

Points of Difference, Signs of Change

Winter has come at last, bringing with it film festivals, the budget, and the passing of the anti-smacking bill.

During the balmy autumn, we experienced a very special coming together at the Magdalena Aotearoa National Gathering; there was a great sense of coming back from a fragmented place of grief, a moving on, regrouping, and rediscovering the strength and energy that we share as a network. The structure of the event enabled everyone to contribute from their own place and to find what they needed. A second Gathering is planned for Easter 2008, and from there we may begin to organise an international festival. Reports and photos from the Gathering are on pages 3-5, and we look forward to the further development of the many interesting works-in-progress.

In August, the Magdalena Aotearoa Trust will have existed for ten years, and we will celebrate this remarkable achievement at our AGM on 10 July. This will be a small and informal affair, to which you are all warmly invited.

We were delighted to see France Herve's film *Hades' Window* at Happy in June. This was filmed in Wellington in 2003 and inspired by collaborative work done by many people with Sally Rodwell following Alan Brunton's death. Also recently screened was *Sign of the Times*, celebrating the April 2006 declaration of New Zealand Sign Language as an official language of this country - the culmination of a twenty-year battle by the deaf community. Another proactive community initiative is the relaunch of the Intersex Trust Aotearoa by its original founder, intersex activist Mani Bruce.

Magdalena trustee Madeline McNamara has been a key mover in Acting Up, a new trust to provide drama and music training for people with intellectual impairment. Classes are being taught in Wellington and Lower Hutt. Madeline also participated, with trustee Dale Ferris and other Magdalena members, in *Sweet As*, a conference organised by young Chinese women for ethnic and pakeha New Zealanders to talk about identity and dominance in a colonised land (see page 7).

We are all excitedly awaiting the the imminent birth of trustee Jessica Sutherland and her husband Rhys Latton's first child; and we congratulate their company, Ake Ake, on the success of *Ship Song*, a magical physical theatre

performance enjoyed by hundreds of children at Capital E in March.

Trustee Helen Varley Jamieson has temporarily returned from her student exile in Queensland (where she is researching cyberformance) to launch the second version of the software UpStage (see page 9).

Around the world of Magdalena, there has been the fifth Transit festival in January (read Helen's report on page 11) and *Piezas Conectadas* in Barcelona in March. We congratulate Jadranka Andjelic and Dijana Milosevic on receiving the prestigious Otto Rene Castillo Awards for Political Theatre, for their work with Dah Theatre in Belgrade.



Nancy Fulford as Gertrude in Hamlet, directed by Lilicherie McGregor. Report on pages 8-9.

A significant event took place at the European Parliament in Brussels on 6 June, when members of the European Parliament performed as refugees in *Rifugia Ti*, conceived and directed by Annet Henneman of Teatro di Nascosto. The project aims to give politicians and audience direct, unmitigated contact with the real experiences of refugees. In November, politicians and human rights specialists will gather in Volterra, Italy, to draft proposals for common European directives on the fate of refugees.

Coming up in January is the second Magdalena Sin Fronteras Festival in Cuba (see page 10) and plans are afoot for an event in Australia in 2009. If you'd like to receive regular updates about the many interesting activities of members of the international Magdalena network, make sure you are on the Magdalena Project email list. This is separate from the Magdalena Aotearoa list - email webqueen@themagdalena-project.org to subscribe (the webqueen happens to be our own Helen Varley Jamieson wearing a different tiara).

And check the web site: www.themagdalena-project.org

Don't forget the Creative New Zealand deadline coming up at the end of July, and our AGM on July 10th at the Newtown Hall (corner Constable and Daniel Sts). For those of you looking for some reading material for the long winter nights, we recommend Anne Bogart's *And Then, You Act: making art in an unpredictable world*; Anna Deavere Smith's *Letters to a Young Artist*; and *Languages of Theatre Shaped by Women*, edited by Jane de Gay and Lizbeth Goodman.

Madeline McNamara & Helen Varley Jamieson

The first half of 2007 focused on the National Gathering, ably coordinated by trustees Helen Varley Jamieson and Jessica Sutherland, and the inimitable Emma Carter.

A salary grant from the Wellington City Council was much appreciated, and we managed to secure grants for travel, tutors fees and technical equipment from the Lion Foundation, Pub Charities and Trust House. CLANZ also contributed by supporting the development of *Does This Make Sense To You*. The Trust gratefully acknowledges the support of these organisations.

A huge thank you also goes to our favourite coffee suppliers, People's Coffee. Thanks to them we had a constant supply of fresh real coffee throughout the Gathering, to keep ourselves awake and alert during a pretty intense weekend.

As you will read in the pages of this newsletter, the Gathering was a huge success and plans are already underway for a similar event next year. We managed to break even, thanks to the generosity of funders, companies and individual donors, and due to the ingenuity of

everyone involved in keeping costs to an absolute minimum. We hope that next year we can secure more funding in advance to make the planning easier.

A big kia ora goes to Moira Aberdeen, queen of the kitchen, who conjured up delicious lunches and snacks including homemade shortbread, all on a very tight budget and at short notice. She did a fantastic job, and was assisted by the Gathering participants who took turns to assist with preparations and cleaning up.

We also farewell Moira from the Trust, and from her position as guardian of the database, with thanks for her work over the last two years.

Lisa Maule continues to juggle receipts and chequebooks, with our wonderful singing accountant Julie Lamb ensuring that all the fiscal deadlines are met.

Next on the horizon is the AGM, to be held on Tuesday 10 July, with a quiet celebration of the tenth birthday of the Magdalena Aotearoa Trust.

Incredible! We hope you will join us.
Helen Varley Jamieson

MAGDALENA AOTEAROA TRUST

2007 AGM

6pm, Tuesday 10th July
Newtown Hall
(cnr Constable & Daniel Sts,
Newtown, Wellington)
ALL WELCOME

Bring a plate and a drink to help us celebrate 10 years of Magdalena Aotearoa after the meeting.

The Magdalena Aotearoa Trust is a charitable trust that aims to encourage and promote the work of women in the performing arts.

Co-founders

Madeline McNamara & Sally Rodwell

Trustees

Lisa Maule, Madeline McNamara, Dale Ferris, Helen Varley Jamieson, Jessica Sutherland and Lilicherie McGregor.

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Newsletter contributions are welcome, but may be edited. Contributions can be emailed to magdalen@actrix.co.nz as an attachment or in the body of an email.

The deadline for the next issue is 31 August 2007

IMPORTANT: CHANGE TO NEWSLETTER DONATIONS

As from this issue of the Magdalena Aotearoa Newsletter, we are moving to a formalised newsletter subscription process. Subscriptions will now be due annually in April. The new amounts are:

- \$20 unwaged
- \$30 waged
- \$40 organisations / international subscribers

If you have paid a newsletter donation this year, you don't need to do anything until April 2008.

If you haven't paid anything this year, your subscription is NOW DUE, at the above prices.

We hope you will agree that this is very good value for the newsletter which comes out three times a year packed with news and information. We can't produce it without your subscription.

Women theatre practitioners gathered at the Newtown Community Centre in Wellington over Easter 2007, for 5 days of focussed work and exchange. Constructive feedback and long-term planning for development were the themes for the event, as well as networking, exchange and building a stronger community. Overall, the event was a huge success, with very positive feedback from participants, and an enthusiasm from all present to hold a similar event next year. Lilicherie McGregor reports:

Easter 5-10 April 2007 - Five days of inspiration, of meeting with colleagues, around our work. To see, feed back, and discuss our work in theatre, with others who are as obsessive as ourselves. Seven works in progress were presented including, solos, devised works, new scripts and adaptations. Each opened a view to another world surprising us with the wide scope of material.

The Magdalena Gathering was predominantly but not exclusively women, and the men who attended contributed in all areas. The tea breaks offered chances to network and plan possible future works. It was especially exciting to have so many women from Auckland contributing, who were openly inspired by The Gathering and what it can offer to women in theatre and performance nationwide.

The participants spanned all ages, from their teens to their seventies. Across generations, it was a sharing of knowledge, where the experienced fed back from their life of performance to the new generations entering the profession. Many thanks to the hard core organisers, The Duchess (Helen Varley Jamieson) and Miss C (Emma Carter), who had the vision and endurance to create this space where the cross fertilisation of knowledge was possible. For me the most touching moment was to see a small group of young women sitting in a circle around Rose Beauchamp



Left: Helen Varley Jamieson introduces the first panel of speakers: from left, Kilda Northcott, Lyne Pringle, Jo Randerson and Helen Moulder. They spoke about their own experiences of requesting and receiving feedback on work in progress, and how this had assisted in the development of their work.

who was telling them about being a witness to the founding of Red Mole in 1974, and all the other theatre groups that have come and gone; and about her experience as puppeteer and musician. The circle gathered around her was intent on learning more of their common history from the horse's mouth, from one of our "living treasures".

The Gathering was part of Magdalena Aotearoa's long-term aim to foster an environment for the development of performances over time. Time to delve deeper, with longer rehearsal periods, pushing the boundaries, to work towards excellence in creating work of an international standard. This is an about-turn from the commercial production of theatre that has three or four weeks' rehearsal, a season, and is gone. But, working in isolation (as most of us do) this long term work is lonely and one can get lost in 'navel gazing'. The Gathering was an opportunity to show the work where

it is at and gather feedback from the outside eye of the audience – an informed audience.

To foster participants' ability to give constructive feedback, the first panel discussion was entitled

Giving and Receiving Constructive Criticism. The panel consisted of Helen Moulder (*Playing Miss Haversham* – currently on a nationwide tour), Lyne Pringle and Kilda Northcott (*Fishnet* – performed to acclaim nationally) and Jo Randerson (inveterate international traveller and performer). The panellists presented their experiences of seeking feedback on their work, identifying what they looked and asked for in feedback, and what they did with it when they received it.

The Sunday morning voice and songwriting workshop led by Mahinaarangi Tocker was a sell-out success. She had won us over the previous night with her performance at Happy. Mahinaarangi is generous and open, with an infectious humour, which makes her an excellent teacher for voice – the exploration of which can be a challenging and terrifying experience. Mahinaarangi's workshop engendered confidence

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Above: at the final concert, trustees Lisa Maule (right) and Helen Varley Jamieson (centre) brought Kitchen Queen Moira Aberdeen to account (for a bottle of whisky), while MCs Jo Randerson and Madeline McNamara stood by looking glamorous.

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and was joyous. The overall consensus was that one workshop was not long enough and there was a call for her to run a longer voice workshop next year.

"I loved Mahinaarangi's stories and thinking through how music has fitted into and shaped my life."

The Newtown Community Centre was an excellent venue for The Gathering with a beautiful wooden floor in the theatre space, a large room for seminars and lunches, smaller rooms for the display and sale of books, etc and a user-friendly kitchen. For dinners, local restaurants offered affordable group meals and we enjoyed a great variety of international cuisine. Many of the participants live in Wellington, but for those who travelled to attend, billets were found so that their accommodation costs were kept to a minimum. It was agreed Easter was a suitable time for people to attend such a gathering, and proposed that such an event be run in 2008.

"I enjoyed the calm efficiency of the weekend. I liked the fact that it was a small group that you could get to know and speak with, developing relationships and projects for future considerations."

So, circle your diary and plan to attend the 2008 National Gathering. With more new works and presentations of completed performances from this year - the planning has already begun for 2008. Come and join us. Magdalena Aotearoa is an open association to support women in theatre and performance in all their various roles. What

Magdalena is, is the input from each and every one of us.

Lilicherie McGregor
Magdalena Aotearoa Trustee

Keeping on keeping on: Kitchen Drawers

So much happens when one decides to do something about an idea that has been playing around in one's head for a long time. And what bliss to have a reason to work on it, and the opportunity to perform it.

Sadly, due to getting over-excited and not looking where I was going after the show, I was not able to attend all of the gathering - but what I did see and take part in gave me the assurance that the Magdalena Network is alive and well in all its diversity. The fresh and varied perspectives of a theatre community that is stropky, knowledgeable, sure of itself, keen to create exciting work, talking, listening and sparking off each other. Plus old friends to share the experience with. This is heaven.

My aim was to make a meaningful narrative about my mother from the contents of her *Kitchen Drawers*, while baking a cake. As I'm a domestic person who loves to play piano,



talk, sing and laugh, this was a fun project to prepare. But shaping it into theatre - another big step! And The Gathering was just so important as I clearly saw the areas of strength, and the weaknesses, in the presentation. The feedback given by both the participants in the audience, and the facilitators of discussion - especially Madeline and Lilicherie - clarified ways to rethink and extend the material out of my comfort zone. This is exactly the challenge I needed. I am looking forward to the next stage with this work as it merges with the piece about my grandmother and great grandmother called *The Voyage*. And as well the other possibilities opening up of a festival, direction, new workmates - this is all inspiring. There is a community here and thus our theatre-making has a context. Thanks to everyone who contributed. It was a great Easter.

Rose Beauchamp
Wellington



Louise Tu'u from
Auckland and
Wellington story-
teller Tony Hopkins
at the closing night
party



“...a complex, generous and powerful process ...”

When we got to the end of talking about our last work in progress, I wanted to go back to that moment just before Rose performed - first up, bless her! - and bring with me everything I'd gathered and do it all again. To take part with my new understanding in a truly engaged way, holding the performer's request to observe within my experiencing of the piece and not letting that construct set me aside from it.

Have you ever been part of a “sentence at a time” story - where each person adds a piece to a joint tale? It's so easy to start creating what you'll say as the first few get the scene set, but if you haven't been really listening when it gets to your turn, your cleverly crafted sentence adds nothing to the shared narrative. You have to commit to being a part of an uncharted story from the start, and it gathers its own power and direction from the offers of you each and you all.

To our first sharing circle, I'd committed to being part of developing, framing and acting on what we, this gathering, meant by working with works in progress and how we'd go about it. This was my performance offer.

I found myself caught up and delighting in the Gathering, what a complex, generous and powerful process. I honour how everyone brought so much of themselves into our collective creation. It was hard, there was uncertainty and some spiky moments. We talked things through and we tried things out, we nourished a



Above: Janet Dunn and Helen Moulder enjoy the Snowball Waltz that concluded the final concert. Below: the discussion following Helen Moran's presentation of *The Bonekeeper*.



joint understanding about our separate and collective roles in responding to works in progress. It bounded and bounced a bit but generally flourished in practice.

Madeline reminded us of the importance of generating and working with an identifiable framework, bringing us back to some core ideas like not giving advice as such (unless asked). Not saying: “Here's how I'd do it”. We watchers weren't there to fix anything. We were there to add to, not to re-define or diminish. And she urged performers to consider listening wholly without necessarily framing responses then and there.

I learned not to commentate in my head on the way through a performance, to experience it fully and bring my thoughts and feelings together once I'd seen the whole. And then to find a way to voice these. I understand that this process was for this time, for those of us sharing this journey. It gave me a valuable vocabulary and working understanding of what might be possible in other sharing spaces.

It was a time of enrichment for me. I specially treasure our “girls in the gutter” chats in a patch of pavement sunshine. A discussion about guttersnipes and outcasts is fuelling a story I am creating to tell ...

Judith Jones
Wellington

“... varied and rich ...”

Fabulously conceived, delivered, facilitated ... a coming together of new and old friends, all of us immeasurably enriched by the wisdom and experience and generosity of fellow Magdalenas ... Brilliant and practical morning sessions with panelists who shared the nuts and bolts of experience, lush meals and conversations, and then the presentations and responses – varied and rich.

I feel incredibly privileged to have been one of the presenting artists at this Gathering. *The Bone Keeper* lurks in a tip now – with seagulls and her dog for company, unwillingly paying the price she must pay for being an old Listener to the winds and the sand. The Gathering breathed wilder life into her, so many possibilities voiced, shared, and thrown into the mix of the ideas that gave her being, and that will follow her on the journey to find her theatrical form.

Thank you. Other strands of my life push her into a corner for a couple of months, but she sings there, digging in the dirt, listening, becoming ...

Helen Moran
Christchurch



Jean Hyland shows her complex process.

"I found some [feedback] absolutely enlightening. Working on my own, there are blinkers that restrict one and these began to fall away without losing the essence of what one believed."

The Magdalena Gathering was all about community. I felt connected with each person, event, presentation, workshop and food. The Gathering provided time and space for a like-minded group of people who were supportive of each other. I presented a reading of my one-act play, *Winter*, read by actors Melissa Billington and Todd Rippon, and received wonderful feedback. It was a wonderful opportunity to present a work in progress at a crucial point in the creating of this theatre work.

The most fun I had was the final night of celebration. I performed the song, *I Was Hoping for a Woman*, written especially for Helen Varley Jamieson. Helen's hard work and dedication for the support of women's theatre was precise and vital to the success of the gathering.

My favorite pic: being kissed on stage by Madeline McNamara with Jo Randerson enviously looking on from the background (below).

Diane Spodarek



"It went far beyond my expectations as every one's generosity and contributions were enormous, whether in performance, in feedback or over meals. Not academic, more subversive."

Wild Cities

When I say wild cities it's not Ridley Scott,
or fighting my way through Times Square
or Harlem
or hammering down Oxford Street
or ducking soccer fans on Barcelona's Ramblas
or even queueing at Quinze Nitz, although it is all that...

Not Alan Brunton's wild eastern European cities, although it is his way

Its more to do with feet, my feet and how they rise and fall, heel and toe in front of heel and toe, just now on the Cambodian border where landmines claim 1000 toes a month, more to do with pathways, cobbled highstreets on a Lewes hill or wellworn sweltering soy, the lanes of Siriraj – and how these feet now choose to step

It all began a while ago, like this.

Ordinary girl from Tauranga, RD4, seeks intelligent journey alone
her little, bare five year old feet on frost or tangled round the chord of
the "hello operator working?" party line that later morphed itself into red plastic dial-tone phone in a suburb called Bellevue. Her father runs athletics at the club and she runs for her life but only ever third. It's a land full of sex offenders and her feet split from running so fast and then she hears Nancy Sinatra sing "These Boots are Made for Walkin'" and she takes her itchy feet and kicks on; how she kicks on to foot in front of foot and even though her mother says she can't afford ballet lessons and her thighs are too big she thinks "well they'll have to do" and strides off to the wild cities to Camden and to Chelsea and The Bowery and Beijing, finds Churchill, then Fassbinder, then Kane, develops a fondness for a good mountain climb, the stairs at the Empire State Building, the Great Wall and she plants her feet on the escalators and descends into the subway underworlds like Persephone and then she stalks right on up onto the stages of New York and bad old Bangkok, a precocious poet an unlikely dancer on a strange stage
where men dangle upside down in aerial circus harnesses
tattoo their lovers into cocktail glasses on their arms
and say "go hard"

then she learns thai classical and dances slow soled in the Temple by the orchid pool.

Soon there are wrinkled feet and curving toes beside her and she holds forth her heart in hand to the women of Khmer.

They reposition her feet and smile
right beside all this

someone's uncle runs the Bangkok CIA

and there's black cars and midnight clubs and feet beating time

and if it's not Ridley Scott it's John Malkovich or "don't walk that way, they murdered a doctor down the soy last week" and she's remembering home where there's salvation in poems and long walks on beaches, Ann Kennedy, Murray Edmond and his Fool Moon
she's thinking of a chat with Mohi, traipsing down to Parihaka where it's quiet

and scudding her toes along Karekare in the wind and feeling safe or unsafe from the Wild Cities which were always there in her feet like a memory reclaimed and once you've danced in the wild cities

you can never give back your wings

once you've danced in the wild cities

your feet will fly.

*Jane Griffin
August 2004*

Acting Up

Madeline McNamara is the coordinator of a recently formed charitable trust, Acting Up.

The original Acting Up Theatre Company was instigated by Amy "special star" Szostak, and run by a group of dedicated Lower Hutt women from 1994 until early 2000. In 2005 Amy approached Bronwyn Bent at Arts Access to help get Acting Up on the road again. Bronwyn put out the word and Madeline and musician Andreas Lepper responded.

With Bronwyn's assistance, a new Trust was formed. A key aim is to provide opportunities for people with disabilities to improve their wellbeing and realise their potential through creative expression. For the past 8 months, performance and music training sessions have been offered by Madeline and Andreas (recently assisted by mask and dance artist Noel Meek). These sessions have taken place weekly in Wellington and fortnightly in Lower Hutt, and have been attended by up to 40 participants with intellectual impairments.

Two demonstrations for family and friends have been held, and the group is devising a work to present to the public next year.

New Vision For Dunedin Fringe

The Dunedin Fringe Festival is to be brought forward six months, and become an annual event from 2008.

This will align the Dunedin Fringe Festival with the Wellington and Adelaide Fringes, and expand tertiary and secondary student involvement.

Other changes include moving the Fringe Hub to the Museum Reserve, an experimental Artist Lab for emerging artists, a Comedy Zone and a Fringe Club for mingling.

The next Dunedin Fringe will be from 29 March to 13 April 2008. Registrations open in November. Dunedin Fringe Festival
www.dunedinfringe.org.nz
phone: +64 3 4773350
email: info@dunedinfringe.org.nz
mail: PO Box 1331 Dunedin NZ

Call For Submissions

To mark the 10th birthday of Magdalena Aotearoa I am calling for submissions for a publication of women's writing about their performance work. The aim is to encourage women in Aotearoa NZ to write about their work.

The publication will be modelled on the Open Page, an international journal of women's theatre writing. "The Open Page was founded in the belief that there needed to be a more substantial space for women theatre practitioners to report on their work and express their thoughts, feelings and analysis of theatre, as a means of building their own memory and a critical perspective within theatre history. As the journal has grown so too has the necessity to document and historicise women's work in theatre: we have to leave behind traces of our work for ourselves and for future generations" [OpenPage 11].

Women's work in theatre has been poorly documented or neglected. I was recently asked to give a lecture at Victoria University of Wellington on 'Women in NZ Theatre'. How could I research this topic? I asked at the library for a book on NZ actresses. No such book exists. To begin to redress this situation, I call for submissions from women, to write about the 'Process' of making their work.

Theme: PROCESS

To write about the process – step by step – of creating a performance. The journey through space and time in: creating, writing, putting music to, adding text, inspiration, mistakes, repetition, humour, obsession, dedication, passion, performance.

Due Date: 16 October 2007

Send to: theatrekore@hotmail.com

Lilicherie McGregor
Magdalena Aotearoa Trustee

Sweet As ...

'Sweet As?': *Ethnic and Pakeha New Zealanders talk identity and dominance in a colonised land* was a conference held in Wellington on June 9-10. The organising group comprised two NZ-born Chinese and two Pakeha, led by Hannah Ho Wai ling, a young NZ-born Chinese woman involved in grassroots activism around decolonisation, anti-racism, queer, feminist and environmental issues. It was an extremely well organised and well attended gathering with brilliant speakers on topics including identity and its politics, whiteness and white

dominance, and discussions on such contentious concepts as ethnicity, multi-culturalism, bi-culturalism, and 'indigenous Pakeha'. Maori, Chinese, Indian, Greek/Cypriot, Turkish, Pacific and Pakeha voices all contributed to the richness of the conversation. The hospitality was warm and heartfelt, the food delicious and healthy, and there was even a good old fashioned lucky dip barrel. Transcripts of all the speeches will appear on the blog site shortly. Also on that site are some very interesting discussions that happened prior to the conference. Check out <http://sweetasconference.blogspot.com/>

Madeline McNamara

Guest Story-tellers wanted

Wellington Storytellers Café is looking for guest performers.

The café is open to all storytellers and story lovers with stories aimed at an adult audience. As well as a guest performance there's usually an opportunity for other tellers to share short stories.

Wellington Storytellers Café is on the first Tuesday of every month at 7.30pm at the Wellington Community Arts Centre, 61 Abel Smith Street. Phone (021) 687 627 or email storytellers.cafe@buzz.net.nz

Manawatu Summer Shakespeare: Hamlet: Ode to Odin

Directed by Lilicherie McGregor (9–18 March 2007)

Lilicherie McGregor reports on her time as artist-in-residence at Massey University and director of the 2007 Manawatu Summer Shakespeare.

The Artist in Residence programme in Palmerston North (3 residents p.a.) is supported by Massey University, Square Edge Community Art Centre and Palmerston North City Council. It is visionary in that a theatre director is included as one of the artists, and could well be the only such residency in Aotearoa New Zealand. This was the main reason I applied, as it has been a concern and question of mine for many years: why theatre directors are not included as artists-in-residence in our city centres and universities.

How does one choose which play to direct for a Summer Shakespeare? Usually it is a comedy, something for the whole family, funny, light and entertaining. But the comedies do not inspire me. I began my quest for 'the' Shakespeare to direct by researching the history of the Manawatu region - and discovered that the first European settlers were from Scandinavia. They arrived, from Norway and Sweden, on the ship *Celaeno* in 1871 and were soon joined by 56 Danes, who settled in Whakarongo and Awapuni. Scandinavians were invited to immigrate to this dense bush area because of their similarly harsh environmental conditions - they were thought to be hardy enough to clear the land and it was they who built the railroad and bridges. Of course names like Dannevirke and Norsewood imply a Scandinavian influence, but as an outsider, brought up in Christchurch, I knew little of the local history. The Tangata Whenua name for Palmerston North is Papaioea, which means "here are beauties indeed".

With this knowledge, I decided to celebrate the beauty and history of Palmerston North through the production of *Hamlet* - the Danish play. There is a strong Scandinavian culture still present in the region, with active Scandinavian Clubs, and kind expertise was offered to teach us traditional dances and music.

The performance was to be located in the Victoria Esplanade and before submitting my application for the residency, I walked through the gardens to look for

inspiration in ways that it could be used as a site specific event. The children's playground offered many possibilities, and I immediately planned to use the miniature railway (in reference to the first railway built) to pick up the Ghost after he appeared on the flying fox - he would not be seen 'walking' on the ground like mere mortals.

I am an experienced theatre director who has recently returned from Denmark, where I was working as assistant director for Eugenio Barba at Odin Teatret for three years. In 2006 Odin performed a version of *Hamlet* for the Summer Shakespeare at Kronberg Castle. Their performance was based on Saxo Grammaticus' original story *Amlethus*. I was present in 2004 as the actors rehearsed in Bali working with a 30 member gamelan orchestra, Topeng actors, Japanese Noh and African Brazilian Candomble dancers. In this performance, Julia Varley played Saxo, singing the text in the original Latin; the Balinese performed in Balinese and Hamlet danced his role. Having been so close to Odin's *Ur-Hamlet* I would not normally chose to direct the same play myself - however, as Eugenio Barba might say it was "serendipity" or "chance" that my journey from Auckland to Wellington passed through Palmerston North, and that I chanced to see the position advertised on The Big Idea.

Notwithstanding, I did choose to draw on the rich Norse mythology of Odin, focussing on Saxo's original story by setting Shakespeare's text in the Viking era, dressing Hamlet in red leather and fox fur - whittling sticks as the mad prince. To create the image of a Viking funeral ship burning on the water, a stage was built in the centre of the pond, where the dead bodies were piled one by one. Paper boats with lighted candles floated in the water and burning fire brands were the only source of light for the final scene of Fortinbras' invasion.

To enhance the exchange between "town and gown", I set out to create a community performance, inviting various groups to perform including Mana Dance Group, Anouschka School of Dance, Hip Hop dancers, YMCA gymnastic groups, Freyberg High School Kapa Haka Group, Taiko Drumming Team IPC, Jazz Club and more.



Above: Simon Jackson as Hamlet and Dione Joseph as Ophelia.



The Victoria Esplanade was imagined as the Castle of Elsinore wherein live the royal family as well as all their retainers and subjects. The community groups performed as the people of the castle, for the funeral procession of the dead King Hamlet which included the audience. The castle guards doubled as customs officials, stamping spectators' hands as they crossed the border into Denmark.

Students from Freyberg High School performed a maypole dance (taught to them by the Rosewood Morris Dancers) in honour of the marriage of Queen Gertrude to King Claudius. The maypole dance is an ancient fertility rite, and its red and white ribbons represented the colours of the Danish flag. The wedding was celebrated in the Gazebo, a much loved site for local weddings, after which the audience was led to seats around the pond for the remainder of the performance.

I designed the costumes and made many myself. The white peacock costume was inspired by Sally Rodwell, who was to play Gertrude. I made this dress from the actual feathers (kindly loaned by the keeper) of the white peacock in the Aviary in the Esplanade (see photo on page 1 of this newsletter).

With original music by Suzy Hawes and a band of 9 musicians, it was a large company spanning all ages, from 13 to 60; two teenage boys had asked to be involved, they played as two of The Players, made paper boats and sang, "Water spirit, water spirit round my head, sure am glad that I'm not dead" as well as a song in Latin by Hildegard von Bingen.

It was an honour to be awarded the Artist in Residence position from November 2006 to March 2007 and I am very happy to have had this opportunity to direct *Hamlet*. I worked for five months, to perform for six nights. This seems extravagant and wasteful, so much work and money expended for such a short period, so now I am re-working the performance with two of the actors, to tour high schools for the next three months (for bookings, contact theatrekore@hotmail.com). More on this version of *Hamlet* in the next issue.

Lilicherie McGregor



Above: Mana Dance Group. Facing page: Hannah Pratt and band lead the parade which opened the performance. All Hamlet photographs by Janine Healey.

All the Web's a Stage ...

From 28 June to 15 July, an exhibition and one-day festival of live online performances will celebrate the launch of UpStage version 2. UpStage is a web-based venue for online performance, allowing players and audiences anywhere in the world to collaborate in real time. Developed by Wellington programmer and digital artist Douglas Bagnall in collaboration with cyformance troupe Avatar Body *Collision* (Helen Varley Jamieson and Vicki Smith, NZ, Karla Ptacek, UK, and Leena Saarinen, Finland), the free, open source software is being used by artists and students around the world.

The exhibition, *Puppets to Pixels - an interactive playground for children of all ages*, is at the NZ Film Archive in Wellington from 28 June until 15 July; experience UpStage hands-on, using the beautiful *Baba Yaga* graphics created by puppeteer Rebekah Wild especially for UpStage.

Anyone with an internet connection can catch the 070707 UpStage Festival on Saturday 7 July - visit www.upstage.org.nz for programme details and live links to the shows. The 13 performances from artists around the world include Samuel Beckett's *Come and Go* performed by Avatar Body *Collision* and Rebekah Wild's *Baba Yaga* performance. The festival will also be screened at the Film Archive; if you're in Wellington and want to see how it's done, Helen Varley Jamieson and Vicki Smith will be cyberperforming from the venue.

Clowning Around

July is the month to develop your clown skills, with two different workshops on offer in the Wellington region:

Introduction to Clown: Explore your own clown character for fun or with performance in mind. No experience necessary! Aileen has been working as a clown tutor and clown for over 25 years, and still has fun!

The workshop is Saturday and Sunday 14-15 July at Te Whaea, 11 Hutchinson Rd, Newtown, Wellington, and costs \$120 waged, \$80 unwaged (may be negotiable).

For information and to register phone Aileen Davidson on 973 7585, email: connaught@paradise.net.nz

The Simplicity Of The Clown: We will explore the simplicity and the inner joy of our clown in more depth as we become present in the moment. When we are able to let go of the thinking and connect with ourselves, the heart is free and full of trust. This is the sacred place the clown comes from and connects with its environment and with others. We will use movement, voice, jabba talk, mime, improvised play etc. in this clowning weekend.

This workshop is for all those who have experienced the introductory clowning workshop, and will be held from 20-22 July at Strathean, near Otaki. The cost is \$290 waged, \$250 unwaged (all inclusive from Friday evening 6pm to Sunday afternoon 3pm)

For more information, contact Gabriele on (04) 9774839 or email info@playfoolspirit.co.nz

Barking all the way home

Miff writes from Norway:

Terje and Angeline's debut album with BARK is now out. It's called Home, and you can buy it on the bark website and on Amazon. Yay! Soon out on iTunes, too! You can read a favourable review on this link: http://www.soundonsound.com/sos/jun07/articles/playback_0607.htm#1

They'll be playing their final gig in London for a while on June 23rd then focus their energy on performances in Norway, Germany and, with a bit of luck, New Zealand (!!!). Check the web site: www.barkmusic.com for further information. Hope one and all are well!

Miff



In Australia, sacredCOW are on the road with The Quivering. If you're in Melbourne, you can catch them at La Mama from 11-22 July. Left to right, Julie Robson, Scotia Monkovitch and Dawn Albinger. Photo by Suzon Fuks.

Odin Week - 10-19 August

The annual Odin Week takes place from 10-19 August. Designed for people who want to visit and learn about Odin Teatret, the week-long intensive includes attending rehearsals, training, Odin Teatret performances and work demonstrations, films, lectures and discussions. The programme is conducted in English.

Further information is available on the Odin Teatret web site, www.odinteatret.dk.

L'Arlecchino Errante!

"A training masterclass between ancient and future: body, voice, mask, improvisation" reads the description for L'Arlecchino Errante International Workshop. Led by commedia dell'Arte experts Claudia Contin and Ferruccio Merisi, with guest Butoh tutor Yumiko Yoshioka, the workshop runs from 30 August to 19 September, in Pordenone, Italy. It takes place within the context of the 11th L'Arlecchino Errante International Festival, this year with the theme "Utopia" and incorporating performances, lectures, demonstrations and special events. Find out more at www.arlecchinoerrante.com

Magdalena Sin Fronteras Santa Clara, Cuba

The second Magdalena Cuba Festival will be held from 8 to 18 January, 2008, in Santa Clara, Cuba, directed by Roxana Piñeda and Estudio Teatral de Santa Clara.

The theme is "Actrices-Directoras" (female actors and directors), and the programme will bring together women theatre practitioners from around the world to explore how women actors and directors collaborate in the creation of their work, through workshops and performances.

Confirmed artists include Julia Varley (Odin Teatret); Jill Greenhalgh (Wales); Cristina Castrillo (Teatro delle Radicci); Patricia Ariza (Teatro La Candelaria, Colombia); Geddy Aniksdal (Grenland Friteater); Déborah Hunt (Maskhunt, Puerto Rico); Clara Inés Ariza (Teatro Tierra, Colombia); Iben Nagel Rasmusen (Odin Teatret); and Elizabeth de Rosa (Singapore).

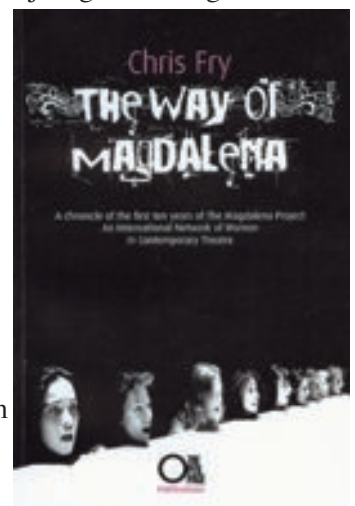
Registration closes on **30 July**; full participation (including 10 nights accommodation, breakfast and lunch) is 550 euros. For more information, contact Roxana Piñeda, email roxanapineda24@gmail.com.

The Way of Magdalena

A book chronicling the first decade of the Magdalena Project, *The Way of Magdalena* by Chris Fry, was launched in January 2007 at the Transit Festival.

Starting with the explosion onto the theatre scene in 1986 of the international women's theatre festival Magdalena '86, the book traces the various lines of development that rippled out from that cathartic event. It examines the work of the founder and Artistic Director, Jill Greenhalgh, and how her vision inspired more and more women to develop their own work and visions. It explores events which became the first of a series of events, such as the Transit Festivals in Denmark, and the Festivals Voix de Femmes in Belgium, and delves behind the scenes to examine the management structures that evolved as The Magdalena Project grew. Using first hand experience, interviews and original documentation, the book attempts to recreate and present the ways of thinking that were prevalent at the time. It offers a useful perspective to readers wishing to find out more about the early years of this still growing international network.

Copies can be ordered from Odin Teatret for 125 DKK; email odin@odinteatret.dk



Transit 5: Stories to be told

Odin Teatret, Denmark, January 18-28 2007

This was the third Transit Festival I've attended, and yet again it was an incredible experience. Julia Varley, Luciana Bazzo and everyone at Odin Teatret who makes the festival happen are amazing organisers, and it was this kind of event and energy that I sought to emulate in our own Gathering at Easter.

The format of Transit is 5 days of workshops and work demonstrations, followed by 5 days of performances, discussions and presentations. During the first 5 days I participated in *Women With Big Eyes*, and in the second part of the festival I gave a presentation about the Magdalena Project web site and online forums.

Women With Big Eyes was not a workshop but a collaboration between a number of the senior and junior Magdalena women; Julia had proposed that five pairs - herself and Gabriella Sacco, Cristina Castrillo and Bruna Gusberti, Geddy Aniksdal and Vibeke Lie, Jill Greenhalgh and Charlotte Nightingale, and Sally Rodwell and Ruby Brunton - attempt to devise a work beginning from the story *Women With Big Eyes* by Angeles



Mastretta, and I asked to join the process. As it turned out, the work was deeply influenced by the 'absent presences' of both Sally and Maria Canepa, a Chilean poet who had attended the previous Transit festival and who also died in 2006.

It was a risky experiment - to put so many strong-minded women together in a room for five days

and see what we might come up with. Having previously worked this way with Jill on *Water[war]s*, I knew that I enjoy working like this. There's no time for mucking around, we must draw on whatever resources we have to create something.

Everyone prepared by reading the story and bringing material which we presented to each other on the first day. I had brought one of Sally's bowler hats, and a poem of Alan's that she had been working on with Lilicherie in preparation for this work. I also had my laptop, web cam, and a gorgeous black velvet evening gown which had been given to me the day before I left New Zealand. Others brought songs, actions, costumes (including Maria Canepa's dress), plastic letters and magic. While not everything ended up in what we presented, it all contributed to the richness of the final work.

The process was organic and we tried a number of different ways of working together, including having the "young ones" direct the "old ones", the pairs taking turns to lead workshops, and finally succumbing to Jill's



desire to direct. The process was riddled with laughter, along with a lot of honesty and goodwill. It really was a pleasure and a privilege to be in the room with such inspiring women and to make a work together.

On the last day of the festival we presented what we had, and I, looking suitably elegant in the evening gown, set up my tools: laptop, data projector, empty glass bottle, web cam, marker pen, paper, fire movie and powerpoint file. I created an environment of light and moving text as a backdrop to the sequence of action, images, and sounds that we had fixed five days before. For me, it was about the essence of "story", the universal pieces or individual letters that are at the heart of any and all of our stories - Sally's story, Maria's, my own and all of the collaborators, the stories of each of the participants at the festival and of all of the Magdalena women around the world. I don't know what others may have found in it, but our performance certainly resonated with everyone.

Women With Big Eyes was just one element of Transit 5; there were many excellent performances, reconnections with old friends and the discovery of new friends. Snow fell as we talked and laughed and danced late into the night - then got up early to work; no-one had enough sleep, but, as Julia says, we don't go to festivals to sleep!

It was also another occasion to farewell Sally; Deborah Hunt put together a slide show of photos spanning Sally's artistic career, and

Dawn Albinger sang a beautiful song she had written after hearing of Sally's death (the lyrics are on the back page). Then we walked out to the grounds of Odin Teatret, where a memorial stone



was uncovered. The Odin company sang a song, Dawn, Deb and I managed a slightly shaky rendition of *E Tu, Kahikatea*, and we blessed the stone with red wine. Since then, in fact on Sally's birthday (16 May), Antonella has returned to turn the stone and paint a circle of gold on it.

Helen Varley Jamieson



Left: Keiran Monaghan in What it means to be civilised, by Interloper.



Right: Bronwyn Bent and Isaac Smith of Interloper, in What it means to be civilised at The Gathering.



Below: Cristina Castrillo, Julia Varley, Jill Greenhalgh and Brigitte Cirila, at Transit 5, January 2007.

Dawn's song for Sally

sally i just don't know how to be writing this song
to wrap your sweet memory in;
there are so many here going to miss you my sister -
hope you can hear the soft rain of our tears;

and sally i'm sorry you just couldn't find that sweet balm
to ease and relieve your heart's pain;
your soul died a little the day that he left us -
you've been leaving us slowly each minute since then;

but there's no judgement here sally,
there's no anger or fear sally,
i know that your soul's now easy and light.
as you walk through elysian fields of flowers
you don't have to wait even one minute longer
you're home now sally
you're home with the love of your life.

sally i'm glad that i met you and briefly was touched
by your strange and your wonderful ways;
we met at a crossroads, i was seeking direction -
just looking at you illumined my way;

and sally i'm sorry that i'll never meet you again
in this life on this earthly plane;
my soul's crying out 'cause we're one goddess down girl -
and i'll miss the light that you brought to our blaze;

but there's no judgement here sally,
there's no anger or fear sally,
i know that your soul's now easy and light.
as you move through elysian fields of flowers
you don't have to wait even one second longer
you're home now sally
you're home with the love of your life.

no there's no judgement here sally,
there's no anger or fear sally,
i know that your soul's now easy and free.
and i know that you've found your way home to where you
want to be.
i'm going to miss you in my heart and bless your dear
sweet memory.

Dawn Albinger
October 2006



Red Mole on the Road

a tribute in film to Alan Brunton and Sally Rodwell

Montana Poetry Day 27th July
Erskine College Theatre
7-10pm, free entry

This year's contribution to Montana Poetry Day by The New Zealand Film Archive is a screening of films featuring the creative partnership of Alan Brunton and Sally Rodwell. *Red Mole on the Road: A tribute in film to Alan Brunton and Sally Rodwell* will include the documentary directed by Sam Neill *Red Mole on the Road* and Sally Rodwell's film *Heaven's Cloudy Smile* in which Alan appears along with fellow poet Michele Leggott. The event will be held at the theatre at Erskine College, which Alan and Sally were instrumental in saving from demolition.



Sally Rodwell's monologues, *Gonne Strange Charity*, can be purchased from Magdalena Aotearoa for \$25 (includes postage & packaging). All proceeds go to Ruby Brunton. Send cheques along with postal address to Magdalena Aotearoa Trust, PO Box 27-300, Wellington.