

MEDIA RELEASE

THE
COURT
THEATRE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Ugly Duckling

Adapted by Will Robertson

Based on the story by Hans Christian Andersen

Directed by Daniel Pengelly

2-14 October 2017

Hands Up to See Ducklings!

There's going to be a real quack-up these school holidays. *The Ugly Duckling* is flocking to The Court Theatre as a fully-fledged puppet show.

Families won't need to be egged on to enjoy the story of a little duckling who doesn't fit in and struggles to find his place in the world. This heart-warming tale is performed by a cavalcade of colourful puppets operated by three talented performers.

Director Daniel Pengelly hatched the idea of working with puppets early in the planning process. "Every kids' show is a chance to create something new and fun for the audiences to enjoy – it gives us opportunities to create moments of magic," says Pengelly. "This is a fun, quirky show and using puppets has added to that joy. I can't remember the last time The Court did a puppet show and it is a really magical experience to watch."

Rather than ruffling feathers, the fresh approach to this children's show is proving a lot of fun for the creative team. "There's heaps of physical action and comedy in this show - I told the cast to start channelling the Muppets," says Pengelly. "I want the parents to enjoy the show as much as the kids."

All three cast members are graduates of the National Academy of Singing and Dramatic Art (NASDA) and have enjoyed the opportunity to stretch their wings with puppetry.

Albany Pasetta plays the Ugly Duckling. Pasetta recently appeared in The Court's touring school production, *Matatiki: Maia's Journey of Bravery*, where he operated a giant full-body puppet to portray a giant eagle 'Pouakai'. "A duckling is a little easier on the shoulder muscles," Pasetta says.

Rebekah Head, who most recently appeared on The Court's stage in last year's *The Little Mermaid*, is the most puppet-savvy cast member. Head started working with puppets in 2015 and spent much of this year as a full-time puppeteer at Whoa! Studios in Auckland before returning to Christchurch for *The Ugly Duckling*. While Head enjoyed her time at Whoa!, "It's nice that I don't have to hide under the stage and crawl around in this show," she says.

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Ben Freeth has held a variety of roles at The Court since his on-stage debut in *The Mikado*, performing in several kids shows and musicals; as well as working behind the scenes as an operator and stage manager for road safety touring show *Crash Bash* and Assistant Stage Manager for *Hudson & Halls Live!*. Freeth loves how “a puppet immediately captures a child’s imagination – and attention.”

All the puppets for *The Ugly Duckling* are designed and constructed by Stephen Robertson. Robertson is best known as the director and choreographer of numerous highly successful summer musicals at The Court, but began his career making puppets - a skill he revised when directing *Avenue Q* for Showbiz in 2013. Robertson will return to The Court Theatre to direct *Chicago* later this year.

Pengelly notes that *The Ugly Duckling*’s message of discovering self-confidence has been echoed by the cast in the rehearsal room. “We started off with unfinished puppets and performers who weren’t confident puppeteers, and now we have this beautiful, funny, magical show where everyone has come together to help it take flight.”

The Ugly Duckling hatches on 2 October: recommended for ages 3-7 but suitable for everyone.

Additional Information

Daniel Pengelly was Associate Director at The Court Theatre from 2014 - February 2017. He has directed many exciting and innovative family-friendly shows for The Court, including The Forge’s Summertimes production *Robin Hood*; which was his swan-song at The Court before becoming Creative Director at Centrepoin Theatre.

Cast

Ugly Duckling	Albany Paseta
Mel	Rebekah Head
Drake/Frog	Ben Freeth

Production

Director	Daniel Pengelly
Puppet Design/Construction	Stephen Robertson
Set Designer	Nick Lowry
Lighting Designer	Giles Tanner
Sound Designer	Tom Harris
Stage Manager	Brylee Lockhart
Properties Manager	Christy Lassen

Starting Times: Mon. – Fri. 11am and 1pm.

Sat 7th - 11am only. Sat 14th – 1pm.

Relaxed Performance: 11am Saturday 14 October

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Tickets: Child \$10. Adult: \$15. Caregivers Required.

Booking Details: 963 0870 or visit www.courttheatre.org.nz

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

For more information or to arrange an interview please contact:

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