

A promotional poster for the Auckland Theatre Company production of 'Awatea'. The poster features two men against a dramatic, cloudy sky. In the foreground, a younger man with dark hair, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and dark tie, looks off to the side with a serious expression. Behind him, an older man with grey hair, wearing a dark, textured sweater, looks directly at the camera with a somber expression. The background shows a dark, hazy landscape with mountains under a heavy, grey sky.

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AWATEA

BY BRUCE MASON

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Welcome

What a joy it is to be working on another “forgotten gem” from New Zealand’s most prestigious playwright, Bruce Mason; a pioneer of professional theatre in this country.

AWATEA was first staged in 1968 for the Wellington Festival, in the Wellington Town Hall. It was quite a spectacle – with a huge cast, the famous Māori opera bass, Inia Te Wiata in the central role and young George Henare as his son Matt. Despite its popularity (it played to 9,000 people in its five performances) it was not an altogether critical success and Bruce Mason had misgivings about the scale of the production:

“The Town Hall dealt splendidly with anything of a ceremonial nature... but much of the play consists in the intimate interplay between small groups of characters, and the Town Hall frayed out such scenes to a wafer thinness”.

Christchurch’s Court Theatre produced AWATEA for 1974 Christchurch Commonwealth Games, but this wonderful work has never had another professional production.

George and I first worked together as the two clowns, Speed and Launce in Shakespeare’s TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA at Downstage in 1968 – so it’s a great pleasure to still be working with him – as he now takes on the pivotal lead role of blind Werihe Paku in AWATEA.

My huge thanks to him and to our wonderfully talented cast and creative team. We've thoroughly absorbed ourselves in East Coast life (circa 1962) and enjoyed discovering the poetry and power of this NZ theatre classic. Enjoy.

– Colin McColl
Artistic Director, Auckland Theatre Company



Colin



George and Colin on stage in TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA in 1968

AWATEA

BY BRUCE MASON

CAST

George Henare — *Werihe Paku* | **Te Kohe Tuhaka** — *Matt Paku*

Geraldine Brophy — *Emma Gilhooly* | **Andrew Grainger** — *Sergeant Jameson*

Nancy Brunning — *Ana* | **Carl Bland** — *Detective Inspector Brett*

Rob Mokaraka — *Kani* | **Nicola Kawana** — *Pera*

Scotty Cotter — *Tahi* | **Cian Elyse White** — *Tina*

Aymee Karaitiana, Rebekah Brady, Te Ruinga Rakena, John Fifita & Gene Tana — *Whānau*

SETTING

AWATEA is set on New Year's Eve, in the early 1960s, in Omoana, a small rural community on New Zealand's East Coast.

CREATIVE

Direction — **Colin McColl** | *Playwright* — **Bruce Mason**

Set & Lighting Design — **Tony Rabbit** | *Costume Design* — **Nic Smillie**

Composition & Sound Design — **John Gibson** | *Dramaturg* — **Philippa Campbell**

Final Wiata — **Te Kohe Tuhaka (words) & John Gibson (music)**

Artist (in the style of Colin McCahon) — **Hedda Oosterhoff**

PRODUCTION

Production Manager — **Paul Towson** | *Technical Manager* — **Paul Nicoll**

Senior Stage Manager — **Fern Christie** | *Stage Manager* — **Lauryn Wati**

Assistant Stage Manager — **Gabrielle Rhodes** | *Technical Operator* — **Robert Hunte**

Wardrobe Technician — **Emma Turnbull** | *Props Master* — **Diana Kovacs**

Set Construction — **2Construct** | *Stenographer* — **Tom Sainsbury**

Unitec Intern — **Zara Cormack**

AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR HELP WITH THIS PRODUCTION: William Davis, John Davies, Sheila Horton, Peter Rigby (Tailor), Elizabeth Gibbons, Piki Wati, Whetu Silver, Unitec School of Performing and Screen Arts, Te Wānanga o Aotearoa.

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AWATEA is the sixth Auckland Theatre Company production for 2012 and opened on July 21.
AWATEA is approximately 2 hours plus a 15 minute interval.
Please remember to switch off all mobile phones, pagers and watch alarms.

Sir George Fistonich, Auckland, New Zealand circa 1960



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ABOUT THE PLAY

Bruce Mason's AWATEA was first performed as a radio play for the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation in 1965, starring Māori Opera star Inia Te Wiata as old man Werihe. Mason always intended the play for the stage and this was realised with a lavish stage debut at the Wellington Town Hall in 1968, with the Prime Minister, Governor-General, and Mayor of Wellington all in attendance, playing for a total of five performances and 9000 audience members. It was the biggest success Mason had enjoyed, but critical response was harsh. The play was performed again by the Court Theatre in Christchurch, in 1974 for the Commonwealth Games Festival of Arts, its last professional performance.

Bruce Mason considered AWATEA to be the richest in his series of plays on Māori themes, which included THE POHUTUKAWA TREE (1956), SWAN SONG, HAND ON THE RAIL (1965) and HONGI (1968). Alongside THE POHUTUKAWA TREE and THE END OF THE GOLDEN WEATHER, AWATEA completes Bruce Mason's classic trilogy of powerful New Zealand dramas from Auckland Theatre Company: a thrilling, heart-wrenching, morally tough, fiercely realistic study of betrayal and disillusionment.

SYNOPSIS

It's New Year's Eve in Omoana, a small rural community on New Zealand's East Coast, early 1960s, before television ended Omoana's isolation forever.

Preparations are underway by Omoana's Māori community for their seventh annual New Year's hui and hāngī. Each year they welcome home Matt Paku, local boy done well and most eligible bachelor, a doctor in Auckland, who sends his money home to support his whānau. Each year, they anxiously await Matt's arrival to fix their aches and pains with his 'healing hands'.

For his father, blind old man Werihe, Matt brings light to the dark: Te Awatea. Together with Omoana's big spirited postmistress Gilhooly, Werihe has kept all his letters from Matt, carefully catalogued, filled with stories of his patients' lives, tragedies, and joys.

But local cop Jameson has bought an unexpected visitor to the hui – Detective Inspector Brett from Auckland, with some shattering news.

Gilhooly hatches an elaborate plan – to keep Matt's secret from the whānau and Werihe's mana intact.

AWATEA and Bruce Mason

By Max Cryer

Until he was 13, Bruce Mason had never actually met a Māori. Up to that time his only knowledge of anything Māori was scant reference in the school history text *Our Nation's Story* and seeing the famous Steele/Goldie painting 'The Arrival' in New Zealand – a large canoe crowded with famished and exhausted but exhilarated natives pointing to a distant horizon (the painting is now in the Auckland Art Gallery).

But on a family holiday to Rotorua he became aware for the first time that there were real people, with a cultural divide between his own milieu and another – albeit with little acknowledgement. In an era when it was not fashionable, he gradually developed a deep interest in aligning the interaction between Māori-Pākehā cultures.

From then, he often referred to New Zealand as a “shared land” and he set out to learn the Māori language, at which he became proficient – for a time he was editor of the Māori magazine *Te Ao Hou*. Bruce would say, to anyone who would listen, that the narrow-minded history text book *Our Nation's Story* should be banned.

Although it is a cliché there is no other way of saying it: Bruce Mason was a man ahead of his time – both intellectually and as a dramatist.

Of his thirty-four plays, five were within the framework of Māori old ways relating to what they perceived as the Pākehā's narrow and constricted emotions.

The first dramatic success of these was THE

POHUTUKAWA TREE, which besides performances in NZ, was featured by BBC television drama in 1959. Four others focussed on the position of Māori culture since European contact, and included observation of: differences in religious faith; being exiled from land; the effect of cities; and the trauma of seeking cultural roots. They were: HONGI, THE HAND ON THE RAIL, and SWAN SONG. The final one – AWATEA – he described as “the richest” of the group.

AWATEA came about largely because of the copyright holders allowing the Gershwin opera PORGY AND BESS to be performed for the first time ever without a black-American cast. Instead, a Māori cast was given approval for a 1965 season, and the great bass Inia Te Wiata was engaged to come back from London to play Porgy. The chief producer of the (then) NZ Broadcasting Corporation discussed with Bruce that this could be an opportunity for an original radio play showcasing Inia as an actor rather than a singer, and including the rest of



the opera's cast if feasible. An agreement was reached.

In mulling over ideas for such a play – involving a major star plus an entire complement of Māori performers – Bruce found himself thinking back to two incidents in his past. He was acquainted with a young English woman who was invited by a Māori friend to be bridesmaid at her wedding to a doctor. The wedding was held with grand ceremony on a marae – but married bliss lasted only a few weeks, when it transpired that the “doctor” was actually a house painter.

Another acquaintance was a young lad who was the focus of much pride from his iwi when he gained the University Entrance examination, and enrolled for a medical degree. The complexity of university overwhelmed him and he dropped out and became a freezing worker.

He was too embarrassed ever to return to his home district.

Besides these two story possibilities taken from real life, in his dramatic work Bruce customarily observed some relationship with the classics culture he admired and deliberately paid homage to. This included the recurring

elements of children at odds with their parents (and vice versa), which is an important theme in Greek tragedy. In AWATEA the fact that the central figure of the Māori patriarch is blind can be seen echoing the perception that Homer himself was also blind.

Other literary sources were also not closed to Bruce. He freely acknowledged that his widely successful solo work THE END OF THE GOLDEN WEATHER, which he performed 986 times, had its iconic title borrowed from the Thomas Clayton Wolfe novel *The Web and the Rock*.

AWATEA's action takes place in a fictional Omoana (“place of the sea”) which, although it doesn't exist, in Bruce's mind was somewhere North of Gisborne.

Combining the themes which had already intrigued him, Bruce devised a story of an isolated village where a blind Māori patriarch lived in the pride of knowing his son was away in the city working as an in-demand doctor. Once a year the son would return for a visit – and a major hui would take place. One year he is late and the old man doesn't know that his son is really a freezing worker who has been arrested for assault.

In the initial draft of the play, the old blind father never finds out the truth. But when the draft was sent to Inia Te Wiata in London, he commented that this seemed to be evading a dramatic high point – that the old man should hear the truth, and provide some resolution to the play by showing how he deals with it. Upon reflection, Bruce agreed and re-wrote the ending – for which two further indelible incidents from his own past became part of the story.



During Bruce's time as editor of *Te Ao Hou* he had been contacted by a Māori youth in prison. They developed a frequent correspondence (in English), during which Bruce was astonished at young man's fluency and command of imagery. When the prison sentence was nearing an end, Bruce philanthropically made discreet enquiries in Wellington about the possibility of this man

becoming a teacher. He was told by the Education Department that normally a conviction was a block to teaching positions, but that in some rare circumstances an exception could be at least considered. This incident helped shape the creation of AWATEA's young protagonist Matt – and how his natural eloquence can possibly provide some glimmer of hope for the future.

Also, when he was younger Bruce had worked as a fruit-picker in an orchard, alongside a young Māori whose quiet capability and magic touch with machinery made a great impression. One day, his mother came to report hesitantly that the young man would not be at work – he and some mates had got drunk the night before, stolen a car, and broken open a cash register. Ashamed, mortified and in tears, she told her story clutching a verandah pillar – down which she slid and fell sobbing on the floor.

You will see tonight how that image had stayed with Bruce for several decades.

The story's action takes place in approximately 1962. Bruce saw it as essential that



an isolated coastal village would not receive rapidly disseminated news items about city crimes – information about which became commonplace when television and radio spread nationwide.

In later years Bruce was acutely aware that live theatre was undergoing considerable changes and moving in different directions. A fair proportion of the change was based on a shift in economics. Of necessity cast numbers became smaller (the original AWATEA stage production had a cast of thirty-four). Large-scale professional productions became the province of pop concerts or of other presentations which combined big forces of drama with music, such as Jenny McLeod's *EARTH AND SKY* – which Bruce acknowledged as “total theatre”. In the 1970s he referred to his own plays as “dodo dramas”.

But the dodo is extinct, and the theme of AWATEA, while historic, is not extinct.

In the play's New Year's Eve scene, the Māori characters sing and dance their traditional festive items and the Pākehās sing *Auld Lang Syne*. Of this unusual-for-the-time juxtaposition, in 1964 Bruce wrote the stage direction:

Māori and European rituals are mixed without incongruity.

Sadly, he never lived to see that juxtaposition occur more frequently in real life, as in later years it has.



Max Cryer is an Auckland-based broadcaster, writer and entertainer.

The Cast



George Henare (Werihe Paku)

"47 years in this vagabond but very rewarding profession. A career which began in 1965, with the NZ Opera Company production of PORGY AND BESS, then, subsequent operas graduating from chorus member to character principal, then into "Legit". Theatre appearances include performances for the Māori Theatre Trust, Downstage, Mercury, Stetson Productions, Court, Circa and Taki Rua. Across the ditch with Melbourne Theatre Company, Sydney Ensemble and Company B Belvoir – all these interspersed with radio drama, television, talking books, documentary narrator, films and hosting awards presentations.

Enough background here I think to enable me to give a compelling account of the character of Werihe. The honours, achievements and awards over the years have been an extremely humbling experience for which I will be eternally grateful."



Andrew Grainger (Sergeant Jameson)

Andrew's career as an actor began in the 1980s and was born out of a love of musicals. The much celebrated shows SOUTH PACIFIC, SEVEN BRIDES FOR SEVEN BROTHERS and LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS, all performed on London's West End, were amongst his first professional productions. For Auckland Theatre Company, he has appeared in: A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, THE TWITS, CALENDAR GIRLS, MARY STUART, POOR BOY, AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY, OLIVER! and LE SUD.

Originally from Britain, Andrew immigrated to New Zealand and has rapidly built up

an impressive collection of credits, having appeared in local television programmes: SHORTLAND STREET, OUTRAGEOUS FORTUNE, THE MILLION DOLLAR CON MAN, LIFE'S A RIOT and THE CULT. Highlights from the UK include roles in: THE BILL, ROSEMARY AND THYME, HEARTBEAT, BAD GIRLS and EASTENDERS; appearing with footballer Vinnie Jones in the feature film MEAN MACHINE and working alongside Robert Redford in SPY GAME.

Andrew featured in Silo Theatre's 2009 production RUBEN GUTHRIE and had a cameo role in THE LOVELY BONES directed by Peter Jackson.



Geraldine Brophy (Emma Gilhooly)

Geraldine Brophy is one of New Zealand's best known actresses. She has worked extensively as an actress, director and playwright for Downstage Theatre, Circa, Court Theatre, Centrepoint Theatre, Fortune Theatre and Auckland Theatre Company.

Her own company, Number 8 Theatre, has toured nationally with her one woman show, CONFESSIONS OF A CHOCOHOLIC, LADIES A PLATE co-written and performed with her daughter, Beatrice Joblin, REAL ESTATE and more recently her work MEAT, a one man show about a celebrity chef. Her latest play, a micro-musical FLORAL NOTES premiered at Circa Theatre in April and goes on tour in October.

Her directing favourites include: SINGLE SPIES, UNDER MILK WOOD and KISS OF THE SPIDER WOMAN for Court Theatre, WEDNESDAY TO COME and MURDOCH for Downstage Theatre, and another of her own works, PARADISE PACKAGE for Fortune Theatre.

From 1997 to 2001 she appeared as receptionist, Moira Crombie on SHORTLAND STREET. Other television credits include: SEVEN PERIODS WITH MR GORMSBY, INSIDER'S GUIDE TO LOVE, OUTRAGEOUS FORTUNE, WELCOME TO PARADISE, TIME HACKERS, LEGEND OF THE SEEKER and SIEGE.

Audiences may remember her as a celebrity contestant on DANCING WITH THE STARS, where she danced for Arthritis NZ, one of the charities for which she is an Ambassador.

In the cinema she has featured in: IN MY FATHER'S DEN, KING KONG, and THE WATERHORSE. She won the 1998 New Zealand Film And Television Best Actress award for HOME MOVIE and the 2008 Qantas Film And Television Best Actress In Film award for the kiwi box office hit, SECOND HAND WEDDING. Her latest NZ film, HOOK LINE AND SINKER was released in 2011.

Geraldine is delighted to be back on the Auckland stage for Auckland Theatre Company, where she last appeared as Nurse in ROMEO & JULIET.

Te Kohe Tuhaka (Matt Paku)

A graduate of Toi Whaakari: New Zealand Drama School Te Kohe's many acting credits include: for theatre MICHAEL JAMES MANAIA, THE BROTHERS SIZE, PAUA, and MAUI - ONE MAN AGAINST THE GODS.

For film: SIONNES 2, BILLY, WHAT REALLY HAPPENED: WAITANGI, ERUPTION; and for television STOLEN, NATIVE DIET, TE MATATINI O TE RA, GO GIRLS and SHORTLAND STREET.



Carl Bland (*Detective Inspector Brett*)

With over 25 years of experience on stage and screen, film credits include: *I'LL MAKE YOU HAPPY* (for which Carl was nominated Best Actor), *LAUNDRY WARRIOR* and *THE WHOLE OF THE MOON*. His numerous stage productions include: *SAVAGE HEARTS* and *KING LEAR* (Theatre At Large), *MONDO NUOVO* (Shona McCullagh), *HAMLET* (Watershed Theatre) and *ROMEO & JULIET* (Mercury Theatre).

He wrote and created his own shows with Peta Rutter under the name Nightsong Productions. Shows include: *THE BED SHOW*, *THE HOUSE OF DOORS*, *CAMELS* and *SOFA STORIES*, collaborating with Theatre Stampede. They also made *HEAD* (winner of Chapman Tripp Most Original Production) and *360* for The New Zealand International Arts Festival in 2010.

Nancy Brunning (*Ana*)

Nancy descends from Ngati Raukawa and Ngai Tuhoe iwi; however, her parents met each other in Taupo, where she was born and raised. At 18, Nancy moved to Wellington to study at Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School under the leadership of Sunny Amey (1990) and Robyn Payne (1991).

She played *SHORTLAND STREET*'s Nurse Jaki Manu for two years after graduating drama school, and then moved back to Wellington to continue working with Taki Rua Theatre.

Nancy has created roles in debut productions such as *NGĀ TANGATA TOA* by Hone Kouka and *WHAEA KAIRAU* by Apirana Taylor. She performed as Aggie Rose in Briar Grace-Smith's *PURAPURAWHETU*. She has also been a participant in the Wellington International Arts Festival with productions such as *WAIORA*, *BLUE SMOKE* and *BEAUTY AND THE BEAST*.

She has directed for stage with productions such as *NGA POU WAHINE*, *WAITAPU* and *FLAT OUT BROWN* (all written by Briar Grace-Smith). For Taki Rua Productions, Nancy has directed Māori Language theatre productions by strong Māori language advocates such as Materoa Haenga, Hone Hurihanganui, Apirana Taylor, Antonio Te Maioha and Kahu Hotere. Nancy directed her first short film called *JOURNEY TO IHIPA* by new writer Vicki-Anne Heikell.

This is the fourth production Nancy has been involved with Auckland Theatre Company, after being in *HARURU MAI* by Briar Grace-Smith, Albert Wendt's *THE SONGMAKER'S CHAIR*, as co-director with Nathaniel Lees, and *AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY*.



Rob Mokaraka (*Kani*)

Rob has co-written and acted with Paolo Rotondo in *STRANGE RESTING PLACES* produced by Taki Rua Productions, which has been on the national / international festival touring circuit on and off for the last four years.

Rob and Paolo also received development funding from the NZ Film Commission to adapt *STRANGE RESTING PLACES* into a feature film.

Rob's most recent television credits include: *PURAPURAWHETU* and *STRANGE RESTING PLACES*, which screened on Māori Television as part of the *ATAMIRA* series.

Rob's awards include: 2001 Chapman Tripp Theatre Award - Most Original Production for *INSALT*, 2001 Chapman Tripp Theatre Award - Promising Newcomer for *HAVE CAR WILL TRAVEL*, and 2007 Chapman Tripp Theatre Award - Outstanding New Playwrights for *STRANGE RESTING PLACES*, co-written with Paolo Rotondo.

Currently he is co-writing a new play for Taki Rua Productions.



Nicola Kawana (*Pera*)

Nicola is a graduate of Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School. She has just completed filming a feature, co-starring with Temuera Morrison in *FRESH MEAT*.

Nicola's television credits include lead roles in: *ERUPTION*, *THE MAN WHO LOST HIS HEAD* starring opposite British actor Martin Clunes, *SHORTLAND STREET*, and *JACKSON'S WHARF*.

Theatre credits include: *THE MOTOR CAMP*, *WHO NEEDS SLEEP ANYWAY?*, *NGA MANURERE*, *WOMAN FAR WALKING*, *LES PARENTS TERRIBLES*, and *BLOOD WEDDING*. Nicola a member of the NZ Actors' Equity.



Scotty Cotter (*Tahi*)

Scotty Cotter has a varied career in both theatre and screen. As an actor, Scotty was recently in the Māori Television *ATAMIRA* series starring in *PURAPURAWHETU* and *THE PROPHET*. Other television credits include: *BROWN BROTHERS*, *SHORTLAND STREET*, *WHANAU*.

For theatre Scotty's credits include: *PURAPURAWHETU*, *AWHI TAPU*, *FLINTLOCK MUSKET*, *HAVOC IN THE GARDEN*, *THE BRAVE*. Scotty has also devised and toured a show internationally (*UP CLOSE OUT LOUD*) with Massive Company.

Scotty is pretty awesome so come say hi to him after the show.



Cian Elyse White (Tina)

Growing up in Rotorua, Cian moved to Wellington to study at Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School at the age of 18. After graduating she then went on to do a full emersion Māori course in 2010.

Cian was nominated for the Chapman Trip - Best Female Newcomer Award for her role as Mo in MO & JESS KILL SUSIE, directed by Murray Lynch. Since then Cian has been involved in various stage productions including: THE PROPHET by Hone Kouka, TE AWARUA by Albert Belz, and for television: UNDERBELLY and THE BLUE ROSE.

AWATEA is Cian's debut for Auckland Theatre Company and she is relishing the opportunity to share the stage with some of New Zealand's theatre greats. She is looking forward to playing Puhī of the village, Tina Keritahu.



Aymee Karaitiana (Whānau)

Born in Masterton, raised in Dunedin, Aymee is currently in her second year of a Bachelor of Performing and Screen Arts at Unitec. AWATEA is Aymee's debut for Auckland Theatre Company.

"Being a busy second year at Unitec, life couldn't be more fulfilling."



Rebekah Brady (Whānau)

Rebekah is currently in her third year of a Bachelor of Performing and Screen Arts at Unitec, where she has performed in: ASPHALT KISS directed by Paul Gittins, THE DINING ROOM directed by Cameron Rhodes, and ROMEO & JULIET directed by Kacie Stetson.

"Working on AWATEA has been an amazing experience. This is my first time working with Auckland Theatre Company and I have found the journey fulfilling and of great value to my craft. I look forward to completing my final year of actor training and entering into the industry."



Te Ruinga Rakena (Whānau)

Born and raised in Papakura, 21-year-old Te Ruinga descends from Waikato Taniwharau.

*Ko Taupiri te Maunga
Ko Waikato te Awa
Ko Ngati Mahuta te hapu
Ko Matahuru te papakainga
Ko Tainui te Waka
Ko Waikato te iwi
Ko Kingi Potatau Tewhero whero
te tangata.*

Now studying performing arts at Te Wānanga o Aotearoa, Te Ruinga likes to play the guitar and sing his heart out and his favorite hobby has to be martial arts.

*No reira, nga hihi nui
Kia koutou katoa*

Mauri ora!



John Fifita (Whānau)

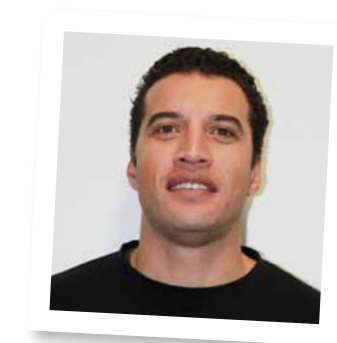
AWATEA is John's debut production for Auckland Theatre Company. Based in Auckland, John is studying Level four Māori Performing Arts at Te Wānanga o Aotearoa. John appeared as an extra in the New Zealand film MT ZION, starring Stan Walker and Temuera Morrison, and for the television show KORERO MAI. As well as acting John enjoys keeping fit and active playing rugby league.



Gene Tana (Whānau)

AWATEA is Gene's debut production for Auckland Theatre Company. Based in Auckland, Gene has been studying Māori Performing Arts at Te Wānanga o Aotearoa. Gene appeared as an extra in SHARK IN THE PARK, in cultural performances for tourists at the National Treaty Grounds, and in the plays, MIST OF TIME and THE LAND OF PLENTY.

The love of stage performance has been a passion of his since he was young and now Gene is pursuing his lifelong dream of becoming an actor.



The Creatives

Colin McColl – Direction

One of New Zealand's leading theatre directors, Colin co-founded Taki Rua Theatre in 1983 and was Artistic Director of Downstage Theatre in Wellington, 1984 - 1992. In the mid-90s, together with Hone Kouka, he led Te Roopu Whakaari, producing five original works, of which NGĀ TANGATA TOA, starring Nancy Brunning, was the highlight. He has led Auckland Theatre Company as Artistic Director since 2003.

Colin has directed for the Norwegian National Theatre and the Dutch National Theatre, as well as leading New Zealand and Australian theatre companies and is the only New Zealand director to be invited to present his work at the official Edinburgh Festival. His production of HEDDA GABLER, played there to great acclaim in 1990 and was also presented at the Ibsen Festival, Oslo, the Covent Garden Festival, London and the 1991 Sydney Festival.

Colin has also won Best Director at the Chapman Tripp Theatre Awards several times – including for his 2002 production of WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?

His many productions for Auckland Theatre Company include: A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, IN THE NEXT ROOM (OR THE VIBRATOR PLAY), CALENDAR GIRLS, ON THE UPSIDE-DOWN OF THE WORLD, MARY STUART, AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY, THE POHUTUKAWA TREE, CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF, THE FEMALE OF THE

SPECIES, WHERE WE ONCE BELONGED, END OF THE RAINBOW, THE CRUCIBLE, HATCH OR THE PLIGHT OF THE PENGUINS, DOUBT, DISGRACE, THE DUCHESS OF MALFI, EQUUS, GOLDIE, WAITING FOR GODOT, SERIAL KILLERS, THE SEAGULL, ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD and UNCLE VANYA.

Opera directing credits include QUARTET (New Zealand International Arts Festival 2004), LA BOHEME (Wellington City Opera), THE ITALIAN GIRL IN ALGIERS, THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO and THE PRODIGAL CHILD for the NBR New Zealand Opera. In 2009 he remounted his production of THE ITALIAN GIRL IN ALGIERS for the Scottish Opera.

In November 2007, Colin was honoured for his artistic achievements and excellence at the eighth annual Arts Foundation of New Zealand Laureate Awards and was made an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit in June 2010.



Bruce Mason – Playwright

Bruce Mason, playwright, critic and fiction writer, was born in Wellington and moved to Takapuna at the age of five. His experiences in Takapuna formed the basis of his famous solo work for the theatre, THE END OF THE GOLDEN WEATHER.

In 30 years Mason wrote more than two dozen plays, including such classics as THE POHUTUKAWA TREE, BLOOD OF THE LAMB and AWATEA. He was a busy actor, critic, editor and general activist for New Zealand's fledgling professional theatre. In 1977 he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Literature by Victoria University, was made a CBE in 1980, and was given the New Zealand Literary Fund Award for Achievement the same year that he died, in 1982.



John Gibson – Composition & Sound Design

"The sound design for AWATEA mainly consists of trying to imply the silence and spaces of Omoana. The lyrics for the song at the end were composed by Te Kohe inspired Bruce Mason's text."

John has been composing original music for New Zealand theatre, film, dance and television since 1980. He has two short films in this year's film festival SNOW IN PARADISE and INHALE/EXHALE, he also scored SHACKLETON'S CAPTAIN shown on television recently. In 2008 he received a Qantas Film and Television award for his score for Vincent Ward's film RAIN OF THE CHILDREN.

Previous works for Auckland Theatre Company include A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, IN THE NEXT ROOM (OR THE VIBRATOR PLAY), ON THE UPSIDE-DOWN OF THE WORLD, POOR BOY, THE WASTE LAND, CALENDAR GIRLS, HORSEPLAY, OLIVER!, THE POHUTUKAWA TREE, THE WIFE WHO SPOKE JAPANESE IN HER SLEEP, CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF, WHO NEEDS SLEEP ANYWAY?, WHERE WE ONCE BELONGED, THE BLONDE THE BRUNETTE AND THE VENGEFUL REDHEAD, EQUUS, DISGRACE, CALIGULA, THE DUCHESS OF MALFI and the arrangements and musical direction of SWEET CHARITY.



Nic Smillie – Costume Design

“Inspiration for the costumes has come from the era in which the play is set, and the play itself which to me is about words, written and spoken, and emotion.

The costumes therefore need to not pull focus from that, simply to be right for the era, location and economic situation of the characters. The major design decision was to limit the colour palette to be in keeping with the set.

Ans Westra’s photographs in ‘Washday at the Pa’ were a great source of visual information, along with other photographs from the era.”

Nic Smillie has a Bachelor of Design in Textiles and has worked in theatre, film and television as a costume designer for the past thirteen years. Designs for Auckland Theatre Company include A MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM, CALENDAR GIRLS, CABARET, AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY, ROMEO & JULIET, THE POHUTUKAWA TREE, THE WIFE WHO SPOKE JAPANESE IN HER SLEEP, CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF and WHERE WE ONCE BELONGED.

Nic has also costumed various mainly Wellington based theatre projects which include SEX DRIVE, RITA AND DOUGLAS and LE SUD (Wanaka Festival of Colour), THE MOTOR CAMP, KING AND COUNTRY, TOP GIRLS, CABARET, DRACULA, PRIVATE LIVES, SWEENEY TODD and DRAWER OF KNIVES.

Tony Rabbit – Set & Lighting Design

Tony Rabbit has designed sets and/or lighting for theatre, opera, television and film and even, according to one reporter, the radio.

His work was last seen by Auckland Theatre Company audiences in A MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM, ON THE UPSIDE-DOWN OF THE WORLD, THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST, THE POHUTUKAWA TREE, CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF, WHERE WE ONCE BELONGED, END OF THE RAINBOW, HATCH OR THE PLIGHT OF THE PENGUINS, DISGRACE and THE DUCHESS OF MALFI.

Winner of the Air New Zealand Screen Award for Contribution to Design for the television series THE INSIDER’S GUIDE TO LOVE, Nic has also designed costumes for RAGE, TANGIWAI, FISH SKIN SUIT and AFTERSHOCK (telefeatures) and THE INSIDER’S GUIDE TO HAPPINESS, SEVEN PERIODS WITH MR GORMSBY, THE HOTHOUSE and TIME TRACKERS (television series). Her operatic designs include QUARTET and THE ITALIAN GIRL IN ALGIERS. For film her works include FRESH MEAT, TURANGAWAEWAE and STICKMEN.



Design Notes from Tony Rabbit

In an appendix to the second edition of AWATEA in March 1978, Bruce included several things that resonated strongly with me, and indeed became pivotal to the design process of this production.

The first was his observation that this play, together with its companion piece THE POHUTUKAWA TREE were what he called “genre” pieces, and “could be played on successive nights without a stick of furniture changed, not a leaf or flower disturbed, not a battered weatherboard removed” Further, he stated that “...the genre I had in mind is the nineteenth century panoramic painting...”

AWATEA’s first staging in the Wellington Town Hall in September 1968 included sets by the famous NZ painter Peter McIntyre – I was intrigued to see if any photos of these existed, since I think it is often very interesting when artists cross disciplines, but although nothing of interest came out of this research, the idea of paintings as an inspiration remained with me. Indeed, the well known painting ‘Christina’s World’ by American artist Andrew Wyeth was already in my mind, as it perfectly depicts the dry summer landscape of parts of Hawkes Bay and the East Coast, and I had already some years ago taken photographs up there that were almost exactly that painting, including the grey weathered buildings perched at the top of that landscape.

So a dry, simple, sloping landscape - a simple honest place for an actor to stand, and allow Bruce’s wonderful text to sing and invoke the

world of the play... indeed, in spirit similar to the set for THE POHUTUKAWA TREE I had designed a few years ago...

The second was that he included in this appendix a number of the letters that Matt wrote to his father, the text of which are not included in the actual play.

Old Mr Paku is of course blind, and it is the letters of his son, over years and years, that have in essence brought the light back into his world. So it seemed appropriate that those letters, physically invisible to Werihe Paku, but an essential foundation of the play, be displayed, hung as in a gallery surrounding his world; and the New Zealand master of that text based genre is of course Colin McCahon, on whose paintings, in particular “I applied my mind...” I have based the physical representation of Matt’s letters.

In Rehearsal



Rehearsal Photos by William Davis



JOIN THE COMING OF AGE CAMPAIGN

To mark Auckland Theatre Company's 21st birthday, the Company plans to open the doors of a custom-built, state of the art theatre in Auckland's Wynyard Quarter. This unique facility will present the best New Zealand has to offer in theatre and dance, celebrating our stories and diverse cultures, alongside visiting international performers.

This long overdue complex will redefine the theatre-going experience, offering flexible performance spaces, bar and café. It will house a stand alone 600-seat theatre and a 200-seat auditorium in ASB's adjoining head office, all built around an open courtyard which will host outdoor performances, film screenings and community events.

The new theatre will be a valuable asset for Auckland, as it strives to be the world's most liveable city, and the perfect addition to the Wynyard Quarter. It will be an iconic destination for both residents and visitors, attracting over 130,000 people per year.

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George Henare QandA

George Henare first started acting because he couldn't behave. He'd been working as a chorus member at the New Zealand Opera Company, but was soon moved out "because I was always pulling focus, I wouldn't keep still". Instead, they began giving him little character roles. In 1968 Director Dickie Johnston invited him to Wellington's Downstage Theatre where he performed in Shakespeare's TWO GENTLEMAN OF VERONA (opposite one Colin McColl!), and then invited him to do AWATEA where he played Matt Paku opposite opera star Inia Te Wiata.

George had by then completed two years of teacher's college, which he delayed finishing when he became involved with the Māori cast of NZ Opera's PORGY AND BESS, and continued to tour with the company.

"We did PORGY AND BESS in Australia. I remember sitting in the Princess Theatre in Melbourne staring at the roof and thinking 'This is it'. I'd just got a letter from the Education Department saying we can't give you any more leave, you have to come back. I thought No, this is it, this is what I want to do, this is it. So I resigned, I had to pay back a 200 pound bond I think."

Having never looked back, George has now come full circle; playing Werihe in Auckland Theatre Company's revival of AWATEA, a role first suggested for George by Bruce Mason's wife, Diana.

What are your memories of the 1968 AWATEA production as a very green actor?

I remember very little about the rehearsal, I remember working with the guy who played Jameson and Brett, and I hardly ever remember working with Inia or the rest of the cast, which was fine because

I had very little to do with them. I remember saying to everyone; this is fantastic, everybody talks about me, I come on and go 'blah, blah, blah', then walk off, and everyone still talks about me. I don't remember sitting in on the big cast rehearsals, so I had no idea that old man Werihe had all this other dialogue until I saw this script and I went 'good grief!'

The guy who played Brett was the one I learnt a lot from. He introduced me to all this stuff about acting, and he used to really get my goat. With hindsight I realised it was a valuable lesson for me to learn. He was very forthright – stop acting, stop mugging, just do it, this is what it means. He made me look at myself as an actor, it was a big learning curve for me.

You'd been talking with Colin McColl for some time about doing AWATEA... why is now the right time?

We did a reading of it at the Victoria Theatre about two years ago on the day I turned 65, and the audience response was amazing. They kept clapping and clapping. And I think that's what inspired Colin to do it. Lets go back and look at this. There's some lovely poetry in there. I remember Bruce had said once, because I think there was a bit of a kick-up because he wrote



THE POHUTUKAWA TREE, and I think there was the odd Māori person around who said 'Why is this Pākehā man writing this stuff'. And he said look, until you guys get writers I'm going to keep doing it, this is going to force you to get the writers up and moving. There were very few others. It's interesting because what he writes is the period just before the renaissance of Māoritanga, before the language of Te Reo became important. Back then it was being pushed aside and pushed aside.

I remember my father saying... what you have to do now, the only way to make Māoritanga survive is for you to become a good Pākehā, learn the Pākehā way, become a good Pākehā, and then bring it back and teach the younger ones. We were all sent off to Gisborne Boy's High School to get the English system of the Boarding school to learn to speak English properly. For me it was like a whole new world, the city – this is it! I'm never going to be a farmer!

How have you approached playing Werihe?

You get a wealth of experience as you grow older and older and older. All the roles I've played vary so much through time. Funnily enough at the start of my career I was always cast as old men, I played Lear at 28 – why are these people casting me? It's only because I was bought up among old men around me all the time – I knew them, all their foibles and their grumpies. Then as you get into that vintage yourself you understand what being grumpy is all about.

I like playing a role that is so rich when you look into it. I'd like to play Lear now, because now I understand, I know things. It makes it much more fulfilling when you do a role like this.

Having grown up on the East Coast, how familiar is the world of the play to you?

This is all of course set in a fictional place called Omoana, round about my area, and all the small towns. The country cops would only lock you up at the last straw. Usually it was a clip around the ear or boot to the bum. Everyone knew everybody and

all the locals knew the local policeman. Gossip was rife in these small places. You couldn't move without somebody saying something. We didn't think of ourselves as poor or anything like that. You had vegetables in the garden, you had food on the land, fish in the sea, what else do you need? Clothes weren't very important, we had never heard of fashion way back then. You just wore what was passed down to you. So I understand this little old place.

Is it challenging playing a character that is blind?

I'm an actor who likes to eye people when I work, I'm having to get used to not eyeing people when I work. That's the difficulty – all of a sudden you've got to defocus, so that's a bit of a challenge. I've had a blind cousin and I've worked with the blind, recording books. I tell young actors – be observant all the time, watch, watch, watch. You see something, store it away. Some day you'll go yes, I know that.

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What's On In Theatres Around The Country?



AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY

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By Joanna Murray-Smith
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Sadie and Ed meet Martin and Chloë at a luxurious Pacific Island resort and instantly hit it off, despite coming from completely different worlds. When Martin saves Ed's life, everyone knows the debt can never be properly repaid. But Ed is rich and Chloe and Martin have a need so great it seems divine providence when Ed, wanting to show his gratitude, offers to gift them whatever they wish for. But what they want is surely a wish nobody could possibly grant.

CENTREPOINT THEATRE

Palmerston North *AT THE WAKE*

By Victor Roger
28 July – 25 August

New Zealand Premiere.

Just when you thought your family had issues... Robert has a lot on his plate. His mother has just died, and his long-estranged father has turned up at the funeral. The only person Robert has to lean on is his 70-year-old grandmother - Joan.



DOWNSTAGE THEATRE

Wellington *THE DOMINION POST SEASON OF MAGNOLIA STREET*

By Dave Armstrong
21 July – 28 July

On this street you'll discover that magnolia trees have hearts, unexpected friendships are the best kind, and 1944 can be just around the corner.

Using multimedia and electronics to blur the line between what's imagined and what's real, Australia's Frank Newman directs with his trademark combination of sharp storytelling and beautifully surprising animation.



BATS THEATRE

Wellington *SOMEONE LIKE YOU*

By Chaz Harris
02 August – 11 August

Have you ever thought about giving up on love?

Will Butler has. After a recent disappointment he decides celibacy is the answer, but his hopelessly romantic flatmate Frankie and brutally honest co-worker Renee have other plans.



COURT THEATRE

Christchurch *THE MOTOR CAMP*

By Dave Armstrong
23 June – 04 August

The problem with holidaying at a motor camp is anyone can park their caravan next to you. When the hard-case Hislops pull up next to the liberal Redmonds, what was supposed to be a relaxing getaway turns into the holiday from hell.



CIRCA THEATRE

Wellington *NUCLEAR FAMILY*

By Desiree Gezentsvey
24 July – 04 August



Winner of the 2011 Moondance International Festival Atlantis Award for Best Stage play (Script), *NUCLEAR FAMILY* features New Zealand actor Yael Gezentsvey in a tour-de-force performance as she takes on 12 multi-cultural characters in this riveting solo-show full of heart, tragedy and a fair balance of true comedy, by New Zealand playwright Desiree Gezentsvey.

FORTUNE THEATRE

Dunedin *HEROES*

By Gerald Sibleyras,
Translated by Tom Stoppard
25 August – 15 September



"HEROES is a sparkling gentle comedy about "human mortality and the universal desire to escape the confines of one's life." - Tom Stoppard

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