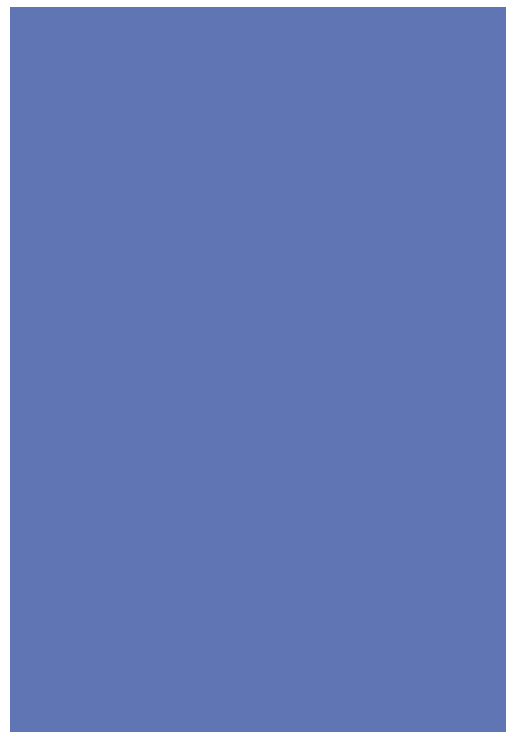




# Schools Resource Guide

## *Peninsula by Gary Henderson*

*"A rare immersion experience, this slice of imminent nostalgia is fluent, intelligent, evocative, multilayered storytelling that effectually mirrors our present through our not so distant past." - Evening Standard*



# Peninsula

By Gary Henderson

**Ten-year-old Michael Hope sleeps on a volcano. This is his playground, his paradise. Michael becomes fascinated when his new teacher describes how his hometown on Banks Peninsula was formed millions of years ago and he begins a project mapping his tiny community.**

As he prepares for the Christchurch Science Fair, unbeknownst to him, there are undercurrents of change and discontent slowly rippling through the adult world around him.

*Peninsula* is a beautifully crafted, touching, and bittersweet look at a small-town New Zealand community in the 1960s.

*Peninsula* was written in Dunedin while Gary Henderson was resident at the Robert Lord Writers' Cottage and teaching at Allen Hall, the home of the University of Otago Theatre Studies Programme.

Directed by Patrick Davies



## Hello from Fortune Theatre

**Shannon Colbert** is Fortune Theatre's new Education Liaison Officer. She has enjoyed learning more about the playwright, the play, and the people behind Fortune's production of *Peninsula*. She enjoyed hearing the insight and enthusiasm of the director, actors and designers. Like everyone else at Fortune Theatre, she has fallen in love with this play.

Please contact her at [education@fortunetheatre.co.nz](mailto:education@fortunetheatre.co.nz) with any thoughts, questions and feedback.

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# About the Play:

## Synopsis

Gary Henderson spent the very important years from six to ten in Duvauchelle near Akaroa on Banks Peninsula. Much of what the children do in the play, including the trolley cart ride, and flooding the paddock are taken directly from his childhood memories.

As the play begins we meet Michael Hope, his best friend Alex, his little sister Ngaire, and her friend Lynette at their small country school. Michael is imaginative and caring. He loves planning and digging out the underground clubhouse for his and Alex's secret Zodiac Club and playing with Alex and his dog, Pug.

We meet the new teacher Gordon MacIntosh, an outsider from Wellington, who has come to Duvauchelle to complete his required country service and, as we later find out, to run from a broken relationship. Gordon hopes to be accepted into this small community and he is, at first, welcomed by Michael's parents, Jack and Valerie Hope and Alex's parents, Bruce and Sylvia Newman.

Michael is fascinated when Gordon tells the class how Banks Peninsula was formed millions of years ago. He becomes enthralled when the class begins working on maps. His maps are amazing works, showing not only places but the people and events that belong to those places. Gordon encourages Michael to work on his maps for the Christchurch Science Fair. He is proud to "represent the Bay" with something that he is passionate about. The land, the places, and the people of



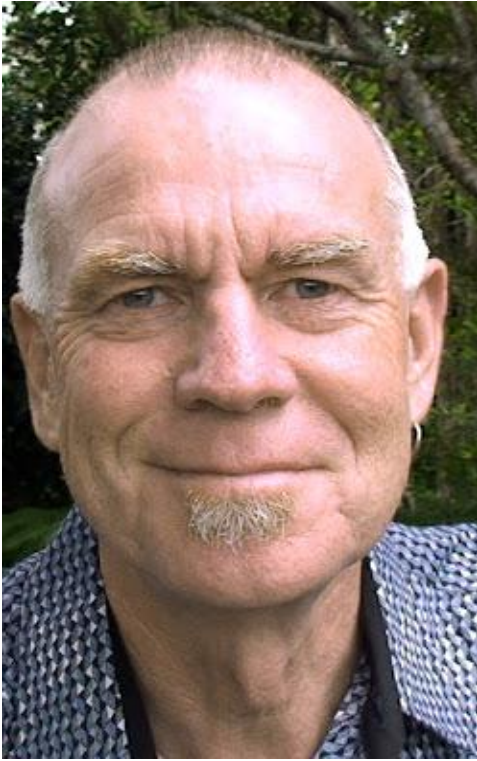
Duvauchelle Bay are the building blocks of his identity and can all be found in his maps. He is devastated when they are accidentally burnt by Shirley Slade. We never see Shirley, who is bullied and ostracised by the children and is the victim of Michael's grief and anger when he hits her with a stone after the maps are burnt.

Duvauchelle, is a gorgeous and idyllic place to live, the perfect place for the freedom, exploration, and creativity of childhood. But we soon witness the strain and tensions in the lives of the adults who live here. We learn that Sylvia is desperate for escape and tries to seduce Gordon, Bruce is violent, limited work creates stress for Jack and Valerie. Gossip and prejudice are rife in this small community and the lack of privacy is brought to mind every time someone picks up a telephone. There is an understanding that Rhonda, the unseen, ever present operator, is always listening, along with anyone else who chooses to pick up the phone. It doesn't take long for Gordon's secret to come to the surface and the reactions to the news he is gay are shocking.

Michael loses some of his innocence and the freedom of his childhood paradise – his maps are destroyed, his Mother's anxiety and prejudice rob him of time with his teacher, he is punished by being excluded from the science fair, his diggings for a secret clubhouse are discovered and get him into trouble again with the world of the grownups. Even Pug goes missing and is found dead. In the end Michael's family leaves Duvauchelle. Gordon has already left, probably before he was asked to go.

Just as they are leaving the family look in wonder at Michael's room turned into a camera obscura capturing a moving colour image of the bay. Ngaire asks "Can we take it with us?" The answer is yes. Michael does take it with him. It is part of who he is. "Onawe like a big nose, the school, the pub, the rock, the boatsheds, the jetty, the plantation, the saleyards, our house. The hills and sky reflected in the harbour. And all of it reflected in me. Printed there. White hot." Duvauchelle goes with him. We feel he will be fine. He is ready for that "strange new country rushing towards me."





## About the Playwright:

**Alister McDonald, Fortune Theatre's Dramaturg, has investigated the playwright: Gary Henderson**

Gary Henderson was born in Geraldine in 1955. His father worked as a foreman for the Lines branch of the Post Office and the family later moved to Timaru, Duvauchelle on Banks Peninsula and finally Lower Hutt, where Gary attended Naenae College. He has a B.Sc. in Mathematics from Victoria University (where he later also studied Music Education, Theatre and Film) and a Diploma in Teaching from Wellington Teachers' College. While primary teaching he began to write with the goal in his early plays, such as *Ziggy's Tribe* (1987) staged at Parkway Intermediate School in Wainuiomata, of writing non-patronising dialogue that adolescents could understand. He is passionate about the need for theatre for children and young people and believes: "Unless you're going to nurture your audience from a young age you're just shooting yourself in the foot. So little energy goes into nurturing tomorrow's audience."

Tomorrow's All Blacks are playing rugby today. Tomorrow's theatre audiences are also playing rugby today." He now lives in Auckland where until recently he taught Playwriting at Unitech.

He formed Strawberry Theatre in the mid-1980s in order to produce high-quality professional theatre for young people and this company presented the premiere seasons of the, usually one-act, plays that made his name in this country and overseas. They include *The Song of Bobby Zack* (1989), *Alien Kiss* (1990), *The Big Blue Planet Earth Show* (1991, Fortune TIE tour 1994), *Sunset Café* (1993, Fortune 1994), *Tigerplay* (1994, Globe 1995), *Skin Tight* (1994, toured to Fortune 1999) and *Mo and Jess Kill Susie* (1996). In Auckland the Maidment Youth Theatre presented *Monsters* and *The Judas Zoo* in 1995. The 1998 New Zealand International Festival of the Arts commissioned *An Unseasonable Fall of Snow* and it premiered at Downstage, subsequently being staged by Wow! in the 2000 Otago Festival of the Arts.

In 2003 Henderson lived in Dunedin at the Robert Lord Writers' Cottage and was based at the Theatre Studies Department of the University of Otago. Then Fortune Artistic Director, Martin Howells, commissioned and workshopped *Home Land* and, directed by Hilary Norris, it was premiered at the Fortune in the 2004 Otago Festival of the Arts as the Fortune's 30th Anniversary production. Sky Media was staged as a Lunchtime Theatre production at Allen Hall in 2005. Wow! commissioned and staged *Lines of Fire* at the Dunedin Railway Station in the 2006 Otago Festival of the Arts. Capital E, New Zealand's National Theatre for Children, commissioned *Stealing Games* and toured it nationally in 2009. *The Moehau* was Radio New Zealand's contribution to the 2008 Wordplay international radio play series. Gary's latest play, *My Bed, My Universe*, is about to open in Auckland in a production by Massive Company.

The *Big Blue Planet Earth Show* was seen on the fringe of the 1992 Adelaide Festival where it became the first play for children to win a Fringe Award for Excellence. *Skin Tight* was presented at the Edinburgh Festival where it won a Fringe First Award and was subsequently staged in South Africa, Canada, New York, Chicago and a number of Australian cities. It was published last year by Methuen, the major UK drama publishing imprint. *Mo and Jess Kill Susie* won the Chapman Tripp Award for Outstanding Short Play of the Year in 1996. *Home*

*Land* was named New Zealand Play of the Year in the 2007 Chapman Tripp Awards following its Wellington production.

His television work includes scripting the *Alive and Kicking Sexuality Special – Your Place or Mine?* for TVNZ (1993), being a puppeteer on *Public Eye* and spells directing *Shortland Street* for South Pacific Pictures. Fortune audiences have also seen his work as a director when his Wow! production of Ken Duncum's *Horseplay* was staged here in 2000. He directed the Downstage Theatre production of Carl Nixon's stage version of *The Book of Fame* and was the Musical Director of the three North Island productions of Ken Duncum's *Blue Sky Boys*. With choreographer Eric Languet he wrote narrative and dialogue for the Royal New Zealand Ballet production of *Alice*.

Gary Henderson received the 2013 Playmarket Award, a \$20,000 prize recognizing a playwright who has made a significant contribution to theatre in New Zealand. His personal website is [www.rocketman.co.nz](http://www.rocketman.co.nz).

*Peninsula* was written for the 2005 Christchurch Arts Festival which had the theme of 'the land emblematic to the Canterbury region'. Henderson told Michelanne Forster in the Playmarket publication *Twenty New Zealand Playwrights*, "My closest connection to land around Christchurch was Banks Peninsula, where I lived as a child, so I used that as a starting place." The play was premiered in a Court Theatre production, directed by the author himself, which was subsequently seen in the 2006 Brisbane Arts Festival. The play has since been staged in New Zealand at Circa Theatre in Wellington (2012) and at Centrepunt in Palmerston North (2013)

### MORE INFORMATION

You can listen to a fascinating, December 2011 interview with Gary Henderson on Radio New Zealand's Saturday Morning. He talks about *Peninsula* with Kim Hill.

<http://www.radionz.co.nz/audio/player/2505315>

You can also find out more about this wonderful New Zealand playwright at his website <http://www.rocketman.co.nz>

or follow him on Facebook.



# The Director and the Cast:

Director **Patrick Davies** and cast members, **Nick Dunbar**, **Rosella Hart**, **Julie Edwards**, **Phil Vaughan** and **Andrew Laing** discuss: **Setting**, **Fears** and **Double Casting**

## Setting

Director Patrick Davies talked about the importance of the setting. The sense of the time, the place, and the land are so strong in the play. We experience the wonderful freedom of this childhood paradise, but also feel the negative side to the smallness of the community. With a minimalist set and no props, how would he capture the setting of the play?

Patrick said the setting is evoked on a metaphorical level. "It is there throughout the script, in Gary's words. The set is minimalist but evokes the feeling of different spaces. There are soft, squishy areas, tongue and groove floor boards, like an old home, a school room, indications of a jetty. The feeling of place comes through in the texture. Mapping and the grids that make up maps is also inherent in the set. Sooty's (Lighting Designer Stephen Kilroy) lighting is also pivotal to the setting. The satellite watching scene will use light to create the feelings of darkness and cold and the vastness of the sky and the landscape. The script, each of the designers and the actors all create the feeling of the setting but the audience has to do their part too and draw on their own imagination and memories. This is what makes it theatre."

Actor Phil Vaughan added that a sparse set and no props, "help create a sense of freedom. It allows the audience to use their imagination and childlike ability for make-believe, and the feeling everything is possible." Again this means effort and reward for the audience.

The cast talked about their own Duvauchelles - special places that hold those golden memories of childhood. They feel the bare bones nature of the set allows the audience to project their own personal version of Duvauchelle.

There is also a negative side to living in tiny Duvauchelle. Rosella Hart who plays Sylvia said her character finds the smallness stifling. The cast agreed that everything is magnified. There is no hiding when you are so isolated, so dependent on each other. Gossip and prejudice ripple through the script. Prejudice runs Gordon out of town. Andrew Laing, who plays Michael and Bruce pointed out that the positives of a small, close-knit community are there too. Neighbours are family in a place like Duvauchelle.

Time is an important part of the setting. It's the 1960's when so much is about to change. The cast decided small town New Zealand was probably at least a decade behind. Nuclear families are the

rule. Men provide for their families, mothers look after the house and kids. Divorce is taboo. There is a sense of social expectation, duty and conformity, whether it is Sylvia being trapped, or the rugby, beer and fishing requirements of Kiwi-blokedom. The cast also talked about the wonderful freedom the children had in this place and time and how that has changed. Julie Edwards said she has tried the best she could to give the Duvauchelle experience to her children; living in Brighton she wanted them to have "unlimited parameters and safety to roam." Freedom that is harder to come by these days.



*Setting the Scene*  
Actors Nick Dunbar and Andrew Laing get a feel for the setting of Peninsula.



# Fears

Understanding what your character wants is the most important thing for an actor, but finding out what they are most afraid of can be very enlightening. Shannon asked the actors what their character's greatest fear was.

**Michael** - Being constrained, not being able to explore.

**Bruce** - Change

**Jack** - Not being able to provide everything his family needs

**Alex** - Not being good enough

**Lynette** - Being wrong or being second.

**Val** - Change

**Ngaire** - Not being liked or accepted

**Sylvia** - Being trapped

**Gordon** - Being found out, being ostracised

makes switching easier as there is such a different energy. The men talked about moving their voices from a higher boy's voice to a deeper man's voice.

Gary Henderson has said that he used double casting mainly for practical reasons, knowing casting and paying five actors is easier than ten, but the double casting also adds to the style and richness of the play. Patrick said he feels each actor's characters are in some ways opposites. I asked the actors to find antonyms to describe their two characters.

**Alex** – rambunctious

**Jack** - gentle

**Gordon** – constrained

**Pug** - free

**Lynette** - light/ easy

**Val** - heavy/ controlling

**Sylvia** - reality/ truth

**Ngaire** - fantasy/ potential

**Michael** – open

**Bruce** – certain

from one character to the next becomes easier. The cast all agreed with Phil Vaughan, who went on to say that this process continues when there is an audience. The audience's reactions bring new insights and the characters keep growing.



*Character Development*

*Actor Julie Edwards contemplates her character at an early rehearsal*

## Double Casting

In Peninsula each actor has two roles and must change characters from one scene to the next without leaving the stage. Shannon asked the actors how they seamlessly switch between characters.

Each actor worked in a different way, depending on their training and preferences. Julie Edwards and Andrew Laing both use the Laban movement technique, which actors and dancers use to think and talk about the way their characters move. Both use the language of Laban to help them change quickly from the physicality of one character to another. All the actors said changing from an adult to a child (or dog)

## Work in progress

The cast was very aware that these were the ideas that they came up with on that day. They pointed out that during the rehearsal process they will learn new things about their characters and they will change and grow every day. Julie Edwards added "This is what makes the rehearsal process so wonderful. There is always something new emerging and watching other actors make discoveries influences your own choices." She said the script, director and other actors all help in building her characters and moving

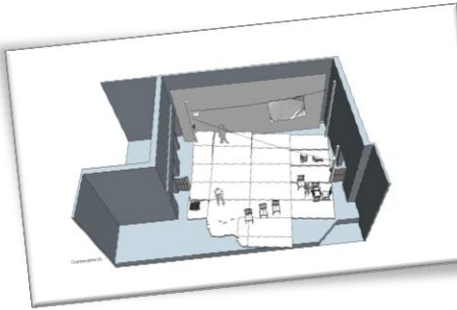
### WANTS, FEARS AND ANTONYMS

**Rosella Hart** was very interested to hear what words a student audience would come up with. If students would like to compile a list of wants, fears and antonyms for the pairs of characters the cast would love to hear from them.

"Don't show them our list first!" said Rosella.

# Design

How the written play comes alive



Peter King talked with Shannon about his set design. He sees the set as Michael's map of his Duvauchelle, folding out from the top left hand corner. The grid of the map can also be seen. He wanted to make us feel, "the whole thing is floating like a piece of the earth's crust", that it is "liquid and tentative and always changing", like Michael's map and like the land itself. "And it's all held together by power poles. Telephone wires. This is the grape vine of the small community. It represents how they are all connected to each other."

Peter said the set is more like a ballet set: "Wide open for freedom of movement and playing - but it is not flat, in part to represent the actual landscape of Duvauchelle Bay, but also to create levels - places to peer over and spy on people."

Texture is important in the set. Peter said, "The natural places in Michael's world are soft, good for falling and playing, giving the feeling of the earth supporting you. The hard wooden parts of the set are the man made parts, the wharf, the school, the house."

Sound also adds to the texture of the set, not only in the soundscape that runs through the play but from the noises the actors make when they walk, tumble and move over the set.

Peter stressed that the most important thing is what the actors are



saying. The audience needs to believe their story, so the set is kept uncomplicated - "to keep it from getting in the way. The story is what matters."



*Peter King talks texture with the cast and crew of Peninsula.*

At the first rehearsal Peter spoke to the cast and crew about the texture and colour of the set. He presented the model and described what the actors would have to work with. The set was still a work in progress at this time and Peter talked about the possibility of including water as another texture to the set. He mentioned some ideas for how the chairs could be used, but again stated the actors and director would drive the story telling and the set should take a back seat and let them play.

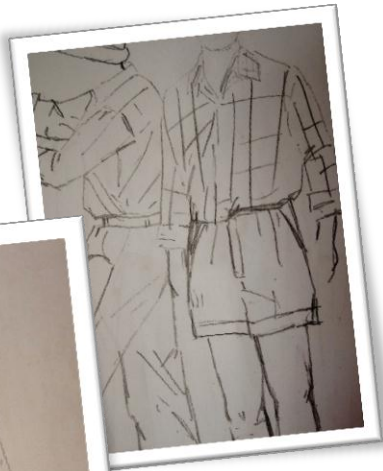
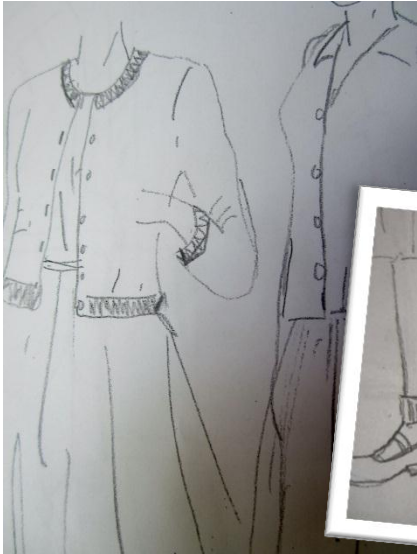




# Costume Design

With Maryanne Wright-Smyth

Shannon talked with costume designer, Maryanne Wright-Smyth, in her sunny wardrobe and workroom. Maryanne showed her sketches of the costumes. She said simplicity was the key to costuming this show. Maryanne pointed out there is no opportunity for costume changes so the clothes needed to say both child and adult.



Maryanne said she did try to make Gordon stand out. His costume is tidier to show the division between the professional teacher and the workmen, the outsider from Wellington and the local men.

She said she wanted to find old clothes and avoided making anything, as something newly made would stand out. The clothes are from the 1960's but the 60's of a small rural New Zealand town, nothing mod or too stylish.

At the first rehearsal Maryanne shared her sketches and talked about her concept with the cast and crew. She had also compiled a collection of photographs showing clothing from the 60's which would fit into rural New Zealand.

Early on, Maryanne provided rehearsal costumes for the actors. Once the actors had their costumes they would visit Maryanne from the rehearsal room above her wardrobe, to ask for a button or a small adjustment to make working with their costume easier.



*Maryanne presents her sketches to the cast and crew and explains her concept for the costumes.*





# Creating the Sound of Peninsula:

A conversation between Sound Designer Chris Ward and Sound Design Consultant John McKay.

**John McKay:** Why do it in the real place when you could fake it all?

**Chris Ward:** To give you an idea of how it all came together, what initially happened was that Gary (Henderson) had an idea that he wanted to do this at the International Festival in 2002 or 2003, and so we did a presentation to the Festival and it wasn't picked up. They didn't run with it. And I was really inspired by the project at that time – I'd worked with Gary before, and with Martyn Roberts the designer and Andrew Foster, and we sort of loosely formed an alliance called "The Four Guys". And Gary said "Right, I've got some money, I'm going to fly you guys down to the bay, and we're going to just experience it. I'll take you round and I'll show the places I hung out in my childhood".

**J.M:** Because Gary lived there as a child didn't he?

**C.W:** He did, yeah. In fact that's the great thing about Gary's work is that a lot of it has biographical sort of contexts, which means that you believe it, because it's coming from that place. You know, so, Gary's dad worked for the telephone company, and they moved around a lot – just like Michael's dad. That's how he was able to describe getting up the Summit Road, digging holes in people's paddocks, damming things, these were things that Gary DID as a kid. It's not made up.

So basically he took us down there, and we didn't arrive until about ten o'clock at night, and they'd phoned ahead to the local pub – the very pub that is in the play – that was owned by a couple of guys there who had said they'd keep some meals waiting for us. You know – everyone knew we were arriving, people knew we were gonna do some strange things in the area for the weekend, they just didn't know what! We turned up at the pub and we ate; I made some recordings in the pub. We also had, just down the road, the blacksmith's cottage where we were staying the night. It was riddled with

mice....it was a funny place. So of course as soon as we arrived, after we ate, we started collecting sounds and video. And I remember Andrew and Martyn looking at how the lights played on the water and they were filming that in interesting ways. I just started collecting night sounds, walking along the coast – grabbing wind, and water movement, various night birds and things like that. Until I fell asleep back at the (cottage) that night. I left a recorder going that night and got the inside ambience – got rain on the patio outside, the porch...

**J.M:** So none of this is fake, eh? Which is quite odd, Chris, because we work in a very "fake" world!

**C.W:** I know, I know! Well the thing is – we work in a fake world, and we're creating an illusion, and the only way, I believe, to really SELL that, when you're trying to do something on this scale, is for it (the soundscape) to be real. Because then people go "well it's fake but far out, it's REALLY good" – you know, BECAUSE it's real.

**J.M:** Something that struck me on seeing it again is that it is quite a theatrical play – the adults playing children is very "theatre" – and yet there's a soundtrack that's ultra-realistic that's running through the whole play. And what got me is that whole contrast is what makes it work so brilliantly. Even the small touch of putting mics in the phones. It's always been my favourite moment in the play – because suddenly you go "They're both on stage and we could just fake it all". But then just going into another slight...level...

**C.W:** I love that, and there's another place I wanted to take that, that I got some source material for, that I never actually introduced. The thing I like about the phones is: those conversations on the phone – they HAVE to be low. They have to be intimate, and everyone apart from Gordon knows they are being overheard. And so they interact on the phone with sensitive issues in that way anyway – just because they know.

**J.M:** The interesting issue this time (compared with the previous production at Circa) is that they couldn't get the phones to ring, so I had to just create a party line ring for it. I just got an old bell ring and did the short and the long ring. Because I actually remember party lines! We had one in Geraldine when I was growing up there. I was talking with Jason about his playing Gordon, and I said "Well, the first time it rings, maybe go 'Woah...is that... (for me)?'" Because being from the city, you're not quite sure how to use them, eh? You go 'Is that it? Or am I just gonna burst in on someone else's conversation?' They're quite an odd thing! The whole thing about a party line is that basically the whole neighbourhood can ACTUALLY hear what you're saying!

**C.W:** That's absolutely right. One of the things I recorded, using a hybrid system that we had access to at work, was – you know when you pick up a phone, an analogue phone, not these new VOIP ones, and every now and then you get that sort of little scratch, or crackle, or something, that someone's holding a handset. I recorded a lot of REALLY subtle stuff like that, and some breathing, and the odd sort of mouth click and pop and things like that. And I wanted to have the (often mentioned, never seen) character of Rhonda as a layer in there, that wasn't obvious.

**J.M:** Well that's interesting, eh, because she's such a presence in the play, you know, like she's SO there...that would have been brilliant!

**C.W:** I bit off way more than I could chew! I realised that! So, just jumping backwards... We had this first visit in the summer, and so I was able to get a flavour, by just recording solid for two days, of different parts of the bay at that time of the year – so, active birds, insect life, that kind of thing. I had a couple of recorders and I planted them so that I didn't KNOW what I was getting sometimes. I'd leave one recording for a couple of hours and take off somewhere else and come back and later, when I was putting this all together I was like "Oh my God, there's GOLD here, real gold!" And one of the things that was really fascinating for me was because I was recording in a different part of the bay, which is a natural amphitheatre, I started to recognise all the landmarks between the recorder I had left somewhere else, and my recordings that I had (taken) a kilometre or two away. And when you put them TOGETHER, you were able to make these amazing quads, and that's

one of the things that I think immerses you in the experience.

I think that – jumping to the hyper-real thing – that's one of the things that enables the audience on a very subtle level to appreciate that something has changed, when the character stays the same, and their clothing stays the same, and (only) their body mannerisms change. And that's the great thing that the actors bring. But when we have a shift in the sound, it becomes a device that enables them to more readily accept "we're in a different place" or "these are different people".

**J.M:** Interestingly enough in this production, we made the contrast between interiors and exteriors more dramatic. When you're whacked out into them and Pug at the beach (for example) it's a lot more elemental, mainly because Centrepont Theatre is a bit more "theatre-shaped". I quite liked it, because you went (to that) from that hum, which is sort of like the unspoken presence that is in the play. The hum got to me like "this is really gonna be the thing that basically unravels everything".

**C.W:** It's a character! That I think... it's one of the things that just drives Gordon over the edge. He's come from the city, he's come from the hustle and bustle. And when it gets so quiet that you can hear something so friggin' annoying...it's like "OH MY GOD! WHAT IS THIS THING?!" It's something that hypes him up a bit as well. And he becomes a bit like everyone else in the district as well, eventually.

So yeah, that whole hyper real thing. I got the summer recordings, and then I went down in winter on my own. I did my OWN mission! And that's where I had some REALLY good luck.

**J.M:** Is that where you had the rugby game, for example?

**C.W:** Yeah, because I had a friend who lived not very far away from Duvauchelle. I travelled down with her and she said "Look, come and have a meal with my family before you go on". So I go to this house, and unbeknownst to me, she was the local piano teacher, the woman. I told her about what I was doing, and just got a bit more about the history of the place. I said "Would you mind playing the piano, and I'll record it, up close, and I'll record it down the hallway a bit as well, so I get both perspectives." And she did, she played that piece for me that's in the show. And she played it badly, you realise.

So that was the first stroke of luck. Next day, after recording all night again, I was like "Okay, it's Saturday morning! I've gotta get up and I've gotta find schoolboy rugby. I've got NO idea where it is, but I'm gonna drive, and I'm just going to find it". And sure enough I did! I found a team of boys, about the same age as Michael, playing rugby, and I went on the sideline and recorded them. And EVERYTHING changed when I arrived because they could see me there and they were thinking "Oh there must be cameras somewhere!" but nobody came over, they left me to it...they performed for me! The entire parent population performed for me! Suddenly like "YEAH! GET IN BEHIND THERE BOYS! COME ON PENINSULA!" and I'm just thinking "Oh my god, this is gold, you can't create this."

**J.M:** I know, you hear that and I'm thinking...it would have been so easy to fake it with some actors though, or something like that. But you actually picked it up from the place so it fits in. I know you just about crap your pants when you're recording it, eh, you're just like (makes a noise like WOW) "I've got it!" ....and then you hope you haven't screwed up recording it! Because those kind of opportunities are one-time only kind of things aren't they?

**C.W:** Yeah, and that's the kicking of the ball, it's someone calling out to Michael, which is in there; and then the only thing that's embellished is that Gary wanted the stampede at the end, which is obviously really over the top. The other great thing about that first trip was that we had the Court Theatre van, and when I was at the Court before going over to Duvauchelle, I had a look in their props department and I found an old wooden sack-barrow with metal wheels.

**J.M:** Oh right, for the trolley scene?

**C.W:** Yeah, I threw it in the van and Gary took me up the hill in the van and I had his partner holding onto my belt and my pants, we opened up the backdoor of the van so it was wide open, I set up a mic, he put the van in neutral and we began to coast downhill with no engine. And I performed "the trolley" in the back of the car to get those sounds. We did two runs and that was it – that was what we used. You don't have time to create this: it's a very long show, you've just got to get the right sounds, chuck them in and move on because theatre is never going to allow you the budget or the time to do what I did without it being a whole lot of good

luck, shooting from the hip and whatever you get is gold.

None of the trucks – you know Bruce at the Summit Road with the trucks? – none of that is put in (later). The only thing that boned me on that first trip was that that weekend coincided with a Harley Davidson convention trip in Akaroa. So from the minute we arrived, every few minutes there was a Harley travelling over the hill, and then off through to Akaroa. So there was a lot of editing out of Harleys. The only bonus was that on the very last day there was a drive by, 650 Harley Davidsons going past one spot, and I have, I would say, probably the only recording in the world of 650 Harley Davidsons doing a 'by! It was amazing!

**J.M:** What about the opening, which is quite unusual, to have a seven minute, in the black opening? I know in the Wellington production it was shortened slightly...

**C.W:** I think it's very indulgent, myself. It's incredibly self-indulgent.

**J.M:** But I think what makes it work in the Centrepont production is there are some lights at the "peak" of the quake, and some AV that starts to come in, to start to bring (the audience) into that world. I think it actually works...I know in Wellington it kinda freaked people out, because it wasn't long after the earthquake in Christchurch, so they had a notice on the door that it might upset some people from Christchurch.

**C.W:** Like in Christchurch, when it opened, I had (a very powerful sound system) and I tuned it within an inch of its life. People thought we had some kind of hydraulic system moving the seating block – they were just like, "WOOOOOAH, what the hell is going on here?!" And it had the right effect: it jolted people into the show. But Gary wrote that! He said, okay, here's what happens: there's this volcanic rumble, it erupts, I want you to get thrown into the air and then you come down like a piece of ash and settle into the bay.

And that's exactly what I tried to do.

**J.M:** It hits that peak, then comes down, and then you start the slow introduction of the kids, with the cue for the actors to come on ...one of the kids says "Thirty, thirty, thirty"? And suddenly you transfer from a real aural world to a real theatrical world.

**C.W:** That is actual kids at Duvauchelle Bay School. I discretely recorded them.

And then I made recordings of the bell – that's the school bell at Duvauchelle. It sounds like that because...that's what it is!

**J.M:** The interesting thing about it, to me, is again – you could have faked all of that. But it's part of the play, what you did, because it's so specific to it all. It (the soundscape) is actually part of the whole fabric. I'm quite glad now we have QLab and it sits there as a whole entity we can play anywhere. (What he's talking about here is how every professional production of Peninsula has utilised the same original soundscape recorded by Chris – nobody has yet decided to abandon it in favour of selectively creating their own sound effects).

**C.W:** I'm really pleased about that. It's funny, when I went to that pub that first night and talked to some of the locals about what I was doing – because I always find that's the way to get the sounds because the locals know where to go and they'll tell you – I had in my mind long before going down there "Oh, I've got some of the most beautiful New Zealand birds from all around the country I'm gonna incorporate in everything" and one of the guys in the pub says "I hope you're not gonna put any f\*\*kin' tuis in there". And I'm like "Well, why not?" – because it's my go-to bird – and he's like "THERE'S NO TUIS DOWN HERE MATE!" I would never have known that, so I was like "Right. I respect that...and I won't go there".

**J.M:** And you did a little bit of music as well. People really love that little guitar.

**C.W:** I wanted to do a lot of music for the show, and I...just bit off waaaaaay more than I could chew.

**J.M:** We've both worked in film, and you worked in theatre a lot earlier on, and I've done the rather odd thing and worked in theatre at the end of my career. And so (coming to theatre from film) the interesting thing I have realised – it's always completely under-resourced. There's always SO much to do, it's SO under-resourced, there's so little time. We've both sound-mixed pictures and the picture stays the same...but in theatre, it doesn't.

**C.W:** Yeah, you have to achieve a random synchronisation EVERY NIGHT with events and if you do, everything is working well. The way that Peninsula is designed is IF things change, it will change with them. And I used to LOVE riding the faders on the show every night, I used to love going "I know how I want

this to be, and I'm going to feather it in around what's going on." And I always said to the actors: "You've got to work above this, because this is real life, that's what it's like."

**J.M:** That was also some of my argument, like if you're in a pub...I've mixed thousands of tv and films with pub scenes with people saying "Well, we've gotta get the dialogue in" and I'm going "Well, you should shoot this and factor in knowing that this is a noisy pub". Why have a big long dialogue scene about whatever - it's unrealistic, isn't it?

That was the other thing that I got out of (the shift from film to) theatre – nights change so dramatically, depending on how big the audience is, how they react to stuff, so you need to be responsive.

**C.W:** The operator needs to be more of a performer than a technician in that case.

**J.M:** The beauty of theatre is it's a film that keeps on changing. Theatre sound to me is like life-capture recording and postproduction simultaneously. It can get better every night. But it can (also) get worse! You can screw something up!

**J.M:** We've basically covered everything I think! Oh wait, one more question! How usual or unusual in your experience of working in theatre is creating a soundtrack that runs through the entire play?

**C.W:** The first time I did that was in 1997. I'd been working with a theatre company called Trouble with Jason Whyte, and I'd just come off my first feature film experience, which was *The Frighteners*, and my mind had just gone "POW! I understand a whole lot more that I can bring back to theatre" and my mission was to do that.

So I did a surround play at BATS, which was called *The Lead Wait* (which replayed recently, and Chris Ward rebuilt the soundtrack for the new production). That show was a real-time period from go to whoa. So if it's like, an hour forty, I had an hour forty soundscape that went from dusk into night in real time, and I built that. So I was able to hit 'play' on ProTools and it ran. That was the first time I had ever done that.

This (Peninsula) is the only other time I have done it, and doing it so much later, and being able to do it the way I did...it was EIGHT OR NINE YEARS LATER. So everything that I'd learned in that time I wanted to apply as well! And as I said, I bit off more than I could chew, and I

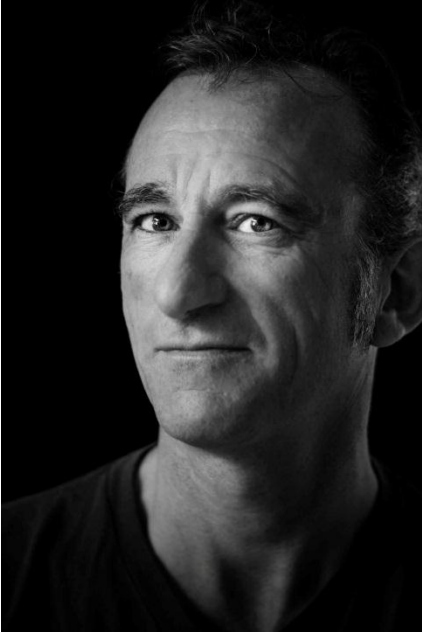
remember the last production week in Christchurch I lived at the theatre and I just STUNK. I was a smelly, dirty person (Both of them crack up laughing really hard) I just slept, woke up, did something, slept woke up, did something, and I was maybe getting two hours sleep a day.

And that's how it came together.



# Meet the Director

## Patrick Davies – Director



Patrick is an award winning Director and international Improviser who grew up in Dunedin and has since worked around New Zealand and overseas. He trained and taught at Theatre Studies at Otago University after some time at the Globe Theatre, going onto work with local companies WoW!, Kilimogo and Panache in *Unidentified Human Remains* and the *True Nature of Love*, *Arcadia*, *Cherish* and *One Flesh*; as well as directing *Collected Stories*, *Eleanor*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, *The great Macbeth Project* and a vast number of kid's shows. Mid 90's he stepped onto the Fortune stage for the first time in *Aunt Daisy* and has gone on to many roles here including *The Graduate*, *Things We Do For Love*, *Noises Off*, *Hamlet*, *Equus* and *Much Ado About Nothing*

*Jerusalem Jerusalem* by local writer Mike Riddell in which he portrayed the last days of James K. Baxter, gained such great reviews and momentum that it toured to Christchurch, Wellington and

then onto the Edinburgh Festival where it was awarded a five star review.

In 2006 he relocated to Wellington to begin his Master of Theatre Arts (Directing) at Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School and Victoria University. During this time he directed many small projects and some major one's including Pinter's *The Dumb Waiter* and Stoppard's *After Magritte*. He also took Mueller's *Quartett* to Germany, the UK and presented the work at INFANT Festival in Novi Sad, Serbia. The following year he returned with more work and teaching adding Romania to the list.

In 2008 he made the choice to work from Dunedin and directed the highly acclaimed *Glorious* (by local playwright Richard Huber) which subsequently toured to Wellington and Auckland. He teaches Shakespeare Performance at the National Youth Drama School in Havelock North and each year spends two months in Colorado working with outdoor theatre company GALSCO creating devised work and presenting Shakespeare. For Fortune Theatre he directed *The Pitmen Painters* (Best Male Performance; Best Design; Best Director; Production of the Year) and has also been nominated for Best Director for *The Tutor* and *Two Fish 'N' a Scoop*.

He has just returned from directing the hilarious and successful season of *The Slapdash Assassin* at the Basement Theatre in Auckland and is currently in preparation to head back overseas.

## Director's Note

Usually I'm not a fan of 'Director's Notes', firmly believing that what I have to say is in the performance you are sitting down and about to watch.

But, *Peninsula* is different. It is quite simply the best New Zealand play and since reading the script some years ago, I have been pursuing it with a passion.

It has been a joy to lead this creative team on this particular journey, though I might be better describing myself as a distiller. Zoe Hobson and the AV team at local company MYTH; the Fortune team who do so much with so little; old collaborator Stephen 'Sooty' Kilroy; the performers (actors and operator working together re-creating magic night by night) and Gary Henderson's beautiful script – bringing together their creativity and energy, to refine and refine, until what we are left with is a 'southern dram' of the most beautiful hue and flavour, the most complex taste so that you can sit back and enjoy.

I first trod these boards in 1995 and have been 'there and back' ever since both as an actor and Director. I am truly happy to be in my homeland and extremely honoured to be part of the Fortune's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year.

My most heartfelt thanks to all these people who have pushed themselves like elite athletes, to go beyond the normal, to bring you, our public, something quite wonderful and magical.

Patrick Davies

Director

# Meet the Cast

**Nick Dunbar** – Mr MacIntosh/Pug



Nick grew up in Dunedin and studied at the University of Otago graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree in German, Modern Literature & Film, plus a DipGrad in Theatre Studies. Nick trained at Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School graduating in 2003. Since graduating he has appeared in *Up For Grabs* at Downstage Theatre which he was nominated for Best Supporting Actor at the Chapman Tripp Theatre Awards. Nick's performances at Downstage Theatre include; *Big River*, *Who Needs Sleep Anyway?*, *Turbine*, *Live At Six!*, *The Spy Who Wouldn't Die Again* and *Le Sud*; Circa Theatre; *Jacques Brel is Alive and Well* and *Living In Paris*, *Drinking Games*, *Aladdin*, *Chekhov In Hell* and *Mary Stuart*; Bats Theatre; *Never Swim Alone*, *Jeff Koons*, *Metamorphosis*, *Turbine*, *Lonely Heart* and *Christ Almighty*. At the 2006 New Zealand International Arts Festival Nick performed in *King And Country* Directed by Conrad Newport. Nick was nominated for Best Supporting Actor at the 2006 New Zealand TV and Film Awards for his

role in the television series *Insiders Guide To Love*. Other appearances include; *Penumbra* in the 2007 Auckland Festival (picked as one of the top cultural events of the year in Metro Magazine), The National Business Review New Zealand Opera's productions *Lucia Di Lammermoor*, *La Boheme* and the 2008 New Zealand International Arts Festival's production of *The Trial Of The Cannibal Dog*. Nick has also featured in multiple films including; *Show Of Hands*, *Aftershock* and *Until Proven Innocent*.

Nick first performed at Fortune there in 2002 in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Directed by Lisa Warrington. Nick is looking forward to stepping back on Fortune's Mainstage to perform Gary's magical piece, *Peninsula*.

## What fondest memory do you have of your favourite school project?

I had a chemistry teacher at school that we called 'Piggy', possibly on account of his high blood pressure, but probably more due to the fact we got him flustered on a regular basis. There was a TV in the classroom which we always turned on without him noticing. The sound would be off and Sesame Street would be playing. Our joy was in waiting for him to notice...sometimes a whole period would go by. We learnt a lot in those classes. One memorable chemistry lesson, the magnesium in water one, we encouraged Piggy to go for an even bigger chunk of magnesium. Sensing our excitement, and wanting our approval, he obliged us. On this occasion the magnesium took an unusually long time to ignite and as such a large amount of hydrogen built up inside the large glass beaker. When it finally ignited, the hydrogen went with it...and BOOM!, the explosion was huge, flying glass filled the room and many of us hit the floor. No one lost an eye and Piggy begged us not to tell the rector about it. We never would because we liked Piggy.

**Julie Edwards** – Valerie/Lynette



Since graduating from New Zealand Drama School in 1989, Julie has appeared in over 50 Fortune Theatre productions and recently played 'Bron' in *Book Ends* by Roger Hall. Some of her most memorable productions were *Jeanie Once* by Renee, *Smoke on The Mountain* by Connie Ray, *Lashings of Whipped Cream* by Fiona Samuel, and *Educating Rita* by Willy Russell. Julie also appeared in *Homeland* by Gary Henderson for Fortune Theatre's 30th Anniversary.

Julie has recently returned from Australia and lives in Brighton with her husband and three children.

## What fondest memory do you have of your favourite school project?

Making miniature farm models with real grass and farm animals and barns etc.

I got in big trouble for stealing a miniature plastic cowgirl from the shop and had to take it back and own up. Humiliating...Ummmmm

**Rosella Hart – Ngaire/Sylvia**



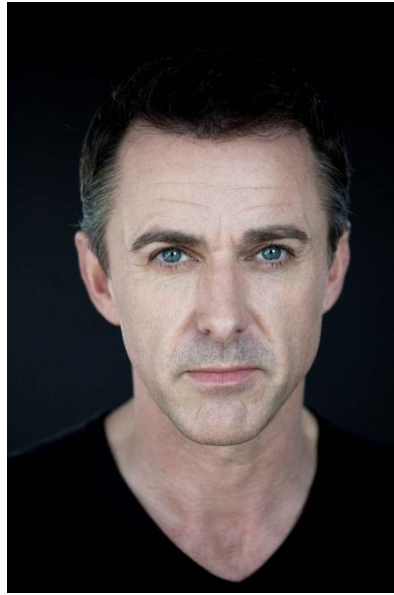
Rosella began her theatre training with Maidment Youth Theatre (MYT - now Massive Company) and graduated with a Bachelor of Performing Arts from Toi Whakaari: The New Zealand Drama School in 2000. She has performed on stage and screen in a number of roles; previous shows with Fortune Theatre are *Equus*, *The Graduate* and *Hamlet*.

After 4 years in London working as a performer, deviser and Director with Shaky Isles Theatre and the Arts Engagement Officer for Lambeth Council, she has returned to live in New Zealand with her family. Currently working as a puppeteer and writer for Natural History Unit New Zealand. Rosella is very happy to be back in Dunedin, and performing in such a beautiful New Zealand play.

**What fondest memory do you have of your favourite school project?**

My favourite school project was probably a diorama in 1st or 2nd form, where we had to create a scene from our favourite book; I made Orthanc from *The Two Towers* (before the Ents wasted it).

**Andrew Laing – Michael/Bruce**



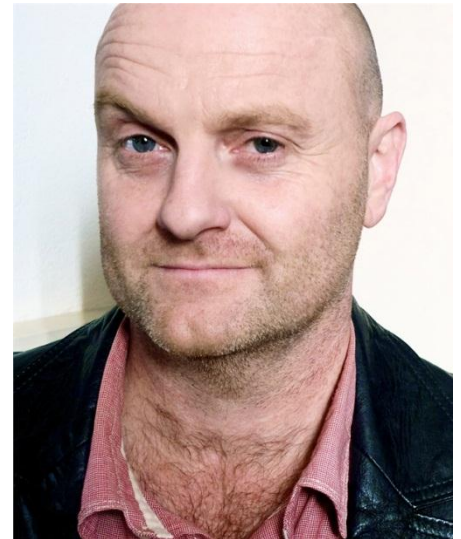
Andrew is a graduate of Toi Whakaari: The New Zealand Drama School and has extensive experience in theatre, television, cabaret and as a voice-over artist. Highlights of his numerous stage credits include *Len Lye: the opera*, *Songs For Guy*, *Berlin*, *Jacques Brel is Alive and Well*, *Assassins*, *Mr Marmalade*, *Twelfth Night*, *Entertaining Mr Sloane*, *Conquest of the South Pole*; as well as the Australasian tours of *Blood Brothers* and *The New Rocky Horror Show*, plus *The Glass Menagerie* for which he won Best Supporting Actor in the inaugural Chapman-Tripp Awards in Wellington awards. He spent two years playing Dr Geoff Greenlaw on *Shortland Street* and has subsequently appeared in *Underbelly: Land of the Long Green Cloud*; *Outrageous Fortune*, *Legend of the Seeker*, and had a recurring role in both *Spartacus: Blood and Sand* and *Gods of the Arena*. He has appeared in many short films including the award-winning New Zealand short *Philosophy*. His most recent appearance at Fortune Theatre was as Frank Sargeson in the World Première (and subsequent New Zealand festival tour) of *Gifted*. A voice-over artist for television and radio advertising, Andrew has also narrated several documentaries for National Geographic's Mega-structures series, provided numerous

character voices for the TV series *Power Rangers* and is a narrator of Talking Books for the Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind. Andrew is a proud member of Actors Equity NZ.

**What fondest memory do you have of your favourite school project?**

My favourite primary school project (also the only one ever I kept) was a study of our solar system. As a kid I was fascinated with space and space travel (I was a child of *Star Wars* and *The Tomorrow People*). I studied and wrote about the sun and each of the planets and their moons; drew them, using wildly inappropriate colours, and also wrote a short story about an interplanetary space-ship manned only by kids! It was awesome! (Awesomely terrible).

**Phil Vaughan – Jack/Alex**



Phil is a relative latecomer to acting, beginning his career in broadcasting as a radio and television presenter. For over 15 years he hosted nationwide breakfast radio shows and presented various television programmes like *Good Morning*, *Where in the World is Carmen San Diego?*, *Mountain Dew on the Edge*, and *What Now?* and he called the numbers on the Big Wednesday Lotto draw. He's also worked behind the



scenes in numerous television and film productions both in New Zealand and overseas for the BBC UK as a writer, production manager and first Assistant Director.

After a chance meeting with a Director 'in a bind', he ended up being cast in Dave Armstrong's play *The Tutor* at Circa Theatre in Wellington. The experience took him completely by surprise and he had an epiphany, won a Chapman Tripp nomination for 'Best Newcomer' and has been acting full time ever since.

Phil has performed in theatres all round New Zealand. Recent productions include; *The Motor Camp*, *Flipside*, *August*; *Osage County*, *The Truth Game*, *The Birthday Boy* and *God of Carnage*. He also voices radio plays and short stories for National Radio and has appeared in a number of television commercials. Television Drama credits include; *The Strip*, *Insider's Guide to Happiness* and *Harry and Cosh* (BBC UK). Phil last appeared at Fortune Theatre in *Boeing Boeing*.

**What fondest memory do you have of your favourite school project?**

When I was a kid I was fascinated (still am) with Earthquakes, Volcanoes, Solar System, the Big Bang, Storms and the Power of the Earth. So I did one when I was in Standard 4 on 'Earthquakes'. I still have it somewhere. I drew a picture of the Earth on the front cover all shaking and there was a big crack in the bottom. The bottom of the Earth was falling off because it was shaking too much. I made sure New Zealand was on that bit because I thought it would be fun to go floating off into space then we could have a whole planet as cool as New Zealand because it would be just New Zealand!

*The set takes shape and the actors get to explore it for the first time. They sit, lie, roll, jump and run across it, listening to the sound it makes and noting the different textures.*



*Actor Phil Vaughan plays 4 square. 4 square was an important part of the rehearsal day. A physical and mental warm up that helped the actors develop their characters and make connections with each other.*

## Further Discussion Questions

- Rhonda and Shirley Slade are such crucial characters to the plot. We feel their presence though we never see them. As a director, designer, or actor how would you evoke these important characters?
- One of the themes in the play is being different. How are those who are seen as being different treated in the play? How is Gordon treated, first as an outsider from Wellington, then once he is discovered to be gay? How is Shirley Slade treated and why? Who else is seen as different?



*Julie Edwards shares messages from family and school friends in an autograph book from her own primary school days. 1970's Facebook.*

- The play looks at gossip and prejudice, particularly homophobia. Does this go hand in hand with the setting of small town New Zealand in the 1960's? How much has this changed today?
- Can anyone's parents or grandparents remember having a party line phone system, how did that change the way they used the telephone? Why is the telephone one of the very few props in the play?
- The cast were asked to share memories from their primary school days of a favourite school project or science experiment and a memorable story from when they were ten. Below is what the cast remembers came up with. What are your memories from primary school?



*Actor Nick Dunbar uses the telephone during rehearsal.*

## What was your favourite Primary School Science Experiment?

### Andrew Laing

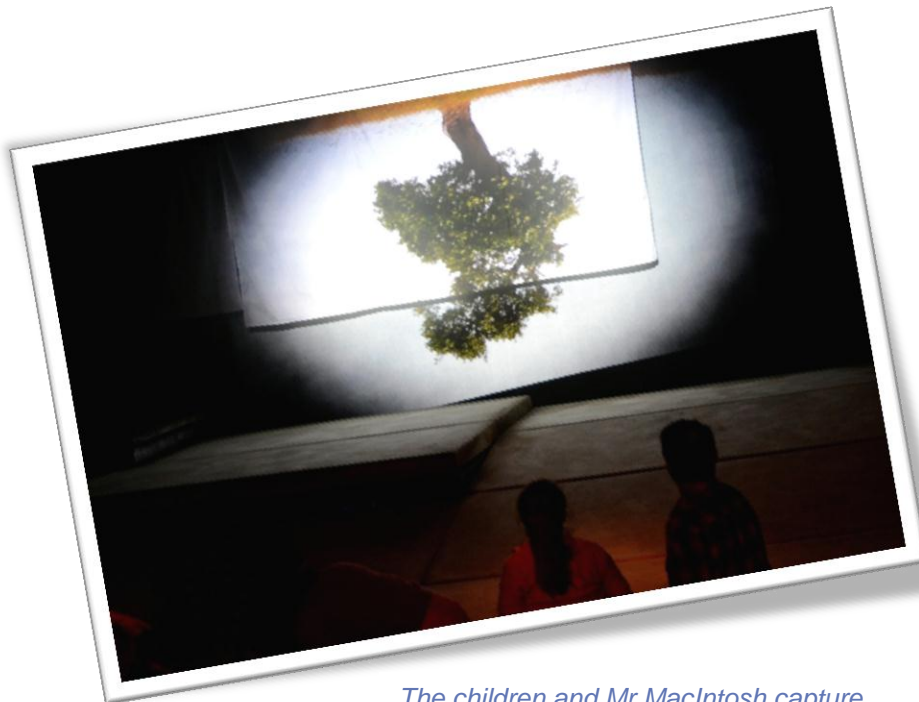
I grew up in Clyde, in Central Otago, and during my last years of Primary School the Clyde Dam Project began. Each Friday afternoon our class would file up to a lookout above the town and observe the diggings and construction. Watching that project begin to emerge was the best kind of science; taming and diverting the mighty Clutha, the massive amounts of concrete being poured, the dredging and tunnelling and metalwork's. It was awe-inspiring.

### Rosella Hart

The only science experiment I really remember was making electrical circuits. We were firmly told how, so that we would not blow up any light bulbs. I deliberately made a circuit that would blow a row of light bulbs, because I wanted to see what would happen. I was hoping for a flash of light or something dramatic but they just...went out. Then I snuck all the broken bulbs back into the box, knowing they would mess up other people's experiments; but also knowing I couldn't tell the teacher that I blew them up on purpose.

### Phil Vaughan

I can't remember any major primary school experiments. I can however remember inventing an awesome "Wake-up Machine" to help me get out of bed when I decided I was going to be an All Black and get up for some early morning training sessions. So I got my Mickey Mouse wind up alarm clock and some string and tied the string round my toe. Then I connected the other end of the string to the wind up mechanism on the back of the clock. The theory being that when the clock alarm went off it would wind up all the string around the winder and pull me out of bed by my feet and into my waiting shoes laid out on the floor. It didn't work. The clock kept getting pulled off my desk. I'm on the lookout for a heavier clock, still haven't managed to find one. If you know where one can be found please let me know.



*The children and Mr MacIntosh capture the image of a tree during a classroom experiment with a camera obscura .*



Do you have a memorable childhood story of when you were 10 years old?

### Andrew Laing

Like my character Michael, when I was about 10 or 11, I encountered my first (of many I'm happy to say) inspirational teacher. Miss Bringans was fresh from Teachers College and loved her job. And loved us. She made each day an adventure: opened my eyes to literature, encouraged my thirst to learn, and never told me to stop day-dreaming. I will be forever grateful to her – and to all those who care enough to teach.

### Nick Dunbar

Going on a field trip to an estuary somewhere on Otago Harbour and collecting plant and animal specimens at low tide. We sellotaped them into our scrapbooks and wrote down their English and Latin names, etc. It was a sandy, smelly scrapbook full of life!

### Rosella Hart

When I was 10-11 Mum took me out of school for 6 months to go travelling to England and Ireland. It was the best thing ever. Lots of good memories, exploring old buildings and having plenty of free time, picking potatoes with Mum in Ireland when we needed cash, and navigating us through the London underground system.

### Phil Vaughan

I can remember at ten years old I got my first job which was a paper round handed down from brother to brother in my family. So for the first time in my life I had money to be able to buy my own Christmas presents. So my next door neighbours Neil & Geoff Mettrick, Andrew Daube, David Williamson and me all went together into town on the train to do our Christmas Shopping. I found this awesome second hand army surplus store called 'Crazy Ricks' that had old army parachutes on sale at 5 for 5 dollars. There are 7 kids in our family so I got them all parachutes. We went back to Neil Mettricks house and he jumped off the roof to try it out and landed in the Kowhai tree and got a massive splinter embedded in his leg and had to go to hospital and have an operation to remove the splinter. I then decided not to give all my brothers and sisters parachutes for Christmas cos they obviously didn't work. I ended up going to Mr Mcardys shop instead and getting them all 50 cent mixtures. Which was heaps better cos aniseed balls were 4 for a cent and wine gums were 2 for a cent.

### Julie Edwards

I created a gang called 'The Chalk Gang', we would be on the lookout after school for a creepy dude who was 'flashing' us kids. And in pairs would follow him and mark chalk on the ground so the others could go get an adult. I got stuck up a tree while he was flashing, my friend ran to get help. Then I followed him getting into his car. Got number plate and car description. He was called 'the Hillpark Flasher'! We went on 'police 5' a reality crime solving show and got medals. Cool eh!

*Phil Vaughan, Andrew Laing, and Rosella Hart at work in the rehearsal space.*



Charmian Smith talks with Patrick Davies and the cast and previews *Peninsula* for the ODT Arts page. Thursday, 20 Mar 2014.

## Lyrical, magical, theatrical

A nostalgic visit to 1960s rural New Zealand and the undercurrents that run beneath the surface are brought to life in the Fortune Theatre's new production of *Peninsula*. Charmian Smith talks to director Patrick Davies.

Patrick Davies waxes lyrical over *Peninsula*, the play he's directing at the Fortune Theatre.

"*Peninsula* is the best New Zealand play written in the last 40 years! Gary Henderson's plays involve really amazingly New Zealand people; they are ordinary, they are brilliant, they are tragic, they are flawed, and his command of language, our pattern of speaking, is extraordinary. Not only are they beautiful to perform and the words just fall out of your mouth but they still have a lyrical, magical, theatrical kind of meaning," Davies rhapsodises. The play has had a hold on him for several years, and he has pestered Artistic Director Lara Macgregor to schedule it at the Fortune. Now it is finally in production, he is bubbling over with enthusiasm.

"This is the most evocative, magical, brilliant evocation of the New Zealand short story on stage. It's the simple story of the epiphany of a young kid becoming an adult, which is a major theme of a lot of New Zealand short stories ... Most of these stories do have this slightly tragic 'Oh, I've lost my innocence' but when Michael loses his innocence he trades it for the opening of an imaginative and amazing vista of what the world could possibly be. You come out of the performance with this glad, warm hug of emotion," he gushes.

The play, a commission for the Christchurch Arts Festival in 2005, was written when Gary Henderson was living in the Robert Lord Writer's Cottage in Dunedin but has not been staged here until now, although it has had productions elsewhere.

Set in the early 1960s, it tells the story of 10-year-old Michael, who lives on rural Banks Peninsula and is neither good at rugby nor brainy.

But when a new teacher arrives, his passion for volcanoes is ignited.

He learns he lives on one and starts to map his community.

"He has a happy family. There are some issues in the play but it's not an 'issue' play. We see a kid start to get excited about something and about a project and discover his own place in the world," Davies says.

"Then some things happen that might derail him. The lack of employment in the area affects his family greatly. There are a couple of scandals but at the end you know he's going to be OK. You don't know what's going to happen to him but he's learned enough through his experience to stand up."

It is about the world of early 1960s rural New Zealand - building a hut, having a club, going fishing with your father, rough and tumble with the dog, chasing the girls and putting up your hand to be lunch monitor, he says.

"We recognise these kids and we also recognise the adults who go down to the pub for a few beers - it's six o'clock closing; the party at home where someone pulls out the guitar or piano and has a bit of a sing-along while the kids try to sneak a beer or two."

There is also a sense of wonder as they watch Echo 1 and Echo 2, some of the first satellites, as pinpoints of light travelling across the night sky.

"It's slightly nostalgic. It reminds us of that golden time before technology took over our lives. All they have is a telephone and then it's a party line, the kind of thing where people find out because the operator's been listening in."

The five actors each play two roles, adult and child or the family dog, and create a world that evokes the imaginative world of children where a stick or a box could be anything: the fort, the house, the time machine, the tunnel, the robot.

"It really enlivens an audience's imagination to watch the creation of a

story. It is not on a set where you get told stuff through exposition and dialogue," Davies says.

But there is also a technical element in the show and the Fortune has joined forces with Myth, a Dunedin digital company, to create the effects and video feeds.

"You actually see people hurtling down a hill on a trolley. You see the lava from the middle of the earth grow out of the stage and cover one of the actors, in a nightmare."

The volcanoes that formed Banks Peninsula are a metaphor for the play, he says.

"Beneath the calm exterior of the family, the people, the landscape, there's something always beating and boiling underneath. It's about those cracks and fissures that appear and the steam gets released. It doesn't always mean an absolute eruption, but it's just a reminder that underneath there's an amazing red heart."

Davies, who says he is based in Dunedin because his mother is here, is an itinerant theatre practitioner, teaching, acting and directing around the country and the world with regular visits to Colorado, and has worked in Germany, Serbia, Romania, Dublin, Glasgow and London.

"I don't have a bed or wardrobe or desk any more. I have about 20 books and a pack's worth of clothes and a very ancient computer," he said.

The internet makes it easy to communicate and for the past three years, he has auditioned people or attended meetings on Skype, he says.

"It's always so much fun to come back to the Fortune. It's like home. I've done so much work here and it's so much fun to create something on this stage, especially *Peninsula*. It's a gold nugget," he enthuses.