

Auckland Theatre Company presents the



season of

# secret bridesmaids' business

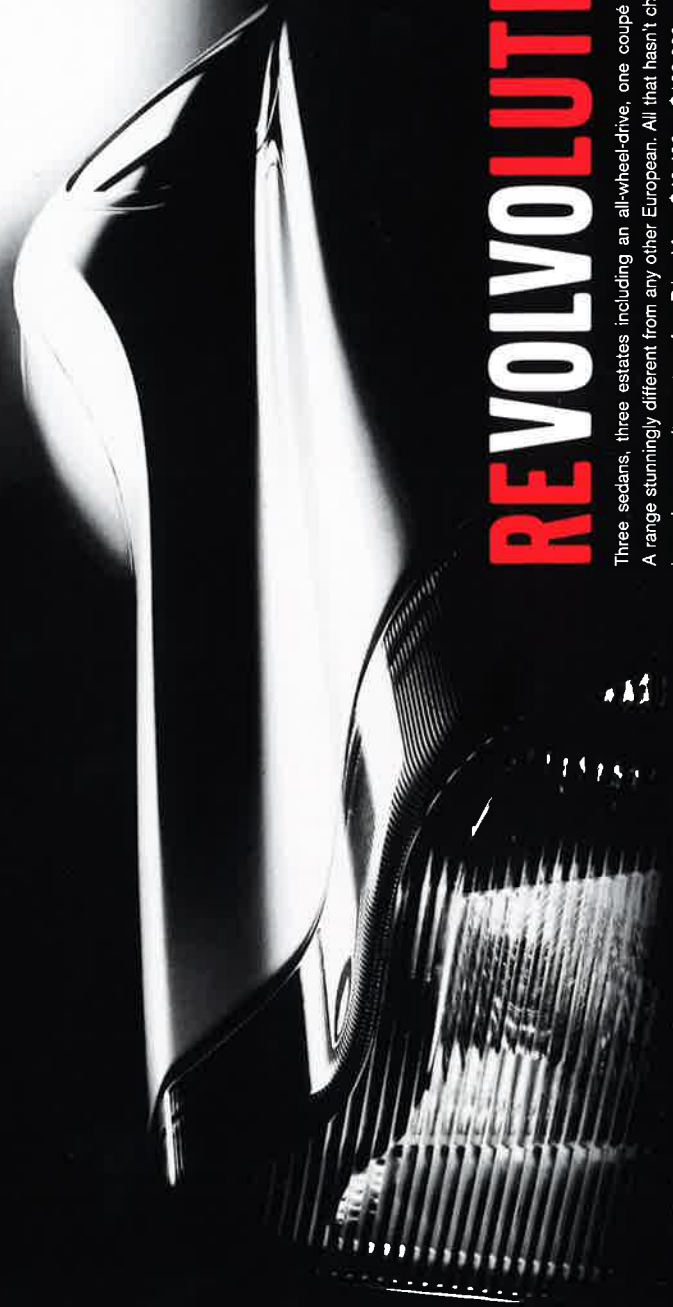
ELIZABETH COLEMAN



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ASB BANK is delighted to join Auckland Theatre Company in presenting this season of SECRET BRIDESMAIDS' BUSINESS.

As a long-standing supporter of the Arts, both nation-wide and in the Auckland community, we continue this proud tradition as a Gold Sponsor of Auckland Theatre Company, who have now truly established themselves as one of the countries leading professional and successful drama companies.

Directed by Ilona Rodgers and written by Australian Elizabeth Coleman, this is a seriously funny play involving a bridal shower, female friendship and the brickbats and bouquets of modern love – a combination sure to lead to hilarity.

ASB BANK is proud to support this wonderful production and we thank Auckland Theatre Company for their ongoing commitment to excellence.

We sincerely hope that you enjoy the performance.

Hugh Burrett  
Chief Operating Officer  
ASB BANK

*"I do"  
said the bride.*



*"I already have"  
thought  
the bridesmaid.*

AUCKLAND  
THEATRE  
COMPANY

ASB BANK IS PROUD TO BRING YOU THIS SEASON OF  
'SECRET BRIDESMAIDS' BUSINESS'.

PROUDLY SPONSORED BY



from the *producer*

WELCOME TO ELIZABETH COLEMAN'S **SECRET BRIDESMAIDS' BUSINESS**, THE FOURTH PRODUCTION OF THE 2001 VOLVO **PLAY WITH FIRE** SEASON.



Every Wedding Ceremony once contained within it a moment of great dramatic tension: "If there is anyone here who knows just cause or impediment why these two persons should not be joined together in Holy Matrimony, let them speak now or forever hold thy peace..." The Minister would then reverentially pause for a response. In that pause, time would stand still. What if you did know of one very BIG impediment? What would you do? Speak now or forever hold your peace?

Australian playwright Elizabeth Coleman explores this surprisingly complex moral dilemma with great wit, warmth and even-handed generosity of spirit. Is 'friendship' best manifested by telling the truth, no matter how brutal? Or does a friend know when to withhold, letting the awful secret reveal itself in its own good time? Perhaps a greater good [and longer relationship] is achieved by the time-honoured tactics of 'constructive omission', 'loving evasion' and 'caring avoidance'? The beauty of the play is that it presents the two-sides of the story, gives both a fair hearing and then lets everyone [with delicious hilarity] suffer the consequences of their actions. Watch that confetti fly!

We congratulate Ilona Rodgers on her debut performance behind the scenes as Director and extend a hearty welcome to Rebecca Hobbs and Katrina Devine both of whom make their ATC debuts with this production. We also congratulate Roz Turnbull for her recent knot tying and wish Katrina Devine every success for her upcoming exchange of nuptials.

As ever, we gratefully acknowledge the ongoing assistance of Creative New Zealand and the Auckland City Council and applaud our Corporate Partners for their vital contribution. ATC also thanks Paul Minifie and his team at the Maidment Theatre for its generous support and hospitality.

For an insight into life on the other side of marriage, be sure to join us for the world première of Roger Hall's brilliant new comedy TAKE A CHANCE ON ME. 2001. Play a part. *play with fire!*

Simon Prast PRODUCER

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L to R: Sara Wiseman, Nicole Whippy, Daniel Gillies

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A WORLD PREMIERE BY ROGER HALL

Having survived separation through death, divorce or desertion, six lonely hearts of a certain age venture out into the 'meet-market'. After many romantic stumbles and fumbles in the dark, they all discover that new, true love can blossom in the most unexpected places.

Roger Hall, author of such comedy classics as GLIDING ON, MARKET FORCES and THE BOOK CLUB, returns with a frisky insight into the risky pursuit of love. Make a date to TAKE A CHANCE ON ME. Who knows whom you might meet!

**STARRING STUART DEVENIE, PETER ELLIOTT, LIDDY HOLLOWAY, GREG JOHNSON, JENNIFER LUDLAM, BRUCE PHILLIPS, FIONA SAMUEL, & RIMA TE WIATA.**



# take a chance on me

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MAIDMENT THEATRE 18 JULY - 18 AUGUST

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TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

# a streetcar named desire

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Run out of town for her sexual escapades, Blanche DuBois seeks refuge from disgrace and destitution with her pregnant sister Stella and brother-in-law Stanley. Masking her past with affectations of gentility, her Southern Belle delusions antagonise the brutish Stanley, heating the cramped New Orleans apartment to boiling point. When Stella departs for maternity hospital he takes his revenge, forever crushing Blanche's fragile world in a shocking confrontation with the truth.

Tennessee Williams' explosive Pulitzer Prize-winning drama pits the romance and graceful beauty of a dying age against the aggressive, unyielding materialism of a new world order. Poetic, sensuous and savage, riding A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE is an unforgettable experience of great theatre.

**STARRING ELIZABETH HAWTHORNE AS BLANCHE DUBOIS & KEVIN SMITH AS STANLEY KOWALSKI WITH DANIELLE CORMACK MICHAEL LAWRENCE & GORETTI CHADWICK**

MAIDMENT THEATRE 29 AUGUST - 29 SEPTEMBER



## *For a long time I've wanted to see a play about female friendship...*

Eventually it occurred to me to write it myself. I chose the backdrop of a big white wedding, as that's the ultimate womanly goal. At least, that's what most of us have been taught. We're fed the dream from the time we're tiny, and it's quite intoxicating. We get to be princess-for-a-day, surrounded by our ladies-in-waiting and watched over by our loyal and loving subjects as we marry our handsome prince. Fine in theory, but life is rarely a fairy tale. Sometimes though, we seem to forget that, and the day becomes more important than the union it's meant to represent. I've seen smart, sensible women get so caught up in the minutiae of their 'one special day' that the groom seems almost incidental. It's as though they're blinded to the fifty years on the other side of the Big Event. Instead of asking themselves: 'Are we truly compatible?' they find themselves obsessing over crooked place cards.

It's always struck me that the enormity of this emotional investment in just one day can compromise all kinds of relationships. In the case of SECRET BRIDESMAIDS' BUSINESS, it puts Lucy and Angela in an invidious position and blinds Meg to some harsh realities in her relationship with her future husband.

In fairy tales, people live happily ever after without having to make any effort. Sadly, real life isn't that simple. Relationships need work and attention, and people behave in ways not expected by others - or by themselves. Fairy tales presume that life is black and white. But life is many shades of grey.

*Elizabeth Coleman*





### *About the Writer*

Elizabeth Coleman is a Melbourne-based writer whose hit comedy, SECRET BRIDESMAIDS' BUSINESS has been a run-away success in Australia since it opened at Playbox Theatre in 1999.

Subsequent productions have included Sydney Theatre Company, Playbox return season 2000, a National Tour by Playbox 2000, La Boite in Brisbane 2001 and Downstage, Wellington 2001. SECRET BRIDESMAIDS' BUSINESS will be touring to Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam in 2001.

Elizabeth's acclaim as a playwright spans thirteen years having previously worked in advertising and as a freelance contributor for THE SUN-HERALD in Sydney.

In 1998, Elizabeth attended the NIDA Playwrights Studio and opened her first play SOMETIMES I WISH I WAS JANA WENDT. IT'S MY PARTY (AND I'LL DIE IF I WANT TO), broke Box Office records, following its premiere at La Mama Theatre early in 1993 as part of Melbourne Comedy Festival, and went on to tour Australia in 1995 and performed in New York City with F. Murray Abraham in the lead role (1999).

Her new work, THIS WAY UP, premieres at Playbox Theatre Centre in Melbourne on November 21, 2001.

Elizabeth has written extensively for television since 1991. Credits include SEA CHANGE, GOOD GUYS BAD GUYS, HEARTBREAK HIGH, POLICE RESCUE and THE FLYING DOCTORS.



### *Maid for the Bride*

The bridesmaids are representatives of the 'guards' who once accompanied the bridal parties in case they should be attacked by enemies wanting to carry off the bride. It is said that the bridesmaid who catches the bridal bouquet can look forward to being married herself within a year, but if any of these attendants should stumble on the way to the altar, unfortunately the saying, 'Always a bridesmaid, never a bride' will apply to them. A matron of honour is said to bring particular luck to a bride as she symbolises the happy state of matrimony.



*From How to Get Married (Without Divorcing Your Family), Carol Keating and Janet Ellis, HarperCollins, London, 1995*

# Going To The Chapel - The Right Way

## The Right Colour

Married in white,  
Your have chosen right

Married in blue,  
Your lover is true

Married in pink,  
Your fortunes will sink

Married in green,  
You will not long be seen

Married in red,  
You'll wish you were dead

Married in yellow,  
Ashamed of the fellow

Married in brown,  
You'll love out of town

Married in grey,  
You'll never live far away

Married in black,  
You'll wish you were back

## The Lucky Day

Monday for health

Tuesday for wealth

Wednesday, the best day of all

Thursday for losses

Friday for crosses

Saturday, no luck at all!

## The Right Accessories

The bride wears 'something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue'.

SOMETHING OLD: looks to the past.

SOMETHING NEW: looks to the future and must be something either newly-made or never worn before, e.g. the bride's dress or underwear.

SOMETHING BORROWED: this is usually from a member of the family and refers to a link with the present. The idea is to borrow something small and perhaps precious, e.g. a prayer book, a veil, a piece of jewellery or a hair decoration. The tradition is said to be only valid if the object is returned after the wedding.

SOMETHING BLUE: blue is the colour of fidelity. The blue referred to for a wedding can either be worn to be seen, e.g. a blue trim on the dress or a flower in the bouquet; or can be worn hidden, e.g. in a garter

*"The pealing of church bells was supposed to drive out evil spirits - a joyful way to drive away the demons and at the same time let everyone know the marriage has taken place."*

## The Right Flowers

Bridal rose = happy love

Garland of roses = reward of virtue

Single rose = simplicity

Red rose bud = pure and lovely

White and red rose = pure and lovely

White rose = I am worthy of you

Deep red rose = bashful shame

Dog rose = pleasure and pain

Carnation = alas for my poor heart

Lily of the valley = return to happiness



## A Recipe For A Bride's Cake

(published at the turn of the century):

1lb of love

2 tbsp sweet argument

1oz of pounded wit

1lb sweet temper

1/2 lb of butter of youth

1 pt rippling laughter

1oz dry humour

1 1/2 wineglasses of common sense

1/2 lb good looks

1 lb self-forgetfulness

Mix the love, looks and sweet temper into a well-furnished house: beat the butter to a cream: mix these ingredients well together with the blunder of faults and self-forgetfulness. Stir the pounded wit and dry humour with the sweet argument, then add to the above. Gently pour in the rippling laughter and common-sense, and mix thoroughly. Bake well forever.

*"From early Egyptians the custom was to place the wedding ring on the third finger of the left hand as it was presumed that a particular nerve, vein or artery ran directly from the third finger of the left hand to the heart."*

*"If a bride wakes up to a chirping bird on her wedding day, this is said to bode well for her marriage. However, the opposite is said of the bride who breaks anything on her wedding day."*

*"It was considered extremely unlucky for the brides to stumble on entering her house for the first time. This is one of the reasons why the groom carries the bride over the threshold. Another old Roman explanation is that she was not to touch the house until she was officially part of it by eating wedding cake at the hearth."*



*Roz Turnbull Meg Bacon*

Roz Turnbull last performed with Auckland Theatre Company as *Cinderella* in the 2000 production of INTO THE WOODS directed by Raymond Hawthorne.

Prior to that she obtained a Bachelor of Musical Theatre at the Western Academy of Performing Arts where she performed in several musicals and operas including GREEK (Berkoff), FOLLIES (Sondheim), THE MAGIC FLUTE and Australian musicals, VILLAIN OF FLOWERS and MIRACLE CITY (Nick Enright). Professional performances include Ben Elton's POPCORN, TRUST and DAMN YANKEES.

Television and film credits include JACKSON'S WHARF, ATOMIC TWISTER and VECTOR FILES.

*Roz on Secret Bridesmaids' Business*

Fantastic opportunity!! It's great to be offered a lead role for ATC. Comedy is such a huge challenge and can be so difficult. And having recently tied the knot myself some of the writing is close to the bone. SECRET BRIDESMAIDS' BUSINESS definitely brings up many issues concerning relationships and commitment and I expect that every audience member will be able to relate in some way to the characters devised by Elizabeth Coleman.



*Rebecca*



*Rebecca Hobbs Lucy Dean*

SECRET BRIDESMAIDS' BUSINESS marks Rebecca's Auckland Theatre Company debut and return to stage for the first time in four years.

Rebecca is best known to local television audiences for her role as nurse *Kate Larsen* on SHORTLAND STREET. Prior to appearing in New Zealand's favourite weeknight drama, she had numerous other television roles including guest parts on the Australian dramas ALL SAINTS, WATER RATS, BIG SKY and MURDER CALL.

Her theatre credits include THE UNSUNG BOY (Bats Theatre), TRUE (Bats Theatre & Downstage), THE LEARNER'S STAND, THREE TALL WOMEN and CHARLEY'S AUNT (Court Theatre) and POOR SUPERMAN (Circa Theatre). Her film credits include the Australian feature SIAM SUNSET and the lead role of *Karen* in THE UGLY by Scott Reynolds.

Rebecca is currently writing for STREET LEGAL and has just finished writing and directing her first short film, TICK.

*Rebecca on Secret Bridesmaids' Business*

It'll be my first time as a bridesmaid and I can't wait! I love a good wedding and this one should be a doozy!





## Rachel Nash Angela Dixon

With over 15 years theatre experience, Rachel has an extensive list of stage credits. Her last Auckland Theatre Company performance was in the 1999 production of FORESKIN'S LAMENT. Other theatre credits include SINBAD THE SAILOR, THE TAMING OF THE SHREW, THE SEX FIEND and PACK OF GIRLS.

Rachel has appeared in SHORTLAND STREET and will be making a guest appearance in the second series of popular local drama STREET LEGAL. She also has a background in Theatre in Education and Children's Theatre and has run numerous drama classes and workshops.

### Rachel on *Secret Bridesmaids' Business*

I'm really looking forward to being a Matron of Honour (makes me sound very old, wise and noble!) and playing with posh frocks, lippy, nail polish, champagne and other delightfully girly wedding things!



Auckland Theatre Company presents the season of



# secret bridesmaids' business

ELIZABETH COLEMAN



## AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY

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| Colleen Bacon       | Donna Akersten     | Business Manager        | Susanne Ritzenhoff |
| Angela Dixon        | Rachel Nash        | Production Manager      | Ross Joblin        |
| Lucy Dean           | Rebecca Hobbs      | Marketing Manager       | Helen Bartle       |
| Naomi Bartlett      | Katrina Devine     | Patron Services Manager | Leal Butler        |
| James Davis         | Simon Roborgh      | Associate Director      | Oliver Driver      |
| Maid                | Calandra Smtih     | Patronage Development   | Shelley Geenty     |
| Director            | Ilona Rodgers      | Artistic Co-ordinator   | Danielle Butler    |
| Designer            | Ross Joblin        | Stage Manager           | Frith Walker       |
| Lighting Designer   | Vera Thomas        | Technical Manager       | T.O. Robertson     |
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This is the fourth production of the Volvo 2001 Season *play with fire*. SECRET BRIDESMAIDS' BUSINESS opened at The Maidment Theatre on Friday 1 June, 2001.

SECRET BRIDESMAIDS' BUSINESS lasts for approximately 2 hours with an interval of 15 minutes.

**PLEASE REMEMBER TO SWITCH OFF ALL CELLPHONES, PAGERS & WATCH ALARMS**

Originally produced by Playbox Theatre Company, Melbourne, Australia.

## AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY

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## *Donna Akersten Colleen Bacon*

Acclaimed actress, Donna Akersten has a theatre career which spans nearly 30 years. Theatre highlights include INSIGNIFICANCE, ENTERTAINING MR SLOANE, THE SISTERS ROZENSWEIG, ANGELS IN AMERICA (Circa Theatre), THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST, THE CHERRY ORCHARD, CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF (Downstage Theatre) THREE SISTERS (Court Theatre), and ASHES (Centrepont).

She has appeared on television extensively in both New Zealand and Australia, including roles in JACKSON'S WHARF, SHORTLAND STREET, COUNTRY GP, BREAD AND ROSES, TALK OF A RUNNING MAN, CERTAIN WOMEN and HOMICIDE.

Her film credits include VIA SATELLITE, BAD BLOOD, SLEEPING DOGS, MIDDLE AGED SPREAD and took her to Berlin for TE RUA.

Donna's last Auckland Theatre Company appearance was her award-winning role as *Deborah* in THE BOOK CLUB, previously appearing for ATC in the sell-out production of HONOUR.



## *Katrina Devine Naomi Bartlett*

Katrina Devine first appeared on our television screens in SHORTLAND STREET at the tender age of 13. For 7 years she played the role of *Minnie Crozier*, a part which won her a nomination for Best Supporting Actress at the 1998 TV Guide Television Awards. Since leaving SHORTLAND STREET at the end of last year, Devine has played guest roles in XENA and an American feature film, ATOMIC TWISTER.

This is Katrina's debut for Auckland Theatre Company.

### *Katrina on Secret Bridesmaids' Business*

After 7 years of being on the small screen this will be my first time stepping on stage so I'm feeling a bit nervous.

But I'm working with a very talented cast and directing me is the amazingly fantastic Ilona Rodgers so I'm in safe hands. This play is incredibly funny, witty and just really well written. I'm very excited to be a part of it.





*Simon Roborgh*  
*James Davis*

Simon has appeared on stage at a number of New Zealand's top theatres including Bats, Downstage and The Court Theatre. SECRET BRIDESMAIDS' BUSINESS marks his fourth appearance for Auckland Theatre Company having previously appeared in INTO THE WOODS and CABARET, directed by Raymond Hawthorne and WIT, directed by Simon Prast. His television roles include SHORTLAND STREET, DUGGAN and the American series JACK OF ALL TRADES. In 1998 Simon was a finalist in SHOWCASE.

*Simon on Secret Bridesmaids' Business*

So many of the characters' actions in this play are really so tragic and at the same time are tragically so real. It's a relief to get stuck into rehearsals and discover that the role of James is so much more than that of a misogynist punching bag...I hope.



*Calandra Smith*  
*Maid*

Calandra Smith was born and raised in Hong Kong where she first became interested in the theatre. In Hong Kong she was involved in the Fringe Festival, performing an original piece titled ARTICLE 12, she also played the part of Grusha in Brecht's CAUCASIAN CHALK CIRCLE for the Breakaleg Company. Since coming to New Zealand she has been involved in The National Sheila Winn Shakespeare Festival playing Lady Macbeth and Queen Margaret. She played the part of Exeter in Auckland University Outdoor Summer Shakespeare's HENRY V, and the part of Antigone in Antipasto Theatre at Auckland University. She is currently studying at Auckland University and training in The Meisner Technique.

*Ilona Rodgers*  
*Director*

Award-winning actress, teacher and director, Ilona Rodgers trained at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School and has worked extensively in theatre, film and television in the UK, Australia and New Zealand over the past 30 years.



*Directors Note*

*"Life is rarely a fairytale. Sometimes though, we seem to forget that, and the day becomes more important than the union it's meant to represent."*

Elizabeth Coleman has written a beautifully constructed comedy. The rhythm of the lines

is so felicitous that words trip off the tongue and the stresses naturally fall into the right place.

In SECRET BRIDESMAIDS' BUSINESS the situation is a conundrum. Each character has a clear position. Who is right? What will the bride do about it?

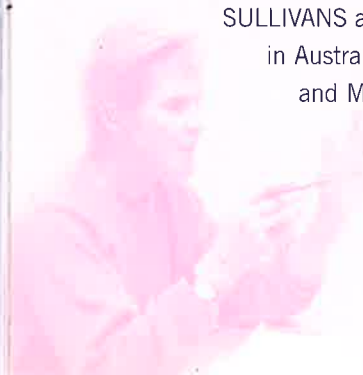
It's very exciting for me to work with 'the team' at ATC as a Director. Thank you Simon Prast for the opportunity.

Ross Joblin and Liz Whiting thank you for taking my vision and adding your ideas to it so that we have created a 'world' where the actors live. Fritha, Stage Manager extraordinaire, Vera bringing your lighting magic to this romantic setting and T.O. adding great sound effects, thank you.

It is a privilege to work with this team of actors: Donna, Roz, Rachel, Simon, who have already worked with ATC. A warm welcome to Rebecca and Katrina. Each day of rehearsals we got closer to the music of the script and it was very rewarding. *Ilona Rodgers*

SECRET BRIDESMAIDS' BUSINESS marks Ilona's directorial debut for Auckland Theatre Company.

Having completed the television directing course at South Pacific Pictures, Ilona directed SWEET REVENGE for The Performing Arts School and worked alongside Simon Prast as Assistant Director for ART. Her acting credits for Auckland Theatre Company are BY DEGREES, THREE TALL WOMEN, ALL MY SONS, AMY'S VIEW and most recently she appeared as *Dr Vivian Bearing* in WIT by Margaret Edson. Her television credits include the cult classics DR WHO, THE BEVERLY HILLBILLIES and THE AVENGERS as well as THE SULLIVANS and PRISONER in Australia and GLOSS and MARLIN BAY in New Zealand.





*Elizabeth Whiting*  
Costume Designer

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

"People often do not notice costumes at a conscious level. Instead costumes create a subconscious perception of the characters' personality, status, hopes, dreams and aspirations. My aim as Costume Designer for SECRET BRIDESMAIDS' BUSINESS is to provide a platform supporting the actor's interpretation of their character. This platform is a heightened version."

Elizabeth Whiting has worked with Theatre Corporate, Mercury Theatre, Auckland Theatre Company, Royal NZ Ballet, Human Garden, Douglas Wright, Auckland Ballet and others.

Her most recent design work with ATC has been CABARET, INTO THE WOODS, THE BLUE ROOM and ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD. Future work includes HAIR (ATC) and FALSTAFF (NZ Opera).



*Ross Joblin*  
Designer

Ross has worked in a variety of positions for Centrepoint, Fortune, Court, Downstage, Circa and Taki Rua Theatres and for Canterbury Opera, The International Festival of Arts and in London's West End.

This is his third ATC design, following production designs for THE GOD BOY and THE BLUE ROOM.

Out of the blue and in the pink, designing SECRET BRIDESMAIDS' BUSINESS has brought out my feminine side.

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SILVER

**TIME**

BRONZE

**BAYCORP**

**IBDO** 500 SPACES

**Canon**

CRYSTAL

**Pittoria**  
Coffee

AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY RECEIVES MAJOR FUNDING FROM CREATIVE NZ AND AUCKLAND CITY

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*acknowledgements*

**John McDermott** Production photography

**Helen Bartle** Rehearsal photography

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**Trish Gribben and the Friends of ATC**

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**Estee Lauder**

**Clinique**

**Frank Casey Suit Hire**

**Lesley Pearce** for the muffins

**MANAGEMENT THEATRE**

**Director** Paul Minifie

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**Box Office Manager** Blair Cooper

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**Front of House Manager** Justin Hardingham

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**DOES NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS, OPINIONS AND MORALS HELD BY ATC.**

**OPENS ON FRIDAY 13 JULY. BOOK AT TICKETEK: 09 307 5000.**



SIMON PRAST  
 MATTHEW BROWN  
 JOHN VERRY  
 ELIZABETH WHITING  
 BRYAN CALDWELL

# hair

**ONE SMALL STEP FOR MAN.  
 ONE GIANT LEAP FOR FLOWER POWER**

**MUSIC BY GALT MacDERMOT  
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 ORIGINALLY PRODUCED ON THE NEW YORK STAGE BY MICHAEL BUTLER**

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**AUCKLAND CITY**



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