

**ON STAGE**  
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LAWYERS season of

# Nell Gwynn

by Jessica Swale

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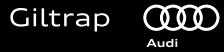
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“The King has decreed that women should be on the stage.” - Thomas Killigrew

# Nell Gwynn

by Jessica Swale

## CAST

Nell Gwynn – **Claire Chitham** | King Charles II – **Tim Balme**  
Lord Arlington / John Dryden – **Mark Hadlow** | Edward Kynaston – **Byron Coll**  
Nancy / Queen Catherine – **Hera Dunleavy**  
Lady Castlemaine / Louise De Keroualle / Old Ma Gwynn – **Alison Bruce**  
Charles Hart – **Andrew Grainger** | Thomas Killigrew – **Roy Ward**  
Ned Spiggett / William – **Samuel Austin** | Rose Gwynn / Servant – **Vida Gibson**  
All other parts played by ensemble

## CREATIVE

Director – **Colin McColl** | Musical Director – **John Gibson**  
Choreographer – **Malia Johnston** | Set Designer – **Rachael Walker**  
Costume Designer – **Elizabeth Whiting** | Lighting Designer – **Jo Kilgour**

## MUSICIANS

Violin/Cello – **Charmian Key** | Trumpet – **Mark Hadlow**  
Alto Sax – **Vida Gibson** | Guitar – **Tim Balme**  
Mandolin/Tambourine – **Byron Coll** | Drums and Percussion – **Samuel Austin**

## PRODUCTION

Production Manager – **Robert Hunte** | Company Manager (Maternity Cover) – **Eliza Josephson-Rutter**  
Technical Manager – **Nik Janiurek** | Venue Technical Manager – **Josh Bond**  
Stage Manager – **Kirsten Lee** | Assistant Stage Manager – **Theresa Adams**  
Technical Operator – **Michael Craven** | Props Master – **Amy Snape**  
Set Construction – **2Construct** | ATC Production Intern – **Nathanaël Ruestschmann**  
Teaching Artists – **Ella Gilbert & Freya Boyle**

Agent: MacNaughton Lord Representation, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, 16 Crucifix Lane, London SE1 3JW.

Music composed and arranged from songs of the period by John Gibson.

Auckland Theatre Company wishes to recognise the passing of committed ATC Patron and Founders Club member, Robert Johnston. We will forever appreciate his passion and dedication to ensuring theatre is accessible for all to enjoy.

AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR HELP WITH THIS PRODUCTION:  
Ella Gilbert, Nuno Hermitério, Fruit Guys, Chris O'Conner, KBB Music Epsom, Sophie Ham, Stuart McCann.

The *Kensington Swan* season of *Nell Gwynn* is the fifth Auckland Theatre Company mainbill production for 2016-2017 and opened on August 17<sup>th</sup> at ASB Waterfront Theatre. The production is approximately 2 hours 35 minutes long including a 20-minute interval. Please remember to switch off all mobile phones, pagers and watch alarms.

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Artistic Director Colin McColl

EVERY CENTURY has its years of significance. Last century, 1929, 1939 and 1968 spring to mind as years when momentous events took place. But three hundred years before the swinging 1960s, London was pretty swinging too.

Oliver Cromwell's Commonwealth was no more and Charles II

reopened and a new breed of performer - the actor-ress - became all the rage.

When the King's Company at Drury Lane elevated a lowborn orange seller, "pretty, witty Nell Gwynn" as its leading lady, Charles was immediately smitten. Nell became his most favoured mistress and a great favourite with the

for paparazzi and popular media today.

However, Jessica Swale's delicious comedy is not slavish documentary theatre. It captures the spirit of Nell and what she stood for. Originally written for London's Globe Theatre, the play is an entertainment that celebrates the cult of celebrity. It also celebrates theatre, and as such, fits perfectly into the first season in our splendid new home.

Huge thanks to my creative team - a fabulously talented group of people who've given the production a contemporary edge whilst still acknowledging the 17<sup>th</sup> century - and, of course, to our fine cast of comic actors, both experienced and new to the game, led by the irrepressible Claire Chitham, whose energy, critical eye, sense of fun and ability to delight surely channels that of Nell herself. We've had great fun bringing this story to life. Enjoy!

**"It's an entertainment that celebrates the cult of celebrity. It also celebrates theatre."**

returned from exile to restore the British monarchy. He brought with him the joie de vivre he'd enjoyed in the French court, and London was ready to party after twelve years under the drab Puritan regime. In Charles' reign there was a great flourishing of the arts and sciences as Britain transitioned from a medieval to a modern society. The theatres

general populace. Songs and ditties were written about her, diarist Samuel Pepys was in raptures about her comic ability, and her performances were sell out successes. Pamphleteers of the day would quickly report the activities of the famous. Charles and Nell were hot topics, in much the same way as the Prince Harry/Meaghan Markle relationship is great fodder

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Musical Director **John Gibson**

**CHARLES I** and a couple of decades of Puritan rule saw the banning of dancing, music and theatre life. Under Charles II, however, there was an explosion of popular music and theatre.

For the first time there surfaced tunes with basses called catches and glees, and pop songs as we now know them. Gentlemen in

**“The English, more barbarian than the French, loved their jigs, reels and hornpipes.”**

the ale house or the coffee house were handed song sheets and sang songs like our *Call George Again* and *As I Lay Kneeling*. The songs were in three to four parts and the words, which often had an erotic twist, celebrated sex and drinking. Here are the lyrics of *As I Lay Kneeling*:

*Here on his back doth lay Sir Andrew Keeling  
And at his feet his mournful lady kneeling  
But when he was alive and had his feeling  
She laid upon her back and he was kneeling*

The sacred was out and flesh was in. Dancing was published in books that

everyone could read, with country tunes and the steps printed below. Most of Nell's songs in our production come from these tunes, including Charles' favourite, *Cuckolds in a Row*, which is sung by Nell to the tune of *I Can Dance and I Can Sing*. Charles hated slow music and couldn't stand anything

he couldn't beat his foot to.

The English, more barbarian than the French, loved their jigs, reels and hornpipes. The new instrument was the violin, which was louder than the old viols. It was the electric guitar of its day, and perfectly suited to a new generation of ostentation and display. Louis of France had 24 in his orchestra so Charles had the same.

I have written the music for the group numbers; otherwise the tunes for *Nell Gwynn* are from *The Catches*, *Playford's Dancing Master*, and other music from the great genius of the day, Henry Purcell. Dead in his 30s like Mozart, he left behind musical riches: songs like *I Gave Her Cakes*, *If Love's a Sweet Passion*, and the mighty funeral music for Queen Anne.

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# Cast.



CLAIRE CHITHAM

## CLAIRE CHITHAM

### Nell Gwynn

Claire began her professional stage career with ATC back in 2003 in *Play 2.03* and followed up with *Up for Grabs* in 2005. Over the years she has appeared in lead roles in *Tape*, *The Real Thing*, *Rabbit*, *The Only Child* and the cabaret *Jacques Brél*. She is most well-known to New Zealanders for her long-standing television role as Waverley on *Shortland Street* and her memorable character Aurora on *Outrageous Fortune*. Claire has been working in Australia and America lately, on both sides of the camera, and was last seen on stage in the one-woman *tour de force* show *Grounded* last year.

*"THEATRE HAS ALWAYS BEEN my first love. I've been singing, dancing and playing dress-ups on stage since I was eight years old. So, to have the opportunity to celebrate and honour an inspirational woman like Nell Gwynn, who's such a formative part of the history of theatre as we know it today, is a gift I never expected and one I fully intend on relishing. My hope is that you - the audience - laugh, love and enjoy the ride of theatre as Nelly would've wanted."*



TIM BALME

## TIM BALME

### King Charles II

Tim is a graduate of Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School. He works as a freelance screenwriter and actor in theatre, film and TV. Roles include Greg Feeney in *Shortland Street*, Mike in *The Almighty Johnsons*, Jules in *Nothing Trivial*, and Ken (the cop) in *Mercy Peak*. He also starred in Peter Jackson's cult splatter comedy *Braindead*. For twelve years he has been writing for South Pacific Pictures. Credits include *Outrageous Fortune*, *Almighty Johnsons*, *800 Words*, and *Prime*



MARK HADLOW

TV's *The Brokenwood Mysteries* for which he has just completed the fourth series as the show's head writer. Theatre highlights include his own one-man show, *Jimmy Costello*, inspired by the life of prison escapee George Wilder, playing an Everly brother in three productions of *Blue Sky Boys*, and channelling James K Baxter in ATC's *Horseplay* in 2010 - which was his most recent stage appearance.

## MARK HADLOW

### Lord Arlington / John Dryden

Mark Hadlow (ONZM) is one of New Zealand's most well-known and prominent actors. He has performed in over 150 plays, including musical theatre, Shakespeare, and one-man shows. He has appeared in dozens of films and TV series, and done thousands of commercials and radio voice-overs. Mark has played many roles in Peter Jackson films, including Dori in *The Hobbit* trilogy, *Meet the Feebles* as the voice of Heidi the Hippo and Robert the Hedgehog, and in *King Kong* as Harry in the vaudeville scenes opposite Naomi Watts. Mark has just finished filming his fourth Peter Jackson production, *Mortal Engines*. Mark has appeared in many concerts and musicals. His favourites have been *My Fair Lady*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *Rocky Horror Show*, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, and *Little Shop of Horrors*. Mark has been nominated for and won several awards, including Best Supporting Actor in a Television Comedy Series for *Willy Nilly*. He won Best Theatrical Performance of the Year in 1993 for the one-man show *SNAG*, and ultimately went on to win Entertainer of the Year in 1995. He won Best Character Voice-over Artist in the 2010 New Zealand Radio Awards. In the 2017 Queen's



BYRON COLL

Birthday honours, Mark was made an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit (ONZM) for services to the Arts.

## BYRON COLL

### Edward Kynaston

Byron has been working consistently in film and theatre since graduating from Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School in 2007. His work includes roles in Jane Campion's *Top of the Lake*, Warp Films multi award-winning feature *Shopping* by Louis Sutherland and Mark Albiston, Lippy Pictures' television drama *Tangiwai*, and Gaylene Preston's *Home by Christmas*. In 2012 Byron appeared in Warner Brothers' *Jack the Giant Slayer*, directed by Bryan Singer. Byron recently received critical acclaim by leading the New Zealand Opera in their production of *The Mikado* (in the role of Ko-Ko), which played at the ASB Waterfront Theatre, the Opera House in Wellington, and the Isaac Theatre Royal. He also flexed his music muscle touring the *Live Live Cinema: Little Shop of Horrors* throughout England, Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand. His most recent Auckland Theatre Company productions are *Amadeus*, *The Ladykillers*, *Once on Chunuk Bair*, *The Good Soul of Szechuan*, and *The End of The Golden Weather*. Byron may be most recognisable as Tim, the over-enthusiastic All Blacks supporter in the award-winning MasterCard commercials.

## HERA DUNLEAVY

### Nancy / Queen Catherine

A graduate of Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School, Hera has worked for all of New Zealand's professional theatre companies. Highlights include *The Master Builder*, *Who's Afraid Of Virginia*

*Wolf?*, *Proof*, *Top Girls*, and *The Blue Room*. Shows with Auckland Theatre Company include *Uncle Vanya*, *God of Carnage*, *The Crucible*, *August: Osage County*, *Calendar Girls*, *Midnight In Moscow*, *Rupert*, and *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Hera's most recent appearance was in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*.

## ALISON BRUCE

### Lady Castlemaine / Louise De Keroualle / Old Ma Gwynn

Alison has worked with many theatre companies, appearing in many productions throughout her career. Some of her favourites are *Angels in America* for Silo Theatre, *The Arrival* and *Kororaraka* with Red Leap, and *The Events* for Court Theatre. Recent TV credits include Phyllis Rose in *Hilary* and Delia in *Dirty Laundry*.

*"MY MOTHER TOLD ME tales of Nell Gwynn all through my childhood, so I'm thrilled to be part of telling her story."*

## ANDREW GRAINGER

### Charles Hart

Andrew's career as an actor began in the 1980s in England. Highlights from the UK include performing in *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*, and *South Pacific* on London's West End; appearing on TV's *Pride and Prejudice*, *Heartbeat*, *Eastenders*, *The Bill*, and *The Governor*; appearing in feature films *Mean Machine*, *In the Beginning*, *David Copperfield*; and working alongside Robert Redford in *Spy Game*. After emigrating to New Zealand, Andrew has rapidly built up an impressive collection of credits including *6 Days*, *The Shannara Chronicles*, *When We Go to War*, *The Cult*, *Shortland Street*, *Outrageous Fortune*, *Spartacus*, *Super City*, *The*

*Dark Horse*, *Ash Versus Evil Dead*, *Meg*, *25 April*, and *Making of the Mob 2: Chicago*. For Auckland Theatre Company, Andrew's most recent credits include *Billy Elliot The Musical*, *The Ladykillers*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Awatea*, *Once on Chunuk Bair*, *Chicago*, *The Heretic*, *Anne Boleyn*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Andrew is passionate about the arts and theatre and is looking forward to working with his hero Mark Hadlow, whom he has admired for many years.

# Cast.

## ROY WARD

### Thomas Killigrew

Roy is a former Literary Manager/ Associate Director of Auckland Theatre Company. During his time with the company he directed *Up for Grabs*, *The Ocean Star*, *Design for Living*, *My Name is Gary Cooper*, and appeared in *The Crucible*. He has since directed *At the Wake* and *Black Faggot*, both by Victor Rodger. *Black Faggot* won Auckland Fringe Production of the Year in 2014 and went on to tour nationally and internationally. Roy's recent acting credits include recurring roles in *Shortland Street*, *Go Girls*, *Dirty Laundry*, and *The Brokenwood Mysteries*. His most recent stage appearance was as a 90-year-old Quentin Crisp in the solo show *Resident Alien*.

## SAMUEL AUSTIN

### Ned Spiggett / William

Samuel graduated from Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School at the end of 2016, having previously been an active member of both Long Cloud Youth Theatre and Wellington High School Shakespeare Society. Samuel participated in many productions, plays, films and projects while at Toi Whakaari, while also commencing an independent practice exploring multi-media, including game design. Notable acting roles included Aristarkh in John Bolton's production of *Dying For It* and the Priest in Annie Ruth's adaptation of *Mother Courage*. At the beginning of the year Samuel performed in *A Slightly Isolated Dog's Jekyll and Hyde* and *Don Juan* at Circa Theatre, before going on to participate in several short film

projects. This included leading his own company, Don't Shoot Films, to a Top 40 placing in London's Super 8 film competition Straight 8 in May. Samuel is fresh from performing in the Basement Theatre season of *Jekyll and Hyde*.

## VIDA GIBSON

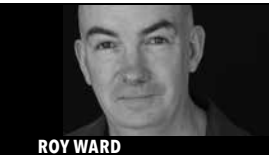
### Rose Gwynn / Servant

The *Kensington Swan* season of *Nell Gwynn* is Vida's first time on stage with Auckland Theatre Company. Since graduating high school last year, Vida has completed training with John Bolton and performed and co-devised the award-winning Fringe show *Shabbat Shalom* and *Thank You For Coming*. Vida is particularly excited to work with her dad John Gibson and is looking forward to being a part of his musical creations. Vida feels lucky to be a part of this production and hopes there will be many more to come.

## CHARMIAN KEAY

### Musician - Violin / Cello

Charmian Keay comes from a musical family and is currently in demand as a freelance violinist around New Zealand, although she is based mainly in Auckland, playing regularly with the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra, Auckland Chamber Orchestra, and with the Blackbird Ensemble. She has been involved in some theatre productions in the past, including *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour* at the National Theatre in London, with score by Andre Previn, and *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* at Fortune Theatre, Dunedin, playing solo violin.



ROY WARD



SAMUEL AUSTIN



VIDA GIBSON



CHARMIAN KEAY

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# Creative.



JESSICA SWALE

## JESSICA SWALE Playwright

Jessica Swale is an Olivier Award winning playwright, theatre director and screenwriter. Her plays/stage adaptations include *Nell Gwynn* (Olivier Award for Best New Comedy, Shakespeare's Globe & West End); *Thomas Tallis*; *Blue Stockings* (Shakespeare's Globe); *The Jungle Book* (UK Tour); *Stig Of The Dump*; *The Secret Garden* (Grosvenor Park Theatre), *Far From The Madding Crowd* and *Sense & Sensibility* (Watermill Theatre). Her screenwriting projects include *Nell Gwynn* (Working Title; in development); *Horrible Histories* (Altitude Films, Citrus TV; in development) and other work in development with Studio Canal, Fox Searchlight, Monumental and Blueprint. In 2014 Jessica was a recipient of the JJ Screenwriting Bursary in Association with BAFTA, during which she completed an original screenplay, *Summerland*. Jessica is Artistic Director of Red Handed Theatre Company, an Associate Director for Youth Bridge Global and an Artistic Associate for Shared Experience.



COLIN MCCOLL

## COLIN MCCOLL Director

Colin has directed for the Norwegian National Theatre and the Dutch National Theatre, as well as leading New Zealand and Australian theatre companies. He is the only New Zealand director to be invited to present his work (*Hedda Gabler*) at the official Edinburgh Festival; the production played to great acclaim and also was presented at other festivals around the world. Colin has also won Best Director at the Chapman Tripp Theatre Awards several times – including for his Circa Theatre production of *A Doll's House*. In 2015 Colin directed Emily Perkin's new version of

Ibsen's *A Doll's House* for Auckland Theatre Company. He has directed approximately 50 productions for Auckland Theatre Company. His 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. He was made an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit in June 2010.

## JOHN GIBSON Musical Director

John Gibson has been composing original music for New Zealand theatre, film, dance and television since 1980. During that time, he has composed over 100 scores and sound designs for theatre. In 2008 he received a Qantas Film and Television award for his score for Vincent Ward's film *Rain of the Children*. He has performed in Edinburgh in a comedy he wrote and directed called *Gordon Six Pence He Is Music*. John is currently adapting a book by Alain de Botton for the stage.

## MALIA JOHNSTON Choreographer

Malia Johnston graduated from Unitec with a Bachelor of Performing and Screen Arts in 1998, and since then has created a significant body of performance work throughout New Zealand, including choreography for Auckland Theatre Company's *Billy Elliot the Musical* last year. Malia is the Artistic Director of

Movement of the Human and has collaborated with other creative organisations and artists. She has created a significant repertoire including *Brouhaha*, *Mana Wahine*, *Rushes*, and most recently *Meremere*, which will have a national tour in 2018. Malia was the Artistic Director and choreographer of the World of Wearable Art Awards Show from 2002-2014 and will direct their 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary show in 2018. She has worked on public and commemorative events including the opening of the Pukeahu National War Memorial Park in 2015, and the New Zealand National Day performance at the Shanghai World Expo. Malia is an ambassador for the new Te Auaha centre, a creative industries training centre in Wellington that will open its doors in 2018. In 2013, Malia was awarded the Creative NZ Choreographic Fellowship. She is currently an ATC Artistic Associate; this is a creative development programme introduced this year.

## RACHAEL WALKER Set Designer

With a passion for theatrical set and prop design, Rachael has spent the past 16 years amassing over 100 projects as a professional designer in Auckland. For Auckland Theatre Company, her works include *Venus in Fur*, *That Bloody Woman*, *You Can Always Hand Them Back*, *Lysistrata*, *The Ladykillers*, *The Lollywitch of Mumuland*, *Other Desert Cities*, *Polly Hood in Mumuland*, *Anne Boleyn*, *King of the Gym*, *The Gift*, *In the Next Room (or the Vibrator Play)*, *Calendar Girls*, *God of Carnage*, *Who Needs Sleep Anyway?*, *End of the Rainbow*, *The Tutor*, *The Bach*, *The Vagina Monologues*, *Play 2* and *Play 2.03*. She has just contributed to New Zealand Dance Company's *Kiss the Sky*, and Court Theatre's *Uncle Vanya*. Rachael is also designing

the next ATC production at the ASB Waterfront Theatre, Roger Hall's *Last Legs*. She won Excellence at the Auckland Theatre Awards in 2014 for Silo Theatre's production of *Angels in America* and in 2016 for ATC/Court Theatre's production of *That Bloody Woman*. Rachael was the 2008 URBIS Best Stage Designer.

## ELIZABETH WHITING Costume Designer

Elizabeth has designed costumes for New Zealand Opera, Auckland Theatre Company, Silo, Court Theatre, Red Leap and Okareka Dance, Michael Parmenter, Atimira, Shona McCullagh, Royal New Zealand Ballet, Pop-Up Theatre London for the Edinburgh Festival, and The World of Wearable Art core show in Wellington for six years. In 2010, she won the Chapman Tripp Costume Design Award for *The Arrival* (Red Leap). She represented New Zealand at the Prague Design Quadrennial in 2003 with her costumes for *Falstaff*, and again in 2007 with a team of designers who created the exhibition *Blow*. Her designs for *Marriage of Figaro* have just been presented in Seattle, and her costume designs for *Tosca* in Perth had a great reception. Recently, Elizabeth has designed *Uncle Vanya* (Court Theatre), *Kororareka* (Red Leap), and *Kiss the Sky* (New Zealand Dance Company). Her costume designs have been seen in the successfully remounted productions of *Hudson and Halls Live* and *The Mooncake and the Kumara*. Later this year, Elizabeth will be working on the costume designs for *Blonde Poison* and *Dominion Road the Musical*.

## JO KILGOUR Lighting Designer

Jo Kilgour is an Auckland-based Lighting Designer and Technical/Production Director with extensive touring and festival experience. Her work in technical management includes projects for the New Zealand Dance Company (NZDC), Auckland Arts Festival, New Zealand Festival, Christchurch Arts Festival, and Taranaki Arts Festival. Her lighting design credits include *Kiss The Sky* (NZDC), *Amadeus* (Auckland Theatre Company), *Rushes* (Malia Johnston), *The Absurdity of Humanity* (NZDC), *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* (Auckland Theatre Company), *Lumina* (NZDC), *The Owl & The Pussycat* (Tim Bray Productions), *Ihimaera* (Auckland Festival 2011), *The Pickle King* (Indian Ink Theatre Company), *Vita and Virginia* (Circa Theatre), *The God Boy* (Downstage Theatre), *The Book Club* (Auckland Theatre Company), *Woman Far Walking* (Taki Rua Productions/NZ Festival 2000), and *Skintight* (Tidy Theatre Company). Jo's lighting design for Malia Johnston's *Rushes* won an Auckland Fringe 2017 award for Production Design (Lighting & AV), along with Rowan Pierce.



MALIA JOHNSTON



RACHAEL WALKER



ELIZABETH WHITING



JO KILGOUR





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# Nell Gwynn...

by Max Cryer

**...fatherless, slum-raised – then theatre star, mistress of a king and mother of a duke.**

**IT WOULD BE FAIR** to say that nobody remembers the name Margaret Hughes, who was the first woman ever allowed by law to appear on an English stage. That giant leap came in 1660, when England finally realised that women could legally appear on the stage without the devil bursting the theatre into flames. At first it was a novelty. But as having female actresses began being taken for granted, managements realised that

while seeing Ophelia and Juliet played by attractive genuine young actresses instead of boys was all very well, having real women onstage opened up other possibilities. There were, after all, always audiences for more daring down-to-earth scenarios than rival families in ancient Verona, or the evil machinations of a bloodthirsty Scottish noblewoman.

A completely different kind of crowd was willing

Eleanor Nell Gwyn (1650-1687), English-born mistress of King Charles II, 1937. Artist: Alexander K MacDonald. Photo credit: Heritage Image Partnership Ltd / Alamy Stock Photo

# Her saucy personality, quick attractive wit, lightning repartee and street-clear diction soon caught the management's attention.

to respond to bawdy comedies. Dramas began to appear featuring barely draped bosoms, double entendre dialogue, and scenes based around a couch. As NZ writer Ruth Spencer once pointed out: "babes on stage meant bums on seats."

This was the context for the arrival of a phenomenon: Nell Gwynn. She stepped onto a stage in 1666 and created an

entirely new image for actresses. If the devil was ever going to burst a theatre into flames, it was far more likely to be caused by the onstage high jinks of young Nell than Margaret Hughes as stately Desdemona.

Nell was born in a slum 'bawdy house.' Her father had died in a debtor's prison; her mother later died drunk in a ditch. This was during the dark days

of England's Puritan rule. King Charles I had been murdered, theatres were permanently closed, and public entertainments and holidays forbidden. Nell grew up being an inhouse waitress, serving drinks to the customers of the 'bawdy house (for which, read 'brothel'). When business was slow, she was sent out into the streets to work as a 'vendor', selling such merchandise as herrings, oysters, even turnips. It was this outdoor employment which was later credited as providing Nell's 'audience-audible' voice and clear diction. The street-selling was organised by a salesman who specialised in employing bright attractive young girls. He was to become a crucial factor in Nell's later life.

By the time she was in her teens the monarchy had been restored (Charles II) and theatres re-opened.

The organiser of the street-vendors who occasionally employed teenage Nell had a theatre contact - and recommended Nell as a potential 'orange girl' in a Drury Lane theatre. Before and after performances,

and during intervals, these girls stood in front of the orchestra pit, and in the manner of fairground 'barkers' they persuaded audience members to buy their oranges. Wit and joking and badinage were encouraged to attract more orange sales. Nell fell into the style as if born to it, and management encouraged her banter to become as outrageous as she pleased.

Her saucy personality, quick attractive wit,

Eleanor "Nell" Gwynn (2 February 1650 – 14 November 1687; also spelled Gwynn, Gwynne) was a long-time mistress of King Charles II of England and Scotland. Portrait date circa 1670-80. Photo credit: GL Archive / Alamy Stock Photo/images.



lightning repartee and street-clear diction soon caught the management's attention, and Nell was offered acting opportunities.

Totally illiterate – Nell couldn't even sign her name – she often took months to memorise a role. But once on the boards, the audience was hers. Red-haired and green-eyed, she

audience would go berserk, including the king – who often sat in the audience to see her performances.

With wit and charisma, she portrayed servants, courtesans, witty 'madcap' young women, and quite frequently boys. Known as 'breeches roles' these allowed Nell to prance about the stage in men's clothing, showing off her

– and eventually into the King's bed.

Nell's stage career lasted only seven years, and she became the unwitting progenitor of what became known centuries later as a "sex symbol." But her fame during her career and lifetime was limited to just London – which in the 1600s had a population of only 500,000 (the same as Auckland in 1964).

After Nell retired from the theatre, her fame took a different direction, and is largely responsible for her still being a household name three hundred years later. In her era, royal personages had no compunction indulging in passionate liaisons away from marriage vows and the duties of the throne. Nell Gwynn's fame has endured and increased over the centuries because of her role as one of history's most prominent royal mistresses.

The King had many mistresses, and publicly acknowledged at least nine of the many out-

of-wedlock children he fathered. For seventeen years Nell Gwynn retained star billing as the favourite mistress of the king. She cheerfully posed nude to be painted (while the king watched, chatting to the artist). She was granted a luxurious house, a royal-bestowed annual 'pension,' a bed made of solid silver, diamonds, silks and gold-trimmed carriages... but still swore like a trooper.

Royal circles accepted this liaison (they had no option) and the social order from which Nell came rather revelled in it. Jewels, luxurious fabrics, several houses, and a silver bed made no dent in Nell's slum-raised bravado, and the public loved her for it. On one occasion a particularly devout passer-by, spying her carriage, mistook her for one of the king's other mistresses, and shouted anti-Catholic abuse at her. Nell opened her carriage window and cheerfully responded: "You are mistaken. I am the King's Protestant whore...."

Charles II's wife Queen Catherine was not able to provide an heir, but Nell Gwynn presented Charles with two sons. One died in infancy, but the King bestowed nobility on the other – who became Duke of St Albans. (Successive Dukes of St. Albans – the current one is the 14<sup>th</sup> Duke – are acknowledged to this day as direct descendants of Nell Gwynn and His Majesty.)

King Charles II died in 1685. His famous last words to his successor brother (James II) were "Let not poor Nellie starve" and the new king obliged. He paid off whatever was owing on houses Nell 'kept up' and arranged a yearly pension for her of 1,500 pounds (roughly equivalent to \$178,000 a year in today's currency).

But two years later, Nell suffered two strokes and died, aged 37. In her will she left a legacy to the Newgate prisoners in London. To this day, Nell is still remembered as "Sweet Nell of Old Drury".

## Samuel Pepys called her "a mighty pretty soul" and she became known as "Sweet Nell of Old Drury"

fascinated all comers from the moment she appeared. With confidence, a carrying voice and a brilliant sense of timing, Nell engaged in 'business' absolutely outrageous for the era – such as finding an opportunity to fall over and roll across the full width of the stage, showing her underwear all the way. The

legs... a circumstance considered very erotic at the time. Samuel Pepys called her "a mighty pretty soul" and she became known as "Sweet Nell of Old Drury" (as in Drury Lane Theatre).

So Nell's performing lifted her out of the gruelling poverty of her childhood to London fame

# What's on at the ASB Waterfront Theatre.

## September



Giltrap Audi season of  
**Last Legs**  
by Roger Hall

**From September 12**

News that Bill English is to open a new wing of The Cambridge retirement village sparks a revolution among its residents. New fractures appear along old fault lines, transforming the swanky facility into a hot bed of isurection, intrigue and infidelity. With shenanigans and skullduggery at every turn from an all-star cast, ageing is about more than bridge and bedpans!

## October



The West End's Best New Comedy  
**The Play That Goes Wrong**

**11 – 22 October**

The Cornley Polytechnic Drama Society are putting on a 1920s murder mystery, but as the title suggests, everything that can go wrong...does! The accident-prone thespians battle on against all the odds to get to their final curtain call with hilarious consequences! Winner of Best New Comedy at London's 2015 Olivier Awards and acclaimed with five star reviews, *The Play That Goes Wrong* is currently playing to packed out houses in the West End and Broadway.

## November



The Amici Trust presents  
**Sister Act**

*A Divine Musical Comedy*

**25 November – 16 December**

*Sister Act* tells the hilarious story of Deloris Van Cartier, a wannabe diva whose life takes a surprising turn when she witnesses a crime and the cops hide her in the last place anyone would think to look - a convent!

# Metro

## Uniquely Auckland



FIONA PARDINGTON, ARTIST.  
ANIMAL LOVER. AUCKLANDER.

PHOTOGRAPHED EXCLUSIVELY  
FOR METRO MAGAZINE BY  
MEEK ZUIDERWYK, WINNER OF  
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event in the  
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The ASB Waterfront Theatre complex offers a number of versatile event spaces perfect for your next function or event. With state-of-the-art in-house staging and production facilities, as well as onsite catering, the ASB Waterfront Theatre is Auckland's newest premier function venue.

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**ASB** WATERFRONT THEATRE



A scene from the set of the ASB season of *Amadeus*: created by Ella Mizrahi with paper donations from supporters. Photo credit: Michael Smith

## Supporting Auckland Theatre Company: what can you do?

**DONATIONS** come in a range of sizes, and are not always monetary. Auckland Theatre Company, as a not-for-profit, is constantly exploring different ways we can engage with our supporters, to secure their help to produce the work that we do.

In a recent campaign led by the creative team who brought us the ASB season of *Amadeus*, the call went out for old music manuscripts to help construct the imaginative set designed by Ella Mizrahi. The Company received numerous

donations from all over the country, and if you were lucky enough to see a performance, you would have marvelled at the 20,000+ sheets of paper that created the ominous world of the play.

This wonderful example of a collective donation shows how a group of people giving something small can create a profound and beautiful impact on stage.

**SEEKING A PRE-LOVED PIANO FOR A NEW HOME**  
The Company is urgently seeking a replacement

rehearsal piano. Our current Yamaha upright is on its last legs (no pun intended Roger Hall!) and despite multiple string replacements is now beyond salvaging. If you know of anyone trying to find a good home for a pre-loved piano, please get in touch.

Whether it is big or small, we are always grateful for your consideration. If you are interested in supporting ATC in this way, give the Development Team a call on 09 309 0390 or email [rosalind@atc.co.nz](mailto:rosalind@atc.co.nz).

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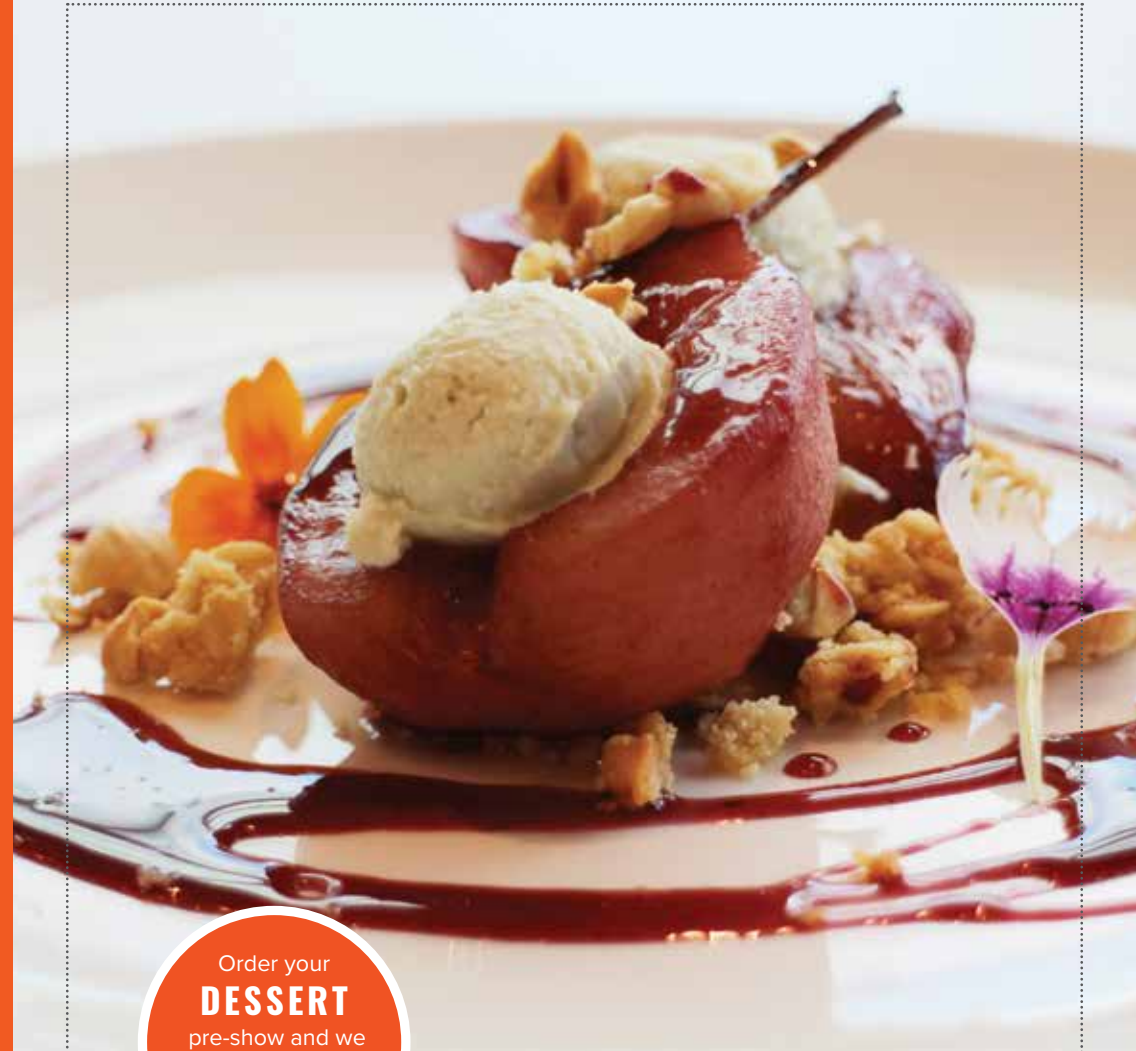
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GILTRAP AUDI SEASON OF

# LAST LEGS

BY **ROGER HALL**

—  
"GUARANTEED TO  
DELIVER A FUN  
NIGHT OUT"  
—

THEATREVIEW



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