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WELCOME

Every so often a play comes along that leaves one breathless.

As soon as I read about Peter Stein's production of *BLACKBIRD* at the Edinburgh Festival, I knew it was the stuff of great theatre: good story, brave, flawed characters and a moral dilemma that would leave the audience in furious debate.

When I finally read the script it lived up to my expectations; it was elegant, spare, poetic and devastating. A play of extraordinary power that grapples with a controversial subject – not for the sensationalism, but as a metaphor for larger ideas about personal freedom and personal responsibility and whether we can ever break free from the shackles of the past. It continually asks us to redefine our sense of morality and our beliefs about the nature of love.

This is a play with phenomenal roles for actors. We are thrilled to have teamed up one of the stalwarts of the New Zealand arts fraternity, Michael Hurst, with

Liesha Ward Knox, a bright young star of the Auckland theatre scene. An explosive combination to tackle this treacherous and compelling work. My thanks to them both for their unflinching commitment to the material.

Big thanks, too, for the commitment and vision of the creative team – director Margaret-Mary Hollins, set and costume designer Robin Rawstorne, lighting designer Bryan Caldwell and sound design Andrew McMillan.

BLACKBIRD is far from a comfortable evening in the theatre. But I promise you the power and the resonance of this work will stay with you for a long time.

Enjoy!

Colin McColl

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

MARGARET-MARY HOLLINS



David Harrower's BLACKBIRD is a well crafted and intricate work that explores the grey areas existing in human behaviour and relationships. Nothing in this play is portrayed in black and white terms and therefore challenges our innate response to stand in judgment.

This script has led us to shy away from plots, purpose and any formal structure because the material, like a loaded gun, fires bullets of love, hate, confusion, compassion, betrayal, secrets and shock throughout. We witness a relationship of a past harboured for years, which has made these people who they are, in this factory lunch-room today.

The rehearsal process has been like walking a tightrope where the coded and disturbingly natural language reads like a musical score, guiding the work towards a deeply emotional and spontaneous connection. It takes great talent to work with such raw and confrontational storytelling and I have been blessed with Michael and Liesha. I have learnt from them as they have taken on

this emotional roller coaster of a challenge and bravely exposed the work for all its frailties and humanity. It was an exhausting and incredibly satisfying process.

Although a two-hander, this has been a collaborative work - our set and costume designer Robin Rawstorne's drive and passion have boldly realised our theatrical choices. Thanks to Andrew McMillan for his enriching, musical sensitivity; our lighting designer Bryan Caldwell whose work I've admired for years - it's been great to finally work with you; Nicola Blackman's constant support and knowledge has been invaluable; and Mark and the Auckland Theatre Company production team, a huge thank you.

All power to Colin and ATC for programming a work that presents us with this powerful, risky material. The darkness of the soul needs to be illuminated for us to understand and examine the complexities that exist in our world.

blackbird

Cast

Michael Hurst Ray Liesha Ward Knox Una

Creative

*Director Margaret-Mary Hollins Set & Costume Design Robin Rawstorne
Lighting Design Bryan Caldwell Sound Design Andrew McMillan*

Production

*Production Manager Mark Gosling Technical Manager Bonnie Burrill
Senior Stage Manager Nicola Blackman Operator Rhedgirl
Properties Master Bec Ehlers Wardrobe Supervisor Cathy Pope
Set Construction 2 Construct*

BLACKBIRD is the seventh Auckland Theatre Company production for 2008. The production was first performed at the Maidment Theatre on 4 September 2008.

BLACKBIRD is approximately 75 minutes long with no interval.

Please remember to switch off all mobile phones, pagers and watch alarms.



Cuisine • Events • Venues

Official caterers of
Auckland Theatre Company.



AVIAN METAPHORS

EDINBURGH BASED JOURNALIST MARK FISHER
TALKS TO PLAYWRIGHT DAVID HARROWER.

OLEANNA by David Mamet is a play in which a young female student and an older male tutor wrestle over the meaning of sexual harassment. BLACKBIRD by David Harrower is a play in which a young woman and an older man wrestle over the meaning of their under-age sexual relationship. But ask Harrower how much influence Mamet had on the writing of BLACKBIRD and his answer is as swift as it is concise: "None."

If there seems to be a connection between the two plays it is entirely superficial. For Harrower, the distinction is clear: you could say OLEANNA was about sexual harassment but you couldn't say BLACKBIRD was about paedophilia – any more than you could say his remarkable debut, KNIVES IN HENS, was about injustices in the grain business in pre-industrial Scotland.

Like KNIVES IN HENS, BLACKBIRD had a prosaic genesis. Harrower was intrigued by news reports of Toby Studabaker, a 31-year-old American marine who, in 2003, befriended a 12-year-old girl from Manchester, England, in an Internet chat-room and absconded with her to Europe, claiming not to have realised how young she was. He was arrested in Germany and pleaded guilty to abduction.

But BLACKBIRD isn't a play about Studabaker. His story is merely a jumping-off point for the playwright's imagination. "I usually get ideas from the smallest human interaction, wondering what it would be like to be the person in that situation," says the 40-year-old Glasgow-based playwright. "BLACKBIRD isn't an account of the American marine's story but I couldn't stop thinking about it. I was fascinated about how he would justify that to himself. It happened in the real world. There must have been a moment on the plane or at the airport when he knew that she was not 19, as she'd claimed. Yet he's still gone through with it as if he was thinking he would test the limits of the moral world. I wanted to know what it's like to be in that situation and how to justify it to yourself."

In a similar way, KNIVES IN HENS, which had its premiere at Edinburgh's Traverse Theatre in 1995, grew out of a passing observation. Reading TC Smout's "A History of the Scottish People, 1560–1830", Harrower was intrigued to learn that it was once common for people to despise millers for appearing to profit from the hard labour of others. You can still see that idea in the relationships between the

play's three characters – a young female field-hand, her ploughman husband and the hated village miller – but it gives little clue about the strange, other-worldly landscape that Harrower conjured.

He imagined a subsistence economy in which language is rudimentary and survival paramount. The characters use a language that is without decoration, even treating metaphors as a threat to their perilous way of life. The result was something mesmerising, unsettling and so far away from its origins in a Scottish history book that, when it was produced in Hungary, the critics declared, "This play is about us and Hungarian theatre will never be the same again." The factual origins of BLACKBIRD are similarly incidental to the territory the finished play inhabits. Harrower does not write documentary theatre.

"I usually get ideas from the
smallest human interaction,
wondering what it would
be like to be the person in
that situation,"

If we can rule out Mamet as an influence on the play, it's harder to know who to rule in – except, perhaps, for Harrower himself. The astonishing success of Knives in Hens, translated into over 20 languages and given over 70 professional productions worldwide, has overshadowed everything he has done since. His subsequent work includes KILL THE OLD, TORTURE THEIR YOUNG (1998), about cultural identity in the big city, and DARK EARTH (2003), about cultural identity in the countryside. He's also done several adaptations and translations, including Jon Fosse's THE GIRL ON THE SOFA, Schiller's MARY STUART and Pirandello's SIX CHARACTERS LOOKING FOR AN AUTHOR.

You could argue that much of his work in the last decade has been a reaction against KNIVES IN HENS. He could see no point in trying to recreate the spare, open, elemental atmosphere of his debut and therefore



accepted there was little chance of dreaming up anything quite so distinctive. Having written *KNIVES IN HENS* purely for himself – frustrated after his early plays had been rejected – he felt that its success was almost accidental. He couldn't hope to just stumble onto another hit and felt he had to learn the craft more consciously. It was as if he was too early in his career to be fully in control of the dramatic form. "I don't want to sound like an idiot savant, but I didn't think I was a playwright," he says; "I thought I had to teach myself how to be one."

"I try to get into a more subjective area in terms of how people talk to each other," he says. "What they're capable of, what they're not capable of, what they'll do to each other. I feel like I'm making new discoveries about why people do things."

The challenge – and this is one felt by many writers – was how to recapture the subconscious impulses that had made his debut so distinct. "When you're writing, there's always an interplay between your rational mind and your subconscious," he says. "If it's good writing, your rational side switches off and you just get lost in it. When you read it again, your rational side kicks in to see what's wrong with it. Then you can go on to a second draft where you lose yourself again. With *KNIVES IN HENS*, I can't remember writing it or what I was thinking of."

He is not intimidated by the challenge of writing dialogue or structuring a plot; the hard task is to write a play simple, pure and streamlined enough to be sustained by only two characters. "In the stuff I'm writing now I'm trying to get back to that quality of *KNIVES IN HENS*," he says. "The amount of space in that play is astonishing. I've

been reading a lot of Beckett and Pinter and realising that I was moving too much down that conventional, realistic way of setting up situations."

Rather than forcing his characters' hands because of the demands of a predetermined plot, he now tries to get to know his characters better and let them show the way. "I try to get into a more subjective area in terms of how people talk to each other," he says. "What they're capable of, what they're not capable of, what they'll do to each other. I feel like I'm making new discoveries about why people do things."

Ray and Una in *BLACKBIRD* had a relationship 15 years ago that has defined their lives ever since. "The question is not just who they've been since but who they were before," says Harrower. "What made them want to do that? There are certain institutional ways you could analyse Ray's behaviour – that maybe he had a loss of status, he felt he was being undervalued or he had a deep-seated hatred of families; and for the girl, that perhaps she's lost a defining male figure in her life and needs to replace him – but these are just speculations. Is that all we are? Is that all she is? I'm using drama to look at the cracks in between. There's no point in me poeticising a case study. A case study is only one person's approximation of how he or she believes another person works. It doesn't necessarily get anywhere near the complexity that the person is going through. Drama can explore more possibilities – though I'm still restricted because all I have is language."

Of course, the taboo of adult-child sex is one of society's most sensitive and Harrower is cautious about appearing to condone Ray's actions. "I'm not trying to excuse his behaviour but it's drama so, I'm trying to push the possibilities. Can a man have a meaningful relationship with a 12-year-old girl? I don't think so, but he believes he does and she believes he does and there are people who believe they can. I'm not here to come to conclusions, only to ask questions. I don't want the play to make people think we should lower the age of consent; I would rather it raised larger ideas about personal freedom, personal responsibility or what you carry with you and what you

leave behind – how much you blame things on your past. This isn't an issue play, it's a metaphor for something else."

When the play premiered at the Edinburgh International Festival in 2005, directed by Peter Stein and starring Roger Allam and Jodhi May, it was an immediate hit. The Scotsman called it "mighty and timeless", the Guardian said it was "a riveting study in sexual obsession" and the Telegraph welcomed it as "the most powerful dramatic two-hander since David Mamet's *Oleanna*". When the production transferred to London, the reviews were, if anything, even more ecstatic. In February 2007, it won an Olivier Award for best new play.

A month later, it opened off-Broadway in a production by Joe Mantello with Jeff Daniels and Alison Pill. Variety called it a "dark, dangerous love story in which the past casts an unhealthy shadow". The New York Times rated it as:

"a drama that promises to be the most powerful of the season".

"I look at *BLACKBIRD* now and it's like a fruitcake," says Harrower. "It's full of stuff, however stripped back you think it is. I've had lots of letters, only from women, saying they've seen many abuse dramas over the years and nothing has got close to the complexity of feelings that they felt in their similar predicament when they were children having a relationship with an adult. I'm not saying they validate what I've written, but it's nice to know you've done something."

© Mark Fisher



CAST



MICHAEL HURST



Michael last appeared for Auckland Theatre Company in Martin McDonagh's *THE PILLOWMAN*. Previous stage roles include *HAMLET*, *MACBETH*, The Fool in *KING LEAR*, Arnold in *TORCH SONG TRILOGY*, Josef K. in *THE TRIAL*, The Maniac in *ACCIDENTAL DEATH OF AN ANARCHIST*, Touchstone in *AS YOU LIKE IT*, Riff-Raff in *THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW*, Mozart in *AMADEUS*, Martin in *THE GOAT* and The Widow Twankey in *ALADDIN*, which he also wrote and directed.

Directing credits include *HAMLET*, *MACBETH*, *KING LEAR*, *MEASURE FOR MEASURE*, *ROMEO AND JULIET*, *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE*, *TWELFTH NIGHT*, *TIS PITY SHE'S A WHORE*, *MR MARMALADE* and, most recently, *THE THREEPENNY OPERA*, produced by The Silo Theatre in conjunction with his own company, The Large Group, as well as his first opera *HANSEL AND GRETEL* for the NBR New Zealand Opera Company.

Michael has directed several feature films, a number of television dramas, and for eight years he starred in the US television series *HERCULES – THE LEGENDARY JOURNEYS* as Iolaus, the loyal companion to the eponymous hero. Earlier this year, he starred in a soon-to-be-released US action movie, *BITCH SLAP*.

As well as being a founding member of Auckland's Watershed Theatre in 1990, Michael is a patron of TAPAC, a New Zealand Arts Laureate award recipient, an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit (ONZM) and is a proud member of Actors' Equity.

LIESHA WARD KNOX



Liesha has previously appeared in Auckland Theatre Company productions of *DESIGN FOR LIVING* and *MY NAME IS GARY COOPER*.

A graduate of the UNITEC School of Performing and Screen Arts, Liesha's other theatre credits include *BAD JELLY THE WITCH*, *PLENTY*, *CYMBELINE*, *UNDINE* and *ORPHEUS DESCENDING*.

Her screen-acting credits include the feature film *HIDDEN* as well as roles on *SHORTLAND STREET* and *MERCY PEAK*.

As a founding member of the burgeoning theatre company Phundmi Productions, Liesha recently performed and co-produced *SHAKESPEARE UNBAR'D*, a delightful show aimed at bringing theatre to the people. Liesha is a proud member of Actors' Equity.

DAVID HARROWER Playwright



David is an award-winning Scottish playwright. His first play, *KNIVES IN HENS*, a critical and popular success, premiered at Edinburgh's Traverse Theatre in 1995.

In 2005, *BLACKBIRD*, directed by the legendary German director Peter Stein, was produced by the Edinburgh International Festival and transferred to London's West End.

It has subsequently been produced around the world. In addition to his original work, Harrower has also translated and adapted many plays, including Schiller's *MARY STUART* for the Scottish National Theatre.

MARGARET-MARY HOLLINS Director



An experienced actor, director, tutor and producer of theatre for 25 years, Margaret-Mary has directed Neil Labute's *SOMEGIRL[S]* and Mike Hudson's *BEAUTIFUL LOSERS* (Silo Theatre and Festivals Tour 2004), and *MACBETH* (Pandemonium Theatre), and she was assistant director to Colin McColl in the Auckland Theatre Company productions of *THE DUCHESS OF MALFI* and *THE CRUCIBLE*.

She has also directed and adapted *500 LETTERS* for *THE EDGE* and consequently produced its 2008 tour. In 2006 she co-directed *BLACK ICE* and this year produced *BEYOND THE BLUE* (Pandemonium Theatre) and adapted and directed *SHREW'D*, the end result of ATC's inaugural summer school, cast from a nationwide audition process - *OPENCALLO7*.

Upcoming works include directing *SILENT NIGHT* for ATC's *THE NEXT STAGE* 2008 and *OHH BABY, BABY* for Co. Theatre Physical in 2009. She is also developing *A THOUSAND HILLS* which is to be showcased at Auckland Festival's *WATCH THIS SPACE '09* and directing development workshops with Phundmi Productions for *THE HOUSE OF BERNARDA ALBA* by Fredrico Garcia Lorca.

Margaret-Mary tutors throughout New Zealand including for ATC Education Unit, Massive Theatre Company, UNITEC School of Performing and Screen Arts and the Ministry of Education.

ROBIN RAWSTORNE Set & Costume Designer



"This intense theatrical experience that is BLACKBIRD demands restraint and subtle blending of ideas from a designer. I don't think it necessary to be hyper-realistic with the space but to work with the poetry of everyday spaces such as a staff canteen where the play is set.

The heightened state of the characters throughout the play and the sense of constantly being intruded upon aided us in creating a space that is almost alive itself, a third character in the piece; sometimes hard-edged and aggressive and at others, soft and enveloping.

I wanted the space to feel very industrial and close to the audience, and yet still protect the viewers behind our wrap-around proscenium. The real voyeurs in the piece are the audience and they will be able to hide in the darkness.

The hardest challenge for this piece is not to side with either character but to allow the piece to speak for itself. In that sense, we can aim to be truly honest with the play's content."

Theatre design is but part of Robin's extensive work which includes architecture, advertising and design for live events, dance, television and opera.

His opera credits include *COSI FAN TUTTE* (Opera North, UK), *DIE ZAUBERFLOTE* (Tollwood Festival, Munich), *SVANDA DUDAK* (Wexford Festival), *THE YOUNG MAN WITH THE CARNATION* (Almeida Opera), and *THE BEAR* (Buxton Opera).

Robin's work, in collaboration with Antony McDonald, was seen at various opera houses including Metropolitan NYC, Opera House London, Opera Garnier Paris and Austria.

BBC television works include *THE HUMAN FACE*, *ROALD DAHL GALA* and *EVERLASTING*. For theatre, he has designed *MY CHILDREN! MY AFRICA!* and *THE JAIL DIARY OF ALBIE SACHS* (Salisbury Playhouse), *AUNT DAN AND LEMON* (Almeida Theatre), *CLOUD NINE* (The Old Vic) and *A DELICATE BALANCE* (Nottingham Playhouse).

Since moving to New Zealand from London in 2005, Robin has designed St Clare's Garden Centre/Café Buildings, Te Kuiti, and has worked extensively in advertising as an art director.

Robin made his Auckland Theatre Company debut earlier this year in *DESIGN FOR LIVING*.

BRYAN CALDWELL Lighting Designer



"The stage directions are very specific. There is a door, and it is open or closed or not, by request or demand. There is rubbish that can be ignored or peeled from the soles of shoes. There is distance and closeness between the characters that remain ambiguous throughout the play. All this is accentuated by the characters' permission for external sources of light to permeate the space through the door and the characters' shifting proximity to light from the window or to the shadows in the corners of the room."

THE PILLOWMAN was Bryan's most recent lighting design work for Auckland Theatre Company. Other ATC credits include the musical HAIR and WIT (both of which Bryan won the Audience Award for Best Lighting Design), THE BLUE ROOM, ROSENCRANTZ AND GULDENSTERN ARE DEAD, WAITING FOR GODOT, STONES IN HIS POCKETS, THE GOD BOY, ART, CABARET, DEATH OF A SALESMAN,

THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN, CLOSER, THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS, VITA AND VIRGINIA, JULIUS CAESAR, TWELVE ANGRY MEN, HONOUR, MASTERCLASS, ALL MY SONS, ARCADIA, MOLLY SWEENEY and UNCLE VANYA.

His recent work has seen him travelling the world, lighting the 150th Birthday Parties for Louis Vuitton, revealing a waka in the dawn fog under the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, creating a video installation luring Aucklanders into some of the darkest alleyways around Queen Street, and completing a PhD researching electrical activation in the heart.

His recent theatre designs include SONS OF CHARLIE PAORA at the Royal Court Theatre in London, THE HOLY SINNER at the Wellington International Festival 2006 and Black Grace's AMATA.

ANDREW McMILLAN Sound Designer



"Drawing from the environment through the window, the sound that exists through the shadows and grills."

The constant hum of the vent drones as a layer supporting and surrounding the text, interrupted by the harsh and cutting characteristics of engineering dentist's tools - lathes, drills, welders etc.

Musically the sense of loss and naivety has been the prime sense of motivation. Drawing from two pieces of music, the standard BYE BYE BLACK BIRD and the Beatles' BLACKBIRD."

Andrew McMillan has a wealth of experience in the New Zealand music and performing arts industries as an improviser, composer and musician. He has successfully combined his commitment to theatre and improvised music with ongoing studies in composition, giving him a rich and diverse musical background from which to draw his inspiration.

Working mainly from his computer, Andrew creates compositions and soundscapes for groups and individuals as well as for theatre, dance,

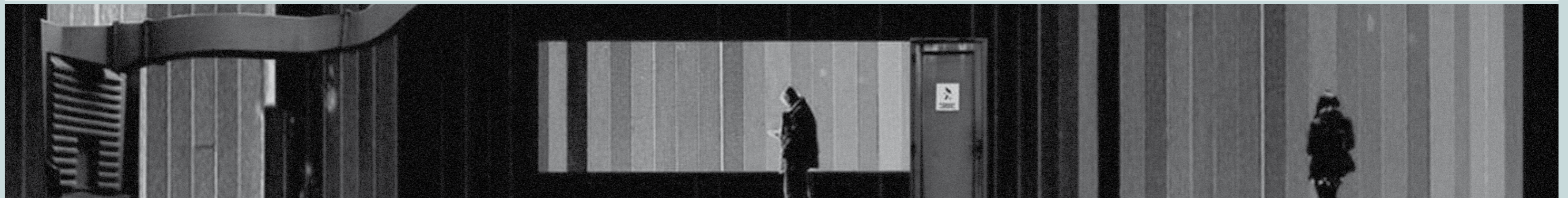
radio, film and television. For theatre, he has built an impressive portfolio as a sound designer, performer and music producer.

Project highlights include TAKE ME OUT, SEX WITH STRANGERS, UNDER MILKWOOD (Silo Theatre), 500 LETTERS (Pauline Grogan), THE YOUNG BARON (Theatre Stampede) and THE MAGIC CHICKEN (Theatre Beating).

His dance works include performances with Amsterdam's Magpie Dance Company, Alyx Duncan (THE NATURE OF WISHING), Paul Young (BONES), and Julia Milsom (SCAPE AND LOCKED).

His work with THE NEW PACIFIC MUSIC ENSEMBLE, and DOMINION CENTENARY CONCERT BAND and the founding of the improvised music community VITAMIN S have seen him combine roles as composer and performer.

Additionally, he has enjoyed performing in various events including BOMB THE SPACE, AK O3, ALT MUSIC, TAURANGA JAZZ FESTIVAL and Wellington's FRINGE FESTIVAL and JAZZ FESTIVAL.





The Lion Foundation is one of New Zealand's largest charitable trusts. The Lion Foundation gives over \$50 million worth of grants on an annual basis to a wide range of community, sport, educational, cultural and health projects throughout New Zealand. These funds benefit hundreds of thousands of New Zealanders.

The Lion Foundation has been one of Auckland Theatre Company's core funders for the last five years. In this time the Foundation has specifically supported the work of ATC's Education and Literary Units, giving young people the opportunity to experience the thrill of live performance and allowing the Company to focus on developing New Zealand stories for New Zealand audiences.

The results of this ongoing support speak for themselves. Over 50,000 school students have been involved with the Company as audience members and participants in the last five years.

Auckland Theatre Company's Literary Unit is the only one of its kind in New Zealand and its success is evidenced by the number of New Zealand plays that have been performed as part of Auckland Theatre Company's main bill season over the last two years.

To learn more about The Lion Foundation and our community grants, please visit our website www.lionfoundation.org.nz or call freephone 0800 802 908.



THANK YOU

Thank you to the thousands of people who signed our petition and wrote letters of support and submissions in favour of the Auckland Regional Amenities Funding Bill. Your support has been overwhelming and we are deeply grateful.

The Bill was passed into law on 27 August and the Act will provide long overdue financial security to Auckland Theatre Company and ten other regional Auckland amenities.

In the case of Auckland Theatre Company, the funding will allow us to continue delivering world class theatre and education programmes to audiences and students across the Auckland region.

Please accept our sincere and heartfelt thanks.

The Board and Staff of Auckland Theatre Company



PLAY ONE:
SILENT NIGHT

by **Yvette Parsons** (Auckland)
Directed by **Margaret-Mary Hollins**

It's Christmas Eve and, somewhere in Sunnynook, Irene McMunn is throwing a party.

She's wrapped the presents, sorted the tree, hung her festive decorations and now she's waiting for the guests to arrive. Make Irene's Christmas Eve one to remember and join her as she shares a lifetime of memories and throws in some Christmas craft tips (it's amazing what you can do with mistletoe and toast!). **SILENT NIGHT** is a play about independence in old age, about those who've slipped off the radar and characters you'll never forget.

75 MINUTES – no interval

Tuesday 7 October	8pm
Friday 10 October	8pm
Saturday 11 October	2pm

PLAY TWO:
LE SUD

By **Dave Armstrong** (Wellington)
Commissioned by **The Wanaka Festival of Colour**

"C'est terrible! You can't walk down the main street of Queenstown anymore and hear French being spoken – it's all foreigners gabbling away. Gerard Depardieu and his film-star mates have come over and built vineyards..."

LE SUD imagines New Zealand colonised in a completely different fashion, splitting in 1839 to the British North Zealand and the French-speaking South – Le Sud. Thanks to abundant cheap hydro-power and farming subsidies, Le Sud flourishes, but free-market economies and a civil war with the Tuhoë nation mean North Zealand is a Third World backwater. So a North Zealand delegation heads to Le Sud to ask for foreign aid and cheap power. What follows is a tense round of negotiations combined with elements of classic French farce with many romances, quarrels and leadership challenges along the way.

90 MINUTES – no interval

Wednesday 8 October	8pm
Friday 10 October	10pm
Saturday 11 October	5pm

PLAY THREE:
THE TRUTH GAME

By **Simon Cunliffe** (Dunedin)
Directed by **Gary Henderson**

Frank Stone thinks he knows the truth but, in a rapidly-changing online world, is the truth enough?

THE TRUTH GAME is a sharp new comedy from Dunedin-based journalist Simon Cunliffe. Frank Stone is a hard-nosed night editor returning from a quick holiday to find change is afoot at *The Advocate*. Sassy new marketing executive Belinda demands more bang for her advertising buck, Ralf is halfway through his wine column and halfway through a bottle of Pinot, while his boss, Bill, is dodging the issue and there's no decent story for the first edition. Then the news comes in off the wires from the Middle East. Now Frank Stone is in his element, but tonight's deadline will throw up more intrigue than he could possibly foresee.

Thursday 9 October	8pm
Saturday 11 October	8pm

The Next Stage is Auckland Theatre Company's annual showcase of new plays in development and a vital part of Auckland Theatre Company's planning for future years. Each script is fully workshopped prior to their presentation as semi-staged readings. This is your chance to see some of New Zealand's best acting talent at work on three utterly original pieces of theatre.



New Zealand Post  PRESENTS THE NEXT STAGE

Musgrove Studio, Maidment Theatre
5 - 11 October. Book 09 308 2383

LAURENCE OLIVIER AWARDS

The Laurence Olivier Awards are regarded as the most prestigious awards in London theatre. Established in 1976 to 'recognise distinguished artistic achievement', they were originally called The Society of West End Theatre Awards, until Lord Olivier agreed to have his name associated with them in 1984.

The Awards are judged by four separate panels: the Theatre Panel, the Opera Panel, the Dance Panel and the Affiliates Panel. The Theatre Panel comprises five people chosen for their specialist knowledge and professional experience as well as eight members of the theatre-going public.

For a play or musical to be considered it must be performed in a theatre represented in membership of the Society for at least 30 performances. Once proposed and seconded by members of the Society, the productions are then seen by the relevant panel. For the Theatre Awards, the nominations are decided by a postal ballot of all members of the Theatre Panel and all members of the Society. All the winners are chosen by relevant Panels in a secret ballot. Only the President of the Society, who counts the votes, knows the results until their announcement at the annual Awards Presentation.

The bronze Laurence Olivier Award presented to all winners was commissioned by the Society from the sculptor Harry Franchetti. It represents the young Laurence Olivier as Henry V at The Old Vic in 1937.



Previous winners for Best Play include:

- 2007: *Blackbird* by David Harrower
- 2006: *On the Shore of the Wide World* by Simon Stephens
- 2005: *The History Boys* by Alan Bennett
- 2004: *The Pillowman* by Martin McDonagh*
- 2003: *Vincent in Brixton* by Nicholas Wright
- 2002: *Jitney* by August Wilson
- 2001: *Blue/Orange* by Joe Penhall
- 2000: *Goodnight Children Everywhere* by Richard Nelson
- 1999: *The Weir* by Conor McPherson
- 1998: *Closer* by Patrick Marber*
- 1997: *Stanley* by Pam Gems
- 1996: *Skylight* by David Hare*
- 1995: *Broken Glass* by Arthur Miller
- 1994: *Arcadia* by Tom Stoppard*
- 1993: *Six Degrees of Separation* by John Guare
- 1992: *Death and the Maiden* by Ariel Dorfman
- 1991: *Dancing at Lughnasa* by Brian Friel*
- 1989/90: *Racing Demon* by David Hare

* Subsequently produced by Auckland Theatre Company.

WHAT'S ON IN THEATRES AROUND THE COUNTRY?

AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY

The New Zealand Post Season of THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE

By William Finn and Rachel Sheinkin

SKYCITY Theatre

6 November - 29 November

It's do or die as six deliciously geeky, philologically-industrious twelve-year-olds battle it out for glory in the spelling championship of a lifetime.

This unlikeliest of hit musicals is chock-full with overachievers' angst, bizarre and multi-syllabic words, romance, cliff-hanging suspense and spelling mums.

SILO THEATRE, Auckland

BARE

By Toa Fraser

Herald Theatre

8 - 18 October

Armed with the violence of the street, two actors riff on body image. Films, takeaway food, tagging and English literature.

CENTREPOINT THEATRE, Palmerston North

VIGIL

By Morris Panych

6 September - 11 October

Vigil is a deeply black comedy, both deliciously vitriolic and surprisingly tender, from acclaimed Canadian playwright, actor and director Morris Panych.

DOWNSTAGE THEATRE, Wellington

ON THE CONDITIONS AND POSSIBILITIES OF HELEN CLARK TAKING ME AS HER YOUNG LOVER

By Arthur Meek

12 - 20 September

Join the over-educated, under-achieving and unemployed Richard Meros as he charges through the pop-cultural slipstream to prove his amorous point.

CIRCA THEATRE, Wellington

DRINKING GAMES

By Damien Wilkins

27 September - 25 October

Damien Wilkins' first play is chock full of wit and insight into men in their thirties behaving badly.

COURT THEATRE, Christchurch

THE BIRTHDAY BOY

By Carl Nixon

6 September - 11 October

When Stuart and Elizabeth meet their oldest friends to celebrate David's 40th birthday, they aren't expecting the announcement that Kathy is pregnant. As children impact on their lives, friends find themselves at odds and the results are resonant and wickedly funny.

FORTUNE THEATRE, Dunedin

JANE EYRE

By Charlotte Brontë

3 October - 19 October

Charlotte Brontë's novel Jane Eyre is one of the most popular English novels of all time. It is a great love story between Jane, the intelligent and pure young governess, and her worldly employer, Mr Rochester. Complicating the possibility of romance is Rochester's mad wife Bertha who is living in the attic.



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AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY

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Creative Development & Education Manager **Lynne Cardy** Artistic Director Intern **Paul McLaughlin**

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Technical Manager **Bonnie Burrill**

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WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Emma Devlin and Maria Hollins-Werry

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

BEST Pacific Institute, Chanel Savea, Thomas Natoalofa, Melissa Ravai, UNITEC, Gabrielle Rhodes, Christina Hollins and Tim Werry, Brenda Steingrimsson-Devlin and James Devlin, Linda Shepherd, Nicole Shepherd, Margie Adams at Benefitz, Anthony Donaldson at Just Water, Kathryn and John Smyth, Karl and Emily Maughn, Bruce Stewart at Kristin School.

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Direction

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Design

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