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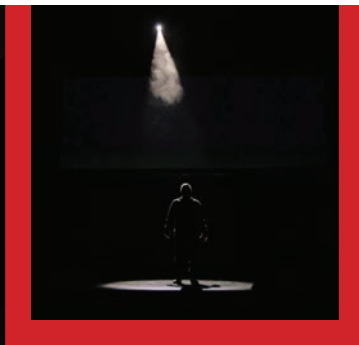
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*We have a vision driven by artistic and cultural integrity and creative excitement...*

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**Alison Walls**  
*Artistic Director*

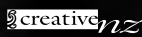


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# MINORITY REPORT

## ISSUE *No* 57

When we started thinking about how to curate the Playmarket Annual in November 2021 we asked: what stories do we want to read about? From whose perspective, experience and world views? How might the content feel relevant to us and to others who may have not historically seen themselves reflected in many spaces? Who would we like to celebrate?

With this 2022 Annual we are celebrating the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) women and non-binary makers in our communities.

As these communities continue to wrestle and grow with the sometimes ill-fitting limitations of the English language around identity, we too want to acknowledge that tricky desire to be inclusive without presenting everyone as a monolith. At the same time, there is incredible power in naming things. Doing so centres and makes visible what might otherwise remain at the margins, the peripheries, the shadows.

As our knowledge and understanding of different intersections expands, so does the need to find new ways to hold and include a range of identities. There are so many ways of being, doing, and knowing. We are learning, we are on a journey, we are listening to the stories around us in our communities, and the courage, beauty, talent, and tenacity it sometimes takes to share those stories.

This annual would not and could not have happened if not for the many contributing writers. Their many voices, often defying easy categorisation, and best described as voices of difference.

And to the many voices that continue to work tirelessly behind the scenes, to the hundreds of artists we did not have capacity to hold space for.

Thank you as well to Mark Amery, the previous editor for handing us the torch, alongside Salesi Le'ota who has been an invaluable ally to us and a huge part of drawing all of this work together.

**Jane Yonge and Nathan Joe**



**PLAYMARKET ANNUAL**

THE MAGAZINE OF THE AOTEAROA  
PLAY AND PLAYWRIGHT

**Playmarket Annual Editor:** Jane Yonge  
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**Editorial Assistants:** Saleisi Le'ota  
and Murray Lynch

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Kelly Hodgkins (Platform Interpreting) at *Greedy Cat* by Joy Cowley, adapted for the stage by Tim Bray • Photo by David Rowland / One-Image.com

# Why I wrote the play I wrote

HELEN PEARSE-OTENE

*on The Undertow*

I remember the first play I wrote; it was about a poor girl who tied ribbons to her ankles and transformed into a prima ballerina. I was four years old and hadn't yet learned to read and write, but that minor detail did not stop me from scrawling my masterpiece of squiggles and interlocked circles in black biro down the length of the passage wall. When I presented my efforts to my mother she said I was to never write again. Fast forward nearly 50 years and my mother is one of the staunchest supporters of my writing, the other being my partner-in-time, Jim Moriarty.

It was Jim who came up with the idea when he said, "I think we should do a play about the history of New Zealand." I'm not very good at maths and percentages and stuff, but even I know that trying to cram a half-decent story spanning nearly 200 years of contested history into a 90-minute show is a tall order. I replied, "You can't do it in one play" and immediately wished I hadn't, because Jim, being the creative terrier that he is, had a light-bulb moment, chomped down hard and said, "Ok then, we'll do it in three." And so *The Undertow* was born.

*The Undertow* series looks at the relationship between the Treaty partners, through a

whānau whose intergenerational story plays out against the backdrop of this country's dynamic history. *The Ragged* (2010) is my love letter to Wellington. At the time of writing, our theatre company Te Rākau was running a therapeutic theatre programme for rangatahi in CYFs (now Oranga Tamariki). There wasn't as much discussion on the state care-to-prison pipeline phenomenon as we have now, but back then it was obvious to us, and I for one was becoming hōhā with the department and its processes that were clearly setting young people up to fail.

Jim and I decided if we could do anything in the short time we had with the rangatahi, we could apply *The Ragged* to seed conscientisation before they were inevitably moved elsewhere. Later, we expanded our mission to include the audience, as well as the acting students and professional practitioners who would join the project.

Although the characters that appear throughout *The Undertow* are fictional, the events that inform each play are historical givens. In *The Ragged*, I created characters that were composites of the New Zealand Company settlers. The majority of their dialogue was lifted verbatim from archived



journal entries, articles, and letters. I used the same process in 2012 when I wrote the second play *Dog and Bone*, set during the second Taranaki war. The sickening gut-punch I felt every time I read the derogatory language in the newspapers, letters, poetry, and diaries that dehumanised Māori and called for our extermination was only slightly tempered by a pleasant tickle whenever I happened upon the musings of Pākehā settlers that were written in te reo Māori.

As *The Undertow* was evolving (from three plays to four), so too was my writing and thinking about national identity, cultural assimilation, placemaking, and contested territories. This was reflected in my decision to call the third play *Public Works* (2014) and set it in No Man's Land. For inspiration, I researched my great-grandfather's military record. Aged 16, John Murray-Macgregor (aka Pop) changed his name and ran away from Te Wairoa to Gallipoli, and then spent the next three years taking bullets and shrapnel on the Western Front. No Man's Land was located between the Allies and German frontlines, a god-forsaken, muddy killing field that was reabsorbed into farmland once hostilities ended. The impermanence and unboundedness of No Man's Land

provided the ideal conditions to write other realities into being. The first scene I wrote occurs over half-way through *Public Works* when a young soldier Hamuera is visited in No Man's Land by an elderly gentleman called Harry. As the scene plays out it is revealed that Harry is Hamuera's mokopuna and a veteran from a much later war. We get to follow Harry's journey to No Man's Land in the fourth play.

*The Landeaters* (2015) was part of my master's research in psychology where I interviewed an inspirational group of Vietnam War veterans on their perspectives of healing after active service. Their interview transcripts set down the thematic bedrock of the story, constructed Harry's internal world, voice, dialogue, physicality, and fuelled his drive to find meaning and peace. I hope

*The Landeaters* served to draw *The Undertow* to a satisfying end — not only for the audiences who turned up to watch all four shows in one day, but also for the characters whose wairua and voices inhabited my hinengaro for the better part of ten years.

ABOVE: *The Undertow: Dog and Bone* by Helen Pearse-Otene, Te Rākau Hua o Te Wao Tapu Trust, Soundings Theatre, 2016. Image: Aneta Pond.





# TĀMAKI MAKĀURAU 2021

BY NAHYEON LEE

The end of 2020 felt like the beginning of regeneration, but 2021 proved to be another test of resilience for the theatre industry. Shows were endlessly rescheduled, with some seasons managing to squeak past lockdowns and outbreaks and others getting swallowed, never to resurface. Despite this, for pockets of time Aotearoa was one of the only parts of the world where going to the theatre was almost riskless. Opening nights buzzed, actors went on and audiences connected with theatre again like nervous lovers on a first date.

The plunge into uncertainty began early. Usually the busiest time of the arts calendar, February saw Tāmaki Makaurau entering level 3 lockdowns resulting in mass postponements. Fringe was fractured, with most shows rescheduling later in the year, some going ahead, and some, like Auckland Live's Fringe Town, completely cancelling. Shows like *Waiting* literally waited for later dates, while Karin McCracken, Meg Rollandi and Julia Croft's *Standard Acts* continued its second season at a reduced capacity. Auckland Pride similarly had shows repeatedly rescheduled but eventually presented seasons of shows such as *He They She, I Wanna be Mark Wahlberg* and Jason Te Mete's *Over My Dead Body: Uninvited*.

Auckland Arts Festival lay in the interstitial space between level changes which plunged them into uncertainty. But with a snap loosening of levels, they managed to swiftly reopen. The Festival featured scripted New Zealand works including Taki Rua's *Sing To Me*, *Tropical Love Birds* and Auckland Theatre Company's *The Haka Party Incident*,

alongside technically innovative works *The Griegol* and *The Artist*. Auckland Arts Festival also offered a larger platform to cross-disciplinary performances like the inaugural Legacy Vogue Ball, which brought together the three ballroom houses Aitu, Iman and Coven-Carangi in partnership with FAFSWAG for a groundbreaking celebration. This sat alongside intimate community theatre offerings such as *Love to Say Goodbye*, which invited local rangatahi to perform on a stage built at the iconic state house location of Toa Fraser's film, *No. 2*, scheduled for demolition but temporarily saved for their season.

June saw a seeming return to normalcy in which shows returned to our stages for a long unbroken stretch.

The year was rich with work about the Asian experience, defining and redefining the understandings of Asian identity. The Australian-written *Single Asian Female* was the first East Asian work ever programmed by Auckland Theatre Company. In their Here and Now Festival, ATC later experienced the audience's appetite for original New Zealand Asian work, selling out its season of coming-of-age story *Yang/Young/杨*. This was further demonstrated by Proudly Asian Theatre and Hand Pulled Collective's sell-out season of *Pork and Poll Taxes*.

The national tour of Ahi Karunaharan's *The Mourning After*, the return of *First World Problems 3.0* and the debut comedy *Boom Shankar* contributed to a celebratory wave of strong South Asian works, as did the return of veterans Indian Ink with *Paradise and the Impermanence of Ice Cream*.



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## THE YEAR WAS RICH WITH WORK ABOUT THE ASIAN EXPERIENCE

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP

LEFT: *Dakota of the White Flats* by Red Leap Theatre Company, Q Theatre. Image: Andi Crown Photography.

*Everything After* by Shane Boshier, Brilliant Adventures, Q Theatre. Image: Andi Crown Photography.

*Peter Paka Paratene* by Rawiri Paratene, Te Pou Tokomanawa Theatre. Image: Amarbir Singh.

*The Mourning After* by Ahilan Karunaharan, Agaram Productions and Square Sums & Co, Q Theatre. Image: Roc + Photography.

*Tropical Love Birds* by Vela Manusaute, TAPA, Auckland Arts Festival, Māngere Arts Centre. Image: Raymond Sagapolutele.

*Pork and Poll Taxes* by Talia Pua, Proudly Asian Theatre and Hand Pulled Collective, Auckland Live. Image: John Rata.

*45 Cents an Hour* by Dominic Hoey, Basement Theatre. Image: Peter Jennings.

PREVIOUS PAGE: *The Griegol* by Hannah Smith and Ralph McCubbin Howell, Trick of the Light Theatre Company, Auckland Arts Festival, Q Theatre. Image: Philip Merry.

Basement Theatre's Co-Pro initiative introduced an exciting assortment of larger scale productions to the space, including Dominic Hoey's *45 Cents an Hour*, the outrageously cheeky *Fala Muncher* and *Standard Acts*. In doing so, Basement provided space preserving independent artists' agency over the direction of their stories, while granting them the resources to present despite the uncertainties of the pandemic.

Te Pou opened the doors to their newly-constructed venue, Te Pou Tokomanawa Theatre with Rawiri Paratene's swan song production of *Peter Paka Paratene*, followed by Nicola Kawana's *Kūpapa*.

Things came to a screeching halt on 17 August, when Tāmaki Makaurau entered a level 4 lockdown, not knowing it would last 107 days due to the Delta variant. Arts institutions and independent artists once again kicked into gear advocating for greater support in an already-precarious gig economy, especially after CNZ announced no further Covid-specific funding support for artists beyond their regular funding rounds in 2021.

That lockdown halted Red Leap's *Dakota and the White Flats*, which was postponed after only one weekend, and forced the cancellation of not just ATC's *Things That Matter*, but all their remaining 2021 programming.

Silo Theatre prepared for and rolled with the punches by shifting into a deeply ambitious slate of digital work. *Mauri Tau*, originally created for Matariki as an audio theatre project, returned, offering a polished and intimate outdoor experience. Despite originally being developed for the stage, *Break Bread* pivoted making the best of its digital format by combining charmingly DIY aesthetics and virtual production polish with cheek and humour.

Other artists addressed the pandemic within the work itself. *Back To Square One?* by Anders Falstie-Jensen pushed the boundaries of what theatre is, and what it could be in a world limited by Covid-19. Its narrative worked through questions about the pandemic and the isolation it has brought us and its outdoor staging allowed audiences some sense of community and togetherness.

Despite a year of vibrant and inspiring work, the question can't help but be asked: what unseen and unexpected consequences will there be for the ecology of Tāmaki Makaurau theatre in the long term? With the ongoing discussions about how to support independent artists we don't consider the works that never made it to the stage—who thrives, who survives and who loses?

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Miriama McDowell in *Lysander's Aunty*...  
Photo: Ross Brown

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# WHANAUNGA FROM ANOTHER MAUNGA

*Neenah Dekkers-Reihana on The Haka Party and other incidents.*

On Saturday, 17th June 2017, the day after my 24th birthday, I was closing my short season of *This is What it Looks Like* – a solo-show I had nocturnally developed in my blue-velvet-curtain-for-a-door bedroom in a draughty flat in Brooklyn. I'd been welcomed into the whānau of what is still my favourite festival, Kia Mau. Hone Kouka shouted me a birthday tequila the night before. I knocked it back, holding my breath, and turned back to see Hone sipping it slowly. Shame.

On Sunday night, I get a call from Hone. There's a show coming down from Auckland, but one of the actors is sick and they need someone to jump in. There's a preview show this Wednesday, and opening night is Thursday. Hone has full confidence I can do it so "yup sweet I'm keen!". They need me to come in for rehearsal tomorrow. I've got a recording job in the morning so "I'll come in as soon as I finish".

On Monday, mid-morning Dolina Wehipeihana emails me. "Here is the script – except scene 15 has changed – we will get that to you tonight". I feel a little flutter of nerves.

But I remind myself, Hone sounded chill, it'll just be a small part. I finish my job early and let them know I'm on my way over to Te Haukāinga. The company are still working at the Hannah Playhouse. "No worries, I'll sit down with my script". And so I do.

I read the first ten pages and I've got maybe four lines so far. Sweet. I'm pretty good at learning lines anyway, especially when they make sense to me. And Mei-Lin Te Paea Hansen writes beautifully. This is going to be fun. I keep reading and - oh I've got some dialogue in te reo Māori. That's a bit scary but ok. I read on and – oh my god is this Mandarin? No, Cantonese! And I have a love interest? Wow they're really centring the romance too – and it hits me, *The Mooncake and the Kūmara*... I'm the bloody kūmara.

I fell in love with Katie immediately. I already knew who she was, of course. One of the amazing wāhine who wrote and directed shorts for the anthology film, *Waru*, which I'd had the honour of playing a small role in the year before, my first named role in a feature film. And here she is, Katie Wolfe,



walking into Te Haukāinga to meet me, her last minute kūmara. I was nervous. I'm always nervous meeting new people, let alone a room full of pros. We had a clunky rehearsal where the gorgeous cast, with Katie's guidance, walked me through the blocking. I was absorbing so much new information and was probably stumbling around like a frightened little lamb. I can't imagine how terrifying it would have been for everyone. But I went home, studied my script and came in for the dress/tech in the theatre the following day. Katie had arranged for a small script to be printed and aged to fit the era so I could have a cheat with me on stage. But I'd been taught that if the cue cards are there my brain would rely on them, so I chose not to use it. The next day, we had the preview show for a sold out audience and as soon as the lights came up I felt a sickening wave of regret. Why didn't you keep the script, you fool? But to absolutely everyone's surprise, when my cue came, I started speaking and the rest was like a dance. We opened the following night and it all happened again. It wasn't just a fluke. Phew!

I was too enamoured by her to recognise it at the time, but Katie is my whanaunga from another maunga. That first week we met, she spotted a scab on my knee. I'd fallen over at the Kia Mau Festival launch party and had never cleaned the wound and, sorry if you're squeamish, but it was straight up rancid. Katie made me sit down and, in the dressing room at Hannah Playhouse, she cleaned out my paru wound. That, e hoa mā, is aroha. After the Wellington season, Katie invited me to join *The Mooncake and the Kūmara* whānau in their season at Q Theatre in Tāmaki Makaurau. I was beyond excited and obviously said yes. Following that, Katie invited me to play the title character in *Anahera* at Circa Theatre. Another pretty iconic opening night, especially when my nose started bleeding while I was standing frozen on stage and a growing red stain formed around my heart. Thankfully a very fitting bodily error for the role. Then in 2019,

ABOVE: *The Haka Party Incident* by Katie Wolfe, Auckland Theatre Company, ASB Waterfront Theatre. Image: Andi Crown Photography.



Katie asked if I would play a part in *The Haka Party Incident*. Which came to be the most important, rewarding, challenging and nourishing work I've been a part of in my life thus far.

On May 1st, 1979, a group of Māori, with support from their Pasifika whanaunga, stood up to the white man. The Auckland University Engineering school had a tradition. One that included (Pākehā) students wearing grass skirts, painting their bodies and performing "haka". They would march down Queen Street, shouting obscenities amongst their grossly mispronounced kupu from existing haka.

Even now I feel sick writing about it. Roimata Fox and I used to move over to each other in rehearsals when it all got too much. We'd hold each other and remind ourselves that these weren't haka, what they did, it's not haka. It was important for us to

---

## I STARTED SPEAKING AND THE REST WAS LIKE A DANCE

separate this lewd, often drunk, disgusting performance from what our tūpuna did.

We performed several haka throughout the play. We had the guidance of our young and powerful Matua Nikau, Katie's son, who worked us hard. And we did recreations of the mock haka as the engineering students did them. For this, we had footage and multiple accounts of what these crude, Pākehā, non-haka looked like over the years. Katie wanted the whole company to perform all of the haka together. At first I wasn't so sure about this. But in time it became clear how necessary it was. We were telling this story together, as one. Kotahitanga was a strong and important practice throughout the process.

What Katie has done with this play is immensely powerful. This story is extremely painful for me to engage with. It fills me with a ferocious, throbbing, bodily rage. You see, when I hear about these moments of overt, systemic, institutional, ongoing racism, I cannot separate it from my own mamae, my own sense of disconnect, the damage to my whakapapa. I see red. I see red, white and black. And it can be too much. But the way in which Katie has woven it all together, it is a meeting of voices, a sharing of experiences, a talanoa. It is the kōrerorero i te pō, in the whareniui. It is people talking, sometimes angry, sometimes in tangi, sometimes aloof and unaware, sometimes humorous. It is the meeting place, the university quad. And you, the listener, are allowed to feel what you want, which is essential to the healing impact of the work. And Katie's choice to include the haka, the real haka, is a huge and necessary





blessing for the show. Not only does this present to the audience an idea of what a haka is supposed to look like, which in turn highlights the absurdity of the mock-haka. But it allows us as performers a pressure valve, a necessary release. Te ihi, te wehi me te wana. And, specifically for us Māori, it is an opportunity to call on, to honour, to connect with our tūpuna. And every night, I walked off stage feeling I had left it all out there on the atamira.

So, as you can imagine, the cancellations hurt badly. We first got cancelled for our season in July 2020. Then we got the ball rolling early 2021, only to be thrown into lockdown mid-rehearsal. We got postponed from March to April, and thankfully still went up, with a reduced season. We had a big tour all over the motu scheduled for Sept - Nov 2021, which was cancelled. And we were due to go up in the Aotearoa New Zealand Festival of the Arts and Auckland Arts Festival earlier this year and, you guessed it, i mutu i mua i te tīmata, it was over before it began. The silencing of this work does sting differently but if there's one thing we, as tangata whenua, know how to do, it's soldiering on. Ahakoa he pouri, ka whawhai tonu matou.

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## AN OPPORTUNITY TO CALL ON, TO HONOUR, TO CONNECT WITH OUR TŪPUNA

LEFT: *The Mooncake and the Kūmara* by Mei-Lin Te Puea Hansen, The Oryza Foundation and Betsy & Mana Productions, Kia Mau Festival and Q Theatre, 2017. Image: Julie Zhu.

ABOVE: *The Haka Party Incident* by Katie Wolfe, Auckland Theatre Company, ASB Waterfront Theatre. Image: Andi Crown Photography.

# SEEING THE DARK REFLECTIONS FROM A BLACK CREATIVE

*By Dione Joseph.*

*He uri ahau no Caribbean, France, Ireland, India  
I whanau mai ahau i te taha o te awa o New Delhi  
I tipu ake au i e taha o te awa o Tāmaki Makaurau  
Ko Te Puaha o Waikato tōku kāinga noho  
Ko au te kaiwhakahaere o Black Creatives Aotearoa  
Ko Dione Joseph Kouratoras tōku ingoa*



I am a mixed-race woman who has been making art for as long as I can remember. I am not alone. There are so many incredible artists from our African/Afro-Caribbean community who have been making art for decades. Our community has been here since the 60s in mass numbers. From scholarship students to small migrations and the mark has been indelible. Rugby players to mayors, hip-hop artists to hairdressers. But who has been paying attention?

The rise of Black Lives Matter in an era when everyone was glued to their screen drew the world's attention to acts of atrocities that have been perpetuated and still continue to be against the Black body. The streets across Auckland, Wellington, Dunedin as well as so many other centres filled with people ready to march, individuals willing to show their personal and collective grief and those committed to demonstrating what true allyship could mean in a world where a mother's son takes his last breath at the crush of a knee.

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## ARTISTS ARE WARRIORS BUT WE ARE ALSO HEALERS



But then what? Anti-racism groups were established but where was the funding to continue the work? Collectives were formed but their presence was barely decipherable. Other communities came together in the moment to show solidarity and then what? Anti-blackness is real and alive in Aotearoa. The fact that even in 2022 we have to continue to justify why the n word is unacceptable is exhausting. On and on, the systems and processes that have facilitated and perpetuated violence have not been held to account. Not just in the United States, here in Aotearoa, Blackness became trendy and people jumped on the bandwagon. Let's get someone from our team to educate others about what happened! Let's get a speaker! Let's get a dancer! Let's keep the cycle locked in violence because there is no place or space for Black joy or Black excellence – trauma porn after all is extremely profitable. Apparently so are golliwogs and the commitment to keep childhood heirlooms.

Our community of Black artists (myself included) are tired of hiding. In fact, in this world of performance making and performing belonging, we have had to step in and step up onto the stage - sometimes having to build it ourselves. When I began Black Creatives Aotearoa in 2018 it was through a deep desire to see African and Afro-Caribbean folks and all our diaspora kin represented in the arts – and on a personal level to create community to distance the overwhelming loneliness I felt as a theatremaker in this industry.

However, the myth that we are not here is as deep as it is pervasive. Recently Mama Wanjiku (Wanjiku Kiarie Sanderson, former Keskidee Arts Centre member) shared the touring history for her show *Black Woman*. A celebration of African diaspora playwrights devised and performed by Kiarie and directed by Martyn Sanderson the show toured from 1983-85 and received rave reviews from audiences and critics. She also spent seven years developing *In Transit* (a Pacific-African

# Connecting our community through the arts



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collaboration written by Sanderson as a tribute to her husband Martyn and directed by Justine Simej-Barton) which came to the stage in 2017.

Today, we are blessed to see the cohort of playwrights, actors, and directors slowly evolving and expanding. Stanley Makuwe, an award-winning playwright has now made the Adam NZ Play Award shortlist twice, his play *Black Lover* co-presented by Auckland Theatre Company and Auckland Arts Festival (2020), Teremoana Rapley, First Lady of Hip-hop in Aotearoa, had her show *Daughter of a Housegirl* (2021) sell out at Kia Mau in Wellington; and over the last three years BCA's Playwrights Lab has nurtured playwrights supporting them with a variety of industry support and resource.

Let's say their names: Alvie McKree, Munashe Tapfuya, Ayo Beckley Adesanya, Estelle Chout, Grace Bentley, Simba Matshe, Jazz dos Santos, Vira Grace Paky, Lynnette Harris, Keagan Carr Fransch, Alex de Vries, Tawanda Manyimo and Kauthar Eckstein. Estelle's play *Po' Boys n Oysters* also made the 2021 Adam Award shortlist and her development play *The Eternal Queers* was staged as part of Wellington Pride.

In addition, there is a fabulous and growing community of Black actors including Toi Whakaari-trained Grace Bentley, Batanai Mashingaidze, Tawanda Manyimo as well as other trained/in-training actors including Graham Vincent, Sandra Zvenyika, Otis Donovan Herring, Quentin DeAngelo Warren, Jenn Onyeiwu, Adorate Mizero, Keven Souza and the list goes on (noting many playwrights are also fabulous actors too).

Every day I am humbled and excited by how much we have achieved and how far we are growing, changing and thriving. Some of us came here as seeds and saplings that were transplanted and others have been here long enough to bear new generations. Fruit of our own, of this soil and strengthening the connections to this land.

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## WE ARE GROWING, CHANGING AND THRIVING

In the midst of this all the artists, excavating within themselves to find the resources to share story, to share joy amidst tears, heart bliss with heart ache, challenge the expectations of trauma and defy the limitations set by others as we helicopter our way through the glass ceilings. Artists are warriors but we are also healers. Black artists have been a minority for a long time but things are changing not just because numbers are rising but because the narrative is shifting - there is a different story that we are now telling, in our own words, on our own terms. The theatre is one of the many places where we will continue to share our stories. We have the talent. We have the skills. We have our people. But we have not always paid enough attention to ourselves.

Before we return to normal and indulge in the huge influx of events and celebrations that are promised, let's remember that long before social distancing was a thing our communities of colour were already isolated. Let's not go back to normal. Let's pay attention. In different ways and make an effort to do different things, in ways that are, well, different.



# REASONS TO REST/ ALL TOMORROW'S ART PARTIES

*Jane Yonge & Nathan Joe consider two pieces  
of writing by Nisha Madhan.*

**Nisha Madhan is the Programmer for Basement Theatre in Tāmaki Makaurau. Across the pandemic, she programmed and un-programmed countless shows, meanwhile supporting artists to produce and un-produce their art at a time of great fragility, vulnerability and precariousness. Nisha is also a practicing artist.**

As a part of her Masters thesis, Nisha wrote about the failure of “neoliberal structures”: the broken systems that perpetuate an unsustainable arts and culture sector, particularly at times of crisis. She also reflected upon several ‘Reasons to Rest’ that emerged during the first lockdown.

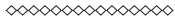
Although the context of Nisha’s ‘call to rest’ sees her contending with live art in a digital landscape, this idea of rest as an act of defiance and resistance can also be extended to the corporeal world: “The most

inflammatory action you can take is to stop and rest in a world that is built to rush you into the arms of something you don’t fully trust.”

How do we keep hold of the lessons that we learnt during lockdown? To not simply have amnesia around our thinking towards self-care and rest. The push to be up and running, to be on the grind and hamster wheel again.

The following section is a passage from ‘Reasons to Rest’, the sentiment initially captured as a blog post on April 1st 2020.

## REASONS TO REST



### *Imagine the Future*

5 years

Wake up. The world is stark light.  
Art is sold alongside bottled water.

20 years

Wake up. The world is stark light.  
Art is a rumour. People hoard water  
in tanks under their houses.

50 years

Wake up. The world is stark light.  
Art is free.  
The world is an ocean.



This piece of writing began in a raw and simple format, as a blog post on April 1st, 2020, twenty days after entering into a lockdown. I chose to record it at the time because as we were plunged into an unparalleled level of digital second life, a fatigue from reading email after email from every single organisation I had ever visited settled over me. Emails with the same tone and the same amount of words: empathetic, sorry, yet hopeful. Almost over-caring blocks of text I could barely fit in my screen-shaped eyeballs. I, too, was guilty of sending these emails to artists from my position as the programmer of Basement Theatre. So, I stopped. Instead, I spoke out loud in a bid for relief, an alternative waveform, smoke signals to my fellow artists of colour - whose physical presence I was missing sorely. Eighteen months after entering into a lockdown, I am astounded by the resilience of the artists around me. And I am pissed off at the arts sector (of which I am a very real part) that nothing seems to have changed. Following

sector-wide conversations on how the system was broken to begin with, governing arts structures seem to be merrily bouncing back to the neo-liberal rhythms of projected box office models and paying everyone in an arts organisation except the artist.

I am in the privileged position of being able to create art and perform it live for audiences, as well being able to facilitate others to do the same. Still, I ineffectually cling to the smoke signals I sent at that time. If anything, the desire to see those signals received and answered has grown stronger. As writer Rosabel Tan says in her article 'We Can Build A New Utopia' [commissioned by Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi]: "We're right to feel lucky. But we're also right to want more."

This 'call to rest' is about art (of the live variety) and its relationship to digital spaces. It is also about the digital space and its relationship to artists of colour. About those artists of colour and their relationship to living in, under and through, various lenses, from colonial to patriarchal. (Though, can those lenses ever really be separated?) What happens when neo-liberalism chooses your rhythm for you? How did we end up stuck on an internal treadmill of productivity? And how might we go about stepping off without feeling a devastating amount of guilt?

Neo-liberal structures that fail artists, especially artists of colour, in the physical world continue to fail them in the digital world - and will keep failing them unless power and privilege are examined at every level. What if, instead of rushing to a digital solution for the future of live performance, we took time to break down the economic and bureaucratic structures that house art in Aotearoa and ask these two questions: Are we simply repeating harmful structures and rhythms online? And what would it be like, in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, to rest and allow for a slow, gentle evolution of live performance to unfold - while paying utmost attention to the safety of QTBIPOC artists?...



On Friday 20th March 2020, five days before entering into a lockdown, the roller door of Basement Theatre was shut and locked to the public indefinitely. As the programmer of the venue, I had roughly 50 out of the expected 500 artists that year at Basement Theatre under my care. I needed to communicate with them, in myriad ways, that a worldwide outbreak of a virus meant that their performances were cancelled and the building needed to be shut. I say 'myriad' because one blanket can't cover everyone (also: some people don't like blankets; others need five) and only a person with blanket privilege would assume that the un-blanketed would need or want one. I wanted to make sure that those artists had means to access some money, that they felt cared for, that they felt hopeful, and that they didn't give up on a way of life that was already difficult to live.

In 2019, twelve months before entering into a lockdown, the median personal annual income for an artist in Aotearoa was \$35,800 (\$15,000, if you take away any income from other sources). Artists live a high-risk life in the wage margins and spend most of their time proving that their choice of career is both valid and useful within the world. So, when a global pandemic puts a stop to all 'non-essential' services and requires the shutdown of the businesses that make the arts possible, you don't need to stretch far to imagine the spike of self-doubt activated in an already fragile and volatile industry.

My first instinct, like that of many, was to encourage artists to throw everything they had online. Live stream; YouTube; Instagram; Zoom; whatever it was, they needed to get it set up as soon as possible and stay relevant to a society that already had suspicions about the artist's purpose long before the Covid-19 pandemic. Theatre is a form that relies upon human beings together in proximity. It could not, would not, simply lie down and take this burn to its pride. The artform was haemorrhaging and needed a nurse.

I thought hard and quickly, but ultimately failed to instantly provide a digital lifeline for our artists, because as a third of the world found itself in lockdown, the internet felt like a problematic place to be. I'm a dedicated scroller of Instagram, a flipper of stories, and a dopamine hunter on Facebook. These are places I generally go to to connect with other POC and revel in my particular algorithms. These algorithms (which I imagine are snakes who are very good at maths) make sure I see other POC faces, bodies, anger, protests, simply framed Audre Lorde quotes offering love and hope and safety. But on Friday March 20th, 2020, I felt less safe. The space for me to exist, to express the complex relationship between race, gender, art, and a global pandemic closed sharply around me. I was physically cut off from safety networks and the amount of xenophobes, mansplainers, and white feminists online had just tripled. As I scrolled through my newly disrupted algorithms, fending off beautifully appropriated lockdown online yoga practises online via Instagram frames – the internet suddenly felt very crowded.

Today, on August 17th, 2021, nearly eighteen months after entering into a lockdown, the doors to the Basement Theatre are wide open. We continue down a road of risk share and box-office and watch as artists contend with the same battles they always have. While digital outputs remain on the table, we have not become a platform for pivoting artists. The rush to digital has subsided to a hum heard in the background. The conversations about equity, safety and sustainability, too, have reduced to a hum in the background. Covid-19 hums at the borders. Algorithms keep a steady, attention-hungry pace. The refusal to return to a broken system is a failing one.

Then again, I have always been a fan of failure as an anti-capitalist strategy, and it shouldn't be an artist's job to fix capitalism.

PREVIOUS PAGE: Nisha Madhan. Image: @eyesofkaos.

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Certainly not for \$11.60 an hour.  
The neo-liberal world is built to scare us into staying on the hamster wheel and into believing that it is our choice to do so. The most inflammatory action you can take is to stop and rest in a world that is built to rush you into the arms of something you don't fully trust.

My hope for artists is this:

Do nothing.

Rest.

Be gentle.

Lean away.

Right away.

Allow time to do its work.

Stare at the stars.

And if you have to do something.

Do it in the physical world.

In the place that you know.

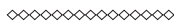
For the people that you love.

Do it for real.

Turn it upside down.

Just for you.

And no one else.



In this next section, Nisha writes two years into the pandemic. She reflects upon the systems change that never came. Instead of rest, hope is now seen as an act of defiance and resistance. Having faith that “there is hope and a bright future for the arts in Aotearoa, one that will be unparalleled in its dedication to duty of care and to systematically centring the work of QTBIPOC artists.”

**ALL TOMORROW'S ART PARTIES**

*To be hopeful means to be uncertain about the future, to be tender toward the possibilities, to be dedicated to change all the way down to the bottom of your heart*

REBECCA SOLNIT

Two years in, it is clear that the pandemic isn't done with its rampage and trying to come up with some new rally cry, or way of saying 'art is life' for the millionth time, feels like pulling teeth. But the cold hard truth is that the time to change hasn't finally come; it has always been here. We, you and I, the readers of this Playmarket annual, know this. We've heard it before, or we've said it ourselves. Realities are starker and the gaps are getting wider. It's scary but clarifying.

It's easy to think that the variants of Covid-19 have decimated the arts scene in Aotearoa. But just because no one sees a tree falling in a forest doesn't mean it didn't make a mighty big sound. I began working as the programmer at Basement Theatre roughly six months before we were plunged into a new meaning of 'Dark Days.' Since then I have programmed near to sixty shows that have either not happened or gone ahead under some pretty compromised circumstances. On a bad day I feel frustrated, but today as I write this, I feel proud and hopeful as I celebrate the invisible scenes of artists that battled it out, pivoted with purpose and championed the plight of the independent artist.

Perhaps the real work in this pandemic has been to persevere in dreaming of all tomorrow's (art) parties, to create our own specific brand of art-fuelled futurisms, and to demand better care toward one another. It has been hard, but will this pressure create a diamond? I think there is hope and a bright future for the arts in Aotearoa, one that will be unparalleled in its dedication to duty of care and to systematically centring the work of QTBIPOC artists.

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**WILL THIS PRESSURE CREATE A DIAMOND?**







IMAGE: *Working on My Night Moves* by Julia Croft and Nisha Madhan, Edinburgh Festival Fringe, Summerhall, 2019. Image: Alex Brenner.

# A BROWN GIRL'S SURVIVAL GUIDE TO PRODUCING THEATRE

By Ankita Singh



**Let me cut to the chase, financially-speaking, there is no good reason to become a theatre producer.**

**BUT being a producer is the fastest way to get an overview of the whole process when creating a show. From idea inception, to writing, applying for money, pitching to venues, funding raising, marketing, ticketing, paying invoices, resolving budget, splitting the box office and wrapping everything up - or taking your project to the next level.**

**These are some things I wish I had known when I got started...**

## **1. HOW TO GET YOUR FOOT IN THE DOOR**

Hang out in theatre foyers, volunteer for theatre companies, attend play readings, rub shoulders with great makers (like Ahi Karunaharan), and ask them how you can get involved and help their community.

Eventually you'll hear about someone who needs a producer (we are short in supply and hot in demand). Don't do an unpaid internship. It's not sustainable. Oh and you don't need to study art/theatre to get started, it helps but real-life-work experience will beat out a degree any day.

These days there are organisations like Proudly Asian Theatre, Black Creatives Aotearoa, Barbarian Productions, Red Scare Theatre Company and Te Pou Theatre, for every community waiting for new relationships and new blood. No matter how slick and intimidating these organisations look from the outside, the truth is, there's just a handful of producers (read: overworked humans) hustling their asses off in very unglamorous offices/cafes to keep these originations going. We love it when someone offers to take us out for a coffee to chat!

## **2. TRIAL BY FIRE**

It's impossible to explain what a producer does, you just have to do it and see if it's for you.

Jump in the deep end. It helps if you have a good nose for sniffing out talent and some basic project management, budgeting, writing and marketing skills - but my advice is to take risks and fail fast.

I got lucky finding some excellent mentors to guide me (see: Sums Selvarajan) - but even they just threw me in the deep end and supported me as I learnt how to tread water!

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**DO. NOT. CUT.  
YOUR. WAGE.**

LEFT: *I am Rachel Chu*  
by Nathan Joe, produced  
by Ankita Singh, Auckland  
Fringe Festival, Basement  
Theatre, 2019.  
Image: Ankita Singh.

Another key learning has been that the most important thing a producer has is relationships. Got a rich doctor friend? They'll fund your show if you ask nicely (trust me, I've done it).

Invest time into forming genuine relationships with people, the rest will fall into place as you desperately try to hold your shows (and your life) together.

### 3. GOING PROFESSIONAL

After a couple of shows - ask yourself, is this really what you want to do? If yes, then make a plan to make it sustainable. Apply for more money than you think you're worth, register for GST, get an accountant to pay your taxes and keep taking on bigger more ambitious projects (with bigger budgets) otherwise you'll burn out and that's not helpful for anyone.

Read up on artist living wages, ask producers for their budgets, most will be willing to share and help.

Read the Screen Industry Guild Blue Book, NZWG and Playmarket guidelines, do the Screensafe anti-harassment workshop, get to know our intimacy co-ordinators and Equity leaders, get a first aid certificate, register as a company or sole trader, talk to a lawyer and create some templates for contracts and learn what IP is.

Heck, make it fun and design yourself a logo, make a website and get some headshots done, it's important to hype yourself, present yourself as a professional and clearly communicate your kaupapa.

Oh, and getting your licence helps (I've survived thanks to Uber, just remember to claim it as a business expense).

Most importantly, always pay yourself. Even when you need an extra \$100 for set, even when your artist is complaining about their fee. Do. Not. Cut. Your. Wage.

If you do not make your practice sustainable you will get salty and quit - leaving an already gaping hole in our industry even more gaping.

### 4. EVERYTHING THAT SUCKS

Sometimes people can forget some producers are also creatives. At an emerging producer level, most producers don't have a lot of creative control, and it's mostly doing budgets and admin.

In fact, most artists don't even want to work with a creative producer. They just want someone to take care of production stuff and provide emotional support when needed. That is fine, but if this isn't your cup of tea and you want to be a creative producer my advice is DON'T PRODUCE.

Take some time off, put your funding application writing skills to good use and make some of your own work. When people see your style, skill and taste, they will be more inclined to collaborate with you and take you seriously.

This is an industry built on relationships and trust. Creatives respect and trust producers who understand the creative process, so show 'em what you got.

### 5. ALWAYS HAVE A BACKUP PLAN

One of the best things I did that helped me survive the pandemic was invest in myself. I did my Masters in Screenwriting and I always kept my photography business chugging along in the background. Pivoting hard into screen and photography were my breadwinners during lockdowns.

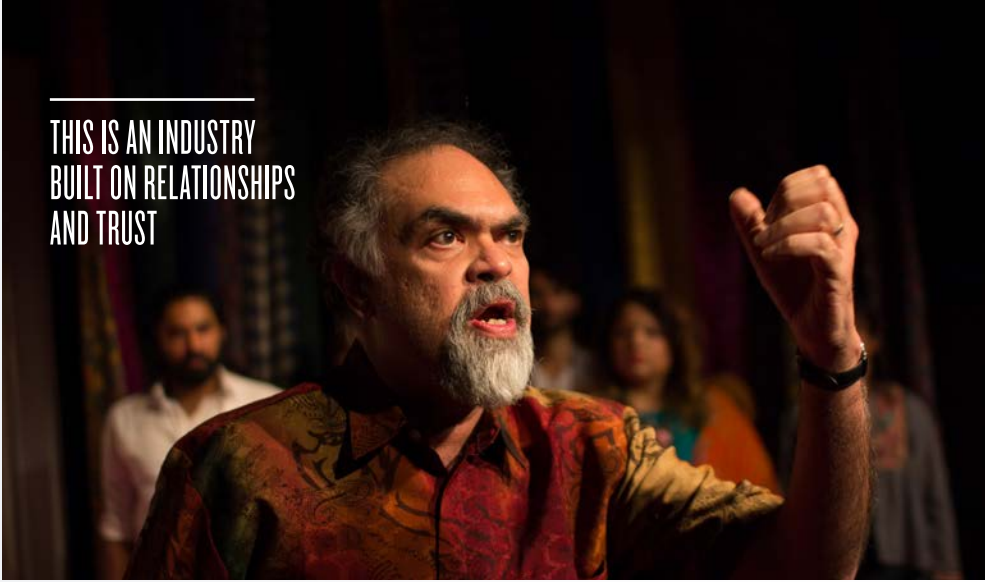
That's something I've noticed about theatre - we forget technology exists. You realise plays can be films, podcasts, comics and literally any other manner of creative output, right? Plays also need a lot of development, time and money (if you want them to be good). During downtime, keep yourself and writers busy with workshops, one-on-one sessions with dramaturgs, Zoom table reads etc, etc.

Work should always be archived and recorded, especially BIPOC work, god knows we have little to no archiving of our histories in Aotearoa - it also helps when it comes to applying for further development.



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## THIS IS AN INDUSTRY BUILT ON RELATIONSHIPS AND TRUST



Always think about how you can get the most mileage from an idea or show, how you can make it as long lasting and sustainable for the artists and help it reach audiences.

After all - live theatre is not accessible to everyone (especially for ethnic/minority/rural communities and people with disabilities) so make sure access and archiving are always at the top of your budget line.

And remember - many theatre shows go on to be TV series or films (*Fleabag*, *Daffodils*) so THINK BIG.

And for, god's sake, make sure the creative team has a Memorandum of Understanding.

### 6. REWARDS (YES THERE ARE SOME)

- Feeling like a boss bitch CEO running your own business
- Building capacity within your community, getting our stories in front of audiences, upskilling people, creating connections, sparking new ideas and ways of thinking and getting artists PAID
- Developing a God-complex as you take ideas on scraps of paper and make them a reality for the consumption of the plebs (audiences)
- Producing is steroids for your communication skills

- Getting to see a lot of shows for free
- You'll always know who to call to fix any problem (more fuel for the God-complex)

Sweet, sweet rewards... And then it's back to the funding apps.

### 6. FORGETTING/REMEMBERING

Yes, financially-speaking, there is no good reason to become a theatre producer.

But you get to bring something beautiful into the world that probably otherwise would have withered away into the void.

You'll forget the excruciating pain, months spent planning, saving up, wrangling the community together to get this thing out into the world... and then everyone's raving on opening night, you forget all the bad stuff and say "fuck sure" when someone asks if you're keen to do another.

And you just do that again and again until you die.

You don't do it for the money. You do it because it gives you a higher purpose.

If you do it right, you'll probably die happy.

ABOVE: *First World Problems* by Prayas Theatre Company, produced by Ankita Singh, Basement Theatre, 2018.  
Image: Ankita Singh.

# A MANIFESTO OF DISABLED DREAMS

by Pelenakeke Brown

I dream of a prolific collective of disabled artists creating work in Aotearoa.  
 I dream of opportunities for black and brown disabled artists to bloom.  
 I dream of a country that welcomes disabled immigrants to relocate and live in Aotearoa.  
 I dream of an abundance of disability focused funding for disabled artists.  
 I dream of pathways in which disabled artists are mentored by other disabled artists.  
 I dream of having organisations and works led by disabled artists.

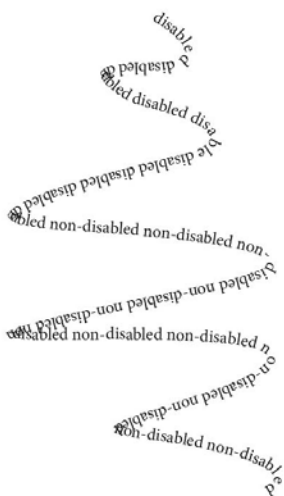
I dream of no more diversity panels.  
 I dream of a world with no euphemisms for disability.  
 I dream of not having to cringe inwardly when disability is on show.  
 I dream of not having to explain.  
 I dream of not having to make people feel comfortable.  
 I dream of people not having to hide their disability.

I dream of no longer having to apply for funding.  
 I dream of attending accessible theatre.  
 I dream of a world where our labour and expertise is paid equitably.  
 I dream of Disabled artists making art without having to compromise.  
 I dream of a connected arts industry that gets it.  
 I dream of a world where the disabled body is viewed as beautiful, thriving and sexy.

## ***The binary***

When thinking about life and disability status, the binary that is often shared is 'able bodied and disabled.' Instead, I would like to offer another: 'disabled and non-disabled.' That actually we are on a spectrum and more

often than not we travel along this spectrum throughout our lifetimes, experiencing sickness, disability or periods of non-disability. One thing I hope that may stay after this pandemic is this idea that our bodies are always travelling on this spectrum.



### ***How can disability be seen as a form of artistry?***

This is a question that I have been mulling on for a few years now. To me this is a really exciting question. Disability in this context is a purposeful one. Disability is defined not by your medical diagnosis, instead, disability is used as an identity marker that acknowledges that your body, mind, or your BodyMind work in a non-normative, capitalist way. And that this is a source of connection and community for you, rather than pain or shame, as is often taught to us.

And what do I mean by artistry? If we acknowledge and delight in our disabled bodies, then these very ways that we navigate, problem solve and therefore create can be powerful tools to make art. What are your ways of navigating the world, ideas, or tools that you use, how can they be used to create new work?

In 2021 Susan Williams created *Illegally Blind* performed at BATS, Wellington. A live show that blended form and genre - a mixture of theatre and poetry as well as embedding audio

description into the piece. Audio description – verbal dialogue that describes to blind or low vision audience members what is occurring on stage. This is most often fed through a headset – so this is often not noticed by other audience members. This access is hidden away. Instead, Susan, a Disabled, queer, non-binary artist created a work that prioritised their Blind Audience members. Susan created an audio describer role, that was a voice that described what was occurring but also interacted directly with Susan. The role was funny, naive and was a charming addition. This work offered a tool for other works to embed audio description into a piece, and how we can innovate within live theatre when we include accessible practices. It also played with common tropes of tragic, inspirational disabled persons. It also played with common tropes of tragic, inspirational disabled persons.

Pati Umaga led a group of disabled, Māori/Pasifika artists to create a new work which was supported and presented at Kia Mau Festival in 2021. This work brought together a mix of disabled artists, dancers and musicians. It acknowledged the importance of decolonising disability spaces and holding space that accounts for our cultural identities and frameworks too. Centring this work within Kia Mau it was a reminder that our disabled Māori/Pasifika artists also have a place within this kaupapa and how powerful it can be when we create spaces that are accessible across disability and culture.

### ***Dreaming as method for world-building***

There have been glimmers of disability-led work occurring in Aotearoa and I hope to witness more.

I dream of a world regardless of kaupapa, immigration status, disability, class, sexuality or gender that we can support and flourish.

I dream of a world where instead of people just saying ‘we need to pass the mike and get out of the way,’ they, actually, do.

# TEA TOGETHER

## WITH

# TANYA MUAGUTUTI'A

*Theatremakers Moana Ete and Tanya Muagututi'a  
in Conversation.*

My earliest memory of seeing any theatre outside of church was Pacific Underground's *Romeo and Tusi* at the Wellington Waterfront. A colourful adaptation of an iconic tale of two star-crossed lovers stealing away for an illicit affair, much to the disgust of their prejudiced families. For all I knew – as a seven year-old in 1997 – this was a purely original idea. Shimpal Lelisi as 'Ruby' mincing across the stage in a red crop top, bulldozing over 'The Mother' archetype – or in this instance – 'Nurse', was quite terrifying. My Dad took me to see it twice.

It was pure farce. And no one did it better than this particular group of young people from Ōtautahi. *'Pacific Underground's Romeo and Tusi sought a looser and more populist kind of Shakespeare performance... Drawing on several music genres, and performing outdoors, they generated a Shakespeare that audiences from a diverse range of ethnic and cultural communities could enjoy.'* (Mark Houlahan, 2009)

Pacific Underground took up space, made noise, thrilled audiences and sought to normalise Moana-Pacific theatre. What has resulted just one generation later is this: Moana-Pacific theatre in Aotearoa is not only perfectly normal but perfectly necessary.

To have the opportunity to interview Pacific Underground alum, writer, producer, visionary, the director of the very first theatre show I ever saw outside of church, Tanya Muagututi'a is as full circle as it gets.

Tanya and I imagine we're sipping tea together on a couch which, in managing Zoom fatigue, is a kind of escapism.

**Moana:** Ok. To give readers more insight into all that you do - what other roles within the arts sector have you taken on - aside from acting, writing, directing...?

**Tanya:** Video Editor (Protect Te Moananui a Kiwa by PU, Creative Nātives, #ProtectOurWhakapapa)

Co-Producer for Ōkareka Dance Company



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I'VE TAKEN THINGS I'VE LOVED,  
AND RUN WITH IT



Producer for Talanoa Solutions  
Senior Producer for Kia Mau Festival  
Artistic Director for No.3 Roskill Theatre  
Festival Director for Otago Polyfest  
Backstage crew at Parihaka Peace Festival  
Programme Manager at Christchurch Arts Festival

**Moana:** Woah! And I'm sure that's only the tip of the iceberg (*it is*). Can I ask about *Scholars*? What was it like winning the Adam NZ Play Award for Best Play by a Pasifika Playwright?

**Tanya:** It truly was amazing. I'd been working on *Scholars* sporadically, over a long period of time. A real start-stop project for me. Roanna Dalziel who was at The Court Theatre chose *Scholars* for a rehearsed reading. So a platform with paid actors, a dramaturg focussing on my writing was daunting and inspiring. I sat on that buzz for a long time lol but I know I need to put that play on.

**Moana:** Absolutely you do! As a 90s kid

I'd love to ask about that time and you coming up in Ōtautahi in the 90s. Did you perceive arts as a viable career option coming up with Pacific Underground?

**Tanya:** I doubt it. I mean from the outset it was probably the challenge, and the bravery required that attracted me to it. Theatre wasn't something I grew up with, but after my sister Mish got into it and meeting Erolia Ifopo, I dabbled in a little bit of improv with them. They were so underrated, and although watching them on the stage was inspiring, my thing was the band. Back then, it was about riding this cool-as creative train. I loved it. Career-wise, I've never set long career goals, rather I've taken things I've loved, and run with it.

*I bring up a mutual contact, actor/director - Jake Arona. Jake is my friend and Tanya's son-in-law. We also refer to Pos, who is a Pacific Underground member. Pos is Tanya's husband.*

ABOVE: Tanya Muagututi'a.

**Moana:** Working with Jake I kept thinking he has such a deep sense of duty to those who brought him through. He honours yours and Pos' legacy. Did you consider 'legacy' when building Pacific Underground?

**Tanya:** Funny, I met Jake when I was at Auckland Theatre Company, and in my role at the time in 2014, I was in charge of a kids' show at Māngere Arts Centre that had about thirty cast members. Jake was in it, as were my kids. No one knew me or knew of Pacific Underground. It didn't matter. But the tools we have (both Pos and I) when working with young people and new talent, come from Pacific Underground. In Auckland, Jake came from Massive Company who do the same, as well as the courses that have since shut down like at PIPA and MIT. Big respect to them!

**Moana:** What does legacy mean to you?

**Tanya:** Legacy is trying it all, collaborating with others, spreading the creativity and supporting the next gen of makers.

**Moana:** Thank you. I couldn't agree more. It's not all about 'leaving something behind' legacy also exists in the here and now and nurturing the new. Who did you look up to at the time?

**Tanya:** Most Pasifika and Māori music and theatre makers who went before us. Some of those who are still going I've had the immense fortune of working for or with because I've worked on so many festivals. E.g. Pati Umaga, Nathaniel Lees, Annie Crummer, Betty-Anne and Ryan Monga, Teremoana Rapley, Tairaroa Royal, Hone Kouka to name a few. And then of course Pacific Underground, Pos and our family.

**Moana:** What a lush list of people! Who then supported you as young artists?

**Tanya:** Erolia, Mish, Makerita Urale, Vic Tamati, Losa Tamati, Sam Uta'i, Peter Taukiri, Pip Laufiso, Maria Godinet Watts, George Kahi, Hix Toto, Aroha Rangi, our collective siblings and parents.

**Moana:** How did they show their support?

**Tanya:** Gave us spaces to work in, the opportunity to create platforms or helped out on gigs. They looked after our kids or raised our kids. They loaned or gave us money. And they gave us rooms, cars, beds, couches and kitchen tables. And they still love us lol.

**Moana:** I know the feels. Thinking more around possibilities for you all as young artists wanting to make theatre and music and share it with Aotearoa. What did you think was 'the ceiling' when you were coming up?

**Tanya:** International travel and performance.

**Moana:** Like, what was 'the dream'?

**Tanya:** I'm not actually sure. Maybe to be Donna Summer?

*We LOL.*

**Moana:** What would you say is 'the dream' now?

**Tanya:** For the next generation to have plenty of opportunities to perform their own stories, in their safe space, to big audiences, and to take their stories to the world, paid in full and to make a living from it.

**Moana:** Amen! For you as playwright, writer, creator - how much of what makes it to the opening night of production is from the initial script and how much is found on the floor in rehearsal with your cast?

**Tanya:** Most of it is initial script, but I enjoy and welcome contributions from actors, especially if they find something that works for them in their character. I'm pretty flexible about it as long as the storytelling is truth and makes sense.

**Moana:** Ooh! Before wrapping up. What does it feel like seeing your Pacific Underground alumni progress in their careers?

**Tanya:** Amazing. Most of us coming from Christchurch, have a unique point of view, individually and collectively. I'm so proud when our alumni give props to their birth place, or their families, communities, where they come from.

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# IN PURSUIT OF SAFE SPACES

*Brady Peeti on opening doors for trans, non-binary Māori  
and Pasifika artists.*

“This is for the LGBTQAI, Black, Latina, Asian ... the many multi-beautiful colours of the rainbow around the world. This is not just for me, this is for y'all. This is the door that opens up for y'all. Not me, for y'all. There's going to be so many young individuals — young, talented, thriving individuals — that are going to be able to trail in, storm in the door. This is for y'all.” MJ Rodriguez acceptance speech after her Golden Globe win for Best Television Actress in a Drama Series.

I watched MJ's acceptance speech on Instagram several times after her glorious win and couldn't help but think to myself – FINALLY! It is possible to be at the top! Finally, we are at the head of the table! Finally, our character narratives have surpassed what is always assumed of us and we can actually convey ourselves as humans! It was at this time that I closed Instagram and thought to myself – it's time to work!

But we have been working in Aotearoa for years. Just like the Kiwi bird, we are slow in pace however still impactful. 2021 saw the beginning of some truly inspiring theatre, *The Eternal Queens* written by Estelle Chout made its premiere at the Wellington Pride Festival. The return of *Fine Fatale* in their

re-developed cabaret *Fever: Return of the Ula* graced the stage of the Auckland Live Cabaret Season. The return of Fine Fatale in their re-developed cabaret *Fever: Return of the Ula* graced the stage of the Auckland Live Cabaret Season and we welcomed the return of *Fala Muncher* this time directed by Amanaki Prescott-Faletau. Previously in 2020, *The Glitter Garden* by George Fowler and Lori Leigh gave children in Te Whanganui-a-Tara the chance to see 'A Drag Musical Extravaganza'.

We also saw larger scale productions show trans inclusivity. I played the coveted role of Audrey 2 in The Court Theatre's rendition of cult classic *Little Shop of Horrors* directed by Benjamin Henson and Circa Theatre staged the American play *Hir* written by Taylor Mac.

Hard discussions had to be made in 2021 that came with differing views from everyone wanting to be involved in the conversation. The question was posed; “Should transgender characters be played by cisgender actors?” putting the production of *Things I Know To Be True* written by Andrew Bovell in the firing line. To those not up to speed, the Court Theatre came under scrutiny when they announced the casting

of a cisgender male playing the role of Mark/ Mia - a transgender woman. A call out was made by many in the non-binary and transgender community to have this rectified that resulted in the actor playing the role getting replaced.

What many non-binary and transgender have spoken out against is the act of transphobic violence that can be caused in these situations and I stand by them completely. I believe that we in the trans and non-binary communities have the definitive right to claim back our stories. It's taken decades for us to be heard, but we finally have the ability to be part of these conversations and that is a super power we must hold on to. When you cast a trans or non-binary person in a role specifically intended for them, you get an authenticity that cannot be organically created from a cisgender person. You also allow space for opportunity to a community that doesn't always get it and that can make for becoming a great ally in helping with the nourishment of that persons craft, talent and confidence.

So, when I decided it was time to work – I questioned what part do I play in this? What can I do to enhance my community and contribute towards the enrichment of this already flourishing industry? I haven't directed, I don't produce and I only ever write for my trusty Macbook Pro. In 2021, I was brought on board to help with casting Wahine Māori trans characters in a kiwi television show. However upon thorough inspection, there were only four trans women of colour in New Zealand who were signed with agencies at the time – one of them was me. A significantly low number to say the least, so I then reached out to my sisters and the general consensus I received was that it was just easier to represent themselves.

I believe this is where the disconnect lies. In many situations, a lot of us trans and non-binary Māori and Pasifika people have been in unsafe spaces a lot in our lives be it work, school, church, etc. Thus when wanting to




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## IT'S ALL TOO EASY TO WANT TO BATTLE IT ON YOUR OWN

pursue a career in the arts where the space is potentially unsafe, it's all too easy to want to battle it on your own or not want to go for it at all. This is ultimately why we need more inclusion in this industry. We need to do better in creating safer spaces for every trans and non-binary person and that starts by ensuring we are using the correct dialogue and behaviours to ensure that safety.

This is why I now strive to be an agent. I have been under the mentorship of my own agent Tanya Horo with TMH Management as I want to help be part of the dialogue and support my brothers, sisters and undisclosed in my community. We are at very humble beginnings with my mentorship however, I want to do it not just for me but for everyone.

ABOVE: Brady Peeti. Image: Andi Crown.

# Why I read the play I read

ERINA DANIELS

*On Wednesday to Come by Renée*

I had just started my term as He Pia Kaihāpai Tuhinga with Playmarket when the coronavirus pandemic caused our Government to lockdown our country. I was grateful that I could continue this mahi – of learning more of the kupu and whakaaro of script advising and dramaturgy, during a time when many others were uncertain if their mahi would continue. Our time in lockdown allowed me to familiarise myself with terms of dramaturgy through reading plays of my choice and reflecting on them alongside my dramaturg mentor, Philippa Campbell.

As I read Renée's brilliant play *Wednesday to Come*, I became increasingly aware of the parallels between the drama of the play, set in New Zealand 1934, and of the drama of the pandemic in 2020. The play is set during the Great Depression of the 1930s; economists today portend that a similar fate (economic recession) will transpire soon.

In *Wednesday to Come*, we see the effect of the Great Depression on a poor working-class New Zealand family. I was glad to learn more of our nation's history through this play and wondered if others would too if we were to perform the show today. I was glad

to have gained more perspective on what an economic depression of that scale might mean for us. And I was glad for this play's affirmation of rights for workers, and the example set of taking action to bring about change.

The premise of the play is highly charged. We learn that Ben - a father, husband and brother - is dead. During the opening scene of the play, we meet his family at home, awaiting the arrival of the tūpāpaku.

We meet four generations of this family within their domestic setting. The majority of the characters are women and the decisions of this household are determined by a strong matriarchy. Later in the play, we meet others who affect the immediate family dynamic – Ben's brother, Ben's mistress and a leader of a protest movement in hikoi to Parliament.

Within the second line of the play, Renee orients us towards the characters' relationship towards time. Here we meet the eldest character (mid-70s) in dialogue with the youngest character (13):

**Granna:** What day is it Jeannie?

**Jeannie:** Monday Granna. (*She runs quickly to her bedroom, upset*)

## I WAS GLAD TO LEARN MORE OF OUR NATION'S HISTORY

**Granna:** (*Speaking the words first and then writing them in a notebook*) Monday. Monday today, Tuesday to come.

Later:

**Granna:** ... Hard times back there. Hard times here. Nothing's changed... nothing's changed...

Towards the end of the play:

**Granna:** What it's always about Jeannie. It's asking and getting no for an answer. And then asking a bit louder and a bit louder. And then – sometimes – if you're lucky – you get a little of what you asked for and then – it starts all over again. And you wonder – you do Jeannie – do they ever listen?

This theme of nothing changing over time, of conditions worsening or of people accepting the status quo of haves and have-nots, resounds throughout the play and our recorded history. That people continue to rise in protest, to give voice to their needs, to speak out against injustice – fills my heart with courage, steadies my determination, and renews my resolve to align myself with values and actions that will manaaki and whakamana our people. It is true that I desire to fill audiences of *Wednesday to Come* with these same preoccupations.

During the last couple years, a hearty crew have gathered to help stage this next production – and we will play our version from 23 July - 20 August 2022 at Circa Theatre. We have planned for all sorts of covid-related contingencies – for we know our time together is not promised. Time together



seems a luxury now – trying our best is all we can ask of each other. Showing up and trying to bring our best is the least we can do.

The theme of responsibility to others lies at the heart of this play, and this is why I am drawn to it. It reminds me of who I am, where I'm from, what I am driving for. It helps me focus my time in action. My father and mother always just want(ed) to contribute within their communities. This desire to contribute holds untold benefits for the individual giver, and the wider community. Actioning this value could be called manaaki, kotahitanga, whanaungatanga, collectivism, service, activism, obligation, privilege, aroha...

I initially had hoped that reading this play would help me see around corners, to help me understand what could be coming ... walking backwards into the future... This play confirms my belief in our theatre art form, our occupation of time in space in conscious action together is powerful. I must remember we are always in reach of our potential, and to keep striving. Mauriora!

ABOVE: *Wednesday to Come* by Renée, Downstage, 2005. Image: David Read.





# TE WHANGANUI-A-TARA 2021

BY SAMEENA ZEHRA

Cancelled seasons; revived seasons; pivots to digital. The day to day uncertainty of whether, and for how long a season would survive, and if by some miracle it did, how diminished would audience numbers be? Nevertheless, in 2021, Te Whanganui-a-Tara was host to a broad palette of theatre that was (mostly) a joy to experience.

Having operated without audience restrictions in Alert Level 1 since September 2020, we moved into the new year with a sense of hope, maybe even some complacency, and January saw the successful Circa Theatre launch of Ali Harper's *The Look of Love*, a tribute to the songs of Burt Bacharach.

The year presented a pinball of alert level changes. Alongside six weeks in July and August, February was the only time in 2021 we had any chance to play at Alert Level 1. The rest of the year became a careful dance that counterpoised audience numbers against the need to break even at the box office.

Well then, let's take it as read that 2021 will not be remembered as a year of good vintage for the purses of arts practitioners, and let's concentrate instead on celebrating what made it past the depleted wings and onto the glorious stage.

We saw the return of *Standard Acts* at BATS, alongside the rather wonderful *Company Kamupene*, set in 1868 during the New Zealand Land Wars. Animalismo Teatro, an independent theatre company from Uruguay, originally came to perform in March 2020. Stranded here during the first lockdown, *Habbuk* was their parting gift to us, an exploration of instability, through invented language, live music and movement.

By now, most practitioners had a Covid-19 plan in place. Venues worked out their rules for social distancing of audiences, and became adept at selling tickets in stages rather than all at once, allowing for alert level audiences and avoiding the prospect of disappointing punters with last minute cancellations. Independent artists were having a more confusing time working out what exactly they needed to do, especially if they were requesting funding from Wellington City Council or Creative New Zealand. NZ Fringe managed to get through relatively unscathed. A number of artists were able to showcase new work, including Birdlife Production's *The Boy With Wings*, Alex Lodge's *Sing To Me* (presented by Taki Rua) and Katrina E. Bastian's *Soliloquy in Sweat*.

Dominic Hoey's *45 Cents an Hour* was poetry close to the bone; a stark and satirical reminder of what it means to be an artist, especially now. *Up Down Girl*, adapted from Myrtle Theatre's *Up Down Boy* was an important production, bringing perspective and storytelling from the disability community to a wider, mainstream audience. Andrew Bovell's *Things I Know To Be True*, a co-pro between The Court Theatre in Ōtautahi and Circa Theatre had a bumpy, somewhat contentious journey to production success that forced some useful conversations about the way representation of marginalised groups is handled.

May brought us *Another Mammal*, a new play by Jo Randerson, exploring the persistence of violence as a problem solver. The NZ International Comedy Festival would not necessarily be the place to go for theatre,



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## UNIVERSAL, ENGAGING, MIND BLOWING

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP

LEFT: *White Men* by Abby Howells, Red Scare Theatre Company, BATS. Image: Roc+ Photography.

*Transmission* by Stuart McKenzie, Harcourt McKenzie Partnership, BATS. Image: Stephen A'Court Photography.

*All I See* by Cian Parker, Mihailo Ladevac and Laura Haughey, Kia Mau Festival, Circa Theatre.

Image: Roc+ Photography.

*Pourakahu* by Jeffrey Addison, Taki Rua Productions, Te Reo Māori Season. Image: Philip Merry.

*Guys in Space* by Tom Sainsbury and Jason Smith, Cuetone Media. Image: Roc+ Photography.

*Whānau* by various, Tahi Festival of Solo Performance, BATS. Image: Dianna Thomson.

*Winding Up* by Roger Hall, Circa Theatre. Image: Stephen A'Court Photography.

PREVIOUS PAGE: *The Little Mermaid – The Pantomime* by Simon Leary and Gavin Rutherford, Circa Theatre. Image: Stephen A'Court Photography.

but it had two extraordinary offerings in Tess Sullivan's *Bobby Wood: If You Met My Mum, You'd Understand* and Janaye Henry's *Literally Obsessed*.

And so we come to the month of June, dominated by the Kia Mau Festival. For me, a woman of multicultural heritage (Kashmiri, Indian, British) and a recent transplant to Aotearoa, this was a month of delightful revelation. As colonised people, and sometimes even as colonisers, we have been told that in order to make our stories palatable, relatable, relevant; we need to construct and tell them in ways that sit seamlessly within Eurocentric writing and performance traditions. We know, of course, that this is utter nonsense. Nevertheless we often create our work with this underlying imperative. How freeing then, to watch a whole festival of Māori, Pasifika and Indigenous theatre. The confrontation of *Witi's Wāhine*; the joy and sorrow of *Upu* and *He Tangata*, the hunt and celebration of *Neke*, the dance of *Te Wheke*, so many more I haven't the space to list here; all the singing and movement and storytelling filling mainstream spaces, watched by mixed audiences, taking its place robustly, unapologetically. More than palatable, relatable, relevant; like all good theatre, it was universal, engaging, mind blowing.

In the latter half of the year, Tupua Tigafua and David Long came together to create the remarkable *Ciggy Butts in the Sand*, imagining a dreamlike world with endless possibilities. We saw Roger Hall's *Winding Up*, a witty two-hander exploring relationships in old age. Bernie Duncan's *Taphead*, a bittersweet tale of striving and losing, came to BATS. Abby Howells' *White Men* finally made it to stage, third time lucky, after previous attempts in 2020 and 2021.

The Tahi Festival of Solo Performance had perhaps the most complementary format for a world of restrictive interaction. It adapted well to last minute, travel restriction-induced performer changes, and even managed a polylogue, *Whānau*, alongside solo shows including *Back To Square One?*, *Iti Kahurangi*, *Ted Talks Crime*. *Change Your Own Life* (Tahi 2020) had a return season at Circa in a double bill with Jonny Potts' solo, *The Best Show in Town is at Your Place Every Night*.

The keywords for 2021 must surely be ingenuity and resilience. Kia kaha and arohanui practitioners. May the coming year reward your mahi well.



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# Why I read the play I read

TAMEKA VAHATAU

*on Mapaki by Dianna Fuemana*

*Mapaki*, by Dianna Fuemana, is as relevant now as it was when it was first written and performed over twenty years ago. It is a response to broken systems, reflecting its very name. Given it is one of only a handful of published plays by Niuean playwrights, it holds true that representation matters.

I am long since innocent to what it means to be from such a tiny atoll in the South Pacific. Reading this work years on, it is only now that I read it through ocean eyes, no longer fragile and in search of cultural validation, or fearful of the resonance the play has in my own world. As people of small nations, it is not uncommon that we stand alone in spaces. There is power in that as much as there is a loneliness.

*Mapaki* is Dianna Fuemana's inaugural play. It unapologetically burst onto the Pacific theatre scene in 1999 under the direction of Hori Ahipene. Originally performed as a monodrama by Fuemana herself, she received nominations at the Chapman Tripp Theatre Awards, before touring the show internationally to great acclaim. I can only imagine the inspiring power of a skilfully calibrated performance of this emotional rollercoaster by a daughter of Niue, morphing her way through characters with lickings of our native tongue.

What began as a poem, dreamt into a tune and splattered onto barking pages, *Mapaki* is a compelling one act play born of musings and nightmares lived by too many women. The piece expands the narrative of the abused woman, juxtaposing logic and reason with blind love, giving soul to the often-shallow media depictions of abuse victims - seen in the frenzied 90's broadcasts that inspired the playwright. New Zealand still holds some of the highest statistics for domestic violence in the OECD, and the subject under scrutiny remains a hard pill to swallow no matter what lens you use to view it with.

*Mapaki* begins at the end of an unhappily-ever-after tale, where Fisi, a young Niuean woman, sits behind bars reliving defining moments of her journey out of an abusive relationship. Fuemana offers a raw insight into one woman's endured cycle of abuse, and the repetition that drives her into a protective fantasy where the lines of reality become blurred. A survivalist tragedy ensues.

Fisi's retelling is wildly fragmented while also being a somewhat self-soothing lament. Her story holds the sinking weight of a heart filled with shame and regret, yet with more freedom than she had previously been

granted. Fisi holds the delicate essence of anyone who has dared to dream of love in a hopeless place. She was raised with a gentle heart by her nan, whose presence stands as a guiding familial pillar in a world that's naively willing to sacrifice freedom for love and love for freedom.

How do you rewire an entire adult identity that has been constructed and deconstructed at the mercy of a man demanding a love he is incapable of returning? A man whose love is controlling and demands obedience.

Even Fisi's best friend Gina, a proud fa'afafine who offers some empowered larger-than-life solace, hopes to make true connections with people who are only wanting five minutes of happiness in gloomy corners of nightclubs. There's security in the dark, if people don't see you in the light. Each character lives in a fantasia, oscillating between what they want and what each has learnt life will actually give them. They sing discordant harmonies in a world where love is fondly remembered as childhood comfort and passion-fueled teen romance.

Work is being done in New Zealand to heal the untrue and reductive dismissal, "if you are dumb enough to be with someone who beats you, then you deserve it"; unfortunately, at a United Nations Small Island Development States Conference I attended as a delegate, these very words were echoed directly from the mouth of a pacific political leader. We were there addressing the very topic of domestic violence against women. It was 2014. We've still got a lot of work to do.

Reflecting on this play and the origins of Fuemana's journey, I am left pondering



## AS RELEVANT NOW AS IT WAS WHEN IT WAS FIRST WRITTEN

how we speak to our people with direct transparency on these almost 'taboo' subjects. Where our honest conversations are so easily referenced out of context or weaponised against us. If our most vulnerable statistics still remain unchanged, and the conversation still stands as potent, how can we successfully educate for the long term through art?

*Mapaki* has inked itself into our nation's Hiapo with a conversation that remains ever poignant to address. It has woven heartwood threads into the ever-growing tapestry of Pacific Island work; may The Rock of Polynesia weave more waves soon.

ABOVE: Poster for the original season of *Mapaki* by Dianna Fuemana, BATS, November 1997.

# TAKING THE MIC

*Sherilee Kahui on how Maranga Mai creates space  
for indigenous women's voices.*

At eight years old, I informed my parents that I wanted to be a clown when I grew up. My dad told me to stop being silly, so I resolved instead to become an actor. After performing in plays all through childhood and into high school, I made the intrepid haerenga all the way from Te Awakairangi to Te Herenga Waka... that is to say, I moved from the Hutt to Town.

My university experience had a decidedly Pākehā flavour, with the exception of performing a small role in my third year as part of a chorus of manu in *Whatungarongaro* by Roma Potiki (Te Rarawa, Te Aupōuri and Ngāti Rangitihī) and He Ara Hou - in which my former tutor Dr Nicola Hyland (Te Atihaunui-a-Pāpārangī and Ngāti Hauti) played a major role. Without Dr Hyland looking out for me and giving me a second chance in my first year, I wouldn't have been able to pursue my undergraduate Theatre degree. How many other young wāhine Māori fell through the cracks because no one saw and thought to catch them?

As I started making my own work after graduating, I felt like there wasn't room to bring my taha Māori into the creative process. I was never connected in with any other Māori practitioners and the few Māori theatre pieces I saw didn't excite me. Most of what I encountered felt cynical – Māori storytelling dressed up as Western theatre to be palatable enough to be programmed at Circa or Downstage. I was young; I craved the raw, the furious, the risky! I read about what had come out in the 90s and I felt like I was too late – all of that had already happened and now those punk AF Māori artists were gone or had been assimilated by the establishment. In reality there was exciting stuff happening at the time, but my disconnection meant that I wasn't attuned to the zeitgeist of indigenous art. My theatre diet had been heavily curated while studying, confined to what was prescribed by the programme, and later dictated by what I could get cheap or free tickets to.

When I returned from a stint living overseas, I enrolled in the Masters of Theatre Arts in Directing co-taught by Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School and Victoria University of Wellington. Now, I don't know if you know this, but theatre practitioners generally don't make very much money. Not long after graduating and with little to no future prospects in the arts, your girl found herself hapū. So I decided to accept the fact that I'm a failed artist and got a 'real job' to support my growing whānau.

And then I immediately wrote my first ever solo show and started touring before pēpi's first birthday because when you're a storyteller and it's in your blood you just can't help yourself...

Solo shows are lonely. But I didn't have the same constraints. I was the lone driving creative force. I thought "maybe I can incorporate my taha Māori now - there's no more white tears to contend with - but how...?"

I saw Mīria George outside of BATS one night and I bravely (drunkenly) asked if she would consider mentoring me in some capacity. Cheeky! But Mīria is nothing if not gracious and encouraging and she agreed.

It's rare that I don't regret drunken decisions, but this one changed my life.

Mīria invited me to participate in a writers' workshop for wāhine Māori and va'ine Pasifika called Maranga Mai. I turned up to Te Haukainga one night after work. Faaark, I was nervous! A group full of writers?! They'll be able to tell I'm a fraud! Gosh if our brains don't set out to sabotage us...

Of course, everyone was welcoming and lovely and warm, and as we practiced whakawhanaungatanga in a way that I had never before experienced in an arts context, I felt like I had come home. We were mothers, students, day-job havers. Poets, playwrights and aspiring journalists. Each of us had roles and responsibilities outside of writing and



were afforded flexibility with no judgement. "Where has this been my whole life?"

I wonder, while thanking the tūpuna for the gifts and the traumas that led me here...

Maranga mai - rise up! It felt like a karanga, both ushering me into the warm embrace of sisterhood and marking a safe space for us to grow together and tautoko each other.

The first year I participated (2019) was not the first year of Maranga Mai. I had joined an already established collective, formed in 2017. I'll pass over to Mīria to give you some background:

*Maranga Mai was formed to support the development of wāhine Māori and va'ine Pasifika writers from Te Ūpoko-o-te-ika-a-Maui. From its inception, Maranga Mai was created to nurture writers who were also full-time workers, community leaders, diplomats, university students; Maranga Mai writers were daughters, mothers, sisters and grandmothers. In its first year, Maranga Mai included Sandra Tisam, Tina McNicholas, Natalia Fareti and Teremoana Yala. These four writers wrote before work, after work,*

*late into the night and throughout the long weekends. In 2017, our collective worked with myself and Rachael Maza, the Artistic Director of Ilbjerri Theatre Company in Melbourne. Maranga Mai created an unwavering va - an active space where the voices of the collective were centred, connected, and together were powerful. Maranga Mai continues to evolve - with new writers joining, brought into the collective through personal and creative ties. Maranga Mai also includes Sherilee Kahui, Teherenui Koteka, Te Aorewa Rolleston and Stevie Greeks. Our dramaturgs have also included Eva Grace Mullaley, Whiti Hereaka and Ahi Karunaharan.*

*The Maranga Mai collective evolved out of Tawata Productions' Breaking Ground, a Māori, Pasifika, Indigenous playwriting festival that has developed and presented new writing since 2010. Breaking Ground was originally created after Hone Kouka and myself worked within Toronto based and Indigenous-led Native Earth Performing Arts' development festival Weesageechak Begins To Dance, which in 2022 will mark 34 years of annual development. With permission, Tawata brought this model of development back to Aotearoa - and over 14 years we have evolved and played with the way playwrights develop new writing. Breaking Ground was borne out of a remarkable gap in our creative landscape - development opportunities for Māori and Pasifika writers for the stage. Playwrights developing new writing within Breaking Ground have included Nancy Brunning, Jamie McCaskill, Ali Foa'i, Riwia Brown, James Nokise, Moana Ete, Hone Kouka, Keith Barker, Yvette Nolan, Sherilee Kahui, Jordy Gregg, Barbara Hostalek, Hinekaa Mako, Maraea Rakuraku, Natano Keni, Sarita So, Nahyeon Lee, Sean Millward and Victor Rodger. Breaking Ground is a multi-award winning playwriting festival - that continues to develop new writing annually.*

Talk about standing on the shoulders of giants...

In my first year, our wero was to write a scene. Alongside support in content generation, we were the hungry recipients of the wisdom and tutelage of Whiti Hereaka (omg) whose pukapuka *Pūrakau* (a collaboration with Witi Ihimaera, omg, you guys!) was doing the rounds of my te reo class at the time. It was surreal to wānanga with Whiti, especially hearing about how she managed her other responsibilities alongside her writing in her earlier years. The thing that stuck with me was that if you are truly passionate about something, you will find the time to pursue it. Even if you have no time, you will make time.

Maranga Mai was the first time I presented a live piece of work that was written entirely by me. I was lucky to have the ridiculously talented and generous Joe Dekkers-Reihana perform my words, directed by the insightful and formidable Erina Daniels. I recognised this for the incredible gift that it was, put my anxiety (ego?) to the side and listened. Listened to the way Erina negotiated decisions with Joe, listened to how the audience responded. Listened to Mīria introduce me as a writer.

This experience was formative for me as an artist. It gave me confidence. I learned new technical skills. It taught me a new way to give and receive feedback. Antithetical to the competition so deeply ingrained in the world of Pākehā theatre, Māori theatre encourages tuakana/teina relationships. Mana enhancing critique.

I brought along a young(er than me, anyway lol) wahine writer to the Maranga Mai play readings. She had dabbled in theatre at uni, but was predominantly a creative essayist working in comms. Cue the Pandemic. Good one, Covid - but Stevie (yes I'm outing you) took it all in her stride and along with the rest of the rōpu, chipped away at her mahi, this time producing a one act





radio play. I think it's important to take a moment here to mihi to how Tawata made the innovative pivot to creating in the online space during this time. Hone and Mīria were no doubt forerunners of recontextualising their mahi to be engaged with online. Giving us the provocation for radio plays was genius. It forced us to hone in on a specific element and focus on how we could use sound to bring our stories to life. I think you'll agree the results were delightfully diverse.

It was off the back of my offering to this project that Mīria approached me about participating in *Breaking Ground 2021*. But oops I did it again. Got hapū that is. So with a bonus bebe added to the mix, Mīria once again proved that te ao Māori is lightyears ahead of our Pākehā counterpart and made adjustments to ensure that I could participate. In a stroke of the universe doing what the universe does, she paired me up with a dramaturg who was similarly #blessed and we forged on together, tackling immense kaupapa with our whakapapa extending our bellies as we went. The fruits of this labour (okay I'll stop it now) went on to become *Mokomoko*, which had

an initial live reading as part of the Kia Mau festival programme. Guided by Lynda Chanwai-Earle, Shania Edmonds and Shevonne Grierson brought my whakaaro into te ao mārama, for people to engage with and respond to. The insights I gained from the wānanga that followed were invaluable and I'm eternally grateful for being afforded the opportunity to be mentored and nurtured as an artist by Tawata. They have created a space for wāhine Māori and va'ine Pasifika to be unapologetically ourselves, a space in which our voices are the mainstream and our lives aren't problems to be negotiated. We have only just begun to realise the potential of such a nurturing and fertile space. If tikanga-based creative practice were to be adopted and valued by more in the wider arts community, we would be opening the door to myriad untold stories, and a richer contemporary theatre tradition that reflects the Aotearoa we aspire to be.

PREVIOUS PAGE: *Mokomoko* by Sherilee Kahui, BATS, 2022. Image: Jamie Kahui.

ABOVE: Sherilee Kahui at *Breaking Ground 2021*. Image: Roc+ Photography.

# WHAT IS IT TO BE A WAHINE MĀORI MAKER ON THE WHENUA THAT BIRTHED ME?

*By Juanita Hepi.*

Tē rongo i a koe	I no longer feel you
Ōku kōiwi, ōku toto	My bones, My blood
Kua tuaki tōku ngākau,	My heart and soul
Kua tuaki tōku wairua	have been dismembered
Kua riro atu rā	I am far away
Nōku konohi, no tauhou kē	My face belongs to a stranger
Kua ngaro ōku waewae	My feet lost
I ngā hiti raima	in concrete sheets

LYRICS - BYLLIE JEAN ZETA

TRANSLATION - KARI MOANA TE RONGOPATAHI

TUNE - JUANITA HEPI

*I Am Not Your Dusky Maiden (2021)*

Protocol wraps around me like air, so do ethnonational narratives, these are the razor thin experiences of my life. I have laboured on this article for far too long in an attempt to describe the experience of being a BIPOC maker in Te Waipounamu. I'm Mana Whenua. I am a wahine Kāi Tahu maker on the whenua that birthed me, Te Waahi Pounamu/Te Waipounamu and I am the culmination of a thousand genealogies tasked in this moment with a story. I keep repeating myself,

(re)presenting the historical facts over and over again. Words taken, no, stolen, no, ripped from our dying mouths- are what I'm really looking for. English words for Māori things, Māori words for English things. We're stuck in a loop of not saying what we really mean. BIPOC, MELAA, Pasifika, Indigenous, Native, disadvantaged, minority when what we really mean is the majority, the original, not White, and all is not White with the world. Angela Davis reminds



us that this language “has nothing to do with numerical presence”, “Are Europeans ever referred to as a “minority”? Factually they are in the minority with respect to Asians, Africans, Latin Americans and the rest of the people who populate the globe”, this language is infantilising, it derides our sense of self and while many of us use this language to be inclusive, these words perpetuate ‘we are meek’ and ‘they are strong’ narratives separating us further from one another and from our mother, Papatūānuku.

As I write this piece I hear my Nanna Priscilla (Waitaha, Kāti Māmoe, Kāi Tahu, Ngāti Mutunga, Moriori) urging me to live in the Pākehā world, worried and protective and perhaps even a little hurt in my claims there is no such thing as a Pākehā world, I am institutionalised, I have the letters and credits to my name yet still I know it’s not enough to satiate the White gaze. These are the punches living inside my gut that have led me to interrogate the societal conditions of the reality to which I am attached and to ask: Why am I/Wahine Māori reduced to a series of archaic judgements about melanin? This isn’t ‘the paranoia of my own mind’ as James Baldwin put it, but a recurring construct that renders Māori women’s voices and stories invisible, to be violated in the shadows and in the sun. Being a body/maker in Te Waipounamu is sometimes just bending to White fragility, accepting indolent ‘allyship’, maintaining the status quo, remaining hyper aware of my body at all times, cultural taxation, smiling, hands in pockets, saying please and thank you to keep your job, keep your home, keep your kids.

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## I AM THE CULMINATION OF A THOUSAND GENEALOGIES

ABOVE: *I am not your Dusky Maiden* by Juanita Hepi and Byllie Jean Zeta, Ōtautahi Tiny Performance Festival, Christchurch Town Hall.  
Image: Petra Mingneau.

And yet in the profundity of myself as Māori is the knowledge that I arrived into Te Ao Mārama with the whakapapa of the universe, my physical form existing in the womb of my mother as she lay in the womb of her mother eventually born whole and loved and knowing into the storytelling traditions of both my māmā Erihapetia Wikitoria Stone and my pāpā Hotorene Tawatawa Hepi. My whānau knew I was going to be a storyteller before I did, and I have been a storyteller for as long as I can remember. It was at home and the marae where wāhine Māori gathered in groups to tell stories that were hilarious, irreverent, dirty, scandalous, philosophical, heart-breaking, argumentative, historical, challenging, nuanced, explicit and all the while looking after babies, doing the mahi, collectively organising, succession planning and walking sovereign. To be a Brown Woman in a sea of Brown Women is to populate the world with love, I believe that because I have felt that and so I'm drawn to these storytelling conditions that centre and frame whānau and whenua, we are emulating them in our work here.

Upon entering the Whitestream storytelling space at 10 years old, however, the most unusual thing happened, with generations of storytelling experience inside and outside of me I went invisible. Ethno-national narratives began early though. The doctrine of discovery arrived with the trinity - the Thief, the Cross and the Peoples who set about turning clay to stone and dreams to dust, stories went underground and Isaac Featherston stroked the pathos of the White Saviour complex urging Whities to 'smooth the pillow of a dying race'. By the time I was born, less than 5% of Māori children had command of te reo Māori, me too but I arrived at a time of great privilege, the crux of the Kōhaka reo movement. Hemmed in by Rogernomics, settler state hegemony and a creeping stasis in relation with Māori activism and/or movements, these early years would have a profound effect on

how I experience, translate and transmit stories. I was introduced to Marx before Matiaha Tiramorehu, Heidegger before Homi K Bhabha, Nietzsche before Ngahua Te Awekotuku and Lacan before Linda Tuhiwai Smith. Luckily decolonisation is grounded in mana motuhake Māori which is to be collectively loved and I was born with karaka dripping from my tongue, ripe for flourishing on the stolen whenua of my ancestors.

Where stories had once been an escape and a place to expand my consciousness, here in the Whitestream theatre was no space for me. It is clear in my journey through the arts by the writers we pedestal; *Shakespeare, Pinter, Chekhov, Beckett, O'Neill, Miller, Ibsen, Williams*, and in the methods we teach; *Hagen, Meisner, Adler, Strasberg, Feldenkrais, Stanislavski, Meyerhold*, and in the data; "New Zealand's mainstage theatres are dominated by European and Pākehā narratives; between 2011 and 2015 only 6% of productions by main centre theatres were of Māori or Pasifika work. 6 to take a generous view" (Wenley, 2020). And before we 'cancel culture', these things aren't in and of themselves bad because we as humans are capable of respectful critique and reason. It's that collective Whiteness dominates above all and maintains a sub-par standard of human expression that centres individuals as superstars rather than storytellers engaged in collective decision-making. As an example, at drama school they taught Boal but not Freire so the narrative was already constructed around the single image of an artist rather than the intergenerational work of decolonisation and Indigenous sovereignty. In fact, and apart from Kaupapa Māori and Iwi-based initiatives, none of my institutional teachings has included Indigenous storytelling methodologies and therefore each person of whakapapa in those classrooms, theatres, organisations was/is invisible. Beyond representation, theatre favours Māori men's bodies over Māori

women's bodies in lead roles and leadership roles for as Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes, "they too are caught in the contradictions of a colonised reality" There are few Māori women in performing arts management and technical positions, and yet there are hundreds if not thousands of Māori actors. Could it be that the Whitestream indeed just needs our bodies to tell their stories?

It is why we as artists relentlessly pursue our own courses of action. We create our own companies, festivals, events, trusts, art houses, art collectives then we hold our people in their power, as experts, as intergenerational knowledge holders and as valued, most importantly however are the embedded values that drive our processes. Our values aren't boxed inside documents, we live and breathe them every day, manaakitaka, kaitiakitaka, rakatirataka, these are intergenerational ontologies and practical guides that nurture our collective hauora. Pākehā words for Māori things, Māori words for Pākehā things.

I'm already over my word count and I've barely even touched the surface of what it is to be a maker in Te Waipounamu. I haven't talked about our potential and our missed opportunities as a Christchurch community or the deficit theorising, hot-takes and polarising race-bait remarks from a media that supplants Te Waipounamu at its heart, racism isn't a place, it's an ideology. I haven't talked about the fallacy of allyship or the integrity of being in relation, our Kāi Tahu storytelling history is missing from this piece and so is an entire timeline of storytelling events from the 1800s to now. I touched on the institution and wished I'd had space to talk about isolation. I haven't talked about the works I've been in or the 40+ works I've created over the past three years, there is also little in the way of technical speak; intentionality, hybridity, liminality. I've purposefully avoided industry clashes out of respect for those involved




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## MY WHĀNAU KNEW I WAS GOING TO BE A STORYTELLER BEFORE I DID

- we're not at that point where we can talk about the issue because we can't move past blame. I hope we can build the infrastructure that means our artists no longer have to leave their whānau and communities to sustain their careers. Finally, the people who value me most are missing, the Wā Noir crew, Aunty Herena, Jeni Leigh, Bobby Teina Hepi, so many who cared about me when I didn't care about myself, their names, their stories and their contributions to my self-belief and my career. Ko wai au? I am water. Dear scholar, e tohuka, tell me in my sinew when we have arrived, cycled through. Ground into papa, exhale me in, exhale me out, I am connected.

ABOVE: Juanita Hepi. Image: Petra Mingneau.



# HE KŌRERO AROHA

*Tanea Heke's heroes, Nancy Brunning and Briar Grace-Smith.*

Recently, I heard Dr Emalani Case talk about the politics of place. She referred to Thomas King who wrote: "The truth about stories is that that's all we are." And I think about the potency of that statement and how that plays out in an Indigenous space. And the impact of story as mauri or the essence of our beings as people, how stories shape us as humans.

We all need heroes, people that we can look up to and identify with. My two heroes were rangatahi when they had their imagination captured by Māori storytellers. Stories linked my heroes to their culture, their whakapapa, their identity. It was stories that set them on the road to becoming two of Aotearoa's most celebrated and esteemed Māori playwrights: Nan Brunning and Briar Grace-Smith.

Nancy Brunning became a fan of Witi Ihimaera's when she read *Pounamu Pounamu* in her Māori class at the age of 14. Her Māori teacher introduced her to this iconic book, not her English teacher. In English she read books by predominantly European male novelists, so to be introduced to the first ever collection of short stories published by a Māori writer stunned her. It had never occurred to her that we could do that. She read the stories, the competitive and passionate friendships in 'A Game of Cards', the fragility of 'The Child',

the opportunistic Heremaia children in 'The Other Side of the Fence', to name a few.

These were stories with characters that looked like her, sounded like her, except for one major difference. Their lives were filled with wāhine, young and old. Nannies, mothers, aunties, cousins, sisters. Influential women that grew and growled and graced the lives of the children in these pages, a privilege she no longer could access in her own life. And that experience became the catalyst for Nancy writing her play, *Witi's Wāhine*.

In Briar Grace-Smith's case, her parents were both teachers. Her whare was filled with books and she believes that reading empowered her to write and tell her own stories. At 13 she read Patricia Grace's book, *Muruwhenua* and much like Nancy had discovered, the story validated her as a young Māori woman. It was the first time she had read something that so profoundly echoed her life and she began to think about telling her own stories.

I first met Nan and Briar when I was a student at Toi Whakaari in the 90s. I saw Nan in a number of plays at Taki Rua: *Ngā Tāngata Toa*, *Whaea Kairau*. I also saw her in the NZ International Arts Festival's production of *Waiora*. Such a remarkable physical teller



of stories as an actor. Grounded, real and scarily talented.

The first play I saw of Briar's was Taki Rua's production of *Purapurawhetū* at Downstage. A play inspired by the stories of our ancestors, found in the tukutuku panels and carved poupou that decorate the meeting house. While weaving such a panel, Briar thought about writing a play in which a story is being woven in fibre while its concepts spill into dramatic action taking place on stage. The pattern she wrote about was 'Purapurawhetū'. Whaea Linda Munn is credited with a quote that holds so much resonance, "when you're born indigenous, you're born in service for your people". This could be such a burden, but my heroes have always woven "service" into the korowai that is their artistic practice. No wonder they are so highly regarded across the arts sector and beyond.

It was Nan's gritty, shitty determination and power in her mahi as an actor, writer and director that held and united so many Māori artists. If ever I got wareware around kaupapa, I could always rely on Nan to set me right.

And Briar leads with a different authority. She lets her written words do the talking. When Briar takes the lead (as she did for

me on *Waru* and *Cousins*) she is clear and precise. She's economic with her spoken word but she's descriptive and effusive when she's writing a scene or presenting the world or the life of the character.

Years ago, we were all in Greece together... Nan, Briar (and her whānau), George Henare, Jim Moriarty, Helen Pearse-Otene, Brad Carroll, Cathy Knowsley, Ross Gibbs and me. Briar had funding to attend the 5th Women Playwrights International Conference being held in Athens and Delphi. The organisers were monsters and utterly koretake. We'd come all that way to perform *Purapurawhetū* to an international audience and the night turned into a nightmare. There was a New Zealand camera crew in attendance poised ready to record history. Instead, they filmed a dust up with the organisers.

Engari, as the play was finally set to perform, hours late and with a huge conference table stuck in the middle of the space, the heavens opened, ka tangi te whaitiri, ka rapa te uira.

Our tūpuna had travelled from Aotearoa to do battle with the local atua.

It was Briar and Nan who stood to karanga the audience into the space and as they did, the skies became calm once more.



And of course, the play went ahead, not quite the way we planned but it was still beautiful, still touched the cold hearts of the organisers, the mana of the production was retained.

My favourite line from the play comes to mind: “When someone special dies, their spirit joins the others in a wild tango across the night sky”.

And there was wild dancing to be had that night in the pito of te ao/Delphi and it was Briar and Nan who brought us all back together again.

He iti hoki te mokoroa nāna i kakati te kahikatea – which refers to the wood grub being small but being able to make short work of the kahikatea. I’d never think of these wāhine purotu, these mareikura as diminutive – in my eyes they work miracles, they weave stories of culture, language, whakapapa and identity. They hold us and celebrate us. They are my heroes. And I’m very grateful.

PREVIOUS PAGE: Nancy Brunning and company in *Paniora* by Briar Grace-Smith, Auckland Theatre Company, New Zealand Festival, Soundings Theatre, 2014. Image: Matt Grace.

ABOVE: Briar Grace-Smith. Image: Tabitha Arthur.

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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: *Other [Chinese]* by Alice Canton, White.Mess, Dunedin Arts Festival, Glenroy Auditorium. Image: Alice Canton. *The Hall* by Ro Bright, Bullet Heart Club in rehearsal for Wanaka Festival of Colour. Image: Amanda Billing. *Simple Acts of Malice* by Richard Huber, Barbara Power, Simon O'Connor and Vincent O'Sullivan in rehearsal for Dunedin Arts Festival, AYU Wellness Arts Event Space. Image: Jeremy Anderson.



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# ŌTEPOTI 2021

BY SAHARA POHATU-TROW

Ōtepoti theatre in 2021 began with Summer Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Day's Scenes* over Valentine's day weekend. A selection of scenes were presented from The Bard's various works including *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Twelfth Night* and *Love's Labour's Lost*. As always, it was a great high note on which to begin the theatre year.

The Dunedin Fringe Festival had a triumphant return following its cancellation in 2020. Harrison Kennedy's *Dayboy* finally had its full debut following its limited run with Arcade Theatre company the year before. Other standout performances from Dunedin Fringe included *The Changing Shed* by Michael Metzger and *Thief* by Kelly Hocking.

From Cindy Diver came *RAA: Resilience – A Lockdown Theatre Response*. A beautiful piece depicting the struggles many families faced during the 2020 lockdown. It deservedly won production of the year at the Dunedin Theatre awards and was filmed later in the year.

Arcade Theatre Company presented a new season of works that included their first musical, *Now. Here. This.* directed by Beth Waite, and Jo Randerson's *Goodnight – The End*, directed by Heidi Geissler. Full of relatable truths, dark humour and

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## MĀORI GODS, GRIEVING TRUCK DRIVERS AND A YETI

existential dread, Arcade produced a season that strongly rivalled their work from previous years.

The Globe Theatre Dunedin was home to many shows including Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* directed by Joseph Cecchi and Michele Amas' *The Pink Hammer* directed by Terry MacTavish.

Ōtepoti Theatre Lab's Playwrights Programme returned this year with Jessica Latton, Martin Swann and Amy Wright going through the 10-week development process followed by staged readings. Māori gods, grieving truck drivers and a yeti all made an appearance and left their mark.

Dunedin theatre in 2021 was filled with persistence following a year of cancellation and doubt. Many artists came back with a hunger to create, but it has continued to be an uphill climb as we navigate what it is to be a creative practitioner in current times. In such a time of uncertainty, we must continue to support and uplift our fellow artists where possible.

# Why I wrote the play I wrote

CIAN PARKER

*on Sorry for Your Loss*

Right, let's take it back to 2019. I have just sent in my application for the Waikato New Works Incubator Programme; a new programme run by Creative Waikato in Hamilton focused on developing local artists through the creation of their own original works. My email is titled 'The Lost Ones'. The attached PDF outlines a physical ensemble piece exploring what it feels like to be bicultural.

Jump forward a month, I am in the programme. I held an audition. Two people show up. One is underage. The other thought he was auditioning for a hip hop crew.

It was over before it began. *The Lost Ones*... was lost to the ether.

Until I have a conversation with my mentor Laura Haughey. It kinda went like this:

"I ain't got an ensemble."

"Ok."

"I think I am going to have to pull out of the programme."

"Why?"

"No ensemble."

"Do a one-woman show."

"I can't."

"You can."

"I don't know how to."

"You don't have another option."

"Ok" Burnt. "So, I am doing a one-woman show."

"Cool."

Mentorship.

My mentor, Laura Haughey, turned creative partner saw something in me that I was yet to discover.

We now arrive at the conversation that really got the ball rolling. Probably where you wanted me to start from the get-go.

But I thought it best to give some context.

I have just raced to The Meteor Theatre for the start of our weekend of workshops. I check the whiteboard and I am just in time for my one-on-one mentor session with The Victor Rodger. Gulp. I sit down and see my original PDF application splayed across the table. On the other side of the table is Awhina-Rose Ashby Henare.

Jump back in my time machine, again.

Sorry, bub. But it'll be worth it.

Right 2014, I'm finishing homework for uni. I get a FB message. Blimp. "Hi Cian, my name is Awhina, I am searching on behalf

of my uncle for a girl named Cian from Hamilton. He is looking for his daughter, is that you?" Plot twist, It was. I hadn't seen my Dad for 8 years. Awhina and I chatted politely, but never met in person until...

Cut back to our mentor session in 2019. Victor is asking me, "there have been a lot of shows made about being from two cultures. What makes yours different?" I blank. I'm nervous. I look at Awhina. "What's going on?" Victor asks us both. Awhina and I explain this is the first time we are meeting after our FB convo that took place 5 years ago. I explain my relationship (or lack thereof) with my Dad. She explains her task to find me.

*The Lost Ones* was officially pushed to the side. Victor declared, "this is the story".

Now, that was half of my word limit used to explain how I got to the point of making *Sorry For Your Loss*, it's about time I attempt to answer why I made it.

Why I wrote *Sorry For Your Loss* is difficult to articulate. As you can see from above the story kind of fell out. I followed it. The writing process entailed a visual mind map of 'and then this happened, then this happened, then this...'

I never set out to write the story of my childhood for audiences to enjoy. To be honest it took me a while to feel like anyone would care. For me, the creative process of *Sorry For Your Loss* consisted of meeting deadlines. Finding an ending for this story was the hardest part altogether. We all took a crack at it. Awhina and I had conversations about where it could go. Victor replied to many messages of me panicking. And Laura, who became the other half of *Sorry For Your Loss*, the director and dramaturg, spent hours with me mapping out the story trying to find the close.

The reason the ending of *Sorry For Your Loss* was so hidden to me was because my story had never found the resolution. Like so many others, I was raised by a single Māmā doing her best, in a world that continually doubted her. And I probably held a lot of resentment towards my Dad for that. Then as time passed I pushed all




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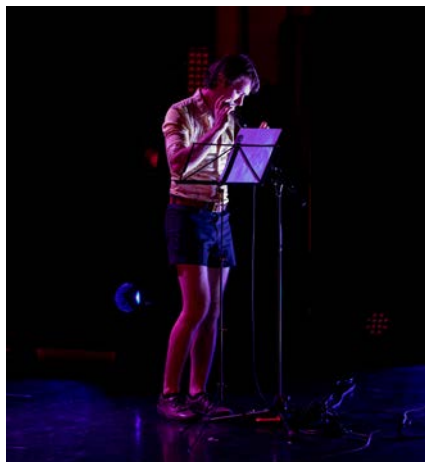
## THE 'WHY' REVEALED ITSELF AFTER I TOOK MY FIRST BOW

that crap down, and just got on with it. For the first 10 years of my life I felt like there was a gap. But when I met him, the shape of him just did not fill that gap. And that was no fault of his. We were just different people. The timing was off.

The 'why' came to be once the show was completed. It was not a straightforward quest of self-discovery from me as a new playwright. But it resonated with people. Through making this show I was literally able to stand at the end of the timeline and look back. And appreciate how far I have come. The 'why' revealed itself after I took my first bow and walked into the foyer to hear how other people's stories were reflected throughout the show.

But also, maybe the 'why' was an unconscious nudge to unlock some baggage I thought I had Marie Kondo'd away, that needed to be pulled out and hung out to dry.

ABOVE: *Sorry For Your Loss* by Cian Parker.  
Image: Michael Smith.



# ŌTAUTAHI 2021

BY RUTH AGNEW

The Court Theatre has always dominated the Ōtautahi theatre scene, like a beloved and respected grandfather who hosts a great dinner party but makes the occasional off-colour joke. 2021 was set to be the year grandad got woke, with Artistic Director Dan Pengelly offering an exciting and diverse range of plays, performers and creators on both the Mainstage and in The Forge. The ultimate unwelcome and unwanted guest, Covid-19, forced the cancellation or postponement of several shows. The Māori Sidesteps are rescheduled to appear in 2022, but *Whā*, an interactive cultural performance experience, was unable to tour, and *Other [Chinese]*, Alice Canton's award-winning exploration of what it means to be a Chinese New Zealander, was cancelled.

However, there was a triumphant close to the year. *Little Shop of Horrors* was a masterclass in how to make a much-performed musical fresh and relevant, with a brilliant cast of BIPOC leads. Rutene Spooner's Seymour fed us well, Monique Clementson proved Audrey could be played with nuance and depth, and Brady Peeti's embodiment of Audrey 2 in human form was simply magical. Centring the show around the star-power of the magnificent Peeti, a proud transgender Wahine Māori, was particularly satisfying after the controversy around the casting of a cis-male actor in a trans role earlier in the year in *Things I Know to be True*.

While The Court Theatre and large scale Showbiz and touring shows at the Isaac Theatre Royal were severely impeded by covid restrictions, some smaller venues and companies were able to meet the challenges of safe live performance in a pandemic. Little Andromeda cannot be praised enough

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## A THRIVING THEATRE SCENE

for the way they navigated changing levels and lights, whilst continuing to champion independent and emerging artists. Highlights from Little A included theatre, comedy, and live recordings of podcasts; Ray Shipley and Emma Cusdin's *Brunch*, Zen Zen Zo's *Toast*, Kathleen Burns, Emma Cusdin and Dan Bain's *Perfuct Storm*, Yugto Productions' *Asian Kiwiana*, Kathleen Burns' *Feminist Yarns*, and a final Christmas treat with *Toys* by Natalie Medlock and Dan Musgrove. New performance festival Tiny Fest returned for its second year to present an outstanding programme of multidisciplinary live performance, despite having to cancel some shows due to Tāmaki Makaurau's lockdown.

With Covid restrictions easing in 2022, we can appreciate how lucky we are to still have a thriving theatre scene in Ōtautahi. Grandad's doors are open again, and he's made space at the table for more of us, but 2021 proved there are other places where we can dine.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: *Notes on a Migration* by Hester Ulyart ft. Admiral Drowsy, Otautahi Tiny Performance Festival, Christchurch Town Hall. Image: Petra Mingneau.

*Whare* by Toi Aamai, Otautahi Tiny Performance Festival, Christchurch Town Hall. Image: Petra Mingneau.

*Ladies Night* by Stephen Sinclair and Anthony McCarten, The Court Theatre. Image: Emma Brittenden.

*First Buzzard at the Body* by Elliot Vaughan, Otautahi Tiny Performance Festival, Christchurch Town Hall. Image: Petra Mingneau.

*The Girl from Transylvania* by David Allen and Nataliya Oryshchuk, No Productions, Little Andromeda. Image: Theuns Verwoerd.



# THEATRE CALENDAR 2021

*Professional Productions of Aotearoa Plays 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021.*

## TOURING & INTERNATIONAL

### *The Wind in the Willows*

Amanda Stone  
The Pantaloons  
Gryphon Theatre  
Wellington, Carterton  
Events Centre, Globe  
Theatre Palmerston North  
16 – 30 Jan

### *The Cool Mum*

Joanna Prendergast  
Picton, Hokitika  
23 – 30 Jan, NZ Fringe,  
Dunedin Fringe 11 – 21  
Mar, Christchurch 9 Apr,  
Nelson Fringe 7 – 8 May

### *The Look of Love*

Ali Harper, Circa Theatre  
23 Jan – 20 Feb,  
Globe Theatre, Toitoti  
Hastings 29 – 31 Jul

### *The Māori Sidesteps*

The Māori Sidesteps  
Collective Centrepoint  
5 – 14 Feb, Kia Mau  
Festival 9 Jun

### *Gays in Space*

Tom Sainsbury and  
Jason Smith  
Cuetone Media  
Q Theatre 9 – 10 Feb,  
BATS 10 – 16 Aug

### *Shot Bro*

Rob Mokaraka, Mookalucky  
Productions Touring  
nationally from 12 Feb

### *The Lost Letter Office*

Jen McArthur and  
Renata Hopkins  
Capital E National Theatre  
for Children National Tour  
19 Feb – 23 Mar

### *Bondage Queen Sings the Hits*

Jo Marsh  
Auckland Fringe, NZ  
Fringe, Dunedin Fringe  
18 Feb – 20 Mar

### *Alone*

Luke Thornborough  
Dusty Room Productions  
Papaioea Festival, Govett  
Brewster New Plymouth,  
NZ Fringe 18 – 6 Mar

### *Dr Drama Makes a Show with You*

James Wenley  
Theatre of Love  
Auckland Fringe,  
NZ Fringe  
18 Feb – 11 Mar

### *Standard Acts*

Karin McCracken and  
Meg Rollandi  
BATS, Basement  
18 Feb – 19 Mar

### *Te Whare Kapua*

Miriama McDowell  
Massive Company  
Auckland Fringe,  
Oneonesix Whangārei  
19 – 26 Feb

### *Adventures in Failure*

Fighting Fit Productions  
Hamilton Gardens Arts  
Festival 20 Feb,  
Dunedin Fringe  
26 – 27 Mar

### *A Stab in the Dark*

Carl Bland  
Nightsong Adelaide  
Fringe, Australia (online)  
22 – 24 Feb

### *Dakota of the White Flats*

Red Leap Theatre

### Oneonesix Whangārei, Hamilton Gardens

Arts Festival  
19 – 26 Feb

### *Back to Square One?*

Anders Falstie-Jensen  
The Rebel Alliance  
Hamilton Gardens Arts  
Festival, Auckland Fringe  
Festival, Auckland Fringe  
Sunnyvale and Basement  
26 Feb – 18 Mar, Meteor  
Hamilton 13 – 15 Aug, Tahī  
Festival 20 Oct, Tiny Fest  
Christchurch 28 Nov

### *The Boy with Wings*

Bridget and Roger Sanders  
Birdlife Productions  
NZ Fringe 26 – 28 Feb,  
Nelson Fringe 8 May,  
Little Andromeda 17 Jul

### *No! I'm Not Australian*

Ocean Denham  
NZ Fringe 27 Feb,  
The Thirsty Dog  
Auckland 4 – 5 Jun

### *Sing to Me*

Alex Lodge  
Taki Rua Productions  
Te Whaea Wellington,  
Auckland Arts Festival  
27 Feb – 13 Mar, Wallace  
Development Company  
Theatre Palmerston  
North, Papa Hou  
Christchurch, Mayfair  
Theatre Dunedin  
19 May – 1 Jun

### *Sorry for Your Loss*

Cian Parker  
Hamilton Gardens Arts  
Festival 27 Feb,  
Auckland Arts Festival  
11 – 19 Mar

### *The Power to Change Your Mind,*

Vinyl Burns  
NZ Fringe, Dunedin  
Fringe 15 – 27 Mar, Little  
Andromeda 13 – 14 Aug

### *The Griegol*

Hannah Smith and Ralph  
McCubbin Howell  
Trick of the Light Theatre  
Company, Auckland Arts  
Festival 16 – 21 Mar,  
Wanaka Festival of Colour  
14 – 15 Apr

### *Them Fatale*

James Hilary Penwarden  
NZ Fringe 17 – 20 Mar, Tahī  
Festival 21 Oct (online)

### *The Artist*

Thomas Monckton  
Circo Aereo  
Auckland Arts Festival,  
Circa, Wanaka Festival  
of Colour, Dunedin Arts  
Festival 17 Mar – 22 Apr,  
Hawke's Bay Arts Festival  
22 Oct

### *Strasbourg 1518*

Lucy Marinkovich and  
Lucien Johnson  
Borderline Arts Ensemble  
Auckland Arts Festival,  
Circa Theatre  
19 – 28 Mar

### *Code Switch*

AFA Productions  
National Tour  
19 Mar – 13 Jun

### *Me and My Nana*

Cubbin Theatre Company  
Isaac Theatre Royal  
Christchurch 20 Mar,  
Wanaka Festival 14 Apr

- Pourakahua*  
Jeffrey Addison  
Taki Rua Productions  
Te Reo Māori Season  
National Tour  
22 Mar – 12 Apr,  
26 Jul – 17 Aug
- The Eternal Queers*  
Estelle Chout  
Wellington Pride Festival  
23, 30 Mar
- Thief*  
Kelly Hocking  
Prospect Park  
Productions  
Dunedin Fringe  
24 – 27 Mar, Little  
Andromeda 12 – 13 Nov
- Wild Dogs Under My Skirt*  
Tusiata Avia  
Tourmakers and  
FCC, Invercargill,  
Dunedin Arts Festival,  
Oamaru Opera House  
8 – 10 Apr
- 45 Cents an Hour*  
Dominic Hoey  
BATS 8 – 17 Apr,  
Basement 1 – 12 Jun
- Hello Darkness*  
Peter Wells adapted  
by Victor Rodger  
Wanaka Festival of Colour  
17 Apr
- Owls do Cry*  
Janet Frame, adapted by  
Red Leap Theatre  
Christchurch Arts Centre,  
Oamaru Opera House,  
Wanaka Festival of  
Colour, Dunedin Arts  
Festival 7 – 18 Apr
- A Lion in the Meadow  
and Other Stories*  
Margaret Mahy,  
adapted by Tim Bray  
Tim Bray Theatre Company  
Auckland Tour  
10 Apr – 29 May
- Tröll*  
Ralph McCubbin Howell  
Trick of the Light Theatre  
Company  
Wanaka Festival of  
Colour 12 – 13 Apr,
- Space Theatre Adelaide,  
Australia 24 – 29 May
- Up and Away*  
Cubbin Theatre Company  
Dunedin Arts Festival,  
Wanaka Festival of Colour  
12 – 15 Apr
- Soft Carnage*  
Brynley Stent  
Little Andromeda  
13 – 17 Apr, Basement  
Theatre 18 – 22 May
- Other [Chinese]*  
Alice Canton  
White.Mess  
Wanaka Festival of  
Colour, Dunedin Arts  
Festival 13 – 16 Apr
- Rants in the Dark*  
Mel Dodge, Lyndee-Jane  
Rutherford and Bevin  
Linkhorn Festival of  
Colour, Dunedin Arts  
Festival 15 – 17 Apr
- Peter Paka Paratene*  
Rawiri Paratene  
Te Pou 16 – 24 Apr,  
Kia Mau Festival 8 – 9 Jun
- A Traveller's Guide  
to Turkish Dogs*  
Barnaby Olson and  
company  
Wanaka Festival of  
Colour, Dunedin Arts  
Festival 17 – 24 Apr
- Meremere*  
Rodney Bell  
Movement of the Human  
Tourmakers National Tour  
10 Apr – 15 May 2021
- The Bicycle and the  
Butcher's Daughter*  
Helen Moulder and  
Sue Rider  
Willow Productions  
Nelson 20 – 22 Apr,  
Dark Room Palmerston  
North, Tiny Theatre  
Auckland, Paekakariki,  
Little Andromeda  
14 May – 26 Jun
- Mrs Krishnan's Party*  
Jacob Rajan and  
Justin Lewis  
Indian Ink Theatre
- Company  
Te Oro, Auckland,  
Carterton Events Centre  
22 Apr – 1 May,  
Hawkes Bay Arts Festival  
23 – 24 Oct
- Promise and Promiscuity*  
Penny Ashton  
Artworks Waiheke,  
Q Theatre 23 Apr – 1 May,  
4th Wall Theatre New  
Plymouth, ASB Theatre  
Marlborough Blenheim,  
Waihi, Queenstown  
12 Jun – 22 Jul
- Whaddarya?* by various  
Young and Hungry  
National Tour  
3 May – 9 Jul
- Seasons*  
Peter Wilson, Laughton  
Patrick, Jenny Patrick  
Capital E National Theatre  
for Children  
National Tour  
19 Apr – 15 Nov
- Boy Mestizo*  
James Roque  
BATS, Dark Room  
Palmerston North,  
Hastings, Gisborne,  
Rotorua, Q Theatre  
7 – 19 May
- Te Rongomaiwhiti*  
Hōhepa Waitoa  
Mahi Mahi Productions  
Little Andromeda  
13 – 22 May, Kia Mau  
Festival 16 – 17 Jun
- Paradise or the  
Impermanence  
of Ice Cream*  
Jacob Rajan and  
Justin Lewis  
Indian Ink Theatre  
Company, National Tour  
20 May – 23 Oct
- Your Me*  
Amy Jansen  
Little Andromeda,  
New Athenaeum Dunedin,  
Invercargill, Waitaiki  
30 May – 23 Jun
- The Mourning After*  
Ahilan Karunaharan
- Agaram and Square  
Sums and Co  
Kia Mau Festival 4 – 12 Jun,  
Q Theatre 20 – 25 Jul
- All I See*  
Cian Parker  
Kia Mau Festival 4 – 12 Jun,  
Meteor 15 – 16 Jul
- Batch*  
by Various  
Tahi Festival Schools Tour  
14 – 25 June 2021
- Werewolf*  
Joel Baxendale,  
Freya Daly Sadgrove,  
Oliver Devlin and  
Karin McCracken  
Binge Culture  
St Peter's Paekakariki,  
Breaker Bay Hall  
11 – 19 Jun
- The Most Naked*  
Hannah Tasker-Poland  
with Lucien Johnson  
Auckland Cabaret  
Festival, BATS  
24 Jun – 24 Jul
- Olive Copperbottom*  
Penny Ashton  
Lyttleton Arts Factory,  
Toitoti 25 Jun – 15 Jul,  
Q Theatre 2 – 5 Dec
- Aperture – The Life and  
Work of Ans Westra*  
Martine Baanvinger  
Arts on Tour National Tour  
6 – 31 Jul
- Story Studio Live*  
Capital E National Theatre  
for Children  
National Tour from 26 Jul
- Silent Spring Revisited*  
Jan Bolwell  
Handstand Productions  
Touring Wellington  
Vogelmorn, Ngāio  
6 – 14 Aug  
Linden, Miramar  
25 Sep – 9 Oct  
St Peter's  
Paekakariki 6 – 7 Nov
- Winding Up*  
Roger Hall  
Theatre Royal Nelson  
10 – 14 Aug

*Six Polar Bears Fell out of the Sky This Morning*  
Alister Emerson  
Theater Alaska, USA  
14 Aug

*Bunny*  
Barney Duncan  
Assembly Festival  
Edinburgh  
10 – 30 Aug (online)

*Ka-Shue*  
Lynda Chanwai Earle  
Te Tairāwhiti Arts  
Festival, Hawke's  
Bay Arts Festival  
15 – 20 Oct

*Gāndește-Te La Africa*  
(Think of Africa)  
Gordon Dryland  
translated by  
Raluca Păun  
Teatrul National  
Marin Sorescu,  
Craiova, Romania  
13 May, 11 – 12 Sep

*Wonderland Glow Show*  
Sarah Burren  
National Tour  
2 Oct – 16 Nov

*Skin Tight*  
Gary Henderson  
Southern Maggie  
Hope Theatre,  
London, UK  
19 Oct – 6 Nov

*Conversations Avec Mon Pénis*  
Dean Hewison  
translated by  
Marc-Andre Thibault  
Epsilon Theatre  
Swiss Tour  
30 Nov – 17 Dec

## TĀMAKI MAKAURAU

### Auckland Theatre Company

*The Haka Party*  
Katie Wolfe  
ASB Waterfront  
Theatre  
30 Mar – 10 Apr

Hawkes Bay Arts  
Festival 18 Oct

Here and Now  
Festival 23 – 30 Jul  
*Yang/Young/杨*  
Sherry Zhang and  
Nuanzhi Zheng  
*Fleshies 2.0 b*  
The Oddballs  
Basement Theatre

*Mahuika!*  
Amber Curreen  
Schools Tour  
10 May – 4 June

### Basement Theatre

*I Wanna be Mark Wahlberg*  
Melody Rachel  
9 – 13 Feb

*Hetheyshe*  
Cypris Afakasi  
9 – 13 Feb

*Ghost Machine*  
Laura Davis  
23 – 27 Feb

*Waiting*  
Shadon Meredith  
16 – 20 Mar

*Silly Samoan*  
Bubbah 16 – 20 Mar

*Twinless*  
Clare Marcie  
23 – 27 Mar

*Digging to Cambodia*  
Sarita So  
I Ken So Productions  
23 – 27 Mar

*An Extraordinary Meeting*  
Alex Bonham, Ellie  
Lim, Hannah Rice,  
Simon Gilchrist and  
Talia Parker  
30 Mar – 1 Apr

*You Are [Not] Alone Here*  
Amy Mansfield  
6 – 10 Apr

*Change Your Own Life*  
Jean Sergent  
School for Gifted  
Children 13 – 17 Apr

*The Downs and Ups of Pip and Squeak*  
Katie Longbottom  
and Ravi  
Gurunathan  
20 – 24 Apr

*First World Problems 3.0*  
Prayas and Agaram  
Productions  
13 – 24 Apr

*Harlequeen*  
Abby Howells  
4 – 8 May

*Head*  
Bubbah  
4 – 8 May  
*Anxiety ... The Musical*  
Maria Williams  
4 – 8 May

*Bunny*  
Barney Duncan  
6 – 8 May,  
17 – 19 Jun

*Boom Shankar*  
Bala Murali  
Shingade and  
Aman Bajaj  
11 – 12 May,  
8 – 12 Jun

*Brunch*  
Ray Shipley and  
Emma Cusdin  
11 – 15 May

*Paradise Island*  
Indigo Paul  
1 – 5 Jun

*Inhospitable*  
15 – 19 Jun

*Cake Baby*  
Alice Kirker  
22 – 26 Jun

*Wonderful*  
Dean Parker  
Armstrong Creative  
22 – 26 Jun

*Fala Muncher*  
Lyncia Muller,  
Jaycee Tanuvasa  
and Disciple Pati  
3 – 14 Aug

### Q Theatre

*Eglantyne*  
Anne Chamberlain  
10 – 13 Feb

*Let's Get Loco*  
Liam Coleman and  
Zak Enayat  
11 – 20 Feb

*Everything After*  
Shane Boshier  
Brilliant Adventures  
8 – 18 Jul

### Auckland Fringe 14 February – 17 April

*Coded* Erin  
O'Flaherty, *Cook*  
*Thinks Again*  
Jo Randerson,  
*Evening!* with  
*Jimmy Applause*  
Zheng Nuanzhi,  
*An Extraordinary Meeting* Alex  
Bonham, *Godzonias*  
Georgie Oulton, *The Grin Reaper Double*  
Bill Julia and Tessa  
Clement, *Outta the Mouths of Babes*  
Tessa Mitchell,  
*Over My Dead Body: Uninvited*  
Jason Te Mete,  
*Real Chai, Songs from My Suitcase*  
Whitney Channings,  
*Squeaky Wheel*  
Katherine Thomas,  
*Sunrise* Joshua  
Downs, Anya  
Christiansen,  
James Hunter and  
Francis Johnson

### Te Pou Theatre

*E Hui E*  
Te Pou Theatre  
Rangatahi 20 Mar

*Racists Anonymous*  
Tainui Tukiwaho  
18 – 22 May  
Te Aha Centre,  
Kaitiā, 15 – 17 Jun  
Oneonesix  
30 Jun – 2 Jul

*Te Mahi a Rahi*  
Tainui Tukiwaho  
14 Jun – 17 Jul

*Kūpapa*  
Nicola Kawana  
3 – 10 Jul

### Other Venues Tāmaki Makaurau

*Inky Pinky Ponky*  
Leki Jackson-Bourke  
and Amanaki  
Prescott-Faletau  
Auckland Pride  
Māngere Arts Centre  
8 Feb

*The Big OE*  
Will Watson  
Tiny Theatre Garnet  
Station 15 – 17 Feb

*Tropical Love Birds*  
Vela Manusaute  
Auckland Arts  
Festival,  
Māngere Arts  
Centre 10 – 20 Mar

*Into the Bush*  
Butch Mermaid  
TAPAC 13 – 16 May

*Pork and Poll Taxes*  
Talia Pua  
Proudly Asian  
Theatre and  
Hand Pulled  
Collective  
Auckland Live  
10 – 14 Aug

*Mauri Tau*  
Scotty Cotter  
Silo Theatre  
2 – 18 Jul (online)

*Vivaldi's The Four Seasons*  
Tim Bray  
Tim Bray Theatre  
Company  
The Pumphouse  
3 – 17 Jul

*The End*  
Emma Walton  
Pitt St Theatre  
16 – 23 Jul

*Greedy Cat*  
Tim Bray adapted

from the books by Joy Cowley and Robyn Benton. Songs by Christine White, online from 27 Aug

*The Birthday Girl*  
Albert Belz  
Auckland University  
2 Oct (online)

*Stories Told To Me By Girls*  
by Julie Hill  
Unitec School of Performing and Screen Arts  
11 – 13 Nov (online)

*Break Bread*  
Alice Canton,  
Freya Finch,  
Jarod Rawiri and  
Leon Wadhams  
Silo Theatre  
30 Nov – 19 Dec  
(online)

## KIRIKIRIROA

### The Meteor

*Mum's Kitchen*  
David Sidwell, Nick Braae, Kyle Chuen, and Jeremy Mayall  
5 – 13 Feb

*The Lonely Hearts Assembly*  
Conor Maxwell  
14 Feb, 3 – 6 Mar

*Damian and the Heartaches*  
Spoken Chronicles Theatre Company  
20 – 22 May

*Beads! Beards! Beards!*  
Ralph McCubbin  
Howell 19 – 23 Jul

*Junior*  
Conor Maxwell  
22 – 25 Sep

### Hamilton Gardens Arts Festival 20 – 28 Feb

*Freda Stark – The Musical,*

*The Intricate Art of Actually Caring*  
Eli Kent, *Ko Tawa – You and I*

### Clarence St Theatre

*MAMIL*  
Gregory Cooper  
21 May

## TE PAPAIOEA

### Centrepoint Theatre

*Winding Up*  
Roger Hall  
27 Mar – 24 Apr

*The Complete History of Palmerston North*  
Gregory Cooper  
24 Jul – 17 Aug

*Friends with Boundaries*  
Regan Taylor and  
Leona Revell  
8 – 9 October

*Little Red Riding Hood*  
Brendon Bennetts  
12 – 16 Oct

*Move*  
The Basement Company  
11 – 13 Nov

*Cringeworthy 80s!*  
Andrea Sanders  
6 Nov – 11 Dec

### Other Venues Palmerston North

*Chance*  
Angie Farrow  
Papaioea Festival  
17 – 19 Feb

*Garage Party*  
Modern Māori Quartet, Papaioea Festival  
20 Feb

## TE WHANGANUI-A-TARA

### Circa Theatre

*Cinderella*  
*The Pantomime*

Simon Leary and  
Gavin Rutherford  
11 – 16 Jan

Yes Yes Yes  
Eleanor Bishop and  
Karim McCracken  
23 – 27 Mar

*Up Down Girl*  
adapted from  
*Up Down Boy*  
by Sue Shields  
20 Apr – 1 May

*Another Mammal*  
Jo Randerson  
8 – 29 May

*The White Tree*  
Peter Wilson  
10 – 25 Jul

*Winding Up*  
Roger Hall  
31 Jul – 10 Aug

*Mr Fungus*  
Fergus Aitken  
5 – 16 Oct

*Live Through This: The Best Show in Town is at Your Place*  
by Jonny Potts and  
*Change Your Own Life*  
by Jean Sergent  
23 Oct – 13 Nov

*The Little Mermaid*  
Simon Leary and  
Gavin Rutherford  
19 Nov – 23 Dec

*Hole*  
Lynda Chanwai-Earle  
20 Nov – 19 Dec

### BATS

*Borders and Margins*  
Paul Percy  
5 – 13 Feb

*The Secret Lives of 16 Year Old Girls*  
Sarah Boddy  
16 – 20 Feb,  
9 – 13 Nov

*Don't Wake Me Up*  
Rosie Glover  
25 Mar – 1 Apr

*Rainbows and Fishes*  
Peter Wilson  
Little Dog Barking  
20 – 24 Apr

*Transmission*  
Stuart McKenzie  
Harcourt McKenzie  
Partnership  
20 Apr – 1 May

*Horny and Confused*  
Katie Hill and  
Charlotte Glucina  
Big Estrogen  
Energy 4 – 8 May

*Hello Darlings! with Pamela Hancock*  
Cole Hampton  
11 – 15 May

*Catch You Up*  
Bubbah  
11 – 15 May

*Bobby Wood: If You Met my Mum, You'd Understand*  
Tess Sullivan  
18 – 22 May

*When Booty Calls*  
Comedy Gold  
29 Jun – 3 Jul

*Tap Head*  
Barnie Duncan  
13 – 24 Jul

*Sapphic Lake*  
Jean Sergent,  
Ania Upstill and  
Brigid Costello  
School for Gifted Children 17 Aug,  
7 – 21 Dec (online)

*Man Lessons: Not the Live Show*  
(online) Adam Rohe  
4 – 11 Sep

*White Men*  
Abby Howells  
Red Scare Theatre  
Company  
23 Sep – 2 Oct

*Little Town Liars*  
Josh Hopton-Stewart  
5 – 9 Oct

## Tahi Festival 19 – 23 Oct

*Iti Kahurangi*  
Kahurangi  
Bronsson-George,  
*Te Tupa – The Goblin*  
John Davies (online),  
*Deep and Meaningful*  
Alyne Dick,  
*How to Win at Life*  
Samantha Hannah,  
*The Great Teddy Bear Escape*  
Beth Kayes (online),  
*Echolalia*  
Jen McArthur,  
*Hatch*  
Chloe Jaques,  
Louise Jiang,  
Amy McLean,  
Viki Moananu,  
Kealan Schmidt and  
Maea Shepherd,  
*Whānau*  
by various

*Births, Deaths and Marriages – On Stage*  
Bea Joblin  
Whitireia  
Performing Arts,  
BATS  
2 – 6 Nov

*Tandy Dandy*  
Laura Gaudin and  
Hamish Gaudin  
16 – 20 Nov

*Big Time Clocks*  
O + P works  
16 – 27 Nov

*Running into the Sun*  
Long Cloud Youth  
Theatre 24 – 27 Nov

*Illegally Blind*  
Susan Williams  
7 – 11 Dec

*Destination Mars*  
Kip Chapman and  
Brad Knewstubb  
Hackman and  
Aotearoa New Zealand Arts  
Festival, Te Papa  
11 Dec – 25 Apr 2022

*Flames*  
Roy Iro and  
Reon Bell  
14 – 18 Dec

## NZ Fringe Festival 26 Feb – 20 Mar

### *The Best of Both Worlds?*

Kelly Fornia, *Big Foot*  
Rebekah de Roo, Daniel  
Nodder, Teag Mackay and  
Tyler Clarke, *Bloodbag*  
David Bowers-Mason,  
*Bruises* Knot Theatre,  
*Campfire Calamity* Isaac  
Andrews and Ace Dalziel,  
*Celestial Nobodies*  
Evangelina Telfar, *Circle*  
of Life Peter Wilson and  
Kenny King, *Community*  
Emma Barrett, *Company*  
*Kamupene* Jamie  
McCaskill, *Conversations*  
with the Ghosts in my  
Bedroom Mia Oudes,  
*Cuffs Stockings and Two*  
*Smoking Barrels* Finlay  
Langelaan, *Fab Beasts*  
Catriona Tipene and Ryan  
Cundy, *Introspection* Liv  
Woodmass, *Love and*  
*Plastic Roses* Isabella  
Murray, *Marble Cinematic*  
*Universe* Adam Rohe,  
*Music Sounds Better Out*  
*Here* Finlay Langelaan,  
*One Way Ticket to Mars*  
Esteban Jaramillo, *Please*  
*Laugh* Fin McLachlan,  
Danny Sewell and Lucy  
Elisara, *Potluck* Kiya  
Basabas, *Razor Boys*  
Jonny Potts, *Shitspeare*  
Sarah Delahunty, *Slay the*  
*Dragon*, *Save the Dragon*  
or *Neither* Jane Yonge,  
*Something's Starting to*  
*Stink* Brick Haus, *Table*  
*Stew* Productions, *This*  
*is Fine* VUW Theatre  
302 2020, *Too Many*  
*Dead People* Jeremy  
Hunt, Kealan Schmidt,  
Olivia Chelmis and Bon  
Buchanan, *Travails*  
with my Ex – *Part Deux*  
Shannon Gillies, *The Wild*  
*Card* Pája Neuhöferová,  
Leda Farrow and Katka  
Prazakova

## Other Venues Te Whanganui-a-Tara

*Tale of a Dog*  
Peter Wilson

Kidzstuff  
Tararua Tramping Club  
17 – 30 Apr

*That's All She Wrote*  
Cassandra Tse  
Red Scare Theatre  
Company  
Te Auaha  
7 – 10 Jul

*Badjelly the Witch*  
Alannah O'Sullivan,  
adapted from the book  
by Spike Milligan  
Kidzstuff, Tararua  
Tramping Club  
10 – 23 Jul

*Ciggie Butts in the Sand*  
Tupua Tigafua  
Soundings  
14 – 16 Jul

*Whaea Kairau: Mother*  
*Hundred Eater*  
Apirana Taylor  
Whitireia Performing Arts  
Te Auaha  
26 – 30 Oct

*Where's Nige?*  
Emma Barrett  
Warped Productions  
Thistle Hall  
25 – 27 Nov

*Battle Hymn*  
Cassandra Tse and  
Bruno Shirley  
Red Scare Youth Theatre  
Gryphon Theatre  
8 – 11 Dec

## Kia Mau Festival 4 – 19 Jun

*Brown Crown Sarai*  
Perenise-Ropeti,  
*Eat These Words* Miss  
Leading, *Maeta* Shanaia  
Boutsady, *Neke* Scotty  
Cotter, *Upu* curated  
by Grace Taylor,  
*Witi's Wāhine*  
Witi Ihimaera and  
Nancy Brunning

## WHANGAREI

*The Absurdatorium*  
Kirwin Hamshire  
Oneonesix 6 – 12 Feb

## GISBORNE/ HAWKES BAY

#ustwo  
Sarah and Catherine  
Delahunty  
Keirunga Creative Arts  
Havelock North 10 Jun

## Hawkes Bay Arts Festival 20 - 31 October

*The End of the Golden*  
*Weather* Bruce Mason,  
*Magic and Mayhem*  
David Ladderman and  
Lizzie Tollemache,  
*Where Kōrero Stories*  
*Within Stories: A*  
*Thousand Thoughts*  
*a Minute* Kristyl Neho  
and *The Hunger Strikes*  
*Me* Eru Heke

## ŌTAUTAHI

### Little Andromeda

*Ugly – The Untold Story*  
*of the Stepsisters*  
Nicky Douglas  
Blackboard Theatre  
Collective 23 – 24 Jan

*Severely Queer*  
– *Time for Tea*  
Blackboard Theatre  
Collective 11 – 13 Mar

*Main Man*  
Tom Eason  
Two Productions  
26 – 27 Mar

*Sexy Ghost Boy:*  
*Sexy Golf Boy*  
George Fenn 7 – 8 May

*The Profession(nah)ls*  
Sincere Muckabouts  
7 – 8 May

*Nicky Le Music*  
(and other theatre mishaps)  
Nic Kyle 10 – 12 Jun

*Distantly Connected*  
Hwyl Theatre Co  
2 – 3 Jul

*Rumplestiltskin*  
NZ Playhouse 22 – 24 Jul

*High Rise*  
Cameron Jones 23 – 24 Jul

*The Girl from Transylvania*  
David Allan and  
Nataliya Oryschuk  
No Productions  
26 – 27 Oct

*Dusty – 3 New Solos*  
Rongopai Tickell,  
Murdoch Keane and Peter  
Burman  
24 – 25 Nov

*Toys*  
Natalie Medlock and  
Daniel Musgrove  
16 – 23 Dec

## The Court Theatre

*Winding Up*  
Roger Hall  
13 Feb – 13 Mar

*Crash Bash 2021: What If...*  
Kathleen Burns  
Schools Tour  
22 Feb – 26 Mar

*Boys*  
Eleanor Bishop  
adapted from  
*Foreskin's Lament* by  
Greg McGee  
The Court Youth  
Company 12 – 25 May

*Ladies Night*  
Stephen Sinclair and  
Anthony McCarten  
1 May – 5 Jun

*The Unauthorised History*  
The Court Youth  
Company  
8 – 11 Dec

## Other venues Ōtautahi

*The Die*  
Joe Bennett  
Lyttleton Arts Factory  
20 Jan – 6 Feb

*Gladys and Daphne*  
Jane McLauchlan  
Lyttleton Arts Factory  
28 Apr – 16 May

*Toast*  
devised Alys Hill,  
Mary Davison, Andy  
Brigden, Megan Herd,  
Stella Cheersmith,  
Jane McLauchlan  
and Kate Allen



Isaac Theatre Royal  
21 Mar  
Little Andromeda  
3 Jun – 5 Jun

*Beauty and the Beast*  
Gregory Cooper  
Isaac Theatre Royal  
9 – 19 Dec

## ŌTEPOTI

*Simple Acts of Malice*  
Vincent O'Sullivan,  
Richard Huber,  
Barbara Power and  
Simon O'Connor  
Dunedin Arts Festival  
14 – 17 Apr

*Bittersweet*  
Talking House,  
Toitū 3 – 12 Jun,  
Otago Pioneer  
Women's Hall 19 – 21 Nov

*Struggling with Lentils*  
Hilary Halba, Simon  
O'Connor, Martyn Roberts  
and Stuart Young  
Talking House and

Otago University School  
of Performing Arts,  
Allen Hall Theatre  
6 – 10 Jul

*Bang!*  
Abby Howells  
NZ International  
Science Festival  
17 – 18 Jul

*Good Night, The End*  
Jo Randerson  
Arcade Theatre Company  
New Athenaeum  
25 – 27 Nov

## Dunedin Fringe Festival 18 – 29 March

*The Bacchae* Sam  
Pretious, *Blue Experience*  
Sophie Ricketts,  
*The Changing Shed*  
Michael Metzger, *Daddy*  
*Issues*, *Dayboy* Harrison  
Kennedy, *Passing*  
*Through* Alison Cowan,  
*RAA! Random Acts of Art!*  
Theatreworks and WOW!  
Productions

## Wanaka Festival of Colour 12 – 18 Apr

*The Hall*  
Ro Bright  
15 – 17 Apr

*Remote Thoughts*  
Anna Shaw  
13 – 14 May

## NELSON AND BLENHEIM

*Mission 34*  
Justin Eade  
ASB Theatre  
Blenheim  
24 Mar – 3 Apr

*Wheeler's Luck*  
Nigel Collins,  
Toby Leach,  
Damon Andrews  
ASB Theatre  
Blenheim  
5 – 8 May

*Box of Birds*  
Bridget and  
Roger Sanders  
Birdlife Productions

Waimarama  
11 Apr

*The Wairau Affray*  
Justin Eade  
ASB Theatre  
Blenheim  
24 – 26 Jun,  
Theatre Royal  
Nelson  
1 – 3 Jul

*First Flight*  
Justin Eade  
Pūtangitangi  
Greenmeadows  
Centre, Nelson  
10 – 13 Nov

## Nelson Fringe Festival 6 – 15 May 2021

*Blue Experience*  
Sophie Ricketts,  
*The Man Who was*  
*Thursday*  
Giles Burton,  
*Solitude* Martine  
Baanvinger

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# PLAYMARKET INFORMATION

Playmarket issues and manages performance licences and royalty payments, circulates clients' plays in Aotearoa and internationally, advises on and negotiates commissions, translation and collaboration agreements, and maintains an archive of playwrights' work.

Playmarket offers a raft of development resources such as clinics, readings, and events; and industry discourse, partnerships and networks. Our bookshop provides every published Aotearoa play in print and has a comprehensive catalogue of unpublished plays to download or purchase.

Playmarket also offers advice to all Aotearoa playwrights, theatremakers and producers.

## FACTS AND FIGURES

Professional performance licences issued: 29

Community performance licences issued: 55

International licences issued: 13

School/tertiary performance licences issued: 117

Scripts circulated: 5613

Scripts/drafts received: 311

Paid script assessments: 8

## PUBLISHING

*Maria Dronke: Glimpses of an Acting Life* by Monica Tempian | Design: Cansino & Co | Editing and Production: Whitireia Publishing

*Playmarket Guidelines 05: Caring for Your Audience* by Lori Leigh | Design: Cansino & Co

### Playmarket Annual

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

### eBulletin

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

### edBulletin

Published biannually via email. Resources and opportunities for teachers and educators  
Editors: Salesi Le'ota, Nathan Mudge and Isaac Martyn

## AWARDS, COMPETITIONS AND PROJECTS

**Bruce Mason Award Winner:** Nathan Joe

**Adam NZ Play Award Winner:**  
& Sons Emily Duncan

### Runner Up:

*The Haka Party Incident* Katie Wolfe

### Best Play a Māori Playwright:

*The Haka Party Incident* Katie Wolfe

### Best Play a Pasifika Playwright:

*Sons of Vao Vela* Manusaute

### Best Play a Woman Playwright:

& Sons Emily Duncan

### McNaughton South Island Play Award:

& Sons Emily Duncan

### Dean Parker Award:

*The Haka Party Incident* Katie Wolfe

### Highly Commended: *A Rich Man*

and *The Future of the Party* Sam Brooks



**Playwrights b4 25 Winner:**

*Lip Sync, Kanikani, Twerk Off!* Te Huamanuka Luiten-Apirana

**Playmarket Plays for the Young**

**Competition:** *Gillian: Dog in the Big City* Kieran Craft and Jonathan Vanderhoorn (3-8 year olds), *Monarch* Beth Kayes (8-12 year olds), *Spilt Milk* Catherine May (Teenagers)

**Brown Ink Development Programme:**

*Departures* DF Mamea, *Our Side of the Fence* Rawinia Parata

**Asian Ink Development Programme:**

*How to Throw a Chinese Funeral* Jill Kwan

**He Pia Māori Kaihāpai Tuhinga:**

Erina Daniels

**Creative New Zealand Playmarket Pasifika**

**Script Advisor Residency:** Suli Moa

**Playwrights in Schools programme with Read NZ Te Pou Muramura:**

Lauren Jackson, Leki Jackson-Bourke

**Robert Lord Writers' Cottage Residencies:**

Karen Wrigglesworth, Holly Walker, Heather McQuillan, Angie Farrow, Emma Hislop, Pennie Hunt, Karen McMillan, Sudha Rao

**Building Communities Conference:**

6 August 2021, Auckland Live

**CLINICS, SCRIPT ADVISORY, READINGS AND WORKSHOPS**

*Blitz Kids* Ken Blackburn, *A Rich Man* Sam Brooks, *Hole* Lynda Chanwai-Earle, *The Complete History of Palmerston North* Greg Cooper, *World on Fire* Mike Hudson, Margaret-Mary Hollins and Georgia Duder-Wood, *The Little Mermaid* Simon Leary and Gavin Rutherford, *Eleanor Crane* Alex MacDonald, *Haere* Mitch Tawhi Thomas, *New Gold Mountain* Cassandra Tse, *Let's Talk About Me* April Philips, *How's Your Asana?* Georgia Duder Wood, Toi Whakaari Duncan Sarkies Workshop, PAT and Ahi's Writing Classes, Ōtepoti Theatre Lab, Proudly Asian Theatre Fresh off the Page.

**Te Tira Tā Mai o te Upoko:**

Fortnightly Wellington playwriting group facilitated by Jamie McCaskill

**Playmarket Playfellows:** Alister McDonald

ABOVE: *Sing to Me* by Alex Lodge, Taki Rua Productions, Te Whaea Theatre. Image: Philip Merry.



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to book an audition.



### CONTACT US

PO Box 9767, Wellington 6141  
Suite 4/35 – 38 Cambridge Terrace 6011

**Director:** Murray Lynch  
[director@playmarket.org.nz](mailto:director@playmarket.org.nz) | +64 4 382 8464

**Licensing and Bookshop**  
**Administrator:** Joanna Cho  
[jo@playmarket.org.nz](mailto:jo@playmarket.org.nz) | +64 382 8462 ext 1

**Kaihāpai Tuhinga Māori:** Jason Te Kare  
[jason@playmarket.org.nz](mailto:jason@playmarket.org.nz)

**Publication and Event**  
**Coordinator:** Saleesi Le'ota  
[sal@playmarket.org.nz](mailto:sal@playmarket.org.nz) | +64 382 8462 ext 2

**Script Advisor:** Allison Horsley  
[scripts@playmarket.org.nz](mailto:scripts@playmarket.org.nz) | +64 382 8462 ext 1

**Script Coordinator:** Isaac Martyn  
[isaac@playmarket.org.nz](mailto:isaac@playmarket.org.nz) | +64 382 8462 ext 2

**Website** [www.playmarket.org.nz](http://www.playmarket.org.nz)

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# THE LAST WORD

*Medicine Makers & Aroha Alchemists. Making Aroha an All-Encompassing Climate for Live Performance-Making in Aotearoa by Cat Ruka.*

In case you didn't know,

The prevalence of indigenous women in our industry is here to stay.

We will devour every last atom of leadership space

We will take first dibs on the microphone (for we are here in the country of *our* ancestors)

We will write our aunties into the starring roles of our stories

We will look out for each other, an impenetrable coven

We will give the final budget sign-off

*and without an ounce of guilt, or sheepish glance to the floor,*

We will take every reparation owed,

We will happily thieve every award,

And every accolade.

And just like our nans taught us, we will do it all with aroha.

When we moved house recently, I came across a box of old journals from my early days at uni. Swollen with ink and dripping with a dark and heaving rage toward my Karen educators and the racist systems that pervaded our industry at that time, these journals were a reminder of how far we've come in our racial politics in the 20 years since then. For you may have noticed there's been an uprising in the sector, and even the nay-sayers are admitting...

That indigenous women are the intervention needed for the arts of tomorrow.

Within contemporary performance making in Aotearoa, the term innovation has for a long time been heralded as perhaps the most crucial

objective to aspire to. It permeates our learning institutions, our industry infrastructures, the strategic plans of arts companies, our funding bodies, our stages, and the practices of the artists we've been told to look to. And like anything, if you chant something repetitively enough it becomes god-like.

If we were to peel back the layers on innovation though, we wouldn't have to get too deep before realising that as a concept, it really can't be untied from some other, pretty grotesque concepts also. Things like colonisation, competition, individualism, neoliberalism, and racial superiority, just to name a few. Who here has been labelled a "ground-breaking" artist and thought they'd died and gone to heaven?





Or perhaps a programmer has claimed they ‘discovered’ you as the next best shiny-thing? Heck if this ain’t high key Captain Cook-esque language I don’t know what is.

In a world that is totally bloated with ideas, turbo-charged to the max on ‘inspo’ and weighted beyond repair with stuff that has been innovated, is innovation still an urgent priority? Or is it perhaps, cock-blocking our capacity to grasp the paradigm switch up that’s needed.

In case you didn’t know, the prevalence of indigenous women in our industry is here to stay. And those oceanic sisters now tasked with moving our industry into the next phase aren’t out here trying to ‘discover’ what that next phase is. In fact we are saying ENOUGH to visions (we have seen too many post-it notes die slow deaths at visioning workshops). We are saying ENOUGH to big and bold directions that will apparently solve our industry’s problems and push us into the new frontier.

Instead we are welcoming a phase of radical grounding, of simple and slow relationship-building, of maintaining and treasuring what already exists, of gifting and giving, of aroha.

Ever since I was a child I have lived my life under the spell of live performance. It’s overwhelming for me at times how much I crave it and think about it. In hard times it’s been my medicine

and my angel, and in perusing this annual you will see that I’m not alone in this. For many women of colour the medicinal aspect of performance – the part that heals people and opens doors to our transformation – is the part we are often drawn to. It’s the part that drives us, it’s the part that gives us purpose.

In case you didn’t know, the prevalence of indigenous women in our industry is here to stay. For centuries our tūpuna have been teaching us the kind of guardianship that will be needed for our times. And that guardianship is the practice of making aroha an all-encompassing climate. We will usher our people into a warm where whereby aroha is not only prioritised, but is the woven mat laid under us. The process that falls out of that setup – the part where artmaking is enabled and stories for our stages are written – will be completely trusted as emergent unfoldings.

And industry racism has fueled us. It has given us a quiet and important little rage, a darkness and a distrust, an edge. We are taking those textures of injustice and spinning them into the worlds we want for our teina. We are clearing pathways and leaving behind the flourishing gardens we never had.

ABOVE: *Te Whare Kapua* by Miriama McDowell, Massive Company, Māngere Arts Centre. Image: Andi Crown Photography.

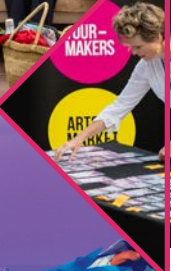
# PANNZ

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'It is not the literal past, the "facts" of history, that shape us, but images of the past embodied in language,' wrote Brian Friel (1929–2015). Indeed, there is no other literary text that embodies the complex relationship between language, identity, and power more directly than his play *Translations*, set in 1833. There is, however, another text that does: the founding document of Aotearoa, The Treaty of Waitangi, signed in 1840.

'It is thus fitting that the story told in such a smart and smarting way by the great Irish playwright can now be read in te reo Māori. Hēmi Kelly, one of this country's foremost translators, and Peter Ryan, the first Ambassador of Ireland to Aotearoa, deserve our whakawhetai and our whakamihi for guiding the waka of multilingual and multicultural understanding from the Atlantic to the Pacific.'

—Marco Sonzogni, New Zealand Centre for Literary Translation, Te Herenga Waka

## Ngā Whakamāoritanga

Nā **Brian Friel**, nā **Hēmi Kelly** i whakamāori  
August, \$30

# PĀRE

## NGĀ WHAKAMĀORITANGA

NĀ BRIAN FRIEL    NĀ HEMI KELLY I WHAKAMĀORI

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