

Spreading out

BY Roger Hall



Artistic Director's Note

"If it weren't for the middle-classes there'd be no orchestra in this country – no theatre to speak of, or art galleries – no culture at all." Isobel, **Middle Age Spread**

Last year I had the great pleasure of directing a revival of Roger Hall's classic Kiwi comedy, **Middle Age Spread**, for Auckland Theatre Company.

So when Roger whispered that he'd written a sequel revisiting the same characters 25 years on, I couldn't wait to discover what happened to Colin and Elizabeth Wilson after that disastrous dinner party. Did their marriage survive? Did their friendship with next-door neighbours Reg and Isobel survive? Did their daughter Jane really become a teenage mum? And whatever happened to Roddy?

Well all the answers are here in **Spreading Out!** And Roger hits the comic button yet again as Colin and Elizabeth cope with the New Year's Eve you wouldn't wish on your worst enemy. How does he know us so well?!!

We welcome back to Auckland Theatre Company Ray Henwood and Elizabeth McRae. Both these actors were in the original Wellington and Auckland productions of **Middle Age Spread**, and Ray comes to us hot from the hugely successful Circa Theatre premiere season of **Spreading Out**. Welcome back too to Paul Barrett and Alison Bruce – both highly accomplished actors. Making their ATC debut are Christine Bartlett, Jeff Gane and Laura Hill (who takes time out of her busy **Shortland Street** schedule to join us for this one).

Anthony Taylor, the director of tonight's production, is no stranger to Roger Hall plays. In fact, he's the man who helped launch Roger's career and got us laughing at his plays when he directed the premiere production of **Glide Time** in 1975.

Thanks to Kensington Swan for coming on board as one of our 2004 Corporate Stars, and thanks to Creative New Zealand and the Auckland City Council for their continued support.

You'll laugh, you'll cry (you'll scream "I know these people!") at this bittersweet comic take on growing old disgracefully. Enjoy.



Colin McColl

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a message from our

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LAWYERS

Spreading out

BY Roger Hall

cast and artistic

team



SPREADING OUT

Colin

Elizabeth

Megan

Jane

Reg

Isobel

Roddy

Paul Barrett

Elizabeth McRae

Laura Hill

Alison Bruce

Ray Henwood

Christine Bartlett

Jeff Gane

Director

Designer

Lighting Designer

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playwright's and director's

NOTES & BIO



Roger Hall Playwright

Roger Hall was born in England and emigrated to New Zealand in 1958.

He first worked in State Insurance, later working as a teacher and editor with the Education Dept before winning the Burns Fellowship at the University of Otago in 1977.

Hall was based in Dunedin as Teaching Fellow in the English Department where he taught the playwriting course until 1996 when he moved to Auckland.

Hall's earliest scripts were for television, but in 1976 he wrote his first stage play **Glide Time**, (which opened at Circa Theatre on 11 August) and helped establish him as New Zealand's best known and most commercially successful playwright.

Many successful play productions followed including **Middle Age Spread**, **By Degrees**, **Market Forces**, **C'Mon Black**, **Dirty Weekends**, **Social Climbers**, **The Book Club**, **You've Gotta Be Joking!**, **Take a Chance on Me** (which Auckland Theatre Company premiered on 18 July, 2001) and **A Way of Life**, together with musicals, pantomimes, radio dramas, books and plays for children and comedy series for television, most notably, **Gliding On** and **Market Forces**.

His plays have been performed in nine other countries, and **Middle Age Spread** as well as being produced on London's West End, and winning London Comedy of the Year, was adapted and produced on Polish TV.

Roger Hall was awarded a QSO and the Turnovsky Prize in 1987, a Commemoration Medal 1990, the 1996 Katherine Mansfield Fellowship for study in Menton, and an Hon Doctorate of Literature from Victoria University in 1996.

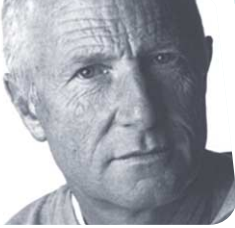


The story so far...

MIDDLE AGE SPREAD

More than 25 years ago, Colin and Elizabeth have a dinner party to celebrate Colin's promotion as head of the local secondary school. They have two teen-age children, Jane and Roddy, and five year old Caroline. Guests are next-door neighbours Reg and Isobel, and relief teacher Judy and her husband, Robert. As the dinner party continues, interspersed scenes go back in time to reveal Colin's dissatisfaction with his marriage and his job...and he drifts into an affair with Judy.

During the dinner, arguments break out over various issues - political and social - and then it is revealed that Colin and Elizabeth's teenage daughter, Jane is pregnant...to the son of Reg and Isobel. In the row that breaks out, Reg reveals Colin and Judy's affair to the whole company. After the guests have gone, Elizabeth and Colin are left to cope with the ruined evening, their fragile marriage...and the dishes.



Anthony Taylor Director

One of the main functions of theatre has always been to help us to recognise (or force us to confront) ourselves - what we were, what we are and what we may become. And nothing is more dangerous and more effective in achieving this than comedy. There is always a dark side. Tragedy follows a central, unrelenting course that is foreseen and irreversible. Good comedy is real life laid bare, twisting and turning, a salutary experience that leads us to "the shock of recognition," but provides the escape-hatch of laughter.

Spreading Out is good comedy. It carries with it an echoing nostalgia, a lingering scent of regret. A play haunted, perhaps, by the ghost of Chekhov and the remembrance of the domestic devastation wreaked by Edward Albee.

I have had a long association with the plays of Roger Hall. From the premiere of Roger's first great success **Glide Time** (Circa), to the premieres of **State of the Play**, **Prisoners of Mother England** (both at Downstage) and **Multiple Choice** (Fortune), I hope we, as playwright and director, have charted compatible courses - at least most of the time.

I hope your evening in the theatre is an enriching experience.



Auckland Theatre Company is delighted to welcome one of New Zealand's most senior theatre practitioners, Anthony Taylor, as guest director. Tony's long career as a director, designer and writer includes six years as Artistic Director of Downstage Theatre, Wellington, Director of Fortune Theatre, Dunedin and ten years as a Drama Director at Radio NZ.

He was Director of Commission Projects (South Island) for the 1990 Commission, and created and directed oNZtage for New Zealand national week at the New Zealand Expo Commission in Brisbane. Auckland audiences may remember his stunning dramatic production of Leonard Bernstein's **Mass** in the Auckland Town Hall, the largest indoor production seen in New Zealand at that time.

He has been an ambassador for New Zealand theatre and culture, notably at the International Theatre Institute Congress in Sofia, Bulgaria, and as an invited speaker at the (then) West German government's symposium "Bridge Across Borders" in Bonn. In addition, Tony was the first New Zealand theatre practitioner to receive a German Academic Exchange stipend for study.

More recently he was co-founder, director and designer for Kempe's **Jig**, a theatre collective that toured Shakespeare to schools throughout the South Island and the lower half of the North Island.

Directing highlights include: **The Merchant of Venice**, **Amadeus**, **Gross und Klein** (Big and Little), **Travesties**, **I'm Not Rappaport** (all at Downstage), **Torch Song Trilogy** (Court), and **La Traviata** (Canterbury Opera Company).

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**AUCKLAND
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the cast & crew



Paul Barrett as Colin



Having worked in theatre for twenty-four years, Paul Barrett has many stage credits to his name. His most recent roles were in **The Viagra Monologues** and **Hamlet**. He has had a long-standing association with Auckland Theatre Company having previously appeared in **Waiting for Godot**, **Noises Off**, **Art**, **Foreskin's Lament** and **Masterclass**.

As a musical director, Paul has worked as an associate director for a tour of **Chicago**. His past work in musical directing includes **Sweeney Todd**, **She Loves Me**, **Gypsy**, **The Boys From Syracuse**, **Big River** and **Little Shop of Horrors**. Paul was also a band member in the sell-out production of **The Rocky Horror Show** in 2002.

His television work includes **Being Eve**, **Shortland Street**, **McPhail and Gadsby**, **Secret Agent Man** and **Cleopatra 2525**. Film includes **Atomic Twister** and the recently completed **Ike - Thunder in June** and Geoff Murphy's **Spooked**.

Paul has taught musical theatre and voice at a number of performing institutions and has recorded over 1000 voice-overs for television commercials, corporate work and documentaries.

"It's always a particular pleasure to perform in a Roger Hall play - the audience response is quite special. It's also a great pleasure to work with Tony Taylor again after many years."

Elizabeth McRae as Elizabeth



Elizabeth McRae is one of New Zealand's most experienced actresses with a career spanning over three decades. She has appeared in countless screen and stage productions.

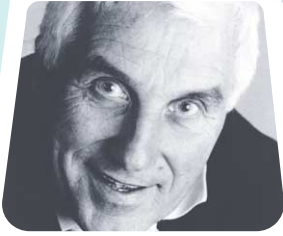
Her ATC appearances include **Collected Stories**, **The Cripple of Inishmann**, **The Wind in the Willows**, **Social Climbers** and **Uncle Vanya**.

Elizabeth's theatre highlights include **Once a Catholic**, **Under Milkwood**, **The Crucible**, **Caucasian Chalk Circle**, **Dark of the Moon**, **The Admirable Crichton**, **Pygmalion**, **The Plough and the Stars**, **Happy Days**, **Not I**, **Vinegar Tom**. She appeared in **Ricordi** and **The World's Wife** for the New Zealand International Festival of the Arts. The latter toured throughout New Zealand.

She also played Isobel in the original production of **Middle Age Spread** at the Mercury Theatre in 1978.

Elizabeth is recognisable for her role as Marj on **Shortland Street**, which she played for four years. Other film and television work includes **An Angel at My Table**, **Jubilee**, **Scarecrow**, **Never Say Die**, **Return Journey**, **One of those Blighters** and **A Doll's House**.

"Roger's play feels very much within my own experience. Fortunately, however, my real husband doesn't find me quite so irritating, nor do I find him quite so irritable. We don't own a vineyard. We're now mid-rehearsal and I think **Spreading Out** is a tragic-comedy with Chekhovian overtones. We're laughing and crying. At the moment the audience is the missing ingredient."



Ray Henwood as Reg

Ray's first Auckland Theatre Company production was **Honour** in 1998. He most recently appeared in Auckland in **Playing Burton**, for which he won Best Actor at the Chapman Tripp Awards 2001. **Playing Burton** has toured to several New Zealand cities including Christchurch, and, in Australia, Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane.

Ray was a founding member of the Circa Council. His performances at Circa include **Conversations After a Burial, The Birthday Party, Copenhagen, Playing Burton, The Unexpected Man, A Delicate Balance, Rutherford, Travesties, Waiting for Godot, Honour, Simply Disconnected, Skylight, Market Forces, F.I.L.T.H., Moonlight, The Master Builder, Angels in America, I Hate Hamlet, No Man's Land** and **Time of my Life**.

Other performances include **Otherwise Engaged, Othello, Uncle Vanya, Hedda Gabler, Much Ado About Nothing** (Downstage), **Honour** (ATC), **NoGood Boyo** (NZ & Australia) and Ken Hill's **Phantom of the Opera** (Japan). Television includes **Market Forces, William Tell, Enid Blyton, Gliding On, Atlantis High**. His film credits include **Heavenly Creatures, The End of the Golden Weather**, and Laketown man in **Lord of the Rings**.

Ray has just finished playing Reg in Circa Theatre's sell-out season of **Spreading Out**.

"It is a great opportunity for an actor to resurrect a character after 27 years and to have grown old along with him. So much has happened to the characters in this play that has also happened to us the cast, and you the audience make it a very special 'Roger Hall' for me."



Christine Bartlett as Isobel

Christine Bartlett trained as a speech and drama teacher at London's Guildhall School of Speech and Drama. Since then, she has worked extensively in theatre, television, film and radio in New Zealand and Australia.

Christine's theatre credits include **True West, Summer, Crown Matrimonial, Death Trap, The Constant Wife** and **Old Times**. Television credits include **Street Legal, Xena Warrior Princess, Hercules, Young Hercules, Shortland Street, Mortimer's Patch** and **Gloss**.

In addition, Christine starred in Harry Sinclair's acclaimed film, **Topless Women Talk About Their Lives**.

This is Christine's debut for Auckland Theatre Company.

"I'm delighted to be appearing in a Roger Hall play - the only other time was when I again played Isobel in a radio version of **Middle Age Spread** a few years ago. I'm also looking forward to appearing with actors with whom I'm formerly worked - Ray Henwood and Elizabeth McRae - and of course with the director Tony Taylor, with whom I did several Downstage Theatre plays in the seventies."



Alison Bruce as Jane

Alison Bruce has had an extensive acting career in New Zealand having had numerous film, television and theatre roles in the last 20 years. Alison's television credits include **Street Legal**, **Xena - Warrior Princess**, **Hercules**, **The Chosen**, **Shortland Street** and the internationally award-winning series **Being Eve**. In addition, Alison starred as Magik in Vanessa Alexander's acclaimed film **Magik & Rose**.

Alison's theatre career began in the early 1980s with Auckland's Theatre Corporate. From there she went on to perform in numerous plays throughout New Zealand including **The Seagull**, **Henry VIII** and **Hamlet**.

In 2002 and 2003, she won Best Supporting Actress at the New Zealand Television Awards for her role in **Mercy Peak**. Alison's last production for Auckland Theatre Company was **Market Forces** in 1996.

"It's challenging coming from TV to such a big venue as SkyCity Theatre. I have to haul out my old drama school voice class notes or I could ask Elizabeth Macrae she was one of my voice teachers!"



Laura Hill as Megan

Laura has a First Class Honours degree in English Literature from Victoria University where she majored in Theatre and Film. While in Wellington, Laura was involved in fringe theatre (**Purple Frog**,

The Daily Grind) and devised work, including the comedy **Welcome to Superbia!** and a feature film directed by Duncan Sarkies (**Bludgers**).

She gained television experience in **Duggan**, and **Questions**, a TV drama developed from a stage play dealing with youth suicide. Since 2001 Laura has been core cast on **Shortland Street**. This is her debut for Auckland Theatre Company.



Jeff Gane as Roddy

This is Jeff Gane's first appearance in Auckland Theatre Company's mainbill.

Jeff last appeared for ATC in **The Orderly Business of Life** by Mike Chunn, an ATC Literary Unit Final Draft production at the Silo theatre.

For the past ten years, Jeff has worked with Stronghold Theatre Company, performing in both

Ping and **Antimony**, their most recent productions. Other theatre credits include **Macbeth**, **Blasted**, **Romeo and Juliet**, **The Duchess**, **The Passion** and **Richard III**.

Jeff has appeared in numerous television shows including TV2's **Shortland Street**, **Trifecta**, **Plainclothes** and **Hercules**.

"I would like to thank Tony, all the cast and everyone involved in bringing this production to life. It's been a real pleasure. Enjoy!"



Ross Joblin Designer

This is Ross Joblin's fifth design for ATC (he previously designed **The God Boy**, **The Blue Room**, **Secret Bridesmaids' Business** and **Stones in His Pockets**) and has been done partly by remote from Wellington. This year he has also designed **The Love of Humankind** and **Macbeth**, both at Circa.

Currently, Ross is working as a Senior Tutor at the New Zealand Drama School. That, continuing to create new work with Native Tongue Ltd (for which he is co-producer) and the odd design gig at Circa Theatre keep him out of the pubs.

"This is my fifth design for ATC, and my first Roger. Roger's plays stretch every department and require a pretty substantial design. Tony and I have worked very closely on this one and we rather like it. I trust you, the audience, will too."



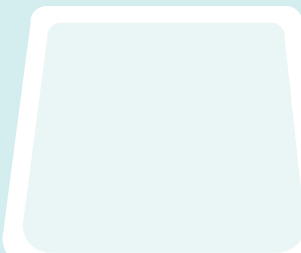
Andrew Malmo Lighting Designer

Andrew has lit numerous dramatic productions for Auckland venues and touring shows, most recently **Blue/Orange**, **Marlene** and **The Caretaker** for Potent Pause Productions and Jennifer Ward-Lealand's touring production, **Singing Marlene**. Through his designs Andrew aims to explore new possibilities and create innovative, artistic and faithful lighting.

Other design credits include: **Spring Awakening** (Stage 2), **The New Man**, **Corpus Christi** (Company of Angels), **Ghost in the Machine** (Hugh Major), **Old Times** (Potent Pause) and **Nightingale Fever** (Michael Parmenter).

Andrew's stylish black and white photographs cover a diverse range of subjects, from landscape and architecture to portraiture and live performance. His images can be viewed online at www.malmo.co.nz

"The naturalistic set design and overall theme for the play essentially prescribe a similar, naturalistic approach with the lighting design. Set in the Wairarapa in summer, I have strived for a "New Zealand" quality of light on stage, and as the play traverses all times of the day (and night) I am able to play with key angles and colour, in relation to Colin and Elizabeth's geographical location. You may not notice the lighting - that can be a good thing - but if I've done my job correctly, you'll have a sense that the action tonight took place somewhere pretty close to home."



Hilary Dold Costume Designer

Hilary was born and raised in Zimbabwe and now lives in New Zealand. She is a graduate of the UNITEC School of Performing and Screen Arts. In 2003, she was designer in training for Auckland Theatre Company's Second Unit, where she designed and costumed **Play 2** and the four new plays in **Final Draft**. In addition to a steady flow of theatre

work, Hilary also runs the production for fashion designer, Miranda Brown and had been the Wardrobe Mistress for the NBR New Zealand Opera. She is very excited about designing the costumes for **Spreading Out**, which is her first mainbill production for Auckland Theatre Company.

"I would like to say a special thank you to Elizabeth Whiting for her continued support, guidance and inspiration, and at Elizabeth Whiting Costumes, thank you to Denise Hosty, Natalie Shields and Jo Hawke."

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A Day in the Life of.. Josh Hyman Stage Manager

Hopefully, if all goes well, I'm the guy you never see.

As a stage manager most of my work is behind the scenes; I'm with the show from the first day of rehearsal to the last performance of the season. During rehearsal my job ranges from being the first point of contact for the creative team, to keeping track of and setting the props for performance.

Once the show is in the theatre I become responsible for keeping it in the shape the director has left it in, and making the season run as smoothly as it can for everyone concerned. Tonight while you are watching the show I will be behind the stage, having already set out all the props. With a communication headset on, I'll be talking to the lighting and sound operators and hopefully making their cues come at the right time.

I first worked with Auckland Theatre Company through the ATC 2second Unit Industry Training programme in 2002-2003, which was an excellent way to gain experience in a professional environment. I had the opportunity to develop my skills as a stage manager by being teamed up with mentors, observing and working on productions. Now I work with Auckland Theatre Company on a show-by-show contract basis. The skills that I think are needed by a stage manager are wide ranging and some would say I have become a parent before my time! Communication is probably the most important part of my job – along with making a good cup of tea.

My most interesting night at work was during **Filler Up** last year when an oven broke down and I was called onstage to fix it, so I can now add appliance repair technician to my list of skills. I have also had nights of crawling under the stage to replace lost drum sticks, fixing costumes on the fly with safety pins and tape, and trying to figure out the complexities of the Auckland power supply.

I love my job for so many reasons and would do it for free if I weren't so lucky to be getting paid to work for Auckland Theatre Company with some of my most favourite people. I hope you have a wonderful evening. Enjoy the show and enjoy the props that we use, then spare a thought on the way out for the dishes that I'll be doing afterwards!

ATC 2second Unit wants to help you create theatre. ATC 2second Unit encourages enthusiastic emerging practitioners in any area of theatre creation to come and meet with us, and we will do what we can to offer you advice, support, resources and mentorship. If you would like to talk to us about our Industry Training for 2005, then call Frith on 09 309 0390, EXT 69.



Backstage Auckland Theatre Company



Under the direction of Colin McColl, Auckland Theatre Company is one of New Zealand's largest theatre companies. A not-for-profit organisation, ATC employs 12 full-time staff and contracts over 150 theatre practitioners. In the areas of artistic achievement, audience development and arts marketing, ATC is now recognised as an industry leader of national significance.

ATC is now in its 12th subscription season, having produced over 68 professional productions since its inception in 1992, and increasing its annual audience share to over 100,000 per annum. ATC has been privileged to embrace the talent of some of New Zealand's most accomplished theatre artists and international practitioners, many of whom are still part of the wider ATC company today.






The ATC repertoire consists of a combination of New Zealand, international, contemporary, classical and musical works. Local content, including world premieres, often makes up 30% of the programme.

Described as "a high quality professional team giving it their all" (City News), Auckland Theatre Company provides community spirit and identity for its members, for its audience, and, we hope, for Auckland as a whole.

"Auckland Theatre Company matches the best the world has to offer." BBC World Service

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AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY PRODUCTION HISTORY

1993	LOVELOCK'S DREAM RUN DAUGHTERS OF HEAVEN	2000	ART COLLECTED STORIES THE BEAUTY QUEEN OF LEENANE WIT THE GOD BOY SERIAL KILLERS THE JUDAS KISS INTO THE WOODS
1994	ANGELS IN AMERICA SOMEONE WHO'LL WATCH OVER ME BY DEGREES THE SEAGULL		
1995	OLEANNA DEAD FUNNY THE LEARNER'S STAND DANCING AT LUGHNASA	2001	HARURU MAI THE BLUE ROOM ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD SECRET BRIDESMAIDS' BUSINESS TAKE A CHANCE ON ME A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE COPENHAGEN HAIR
1996	THREE TALL WOMEN TRAVELS WITH MY AUNT MARKET FORCES UNCLE VANYA		
1997	ARCADIA MOLLY SWEENEY ALL MY SONS SKYLIGHT MASTER CLASS SOCIAL CLIMBERS		2002
1998	THE HERBAL BED HONOUR TWELVE ANGRY MEN FOUR CITIES JULIUS CAESAR VITA & VIRGINIA THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS		THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES THE PLAY ABOUT THE BABY THE DAYLIGHT ATHEIST NOISES OFF THE BELLBIRD TRAVESTIES STONES IN HIS POCKETS WAITING FOR GODOT THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW
1999	CLOSER AMY'S VIEW THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN FORESKIN'S LAMENT DEATH OF A SALESMAN THE BOOK CLUB CABARET		2003
			THE GRADUATE THE SHAPE OF THINGS MIDDLE AGE SPREAD THE WORLD'S WIFE THE SONGMAKER'S CHAIR FILLER UP LADIES NIGHT
		2004	THE TALENTED MR RIPLEY GOLDIE SPREADING OUT



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