Hāpai Productions & Auckland Theatre Company present

Witi’s Wāhine

By Nancy Brunning

Directed by Ngapaki & Teina Moetara

2 – 20 May 2023

ASB Waterfront Theatre

This performance is audio described by Nicola Kāwana, Audio Described Aoteraoa

Auckland Theatre Company’s accessible programme is proudly presented by Dentons Kensington Swan

He pou atua, he pou whenua, he pou tangata.

Ko Waitematā te moana

Ko Waikōkota te whenua.

Ko Te Pou Whakamaharatanga mō Māui

Tikitiki a Taranga te tohu o te kaha,

o te kōrero, o te whakapapa o tēnei wāhi,

o tēnei whare.

Nau mai e te tī, e te tā ki te whare kōrero,

ki te whare whakaari o ASB ki te tahatika

o te moana.

Mauri tau, mauri ora!

The symbols of support, of strength and of

guardianship stand fast and proud.

The waters of Waitematā ebb and flow

against the shores here at Waikōkota,

the land upon which we stand.

The pou of remembrance to Māui Tikitiki a

Taranga stands tall as a beacon of courage,

of stories passed down and of the history that

connects us all to this place and to this space.

We welcome you all from near and

far to this house of stories, to the

ASB Waterfront Theatre.

Mauri tau, mauri ora!

He kōkonga whare e kitea

He kōkonga ngākau e kore e kitea.

Kei aku nui, kei aku wehi, kei aku whakamatakū –

haere mai rā, haere mai!

Kia ngākau whiwhita mai tātou ki tēnei kaupapa e

rangona ake ai te hanga kokonga kore o te ngākau

wahine. Nau mai i runga i tā Nancy Brunning karanga!

The corners of a house are easily seen,

but those of the heart have no bounds.

I pay tribute to one and all –

and extend to you all my most sincere welcome!

Let us gather in haste and enthusiasm to witness how

boundless the hearts of wāhine are as we gain deep

insight through the eyes of Nancy Brunning!

– Hone Hurihanganui

## ABOUT THE PLAY

The phenomenal women of Witi Ihimaera’s writing, including The Parihaka Woman, The Matriarch and Pounamu Pounamu, take focus and lead us powerfully through the universe of Rongopai (the wharenui at Waituhi) to reveal that which lies deep behind the veil of a world we think we know and occupy.

## CAST

Roimata Fox (Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Rongomaiwahine, Ngāti Kahungunu)

Awhina-Rose Henare Ashby (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Hine)

Pehia King (Shetland Islands, Ngāti Mahuta ki te Hauāuru, Ngāti Maniapoto)

Olivia Violet Robinson-Falconer (Ngāti Hine, Ngāti Kahungunu ki Te Wairoa)

## TIRA

Maramaria Ki-Tihirahi Moetara (Rongowhakaata, Waikato, Ngāpuhi)

Pepi-ria Moetara-Pokai (Rongowhakaata, Ngāti Porou, Ngāpuhi, Te-Aitanga-a-Māhaki)

Raiha Moetara(Rongowhakaata, Te Aitanga-a-Hauiti)

Matawai Hanatia Winiata (Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Kuia, Ngāti Whakaue)

## CREATIVE

Playwright — Nancy Brunning (Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāi Tūhoe)

Directors — Ngapaki Moetara (Waikato, Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāti Whanaunga, Ngāti Ruanui) &Teina Moetara (Rongowhakaata, Ngāpuhi)

Hāpai Productions Producer — Tanea Heke (Ngāpuhi nui tonu, Ngāti Rangi, Te Uri Taniwha, Ngāti Hineira)

Hāpai Productions Associate Producer — Ash Moor (Ngāti Awa, Te Ātiawa, Ngāi Tūhoe)

Set Designer — Penny Fitt

Costume Designer — Sandra Tupu

Lighting Designer — William Smith

Sound Designer — Tyna Keelan (Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Rongomaiwahine, Te Aitanga-a-Hauiti, Te Aupōuri)

Video Designer — Delainy Kennedy

Wardrobe Assistant — Nina Douglas

## PRODUCTION

Production Management — Jamie Blackburn, Pilot Productions & William Smith, Hāpai Productions

Production Management Support — Khalid Parkar & Billie Holland, Pilot Productions

Stage Manager — Ashley Mardon (Te Arawa – Ngāti Pikiao, Ngāti Pākehā)

Deputy Stage Manager — Chiara Niccolini

Props Maker — Alex Martyn Ngāti Tūwharetoa

Technical Operator — Ruby van Dorp

QLab Programmer — Andrew Furness

Audio Mix Engineer — Matt Eller

Fly Technician & Mechanist — T.J. Haunui (Whakatōhea, Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Rangitihi)

Teaching Artists — Millie Manning (Ngāi Tahu, Kāti Māmoe, Waitaha) & Acacia O’Connor (Ngāti Porou, Tainui)

Artist Liaison, Gisborne — Leo Garcia

Photographer — Andi Crown

Publicity — Michelle Lafferty & Jess Karamjeet, Elephant Publicity

The world premiere of Witi’s Wāhine was at Te Tairāwhiti Arts Festival in October 2019, returning to the Festival the next year before performances at Kia Mau Festival, Auckland Writers Festival and Matariki Lighting The Beacons Festival. This new production of Witi’s Wāhine, presented by Auckland Theatre Company and Hāpai Productions, is the second production in the Auckland Theatre Company 2023 Season.

The production is 1 hour, 30 minutes without an interval.

Please remember to switch off all mobile phones and noise-emitting devices

Principal funders: Creative New Zealand and Auckland Council

# Haere Mai. Welcome.

Tēnā koutou katoa.

This new production of Witi’s Wāhine was conceived by Tanea Heke and me as a way to honour Nancy Brunning, bringing her final work to the big stage, following adored seasons in its original iteration, starting with the world premiere at Te Tairāwhiti Arts Festival in 2019.

Nancy saw the potential to bring to the stage some of Aotearoa’s most loved literary characters, who conjure vivid and touching stories, many drawn from Witi Ihimaera’s early life. With 2023 marking 50 years since Witi was first published with Tangi, it is fitting that his writing should be celebrated in this beautiful new production.

At the end of March, directors Ngapaki and Teina Moetara gathered the rōpū in Tūranganui-aKiwa/Gisborne to begin the making, grounding the work in the whenua of Witi’s upbringing. A brilliant creative team, of Sandra Tupu, Penny Fitt, William Smith, Delainy Kennedy and Tyna Keelan, has collaborated with Ngapaki and Teina to create an expansive new vision for the ASB Waterfront Theatre stage.

We are grateful for support from The Tindall Foundation’s Next Gen fund and ATC Patrons Group which has enabled the tira/ensemble from Gisborne to be here in Tāmaki Makaurau for this season.

Witi’s Wāhine is a collaboration between Hāpai Productions, the company founded by Nancy Brunning and Tanea Heke, and Auckland Theatre Company. It has been a privilege to walk alongside Tanea, Teina, Ngapaki and the company of artists for this glorious and rich kaupapa.

We mihi to the whānau of Nancy Brunning and to the many people who have played a part on the journey this play has taken to arrive on the shores of the Waitematā.

**Jonathan Bielski**

Artistic Director & CEO

# **Note Hāpai Productions**

Nancy and I became friends while I was a student at Te Kura Toi Whakaari o Aotearoa: NZ Drama School. She was the tuakana in those days and, throughout our long friendship, she was always The Boss. Nancy was super smart and, while people knew her as an actor and director, she was a prolific writer. She was always making notes, committing her thoughts and anecdotes to paper. She was an expert weaver of stories. I’m very proud that, when we came together to create Hāpai Productions, she insisted kaupapa Māori would always be at the heart of our mahi. We produced all of her work: Hīkoi in 2014 (Circa Theatre), Portrait of an Artist Mongrel (Kia Mau Festival) in 2018 and then Witi’s Wāhine in 2019 (Te Tairāwhiti Arts Festival). There’s one more play to go – Taniwha Women – but that’s for another time.

On behalf of Nancy and Hāpai Productions, welcome to Witi’s Wāhine. This story celebrates the rise of the matriarchy – our wāhine who lead their wāhanu and their communities and, given the right set of circumstances, world domination! They are the wāhine who make sacrifices, and who hold mātauranga and whakapapa. These women are very recognisable as the aunties and sisters, mothers and nannies from your own family, and they are tūturu Māori as!

Ngapaki, Teina, our creative and production whānau, and all the wāhine you’re about to meet on the stage this evening will immerse you into the world written by Witi and Nan, yet created by our tūpuna.

Haumi e, Hui e, Tāiki e!

**Tanea Heke MNZM**

# **About Hāpai Productions**

Hāpai Productions’ vision is to produce mana-enhancing Māori theatre productions whilst upholding Māori values.

E hāpai nei i te kaupapa Māori, I te mana Māori, i te whāia anō o te mātauranga Māori, mā roto mai I te auahatanga o te whakaari Māori – upholding Māori philosophical practices, prestige and the pursuit of Māori knowledge through the creation of Māori theatre.

Nancy Brunning (Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāi Tūhoe) and Tanea Heke (Ngāpuhi nui tonu, Ngāti Rangi, Te Uri Taniwha, Ngāti Hineira) worked together for years (way back in the late `90s). They decided to combine forces in 2013 and created Hāpai Productions.

Hāpai Productions provides a culturally supportive environment for Māori theatre practitioners to feel understood and supported.

We have more than 25 years of industry experience, have an undeniable commitment and passion for theatre, and have experienced the positive effect theatre can have on Māori artists and their audiences. Our philosophy on Māori theatre develops further from the guidance and vision of Māori theatre pioneers such as Keri Kaa, Wi Kuki Kaa, Don Selwyn, Tungia Baker and Rowley Habib. They challenged the New Zealand theatre status quo in the `60s and `70s by championing for Māori-led theatre productions to be included on

mainstream stages.

The wāhine Māori voice is important to establishing a balanced perspective of the Māori world view. The key focus for Hāpai is creating more opportunities for wāhine representation on stage and behind the scenes.

Hāpai offers opportunities for all Māori practitioners to learn new skills in all areas of theatre performance and production.

# Note from the Directors

The stories of Witi Ihimaera are commonplace in homes across Aotearoa. They skilfully contrast the idea of small humble rural community living with majestic and timeless truths of human existence. To many, the stories are hybrids of myth and truth. To us, they are, unapologetically, a Māori way of telling history and politics, with life hacks for good measure.

Witi’s Wāhine was brought to life by Nancy Brunning. Capitalising on Witi’s storytelling in true form, Nancy reveals the strength, veracity and power of wāhine through history and politics, and again, with life hacks as rongoā for our society today. Nancy fiercely protected the way the mana of these stories was to be received. She is the North Star of this production, and her truth is also majestic and timeless.

Our direction has been to take a small, intimate production and present it on a grand stage. Our challenge is to bring an audience, who primarily know the stories through book form, into the library of the Māori world, being the wharenui.

We draw from mātauranga and use the stories to sequence the engagement. The magic of theatre localises the storytelling to this place, now.

“If you ever had to see what my heart looked like, all you had to do was come to Rongopai.”

Rongopai is the traditional house of the Te Whānau a Kai people and is located in Witi’s home, Waituhi. Rongopai anchors our making. The colours of the latticed panels inside the house inform the costumes. The set walls, like poupou, act as portals to the world of spirit. Where Nancy had the vision, the soul of that vision is the whenua where these stories reside. We have worked to bring forward the spirit of the land, knowing that whenua and wāhine are synonymous. They both hold and mirror the other.

We invite you to journey with us, led by the wāhine of Witi’s stories, and hope that, together, we can all learn about ourselves as a people connected to this land.

**Ngapaki & Teina Moetara**

# A Whakapapa of Women

## Acclaimed writer Witi Ihimaera (Te Whānau a Kai) reflects on the wahine toa Nancy Brunning who created Witi’s Wāhine.

E rau rangatira mā, tēnā tātou.

Some people still think I wrote Witi’s Wāhine. I didn’t; Nancy Brunning did.

I didn’t want it to be called Witi’s Wāhine either. I like to hide behind my writer’s name Witi Ihimaera when I am really Witi Smiler from Waituhi. I blame Nancy and Tanea Heke, who both conceived of the play and never listened to me when I said, “The women don’t belong to me; I belong to them”.

Nor have I caught any of the rehearsals anywhere. On the first performance night at Te Tairāwhiti Arts Festival, 2019, for instance, my flight from Wellington to Gisborne via Auckland (don’t ask) was cancelled. I flew to Napier instead and drove the rest of the way, arriving just in time to hear the applause when the curtain went down. My sister Gay apologised to the home-town audience for my being a no-show. I much prefer my sisters Caroline, Polly, Vicki and Gay to represent me anyway. Actually, they have started a tradition with this play. At the very end, the fictional becomes real as they join the cast of women in a song which memorialises our mother. In the 1980s, she flew with Dad from Aotearoa to the Middle East. With her she took shiny round black stones from the Uawa River. Three days later, she placed them on her brother Rangi’s grave at the Commonwealth cemetery for WWII soldiers at Sfax, Tunisia. In that moment, I prefer to stay in the audience and watch. It’s better that way: to leave my sisters and the cast to take the bow, because this is a whakapapa of women.

I honour all of Nancy Brunning’s family, friends and colleagues. They knew her better than I did and I feel a bit whakamā about putting down my own memories of her, but here goes.

I first met Nancy when she was just a teenager at Taupō-nui-a-Tia College in the 1980s. The college was putting on a school production of The Whale Rider and I drove from Wellington to see it. I thought she was playing the young heroine, Kahu, but I guess that would have been too easy for her. Instead, an old lady in a fright-haired white wig, painted wrinkles and scarf, playing the kuia, Flowers, came and sat down beside me. “Boo,” she said.

I hold dear to my heart Nancy’s acting performance in Hone Kouka’s Waiora, which I saw in Honolulu. I had flown to Hawai’i the day before. Māori stories are also Pacific stories and the Hawai’ians draped flower lei after flower lei over her tiny shoulders.

Nan walked with the greatest actors and producers of our generation. She was on screen in What Becomes of the Broken Hearted. She was an inspiration to Lee Tamahori in Mahana. The reason that the film opens with her rocking in a chair is that Lee saw her doing that while waiting for the camera to roll and told the camera woman: “Start the camera now”. She encapsulated the entire film in that spontaneous moment: all the strength and patience of mana wāhine. And, she was vocal coach for Taika Waititi’s first international hit, Two Cars, One Night.

Nancy was also a formidable activist supporting Māori arts in Aotearoa. With Tanea Heke, she established Hāpai Productions, and belonged to a group of strong young women, including Grace Ahipene Hoete, Mīria George, Hera Dunleavy, the Hotere sisters and Rachel House in bringing authenticity to female roles in Māori work on stage, television and screen. She directed my two-hander, Woman Far Walking.

She even wrote her own play, Hīkoi, concerning the survival of the reo. It was workshopped in, of all places, the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, in the middle of the beautiful Canadian Rocky Mountains. I was teaching creative writing and, over a period of three snowed-in nights, listened in with Inuit and First Nations directors and actors; they didn’t want to let it, or Nancy, go. Just as the Hawai’ians had claimed Māori stories as theirs, so did the native peoples of Canada claim her play as theirs.

I last saw Nancy during the first run of Witi’s Wāhine in Gisborne in October 2019. By then, she was suffering with cancer but she wasn’t going to let a little thing like that stop her from being at the premiere. In her wheelchair, she received a thunderous ovation. She looked like a beautiful tiny bird but, really, what I saw was an eagle.

Nancy died the following month. I drove from Auckland with friends to her tangi at Raukawa Marae. I actually had an invitation that same day to attend a reception at Government House for Charles, Prince of Wales, and Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall. But there was only one royalty I wanted to see and that was Nan.

Although attending her tangi was not an invitation I would have wanted to receive, it was really the only invitation I would have accepted.

Witi’s Wāhine is about the strength of women, the mana of the kuia. When Nancy first asked me if she could transfer some of the women I had written about onto the stage, I asked her, “Why?” I had been brought up by many grandmothers and never realised how they proliferated in my fiction, plays and lord knows where else. Nancy answered, “Because some of us never had women like yours.”

Later, Nancy did a research trip to Gisborne and the East Coast. My sisters took her all over the place to talk to this Nanny and that one, this Aunty here and that Aunty over there, and every other cuzzie they met on the road between Waituhi and Waipiro Bay.

After the trip, Nancy told me, “I needed to do that haerenga, Witi. Even though I wanted to write the play, I really needed to see them, the real women.”

Through them, Nancy was able to recall what we sometimes forget: the importance of women in contemporary Māori history and especially the kuia.

Witi’s Wāhine may involve stories of women from Gisborne and the East Coast. But, in writing about them, Nancy constructed a whakapapa, a genealogy, of all our women: yours as well as mine. They are not mine at all; they are everyone’s. And they share one thing in common: protecting, nurturing and looking after the iwi, whānau and hapū during changing times, no matter what.

Ngā mihi aroha ki a koe, Nancy mō āu mahi katoa me mātou. Nā reira, koutou, rātou, tātou, tēnā tātou katoa.

# Playwright

Nancy Brunning (1971–2019)  
Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāi Tūhoe

Nancy Brunning was involved in professional theatre from 1992. She trained at Te Kura Toi Whakaari o Aotearoa: NZ Drama School in 1990 – 1991 and established herself as a theatre actor, director and dramaturg with Māori theatre company Taki Rua Productions for well over 15 years. She acted for theatre throughout Aotearoa and directed theatre in both English and te reo Māori. Nancy worked with New Zealand’s most celebrated Māori playwrights, such as Briar Grace-Smith, Witi Ihimaera, Hone Kouka and Albert Belz to name a few.

In 2011, Nancy completed her first play Hīkoi which premiered at the 2015 Auckland Arts Festival and, in 2014, she was the first indigenous New Zealand writer to be selected for the Banff Centre Indigenous Writers Residency in Canada.

Nancy was also an actor for television and film. Her credits include Mahana, directed by Lee Tamahori and based on the novel Bulibasha by Witi Ihimaera, which premiered at the Berlin International Film Festival in February 2016. She also recorded many plays and short stories for Radio New Zealand.

In 2013, Nancy and Tanea Heke combined forces and created Hāpai Productions, a mana wāhine, kaupapa Māori theatre company. Hāpai Productions has produced Hīkoi by Nancy Brunning, 2080 by Aroha White, Portrait of an Artist Mongrel by Rowley Habib and Pakaru by Mitch Tawhi Thomas. Brunning’s last creative work was Witi’s Wāhine, which premiered at Te Tairāwhiti Arts Festival in Gisborne in 2019.

Witi’s Wāhine is Nancy Brunning’s loving celebration of the women of the East Coast, Te Tairāwhiti, of which Witi Ihimaera writes so vividly.

# Directors

## Ngapaki Moetara Waikato, Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāti Whanaunga, Ngāti Ruanui

‘He piko he taniwha.’ ‘At every bend in the river, a chief stands.’

Ngapaki Moetara grew up nurtured in the stories of service of her grandparents. She lives in paradise, Manutūkē, with her husband and whānau on their papakāinga. Solace is found there in the whenua and its people. “Hine Korako is a great inspiration in my life. She was a guide for the Takitimu waka, seen as prisms of light and colour at its helm. She is also part of our daughter’s whakapapa.” Ngapaki is guided by this approach when working with iwi stories. Seeking the rongoā (medicine) inside. Encouraging beauty and play in the performers as safe passage through. Directing Witi’s Wāhine allows Ngapaki’s passion for history and Indigenous process to come to life. “Nancy was a brave and formidable force. She was purposeful in crafting this work and has something important to say about Aotearoa.” Ngapaki follows this by driving her own purpose to apply storytelling in consideration of the people of Te Tairāwhiti and Tūranga.

## Teina Moetara Rongowhakaata, Ngāpuhi

‘Ko au, ko te repo.’ ‘I am the swamp.’

Teina Moetara was raised under the auspices of his mother’s people – Rongowhakaata, Te Aitanga a Māhaki and Ngāti Kōnohi, who are artists, storytellers, politicians and shapeshifters. Teina grew up with a profoundly metaphoric world view, meaning everything tangible and intangible is part of a connected universe and this is how he expresses his identity.

Directing Witi’s Wāhine alongside his wife, Ngapaki, gives Teina the means to honour the most significant women in his life; these include his mother, grandmothers, sister-siblings, aunties, nieces, mokopuna, friends and three daughters. He also gets to share his home, whenua, marae and whakapapa. A composer of Māori song, a kapa haka director, a community storyteller and an iwi leader, Teina knows that the art of ensemble reflects life itself.

# Cast

**Roimata Fox**Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Rongomaiwahine, Ngāti Kahungunu

Roimata Fox was born and raised on the East Coast. She moved to Auckland at the age of 19 to study film for a year and is blessed that she is still working today.

Theatre highlights: Purapurawhetū, The Māori Troilus and Cressida - Toroihi rāua ko Kāhira, Much Ado About Nothing, Witi’s Wāhine and The Haka Party Incident.

Screen highlights: Waru (2017), Muru (2020), and television series Head High (2021). Also, she had the pleasure of working with Katie Wolfe in three seasons of The Ring Inz.

## Awhina-Rose Henare Ashby Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Hine

Awhina-Rose Henare Ashby graduated from Excel School of Performing Arts in 2008 and Te Kura Toi Whakaari o Aotearoa: NZ Drama School in 2012. She has continued working in the creative industries.

Theatre highlights: The Māori Troilus and Cressida - Toroihi rāua ko Kāhira, Party with the Aunties, Marama, The Mooncake and the Kūmara, The Vultures and Kororāreka: The Ballad of Maggie Flynn.

Screen highlights: Shortland Street, Dear Murderer, Resolve, three seasons of a Māori comedy television show The Ring Inz. Feature films: Whina, Waru, Te Pāmu Kūmara and film turned-Emmy-winning series Rūrangi.

Awhina-Rose was raised on a farm in Mōtatau, a small place in the Bay of Islands. She grew up with te reo Māori as her first language.

## Pehia King Shetland Islands, Ngāti Mahuta ki te Hauāuru, Ngāti Maniapoto

Pehia King was brought up in Ōtorohanga and Tahaaroa and went on to attend Te Kura o Kuīni Wikitōria. She studied at Whitireia Performing Arts (WPA) and travelled extensively, showcasing Māori and Pasifika performance. After returning to WPA in 2012 to upgrade her qualification to a degree (BAppA), she was introduced to theatre and had a new-found excitement for acting. She has since gone on to do television, Māori media and theatre work.

## Olivia Violet Robinson-Falconer Ngāti Hine, Ngāti Kahungunu ki Te Wairoa

Olivia Violet RobinsonFalconer is a theatre and screen actor with a career that spans more than 25 years. She trained at Te Kura Toi Whakaari o Aotearoa: NZ Drama School.

Theatre highlights: Ngā Pou Wāhine, When Sun and Moon Collide, Into the Woods, Blue Smoke, Ngā Tāngata Toa, Le Sud and The Motor Camp.

Screen highlights: Needles and Glass, Mataku series: Te Whakaahua and Aftershock.

When she is not acting, Olivia is helping students reach their academic goals at Te Pūkenga: New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology, in the māra, buried in a book or listening to music.

“Thank you for supporting this beautiful work. To my dear friend Nancy, thank you for choosing me. And to my son, remember sweetheart, reach for all the stars!”

# Tira

## Raiha Moetara Rongowhakaata, Te Aitanga-aHauiti

Raiha Moetara is a young singer, songwriter and performing artist, born and raised in the rural areas of Te Tairāwhiti, who proudly represents her iwi Rongowhakaata and Te Aitanga-aHauiti.

Raiha started performing in theatre at the young age of 12; performance was a part of her early high school years. Since finishing school, Raiha has continued working in performing arts for the Rongowhakaata Iwi Trust. Amongst other projects in her kete, Raiha is also working towards releasing her own music.

## Pepi-Ria Moetara-Pokai Rongowhakaata, Ngāti Porou, Ngāpuhi, Te-Aitanga-a-Māhaki

‘He reo pākura karanga i te pō.’ ‘The swamp hen calls to gather through the night.’

Pepi-ria MoetaraPokai is 14 years old and is of Rongowhakaata, Te-Aitanga-aMāhaki, Ngāti Porou and Ngāpuhi descent. She is in her second year of Manukura level at Te Whānau Reo Māori o Te Kura o Manutūkē. Pepi-ria has been nurtured by her aunties, uncles, nannies and 'papas' in te ao kapa haka and singing. Her passions are drawing, singing and performance. She brings all of this and more to share with you.

## Maramaria Ki-Tihirahi Moetara Rongowhakaata, Waikato, Ngāpuhi

‘He tīwaiwaka ahau nā Māui.’ ‘I am the fantail of Māui.’

Maramaria KiTihirahi Moetara is 11 years old and is of the same iwi as her parents, Teina and Ngapaki. Her initiation into the world of performance is under the auspices of her aunts, uncles, nannies and 'papas' in Manutūkē. She is a student of Te Whānau Reo Māori o Te Kura o Manutūkē and has a great love of performance in different forms. This is her debut in te ao whakaari, bringing her skills and essence from home to share here in Tāmaki Makaurau.

## Matawai Hanatia Winiata Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Kuia, Ngāti Whakaue

Matawai Hanatia Winiata was raised in a whānau dedicated to the revitalisation of te reo Māori, to the retention of mātauranga Māori and to the Māori nation. She brings a depth of experience in kapa haka and Māori speech competitions, where she has represented her people on regional and national stages. Outside of performing, Matawai is a Māori Cultural Advisor and Project Manager for iwi and pakihi Māori.

Kōhanga, kura kaupapa Māori, and wānanga have been natural environments for Matawai to grow and understand her roles and responsibilities to her whānau, hapū and iwi. Her decisions in life have always reflected maximising her contribution to the survival and prosperity of Māori as a people.

Matawai is excited to showcase and extend her skills onto the ASB Waterfront Theatre stage.

Auckland Theatre Company and Hāpai Productions mihi to The Tindall Foundation’s Next Gen fund for its generous support of the Tairāwhiti tira.

# Creative

## Hāpai Productions Producer Tanea Heke Ngāpuhi nui tonu, Ngāti Rangi, Te Uri Taniwha, Ngāti Hineira

Tanea Heke is a creative, arts administrator, co-founder of Hāpai Productions – a mana wāhine, kaupapa Māori theatre company she and Nancy Brunning set up in 2013 – and Tumuaki / Director and Poutūhono of Te Kura Toi Whakaari o Aotearoa: NZ Drama School.

Tanea was a producer at Taki Rua Productions before moving to Te Papa Tongarewa where she oversaw exhibition management. At Creative New Zealand, Tanea was responsible for delivering the Venice Biennale project. She is currently mentor for the Māori Arts Internship Programme run by Toi Māori, a board member of Track Zero and The Arts Foundation Te Tumu Toi.

In 2020, Tanea was the recipient of Creative New Zealand’s Te Tohu Toi Kē a Te Waka Toi | Making a Difference Award and in 2022, she was appointed a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM), for services to the arts and Māori.

## Set Designer Penny Fitt

Penny Fitt trained as a theatre designer in the UK where she grew up. She designed for a range of companies and theatres, including Bristol Old Vic, Octagon Theatre, Bolton, The Lancaster Playhouse, Almeida Theatre and English National Opera Baylis programme before moving to New Zealand to run the design programme at Te Kura Toi Whakaari o Aotearoa: NZ Drama School in Wellington. This is where she began working with Teina and Ngapaki. Her work with them always centres around frameworks for collaborating and communicating story. Other design work in New Zealand includes Penumbra (Te Ahurei Toi o Tāmaki | Auckland Arts Festival), The Trial of the Cannibal Dog (Aotearoa New Zealand International Festival of the Arts), Crossing Lines, Owls Do Cry (Red Leap Theatre) and The Naked Samoans Do Magic (The Conch and Te Ahurei Toi o Tāmaki | Auckland Arts Festival).

## Costume Designer SANDRA TUPU

Sandra Tupu is an independent fashion designer and artist working from her home studio in Aotearoa. She graduated from AUT – Auckland University of Technology with a Bachelor of Fashion Design degree. Sandra runs Flying Fox Clothing, a sustainable business that designs and creates high-quality custom pieces using a mix of natural fibres and recycled elements for individuals and the performing arts community.

Her most recent work is a small capsule collection Afi vao that was shown in Sydney at Pacific Runway 2023.

Sandra also lectures at AUT as part of the Fashion Design programme and loves sharing her passion with Aotearoa’s budding fashion design students.

Locally, she offers an alteration service to the Waitākere community to extend the lifespan of clothing and find ways to reduce and upcycle.

## Lighting Designer William Smith

William Smith is codirector of Tungsten Projects Limited based in Pōneke. As a creator he believes in bringing together the worlds of creative intention and practical realisation at all stages of the production process. It is on this philosophy that Tungsten Projects was created. William is a graduate of Te Kura Toi Whakaari o Aotearoa: NZ Drama School, where he gained an Arts Management degree. His recent production credits include: World of WearableArt Show (WOW), In Bed with Schoenberg (Armstrong Creative) and Pakaru (Hāpai Productions).

## Sound Designer Tyna Keelan Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Rongomaiwahine, Te Aitanga-a-Hauiti, Te Aupōuri

Tyna Keelan is a musician, vocalist and composer. He grew up in Porirua where he played with several musicians before heading overseas to play in the band Ascension. Since then, Tyna has recorded and performed with some of New Zealand’s most well-known artists including Scribe, Katchafire, DJ Sir-Vere, Nesian Mystik, Blindspott, P-Money, Savage, Home Brew and Lady6. In 2009, he released his first solo single, Overjoyed and, in 2010, he formed the band The Nok with Darren Mathiassen and Chris Yeabsley with whom he toured across New Zealand. Their self-titled album won Best Māori Pop Album at the Waiata Māori Music Awards and awarded Tyna a Maiohi award at the APRA Silver Scroll Awards in 2011. He won this award again in 2019 for the ballad Ka Ao. When not performing or making music, Tyna uses his experience to help rangatahi work towards a career in music.

## Video Designer Delainy Kennedy

Delainy Kennedy is a highly accomplished creative technologist and visual artist. As the creative director of Artificial Imagination, a boutique motion design studio, and co-founder of The Grid, an immersive digital art company, Delainy has earned a reputation as a leading figure in the industry.

Throughout his career, Delainy has been responsible for delivering cutting-edge visual projects on a global scale. He has contributed as a key creative in Joseph Michael’s Antarctica: while you were sleeping projections at the Auckland War Memorial Museum, and at the United Nations General Assembly and Secretariat buildings in New York. Also, he has worked as real-time content designer for the Al Wasl dome at Expo 2020 Dubai, the largest permanent projection installation in the world.

With a consistent track record of success, Delainy continues to push the boundaries of what’s possible in the world of visual art and technology.

# Celebrating 50 Years as a Writer

Ko Ōkāhuatiu te maunga,

Ko Waipaoa me Repongaere

ngā wai tapu

Ko Rongopai te marae,

Ko Te Whānau a Kai te iwi,

He uri ahau nō Teria Pere, te wahine,

Tihei mauri ora

This month, May, I am publishing two books: Tangi my first novel in a 50th Anniversary Edition, and A Kind of Shelter, an anthology of writing which I have co-edited with Michelle Elvy.

Tangi looks back to the past; A Kind of Shelter looks forward to the future. And Witi’s Wāhine is the pivot, smack bang in the middle, from which to take a check on where I, and we, have reached in the ever-evolving story of Aotearoa New Zealand.

I began Tangi in Wellington, prior to embarking with Jane for London on our honeymoon in 1971. But the bulk of my debut novel was written in a small bedsitting room at 67 Harcourt Terrace, South Kensington, London. Every day when Jane went to work as a relief teacher in Hounslow, I sat at a small Olivetti typewriter and bashed away on it. I fiddled with carbon paper to make sure I had a duplicate copy. Between trips to France and Greece, and tours in a small minivan whizzing around England, Scotland and Wales, I kept on typing away. On returns to London, the mahi continued. Sometimes May, the housekeeper at Harcourt Terrace, would look in to see that I was not slacking on the job and Mr Way, who owned the four-storeyed building, would invite me up to his apartment for a beer.

Tangi was one of three books I published between 1972 and 1974; guess who was a busy boy. They comprise a publishing trifecta of Pounamu Pounamu (1972), Tangi (1973) and Whānau (1974).

With these three books, I began to create what might be called the Ihimaera multiverse. I was 29 when Tangi was published, which was young at the time for a novelist, and I was very proud when the book won the Wattie Book of the Year Award (1974). I hope you enjoy the extract from the 50th Anniversary Edition in which I have rewritten large parts of it. Some of the rewriting is seriously good; after all, I am older and wiser now and I hope I have brought maturity and richness to my craft as well as cunning.

As for A Kind of Shelter, well, it’s a product of my other literary career as an editor and anthologist: another kind of multiverse. I keep on getting the count wrong but I think I have edited at least 25 books with titles like Into the World of Light, Vision Aotearoa, Te Ao Mārama (there are five of those), Growing up Māori, Get on the Waka, Black Marks on the White Page, Pūrākau and Navigating the Stars.

A Kind of Shelter is kind of special and I am grateful that Massey University Press has agreed to offer it to all Auckland Theatre Company theatre-goers. Seventy-six writers and artists take a look at some of the challenges that we are actually already facing. In other words, my literary career hasn’t always been just about me! Pick it up at its seriously discounted price; it’s going to be one of the books of 2023.

And my sisters and I hope you enjoy our lives as portrayed in Nancy Brunning’s brilliant play Witi’s Wāhine. They are not my sisters. I am their brother.

Ngā mihi,   
Witi

# Tangi

## Shearer’s Huts, Scrubcutters’ Shacks & Sugarbag Windows Chapter eight, an extract by Witi Ihimaera

My father, Rongo, was born in Waituhi and belonged to one of three Mahana clans. The first was the whānau devoted to Riripeti, who was a Ringatū priestess well known throughout Māoridom. She led the faithful in our valley. My father belonged to the second, smaller, clan of Teria and Pera. They were ahi kaa, meaning they kept the home fires going, and they supported Riripeti. The third was Bulibasha and Ramona’s clan, which provided shearing gangs for Pākehā farmers.

Dad caught the eye of my mother, Huia, at a dance in Gisborne. She was from the Ngāti Porou people of the East Coast but was staying in the city and worked at a canning factory. On weekends she would go dancing with her friends and was sick of being picked up by young men who were only out for a good time. She had actually looked at Dad once but, no, she had seen a bad boy who got drunk with his mates on Fridays and probably beat his girlfriends.

However, when Mum looked at Dad a second time, she saw that he had qualities she could work on. At least he didn’t smoke and, if he tried to beat her he had better watch out, she was no shrinking violet. Then there was the fact that he was obedient to his mother, Teria. Although among Teria’s sons he was down the line in terms of male seniority, she had still raised him like the others. To look after the valley, with his particular task being to care for the old people and take meat and vegetables to them if they were hungry or sick. To show some leadership at meetings where the iwi discussed how to get the land back from the soldiers it had been sold to.

Best of all, Rongo Mahana knew how to work.

That was raw material enough.

Mum and Dad married and he brought his bride back to Waituhi. Not for long, though, just to claim tribal residence through Dad’s whakapapa lineages, and then they set out to find work.

Within a year I was born and Dad took the afterbirth to Rongopai, one of three marae in the Waituhi Valley, and buried it in the earth. It would be the umbilical connecting me forever with the valley. My brother Rāwiri came next. In those days when Māori infant mortality was high he died, coughing for breath, during the winter when he was three. Rīpeka was born a year after him, then came Mere and, soon after, Wiki; Hōne and Mārama weren’t thought of yet.

With a wife and four kids, gone were Dad’s bad boy days.

My father had limited Pākehā education. He hadn’t stayed at school for very long and, instead, was educated by his grandparents. Their wisdom in the ways of the land was immense and they understood its whims with the deep patience of people who had lived all their lives close to the earth. If the land was wilful and did not grow their crops or if a storm laid the maize low, it did not matter. They would be patient. Some time, the calm would come again.

My mother too, hadn’t had much education. She often told Rīpeka and me of days when she had to walk to school, a long way. Her father had no money to afford such things as we were accustomed to, like shoes and nice clothes.

Both Mum and Dad had left school early to work. Dad to go out shearing and scrub-cutting with the Mahana clan. Mum had taken jobs as a cook and a servant before becoming a factory worker. Where my parents had an advantage in actually securing jobs in the Gisborne district was that Mum and Dad contracted themselves out as a working couple. Mum didn’t stay at home having the babies. No, she went with Dad and took us with her. If Dad was working as a shearer in one of the Mahana shearing gangs she went along as a fleeco. When the season was over, they took on anything, say, from Dad as horsebreaker and Mum as kitchenhand (although she was better at breaking in horses than Dad or any other man was). Or as a two-man scrubcutting team, fencing duo or opossum trappers.

They would also do anything extra the boss or Mrs Boss asked them to do. And if the boss needed some other odd jobs done, my sisters and I took those on.

You want your paths swept or outhouse cleaned, boss? We were never too proud.

My first memories as a child are blurred with a succession of shearing whare during the season when we travelled around like gypsies. Or else, during the off-season, of shepherds’ quarters and draughty single-room scrubcutters’ shacks. Of sugarbag doors and windows, straw mattresses, dirt floors, outside lean-to corrugated iron kitchens and, somewhere in a paddock, a wash house and longdrop toilet. Of hazy glimpses of Mum lifting cooking pots onto hooks over open fires. Or Dad checking his saddle by the light of a solitary candle. Or my sisters and I patching holes in the walls to keep the wind and rain out.

Mum always tried to make each whare beautiful. We always seemed to arrive at night, and every whare was dirty and smelly with the walls smeared with black smoke, the table and cupboards still strewn with days-old food left by the previous hands, and the floor littered with chipped crockery or broken chairs. Sometimes a window would be swinging on one hinge or a door just propped up in the frame. We would stand in the doorway, surveying each whare until the light cast by a match burnt out. And, because Mum had seen many of her family die of flu, TB, meningitis or respiratory infections from unhealthy living conditions, the first thing we ever had to do was to clean our new shack from top to bottom. Was she going to let her kids take one more step into this hovel, let alone sleep in it? No fear.

You kids, go and help your Dad bring our washing things from the truck.

By ‘You kids’ she meant me and Rīpeka, so we would run back to the truck with our father. Most times that meant going for miles by torchlight because the places we worked at were not exactly first pick. You couldn’t drive up to the front door. There were times when Dad had to leave the truck on the other side of a river, for instance, or gully. We’d have to wade through the water or climb stony tracks to get to our new home.

As for pitch black country nights, Rīpeka and I were already accustomed to those. We had often been left alone when Mum and Dad were working late. No matter how dark it was or how far we had to go to reach the truck, Rīpeka and I were never afraid. All we had to do was keep our eyes fixed on the headlights shining far away. Anyway, Dad was with us and not even kēhua could frighten us.

Back and forth we’d go from the truck to the whare, then back to the truck again. Every time we got to the whare, Mum would have cleaned it up a little more. Wipe, wipe, wipe. Scrub, scrub, scrub. Clean, clean, clean. No time to sit down, she would say to us. When we’ve finished, then we can rest. Then, Clean enough, Mum would say.

We would finally be able to have dinner on our clean plates on the spotless table and the babies would be able to crawl around on the immaculate floor. Afterwards we would sleep on mattresses full of fresh hay and close the sugar bag windows so the flying insects couldn’t come in. The fowls and chickens and Roos would sleep by the fire on the spotless hearth. Kurī and Tim, would sleep outside with our pig in their spotless new fenced enclosure. Rīpeka, Mere and Wiki slept with Mum and Dad. I always had my own bed. And Dad would have fixed the door so that it could shut. Even in the middle of nowhere, we had to keep ourselves safe.

And we, too, after our baths, would be spotless.

With the door secured nice and tight, Dad would say: I’m not too sure how I feel about the sleeping arrangements. Sometimes I feel like Joseph going to bed in a stable. The only thing missing is…

What? Mum would ask. The donkey.

# Accessibility Presented by Dentons Kensington Swan

## Audio-Described Performance and Touch Tour Witi’s Wāhine Sunday 14 May 4:00pm

The audio-described performance is open to all and includes a live audio commentary relayed to blind and low-vision patrons in the audience via an

earpiece. Patrons with accessibility tickets can also attend a touch tour 90 minutes before the performance.

## NZSL-Interpreted Performance Witi’s Wāhine Saturday 20 May 8:00pm

The NZSL-interpreted performance is open to all and features an interpreter

on stage signing the show for Deaf and hard-of-hearing patrons in the audience.

## How to Book

Deaf/hard-of-hearing and blind/low-vision patrons can buy tickets for NZSL-interpreted and audio-described performances for $20. One companion ticket per theatre-goer is also available for $20. Please contact the box office to book accessible performance tickets or if you have any special requirements.

## Wheelchair Access

ASB Waterfront Theatre has eight seats and three wheelchair spaces in the auditorium, reserved for customers with special access requirements. There is step-free level access to all tiers of the building and to seating in the stalls. Wheelchair-accessible toilets are located on the ground floor; accessible parking is available on Madden Street.

## Assistance Dogs

Assistance dogs are welcome at ASB Waterfront Theatre. We can find a seat that’s comfortable for you and your dog or arrange for the theatre staff to look after your dog during the show.

## Hearing Assistance

The theatre has a T-Loop radio frequency system to amplify the sound of the performance. If you don’t use a hearing aid or your hearing aid does not have a T setting, there is a listener unit available on request from the box office.

NZSL Interpreting and Signing — Platform Interpreting NZ

Audio Description — Nicola Kāwana, Audio Described Aotearoa Ltd

Sign up to receive news about the accessibility programme. atc.co.nz/access

**Mihi Aroha**

**Auckland Theatre Company and Hāpai Productions would like to thank the following for their help with this production:**

Tama Waipara, Te Tairāwhiti Arts Festival, Maarire Brunning-Kouka, Brunning whānau, Mere Boynton, Jordan Walker, Tommy Taurima, Hera Dunleavy, Grace Hoete, Teokotai Paitai, Margaret Goldsmith, Shirley Simmons, Scotty Cotter, Stu Turner, Waimihi Hotere, Ani-Piki Tuari, Amy McCaskill, Jane Hakaraia, Johnson Witehira, Karena Letham, Hone Hurihanganui, Natala Gwiazdzinski, Ebony Filikitonga, Sally Hughes, Desray Armstrong, Jessica Sanderson, Vanessa Immink, Dolina Wehipeihana, Hone Kouka, Mīria George, Tainui Tukiwaho, Amber Curreen, Marama Lloyd, Tānemahuta Gray, Carla van Zon, Ataahua Papa, Aroha Rawson, Jess Kean, Te Ohorere Williams, Luka Te Ngere Wolfgram, Te Kura Toi Whakaari o Aotearoa: NZ Drama School, Homeland, Foundation North, Te Wānanga o Aotearoa Gisborne Chris Brown at Theatrical Solutions, Dust Palace. Mahana film clip courtesy of Robin Scholes, Lee Tamahori and the New Zealand Film Commission.

Supported by: Pilot Productions

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**Created by a group of visionary founding donors in 1998 to support the growth and creativity of Auckland Theatre Company, The Theatre Foundation has underwritten the ambition of making theatre of scale for our city and carried us to the dawn of our fourth decade as we stage our 200th production.**

The Foundation is now renewing its capacity to support Auckland Theatre Company for the next 30 years by raising funds to mark the Company’s anniversary.

We invite you to be part of the next era of Auckland Theatre Company’s history by making a tax-deductible donation to The Theatre Foundation 30th Anniversary Fund. To make a donation, visit atc.co.nz/support or, for more information, contact our Artistic Director & CEO, Jonathan Bielski [development@atc.co.nz](mailto:development@atc.co.nz)

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# Pre-order your book

To celebrate 30 years of theatre-making, we have invited author Frances Walsh to lift the lid on the decades of drama and tell the story of Auckland Theatre Company.

Delving into the archives and interviewing a starry ensemble of creatives, board members and staff, Frances has uncovered a tantalising treasure trove of tales.

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