

Kōtātara

The Newsletter of Ōrotokare: Art, Story, Motion Trust

Toward indigenous theatre and performing arts

No. 11, May 2009

In this edition of *Kōtātara* we report on our latest workshop held at Waimangō, Wharekawa, Hauraki. This took place during 12-17 April and was convened under the auspices of our contract with *Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga*. It enabled us to further both our research into the use of mātauranga Māori in contemporary performing



arts as well as develop our work *Te Kārohirohi*. It is our intention to stage *Te Kārohirohi: The Light Dances*, and the first whare tapere, at Waimangō in February 2010.

The workshop was again led by Louise Pōtiki-Bryant and was attended by Brett Graham whom we have engaged to assist with the design and development of stage and set design. We were again supported by a wonderful group of dancers and performers: Jack Gray, Rachel Ruckstuhl-Mann, Ngāpaki Emery, Oyeja Cruz-Banks and Tema Fenton-Coyne. We also welcomed a new member to the *Ōrotokare* family, Her name is Erina Daniels and she is an actor, director and musician. Many thanks to Erina for supporting our work. As always, we thank our wonderful dancers and performers who again provided outstanding contributions.

Additionally, we were visited by Rose Beauchamp and Challen Wilson (playwright). Rose has spent over twenty years researching karetao (puppets) and she presented to *Ōrotokare* a copy of her research on this topic. We thank Rose for her generous gift and her support of *Ōrotokare*. We would also to thank Challen for bringing Rose to us and for her support. We were also visited by James Webster and his partner Hinemoa. James is a Whitianga based artist. He has created taonga pūoro, karetao, manu aute and many other things. Thanks also to Tikapa Moana Lodge for taking care of our performers at beautiful Waihihi.

Day One

As all participants arrived on Monday morning, the workshop began proper on Monday afternoon. This period of time was spent on building up the fellowship and whanaungatanga of the group. Building a sense of unity,

cohesion and fellowship within our group is very important to Ōrotokare and one of our core values. We reacquainted ourselves with the performance space, an area adjacent to sea and bush at Waimangō. We played numerous games and generally eased ourselves into the Waimangō environment.

Day Two

Day Two saw the workshop proper get under way. Hineruhi and Tānerore warm-ups were attended to in the morning. It began with minimal use of energy, slowly unfolding ourselves and moving into the experience of Hineruhi and Tānerore. Later, the movement became more intense and intensive as explorations of whole body *wiri* took place. We were also visited this day by Rose Beauchamp and Challen Wilson (and Lotus). Rose presented a wonderful gift to us – a copy of her research report describing her journey into the world of *karetao* or traditional puppets. Not much is known of these taonga and Rose has spent many years meticulously gathering information and fragments of knowledge about karetao. She travelled throughout the world identifying karetao in museums and has brought together what she has discovered in her research report. We are very grateful for Rose's kind gift and look forward to further explorations and experiments utilising karetao.

Day Three

In the morning, the group returned to Hineruhi and explored this in relation to water. In the afternoon, we were lead by Brett as we explored the physical space for the performance. We looked at the potential size of the stage and also the audio/sound features of the space. Louise looked at potential entrances to the stage and Brett considered in more depth the construction of the stage. During this time, we also visited by James Webster and his family. It was an opportunity to connect with James, to discuss our plans with him and to develop some ideas concerning his potential contribution to our forthcoming whare tapere.

Day Four

During Day Four, we revisited the Ōrotokare core values. This is a feature of our workshops – taking pause to consider and explore our philosophy and our values. Briefly, the core values are as follows:

Love - the experience of wholeness in a world of brokenness

Compassion - the spontaneous power of love to express itself, to bring about wholeness

Forgiveness - the power of love to create wholeness often when circumstances are demanding brokenness

Manaakitanga - the art of uplifting and fostering mana (the most important mana being love, mana aroha)

Whanaungatanga - the art of building and living within nourishing and loving relationships

Day Five

Finally, Day Five was spent summarising our work to date. Overall, the workshop enabled us to develop further choreographic material, explore possibilities for the performance space and refine ideas about Tānerore and Hineruhi based warm-ups and approaches to performance.



Ōrotokare: Art, Story, Motion Trust is a charitable trust dedicated to indigenous theatre and performing arts. *Ōrotokare* explores the traditional *whare tapere* (pā based houses of entertainment, storytelling and dance) and uses this as an inspiration and a starting point for a new indigenous theatre. The ethos of the trust is to be experimental, exploratory and *avant garde* seeking to find new ways of performing, new expressions of traditional ideas and innovative solutions to performance issues.

Make a Donation, Express Your Support!

As a charitable trust, *Ōrotokare: Art, Story, Motion Trust* relies on donations, sponsorships and other kinds of philanthropic support. If you would like to support our organisation and make a donation, please let us know by writing to:

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Donations can be made directly into our bank account below and if you would like a receipt, please let us know.

Bank Account: 03-0547-0674973-00
 Westpac, Porirua City

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*...korimako pae ki te **kōtātara**...
‘The bellbird alights upon its perch.’*

*Taken from a traditional Ngā Puhi chant used to welcome visitors to the marae.
Its usage here is to suggest that this newsletter is like a perch upon which various
birds are able to alight and address their audiences.*

*The bird – particularly the kākā, kuaka, kōtuku, huia, toroa and so on –
is a traditional reference used in literature for the orator.*

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