

THE BLONDE THE BRUNETTE
AND THE

Vengeful

REDHEAD



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ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

COLIN MCCOLL

Welcome to the world of *The Blonde*, *The Brunette* and *The Vengeful Readhead*. It's a world we're all familiar with – contemporary, suburban, ordinary – the world of supermarkets and shopping malls but now strangely alien. The central character Rhonda Russell, desperate housewife and mother, is a Mrs. Nobody. You pass her every day in the street – invisible and insignificant until the things she does for love thrust her into the public arena. While Rhonda attempts to come to terms with the fragmentation and trauma in her life she is surrounded by people who refuse to take responsibility for their actions because of their naivety, ignorance, self-delusion or lack of compassion.

There is an old maxim in show business that to portray someone who sings badly, you have to cast an excellent singer. Likewise with this play. It needs an actor of consummate skill and emotional range to portray with feeling and empathy a group of characters trapped by the banalities of life. I have been lucky to find such an actor in Kerry Fox.

I first met Kerry working on *An Angel at my Table* and over the years I've followed her career with interest. I'm thrilled that Kerry agreed to work with Auckland Theatre Company on *Blonde* and I've thoroughly enjoyed discovering the possibilities of the text with her.

The Blonde, *The Brunette* and *The Vengeful Redhead* is currently enjoying international success with productions in Australia, Canada and Europe. Auckland Theatre Company and Downstage Theatre are delighted to bring this hit to Auckland and Wellington audiences.

This production marks a new partnership between Auckland Theatre Company and Downstage Theatre.

Despite the complexities of sharing productions, given different theatre spaces and company structures, this collaboration between performing arts companies in New Zealand is a positive move and certainly one we hope to develop in the future.

Big thanks to my creative design team Kate Hawley (Set and Costumes), Phillip Dexter (Lighting), John Gibson (Sound) and Steve Latty (AV design) for their contribution to this production.

Big thanks, too, to Auckland Theatre Company and Downstage staff who support this production.

Next up in our Things We do For Love season is the premiere of Michael Galvin's darkly funny new comedy *The Ocean Star*.

It plays at Maidment Theatre 28 September – 21 October.

Enjoy!

Colin McColl



DIRECTOR, DOWNSTAGE THEATRE

CATHERINE DOWNES



Downstage is delighted to be collaborating with The Auckland Theatre Company in producing *The Blonde, The Brunette and The Vengeful Redhead*.

This extraordinary tale - or tales - is extraordinarily told by writer Robert Hewett and extraordinarily directed by the fabulous Colin McColl who gives us an innovative production of a world turned upside down when one day, ordinary housewife Rhonda Russell went beserk in the shopping mall...

We welcome the wonderful Kerry Fox in her return home to Wellington and invite you to enjoy her multifaceted performance as the blonde, the brunette and the vengeful redhead plus an assortment of several other characters.

With each one a fresh twist of perspective is added to the tale in this disastrous yet devastatingly funny tour de force!

Catherine Downes MNZM



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THE BLONDE THE BRUNETTE
AND THE
Vengeful
REDHEAD

RHONDA RUSSELL'S Story DOCTOR ALEX DOUCETTE'S Story LYNETTE ANDERSON'S Story
MATTHEW MCKINNON'S Story GRAHAM RUSSELL'S Story MRS. JOAN CARLISLE'S Story
TANYA MOISEVITCH'S Story RHONDA RUSSELL'S Final Story
All told by **KERRY FOX**

PRODUCTION

Direction COLIN MCCOLL Set and Costume Design KATE HAWLEY Lighting Design PHILLIP DEXTER
Audio Visual Design STEVE LATTY Sound Design JOHN GIBSON

Production Manager ROBYN TEARLE Technical Manager BONNIE BURRILL

Stage Manager and AV Operator AILEEN ROBERTSON Lighting and Sound Operator ROBRECHT GHESQUIERE
Costume Construction DENISE HOSTY AT THE COSTUME STUDIO Properties VICKI SLOW
Set and Costume Design Assistant CAROLINE STEPHEN

The Blonde The Brunette and The Vengeful Redhead is the fifth Auckland Theatre Company production for 2006.
This production was first performed at the Maidment Theatre on August 24, 2006.

The Blonde the Brunette and the Vengeful Redhead is approximately 2 hours long, including a 15 minute interval.
Please remember to switch off all mobile phones, pagers and watch alarms.

LINDAUER



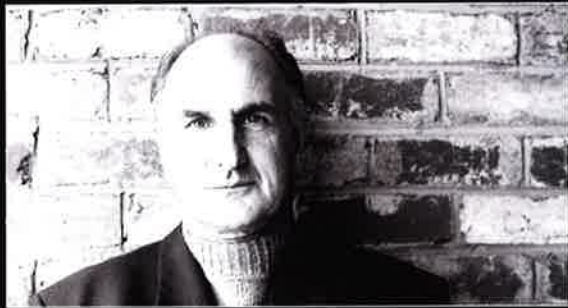
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THE ACTRESS, THE DIRECTOR AND THE BALDING WRITER

ROBERT HEWETT



This story began with an almighty whinge. If it had been measured like an earthquake, it would have shot right off the Richter scale. It came in the form of an email from an actress. Part of it read: '...and I've just won Best Actress, Best Director, been awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award and I'm broke and out of work!' It has always been thus.

We are old friends and a whinge via email, phone or in person is allowed. I'd been having a bit of a lazy time, but this email galvanized me into action. The plan: to write a play my friend could produce and perform, then tuck away in her bag, ready to be pulled out whenever the coffers were getting a bit low.

In the meantime, in another part of Australia, a well known actress, Jacki Weaver - recently married and keen to do a play with her new husband - was looking for a two-hander. I didn't have one, but there was *The Blonde*, as the text had now been christened. It was sent off, with the proviso that certain territories were already spoken for, but if she was interested, she could have the rest of Oz. So now Jacki began trying to haul in a budget. Not an easy thing to do. Then came bad news. My friend, for whom I had written the play had been turned down by the funding bodies. A bitter disappointment. Graciously, she wrote to me and said to give her rights to Jacki.

This was November. By December we had a producer, designer, lighting designer and a theatre booked. A definite opening night loomed, but no money, with rehearsals due to begin in three weeks. Things fell off the rails a little until, finally, the money was in place.

For the next four days we went through the text, breaking it down scene by scene, character by character. I went home to my sister's family at night, booting my nephews out of their bedroom while I hit the computer, so by the end of the four days I could leave the crew with the next working draft. This was a good time. Nothing about the story had changed, but perceptions had. Decisions were made, ideas enriched - a consolidating time for all.

Rehearsals proper began two weeks later. I was in Melbourne 800 kilometres away, so all requests for further re-writes came in via e-mail after rehearsal. I'd work on them that night and send them back, usually in time for the following day. It wasn't till the last week that I went back up to Sydney. This time, when I arrived at the space, a kindergarten hall in the inner Sydney suburb of Newtown, very serious discussions were being held by mature adults sitting on chairs designed for little people.

Backsides very near the ground, knees around the ears, there was no room for airs or graces here. There were problems; they were sorted.

A run through, a pack-up and move to the theatre, a preview, then an opening. This was February. It had only been five months. *The Blonde*, the Director, and the Balding Writer had done it. We opened to a wonderful reaction from both audience and critics and have never looked back. *The Blonde* took the country by storm and to this day Jacki is still touring with the production throughout Australia.

Enjoy the play! Robert Hewett

ROBERT HEWETT BIOGRAPHY

Robert Hewett began his career in the theatre as an actor. He studied at Flinders University before joining the Melbourne Theatre Company in 1972. Throughout the '70's, Robert performed in *Comedy of Errors* and *Henry IV* (Nimrod Theatre), *Godspell* (Playbox) and over twenty productions with the Melbourne Theatre Company including *Equus*, *Last of the Knucklemen* and *The Hothouse*. Robert also worked extensively in film, television and radio, throughout this decade, before switching to a career as a writer. His first play *Just... One Last Dance*, premiered in Auckland at the Mercury Theatre in 1980 and then the Melbourne Theatre Company later that year. The MTC also produced Hewett's second and highly acclaimed play *Gulls* in 1983. For this he received the Green Room Award for Best Play, as well as being short listed in the inaugural Premier's Literary Awards. In 1991 Playbox premiered Hewett's, *The Adman* with Shane Bourne in the title role. This play was later presented in Brisbane and Sydney, and at the Kennedy Centre as part of the Washington International Theatre Festival. *Waking Eve*, with Colette Mann as the beleaguered Eve, also premiered at Playbox in 1997 and later toured to Sydney. In mid 2000 *Goodbye Mrs. Blore* premiered for Hit Productions and toured through Victoria and NSW. A play in one act *Showday* has recently been performed in rural NSW, however Robert's last venture was into the world of cabaret. Writing the book for Robyn Arthur's highly successful one woman show *Taught By Experts*, which had two successful seasons at Chapel Off Chapel. *The Blonde The Brunette and The Vengeful Redhead* starring Jacki Weaver, opened to much acclaim at The Stables, Sydney in February 2004.

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INTERVIEW

HOME OR AWAY?



UP TO 1.5 MILLION NEW ZEALANDERS LIVE AND WORK OVERSEAS. KERRY FOX IS ONE OF THEM. UNTIL RECENTLY DESIGNER KATE HAWLEY WAS ANOTHER. THEY'RE HOME NOW BUT WHAT WILL IT TAKE TO KEEP THEM HERE? THEY TALKED TO AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY'S ROY WARD.

KATE: I'm basing myself from New Zealand. For me there's no question that New Zealand has it over London in terms of general life style and what you can offer your children and how that facilitates you being able to work.

BUT IS IT POSSIBLE TO BASE YOURSELF HERE AND BE CONFIDENT OF STILL WORKING OVERSEAS?

KATE: I think it is now. It's always difficult and there's always the danger of cutting yourself off but I think these days with communications the way they are there are better ways of keeping your contacts and work relationships together.

KERRY: I don't agree. I think it would be virtually impossible to survive as an actor if I lived here. The basis for getting most work is who you know and being in the right place at the right time. If you're here, it's not the right place and it's hardly ever the right time. And there certainly isn't enough money... (laughs) I mean, work here. Sure, you may be able to offer your kids more in terms of space and family support and more fun at school and like-minded friends and great holidays...

IT'S SOUNDING PRETTY GOOD.

KERRY: But if it's going to be a struggle then is it really worth it?

KATE: I'd say that's particularly true of the acting profession. It is slightly different in my field of work. And I don't think you can look at New

Zealand on it's own - I think you have to include Australia and the possibilities there.

KERRY: But when I was living in Australia there was a lot of pressure on me not to appear to be a New Zealander. I lived there for six years and I never felt that I fitted in - it was always a battle. Living in London I feel I can still maintain my identity as a New Zealander. It's not questioned as much as it was in Australia strangely enough.

DO YOU THINK THE PERCEPTION OF NEW ZEALAND AND PARTICULARLY NEW ZEALAND ARTS HAS CHANGED OVER THE YEARS YOU'VE BEEN AWAY?

KERRY: Oh god yeah. Absolutely. It's the films that have made the big difference and the really big one was *Once Were Warriors*.

KATE: A lot of film people in the UK are looking to New Zealand, all saying 'if we could, we'd go over there'. Because of the restrictions they feel at home. There is a perception now that everything is happening here.

KERRY: Absolutely. I'll often hear film people say 'oh yes, we were thinking about shooting this in New Zealand'

WHY? BECAUSE THEY KNOW IT'S CHEAP?

KERRY: Yes. Because of the money. Because of the tax. And because of the potential to be up a mountain shooting and an hour later be at the ocean. Mind you, the conditions aren't always wonderful - they should see the 'studio' we shot *The Ferryman* in....

KATE: But conditions overseas might not be any better.
KERRY: True. We shot *Shallow Grave* in a shed. But we still had a green room, still had a make-up room, still had a toilet. It didn't have a dirt floor.

WHAT BROUGHT YOU HOME TO WORK THIS TIME?

KERRY: I've always wanted to work here but nothing's ever worked out until now. Things have fallen over at the last moment. It's just fortuitous that a number of things have all come together around the same time.

KATE: Which sounds great. You've got this great body of work in New Zealand all at the same time but you couldn't have that consistently every year if you lived here.

IS THERE ANY PARTICULAR APPEAL TO WORKING IN NZ? IN ONE OF THE JANET FRAME AUTOBIOGRAPHIES SHE WRITES ABOUT LIVING IN A COUNTRY WHERE THE MAPS ARE YET TO BE DRAWN SUGGESTING A SENSE OF CREATIVE FREEDOM HERE.

KATE: When I've been back on my occasional trips home I've always felt regenerated and excited by what was happening here. You do feel that things can be done, that it's all possible whereas in England you think 'oh god, the effort of getting something up from scratch is too daunting'. There's so many people doing it and there's so many people you've got to know and be on the right side of.

KERRY: I've always felt frustrated performing in British theatre productions, mainly because of the nature of the actors. A lot of it has to do with lack of experience, lack of worldliness, lack of money

- because they're all so poor they're stuck in their little bed-sits in some horrible suburb of London and never go anywhere.

KATE: The upside of such an established scene is the huge number of resources geared to theatre and film. In my field, for example, there are huge props warehouses - you're not always scrabbling around desperately trying to find the things you need.

WAS IT ALWAYS YOUR AMBITION TO WORK OVERSEAS?

KERRY: I never imagined that I'd work overseas - I never imagined that I'd be working in film. I went to a theatre school - that's how I saw it - and I've always been committed to New Zealand writing and the progression of a New Zealand identity but then with *An Angel at My Table* I had an opportunity and I seized it. It was a complete change of direction for me.

KATE: I always looked to going overseas. There was nowhere here that you could learn to be a theatre designer or a film designer - there was none of that. I did have great experiences working with people here but London had

design schools and many to choose from. And career viability at the end of it. You could actually earn money from doing it.

DID YOU PLAN TO STAY AWAY AS LONG AS YOU DID?

KATE: No. So many people run back after six months and I could have been one of them. But after ten years or so your life becomes so much more ingrained there.

KERRY: And it's complicated, of course, if you find a British partner.

LAST YEAR HELEN CLARK LAUNCHED NEW MOVES DIRECTED PARTLY AT ENCOURAGING EX-PATS TO COME HOME. ANY SIGN OF THAT HAPPENING?

KATE: I've noticed a lot of people around me making moves to come home to New Zealand but maybe that's just normal for where they are in their lives. And I've noticed the advertising - a lot of ads saying come home.

KERRY: Air New Zealand especially.

KATE: Even if Kiwis aren't coming home it seems other nationalities are keen to come here. New Zealand seems much more international than it did when I left. I notice it on the street or on the beach - a much bigger mix of languages being spoken, it is a more interesting place to come home to.

KERRY, WHAT WOULD IT TAKE TO BRING YOU HOME - TO STAY.

KERRY: It would mean me deciding on a different career. And it's not something I haven't thought about - I've got a few plots and schemes that have nothing to do with acting or film. Alex and I have discussed it. But it would take a huge effort from both of us. He's commissioning editor of a political cultural essay magazine - the likes of which you don't really have in this hemisphere. He has a column in *The Guardian*. What's he going to do here? And realistically, as an actor I couldn't survive. It's bad enough in the UK with things like the BBC wages frozen. Here, employers seem to be offering about half of what they used to. It's too hard.

BUT KATE, YOU'RE BACK HERE TO STAY. YOU'RE HERE FOR EVER NOW.

KATE: (laughs) I've spent a fair bit of the time pretending I'm on holiday. I'm still in contact with a film director I've worked with in England and there are two film projects which are possibly going to happen over there... New Zealand's been great to me but I'll go where the work is.

“NEW ZEALAND SEEMS MUCH MORE INTERNATIONAL THAN IT DID WHEN I LEFT. IT IS A MORE INTERESTING PLACE TO COME HOME TO.”

KATE HAWLEY



A BIOGRAPHY KERRY FOX

"A SUPERB EMOTION-CHARGED PERFORMANCE FROM KERRY FOX... SENSUAL... A REAL WOMAN CAUGHT UP IN APPALLING EVENTS."

THE GUARDIAN (for *Cruel & Tender*)



KERRY FOX STUDIED DRAMA IN NEW ZEALAND AND SOON ESTABLISHED HERSELF AS AN ACTOR BOTH HERE AND IN AUSTRALIA, BEFORE HEADING TO THE UK. SHE LANDED SEVERAL CHALLENGING ROLES ON STAGE AND FILM AND SOON DEVELOPED A REPUTATION FOR PLAYING FIERCELY INTELLIGENT, INDEPENDENT-MINDED WOMEN.

Kerry first garnered attention for her exceptional portrayal of New Zealand author Janet Frame in the seminal Jane Campion directed biopic *An Angel at My Table* (1990) adapted from Frame's award-winning autobiography. She went on to earn praise for her turn as the younger sibling of a writer (Lisa Harrow) unaware of the path of destruction that follows in her wake in the melodrama *The Last Days of Chez Nous* (1992). She gave an acclaimed performance as a radicalised white South African in *Friends* (1993) and as a greedy medical student (opposite Ewan McGregor) in her breakthrough role in *Shallow Grave* (1994). Throughout the 1990's Kerry continued to demonstrate her remarkable range playing a seductive lesbian in the British TV production *A Village*

Affair and as a sheep farmer in Michael Blakemore's *Country Life* (both 1994), a version of Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* set in the Australian Outback.

Moving back to the small screen, Kerry acted in the HBO melodrama *The Affair* (1995), portraying an English Officer's wife enjoying a forbidden romance with a black American soldier during WWII. In the surreal Canadian-produced feature film *The Hanging Garden* (1997), she was a bride-to-be eagerly awaiting the return of her gay brother. That same year, she was briefly, but effectively, seen as a foreign journalist covering the Balkan conflict in *Welcome to Sarajevo*.

Kerry's stage career reflects her independent spirit and incorporates contemporary revivals of classics

(she made her London stage debut in a 1997 production of Genet's *The Maids*) with the best of new writing *I Am Yours* (1998) and *Flame* (2000). She has appeared in the distinctive plays of world class UK company *Shared Experience* (blending physical and text based theatre) at The New Ambassadors and in 2004 Fox dominated the stage as Amelia in Martin Crimp's *Cruel and Tender*, a play destroying the moral credibility of war. The production received extraordinary reviews from several publications including The Guardian: "A superb emotion-charged performance from Kerry Fox... sensual... a real woman caught up in appalling events".

In 2000, Kerry came roaring back to the big screen with a blistering turn as an actress engaging in a sexual relationship with a relative stranger in *Intimacy*.

Adapted from Hanif Kureishi's stories and marking the English-language debut of director Patrice Chereau, *Intimacy* was screened to acclaim at the 2001 Sundance and Berlin Film Festivals, Kerry was awarded The Silver Bear Best Actress Award in Berlin for the role.

In 2005, Kerry acted in the film *Rag Tale* - a satire delving into the seedy world of tabloid journalism and is the first of an 'amorality trilogy' written and directed by Mary McGuckian. In 2005 Fox worked on the second installment, *Intervention* (a.k.a *Funny Farm*), currently in post production. In the last year Fox has worked on two other films including the kiwi horror flick *The Ferryman* opposite John Rhys-Davies and directed by Chris Graham (*Sione's Wedding*); and as Catherine de Medici in the Discovery Channel's first feature-length film *Nostradamus*.



An Angel At My Table



Cruel and Tender



Intimacy

AWARDS

- THE SILVER BEAR FOR BEST ACTRESS, BERLIN FILM FESTIVAL, INTIMACY
- THE GOLDEN BEAR FOR BEST FILM, BERLIN FILM FESTIVAL, INTIMACY
- IN COMPETITION AT CANNES FILM FESTIVAL, WELCOME TO SARAJEVO
- NOMINATED FOR BEST ACTRESS, CABLE ACE AWARDS, THE AFFAIR
- DINARD FESTIVAL OF BRITISH FILMS AWARD FOR ACTING AND BEST FILM, SHALLOW GRAVE
- NOMINATED FOR BEST ACTRESS, AUSTRALIAN FILM CRITICS AWARD, COUNTRY LIFE
- BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS, ASIA-PACIFIC FILM FESTIVAL, LAST DAYS OF CHEZ NOUS
- SPECIAL JURY MENTION CANNES FILM FESTIVAL CAMERA D'OR, FRIENDS
- MOST POPULAR FILM, SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL, AN ANGEL AT MY TABLE
- SPECIAL JURY PRIZE, VENICE FILM FESTIVAL, AN ANGEL AT MY TABLE
- ELVIRA NOTARI AWARD FOR BEST PERFORMANCE, VENICE FILM FESTIVAL, AN ANGEL AT MY TABLE
- CRITICS' CHOICE AWARD, TORONTO FILM FESTIVAL, AN ANGEL AT MY TABLE
- BEST ACTRESS, SAN SEBASTIAN FILM FESTIVAL, AN ANGEL AT MY TABLE
- BEST FILM, BELGIAN FILM AWARDS, AN ANGEL AT MY TABLE
- BEST ACTRESS, NEW ZEALAND FILM AWARDS, AN ANGEL AT MY TABLE



ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

COLIN MCCOLL

One of New Zealand's leading theatre directors, Colin co-founded Taki Rua Theatre in 1983 and was Artistic Director of Downstage Theatre in Wellington, 1984-1992. He has led Auckland Theatre Company as Artistic Director since July 2003.

Colin has directed for the Norwegian National Theatre and the Dutch National Theatre, as well as most leading New Zealand and Australian theatre companies. Colin won Best Director for Auckland Theatre Company's 2001 production of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* and has won Best Director of the Chapman Tripp Theatre Awards several times - including his production *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* in 2002.

For Auckland Theatre Company Colin has directed *Doubt*, *Disgrace*, *The Duchess of Malfi*, *Equus*, *Caligula*, *Goldie*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *Middle Age Spread*, *Waiting for Godot*, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, *Serial Killers*, *The Seagull*, *Uncle Vanya*, *Skylight*, *Daughters of Heaven* and *Honour*.

Opera directing credits include *Quartet* (NZ International Arts Festival 2004), *La Boheme* (Wellington City Opera), *The Marriage of Figaro* and *The Prodigal Child* for the NBR NZ Opera.



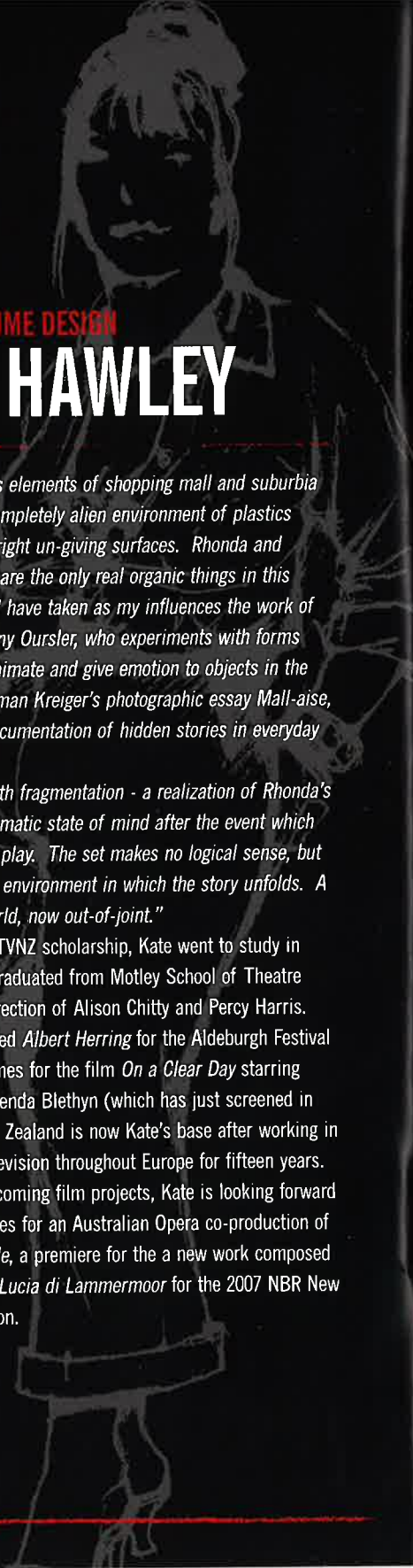
SET AND COSTUME DESIGN

KATE HAWLEY

"The set - with its elements of shopping mall and suburbia - is a familiar but completely alien environment of plastics, chromes and hard bright un-giving surfaces. Rhonda and the other characters are the only real organic things in this alien environment. I have taken as my influences the work of installation artist Tony Oursler, who experiments with forms and technology to animate and give emotion to objects in the everyday. Also, Herman Kreiger's photographic essay Mall-aise, a tragically funny documentation of hidden stories in everyday mall life.

The play deals with fragmentation - a realization of Rhonda's fragmented and traumatic state of mind after the event which is at the core of the play. The set makes no logical sense, but is there to create an environment in which the story unfolds. A boringly familiar world, now out-of-joint."

After receiving a TVNZ scholarship, Kate went to study in London where she graduated from Motley School of Theatre Design under the direction of Alison Chitty and Percy Harris. Kate recently designed *Albert Herring* for the Aldeburgh Festival and designed costumes for the film *On a Clear Day* starring Peter Mullan and Brenda Blethyn (which has just screened in New Zealand). New Zealand is now Kate's base after working in Opera, Film and Television throughout Europe for fifteen years. As well as some upcoming film projects, Kate is looking forward to designing costumes for an Australian Opera co-production of *Love of a Nightingale*, a premiere for the a new work composed by Richard Hill and *Lucia di Lammermoor* for the 2007 NBR New Zealand Opera season.



LIGHTING DESIGN

PHILLIP DEXTER



"As we develop a greater understanding of the human brain we see that, apart from vision, light plays a large part in many of our biological systems. With this knowledge light is not only used to illuminate but can manipulate. Light can subliminally control how we feel, alter emotions and influence what we concentrate on. In some situations it is used to direct us, keep us alert or increase our productivity. In the world of the shopping mall retailers manipulate where we look and how we feel about products and environments. Light is used to stimulate us and build tension, to stress us out and, for some, turn retail therapy into a frenzied attack. The characters in this play exist in some shape or form within the mall; that home away from home, where manipulation and misinformation rule supreme. Notice in the mall the use of light to direct, to suspend time; to keep us shopping forever. Next time you are in your supermarket notice how light makes things look better than they are, brightness makes you alert, lifts your heart rate and contrast tells you to buy all those things that were not on the list. Beware the manipulation!"

Phillip Dexter has designed for several Auckland Theatre Company productions including *Doubt*, *Equus* and *Up For Grabs*. He has also held senior posts in lighting at prestigious London theatres including Hampstead Theatre, The Royal College of Music, The Opera Conservatory, The Royal Opera House and the recently opened Stratford Circus multiple auditorium performance complex.

VISUAL DESIGN

STEVE LATTY



"The nature of a one person play dictates a certain restraint in terms of any extra audio visual content. With this play the video or visual effects have been designed to add layers that reflect the psychological states of the each of the characters. In some instances the images are small and grotesque, at other times bland and observational. One of the challenges for the design team has been to create opportunities for these projections or transmissions, with in a static set. Aside from monitors and other projections we are using a state of the art Holo screen that behaves like an optical theatrical gauze, it delivers great saturated images and then disappears."

Steve's background is as a director of photography/cameraman in film and television. Last year was his first experience working behind the scenes in theatre, when he did the audio visual design for *Disgrace*.

SOUND DESIGN

JOHN GIBSON



*"Into the shiny happy world of the suburban mall a disaster occurs. The sound world of *The Blonde*, *The Brunette* and *The Vengeful Redhead* is the world all around us disorientated by a sensibility in deep shock. We wanted to spatially reflect this in the sound design. Different locations are filtered through recurring themes of pulse and panic that don't quite make sense till the play unfolds."*

Last year held many theatrical joys for John, working on *Equus*, *The Duchess of Malfi* and *Disgrace* for Auckland Theatre Company. This year he is thrilled to be working on this project, and later in the year The New Zealand Post Season of *Sweet Charity*. In 2007 John will be working with Michael Hodgson on the sound design for the New Zealand exhibit at the Prague Quadrennial .



LINE

15%
EVERYTH

MALL LIFE

Photography by South Vermining

The Blonde, The Brunette and The Vengeful Redhead is set largely within a shopping centre or 'mall'. Defined as "a group of stores planned, owned and managed as a unit", many argue that malls have become one of life's major battle-grounds. A recent article in North & South Magazine begged the question: Are malls blights on the urban landscape, cheating us of real shopping variety with their samey blandness, ripping the corner-store heart out of our communities? Or simply suburbia's new village square: comfortable, safe places to spend time with friends and family as well as convenient one-stop shops? Below are some particularly interesting quotes and statistics taken from the article that shed some fluorescent light on the culture of Mall Life in New Zealand.

- ✂ If all the shopping centres in the country were put together, minus car parks they'd take up 172 hectares - 57 Eden Parks or four small dairy farms.
- ✂ Westfield is the world's biggest mall chain, and its 11 New Zealand malls get almost 70 million visits a year. Last year the Property Council counted 143 shopping centres nationally.
- ✂ Christchurch is our most malled city, with 0.84sqm of enclosed shopping centre space per person, followed by Auckland's 0.57sqm and Wellington's 0.47sqm. New Zealand's overall mall-to-population ratio of 0.39sqm

pales against the United States' 2sqm - but is roughly double that of the United Kingdom.

- ✂ By industry estimates New Zealanders do 16 to 18 percent of our total retail spending (excluding car buying) in shopping centres. In 2005 this totalled \$8.1 billion to \$9.1 billion - about \$2000 each - of our total \$50.5 billion annual retail splurge.
- ✂ New Zealand's total annual retail spend almost doubled between 1996 and 2005, from \$26.6 billion to \$50.5 billion excluding cars, while our population rose only nine percent.
- ✂ When New Zealanders were quizzed about their recreation habits in the mid 1970s, shopping didn't figure. By the end of the 1980s, a Hilary Commission survey found shopping was the second-equal most popular activity away from home, behind visiting friends/family and on par with going for a drive for pleasure.
- ✂ In a 2004 survey of 1067 Christchurch shoppers by Lincoln University marketing senior lecturer Charley Lamb, more females (64 percent) than males (40 percent) reported they shopped for relaxation and enjoyment. Asian residents were most likely to shop for relaxation, followed by new European residents and Pacific Islanders, with Maori least likely. Overall, most shoppers were under 20 and earning less than \$20,000 a year, and the next biggest cohort was new retirees.



IN THE LEISURE CENTRE CATEGORY, VISITING A SHOPPING CENTRE WAS PREFERRED OVER BEACHES/LAKES/RIVERS, RESTAURANTS, PARKS, SPORTS CENTRES, CINEMAS AND ART GALLERIES.

✎ It can't be argued that malls don't create hundreds of retail jobs. There's no mall tally but nationally 325,000 people - 20 percent of New Zealand's workforce - work in retail. However, an analysis by urban planner Mike Cullen found Auckland's traditional town centres generate four non-retails jobs (for example, in the business service sector) for every retail job, whereas malls dominating town centres, like Westfield West City in Henderson, generate only two non-retail jobs for every retail job.

What the critics say:

✎ When Austrian émigré Victor Gruen designed the world's first mall in Edina Minneapolis, he had a socialist utopian vision. Explains historian Ian Brailsford, "He saw malls as a place where civic and commercial activities could combine, creating a new community in the suburbs." Gruen planned to integrate parks, schools and apartment blocks with his bustling retail centrepiece, but this never came to pass. Half a century later, mall critics say this lack of integration means malls can't be true community hubs.

✎ John Hunt, Auckland University professor of architecture and convener of Auckland's independent Urban Design Panel, which vets new buildings says: "Although malls do offer something in terms of community, they cannot actually become town centres in the full sense... They're presenting themselves as town centres because they want to capture people for longer. If they offer libraries and other amenities they're doing it primarily out of a commercial motive."

✎ Laura Downey, a 27-year-old English language teacher from Wellington says: "I hate malls because they show a commitment to a lifestyle I find repugnant yet know to be a dangerous opiate. They promote pathological shopping - people greedily filling spiritual cavities and finding an outlet for restlessness... and the erasure of genuine individualism, diversity, even meaning, as every facet of culture is branded and commodified - teens wearing brand new vintage style T-shirts with the logo of an iconic anarchist band so that they might conform." >



NOT ONLY CAN THEY NEVER SUPPORT A GENUINE COMMUNITY, SAY THE CRITICS, MALLS AND OTHER BIG RETAIL DEVELOPMENTS OFTEN HURT THE COMMUNITY LIFE FED BY TRADITIONAL TOWN CENTRES AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SHOPS.

Since 2002, Warren Snow has headed the Auckland-based sustainable development consultancy group Envision, which helps local retailer groups to battle high-powered big-box developments such as The Warehouse and Briscoes, he says: "It's a transfer of community control to corporate control, with profits going almost always overseas to shareholders who don't care about the locals".

The counter argument:

Stephen Costley, AMP property portfolio general manager doesn't buy the argument that retail malls per se have caused the demise of family business, he says: "Businesses with better capital bases have been the businesses that expanded, and we see them through New Zealand as chain stores".

Westfield's chief John Widdup estimates 75 percent of his malls' tenants are New Zealand owned businesses, and the chains 10 to 15 year \$1 billion development programme launched in 2000, will eventually generate 7700 direct construction and 5600 retails jobs. What's more, he claims traditional shops actually benefit from the inflated consumer demand malls generate.

What the shoppers say:

Even if a mall isn't a proper community, for many it's still a shopper's paradise.

Elizabeth Webley, a non-conflicted Christchurch shopper says: "How are the companies making these things going to make money if they don't promote this cool image? It's up to people to get what they can afford. If you don't want to use your common sense you can't really hold Sony or

Apple or Westfield responsible. If you don't take it to the extremes why not have a little retail therapy? There are people with serious problems who use shopping to fill a gap, but hopefully the more well-adjusted people know it'll give you a little lift but won't fill the gap."

Danielle Boettcher, a vivacious 23-year-old marketing co-ordinator and self-confessed Auckland mall-rat says: "Every payday I have to go late night shopping, I have to buy something." Retail therapy, Boettcher reckons, "is the ultimate feel-better-about-yourself. When I broke up last time, shopping was just a must: you want to get the sexiest, brightest clothes, you want to show, look I'm bright and happy and screw you".

Doris, a small neatly dressed 85-year-old, sits in the same black armless seat, near Foodtown (St Lukes) for three or four hours most days (she doesn't want her surname published because she's worried what her neighbours will think): "It's my second home, I've got nowhere else to go."

Rose Vesey, also 85, a bustling retired social worker with pink tinted glasses and ginger hair who visits St Lukes five days a week. Unlike Doris, Rose has an active life outside the mall — she belongs to several clubs and nurses her husband, who's recently had a stroke: "It's handy and you can never be lonely". There's even a hint of romance. Doris: "There's another man who sits here regularly; he's in his late 80's. Sometimes my son takes him home when he's got lots of shopping. The girls say to me, 'There's your boyfriend'."

"It's no surprise the mall is such an easy target for american self-loathing. It's a lot like television in that way: another totally fake environment that attempts to pass itself off as a true reflection of who we are and what we want. [The mall] could be much better - more vivid, intelligent, adventurous, entertaining, imaginative, alive with human quest for art and beauty and truth. But its not. It's the mall."

- Paco Underhill, *Call of the Mall*



WHAT'S ON IN THEATRES AROUND THE COUNTRY?

AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY

Maidment Theatre

28 September - 21 October

THE OCEAN STAR

Michael Galvin

With a keen sense of the absurd, Galvin has crafted a darkly comic take on the usual father-son, brother-brother relationships. Your own family never seemed so sane.

SILO THEATRE, AUCKLAND

18 August - 23 September

TAKE ME OUT

Richard Greenberg

Sex, celebrity, friendship, bigotry and the thrill of the game. When sport wrestles with its final taboo.

Herald Theatre

22 August - 16 September

THE CASE OF KATHERINE MANSFIELD

Catherine Downes

A celebration of New Zealand's most controversial writer, from the age of eighteen to her premature death at thirty four.

CENTREPOINT THEATRE, PALMERSTON NORTH

14 September - 14 October

THE UNDERARM

David Geary and Justin Gregory

Kiwi Colin and Aussie Don are brothers, from a family torn apart by the most disgraceful episode in Trans-Tasman history: the infamous Underarm Delivery. 25 years on, they meet for a cricket test at the Basin Reserve to put on trial the man who ruined their lives.

DOWNSTAGE THEATRE, WELLINGTON

12 - 16 September

D'ARRANGED MARRIAGE

Those Indian Guys

This smash hit comedy brings Bollywood back to Wellington - D'Arranged Marriage tells the story of a young Indian boy called Sanjay who spends his life avoiding the issue of an arranged marriage.

21 September - 7 October

THE BLONDE, THE BRUNETTE AND THE VENGEFUL REDHEAD

Robert Hewett

Everyone has their own story to tell about the day that Rhonda Russell, deserted wife and mother, had a meltdown in the shopping Mall. But who knows where the truth lies? Kerry Fox returns to New Zealand for this tour de force one woman show.

18 October - 4 November

NGA TANGATA TOA

Hone Kouka

Kouka has sculpted a work reaching to the very heart of the obsessive nature of revenge. '... elemental passions and the dark tragic action of lust, murder, love and long-simmering desire for utu unfolds.' Dominion Post.

CIRCA THEATRE WELLINGTON

29 July - 2 September

THE RIVALS

Richard Brinsley Sheridan

A comedy of mistaken identities, and misconceptions of love, the play satirises the trappings of marriage and wealth - with a flair that has kept the play fresh for over 200 years.

9 September - 7 October

PICTURE PERFECT

Ken Duncum

Another cutting edge dissection of life and love from the prize winning pen of Ken Duncum.

COURT THEATRE CHRISTCHURCH

12 August - 9 September

BACKWARDS IN HIGH HEELS

Stuart Hoar

Backwards in High Heels (Ginger Rogers did everything Fred Astaire did but backwards and in high heels...) is a twenty-first century comedy of manners.

26 August - 14 October 2006

FLAGONS AND FOXTROTS

Ross Gumbley

Share in the nostalgic celebration as we journey back to a 60's New Zealand dance hall for an evening of fun, laughter and rampant hormones.

FORTUNE THEATRE, DUNEDIN

1 - 23 September

THE WITCHES

by Roald Dahl, adapted by David Wood

A real witch gets the same pleasure from squelching a child as you get from eating a plateful of strawberries and thick cream! Funny, wise, deliciously disgusting... a play for the whole family.

6 - 21 October

MY HEART IS BATHED IN BLOOD

Michelanne Forster

Based on a true story - this tragedy juxtaposes the fabulous music of the 1950's and the timeless music of Bach, exposing the hearts of the two lovers: one a female house surgeon and the other a medical registrar.



AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY STAFF - 2006

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Associate Director Artistic & Literary Roy Ward **Education & 2econd Unit Coordinator** Lynne Cardy
Associate Director Production Robyn Tearle **Senior Stage Manager** Aileen Robertson **Technical Manager** Bonnie Burrill
Marketing & Sponsorship Manager Michael Adams **Marketing & Publicity Co-ordinator** Elissa Downey **Partnerships Co-ordinator** Anna Connell
ATC Intern Anna Kupfer **Business Manager** Alex Gortchinski **Box Office & Audience Liaison Manager** Alison Reid **Box Office Assistant** Helen Ross
Receptionist Sue East **Photography** John McDermott

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Theatre Cat Tybalt

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Downstage Theatre Society Rep Rachel Underwood



THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
MAIDMENT THEATRE

MAIDMENT THEATRE STAFF

Director Paul Minifie **Business Manager** Margo Athy **Box Office Manager** Blair Cooper **Technical Manager** Nik Janiurek
Front of House Managers John Humphries and Will Gaisford **Maidment Technician** Rob McDonald

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Andrew and Lee from TOUCH/CAST NEXT Becky Ehlers at Lunar Essence Craig Bond and Mark Dalton
David and Allan at Crowcroft Construction for metal work and modification David Inns and The New Zealand International Arts Festival
Gayle Jackson at Unitec School of Performing and Screen Arts Gene Hollins-Weary for video appearance
Hera Dunleavy, Alison Reid and Cameron Rhodes for voice-overs James MacKenzie at Oceania Audio John Moore at Cambrian Plastics
Kathy Tipler at the Bolton Hotel, Wellington Lance at Lamps Exclusively Ltd Lee Elsmore at Heritage Tiles Morgan Dalton at Atrium on Elliott
Nicola Beaston at Mei + Picchi Nicola Shephard, Robyn Langwell and Virginia Larson at North & South Magazine
Peter at PSP Plastics Sam and Sarah from Chagall Hair Design for Kerry's hair Scott Venning for the mall photography Sonali at Screenshot
Selecon Lighting Steve Crowcroft and Bryce Gibson from The Edge Steve Pryor at Xytec Lighting Tony Rabbit Zambesi Zayne at Purflex

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AUCKLAND
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IN ASSOCIATION WITH ATC PATRONS

THE OCEAN STAR

MAIDMENT THEATRE SEPT 28 - OCT 21

WRITER **MICHAEL GALVIN** DIRECTOR **ROY WARD**
DESIGNERS **MARK McENTYRE PHILLIP DEXTER KASIA POL**
WITH **ADAM GARDINER GREG JOHNSON DEAN O'GORMAN**

A comic new take on the usual father-son, brother-brother relationships.

Ted may or may not be suffering from an incurable disease. Jay seems to be nursing a terrible resentment. Then there's the small matter of Brian's agoraphobia...

Brian soon learns that dysfunction, like charity, begins at home.

With a keen sense for the absurd, Michael Galvin has crafted an exquisitely comic play.

Your own family never seemed so sane.

**"GALVIN'S WRITING IS SHARP, CLEVER, ICONOCLASTIC,
WITH AN INSPIRED SENSE OF THE ABSURD, A FINE
EAR FOR THE SMART ONE-LINER AND SNAPPY,
WITTY DIALOGUE."**

Frances Edmond, Listener (for New Gold Dream)

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