

Auckland Theatre Company

Artistic Director

Colin McColl to Step Down

The Chair of Auckland Theatre Company Board of Directors Vivien Sutherland Bridgwater has announced the Company's longstanding Artistic Director Colin McColl ONZM is to leave at the conclusion of the 2021 season.

Vivien Sutherland Bridgwater said, "On behalf of the Board I pay tribute to the immeasurable contribution Colin has made to ATC but also to the New Zealand theatre profession. A towering figure in Aotearoa's cultural landscape, Colin has led ATC to wonderful success and will leave the Company at the end of the year in its strongest position ever. I see Colin's work as an artist as a generous gift, an unparalleled sharing of his talents with generations of audiences and artists. I would like to express our deep gratitude and acknowledge the legacy created."

Bridgwater said the Board was grateful Colin would oversee his 2021 programme, giving the Board time to consider the future leadership of the Company before making any decisions.

Colin McColl said, "It has been a joy to have spent my career doing what I love. I've had the privilege to work with NZ's finest actors, playwrights, designers, producers and production teams. And I'll always value the support from my colleagues in the Company. ATC has always been committed to bringing big hearted stories that matter to the people of Tāmaki Makaurau and I'm sure it will continue to do that in exciting new ways. I'm certainly looking forward to new adventures; there's a myriad of juicy stories to be told from my 50 years in the performing arts so I'm looking forward now to having the time and space to explore what form that story telling might take."

Colin's extraordinary career has spanned film, television, opera, ballet, festivals and theatre. Co-founding Taki Rua Theatre in 1983 and leading Wellington's Downstage Theatre as Artistic Director from 1984 to 1992, Colin was an early leader in the development of the New Zealand theatre industry, nurturing countless playwrights, directors, actors and theatre artists and creating productions that have made a lasting impression on audiences throughout the country.

Colin has become an internationally sought-after director whose work has been seen at the Het Nationale Toneel (Dutch National Theatre), the Scottish Opera, Covent Garden Festival, Norwegian National Theatre, Sydney Festival and in companies across Australia. In 1990 he became the only New Zealand theatre director to ever be invited to present work at the main Edinburgh International Festival (*Hedda Gabler*).

Colin's association with ATC began in 1993 as the director of Michelanne Forster's play about the Parker-Hulme murder, *Daughters of Heaven*, part of the Company's inaugural season. In 2003, Colin joined ATC as Artistic Director and by the end of 2021 will have produced 18 seasons and directed 62 productions. Colin's tenure at the head of the Company has seen significant growth in scale and artistic excellence, with the creation of a home for the Company at its Balmoral Studios, the opening of the ASB Waterfront Theatre, and the creation of both a dedicated literary unit and an acclaimed education programme.

His work at ATC has included landmark productions of Bruce Mason's *The Pohutukawa Tree* and *Awatea*, renowned interpretations of the masterworks of Henrik Ibsen's including Eli Kent's dazzling *Peer Gynt [recycled]*, a filmed studio production of *The Master Builder* and a thrilling new *A Doll's House* by Emily Perkins in 2015. A long-term collaborator of New Zealand's most successful playwright, Sir Roger Hall, ATC under Colin McColl has produced a string of loved and successful plays including *Four Flat Whites In Italy*, *Middle Age Spread* and the 2020 hit, *Winding Up*.

Colin's leadership has had a particular focus on the championing of the New Zealand voice with new commissions including Briar Grace-Smith's *Paniora!*, *On The Upside Down of the World* by Arthur Meek, Stanley Makuwe's story of Sir Garfield Todd *Black Lover*, and in the 2021 season, Gary Henderson's stage adaptation of the memoir by Dr David Galler *Things That Matter*.

With a career adorned with many awards, Colin was made an Arts Laureate in 2007 and an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit in the 2010 Queen's Birthday Honours.

To coincide with Colin's final production, the Dentons Kensington Swan season of Noël Coward's *Blithe Spirit* in November 2021, the Company will be formally marking his contribution with a celebration. Full details will be announced closer to the time.

Colin is currently in rehearsals for his 60th production for ATC, the MiNDFOOD season of *Two Ladies* by Nancy Harris, which opens 9 February at the ASB Waterfront Theatre to get the 2021 season underway.

For further information please contact:

Natasha Gordon

Head of Marketing and Partnerships

M 021 912 110

T 09 309 0390 ext 273

E natasha@atc.co.nz

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