

Kōtātara

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

Toward indigenous theatre and performing arts

No. 6, December 2006

Tēnā koutou katoa.

In this edition of *Kōtātara*, we report on the very successful Te Rea Wānanga that was run under the auspices of Te Ope-o-Rehua, the dance committee of Toi Māori Aotearoa. The wānanga took place in the dance studios of Te Wānanga-o-Aotearoa, Māngere campus, Auckland, 3-13 December. The organisers sought applications from choreographers and dancers to attend the workshop (which ran over a week and half in December) and to develop a new work. We were lucky enough to be selected as one of three for the wānanga.

Our proposal was entitled 'The Light Dances' and the wānanga provided us an opportunity to develop the first draft of a new work, drawing upon the material we had developed in our earlier 2006 workshops. Louise Pōtiki-Bryant once again agreed to help Ōrotokare and together we worked with the following five performers:

Marama Emery
Kura Te Ua
Kereama Te Ua
Toni Huata
Rangi Rangitukunoa



Kereama Te Ua

Our proposal contained the following explanation:

We propose to develop a 'performance essay' in which to demonstrate aspects of haka in history that are not well known or seen in Māori performance today. These aspects include masculine and feminine dance, illusion, eroticism and more (as these can be found in iwi histories and traditions). The 'performance essay' will have a spoken narrative thread, discussing aspects of haka in a poetic way, and dancers will illustrate the narrative in various ways. The narrative will begin with the whare tapere in Hawaiki, and will include Tānerore and Hineruhi, Māui, and aspects of haka found within iwi histories and traditions.

Since the writing of the proposal and the passage of the first week of the wānanga, we decided to structure the work on the following five sequences:

Te Kore
 Te Pō
 Te Whaiao
 Te Ata
 Te Ao Mārama

These sequences come from iwi creation traditions and as a structure, they allow us to go deeply into the traditional Māori worldview. As performing and art generally expresses the worldview of the artist and his/her people, exploring creation traditions is a way of getting to the heart of the traditional Māori worldview. The structure also allows us to explore the Hineruhi and Tānerore characters, which are associated with dawn and daylight respectively. One of the exciting aspects of the new work is the opportunity to create new Hineruhi and Tānerore dances.

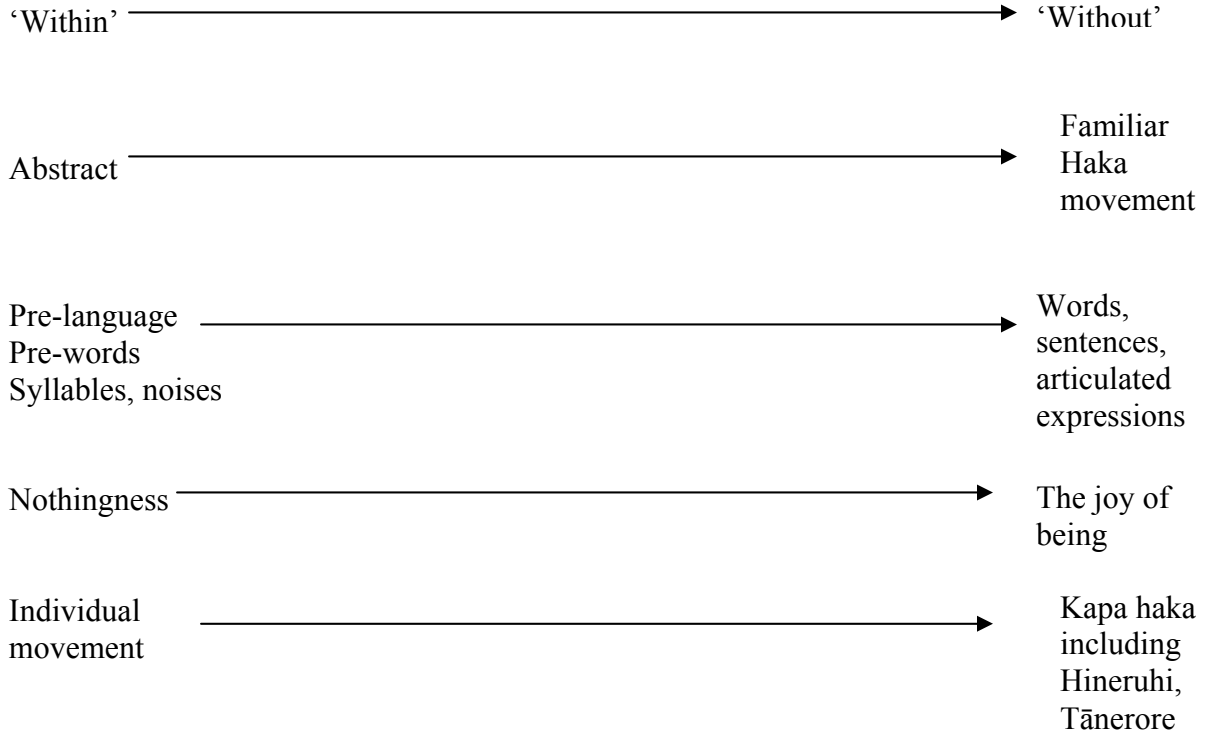
Whakaahua

A particular theme that we explored is the idea of 'whakaahua' which means 'coming to be, coming to form'. We see 'whakaahua' as a process of unfolding and coming to be. It commences with something deep within the person which could be even imperceptible from the outside. Slowly the energy within grows and begins to find expression in the outward movement of the body. Our thought is that the



Kereama Te Ua, Rangi Rangitukunoa

shape of the work should move from quiet introspection, energy within, to the energy flowing out to the extremities of the body in joyful ways. Here are some themes within this process of unfolding and coming to be:



The stages of the unfolding whakaahua process could follow the creation traditions:

- Te Kore (nothingness)
- Te Pō (darkness)
- Te Whaiao (toward dawn, half light)
- Te Ata (dawn)
- Te Ao Mārama (the day illuminated)



Toni Huata, Kura Te Ua, Marama Emery

Another way of looking at the work is through the emergence of the collective kapa haka dance. That is, the piece might begin with disparate, individual and abstract elements that slowly coalesce into the collective kapa haka. The arrival of the kapa haka might be the climax of the piece. Also, as the collective group dances, individuals too come out, now and then, and they represent Tānerore and Hineruhi. The Tānerore and Hineruhi dances contain elements seen in the earlier abstract phase of the work.

Overall, the Te Rea Wānanga was a great success for *Ōrotokare*. A first version of a new work called ‘Whakaahua-The Light Dances’ was performed on the final night of the workshop before an audience of friends and

colleagues. This was an 'in-studio' performance which nonetheless represented step forward for *Ōrotokare*. As we have a first draft of a new work, the movement to a first production now appears a possibility.

Our Thanks

Much thanks goes to Stephen Bradshaw, Dolina Wehipeihana and Moss Paterson for their support and encouragement throughout the entire process and the wānanga as a whole. We would also like to thank our dancers Marama Emery, Kura Te Ua, Kereama Te Ua, Toni Huata and Rangi Rangitukunoa who remained committed and dedicated throughout the duration of the wānanga and brought the work to life. Much thanks and aroha.







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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 Website: www.orotokare.org.nz

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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