

Auckland Theatre Company  
& Auckland Festival present

# MIU

By Oscar Kightley & Dave Armstrong

# DUKE



In association with Downstage Theatre By Arrangement with Playmarket

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TALOFA LAVA OU TOU UMA!

HUGE GREETINGS TO YOU ALL!

Welcome to  
the first play in  
Auckland Theatre  
Company's 13th  
season of theatre.



2004 proved beyond doubt the popularity of the NZ work in our playbill - so it's a great pleasure to be presenting the Auckland premiere of *Niu Sila* by Oscar Kightley and Dave Armstrong - voted Outstanding New Zealand Play of the Year in the 2004 Chapman Tripp Theatre Awards.

Welcome back to Damon Andrews as well. Damon played Jack Lovelock in ATC's inaugural production *Lovelock's Dream Run* in 1993. As an actor and director Damon has always been involved in ground-breaking projects - his production of *Wheeler's Luck* is currently wowing Wellington audiences.

Our thanks to our partner Auckland Festival, AK05, and also to Wellington's Downstage Theatre for helping us bring this award-winning production to Auckland audiences.



# ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

**Colin McColl**

Besides being a great vehicle for two hugely gifted comic actors - *Niu Sila* charts 40 years of NZ social history - from the wilds of 60's Ponsonby and the Polynesian migration to the multi-cultural Auckland of today. The play is also testimony to the enduring power of friendship.

I had the pleasure of directing Dave Fane and Damon Andrews in their Toi Whakaari /NZ Drama School graduation production of Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Dave was Launce - the clown who shares most of his scenes with his dog Crab. When the dog decided to investigate the audience Dave covered brilliantly in improvised iambic pentameter. His improvisational skills and comic timing have since been used to great effect in the *Naked Samoans* various and hugely popular shows and more recently in the animated television series *bro' Town*. We're delighted to have him back at Auckland Theatre Company.

In 2005 Auckland Theatre Company brings you all that is best about theatre - great story-telling, fascinating characters, good laughs, eloquent language and provocative ideas. 15,000 tickets have already been sold - so don't miss out - there's still time to subscribe and save \$10 on each ticket - plus a host of other benefits.

Enjoy tonight - and we look forward to seeing you at the second production in our 2005 season - the compelling and sensationally theatrical modern classic *Equus* which previews at the Maidment Theatre on April 14th.

Colin McColl






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Auckland Theatre Company & Auckland Festival present

# NIU SILA



By Oscar Kightley & Dave Armstrong

 **Starring David Fane & Damon Andrews**

Director	Conrad Newport
Set & Costume Design	Brian King
Lighting Design	Lisa Maule
Music	Gareth Farr, Conrad Newport
Production Manager	Andrew Malmo
Stage Manager	Sophie Collis
Operator	Rhed Clift
Set Painting	Chris Clements
Costume Construction	Coralie Hare
Workshop Coordinator	Lynne Cardy
Teachers' Resource Writer	Louise Tu'u
Workshop Trainee	Scott Cotter

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& SCRIPT ADVISORY SERVICE  
www.playmarket.org.nz

*Niu Sila* was originally staged by  
Downstage Theatre and is the first production in ATC's 2005 season.  
*Niu Sila* previewed on Friday, 4 March 2005  
at the Maidment Theatre.

***Niu Sila* is approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes long  
without interval.**

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

**LINDAUER**

  
**MONTANA**

Proud to be the selected wines of Auckland Theatre Company



I would like to thank Dave Armstrong for wanting to write this story and for allowing me to share in the telling. This play, based on a sacred time in his life, is for everybody who has ever wondered what happened to that cool kid they made friends with in primary school. At a time when politicians seem to want to make us all one colour, stories like *Niu Sila* remind us that it's OK to be different and still live here. To the brown people, I hope this show makes you want to go out and hug a palagi, and to the white people, no one is going anywhere, so go out and hug a brown person.

Oscar Kightley



It was only after Oscar and I finished writing this play that I realised it is a requiem for a time in New Zealand that no longer exists. Today, brown and white New Zealanders, with a few exceptions, work in different jobs, live in separate suburbs, and send their kids to different schools. That is not the New Zealand of my childhood. All I ask of Palagi (European) audience members is they entertain the idea that Pacific Islanders contribute far more to our society than cleaning our offices and scoring the odd try on the wing. I am delighted that this play is part of the Auckland Festival, AK05, is being presented by the wonderful Auckland Theatre Company, and most of all, is being performed in the largest Polynesian city in *Niu Sila*.

Dave Armstrong

# WRITERS' NOTES

## Oscar Kightley

Born in Apia, Samoa in 1969, Oscar Kightley emigrated to New Zealand at age four. His plays include *Fresh off the Boat*, *A Frigate Bird Sings* (with David Fane) and *Dawn Raids*. A longstanding member of the Naked Samoans comedy group, he also runs Auckland based theatre group, Island Players and was a past winner of the Bruce Mason Playwriting Award. Oscar has worked extensively in television as a writer, presenter and performer on TV3's *The Panel* and the sports show *Sportzahn!* He is currently breakfast show host on Flava 96.1 with Stacey Daniels and a writer and voice for the new TV3 animated hit comedy, *bro' Town*.

## Dave Armstrong

Dave's adaptation of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* was a hit for ATC at the end of 2004. Dave was script editor for the first series of *bro' Town*, and his latest TV project, *Seven Periods with Mr Gormsby*, which he co-created and co-wrote, will screen on TV One during 2005. Dave is currently completing *King and Country*, a play with music about New Zealand soliders in the First World War, which will tour various New Zealand festivals in 2005 and 2006. His musical, *The Semisis*, based on the Pacific Island family from TV3's *Skitz*, will premiere at Wellington's Downstage Theatre in August this year. David has recently completed a commission from Wellington's Circa Theatre for his play, *The Tutor*.



## David Fane

7-Time Academy Award Viewer, David has worked as an actor, director & writer for 12 years.

A founding member of the Naked Samoans, David is well known for his TV appearances in *The Strip*, *Skitz* and *The Semisis*. Last year he took up the Macmillan Brown Pacific Artist-in-Residency at Canterbury University. More recently David, along with the Naked Samoans, made *bro' Town*, NZ's first primetime animated series on TV3.



## Damon Andrews

Graduate Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School (1992). Damon has recently directed for TV *The Tribe* and *Love Town*. Theatre credits include: *Angelo's Song* and *Lovelock's Dream Run* (ATC), *Big River*, *Twelfth Night*, *Arcadia* (The Court), *An Unseasonable Fall of Snow* (Downstage), *The Unsung Boy & Split* (BATS & The Maidment), *Savage Hearts* (Theatre at Large) and *A Man's World* (The Silo). Damon also has appeared in *The Tribe* and *Urban Gothic* for TV, and the film *Pudding*. Damon has just directed the successful season of *Wheeler's Luck* at Circa Studio.



CAST



Corner of Jervois Road and Ponsonby Road, 1964

Image courtesy of Special Collections, Auckland City Libraries 7-A1313

Even though *Niu Sila* is set in the heart of 1960's Ponsonby, I must confess that I am a Wellingtonian and at best only an honorary Jafa. That said, a large proportion of the play was written in Epsom about seven years ago, with only occasional interruptions from an eight-year-old Chinese kid 'fresh off the boat' from Hong Kong who'd just moved in next door. An only child, he was looking for kids to play with, but while Oscar and I were too busy finishing our script to kick a soccer ball around with him, he did give us ideas that we were able incorporate into the play.

# MY AUCKLAND

dave armstrong

*Niu Sila* celebrates the Pacific Island migration to New Zealand that occurred during the 1960's and 70's, as well as the wonderful multicultural nature of many of our older suburbs. In Auckland these were once places like Grey Lynn and Ponsonby, and today are the increasingly culturally diverse areas such as Kingsland and Mount Roskill. It's places like these that make Auckland the perfect setting for *Niu Sila* with its crazy multicultural cast of over thirty characters (all played by the two actors), including an entire Indian cricket team.

During the 1970's and 80's, I was a frequent visitor to Auckland, and the influence of the world's biggest Polynesian city on me was profound. I often played with bands at the Gluepot tavern. Ponsonby was a great old suburb back then, despite there hardly being a latte in sight. As much as I loved the Gluepot, it was the downstairs bar, with its mix of old palagi men with their Best Bets, and younger Polynesian men with 70's-style Afros.

Then there's South Auckland. The mere mention of the word can stir up fear and loathing amongst white New Zealanders who've never actually bothered to go there and see the place for themselves. But the most interesting South Auckland experiences I had were far from scary, apart from being chased by some gang members in a red Valiant charger, but that was strictly South-East Auckland and it was very late at night.





One evening I landed in Auckland on a delayed flight from Australia. I'd missed the last flight back to Wellington so I was put up in a Mangere hotel within a stone's throw of the airport. Against the advice of the palagi motelier, I went for a walk and looked into the hall down the road, where a social to raise funds for victims of a recent cyclone in the Pacific was being held. Though I was a total stranger, I was welcomed inside. The only white person there, I had food thrust upon me, cackling old grannies and aunties insisted I dance with them, I fell in love a hundred times with gorgeous Polynesian princesses in stunning floral dresses, and I discovered the wonderful music of Samoan band The Five Stars. Then to end the evening, a young Samoan guy gave me two cans of beer for the 'trip home' to my motel – about 100 metres.

I know a lot of bad stuff goes on in South Auckland, but I'll never forget my night in Mangere, and the friendly generosity of those in that hall. Incidents like this one taught me that palagi New Zealanders have got to accept that Pacific people bring far more positives to this country than negatives, and that those positives are not just in the clichéd areas of rugby and entertainment.

Next time I was up in Auckland I took my elderly palagi father-in-law, who lived in Papakura, to the Otara Markets. At first he seemed terrified - 'no one ever goes to Otara round here,' he yelled as I forced him into the back of the car, 'it's full of bloody Islanders'. However, he was a very keen gardener and after inspecting all the amazing taro, bananas, beans, coriander, coconuts, mangoes, papayas on display, and enjoying a very nice cup of koko Samoa, he conceded it was an extremely enjoyable morning after all.

I could go on about the amazing Asian foodhalls one finds around Queen Street, the fascinating mix of cultures one can witness in suburbs like Onehunga, the wonderful theatre and short films coming out of the city's Pacific and Asian communities, and the fascinating mix of languages one notices at the taxi stand at Auckland airport.

As much as I love the Harbour Bridge, the Viaduct Basin, Ponsonby cafes, the Waitakeres, and the acoustics of the Auckland Town Hall, the real jewel in Auckland's crown is its multicultural population. Let's hope all Aucklanders, and eventually all New Zealanders, will come to fully appreciate it.

Reprinted with kind permission from *citymix* - Auckland's ultimate time out guide, March 2005.





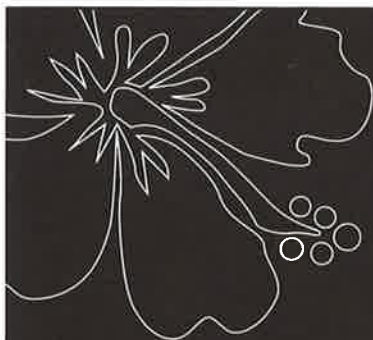
When we worked on the *Niu Sila* script for the Adam Play Reading in 2003 we soon realised that it would and should have a full-scale production one day. That

day did happen with a very successful season at Downstage in Wellington in 2004 and now it's off to see the world! We have had enormous fun re-discovering the many timely themes of the script.

# DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Balancing these with the lyrical nature of a young boy's memories, as he grows up in the 70's and 80's urban NZ, has been both hilarious and moving in turn. A great big thank you to everyone involved in this production and especially all the kind people at ATC. My eternal gratitude to you all for listening to me as if I were paying you myself.

Conrad Newport



ATC Education Unit supports the arts education of students with a focus on curriculum development, literature, and the Arts.



Dave Fane with Year 12 students Auckland Girls Grammar

Each year, over three thousand students and teachers attend ATC school matinees. These students and many more are able to access resource packs and participate in forums with actors and crews. Other programmes include school visits, in-theatre workshops, professional development, ASB Bank DramaMark and an education advisory panel.

In 2005 the Education Unit also includes over 70 ATC Ambassadors representing a range of secondary schools throughout Auckland. ATC Ambassadors take part in workshops and forums to discuss each performance with the actors, directors and the production team, and attend ATC shows for free.

# ATC Education Unit

For further information, contact Lynne Cardy in the Education Unit on 09 309 0390 ext. 67

Photos: Lynne Cardy

Each Ambassador also acts as the link between ATC and their school, offering the opportunity for their mates to experience live theatre at a special \$10 rate.

Most recently Auckland Theatre Company carried out an enterprising *Niu Sila* schools' workshop tour with Dave Fane and Damon Andrews visiting several Auckland secondary schools with high numbers of Pacific Island students.

Participating schools included Otahuhu College, Southern Cross Campus, Auckland Girls Grammar and McAuley High School and each workshop was designed to offer a unique opportunity for senior drama students to interact with professional actors and take part in drama activities linked to *Niu Sila*.



Year 12 students McAuley High School





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John Hodgkins, Warner Office Services, Cornelia Lang  
at Capital Canvas and everyone at Downstage Theatre.

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*Oscar and Dave would like to thank  
Creative New Zealand for funding the  
writing of this play and the Adam  
Playreading Series for smoothing  
some rough edges.*



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