

Maori people, the prejudice of landlords (now worsening because of the economic downturn which makes for fewer rentals available) and the strength of cultural values.

Tomo Nahi sang the link song "Nga Mana atua" and took part in the Te Whanau excerpts. Robin Kora added his poetry which he surely must publish a collection of soon and then Mereana Pitman rounded off the evening with moving anti-nuclear songs and two forceful women's songs. Mereana Pitman was undoubtedly the high point of the evening.

Her strong, earthy voice, her guitar playing, and her confident stage presence caused the audience to call for more. I note that Rowley Habib used Mereana for the theme songs of his T.V. play "The Protesters" seen recently as the last of the "Loose ENZ" series.

Ngati Kuri

"Te Raukura" written by the late Harry Dansey and presented at the annual festival 10 years ago, was the first play written by a Maori to be performed at an Auckland festival. Selwyn Muru's "Get the Hell Home Boy" is the second. Selwyn Muru, a Ngati Kuri of Aupouri, is better known as an artist and broadcaster. He can now add playwright to the list of his many talents.

The play was written in 1979 as a radio play and this was its first production on stage. It centres on the Maori need for communal and cultural identity, the sense of belonging to ones people and the strong ties to the land and to ancestors; it centres on the disorientation in our modern urban technological society where the Maori is expected to accept the mores of Pakaha society whilst sometimes forfeiting ones own mana and individuality.

The play was sponsored by the Auckland Maori Artists and Writers, produced by Ray Waru and directed by Garry Taylor. It is now no coincidence that Ray Waru's producing skills are often associated with successes in Maori based productions.

This play had several full houses and was notable for each night having a good percentage of Polynesians in the audience — something that does not normally happen in Auckland's theatre scene.

Clear message

The message to Maori playwrights is clear. Write more plays; we have the actors and directors now, plus a ready made audience eager to come to plays relevant to them.

The production was fortunate in having the directing skills of Garry Taylor of Ngati Porou who has progressed from the N.Z. Drama School, to Theatre Corporate to Manukau Theatre, "Te Whanau" players, radio, T.V. films and currently Mercury Theatre. Garry is a

force in Maori theatre today and will continue to become a strength in New Zealand's total theatre scene.

His cast for "Get the Hell Home Boy" was as follows:

Robin Kora of Ngati Raukawa who played Tupu Tamarangi. James Cherrington of Ngapuhi as Benji and the Black Power member, Paki Cherrington of Ngapuhi as Koro and the Judge, Kuresa Fleseuga of Samoa as Tua, Roger Fowler of South Auckland as Sting, David Meade of Wales as Court Clerk and Policeman, Ian Melville of Auckland as Prison Officer and Announcer, Vince Tierney of Ngati Kaha as Tobruk, Dawn Underwood of Ngapuhi as Dolly, Rawinia, and Kuia and Albert Whittaker of Ngapuhi as Bistro and a policeman.

Holding cells

The action of the play takes place in the holding cells of the Auckland District Court, a jail and a small town north of Auckland. It was presented at New Independent Theatre, Upper Queen Street, Auckland.

Reviews were favourable with Robert H. Leek of the New Zealand Times saying:-

"The key factors in this success are: richly engaging performances by Robin Kora and Paki Cherrington as Tupu and Koro respectively (Cherrington also

plays the unbending pakeha magistrate — a nicely ironic touch), a disarming ensemble spirit among the raw young members of the cast and — last but not least — Garry Taylor's unobtrusive and thoughtful direction, which highlights the play's strengths while camouflaging its technical shortcomings, such as they are."

For me the play was worthwhile because we were playing ourselves. The experienced members of the cast gave performances that were expected of them but those who were acting for the first time should be given an accolade. I refer here to Kuresa Faleseuga, Albert Whittaker, Vince Tierney and David Meade, all of whom gave excellent first time performances and we look forward to many more enjoyable shows from them.

"Te Ao Marama" — A festival of Maori Art, was highly successful, thanks to the energetic committee of the Auckland Branch of the New Zealand Maori Artists and Writers which includes:

Diane Francis as secretary, Ramai Hayward as chairperson, Ross Hemera as Treasurer along with stalwarts Georgina Kirby and Brian Kirby who are owed so much both Auckland-wise and nationally. Other committee members were Toi Maihi, Haare Williams, Fred Graham, Paki Cherrington, Robin Kora and Robert Jahnke.



Sydney Art Festival draws praise from judge

An impressive standard of performance was given by Sydney based Maori cultural groups at this years Sydney Festival of Maori Arts according to one of the festival judges Wiremu Kerekere.

He says the improved standard was amazing and the Maori groups across the Tasman are on a par with the home-grown product.

This years festival was organised by Te Maori Co-operative and leaders of Maori clubs to raise funds for a marae in Sydney for the twenty thousand plus Maori living there.

Top entertainers such as Prince Tui Teke, the Yandell Sisters and Billy T James drew capacity audiences to every session of the week long festival.

Other New Zealand judges invited to attend the festival were Dovey Katene-Horvath, Timoti Karetu and Roka Paora with the main guest being Arch-Deacon Kingi Matutaera Ihaka, the chairman of the N.Z. Polynesian Festival Committee.

Wiremu Kerekere says the item content, traditional costuming, qualities of leaders, the performances of the poi,

the haka, the chant, the action song, te mauri, ihi, wehi of each performer all showed considerable improvement.

"It would be ridiculous to say that any of their groups would win the Polynesian Festival next year in Hastings, but it would be fair to say that their top teams would not disgrace themselves."

He says the improvement's not surprising when one remembers that there are over 20-thousand Maori in Sydney alone, and especially in view of the experienced people amongst them. Paraire Huata, Rose Puriri, David Matahiki, Puau Koopu, Raewyn Herekua, Bessie Te Moni, Ngatai Huata, Dick Maika, Peter Cowan, Mike Perenara, Linda Morrison, Monty Cowan, Sharon Paewai, Mark Tutaki, Tama Huata and many others.

Composers such as Hirini Melbourne, Ngapo Bub Wehi, Tame Taurima and others would have been pleased to hear their original works performed by the various groups says Wiremu.

Kia ora, nga mihi kia koutou te tini mano a ngai tataua e noho mai na i tawahi.

