

# MEDIA RELEASE



3 September 2019

## For immediate release

### [Au Ko Tuvalu](#)

Written & directed by Tavita Nielsen-Mamea

Dates: 12 – 21 September 2019

Location: The Forge at The Court's Pub Charity Studio

### Short show description:

Waves are lapping dangerously at the shores of Tuvalu as three siblings pack up their belongings and prepare to flee for a new life in Aotearoa. While Lifa and Maleko are excited, their sister struggles to say goodbye to their homeland in this stunning Pasifika play.

## SAVING THE WORLD ONE PLAY AT A TIME

### IN-BRIEF:

With the world's spotlight on Tuvalu as the Pacific nation faces destructive consequences from climate change, *Au Ko Tuvalu* rips news straight from the headlines, showcasing the reality of the country's plight in a bittersweet, poignant and affecting new play.

Written, directed and produced by Tavita Nielsen-Mamea, *Au Ko Tuvalu* follows three siblings preparing to leave their home for a new life in Aotearoa as the world's first climate-change refugees.

"*Au Ko Tuvalu* has come around at the perfect time," says Nielsen-Mamea. "Especially for Tuvalu and the other smaller islands that are dealing with climate change on the frontlines. They don't have the privilege of sitting back and acting like climate change isn't real."

With a population of just over 11,000 people, Tuvalu is the fourth-smallest state in the world, with its highest point sitting just 4.5 metres above sea level, in contrast to most of New Zealand which sits around 600 metres above sea level.

Starring a group of rising Pasifika stars (Malia 'Ahovelo, Spencer Papalii, Bella Robertson and Susilia Tealei Kauapa) and supported by the Tuvaluan community of Ōtautahi, *Au Ko Tuvalu* takes the global and abstract concept of climate change and makes it personal and relatable.

"There's this saying that they have in Tuvalu - 'you save Tuvalu, you save the world'," says Nielsen-Mamea. "And it's true - if Tuvalu goes down and no one in this world has stepped up to do anything, who's next?"

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The Court Theatre

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New Zealand

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## IN-DEPTH:

With the world's spotlight on Tuvalu as the Pacific nation faces destructive consequences from climate change, *Au Ko Tuvalu* rips news straight from the headlines, showcasing the reality of the country's plight in a bittersweet, poignant and affecting new play.

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Prior to its upcoming season in Ōtautahi, *Au Ko Tuvalu* first debuted as one of three developing plays in the 2018 *Ē Toru* festival at The Forge.

After its sold-out performance, the play went on to a development workshop with Victor Rodger through Playmarket's *Brown Ink* programme, before winning two awards at the Wellington Fringe Festival and performing a return season at the Kia Mau Festival.

Now, following mentorship with Nina Nawalowalo ONZM (Artistic Director & Co-Founder of The Conch) through the Emerging Artists Trust, *Au Ko Tuvalu* is returning to the South Island for a full season in what feels like a full circle for this critically acclaimed production.

"This is a universal play. Even though it's based in Tuvalu – and is in fact the first official Tuvaluan play! - the issue is universal," Nielsen-Mamea explains.

Starring a group of rising Pasifika stars (Malia 'Ahovelo, Spencer Papalii, Bella Robertson and Susilia Tealei Kauapa) and supported by the Tuvaluan community of Ōtautahi, *Au Ko Tuvalu* takes the global and abstract concept of climate change and makes it personal and relatable. While siblings Lifa and Maleko are excited for their new life in Aotearoa, their sister Fetau doesn't want to say goodbye to their homeland.

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“For some reason, we can't have empathy for the earth like we should. But we can have empathy for other people and that's what I've based this play on. If we talk about the people of Tuvalu and what they're going through, we can ask ourselves 'what would we do if that was us?'”

Nielsen-Mamea himself is of Samoan/Tuvaluan descent, which inspired him to write this ground-breaking production.

“What really scares me and pushed me to write this play is the question of 'what do I say to my children' when my kids come along – because they may never see Tuvalu. How do I explain to them why that happened and keep that culture living without any whenua? That's why there's that line in the play – 'it's hard to believe what you can't see.' But the truth is, we're going to have to start doing so.”

***Au Ko Tuvalu runs at The Forge at The Court Theatre from 12 – 21 September 2019.***

## Cast



*Fetau*

[Malia 'Ahovelo](#)



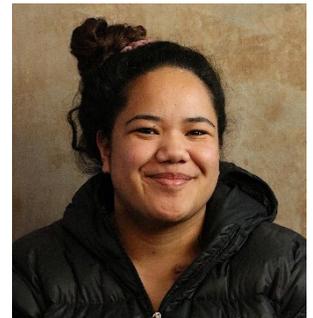
*Maleko*

[Spencer Papalii](#)



*Lifa*

[Bella Robertson](#)



*Aunty Fala*

[Susilia Tealei Kauapa](#)

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## Creatives

Writer/Director/Producer

[Tavita Nielsen-Mamea](#)

Stage Manager – Rehearsals

[Erica Browne](#)

Stage Manager – Season

[Giles Tanner](#)

## Ticket Prices

All tickets

\$20

## Show Times

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- Monday & Thursday 6pm
- Tue/Wed/Fri/Sat 7pm
- Matinee 4:00pm Saturday 14 September

**Bookings:** phone 03 963 0870 or visit [www.courttheatre.org.nz](http://www.courttheatre.org.nz)

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

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