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# ARTIST AS CHANGE AGENT

ISSUE *No* 59

*"Contradiction is the clearest way to truth."* Patti Smith

As the writers acknowledge across these pages, we are in the midst of crisis in the arts.

It is always a truth but never more than in crisis: stories matter. What we say and how we say it matters.

These pages tell stories of intrepid artists fighting the good fight. Their advocacy isn't always aggressive. With some, it's a quiet and insistent nudge.

These changemakers have forged new ground: creating a new home for Māori theatre, giving the middle finger to misogyny, advocating for inclusion, holding their community and championing local stories, questioning the relationship between form and content, and considering new ways to tell existing stories. At the centre of it all is a passionate essay from Kerryn Palmer about the challenges currently faced by our Performing Arts and Young People sector.

Not one to whinge from the sidelines, Kerryn advocates for achievable systemic change.

From within the turbulence, these artists seem determined to face the world with positivity. This can be experienced perhaps most vividly in Marianne Infante's Last Word, and with David Geary's conversation with Centrepunkt Theatre rangatira Alison Quigan and Kate Louise Elliott. Absolutely frickin' glorious.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the creation of this year's annual, for sharing your take on theatremaking. In particular, I want to acknowledge Salesi Le'ota, my predecessor at Playmarket, who for over ten years shepherded the annual to publication with rigour, patience, wicked humour and fine attention to detail. The Oxford comma misses you greatly.

**Shane Boshier**



**PLAYMARKET ANNUAL**

THE MAGAZINE OF THE AOTEAROA  
PLAY AND PLAYWRIGHT

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COVER IMAGE: Talia Pua in *Heart Go... BOOM!* by Massive Theatre Company, Basement Theatre. Image: Andi Crown Photography.

PREVIOUS PAGE: Audience at the 2023 Playmarket Accolades, Hannah Playhouse. Image: Philip Merry.



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*Hide the Dog* by Nathan Maynard and Jamie McCaskill, Performing Lines, Cremorne Theatre, Brisbane, Australia. Image: Brisbane Festival.

*Chick Habit* by Nuanzhi Zheng, Punctum Productions, Basement Theatre. Image: David St George.

*Whakapaupakihi* by Ani-Piki Tuari, Tatana Tuari, Tame-Hoake Tuari and Hamiora Tuari, Development season, Te Tairāwhiti Arts Festival, Gisborne War Memorial Theatre. Image: Erica Sinclair.

*An Almighty Yes* by Emma Lange, Basement Theatre.

*Frangipani Perfume* by Makerita Urale, Centrepoint Theatre. Image: Sam Millen Photography.

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# NEW WRITING FROM AOTEAROA

## Yes Yes Yes

By Eleanor Bishop and Karin McCracken

Originally commissioned by Auckland Live  
and produced by Zanetti Productions

## Things That Matter

By Gary Henderson

Based on the memoir by David Galler

World premiere commissioned by  
Auckland Theatre Company

## Witi's Wāhine

By Nancy Brunning

A collaboration with Hāpai Productions

## Future-tense

Curated by Keagan Carr Fransch featuring  
writing by Alex de Vries, Shelby Kua,  
Te Huamanuka Luiten-Apirana,  
Tuakoi Ohia, Vira Paky and Zane Wood

## Basmati Bitch

By Ankita Singh

A collaboration with SquareSums&Co  
and Oriental Maidens

World premiere commissioned  
by Auckland Theatre Company



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Basmati Bitch, 2023  
Photo by: Mark Leedom

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# Why I wrote the play I wrote

RUTENE SPOONER

*on Be Like Billy?*

I often find myself clumsily falling into the right place at the right time – often coerced by curiosity, mischief and the age-old philosophy: fake it till you make it.

In 2017, the idea for this show came out of a candid conversation in a theatre green room. I was a junior in the theatre world at the time, working predominantly in musical theatre. But like any ‘honest’ young actor, I had a side hustle in corporate entertainment – Billy T impersonations to be exact, and for a few years, being like Billy paid the bills. Six months after revealing my side hustle, The Court Theatre – the place I ‘emerged’ as an actor – approached me about the idea and before I knew it, I was commissioned to write *Be Like Billy?*

It’s important for me to note that I don’t whakapapa to Billy T. I never met him; I never saw him live-and-in-person either. Billy sadly passed away a couple years before I was born, so like many others, and being from the ‘VHS, OHP and floppy disk’ generation, I met Billy through the chatterbox. Some may say that I have a secondhand account of the legend that is Billy T.

My daughter’s generation will likely never know a VHS tape, and perhaps their

knowledge of Māori showband entertainers will live in the faint conversations of their nannies and koros.

I found Billy’s work intriguing – the fact that there was this brown fella who dominated the entertainment world, who looked and sounded like me and the people in my world.

At the time I was commissioned, I had written and devised a handful of bilingual Māori children’s musicals, but I was still a junior artist. I would never do the legend any justice if I tried to fake this till I made it. I had little experience in cabaret and almost no experience telling a story solo.

So after a clunky start, and with Billy’s daughter’s blessing, I set a plan... a series of milestones. In five years’ time, I was going to finish this show, but I was going to write two others prior.

In 2017, I wrote my first show called *Super Hugh-Man*; a Māori boy’s musical about his Hollywood hero – Hugh Jackman. This was going to be my *Be Like Billy?* template. I fumbled through a Basement Theatre application, rallied a team of dedicated creatives who knew nothing about me and timidly blurted out to Jennifer Ward-Lealand,



“Would you help me make this show?”. I needed to learn the basics of solo theatre and she was just the weapon to do that. *Super Hugh-Man* became the amalgamation of my two worlds; my classical music theatre world and my foundation in te ao haka. We premiered it at my first cabaret festival and it’s since toured festivals throughout the country and the UK.

Like any good writer, I procrastinated, did stints overseas and tinkered on my commission at a snail’s pace. I came home, my partner and I then had our daughter, and all of a sudden, my purpose became more direct. I knew that living away from our Tūrangawaewae, the home in which I raised my child needed to fully embrace the ideologies you would find at the pā. Activating this became my core responsibility.

During *Super Hugh-Man*, I joined the Modern Māori Quartet, touring internationally. I had joined a show band and unintentionally echoed Billy T’s career path. Whilst overseas I experienced every cabaret possible (particularly in the UK) and a new question emerged – us devisors do love a provocation... I wanted to know what makes

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## FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT

our cabaret contemporary and unique to Aotearoa, in particular: What is Māori cabaret and what does it look like today?

In 2020, I fell into another conversation with the Auckland Live Cabaret Season team. They wanted to commission me to write a cabaret. I rallied some of my MMQ brothers – including director and collaborator Matariki Whatarau – and we set out to create an all-original Māori cabaret. I harvested the concepts of theatrical singing-storytelling and sewed them into Māori constructs like whaikōrero to inform our structure.

We made *Thoroughly Modern Māui* – an affirmation for us to stand in the inherited mana from our ancestors, a reminder that the kōrero tuku iho can inform the way we navigate contemporary challenges. This is not a new concept, but we retold this affirmation as entertainment, using my own story as a vessel.

ABOVE: *Be Like Billy?* by Rutene Spooner, The Court Theatre. Image: The Court Theatre.

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## SOMETHING ROTTEN!

*"...the entire cast, from the leads to the ensemble, are of the highest standard and it's not fair to single any one of them out. They sang, danced and acted so well, you could easily have been sitting in a Broadway theatre rather than the Christchurch temporary home for The Court Theatre."*

- Neil Brewer, Broadway World.



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Fast forward to 2023 and at this point, my track record of theatremaking may have been flagged as narcissistic. Solo shows, my voice, my perspective. If audiences were over it, they still had one more offering to stomach. I was pushing my deadline and *Be Like Billy?* was still just a seedling.

Five years on, I'm watching cartoons with my daughter and I hear, with the most clarity, "Fun doesn't always mean 'making fun of'." I realised that the reason why I stopped impersonating Billy T would be the very kaupapa for my show about Billy T.

Really? After five years, it was a cartoon that set the kaupapa for the show. It was always going to be a celebration of Māori showmanship, but now it was to evoke questions about the future of Māori entertainment, to have fun without being made fun of.

But here we are: 2024. We have a show. Armed with a team handpicked with

## STAND IN THE INHERITED MANA FROM OUR ANCESTORS

precision, led by my creative counterpart and staunch ally Holly Chappell-Eason, we're about to embark on a national tour of *Be Like Billy?*

My uncle once said that Māori theatre is that which focuses on whakapapa and funnily, this show speaks of my whakapapa in the entertainment world. This journey has taught me what kind of performer I am, what kaupapa I deem important, what I want to say to the world and how loud I want to say it.

I will continue to call on my ancestors and their teachings, pull the resources from the Pākehā world, but it's clearer now more than ever that I am a storyteller... who moonlights as a writer.

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# TĀMAKI MAKĀURAU 2023

BY MATTHEW KEREAMA

As an artist and theatremaker in Tāmaki Makaurau, 2023 was a whirlwind as we were challenged and reshaped in more ways than one. For better or worse, the past three years have forged theatremakers who demonstrate resilience, resourcefulness and bravery within their work. I feel extremely lucky to have seen so much theatre last year, especially in comparison to previous years and the current socioeconomic climate. It brought me so much joy to see collectives, theatres and friends working and thriving. There were multiple moments for me of revelation and awe.

The ever-changing landscape still proved difficult for many practitioners and theatre companies. Silo Theatre made the tough decision to cancel their 2023 season, in lieu of environmental realities and the artistic desires of the company. During this time, they turned to developing new works with New Zealand artists. This choice sparked many conversations and debates within our community, but one thing was clear: we really felt the vacuum they left behind. They returned in November, presenting *Live Live Cinema: Night of the Living Dead*.

Extreme weather events in February forced the cancellation or postponement of Laneway, some Auckland Pride events and most of F.O.L.A. That first night, I was shovelling water out of Auckland Theatre Company's wardrobe as plans were being made to find alternative rehearsal space for *The Heartbreak Choir*. Later, the company was challenged by the untimely loss of a dress rehearsal when the second lot of storms came through.

2023 still offered opportunities to build, revitalise and celebrate spaces that back

artists and new work. At the beginning of the year, Te Pou Theatre opened their new whare, a space built around the heart of its whanaungatanga, holding both rehearsal studios and a 250-seat auditorium. Basement Theatre celebrated its fifteenth year with a birthday blowout in November, and after ten years, Snort wrapped with ten back-to-back shows in an all-day improv marathon extravaganza.

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## THERE WERE MULTIPLE MOMENTS FOR ME OF REVELATION AND AWE

Many artists also saw their works return. ATC's production of *Things That Matter* by Gary Henderson found itself back on the ASB Waterfront stage. Based on the memoir by Dr David Galler, the piece had more relevance two years after its intended debut. *Witi's Wāhine* by Nancy Brunning, postponed in 2022, was given the full mainstage treatment in a co-production with Hāpai Productions. The company also premiered Ankita Singh's *Basmati Bitch*, an action-packed piece which threw its cast into tense and unbridled fight scenes that lived inside the projected designs of Ant Sang.

With the world open and fully accessible again, it was beautiful to see so many makers return to touring, both regionally and internationally. Eleanor Bishop and Karin McCracken (EBKM) had two impactful productions in circulation with *Yes Yes Yes* returning in Auckland before travelling to Edinburgh, Australia and Serbia;





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## THEY MADE ME GIGGLE AND RUMINATE ON THE RELEVANT AND PERSONAL

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP

LEFT: *Waiting* by Shadon Meredith, Sos and Sha Creative, Q Theatre. Image: Andi Crown Photography.

*Heartbreak Hotel* by Karin McCracken, EBKM, Q Theatre. Image: Andi Crown Photography.

*Basmati Bitch* by Ankita Singh, Auckland Theatre Company, Square Sums and Co, Oriental Maidens, Q Theatre. Image: Abhi Chinniah.

*Kōpū* by Tuakoi Ohia, Te Rehia Theatre, Te Pou Theatre. Image: Bob Scott Photography.

*Live Live Cinema: Night of the Living Dead* created by Leon Radojkovic, Silo Theatre, Hollywood Cinema. Image: Andi Crown Photography.

*Boom Shankar* by Aman Bajaj and Bala Murali Shingade, Agaram Productions, Q Theatre. Image: Amanda Billing.

*I Want to Be Happy* by Carl Bland, Nightsong, Herald Theatre. Image: Andi Crown Photography.

*Dirty Work* by Jacob Rajan and Justin Lewis, Indian Ink Theatre Company. Image: John McDermott.

PREVIOUS PAGE: *Actor//Android* by Louise Jiang, Square Sums and Co, Basement Theatre. Image: Julie Zhu.

the award-winning duo brought their latest work *Heartbreak Hotel* to Q Theatre in November. Two other new works built a following as they toured the country: Nightsong's production of *I Want to Be Happy* by Carl Bland and Indian Ink's new production *Dirty Work*.

The many conversations that an election year provokes spread into and around our sector. Tusiata Avia's *The Savage Coloniser Show* gained national attention as her writing was branded as "the definition of racism" by Act party leader David Seymour. *Kōpū* by Tuakoi Ohia also reflected the political change our country is going through when it responded to then National leader Judith Collins' criticism of women not being able to speak on the marae. Both works shared similar themes of wāhinetanga and quickly became must-see theatre as they toured the country. *Kōpū* continues to resonate with the recent words of Kiingi Tūheitia as he said, "The best protest we can do now is: be Māori. Be who we are, live our values, speak our reo, care for our mokopuna, our awa, our maunga, just be Māori."

Although at times it felt like the world was spiralling, I found myself returning to the theatre of Tāmaki to seek shelter from the storms. I was met with joyful works by Toi Whakaari alumni such as *Actor//Android* by Louise Jiang, *CLAS103: Greet Mythology* by Vincent Andrew-Scammell and *She's Crowning* by Murdoch Keane and Peter Burman. Additionally, productions like Esaú Mora's *Cholo Fugue*, Mx. Well's *Gender Marxist* and Joni Nelson, Sam Phillips and Nathan Joe's *Code and Chaos* made me giggle and ruminate on the relevant and personal.

2023 was a year in which the brutal war in Eastern Europe continued and mass genocide in the Middle East boiled over, opening the eyes of the Western world. Likewise, tensions continually built here at home, uniting Māori to face a government that continues to question our Tino Rangatiratanga. Although it is undeniable that these large events of 2023 will shape us as artists in the coming years, I am conscious that to speak to these shifts and changes now would be naïve. Their impact on the writers of tomorrow has only just begun.

*RENÉE*

*Ngāti Kahungunu*

*ONZM*

*1929-2023*



# A LESBIAN FEMINIST WITH WORKING-CLASS IDEALS

*Sunny Amey remembers Renée.*

*I can see it all so clearly. It's such a good plan. Force all the men off to the camps, give them a few shillings for three out of four weeks. But what about the women, Sir?*

*The wives and mothers? Oh, they'll be fine, they can take in a bit of washing, cut a pile of wood, stand in the queues ... What the hell are we supposed to do, Ted? See our kids starve? Or do we grovel? Not much of a choice is it? ... How is it some people get their washing and ironing done and other people have to do it?*

*Iris, Wednesday to Come*

Renée was a remarkable and courageous woman, who survived many things.

Her father took his own life during the Depression in the 1930s when she was just four years old. She had to finish her formal education at primary school when she was 12 years old. She worked at the woollen mills at Pandora Point, Napier, which helped to raise the money for her siblings to go to school.

Her mother Rose was a very strict and meticulous housekeeper. She brought Renée up to be the same, and to have perfect manners.

The moment you entered her neat little house next door to Ngā Purapura and opposite Te Wananga o Raukawa in Ōtaki, the kettle went on. The best china cups came out and usually freshly baked scones or pikelets. Her finest linen napkins were always offered with the home baking.

Renée did not indulge in small talk and the conversation inevitably focused on the latest political outrage or some local issue that had got her ire.

For years she kept up a weekly blog, 'Wednesday Busk', which those of us who were her audience treasured. Whimsical, philosophical, outraged, poetical, and always entertaining, Renée shared with us whatever was uppermost in her mind that week.

When Renée shifted to Ōtaki from Wellington, she wasted no time in planting a garden – roses, fruit trees, a veggie garden, and she delighted in sharing the bounty. Homemaking was important to her, and once set up, she could concentrate on her writing. She once said to us "I will write until I can do it no longer", and that is exactly what she did. Even failing eyesight did not deter her.

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## I WILL WRITE UNTIL I CAN DO IT NO LONGER

She got a large monitor and a huge keyboard, and on she went, turning very successfully to crime fiction in her last years and appearing at numerous literary festivals where she was always a hit. She received the Sir Kingi Ihaka Award, recognising lifetime contribution, at Creative New Zealand's 2013 Te Waka Toi Awards; the Playmarket Award in 2017; and the Prime Minister's Award for Literary Achievement in 2018. All accolades so well deserved.

All her life Renée was an inveterate reader, so it was no surprise to see her set up a little Lilliput library at her front gate in Ōtaki. It became a busy hub of books being swapped and shared. Her memoir writing courses were renowned, taught both at Whitireia and later in Ōtaki. She enabled so many people to be able to record their life stories, but she was also a hard taskmaster. You were expected to write so many pages a week – no exceptions! (Oh, and she hated exclamation marks and misplaced commas).

I first met Renée in the mid 1970s at Theatre Corporate where she was employed as the

much-valued cleaner by the founding director, Raymond Hawthorne. Cleaning toilets was her speciality.

At the age of 50, she started to write plays and novels, foreshadowing the development of feminist theatre in this country. *Wednesday to Come*, her best-known play, was first performed by Downstage at the Hannah Playhouse in August 1984, directed by George Webby. It is now published in a trilogy of plays that included *Pass It On* and *Jeannie Once*. *Wednesday to Come* continues to be a seminal New Zealand play, performed by amateur and professional theatre companies and school students throughout Aotearoa.

Renée wrote eight novels, poems and more than 20 plays, as well as an excellent memoir *These Two Hands*. A warm and generous person, she will always be with us in spirit.

We loved her dearly.

Moe mai rā e hoa.

PREVIOUS PAGE: Renée at her Ōtaki home, 2022. Image: Kevin Stent, Stuff.

BELOW: *Wednesday to Come* by Renée, Theatre Corporate, 1984. Image: Justine Lord.



# A RECIPE FOR A REGIONAL THEATRE

*Emboldened punters and provocative programming in the early days of Centrepoint Theatre, with Murray Lynch.*

**In 2024, Centrepoint Theatre celebrates five decades of existence – the only remaining professional theatre house in regional Aotearoa. In the early years of his career, Murray Lynch spent eight heady years there, advancing from Stage Manager to Artistic Director. This is his take on the beginning.**

In 1970, there was little professional theatre in Aotearoa. That began to change when professional theatres in Wellington and Auckland were joined by companies in Whanganui, Christchurch, Tauranga and Dunedin. In 1973, a foolhardy group of locals comprising Brian and Faye Flegg, John Quince, Bill Borlase, and Don Hampton and his wife Diane, created a new company in Palmerston North. Centrepoint Theatre began in September of that year in a former music venue in George Street, with three performances of Pat Evison's *An Evening with Katherine Mansfield*. The building was opened for lunches and restaurant fare to raise money and then, in January 1974, a programme of plays was launched with a three-course dinner that was catered at \$1.00 a head. Punters paid the princely sum of \$4.50 for the dinner and a show. Utilising a loophole in the liquor laws, the theatre offered wine and beer with dinner to members. However, it wasn't long before a legitimate licence was granted.

Centrepoint initially established itself with the dinner-before-the-show model of Downstage, formed ten years earlier. Eating a sophisticated meal was a novel experience when there were so few dining options in the town. For the season of *Private Lives*, diners enjoyed a menu of fondue Neuchatel style with French bread, salad, crumbed prawns, baked potatoes, and a dessert of strawberry torte followed by coffee and cream. Drinking and smoking were also definite attractions. Drunkenness would regularly embolden the punters out for a good night. Excellent when a raucous comedy was on offer, not so much fun when the drama onstage was overtaken by that in the auditorium. One night a full house comprising local Teacher's College staff partook of the cider available for the Music Hall production so avidly that the performers could have been reciting the communist manifesto and no one in the audience would have known the difference. After the glorious and multi-capable caterer Dianne Thorstenson left, there were sometimes some not so appropriate shenanigans in the kitchen from less-sober cooks. A feature until 1986, the dinner component was magnificently assisted by a huge roster of volunteers who eagerly awaited their chance to serve the meals and then see the next show.



In the first year, the small group of founders received multiple resignations from Don Hampton, the inaugural Artistic Director. Paul Minifie, who was onstage in the production of *The Real Inspector Hound* at the time, was asked if he would replace Don. Paul agreed and at age 27, he was thrust into developing a stable and ongoing theatre company. Paul ran Centrepoint with magnificent rigour, developing an excellent culture in the building.

The number-eight-wire outlook fashioned theatre lights out of catering-size juice cans with added domestic light bulbs and fittings. The stage was the same height as the tables and high enough that you could almost touch the ceiling of the venue. One night in a blackout after performing a scene in *The Lady with the Lapdog*, Paul Minifie walked off the stage onto a table in the front row. There were around 94 seats in total – 64 were arranged around dining tables and 30 on the outskirts came at a cost of \$2.50 for coffee and the show. However, the theatre was very flexible and staged in the round and traverse formats regularly. One of these productions was Robert Lord's *Meeting Place* which I directed, and which drew 14% houses! Fortunately, later productions of locally written plays, including those from the early career of Roger Hall, packed the venue out.

The programming was bold from the outset with Christopher Hampton's sensational

*The Philanthropist* fairly fresh from the West End, and many plays that Artistic Director Paul Minifie discovered while they were still running in smaller venues in London. Plays such as Ted Whitehead's *Old Flames*, Robert Patrick's *Kennedy's Children* and Peter Gill's *Small Change* were far from light fare. A 1975 production of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* was approved by the playwright's agent but just as it was due to open a withdrawal letter arrived, saying the author didn't want the play staged in a dinner theatre. Paul shoved the letter in a drawer and the show went ahead.

There was a full-time cohort of (usually seven) actors employed on annual contract and many lunchtime (with a bowl of soup on offer) and late-night shows were staged. Centrepoint Two ran a programme of children's and outreach classes held in a separate building upstairs on Palmerston North's Broadway. When the theatre had outgrown its venue, which was coincidentally scheduled to be demolished, a fundraising programme was set up and the move to the current premises was undertaken.

By the time the new venue was opened, there was a staff of 20 including the actors and two kitchen staff working at the theatre. Funding from the Arts Council had grown exponentially over those early years, and fulfilled a promise to ensure the country had a comprehensive regional theatre sector.

# LOCAL HEROES

*Alison Quigan and Kate Louise Elliott  
in conversation with David Geary.*





Alison Quigan and Kate Louise Elliott – their names are synonymous with Centrepoint Theatre. Between them, they've spent over 35 years leading the company, and at least another six performing there. As the theatre hurtled towards its fiftieth birthday celebrations, David Geary connected with them to kōrero. Together, they give voice to Centrepoint's rich history of championing local.

**David Geary:** Congrats on you both playing a huge part in Centrepoint making the half-century. How can the theatre push on to a full 100?

**Kate Louise Elliott:** Have your plan, know why you are here, who you are here for, and answer to them. Be honest when you fuck up, listen, and be prepared to be constantly fighting.

**DG:** Alison, when you kicked off as AD in 1986, what was your initial vision?

**Alison Quigan:** Just to keep the doors open. I'd done some directing but had not much idea how to run and programme a theatre. Thought I'd last a year before the board realised how unprepared I was and fired me.

**KLE:** Same.

**AQ:** I got lucky the first couple of years with Roger Hall's *The Share Club* making a big

impact and then *Ladies' Night* took off like a rocket. But it took a while to realise what I really liked.

In the early nineties we formed a policy to be an asset to the city. We knew the Council, University and places like Glaxo [a food and pharmaceuticals manufacturer] used the existence of a professional theatre as a recruitment tool. We needed to jump on that and become something that the city would value.

**KLE:** Got to make yourself a vital part of the community.

**AQ:** In 1992, Creative New Zealand made all recurrently funded organisations produce a Strategic Plan. I was shattered, working seven days, directing, acting, writing reports, attending board meetings, doing sponsorship and advocacy. Luckily we had a new Marketing Manager, Andrew Stanbury, fresh out of uni with a marketing degree. Flash! He made me unpack what I was doing. And we had Bobbie O'Fee – brilliant Business Manager – that was another essential.

**KLE:** Absolutely.

**DG:** Kate, you share an office with your Business Manager, Martin Carr, and it's a converted storage cupboard.

**KLE:** We're working on that.



PREVIOUS PAGE: Diners at Centrepoint Theatre's restaurant, during the production of *Old Flames* by Ted Whitehead, 1977.

*Meeting Place* by Robert Lord, Centrepoint Theatre, 1976. Image: Barry Woods Studio.

FAR LEFT: *Ladies' Night* by Anthony McCarten and Stephen Sinclair, Centrepoint Theatre, 1988.

LEFT: *The School Ball* by Alison Quigan, Centrepoint Theatre, 2003.



**AQ:** Working with Andrew, Bobbie and Bruce Graham [designer, production manager and set builder], we found a whiteboard and unpacked our past programmes and budgets. The process led by Andrew taught me to dream and work as a team. Between the four of us – money, marketing, logistics and art – we chose plays we believed in. After that first Strategic Plan, we looked forward to it every year. Our vision was to be the storytellers of the people of Palmerston North and surrounding regions.

**DG:** Alison, you were raised in the Manawatū, but started your career at Theatre Corporate. What made you come home?

**AQ:** I first came back in 1981-82 as an actor – devastated I had to take the job because I was young and funky in Auckland. I was the big city! But Murray Lynch, the AD, was great. He kept giving me extra plays to perform in and I got over myself. I came back the second time at the end of 1986 to run the show. By then I'd realised being born and bred in Palmy – part of the Murphias, the Irish connection – was a big plus. I had a young child and wrap around family support. Everything was five

minutes away. The locals were so supportive. I'd be writing about the Newbury Hall Dances and people would tell me: "I remember the beer crates in the pond and the too-tight undies!" and that'd go in the play. Or "Oh, I knew your father and your brother. God, they're characters!" And I'd put bits of them into *Boys at the Beach*. After I started writing plays, I gave speeches to increase interest in the coming season. I spoke to Probus, Rotary, Lunch Club, and University of the Third Age – for people over the age of 65.

**KLE:** That's essential outreach. I'm a guest speaker in the community all the time. I'll add you need a strong board. I ask them to hold me accountable because I don't always explain why I do what I do. Also, for building community, Simon Ferry started a youth theatre company that has evolved into monthly free workshops with industry professionals. During Covid, we started Sunday script sessions – an online scriptwriting course to keep people involved and hired professionals to run it. That's kept going. We run workshops too: prop making with Wētā Workshop, casting with Liz Mullane and Rachel Bullock, puppet making, SFX, stunt fighting. We see a gap, we fill it. Our motto is: from Impossible to I'm Possible.

ABOVE: *Two Guitars* by Jamie McCaskill, Centrepoint Theatre. Image: Ben Pryor Photography.

**DG:** You're in charge of bringing the money in. Where do you find it?

**KLE:** Local sponsors, local government, trusts, Mainland Trust, CNZ. I find the funding and Martin Carr, our BM, tells me how to spend it.

**DG:** You found one of your tutors here in Moxies Café?

**KLE:** Yes, talking about how much he loved theatre, and now he's running the Pasifika programme while being a full-time high school drama teacher. I like to connect people with performing arts, and I get a lot of support and advice from them. Like: "We want more drama!" So I give them *Prima Facie* and then a couple are like, "Yeah, nah, that's too much drama!" But, yes, we ask the audience what they want through surveys and get lots of feedback that way.

**AQ:** Everyone's got an opinion on everything.

**DG:** Means they care, right?

**KLE:** Yeah, they care a lot. But it's 100% on me to make things work. Sometimes it feels like the weight of the world is on your shoulders. We're always a couple of shows away from trouble. Sure, we've built up reserves, but we own a building that needs attention. Fantastic asset, but huge responsibility.

**DG:** So what's been your vision for Centrepoint, Kate?

**KLE:** First time was to be visible. Get the audience back and make sure everyone knew who we were, even if we weren't their cup of tea. Second time was to expand, secure it financially, and grow the outreach. We're in high schools, retirement villages, businesses, events, anywhere that needs us or doesn't know that they need us yet. And if we take a risk, it can't close us down. I take the small wins, but my team deserve to celebrate every day. I'm proud we're still here to carry on Alison's legacy, so people come back and call it home.

**DG:** Alison, you kicked off your playwriting career at Centrepoint.

**AQ:** Andrew found that our biggest box office results were from New Zealand plays.

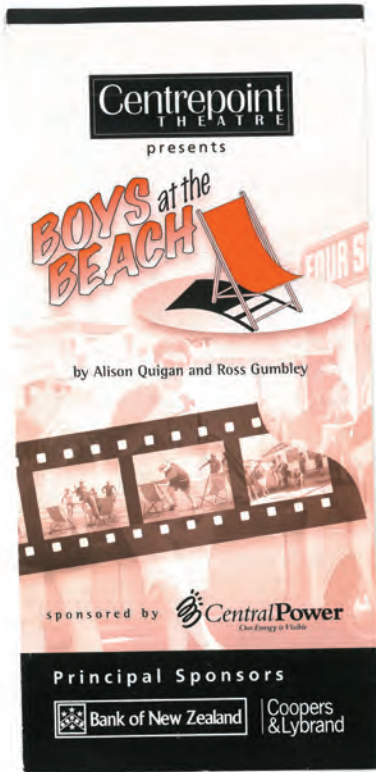


Everything by Roger Hall, *Ladies' Night*, *Foreskin's Lament* and *Pack of Girls*. They were the point of difference from our competition – amateur and visiting shows, and the movies. No one else was telling our stories. In 1993, we produced our first completely New Zealand programme. But in 1994, we ran out of enough variety so thought: "Fuck it! We'll write our own! How hard can it be?" Hard. But we wrote a new play every year until I left. Eleven plays in ten years. Ross Gumbley and I wrote six, Lucy Schmidt and I wrote two, and I wrote three. We knew the audiences, and we'd seen the likes of how in *Pack of Girls* the actors packed down a scrum with the delighted audience cast as front row. We wanted more of that.

**DG:** Crouch – Touch – Community Engagement!

**AQ:** Also, I'd been to London with Simon Bennett, repping New Zealand, and we saw some highfalutin English play with Felicity Kendal that was sphincters-tight. We met Nick Hornby [*High Fidelity*, *About a Boy*] who asked: "Why aren't you telling your own stories?" Lucy and Ross Gumbley were great to work with. Ross brought the joy of improv to Centrepoint and that led to the success of *Scared Scriptless*.

ABOVE: *Mum's Choir* by Alison Quigan, Centrepoint Theatre, 2004. Image: Brendan Lodge.



**KLE:** Centrepoint still runs theatresports in schools, improv for corporates and hosts SpontaneoUS on Friday nights.

**AQ:** 2003 was difficult. Three plays struggled. I ended up writing three plays in 12 months and they did 90% business each, while also directing five plays to get the finances back on track. May 2004 was the premiere of my very personal play, *Mum's Choir*. I had a great team and the wonderful Laughton Patrick. Opening night, the whole audience just went whoosh – standing ovation. I remember thinking I'd achieved everything I wanted. I had an offer from *Shortland Street*, so I knew a chapter in my life had ended and another door had opened.

**DG:** Kate, you're about to launch your own first play, *Last Song*, as the Christmas show.

**KLE:** Bit scary, but it's a story that's got to be told, based around the old China Inn – karaoke

central here for years. I believed I was the queen of karaoke there until Carrie Green (my show's director) was old enough to get into the pub, and then she took my crown. Lots of locals have stories from there – it was the last place open to party at night – and we'll try to tell some of them. We're making it with three professional actors and a bunch of super-talented locals.

**AQ:** That's what we did with our Shakespeares. You've got to innovate all the time when budgets are small.

**DG:** So, Kate, it's a comedy?

**KLE:** With a big heart. And I learnt all about that right here. Centrepoint is a great training ground.

**AQ:** Employed over 2500 actors and produced more New Zealand plays than any other theatre.

**KLE:** Who said that?

**AQ:** Wikipedia. The first production was *An Evening with Katherine Mansfield* starring Pat Evison.

**DG:** Clearly a place that embraces women of great character, especially ones like yourselves who specialise in innovation, inspiration, and doing the hard yards.

**AQ:** Yeah. I worked on *Shortland Street* for ten years – that felt easy by comparison. After that I went to MAC, Māngere Arts Centre, which was also all about using my skills to create community.

I initially had doubts about moving to Auckland. That I'd be seen as less than the city slickers – too regional, too fat, too old, past it. But I got work. Centrepoint hadn't held me back, it had given me a grounding in the range of work, the risks, the confidence to not only become a director, a writer, a producer, but also a better actor than I realised.

**DG:** So what about how the rest of the country feels about our beloved Palmy and Centrepoint?

**KLE:** Well, some still don't even know we exist.

**AQ:** But, after The Court Theatre, Centrepoint is the only theatre to hit the 50 year mark. Arts are trivialised, Palmerston North is trivialised, and so



are women. But between Kate and I, we have spent over 35 years running Centrepont.

**KLE:** And some think we just do 'silly comedies'.

**AQ:** Comedy is hard.

**KLE:** Takes a lot of skill to keep an audience laughing all night. Funny story, when Alison and I were up in Auckland doing *Calendar Girls*, the director told the other actors to watch how we leaned into the audience.

**AQ:** Learnt all about that at Centrepont.

**KLE:** I've performed to the most theatre savvy audiences here in Palmy. They see a lot of shows of varying styles as there are four theatres altogether, loads of touring shows, and Act Three Productions are brilliant. Also, we do a lot more than just mainstage shows. It's an amazing training ground not just for actors but techs, associates, ADs, producers. I have people from larger theatres call me to find out if this candidate in front of them is 'one of mine', and that's enough to get them hired. And then they end up making more money than me!

**AQ:** It's like off-Broadway – a place of safety. Doesn't mean standards are lower. The audience is closer and mistakes can't be covered up.

**DG:** Funny stories?

**KLE:** Too many. But a comment from an audience member has stayed with me after

they were watching one of our 'silly New Zealand comedies'. A woman made a beeline for me in the foyer after a show. She looked upset, desperate, crying. She said to me, "We are sheep farmers from Dannevirke, we lost our daughter in a tragic accident five years ago and my husband hasn't smiled since. He was rolling in his seat laughing out loud in that show. I think you just saved our marriage." Probably sounds a bit wanky but it's a true story.

**AQ:** That's gold. Success to me is reaching an audience, sharing a story and sometimes just giving them two hours of peace. We build communities. We show the audience they're not alone.

**DG:** Cheers to that.

Centrepont has just launched a fundraising campaign to renovate the theatre, making the building fit-for-purpose for the next 50 years. Check out [centrepont.co.nz/rebuild](http://centrepont.co.nz/rebuild) for more details and to find out how you can contribute.

LEFT: Programme for *Boys at the Beach* by Alison Quigan and Ross Gumbley, Centrepont Theatre, 1997.

ABOVE: *The Opening Night Before Christmas* by Tom Sainsbury and Chris Parker, Centrepont Theatre, 2022. Image: Sam Millen Photography.

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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: *Lessons Learned from Hannibal Lecter* by Angela Pope, Dunedin Fringe Festival, New Athenaeum Theatre. Image: Blake Armstrong. *Wahine Mātātoa* by Cindy Diver, Otepoti Theatre Lab Reading Series. Image: Kerry Hodge Photography. *Wonderful* by Richard Huber, Sahara Breeze Productions. Image: Matilda Macandrew.



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# ŌTEPOTI 2023

BY H-J KILKELLY

It's impossible to reflect on 2023 without acknowledging the ongoing obstacles to being a theatre artist in the South. Resources are increasingly squeezed locally. We are yet again a poor cousin in national funding announcements. The attrition rate of practitioners continues. To live here and 'work in the arts' means to take more work outside the region. And then there's the ongoing conversation around appropriately sized, healthy and safe venues – or rather the lack thereof.

Arts spaces are crucial for our community. At Prospect Park, we faced the stark decision of letting our precious office and rehearsal space go. The Dunedin Arts Festival also gave up their street front office and the Fringe Festival's new digs were hidden by scaffolding for most of the year, which, yes, all feels like a metaphor for artist visibility.

Despite this, Ōtepoti's creatives kept making, showcasing and, closest to my heart, developing new work.

Our Māori theatre scene went from strength to strength. *The World's First Lovers* by Jessica Latton (Kāi Tahu, Waitawa) continued its development here before touring to the prestigious Kia Mau Festival, a huge pop of visibility. Ōtepoti Theatre Lab celebrated our fifth year and had the privilege of developing new works from locally based Māori writers Alex Martyn (Tūwharetoa) and Cindy Diver (Kāi Tahu) alongside newcomer to the theatre writing scene, Patty Klinpibul (Thailand). Diver's *Wāhine Mātātoa* has, excitingly, attracted further funding through 2024.

The Dunedin Fringe Festival, under a new co-leadership team in 2023, brought us Marty Roberts' *Dark Radio*, which immersed

audiences in chaos and subterfuge, whereas *Flow* by the increasingly prolific local company Late Bloomers offered a gentle stream-of-consciousness on grieving. Notably, both these shows also had seasons outside of Ōtepoti in 2023, highlighting the value of the Fringe ecosystem, and the national appeal of the talent we have here in Ōtepoti.

dollhouse presented *Stupid F\*\*\*ing Bird*, and *The Many Deaths of Jeff Goldblum* by local writer Meg Perry. The latter and fellow Fringe show *Lessons Learned from Hannibal Lecter* both came through Ōtepoti Theatre Lab in previous years and it was an absolute thrill to see both shows further developed, extended and produced for full premiere.

The title for busiest woman in Ōtepoti goes to Kim Morgan, part of the team offering the now annual Summer Shakespeare (in 2023, *Magic in the Air*, co-directed alongside Lisa Warrington and Jessica Latton), director and producer of the musical *Spring Awakening*, director for Opera Otago's *An Incomplete Education*, and a helping hand in many other shows. SBZ were also prolific makers, with a strong focus on Chekhov (featuring aerials even!), but also producing *Out at Sea*, *The John Show* and a touring production of Richard Huber's *Wonderful*.

I could go on, but regional space, as always, is an issue. My wero for these very pages is to expand the regional coverage so that it is equivalent to the 'main' centres of Auckland and Wellington. For that to happen though, let's issue a wider wero to our funders, our councils, our peak agencies, to assist us to increase the production of work in the regions.



# RESEMBLANCE TO EXISTING TEXTS IS NOT COINCIDENTAL

*Sam Brooks on the craft of making new art from old.*

**At its core, theatre is the art of adaptation. Whenever a script is put onto stage, it is an adaptation of the playwright's words, translating and interpreting the writer's intentions through performance, design and production.**

**But how does a writer translate the words, images and ideas of another piece of work to be performed on the stage? Sam Brooks talked to seven writers and directors who have worked on several adaptations between them about their process, what is important for them to keep true to, and the hurdles to adapt stories to their chosen medium.**

“It's important to me that the play is a new work of art and does things that only theatre can do. It must not be the book acted out on stage, but it must clearly articulate the book's truths,” says playwright Gary Henderson.

In an article for *The Listener*, he wrote that he had always been sceptical about adaptations. “Why would anyone want to spend their precious, limited creative life reproducing someone else's work instead of bringing new art into the world? Not my idea of a good time – until I was invited to examine a PhD about adaptation. During the viva voce, the oral part of the examination, I'd thrown my question at the candidate. Why not create a new work of art? Their simple response – ‘But it *would* be a new work of art.’ I've carried that answer with me ever since.”

*Things That Matter*, adapted by Henderson and based on a memoir of the same name by Dr David Galler, was presented by Auckland

Theatre Company as part of their 2023 season. Henderson had been in conversations with the company about adapting an existing work for their stage and was in the process of reading novels, short story collections and graphic novels when he came across the memoir.

“It had lots of anecdotes, no plot, zig-zagging across countries and decades, chapters organised around organs of the body, dozens of characters who came and went – but brim full of humanity, compassion, anger and optimism,” he says, calling it possibly the most inspiring book he'd ever read.

But also? “There was no hope of transposing it directly onto the stage. It would have to be a new work of art.”

The big adapting choice that Henderson made was about the book's structure. The memoir has three strands – medical, familial and political. He broke the book into a three-column grid and extracted from each column

## HOW CAN I BEAT THE FILM?



the important things he thought the book was saying, which gave him the right skeleton to build an emotional arc. From there, a narrative arc was found over several drafts – drawing on stories of patients from several chapters and presenting those medical journeys in detail. Galler himself is adapted as Rafal Backman, while the staff at the hospital are entirely fictional.

Galler was impressed with the first draft, although he did say to Henderson that the “best contribution” he could make was to discuss any areas of concern with him “in the hope that you will then convert the spirit of what we discuss into words.” In later drafts, he would clear up medical things with

PREVIOUS PAGE: *Things That Matter* by Gary Henderson, adapted from the memoir by David Galler, Auckland Theatre Company, ASB Waterfront Theatre. Image: Andi Crown Photography.

ABOVE: *Red, White and Brass* adapted by Leki Jackson-Bourke. Film screenplay by Halaifonua Finau and Damon Fepulea'i, and directed by Damon Fepulea'i. Film produced by Piki Films and Miss Conception Films © Miss Piki's Band Limited & Leki Jackson-Bourke. Auckland Theatre Company, ASB Waterfront Theatre. Image: Andi Crown Photography.

Henderson, giving him tools like medical shorthand for authenticity and context for how doctors talk to the family of dying patients.

Henderson puts his own response succinctly: “It was gold.”

*Things That Matter* is a beloved, critically acclaimed memoir, but in its initial printed form it had a fairly limited audience. *Red, White and Brass* was one of the biggest local film hits in recent memory, beloved by audiences and hanging around the box office for months. Leki Jackson-Bourke was selected to adapt the film after an initial meeting between him, the originating producers, Piki Films, and the commissioners of the stage adaptation, Auckland Theatre Company. Everybody was onboard, but his first question was obvious: “How can I beat the film?”

“It was already a well put together story and the film obviously did well, so I was open to the challenge of adapting with the intention of making it better,” Jackson-Bourke says. “I’ve always been a firm believer that if you can’t beat the original, then there’s no point. The real challenge has been to portray our version of the story without losing the heart and genesis of it.”

He was aware of the immense pressure associated with the project as well, given people's familiarity with the film, and the expectations at play within the Pacific arts community. The most important thing was to honour the voice of co-writer, co-producer (and original brass band member!) Halaifonua 'Nua' Finau.

"I had multiple conversations with him, and he gave me the creative licence to go for gold," he says. "Our friendship is founded on trust, and I know that we both understand the stakes at play, and the importance of authentic representation of our community on stage and screen."

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## THE VOICE BECAME A COMMUNAL ONE

"As a New Zealand born Tongan, there are always challenges that come with portraying cultural stories," he says, acknowledging that he is also not a fluent Tongan speaker. Finau, as well as being the original writer, also serves as cultural advisor to Jackson-Bourke. "The role of cultural advisor is crucial in ensuring that I achieve a nice balance of contemporary and traditional representation, so that anything cultural is done respectfully."

Adapting a work when the author is alive, able to discuss and debate with you, is one thing. Adapting a work with a living author and an audience who loves the initial work is another. However, adapting a work when the author is long dead, the text much beloved and already adapted, is a lot for a playwright to attempt. That's exactly what Ken Duncum did, however.

F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* had always been a favourite book of his, but he believed nobody had successfully managed to put it on stage – specifically when it came to the dark underbelly of the story. "The public perception of the narrative had somehow become one of a swooning romance,"

he says, "when in fact, it's a sometimes brutal and hard-edged destruction of romantic fantasy, with a bit of singing and dancing!"

In his view, other adaptations had attempted a more literal staging, with large casts and large budgets trying to present a movie on stage, rather than playing to the imaginative strength of theatre. His goal was to adapt it, fully and truly theatrically. Due to a quirk in New Zealand's copyright laws compared to the rest of the world, Duncum was able to adapt with impunity, rather than having to ask permission from the estate. The work is now entirely in the public domain, with adaptations cropping up around the world, including two Broadway-scaled musical versions.

"With all adaptations of novels, there's an editing down process because any novel is too big and complex a story to fit into two hours of stage time," explains Duncum. Although *Gatsby* is a relatively short novel, this still meant that several threads had to go. Beyond that, he also had to work out how to double the roles to ensure eight performers could cover all the roles necessary in the novel.

"I 'orchestrated' the narration so this device started slowly but built up through the play to the point where all the actors were tightly and adroitly interweaving fractured lines and finishing each other's sentences, so the 'voice' became a communal one," he says. "It felt like the narration was truly organic and theatrical and was part of the warp and weft of the play."

Crucially, despite Duncum being a playwright from New Zealand, he never considered relocating the setting. Understandable, as the 1920s Long Island setting is as central to the novel as the colour green is. "The book spoke to me out of time and space because of its relationships, emotions and themes which are as contemporaneous now as when it was first written."

"I don't need to see a play set in New Zealand in order to feel that it's relevant or appealing to me. I expect and hope most audiences feel the same."



Two of the most successful adaptations in recent memory are the adaptations of poet Tusiata Avia's works *Wild Dogs Under My Skirt* and *The Savage Coloniser Book*. Both have played arts festivals across the country to critical acclaim and healthy box-office, generating controversy and audience delight.

After the massive success of the ensemble adaptation of *Wild Dogs Under My Skirt*, which included an invitation to perform Off-Broadway, producer Victor Rodger acquired funding under the FCC banner to support the adaptation of *The Savage Coloniser Book*. From there, Anapela Polata'ivao – who had directed the first show – took the reins.

ABOVE: *The Savage Coloniser Show* by Tusiata Avia, FCC, Auckland Arts Festival, Q Theatre. Image: Raymond Sagapolutele.

RIGHT: *Gravity & Grace* by Eleanor Bishop and Karin McCracken, adapted from the book *Aliens & Anorexia* by Chris Kraus, EBKM, Aotearoa New Zealand Festival of the Arts, Circa Theatre. Image: Andi Crown Photography.

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## EXAMINING THE MUSICALITY, THE SYNERGY, THE MAGIC

Adapting poetry for the stage is an entirely different process than adapting a novel, a film, or any other kind of story with a narrative backbone. It needs to hook an audience in without the benefit of an overarching plot and perhaps even characters to act as anchor points. Polata'ivao needed first to make sense of the 'what' and 'why' of both the landscape and landmarks of the titular coloniser. "My initial response was fragmented possibilities, which eventually morphed into composition, imagery, and inspired choreography," she says.

For Rodger, watching Polata'ivao follow her instincts as she adapted the text – often on the floor – was remarkable. "The courage to follow her gut, no matter how iffy it might seem, was incredible," he says. "How she might grab hold of something that someone offered which then might lead into something else and ultimately end up in the production." He points to one of the show's most memorable moments, a riff on Megan Thee Stallion and Cardi B's 'WAP' while they were performing Avia's 'Big Fat Brown Bitch' poem, which initially came from the cast joking about it in rehearsal.

The most important thing for Polata'ivao to preserve in adapting the text was Avia's truth and keeping as authentic to the characters as possible. "It's about the exploration of our ancient world without judgement or censorship," she says. "Creating, collaborating, examining the musicality, the synergy, the magic, the choreography and the poetry – under lights, gauze and [with] machetes."

"Whilst this may sound deep and serious, we spent most of our days working on the show in fits of laughter and joy."




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As an artform, poetry lends itself to adaptation to the stage. Poetry is often performed aloud, in front of a live audience. Less generous for adaptation is a highly academic memoir that crosses countries, timeframes and intentionally bucks any sense of narrative arc. Nevertheless, Eleanor Bishop and Karin McCracken took on the task of adapting Chris Kraus' 1999 book *Aliens & Anorexia* – retitled *Gravity & Grace* for the stage.

Both had become Chris Kraus fans after reading her hit semi-autobiographical novel *I Love Dick*. Bishop then started to read all of her other books, eventually landing on *Aliens & Anorexia*, which weaves together Kraus' experience making a film in New Zealand with her time spent in the New York art world.

"I thought it would make a great show because the novel brought together a lot of the things we were interested in: great language, documentary, and the process

of filmmaking," Bishop says. The pair tracked down Kraus' email and wrote her a pitch to adapt the book, which she agreed to.

From there, a long development process of four years followed (lengthened by that chronic lengthener, Covid-19). That development included a four-week writing residency, four week-long workshops with actors and designers, and a rehearsal period in 2022 that ended up being a development process.

"I wouldn't say it was a different process from our previous work, as it still involved writing text, workshoping text and an iterative script creation process in response to acting, staging and design," she says. "But it was the most complex version of that process we've ever undertaken – due to the intellectual complexity of the source material, the difficulty of translating it to the stage and the scale of our ambition for the work to be so design integrated."

When Bishop and McCracken started working, the only thing that they thought



**Let your audience experience a much-loved story anew. Here is a sampling of just some of the top-shelf adaptations available from Playmarket.**

#### **NOVEL APPROACHES TO CLASSICS**

*A Christmas Carol* by Dave Armstrong, adapted from the novella by Charles Dickens

*Dracula* by Claire Ahiriri-Dunning, adapted from the novel by Bram Stoker

*Em* by Sam Brooks, adapted from the novel by Jane Austen

*Great Expectations* by Dean Parker, adapted from the novel by Charles Dickens

*The Odyssey* by Dan Bain, adapted from the epic poem by Homer

*Sense and Sensibility* by Penny Ashton, adapted from the novel by Jane Austen

*The Thirty-Nine Steps* by Ross Gumbley, adapted from the novel by John Buchan

#### **OUR STORIES ONSTAGE**

*The Baby Farmer* by Lynley Hood, from her book *Minnie Dean: Her Life and Crimes*

*The Book of Fame* by Carl Nixon, based on the novel by Lloyd Jones

*Gifted* by Patrick Evans, based on his own novel

*The God Boy* by Ian Cross, based on his own novel

*Irish Annals of Aotearoa* by Simon O'Connor, adapted from the novel by Michael O'Leary

*Man Alone* by Dean Parker, based on the novel by John Mulgan

*Tu* by Hone Kouka, inspired by the novel by Patricia Grace

*Where We Once Belonged* adapted by Dave Armstrong from the novel by Sia Figiel

#### **PERFECT FOR FAMILIES**

*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* adapted by Mike Hudson from the novel by Mark Twain

*Badjelly the Witch* adapted by Alannah O'Sullivan from the book by Spike Milligan [there is also a version by Tim Bray]

*Kiwi Moon* by Rachel Callinan, adapted from the short story by Gavin Bishop



would work was Kraus' narration – and even then, they had to find how that would work onstage and how to make it present and active. They discovered early on that they could – and 'should' – invent scenes of events that were only glancingly mentioned in the book, and mingle short scenes, interrupt them with 'Fleabag'-style direct address, then quickly time jump with narration. The book became a launchpad to spring from, rather than a blueprint to build to.

"It's not a literal adaptation," Bishop says. "The book blends memoir, art criticism, philosophy and there really is no way to include everything that is in the book on the stage."

If there's one thing that binds all these writers and their attendant adaptations together, it's that acknowledgment. There is no way to include everything that is in the original texts on the stage. That's not the point of adapting. The point is to see what else a story can hold when it is flung out from its source – be that a poem from a Laureate, a beloved classic, or a hit cult film – and put up onto the stage. That's where the magic is.

LEFT: *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, adapted for the stage by Ken Duncum, Circa Theatre, 2010. Image: Stephen A'Court.

*Te Kūia me te Pūngāwerewere* by Patricia Grace, adapted by Jamie McCaskill

*The Man Whose Mother Was a Pirate* by Margaret Mahy, adapted by Rachel Callinan [there is also a version by Tim Bray]

*Under the Mountain* by Pip Hall, adapted from the novel by Maurice Gee

*The Whale Rider* by Witi Ihimaera, adapted for the stage by Tim Bray

#### WITH A MUSICAL NOTE

*Came a Hot Friday* by Dean Parker and Stephen McCurdy, adapted from the novel by Ronald Hugh Morrieson

*Footrot Flats: The Musical* book by Roger Hall, music by Philip Norman and lyrics by A. K. Grant, based on original characters by Murray Ball

*Shortland Street: The Musical* music and lyrics by Guy Langford, book by Guy Langford and Simon Bennett, by arrangement with South Pacific Pictures

#### VERY FREELY ADAPTED

*Easy Money* by Roger Hall, inspired by *The Alchemist* by Ben Jonson

*Like Sex* by Nathan Joe, inspired by *La Ronde* by Arthur Schnitzler

*Lockdown La Ronde* by Victor Rodger, inspired by the play by Arthur Schnitzler and the film by Max Ophuls

*Ngā Tangata Toa* by Hone Kouka, derived from *The Vikings at Helgeland* by Henrik Ibsen

*Revenge of the Amazons*, being a somewhat revised version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, by J. Betts and W. Shakespeare

*The Merry Wives of Windsor Avenue* by Geraldine Brophy, inspired by *The Merry Wives of Windsor* by William Shakespeare

*Whaea Kairau: Mother Hundred Eater* by Apirana Taylor, inspired by *Courage, the Adventuress* by Hans Jacob Grimmshausen

# FOR YOUR URGENT ATTENTION

*Kerryn Palmer asks why Aotearoa deeply undervalues its children by failing to invest in the arts.*



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**CHILDREN'S ART  
IS NOT ONLY  
VERY SERIOUSLY  
UNDERFUNDED,  
BUT UNDERVALUED**

Children aged 0 to 15 years make up approximately 18% of our population. Youth aged 15 to 25 make up 12%. So, how good are we at delivering excellent arts opportunities for 30% of our population? In terms of theatre, not good at all.

Due to a lack of sustaining investment, Aotearoa is severely lacking in providing performing arts opportunities for children and youth. This has resulted in a Performing Arts and Young People's (PA&YP) sector that is struggling, as well as thousands of young people throughout the motu missing out on valuable and essential arts opportunities.

In the past three years, Wellington alone has seen the closure of several vital companies that made theatre work for, by and with young people, including Young and Hungry, and Summer Shakespeare. Decades worth of crucial infrastructure gone.

In October 2023, New Zealand's flagship PA&YP company – Capital E's National Theatre for Children (NTFC) – blindsided the sector with its shock closure.

Begun in 1997 by the late visionary and Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA) stalwart Peter Wilson, and further led by passionate advocates Stephen Blackburn and Marianne Taylor, NTFC entertained thousands of children over its quarter of a century. It excelled in creating original high-quality work for children and commissioned work from some of our best playwrights and composers, including Dave Armstrong, Gareth Farr, Jo Randerson, and Jenny and Laughton Pattrick. At the heart of its kaupapa was "excellence in theatre for children right now" – not as future audiences, but as citizens worthy of excellent theatrical experiences in the present moment. Underpinned by high-production values, NTFC offered children throughout Aotearoa the opportunity to experience a full theatrical experience outside of a school environment. This was theatre that was not purely didactic – it was quality theatre that expanded minds and encouraged imagination.

NTFC was consistently celebrated in the global PA&YP sector. Aotearoa was considered forward-thinking for having a national theatre organisation dedicated specifically to children.





Annually, NTFC would tour two theatre shows across the breadth of Aotearoa, one aimed at two-to-seven-year-old children and one for eight-to-twelve-year-olds. Each year would also typically see a development of the next year's original work. NTFC provided consistent, well-paid employment for many actors, designers, technicians, and designers.

Every two years Wellington was host to a beautifully curated festival of local and international work, specifically for children. Thousands of children would travel into the city, often on subsidised buses, attending up to three shows a day. Many children – including my own – have fond memories of their first theatre experiences at Capital E.

NTFC were a company that valued their creatives and deeply valued their audiences – until they did not.

Their sudden closure by governing body Experience Wellington was a shock to the sector, in particular because of a recent and significant six-year investment made by Creative New Zealand. Experience Wellington chief executive Sarah Rusholme said it was stepping away from delivering the theatre's programme to "better focus

on delivering remarkable experiences for the people of Pōneke." As reported by Stuff, Rusholme also said that "Experience Wellington trialled different models for the theatre. However, it was facing dwindling audience numbers as schools dealt with limited budgets for tickets and transport, managing ongoing staff and student illness, finding adults to accompany classes, and a slow return of confidence in allowing students to visit busy sites, or external providers to visit schools."

It is hard to put a finger on exactly what went wrong. It is most likely that the closure was a result of mismanagement by Experience Wellington, a tension in balancing the books, as well as post Covid-related dwindling numbers of audiences. There was – in my opinion – also a deep lack of understanding and respect of the uniqueness and importance of quality children's theatre. This was so clearly demonstrated at Experience Wellington's deeply underwhelming poroporoaki for NTFC, which consisted of a three-minute speech and tea and biscuits.

Since October 2023, Experience Wellington have consistently failed to engage with artists who developed and staged work with NTFC about the holding of their intellectual property and production assets. It is presumed that these assets are in storage; it would make financial and artistic sense to release them to the community of practitioners, so that these works can have a new life and continue to be shown to the children of Aotearoa.

The demise of this national institution has been a crushing blow to the PA&YP sector for several reasons.

NTFC was an investment client of CNZ and that support is now lost to the sector. Out of the 81 Tōtara and Kahikatea clients that CNZ currently support in 2024, there is only one that is solely focused on children and young people aged 0 to 15. While some clients such as Massive Theatre Company deliver to a youth market aged 14 to 25 and from time-to-time others



include some children's theatre in their programming, Storylines is the *only* investment client that is specifically for children.

The fact that only 1.2% of CNZ's investment portfolio is specifically focused on children, suggests that children's art is not only very seriously underfunded, but undervalued.

Something doesn't stack up. CNZ's own Fact Finder for Arts Advocates states several facts espousing the importance of arts for young people:

- » **79% of young New Zealanders say that doing creative things makes them feel excellent or good.**
- » **70% of young New Zealanders agree that the arts can make them feel more confident.**
- » **Youth arts participation contributes to life satisfaction, happiness, and optimism for the future.**

Are these just words on a page? With their own rhetoric flying in the face of current support, we must question how it has all gone so awry.

It didn't always look this way.

In 2013, CNZ began to recognise the importance of the PA&YP sector, activating meaningful change with a national arts conference which championed Arts by, with, and for Young People. The object was to provide an opportunity to focus on the development of best practice, increasing participation, developing young audiences, promoting the value of arts education, and to engage with leaders in other sectors.

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## ARE THESE JUST WORDS ON A PAGE?

PREVIOUS PAGE: *Magnolia Street* by Dave Armstrong, Capital E National Theatre for Children, 2012. Image: Stephen A'Court.

ABOVE: *The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch* by Ronda and David Armitage, adapted for the stage by Tim Bray, songs by Christine White, Tim Bray Theatre Company. Image: David Rowland, One-Image.com.

LEFT: *Wonderkind* devised by Kerryn Palmer, Timothy Fraser and Emma Rattenbury, Wonderlight Theatre Aotearoa, 2022. Image: Roc+ Photography.




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## OUR NATIONAL ARTS FUNDING BODY NEEDS TO STEP UP

ABOVE: *Polly Hood* in *Mumuland* by Lauren Jackson, Auckland Theatre Company, Māngere Arts Centre, 2014. Image: Michael Smith.

RIGHT: *Land of the Long Long Drive* by Catriona Tipene and Ryan Cundy, Horse With No Name, Circa Theatre. Image: Alex Rabina.

From 2013 to 2017, CNZ prioritised young people and the arts in their strategic plan. In 2019, they initiated Toi Rangatahi, three new funds for arts projects targeted towards New Zealanders aged 10 to 25. These funds were intended to be part of a five-year initiative which included an investment of \$500,000 in the first year. At the time, CNZ's Senior Manager of Arts Development Services, Cath Cardiff, stated: "We want more young people to have the opportunity to explore their creative potential. These dedicated funds will help to generate more opportunities and support young people to create the arts experiences that appeal to them."

The impact of this support began to show. In 2019, I conducted a survey of TYA companies and their work throughout Aotearoa. Research showed a wide range of creative work happening in the field. Original New Zealand work, including work created in te reo Māori, sat alongside traditional Eurocentric work based on fairytales or pantomimes and didactic theatre-in-education work. Mainstage theatres, such as Circa Theatre, The Court Theatre and Auckland Theatre Company were programming TYA on a regular basis, mostly during school holidays. Independent theatre companies such as Trick of The Light Theatre were receiving international recognition for their work and new companies such as Cubbin Theatre Company were starting to receive funding and recognition for their work.

Perhaps most significantly, New Zealand's flagship theatre company for children, NTFC, was granted \$3,163,000 in

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## THE DEMISE OF THIS NATIONAL INSTITUTION HAS BEEN A CRUSHING BLOW

funding by CNZ, to be distributed in the following six years. This was a huge achievement for NTFC and was a major boost of 13% from their previous funding allocation.

So, despite many practitioners in the survey reporting that funding was an ‘ongoing challenge,’ the future looked moderately positive.

And then it was 2020. The ringfenced monies from Toi Rangatahi were “reinvested into the general arts funding pool” and significantly, in 2024, none of the remaining investment tagged to NTFC has been set aside to support the PA&YP sector.

The historic commitments from CNZ demonstrate that there is some understanding of the need for and importance of decent funding for the sector, but their actions of late have left PA&YP companies placed in unnecessary competition with each other, fighting each other and the rest of the independent sector for dwindling funding in the contestable grants pool.

CNZ were approached to comment on their vision for the PA&YP sector and invited to consider how they would back a sector compromised by the very promises they have failed to deliver on. The organisation was given ample time to respond, but at the time of publication, had not provided comment.

In 2024, the PA&YP sector is struggling more than ever. Many practitioners are tired of talking about the innate undervaluing and underfunding of our sector, particularly when compared with adult art. Despite this, many companies continue to make excellent work, some of which has hit internationally. Trick of

the Light goes from strength to strength and in 2024 will undertake a two-month tour to China and the UK. EBKM’s Yes Yes Yes has been licensed in several different countries including Wales, Spain and Australia, and was a hit at the ASSITEJ artistic gathering in Serbia in 2023. The Rebel Alliance’s brand-new work *The Valentina* premiered at Auckland Arts Festival in March. Massive and Tim Bray Theatre Company have recently clocked up over 30 years of making work by and for young people; Taki Rua’s Te Reo Māori season is about to embark on its 29th year of touring nationally. The past five years has also seen companies such as Cubbin, Sau e Siva, Birdlife, Naranjarte, Horse With No Name, Stringbean Puppets, The Dust Palace, Rollicking Entertainment, Healing Through Arts and Wonderlight, among others,



all working tirelessly to bring original theatre to New Zealand children.

Except for Taki Rua and Massive, who are supported by multi-year investment from CNZ, all of these companies are hindered operationally by the inability to plan long-term. They are caught in a cycle of applying for short-term project funding every few months. They rely on box office for survival, income which is impacted by low average ticket prices. There is no direct pathway to increased support either – CNZ have set a very high, and often unobtainable, threshold to become an investment client.

This lack of investment means that often quality is compromised. Companies can only reach a certain level of production with limited funds and even though the stories, the goodwill and passion are excellent, without true investment, production values are often compromised, in particular production design, dramaturgy and engagement with young people in the making of the work.

A 2024 state of the play survey by Performing Arts and Young People Aotearoa gathered responses from 56 participants, a mixture of companies, individual practitioners, and

educational institutes. The biggest challenge in 2024? Unsurprisingly, a lack of funding.

In the current context, it is impossible to uphold a sustainable working model for companies. As a result, it is growing increasingly difficult to find and retain creatives, establish relationships with schools and audiences, and find space to perform.

This sits alongside a lack of public understanding of the value of the performing arts for young people. While the public at large may not understand, those working within the sector do.

Research by Australia's National Advocates for Arts Education shows that children's engagement in the arts contributes to higher levels of critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, empathy, and resilience. Well-documented accounts show that when children are engaged in the arts, they typically achieve higher in literacy and numeracy.

But this thinking is not hitting the people that need to hear it most, particularly the current government.

IMAGE: *Play Play* by Cubbin Theatre Company, 2018.  
Image: Nayhauss.







**The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states:**

Every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts. Governments shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

**The sector needs to be deliberate about how we respond.**

Our national arts funding body needs to step up. To ignite systemic change, we need:

1. Increased resourcing and funding, including better remuneration for creatives. This funding must enable us to be accessible for all, covering the entire cost of producing a show, event or workshop.
2. A funding system that is more transparent, offering equity between independent companies and larger performing arts companies. Support for arts for, by, and with young people, must be ringfenced. CNZ must provide a cogent pathway to investment support for child-centred arts providers.
3. Leadership so that we can co-design a more sustainable sector. Working in the PA&YP space must be a viable career choice; the children of Aotearoa have the right to access a range of theatre experiences, regardless of where they live.
4. Support to undertake a feasibility study to centralise resources. This may include, but is not limited to, the creation of a touring agency, booking system, and quality control measures to assist educators, parents, and young people to recognise high-quality work.

5. Promotion of the value of performing arts for, by and with young people, which includes advocacy to government and local bodies.
6. To challenge the marginalisation of performing arts work for, by and with young people within the arts sector, eliminating the assumptions, tropes and stereotypes often made in the programming and presentation of the work.
7. Training for tertiary institutions, especially actor training programmes, to take PA&YP seriously, deepening the understanding of the value and scope of this work in New Zealand.
8. To examine the best practice in improving the pastoral care and wellness of PA&YP audiences and practitioners, particularly those that tour.
9. Greater academic discourse and more robust promotion of PA&YP.
10. To investigate and highlight ways that companies can put children at the centre of their work, encouraging testing, interacting with, and listening to children in the making of the work.

**New Zealand children deserve to see and experience world class art that is made for, by and with them. They deserve to see and experience it now – not as an audience of the future – but right now, to help them to make sense of, comprehend and make positive change in our ever-changing world.**

PREVIOUS PAGE: *Seasons* by Peter Wilson, songs by Laughton and Jenny Patrick, Capital E National Theatre for Children, 2013. Image: Stephen A'Court.

BELOW: *The Tantrum* by Java Dance Theatre, Capital E National Theatre for Children, Circa Theatre. Image: Stephen A'Court.



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Dylan Underwood (Mudwiggle)  
*Badjelly the Witch* by Spike Milligan,  
 adapted by Tim Bray  
 Tim Bray Theatre Company  
 Photo by David Rowland  
 / One-Image.com

- Badjelly the Witch* • *Pippi Longstocking*
- Puff the Magic Dragon*
- The Emperor's New Clothes and The Ugly Duckling*
- The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch*
- The Magic Faraway Tree*
- The Owl and the Pussy-Cat*
- The Velveteen Rabbit*
- The Wind in the Willows* (outdoor production)
- Vivaldi's The Four Seasons*
- We're Going on a Bear Hunt*
- Five Go on an Adventure*

**NZ STORIES**

- The Little Yellow Digger*
- The Santa Claus Show*
- The Whale Rider*
- Joy Cowley's*
- Greedy Cat* • *Mrs Wishy-Washy* • *Snake and Lizard*
- Margaret Mahy's*
- A Lion in the Meadow and Other Stories*
- The Dragon of an Ordinary Family*
- The Great Piratical Rumbustification*
- The Great White Man-Eating Shark and Other Stories*
- The Man Whose Mother was a Pirate*

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The Great Piratical Rumbustification by Margaret Mahy  
 Photo by David Rowland / One-Image.com

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I LOVE YOU G  
Massive Theatre Company, 2024  
Andi Crown Photography



For more information and pricing please visit:  
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# KAUPAPA FORWARD

*Cian Parker on Te Pou Theatre.*



Today is a two-show day of Poata Alvie McKree's *The Handlers* at Te Pou Theatre. The cast have just completed our morning school matinee and are recharging for another sold out performance this evening. Instead of opting for the theatre-turned-nap area for the cast, Amber Curreen (Poutoko Whānau) and I have opted for the upstairs boardroom, to talk about the theatre's whakapapa.

*The Handlers* has become the highest attended show Te Pou have ever produced in their own whare. Every night the audiences are full of diversity in all senses: colour, cultural backgrounds, ages, families, couples, regular theatregoers and first-timers. This piece of theatre, written by a Māori storyteller with a creative process imbued with te ao Māori, is reaching the masses.

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## WHAT IS MĀORI THEATRE?

In 2008, Amber met Tainui Tukiwaho (Poutoko Wairua) at a Playmarket event for Matariki. There was a wānanga held to explore the question: What is Māori theatre? It became apparent that this was not a simple question to answer, and that perhaps it wasn't necessary to answer. What was clear was that the home of Māori theatre was not in Auckland, it was in Wellington.

Māori theatre started in the 1960s, but it really found its stride in the 90s. There was constant talk about Taki Rua/The Depot in Wellington during those years. It was a whare where everyone would come together. But there wasn't anything like that anymore – there was no place for the Māori theatre community to call home.

Over the coming years, Amber and Tainui produced, presented and toured shows with their company, Te Rēhia Theatre. Alongside making shows, they were also creating opportunities to support the sector more widely: Organising reo Māori classes to encourage more use within the arts industry; leading acting workshops; focusing on development opportunities for mid-career artists. The core of the mahi was about uplifting and bringing people together within Māori performing arts, in turn elevating the wider performing arts sector.

They knew that opening a Māori-led whare for the performing arts would be the best way to do all this.

By 2014, a converted theatre venue that neighboured a lively basketball court became available in New Lynn. At the same time, conversations about the place of Māori theatre in Auckland began to re-emerge. What was everyone doing? Where was the Māori theatre being produced? It was clear that there was a need within the industry for Māori to have a space to come together.

Amber explained, "We saw what was needed, and knew that this venue was available, so we called a hui. The Auckland Māori arts community came together to discuss how to grow and strengthen our industry."

As their website outlines, "The need for our own theatre space, a whare, was voiced strongly. The karanga was heard and answered – and on March 1 2015, the lease was signed on the building at 44a Portage Road, New Lynn."

This was an opportunity to do the work they were already doing, but in their own whare. Amber mentions, "We could only Māorify a place so far. It was temporary. We knew that



if we were to be able to have our own space, we could grow our own audiences. We could make it so Māori artists wouldn't be fighting the existing infrastructure or the existing aesthetic in order to be able to have a space that works for them.”

Three years later, Te Pou moved from the New Lynn location to Corban Estate Arts Centre in Henderson. Te Pou planned an ambitious build that would create a fit for purpose kaupapa Māori home for performing arts. In January 2023, Te Pou reopened its doors fully renovated and ready for programming. The span of programming within their first year included premieres of new work, fashion shows, community-focused kaupapa like *Recovery Street*, a return season of *The Haka Party Incident*, Te Reo Māori circus, the annual Kōanga Festival, and dance theatre.

Though massively inspiring, creating Te Pou Theatre has not come without its challenges. Renovating the physical space was no easy feat and took the team (special shout out to Amanda Rees) years of fundraising. Applying for a plethora of grants and pivoting through a pandemic, they created the whare bit by bit. Now the doors are open, the team is working out how to run a large venue. The new space

includes the 250 seat Tokomanawa Theatre, Tāhū black box rehearsal studio, Te Kōpua foyer and bar, as well as office spaces and meeting rooms. The kaimahi at Te Pou are also teaching the wider community about the space, welcoming them in, and building a local audience of support.

The team are artists first; this venue was built by artists, for artists. The running of such a whare requires a real sacrifice of their artistic capacity, though the team finds ways to practice. Amber reflects, “I had to grow the company to a certain point, so I was able to dip into that creativity puna, keeping nourished from there and then going back into making things happen.”

While the team took on this mammoth task, Amber explains that it was important to keep a distance from council and other funders. This allows Te Pou to maintain rangatiratanga. Having the autonomy and space to shape a vision is an ongoing process. She explained that they are constantly asking themselves, what does it mean to run a kaupapa Māori theatre business?

“What we have right now, this whare was a dream. That was a wawata. So now, it's like, oh, what do we do next? Yeah. Awesome



(laughs). Tick. Well, we got it now. We just gotta know how to drive it.”

Te Pou states their wawata as, “Tikanga Māori-led performing arts transforms the arts sector and makes a necessary difference to society in Aotearoa and the world.” Reflecting on this vision, Amber says, “The fact that it's got the words ‘necessary difference’ in there means that we have to keep being aware of what the difference is that needs to be made. We need to keep assessing, how do we keep making a difference? In the stories we tell, the ways we run things, what we do, how we are actually making change. What we are doing is constant decolonisation. We uplift Mātauranga Māori through the arts.”

“It was really important for us that Te Rēhia Theatre was not the company that had the venue. We needed Te Pou to be its own thing, so that people didn't feel like it was just the place where our work is presented. It needs to be a venue where people know they can come and put their own shows on. It's not just for us. It's a place where people go to see lots of different shows. And a place where Pākehā could go and experience being in a little microcosm where Māori ways of doing things rule. That is not the marae. That's not within a formal space. It's an informal space. A learning space, and you get to engage in te ao Māori there.”

The vision that was communicated back at the hui in 2014 has most definitely been achieved. When I asked Amber where that vision points now, she explained, “We're always looking beyond it. Always looking at the few generations beyond us. I'm looking at these kids that come through and they'll be like,



## A CREATIVE PROCESS IMBUED WITH TE AO MĀORI IS REACHING THE MASSES



PREVIOUS PAGE: *Kōpū* by Tuakoi Ohia, Te Rēhia Theatre, Te Pou Theatre. Image: Bob Scott Photography.

LEFT PAGE: Readthrough for *Hemo is Home* by Tainui Tukiwaho with Te Rongopai, Jade, Paku, Le-Toya and Mia, Te Pou Theatre. Image: Ralph Brown.

LEFT: Development for *Kōpū* by Tuakoi Ohia, Te Rēhia Theatre, Te Pou Theatre, 2022. Image: Fedner Maeva.

ABOVE: Matariki Industry Hui, Te Pou Theatre, 2024. Image: Julie Zhu.

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‘I’m proud of where I come from.’ They get to have what I think is one of the most mana enhancing ways of living your life – that is telling your stories. Having ownership over your own story is one of the best things that people can give themselves. They get to have that, and they get to pass that on to their kids and then their kids and then we end up with a few generations of these people that, for them, they just take it for granted. It’s just a given that, of course, we have Whare Whakaari. There’s more than one. There are heaps of them. Of course, we can walk into any space and feel like it’s ours. It’s that mokopuna vision, you know?”

ABOVE TOP: Workshop for *The Handlers* by Poata Alvie McKree, Te Pou Theatre, 2023. Image: Fender Maeva.

ABOVE BELOW: Amber Curreen and Tainui Tukiwaho at Matariki Industry Hui, Te Pou Theatre, 2024. Image: Julie Zhu.

### MOKOPUNA VISION

I am reminded of the haka performed by kids from the local kura at our performance this morning. It was a wave of energy that reached us performers so strongly we all had to take steps back. Rangatahi watched a theatre show about a group of Māori and Pasifika women in the 1970s, who work in a factory. Far before their time, but their reactions were so immediate.

In the middle of our season, our director Amber led a kōrero with the cast. She asked us to think of theatre shows that imprinted on us as teenagers. She reminded us how there is such a limited amount of Māori theatre, each time a story like this is shared, it is another addition to the legacy of Māori stories onstage. And that potentially the work we do, could imprint on the next generation.

Which brings us back to the question circulating since the 1960s... 1990s... 2008...2014... 2015... 2024. What is Māori theatre? Can it be defined? Should it be defined? Many would agree it is a different kaupapa. Yes. Māori theatre looks all the way forward and all the way back.

Te Pou Theatre has now become a huge part of that whakapapa. Like Taki Rua/The Depot, this will be a space where all who enter the building feel a sense of coming together.

A sense of belonging.

KEI ŌU  
RINGARINGA  
TEAO  
THE WORLD IS  
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# REIGNITING FEMINIST FIRES

*Recollections of game-changing festivals with Jean Betts.*

**1991. Less than 25% of the plays on our professional stages were written by women. Only six of those were by New Zealand women. Jean Betts reflects on an historic moment of coming together.**

In 1992, the enterprising Lorae Parry, having self-published her groundbreaking play *Frontwomen*, decided to start a women's play publishing collective to mark Aotearoa New Zealand's centenary of women's suffrage, coming up in 1993. So she rounded up me, Viv Plumb, Fiona Samuel, Cathy Downes and puppeteer Rose Beauchamp to see what we thought.

The success of tiny Christchurch feminist collective Spiral, who'd published Keri Hulme's Booker Prize-winning novel *The Bone People* after she'd been unable to find a traditional publisher, was inspiring; and the revelation that of all the New Zealand plays available in print at the time – from memory around fifty – only three were by women, also fired us up. When we also realised we all had a new play either completed or well on the way, in a rash and in retrospect very brave moment, we agreed to try to stage them all as well – a huge undertaking. Lorae magically raised all the funding, organised the venues (Circa, BATS, Taki Rua/The Depot) and off we went.

At this point it's important to mention the all-woman revue *Hen's Teeth*, the brainchild of Kate JasonSmith, which had opened a year or so earlier and in which most of us took part in some way. Predicted by many to be an embarrassing flop – we were still in the days of 'women have no sense of humour' – it was phenomenally successful and continued, touring the country for years. I'm sure this helped to boost our confidence.

The festival was scheduled for September and October 1993. We named it WOPPA, the Women's Professional Playwrights' Association. We took multiple roles, not only writing but often directing, administering, designing and acting too.

Fiona's *Lashings of Whipped Cream* is a one-dominatrix marvel; *Stone Telling* was another of Rose's mini-masterpieces; Lorae's *Cracks* introduces two adventurous working class Aussie girls; Viv's *Love Knots* was deemed "a brilliant exercise in magic realism"; mine, *Ophelia Thinks Harder*, is a rickety rewritten *Hamlet*; and Cath's play, probably the most appropriate for the occasion, is a lively adaptation of Rachel McAlpine's *Farewell Speech*, featuring one of our own suffragette heroines, Kate Sheppard.

The suffrage theme of WOPPA spurred me to be bloody-minded. I reasoned that if I



couldn't say exactly what I wanted to say, direct, uncensored, in this year of *all* years – then when could I? So I went hell for leather and threw care to the wind. I braced myself for complaints and mockery; and was bemused when the play didn't seem to ruffle anyone! Suitably chastened and realising what a wimp I'd been, whenever I've had to give advice

ABOVE: *Love Knots* by Vivienne Plumb, Circa Theatre, 1993. Image: Peter Dinnan.

ABOVE BOTTOM: *Ophelia Thinks Harder* by Jean Betts and Wm. Shakespeare, Circa Theatre, 1993. Image: Joe Bleakley.

to other playwrights I've tried to pass this lesson on: don't hold back, don't self-censor; be brave; say exactly what you want to say and don't be bound by any imagined rules or restrictions. The joy is worth it!

The response to the festival was positive and encouraging, and most of the plays have had extended lives in theatres and schools here and away since. After some post-production editing and once again with Lorae's very generous help, particularly necessary in those pre-digital days, we published most of these and several subsequent plays with our newly formed Women's Play Press collective – WPP. There were other celebratory women's events on offer that year, but I only have the vaguest memory of them – lectures, statues, music, flowers planted...? Distracted by rehearsals and the MMP election, all passed me by.

There were pockets of misogyny from unexpected quarters. A well-respected female commentator I'd assumed would champion our cause, apparently exasperated by the year's girly focus, advised everyone to go and see something else instead "to get a break from all this women's stuff!". Male colleagues I'd expected to be supportive clearly felt – um – *challenged*. I was very surprised. Naively I'd thought those days were over. So yes, that was something of a revelation, and helped to reignite the feminist fires.

Astoundingly, Lorae decided to do it all over again to mark the year 2000, this time including works by Renée, Jo Randerson and Briar Grace-Smith, and shorter works by newcomers Gabe McDonnell, Jackie van Beek and Ruby Brunton – this one named Shebang. It was even more gloriously chaotic than the first time but nevertheless, an amazing achievement now I look back.

These experiences helped me realise how inspiring and motivating it can be for playwrights to have a goal – a festival, a competition, something to write for. So at Playmarket I worked to find and create these opportunities; e.g. the Playmarket New Play

Competition (which later became the Adam NZ Play Award) and the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, a lucrative international prize for women's plays; well worth a look.

WPP also made me realise how vitally important publishing is. There are grants and competitions that are only open to published work; institutions are usually reluctant to study or stage unpublished plays; it makes them available to bookshops and libraries worldwide, and of course, without publication they can easily be lost forever.

For years, Creative New Zealand regularly turned down Playmarket's dogged publishing grant applications, stymied in part by their own baffling inability to decide if they fell into the Literature or Theatre categories (!) At one point WPP was the only active play publisher, which meant a pile of great plays were languishing unpublished. This hiatus motivated me to expand my share of WPP into my own venture, The Play Press. So, with invaluable help from Daphne Brasell of the publishing course at what would become Whitireia, and a CNZ breakthrough care of Anton Carter, I began publishing other people's plays too, both women's and men's.

All of us have continued writing, performing, producing, publishing. I hope their memories are at least as positive as mine. I'm pleased to see there doesn't seem to be any shortage of women's plays any more, and surely our endeavours must have played some part in that? I like to think so.

BELOW: *Farewell Speech* by Catherine Downes, adapted from the novel by Rachel McAlpine, Circa Theatre, 1993. Image: Limelight.



## THE WOPPA AND SHEBANG PLAYS

Most of these titles are available from Playmarket.

### WOPPA

*Cracks* by Lorae Parry \*

*Farewell Speech*  
adapted by Catherine Downes from the novel by Rachel McAlpine \*

*Lashings of Whipped Cream* by Fiona Samuel\*

*Love Knots* by Vivienne Plumb \*

*Ophelia Thinks Harder*  
by Jean Betts & Wm Shakespeare \*

*Stone Telling*  
by Rose Beauchamp

### SHEBANG

*The Inept*  
by Gabe McDonnell

*The Misandrist*  
by Jean Betts \*

*Missionary Position*  
by Renée

*Never Never*  
by Jackie van Beek

*This Is Me/Tango Road*  
by Ruby Brunton

*The Unforgiven Harvest*  
by Jo Randerson

*Vagabonds*  
by Lorae Parry \*

*When Sun and Moon Collide*  
by Briar Grace-Smith

\* Published by The Women's Play Press  
theplaypress.co.nz

# A MOOD FOR CHANGE

*Champion, delegate, witness: Susan Wilson was there.*

Throughout the nine years I worked at Playmarket, I was privileged to witness the extraordinary growth of the WOPPA movement, The Women's Play Press and later, The Play Press. Jean Betts deserves far more credit than she gives herself in her own accompanying account – a phenomenal number of plays were published under her banner.

As the new Playmarket Script Advisor in 1992, I was quickly immersed in the stunning Australasian Playwrights' Conference in Canberra. The large prestigious Kiwi contingent was meticulously managed by Playmarket's John McDavitt and Stephanie Creed. Present among the very strong and impressive Aotearoa participants, which included Riwia Brown and Rena Owen, were Vivienne Plumb, Cathy Downes and Lorae Parry.

As actors, playwrights and theatre practitioners, these women were aware of the challenges of surviving in New Zealand's theatrical environment, so it is no surprise that following this empowering event they should join Jean and Fiona Samuel in the 1993 Suffrage project for WOPPA and the launch of WPP. Canberra had proved a rich and significant experience – it was a beacon for the great work to follow. Jean's

diligent work proved a catalyst for so much theatre development realised in the liberating nineties.

Other significant events followed. I was privileged to represent Playmarket at The International Women Playwrights Conference three times: Adelaide in 1994, Galway in 1997, Athens and Delphi in 2000. Jean, Cathy, Vivienne and Lorae were among Kiwi delegates in Adelaide; Pip Hall, Briar Grace-Smith, Norelle Scott, Jo Randerson and Lynda Chanwai-Earle represented in Galway, where scenes from *Ka-Shue (Letters Home)*, *Ngā Pou Wāhine*, *Fold* and *Promise Not to Tell* were performed. Vivienne and Briar travelled to Greece alongside Micky Delahunty, Lucy White and others.

Sharing ideas and concerns with like-minded women from across the world was another empowering moment. Before WOPPA and the Conferences, I had shared Jean's experiences of the scorn for women playwrights... the raised eyebrows ... the sighs ... the shrugs of disbelief... 'Let them have their little Suffrage moment, then we can get back to the real theatre business.'

The freedom and support at these events, however, brought a release of creativity and an enduring mood for change.





Plays were showcased, read, shared, distributed. Hopes and ideas were exchanged; important networking established.

Some of the experiences in Galway, Athens and Delphi were confronting and challenging, largely due to failures in planning. It was expected that Briar's brilliant play *Purapurawhetū* would be performed by George Henare and Nancy Brunning in the amphitheatre in Athens, but an application to perform there had never been made.

Instead, the performance was relegated to a conference hall, with bureaucracy refusing to move a large black table in the centre of the performance space. It was a muddle, a downright disgrace, but Briar rose above it all: "I've come back having made many connections, shared many stories and thanks to the Oracle, have an idea that could be turned into a play. I've also learned that no storm can sway the determination of our roopu."

Further accounts of these hitches are hilariously recorded in *Playmarket News* #16 and #26.

To quote Pip Hall:

*"Our work is filled  
with bubbling humour  
and infinite sadness  
and that little something that spikes you in  
the gut.*

*Our work is filled  
with freshness and spunk that's our very own.  
It stands with two feet firmly planted.  
It made me laugh,  
It made me cry,  
It made me crave the bottom of the Pacific,  
and our own little patch of green."*

In 1999, Magdalena Aotearoa hosted the International Festival of Women's Performance at Circa and on the Kāpiti Coast. This was followed by the fantastic Shebang in 2000, featuring an outstanding season of work by eight women playwrights. These celebrations proved a rich and significant conclusion to the action-packed decade and welcomed the start of a new era.

# ŌTAUTAHI 2023

BY SARA BRODIE

The little fringe venue with a lot of heart, Little Andromeda aka Little A, hosted an astounding 107 shows in 2023 – in spite of a nail-biting hiatus to secure funding in the depths of winter. Under the leadership of Michael Bell they continue to provide support and be fertile ground for new work. Stand out shows developed in 2023 included *Love; Mum* by Sela Faletolu-Fasi, a story of the intricacies of sisterhood, that had a sell-out laughter and tear-filled season, and Dan Bain's multi-award winning *The Odyssey*. Also notable were *Mā Te Wā* by Ben Brown, Popi Newbury and Tom Trevella; *Haha Horror* by David Correos and Hamish Parkinson; and *The Flight Before Christmas* by Cally Castell and Rebekah Head, staged in collaboration with Tusk Puppets.

The Court Theatre led by new artistic director, Alison Walls, offered a mixed bag of shows ranging from Branden Jacobs-Jenkins' *Appropriate* and Clare Barron's *Dance Nation*, to contrasting musicals *Next to Normal* and the sell-out season of *Something Rotten*. Original New Zealand work included *Be Like Billy?* by Rutene Spooner, which was both a celebration and lament examining the fallout of Spooner's relationship to Billy T. James. The premiere of Penny Ashton's adaptation of *Sense and Sensibility* was an ensemble tour de force. *O le Toa*, a new bilingual work based on legends of the Pacific was co-created by Jake Arona, Rachel Brebner, Talia-Rae Mavaega and Ben O'Brien-Limmer. It toured to schools in August and September.

In October, headlines were dominated by the dramatic departure of The Court's CEO Barbara George. For audiences however, this was overshadowed by Katie Wolfe's powerful

verbatim work *The Haka Party Incident*. All focus was firmly back on the art form after a resounding opening night ovation. Meanwhile, construction work for the new purpose-built Court Theatre on Gloucester Street continued apace. The new venue ensures that The Court will retain its status as New Zealand's only producing company with a full complement of in-house production workshops.

Ōtautahi is sadly a city without a main arts festival but this is redressed by a number of smaller festivals and the highly resourceful arts practitioners behind them. Te Matatiki Toi Ora The Arts Centre's Off Centre festival landed in March, cramming in 40 events over two days. At Cloisters Studio, *The Golden Time* featured dancers, actors and a live band, all joining forces to explore the historical relics and stories of early Chinese settlers during the Gold Rush. Running throughout August across multiple venues and marae was Whao, a Māori Arts Festival run by Mahi Mahi Productions featuring music, wānanga and play readings, including *Jim's Room*, *Te Rongomaiwhiti* and *He Kura E Huna Ana*. This was closely followed by Word, a highlight of which was *Confluence*, curated and hosted by Daisy Speaks.

Another triumph was the establishment of Te Whare Tapere in September, a permanent home for indigenous storytelling and a multidisciplinary arts space for Māori artists, founded by Kaiwhakahaere Juanita Hepi and Ngaio Cowell at Te Matatiki Toi Ora. Hepi had a busy year as this was hot on the heels of creating *Hine Hōia* for Chamber Music New Zealand. The production reframed Stravinsky and Ramuz's *The Soldier's Tale* through wāhine experience, setting it in



Te Waipounamu in 1918 during the influenza epidemic. It played at The Piano and toured throughout Aotearoa.

At the Pump House in Phillipstown, the enduring Free Theatre presented *Woyzeck*, completing a trilogy of Tom Waits musicals. It was a journey first embarked on when the company staged *The Black Rider* in 2017.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: *The Flight Before Christmas* by Cally Castell and Rebekah Head, Tusk Puppets, Little Andromeda. Image: Charlie Rose Creative.

*Cinderella* by Gregory Cooper, The Court Theatre. Image: The Court Theatre.

*Sense and Sensibility* by Penny Ashton, based on the novel by Jane Austen, The Court Theatre. Image: The Court Theatre.

*Mā te Wā* by Ben Brown, Popi Newbury and Tom Trevella, Little Andromeda. Image: Sabin Holloway.

# The Play I Read

KASI VALU

*on Think of a Garden*

*“Samoa filemu pea, ma si ou toto nei ta’u’ualea, a ia aoga lo’u ola mo lenei mea”*

- Tupua Tamasese Lealofi-o-ā’ana III

My Nena’s garden is a community of plants and a cluster of shooting stars, connecting its roots to every being, spirit and energy it encounters. In her garden, there is no concept of time. The past, present and future are merely constellations that uphold the stalk of every taro leaf that dances in the wind. Every Saturday morning, my Nena stains her nails with the rust of the Earth. With her bare hands, she ploughs the soil, eradicating every weed. The worms wriggle and weave in and out of the new foundation. The backdrop of ancestral whispers, a unique element in John Kneubuhl’s iconic play, *Think of a Garden*, has always intrigued me. I first read about it in *Floating Islanders: Pasifika Theatre in Aotearoa* and learned it was first staged in 1993, in a production directed by Nathaniel Lees. Nathaniel went on to direct a second production at Taki Rua/The Depot in 1995. The most recent iteration was directed by Anapela Polata’ivao at the Nathan Homestead in Manurewa in 2018.

Kneubuhl’s play is a devastating critique of the New Zealand administration’s mismanagement of Sāmoa in 1929.

The playwright seamlessly establishes the stage as an ocean that traverses space and time. By suspending the reader into a setting with such vivid imagery, the stage directions become more than just a pinpoint location, but a metaphor that enlarges the weight of each character’s emotional journey. I associate this with the constellation of my grandmother’s garden and the cosmic synergy between plants and human hands. Just as the elements provide sustainable conditions for the specimen to prosper, our human intervention can easily alter the course of this lifespan.

I liken this notion to the main protagonist within this play, David – the elements being what he was born into and the cultural seesaw that he navigates as an American Samoan. Entangled in the vā are the tensions that live within his household. We promptly learn the existing shame that has been woven into the fabric of this family. He can only speak English

## ADAPTING WITHIN A COLONIAL MINDSET AND RETAINING AN INDIGENOUS HEART



when his father, Frank Kreber, is present – his father still views him as “half savage”. His mother Lu’isa has assimilated into this Americanised lifestyle. It would be remiss to simply acknowledge this assimilation of Lu’isa as an act of cultural submission. Her relentless protection, resilience and irrefutable love for her son indicate the contemporary compass of survival, achieved by adapting within a colonial mindset and retaining an indigenous heart.

I ponder the influence that his parents have on David; whether his naive curiosity would have led him deeper into a spiritual realm, with the underbelly that seethes beneath the absolute terror of Brother Patrick’s actions. Kneubuhl’s perspective of David colluding with a spirit is the apex of blasphemous danger within the paradigm of Catholicism. What sparks my interest is how one can return to a relationship with the spiritual realm without being quite literally demonised for such a practice. With the arrival of Christianity across the Pacific and its religious practices deeply entrenched throughout multiple Pacific cultural practices,

the straddling tensions of indigeneity and post-colonial perspectives are often paradigms that barely converge.

This world pressure underscores the entire play. It is an ongoing academic and artistic discourse topic that has been iterated in varying perspectives between the diasporic and on-island Pacific peoples. *Bloody Woman* by Lana Lopesi is a prime example of this kaleidoscope, in continual shifting motion.

The commonality of sacrifice between all the characters becomes overtly apparent in *Think of a Garden*. These sacrifices, whether it be relinquishing their native tongue, dedicating their life to a role of service within their household, or travelling to a new nation in advocacy of the Mau Movement to propel the independence of Sāmoa, are not just plot devices but reflections of real-life experiences. These specific themes continue to relate to the context of today’s

ABOVE: *Think of a Garden* by John Kneubuhl, TAPA, Nathan Homestead, Manurewa, 2018. Image: Raymond Sagapolutele.

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Te Kaitiaki me te Pūngawerewere based on the book by Patricia Grace, adapted by Jamie McCaskill

current political landscape, with the current NZ Citizenship (Western Samoa) Act 1982 Bill. This bill seeks to enable Samoan people whose New Zealand citizenship was removed by the Act, to receive, on application, New Zealand citizenship as of right.

Is some of the slang used to describe Pacific Islanders an intentional choice to magnify the mindset of Mr Kreber, or more of a historical and social stamp of how society viewed Pacific Islanders during the 20th century? I ask this question with multiple offshoots of curiosity. When does a text like this become archaic and require development if it is to be staged again? How does one honour the text whilst massaging the current vā for the state of tomorrow? How do we hold up the mirror back to the text in robust and meaningful ways, the same way the text does for its readers?

At the core of this play are the actual historical events that unfolded. The leader of Sāmoa's pro-independent Mau

Movement, Tamasese, embodied the true value of service. His last words, after he was fatally gunned by a New Zealand police officer during a peaceful procession in 1929, are etched into world history as a hallmark of passive and peaceful protest:

“Samoa filemu pea, ma si ou toto nei ta'uvalea, a ia aoga lo'u ola mo lenei mea.”

“My blood has been spilt for Samoa. I am proud to give it. Do not dream of avenging it, as it was spilt in peace. If I die, peace must be maintained at any price.”

I find myself questioning what kind of garden I keep. What is the best way to uproot a rotting taro leaf? How can I best nurture my seedlings with an interconnected web of roots? What do worms like to eat?

*Think of a Garden*: a timeless piece that shatters stone into diamonds, leaving a treasure trove of historical navigational tools to manoeuvre the present into the future.



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# IN PURSUIT OF ENTERTAINMENT

*Karin McCracken on new adventures in theatremaking.*

**There's a statistic that is often bandied around in our industry – 4%. That's the proportion of New Zealanders who (apparently) regularly attend theatre in Aotearoa. Or, at least, that's the number theatremakers shout at each other in bars, or mutter in hui, or reflect on (existentially) in the depths of a funding application. I've heard it so often that I was surprised when I failed to find a credible source for the statistic. But on an instinctual level, the number seems about right. In an era where audience behaviour has undeniably changed, and the pull of 'at home' culture options risk eclipsing live events, I wanted to speak with theatremakers in Aotearoa who are offering audiences more curated and individual experiences.**

If your mind frequently wanders to Aotearoa theatre companies that focus on new-form, experimental or interactive performance, you are likely familiar with Barbarian Productions, Binge Culture Collective and A Slightly

Isolated Dog. Diverse in their approaches to audience engagement, but unified in the pursuit of entertainment, community and meaning, I asked Jo Randerson (Barbarian), Joel Baxendale (Binge Culture) and Leo



Gene Peters (A Slightly Isolated Dog) some questions about their beginnings, their purpose and what they're trying to give their audiences.

## BEGINNINGS

All three companies began in Pōneke between the years of 1995 and 2009, in an era when devising and Gaulier-inspired clowning was becoming synonymous with contemporary performance and experimentation in theatre.

Jo Randerson, whose electric Viking-inspired solo show *Banging Cymbal, Clanging Gong* became the inaugural work for Barbarian Productions, wanted to make something that hummed off gut instinct and colour, in a theatre landscape that prioritised minimalism and intellectual abstraction. "I was working around Europeans who (in my eyes) valued delicacy, sophistication, mutedness and smallness, and wondered, 'what about brute anger, at injustice? What about when you're just like... no, this isn't right?'" Barbarian has since focussed on creating live events that have inhabited almost every space and form you can think of, "from outdoor immersive gaming to carefully curated digital work to large-scale building takeovers to large public recording booths to voluntary choirs singing about inter-generational prejudice... First and foremost, we are clowns, we love live interactions." Colour and energy remain key to the company. Barbarian is now a Toi Uru Kahikatea investment client with Creative New Zealand, which has supported the emergence of a significant community engagement element of their practice.

A Slightly Isolated Dog began around 2005, hoping to approach storytelling in a more innovative way. "We were wanting to make stuff from story, without having to rely on the old forms of playwriting," Leo Gene explains, while also trying to harness audience engagement – something that he felt more dominant forms at the time were

not capturing. "There was a hunger for the evolution of the form. Why are we all in a room together if I could just watch a DVD at home? What's the point of live performance if you're just going to ignore the audience?" A significant local hit early on for the company was *Death and the Dreamlife of Elephants* in 2009, where they made the everyday seem magical and allowed the audience to "play make-believe". This has remained a throughline for the company. Over the last eight years they've had significant success with a series of shows that fall somewhere between a party, comedy and cabaret, facilitated by a faux-French theatre troupe that is singularly focussed on making sure the audience has a good time.

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## I WANTED TO MAKE A SHOW THAT I DIDN'T HAVE TO EXPLAIN TO MY MUM

Binge Culture came to existence at Victoria University, their first work part of Ralph Upton's Honours project – a practical investigation into legendary experimental theatre company Forced Entertainment. From the beginning, they were looking to engage their audiences in a more direct way. "We were interested in form; interested in providing the audience with real stakes" Joel says, of the time. "We wanted to implicate them in what was happening on stage." Since then, they have become international fringe favourites with their efficient and plucky approach to performance. In 2017, their work *Break Up (We Need to Talk)*, in which five performers wearing banana suits break up with each other for five consecutive hours mesmerised audiences at Edinburgh Festival Fringe and was nominated for a prestigious Total Theatre Award. Sam Gough, CEO of Edinburgh venue Summerhall, recently told me that people still ask him "if the bananas will ever come back".

## AUDIENCE FORWARD - AND AUDIENCE ACCESSIBLE

New-form or ‘experimental’ theatre tends to garner the reputation for being esoteric or inaccessible. But none of these companies are leaning into the abstract as a way to alienate. In fact, all three specifically mention ‘fun’ as a driver for their work. While the three companies are clearly distinct in their output, I would wager that a critical similarity between all of them is an insistence on coming toward the audience. In their own ways, Binge Culture, Barbarian and A Slightly Isolated Dog celebrate the fact of each individual arriving at the performance by talking to them. Literally.

Consider recent works from each company; Barbarian debuted *U R BACK* at Martin Luckie Park as part of NZ Fringe 2024, an outdoor theatrical event aimed at all ages featuring 30-ish actors in flamboyant and otherworldly costumes, where audiences could choose their own path and level of engagement. Attending the show, I was struck by the number of families in attendance – a nod to Barbarian’s unrivalled ability to directly engage Pōneke communities in their work.

A Slightly Isolated Dog is, at the time of writing, on a 10-week Australian tour of their show *The Trojan War*, an adrenaline-fuelled ensemble retelling of the ancient story, with significant audience interaction. Crucially, the extremely talented performers (Andrew Paterson, Susie Berry, Comfrey Sanders, Jono Price and Jack Buchanan) create an environment where audience members appear genuinely thrilled to get involved in the storytelling. While the show appears to run off the sheer (and seemingly endless) charm of the company, the theatrical craft

and care with the audience is the real engine behind its success.

Binge Culture’s show *Werewolf* is having its UK premiere at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 2024, an “immersive horror-comedy show inspired by the classic game of social deduction”. Performed in an intimate space, in the round, each audience member is given a task to complete, at times openly sparring with performers. Rightly, the audience suspects that the show could change course at any moment. Disclaimer: I was a performer in *Werewolf* during its Aotearoa outings in 2021-2022. Each night, I was astonished by the number of audience members who don’t usually see theatre – they showed up because they like the game ‘Werewolf’ and thought it would be fun. This struck me as exceedingly rare.

## SPACE AND FORM

All three makers spoke to the phenomenon of traditional theatre venues as sometimes unwelcoming or alienating spaces. Gene mentions, “I’m raised in the theatre now, and I still feel uncomfortable in there. So, if I’m not walking in and feeling at home, how is anybody else that’s never been in that space supposed to feel?” To combat this discomfort, the company lets everyone know what’s going on up top. “We’re here to tell you a story, but we’re trying to remove all the pretence of it – the idea that you need to be in the know or something. We wanted to, as explicitly as possible, go: this is why we’re here, and this is what we’re going to do. But in a way that’s fun and playful and exciting. I think that’s the basic reason for direct address.” On the emergence of the French-clown series, which now has three iterations, Gene says simply, “I wanted to make a show that I didn’t have to explain to my mom.” There’s a persistent formal approach that allows for a more active imaginative space; for example, the titular Trojan horse is made of cardboard boxes

PREVIOUS PAGE: Barbarian Productions’ artists at Vogelmorn Bowling Club, 2022.

Image: Roc+ Photography.

RIGHT: *Don Juan* by A Slightly Isolated Dog, Australian Tour, 2022. Image: Ivan Kemp.



in the show, quickly assembled by the performers and manipulated across the stage. Barbarian approaches this tension, in part, by staging the majority of their events outside of traditional theatre spaces. Jo cites the word ‘together’ as one of Barbarian’s cornerstones when thinking about the kind of work they make, prioritising “inclusivity, community, accessibility and broad audience”. Jo adds, “We’re interested in ways that we can come together as audiences or fellow players to think deeply about what’s happening in the world around us, to jostle thoughts, question ourselves and remind ourselves what we hold important.” Barbarian’s headquarters are at the iconic and welcoming Vogelmorn Bowling Club, where they host events for their immediate community, the regular theatregoing crowd and specific artistic development opportunities for practising artists. When I asked Jo if this informal role of community-steering and mentoring was ever draining, she responded with typical generosity. “I need other people around me to be making my own work. Since this community practice has emerged, I feel braver, safer and more inspired than ever... For me, the wider group of people

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## WE WANTED TO IMPLICATE THEM IN WHAT WAS HAPPENING ON STAGE

means we can all help each other and solve each other’s problems.”

Binge Culture broadcasts that their works are for people interested in connection, experience and games. While their early shows were in black-box spaces, the work has always been anti fourth wall. “It was about being able to have uncomfortable conversations, so that people maybe felt equipped to deal with the absurdities of the world.” Joel adds that abstraction and layering in their work helps prevent didacticism.

“The politics are present, but they are pretty soft touch. Collage is good for that, formally.” More recently, they have pushed this layering by introducing digital elements to their live work, utilising app technology to navigate their audiences through a live experience, often outside. *You and AI*, which used the PickPath app to guide participants through the show, picked up the Most Innovative Work award at





the NZ Fringe in early 2024. Joel mentions that the digital-live experiences work double-time for Binge: they provide the audience with a more individual theatrical experience, while also helping reduce venue and personnel costs for the company.

### WHAT THEY LOVE

I'm always interested in what other makers love. So, my final question for each was to describe a moment in live performance that has stuck with them. I found the results telling.

**Jo:** "Zoë Coombs Marr in their [comedy] show *Dave*, when their head started bleeding with the challenge of interpreting feminist feedback."

**Leo Gene:** "John Robertson's *The Dark Room*."

This is a live-action videogame, where audience members try to survive a videogame level. If they fail, the whole audience chants "Ya die! Ya die! Ya die!"

**Joel:** "*Clean Room Season 1* from Juan Dominguez. At the beginning, everyone is gathered on the stairs to the theatre for a

briefing before going in. The briefing lasts and lasts, performers play out scenes on the stairs, and interact with the crowd. It's the whole show."

Reader, as someone who knows Joel Baxendale very well, believe me when I say; this is a dream result for him.

In three conversations that circled around providing entertainment that can't be located on a streaming service, it felt right that all three examples were so, well... live.

There are evidently many reasons for low theatre attendance in Aotearoa, not least the cost-of-living crisis parrying with the cost-of-making-theatre crisis. But I wonder whether the question of what *kind* of experience people want in the theatre has been slightly overlooked in favour of old formulas. It strikes me that in many ways, Binge Culture, Barbarian Productions and A Slightly Isolated Dog are approaching their audiences in the most traditional way of all: by meeting them.

LEFT: *Werewolf II: Wolves Among Us* by Binge Culture Collective, Lōemis, 2022.

ABOVE: *Whales* by Binge Culture Collective, Auckland Fringe, Aotea Square, 2015.



# TE WHANGANUI-A-TARA 2023

BY SAMEENA ZEHRA

It feels surreal to be discussing theatre while a genocide is underway, largely ignored, even tacitly enabled by our leaders, and the subject of propaganda that allows for more than 16,000 children to be slaughtered in the name of 'self-defence', not to mention the lost medics, journalists, poets and artists. But surely the midst of conflict is the very time art and artists are most important. To witness, to explore, to humanise, to offer hope. Looking back at this year of two halves; familiar and strange, normal and not normal, light and shuttering dark... what kind of art did Te Whanganui-a-Tara host?

Exploration of identity and purpose was a common theme throughout the year. Jackson Burling's *Caution Wet Floor* was a beautifully crafted physical comedy exploring relationships with oneself and where we sit in society. *The Emperor's New Clothes*, written, choreographed and performed by Sacha Copland, was a brutal and empathetic examination of our complicity in commodifying ourselves. In both works we were challenged and entertained; I was sent away with more questions than answers. Other shows that directly addressed these themes and ownership of one's own narrative were Sherilee Kahui's *Mokomoko*, made about, and for wāhine Māori; Tainui Tukiwaho's family drama *The Sun and the Wind*; *Kōpū*, a no-holds-barred celebration of wāhinetanga; and the revival by Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School of Mīria George's *and what remains*. At one point a character says, "If Māori left the country, would you even care?" In a year when we voted in a government that seems bent on the decimation of all things te ao Māori, this piece felt starkly prescient.

The much-anticipated *The Haka Party Incident* by Katie Wolfe, an extraordinary piece of verbatim theatre, finally had its showing after numerous Covid-related delays, fittingly as part of the Kia Mau Festival, playing on the Opera House stage.

The year saw a good amount of silliness and satire, light and dark, providing something for every inclination. Sam Wang's *Skyduck: A Chinese Spy Comedy* was a triumph of multilingual, irreverent parody and DIY design with its homemade props and puppets, accompanied by musical numbers and Mandarin subtitles. Jeremy Hunt's *Ted Talks Crimes* was a similarly fun multiple-character solo of crime capers and deadly bananas. Early in the year, Micky Delahunty's *Interrupting Cow* saw living through Covid, in old school theatre of the absurd. *PSA: Election 2023*, written by Jamie McCaskill, Thom Adams and Johanna Cosgrove, was the 18th show in the series and, arriving in July, split the year in half, a satirical omen of mishaps to come. Thom Monckton's *The King of Taking* was also a harbinger of storms later in the year, after an election that has brought us leaders that diminish us in every way, much as the King does in Monckton's satirical physical comedy, which explores greed and entitlement.

An antidote to entitlement, Sachie Mikawa's *Fish Saw* used Japanese fables and 'grandmother's tales' set to a haunting score to weave a story of the power of friendship across distance and time. Another kind of haunting score complemented Gavin Rutherford's sensitive and self-deprecating interpretation of the thwarted composer in





## THE MIDST OF CONFLICT IS THE VERY TIME ART AND ARTISTS ARE MOST IMPORTANT



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP

LEFT: *Interrupting Cow*  
by Micky Delahunty,  
A Muddled Whine, BATS.  
Image: Isadora Lao.

*O le Pepelo, le Gaoi, ma le  
Pala'ai – The Liar, the Thief and  
the Coward* by Natano Keni and  
Sarita So, I Ken So Productions,  
Kia Mau Festival, Circa  
Theatre. Image: Julie Zhu.

*The Sun and the Wind*  
by Tainui Tukiwaho, Taurima  
Vibes, Circa Theatre.  
Image: Jode Wade Lee.

*In Bed with Schoenberg* by  
Dave Armstrong, Armstrong  
Creative, Circa Theatre.  
Image: Roc+ Photography.

*Public Service Announcements:  
Election 2023* by Thom Adams,  
Jamie McCaskill and Johanna  
Cosgrove, Circa Theatre.  
Image: Roc+ Photography.

*Concerning the UFO Sighting  
Outside Mt Roskill, Auckland*  
by Reon Bell, Kia Mau Festival,  
BATS. Image: Jode Wade Lee.

*Dakota of the White Flats*  
by Red Leap Theatre,  
adapted from the novel  
by Philip Ridley. Image:  
Andi Crown Photography.

THIS PAGE: *The Coven on  
Grey Street* by James Cain,  
Red Scare Theatre Company,  
Circa Theatre.  
Image: Roc+ Photography.

PREVIOUS PAGE: *Skyluck:  
A Chinese Spy Comedy* by  
Sam Wang, Square Sums  
and Co, Circa Theatre.  
Image: Lyndon Katene.

Dave Armstrong's *In Bed with Schoenberg*. Western classical greats were followed by scores and tunes of different kinds, from Andrea Sanders and Beat Girl Productions' *Cringeworthy – Swinging in the 60s*, which proved a welcome escape into nostalgic fun, music, dance and sixties hairdos, to James Wenley's *Dr Drama Makes a Musical*, exploring the personal significance and wider history of a beloved genre.

The year's varied palette included James Cain's *The Coven on Grey Street*, a comedic riff on the well-loved witches of the Scottish play, with a standout design by Lucas Neal that treated us to a man being swallowed whole by a tree. We experienced weirdness and existential angst from Carl Bland's *I Want to Be Happy*; song and dance and romance from Indian Ink's *Dirty Work*; robust, poignant and hilarious insights into what we can look forward to if we're lucky enough to get there, in Rachel McAlpine's *The Secret Lives of Extremely Old People*; and Elisabeth Easter's *A Rare Bird*, using storytelling and puppets to shine light on the life of important conservationist Perrine Moncrieff.

Finally, in the year when Capital E made the perplexing decision to shut down the National Theatre for Children, depriving our tamariki the opportunity for education and the wonder that theatre affords, and to honour the lost children of Gaza, I'll finish with a selection of the shows that made up the extraordinary variety of theatre made for young people in Te Whanganui-a-Tara this year:

*Birdhouse* from Monfu

*Land of the Long Long Drive* from Horse With No Name

*The Tantrum* from Java Dance Theatre

*The Adventures of Tahi and Kōwhai* from Little Dog Barking

*Te Kuia me te Pūngāwerewere* by Patricia Grace, adapted by Jamie McCaskill with translation by Hōhepa Waitoa

*Taku Waimarie* by Willy Craig Fransen

*Dakota of the White Flats* from Red Leap Theatre and the National Theatre for Children's last show ever, *The Grumpiest Child in the World* by Finegan Kruckemeyer

# IN CONVENIENT TRUTH

*How to love the world with Elspeth Tilley and Trick of the Light Theatre.*

**The climate crisis is here. Last year, turbulent weather events in Aotearoa jolted our eyes wide open. It's well and truly evident that we must take collective action, now.**

**In 2024, Playmarket has joined forces with theatremakers Elspeth Tilley, and Ralph McCubbin Howell and Hannah Smith of Trick of the Light Theatre, to create two sustainability guides. Designed to activate greener thinking, one guide focuses on theatre presentation, the other on touring. Both robust and practical, they offer sage words and provocative thought for artists and audiences.**

**They share some of the critical thinking which led them as they put fingertips to keyboard. The colour is green.**

*Salt runs through our veins*

*Through our fingers as we dive beneath  
the surface*

*A surface that travels currents across  
ancient highways to whānaunga*

*To Hawaiki*

*To pathways that the call of the mother  
whale anchors into the deep*

*Into a deep knowing*

*An irresistible recognising of the pull*

**India Logan-Riley**

## **ELSPETH TILLEY**

Oh no, not yet another greening guide.

You know that sensation of guilty disengagement when you yearn to be sustainable, but the challenge seems so huge, so complicated, so much work, that it feels impossible? It's called green fatigue and it's increasingly common in the performing arts.

Green fatigue is connected with being creative and a high achiever: with expecting excellence from ourselves and our work, setting high goals, looking for ways to innovate, and beating ourselves up when things fall short. The good news? There are



solutions and they involve wellbeing steps that help with theatre practice in multiple ways, not just greening goals.

Developing a mindset of connection and compassion (with ourselves as well as the world around us), practising self-care, avoiding unrealistic goals, and accepting that mistakes are normal, can bring us gently out of fatigue to focus on process instead of product.

Doing our best in a greening sense may mean starting where we are and using what we have. It may also mean accepting that we are not experts and listening with humility to the resources around us, particularly, in Aotearoa, Māori sustainability knowledge.

So, what does this have to do with the release of yet another green theatre guide? This one is different. This one is designed within and for Aotearoa. It breaks greening down into seven smaller areas, and focuses on small steps on a journey, not expecting the impossible.

Most importantly, though, it responds to the many calls from Māori environmental activists asking non-Māori to learn about and support Indigenous values as the most urgent solution

to healing and protecting the ecologies we are all entangled in. Just one example of this is the call to “learn our histories, listen to our stories, honour our knowledge, and get in line or get out of the way” from India Logan-Riley (Ngāti Kahungunu, Rangitāne, Rongomaiwahine) at the 2021 United Nations Paris Climate Conference.

Of course, environmentalists have for decades understood that Indigenous knowledges embed crucial climate solutions in unique ways of relating to the world. If we are open to listening, Māori and Indigenous Pacific ecological understandings can help guide not only our emergence from green fatigue into a reconnection with nature but also pragmatic steps on a theatre greening journey.

*The Aotearoa Green Theatre Guide* therefore grounds practical theatre greening processes in values such as whakapapa, whakakotahitanga, arohatanga, and manaakitanga. It approaches greening as a shared, collective process of connecting more deeply with our environment, to which cast, crew, audiences, venues, suppliers, and stakeholders can contribute in ways that are



engaging, fun, and collaborative. Above all, it reminds us that, as recorded in the whakatauki “I orea te tuatara ka puta ki waho” – a problem is solved by continuing to find solutions.\*

*The Aotearoa Green Theatre Plan is available from Playmarket now.*

### TRICK OF THE LIGHT

We never thought we’d write a book about green touring.

We run an independent theatre company. We make shows. In our home life, sure, we’d always been greenies, but it wasn’t until some years into the biz that we found ourselves wondering why we weren’t bringing the same priorities to our work. We’d made plays that were overtly environmental in their content, but beyond scattered efforts and aspirations, there wasn’t a green kaupapa that we brought to our work as a whole.

Our sense of a blindspot was building, but when New Year’s Day 2020 dawned to a sky eerie red from the bushfires over the Tasman,

it felt like a telling start to the decade. Once, we might have convinced ourselves that climate change was happening somewhere else or was only going to hit us some time further down the line, but this was hard to ignore. This was happening now.

We started by turning to what other people were doing. We got some mentoring from Sustainability Lab in Germany. We read the *UK Theatre Green Book*. But we noticed that there wasn’t a lot of content about touring. “Someone really needs to write a section on this about touring,” we said. We found much of the (excellent) work overseas wasn’t applicable in Aotearoa. “Someone needs to adapt this for our context,” we said.

When we were invited to consult on the (excellent) *Green Touring Guidebook* made by Arts on Tour Australia, we realised that we had some reckons.

And so, we pitched for the Cultural Sector Regeneration Fund, partnered with Tour-Makers and Playmarket, and the Green Theatre Touring Guide was born – a guidebook and website to help theatremakers in Aotearoa navigate the realities of making art in our changing world.

Even deep in our theatres, we’re not cut off from what’s happening. Art is most engaging when it connects with the context around it, and as we found throughout the pandemic, storytelling is vital, and community is all. Amidst the climate crisis, the performing arts have a crucial role: to provide escape or a call to action, to comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable.

For the performing arts to continue, we have to change the way we’re doing business. This means making and touring our work in a way that walks the walk as well as talking the talk. This doesn’t mean all our art should be *about* the environment – we can make sustainable theatre without making theatre about sustainability.

So. We set out to make a guidebook and toolkit to help. It’s tailored to our context,

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\* Nō Te Kunenga Ki Pūrehuroa / from Massey University.

both geographically and culturally, including a mātauranga and te ao Māori perspective that must be central to kaitiakitanga. Our hope is that it is both user-friendly and widely applicable, bringing together the mahi that is already happening around the country. We don't claim to be experts; we don't claim to be perfect – we're on this journey ourselves, and we balance environmental aspirations with the realities of making work in an under-resourced sector. But we have road-tested many of these ideas and have sought the expertise of people far more knowledgeable than us.

Change is hard, and making and touring work sustainably can feel like a daunting prospect. It's worth saying that you don't have to tackle everything at once – don't let perfect be the enemy of good. It's better to take any green action than none at all. Start by tackling something small. Start by getting a compost bin. Pace yourself and look after your people.

And remember this: you're a theatremaker from the ends of the earth. You're used


to making extraordinary work with scant resources (and using those resources again and again). On a global scale, shows from Aotearoa are already compact and nimble, and because our population centres are small, we've worked out how to tour. But we can do more. Some of the stuff in the guide will be things you are doing already, the rest of it will build on skills that you already have.

Rest assured: you've got this.

*The Green Theatre Touring Guide will be published in late 2024.*




PREVIOUS PAGE: *Ngaru Ngaru - Climate Change Theatre Action Aotearoa*. Street theatre in Cuba Mall, Te Whanganui-a-Tara / Wellington. Performed by Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa / Massey University Creativity in the Community Te Whanganui-a-Tara class of 2019, image courtesy of School of Humanities, Media & Creative Communication, Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa / Massey University.

LEFT: Hannah Smith of *Trick of the Light*, packing out *The Road That Wasn't There* in Waikari, North Canterbury, 2013. Image: Ralph McCubbin Howell.




## PLAYWRITING AT MASSEY

Our playwriting faculty and students win awards and build communities. We support you to write your play from anywhere, in Aotearoa's only fully online Master of Creative Writing.

WHITI HEREAKA
STUART HOAR
ELSPETH TILLEY



# THEATRE CALENDAR 2023

*Professional Productions of Aotearoa Plays 1 January 2023 – 31 December 2023.*

## TOURING & INTERNATIONAL

### *Hide the Dog*

Jamie McCaskill and

Nathan Maynard

Sydney Festival

13 – 17 Jan

Perth Festival, Ten Days

on the Island Tasmania

1 – 19 Mar

Rising Festival Melbourne

16 – 17 Jun

Brisbane Festival

21 – 23 Sep

### *Paradise or the*

*Impermanence*

*of Ice Cream*

Jacob Rajan and

Justin Lewis

Indian Ink Theatre

Company

Sydney Festival

17 – 22 Jan

The Cultch Vancouver,

Canada 23 Mar – 2 Apr

Melbourne Tour

11 – 13 Jul

OzAsia Festival Adelaide

19 – 21 Oct

### *Big J: A New Legacy*

Jacob Dombroski

Everybody Cool

Lives Here

Circa Theatre 18 – 28 Jan

Ōtautahi Tiny Fest,

Hamilton Arts Festival

25 Feb – 3 Mar

Te Tairāwhiti Arts Festival

11 – 12 Oct

### *Please Adjust Your*

*G-String*

Margaret Austin

Fringe Bar 22 Jan, 11 Jun

Inverloch Arts School

26 Mar

### *She's Crowning*

Murdoch Keane and

Peter Burman

Auckland Pride 2 – 4 Feb

BATS 21 – 25 Feb

Basement Theatre 6 Sep

Melbourne Fringe

11 – 15 Oct

### *Skin Hunger*

Tatiana Hotere

Q Theatre 7 – 10 Feb

Oneonesix Whangārei,

Hawke's Bay Arts

Festival, Q Theatre

12 Oct – 11 Nov

### *Wonderful*

Richard Huber

Southland Tour, NZ Fringe

11 – 19 Feb

Dunedin Fringe 17 Mar

Little Andromeda

1 Mar – 1 Apr

### *A Tart on Tour*

Andrea Kelland

Q Theatre 15 – 19 Feb

Basement 18 – 22 Apr

Tahi Festival 13 – 16 Sep

### *Them Fatale*

James Hilary Penwarden

A Mulled Whine

Adelaide Fringe

16 – 26 Feb

Basement 16 – 20 May

### *Alone*

Luke Thornborough

Q Theatre 16 – 18 Feb

Edinburgh Festival Fringe

UK 4 – 28 Aug

### *Dark Radio*

Martyn Roberts

Afterburner

NZ Fringe 17 – 19 Feb

Dunedin Fringe

17 – 19 Mar

### *Te Tupua – The Goblin*

John Davies

Morra Hall Waiheke Island

18 Feb

Hamilton Arts Festival

3 Mar

### *Caution Wet Floor*

Jackson Burling

NZ Fringe 21 – 25 Feb

Centrepoint Theatre

16 – 18 Jun

### *Concerning the UFO*

*Sighting Outside Mt*

*Roskill, Auckland*

Reon Bell

Auckland Pride

21 – 25 Feb

Kia Mau Festival

7 – 10 Jun

Te Pou Theatre

7 – 11 Nov

### *Three Steps Back*

Emma Katene

NZ Fringe 23 – 26 Feb

Kia Mau Festival

14 – 17 Jun

### *We've Got So Much*

*to Talk About*

Sally Stockwell

Ōtautahi Tiny Festival

25 Feb

Tahi Festival 13 – 16 Sep

Lyttleton Arts Factory

20 – 22 Oct

Lopdell House 8 – 10 Dec

### *The Golden Ass*

Michael Hurst with

Fiona Samuel

Hamilton Arts Festival

26 Feb – 2 Mar

Stratford Shakespeare

Festival, Q Theatre,

Artworks Waiheke Island

1 – 29 Apr

### *Tea with Terrorists*

Sameena Zehra

The Magnificent Weirdos

Basement 28 Feb – 4 Mar

Tahi Festival 13 – 16 Sep

Hawke's Bay Arts

Festival, Tauranga Arts

Festival 20 – 28 Oct

### *To Be Frank*

Michael Hockey

NZ Fringe 28 Feb – 4 Mar

Basement 14 – 18 Mar

and 6 Sep

Melbourne Fringe

11 – 15 Oct

### *The Trojan War*

A Slightly Isolated Dog

Hamilton Arts Festival

2 – 3 Mar

Taupō Winter Festival

6 July

### *A Rare Bird*

Elisabeth Easther

Hamilton Arts Festival

2 – 4 Mar

Te Auaha 28 Jul

### *Flow*

Maraea Colombo and

Bronwyn Wallace

Late Bloomers

NZ Fringe,

Dunedin Fringe

5 – 19 Mar

### *Winding Up*

Roger Hall

Winding Up Productions

Mayfair Theatre Dunedin,

Civic Theatre Invercargill

6 – 13 Mar

### *The Savage Coloniser*

*Show*

Tusiata Avia, FCC

Auckland Arts Festival

- 9 – 11 Mar  
Nelson Arts Festival,  
Tauranga Arts Festival  
19 - 29 Oct
- Pipī Paopao*  
Rutene Spooner  
Auckland Arts Festival  
11 Mar  
Te Tairāwhiti Arts Festival  
6 Jul
- The Wedding*  
A Fools Company  
Basement 14 – 18 Mar  
Little Andromeda  
30 Aug – 2 Sep  
Melbourne Fringe  
18 – 22 Oct
- Skyduck: A Chinese Spy Comedy*  
Sam Wang  
Auckland Arts Festival  
14 – 17 Mar  
Circa 18 – 27 May
- Stories About My Body*  
Morgana O'Reilly  
Circa 15 – 25 Mar  
Toitō 28 – 29 Jul  
Tauranga Arts Festival  
24 – 25
- Real*  
Chai Pyle  
Little Andromeda  
10 – 11 Mar  
Dunedin Fringe, Nelson  
Fringe 16 – 24 Mar
- The King of Taking*  
Thom Monckton  
A Mulled Whine  
Adelaide Fringe Australia,  
Circa 16 Feb – 25 Mar
- Fish Saw*  
Sachie Mikawa  
Monfu  
BATS, Basement  
28 Mar – 6 Apr
- Promise and Promiscuity*  
Penny Ashton  
ASB Theatre Marlborough,  
Theatre Royal Nelson,  
29 Mar – 1 Apr  
4th Wall Theatre New  
Plymouth, The Meteor  
Hamilton, Sir Howard  
Morrison Centre Rotorua,  
28 Apr – 13 May
- Lytelton Arts Factory,  
Centrepoint,  
22 Jul – 13 Aug
- The Boy with Wings*  
Bridget, Roger and  
Comfrey Sanders  
Birdlife Productions  
Arts on Tour  
1 – 25 Apr
- Limited Time Only*  
Hone Taukiri  
Basement 4 – 6 Apr  
Te Pou 21 – 25 Nov
- The Worm*  
Carl and Peter Bland  
Nightson  
Bruce Mason Centre,  
Herald Theatre, Toitō  
Hawke's Bay 5 – 22 Apr
- Taku Waimarie*  
Willy Craig Fransen  
Taki Rua, National Tour  
24 Apr – 28 Jun
- Dakota of the White Flats*  
Red Leap Theatre  
Q Theatre, The Meteor,  
Oneonesix, Turner Centre  
Kerikeri, Te Auaha  
26 Apr – 4 Jun
- Back to Square One?*  
Anders Falstie-Jensen  
The Rebel Alliance  
Centrepoint Theatre  
29 Apr  
Teater V Copenhagen,  
Denmark, 8 – 10 June  
Waitaki Arts Festival  
Oamaru 18 – 19 Oct
- Kōpū*  
Tuakoi Ohia  
Te Rēhia Theatre  
Te Pou 4 – 14 May  
Kia Mau Festival  
6 – 10 Jun
- La Soupco*  
Abby Howells  
BATS, Basement  
9 – 27 May  
Little Andromeda  
5 – 7 Oct  
Tauranga Arts Festival  
21 Oct
- Moon*  
Barnie Duncan and  
Alistair Deverick
- Q Theatre 13 May  
Tauranga Arts Festival  
28 – 29 Oct
- ADHD ... The Musical*  
Maria Williams  
BATS, Q Theatre  
16 – 27 May
- Deacon the Vampire – Live*  
Jonny Brugh  
Basement, BATS  
17 – 27 May
- The Haka Party Incident*  
Katie Wolfe  
Te Pou, Kia Mau Festival,  
Sir Howard Morrison  
Centre Rotorua, Taranaki  
Arts Festival, Te Tairāwhiti  
Arts Festival 1 Jun – 5 Jul  
Tauranga Arts Festival,  
The Court Theatre  
19 Oct – 11 Nov
- Mr and Mrs Macbeth of  
Dodson Valley Rd*  
Gregory Cooper  
Professional Theatre Co.  
Theatre Royal Nelson  
1 – 15 Jun  
Sky City Auckland  
25 – 28 Jul
- CLAS103: Greek  
Mythology*  
Vincent Andrew-  
Scammell  
Basement  
6 – 10 Jun  
Little Andromeda  
7 – 9 Sep
- Mokomoko*  
Sherilee Kahui  
Kia Mau Festival  
6 – 10 Jun  
Taranaki Arts Festival  
7 Oct
- Brian 'n' Bronwyn*  
Millen Baird and Siobhan  
Marshall  
Hollywood Fringe, USA  
15 – 24 Jun  
4th Wall Theatre  
1 – 2 Sep  
Oneonesix 25 Nov
- Dirty Work*  
Jacob Rajan and Justin  
Lewis
- Indian Ink  
Q Theatre,  
Theatre Royal Nelson,  
Isaac Theatre Royal,  
Soundings Theatre  
Wellington, Baycourt  
Tauranga  
16 Jun – 20 Aug
- Transhumance*  
Ania Upstill  
Butch Mermaid  
Queerly Festival  
New York, USA  
17 – 22 Jun  
Reykjavik Fringe,  
Iceland 1 – 2 Jul
- Heart go ... BOOM!*  
Massive Theatre  
Company  
Basement, Oneonesix  
25 Jul – 4 Aug
- Antonio!*  
Ania Upstill, William  
Duignan and Andy  
Manning  
Butch Mermaid  
The Tank New York,  
USA, Edinburgh Festival  
Fringe UK  
26 Jul – 25 Aug
- Long Ride Home*  
Jack McGee  
Squash Arts Co.  
Te Auaha 2 – 5 Aug,  
Little Andromeda  
16 – 18 Nov
- The Shit Kid*  
Sarah Harpur  
A Mulled Whine  
The Meteor Hamilton  
14 Jul  
Edinburgh Festival  
Fringe, UK 4 – 27 Aug
- A Bit Too Much Hair*  
Butch Mermaid  
The Meteor  
13 – 14 Jul  
Edinburgh Festival Fringe  
UK 9 – 26 Aug
- I Want to Be Happy*  
Carl Bland  
Nightson  
Herald Theatre  
Auckland Live, Circa  
18 Aug – 30 Sep

**Yes Yes Yes**

Eleanor Bishop and  
Karin McCracken  
EBKM  
Auckland Theatre  
Company  
28 Feb – 1 Mar  
Edinburgh Festival  
Fringe, UK,  
Australian Tour  
19 Aug – 21 Sep  
ASSITEJ Artistic  
Gathering Novi Sad,  
Serbia 22 Nov

*Half of the Sky*  
Lennie James  
Massive Theatre  
Company  
TSB Showplace  
New Plymouth,  
Sir Howard  
Morrison Centre  
Rotorua,  
Herald Theatre  
Auckland Live  
30 Aug – 16 Sep

*Te Kuia me te  
Pūngāwerewere*  
Patricia Grace,  
adapted by  
Jamie McCaskill,  
translation by  
Hōhepa Waitoa  
Taki Rua  
National Tour  
31 Aug – 20 Sep

*Ono*  
Vela Manusaute,  
Poata Alvie McKree,  
Jthan Morgan,  
Michaella Steel and  
Tainui Tukiwaho  
Tahi Festival,  
Kōanga Festival  
7 – 24 Sep

*The Creeps*  
Catherine Waller  
Playhouse 46 at St  
Luke's New York,  
USA 7 Sep – 5 Nov

*Dr Drama Makes  
a Musical*  
James Wenley  
Theatre of Love  
BATS  
19 Sep – 23 Sep  
Q Theatre 2 – 4 Nov

**Ladies' Night**

Stephen Sinclair  
and Anthony  
McCarten  
Ben McDonald  
National Tour  
25 Sep – 22 Oct

*Upu*  
Upu Collective and  
Tour-Makers  
Te Tairāwhiti Arts  
Festival, Taranaki  
Arts Festival, Sir  
Howard Morrison  
Centre Rotorua,  
Tauranga Arts  
Festival, Hawke's  
Bay Arts Festival  
12 – 28 Oct

*Mission Control:  
Mars*  
Kip Chapman and  
Brad Knewstub  
Hackman  
Oneonesix, Taranaki  
Arts Festival,  
Tauranga Arts  
Festival 5 – 22 Oct  
  
*Te Tangi a te Tūi*  
Tainui Tukiwaho and  
Amber Curreen  
Te Rēhia Theatre  
and The Dust  
Palace  
The Cultch  
Vancouver, Canada  
19 – 29 Oct

*The Intricate Art of  
Actually Caring*  
Eli Kent  
Hope Theatre  
London, UK  
5 – 6 Nov

*Heartbreak Hotel*  
Karin McCracken  
EBKM  
Hawke's Bay Arts  
Festival 26 Oct  
Q Theatre  
28 Nov – 2 Dec

*Mrs Krishnan's Party*  
Jacob Rajan and  
Justin Lewis  
Indian Ink  
Actors Theatre of  
Louisville, Kentucky  
USA 6 – 17 Dec

**WHANGĀREI****Oneonesix**

*My Name is Laverne*  
Sarah Macombe  
31 May – 2 Jun

*Orlando: The Fish  
Eats the Softest  
Parts First*  
Jessie Alsop  
14 – 15 Sep

*Social Animal*  
Damon Andrews  
19 – 21 Oct

**TĀMAKI  
MAKAURAU****Auckland Theatre  
Company**

*Witi's Wāhine*  
Nancy Brunning  
ASB Waterfront  
Theatre  
2 – 20 May  
  
*Daddy Ubu*  
by Esaú Mora after  
Alfred Jarry  
ATC Youth Company  
ATC Studios  
7 – 9 Jul

*Basmati Bitch*  
Ankita Singh  
Q Theatre  
11 Jul – 5 Aug

*Things That Matter*  
Gary Henderson  
ASB Waterfront  
Theatre 12 – 27 Aug

*Future-Tense*  
by Alex de Vries,  
Shelby Kua, Te  
Huamanuka Luiten-  
Apirana, Tuakoi  
Ohia, Vira Paky and  
Zane Wood  
ATC Youth Company  
Basement  
22 – 25 Nov

**Basement Theatre**

*Man Lessons*  
Adam Rohe and  
Nī Dekkers-Reihana  
7 – 11 Feb

**Actor//Android**

Louise Jiang  
7 – 11 Mar

*Not Woman Enough*  
Hweiling Ow  
Proudly Asian  
Theatre  
28 Mar – 1 Apr

*Champions*  
Isabella McDermott  
18 – 26 Apr

*Cholo Fugue*  
Esaú Mora  
25 – 29 Apr

*Castaway Airlines*  
Anthony Crum,  
Leo Maggs and  
Jane Wills  
30 May – 2 Jun

*The Tempestuous*  
Penny Ashton  
13 – 17 Jun

*The Bitching Hour*  
Olivia Hall and  
Carrie Rudzinski  
27 Jun – 1 Jul

*Tea for Two*  
*World Tour*  
Tamara Gussy and  
Pedro Ilgenfritz  
1 – 5 Aug

*Henchmen*  
Amy Wright  
8 – 12 Aug

*Minnie and Judy*  
Murdoch Keane  
and Peter Burman  
15 – 19 Aug

*An Imposter*  
Ron Gallipoli  
29 Aug – 2 Sep

*Is This All That You  
Had in Mind?*  
Katie Harris  
29 Aug – 2 Sep

*Club Waack*  
devised by the  
company  
Prowl Productions  
12 – 16 Sep

*La Catrina*  
Matias Avaca and

Daniel Fernandez  
12 – 16 Sep

*The Cool Mum*  
Jo Prendergast  
28 – 30 Sep

*Om Fred!*  
Tom Webster  
3 – 7 Oct

*How to Throw a  
Chinese Funeral*  
Ji Lian Kwan  
Proudly Asian  
Theatre and  
Hand Pulled  
Collective  
3 – 14 Oct

*Code and Chaos*  
Joni Nelson,  
Sam Phillips and  
Nathan Joe  
Hot Shame  
10 – 14 Oct

*Basket Case*  
Ben Hobbs  
24 – 28 Oct

*Chick Habit*  
Nuanzhi Zheng  
Punctum  
24 – 28 Oct

*Chairs!*  
devised by the  
company  
14 – 18 Nov

*An Almighty Yes*  
Emma Lange  
14 – 18 Nov

*Jingle Bellethon  
Telethon*  
Janaye Henry and  
Bea Gladding  
29 Nov – 22 Dec

**Q Theatre**

*Wheel Head*  
Beth Kayes  
Co Theatre Physical  
22 – 25 Feb

*All the Atoms in  
the Universe Really  
Made My Day*  
Trent H Baumann  
Monfu  
23 – 25 Feb



*The Wild*  
Julia Croft and  
Virginia Frankovich  
19 – 23 Apr

*Émilie*  
Sophie Lindsay  
19 – 23 Sep

*Waiting*  
Shadon Meredith  
26 – 30 Sep

*Losing Face*  
Nathan Joe  
Punctum  
9 – 19 Aug

*Moe Miti*  
Red Leap Theatre  
22 – 27 Aug

*Boom Shankar*  
Aman Bajaj  
and Bala Murali  
Shingade  
Agaram  
6 – 16 Sep

*Dr Drama Makes  
a Show with You*  
James Wenley  
Theatre of Love  
4 Nov

*Christ! What a  
Night!*  
Chris Parker and  
Tom Sainsbury  
12 – 16 Dec

### **The Pumphouse**

*Rangitoto*  
Geoff Clendon  
Turning Tide  
Theatre  
23 Feb – 5 Mar

.co.nz  
Mark Wilson  
11 – 13 Jul

*Mike and Virginia*  
Kathryn Burnett &  
Nick Ward  
Tadpole  
31 Aug – 10 Sep

*Boy Afraid/Rushing  
Woman*  
Terry Hooper and  
Aimee Gestro  
19 – 24 Sep

### **Silo Theatre**

*Live Live Cinema:  
Night of the Living  
Dead*

created by Leon  
Radojkovic  
Hollywood Cinema  
2 – 12 Nov

### **Te Pou Theatre**

*Hemo is Home*  
Tainui Tukiwaho  
with Te Rongopai,  
Jade, Paku,  
Le-Toya and Mia  
3 – 12 Mar

*Te Haerenga a  
Hoiho*  
Tainui Tukiwaho  
Northland Tour  
7 Jul – 11 Aug

*He Māori?*  
Īhaka Martyr  
20 – 23 Sep

*Wrestling with  
Wregret*  
Tyler Wilson-Kokiri  
14 – 18 Nov

*Ngā Reta*  
Te Huamanuka  
Luiten-Apirana  
28 Nov – 2 Dec

### **Tim Bray Theatre Company**

*The Lighthouse  
Keeper's Lunch*  
Ronda and David  
Armitage, adapted  
by Tim Bray, songs  
by Christine White  
Regional Tour  
1 Apr – 6 May

*The Magic  
Faraway Tree*  
Enid Blyton,  
adapted by  
Tim Bray, music  
by Marshall Smith  
The Pumphouse  
24 Jun – 15 Jul

*Roadl Dahl's  
The Twits*  
Tim Bray  
Regional Tour  
16 Sep – 28 Oct

*The Santa Claus  
Show*  
Tim Bray  
The Pumphouse  
2 – 22 Dec

### **Other Venues Tāmaki Makaurau**

*Era and the  
Carbonauts!*  
Grae Burton,  
music and lyrics by  
Peter J Graeme  
Lake House Arts  
Centre Takapuna  
12 – 22 Jan

*Butterfly  
Smokescreen*  
Laura Irish and  
Jim Fishwick  
The Barden Party  
Eastern Viaduct  
2 Jun – 6 Aug,  
22 – 30 Sep

*Ghost Trees*  
Gary Stalker  
Plumb Theatre  
Pitt St Theatre  
10 Sep

*Pirate Popsicle and  
the Bubble Dragon*  
Sarah Somerville  
TAPAC  
27 Sep – 6 Oct

*Welcome Home*  
No.3 Roskill  
Theatre and JLP  
Turner Reserve  
2 – 4 Nov

### **TAIRĀWHITI**

#### **Te Tairāwhiti Arts Festival**

*Whakapaupakihi*  
Ani-Piki, Tatana,  
Tame-Hoake and  
Hamiora Tuari  
Development  
Season  
War Memorial  
Theatre  
13 – 15 Oct

### **PAPAIOEA**

**Centrepoint Theatre**  
*Pick a Pack of*

*Pirates*  
Joy Cowley  
17 – 21 Apr  
*QEIII: Black Betty*  
David Geary  
6 – 28 May

*Frangipani  
Perfume*  
Makerita Urale  
24 Jun – 13 Jul

*The End of the  
Golden Weather*  
Bruce Mason  
adapted by  
Raymond  
Hawthorne  
7 – 9 Sep

*Two Guitars*  
Jamie McCaskill  
30 Sep – 14 Oct

*Mannbann'd*  
Michael Galvin  
18 Nov – 16 Dec

### **TE WHANGANUI- A-TARA**

#### **Circa Theatre**

*Pinocchio –  
The Pantomime*  
Simon Leary and  
Gavin Rutherford  
3 – 14 Jan

*Birdhouse*  
Trent Baumann  
and Sachie Mikawa  
Monfu  
18 – 29 Jan

*In Bed with  
Schoenberg*  
Dave Armstrong  
25 Feb – 17 Mar

*Cringeworthy –  
Swinging in the 60s*  
Andrea Sanders  
1 – 29 Apr

*Land of the Long  
Long Drive*  
Catriona Tipene  
and Ryan Cundy  
8 – 22 Apr

*Funny Gurl!*  
Anita Wigl'it  
12 – 22 Apr

*The Coven on  
Grey Street*  
James Cain  
Red Scare  
29 Apr – 27 May

*The Tantrum*  
Java Dance  
2 – 5 May

*The Emperor's  
New Clothes*  
Sacha Copland  
Java Dance  
21 Jun – 1 Jul

*The Adventures of  
Tahi and Kōwhai*  
Little Dog Barking  
4 – 21 Jul

*The Sun and the  
Wind*  
Tainui Tukiwaho  
Taurima Vibes  
28 Jul – 26 Aug

*PSA: Election 2023*  
Jamie McCaskill,  
Thom Adams and  
Johanna Cosgrove  
29 Jul – 26 Aug

*Mr Fungus Dreams*  
Fergus Aitken and  
Thom Monckton  
19 Sep – 7 Oct

*The Bicycle and  
the Butcher's  
Daughter*  
Helen Moulder  
and Sue Rider  
Willow Productions  
25 Oct – 11 Nov

*Treasure Island –  
The Pantomime*  
Simon Leary and  
Gavin Rutherford  
18 Nov – 23 Dec

*The Secret Lives  
of Extremely Old  
People*  
Rachel McAlpine  
25 Nov – 17 Dec

### **BATS**

#### **Six Degrees Festival 24 Jan – 11 Feb**

*Monkey Lynda*  
Chanwai-Earle,

*Raru e Maruakaītā*  
Poe Tiare Tararo,  
*The Veil* Ezra Seuli,  
*Timelines* Morgan  
Delaney, *Daisy* Vahey  
Bourne and Lani Swann

*Core*  
Hattie Salmon  
30 Mar – 1 Apr

*Interrupting Cow*  
Micky Delahunty  
4 – 12 April

*Cocked and Reloaded*  
Comedy Gold  
18 – 22 Apr

*Ted Talks Crimes*  
Jeremy Hunt  
2 – 6 May

*Bangwagon*  
Jim Stanton  
24 – 27 May

*Five Slices of  
Another Life*  
Etta Bollinger,  
Hamish Boyle,  
Helen Vivienne Fletcher,  
Steff Green and  
Angela Pope  
*The Magnificent Weirdos*  
21 – 24 Sep

*Fatal Fame*  
Zoe Snowdon  
31 Oct – 4 Nov

*Wedding Bazaar*  
Dylan Matthew  
Prasad Menon  
31 Oct – 4 Nov

*Only Bones*  
Daniel Nodder  
14 – 18 Nov

*Naturally Curious*  
Evangelina Telfer  
14 – 25 Nov

*Hausdown*  
Ruby Carter and  
Katie Hill  
28 Nov – 2 Dec

*Too Much?*  
Tessa Waters with  
Victoria Falconer,  
Jarrad Payne and  
Nick Zwart  
29 Nov – 2 Dec

## **Kia Mau Festival 2 – 17 Jun**

*'Avaiki Nui Social* Tu Raa  
and Miria George, *Flames*  
Roy Iro, Reon Bell and  
Sepelini Mua'au, *Coolie:  
The Story of the Girmityas*  
Miss Leading (Nadia  
Freeman), *O le Pepelo,  
Le Gaoi ma le Pala'ai –  
The Liar, the Thief and  
the Coward* Ui Natano  
Keni and Sarita So,  
*Shifting Centre* devised  
by the company, *Slowing  
the Sun* Īhaka Martyn,  
*Waiwhakaaata – Reflection  
in the Water* Eddie Elliott,  
Niwa Milroy and Cian  
Parker, *The World's First  
Lovers* Jessica Latton

## **NZ Fringe Festival 17 Feb – 27 Mar**

*Be Good* Wellington  
Young Actors, *The  
Bell Tolls* Drama Club  
Productions, *The  
Birdmann and Egg:  
Fantastic* Trent H  
Baumann and Sachie  
Mikawa, *The Butler Did  
It* Isabella Murray and  
Revena Correll Trnka, *El  
Camp* *Machismo* Max  
Nunes-Cesar *Five Words  
or Less and Knights of  
the Table* Oh That Theatre  
Company, *Gaslight Me*  
Bronwyn Wallace and  
Marea Colombo, *Get  
Stuffed* Semi Cho, *Goths  
Against Classical Music*  
Curtain Call Company,  
*Hell School: The Musical*  
Theatre of Love, *His Dark  
Relationships* Simon  
Burgess, *I am King/  
Queen* Roymata Holmes,  
*Just The Tip or a Guide  
to Strip Club Etiquette*  
Vixen Temple, *King Shit*  
Pretty People, *Long  
Cloud Makes a Show in  
48 Hours* Long Cloud  
Youth Theatre, *Mens  
Rea: A Guilty Mind* Kim  
Bailey, *Miss Scrappe  
Presents: Fool Affrontal*  
*Rudity* Madeline Ann

Smith, *Moonroe's Happy  
Hour* Jackson Cordery  
and Laura Oakley, *My  
Grandfather is a Canoe*  
Faumuina Felolini Maria  
Tafunai, *Nailed It* The  
Awkward Company,  
*The Pre Conditioned*  
Hori Charles N Charge,  
*Professor Wild Returns*  
Austin Harrison, *Ratking*  
Michaela Steel, *The  
Retreat* JK Productions,  
*Rich People Cry Too*  
(*And Other Lessons I  
Learnt from Telenovela*)  
Lucy Dawber, *Sexy Golf*  
Boy George Fenn, *Tales  
from the Strypt* Rachel  
Atlas, *To All the Friends  
I've Lost* Before Sarah  
Bradley, *Two Very Serious  
Plays* Alex Fox and  
Ryan Holtham, *U R Here*  
Barbarian Productions,  
*Watch Out* Gay Panda  
Dennis Eir Lim, *What  
Keith Did* James Kiesel  
and Alex Suha, *Where  
the Water Lies* James  
Ladanyi, *Who Hears the  
Cries of the Children?*  
Te Puawai o te Aroha  
Productions, *Whole*  
New Woman Freya  
Daly Sadgrove, *Women  
Drinking Hemlock*  
Sacha Ackland

## **Tahi Festival 6 – 16 Sep**

*Ātete | Resistance|*  
ചരമുത്സവ്  
Swaroop Prameela  
Unni, *Flutter* String Bean  
Puppets, *Verbatim*  
William Brandt and  
Miranda Harcourt

## **Te Auaha**

*Another Mammal*  
Jo Randerson  
Long Cloud Youth Theatre  
9 – 10 Feb

*The Boy Who Caused  
9/11*  
Ken Mizusawa  
Whitireia Stage and  
Screen  
23 – 24 Aug

## **Te Whaea National Dance and Drama Centre**

*Re: Lease*  
Long Cloud  
Youth Theatre  
9 – 12 Aug

*and what remains*  
Miria George  
Toi Whakaari:  
NZ Drama School  
30 May – 1 Jun

*The Birthday Girl*  
Albert Belz  
Toi Whakaari:  
NZ Drama School  
27 May – 1 Jun

## **Other Venues Te Whanganui-a-Tara**

*Jessica Bo Peep*  
Amalia Calder  
Kidzstuff  
Tararua Tramping Club  
8 – 15 April

*Wonderkind*  
devised by  
Kerryn Palmer,  
Timothy Fraser,  
Emma Rattenbury  
and Ana Lorite  
Capital E  
Soundings Theatre  
May 2 – 5

*Shalakazap!*  
Jenny Wake  
Kidzstuff  
Tararua Tramping Club  
1 – 8 Jul

*Goldilocks*  
Amalia Calder  
Kidzstuff  
Tararua Tramping Club  
23 – 30 Sep

## **WHAKATŪ**

### **The Professional Theatre Co.**

*CHONA: The Complete  
History of Nelson*  
(*Abridged*)  
Gregory Cooper  
Founders  
Heritage Park  
1 – 10 Dec

## ŌTAUTAHI

### The Court Theatre

*Sense and Sensibility*  
Penny Ashton  
11 Feb – 11 Mar

*Crash Bash 2023:*  
*Open Roads*  
Brendon Bennetts  
Canterbury  
Schools Tour  
20 Feb – 24 Mar

*Rēwena*  
Whiti Hereaka  
25 Mar – 23 Apr

*Be Like Billy?*  
Rutene Spooner  
25 Mar – 22 Apr

*Cinderella*  
Gregory Cooper  
11 – 22 Apr

*O le Toa*  
Jake Arona,  
Talia-Rae Mavaega  
and Rachel Brebner  
Canterbury Schools Tour  
28 Aug – 22 Sep

*The Kuia and the Spider*  
Patricia Grace adapted  
by Jamie McCaskill  
27 Sep – 7 Oct

### Cubbin Theatre Company

*Sportsball*  
Christchurch  
Art Gallery  
22 – 25 Feb

### Little Andromeda

*I Didn't Invite You*  
*Here to Lecture Me*  
Amy Mansfield  
8 – 10 Feb

*Outcast!*  
Play Space Productions  
11 Feb

*Ukraine to Middle-Earth*  
*and Back Again*  
Nataliya Oryshchuk  
17 – 18 Feb

*Benedict Cumberbatch*  
*Must Die*  
Abby Howells  
7 – 8 Apr

*Colour Me Cecily*  
Bea Lee-Smith  
20 – 21 Apr

*Mā te Wā*  
Ben Brown, Popi Newbery  
and Tom Trevela  
13 – 16 Sep

*Confessions of a*  
*Mummy's Boy*  
Turn Round Theatre  
20 – 23 Sep

*I Can Not Give Hugs*  
Merlia de Ridder,  
Lucy Sparks and  
Chloe Robertson  
23 – 25 Nov

*The Flight Before*  
*Christmas*  
Cally Castell and  
Rebekah Head  
12 – 23 Dec

### Other Venues Ōtautahi

*The Engine Room*  
Ralph McCubbin Howell  
Hagley Theatre Company  
17 – 24 Jun

## ŌTEPOTI

### Dunedin Fringe

*The John Show*  
John Gouge,  
*Lamb to the Slaughter*  
Suitcase Theatre,  
*Lessons Learned from*  
*Hannibal Lecter* Angela  
Pope, 愛, 媽媽 (Love,  
Mum) Cynthia Hiu Ying  
Lam, *The Many Deaths*  
of Jeff Goldblum  
Meg Perry

### Regent Theatre

*Oliver Copperbottom*  
Penny Ashton  
15 – 16 Dec

Theatre  
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Auckland, Northland

Theatre  
NEW ZEALAND  
Waikato, Bay of Plenty,  
Taranaki

Theatre  
NEW ZEALAND  
Nelson, Marlborough,  
Tasman

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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: 39

Community performance licences issued: 79

International licences issued: 16

School/tertiary performance licences issued: 141

Scripts circulated: 3220

Scripts/drafts received: 317

Paid script assessments: 5

## PUBLISHING

*40 New Zealand Scenes for Youth* | Editor: Shane Boshier | Design: Cansino & Co | Editing and Production: Whitireia Publishing

*Birds* by Dianna Fuemana | Editor: Lisa Fuemana | Design: Phila Lagaluga of SixOneNine | Typesetting: Evie Birch | Series Editor and Production: Salesi Le'ota

*The Gangster's Paradise* by Leki Jackson-Bourke | Editor: Lisa Fuemana | Design: Phila Lagaluga of SixOneNine | Typesetting: Evie Birch | Series Editor and Production: Salesi Le'ota

*Still Life with Chickens* by DF Mamea | Editor: Lisa Fuemana | Design: Phila Lagaluga of SixOneNine | Typesetting: Evie Birch | Series

Editor and Production: Salesi Le'ota  
*Urban Hymns* by Miria George | Editor: Lisa Fuemana | Design: Phila Lagaluga of SixOneNine | Typesetting: Evie Birch | Series Editor and Production: Salesi Le'ota

## Playmarket Annual

Editor: Shane Boshier | 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 and Ihaka Martyn

## AWARDS, COMPETITIONS AND PROJECTS

**Bruce Mason Award Winner:** Tainui Tukiwaho

**Adam NZ Play Award Winner:** *Supernova* (renamed *Hyperspace*) Albert Belz

**Runner Up:** *Mitochondrial Eve* Keagan Carr Fransch

ABOVE RIGHT: Lisa Fuemana and Salesi Le'ota at the 2023 Playmarket Accolades. Image: Philip Merry.



**Best Play a Māori Playwright:**

*Supernova* (renamed *Hyperspace*) Albert Belz

**Best Play by a Pasifika Playwright:**

*Icky* Viki Moananu

**Best Play by a Woman Playwright:**

*Mitochondrial Eve* Keagan Carr Fransch

**Dean Parker Award:** *Em* Sam Brooks,

adapted from *Emma* by Jane Austen

**McNaughton South Island Play Award:**

*Give Way – The Musical* Steven Page

**Playwrights b4 25 Winner:** *Boys and Girls*

*at the School Silent Disco* Jack McGee

**Runners Up:** *The Patupaiarehe* Tia Hibbert,

*Pane Provocations* Teherenui Koteka

**Plays for the Young Competition:**

*Pipī Paopao* Rutene Spooner (3-8 year olds),

*Wild Feelings* Beth Kayes (8-12 year olds),

*Bomb* Rachel Callinan (Teenagers)

**Brown Ink Development Programme:**

*Numb* Joshua Iosefo, *Bridge Park Tennis*

Club Roy Iro

**Asian Ink Development Programme:**

*Eggs* Joseph Trinidad

**Te Hono/Connection:** Ruth Agnew and Lynda

Chanwai-Earle, Kathryn Burnett and Allison

Horsley, Yael Gezentsvey and Emily Duncan,

Murdoch Keane and Nathan Joe, Ngahiriwa

Rauhina and Tainui Tukiwaho, David Riley

and Vela Manusaute, Craig Thaine and Shane

Bosher, Luke Thornborough and Stuart Hoar,

Georgina Titheridge and Lee Smith-Gibbons,

Ben Wilson and Ralph McCubbin Howell

**Creative New Zealand Playmarket Pasifika**

**Script Advisor Residency:**

Leki Jackson-Bourke, Sarai Perenise-Ropeti,

Dolina Wehipeihana

**Playwrights in Schools programme with**

**Read NZ Te Pou Muramura:** Dave Armstrong,

Leki Jackson-Bourke, Lindsey Brown

**Robert Lord Writers' Cottage Residencies:**

Merryn Jones, Nicola Pauling, Ruth Paul,

Elena de Roo, Ruby Macomber, Mary

MacPherson, Claire Mabey, Vivienne Plumb

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

*Hemo is Home* Tainui Tukiwaho with Te

Rongopai, Jade, Paku, Le-Toya and Mia,

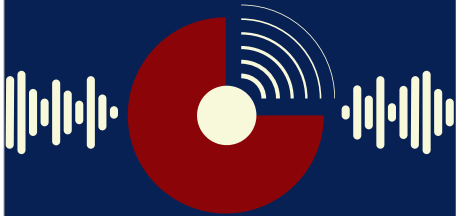
*The Secret Lives of Extremely Old People*

Rachel McAlpine, *Two Guitars* Jamie McCaskill,



# AROUND THE TABLE

A PODCAST BY CREATIVES, FOR CREATIVES



Welcome to Around The Table, a podcast by creatives for creatives. We bring creatives in Aotearoa New Zealand around the table for discussions around why the arts are crucial to the wellbeing of our people, advocating for a more creative Aotearoa, and everything in between.

PAST GUESTS INCLUDE:



**ARI GRANT**  
Hauora Coach



**DARCELL APELU**  
Artist & Lecturer



**ROSE KENNEDY**  
Culinary Artist



**JASON TE METE**  
Tuatara Collective

AND MORE!

*Icky Viki Moananu, Five Dollar Bill Rachel Callinan, Bridge Park Tennis Club Roy Iro, Numb Joshua Iosefo, Eggs Joseph Trinidad, Kōanga Festival, NASDA, Ōtepoti Theatre Lab, Proudly Asian Theatre Fresh off the Page, Tahī Festival.*

**Playmarket Playfellow:** Alister McDonald

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# E/MERGE

## FESTIVAL OF CREATIVITY

Mark your calendars, our  
E/MERGE Festival is back  
from **7<sup>th</sup>–24<sup>th</sup> October!**



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# THE LAST WORD

*Marianne Infante, one of the driving forces behind Proudly Asian Theatre, on finding joy in creative practice.*

**It's ironic writing a piece about how I find joy in my creative practice when the world around me feels like it's always in a state of crumble — the decline of funding support, TVNZ job cuts, ongoing genocide — there are so many things sucking the joy out of me. Something that continues to be true is that art survives adversities. I just wished it wasn't so brutal trying to survive sometimes. But I guess the timing to write this is fitting because the reality is the flip side of joy is despair, and right now I really need to find the joy otherwise I may as well pack up my hypothetical creative bags and move on to a different career. And I just don't see myself doing that any time soon...**

## **So. How do I find joy in my creative practice?**

Having robust social health and having my tribe help me find joy. Truth be told, if my social health is looked after, I don't need to go looking for joy – it *brings* me joy. They say you can't pour from an empty cup and my social health cup is filled by my tribe: my whānau, my friends, Proudly Asian Theatre, my colleagues, and by conscious choice, myself. And of course, all the social things I consume, such as theatre shows, social media and current affairs.

These are the sort of people who drive good social health for me:

That supportive group chat where you can share your good news.

The right people on speed dial for emergency mental breakdowns.

That person who backs your work and sings your praises in rooms you're not even in.

That mate that never gets exhausted forwarding you workshops or call outs just to make sure you never miss an opportunity.

That person who asks which funding stream you're applying for to make sure you aren't wasting your time applying for the wrong thing.

That friend who donates their last \$5 just so they can help you make your Boosted campaign. That partner that tells you it's okay to cry when you're facing unprecedented circumstances.





That person who reminds you that “being an empath is a strength and not a weakness.”

Family who remind you to rest and look after yourself.

That friend who gasses you up and shouts, “you are not shit, you are *the* shit.”

That colleague that grabs your hand and says, “we’ve got this.”

Those group mates who don’t make you feel guilty when you have to bow out of events, because they understand your social battery is empty.

I’ve been able to enjoy my creative practice because very early in my career, during my training, I was gifted a saying by one of my rangatira. Sadly, they passed on too early. When they spoke these words, I didn’t realise their taonga would shape the way I exist in this industry today.

“Be kind to people, be ruthless with everything else.”

Be kind to people. I always knew how to be kind, but as years have passed, I’ve learnt just how vital this mindset is to my practice. This mahi, the luxury of living, the gift of

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## BEING AN EMPATH IS A STRENGTH AND NOT A WEAKNESS

telling and holding stories has always been about the people:

The people I cherish. The people I love. The people I’ve gotten to know. The people I’ve lost. The people who have let me down. And the people who continue to disappoint and anger me. The people I had to move on from. The people who have raised me, held me and championed my growth.

Also, let’s be honest, most of us in this business know it’s not just about how hard you work, it’s about the people you know, the people that know you or know *of* you.

This industry is too small and too hard to think about working with rude and unkind people.

Be ruthless. This industry can throw you into a whirlwind, and it’s extremely special to have genuine people who can handle the chaos with you. It’s a privilege to have people who have your best interests at heart, call

you out on your bullshit, yet ground you at the same time. Those people bring me an insane amount of joy, sanity and quite frankly, they inspire me to be ruthless. Ruthless means to be “without pity of compassion for others”, but I’ve reframed that for myself — to be without limit, to be without fear, to not let anyone take your agency, to not be minimised. With that, I take on opportunities that come my way ruthlessly. I have learnt to succeed is to make mistakes, to take risks, to rest without guilt, to love with my heart on my sleeve, to vulnerably share my curiosities and dreams, to be kind to my healing wounds, and to be painfully honest with myself and my work. I don’t let moments fly by without being genuine with people.

I could list a bunch of things that give me joy in this industry, and there are plenty! I had many draft statements on how to answer this question and write about it, but the easiest way to tackle this question was by asking

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## I DON'T LET MOMENTS FLY BY WITHOUT BEING GENUINE WITH PEOPLE

myself the opposite: What do I think will ruin, or dare I say, kill my creative practice?

Loneliness.

I don’t think I could be truly joyous in my creative mahi if it weren’t for the people whose shoulders I’ve stood on, whose hands have held my heart, whose minds have given me permission to live larger than life. They give me the joy and privilege to continue existing in this creative world and I will never take that for granted.

PREVIOUS PAGE: Marianne Infante at Fresh off the Page reading, Proudly Asian Theatre, 2019.  
Image: John Rata Photography.

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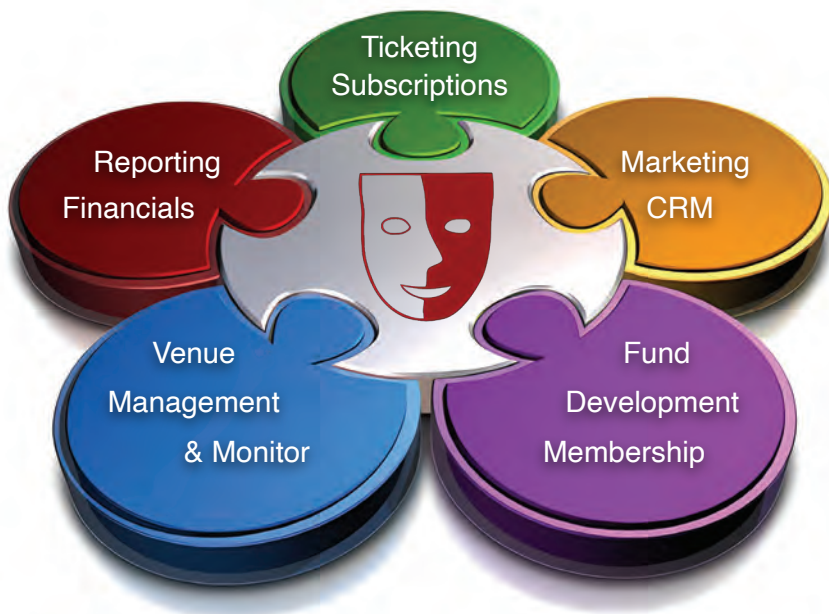
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