

Magdalena Aotearoa

Issue 2

Magdalena Aotearoa June 1997

Mid Winter Report

A huge yellow moon lit up the rocky coast of Wellington at the Solstice as we sat by smoky fires and collected thoughts for this mid-winter report on Magdalena Aotearoa. Much has happened, and the flames are burning still.

We are in the process of incorporating Magdalena Aotearoa as a formal Trust, of setting down our aims and confirming the trustees. We have been assisted in this process by the generous staff of the Community Law Office. Te Kawehau Hoskins' correspondence from Auckland, published here, has raised the important issues of communication and participation. We include a summary of our reply to her in this newsletter.

We still await news of the outcome of our applications for part-time salary grants, but always optimistic, have impulsively rented three rooms in the Old Trades Hall, 126 Vivian St. It's 2 doors down from where the pink lamps of Carmen's legendary Coffee Shop used to glow, and home to amongst others, the Peace Movement, the Eco Group, and the Bakers' and Pastry-cooks' Union. The first Wellington Magdalena Aotearoa meeting was held in the new office last week, and it will be a base for all committees, friends, supporters, and information seekers. Although sparsely furnished, there are 2 telephones (thanks to Cathy

Downes and Jenny Ludlam), a desk with a wonderful history (thank you Shona Solomon), a filing cabinet (thank you Celia West) stationery (thank you Lora), a coffee pot (thank you Maggie Kennedy) and a plant. Start-up costs and the opening of the post box have been assisted by a grant of \$250.00 from the Hutt Valley Community Arts. There is also soon to be a computer and printer, thanks to a project grant from the Wellington City Council. This grant also covers 6 months line rental

for the telephone and the costs of producing the next 3 newsletters. Melanie Thaker, a photography student at Polytech, is documenting our physical progress/ deterioration, in a visual format.

The first meeting of the Venue Committee brought together some very skilled women. A proposal was made to Circa Theatre to rent their facilities for the Wellington section of the Magdalena Aotearoa Festival, and the Circa Council has approved in principle. There are two well-equipped theatres, one large, one studio-size, rehearsal rooms, lobby and cafe, it's downtown, right on the harbour, and next to the new museum. Support venues could include Taki Rua, Thistle Hall, NZ Drama School Toi



*Madeline & Sally outside the new
Magdalena Aotearoa Office
Vivian St, Wellington
Please visit!*

Whakaari, the Repertory Theatre, for workshops and additional performances etc. The Proposed Festival Dates still fall within the last two weeks of March 1999. Already letters are arriving with fabulous stamps from Magdalena women in other countries who have heard of the festival, and are resolved to come. We look forward to receiving ALL proposals from women in Aotearoa New Zealand, who are interested in being part of the 1999 Festival, and helping it take form.

The first meeting of the Finance Committee is this week. We need to urgently study the possible sources of funding for the projects of the Trust, and for the Festival. A small grant from Creative NZ has allowed preparations to begin for 3 weekend workshops in Wellington, 16/17 August, 13/14 September, 15/16 November. At the end of November it is planned to produce 5 nights of women's performance at Taki Rua, called Not Broadcast Quality Again (NBQA) (Continues page 2)

(...From page 1)

The Magdalena Aotearoa mailing list grows daily. Copies are available for \$5.00. We thank everyone who has contributed to this newsletter, and above all, to Katrina Shieffelin for her brilliant layout and design. We look forward to receiving news of NZ women in performance, communications, articles, proposals. We urge you to subscribe. The work is still voluntary, expenses mount, so there is a form at the end of the newsletter. We thank all of you who have subscribed and those who have made generous donations. We welcome news of friends performing abroad, notices of meetings and listings of forthcoming works and tours by women artists. Next issue will be August/Sept.

We finally want to offer thanks to those who are in close communication from other centres - Caroline Robinson, Briar Monro Elizabeth Whiting and Te Kawehau Hoskins in Auckland, Jules Novena Sorrel in Hamilton, Roma Potiki in Paekakariki, Cherie Hart in Christchurch. And to all the Wellington women who have already given so much time and creativity.

And to Jill Greenhalgh in the green hills of Wales, our best wishes for the RawVisions Festival, 11-13 July in Swansea. (Moira Aberdeen and Jessica Sutherland from Wellington will be there.) If you want to reach the Magdalena Project in Cardiff at speed, they are now on e-mail:

zu83@pop.dial.pipex.com

Magdalena Aotearoa Office

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Auckland Hui Notes 28 April 1997

By Te Kawehau Hoskins

Tena koutou katoa, nga mihi whanui i runga i nga ahuatanga o te wa.

The Magdalena festival and network is the kaupapa which drew a group of around 17 women to gather at St David's church hall on a hell (wet!) Queens birthday afternoon in Tamaki Makaurau. Designers, singers, dancers, educators, directors, actors, performers, practitioners and activists who share both a passion for their work and are excited about the potential and possibilities of Magdalena turned out to explore....

Within the introductions many women expressed frustration about the lack of support and community in Auckland for theatre, especially women's theatre. Difficulties in finding work in a male dominated industry and the onerousness encountered in making works alone with little financial support or reward are common experiences. Many women feel the huge investments of time, energy, finance and passion that go in to producing works are rarely acknowledged, seen widely enough or have a longevity which makes the idea of mounting further works an absolutely exhausting prospect.

When the gathering was confronted with the question of what women 'want to do' for the festival, women quickly came to the realisation that we need to create a future for ourselves and our work in Auckland and that focusing solely to the Festival in Wellington will not begin the process of change we seek. It is felt that in order to change our situation, and in order to make the process of preparing for the festival a part of our ongoing development within our own communities, we need to invest a large part of our significant energies here.

It was also felt that before we could answer further the question of 'what are we going to do?' we needed to ask some more fundamental questions to ourselves and to the wider network. Firstly, what is/are the vision(s) and aspirations for the festival? Are there some central themes or ideas emerging? What are the politics of the festival and network? and where and how do Maori women participate within the festival? It is felt that continued discussion, debate and dialogue are essential to enabling ideas to emerge which can guide the approach and shape of the festival. It is also felt that the development of processes which are inclusive of all women is essential to enable real and meaningful dialogue and participation to happen and to further assist in the development of a women's theatre community.

A central theme/idea for Auckland women which emerged from the meeting is the desire to 'make community'. Community between and amongst women within our own area of work, but also within our communities generally. There is a clear desire to create work, and initiate projects in collaboration with our communities which reflect the identity, realities and aspirations of those communities. This approach would yield the more connected and lasting potential of work that many women feel is lacking. A community approach

could also enable the notion of theatre being politically powerful and meaningful, that women spoke about, to create not only lasting change, but lasting participation by communities in theatre as a legitimate form of expression, protest, celebration and dialogue.

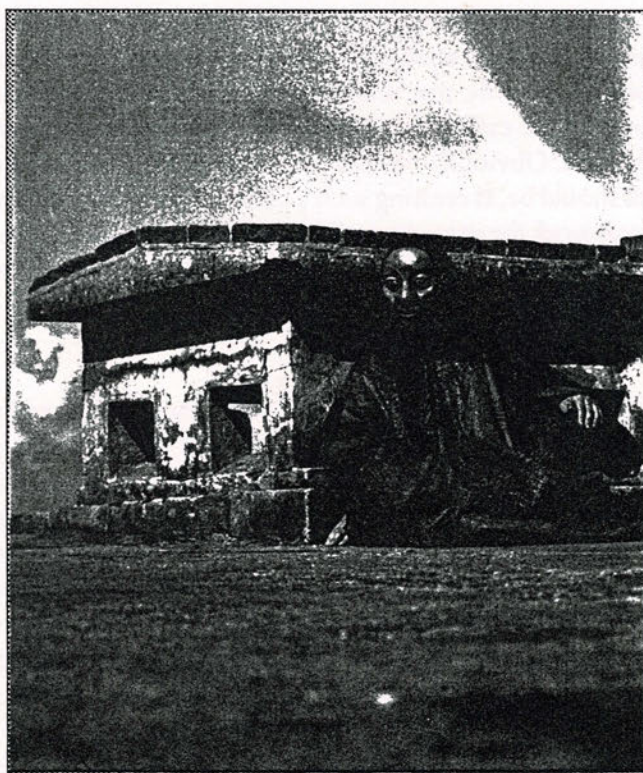
Further questions we would like to direct to the Festival organisers and to the network generally include – how will the network communicate with ourselves, provide space for continued discussion about the festival, make decisions, promote and support itself?

The Auckland group resolved to meet on the first Sunday of each month and to work inclusively, each meeting will be composed of time to dialogue and debate, to present work and do the 'business' of organising toward the festival. In this way, it is hoped decision making can remain a collective process. The task of facilitation will be shared among the group. The group has some important issues for the agenda of the next meeting which include further discussion on the role of men within meetings and the festival, the development and expression of individual, group and collective visions for the festival. We are to look particularly at our experience and needs as women in Auckland, and we aim also to explore the politics of 'bi-culturalism' and what this actually means for us and particularly within the context of the festival.

We look forward to any responses to issues and ideas presented here, and hope other groups around the country are getting into and enjoying exploring the potential of Magdalena Aotearoa.

Heoi ano

Te Kawehau Hoskins



Deborah Hunt ("Soledad" - Puerto Rico)

He Wero

The Auckland Meeting on Queens birthday weekend mandated me to write up the findings of the hui for the next Magdalena Aotearoa Newsletter. However as the only Maori woman present at the hui, there were other central issues which did not have the opportunity to be voiced. I would like to take this opportunity, through the newsletter, to now raise some of them as a challenge to us all.

Although I am aware that there are other Maori women interested and involved with this festival already, there is concern that this participation should begin as and remain foundational to the festival. (We are conscious that some discussion may have already begun in Wellington)

Maori women will need to know that there will be an open and sustained attempt to engage with the issues of power and racism which exist between Maori and pakeha women in Aotearoa today, and that these relationships do not exist outside of the festival, rather they are necessarily implicated within it. How these relationships are acknowledged, explored and reflected within the development and organisation of the festival will be central to an atmosphere of goodwill and inclusion.

This engagement will require the development of processes which can allow open participation, discussion and debate toward the establishment of appropriate working relationships. This work should also enable the festival to reflect more accurately and honestly the relationships, identities and politics that are central to our lives and experiences as women in Aotearoa. It will enable the festival to say to itself, to our communities and to the world that these issues are being engaged with, not concealed by a display which merely reflects cultural and other forms of diversity. (Continues page 4)

(...From page 3)

Although attempts will be made to begin this discussion here in Tamaki, as a national network we will need to establish processes for communication, consultation and decision making to enable the participation of all interested women.

This challenge is made in the hope it can be received and embraced by ourselves as another potential opportunity to forge real understanding, connection and alliance within and among the women's communities who will make this festival a dynamic and awesome event.

Heoi ano

Te Kawehau Hoskins

ADVERTISEMENT

Crow Station
Comes
to
Christchurch
in
September



See
page 6
for details

In Reply to Te Kawehau, some thoughts....(a summary)

From the moment Sally and I first talked with Jill Greenhalgh about the possibility of a Magdalena Project based in Aotearoa, we envisaged the participation of Maori women being integral to the festival. We don't mean just as a display of diversity, but in the terms of which Te Kawehau speaks of 'developing processes to allow the fullest participation, of 'engaging with the issues of power and racism', and 'acknowledging that these relationships are necessarily implicated with the festival and a vital feature of it'. We also have an understanding that, because of the history of this country, clear and honest relationships between Maori and Pakeha women don't just happen of their own accord. It takes genuine commitment to bring this about and to create that atmosphere of full inclusion and goodwill. We feel passionately committed to this task as does the Trust and our hope is that some of the performance work that evolves will be an expression of the complexities of this process.

During Jill's Easter visit to Wellington, we arranged a special meeting for Maori women theatre practitioners, many of whom are based in Paekakariki, to meet Jill and to hear of the work of The Magdalena Project. It was an excellent meeting with a large turnout of both Maori and Pakeha. The Maori women put forward a very strong proposal for the festival and we look forward to being able to announce it in the newsletter once they have completed the necessary consultations with community elders.

While on tour with Jill, we learned that many women in Aotearoa were very enthusiastic about being involved in a big festival in 1999, but more importantly, that women theatre practitioners throughout the country were calling for a more permanent national network to be established. Obviously we have very strong ideas about what that network should be, as creating such a network in Wellington has been part of our work for some years. They include addressing, at its heart, the important issues of racism, class, sexuality, and gender, as well as a very strong commitment to creating the conditions for the fullest participation of Maori women.

We are forming a Trust that formally sets down our aims and values, these include a commitment to working in active partnership with Maori women. We want a Trust membership that is as representative as possible. The aims of the Trust will incorporate those of The Magdalena Project in Wales but will be adapted to suit the situation of women practitioners within Aotearoa. The aims and philosophies of the Trust will shape the kind of festival we will have in 1999 and will also challenge other regions to organise along similar lines. The purpose of our work is to promote the work of women in the performing arts, to encourage innovative individual and collaborative projects, to create training opportunities, to create performance events and to host festivals, to encourage the expression of diverse theatrical forms and cultural realities, and to establish a national and international network of women in the performing arts and related areas.

Te Kawehau raised the question of how we all communicate with each other. We agree that this is another vital area and one of the reasons we are committed to producing this newsletter 4 times a year. It will be a place to write about activities in all the regions, for dialogue, a place for updates on projects, for listings, information, and anything else that arises.

We are organising a series of four workshops for the next 12 months and would like to do a national workshop tour early next year and meet with women from the different regions at the same time. As the project develops we will find more efficient and effective ways of communicating.

We were very excited to hear about the way things are progressing with regard to establishing an Auckland based women's theatre network. This seems to us a very fine way to proceed as it is necessary to establish local networks before we can really establish a strong national network. Once this is under way in Auckland and other places we can begin to discuss ways in which the festival can meet everyone's needs. We welcome all proposals for the festival. The size of it will be dependent on our skills at fundraising. The vision for it will take shape through the guidance of the trustees, through the group meetings, regional meetings, and through works and projects offered by women throughout Aotearoa New Zealand.

Madeline McNamara & Sally Rodwell

Regional News

Auckland

Letter from Louise Majic

To me, The Magdalena Project is an opportunity for women to join together, as individuals offering their various and diverse skills, knowledge and wisdom.

The offering and giving within a group assists in generating a power and energy helping us reach our goals. Sometimes its just too overwhelming for one woman, when in pursuit of fulfilling her dreams and desires, to go it alone. If we all help throw wood on the fire the flames will burn long and high, the heat will be a comfort to us all.

It is a wonderful and powerful feeling realizing your work. Be it; performance, dance, plays, standup comedy, exhibitions, installations, publications, web sites, screaming out and demanding to be heard.

Sometimes though, I find myself saying, where are all my sisters. I walk my own path, with my dreams and schemes. That's my choice. In my work I follow my heart always. I come into this group from that path to offer my skills, knowledge and wisdom. To lessen my load, share with others.

This is for me an exciting and challenging project. To offer women a place to perform their rituals, cast their spells, to heal and humour, sing and chant.

Power to Magdalena. Power to us.



Louise Majic
28-04-97

Hamilton



ROTA FORTUNA

produced by
Jules Novena Sorrel for
Corso Hamilton

Corso Hamilton presents Rota Fortuna, a richly interwoven carousel of images featuring human trees, mad inventions, angels, stilt walking animals and singing piles of rubbish.

Rota Fortuna has been created over three months in a collaborative process where individual ideas and images are collaged together. This began in May with a series of workshops held by Corso in stilting, costume design, puppetry and sculpture. The main focus of the ideas are environmental and justice issues.

The interpretation of these issues using costume, mask and dance becomes surreal and engaging. Intriguing characters juxtapose the serious with the silly and the sublime with the nasty. Justice and fate preside over the game of life, hence the association with Fota Fortuna - the wheel of fortune.

An unusual aspect of the performance is that the audience will be seated centre stage in order to fully experience the magical revolutions and revelations of Rota Fortuna.

Performance at:

The Meteor
Hamilton
25 - 27 July

Tickets: \$8 unwaged,
\$10 waged
\$5 children

Bookings Ph: 384 2472

Contact person:

Jules Novena Sorrel Ph: 82 [redacted]

Christchurch

Performance

CROW STATION
by the TOADLILIES

The Free Theatre
Christchurch
23-27 September

Wellington

Workshops

- 16/17 August - performance skills
physical & self-devised,
rhythm & voice
Venue - NZ Drama School
Toi Whakaari
- 13/14 September - street
theatre and ritual
Venue - Taki Rua
- 15/16 November - shaping
work for performance
Venue - Taki Rua

Performance

Not Broadcast Quality

A Festival of Women's Performance
25 - 29 November
Taki Rua
Wellington

Short Film

**World Premiere
of
SHOES**

by Sally Rodwell and
Robin Nathan, at Auckland &
Wellington Film Festivals

- Auckland July 11, 11.15 am
July 12, 7.15 pm
St James
- Wellington July 18, 2.00pm
July 19, 7.30pm
Embassy

(It shows with the Czech feature, Kolya)

There are a remarkable number of
films directed by women at this year's
Film Festivals, including features by

Yvonne Rainer, Su Friedrich, Rebecca Feig, Fina Torres (her film is preceded by Fiona Samuel's "Song of the Siren"), Deepa Mehta, Clara Law, Jane C Wagner/Tina DeFelicianantonio, Rivka Hartman, Claire Denis, Heddy Honigmann, Danielle Gardner, Samantha Lang, Sandrine Veysset. There are short films by NZ women at the Fringe Festival, and documentaries by local directors, Andrea Bosshard and Halina Ogonowska-Coates.

In a report (17 June 1997) of the recent New York Women's Film Festival, figures from the Directors Guild of America show just 6% of all directing jobs last year went to women, and most of these were in TV! Let's support films directed by women in the Film Festivals.

ABROAD

• Several women from Aotearoa are attending the 4th International Women Playwrights' Conference in Galway: Briar Grace-Smith, Linda Chanwai Earle, Jo Randerson, Pip Hall, Norelle Scott, Sue Wilson, Rachel House, Nicola Murphy, Moira Aberdeen.

• Sara McDougall's play, *Up the Duff*, is going to the Edinburgh Festival. That's how Jessica Sutherland gets to slip in to *Raw Visions* in Swansea. As does Moira, from Galway!

• Cathy Downes (NZ actor/director/telephone donor) is developing a one-woman play with Australian performer, Deborah Cheetham, *WHITE BAPTIST ABBA FAN*. It is the intensely personal, autobiographical story of Deborah, an adopted, aboriginal, gay opera singer, and her journey towards truth, belonging and fulfilment. With songs from operas, the work premieres at The Festival of Dreaming, Sydney Opera House Sept 30 - Oct 4 1997

• Wellington actor Jenny Ludlam is working with legendary Australian Sue Ingleton. Their two-women show, *The Sunday Roast*, a satire set in 1961, features two old blokes, R S A types, played by Ludlam and Ingleton. They received rave reviews at the recent Melbourne Festival, and will be at the Arts Festival in Wellington, March 1998.

News of performing friends who are overseas and much missed:

London - Katarina Governor



Katarina

One of Wellington's favourite musicians, composer of songs and producer of radio, Katarina is DJ-ing in London. This summer she is travelling with a group in Europe, presenting *Pacific Funk* in Paris and Rome, and blasting Berlin with their show "*Nga Awa: Rivers*," a mix of spoken word and rap commentary with traditional songs and instruments. Katarina writes that she misses the vibe of Wellington. We reply: we miss you.

New York - Susan Leiutaua

Playing in *Lysistrata* in Washington Square Park, acting in *Tigrella*, a Brazilian film with all-women cast and crew, and managing a neighbourhood Irish bar in Queens, these are ways Susan Leiutaua supports her acting studies in New York. At the same time she is creating a solo show called "Faitala", which we hope will play at the Magdalena Aotearoa Festival in '99.

San Francisco - Olive Bieringa

Wellington dancer, Olive is currently working with a dance collective in San Francisco, called Thicket. A Creative NZ grant will allow her to attend workshops in contact improvisation. She returns for Xmas to collaborate with Deirdre Tarrant on a piece with the working title, "Figures in Motion".

Puerto Rico - Deborah Hunt



(Soledad - Puerto Rico)

NZ Mask-maker and performer, Deborah Hunt, currently living in San Juan, Puerto Rico, is making the third part of her trilogy, "Birds: Anatomy of Flight".

This part, called "Against the Wind," is a collaboration with trapeze artist, Nikki Byrd. The first parts are "Soledad" and "Door to Door". Deb will bring the trilogy to the Magdalena Aotearoa Festival 1999.

Sydney - Jan Preston

Song-writer and composer, Jan Preston was back in Wellington last month, performing her solo show of songs, stories and poems, all woven together with some spectacular piano-playing. Her latest songs are available on a CD called "Accomplices".

Italy - Emily Buttle

Emily is a co-creator of visual dramas with Jules Novena Sorrel. Currently she is stilt-walking solo across Europe. Jules writes about her:

"Emily Buttle is a performer and artist from Dunedin who is now living and working in Europe. Before leaving New Zealand in early 1996 Emily had just finished performing at the Wellington Fringe Festival.

She has been making costumes, painting and performing in her own self-devised and directed theatrical work for at least five years. Her style is highly innovative, energetic and positive.

As a person Emily never ceases to search and grow in her work, to question the mundane and challenges that which is acceptable. Far from being harsh and alienating her paintings, costume and performance are most often warm, humorous, engaging and intensely colourful.

Emily's reasons for going to Europe were to meet the challenge of performing to larger audiences and to work beyond the safe enclosures of the New Zealand performing scene.



Emily busking outside Koln Cathedral

She was also interested in bringing the unique quality of the New Zealand artistic community into a different context.

To make a living as a performer in New Zealand is very difficult, but with greater population numbers in Europe it seems a realistic possibility. Emily has found it difficult but has also opened herself to some incredible challenges and adventures.

On first arriving in England Emily entered the dance/techno scene performing on stilts. Emily has been able to sustain a meagre living wage from weekly performances in an Italian club and by busking in the local piazza. She performs solo on stilts with her major strengths being her dynamic costumes and the positive characters she creates.

Having recently performed at the Venetian Carnivale and received overwhelming enthusiasm by public and press, Emily when last heard of was making plans to tour Europe for the summer festivals."



Painting by Emily Buttle

This newsletter was prepared in Wellington by Sally Rodwell, Madeline McNamara & Katrina Shieffelin.

Thanks to all contributors.

Deadline for next newsletter:
31 August 1997

Performers Wanted



Performers are needed for New Zealand's first National Street Theatre Festival to be held in Hamilton from November 24 - 30.

PARTICIPANTS MUST:

- Be registered by 31 August.
- Supply a list of people involved, 2 contact phone numbers and 1 address.
- Supply an outline of your performance, biographical details of performers and preferably publicity photos by closing date

Call the Festival Coordinator

PH: 07 82 [REDACTED]

or write to:

National Street Theatre Festival
PO Box 9437
Hamilton

Meeting Dates

Wellington

Tuesday July 8th 6-8pm

Magdalena Aotearoa Offices

Trades Hall

126 Vivian St

ph 385 0777

(And thereafter the first Tuesday of every month)

Auckland

Sunday 6th July 2-4pm

20A Minnie St

Eden Tee

ph Caroline [REDACTED]

(And thereafter the first Sunday of every month)

If you intend to subscribe to

Magdalena Aotearoa

why not do it now

Using the enclosed subscription Form

Women who run away to the circus

THE
DOMINION
28/6/97

WOMEN'S CIRCUS: Leaping Off the Edge (Spinifex Press, \$36.95) is a record, or as the Circus Women claim a "herstory", of this amazing community arts project which started in Melbourne in 1991. The philosophy of the circus can be summarised as "feminist survival"; women who have been the victim of sexual assault are particularly encouraged to join the all-women circus for rehabilitation of trust and strength. I enjoyed this collage of commitment and enthusiasm, but the writing and photography could not fully convey the sheer, vibrant physicality of the circus. A video of the circus's shows, now that would be perfect!

□□□

Work Wanted:

Briar Munro is interested in production or direction work in Wellington between August and November 1997.

She is currently working on a collaboration with Shona McCullough for the International Arts Festival.

Phone Auckland: 09 83 [REDACTED]

Performances at Artspace

29 - 30th July 1997 - 7pm

by Latin American performing

artists, Coco Fusco & Nao

Bustamante; "STUFF"

Talk

31 July - The artists speak
about their work

300 Karangahape Road
Auckland

Details Ph: 09 3 [REDACTED]



Visit us soon!