big, big movements and trends and power shifts. I suppose you’re better off going into politics to get your point of view across, or maybe TV.”





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## I'M COMPETING IN A MARKET WITH MULTIPLE NON-THEATRE OPTIONS

With who? Where are all these bums that used to buy Opera House seats? I talked to Rosabel Tan, the editor of *Pantograph Punch* and a self-described “sometimes-critic.” She’s a phenomenal consumer of theatre, since initially getting hooked in the days of The New Zealand Actors’ Company.

In Rosabel’s opinion, “theatre hasn’t changed, in the sense of the reason people make theatre, wanting to tell a story, wanting to explore an issue – that’s never going to change. But the ways in which we can do that is changing. The (UK’s) National Theatre filming their performances and broadcasting them across the world, that’s really interesting to me. America has a great podcasting culture.”

ABOVE: *Golf – A Love Story* by Roger Hall, Centrepoint Theatre. Image: Luke Anderson.

I agree that audiences have different avenues to consume content that would once have been staged, but when Roger and Stephen were filling the Opera House, audiences still had the option of watching films and TV. On the other hand, George Leitch didn’t manage to fill the same Opera House at a time when there were virtually no competing forms.

I feel like something else must be happening too. I wanted to talk to someone else who knew New Zealand theatre before the 1980s boom. So I talked to Nonnita Rees. Nonnita was one of the professional pioneers. She helped found Playmarket and became its first director. I wanted to know about the theatre scene that she found when she first rocked up.

“There weren’t a lot of playwrights at that point. I kind of met poets – people like Alistair (Te Ariki) Campbell were the first people I got to know.” That’s interesting to hear. Fifteen years before multiple Kiwi playwrights are filling the Opera House, there was hardly a playwright in town.

I asked her what the major difference between then and now is. “The thing now is that it’s absolutely normal that people make work for

local audiences, and there's a huge amount of it, and that's pretty interesting and pretty exciting to me." Having said that, her viewing habits have also changed. "I go to a wider range of art forms than I did. I go to art galleries, contemporary opera, that kind of stuff. I was probably quite narrow-minded and missionary about the theatre when I was younger."

So there's another significant thing going on here – intra-media competition for the cultural eyeball. I'm competing in a market with multiple non-theatre options, and also multiple theatre options. Talking to Nonnita made me realise something about my own attitude too. In the back of my mind I've been operating as if I'm some still some kind of theatre pioneer. Making shows that have never been done here before. It's not a delusion restricted to me – look at the emphasis placed on the development of new New Zealand theatre. Look at the cultural primacy afforded to venues and companies that premiere new work. As if the most pressing problem in our industry is a content vacuum. Luckily, *Moa* leaves me in no doubt. People were trying to blow up the Pink and White Terraces on stage 120 years ago. And pulling it off spectacularly. If I write my *Moa*, I have to accept that I'm not doing something new. Not one person will be buying a ticket for novelty value. It has to be compellingly good, in and of itself, and compared to everything else in any other medium *and* all the other shows in town.

How do I measure my play's success?

Remember how I've repeatedly said *Moa* was a big flop? Well, if you go online and read some reviews you'll find it's quite favourably mentioned. What history isn't telling us is that some of the more flattering newspapers had invested money in the production. *The Evening Post* virtually retracted the ho-hum review of one of their more empirical critics who clearly hadn't got the memo. Yes, George's play was spectacular. In the introduction to his edited edition, Adrian Kiernander notes that "the

## Why Write:

### BRIAR GRACE-SMITH

#### THEN

"I feel like in a lot of ways I fluked things. I was a trainee at the *Evening Post*. I was asked to go and interview Te Ohu Whakaari – a Māori theatre company up on Willis St. They were auditioning so I just pretended to audition. For me that was it. I spent the next year and a half touring with them to schools and prisons and universities performing the work we had devised ourselves."

#### AND NOW

"For me, it's always trying to push my own boundaries as a writer and not going into my default. I think it's very easy for me to ask 'what do I want to write about?' and similar things come up. So now it's always about challenging myself as a writer and questioning the stories I want to tell and why I want to tell them. (Asking whether) they're still helpful in terms of moving myself forward or making it relevant to what's happening today."



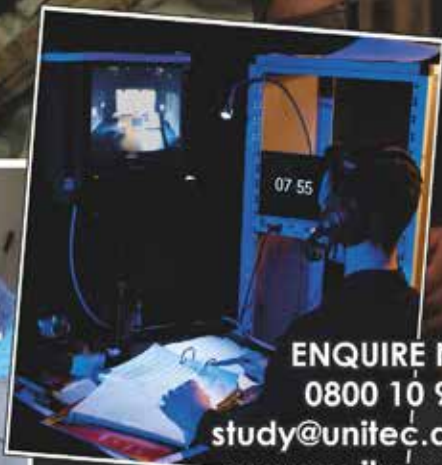
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production seems to have made the most of the sensation scenes, to the point of being dangerous.” Nothing wrong with that. “As a pictorial and spectacular entertainment, the production was taken seriously – as a piece of dramatic writing it was not, and probably it was never intended to be.”

It closed early almost everywhere. The company had to rush to the next town before word-of-mouth spread and undermined the LOM Dramatic Company’s fine propaganda. George finally got sick of this game when two of his leads rebelled against the idea of learning a replacement play at short notice and killed themselves. George’s final interaction with his production involved a plot to sell the show to another producer by stealing a script from the theatre.

So I don’t think George could honestly describe it as a success. I’m all for optimism, but I think it’s a good idea for me to identify some clear, tangible outcomes that I’d like from my play, so that I can measure the results against them and know where I’m really at in my writing.

It seems like these goals could involve money, social value, or both. Given that times have changed, should I give up on the idea of making any money from it?

Rosabel doesn’t think it’s that simple. “I don’t think we should be making (theatre) to make money, money shouldn’t be the driver, but it is one element of things being able to exist.” Why? “Because if we value something it makes money, so for theatre to not make money suggests that we don’t value it.” So will it be my fault if it doesn’t make money? “I don’t think it’s about blame but it is about being open to having conversations around why things might not be working and how we can change that. They’re the kind of questions we don’t really ask.”

Rosabel helped me realise that I’ve become incredibly good at not asking why I don’t make a lot of money off shows. Is the work I make not accessible, or not appealing enough? Is it not being staged in the right places? Is it costing me too much to put on, leaving little room for profit? Are ticket prices too high or too low? Instead of examining it like a business, and interrogating my expenses and incomings, I spend an inordinate amount of time gauging the success of my projects by other standards – purported social value, personal growth




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## YOU SHOULD BROOD OVER PLAYS

ABOVE: *Trees Beneath the Lake*  
by Arthur Meek, Auckland  
Theatre Company. Image:  
Michael Smith.





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– things that are so intangible that it means I can't feel like I've failed. Even though I haven't really succeeded either.

But surely there's a way to describe these non-monetary goals in a way that I can honestly measure? There is, and the person who articulated it most clearly to me, was Briar Grace-Smith (see sidebar). She talks of the measure not being against what the play is about, but how it's challenging her own boundaries of how she writes and why that's relevant.

Yet after talking to everyone I'm even more convinced than ever that it is important to set out to fill a theatre. No matter what size that theatre is. Monetary reward in the form of box-office receipts can and should be used as an indicator of the success of the show. So should my own sense that I've pushed myself into new territories as a writer and as a member of my community. To do this, I'm excited at the idea of excavating and serving a central question in the play that compels me to write it, and the people who are watching it to get out of their home, and to choose my show over the dozen or more other live performance options they have that night.

This suggests I need to work to examine my idea more closely. I need to test it in private to figure out whether this story really needs to be a play, or whether it's a podcast, a webisode or just a funny tweet. And if it is a play, I need to pursue the drafting process thoroughly at my own expense, so that by the time I ask for buy-in – be it from a theatre company, CNZ, or an audience – I know exactly what I'm selling them. And I need to remember that there's no rush. I'm not making work to fill a vacuum.

By taking my time and renovating it to modern building standards, it's just possible that I'll discover exactly why I've spent my adult life engaged in this strange and ancient craft – writing plays.

## Why Watch

### MICHAEL AND SHARON WRAY

#### THEN

"The very first experience I had, at fourteen or fifteen, was *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* by Dario Fo. I loved the verbosity and the dexterity of the word play and the speed with which those words were thrown at you. I'd never experienced anything like it before. It was a long time before I got the chance to go again. After I met Sharon we started feeding off each other's enthusiasm for theatre. Then it becomes part of your usual weekly routine. It's not a case of 'are we going to the theatre on Friday?' It's 'what's on that we're going to see?'. And gradually you find yourself getting absorbed into the ecosystem of Wellington theatre and that just feeds the addiction more."

#### AND NOW

"I think when you first start going you're seeing things that are the polished end product. As you get into it you're seeing things earlier and earlier in their development. So you're getting exposed to things that don't necessarily hit the mark for you and that's good and that's bad as well – a double-edged thing."



# WELLINGTON

BY HANNAH BANKS

Theatre in Wellington over the past year has had an air of potential. I feel like there might be a ray of hope for practitioners, amongst the crushing defeat of not getting funded again.

Hope came largely from BATS Theatre reopening at Kent Terrace. A venue so beautiful, it makes the Embassy next door look a bit shabby. Not only is BATS now the venue that Wellington artists deserve, it also has three performance spaces, making it the busiest and most vibrant theatre in this city. They reopened with the My Accomplice and Goldthorpe Creative's STAB production *Watch* by Uther Dean and Meg Rollandi in November, housed The Bacchanals' *Richard III* in January and then were completely overtaken by the New Zealand Fringe Festival. This was the first real test of BATS as a new multiple space venue and a stunning success – up to six shows a night and a hub-like feeling to the whole building.

2015 was a fantastic Fringe year. The outstanding shows included *Wake Up Tomorrow* by Everybody Cool Lives Here, but beyond this the Fringe felt like the battle of the solo show, with several excellent new pieces prompting a new Fringe Award for Best Writing. *Real Fake White Dirt* by Jess Holly Bates, *Loose: A Private History of Booze and Iggy Pop 1996-2015* by Jonny Potts, and *Rukahu* by James Nokise stood out amongst the crowd of strong voices with a lot to say.

Circa mixed their usual Broadway/ off-Broadway/ West End fare with some local writing and a few surprises. Circa did seem plagued with some unfortunate programming, such as putting the odd and poorly attended

*A Public Reading of an Unproduced Screenplay about the Death of Walt Disney* by Lucas Hnath in Circa One, while at the same time the riotous *Destination Beehive* by Pinky Agnew and Lorae Parry sold out every night in Circa Two.

However, Circa also had strong return seasons such as the Young and Hungry play *Second Afterlife* by Ralph McCubbin Howell, and the exceptional New Zealand Festival show *The Demolition of the Century* by Duncan Sarkies and Joe Blossom. Circa also showed that they are willing to take risks with devised works like the joyful *Don Juan* by A Slightly Isolated Dog, although that show seemed to struggle to find its audience.

I hope Circa continues to push the boundaries.

The Hannah Playhouse hosted a small number of companies while also housing Capital E National Theatre for Children and their productions *Grandad's Lucky Storm*, *An Awfully Big Adventure*, and the recently revived Gary Henderson play *Stealing Games*. They also hosted the short-lived but well received *White Elephant* by Barbarian Productions, and out-of-town companies like Massive with *The Brave*. The amount of time this theatre is dark is upsetting. Could it be like the illustrious Q Theatre in Auckland? It needs support and financial backing to transform the ground level into the theatre foyer and bar/restaurant with a stunning Courtenay Place entrance. This idea isn't new, but how do we make it happen?

Something exciting that was realised city-wide was the Ahi Kaa festival of Māori theatre and dance led by Tawata Productions. With six performances from six different



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

*Not in Our Neighbourhood* by Jamie McCaskill, Tikapa Productions. Image: Tim Elkington.

*How to Catch a Grim Reaper* by Helen Vivienne Fletcher, Young and Hungry, BATS. Image: Stephen A'Court.

*Labyrinthine* by Tabitha Arthur and company, Lightshade, NZ Fringe Festival 2015. Image: Chris Williamson.

*Don Juan* by A Slightly Isolated Dog. Image: Rosie Remmerswaal.

*Ngā Pou Wahine* by Briar Grace-Smith, Taki Rua Productions.

*Dead Tragic* by Michael Nicholas Williams, Circa Theatre. Image: Jasmyne Chung.

PREVIOUS PAGE: *Woyzeck* by Georg Büchner, adapted by Jonathon Hendry, Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School. Image: Philip Merry.

companies, Wellington felt alive with fresh and exciting theatre. I only managed to see two of the productions, but wish I had been able to see them all. *2080* by Aroha White at BATS gave us a shining glimpse of a new writer's talent, and *Not In Our Neighbourhood* by Jamie McCaskill (also at BATS) was one of the most effective and powerful pieces of theatre I have ever seen. I hope that this festival is here to stay.

At present there is a feeling of doom and gloom hanging over this city – no funding coming in and people leaving for Auckland. There is still so much worth fighting for. Every year the Theatre Programme at Victoria and Toi Whakaari pump out graduates who want to make theatre here. Part of the exodus problem could be that there are too many established artists in this city, stuck between BATS and Circa. A possible solution I see is for BATS to rise to the challenge their venue has put before them. They have the potential now to host those established practitioners making bigger work for higher ticket prices, while still inviting those emerging artists putting on their first show. They just have to want to be both of those things.

This city can thrive again, but the venues and companies need to support each other all the time, not just during festivals. We all get tired fighting this battle on our own.

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# Why I Wrote the Play I Wrote

AROHA WHITE

*on 2080.*

As a dystopian future, sixty-some years from now, *2080* imagines the inhabitants of Aotearoa forced to confront the increasing gap between rich and poor and the on-flow effects of over-population. The interplay of themes, both futurist and cultural has viewers classifying it “indigenous sci-fi”.

*2080* presents the audience with a world that failed to ask important questions while it still had the time and relative freedom to do so. With the inevitability of domestic, émigré and ‘greener-pastures’ population growth, I suggest we need to prepare ourselves for a time when what we consider now to be basic human rights may be considered luxurious.

*2080* was first developed in Tawata Productions’ Matariki Development Festival (MDF) in 2012. It got more firmly on its feet during MDF 2014. Later that year I was able to refine the script further with Auckland Theatre Company’s The Next Stage.

‘The Prevention of Dying’ was the original working title. Under this I investigated themes of oppression, mental health, poverty and, particularly, environmental refugees. Further research led me to classism and racism.

I began asking the questions: What creates racism? Is it fear? Misunderstanding? Learned prejudice? Or bigger than that, is it terror? Are we really afraid of faces we don’t

recognise, cultures or languages we don’t understand?

I questioned that parochial, fear-inducing statement I’ve heard all too frequently in recent years: “They’re coming here, buying up all the land and all the businesses, we need to be careful”. It’s up to us how we respond. Will it be with fear or with acceptance? What if we let go of the concept that things can be preserved the way they are right now and just accept that everything will change? An exploration of these uncertainties underpins *2080*’s occasionally uncomfortable narrative.

I took the working title ‘The Prevention of Dying’ literally. I started exploring themes of self-preservation. To what lengths will humans go to preserve themselves? Cosmetic surgery, synthetic blood transfusion, tracking implants, gene mapping, injecting god-knows-what into god-knows-where. How long before we’re downloading DNA to grow newer, better organs?

Also, how far will we go with surveillance and CCTV? To what degree will freedom and privacy become the casualties of our quest for safety?

At the time, the US financial crisis was all over the news. Debt had reached Depression-era highs and there was talk of people leaving the country in search of greener pastures.

I guess this media-induced anxiety helped give birth to the *2080* world, along with its concept of a three-state Aotearoa: New Zealand First, Second and Third.

New Zealand First is situated in Te Ika a Maui (the North Island), stretching from Cape Reinga to Palmerston North. All of NZ's current inhabitants, regardless of their birthplace or chosen home are translocated to NZ First. As the wealthiest of the three states – the people of privilege – NZ First casts a dark reflection on our society's fetish for wealth and security.

All of Te Wai Pounamu (the South Island) is renamed 'NZ Second'. This territory is essentially leased to 25 million Americans who escape their declining economy with their financial security intact. Although NZ Second's inhabitants managed to relocate much of their wealth, they are still essentially second-tier citizens – not in the rightful land of NZ First. NZ Second questions the effects of population influx, how it is currently being responded to, and how it may be responded to in the future.

New Zealand Third – where the story unfolds and unravels – is situated in the bottom of Te Ika a Maui, covering Poneke (Wellington) and the Kapiti Coast district. Rapidly dilapidating, NZ Third is the home/ holding zone to the population of the Pacific Islands (totaling 1.5 million) after the islands have been deserted, semi-submerged or devastated by the effects of climate change. NZ Third is the lower class, a crucible of struggle and suffering with little hope of escape. They provide a mirror to the current situation for many of our most disadvantaged. As the poverty gap continues to increase this becomes a very real possibility for our society's future.

Theatre is an amazing medium, a forum where freedom of ideas still reigns supreme. Formless and flexible, it invites audiences to engage the imagination. We're lucky here in New Zealand. We have the right to think and speak openly, to stand on a stage before a




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## A FORUM WHERE FREEDOM OF IDEAS STILL REIGNS SUPREME

crowd of hundreds and express our craziest hopes and most intimate worries.

I value the independent nature of theatre. There isn't anyone else deciding what stories we can tell. Every piece we write and perform, each playwright and actor contributes to furthering theatre. Although the theatre world has its structures, a nurturing of the art-form itself often shares pole-position with commercial necessity. At the end of the day if you have a solid team and a story that needs to be told nothing can stop you from telling it. *2080* was recently presented as part of Wellington's inaugural Ahi Kaa Festival at BATS, produced by Hāpai Productions with Wing Horn Tail, directed by Katie Wolfe and featuring a brilliant cast: Nua Finau, Susie Berry, Erroll Anderson and Acushla-Tara Sutton.

ABOVE: Aroha White.

# HOW TO CHANGE THE WORLD

*Renee Liang in conversation with Jess Sayer and Jamie McCaskill.*

**Renee:** How did you start writing?

**Jess:** My parents were going through a horrific divorce, and I started writing dialogue to try and get it out. I didn't know I was writing a play. Then I saw *The Creditors* by August Strindberg, and after that I was inspired. Friends encouraged me to send it in to Playmarket's b4 25 competition, and then Stuart Hoar encouraged me to keep writing. So I decided I'd go to drama school to learn how to be a writer.

**Renee:** Are you an actor because it will help your writing?

**Jess:** I think they're useful tools for each other. As a writer you understand script and as an actor you understand motivation. Do you both act as well?

**Renee:** I'm not shy, I do performance poetry, but I prefer to leave the craft of acting to people who are more skilled.

**Jamie:** I wrote out of necessity to get myself on stage. Writing for me was an 'in'. Then I started appreciating the craft of writing, and found I could give the moment over to other actors.

I'm usually involved in my plays some way. I'm looking forward one day to the anonymity of sitting in an audience and watching something I had no hand in.

**Jess:** My first time not being involved as either actor or writer was a production of my play *Wings* at BATS – that was a surreal experience.

**Jamie:** I run a small production company called Tikapa Productions (named for the Firth of Thames where I'm from) with my partner (Kali Kopae), mainly to do my own stuff. We brought in Sonia Hardie who's a legend production manager, so I can focus on the artistic side of the company – it's a great relationship we have. I only started directing recently, I do sound design as well. I work with a lot of musos, so bring my mates in to work on a show.

**Renee:** What drives us to write? Is it because you can't not write? If I haven't been writing for a while, I feel low.

**Jess:** I wouldn't know what to do with my time otherwise. When I'm writing, I get into it for about four days. If anyone tries to talk to me they just die, but after that I find it hard to come back to. I need a workshop or something to make me revisit it.

**Jamie:** I find it hard to read my own stuff, so I miss deadlines out of procrastination.

**Renee:** Do you push yourself? I'm always trying to do something I haven't done before. I just finished writing an existentialist



tragicomedy because I've never done one before. I find it really exciting that I can just try something in theatre and train myself.

**Jess:** I don't think of much else than the story or characters – it will hit me and then I'll write it out. It's never planned. Structure is my weakest point. Sometimes I'll get 50 pages in before I realise what's happening.

I write dark comedies – the knife-edge of sanity really interests me, and strong roles for women. What I have to say makes me different to my peer group. I watch people on the street, get whole new characters out of just talking to someone, or the way they wave – I'm creepy.

**Renee:** You know that mental tape recorder writers have? So if you're in a situation – say a really bad audition, or someone is a bitch, at least you can press record and store material for later use.

**Jess:** You catch a bit of dialogue and then you start following them around the room...

**Renee:** A tip I give students is to sit at bus stops and write things down. Have you ever hidden away at a party just to quickly write something down?

**Jamie:** I have typed on my phone.

**Jess:** Me too.

**Renee:** Has where you've lived shaped what you write?

**Jamie:** I grew up in Thames, but moved away when I was 17. I was back there for three years recently – now I'm writing a trilogy getting deep in the guts of raw rural men – how racist

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**I DON'T THINK I SHOULD  
BE FORCED INTO ONE  
PATH OF STORYTELLING.**

ABOVE: *Wings* by Jess Sayer,  
Palindrome Productions.  
Image: Rebecca Tate.



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## FOR ME THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES

ABOVE: *A Tale of 3 Lonely Men and their quest for an Audience with the elusive Mōa* by Jamie McCaskill and Craig Geenty, Tikapa Productions, Putahi Festival 2015. Image: Hone Kouka.

and homophobic they are. There are some gold characters in those small towns. Where did you grow up Jess?

**Jess:** I was born in Whangarei, then at five we moved to Brunei. We got to travel a lot – when we moved back, even as an 11-year-old I could see how people treated each other, how some didn't have broad minds. It was a beautiful place to grow up though. Everyone you meet plays a part in what you have to say and how you see things.

**Jamie:** I remember one time we did a show in Dargaville, this woman in a mobility scooter decided to leave. So halfway through I hear this “beep beep beep” and I'm like, “good to be here Dargaville!” We only did one show but it was full. They came with boxes of beer and stood around the walls.

**Renee:** Do you find you have a writer label? That once you've written something, you're expected to keep pumping out the same stuff? And also, is there ethnic labelling?

**Jamie:** I think there are certain responsibilities as a Māori artist, to my own community, which is fine. It used to bother me but less now that I'm more confident in what I have to offer. There's the stereotype, sure – “be a nice Māori, don't scare anyone, play happy music.” The whole discussion about what is Māori theatre – it's so nebulous. Aroha White for example has written a Māori sci-fi play that doesn't fit into the mould.

**Renee:** We all write according to our backgrounds right? Replace Māori with Asian and – really there's no such thing as an Asian play. I happen to be Asian and I write it, therefore it must be an Asian play. Of course I'm going to write from my background, because those are the things I know.



**Jamie:** It can be inspiring for your community to do that, especially young people. I see how Ahi (Karunaharan) has done great things for the South Asian community with his work. But as a writer, you can't be stuck with just that one thing.

**Jess:** I've never really thought about having a label. It makes me really sad to think that people would expect one thing of you and not let you write whatever you like. I don't think I should be forced into one path of storytelling.

**Renee:** I wanted to touch on that idea of responsibility to community. The flip side is that after writing the stories of one community for a while, you get special access. It can be a double-edged sword. People open up and give me privileged information, but there's the expectation that I will show it in a good light. Yet as a writer I want to investigate the light and dark.

**Jamie:** For me there are many different communities – Māori, theatre, and many others. Some practitioners have a certain vision on how things should be presented. When I started writing with a different political edge, I worried that I wasn't getting this 'Māori theatre' thing right, maybe even that I was being anti-Māori.

**Renee:** Non-Māori playwrights are also very scared of coming across the wrong way when writing Māori characters...

**Jess:** That happens even in acting – when my partner and I did (Gary Henderson's) *Mo And Jess Kill Susie* some people boycotted the play because we weren't Māori, even though I am part Māori.

**Jamie:** People boycott my shows for not being Māori enough. That's just the way it is. You don't want to self-censor, and you don't want to preach to the converted all the time, but to have their support is good. But you can get through to other people as well. I've written this play about Women's Refuge and people have said, well who are you to write

about this, you're a man. And I just have to accept that some people will choose not to watch because of that.

**Jess:** Do you write for certain people? I usually write with specific people in mind.

**Renee:** My last few plays – I get the actors on board before I write. It can backfire – if they're then unavailable I find it hard to see anyone else in the role.

**Jamie:** I used to write for my mates, but as I've got into the craft of writing I've started writing more for characters.

**Renee:** How about writing blocks? Anything you do to get over them? I'm going to admit I'm a nerd. I draw graphs and make timelines. I think it's just procrastination, but I kid myself it works.

**Jess:** I try to write a synopsis, but they just make me feel like my idea is really bad. I usually start writing dialogue and then I get an idea and write more but it's not in order – it's messy. Once I get going it will just come out, but sometimes I realise I hate it, and I throw it in this folder labelled 'shit' and never look at it again.

**Jamie:** I've started writing the synopsis first. I used to start with dialogue, but now I write the structure before I put in the dialogue. I find it a much more economical way of writing, because I've already got the story sorted. I get the structure stuff from writing for TV.

**Renee:** What draws you back to theatre?

**Jamie:** TV is good for the money and the discipline of writing in a structure, but theatre is so much more freeing. You can fuck with your audience, pull them with you. I do theatre as more an expression of different thoughts – I write theatre to change the world.

**Renee:** I've noticed that audiences who come to plays tend to be more cerebral.

**Jess:** People come to plays to think. That's what I like doing – not spoon feeding, having layers and twists and turns and playing with them.

# THE INTRICATE ART OF PACKHUNTING THE BEAST

*Natasha Hay talks with playwrights adept at working collectively about the art of collaboration.*

Theatre by its very nature is a public forum. It makes sense that the art of writing for the stage needn't be a lonesome pursuit carried out in the privacy of one's own imagination. Alone at the keyboard is ultimately the writer's fate, but many playwrights find huge benefits from working in tandem along the way or devising from the get-go, sharing ideas and letting the work evolve as a living, breathing entity.

But just how easy is it for a writer to work as part of a creative team sharing the authorship, especially if you're the one with the vision and ideas and earned your stripes flying solo?

For Eli Kent, the process of writing a play has always been hugely collaborative: "I'm not someone who can hole up in a shack somewhere and work tirelessly by myself on some 'masterpiece'. I'm incredibly self-conscious and wracked with doubt about everything I write. So I have to bounce ideas off other people to get a sense of what's

interesting or relevant to others, to problem-solve, to expand on the theme."

Vela Manusaute feels his best work happens when sharing ideas with other creative people all gunning for the same idea – not forgetting the need to make South Auckland laugh. Most of his Kila Kokonut Krew work, he says, has been devised. "It's an organic process that only comes alive on the floor. And it's faster this way. I've more options collaborating with other people – and I know what works and what doesn't. The strength of collaborations is that I as a writer get more out of it."

This is especially true, says Rachel Callinan, if you are collaborating with someone you click with – a trusted sounding board to bounce ideas off. "You can disregard crap ideas quickly and pick apart trickier ideas... I feel as though a script comes into shape a lot faster when there's a team working around it.

"When things aren't going great, and you're working alone, it can sometimes turn into a real stumbling block, but if you're working



I'VE MORE OPTIONS  
COLLABORATING WITH  
OTHER PEOPLE

alongside someone who is in the work as deep as you are, you get over yourself pretty quickly.

“However, for me personally, writing solo and being alone with an idea for a long period of time tends to bring out a lot more complexity and subtlety, and the ‘quiet’ of working alone allows you to really dig deep into ideas.”

Hunting in a pack, according to Jo Randerson, means there are more of you to catch the beast – “that entity often unknown, a mysterious but uniquely formed creature of its own right, perpetually just around the corner”.

The challenge however, she says, is to stay focused and not run off in all directions.

“Or, you all run off but make sure you come back together. It’s not that everything has to be done collectively. But that we don’t abandon collective responsibility and just rely on one hunter to catch the beast.”

So is it the writer’s role to get to the core of what the “beast” is? Sure, says Kent, but it’s actually a job that falls to everyone involved in regards to their part. “What we do in our

company (Playground Collective) is try and define early on what the central question of the show is. It’s not always a question, but a sentence that sums up for everyone what we’re trying to achieve. We write it up on the wall and always refer to it and ask ourselves whether what we’re doing is holding the question. But everybody – director, writer, actor, designer – strays from it at some point.”

A big plus for Kent when making devised theatre is the design can be fully integrated from the start. Writing solo means it’s harder to get a sense of what it’s actually going to look like – what the images are.

“The designers are there in discussion with everyone else. This means that you don’t just get a surface idea layered over performance, but a fleshed-out world with its own laws, its own way of being inhabited. The actors understand how they can move around the world and the limits of the world. The world that the designers have created might shape what needs to be said in words.”

Randerson recalls a conference where a senior playwright spoke passionately about the necessity of the writer in the process – that a project wouldn't fly without this role.

“While I have seen many productions that are not developed with integrity, that fail to hit home to an audience and that lack intention and purpose I do not see the ‘writer’ as the only person capable of providing this. I know designers, directors, performers and producers who can also steer a project towards a focused sense of meaning...

“I don't see the playwright as the top of the hierarchy in the theatre-making process. Until we can shift the dominance of this thinking, we will continue in a 20th-century mindset of theatre being ‘plays’.” Collective ownership of a work creates an extremely powerful performance, she stresses.

Having said that, she admits that as a writer you're expected to assert your voice.

“Maybe you are allowed to stamp your foot, too, and insist on something – a word, or phrase, or pause... The word ‘writer’ to me is almost interchangeable with ‘designer’ – someone who authors a certain part of the process.

“I like to let the process evolve depending on the gathering of people involved and what their strengths and desires are, and the needs of the particular project. ...[As] a writer in any kind of process, I try to speak up when I feel I have something to offer, and to listen, and to put forward anything I can which I think may be of use. I can't always delineate or define exactly how the process works, but it works.”

Really, it's about being flexible, almost like flying a kite. “There are elements out of your control, and you have to find a way to land the kite by working with the wind.”

So what does the writer bring that is essential to the whole process? Apart from the ubiquitous biscuits for meetings, Callinan quips, it's the skills of crafting a narrative.

“You can get together and talk around ideas and scenarios until you're blue in the face, but at some point you have to make a decision



– actually put on paper your little nuggets of discovery, fitting them together in a way that stays true to the overarching idea. You're a decision-maker in a sense, and need to pick and choose the best and most useful bits.

“Creativity really flies when you have boundaries, and I see the script – or the act of writing and recording the product of a collaboration – as setting a framework to work inside, or outside of, especially when going into a workshop environment; it's creating a point of reference to work from. I've definitely been in situations where ideas get overcooked, you drift further and further sideways ... You need to trust your gut, follow a narrative path that feels right... And whether it is or it isn't, you create a point of reference that you as a team can work from.”

Making sure everyone is on the same page is the stuff of collaboration, says Manusaute. Essential to the process is having a writer who listens.

“Sometimes as a writer we are very precious about what we want to say – but sometimes it does not work or serve the purpose of the play... It's hard being a playwright and trying to explain my ideas to actors and the people I work with, so they can get what I mean.”

So vision and ideas are necessary, he says, but equally important is acute listening for what actually works for an audience.

Randerson agrees: “I have to listen hard when I am writing in a devising process.



Listen for what I don't like, because there may be a prejudice that I have there. Sometimes the things that annoy me become the strongest parts of a work. I listen to the way all the different voices express their feelings/thoughts, or don't express them. Listen for the ways they are silent and what that means. It can feel more like an editing process."

This is something Kent relishes: "I love being a recorder in the devising process, picking up morsels of improvised genius offered up by the performers/makers, helping to string it all together."

After all, a writer's talents are language and dramatic structure. "Sometimes I generate crazy amounts of content, a lot of which never gets used; other times I'm just helping to piece together what actors have come up with. I'd say the main things that remain the same are guiding how people talk so there's a consistency in style and tone, and guiding the arc of the piece.

"I feel like I'm selling myself short," he says, laughing. "But that's the thing I love about devised theatre. When it's all finished, you're not sure who came up with what at which point. Everyone owns the thing together."

This reminds him of another strength of devised theatre: "It allows me and my friends to make shows that are more abstract than we would otherwise make sitting alone at a computer with our logical, literal minds. Shows that feel like songs. Where the meaning is felt. You know how with good songs, you feel something then you pick over the lyrics trying to dig deeper into what that feeling is? Good theatre is like that to me."

PREVIOUS PAGE: *All Your Wants and Needs Fulfilled Forever* by The Playground Collective. Image: Sarah Burrell.

ABOVE: *Break Up [We Need to Talk]*, by Binge Culture Collective. Image: Goldthorpe Creative.

ABOVE LEFT: *White Elephant* by Barbarian Productions, Barbarian and Show Pony. Image: Owen McCarthy.



# PIPA PROGRAMMES 2015 SEASON



## AUGUST

### Deadline for 2016 PIPA enrolments

Friday 14th

Submit queries and applications to  
Recruitment Liaison, **Louise Tu'u**

Louise.Tu'u@best.ac.nz

### Audition Dates for 2016 PIPA enrolments

Saturday 29th  
Pacific Institute of Performing Arts (PIPA)

48 Rosebank Road  
Avondale

## SEPTEMBER

### Callbacks for 2016 PIPA enrolments

Saturday 5th

Pacific Institute of Performing Arts (PIPA)

48 Rosebank Road  
Avondale

### Going Solo – Diploma 2 (D2) Various Directors

Tuesday 1st – Thursday 3rd with  
matinee date TBC

Ticket & Booking fees apply

Basement Theatre

Lower Greys Ave

Auckland CBD

0508 484 253  
<http://www.iticket.co.nz/>

### Dance Production – Diploma 1 (D1)

8pm, Thursday 10th – Saturday 12th with  
matinee date TBC

Ticket & Booking fees apply

Mangere Arts Centre

Corner Bader Drive and Orly Avenue  
Mangere

09 262 5789

<http://www.eventfinder.co.nz/venue/mangere-arts-centre-ng-tohu-uenuku-auckland-south-mangere>

# DECEMBER

## Graduation (Invite only)

Friday 11th

Pacific Institute of Performing Arts (PIPA)

48 Rosebank Road

Avondale

# NOVEMBER

## Graduation production – Diploma 2 (D2)

8pm, Thursday 5th – Saturday 7th

Ticket & Booking fees apply

Mangere Arts Centre

Corner Bader Drive and Orly Avenue  
Mangere

09 262 5789

<http://www.eventfinder.co.nz/venue/mangere-arts-centre-ng-tohu-uenuku-auckland-south-mangere>

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# Why I Wrote the Play I Wrote

SAM BROOKS

*on Riding in Cars with (Mostly Straight) Boys.*

“Have you ever been in love with a straight guy?”

Before I wrote a single word of *Riding in Cars with (Mostly Straight) Boys*, I texted my friend this innocuous question.

“Um, yes,” was the response.

And so I decided to write a play about a guy who falls in love with straight guys, much like how Blanche always relied on the kindness of strangers, or how Ash Ketchum could never quite beat the Pokémon League.

I love writing gay characters. Not only because they reflect me, a gay man, but because there’s so many stories that we haven’t seen with a gay perspective. Stories that can even gain clarity when told with gay rather than straight characters.

In one of my other plays *And I Was Like* a man gets into an emotionally abusive relationship with a man who is a voluntary mute (he refuses to talk to anybody). If you change the gender of either of those people, you’re suddenly engaging with thousands of years of enforced gender roles. And while those are obviously fascinating and important to examine, engaging with them can cloud the intent of the writing.

Painted with broad strokes – because those are the most useful strokes with which to cover an entire canvas – audiences have

been treated to gay stories like they’re windows into a particularly sad-looking, unclean house. We’re not asked to empathise with Bernadette in *Priscilla*, or Ennis Del Mar in *Brokeback Mountain*, we sympathise with them and how bad their lives are.

It’s really hard being gay, you guys.

Everybody on the sexuality and gender spectrums has experience with unrequited love. What I wanted to do with *Riding in Cars with (Mostly Straight) Boys* was throw a character – the motor-mouthed, emotionally dysfunctional and profoundly self-obliterating Kyle – into the abyss that is unrequited love and tear apart why that kind of love even exists. Can we control who we fall in love with, or do we settle for unrequited love because it’s safer, and easier than establishing a relationship with somebody who might love us back?

There’s a clarity in the complete certainty of unrequited love that a gay person being in love with a straight person provides a writer. You never have to wrestle with the concept of ‘he could love me if I was thinner/smarter/prettier/had better taste in music’, because one of your characters likes penises and the other one simply doesn’t.

As Kyle’s best friend describes, it’s like



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## SO MANY STORIES THAT WE HAVEN'T SEEN

‘banging up against a wall wishing it was a door’.

The play swerves around a corner when a straight guy that Kyle has declared his love for earlier in the play reveals that he is actually gay. Our main character goes through a breakdown, and immediately falls out of love with him.

(Tip: When writing a play about men who fall in love with each other, pronouns are your worst enemy. Avoid if at all possible.)

Throughout the play, Kyle recites a memory he has from being a teenager at swimming sports. A boy emerges from the water, the most beautiful thing Kyle has ever seen, but then he accidentally touches the boy and he turns from this thing of pristine beauty into tar, and the entire world turns to black.

It’s his self-loathing made concrete: the idea that if somebody is touched by him, tainted by him, let alone even interested in him that person is worthless to him.

There’s only so much paper in the world, so I’ll brush over the bleak phenomena that is gay self-loathing, but it is definitely a thing, and it’s definitely present in *Riding in Cars with (Mostly Straight) Boys*.

Of course self-loathing isn’t just present in gay people. Just like everybody has fallen

in love with somebody who doesn’t love them back, everybody has also hated themselves just a little bit. Maybe those things aren’t necessarily separate.

The thing I’m proudest of with *Riding in Cars with (Mostly Straight) Boys*, other than the title, is how the play manages to make universal one very specific, very gay person’s complete inability to accept not only love, but even the possibility of being loved.

We’re living in 2015. Elvis Presley’s granddaughter is in the fourth *Mad Max* film, gluten is public enemy number one and gay people can get married in America. Gay characters can stop being the windows into a terrible world hidden behind closet doors. Gay characters have their own struggles, thoughts, ideas and situations that are unique to them, but hey, just might reflect problems that are universal, who would’ve thought?

I mean, who hasn’t fallen in love with a straight guy who then turned out to be gay. And then they broke down to their best friend, a straight guy who they had also been in love with, while ‘How Bizarre’ by OMC plays?

ABOVE: *Riding in Cars with (Mostly Straight) Boys* by Sam Brooks. Image: Tegan Good.

# MOVING BETWEEN MEDIA

*Bevin Linkhorn talks to writers about the transition  
from theatre to film and back again.*

What's the secret to forging a professional career as a playwright in New Zealand? And by professional what I really mean is "make a living". One strategy is to get a play produced at every single theatre in the country, sit back and wait until the royalties roll in. That's possible, right?

Another way is to supplement playwriting with work in other dramatic mediums. Film, television, trans-media and the gaming industry are all creative industries where the playwright can work. But what specific value do playwrights offer screen work and work in other mediums?

I talked with a variety of New Zealand playwrights who have turned to writing for the screen, alongside their theatre work.

Anthony McCarten has written plays, novels and screenplays (recently receiving a BAFTA for his work on *The Theory of Everything*) – often adapting his own work from one form to another. He started his professional life as a playwright and screenwriter, and then

progressed to novels. He says his early work taught him the importance of story and plot – perhaps the most important building blocks for any form of drama.

"The novel, screenplay and stage play all offer a variety of technical and emotional challenges for the writer. The skills you learn from each are in part transferable between the mediums.

"Playwriting taught me how much of the action could be contained purely in what is said. My novels, as a result, probably contain a little more dialogue than you normally see. Also, I learned the dramatic importance of making characters speak in a distinctive way that is unique to them. Novelists often overlook this, and have everyone speak more or less the same. This is not true to life.

"A play needs to be built around a strong unifying premise and three questions: what does this character want, how do they try to get it, and what do they actually end up with? I find myself asking the same questions of all my characters in all my stories."



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AS PLAYWRIGHTS  
WE NATURALLY GIVE  
OURSELVES  
PERMISSION TO PLAY  
WITH LANGUAGE



Briar Grace-Smith is another playwright who has combined a career working in theatre and for the screen. She's noticed that playwrights tend to put characters first when writing for the screen.

“One thing that playwrights tend to bring to their work for screen is that characters really determine the plot. So the character is first. I find that as a playwright I concentrate heavily on characters and I find with people that haven't been involved in theatre that sometimes there's too much plot driving the story and it doesn't make for a drama that is as compelling. It can be quite an unsatisfying watch when the plot is driving something and characters are being forced to do something that goes against who you've set them up as. So there's a real truth to theatre.”

This sentiment was echoed by Jamie McCaskill who has recently started writing for the screen. With his plays he's character led, whereas in screen work – because of the technical and visual requirements – he finds

he is more likely to be more present in the writing.

“I've found that in writing for screen I have to keep the visual language alive in how I write, so Jamie the writer is always in charge. But in writing for theatre, I find that the characters take on a life of their own. The characters are in charge in theatre, not the writer.”

Sophie Henderson adapted her own one-woman play into the film *Fantail*. In the adaptation process she learnt that she had to find the heart of the story.

“Theatre is in a wide shot. And it's locked off. You can't really tell the audience where to look. They're just looking at whoever is talking or whoever is moving. And all you've got to reveal story or character is conversation, body language and gesture – and devices like soliloquies. Whereas in film you can use imagery as exposition instead of dialogue. You can put the camera wherever you want. You can show what somebody is thinking, without them having to speak it.



Grace-Smith believes that playwrights are more used to playing with language in theatre, so they bring that skill to screen work.

“We have huge permission to play with language when it comes to theatre. So we can go into poetry and can really push the boundaries of language. There are some screenwriters that say that everyone should talk naturalistically in film, but I would completely disagree with that. Usually when I write for film I take all of those permissions I’ve been given in theatre and I bring them into film and it enriches the experience.

“As playwrights we naturally give ourselves permission to play with language, but often screenwriters that haven’t been through theatre, they don’t give themselves permission. It’s all about pulling language back, and making it sparse and very real.

“We have real appreciation for the spoken word. It’s as important as the visuals. I spend a lot of time thinking about how characters speak when I’m writing film.”

So is it difficult switching between the mediums? McCarten says he finds it refreshing and rejuvenating, rather than difficult.

“The lessons I learn in one medium sometimes offer exciting possibilities when transferred to another. Such as using film-editing techniques in a novel, cutting between scenes rapidly as in a movie, or having the narrative effectively reproduce a zoom in to an extreme close up, conveying this in language rather than image.”

But it can be difficult switching between the mediums too. Grace-Smith explained that although she found the transition from theatre to film to be a smooth and positive experience, switching back has been more difficult.

“Once I transitioned into film I found it really hard to go back to theatre, because my mind was operating in a way that meant it couldn’t stay still. So I found it really hard to sit in a scene and feel it was OK to let characters talk forever. When I went back to theatre I felt I had something on my back telling me to hurry up and asking me ‘what’s the point?’



Where is this going?’ So it took me quite a while to let that go and be still and enjoy having that amazing freedom that you have in theatre to use words and language to tell a story simply through character. It was harder to go back to theatre than to leave it, and I’m not sure what that’s about.”

Playwriting can also provide the frustrated screenwriter with an outlet. Hewison suggests that if a screenwriter is having trouble writing a treatment or a script, then throw that to one side for a while and write the play version of the story.

“That way at least the process of writing the play will inform the treatment or screenplay you’re writing. Even if nothing happens with your play, even if you don’t get it on, at least you’ve spewed out sixty pages of scenes, actions, dialogue.”

“I like that when I write a play I have so many less people to answer to. I find it quite freeing. The most fun I have writing is when I’m writing plays.”

PREVIOUS PAGE: *Jingles: The Musical* by Dean Hewison, Out of Bounds. Image: Tabitha Arthur.

ABOVE: *Fantail* screenplay by Sophie Henderson, directed by Curtis Vowell. Image: Coralee and Alex de Freitas.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: *Moon at the Bottom of the Garden* by Sarah McDougall, Moon Productions, Otago Arts Festival. Image: Sarah McDougall. *The War Play* by Philip Braithwaite, Fortune Theatre. Image: Lara Macgregor. *Ladies Night* by Stephen Sinclair and Anthony McCarten, Fortune Theatre. Image: Lara Macgregor.

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# DUNEDIN

BY TERRY MACTAVISH

How gratifying at a recent welcome for Otago University Arts Fellows to hear them express astonishment at Dunedin's vibrant art scene. The past year has been lively indeed with two stimulating Festivals and 80 plus reviews of Dunedin theatre on *Theatreview*.

Under inspirational director Lara Macgregor, professional theatre Fortune has consistently delivered quality productions based on bold programme choices, and supported the theatre community with innovative ventures like the 4x4 Young Playwrights Initiative and 86 hour Shakespeare Marathon.

The chief New Zealand work was *The War Play*, writer Philip Braithwaite's moving quest to discover the truth of the WW1 disgrace of his Great-Uncle Jack, but Macgregor's outstanding production of Pinter's *The Caretaker* was also made frighteningly relevant by its staging – in the waterfront's eerily atmospheric Shed 40 – and the current upturn in homelessness.

Fortune began 2015 charmingly with *Outside Mullingar* (director Lisa Warrington), a reminder that theatre can be heart-warming as well as confrontational. *Punk Rock*, directed faultlessly by Macgregor is better described as heart-shattering. This stunning exploration of youthful violence was a collaboration with the renowned University Theatre Studies Department, also responsible for the wonderful verbatim work on dementia, *The Keys Are in the Margarine*, and the arresting *Laramie Project*.

Spawned by this department, daring young company Counterpoint (director Bronwyn Wallace) has flourished, giving fantastic opportunities to youthful practitioners.

Performances, often in the old Athenaeum, include homegrown scripts (Sainsbury's *The Mall*; Plumb's *The Cape*; Rosie Howells' *Grimey Times*).

Other exuberant university offshoots include Improsaurus (improvisation), and hysterical comedy group Discharge, celebrating 2014 with *Mary's Christmas*, and back for Fringe Festival with the irresistible *Benedict Cumberbatch Must Die* (Abby Howells).

Further exciting Festival performers that Dunedin can at least partially claim include luminous Trick of the Light (*Beards Beards Beards*), lovely Ake Ake Theatre Company (*Sisters in Arms*), impressive soloists Jan Bolwell (*Bill Massey's Tourists*) and Jodie Bate (*Amputation of Personality*), and Brophy Aerial Studio's dazzling contribution to *Metamorphosis*. Sarah McDougall's sensitive interpretation of 1955 "jukebox murder" *Moon at the Bottom of the Garden* was given polished direction by Julie Edwards.

The Globe Theatre has achieved marvels this year. A campaign led by Rosemary Beresford raised half a million to restore the enchanting heritage building, while they somehow still mounted fine productions including imaginative Shakespeare, local Keith Scott's *Tin Can Tourists* and *Verdict*, produced jointly with the trusty Playhouse.

"Dear names, and thousand other throng to me!" – I regret the lack of space to mention many splendid productions: so many gallant little troupes, in gorgeous venues like the Mayfair or quirky ones like the Gasworks Museum, presenting magnificent opera (*This Other Eden*) or charming plays for children (*Steam Punch*). Bravo, all.



# Why I Wrote the Play I Wrote

RALPH MCCUBBIN HOWELL

*on The Bookbinder.*

*The Bookbinder* is a play I very nearly didn't write. We were right in the thick of rehearsals for our STAB show, *Broken River* – a political, magical epic about dairying and irrigation, which left us feeling as rooted as a Canterbury creek. Somewhere between the sprawling cast size and kinetic water sculpture, my partner in crime Hannah Smith and I decided the next Trick of the Light show should be very very small.

We had the idea of staging a production in a bookshop – adapting a picture book by Chris Van Allsburg called *The Wreck of the Zephyr* with a staging which would see the story spill from the pages and into the space, shifting from book-reading to pop-up book to puppetry and live action. But after weeks of false leads and bounced emails, tracking down the author in order to seek his permission proved a fruitless quest.

Late one night, we found ourselves at the actual, final last deadline to complete our Fringe registration, weighing up whether or not to pull the plug on the whole thing. Instead we decided to take our staging idea and come up with a new show to fit. We gave it a new title, I took a slap-dash promo photo, and we cobbled together a blurb that left the content decidedly vague. Then we went back to our dysfunctional dairy farm and put the

Fringe show out of mind.

A month later STAB was done, and we were hungry for theatre again (that turn-around is always dangerously quick). We found an accommodating venue in Arty Bees bookshop on Manners Street and set about making a play. We had titled the new show *The Bookbinder*. Some time ago, a friend had mentioned a bloke he'd met in Oamaru: 'Michael O'Brien: Bookbinder' who not only worked restoring books with traditional techniques, but chose to live as if the industrial revolution never happened (off the grid, in handmade clothes, and riding penny farthings). When we were looking for content to go with our bookshop staging idea, this anecdote came back to us.

We wanted to make work about telling stories, and a play about bookbinding conjured up some interesting dualities – an act of weaving together a story physically as well as creatively. Over the summer we drove down south and met with Michael, who poured us a cuppa and then spent an hour yarning about his craft. "Bookbinders," he told us, "are all pretty bloody mad. It's 'cause they're delving into the bible all the time. I don't think it's the glue – that's the Hatters..."

I'd spent the best part of a year writing the script for *Broken River*. The production draft

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## TURNING SCRIBBLES INTO SCRIPT – A KIND OF ARO VALLEY ALCHEMY



for *The Bookbinder* was bashed out in just over a week. We had deliberately set out to make the work fast, and hone it in front of an audience. Our process started with a walk (up the hill to the Brooklyn wind turbine) on which we threw around ideas and nussed out the shape for a story: a classic hero's quest, but with a meta-textual wryness and a good bit of South Island gothic. The ideas were turned into jottings scrawled on sheets of paper, and then while Hannah worked in one room transforming encyclopaedias into a pop-up book, I worked in the other turning scribbles into script – a kind of Aro Valley alchemy. Tane Upjohn-Beatson recorded the soundtrack one hot summer's afternoon, then we set about the business of turning these elements into a play.

Working so quickly had its challenges – for the first few shows we were flying by the seat of our pants – but the piece swiftly found its feet. Our venue at Arty Bees was so tiny that – in order to cover costs, and get the same audience say as a three-night run at BATS – we did twenty-odd shows in a week and a half, with two shows every night. It was the best thing we could have done. As the season went on, and our capacity increased from fifteen to fire hazard, the show grew

as well. With such a small audience, I was able to get an immediate read on what was landing (eight people laughed at *this* joke; six looked bored when I got up to *this* bit...).

In a one-man show, it's easy to roll out last minute changes, so after each show Hannah and I assessed what had worked and what had not, and then changed it for the next one. These changes were sometimes a matter of staging and delivery, but frequently also of script. I chopped lines, and added new ones; reordered the structure and played with the tone; the writing process extended beyond my time in front of a laptop, and throughout that early season.

This week marked our hundredth performance of *The Bookbinder*. Even now the show remains an ever-changing beastie. Different audiences have revealed different things, and the show seems to get sharper and stronger. There are bits in the script that continue to evolve, but in a story about making stories that seems only as it should be.

ABOVE: Ralph McCubbin Howell speaking on receiving the 2014 Bruce Mason Award. Image: Philip Merry.



# CHRISTCHURCH

BY ERIN HARRINGTON

Two of the year's best productions were devised works from youth companies. *The Wild Hunt* (Two Productions) and *Do Not Touch the Exhibition* (a site-specific work at Canterbury Museum by The Court Theatre's Youth Company) were thoughtful, intelligent pieces of theatre that challenged and invigorated their audiences.

The Court Theatre staged some outstanding shows, yet doesn't always live up to its role as the self-proclaimed flagship of mainstream Christchurch theatre. Some larger productions were more impressive for their production design than their substance, while smaller productions such as *Niu Sila* and *Constellations* really shone. In terms of new works, Dan Bain and Brendon Bennetts' *Stag Weekend* combined thoughtful commentary on contemporary masculinity with raucous 'bums on seats' comedy, and the premiere of Pip Hall's *Ache* was sweet but didn't entirely live up to its potential. The ballsy, high concept sci-fi *Shepherd*, written and directed by Gary Henderson, was a welcome slap in the face in a largely 'safe' programme. *Scared Scriptless* continues to showcase the abilities of the talented Court Jesters, particularly through their seasons of long-form improvisation. It is disheartening though that The Court's programme, across the board, remains overwhelmingly dominated by plays written by (and about) white men.

Free Theatre has been untethered from the University of Canterbury following the disestablishment of Theatre and Film Studies. Their *Kafka's Amerika*, while visually and technologically impressive, didn't make good on its promise of interactivity, but along with the lush bicultural opera *Footprints / Tapuwai*

it promoted the company's strengths and the potential of their new home in The Gym in the Arts Centre.

Christchurch is artistically fragmentary: the 'glass half empty' view is that the post-disaster 'settling in' period is re-establishing the same old silos. The reopening of the gorgeous Isaac Theatre Royal and a welcome decision on the Christchurch Town Hall indicate that on a civic level progress is happening, albeit at a glacial pace. Hagley Theatre Company and NASDA continue to challenge their students with classic and contemporary works, and the wide range of community theatre groups serve their audiences well, despite a lack of infrastructure.

The more optimistic view is that opportunities for creativity abound for those who are willing to make their own fun. Independent productions such as Karen Zelas' poetic *The Geography of Loss* (One Man Banned Productions), a vibrant presentation of musical *The Last Five Years* (Kindle Theatre Company), the variety shows, living room theatre and comedy competitions organised by Meegwai Productions, the sideshow carné theatre of *Mr and Mrs Alexander* (Rollicking Productions), and the outstanding cross-disciplinary work facilitated by contemporary dance incubator Movement Art Practice, are evidence of artists creating their own frameworks in a creative environment that is still incrementally adjusting to the 'new normal'.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: *Niu Sila* by Oscar Kightley and Dave Armstrong, The Court Theatre; *Footprints/Tapuwai*. Image: Stuart Lloyd Harris; *Alice in Wonderland - In the Attic* by Dan and Lisa Allan, The Court Theatre; *Kafka's Amerika* conceived by Peter Falkenberg, Free Theatre. Image: cmgstudios; *Shepherd* by Gary Henderson, The Court Theatre.

# BEING PUSHED FURTHER

*Benjamin Henson considers Auckland Theatre Company's  
Next Stage programme.*

Stepping off the plane five years ago, having never before set foot in New Zealand, it took me about eight days to run to Auckland Theatre Company screaming for help.

I'm a young theatre director, who trained in London but moved to Auckland for love. Looking for where the magic is here I found a particular, intensive example with ATC's Next Stage programme. Working in the rehearsal room, slicing and dicing the new offerings of writers through its rollercoaster 14 days.

In order to suss the strength of my mettle, I was thrown amongst the team as a stage manager for Raymond Hawthorne – a new piece by Victor Rodger being the work under investigation. The cast consisted of nearly all the gang behind *Sione's Wedding*, with Pip Hall in residence as dramaturg.

Upstairs, Colin McColl locked actor Laurel Devenie and writer Arthur Meek in a room to probe the world of Mary Ann Martin, wife to New Zealand's first chief justice – a one-woman show lancing Auckland's rich

history with a startling freshness that would go on to be the award-winning production *On the Upside Down of the World* touring the country and representing New Zealand in the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

In yet another room a further cast of hardy actors explored the work of Stephen Sinclair, in a domestic drama charting a family's attempt to repair themselves after their father's sudden stroke. A veritable hubbub of fights, tears, breakthroughs and heavy pencil lines. And all before ATC had their base on Dominion Road to keep the action bubbling under one roof.

Next Stage began in 2003 as the programme Final Draft – a number of years before current Literary Manager Philippa Campbell inherited her role – as a forum for the new voices out there creating work for the stage. The idea was to put a new work to the test by pumping it through a condensed production model. Three plays would be selected from a submission process and handed over to a





director and team of actors who would semi-stage the piece in two weeks and present it to an audience at the Musgrove Studio.

The process exposed the writer to the terrifying but galvanising experience of handing over their baby from the highly malleable stage inside their minds, generated from the comfort of their desk, to the realities of their script as a blueprint for performance. Real actors on a real stage really saying the words reserved for characters that writers may have lived with in their imaginations for years. An extremely brave act for all involved – but most especially the writers.

This model is what I found five years ago, with Raymond and the actors working tirelessly toward a showing at the Musgrove with simple set elements, pressure for lines to be learnt fast and a full scape of sound-effects (that yours truly had the pleasure of operating from the box).

Laurel Devenie remembers the experience of intensely workshopping *On the Upside Down of the World* (then under the working title of ‘Our Māoris’) as one characterised by “solving problems, unlocking character, engaging with form and the asking of questions probing the purpose of work and particular stories.” This

process was fundamental to the play finding its voice by offering a unique forum between writer, director and performer: a creative space that supported the testing of what a piece has to say and how best it might say it.

“For months we had grappled with the form of *On the Upside Down of the World*,” Devenie recalls. “The main thrust of its mode and the relationship between the character and audience became very clear in the period of exploration and experimentation that The Next Stage offered.” The frantic scramble of creative energy generated in this tight timeframe is extremely addictive and vibrant, and it is the belief and generosity from director to writer in pursuit of the strongest work that was the most striking impression of the project. However, the emphasis was very much geared towards the baby production of the work, rather than the goal primarily being investigation of the text.

Coinciding with the ATC’s shift to its base on Dominion Road – with its two large rehearsal studios and access to further spaces used by the surrounding community – was a shift in perspective for the aims and treatment of the project. The Next Stage would continue to run a submissions process, with three plays



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## AN IMMEDIATE SWEATY SENSE OF FREAK OUT

ON THE PREVIOUS PAGE:  
*Le Sud* by Dave Armstrong,  
The Court Theatre. Image:  
The Court Theatre.

ABOVE: *On the Upside Down  
of the World* by Arthur Meek,  
Auckland Theatre Company.  
Image: Michael Smith.

a year selected, but now the true strength ATC could offer lay in the access to their rehearsal rooms.

Bringing emphasis back to what current Literary Manager Philippa Campbell expresses as “the naked play” means the writers’ work is truly put to the centre of the process. Audiences are now invited to enter the creative space of the rehearsal room, rather than the piece thrown into a theatre space fraught with expectation. A simple change, but instrumental to the spirit of what The Next Stage means to writers. It is still about how having a work exposed to test audiences can fuel a play in development, but it’s a step far from any pretence of a mini-production. It brings the creative directional pull towards delving inside the text, rather than the piece being put on and out.

Campbell believes that by stripping back the presentation of the work it is “the life force of the play that truly comes through for audiences.” In this regard, the process of development resulting in a showing becomes a kind of pact – the writer has the opportunity to experience the work through the ears of others; the molecules in the room shifting as their words take effect – and audiences get a chance to see inside the world of the rehearsal room, seeing some of New Zealand’s best acting talent up close.

“I remember Stephen Lovatt at one point saying ‘I don’t know why the character of Neil is here at all. It doesn’t make sense to me. But let’s go!’” So says Anders Falstie-Jensen of his play *Centrepoin*t, which featured ten actors in its Next Stage development. “And then he (Lovatt) just committed to it 100% and tried to make it work.”

Falstie-Jensen explains the immense pressure-cooker of the scheme. A propensity for guzzling coffee is a prerequisite for the whole experience. “There was an immediate sweaty sense of freak out. Of having to present, and in a way account for something in a public forum that I was still very much grappling to understand myself.”

The decision to submit a piece for the scheme is by no means an easy one, especially when ideas may only be half formed or explored. “I had done a tonne of research,” says Falstie-Jensen. “I had a clear ending and a couple of key scenes in my head but overall my draft was just a huge mess. It was out of control.”

And here is perhaps where ATC had seen the most potential – clearly the kernel of the idea Anders had encapsulated was crying out for exploration. “Because it was such a big sprawling mess,” he explains, “it was actually in a really good place for a workshop. There was so much to dig into so we just started from the beginning and then distilled and distilled and distilled.”

Young playwright Aroha White had a structure for *2080* that she felt needed to be pushed further: “Having a creative team around the work at this stage lets the play stretch into shapes that were previously only hinted at.”

The intensive workshop pushes writers beyond their private working practices and brings the work to a collective fever of hard graft.

“We were moving fast, making and discarding work every day” recalls White. “I was making big decisions about the construction of the world and felt 100% supported as well as challenged.”

In this, The Next Stage also proves its importance, by offering a community for writers to belong, brought to the fore by a uniquely challenging task. Philippa Campbell is succinct once again: “The process might be, at times traumatising for the writer but it is incredibly consolidating for the writing.”

Of the initiative’s aims she describes the provocation rests in: “How to inspire and engage writers towards their own ambition. We give them a floor to test big ideas in big worlds. It shifts people.”

And what does ATC gain from the project? “Above all”, Campbell explains, “It’s an opportunity for the company to have an exchange with great artists. In the work of some writers it’s an intervention. It’s thrilling.”

We discuss how such a challenging and exposing experience is not for everyone, especially those who might regard the opportunity as only a stepping-stone towards being programmed by the company. Though there have been many of The Next Stage plays that have then been included in the following year’s billing, a writer having sights on this is in danger of missing all that can be gained on the journey.

All shortlisted writers who aren’t selected for the workshop receive feedback and opportunities for workshops in the future – what’s important for the literary department is the beginnings of the conversation, the building of relationships with writers and a support network for the progression of their work. Writers are, after all the life-blood of a healthy future for the theatre.

Speaking of which, as ATC bless the foundations of their new venue down in Auckland’s waterfront, the perspective of initiatives like The Next Stage may shift again, but never far, I hope, from the ethos of access – access for writers, for creatives, for the pushing of shape and form and the testing of those big ideas in big worlds.

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# PLAYWRITING ISN'T JUST WRITING A PLAY

*That would be too easy writes Uther Dean.*

Playwriting is having an idea but having no clue what to do with it. Playwriting is being sure that actually you've just stolen that idea from somewhere and it's not that good anyway. Playwriting is discovering how hard it is to Google for ideas. Playwriting is settling for the idea you have rather than the ones you wish you'd had. Playwriting is notebooks full of words that must have made sense when drunk or high or lonely.

Playwriting is jealousy. Playwriting is sitting in other shows, counting every head and wanting to ask them where they were when you were doing 30% houses. Playwriting is seeing a play so bad you inflate with ego and sail out into the clouds ready to float through the rest of life. Playwriting is seeing a play so good, so much better that anything you could ever do, that you shrivel into a raisin and hope the theatre usher eats you.

Playwriting is amazing inspiration. The one moment where everything aligns in your brain: when two or three ideas rub together and in that moment you know they're not just ideas anymore, they're a play. Playwriting is celebratory baths, soaping up your play. Playwriting is pages upon pages of scribbled notes – what if this play escapes from your head before you've had the chance to write it? Playwriting is that lightning bolt and

playwriting is the pain it will bring.

Playwriting is lists of titles, none of them good enough. Playwriting is first drafts that confirm every suspicion you've ever had about how terrible you are. Playwriting is lying about how many pages you got done today – how could you ever say that the number is actually negative? Playwriting is characters who don't know what they want to say or do but certainly know what they *don't* want to do or say. Playwriting is me using this to confess I've cried through every first draft I've ever written. Ugly tears.

Playwriting is an early start, a cup of tea, a cigarette, organising your desk, updating all your software, another cup of tea, reorganising your desk, another cigarette, another cigarette, another cup of tea, and a decision on what font to use before bed. Playwriting is whole weeks spent getting ready to write the play. Playwriting is writing one great line and that being your work for the day. Playwriting is cutting that line a week later.

Playwriting is lying face down on your bed, the play open in the other room. Taunting you. Asking why you're not good enough to write it. Playwriting is desperate searching on Trade Me for a real job. Playwriting is fleeing the house so the play can't sense your fear.



Playwriting is smiling and nodding while friends tear your first draft to pieces. Playwriting is the dull aching thud of someone else having to tell you the obvious solution to your obvious problem. Playwriting is holding on so tight to every nice thing they say that your knuckles turn white. Playwriting is stabbing each negative note right through your heart into your brain.

Playwriting is rewriting and rewriting and rewriting until you can almost bear the idea of people you don't know seeing or reading it. Playwriting is reading it again and realising that you were wrong, it's terrible and your career is over. Playwriting is sending it out anyway. Might as well go out with a bang.

Playwriting is feeling like a con artist when you get commissioned or programmed. Playwriting is worrying about the state of an industry where you're the kind of person that gets a season.

Playwriting is actors sincerely looking deep in your eyes and asking questions as if you have any answers. Playwriting is resisting the urge to just say "Because I wrote it like that!" Playwriting is directors who know your play better than you do.

Playwriting is an opening night audience member asking if you wrote the play.

Playwriting is when they follow that up with "But did you write all of it?" Playwriting is a night's sleep lost to that question echoing through your brain. What is all of anything?

Playwriting is the feeling every show night that this will be the audience to see through you – instead of clapping they turn as one, point at you, and chant "Imposter!"

Playwriting is knowing all of the exits out of a theatre. Playwriting is knowing how to get out of there without coming into contact with a single other human.

Playwriting is saying you don't read reviews. Playwriting is tattooing every review to the very meat of your mind, never letting a single adjective go. Playwriting is asking people what their favourite bit was. Playwriting is




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## THE FEELING EVERY SHOW NIGHT THAT THIS WILL BE THE AUDIENCE TO SEE THROUGH YOU

the fact that it's always something the cast, crew or director added. Playwriting is loving your collaborators. Playwriting is hating your collaborators.

Playwriting is the moment, the one moment, when it all clicks. An audience laughs. Or gasps. Or is totally silent. That one sliver of everything working together. The play is a machine, it works, it all slots together, and that came from you. The world expands, everything is amazing, all of your atoms are electric. Playwriting is the high of that moment, the ecstasy of that, making it all almost worth it.

Almost.

ABOVE: *Tiny Deaths* by Uther Dean, My Accomplice.  
Image: Matt Bialostocki.

# FINDING A VOICE

*Former student Simon McCarthy looks back over the IIML Scriptwriting course.*

One of the things that sets the Institute of Modern Letters creative writing MA at Victoria University aside from others, says course facilitator and playwright Ken Duncum, is the amount of rewriting that is undertaken during the year.

“To my knowledge no other course around works on a project as thoroughly.”

Within the course students do three drafts of their thesis project. “We really take development seriously,” says Duncum.

Ken Duncum sees the considerable amount of rewriting as an advantage going into life after the course - preparing students for the large portion of time which is spent rewriting and reworking projects.

A stream focussed on scriptwriting has been running since 2002, with Duncum there since its inception. They have stuck to the workshop model that was developed by Bill Manhire. Key to the process is the course’s feedback sessions, where fellow students and Duncum critique and give feedback.

“Playwriting can be a very solitary profession... people push themselves harder from working with others.”

“I remember coming out of those,” former student playwright Gavin McGibbon says of one-on-one sessions with Ken, “my

legs shaking under the weight of all the knowledge my mind had just absorbed.”

McGibbon says that it was giving feedback on other people’s scripts, that probably more than anything else really helped him grow as a writer.

For Duncum being a working playwright himself is essential; he thinks of himself as a writer first and foremost.

“It keeps the creativity alive. If I was just teaching, I would feel that I was being a fraud.”

Duncum’s plays include award-winning *Blue Sky Boys*, *Flipside* and *Cherish*.

“I can’t turn around and say it’s particularly easy; especially as I am still trying to grow as a writer. In turn, I have great empathy with writers.”

The MA course covers not just playwriting and screenwriting, but also writing for radio and television, with many graduates finding success in these fields.

Tusi Tamasese developed the screenplay for his award winning debut film *The Orator* whilst completing the MA. Peter Cox’s thesis project became the highly acclaimed New Zealand television series *Insider’s Guide To Happiness/Love*.

However, Duncum says theatre has been a major part of the course’s success.



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“There is a greater chance of getting things on, which is why I encourage my students into the theatre; people learn when they see their work performed and develop as writers.”

Many students when they start the course haven't seen much live theatre, or thought about writing for the theatre.

Gavin McGibbon said that on the first day of the MA course they went and watched Stephen Sinclair's *The Bach* at Circa.

“I fell in love with theatre that day and it's become something I am deeply passionate about writing for.”

McGibbon has gone on to write seven plays, the most recent of which *Con* debuted at Circa in 2014.

Many playwrights have come through the course. They include Lucy O'Brien, whose thesis project *Katydid* won the Embassy Trust Theatre Prize as well as picking up the Chapman Tripp Theatre Award for Outstanding New Playwright of the Year in 2010.

Current prominent playwrights include Uther Dean, Eli Kent, Philip Braithwaite, Lynda Chanwai-Earle and Abby Howells who recently was awarded best newcomer (Wellington) for her play *Glocknid (Dwarf Warrior)* in the New Zealand Comedy Festival Awards.

The course, which is a one year Master's Degree says Duncum is an “immersive and intense experience”.

In addition to the thesis there are several other projects which the students work on during the year including some combined works where they interact with other institutions such as Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School, Massey University and New Zealand Film and Television School.

Lots of fruitful working relationships have started through these elements of the course; be it taking the exercise further or working on a new project later.

There are also a limited number of guest speakers – industry professionals, be they successful writers or producers. Last year




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## LEGS SHAKING UNDER THE WEIGHT OF ALL THE KNOWLEDGE...

the students had Neil Cross (*Luther, Doctor Who*) as one of their guests.

The students are also given a work placement they must complete with an established professional organisation in the industry.

Entries are limited to the course each year with only ten selected; this ensures that each member of the class is able to get the most out of the course and is allocated a fair amount of feedback.

Each student is given a mentor, be it Duncum, or one of selected outside mentors, and they work closely on the thesis project throughout the year.

“My goal is to develop these writers each year to advance their work and start them in a direction to finding their own voice.”

ABOVE: *Con* by Gavin McGibbon, Circa Theatre. Image: Stephen A'Court.

# DRAFTS & REDRAFTS

*Playmarket's Stuart Hoar on writing as a never-ending story.*

'I always write three drafts, but you have to leave it eventually. There comes a point when you say, That's it, I can't do anything more. The only play that gets remotely near to a structural entity which satisfies me is *The Homecoming*. *The Birthday Party* and *The Caretaker* have too much writing.'

*Harold Pinter*

How many drafts should a playwright write? There's no correct answer to this question but it's a question all playwrights ask themselves every time they write a play. Should we, immediately on finishing our first draft send it off to an agent or a theatre? The answer is I think not a strict 'yes' or 'no' but depends on circumstances. You may for example be writing to a commission deadline or competition deadline – in that case you send the draft out.

As an agency for New Zealand playwrights, Playmarket logs and files all first and subsequent drafts from playwrights. There is something to be said for our clients sending us their new drafts hot off the press, just so that draft has one more back up.

We always back our work up, yes? Excellent. As soon as we finish them we put them on to an external hard drive, possibly two and maybe another computer just for luck. Failing

that, we at the very least email a copy of the draft to ourselves.

Then playwrights have to ask themselves when the draft should be read by someone else. My own rule of thumb on finishing a draft (after backing it up) is, ideally, to ignore it for perhaps a month. Then I read it again, looking hard for typos. Studies tell us that it's very hard for writers to pick up their own simple typos, so a neutrally opinionated proofreader is very useful before you send it out into the world.

Beyond proofing it, I try and read the play now as if written by someone else. I look for plot confusions and over writing – elements which are easier to work out on a second draft.

When asked how many drafts she usually writes, the American playwright Beth Henley replied: "I often do ten or more drafts of a play. Between each draft I try to do a reading or workshop of the play – even if only in my living room."

Having your play read at least from second draft stage – no matter how informally – is an incredibly useful part of the redrafting process. If you can manage to get this done (maybe get some friends round your kitchen table and pay them with wine – after, never before – the reading) then the writing of an improved third



draft is made much easier. Simply hearing your play outside of your brain makes obvious what is working and what is not. By now you have arrived at Harold Pinter's possibly mystical figure of three drafts and no more. According to Harold your play is now ready to fend for itself in the hard and often cruel world of potential theatrical indifference. Once again however it comes down to opinion, not fact, if the play should be read by others or yet again revised. Luckily this opinion belongs solely to the playwright. It's a great power you have over your play – you choose when you want other people to read it. I tend to agree with Harold Pinter that three drafts is a good minimum and may be near to a maximum. But who can say for sure?

Should a play then be produced a playwright sends us a post production script. Should that play get another production he or she often sends us a new pre-production script and then a new script after production. The process of revising, rewriting, rethinking is potentially never ending for a playwright – rather different compared to the process a novelist goes through.

Is this never ending quality a good thing? I think yes, but I also agree with Harold Pinter where he says 'There comes a point when you say, That's it, I can't do anything more.' At some point you will abandon your play and move on, hopefully, to a new one.

In some ways to be a playwright is to be a writer who never totally ends a piece of writing. You simply move on to start a new piece of writing. That's one of the many things I love about writing plays.

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## TO BE A WRITER WHO NEVER TOTALLY ENDS A PIECE OF WRITING

ABOVE: Erin Banks, Jack Buchanan, Allan Henry and Nancy Brunning read from *Best Playwriting Book Ever* by Roger Hall at the 2014 Playmarket Accolades. Image: Philip Merry.





*Photo credit: Anita Narbey and O Le Tulafale Ltd.*

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# THEATRE CALENDAR 2015

*Professional Productions of NZ Plays 1 August 2014 – 31 July 2015*

## TOURING & INTERNATIONAL

### *Hoki Mai Tama Mā*

by Tainui Tukiwaho  
Te Rēhia Theatre  
Whangarei, Centrepoint  
31 Jul – 18 Oct 2014

### *Black Faggot*

by Victor Rodger,  
Multimesia: Edinburgh  
Festival Fringe, Nelson  
Melbourne Fringe  
Festival, Centrepoint  
31 Jul 2014 – 28 Feb 2015

### *Duck Death and the Tulip*

by Wolf Erbruch, adapted  
for stage by Peter Wilson  
Little Dog Barking  
Edinburgh Festival Fringe  
1 – 24 Aug 2014

### *Kava Girls*

by Sani Muliaumaseali'i  
GAFA Arts Collective  
Edinburgh Festival  
Fringe, UK  
10 – 25 Aug 2014

### *Once we Built a Tower*

by Dean Parker  
The Bacchanals  
South Island Tour  
25 Aug – 6 Sep 2014

### *Take Back the Hood*

by Deborah Eve Rea  
BATS, The Basement,  
Nelson  
19 Aug 2014 – 8 May 2015

### *Kiss the Fish*

by Jacob Rajan and  
Justin Lewis, Indian Ink  
Q Theatre  
29 – 30 Aug 2014  
NZ Tour  
4 Jun – 26 Jul 2015

### MAMIL: *Middle Aged Man in Lycra*

by Gregory Cooper  
Prefab Hall, Wellington,  
Fortune Theatre  
5 Sep 2014 – 16 May 2015

### *The Bookbinder*

by Ralph McCubbin  
Howell, Trick of the Light  
Sydney Fringe,  
Melbourne Fringe,  
Nelson, Waikari, Oamaru,  
Fringe World Perth,  
Australia, Hamilton,  
Canberra, Australia,  
Wanaka, Kerikeri  
11 Sep 2014 – 26 Apr 2015

### *Gloria's Handbag*

by Helen Moulder and Sue  
Rider, Willow Productions  
Picton, Centrepoint,  
Auckland, Cambridge,  
Sydney, Australia  
18 Sep – 13 Nov 2014

### *Superhero*

by Anthony McCarten,  
music and lyrics by  
Paul Graham Brown  
Staatstheater Wiesbaden,  
Germany  
26 Sep – 31 Oct 2014

### *Everything Is Surrounded by Water*

by Hannah Banks & Uther  
Dean, My Accomplice  
BATS, The Basement  
30 Sep – 11 Oct 2014

### *Mr McGee and the Biting Flea*

adapted from books  
by Pamela Allen, Patch  
Theatre Company and  
Capital E National  
Theatre for Children

Hannah Playhouse  
27 Sep – 11 Oct 2014

### *Sisters In Arms*

by Hleb Teatar and Ake  
Ake Theatre Company  
Dunedin, Nelson  
10 – 19 Oct 2014

### *The F Word*

by Best on Tap  
BATS, Centrepoint  
7 Oct 2014 – 11 Apr 2015

### *Promise And Promiscuity: A New Musical by Jane Austen*

by Penny Ashton  
Dunedin, Christchurch,  
Fringe World Perth,  
Adelaide Fringe,  
Auckland, Winnipeg  
Fringe Festival  
15 Oct 2014 – 25 Jul 2015

### *White Cloud*

by Tim Finn and Ken  
Duncum, Jumpboard  
Productions: Dunedin,  
Nelson, Kerikeri,  
Galway Arts Festival  
17 Oct 2014 – 16 Jul 2015

### *Suri Vs Shiloh*

by Phoebe Borwick and  
Susannah Smith-Roy, We  
Are Sailors Productions  
Christchurch, Q Theatre  
21 Oct 2014 – 14 Feb 2015

### *I'll Be Fine*

by Ben Wilson  
BATS, The Basement  
21 Oct 2014 – 20 Jun 2015

### *The Thing from the Place*

by Theatre Beating  
Tauranga, Hamilton,  
New Plymouth  
25 – 30 Oct 2014

### *The Underarm*

by David Geary  
and Justin Gregory  
Silly Mid On Productions  
Hannah Playhouse,  
New Plymouth,  
Gisborne, Napier  
28 Oct – 29 Nov 2014

### *One Day Moko*

by Tim Carlsen, Q Theatre,  
Bondifest Sydney  
5 Nov 2014 – 25 Jul 2015

### *My Name Is Gary Cooper*

by Victor Rodger  
Kumu Kahua Theatre,  
Honolulu, USA  
22 Jan – 21 Feb 2015

### *Under The Same Moon*

by Renee Liang  
Omphalos Co: BATS  
Maidment Theatre  
10 Feb – 7 Mar 2015

### *Gift Of The Gab*

by James Cain and  
Matt Loveranes  
The Basement, Gryphon  
13 Feb – 7 Mar 2015

### *On The Conditions And Possibilities Of Hillary*

*Clinton Taking Me As Her  
Young Lover* adapted  
from the book by Richard  
Meros by Arthur Meek  
and Geoff Pinfield,  
Theatre Beating  
Hamilton, The Basement,  
La Mama New York, USA  
16 Feb – 15 Mar 2015

### *The Two Farting Sisters*

devised by Pettit  
Workshop from a story  
by Renee Liang: BATS,  
Maidment Theatre  
17 Feb – 3 Mar 2015

# Hilarious Comedies!

By Devon Williamson [www.plays.co.nz](http://www.plays.co.nz)

## 'Twas the Fight Before Christmas!

Cast: 4 Female, 2 Male

Length: Two Acts

Think your family is complicated? Meet the most dysfunctional family you can imagine as they try to navigate Christmas. Peace on earth and good will to all men? Not likely!

Ever since her husband died, Mary's horrible adult children have been ruining Christmas. This year, with the help of a suicidal French psychiatrist, Mary is determined to take Christmas back. Hilarious and uplifting Christmas comedy.



## Over Paid, Over Sexed and Over Here!

Cast: 4 Female, 5 Male Length: Two Acts

The outrageous comedy about the Yanks 1942 invasion of New Zealand! As our men fight overseas, a sleepy seaside town is about to experience an invasion by the Americans. The arrival of the Yanks brings much needed excitement for the ladies, but for the local lads there are three big problems with the visitors... they're over paid, they're over sexed, and they're over here!

## The Old People Are Revolting

Cast: 5 Female, 2 Male Length: Two Acts

An hilarious comedy about seniors seeking revenge! The residents of the Sunshine Retirement Village have had enough: they're revolting! Bursting with eccentric characters and crazy shenanigans the play is great fun to stage and a huge audience pleaser.

## Also Available...

My Inlaws are Outlaws, How To Train Your Husband, Crazy Ladies, Menopause Made Me Do It, My Husband's Nuts, Understanding Women.

70 productions staged across  
New Zealand, Australia, USA and UK!



For perusal scripts and information  
contact **The Play Bureau**

Phone: 03 455 9959

Email: [info@playbureau.com](mailto:info@playbureau.com)

### *Real Fake White Dirt*

by Jess Holly Bates  
Theatre Beating  
Hamilton, BATS  
18 Feb – 1 Mar 2015

### *The Brave*

by Massive Company  
Hannah Playhouse,  
Hawaii Tour, USA  
18 Feb – 12 Mar 2015

### *Bill Massey's Tourists*

by Jan Bolwell  
Handstand Productions  
NZ Fringe Festival,  
Dunedin  
19 Feb – 19 Mar 2015

### *I am a Cat*

by Joseph Harper  
Basement, Tararua  
Tramping Club  
19 Feb – 9 May 2015

### *The Things We Do*

by Sarah Tuck  
Pat-A-Cake Productions  
BATS, Nelson  
24 Feb – 8 May 2015

### *Out Of Order*

by Alice Pearce: BATS,  
The Basement  
3 Mar – 23 May 2015

### *Pupil Zero*

by Paul Rothwell  
Big Lies Theatre  
Company: Gryphon  
Theatre, Dunedin  
5 – 14 Mar 2015

### *Six Bad Arthouse Plays*

by Apocalypse Lounge  
BATS, The Meteor,  
Hamilton  
9 – 21 Mar 2015

### *Beards, Beards, Beards*

by Ralph McCubbin  
Howell, Trick of The Light  
Dunedin, Circa,  
The Basement  
12 Mar – 11 Apr 2015

### *Coaltown Blues*

by Mervyn Thompson  
Westport, Timaru,  
Ashburton, Blenheim,  
Takaka, Centrepoin,  
Nelson  
14 Mar – 13 Jun 2015

### *An Awfully Big Adventure*

by Capital E National  
Theatre For Children  
Hannah Playhouse,  
Q Theatre  
16 – 28 Mar 2015

### *The Magic Chicken*

by Theatre Beating  
Salman Culture Centre,  
Bahrain  
19 – 22 Mar 2015

### *The Good News*

by Making Friends  
Collective: BATS, 17 Tory  
St, Feilding, Centrepoin  
24 Mar – 4 Jul 2015

### *All Your Wants And Needs Fulfilled Forever*

by The Playground  
Collective: La Mama,  
NYC, USA  
26 – 27 Mar 2015

### *Chet Baker: Like*

*Someone in Love*  
by David Goldthorpe  
Goldthorpe Creative  
La Mama, New York, USA  
28 – 29 Mar 2015

### *Kiwi Moon*

by Gavin Bishop, adapted  
for the stage by Rachel  
Callinan, Capital E  
National Theatre for  
Children: North Island Tour  
4 Apr – 12 Jun 2015

### *Daffodils*

by Rochelle Bright  
Bullet Heart Club  
Q Theatre, Meteor  
Theatre, Wanaka, Kerikeri  
8 – 25 Apr 2015

### *Wairua and Waiora*

Taki Rua Te Reo Maori  
Season National Tour  
20 Apr – 19 Jun 2015

### *A Boy Wonder*

by Ryan Richards  
The Basement, Otago/  
Southland Tour  
21 Apr – 30 May 2015

### *No More Dancing*

*In The Good Room*  
by Chris Parker, BATS,  
The Basement  
28 Apr – 9 May 2015

*Meeting Karpovsky*  
by Helen Moulder,  
Sue Rider and Sir  
Jon Trimmer, Willow  
Productions: Arts on  
Tour NZ Tour  
2 May – 14 Jun 2015

*Spyfingler – A Show  
About Spies*  
by My Accomplice  
BATS, The Basement  
5 – 16 May 2015

*Everybody's Reading Room*  
by Sheri O'Neill, Platform  
Thirteen: Dargaville,  
Maungaturoto, Whangarei  
30 May – 14 Jun 2015

*Eglantyne*  
by Anne Chamberlain  
Ms Chamberlain  
Presents: UK Tour  
7 Jun – 10 Jul 2015

*Krishnan's Dairy*  
by Jacob Rajan  
Indian Ink: NZ Tour  
16 Jun – 26 Aug 2015

*Nga Pou Wahine*  
by Briar Grace Smith, Taki  
Rua: Wellington, Auckland,  
Whangarei, Kaitiāia  
24 Jun – 10 Jul 2015

*Stealing Games*  
by Gary Henderson  
Capital E National  
Theatre for Children  
National Tour  
11 Jul – 16 Sep 2015

*Drowning in  
Veronica Lake*  
by Phil Ormsby  
Flaxworks: Australian Tour  
25 Jul – 8 Aug 2015

## AUCKLAND

### Auckland Theatre Company

*Trees Beneath the Lake*  
by Arthur Meek  
Maidment Theatre  
4 – 27 Sep 2014

*Sons*  
by Victor Rodger  
Mangere Arts Centre  
16 – 25 Oct 2014

*A Doll's House*  
by Emily Perkins adapted  
from Ibsen: Maidment  
Theatre  
2 – 23 May 2015

*The Lolly Witch Of  
Mumulan*  
originally conceived  
by Lauren Jackson  
and Lolo Fonua  
Mangere Arts Centre  
11 – 18 Apr 2015

Next Big Thing: *Bed*  
by Benjamin Henson;  
*Inky Pinky Pony*  
by Amanaki Prescott-  
Faletau and Leki Jackson-  
Bourke; *Sit on It*  
by Georgina Titheridge:  
The Basement  
10 – 25 Jul 2015

### Basement Theatre

*Fix*  
by Jess Sayer, Junket  
Theatre Company  
12 – 16 Aug 2014

*Affinity*  
by Sarah Delahunty  
1st Gear Productions  
12 – 16 Aug 2014

*Dog*  
by Ben Hutchison  
Wolfgang Creative  
19 – 30 Aug 2014

*Wine Lips*  
by Sam Brooks, Smoke  
Labour's Productions  
26 – 30 Aug 2014

*Hubbub*  
devised by the cast  
2 – 6 Sep 2014

*Wild Bees*  
by Phil Ormsby  
Flaxworks  
16 – 20 Sep 2014

*Barnie Duncan in ...him*  
by Barnie Duncan  
Theatre Beating  
16 – 26 Sep 2014

Young and Hungry  
Festival of New  
Theatre 2014:  
*Uncle Minotaur*

by Dan Bain;  
*Second Afterlife*  
by Ralph McCubbin  
Howell  
3 – 18 Oct 2014

*Perfect Place*  
by Colin Garlick  
As Expected  
21 – 25 Oct 2014

*Hauraki Horror*  
by Thomas Sainsbury  
and Chris Parker  
4 – 20 Dec 2014

*The Non-Surgeon's Guide  
To The Appendectomy*  
by Finnius Teppett  
3 – 7 Mar 2015

*The Girl and the Gay*  
by Sam Brooks,  
Smoke Labour's  
25 Apr – 2 May 2015

*Fallout: The Sinking of  
the Rainbow Warrior*  
by Bronwyn Elsmore  
The Large Group and Last  
Tapes Theatre Company  
20 – 30 May 2015

*The Best Possible Album  
Party That Anybody Has  
Ever Been To*  
by Kate McGill and  
Frith Horan, Alacrity  
Productions  
26 – 30 May 2015

*Club Paradiso*  
by Victor Rodger, F.C.C  
2 – 6 Jun 2015

*Days like Today*  
by Laurence Dolan  
2 – 6 Jun 2015

*The Mourning After*  
by Ahi Karunaharan,  
Prayas Theatre and  
Agaram Productions  
30 Jun – 3 Jul 2015

*Orangutan*  
by Alice Canton  
30 Jun – 3 Jul 2015

### Q Theatre

*One of Those*  
by David Charteris  
12 – 16 Aug 2014

*Sunset Road*  
by Miria George  
Tawata Productions  
20 – 23 Aug 2014

*God-Belly*  
by Andrew Gunn and  
Rosie Tapsell, Pressure  
Point Collective  
9 – 13 Sep 2014

*Royals of Kihikihi*  
by Samuel Christopher  
16 – 27 Sep 2014

*Everest Untold*  
by Gareth Davies  
24 – 27 Sep 2014

*Sheep*  
by Arthur Meek  
The Actors' Program  
25 – 29 Nov 2014

*Eat The Young Fresh*  
by Patrick Kelly  
24 – 28 Feb 2015

*Hikoi*  
by Nancy Brunning  
Auckland Arts Festival  
and Hāpai Productions  
4 – 8 Mar 2015

*The Mooncake and  
the Kūmara*  
by Mei-Lin Te Puea Hansen  
Auckland Arts Festival  
and Oryza Foundation  
5 – 10 Mar 2015

*Dust Pilgrim –  
A Tale of Freedom*  
by Red Leap Theatre  
4 – 13 Jun 2015

### The Pumphouse

*The Little Yellow Digger*  
by Betty and Alan  
Gilderdale, adapted  
by Tim Bray, Tim Bray  
Productions  
22 Sep – 11 Oct 2014

*The Santa Claus Show*  
by Tim Bray, Tim Bray  
Productions  
8 – 20 Dec 2014

*Greedy Cat*  
by Joy Cowley, adapted  
by Tim Bray, Tim Bray  
Productions  
28 Mar – 18 Apr 2015

# University of Otago Theatre Studies Programme Master of Fine Arts (MFA)

Applications for study in 2016  
are now open



*"The MFA provided an opportunity to develop my skills as a playwright much more intensively and extensively than would otherwise have been the case... Ultimately, participating in the programme has improved my ability to critique my own work"*

Michael Metzger MFA

The Master of Fine Arts (MFA) is a practical, studio-based degree designed to enable students to attain a high level of professional mastery, craft and practical skill, through the presentation of both a creative art-work (or art-works) and a reflective written component.

For more information  
[otago.ac.nz/theatrestudies](http://otago.ac.nz/theatrestudies)



*Grandma McGarvey with Grandpa's Slippers*  
by Jenny Hessel and Joy Watson adapted by Tim Bray, Tim Bray Productions  
4 – 18 Jul 2015

#### TAPAC

*Ivy – Saviour Of The Dinosaur*  
by Jennifer Martin  
Capital E National Theatre for Children  
3 – 5 Oct 2014

*Yo Future*  
by Barbarian Productions  
16 – 25 Oct 2014

*Bitter Sweet*  
by Mixit  
16 – 17 Jan 2015

*The Royals of Kihikihi*  
by Samuel Christopher  
25 – 27 Feb 2015

*Dexter's Deep Sea Discovery*  
by Darlene Mohekey & Jess Sayer, Junket Theatre and TAPAC  
3 – 11 Jul 2015

#### Auckland Live

*Pure And Deep*  
by Toa Fraser  
12 – 23 Nov 2014

*At The Wake*  
by Victor Rodger  
Multinesia Productions  
25 Nov – 6 Dec 2014

*Rua Te Kākanō: Hokia Ki Ngā Maunga – Return To The Mountains*  
by Matthew Donaldson,  
Te Rēhia Theatre Company  
6 – 11 Jul 2015

#### Auckland Fringe Festival 9 Feb – 1 Mar 2015

*Beast*  
by Taylor Hall  
*Girl On A Corner*  
by Victor Rodger  
*I Wanna Be Na Nah*  
*Na Nah Nah*  
by Tessa Mitchell, Stephen Bain and Dave Fane

*It Ends With The Sea*  
by Lucinda Bennett  
*Keep Out Of My Box (And Other Useful Advice)*  
by Torum Heng  
*Live Orgy*  
by Freya Desmarais  
*Legacy Project Year Two*  
by Nathan Joe, Todd Waters, Cole Meyers, Jordan Keyzer, Joni Nelson and Bruce Brown  
*The Memory Shelf*  
by Saraid Cameron and Amelia Reynolds  
*Prehistoria*  
by Eli Mathewson and Laura Daniel  
*Puzzle*  
by The People Who Play With Theatre  
*Robin Goblin*  
by Paul Rothwell  
*The Shittiest Theatre You Will Ever See*  
by Natalie Medlock and Thomas Sainsbury  
*Squirrel*  
by Nicole Steven  
*Stutterpop*  
by Sam Brooks  
*Up On Lowman*  
by Grublette Productions

#### Other Venues Auckland

*The Tautai of Digital Winds*  
by Iaheto Ah Hi, Kinetic Wayfinding Theatre  
Mangere Arts Centre  
5 – 16 Aug 2014

*Sister Anzac*  
by Geoff Alan  
Galatea Theatre  
NZ Maritime Museum  
6 – 10 Aug 2014

*Goodbye My Feleni*  
by David Mamea  
Chocolate Stigmata & Going West Festival  
The Playhouse, Titirangi  
28 – 31 Aug 2014

*Music and Me*  
by Victoria Schmidt  
Kinetic Wayfinding Theatre: Mangere Arts Centre  
24 – 27 Sep 2014



*Famous Flora*  
by Elisabeth Easther  
The White House  
13 – 29 Nov 2014

*Have Car Will Travel*  
by Mitch Tawhi  
Thomas Te Pou  
23 May 2015

*Rangi and Mau's  
Amazing Race*  
by Tanya Muagututi'a,  
Joy Vaele, Ave Sua and  
Raniera Dallas, Pacific  
Underground: Te Oro  
8 – 15 Jul 2015

## HAMILTON

*Choice*  
by Andrew Kaye,  
Matthew Powell and  
Sera Devcich,  
Full House Productions  
Meteor Theatre  
14 – 23 Aug 2014

*We Were Always  
Watching*  
by Antony Aiono,  
Mitchell Botting, Lisa  
Louw, Amelia Williams  
and Nick Sturgess-  
Monks, Remote Fiction  
Theatre: Meteor Theatre  
30 Sep – Oct 2014

*Awesome Adventures  
Of Modern Maui*  
by Te Rēhia Theatre  
Company

*SoloThello*  
by Regan Taylor, Te Rēhia  
Theatre Company  
Gardens Festival  
14 – 15, 21 – 22 Feb 2015

*State Highway 48*  
by Chris Williams  
Gardens Festival  
23 – 26 Feb 2015

*Sympathy For The Devil*  
by Hallam Woolfrey  
Meteor Theatre  
18 – 19 Mar 2015

*The Watchmaker*  
by Mitchell Botting &  
Benny Marama and  
*Reaper*  
by Antony Aiono

Remote Fiction Theatre  
Meteor Theatre  
2 May 2015

## PALMERSTON NORTH

### Centrepoint

*The Pink Hammer*  
by Michele Amas  
1 Nov – 13 Dec 2014

*Mums: The Word*  
by Peri Chappelle, Karla  
Crofts, Louise O'Flaherty,  
Nicola Reid, Te Pūanga  
Whakaari Productions  
6 – 15 Nov 2014

*Golf: A Love Story*  
by Roger Hall  
18 Apr – 23 May 2015

*Prince Seth and the  
Princess – Time Travel*  
by Karla Haronga  
Te Pūanga Whakaari  
Theatre Productions  
8 – 12 Jul 2015

## WELLINGTON

### Circa

*Destination Beehive*  
by Lorae Parry and  
Pinky Agnew  
29 Aug – 20 Sep 2014

*An Unseasonable  
Fall of Snow*  
by Gary Henderson  
24 Sep – 4 Oct 2014

*Red Riding Hood The  
Pantomime*  
by Roger Hall.  
Songs by Paul Jenden &  
Michael Nicholas Williams  
15 Nov – 21 Dec 2014,  
2 – 10 Jan 2015

*Dead Tragic*  
by Michael Nicholas  
Williams  
22 Nov – 21 Dec 2014

*The Kitchen At The End  
Of The World*  
by William Connor  
16 – 24 Jan 2015

*Seed*  
by Elisabeth Easther  
17 Jan – Feb 2015

*Yep, Still Got It!*  
by Jane Keller and  
Sandy Brewer  
28 Feb – 21 Mar 2015

*Don Juan*  
by A Slightly Isolated Dog  
25 Apr – 23 May 2015

*Second Afterlife*  
by Ralph McCubbin Howell  
28 May – 13 Jun 2015

*The Beautiful Ones*  
by Hone Kouka, Tawata  
Productions:  
27 Jun – 11 Jul 2015

### BATS

*Shadows of Algora*  
by Adam Brown and  
Kenneth Gaffney  
12 – 16 Aug 2014

*Banging Cymbal,  
Clanging Gong*  
by Jo Randerson  
Barbarian Productions  
26 – 27 Aug 2014

*Public Service  
Announcements:  
Election Special*  
by James Nokise, Thom  
Adams and Simon Leary  
No Fefe Collective  
26 Aug – 6 Sep 2014

*Mis[con]ception*  
by Ania Upstill and  
Rosaleen Moxey,  
The Clitlective  
16 – 20 Sep 2014

*Lashings of Whipped  
Cream*  
by Fiona Samuel, Large  
Carpark Productions  
18 – 27 Sep 2014

*Whore*  
by Melissa Fergusson  
Charlatan Clinic  
25 – 27 Sep 2014

*God-Belly*  
by Andrew Gunn and  
Rosie Tapsell, Pressure  
Point Collective  
30 Sep – 4 Oct 2014

*Tut*  
by Alice May Connolly  
14 – 18 Oct 2014

*Once Upon A Time  
In Wellington*  
by Tza Drake  
16 – 25 Oct 2014

*Watch*  
by Uther Dean, BATS,  
My Accomplice,  
Goldthorpe Creative  
22 Nov – 13 Dec 2014

*Stomach*  
by Amelia Reynolds  
and Saraid Cameron  
27 – 31 Jan 2015

*Conversations With  
My Penis*  
by Dean Hewison  
Out of Bounds  
3 – 14 Feb 2015

*Don't Ever Forget*  
by Simon McCarthy  
Carnage Entertainment  
13 – 21 Mar 2015

*Tiny Deaths*  
by Uther Dean  
My Accomplice  
24 Mar – 2 Apr 2015

*Together All Alone:  
Six Short Plays*  
by Angie Farrow  
After Eden Collective  
7 – 18 Apr 2015

*Where There's A Will*  
by John Smythe  
Nothing But Co-operative  
8 – 18 Apr 2015

*Glocknid (Dwarf Warrior)*  
by Abby Howells, Big  
Lies Theatre Company  
12 – 16 May 2015

*Public Service  
Announcements:  
Who Dunne It?*  
No Fefe Collective  
12 – 16 May 2015

*Lysistrata*  
by Aristophanes adapted  
by The Bacchanals  
22 May – Jun 2015

*Wings*  
by Jess Sayer  
26 – 30 May 2015

*Success*  
by Stephen Sinclair  
4 – 20 Jun 2015



# Hagley THEATRE COMPANY

## Theatre Training

The Hagley Theatre Company offers theoretical and practical tuition in acting, dance, physical theatre, playwriting and stage direction.

Students can expect to be involved in a number of public performances including major plays, dance, theatre in education, not to mention film and commercial opportunities.

Applicants must be 18 years or older and will be expected to demonstrate initiative, self-drive and a willingness to learn. Audition is by interview and full day workshop that will be held.

Full details on the course can be found online at

[www.hagleytheatreco.co.nz](http://www.hagleytheatreco.co.nz)

or by calling (03) 364 5155



## APPLICATIONS OPEN NOW!

*Not In Our  
Neighbourhood* by  
Jamie McCaskill, Tikapa  
Productions  
9 – 13 Jun 2015

*2080*  
by Aroha White, Hāpai  
Productions  
16 – 20 Jun 2015

*Long Ago, Long Ago*  
by Cassandra Tse  
Red Scare Collective  
23 – 27 Jun 2015

*Young and Hungry  
Festival of New Theatre:  
The 21st Narcissus*  
by Sam Brooks;  
*The First 7500 Days  
of my Life*  
by Uther Dean;  
*How to Catch a  
Grim Reaper*  
by Helen Vivienne Fletcher  
11 – 25 Jul 2015

### Gryphon Theatre

*The Marvellous Adventure  
Of Jack And Daisy*  
by Aaron Blackledge  
Kapitall Kids  
30 – 11 Oct 2014

*Rumplestiltskin*  
by Lou Proudfoot  
Kapitall Kids  
7 – 18 Apr 2015

*The Showgirl*  
by Matt Loveranes  
Red Scare Collective and  
Killer Darlings Collective  
14 – 18 Apr 2015

*Yours Truly*  
by Albert Belz  
Backyard Theatre  
8 – 18 Jul 2015

*The Sword in the Stone*  
by Aaron Blackledge  
Kapitall Kids  
17 – 18 Jul 2015

### NZ Fringe Festival 20 Feb – 14 Mar 2015

*28 Days: A Period Piece*  
by Abby Howells  
*Boxed*  
by William Duignan  
and Waylon Edwards

*Fax Of Life*  
by Emma McAuliffe  
*Jingles – The Musical*  
by Dean Hewison  
*Katabasis*  
by Music to my Years  
*Loose: A Private History  
of Booze and Iggy Pop  
1996-2015*  
by Jonny Potts  
*Mothy and Other Stories*  
by Amy Griffin-Browne,  
Lily Della Porta, Oliver  
Devlin, Stevie Hancox-  
Monk and Ryan Knighton  
*Postmortem*  
by Vanessa Stacey and  
Anna Shaw  
*My Favourite Problematic*  
by Titty Theatre  
*Pussycat Lost*  
by Nathaniel Herz-  
Edinger  
*Rukahu*  
by James Nokise  
*Stay Frosty*  
by James Atkinson  
*Surgery In Mind*  
by Evangelina Telfar  
*The Park Bench*  
by Cloud Coal Shackle  
*Thin*  
by Neenah Dekkers-  
Reihana  
*Thr3e*  
by Jett Ranchhod  
*Wake Up Tomorrow*  
by Everybody Cool  
*Lives Here*  
*We're Going On*  
*A Deer Hunt*  
by Travis Graham and  
Josh McDonald

### Other Venues Wellington

*Rapunzel*  
by Amalia Calder  
KidzStuff  
Tararua Tramping Club  
27 Sep – 11 Oct 2014

*Vanilla Miraka*  
by Hayley Sproull  
Taki Rua: James Cabaret  
4 – 7 Nov 2014

*White Elephant*  
by Barbarian Productions,  
Show Pony: Hannah  
Playhouse  
27 – 30 Nov 2014

*Mary's Christmas*  
in Wellington  
by Abby Howells  
and Rosie Howells  
Discharge: Newtown  
Community Centre  
16 – 17 Dec 2014

*A Tale Of 3 Lonely Men*  
And Their Quest For  
An Audience With The  
*Elusive Moa*  
by Jamie McCaskill and  
Craig Geenty, Tikapa  
Productions: Studio 77  
24 – 28 Feb 2015

*Ngunguru I Te Ao I Te Po*  
by Noa Campbell  
Taki Rua: Te Papa  
9 – 14 Mar 2015

*Guji Guji*  
by Chih-Yuan Chen,  
adapted by Peter Wilson  
Little Dog Barking: Prefab  
9 – 14 Mar 2015

*Jack And The Beanstalk*  
by Rob Ormsby, KidzStuff  
Tararua Tramping Club  
4 – 18 Apr 2015

*Sleeping Around*  
by Geraldine Brophy  
Nextstage Theatre  
Company: Little Theatre,  
Lower Hutt  
6 – 14 May 2015

*The Elves and the*  
*Shoemaker*  
by Rachel Henry  
KidzStuff: Tararua  
Tramping Club  
4 – 18 Jul 2015

## OTHER NORTH ISLAND

*I, George Nepia*  
by Hone Kouka  
Tawata Productions,  
Lawson Field Theatre,  
Gisborne  
16 – 18 Oct 2014

*The Owl And The*  
*Pussycat* by Laurel  
Devenie and  
A Company of Giants:  
Whangarei  
16 – 20 Dec 2014,  
12 – 15 Feb 2015

## CHRISTCHURCH

### The Court Theatre

*You Can Always*  
*Hand Them Back*  
by Roger Hall, music and  
lyrics by Peter Skellern  
6 Sep – 4 Oct 2014

*Goldilocks And*  
*The Three Bears*  
by Georgia-Kate Heard  
1 – 11 Oct 2014

*Stag Weekend*  
by Dan Bain and  
Brendon Bennetts  
25 Oct – 8 Nov 2014

*Do Not Touch The*  
*Exhibition*  
by The Court  
Youth Company  
Canterbury Museum  
3 – 5 Dec 2014

*Mrs McGinty and the*  
*Bizarre Plant*  
by Gavin Bishop, adapted  
by Luke Di Somma  
14 – 24 Jan 2015  
and Bruce Mason Centre  
16 – 18 Apr 2015

*Peter Pan*  
by J. M. Barrie adapted  
by Daniel Pengelly  
4 – 22 Feb 2015

*Shepherd*  
by Gary Henderson  
7 – 28 Feb 2015

*Le Sud*  
by Dave Armstrong  
14 Mar – 18 Apr 2015

*Alice In Wonderland –*  
*In the Attic Adapted*  
by Dan and Lisa Allan,  
based on the book  
by Lewis Carroll  
8 – 18 Apr 2015

*Niu Sila*  
by Oscar Kightley  
and Dave Armstrong  
6 Jun – 4 Jul 2015

### Other Venues Christchurch

*Geography Of Loss*  
by Karen Zelas, Lightning  
Productions: Elmwood  
Theatre  
15 – 25 Oct 2014

## DUNEDIN

### Fortune Theatre

*Nick: An Accidental Hero*  
by Renee Lyons  
10 – 18 Oct 2014

*You Can Always*  
*Hand Them Back*  
by Roger Hall. Music and  
lyrics by Peter Skellern,  
Fortune Theatre:  
Otago/Southland Tour  
14 – 25 Oct 2014

*No Holds Bard*  
by Michael Hurst,  
Natalie Medlock  
and Dan Musgrove,  
Royale Productions  
15 – 18 Oct 2014

*Ladies Night*  
by Stephen Sinclair and  
Anthony McCarten  
15 Nov – 13 Dec 2014

*The War Play*  
by Philip Braithwaite  
28 Mar – 18 Apr 2015

### Other Venues Dunedin

*Moon At The Bottom*  
*Of The Garden*  
by Sarah McDougall  
Moon Productions and  
Arts Festival Dunedin:  
Dunedin Public Art Gallery  
10 – 19 Oct 2014

*The Mall*  
by Thomas Sainsbury  
Counterpoint  
Allen Hall Theatre  
23 – 25 Oct 2014

*Grimey Times*  
by Rosie Howells  
Counterpoint  
Athenaeum Theatre  
5 – 7 Dec 2014

*Mary's Christmas in*  
*Dunedin*  
by Abby Howells and  
Rosie Howells, Discharge  
Playhouse Theatre  
11 – 12 Dec 2014

*Benedict Cumberbatch*  
*Must Die*  
by Abby Howells  
Discharge: Playhouse

Theatre  
12 – 14 Mar 2015

*Home*  
by Freya Desmarais  
Fresh 'n' Fruity Gallery  
20 – 22 Mar 2015

*The Cape*  
by Vivienne Plumb  
Counterpoint  
Mary Hopewell Theatre  
1 – 4 Jul 2015

## OTHER SOUTH ISLAND

*Ted, Poppy and*  
*World War Two*  
by Paul Maunder  
Kiwi Possum Productions  
Regent Theatre, Greymouth  
28 – 30 Aug 2014

*The Road that Wasn't*  
*There* by Ralph McCubbin  
Howell, Trick of the Light  
Nelson Arts Festival  
22 – 23 Oct 2014

*Like There's No Tomorrow*  
by The Playground  
Collective, Show Pony  
Wanaka Festival of Colour  
20 – 25 Apr 2015

*Café*  
by Rachel Callinan  
and Paul McLaughlin  
Site-specific Theatre NZ,  
Wanaka Festival of Colour  
21 – 26 Apr 2015

*Central*  
by Dave Armstrong  
Wanaka Festival of Colour  
23 – 24 Apr 2015

# PLAYMARKET INFORMATION

The Playmarket agency issues and manages performance licenses, advises on and negotiates commission and collaboration agreements, manages royalty payments, maintains an archive of playwrights' work and materials related to it and circulates their plays in New Zealand and internationally. As an Advisor, Playmarket offers advice to playwrights and producers, a raft of development resources such as clinics, readings, and events; and industry discourse, partnerships and networks. Our Bookshop provides every published New Zealand play in print and an extensive catalogue of plays in manuscript form available to download or purchase.

## FACTS AND FIGURES

### 1 July 2014 – 30 June 2015

Professional performance licenses issued: 64

Community performance licenses issued: 112

International licenses issued: 23

School/Tertiary performance licenses issued: 169

Scripts circulated: 1537

Scripts/drafts received: 349

Paid Script assessments: 12

## PUBLISHING

### NZ Play Series

*Here/Now Plays* by Sam Brooks, Emily Duncan, Whiti Hereaka, Ralph McCubbin Howell, Eli Kent, Jamie McCaskill, Arthur Meek and Jess Sayer

*Children of the Poor* by Mervyn Thompson  
Series editor: David O'Donnell | Design: Cansino & Co | Editing and Production: Whitireia Publishing

*The Plays of Bruce Mason* by John Smythe  
Co-produced with Victoria University Press  
Publisher: Fergus Barrowman | Design: Cansino & Co | Editing and Production: Whitireia Publishing

### Playmarket Annual

Editor: Mark Amery | Design: Cansino & Co  
| Editorial assistants: Salesi Le'ota and Murray Lynch

### eBulletin

Published monthly and distributed via email. News and opportunities for those interested in New Zealand plays | Editor: Salesi Le'ota

### edBulletin

A Bulletin sent out to schools biannually encouraging the continued growth of New Zealand plays in education, offering resources and opportunities to teachers | Editor: Salesi Le'ota

## COMPETITIONS AND PROJECTS

### Bruce Mason Award Winner 2014:

Ralph McCubbin Howell

### Adam NZ Play Award Winners:

*Centrepint* by Anders Falstie-Jensen and *Bless the Child* by Hone Kouka

### Runner-up: *Polo* by Dean Parker

### Best Play by a Woman Playwright:

*The Gift of Tongues* by Michelanne Forster

### Best Play by a Māori Playwright:

*Bless the Child* by Hone Kouka

### Best Play by a Pasifika Playwright:

*Kingswood* by David Mamea



**Highly Commended:**

*Significance* by Tom McCrory

**Playwrights b4 25 Winners 2015:**

*Hippolytus Veiled: Or, Eros Beware!* by Nathan Joe and *Long Ago, Long Ago* by Cassandra Tse

**Highly Commended:**

*Benedict Cumberbatch Must Die* by Abby Howells

**Playmarket Plays for the Young Competition 2014:**

*The Laughalot Tribe* by Ronnie Short (3 – 8 year olds), *Wide Awake* by Mike Hudson (8 – 12 year olds) and *The Quiet Room* by Renee Liang (teenagers)

**Runners-up:**

*Le Sujet Parle: And Then He Shot Me* by Emily Duncan and *The Twenty-Seven Last Days of Childhood* by Tom McCrory

**Brown Ink 2015:**

*Officer 27* by Aroha Awarau and *Blackout* by Sepelini Mua'au

**Asian Ink 2015:**

*Let's Save the Universe!* by Benjamin Teh

**Rebecca Mason Executive Coaching:**

Arthur Meek

**Playwrights in Schools programme in partnership with NZ Book Council:**

Dave Armstrong, Briar Grace-Smith, Vela Manusaute

**Young and Hungry Playwrights' Initiative 2015:**

*The 21st Narcissus* by Sam Brooks, *The Presentation of Findings from My Scientific Survey of the First 7500 Days of My Life Done in the Interest of Showing You How to Live Better Lives* by Uther Dean and *How to Catch a Grim Reaper* by Helen Vivienne Fletcher

**Robert Lord Cottage Residencies:**

Chris Price, Jennifer Beck (University of Otago College of Education/Creative New Zealand Children's Writer in Residence), Ralph McCubbin Howell, Chris Molloy, Kiri Rodwell, and Jan Bolwell

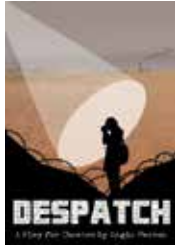
**CLINICS, READINGS AND WORKSHOPS**

**1 July 2014 – 30 June 2014:**

*I Wanna Be Na Na Nah Na Nah* by Stephen Bain, Dave Fane and Tessa Mitchell  
*The War Play* by Philip Braithwaite  
*The Way of the Queen* by Paul Fagamalo  
*Golf* by Roger Hall

# DRAMATIC STUFF

*Playscripts available now  
or coming soon ...*



## ANGIE FARROW

*Falling & other short plays*

\$29.99

*Despatch* (available September)

\$24.99

## RENEE LIANG

*FAAB – The First Asian All Black  
and Lantern* (October)

\$29.99

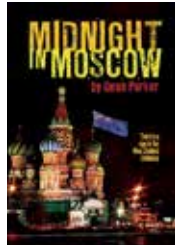
## DEAN PARKER

*Midnight in Moscow* \$24.99

*The Tigers of Wrath* \$24.99

*Left, Left, Left Right Left*

(October) \$24.99



*Who is Sada Abe? Part One: Bullfight of Love*

by Nathan Joe

*Bless the Child* by Hone Kouka

*Wild Bees* by Phil Ormsby

*Girl on a Corner* by Victor Rodger

*Fix* by Jess Sayer

*Te Pahi* by Cian Elyse White

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### **Playmarket thanks our partners for their support:**

Creative New Zealand; First Sovereign Trust; Foundation North; Adam Foundation; Auckland Live; Auckland Writers Festival; Bruce Mason Estate; Drama New Zealand; Downstage Theatre Society; FAME Trust; Four Winds Foundation; Massive Company; Infinity Foundation; Matariki Development Festival; Museum Art Hotel; Musical Theatre New Zealand; NZ Book Council; NZ Festival; Writers Week; NZ Players Theatre Trust; NZ Writers Guild; Playwrights Studio Scotland; Playwriting Australia; Rebecca Mason; TAPAC; The Writers' Cottage Trust; Te Whaea: National Dance & Drama Centre; Theatre New Zealand; Victoria University Press; Whitireia Publishing; Young and Hungry Arts Trust and all of the professional theatre companies.

PREVIOUS PAGE: Benjamin Henson and Nathan Joe working on Nathan's Asian Ink submission *Who is Sada Abe? Part One: Bullfight of Love*.



STEELE ROBERTS  
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# THE LAST WORD

*Artistic Director of TAPAC Margaret-Mary Hollins  
on bringing the professional and community together.*

The relationship between professional and community theatre is kind of like going tandem when jumping out of a plane. I tried jumping out of a plane once, but terror stopped me. I tried acting and being in front of an audience and experienced the same terror – I hated it, I loved it. The human spirit seeks a way to jump, searching for that place in yourself that can terrify and excite. A place that can take your breath away, publicly or privately.

In 2014, I was funded by Art Venture and TAPAC to visit 20 arts organisations in the USA. These were both professional and community based organisations creating and curating theatre productions and programmes.

I found America interested in our community meets professional practitioner model at TAPAC. We have four studios and an intimate theatre in Western Springs, Auckland, run approximately 54 classes a week, contract about 30 teaching artists, run holiday programmes and create projects with community to “produce inspirational outcomes”.

I have watched senior community group Marvellous Theatre for Seniors grow sharper and younger, through theatre process and performance working with professionals. The members are all aged 65 plus, the oldest member 94. It was founded at Auckland

Theatre Company and is now based independently at TAPAC).

We also bring community projects together. New initiative *Marvellous Friday* sees our *Friday Club* (11 to 14 year olds) meet with Marvellous every fortnight. We don't know what it is we are creating yet – that comes later – what is important is the connection, respect and joy between generations. We're currently working with members of the Blind Foundation on our *Lights Out Project*, supported by a professional creative team, to create something unique for an audience giving a voice to an ignored community. Again the process is what compels.

Working together with independent professionals and members of the community, a jump into the unknown is encouraged on both sides. It may be a little scary, but we also provide a secure safety net. The self-learning that occurs in theatre through being involved in the process that leads to a production is astronomical. I've seen companies go from performing in suburban community halls, to being invited to perform in theatres in the CBD. I've seen amateur performers develop into very good actors. The budding talent and, often, the desire was always there, but the insecurity and risk of being a professional actor takes another kind of guts.





The process towards performance, is as exciting as the outcome. It's about tapping into parts of yourself that hum and sit inside, unexplored, undiscovered. It's about finding more of yourself with people you've met for the first time. It's about getting close, real close – being asked to stare into eyes, touch, scream, laugh and cry. It's about being brave enough to trust that whatever it is you are doing, it is okay. It's not about wanting to be a professional performer, it's more about learning about yourself.

It can also be very funny. A serious voice class can degenerate into a chorus of giggling individuals trying to keep their focus. Fair enough, it's pretty weird stuff if you haven't been to drama school. For the professional on the other hand, it can be very frustrating as dramatic techniques needs to be taught in a short amount of time. Communicating through the process is hard work and can be exhausting – it takes consistent, sustained focus.

Social connection is incredibly important. This cannot be underestimated. If they are not going to enjoy it, why do it? The community members are not being paid. They are there to connect, to grow, to share. Every culture has its unique characteristics and similarities, and our shared aims provide

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## THE JUMP IS TANDEM NOT FREEFALL

a platform to better understand each other. Our differences help teach us to accept each other.

So, it's imperative for community groups to work with professionals who have patience, commitment, understanding, passion and drive. The performer is flying but the jump is tandem not freefall.

At TAPAC we love connecting and collaborating with independent, established and emerging artists and the community. There are a number of ways, where the community groups support the professional production, the professional mentors the community, or the professional goes a step further and educates the emerging artist or community members. Whatever way, it works, as we create a culture of our own to develop our own arts.

ABOVE: Playmarket's Stuart Hoar with the cast of *Dexter's Deep Sea Discovery* by Darlene Moheky and Jess Sayer, TAPAC. Image: Stuart Hoar.

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