

MEDIA RELEASE

THE
COURT
THEATRE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – 16 August 2017

Matai

Created by Tulou Productions

Directed by Sela Faletolu-Fasi

8 – 16 September 2017

The Pub Charity Studio at The Court Theatre

A Forge Development Season

In association with Christchurch Arts Festival

New Pasifika Work Takes Fresh Look at Samoan Traditions

O le ala ile pule, o le tautua – The Pathway to leadership is to serve.

Born and raised in New Zealand, Lui has big dreams for his future that don't involve his Samoan roots. But Lui's father has hopes for his son that are steeped deeply in tradition.

Matai is the debut work of Pasifika theatre company Tulou Productions and takes a fresh look at Samoan culture. Tulou Productions grew out of No Limits, a Pasifika theatre troupe with a focus on youth. "After five years, we decided it was time to step up and provide more opportunities for young people in Christchurch to perform and share their voice," says founding member of Tulou Productions and director/co-writer of *Matai*, Sela Faletolu-Fasi.

The troupe wanted to explore a different aspect of Pasifika life in New Zealand, and looked at the contemporary experience of New Zealand Samoans. In *Matai*, the challenge to balance traditional values with modern life is brought to the fore when Lui returns home for his younger brother's birthday and is pressured to become a Matai, Chief of the aiga (family). Lui's father considers it a great honour; Lui sees it as an unbearable responsibility and financial obligation.

This premise is close to the hearts of *Matai*'s creators. "There are differences of opinions and values in any family," says Faletolu-Fasi. "There's always a black sheep or pressure from parents." Faletolu-Fasi's father-in-law is a Matai, and her family have seen both the cost and value of the position up close. "We walk that struggle now. Sometimes we see the burden, but we also know our family is always going to be there."

Matai's Salatielu Tiatia, known as Sala, plays a father commanding his son to honour his heritage. In his own life, Tiatia was very reluctant to assume his role as Matai; only appreciating the connection to his roots as he has grown older. After appearing on TV's *Survivor New Zealand*, Sala is looking forward to embracing a role so close to his heart and culture.

The remainder of the cast, Gaseilevao Faletolu-Toaiva, Peniamina Sofai, Faith Saimoa Taula, Moresby Peseta and Musician/Vocalist Vai Punivai, have long associations with No Limits and a strong relationship of trust with Faletolu-Fasi.

Everyone involved feels the message of *Matai* is universal. "Never forget where you came from: that could be Samoa, that could be Ireland," says Faletolu-Fasi. "Never forget your roots and what that gives you in terms of your character; don't give any of it away to try to be part of something else."

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The Court Theatre

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Tulou Productions look forward to sharing their stories with Christchurch. “In Samoa, when you walk into a room, you lower your head and say ‘Tulou’,” Faletolu-Fasi says. “That’s where the name of our company came from. We want that to be our presence in theatre – to enter respectfully. We acknowledge the work that others have done before us, that have paved the way for us to stand on stage and tell our story.”

Matai will be staged as a Forge Development Season as part of Christchurch Arts Festival. Artistic Director of The Court Theatre, Ross Gumbley, is proud that The Court continues to support emerging artists and The Forge will be “the first place to hear this exciting new voice in Pasifika theatre”.

Matai will be staged at The Court Theatre from 8 -16 September.

Cast:

Matai'a Salatielu (Sala) Tiatia	Mikaele Manuia
Gaseilevao Faletolu-Toaiva	Malia
Peniamina Sofai	Lui Manuia
Faith Saimoa Taula	Masina Manuia
Moresby Peseta	Jonah Manuia

Production Team:

Sela Faletolu-Fasi	Director/co-writer/producer
Silivelio Fasi	Co-writer/co-director/choreographer
Vai Punivai	Musical Director and Musician/Vocalist
Rainer Tuakalau-Prouting	Co-producer/stage manager

Ticket Prices:

- Adults \$20
- Students/Seniors \$15
- Groups (10+) \$10

Bookings: Phone 963 0870 or visit www.courttheatre.org.nz

Show Times:

6pm:	Mon & Thu
7pm:	Tue/Wed/Fri/Sat

Additional Information

- Sela Faletolu-Fasi last appeared on-stage at The Forge in 2009’s *Angels*, produced in collaboration with Pacific Underground.

<ENDS>

Images can be found at The Court Theatre’s [Media Centre](#)

For more information or to arrange an interview please contact:

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