

New Zealand Post  SEASON OF

THE POHUTUKAWA TREE

BY BRUCE MASON

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THEATRE
COMPANY

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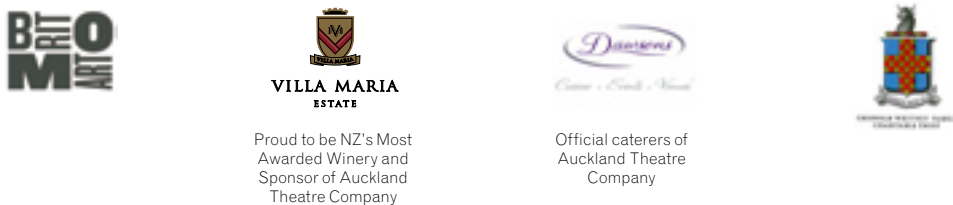
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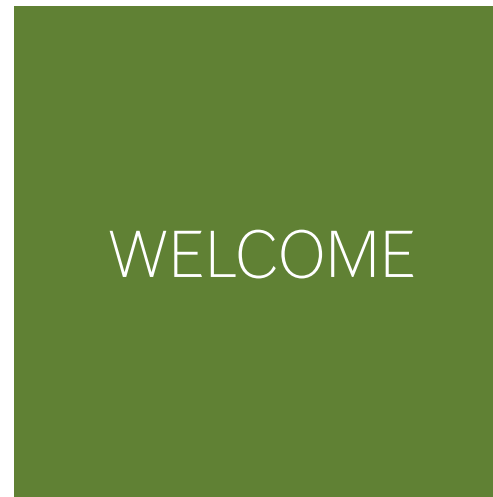


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THE POHUTUKAWA TREE is New Zealand's best known play, but tonight's production is the first-ever fully professional staging of the play in Auckland.

Written in 1955, it was given a semi-staged workshop production by the New Zealand Players in 1957. BBC Television produced it in 1959 for their Sunday Night Theatre series and the NZBS broadcast a radio adaptation of it in 1960. Since then it has been kept alive by amateur productions and by being studied in schools. The first fully professional live production in New Zealand was directed by Richard Campion (father of film-maker Jane Campion) 27 years after his original workshop production and less than two years after Bruce Mason's death.

Bruce was a pioneer of New Zealand professional theatre and a pioneer New Zealand playwright. He championed New Zealand stories and was generous and supportive

of local playwrights. He led by example, writing and performing a number of solo shows of which THE END OF THE GOLDEN WEATHER is the best known.

He also tried, in his humble way, to express in dramatic terms, the complexities and the misunderstandings of Maori-Pakeha relations at the time, with plays like THE POHUTUKAWA TREE and AWATEA (written for the great New Zealand bass Inia Te Wiata). These plays were written before the 1970s' Land Marches, Bastion Point and the huge renaissance of Maori language.

THE POHUTUKAWA TREE must be seen in that context. In this production, we have deliberately stripped back the fussy naturalism to let the play breathe and to allow actors and audience alike to examine the power and significance of the piece.

My huge and heartfelt thanks to the team which has joined me on this journey – my creative and production team,

and Rena Owen and the sterling cast – and special thanks to Esther Davis of Ngati Whatua for her advice and support.

I would also like to thank New Zealand Post for their support of this season. We are delighted to have them partnering with us in presenting this iconic work and also in the creation of an educational resource for the play which will be distributed to high schools all over Auckland. We greatly admire and appreciate their commitment to New Zealand writing.

Enjoy,

Colin McColl

New Zealand Post is a passionate supporter of the arts and culture in New Zealand.



THE POHUTUKAWA TREE, a moving and dramatic immediate post-war tale of cultural land ties, cultural integration and inter-generational tension, is as poignant today as it was when written 54 years ago.

It is always a pleasure to see the works of talented New Zealanders brought to life, especially one as creative as Bruce Mason who was actively involved in all aspects of New Zealand literature.

New Zealand Post also takes a broad view in its support of literacy, which we see as fundamental to a successful society. That is why New Zealand Post supports programmes as diverse as the New Zealand Post Book Awards for Children and Young Adults, the Books in Homes programme, the

National Schools Poetry Awards, the Mansfield Prize and, from 2010, the New Zealand Book Awards.

I congratulate Auckland Theatre Company, director Colin McColl and all those who have collaborated over many months to bring Bruce Mason's remarkable story to the stage. I know you will enjoy it.

Rt Hon James B Bolger,
ONZ

Chairman
New Zealand Post

New Zealand Post  SEASON OF

THE POHUTUKAWA TREE

BY BRUCE MASON

CAST

Aroha Mataira — **Rena Owen** Queenie Mataira — **Maria Walker** Johnny Mataira — **Tiare Tawera**
Mrs Atkinson — **Catherine Wilkin** Mr Atkinson — **Peter McCauley** Sylvia Atkinson — **Fern Sutherland**
Roy McDowell — **Richard Knowles** Rev. Athol Sedgwick — **Edwin Wright**
George Rawlings / Sergeant Robinson — **Craig Geenty**
Claude Johnson — **Michael Keir-Morrissey** Mrs Johnson — **Hera Dunleavy**
Dr Lomas — **Stuart Devenie** Tamatea Cousins — **Maria Walker, Hera Dunleavy**

CREATIVE

Direction — **Colin McColl** Assistant Direction — **Hera Dunleavy**
Set and Lighting Design — **Tony Rabbit** Costume Design — **Nic Smillie**
Sound Design — **John Gibson**
Ngā mihi nui ki a koe e te whaea Esther Davis i āwhina mai, i tautoko mai i kōupapa nei, otira i a mātou katoa te whānau Pohutukawa. Ngā mihi matihere.

PRODUCTION

Production Manager — **Mark Gosling** Technical Manager — **Bonnie Burrill**
Senior Stage Manager — **Fern Christie** Stage Manager — **Mitchell Turei** Operator — **Robert Hunte**
Properties Master — **Bec Ehlers** Wardrobe Supervisor — **Sara Kolijn**
Set Construction — **2 Construct**

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THE POHUTUKAWA TREE is the sixth Auckland Theatre Company production for 2009 and opened on 3 September 2009. THE POHUTUKAWA TREE is approximately 150 minutes long with an interval. Please remember to switch off all mobile phones, pagers and watch alarms.

New Zealand Post 



1.

Bruce Mason

By Vivienne Plumb

At the time of my first meeting with Bruce Mason, I was not a playwright. I used to jot down small ideas and poems and thoughts onto paper but I had not begun writing professionally. I didn't know I was a writer. I had begun an acting career and my partner of those years was working at Downstage Theatre in Wellington which meant I often hung around the downstairs coffee lounge and in the backstage part of the theatre,

which is exactly what I was doing when Bruce walked out of one of the dressing rooms, came straight up to me, and asked me to sew a button on his costume.

I think he assumed I was an employee of the theatre, maybe the junior "costume girl". In those days, around the mid to late 1970s, Downstage employed an entire company of actors, directors, stage managers and wardrobe people. The theatre produced year-round main-stage productions and late-night shows, toured theatre into the schools and was a training ground for all of the above-mentioned occupations.

Bruce could have been preparing for a matinee performance of his solo show *WATERS OF SILENCE*,

or it may have been *NOT CHRISTMAS, BUT GUY FAWKES*, I can't remember now. But what stopped me in my tracks was Bruce's well-enunciated voice and very particular way of speaking (all the other actors would try to mimic him), his gregarious manner, and his entire demeanour which spelt out *AMAZING THEATRICAL BEING* in larger-than-life capital letters. I was so totally impressed that I immediately sewed the button onto his costume, quickly and without question. Who is that man? I asked other people in the company and they explained.

Bruce was born 28 September 1921 in Wellington, New Zealand, but his family moved to Takapuna on the North Shore of Auckland when he was five years old. The

nostalgic memories of growing up near Takapuna Beach later resulted in Bruce writing *THE END OF THE GOLDEN WEATHER*. This became a classic piece of New Zealand literature, was made into a film and is often used for study in New Zealand schools.

Bruce was a playwright, a critic, an actor and a fiction writer. He was a co-founder of Downstage Theatre in 1964, he wrote a weekly column for the *New Zealand Listener* from 1964 to 1969, and reviewed theatre for many years for both *The Dominion* and *The Evening Post* newspapers in Wellington. He wrote 34 plays in total, edited the landmark Maori news magazine *Te Ao Hou* between 1960 and 1961, and married Diana Shaw who became a well-known Wellington obstetri-

cian, famous for her "Amy Winehouse-type" hairdos, her huge earrings and her habit of leaving shows early in order to go and deliver babies.

Later on, I performed for the first time at Downstage Theatre in the play of United Kingdom writer, Steve Gooch, *FEMALE TRANSPORT*, playing the part of a young female convict being transported to Sydney, Australia. Bruce wrote up the play giving me a small review that went something like: Vivienne Plumb as Winnie bustles around the stage like a recalcitrant hen. The phrase "recalcitrant hen" has stuck in my head after all these years – it was such a good description of what I was doing on stage, and so typical of Bruce's witty, superbly written theatre reviews which he delivered for many years.



2.

During the 1980s, I began living in a house in Drummond St, Newtown. The Wellington actor, Michael Haigh, explained to me that I was now living next door to what had once been Unity Theatre. The theatre was started by Wellingtonians interested in theatre and in the use of theatre as political comment. It was a society with a tradition of left-wing political leanings that began in 1942. In its early years, Unity moved from Newtown to the Aro St Wesleyan Church and eventually to its final site located in the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes building at 1 Kent Terrace, where it became *BATS Theatre* in 1979.

Unity was a breeding ground for local New Zealand writers. Besides productions by Sean O'Casey, Gorki, Pinter,

Ionesco, Lorca, Arthur Miller, Ibsen and Sartre, the theatre at 36 Drummond St also premiered many New Zealand works including James K Baxter's *WIDE OPEN CAGE* and at least two of Bruce's early pieces. The structure was a wooden two-storey house with bay windows built around 1910 in a row of lookalike townhouses that ran alongside the Drummond St steps. (In Wellington, the streets often turn into steps as they climb up hills). The dressing rooms and wardrobe storage were situated upstairs in the bedrooms while the audience sat downstairs in what had once been the parlour and hallway, and the stage was set in the dining room.

Bruce lived nearby in a large wooden house near the corner of Riddiford St and Adelaide Rd, Newtown, where his wife Diana had established a surgery on the ground floor while the family lived above. This house is still standing in Riddiford St, very near the hospital, and is now used by the Wellington Child Cancer Centre.

Bruce's play, *THE POHUTUKAWA TREE*, was rehearsed in a church hall in Adelaide Rd in Newtown close to Bruce's residence in Riddiford St. If you look on a map at the three points – Unity Theatre in Drummond St, the house in Riddiford St, and the church hall on Adelaide Rd, you can see that they create an easily walkable triangle.



3.

THE POHUTUKAWA TREE was an ambitious full-length project, operatic in size and feel. It was first performed by the New Zealand Players Theatre Workshop in 1957, directed by Richard Campion. The initial run was seven performances in Wellington and two in Auckland. Bruce hoped to make an income from plays such as *THE POHUTUKAWA TREE* but the play never drew large audiences; it was after this that he decided to work on solo pieces that he could perform himself and he wrote *THE END OF THE GOLDEN WEATHER*.

I am writing this article during Maori Language Week and at the same time the idea is being mooted in Parliament that the Maori New Year, Matariki, be officially celebrated every year with a public holiday. Bruce was writing *THE POHUTUKAWA TREE* 50 years ago and it was his own contribution to a bicultural future for New Zealand. What was most inspiring about Bruce was his tireless effort towards the creation of a New Zealand theatre. He was one of the people who didn't just talk about it, he got up and did it.

In the revised publication of *THE END OF THE GOLDEN WEATHER*, he describes touring and performing the piece six nights a week through large and small New Zealand towns where he stayed in hotels or with local people, often



4.

every night in a different bed in a different town. His stories of the people he met – shepherds, farmers, housewives on the land – are both touching and historically fascinating. It was a hard-working agricultural society and New Zealanders weren't even sure what "culture" was.

Bruce states that he thought he had something to offer the New Zealand public but that as he continually performed the solo pieces he came to a realisation that he was really learning from his audience. These days it is amazing to imagine him touring, performing *THE END OF THE GOLDEN WEATHER* something like a thousand times. It was actions such as these that not only gave Bruce experience and an understanding of the New Zealand audience, and a window into their lives



5.

and culture, but helped him to create the beginning of a theatre that was about us: a theatre that was made up of our own uniquely New Zealand stories.

In 1995, I was awarded the Bruce Mason Playwrighting Award for my first play, *LOVE KNOTS*. This award was created to keep Bruce's memory alive and to help future New Zealand playwrights. Diana Mason was there at the presentation and I told the story about Bruce asking me to sew a button onto his costume. The award meant so much to me and was a great encouragement for me to continue writing.

Writers walk in the footprints of the ones who went before them. Bruce pioneered the walking track along which New Zealand playwrights are now travelling. He left us his beautiful stories, the playwrighting award that is in his name, and the "walkway" that he established for us with his touring, his enthusiasm and his belief; because of that I feel a great affinity with him and an immense affection for him.

IMAGE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The North Shore — the Home of Writers

By Graeme Lay



1.

Eighty years ago the North Shore was a backwater, a series of baches clustered about the bays and beaches of Auckland's north-east coast, connected by a rudimentary road. The beaches were overhung with pohutukawa trees and the hills inland were covered by tracts of native bush and scrub. At the southern end of the North Shore was one of Auckland's oldest suburbs, Devonport. Victorian villas covered the peninsula at Devonport, and the suburb's main street swept down to the ferry terminal, where vehicle and passenger ferries arrived from Auckland. The Waitemata Harbour kept the city at a distance and maintained the North Shore's sense of separateness.



2.

It was this physical detachment, along with the beauty of the bays, cheap bach accommodation and a casual way of life, which from the late 1920s onwards began to attract writers to the Shore. A seaside bach, for a peppercorn rental, overlooking a beach, the possibility of a vegetable garden around the bach and plentiful fish in the Rangitoto Channel, combined to allure aspiring poets, short story writers, novelists and playwrights to the area. Writer's block could usually be cured – or at least kept at bay – by a walk on the beach.

One of the first writers to live on the Shore was poet D'Arcy Cresswell, the son of a well-to-do Canterbury family, who lived rent-free in a bach above Castor Bay, provided by the Stronach family, from the late 1920s. An eccentric vagabond who wrote verse in a deliberately archaic style, Cresswell made the bach a focus for literary gatherings. His visitors during the 1930s included



3.

poet and novelist Robin Hyde – who lived nearby in another bach – poet R.A.K. Mason and short story writer Frank Sargeson. Novelists Jane Mander and Roderick Finlayson also visited from Auckland. Cresswell later left to live in England, returning only once to New Zealand.

Another poet and novelist, Margaret Escott, lived down the hill in Milford during the 1930s. In her 1936 novel *Show Down* (1936), there is an episode in which a pair of lovers meets on the cliff by the ancient pa at Castor Bay. Escott drowned herself in the sea at Milford in 1977.

In 1942, in the midst of World War Two, English writer Anna Kavan moved to remote Torbay, the most distant settlement on the Shore, to live with playwright and pacifist Ian Hamilton. They lived at Rock Isle Road, on a promontory above the bay. There Anna wrote short stories inspired by her eccentric neighbours and the property's panoramic views of the Hauraki Gulf. Her short stories have recently been republished in *Anna Kavan's New Zealand* (Vintage) edited by Jennifer Sturm.

In 1946 in the small cottage hospital at Castor Bay, a boy was born into the Hunt family, who lived at nearby Milford Beach. His parents named him Sam. Later Sam Hunt was to publish a poem that read in part:

*I have no memories as others do
Of family outings: we had it
all here,
White sand, ocean, Wairau creek
and bridge,
The orchard where we laid our
bodies bare*

Meanwhile in Devonport, at the populous end of the Shore, another writer had been strongly influenced by his Shore upbringing. This was novelist and English royal family biographer Hector Bolitho, who grew up in Devonport. He wrote in his autobiography, *My Restless Years* (1962): On summer nights, when my brother and I slept on the back balcony, we could hear the waves breaking on the beach and see ships

coming in from the sea, with lighted cabins that hinted at more thrilling lives than our own.

In 1946, ARD (Rex) Fairburn, poet and political polemicist, came with his family to live at 7 King Edward Parade, Devonport. He lived there for the next 30 years, and the outlook from the villa inspired one of his most memorable lines: There are ferries at the bottom of my garden, the Takapuna people envy us ...

After the harbour bridge opened in 1959, rapid suburban growth transformed the Shore. The price of coastal land soared and most of the baches were replaced by proper houses, townhouses and apartments. But the Shore's natural attractions continue to attract and motivate writers. Contemporary literary figures such as Kevin Ireland, Shonagh Koea, Anne Salmond, Michele Leggott, Christine Cole Catley and Roger Hall today make the Shore their home. It is an area which has left an indelible imprint on New Zealand literature, and so is worthy of its unofficial subtitle, "The Literary Capital of New Zealand".

IMAGE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 1— Frank Sargeson
- 2— Maurice Gee © Marti Friedlander
- 3— Sam Hunt

CAST



RENA OWEN

Ngati Hine/Welsh/European. A descendant of Chief Kawiti, Rena grew up in rural Northland amongst a large extended whanau. Although she originally trained and qualified as a SRN at Auckland Hospital, her first OE to London, though it was a wayward path, led her back to her childhood dreams and creative passions: performing and writing. She trained as an actor in London in the mid-1980s and has since worked extensively in theatre, television and film, around the globe. Amongst numerous credits and multiple awards, she earned international acclaim for her performance in New Zealand's classic film, *ONCE WERE WARRIORS*. Rena is one of only five actors in the world to have worked with both George Lucas and Stephen Spielberg. Based in Los Angeles, she continues to work in all mediums as an actor and writer. A published playwright now writing and

producing for the screen, she considers the theatre to be her first love. Portraying the formidable Aroha in Bruce Mason's classic play is a long-term career ambition fulfilled! She is thrilled to be working with Colin McColl again and with the Auckland Theatre Company, and honoured to be a part of this historic New Zealand production.



MARIA WALKER

Maria first performed for Auckland Theatre Company in Stephen Sinclair's hit *THE BACH* in 2005. Other theatre experience includes *UNITY*, *TWELFTH NIGHT*, *HISTORY OF AMERICAN FILM*, *KA MATE KA ORA*, *HINEPAU*, *TE TAPA TORU* and *THE PROPHET*.

Since graduating from Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School in 2008, Maria has gained a trainee position with Radio New Zealand in their Emerging Practitioners Programme.

She has roles in the upcoming feature films *CHOICE NIGHTS* and *AVATAR* and will appear in the new local television series *THIS IS NOT MY LIFE*.



TIARE TAWERA

(Ngati Porou, Tuhoe, Te Whānau-a-Apanui)
THE POHUTUKAWA TREE marks Tiare's debut performance for the Auckland Theatre Company.

Since graduating from school, Tiare has been presenting on a Maori kids' TV show called *PUKANA* for the past four years. His attention shifted to drama in 2007 when he landed a core cast role in the TV series *WHANAU*. Tiare has also been involved in Maori cartoon voice-overs such as *THE BACKYARDIGANS* and, most recently, the voice of *SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS* for Nickelodeon.

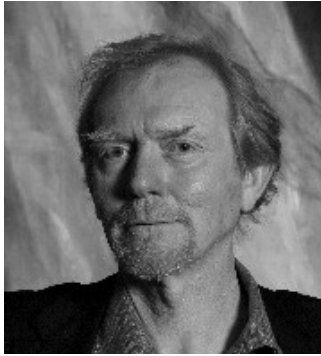
Being a fluent speaker in Te Reo, Tiare looks forward to challenging himself with his up-and-coming role in *THE POHUTUKAWA TREE* and sees this as a great stepping stone in his career.



CATHERINE WILKIN

Catherine's extensive career in theatre, film and television has seen her perform throughout New Zealand, Australia and Europe.

Theatre credits include *HEDDA GABLER*, *THE GRADUATE* (Downstage Theatre), *THE MISANTHROPE*, *BURNT PIANO*, *SHARK FIN SOUP* (Melbourne Theatre Company), *DINNER*, *LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN* (Circa Theatre), *ARCADIA*, *GHOSTS* (The Court Theatre), *MIDDLE AGE SPREAD*, *UP FOR GRABS*, *EQUUS*, *WHO WANTS TO BE 100?* (Auckland Theatre Company) and, most recently, *THE RAFT* (Centrepoint Theatre). Catherine's television credits include the Australian series *MCCLEOD'S DAUGHTERS*, *THE SADDLE CLUB*, *BLUE HEELERS*, *EMBASSY*, *HALIFAX*, *RAFFERTY'S RULES* (for which she won a Silver Logie) and *FLYING*



PETER MCCAULEY

Peter last appeared for Auckland Theatre Company in William Shakespeare's TWELFTH NIGHT. Peter's television experience includes ROAR, THE SECRET LIFE OF US, THE LOST WORLD (SERIES 1 – 3), BLUE HEELERS, HERCULES, XENA, SHORTLAND STREET, CLOSE TO HOME, GOOD GUYS BAD GUYS and 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA. Film credits include AFTER THE WATERFALL, THE INTERVIEW, PERFECT CREATURE, THE LOCALS, THE OUTSIDER and PALLET ON THE FLOOR.



FERN SUTHERLAND

Fern Sutherland is a recent graduate of Unitec's School of Performing and Screen Arts. Fern's highlights while training at Unitec include playing Bottom in A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM directed by John Callen, and Pope Joan in TOP GIRLS directed by Jennifer Ward-Lealand. After graduating in 2008, Fern was accepted into the intensive and prestigious Silo Theatre company's THE ENSEMBLE PROJECT. During this time, Fern devised a show BACKSTORY with six others under the guidance of Oliver Driver and rehearsed a classical play LIFE IS A DREAM directed by Michael Hurst. THE POHUTUKAWA TREE is her debut with The Auckland Theatre Company.



RICHARD KNOWLES

THE POHUTUKAWA TREE marks Richard's debut performance for Auckland Theatre Company. Since graduating from Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School in 2005, Richard's performances include ROCK N ROLL (Circa Theatre), GODS OF WARM BEER, THE FARM, WEIGHING IN (Centrepoint Theatre) and THE LITTLE DOG LAUGHED (Downstage Theatre). Richard appears in the acclaimed feature film OUT OF THE BLUE and Gaylene Preston's upcoming HOME BY CHRISTMAS. His television credits include LEGEND OF THE SEEKER, PARADISE CAFÉ and the new series THIS IS NOT MY LIFE.



EDWIN WRIGHT

Since graduating from Otago University's Allen Hall Theatre in 1999, Edwin has been fortunate enough to work with some of New Zealand's leading practitioners of theatre, film and television. He has worked extensively with Silo Theatre over the past seven years; his credits include UNIDENTIFIED HUMAN REMAINS AND THE TRUE NATURE OF LOVE, THE BOYS IN THE BAND, TAKE ME OUT, DYING CITY, RABBIT and, most recently, THE SCENE, earlier this year. Other notable theatre credits include THE DUMB WAITER, ARCADIA, ONE FLESH, RICHARD III, CLOSER, CHERISH and the critically acclaimed solo piece BRUISED. Film and television highlights include KING KONG, UNDERWORLD III: RISE OF THE LYCANS, POWER RANGERS, RUDE AWAKENINGS and OUTRAGEOUS FORTUNE.

DOCTORS (for which she won a Penguin Award). In New Zealand, she has appeared in OUTRAGEOUS FORTUNE, CHILDREN OF THE DOGSTAR, GLOSS, MARLIN BAY, THE CHOSEN, DUGGAN and SWIMMING LESSONS (for which she won a New Zealand Film and TV Award). Her film work includes THE CASE OF KATHERINE MANSFIELD, THE JOKER, SMALL TOWN BLUES and BRILLIANT LIES.

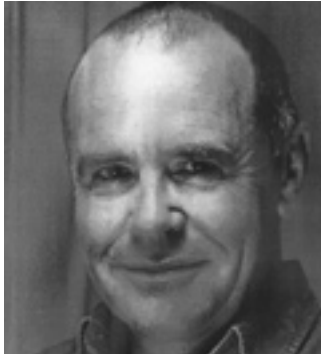
Recently Edwin worked on the South Pacific Pictures telefeature SPIES AND LIES, television drama/thriller series THIS IS NOT MY LIFE, and completed the filming of his first feature film lead role in MATARIKI, all yet to be released. THE POHUTUKAWA TREE is his fourth production with Auckland Theatre Company previous productions being THE CRUCIBLE, END OF THE RAINBOW and PLAY 2.03.



CRAIG GEENTY

Craig was trained at UCOL, Palmerston North by Bert Van Dijk and Simon Ferry. Since 2003, he has worked with Radio New Zealand and has appeared in theatre productions all around New Zealand, including WASSUP BRO, GIRLS' WEEKEND ESCAPE, MAN OF LA MANCHA (Centrepoint Theatre), REVENGE OF THE AMAZONS, METAMORPHOSIS (BATS Theatre), WHO NEEDS SLEEP ANYWAY? (Fortune Theatre) and KING AND COUNTRY throughout the New Zealand festival circuit.

Also, Craig has produced two of his own solo shows, including TRAIN GHOSTS (Best Performer and Best Comedy, New Zealand Fringe 2005), and this year directed Regan Taylor in DESTINATION: DEATH (BATS Theatre and PumpHouse Amphitheatre, Auckland Fringe).



MICHAEL KEIR-MORRISSEY

With over 30 years behind him in professional theatre, Michael has worked as an actor all around the country and in every medium.

Of the plays in which he has appeared, at Circa Theatre, Centrepoint Theatre, Mercury Theatre and Theatre Corporate, standouts include the original production of ONCE ON CHUNUK BAIR and Harold Pinter's THE CARETAKER.

Highlights from Michael's Watershed Theatre days include SONG OF THE CIVILISED THIEF and SPECTACLE OF ONE with Inside Out Company, and THE TAMING OF THE SHREW in which he played Petruccio.

Recent work includes CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF, FEMALE OF THE SPECIES (Auckland Theatre Company), WILD CABBAGE (Silo Theatre) and THE HOLLOW MEN (BATS Theatre, Circa Theatre and Maidment Theatre).



HERA DUNLEAVY

A graduate of Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School, Hera has worked at all of New Zealand's professional theatres. Auckland Theatre Company productions include GOD OF CARNAGE, THE FEMALE OF THE SPECIES, UNCLE VANYA, SERIAL KILLERS, WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?, EQUUS, DISGRACE, THE CRUCIBLE and HONOUR.

Highlights for other theatres include the original cast production of NGA TANGATA TOA, THE MASTER BUILDER, PROOF, THE CHERRY ORCHARD, CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF, TOP GIRLS, Victor Rodger's plays SONS and RANTERSTANTRUM, DOUBLE BEAT, THREE DAYS OF RAIN and BEAUTIFUL THING (for which Hera won the Chapman Tripp Award for Best Female Newcomer).



STUART DEVENIE

Stuart Devenie is one of New Zealand's most accomplished actors with a theatrical career spanning over three decades, in which time he has directed and acted for every major theatre company in the country.

Earlier this year, Stuart headlined Auckland Theatre Company's hugely successful tour of HATCH OR THE PLIGHT OF THE PENGUINS at the Ten Days on the Island festival in Tasmania. This was soon followed with the tour of Roger Hall's FOUR FLAT WHITES IN ITALY.

Stuart's previous works for Auckland Theatre Company include CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF, HATCH, DISGRACE, CALIGULA, THE TALENTED MR RIPLEY, LADIES NIGHT, MIDDLE AGE SPREAD, TAKE A CHANCE ON ME, COPENHAGEN, SERIAL KILLERS, THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN, TWELVE ANGRY MEN, UNCLE VANYA and MOLLY SWEENEY.

Film and television appearances include A SMALL LIFE, WAITING FOR YOU, MANUREWA, FOR GOOD, BLESSED, RUDE AWAKENINGS, KORERO MAI and AROHA.

Stuart has also directed THE ORDERLY BUSINESS OF LIFE and THE GOD BOY for the Company.

From 1983 to 1984, Stuart was the Artistic Director of Centrepoint Theatre in Palmerston North. Also, he was a senior tutor at both the New Zealand Drama School and Northland Polytechnic. In 2000, he established a theatre company, Playfair Ltd, in Whangarei and enjoyed successful runs of COLD TURKEY, TAKE A CHANCE ON ME, THE GOD BOY, LADIES NIGHT and MIDDLE AGE SPREAD.



BRUCE MASON PLAYWRIGHT

Bruce Mason, playwright, critic and fiction writer, was born in Wellington before moving 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 honoured with a CBE in 1980 and, in 1982, the same year in which he died, was given the New Zealand Literary Fund Award for Achievement.

Mason was a fervent supporter of Downstage Theatre,

and many of his plays were produced in the theatre's early days. His contribution to Downstage and New Zealand theatre has been recognised by the unveiling of a sculpture of Mason at Downstage in 2005.



COLIN MCCOLL DIRECTOR

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 from 1984 to 1992. He has led Auckland Theatre Company as Artistic Director since July 2003.

Colin has directed for the Norwegian National Theatre and the Dutch National Theatre, as well as for most leading New Zealand and Australian theatre companies.

In November 2007, Colin was honoured for his artistic achievements and excellence at the eighth annual Arts Foundation of New Zealand Laureate Awards.

Previous achievements include Best Director for Auckland Theatre Company's 2001 production of *ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD*.

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 *CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF*, *THE FEMALE OF THE SPECIES*, *THE CRUCIBLE*, *HATCH OR THE PLIGHT OF THE PENGUINS*, *DOUBT*, *THE DUCHESS OF MALFI*, *EQUUS*, *GOLDIE*, *WAITING FOR GODOT*, *SERIAL KILLERS*, *THE SEAGULL*, *UNCLE VANYA*, *DAUGHTERS OF HEAVEN* and *HONOUR*.

Opera-directing credits include *QUARTET* (New Zealand International Arts Festival 2004), *LA BOHEME* (Wellington City Opera) and *THE ITALIAN GIRL IN ALGIERS*, *THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO* and *THE PRODIGAL CHILD* for the NBR New Zealand Opera. His next assignment is for the Scottish National Opera Company.



TONY RABBIT SET & LIGHTING DESIGNER

"In approaching the text, our touchstone has been the honesty of the rehearsal room, something an audience is not normally party to, but in which an actor is perhaps at the peak of their craft, standing in their own clothes or rehearsal costume, with only room lighting, and the support of their colleagues and director, exploring and examining the text and moving to a performance solution of the work.

Years ago I lit Bruce Mason on stage performing many of his solo pieces, and I still recall images he conjured up in my mind from these sparse performances, simply telling us a story – theatre in its purest form.

This was very much in my mind in designing the set and lighting for this production of *THE POHUTUKAWA TREE*; I have tried to basically 'get out

CREATIVE TEAM



NIC SMILLIE COSTUME DESIGNER

"Being the only vertical reference on the beautiful and simple set we chose the costumes to help indicate the era in which the play is set along with the passing of time/seasonal shifts and personal changes undergone by some of the characters."

Universal themes of love, family, culture, class and religion are all woven in to the story and the way the costumes are sometimes handled during the performance is a reflection of our decision to treat this particular

production of the play as an examination of the text, its meanings, the history and the future of a society."

Nic Smillie has a Bachelor of Design in Textiles and has worked in theatre, film and television as a costume designer for the past twelve years. For Auckland Theatre Company

her designs include THE WIFE WHO SPOKE JAPANESE IN HER SLEEP, CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF, WHERE WE ONCE BELONGED and WHO NEEDS SLEEP ANYWAY?

Nic has also costumed various projects at Downstage and Circa Theatres in Wellington including KING AND COUNTRY, TOP GIRLS, CABARET, SWEENEY TODD and DRAWER OF KNIVES. Winner of the Air New Zealand Screen Award for Contribution to Design for the television series THE INSIDERS GUIDE TO LOVE, Nic also designed costumes for THE INSIDERS GUIDE TO HAPPINESS. Her costumes for film include FISH SKIN SUIT, TURANGAWAEWAE and STICKMEN.



JOHN GIBSON SOUND DESIGN

"Firstly it is a great honour to be designing the sound elements of this play. Bruce Mason was a great lover and aficionado of music. He knew that nothing tells you more about a time and a place than its music. Nothing tells you more about the 50s than the 'proper' and controlled technique of Bing Crosby in 'Moonlight becomes you' or even Dick James singing 'Robin Hood'. Nothing tells us more about the subversion of all that than the sounds of the jazz coming in from America, be it Glen Miller or 'I can't give you anything but love baby, the 50s equivalent of Gangster rap.

For the sound design elements I have chosen two Pakeha composers who were contemporaries of Bruce's and who were deeply involved in the passionate pursuit of finding an original artistic voice, and who were both inspired in different ways by the landscape of New

Zealand. Douglas Lillburn in his first electronic works, and Len Lye in a sound recording of his sculptures.

Toward the end of the play we bring in sounds that Bruce could have only dreamed of.

The playing of Maori instruments by Richard Nunn and Hirini Melbourne from the legendary album 'Te ku te whe', which since 1994 has changed the way we listen to New Zealand music and a recent collaboration between Gillian Whitehead and Richard Nunn.

The arrangement of the Lords Prayer at the beginning of the piece was by Anania te Amohau and was originally sung by the Te Pakata Moari Entertainers and recorded on Kiwi Pacific Records.

The recordings of Douglas Lillburn and Len Lye are on the Atoll label and 'Te ku te whe' and Gillian Whitehead and Richard Nunn are on Rattle records. Two wonderful labels committed to releasing exciting new New Zealand music. Check them out and support

New Zealand artists, Bruce would have been delighted."

John composes original music for New Zealand theatre, film, dance and television. He has composed over 60 scores for theatre including RICORDI for the International Festival of the Arts.

For dance he has written scores for Shona McCullagh and Ann Dewey. Last July, John's first feature film score premiered at the International Film Festival for Vincent Ward's RAIN OF THE CHILDREN.

Previous works for Auckland Theatre Company include THE WIFE WHO SPOKE JAPANESE IN HER SLEEP, CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF, WHO NEEDS SLEEP ANYWAY?, WHERE WE ONCE BELONGED, EQUUS, THE DUCHESS OF MALFI and the arrangements and musical direction of SWEET CHARITY.



TAKAPUNA'S ROLE IN NEW ZEALAND'S LITERARY HISTORY

By Graeme Lay

Many writers have made Takapuna their home. Nowhere in the town is far from the superb sweep of sand which extends from Hauraki Corner north to The Strand, and most writers have lived within easy walking distance of the beach. Among those who passed through Takapuna were children's author Tessa Duder, poet and novelist CK Stead and novelist Maurice Gee. Local landmarks, including Lake Pupuke, make appearances in Gee's children's novel *Under the Mountain* and in his adult novel, *In My Father's Den*,

while Stead's time in Takapuna inspired one of his most memorable novels, *All Visitors Ashore* (1984). Other writers lived in Takapuna for much longer, including novelist Susie Mactier, poets R.A.K. Mason, Allen Curnow and Kevin Ireland, short story writer Frank Sargeson, historian and poet Keith Sinclair, and playwright Bruce Mason.

Bruce Mason's family moved to Takapuna (from Wellington) in 1926, when Bruce was five years old. The Masons lived at 26 Ewen Street, just above Takapuna Beach. The view over the beautiful beach and across the channel to Rangitoto Island led to the writing of Mason's one-man play *THE END OF THE GOLDEN WEATHER*. Although Ewen Street is very different now from what it was in the 1930s, the view is utterly unchanged.

A founding writer of Takapuna, novelist and poet Susie Mactier (1854 – 1936) had lived in

Hauraki Road, just one street away from the one to which the Masons later moved. As well as publishing five novels and a collection of poetry, Mactier was the headmistress of Takapuna Primary School from 1877 to 1880. She also founded the Takapuna Library.

Frank Sargeson lived at 14 Esmonde Road, Takapuna, from 1931 until his death in 1982. In 1923, Sargeson's father Edwin Davey bought a hut on a quarter-acre section a few hundred yards inland from the beach. The Davey family travelled from their home in Hamilton and stayed in the hut during the summer holidays. After qualifying as a solicitor, their younger son Norris moved into the Takapuna hut, changed his name to Frank Sargeson and devoted his life to writing. The hut eventually became uninhabitable and was replaced in 1948 by a sturdy cottage designed by Sargeson's builder friend George Haydn.

For half a century, the house at 14 Esmonde Road became a meeting place for writers and artists. Having established himself as a leading short story writer from the 1930s onwards, Frank Sargeson became mentor to many other writers. His protégés included Robin Hyde, Jane Mander, AP Gaskell, John Reece Cole, David Ballantyne, Roderick Finlayson, Bruce Mason, CK Stead, Janet Frame and Kevin Ireland.

In 1954, after her release from Seacliff Hospital near Dunedin, where she had been wrongly diagnosed with schizophrenia, Janet Frame met Sargeson and was invited by him to live in the old army hut behind the house at 14 Esmonde Road. Here, in 1955 and 1956, she wrote her first novel, *Owls Do Cry* (1957). In her memoir, *An Angel at My Table* (1984), she describes the beginning of her relationship with Sargeson:

Our visit was short. What could I say? I was self-conscious, the

"funny" sister being taken for a drive. Mr Sargeson, a bearded old man in a shabby grey suit and grey pants tied with string, smiled kindly and asked how I was, and I said nothing. He had an army hut in his garden, he said. I was welcome to live and work there. I neither accepted nor refused, I was so overcome by my "mental" status, and by seeing in person the famous writer whose anthology of New Zealand writing, *Speaking for Ourselves*, was a treasured book; the famous writer for whose fiftieth birthday I had signed a letter of good wishes, not knowing him and knowing nothing of the other signatories of the letter. Frank Sargeson. Mr Sargeson.

After Sargeson's death in 1982, his long-time friend and literary executor Christine Cole Catley established the Frank Sargeson Trust. Its aims were to preserve 14 Esmonde Road as a literary museum and establish a fellowship which would support chosen New

Zealand writers for a period, to allow them to work free of the financial constraints with which Sargeson had had to contend throughout his life.

Sargeson's Takapuna house is now a listed heritage building and the fellowship – established in 1987 – is now the Buddle Findlay Sargeson Fellowship. More than 30 writers have benefited from living and working in the studio flat in the Frank Sargeson Centre, at 25A Princes Street, Auckland. Outside the house at 14 Esmonde Road, Takapuna, a sign states:

Frank Sargeson (1903 – 1982) lived at this address from 1931 until his death. Here he wrote all his best-known short stories and novels, grew vegetables and entertained friends and fellow-writers. Here a truly New Zealand literature had its beginnings.

The ATC Literary Unit salutes all the playwrights, actors, directors and dramaturgs who have supported the development of new New Zealand plays in the theatre's workshop programme during the last 12 months.

Dave Armstrong	Raymond Hawthorne	Heather O'Carroll
David Aston	Sophia Hawthorne	Elizabeth O'Connor
Stephen Bain	Teresa Healey	David O'Donnell
Millen Baird	George Henare	Stephen Papps
Tim Balme	Gary Henderson	Dean Parker
Paul Barrett	Kelson Henderson	Yvette Parsons
Phil Brown	Margaret-Mary Hollins	Bruce Phillips
Alison Bruce	Nicola Kawana	Jodie Rimmer
Goretti Chadwick	Murray Keane	Victor Rodger
Danielle Cormack	Dena Kennedy	Fiona Samuel
Simon Cunliffe	Andre King	Jordan Selwyn
Laurel Devenie	Vadim Ledogorov	Geoff Snell
Stuart Devenie	John Leigh	Matthew Sunderland
Cathy Downes	Michelle Leuthart	Fern Sutherland
Peter Elliott	Stephen Lovatt	Anya Tate-Manning
Janice Finn	Murray Lynch	Jared Turner
Andrew Ford	Pua Magasiva	Yvonne Van Dongen
Kura Forrester	Robbie Magasiva	Roy Ward
Michael Galvin	Anna Marbrook	Jennifer Ward-Lealand
Adam Gardiner	Elizabeth McRae	Annie Whittle
Roger Hall	Arthur Meek	Gareth Williams
Elizabeth Hawthorne	Thomas Natealoafa	Kevin Wilson

*Thank you for your commitment, generosity, talent and hard work.
Bruce Mason would, we are sure, approve.*

Celebrating great New Zealand stories

New Zealand Post is proud
to be supporting this season
of The Pohutukawa Tree.

We're also proud to be assisting in the
development and distribution of an
education pack for the play for every
high school in Auckland.

It is also free to download at
www.atc.co.nz/educationunit/resources

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THE NEXT STAGE

The Next Stage is a festival of semi-staged readings, where three new scripts are showcased by some of New Zealand's best actors, and you get the chance to see new plays in development.

The Next Stage is a vital part of Auckland Theatre Company's mission to bring utterly original, fervently New Zealand stories to the stage, and after each performance we welcome comments from the audience in a discussion with the author and director.

PLAY 1: LEN

by Brian Hannam
Directed by John Bolton

A vibrant portrait of one of New Zealand's most significant and internationally acclaimed modernist artists. Brilliant, sexy, bohemian, unstoppable, Len's real and imagined journeys take him far and wide. After sojourns in Sydney and the South Pacific, he moves on to London and then, escaping war-torn Britain, New York. Finally after forty years abroad and frustrated by the politics of the art world, he returns home to build a deep connection with his birth place that endures to this day in the legacy of his extraordinary work.

PLAY 2: GHOST TRAIN

by Fiona Samuel
Directed by Peter Elliott

Barry and Janine invite prominent public servant Athol and his wife to dinner.

Twenty years ago Athol and Barry were colleagues and mates – they shared everything.

But now Athol is at the top of his game and Barry is on the skids.

Barry's got reason to think Athol will help him out of trouble. Buried in their shared past is an explosive secret, and Barry's optimistic Athol will pay to keep that secret.

But when two other people from their past turn up uninvited, a Saturday night dinner for four turns into a shocking reckoning for six.



PLAY 3: DON'T HOLD YOUR BREATH *a play with songs*

by Lisa Chappell
Directed by Ben Crowder
Musical director Penny Dodd

Self-styled cabaret queen Letitia Lush is determined to be famous. Inspired by Frank Sinatra's enormous lung capacity, and convinced this will be the secret of her own imminent mega-success, Letitia uses her reclusive sister Rose as a human guinea pig in a unique lung-capacity building competition that involves the regular almost-drowning of Rose in their bath. But when Rose dries off, falls in love with the local pizza delivery guy and it's discovered that she is the one with a truly remarkable voice, green eyed monsters rear their ugly heads, and worms begin to turn. Sibling rivalry as never seen or heard before!

Musgrove Studio

Play One

Tuesday 13 Oct, 8pm
Friday 16 Oct, 6.30pm
Saturday 17 Oct, 2pm

Play Two

Wednesday 14 Oct, 8pm
Friday 16 Oct, 9.00pm
Saturday 17 Oct, 5.00pm

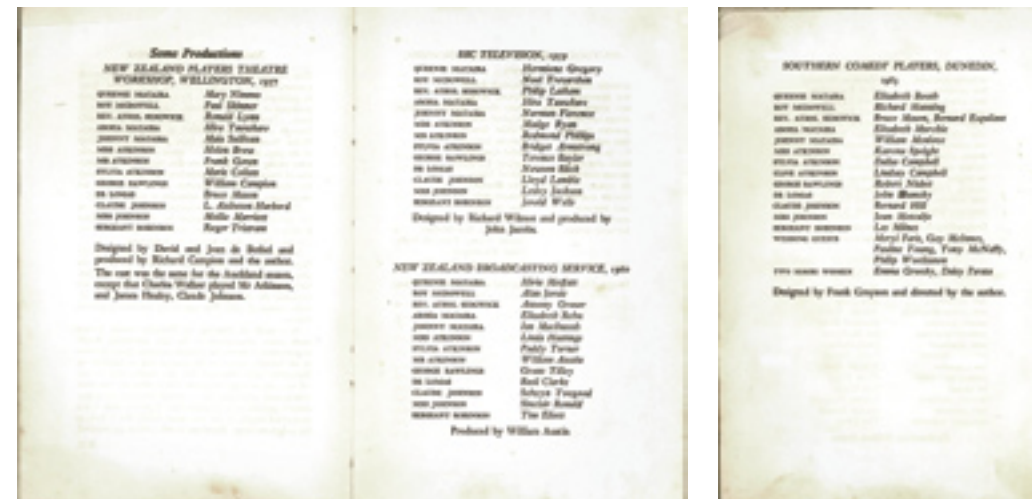
Play Three

Thursday 15 Oct, 8pm
Saturday 17 Oct, 8pm

Book Maidment Theatre
09 308 2383

THE POHUTUKAWA TREE

PAST PRODUCTIONS



Cast lists from the first 4 productions of The Pohutukawa Tree.



Karlite Rangihau as Queenie and Bill Walker as Roy McDowell
The Downstage Theatre Production 1984,
Photographer: Guy Robinson.
© Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, N.Z.



Elizabeth Murchie as Aroha Mataira
The Downstage Theatre Production 1984,
Photographer: Guy Robinson.
© Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, N.Z.



Karlite Rangihau as Queenie, Desond Lance Kelly as Mr Atkinson and Gerald Bryan as Sergeant Robinson
The Downstage Theatre Production 1984,
Photographer: Guy Robinson.
© Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, N.Z.

WHAT'S ON IN THEATRES AROUND THE COUNTRY?

AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY

OLIVER!

By Lionel Bart
SKYCITY Theatre
29 Oct — 21 Nov

OLIVER! comes to the SKYCITY Theatre, starring Mark Hadlow as Fagin, in a dazzling new production. This much-loved musical vividly brings to life Dickens' timeless characters with its ever-popular story of the boy who asked for more.

SILO THEATRE

Auckland

RUBEN GUTHRIE

By Brendan Cowell
18 Sept — 17 Oct

Ruben Guthrie pours himself a drink to celebrate, a drink to work and a drink to sleep and one spectacular night he drinks so much he thinks he can fly. Given that the demons of self-destruction are hovering, Ruben steps toward a life of sudden sobriety – one day at a time.

CENTREPOINT THEATRE

Palmerston North

AWHI TAPU

By Albert Belz
29 Aug — 26 Sept

Wendyl, Sonny, Casper and Girl Girl have only each other and their fertile imaginations to rely on, as they visualise the big-budget Hollywood blockbuster film of their lives and their home. This is a story of loss and belonging but, most of all, of friendship.

CIRCA THEATRE

Wellington

WHERE ARE YOU MY
ONLY ONE?

By Vanessa Rhodes
5 Sept — 3 Oct

When Yulia signs up with a Russian "Mail Order Bride" agency she meets Bob, a lonely Waikato farmer. Can one really find love in a catalogue? This play explores love between strangers, the courage to love again despite past failings and the endless pursuit of happiness.

DOWNSTAGE THEATRE

Wellington

GOOD NIGHT – THE END

By Jo Randerson
11 Sept – 3 Oct

Life can be pretty grim for a reaper. Fresh from the unique mind of celebrated writer Jo Randerson (Bruce Mason award winner, New Generation Laureate 2008), GOOD NIGHT – THE END is an existential comedy crackling with the fierce originality that has earned her cult status in theatre and literature alike.

THE COURT THEATRE

Christchurch

ON THE ROCKS

By Amy Rosenthal
17 Oct – 13 Nov

Based on true events, this is the story of four friends trying to live together, artists searching for inspiration and two marriages struggling for survival. It is an uplifting and passionate comedy-drama about women, and men, in love.

FORTUNE THEATRE

Dunedin

THE DAY MY BUM WENT
PSYCHO

By Andy Griffiths
2 Oct – 24 Oct

This is a story your bum will never forget. B-team, a crack bum-fighting unit, follows the adventures of the legendary Bum Hunter and his formidable daughter with some of the biggest, ugliest and meanest bums ever to roam the face of the Earth.

To find out what else is going on in Auckland be sure to pick up the latest copy of





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AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR HELP WITH THIS

PRODUCTION **Keith Moshier at Ward Demolition, Tim Blake, Sally Markham and Dave and Leah Down at Cowell's Genuine Meringue**

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