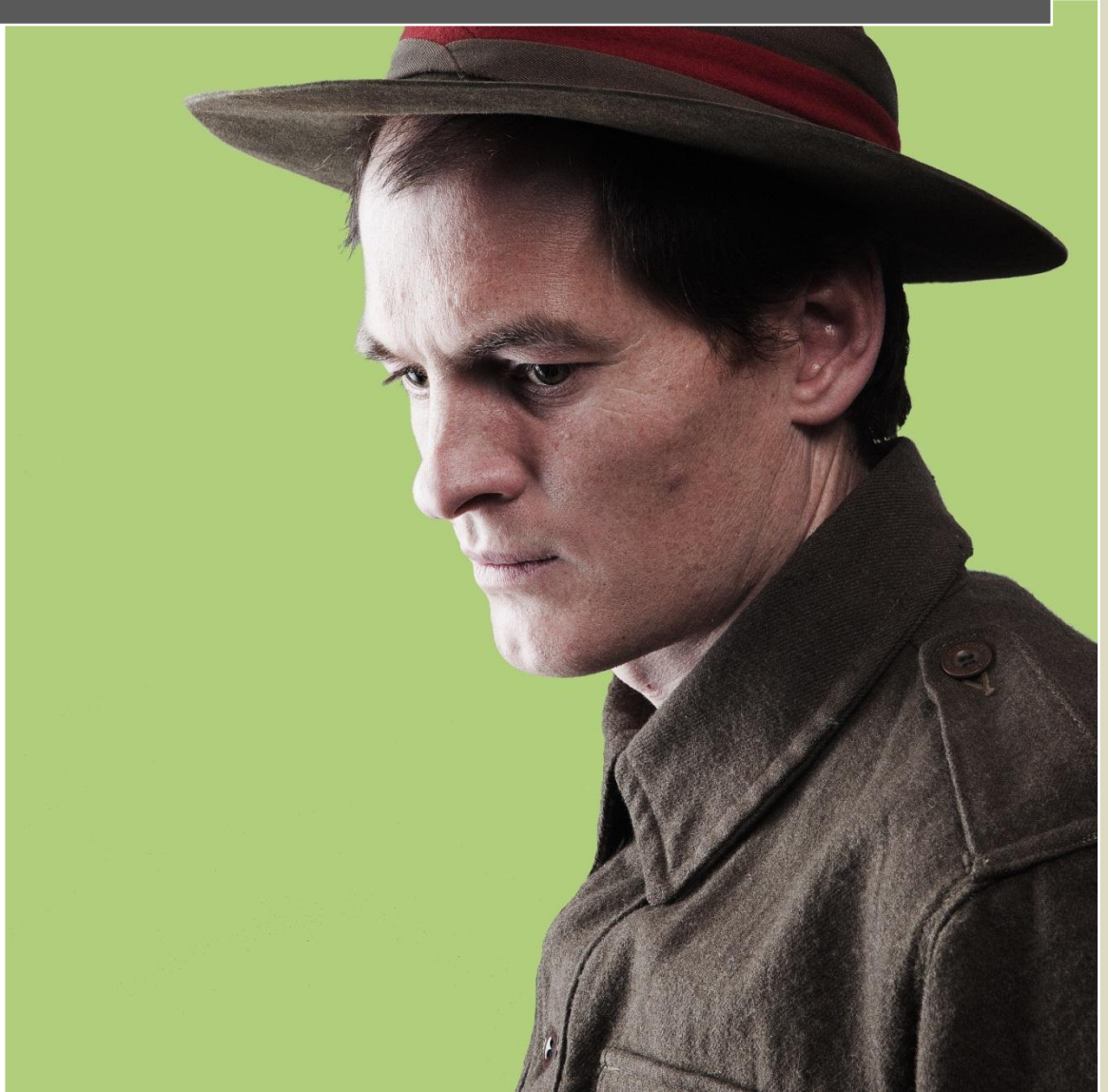


The War play by Philip Braithwaite



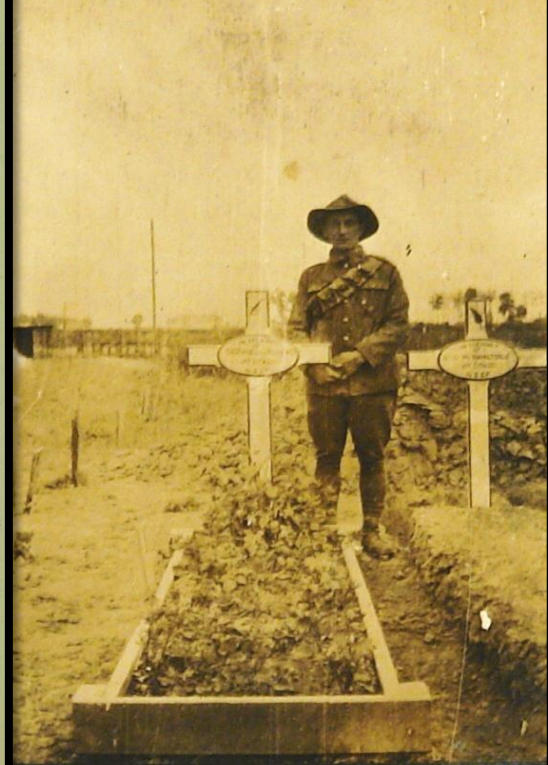
I feel like Jack's right in front of me, hanging over me. The past is like that. You turn a corner and it's there, staring at you.

- Philip Braithwaite

Fortune School Resource



"ENJOYING THE JOKE": NEW ZEALANDERS, WITH A COPY OF "NEW ZEALAND AT THE FRONT," SEATED ON A CAPTURED GERMAN ANTI-TANK GUN.



The Way Play by Philip Braithwaite

World Première

In a brand new play that blurs the line between the real and the imaginary, playwright Philip Braithwaite searches for answers about his great uncle, Jack Braithwaite, who was in WW1.

What he uncovers is a truth that has been locked away for nearly a century. Across several generations, spanning from Dunedin to half way around the world, two men's lives become inextricably bound. What are the connections between fathers and sons in Dunedin's Braithwaite family, and what was Jack's grave injustice? Politics, art, family and the nature of truth come together in *The War Play* - an exciting Fortune Theatre commission from one of New Zealand's prominent award-winning playwrights.

Fortune Theatre is proud to share this very personal Dunedin family story and to remember the horrors of WW1.

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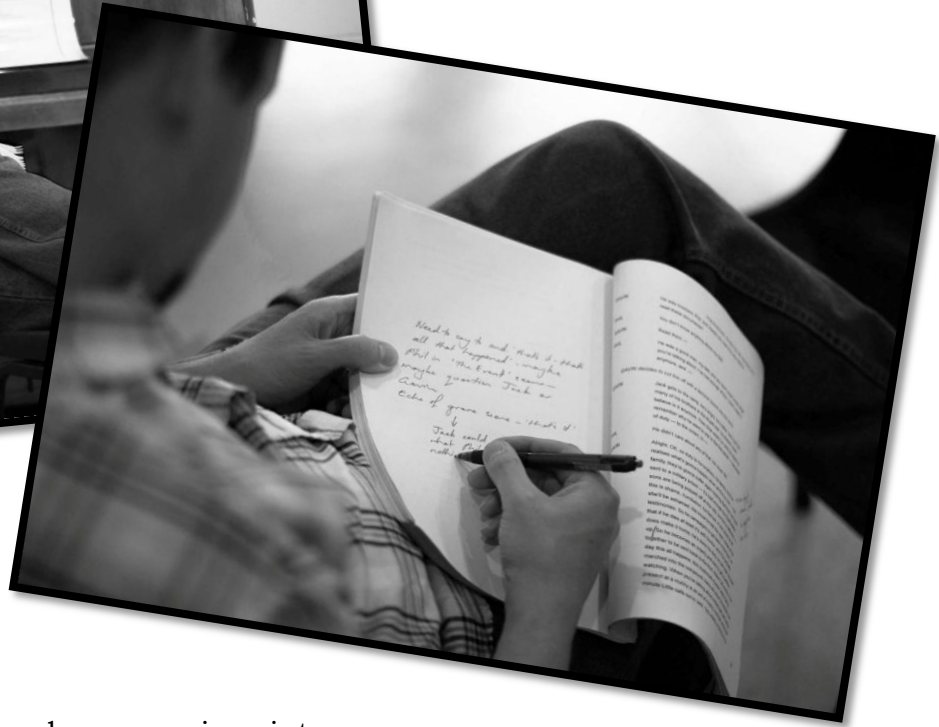
Please contact me at
education@fortunetheatre.co.nz with
any thoughts, questions and feedback or
if you are interested in becoming a
Fortune School Ambassador.

Shannon Colbert
Education Liaison Officer





*Philip Braithwaite takes notes at development clinic for *The War Play* in Auckland.*



Philip Braithwaite

Philip Braithwaite enjoyed early success in his writing career when, shortly after graduating from university, he won the 2001 BBC World Service International Radio Playwriting Competition with *Blood*, redrafted for radio from a stage play, *The Human Engine*. At its centre is Robbie Sinclair, a part-Maori ex-convict, who recounts the course of his relationship with Francie, a middle class Pakeha ten years younger than him, her parents and brother.

His comedy, *The Ghost of Woody Allen*, attracted attention in a production at Bats Theatre as part of the 2003 Wellington Fringe Festival. Alan is in his mid 20s and suffering from Anthropomorphic Celebrity Virus which sees him

morph on occasions into the persona of Woody Allen. This inevitably poses problems for his relationships with his friends in a Wellington flat.

Hail to the Thief was presented in Wellington by the well-known fringe group The Bacchanals in 2007. Its plot is the Old Testament Biblical story of King David and Bathsheba.

Honest to God, an account of controversial theologian Lloyd Geering's life and views, was given a reading in Wellington in 2011. Like the character at the centre of *The War Play*, its protagonist is uncomfortable in the institution in which he finds himself. Braithwaite presented his own autobiographical piece, *Be Glad You're Neurotic*, at the Gryphon Theatre in 2012 Wellington Fringe Festival.

In 2014 *The Mercy clause*, which won the 2013 Adam NZ Play Award, was premiered at Palmerston North's Centrepont Theatre. In it a lawyer with a disintegrating marriage struggles to ascertain the truth about the events which have led to his client being charged with causing the death of his father. As in several of Braithwaite's other plays, including *The War Play*, intergenerational relationships are presented as difficult and highly charged.

Alister McDonald
Fortune Theatre Dramaturg

A Note from the Playwright

I don't remember the first time I heard the story of my Great Uncle Jack: it was always hovering around, just out of sight. It polarised members of my family: some wanted to talk about it; some preferred it remain hidden away.

It's understandable: Jack and his 'shameful' story created an open wound in the family. His father, Joseph, once mayor of Dunedin, died about six months after he did. Whether it was, as the speculation goes, from a broken heart, we can't know, but certainly he carried to his grave a profound misunderstanding of what happened to his son.

We know the truth now, and we know there is little cause for shame. And yet there is still this discomfort: it's as if our family can't fully bury Jack. But that sense of the spectre of the past is very useful creatively, and moulded the play into its current shape.

The process has been a long, fascinating and sometimes frustrating one. There are many people who helped me along the way, and only space to thank a few. The first is Lara Macgregor, for programming the play and supporting me even



when she hadn't seen anything approximating a final draft. Playmarket were supportive of me all through the process. Ian McGibbon, the historian, who knows more about my family than I do, provided me with a huge amount of useful information. The WW100 fund allowed me an income to write the first draft, and the Michael King Centre in Auckland gave me accommodation and a stipend to produce the final version. I'd also like to give special thanks to director Roy Ward and the cast for bringing the play to life.

Philip Braithwaite is an award-winning playwright. Amongst his credits are the BBC World Service/British Council International Radio Playwriting Award, and the Adam NZ Play Award. Phil's work has been produced in New Zealand and internationally, and he has collaborated with groups from the Royal Court Theatre in London, the BBC and the SEEd theatre company. His radio plays have been produced on the BBC World Service and Radio New Zealand.

He has also worked as a scriptwriting teacher at Massey University, Victoria University of Wellington, and Whitireia Polytechnic. He has provided mentorship for young playwrights at the Fortune theatre, Dunedin, and in 2013-14 he was the William Evans Playwriting Fellow at the University of Otago.



Fortune Ambassadors got to talk with Philip Braithwaite and Artistic Director, Lara Macgregor before watching the 2nd ever performance of *The War Play*.

Phil talked about the way his play has changed form. The first workshop or clinic, took place at Fortune Theatre in the winter of 2014. The working draft of the script at that time simply focused on the story of what happened to Jack. During that first clinic the feedback Phil was given from Lara and several others was that it needed to be more personal. Phil said he may have taken them too literally when he actually put himself and his father into the play. He said he needed to find an angle or focus for the story. It could have been injustice, truth or the futility and nonsense of war and those themes are all there but he decided his way into the story would be through his family. He talked about the shame felt by his family and how Jack had been made into a monster in family mythology. Once the truth had come out, those facts did not change the feelings of shame and the myth of Jack the villain. Phil said that was something he wanted to explore.

Nathaniel, Ambassador from Kaikorai Valley College, asked Phil how much of himself was in the character Philip Braithwaite. Phil said that the characters of his father and himself had elements of the real life people but were, naturally, simplified and peered down. He said the facts about them had

changed but that he hoped that the truth was still there.

Phil talked more about the theme of the nature of truth in *The War Play* when he and Roy Ward spoke to Eva Radich, on Radio New Zealand Concert.

Phil discussed the way Gallipoli has turned into a national myth separate to actual historical events, just as the myth of Jack has loomed over his family. He talked about the legacy of shame born by his family. Philip said his father knows the truth about Jack now, but his grandfather never did. "Shame and guilt and that black stain on our family that was unnecessary. It never needed to be there in the first place."

He said some of his family have revelled in the news that Jack was innocent, like David Braithwaite, the ex-mayor of Hamilton who when he found out was, "singing it from the roof tops, while others have remained strangely clamped shut. And that's the nature of shame isn't it. It's not rational. You can't just shrug it off because new facts have come to light."

Eva asked Phil and Roy about the balance of power when playwright and director are working on a new play.

Eva: When push comes to shove who makes the final

decision – probably the director..."

Philip: Probably

Roy: Yeah, yeah

Eva: And some writers don't like that...

Philip: Some writers have trouble with that. But you've got to have the right director and I'm confident that Roy is the right director because he is a writer too and he knows that process.

Eva asked Roy what is particularly difficult about directing a new play.

"It's Phil's new play. It's got to be the play he wants to write. But I've got a lot of influence on whether it works or not. So it's a lot of responsibility. It's not like if I'm doing a classic from 30 or 40 years ago, that's challenging in a different way because you know then - this play works. So you feel - why can't I make it work now? With a new play it is more interesting than that but it's also challenging because you have the responsibility to the writer to try to fulfil everything they want it to be and still make it their voice and not yours... And you've only got three weeks."

Listen to the whole interview at:

<http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/standing-room-only/audio/20170966/the-war-play>

A note from Director Roy Ward

The War Play is full of lies and half-truths – far more of them than you would have a right to expect from a play rooted in historical fact. But how can we tell the truth about events that transpired in 1916 on the other side of the world, some of which were deliberately hidden from public understanding for decades? Some of the deceptions are old and official ones: exaggerations and omissions used a hundred years ago to explain and justify the harsh punishment meted out to Jack Braithwaite. But to get to the heart of Jack's real life tale, his great nephew Philip has bravely played fast and loose with other details of his family's century old story - all in service of arriving at some greater truths about men and war, fathers and sons, and the way events of World War I still ripple through time to haunt and challenge us.

It has been a joy to return to Dunedin and help bring this exciting new work to the Fortune stage. My thanks to Lara Macgregor for the opportunity, to *The War Play's* brilliant and hard-working cast and production crew, and especially to Philip for the great trust he has placed in us.

Roy Ward



Riverton director comes south for War Play

**Southland Times,
March, 2015
By Caitlin Salter**

The first time Riverton-born director Roy Ward got a job in the theatre more than two decades ago, *The Southland Times* headline was 'Riverton man cast in play'.

"It was like it was very strange that a person from Riverton could be cast in a play. I don't think it would now be the oddity that it was then," Ward said. Growing up in Riverton and wanting to work in the arts felt like a hurdle at the time for Ward, who has lived in Auckland for most of his adult life.

"Over 40 years ago in primary school, I said I wanted to be an actor when I grew up and I was laughed at," he said. "New Zealand theatre barely existed then. Now it has changed so much and drama is more present in schools."

Ward left Riverton in his late teens to study in Dunedin and his first job out of drama school was to do a series of plays at the Fortune Theatre in Dunedin in 1986. Now he is returning to work in the south for the first time since that stint to direct the *The War Play* at Fortune Theatre. The play was inspired by a real life incident during World War I when playwright Philip Braithwaite's great uncle was shot for mutiny during the war, an event which caused great shame for his family.

"More recently documents were discovered that had been suppressed and they told more of the story than anyone had ever known." The play fit well with this year's commemorations going on about WWI this year, Ward said.

"Every family has a World War story and you still feel the ripples of it in our families today. Something that happened 100 years ago can still be felt very keenly by a family now.

"A script like this asks for a lot of trust from the writer. It's very challenging but it's an exciting process to bring a new play to life."

For Ward it has been a treat to return to southern New Zealand.

"I have spent most of my life getting away from Riverton, but I've got to the stage in my life where I love this end of the country.

"It's a lovely thing coming back to a place I know very well. I've got good positive memories of my time here." *The War Play* will run at Fortune Theatre in Dunedin from March 28 to April 18.

Characters

Phil: mid-30s. Quiet, thoughtful, searching. He's drawn to the story of Jack because it says something to him about his own character: a writer, someone who is really at odds with his own time and place. Just as Jack is at odds with a world in the maelstrom of war, Phil's world is full of people who don't understand him. He's not like Jack in the sense that he is a total introvert, whereas Jack is caught between the reflective and exhibitionist parts of his personality. Phil is just introverted. Phil is more complex than Jack — looks at things from every angle (Jack would've steamed ahead with a writing commission, not sought his father's advice). Phil is also prone to outbursts of anger, much like Jack, but Phil is more restrained.

Here are the character descriptions from Philip Braithwaite's 8th draft of *The War Play*.

What parallels can you see between the Braithwaite characters?

How has the shame and injustice of Jack's execution affected four generations of his family?

Jack: late 20s – early 30s, a 'chancer', a 'Jack-the-lad,' at the start full of optimism, talking a good game, a raconteur. He is also genuinely interested in life, and always has a piece of trivia to share. But it all disguises a deep insecurity and desperation. He doesn't really feel like he's good enough, and this is reinforced by his family – his father doesn't really believe in him, even though he is more morally upright than his brother. He wants desperately to prove that he's 'a man', that he's good at something, that he has some sense of honour and nobility. This is what compels him in the end to act as he does – he goes from highly optimistic and desperate to prove himself in the beginning (if a little naïve), to almost complete collapse after seeing what happens to Eric in the war, then back to a sort of idealism at the end which, ironically, is what causes his death.

Eric: late 20s – early 30s, a couple of years younger than Jack. He is more of a chancer than Jack, not above illegal activities. He's not as 'cultivated' as Jack, more simplistic, less nuanced in his moral behaviour. He is one of those charmers who does reckless things, and people want to be angry at him but can't be because there's always a twinkle in his eye. You love and resent him at the same time.

Joseph: late 50s. Their father. A complicated man – he comes from Edwardian England and its attitudes about men and women – that men need to be stoic at all times and never show emotions. But he is collapsing underneath. The loss of his son Horace is almost more than he can take, and the prospect of his other sons going to war fills him with dread. He's caught between the values of the Empire – wanting his sons to fight for king and country – and paternal love, as well as fear for their safety. All three of the Braithwaite men have enormous trouble expressing their feelings, but Joseph finds it almost impossible. This is why he has such an awkward time with the minister and tells that long, rambling and pointless story. That coiled up tension and emotional constipation is what drives most of his scenes. As long as he is doing something practical he is alright. As soon as he tries to be reflective, it falls apart.

Private Little: late 20s – early 30s, very like Eric, which is why Jack is drawn to him. In a sense he represents for Jack a 'second chance', where he can do the right thing and help Little where he failed his brother.

Staff Sergeant Shearing: late 30s, a good man. Tries to do his best for the prisoners.

Brigadier General Burwood: 50s. His agenda is mixed. He's of the old school of military conduct, and he wants to further his career by reforming the prisoners, but he also does have an interest in Jack through his connection to Jack's uncle. He is callous in the end, but this is partly due to his own sense of failure.



A Chat with Set Designer, Peter King

Peter King met with some of the Fortune School Ambassadors, while the crew hung lights over his new set for *The War Play*.

Peter told the ambassadors that his original design was, “to have a huge mountain of stuff – things you need for war.” Peter talked about a mound of munitions, provisions, paper work, filing cabinets, the debris of war – “soldiers old gloves appearing out of the mound”. The idea was also to give a sense of being in trenches not being able to see over this mound – not being able to see what’s coming.

“It was going to take up a large part of the stage but, as you can see, it’s quite the opposite.” said Peter. He explained the director wanted full use of the stage with the focus on the actors telling the story. So Peter’s design kept changing to the sparse, open set he was sitting on as he talked with the ambassadors. “It’s a long discussion that you have with the director; you are trying to give the director the fullness of their idea by sharing your ideas.”

Peter showed the ambassadors how the stage has been divided into three areas. He gestures towards Joseph Braithwaite’s house in Dunedin, 1916 on stage

left, Jack Braithwaite’s house in New Zealand, 2015 on stage right, and between them is a raked platform sloping up away from the audience, focusing the gaze to the tall poll upstage centre where Jack is executed. This section is used for war and prison scenes in France, 1916.

“This middle section,” Peter told the ambassadors, “Is a counter point to the two domestic settings and reminds you of planks and trenchers.”

Logan Park Ambassador, Jimmy said it reminded him of no man’s land – “There are the two distinct sides, then somewhere that is completely different”.

Peter agreed and said it is this that enables the character of Phillip the playwright to have moments of interaction with his great-uncle Jack across the time zones.

“The set helps with the transitions in time and place; between 1915 and 2015, New Zealand and France. It’s best not to have big banging set changes which distract from the story. With this pared back set the transitions actually happen in the actors faces.”

Peter wanted a greasy looking brown that could look like mud or age, muck, blood or wood. He used several layers of light and dark brown paint and glaze to get the right look. Peter said it would look very rich



Designer Peter King and Director, Roy Ward discuss the design for the set.

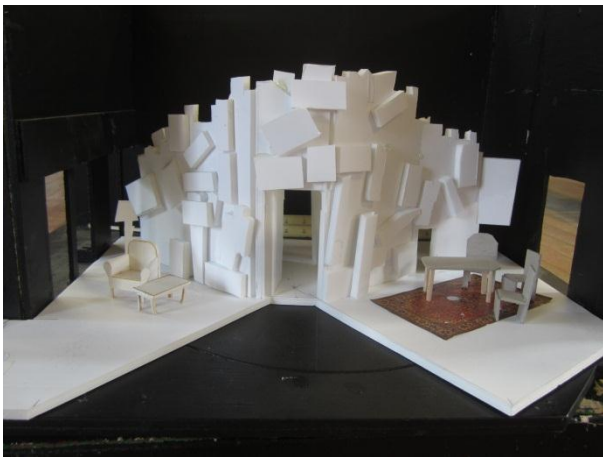
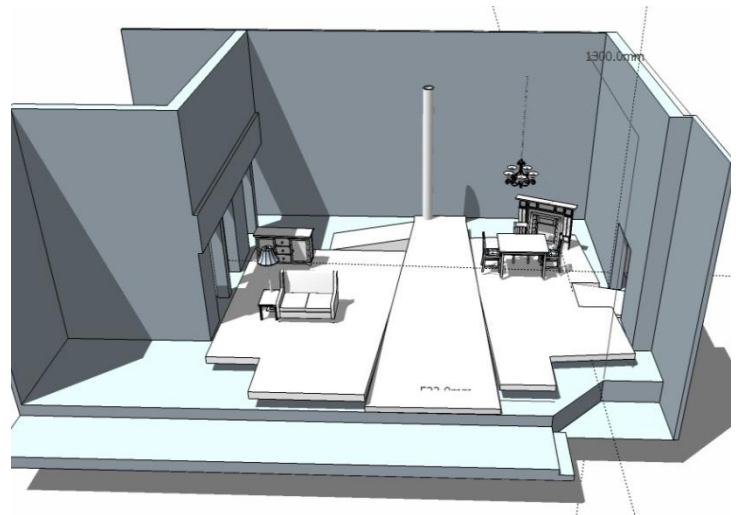
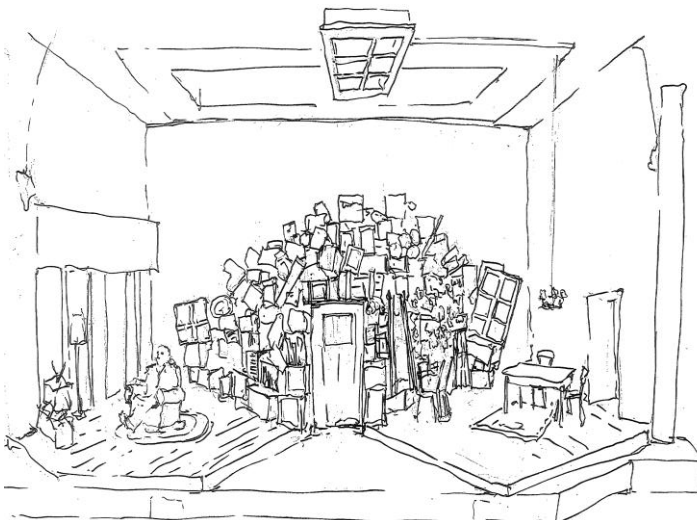
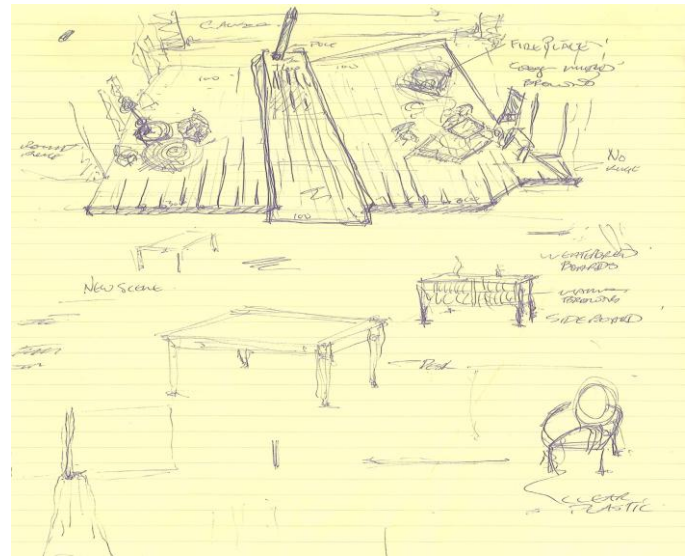
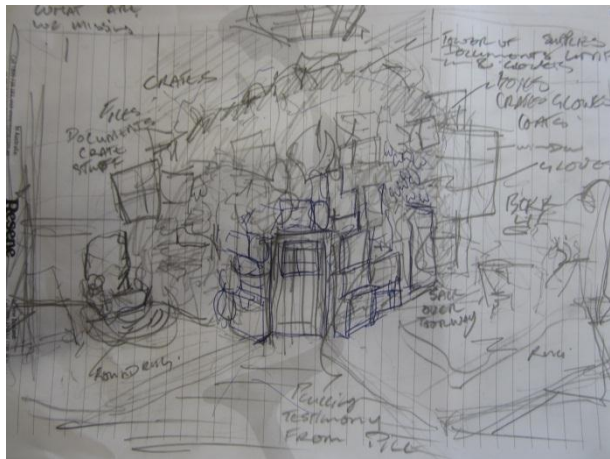
under the lights and change its look under different lighting.

Peter talked about his process of creating doodles, drawings, paintings and models before putting his design into Google Sketch Up, which he recommended to all the ambassadors. Jamie, from Logan Park, said she had used it. Peter encouraged them to give it a go. He said it is also very interesting to look at other peoples set designs in Sketch Up.

Lani, ambassador from Kavanagh College asked Peter if he gets attached when he creates a set. He said he gets attached to the memory of the set and the emotions of the play which are brought back by those memories of how the set worked, looked and was put together.

“My job is basically to facilitate making memories. So that when you leave the theatre, you have images to remember the play by.”

The evolution of the set design for *The War Play*



History and The War Play.

Although the play is based on true events, Philip Braithwaite is merging fact and fiction. In real life, we are happy to say, his father is alive and well, also his great-uncle Horace was wounded at Gallipoli rather than killed. The facts surrounding Jack's execution, however, are from the actual records that were uncovered.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Braithwaite_\(journalist\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Braithwaite_(journalist))

John Braithwaite

(3 Jan 1885–29 Oct 1916) was a New Zealander who served in the First World War with the New Zealand Expeditionary Force. A journalist before the war, in 1916 he was convicted of mutiny and executed by firing squad. He was posthumously pardoned in September 2000 through the passage of the *Pardon for Soldiers of the Great War Act 2000*.

John Braithwaite was born in Dunedin, New Zealand, on 3 January 1885, one of 16 children to a bookseller and his wife. After completing his schooling, he worked alongside his father. In 1911, he became a journalist and lived in Sydney, Australia, for a time.

Braithwaite enlisted in the New Zealand Expeditionary

Force (NZEF) in May 1915. Some of his brothers were already serving abroad with the NZEF, one being wounded at Gallipoli. He was posted to the 2nd Battalion of the New Zealand Rifle Brigade and embarked for the Middle East in January 1916. Within a matter of weeks of arriving in Egypt, he was transferred to 2nd Battalion, Otago Infantry Regiment. Promoted to lance corporal in April, his unit was shipped to France for service on the Western Front. His performance as a soldier soon deteriorated.

In May 1916, shortly after his arrival in France, Braithwaite was demoted for being absent without leave. The following month, he was court-martialled for three offences; a second period of absence without leave; lying to an officer; and falsifying a leave pass. He was sentenced to 60-days Field Punishment No. 2 but continued to disregard military discipline. The following month he escaped confinement and on recapture, a senior NZEF officer recommended that he be returned to New Zealand to serve out his punishment. Sentenced to two years imprisonment for his escape, he was being transferred to a prison facility at Blargies when he evaded his guards and went on the run for two days before being caught. He received a further two year term of imprisonment.

Mutiny at Blargies

Sent to Blargies, Braithwaite appeared to settle down and accept prison life. He applied to

the commandant of the prison for a suspension of his sentence so that he, and other soldiers of New Zealand and Australia, could return to the front lines. His request was passed to Lieutenant General William Birdwood, commanding officer of First ANZAC Corps. In late August 1916, Braithwaite became involved in a mutiny. Blargies had already been the scene of an earlier mutiny by British soldiers protesting at their treatment. This time, an Australian prisoner had become unruly and began resisting attempts by guards to confine him. Braithwaite intervened and dragged the Australian away from the guards and a gathering crowd of Australian prisoners, already disgruntled at their harsh treatment. He later claimed that he reminded the struggling Australian of the petition to Birdwood and not to jeopardise this and that his (Braithwaite's) actions were aimed at calming the situation. However, he, along with three others, were charged with mutiny.

Braithwaite pleaded not guilty, but despite evidence from other prisoners that confirmed his side of the story, a general court martial of five British Army officers, convicted him of mutiny and conferred a sentence of death by firing squad. The three other soldiers on trial, all Australians, received the same sentence. The decision of the court martial was sent to the commander of the British Expeditionary Force, General Douglas Haig, for approval but was

accompanied by a recommendation from the convening officer that the sentences be reduced to a 10-year term of imprisonment.

However, Haig, who in dealing with these matters favoured confirming the death sentence for the perceived ringleader while commuting similar sentences for other soldiers involved in the same incident, deemed Braithwaite the responsible party for the mutiny and as was his habit, confirmed the sentence of death. The sentences passed onto the Australians were commuted to two-years punishment with hard labour. Braithwaite was shot by a firing squad early in the morning of 29 October 1916. The only New Zealand soldier executed for mutiny during the war, he is buried in the St Sever Cemetery Extension in the city of Rouen.

Legacy

The execution of Braithwaite received little publicity at the time. Even immediately after the war, when the New Zealand government became aware of the severity of his treatment compared to the Australian mutineers, it decided to keep the release of information of the circumstances of his fate to a minimum. However, by the 1980s the injustice of Braithwaite's treatment was widely known and in September 2000, the New Zealand Parliament passed a bill, the *Pardon for Soldiers of the Great War Act 2000*, that pardoned

Braithwaite and four other New Zealand soldiers that were executed during the war.

The Unlucky Otagos in WWI

Fortune Theatre has been helped in its research by Sean Brosnahan, Curator of Toitu Otago Settlers Museum who shared photos from the collection and wrote this about the Otago Units:

Jack Braithwaite enlisted in the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in May 1915. He was following the example of three younger brothers, one of whom had been wounded in the Gallipoli landing. During training in Egypt Jack joined the newly formed 2nd Battalion of the Otago Infantry Regiment and was appointed Lance Corporal in its 4th Company, a unit made up mainly of men from Dunedin. His troubles began soon after, however, when the New Zealanders moved to France to join the fighting on the Western Front.

The Western Front consisted of lines of trenches running for 700 kilometres from the Belgian coast to the Swiss border. Vast armies manned these lines, shelling and raiding each other constantly, in between huge set-piece battles that claimed millions of lives for little gain. It was here, amidst the mud and mayhem, that New Zealand made its main contribution to the war. Jack Braithwaite and his

4th Company went into the trenches for the first time just east of Armentières on 8 May 1916. Eight days later they were relieved and Jack went AWOL, never to return to the fight until his execution five months later.

The other Otagos did go back. Although the Armentières section was deemed a 'quiet' area, the New Zealand Division suffered over 2,500 casualties there during the next three months. The Otago Infantry Regiment, meanwhile, was already earning its nickname the "unlucky Otagos". A single trench raid on 13 July cost the 1st Otago Battalion over 50 killed and 100 wounded. Frequently deployed to 'the wrong place at the wrong time', especially at Gallipoli, on the Somme and at Passchendaele, the Otago units suffered more fatalities through the war than any other New Zealand regiment.

Soldiers did not spend all or even most of their time in the trenches. Units were rotated in and out of the line on a regular basis. When not at the 'sharp end', troops might be in support trenches, training, or being rested further back. This was a time for a hot bath, delousing uniforms and then finding some fun. Gambling, drinking and fraternising with the locals provided a welcome respite from mud and misery. But then it was back to the line and another stint of unrelenting pressure with the constant threat of sudden death or maiming.

31 August 2005
WORLD WAR ONE
MEDAL
PRESENTATION
CEREMONY,
PARLIAMENT

Speech by the Rt. Hon
Helen Clark:

Today's ceremony marks the end of a sad chapter in our history which began ninety years ago.

In 1915, the soldiers whose memories we honour today were all in uniform. They had all volunteered to serve their country in the Great War. Private Victor Manson Spencer was fighting at ANZAC Cove, while Privates Jack Braithwaite and Frank Hughes were completing their training in New Zealand.

By 1916, they had all arrived in France ready for service on the Western Front. There, they experienced the horrors of trench warfare during World War One – massed attacks on well-protected trenches, the barbed wire and machine guns, poison gas, the incessant rain and mud, and appalling living conditions.

All three men lost personal battles – whether with military discipline, or with their ability to endure the terrors of life in the trenches. And in so doing, they ran foul of the harsh military discipline of the day, which could only recognise dissent or shell shock as the offences of mutiny or desertion, punishable by death by firing squad. Privates Hughes and Braithwaite were executed in France in 1916, and Private Spencer

was executed in Belgium in 1918.

The truth of their tragic fates was also buried. Their courts-martial files were locked away, with the intention that the details – even the very fact – of their executions would not be made public for one hundred years. War service medals were never issued, and certificates of service were never written. While the rest of New Zealand honoured the nation's war dead every ANZAC Day, what must the families of Privates Braithwaite, Hughes and Spencer have thought, and how much sharper and deeper was their grief?

Not until the 1980s did researchers uncover the hidden history of the execution of New Zealand soldiers in the First World War. With the release of the courts-martial records, it was revealed for the first time that the horrors of that conflict were not confined to the front line, and that New Zealand casualties were not solely the result of enemy action. It is easy enough to dismiss the events of a distant war as characteristic of the harsh standards of the time. However, there are those among us today – and I would like to single out Mark Peck, the Member of Parliament for Invercargill, in particular – who recognised the scale and significance of the lasting injustice perpetrated almost ninety years ago

on Privates Braithwaite, Hughes and Spencer, and on Privates John King and John Joseph Sweeney, whose families will shortly be present at a similar ceremony in Canberra. During the 1990s, Mark championed the memories of these soldiers, and his efforts were rewarded in 2000 with the passage of the Pardon for Soldiers of the Great War Act. This Act pardoned Private Braithwaite of the offence of mutiny, and Privates Hughes and Spencer of the offence of desertion. Today, we are assembled to honour their memory, and to issue the medals, certificates and medallions which they earned by reason of their service in the First World War. Now the service of Privates Jack Braithwaite, Frank Hughes and Victor Manson Spencer be remembered with pride and sorrow whenever New Zealand commemorates those who died in war, and in the service of peace. I would now ask representatives of the Braithwaite, Hughes and Spencer families to come forward, please, to accept the medals, certificates and medallions.



MP, Mark Peck, shares Philip Braithwaite's understanding of events, that the only reason Jack was shot is that Australia would not allow their soldiers to be executed, whereas New Zealand soldiers had no such protection from their government and were entirely under British military law. Someone had to be made an example and it couldn't be an Australian. It is interesting that 100 years later as New Zealand is about to send troops to Iraq, that the government is refusing to release information about the legal protections they will have while working in that war zone.

Tuesday, September 12, 2000, Parliament

PARDON FOR SOLDIERS OF THE GREAT WAR BILL : Third Reading

PARDON FOR SOLDIERS OF THE GREAT WAR BILL - Third Reading

Hon. MARK BURTON (Minister of Defence): I want to pay special tribute to Mark Peck, who has pursued this matter with great determination. Tonight, he is entitled to take some pride in the fact that he has served well these men and those who remember them. We must not underestimate how important this legislation is to families of the executed men. By removing the stigma of execution from these men, we also remove the lingering stigma that has stayed with their descendants. I am confident that in passing this bill this House can take some satisfaction that it has cooperated in finally putting right an injustice of long standing. I commend this bill to the House.

MARK PECK: I thank my colleague. I am a little bit sad today in two respects. One is over a matter of organisation: it would have been nice if all the families could have been here today, but they cannot. Indeed, some whom we organised to be here, as a result of the snap debate, are shopping, and I feel for them because I know they would like to be here for this third reading debate---and that is the Braithwaite family. I think I will be reduced to supplying them with a copy of my Hansard following this third reading, and that is somewhat sad. But it is the nature of this place and it is simply one of those things.

Where my office is in Parliament Buildings every morning I wander past the picture of Chunuk Bair, and I know as I do so that this is the right thing to do, because the story of Chunuk Bair is quite clear in its account of the devastation of a proud division of the New Zealand Army by, in many respects, even friendly fire once these troops had made it to the top of the hill. They were the only soldiers to see the Dardanelles---the Brits did not get there and they shelled them. And then we were told that the colonel was a coward. That does amplify the point made by the previous speaker, that they were all victims of war and did not deserve to be treated the way they were.

As we look around the Chamber we see on the walls the record of the various conflicts in which our soldiers have participated. We grew up as a nation as a result of World War I, and in particular we grew up as a nation as the result of the effects of the battle of Chunuk Bair. It is right that this Parliament rights those wrongs. Those men should never have been executed, and I want to comment on two of them.

Braithwaite was judicially murdered and made an example of because Haig could not kill the Australians. The evidence in the Braithwaite case was that the evidence supported his version of the events. He should not have been shot. He was innocent. Indeed, Eric Dean, who wrote to me about the matter, made it clear that maybe a pardon was not the

way to go in his case, maybe the way to go should have been that his convictions were quashed--he was made an example.

Private Victor Manson Spencer was an 18-year-old boy when he volunteered for war. He was a scallywag. He was not the educated man that Braithwaite was. Braithwaite was a journalist but Spencer was a patriot. He served at Gallipoli and he served at the Somme, and he would have served at Passchendaele but he was executed. He was blown up by a minenwerfer at Armentieres and was never right after that.

When he stood before the firing squad in February 1918 the last words he said were: "Are you there, padre?". And the Rev. Parata, who was standing not far from him, said: "I am here, lad." And they shot him.

I have said much in this House about what has been written about this conflict and about these executions. I have given to the House the book written by Anthony Babington, *For the Sake of Example*, which tells the story of what happens to brave men when they finally crack. And the good thing is, as Doug Kidd said, that we have learnt the lessons. Those men paid a price they should never have paid, and today in New Zealand we say to those families that these men are pardoned.

To see more: <http://www.vdig.net/hansard/archive.jsp?y=2000&m=09&d=12&o=31&p=37>



Joseph Braithwaite, Dunedin's 30th Mayor in his mayoral robes, 20 July 1905. Philips family law tells us that he and his wife Mary Ann Bellett had 23 children.

A drawing from 1915 of the prison camp at Blargies where Jack was executed.



Military discipline and punishment

Written by Gary Sheffield

<http://www.bl.uk/world-war-one/articles/military-discipline#sthash.qFTg5gqq.dpuf>

Mutiny was the gravest military crime, for it struck at the very heart of military discipline, and desertion was not far behind for similar reasons. Nearly all armies executed malefactors.

Sometimes the purpose was to act as a warning or deterrent to others, with the justice of sentences passed on individuals of less importance than the disciplinary needs of the army. There were certainly cases, perhaps numerous ones, of

psychiatric casualties (soldiers who have sustained mental wounds) being shot. Civilian justice and military discipline served two different purposes.



Germany used the ultimate penalty sparingly: only 48 of 150 death sentences were carried out. The numbers shot by the French army are unknown, as they included some summary executions, but the shooting of 600 (out of 2,000 condemned) are documented. However, in the aftermath of the mutinies of 1917, while 554 men were sentenced to death, only 49 were executed. The British executed 321 for military offences, plus an unknown number of Indian soldiers. The Australian government refused to allow death sentences to be carried out on their men, otherwise subject to British military law. Punishments were particularly savage in the Italian army. They included 'decimation', choosing soldiers by lot from a unit that had failed in some way, and executing them. A favoured policy of General Luigi Cardona, it was discontinued by his successor as *de facto* Commander-in-Chief, General Armando Diaz, seeking to restore the morale of the army after the disaster at Caporetto in 1917. Some 750 Italian soldiers were shot.



These famous WW1 poems show the sense of nationalism, of King, Country and Empire, the values of honour and sacrifice and the excitement that sent some young men to war, as well as the true horrors of the reality of the war once they were there.

The Soldier

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

Rupert Brooke

Dulce et Decorum Est

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs,
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots,
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame, all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
Of gas-shells dropping softly behind.
Gas! GAS! Quick, boys!--An ecstasy of fumbling
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time,
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime.--
Dim through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams before my helpless sight
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin,
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs
Bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,--
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.

Wilfred Owen

*The Latin title of this poem means:
"Sweet and fitting it is to die for one's country."
(From Horace, Odes, III. ii. 13)*

Dulce et Decorum est

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-knees, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
Till on the ~~flaming~~ ^{flaming} flares we turned our backs,
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
Dead ~~slow~~ ^{slow} we moved. Many had lost their boots,
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoarse
Of disappointed shells that dropped behind.
Of ~~lind-voices~~ ^{lind-voices} five-nines that dropped behind.
~~five-nines~~ ^{and} ~~five-nines~~

Then somewhere near in front: Whew... fup... fop... fup... Gas shells or duds? He loosened masks, in case - And listened -

And listened... Nothing... Far rumouring of Krupp;
Then ^{stinging} ~~smallly~~, poison hit us in the face.

Gas! GAS! — ~~An ecstasy of~~
Quick, boys! — An ecstasy of fumbling.
Fitting the shell —

Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time.
But someone still was yelling out, and stumbling,
And floundering like a man in fire or lime.—
Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a dark sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, ~~gargling~~ choking, drowning.

~~gagging~~
gagging
gutter



Suicide in the Trenches

I knew a simple soldier boy
Who grinned at life in empty joy,
Slept soundly through the lonesome dark,
And whistled early with the lark.

In winter trenches, cowed and glum,
With crumps and lice and lack of rum,
He put a bullet through his brain.
No one spoke of him again.

You smug-faced crowds with kindling eye
Who cheer when soldier lads march by,
Sneak home and pray you'll never know
The hell where youth and laughter go.

Siegfried Sassoon

III. The Dead

Blow out, you bugles, over the rich Dead!
There's none of these so lonely and poor of old,
But, dying, has made us rarer gifts than gold.
These laid the world away; poured out the red
Sweet wine of youth; gave up the years to be
Of work and joy, and that unhopd serene,
That men call age; and those who would have been,
Their sons, they gave, their immortality.
Blow, bugles, blow! They brought us, for our dearth,
Holiness, lacked so long, and Love, and Pain.
Honour has come back, as a king, to earth,
And paid his subjects with a royal wage;
And Nobleness walks in our ways again;
And we have come into our heritage

Rupert Brooke



'...I am not concerned with Poetry. My subject is War, and the pity of War. The Poetry is in the pity. Yet these elegies are to this generation in no sense consolatory. They may be to the next. All a poet can do today is warn. That is why the true Poets must be truthful.'

- Wilfred Owen



Family Mystery Explored

Otago Daily Times

19 March, 2015

By Rebecca Fox

A World War 1 mystery is to be brought to life in a play by Philip Braithwaite to be premiered in Dunedin this month. Rebecca Fox talks to the playwright about the family "myth", which had intrigued him throughout most of his life. A whispered family story heard as a child intrigued Philip Braithwaite so much he could not turn down an opportunity to write about it.

The Wellington playwright jumped at the opportunity to write about the family secret of his great uncle Jack Braithwaite's World War 1 experiences when approached by the Fortune Theatre.

"I couldn't believe my luck when Philip Braithwaite revealed his fascinating family history and that he was planning to write about it. We acted immediately to secure funding to commission him to write the first draft," Fortune artistic director Lara Macgregor said.

The result of that work, *The War Play*, opens next week. For Mr Braithwaite, the WW1 centenary celebrations were the perfect opportunity to dig deeper into his family's story.

"It's been a real bone of contention in our family. Some talked about it, some didn't. It had become like a myth of our family."

Despite this, Mr Braithwaite had not had any objections from the



family to his telling the story.

"[There was a] bit of interest from some cousins I didn't know I had who are excited about it."

He became more interested in the story at university when Prime Minister Helen Clark issued a pardon to those men who "got up to mischief" during the war. "He [Jack] was one of them."

Her pardon was not really adequate, he said, so that spurred him on to do more research about the man.

"It's one of those tragic miscarriage of justice stories."

It began when Jack was sent to war and, while he tried his best, rising to the rank of lance corporal, he was not a good soldier.

"Then he went off the rails and was sent to military

prison in France. While there he got himself into a situation which was described as mutiny and was executed for it."

Finding Jack's story was not difficult as it was pet project of historian Ian McGibbon in Wellington, who recently retired from the Ministry of Culture and Heritage.

What turned out to be difficult was the telling of the story, which at first glance seemed a simple one, he said.

"As I began to map out his journey, here was this guy in Dunedin, a journalist, like you, who wanted to stay that way, but went to war. He behaved well and then he behaved badly and then he behaved well. It goes up and down. It was a difficult one to chart."

Added to the difficulty was his decision halfway



through writing the play to do a "radical revision" and introduce a contemporary framework for the play. "It changed a lot. The reason I did that was Jack's story and his death is only half the story. Then there is what happened to his family and the impact this had on them."

Aside from the satisfaction of writing the play, it had been an interesting journey that had become slightly strange since seeing the actors bring his characters to life on the stage.

"Watching people play members of my family, it was a strange dynamic I hadn't seen before."

There was a character in the play with Mr Braithwaite's name but he had not seen those scenes acted.

"But it's working, which is good."

Having the play produced in Dunedin was special to him as that was where Jack's generation lived and his dad was from Dunedin, although Mr Braithwaite grew up in the Hawkes Bay and went to university in Palmerston North.

"He's very nostalgic for his childhood. I met my grandfather. My

grandfather was Jack's brother. It doesn't seem that far away. How close this really is, it's still happening in the family."

He admits to feeling a bit nervous about how the family will react when the work opens.

"The story belongs to more than just me and I don't want to disappoint anybody, but at the same time you can't let that get in the way of the story you want to tell."

Heart-wrenching and intensely thought Provoking

Theatreview,
30 March 2015

By Brenda Harwood

The terrible threats and dark deeds faced by New

Zealand soldiers during World War 1 – from their own side as well as the enemy – are revealed in Philip Braithwaite's heartfelt new play, *The War Play*.

Supported and produced by the Dunedin's Fortune Theatre, which assisted Braithwaite with sourcing WW100 funding for the project and workshopped its early drafts, the work had its world premiere on Saturday night [March 28]. A good-sized Sunday afternoon audience were kept spellbound throughout as four superb players – Jonathan Martin, Simon O'Connor, Ben Van Lier, and Alexander Walker – brought this important and very personal new play to life under the direction of Roy Ward.

Exploring the terrible wartime experiences of an increasingly bewildered Jack Braithwaite and his young comrades, *The War Play* also highlights how the perceived shame of his actions and the horror of his fate resonated in his family for generations.

Jonathan Martin is superb in the role of the cheeky larrikin Jack, who goes to war for 'King and Country' and whose kind heart is ultimately his undoing. His growing bewilderment and despair as impending doom marches inexorably towards him is heart-breaking.

Ben Van Lier is equally fine as the playwright and Jack's great-nephew, Phil Braithwaite, whose search for answers takes him half-way around the world and into a maze of darkness, official half-truths, and outright lies. It is a testing emotional journey, for both himself and his elderly father,

highlighting the destructive force of a brutal military episode on a proud Dunedin family.

In the roles of the fathers of both Phil and Jack Braithwaite, Simon O'Connor is at his wonderfully sensitive best, revealing the broken hearts under the stiff upper lips. O'Connor also tackles several military characters, including the indifferent prison camp officer whose parting words to a terrified, doomed Jack are "I warned you not to trust the officer class."

Alexander Walker is also impressive in multiple roles, including Jack's brother Eric and Australian soldier Alex Little, highlighting the desperate struggles of young men far from home, trying to make sense of a senseless situation.

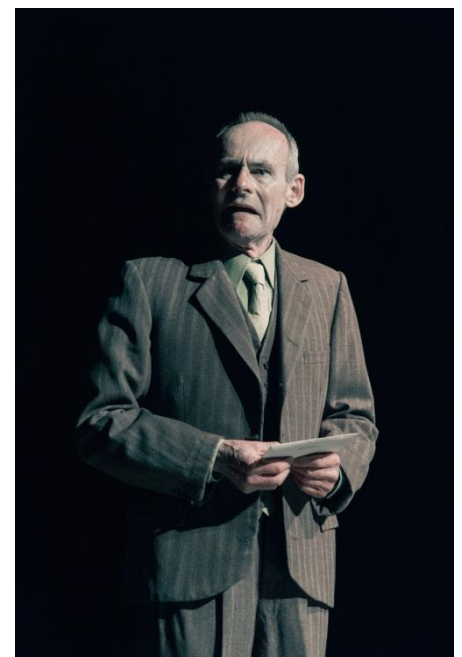
With multiple and rapid changes in time and place required to keep the action of *The War*

Play flowing, set designer Peter King's minimalist creation morphs seamlessly from cosy family lounge to front-line to dank prison cell, with the aid of superb lighting design by Stephen Kilroy.

Despite its many lighter moments, *The War Play* creates a sense of growing foreboding, as the forces of history gather moment towards an inevitable, nightmarish conclusion.

As a revelation of an extraordinary and terrible chapter in New Zealand's military history, which has resonated down through the years, *The War Play* is both heart-wrenching and intensely thought provoking. As a deeply personal exploration of one family's history, it is equally powerful.

Highly recommended.



Discussion Questions

- Eric Braithwaite says, *“Round here all you see are blokes. This is a world of men, and I’m bloody sick of it. If women ran the war it would be over tomorrow”*. There are no women characters on stage in the play, though they are talked about and talked to off stage and for at least the first few drafts there was a female role. Philip Braithwaite said creating a male only world reinforces the failures of this patriarchal system. Do you think the absence of women adds something to the play?
- Both Peter King and Maryanne Wright-Smyth said their set and costume design work because of Stephen Kilroy’s wonderful Lighting Design. How do these three design elements work so well together to create the world of the play?
- My great-grandfather was in the cavalry division in WWI. He would not speak about the men who died, but he had horrifying stories of terrified and wounded horses and burying horses in hard ground. What stories have come down the generations of your family from the world wars?

