

MEDIA RELEASE

THE
COURT
THEATRE

8 January 2019

For immediate release

[Thumbelina](#)

Written and directed by Emma Cusdin

16 – 26 January

The Court Theatre's mainstage

Short Show Description:

It's tough being a little lady. Winter is coming and Thumbelina's tulip house is falling to pieces. Her only choice is to embark on a big adventure to find somewhere new to live and hopefully to discover who her real friends are on the way. This production of *Thumbelina* is no tall story, but rather a celebration of life's small victories.

FAIRY-TALE FUN COMES TO THE COURT THEATRE IN *THUMBELINA*

IN-BRIEF (220):

Although it's the heat of Summer here in Christchurch, winter is coming for fairy-tale character Thumbelina, and her tulip house falling apart!

In search of a new home, Thumbelina embarks on a journey to find her place in the world – and hopefully some new friends along the way.

Court Jester and actor Emma Cusdin (who has worked at The Court in various roles for over 12 years!) is making her playwrighting and directorial debut in this kids production, which she hopes will bring a little magic to Canterbury children this January.

The actors taking on these famous, fairy-tale roles are Reylene Hilaga as Thumbelina, with Rhiannon McCall and Kathleen Burns joining her to play a range of charming creatures.

Beyond the enchanting world *Thumbelina* promises to bring to the stage, the message behind Cusdin's play is also pretty special for the first-time writer and director.

"I want children to see that it's okay to feel like you're one-of-a-kind and if you feel like you don't fit in anywhere, that isn't necessarily how it will always be. Sometimes, you just need to grow into your skin."

Thumbelina runs at The Court Theatre from 16 – 26 January 2019, with a relaxed performance of the show being hosted on the 26th January at 11am. Recommended ages are 3 – 7 with all tickets \$10.

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IN-DEPTH (454):

Although it's the heat of Summer here in Christchurch, winter is coming for fairy-tale character Thumbelina, and her tulip house falling apart!

In search of a new home, Thumbelina embarks on a journey to find her place in the world – and hopefully some new friends along the way.

Court Jester and actor Emma Cusdin (who has worked at The Court in various roles for over 12 years!) is making her playwrighting and directorial debut in this kids production, which she hopes will bring a little magic to Canterbury children this January.

Adapted from the classic Hans Christian Andersen fairytale, this version of *Thumbelina* includes most of the original characters – such as Toad and Mouse – but gives the story a modern twist.

“The big difference in this adaptation is that in the original, Thumbelina doesn't really make any choices for herself. The creatures she comes in contact with all tell her ‘you're beautiful, come and live with me!’ so we've tried to make this adaptation a bit more modern. Thumbelina has big dreams and wants to find where she fits in – which isn't featured in the original, but it's a good message for young people watching the story today... especially little ladies!” Cusdin says.

The actor taking on the role of Thumbelina is Reylene Hilaga, most recently seen at The Court as the title role in kids play *The Littlest Ninja*.

Joining her are Rhiannon McCall (*Funny Girls*) and Kathleen Burns (*The Early Early Late Show*) as a range of charming fairy-tale characters.

Speaking about the strong female cast she's assembled, Cusdin says, “I originally wrote the play with two women and one man and then I had to rewrite it, because we cast three awesome women, so we wanted to make the play work around them!”

Beyond the enchanting world *Thumbelina* promises to bring to the stage, the message behind Cusdin's play is also pretty special for the first-time writer and director.

“I want children to see that it's okay to feel like you're one-of-a-kind and if you feel like you don't fit in anywhere, that isn't necessarily how it will always be. Sometimes, you just need to grow into your skin.”

Keeping to that inclusive theme, *Thumbelina* will specifically cater to audiences who need a more subdued environment with a relaxed performance of the play on the 26th January at 11am.

A relaxed performance is designed to reduce noise and movement during the performance to make the experience as comfortable as possible for audience members with sensory needs.

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[To read more, click here](#)

FULL (759):

Although it's the heat of Summer here in Christchurch, winter is coming for fairy-tale character Thumbelina, and her tulip house falling apart!

In search of a new home, Thumbelina embarks on a journey to find her place in the world – and hopefully some new friends along the way.

Court Jester and actor Emma Cusdin (who has worked at The Court in various roles for over 12 years!) is making her playwrighting and directorial debut in this kids production, which she hopes will bring a little magic to Canterbury children this January.

“Thumbelina’s on a journey to find somewhere new she can live. She’s also the only one of her kind; she’s never met another Thumbelina, so she’s looking to find how she fits into the world around her. She’s in pursuit of who she is and where she belongs.”

Adapted from the classic Hans Christian Andersen fairytale, this version of *Thumbelina* includes most of the original characters – such as Toad and Mouse – but gives the story a modern twist.

“The big difference in this adaptation is that in the original, Thumbelina doesn’t really make any choices for herself. The creatures she comes in contact with all tell her ‘you’re beautiful, come and live with me!’ so we’ve tried to make this adaptation a bit more modern. Thumbelina has big dreams and wants to find where she fits in – which isn’t featured in the original, but it’s a good message for young people watching the story today... especially little ladies!” Cusdin says.

The actor taking on the role of Thumbelina is Reylene Hilaga, most recently seen at The Court as the title role in kids play *The Littlest Ninja*.

“She’s quite petite, so she’s a great Thumbelina, that’s for sure!” Cusdin says with a laugh.

Joining Hilaga is Rhiannon McCall as a range of characters – including Thumbelina’s close friend, Bird. McCall, a former Court Jester and current *Funny Girls* cast member, is returning to her hometown for *Thumbelina*.

Rounding out the cast is actor and Court Jester Kathleen Burns, playing a range of characters, including Toad and Mole.

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Speaking about the strong female cast she's assembled, Cusdin says, "I originally wrote the play with two women and one man and then I had to rewrite it, because we cast three awesome women, so we wanted to make the play work around them!"

Together, Hilaga, McCall and Burns will be portraying nine fairy-tale creatures in total, creating an enchanting world of magical animals that will delight Canterbury's littlest theatregoers.

"One of the most appealing things about the play is all the different creatures," Cusdin says. "They've got lots of varied characteristics – some are really funny and silly, and others are totally different again. I think the richness of all these distinct characters and the imagined, lush surroundings of living in a flower and the repurposed, forest-like scenery will be really cool to see."

Beyond the enchanting world *Thumbelina* promises to bring to the stage, the message behind Cusdin's play is also pretty special for the first-time writer and director.

"I want children to see that it's okay to feel like you're one-of-a-kind and if you feel like you don't fit in anywhere, that isn't necessarily how it will always be. Sometimes, you just need to grow into your skin."

Keeping to that inclusive theme, *Thumbelina* will specifically cater to audiences who need a more subdued environment with a relaxed performance of the play on the 26th January at 11am.

A relaxed performance is designed to reduce noise and movement during the performance to make the experience as comfortable as possible for audience members with sensory needs.

Cusdin wants to make the experience of seeing *Thumbelina* as special as possible for her incoming audience members – especially because of her own history of attending kids shows here at The Court.

"*Thumbelina* is quite special for me... I have vivid memories of being a little girl and going to my first-ever Court kids show and looking up at the wall of company member photos and saying, 'I'll be on there one day!' So, it's pretty special for me to be involved in the next round of kids shows, because that was what I grew up on - and now I'm getting to do it! Little Emma Cusdin, somewhere back in the annals of time, is really happy right now.

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Cast

Thumbelina	Reylene Hilaga
Bird/Fish/Queen Bee/Mrs Mouse	Rhiannon McCall
Toad/Bee/Mole/Fairy	Kathleen Burns

Creatives

Writer/Director	Emma Cusdin
Set Designer	Richard van den Berg
Costume Designer	Deborah Moor

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Lighting Designer [Paul Johnson](#)
Sound Designer [Matt Short](#)
Stage Manager [Mandy Perry](#)
Assistant Stage Manager Becky Gallacher

Ticket Prices

All tickets \$10

Show Times (16 - 26 January):

- Monday – Friday 11am and 1pm
- Saturday 19th January 11am
- Saturday 26th January 1pm
- Relaxed Performance Saturday 26th January, 11am

Bookings: phone 03 963 0870 or visit www.courttheatre.org.nz

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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samantha.mcconnell@courttheatre.org.nz

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