

Kōtātara

The Newsletter of *Ōrotokare: Art, Story, Motion*

Toward indigenous theatre and performing arts

No. 4, August 2006

Tēnā koutou katoa.

In this edition of *Kōtātara* we report on the second of our 2006 series of haka/dance innovation workshops which took place at Pātaka Museum, Porirua, 29,30 July 2006. Once again we were lead by Ngāi Tahu choreographer and dancer, Louise Pōtiki-Bryant and the workshop was attended by dancers and performers including Matariki Whatarau, Terri Crawford, Te Urikore Biddle and Toni Huata. Artist Sandy Rogers and her husband Fernando sat in as



Toni Huata, Matariki Whatarau and Terri Crawford

well. The workshop was very enjoyable and fruitful as participants moved to work on the story concerning the enmity between Tinirau and Kae. This is an old Hawaiki-Polynesian story which is very important in literature pertaining to the traditional whare tapere. (See below)

Looking to our first performance

Prior to the weekend, it was decided to use this workshop to begin thinking about a first performance. Whilst we continued our exploration of haka/dance innovation, we were also keen to think about a first performance or production to be convened under our auspices. The decision to work toward a first performance is both focusing and challenging. As all performers and performance designers know, deciding to do a performance (setting dates, setting up a production schedule and so on) is excellent for focus and catalysing things to happen. It is also challenging for *Ōrotokare* is looking to develop new ways of performing based upon our research into the whare tapere. Hence, our task is not merely to 'do' Māori performing arts as we customarily understand this to mean today but rather to find a new form for 'whare tapere performance'. We are not quite sure yet what this will mean but ideas are emerging and it may take some time to get to opening night.

Tinirau and Kae

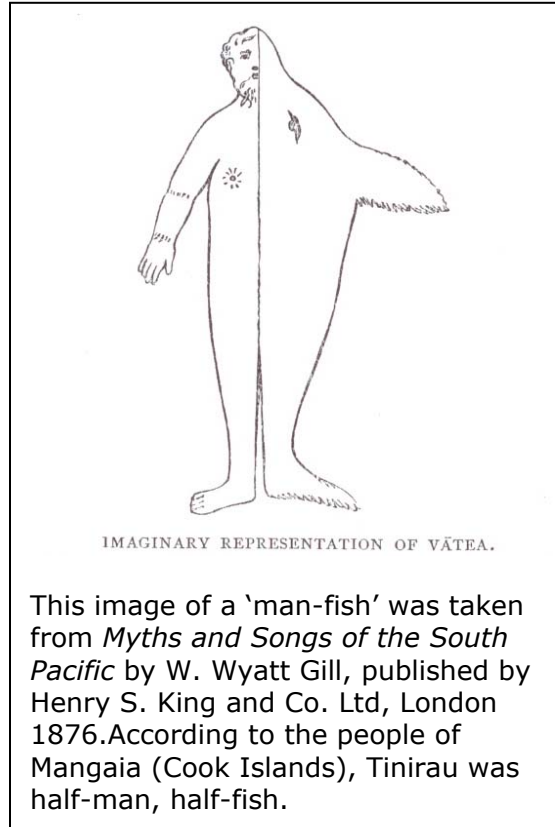
The story of the enmity between Tinirau and the tohunga Kae is one of the most important stories in literature concerning the traditional *whare tapere*. It is both very old and very Polynesian and versions of it can be found in Hawai'i, in Tahiti, in Samoa, in the Cook Islands and, of course, in New Zealand. It tells of troubles that arise between the rivals, Tinirau and Kae. Of particular interest to those working with *whare tapere* materials is the appearance of the first *whare tapere* of our tradition.

Following the death of Tinirau's pet whale, Tutunui, Tinirau and his wife Hine-te-iwaiwa convene a troupe of women who travel to Kae's island to perform in the *whare tapere*. Their goal is to identify and capture Kae and they have to achieve this through their performances –

dances, songs, stories, games and more. Tinirau instructs the women to get Kae to laugh and they will be able to identify him by his unusual teeth – in some versions he has one tooth growing over another, in other versions he has a tooth that grows at an angle. Once the women identify Kae, they capture him and return him to Tinirau where he is dispatched to his death.

There are many rich aspects to this story that can be used to inspire new haka-dance, and *whare tapere* performing generally. Some of these aspects include the wind and aroma motif (the winds bring the aroma of cooked whale flesh), Tinirau's house is rectangular in construction with no veranda (a *whare paikea*) whilst Kae's is circular (a *whare kōpae*) and the name Tinirau itself means 'the multitudes'. This suggests large schools containing thousands of fish swirling and moving in flowing and erratic movements in the ocean.

Hence, the Tinirau and Kae story offers us an opportunity to present a very old Polynesian story as well as aspects of traditional *whare tapere*. As the central action of the story centres upon the women in the *whare tapere* and their attempts to capture Kae, the story also offers an opportunity to present traditional games, songs, music, dance, entertainments and so on, that can be found in the *whare tapere* in history.



Performance Aspects

With respect to performance, the Tinirau/Kae story offers many ideas and possibilities. The most relevant dimension of the story relating to performance is the troupe of women who lie at the centre of the story. These women, including Raukatauri, Raukatamea and others, are the deities of the traditional whare tapere. Unfortunately, only



fragmentary information exists about these women and their performances. Nonetheless these fragments can be used to inspire us in the creation of a new performance.

The version of the story written by Mātene Te Whiwhi of Ngāti Toa and Ngāti Raukawa at the dictation of Te Rangihaeata states that the troupe comprised some 40 women (hokorua) lists the women as:

- Hineteiwaiwa
- Raukatauri
- Raukatamea
- Itiiti
- Rekareka
- Ruahautangaroa

The entertainments listed in the Te Whiwhi text include:

- haka
- waiata
- pūtorino
- kōauau
- tokere
- tī ringaringa
- tī rākau
- pākuru
- papaki
- porotītī

Our challenge is to convincingly recreate the world of Tinirau and Kae within a new whare tapere performance utilising aspects found in this story.

Haka/dance innovation workshop, Pātaka Museum, Porirua, 29, 30 July 2006

In addition to discussions concerning the Tinirau/Kae story, a key outcome of this workshop was the first draft of a 2-3 minute movement sequence which the dancers were able to develop together with Louise, our choreographer. From the *Ōrotokare* point of view, this was an exciting development as it was felt that some practical outcomes are now being achieved. Whilst it is still early days, some progress is being made to explore particular ways of performing suggested by aspects of the *whare tapere*.



Louise Pōtiki-Bryant and Terri Crawford

An additional feature of our workshop was learning from Louise aspects of the movement construction/creation process. Louise asked each participant to offer a short movement sequence of their own imagining. Hence, each participant taught the group their brief sequence and the group practiced to familiarise themselves with each of these individual sequences.

Next the individual movement sequences were arranged in a certain fashion. Sometimes it was obvious to see how one sequence moved into another. On other occasions it was not so obvious. Simple considerations needed to be taken into account such as whether one naturally flowed into another. For example, one sequence might finish with the dancer on the floor and the next sequence might begin standing on one foot. So the sequences needed to be arranged in practical ways.

Of course, they needed to be arranged to satisfy aesthetic aspirations as well. The movement of energy as it flowed both within an individual sequence and between sequences was an important consideration. It is not only helpful to the dancers to have energy flow well through movement sequences. Audiences will perceive this flow as well. When the energy flow is stilted and awkward, everybody can perceive this, audiences included. Hence, Louise's choreographic practice began with these small fragments offered by individual participants and then arranged the individual sequences in a certain pattern.

Interestingly, the overall composition (perhaps 2-3 minutes in length) was not merely a performance of individual sequences in a particular order, but rather as each sequence encountered another, they overlapped and overflowed so that individual sequences became one overall movement. With this in place, further work was then done on the newly created whole of 2-3 minutes in length - refining, changing, adapting, moulding.

Images from Our Workshop

Here are some images taken from our workshop held on the 29th and 30th of July at Pātaka Museum, Porirua.



Other News

In other news, our Artistic Director Charles Royal has recently completed a contribution to a forthcoming volume entitled *Performing Aotearoa* which is being jointly edited by David O'Donnell of

Victoria University and Professor Marc Maufort of the Université Libre de Bruxelles (Brussels, Belgium). Charles's contribution is entitled 'Ōrotokare:

Towards a new model for Indigenous Theatre and Performing Arts'



Charles has also been invited to deliver a presentation to the forthcoming 51st Annual Conference of the Society for Ethnomusicology in Honolulu, Hawai'i (15-19 November 2006). The theme of the conference is 'Decolonizing Ethnomusicology' and Charles has been asked to participate in a panel concerning 'Decolonizing Music Scholarship'.

Charles's presentation will again discuss *Ōrotokare* and its work. He will provide an overview of the trust and will discuss our 2006 series of haka/dance innovation workshops. It is hoped that some video and audio from the workshops will be used in the conference as well, during Charles's presentation.

Charles has recently delivered presentations on the whare tapere and *Ōrotokare* to audiences at the Wellington Public Library and at Victoria University.

If you would like to obtain information about these presentations and their contents, please see our website at

www.orotokare.org.nz.





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.

Make a Donation, Express Your Support!

As a charitable trust, *Ōrotokare: 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:

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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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Ōrotokare: 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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