



ARTISTIC DIRECTOR COLIN McCOLL

Is it because we inhabit these isolated islands so far from the so-called 'centre of civilisation' that we are obsessed with the idea of overseas travel? Certainly we have an immense curiosity about experiencing life in other places and the concept of OE is central to the rite of passage mythology for hordes of young New Zealanders. Of course, between the idea and the reality falls the jet lag, the crowds, the cruddy accommodation, the pollution and the con-artist tour guides. Let's face it - we are innocents abroad!

Now, Roger Hall, with superb comic cunning, gives us a new twist on this familiar travel tale. Four intrepid middle-aged Kiwi Shirley Valentines experience the perils, pitfalls and pleasures of their Big OE. For these women it's now or never!

So welcome back Roger!

And welcome back to Roger Hall stalwarts Jennifer Ludlam and Fiona Samuel. Many thanks to the Shortland Street producers for releasing Alison Quigan for this engagement. Alison has directed Roger Hall for ATC but this is her first acting role for us. Big welcome too, to Annie Whittle.

Annie will be a familiar face to Shortland Street viewers – though more recently she's been busy being Anthony Hopkin's girlfriend in the new NZ film *The World's Fastest Indian*. Many thanks to Director John Callen, Designer John Parker, Costume Designer Victoria Ingram and Lighting Designer Andrew Malmo and the production team for their contribution to tonight's performance.

Taking Off is the first in our Winter Comedy Season. Next up is Stephen Sinclair's *The Bach*, (puff line about the bach) another chance to catch it if you missed last year's sell-out season. It stars Jennifer Ward Lealand and Michael Lawrence. If you missed it – check it out – if you saw it and enjoyed it – tell your friends to book early. It is a strictly limited two week return season before it tours to the Christchurch and Taranaki Arts festivals. *The Bach* plays at the Maidment Theatre June 24 to July 9.

Regards

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THE ASB SEASON OF
ROGER HALL'S
TAKING
THE WICKEDLY FUNNY STORY OF
FOUR KIWI SHIRLEY VALENTINES
BY ARRANGEMENT WITH PLAYMARKET
OFF 

STARRING

Noeline **JENNIFER LUDLAM** Ruth **FIONA SAMUEL**
Jean **ALISON QUIGAN** Frankie **ANNIE WHITTLE**

Direction **JOHN CALLEN** Set **JOHN PARKER** Lighting **ANDREW MALMO**
Costumes **VICTORIA INGRAM** Sound **JASON SMITH** Production Manager **ROBYN TEARLE**
Stage Manager **FERN CHRISTIE** Wardrobe Supervisor **DENISE HOSTY**
Properties **SHELLY WATSON** Lighting Operator **NOVA JACKSON**
Sound Engineer Ratu Gordon Publicity **BRIDGET DELAUNAY & TIM AITKEN**

This is the first production in ATC's Winter Comedy Season and the third ATC production for 2005.
Taking Off premiered on Thursday 2 June at SKYCITY Theatre.
Taking Off is approximately 2 hours and 20 minutes long, including a 15 minute interval.

LINDAUER


MONTANA

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WRITER'S NOTE ROGER HALL ON TAKING OFF...

A woman wrote to me from overseas saying she was in her fifties and doing her OE for the first time, and that there were lots of others her age doing OE for the first time. They were having the time of their lives and why didn't I write a play about it.

I put it on the back burner for a time (wasn't sure about it), but when I mentioned it to John Dryden, then head of Drama at Radio NZ he jumped at it, and commissioned me to write a six part series.

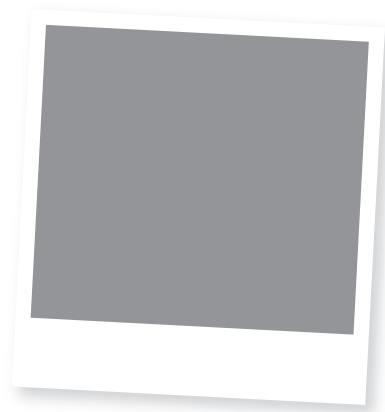
So then I had to start to research. I put an item in the NZ Herald asking for women in the same category to contact me, and I got more than fifty replies. I sent all of them a questionnaire, and many of these I followed up by talking to them in person or phoning them. Between them they had an enormous range of experiences, mostly good but not always... and many of these I used or adapted. A lot of the incidences in the play I used my own experience or my imagination.

I wrote it along the same lines as *By Degrees*; that is, each woman telling their

own story. Each travels on their own and each has their own way of telling it: Noeline communicates by e-mail; Jean keeps a journal; Frankie can't be bothered to write to anyone and uses the phone all the time; and Ruth, most ambitious of all, turns her travel experiences into a novel.

Susan Wilson of *Circa* was at Radio New Zealand, saw the scripts and said they would stage very well. Indeed they did, though it was very hard sacrificing so much from the six half-hour episodes. Susan and the cast made helpful (though often painful) suggestions plus adding their own stamp on presenting it to a theatre audience. But judging by audiences' responses at *Circa* and *Fortune*, it seems to have worked very well.

Kiwi women who embark on such a brave step at that time of life are undergoing a real adventure and I have nothing but admiration for them.



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF... JANE VESTY ATC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

As co-founder of Sweeney Vesty Limited (the international corporate marketing and communications company) you are recognized internationally as a leading communications expert. How would explain the kind of vision, drive and focus, necessary to succeed as to what some people now define as an 'extreme entrepreneur'?

It's unexplainable. All I know is that if you have that drive to do something, whatever it is, then you don't seek to explain it. It's just the way you go about things. This is something I have found to be true of all entrepreneurs.

How and why did you become a director of ATC?

My first employer was Stuart Devenie at Centerpoint Theatre in Palmerston North. My second, Colin McColl at Downstage. Rarely do you have the opportunity to work for one genius, let alone one immediately followed by another. So the opportunity to work with Colin again overrode all more sensible considerations about geography and time constraints. Once I met Kim and Kit and talked to the company about their programme and aspirations it was like being back home again.

I so admire the way in which all the actors, production teams and administrators I've ever worked with in the theatre go about their profession. Every day I think about the values they bring to the way they do their work, and try to reflect those values in the way I go about mine. Stuart and Colin were amazing bosses to have!

Have you always had the desire to align your profession with the dramatic arts?

I've never really thought about it like that, I've always been fascinated by creative people and the process they go through to explain the human condition in whatever art form that takes.

How would you describe the essence of ATC's Board of Directors if you had to boil it down to two things?

I've never been good at boiling anything down to two things. I think that it is their commitment to the Auckland Theatre Company and the people who work in it, their professionalism, integrity and their acumen across a wide range of areas.

You once said "Women make for great entrepreneurs and pioneers because we can do many things at the same time successfully". What advice would you give to women who want to "have it all" but are overwhelmed by what it takes to achieve it?

I don't believe that there is such a thing as "having it all" and even if there was it would mean completely different things to different people. I think it's more a case of focusing on what it is you want for yourself and those closest to you, so that you can define what "having it" means to you. In order to do that it is important to know yourself so you can make choices about what it is that will help you achieve it.

If your choices lead to performing a number of different tasks simultaneously to a high standard you will be reliant on many people to help you, so my advice is get your training in the theatre!

Who is your favourite playwright and why?

Tennessee Williams, and NOT just because Colin's sold out 1986 production of A Streetcar Named Desire during the first New Zealand International Arts Festival was one of the highlights of my tenure at Downstage.

What is your vision for ATC over the next 5 years?

My vision for the Auckland Theatre company is it continues to flourish, and to exceed the expectations of a growing, loyal and stable audience which in turn actively supports Colin and the company so that they can continue to produce world-class theatrical experiences.



THE KIWI LOVE AFFAIR WITH THE BIG O.E.

There is probably no country in which the letters O and E resonate as strongly as they do in New Zealand. In just a few generations of New Zealand's short history, the Overseas Experience, or Big OE, has become a national ritual. The fact that we even have a name for it is evidence of its hold – Australians do a similar thing but have no name for it.

Its popularity for a long time had something to do with the weakness of the New Zealand dollar. These days, it's seen more as a gateway to those magical places we grew up hearing about – Rome, Venice, Madrid, Greece, London. Regardless of what the New Zealand dollar is doing, the fact is that you can't hop on a train in Auckland and be in Paris three hours later.

Another motivation for the OE is far more whimsical. It's about freedom, escape and

independence. It's about reinventing yourself, expanding your horizons, loosening the bonds of study and career and relationships. It's the call to adventure, to explore, to discover.

Many Kiwis go on OE to escape their lives. What many of us don't realise before we leave is that you can escape a humdrum job or a dead-end relationship but you can't escape from yourself. Insecurities, foibles and anxieties go with you – and might even multiply when you are left to fend for yourself.

We typically fly into London relatively blind, with random snippets of advice gleaned from friends here and there, and arrive at Heathrow blinking and overwhelmed. We all reinvent the wheel and make mistakes but most importantly we end up discovering ourselves along the way.



ANNIE WHITTLE

Well recognised throughout New Zealand as Shortland Street (TVNZ) favourite 'Barb Heywood', Annie's notable industry experience stretches over three decades and includes acting for stage and screen, singing, TV presenting and reporting.

Her theatre credits include lead roles in Mercury Theatre's productions of Insignificance and Chicago as well as the Court Theatre's Duet for One, Fresh Revolving Pleasures, Putting it Together and Side by Side by Sondheim.

Annie's film and television experience includes an extensive list of credentials with lead roles in TVNZ's The Shadow Trader, The Billy T James Show and presenting roles on Heartland, Living Earth and Holiday.

Annie's work in music and on screen has resulted in various accolades including two NZ Recording Industry Awards, two Kensington Awards for Best Actress and the Neboa award for Entertainer of the Year.

Taking Off is the first appearance on the ATC stage for this ex-champion fencer.

FROM: ANNIE WHITTLE SENT: ENGLAND
SUBJECT: STOP! THIEF WITH THE MINTS!

AUCKLAND
THEATRE
COMPANY

I was 19-years-old, on my real OE in Northern England and unhappily packing cans for a living at a supermarket. Desperately seeking something more gratifying, I applied for a nannying job I saw advertised in the posh magazine "The Lady", jumped on a train, and went to meet the rather gentrified family on their Wiltsure estate. Fresh from the North, I realised pretty quickly that no easy going kiwi lass such as I could ever enjoy working under such subservient conditions. As the parents discussed me in another room, I took my bridled attitude out on their fine mints which I stuffed into my pockets and made a dash for the train. Quite upset, I demolished the mints and continued to find comfort in the train's cafeteria. At the changeover in London, I sadly realised I had spent the last of my train money on cake! I ended up having to sell my orange to a bemused black porter who gave me the 2 shillings necessary to finish my journey home (my tail firmly between my legs!)
Love Annie xx



ALISON QUIGAN

Alison's theatrical experience extends over almost 30 years and includes acting and directing a wide range of plays, as well as writing original works.

In December 2004 Alison completed her 18-year post as Artistic Director of Centrepont Theatre in Palmerston North.

Since 1984 she has directed over 60 plays (original and classics), favourites include Othello, Hamlet, Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet, Equus, Ladies Night, Pack of Girls and Mums' Choir.

Alison initially trained with Auckland's

Theatre Corporate Actors School where her tutors included Raymond Hawthorne, Ilona Rogers and Paul Gittens.

Currently playing the role of Yvonne Jefferies on Shortland Street (TVNZ), her previous television experience includes the character 'Maddie' on The Strip as well as appearances in Duggan (2000) and Hercules (1999).

In 2002 Alison performed in Leah as Duchess of Gloucester, produced by The New Zealand Actors Company for the NZ International Festival of Arts.

FROM: ALISON QUIGAN SENT: LONDON
SUBJECT: SWINGS & HYDE PARK ROUNDABOUTS!

AUCKLAND
THEATRE
COMPANY

The first time we drove in London was pretty amazing. I'd been in London for about 3 months and we'd decided to buy a car before we went over to Europe. So we took the tube to Putney and found this lovely little Morris Minor. Then we had to drive it away. Now, back in NZ I was a very nervous driver but for some reason as soon as I got behind the wheel in London I could do no wrong. We took off and it wasn't long before we were heading towards one of the biggest roundabouts I'd ever seen - "Where are we, Joan, I said. "Hyde Park Corner" she says, "don't look behind you and don't stop".
Love Alison



JENNIFER LUDLAM

Jennifer Ludlam has worked extensively on stage and television in both New Zealand and Australia. She is no stranger to the works of Roger Hall or the ATC stage, having performed as 'Maxine' in 1997's Social Climbers and as the 'Narrator' in 2001's Take a Chance on Me. Jennifer has recently appeared playing her character 'Noeline' in the premier of Taking Off at Circa Theatre in Wellington. Jennifer was last seen on the ATC stage in 2004's Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf – for which she won her third Chapmann

Tripp Award for Best Actress (Wellington Theatre Awards).

Other favourite roles include 'Vita' in Vita and Virginia and 'Winnie' in Happy Days. Her performances in Undercover and Coverstory (Gibson Film Group) saw her win two NZ Film and Television Awards for Best Dramatic Performance TV (1993 & 1996). Most recently Jennifer appeared in Tennessee Williams' Suddenly Last Summer for the Court Theatre.

FROM: JENNIFER LUDLAM SENT: VENICE
SUBJECT: PASSPORTS & ELEPHANTS

AUCKLAND
THEATRE
COMPANY

Twenty-three years old and off to conquer the world on my own real OE! Arrived in Venice, Gondoliers on strike! Vaparetto arrives to transport large congregation of angry tourists and locals. Much pushing and shoving ensued – travel folder containing passport and travellers cheques lifted neatly from bucked up hand-bag - don't feel a thing. Vomit into Grand Canal – Very Worried. Return to Rome – nearest NZ Embassy. Replace passport. See "Aida" at Caracalla Baths. 400 people, elephants and giraffes – front row, v. v. happy again. Love Jen.



FIONA SAMUEL

Fiona trained at the New Zealand Drama School, where she learned how to play any role wearing stiletto heels and a spiral perm.

She graduated in 1980 and worked for several years, starting to write between acting jobs. Her original television series *The Marching Girls* was broadcast in 1987, and since then Fiona has worked mainly as a writer for television (*Face Value*, *Home Movie*), stage (*The Wedding Party*, *Lashings of Whipped Cream*) and radio (*Blonde Bombshell*, *A Short History of Contraception*).

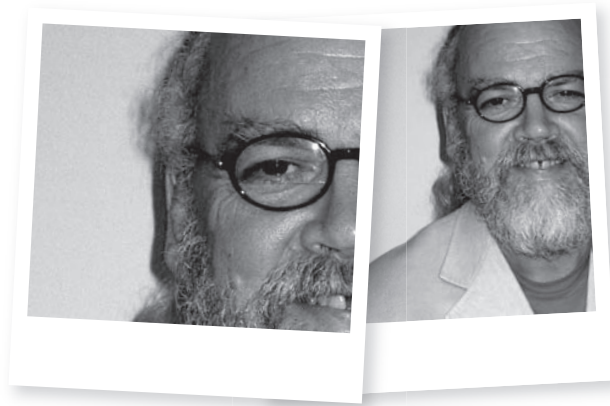
She has continued to act, most recently in *The World's Wife*, which debuted at the New Zealand Festival and then toured New Zealand with an Auckland Theatre Company season in 2003. Other shows for the Auckland Theatre Company include *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1995) and Roger Hall's *Social Climbers* (1997) and *Take a Chance on Me* (2001).

Fiona is currently the Buddle Findlay Sargeson Fellow, and writes in *A Room of Her Own* exactly as her character Ruth dreams of doing.

FROM: FIONA SAMUEL SENT: NORTH WALES
SUBJECT: THE GROPER'S ARMS

AUCKLAND
THEATRE
COMPANY

My entire family went on my brother's honeymoon, to a small and rustic hotel in North Wales. On the first morning, surly before my first coffee, I accused mine host of groping me at the breakfast buffet (roomful of English holidaymakers goes very quiet). Mine host's wife went ape, my husband threatened to move us all out and for the next few days we were served at breakfast by a blushing local girl. When we checked out, I went to give her an enormous tip and she whispered to me 'He does do that, he's always doing it, this place used to be really popular but no one comes here now...' This hotel has entered my family's mythology as 'The Groper's Arms' and we still get hysterical when we speak of it.
Love Fiona



JOHN CALLEN

John has a career in stage, screen and radio going back more than 30 years. He has won awards as best actor and best supporting actor in Wellington and in 2002 won best actor in a short film.

He was a member of the Downstage Theatre and Mercury Theatre companies and has worked around New Zealand and in the US. Recently he had the adult lead role in three children's films, narrated 14 documentaries for the Animal Planet Channel and wrote and directed several documentaries

for a new series called Taonga to be broadcast later in the year on Channel One.

He has extensive experience as a director with credits including Comedy Central, Jackson's Wharf, The Tribe and Shortland Street. Lately he has been running a course on television acting for students at Unitec and after Taking Off, his first directing gig for ATC, will be having a break before starting work on another TV documentary. He is also a visiting tutor at Toi Whakaari, New Zealand Drama School in Wellington.

FROM: JOHN CALLEN SENT: PARIS
SUBJECT: PASSPORTS & ELEPHANTS

AUCKLAND
THEATRE
COMPANY

The Mexican woman security guard at Washington Airport wasn't at all sure that my daughter's wheelchair was not hiding some weapon of mass destruction. Maria called Juanita over. "Lean over; we check your back." "My back is very fragile; please don't touch it," said my daughter, Anna. "We got to check." "You can; just don't touch my back." This wasn't good enough. Juanita and her colleague, Maria, called over the senior security man, another Mexican, named Pedro. "Hey Pedro, she says we can't check her." "Yes, you can check, just don't touch my back." Pedro had a new, innovative approach: "You have to stand up." Anna looked at him, then at us. Her older brother leaned over to Pedro. "She can't walk; that's why she's in a wheelchair." Pedro looked to his two women subordinates and came back with a lightning-fast intellectual retort: "Just for a minute." My son's next comment is not for print but we passed through the security check with no further problem.

Love John



JOHN PARKER

John has a long history of designing for ATC, including Equus, Caligua, The Bach, Middle Age Spread, The Rocky Horror Show, Noises Off, Waiting for Godot, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead, Into The Woods, Serial Killers, Art, Cabaret, The Book Club, Amy's View and Lovelock's Dream Run.

Other work includes: The Threepenny Opera, Chess, , Romeo And Juliet, Titus Andronicus, Twelfth Night, F.I.L.T.H, Assassins, Waiora, Cat On A Hot Tin Roof, Decadence, On the Razzle, Chicago, The

Marriage of Figaro, Barber of Seville, Cosi Fan Tutte, Evita, Trash To Fashion and Big River (Winner the Chapman Tripp Awards Set Designer of the Year) at Downstage theatre.

John has also designed for The Louis Vuitton Ball and The America's Cup Ball, Bendon's Next To Nothing, Bellsouth Pharaohs, Precious Legacy and Peru : Gold and Sacrifice for the Auckland Museum.

He was awarded a Waitakere City Millennium Medal for services to the Community.

FROM: JOHN PARKER SENT: INDIA
SUBJECT: THE NECESSITY OF BEING IN TOUCH...

AUCKLAND
THEATRE
COMPANY

On my first OE in the early seventies I had a round the world ticket and I traveled alone. You could stop off as many times you liked as long as you kept going in the same direction. I had booked main flights and left the itinerary with my parents. Flying from Madras to Delhi, I left a day early for some reason. The night flight was uneventful until landing, which was a zero G theme park experience. The same flight the next day, that I should have been on, crashed, killing everyone. Apparently the airport landing lights hadn't worked for days and landing relied on the pilot sighting the terminal and dropping altitude fast. Newspaper headlines mentioned a young unidentified European man among the dead. Trying to call my parents that I was OK before they saw the TV news was a nightmare through the Indian telephone system, compounded with me having long hair and being continually made to go to the back of the queue. It was the most devastating feeling of isolation, of not existing of being a non-entity. The necessity of being in touch, to prove you still are there is a powerful need. No mobile phones then. Still have the newspaper somewhere.

Love John xx



VICTORIA INGRAM

Victoria was the Costume Designer for the Silo Theatre's 2004 production of Mr. Kolpert and was invited back to the Silo in February 2005 to design A Clockwork Orange. Taking Off is her third professional costume design project.

Victoria last year won the 'Emale' (male section) of the 2004 'Trash to Fashion' Awards with her entry 'Desperdicios' (Spanish word for 'Rubbish'), the creation resembled a

Matador costume made from recycled coffee sacks.

During the third year of her Degree in Fashion Technology (Specialising in Costume AUT 2001-2003), Victoria was chosen for work experience with EWC and once her studies concluded she was immediately employed in a full-time, permanent position. Victoria has now been working with Elizabeth Whiting Costumes as a Machinest for 14 months.

ANDREW MALMO

Andrew Malmo is a lighting designer, photographer and production manager.

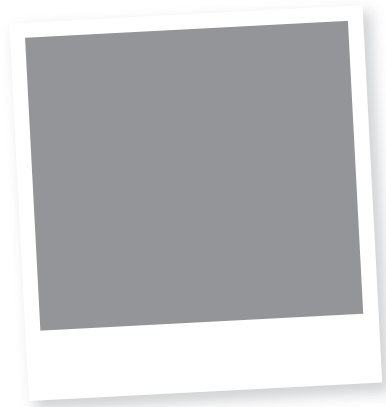
As a lighting designer, Andrew's work is theatrically based. He has designed numerous dramatic productions for Auckland venues and touring shows, most recently Spreading Out for Auckland Theatre Company, Strange Children, The Caretaker, Blue Orange and Marlene for Potent Pause Productions and Jennifer Ward-Lealand's Falling in Love Again. Through his designs Andrew aims to explore new possibilities and create innovative, artistic and faithful lighting.

Other design credits include: Spring Awakening (Stage 2), The New Man, Corpus

Christi (Company of Angels), Ghost in the Machine (Hugh Major), Decadence, Old Times (Potent Pause) and Nightingale Fever (Michael Parmenter).

Production Management credits includes: Equus, A Christmas Carol, Caligula, Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf, The Bach (ATC), Falling In Love Again (Bronze Age Productions), Much Ado About Nothing (Outdoor Summer Shakespeare), Rainbow Youth Charity Concert (Rainbow Youth).

Andrew is also a photographer, focussing primarily on landscape in black and white. www.malmo.co.nz



THE REAL JEAN!

A DAY IN THE LIFE



PHOTOS FROM THE OPENING NIGHT OF EQUUS
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