ATC PRESENTS THE WORLD PREMIERE SEASON OF bellbird~ By Stephen Sinclair

> AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY

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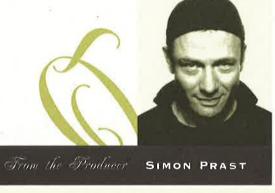
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ATC's tenth anniversary season continues with this world premiere production of The Bellbird. brought to you in association with Volvo.

Genesis for The Bellbird was a solitary letter unearthed by playwright Stephen Sinclair while doing research. In it, a pakeha woman made a plea for help. Since the death of her husband. a Maori, she could no longer make ends meet and her situation was becoming increasingly more desperate. No one knows what became of her but the official record suggests no government assistance was forthcoming. The human predicament hinted at by this historical footnote inspired the co-author of Ladies' Night to create a very different play. With The Bellbird, Stephen adds flesh and blood to a story where two people fall in love and two cultures collide, set in a landscape as unyielding as the human will that would tame it. The inevitable showdown of opposing forces is the stuff of great drama. All the ingredients are here, as the playwright puts a face to a name and a heart to our history.

As part of our tenth anniversary celebrations, we are delighted to present this second world premiere of a new New Zealand work. The Bellbird and The Daylight Atheist were both developed under the aegis of ATC's 2econd Unit Literary Programme. We are indebted to all those who have supported the programme, most particularly the ATC Patrons. We also welcome those making their ATC debut with this production, Kayte Ferguson, Tearepa Kahi and especially Helen Steemson, who only last year participated in the inaugural ATC Schools' Ambassador Programme.

We thank you for your patronage and look forward to seeing you at Tom Stoppard's Travesties, opening at the Maidment on 17 July.

Go well!

Simon.

VOLVO

for life

Welcome to *The Bellbird*, the powerful new work by New Zealand playwright Stephen Sinclair.

In a recent National Radio interview with Stephen, it was said that so timeless is the play's underlying theme, the names of Capulet and Montague could easily be substituted.

Yet The Bellbird is an even more powerful work because its foundations are based on a tragic, historical fact. In 1870 a Pakeha widow's pleas for help fell on deaf ears for the want of a little compassion from either her own, or her late Maori husband's, people.

It is easy in the busy times we live in to switch channels, turn the page, look the other way and ignore our wider communities. But the rewards for not doing so, for becoming involved, can be infinitely greater.

Volvo is proud to support Auckland Theatre Company in bringing you yet another exceptional production, one whose message we at Volvo also proudly support.

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E-MAIL atc@aucklandtheatre.co.nz www.atc.co.nz Art is absurdly overrated by artists, which is understandable, but what is strange is that it is absurdly overrated by everyone else."

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Stephen Tinulair PLAYWRIGHT

Stephen is one of New Zealand's most successful playwrights and screenwriters.

The Sex Fiend (Co-written with Danny Mulheron), which premiered at Bats Theatre in 1989, went on to play return seasons in all the main centres, and continues to be performed by repertory companies around the country. It has also been produced in Australia, most recently in December of last year. Ladies' Night (co-written with Anthony McCarten) has enjoyed international success with recent productions in Great Britain, Germany, France, Switzerland, Scandanavia, Finland, Austria, Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Brazil, Puerto Rico and Canada. Last year in France it won the Molière Award for the Best Stage Cornedy for 2001. A production in Moscow is scheduled for later this year.

Stephen began his career as writer and director for the Maori and Pacific Island Theatre Group, Taotahi, which he co-founded. His several years with the group culminated with the production of *Le Matau*, the first play to deal with the Pacific Island experience in New Zealand.

In 1991, Stephen tackled the difficult and emotive subject of biculturalism within New Zealand society in *Caramel Cream*. Performed at Wellington's Depot Theatre it proved, as one critic stated, that Sinclair is a writer who "...not only has a clift for comedy but also can tackle

complex moral issues with uncompromising toughness."

In 1999, Stephen directed his one man play Blowing It, performed by Stephen Papps, at the Silo Theatre in Auckland. The play toured nationally to rave reviews in 2000. He is currently working on a feature film adaptation, to be directed by himself.

Stephen has written the musicals *Big Bickies*, which premiered concurrently at the Fortune Theatre in Dunedin and Depot Theatre in Wellington in 1988, and *Braindead* which played in Auckland (The Watershed) and Wellington (Downstage) in 1995.

Stephen has had a long screenwriting partnership with Academy Award nominees Peter Jackson and Frances Walsh (Heavenly Creatures, The Frighteners). In 1990 he co-scripted the feature film Meet The Feebles and in 1991 Braindead, which subsequently won Best Screenplay at the 1993 New Zealand Film and Television Awards. He worked with Fran and Peter and Philippa Boyens on the scripts for the feature film adaptation of Lord Of The Rings, with screen credits on The Two Towers and Return Of The King.

His one hour television comedy-drama *Love Mussel*, starring Kevin Smith, screened in July last year. The NZ Listener cited it as the best one hour television comedy-drama for 2001.

In April Stephen directed his short film *The Bach*, a twelve minute comedy thriller set in the Coromandel.

Stephen's first novel, the children's book *Thief Of Colours*, was published by Penguin Books in 1995. His first adult novel, entitled *Dread*, published in July 2000, was described in the review in the New Zealand Listener as 'an impressive debut.' His collection of poetry *The Dwarf And The Stripper* will be published later this year.

THE HISTORY OF THE PLAY

The letters were progressively desperate in tone, and the hand-writing more spidery and shaky - graphic evidence of her deterioration. With the letters were memos from one departmental bureaucrat to another, advising that the woman should be directed to an appropriate charity in the area. I could only conclude that her pleas for assistance had failed, and that she probably died of hunger.

I was haunted by these letters. They seemed a poignant example of a life caught in a no-man's land between two cultures. Ten years ago and ten years after I read the letters - I began work on a play using them as a starting point.

After years writing the play, and a few more trying unsuccessfully to interest a theatre, I consigned it to my bottom draw, as one project of mine which was never going to reach fruition. Then in February last year I got a call out of the blue from Oliver Driver, asking

whether I was interested in a play reading. Oliver not only resurrected the play, he provided invaluable guidance in developing the script, through the two workshops he organised, and as a script editor. I'm grateful too to Simon Prast and the ATC for taking a punt on an untested script, and having the confidence in it to mount it as a main bill.

It's been a long and oft-interrupted journey, and it seems hard to believe the piece is finally reaching the light of day.

Flo, if you're up there somewhere, this is for you.



The Bellbird is set in Marlborough in the early 1870s. The idea for the play came from three letters Stephen Sinclair discovered while he was translating Maori manuscripts in the National Archives some years ago. The Bellbird, though based on a real life situation, is fictional. The letters gave no information about the woman and her background, beyond the immediate urgency of her situation. The events in her life leading up to the letters, and all the other characters are imaginary.

There is extensive use of Maori throughout the play, however nothing of significance is conveyed in Maori that is not also either expressed in English or communicated non-verbally through the actions of the actors.

Maori Life in the 1870s

Life for Tapairu, Aoraki and their whanau would have revolved around the key areas of land, family and tikanga Maori.

Whenua was sacred and protected, and it provided Maori with shelter and food. The land and its resources were shared among many relatives. Suitable land for cultivation and food gathering would be nearby and whanau would move around to harvest birds, catch fish, or gather seafood.

The day was spent gathering and cooking food, working the land, and taking care of daily tasks. Tribal life revolved around ensuring the

continued well-being of the members of the whanau, hapu and iwi. Maori were also focussed on protecting and defending their whenua.

Maori life was contained within an intricate structure of customary cultural practices and beliefs.

Mana and tapu were the primary forces in Maori life. The roles of men and women were clearly defined, and people of higher rank had extra privileges - as well as extra constraints and tapu. Tapu's many boundaries and constraints regulated what was possible and what was not, and played a key role in maintaining an ordered life.

Maori had very different lives to Pakeha colonists
- Maori had communal meeting, cooking and eating facilities and different food, language and activities.

The rich culture of Maori was reflected through the arts of carving, tattooing, weaving, song, poetry, and oratory.

Pakeha clothes became fashionable, and by 1870 most Maori had adopted Western-style clothing, reserving their traditional clothing for ceremonial use.

For both Maori and Pakeha, life revolved around the many necessary daily tasks that included maintaining farms and animals, gathering food and water, lighting fires, cooking, mending and staying healthy.



New Zealand in the 1870s - the Historical Context

Between the mid 1850s and 1870 the Pakeha population had overtaken the Maori population. In 1870 there were around 47,000 Maori and around 300,000 Pakeha settlers in New Zealand.

Many aspects of Maori life had changed as a result of the arrival of European traders, missionaries and settlers.

Maori had selected aspects of European culture to use in their own lives, including crops, animals, tools, and literacy. Some of the negative European introductions included muskets, alcohol and European diseases.

As a result of the arrival of missionaries - some Maori had also chosen to adopt aspects of Christianity into their way of life. One of the key benefits Maori saw they could gain from missionaries was the ability to read and write, and to learn English, which would help them to trade and to communicate effectively with Pakeha officials.

As Pakeha began to establish New Zealand as colony they attempted to assert their sovereignty over New Zealand through the Treaty of Waitangi.

Disputes over sovereignty and land ownership between Maori and Pakeha led to a series of wars that were at their height in the 1860s. The New Zealand Settlement Act (1863) and The Native Lands Act (1865) saw the confiscation of much Maori land in the North Island, leaving many Maori economically and socially dislocated. It was these law changes that saw Pakeha eventually gain control over the land and the sovereignty it embodied.

Stephen Sinclair



BY ARRANGEMENT WITH PLAYMARKET

bellbird~

By Stephen Sinclair

Flo Danielle Cormack Apí Tearepa Kahi **Mrs Harrington** Flizabeth Hawthorne **Tapairu Bachel House Aoraki** Kayte Ferguson **Elsie** Helen Steemson Te Reotakiwa Dunn Composer Kaiako Waiata Tahau Kaiako Alison Reid Stage Manager Frith Walker Oliver Driver **Director Set Designer** Sean Coyle **Costume Designer** Elizabeth Whiting **Lighting Designer** Jennifer LaL **Props Master** Suzanne Gratkowski Operator Steve Morrison **Set Construction** Third Stage Ltd Costume Elizabeth Whiting Construction Costumes Ltd.

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This is the sixth production of the Volvo 10th Anniversary Season of Decadence. The Bellbird previews on Thursday 6 June 2002.

The Bellbird lasts approximately 2 hours and 25 minutes, including a 15 minute interval.

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THE BELLBIRD WAS DEVELOPED BY ATC 2ECOND UNIT





Danielle Cormack is one of New Zealand's most talented actresses. She received the Best Actress Award at the NZ Film & Television Awards in 1997 for her role in Topless Women Talk About Their Lives, and has been a finalist in the Best Actress category at the Nokia NZ Film Awards in 1999 and 2000. She has also recieved the Best Actress Award at the Fantasporto International Film Festival 2000 in Portugal for her role in Siam Sunset.

Danielle's film credits include lead roles in the films The Price of Milk, Via Satellite, Channelling Baby, Topless Women Talk About Their Lives and Siam Sunset.

Danielle's television credits include roles in Xena: Warrior Princess, Cleopatra 2525, Hercules, Montana Sunday Theatre, and Shortland Street.

Most recently Danielle appeared in Auckland Theatre Company's sellout play, The Vagina Monologues.

She has also performed for Auckland Theatre Company in A Streetcar Named Desire. The Blue Room, Arcadia and The Learner's Stand. Other theatre roles include Trainspotting and a touring season of East (Wellington, Auckland, and Zurich).

Danielle's thoughts on The Bellbird

As with this play, the conflict of prejudice and ignorance versus compassion and understanding continues in many people's lives. My heart and thoughts are with those who suffer still.

Kia Kaha.



NGATI PAOA, WAIKATO

Tearepa is a freelance television director having directed such programmes as Tikitiki (TVNZ), Ahorangi (TVNZ), Tama Tu (TVNZ) and is currently directing the Hawaiki series (MTS).

His acting career began when he joined Jim Moriarty's Theatre Company, Te Rakau Hua o Te Wao Tapu. Since then he has featured in the upcoming television productions of Mataku and Aroha, the feature film The Maori Merchant of Venice and most recently, the short film The

Tearepa's thoughts on The Bellbird

The Bellbird is a play that sits poised on the crest of two cultures.

Two worlds collide, and at their intersection lives love.





Rachel has an extensive list of acting credits to her name, including many theatre and television productions. Her recent work in theatre includes Woman Far Walking, Wit, When Sun and Moon Collide, Serial Killers, Beauty and the Beast, Nga Pou Wahine, Alice in Wonderland, Wajora and World's Wife. She also directed Have Car Will Travel for which she won Director of the Year at the Wellington Theatre Awards. The play will be remounted at the Silo Theatre in June/July.

Among her television work, Rachel has starred in The Life and Times of Te Tutu, Tiger Country, and Mataku.

Her film work includes Crime Story and Whalerider.

Rachel is a graduate of Toi Whakaari, New Zealand Drama School



A graduate of Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School, 2000, Kayte's most recent role was in the television series Spin Doctors. She also appears in Mataku: Kahurangi.

The Bellbird is Kayte's first theatre role and subsequently her first time working for ATC.

Ko Taupiri te maunga

Ko Waikato te awa

Ko Tainui te waka

Ko Waikiri te marae

Ko Waikato taniwha rau, he piko he taniwha. he piko he taniwha, he piko he taniwha



Elizabeth Hawthorna MRS HARRINGTON

Once again Auckland Theatre Company is fortunate to be working with Elizabeth Hawthorne, one of New Zealand's most talented and respected actresses. Elizabeth appeared most recently in Auckland Theatre Company's *The Play About The Baby*.

During her twenty-eight year career, Elizabeth has also worked with Theatre Corporate and the Mercury Theatre.

Elizabeth was named Theatre Actress of the Year for her role as Rosalind in *As You Like It* and received an ONZM in the Queen's Birthday Honours 2001 for services to theatre.

Elizabeth has also appeared in a number of films including Jubilee, The Frighteners, Savage Honeymoon, The Last Tattoo and Alex. For her role in Savage Honeymoon, Elizabeth won the Best Supporting Actress Award at the Nokia Film Awards In 2000.

Elizabeth lists her theatre highlights as her appearances as Rosalind in As You Like It; Masha in Three Sisters; Blanche in A Streetcar Named Desire; and Maria Callas in Masterclass.

Elizabeth's thoughts on The Bellbird

That Stephen came across those three letters and consequently constructed this compelling story of how they may have come to be, is inspired.



At 18, Helen has an impressive list of acting credits. She has appeared in the television series' *Jackson's Wharf* and *Shortland Street*, and in the film *Desperate Remedies* for which she was nominated for Best Junior Entertainer at the New Zealand Film and Television Awards in 1994.

Helen's theatre history includes lead roles in *My Fair Lady, Pinnochio*, and Tessa Duders' *A Warrior Virgin. The Bellbird* is Helen's first play with Auckland Theatre Company.

Helen's thoughts on The Bellbird

This production has been an incredible learning experience for me. Cliched but true. In a perfect world all actors would make their professional debut in a play such as *The Bellbird*.



Auckland Theatre Company's Associate Director, returns to the directors chair after directing the phenomenally successful *The Vagina Monologues* earlier this year.

Oliver has previously directed *The Blue Room* for Auckland Theatre Company, *The Atrocity* for ATC 2econd Unit, *Atrocities* for Iris Productions and *Coriolanus* as part of the Auckland Summer Shakespeare. He is also set to direct *Small God* as part of ATC 2econd Unit's Final Draft, and *Stones in his Pockets* for Auckland Theatre Company. Oliver has also worked as an Assistant Director on Auckland Theatre Company's productions of *Hair*, *The Judas Kiss*, *Wit and All My Sons*.

Oliver is co-producer of ATC 2econd Unit, a new initiative designed to open doors for new artists and audiences, and provide an invaluable training ground for new theatre practitioners. Oliver spent much of 2001 working with New Zealand playwrights developing work for both ATC 2econd Unit and Auckland Theatre Company.



Working on a story of New Zealand is a thrill. the play is our own. Stephen has provided a tale of epic proportions and we have jumped at the chance to tell it, Sean, Elizabeth and Jen are more than designers, they have given input into the play as a whole, they provide as much as the words themselves. The cast you can see and the ones you cannot have been astounding and all have been a part of this production. There have been many voices inside these characters, the play may be brand new but it is also well trodden.

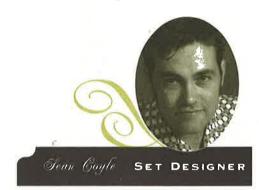
The story has made us look into our past and I am in awe of the people and of the land, I thank Stephen, Waiata and the cast for helping me see it so clearly.

Api and Flo get so close, they deserve to be together to raise a family, be warriors of words, and help create our history, but this is a tragedy and belief is a powerful thing.

Thank you for the rain, your timing has been excellent.

Oliver Driver Director







Sean is a graduate of Toi Whakaari - New Zealand Drama School and has also completed a graduate diploma in Drama from the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne University.

Since graduating, Sean has worked extensively throughout Australia and New Zealand as a theatre designer.

Recent design credits include Ranterstantrum for New Zealand International Festival of the Arts. Have Car Will Travel for Bats Theatre. The Atrocity for ATC 2econd Unit, Closer and Heretic for Circa Theatre, and Nga Pou Wahine New Zealand and Australia Tour.

As well as working as a designer, Sean works as a photographer and tutor.

This is Sean's first time designing for an Auckland Theatre Company mainbill show.

Jennifer's lighting design work has seen her receive the Chapman Tripp Award for Best Lighting Design in 1999, for Mapaki, and in 2001, for Mitch Tawhi Thomas' Have Car Will Travel.

She has just finished designing Ranterstantrum for The International Festival and a season of The Naked Samoans.

This is her first design for Auckland Theatre Company.





Chealeth Whiting Costume Designer

Elizabeth Whiting is one of NZ's best-known costume designers, with over 20 years experience in the industry.

Elizabeth has worked with Opera New Zealand, Auckland Theatre Company, Royal NZ Ballet, Human Garden, Douglas Wright, Auckland Ballet and Black Grace.

Her most recent design work with ATC has been Hair, Secret Bridesmaids' Business. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead. The Blue Room, Into the Woods and Cabaret, She also recently designed for Falstaff for NBR NZ Opera.

Elizabeth's thoughts on The Bellbird

The design process for The Bellbird is best described as evolving. It has been fascinating to see the script evolving through the workshop and rehearsal process, and to have the design process fully integrated into this. I undertook a lot of research in preparation for The Bellbird, finding as many visual references as I could to New Zealand clothing of Maori and Pakeha of the time. All of the design is

based on actual photographs and Joanne Hawke's collection of vintage clothing.

The research into Maori clothing of the period was especially enlightening - many people assume that Maori wore piupiu and so on - this isn't true. In fact, the clothing of the time had quite a modern Pacific style.

The costumes play a strongly symbolic role in the play. The corset and crinoline are indicative of the restriction and restraint of the Pakeha society. As Flo relaxes into her changing lifestyle her clothing strongly reflects this.

The whole process has been challenging, stimulating and exciting for my whole team.

Thanks ATC.



A 2ECOND T C pow



ATC 2econd Unit has been created to act as a resource for the development of theatre in New Zealand. Our main directives include audience building. training arts practitioners and developing New Zealand playwrights and their work.

One of our key initiatives is our Literary Programme which workshopped and developed *The Daylight Atheist* by Tom Scott, to public and critical acclaim - and now The Bellbird by Stephen Sinclair.

Since its playreading in 2001, The Bellbird has gone through three intensive workshops, several redrafts and has had lots of input from actors, theatre makers and kaumatua. The process has been incredible and we thank Stephen for allowing us to help him develop his impressive new work.

ATC 2econd Unit is proud to be able to encourage the development of new local scripts, so that we can continue to be captivated by New Zealand plays - and our own stories.

In 2002, FINAL DRAFT has been established and will become the annual showcase of new New Zealand plays. Each year you will get the opportunity to see these new works before they are produced by theatre companies throughout New Zealand, and around the world.

Two writers that have progressed through the ATC 2econd Unit Literary Programme will have their work developed and performed in the FINAL DRAFT season. Angelo's Song by Denis Edwards and Small God by Jacques Strauss both had successful workshops and playreadings in 2001.

Two exciting new playwrights, two great directors including Dave Letch, who we welcome back from Australia - and an amazing line up of actors: Paolo Rotondo, Stuart Devenie, Geraldine Brophy, David Aston and Marek Sumich. We can't wait to see the results!

FINAL DRAFT Volume One: Angelo's Song and Small God Maidment Studio Theatre July 22 - August 10, 2002

Thank you for supporting new NZ work from playreading to premiere.

Kia ora.

Oliver Driver, Frith Walker and Sarah Peters

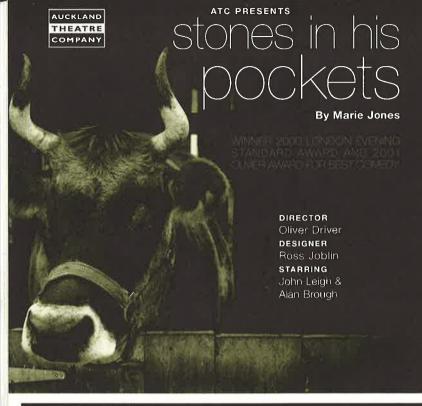
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