



Making eeltraps at Koriniti (Whanganui River) in 1921 — from McDonalds Films, NZ International Festival of the Arts.

Maori artists prominent in NZ Festival of Arts

By Yvonne Dasler

Artefacts and artists, museums and musicians, poets and players — all sectors of the Maori arts community will be prominently featured in next years inaugural New Zealand Festival of the Arts.

From the first karanga of welcome on March 5 to the close of Festival on March 26 Maori performers will be an integral and vital part of the international cultural mix, according to festival director Michael Maxwell. Popular too. Although artists and performers from 18 countries will be taking part, bookings are extremely heavy for those with a significant Maori input.

One of the most exciting projects is the Circa Theatre production of *Waitangi*, billed as revealing the "truth" about the events of February 6, 1840. The show — to be held in the Wellington Town Hall from March 4 to March 10 inclusive — is a dramatisation of the diaries of missionary printer William Colenso who faithfully recorded the circumstances and politics of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. "We want truth," says joint director Richard Campion. "We are built on the foundation of Waitangi. There will be no slanting."

The quest for accuracy extends to ensuring that actors speak in the language of the time. Pakeha actors representing the English colonists will speak English and Maori actors and actresses will speak in Maori. Joint director Don Sel-

wyn will co-ordinate the cultural groups taking part in the mass scenes and decor is being devised by noted artist and performer Selwyn Muru. Wiremu Parker has the task of translation and Maori authenticity is being scrutinised by a committee which includes panel Darcy Nicholas, John Tahu, Keri Kaa and Maori Marsden.

Nicholas has a joint role. As director of the Flying Kiwi Fringe Festival to be run in conjunction with the main events, he promises a prominent position for young Maori artists and professes a personal bias toward the showcasing of new Maori and South Pacific talent.

The same emphasis can be seen in Writers and Readers Week, to be held from March 12 to March 16 inclusive. Organised by a committee which includes noted author Witi Ihimaera, the festival programme includes panel discussions, pub readings, lectures and social gatherings with writers from all over the world. Of the six New Zealand authors invited as special guests, two are Maori. Keri Hulme of the Kai Tahu will take part in a discussion with Samoan Albert Wendt and Felix Mnthai of Botswana on writing across cultures as well as reading her fiction and verse, and noted poet Hone Tuwhare returns from a Fellowship in Germany to give readings of his poetry. A high point of the Writers and Readers Week programme will also be the launch of Patricia Grace's new novel *Potiki*.

Whakaahua Maori

Whakaahua Maori is the title of a special exhibition being mounted for the festival by the National Museum. On a smaller scale but with similar emphasis to the world-famous *Te Maori*, it studies the human form in Maori art. To the artist of old, the human image provided a limitless variety of formal possibilities and whether painted or carved could be modified or stylised to convey a wide range of meanings.

The exhibition will show how through these human images, the power and strength of the gods and ancestors could be concentrated into the smallest tool or the most massive gatepost.

The national Museum in conjunction with the New Zealand Film Archive will also be making special festival screenings of a unique quartet of films depicting Maori life in the first quarter of this century. The films were made between 1919 and 1923 by James McDonald who accompanied Elsdon Best and J.C. Anderson on expeditions throughout the North Island. The fragments of film which remain have been painstakingly restored and pieced together and this will be the first time they have been shown to the public.

The films show poi and string games performed at the Gisborne Hui Aroha in 1919, and preparations for a hui in Rotorua to greet the Prince of Wales in 1920. McDonald's scenes of life on the Whanganui River in 1921 are regarded as the most extensive record of their kind of traditional Maori activities during this period and were filmed over several weeks at Koriniti, Hiruharama (Jerusalem) and Pipiriki. The fourth film was made on the East Coast in 1923 and shows examples of old-time skills retained in the area for making fishnets and traps, methods of fishing, weaving, handgames, cultivation and cooking.

This is the first time a truly international festival has been held in this country, and the New Zealand International Festival of the Arts is proud to include Maori artists, writers and performers in such prominent and diverse roles.

And although details have been finalised for the mainbill programme, others wishing to take part in the festival can still do so on a more informal level through the Flying Kiwi Fringe (phone Wellington 850-241) or by contacting the Festival office (phone Wellington 730-149). Assistance is available toward the cost of staging, travel and accommodation.

The Festival will be held in Wellington every two years.