

AUSTRALIA / NZ

DRAMA

# BLACK TIES

BY JOHN HARVEY & TAINUI TUKIWAHO

ILBIJERRI Theatre Company & Te Rēhia Theatre

## EDUCATION RESOURCE



Image: Garth Oriander

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# SYNOPSIS

Two families, two cultures ... too much!

For Maori corporate hotshot Hera and Aboriginal consultancy entrepreneur Kane it was love at first sight. Ambitious and career focused, Kane and Hera have their perfect future all mapped out. But there is one thing they can't control ... their families!

As the biggest mob get worked up for the blackest wedding ever, reality is sinking in. Fast! Will this international love story bring two strong cultures together? Or will it blow Hera and Kane's world apart?

# CREDITS

**Written by** John Harvey & Tainui Tukiwaho

**Directors** Rachael Maza & Tainui Tukiwaho

**Set Designer** Jacob Nash

**Composition & Musical Direction** Brendon Boney

**Lighting Designer** Jane Hakaraia

**AV Designer** James Henry

**Sound Designer** Laughton Kora

**Costume Designer** Te Ura Hoskins

**Performers** Jack Charles, Mark Coles Smith, Lana Garland, Tawhirangi Macpherson, Lisa Maza, Tuakoi Ohia, Brady Peeti, Tainui Tukiwaho, Dalara Williams, Dion Williams

**Band** Brendon Boney, Mayella Dewis, Laughton Kora

**Producers** Nina Bonacci, Amber Curreen, Laila Thaker

**Production Manager** Nick Glen

**AV Mentor** Sean Bacon

**Audio Engineer** Jake Luther

**AV Operator** Sean Bacon, James Henry

**Stage Manager** Casey Norton

**Assistant Stage Manager** Nazaree Dickerson

**Company Manager** Jamara Maza

**Technical Consultant** Paul Lim

**Design Assistant** Hannah Murphy

# BIOGRAPHIES

## ILBIJERRI THEATRE COMPANY

ILBIJERRI is Australia's leading and longest running First Nations theatre company. The company creates, presents and tours powerful and engaging theatre creatively controlled by First Nations artists that gives voice to their cultures. Born from community, ILBIJERRI remains grounded in telling the stories of what it means to be First Nations in Australia today. ILBIJERRI supports self-determination for First Nations voices through programs that foster emerging First Nations theatre makers and industry professionals. ILBIJERRI works to reclaim First Nations ways of working within the Australian arts sector, through programs and projects grounded in deep listening with and for community and country. They engage purposefully and promote discussion around key issues facing First Nations community. There is a growing hunger for ILBIJERRI's work across Australia and around the world, and they are committed to continuing to develop meaningful relationships with audiences through sharing the stories they are uniquely placed to tell.

## TE RĒHIA THEATRE

Established in 2012, Te Rēhia Theatre is a proudly Māori theatre company, championing Māori playwrights, tikanga Māori arts practice and the presentation of diverse stories. Te Rēhia Theatre, named in honour of the atua of leisure is led by Amber Curreen and Tainui Tukiwaho based at Te Pou – The Auckland home of Māori Theatre. The company is passionate about te reo Māori (the Māori language) in theatre and the exploration of innovative ways of telling Māori stories.

## JOHN HARVEY (SAIBAI ISLAND)

### WRITER

John Harvey is the Creative Director of *Brown Cabs* and is a producer, writer and director across theatre and film. He is the writer of the Green Room nominated and highly acclaimed *Heart Is A Wasteland*. He has been a recipient of the Footscray Community Arts Centre Writer-In-Residence and in 2018 he was a recipient of the Malthouse Theatre Sydney Myer Fund Tower Residency creating a new theatre work. In the same year he was a recipient of Creative Victoria Creators Fund. He currently has writing commissions with Malthouse Theatre, ILBIJERRI Theatre Company and has a new work in development for Brown Cabs. In 2018 he directed new theatre work *A Little Piece Of Heaven* for Orana Arts. He has many accomplishments in film including producing feature film *Spear*, being a producer on *The Warriors* TV series and has produced numerous First Nation short dramas. He has also directed documentary and short film narratives for screen.

## TAINUI TUKIWAHO (TE ARAWA / TUHOE)

### WRITER & DIRECTOR

Tainui Tukiwaho has been a company director, producer, director, actor and writer of Māori theatre for a number of organisations over the last decade, leading Te Rēhia theatre, Takirua and Te Pou Theatre. His most recent directing credits include *Astroman*, presented in partnership by Te Rēhia Theatre and Auckland Theatre Company, Māori language play *He TūrūMāu* (2018), Albert Belz's *Cradle Song* (2018). He has worked with Albert Belz as director and co-creator over many projects since 2008 developing their distinctive comedic style.

# BIOGRAPHIES

## RACHAEL MAZA (MERIAM MER / YIDINJI)

### DIRECTOR

Rachael Maza is widely known for her wealth of acting, directing and dramaturgical experience across the Australian film, television and theatre industry. Most notably, the AFI (Australian Film Institute) award-winning *Radiance*, stage production of *The Sapphires*, as presenter for ABC's *Message Stick* and acting coach for multi-award winning *Rabbit Proof Fence*. Her performances have also been acknowledged with a Green Room Award and Sydney Theatre Critics Circle Award. Maza first worked with ILBIJERRI Theatre Company in 1992, as director of *Stolen*, and in 2008 joined the company as Artistic Director. Since then she has directed iconic works such as *Jack Charles V The Crown* (2010), *Foley* (2011) and *Which Way Home* (2017). Her contribution has been recognised through multiple awards, including the Touring Legend Drover Award (2017) and the Australia Council of the Arts Award for Theatre (2019), as well as an Honorary Doctorate of Performing Arts from Edith Cowan University (2019).

## JACOB NASH (MURRI)

### SET DESIGNER

Jacob Nash graduated from the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) Design Course in 2005. In 2010 he designed the set for Bangarra Dance Theatre's *of earth & sky* and received a Green Room Award for Best Design in Dance. He was appointed Artist-in-Residence at Bangarra the following year and is now Head of Design. Jacob received a Green Room Award nomination for his unique set design for Bangarra's season of *Belong* (2011) and has designed sets for each of their annual productions since. In 2019 he was awarded a Helpmann Award for Best Scenic Design for his powerful and evocative set in *Bennelong*. Nash was the specialist production designer and creature designer on the critically acclaimed sci-fi TV drama *Cleverman* season one and production designer and creative designer for season two.

## BRENDON BONEY (WIRADJURI / GAMILARO)

### COMPOSER & MUSICAL DIRECTOR

Brendon Boney has been a recording and performing artist touring the world as part of the act *Microwave Jenny* for the past decade. He has composed for and performed at festivals such as Bluesfest, Woodford Folk Festival, Festival of the Sun and The Aussie BBQ (UK). His theatre credits include *Dubboo* (Bangarra Dance Theatre – David Page Fellowship), *Winyanboga Yurringa* (Belvoir Theatre – Composer and Sound Designer) and *Black Cockatoo Ensemble* (Assistant Music Supervisor and Sound Design).

## JAMES HENRY (YUWAALARAAY / YORTA YORTA)

### AV DESIGN

James Henry is involved in many aspects of the music industry: from singer/songwriter to sound engineer to musical director. His diverse skill set has seen him perform as a guitarist on the Black Arm Band tour of the UK and as a choir member and guitarist as part of Archie Roach's *Into the Bloodstream* tour. His composition skills have attracted commissions from City of Melbourne to compose for experimental medias. Henry was also musical director of *Tanderrum* for the 2014 Melbourne Festival, and AFL's *Dreamtime at the 'G* performances. He has also worked with ILBIJERRI as sound designer for the 2017 touring production of *Coranderrk*.

## JANE HAKARAIA (NGĀTI RAUKAWA KI TE TONGA)

### LIGHTING DESIGNER

Jane Hakaraia is a freelance theatre and TV designer. Theatre companies she works with regularly include Auckland Theatre Company, Bullet Heart Club, Silo Theatre and Massive Company. In theatre she is known primarily for lighting design but, in the last few years, has expanded into set design. She also works with Blue Bach Productions as Art Director on their TV offerings and is currently working with Māoriland Film Festival in the design of their outdoor spaces at the Māoriland Hub in Otaki. This year she will be working with all her favourite theatre companies, including Te Rēhia and Auckland Theatre Companies on *Astroman* and Silo Theatre on *Wild Dogs Under My Skirt*, both for Auckland Arts Festival. She will also work on *Half the Sky* and *Like a River, I Disagree with Massive*, and *Owls Do Cry* with Red Leap Theatre. She has a degree in design from Unitec and undertook an honours degree in design at AUT.

## LAUGHTON KORA (NGĀI TŪHOE / NGĀTI PŪKEKO)

### SOUND DESIGNER & BAND MEMBER

Laughton Kora has been playing music since the age of six, appearing on stage as part of his father's band until he was 17 years old, when he won Smokefree rockquest. His band, *Aunty Beatrice*, toured New Zealand and released a single. He moved to Queenstown and formed *Soul Charge* with members KP (Sunshine Sound System) and P Digsss (Shapeshifter). In 2001 he headed to Wellington and formed *Kora* (2003 – 12) with his brothers. He toured extensively with *Kora* to Australia, England, Ireland, Scotland, Japan, Singapore and the USA. Since 2012 he has forged ahead with his own solo project and has also formed duo *Neon Ninja* with Andy Keys (ex-Opshop).

Kora attended NZ Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School – and has a bachelor's degree in Performing Arts. He featured on series two of *Songs from the Inside*, with Don McGlashan, Anika Moa and Annie Crummer, and starred in TVNZ's drama series *Coverband*. He has sound designed *Amadeus* and *Astroman* with Auckland Theatre Company.

# BIOGRAPHIES

## JACK CHARLES (BOON WURRUNG / DJA DJA WURRUNG) PERFORMER

Uncle Jack Charles is a beloved and respected elder, actor, musician, potter, writer and gifted performer. He is acknowledged as the grandfather of Aboriginal theatre in Australia and co-founded the first Aboriginal theatre company, Nindethana Theatre, with Bob Maza in 1972. Charles' acting career spans over six decades and has touched many across the globe. He has showcased his work in many nations including Ireland, Japan, New Zealand and the USA. His early career highlights include *Cradle of Hercules* (Old Tote Theatre); *Ben Hall* and *Rush* (ABC TV); and the feature film *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith*.

In 2019 Charles memoir, *Born-Again Blakfella*, was released by Random House, and tells his extraordinary life story. *Jack Charles V The Crown*, co-written by Charles and John Romeril, directed by Rachael Maza, was first produced by ILBIJERRI Theatre Company in 2010. The almost entirely autobiographical work Charles was able to bring the lived experience of being a member of the Stolen Generation to the world, with empathy and charm. The production won the Drovers Award for Best as well as a Helpmann Award for Best Regional Touring Production in 2012. His recent credits include *Gods of Wheat Street*, *Cleverman*, *Black Comedy*, *Play School* (ABC TV); the feature film *Pan* (Berlanti Productions, RatPac-Dune Entertainment); and *Wolf Creek* (Stan).

In 2009 Charles was awarded the Tudawali Award at the Message Sticks Festival, honouring his lifetime contribution to Indigenous media. He was the recipient of a Green Room Lifetime Achievement Award in 2014 and in 2016 was named Victorian Senior Australian of the Year. Most recently, Charles was awarded the 2019 Red Ochre Award at the National Indigenous Arts Awards, a prestigious honour that recognises his outstanding contributions to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts in Australia and abroad.

## MARK COLES SMITH (NYIKINA) PERFORMER

Mark Coles Smith is a Helpmann Award winner for Leah Purcell's *The Drover's Wife* and has twice been nominated at the AACTA Awards, for *Last Cab to Darwin* and *Pawno*. He also won a Film Critics' Circle of Australia Award for *Last Cab to Darwin*. His most recent screen credits include Channel Nine's *Halifax*, ABC TV's *Les Norton*, *KGB* and Shaun Micallef's *Mad as Hell* and Lucy Durack's writing debut, *Lift*. He also presented the ABC documentary *Will Australia Ever Have a Black Prime Minister?* An in-demand voice artist, he voiced the 2018 character of Crash in *Call of Duty Black Ops 4*, for PlayStation.

Coles Smith works as a sound designer under the alias Kalaji, which is a Nyikina word for 'whirlwind'. His first major experimental work, *Night River*, played at the 2019 YIRRAMBOI Festival in Melbourne. He has produced across an array of genres and projects, including the sound for *Which Way Home* (ILBIJERRI Theatre Company 2018). Recent theatre acting credits include *Bottomless*(fortyfivedownstairs); both seasons of *Bliss* (Malthouse and Belvoir); and *The Man with the Iron Neck* (Legs on the Wall Theatre Company).

Previous screen credits include the short film *Miro*, *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, US series *Hunters: Old School*, opposite Bryan Brown and Sam Neill, *The Gods of Wheat Street*, American comedy *Modern Family*, *Hard Rock Medical* and *Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries*, among others.

## LANA GARLAND (TE ATIWA) PERFORMER

Lana Garland has been working as an actor for over 20 years both in theatre and on screen in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Appearing on television in Aotearoa every evening for seven years doing *Food in a Minute* is probably what she is best known for and she has worked with Te Rēhia theatre presenting the highly popular musical drama *Raising The Titanics* at festivals throughout New Zealand. What excites her most is the potential of theatre and storytelling to affirm, reflect and transform our community. She has been fortunate to have been cast in many new Māori theatre works, helping to bring Indigenous stories and perspectives to the stage. Being a part of this collaboration between ILBIJERRI and Te Rēhia theatre companies is a great next step on her journey and she can't wait to share it with the world.

## TAWHIRANGI MACPHERSON (TE ARAWA / TUHOE) PERFORMER

Tawhirangi 'Duchess' Macpherson is an exciting emerging young talent from Rotorua, New Zealand who is currently studying drama in high school and received her first public review this year after she "impressively played" Tatiana in a Māori adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. She is a keen singer and performer who aspires to find a career in stage and screen.

## LISA MAZA (MERIAM / YIDINDJI / DUTCH) PERFORMER

Lisa Maza has been acting and singing professionally for more than 20 years. Most recently she appeared in the world premiere of *The Season* (Tasmania Performs) in Sydney, Tasmania and Melbourne, followed by a national regional tour in late 2018. She was awarded Best Supporting Performance (Female) at Tasmania Theatre Awards in 2018 for her portrayal of Auntie Marlene. Her other credits include *The Rabbits* (Opera Australia/Barking Gecko) for sold out Perth, Melbourne and Sydney Festival seasons and a short season in Brisbane; *Going Through* (Castlemaine State Festival); *Swanson!!! The Musical!! & Things that Fall Over* (Peta Murray & Co); *The Sapphires* (Company B); *Gronks* (STC/Zeal); *Inkata* (State Opera SA); *Yanagai! Yanagai!* (MWT/Playbox); *Stolen*(Playbox/ILBIJERRI); *An Evening with Richard Frankland* (Sydney Opera House/Adelaide Festival); *Enuff* (Playbox); *Kan Yama Kan*(FLN), *Corrugation Road* (Black Swan) and in one of her earliest performances on stage, in Brisbane 1997, where she played Cressy in *Radiance* (QTC/Kooemba Jdarra). In 2016 Maza was awarded an Australia Council Fellowship and recently worked as Associate Producer of the 2019 YIRRAMBOI Festival. Most recently, she featured in *From Darkness* (Co-presented by La Boite & Brisbane Festival).

## TUAKOI OHIA PERFORMER

Tuakoi Ohia is a dynamic and exciting young Māori actress in New Zealand, new to the entertainment industry but already securing some strong roles in TV and now theatre. She was recently cast in Māori TV's *Ahikāroa* as the role of Dylan, a standout role in the bi-lingual TV Series and she has recently been cast next to Brady Peeti for Te Rēhia Theatre's new show *Black Ties*. This is the beginning of what will be a continuing and successful career for this young wahine.

# BIOGRAPHIES

## BRADY PEETI (TE ATI HAU NUI A PAPARANGI / NGATI MANIAPOTO)

### PERFORMER

Brady Peeti is a Takatapui actor and singer hailing from the Whanganui region. They have worked on multiple productions in and around the Auckland region and was awarded the NAPTA Award for Best Supporting Male Actor in a Musical for their role as 'Jimmy' in *Dreamgirls*. Recent credits include Auckland Theatre Company's *Astroman*, Fine Fatale's *The Heels Are Alive* programmed in the Cabaret Festival with Auckland Live and a directorial debut of *Sinarella* with the Mangere Arts Centre. Peeti's single of Allen Toussaint's 'It's Raining' made it to the top of the 2016 New Zealand Blues Charts twice and their "killer voice" and "soulful vocals" have been praised in productions including *Dominion Road The Musical*, *Larger than Life* and *The Wizard of Otahuhu*.

## TAINUI TUKIWAHO (TE ARARWA / TUHOE)

### PERFORMER

Unitec graduate (2001) Tainui Tukiwaho has multiple short films and television shows and theatre productions in Aotearoa and abroad to his name. In 2011 he took on the challenge of playing legendary entertainer Billy T James, for telemovie *Billy* and other notable roles include *Tangiwai – A Love Story*, playing Dave's boss in TV series *Step Dave* and co-starring in feelgood fishing movie *The Catch*, as a man trying to win a Kaipara fishing contest. His latest work includes *The Sounds* (2019), Channel 7 comedy *Fam Time* (2019), *The Gulf* (2018) and *Fluent* in te reo Māori. Tukiwaho also hosted Māori Television talk show *O Whakaaro* and featured in te reo Māori drama *Kōrero Mai*.

## DALARA WILLIAMS (WIRADJURI / GUMBAYNGGIRR)

### PERFORMER

Dalara Williams graduated from the prestigious National Institute of Dramatic Art in 2017. She made her feature film debut in Wayne Blair's *Top End Wedding*, which premiered at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival, and she has recently completed production on her follow up feature, Victoria Wharfe McIntyre's *The Flood*. Her recent television credits include *Get Krack!N* and the third and fourth series of *Black Comedy* for the ABC, which went on to win the 2018 Casting Guild of Australia Award for Best Casting in a TV Comedy. Her short film credits include *Last Drinks At Frida's*, which premiered at the 2017 Sydney Film Festival and Origins.

Her stage credits include *Winyanboga Yurringa* for Belvoir and *Blackie Blackie Brown* for the Sydney Theatre Company and the Malthouse Theatre. At NIDA her stage credits included *Realism, Love And Money* directed by Judy Davis, *The Season At Sasparilla and Twelfth Night*. She was also awarded the Hazel Treweek Shakespeare Award during her time at NIDA. Prior to NIDA, Williams studied Aboriginal Theatre at Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts and performed in *Crowbones And Carnivores*. She also performed as Goneril in *The Shadow King*, a reworking of Shakespeare's tragedy King Lear as part of Darwin Festival. Her professional acting debut was starring in the Tiwi adaptation of *Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs; Wulamanayuwu and The Seven Pamaui* directed by Eamon Flack which toured nationally.

## DION WILLIAMS (WIRADJURI / WOKAMAN) PERFORMER

Dion Williams hails from Echuca in country Victoria. He played the lead role of Ruben in the Jada Alberts play *Brothers Wreck* at the Malthouse and Adelaide's State Theatre and is currently starring in a schools' production of *Black Diggers / The Longest Memory* for Complete Works Theatre Company. Williams' acting career began when he won the role of Marlon in Chris Lilley's *Angry Boys*. He was a runner up in Melbourne Comedy Festival's 2017 stand up competition *Deadly Funny*. He has played roles in large-scale drama series including a recurring role in the primetime drama *The Time of Our Lives* and was a lead guest in *Redfern Now*, both for the ABC. He also played a lead role in the Nine Network's mini-series *Gallipoli*. Williams is also an accomplished athlete and footballer.

# A NOTE FROM THE CREATORS

When we started out on this journey we wanted to make a show that our Elders, our Aunties and Uncles, in fact all of our community, could enjoy. And in *BLACK TIES* we have spades of that! *BLACK TIES* celebrates our rich cultures and our connection across the water between our people.

ILBIJERRI Theatre Company is leading the way in creating paths for our stories on an international level and the company is perfectly placed to embark on a bold First Nations collaboration of this scale thanks to the support of AsiaTOPA and MFI. I think as First Nations people we often have conversations with our Māori sisters and brothers across the water, but rarely do we embark on these types of collaborations – it's been an amazing experience for me as writer.

## JOHN HARVEY CO-WRITER

The big highlight for me is that I finally get to work with an all-First Nations creative team and what a team: Jacob Nash, Brendon Boney, James Henry, John Harvey, but especially my old and new whanau from NZ: Tainui Tukiwaho, Amber Curreen, Jane Hakaraia, Laughton Kora and Te Ura Hoskins. On and off stage this work is a celebration of who we are as Blackfullas and Māoris – the resilience, the humour, the passion, strong family, culture, thriving despite our shared experiences of colonisation.

I think about the trajectory of black theatre in this country to where we are today, and this cocktail of the hard-hitting and political mixed with humour has always been there – how else could we have survived?

## RACHAEL MAZA CO-DIRECTOR

*He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tangata, he tangata, he tangata.  
What is the most important thing in the world? It is people, it is people, it is people.*

This whakatauki or proverb from home speaks to the importance of people and relationships to ngai Māori. *BLACK TIES* brings these relationships to the stage, blows them up, re-builds them and allows us to love and laugh with our people from both sides of the ditch. We empower our people by bringing our mums, our aunties, our cousins to the stage and sharing what is important for them – it is family, it is laughter, it is music, it is kai! Whether we are fighting for our land and our language, mourning our loved ones or having a party, these same things remain. It is the ultimate act of self determination for us as First Peoples artists to create theatre at the scale of *BLACK TIES* for our people, by our people and about what we think is important. We've started a mean party and we can't wait for everyone to join us.

## TAINUI TUKIWAHO CO-WRITER & CO-DIRECTOR



Image: Luke Currie Richardson

# ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

Written by John Harvey (Saibai Island) and Tainui Tukiwaho (Te Arawa / Tuhoë), this is a ground breaking collaboration between two First Nations Theatre Companies: ILBIJERRI Theatre Company and the Te Rēhia Theatre.

*BLACK TIES* promises to be “A proper good night out!” Rachael Maza (Director)

It is an important piece of theatre that unites two First Nations families from across the seas and a vital performance for students to see. It is a laugh-out-loud wedding nightmare that engages Indigenous and non-Indigenous audiences to celebrate culture and community.

## MAJOR THEMES

### CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

The play presents a comic look at what happens when two cultures collide. What similarities and differences exist between the families? Do the families find a way to accept their differences?

### THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY

Hera is unable to accept Kane’s proposal until their families meet. In a modern age, why is this so important to Hera?

### HONOURING ELDERS

Uncle Jack Charles is a Boon Wurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung man, a beloved and respected elder, an actor, musician, potter and gifted performer. What role does he play in *BLACK TIES* and how does his character help to illuminate the importance of honouring elders in Aboriginal culture?

### FATHERHOOD

While the play is a comedy it does acknowledge some issues within each culture. How is fatherhood represented in the play? What messages are the playwrights wanting to communicate about fatherhood?

## RESOURCES

<https://ilbijerri.com.au/event/black-ties/>

<https://terehiatheatre.com/about-us-te-kaupapa/>

<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/the-stage-show/black-ties-ilbijerri-theatre-company-te-rehia-theatre/11760976>

<https://www.abc.net.au/radio-australia/programs/pacificmornings/black-ties/11699536>

# Q&A WITH RACHAEL MAZA & TAINUI TUKIWAHO

## How did it come about that this was a cross-cultural project?

**RM:** I wanna start by saying this is long overdue. A project waiting to happen for a long time. Just waiting for the ducks to align. For several decades now there has been a growing vibrant network of First Nation to First Nation artists and activists in dialogue across several countries: Canada, New Zealand and Australia. It's from these gatherings that ILBIJERRI has developed a strong relationship with Te Rēhia. When the opportunity came along for a collaboration it was a no-brainer we would want to collaborate with them.

**TT:** We have been extremely fortunate to have been doing cross cultural engagement with ILBIJERRI and other first peoples artists and companies since 2014. Creative New Zealand has supported us to head over to APAM and other delegations where we came to form deep, rich and respect filled relationships with our community of artists. At Auckland Arts Festival 2018 we were honoured when Artistic Director of ILBIJERRI Rachael Maza and then Executive Producer Lydia Fairhall suggested we dive into the deepest form of engagement – making a work together. This is a long overdue co-creation engagement, the first of its kind but not the last – you'll be seeing more cross-cultural projects hitting the worlds stages soon.

**RM:** The opportunity to collaborate with a fellow First Nation theatre company was extremely exciting for me. I have partnered with many organisations in my time at ILBIJERRI but none of them First Nations. *BLACK TIES* is the fruit of an incredible process of working that is specific to who we are as First Nations peoples and builds on 2,000 generations of storytelling! It is critical that the collaboration has been truly cross-cultural on every level of the process – co-writers, co-directors etc. The journey has certainly had its challenges, but good challenges, massive learnings on both sides. We have worked incredibly hard, but it has always been with joy and we have felt uplifted.

## Why did you decide to set this story at a wedding?

**RM:** The idea that it should be a wedding between a Maori woman and an Aboriginal man was decided very early in the process by the writers in response to the provocation: 'Let's make a show that our families will enjoy! The show your aunty, your nan will have a great time at, and will want to come back to again'. We knew it must have food, be funny and have lots of music. Weddings are such a familiar trope – but no-one will have seen it done like this! Everyone loves 'love'. Everyone has family that drives them crazy!

## You each have such obvious pride in your own cultures and heritage and respect for the other's – did that make it easier to poke fun at yourselves and each other?

**TT:** Oh we had so much fun poking fun at each other and ourselves. We get to make a show where we can say things to each other that no pākeha (non-First Nations person) can. We also get to have a great time making fun of our own cultures in a way that only our people can do. We take ownership of our cultural treasures – our language, our dances, our cultural protocol and mess with it in a way that only our people will fully understand. Our deep abiding respect, desire to learn and openness to differences is what has made this possible.

## What makes for a memorable wedding for you?

**RM:** Weddings for me are about love and family. The most memorable weddings for me are those that are kept simple, real and down to earth, when it's celebrated with a big mob of family and friends who all bring food to share, there's live music, and much singing and dancing into the wee hours of the morning! One very memorable wedding I went to, which was particularly inspiring, was a beautiful Noongar couple whose wedding was conducted entirely in the Noongar language, on sand that had been designed by a Noongar artist / family member, onto which every guest put their own hand print. The bride and groom swapped Kangaroo skin cloaks. There was no doubt in anyone's mind that day that the children of this couple would be very blessed and would grow up proud and strong in their culture.

**TT:** Like any major family event, the most memorable parts of a wedding are usually the unintended parts. It's the small dramas that become stories that get repeated around the family for years to come, at all the powhiri, getting embellished at every retelling. The story of our families lives on in these retellings.

# BEFORE THE SHOW

In *BLACK TIES*, musicians take on the characters of family members. At one point in the play they sing a 'mash up' of well-known Australian and New Zealand love ballads. This adds humour and effectively communicates the merging of two cultures.

## PRE-SHOW ACTIVITY

### OBJECTIVE

Students are to create a 'mash up' of songs specifically written for each gender. They are to examine the stereotypes and point of view represented in each song. Students are to create their own 'mash up' and consider how this technique could be used to enhance drama.

### ACTIVITY

- Split the class in two and assign each group with the task of finding four or five of the most popular songs that represent boys and girls. For example:

#### GROUP ONE - GIRLS:

- 'Girls just Wanna Have Fun' by Cyndi Lauper
- 'Run the World' by Beyoncé
- 'I will Survive' by Gloria Gaynor
- 'You Don't Own Me' by Lesley Gore

#### GROUP TWO - BOYS:

- 'Working Class Man' by Jimmy Barnes
- 'Man in the Mirror' by Michael Jackson
- 'Whatta Man' by Salt and Pepper
- 'The Boys are Back in Town' by Thin Lizzy

- The students will no doubt have a more up to date selection than the ones listed above. Ask the students what the song implies about each gender. Is there any stereotyping that you can observe? Do the songs represent everyone (that is all women or all men)? Do these songs objectify, exclude or place pressures on males or females to fit a criterion?
- Now ask two students from Group One to pair with two students from Group Two.
- Get them to select two songs, from each group and they need to create a 'mash up' of those songs using the chorus only.
- Consider how these songs could be used to support various scenes? E.g.: A story about a misunderstood girl or boy. A scene about gender inequality. A story about identity.
- Consider developing two scenes, using your 'mash up' of music to transition or underscore.
- Reflect on how the 'mash up' enhances the performance. What does it communicate to an audience? Consider dramatic meaning, themes and issues.



Image: Luke Curne Richardson

# PERFORMANCE PROTOCOLS

## MAKING THE MOST OUT OF THE PERFORMANCE

These activities are intended to maximise the theatre experience for all audience members. These activities guide students through a series of engagements intended to get them thinking about how and why they should behave in particular ways and what their behaviour means in this context.

### OBJECTIVES

Students will develop their awareness and understanding of:

- Theatre etiquette
- Appropriate behaviour for an audience
- Relationship between performers and the audience

### DISCUSSION POINTS

Live performance involves performers acting and interacting in real time, before your eyes. The audience is active in the way they view the performance. The performers on stage can hear and see you; your reactions and your behaviour can contribute to, disrupt or disturb their performance. The audience can have a big influence on the energy, pace and vibe of the actors and the performance as a whole.

### ACTIVITY

Talk to your students about whether they have been to the theatre before. Use the following questions to guide their discussion:

- What show did you see?
- Who did you go with?
- Where did you see it?
- What was the show about?
- Were the performers professional or amateur?
- What did it make you think about?

Split the class into small groups and ask them to create a list of behaviour they consider appropriate and inappropriate for different settings. Assign the groups the following settings:

- Footy match
- School assembly
- Cinema
- Rock concert
- Theatre

Come back together as a whole group and ask groups to feed their thoughts back to the group. Create a matrix that compares different kinds of behaviour across each setting. For example:

	Assembly	Cinema	Rock Concert	Theatre
Talking	No	No	Yes	No
Eating				
Walking in and out				
Laughing / crying				
Booing / shouting				
Using your mobile phone				

Based on the above, discuss the conclusions students have come to about attending a live performance and compile a series of protocols to guide their behaviour. Ensure elements in the appendix at the end of this document are included.

# AFTER THE SHOW

## POST SHOW DISCUSSION

In small groups, students are to brainstorm as many rituals as possible. For example what are some rituals that exist around Christmas, New Year, birthdays, etc.?

- Ask students to delve deeper into how rituals within their own families are performed e.g.: putting tooth under the pillow / in a box for the tooth fairy, putting milk out for Father Christmas
- Discuss similarities and differences of rituals between families. You will find slight variations between families and the way that they celebrate. It is always interesting.
- Focus in on the variations and differences in these traditions. Identify and discuss the origins of these rituals. Do they come from a grandparent? Do they come from a different country / culture / community? Was it a ritual that you started?

Ask students to identify and discuss the rituals and traditions in *BLACK TIES*. What were the similarities in how the families celebrated the wedding ritual and what were the differences?

- What cultural and social viewpoints did you discover that you did not know about before seeing the show?

## ACTIVITY: COMMUNICATING MESSAGES

Together with students, look at some of the advertising used for Perth Festival productions and other theatre productions.

- Analyse the effectiveness of the flyers / posters / online advertising.

In pairs create a poster to advertise *BLACK TIES*.

- Your target audience is a group of tourists from Ireland who have never been to New Zealand or Australia before.
- Your goal is to create a flyer to advertise the show to your target audience that:
  - Includes an image/s to express the ideas and viewpoints from each culture
  - Conveys the themes
  - Gives the audience a sense of the form / genre (comedy)
  - Includes a tag line to capture the overall benefit of seeing this show
  - Incorporates key information such as show title, author, theatre companies, venue, times
  - Consider the visual elements and principles of design in your poster design



# REVIEWING LIVE PERFORMANCE

There are many different ways to write a review, as reviews express an individual's thoughts and feelings about a show.

Traditional reviews will often:

## **Give the reader brief background information about a production**

- Title of show (mention playwright or choreographer if relevant)
- Is it an adaptation of another text? An original work?
- Identify the company presenting or performing the show
- Where is this show being performed?

## **Briefly outline plot and themes**

- Make sure not to include any spoilers
- Were the themes/issues effectively conveyed to the audience?
- How do the characters and relationships communicate these?
- Does the design (e.g. set, costumes, lighting, sound and filmic elements) contribute to the conveyance of themes/issues? Consider symbols and metaphors.
- How do style and form play a part in communicating these?

## **Provide an idea of what the design elements are**

- Think about set, lighting, costume, filmic elements and sound
- How did the design choices convey place, time and situation (dramatic meaning or context)?
- What atmosphere and mood were the creative team aiming for?
- How successful were they in achieving their goals?

## **Evaluate the writing, production and performances**

- You might consider things like: Were there any stand out performances or design elements? Why? What were the technical aspects of the production that stood out?

Reviews should reflect how you felt about a show, not what you think you should have felt.

In the digital age, the act of reviewing has changed immensely. It has enabled platforms for a broad range of voices to participate in the reviewing process that previously would not have been heard.

Have a go at writing a 140-character Twitter review of the work.

# SPECIFIC LINKS TO CURRICULUM

## HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Connections to Year 11 Aboriginal and Intercultural Studies ATAR Year 11 and 12: Unit 3 Aboriginal and cultural perspectives:

- The role of media in shaping social attitudes
- Media representations of Aboriginal Peoples' lives
- Types of representations of Aboriginal Peoples in the media, including stereotyping, use of propaganda
- The effects of media representation on Aboriginal people themselves

Connections to Year 11 Aboriginal and Intercultural Studies ATAR Year 11 and 12: Unit 3 Place and belong:

- Importance of kinship in maintaining links to Country (Unit 2)
- Media representations of the relationships between different peoples and the land (Unit 3)

Connections to Year 11 Aboriginal and Intercultural Studies ATAR Year 11 and 12: Unit 3 Diversity and change:

- Reasons for change and continuity in different aspects of media representation, including contact with other cultures, economic, political and social factors (Unit 3)
- Changing representations of Aboriginal Peoples in the media (Unit 3)

## ENGLISH

Connections to Year 11 English, Unit 2: As students analyse the representation of ideas, attitudes and voices in texts to consider how texts represent the world and human experience, they are:

- Evaluating the effectiveness of texts in representing ideas, attitudes and voices;
- Critically examining how and why texts position readers and viewers.

Connections to Year 12 English, Unit 4: As students examine different interpretations and perspectives to develop further their knowledge and analysis of purpose and style; and challenge perspectives, values and attitudes in texts, developing and testing their own interpretations through debate and argument, they are:

- Analysing the use of voice and narrative point of view;
- Evaluating perspectives through the ways viewpoints and values are represented;
- Identifying omissions, inclusions, emphases and marginalisations

## DRAMA

Connections to Year 12 ATDRA Values, forces and drama practice:

- Impact of changing historical, social and cultural values on drama production and audience reception



Image: Luke Currie Richardson

# APPENDIX

## Latecomers

The show will start promptly and latecomers will not be admitted until an appropriate break in the show. Be aware that for many shows, you will not be admitted if you arrive late.

## Lock out

If you leave your seat during the performance, you may not be allowed back in. Make sure you go to the toilet and have a drink of water before the performance and / or during the intervals.

## Noise

Food wrappers and plastic packets make a lot of noise. It is generally accepted that the audience does not eat during a performance. If you absolutely have to have lollies (such as a cough lolly), ensure it is out of the wrapper prior to the performance.

## Mobile phones

Please ensure mobile phones are turned off. If your phone rings during a performance, it can be very embarrassing for you and very distracting for the performers. It is inappropriate to receive a text during a performance.

## Talking

Allow everyone – performers and the audience – to focus on the performance by not talking. Talking is annoying for other audience members and can be very distracting for performers.

## Photographs

Taking photos, videos or audio recordings is not allowed.



Image: Luke Currie Richardson