#  WITI’S WAHINE Stories by Witi Ihimaera, playwright by Nancy Brunning.

# Introductory notes

# COSTUME & PROPS

In this production, there are 4 lead actors who play various roles. The lead actors are AWHINA, ROIMATA, PEHIA and OLIVIA.

*Awhina - Ngāpuhi and Ngāti Hine.*

*Roimata - Ngati-Porou, Ngāti Rongomaiwahine and Ngāti-Kahungunu decent.*

*Pehia - Ngati-Mahuta ki te Hauāuru and Ngati-Maniapoto, she is also of Scottish heritage from the Shetland Islands.*

*Olivia who is also Ngati-Hine, and Ngati-Kahungunu ki Wairoa decent.*

The base of their costumes are cotton oversized wrap dresses. Each actor wears a different colour. Awhina wears red, Roimata wears dark blue, Pehia wears mustard yellow, Pehia’s kākāhu are partly made from the soil in Waituhi. Then we have Olivia who wears forest green.

The TIRA/Ensemble are essential to the piece and play a major role in portraying parts of this story mainly through forms of Kapa Haka such as karanga, pōhiri, mōteatea, poi, waiata-ā-ringa, haka, and more. In the tira we have,

*RAIHA who is Rongowhakaata and Te Aiatanga a Hauiti decent.*

*MATAWAI who is Ngāti-Raukawa, Ngāti-Kuia and Ngāti-Whakaue decent.*

Then the two young girls of the TIRA,

*MAMARARIA KI TIHIRAHI who is Rongowhakaata, Waikato, Ngapuhi. She is also known as the pīwaiwaka/fantail.*

*Then we have PEPI-RIA who is Rongowhakaata, Ngati-Porou, Ngapuhi and Te Aitanga-a-Māhaki.*

Raiha wears a brown oversized wrap dress, with brown flowy straight leg plants.

Matawai wears a brown oversized wrap dress, with light brown flowy straight leg plants.

Maramaria wears a cotton light blue wrap dress with details on the neck line.

Pepi-Ria wears a cotton light brown wrap dress.

As you are being seated, present on the stage, there is a brown wooden crate on the left side. This crate holds the costumes that the actors use to transition into other characters. Inside the crate you will find scarves. Furthermore, around the crate are a pair of black gumboots, a pair of shiny black dress shoes, and large brown sticks on either side of the stage. There is also a stack of ‘WITI IHIMAERA’ books that sit in front of the crate on the right side. Each of the acts are based on these books. In the first half, each cast member take on the role of holding a book while introducing the stories, in the middle of the show 4 books and 4 river stones are also placed on the floor leaning against the gray/white corridor walls. On the right side of the stage, there is a Solid wooden retro Chair with a colorful granny crochet blanket as the cover. Underneath the chair are small muslin sacks attached to each other, surrounding the chair are another pair of black Red Band gumboots and aprons folded on top.

The cast change into various roles by playing dress up, their dresses stay as the base throughout the entire show.

## Once upon a time story

THE PRINCESS wears a white cotton scarf draped over her head like long hair.

THE DRAGON wears a green scarf draped around their neck and held out like claws.

THE PRINCE also wears a green scarf as a cape, with black dress shoes.

## Mana Wāhine

HIMIONA wears a brown checked shirt, with red band gumboots.

MUM wears a light blue apron with little flower shapes on it, the straps of the apron are yellow.

GLORY wears a floral pattern apron.

As they set out to cut the scrub, Both Mum and Glory put gumboots on and hold sticks as slashers.

GRANDMA RAMONA wears a harakeke/flax hat with gumboots.

## The Sister

RANGIORA wears an army uniform with a khaki cap, when he is present he doesn’t speak. Pehia is the voice of RANGIORA while RAIHA stands in attention embodying RANGIORA.

MATAWAI wears a brown fur collar vest, she is the voice that sings whilst RANGIORA and AROHA waltz.

AROHA holds riverstones in her hands to remember her brother RANGIORA.

DAD wears a dark gray fedora hat, and holds a walking stick.

MONSIEUR SAMARITAN wears a black bowler hat, a silk red scarf and shiny black dress shoes.

When RAIHA and MATAWAI commemorate the 28th Māori Battalion with waiata/song, they hold poi. A ball - a string - a pompom.

## Riripeta and the policians

RIRIPETI wears a mustard vest with gold buttons, a black hoop skirt with black elastic straps attached and a black top hat with a walking stick.

TIMOTI wears a gray vest and flat top hat, beside TIMOTI stands 3 racks, on top of each rack is a hat. These racks resemble TIMOTI’s brothers.

## Te Matua – Miro and Tama

MIRO wears the two small muslin sacks, the muslin cloth is draped around her neck as the sacks hang on each side, the sacks are dragged on the ground as she walks, the cloth is frequently moved by her hands to emphasize her words. In some cases she will wrap the cloth around her, hold the cloth or let go of the cloth.

## Nanny Miro

NANNY MIRO wears a white head scarf with light blue patterns.

MRS HETA wears a white head scarf with red patterns.

They both hold cigaretes.

They sit on the wooden chairs and play cards on the wooden crate now used as their table.

OLDER VERSION OF NANNY MIRO sits on the retro chair, with the granny crochet blanket to cover her waist down.

## The child (Nanny Putiputi)

NANNY PUTI wears a brown knitted poncho. Nanny Puti also has a rahu/flax kete. This holds her yellow head scarf and sea shell.

## Tiana – The Dreamswimmer

TIANA’s daughters hold a small pink silk sheet against their mother.

## The Warrior

TILLY holds a stick, used as multiple things: tokotoko, taiaha, and a musket.

The CAST and TIRA wear gray blanket collar ponchos. The tira also hold the sticks as a weapon - taiaha - musket.

## The progenitor

PEHIA plays a ukulele, she also holds it while she narrates.

## Hockey Coach

MIRO MANANUI wears a whistle around her neck.

THE STUDENTS hold hockey sticks.

## Last Spear

ALL THE WOMEN and YOUNG GIRLS hold riverstones that they use as castanets in the final scene.

# Set and Lighting design

 We ease into the performance of Witi’s Wahine with the main performers onstage, house lights still up but dimmed so that we the audience and the actresses can see each other. The play begins with the red velvet stage curtain drawn. The story of the whare, the ancestral house is told in front of the curtain on the apron stage. At times there is subtle lighting on the stage curtain in the shape of a roof or wharenui, two diagonal lines that meet in a point at the top.

When the curtain rises to transition to the main set, it is as if we are looking down a long corridor with a vanishing point up the back, giving a suggestion of infinity. From the centre point at the back of the stage the corridors are at a 45-degree angle either side and come down as far as the stage curtain. They are a mottled grey/white and each side has three large doorways which serve as entrance and exit points for the performers. At times characters are backlit in these doorways to allow their shadows to fall on the stage and walls. The stage is bare and there is minimal use of props and set pieces. The lighting is projected through the doors to create latticing on the floor and a cross to signify a graveyard. The lights are used to spotlight, shadow and isolate characters in pockets of memory.

 There are times in the play when the actors or characters are speaking and there is no time for description. We’ll be back as soon as there is space to describe.