

Gary TAYLOR from Ngati Porou who played Tumatauenga, Peter ROWELL from Ngati Ponsonby who played Tawhirimatea, Tomo NAHI from Ngapuhi who sang the link song "Nga Mana Atua".

In 1982 we no longer have our kaumataua nor our original director and three other players. Dawn Underwood is now manager/director and the three new players are:

Piki UENUKU from Arawa who now plays Papa, Herbert WHARERAU from Arawa who now plays Rehua, and James CHERRINGTON from Ngapuhi who now plays Tawhirimatea because Peter ROWELL moves to play Ruau-moko.

An historical view

"Songs for the Judges", "Hand on the Rail", and "The Protestors" are the two stage plays and film mentioned earlier as dealing with Maori points of view.

"Songs for the Judges" written and directed by Mervyn Thompson, presented in song and dance form an historical view of the courts/laws in New Zealand with reference to how they were viewed by and affected the Maori. Having Pakeha actors playing Maori roles but not vice-versa created controversy but did not have any detrimental effect on the overall excellence of the production.

The two Maori actors, Hemi Ropata and Richard Eriwata, both gave performances which drew on their knowledge and experience of Maori and Maoritanga. Actors without that knowledge and experience could not have given such performances.

The other members of the cast, Arthur Ranford, Margaret Blay, Margaret Maxwell, and Mervyn Thompson all gave performances which showed their obvious professionalism and experience.

Multi-cultural

Whilst being sympathetic to the Maori point of view and an exciting plus to the theatre world, the production ended rather belatedly with a kind of "Let's all be multi-cultural friends" message which may be perfectly valid but which left one wondering whether this was because the play was purely "a sympathetic Pakeha point of view" of the situation. It was difficult to see, as with "Maranga Mai", why this production was not chosen to be part of the contingent to the 1980 South Pacific Arts Festival.

"Hand on the Rail" written by Bruce Mason in 1965 as a radio play especially for Don Selwyn, was directed for New Independent Theatre by Ray Waru who produces T.V.'s "Koha". Incidentally, Ray Waru was also producer for Te Whanau's Papua New Guinea trip.

"Hand on the Rail", adapted for the stage by Bruce Mason, deals with the ur-



Maranga Mai

ban versus rural problem, mixed marriages, as well as the problem of the younger Maori who finds Maori and Maoritanga as irrelevant as New Zealand's education system which teaches details about Thomas à Becket.

Don Selwyn played Hingawaru Karani, a King Country farmer who comes to the city to find his son Rangī played by Kapa Kitchie. Kapa is known for his role in the T.V. series involving George Henare and the car "The White Lady". Rangī, the son, has caused the death of a fellow drinker in a tavern fight and is on the run.

Best play

Sebastian Black, a "Listener" drama critic, said "— it is the best new play seen in the city this year." Of Don Selwyn's performance he said, "This remarkable performance embodies a tradition of feeling and response which is hard to describe because it is so determinedly non-European, and which the play suggests we reject at our peril."

Other Maori performers playing cameo roles were Caroline Ormsby, Robin Kora, Stephen Stehlin, Nola Pawa, Loretta Wilson, and Paki Cherrington. A Samoan actress Patupatu Ripley played Hingawaru's daughter Meri.

Gutsy realism

The third exciting theatrical event was the T.V. film "The Protestors" written by Rowley Habib of Tuwharetoa. The film is a version of Bastion Point. Its gutsy realism shows all the complexities of the attitudes and feelings in Maori-dom today and does not romanticise.

The film was completed in November/December 1981 and will be screened later this year. Many well known performers are involved along with a lot of exciting new acting talent. Those taking

part include Jim Moriarty of "Close to Home", Don Selwyn of "Mortimer's Patch", the well known entertainers Billy T. James, Reg Ruka, and Hemi Ropata. Others in the cast were the Rev. Hone Kaa of High Chaparral, Gary Taylor, Peter Rowell, Merata Mita, Dale Williams, Huru Rakete, Katherine Pipi, Esther Davis, Paki Cherrington, James Cherrington, and Aroha Harris.

The exciting new talent to straight acting included singer Robin Ruakere, dancer Robin Nicholls, Waikato kaumataua Whare Kerr, Mary Marsh who plays Auntie Wai, and trade unionist Zac Wallace. Zac's vigorous and talented performance leaves one wondering why he has not been seen on screen or stage earlier.

Pakeha roles

There are few Pakeha roles and these are played by Therese Ireland, Nikki Farrell who is known for her role in "Stock and Station" and John Givins who among other roles on screen is remembered for his part in "Children of Fire Mountain". The fact that one Pakeha is beaten up and another raped moved one well-known wit to remark that perhaps the film should be renamed "Habib's Revenge". The film was produced by Tony Isaac and directed by Peter Muxlow.

All these productions show that there is ample Maori talent and expertise around to put forward theatrically the Maori point of view, something which has been lacking in the past. Whilst there may have been productions which tried to deal with the Maori point of view, they have been essentially a 'sympathetic' Pakeha point of view. An authentic Maori point of view is now emerging and can only augur well for the future.