



School Resource Guide

Lungs by Duncan Macmillan

"Duncan Macmillan's distinctive, off-kilter love story is brutally honest, funny, edgy and current. It gives voice to a generation for whom uncertainty is a way of life... bravely written, startlingly structured" – Guardian



Lungs

By Duncan Macmillan

Directed by Stephanie McKellar-Smith

In a time of global anxiety and political unrest, a young couple contemplate having a child. If they overthink it, they'll never do it. But if they rush, it could be a disaster.

Fortune Theatre is privileged to be producing *Lungs* for the first time in New Zealand as part of our True Grit Series.

Director Stephanie McKellar-Smith says, “*Macmillan has stripped Lungs down to the bare essentials – text, movement and actors. The Fortune Studio is ideal to accommodate this sparseness, and it allows the audience to hone right in on the central themes, electric emotion and moment-to-moment reality between the characters.*”

Thank You Ambassadors!

We have loved all the input from the Fortune Theatre Ambassadors throughout the production of *Lungs*. We’ve all been affected by the raw honesty of *Lungs* and it has been interesting to hear the ambassadors perspective, especially since they are about to inherit this uncertain and troubled world.

Please contact me at education@fortunetheatre.co.nz with any thoughts, questions and feedback or if you are interested in becoming a Fortune Ambassador.

All the best,
Shannon Colbert
Education Liaison Officer



Contents

About the Play.....	2
About the Playwright.....	5
At Rehearsal.....	8
Set Design.....	9
Costume, Light and Sound.....	10
Meet the Director.....	11
Meet the Cast.....	12
Discussion Questions.....	13
Lungs Quotes.....	14
A Climate of Unease By Charmian Smith	17
Related Articles.....	19
Photo Gallery.....	24

About the Play

Synopsis

Lungs is a funny, tragic, brutally honest, no-holds-barred love story, which focuses intently on the enormity of bringing another person into the world and all that that means.

The play is really one long conversation. A conversation which, in the end, spans 50 or so years. Things happen during the conversation. We see a relationship spiral, unravel and come together. There is a pregnancy, a miscarriage, a break up, sex and a pregnancy, an agreement and a child. We see time flash by in funny, poignant, agonizing, tender and heartbreaking moments.

Themes

There are several interwoven themes all relating to the enormity of the decision to bring another human into this troubled and overburdened world. Does being responsible, being a good person, a questioning, thoughtful, loving person, make any difference when it comes to the ethics of having a baby? The play asks huge and disturbing questions. Who should have the right to breed? How do we justify our burden on the earth? How do we love and care for each other?



Being good

Being good people is something the characters talk and worry about a lot. The playwright, Duncan Macmillan, told John Barry in an interview during the Washington DC premiere in 2011 that,

"The play came in some ways out of the anxieties I had about turning thirty and moving on to the next part of my life. Trying to take more personal responsibility... getting engaged, getting a cat. These characters somehow embody the anxieties that I was trying to articulate... about how to be a good person, how to live a good life, how to be a good influence on the planet and to other people, in a time when good and bad doesn't seem as clear cut as maybe it used to."

Over population, climate change and the survival of the species

The characters are living with the guilt, responsibilities and repercussions of global warming.

Duncan Macmillan discussed the issue at a forum during the Stockholm production of *Lungs*.

"It's absurd to be talking about wanting to become a father and the industrial revolution in the same sentence, it's ridiculous, but that is the reality of where we are at."

*"An earlier generation was terrified about atomic war and final destruction. You can find this throughout history... I think every generation feels they are living at the end of days - sort of - but ours is the first that can definitively see the end of the species - not in our lifetime - it's **just** too far away to focus on, but we pretty much know definitively that there is an end point unless someone miraculous comes along and - and puts silver nitrate in the oceans - but not that because we know that won't work."*

"Yes, some things you can over think, but the conversation they have about the planet - if our species is to be saved - that's the conversation that should be happening - and it isn't really."

Theatrical Conventions

Duncan Macmillan states clearly that there are to be no props, no miming, no set, costume or lighting changes.

In a 2011 interview by John Barry, Duncan Macmillan said that he had been in the middle of a large project – and was getting terribly “bogged down” with all the practicalities. So in reaction to that he wanted to try to write something in a stripped-down format with the focus just on the actors and the words.

“... And there’s nothing getting in the way. There are no scene changes, no lighting changes, no props, no set changes, no costumes. A lot of what we accept as theatrical convention we want, bit by bit, pulled away. So it’s a ninety minute, unbroken piece of time, where two people are having a conversation. We see how that conversation evolves and adapts over what ultimately is fifty years of a relationship.”

In an interview during the Washington DC premiere of *Lungs*, Duncan Macmillan spoke about working closely with the director to make this stripped down theatre work.

"What is this strange thing? How does it work? What does the audience require? ... How do we teach the audience how to watch this play? It's a play that doesn't

have any scene changes, in any conventional way. It doesn't have any props or costume changes. There is no severe lighting cues, there's no black outs, there is no furniture on stage, there is no miming. It moves through time in a way that breaks the conventions of what people expect from a play, I think. So a lot of rehearsal time has been spent working out how this actually works."

Language

As the play is stripped down to just the actors’ movements and words, Duncan Macmillan’s language is even more striking and lyrical.

He has used natural speech patterns, with overlapping,

interruptions, tangents, struggling for words, along with beautiful monologues. He talked about the language of the show in his 2011 interview with John Barry.

“We have certain conversations that we dip in and out of. Any time we happen to introduce certain images, we just leap back into it.”

“There are moments when their intention will change halfway through a sentence. They’ll start on some tack, scare themselves, and then say the exact opposite. They overthink things. They’re very thoughtful people.”

“That’s how my characters talk. They will be constantly listening to themselves and self-editing.”



"We don't get those moments where someone gives a lecture about the theme of the play. It's more about how they behave almost physically with the language they're using."

The female character, W, puts it this way herself, *"I'm thinking out loud here so please just let me talk just let me think it through out loud please alright don't just jump in if I say something wrong or stupid just let me think ok?"*

Duncan Macmillan's characters think out loud. During an after-show forum in Stockholm he told the audience it's how he thinks too.

"I have the impulse to say something before I've formed it in my brain. I work out how I am feeling or thinking about something by hearing the words come out of my face - then editing them and immediately backtracking. And I have the anxiety that is manifest in her character which is to have these thoughts come out which are deep in my subconscious that I find very ugly to hear out loud and that are very damaging to say out loud... And I have his thing of really genuinely not knowing how to feel at any given moment and trying to second guess how she is going to feel about something or even how I am going to feel about something... In real life I'm a very quiet person but I have her inner

monologue. I just wouldn't say it out loud because - I'm not a psychopath. To be fair to the characters - these are things we say in private to each other - but wouldn't dare to say in public."

He also says he is careful to keep his language honest to his characters.

"The script has been changed quite a bit. There's been quite a lot of Britishisms that have had to change - but mainly it's been making sure the play isactable and cutting out anything that sounds too writerly - anything where you can hear me. Anything where it doesn't sound character led or truthful to the people speaking it"

Take a Breath

Stephanie McKellar-Smith said from the first read-through that they would be working a lot with breath. She feels breathing is the root of spontaneity in acting. She also thought it would be a way to transition through the gaps in time in the play. Without the usual conventions of set, costume and lighting changes to show that time and place have changed, the actors breathe as they move through hours, days and years. As Stephanie pointed out, the play is called *Lungs* after all.

Quoted articles and videos

Take a look for yourself:

Duncan Macmillan is interviewed by John Barry during the Washington DC premiere in 2011

<http://dctheatrescene.com/2011/10/03/duncan-macmillan-at-studio-theatre/>

A video of Duncan Macmillan taking questions at a forum during the Stockholm production of *Lungs*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8RLtSeSZnds>

A video of Duncan Macmillan talking about his work on the Washington DC premiere of *Lungs*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GMxntJZk8-s>

About the Playwright



Duncan Macmillan

Duncan Macmillan was born in 1980 and educated at Reading University where he studied film and wrote a short play. He then enrolled in four courses in playwriting 'to avoid having to write' his first play. He now teaches Creative Writing at Kingston University, having previously taught at the Central School of Speech and Drama, Royal Holloway, the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Dance and the Royal Court Theatre. He also acted as dramaturg on projects at the Glasgow Citizens and Hampstead theatres and has been a Writer in Residence with the Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester and leading fringe group, Paines Plough.

Macmillan's first major play, *The Most Humane Way to Kill a Lobster*, in which a middle aged woman reconsiders her sexual initiation at the age of 14 in the context of contemporary violence against young women and her own daughter's suicide attempt, was staged at the well-known London fringe venue, Theatre 503, in 2005. *Monster* premiered in the Studio at the Royal Exchange in 2007 as part of the Manchester International Festival and won the *Manchester Evening News* Best New Play Award having previously won two awards in the 2006 Brentwood Playwriting Competition. It examines the impact a disturbed student has on his grandmother, his teacher and the latter's wife. The following year he co-wrote with Mike Bartlett *An Object* for Paines Plough. With Morgan Lloyd McLean he then wrote *Platform* for the Old Vic Theatre Community Group to perform on a railway station platform. These venues have also presented productions of seven of his short plays.

He has prepared four adaptations, *Don Juan Comes Back from the War* by German dramatist Odon von Horvath (Finborough Theatre London, 2011), *1984* from the novel by George Orwell, a 2013/14 touring collaboration between fringe company Headlong and the Nottingham Playhouse, *Reise durch die Nacht* from Mayrocker for the Schauspielhaus in Köln (winner of the 2013 Nestroypreis for Best

German Language Play) and *Wunschloses Unglück* from Peter Handke. 2014 is proving to be a busy year for him with a touring revival of his short play about depression, *Every Brilliant Thing*, a new play, *The Forbidden Zone*, about women's involvement in WWI, being presented recently at the Salzburg Festival and *2071*, about climate change, scheduled to open in November at the Royal Court Theatre. He is under commission to Paines Plough, the Royal National Theatre and BBC Radio (which has already broadcast two adaptations and two original radio plays by him along with two that he co-wrote with Amelia Bullmore, Linda McLean and Dan Rebellato).

Lungs was premiered by the Studio Theatre in Washington DC on October 2, 2011 and two weeks later a second production opened in Britain, co-produced by Paines Plough and Sheffield Theatres. It was nominated for Outstanding Play in the Helen Hayes Awards (Washington), Best New Play in the 2012 Theatre Awards UK and won the Best New Play in the 2013 off-West End Awards. It has subsequently had a number of other regional theatre productions in America, had its Canadian premiere at the Tarragon in Toronto and been staged in Berlin at the famous Schaubühne in a production by the leading English director, Katie Mitchell. It has been broadcast on BBC Radio. This Fortune production will be the play's New Zealand premiere.

Interviewed at the time of the Washington premiere of *Lungs*, Macmillan recalled that a decade earlier he had been intending to write 'fairly funny' plays: "I thought I wouldn't be a particularly political writer. Then, in the wake of the events of 2001...everything was political. [...] I think my generation of writers, I think there's a number of us who were politicized. All our work, in the wake of 9/11, had to be in some way responsive to how we live nowadays. What are we?" He admitted an autobiographical impulse behind the writing of *Lungs*: "The play came in some ways out of the anxieties I had about turning 30 and moving on to the next part of my life. Trying to take more personal responsibility...getting engaged, getting a cat. These characters somehow embody the anxieties that I was trying to articulate...about how to be a good person, how to live a good life, how to be a good influence on the planet and to other people, in a time when good and bad doesn't [sic] seem as clear cut as maybe it used to. [...] I think this is the first generation where, really, everyone – anyone - who's making one of the most important decisions you can make – having a child – is inextricably linked to the biggest narrative you can think of: that of the species and the future of the planet." Despite this he still believes *Lungs* is closer to a sit-com than a tragedy: "I wanted to write something quickly that actors would really enjoy doing.



[...] And there's nothing getting in the way. [...] A lot of what we accept as theatrical convention we want, bit by bit, pulled away. What we really want to see on stage is something happening, people making decisions. There being something clearly at stake for them. There's a time pressure in which to make a decision." For Macmillan the stage is "a microscope over people. [...] It's a place for real coherent, continuous thoughts. Where we can encounter something unmediated by advertising and any particular agenda other than the playwright's." In his plays "there has to be some kind of unresolved, and possibly unresolvable, moral conundrum at the heart of a new idea."

Fortune Theatre is delighted to introduce this rising new English dramatist to New Zealand audiences.

Alister McDonald
(Fortune Theatre Dramaturg)

INTERESTING YOUTUBE LINKS WITH DUNCAN MACMILLAN

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GMxntJZk8-s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8RLtSeSZnds>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=43Z3kYhHpR4>

A note from the playwright



Lungs is the story of a conversation. One day, while shopping for furniture, a couple unexpectedly find themselves debating whether or not they should start trying for a baby.

Am I a good person? Will I be a good parent? What sort of world will our children inherit? Is it wise or necessary to bring yet another person into the world? The smarter you are, the harder those questions are to answer and the more ridiculous you appear for trying to wrestle with them.

The play text has no stage directions, but it does begin with some instructions for how it should be staged:

This play is written to be performed on a bare stage. There is no scenery, no furniture, no props and no mime. There are no costume changes. Light and sound should not be used to indicate a change in time or place.

This is a huge challenge for a director as it takes a lot of skill and confidence to work without the usual toolbox and to make your hand invisible. It's also a high-wire act for the two actors. There's nothing else but them. It's an opportunity to see two extraordinary performers without any of the usual theatrical mechanics getting in the way. They control the pace, the tone, the journey through the play. It requires physical and emotional stamina, an amazing memory and the ability to listen and respond in the moment, not just to each other but also to the audience. In this way it's inevitably a different show each night. It's a living, breathing thing. It requires the audience to suspend their disbelief and use their imagination. This is what theatre does best, I think.

I've nothing against set or props, or lighting or sound or any particular theatrical conventions. For *Lungs*, however, the *conversation* is what matters - this difficult conversation that eventually comes to span a lifetime. To have realistically rendered sets, costume-changes and props would emphasise the wrong thing. It's their *words*, their decisions, their streams-of-consciousness, their silences - that's what matters. It seems to me that when you have these on-going conversations with people you love, it doesn't really matter where you are, you could be stuck in traffic, lying in the bath together or waiting for a play to start. It's the same conversation, you just dip in and out of it. That's how it feels when you're inside it so that's how it should feel when we watch it on stage. It also means we can move through time and space quickly and tell their story in a more immediate way, unencumbered by the usual stage mechanics. It was written as a challenge for actors and audiences, and also a gift.

I hope you enjoy *Lungs*.

Duncan Macmillan

First Read-through

The School Ambassadors joined the director, actors, designers and Fortune staff for the first read-through of *Lungs*.

It was a very intimate and emotionally powerful reading. There was a lot of laughing and crying. It was agreed that the play works very affectively as a reading – especially when you are sitting at the same table as the actors.

The play has been adapted to a radio play for the BBC. It was felt it would work well in that form.

Director, Stephanie McKellar-Smith was delighted with the wonderful work of actors Claire Dougan playing W and Todd Emerson playing M and joked that her job was done - she'd cast the show brilliantly and she would see everyone on opening night.

The ambassadors were very curious to see how the play would be staged, especially as the playwright makes it very clear that there is to be no scenery, no costume changes, no props, no miming, no light or sound to show a change of scene or time.



In Rehearsal

The School Ambassadors were also invited to see a rehearsal. The actors and director were detailing the very last part of the play which speeds through time, from the birth of their child till W finally has the last word; talking to M's grave.

The challenge was to resist literal movements. When M dies Todd first tried turning his back, then sitting back to back with Clare, then moving to the edge of the circle and at last they decided he should simply stay where he had been standing; listening to W talk to him.

"The audience had better be with us by now!" said Stephanie McKellar-Smith. She told the ambassadors that she has been very mindful of letting the

audience know right from the beginning that this is a play that is not going to have the usual theatrical conventions. "I've tried to make it very obvious from the start that we are not being literal with our actions – they are sitting down when they are standing in a queue and standing up when they are sleeping in bed." She told us the conventions of the way this play works have to be quickly and clearly established for the audience.

Ambassador Georgia Ryder from OGHs asked how they were managing to learn their lines as the dialogue was so full of overlapping and unfinished or interrupted thoughts. Stephanie agreed this was a challenge, "Although this is the way people actually talk in real life, it is not often the way they talk in theatre and it is extremely challenging." Todd said the way he learns lines is to incorporate them with his actions which has been a challenge with the changing choreography. "They disappear and then I relearn them."

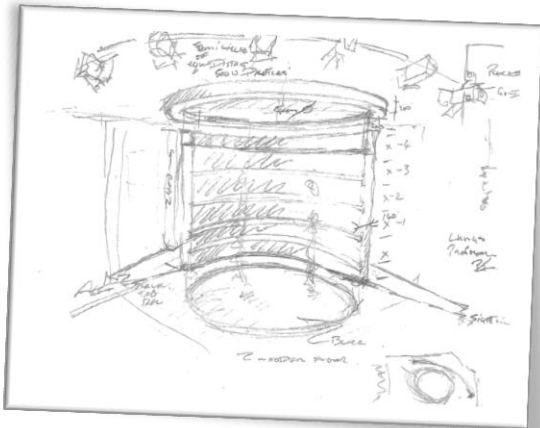
They held back in front of the ambassadors but the actors have been heard using explicit language, to tell Duncan Macmillan exactly what he can do with his impossible to learn script.



Set Design

Director Stephanie McKellar-Smith ideally would have loved to have staged *Lungs* in the round with audience on all sides. Although this wasn't possible in Fortune's Studio space, set designer Peter King tried to bring that feeling to his design. The reflective panels give the illusion of other seats, other people surrounding the two characters. "It's not theatre in the round but the next best thing", he said.

Peter King's original idea had been to have a full semi-circle of reflective panels – a wall of light reflecting the actors, but he quickly decided this would be too harsh for the audience and too difficult to work with for the actors.



Peter's original sketch of the set design

Stephanie likes the way the audience can see a glimpse of the actors faces in the reflective



panels. "It gives the audience a different perspective - even when the faces are a little distorted it's an interesting shift."

Both the characters and audience can literally "reflect" - take a look at themselves. This suits the soul searching and constant questioning of the characters. Are we good people? Are we responsible? Where do we go from here? These are characters who are taking a good look at themselves.

Peter King also likes to think of his set as a circus ring. "Relationships are like a circus – or better a boxing ring". The characters cannot leave the circle. "Treat it like a judo mat", Peter told the actors at the first read through.

When it is established that the characters can't leave the circle, the audience feels the characters have to be together. "They are drawn together, like magnetic attraction, there's no escape", said Peter. He felt this worked

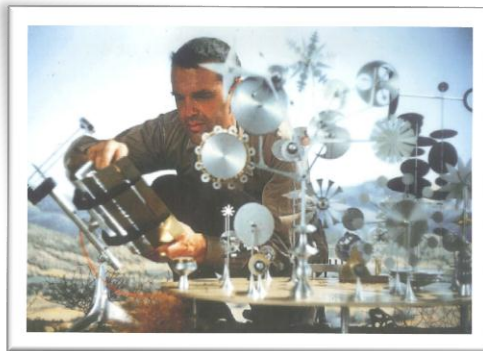
with a sense of predestination which, side by side with uncertainty for the future, runs throughout the play.

The circle could also symbolise the earth, the womb, and the microscope that Duncan Macmillan imagines. "A microscope over people...It's a place for real, coherent, continuous thoughts."



Peter also liked that it reminded him of the Star Trek transporter room.

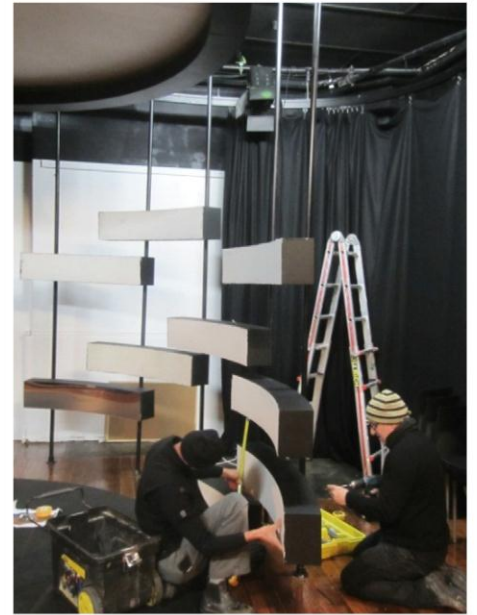
Both actors said they were enjoying working on the set. Claire said that she loves working within the boundaries of the circle – “It feels like a boxing match and a dance – it does feel like being in the round.”



Peter was inspired by Charles Eames use of aluminium as a reflective surface, liking the futuristic feel of the shiny surface.



The actors' first look at the set design



Building the set



Costume, Lighting and Sound

Maryanne Wright-Smyth and Peter King were charged with providing costume and light when the playwright specifically requires that these be extremely minimal. How do you dress and light the actors when costume and lighting are not meant to be a focus.

Maryanne Wright-Smyth said she wanted to work with mostly earthy colours. She also

responded to the actors' request for costumes they could work with. Hoods and pockets and bits they can do things with.

Peter King designed a very simple and subtle lighting plot. The light starts off with cooler colours and very gradually becomes warmer, until right at the end there is a warm coppery glow. This enforces the reality of the changed, hot world where we leave W.

Sound design for Lindsay Gordon was just as minimal. He uses Florence and the Machine to get the audience's attention after the preshow music. Then to ease them into the world of the play he uses the under-watery sounds and racing heartbeat of a baby in the womb from a recording of a fetal heart-rate monitor overlapped with a recording of Claire Dougan breathing.

Meet the Director



Stephanie
McKellar-Smith

Originally from Westport, Stephanie trained as a director at Theatre Corporate in Auckland and subsequently received an AGC young achievers award to further her training with the British Theatre Association in London. During her 30-year career she has directed and produced a wide range of shows in New Zealand and abroad including a season of *Me and My Vice* at the Edinburgh Festival.

Stephanie was a founding member and artistic director of The Other Company, which toured New Zealand schools for 11 years, and spent three years as Artistic Director of the Auckland Youth Theatre & Drama School. She has appeared in numerous roles in theatre, television and film including Judy Billingham on *Shortland Street*, Reebie in the NZ feature film *Fifty Ways Of Saying Fabulous*, and for The Court Theatre in the *Gods of Warm Beer* and the world premiere production of *Peninsula* which toured to the Nelson and Brisbane arts festivals.

For The Court Theatre Stephanie has directed the world premiere of Carl Nixon's *The Raft, Home Land, Pacific Post* (which she co-wrote with her husband Ross McKellar) and *August: Osage County* and *Blackbird* for The Forge. Stephanie also directed the world premiere of Branwen Millar's *Father Familiar* at Bats Theatre, Wellington and *The Underpants* for Ohio Northern University, USA.

Stephanie has a diploma in directing from the BTA, London and an MA in directing from Charles Sturt University, Australia. Currently, she is the head of the acting programme at NASDA (National Academy of Singing & Dramatic Art) at CPIT in Christchurch and has directed a wide range of plays and musicals for the school. This will be Stephanie's first production at the Fortune Theatre.

Director's note

When I had my children during the 90's I never thought to question whether I was being selfish or irresponsible in adding to the global population of a planet suffering from environmental degradation. Now, I do wonder what the world will be like in 50 to 100 years, what legacy am I leaving to my children's children?

In *Lungs* Duncan Macmillan brings us two flawed, but deeply human, people, working through their complicated and anxiety-ridden feelings about bringing a child into the world.

I could fly to New York and back every day for seven years and still not leave a carbon footprint as big as if I have a child. Ten thousand tonnes of CO2. That's the weight of the Eiffel Tower. I'd be giving birth to the Eiffel Tower.

But maybe, just maybe, their child could be a part of the solution?

What if she or he was the person to work it all out and save everything... the world is going to need good people in it.

Lungs is a play for now, it gives voice to a generation for whom uncertainty is a way of life. Thought provoking, challenging, exasperating, edgy, bleak and sharply funny, this play is beautiful in its deceptive simplicity. Performed without the usual trappings and artifice of modern theatre, it requires huge craft and dexterity from the actors and I have been blessed to explore this work with Claire and Todd, two exceptional and committed actors who have found a way to breathe this extraordinary piece of theatre.

I wish to thank all the staff at the Fortune for making me feel so welcome here, for gifting me such a beautiful play to work on during my first engagement, and you the audience for coming to share this experience with us.

Stephanie McKellar-Smith
Director

Meet the Cast

CLAIRE DOUGAN - W

Claire has been working in the theatre for seventeen years, having graduated from Auckland's UNITEC School of Performing Arts in 1997.

She has appeared in a number of shows for Auckland Theatre Company including *Death of a Salesman*, *Cabaret* (1999), *Into the Woods*, *High Society*, *Four Cities* and most recently *Anne Boleyn* and *Fallen Angels* earlier this year.

Claire spent six years living in Christchurch where she became a Court Theatre regular, appearing in over 20 productions. Just some of the highlights were *The Country Wife*, *The Raft* (NZ premiere) *Year of the Rat* (world premiere) *The Producers*, *Arsenic and Old Lace*, *Baghdad Baby!*, *Honour*, *The Great Gatsby*, *The Seagull*, *Cabaret* and *On The Rocks* (where she played the iconic writer Katherine Mansfield).

Claire has had the pleasure of appearing in a number of Fortune Theatre productions over the last three years including *God of Carnage*, *The Motor Camp*, *In the Next Room or the vibrator play* and *Love, Loss and What I Wore*.

She is delighted to be back and to have the opportunity to work on this very special play.

Claire is a proud member of NZ's Actors Equity.



Todd Emerson - M

Todd was born in and still lives in Auckland. This is his first production for the Fortune Theatre. He first performed professionally on stage at the age of 11 in the Ascot Group's production of *The Secret Garden* which toured New Zealand. He spent his teenaged years working mainly on film and television in shows such as *Being Eve*, *Shortland Street*, *The Tribe*, *Secret Agent Men* and *The Amazing Extraordinary Friends*, and films such as *The World's Fastest Indian* and *Her Majesty*.

Since then, Todd has been seen onscreen in *My Wedding & Other Secrets*, *Romeo & Juliet: A Love Song*, *Agent Anna*, *Interrogation*, *Outrageous Fortune*, and *Spies & Lies*. Over the last few years, Todd has been working mainly on stage throughout New Zealand in shows such as *Bullet Heart Club's Daffodils*, *The Moving Theatre Company's The Pitchfork* *Disney* and *Dog Sees God* and *Massive Company's The Brave*.

Next year Todd is travelling to Hawaii with *The Brave*, and then heading off around NZ with *Daffodils*.

Todd is a proud member of NZ's Actors Equity.



Discussion Questions

- The characters are very concerned with whether they are good people, good enough to pass on their DNA and raise a child. What does it mean to these characters to be good enough – what do they value? Does this mean others with different values or abilities are not good enough to add to the population? What are they trying to justify?

Playhouse Teater in Stockholm performed *Lungs*, or *Nasta Andetag* (next breath) in the Swedish translation, in October of 2013. Duncan Macmillan attended a forum after a performance. You can watch the forum discussion here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8RLtSeSZnd>. During the forum he was asked why the characters so often question whether they are good people.

“There is a lot of anxiety about what it is to be a good person – especially living in the west when, in the grand scheme of things, the planet would be better off without me in it. My sheer existence is damaging everyone else on the planet, especially those in the third world.”

“I want to be a good force in the world, but the more I think about it, my own influence is incredibly selfish and makes me feel very uncomfortable. I think that friction point where I start feeling very uncomfortable is an interesting thing to dramatise... because I don’t know the answers ... [I’m] certainly not trying to preach or provide answers. It’s more - can I articulate my anxieties to give them to you people to try to work out?”

- Would this play work with costume, set and lighting changes or a soundscape to show a change of scene and time? What are the benefits of stripping away these theatrical technologies for this play?
- How did the director and actors make this work? How did the director “teach the audience how to watch this play”?
- The play has been described as a dance and a boxing match. Sometimes the actors look like they are getting ready for the next bout. How do the actors use movement to express their characters thoughts and emotions, drive the play forward and show there has been a jump in time?
- The play can stretch out time or condense it. It jumps ahead in hours, days, years, till we feel we are hurtling through time, like time lapse photography. How does this work without the usual theatrical conventions to show time has passed or the setting has changed? How does this affect the feel and focus of the play?
- The play is called *Lungs*. The sound beginning the play contains breathing. Breath and breathing are often mentioned in the script, *breathe* is the second word of the play. How have the director and actors used breath throughout the play? What is the significance of the title?

Lungs Quotes

On having a baby and the enormity of bringing another human into the world:

W: I've always had a sense or an idea of myself always defined myself okay as a person who would, that my purpose in life that my function on this planet would be to...

W: ...always been an image, I guess, of myself with a bump and glowing and that motherly or pushing a pram... small and soft and adorable with that milky head smell and the tiny socks and giggles and yes vomit even that's all part of it...

W: it's important probably the most important thing you could do to bring another person yes a person an actually living breathing thinking because they won't stay small forever... people think about them being small, just tiny and sweet and unconditional with their eyes and giggles and tiny fingers ...because it's too hard like we're not quite designed to be able to fully comprehend the the the

M: enormity

W: or whatever maybe it's a survival mechanism... if you really properly thought about it before actually doing it then you'd never ever actually – do it because it's too – too

M: Enormous

W:...enormous – the purpose of life itself, the purpose, the meaning, the meaninglessness, the love and the horror and the hope and the fear and everything the volume of it all turned right up, the rest of your life the rest of someone else's life committing someone to something forever...

W: ... they don't stay small, they grow up and become people, they become people like everyone else, they become their own grown up people and they think their own thoughts and they buy their own clothes and they leave home and they hate you

W: it's about making a person. What we're doing. It's about this amazing – miracle, not miracle ...miracle yes miracle it's about this miracle happening and it – I want it to – I need it to feel – I don't know – sacred or – not sacred but – yes.

W: We must be very certain, arrogant even to want to create another person out of our genes and to teach it to bring it up as



On over population and climate change:

W: This weather is insane

M: Coldest winter ever they've just said. Hottest summer, coldest winter

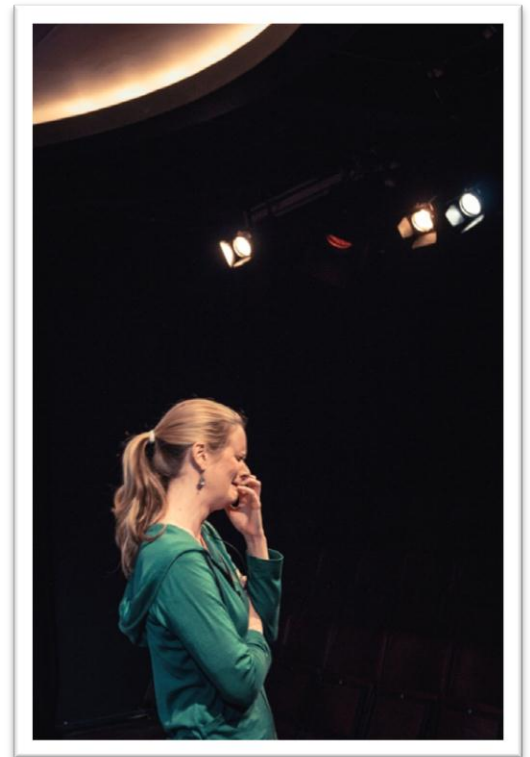
W: and you left the engine running

W: ... and they say don't they that if you really care about the planet, if you really care about the future of mankind then don't have children

M: do they?

W: ...they actually say if you really care about the planet then kill yourself but I'm – I mean – I'm not going to do that ... there is too many people and there is not enough of everything so really the right thing to do, the ethical thing to do is to not contribute to that, particularly people like us ...car driving, plastic bag using, aerosol spraying, avocado importing, Western

W: ... it's – terrifying it's the taboo, the last real taboo. There is no incentive to save lives right now, there is no incentive to to to to to cure AIDS or whatever, to keep people alive, what we need is the planet to - purge us – drown us, burn us, cull everyone by about two thirds.



On being a good person:

W: I'm not an idiot, I'm a thoughtful, very thoughtful person and I want to do everything for the right reason or at least a good reason and I believe in questioning and never just blindly accepting...

M: The world is going to need good people in it. With everything that's happening. We can't just leave it to the people who don't think, the people who just have child after child without ever properly examining their their *capacity for love*... Some people lots of people, aren't thinking it through, not fully, and maybe the smartest, most caring, most informed people aren't having children.

W: Are we good people?
M: Yes.
W: I mean, yes I know but are we actually though?
M: Yes we are ...We're going to be great parents.
W: I think it's ok to ask the question ...
M: It's part of what makes us good people ...
W: ...we don't believe, do we, in good and bad. Right and wrong.
M: Don't we?
W: Don't believe in evil.
M: Not evil no, we don't condemn people, we try to empathise, to put ourselves in their/ position
W: Shoes ... but doesn't everyone think they are good? Doesn't everyone believe they're
M: Some people wouldn't ask, wouldn't question it
W: Hitler or Rupert Murdoch or
M: everyone thinks they're doing the right thing. Pretty much.
W: So what makes us sure?

On uncertainly or destiny:

W: And what if this kid, this hypothetical what if she or he ...was the person to work it all out and save everything, everyone, the world, polar bears, Bangladesh, everything, we don't know so

W: We weren't right together were we? We were good people weren't we, but it just wasn't meant to be.
M: You don't believe in any of that predetermination, destiny stuff.
W: I do now
M: Oh, - sorry. Really?
W: Yes. No. I think what with the world how it is, I think if I didn't think someone was going to fix it all, that some superhuman genius was going to work out how to fix it all then – I think I'd just entirely lose my mind.

On responsibility:

M: You can't think about that stuff.
W: No I know. It's not our responsibility. And anyway so much about it is unknown.
M: Yes some people are saying that maybe that will happen but we'll be long dead by the time that's
M: We should move. Go to Brighton. Isn't that what people do? Get some outdoor space... We should plant trees. Put a bit more oxygen in the world. Like you said. Do our bit
W: We should get married ...
M: You should get a job ...
W: ... You should get something a bit more full time ... we've both got to make sacrifices ...



A climate of unease

By Charmian Smith

Lungs is a little play with big ideas, director Stephanie McKellar-Smith tells Charmian Smith.

A play for our generation is how director Stephanie McKellar-Smith describes the Fortune Theatre's upcoming production.

In the theatre's "True Grit" series, it is beautiful, funny in parts, but thought-provoking and even disturbing, she says.

"I was driving to work this morning in my four-wheel-drive and thinking 'Oh my God my carbon footprint is enormous. What am I going to do about my carbon footprint'."

Written by British playwright Duncan Macmillan and premiered in New York, *Lungs* has American and British versions, but McKellar-Smith and her cast of two, Todd Emerson and Claire Dougan, are setting it firmly in New Zealand.

"I didn't want the audience to feel this is about someone else over there so we feel we can watch this academically and don't have to own the ideas that these two are debating. I want us to see ourselves on stage," she says.

The two characters - they don't have names - agonise over



whether to have a child and the impact on the planet of having one.

"When I had my three girls, I didn't think once about what the planet was going to be like for them when they are my age. It never crossed my mind, but now my girls are grown up I hope one day I'll have grandchildren. I really want that but my God, what is the planet going to be like for them?" she said.

"Are we the people who should be having children because we are thinking and aware and recycling, or because of that should we be the people who don't have children. Should we be

adopting children who are already out there?"

There's a new acronym, Gink (green inclinations no kids), people who make a conscious decision not to have children, she said.

"While we can say it's all those people in Asia and Africa who are breeding and breeding, those people don't have recourse to contraception and healthcare and so on, and when they do have a child, the carbon footprint is still really tiny, whereas if you give birth to a child in the West the carbon footprint is enormous immediately because of all the

gadgets and the massive infrastructure around that.

"We are the ones who have the means and ability not to have children, and we are also the ones living in the society that's actually producing the bulk of the world's carbon emissions, consuming a large proportion of the world's resources and spitting them out as pollution, not the Third World," she says.

"For me, that's the beauty of the play; everything's grey. We want to think in black and white but everything's grey, and we might think it's the right thing to do not to have a child but we are also driven by that deep primitive need to take care of our own feelings of mortality but thinking that we do go on."

But despite the importance of ideas about climate change in the play, it is really about two people and their relationship over a long period of time, she emphasises.

"They have one child. It's pretty intense. As the play progresses time speeds up, so there are conversations where they are debating what to do in real time at the beginning of the play, but by the end you are leaping decades in a page of text. The child has grown up and it's most telling because they talk about his anger, their children's anger at our generation because of the way we are living now. It's incredibly hot, it's hard to breathe, there's ash

everywhere. This is in the future when their child has grown up."

In the play, the female is doing a PhD around these kinds of issues, and when they separate at one stage the man says he's more stupid without her because she used to show him what books to read.

However, he's happier because he feels released from the burden of knowing, McKellar-Smith says.

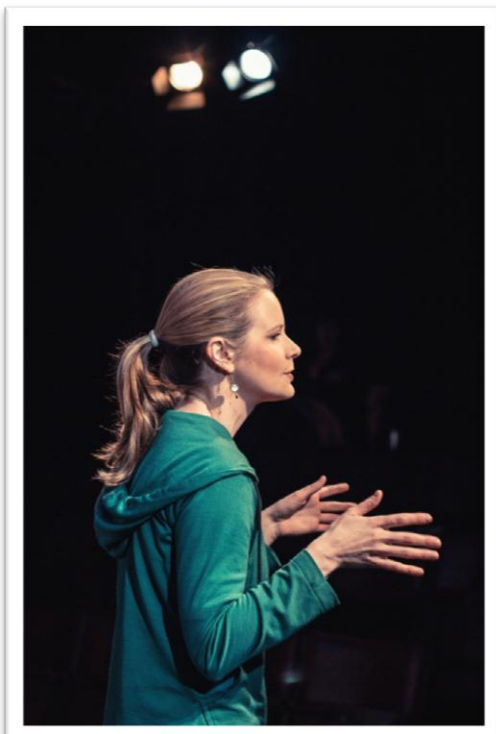
"It's that whole head-in-the-sand. We go 'it's too big. I can't do anything about it. I'll recycle my plastic bags. I'll do what I can in my little corner but I can't think about the sheer scale of it'."

The play is stripped back - the two characters don't have names, there is no set, no lighting changes to help with mood, no props, no sound cues or costume changes.

It's a real actors' play and calls on all their craft and skills, she says.

"I think it's really satisfying for audiences: it will jump and suddenly people will be aware it's then next day or next week or a couple of months or 10 years down the line. I think audiences will be able to make those connections for themselves. That's the beauty of live theatre. It's such a wonderful communion between audience and actors.

"At the end of the day, we want a great story and this is a great story, and we want to recognise ourselves on stage and be provoked and challenged. Hopefully, Lungs will make us open our eyes, even if it's just for five minutes, and make us think: do I worry about if I have any grandchildren and what is it going to be like in 50 years?" she says.



Scientific American

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/population-growth-climate-change/>

Does Population Growth Impact Climate Change?

Does the rate at which people are reproducing need to be controlled to save the environment?

Jul 29, 2009



Jake Brewer, courtesy Flickr

No doubt human population growth is a major contributor to global warming, given that humans use fossil fuels to power their increasingly mechanized lifestyles. More people means more demand for oil, gas, coal and other fuels mined or drilled from below the Earth's surface that, when burned, spew enough carbon dioxide (CO₂) into the atmosphere to trap warm air inside like a greenhouse.

According to the United Nations Population Fund, human population grew from 1.6 billion to 6.1 billion people during the course of the 20th century. (Think about it: It took all of time for population to reach 1.6 billion; then it shot to 6.1 billion over just 100 years.) During

that time emissions of CO₂, the leading greenhouse gas, grew 12-fold. And with worldwide population expected to surpass nine billion over the next 50 years, environmentalists and others are worried about the ability of the planet to withstand the added load of greenhouse gases entering the atmosphere and wreaking havoc on ecosystems down below.

Developed countries consume the lion's share of fossil fuels. The United States, for example, contains just five percent of world population, yet contributes a quarter of total CO₂ output. But while population growth is stagnant or dropping in most developed countries (except for the U.S., due to immigration), it is rising rapidly in quickly industrializing developing nations. According to the United Nations Population Fund, fast-growing developing countries (like China and India) will contribute more than half of global CO₂ emissions by 2050, leading some to wonder if all of the efforts being made to curb U.S. emissions will be erased by other countries' adoption of our long held over-consumptive ways.

"Population, global warming and consumption patterns are inextricably linked in their collective global environmental impact," reports the Global Population and Environment Program at the non-profit Sierra Club. "As developing countries' contribution to global emissions grows, population size and growth rates will become significant factors in magnifying the impacts of global warming."

According to the Worldwatch Institute, a nonprofit

environmental think tank, the overriding challenges facing our global civilization are to curtail climate change and slow population growth. *"Success on these two fronts would make other challenges, such as reversing the deforestation of Earth, stabilizing water tables, and protecting plant and animal diversity, much more manageable," reports the group. "If we cannot stabilize climate and we cannot stabilize population, there is not an ecosystem on Earth that we can save."*

Many population experts believe the answer lies in improving the health of women and children in developing nations. By reducing poverty and infant mortality, increasing women's and girls' access to basic human rights (health care, education, economic opportunity), educating women about birth control options and ensuring access to voluntary family planning services, women will choose to limit family size.

TED TALKS ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND POPULATION GROWTH

https://www.ted.com/talks/james_hansen_why_i_must_speak_out_about_climate_change#t-32186

https://www.ted.com/talks/hans_rosling_on_global_population_growth

https://www.ted.com/playlists/154/how_do_you_solve_a_problem_like

https://www.ted.com/talks/hans_rosling_religions_and_babies

Baby decisions - adding to the world's woes?

By Joanna Benn

How responsible is it to have children in a world whose environmental health is already under stress? That's the question Joanna Benn poses this week in the Green Room. On the other hand, she wonders, will a couple more hungry mouths make much difference?

I came out of my house last week and got caught up in a fleet of mothers and prams.

They were wearing a middle class yummy mummy uniform combining comfort and fashion - skinny jeans, UGG boots, black tops and large sunglasses. The prams were all state-of-the-art three wheeled, balanced, air-bagged mini cars that can fold to the size of a postage stamp and carry the week's shopping.

The urban mother tribe looked chic, proud and collectively cool. It got me thinking. I love kids, I love babies. I love the idea of the Brady Bunch, of close-knit large families and a stream of brothers and sisters of different heights with crazy hair. However, perhaps it's my age; suddenly everyone I know has children and it is confusing me.

I don't even know when it all happened. I remember conversations about university, jobs, flats, boyfriends and partners, but I seem to have missed the pre-baby musings. One minute people were childless - or child-free, depending on your viewpoint. The next - magic wand, small bang, plume of smoke - it was insta-family, complete with new people-carrier in the drive and more often than not, a house extension.

Two weeks ago, a single childless friend confessed she'd been looking into freezing her eggs. That apparently is not a taboo subject.

Nor are conversations about contraception, fertility patterns, mastitis,



post-partum depression and sex, child behaviour problems, sleepless nights, credit crunch worries or redundancy.

However, dare ask how green is it to have kids in a world of dwindling resources, vast global inequality, terrifying climate change scenarios and dying empty seas... then people get uncomfortable and usually defensive.

Ugly truths

I have couched the question a few times: "Why did you want children?"

The answers have usually been - "It seemed the next thing to do, we wanted to, it felt right, I couldn't imagine not..."

Push again - "Have you thought about what kind of world you are bringing them into to? Some climate change scenarios give us a 10 to 15 year window before things get very ugly and scary indeed."

Resounding silence.

Being an environmentalist is, quite frankly, an awkward thing. When I see babies, not only do I see the beauty, joy and miracle of life, I also see nappies, landfill waste, vast amounts of food and money needed, and a very shaky, unpredictable future.

According to United Nations projections, the world population will nearly stabilise at just above 10 billion people after 2200. That's a lot of people on one small planet.

When we talk about the environment and available natural resources, we bandy around statistics; yet none of it

seems to be about me or you or that guy that everyone talked about during the US election campaign, Joe the Plumber.

Mood swings

Ask any environmental organisation what it thinks about birth control; it'll sidestep the issue, and say it's not their place to comment.

If a commentator says there are too many people on the planet, their words smack of authoritarian dictatorships and human rights violations, and echo traces of unpalatable eugenics.

However, the reality is that every time we eat, switch on a light, get in a car, drink a beer, go on holiday or buy something to wear or use, we are adding to our environmental footprint.

Toddlers - small beings that they are - require almost unlimited nappies, a fair amount of food, and apparently a loungeful of loud, battery-powered plastic toys.

I am not saying we shouldn't have kids. They may well be the leaders of tomorrow, steering humanity into a just, equitable, fair and healthy future. The new generation may indeed succeed where all others have failed, and learn lessons of the past. Perhaps it's just my mood.

Or perhaps it's the media's fault that some of us feel as if humanity is sliding from one patch of melting ice to another in a murky sea of financial, environmental and social woes.

I am curious to know if I am the only 30-something woman who has these dilemmas, worrying about the planet's future and what we could and should do to ease the strain. Am I fretting needlessly? Because in the grand scheme of things, one or two more children in the world really make no difference, do they?

And as for the future - rising sea levels, bare former forests, desertification, empty seas and a few dollar bills floating in the wind - well that'll all take care of itself. - Won't it?

Links to Topical Articles

I decided not to have children for environmental reasons

Editor Lisa Hymas explains her views on population and why she decided to become a GINK – green inclinations, no kids

theguardian.com, Tuesday 27 September 2011

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2011/sep/27/not-have-children-environmental-reasons>

“... Real reproductive freedom has to include social acceptance of the decision not to reproduce. When we achieve that, it will mean less pressure on women and men who don't feel called to become parents. It will mean less of a stigma on people who may have wanted to become parents but didn't get the chance. It will mean a wider array of options for people who haven't decided yet. It will mean fewer children born to ambivalent or unhappy parents, getting us closer to the goal of "every child a wanted child." Finally, it will mean fewer Americans making a mess of the planet, and a little more breathing room for those of us who are already here or on the way.

I recognize that I am the population problem. I'm trying to be part of the solution. Let's make it easier for others to join me.”

Climate change: calling planet birth

Family size has become the great unmentionable of the campaign for more environmentally friendly lifestyles

Oliver Burkeman The Guardian, February 2010

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2010/feb/13/climate-change-family-size-babies>

“... Alan Weisman's 2007 bestseller, *The World Without Us*, pictures the earth in the hypothetical weeks after humanity vanishes – as weeds and then trees start to break through the pavements and wild animals began to take up residence again in the midst of abandoned cities. It's a paradisiacal vision, yet also a terrifying one, and Weisman isn't recommending that we try to bring it about. He reaches a slightly more modest conclusion: the world would easily heal, he argues, if each person brought a maximum of one child into it. (This is intended as a thought-experiment and an inspiration, not a call for coercive policies.) By 2075, the human presence on earth would have been reduced by half.

"At such far-more-manageable numbers... we would have the benefit of all our progress, plus the wisdom to keep our presence under control," Weisman writes. "That wisdom would come partly from losses and extinctions too late to reverse, but also from the growing joy of watching the world daily become more wonderful. The evidence wouldn't hide in statistics. It would be outside every human's window, where refreshed air would fill each season with more birdsong." ..."

Should This Be the Last Generation?

By PETER SINGER – New York Times, JUNE 6, 2010

<http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/06/06/should-this-be-the-last-generation/?module=Search&mabReward=relbias%3Ar%2C%7B%22%22%3A%22RI%3A15%22%7D>

“... Have you ever thought about whether to have a child? If so, what factors entered into your decision? Was it whether having children would be good for you, your partner and others close to the possible child, such as children you may already have, or perhaps your parents? For most people contemplating reproduction, those are the dominant questions. Some may also think about the desirability of adding to the strain that the nearly seven billion people already here are putting on our planet’s environment. But very few ask whether coming into existence is a good thing for the child itself...”

Having Children Brings High Carbon Impact

By KATE GALBRAITH – New York Times AUGUST 7, 2009

<http://green.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/08/07/having-children-brings-high-carbon-impact/?module=Search&mabReward=relbias%3Ar%2C%7B%22%22%3A%22RI%3A15%22%7D>

“... Having children is the surest way to send your carbon footprint soaring, according to a [new study from statisticians at Oregon State University](#).

The study found that having a child has an impact that far outweighs that of other energy-saving behaviors.

Take, for example, a hypothetical American woman who switches to a more fuel-efficient car, drives less, recycles, installs more efficient light bulbs, and replaces her refrigerator and windows with energy-saving models. If she had two children, the researchers found, her carbon legacy would eventually rise to nearly 40 times what she had saved by those actions.

“Clearly, the potential savings from reduced reproduction are huge compared to the savings that can be achieved by changes in lifestyle,” the report states.

The impact of children varies dramatically depending on geography: An American woman who has a baby will generate nearly seven times the carbon footprint of that of a Chinese woman who has a child, the study found...”

Visit <http://www.generationzero.org/> to find out how young New Zealanders are taking on the climate change challenge. Here is their vision statement:



Generation Zero

Climate change is the challenge of our generation, and young people are the inheritors of humanity's response to climate change.

For that reason – Generation Zero, a youth-led organisation, was founded with the central purpose of providing solutions for New Zealand to cut carbon pollution through smarter transport, liveable cities & independence from fossil fuels.

We are witnessing a global shift away from polluting fossil fuels, and as New Zealanders, we are fortunate enough to possess an abundance of opportunities to make this transition.

We can power our homes, our industries and our economy with clean safe energy. We can build more liveable cities with greater housing and transport choices to attract the best and brightest to New Zealand. We can move beyond fossil fuels and create a safer and healthier nation by doing so.

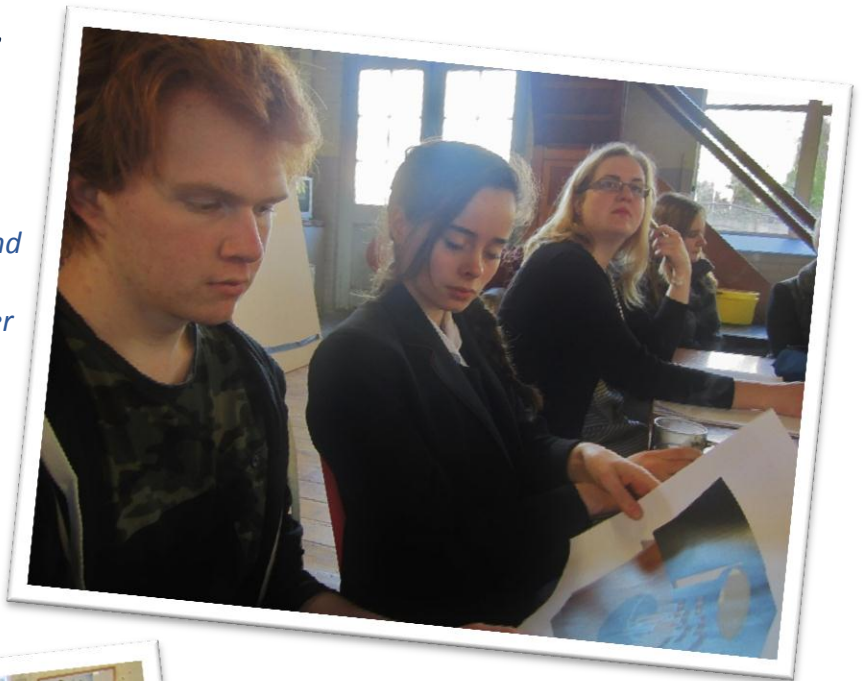
These solutions will not come from one minority, one political party, or one ideology. These solutions come from real New Zealanders, from all backgrounds joining together under a central vision.

It is time for New Zealand to step up, act responsibly and secure a safe thriving zero carbon Aotearoa.



Pictures from *Lungs*

Ambassadors Michael Glover from Kaikorai Valley College and Pippi Miller from Logan Park High School take a look at Peter King's set design at the first read-through and design presentation.



Actors Claire Dougan and Todd Emerson read the script together for the first time. Seen here with director, Stephanie McKellar-Smith and set and lighting designer, Peter King at the first read-through.

Ambassadors, Megan Robson and Taylor Aitken-Boyle from South Otago High School, Amber Procter and Michael Glover from KVC, Josephine Devereux from Logan Park High School, Toni Kennedy and Georgia Ryder from Otago Girls High School and Sophie O'Driscoll and Amber Wright from St Hilda's look on with director Stephanie McKellar-Smith and stage manager George Wallace as actors explore the end of the play during rehearsal.



