

Punk Rock by Simon Stephens



*“A stark, bracing and
eventually brutal portrait
of adolescent
relationships”*
– Daily Express

Fortune School Resource



Punk Rock

By Simon Stephens

Directed by Lara Macgregor

The play explores the pressures of teenage life as a group of educated, intelligent young people begin to plan for college and the rest of their lives. When a new classmate arrives, suddenly friendships are tested and allegiances shift amidst the pressures of everyday adolescence.

Director Lara Macgregor said, *“The desire to tackle the themes prevalent in this script and the idea of working in collaboration with the University of Otago formed a perfect synergy. In unison, we’re about to bring to life this riveting new work, which is both funny and shocking, and sadly, all too familiar.”*

With hormones raging and minimal adult supervision, nothing can mask the underlying and increasing tension in the group. These privileged grammar school students are suddenly faced with a very real danger that could swallow them whole.

Many thanks to Christy Nicholls, our Otago University Theatre Studies intern, for all her work in creating this education resource and to the other University interns and our wonderful Fortune School Ambassadors for their insight and contributions.

Please contact us with any thoughts, questions and feedback at education@fortunetheatre.co.nz

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Director's Note

"I am going to attempt to talk about the reasons for programming this play without talking about the reasons for programming this play.

SPOILER ALERT. There is an escalation of events happening in this world (indeed on the eve of our production week) that cannot be ignored. Dunedin has experienced first-hand the fallout of such events. However, to date, our school systems have not, and let's pray it stays that way. It is very rare to find a playwright with the skill, talent and bravery to tackle such subject matter and although many films have influenced this story there is a true theatricality at its heart. It is my hope that by seeing this story



unfold it will stop you in your tracks and make you think, discuss, empathise, debate, and ponder the pressures of success and society on our young people today.

This special project has combined Fortune forces with the Otago University Theatre Studies Programme. This first-time collaboration is all about providing a professional development process for actors and interns alike. Rigorous auditions saw

four 3rd Year acting students cast alongside emerging professional actors, and all remaining students interning across all departments in the theatre. The energy and discipline shown by everyone involved in the project is testament to the dedication of the tutors at Otago University. My sincere thanks to all involved for pulling out the stops to make this happen. The sheer positivity of everyone involved has created huge momentum at the theatre - for that we are all grateful.

This cast are exemplary, and I am eternally grateful for their commitment and bravery in telling this tale. Seasoned actors struggle with such subject matter. Watch and marvel. Think and talk. And understand again what challenges there are to growing up."

- Lara
Macgregor





A Note from Simon Stephens

Punk Rock is not a musical genre. Punk rock is not even as simple as a state of mind. Punk Rock is an energy of total interrogation. Born out of New York City in the wake of the collapse of the hippies it spanned the world on Tom Verlaine's guitar and Patti Smith's back and John Cale's violin. Some of the Brits GOT it but mainly Mark E Smith. The rest wanted to be Chuck Berry with cheaper amplifiers and swear words. Punk Rock is not about swear words. Punk Rock is not about class war. Class War only ever feeds into structures.

Punk Rock dismantles them Class War wears swastikas and communist

flags with equal irony. Punk Rock is not ironic. Punk Rock wasn't born on housing estates. Punk Rock was born in Art Schools. Punk Rock was never about redistribution of wealth. It was about savaging the idea of money. Punk Rock was never stupid. Punk Rock was never graceless. Punk Rock moved like a gazelle, read book after book after book and looked at every single kid in class at school and knew they were wrong and dared to tell them.

Young Men with broken hearts have always flirted with suicide. All over the world now young boys, broken hearted and horny are bringing others down with them. The passengers on their planes. The kids in their class. The shoppers at the mall. Maybe they should listen to Metallic KO instead.

The truth is I only ever called my play *Punk Rock*

because Tom Stoppard called his worst ever play *Rock and Roll* and in so doing denigrated the art form I love more than any other. He peppered his play with a soundtrack right out of the Rolling Stone Greatest Albums Ever Made. This was a gesture so execrable that I thought to myself "If you're going to have Rock and Roll Stoppard. I'm going to have Punk Rock." It just took me a few years to realise what I meant. - Simon Stephens

Simon Stephens' *Punk Rock* play list:

Scene 1: *Kerosene* by Big Black

Scene 2: *Eric Trip* by Sonic Youth

Scene 3: *Loose* by The Stooges

Scene 4: *The Woman Inside* by Cows

Scene 5: *Fell in Love with a Girl* by The White Stripes*

*We were not granted permission to use *In Love with a Girl* in this production. This song was replaced by *Get Free* by The Vines.

Scene 6: *Touch Me I'm Sick* by Mudhoney

Scene 7: *Desperate Man Blues* by Daniel Johnston



Author's Biography

Simon Stephens was born in Stockport, a city slightly larger than Dunedin in the Greater Manchester urban area, in 1971. He went to the all-male Stockport School (located over the road from the prestigious 500-year-old, fee-paying college, Stockport Grammar, a model for the fictional school in *Punk Rock*) before completing a History degree at the University of York. After graduating he lived for a time in Edinburgh, where he played in Ben Waller's art punk band, The Country Teasers, worked as a barman and trained as a teacher. He taught for a number of years in London's East End before becoming a professional playwright, initially supplementing his royalties by teaching on the Young Writers' Programme at the Royal Court Theatre in Chelsea, Britain's longest established theatre devoted

to developing new plays and playwrights.

His unpublished apprentice pieces in the early 1990s were written for the Edinburgh Festival fringe (the most successful of them, *Bring Me Sunshine*, later transferring to the Riverside Studios in London). The plays which established his reputation are generally set in either the East End or in Stockport (both in one instance) and most premiered at the theatres where he had periods as Writer in Residence, the Royal Court and the Royal Exchange in Manchester. They include *Bluebird* (1998), *Hérons* (2001), *Port* (2002, Pearson Award for Best New Play), *One Minute* (2003), *Country Music* (2004) and *On the Shore of the Wide World* which transferred from Manchester to the National Theatre and won the 2005 Olivier Award for Best New Play. The later *Harper Regan* (2008) was his first play written for the National Theatre.

In several of these plays teenagers are key figures, frequently experiencing dysfunctional family life stemming from alcohol abuse and/or domestic tragedy in an urban setting marked by violence and crime. Infused by Stephens' love of Chekhov, the plays are dialogue-driven and naturalistic, peopled with truthfully observed, fully rounded, usually working class characters. Although not strictly part of the 'in yer face' or 'blood and sperm' grouping of young British dramatists who rose to prominence in the early 1990s (Mark Ravenhill, Sarah Kane and Anthony Neilson the key figures) his work clearly shares some elements (such as at times shocking violence) with them. In a fascinating collaboration embracing both poles in his work, in 2010 he co-wrote *A Thousand Stars Explode in the Sky* with the veteran miniaturist dramatist, Robert Holman, and another leading 'in yer face' figure, David Eldridge.

Stephens toured New Zealand community theatres in early 2006 sponsored by the British Council and Playmarket, the New Zealand playwrights' agency and script development organisation. He brought with him a draft of *Motortown* and it was given a public rehearsed reading on the Fortune mainstage. It was the first of his plays in which large scale public

events (in that case the war in Iraq) form a backdrop to his characters' domestic experiences. Later examples include *Pornography* (2007), a response to the London bombings of July 2005, *Canopy of Stars* (2009) part of a multi-authored piece on the war in Afghanistan, *Three Kingdoms* (2011) with its background of European people-trafficking and *Blindsided* (2014) which returns to a Stockport setting at the time of the rise of Thatcherism.

These plays saw a rise in his popularity in the



German-speaking theatre and both *Motortown* and *Pornography* resulted in him being named Best Foreign Playwright of their years by the influential German theatre magazine, Theater Heute. As a result several of his more recent plays have premiered in Germany or been co-produced with European theatres and in some cases their stagecraft has moved in a more Continental direction. Examples include *Three Kingdoms*, *Trial of Ubu* (2010, in which the anarchist dramatist Jarry's satiric anti-hero is hauled before a contemporary international court of justice), *Wastwater* (2011) and *Carmen Disruption* (2014, a deconstruction of Bizet's opera).

He has also prepared acting versions of several European classics. In addition to Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (which formed the basis of a starry West End and Broadway production) and his personal favourite play, Chekov's *The Cherry Orchard*, he has also introduced the major living Norwegian dramatist, Jon Fosse, to English language audiences with a version of *I Am the Wind* (2011), and *The Funfair* (2015), based on Kasimir und Karoline by the between-the-wars Austrian dramatist, Odon von Horvath.

Stephens is best known internationally for his popular success, a 2012 stage adaptation of Mark

Haddon's novel, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time*, which premiered at the National Theatre (and was screened world-wide as part of the NT Live programme) before transferring to the West End and Broadway. Still running on both sides of the Atlantic it won the Olivier Award for Best New Play in London and the Outer Critics' Circle Award for Outstanding New Play on Broadway. Again at its centre is a troubled teenager from a dysfunctional family background who finds himself caught up in a violent crime.

Other recent work includes *Morning* (2012) a coming-of-age play about teenage friends about to follow different post-school paths and *Birdland* (2014) centering on a rock star in the last stages of a world tour. His first American commission, though with a London setting, is *Heisenberg*, a relationship comedy involving a woman and an older man which is currently playing at the Manhattan Theater Club. He is preparing for the London opening in September of *Song from Faraway* in which a young Dutchman living in New York is asked by his mother to return home following a bereavement. The music for the production will be by American indie rocker, Mark Eitzel, with whom Stephens previously collaborated on a musical

set in a run-down Brighton hotel, *Marine Parade* (2010).

In a prolific decade and a half of writing for the stage he has had little time for work in other media. His radio plays are *Five Letters Home to Elizabeth* (2001) and *Digging* (2003) and for television he wrote a version of *Pornography* (2009) and the original screenplays *Dive* (2009) and *Cargese* (2013).

Punk Rock opened in London at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, in 2009 with the production then transferring to the Royal Exchange in Manchester where it won the Manchester Evening News Award for Best Production of the year. The play has since been staged off-Broadway and in a number of European cities. It received its New Zealand premiere in 2012 in a production by The Outfit Theatre Company at The Basement Theatre in Auckland.

Stephens is a lucid commentator on his own work and this is how he introduces *Punk Rock* in the foreword to Volume Three of his Collected Plays: "I have spent a long time over the past ten years writing about seventeen year old characters. My plays, it strikes me, are as populated by seventeen year olds as they are by alcoholics and dead children. There is

something latent about being seventeen. You stand on the edge of a life. You're charged by a desire to live and that desire is often contained. I wanted to return to that age again. [Spoiler alert] Gus van Sant's film *Elephant* is one of the most significant films of the last decade. [...] The notion that adolescent fear and horror should become not merely suicidal but murderous chills me. It was my fear that propelled me to want to write. [Alert ends] I had spent some time in the years before writing *Punk Rock* teaching playwriting in private schools. In the years before that I had worked primarily in comprehensive schools and prisons and young offenders' teams. I was struck by the way in which the same fears and doubts and desires that had inspired me in the work I'd done in comprehensive schools were played out in private schools. Sometimes they were played out with

more eloquence and often with the safety valve of economic stability. It was as though there was something in the metabolism of the young in England, quite apart from economic circumstance, that was experiencing trauma. I was drawn to writing about the students I met there. It was no coincidence to me that the same kind of educated, affluent, disaffected youths who'd captured my attention had also been responsible for some of the most compelling music of my lifetime. The real punk spirit, I felt, wasn't born out of class dissidence but out of existential horror. I found the name of the play in that music."

Like Stephen Poliakoff before him, Stephens is famous for writing plays to a repetitive musical soundtrack. On high rotate as he wrote *Punk Rock* was Kerosene by Big Black.

Alister McDonald
Fortune Theatre Dramaturg



Influences

Simon Stephens is very open about his influences in writing *Punk Rock*. Not only the 1999 Columbine shootings, which he says feels “like the start of the 21st century” but particularly Gus Van Sant’s film *Elephant* based on Columbine shootings. (Watch for a sneaky reference to the film when William talks about an album of the same name by The White Stripes.) He thought it was important to show that what happens on the other side of the world can actually happen anywhere. He also credits Lindsay Anderson film *If*, Alan Bennett’s *The History Boys* and the influential 1906 play *Spring Awakenings* by Frank Wedekind.

Columbine

The Columbine massacre “was the bloodiest, creepiest, most vivid school attack” anyone had ever seen. It still remains in people’s minds to this day. Two teenagers, Eric Harris (18) and Dylan Klebold (17), shot and killed 13 people within the school’s grounds (12 were classmates, one PE teacher) and wounded two dozen people. They had to improvise their plans to destroy the school after their homemade bombs didn’t detonate. Instead, Harris and Klebold used an “arsenal of shotguns, semiautomatic machine

pistols, pipe bombs, knives and small carbon dioxide canister bombs.” It was the first massacre to be played out in real time that the public could follow. Afterwards, they took their own lives. Both them and 10 of their victims lay dead in the school’s library.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/apr/17/columbine-massacre-gun-crime-us>

Anarchy in the UK, or what’s Punk Rock got to do with it?

Punk Rock was a 1970’s music genre that grew out of New York and London with bands like The Ramones, The Sex Pistols, The Clash and many, many more. It quickly spread around the world (check out Dunedin’s own The Enemy, for example, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p8ev-GzGZN0>) and has had huge and lasting influence. Punk Rock was just as much about the attitude, the look and the anti-establishment angst and youthful anger, as the music itself.

Although the play isn’t about punk rock music, it has a lot of punk rock feeling:

“Everything human beings do finishes up bad in the end. Everything good human beings ever make is built on something monstrous. Nothing lasts. We certainly won’t...”

Simon Stephens starts each scene in *Punk Rock* with a



carefully chosen punk song.

Punk was ever present in the writing of the play. Simon Stephens had *Kerosene* by Big Black on repeat the whole time. It surely infused some punk pace and rhythm into the play.

Simon says 'Punk rock is mistakenly considered working class but it more often came out of art school than housing estates. It is the musical manifestation of the anger and frustration a lot of middle-class kids feel. It cuts to the quick of that energy.'

<http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2009/aug/30/simon-stephens-theatre-punk-rock>

"It was no coincidence to me that the same kind of educated, affluent, disaffected youths who'd captured my attention had also been responsible for some of the most compelling music of my lifetime. The real punk spirit, I felt, wasn't born out of class dissidence but out of existential horror. I found the name of the play in that music." - Simon Stephens, *Collected Works Vol. 3*.

Setting: Stockport Grammar

Although the school in *Punk Rock* is referred to as “a fee-paying Grammar school in Stockport”, we know that Simon Stephens based the school on prestigious Stockport Grammar in his home town right across the road from his old high school. Stockport Grammar was established in 1487 making it one of oldest in Britain.

Simon Stephens often talks about how his high school experiences in Stockport, Manchester influenced not only *Punk Rock* but his work as a writer.

The Scotsman, 21 September 2010

Stephens grew up in Stockport and went to secondary school at an all-boys comprehensive, known prosaically as Stockport School. Immediately over the road was Stockport Grammar, a 500-year-old fee-paying school for which pupils had to sit an entrance exam. The young Stephens would look enviously at the grand red-brick building and fantasise about what life would be like inside. It dominated his teenage imagination.

"There's so much of me in this play and so much of my childhood and particularly my teenage years," says Stephens who, even today, has never set foot in the grammar school. "It's a synthesis of an imagined world, an experienced world and a researched world. My school was the worst of both worlds. There was none of the civilising influence of the girls and a lot of tension and aggro. The grammar school was always the imagined 'other' that I never experienced."

It continued to haunt his adult imagination, which is why he thought it would make a perfect setting for a play about the simmering pressures of today's goal-driven society. *Punk Rock* fits in with a pattern of Stephens's plays that, typically, worry away at the stresses of 21st-century life and those headline-grabbing global events that seem so inexplicable.

<http://www.scotsman.com/news/interview-simon-stephens-playwright-1-811347>

The Guardian - 19 May 2015 – Simon Stephens

"I went to an all-boys comprehensive, a school where academic achievement was viewed with suspicion and where girls, with their civilising influence and nicer smells, were absent altogether. I was about 17 before I met more than a couple of people who liked the same music as I did. Perhaps such a mentality was also perfect for the emerging writer. My sense of being a loner was reinforced in a schoolyard where the unconventional was perceived as just being fucking odd. Such a sense of the conventional was ballast to define myself against. Creativity became an act of defiance. Literature and drama carried with them the possibility of escape.

For a bespectacled, spotty, lanky boy with a weird love for the *Jesus and Mary Chain*, Stockport town centre was also a fine breeding ground for watchfulness. It felt like a violent town to go shopping in. It felt like a violent town to go drinking in on a Friday or Saturday night. I quickly learned to be watchful. It could kick off at any minute. This kind of watchfulness, exercising a sense of what people were about to do next, was perfect playwriting preparation. I pay my mortgage by considering the things that my characters are about to do next. Maybe I learned this as a 17-year-old, at the Merseyway shopping centre at 11.30 every Friday and Saturday night."

<http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2015/may/19/simon-stephens-manchester-home-funfair>

Get your schools straight

English Schools	NZ Schools
<p>State Schools: Free tuition with voluntary fees. Until 1870 all schools were privately funded, since then a state system has developed. Now 93% of English students attend government funded state schools.</p>	<p>Public or State schools: Government funded and operated. Free tuition though many require a donation of school fees.</p>
<p>Public schools or Independent Schools: A public school is usually prestigious and historic, charges fees and is privately funded. Public schools are also called independent schools as they are independent of some of the regulations that apply to state schools. Some public/independent schools are highly selective with admission based on academic testing and family background as well being financially restrictive. Although, there are scholarships available like the one Chadwick has in <i>Punk Rock</i>.</p>	<p>Private schools: Fee paying schools, with small assistance from the government. Many are religious or have a special character.</p>
<p>Grammar Schools: In medieval times a grammar school taught Latin and prepared younger boys for the ancient universities or church education. Grammar schools are selective schools whose students must pass an exam to be admitted. Most Grammar schools are now state funded but to make things more confusing some Grammar schools are independent (private), fee paying schools like Stockport Grammar and the Grammar school in <i>Punk Rock</i></p>	<p>Grammar schools later spread throughout the commonwealth. Some, like Auckland Grammar, remain boys boarding and day schools with a focus on high academic achievement.</p>
<p>Comprehensive schools: Schools whose students are not selected based on academic achievement or an entrance exam. The majority of state schools are comprehensives.</p>	



Stockport Grammar in the snow

Mental Health and Schools

We were discussing the pressure of the school system in England and New Zealand with our fabulous Ambassadors.

*John McGlashan
Ambassador, Philip Plant,
kindly supplied this recent
article from The Guardian,
which we would like to
share.*

The Guardian, 6th June, 2015:

Homework could be abolished by one of Britain's most prestigious independent schools to tackle an "epidemic" of teenage depression and anxiety.

"We've created this epidemic of anxiety for ourselves as a society, and if our obligation as educators is to try to the best of our ability to set young people up as best we can for whatever the future may hold, then to ignore this whole area or to trivialise it is really irresponsible." - Eve Jardine-Young, principal of Cheltenham ladies a 162-year-old boarding and day school in Gloucestershire.
<http://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/jun/06/cheltenham-ladies-college-considers-homework-ban-over-student-welfare>

Here are some other related articles that talk about the kind of pressures and



mental health issues faced by students, particularly in schools like the one in Punk Rock.

The Telegraph, 13th August, 2014:

Schools anxious to maintain or improve their league-table positions treat their pupils not as individuals with various strengths and weaknesses, but as components on a production line. Faulty ones get chucked before they can harm the brand. One highly successful school stopped offering Drama at GCSE last year after a few kids actually – wait for it – got Bs. Oh, the horror! Far too risky to go on timetabling a creative subject with unpredictable marking that could bring down the school's grade average.

And so, by degrees, the thing we call education is eroded.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationopinion/11031251/Is-the-crippling-anxiety-over-exams-what-we-want-for-our-children.html>

The Telegraph, 27th April, 2015:

Mike Grenier, house master at Eton College, said that relentless testing was leading to schools which were "rife with anxiety".

Sixty-five prep schools are due to take part in the Highfield School conference, giving delegates the chance to share best practice in mental health awareness.

"Some of the areas that we specifically address are perfectionism and a fear of failure – which I know a lot of highly selective schools are confronting."

He added that it was part of the job of schools to address this pressure, and those associated with modern life. "All schools should have a proactive and reactive mental health strategy," he said. "Modern life does seem to be creating additional pressures for children of all ages."

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/11566364/Relentless-testing-leading-to-schools-rife-with-anxiety.html>

BBC News, 28th March, 2015:

Proposer Bella Hewes, a special needs teacher from Oxford, said the expertise to support pupils' mental health was "just not there".

"Where are the school nurses? Where are the school counsellors? Where are the expert social workers who have the time and resilience to support families in crisis? They have been made redundant!"

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-32075251>

Do you think New Zealand schools are putting the same pressure on their students?

As part of his background research Hamish Annan, who plays Chadwick, took a look at the pressures faced by children at schools like the one in Punk Rock.

The Problem with Rich Kids

The offspring of the affluent are more distressed than other youth. They show disturbingly high rates of substance use, depression, anxiety, eating disorders, cheating, and stealing. They are from communities dominated by white-collar, well-educated parents. They attend schools distinguished by rich academic curricula, high standardised test scores, and diverse extracurricular opportunities. And show serious levels of maladjustment as teens, displaying problems that tend to get worse as they approach college.

On average, serious levels of depression, anxiety, or somatic symptoms occur twice as often or more among these students, compared to national rates. The evidence all points to one cause underlying this:

pressure for high achievement. The children of affluent parents expect to excel at school and in multiple extracurriculars and also in their social lives. They feel a relentless sense of pressure that plays out in excessive substance use; "We work hard—and we play hard!" It plays out in crippling anxiety and depression, about anticipated or perceived achievement "failures."

The high pressure is experienced as parental criticism. Children come to feel that any failure to accomplish will seriously diminish the acceptance and esteem with which their parents regard them.

Perceived parental criticism is linked with a variety of adjustment problems: depressive and anxiety symptoms as well as acting-out behaviours. It's important to note that adult criticism is not annulled by attention or even affection. Psychologists have established that disparaging words or attitudes have a much stronger impact than words of praise—by at least a

factor of three.

One of the most established facts of psychology is that people evaluate themselves by comparing themselves with others. The phenomenon of relative deprivation becomes the psychological cost of life surrounded by the extremely successful. This promotes envy. Upper-middle-class school students, especially girls, experienced significantly more envy of peers who they felt surpassed them in popularity, attractiveness, academics, and sports.

There is an inflated sense of control over one's life. Affluence leads people to believe they are wholly responsible for their own success. The wealthier people become, the more they believe that they can control many aspects of their life and design exactly the kind of life they want. They come to expect perfection.

How These Pressures Affect Mental Health

These pressures for success negatively impact on mental health. Over the past five years, there has been a significant increase in the percentage of students seeking mental health services.

The most common result of this pressure is stress, which an overwhelming amount of literature shows is extremely detrimental to mental health, especially for high school students who are still developing cognitively.



Depression, anxiety disorders, panic attacks, suicide, and other mental health disorders and resulting behaviours, insomnia, muscle pain, high blood pressure, and weakened immune system can all result from stress. It can also contribute to the development of major illnesses; heart disease, depression, and obesity. It would be conjecture to assume that the pressure to succeed at school was the prime driving force behind suicide.

- Hamish Annan

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<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/manage-stress.aspx>



Fortune Theatre was proud to support Youthline Otago by holding a special fundraising preview. Youthline wrote about these issues from a New Zealand perspective.

Pressures on New

Zealand's youth: Today's young people in Aotearoa New Zealand are growing up in a world quite unlike any experienced by previous generations. Their world is more complex, diverse and accessible, opportunities abound, and travel beckons. They are highly interconnected and yet individualistic. Demands are instant and spontaneous. Jobs beckon and riches are within reach, yet many find life a constant struggle of survival. Definitions of self, success, gender, happiness and self-worth are being redefined. Expectations are higher than ever before in all areas of life. So, how does a young person negotiate such a bewildering set of choices and expectations in a world that is so fluid and expects so much? Our young people ask themselves; Why am I not fabulously successful? Popular? Belong? Loved? Why do I feel scared? Lonely? Confused?

As a result, amongst our many issues, Youthline is seeing a major rise in anxiety, loneliness, and depression. They live in a world where such expectations, from parents, friends, society and self weight down heavily on their shoulders.

Issues affecting young people today:

The top issue that is presented through the Youthline support service is depression, which makes up 15%. This is followed by family relationships (14%), peer relationships (14%), partner relationships (12%), suicide (12%), self-harm (9%), fear and anxiety (7%), bullying (4%), grief and loss (2%), and sexual violence (2%).

Youthline provides a wide range of easily accessible youth focused services for young people, by young people. These can be accessed in a variety of ways, including in person, by phone or via internet services, thus allowing for high levels of anonymity.

To access the Youthline Helpline free call 0800 376 633 and free txt 234.

Set & Lighting Design: A Chat with Martyn Roberts

The Ambassadors had an opportunity to have a chat with Martyn Roberts, the set and lighting designer for Punk Rock. They had some great questions, learnt about designing, discussed Martyn's choices, and to top it all off - they got to see the set being built! Here are some notes from the chat.

The script clearly defines the set should be part of the senior school, a library that no one visits frequently. Martyn has taken this idea further. The library has been neglected and left to its own devices as if it is a part of the school that is untouched, possibly waiting for redevelopment.

Martyn said he talked with Lara about going in this direction because, "I don't think the students would have got themselves to the point they do, specifically William, if there was some form of teacher intervention and oversight. They are left in a *Lord of the Flies* situation and they go rampant with their thoughts and feelings and emotions."

Martyn said the lack of adult presence is vital, so the library has to feel abandoned, isolated and far from adults.



Ambassadors Hannah Jopson, Mhairi Rowbottom, Sam van der Weerden, and Jamie Moore, and Education Liaison Assistant, Christy Nicholls, listen to Martyn Roberts as he discusses the Punk Rock set.



By using a ceiling, Martyn wanted to create a feeling of claustrophobia by virtually enclosing the students in a cage. The ceiling provides a "hermetically sealed environment – a box to contain the action – to contain the students."

The ceiling adds weight to the look of the space and plays with the sense of perspective. So from an audience's point of view, the space appears to be slightly bigger than it really is.

The ceiling should also assist with sound projection, helping the actor's voices to be heard and making the gun shots shockingly loud.

The set also includes a secret door through the lockers. This is to make the transitions between the scenes easier for the actors, while giving the impression that there is only one way

in and one way out of the old library - which is vital.

Martyn asked the Ambassadors if they had common rooms or spaces in their schools which they could compare to the old library. Two said their yr.13 common room was quite secluded and seldom visited by teachers. Another Ambassador said their common rooms were actually more like alcoves with a hall running through them – quite the opposite of being hidden away and separate from the rest of the school. They wondered about the thinking behind these designs from a new perspective.

In the original production of *Punk Rock* the set made reference to the dark, traditional, old architecture of British grammar schools. Martyn wanted to go in a different direction by using light colours and bright lighting, with plenty of light

coming through windows. He liked the idea that something so dark can happen in a space that is so light.

Martyn used coloured chairs to be bright spots against the light institutional mint green walls. In New Zealand this green was used in government institutions and schools. "It's a nod to the green used in old psychiatric hospitals. The colour was thought to be calming."

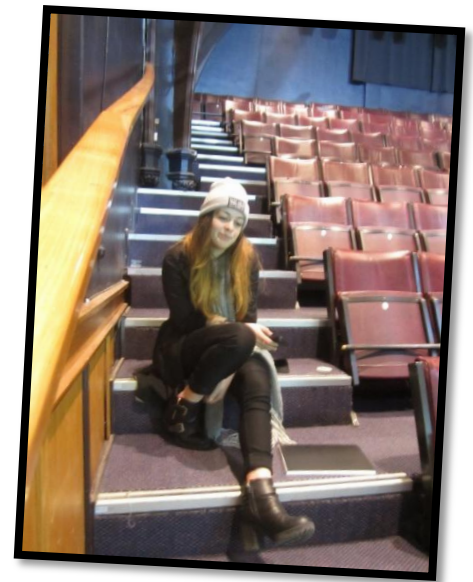
Martyn wants to include a few remnants of the library's former days, like old school science pictures of skeletons and eye charts. However, Martyn does not want the set to be too cluttered. The set will be

scruffy, with rips in the walls from peeling paint.

The plan is to "dirty up" the set. Martyn said he was going to get the actors to add their own little touches to their lockers and add graffiti to the set. "These characters absolutely own the space, so their rubbish and stuff will be everywhere, shoved into corners, lockers filled with leftover belongings. Overall, it will look slightly feral."

The actors will get to decorate their lockers and, during rehearsals, litter the set with their Coke cans, papers, and coffee cups. The 'dirtying up' of the set will be continuous through the production.

The Ambassadors asked Martyn about his training and the way he works. He said he first began lighting design by helping friends when he studied at Victoria, but there were no lighting or set design courses at that time in New



Logan Park Ambassador Jamie Moore watches the build after learning about lighting and designing the Punk Rock set.

Zealand. He feels that the up side of missing a formal education was that he got to experiment and discover for himself what works and what doesn't. He got to break rules without knowing what the rules were. He encouraged everyone, if they have the chance, not to lock themselves into conventions, but to play and try different plans, ideas, and methods.

When asked if he did follow any rules, he recommended lighting from back to front, not from front to back.

"It's very easy when you are shining lights on to the stage from the front to say – I've got enough light now, I can see everybody. However, highlights and sidelights are forgotten. So start from the back and work your way to the front. By the time you get to the front, you should hardly need any lights - only a very few to pick the eyes."



Martyn Roberts shows Ambassador Hannah Jopson a Lycra panel that will be used as part of the ceiling. Production Management Assistant, David Stock and Lighting and Set Assistant, Mac Veitch paint window frames.



He told the Ambassadors that he likes to plan his lighting design in the rehearsal room. He tries to imagine the architecture of light in a three dimensional form and only use lights that are necessary in helping to create specific moment in the production.

“Every moment of the play is a photograph. So look at every moment to see how the picture changes - the picture supports the action, the picture supports the mood.”

He says that for him it is during plotting that everything falls into place. “This is the moment when the magic and the artistry comes together for me.”

The *Punk Rock* set allows little use of back or top lighting. There is a lot of side lighting which should look like natural light coming through the windows. There is also light from what Martyn refers to as “10 o'clock and 2 o'clock” directions. He said that these lights, along with a high back light, are the most important - not the middle light coming straight onto actors’ faces,



which can “flatten out” the actors.

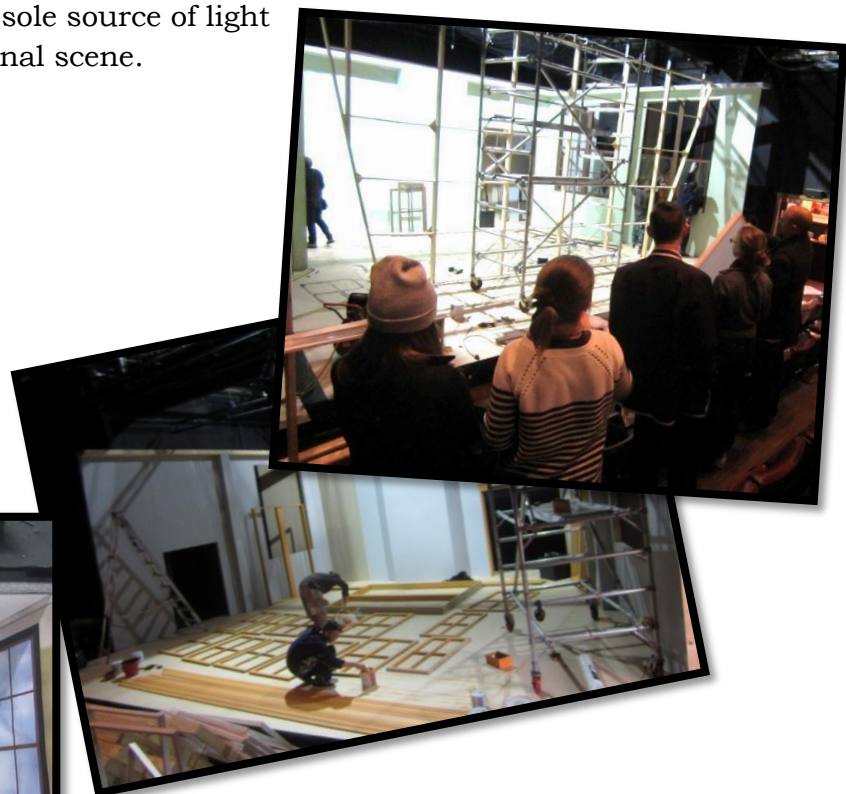
With the side window lights, “we start heading into a 9:30 and 2:30 angle and we’re entering the realm of dance lighting, which creates a very three dimensional and sculptured look. It makes the actors pop.”

When the ceiling comes down, the light will come through the Lycra material, illuminating the panels. Martyn is hoping to make that the sole source of light for the final scene.



Martyn calls this effect, “burning the retina.” The audience is left with that final image, of those two silhouettes, on their retinas.

Hopefully this will be one of many images the audience takes home with them.



Wilma from *The Flintstones* stands in for an actor on the model of Martyn’s *Punk Rock* set.

Costumes

Georgia Davenport is assisting Costume Designer, Maryanne Wright-Smyth as part of the Otago University Theatre Studies collaboration. They have created school uniforms for this fictional school that are loosely based on Stockport Grammar. However they didn't want to duplicate the Stockport Grammar uniform and were very careful not to get close to any local school uniforms.

Georgia researched some history of school uniforms. She found that New Zealand uniforms were very similar to British uniforms. While many British colonies have moved away from this style, New Zealand has retained it as we have a very similar climate.

Georgia discovered that English schools, as a rule, do not use tartan. However, they decided to use tartan as it is typically worn in Dunedin schools with their Scottish heritage and because the Gordon Tartan worked very well with their colour palate.



Christy Nicholls, Education Liaison Assistant, looks on as Georgia attaches gold edging to a blazer.



Actual Stockport Grammar students in their uniforms, Nicholas' Moschino jacket, and uniform costumes for Cissy and Chadwick, including the special scholarship tie that singles him out.

The costumes are dark blues and greens with gold highlights. These are darker colours that will not blend into the set.

The girls tend to wear their skirts much shorter in English schools. So these kilts are short.

Some of the characters have special accessories. Maryanne wanted the costumes to show how some of these students try to push the limits and use accessories as status symbols. Lilly wants to stand as a new girl in school and show her individuality and fashion style by wearing boots and a Lily Allen leopard print coat. Director Lara Macgregor wanted to be sure that Chadwick's Kanye West coat looks like his attempt to try and be something that he is not. Sadly, his efforts result in more bullying. Nicholas, on the other hand, easily pulls off his Moschino puffer.



Georgia Davenport, Costume Assistant, sews a school crest onto a blazer sourced from Otago Girls' High School.



The Gun and Bodily Fluids

Christy Nicholls took notes during a "gun and blood" rehearsal.

On the 23rd June, the gun was shot for the first time on stage making us all jump in surprise! The blood and urine packs were also used for the first time.

As stage manager, Monique Webster is in charge of the gun. She gets it out of the safe, loads it and hands it, with safety on, to Jared Kirkwood (William) just before he enters. Monique retrieves the gun and returns it to the safe.

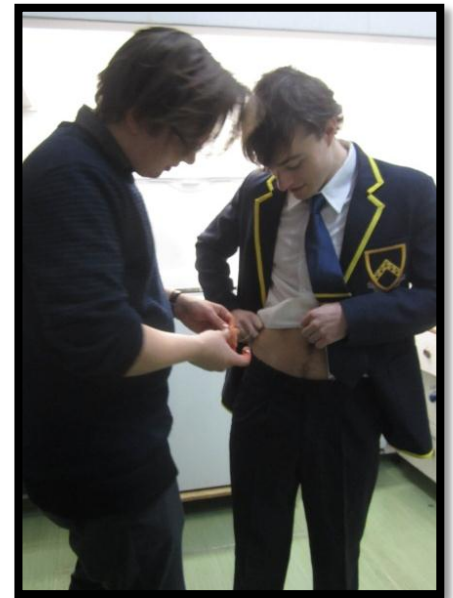
The gun is shot five times. First, William enters and shoots the ceiling, causing plaster to fall. He then, shoots Bennett twice, Cissy once and finally Nicholas. William hugs Tanya, stands

on the table and puts the gun in his mouth to shoot himself, but chooses not to.

Every moment with the gun is practiced like any other choreography; where and when it is pointed, when the safety is turned off and on.

The heavy, 8mm gun can only be used with blanks. If it was to be used with real bullets it would blow up in the user's hand.

Even though it is not a 'real' gun, safety rules have to be followed, including a safe distance between the actors, as shell casings fly out of the gun, there is a flare and the noise can be damaging at close range. Jared wears an ear plug.



Props Master, George Wallace attaches the trigger of the urine pack to Jared Kirkwood (William).

Props master George Wallace has been experimenting for weeks with creating, placing and triggering blood packs. He has also been coordinating with wardrobe on the blood itself.

The blood had to be non-staining and still look realistic. There is a soaking bucket standing by for the shirts and some actors may need to shower during scene six, before curtain call.

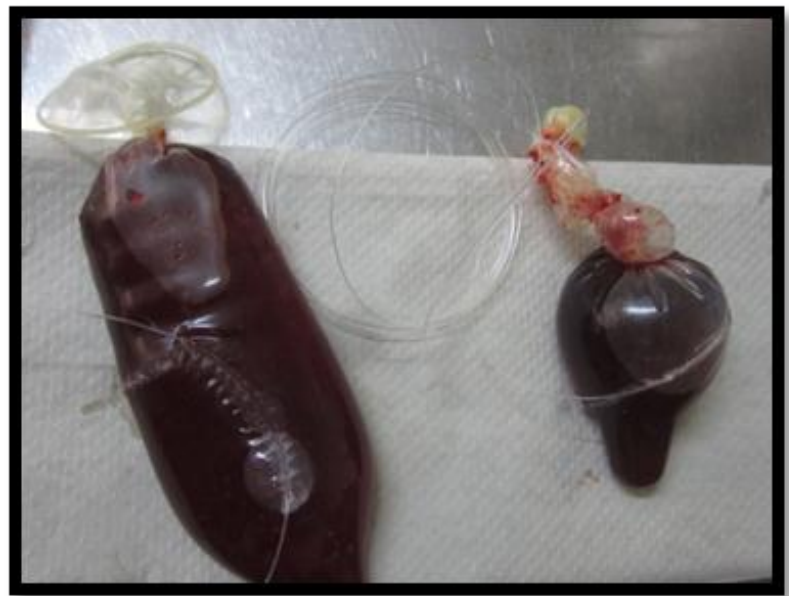
Blood packs need to be placed expertly on the actor's bodies or the blood may leak or be set off too early. Instead of a blood pack, Andrew Coshan (Nicholas) has a tube filled with blood attached to a small gas cylinder, so, when it is triggered, blood sprays on the window behind him.



Ailis Oliver-Kerby (Cissy) after her first attempt with her blood pack.

Along with triggering their blood packs at the right moment, the actors also need to fall a realistic way that allows the audience to see the blood. If any of these technical factors ring false the scene will lose its dramatic power for the audience.

William urinates in his trousers when standing on the table. Today the urine pack was not successful. William's school trousers are too dark and thick so the fake urine was not able to be seen. So it's back to the drawing board.



The blood packs, known as squibs in the trade, are made of condoms filled with fake blood. Catgut or fishing line is superglued on to the condoms. When the actors pull the line the super glue tears the condom releasing the blood.

Props Update

Although the blood splatter effect for Nicholas worked well during experiments in the Fortune shower, it was unreliable on stage. Director, Lara Macgregor could not take the chance that it would not work correctly and take the audience out of the reality of the play at this crucial moment. So Andrew Coshan (Nicholas) will use a blood pack too.

It is just as well, then, that props master George Wallace has plenty of spare condoms. He said getting a prescription for 150 condoms was one of his most embarrassing moments working on props for Fortune.

Nurse: So, this is a lot of condoms.
George: It's for work.
Nurse: And what is your work?
George: Oh, no, it's for blood packs.
Nurse: For blood packs...?

Urine

Little could be done to see the urine without changing William's good quality school trousers. However, the effect still works as the audience can clearly see the pool of water that collects on the table where William is standing.

Props like the blood and Urine packs have a powerfully visceral affect on the audience. But they must work perfectly or they could ruin the climactic scene of the play. So fingers crossed for well-behaved blood and urine packs.



Jared Kirkward fires the gun for the first time in rehearsal.

Meet the Actors

Hamish Annan - playing Chadwick



Hamish is a third year University of Otago student completing his BA in Theatre Studies and Psychology. Originally from Te Awamutu, he is now a Dunedin local and actively involved in the theatre community. He is an actor, writer, corporate entertainer. In 2012 he staged his first show, *Paradox*, in the Hamilton Fringe Festival. Since then he has performed in *Oracle* (2013) and *Complete Reality* (2014). Early 2015 saw him play a feature role in Counterpoint Productions' *The Boy On A Swing*. As a playwright, two of his works, *2'36"* and *Dear Diary*, were staged this year at Allen Hall Theatre. *Punk Rock* sees his debut into professional theatre.

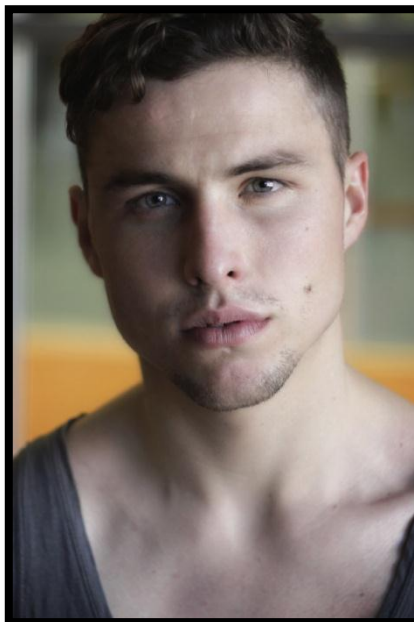
What is your character afraid of?

"Being attacked by the bullies at school. More importantly, though, not getting into Cambridge University."

What is in your character's locker?

"My maths, physics, French, general studies, and English textbooks. My workbooks. My pens, pencils, erasers, calculator, ruler."

Taylor Barrett - playing Bennett



Taylor is a recent graduate from Toi Whakarri: NZ Drama School. His recent acting credits include: *GO SOLO: Unbroken*, *As You Like It*, *The Last days of Judas Iscariot*, and *Assassins*. In 2010 he was part of the Shakespeare Globe Centre NZ Young Shakespeare Company that performed *Macbeth* at the Globe Theatre in London, England. Taylor was born and bred in Invercargill. He is pleased to be performing alongside an outstanding cast so close to home. This is Taylor's debut

performance at Fortune Theatre.

What is your character afraid of?

"Public humiliation."

What is in your character's locker?

"An empty bottle of whisky and empty packets of ciggys."

Andrew Coshan - playing Nicholas



Andrew is an Otago University student in his fourth year studying Performing Arts and Theatre Studies. Having studied numerous styles of dance for eight years and singing for two years, most of Andrew's previous stage performances have been in musical theatre. Credits include *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat*, *Les Miserables*, *Hairspray*, *Mamma Mia*, and most recently in *Slaughterhouse* at Allen Hall Theatre. Andrew is currently relishing the opportunity to gain further experience as

an actor in *Punk Rock*, and is thoroughly enjoying the challenge of acting on stage without dancing or singing. Andrew is thrilled to have been cast in what is his first professional production and is thankful to all of the people at Fortune who have contributed to his vast growth and learning as an actor over the last few months.

What is your character afraid of?

"Confrontation, failure, disappointing the parents and spiders."

What is in your character's locker?

"Running shoes, sports clothes, deodorant, protein shakes/bars, water bottle, a towel and of course his school books."

Sinead Fitzgerald - playing Lucy (understudying Lilly)



Sinead is in her final year of her Theatre Studies degree at Otago University where she has regularly acted in the university's Lunchtime Theatre Productions. She starred as "Sinead" in

Counterpoint's ukulele cabaret *Feminist Fridays*, as Janet Frame in the New Zealand film *No Ordinary Sheila*, and has worked on Derek Cianfrance's Hollywood film *Light Between Oceans* as Olga Roennfeldt. This will be her first professional onstage experience.

Ross Johnston - playing Dr Richard Harvey



Ross's association with the Fortune is a lengthy one dating back to performances in the original Fortune Theatre in the Athenaeum Building when his beard wasn't 'blonde'. He most recently appeared at the Fortune as 'Harry' in *Pitman Painters* and in the Talking House production of *The Keys are in the Margarine*.

Jared Kirkwood - playing William



Jared, who is from Wanganui, began his training at Whitireia in 2011 under the Stage and Screen Arts degree. While at drama school Jared won the 48hr film festival for the Wellington region and also gained experience on the professional stage. Since graduating he has worked in film and theatre productions around New Zealand, including performing at the recent Festival of Colour in Wanaka. Jared is excited to be working with the talented team involved in *Punk Rock*, and to be visiting Dunedin and performing at Fortune Theatre for the first time. "It is an absolute privilege to do what you love and travel at the same time" he says.

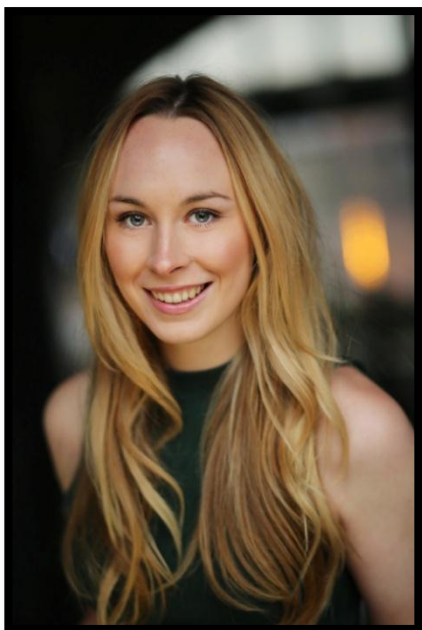
What is your character afraid of?

"William is scared of getting mugged on the street."

What is in your character's locker?

"Rolling Stones magazine, a half full packet of cigarettes. A scarf, a few pens and pencils and a Radiohead poster."

Ailis Oliver-Kerby playing Cissy



Ailis has trained in acting, musical theatre, ballet, dance and singing from a young age. She was born in New Zealand, lived in Hong Kong until she was 16 when she moved to England to go to Tring Park School for the Performing Arts. While there, Ailis performed in many shows including *Jesus Christ Superstar* (2011) and *Once Upon a Time at the Adelphi* (2012) at the Shaw Theatre, London.

Ailis moved to Dunedin in 2012 and is in her final year at University of Otago doing a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre Studies and Media, Film and Communication. Ailis has performed as Ali in Taieri Musical's *Mamma Mia!*, and Penny in Musical Theatre Dunedin's *Hairspray* (2013) for which she won the 2013 Otago Southland Theatre Award for best supporting actress. Most recently she enjoyed

being "sixteen going on seventeen" again as Liesl in Taieri Musical's *The Sound of Music* (2015).

What is your character afraid of?

"Failure, social suicide, my mum's mood swings, getting fat, losing social status, pissing off Bennett."

What is in your character's locker?

"Loads of packets of skittles, Libra pads, hair brush, A-Level revision guides, sheet music for flute, bottle of St Tropez fake tan, tooth brush and toothpaste, Britney Spears fantasy perfume, photo of me and Bennett, this month's Cosmopolitan, chewing gum."

Ripeka Templeton - playing Lilly



Ripeka is a Maori and British actress, born in Dunedin, raised in London and Hamburg, Germany. She trained for three years at The Oxford School of

Drama and returned home to Aotearoa in 2014.

She recently completed filming *Flying South* with NHNZ in Queenstown directed by Leszek Burzynski, where she played Tui, a young Maori pilot on her first unaided flight. At drama school she played Kate in *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Dracula's Bride* in *Dracula*, and Anna in *Anna Karenina*. This will be Ripeka's professional stage debut.

What is your character afraid of?

"Dogs, birds, farm animals, rejection, being overweight and my mum leaving."

What is in your character's locker?

"Half eaten apple and carrot, Wrigley's spearmint gum, toothbrush and toothpaste, a Ramones lighter, a little mirror, packet of lucky strike, iPod for my music, the pill."

**Lana Walters - playing
Tanya**



Lana started acting in Local Summer Shakespeare Productions in her hometown of Rotorua where her love for comedies was fuelled playing roles such as Rosalind in *As You Like It* and Mistress Ford in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. After high school she moved to Auckland to study Acting at Unitec where she played roles in *Three Sisters*, *The Tempest* and *Artaud at Rodez* and graduated in 2011 with a Bachelor of Performing & Screen Arts.

Since graduating Lana has performed regularly in the Auckland Short & Sweet Festival - her self-written play *OkCupid* was a people's choice finalist in 2014. In the Auckland Fringe Festival she performed in the Thomas Sainsbury and Natalie Medlock comedy *The Shittiest Theatre You'll Ever See*. In 2014 Lana directed and co-devised her first professional production titled *Suri vs. Shiloh* with

We Are Sailors Theatre Company for the 2014 Wellington and Christchurch Fringe Festivals and in the 2015 Auckland Fringe at Q theatre.

Her most recent venture has been into the world of standup comedy and earlier this year she made it to the semifinals of the Raw Stand-up Comedy fest in Auckland.

**What is your character
afraid of?**

"That when school ends her best friend, Cissy, will move far away from Stockport and she won't see her anymore - that she will fail her exams - that she will

get in trouble at school and at home."

**What is in your
character's locker?**

"The English creative writing assignment where Mr Anderson gave her an A+ and wrote the most amazing complimentary notes all over it. Way more effort than you would go to than if you saw someone as just a student. Solid proof he is in deep love with Tanya. Also the yuck scrogin mix her mum always gives her and a bunch of chapsticks with no lids."



Journal Extracts

As part of the collaboration with University of Otago, it is ideal for the students to make important notes that are relevant for their specific roles for future reference.

Notes include personal experiences, and records of the rehearsal process.

Andrew Coshan, who plays Nicholas, shares an extract from his journal along with notes from their rehearsal that involved character research:

"Pre-rehearsal period:

During the rehearsal process I've become very aware that all I can do is prepare, and I find that there are two main areas in which preparation can take place:

1) **Read the play** (and other texts e.g. inspirations or related journals) to familiarise yourself with lines, while also letting you discover your character's role in the play as a whole. As an actor your job is to portray the character you've been cast so that the narrative successfully expresses the director's vision. To do this you must understand what it is your character contributes to the story. The key things to know are how your character thinks, relates to other characters and changes over the course of the play. All of this can be

learned from analysing the text. However it is important to remember that you will learn more from being in the rehearsal space while on your feet and responding to other actors than you will from reading a script by yourself, but the knowledge you gain from the analysis is essential to making the right decisions in the rehearsal room.

2) **Physical preparation** is a must for any kind of performance. This doesn't just mean to hit the gym so you have killer abs on stage (though physical fitness is still important because acting is a high energy activity) it more refers to training the actor's essential toolbox: vocal support, breath training and articulation. Vocal support is how an actor can fill a theatre with their voice without straining or shouting. Breath control also allows the actor to carry their vocal energy through to the end of their sentence, while giving them the ability to control their vocal energy to emote or inflect their lines skilfully. Articulation training helps the clarity which an actor speaks but also includes speaking in accents which is key for plays such as Punk Rock."

- Andrew Coshan

Zoe Robson, Marketing Assistant, shares her experience with promoting the show:

"Friday 12th June: Today I went all around Dunedin poster. Posters literally go everywhere. From George Street all the way out to Mornington to Roslyn. The best part was that I got to zip around in the Fortune Theatre car. It was quite an interesting experience going everywhere poster. Some places are really keen to let me put up a poster while others were quite rude in how they said no. I noticed that even some of the places I put posters up earlier in the week have already been taken down. Some people already said they had their tickets booked or were really excited about the show so that gave me a wee boost. Poster certainly feels like it is never-ending but I think it's going to be a great feeling wandering around town knowing that our show is on display."

- Zoe Robson



Andrew Coshan kindly provided us with his character notes:

Nicholas	<p>Attributes: Sports, tries hard to do his best, cares about academic output, wealthy, afraid of conflict, confident (with normal school mates) but insecure about romance once Lilly arrives,</p> <p>Family: Mum – 45, Primary school teacher Dad – 48, Solicitor Brother – 19, first year studying Biophysical Sciences at Durham University</p> <p>Persona: Ladies man</p> <p>Hobbies: lacrosse, rugby, watches porn, likes the white stripes, Shakespeare, gym</p> <p>Classes: PE, General Studies, Maths, History, [Theatre or physics?]</p> <p>Fears: Confrontation, failure, disappointing the parents & spiders</p> <p>Notes: Not nasty at any point, only shows courage when he's in fear of death He's allows the bullying to happen, doesn't stop it, doesn't encourage it</p>
Lilly	<p>Romantically interested, hooked up within a week of meeting her, had sex 23 days after meeting her.</p> <p>She's the new girl at school; she's desirable, competition between lads for her.</p> <p>Things to think about: What does he think about her burns? Do they talk about William?</p>
William	<p>Been at school with for 5 years, not close enough to know specifics about his brother but knows his parent's occupations,</p> <p>Stands up to William in Scene 4 but instantly backs down.</p> <p>Likes William, thinks he's a nerd but appreciates his intelligence</p>
Bennett	<p>Been at school with for 5 years, best mates, banter between them as long as it's not at anyone's expense, doesn't like that he's a bully but too afraid of conflict/getting knocked off his status to stand up for anything.</p>
Cissy	<p>Been at school with for 5 years, comfortable together, don't hang out outside of class, know each other through Bennett mostly, not close enough to know what her parents are like.</p>
Chadwick	<p>Been at school with for 5 years, thinks he's a nerd but appreciates his intelligence, laughs at him but with no intention of making him feel bad.</p>
Tanya	<p>Been at school with for 5 years, acquaintances. Don't talk a lot.</p>
Copley	<p>Teaches physics but goes to Macbeth???</p>



University of Otago interns (left to right): Christy Nicholls, Education Liaison Assistant; Jordan Dickson, Directing Assistant; David Stock, Production Manager Assistant; Mac Veitch, Set and Lighting Assistant; Zoe Robson, Marketing Assistant and Georgia Davenport, Wardrobe Assistant.

Georgia Davenport, Wardrobe Assistant, talks about her first day working at the Fortune Theatre and speaking into front of a large group:

"Tuesday 2 June: First day today!! Well, first official day of Punk Rock. I've already been up in the wardrobe with Maryanne a bit when I could fit it in around my classes, but today marks the start of full time Punk Rock wardrobe assisting! Maryanne and I had decided before the weekend that my call time was 9:15, as we had our Costume presentation and I wanted to run over what I needed to say (I was a bit nervous). After a quick pow-wow with Maryanne, I headed up to the rehearsal room with the mood-board, early as usual, and waited for everyone else to arrive. ... After the read through, set and wardrobe had our presentations. I talked about costumes in general as well as the specific for certain characters. Overall, today was a lot of fun. Hopefully I enjoy myself as much for the rest of the run. I'm sure I will."

- Georgia Davenport



Hamish Annan, who plays Chadwick, shares his acting experience, giving us an insight into the professional acting world:

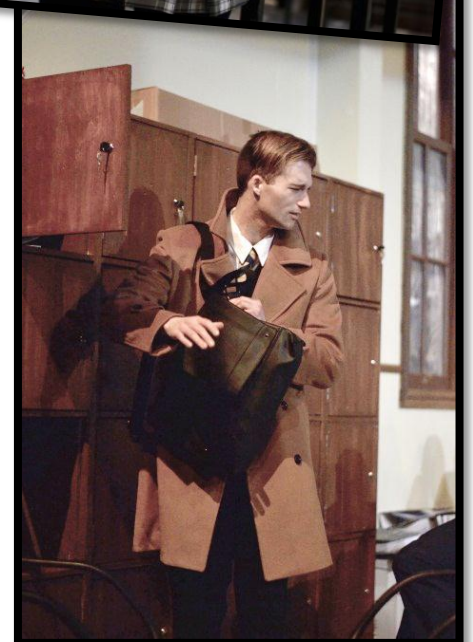
"The interesting thing about professional acting and getting an acting job is that the expectation to deliver on your role can cause stress and anxiousness. Something I've come to learn is the understanding that you're employed to deliver. The nerves and second guessing of your ability has to be put aside to be able to get the job done.

Losing the New Zealand accent: an interesting note is that Kiwi's tend to gabble their speech. There is a tendency for the energy used within the line to drop off at the end of the line. This does not happen in British speech, so when adopting a Manchester accent I had to be conscious of this dialect change; the energy has to continue through to the end of the line.

Allowing myself to explore my own range of emotional and response-based colouring for Chadwick is important. Uta Hagen's idea of learning to expand your image of self or, in other words, enlarging your sense of identity, was valuable to me during this discovery process. I am using myself in order to be somebody else, but I have to avoid illustrating a preconceived outer image of what I think

Chadwick will do, and instead work from a true response. This gives the character colour. What I initially 'think' Chadwick would do (from the impressions based on the text) should be dropped if it is limiting the performance. Pre-conceived characterisations are often limiting. Breaking away from these is very liberating; it frees the performance and is much more interesting to watch."

- Hamish Annan



Christy Nicholls, Education Liaison Assistant, talks about her first meeting with the Ambassadors:

"On the 29th March, there was a members meeting before *The War Play*. After the meeting was over, I introduced myself to the Ambassadors. It was so great to listen to their plans for the future and their interest in theatre. They have such an awesome opportunity to come to the Fortune and learn. I never knew something like this was available for school students. They're interested in both backstage and onstage elements of the theatre world. Coming along to different events is a fantastic way to involve the younger generation in the theatre and hopefully encourage them to include performing arts in their lives! It's not only a great opportunity for the Ambassadors, but it's an amazing chance for each of

the schools involved to have students attend Fortune events and be part of the community through the representation of their students. It's so great to help Shannon with the educational side of theatre. There is so much information involved and so much to organize.

After chatting with the Ambassadors today, it is clear that the work is worth

it because they are all passionate about theatre. I am excited for the next few months! I have a feeling it's going to be awesome and I will learn as much as the Ambassadors do."

- Christy Nicholls



Themes and Quotes

Bullying

Throughout the text, the theme of bullying comes up many times. All of the characters in Punk Rock experience bullying in some form; either being the bully, being bullied, or being a willing or unwilling bystander.

Almost all of Bennett's interactions with the other characters is bullying or controlling. He uses humiliation, sexual harassment and vicious humour to dominate the group. It seems Cissy also enjoys joining in with bullying Chadwick – possibly because he is one person who is smarter than her.

Bennett: You always used to look forward to PE lessons, didn't you, Chadwick?

Chadwick: What?

Cissy: Do you remember in swimming when he went diving for the brick? You nearly drowned didn't you, sweetheart?

Bennett: Missed opportunity that one, folks. I remember you in the changing rooms. I remember your little tiny needle dick. Chadwick.

Tanya: Here we go. (pg. 46)

Bennett: Stun me, Chadwick. Tell me something stunning. Tell me something the like of which I've never even thought possible before.

The others look at Chadwick.

Chadwick: Do you know how many galaxies there are in the universe? About a hundred billion. And there are about a hundred billion stars in most given galaxies. That's ten thousand billion, billion stars in the universe.

Which works out as about ten million billion planets. *The others look at Bennett.*

Bennett: It's like having an absurdly clever puppy. Here. Chadwick.

Chadwick: What?

Bennett: Have a wine gum. *He pulls out a wine gum and pops it in Chadwick's mouth. He laughs hysterically.* (pg. 18)

Bennett: Cissy told me about your fantasy. Did you hear this, Nicholas? Tanya's biggest dream is to live with Anderson. To be his secret lover. To have his baby. To waddle about his flat barefoot and pregnant. She's absolutely serious about it, by the way.

Tanya: Fuck off.

Bennett: Aren't you?

Tanya: Did you say that to him?

Cissy: I don't believe you, Bennett.

Bennett: It's true. Am I lying? Are you calling me a liar?

Tanya: Cissy. How could -?

Tanya goes to say

something. Nearly starts crying. Says nothing. Leaves. (pg. 20)

Bennett: You're a genius, Chadwick, I think, aren't you? But you've got to admit -

Chadwick: What?

Bennett: You look pretty fucking stupid in that coat.

Chadwick: Yeah.

Bennett: Did you just actually agree with me?

Tanya: Shut up, Bennett.

Cissy: Some people can wear a coat like that. Some people look like retards. (pg. 47)

Bennett: Chadwick, have you got any money on you?

Chadwick: I'm sorry?

Bennett: Have you, Chadwick?

Chadwick: What do you mean?

Bennett: I mean have you got any money in your wallet or in your pocket or in your bag or up your arse that you could spare for William? William's lost a hundred pounds and I think you should try and get it back to him, don't you?



Chadwick: It's nothing to do with me.

Bennett: I'm sorry?

Chadwick: I said it's nothing to do with me.

Bennett: Ha!

Chadwick: William, I'm terribly sorry that you've lost some money but I don't really think it was my fault.

Bennett: Chadwick. Get your wallet out.

Tanya: Bennett. Stop it. Now.

Bennett: What? What, Tanya? Are you actually trying to stop me here? Chadwick, get your wallet out fucking cunt-faced twat or I will beat the fucking bricks out of your arse with my bare fists while everybody else watches and sings little fucking songs, so help me God I will.

Chadwick: Here.

Bennett: How much is in there?

Chadwick: Nothing.

Bennett: How much, you

lying fuck?

Chadwick: Twenty pounds.

Bennett: Take it out.

Chadwick: What?

Bennett: Take it out of the wallet.

Chadwick: No.

Bennett: Now. Hole-head. Thank you. And give it to William. He's a bit short. (pg. 49-50)

Bennett: You look all sad. Are you really sad?

Tanya: No.

Bennett: You are though, aren't you? Do you know why? Do you want to know why you're so sad? Should I tell you? You're sad because you're fat. You're fat because you eat too much. You eat too much because you're depressed. You're depressed because of the fucking world. (pg. 51-52)

Bennett: Did I tell you, you could fucking move. Did I?

Chadwick: No.

Bennett: Then what the fuck are you moving for?

Chadwick: I wanted to put my stuff in my locker.

Bennett: Well you can't. Today, Chadwick, as a little tribute to a dying Lloyd, you are my doll. Do you understand me? (pg. 62)

Bennett: Tanya. Take your lipstick out or I'll properly hurt him. There. Now Chadwick, come over to Tanya. And she'll put some lipstick on for you.

Tanya: What?

Bennett:

Come on Tanya.

Cissy: Oh my God.

Bennett: Chadwick, come to Tanya. Purse your lips. Tanya. *He spits in her*

face. Do it. Now. Thank you. (pg. 66)

As well as the bullying on stage, there are mentions of other students being harassed. Bullying is talked about as if it is a joke or a game.

Tanya: I noticed something about Year-Seven kids.

Cissy: You noticed something about what?

Tanya: About the children in Year Seven.

Cissy: When?

Tanya: This morning.

Cissy: You're very random sometimes Tanya, sweetheart, I have to say.

Tanya: When they line up. If you push them. They all fall on top of one another. Like little toys. (pg. 13-14)

Pressure

There is intense pressure on the characters. As well as the pressure and tension created by domineering Bennett with his almost constant bullying and threatening presence, there is pressure from parents, school, peers and society, as well as the pressure of being an adolescent coping with issues of sexuality, identity and isolation, not to mention exams.

Pressure from parents, to achieve academically arises numerous times for the characters, especially Cissy.

Cissy: My mum would kill me if I got less than an 'A' in any subject.

William: Would she literally kill you?

Cissy: Yes. Literally. She'd burn me alive. (pg. 15)

Cissy: Don't tell my mum. Don't tell my mum. Don't tell my mum. Don't tell my mum.



Bennett: Fucking hell.

Cissy: I just saw Anderson. I got a 'B' for English.

Bennett: Fucking hell.

Cissy: I know.

Nicholas: A 'B's not bad.

Cissy: Are you being serious?

Nicholas: A 'B' 's good I think.

Cissy: If she finds out she'll kill me.

Nicholas: Cissy, I think you're exaggerating.

Bennett: You don't know her mother.

Cissy: How can I stop her from finding out?

Nicholas: Don't tell her.

Cissy: She'll get the report.

Bennett: Hide it. Burn it.

Cissy: Don't be fucking stupid, Bennett. She knows there'll be a report. It's the end of the term. There's always a report. (pg. 85)



Bennett: How's the revision going, Lilly? Have you started yet?

Lilly: Yes.

Bennett: Sorry? You're muttering. I didn't hear you.

Lilly: I said yes. Of course I've started. The exams are next week. (pg. 50-51)

Bennett: William. Answer me this. Why is it that every single person in this school judges everybody else by the level of their intelligence? Not by their wit. Not by their appearance. Not by their dress sense. Not by their taste in music. By how many 'A's they got at GCSE. (pg. 87)
(This line is just before William pulls out his gun. It is the last thought from Bennett.)

Along with academic pressures there are social/class pressures in this very elite school. Particularly for Chadwick who isn't paying the high fees his fellow students are.

William: He [Chadwick] has a monster of a time. He's on a rather considerable scholarship. His home life is rather ghastly, I think. He has a very difficult time here. You should be nice to him... People notice him because

William: Can I stay at your house tonight?

Chadwick: I don't know.

William: What would your parents say if I just came round?

Chadwick: I'm not sure they'd like it. With the exams next week and everything.

William: They wouldn't do anything though, would they?

Chadwick: I don't know. (pg. 57)

Among the six students in Punk Rock, there is also peer pressure. This includes the pressure to achieve a high level of academic success.

Nicholas: Have you started revising yet?

Bennett: Are you being serious?

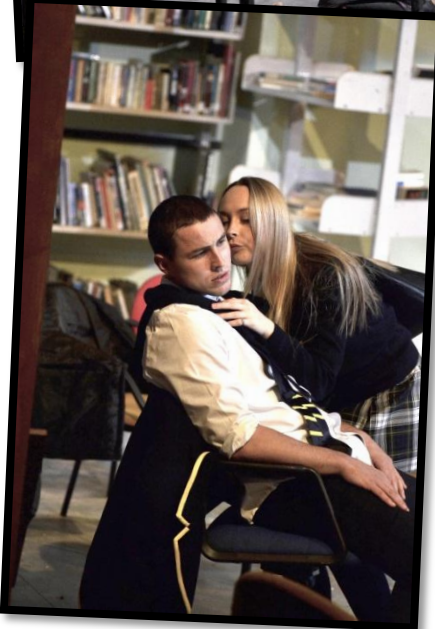
Nicholas: I kind of am, actually.

Bennett: Oh my Lord alive!

Tanya: They're only mocks. You don't need to revise for mocks.

Cissy: I never need to. I never need to revise for anything. I just do the exams.

Bennett: And you get 'A's. You tart. (pg. 14)



of his scholarship tie. He said that it's a constant reminder. (pg. 24)

William talks about pressure with Lilly in a moment of foreshadowing. Although he is talking about Chadwick, in retrospect, he may be talking about himself.

William: The pressure he [Chadwick] gets. The thoughts he has. People should be careful around him.

Lilly: That was kind of my point.

William: One day he's going to snap, I think.

Lilly: What do you mean?

William: He's too timid half the time. He should stand up to it. Stick his chin out. I wish he would. I've seen it happen.

Lilly: See what happen?

William: People like him who get so much abuse and then one day. Pop.

Lilly: Pop? (pg. 24-25)



Another pressure faced by young people is the future of the planet itself.

Chadwick: Human beings are pathetic...We could have made something really extraordinary and we won't. We've been around one hundred thousand years. We'll have died out before the next two hundred...You know what will define the next two hundred years? Religions will become brutalised; crime rates will become hysterical; everybody will become addicted to internet sex; suicide will become fashionable; there'll be famine; there'll be floods; there'll be fires in the major cities of the Western world. Our education systems will become battered. Our health services unsustainable; our police forces unmanageable; our governments corrupt; there'll be nuclear war; massive depletion of resources on every level; insanely increasing third-world population. It's happening now...The oceans will rise. The cities will flood. The power stations will flood. Airports will flood. Species will vanish forever. Including ours. So if you think I'm worried by you calling me names, Bennett, you little,



little boy, you are fucking kidding yourself.

Bennett: Blimey. That's a bit bleak, Chadwick.

Sexual Identity

Bennett is unable to talk about homosexual feelings – though he brings it up several times. Here he brings up the topic but then changes the subject.

Bennett: I'm getting really bored of Mahon telling me about gay heroes of literary history. She finds me every day; it's like she waits around corners for me and leaps out. She makes me summarise articles from the Guardian for her.

Cissy: It's only because she's too thick to read them herself.

Bennett: She keeps telling me that I could be a lawyer if I wanted to. I don't want to be a lawyer. Who wants to be a fucking lawyer for fucksake?

Tanya: Have you ever thought that there might be a reason?

Bennett: What?



Tanya: That she singles you out for those kinds of suggestions?

Bennett: What the fuck are you implying, Miss Gleason?

Tanya: I'm not implying anything, Mr Francis. I'm just asking a question.

Bennett: Have they put the heating on? This fucking room. I need to get outside. I need to go and run around a bit. I need to do PE. I really miss PE. I never thought I'd say that, ever. (pg. 45)

Bennett gets a little closer when he talks to Nicholas.

Bennett: Have you ever wanted to kiss a boy?

Nicholas: No.

Bennett: Never?

Nicholas: No.

Bennett: Liar.

Nicholas: I'm not lying.

Bennett: I wanted to kiss Thom Yorke once.

Nicholas: Yeah?

Bennett: And David Bowie. (pg. 84)

Isolation/Neglect

The students themselves are isolated in a neglected part of the school. They have become their own little dysfunctional family in the

old library. There is a notable absence of adults until the last scene of the play. Parents and teachers seem very distant and the children are left to cope on their own.

Chadwick: Don't you think it'd be better sometimes? Just to end it. I do. I think about that far more than I ought to. I sometimes think that when you die it's like you cross this threshold. You cross this door. You get out of here. *Some time.*

William: There are other ways. Of getting out, you know. (pg. 55)

William: Why won't you let me stay then?

Chadwick: It's not about letting you do anything. It's just not really my house.

William: I could come round after the exams then. Couldn't I? (pg. 57)

Nicholas: People will have heard the gunshot. They'll be here any second.

William: Do you think so? I can't anybody coming. Can you hear anybody? *They listen.* (pg. 88)

Violence

The threat of violence from Bennett runs throughout the play as does the feeling that several of the characters could snap. This builds up the tension until we arrive at the extremely violent climax.

William: It works then. I did warn you, Bennett. Don't say I didn't warn you because I really fucking did. *He points his gun at Bennett.*

....

Nicholas: Put the gun down before anybody gets hurt.

William: Don't be fucking stupid. It feels funny. It's a lot lighter than I thought it would be. It's a lot easier to aim. Hey, Bennett. Hey, Bennett. Get up. Bennett. Stop fucking crying and fucking listen to me. 87-88

William: I don't want to talk about this anymore. *He shoots Bennett twice. He dies. Cissy screams.* (pg. 90)



Scene Breakdowns

Scene One

Lilly is new to the school and William introduces her to the characters as they enter the library. We meet all the student characters. The characters want to find out about Lilly and decide whether to trust her or not within the group, and discuss GCSEs.

Scene Two

Lilly and William chat together about Stockport, Chadwick, the pressure of studies, what they're afraid of, the future. William lies to Lilly about his family and asks her out. She says no.

Scene Three

Nicholas and Lilly discuss William, in particular, his lies about his family. Lilly is mad that he lied. Lilly, Cissy, and Tanya chat about motherhood and their future after Stockport. Tanya indicates Bennett could be homosexual and tries to stop Chadwick being bullied. William comes in with a story about losing £100. Bennett bullies Chadwick into giving William £20 (Which William later returns). After everyone leaves, Chadwick and William chat about 'getting out' and William asks to stay at Chadwick's house.



Scene Four

The scene begins with Bennett catching a wasp. Chadwick tells everyone Lloyd has had a heart attack. William is distraught and wants to visit his favourite teacher in hospital. Bennett forces Tanya to put lipstick on Chadwick, William stands up to Bennett's bullying, and Chadwick tells Bennett his bullying is insignificant in the face of the global destruction in store for humanity.

Scene Five

William says he went to see Lloyd, who died. He talks about missing his exams. Lilly is concerned for William's wellbeing and encourages him to get help.

Scene Six

Bennett and Nicholas talk about the pressures from school, and Cissy is extremely worried about

exam results before William comes in with the gun. William kills Bennett, Cissy and Nicholas and attempts suicide.

Scene Seven

William answers questions that Dr Richard Harvey has set out. Dead Nicholas enters and William tries to talk to him. William once again talks about the future.





Good Fortune for Otago Theatre students

Otago Bulletin Board
Friday, 19 June 2015

The cast of *Punk Rock* are (from left) Sinead Fitzgerald, Ailis Oliver-Kerby, Lana Walters, Ripeka Templeton, Jared Kirkwood, Hamish Annan, Taylor Barrett and Andrew Coshan (Absent Ross Johnston). The Otago students in the cast are Sinead, Ailis, Hamish and Andrew. Photo: George Wallace.

A long-term relationship between the Fortune Theatre and the Theatre Studies department at Otago is taking centre stage in the Fortune's latest production.

Punk Rock, written by recent Tony awardee Simon Stephens, will run from 27 June to 18 July, and, in a new pilot programme, will feature Otago drama students on stage and behind the scenes.

"We're very excited about this initiative," Music and Theatre Studies Department head Professor Stuart Young says. "We've had a long relationship with the theatre, but this is the first collaboration of this type."

Ten third-year students are taking part in the programme as part of an honours level paper. Four will act on stage alongside professional actors in the cast, and the remaining six are in production and technical roles ranging from wardrobe to marketing.

"It's an internship," Professor Young says. "They get a chance to apply and extend their skills in a professional context."

Fortune Theatre Artistic Director Lara Macgregor says the theatre benefited from the programme alongside the students.

"This collaboration enhances and strengthens the Fortune's educational role through sharing its knowledge with the community. The theatre also benefits from the energy and ideas the students bring."

The play selected, *Punk Rock*, explores underlying jittery tensions, hormonal headiness and potential violence in a group of affluent seventeen-year-old students as they begin to plan for university and the rest of their lives.

"It interests me because it is about societal pressure, particularly the pressure on privileged children," Lara says.

Using students not too far removed in age from those featured in the play added a layer of reality, and the play seemed ideal to use for the collaboration.

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/otagobulletin/postgraduate/otago112331.html>

A CHANCE TO UNDERSTAND THEM: SO BEAUTIFUL, SO EVIL, SO VULNERABLE

Reviewed by Terry
MacTavish, 28 Jun 2015

Gut-wrenching, gob-smacking, mind-blowing – Punk Rock, the latest in the Fortune's great True Grit series, is altogether visceral theatre. How could it be other, when it authentically delves into that thrilling and dangerous time we call adolescence? When body and brain send crazily confused but utterly compelling commands that must be acted on without thought?

My guest tonight is a Deputy Principal (not local!), well accustomed to disciplining this unpredictably unstable age-group. She laughs and gasps with the rest, but nods vigorously at both the hilarious and the horrific, nudging me to mutter, "I had a kid say/do just that" – marvellous stories that I alas am forbidden to repeat, all of them attesting to the truth of Simon Stephens' script.

This fierce Fortune production, meticulously directed by Lara Macgregor, who has remarkable empathy with the desperate young, does full justice to a stunning play. It is an

innovative collaboration between the professional theatre and University of Otago Theatre Studies that deserves to be wildly successful. Certainly the opening night audience is rapturous.

Five of the actors are experienced professionals, and the skills of the University students have been honed to the requisite sharpness, while those not cast have had the enviable opportunity of working as interns with the Fortune's team of technical experts, which includes master illuminator Martyn Roberts and set wizard Peter King, under production manager Lindsay Gordon

The set is an instantly recognisable school study, although it is in Stockport, Manchester: industrial green with messy shelves, broken lockers, scattered chairs and tables, and the huge dirty windows set too cruelly high for a child to feel anything but imprisoned. When the fluorescent lights are ominously flicked off in one frightening scene, the superbly designed flow of light from those windows, and under the swing doors to the outside world, is mesmerisingly lovely.

The violent bursts of sound are hardly lovely but, as the title no doubt indicates, replicate the chaos of bursting minds. Punk is not just music after all – over time it has covered

everything from prostitute to young criminal, options this feral bunch may well explore, deceptively attired though they are in cute school uniforms by Maryanne Wright-Smyth. Under Monique Webster's stage management, the actors themselves perform the cunningly choreographed set changes, at break-neck speed.

The sheer animal energy of the cast is utterly exhilarating. Director Macgregor has capitalised on this, from the screaming entry leading to an aggressive confrontation of the audience, to the absolutely shocking denouement. Each actor quickly establishes their character as more than the easy school stereotypes of nerd, bully, cool kid...

First to seize our attention is William, who seems the most accessible, chatty and likeable member of the group – an engaging fantasist, giving absurd and funny advice alarmingly fast to new girl Lilly, whose arrival will trigger a chain reaction leading inexorably to a devastating climax. Delightfully manic but controlled, Jared Kirkwood gives a riveting performance as William, from start to finish.

Unchallenged boss of the group is Bennett, played as a swaggering, boastful, bully boy by Taylor Barrett, with a physicality that is fearless and impressive.

Watch for his capture of the wasp!

More low-key but similarly convincing is Andrew Coshan's portrayal of handsome Nicholas, fancied by all and hence with less need to put himself forward.

Hamish Annan is intriguingly different as brilliant, persecuted Chadwick, his apparent autism perhaps foreshadowing Stephens' much-lauded play of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time*. Annan's handling of the declamatory speech on the dire state of the universe is exemplary.

Bennett's tag-along girlfriend is played by Ailis Oliver-Kerby, a stand-out even in this physically able group as a lovely fluid mover taking full advantage of the possibilities offered by the set. (Funny though, as a New Zealander I am really bothered nowadays to see bottoms on tables!)

As her 'fat' friend, the more sympathetic Tanya, Lana Walters is a real charmer, ensuring her fate is of genuine concern to the audience.

Ripeka Templeton gives an immaculate performance as Lilly, with cut-glass accent and fake – sorry, faux – fur coat, making even her self-harm seem an action of confident and impudent strength. Sinead Fitzgerald rounds out the cast appealingly in a minor role.

Stephens is an admirer of Chekhov, and certainly his writing is wonderfully naturalistic, but if I have a criticism of the script it is that Punk Rock takes the male viewpoint. The girls who are attractive are seen as invulnerable: more Gregory's Girl than *The Seagull*. The girls are sexual objects to the boys, friendship from them is disdained and the scene in which they talk alone centres round their body image: "I'm so fat," squeals Cissy, squeezing imaginary rolls from visible ribs, and her distress over getting a B instead of an A appears merely silly, while the boys' ambitions are treated seriously.

Although this is the bright group, preparing for Mock exams before applying to top universities, there is surprisingly little reference to what they are actually learning, apart from Chadwick's Maths riffs and William's disarming admission that he prefers one teacher "because I find his classroom management skills rather bracing". Perhaps the play would be richer still if the ideas of some poet were imbedded – William Blake springs to mind: *Songs of Innocence* and of *Experience* show how clearly Blake too understood the shock and terror of adolescence; a time of loss as much as gain.

But there is no time to ponder what more the play might have been. The pace never lets up, except for equally gripping sudden awkward silences, and it is enough that we are held spellbound by the drama inexorably unfolding, the betrayals and the brutality.

Macgregor's brilliantly bold use of space is everywhere apparent and uncompromising, from convincingly violent assaults and pretty explicit sexual shenanigans, to choreographed group action, like the inspired blocking for the pivotal moment when one of the worms turns, fiercely denouncing his tormenter as a "little, little boy" in a cathartic scene that has the audience actually cheering.

With no interval, the tension mounts steadily, not reduced but enhanced by the moments of crazy humour, and during the almost unbearably protracted climax, my reviewer's pen is still: I dare not take my eyes from the stage for a split second. Direction, acting, and technical effects are beyond praise at this point. I shudder to think how easily the incredible impact of the play could be destroyed by any slip-up now. There is none.

The introduction of a new character, Dr Richard Harvey, in the concluding scene, is a bold decision by the playwright, but it gives

us the crucial perspective to consider just how society copes with the consequences of adolescent angst. Bringing to mind the beleaguered psychiatrist in *Equus*, experienced actor Ross Johnston plays the role of Harvey to perfection, delivering a subtle performance that hints at hidden depths.

It's not that this territory hasn't been traversed before. Punk Rock reminds me of a comedy of menace play of the 60s or 70s by David Campton, called *Class Play*, and even the contemporary (but set in the 70s) TV series, *Puberty Blues*. But that is the point. Each new generation, of teenagers or parents and teachers, has to confront the potentially horrific impact of puberty. It doesn't matter that the scene is not set in New Zealand. Whenever and wherever Punk Rock plays, there will have been something in the news to make it hideously relevant.

This time a year ago I was reeling in shock over the online video posted by the local paper, of 15 year old girls delivering vicious kicks to another cowering on the ground. It is actually a relief now to see such horrors tackled responsibly by our own theatre, in a courageous production that is dazzling, compelling and (I fear) unforgettable.

I am glad to see in the programme, along with Alister McDonald's

informative notes on Stephens, calm advice from Youthline Otago. Maybe Nigel Latta is right when he says teenagers are f**ked in the head. But as Punk Rock suggests, the off-stage parents and teachers have quite a bit to do with this. If you are a teen, or know one, please, please seize this marvellous chance the Fortune offers to try to understand them: so beautiful, so evil, so vulnerable.



The Southland Times

Enter Stage Left: Taylor Barrett – by Caitlin Salter
June 18 2015



Invercargill actor Taylor Barrett, who will star in the play Punk Rock at Dunedin's Fortune Theatre.

Q: How are you preparing for your latest role?

A: I went and got a haircut and an ear piercing. Currently I'm learning a Manchester accent and discovering why guys like Bennett operate the way

they do. And I'm trying to get in shape.

Q: Why do you like to act?

A: I've always loved storytelling and watching films! I suppose I like it because it gives me freedom to create. I love that. Just quietly, I actually had the best teacher at Southland Boys High School, Gussie Johnson, and she taught me how to act and I'm forever grateful for that.

Q: What was your toughest role?

A: Probably Simon the Zealot from The Last Days Of Judas Iscariot at drama school - he was a toughy.

Q: Do you find it easy to memorize lines? Why/why not?

A: Not at all (laughs). It's a battle. I'm constantly reading them over and then saying them aloud, trying not to learn them in a

pattern. It's like a muscle you build over time I guess.

Q: What is the best piece of advice you would give an aspiring actor?

A: Don't let anyone ever tell you, you can't pursue it as a career. Write down an action plan and find a way to make it happen. Don't let money stop you either, just work smart, be humble and believe in yourself.

Taylor Barrett will star as Bennett in Punk Rock, directed by Lara Macgregor and written by Simon Stephens. The play is on at Fortune Theatre in Dunedin from June 27 to July 18.



Discussion Questions

1. How do you think Lilly feels on her first day at a new school? What are her first impressions when she meets her potential new friends?
2. The characters can be seen as high school stereotypes. Do they overcome the stereotype and become fully fleshed characters? For example, does Bennett have more depth to his character than just being stereotyped as the bully?
3. Although William is very upset that Lilly lied to him, he himself lies throughout the play. How does he use lies to gain attention and protect himself? Does he believe his lies? When do reality and fantasy blur for him? What happens when the audience can't believe what a character says?
4. Who does William reach out to for help?
5. Director, Lara Macgregor, said the moment Lilly says, "I don't love you", is a turning point for William. How do the actors show this change?
6. How are the opening songs relevant to each scene?
7. Why do you think the characters hang out in the neglected library? Why don't they bother to pick up any rubbish?
8. Tension and pressure keep steadily building towards the violent climax of *Punk Rock*. What leads to William entering the library with a gun?
9. Do parents and teachers have an importance role in the play, even though they are not seen?
10. Why is it important for Cissy to pass with A's?
11. Who stands up to the bullying?
12. If Chadwick didn't escape from the library, do you think William would have shot him?
13. What do you think happened to Lilly?

