

# MEDIA RELEASE

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28 July 2017

## A Feast of Māori and Pasifika Theatre at The Court Theatre

Māori and Pasifika voices are ready to fill The Court Theatre. From 4-12 August, the theatre will welcome writers and performers from Ōtautahi for a Māori and Pasifika Festival.

At the heart of the festival is a Māori and Pasifika Theatre Hui which will see local performers and practitioners come together to discuss and celebrate theatre within the Māori and Pasifika communities. The Festival will also include nine days of workshops, play readings, classes, presentations and forums.

The Court Theatre's Kaihāpai Toi (Māori and Pasifika Producer), Morehu Solomon, extended The Court's invitation to local Māori and Pasifika artists. "They came on board straight away," says Solomon. "They knew it was a great opportunity to work alongside The Court Theatre and use it as a platform to showcase their work."

Pacific Underground, Aotearoa's longest-running Pacific performing arts organisation, has three pieces during the festival, all at various stages of their development. The first is an updated version of their highly successful touring show *Rangi and Mau's Fantastic Voyage*, where two teenagers are challenged by a genie to learn their histories.

The second is *Scholars*, a new work developed by Tanya Muagututi'a during her Macmillan Brown Pacific Arts Residency in 2010 and inspired by research of her father's history. Following a devastating tsunami in Samoa, Tavita searches for his missing friend Monte and recalls their time together at a New Zealand private school in the 1950s.

The third Pacific Underground piece, *Our Table*, is inspired by a conversation between Pos Mavaega and his 13-year old daughter about the bustling activity around their own kitchen table. This devised work follows 24 hours around a family's kitchen table - the equivalent of a 21<sup>st</sup> party, a church service, card game and concert all rolled into one.

*Phenomenal – Unplugged* is a dynamic mixture of slam poetry, spoken word and acoustic jazz featuring local poets Daisy Timo, Moana Thompson and Courtney Petelo-Luamanuvae and the Judah Band.

Developing the next generation of practitioners, Pasifika troupe Y Not will ask young performers "Where's Your Game At?". This free workshop expects participants to "bring their A-game", explore "the play" onstage and enjoy a performance of *La'u Gagana*, a piece exploring Samoan identity.

A Rakatahi Youth Drama Workshop, run by local practitioners Jade Marie and Kerepeti Paraone, is an opportunity for young people to experience the skills of mau rakau and creatively integrate them into storytelling.

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The Court Theatre

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The festival will be rounded off with a collection of rehearsed readings in a Māori Theatre Wananga Sharing. This will feature extracts from devised works: *Brown Man Running* by Ben Brown and *Comcare* by Pohlen Newbery, directed by Tola Newbery; and scenes from Hone Kouka's acclaimed drama *Home Fires*, directed by Tania Gilchrist.

Artistic Director of The Court Theatre, Ross Gumbley, feels that the festival is part of a larger journey. The theatre's increased collaboration with Māori and Pasifika practitioners in recent years has led to "significant cultural changes" at The Court. "For us to act as a venue and catalyst to encourage their work is a privilege for this company."

Solomon is enthusiastic about the future this will bring to the performing arts in Canterbury. "It's uncharted waters but we hope it will become an annual event."

Gumbley agrees. "It's important to us that we create stepping stones into the theatre for all ethnicities."

This festival comes at an ideal time for local practitioners, with Christchurch hosting a National Māori Theatre Hui later in the year.

Tickets for public events and performances at The Court's Māori and Pasifika Festival are on sale now through The Court Theatre box office and website: [www.courttheatre.org.nz](http://www.courttheatre.org.nz)

## Schedule of Public Events

Saturday 5 August	Y Not – "Where's Your Game At?" acting workshop for young people followed by performance of <i>La'u Gagana</i> .
Tuesday 8 August	5:30pm – Pacific Underground play reading: <i>Scholars</i> 8pm – Pacific Underground play reading: <i>Our Table</i>
Friday 11 August	6:30pm – <i>Phenomenal – Unplugged</i> : poetry, music and spoken word
Saturday 12 August	10am – Rakatahi Youth Drama Workshop 6:30pm – <i>Wananga Sharing</i> : rehearsed readings of extracts from <i>Brown Man Running</i> ; <i>Comcare</i> ; and <i>Home Fires</i>

Tickets available from The Court Theatre Box Office: 963 0870 or online at [www.courttheatre.org.nz](http://www.courttheatre.org.nz)

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