

Regional News

Eyes on Burlington

Issue 268
May 19, 2026



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News

All the world's a stage



King Lear by Newlands College at the regional festival. Photo by Memory of Light.

This year, over 4000 students performed 600 scenes from Shakespeare's plays across 23 regional festivals as part of the Shakespeare Globe Centre New Zealand (SGCNZ) competition.

Now, taking place over King's Birthday weekend, Wellington's streets will be Buzzing with the Bard as 50 scenes selected from the regional festivals are brought to the capital as part of the national festival, marking the SGCNZ's 35th year. These scenes will be performed by hundreds of students at the St James Theatre on Saturday the 30th and Sunday the 31st of May.

400 years on, and the words of Shakespeare's plays continue to ring true, dealing with the same universal truths and struggles as the youth of today experience: power, greed, deceit, jealousy, love, laughter, and hope.

"Students from schools, homeschool clusters, and community youth drama groups will perform bold, contemporary takes on Shakespeare's work, filtered through today's language, politics, humour, and social realities", says SGCNZ CEO and founder Dawn Sanders.

Students will perform five and 15-minute scenes throughout both days in front of an audience who get to witness Shakespeare's eternal texts come to life, expressed through body language, physicality, and interaction. The scenes will be judged by three assessors, who will select 46 students to attend the SGCNZ National Shakespeare Schools Production intensive course later this year. 24 students from this group are selected to travel to London for further artistic development at the Globe Theatre.

SGCNZ festivals are the largest youth-led cultural events in the country. Part sponsored by Te Herenga Waka University of Wellington, it is a launchpad for young actors. One of the three assessors, Professor Sarah Ross from Te Herenga Waka says, "Four centuries on, Shakespeare isn't being preserved behind glass. He's being remixed, respoken, and reowned by teenagers who recognise themselves in his characters and aren't afraid to make the stories their own,"

The perfect way to spend the long weekend, head along to witness the immense talent of Aotearoa youth theatre, and dive into Shakespeare's profound insight into human nature.

¡Bailemos!



Photo by Augustine Photography.

The largest event celebrating Latin music, dance, and culture is taking over Te Whaea Dance & Drama Centre over King's Birthday weekend from the 29th to the 31st of May.

New Zealand Salsa Congress is in its 19th year, growing into Aotearoa's premier salsa and bachata festival, offering up two days of workshops, masterclasses for instructors, performances from some of the world's greatest Latin dance talent, and of course, three huge nights of parties, including the Grand Latin Ball with multiple dance rooms and DJs going late into the night.

Salsa Congress attracts dancers, performers, and spectators from across the motu, from all ages and backgrounds, who descend upon the venue to take part in the vibrant programme either as experienced dancers, complete beginners, or sideline supporters.

This year's international headline features guests Inwoo Choi from South Korea, one of Asia's most respected salsa artists; Gonzalo and Jarianny from Chile, globally celebrated and award-winning dancers; Daniel Camacho and Saren from Ecuador and Singapore who are the current SBTA Asia Open Bachata champions; Samuel Funflow from Spain who is a World Salsa Champion, famous for his innovative fusion of salsa, bachata, zouk, and urban movement; and other incredible talents from Australia and New Zealand.

More than dance, Salsa Congress is a celebration of culture, fostering community and connection. Whether you're a salsa expert or salsa curious, know the steps to bachata or want to be wowed as a spectator, head along to Te Whaea for an unforgettable weekend. ¡Bailemos! Let's dance!

Cover: *Heathers The Musical*

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What's the damage, Heather?



Welcome to Westerberg High, where popularity is a matter of life and death.

Smash-hit *Heathers The Musical* is set to take over The Opera House in Pōneke between the 28th of May and the 7th of June. Based on the 1988 cult favourite film of the same name, the killer comedy musical follows Veronica Sawyer (performed by Emma Caporaso), another nobody dreaming of a better day until she is unexpectedly taken in by a trio of cool girls, all named Heather. When teen rebel J.D. (performed by Conor Beaumont) arrives, Veronica soon learns it might kill to be a nobody, but it's a murder being somebody.

The film famously takes high school hierarchies to their extremes, and the high-octane, black-comedy musical version is no different. With a mercilessly catchy mix of ballads and bangers from award-winning writers Kevin Murphy (*Desperate Housewives*) and Laurence O'Keefe (*Legally Blonde The Musical*), *Heathers* first premiered in 2013 in front of a sold-out house in Los Angeles, and has since enjoyed record-breaking seasons in both London and New York.

Directed by acclaimed American screen and stage director Andy Fickman, this is the first time the musical has headed down under, replete with an Australasian cast. Taking on the Heathers are Tauranga-born Calista Nemes, tying up her locks in the iconic red scrunchie of queen bee Heather Chandler, Tāmaki Makaurau-born Amélia Rojas playing her sidekick Heather Duke, and Australian actress Abigail Sharp making her debut mainstage performance as Heather McNamara.

"We can't wait to share this twistedly heartfelt story", Fickman says. "It's a show that deals with love, heartache, sadness, defying expectations, and being true to yourself."

Don your most colourful scrunchies, blazers, and knee-high socks, grab your croquet mallet and a packet of Corn Nuts, and see you in class at Westerberg High.

Thought-provoking nonsense

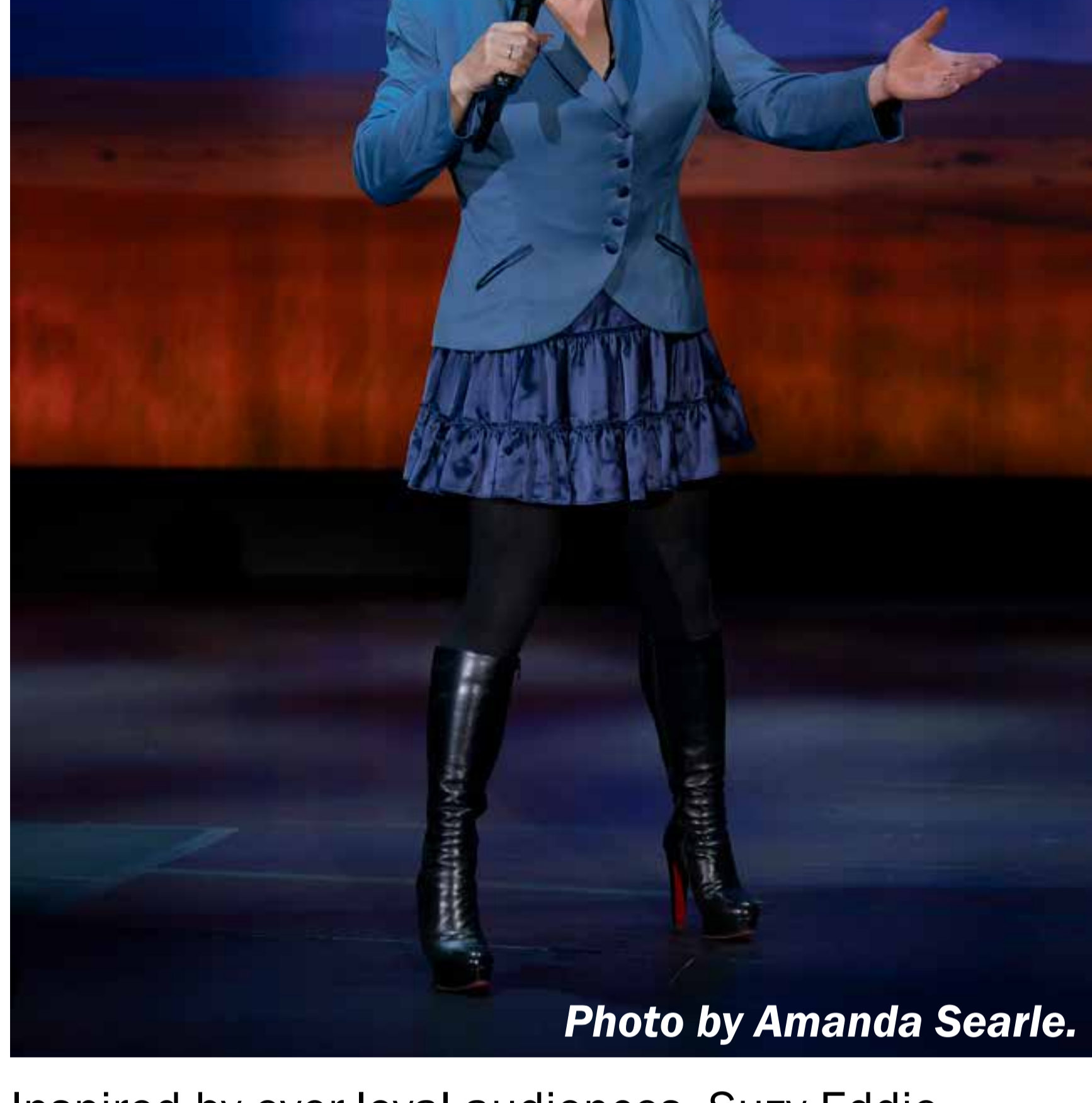


Photo by Amanda Searle.

Inspired by ever-loyal audiences, Suzy Eddie Izzard has re-imagined her own favourite comedy highlights from over three decades of sell-out shows into the Remix Tour, which stops off at Wellington's Michael Fowler Centre on the 24th of May.

"In the first 35 years of my stand-up career I came up with many weird and crazy comedy stories," Izzard says. "The ones I like the best will be in my live Remix Tour."

Iconic moments like the Death Star Canteen sketch (what ever happened to Darth Vader and Mr Stevens?) and how to slip the weird phrases you learn in French class casually into conversation will be brought back to life as Izzard hilariously journeys through years of thought-provoking nonsense.

Hailed as the foremost stand-up of a generation, the star of the stage and screen, philanthropist, multi-marathon runner, political campaigner, fashion icon, and out-the-gate human has enjoyed a career of record-breaking comedy tours and critically acclaimed film, TV, and theatre performances. Izzard made her West End debut in 1993 with *Live at the Ambassadors*, which received an Olivier Award nomination for Outstanding Achievement, fanning the wind beneath her sails with subsequent smash hits the likes of *Unrepeatable*, *Definite Article*, *Glorious*, *Dress to Kill*, *Circle*, *Sexie*, *Stripped*, *Wunderbar*, and *Force Majeure*, which became the most extensive comedy tour ever, playing in over 45 countries and in all 50 US states.

Whether you've rewatched her sketches over and over again or you're yet to hear a single word come out of her mouth, the Remix Tour should be approached like any Izzard show that has come before: by expecting the unexpected.

SNIPS

Fares increase

On the 15th of May, Metlink public transport fares increased by 3.1 percent and the off-peak Snapper fare discount reduced from 30 to 20 percent. The cost of a three-zone trip increased by 14 cents, bringing the peak adult Snapper fare to \$4.67 for those travelling to the CBD from Miramar or Karori. For passengers travelling by train from Masterton to Wellington, the adult Snapper fare rose by 56 cents to \$18.50 at peak times.

New roundabout

The new roundabout at the Flightys and Murphys Road intersection in Judgeford on State Highway 58 has opened. Drivers will need to follow new give-way rules. Meanwhile, construction continues on the new Moonshine Road roundabout further along the highway.

Kiwi calling

On Monday the 15th of June from 6pm to 8pm NZST, the call of the kiwi will be broadcast live from a remote valley in Te Pēwhairangi Bay of Islands to listeners all over the world. Tune in at www.ngamanuhuna.nz

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News

Like fire and powder



Li-Wei Qin. Photo by Hans Goh.

One of the greatest love stories comes to life at New Zealand Symphony Orchestra's *Romeo & Juliet*. Wooing and wowing Michael Fowler audiences on the 5th of June, the intensely lyrical concert will feature internationally acclaimed cellist Li-Wei Qin performing the works of Samuel Barber and Sergei Prokofiev, and Kiwi composer Kenneth Young.

Opening the concert is Young's sweetly nostalgic *Douce Tristesse*. Young, a former NZSO principal tuba and conductor-in-residence, is one of New Zealand's best-known and performed composers.

Barber's richly expressive Cello Concerto, known for being technically demanding for even the most experienced soloist, will be performed by Li-Wei Qin, a Chinese-born Australian virtuoso praised for a sound that is "incisive and searing, yet filled with tenderness" (*Straits Times*).

He loves the cello's versatility. "It can portray the lovely, flighty melodies of the soprano, the throaty tenor, and the tension of the dramatic bass. It's wonderful as the soloist and the accompanist."

Leading selections from Prokofiev's groundbreaking and beloved ballet score *Romeo and Juliet* is acclaimed Australian conductor Benjamin Northey. From the courtly grandeur of the irresistible *Dance of the Knights* to the circling, slicing energy of *Death of Tybalt*, with luminous melodies capturing the lovers' enduring story, it has been one of the most popular and performed classical works.

Get swept up in the passion, the tumult, and the intensity of it all at *Romeo & Juliet*.

Moon landing



How to Human.

Three live, loud, slightly unhinged local bands will crash land at Moon Bar in Newtown on Saturday the 23rd of May. How To Human, Because Robots, and Axis Moon will all make a craterous impact in *The Real Moon Landing*.

Lars Von Espy, vocalist of the organising band How to Human, says the inspiration for the event was to put on a killer live rock show while helping to build up newer acts on the scene.

"Both Axis Moon and Because Robots are relatively new on the circuit, and we're always keen to play with bands that are hungry to gain more live experience and get more gigs under their belt. Bringing together emerging artists with strong energy felt like the perfect way to create a memorable night."

The beauty of the lineup is that the bands each bring something completely different to the table, Von Espy continues.

"How To Human are very loud, intense, and in-your-face, with music rooted in social commentary and a harder edge that's designed to challenge the listener. Axis Moon lean more into a grunge-inspired rock sound, while Because Robots bring an experimental noise-rock element to the night."

With all three delivering astronomical energy on stage, the result will be "exciting, unpredictable, and most importantly, a really good time".

"The audience is going to experience a wide spectrum of sounds and energy across the night, so there's genuinely something for everyone."

Swirl, shred, thrill



Photo by Max Miechowski.

Dry Cleaning are “like no other band you’ve seen”. Praised by critics as one of the most intelligent and exciting live acts to come out of the UK, the GRAMMY® Award-winning post-punk quartet shot to prominence in 2019 for their poetic yet unconventional lyrics, delivered as spoken word rather than sung vocals. They burst, burning and bright, onto the scene with the likes of “Anyway I had been swinging for / hours trying to reach higher and / higher, and I felt like the king of / the universe / Everything was so easy / Everyone was alive, and they / looked so happy / I miss my grandmother” from their debut EP *Sweet Princess*. Behind the lyrics, alt-rock riffs swirl, shred, and thrill.

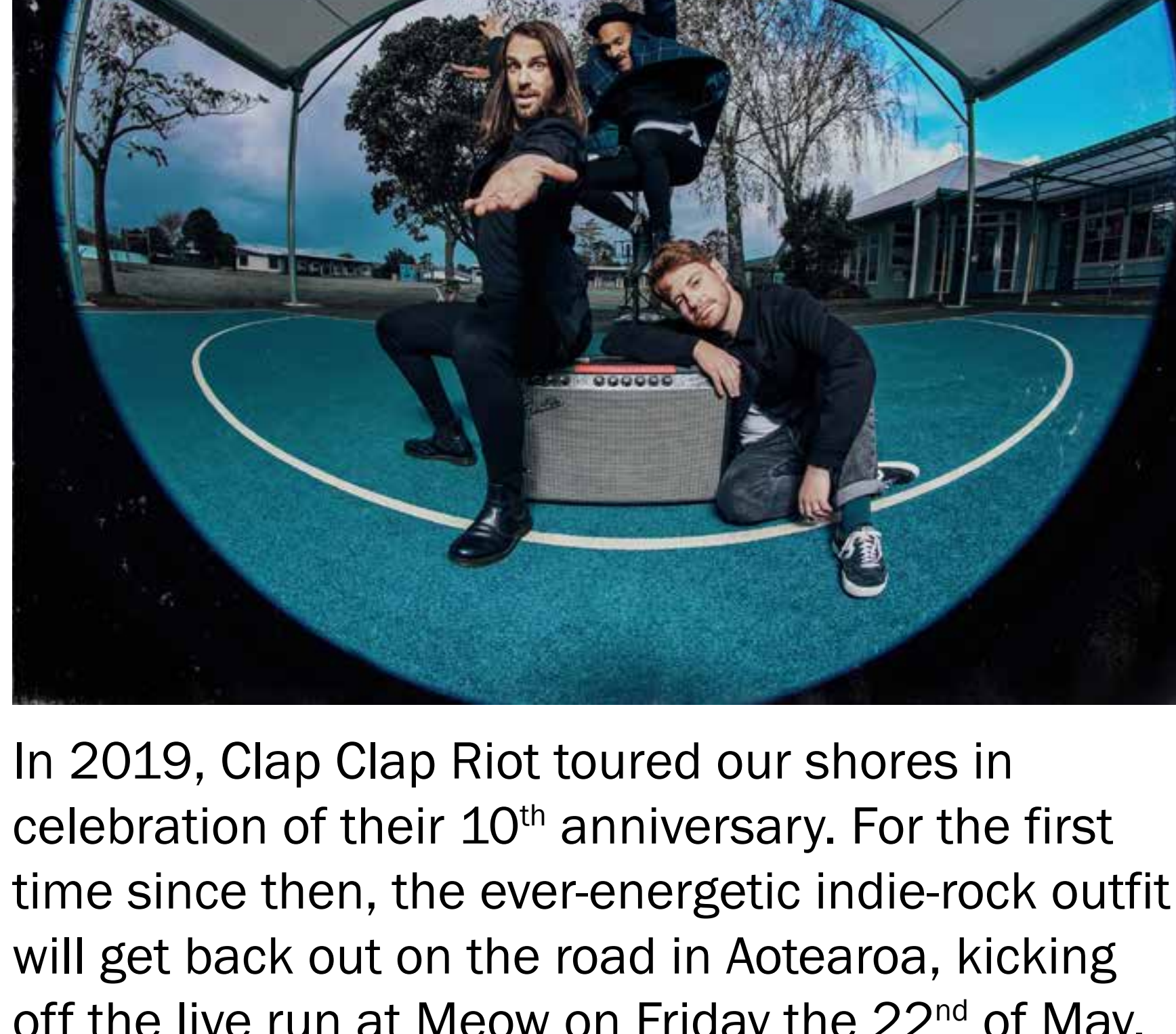
Vocalist and lyricist Florence Shaw, guitarist Tom Dowse, bassist Lewis Maynard, and drummer Nick Buxton will make their long-awaited return to Australia and New Zealand this autumn: their first visit since their sold-out debut tour in 2022.

With support from dream-pop trio Womb – Cello Forrester, Haz Forrester, and Georgette Brown – they’ll play Meow Nui on the 2nd of June in celebration of their 2026 album *Secret Love*.

Described as “newly expansive” by *The Guardian*, Dry Cleaning’s third studio album is a collection of “strikingly odd lyrics” depicting “distinctive tales of mundane lives spiralling out of control”. Produced by Welsh musician Cate Le Bon, *Secret Love* follows 2021’s debut *New Long Leg* and 2022’s *Stumpwork* and proves why the band is, put simply, “one of a kind” (*NME*).

BYO fire extinguisher

by **Madelaine Empson**



In 2019, Clap Clap Riot toured our shores in celebration of their 10th anniversary. For the first time since then, the ever-energetic indie-rock outfit will get back out on the road in Aotearoa, kicking off the live run at Meow on Friday the 22nd of May.

“We are all such close friends so getting out on the road together is a lovely time for us to reconnect with each other as well as our terrific fans”, guitarist Dave Rowlands says when I ask what the band are most looking forward to about the upcoming tour. “We are so excited to be able to return to Christchurch and Wellington in particular, as those cities have always been so good to us out on the road. Wellington is one of our favourite places to play in the whole country.”

Rowlands says they’ve been kept busy since their last visit. He’s been out touring the world playing with Fazerdaze and Georgia Lines, frontman Stephen Heard is a travel writer, bassist Tristan Colenso is a sommelier, and they’ve completed a new record together to boot. In fact, the tour aligns with their latest raw and catchy single *Like a Lover*.

Playing a mix of new songs and old classics that champion their signature blend of infectious guitar hooks and sharp-edged rock, Rowlands says Clap Clap Riot bring the passion and energy every time they play, giving their all on stage.

“Expect to wear out your dancing shoes and officially let your hair down. The shows are firecracker.”

Fanning the flame

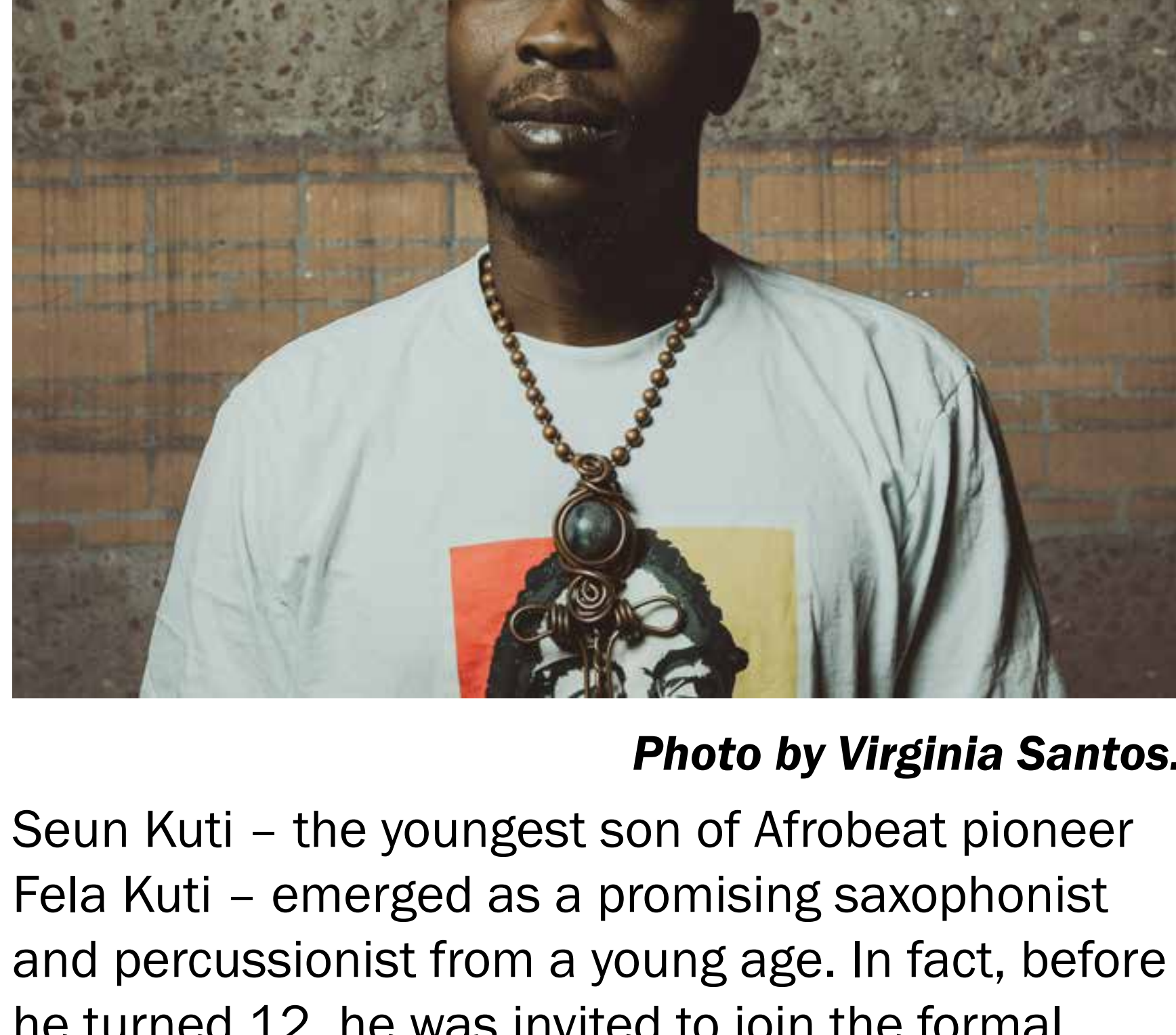


Photo by Virginia Santos.

Seun Kuti – the youngest son of Afrobeat pioneer Fela Kuti – emerged as a promising saxophonist and percussionist from a young age. In fact, before he turned 12, he was invited to join the formal ranks of Fela’s band Egypt 80. Seun took up the mantle of bandleader when Fela passed in 1997 and has been running the band ever since, just as his father wished.

Today, the Nigerian musician, singer, and songwriter is renowned for his captivating performances and socially conscious music.

He has spent most of his life preserving and extending his father’s musical and political legacy, including reviving the Movement of the People (M.O.P.), a political party Fela set up in 1979 that was quashed by the military government not long after his failed presidential bid. As well as being involved in such campaigns and social movements as #OccupyNigeria and #EndSARS in recent years, Seun has released five albums with Egypt 80:

Many Things (2008), *From Africa with Fury: Rise* (2011), *A Long Way to the Beginning* (2014), the GRAMMY® Award-nominated *Black Times* (2018), and 2024’s highly anticipated *Heavier Yet (Lays The Crownless Head)*.

In May last year, the band unveiled the deluxe edition of *Heavier Yet (Lays The Crownless Head)*, where Seun expands the sonic and political scope of the original into a compelling suite of remixes, reworkings, and new collaborations. The result is a work of resistance, empowerment, and cultural pride that “keeps his father’s Afrobeat flame burning, with a funk twist” (*The Guardian*).

It is in celebration of this album, executive produced by Lenny Kravitz, that Seun Kuti and Egypt 80 will play Meow Nui on Sunday the 31st of May.

Love, loss, and loneliness



With “sweetness that would warm the coldest of hearts” (*Tearaway Magazine*), Emma Kate crafts comfort pop that encapsulates heartbreak, change, and coming of age. The Wellington-based singer-songwriter and guitarist has been coming up on the scene lately, having spent a summer playing at local venues and the likes of Gardens Magic and CubaDupa, and now releases her debut EP *Autumn*.


“Moments in time are inevitable and inescapable, like the seasons”, Kate explains. “For me, autumn has always been a season where I’ve experienced the most change. I spent autumn last year alone, with countless nights crying, contemplating what I was doing with my life, and pouring those feelings into journals. And thus, *Autumn* was born.”

The fluid work captures Kate’s most pivotal and sentimental experiences to date, just as she’d always hoped for her first EP. Exploring the highs and lows of her early twenties through ballads and bangers alike, with an acoustic guitar serving as the throughline, *Autumn* reflects on how growing up can be exciting and hopeful in one breath, yet difficult and isolating the next.

Kate wrote every song on the largely self-produced EP, which also features production from longtime collaborator Adam Cameron and local artist Flynn Adamson.

“Reflecting upon writing and producing these songs, I am also incredibly grateful I get to have creative control and tell my life stories in a way where it can be passed down through generations, but also reach and connect with people in the present.”

Embarking on her first-ever headline tour this May – yes, this autumn – Kate will celebrate the new release in an intimate live performance at the Vogelmorn Upstairs on Thursday the 28th of May.

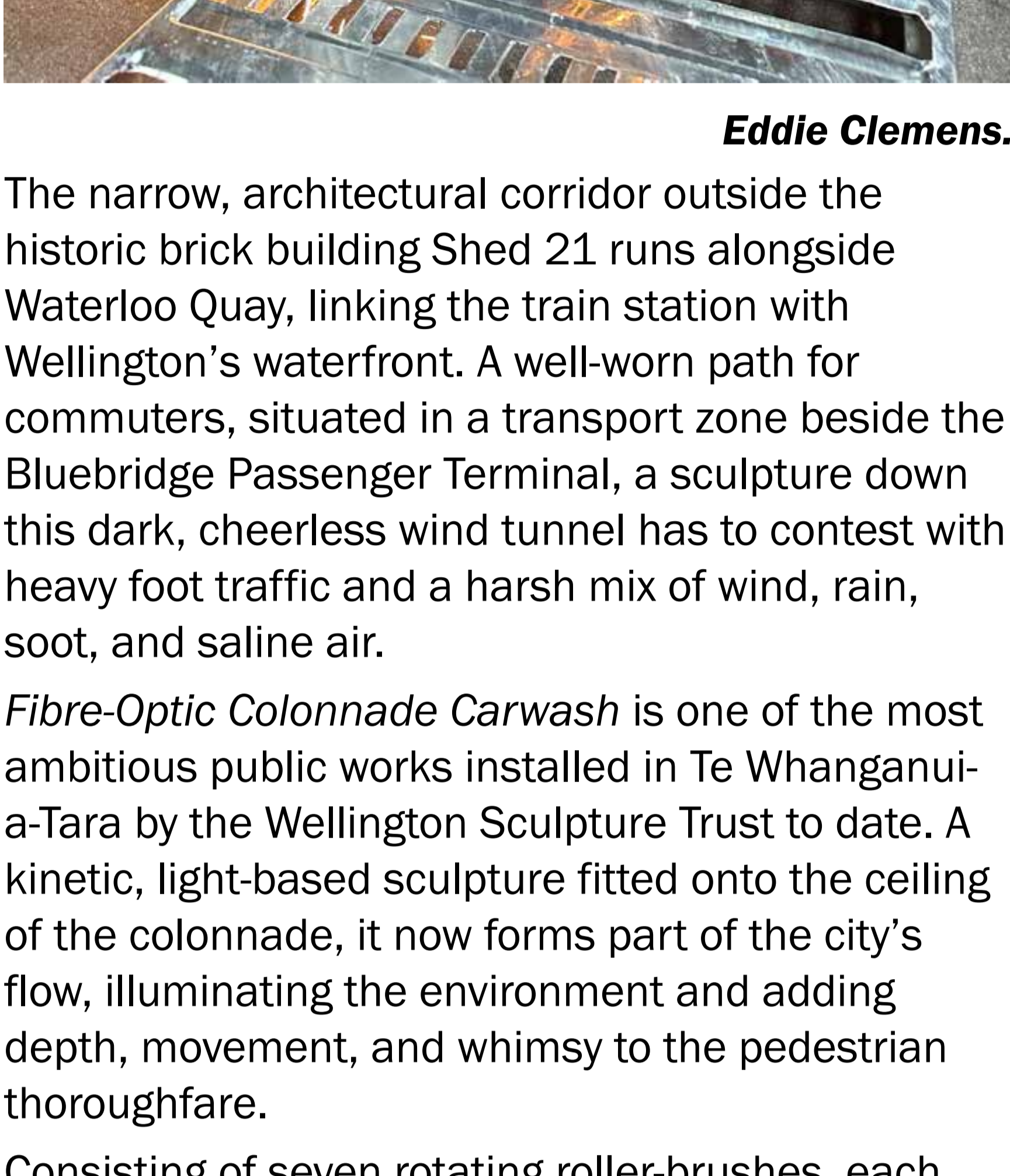
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Fibre-Optic Colonnade Carwash

In this new series, Isabella Smith meets the artists behind the sculptures dotted around our city.



Photo courtesy of Wellington Sculpture Trust.



Eddie Clemens.

The narrow, architectural corridor outside the historic brick building Shed 21 runs alongside Waterloo Quay, linking the train station with Wellington's waterfront. A well-worn path for commuters, situated in a transport zone beside the Bluebridge Passenger Terminal, a sculpture down this dark, cheerless wind tunnel has to contest with heavy foot traffic and a harsh mix of wind, rain, soot, and saline air.

Fibre-Optic Colonnade Carwash is one of the most ambitious public works installed in Te Whanganui-a-Tara by the Wellington Sculpture Trust to date. A kinetic, light-based sculpture fitted onto the ceiling of the colonnade, it now forms part of the city's flow, illuminating the environment and adding depth, movement, and whimsy to the pedestrian thoroughfare.

Consisting of seven rotating roller-brushes, each containing 1000 programmed LED strips and side and tip-glowing fibre-optic cables, the sculpture behaves like a carwash, washing commuters in moving patterns of light and colour.

The seven brushes are programmed as one synchronised system, unfolding through chapters of animation and movement. As the drums rotate and the light shifts across the full length of the colonnade, commuters experience something akin to the physical and perceptual sensation of being inside a car wash: the apparent motion of the surrounding environment.

Tāmaki Makaurau-based artist Eddie Clemens has been working with kinetic sculpture since the late 1990s. With no formal training as an electrician, the creation and installment of this mechanically and technically complex work involved many hats and a huge amount of experimentation, troubleshooting, and collaboration with industrial designers, electricians, engineers, construction workers, programmers, animation artists, council, residents, and of course, The Wellington Sculpture Trust.

Clemens and his long-time collaborators Mitchell Hughes and Dave Branton developed a custom web-based system to run the sculpture which controlled both the animated light programme as well as the motor speed and direction of the fibre-optic brushes. Each were programmed to their own rhythm, allowing for the moving light images to be synchronised with the movement of the drums. "I was interested in that alignment", he says. "The sense that light, motion, and structure are all moving together."

Cinema has always been a reference point in Clemens' work, "How objects can hold a narrative charge without resolving into a fixed story." With the fibre-optic rollers mounted in a row above people who pass through the long, narrow corridor, it is as though they are walking through a fixed scene, with the colonnade becoming "a kind of camera path," and the viewer becoming "both the audience and the thing being washed through the image".

The sculpture is also concerned with time and subjectivity. Programmed to run at peak commuter times, the public only view it in fragments. Witnessing only a moment of the colourful animations, they might be caught awash in a pink glow, or behold lights flood down the corridor in a multi-coloured tide. One of the chapters is an expanding colour field that slowly washes through different colours in the same direction as the brushes rotate.

"I work conceptually and technically in a hand-in-glove way" Clemens says. "From the outset, I wanted full control over the supporting electrical infrastructure because I see it as part of the work rather than something separate". Being able to see the mechanations and practical aspects in the work is part of its philosophy.

"With *Fibre-Optic Colonnade Car Wash*, everything is overhead, but it has been designed so it can be accessed by an elevated work platform, and all components are waterproof-rated for the exposed waterfront environment. I have left parts relatively exposed, in a high-tech architectural fashion, so that preventive maintenance is easier in the future. After all, it is a car wash – it is designed around the idea of maintenance."

Down in Pōneke for six weeks he worked long days on-site in volatile spring weather, having brought tools and all the sculpture's components down in a 40-foot container. Together with Peak Electrical, he laid several kilometres of cabling and connected all eight electrical boxes, which had been pre-built and wired in his studio in Auckland.

A huge amount of industrial design, product, and technical testing was done before reaching the site. It was a "long ordeal of assembly and troubleshooting" particularly around electrical and electromagnetic interference, with Clemens "dealing with powerful electrical systems sitting alongside very sensitive control and signal systems. So much of that process came down to trying, adjusting, and testing things in real time until the whole setup behaved reliably."

Reading *Frankenstein* during its development, he felt a shared kinship in the bringing of a complex system to life, "blow by blow" as he "chased glitches through the system".

City Gallery Wellington Te Whare Toi senior curator Aaron Lister says, "Eddie Clemens is a total maverick. His sci-fi-tinged work is meta in its range of references and operations. This kinetic light sculpture comes from a line of glowing fibre-optic brooms and hand scrubbers, of materialised fences and bridges that are put to work in and on specific spaces. His transformation of a dingy pedestrian colonnade into a fibre-optic, automatic tunnel car wash that is to be walked (not driven) through is out-of-the box brilliant thinking. It perfectly marries concept, a decade's practice, and technology – all turned towards the specific dynamics of a very challenging site."

The sculpture runs every day during peak pedestrian times: on weekdays between 7am and 9am, 12am and 1pm, 3:30pm and 6:30pm, 8pm and 11pm, and for 10 minutes on the hour in between those times until 11pm, and on the weekends between 11am and 2pm, and 8pm and 11pm.



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An arresting odyssey



Modern God makes the internet incarnate. Straddling the realms of contemporary dance and physical theatre, Footnote New Zealand Dance's critically acclaimed show delves into the intricate web of global internet culture and the complexity of the online world in a return season at Circa Theatre until the 23rd of May.

Six influencers take the stage in this high-powered satirical performance. Through text, dance, and three cell phones, the characters relentlessly create content for their online platform and social media channels – reviewing the latest beauty product, fielding online trolls, getting cancelled, filming an ad for hand sanitiser. *Modern God* dissects our interaction with the digital world, while capturing its absurdity, speed, and mounting danger.

The complex and thought-provoking dance theatre work comes from the mind of choreographer and director Jeremy Beck, who is joined by a powerhouse team featuring AV design by creative production studio RDYSTDY (*Unarchival, Innocence, The Bloom*), sound design by Benny Jennings (*Avatar: The Way of Water, Fire and Ash*), costumes by Gabrielle Stevenson (*The Luminaries, Ghost in the Shell, Mortal Engines, The Hobbit*), and lighting by Tony Black (*Dance, Danced, Dancing*). The cast comprises Footnote dancers Airu Matsuda, Cecilia Wilcox, and Levi Siaso alongside guests Jareen Wee, Montell Nickel, and Haruka Chan.

An arresting odyssey that surfs the web's deepest and darkest corners, *Modern God* navigates into the recesses of our souls.

Sizzling-hot cabaret



Slay West.

We've said it before and we'll say it again, "Hot! Oh, so hot!" *REVEL* is Wellington's premier cabaret experience, and it's back for its third year: bigger, better, and more sparkly than ever.

On at The Hannah from the 4th to the 6th of June, *REVEL* will deliver all the glitz, glamour, and top-tier cabaret acts that audiences have come to expect, but this time with an all-new cast. Combining circus acts, cocktails, live music, drag, and theatre, *REVEL* is Pōneke's answer to international cabarets like *Moulin Rouge* and *Dracula's*. This year's sizzling-hot show is all about disco, putting music and dance at the forefront with a banging 70s soundtrack played by a live band during the preshow and the show itself.

Acts include dance numbers with a vogue/ ballroom flavour, aerial circus, and some of the strongest disco vocals on offer. The Hannah will be unrecognisable as it is transformed into a shimmering disco club with a cocktail bar built into the stage and *REVEL*'s iconic light-up marquee.

Regional News reviewed *REVEL* in 2024, writing, "When I close my eyes and think of *REVEL*, I see rouge, sequins, smiles. I hear laughter, lively chatter, upbeat swing. And I feel joy, warmth... nay, hot! Oh, so hot!" With performances from Anna Smith, Jade Merematira, Kiwi Marama, Slay West, and more, *REVEL* showcases a feast of local talent and their world-class cabaret acts. This is the kind of boogie wonderland you'd be mad to miss out on.

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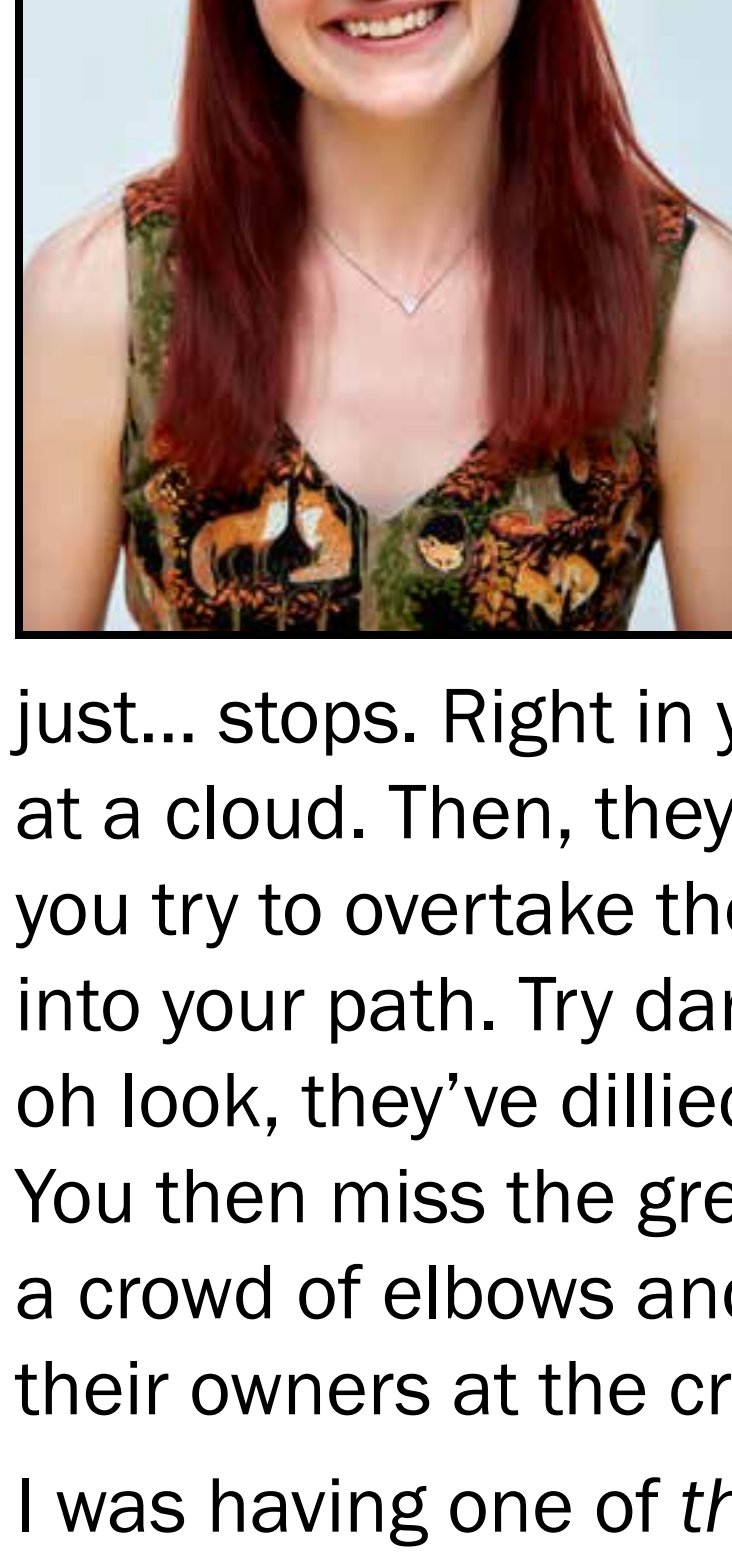


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Viewpoint A word from Maddi...

Keep calm and read on

by **Madelaine Empson**



Some days, you get stuck behind people walking three abreast on the footpath and it just bounces right off you. That car straddling two lanes that makes you miss your turnoff? No sweat. But other days, you're running down the street late for an appointment, when someone in front of you just... stops. Right in your way. Assumedly to marvel at a cloud. Then, they start *meandering*. Every time you try to overtake them on the left, they bumble into your path. Try dart past them on the right and, oh look, they've dillied their dallies that way too. You then miss the green man and get swept up in a crowd of elbows and single brain cells looking for their owners at the crossing. Cue. The. Rage.

I was having one of *those* days last weekend. Grumpy is not my MO, but something in me had snapped. "You know when you're just generally raging because people exist in close proximity to you?" I asked a barista on this most heinous of days. I know the customer's supposed to always be right and all that, but it seemed like this barista felt my comment in their soul. They clicked their fingers in affirmation, like I was a poet at a slam, and I immediately felt both validated and famous.

We then got to talking about Te Matapihi Ki Te Ao Nui, the central library, because I was on my way there to try and calm the heck down. It is the most magical of spaces: a nervous system regulator that makes me feel like everything is right with the world, at least while I'm inside.

Friends, it's about to get a whole lot more magical. "Have you heard about the sensory room?" the wonderful barista asked. I about dropped my hot choc. "Do you need a secret code or password to get in?" I sputtered, as if I was hearing a trade secret that would surely get me arrested. As I learned, you don't. You just go there and simply... ask. And they let you into this plush room with beanbags and sparkly things to play with and fluffy rugs that are soft underfoot and mood lighting and weighted blankies and they give you 45 minutes in blissful silence and total privacy to read or breathe or whatever you need to get through your day.

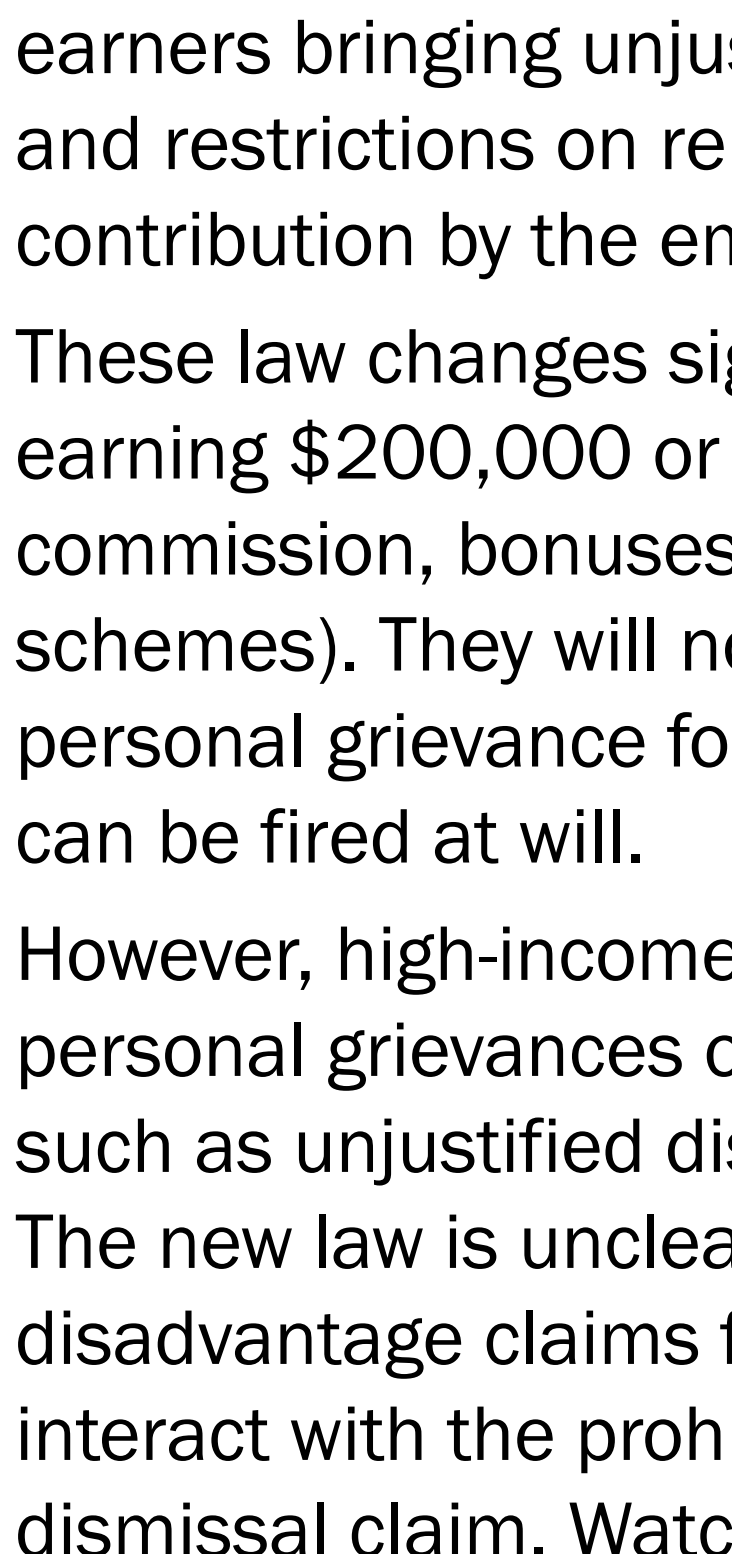
What a wonder Te Matapihi Ki Te Ao Nui is.

Advice from Alan

Employment law changes

by **Alan Knowsley, consultant,**

Rainey Collins Lawyers



The New Zealand Government has passed a new law which came into effect on the 21st of February 2026 which has considerable implications for contractors, all employees bringing personal grievance claims, and high earners wanting to challenge their dismissal.

In this article we look at the restriction on high earners bringing unjustified dismissal claims and restrictions on remedies if there has been a contribution by the employee to the situation.

These law changes significantly impact employees earning \$200,000 or more per annum (including commission, bonuses, and benefits from share schemes). They will no longer be able to bring a personal grievance for unjustified dismissal, so they can be fired at will.

However, high-income employees may still raise personal grievances on other existing grounds such as unjustified disadvantage or discrimination. The new law is unclear on how the unjustified disadvantage claims for lack of process might interact with the prohibition on an unjustified dismissal claim. Watch this space, as this is likely to be contested.

While this amendment impacts new employees immediately, there is a 12-month transition period for existing employees earning \$200,000 or more if they are in the same role or are restructured into a different role. Parties may agree to opt out of this protection and the threshold test.

The new law requires the Employment Relations Authority and Employment Court to consider whether the employee has contributed to the situation. If either entity considers the employee's actions contributed to the problem and the employee's actions amounted to serious misconduct, neither the Employment Relations Authority, nor the Employment Court, may award any remedies, including lost wages or compensation.

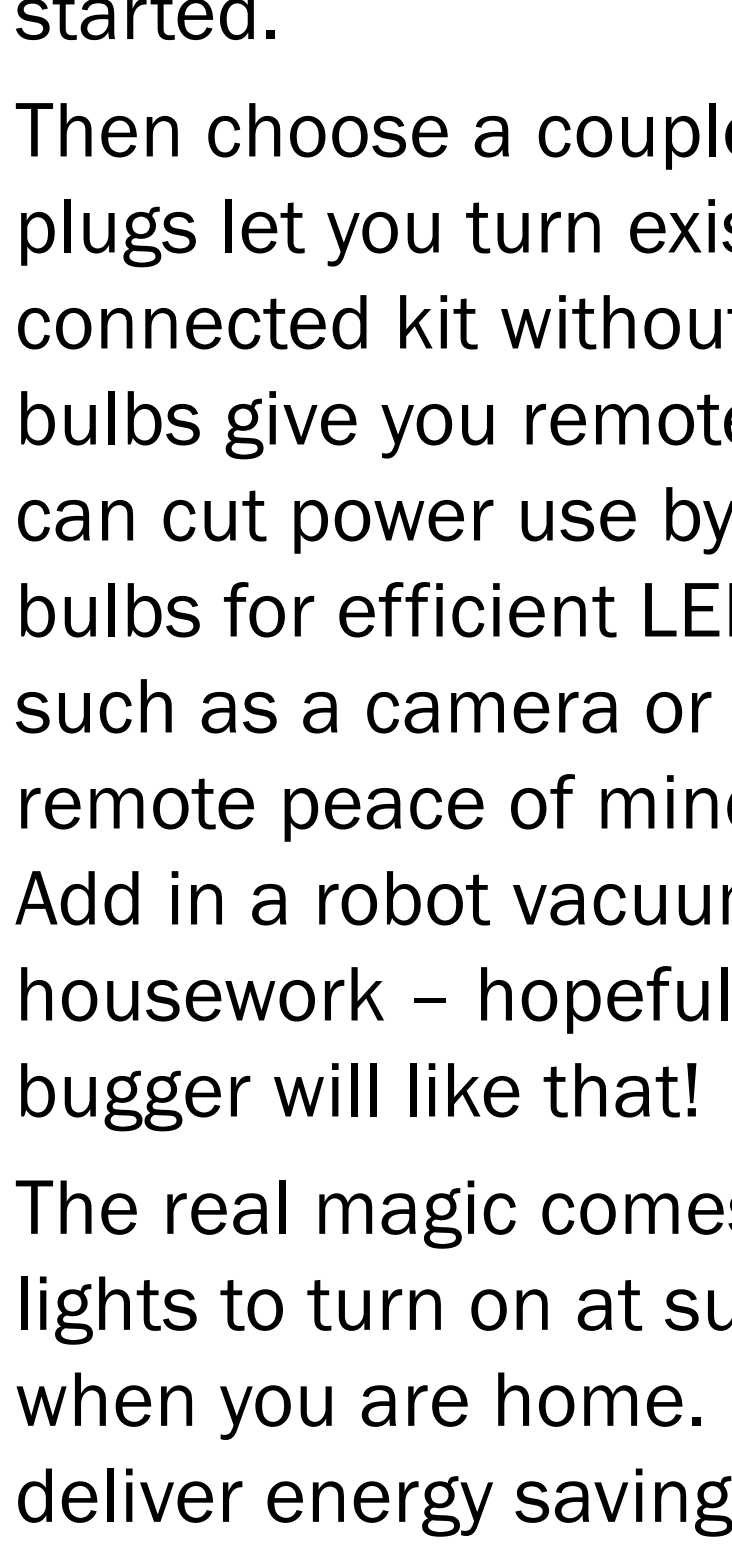
Neither entity may order reinstatement or compensation for humiliation, loss of dignity, or injury to feelings in situations where the employee's actions and behaviour contributed to the situation but not at the serious misconduct level. They can still order lost wages.

These are mandatory bans on those remedies, not just a reduction by the extent of the contribution. The employee's behaviour must contribute to the situation, so there will likely be many arguments about any contribution.

Tech talks with Pat

Setting up a smart home

by **Pat Pilcher**



A smart home is no longer the stuff of science fiction. Setting one up is an easy way to make your place more comfortable, more secure, and a bit kinder on your power bill, even if you are starting from scratch with a couple of smart lights. New Zealand's fast fibre broadband rollout means most homes already have the foundation needed for smart, connected gear.

Start by checking your Wi-Fi. Walk around your place with your phone and see where the signal drops. If your router is tucked behind the TV or in a cupboard, move it to a central, high spot or even better still, consider a mesh system to eliminate Wi-Fi dead zones. Without solid Wi-Fi coverage, smart gadgets are more stupid than smart.

Next, pick the 'brain' for your smart home. This means choosing a voice assistant such as Alexa, Google Assistant, or Siri and using a smart speaker as your hub. Place it in a central room where everyone can talk to it. Stick to one ecosystem to avoid the usual app soup that turns people off smart homes before they really get started.

Then choose a couple of smart devices. Smart plugs let you turn existing lamps or heaters into connected kit without replacing everything. Smart bulbs give you remote control and dimming and can cut power use by swapping old incandescent bulbs for efficient LEDs. Add some security basics, such as a camera or video doorbell, and you have remote peace of mind any time you are away.

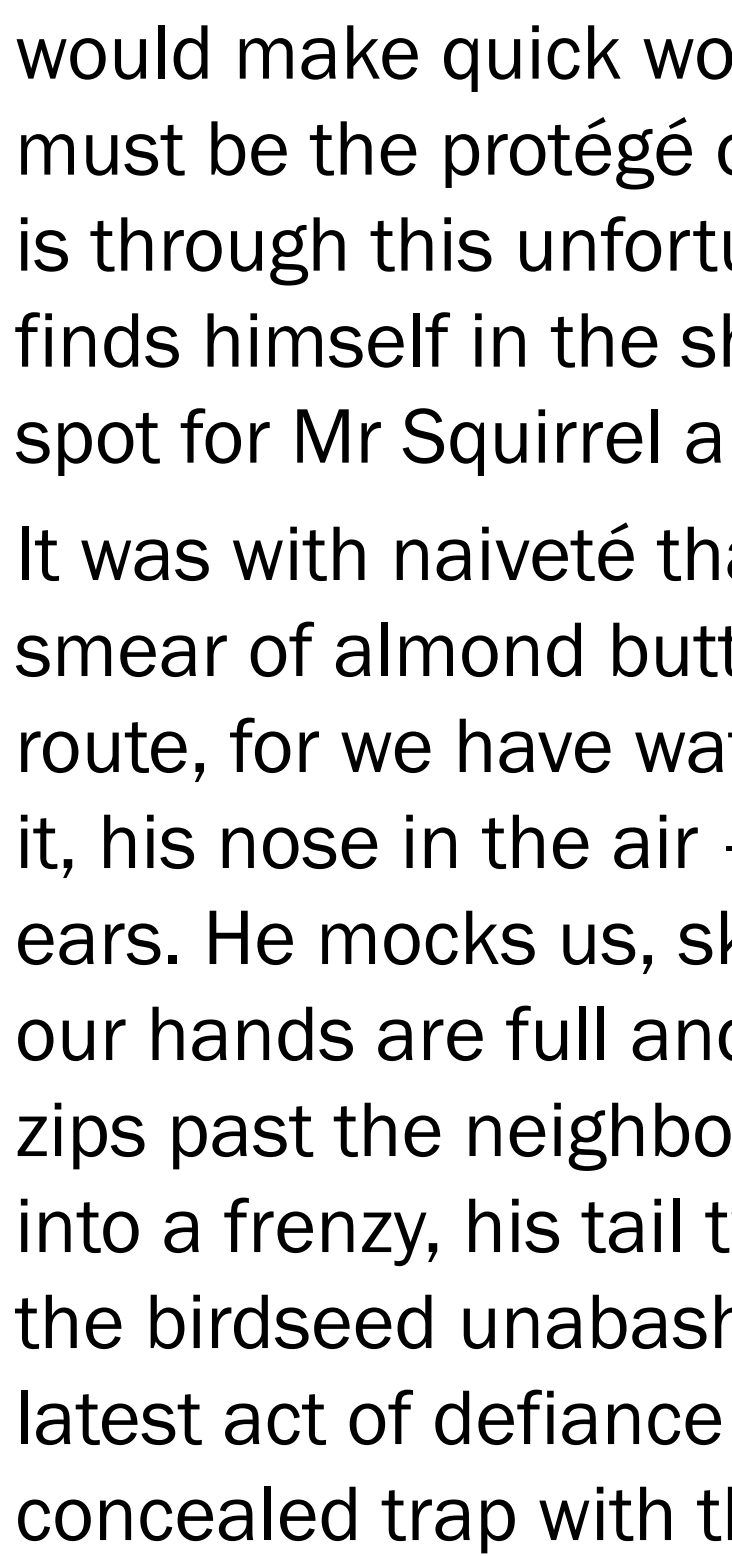
Add in a robot vacuum cleaner and there's less housework – hopefully, like me, your inner lazy bugger will like that!

The real magic comes from routines. You can set lights to turn on at sunset, or heaters to run only when you are home. Done well, a smart home will deliver energy savings and a quieter, safer house that mostly runs itself. Start small, keep it simple, and a smart home will quietly become the most helpful flatmate you have ever had.

A Kiwi abroad

That rackin' frackin' varmint!

by **Alessia Belsito-Riera**



We have been locked in a bitter battle since arriving on Catalina Island. Our serene island life has been wrought with havoc, our dreams of sipping cocktails in the sun snatched away like dust in the Santa Ana winds.

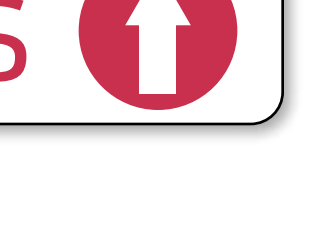
The culprit: a foe as cunning as they come; as sly and sneaky as a spy; as devious as they are dastardly. A Catalina Island ground squirrel.

Now, before you Southern Hemisphere folk start telling me how precious squirrels are, to us in the north they are nothing short of a rat with a fancy tail. This, my sweet, unsuspecting Kiwi husband has learned all too well. Endemic to our island, ground squirrels are especially troublesome when compared to their tree-faring cousins, for they burrow, building entire palaces, cities, and suburbs beneath our feet. Which is hilarious when structurally engineered under the swanky golf course – their front doors placed covertly next to hole 10 – but concerning when their architectural pursuits are below the foundations of our house.

Thus, we find ourselves engaged in some *Looney Tunes*-esque skirmish – nay, war. With it standing just 50 centimetres tall, you'd think us humans would make quick work of it, but this wily rascal must be the protégé of Bugs Bunny himself. So, it is through this unfortunate chain of events that Jas finds himself in the shoes of Elmer J. Fudd, his soft spot for Mr Squirrel already soured.

It was with naiveté that we placed a trap with a smear of almond butter haphazardly along his route, for we have watched our adversary waltz by it, his nose in the air – his tiny scoff echoing in our ears. He mocks us, skirting between our feet while our hands are full and we are encumbered. He zips past the neighbour's senior dog, sending her into a frenzy, his tail twitching tauntingly. He steals the birdseed unabashedly in broad daylight. His latest act of defiance was to dig under the carefully concealed trap with the aim to remove the apple slice in a heist befitting the Ocean's 11 team.

However, we are pleased to announce that our furry foe has been vanquished. All it took was CIA-level camouflage of the trap, a perfectly ripe avocado, and our sanity. That's all, folks!



Go towards truth



Tawhi Thomas (Ngāti Maniapoto) has just won Best Play by a Māori Playwright at Playmarket’s 2026 Adam NZ Play Awards. His winning work *Haere* is about “intimate connections, or missed connections, between humans”, the writer, actor, director, and teacher tells me.

It’s by no means the first time Tawhi has scooped up at the ceremony – his play *Pakaru* took out the 2019 Adam NZ Play Award, making him the first playwright to win the prestigious prize twice.

We got down to the nitty-gritty about *Haere* and more.

Congratulations on your win! Can you tell me about the play?

It’s a bumpy ride of punchy vignettes where I’m exploring, specifically, bicultural dynamics between Pākehā and Māori characters. It’s high tension, straight in there with each scene. The longest one is maybe 10 minutes and there are 10 scenes in all. Each scene takes place in the context of a journey, or on some kind of transport, or is to do with travel and getting somewhere, hence the name *Haere*.

Ambitiously, but I think I’m pulling it off, each vignette takes place during a different era throughout our modern history. We start off with a runaway bride in 1864 and end up time jumping through decades. Then, something really freaky happens when we get to 2024: the next scene is called *Now*, and the scene after that is called *What is time anyway?* It turns meta: like a koru, the whole play curls in on itself and starts commenting on itself, and we meet the characters from all the other vignettes.

What was the process from inspiration to concept to completion?

I had this hunch several years ago that I wanted to do a piece called *Haere*. It would be vignettes because I wanted to move away from the three-act structure, the well-made play, the hero’s journey. I wanted to be playful and not worry so much about form, and I wanted to explore fragments of human interaction. It sat on my stovetop for several months, gathering a bit of dust. In 2024, I pitched it to the Kōanga Festival at Te Pou Theatre in Auckland, which is a development festival for new Māori writing. I got in and became part of a year-long writers’ group. We had a really good workshop with actors, a director, and a dramaturg, and that’s where the draft became realised. It had a public reading and it was kind of a smash hit!

Are you always, often, or hardly involved in the process of getting your work from the page to the stage?

I’ve been doing this for 30 years now, so I’ve had a real mixture. When I was a young fella starting off at BATS in the early to mid-90s, I wanted to do everything. We were being awesome and young and deep 90s and doing it on the smell of an oily rag. But I kind of had a breakdown about it [chuckles], because I wanted to write, act, direct! All at the same time!

When I kept writing and started to get more confident, find my real voice, and consistently started getting good notices, funding, and encouragement, I began handing it over to my trusted peers and colleagues – who were getting to the top of their game as well in terms of lighting, direction, acting. Handing it over to them completely and just turning up on opening night in a really great outfit to see what they came up with, that proved really great. It was the best feeling, to turn up and have my dream realised by trusted colleagues.

When you’re not involved, what does it take to release the work – it sounds like trust is a big component?

It’s completely about trust. And in saying that, as I’ve gotten older and more mature – and I think my teaching has informed this as well – I’ve gotten more confident to direct my own work. I don’t feel the need to direct every single one. But for example, I directed my play *Pakaru*, which was really successful back in 2019. That was really satisfying.

When watching your work on stage, what has most surprised you?

This makes me go back to my love of actors. Every single time – even though I’ve trained as an actor myself, and I did a stint helping train actors at Toi Whakaari a few years back – I’m utterly refreshed and blown away and completely surprised by the courage that our local actors have on stage. I don’t pull any punches. I’m asking people to go into shadowy corners, to be really laid bare in my work. Hone Kouka once called me the Prince of Darkness because of where I like to go with my characters. There’s always laughter, always aroha, but I do ask a lot of the actors who want to jam with me in my scripts. I’m constantly surprised by their openness and their courageous talent.

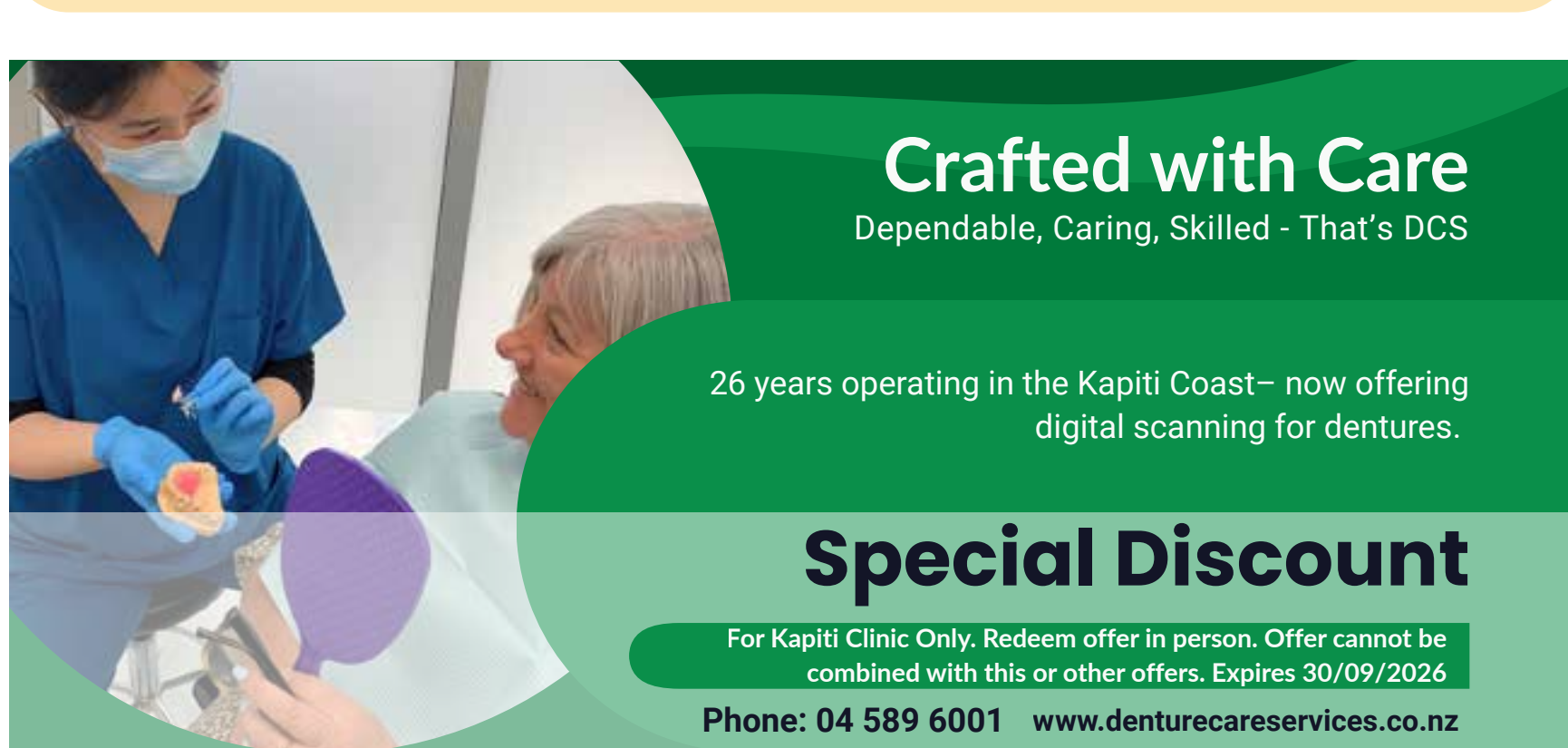
What does it mean to you to win at the Adam NZ Play Awards and what do you think makes Playmarket special?

I think it’s just the reality that there is someone every year who wants to acknowledge us as writers. We get bugger all in this country. It’s the fourth time I’ve won Māori Playwright, and I’ve won the overall big one [The Adam NZ Play Award] twice, and a really dear friend of mine said to me once, ‘You’re just being greedy now.’ We both laughed, but actually, that is a bit of a joke. Because there is no such thing as being a greedy writer in Aotearoa. There’s just so little to go around. So to have ongoing support, recognition – from Playmarket and the Adam Foundation for these awards, and also local awards like the Wellington and Auckland Theatre Awards – is a great, constant lifeline of tautoko. We know we’re not doing it for pūtea, for money, but it’s good to have that feeling of support. My favourite thing about the Playmarket Adam NZ Play Awards is by far when you get to go and you see scenes from all the finalists. It’s incredible, I was completely blown away by the one they just had in Auckland. They flew me up, I had a great day, got to hang out with my actor friends and writer friends, met some new writers... It was great to be in the mix, but it was *really* great to see and hear where everyone’s at. It’s a super healthy, wondrous community of writing that’s going on right now.

From writing to acting, directing to teaching; from page to stage to screen and back again, why do you do what you do?

When I was younger, it was like I didn’t really even have a choice: I found out really early on, this is what I’m here for. I’m here to tell stories. When I was young, it was an ego-driven, youthful, energetic drive to be heard. As I’ve matured, I’ve realised it’s actually not about me. That artists truly are vessels for a bigger energy to come through – an energy that is always seeking an audience. It’s always seeking people to help, to heal, for them to be seen, to be heard, through our artform.

We’re living in a world that has just gone so crazy, and the power of storytelling is now more important than ever. There’s a reason storytellers and artists are shut down by dictatorships and far-right regimes. That is because we encourage people to go towards truth, and to act on what is right. It sounds lofty, but that’s why I keep doing what I keep doing.



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Robbie and his team of experts can help you make the most of your financial future by aligning your investments with your goals and risk profile, and by devising strategies to improve your financial security. Whether you're preparing to purchase your first home or gearing up for retirement, our goal is to help you stay on track and make informed financial decisions every step of the way.

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★★★★★ "Robbie has been taking care of my KiwiSaver for many years now and recently has helped me with several investments. Being on the cautious side I found Robbie to be knowledgeable and helpful without any pressure to take his advice and recommendations. Would not hesitate to recommend his services." - Bob

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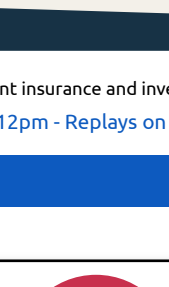
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Sarah Kidd – Centre Manager

Kia ora, my name is Sarah Kidd and I am the centre manager and NZ director for Chelsea House Early Childhood centres Raumati and Levin.

I have been in ECE since the late 1990s and gained my qualification in 2003. I have been with Chelsea House since 2012 and feel so lucky and honoured to be entrusted with managing the operations of Chelsea House.

Stepping up into this role was a natural progression from centre manager in Levin to overseeing the whole company, working between the Raumati and Levin services since 2022. My main passion is mentoring and leadership. The other passion of mine is providing quality care and education for our tamariki, whānau, and community. Combining both of these along with the managerial side of things encompasses my values as a manager.

I believe that providing effective, robust leadership that flows down to the staff ensures they feel valued, supported, and appreciated. When teachers have this foundation, the children have happy teachers who are well placed to guide their learning and development.

Creating a strong sense of wellbeing and belonging in our services at Chelsea House, where our children learn through play in a safe, caring environment with love and laughter, imagination and exploration: that's what quality education and care looks like for us at Chelsea House.

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Education – Meet the Principal



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Kevin Carter

Principal Kevin Carter has led Rongotai College for the last 17 years, but his long career in education spans over 40 years, upholding a simple but impactful philosophy on education that guides his commitment to the achievement of excellence. Studies in New Zealand have shown conclusively that boys who attend boys' schools achieve at significantly higher rates than those at co-ed schools. Rongotai College is an exceptional state secondary school, providing young men with the knowledge, skills, and opportunities to succeed. Under Kevin's leadership, Rongotai College is forward-thinking and progressive in educating its students to meet the challenges of today. It has a culture that encourages boys to strive for excellence in academic, creative, cultural, and sporting pursuits.

Kevin and his teachers have a clear vision of what they want to achieve: encouraging young men to be the best they can be in all areas of their lives. Rongotai offers an engaging curriculum specifically developed for the way boys think and learn, helping them to thrive and to build confidence in their abilities.

A broad range of opportunities both inside and outside the classroom help students discover their passion. Having coached extensively across a range of school sports, Kevin understands the importance of extra-curricular activities, believing they provide students with a further avenue to achieve their potential and show leadership.

With a roll of 730, Rongotai College is small enough to know each boy well and recognise his individual character and needs, but large enough to offer a curriculum that meets the academic and vocational needs of individual students.



South Wellington Intermediate School

South Wellington Intermediate School






New technology block design



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Brendon Henderson

Brendon Henderson has dedicated much of his life to the education of children. With undergraduate and post-graduate qualifications in education, and a wealth of experience serving as Principal at a number of schools in the Greater Wellington Region, he is a trusted, respected, and knowledgeable person to have steering the ship. Brendon has been Principal of both Tawa Intermediate School and Newlands Intermediate School, and at the beginning of this year, he became Principal of South Wellington Intermediate School (SWIS). The new role has only deepened his commitment to fostering environments where excellence, opportunity, and equity thrive.

SWIS is a vibrant, energetic, and focused learning environment that cherishes being part of the community. They continue to evolve as a school, and with the support of the Board of Trustees, recent enhancements include four brand new classrooms built late last year and a six-classroom double-storey technology block currently in the works; the intended repainting of the hall, while keeping the amazing murals intact; the construction of the purpose-built adventure playground; and the purchase of new sports uniforms available later on in the term.

With 15 years of experience as a school principal and a particular focus on early adolescence, Brendon has brought new energy into the tight-knit community at SWIS. The school offers a huge range of opportunities for both staff and students. It is a place that is continually evolving and growing to ensure that each student comes away feeling ready for their next chapter.

Education – Meet the Principal

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Ryan Clark

Ryan Clark is Principal of the New Zealand Performance Academy Aotearoa (NZPAA). An experienced education leader working across schools, councils, and national organisations, he brings a unique set of skills that foster both academic learning and athletic growth.

Throughout his career, Ryan has focused on developing learning environments where strong relationships, high expectations, and effective teaching practices enable students to understand their strengths and develop a strong sense of self. NZPAA is for young student athletes who are committed to excellence in both education and sport, without having to compromise one pursuit for the other. The school is based at the New Zealand Campus of Innovation and Sport in Upper Hutt, which is home to world-class sporting facilities. NZPAA currently offers a wide range of sporting opportunities, including Football, Rugby, Basketball, Softball, Netball, Volleyball, Floorball, Running, and Hockey. Additional sports will continue to be introduced in response to student interest and enrolment demand.

The academy’s environment fosters the discipline, resilience, and high-performance standards required for aspiring young athletes, while at the same time promoting academic achievement, critical thinking, and the skills and habits needed for life beyond school. Ryan’s leadership approach is also shaped by Te Ao Māori, and Te Tiriti o Waitangi underpins every practice and relationship.

Ryan says that NZPAA “are proud to offer a learning environment where education, wellbeing, character, and sport work together to unlock potential, cultivate discipline, and prepare young people to succeed in whatever pathway they choose.”

Education – Meet the Principal

**WHERE
EVERY CHILD IS
KNOWN AND
EVERY DAY HAS
PURPOSE**

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It's about who your child becomes along the way.

At Huntley, education is more than academics.

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It's an environment where every child is known, and every day has purpose.



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Sam Edwards

Leading Huntley School is Sam Edwards, appointed Principal in February 2015 after four years as deputy. Sam's undergraduate and post-graduate qualifications and wealth of experience as a teacher and leader have shaped his ethos. "We want to help your child become an outstanding citizen", he says. Children are set up for the rest of their lives with a strong work ethic, high personal standards, and the confidence to pursue their interests.

Sam believes in a holistic education, with Huntley school offering music, drama, sports, and technology, alongside core subjects that emphasise literacy and numeracy. Over the years Sam has overseen boarding and pastoral care, establishing flexible boarding and leave options that have increased boarding numbers and fostered a home away from home, and introduced a wellbeing programme. He has coached the Top VIII tennis and First XV rugby teams, embedded the change to co-education in 2015, and led the school successfully through the COVID years. Sam says, "The skills that are learned, the habits that are formed, the values and standards that are absorbed, stay with students not only through their time at Huntley but also into adult life as well."

At Huntley, the education provided to Years 3 to 8 is a complete and well-rounded learning experience, with a focus on instilling confidence and readiness that sets a child up for life. Huntley kids excel academically, culturally, socially, spiritually, and physically. Located in Marton, they're kept busy and active in a supportive environment that ensures each child has the opportunity to pursue their interests, be challenged, and make lifelong friends.



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Rosalind Burnett

Rosalind Burnett was appointed as the Principal at Longburn Adventist College in 2023, making her the first woman principal since the school first opened its doors in 1906. Her extensive career as a teacher and in leadership positions at both Longburn Adventist College and Auckland Seventh Day Adventist High School has made her well equipped to guide the Christian school and its young people. Burnett is passionate about music, and is deeply humbled by her leadership opportunity and the ability to positively impact communities.

Longburn Adventist College is a co-ed school for Years 7 to 13. Located near Palmerston North, it has provided Christian education in a caring family environment for 120 years. Its stunning park-like grounds surrounded by country farms makes it an idyllic location for students, whether they're day schoolers or boarders, to achieve excellent academic results and learn Christian values. At the school they believe that if the right values are taught, the results will follow. The school's motto, 'In Christ we educate, encourage, and empower', is the guiding principle for teachers and staff. This has seen the school achieve academic results and retention rates above the national average.

Longburn is a member of Adventist Education New Zealand, and an affiliate of the worldwide Adventist Education system. This kind of education combined with living in a boarding home is excellent for children with no direct access to a Christian school. Under Principal Rosalind Burnett, the college is committed to providing education to equip children for their future in an everchanging, challenging world.

Education – Meet the Principal



Graeme Yule

Education is in a time of great change with a new curriculum, new qualifications, and the disruption of Artificial Intelligence. This year we celebrate our 110th anniversary. As we do so, we proudly offer a world-class education based on globally proven pedagogy and a choice of qualifications. We have also adopted technology to enhance teaching and learning at Scots College.

Education is special and creates a lifetime of opportunity. Choosing a school is one of the most important decisions a family makes. When a family chooses Scots College, we enter into a partnership to prepare our students for their futures. Founded in 1916, Scots College is proudly co-educational from Years 0 to 13, and we're built on a simple belief: preparing young people of good character who will be good citizens and leaders in their communities. That belief shapes everything, including our International Baccalaureate programme, which runs continuously from Year 1 to Year 13. A major 2026 study by the Australian Council for Educational Research examined over 71,000 students across 254 international schools and found IB students consistently outperformed their peers in reading, writing, and scientific literacy at every grade level tested. Not one exception.

We're also investing in our campus. In our 110th year, we're delivering new classrooms and an all-weather turf. It's a thoughtful, future-focussed investment that ensures our students have the spaces and facilities they need to learn, play, and thrive for years to come.

We'd love to show you what life at Scots looks like. Join us for our Year 4 Discovery Day on the 16th of June or our Year 9 Experience Day on the 19th of June. To register, visit www.scotscollege.school.nz



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Girls Years 1-13,
Co-ed Preschool

Marsden *Inspiring Girls*

SAMUEL MARS DEN COLLEGIATE SCHOOL



Paula Wells

Choosing the right school is one of the most important decisions a family will make. At Samuel Marsden Collegiate School in Karori, girls from Years 1-13 are inspired to aim high, think deeply, and lead with confidence. Its co-educational Preschool provides the perfect beginning, all on one spacious, green campus just minutes from the city.

Marsden believes in the transformative power of an education designed especially for girls. In a purposeful environment, students are encouraged to ask questions, take intellectual risks, and discover their strengths. Small class sizes and exceptional teachers ensure every student is known, challenged, and supported.

Excellence is central to a Marsden education. Alongside outstanding NCEA results, the school recently re-introduced Cambridge International, extending academic opportunities.

Education at Marsden extends well beyond the classroom. From sport and performing arts to leadership, service, and outdoor education, students are empowered to explore widely and grow in confidence. The school values – Hiranga (Excellence), Manahau (Resilience), Auahatanga (Creativity), Oha (Service), and Whanaungatanga (Respectful Relationships) – shape a culture where achievement is celebrated and kindness matters. A carefully designed wellbeing programme underpins every stage.

Marsden graduates leave as capable, compassionate wāhine toa, ready to contribute with purpose and integrity. Families considering Marsden for 2027 are warmly invited to attend the Year 7 and Year 9 Information Evening on the 3rd of June, or book an Experience Day for their child to spend a day in class in June. Find out more and register at www.marsden.school.nz/register

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The stories they tell



Artists Bri Leone-Rhea Lawrence (left) and Geo Aroha Thompson-Skipworth (right).

Photo by Samson Dell.

Tāmata means to refresh, restore, revitalise. In the joint exhibition from Bri Leone-Rhea Lawrence (Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairoa) and Geo Aroha Thompson-Skipworth (Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāti Porou), the artists consider the effects of colonial displacement and dispossession, relational restoration, and the strength of Māori communities to rebuild and protect.

Both Bri and Geo are Ōtautahi-based artists. They went on a research trip to the East Coast, visiting Hinemihi marae of Wairoa and Hinerupe marae of Te Araroa to connect with places and histories tied to their whakapapa. The marae are linked through shared yet distinct histories of deterioration and restoration, with the former so run down it needed to be rebuilt, and the latter lost in a fire. “Spending time there reinforced for us the importance of marae as living spaces that hold whakapapa, memory, and intergenerational knowledge”, Geo says. While the marae speak of lasting colonial displacement, they also tell a story of resilience, the strength and mana of community in restoring something that has been lost, and the rebuilding and protection of place and identity.

Bri primarily works with photography and documentary-style mediums. The photographic prints document the trip the artists took, and the realities of their whakapapa. “Photography’s ability to show truths and relate to people’s personal histories is great. Thinking about autoethnography, photography can be used to unpack ideas surrounding both personal and colonial histories.”

The natural materials and organic mediums Geo works with are inseparable from the concepts she explores. Her artworks consist of whenua paintings, photographic prints, and sculptures made from kōwhai seeds, wool, stone, and the claw of a kāhu. “When engaging with ideas such as whakapapa, whenua, and cultural memory, it feels meaningful to work with materials my ancestors would also have used, interpreted in my own way through a contemporary practice.”

The artworks speak of history as an ongoing process. They engage with the past through whenua, traditional knowledge systems, and relationships to place. But at the same time, “they look toward how restoration can exist in the present – not as a return to a fixed past, but as an ongoing, living process of care, reconstruction, and re-connection”.

Tāmata invites viewers to engage with artmaking and to move alongside the process, rather than encounter only the finished works. “The exhibition is as much about process as it is about outcome, inviting the audience to consider how cultural memory is carried, reactivated, and reshaped through making”, the artists say.

On the shared responsibility for supporting restoration projects, Geo says, “Recognising the value of marae as cultural, historical, and living spaces means acknowledging that their care and continuation contributes to a wider understanding of Aotearoa’s identity and history.”

Tāmata will be on display at Meanwhile Gallery until the 24th of May. Meanwhile is an artist-run gallery, event venue, and studio space that promotes emerging artists. You can find them on Willis Street.

Changing face of Aotearoa



Fledgling, 2026 by Barry Smith.

The Adam Portraiture Award plays an important role in recording the changing face of Aotearoa. First awarded in 2000, it is one of the most long-standing and significant art prizes in New Zealand, presented biennially by the New Zealand Portrait Gallery Te Pūkenga Whakaata and supported by the Adam Foundation.

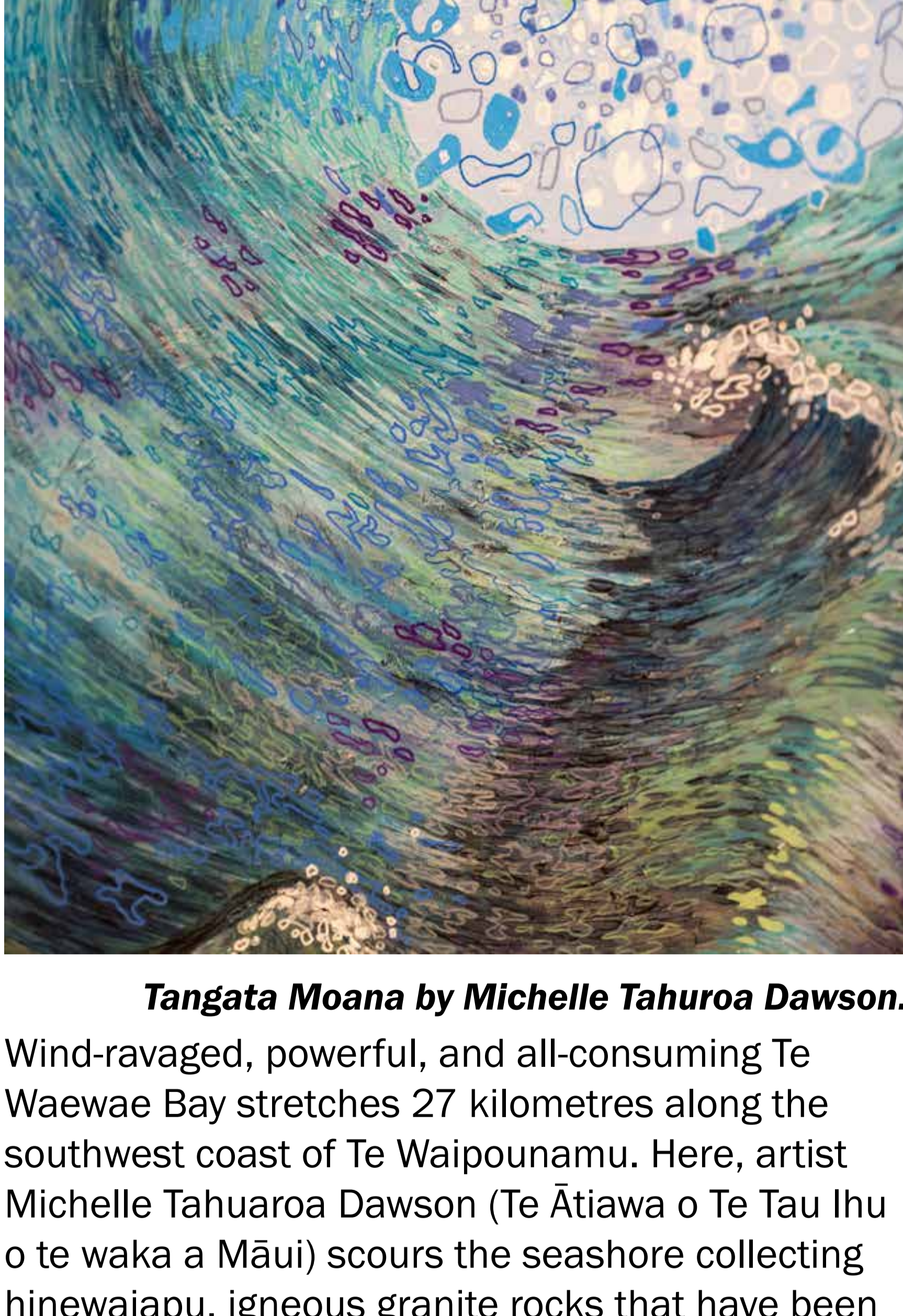
This year there were 429 entries, with 43 artists getting shortlisted by international judge Jude Rae. These 43 portraits are on display at the Portrait Gallery from the 21st of May to the 9th of August before most of the works are then toured nationally.

This year’s awards introduced new requirements, whereby the portrait had to be of a living New Zealander and created from at least one live sitting or study from life. The shortlist brings together a dynamic mix of subjects and stories, some rendered on unconventional surfaces including woven tape measures, corrugated aluminium, and a false gel nail. Familiar New Zealand faces appear alongside self-portraits and intimate portrayals of friends, whānau, and colleagues.

Finalists include previously shortlisted artists Dita Angeles, David Owain Jones, Duncan Pepe Long, Jasmine Middlebrook, and Clark Roworth, alongside 2020 winner Sacha Lees. Director of the New Zealand Portrait Gallery Brian Wood says, “There’s a real sense of momentum in this year’s finalists. The move toward working from life has brought a deeper sense of connection with the sitter, more immediacy and presence to the portraits, while the range of materials and approaches shows just how expansive contemporary portraiture can be.”

The winner will be announced on Wednesday the 20th of May, with a \$30,000 first prize awarded alongside a \$2500 runner-up prize and a \$2500 People’s Choice Award.

Elemental matter



Tangata Moana by Michelle Tahuaroa Dawson.

Wind-ravaged, powerful, and all-consuming Te Waewae Bay stretches 27 kilometres along the southwest coast of Te Waipounamu. Here, artist Michelle Tahuaroa Dawson (Te Ātiawa o Te Tau Ihu o te waka a Māui) scours the seashore collecting hinewaiapu, igneous granite rocks that have been shaped into smooth, spherical orbs over thousands of years, grinding together as they’re driven shoreward by Antarctic tides.

“I am fascinated by the powerful forces that shape these pieces... and by the idea that the friction created when abrading against one another can create something quite beautiful”, Michelle says. “I see parallels for humanity.”

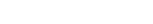
Michelle then encases the hinewaiapu in woven harakeke anchor-like structures to become a collective, “likened to a whānau and reminiscent of the foundation that a loving family can give its members.”

Accompanying the hinewaiapu are a series of acrylic and mixed-media paintings depicting the remote, untamed coastlines of Te Waewae Bay and the nearby Awarua-Waituna Wetlands and Waipapa Point. “The raw and visceral beauty of isolated coastal regions reminds me that we are small and temporary beings playing our part in the infinite and as such, our contribution and existence is precious”, she says.

Michelle’s paintings capture how it feels to stand in one of these remote landscapes. “I see shapes in the land and sea and tend to exaggerate them in my acrylic works.”

Hinewaiapu – Deep South Rock is exhibiting at Pātaka Art + Museum until the 7th of June. The works are recognition of our deep connection to the land, to our coastlines, and of the need to preserve these sacred places and be kaitiaki for future generations. They remind us that we are all made from the same elemental matter.

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Small towns of New Zealand



Arrowtown



Ashburton



Balclutha



Gore



Cromwell



Geraldine



Te Anau



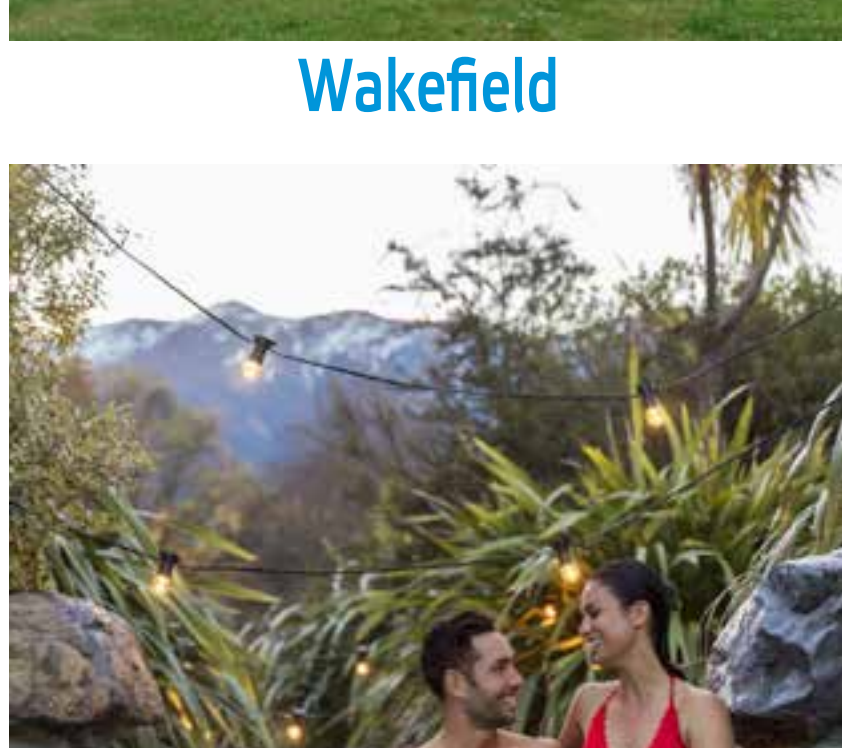
Milton



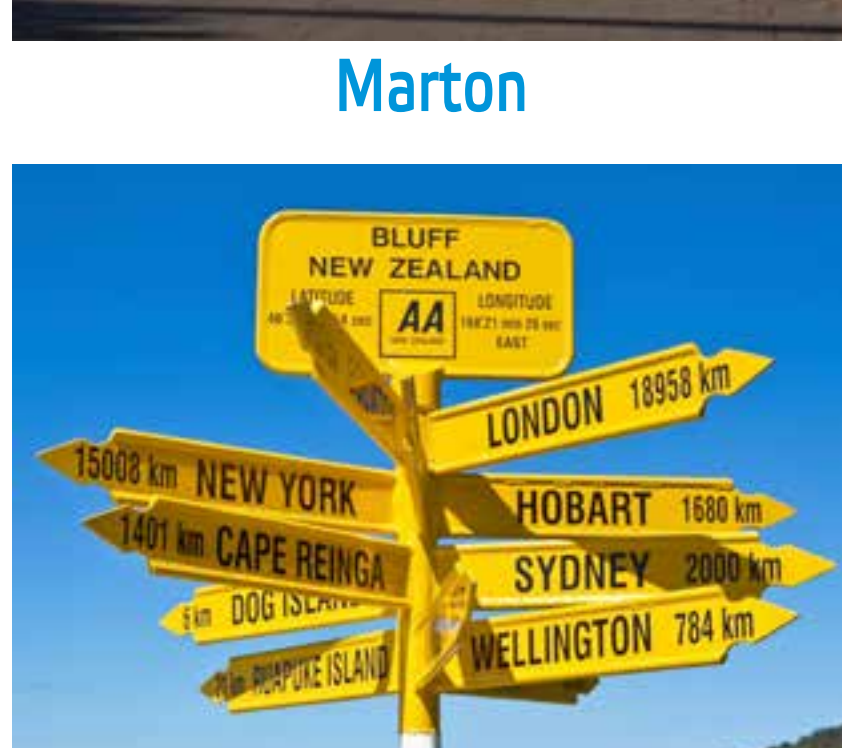
Wakefield



Marton



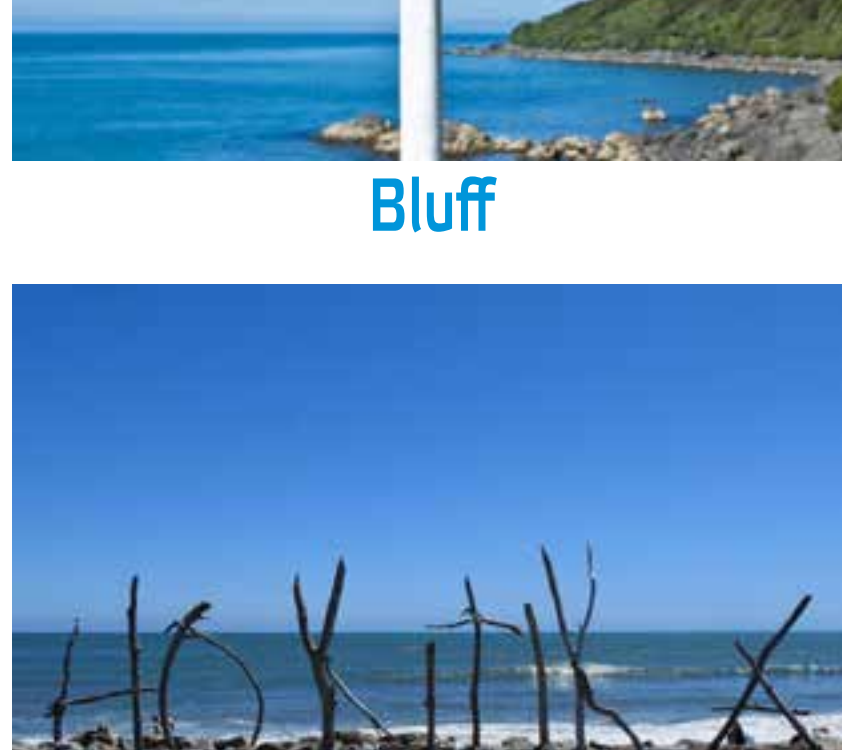
Hanmer Springs



Bluff



Westport



Hokitika

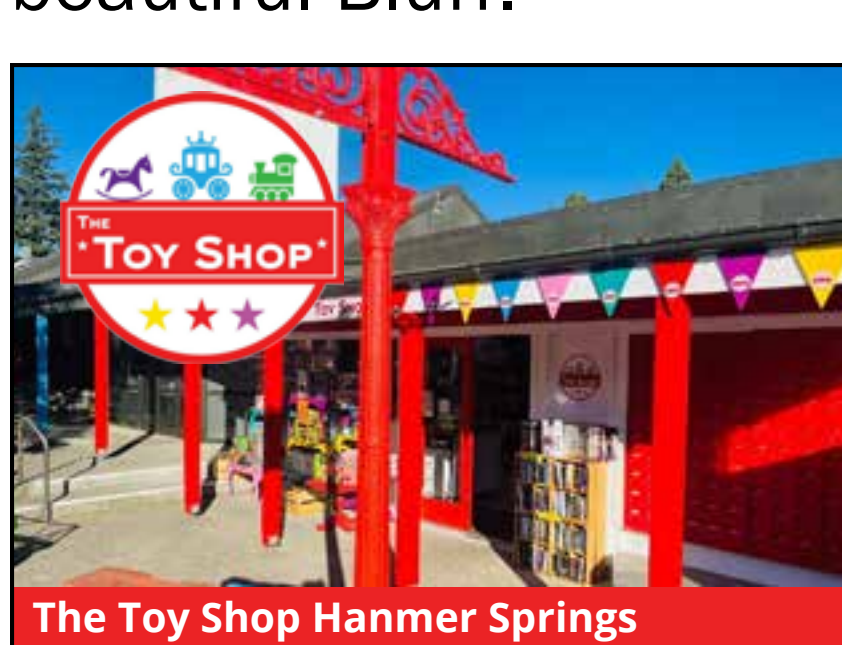
Bluff

Bluff is world famous for its fresh oysters, but the charming seaside town serves up more than delicious kaimoana for those who call it home.

The village is nestled at the end of the Bluff Peninsula and is less than a 30-minute drive from Invercargill, making it perfect for families in particular who want access to both the hustle and bustle of the city and fun-filled days found in nature. There are endless opportunities to explore the beautiful landscape on land and sea – from the 10 kilometres of tracks and trails in Motupōhue Adventure Park to the endless blue sea of the Foveaux Strait.

Bluff is one of the oldest European settlements in the country, so naturally it has a lot of history. Whether you prefer being in town or on your own tract of land, properties are more affordable than in Invercargill and the heritage buildings provide excellent kerb appeal. Small and safe as can be, Bluff has a tight-knit community where everyone knows and cares for each other. Plus, everything is just a stone's throw from home.

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Small towns of New Zealand

Arrowtown

If you're looking for somewhere like you see in the movies, Arrowtown is a picture-perfect place to call home. Just a 20-minute drive from Queenstown, this quaint little gem is nestled along the Arrow River and is surrounded by beautiful snow-capped peaks, thick forests, and shimmering lakes. With a fascinating gold-mining history and restaurants, cafés, and boutiques too, Arrowtown is as quaint as they come.

Buckingham Street, which is lined with heritage buildings dating back to the 1870s, is home to elegant eateries and upscale boutiques perfect for weekend brunches or a dose of retail therapy. Enjoying a small, walkable town centre, Arrowtown is the perfect base for retirees. Just beyond the city limits are wonderful wineries where one can while away an afternoon. A quiet luxury permeates every detail of Arrowtown's lifestyle.

With distinct seasons that bring everything from colourful leaves, snow, and fields of flowers to clear, blue skies, Arrowtown offers activities all year round. From skiing to swimming, boating to biking, hiking to hunkering down, golfing to gardening, locals live in tune with nature.

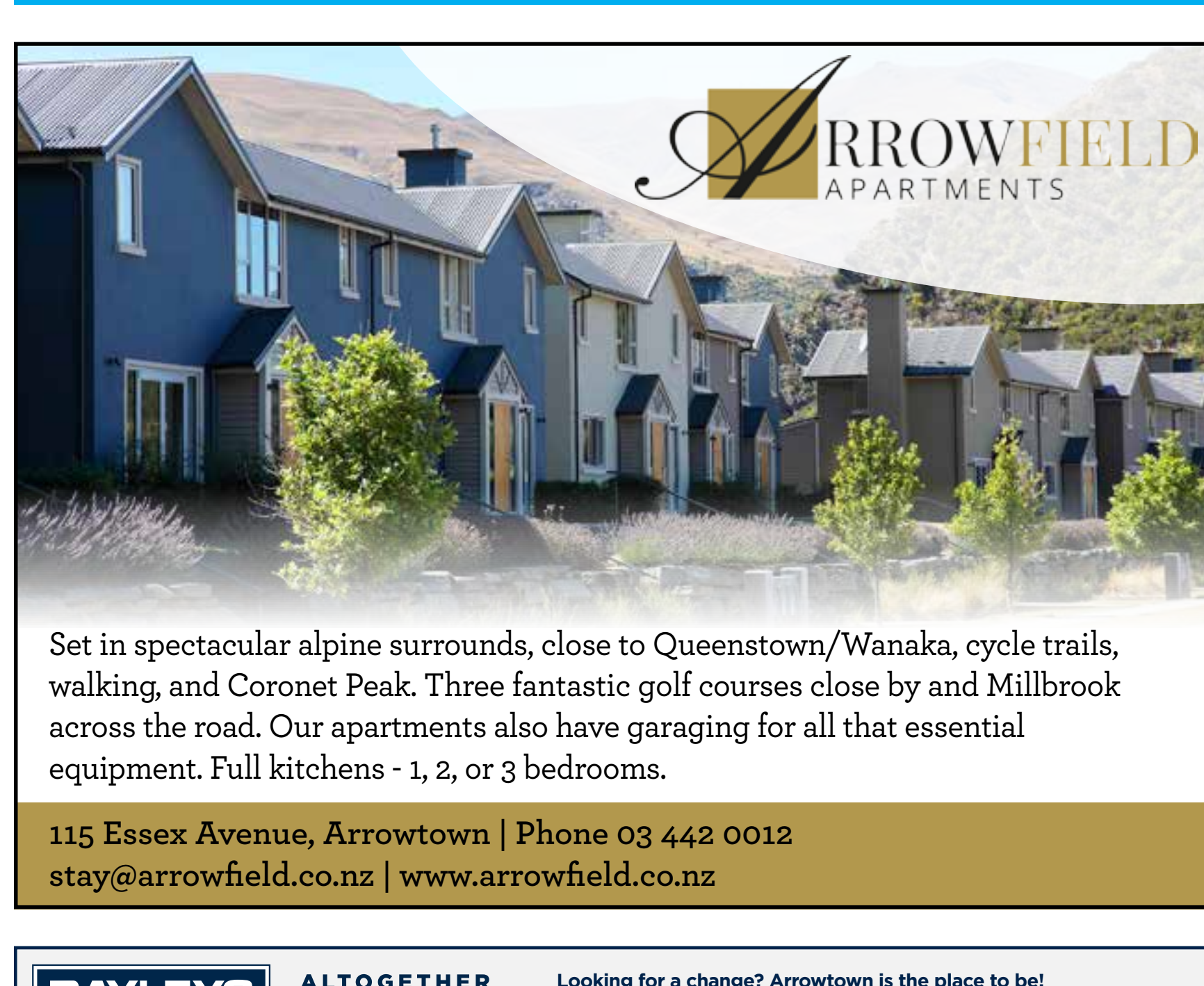
Find yourself a fairytale future in Arrowtown.

Population: 2860

Known for: autumn colours

Climate: full range of distinct seasons

Location: 20 minutes from Queenstown



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Gore

Gore packs a punch, with a popping events calendar that has something fun to offer locals all year round: from the New Zealand Gold Guitar Awards and Tussock Country – New Zealand's Country Music Festival to the Line Dancing Championships and the Hokonui Fashion Design Awards, with plenty more to boot.

Like many small towns in Te Waipounamu, Gore traces its origins back to the gold rush. That means its buildings are cute as can be and its history is chocka with tales. Downtown is lined with heritage storefronts with beautiful boutiques, gorgeous galleries, and excellent eateries tucked away inside. It's always bustling too, since residents can find everything they need and more here.

Whether you're retired or raising a family, there is plenty to do in Gore. Many residents fill their days or weekends fishing in the mountain streams, but there are also tracks and trails by which to explore the dramatic landscape on foot, by bike, or on horseback. From the golf course to the aquapark and ice rink, the trout-filled river to reserves, parks, and gardens, choose Gore for the great outdoors and so much more.

Population: 12,950

Known for: trout and fly fishing

Climate: long, hot summers and temperate winters

Location: 50 minutes from Invercargill

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Small towns of New Zealand

Clutha – Balclutha

On the southern edge of the South Island, the Clutha District offers something increasingly hard to find – space to breathe, strong career opportunities, affordable living, and communities that genuinely connect people together.

Stretching from the dramatic coastline of The Catlins to the rich rural landscapes surrounding Tapanui, Lawrence, and Waihola, Clutha combines natural beauty with a thriving regional economy and an enviable lifestyle pace.

Clutha is home to a diverse range of industries, including agriculture, forestry, manufacturing, construction, tourism, engineering, health care, and education. With businesses continuing to grow across the district, there are plenty of strong career paths with better work-life balance.

Balclutha, the district's main town, offers affordable living, quality schools, and easy access to the Clutha Gold Cycle Trail, waterfall walks, and spectacular scenery.

With short commutes, open spaces, and world-class outdoor recreation on the doorstep, Clutha continues to attract families, professionals, and businesses seeking a relaxed lifestyle and strong sense of community. Visit www.cluthanz.com

Population: 18,800

Known for: rugged splendour

Climate: warm summers, cold winters

Location: 30 minutes to Dunedin, 2.5 hours to Queenstown/Wānaka

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Milton

Milton sits at the heart of the Bruce Ward on the Tokomairiro Plains of South Otago. With its passionate community, rural charm, affordable housing, and prime location – connecting North, South, and Central Otago – it's no wonder that so many people have been making the move.

Over recent years, Milton has fast grown into an important industrial hub. The nearby Otago Corrections Facility and the building of the Milburn Quadrant has created an influx of employment, enticing people away from larger centres with its opportunities, affordability, and relaxed lifestyle. The Milburn Quadrant is a 200-hectare industrial development and intermodal freight hub that will connect rail, road, and port to support growth in the area, and better connect Central Otago and Southland with the rest of Aotearoa.

With rivers to fish in, wetlands teeming with life, beaches nearby, panoramic vistas from the McNally walking track, and a short drive to The Catlins, there is plenty to love about the up-and-coming Milton. The towering gothic spire of the Tokomairiro Church stands tall, lending aesthetic and architectural beauty to the town centre and anchoring it within the wider rural landscape.

Population: 2120

Known for: Tokomairiro Church

Climate: comfortable summers, short very cold winters

Location: 40 minutes from Dunedin

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Small towns of New Zealand

Wakefield

Wakefield is a small town with a lot going on. Situated at the southern end of the Waimea Plains, it is just 20 minutes south-west of Nelson, giving this semi-rural town a pleasant village atmosphere while being a stone's throw away from the city. With three national parks right on its doorstep – Abel Tasman, Kahurangi, and Nelson Lakes – there is plenty of hiking, cycling, kayaking, and camping to be done. The nearby rivers make for popular swimming spots, while the parks are the perfect place to picnic, being home to the few podocarp forests remaining in the area where an abundance of native birds sing from the branches.

One of the earliest European settlements in Aotearoa, Wakefield has the oldest-running school and the second-oldest church. Outdoor enthusiasts, artists, young families, and people looking for a quiet life all call it home. Proudly self-sufficient, the town is full of a surprising number of shops, cafés, galleries, vineyards, and museums.

With a busy calendar, a close community, and loads of sunshine, this town makes for a stunning fresh start.

Population: 2730

Known for: deep historical roots


Climate: sunny and mild with wet winters

Location: 20 minutes from Nelson



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Geraldine

Often cited as one of Aotearoa's prettiest small towns, Raukāpuka Geraldine looks like it has come out of a storybook. World renowned as the home of Barker's – stocking every Kiwi's pantry with chutneys, syrups, sauces, and marmalades – Geraldine has become an artisanal food-producing town, with an award-winning cheesemonger, craft gin distiller, and an excellent array of cafés, restaurants, and pubs. At the foot of the Southern Alps, it is the gateway to the alpine region and the lakes of the central Mackenzie Basin. It offers up endless picturesque scenery, and plenty of opportunities for outdoor adventuring.

The small town is full of historical buildings and a lovely rose garden. Nearby Peel and Talbot forests are home to an abundance of ancient native podocarps, ferns, and birds, and offer up stunning walking tracks.

Geraldine is a proud town with a welcoming community who are enterprising and energetic. They have a tradition of volunteering, and the affordability makes it an excellent place for raising children, starting a business, a change of a pace, or relaxing into retirement.

Population: 3070

Known for: artisanal food

Climate: warm summers and cool crisp winters

Location: 30 minutes from Timaru



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Small towns of New Zealand

Cromwell

Located at the picturesque junction where the Clutha and Kawarau rivers meet, Tirau Cromwell is the beating heart of Central Otago. Its wide-open mountain landscapes, shimmering lakes, world-class vineyards, and rich mining history make for plenty to do, see, drink, and eat. Renowned in Aotearoa as the stone fruit capital, the surrounding orchards produce the country's best cherries, apricots, nectarines, peaches, and plums.

Outdoorsy types can take an adventure trip on the mountain biking and hiking trails. Vinophiles and foodies can take a tour of the surrounding Central Otago winery cellar doors, who pair world-famous pinot noir and other cold-climate varieties with their menu items made from local produce. Beachgoers can lounge by the lake with a picnic and watch kayakers, boaters, and swimmers enjoy the autumn sunshine.

The Cromwell Heritage Precinct offers up a trip back in time, where original gold-rush buildings have been carefully reconstructed beside Dunstan Lake, with a variety of shops, galleries, and cafés to visit. Under an hour away from Queenstown and Wānaka, Cromwell is a quiet, perfectly positioned place to call home.

Population: 7470
Known for: world-class pinot noir
Climate: hot dry summers, cold crisp winters
Location: one hour from Tāhuna Queenstown

Harcourts Cromwell



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Westport

Stepping onto Te Tai Poutini, the West Coast of the South Island can feel like travelling back in time. The remote and rugged coastline features dense sub-tropical rainforests, black-sand beaches, fast-flowing rivers, and glaciers tucked between the Southern Alps and the cobalt blue of the Tasman Sea. Located at the mouth of the Buller River lies Kawatiri Westport, a quaint coastal town with a rich mining and milling heritage and plenty to offer. As the administrative centre of the Buller District, there is lots going on here against the dramatic backdrop of the Paparoa Range.

The tight-knit, vibrant community is full of outdoor adventurers, with hiking trails, white-water rafting, caving, and jetboating at Westport's fingertips. There's a movie theatre, a recreation centre featuring swimming pools, basketball courts, and a hockey field. The town has a commercial port and airport, and its key industries are based around tourism, mining, farming, and fishing. With housing prices significantly lower than the rest of Aotearoa and a certain prehistoric beauty that makes you feel like a pterodactyl might fly overhead, this remote little town has a big heart and a unique way of life.

Population: 4600
Known for: outdoor adventures
Climate: mild, sunny, high rainfall
Location: an hour and a half from Greymouth

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Small towns of New Zealand

Ashburton

Hakatere Ashburton is an agricultural hub and urban centre in the heart of the flat, tussocky Canterbury plains. Beneath enormous southern skies, the wider district is hemmed in by the Southern Alps to the west, the Pacific Ocean to the east, and the Rakaia and Rangitata rivers to the north and south, making life in Ashburton full of adventure. Commercial and club ski fields, world-class fly fishing spots, and water sports at Lake Hood are just some of the activities that occupy locals, while the bustling town is home to restaurants, museums, gardens, and art galleries. The excellent public facilities include the EA Networks Centre, which boasts a spa, gym, indoor pools, steam rooms, and four indoor and two outdoor courts.

Ashburton is located in one of the most productive agricultural districts in the world. Right on State Highway 1, it is well connected while still maintaining affordable housing and a quiet, tight-knit community feel. The slower rhythms of the region, dry and temperate climate, and stunning scenery makes it a beautiful place to begin your next chapter.

Population: 27,400

Known for: agricultural heartland

Climate: Dry temperate climate with frosty winters

Location: an hour out of Ōtautahi Christchurch

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Hanmer Springs

The picturesque Hanmer Springs might be known for its thermal hot pools, but there's a lot more to the alpine village than that. Although, of course, we recommend soaking your troubles away any day!

These days, it's rare to find a spirited community where everyone looks out for each other.

Hanmer Springs has a village atmosphere and a strong economy to boot, making it a lovely and prosperous place to settle down. Scenically stunning, it is one of the country's most popular resort towns and has visitors propping up the economy all year round – especially on weekends, school holidays, and in winter. Set up a service and you won't have to slow down when the snow starts falling! If you do fancy a gentler pace, you'll love the alpine air, pretty walks, and the fact that R&R is a focal point in this Canterbury town.

For kids, there's a full primary school for Years 1 to 8 right in town and a high school just 30 minutes away. Outdoor activities are a focus of school programmes. Meanwhile in the town centre, everyday needs are covered and social vibes make neighbours feel like family.

Population: 1090

Known for: natural hot pools

Climate: warm summers and snowy winters

Location: 90 minutes from Christchurch

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Small towns of New Zealand

Hokitika

Historic Hokitika has a cool, quirky vibe fuelled by a thriving hospo scene, a vibrant artisan community, and a stunning backdrop of West Coast scenery. With a relaxed and affordable lifestyle, tight-knit locals, and an unbeatable work-life balance, it's a great place to retire, set up a business, or raise a family – especially if you love the great outdoors.

Hokitika is perfect for those seeking access to the untamed natural wilderness of the West Coast, but with everything needed to build a life of comfort and success. A growing ecotourism industry and a bustling events calendar means it's popular and well frequented, so business endeavours have a great chance of success. Kids will love being able to walk or bike to school like the good old days in this incredibly safe town... that has no traffic lights!

Leave behind the daily commute and choose the best of both worlds: where nature meets modern amenities, community meets rugged landscapes that are so spectacular, you'll feel like the only person on Earth. Hokitika will leave you wanting for nothing.

Population: 3420

Known for: Wildfoods Festival

Climate: mild summers and high rainfall

Location: 30 minutes from Greymouth

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Te Anau

Te Anau is one of the prettiest towns you could ever call home. Imagine waking up every day to the sun glistening off a crystal-clear lake, and spending your afternoons exploring world-famous fjords, mountains, and walking tracks. Sitting on the eastern shores of Lake Te Anau right on the edge of Fiordland National Park, the town serves as the starting point for both Milford Sound, Doubtful Sound, and three of New Zealand's Great Walks. It is a natural paradise with so much to offer anyone who chooses to put down roots there.

Lake Te Anau is the largest lake in the South Island and the second largest in the country. Plenty of properties have a gorgeous water view, and as one of the last places in Aotearoa to see the sun, sunsets on the lake are spectacular. The town centre offers a host of amenities and excellent eateries that often bustle with visitors to the region, making Te Anau a great place to set up shop. And with schools ranging from primary age all the way up to Year 13 right in town, your whole family is catered for here.

Population: 2920

Known for: Lake Te Anau and nearby famous fiords

Climate: mild oceanic with long summer days and cool winters

Location: two hours from Queenstown and Invercargill



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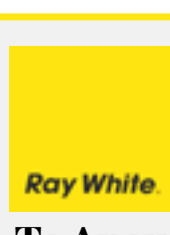
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Small towns of New Zealand

Marion

All roads lead to Marion, so says the old adage. Drive along SH1 and you'll notice several turn-offs to the vibrant rural town. Tūtaenui Marion is the heart of the Rangitikei District. Being the agricultural hub of region, the Marion train station was also once a busy junction where the line connecting Whanganui to Palmerston North met the line heading down to Wellington.

These days, despite the train line vanishing, the charming little town is still bustling, full of Victorian era homes, homesteads, buildings, and lovely gardens. The tight-knit town hosts a number of events each year, including the Marion Country Music Festival, an annual market day, and the Rangitikei Heritage Weekend.

Situated near the braided Rangitikei river, Marion is surrounded by rolling, verdant farmland. With the Ruahine Range framing the area to the east, there are plenty of ways to enjoy the outdoors, whether it be tramping in the ranges, heading further north to the Central Plateau, or taking a half-hour trip down the road to visit the picturesque Whanganui township. Affordable and quiet, it is the perfect place to move and get away from the city.

Population: 5598

Known for: heritage homesteads

Climate: long hot summers and mild winters

Location: 35 minutes from Palmerston North



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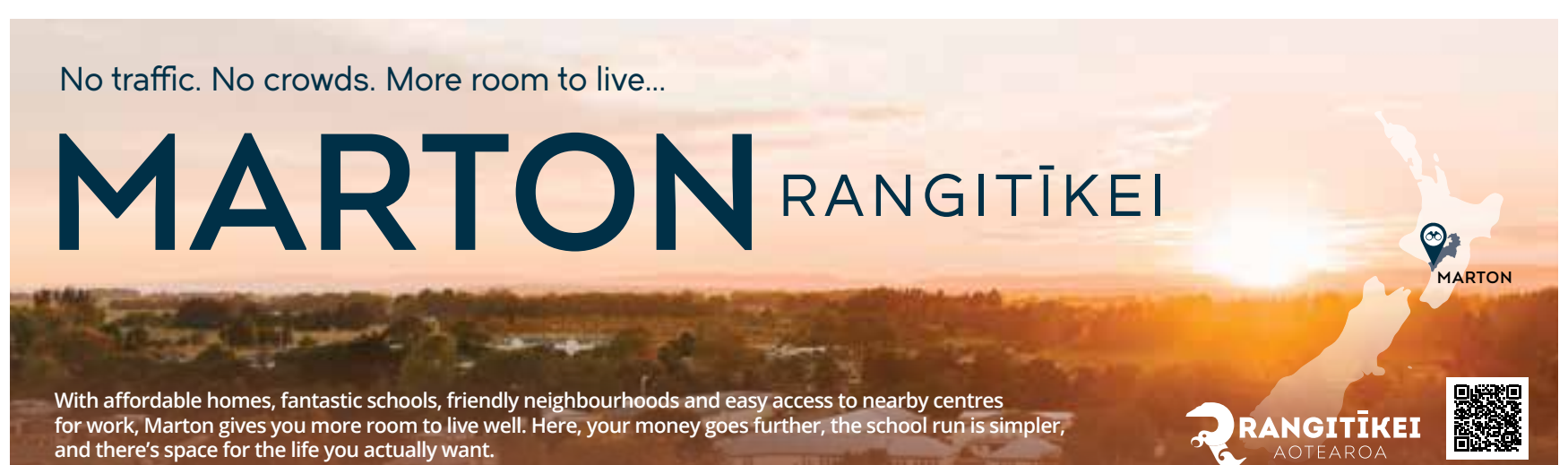
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Runaway American dream



Come Together is a concert series that celebrates seminal rock albums, bringing them to life through a supergroup made up of New Zealand’s most successful musicians. The 2026 programme features three concerts, the first taking place on the 5th of June at St James Theatre, where Bruce Springsteen’s triple-platinum album *Born To Run* will be performed in its entirety. According to biographer Peter Ames Carlin, the album captures “the essence of 50s rock ‘n’ roll and the beatnik poetry of 60s folk-rock, projected onto the battered spirit of mid-70s America”.

Performed by Milan Borich, Adam McGrath, Jennie Skulander, Jon Toogood, and the Come Together Band, the album will be played in full, followed by a second set featuring classics and deep cuts that span Springsteen’s extraordinary catalogue.

Described by *Forbes* magazine as “the most cinematic rock album of all time”, *Born To Run* marked its 50th birthday in August last year.

Transforming Springsteen from a struggling artist on the brink of being dropped into a full-blown rock star, *Born To Run* amounts to eight songs or a 39-minute masterpiece. One of the defining records of the 1970s, its success is still being felt half a decade later. It is immersive and bursting with heart, featuring tracks like *Thunder Road*, *Born To Run*, and *Jungleland*.

Head along for a show that promises epic musicianship, emotional punch, and musical collaborations that have made the *Come Together* series a cultural phenomenon.

Cathedrals of sound



19th century Austrian composer Anton Bruckner’s symphonic music is known for its long musical lines and spiritual atmosphere. His works have been described as cathedrals of sound, influenced by his deep Catholic faith and experience as an organist.

On Wednesday the 27th of May, Te Kōkī Orchestra of the New Zealand School of Music from Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington will bring his Symphony No. 4, titled *Romantic*, to life at Wellington’s Cathedral of St Paul, where the architecture of the hall will only add to the sense of grandeur and transcendence that is experienced listening to the symphony.

Te Kōkī Orchestra is made up of classical music students from the school, and will be supported by the French horn section and a few strings players from the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra.

Symphony No. 4 remains Bruckner’s most popular symphony. Conductor Shannon Pittaway says the title *Romantic* “is in reference to the 19th century idea of imagination, nature, legend, and a sense of wonder. Bruckner clearly plots out what each movement is depicting, although I think that there is something more going on below the surface.”

“The most satisfying thing about conducting a concert is to witness the musicians step up a level”, Pittaway says. “Seeing these young people hopefully fall in love with this music and gain deeper understanding, it’s incredibly satisfying as an educator to witness this process firsthand.”

Stilettoed skirmish

by **Alessia Belsito-Riera**



Sequins, sparkles, and staggering stilettos clash in the ultimate search for stardom this May. On the 31st, at Ivy Bar & Cabaret, six divas will take to the stage, baring their scintillating smiles and sharply choreographed steps in the hopes of taking home the crown at the Mx Capital Drag 2026 finale.

After months of knockout battles to the death-drop, the finale unfolds across three rounds, each testing a different side of drag. Here, in these last throes of perfection, performance, presentation, and pressure are everything.

“It pushed me and my overall drag to be more practical, clean, detailed, and unapologetically my own,” current reigning Mx Capital Faux Femm says, adding that it was surreal to compete alongside drag titans they looked up to. “I was incredibly lucky to be in a room filled with my community cheering and celebrating with me”.

Expect a night of high-energy performances, thought-provoking drag, and contestants putting everything on the line. Competing for this year’s title are Myrtle Montgomery, Dame Jthan, Slay West, Deliria Hevelius, Blink Bogan, and Maria Richman.

The stakes are real, with the winner representing the community both on and off the stage.

“I find that the Mx Capital crown often is the affirmation that you are and continue to be a community leader”, Faux Femm says. “I think winning gave me confidence in myself and my drag to continue with what I was already doing. This year’s contestants are incredibly talented, and I am super excited to see who takes the title for Wellington’s longest-running drag competition”.

A mystery for the whole flock



Every night, shepherd George Hardie (Hugh Jackman) reads murder mysteries aloud to his beloved flock of sheep, pretending they can speak English and unaware that, not only do they understand, but after he closes the book, they spend hours arguing over whodunnit.

George lives in a trailer on his field, raising the sheep purely for their wool, much to the distaste of local agribusiness types who are interested in his land. When he is found dead under mysterious circumstances, the sheep realise at once that it was a murder. On the other hand, local cop Tim Derry (Nicholas Braun) has never solved a serious crime in his life. The sheep decide to take it upon themselves to uncover the killer – even if it means leaving their meadow. What ensues is a classic whodunnit, with the exception of the sheep, who discover that the human world isn’t as simple as it appears in the books.

The Sheep Detectives is a live-action film directed by Kyle Balda (*Despicable Me*) and based on the book *Three Bags Full* by German crime author Leonie Swann.

Bach Choir of Wellington is putting on a special fundraiser screening on Sunday the 24th of May at Penthouse Cinema, raising funds that will go toward their continued performance of choral music, with a particular focus on the music of J.S. Bach and his contemporaries. This will enable the choir to keep entry fees accessible to all lovers of choral music.

Iconic New Zealand

Somewhere special



Ōtepoti Dunedin is exceptionally beautiful and chocka with things to do come rain or shine, making it the perfect winter destination.

Founded by Scottish immigrants, the city's history can be traced back to the 1800s, though Māori iwi have been settled in these parts since much longer ago. Echoes of Caledonia can be seen in the architecture and the atmosphere. Glimpse heritage homes, wander the historic centre, check out Larnach Castle, explore the museums, tour the galleries, and immerse yourself in both the cultural and culinary scenes.

Dunedin is also the wildlife capital of New Zealand. The coastal terrain of Otago Peninsula, secluded beaches, and bush-clad hills are perfect for all manner of creatures of wing and water. Visitors can explore the landscape and its inhabitants on biking, hiking, sailing, driving, or riding excursions.

Rug up warm one evening to catch the Aurora Australis – it's the best time of year to see it!

Rugged landscapes



Dunedin Railway Station is the home of the Taieri Gorge Railway. One of the world's great heritage rail journeys, the century-old rail takes passengers back in time, through the rugged landscapes of Central Otago, passing through tunnels and across viaducts carved by hand, revealing parts of the region only accessible by train.

Passengers are seated in carriages from the 1930s, with a guide sharing stories about the people and places along the way. A relaxing journey, each gentle curve reveals new outlooks, giving you time to soak in the changing scenery and appreciate the scale and remoteness.

A second scenic rail journey is the The Seaside, which takes passengers through charming seaside towns, revealing stunning views of the coastline with its sweeping beaches and dramatic cliffs. Heading north, there are options for half-day trips, or a full-day trip to Ōamaru, revealing hidden coastal gems along the way.

An architectural marvel



Dunedin Railway Station is the secondmost photographed building in the Southern Hemisphere. Built in 1906 in the Renaissance Revival style, its clock tower, colonnade, and copper-domed cupolas make it an architectural marvel and part of the top 20 railway stations in the world.

More than a departure point, the station is a destination in its own right. There you'll find the Otago Art Society, dining at Cobb & Co, and each Saturday an authentic farmers' market gathers in the northern carpark, offering up delicious local produce from vendors who come from throughout the region.

The station is the start of two incredible scenic train tours. The Taieri Gorge and The Seaside take passengers on a journey back in time through Dunedin's rugged inland and coastal landscapes that are rich in history and breathtaking views. Visit Dunedin Railway Station, the starting point of exciting adventures into the stories of the land.



Iconic New Zealand

Highland roots



Dunedin is steeped in Scottish history, with its stone buildings and its streets named after those in Edinburgh. Even the name is derived from Dùn Èideann, the Gaelic term for Edinburgh. Nowhere recognises and celebrates those Highland roots more than The Scottish Shop. Having recently moved across the Octagon from George Street to Stuart Street, The Scottish Shop is a treasure trove of time-honoured Scottish quality classics and giftware.

Whether it's a gift for someone special in your life or a celebration of a wedding or anniversary, The Scottish Shop can provide you with the perfect Scottish accessory or gift. They stock everything from tartan blankets, tam o' shanters, and scarves to kilt buckles, sporrans, and ghillie brogues. They also offer a made-to-measure kilt-making service and South Island kilt hire for every occasion. Keep an eye out online for their brand new website, going live mid-June.

Majestic sea giants



With a three-metre wingspan, the toroa or albatross is a truly majestic bird to behold. The Royal Albatross Centre in Ōtepoti Dunedin is home to the world's only mainland northern royal albatross colony. From the exclusive viewing observatory, you can witness these sea giants at their nesting grounds on the headlands of the Otago Harbour.

The fully guided tours include an informative short film and presentation about albatross, as well as a history of the site – from a small Māori camp to a fortified pā where Te Tiriti o Waitangi was signed in 1840, from a lighthouse to an underground fort, to a large defence base in World War II, to the nature reserve it is today. Visitors can also walk through the underground Tairaroa Fort, built in the late 1880s, and visit the McMillan Gallery to learn about the diverse marine wildlife in the area. It's the perfect educational attraction for families on King's Birthday weekend and over the winter holidays.

Dunedin local legends



Rob Roy Dairy Dunedin is a quintessential scarfie institution. Whether you're a student, tourist, or happen to be passing through, getting an ice cream from Rob Roy Dairy on the corner of Albany Street and George Street is a rite of passage.

Rob Roy has been a hotspot in Dunedin for over 31 years. This month it celebrates the launch of Rob Roy Designer Desserts, which will serve up a huge range of bubble tea alongside its famous ice creams. With lines wrapping round the corner on any given day, it has 30 different ice cream flavours, offering up sundaes, soft-serves, frozen yoghurt, fruit smoothies, waffles, shakes, the beloved CookieTime pie, and more toppings than you can shake a stick at.

Bring your mum, dad, grandparents, kids, and cousins, because *everyone* loves ice cream. No one knows that better than the hosts, who have been elevated to the level of Dunedin local legends.



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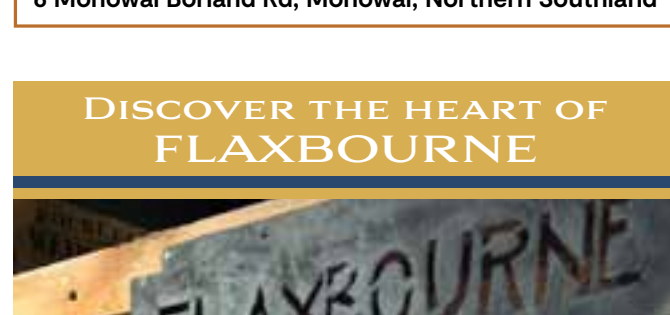
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Operatunity is celebrating its 25th Birthday this year and company owners Susan Boland and John Cameron are proud that Operatunity has become New Zealand's leading provider of daytime concerts and music travel for seniors. Don't let the name Operatunity fool you. It is a play on the words Opera and tunes but we include everything from opera, classical, musical theatre, country, hits from the 20s to 70s and more.

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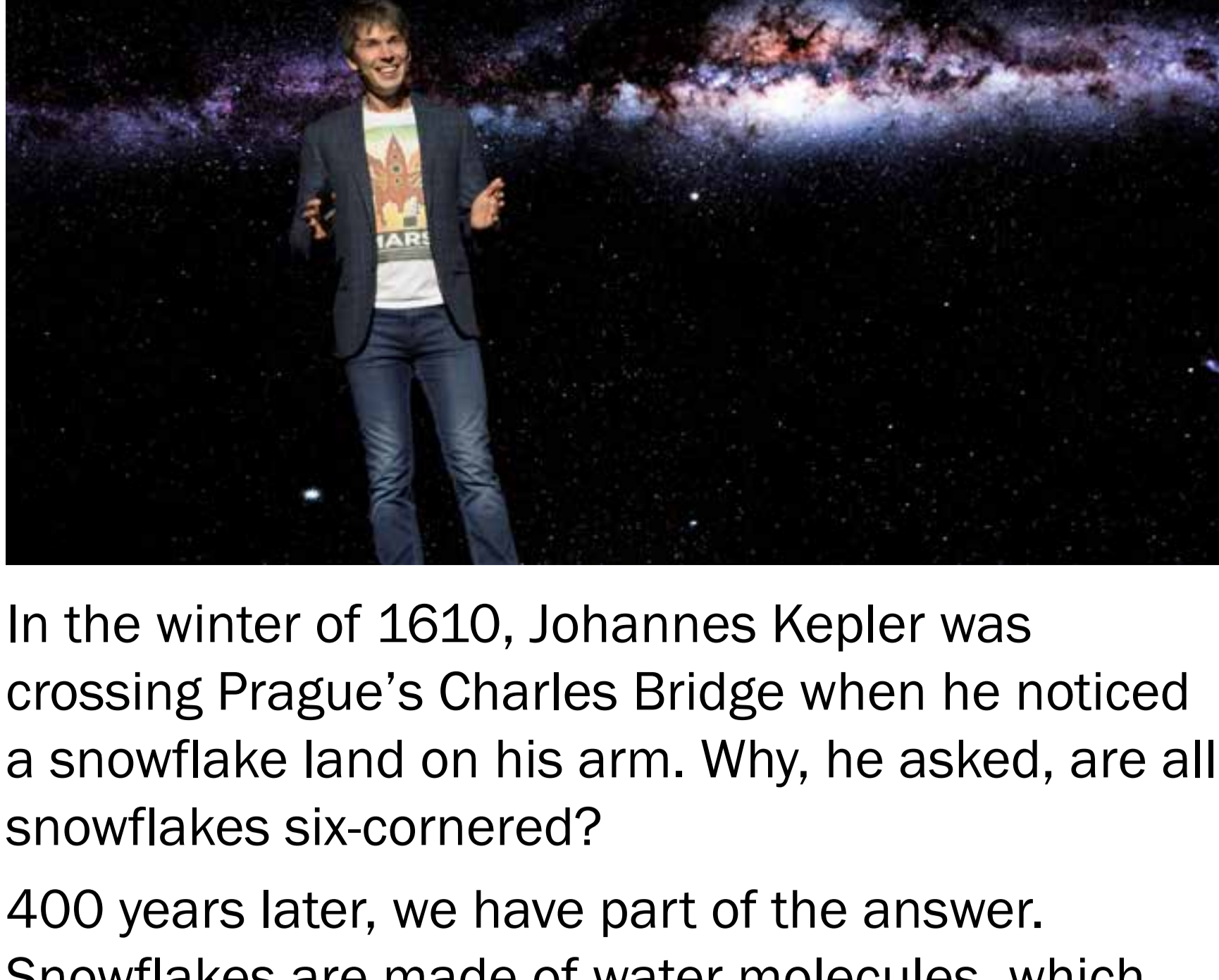


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Big and small



In the winter of 1610, Johannes Kepler was crossing Prague's Charles Bridge when he noticed a snowflake land on his arm. Why, he asked, are all snowflakes six-cornered?

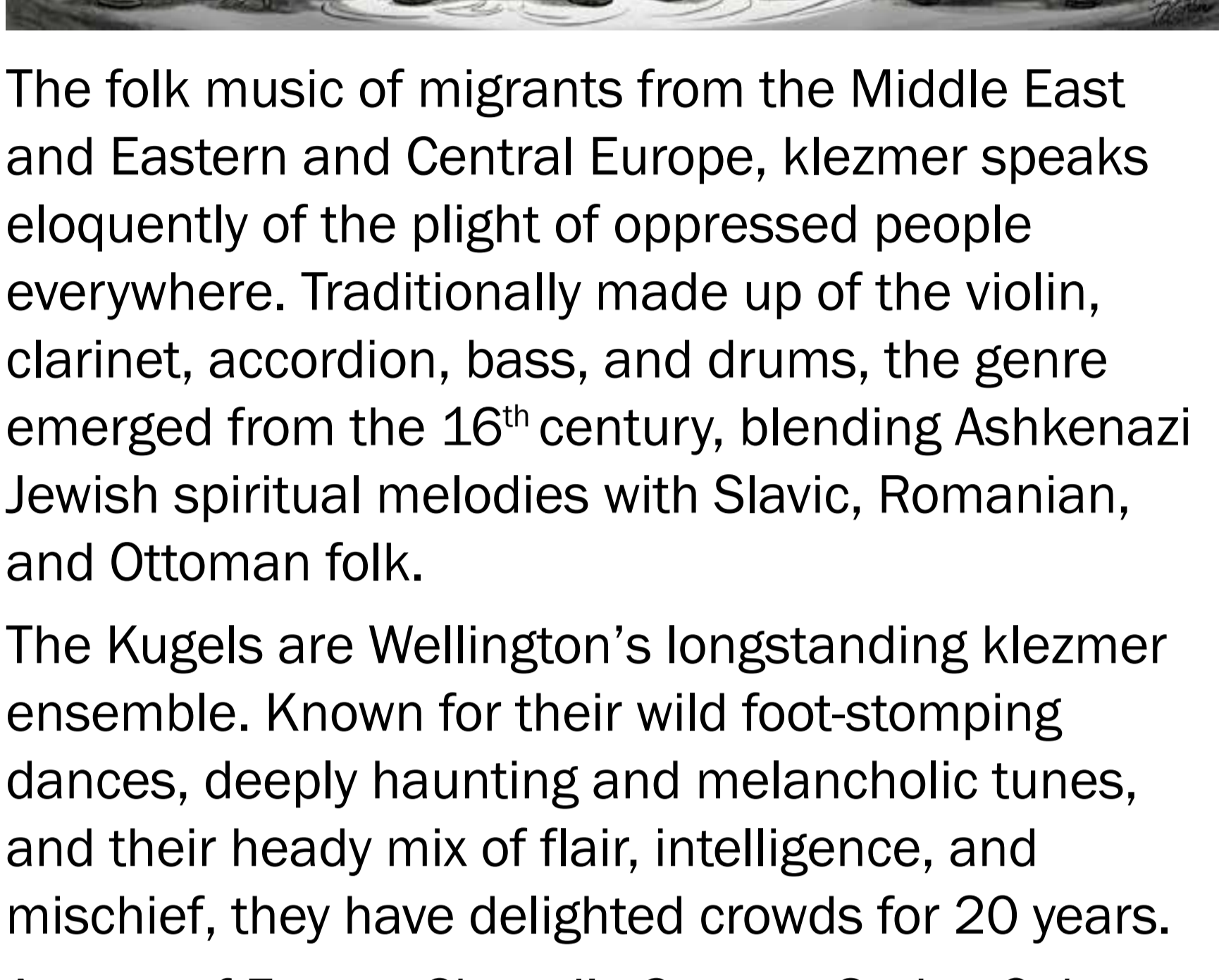
400 years later, we have part of the answer. Snowflakes are made of water molecules, which are made of atoms, which are made of quarks and electrons – which might be made of superstrings – all held together by forces of nature described by quantum theory. But how did a quarter-of-a-million-year-old species of great apes on one small planet orbiting around a middle-aged star in an average galaxy figure all this out?

Following his smash-hit show *Horizons*, which he performed to over half a million people across the world, Professor Brian Cox is heading to Aotearoa to perform his brand-new show, *Emergence*, which celebrates the intricacy of the Universe and explores the laws of nature that sculpted it.

Happening on Saturday the 6th of June at TSB Arena, the show traces the flows of galaxies that make up the cosmic web, traverses the Earth's interlinked ecosystems, dives into the structures of the human brain, and pushes out towards the edge of human invention.

"It's the most ambitious live show I've ever written", Cox says. "I hope the show is an all-encompassing experience, and I hope it leaves everyone, whether they love science or music or history, or simply contemplating the beauty of nature, with something new to think about."

Wild, foot-stomping, haunting



The folk music of migrants from the Middle East and Eastern and Central Europe, klezmer speaks eloquently of the plight of oppressed people everywhere. Traditionally made up of the violin, clarinet, accordion, bass, and drums, the genre emerged from the 16th century, blending Ashkenazi Jewish spiritual melodies with Slavic, Romanian, and Ottoman folk.

The Kugels are Wellington's longstanding klezmer ensemble. Known for their wild foot-stomping dances, deeply haunting and melancholic tunes, and their heady mix of flair, intelligence, and mischief, they have delighted crowds for 20 years.

As part of Futuna Chapel's Concert Series *Colours of Futuna*, The Kugels will be performing on Sunday the 24th of May, promising an afternoon of soaring highs, crushing lows, and klezmer grooves that will make you want to jump up and dance.

They'll be performing their trademark toe-tapping folk music, made up of traditional tunes alongside original works from Composer Laureate Ross Harris, and new pieces written by members of the band.

The group features spectacular musical talent: two former New Zealand Symphony Orchestra players – Robin Perks (violin) and Debbie Rawson (clarinet, xaphoon) – virtuoso champion accordionist Rebekah Greig, and top bass player Nick Tipping.

The South Waikato Arts Trust says to expect a "soul-tingling programme" and a "mesmerised audience". Head along to the very special Futuna Chapel in Karori for what is sure to be an enthralling afternoon that'll have you dancing all the way home.

Stories of Ireland



Coromandel-based Irish musician Sean Kelly has been performing traditional Irish music here in Aotearoa for over 30 years. He's set to tour across small-town Aotearoa, bringing along his friends Jono Lonie and Maree Limpus and stopping by Whirinaki Whare Taonga in Upper Hutt and the Wairarapa Events Centre in Carterton on the 30th and 31st of May respectively. Both Arts on Tour NZ concerts promise intimate shows that blend history, culture, music, and cinema.

Kelly's father was a renowned cinephile who shot films on his Super 8 in and around urban Derry and rural Donegal between 1958 and 1988. A tumultuous time in the history of the north of Ireland, the show is an authentic dialogue between music and the footage depicting scenes of ordinary life during that period.

Designed to both entertain and enlighten, Kelly will be on vocals, Irish whistles, bodhran, and guitar, with Lonie on the fiddle, Uilleann pipes, and electric mandolin, and Limpus on cello and doubling as AV operator. Both evenings are set to be a sensory-rich experience leaving the audience with an elusive sense of wonder.

Starting out as lead vocalist with Irish bands Róisín Dubh and the Celtic Flyers, Kelly has since sung *Ireland's Call* twice at Eden Park and performed a duet with Florence Welch of Florence and the Machine. *Lyric Theatre* says, "Sean Kelly's work reminds us that storytelling doesn't need to shout to be heard – it can whisper through grainy film, rustle through the strings of a guitar, and settle gently in the heart."

Buckle up, Pōneke



Jackson Burling is in the driver's seat of his one-man show *Over and Out*, and he's ready to take you on the ride of a lifetime. From The Hannah on the 30th of May, he'll cover some serious mileage in a show that has already scooped up plenty of awards and nominations during its 2025 premiere as part of TAHI: New Zealand Festival of Solo Performance.

As a young man, Burling took his father's advice and steered clear of a career as a truck driver. Years later, after a long and gruelling stretch in the arts industry and a session with Murphy – a diehard, long-haul truck driver with grit, charm, and a lifetime of stories – Burling finds himself making a U-turn as he ponders whether he made the right choice.

In *Over and Out*, Burling circles back to present a verbatim theatre show that moves between the cab of a truck and the space of the theatre, tracing the distance between where you come from, where you end up, and what it means if something is in your blood.

Burling says the show is for those who come from the trucking world, for people in the arts, and for anyone who loves a good story. "It's about the space between those worlds and realising there's actually not much difference."

The result is a portrait of one of Aotearoa's essential workers, and a reflection on identity, work, and the choices that shape a life. It's raw, grounded, and quietly disarming, asking what it means to step away from something and glance in the rearview mirror.

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Harcourts has been part of the fabric of the New Zealand property market since 1888, making it the oldest real estate company in Aotearoa. This year they were awarded Most Trusted Real Estate Agency at the Reader's Digest Trusted Brands Awards, the 14th year in a row that Harcourts has received this prize.

The Reader's Digest Trusted Brands Awards are widely regarded as a benchmark of consumer confidence across multiple industries. Voted entirely by consumers, with thousands of New Zealanders getting independently surveyed, the awards are a true and authentic representation of consumer preferences.

Wellington

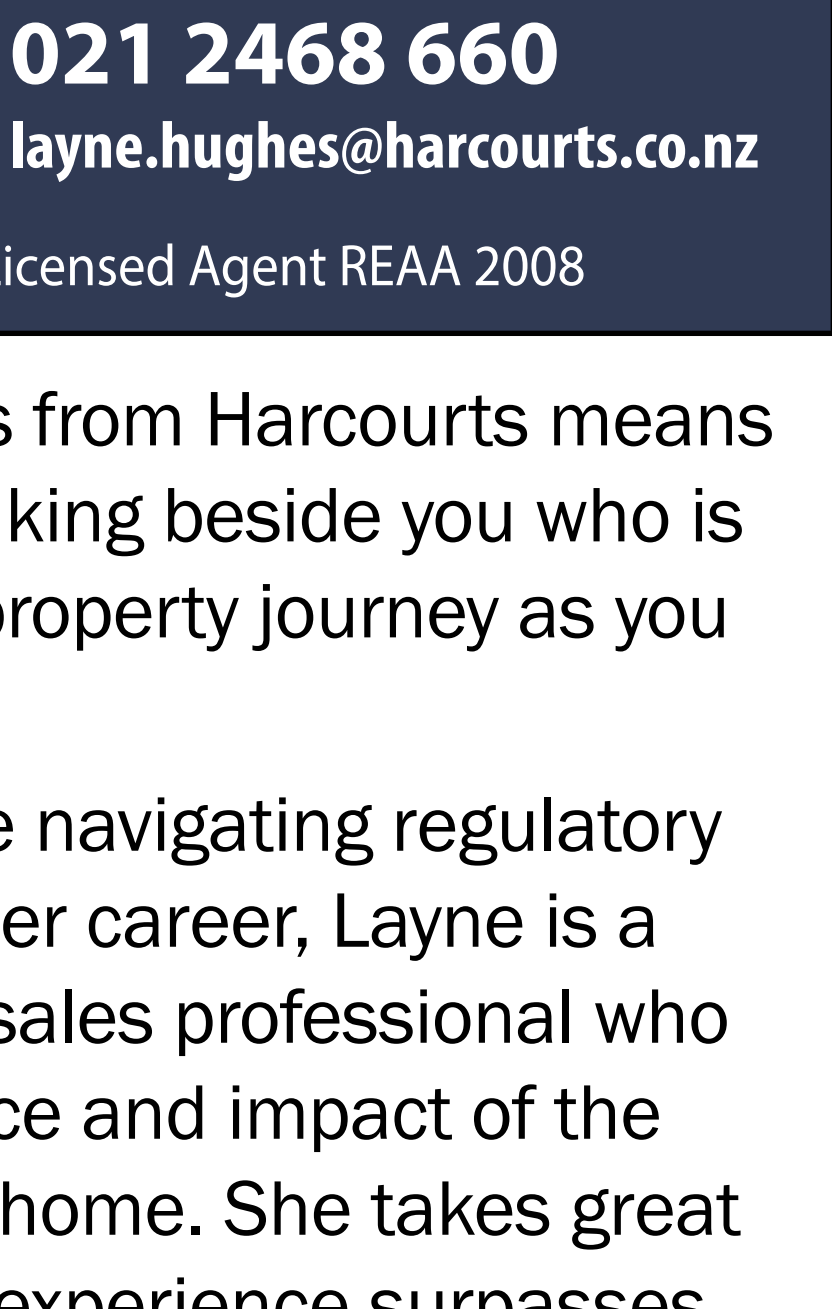
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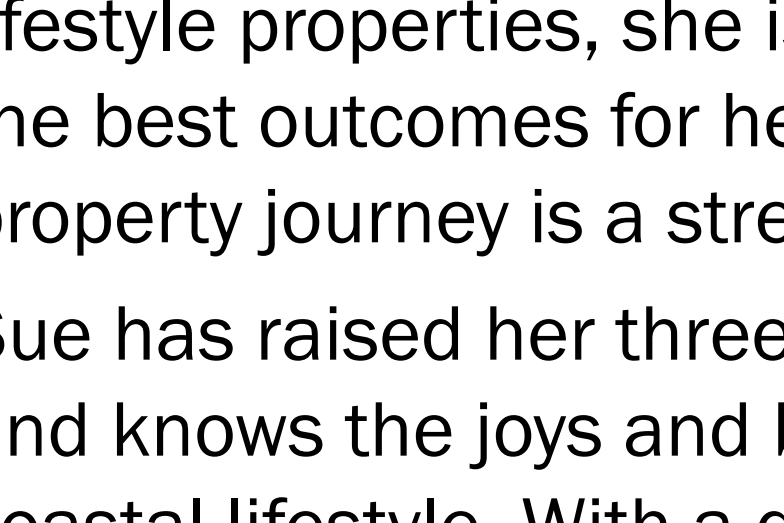
Working with Layne Hughes from Harcourts means that you have someone walking beside you who is just as excited about your property journey as you are.

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Clients consider Layne to be honest, dedicated, supportive, friendly, and an expert communicator. For more visit RateMyAgent.

Waikanae

Harcourts Team Group

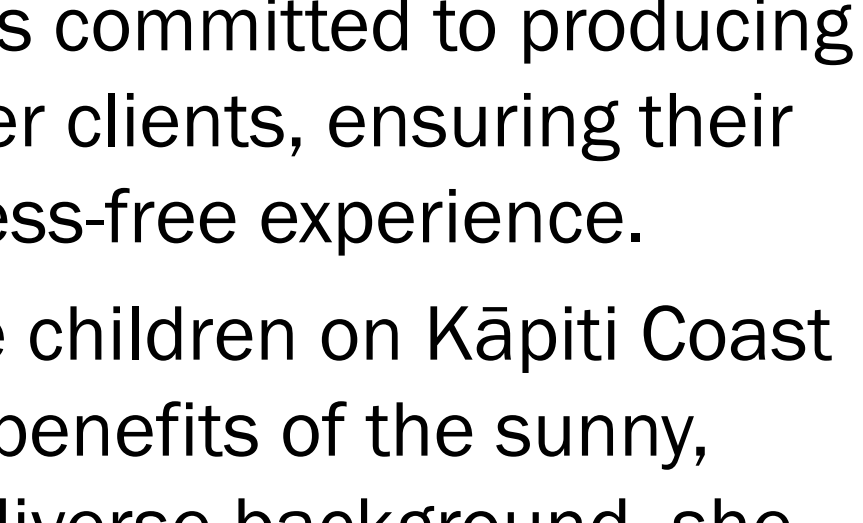


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Harcourts Waikanae Team Group Realty Ltd Licensed under REAA 2008

The combined expertise of Harcourts' Trina James and Sue Ayton amounts to 41 years of buying and selling houses in Waikanae.

A high-energy and driven person, Trina lives on a small farm in Reikorangi. With a focus on rural and lifestyle properties, she is committed to producing the best outcomes for her clients, ensuring their property journey is a stress-free experience.

Sue has raised her three children on Kāpiti Coast and knows the joys and benefits of the sunny, coastal lifestyle. With a diverse background, she has a unique set of skills that foster her clear communication skills and attention to detail.

Paremata

Harcourts Team Group



Team Watson | Harcourts Paremata

Adriana Watson | M **027 498 2622**

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www.harcourts.net/nz/office/paremata/people/adriana-watson

Adriana Watson knows what it takes to build up a track record of success. She always puts her clients first, as good relationships are key to ensuring the best possible outcomes.

Alongside Emma and Kate, Adriana is proud to be part of a dedicated team that brings energy, professionalism, and a commitment to every client experience. Together, they work closely to ensure every detail is handled with care, making the buying and selling process as smooth and stress-free as possible. With honest advice, strong communication, and extensive local market knowledge, Team Watson are passionate about helping clients achieve outstanding results. Get in touch to make your next move.

Kāpiti

Harcourts Team Group

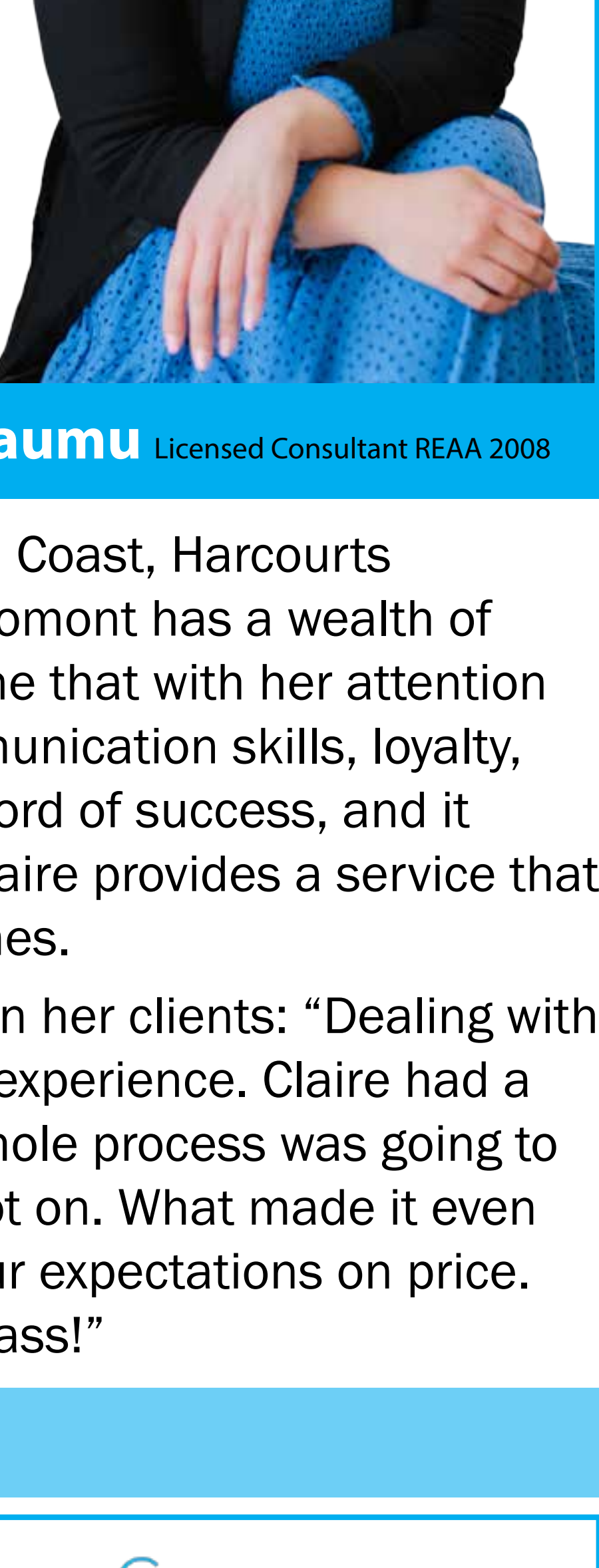
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Claire Fromont

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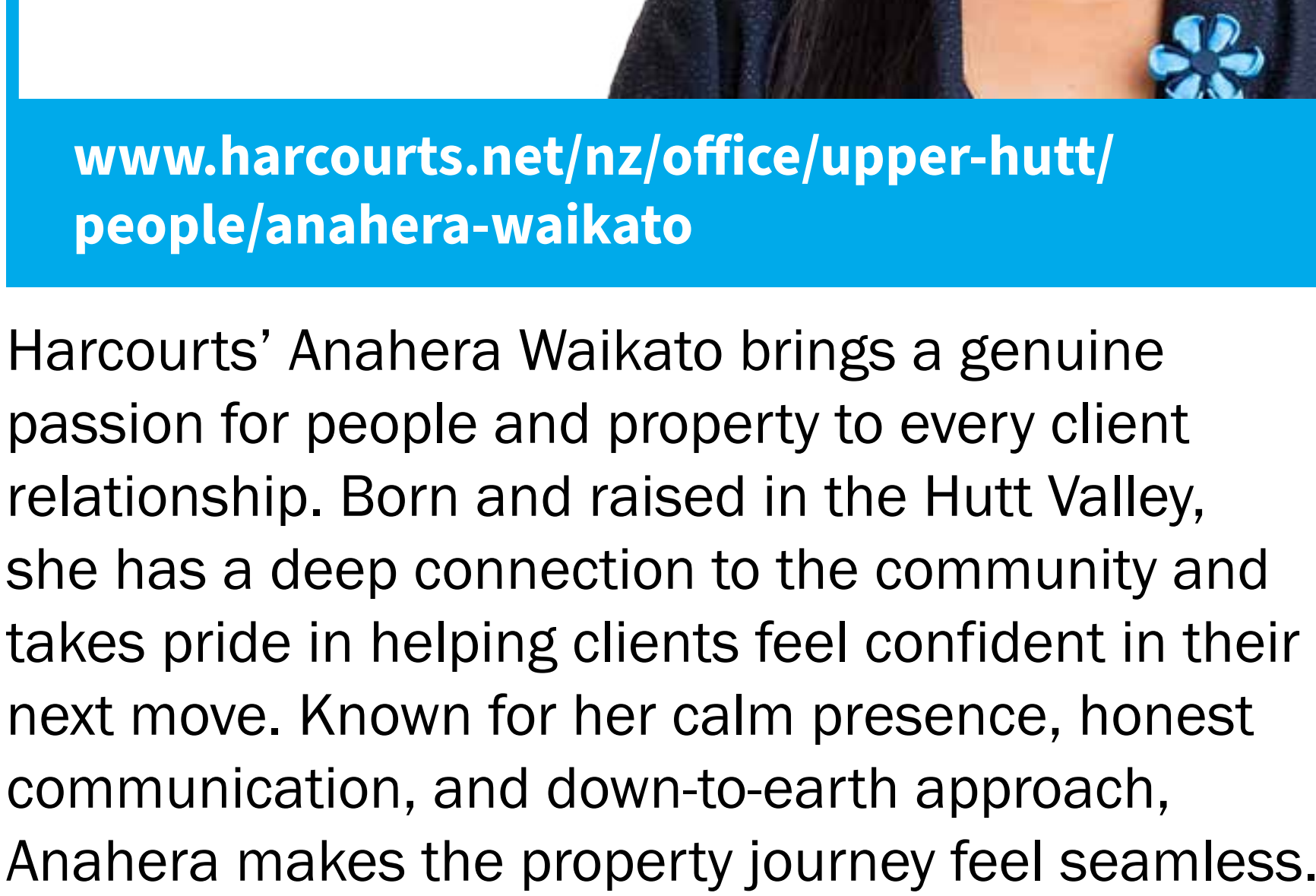
Harcourts Paraparaumu Licensed Consultant REAA 2008

Growing up on the Kāpiti Coast, Harcourts Paraparaumu's Claire Fromont has a wealth of local knowledge. Combine that with her attention to detail, excellent communication skills, loyalty, integrity, and a track record of success, and it becomes evident that Claire provides a service that delivers the best outcomes.

No one says it better than her clients: "Dealing with Claire was an awesome experience. Claire had a clear plan on how the whole process was going to unfold and she got it spot on. What made it even better is we exceeded our expectations on price. Well done, Claire, first class!"

Lower Hutt

Harcourts Team Group



Michelle and Glen
Team Robertson

Michelle Robertson

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Glen Robertson

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Harcourts Team Group Licensed under REAA 2008

Buying and selling property is a huge deal. No one understands that better than Michelle and Glen, who make up the husband-and-wife team from Harcourts Lower Hutt: Team Robertson. The duo pride themselves on their ability to work with anyone, bringing their wealth of experience to ensure the best outcomes are achieved for their clients.

Team Robertson's personal touch means that clients feel supported and confident throughout their journey. Michelle's expert communication skills and attention to detail, combined with Glen's warmth, commitment, and integrity, makes Team Robertson the trusted duo to have on your team as you navigate the property market.

Upper Hutt

Harcourts Team Group

Proudly raised in the Hutt Valley, with strong local knowledge and a genuine connection to the community

Anahera Waikato

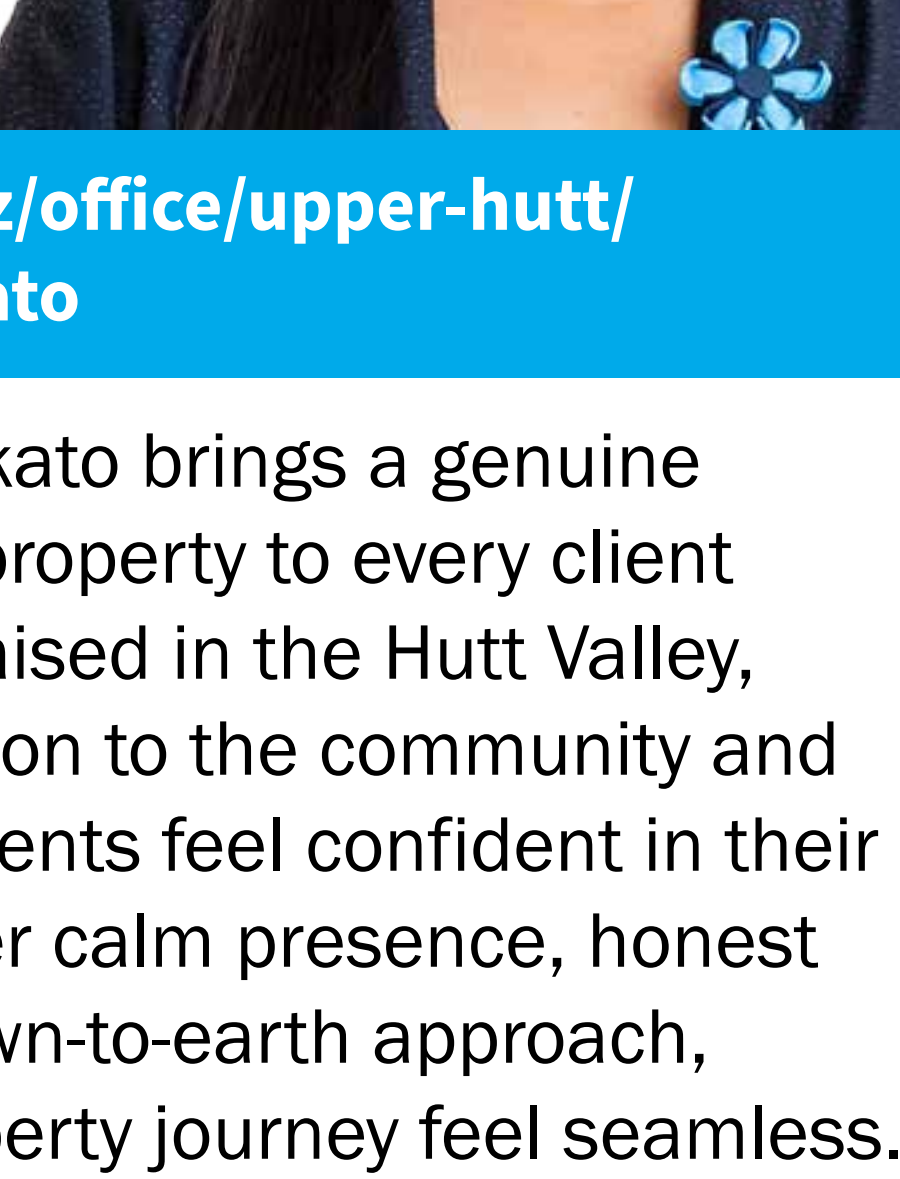
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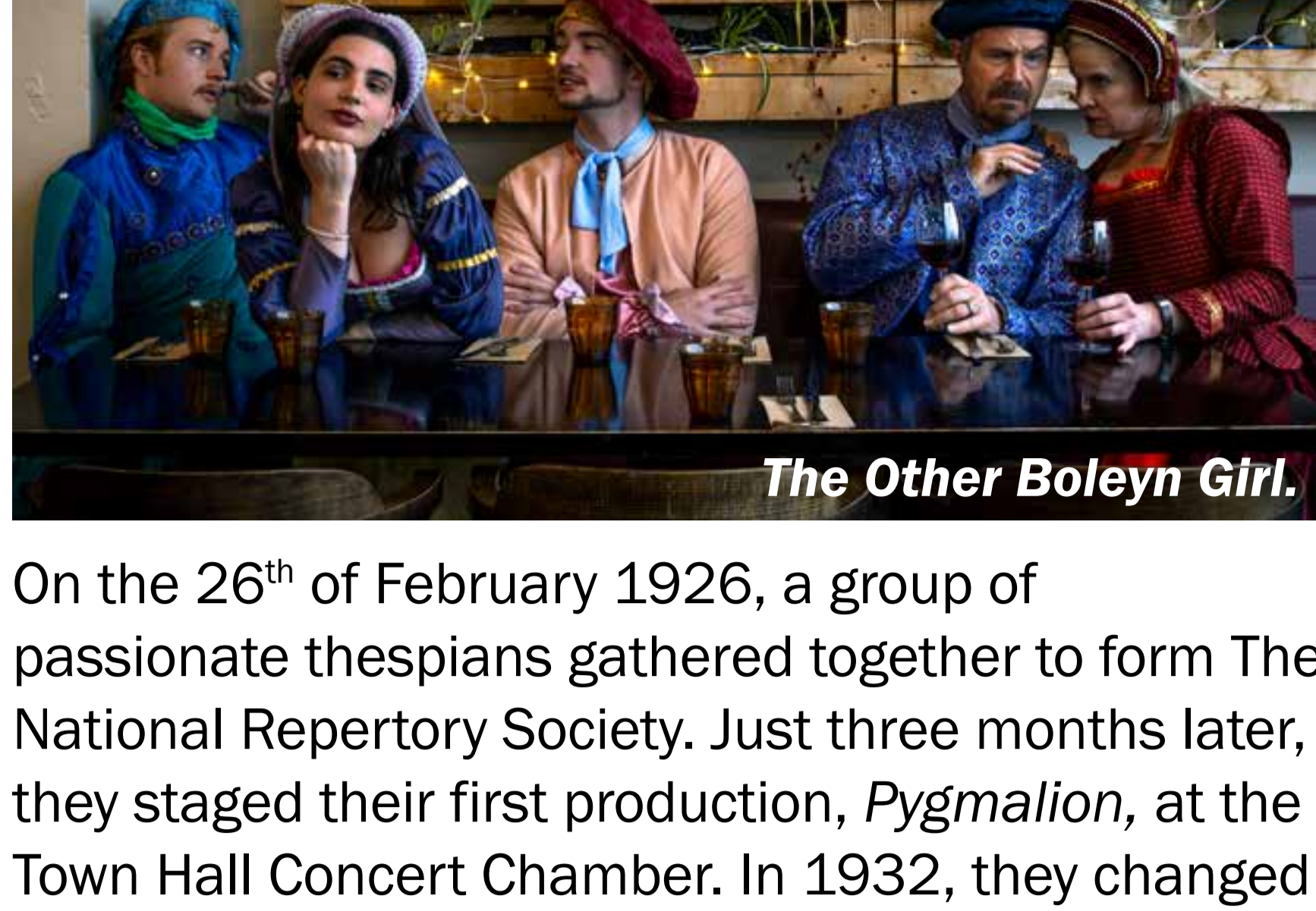


www.harcourts.net/nz/office/upper-hutt/people/anahera-waikato

Harcourts' Anahera Waikato brings a genuine passion for people and property to every client relationship. Born and raised in the Hutt Valley, she has a deep connection to the community and takes pride in helping clients feel confident in their next move. Known for her calm presence, honest communication, and down-to-earth approach, Anahera makes the property journey feel seamless.

As a proud mother of two, she understands that property decisions are about family, future, and creating opportunities for loved ones. Anahera is trusted for her professionalism, consistency, and ability to guide clients with clarity and care every step of the way.

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Curtain up! by **Madelaine Empson****Ewen Coleman.****The Other Boleyn Girl.**

On the 26th of February 1926, a group of passionate thespians gathered together to form The National Repertory Society. Just three months later, they staged their first production, *Pygmalion*, at the Town Hall Concert Chamber. In 1932, they changed their name to something you'll recognise instantly: Wellington Repertory Theatre.

Now celebrating a century of spirited storytelling, the city's longest-running community theatre company will raise a glass (and the curtain) to more than 600 productions staged on the 30th and 31st of May over King's Birthday at Prefab Hall. Everyone is welcome to join them for a weekend that includes an exhibition, gala dinner, official cake-cutting ceremony, and more.

I spoke with life member Ewen Coleman about Wellington Repertory Theatre's past, present, and future ahead of their centenary production *The Other Boleyn Girl*, running at Gryphon Theatre from the 27th of May to the 6th of June.

How does it feel to be celebrating the centenary of Wellington Repertory Theatre? What an amazing legacy.

Quite amazing really when you look back and see just what has been achieved over the years. Over 600 productions, plus the Greenroom Club, junior theatre, play readings, and drama classes all involving dozens of people bringing theatre to Wellington audiences. And to see many famous names that have trod the boards and been part of the Wellington Repertory Theatre Community.

What are your favourite memories of shows or moments over the years?

I have been actively involved with Wellington Rep for 50 years and in that time, and of all the shows I have been involved with, it is the people I have worked with both on and off stage that I have the fondest memories of. And being community theatre, everyone involved has a day job so it is all entirely voluntary. I have been so impressed with the enthusiasm and commitment from everyone in the theatre. It is exciting that so many of the actors in the shows have gone on to have professional careers – both here and overseas.

Why have you chosen *The Other Boleyn Girl* to mark the centenary?

From a personal point of view, the Tudor period of history fascinates me. I have directed about half a dozen period costume dramas and each time I get a real buzz working on these types of shows. Also, as it is a large cast of 20 and involves many people on stage, plus just as many backstage, it is the ethos of community theatre.

What do you hope people take away from the show and the centenary celebrations?

It is a challenging play, and I hope the audiences will go home not only entertained but in admiration of what a group of community actors can achieve with such a complex play.

Those attending the centenary celebrations will see the depth and width of theatre that has been produced in Wellington over the years. And will now no doubt be sharing many wonderful memories and stories... some never to be repeated.

Love and treachery



The Tudor period continues to captivate the world with its cast of racy characters engaged in political intrigue and romantic scandals.

King Henry VIII's court was a stage for love and treachery, where the weapons of choice were sex, marriage, and the executioner's axe. No one captured the Tudor soap opera quite like Philippa Gregory in her million-copy bestselling novel *The Other Boleyn Girl*. In 2024, Mike Poulton's stage adaptation premiered at Chichester Festival Theatre, and it will now be staged by Wellington Repertory Theatre under the competent direction of lifetime member Ewen Coleman.

Henry VIII's mistress Mary Boleyn is a pawn in her family's lust for power. Queen Katherine of Aragon hasn't produced a male heir, and Mary's ruthless uncle scents the chance of putting his niece on the throne. But the King's eye has fallen on another: Mary's headstrong sister Anne, whose ambition not only threatens to destroy her bond with her sister and their brother George, but shakes the very foundations of Church and State.

The production not only marks Wellington Repertory's 100th birthday, but also marks 50 years of service from Coleman. The large cast will take this lavish production on a 10-performance run between the 27th and 6th of June at the Gryphon Theatre, bringing to life a key moment in England's history.

King's Birthday will be an action-packed weekend, with performances of the play each night alongside centenary celebrations at Prefab Hall during the day, featuring an exhibition of photos, programmes, posters, and other theatre memorabilia.

Electronica voyagers

**Photo by Alex Coxy.**

Nikita 雅涵 Tu-Bryant, the frontperson of Aotearoa electronica voyagers KITA has your King's Birthday weekend sorted, with a three-act lineup at Moon Bar in Newtown on Thursday the 28th of May, followed by a three-part musical miniseries at the Raumati Social Club from Friday the 29th through to Sunday the 31st.

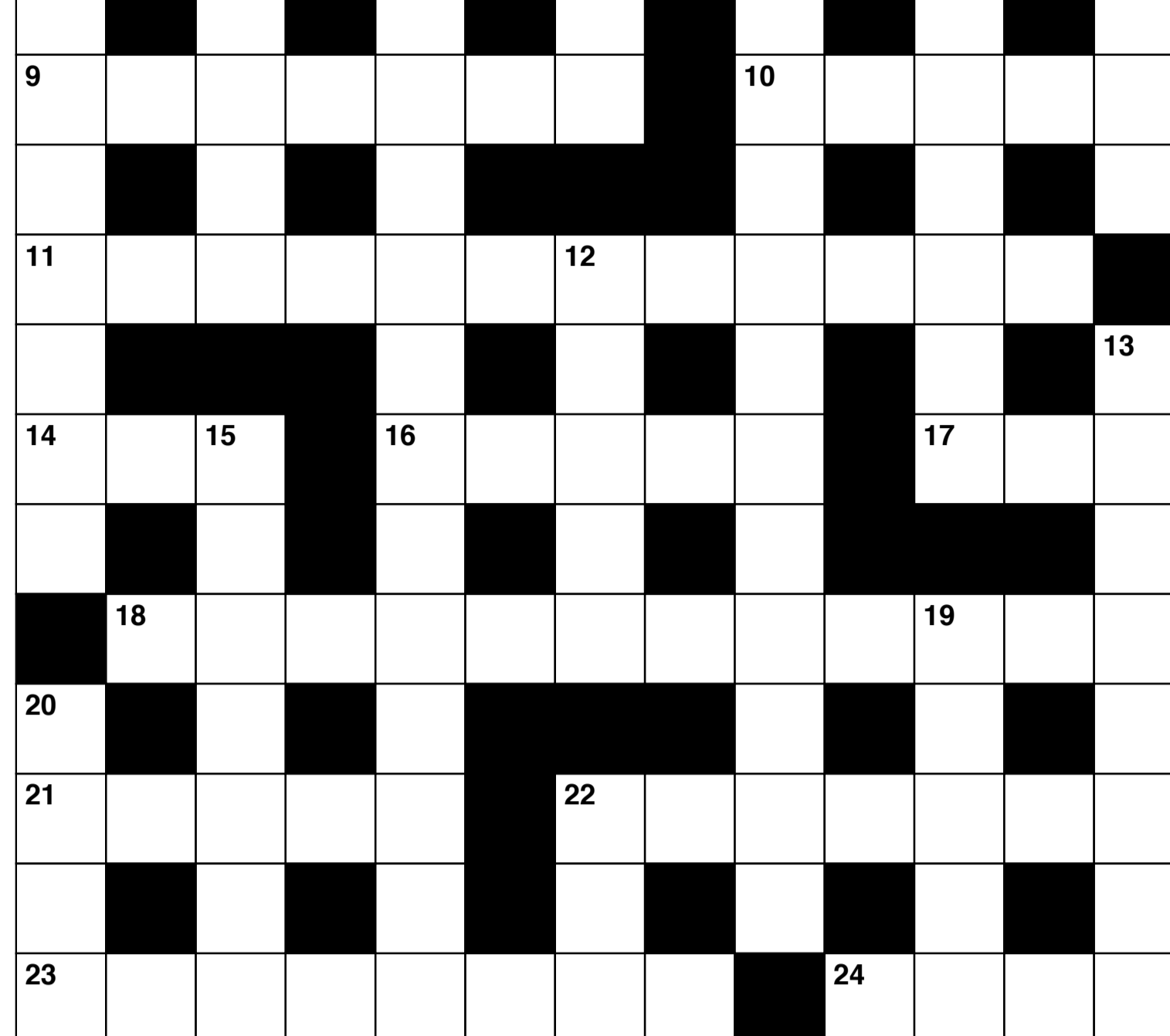
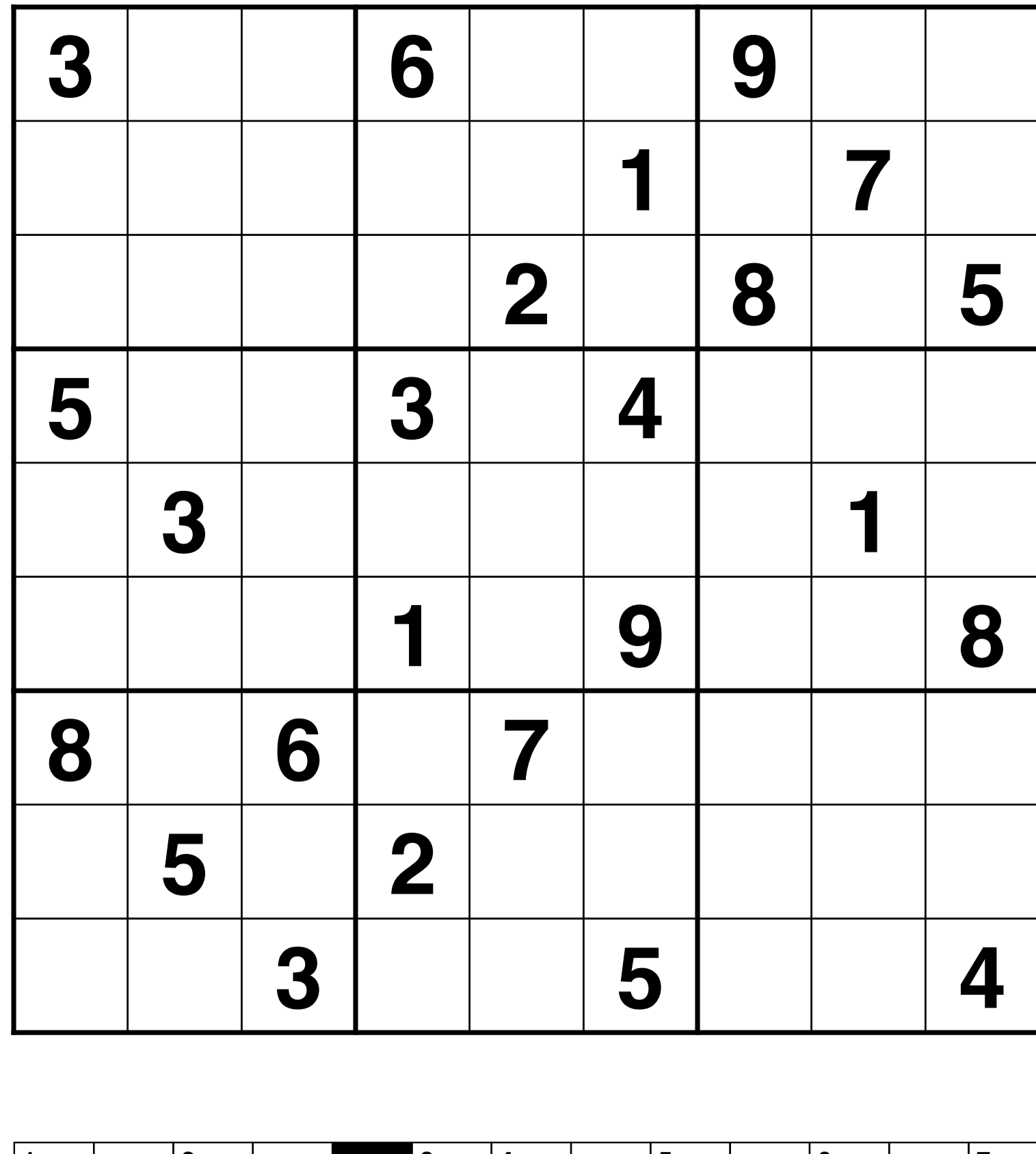
Nikita is a well-known Taiwan-born Pōneke-based multidisciplinary artist. In tune with Te Marama Puoro o Aotearoa New Zealand Music Month, she will be performing an acoustic set at Moon Bar, sharing the bill with a solo performance from Goodnight My Darling, the musical project of Maxine Macaulay – known for her combination of dreamy vocals and experiential sound – and Tyson Smith, musician, songwriter, and DJ who released his album *The Electrons* last year, combining elements of rock, blues, folk, electronic, and freeform improvisation.

Come Friday, Nikita will be at the Raumati Social Club, performing a KITA DJ set with her long-time collaborator, producer Ed Zucollo (aka ZUKE), sharing both old and new songs from the band, performed in the way they were originally written: without any live drums.

Saturday night will see the KITA trio reunited and joined by Tyson Smith once more, adding his twang to the KITA set while also performing music from his album *The Hollow Tree* in celebration of its 10th birthday.

Finally, Sunday afternoon dials it down a little with an intimate solo performance from Nikita alongside Goodnight My Darling's vocalist Maxine.

Puzzles



Across

- 1 - Ward (anag) (4)
 3 - Partially hidden (8)
 9 - Perfect happiness (7)
 10 - Musical instrument (5)
 11 - Connection or association (12)
 14 - Distant (3)
 16 - Very masculine (5)
 17 - Possesses (3)
 18 - Untimely (12)
 21 - With a forward motion (5)
 22 - Vehement denunciations (7)
 23 - Study of heredity (8)
 24 - Endure; large animal (4)

Down

- 1 - White flakes in the hair (8)
 2 - Fourth month (5)
 4 - Feather scarf (3)
 5 - Long athletics race (5-7)
 6 - Mischievous (7)
 7 - Depression in a surface (4)
 8 - Boxing class (12)
 12 - Killer whales (5)
 13 - Evaluator (8)
 15 - Summary of results (7)
 19 - Form of identification (5)
 20 - Be suspended (4)
 22 - Twitch (3)

The Devil Wears Prada 2

R13

119 minutes

★★★

Reviewed by Isabella Smith



It's a little difficult to know what to say about the sequel to a cult classic like *The Devil Wears Prada*. Set 20 years after where we left off, Andy Sachs (Anne Hathaway) has become a successful investigative journalist, Emily (Emily Blunt) has become a fashion executive at Christian Dior, Miranda Priestly (Meryl Streep) is still the editor-in-chief of *Runway* magazine – though the magazine is struggling with the decline of print media, and she is no longer allowed to throw her coat at her interns due to HR complaints – and Nigel (Stanley Tucci) is still as loyal and charming as ever.

What ensues is a tide of glamour and high fashion (with a surprising number of sequins, dungarees, and culottes), endless references to the original lore to make the fans happy, and a movie that oscillates from so-bad-it's-good to plain bad from start to finish.

But can we ask for much from a sequel? The script was sharp and full of the quotable one liners that made the first such a hit – especially from Miranda, Emily, and Nigel. The plot was modern, with talk of Ozempic, glow ups, and viral memes. Streep and Tucci give phenomenal performances. It was fun picking out the celebrities making brief cameos, from Lady Gaga to Donatella Versace. It was slightly amusing watching them poke fun at the rise of tech bro giants and the subsequent loss of artistry and humanity that comes with AI.

What really bothered me was Andy Sachs. Following an online faux pas from *Runway* she is called in to save the day. It's hard to believe in her moral integrity as a do-good investigative journalist when it slips out the backdoor the second she enters the high-fashion building, is taken to the dressing room, and loaned a Gabriela Hearst maxi dress before heading off to the Hamptons. What's more, and this is a personal preference, but watching *The Devil Wears Prada 2* in today's climate felt almost as tone deaf as when the makers of *Sex and the City 2* thought offering up a glitzy sequel would provide an escape from the gloom of the financial crisis of 2010. But hey, it was fun. I laughed. I cringed. It's a sequel to a classic. You might as well go check it out.



Feel free to get in touch with cartoonist Kate Garnyk at katykamf@gmail.com

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Regional News

Eyes on Wellington

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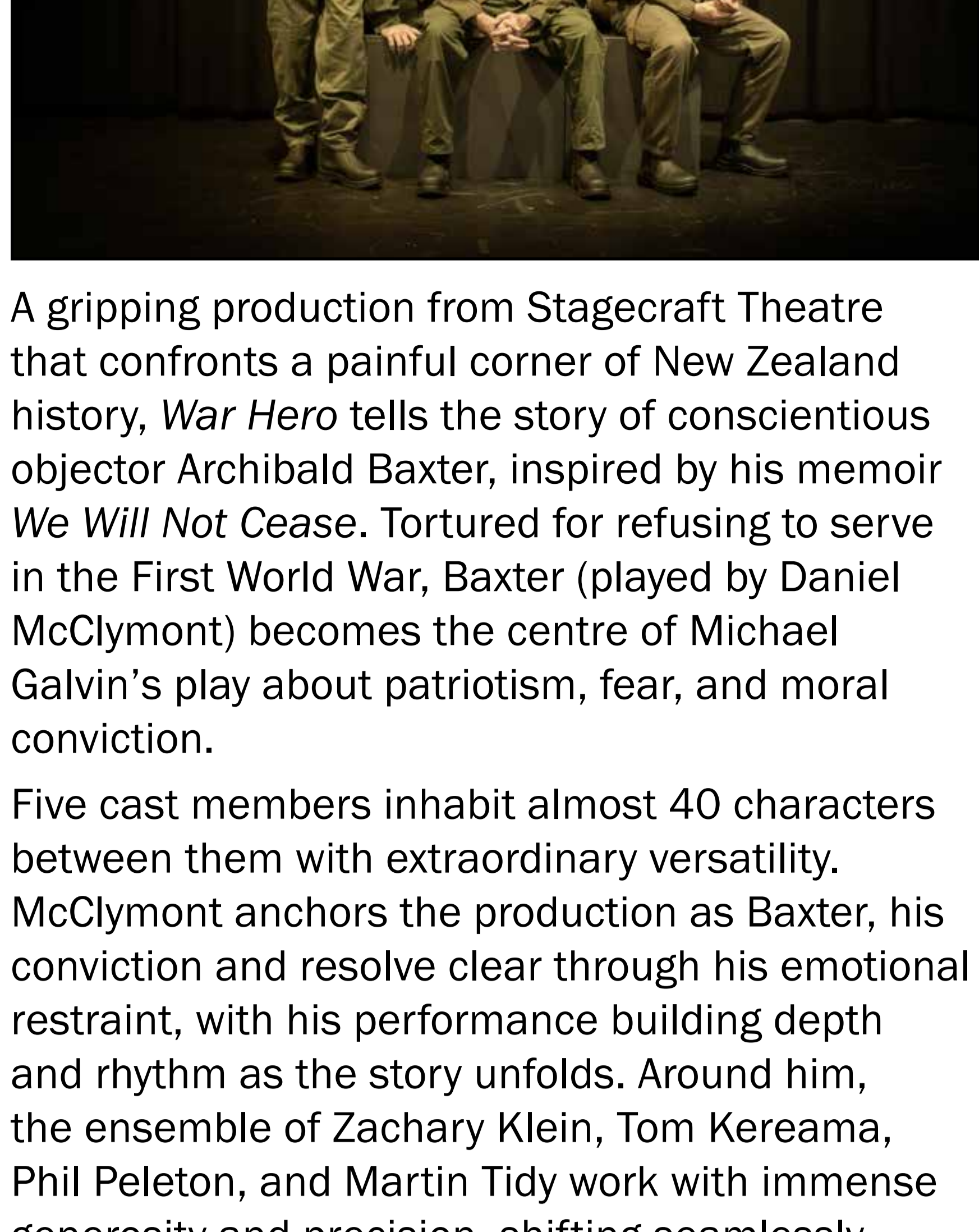
War Hero

Written by Michael Galvin

Directed by Murray Lynch

Gryphon Theatre, 6th May 2026

Reviewed by Stanford Reynolds



A gripping production from Stagecraft Theatre that confronts a painful corner of New Zealand history, *War Hero* tells the story of conscientious objector Archibald Baxter, inspired by his memoir *We Will Not Cease*. Tortured for refusing to serve in the First World War, Baxter (played by Daniel McClymont) becomes the centre of Michael Galvin's play about patriotism, fear, and moral conviction.

Five cast members inhabit almost 40 characters between them with extraordinary versatility. McClymont anchors the production as Baxter, his conviction and resolve clear through his emotional restraint, with his performance building depth and rhythm as the story unfolds. Around him, the ensemble of Zachary Klein, Tom Kereama, Phil Peleton, and Martin Tidy work with immense generosity and precision, shifting seamlessly between a varied host of characters through sharply defined physicality, vocal work, and excellently consistent accents for characters of different nationalities.

The production's technical craft is exceptional. A modular set (design concept by director Murray Lynch) of boxes and benches transforms fluidly into a ship, a train carriage, prison yards, and a battlefield, while the reflective black back wall eerily extends the space, subtly implicating the audience in the action. Chris Ward's sound design layers birdsong, machinery, music, and voiceover into a vivid sonic landscape that feels cinematic, making the space feel full and grounded in reality without overwhelming the stage. Mike Slater's lighting design is equally assured: stark spotlights, darkness, haze, and textured slats create images that linger long after the show ends, particularly during the harrowing 'Field Punishment No. 1' scenes.

What surprises most is the humour that arises throughout the script, giving warmth and humanity to a story of brutality and bureaucracy. The play asks difficult questions about violence, nationalism, and obedience that feel alarmingly relevant in light of current international events.

War Hero is a stark examination of a shameful period in our nation's history, and an inspiring message about the power of acting out of love rather than fear.

XL: 40 Years of The Tudor

Consort

Led by music director Michael Stewart

Wellington Cathedral of St Paul,

2nd May 2026

Reviewed by Ruth Corkill



Photo by Nick George Creative.

It is a pleasure to be back in Wellington Cathedral for a concert that honours place and tradition while keeping creative energy and possibilities open. For this 40th anniversary programme, The Tudor Consort perform in the round, reshaping themselves into new configurations for each work. These shifts create subtle changes of colour and perspective, keeping ears and eyes alert across a programme of 10 works.

The repertoire spans an enormous historical range, from 16th century polyphony to contemporary choral writing, and the programming deftly weaves the choir's own history through that arc.

Several works are long-standing fixtures in Tudor Consort's repertoire, giving the evening a sense of accumulated knowledge and craft rather than mere retrospection. There is also a satisfying variation of density: works ranging from eight parts through to 40, and a thoughtful balance between music that leans into consonant radiance and music willing to sit in tension or ambiguity.

An especially pleasing programming choice is the inclusion of paired works by the same composers, allowing contrasts to emerge organically. The two settings of *The Silver Swan*, Orlando Gibbons' poised melancholy alongside Jaakko Mäntyjärvi's modern reimagining, sharpen the listener's awareness of how Mäntyjärvi's contemporary practice is informed by historic works.

This is the ideal mindset in which to approach Mäntyjärvi's *Tentatio*, given its New Zealand premiere in a staging by Jacqueline Coats. The choir is positioned in four groups behind the audience, enveloping us in sound. The work conjures extraordinary atmosphere: moments of stark isolation, sudden antagonism, and passages of calm resistance as Christ faces temptation in the wilderness. A recurring solo female voice near the altar is serene, grounded, and untouched by hostility, while the male voices representing the Devil circle and menace from different directions. Personally, I felt Satan could have been pushed to be syrupy and more seductive, but the dramatic tension remains compelling throughout.

A final, deeply affecting moment comes when alumni join the present choir for *O nata lux* and *Ave verum corpus*. The sound blooms with warmth and shared history, joyful without sentimentality. A fitting affirmation of 40 years of collective music-making.

Tom Scott: self untitled tour

Meow Nui, 8th May 2026

Reviewed by Nikita 雅涵 Tu-Bryant



Photo by Ryo Nishikawa.

I don't watch trailers. I'll take a recommendation but refuse the synopsis. I made an exception for Tom Scott, who I last saw with Avondale Bowling Club in 2018 and is now touring his first solo album *ANITYA*. I dived into his album and broke my rule. I watched the trailer.

As more high production comes to exist in our world of making, I was curious to see how Scott was going to translate the album for the stage. *ANITYA* is an expressive palette oscillating between hooky beats, real-life soundscapes, beds of taonga pūoro, and nylon string guitar. I'm reminded of Mk.gee's 2024 album *Two Star & The Dream Police* and Anderson .Paak's *Malibu*, but *ANITYA* is its own.

Warming us is Savagehine & Wear Pounamu with a dancer. Pounamu plays taonga pūoro over tunes with a youthful, honest reverence, with Savagehine rapping: a beautifully lit trio.

Scott's band enters bang on 9pm, consisting of Guy Harrison on keys (also *nailling* a variety of guitar tones – but I was *also* hoping for a nylon string), bassist Cass Basil in the pocket with drummer Swap Gomez, an infectious Maxx Gunn on keys, and vocalists Vai'utukakau Mahina and Grace Ikenasio. I'd like to see less reading in today's live contemporary scene, especially up front, as it can feel like a barrier.

Scott begins by insisting he's "just an uncle from Avondale... and it's not just about one dude tonight", opening with *gyal like you*. The crowd, eager off the bat, really loosen throughout the night. I myself took three songs to land; that was when the sound mix found its equilibrium during *i just came round to say goodbye again*.

By the end, Scott has the crowd unified. Looking around I see half-hooded eyes and mouths uninhibited, making the space feel intimate because of the great delivery. A genuine encore is demanded, a split-second appearance by Louis Baker ending their set with high energy then leaving Scott, the last man standing, rapping a cappella to young men up front who rapped back with fervour, eyes locked. The sight is moving.

The rain didn't dampen Friday's attendance for Scott. The crowd was satisfied.

Split Enz – Forever Enz Tour

2026

TSB Arena, 6th May 2026

Reviewed by Graeme King

Photo by Tom Grut.

Split Enz, dressed in Noel Crombie-designed suits, walked onto the stage to instrumental *The Choral Sea* and the excitement amongst the 4000 capacity crowd was palpable. When they exploded into *Shark Attack*, with stunning graphics on the main backdrop screen, we knew we were in for something special. The side screens, showing close-ups of the musicians, flanked the main backdrop screen and fully engaged our senses and attention – an immersive experience.

Then there was the music: all the expected hits such as *History Never Repeats*, *Poor Boy*, *Dirty Creature*, *Message to My Girl*, and more, together with some surprises from their earliest albums. Before *Time for a Change*, Tim Finn mentioned an early tour with John Mayall which he called "an unlikely pairing". It was on that tour, at Ziggy's nightclub in Wellington, that Crombie first played the spoons.

Across the big screen, Eddie Rayner's instrumental *Double Happy* featured a dazzling visual history of the band's previous costumes. Although the core of this band have been together almost 50 years, with the current lineup featuring James Milne (bass) and Matt Eccles (drums) there was a vitality and freshness to their songs. Introducing *Matinee Idyll* (129) featuring Neil Finn on mandolin, Tim mentioned that "mandolin was a big part of our sound back in the day. We did a TV appearance on *New Faces* which was way before *Idol*, *The X Factor*, this that and the other".

By *Six Months in a Leaky Boat*, the crowd were dancing in their seats and spilling into the aisles and, with encouragement from Tim, sang the ending a cappella. *I Got You* followed, with the crowd singing at full volume. This was a party! A blistering *I See Red* finished the set, but there were encores to come – *Spellbound* followed by Tim singing the gorgeous *I Hope I Never*. *Strait Old Line* had Crombie starting on drums and ending up on spoons to end the concert on a high. This was entertainment and musicianship at its best.

NZ International Comedy Festival

Everybody Knows

Presented by Laser Kiwi

The Hannah, 1st May 2026

Reviewed by Tanya Piejus



Local sensation Laser Kiwi is made up of brothers Degge and Zane Jarvie, and Imogen Stone. The award-winning trio have been performing shows on festival circuits and around the world for more than 10 years, describing themselves as “the world’s only surreal sketch circus”. They combine comedy, acrobatic tricks, magic, circus skills, and physical theatre in a uniquely entertaining blend and are back home in Te Whanganui-a-Tara for the NZ International Comedy Festival.

In *Everybody Knows* (or should that be *Everybody Nose? IYKYK*), they arguably have a fourth character – a long LED display high on the back wall of The Hannah – that adds commentary, acts as a lie detector, provides instructions, counts points scored, and generally adds to the on-stage mayhem. The audience are also very much part of the show, and we all quickly become fully invested in making sure Zane never scores a point. More game audience members have the opportunity to become directly involved with the action on and off stage and everyone gets to shout things during Degge’s poor attempts at charades, pull off and throw their noses at the LED display, and wave their arms like an eel. All of which makes absurdly wonderful sense within the context of the show.

All three performers have mad circus skills. Stone mixes tracks DJ-style while in a handstand and does gravity-defying things on ropes, the Jarvie brothers juggle clubs impossibly across the full width of the Hannah stage, Degge balances crazily on a moving bike, and all three play the most bizarrely physical game of ping pong you’re ever likely to see.

With their comedic non-sequiturs, managing to create a ridiculous level of excitement over a small red rubber man, and doing it all in delightfully coloured leisure wear, this is a trio whose brand of infectious and wonderfully weird humour you don’t want to miss. It’s hard not to love the endearingly whacky Laser Kiwi and everything they do.

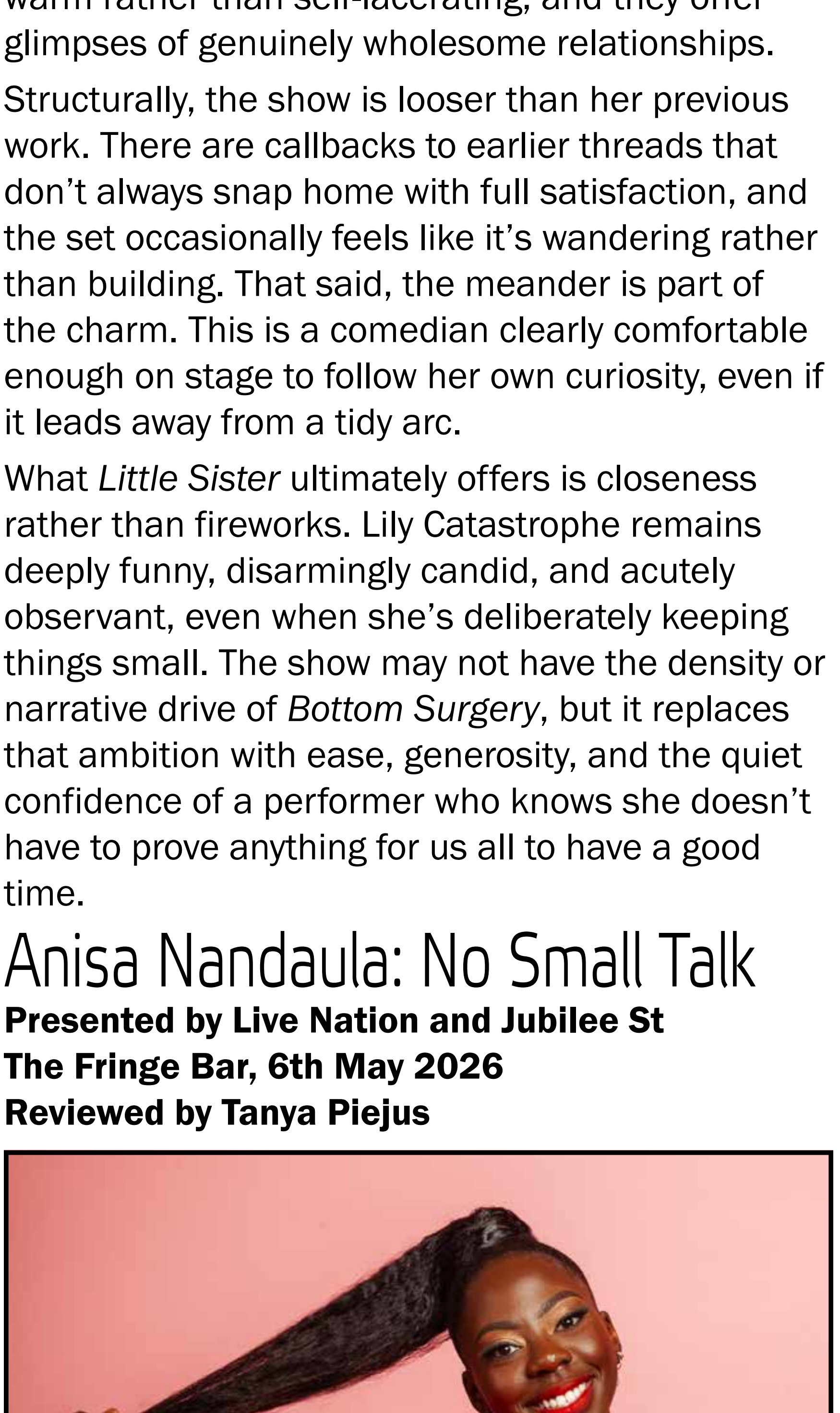
Whistles and wings, everyone.

Lily Catastrophe: Little Sister

Created by Lily Catastrophe

BATS Theatre, 9th May 2026

Reviewed by Ruth Corkill



Following the maximalist cabaret sprawl of *Bottom Surgery*, Lily Catastrophe’s *Little Sister* feels deliberately pared back. Performed in BATS’ beautiful Dome space, this is essentially a classic stand-up set, lightly adorned with floral arrangements and a Chappell Roan album cover.

The simplicity suits the material: rather than spectacle, this has the divinely cosy feeling of meeting up with a close friend you haven’t seen in a while, and getting an in-depth and hilarious update on their life.

Lily establishes a relaxed, conversational atmosphere, sharing anecdotes about family, friendships, and the persistent feeling of being slightly out of step. Much of the humour hinges on family dynamics, including an excellent run on the inconsistent poetry of naming within her family. One sister’s name translates to ‘sunlight through clouds’; another is simply called Judy.

Lily positions herself as the eternally younger sibling, the least edgy person in her social circle, worried that her friends and even her boyfriend are radically queerer than she is. These moments are warm rather than self-lacerating, and they offer glimpses of genuinely wholesome relationships.

Structurally, the show is looser than her previous work. There are callbacks to earlier threads that don’t always snap home with full satisfaction, and the set occasionally feels like it’s wandering rather than building. That said, the meander is part of the charm. This is a comedian clearly comfortable enough on stage to follow her own curiosity, even if it leads away from a tidy arc.

What *Little Sister* ultimately offers is closeness rather than fireworks. Lily Catastrophe remains deeply funny, disarmingly candid, and acutely observant, even when she’s deliberately keeping things small. The show may not have the density or narrative drive of *Bottom Surgery*, but it replaces that ambition with ease, generosity, and the quiet confidence of a performer who knows she doesn’t have to prove anything for us all to have a good time.

Anisa Nandaula: No Small Talk

Presented by Live Nation and Jubilee St

The Fringe Bar, 6th May 2026

Reviewed by Tanya Piejus



Best Newcomer at the Melbourne Comedy Festival last year, Anisa Nandaula is a Ugandan Australian from Rockhampton, Queensland with a suitcase full of stories. While these stories form the backbone of her one-hour standup show, it’s Nandaula’s ability to interact warmly with her lively audience that makes *No Small Talk* especially enjoyable this NZ International Comedy Festival.

Truth is often stranger than fiction and comedy gold emerges straight off the bat as a couple in the front row admit to having had an affair before pairing up legitimately. More couples, friend groups, and the one African in the audience offer up similarly fun tidbits that Nandaula skilfully massages to comic advantage without belittling or patronising them. Her quick and witty responses to their answers to her questions are frequently brilliant and mark her as a gifted natural comedian.

Nandaula’s own background and that of her part-Asian boyfriend make for interesting and often hilarious anecdotes about race. Her unique take on an Indian speaking at an Australian white supremacists’ rally is inspired and unexpected. And her fellow Africans certainly don’t get a free ride. Her description of how anyone who’s not clearly black or white is referred to in Kenya gets one of the biggest laughs of the night, as does her account of African dads and their lack of knowledge of the particulars of their children’s lives.

Religion comes under the spotlight too, the audience audibly sympathising with Nandaula’s tale of being five minutes into a protracted hair-braiding session and being asked, as a Muslim, “Have you ever considered your religion is wrong?”

Race and religion may seem like dangerous ground to walk on for a comedian, but Nandaula manages not to cross the line into offensiveness by being genuinely funny and bringing her own humanity into every narrative. The addition of her neighbours’ cute seven-year-old, dogs, lions, and baby elephants doesn’t hurt either.

No small talk here, just big laughs.

Mum Wants A Girlfriend

(For Me)?

Created by Henry Yan

Cavern Club, 12th May 2026

Reviewed by Oliver Mander



Henry Yan is an Auckland-born comedian, now based in Melbourne. His stage persona is “nerdy but cool”, with a quirky delivery style that emphasises social awkwardness. Whether ‘real’ or not isn’t relevant; in *Mum Wants A Girlfriend (For Me)?*, it becomes the engine of a superbly warm, funny, and unexpectedly affecting performance.

Yan riffs on dating apps, office life, Excel, engineering, weddings, Instagram algorithms, and, in one glorious detour, the case for replacing cars with horses. The topic jumps are more cleverly constructed than they appear; they all return to the central anxiety of being single, wanting connection, and not quite knowing how to ask for it.

What lifts the show is Yan’s control of discomfort. He tells us early that part of his comedy involves sitting in tension until it moves, and he keeps that promise. Pauses, soft “yeahs”, and sudden reversals become part of the rhythm. A punchline often arrives just after the moment when silence has become almost too exposed.

That leads to an authentic performance. The key theme underlying this show is to find the love in yourself before seeking it in others. Easy to say; hard to do.

Nonetheless, we can all relate. Not everyone enjoys being single. Yet Yan is not afraid to tackle this head-on. The angst around reciprocated affection, the judgement of a person only just met, and the social pressure to find a partner form a structural backbone supporting the underlying theme.

My personal surprise was Yan’s effectiveness at interacting with his audience. Audience members were gently drawn into the performance as it unfolded, with the exchanges creating a sense of shared vulnerability. That allowed the bigger laughs to land harder and the reflective moments to feel earned.

Authentic, quirky, skilfully uncomfortable, and utterly relatable, this was a genuinely impressive hour. Yan is already a very funny comedian. He has the craft and emotional intelligence to become a distinctive one.

NZ International Comedy Festival

Ben Knight: The Parent/Teacher Interviews

Presented by Keg Touring
The Hannah, 12th May 2026
Reviewed by Numi Stössner



Have you ever wondered what teachers talk about when nobody else is listening? I found out for myself at Australian teacher and comedian Ben Knight's first-ever performance in New Zealand, as part of the NZ International Comedy Festival. In his show *The Parent/Teacher Interview*, the self-proclaimed bogan-hippie invites you for an evening filled with hilarious insights into the life of a teacher. These insights include, but are not limited to, the most outrageous kid names he encountered (my personal winner is Crystal-Beth) and the relatable fear of forgetting where the 'h' goes in yoghurt while spelling it out on the whiteboard.

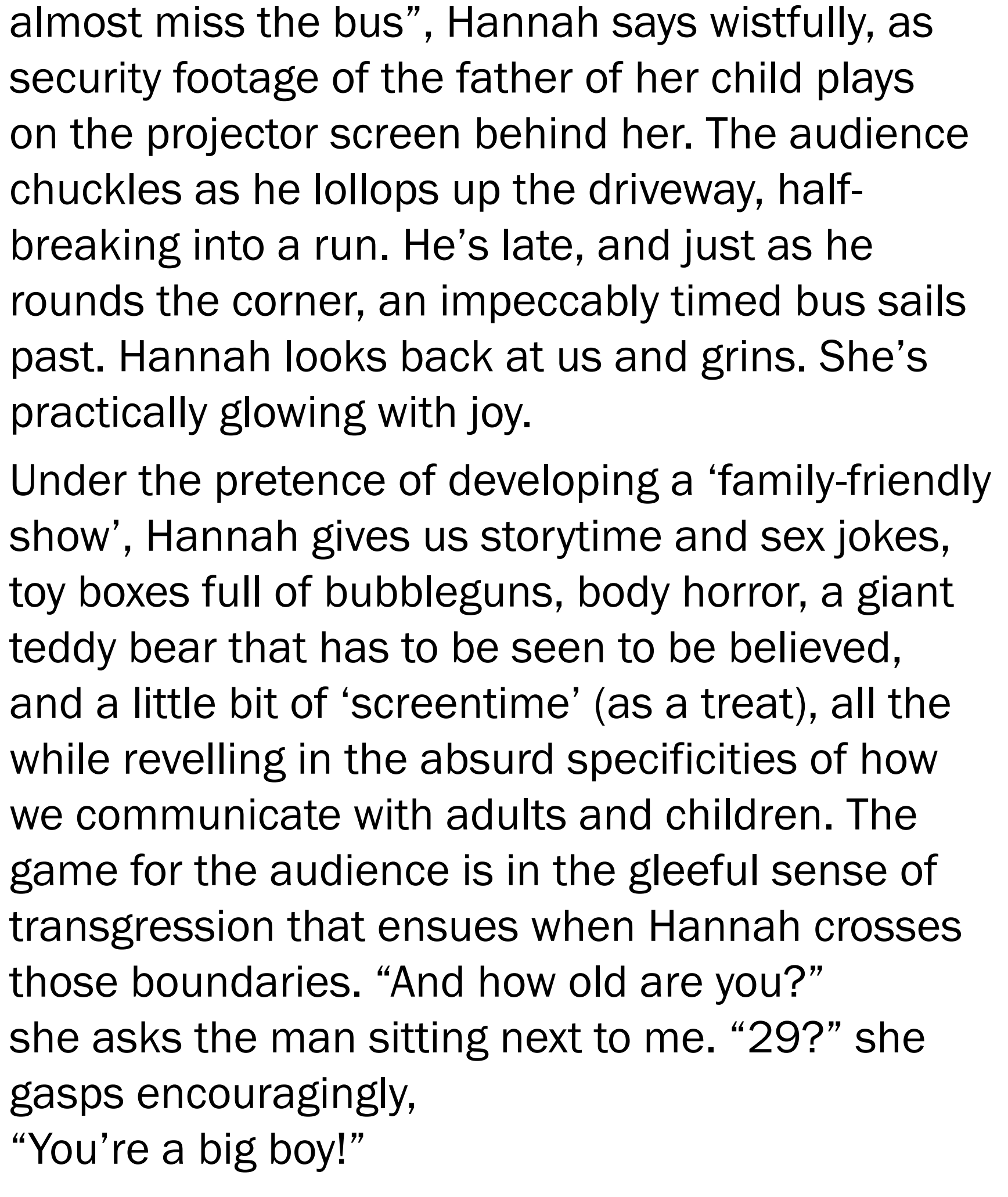
Throughout the night, Knight interrupts his witty reflections on teachers, students, and parents with self-written rap songs about the difficulties of teaching the English alphabet, performed at an impressive speed. One of my favorite sketches of the night is his lesson on 'teacher code', in which he shows the audience how to interpret annual student evaluations. Who knew, for instance, that 'Billy is a spirited child' can be directly translated to 'Billy needs to sit the f*** down'. This makes me look back and smile at some of my own report cards, wondering what my teachers might have actually thought about me.

What's almost the most entertaining, however, is Knight's warm engagement with the crowd. From bonding with the only other ginger in the room (Hey, James!) to teacher banter and even ordering a guest a gin, the way he includes the audience is outstandingly funny. His quick comebacks turn this 'supportive classroom environment' into a space that's instantly welcoming and inclusive.

As Knight himself admits, he has the same sense of humor as his third-grade students, and I am not mad about it. He says out loud what teachers are not allowed to say, but, judging by the laughter in the crowd, most certainly think. *The Parent/Teacher Interview* is a hilariously entertaining show for anyone in education, or just simply anyone who has ever gone to school.

Peekaboo!

Created by Samantha Hannah
BATS Theatre, 12th May 2026
Reviewed by Dani Yourukova



2026 Billy T Award nominee Samantha Hannah is back from maternity leave with a killer new show this NZ International Comedy Festival. *Peekaboo!* is about parenthood, pregnancy, and finding joy wherever you can. If that sounds heartwarming and life affirming to you, well, you're nearly right.

"I like to use the ring camera to watch my partner almost miss the bus", Hannah says wistfully, as security footage of the father of her child plays on the projector screen behind her. The audience chuckles as he lollaps up the driveway, half-breaking into a run. He's late, and just as he rounds the corner, an impeccably timed bus sails past. Hannah looks back at us and grins. She's practically glowing with joy.

Under the pretence of developing a 'family-friendly show', Hannah gives us storytime and sex jokes, toy boxes full of bubblegums, body horror, a giant teddy bear that has to be seen to be believed, and a little bit of 'screentime' (as a treat), all the while revelling in the absurd specificities of how we communicate with adults and children. The game for the audience is in the gleeful sense of transgression that ensues when Hannah crosses those boundaries. "And how old are you?" she asks the man sitting next to me. "29?" she gasps encouragingly, "You're a big boy!"

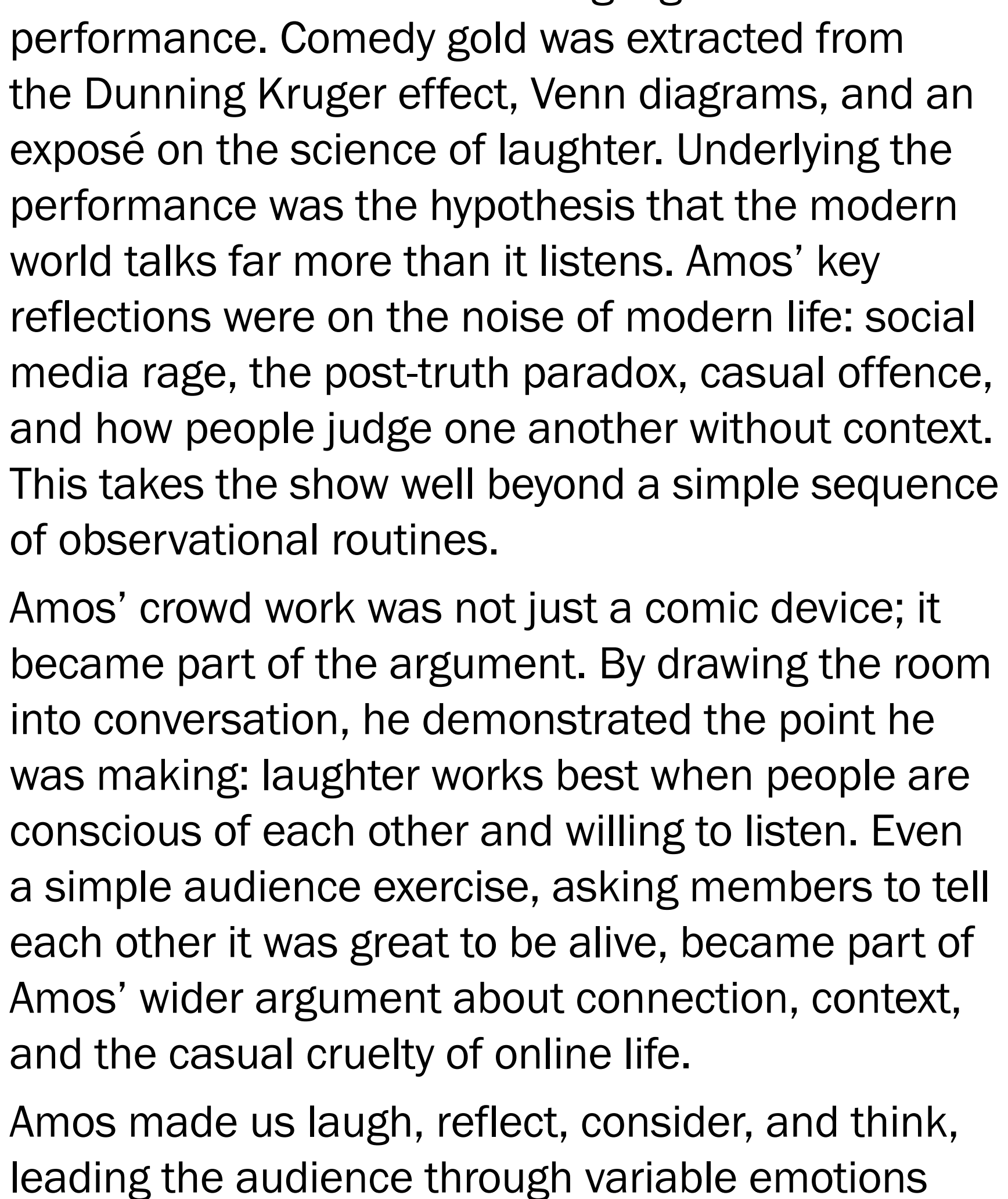
There were some technical hiccups on opening night, but Hannah is so enormously funny and quick-witted that I'm not convinced flawlessness would have improved the experience (watching her 'gentle parent' the stage technician through their botched cues almost killed me).

Hannah has total control of the room, never misses a beat, and by 10 minutes in, the audience was so completely on her side that she got away with eviscerating national treasure Lynley Dodd live on stage.

An absolute icon.

Now We're Talking

Created by Stephen K Amos
The Hannah, 8th May 2026
Reviewed by Oliver Mander



Stephen K Amos is well known for interacting with his audience, and this performance was no exception. *Now We're Talking* will be remembered fondly by 18-year-old Ethan, "short-arms guy", the gentleman who briefly left the auditorium to go to the toilet, and even this reviewer and his wife ('Ollie and Gillian').

Let it be known: if you're in the front row, the second, the third, or perhaps even the balcony, you're fair game. Amos is so quick-witted that even a quiet pat on your wife's shoulder will attract his attention...

The running commentary on these audience members gave Amos counterpoints for the human, social, and cultural observations that underpinned the laughter. His comedy sits within the modern British 'observational' tradition: socially alert, conversational, nerdily curious, and quick enough to turn almost any audience interruption into material.

Amos confirms that when it comes to modern British comedy, it's cool to be a nerd.

There were some wonderful highlights in this performance. Comedy gold was extracted from the Dunning Kruger effect, Venn diagrams, and an exposé on the science of laughter. Underlying the performance was the hypothesis that the modern world talks far more than it listens. Amos' key reflections were on the noise of modern life: social media rage, the post-truth paradox, casual offence, and how people judge one another without context. This takes the show well beyond a simple sequence of observational routines.

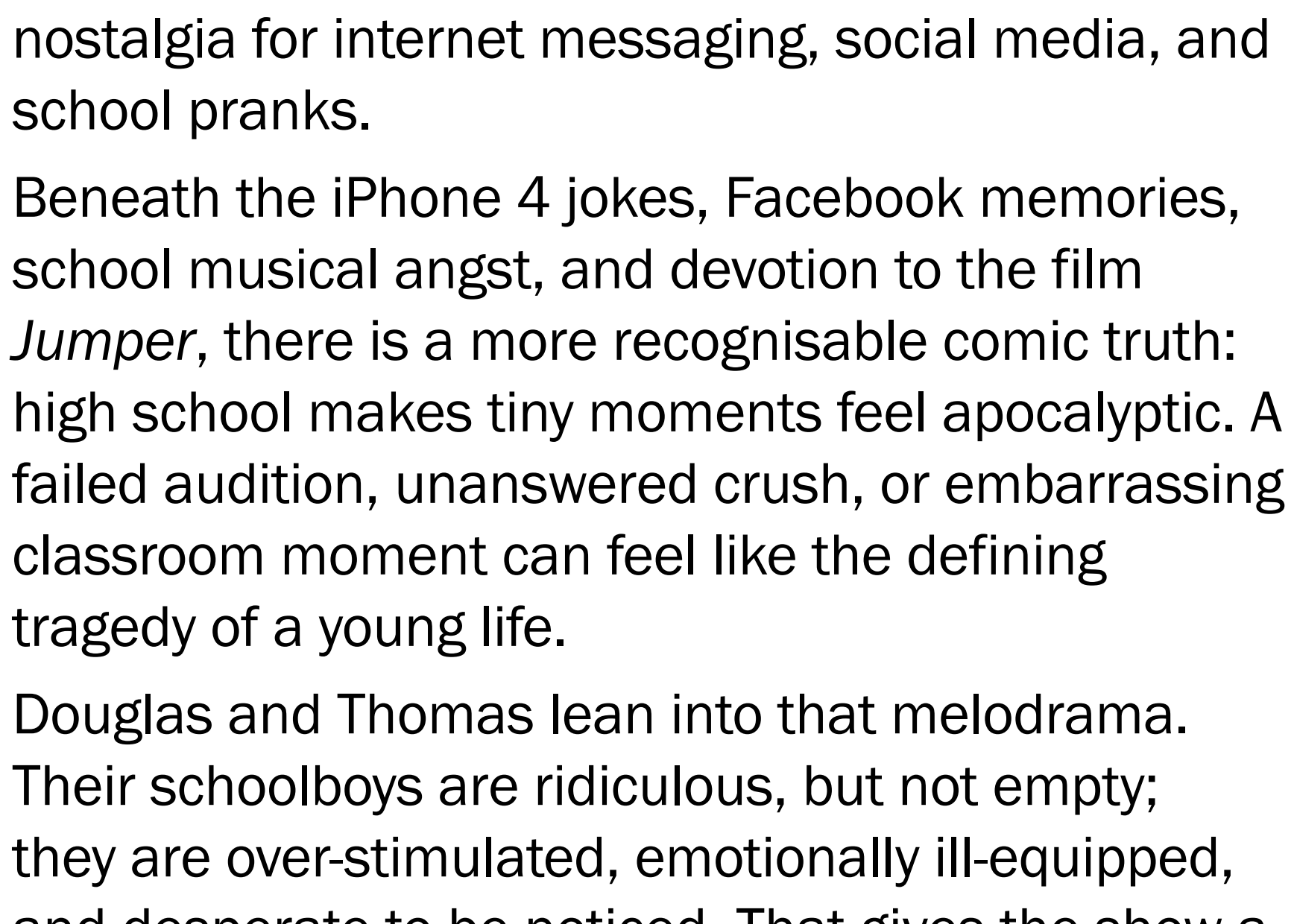
Amos' crowd work was not just a comic device; it became part of the argument. By drawing the room into conversation, he demonstrated the point he was making: laughter works best when people are conscious of each other and willing to listen. Even a simple audience exercise, asking members to tell each other it was great to be alive, became part of Amos' wider argument about connection, context, and the casual cruelty of online life.

Amos made us laugh, reflect, consider, and think, leading the audience through variable emotions that allowed them to fully engage in the process. This was observational commentary, delivered in a manner that felt inclusive and conversational, rather than a lecture.

A must-see.

Hey, Miss!

Created by Aaron James Douglas and Keegan Thomas
Cavern Club, 7th May 2026
Reviewed by Oliver Mander



The audience is immediately involved in the core premise of this show, with names signed off on a class list by the supervising teacher as we enter the venue. We have been sent to school detention; my transgression was 'creating an online dating profile for the teacher's cat'.

Even before the show has begun, Aaron James Douglas and Keegan Thomas are energetically and loudly inhabiting their roles as attention-deprived naughty schoolboys. For this performance, the teacher was hilariously improvised by Megan Connolly (from comedic duo Ginge & Minge) whose attempt to improvise a lesson plan before storming out of the classroom helped to accentuate the chaos.

Douglas and Thomas trade on energy and pace to deliver their blend of gags, improvisation, and physical comedy. The year is 2010, evoking teenage nostalgia for internet messaging, social media, and school pranks.

Beneath the iPhone 4 jokes, Facebook memories, school musical angst, and devotion to the film *Jumper*, there is a more recognisable comic truth: high school makes tiny moments feel apocalyptic. A failed audition, unanswered crush, or embarrassing classroom moment can feel like the defining tragedy of a young life.

Douglas and Thomas lean into that melodrama. Their schoolboys are ridiculous, but not empty; they are over-stimulated, emotionally ill-equipped, and desperate to be noticed. That gives the show a stronger emotional thread than the chaos suggests, especially when the bravado slips to reveal the wounded theatre kid beneath the noise.

The energy doesn't let up. However, energy is not created through simply being loud. The volume soon feels relentless, making it difficult to stay engaged, or even reflect on what was funny or why we were laughing. Greater contrast between high-volume chaos and quieter absurdity would likely create a better audience connection.

Whatever our age, we can still recognise the fragility of the teenage ego. The year might change, but the emotional overkill of high school remains a constant. If you're willing to ride the volume, *Hey, Miss!* offers a frantic, funny, and nostalgic return to that world.

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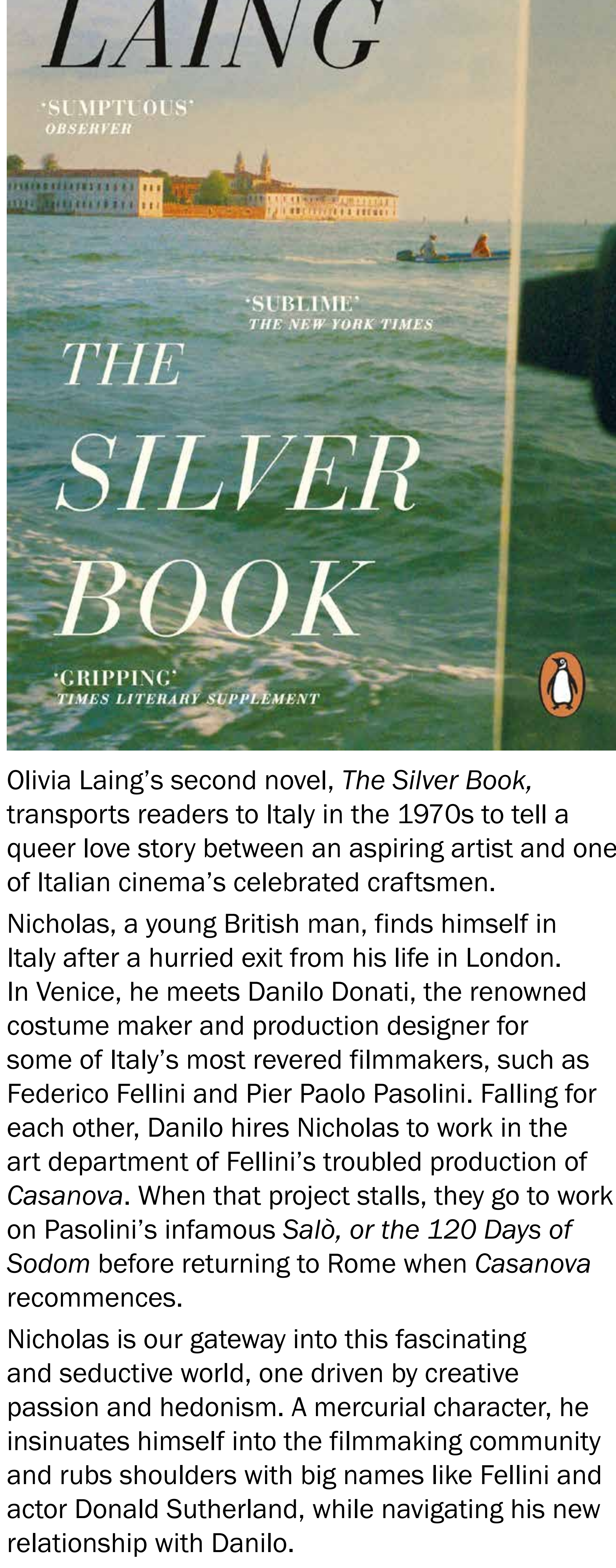
Book reviews

The Silver Book

Written by Olivia Laing

Hamish Hamilton

Reviewed by Denver Grenell



Olivia Laing's second novel, *The Silver Book*, transports readers to Italy in the 1970s to tell a queer love story between an aspiring artist and one of Italian cinema's celebrated craftsmen.

Nicholas, a young British man, finds himself in Italy after a hurried exit from his life in London. In Venice, he meets Danilo Donati, the renowned costume maker and production designer for some of Italy's most revered filmmakers, such as Federico Fellini and Pier Paolo Pasolini. Falling for each other, Danilo hires Nicholas to work in the art department of Fellini's troubled production of *Casanova*. When that project stalls, they go to work on Pasolini's infamous *Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom* before returning to Rome when *Casanova* recommences.

Nicholas is our gateway into this fascinating and seductive world, one driven by creative passion and hedonism. A mercurial character, he insinuates himself into the filmmaking community and rubs shoulders with big names like Fellini and actor Donald Sutherland, while navigating his new relationship with Danilo.

Italy in the 60s and 70s was characterised by political turmoil and domestic terrorism seeking to disrupt the status quo, a central tenet of Pasolini's film. Indeed, Pasolini is a key character in the book, and his violent death just three weeks before the release of *Salò* hits like a shocking plot twist even with foreknowledge of his demise.

But it is the intensity of Danilo and Nicholas' relationship, fuelled by art and cinema, that carries the book in the absence of a traditional plot. Laing writes poetically, with an economy of prose in a similar vein to Cormac McCarthy, conveying more with fewer words than some contemporary authors might employ.

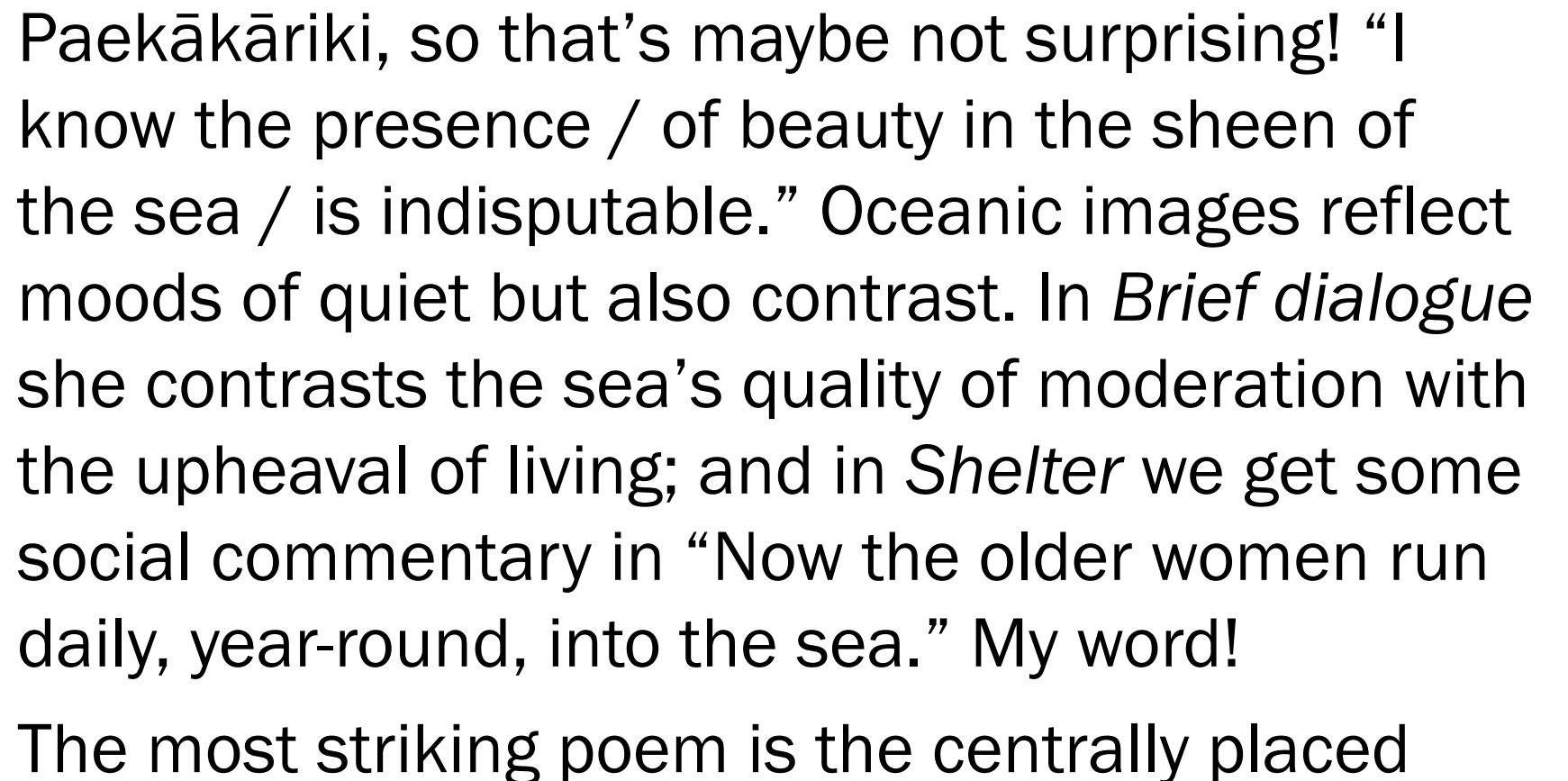
Blending historical fact with fiction, *The Silver Book* is a sensory, almost fable-like work, laced with the intruding darkness of the time. Those seeking a regular plot will not find one, but may enjoy this strange, beguiling trip to Italy, and cinephiles will devour this deep dive into the artists and artistry of the era.

Peace and Quiet

Written by Dinah Hawken

Te Herenga Waka University Press

Reviewed by Margaret Austin



The title of this collection states Dinah Hawken's theme: in mostly a brief few lines and in two longer pieces her preoccupation is peace, and the quiet that accompanies it.

The sea is predominant: Hawken lives in Paekākāriki, so that's maybe not surprising! "I know the presence / of beauty in the sheen of the sea / is indisputable." Oceanic images reflect moods of quiet but also contrast. In *Brief dialogue* she contrasts the sea's quality of moderation with the upheaval of living; and in *Shelter* we get some social commentary in "Now the older women run daily, year-round, into the sea." My word!

The most striking poem is the centrally placed paean for peace. In the form of a ballad, Hawken takes us to Parihaka. "'Sit close and be stout-hearted,' Te Whiti said." Was he really buried in a cloud of white feathers? Further on, we are shocked again into awareness of war, this time on a worldwide scale, by mention of the Somme and its horrors. New Zealand re-enters the picture with the story of Archibald Baxter, conscientious objector, and the cruelty of Field Punishment No. 1 that he underwent. But "There is no prohibition / on the use of gentleness", says our writer, "gentleness is light / and it levitates." She questions whether we can stop thinking of war as inevitable – and is hopeful that we can.

The last few poems are redolent with nature: Kāpiti, blackbird, tūi, flowers – yet in *October Morning* "Here they come, the missile men and the techno men, / thinking of the quickest and the deadliest way forward." Are we not to avoid war after all?

More recent events and markers of our times are referenced: the pandemic, cell phones, scamming, an Apple Mac.

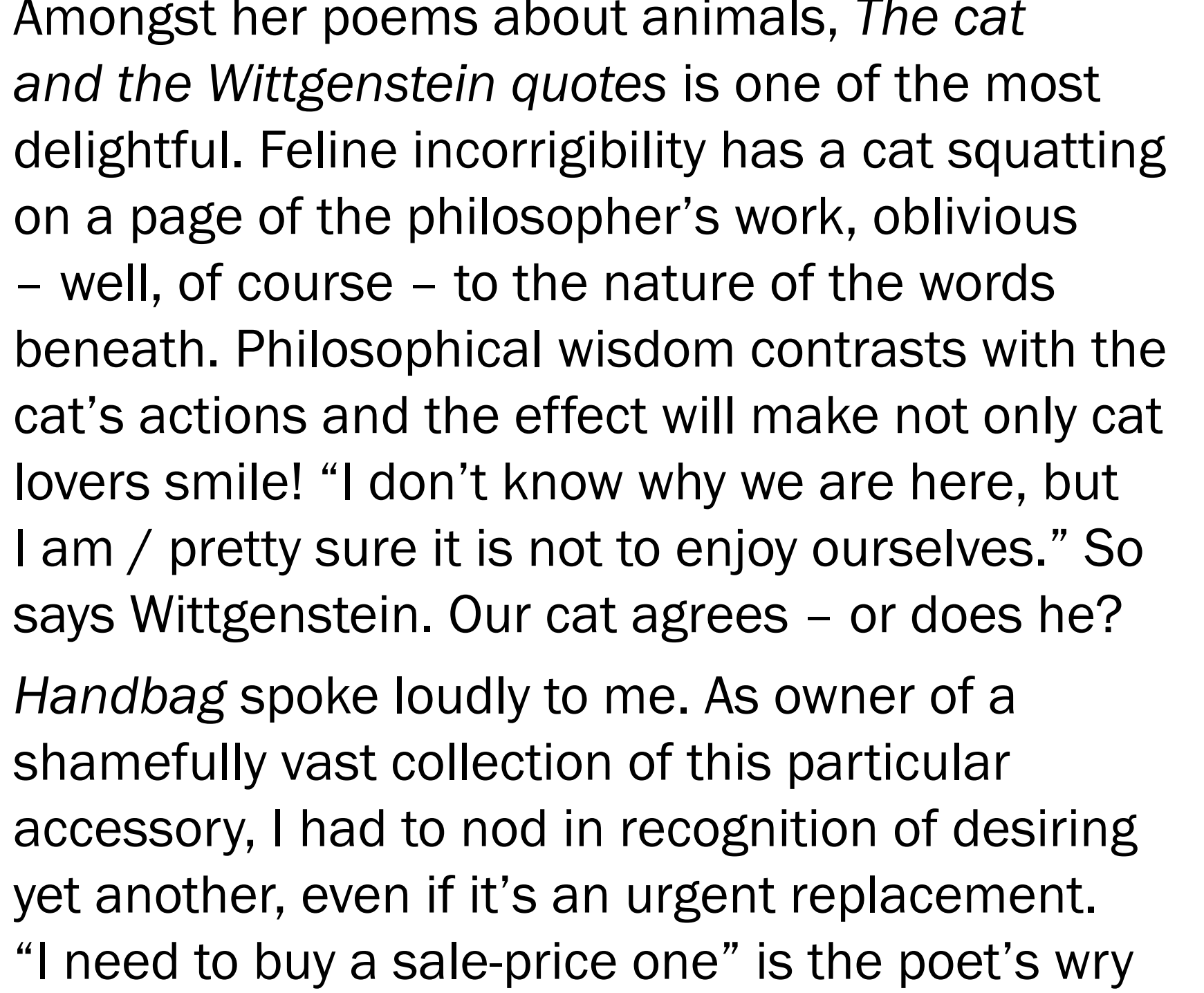
The final poem *and* is also the most heartfelt. Its timeliness is all too clear. Weapons of mass destruction there may be, but the Pacific Ocean swells and flows with prayer and hope.

The Interview Rose

Written by Elizabeth Smither

Auckland University Press

Reviewed by Margaret Austin



This collection – Elizabeth Smither's 20th – embraces themes of nature, religion, and philosophy, expressed with quiet reflection plus several doses of wry observation.

Amongst her poems about animals, *The cat and the Wittgenstein quotes* is one of the most delightful. Feline incorrigibility has a cat squatting on a page of the philosopher's work, oblivious – well, of course – to the wisdom of the words beneath. Philosophical wisdom contrasts with the cat's actions and the effect will make not only cat lovers smile! "I don't know why we are here, but I am / pretty sure it is not to enjoy ourselves." So says Wittgenstein. Our cat agrees – or does he?

Handbag spoke loudly to me. As owner of a shamefully vast collection of this particular accessory, I had to nod in recognition of desiring yet another, even if it's an urgent replacement. "I need to buy a sale-price one" is the poet's wry conclusion.

Religion enters the picture with *The travelling reliquary of St Teresa of Avila* with its description of a reliquary as "a nice piece of furniture, a travelling church". Our poet goes on to reflect – wryly once more – on the possible contents of such a revered object, contrasting the reason behind it with everyday behaviour.

Jane Austen fans will especially enjoy four poems with much-loved heroines and their actions as their subject. In *Jane Fairfax's Piano* half a dozen recognisable women feature as their piano playing is celebrated or commented on by those present. "Elizabeth has a good notion of fingering, / Marianne has a sweet untrained voice", and I encourage readers to enjoy the final few lines of this poem!

From the sublime to the banal, Smither now offers us *De-stringing beans*, at once a piece of practical advice on this domestic task and a recommendation for eating the result. And there's satisfaction to be gained from such a humble-sounding task.

I have referred three times to this poet's wry expression – evidence of maturity, I think, and the philosophical attitude from which it originates.

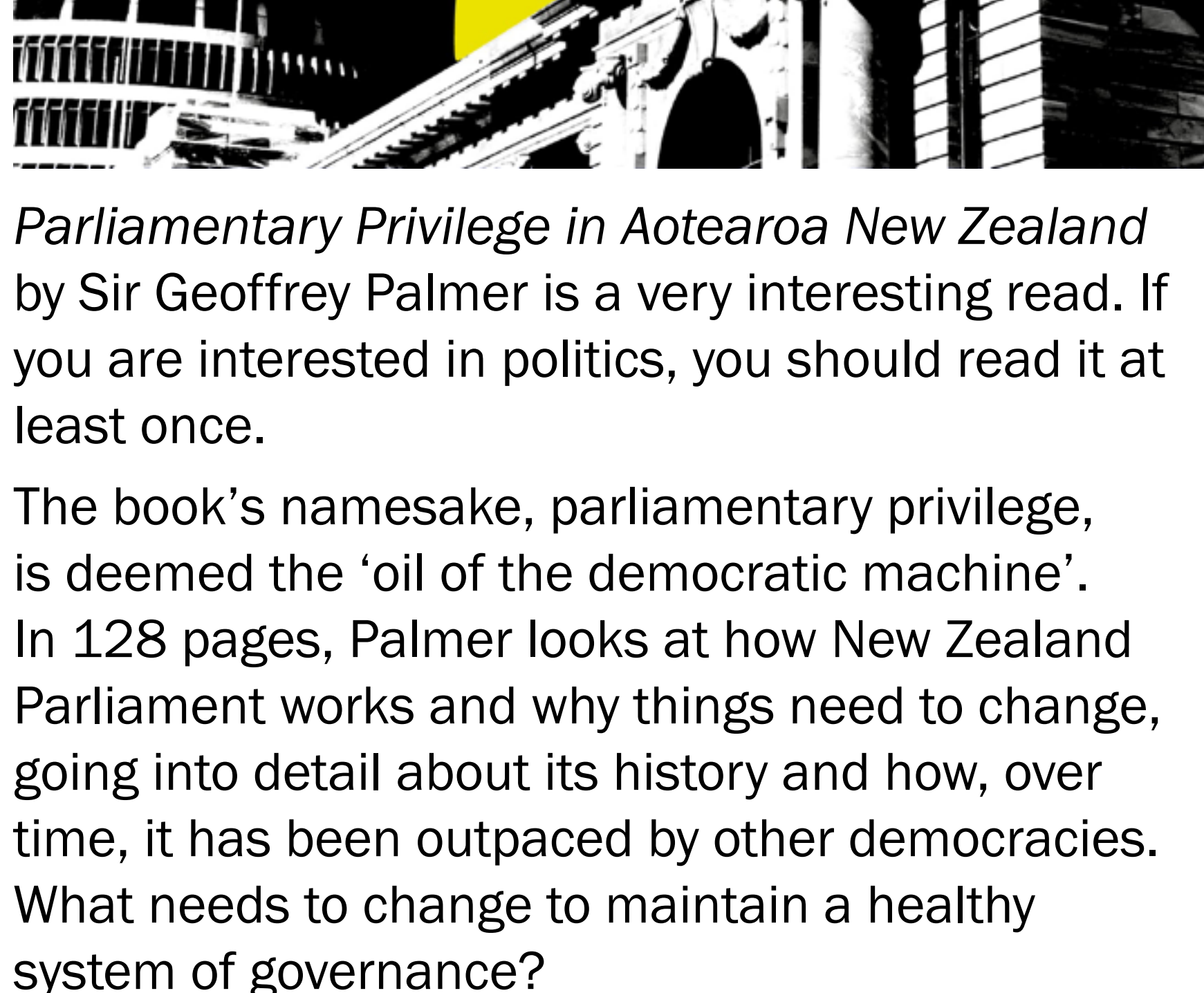
Parliamentary Privilege in

Aotearoa New Zealand

Written by Sir Geoffrey Palmer

Te Herenga Waka University Press

Reviewed by Kerry Lee



Parliamentary Privilege in Aotearoa New Zealand by Sir Geoffrey Palmer is a very interesting read. If you are interested in politics, you should read it at least once.

The book's namesake, parliamentary privilege, is deemed the 'oil of the democratic machine'. In 128 pages, Palmer looks at how New Zealand Parliament works and why things need to change, going into detail about its history and how, over time, it has been outpaced by other democracies.

What needs to change to maintain a healthy system of governance?


In the book, he calls for transparency with the people about how New Zealand Parliament conducts itself and argues that if we do nothing, we will slide further away from the ideals that our country was built on.

Palmer is, as usual, on point with his analysis; it is well detailed and comprehensive. He gets right to the heart of the issue and does not muck around with preamble, which is something I have always admired about his writing.

The only fly in the ointment would have to be that, unless you are keen on politics, *Parliamentary Privilege in Aotearoa New Zealand* may not capture you. This is a crying shame, as it is a book that in some way or other should interest everyone, because it affects everyone.

Those who are not interested in politics or the law may find the book to be a bit of a dry read, but it is quite short, so if they stick with it, they should be able to knock it out in a few days. And in Palmer's defence, the world of law is not one of romance or action-adventure.

In summary, Sir Geoffrey Palmer's *Parliamentary Privilege in Aotearoa New Zealand* will not be for everyone; some will struggle, but if you like to learn about our history or scrutinise how New Zealand Parliament wields its powers, especially ahead of the 2026 General Election, it will be right up your alley.

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What's on



26th-31st May. Vamlet: Dark Prince of Denmark:

Studio 77, Fairlie Terrace, Kelburn – various times. Te Herenga Waka – Victoria University of Wellington presents a new, vampirous take on Shakespeare's great work. Hamlet is exhumed and consumed in this unique Gothic revival uniting live performance and video. A creature hides within the royal family of Denmark... will it destroy them all?

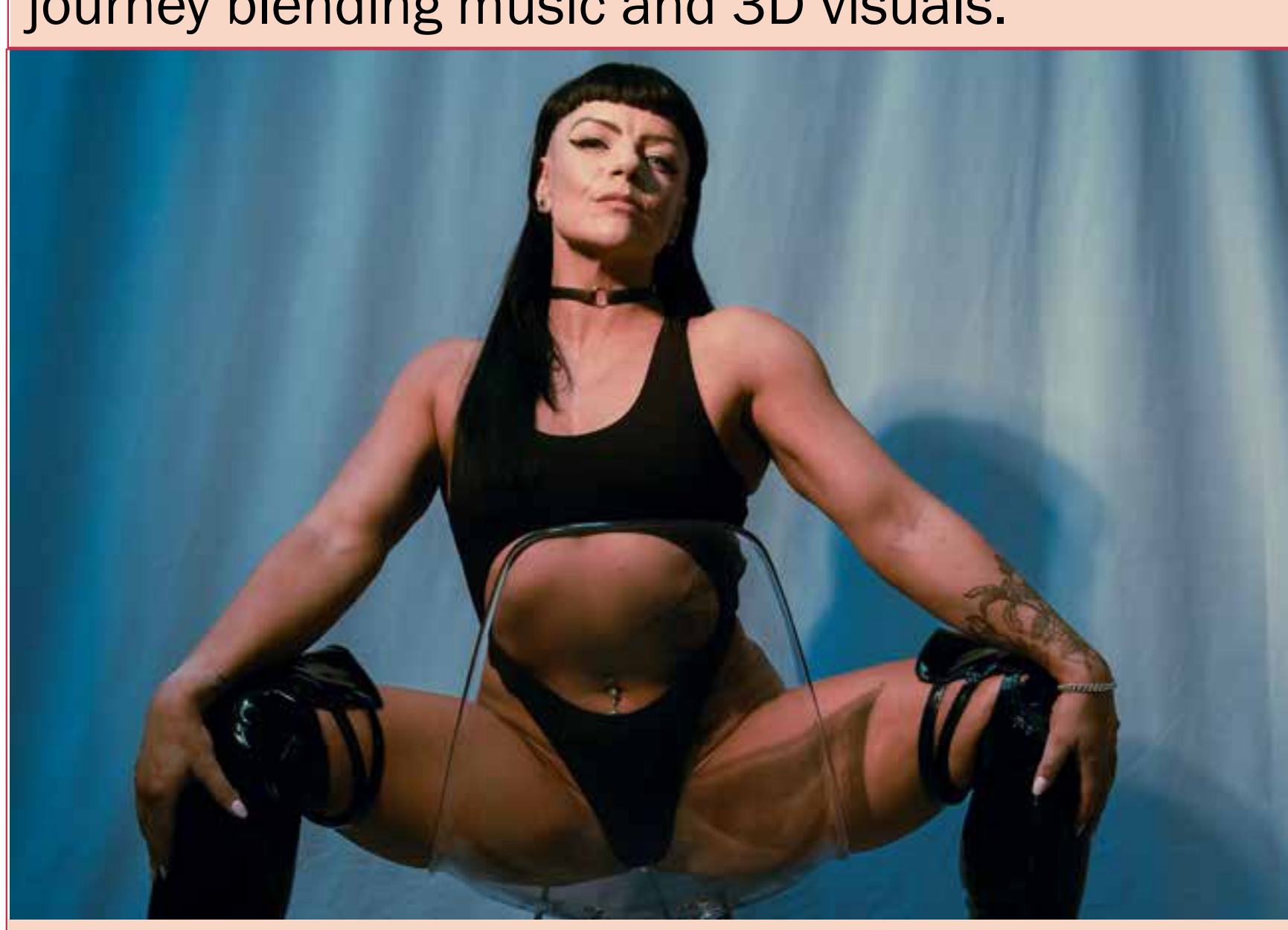
Bram Casey. Photo by Helena Mills.



23rd May. Goblin Girls: BATS Theatre, Kent Terrace, Te Aro – 9:30pm. Nominated for Best Live Comedy Show at the 2025 NZ Comedy Guild Awards, Johanna Cosgrove's NZ International Comedy Festival show will feature the award-winning comedian alongside a rotating cast of the funniest femme and non-binary comics the festival has to offer.



1st Jun. Flying Lotus: Meow Nui, Vivian Street, Te Aro – 7pm. GRAMMY®-winning artist Steve Ellison returns to Aotearoa with his signature fusion of hip-hop, jazz, electronic beats, and experimental sound. The Californian electronic visionary will present his live show *Layer³*, a multi-sensory tapestry dubbed an immersive audiovisual journey blending music and 3D visuals.



5th Jun. MILF: The Mother Of All Cabarets: The Fringe Bar, Allen Street, Te Aro – 8pm. Drag king Willy SmacknTush presents a show dedicated to all the mums. Stacey's mom and the rest of the PTA will have it going on all night long, and they'll teach you a lesson you won't soon forget. If you're really good, you may even get dessert before playtime is over – mommy knows best!

Victoria Von Sin.



5th Jun. Boogie with The BeatGirls: Copthorne Hotel & Resort Solway Park, High Street, Masterton – 8pm. Join The BeatGirls on a trip down memory lane as they perform hits from the 60s, 70s, 80s, 90s, and 2000s to get you moving and grooving. Expect a range of dance hits delivered with excellent vocals and iconic harmonies to boot!



23rd May. Kid's Disco: The Circus Hub, Hutchison Road, Newtown – 2:30pm. Whether your littlies are keen to boogie, have their face painted like their favourite hero or critter, ready to colour up a storm, dreaming of getting wrapped up in some circus fun, or hoping to get their mitts on a great goodie bag, this tamariki-friendly event will be all twirly whirly! Kid's Disco is suitable for ages up to seven.

What's on

Wairarapa

21st May: Mitre10 Presents: Ladies Night:

Mitre 10 Mega, Ngaumutawa Road, Masterton – 6:30pm. From practical DIY demos to interactive games, spot prizes, and brand experts, this event is perfect for a practical girls' night out.

29th May. Laser Kiwi Presents: Everybody Knows:

Wairarapa Events Centre, Holloway Street, Te Aro – 7pm. Armed with world-class circus skills and their signature brand of surreal sketch comedy, Laser Kiwi will attempt the impossible: articulating that thing we're all thinking.

31st May. Sean Kelly & The Super 8's: Wairarapa

Events Centre, Holloway Street, Carterton – 6pm. Enjoy a night of lively Irish music played to a backdrop of Super 8 movies filmed in and around Derry and Donegal, Ireland in the 1980s.

Kāpiti

20th May. ThinkTech Kāpiti: Te Raukura ki Kāpiti

Coastlands Theatre, Raumati Road, Paraparaumu – 8:30am. ThinkTech Kāpiti is the district's flagship tech and innovation event bringing together founders, business leaders, professionals, enthusiasts, and future talent for a day of ideas, insight, and connection.

24th May. Kāpiti Chorale Presents: Bach

Magnificat & Haydn Requiem: *St Paul's Church, Langdale Avenue, Paraparaumu* – 3pm. The chamber orchestra, under direction from conductor Eric Sidoti, presents two of classical music's most vibrant sacred choral works.

29th, 30th, 31st May. Raumati Social Club Mini

Series: *Raumati Social Club, Poplar Avenue, Raumati* – various times. In honour of NZ Music Month, the Raumati Social Club will host three exceptional gigs featuring KITA and Nikita 雅涵 Tu-Bryant, Tyson Smith, and Goodnight My Darling.

7th Jun. Sionna: St Peter's Village Hall, Beach

Road, Paekākāriki - 7:30pm. Irish duo Helen and Lorcan combine haunting vocal harmonies, top-class fiddle, and rich, driving accompaniment on bouzouki and guitar.

Events

24th May. The Sheep Detectives: A Fundraiser

with the Bach Choir: *Penthouse Cinema and Café, Ohiro Road, Brooklyn* – 5:30pm. Grab a glass of wine or juice and settle in for a murder-mystery movie starring Hugh Jackman and a flock of un-baa-lievable detectives.

29th-31st May. Salsa Congress: Te Whaea National

Dance & Drama Centre, Hutchison Road, Newtown – various times. Cha cha, salsa, and shake your hips at New Zealand's biggest Latin dance festival.

Music

21st; 23rd May. Rock Tenors: Wairarapa Events

Centre, Carterton; The Opera House, Te Aro – 7:30pm. The *Anthems Reloaded Tour* is a full-throttle celebration of the greatest rock hits of all time, delivered with theatrical firepower and vocal brilliance by five of Aotearoa's finest.

22nd May. New Zealand Symphony Orchestra

Presents: Titan: *Michael Fowler Centre, Wakefield Street, Te Aro* – 6:30pm. Violinist James Ehnes performs Korngold's dazzling Violin Concerto before NZSO conductor Gemma New leads the orchestra in Mahler's magnificent *Titan* symphony.

22nd May. Clap Clap Riot: Meow, Edward Street, Te

Aro – 8pm. The ever-energetic indie-rock outfit Clap Clap Riot present their newest single *Like a Lover*.

23rd May. The Real Moon Landing: Moon,

Riddiford Street, Newtown – 8pm. Three loud, slightly unhinged Wellington bands will deliver a chaotic, glorious wall of noise.

23rd May-13th Jun. Not In Our Neighbourhood:

Circa Theatre, Taranaki Street, Wellington Waterfront – various times. Told through the lens of a filmmaker, *Not in Our Neighbourhood* follows a group of women whose lives intersect at a moment of change.

24th May. The Kugels Play Futuna: Futuna Chapel,

Friend Street, Karori – 11pm. Celebrating 15 years together, this much-loved ensemble comprises NZSO players, Australasian champs, and RNZ voices playing music rooted in Eastern European klezmer sounds.

24th May; 6th Jun. Orpheus Choir Presents: Glory:

Wairarapa Events Centre, Carterton; Te Raukura ki Kāpiti Coastlands Theatre, Waikanae – 2pm; 7pm. Vivaldi's *Gloria* unfolds in a rapid series of short movements, moving between full choir and solo voices with an energy and brightness that has made it a favourite for generations.

27th May. New Zealand School of Music Te

Kōkī Orchestra Presents: Cathedrals of Sound:

Wellington Cathedral of Saint Paul, Hill Street, Thorndon – 7pm. Anton Bruckner's Symphony No. 4 captures his faith and his experience as an organist, delivering music overflowing with grandeur, reverence, and transcendence.

28th May. Exhumed and Anoxia: Valhalla, Vivian

Street, Te Aro – 7pm. American gore metal kings Exhumed celebrate their new album *Red Asphalt* alongside old-school Aussie death metal band Anoxia.

28th May. Emma Kate: Vogelmorn Upstairs,

Mornington Road, Brooklyn – 7:30pm. The Kiwi creative's debut EP *Autumn* comes to life with the falling leaves.

28th May. UPCLOSE: Moon, Riddiford Street, Te

Aro – 8:30pm. Catch artists Goodnight My Darling, Tyson Smith, and Nikita 雅涵 Tu-Bryant up close and personal without their bands.

29th-30th May. Battle of the Bands 2026 National

Championship: *Valhalla, Vivian Street, Te Aro* – 8pm. Discover New Zealand's breakout artists of tomorrow at this competition celebrating homegrown music.

30th May; 5th Jun. Arts on Tour NZ Presents:

Boogie with The BeatGirls: *Whirinaki Whare Taonga, Upper Hutt; Copthorne Hotel & Resort Solway Park, Masterton* – 8pm. Join The BeatGirls on a trip down memory lane as they perform hits from the 60s, 70s, 80s, 90s, and 2000s to get you moving and grooving.

31st May. Seun Kuti: Meow Nui, Vivian Street, Te

Aro – 7pm. The youngest son of Afrobeat pioneer Fela Kuti, Seun Kuti will be joined by his father's former band Egypt 80.

31st May The Warratahs: Whirinaki Whare Taonga,

Fergusson Drive, Upper Hutt – 8pm. One of Aotearoa's most iconic bands hit the stage with their signature homegrown country roots-driven sound.

2nd Jun. Dry Cleaning: Meow Nui, Vivian Street, Te

Aro – 7pm. Florence Shaw talk-sings about rage bait, domestic labour, retractable legs, and scabs on her head.

5th Jun. New Zealand Symphony Orchestra

Presents: Romeo & Juliet: *Michael Fowler Centre, Wakefield Street, Te Aro* – 6:30pm. Benjamin Northey conducts a programme pulsing with the intimate power of love itself, featuring virtuoso cellist Li-Wei Qin.

5th Jun. Come Together Presents: Born to Run:

St James Theatre, Courtenay Place, Te Aro – 8pm. New Zealand's most successful rock series ever returns in 2026 to celebrate Bruce Springsteen's electrifying album *Born to Run*.

Performance

Until 23rd May. Footnote New Zealand Dance

Presents: Modern God: *Circa Theatre, Taranaki Street, Te Aro* – various times. Six influencers collide in a high-energy dance-theatre work exploring fame, consumerism, and our digital obsessions.

24th May. Suzy Eddie Izzard: Michael Fowler

Centre, Wakefield Street, Te Aro – 8pm. Inspired by her ever-loyal audiences to re-imagine some of her own favourite, personal comedy highlights, Suzy Eddie Izzard presents *The Remix Tour*.

27th May. DRONE STRIKE! Topical Comedy: The

Welsh Dragon Bar, Kent Terrace, Te Aro – 7:30pm. Feeling overwhelmed by the world? See some of Wellington's funniest minds put an alternative spin on it.

27th May-7th Jun. Wellington Repertory Theatre

Presents: The Other Boleyn Girl: *Gryphon Theatre, Ghuznee Street, Te Aro* – various times. Sisters Anne and Mary Boleyn are rivals for the King's affection in this play adapted from the bestselling novel. They're drawn into a dangerous game where love is power, and power can be deadly.

28th May-7th Jun. Heathers The Musical: The

Opera House, Manners Street, Te Aro – various times. In the smash-hit musical *Heathers*, being popular is a matter of life and death.

30th May. Over and Out: The Hannah, Cambridge

Terrace, Te Aro – 8pm. Over 50 minutes and through plenty of emotional potholes, Jackson Burling provides a rare look into the gritty, heartfelt, and often-overlooked life of truck drivers.

30th-31st May. Shakespeare Globe Centre New

Zealand Presents: VUW National Shakespeare Festival 2026: *St James Theatre, Courtenay Place, Te Aro* – various times. Tamariki and rangatahi from across the motu perform their own versions of Shakespearean scenes.

30th May-27th Jun. Julia: Circa Theatre, Taranaki

Street, Wellington Waterfront – various times. In 2012, Julia Gillard delivered a speech that ricocheted across the world. Now, the woman and the moment are brought to the stage in a gripping solo show that puts us inside a very public storm.

31st May. MX Capital Drag 2026 Finale: Ivy Bar

& Cabaret, Cuba Street, Te Aro – 8pm. Aotearoa's longest-running drag pageant will see six drag stars at the top of their game compete in a battle to the death drop.

4th-6th Jun. REVEL: The Hannah, Cambridge

Terrace, Te Aro – 7:30pm. Cabaret acts, live music, and a cocktail bar built into the stage come together for a delicious evening touted as Wellington's premier cabaret experience.

6th Jun. The Great D.I.Y. Burleskiwi: The Fringe

Bar, Allen Street, Te Aro – 7pm. This annual burlesque competition challenges participants to use their ingenuity and creativity to bring an award-winning performance to the stage for under \$100.

6th Jun. Professor Brian Cox: TSB Arena,

Queens Wharf, Wellington Waterfront – 7:30pm. Collaborating with scientists, musicians, filmmakers, and graphic artists, Cox brings cosmology, biology, philosophy, and history to one of the largest and most advanced LED screens available.

Galleries

Until 24th May. Tāmata: Meanwhile Gallery, Willis

Street, Te Aro. Bri Leone-Rhea Lawrence and Geo Aroha Thompson-Skipworth examine colonial displacement, cultural restoration, and Māori identity.

Until 6th Jun. Recent Works: Artists 24.7 Gallery,

Riddiford Street, Newtown. This exhibition by award-winning printmaker Linda Evangaline Smith explores flowers and landscapes.

Until 7th Jun. Hinewaiapu – Deep South Rock:

Pātaka Art + Museum, Parumoana Street, Porirua. Michelle Tahuaroa Dawson is an Invercargill-based artist who creates acrylic mixed-media paintings that explore the deep connection between people and land.

21st May-9th Aug. The Adam Portraiture Award:

New Zealand Portrait Gallery Te Pūkenga Whakaata, Queens Wharf, Wellington Waterfront. Celebrating portraiture art in all its forms, this competition plays a valuable role in recording the changing face of Aotearoa.

29th-31st May. NZ Art Show: TSB Arena, Queens

Wharf, Wellington Waterfront. Explore thousands of original works, meet the hundreds of artists behind them, and encounter creativity from every corner of Aotearoa.

Festivals

Until 24th May. New Zealand International Comedy

Festival w. Best Foods Mayo: *Various locations and times in Wellington Region.* Giggle and guffaw your way across Wellington with local, national, and overseas comedians at the top of their games.

For your inclusion in the what's on listings email: whatson@regionalnews.kiwi. Close off for the next issue's listings is noon Tuesday 26 May

To the best of our knowledge, the information provided to us regarding the above events was correct at the time of press. Our company accepts no liability for events postponed, cancelled, sold out, or otherwise adapted.

Regional News
Connecting Wellington

Answers to the puzzles on page 32

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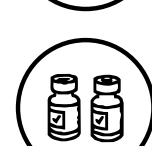
KOKIRI MARAE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Measles is here

Are you prepared?



Find out if you and your whānau have had two doses of the MMR vaccine.
Check your Plunket / Well Child books, or call your GP.



Not vaccinated or don't know? Get your MMR vaccine. It's FREE.
If you're not sure, no worries. Contact your doctor to check. It's safe to get the vaccine again if you have no record of receiving it.



Stay home if you're unwell
If you have cold or flu symptoms and a rash, stay at home and call your GP or Healthline on 0800 611 116 for advice.

Kokiri are able to check to see whether you have had the MMR (Measles, Mumps, Rubella) vaccination as well – this saves you a call to your GP. If there is no documentation as having received the MMR vaccine, then it is safe to have.

www.health.govt.nz/measles

Te Whatu Ora
Health New Zealand



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HISTORY THROUGH THE HEARTLAND

Following the success of the inaugural History Through the Heartland Rail Tour in 2026, Steam Incorporated is thrilled to bring this unique journey back in 2027. This multi-day adventure captivated rail enthusiasts and travellers alike, showcasing the North Island's most scenic routes, fascinating destinations, and rich heritage. Building on that momentum, the 2027 tour promises an even more memorable way to discover the heart of New Zealand by rail - with Steam Incorporated.

Featuring - Napier's Art Deco Festival | 3hr Cruise on Whanganui's PS Waimarie | A Journey through the Forgotten World | New Plymouth's Americarna
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Grace, 11, takes part in a remedial class in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, supported by UNICEF.



Toàn, 10, in Viet Nam, wearing a school backpack and carrying a UNICEF learning kit after floods disrupted schooling in the area.

Hope Lives With You

Toàn dreams of a future full of possibility. But when severe storms and flooding in his community in Viet Nam disrupted schooling, that future was put on hold. With support from UNICEF learning kits, students like Toàn were able to return to the classroom and continue their education.

Thousands of kilometres away in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Grace attends a UNICEF-supported remedial class, helping her catch up on missed learning. Their stories are just two among millions.

When crises strike - whether caused by climate events, conflict or poverty - children are often the hardest hit. Schools are damaged, lessons are interrupted, and futures hang in the balance. Working alongside partners and communities, UNICEF responds rapidly to ensure children can return to learning as quickly as possible.

In Aotearoa and around the world, UNICEF's legacy supporters play a vital role in this work. Their long-term commitment and generosity help provide children with life essentials: clean water, nutritious food, education, healthcare, and protection. These are the building blocks for brighter, more secure futures.

Wellington donor Geoff Wane says he chose to support UNICEF because he is deeply concerned about how increasing social and economic pressures continue to affect children worldwide.

"UNICEF has a proven record of success that few can match," he says. "I hope my legacy can help add to that and bring some smiles back to the faces of children who

have done no harm themselves."

By remembering UNICEF in your Will, you become part of a growing community dedicated to helping children not just survive, but thrive. Many supporters choose to leave a percentage of their estate - ensuring loved ones are cared for first, while also contributing to a cause that reflects their values.

Legacy gifts are crucial to UNICEF's work. They enable rapid emergency responses, delivering essential supplies to children when they are needed most. They also fund ongoing programmes such as education, health, nutrition, and access to safe water, helping to build stronger futures for children and their communities.

Now marking 80 years of work for children, UNICEF operates in over 190 countries. Legacy gifts help UNICEF act quickly in emergencies, deliver lifesaving supplies anywhere in the world within 48 hours, and support long-term programmes that break cycles of poverty. They fund vital vaccination, education, and nutrition initiatives that reach millions of children every year.

For many, the first step is simply learning more. You can register to receive the legacy information booklet and stay connected at www.unicef.org.nz/legacy

If you are ready to take the next step, free Will-writing services and appointments are available through Public Trust. To book, call 0800 371 471, or visit www.publictrustonline.co.nz and use the code UNICEF100 at checkout or with the Digital Trustee.

LEAVE A GIFT IN YOUR WILL WITH UNICEF AOTEAROA

"Leaving a legacy gift is a way of letting your values live on. It is giving something that you cannot take with you, yet has the power to create a new opportunity for someone else. In this way, your gift becomes a continuation of life, a chance to **live again through hope, and growth and possibilities you inspire in others."**

- Testimonial from Steven Yin



A gift in your Will is one of the most powerful ways you can support children who need it most.

With UNICEF, writing your Will is always free and will rewrite the future for generations to come. Visit unicef.org.nz/bequest to claim your free Will.