

# PLAYMARKET ANNUAL NEW ZEALAND THEATRE 2020



**FUTURE THEATRE SHOCK**  
Aotearoa theatremakers'  
visions for the times ahead

**THEATRE COMEDY LOCKDOWN**  
Kura Forrester, Chris Parker,  
Tom Sainsbury & Hayley Sproull

**FIRING THE CANON**  
The start of a history of queer  
playwriting

**No 55**  
SPRING 2020



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# KA MUA, KA MURI

ISSUE *No 55*

Ka mua, ka muri is a whakataukī meaning ‘walking backwards into the future’ – a conception of looking to the past to inform the future. This whakataukī comes to mind reading the rich collection of articles in this New Zealand theatre annual. Articles that record personal responses to living in a Covid-19 enforced lockdown and consider future prospects; that reflect on writing in a country other than our own; record our queer theatre writing; provide lessons learnt shifting between performing comedy and theatre writing, and creating in new ways during a lockdown. It discusses new regionally driven festival programming; reflects on the genesis of past writing; and provides thoughts on the legacy of a playwriting elder who has recently passed, Dean Parker. All this with round-ups in images and words of what’s been on our stages in the twelve months since June 2019.

At the time of writing we are facing the challenges of community transmission of Covid-19 after coming out of an initial lockdown that had seen theatres black since late March. This period has given us all impetus to assess what theatre might look like in the future. The challenges to sustain a theatre career have escalated (the livelihoods of independent practitioners, in particular, have all but vanished). The way of the world is in the dock, facing important questioning. Age-old festering is exploding in the streets.

There were so many challenges that were with us long before the year began – pictured is a scene from The Court Theatre production of Tavita Nielsen-Mamea’s *Au Ko Tuvalu*, which takes us into the future, to the Pacific homeland of the world’s first climate change refugees. Making change is much discussed in this Annual; some has already taken place. Exploration of digital works has informed hybrid presentation modes. Structures are being challenged. It will be fascinating to contemplate all of this in a year’s time.

Mark Amery has once again edited the Annual in his inimitable fashion and I am especially grateful for his guidance in the commissioning of exactly what we need to read right now.

**Murray Lynch**  
Director, Playmarket



## PLAYMARKET ANNUAL

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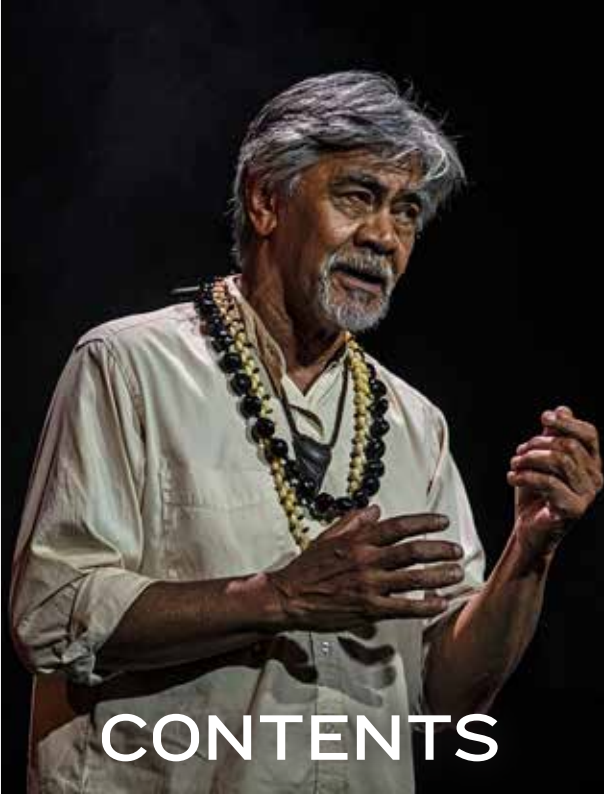
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COVER IMAGE: Kura Forrester and  
Chris Parker. Image: Matt Grace.

PREVIOUS PAGE: *Au Ko Tuvalu* by  
Tavita Nielsen-Mamea, The Court Theatre.  
Image: The Court Theatre.



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CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: *Upu* curated by Grace Taylor, Silo Theatre and Auckland Arts Festival, Q Theatre. Image: Raymond Sagapolutele; *Mr Red Light* by Carl Bland, Nightsong, Auckland Live. Image: Andi Crown Photography; *Story Studio Live*, Capital E National Theatre for Children. Image: Neil Price; *Te Manawa Takeover*, Centrepont Theatre 2020 Basement Company. Image: Sam Millen; *Be Longing* by Lauren Gibson, Vault Festival, London UK. Image: Danny Kaan.

# Why I wrote the play I wrote

RIWIA BROWN

*on Roimata*

I was walking along Paekākāriki beach on a chilly autumn day with my baby boy, Ariki, on my back and my eight-year-old daughter, Micah, by my side. We were being filmed for an arts programme in the early '90s. I was being interviewed as an emerging Māori woman playwright, for my play *Roimata*.

To this day, I am amazed how this play gave me so many opportunities and was pivotal to my future writing career.

The title of the play is the name of the central character, Roimata. She is a young Māori woman from the East Coast who goes to visit her city slicker half sister Girlie. The drama unfolds when she is seduced by a fast talking gang member Eddy, and meets up with her childhood sweetheart, Kevin, who has become a young Salvation Army Cadet.

Originally I wrote it for a half hour television drama. It was in response to a call from the Drama Department for applications for New Zealand stories, which was housed in the Avalon Television Studio in the Hutt Valley.

I was stunned when my application was successful and not long after that I actually received a visit from Philippa Campbell, who was in the Drama department at the time. Although she suggested various ways

to advance the narrative, I didn't have the writing craft necessary at the time to develop it further. Philippa and I would work together in the future.

However, your future is often formed by your past. My grandmother encouraged creativity, we were expected to perform skits or a musical item whenever the extended family gathered. I was also privileged to work with and be influenced by some of the great pioneers of Māori theatre and film; Don Selwyn, Tama Poata, Rowley Habib, Wi Kuki Kaa, Barry Barclay, Bruce Stewart, Jim Moriarty, Tungia Baker and, my personal favourites, my talented brothers Rangimoana and Apirana Taylor.

Rangimoana formed Māori theatre company Te Ohu Whakaari in the early '80s, producing out of the Depot theatre, which later became Taki Rua, I helped out whenever I could; running errands, working backstage, front of house and occasionally I got an acting role, although I didn't always feel comfortable on stage, I enjoyed the camaraderie and witnessing the creative process in action.

It was Apirana's first play *Kōhanga* that inspired me to write. So when there was a request for new stories for the group to work



on, after some personal angst, I offered *Roimata* and handed over my original television script to my peers to critique – nerve racking! Thankfully it was received well, and with their help and encouragement I spent many long nights working on drafts, all written by hand, until eventually I had a finished play.

Rangimoana assembled a talented cast. The leads were; Arihia Bristowe, Poto Stevens, Peter Kaa and Apirana. Everyone worked incredibly hard and although none of us got paid, there was lots of laughter and good will. We sat down for a meal together at least twice a week. I was given the job of publicity. I must admit I was horrified when I first saw it written in print ‘writer Riwia Brown.’ I really felt they should have seen the play before giving me the title of writer.

I was both nervous and excited on opening night, but once the lights came up on the first scene I found it exhilarating to see the dialogue come off the page and the characters come to life. From that moment I was hooked and so began my early writing career. A few years later I followed up with *Te Hokina*. This play continued Roimata’s and Girlie’s story, although it was set on the East Coast.

In 1989 I readapted *Roimata* back to a television script, it was chosen to be included in the ‘E Tipu e Rea’ Māori anthology series produced by Larry Parr. I was further challenged when I was asked to direct. I was still young enough and sufficiently naive to accept the challenge. While working on this series I met Lee Tamahori. Little did I know that he and I would work together in the future on the film *Once Were Warriors*.

---

## FROM THAT MOMENT I WAS HOOKED

ABOVE: Arihia Bristowe, Poto Stevens and Apirana Taylor in rehearsal for *Roimata* by Riwia Brown, Te Ohu Whakaari, The Depot, 1988. Image: Dominion Post Collection Alexander Turnbull Library.



# AUCKLAND

BY JESS MACDONALD

It's impossible to reflect on Auckland's theatre scene without feeling the impact of those final months April to July, with nothing programmed. Covid-19 left a gaping hole, with productions shelved indefinitely as theatre spaces waited out the pandemic. Countless artists have turned to second jobs, which are now their only way of staying afloat; actors, unsure of future work opportunities, have turned to different trades. But, at the time of writing, theatre is on the horizon. Q theatre has fundraised \$150,000 to re-open their doors; Basement Theatre have a Christmas special lined-up and made use of their empty space by offering creatives opportunities to rehearse. ATC will host a mini festival in September.

The preceding nine months demonstrated the positive impact of diverse voices – and those diverse arts-makers are statistically the most vulnerable when it comes to financial hardship.

The 2019 winter season at Q kicked off with a reworking of the 2015 TAPAC production *A Fine Balance*. Adapted from Rohinton Mistry's epic Booker Prize nominated novel and directed by Ahi Karunaharan, this collaboration between Auckland Theatre Company and Prayas (a South Asian community theatre company) marked a fresh take for ATC. With a large South Asian cast and sweeping narrative, the storytelling flourished, thanks to funding which surpassed theatremakers' expectations. If only this diversity funding could continue within future years of ATC programming.

Karunaharan's next offering, *My Heart Goes Thadak Thadak* for Silo in November at Q, was another sweeping South Asian story – Bollywood meets the Wild West. A smaller

cast led us through Karunaharan's original script, with notable performances from Mustaq Missouri and relative newcomer Shaan Kesha.

Prior to lockdown, the ever-inclusive Basement Theatre presented a line-up of theatremakers who are anarchic, provocative and revelatory. October's spoken-word night *How We Survive* (Olivia Hall and Carrie Rudzinski) and *An Organ of Soft Tissue* (Erin O'Flaherty and Rachael Longshaw-Park) sought to dissect conversations in a post #MeToo world. *Have You Ever Been With An Asian Wxman?* explored Asian sexuality and fetishes from the raw perspectives of Gemishka Chetty and Aiwa Pooamorn – women who felt as if they hadn't had a platform before, but were now able to voice their desires and demands without censorship.

*Animal*, Arlo Green's adaptation of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, was another provocative offering from The Basement. The ambitious production filled the small studio with a huge ensemble cast, and clever costume and set design transformed us to a farm in modern day Aotearoa. Audience participation and an abundance of humour marked the production – as did Green's directorial prowess.

During lockdown, Green took part in an online production of Chekov's *The Seagull* – acting alongside Jennifer Ward-Lealand, Nathalie Morris, Bruce Phillips and more – bringing Eli Kent and Eleanor Bishop's re-imagining to life. The confines of a computer screen, and plotting which utilised Zoom, left audiences with mixed reactions – but the four 30-minute segments succeeded in engaging and inspiring other theatremakers to embrace the 'new normal.'



## THE PASSING OF TIME DOESN'T ALWAYS EQUATE TO SIMPLER STORIES

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP

LEFT: *Year of the Tiger* (虎—hú) by Alice Canton, White Mess, Basement Theatre. Image: Julie Zhu.

*Black Lover* by Stanley Makuwe, Auckland Theatre Company, Q Theatre. Image: Andi Crown Photography.

*Reclamation* by Elyssia Wilson-Heti, FAFSWAG, Basement Theatre. Image: Pati Solomona Tyrell.

*A Frickin Dangerous Space-Mas* by Pax Assadi, James Roque and Jamaine Ross, Basement Theatre. Image: Andi Crown Photography.

*My Heart Goes Thadakk Thadakk* by Ahilan Karunaharan, Silo Theatre, Q Theatre. Image: Andi Crown Photography.

*We're Going on a Bear Hunt* by Michael Rosen and Helen Oxenbury, adapted for the stage by Tim Bray songs by Marshall Smith and Tom Fox/The Sound Room, Tim Bray Theatre Company, The Pumphouse. Image: David Rowland/One Image.

*Owls Do Cry* by Janet Frame, Red Leap Theatre Company. Image: Andi Crown Photography.

PREVIOUS PAGE: *Odd Daphne* by Joshua Iosefo, The Odd Family, Mangere Arts Centre. Image: Elena Folau.

In a striking contrast to online theatre, West Auckland's Te Pou theatre re-programmed to create Front Yard Festival. Whilst respecting social distancing measures, they visited the elderly and put smiles on the faces of those most isolated by Covid-19. The ten-minute shows, directed by Tainui Tukiwaho and Jarod Rawiri, featured nostalgic love stories and harked back to simpler times.

But stories of times passed doesn't always equate to simpler stories. Love, comedy and tragedy were given fresh perspectives at *The Works of William Shakespeare by Chicks* as part of the Auckland Fringe. This fist-punching whirlwind re-worked the canon and alleged that women helped to create the classics. Jess Loudon's boisterous performance tied the all-female ensemble cast's performance together.

Another of Silo Theatre's ground-shaking productions was a reworking of *Upu*, re-presented as part of the Auckland Arts Festival. Directed by Fasitua Amosa with poems curated by Grace Taylor, the all-star cast brought an eclectic mix of material to life. Audiences continue to hunger for authentic stories with Māori and Pasifika storytellers at the helm. *Upu* was a great, near-seamless example of this – as well as a beautifully articulated work of art.

The March 2020 co-production of *Black Ties* - written by John Harvey and Tainui Tukiwaho and co-produced by Ilbjerri and Te Rēhia theatre companies at both Auckland and Wellington festivals – was another attempt to provide space for indigenous stories to be told, this time in the form of a comedy about a newly-engaged couple who try to bridge the Tasman sea and unite their Aboriginal and Māori families. The offering – which contained racist and transphobic slurs – appeared to divide audiences on where to draw the line between accurate depictions of conflict, and work which may cause offence.

It's clear the burden of representation for minority arts-makers remains at the forefront of conversation in Aotearoa. The Power of Inclusion Summit – aimed mainly at filmmakers but attended by a wide-ranging demographic of cross-disciplinary practitioners – sparked controversy because of its high-ticket price and the subsequent alienation of those it aimed to include in 'the conversation.' Now, more than ever, it is time for minority creatives to be given opportunities to be decision-makers, and not just offered a seat at the table.

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# LEANING INTO LIVENESS

*Kate Powell on new approaches to  
playwriting during Covid-19.*

An artist's creative process is rarely static. Process shapes itself around shifting combinations of factors. However, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has been near universal. With lockdown and beyond, Aotearoa's theatre sector has been hit hard. This was uncharted territory. A flood of cancellations and postponements meant livelihoods hung in the balance. But many proved agile and resilient, finding new ways to continue from home.

The result of this pandemic is a burgeoning cultural zeitgeist. We are already seeing changes in artistic processes. How artists interact and work will continue to be impacted for years as our cultural landscape continues to shift. At the same time, it's important to capture how this moment has affected a handful of playwrights and producers who provide the hallmarks of ripping yarns – love, trials, tragedy, resilience and innovation.

## **Eleanor Bishop and Eli Kent**

Auckland Theatre Company's 2020 programme had only just begun when Covid-19 scuppered their plans, but they were one of

the first to adjust to a 'new normal' presenting theatre online. Their choice, a digital adaptation of Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull* co-written by Eleanor Bishop and Eli Kent.

"I became curious as to whether Zoom theatre could be formally and theatrically interesting," says Bishop. "I was interested in seeing characters who were actually on Zoom in the reality of the play (our time), but I was also drawn to approach classical material (timeless).

"I turned to *The Seagull* because all the characters are filled with longing – a longing for connection – and are having deep reflections about their lives. That fitted the current mood in lockdown. In the play itself, there is a sense of tedium, of languidness, of nothing happening – except these deep fundamental shifts in the characters and the relationships. So actually highly dramatic. Again – that felt like our current moment."

Bishop sees herself as director first, writer second.

"My approach to playwriting has always been tied directly to the formal interests



I have in making theatre... whether it's new work or an adaptation, the process is led by writing, but the writing develops alongside the design and staging, and progresses through conceptualisation and workshoping to a final presentation." It's a process she says that wasn't altered during lockdown, except for its pace.

"We could work quickly because we were adapting something that is completely brilliantly structured. And we weren't tampering at all with the overall structure, or even with the structure of a line (unless we had to for logic). We did do a treatment for the overall arc of *The Seagull* but initially we were adapting each act/episode only two days before we began rehearsal each week. As we went along we were able to think ahead a bit more, and incorporate the voices of each actor into the writing, and the locations and designs we had available to us. So the process was both highly structured and incredibly organic."

Making the switch to writing with Eli Kent over Zoom proved beneficial "since we were making a work set and rehearsed on zoom,

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## AUDIENCES LOVE RELEVANCE AND THAT CHANGES QUICKLY IN OUR CURRENT TIME

it just allowed us to fully absorb the medium. So a pro is that the process fed directly into the product"

Because of the warm reception, Bishop believes there is a future for digital theatre: "Theatre that wishes to directly and critically engage with the digital space in which we now spend much of our lives. This is distinctly different from screen work. I'm interested to see where the form goes after Covid – when the form isn't directly responding to the pandemic, but more to digital space in general. Obviously digital theatre is much more accessible, which is great."

Bishop says she felt supported in her work. "Sometimes I think the conversation here in Aotearoa draws too strong a distinction between 'playwriting' and 'devised/making work', and operates under the assumption that 'playwriting' leads to a 'text based traditional



## FUTURE THEATRE WILL BE LEAN, LOCAL AND ABOUT BRINGING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

play' and 'maker-led' work leads to something more formally innovative or non-text based. The development processes of different theatres lean heavily on those distinctions and are geared towards those outcomes. Those distinctions aren't particularly useful to me as someone who makes text based work that is formally adventurous."

Bishop hopes the sector continues to embrace flexibility and innovation. "Sometimes work needs time and space to develop and sometimes work can be put up quickly. Audiences love relevance and that changes quickly in our current time."

Bishop sees the current artistic conversation as being shaped not by lockdown itself but "by the way the virus has exposed the failures of capitalism."

"People are turning a critical eye towards powerful structures such as the internet, systemic racism and globalisation. For the privileged, there is a little more time and space to think about how we got here and where we go next. So I hope the future stories on our stages are about history, the future and big ideas. I think that future theatre will be lean, local and about bringing communities together under our commonalities – in direct opposition to the internet, where corporate platforms heighten the importance of 'opinion'."

### Ralph McCubbin Howell – Trick of the Light Theatre

As lockdown set in, Trick of the Light was mere days away from premiering *Lysander's Aunty* at The Court, a project McCubbin Howell describes as "a big beastie" he'd been working on for a couple of years.

"This is longer than I usually spend on a script – where it's just me and my laptop – so I was hanging out to see how it worked in performance... that part of the process for this script will have to wait a little while."

McCubbin Howell describes his pre-Covid writing process as "varied, but often involved workshoping drafts with actors on the floor, putting an early first draft up in front of audiences, and then honing the script through performance."

PREVIOUS PAGE: *Front Yard Festival* by Te Pou Theatre.  
Image: Julie Zhu.

ABOVE AND FOLLOWING PAGE: *Chekov's The Seagull* by Eli Kent and Eleanor Bishop, Auckland Theatre Company.  
Image: Auckland Theatre Company.



Trick of the Light was also developing two other pieces and they were able to change tack with their playwriting process.

“One of them is a show without words, so we were already thinking of experimenting with a non-traditional script, and the writing work I’d done on it was largely to do with structure. Our plan for the next stage had been to workshop the ideas with some actors, and from there consolidate it into a script, but instead Hannah and I spent lockdown making a storyboard – a visual script to use as a starting point when we do get back in the room with our collaborators.”

Trick of the Light didn’t let lockdown put a damper on their international plans either, creating their second piece in collaboration with an international company.

“We had been hoping to line up a workshop when our touring schedules put us in the same part of the world, but with that off the cards we’ve been workshoping over the internet instead. This show has an environmental bent, and we’d already been looking at ways to make and tour it that minimised its carbon footprint, but now we’re leaning further into staging it remotely as part of its actual form, as this means it’s somewhat future-proofed against changing alert levels and travel restrictions.”

McCubbin Howell spent a lot of his pre-Covid life on the road, which saw “carving out pockets of time” between gigs to work in concentrated bursts. “Post-Covid our schedule was suddenly wide open, and with time on our hands it’s been great to bring new projects forward and work on them for longer. I did find it pretty

hard to focus on writing over lockdown. Despite the alarming amount of scheduled work that fell over in those first couple of weeks, time seemed to disappear amidst the day-to-day business of staying alive.”

He feels very lucky to have the government we’ve got. “Especially in contrast to the experience of our artist friends in other parts of the world. It’s significant that our Prime Minister and Minister of Finance are also Minister and Associate Minister of the Arts. The wage subsidy is straight up one of the most consistent pay cheques I’ve ever received, and certainly relieved some of the stress in the short term when our work all disappeared. Playmarket have been incredible in keeping on keeping on, hunting out opportunities, and going in to advocate for playwrights over the last few months. Looking further into the future feels much more precarious – we’ve brought forward work on a bunch of new projects, but we’ve built a career out of touring, and we’ve no idea when or to what extent that will return.”

Post lockdown, Trick of the Light made a play on Zoom for Circa Theatre, a short horror satire *It’s Behind You!*

“Because of the short time frame, and because it was working in a medium that crossed the line between theatre and film, we wanted to bring in someone else, so I wrote with Anya Tate-Manning. Anya was great for this because she’s way more versed in writing for the screen than I am, is savvy with the horror genre, and is funny as hell. Over a couple of weeks we bashed out a draft on Google Docs, and made



WE DON'T REALLY  
KNOW WHAT'S AROUND  
THE CORNER, BUT  
WE'RE OPTIMISTIC.

changes after reading it through with the actors, before they performed the thing live over Zoom. Whilst the speed of the process was familiar, in this case the show was only performed once. In some ways it felt liberating to write for a one-off occasion, but man oh man I look forward to a return to writing for the stage, where the thing keeps evolving after opening night and changes in response to the audience.

"There was a rush to put things up online in the first few weeks of lockdown, and whilst there was some cool stuff and exciting possibilities in making theatre through this medium, there's also a danger of letting the genie out of the bottle and devaluing our work.

"Making theatre in lockdown has brought home what's so special about what we do. I loved making a show online, and we're leaning into this on another project – at the same time, we're not filmmakers, and for me theatre is inherently about a live exchange between performer and audience (whether IRL or not). In the post-Covid world, I hope we lean into that liveness, while taking forward ways of working that are less destructive to the environment."

### **Amber Curreen – Te Pou Theatre**

"Pre lockdown our writing process was hurried and meeting needs" recalls Curreen of the Auckland Māori theatre. "Myself and the people I work with often write because we think that a story needs to be told and it isn't. We are constantly trying to keep Māori theatre on stages, so that's our approach to making theatre. We want to provide opportunities to make sure there are Māori artists onstage and audiences are seeing Te Ao Māori onstage."

These were needs that only got greater during lockdown, says Curreen. "We have gone a lot more local. Prior [to lockdown] we were really interested in going international..."

Te Pou's usual annual programme of four shows and two festivals was transformed into the Front Yard Festival. This travelling festival consisted of six performers visiting rest homes and private addresses to put on 10-minute outdoor performances.

"We weren't able to engage with our kaumātua the way we normally do – with a big show" says Curreen. "But we wanted to keep honouring live theatre rather than going straight to digital and whakamana (empower) live performance and our kaumātua."

Curreen says during lockdown they didn't get time to relax because the way they were running the company needed to be completely changed. "And we needed to engage with advocacy work and stakeholders. So while we didn't get a lot of time to write, I found that for myself and those around me we got to pick up on work we had been thinking about for a long time; we were able to let [those ideas] flourish."

"Creative New Zealand worked their arses off trying to respond in the best way possible. There was also a space for more advocacy for playwrights and for Māori writers to step up during that time.

There was a desire amongst independent writers to come together and support each other more – there's been a lot of growth worldwide from that realisation. Because during Covid-19 the world was saying that we need to keep people more connected, and

we were allowed to see connection as a need. We became more humane, more caring and sensitive to what people needed and the ways in which communication tools can fulfil that.”

Looking forward, Curreen hopes that whakawhanaungatanga (family relationships) “are taken as active verbs – they are thrown around but during Covid-19 there were active creations of reciprocal and familial relationships and highlighting how each of them support artists as individuals.

“I’ve also seen artists demanding more interesting ideas of themselves and not just creating theatre for the sake of creating theatre” she continues. “If we’re going to bring people to be together in a room we’ve got to have a damn good reason to do so...”

Curreen says Covid-19 also highlighted the need for Māori and Pasifika creatives to have “their own space just for them. One fear coming out of the government announcing new funds was that it is just replicating the same system.

“What can we do to make sure it doesn’t do that and doesn’t continue the imbalance where European versions of stories are what is being made into art?”

Out of these concerns came the Mana Moana Creatives Facebook page, specifically for Māori and Pasifika creatives. “It’s an autonomous and self-determined collective for advocacy” explains Curreen. “So we can know who each other is and what we are doing and share our calendars”

### **Debbie Fish – Circa Theatre**

Establishing Circa Theatre’s Distance Programme during lockdown included a straightforward weekly Facebook Live with theatre artists as well as commissioning two short pieces for Zoom – *Trick of the Light’s It’s Behind You!* and *Found in Translation* created by Te Pou in association with Te Rēhia. “We wanted to allow the artists freedom to create whatever they felt would resonate, using this medium,” says Debbie

Fish.” *It’s Behind You!* was a wonderful, whimsical piece and because it was set in lockdown but aired during level 2 it was already looking at the lockdown experience we’d lived through as a past experience – that time aspect was interesting. *Found in Translation* is about language misunderstandings, following two people on a first date over Zoom with a translator”. In terms of themes coming out of these Lockdown pieces, Fish notes that “although they are quite different, they both had a comedic, misunderstood element to them – maybe that’s because of the mode of using Zoom, with all of the potential for misunderstandings that provides.”

ATC are planning to broadcast at least one production digitally a year from now on. When asked about Circa utilising digital forms post-Lockdown, Fish responds “We’re talking about it. I’m personally interested in keeping a strand of this digital presentation going forward specifically for accessibility because it allows people who previously couldn’t get out of the house to access these awesome quality works. I’m particularly interested in the cross interaction between artistic mediums, with artists finding ways to blend different artistic forms to create new artistic experiences.

“Live streaming isn’t the future of theatre but there are things we can take from its use during Covid-19 that inform the way we work... how do we ensure the theatre is safe for artists who want to keep making and ensure that they are still getting enough from the box office? We haven’t figured this out entirely, we can only speak to what we know right now – we can’t make assumptions about the future because it’s been such an unsettled year and we don’t really know what’s around the corner, but we’re optimistic.”

With the year of uncertainty we’ve had, Fish acknowledges the need “for artists, as they often do, to have multiple possible future opportunities going ahead – kind of like a Schrödinger’s reality.”

# A THEATRE COMEDY LOCKDOWN

*Mark Amery zooms with Kura Forrester, Chris Parker, Tom Sainsbury and Hayley Sproull about being both theatre and comedy writers.*

**Chris:** Hayley!

**Tom:** Hayley!

**Kura:** Hayley!

**Chris:** You're supposed to be on the TV right now!

**Kura:** Hang on! It mustn't be live!

**Tom:** Why are you looking so good Hayley?

**Hayley:** You're fucking kidding me, I'm wearing a Jono and Ben hoodie that's got cream down the front. You're full of shit Tom. Hi Mark!

**Mark:** This conversation is so made for print.

**Chris:** "I've got cream all over, I'm a fucking wreck, Hi Mark!"

**Mark:** Alright, I'm going to take off my video and let you guys talk.

**Hayley:** Honestly, it's going to make me laugh knowing you are secretly there.

**Mark:** Well, I'll keep my microphone on...

**Tom:** OK. We've got this statement here...

**Chris:** Beautiful. I love it when Tom takes leadership. He's going to do his classic "Let's run this scene five times from the top really fast."

**Hayley:** We're going to keep it concise because that's what we're all known for... real tight.

**Chris:** We're not going to wander.

**Tom:** Good luck with that guys. Let's begin. What is the relationship between playwriting, theatre and comedy for you from your beginnings to now? Who was the first one here to do a comedy festival show?

**Chris:** Hayley was first. 2012 with *Miss Fletcher Sings the Blues*.

**Kura:** Damn, girl!

**Hayley:** Straight out of drama school. It was like, 'well I guess I won't be doing anything else anymore, so here's an idea I'd already been developing in drama school.' And the people at BATS were like, "Put it on in May for Comedy Fest". So it was accidental.

**Tom:** What I really like about you Hayley is that there was a stage where every single year you were doing a solo show, usually with a musical and a theatrical bent. Where are you at with that kind of high output?!

**Hayley:** Two years no-show!



**Chris:** But on every fucking TV show in New Zealand.

**Hayley:** Other stuff took over, and my desire to make it work in with everything else wasn't strong enough.

**Tom:** That first year – was cancelling a relief, or was it terrible?

**Hayley:** It was beautiful. I was doing [TV show] *Golden Boy* and rather than high tension I was Cruisy Suzy. But as soon as I got into an audience – as you all know – it was like, immense jealousy.

**Tom:** Have you done straight stand-up?

**Hayley:** A few times, but mostly I've hidden behind my piano.

**Chris:** It's so crazy our relationship to Comedy Festival back in Wellington days, like out of drama school. It wasn't like Comedy Festival – it was more like weird brackets in which to put a show on. Now our relationship with that festival is really different. I didn't think of the comedy industry in any regard.

**Hayley:** Back then it was just an excuse to have a show.

**Chris:** In terms of the comedy industry the rules are laid out with that traditional form. I think a lot of us have struggled to exist inside of those; if you're not doing *The Classic*, the pub gigs, haven't got a seven-minute tight set, you're not in comedy. I think for a lot of creatives like us, who have a different strategy or outcome goal, it's hard to keep up with that pace.

**Hayley:** Yeah, I think I've made at this point, either collaborating with people like yourself Chris or solo, maybe eight shows, and last year was the first time I performed at the *Classic*. So many people are there once if not twice a week. I felt like it was back to square one.

**Chris:** Same. I tanked because I wasn't used to performing there. I'm downstairs (the Basement Theatre) but in their eyes that's not a comedy venue, that's a theatre.

**Tom:** I don't know what it's like for you guys with a solo, but when I'm doing a theatre show I have no stress and I have complete faith that a story will come out; story leads the way. But when you're doing comedy you've got nothing to start off with. With theatre you've got a premise to hang off.

**Hayley:** You say “I’m a comedian” and they say “Give us a joke” and you say “Well, I don’t really do... I can’t show you a scene of a play that I’ve written...”

**Tom:** Why did you start doing traditional stand-up Ku, what was that?

**Kura:** I started doing it in London because I had no outlet, I didn’t know anyone. So I went along to open mic nights and I had to do five minutes. So I did the opening of *Tiki Tour* which was four characters, but I didn’t care because nobody knew me. And then I did decide to give stand-up a go. Like I had a notebook with me and wrote jokes – because that’s what people were doing! But it didn’t work out for me, that style. I gave gags a go.

**Hayley:** It’s that box-ticking style – where you run in and say “hey hey guys how we feeling tonight!?”

**Chris:** *Camping*, [one of three plays Sainsbury and Parker wrote together] was a transcendent moment for me and Tom where our power felt like our difference. It was like trying to write a play within a comedy festival context. Trying to ride both horses. While in other people’s minds the play may, at a guess, have felt like the next Bruce Mason...

**Tom:** Do you think of all of us Chris your solo comedy shows are the most theatrical?

**Chris:** No. I approach them like I’m approaching any show. I always think that if you just put a mic in a stand people will think it’s a stand-up – and then you just write a theatre show. I’ve always worked like that. *Camp Binch* was like that. I worked with Jo Randerson, a theatre director. *Iconique* was the same. I knew the thematics and the story arc. Actually *Iconique* was different in one way: I was getting stand-up opportunities so I had to swallow my pride and as part of that write seven minutes. That was quite liberating. To prove that I could do that: have gear up my sleeves I could just pull out. But then I had to make a show around this material I couldn’t contextualise. It felt like making a burger the wrong way.

**Kura:** And having to go out to those pubs on the North Shore and stuff. I’ve done lots of those little gigs where you go and do seven minutes...

**Tom:** Those are so good to practice and get your things brushed up. But I can’t relax the entire day if I have a seven minute gig that night – your day’s been wasted. To me the stress is no different to doing an hour show.

**Hayley:** When they give you such a limited time every second of that has to be punchy whereas when you’ve got the audience’s attention for an hour you can take them on more of a journey.

**Chris:** Countering this, what do you three think are things theatre could learn from the comedy industry?

**Kura:** Great question.

**Tom:** I think actors can learn to be less precious. Comedians will come off saying “I just completely died. I’ll drink tonight and tomorrow will be a new day.”

**Hayley:** Whereas as an actor you’re like ‘No! It’s not ready!’

**Tom:** Comedians are like ‘I got one joke out of trialling ten minutes of jokes’.

**Chris:** Comedy is created entirely with the audience in mind, so stand-ups test as much as they can on a crowd, whereas I feel like with theatre it’s so much about what you’re trying to articulate. Comedians will test things out to the point where even on a bad night they will have a good hour. Also, when they talk about what their shows are about comedians are good at knocking it down to a tight sentence. Like Eli Matthewson: “My show this year is about me using my degree in classics for the first time.” And I’m like boom, you’ve sold it. Whereas in theatre it’s like: “We’re really interested in fragments of homosexual identity in this postinternet...” and, you’re like, “you’ve lost me.”

**Kura:** I agree with Chris about comedians having a connection with their audience – it’s what they’re working for all the time.



## JUST BECAUSE WE'RE LAUGHING DOESN'T MEAN WE'RE TAKING THINGS LIGHTLY

PREVIOUS PAGE: *Hauraki Horror* by Thomas Sainsbury and Chris Parker, Basement Theatre, 2014. Image: Andi Crown Photography.

LEFT: *Vanilla Miraka* by Hayley Sproull, Nuts and Bolts, 2016. Image: Mikel Taylor.

That magic thing between performer and audience happens more with comedy.

**Hayley:** You'd notice the most Ku because in recent years you've done a lot more drama than perhaps the three of us. You switch quite easily.

**Kura:** I do love a good drama... I was also going to say: ticket prices. Comedy is cheaper and seems more accessible, less hoity toity lah de dah.

**Chris:** It's a bit like with [play] *Hudson and Halls*. I rode that show through my shifting identities between theatremaker and comedian. My ear was always going for gags and that drove a lot of the show in a way. I was trying to eke more out of the audience every time – I was like a heroin addict – and at the same time director Sophie Roberts was like, “you need to learn the power of delivering your lines well every night.” Like it's not about just constantly decorating the cake, but rather learning how to bake the cake every night in a way that feels fresh. That's a power I feel actors have over comedians.

**Hayley:** Tom, for you what came first: performance and comedy or playwriting and performing solo. When did it cross?

**Tom:** It started with writing plays for other people first, and they were all very serious. And then Renee Lyons got me to act in a play

with her we wrote as a two-hander. And then I did all the Yeti plays with Natalie Medlock and Dan Musgrove, and that was part of the comedy festival. But I think it was getting involved in *Snort* and everyone was doing comedy that I thought, “I'll give this more of a go.” And then it was me and Lana Walters – we both did *Raw* together and got into the finals. Then you go on the progression – so I've probably done a lot more Classic than you guys.

What I like about comedians is their branding and business sense – they're a lot more clued up. Then there's the skills of the MC – which is so useful, because it can pay your rent for a month.

**Chris:** Tom, as someone who has written – how many plays do you reckon?

**Tom:** Dozens yes.

**Chris:** What amount of your identity is as a playwright but has recently shifted towards comedian, and now fucking influencer! I mean, who do you write for now?

**Tom:** I think they all feed each other, and that it's good like that. I guess the stuff I do on Snapchat comes from doing those terrible monologues back when I was in my early 20s. And then stand-up makes you conscious of the gag rate, so the two blend together.



NEW ZEALAND

# Comedy

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**Hayley:** That's such a good note about what comedy can give theatre. I think I will always frame my solo shows as more theatre than stand-up, but it makes you feel more responsible for your gag rate and that's always going to make your work better. To get rid of the shit that's not funny and not working.

**Chris:** Would you write another serious play Tom?

**Tom:** Yes, absolutely, I love drama.

**Hayley:** I know I said I didn't want any more drama shit but Tom, if you want to write a real drama...

**Tom:** Oh My God, imagine the four of us in a serious play!

**Chris:** Me doing another dead fag.

**Hayley:** I want to do that serious acting, like when they do it through the teeth.

**Tom:** But you're so good at pushing comedy through to tragedy.

**Hayley:** That's what some of my shows have been about – that we can use comedy to feel a bit sad. When I say I don't want to do anything serious it doesn't mean I don't want to talk about things or not make things of any substance, it's just that laughter will always be the way-in for me.

**Kura:** Yes I would never write a drama, but I'm happy to do other people's. But I bawled my eyes out in *Camp Binch*, Chris's show. And I cried making my show *Kura Shoulda Woulda* – or I cried out of frustration I think. But I definitely know the bits in the show where I'm trying to 'say a bit now'.

**Chris:** Totally.

**Tom:** Because you totally want to do a *Nanette* in seven minutes right?! That's your dream!

**Hayley:** You have to go up and down right. Like that was me after *Vanilla Miraka*. I was, 'cool, now I'm going to make the dumbest silliest gag heavy light thin show I can, and I am going to enjoy that just as much.'



**Tom:** Two minutes to go, has anyone got a statement on the journey from theatre into comedy?

**Hayley:** Tom, you start.

**Tom:** I'm so glad I have married them both and I would never want to go one or the other. I feel they both feed into each other.

**Kura:** Yeah I agree. I think when people ask what is the difference I think there is none. I love live; both are alive.

**Chris:** Let's just go until we get cut off – I would say mine is that there is no hard and fast rule as to how it works. We're so accustomed to seeing everything in a binary way – like you either exist in the Basement or the Classic, but it's like Ku is saying. They can inform each other and they can exist in each other's spaces.

**Hayley:** Agreed. I tautoko all of the thoughts, just beautiful. I will never pick a side and they will always be blurred.

**Chris:** I kind of feel a traitor to both industries in a way.

**Hayley:** Yeah, same.

**Chris:** I'll snitch to comedy about theatre, and I'll snitch to theatre about comedy. Like all the time.

Thomas Sainsbury appeared as Bruce Mason on the cover of Playmarket Annual #41 in 2008 (a forerunner of his Snapchat work). Hayley Sproull appeared on the cover issue #48 with other theatremakers. Chris Parker and Kura Forrester appear on the cover this year for the first time.

ABOVE: *Half of the Sky* by Lennie James developed in collaboration with Bree Peters, Mark Mitchison, Max Palamo, Miriama McDowell, Sam Scott and Scotty Cotter, Massive Company. Image: Andi Crown Photography.

# FUTURE THEATRE SHOCK

*What do we want our theatre to be?*

**2020 has seen unprecedented disruption to the theatre. There has never been a better and, conversely, harder time to dream. There has been a pause within which to reflect, and also question what we are doing. It's time for vision. We have gone out to a range of creators and supporters of new NZ theatre to ask what the opportunities are that we need to grasp.**

**Mark Amery, Editor**

**LYNNE CARDY**  
**Associate Director, Auckland Theatre Company**

Right now, it is too hard to think about the future. While we are back in rehearsal and planning to reopen our doors, the theatre industry is decimated. Jobs are toppling like dominoes and the inequities in society are clearer now than ever. It's tough and it's exhausting. And, while I am a recent convert

to making digital theatre thanks to Eleanor and Eli's *Seagull*, I don't have a cache of ideas on how to work better and can't yet reflect on what I've learnt. Like many people, I am too busy struggling with how to be now, not tomorrow. So, no predictions, only wishes.

I wish that investment in the arts increases 100% and around the country grassroots projects and community companies



flourish and more people have wonderful experiences. I wish that our professional theatre companies grow in strength and number and partner with the community to tell relevant stories by all sorts of people of all ages, and that artistic direction is completely different; open, democratic, responsive, and nurturing, reflecting us now. I wish that our unique theatre history – here – is elevated and celebrated and stored somewhere we can all access it so we can learn and remember the whakapapa of those who have come before us.

Last night I was in ATC's big rehearsal studio (once the Mt Eden RSA ballroom) auditioning actors in their 20s to make up an ensemble to perform *48 Nights on Hope Street*. The music was on, the welcome warm, the atmosphere dynamic. It was like all the celebration and congregation that has ever happened in that room seeped in through the walls and up through the floor and met the energy of those actors and turned our audition into a wonderful workshop/story party. The future was in that room. Now.

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## REMEMBER THE WHAKAPAPA

ABOVE: *Lysander's Aunty* by Ralph McCubbin Howell, The Court Theatre. Image: Danielle Colvin Photography.



## THE ROLE OF PLAYWRIGHT HAS STARTED TO OPEN UP

ABOVE: *Like a River* by Jo Randerson, Massive Company Nui Ensemble, Basement Theatre. Image: Andi Crown Photography.

FOLLOWING PAGE: *Black Ties* by John Harvey and Tainui Tukiwaho, Ilbijerri Theatre Company and Te Rēhia Theatre, 2020 New Zealand Festival of the Arts. Image: Matt Grace.

### AMBER CURREEN

**Creative Producer, Te Rēhia Theatre Company/Te Pou Theatre**

I've always gotten a buzz out of people being together in a moment experiencing the same thing in their different ways. It's like we're all taking part in telling the same story. It makes Christmas jingles bearable – in our own ways, we're all in this together. I felt this so strongly over lockdown with our team of five million that we were all connected valiantly making a story of change together. This time taught me two things that will impact how we make theatre in the future.

Firstly, connection through story is the pure heart of why I make. We must connect people more deeply in whatever form it must take and we must whakamana story. Story in all its glorious forms needs time; time to develop, and time to deeply consider the best ways for it to be shared.

Secondly, if we can do this, we can do anything. There is no longer any denying that we as a nation can accept bold and drastic life-changing decisions for all, when its needed. It's like we've lifted the nation's skirts and we all know what knickers we're wearing – we can't unknow it. Ours is a systemically racist country and we all are forced to take part in telling the story of European eminence daily. This hurts us all, kills our teammates and urgently needs to change.

## ANDREW FOSTER

**Circa Councillor, theatre designer and director**

I'm in a borrowed bach. It's the first holiday we've taken our kids on that doesn't have a gig attached. Fiji to make a dance show. Edinburgh to workshop. The sort of thing we do as artists.

My family would have been holidaying at Edinburgh Festival. It's the far-reaching impact on the livelihood of our theatre culture at home that we now find ourselves pondering.

The blessing is the way now everything is viewed with fresh eyes. My university drama lecturer once instructed our class to start the next day one hour earlier, promising that the familiar would become strange, inspiring and new. As artists we thrive on that sense of new.

We haven't traditionally invested much time or resource into research and development in the arts. But there's been a lot of strategic thinking in the wake of Covid-19. We have been thinking about survival and our place in society. And a great deal of that thinking has become redundant almost as soon as it has been embraced, such is the uncertainty.

Sitting in a cafe on holiday, I feel our industry faces the same issues as it did before. The woman who made my coffee, has never been to the theatre. Why would she? She has Netflix. She has Lake Taupo on her doorstep. Theatre is not a part of her life.

We've looked to foreign markets to extend the reach of our work. It's partly a desire to see the world and partly to feel 'heard' or understood. Kiwis have a lingering sense that they don't belong in their own culture. Looking forward I'm actually excited by the scaling down of the arts, getting back to grassroots. So much we can't control right now, but in reconnecting with our communities we might find the sense of 'new' to lead us forward.

I'm reminded of studying Greek tragedy. Theatre is still about recognising our common experience.

## FINNIUS TEPPETT

**Playwright and screenwriter**

My idea of the role of a 'playwright' has started to open up. Lately I think of myself more as a tradie, someone who works with his hands. I'd argue the point of a playwright is to put on a good play, not to be a genius with the best ideas in the room. The thought of being Master of Ideas—having the most insightful takes on whatever, getting an audience to sit through a litany of my clever reckonings—is less interesting to me than showing up to a worksite with my toolbox and putting the skills from my apprenticeship to use. I don't know what the future of theatre will be, but my own practice is developing in that direction: collectivism, community, solidarity, etc.

The most rewarding work I've done lately has been collaborative at its core, and the best stuff has come out of big, long, free explorations, experiments and chats. The effect has been a network of creative power and true consensus building, rather than a top-down hierarchy. The voice of the play becomes collective, rather than a troupe rallying behind a single prophetic truth-teller (aren't there enough people in the world who have the solution to everything?). I feel useful in these collectives, I've got a skillset from education and experience that fills a gap, which frees others to worry about parts of the play closer to them. Theatre has always been collaborative, but is still usually led by a single, booming voice. As a writer I'm interested in building up those other voices, rather than having them be mouthpieces for my own singular thoughts.



No doubt we need to rebuild. In the past we've not been the most supportive of each other as an industry. We need to be kinder, to recognise, nurture and respect the mana of our artists and the community they bind together around us. We need to work together to build strength and root the arts deeper in our nation's common experience.

In this small town there's a strange sense Covid-19 never happened. Cafés and takeaways, bike trails and hot pools are all open. There's a vintage car festival at the lake. A circus is playing down the road. And it is Kiwi voices you hear in all the tourist haunts. My children, their passion reflects our future. Their love of performance, and of the commune that it conjures.

## **TĀNEMAHUTA GRAY**

**Kahukura/CEO, Taki Rua Productions**

Some key questions have been sitting with me during this journey. How can we improve the sustainability of the artistic life to create a healthier journey that prioritises the hauora of all who drive this waka forward? How can we make sure that the mental, physical,

emotional and spiritual well-being of the arts community is transformed into a priority for a better work/life balance for all in our sector?

I was moved to read an article penned by Zohar Spatz (Executive Director of La Boite in Australia) responding to the exhaustion now experienced by arts managers and leaders. Who are holding the managers? Who are holding the kaimahi / workers who have seen months of work disappear overnight? The community needs to work together to find a stronger path to a sustainable career that prioritises financial well-being to support mental, emotional and spiritual well-being as a key priority. Building a community of support is key to create a space for holding. But building and holding a community takes an enormous amount of energy that also leads to burn-out. How do we find a way to achieve the first, without being drained to depletion in the process of doing so?

I am still searching for the answers. However, as I was reminded by one of my work colleagues, this will be more of a marathon than a sprint.



**JONATHON HENDRY**  
**General Manager, BATS**

My hope is that ten years from now BATS will be bolshy, resilient and generous, led by passionate young minds. Over the next three years we'll test and co-design initiatives that drive greater inclusivity, wellbeing and career sustainability. We'll deliver this under a revised business model that sustainably and ethically brings our resource to a wider community through championing social connectedness, while having fun. A focus on hauora and cultural competency through capability building already has shifted our work in exciting ways. It is a start.

We used this last period of uncertainty to ask questions of ourselves and our community. To take the time to deepen relationships as we redefine priorities and partner with others who wish to help reshape our sector in the post lockdown environment.

Our sector can and must work more strategically together. To do this BATS needs to leverage mutually beneficial relationships through an evolving partnership matrix.

Over the last year, through several paid opportunities and the appointment of board youth interns, we've guided an inclusive group of rangatahi into roles of responsibility. BATS is a natural home for youth to test new ideas and develop leadership, so BATS' operational structure will change. We'll explore territory that moves us away from the eurocentric models in place.

This work is alongside an evolving programming strategy that champions inter-art activity. We've begun to change our relationship with artists to encourage them to make work with us, rather than simply bring it to our spaces. We continue to explore the meeting of digital and live art, bolster BATS as a hub of creativity and better partner in festival activity.

Our audience capacity cannot support ticket sales as a way of making a living. By continuing our current model we contribute to the devaluing of art and artists. We've begun to shift this through longer seasons and to give more space to mount work under current budget constraints. We've begun to strengthen capability building through clearer tuakana teina relationships.

**NISHA MADHAN****Programming Manager, Basement Theatre and theatremaker**

Imagine the future.

5 years.

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

20 years.

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

50 years.

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

I want to make some distinctions between art as a product or commodity, subject to the wild swings of the free market economy, and art as a necessary, effective process to reconnect with ourselves, each other and the world. In one world, artists are vague, fruity and an odd business choice. In another, artists are astronomers, social scientists and prophets.

When we had to shut our doors because of Covid-19, I felt like I was crashing a car in slow motion. A history of realisations from an independent arts organisation in lockdown:

1. We are in a global pandemic. There's no need to productise this moment. It's okay to be quiet and take a moment.
2. Most artists just received a pay rise through the wage subsidy and their CNZ top up. The past was utterly unsustainable for artists, and Basement's model was a part of that.
3. Our Risk Share Model (20/80 split) was created in response to the past. We are now in the future.
4. Resting is a political act. Audre Lorde said that.
5. Turns out, our most sustainable activity wasn't convincing artists to risk their income on shows, it was paying them to develop their work through our residency programmes.

8. Art is like water, it will find a way to slip through any crack, or gush through an open door.

Artists do an important and specific job. They process the world around them in real time and space through intention and action. Artists use ritual to weave spells that need witnesses, audiences, to activate its charm. We are here to provide the best possible circumstances for this service. At the Basement, that service involves the undoing of the dominant capitalist-colonial-patriarchal regime, by taking up space with unapologetic bodies and give-no-fucks voices. I'm gonna be stupid bold, and say 95% percent of the time artists pay, or are indebted for this service.



A history of questions asked by an Independent arts organisation in lockdown:

- When you invite an artist of colour, especially a queer, trans artist of colour, into your organisation, venue, gallery or development programme, how are they made to feel safe? Like, really safe.
- How and when do we leverage off the work of artists, especially artists of colour? How do we compensate for that?
- Who does a contract between an organisation and an artist protect?
- Whose rent depends on a projected box office model?
- Who wins if the artist wins?
- Who loses if the artist loses?
- Whose traditions are we following and why?
- What if non-outcome based development was as sexy as a sell out season?
- What if the art were free, but the artists were expensive?

When we experience a traumatic event, we need to remember our bodies; to reconnect to ourselves, our ancestors, our loved ones and our land. I personally want to instil better care and clarity into my work with artists. I know what it feels like to be seen as the outsider to an organisation and to have my creative demands met with big sighs and condescending head tilts. Artists are smarter than you think.

I've been using an incredible online resource by Fannie Sosa almost every day. It's called 'A White Institution's Guide For Welcoming Artists of Color\* and Their Audiences'. I encourage every arts organisation to buy it.

I'm a big fan of pulling down power structures from the inside, screw by screw, inch by inch, and building something new out of the rubble. I'm not surprised to have found myself inside one of New Zealand's most disruptive theatre spaces at one of the world's most disruptive times.

Wake up. The world is stark light. Get the plunger. Time to get to work.

## SHONA MCCULLAGH

### Artistic Director, Auckland Arts Festival

The future of NZ theatre is utterly vibrant creatively. Auckland Arts Festival's Call for Proposals received over 350 submissions, with over 173 described as theatre projects. Interestingly we see a trend of theatremakers moving towards redefining theatre, often with significant crossovers with other forms. An explosion of fresh perspectives and methodologies have emerged. Morphing, blurring and boundary breaking are becoming the norm, which includes digital work. We've had the benefit of increased dialogue as a community and a stronger connection with our international counterparts as we bind together for support, partnership and collaboration.

The future I envisage sees us leaning inwards to listen more closely to voices less heard, resulting in a much wider range of creative voices supported, listened to and truly uplifted. The preciousness and vitality of the distinct talents and world views of our Māori and Pacific artists are celebrated both here by passionate audiences of Aotearoa and curious international patrons.

Mauri ora!

## FRANCES MCELHINNEY

### Director, Oamaru Opera House

The overwhelming pleasure of the raw visceral energy that comes from live performance, and sharing that experience with our fellow audience members, will always exist. If we find ourselves living with community transmission, performance communities will be tight-knit units – group bookings may be the norm, box seats premium, hospitality services online and there may be a return of restroom attendants.

The changes required for our regional theatre will involve technology – live streaming, in-seat ordering service and customised customer management service. Our relationship with our

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

audience is crucial to retaining confidence in how we operate within our venue, and in maintaining a safe space. Broadening the theatre experience will be important – creating performance beyond our doors and in our foyers, creating vibrancy in the spaces which were once designed for socialising.

I believe our digital world will become so sophisticated and immersive that it will be important to experience reality through live performance. I also believe that communities will become more cohesive – the urban village will be prevalent, and theatres will remain open to provide a conduit for our artists and our audiences.

### **BENNY MARAMA**

#### **Playwright and presenter, *The Meteor***

I saw the truck come for Captain Hamilton, as he stood short and proud outside the council chambers.

I saw him as he was lifted onto the bed of the truck, as four orange cones were positioned near the hole where he once stood.

I saw the truck drive off and heard the applause from the people watching as Captain Hamilton was carted off, his second indignant death in Aotearoa.

The second death of Captain Hamilton didn't happen because Council finally realised that it didn't belong.

He died again because we made it so.

(Okay, so technically council removed it because they were worried about it being torn out during the Kirikiriroa Black Lives Matter march but, hey, a win's a win.)

This only happened because the world we're in right now has changed irrevocably. And, as a creator of colour, I have a responsibility to help shape this new world we're in.

What I create next will be significant, because it will be my first work as a Pasifika writer who knows that I will not be silenced. My first work as a Cook Island writer who knows that we are

living in a world where my words will finally hold the power that it had previously been denied.

Because my next work will be a brick; one of the many bricks that will line the truck bed as it drives to Civic Square, ready to cover the hole where Captain Hamilton died a second time.

### **TANYA MUAGUTUTI'A**

#### **Founder Pacific Underground, producer and playwright**

I have dreamt.

I have just walked out of a theatre, weeping. The emotion of the show topped off the evening marking years of preparation for the grand opening of the fourth National Performing Arts Centre – 'Ōtākaro' in Christchurch (five in total spread throughout NZ).

The impressive Arts Centre converts from a black box to a large arena stage for Kapa Haka or Siva groups. Its Pacific Underground Gardens for concerts and outdoor theatre looks, sounds and feels like home. The five centres will form 'Awa' a 12-venue trans-Tasman international touring circuit.

Tonight we celebrated Victor Rodgers' body of work and his establishment of the Exchange Festival in New York, *Kia ora Broadway*. Next week is Sau E Siva's latest season (a cast of 88) then the Kia Mau Festival Tour. The permanent hangi and umu pits have been upgraded. The outdoor feast, amongst the fire pits was perfect. I'll come back once the hype is over and I've processed the enormity of it all.

Jacinda Ardern's 'Aotearoa Art Nation' legacy- a global impact policy enabling Indigenous Māori and Pasifika integration of all art-forms into every aspect of New Zealand life is in its fifth year.

### **DAN PENGELLY**

#### **Artistic Director, The Court Theatre**

In 2021 The Court Theatre will celebrate the achievement of 50 years performing

for Canterbury. These 50 years have been possible because of the blood, sweat and tears, and contribution of so many.

The Court has just signed up to partner with Christchurch City Council to build a new home in the Performing Arts Precinct – a central city block – as part of the regeneration and activation of our vibrant city. As the newly appointed Artistic Director, my

role is to begin a new conversation about our next 50 years, ensuring that what we do will develop and employ artists, be sustainable in the long term, produce and present the best theatre from around New Zealand and the world, and ensure our voice is inclusive of the many faces of our diverse community.

Where does that conversation start?

For me, I've been doing a lot of listening.

## **LYNDA CHANWAI-EARLE**

**Playwright, journalist and presenter**

Back in time, March 15, 2019 marked one of the most tragic events Aotearoa had ever experienced. The massacre that took place in Christchurch devastated our small population of migrant and refugee communities, the aftershocks rippling across the country. The year following saw the Covid-19 pandemic seize the world with tectonic force, the aftershocks this time, socio-economic tsunamis rippling across the globe.

In 2060 the world celebrates the International Year of Theatre, acknowledging the earliest forms of 'education' among every civilisation, acknowledging that we all grew from our oral histories before our written ones, and the 'age of screen'.

This is after my death... I imagine my children, now in their 50s, frustrated, dealing with funeral insurance, and the other global catastrophe. It was the one we were all complicit in creating, one that crept up on us, while our eyes were wide open, somnambulist. It was a catastrophe that ate at our land and ice and made polar bears extinct.

Meanwhile humans, stubbornly resilient somehow survive. My two middle-aged adult daughters are recalling theatre pieces I created way back last century, in the dark ages of mass consumerism.

"Remember that play mum wrote and performed? About belonging, about our

Chinese heritage. About Po-po (maternal grandmother) being a baby refugee, fleeing China during the Second World War?" – 'No,' says my other daughter, 'I don't, but I do remember her crazy production company creating the first green-powered theatre in this country.'

"Oh yeah, the weird plays, set in Antarctica. Off-the-grid, solar panels, wind-turbines, lots of swearing and fighting."

Laughing – "Yeah, that was mum alright, regular potty-mouth! They made it green-powered, way back then. How could they have predicted it? Do you think they knew what was coming?"

"Good question. Can't believe they drove and flew everywhere, fossil fuel in the middle of, of – what did they call it back then?"

"Global warming?" – "Yeah, that's right. We were just kids. Remember how identifying with Extinction Rebellion and LGBTQI+ was so woke?"

Laughing harder – "Mum thought she was so 'cool' using those words. What do you think she would say if she could see us now?"

"I think she'd be proud, and shocked. At least now we're all off-the-grid."

"Reckon she'd think we're all 'happy non-binary hippies' growing trees?"

"Shame she's not around to ask anymore."

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## **GEORGIA MAY RUSS**

**Co-organiser, Whangārei Fringe**

I hope to see more work being toured outside the main centres, and I hope to see more making and creating being supported in the smaller spaces of NZ.

Here in Whangarei, we are feeling a huge creative drive from our local artists. Projects are in full swing and there is a strong buzz in the community, with events and shows being announced regularly.

We have been preparing for our very first Fringe, an open-access, two-week festival that celebrates original, emerging and experimental arts, in all forms. This festival will be one of the first of the New Zealand Fringe Festivals to open post Covid-19 and so far we are seeing artists from all over Aotearoa sign up to bring their projects to Whangarei during October.

## **KATE LOUISE ELLIOTT**

**General Manager, Centrepont Theatre**

In reality the aim is that in 20 years' time we are still open – the dream is that we are firmly embedded as the leaders in professional performing arts for the central North Island. Centrepont Theatre is exactly that – the “Centre point” for professional live theatre.

The dream is that our Basement Company is the go-to youth theatre company and bridge for tertiary arts facilities in both performing and production. We are developing resilient next-gen arts leaders and have branches all around the central North Island.

The dream is that our new facility has enough space for artists to develop their work while being supported by Centrepont's team no matter what level it is at. We partner with artists to create work as well as produce. Our work is shared with areas starved of professional theatre and our audience is exposed to a variety of work and they embrace that, they trust that what we offer them is a good idea.

That's the dream.

## **MEGAN PEACOCK-COYLE**

**Manager, Toitū Hawkes Bay and Chair, PAANZ**

As a venue this pandemic has highlighted how much we all actually rely on each other. As a local government-funded venue we are working hard to encourage our councillors to truly understand the importance of the arts in our community. There's a constant struggle, financially and philosophically, on how we can be venues in New Zealand that actually support and fund our practitioners, engage with its creative community, be culturally competent and operate in an innovative, affordable and inclusive way.

There are massive opportunities for regional New Zealand venues to be the performing arts core of their community, by encouraging exploration, facilitating employment pathways and providing safe creative learning environments. Venues can be more than a 'hall for hire'. They can be arts leaders in their communities by supporting and producing the creation of new event experiences which encourage participation in the arts.

Achieving accessible, affordable and inclusive programming as well as a vibrant and vital performing arts community is possible if we continue to nurture and grow our relationship between artist and venue. Venues who work to reimagine, refine and rebuild their offerings based on the 'new normal' are going to be more relevant in our industry's future.

## **BORNI TE RONGOPAI TUKIWAHO**

**(Tūhoe, Te Arawa, Tūwharetoa) – Director, Taurima Vibes and Auckland Fringe**

It's interesting. Covid-19 actually afforded us opportunity. It's shit, no doubt about that, but as someone who sits in our industry leading with a hauora and social change lens, it's become apparent that things that needed to change, flourished because we were forced to stop and reassess.

## DON'T USE US AS A TOOL

The impacts for Taurima Vibes have been to see a glimmer of comprehension in many of our artistic peeps because they are now directly affected by new stressors. Not just from a health perspective. BLM hit Aotearoa with abandon. The fervour that accompanied, brought a necessary spotlight back to the inequalities and inequities that continue to plague our own Tangata Whenua. Yes, things are different from 20 years ago, but no, that's not good enough. Taurima works with key organisations to help dismantle problematic systemic issues that create barriers for connection. 100% of the time, the biggest issue is the inherent colonised infrastructure that the inhouse team have to battle before it can move forward. Those who don't 'see' an issue have a responsibility to listen and be willing and open to change. Those who do recognise disparity, have a responsibility to step forward and help dismantle the problematic areas and actively make change.

Te Ao Māori has guidance that can uplift and help nourish the full artistic landscape. Be brave, don't use us as a tool or a tag-on. Let us walk alongside and help forge unified accessible pathways. We have a stronger responsibility to embrace the change, post Covid-19, and create positive action that matters. We are creators, we experiment, we ignite, we challenge and we delve, but we must also allow ourselves to evolve.

### BRENT THAWLEY

#### Chair, Nelson Festivals Trust

I imagine a future where everyone has ownership and engagement with our arts festivals. People will have meaningful opportunities to see and hear their own voices, not just with the content, but how festival programmes are created, decided and delivered.

My focus in the arts is governance. I've been thinking a lot about how governance structures can support, or hinder the development of truly multicultural and multigenerational models for the arts.

Diversity and change must start at the board table. However, any new model needs to reflect diversity of ownership and decision-making at all stages of programme development and delivery. To support this means reassessing governance structures and dynamics to move beyond 'consultation' with our communities, to a more truly inclusive and empowered model.

So, how do we create governance structures that better represent our communities? As a middle-aged male Pākehā, what is my role? What is this best way that I can support change and diversity? Is it useful for me to use my skills and experience on a board, or will I have more impact by moving aside and creating space for others? It can be challenging to confront my own privilege and biases.

### STEVE THOMAS

#### General Manager, Arts On Tour NZ

Arts on Tour has prided itself for 35 years on a light-footed tread on the whenua, with theatre travelling to audiences rather than the reverse. Touring is environmentally sustainable. A different room, a new crowd, another show sharpened to a fine edge.

Some years back there was a suggestion in higher quarters that the tradition might be replaced by mailing a video from town to town. It was met with mirth. Recent events have shown that unless a national theatre budget is available, the digital cannot replace the buzz of human interaction, with its immediacy and spontaneity. Digital is as digital does but doesn't dig it all.

Theatre is as essential as clean air and water, the standing ovation arriving when we witness a full blown universal expression of our humanity, frailty, tragedy and joy.

## LIZZIE TOLLEMACHE

**Producer, performer Rollicking Entertainment**

The dream for Rollicking Entertainment is a simple one – I'd like to see professional entertainers, storytellers and carnies become a standard part of every outdoor event, festival, conference and pub circuit. I'd like the pendulum to swing back into live gatherings facilitated by laughter and connection. And I'd like for attending theatre to be as normal and comfortable for your average Kiwi bloke, rural family and woman about town as attending a rugby game is now.

## PHILIP TREMEWAN

**Director, Wanaka Festival of Colour**

I keep dipping for inspiration into a book that Steph Walker gave me while we were both working on Christchurch Arts Festival at the time of the earthquakes (thanks Steph). James Lingwood's *Off Limits: 40 Artangel Projects* always takes my breath away – the projects, large and small, break boundaries, and cause us to see the world in new ways. Simon McBurney puts it well: "Artangel is a place in which to imagine". This is what good art does, and in these uncertain times this role becomes even more important as we turn to craft, imagination, and creativity to make some sense of it all.

We're not dealing with anything new. In the 1300s Giovanni Boccaccio dealt with a major pandemic in his remarkable book *The Decameron*. But we do have some new ways of working. Newspaper *The Scotsman* highlighted ATC's achievement with Eleanor Bishop and Eli Kent's brilliant adaptation of *The Seagull* for Zoom. But even though the online world takes up an ever-increasing chunk of our lives, I believe in the power of direct, emotional human interaction, and that it will continue to draw people to share in live performances.


## ELSPETH SANDYS

**Playwright and author**

Theatre, historically, has adapted to changing times. The accusation that it is an elitist art form – think corporate sponsorship and complimentary evenings out – has to be addressed. Theatre in its essence has never been elitist. It has survived by being multicultural, classless, rude, bold, innovative and international.

Given the difficulties of funding I would like to see theatre break down not just the fourth wall but all the walls that surround it. If it is to touch more lives than it currently does it needs to come out onto the streets and parks, into schools, and institutions not normally associated with theatre. I was struck by the way the Royal New Zealand Ballet launched its season by having dancers perform in the parks and pathways of Wellington. Actors could do the same, emulating the performances in Dublin on Leopold Bloom Day, with extracts from plays currently showing in local theatres.

I hope playwrights of the future will be alert to more than just our Kiwi concerns. Scheduling plays so that a dialogue can take place between what overseas writers are wrestling with and what our local artists are saying would greatly broaden our perspective. The plays of the future will, I'm sure, deal with the big issues facing all of us – climate change, racism, wealth inequality – but I hope our playwrights will remember the need to entertain the audience, putting characters, not preachers, at the centre of their work.



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## ALEX WILSON

**Artistic Director, Arcade Theatre Company**

With the challenges presented by the lockdown and subsequent closure of the theatres, it was a timely reminder of the strength theatre has over other art forms, specifically its intimacy and its immediacy. With the rise of technologies in augmented and virtual realities it is tempting for us to pursue these new technologies in our work. However, the virtual/filmed experiments during the lockdown prove that putting further barriers between the audience and practitioner removes the lifeblood of what makes theatre really work.

Politically we are seeing the world driven further and further into silos and echo chambers. Virtual spaces are ones that can be dominated rapidly through the flooding of misinformation. From a communal standpoint, theatre allows a slower, more thoughtful, less literal and, hopefully, less partisan space to explore our 'reality'. Theatre's strength is in defamiliarising and decontextualising larger issues, the more we



play with 'theatricality', the more we unlock what is so magical and captivating about it.

These are not new ideas, look at Brecht, but these are the strengths of our artform that will not only allow it to deal with the challenges of our current environment but will distinguish it moving into the future. Focussing on theatre that is slower, thoughtful; intimate and playful.

ABOVE: *Niu Sila* by Oscar Kightley and Dave Armstrong, Centrepont Theatre. Alexander Hallag AH23 Photography.

## MIRIA GEORGE

**Playwright and producer, Tawata**

You've asked me to imagine the future. Fuck the future. Why imagine the future when we need to deal with now?

The future at this point is a place of privilege for the very few. And that has to change. We need to deal with this right now. We need newness. Right now, we need new vision.

A new vision that will tear down old ways of thinking and working. Old ways are still perpetuated throughout our creative landscape. These old ways need to fall. Why? These old ways are the empty promises of our coloniser. Created to exclude rather than include.

A royal imitation of someone's else's land. Tear down these old ways. They need to fall

like the racist, colonial statues the world over. Dismantle them. They must fall.

Haramai ki te ao marama. We've been waiting for you. Catch up!

You see solidarity is an action. Solidarity is a positive action. Yes there is struggle in positive action. That is because inequity has been enabled for so long. Many of you who have always been comfortable are going to be uncomfortable. And that's okay. Because in our struggle (the struggle of you and the struggle of me) new ways of thinking and working will be born. And a new way of us being together will be possible.

Kia tere! We're waiting. The new world is on its way.

# UNDER AN EAST COAST MOON

*Dolina Wehipeihana talks to Tama Waipara about  
Te Tairāwhiti Arts Festival.*

*Under an east coast moon  
Humming a familiar tune  
Under my east coast moon  
with a Coastie attitude*

The east coast is known for the coastie attitude of locals, surf-breaks and being the first place to greet the sunrise. During Lockdown Jacinda Ardern even showed people how to do the East Coast Wave.

But like any place, Te Tairāwhiti is so much more than stereotypes. In many ways it's no surprise that Tama Waipara – esteemed musician, composer, singer-songwriter, festival programmer and industry advocate – ended up moving back home in 2018 to lead the development of a brand new regional arts festival. In Tama's waiata 'East Coast Moon' the potency of "home" shines through:

*All the lights' reflections are a ripple of the  
love we share  
And all my life's intentions seem to lead me  
back there*

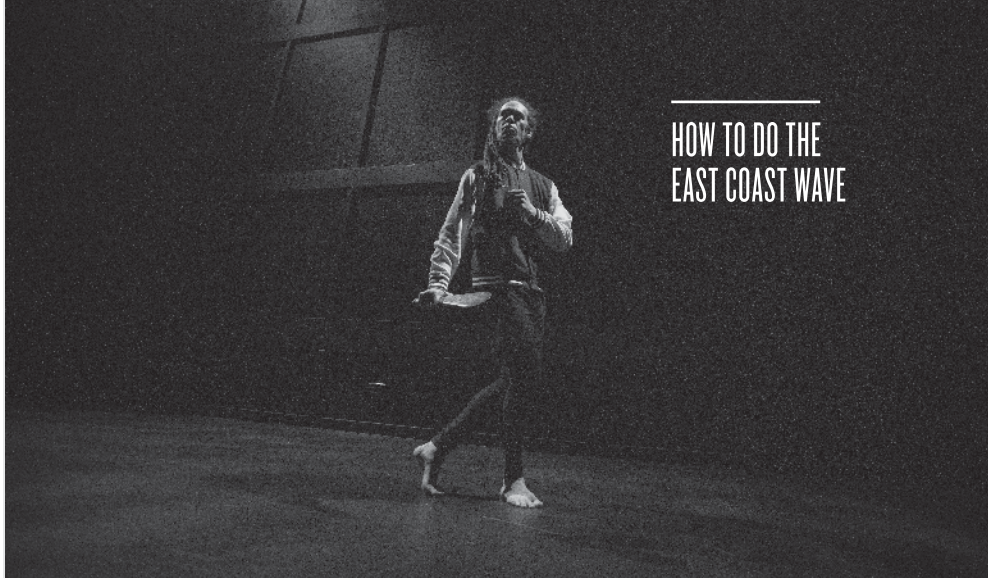
But in the world of regional arts festivals, how do you create a festival that is truly unique to its place and community?

The journey starts and ends with whakapapa. Tama hails from the east coast iwi of Ruapani, Ngāti Porou, and Rongowhakaata. His parents met at teachers college and Tama was born in Rangiora, the youngest of three boys. His early years were spent in Kaiapoi and Christchurch.

"We would go back to Manutuke every Christmas," Tama remembers. "Time would stop. All the whanau would be there - just tents and caravans on my Nanny's front lawn, and cousins. It just seemed like this huge whanau, long summers. And then you'd have to go back... It was a constant threading of the two worlds."

Gisborne in itself, is a city of two worlds. It has the highest proportion of Māori of all regions, with 52% identifying as Māori in the 2018 census compared to 15% nationally. Pretty much the people of Gisborne are divided down the middle – 50% Pākehā, 50% Māori. Add to that the challenge of the first festival sitting alongside the Tuia 250 commemorations and you get a picture of the potent and dynamic landscape that was the bedrock for the inaugural Te Tairāwhiti Festival October 2019.

During the Tuia 250 commemorations, whilst local iwi welcomed the waka hourua signifying



## HOW TO DO THE EAST COAST WAVE

the historic voyages of Māori to Aotearoa, they politely declined to hold a pōwhiri for the Endeavour replica fleet. Instead they held an interdenominational karakia, to remember those who were killed during the dubiously named ‘first encounters’.

Iwi standing their ground – on their own ground – was inspiring to witness at the time. To me, Tama’s approach to the festival programming followed this same kaupapa – be unashamedly yourself in your own place – and invite others in to share with you.

Of Te Tairāwhiti Tama says “The place we are in is abundant in creative brilliance and excellence and genius and talent, and that stretches way, way back but is alive and well today too.”

There was no better place to launch the 2019 Festival than Toko Toru Tapu Church at Manutuke.

“I don’t think as a kid I realised how stunning it was in there with the carvings. The history of this coexistence of Pākehā and Māori, western and our whakaaro Māori, all being wrapped in together... there were still these moments where the carver had subverted or just maintained the mana of the Māori worldview, by adjusting things to appease

the Western sensibilities but still maintaining the power of those whakairo.”

Maintaining the mana of the Māori worldview is another constant thread, evident in the commissioning and presentation of new theatre works.

“Someone has to open a door for people to be able to walk through. I often think about the responsibility that any presenter has for making space for people,” Tama says of the artists he programmes. “They have spent their entire careers breaking ground, being innovators, making a stand for generations of other people to find opportunities, and have all in some way created their own spaces that celebrate their uniqueness but also who they are as Māori.”

Invited into the 2019 programme were artists with whakapapa connections to Tairāwhiti, alongside leading shows from around the motu. The festival opening event *Māui Pūtahi*, created by local director and artist Teina Moetara, took place where the Taruheru, Waimata and Turanganui rivers meet. Teina spoke with the *Gisborne Herald* saying “fundamentally *Māui Pūtahi* is a celebration of who we are as artists.”

ABOVE: *Henare* by Hōhepa Waitoa, Tawata Productions, Te Tairāwhiti Arts Festival, Lawson Field Theatre.  
Image: Strike Photography.

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Teina also directed the devised production *All Roads Lead to Ngātapa* with co-director Ngapaki Moetara, working with rangatahi performers to tell stories of Rongowhakaata history, activism and strength.

*Witi's Wāhine* written by the late Nancy Brunning premiered. Based on Witi Ihimaera stories and championing the voices of wāhine Māori, the production drew a tour-de-force performance from four leading female actors Mere Boynton, Ngapaki Moetara, Roimata Fox and Ani-Piki Tuari. *Henare* created by Tawata Productions, was inspired by the story of renowned composer Henare Waitoa and created by his grandsons', writer Hōhepa Waitoa and producer Hone Kouka. Premiering at Rāhui Marae in Tikitiki the performance was a warm exchange, as many times the audience joined in to sing well-known waiata.

These strong links to Māori theatre stem all the way back to the late '90s when Tama was studying clarinet at Auckland University School of Music and working part-time at the Maidment Theatre, on the cusp of heading to New York to study at the Manhattan School of Music. Hone Kouka's play *Waiora* came to town with a company including Rachel House, Nancy Brunning, Rawiri Paratene, Anatonio Te Maioha, Waimihi Hotere, and Jason Te Kare. "When *Waiora* came in, and essentially when Māori theatre came in to live and breathe inside the whare, it was the first time that it felt like a whare as I know a whare to be. Where all of the aroha that came with those people, all of the sense of whanaungatanga came with them, all of their tūpuna came with them, and resided with us alongside each other in that space as we shared it together. "I think for me the seed of my love for a greater means of storytelling was planted then, and it just followed me to New York and in a way coming back round to the world of arts festivals was really just a way of realising those connections."

The second Te Tairāwhiti Arts Festival takes place in October 2020.



"Coming out of Covid it has a totally different context... We're in this space of coming out of darkness into the light, we're coming out of wānanga into connection, we're trying to hold on desperately to all of the beautiful positive aspects to what it was to let Papatūānuku breathe but still we've gotta carry on and move forward too".

Te Tairāwhiti Arts Festival taps into the history of the place in which it is situated and the present day issues the community care about. At the heart it is all the things it says it is: vibrant and rich with story, rugged, soulful and deep. Te Tairāwhiti is home to the creativity of many – past, present and those yet to flourish.

*I know a place where the sun begins  
Starts each day with a face full of good living  
Throws a line from the sea and then reels me in  
And I stay, there I stay*

ABOVE: *Witi's Wāhine* by Nancy Brunning from the novels by Witi Ihimaera, Hapai Productions, Te Tairāwhiti Arts Festival, Lawson Field Theatre. Image: Strike Photography.



# WELLINGTON

BY JAMES WENLEY

There's this moment in NZ Festival's *Mám* (Michael Keegan-Dolan): a performer bestows a kiss on the lips of another in the company, who accepts it with rapture. The kiss then cascades around the ensemble, blissfully transforming each receiver. There's an innocence in the freewheeling sexuality, a shared intimacy, a sublime liberation.

Within a week, my recollection of this image turned it into something terrible, foolish, dangerous, as we began to question the safety of festival-going and close contact. On the Saturday, I smugly watched work-in-progress *The Brief and Frightening Reign of Phil*, the new musical from Bret McKenzie and the UK's National Theatre about the George Saunders character whose brain literally falls off whenever he goes off on a narrow-minded rant and is elevated to leader. How relevant to the current political climate! How great to be able to claim that when this becomes a big West End and Broadway hit, we saw it here first!

On the Sunday – the festival's final day – all tickets were cancelled. I didn't get to see *Strasbourg 1518*, but I imagine that its investigation of a mysterious dancing plague would not have played as mere historical footnote. Our theatre had received its first unwanted kiss with a modern pandemic.

The NZ Fringe still had a week to go, celebrating a milestone birthday with its "Fringe is thirty, Fringe is flirty" tagline. And it sure got its flirt on, with a bumper year of 150 plus productions. Jean Sergent told us how to *Change Your Own Life*, Jonny Potts' guided us through Wellington's lost landscape of video stores in *The Best Show*

*in Town is at Your Place Every Night*, Acts of Kindness questioned what makes a *LEGEND*, and *Party at Mine* – a digital performance for Instagram – proved ahead of the curve. But we also found ourselves flirting with another presence, and both performing and theatregoing became an ethical conundrum as shows were cancelled and physical distancing and tracing measures unevenly implemented. Three days after the Fringe awards were livestreamed, Aotearoa was in lockdown and live theatre came to an enforced and devastating halt.

Memories of performances over the previous months would have to nurture us instead, like Circa's *Burn Her* by Sam Brooks, *Wonderful* by Dean Parker, Dave Armstrong's election-year salvo *The Surprise Party*, and a long overdue posthumous production of Michele Amas' *The Pink Hammer*. Director Shane Boshier brought us *Cock* by Mike Bartlett and went indoors for Summer Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Red Scare debuted *Four Nights in the Green Barrow Pub* by Kieran Craft, making homely use of JJ Murphy & Co. *Ransom* from Stella Reid and Neenah Dekkers-Reihana took audience members three at a time through the secret areas of BATS in a confrontation with white supremacy. Playing alongside the The Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care, The Conch's *A Boy Called Piano* offered the powerful testimony of Fa'amoana John Luafutu's story with heart-wrenching immediacy. Victor Rodger followed an intense season of *Club Paradiso* with *Uma Lava*. *Uma Lava* is another that would play differently now.



## OUR THEATRE HAD RECEIVED ITS FIRST UNWANTED KISS



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP  
LEFT: *The Surprise Party*  
by Dave Armstrong,  
Circa Theatre. Image:  
Paul McLaughlin.

*Small Town* by Michael Lloyd  
and Shona Jaunas, Circle of  
Fifths, Te Raukura ki Kāpiti.  
Image: Moments of Light  
Photography.

*Breaks* by Ben Wilson,  
Long Cloud Youth Theatre,  
Te Whaea: National Dance  
and Drama Centre. Image:  
Philip Merry.

*A Traveller's Guide to Turkish  
Dogs* by Barnaby Olson and  
company, Circa Theatre.  
Image: Roc+ Photography.

*Sorry for your Loss* by Cian  
Gardener, Circa Theatre.  
Image: Michael Smith.

*Ngā Manu Rōreka* by Apirana  
Taylor, translated into te reo  
Māori by Materoa Haenga,  
Taki Rua Productions.  
Image: Philip Merry.

ABOVE: *The Swing* by Helen  
Pearse-Otene, Te Rākau Hua  
O Te Wao Tapu Trust, Massey  
University Drama Lab. Image:  
Aneta Pond.

PREVIOUS PAGE: *Burn Her*  
by Sam Brooks, Circa Theatre.  
Image: Philip Merry.

Quietly revolutionary was the NZ Festival's choice to throw open its 2020 programming to three guest curators. Whilst in some ways a bargain move to programme more work from each artist, it lent each week a welcome idiosyncrasy: the grand and beguiling statements of Lemi Ponifasio and MAU, the transcendence of Laurie Anderson, the whimsy of Bret McKenzie.

But then this momentum was halted. Or at least redirected. I think about the shows that I might otherwise have been writing about here. Circa's *Things I Know to be True*, *Winding Up*, *Hir... A second Second Unit*.

BATS resolved that even if its physical space was temporarily off-limits, it would remain an online home for artists. Early on it led the charge in live streaming – with its Fringe season cut short, Hugo Grrrl's empowering *Princess Boy Wonder* was beamed to a larger audience than the random stage could seat. Cancelled USA touring show *Butcher Holler Here We Come* became BATS' first 'on demand' video production. Binge Culture dusted off their banana suits for a five-hour lockdown Zoom edition of *Break-Up*. Circa Theatre commissioned Trick of the Light's zoom horror *It's Behind You!* and Te Rēhia's *Found in Translation*, whilst actor Jack Buchanan went viral (the good kind!) with Family Lockdown Boogie (google it!).

For all the comfort these familiar faces provided online while theatres were closed, it was a relief to return to Circa for the postponed season of Thomas Monckton's *The Artist*. On my night a child responded with vocal delight at each of Monckton's physical tricks, becoming a special running gag of its own. I felt like I too was seeing this show through the eyes of a child, full of the wonder of liveness. Oh yeah, this is what I have missed, *this* is what only live theatre can do. And how remarkable, that in that month of June, Pōneke was one of the few places in the world where you could safely experience this.

# Why I wrote the play I wrote

COURTNEY ROSE BROWN

*on The First Time*

I wrote *The First Time* after I quit my 50 hours a week hospo job back in 2015. I told my boss that the arts were calling me, dug into my savings to buy a Macbook, and started writing.

I wrote freely without filtering. It was exhilarating. I had finished uni, moved in with my best friend after leaving a traumatic flat, and was excited about life for the first time in a while. I had two Fringe shows I was working on. It felt like a good step forward in being an artist.

I sashayed around in my ill-fitting op-shopped vintage looks and newly-perfected winged eyeliner, but I had not invested yet in being able to properly see. With purple lips and misplaced enthusiasm, I threw myself into everything creative I could. I obsessively started archiving my life in poetry which I shared at a few open mics, fundraiser gigs and with friends. I had a lot of young women reach out to me and say that they'd had the same experiences and were stoked to see them shared, for the first time. Hearing this again and again made me realise someone needed to create content about young women that we wanted to see. Why not me?

I started writing a monologue for a character Alana first as a fun, self-imposed exercise about the firsts in a relationship. The cynic

I was at the time knew the romance would end badly. I played a lot with text language and self-obsession, honing in on a stereotype of a young female, knowing that at the core, Alana was a very kind and caring character. With her LOLs and WTFs and AFs I wanted people to challenge their first thoughts, and why they thought less of her.

Once I had finished Alana's story, I started on Jess, who I knew would be the exact opposite. I had fun playing off their differences: Jess, a queer, outspoken perfectionist, a feminist. Through Jess I wanted to explore feminism, and how you can be 'woke' about some things, and less about others. Jess was clued up on all the lingo: toxic masculinity etc. Yet she was clueless about mental health. This was an important thing for me to explore. At the time everyone I loved was depressed.

The year before I had worked on a verbatim show called *Well*, a play about mental health with Women Aren't Wolves Productions. I spent hours transcribing interviews and I was struck with how differently everyone spoke. Part of my exercise now was to experiment with different ways of talking.

It tied in with my transition from growing up in the Hutt to moving into town. I wanted the




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## NO MATTER HOW SMALL IT MAY SEEM, A WIN IS A WIN

script to reflect the experiences that I and those around me had had. During my first year at uni, I didn't realise that some high schools went to Europe in year 13 (we went to Rotorua), nor how having a Macbook was the ultimate status symbol. I didn't realise how strong my Hutt drawl was. How people who'd never been to the Hutt clocked on to it as 'a bad place'.

I experimented with an English accent without going to England, and worked hard at using grammar correctly when I spoke, while figuring out the hot words that everyone was flinging around: 'emulate', 'aesthetic' and 'organic'. Organic was a particularly funny one for me. I had never thought about how a process could be forced, or about how food could be organic.

Writing *The First Time*, was a way for me to reclaim ownership over language, and push through shame.

At this stage, I was a black sheep in my home, having found Jesus in my heart. I went to church several times a week. I didn't drink, or swear or do any of the fun things that first years were getting up to. A lot changed over my time at uni. Classic. Writing *The First Time* was a way for me to process the changes and also validate young female experiences.

A funny thing was that one of the characters, Mereana experienced a heap of things that I hadn't, but in the future I then did. In fact I went through a phase where I stopped writing 'cause I was low-key scared that I would write the future into being, and all I wanted to write was black comedies lol. I never had my heart broken, and I didn't feel like I needed to 'come out'. I felt like through Mereana processing it, I was able to as well. At that time I was deeply in denial about being depressed and queer.

I wanted the script to show many perspectives, and not preach about a single stance. I wanted to show growth and the complexities of women. Elle, who I played in the premiere production, was anxious-as, but had no frame of reference for it. She also experienced sexual assault. At the start I wanted her to believe it was her fault, as so many people do. Each character was able to figure out what they believed in. In the end I wanted Elle to have her victory; for her last 'first' to be being able to catch the bus by herself. The show ended on a win. No matter how small it may seem, a win is a win.

ABOVE: *The First Time* by Courtney Rose Brown, Circa Theatre, 2017. Image: Holly Neill.

# FIRING THE CANON

*Shane Bosher begins a history of queer  
playwriting and considers its future.*



## DO WE ACTUALLY KNOW OUR HISTORY?

Queer playwriting has a fractured history in Aotearoa. It exists in bursts of energy from generation to generation. How do we connect the dots? Is there a canon of queer work to celebrate at all?

In recent years, there has been a flourish of activity in developmental and community spaces. Artists like FAFSWAG, Chris Parker, Jess Holly Bates, Joshua Iosefo and Leon Wadham have redefined what queer work looks like and how it is made. Yet, look to the programmes of most significantly funded theatre institutions and it's the near absence of queer storytelling you notice.

Many queer playwrights I spoke to hungered for things to move forward. They craved community and connectivity, to forge links across generations. In terms of a canon, most cited the work of their contemporaries rather than predecessors as inspirations. Do we actually know our history?

"We are tragically bad at meaningfully archiving our theatre history in an accessible way," commented Sam Brooks. "Our canon is passed down by stories from our elders and our contemporaries, and access to that canon is mostly secondhand, not first hand."

Joni Nelson, an early career playwright recently acclaimed for *8 Reasonable Demands*: "I don't think we're there yet. Which isn't to say there's not lots of queer content being made. Maybe it's because often this work is contained to a one-week season, and isn't recorded or published anywhere, it doesn't often feel like it's building towards something."

"It's hard to canonise work that sits out of print," says Nathan Joe. "How can you

celebrate or even evaluate a canon if it only exists via memory?"

So, I've decided to take a first stab at writing our history down. I zero in on moments where something shifted, rather than shining a light on all of the many canonical corners – that's a bigger gig to be done.

What exactly is queer work? "I think that's ultimately up to the author of any piece of work to decide," says Felix Desmarais, though "I think it's difficult for me to silo my work from who I am." Further, Nathan Joe suggests "queerness can have aesthetic or formal qualities that inform a work beyond simply content."

There is no Bechdel Test to evaluate queerness in work. It is wildly subjective. But for the purposes of this article I define queer work as being created by and about queer people, where queer bodies and lives exist centre frame.

This is not to dismiss notable contributions to queer storytelling from cishet playwrights like Ken Duncum, Hilary Beaton, David Fane, Oscar Kightley, Nathaniel Lees, David Geary and Judy Callingham. But it's vital that we celebrate those telling stories for their own communities.

We begin in 1971.

Arthur Allan Thomas had been found guilty of the Crewe murders, the Race Relations Act was signed into law and Kentucky Fried Chicken opened its first New Zealand store. A cigarette company Rothmans sponsored a Play of the Year Award, and it went to our first out and proud queer play.

LEFT: Nonnita Rees and Susan Wilson in *Meeting Place* by Robert Lord, Downstage 1972. Image: Peter Ridder.



Subversive and playful, the late Gordon Dryland's *If I Bought Her the Wool* takes its name from an infamous graffiti tag.

*"My mother made me a homosexual."*

*"If I buy her the wool, will she make me one too?"*

Dryland's comedy of manners used bold archetypes to eviscerate social mores, exploring the clash of cultures for the post-sixties generation. The plot reads like a wild queer romcom: Mabel loves William, William loves Charlie, Charlie thinks he loves Mabel, Mabel is pretending to love Beryl. Charlie might be gay and William definitely is, even though he used to be married to Mabel. The sexuality in the piece is front and centre and the intergenerational clash with William's strictly heterosexual parents is wonderfully uncomfortable.

It was first produced by Central Theatre a year later, then picked up by The Court

Theatre in a heavily revised version in 1974.

It also travelled across the Tasman the same year. Its production in Brisbane had an unfavourable reception from the gay community and was picketed by gay liberation groups, a response Dryland found baffling.

Dryland was a prolific playwright and celebrated novelist, winning a number of awards and fellowships across his career. He wrote candidly about subjects rarely discussed in public forums, including sexuality and colonisation. His work was rarely staged by the professional theatres and eventually, Dryland moved to Sydney. "I didn't really want to go back to New Zealand, I felt there were more prospects here," he once told *The Age* simply.

One of our greatest playwrighting exports, Robert Lord spent most of his career in New York. In plays such as *Balance of Payments* and *Meeting Place*, both of which premiered in 1972, he bravely articulated gay themes in a way distinct to other New Zealand storytelling of the period. The plays are decidedly ambiguous, but alive with subtext

ABOVE: *8 Reasonable Demands* by Joni Nelson, Auckland Theatre Company, ASB Waterfront Theatre. Image: 2113 Creatives.

that queer audiences would have happily read. Most of Lord's work was written prior to Homosexual Law Reform in New Zealand – his articulation of gay experience shows extraordinary courage and defiance. Lord died at the age of only 45 from AIDS-related complications; one can only think of the stories he would have gone on to tell.

Bruce Mason was happily married and had three children. He also had relationships with men across his lifetime, though his sexuality was never discussed publicly. While he chose not to articulate the experience of gay or bisexual men in his writing, one of his works, *Blood of the Lamb*, explored the lives of queer women. Commissioned by The Court Theatre, Mason's play zeroes in on a lesbian couple and their child, with one of the couple presenting as male. Underpinned by references to the classics, the play leans into the cost of self-acceptance. It toured the country in 1981 before playing at the Sydney Festival the following year.

In 1982, Mercury Theatre gave our first out lesbian dramatist, Renée, her mainstage debut. *Setting the Table* would become infamous for its implication in an attack on fellow dramatist and director, Mervyn Thompson two years later. Replicating a scene from the play, Thompson was tied to a tree by a group of women, threatened with castration and left with a sign hung around his neck labelling him a rapist. Despite having nothing to do with the attack and condemning it, Renée was vilified by local media and harassed by crank callers.

Thompson directed both the workshop and a rehearsed reading of the play, but not the eventual production. Renée notes that theatre administration chose two heterosexual men to foster the development of a play about lesbians in Ponsonby. "Was this because there were no women directors or dramaturgs?" she muses.

Renée further recalls, "None of the women say they are lesbian, and Mervyn, when we did

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## I WASN'T WRITING THOSE 'SILLY LITTLE GAY PLAYS' ANYMORE

the workshop, wanted me to insert a line that says that, but as I said to him, lesbians don't sit around and say 'we're lesbians' because they just are. I said I wanted the audience to look at them, see they didn't have green heads or anything, surprise surprise, they were just like any other two couples."

Lorae Parry celebrates the trailblazing nature of her peer, "Renée didn't stand at the door waiting for it to open – she kicked it open, leapt onto the stage and said 'I'm here'."

The play was hugely successful, playing to 82% houses. Its provocative edge however, frightened the artistic team at Mercury Theatre. Though they had the capacity to, they did not extend the season. "They kept grimly to that timeframe," Renée says.

Written at the time of the first rumblings of the Homosexual Law Reform Bill, *Give Us a Kiss... and We'll Tell You* was a journey through gay history, presented in cabaret format. Leaping from Oscar Wilde's incarceration to the Stonewall riots, we finally landed in Aotearoa where Wayne, Faye, Mum and Dad, an apparently perfectly normal family, prepared to face a perfectly normal day. Maybe. Created by John Curry, William Dart, Ross Fraser and Ken Porter, the revue toured the country in 1982.

Lorae Parry's early plays gave agency to the lives of strippers, junkies and women living on the margins. Her work consistently interrogates the fault lines of sexuality, gender and class. *Frontwomen* in 1988 was centred on lesbian desire and *Eugenia* in 1996 was inspired by the life of trans men Eugene Falleni and Brandon Teena, who were both persecuted for their expression of gender. Hugely successful in its initial run at Taki Rua, the production transferred to Auckland's Watershed Theatre and enjoyed a season at Belvoir Street Theatre in Sydney. It was the

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first work which really centred queer bodies and our relationship to the gender spectrum. None of these works have ever been professionally revived. If they're given voice, it's through community and university productions. Some are distinctly of their time, but some could allow us to reach into the past to learn of the future. After all, as people we often ask the same big questions about the human confusion.

Queer artists have inherited a rich legacy from these playwrights. They articulated their experience in hostile terrain, coming up against homophobic audiences and institutions that sometimes weren't ready for them, at a time when discriminatory laws were in place and violence against queer people was condoned.

Many queer playwrights cite the considerable impact Victor Rodger has had on their careers.

"He's ballsy and he surprises me. His narratives, everything I've seen and read of his, I'm there, I'm just so excited by it," Courtney Rose Brown said.

Nathan Joe on *Black Faggot*: "(It) absolutely floored me. It was also one of my earliest experiences watching something unabashedly queer on stage. Something unapologetically in-yer-face gay."

Victor is arguably the greatest exponent of queer playwriting in the last twenty years in Aotearoa. His writing is visceral and incendiary, intended to provoke discussion. He reveres a quote from playwright Edward Albee, "if your play isn't offending someone, then there is something wrong with your play."

*Black Faggot* was Victor's response to the rise of Destiny Church and the protests against the Marriage Equality Bill. Rambunctious and oh-so-provocative, critic Simon Wilson celebrated the "quiet and very determined pride running through" it. It's one of the few queer works we've exported internationally since the early 1990s, playing Edinburgh, Brisbane, Melbourne and Honolulu after multiple seasons in Aotearoa.



Victor recalls, "I often cite the story of the young mixed-race fast food worker who I met at a performance in Palmy. He was like: 'This is my second time watching the play. This is my story.' Seeing yourself represented in the narrative is essential and necessary."

Rodger is a staunch advocate for elevating the next generation of Pasifika talent, acting as a mentor, script consultant and often producer. He is a great cheerleader for others. "The fact that a play like *Inky Pinky Ponky* [by 'Amanaki Prescott-Faletau and Leki Jackson-Bourke, 2015], a trans romcom with a fakaleiti at its heart is being performed in high schools blows my mind in the best possible way. *Odd Daphne* [Joshua Iosefo, 2019] has an incredibly moving queer storyline that I thought was handled with real sensitivity in a way that was incredibly inclusive of the community it was aimed at."

LEFT: *Black Faggot* by Victor Rodger, Multnesia, Basement Theatre. Image: Karin Williams.

## IF YOU DON'T SEE YOURSELF, YOU CAN'T KNOW YOURSELF.

*Hudson & Halls: Live!* was written by Kip Chapman with Todd Emerson and Sophie Roberts. Commissioned by Silo Theatre, it was shameless balls-to-the-wall entertainment which celebrated the lives of Peter Hudson and David Halls, two gay men who hid in plain sight on national television. It was a bona fide hit, playing return seasons, in many of our regional festivals and co-presented with many of our major theatres. Queer content as commercial success.

In 2019, Joni Nelson, a playwright nurtured through ATC's Young Writers Table, was commissioned to write *8 Reasonable Demands*.

"Its genesis really began with the events of the Auckland Pride Parade in 2015. A group of young activists had jumped the barrier to protest police inclusion in the parade and one of these activists had her arm broken by a security guard. I was living in a fairly well-known queer activist flat at the time, and we would often bitch about bougie gay men, but until that point, I don't think I understood how divided our queer communities were. It seemed like the whole of queer Aotearoa was split in two, and both sides were raging."

Nathan Joe holds the play up as a significant marker of change. "(It) strikes me as one of the (if not the) most stunning clashes of different queer bodies on stage I've seen – on the ASB Waterfront Theatre no less. I think it will be a long while until we see something that diverse and representative again."

Joe acknowledges ATC's championing of young queer voices with the Here and Now Festival supporting *Inky Pinky Ponky*, *8 Reasonable Demands* and *Yang/Young/杨*.

"Each one of these queer narratives are remarkable in that they're not simply queer narratives, but queer narratives of rich racial

and cultural diversity. It's a shame their mainbill isn't quite so progressive."

Creative New Zealand provides a significant proportion of its theatre support to Tōtara and Kahikatea investment clients. From 2011 to 2020, less than 2% of mainbill programming from the producing houses centred queer storytelling from Aotearoa, just 16 works out of 804.

Sam Brooks has been strategic in the creation of his work, "I look at what's being programmed and know that if I want those theatres to read my work, I need to give them something that looks like that. It's one of the reasons why I wrote *Burn Her* – so people would take me seriously as a playwright because I wasn't writing those 'silly little gay plays' anymore. That's a direct quote from someone."

By allowing himself to be programmed by these companies, Brooks does question whether he is implicitly endorsing a 'tick box' rather than a prolonged commitment to inclusivity.

The landscape looks much better with the presenting houses; The Basement and BATS supported 78 new queer works in the same ten-year period (8% of their programmes).

Joe says that it is the independents that are doing all of the heavy lifting for queer work. Yet those artists are not being funded or being paid a living wage, creating the work at significant personal cost. CNZ has invested just 3.5% of its project funding into queer theatre works over the last ten years.

Things have certainly improved during this time, but it is clear that there is some way to go. CNZ currently has no discernible policy or pledge towards queer artists.

"We lose so many voices from the lack of support for sapling-level work and artists," says Desmarais. "This is even more so for queer artists – or any minority or marginalised group – as there are additional challenges for us."

Lack of sustaining funding has meant that *The Legacy Project* has recently gone into recess. Steered by Bruce Brown from 2013 to 2019,

it was a valuable platform for emerging queer talent, allowing writers such as Cole Meyers, Iosefo, Nelson and Joe to test their voices.

Our major festivals' policies celebrate inclusivity, but their programming histories tell a different story. Every now and then a queer character will pop up, but only ever as a supporting character or to deliver a sassy punchline. The NZ Festival presented *Black Faggot* in 2014, but you have to look back fourteen years and then again to the 1990s for the next pieces of out and proud queer programming. Auckland Arts Festival has just one queer New Zealand work in its entire history of theatre programming. The strategic plans say inclusive, but the statistics say something else.

Brooks believes that Creative New Zealand needs to act decisively here. "Meaningfully measure us. Set targets. Yank the money chain until companies meet those targets."

I agree. We need dedicated funds specifically set up for queer-led projects. Representation matters.

"You can't exist unless people see you," says Joe. "I think queer consumers are so good at projecting themselves onto surrogate characters that they forget how powerful it is to truly be seen and reflected in stories. Not through metaphor, but through actual characters who are meant to resemble you. Seeing ourselves, full stop, teaches us to feel seen. That we matter. That we belong."

"Heterosexual writers don't 'see' us," Renée comments.

"If you don't see yourself," adds Brooks, "you can't know yourself. Even more important, if other people don't see you, or people like you, represented in stories, it's harder for them to see and acknowledge us."

"My whole existence has been framed by straight, heteronormative narratives," comments Courtney Rose Brown. "I still get nervous telling people who I don't know that I have a girlfriend ... I feel like it still takes a lot of courage."



Queer storytelling has also historically privileged the voices of white gay men. It is only recently that we have begun to unpack and discuss the patriarchal legacy of sexism and racial inequality. The stories of queer women, people of colour and trans people have largely been hidden. "We are now being able to sit at the table and have our say when it comes to rainbow POC narratives," says Amanaki Prescott-Faletau.

Nathan Joe reflects, "the lack of queer Asian narratives is pretty dire. It doesn't even enter into the conversation. It's an intersectional double-whammy of needed representation."

There is still much work to be done.

At the climax of Act One of *If I Bought Her the Wool*, William's super straight parents are at the door, just about to enter. William braces himself and calls out: "We're in here. We're nearly all in here. Take a deep breath and enter." We are in here. Ready now.

ABOVE: *Inky Pinky Ponky* by Leki Jackson-Bourke and 'Amanaki Prescott-Faletau, Auckland Theatre Company, Basement Theatre, 2015. Image: Michael Smith.



ABOVE: *Me and My Sister Tell Each Other Everything* by Uther Dean, Arcade Theatre Company. Image: Ashley Heydon.

LEFT: Otepoti Theatre Lab Student Programme, Otepoti Theatre Lab in collaboration with Wow! Productions and InterACT Drama Classes. Image: Sarah Georgie.

# Drama New Zealand

## NZ DRAMA TEACHERS SUBJECT ASSOCIATION

### Who is Drama NZ?

Drama New Zealand is the national body that represents and advocates on behalf of: drama teachers from all sectors; academics, applied theatre workers and theatre in education practitioners at both a national and international level.

We are part of a number of forums as well as providing a voice in education policy-making.

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# DUNEDIN

BY JESSICA LATTON

Dunedin Fringe 2020, cancelled due to Covid-19 was due to host a huge number of new works – it continues to support local artists. The Dunedin City Council Professional Theatre Fund, tagged to support the theatre community most affected by the closure of The Fortune Theatre, was a welcome boost to Fringe Artists Grants this year.

The New Zealand Young Writers Festival back in October had Nathan Joe as the inaugural Young Writer in Residence, in association with the Robert Lord Cottage. The festival presented readings from his play *Scenes From a Yellow Peril*, and Zac James' *Kangaroo Stew*. Zac is the Creative Director of the Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company in Perth, and his engagement with local practitioners went deep.

The New Athenaeum Theatre (NAT), a 100-seat theatre in the Octagon hosted 61 shows, 236 artists, over 2000 audience members, and over 145 volunteers, July to June.

Partnerships with local companies included Prospect Park Productions and Gasp! Inclusive Dance Company. The NAT hit all its targets for inclusion and activity by lockdown. The budget however took a big hit. That's something NAT is working to recover from.

Prospect Park launched the Ōtēpoti Writers Lab during the 2019 New Zealand Young Writers Festival. This free initiative for local writers ran sessions through lockdown, fully booked within hours of publicising. The inaugural Ōtēpoti Theatre Lab (ŌTL) Playwrights Programme in September paired three playwrights with a dramaturg to develop their short plays over 10 weeks: Kelly Hocking's *Thief!* (dramaturg: Emily Duncan), *Tableland* by Simon Anderson (dramaturg:

Simon O'Connor), and *Partially Furnished* by Isaac Martyn (dramaturg: Duncan Sarkies).

In January ŌTL held a scriptwriting workshop at Otago Museum, *Diving into Writing*.

Play:Ground, a three-day festival was to have been delivered at 2020 Dunedin Fringe including Julie Edwards' new play *Te Mauri, Mum and Me*.

Arcade Theatre Company were awarded the 2019 Production of the Year and Ensemble of the Year at the Dunedin Theatre Awards for their staging of Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano*. Their 2019 season included *Me and My Sister Tell Each Other Everything* by Uther Dean and *Lemons Lemons Lemons Lemons Lemons* by Sam Steiner. *Light to Light* a local storytelling evening, presented by Abby Howells, at the University Bookshop invites speakers to tell stories from their lives. Dunedin playwright Harrison Kennedy's *Dayboy* and a reimaging of Jean-Paul Sartre's *No Exit* directed by Shaun Swain, postponed due to Covid-19 will be presented in September and October.

Wow! Productions produced *The Flick*, directed by Lara Macgregor, and are currently preparing *The End of the Golden Weather* directed by Lisa Warrington.

The new Dunedin Summer Shakespeare, a pro/am production initiated by Lara Macgregor, Kim Morgan and Jessica Latton presented *Romeo and Juliet* in Woodhaugh Gardens over February to large audiences of happy picnic-goers. The Shakespeare training for the 2021 season is underway.

Finally, Ake Ake Theatre Company is producing the National Māori Theatre Hui at Karitane Marae in November.

# Why I wrote the play I wrote

JOHN BROUGHTON

*on Ngā Puke: The Hills*

Over the 30 years since it was penned *Ngā Puke* has had quite a life of its own.

I was asked by Jim Moriarty to write a two-hander play. In so doing I thought the two characters should start off being worlds apart. Angie is female, Pākehā and urban, contrasting with Waru who is male, Māori and rural. The next decision was the background against which the play was to be set. That was easy: the Battle for Crete in World War Two. I was a Commissioned Officer and on a training weekend at Burnham Military Camp we had what was called an “appreciation” of the actual battle, which involved dissecting all aspects of that particular conflict. It left me armed with all the historical facts essential for the credibility of the play.

Act One was set on Waru’s farm, ‘Ngā Puke’ on the East Coast. I chose Ngā Puke for the name of the farm and the play as it was the name of a great-grandfather’s farm in Hawkes Bay in the 1800s. I always like to include little personal or extended whānau details in my plays that only I know, or other whānau members may happily recognise. Doing this, I found to my surprise that sometimes things happen quite out of the blue as a consequence – things that tell me that my

tupuna are watching over me. This certainly happened with *Ngā Puke*.

Act two was set on Crete. In April 1941 the Allied Forces had retreated to Crete following their withdrawal from Greece due to the German advance. On 30 April command of ‘Creforce’ was entrusted to Major-General Bernard Freyberg, who led the Second New Zealand Expeditionary Force. By the end of April there were more than 42,000 allied soldiers on the island, including 7700 men of the New Zealand Division. The British Seventh General Hospital was set up on Crete to provide medical care for the troops, including the walking wounded. This provided the opportunity for Angie and Waru to meet up again when he walked into the Casualty Clearing Station seeking medical care for his shrapnel wounds. Waru, a young Second Lieutenant with 28th Māori Battalion encountered Angie, a Nursing Officer on duty.

However, Freyberg knew that the German invasion was to come as the British had cracked the Enigma Code and thereby could decipher the military codes used by Germany. But Freyberg could do very little with this intelligence as it could mean that the Germans would realise that their codes had been deciphered. But what Freyberg



did do was to evacuate all the fifty Nursing Officers from Crete back to Egypt before the invasion came. This fact was crucial for the unfolding of my plot line for the play *Ngā Puke* was workshopped in December 1989 at Tapu Te Ranga Marae in Island Bay, Wellington, directed by Alison Quigan with Lisa Warrington as dramaturg. Lisa went on to direct two productions of the play.

In 1990 it premiered at Taki Rua/Depot Theatre in Wellington produced by Jim Moriarty's company, Te Rakau Hua O Te Wao Tapu for a 3-week season as part of the 1990 International Festival of the Arts with Maggie Harper and Toby Mills. In 1992 Jim took *Ngā Puke* on a national tour of high schools where he played Waru with Jude Gibson as Angie. He said that at one rural high school the students did not want to bother fronting up to some "stink old play" but as soon as the play opened with Waru trying to manage his sheep, he had them all eating out of his hand!

The students identified strongly with the play, as most of their grandfathers and great uncles had served in the 28th Māori Battalion. *Ngā Puke* went on to be a standard text for fifth form Correspondence School for many years. It's had numerous productions, including recently with Te Pou Theatre in Auckland and Waiti Productions in Rotorua and Dunedin.

One amazing thing that occurred was just a week before the 1990 production in Dunedin. I happened to come across a waiata, 'I Runga o Ngā Puke' among some old family papers at home. The waiata carried a note saying it was "based on a song which was current in the Rotorua district in the summer of 1914, and later adopted...by Mr P.H. Tomoana of Hastings, the song will long be associated with the Second Māori Contingent...1915." The song was reset to music and was used in the Dunedin production of the play.

The words were so apt:

*Waiho mai e tama*

*O kupu oati*

*I runga o nga puke*

*I tangi ai taua.*

*E haere ana koe*

*Ko runga o te pakanga:*

*Ko te reo aroha,*

*Karanga mai.*

*'Twas on the mountain*

*Our love was plighted:*

*You vowed to hold me*

*In memory forever.*

*Now war has called you*

*Across the ocean.*

*My heart is breaking,*

*Crying in vain.*

The tupuna were certainly there for me!

ABOVE: *Ngā Puke* by John Broughton, Waiti Productions.  
Image: Michelle Cutelli Photography.



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Lori Dungey (*A Lion in the Meadow  
and Other Stories* by Margaret Mahy)  
Tim Bray Theatre Company  
Photo by David Rowland/One-Image.com

# CHRISTCHURCH

BY NATHAN JOE

One risks sounding like a broken record when calling Ōtautahi a city in transition, but that statement has never been truer than over the past year. The latter half of 2019 marked significant changes in the local theatre scene.

July marked the opening of the Christchurch Arts Festival under the helm of new artistic director George Parker. The programme made a point to celebrate the homegrown artists that were formed in the city, including the likes of Pacific Underground, Tusiata Avia and Free Theatre. As I have previously said: “it was a love letter to a city that harbours more talent than we often acknowledge or realise.”

This was followed by the opening of Little Andromeda in October, brainchild of producer Michael Bell, and the city’s long-awaited fringe theatre. While it had previously existed as a pop-up tent, this was its much needed transition to a fixed building. Ōtautahi finally had its very own BATS or The Basement. It has since hosted a variety of performances, though most notably it’s become a hub for the nation’s best comedians to tour their solo shows, creating a new bridge between many Auckland-based theatremakers and the South Island, and culminating with *Snort on Tour* this year.

In November, those hungry for more conceptually driven works had the joy of attending Tiny Fest, a performance art festival set over a single day, programmed by choreographer Julia Harvie. Packed to the rafters with music, live art and dance works, there were also notable theatre offerings, including Tom Eason’s dissection of toxic masculinity *Mainman* and Alice Canton’s development showing of *Year of the Tiger* (虎 — hǔ).

The Court Theatre underwent a major change with Artistic Director Ross Gumbley stepping down in December, delivering an extravagant swansong with *Wind in the Willows* to close 2019. A faithful production of *A Streetcar Named Desire* became their main show of 2020 when Covid-19 unfortunately decimated the rest of the year’s programming, beginning with the tragic cancellation of Ralph McCubbin Howell’s *Lysander’s Aunty*. The Court has since reopened post-lockdown with a production by their Youth Company, *The Quarantine Diaries*, and appointed Daniel Pengelly as new artistic director.

Remnants of musical and theatre productions during this period were also salvaged by Blackboard Theatre Collective with *Waiting in the Wings*, featuring sixteen performers from over a dozen different cancelled or postponed projects.

While none of these arts organisations hold enviable positions in the current post-Covid-19 climate, they are a reminder of the need for theatremakers and space-makers alike. The future may be uncertain, but I can think of no other city that has proven its resilience like Ōtautahi has.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: George Fenn performing at Little Andromeda opening night. Image: Erik Norder.

*Fresh Off the Boat* by Oscar Kightley and Simon Small, The Court Theatre in collaboration with Pacific Underground. Image: Danielle Colvin Photography.

*Escape from Haunted House* by Brendon Bennetts and Kathleen Burns, The Court Theatre. Image: The Court Theatre.

*The Pink Hammer* by Michele Amas, The Court Theatre. Image: Danielle Colvin Photography.

# WANDERLUST

*Scotland New Zealand Playwriting Exchange writer Morna Young  
on looking back from a distance.*

I am writing this on day 108 of lockdown, 9th July in Glasgow. Here, in Scotland we are entering phase three of 'the Route Map to recovery'. Glimpses of 'life before' lurk tantalisingly: coffee shops offer takeaways, groups of friends swarm and passing cars multiply by the day.

In many ways, my lifestyle has not shifted particularly dramatically during the past three-and-a-bit months. Though theatre performances are postponed indefinitely, I'm still working toward script deadlines for previous commissions, in addition to new assignments. Prior to lockdown, I was gearing up for my busiest year to date with five new premieres and those scripts still need to be written and redrafted.

The most noticeable difference between 'life now' and 'life before' surfaces repeatedly on Facebook's 'memories' feature. For, precisely two years ago, I was recipient of the Scotland New Zealand Playwriting Exchange, allowing me to live and work in Wellington for three months. Every day, social media conjures up an 'on-this-day' recollection and I marvel at the idea of travelling so far. Until a few days ago, we were prohibited to leave a five-mile radius. Travelling to Edinburgh, let alone New Zealand, feels like an alien adventure.

Viewing these online 'memories' has become part of my lockdown routine and I'm grateful that my past self was so snap-happy. I'm reminded of my first fortnight spent in Auckland as part of a multi-disciplinary Creative Lab (Rough Mix). A visit to Piha beach with our company of creatives shows us splashing in bluer-than-blue seas, arms linked and laughing. Artistic friendships built in a rehearsal room through trust, are quickly bonded and I suddenly, deeply long to see my friends on the other side of the world.

These snapshots lead me onward to the quaint cottage in Wellington that I called home for the majority of my stay. I'm reintroduced to drinks at BATS and shows at Circa. Then begin my travels, starting with the Tongariro Crossing. I'm reminded of a shocking pink sunrise and an unfolding landscape marked by snow-covered peaks. I feel a renewed pride at completing the hike as I recall hobbling for days afterwards.

My picture trail continues onto the South Island for a road-trip with my soul sister, Anya Tate-Manning, as we visit glaciers, lakes and gorges. Then a jump back to Auckland and a journey to Cape Reinga, Waipoua and Waipū. Finally, a slow, winding return toward



Wellington via Coromandel, Rotorua then Napier. I reconnect with places, faces and unforgettable, magical experiences.

These pictures echo the very sentiment and subsequent project that initially drew me to New Zealand. To explain, I must skip back even further through the years. Every Christmas throughout my childhood, I received a New Zealand landscape calendar from my deceased father's best friend, Jim. After sailing in the Merchant Navy and travelling to Auckland together, Jim had emigrated there. As a child, I loved flicking through the glorious monthly pictures whilst mythologising stories about Jim. *One day, I told myself, one day I'll go there and meet him. I'll hear his stories about my dad and their travels.* One day.

Thankfully, I did, indeed, meet Jim in New Zealand. The calendar story also became central to the plot of the play I wrote, alongside the subsequent road trip taking in all twelve monthly locations. A childhood story became my adult, professional inspiration. This inspiration led to an adventure and now, in turn, that adventure is leading me through lockdown with photographic memories, sparking new dreams and wanderlust.

I've yet to reach the 'memories' that mark the writing and ensuing rehearsed reading of my play, *The Water Clan*. These photographs will signal an end to the journey and time to bid farewell to my New Zealand adventure once more. Perhaps I'll dig out the script as a sort of symbolic gesture. *The Water Clan*, written in Scots, Māori and English language, is a story about stories, and the narratives we create to help us survive. It explores *why* we tell stories; to remember, to memorialise, to fantasise. This feels more appropriate than ever in this new era of containment.

As the Covid-19 crisis draws on, I wonder, curiously, about the future of international arts projects. I've always been drawn to working outside Scotland, lulled by the chance to step outside myself and to gain insight into others' lives. I've always believed that the more we can understand about a place, not just facts and statistics but beliefs and influences, the more effectively we can connect and communicate.

ABOVE: Morna Young at the clinic for *The Water Clan*, Wellington, 2018. Image: Stuart Hoar.

# IT WAS A DREAM

*Uther Dean on not talking about a playwrights residency heading into Covid-19 lockdown.*

It feels strange, almost wrong, to talk about my time on the Scotland Residency earlier this year. Not because it was bad or boring or explicit, it wasn't any of those things. It was a dream.

Being paid to write a play, see theatre and meet wonderful people in the country that feels the most like my home without actually being it was an incredible experience. I am a different, much better writer from the two months I spent haunting the places my mother grew up in. Places I had never known.

While obviously proper hindsight is not on the table for me right now, the residency will bloom in my memory into one of the momentous turning points in my life. A point after which things changed, a tipping point in my process.

But it feels wrong to talk about. Because as much as it may become A Crux of Change for me, it was definitely, as you know, one for the world. Covid grew like ivy up the walls of the world, small until it was massive, over the last weeks of my time in Scotland.

I was in Dubai airport on the way home when the Prime Minister announced that anyone entering the country would be required to quarantine. I was just slipping under the wire

and white, male privilege means that this was the first moment of my life where I have ever really felt like I was fleeing somewhere. Not for the last time.

After cancelling my Wellington Fringe show in mid-March, the flight back to Auckland was thick with the fear that the doors could be shut at any time. For good reason, obviously. But if you don't live in Wellington, you don't want to live in Wellington and being faced with that not being a choice was... bracing.

As much as my playwright's brain immediately filed this feeling, this moment, as a good beat, a good monologue, maybe even a good subplot, I also hated myself for doing that. Because it meant confessing that I could never really go back.

The Scotland I had met and immediately fallen in love with, where I had finally found new parts of myself, could never be returned to. The greatest pleasure of being in Scotland was Magnetic North's Rough Mix two-week workshop where I got to see that, while the precise concerns are different, theatre-makers are all the same across the world (or at least across the colonised world). All delightful, woollen-jumper-weirdos with big hearts and no money.



The theatres I visited, the workshops I attended, thrummed with a life and purpose that infected me. I wanted to be a carrier of it, bringing it back to the Aotearoa I had left. But I would never return to that New Zealand. And the professionally incompetent Tories have ensured through their badly handled arts package and psychopathic response to a global pandemic that the hungry, vibrant, shifting, dense and diverse theatrical landscape I had fallen for in Scotland is now, in effect, just a wonderful dream I once had. Fading from my grasp as I wake; as I check my phone for today's death tolls.

The tight-knit sense of community and support that binds New Zealand's arts against the fact that we are a tiny country with an audience trained to look elsewhere for their entertainment, and the sheer scope of ambition, time, space and respect that Scotland's arts community give the work they develop seemed like a match made in heaven. And it's easy to think that it will remain in the afterlife, now that 2020 is for the world what 2015 was for me: a massive depression, paralysing all possibility of major and necessary work.

But I have always trusted in and believed in my dreams. It will be harder now for Scotland and New Zealand to come together, map their similarities (to visit Scotland is to see a million things that are like NZ and then remember that actually it's the other way round) and learn from their successes, but it still can be done. It has to be.

I hope to return to Scotland one day, the one I left. And I feel the same way about this country too.

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ALL DELIGHTFUL,  
WOOLLEN-JUMPER-  
WEIRDOS WITH BIG  
HEARTS AND NO MONEY

ABOVE: Uther Dean. Image:  
Matt Bialostocki.

# REALISE THE HOPE

*Paul Maunder on why Dean Parker's significant  
legacy of plays should be standard fare.*

Auckland playwright Dean Parker died suddenly during the lockdown, so his death could not be acknowledged by presence and by ritual, which has left an uncomfortable absence. It is like being informed that someone is missing in action.

I want to take this opportunity to suggest the importance of the substantial body of work Dean wrote and ways in which we might begin to consider it, together with his performance as author. This is important, for too often (even while acknowledging the work of Playmarket and John Smythe) things slip away. Plays are not often read, theatre performances disappear and there has never been an important reviewer such as Kenneth Tynan in the UK, or Katherine Brisbane in Australia, monitoring the development of theatre in this country (despite Bruce Mason's efforts to play such a role in his later years).

With Dean, his influences will need to be noted: a provincial working class Napier childhood, the density of Catholicism (both spiritually and aesthetically) as religion and schooling, a mother who loved the American musical,

a father who preferred the races, the London of the swinging sixties, the bitter Irish struggle, and the fact that he became (and remained) a communist. Let me qualify this last point. He was a member of the Socialist Unity Party for a period but realised the writer always begins with a blank page and must follow his instincts rather than obey a central committee.

Nevertheless, the area of interest was set: the struggle of the working class to reproduce itself in conditions of relative decency is opposed, generally, by the efforts of capital to reproduce itself and accumulate. Dean Parker, as writer, was then a worker working in opposition to the interests of capital.

Why theatre, or, if we include his work in film and television, why drama? Subjectivity does come into it. He was a playful man. His one man piece, *Wonderful* is perhaps closest to a personal document.

Within this framework, the content entered his workshop and emerged as scripts; and he was prolific – 58 plays covering the swinging sixties, adaptations of classics, Labour Party history, National Party skulduggery, our

role in Afghanistan, neoliberalism, and not surprisingly, he had a fascination with the 1930s generation of intellectual lefties like John Mulgan and the diplomatic intrigues of war and post war. He researched thoroughly and was hugely knowledgeable. He never wrote of the Irish struggle but instead was a key activist in a local organisation determined to raise consciousness around the issue.

Film and television work is always more collective and hopefully better paid than theatre, for the writer is operating within a capitalist process involving large sums of money. In order to try and realise that hope, Dean, along with others, set up a trade union for writers which remains at least partially successful.

His was a world view unsuited to the intricacies of postmodernism with its fragmentations and tributaries, for he retained a meta-narrative which embraced diversity (a braided river) rather than diverse narratives being ends in themselves. To take an example of this, in *The Man That Lovelock Couldn't Beat*, Tom Morehu, a Māori, is a working class lad taking on Jack Lovelock, a Pākehā bourgeois, and ends up an internationalist martyr in the Spanish Civil War.

Aesthetically, Dean wrote within the conventional three-act realist form, but with Brechtian and cabaret tendencies, with sometimes a venturing into folk theatre. There is always a tension in his work, for the three-act play is usually centred on middle class family dynamics and skeletons in the closet, whereas the Marxist praxis is about rejecting mystery and revealing the wider structure of society.

These factors created career difficulties, for the local theatre market is geared toward serving a largely middle class or petit bourgeois clientele. As a consequence Dean had problems getting his plays on stage. He required a national theatre, for his topics were often of national importance, but the decision (perhaps inevitable geographically) by the Arts Council in the 1970s to fund provincial theatres rather than a national



theatre has meant exactly that, provincial theatres and provincial theatre. Dean had an ongoing battle with the Auckland Theatre Company and the needs of the 'Remuera' audience. However, it is tribute to the strength of his writing, his tenacity and that of his advocates that many plays did get produced by small independents and some by major companies, even when Dean was berating them for their general lack of courage.

Dean's career leads one inevitably to Walter Benjamin's seminal essay, 'The Author as Producer', in which Benjamin argues for the need to transform cultural production rather than simply placing socialist content within the capitalist machinery. But Dean never saw himself in the role of theatre manager or even cultural activist (he'd never have time to write). However he occasionally devised a community event of great vibrancy, including an annual James Joyce night at a Karangahape Road pub.

Hopefully, as we realise his absence, more of Dean's work will be produced, in a variety of ways, from student productions to co-operatives to mainstream theatre. In fact, Dean Parker's work should now become standard fare throughout the process of reproducing and nurturing theatre in this country.

Ella Lincoln 'Pupa' - 2019, Bachelor of Design  
(Stage and Screen). Image Phillip Merry.

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## TOURING & INTERNATIONAL

### Edinburgh Festival Fringe 31 July – 26 August 2019

*Super Hugh-Man* by Rutene Spooner, *Aunty* by Johanna Cosgrove, *Tröll* by Ralph McCubbin Howell, *Only Bones 1.0* by Thom Monckton and Gemma Tweedie, *Working On my Night Moves* by Julia Croft and Nisha Madhan, *Camp Binch* by Chris Parker, *Two Hearts: The Comeback Tour* by Laura Daniel and Joseph Moore, *Jekyll and Hyde* by A Slightly Isolated Dog, *I'll Tell You This for Nothing: My Mother the War Hero* by Kate JasonSmith, *Bleeding Black* by Christopher Watts and *Two Worlds* by The Modern Māori Quartet.

*Solitude: The Secret Life of Annie Chaffey* by Martine Baanvinger Arts on Tour national tour 1 – 24 Aug 2019

*Story Studio LIVE* by Neenah Dekkers-Reihana, Hannah Kelly, Sepelini Mua'au and the Company; Capital E: National Theatre for Children, National Tour 1 Aug – 20 Sep 2019

*Meremere* by Rodney Bell Movement of the Human Christchurch Arts Festival, South Island Tour

1 – 10 Aug 2019  
Te Tairāwhiti Arts Festival, Hawke's Bay Arts Festival  
12 – 16 Oct 2019

*Eglantyne* by Anne Chamberlain Melbourne Australia 1 Aug 2019, BATS, Geneva, Zurich Switzerland, Nairobi Kenya, Maputo Mozambique, Lilongwe Malawi 22 Oct – 5 Dec 2019

*Promise and Promiscuity* by Penny Ashton Saskatoon Fringe, Edmonton Fringe, Canada 1 – 24 Aug 2019, ASB Theatre Blenheim, Rangiora Town Hall, Lyttelton Arts Factory 24 Oct – 7 Nov 2019, Adelaide Fringe Australia 14 – 27 Feb 2020

*Shot Bro* by Rob Mokaraka Mookalucky Productions Touring nationally 1 Aug 2019 – 11 Mar 2020, Adelaide, Australia 21 – 24 Nov 2019, Melbourne, Australia 2 – 5 Mar 2020

*Te Kuia Me Te Pūngāwerewere* by Jamie McCaskill, adapted from *The Kuia and the Spider* by Patricia Grace Te Reo Māori translation by Hōhepa Waitoa Taki Rua Productions National tour 5 Aug – 20 Sep 2019

*Skin Tight* by Gary Henderson Restless Ecstasy New Theatre, Dublin, Ireland 6 – 17 Aug 2019

*Mrs Krishnan's Party* by Justin Lewis and Jacob Rajan Indian Ink Q Theatre Auckland, Baycourt Tauranga 6 – 25 Aug 2019, Salt Lake City Utah, Rohnert Park California, Seattle Washington, USA 1 – 24 Nov 2019, Blacksburg Virginia, USA 30 Jan – 1 Feb 2020

*Like a River* by Jo Randerson Massive Company Forum North, Whāngarei 7 Aug 2019

*Ngā Puke* by John Broughton Waiti Productions New Athenaeum Theatre, Dunedin 7 – 8 Aug 2019

*Te Molimau* by Taofia Pelesasa Black Birds Creative Arts Co. Belvoir Street Theatre Sydney, Australia 7 – 24 Aug 2019

*Rants in the Dark* by Mel Dodge, Bevin Linkhorn and Lyndee-Jane Rutherford after the book by Emily Writes Winterfest, Taranaki 16 – 17 Aug 2019

Hawke's Bay Arts Festival, Tauranga Arts Festival 27 – 31 Oct 2019

*Conversations avec mon Pénis* by Dean Hewison Théâtre Bistouri Touring Quebec, Canada 16 Aug 2019 – 7 Mar 2020

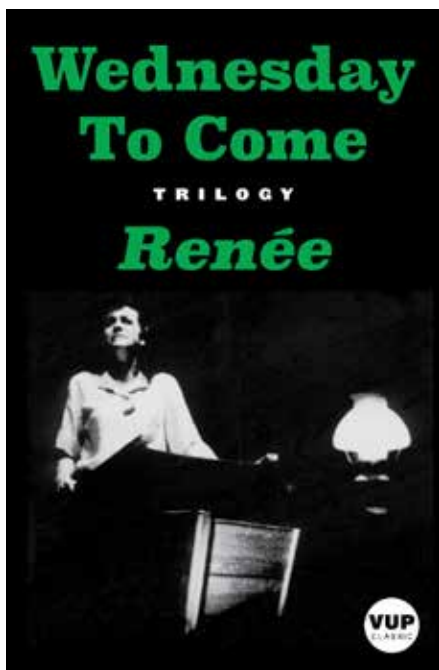
*Charles Darwin: Collapsing Creation* by Arthur Meek Kākāriki Theatre Company The Brockley Jack Studio Theatre, London, UK 20 – 31 Aug 2019

*Soft 'n' Hard* by Jo Randerson and Thomas LaHood Barbarian Productions Q Theatre, Toi Wāhine Festival Hamilton 20 Aug – 21 Sep 2019

*Guru of Chai* by Justin Lewis and Jacob Rajan Indian Ink Darwin Festival, Australia 22 – 25 Aug 2019, Suva, Fiji 6 – 9 Nov 2019

*Alofa* by Fiona Collins BATS, Aronui Indigenous Arts Festival Rotorua, Meteor Hamilton, Q Theatre, Māngere Arts Centre 27 Aug – 27 Sep 2019

*Mr Red Light* by Carl Bland Nightsong Auckland Live, Waitaki



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Mayer Mehta in *My Heart Goes Thadak Thadak*, 2019  
Photo: Andi Crown Photography

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by Kura Forrester  
Q Theatre  
31 Aug 2019,  
Spiegel Fest  
New Plymouth, Little  
Andromeda, Christchurch  
23 – 30 Nov 2019
- Anahera*  
by Emma Kinane  
Finborough Theatre,  
London  
3 – 28 Sep 2019
- A Doll's House*  
by Emily Perkins  
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by Renee Liang  
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Festival  
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- Ghost Trees*  
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Plumb Productions  
Going West Writers Festival  
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Lopdell House, Artworks,  
Q Theatre NZ Fringe and  
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30 Jan – 29 Feb 2020
- Power Ballad*  
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Nisha Madhan  
Zanetti Productions  
Tron Theatre Glasgow,  
Cambridge Junction,  
Marlborough Theatre  
Brighton UK  
12 – 26 Sep 2019
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Toi Wāhine Festival  
Hamilton  
18 – 25 Sep 2019,  
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16 – 20 Mar 2020,
- Meteor  
20 Jun 2020
- Super Hugh-Man*  
by Rutene Spooner  
Aronui Indigenous Arts  
Festival  
19 – 21 Sep 2019,  
Spiegel Fest, Taranaki  
23 Nov 2019
- Mary Bumby's Hive of Story*  
by Tanya Batt  
Auckland, Waikato,  
Bay of Plenty Tour  
20 Sep – 4 Oct 2019,  
NZ Fringe Festival  
29 – 29 Feb 2020
- HarleQueen*  
by Abby Howells  
HarleQueen Productions  
and Arcade Theatre  
Company  
University Book Shop  
Dunedin, BATS  
29 Sep – 5 Oct 2019,  
Adelaide Fringe Festival  
Australia  
3 – 8 Mar 2020
- Messy Magic Adventure:  
Kitchen Chaos*  
by David Ladderman and  
Lizzie Tollemache  
Rollicking Entertainment  
Centrepont  
1 – 12 Oct 2019,  
Arts on Tour National Tour  
4 – 25 Jul 2020
- The Pond*  
by Peter Wilson  
Little Dog Barking  
Globe Theatre Palmerston  
North, Kāpiti Playhouse,  
Lower Hutt Little Theatre,  
St Peter's Paekākāriki  
2 – 9 Oct 2019
- The Keys are in the  
Margarine*  
by Cindy Diver, Susie  
Lawless and Stuart Young  
Arts on Tour national tour  
2 – 20 Oct 2019
- Tröll*  
by Ralph McCubbin Howell  
Trick of the Light  
Riverside Parramatta,  
Australia  
3 – 4 Oct 2019,
- Little Andromeda  
5 – 7 Mar 2020
- Owls Do Cry*  
by Red Leap Theatre after  
the book by Janet Frame  
Waitaki Arts Festival,  
Q Theatre  
5 Oct – 2 Nov 2019
- Alice in Wonderland*  
by Amanda Stone  
The Pantaloons  
Carterton Events Centre,  
Gryphon Theatre  
Wellington  
6 – 11 Oct 2019
- Aunty*  
by Johanna Cosgrove  
Waitaki Arts Festival  
8 – 9 Oct 2019
- The Bookbinder*  
by Ralph McCubbin  
Howell  
Trick of the Light  
Te Tairāwhiti Arts Festival,  
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9 Oct – 9 Nov 2019
- My Best Dead Friend*  
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Zanetti Productions  
Riverside Parramatta,  
Australia  
10 – 12 Oct 2019
- Cellfish*  
by Miriama McDowell,  
Rob Mokaraka and  
Jason Te Kare  
Taki Rua Productions  
National tour  
11 – 29 Oct 2019
- Wild Dogs Under My Skirt*  
by Tusiata Avia  
FCC  
Te Tairāwhiti Arts Festival,  
Tauranga Arts Festival  
11 Oct – 2 Nov 2019,  
Soho Playhouse  
New York, USA  
3 – 18 Jan 2020
- Up and Away*  
by Cubbin Theatre
- Company  
Waitaki Arts Festival,  
Nelson Arts Festival, Little  
Andromeda, Auckland Live  
12 Oct – 12 Nov 2019
- Worm*  
by Phoebe Hurst  
Basement Theatre  
15 – 19 Oct 2019,  
Little Andromeda  
27 Nov 2019
- The South Afreakins*  
by Robyn Paterson  
Nelson Arts Festival,  
Tauranga Arts Festival,  
Arts on Tour national tour  
20 Oct – 25 Nov 2019
- Captain Pinky's Pirate  
Toddler Boogie*  
by Penny Ashton  
Little Andromeda,  
Invercargill, Queenstown,  
Lyttelton Arts Factory  
27 Oct – 9 Nov 2019
- Feminine Hygiene*  
by Marika Pratley and  
Virginia Kennard  
Hamilton Fringe Festival,  
Ōtautahi Tiny Fest  
30 Oct – 30 Nov 2019
- Filthy Little Goblin*  
by Brynley Stent  
BATS, Little Andromeda  
31 Oct – 14 Nov 2019
- Party with the Aunties*  
by Erina Daniels and  
Company  
WOW! Productions and  
EnD Productions  
Dunedin Tour  
14 – 24 Nov 2019
- Two Hearts: Palmerston  
North World Tour and  
Hamilton World Tour*  
by Laura Daniel and  
Joseph Moore  
Globe Theatre  
Palmerston North  
20 – 21 Nov 2019,  
Hamilton Gardens Arts  
Festival 20 Feb 2020
- Exes*  
by Eli Matthewson and  
Brynley Stent  
Little Andromeda

15 Nov 2019,  
BATS  
28 Jan – 1 Feb 2020

*The Grin Reaper*  
by Julia Clement  
Globe Theatre  
Palmerston North  
20 – 21 Nov 2019,  
Auckland Fringe  
26 – 28 Feb 2020

*Box of Birds*  
by Birdlife Productions  
Left Bank Art Gallery,  
Greymouth  
23 Nov 2019  
Nelson Tasman Tour  
21 Jan – 1 Mar 2020

*Year of the Tiger (虎—hū)*  
by Alice Canton  
Ōtautahi Tiny  
Performance Festival  
30 Nov 2019,  
Basement Theatre  
10 – 17 Mar 2020

*Cinderella*  
by Amanda Stone  
The Pantaloons  
Hannah Playhouse,  
Globe Theatre,  
Carterton Events Centre  
11 Dec 2019 – 19 Jan 2020

*Only Bones 1.0*  
by Thom Monckton and  
Gemma Tweedie  
Kallo Collective  
Winterfest Salzburg,  
Austria  
11 Dec 2019 – 6 Jan 2020  
Auckland Fringe  
1 – 2 Mar 2020

*The Contours of Heaven*  
by Ana Chaya Scotney,  
Marama Beamish and  
Puti Lancaster  
BATS  
13 Dec 2019,  
Soho Playhouse  
New York, USA  
11 – 13 Jan 2020

*Two Worlds*  
by The Modern Māori  
Quartet  
Soho Playhouse,  
New York USA  
9 – 18 Jan 2020

*Black Ties*  
by John Harvey and  
Tainui Tukiwaho  
Ilbjerri Theatre Company  
and Te Rēhia Theatre  
Company  
Sydney Festival Australia,  
Perth Festival Australia,  
NZ Festival, Auckland  
Arts Festival  
10 Jan – 15 Mar 2020

*Be Longing*  
by Lauren Gibson  
Vault Festival London UK  
4 – 8 Feb 2020

*Oldest Friend*  
by David Osborne  
Crossfade Productions  
Garnet Station,  
Lake House Arts,  
The Pumphouse  
5 – 20 Feb 2020

*I'll Tell You This for  
Nothing: My Mother  
the War Hero*  
by Kate JasonSmith  
Adelaide Fringe Australia,  
Bateman's Bay Australia  
14 Feb – 6 Mar 2020

*Hudson and Halls Live!*  
by Kip Chapman with  
Todd Emerson and  
Sophie Roberts, Gay  
and Lesbian Mardi Gras  
Festival, Sydney Australia  
18 – 19 Feb 2020

*Working On My Night  
Moves*  
by Julia Croft and  
Nisha Madhan  
The Yard Theatre  
London, UK  
18 – 22 Feb 2020

*Transhumance*  
by Ania Upstill  
Butch Mermaid  
Productions  
Adelaide Fringe Australia,  
NZ Fringe  
15 Feb – 12 Mar 2020

*Dr. Drama Makes a Show*  
by James Wenley  
Auckland Fringe,  
NZ Fringe  
18 Feb – 3 Mar 2020

*This Fragile Planet*  
NZ Dance Company and  
The Conch  
Auckland Fringe, Hamilton  
Gardens Arts Festival  
25 Feb – 1 Mar 2020  
  
*#ustwo*  
by Catherine and Sarah  
Delahunty  
Auckland Fringe, NZ Fringe  
25 Feb – 9 Mar 2020

*Over My Dead Body:*  
*Little Black Bitch*  
by Jason Te Mete  
Tuatara Collective  
Mangere Arts Centre,  
TAPAC, Artworks Waiheke,  
ONEONESIX Whangarei  
3 – 19 Mar 2020

*Ngā Manu Rōreka*  
by Apirana Taylor trans-  
lated into te reo Māori by  
Materoa Haenga  
Taki Rua Productions  
National tour  
9 – 20 Mar,  
20 Jul – 18 Sep 2020

*The Artist*  
by Thom Monckton  
and Circo Aereo  
Adelaide Festival Australia  
9 – 14 Mar 2020,  
Circa Theatre  
24 – 27 Jun 2020  
Front Yard Festival  
Te Pou Theatre  
Auckland, Manawatu,  
Taranaki Bay of Plenty tour  
20 May – 10 Jul 2020

*MAMIL – Middle Aged  
Man in Lycra*  
by Gregory Cooper  
Theatre Royal Nelson,  
Toitōi, Sky City Auckland  
19 Jun – 24 Jul 2020

*Puss in Boots*  
by Amanda Stone  
The Pantaloons  
BATS, Carterton Events  
Centre  
15 – 19 Jul 2020

*The Daylight Atheist*  
by Tom Scott  
Arts on Tour national tour  
20 Jul – 25 Aug 2020

## AUCKLAND

### Auckland Theatre Company

*Still Life with Chickens*  
by DF Mamea  
Riverside, Parramatta,  
Australia, Winterfest  
Taranaki  
7 – 25 Aug 2019  
Nelson Arts Festival,  
Tauranga Arts Festival  
26 – 31 Oct 2019

Grand Theatre,  
Shanghai China  
18 – 22 Dec 2019

*Mahuika!*  
by Amber Curreen  
Schools tour  
12 – 23 Aug 2019

*Icarus: The Boy Who Flew  
Too Close to the Sun*  
by Benjamin Henson  
Schools tour  
21 Oct – 8 Nov 2019

*Winding Up*  
by Roger Hall  
ASB Waterfront Theatre,  
Clarence Street Theatre  
Hamilton, Toitōi Hastings  
1 Feb – 22 Mar 2020

*Black Lover*  
by Stanley Makuwe  
Q Theatre  
6 – 18 Mar 2020

### Silo Theatre

*My Heart Goes Thadak  
Thadak*  
by Ahi Karunaharan  
Q Theatre  
21 Nov – 14 Dec 2019

*Upu*  
curated by Grace Taylor  
Q Theatre  
5 – 15 Mar 2020

### Basement Theatre

*I am Rachel Chu*  
by Nathan Joe,  
Amanda Grace Leo,  
Ravi Gurunathan and  
Angela Zhang  
6 – 10 Aug 2019

*Housekeeping*  
by Coven  
6 – 10 Aug 2019

*Sicko*  
by Alex MacDonald  
13 – 17 Aug 2019

*Pinay*  
by Marianne Infante  
13 – 17 Aug 2019

*Coral*  
by Emma Newborn  
3 – 7 Sep 2019

*I Didn't Invite You Here to Lecture Me*  
by Amy Mansfield  
10 – 14 Sep 2019

*Reclamation*  
by FAFSWAG  
19 Sep – 5 Oct 2019

*Manawa Ora: Navigators*  
by the company  
9 – 10 Oct 2019

*First World Problems 2.0*  
curated by Sananda Chatterjee  
Prayas and Agaram Productions  
15 – 19 Oct 2019

*Animal*  
by Arlo Green and Harriett Maire  
22 – 26 Oct 2019

*Manifesto of a Good Cripple*  
by Suzanne Cowan  
29 – 31 Oct 2019

*An Organ of Soft Tissue*  
by Erin O'Flaherty and Rachael Longshaw-Park  
5 – 9 Nov 2019

*A Frickin Dangerous Space-mas*  
by Pax Assadi, James Roque and Jamaïne Ross  
21 Nov – 20 Dec 2019

*Take the Crown*  
by The Others Club  
11 – 15 Feb 2020

*Perfect Shade*  
by Sarita Das  
11 – 15 Feb 2020

*Essays in Love*  
adapted by Eli Kent and Oliver Driver from the

novel by Alain de Botton  
10 – 19 Mar 2020

### Auckland Live

*Tu Meke Tūi!*  
by Malcolm Clarke  
9 – 12 Oct 2019

*State Highway 48*  
by Chris Williams  
15 – 19 Oct 2019

*Sing It to My Face*  
by Jo Randerson and Barbarian Productions  
17 – 20 Oct 2019

*Provocation*  
by Aroha Awarau  
12 – 15 Feb 2020

### Tim Bray Theatre Company

*The Man Whose Mother Was a Pirate*  
by Margaret Mahy, adapted by Tim Bray with songs by Christine White  
Mangere Arts Centre, TAPAC, Te Oro  
10 – 24 Aug 2019

*The Little Yellow Digger*  
by Betty and Alan Gilderdale, adapted for the stage by Tim Bray with songs by Christine White  
The Pumphouse  
21 Sep – 12 Oct 2019

*The Santa Claus Show*  
by Tim Bray  
The Pumphouse  
30 Nov – 21 Dec 2019

### Auckland Fringe

*Alone* by Luke Thornborough, *Brainstorm* by Ned Glasier, Emily Lim and Company Three, Browns Bay Intermediate Class of '05 devised by the cast, *Burning Opinion* by Suli Moa, *Carnicus Rex* by Stray Theatre Company, *Deep* by Hayden J. Weal, *Game Face* by Lucy Park, Katie Paterson and Lexi Clare, *Get Out of my Letter Box* by Katie Burson and Beth Kayes, *Have You Ever Been with*

*an Asian Womxn?* by Gemishka Chetty and Aiwa Pooamorn, *I Did it My Way* by Deb Fuller, *I Know What I'm Doing* by Melody Rachel, *Let me Tell you about Auckland* by Anders Falstie-Jensen and the Hobson Street Theatre Company, *Lunar State* by Lunar Collaborative, *No Holds Bard* by Natalie Medlock, Dan Musgrove and Michael Hurst, *Perry* by Tom Clarke, *Stupid Bitch wants a Puppy* by Claire Waldron, *Tampocalypse* by Embers Collective, *The Incredible and Glorious World According to the Fitzroys* by Charlotte Nightingale, *The Wall* by Babel Theatre, *Two Unlikely Heroes* by Regan Taylor, Salomé Grace, Phil Middleton, *The Doll's House* by Katherine Mansfield

### Mangere Arts Centre

*Inky Pinky Pony*  
by Lekki Jackson-Bourke and 'Amanaki Prescott-Faletau  
MIT Performing Arts  
1 Oct – 2 Nov 2019

*Odd Daphne*  
by Josh Iosefo  
The Odd Family  
12 – 15 Feb 2020

*Babbie*  
Massive Nui Ensemble  
Auckland Arts Festival  
18 – 19 Mar 2020

### Q Theatre

*Half of the Sky*  
by Lennie James with Bree Peters, Mark Mitchison, Max Palamo, Miriama McDowell, Sam Scott and Scotty Cotter  
Massive Company  
16 – 26 Oct 2019

*Top Town*  
by Dynamotion  
17 – 21 Dec 2019

*Play*  
by Liam Coleman  
Auckland Pride  
4 – 15 Feb 2020

### Other venues Auckland

*A Real Goodbye*  
by Geoff Allen  
Galatea Theatre, Pitt Street Theatre  
22 – 30 Nov 2019

*Over My Dead Body: With These Hands*  
by Jason Te Mete  
Tuatara Collective  
Artworks  
15 – 18 Jul 2020

### HAMILTON

#### Meteor Theatre

*The Don* by Stuart Coats and *These are a Few of my Favourite Sings*  
by Francesca Emms  
Wanderlust  
11 Jul – 10 Aug 2019

*Mum's Kitchen*  
book by Kyle Chuen, Nic Kyle and Scott Hall, lyrics by Nick Braae  
22 – 23 Aug 2019

*Riding in Cars with (Mostly Straight) Boys*  
by Sam Brooks  
Carving in Ice Theatre  
4 – 8 Sep 2019

*Aroha is a Māori*  
by Kahurangi Carter  
Toi Wāhine Arts Festival  
27 – 28 Sep 2019

*Skin Deep*  
by Mirrored Stage Theatre Company  
6 – 8 Nov 2019

*Destination Earth*  
by Courtney Mayall  
6 – 11 Jul 2020

*Hood Street: The Musical*  
words and music by Kyle Chuen, Nick Braae, Courtney Mayall and Nick Wilkinson  
Hood Street Fishing Club  
25 Jul 2020

## Hamilton Gardens Arts Festival 26 Feb – 1 Mar 2020

*Romeo and Juliet and Viola*  
by Apocalypse Lounge and  
Tahi Ta'i Tasi, *Morningstar*  
by Albert Belz (Sapphire  
Productions), *Old, Bold  
and Going Nowhere* by  
K-M Adams, *Chick'n a  
Box* by Phil Ormsby and  
Alex Ellis (Flaxworks)

### Other venues Hamilton

*Hudson and Halls Live!*  
by Kip Chapman with  
Todd Emerson and  
Sophie Roberts  
Clarence Street Theatre,  
Hamilton  
31 Jul – 11 Aug 2019

## PALMERSTON NORTH

### Centrepoint

*Niu Sila*  
by Dave Armstrong  
and Oscar Kightley  
3 – 25 Aug 2019

*Club Cabaret: Part Deux*  
created by Dan Pengelly  
and Centrepoint Theatre  
21 Sep – 19 Oct 2019

*MAMIL: Middle Aged  
Man in Lycra*  
by Gregory Cooper  
9 Nov – 14 Dec 2019

*A Spontaneous  
Christmas Carol*  
created by Dan Pengelly  
and Spontaneous  
5 – 14 Dec 2019

### Other venues Palmerston North

*Bachelor Party*  
by Chelsea Sheehan-  
Gaiger  
The Dark Room  
15 – 16 Nov 2019

*Up Down Girl* based  
on *Up Down Boy*  
by Sue Shields  
Globe Theatre  
28 Feb – 1 Mar 2020

*Pure and Deep*  
by Toa Fraser  
Simple Truth Theatre

The Dark Room  
31 Jul – 2 Aug 2020

## HAWKE'S BAY AND GISBORNE

### Hawke's Bay Arts Festival 15 – 28 October 2019

*High Rise*  
by Cameron Jones,  
*Royal Jelly*  
by Beth Kayes and  
Katie Burson  
(Co Theatre Physical)

*Grand Opening*  
by Barbarian Productions  
Toitoti  
6 – 8 Mar 2020

### Te Tairāwhiti Arts Festival, Gisborne 5-19 October

*Witi's Wāhine*  
by Nancy Brunning  
(Hāpai Productions),  
*Henare*  
by Hōhepa Waitoa  
(Tawata Productions),  
*I Ain't Mad At Cha*  
by Turene Jones  
(Waiti Productions)

## WELLINGTON

### Circa Theatre

*Burn Her*  
by Sam Brooks  
3 – 31 Aug 2019

*Cringeworthy!*  
The Beat Girls  
10 Aug – 7 Sep,  
13 – 20 Dec 2019

*The Pink Hammer*  
by Michele Amas  
7 Sep – 5 Oct 2019

*He Kura Kōrero:  
The Gift of Speech*  
by Holly Chappell-Eason  
and Rutene Spooner  
1 – 12 Oct 2019

*Meeting Karpovsky*  
by Helen Moulder, Sue  
Rider and Jon Trimmer  
6 – 16 Nov 2019

*Alice in Wonderland*  
by Simon Leary and

Gavin Rutherford  
16 Nov 2019 – 11 Jan 2020

*Uma Lava*  
by Victor Rodger,  
FCC  
23 Nov – 7 Dec 2019

*A Traveller's Guide to  
Turkish Dogs*  
by Barnaby Olson and  
Company  
17 Jan – 8 Feb 2020

*The Surprise Party*  
by Dave Armstrong  
18 Jan – 15 Feb 2020

*Wonderful*  
by Dean Parker  
Armstrong Creative  
12 Feb – 7 Mar 2020

*Strasbourg 1518*  
by Lucy Marinkovich  
and Lucien Johnson  
Borderline Arts Ensemble  
13 Mar 2020

*The Road That Wasn't  
There*  
by Ralph McCubbin Howell  
Trick of the Light Theatre  
22 Jul – 1 Aug 2020

### BATS

*Club Paradiso*  
by Victor Rodger,  
FCC  
13 – 17 Aug 2019

*Lovin' It*  
by Jo Randerson  
Te Auaha, BATS  
15 – 24 Aug 2019

### Tahi Festival 20 – 24 August 2019

*Tiny Deaths* by Uther  
Dean, *Shot Bro:*  
*Confessions of a  
Depressed Bullet*  
by Rob Mokaraka,  
*Symmetry* by Hannah  
Banks and Uther Dean,  
*El Macho* by Jaime  
Dörner, *She Danced  
on a Friday* by Nicola  
Pauling, *Bill Massey's  
Tourists* by Jan Bolwell,  
*The Motorway* by  
Moiria Fortin, *Run Rabbit*  
by Victoria Abbott

*The Inter-FENN-tion*  
by George Fenn  
FIDK  
3 – 7 Sep 2019

*Wise Guy*  
by Ethan Morse  
Soy People Productions  
10 – 14 Sep 2019

*The Ned Niamh Show*  
by Niamh O'Keeffe  
1 – 5 Oct 2019

*Slow Antiheroes*  
by Apple Box Brand  
1 – 5 Oct 2019

*Ransom*  
by Neenah Dekkers-  
Reihana, Robbie Nicol,  
Stella Reid and Finniss  
Tepett  
A Mulled Whine  
STAB  
1 – 16 Nov 2019

*Welcome to the Death  
Cafe*  
by Jan Bolwell  
19 – 23 Nov 2019

*A Boy Called Piano*  
by Fa'amoana Luafutu  
The Conch  
22 – 30 Nov 2019

*Massive Crushes*  
by Uther Dean  
A Mulled Whine  
5 – 13 Dec 2019

*Sunset*  
inspired by Sunset Cafe  
by Gary Henderson  
14 Dec 2019

### Six Degrees Festival 30 Jan – 15 Feb 2020

*Sarah* by Glenn Ashworth  
and Eliza Sanders, *Hush*  
by Julian Sewell, *The  
Party* by Hannah Clarke,  
Timothy Fraser, Austin  
Harrison and Emma  
Rattenbury, *Stupid Bitch  
Wants a Puppy* by Claire  
Waldron, *Fracture* by  
Jacob Cleghorn, *The  
Extinction Paradox* by Max  
Nunes-Cesar, *Dance Me  
to the End* by Carrie Thiel

## NZ Fringe Festival 28 Feb – 21 Mar 2020

*A Night Out with the Boys* by Oboys, *Another Day in Paradise* by Kirstin Crowe, *Change Your Own Life* by Jean Sergent, *Declarations of Love (and Other Useless Things)* by Emma Maguire, *Deep and Meaningful* by Alayne Dick, *Dinner* by Eli Payne, *Dr. Barry Roberts Health and Wellness Summit/Program (Guide): "Ascending the New You"*, *Elevator* by Stew Productions, *Fatal Fame* by Dripping Bottle, *From Topp to Bottom*, *Girlz on Drug\$* by Straight Edge Productions, *Hay in the Needle Stack* by Waka Maori Inc, *I'm Walken Here* by Jon Coddington, *Inquiet Moments* by Campbell Wright, *Insert Title Here* by Tatjana T, *Legend* by Courtney Rose Brown, *Lita* by Lucy Dawber, *Luke Scott's Little Theatre of Big Dreams* by Catriona Tipene and Ryan Cundy, *Maramataka* curated by Neenah Dekkers-Reihana, *Paloma and the Do of Death* by Tom Tuke, *Princess Boy Wonder* by George Fowler, *Puberty: The Musical* by Wellington Young Actors, *Radical Youth!* by Dylan Hutton, *Saltwater Bath* by Duct Taped On, *Should've Said No* by Tyler Clarke and Prea Millar, *Sorry for Your Loss* by Cian Gardner, *Stepping Up* by Daniel Nodder, *Ten and Two-Thirds (Years)* by Hard Sleeper Theatre Collective, *The Ballad of Paragon Station* by Hester Uilyart, *The Best Show in Town is at Your Place Every Night* by Jonny Potts, *Waiting for Shark Week* by Stevie Hancox-Monk, Lori Leigh, Maggie Leigh White,

Pippa Drakeford and Sarah Bergbusch, *Why Me?* by Georgia Kellett with Jeremy Hunt and Bella Petrie

### Other venues Wellington

*Sparrow & Boyle Comedy Festival* by Alexander Sparrow and Katie Boyle  
*Mirrored Faces Productions*  
Gryphon Theatre  
10 – 14 Sep 2019

*The Pied Piper* by Amalia Calder and Rob Ormsby  
Kidzstuff  
Taranua Tramping Club  
28 Sep – 11 Oct 2019

*Four Nights in the Green Barrow Pub* by Kieran Craft  
Red Scare Theatre Company  
JJ Murphy and Co  
14 – 23 Nov 2019

*Breaks* by Ben Wilson  
Long Cloud Youth Theatre  
Te Whaea  
14 – 18 Nov 2019

*SnowBright and the Oopsie Woopsies* by Geraldine Brophy  
Next Stage Theatre  
Moera Community Hall  
Lower Hutt  
20 – 25 Jan 2020

*The Swing* by Helen Pearse Otene  
Te Rākau  
Massey University  
Drama Lab  
7 – 9 Feb 2020

*Jerusalem* by Lemi Ponifasio  
MAU and NZ Festival  
Opera House  
22 – 23 Feb 2020

*Small Town* by Michael Lloyd and Shona Jaunas  
Circle of Fifts  
Te Raukura ki Kāpiti  
15 – 17 Jul 2020

## Other venues North Island

### Winterfest, Taranaki 15 – 25 August 2019

*Erewhon* by Arthur Meek, music by Eva Prowse, *Valerie* by Robin Kelly with Tom Broome and Cherie Moore (Last Tapes Theatre Company), *Watching Paint Dry* by Anders Falstie-Jensen (The Rebel Alliance)

8 Scott Ave – *The Musical* by Jack Grace  
The Blue Baths, Rotorua  
12 – 22 Feb 2020

## CHRISTCHURCH

### The Court Theatre

*O Le Malaga Fa'a'atua: The Journey of the Gods* by The Court Theatre with Jake Arona, Talia-Rae Mavega and Mana Tātāfu in collaboration with YJNOT Schools Tour  
19 Aug – 13 Sep 2019

*The Pink Hammer* by Michele Hammer  
7 Sep – 5 Oct 2019

*Au Ko Tuvalu* by Tavita Nielsen-Mamea  
12 – 21 Sep 2019

*Escape from Haunted House* by Brendon Bennetts and Kathleen Burns  
2 – 12 Oct 2019

*Fresh Off the Boat* by Oscar Kightley and Simon Small in collaboration with Pacific Underground  
19 Oct – 9 Nov 2019

*A Christmas Carol* by Dan Bain  
30 Nov – 21 Dec 2019

*Brainstorm* created by Ned Glasier, Emily Lim and Company  
Three, Rachel Sears and The Court Youth Company  
10 – 14 Dec 2019

*The Quarantine Diaries* devised by The Court Youth Company  
1 – 4 Jul 2020

### Little Andromeda

*The Tortoise and the Hare* by Gregory Cooper  
8 Oct 2019

*Sibs* by Chris and Liv Parker  
31 Oct – 2 Nov 2019

*Meme Lord* by Alice Canton  
1 – 2 Nov 2019

*Me and My Nana* by Cubbin Theatre Company  
2 – 5 Nov 2019

*Juliet & Romeo* by Isla Frame  
10 – 20 Nov 2019

*How to Apology* by George Fenn  
12 Nov 2019

*Oh Craig* by TJ Snow  
22 Nov 2019

*These Streets* by Hwyl Theatre Company  
26 Nov 2019

*Waste Not Want Not* by Bethany Miller  
29 Nov 2019

*The Opening Night Before Christmas* by Chris Parker and Thomas Sainsbury  
17 – 21 Dec 2019

*Giddy* by Leon Wadham  
28 – 29 Feb 2020

### Other venues Christchurch

*The History of Different Light* by A Different Light Theatre  
Christchurch Arts Festival  
1 – 3 Aug 2019

*Mainman* by Tom Eason  
Ōtautahi Tiny  
Performance Festival  
30 Nov 2019

# PLAYMARKET INFORMATION

Playmarket issues and manages performance licences and royalty payments, circulates clients' plays in New Zealand 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 New Zealand play in print and has a comprehensive catalogue of unpublished plays to download or purchase.

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

## FACTS AND FIGURES

### 1 July 2019 – 30 June 2020

Professional performance licenses issued: 33

Community performance licenses issued: 72

International licenses issued: 15

School/Tertiary performance licenses issued: 116

Scripts circulated: 5800

Scripts/drafts received: 442

Paid script assessments: 7

## PUBLISHING 2020

### NZ Play Series

*Purapurawhetū* by Briar Grace-Smith | Series Editor: David O'Donnell | Design: Cansino & Co | Editing and Production: Whitireia Publishing

*The Pink Hammer* by Michele Amas and *Flavons and Foxtrots* by Alison Quigan and Ross Gumbley | Series Editor: David O'Donnell | Design: Cansino & Co | Editing and Production: Whitireia Publishing

### Playmarket Annual

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

## Playmarket Guidelines Series

*Caring for Your Audience* by Lori Leigh | Editors: Salesi Le'ota and Murray Lynch | Design: Cansino & Co

### eBulletin

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

### edBulletin

Published biannually via email. Resources and opportunities for teachers and educators | Editor: Salesi Le'ota

## AWARDS, COMPETITIONS AND PROJECTS

### Playmarket Award Winner 2019:

Sarah Delahunty

### Bruce Mason Award Winner 2019:

Nancy Brunning

### Adam NZ Play Award Winner 2020:

*This Particular Room* by Jess Sayer

### Runner Up: *Blocked* by Siobhan Rosenthal

### Best Play by a Māori Playwright:

*Second to God* by Sarah Browne

### Best Play by a Pasifika Playwright:

*Scholars* by Tanya Muagututi'a

### Best Play by a Woman Playwright:

*This Particular Room* by Jess Sayer



**McNaughton South Island Play Award:**

*An Unlikely Season* by Carl Nixon

**Playwrights b4 25 Winner 2020:**

*Homemade Takeaways* by Ben Wilson

**Playmarket Plays for the Young Competition**

**2019:** *Prince Charming* by Shaun Swain

(3 – 8 year olds), *Whetū and Nick* by Mike

Hudson (8 – 12 year olds), *A Gaggle of*

*Ducks* by Aroha Awarau and *The Gangster's*

*Paradise* by Leki Jackson-Bourke (teenage)

**Brown Ink Development Programme 2019:**

*Fah (Whā)* by Fraser Findlay and *Temperance*

by Annette Morehu

**Asian Ink Development Programme 2019:**

*Not Woman Enough* by Hweiling Ow

**Scotland Residency with Playwrights'**

**Studio Scotland, Magnetic North and CNZ:**

Uther Dean

**Te Hono / Connector:** Grace Bentley-

Tsibuah and Miriama McDowell, Mike

Hudson and Margaret Mary Hollins and

Philippa Campbell, Ben Hutchison and Gary

Henderson, Alex Lodge and Hilary Beaton,

Poata Alvie McKree and Dione Joseph-

Kouratoras, Suli Moa and Gary Henderson,

Joni Nelson and Ahilan Karunaharan,

Siobhan Rosenthal and Ralph McCubbin

Howell, Ankita Singh and Nathan Joe,

Renaye Tamati and Shane Boshier

**Rebecca Mason Executive Coaching 2020:**

Courtney Rose Brown, Finnius Teppett

**Playwrights in Schools programme with**

**Read NZ Te Pou Muramura 2019:** Dave

Armstrong, Holly Gooch, Leki Jackson-

Bourke, Oscar Kightley, Alex Lodge

**Robert Lord Writers' Cottage Residencies**

**2019:** Michael Stevens, Fifi Colston,

Karen Wigglesworth, Young Writers Festival,

Sue Gerrard

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

**1 July 2019– 30 June 2020:**

*Congregation* by Gavin McGibbon, *Good*

*Grief* by Louise Proudfoot, *Lloyd Dobbler*

*is Dead* by Rene Le Bas, *Politics in Little*

*Paradise* by Vela Manusaute, *thursdays.child*

by Benny Marama, *The Surprise Party* by

Dave Armstrong, *Breathless* by Courtney

Rose Brown, *Movers* by James Cain, *The*

*Secret Life of Seaweed* by Julie McKee,

*The Glitter Garden* by George Fowler and

Lori Leigh, *The Beak of the Bird* by Apirana

Taylor, *Rupture* by Craig Thaine, PAT Fresh

off the Page, Atawhai Festival.

**Through Lines 6 – 7 September 2019:**

Dramaturgical Kick-In-The-Pants with Iain Sinclair, Getting Started with Fiona Samuel, Script Editing with Iain Sinclair, Dramaturgical Best Practice with Stuart Hoar and Allison Horsley, Too Too Funny: Writing Comedy with Dave Armstrong and Jamie McCaskill, How Do I Get My Play Programmed? with Kathryn Burnett, Roanna Dalziel, Colin McColl, Nathan McKendry and Dolina Wehipeihana, Building Community with Jo Randerson, Ahi Karunaharan and Tanya Muagututi'a, Moving Forward with Johanna Smith, Victor Rodger and Roy Ward, Pronouns+ with Daedae Tekoronga-Waka and Felix Desmarais, Worst Case-Best Case Scenario with Fasitua Amosa, Philippa Campbell and Gary Henderson.

**Te Tira Tā Mai o te Upoko** facilitated by Jamie McCaskill

**Playmarket Playfellows 2019 - 2020:**

The Wallace Foundation, Alister McDonald

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PREVIOUS PAGE: Renée and Sarah Delahunty, Playmarket Accolades, 2019. Image: Philip Merry.

**THEATRE CALENDAR 2020 CONTINUED:***Gladys and Alfie*

by Jane McLauchlan  
Lyttelton Arts Factory  
17 – 25 Jan 2020

*Frickin Dangerous Bro 2020*

by Jamaine Ross, James Roque and Pax Assadi  
Bread and Circus  
24 Jan – 2 Feb 2020

*Treasure Island*

by David Ladderman and Lizzie Tollemache  
Rollicking Entertainment  
Botanic Gardens  
29 Jan – 16 Feb 2020

**DUNEDIN**

*Me and My Sister Tell Each Other Everything*  
by Uther Dean  
Arcade Theatre

University of Otago  
Bookshop  
26 Jul – 3 Aug 2019

*Crunchy Silk*

by Jess Sayer  
Suitcase Theatre  
New Athenaeum  
14 – 17 Aug 2019

*The Passion of the [Redacted]*

by Kerry Lane

Sacrilege Productions  
University Bookshop  
12 – 14 Mar 2020

**Other venues South Island***Aperture*

by Martine Baanvinger  
Suter Theatre, Nelson  
24 – 25 Oct 2019

*Waiting for Greta*

by Paul Maunder  
Kiwi Possum Productions  
Left Bank Gallery,  
Greymouth  
14 Sep 2019,  
Imagine Theatre, Motueka  
9 Nov 2019

*The Survival of Thomas Brunner*

by Tall Tales Co-op  
Left Bank Art Gallery  
15 Sep 2019

*Moon Tales*

by Birdlife Productions  
Nelson Provincial Museum  
18 Jan 2020

*The Bicycle and the*

*Butcher's Daughter*  
by Helen Moulder and Sue Rider  
Willow Productions  
Shopfront Theatre, Nelson  
15 Jul – 16 Aug 2020

# THE LAST WORD

*Kathryn Burnett on how lockdown unexpectedly confirmed that certain myths about writers just will not die.*

Being a writer is such a glorious, romantic notion. There you are, typing away in your book-lined apartment or sponsored Tuscan retreat, tinkering with words, wonderful words combined in a fashion that will no doubt find favour when released into the world. You spend your days being creative, or talking about being creative in interesting cafes and your nights alone being exquisitely tortured by artistic insecurity. And the company you keep – well – it's erudite and witty innit?

Except, as anyone who works in the arts knows, the reality of creating anything is somewhat more grinding and distinctly unromantic.

During lockdown it became apparent to me that a handful of irritating beliefs about writers are alive and well.

Let's start with this one – that 'Writers Are Naturally Solitary Creatures'. It was incredible how many people said to me, "well, you'll be fine during lockdown, you're used to being at home on your own." And these are people who have actually met me!

Sure. Except for the whole world tipping on its head, paid gigs toppling like dominoes and oh, yeah, being a human being.

Totally fine.

The stereotype of 'writer alone in garret' is still seemingly very popular. But have you met many writers? And if so, where did you meet them? Was it out and about, socialising by any chance?

Most of the writers I know (and we are talking triple figures here) spent a sizable chunk of the lockdown parked on social media and eagerly organising Zoom drinks at every opportunity.

Which leads me to myth #2 – 'Writers Thrive On Pain In Their Lives to Be Creative'. Oh my good Lord! Or just maybe they have this other thing called an imagination. Pain, like poverty and stress, is not actually conducive to productive, creative work.

I know a couple of folks who found the stop-the-clocks nature of lockdown terrific for their creative productivity, but not many. And I was certainly not one of them.

In a recent Auckland Writers Festival interview esteemed writer Neil Gaiman said it used to be that the writing or the "making up place" used to be a refuge from reality but, "it has definitely been harder over the last four months to take refuge in that place."

I'm with you, Neil, it can be challenging to get into creative flow when shit is going down.

Or put another way – as a playwright friend said to me during lockdown: "I feel like I'm



typing with fingers made of concrete.”

To which I replied: “Exactly. Well put.”

The other thing that happened during lockdown was a torrent of well-meaning people, who don’t work in the arts, offering up ideas for things I should work on since I “probably wasn’t busy at the moment.” I’m assuming this happened because people had time on their hands and believed fervently in another myth: that ‘Writers Want To Be Given Ideas’.

Sorry to disappoint, but they do not. Your support, your feedback, your patronage, your keys to the back and your undying loyalty – yes. But not your ideas. We tend to have plenty of our own.

Maybe I’m just an ungrateful curmudgeon, but I did not find people suggesting I cook up an idea about being in lockdown during a global pandemic overly helpful.

But again, I can see how this confusion has arisen. Because perhaps one of the most enduring myths about writers is that ‘Their Work Is Autobiographical’.

Okay, so some writers get some ideas from their actual life. Of course we do. All creative people draw on their lived experience. But again – sorry to sound so pissy – but there’s this thing called an imagination.

However I did see a call out for short plays about quarantine and Covid-19 – so what do I know? I noted that they were “to be written in a funny and upbeat manner.” Fat chance, I thought somewhat uncharitably (see myth #1 and #2.)

So did I rub up against any deeply held beliefs about writers that have a basis in fact? Well, yes.

‘Writers Like to Drink.’ I’m just going to leave that one there. And there is another myth that will not die – because ...let’s just say it’s a bit true. ‘That Writers Will Write About You’ aka ‘Writers Will Use What You Say in Their Work.’

Yes, sometimes we hear or see something that we consider found art. We are observant creatures after all. On the other hand sometimes the things you say aren’t as interesting or unique or scandalous as you think. But what I can tell you is that watching how people act during a crisis is like a masterclass in character development. And as I sat alone in my lofty, book-lined apartment – I was indeed taking note.

ABOVE: Kathryn Burnett at *State of Our Stage* hui, Te Haukāinga, Wellington, 2018. Image: Philip Merry.

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