

Kōtātara

The Newsletter of Ōrotokare: Art, Story, Motion

Toward indigenous theatre and performing arts

No. 2, 13 October 2005

'The Light Dances': A Report on a 'thinking out loud' hui concerning Haka-Dance

On the 30th of September, *Ōrotokare* burst into life by convening its very first hui. A strategic planning hui, its purpose was to explore haka in history and to use aspects of historical haka to inspire the composition of new haka. We were able to achieve a long held aspiration of sharing with dancers a range of ideas and thoughts about haka discovered through research into the *whare tapere*. Additional objectives of the hui included determining areas of haka activity which



The group worked on a haka inspired by Michael Campbell's recent successes on the golf course!

Ōrotokare can devote itself to, discussing the forthcoming Te Papa conference on Pacific dance and also to identify people who may wish to assist us in haka programme. We are delighted by the response to the ideas in the hui and the expressions of support we have received from those who attended.

The hui was attended by a number of well-known Māori dancers, drawn from throughout New Zealand, including Merenia Grey (Merena Gray Dance Company), Tāne Mahuta Grey (Te Ao Mārama), Marama Emery (Toi Whakaari), Louise Pōtiki-Bryant (Atamira Dance Collective), Moana Nepia (Elam Art School, University of Auckland), Moss Patterson, Piripi Christie and Kīmoro Taiepa (Te Wānanga-o-Aotearoa), Gaylene Sciascia (Whitireia Performing Arts) Matariki Whatarau (Wellington School of Performing Arts) and Cathy Livermore (Whitireia Performing Arts, Atamira)

We also received apologies and expressions of support from well known New Zealand dancer Taiaroa Royal, Dr Tania Kopytko (Dance Association of New Zealand), dance critic Jennifer Shennan, Terri Crawford (Waikato University) Natalie Hona (NZ School of Dance) and Te Rita Papesch. The hui was ably supported by Derek Renata (who delivered a wonderful presentation using animation), Dene Ainsworth *Ōrotokare* trustee Parekāwhia Mclean and Joanne Grace of Ngāti Toarangatira. The hui took place in the Community Room at Pātaka Museum, Porirua City. Many thanks to the Porirua City

Council Creative Communities Scheme and the National School of Performing Arts, Te Wānanga-o-Aotearoa (particularly Jonathan Fohrman and Susan Battye) for supporting the hui. Their assistance was invaluable. The hui was captured on video by Shane Loader and a draft edit of video will be prepared.

'The Light Dances'

A booklet was prepared for the hui. It is entitled '*The Light Dances*', a title inspired by the two mythological models for masculine and feminine dance, namely, *Te Haka-a-Tānerore* (the dance of Tānerore) and *Te Haka-a-Hineruhi* (the dance of Hineruhi). The booklet was compiled to help dancers and those interested in dance to increase our understanding of the creative possibilities of haka. Our interest is to encourage the rediscovery of the depth and breadth of haka in history and to use these fragments and ideas to inspire the composition and performance of new haka.

It has been popular to think about haka solely as war dance and displays of aggression. Many see haka simply as an amusement or, for some, its sole purpose is to express anger. Recent research, however, has rediscovered a wide variety of haka expressing a diversity of emotion and experience. Whilst some haka were designed to express anger and assert identity – the *peruperu*, the *taparahi*, the *puha*, the *ngeri*, for example – others, such as the *puapua* and the *kori*, were performed to entertain, to attract, to seduce and to beguile.

The booklet presents fragments, ideas and perspectives on haka found through research. It is hoped that it will inspire dancers and choreographers to create new haka. Of particular interest is to rediscover the masculine and the feminine within 'Māori' dance. We wish to see a 'rebalancing' of the masculine and the feminine in new haka so that haka may be truly restored as a dance tradition which can speak meaningfully to all aspects of our humanity and our experiences.



Moana Nepia (right) shares an idea.



Tāne Mahuta Grey

A further feature of contemporary haka is its preoccupation with asserting identity – either ‘Māori’ identity or iwi identity. Whilst this is a valid and ongoing concern, it can be contrasted with haka in history and its interest in expressing aspects of the natural world into human creativity. A particularly distinctive aspect of traditional haka involved the transformation of the individual dancer into a bird, a fish, into light, into an animal and so on. This constituted a reflection and an expression of the energies and forms of the natural world into human performance. ‘Indigenous theatre and performing arts’ is a set of terms we can use for this way of

performing – the imaging and the imagining of the natural world into the human artistic performance. There is much more to discover and be inspired by and we hope that dancers will be inspired by what is presented here and by what we have discovered and can discover through research. ‘The Light Dances’ (haka booklet) and *Ōrotokare* booklet (see below) can be purchased from us for a donation of \$20. (Individually for \$10 each.)

‘Haka is more than wardance...’ – A Media Release

A media release was prepared and sent to a number of media outlets. The release was entitled ‘Haka is more than wardance...’ and its purpose was to draw attention to our hui and also to the idea that, in history, there were haka composed and performed for purposes other than for war or displays of aggression. Charles was interviewed for *Te Karere* (TVNZ) and the interview was broadcast later that evening. Charles was also interviewed by *Waka Huia* (TVNZ) earlier this month where again ideas about the traditional where tapere were able to be discussed. This interview was used in the Waka Huia programme celebrating ten years of the Māori language seasons of *Takirua* Theatre in Wellington. The programme screened on the 25th of September.

Where to next?

The goal of the *Ōrotokare* haka programme can be described in the following terms:

- Expanding our understanding of haka in history (a research activity)
- Inspiring the composition and performance of new haka (a creative activity)



Louise Pōtiki-Bryant, Moss Patterson

As a result of our hui on the 30th September, our next steps involve convening a smaller group of people who



Cathy Livermore, Marama Emery, Tāne Mahuta Grey, Piripi Christie

can workshop more intensively the ideas presented in the hui. This is likely to be a Wellington based group of people who can come together fairly easily and work through various ideas. The hui felt that, at this stage, it would prudent to go into a workshop process first before committing to some public performances. Hence, our next steps will involve perhaps three workshops in which we will be able to work through many ideas. We have received lots of encouragement to go in this direction. So watch this space!

A New Booklet and Logo

We are also delighted to announce the arrival of our new logo and the publication of a booklet about *Ōrotokare: Art, Story, Motion*. The logo and the booklet were both designed by Derek Renata. The logo represents the surface of lake water, ideas reflected in the name *Ōrotokare*. The term 'Ōrotokare' likens one's emotional state to the surface of lake water. *Roto* means both 'within' and is also a term for 'lake'. *Kare* refers to the surface of water. Hence, the outward surface of a lake symbolises the inward state of the heart. At times, it is at peace. At others, winds blow, the passions are stirred. The name *Ōrotokare* is a variant of the term *kare-ā-roto* which is used to denote the passions of the heart. A *kare-ā-roto* is a person who has captured one's affections. We would to thank Derek for making an important contribution to *Ōrotokare* at this time and offering his services at a greatly reduced fee.

As mentioned earlier, The *Ōrotokare* booklet and the 'The Light Dances' (haka booklet) can be purchased from us for a donation of \$20. (Individually for \$10 each.)

Tēnā anō koutou katoa.

Te Ahukaramū
Charles Royal



Orotokare: Art, Story, Motion is a charitable trust dedicated to indigenous theatre and performing arts. *Orotokare* 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, *Orotokare: Art, Story, Motion* 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:

Dr Charles Royal
 Artistic Director
Orotokare: Art, Story, Motion
 PO Box 12446, Thorndon, Wellington
 Email: charles@mkta.co.nz
 Website: www.orotokare.org.nz

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

Orotokare: Art, Story, Motion was established on the 15th of December 2004. It is a charitable trust and meets exemption requirements under CB4 of the Income Tax Act 1994. IRD/Exemption No. 88-660-536

Orotokare: Art, Story, Motion is supported by:



*...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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