

Where there's a will, there's a way

Often I wonder how we manage to keep going, when it seems that we exist against all odds. Often things seem impossible - we really can't make another newsletter or organise another event. And yet we do. Sometimes in the middle of it all, it feels like we really are crazy, and I ask myself why on earth we are doing this impossible thing. Yet when it's done and we look back it's clearly worthwhile.

The Easter Gathering is a great example of this: we had no funding at all, I was out of the country, Jessica had just had a baby, Lisa would be working full-time on the International Festival, Lilicherie had moved to Northland and Madeline and Dale were as busy as ever. Organise a Gathering?? Sure, no problem! We resolved to do it because of the energy from last year, but we also resolved to keep it realistic: low budget, low stress. Just make the space and see who would come and what might happen.

Right from the start, the Gathering had a similar energy to last year: everyone was there for their own reasons but also for the shared reason of coming together to receive each others' work and give something back. The Gathering manages to create a space for that to happen, in the way that people need it to happen, and the people who need it are those who come. And it was good to keep it small - it was friendly, intimate and manageable.

One thing we didn't quite achieve at the Gathering was the Trust AGM, which has been rescheduled to **Tuesday 24 June at 6pm**, at the Newtown Hall (71 Daniel St, Wellington). Everyone is welcome to attend - once the formalities are dealt with it will be an opportunity for further reflection on the Gathering, ideas for the future and networking.

Just after the Gathering, we learned with great sadness of the death of Mahinaarangi Tocker. We had the pleasure of Mahinaarangi's presence at the 2007 Gathering, she gave a voice and song-writing workshop and a concert at Happy; and we would have invited her again if we had had the funds. We send our condolences to her family and friends - her passing is a great loss to the community.



Madeline McNamara contemplates a smorgasbord of material for her work-in-progress presentation at the Gathering.

I am writing this from Brisbane, where I am now in the "writing up" stage of my Masters thesis, therefore I'm feeling a bit out of touch with New Zealand events. But as usual I'm plugged into the international Magdalena network. Julia Varley has announced that the next Transit Festival will be held at Odin Teatret in Denmark in August 2009, so now is a good time to start saving if you are interested in attending. There will also be a Magdalena meeting in Brasil in July this year. Meanwhile the DVD of the Articulate Practitioner, organised by Jill Greenhalgh and held in 2005 in Wales, is now available

to order from the Centre for Performance Research (www.theopr.org). This is an excellent resource, with video excerpts and transcripts of the papers presented by leading performers and theorists including Carol Brown, Susan Melrose, Deborah Hay and many others.

Away from the theatre, the world seems beset by natural and manmade disasters, under the shadow of ever-more frightening environmental statistics.

One positive and significant event that happened in Australia in February was the government's long-overdue formal apology to the indigenous people in general and the stolen generation(s) in particular. I happened to be in Sydney with my 99 year old grandmother, who got up uncharacteristically early to watch the live broadcast on TV at 9am; she declared it made it worth staying alive so long to finally see such a momentous event. It's not clear yet just how momentous it really will be in the long term, but it is at least symbolically momentous.

Helen Varley Jamieson

Inside this issue:

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- * the Gatherings in Brisbane and Perth (p 5);
- * Annette Rose - mask maker (p 9);
- * Louise Tu'u - playwright in New York (p 10).
- * Helen Varley Jamieson reports on Magdalena Sin Fronteras in Cuba (p 11).

**DON'T FORGET OUR TRUST AGM:
6pm Tuesday 24 June, Newtown Hall, Wngtn**

Post-Gathering, the Trustees have been busy attending to our own work and lives and families, but keen to ride on the energy generated from the event a hui was held at Madeline and Dale's house on the 3rd of May. This was a debrief about the Gathering and beginning to plan the next.

Lisa has been dealing with the formalities around the changes in legislation relating to Trusts and charities, and our application to register under the new Charities Act is now formally in the queue of applications.

Having completed her Post-Graduate study, Janet Dunn has been formally appointed to the role of Magdalena Post-Mistress. This should ensure a more regular response to written correspondence, of which we do still get quite a bit.

Lilicherie is now settled in Whangarei, where she has directed another show, *Lear and His Daughters*, which will tour NZ schools until August.

August will also see Helen (pictured

The Magdalena Aotearoa Trust ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

6-9pm, Tuesday 24 June 2008
Newtown Hall, 71 Daniel St., Wellington
Meeting stuff, agendas, chairs, minutes not hours, motions not static.



above presenting a cyberperformance at the Gathering) return to Wellington, assuming all goes well with the final throes of her thesis ... Jessica is revelling in the joys of motherhood and expecting no. 2, as well as beginning a new session of training with Ake Ake Theatre company. Meanwhile Madeline and Dale continue their many projects ...

A founding trustee writes ...

When Magdalena Aotearoa was founded I was a member of the Magdalena International Advisory Board and was invited to become a trustee.

My memories are of the very early days when, having moved to New Zealand with a baby and in a difficult marriage, I was able occasionally to get down to Wellington from Carterton and attend Trust meetings and occasional bigger gatherings. It was so good to spend a few hours with women from the theatre tribe - Celia, Madeline, Sally and many other wonderful women. I remember that in the early Trust meetings we had very few resources but we laughed a lot!

Then Jill came for her first visit and I remember her arriving on Carterton station and I cried. We all gathered at Paekakariki to seed ideas for the international festival. I remember I



had to leave early but you all went down to the beach to enjoy one of those fantastic Kapiti sunsets. There was a very special energy at work that day and the seeds took root.

To the next ten years!

Lis Hughes-Jones

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

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

Accountant

Julie Lamb & Associates

Newsletter

Helen Varley Jamieson & Madeline McNamara

Website

Helen Varley Jamieson

Postmistress

Janet Dunn

**PO Box 27-300
Marion Square
Wellington
magdalen@actrix.co.nz
<http://magdalena.actrix.co.nz>**

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 July 2008

Incredible, we did it again! The second Magdalena Aotearoa National Gathering was held over five days of Easter 2008, and once again it proved to be an inspiring and productive experience for the participants.

Programme Overview

As well as discussion panels and work-in-progress showings, we also had open rehearsals which got everyone up on the floor, and several participant presentations.

Works-in-progress:

- reading of scenes from *Double Portrait* by Jan Bolwell, a new play about the painter Frances Hodgkins; Jan says it was great to share an excerpt of the work and she is now fine-tuning with a view to production in the last third of this year.
- reading of *In The Cellar of My Heart* by Diane Spodarek, a solo performance.
- *a gesture through the flames* - cyberformance solo by Helen Varley Jamieson, watched simultaneously by the Gathering in Brisbane as well as audience in other parts of New Zealand and Canada.
- *The Bonekeeper*, solo performance by Helen Moran that was presented as an earlier version at the 2007 Gathering.
- the beginnings of Madeline McNamara's solo show.

Panel Discussions:

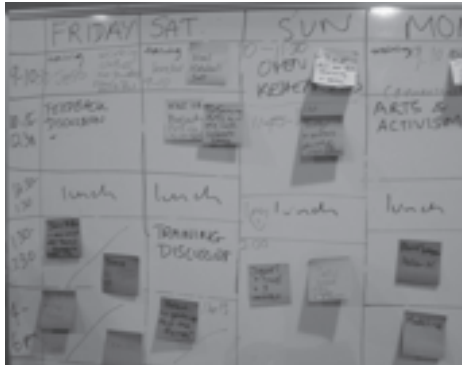
- Giving and receiving feedback: a starting place for the weekend's work.
- Training: different forms of training and how to maintain a training outside of a company structure.
- Community Arts and Activism: bringing together different community practitioners to share their experiences and network.
- Arts Infrastructure: Emily Buttle and Matt Simcock of Empress Stilt Dance followed by Martin Rodgers from the new arts team at the WCC.

Presentations:

- Janet Dunn presented her recently completed Masters thesis on sustainability and fashion.
- Helen Varley Jamieson gave a presentation about the Magdalena Sin Fronteras festival in Cuba (see p. ?)
- Nancy Fulford gave a presentation about her attendance at Odin Week last year, and another presentation about her current work as an arts advisor to the Cook Islands Ministry for Education.
- Kaz Funky Blue - *Wild Women* extravaganza.
- Jaki Trolove presented her visual art installations.
- presentation of the CD and musical screenplay *Jade ov Arcc* by Jade Valour.

Open rehearsals:

- provocations by Rachel Baker
- physicalisation of scenes from *Torpedo Women* by Sugu Pillay, a play about female Tamil Tigers.
- improvisation on Jade Valour's *Salomé*.



Above: the blackboard (or rather, whiteboard) programme takes shape.

“A special event ...”

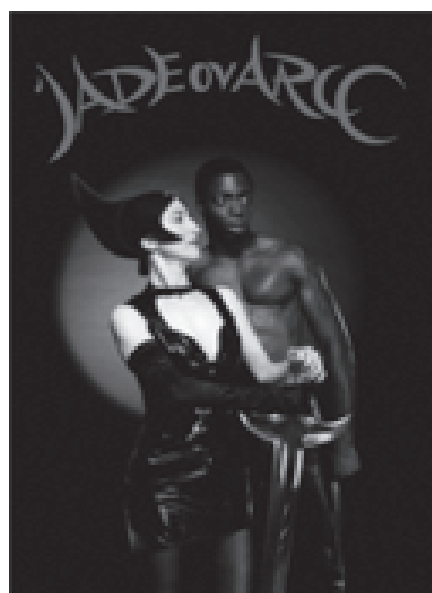
This past Easter I spent five of the most creative inspiring days I've ever spent at the Wellington Magdalena Gathering. An American songwriter/writer/actress/director, visiting New Zealand and based in Wellington, I heard about the Magdalena Project from NZ director Sara Brodie.

I arrived the first evening to a warm welcome from Helen. As other women began to arrive I quickly realized that this was going to be a special event! I was thrilled to find myself part of a multi-dimensionally gifted group of women (and men), in an atmosphere of highly supportive creativity. Actresses, performance artists, writers, costume designers, painters, choreographers ... an amazing collection of talent and sheer creative power. I felt privileged to have been able to do two presentations of my own, to be able to experiment, to participate in helping others with their work and ideas. The positive and constructive discussions/feedback left me with so much inspiration for future work that I hardly know where to begin, and the group spirit was like nothing I have ever experienced. From the presentations to the meals, it was a

complete and total joy. I hope I'll be able to stay in touch and have the pleasure of participating in next year's Gathering.

My deepest gratitude to Helen and Madeline for all the effort and time and caring that went into the organization, and to all the wonderful, talented women who made these five days so memorable.

Jade Valour



The Shed is Ready

“There is vitality, life force, a quickening that is translated through you into action. And because there is only one of you in all time, this expression is unique. If you block it it will never exist through any other medium and it will be lost. The world will not have it. It is your business to keep it yours clearly and directly, to keep the channel open. You do not even have to believe in yourself or your work. You have to keep open and be directly aware of the urges that motivate you.”

Martha Graham to Agnes de Mille

My presentation at the Easter Gathering was an effort to keep the channel open, to remain in touch with the urges that motivate me to make this solo work and to do, as Picasso said, “that which I cannot do in order to learn how to do it”.

For some time I have wanted to create a solo work. It is taking a very long time. Shades of it have existed in various Magdalena forums. A seed was planted when Jill invited me to work with Gerald Tyler in 1999 at the Bleeding/Breeding Ground. I wrote about the work in the Open Page edition on Women/Theatre/Character. A singing it into being. I explored aspects of it in the Performing Words workshop with Geddy Aniksdal and Gilly Adams at the Magdalena Australia festival in Brisbane in 2003 and again with Geddy in Crossroads in Singapore in 2006. At our first Gathering in 2007 a version of my solo was conspicuous by its absence. This year I determined that an appearance would be made despite unpreparedness due to over commitments.

What I presented at our Gathering was incomplete and fragmentary: some great starts but also some alarming

stops, the vaguest of traces and trails, hopefully some indications of motivating urges. Hard for anyone to know what to make of it all. What was remarkable about the feedback I received was that I felt that people’s comments formed part of the same physical ‘body’ of work that I had presented, however broken that body was. The audience recognised that the fragmentation reflected the way that life, knowledge and insight often come to us. They suggested that one thing the work was about was the struggle to make a work and that however exposing, I must not abandon this theme. They advised me not to smooth out the rough edges, the scary places I took them to were also some of the places where they felt most connected. They said I was a performer, a sharer, a connector. They said that the work was like a cat under the blanket - that something bigger existed under the surfaces I scratched and that I was closer than I thought. Some recognised the humour as medicinal but said they did not want or need that medicine. They urged me to get out of the detail that was bogging me down, the pulls from the past, to discover what is really going on. Finally they told me I needed to discover the energy underneath the difficult and scary places.

All these things made absolute sense. I know them like I know my own body. I can now see the new map of this work. I know what connections I need to make for myself and my audience. The final stages of preparation are in place to make this work. The shed is ready.

The experience of presenting at the Gathering was critical, in the best possible sense. I am immensely grateful.

Madeline McNamara

Beyond the Gathering ...

The question, with the repeat of any event, is always “was it as good as last time?” If anything, I got more out of the Gathering this time than the first, even though, or perhaps because, the structure and forward planning were more informal.

Madeline’s experience and intuition as a facilitator are invaluable for work-in-progress presentations. The standout example was her direction of the improvisations around excerpts from Sugu’s play about Sri Lankan female freedom fighters. I realised how important it is for a writer to have the input of director and actors. I hope to hear from Sugu how it has helped her move forward.

The evening presentations were stimulating and absorbing. They reminded me of the connectedness that it is so important for us to maintain. I could see how Jaki’s art practice could also be performance not to mention political and community-based.

My general comment for all of the panel discussions, which included feedback, training, community and activism and arts and infrastructure, was that the time allocated was too short to encompass in depth questioning and discussion. Perhaps the answer is to have fewer topics and allocate longer times.

We have established a basic format for feedback, but I sense that there is still a lot more to learn and disseminate about this subject. I would like to see if there are

more tools and more information that we can bring to the discussion especially in the area of constructive criticism. As the givers of feedback, we all can learn more about how we listen, look, perceive and assess and then articulate. The more we learn about how to give feedback the more it is beneficial to our own making of work, be it material, performative or writing and devising.

My own particular interest would be to look at training not just in the physical aspects of theatre but also the material ones such as set, costume, sound and light design. I’d love to be part of planning a simple workshop for next year’s Gathering.

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Janet Dunn presenting her thesis.

At the same time as we Gathered in Wellington, two other Magdalena Gatherings were taking place across the ditch: in Brisbane, about 60 women met at Metro Arts, while in Perth five women gathered on a hot Thursday evening to hatch plans for a larger event. The Magdalena Gatherings Blog, <http://magdalenagathering.blogspot.com> was used to facilitate dialogue and exchange between the three locations.

Dawn Albinger reports from Perth:
Aroha from Perth! Our meeting in Perth on that hot Thursday evening consisted of Julie Robson, Deborah Hunt, Kat, Trixie and myself. The main outcomes from that initial meeting were the 'exquisite corpse' initiative (which was a response to our desire for a transnational dialogue and to link in with the Brisbane theme of how we develop frameworks for useful 'feedback' to developing work), and the decision to host a larger, more formal meeting to introduce the Magdalena Project to women in Perth.

We have just arranged to host this meeting at PICA (Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts) on Saturday June 7, 4pm - 6pm. The meeting is primarily to introduce the network and also to discover what energies exist and what the women making work over here are hungry for. Let's keep the dialogue going :-)

The Exquisite Corpse



Scotia Monkivitch in Brisbane with breasts & ovaries of the exquisite corpse.

Read the Exquisite Corpse letters at magdalenagathering.blogspot.com/

Right: The story of Salomé featured in presentations in both Brisbane (by Gabriela Erakovic, right) and Wellington (Jade Valour). Below: the audience at a reading The Pink Twins by Sue Rider were asked to turn their backs to the actors, as this was to be a radio play.

The Perth Magdalenas proposed an 'exquisite corpse' letter between the three locations, based on the Dadaist game of drawing a body one part at a time, folding the paper and passing it to the next person to draw the next part of the body. The letter was not quite the same in that we could see what came before, however the idea of the bdy parts provided the structure. The initial letters from Perth (Head and Neck) can be found on the blog, along with the Brisbane Breasts and Ovaries.

In Wellington we were allocated the Belly, however time being short and the programme being full, we did not manage to create a response during the Gathering.



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The personal testaments of the speakers on the Arts and Activism panel were riveting and I regret the lack of time for further questioning and discussion. The topics of both this panel and the arts and infrastructure panel are an ongoing dialogue amongst all arts practitioners creating meaningful work.

For me, the experience and discussion of the gathering comes back again and again to the value of networking. The challenge is to keep the gathering fresh, and not to slip into a formula which will become less stimulating and rewarding. It was a good call to have it again this

year even though no one had a lot of time to put into forward planning. There was a slight feeling of "winging it" which was fine, but may not continue to be year after year. So perhaps the gathering needs to be more focused in particular areas next time, rather than being a bit of a catch-all for a wide variety of subjects.

The organisation of the gathering was great, the food once again exceptional, and it is really good to have the use of the Newtown Community Centre with its hall and theatre spaces. Overall, a rewarding way to spend Easter.

Janet Dunn

The S Word

I feel a bit loathe to use the word, because it is prone to bad press and because now it gets bandied about when selling anything from hand crèmes to lady-shaves, but after some thought, I do want to describe the context that the Magdalena gathering created, as sacred.

I don't intend this in any kind of mystical way, I mean a very real, very tangible, sweaty / bodily version of it; a kind of lived and handsomely flawed sacredness maybe. No doubt as a result of institutionalising myself for the last two years at university I just lunged for the dictionary definition of sacred, out of curiosity- knowing surely the last place on earth or heaven or anywhere else one is likely to get an understanding of the sacred is in a dictionary; unsurprisingly most of the definitions offered referred to its use in organized western religion. However, one option suggested the sacred was 'dedicated to or in honor of somebody'. In a sense this one does catch an element of what I'm trying to get my mouth around. The 'somebody' becomes 'somebodies' become our participating bodies.

Being in that environment over the long weekend, I really felt history like a flood over me. I felt where it lives in my bloodstream. This is the treasure of intergenerational space; it's hard to forget your history when she is moving in front of you, speaking, performing, critiquing, writing. As a 'young' artist now while I still have my battles, I can forge my living from creative work. This has not always been the way. I had some (female) students a while back slagging off feminist art (and suffragettes) in one of my classes, when I tried to talk with them about it they clarified it was boring, cheesy and didactic because feminist artists 'had a barrow to push' (and were badly dressed). We talked about context, changing contexts between then (the works in question were from the 70's) and now, and we talked about that barrow. I suggested their bodies were in that barrow. That's why they had the luxury to sit in this class and disown the work. We tried to decipher the difference between intelligent critique and slagging. We talked about how none of us would be in the

classroom if it wasn't for those stropy 'didactic' women.

The long weekend for me was time to see myself slotted into these histories, surrounded by the bodies of other artists and makers I felt 'in community' and simply taking the time out to collectively give airtime to our process and to the logistics of developing work felt like a resistance to going under and therefore, felt sacred.

The gathering for me provided a kind of stockpiling, of drinking in this space which honoured and enjoyed the intelligence, frustrations and poetics of people making work. I felt a bit like a squirrel knowing a long winter was on its way; such a healthy vital thing to do when so many of us work in relative isolation, splashing around alone in a studio in the middle of nowhere or tapping away at a screen. It was really lovely and refreshing to be in a space where for the large part, women weren't apologising for their work or what they were trying to communicate.

I think its really important as an artist, to see that stuff modeled, and outside of a competitive / bravado kind of environment; it saddened me to notice that after 2 years in an institution, genuineness was really noticeable, vulnerability was noticeable and treated with respect. It made me consider again the sometimes viciousness and dislocation of institutional learning.

While during some conversations and elements of work over the weekend, I did feel like some histories were

spoken out of the space even while 'womens histories' were spoken in, it was at least an environment that felt like it wasn't static, wasn't unaware of how the past creates and carves out the present and felt open to challenge and participation. So thank you for that space. Like with any 'feast', it was a kind of gorging, of stuffing down as much work and as many conversations as one can before hibernating for the winter, inevitably there wasn't time for some things to be fleshed out which left me frustrated and hanging for conversations that were only just opened but I suppose that's part of the pleasure of a feast, eh.

Thanks and respects to the women who put their time and energy into organising the gathering. And Moria, for filling our bellies, thank you. x x

Jaki Trolove



Above: one of Jaki Trolove's images that she showed in her presentation; left: Helen Moran as The Bone Keeper - further developed since its presentation at last year's Gathering; right: Jan Bolwell reads from her new script Double Portrait, about the painter Frances Hodgkins.



Mahinaarangi Tocker 1955-2008



Mahinaarangi leading the voice workshop at the 2007 Gathering.

Ngati Raukawa, Ngati Tuwharetoa, Tainui (Ngati Maniapoto), Hebrew and Celtic.

We mourn the passing of an incredible artistic woman. We pay tribute to Mahinaarangi's brilliance and passionate humanity. We have lost a truly amazing soul, a sister who touched all of our hearts with the

wickedness of her humour, the beauty of her song, and the power of her voice.

E te taonga, ko Mahinaarangi, takoto mai, takoto mai. Kua hoki wairua mai koe ki runga i to marae otira ki waenganui i to iwi, i to hapu, i to whanau. He kitenga kanohi he hokinga whakaaro ki a koe e ora tonu ana. He wahine kaha, he wahine toa koe ki te waiata, i hapai i to iwi Maori, otira i nga kaupapa maha o te iwi, o te motu hoki. Kua tutuki i ou mahi. No reira, takahia te ara whanui a Tane ki era o tatou e whanga mai ana ki a koe. E te rangatira, haere, haere, haere atu ra.

Madeline McNamara and Dale Ferris

Why On Earth?

As part of the pilot Wellington Independent Theatre Practitioner Support Programme, Briar Monro is offering a series of three seminars looking at strengthening the sustainability of arts practice. The seminars offer directors, producers, choreographers, dancers, designers and performers an opportunity to grapple with some of the bigger questions that often get lost in the day to day.

Real Vision 9.30 am – 12.30pm Wednesday 25 June
Build towards a stronger articulation of our practice in today's rapidly changing world.

Realising Vision 9.30 am – 12.30pm Wednesday 2 July
This session explores different pathways for realising our visions, what supports or limits the realising of our visions and how to make our practice sustainable.

Who is it all for? 9.30am – 12.30pm Wednesday 9 July
Examines our relationships with our audiences. Who are they? Why would they pay? What relationship do we want? How can we build that?

The workshops are designed as a package but can be attended separately. The cost is \$30 [+gst] for all three or \$15 [+gst] for the individual sessions. To book or if you have any questions, email briarmonro@clear.net.nz or call 021-2711002

BIPEDS PRODUCTIONS UPDATE

2008 began with a workshop for our new production, *Lily*, featuring Kilda Northcott as Dunedin dance pioneer Lily Stevens (pictured at right). We worked in the Port Chalmers Town Hall with Rhys Latton from Ake Ake Theatre Company, Julia Milsom and young



dancers whom Kilda has been working with. *Lily* is coming together well and will be previewed during the Otago Festival of the Arts, October 2-5, in the Teachers' College Auditorium. Young dancers from the region will join the core cast, and there will be live Chopin on piano from the lovely Hermione. We are really excited about this new production and plan to tour in 2009.

After the workshop, Kilda went on to dance for Daniel Belton in his new film, then danced like a whirlwind in several productions during the Dunedin Fringe in April, including a little teaser for *Lily* which I flew down for. This was part of Dancespeak, curated by Alison East - it was like a mini dance gathering/festival in Dunedin - lots of fun! Meanwhile Paul Forrest, our producer and also a visual artist, had a successful exhibition at the Michael Fowler Centre during the International Arts Festival - sold lots of works!

I am full-steam into planning a residency based at Mt Cook primary school; this is an Artist in Residency scholarship from the Ministry of Education to develop a community-based project for the suburb of Mt Cook in conjunction with Wellington High School. Lynda Chanwai-Earle is writing the script, David O'Donnell directing and Strike composing. It will come to fruition in September. We are very keen to work with people from the Mt Cook community - if anybody is interested please contact me.

In June I will finish my second oral history project, which is associated with the *Lily* project, after interviewing several people in Dunedin and Central Otago about the Dunedin dancing competitions from 1917 to 1970 - interesting stuff!

Lyne Pringle
Co-director Biped Productions
www.bipeds.co.nz

Zarathustra Said restaged

After a successful season last November, Lilicherie McGregor remounted her production of Alan Brunton's *Zarathustra Said* for the Wellington Fringe Festival. Here we present an excerpt from a review by Diane Spodarek, the full text of which can be read online at:

www.theatreview.org.nz/reviews/review.php?id=1274

Zarathustra Said began in the dark, the space softly illuminated by candles around small rocks near pillars. Sounds of live music filled the space as three musicians in white suits entered playing their instruments: a clarinet, a horn, and a plastic toy horn. They marched and strutted, followed by three characters: a nymph in white rags who climbed the bar, her face, arms and legs dusted by white clay; next the Master of Ceremonies in a tux and white face with painted red cheeks and bow lips who greeted the audience with a stance as if she could swallow us whole; the Butcher menacing and proud; and walking on her hands a sexy blonde wearing a very short dress. This was just the beginning of *Zarathustra Said*.

You had to leave your expectations at the door, this play was not a 'get comfy sit back and enjoy' theatre piece. Happy is a deep basement hole and the perfect place to experience Red Mole theatre where the original members had performed before. *Zarathustra Said*, directed by Lilicherie McGregor, only had three performances as part of the Fringe 2008 Festival. It was the last piece written by Alan Brunton, who with his partner Sally Rodwell founded Red Mole in New Zealand in the 70's.

Embracing the last work by Brunton can only be an immense challenge for a director. Brunton was a master of ambiguity, a poet who understood the impact of sound and image together, a poet who heard his own voice and those of his long-term collaborators when he worked on a theatrical script. His work always embraced the political and demanded that the audience have as much fun as the performers. McGregor transformed this theatre piece into a multi media event full of surprises. Each actor embodied a unique character, each movement was carefully choreographed, and each sound from the three musicians had its place. Nothing made sense and nothing did not make sense -- just as Alan had written it.

Not since I have seen theatrical shows by such diverse groups as The Wooster Group and Richard Foreman in New York have I experienced avant-garde theatre that is

both engaging and precise as McGregor's direction of *Zarathustra Said*. From the first moment to the last, the work was in perfect sync. Multiple images and sounds came at the audience simultaneously arousing all the senses. There were surprise moments like the tiny babies that fell from the sky as a result of The Butcher releasing them from their bondage; it was so precisely directed, you could almost hear the ghost of Alan sigh in approval.

Zarathustra Said deserves another production, it should tour the country. It's full of joy and sadness, unexpected delights, great acting and the direction of someone who not only knows the history of Red Mole and New Zealand theatre but international theatre as well. This production is now an important part of Red Mole history, and New Zealand theatre.

Read the full article online at:

www.theatreview.org.nz/reviews/review.php?id=1274
Diane Spodarek: <http://www.dangerousdiane.blogspot.com>

Public Sex-cess in Paekakariki

After having been a member-at-large of Magdalena Aotearoa since its inception, I took the plunge, directing and producing my play *Public Sex* in the newly village-owned St. Peter's Hall in Paekakariki.

The themes of the play are controversial: child-abuse, suicide, and sex. The record of child-abuse in Aotearoa is searingly bad and it seemed to me that the stage, where truth holds sway, was the place to try to address that record.

I was extremely fortunate: first, that Kapiti Creative Communities gave the production a grant, and second, that Paekakariki is home to several professional actors, whose commitment to the play was immediate, possibly because they are all parents of still-small children.

The play was the first full-length play to be performed in St. Peter's Hall for about fifty years. While the stage is possibly the only raked stage left in the country, it has no backstage at all, and the right hand side has been boxed in to make cupboards. As well, the stage has no lighting or even rigging to hold it, unworkable footlights, and a curtain which only opened on the right side!

These things conquered, we had a successful six night season, being able to pay each actor, our sound mixer, and our lighting technician, and additionally raising about \$500 for the local Kohanga Reo.

Sandi Hall

Right: discussion at the Gathering on arts and activism brought a range of people together to share their work in different areas of political activism, including Heather Timms who works with disadvantaged youth and migrant groups, Hannah Ho who is involved in queer and environmental activism, Noel Meek of People Theatre, Chrissie Butler and Keiran Monaghan from Interloper and Madeline McNamara with her *Acting Up* hat on.



Annette Rose is co-creator of the Multimask: a simplified, educational method of making masks using a premoulded 'green' (enviro-friendly) face shape. She describes the process and technologies behind the masks.

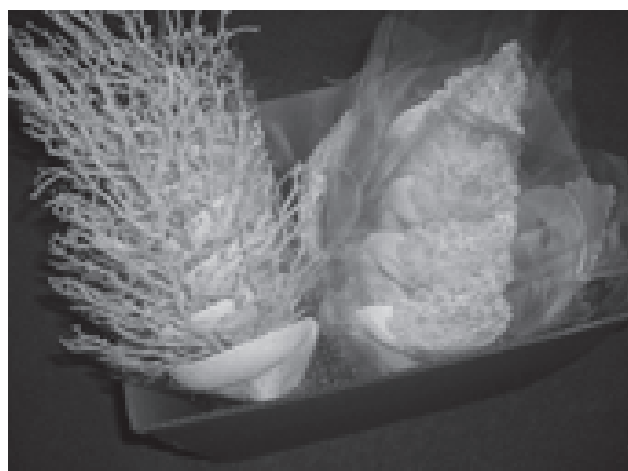
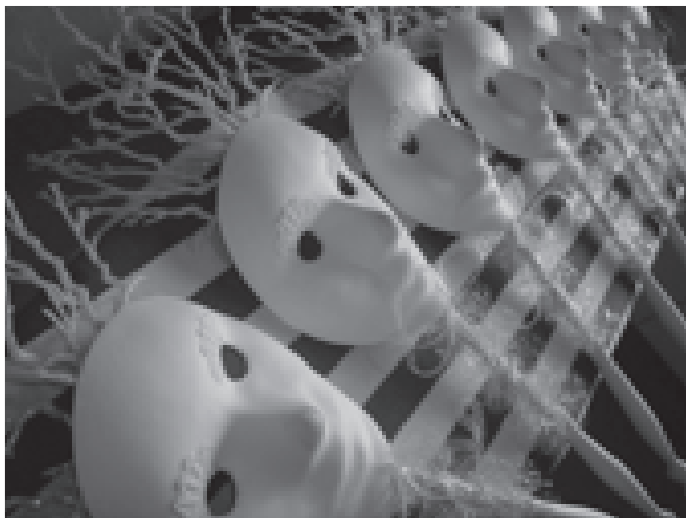
I've been making masks for nearly fifteen years. I started by visiting Professor Agostino Dessi and daughter Alice Dessi in Florence (www.alicemasks.com), where I learned how to make masks the traditional Italian way – from papier mache using a specialty paper called 'wool paper'. After ripping and dampening and gluing and pressing the wool paper into a plaster mould, the mask begins to take shape.

Once dry, the hardened wool paper pops out, the plaster shell is removed for storage, and the process of transforming paper base mask into enchanting character begins. "These are story containers" Agostino explains, "Stories are delicate, it's best to store them in places that suit them. The stories a person can give to the world are precious."

Returning home, I found the necessary wool paper was not available in New Zealand. So I thought: we have lots of trees and sheep in New Zealand ... why can't we make our own wool paper? This was the start of my new arts business, although my original vision changed shape over time.

After 15 months of getting my

left brain into gear at the Otago School of Business, I teamed up with Auckland entrepreneur Philip Blackburn (aka "Professor Paper"), a specialist in hot-pressed recycled paper products. Using our combined talents in engineering, biochemistry, arts, anthropology and commerce, we co-created the Multimask - a premoulded classic face shape with embossed guidelines for shaping and styling your own mask. A ready-made mask with oodles of potential for individual flair!



Like all theatre and drama activities, mask-making helps young people especially to take a productive orientation towards the issues, concerns and constraints of their social worlds. To shape their own mask means their hands and eyes are involved in creating a visually interesting story. To wear their own mask means their whole body and being is involved too.

I like to make masks for theatre that happens on the street. The images on this page are of



"winter white sprites" being made for a processional dance which will feature in the 2008 Dunedin Midwinter Carnival, directed by local artist and stilt performer Juliet Novena Sorrel. The annual midwinter carnival features a dance of light around the Octagon ring-road, an event which provides welcome relief from the gothic darkness of a typical "dunners" winter.

I have also been invited to contribute a "response work" (to an earlier workshop in Brisbane with indigenous artist Dr. Pamela Croft) in Rockhampton, June 2008.

The mask I am making narrates an outsider perspective of the Australian "stolen generation" story.

Mask making is strong business.

Annette Rose

Contact Annette:

email: multimask@orcon.net.nz

phone: 021 038 8639

or 03 4679941

visit: www.maskworx.co.nz

e-news: Making Masks Together

<http://newsletters.mobilizemail.com/maskworx/landing/enews.html>

The photos on this page are "winter white sprites" and other masks ready for the Dunedin Midwinter Carnival.

Sugar Hill 4 life

Last November, I participated as a guest speaker and artist in the Indigenous World Theatre Reading Series in New York. My play *Le Tauvaga* was given a 30 minute reading with a moderated discussion afterwards

Who would've thought that a broke full-time student of film such as myself would be going to NYC for work? Not I said the wolf. So it stands to reason that when I was invited in May 2007 by the Australian Aboriginal Theatre Initiative, Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, and the Martin E. Segal Theatre Center/CUNY Grad Center in New York, that I a) didn't concentrate on the short film project I was directing and failed spectacularly and that b) the Tu'u side of my brain said you better find a dinghy or apply for funding ASAP.

So I thought very hard and applied to Fulbright New Zealand for a travel award and to quote a musical that's very popular amongst us fobs, "wonders of wonders, miracles of miracles", I was lucky to be awarded one of these hens' teeth. I then applied to Creative New Zealand who awarded me the shortfall of funding, which allowed me to spend a fortnight in the Big Apple.

The play I took over was called *Le Tauvaga*, which is Samoan for the Competition and centred on a young Samoan man, Dash, who struggles to be kosher with his fa'a Samoa, as he is in the Palagi world. The ASB Maori and Pacific Island Festival, more commonly known as the Polyfest, formed a contemporary backdrop. Anecdotally, this play was well-received and a diverse group of people attended the three shows up here in Aukilani, in March 2004. I was stoked as it was my first play and had gained some street cred for writing about issues and events that actually meant to something to our Pacific Island youth.

Taking this to New York was a very frightening and nerve-wracking prospect. The work was already 3 years old and I couldn't remember some of the slang (It's what you get when you hit the wrong side of 25). However, I had nothing to fear, except pickpockets, super-sized everything and my own naïve NooZealandness about places called the Bronx and Harlem, which was where Albert Belz and I ended up staying. (Albert was invited to the series too). Our lil' pad was in a funky place called Sugar Hill, where we were mistaken for Dominicans on a daily basis (the place was like Otahuhu but instead of Samoans being the biggest ethnic group, Dominican Republicans ruled the roost). Our 3 amigo impressions of español didn't go down well so we stuck to English. It was amazing how in a sea of Americana how two brown

Transit VI

festival of women's performance

will take place in August 2009
at Odin Teatret, Denmark.

For more information, join the
Magdalena Project email list
or keep an eye on the web site:

www.themagdalena-project.org

artists suddenly sounded so colonially quaint.

Our readings were well-received: mine being *Le Tauvaga* and Albert taking over the superb *Awhi Tapu*. Hearing it in an American accent, gave me goose bumps, similar to when the first scene of my second play *Imakulata* was performed in the Jerwood Theatre Upstairs at the Royal Court Theatre, London in 2005. We met so many wonderful people and I went to my beloved Coney Island on the first day it snowed that winter. (Watch the movie *The Warriors* to know what I mean. Like other Islanders, it was part of my TV diet. It will change your life). Many thanks to Karen Oughtred from the Australian Aboriginal Theatre Initiative who invited us over and showered us with antipodean hospitality, Fulbright New Zealand, Creative New Zealand and our families and partners.

Louise Tu'u

Louise, surrounded by challenges, straight from her local street mural in Sugar Hill.



Helen Varley Jamieson reports on Magdalena Sin Fronteras in Santa Clara, Cuba in January. She was invited to attend and participate in the second Women With Big Eyes collaboration.

The festival, organised by Roxana Piñeda of Estudio Teatral, featured 11 Cuban performances and 9 from international artists, all of which were very well attended. There was always a crowd outside the theatre before the performance, and when we “Magdalenas” arrived, a path would be cleared to allow us to enter the theatre first and get good seats, which made us feel like real V.I.Ps. One of the Cuban performances was *Suite para Katherine Sola*, by a company from Havana, and I was surprised to discover it was the story of Katherine Mansfield. Literature is big in Cuba, with books being very cheap (I think government subsidised) and many literary classics including Katherine Mansfield prominent in the shops.

DAH Teater from Belgrade gave their performance *Dancing in the Darkness* in Spanish, but having previously seen it in English in rehearsal, I was able to follow it well. This tells the story of a lost performance, *The Case of Helen Keller*, which DAH Teater was performing at our own Magdalena festival in 1999 when the NATO



Above, Helen with Zoe Hammond Greene (photo by Luciana Bazzo) and above right, Women With Big Eyes.

bombing of Serbia began. Because the performance included American and British actors who were unable to return to Belgrade with the company due to the political situation, it has never been performed since. The actor Sanja Krsmanovic-Tasic created a new performance from this situation which is an important part of the history of DAH Teater and of the Magdalena Project, especially for people such as myself who were present at the last performance of *The Case of Helen Keller*.

I participated in a writing workshop led by Gilly Adams from Wales. About half of our group were Cuban, with most of the rest from Europe or at least English speaking, and over four mornings we got to know each other through our writing and enjoyed a real cultural exchange as well as honing our writing skills.

Just being in Cuba was a wonderful experience because in so many subtle or not-so-subtle ways it is a totally unique place. The most immediate and visual difference is that there is no advertising. Billboards carry political slogans in praise of the revolution, rather than advertising cars or TV programmes. A less visible difference, when you graduate in anything, be it theatre or plumbing, you are guaranteed a job in that profession; but the salaries are so small it's not enough to live on. Roxana's theatre company has a good space to work in but few resources - no printer or photocopier, let alone a data projector. So I lugged a data projector all the way from New Zealand along with my laptop (luckily no-one tried to weigh my hand luggage!) to be able to do what I wanted to do in *Women With Big Eyes*.

Our goal was to build on what we had begun at the Transit V festival in January 2007 (Odin



Teatret, Denmark) and so we began by watching a video of that performance. The original idea behind *Women With Big Eyes* was to create an opportunity for senior Magdalena women to work together creatively, and also to work creatively with some of the younger women instead of being cast into the roles of teacher and mentor all the time. In our second gathering in Cuba, everyone from the first group except Charlotte Nightingale was able to be there, and we were joined by Gilly Adams (Wales), Luciana Bacco (Denmark/Brazil), Malin Brattlie (Norway), Zoe Hammond Green (UK) and Roxana Piñeda (Cuba).

The short story *Women With Big Eyes* by Angeles Mastretta was used as a starting point for the work and gives it its name, however we are not trying to tell that story; everyone brought their own material to the process. In Denmark, I literally cut up the story into words and phrases and we created new stories from those pieces; some of those words and phrases appeared in the

continued on page 12

continued from page 11

performance as projected text that slid down the wall. We also used haiku and text from various other sources. In Cuba, I was eager to experiment further with the projected text; during 2007 I had begun to play with a piece of flexible mirror, using it to move, distort, transform and further deconstruct projected text. Not only was I travelling with a data projector in my hand-luggage but also a piece of mirror carefully cut to fit exactly inside my suitcase.

In our short space of time in Cuba, we began by watching the video from Denmark and then had a necessarily swift selection process: people argued to keep the bits they liked and leave the bits they didn't like. Once carved up, we took to the floor and began to play with these pieces, something like trying to make a new jigsaw puzzle out of a whole lot of pieces from different-but-similar puzzles. We had brought with us our costumes and props from last time, as well as new proposals such as my flexible mirror or ideas for movement. Geddy donned the grey coat of her costume and I projected the video onto her back; as she walked away from the projector it grew and changed and Charlotte – unable to be with us in Cuba – appeared, walking blindfold on a path of plastic letters, down Geddy's back. Thus we found the beginning for our new presentation.

By using the mirror and moving the projector, I created a river of text along the floor and letters which danced around the walls, ceiling and floor of the space – like magical butterflies that the performers tried in vain to catch. The letter A entered into Cristina's mouth and later she spat it out – transformed into a solid plastic A. Geddy burned pages of the Magdalena book, Bruna poured water slowly into a glass and overflowing to the table and the floor, and Julia tied messages to the branches of a tree. Many elements were kept from the previous presentation and many were changed or new. We presented what we had made to a typically full-to-overflowing audience; several people were moved to tears and many spoke to us afterwards about their response to the work and the stories they had found in it.

With more people in the group and less time than we had had in Denmark, the process was more difficult for me, but the result was as powerful and makes me determined to continue the work - hopefully at Transit VI



in Denmark next year.

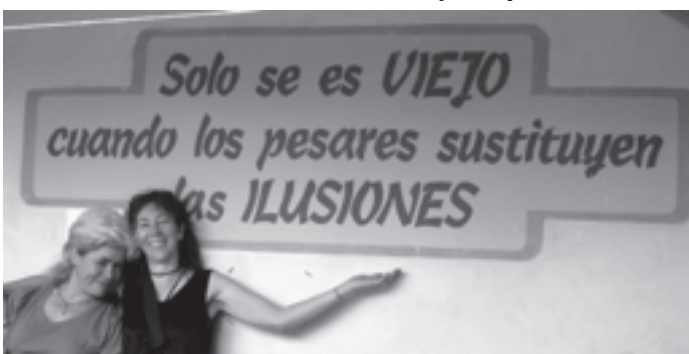
There was a lot else happening at the festival - such as visits to the *jubiladas* - the rest home next door to Estudio Teatral, where we sang for and were sung to by the elderly women residents - and a demonstration of Afro-Cuban folkloric dance by young students; and after the festival I had a week of holidays, visiting Trinidad (a town in the south) where we played at tourists and spending some more time in Havana where I finally got to have a ride in one of the gorgeous old cars (it was a 1959 Chevrolet Impala).

Enormous thanks and gratitude to Roxana, Alejandro and the rest of the team who organised the festival - it was an incredible achievement to make so much happen with so few resources.

Helen Varley Jamieson



Photos on this page: top, participants in Gilly Adam's writing for performance workshop; middle, Gilly and Jill Greenhalgh in Havana; below, one of the forums - Alejandro (our wonderful translator, guide and organiser), Nelda Castillo, Roxana Piñeda, Maria Porter, Antonia Fernández; below left, Maria Porter and Helen Varley Jamieson at the home for the jubilas (rest home). The sign reads "You are only old when your sorrows replace your dreams."



The Open Page

next issue out soon:

Theatre - Women - Letters

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Move Your Mood

The Actor's Practice class has been re-named to Move Your Mood. A number of people from my regular yoga classes were getting hooked into it & so I wanted to expand it out to non-actors, because--at its heart--it really is for anyone & everyone who wants to free themselves up through movement, yoga & mantra.

This is not a dance class. We start with about 20-30 minutes of movement that is inspired by a mix of music that I put together each week. The range is from world to reggae to classical to latin to instrumental to meditative to rock n roll to trance--anything & everything that will indicate & guide a rhythm in the body. The focus is on connecting to the breath as it connects into the body-in-motion. It's very freeing. I created this class because I needed it! I wanted a regular practice of moving with good people to good music & then guiding that energy through some yoga work & settling into relaxation after.

Before we end the 1 3/4 hour session, we do some vocal work that has the same emphasis on freedom that the physical work has. We create greater freedom in the body & the voice & the self by letting the vibrations roll through us, whether via movement to music or via the opening of the voice through mantra work. Mantra translates from Sanskrit to mean "to transit (tra) out of the mind (man)"--or, to go out of one's mind!! We let go of how it sounds & focus instead on how it feels as we create sound, as we allow sound to move through us & open us up.

No experience is needed for any of the components--only the willingness & curiosity to explore oneself. You are welcome to join us Saturdays 10-11:45am, The Studio, 146 Riddiford St, level 1, Newtown. \$15. If you plan to attend, I'd love to know so I can expect you, but if you decide last minute, 'rock on up' & join us!

Melissa Billington
021 562 775

Fire Performers and Jugglers

Fire Performers and jugglers gather at Frank Kitts Park in Wellington every Tuesday evening from 8.30 and play till late into the night. There are poi players, staff twirlers, jugglers, devil stick and diablo players.

The emphasis on the evenings is to swap ideas and share knowledge within the fire community of Wellington.

Frank Kitts Park is located on Jervois Quay, next to the waterfront behind The Events Centre. BYO kero (there is also a donations jar).

For more information visit the Wellington Circus Trust web site: www.circus.org.nz

Drumming in Paekakariki

Keen to learn some drumming? Here's how!

Small group workshops in hand-drumming and percussion with rhythms from Latin-America, Brazil and Africa start on a regular basis in Wellington and Paekakariki. You don't need any previous knowledge at all just a will to give it a go :-). All instruments provided.

Tutor Mabeth Ciurans is also available for individual tuition or one off group sessions from interactive drumming workshops for team-building to birthday parties.

Jenny Goes Down is the creative space shared by singer/songwriter/guitarist Karen Clarke and Mabeth on hand percussion, conga & bongo drums. With roots in blues, femme and contemporary folk their sound is punchy and pared-back. Right now they are recording a demo CD, and they can often be found playing gigs around the Kapiti Coast.

Contact Mabeth; Phone 04 292 7665 or 0274 194 028; e-mail mabeth@handsondrumming.co.nz www.handsondrumming.co.nz

Story-time

The Storytellers' Cafe continues on the first Tuesday of the month in the the Dance Studio of the Wellington Arts Centre (61-69 Abel Smith Street, Wellington -- enquire at the front desk for directions if needed). There's parking in the back!

US storyteller Cathy Spagnoli will be the guest storyteller in June, bringing tales from Asia. And in July, Tanya Batt, the woman of many voices and even more costumes, comes to you from Waiheke Island.

This is the best \$5 entertainment in Wellington and you get coffee, tea and munchies to boot! For more information, phone 381 3307 or 021 687 627 or email storytellers.cafe@buzz.net.nz.



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.

Workshop: devising character and performance pieces

SPEND A WEEKEND DEVELOPING YOUR OWN UNIQUE CHARACTER AND DEVISING A PERFORMANCE PIECE TO SHOW TO FRIENDS AND FAMILY!

When: 14 & 15 JUNE 2008, 10.00 - 3.00pm
Where: Daniell St Hall, Daniell St, Newtown
Fee: \$120.00 waged/\$80 unwaged
Tutor: Aileen Davidson

We work both days, and end with a performance for family and friends on Sunday 15 June, 2pm at the Newtown Community Centre theatre.

A member of Womens Circus Aotearoa, Aileen has taught clowning & character devising for 25 years.
To enrol: phone Aileen evenings on (04)973 7585.

NUMBERS LIMITED SO ENROL NOW.

What do you think of the show so far?

If you love making theatre and want to improve on the way we work, come along to an open forum on Auckland's theatre scene.

What do you think of the show so far? What are your pressing concerns? What would you like to see improve? What's got you motivated, excited, confused or frustrated?

Whatever issue has got your goat, raise it on the day and it will be discussed. It's time to meet each other, talk to each other and voice our needs as a group.

This invitation is open to everyone in the theatre community and attendance is FREE. Not only that, but we'll provide lunch!

The forum is organised by Q Theatre and will be held at the Auckland Town Hall on Friday, 13 June, from 10am to 5pm (followed by drinks). The day will be run by Briar Monro, an independent creative producer.

Lunch will be provided, so please RSVP by 6 June to catherine@qtheatre.co.nz. For more information, phone 09 309 8324.



E nga mana, e nga reo, e nga karangatanga maha o nga hau e wha tenei te mihi ki a koutou katoa!

Award-winning theatre from Native Earth (Canada), Yirra Yaakin (Australia) and a world premier from Tawata Productions (NZ): Honouring Theatre is your opportunity to experience the best of indigenous theatre from around the world in your own backyard.

Rotorua: 16-19 June | Manukau: 22-26 June

Rotorua: Ticketek (07) 350 2244
Auckland: Ticket Direct (0800) 224 224
www.honouringtheatre.co.nz

Annie Mae's Movement (Native Earth)
By Yvette Nolan

In 1976 Annie Mae's body was found on Pine Ridge Reserve. Did she die of exposure, or from a bullet? Based on the life of Anna Mae Aquash, this play is a fictional treatment of the story of the first woman warrior of the American Indian Movement (AIM).

I Don't Wanna Play House (Yirra Yaakin)
By Tammy Anderson

Often heartbreaking, Tammy relives the abuse she and her family endured. However, her story is told with singular lack of sentiment and wry humour. A play full of love told through boisterous characters, this ultimately celebratory one woman show is a kinetic swirl of monologue, movement and song.

He Reo Aroha (Tawata Productions)
By Jamie McCaskill and Miria George

From an early age Kaia was trained to sing, she was groomed for greatness. Pascoe sang, with his father, he was groomed to work on the fishing boats. When the teenagers meet at a high school party one warm summer's night, their voices create a love that remains with them for a lifetime.