

Kōtātara

The Newsletter of Ōrotokare: Art, Story, Motion

Toward indigenous theatre and performing arts

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Tēnā koutou katoa.

In this issue, we report on a haka/dance innovation workshop that took place on the 29th and 30th of April 2006, at Pātaka Museum, Porirua. Led by Ngāi Tahu dancer and choreographer, Louise Pōtiki-Bryant, the workshop was an opportunity to explore a range of questions and possibilities arising from our research into haka in history. The workshop was an opportunity to play with ways in which fragments concerning traditional dance



discovered through research might be used in the composition of new haka-dance. The goals and objectives our three planned haka-dance workshops in 2006 are:

Goal:

- to explore perspectives on haka-dance found in iwi histories and traditions, particularly those not fully expressed in haka-dance today, and to use these perspectives to inspire the composition and performance of new haka-dance

Objectives

- to explore and design models for collective dance (kapa etc.)
- to design models for the individual dancer (male and female)
- to understand the nature of masculine and feminine haka-dance (Tānerore, Hineruhi) and to use this to inspire new dance
- to explore the use of elements of the natural world as models for haka
- to explore 'interior' *whare* located haka-dance

It is likely that, in time, these goals and objectives will be utilised in our ongoing haka/dance programme of the Trust.

Participants

We were very grateful to have a small number of talented theatre and dance performers attend our workshop. They included performing arts student Matariki Whatarau and *Toi Whakaari* graduate Marama Emery. We were also joined by flamenco dancer Francine Sweetman and theatre practitioner Bert Van Dijk. Together with Louise Pōtiki-Bryant, the group was appended by Charles Royal, Derek Renata and Dene Ainsworth who recorded the event on

video. (We will eventually compile all video material from these workshops into a DVD.)

Themes explored

With this small group the workshop was able to work through a number of elements that can be found in traditional literature including:

- imaging and imagining schools of fish and flocks of birds in a *kapa*
- exploring Tānerore and Hineruhi dance
- developing *whare* located dance (rather than marae ātea dance)



The exploration of bird and fish movement through *kapa* began with our very first workshop in 2005 where participants were initially asked to dance together as a group. As the group dynamic came together, an individual within the *kapa* was asked to lead some part of the dance merely by moving the head from one direction to the next. Whilst dancing in such a way, the *kapa* looked like it was hovering (or suspended perhaps in air or water). The movement of the leader's head was followed by the rest of the group and a unison movement was formed. This slowly grew to incorporate hand and arm movements before the entire body was employed in a variety of directions.

The key idea of this experiment was to explore unison in dance movement reflecting the notion expressed in this statement:

Ka ranga tētahi, ka ranga te katoa
One moves, all move

This is an elaboration of the concept of *rangatiratanga*. Ranga means to weave and a tira is a group of people convened for a particular purpose. Hence, a rangatira is a person who is able to weave groups of people together in purposeful ways. The traditional symbol for this sense of unison between groups of people was seen in the way flocks of birds or schools of fish fly/swim in unison together. There is an uncanny and intuitive depth of communication taking place throughout the group by which the movement of one flows throughout to become the movement of the entire group. Exploring this in a dance context was fascinating.

Tānerore, Hineruhi

Later in the workshop, we looked more closely at traditions concerning Tānerore and Hineruhi, deities which relate to aspects of the behaviour of

light. Tānerore is the quivering of light on a very hot day and Hineruhi is generally dawn light (ata hāpara). Commencing with Tānerore, our first idea was that the quivering Tānerore energy should commence in the earth, enter the feet and rise through the body. This should take place before arriving at the *wiri* and *kakapa* (quivering of the hands and arms) which are the most well known expressions of the dance of Tānerore in Māori performing arts and kapa haka today.

Similarly, Hineruhi dance involves an energy rising up from the feet and through the body (to capture the idea of the rising sun), however, the difference here is that Hineruhi *receives* the sun energy and transforms it in beautiful ways. Particularly, the eyes, the face and hair are important in Hineruhi dance. Here it is the play of light upon the face and body, the sparkle, the dance of light which emanates from the arrival of light upon the body which we suggest is the essence of Hineruhi dance.



A thought about pūkana

Pūkana is a well known aspect in haka. It involves distending and distorting the eyes and eye balls. Its purpose is to transform the body in unusual ways and to make one's appearance impressive. Here is an extract from an *oriori* (lullaby) by Āperahama Te Ruru of Ngāti Raukawa which expresses a father's aspirations for his son:

Takoto mai ki raro kia tōia koe
 Kia roroa ō pona
 Kia honuhonu ō kape
 Kia mārama ai ō kanohi ki te pūkana
 Lay down so that you may 'drawn out'
 So that your joints may be lengthened
 That your eye sockets may be deepened and become agile
 And your eyes will know how to pūkana

We can see that there is a sense of massaging, lengthening and extending the body in some way which seems to speak to the potential of the person.

With respect to pūkana, we suggest that there is a difference between pūkana which is performed in an assertive, even defiant way (eyes particularly distended, eyeballs protruding in a significant way) - which is designed to create tension and apprehension in the observer - and pūkana which is designed to attract and engage. The pūkana of assertion could be an

ongoing recollection of the *ngārara* and *mokomoko* (lizard, amphibious creatures) forms which feature in a lot of Māori art (such the three fingers in carving) and is often used in encounter rituals such as the pōwhiri upon the marae ātea. Encounter rituals commence with challenge and assertion between groups of people and pūkana is often used to express challenge, even defiance.

The pūkana of Hineruhi dance, however, is alluring, enticing and beautiful. Its purpose is to elicit admiration and desire in the observers. See for example this description of Puhihuia when she dances:



... ae ta tuawahine pai,
whakamau noa atu ki nga
kanoahi o ia wahine; anana,
me te Maure ka puta ake i
te pae! Na reira ano te
manuhiri ra mate noa ake ki

te pai o te wahine ra. Koia hoki ko Te Ponga, ko te rangatira o taua teretere nei, kua whakawairangi noa ake te ngakau ki te pai o ia wahine.

... She was an exemplar of female dance, and this too was reflected in the faces of all the women. Like the moon rising above the horizon! The visitors were enraptured by the beauty of her dance. Te Ponga, the chief of the visitors, was gripped by a maddening love for the beauty of all the women...

Here is the description of Te Kahureremoa:

Tino whakatikanga o te wahine nei ki runga ki te haka, i te toronga kautanga o nga ringa inamata e whakatangihia ana ki te ngongoro... koia ano me te mea e komurua ana te tamahine a Paka, ta te Aitanga-a-Tiki pai, ta te kotahi a Tu-tawake...

And so the woman rises to dance, as soon as she extends her arms exclamations of surprise and admiration can be heard... it is as though the suppleness of Paka's daughter has come from constant training and massage, she is the epitome of feminine grace and beauty in the dance...

Ultimately, we see therefore that Hineruhi and Tānerore are complementary energies in the dance. Tānerore, a masculine energy, is concerned to project and assert expressions into the world whereas the Hineruhi energy is

receiving and transforming in beautiful ways, the essence of feminine energies and qualities.

Dance for the *whare whakairo*, the interior

One further theme explored in our workshop concerned the idea of haka for the *whare whakairo*. Our thought is that the key source or foundation of the contemporary kapa haka lies with the performances upon the *marae ātea*, the clear space of ground in front of the meeting house. This is the space of encounter and conflict (*te wāhi tutū te puehu*) and this is where the kapa haka draws much of its inspiration.



A second and important space where *marae* based performances take place is in the *whare kai*, the place where people gather to eat. Here the performances have an ease about them and are designed to entertain. The cooks gather to welcome visitors into the *whare kai* with various light hearted songs and entertainments. The sense of ease in the *whare kai* comes about because any tensions and conflicts that are raised have been dealt with upon the *marae ātea*.

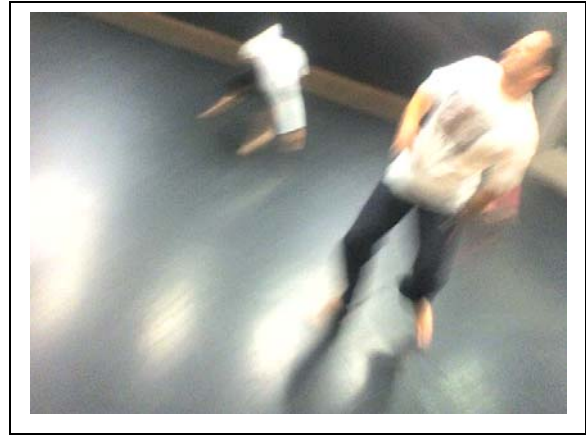
The third and important space for *marae* based performance is the *whare whakairo*, the carved meeting house. This is a sacred space for it is the abode of *Te Ao Mārama* and it is a place in which the peaceful deities – including Rongo and Tāne-whakapiripiri – can be found. A carved meeting house also depicts ancestors and it is a people's most profound statement on the nature of the world they experience. Depicted along the walls, in the various artworks, are a people's view of aspects of existence. Hence, the kind of performing that takes place here is respectful and can be profound.

These three spaces – the *marae ātea*, the *whare kai* and the *whare whakairo* – suggest three different types of performing and our workshop worked a little on haka-dance for inside the *whare whakairo*. A particular theme that emerged was the idea of *whakaahua* or 'coming to form'. This is a term used for the carvings in a *whare whakairo* where ancestors are said to 'come to form' within the carvings of a meeting house. Carvings are not merely illustrations or depictions of ancestors but the ancestors themselves coming to life again in the living carving.

Hence, what is taking place here is some kind of mysterious process from within – an energy, a quality, a *mana from within* the ground, the earth is coming into the world again through the wood of the carving. This idea can

be taken into performance whereby something *within comes out, comes to form*. This can be contrasted with the idea of mimesis (donning the mask) which is a foundational idea in western and other theatre forms.

A further aspect of interior, whare whakairo located dance performance is the notion that the performances should assist in adorning the house. Just as it was customary to consider that all words which are spoken in the whare are said to subsequently adhere to the walls and to the ridge pole (e iri ana i ngā pakitara, i te tāhūhū o te whare) so our performances should emanate outwards to assist the whare in its presentation of the world. The roof



of the house represents the sky, the floor of the house represents earth. Hence, the interior of the house represents the world and so our performances in the whare whakairo should elaborate, support, extend and enrich this way of presenting and perceiving reality.

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Quote Sources

The story of Ponga and Puhihuia can be found in John White's *Ancient History of the Maori*, Volume IV, pages 111-133. This quote is on page 113. Six volumes, 1887-1890, Government Printer, Wellington. The story of Te Kahureremoa can be found on pages 120-125 in George Grey's *Nga Mahi a nga Tupuna*, 1854. The oriori by Āperahama Te Ruru of Ngāti Raukawa can be found in *Kāti au i konei: He Kohikohinga i ngā Waiata a Ngāti Toarangatira, a Ngāti Raukawa*, compiled by Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal, pages 98-101. (Huia 1994)



Ōrotokare: Art, Story, Motion 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.

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Dr Charles Royal
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Ōrotokare: Art, Story, Motion
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 Website: www.orotokare.org.nz

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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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