

the  
female  
of  
the  
species

by Joanna Murray-Smith



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# WELCOME

In 1998 I had the pleasure of directing the New Zealand premiere of Joanna Murray-Smith's HONOUR for Auckland Theatre Company. I was immediately impressed by her unique and stylish treatment of a well-titled theme - infidelity - and by the way her dialogue existed just outside of naturalism; a poetic, distilled, incisive, corrosively witty language that proved theatrically potent in illuminating the play's themes. After its success in Australia and New Zealand HONOUR went on to become an international hit for Murray-Smith with productions in London, New York and Europe.

So it's our great pleasure to be able to bring you the New Zealand premiere of Joanna Murray-Smith's latest runaway success.

Loosely based on an actual incident in which feminist icon author Germaine Greer was attacked in her own home by a deranged student, THE FEMALE OF THE SPECIES is quite a different beast from her earlier plays. Again Murray-Smith avoids the obvious and treats the Greer incident as high comedy, gleaning the incident for every satiric possibility.

Full of verbal gymnastics, outrageous archetypes, pithy argument and intelligent pertinent observations about gender politics, mother-daughter relationships, lily-livered academics, and the power and consequence of the written word, THE FEMALE OF THE SPECIES

wickedly references Oscar Wilde, the Ben Travers Aldwych farces and Tom Stoppard in both style and syntax.

Murray-Smith describes her central character as "a monster" and a deciding factor in programming this play was that Elizabeth Hawthorne was willing and available to take up the challenge of this monster of a role. Her dedication to the work and her constant desire to get to the heart of the piece is breath-taking to watch. It's been a huge delight to work with her again. Big thanks as well to the cast who so ably support her - Brooke Williams, Hera Dunleavy, Adam Gardiner and Michael Keir-Morrissey and making his debut with Auckland Theatre Company, Brian Manthenga.

Heartfelt thanks too to our brilliant design team - headed by Tracy Grant Lord, and the hard-working Auckland Theatre Company production team and staff.

Whoever thought feminism could be this funny?!

Enjoy!

Colin McColl

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# the female of the species

by Joanna Murray-Smith

## Cast

*Elizabeth Hawthorne* Margot Mason *Brooke Williams* Molly Rivers  
*Hera Dunleavy* Tess Thornton *Adam Gardiner* Bryan Thornton  
*Michael Keir-Morrissey* Theo Hanover *Brian Manthenga* Frank

## Creative

Director *Colin McColl* Set & Costume Design *Tracy Grant Lord*  
Lighting Design *Brad Gledhill* Sound Design *Eden Mulholland*

## Production

Production Manager *Mark Gosling* Technical Manager *Bonnie Burrill*  
Senior Stage Manager *Nicola Blackman* Operator *Robert Hunte*  
Properties Master *Bec Ehlers* Wardrobe Supervisor *Erin O'Neill*  
Set Construction *2 Construct*

**FEMALE OF THE SPECIES** is the third Auckland Theatre Company production for 2008.  
This production was first performed at the Maidment Theatre on Thursday 1 May, 2008.  
**FEMALE OF THE SPECIES** is approximately 90 minutes long without an interval.  
Please remember to switch off all mobile phones, pagers and watch alarms.



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# DON'T BE AFRAID TO BE FUNNY

Some good advice gave Joanna Murray-Smith the key to her first full-length comedy. She talked to Roy Ward about **THE FEMALE OF THE SPECIES** and its evolution from real life incident to hit play.



The play is clearly inspired by the real life Germaine Greer incident. Did it coincide with ideas you were already thinking about or did it send you off in a new direction?

The play really began with the image of the older feminist handcuffed and bound by a younger woman. The image was the starting point. I hadn't been mulling over writing a play about feminism at all – since it's an inherently uninteresting idea! But I suppose I have been interested in feminism since my university days, when my own view of feminism seemed sometimes in direct opposition to the view of feminism being propounded on campus. I felt feminism was hijacked by hard liners for a long time and I didn't think that served the interests of women at all.

Did you know from the beginning that it would be a comedy?

No, I tried to write it as a drama and for the first time ever really struggled with the first draft. I was complaining to Simon Phillips, the Artistic Director of the Melbourne Theatre Company who had commissioned the play and he said "Don't be afraid to be funny". The moment the words were out of his mouth, I had completely reconceived it as a comedy. And then once I began writing, the ideas and the comedy gathered momentum

and I realised I had written a farce. It seemed to be both appropriate and very piquant to write a farce about a subject which seems to be universally considered unfunny.

The timing of the play seems to be written into the dialogue. It demands to be played at a certain pace. Was that conscious?

I wrote the first draft at the speed of light and I do think that that is integrated in the rhythms of the play.

Has Germaine Greer seen or read the play? Do you care what she thinks?

I don't think she's seen or read it, but I believe she does know about it. I would care more about what she thought of it if she was, in fact, the central character. But Margot Mason, while drawing on many shared characteristics of many of the famous feminists of that era, is absolutely an invention. I did not want to be strait-jacketed by fact – hence the fact that the feminist has a daughter who is in every way leading a life that is the antithesis of her mother's ideological wishes.

How much Joanna is in Margot?

Scary question! Ask Lucy! (She's only three, so maybe we won't know for a few years). I suppose there are elements of bossiness and ego in me (she says grudgingly) but it's my job to always second guess myself

ideologically, since playing devil's advocate is inherent in every dramatist. Every time I believe something with a great deal of conviction I ask myself if I might be wrong, which is not very Margot. There are occasional moments when I think I'm more interesting than most people! But most of the time I'm bemoaning my limitations.

Did the director and cast of the first production have a role in shaping the final draft? When do you consider a play 'finished' and let go?

I like to go into the rehearsal room thinking the play is finished, but it never is and you would be a very foolish playwright not to be open to changes once the words begin to have theatrical life. In this case, Patrick Nolan and the marvellous first cast of the play taught me a huge amount about the play, and about comedy in general. They will always be an invisible presence in the play for me. But every production has certain changes, certain strengths and weaknesses, a character that insinuates itself on the text. So the play always feels new and evolving. There is a point when I think you have to stop working on a play consciously and then only make very small changes as a result of conversations with a director who has small requests. But as Stoppard says, no play is ever finished, it's only ever abandoned.

The play has been widely performed in Australia and you'll be in Auckland for opening night. Have you noticed major differences in the various productions?

So far I've seen productions in Melbourne, Queensland and Adelaide. Next are Auckland, Perth and London. Each production has certain things that work in exactly the same way and certain things that are completely idiosyncratic. It's fascinating seeing so many productions, so closely spaced.

It must have been disappointing when the Broadway production stalled with the departure of Annette Bening. Shouldn't star actresses of a certain age be falling over themselves to play this role?

Annette Bening WAS falling over herself to do the play. The producer eventually decided not to do it with her because, for very understandable personal reasons, she could not commit to doing it on Broadway after Los Angeles – this made it economically inadvisable for the producer. I was devastated because I had long discussions with her in LA and heard her in a reading there and she was superb. I totally adore her. But now the play is going to the West End, which was always my preferred starting place, instead, and I am overjoyed at the creative team involved there.

You've had an international reputation for some years. Someone said of you that you don't "write about the backyard". There's nothing explicitly Australian in much of your work. Is that conscious now? Is it liberating not to feel tied to telling "Australian stories"?

My plays are not consciously set in Australia, but usually in the world of the urban bourgeoisie, which moves beyond national borders. This was never a conscious decision on my part. I always liked stripping back stories to very raw emotional landscapes, uncluttered by situational detail. This has inevitably made them feel emotionally and intellectually accessible to audiences in different places around the world. I'm happy about that – because I want the plays to travel for obvious reasons. But I'm not really conscious of their Australian-ness or otherwise, most of the time – I don't feel liberated or burdened by nationality. That said, I believe they ARE Australian plays, because I am an Australian and there are aspects of character within some of the plays that

are essentially Australian. For instance, in RAPTURE, it's hard to imagine English characters discussing their spiritual epiphanies so openly - that's easier to believe in Australian characters who tend to be less emotionally reticent.

**Does the business of being a writer keep you from writing as much as you'd like?**

Yes. I loathe admin and negotiation and all of that. For the foreign work, I have two excellent agents who work in tandem (one in New York and one in London). I deal with Australasian productions myself, but I'm finding that it's taking up too much time and with three children as well, I'm desperate for time to write.

**Yet the plays and books keep coming. You write in many forms including fiction but you keep coming back to theatre. Is one form more fulfilling - or frustrating - than another?**

They all have their up and down sides. I love the comparative safety of fiction - it's much more controllable. For good or ill, it's a contained, finished work within those covers. It's always agitating (although also interesting) that plays take on different qualities

continually throughout time, depending on the particular qualities or flaws of each production. But I have to say that I think my imagination feels most free and alive inside theatrical writing. I hear ideas in terms of voices.

**What do you think about the state of theatre and playwriting in Australia? Do you see talented younger playwrights rising up?**

There are always new voices rising up. But there are lots of impediments to becoming a good playwright here. Most particularly - the literary establishment puts no value on theatrical writing - it's virtually ignored - so there's very little broad cultural encouragement to making a life in theatre (and I'm not talking about money, here). How often do you see articles in our literary pages about playwrights and playwriting, the way you do in the US and London? Secondly, the low volume of other people's work is a problem. As young playwrights, you need to immerse yourself in theatre - both the classics and contemporary work - partly in order to know against what you define your own voice. Going to London and New York as a younger woman and seeing play after play helped me to understand what it was I wanted to do on the stage and who it was I wanted to be.



The Lion Foundation is one of New Zealand's largest charitable trusts. The Lion Foundation gives over \$50 million worth of grants on an annual basis to a wide range of community, sport, educational, cultural and health projects throughout New Zealand. These funds benefit hundreds of thousands of New Zealanders.

The Lion Foundation has been one of Auckland Theatre Company's core funders for the last five years. In this time the Foundation has specifically supported the work of ATC's Education and Literary Units, giving young people the opportunity to experience the thrill of live performance and allowing the Company to focus on developing New Zealand stories for New Zealand audiences.

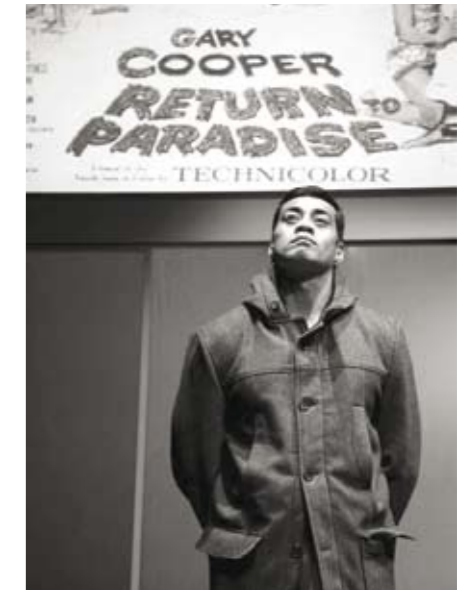
The results of this ongoing support speak for themselves. Over 50,000 school students have been involved with the Company as audience members and participants in the last five years.

Auckland Theatre Company's Literary Unit is the only one of its kind in New Zealand and its success is evidenced by the number of New Zealand plays that have been performed as part of Auckland Theatre Company's main bill season over the last 2 years.

To learn more about The Lion Foundation and our community grants please visit our website [www.lionfoundation.org.nz](http://www.lionfoundation.org.nz) or call freephone 0800 802 908.

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# CAST

"Darling, I know I'm old. I remember when a Brazilian was a person."

Margot Mason



**ELIZABETH  
HAWTHORNE**

Elizabeth Hawthorne is one of New Zealand's most talented and respected actors. Her Auckland Theatre Company credits include DOUBT, UP FOR GRABS, SERIAL KILLERS, VITA AND VIRGINIA, THE PLAY ABOUT THE BABY, THE BELLBIRD, A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE, MASTERCLASS and THE GRADUATE. Other theatre highlights include AS YOU LIKE IT and THREE SISTERS.

Amongst Elizabeth's many film credits are 30 DAYS OF NIGHT, UNDERWORLD 3, JUBILEE, THE FRIGHTENERS, SAVAGE HONEYMOON, THE LAST TATTOO, ALEX and THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA: THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE.

Television experience includes SHORTLAND STREET and SPIN DOCTORS. Elizabeth's film and television accolades include a Nokia Film Best Supporting Actress Award for her role in SAVAGE HONEYMOON (2000) and an AFTA Award for Best Comedy Performance for SPIN DOCTORS (2003).

In 2001, Elizabeth received an ONZM for Services to The Theatre in the Queen's Birthday Honours List.



**BROOKE  
WILLIAMS**

Prior to graduating from Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School in 2006, Brooke worked at the Court Theatre, Christchurch, appearing in productions such as THE CHERRY ORCHARD, GREAT EXPECTATIONS and THE LESSON.

Since graduating Brooke has worked on the New Zealand feature film KISSY KISSY, devised and toured her solo show PORCELAIN GRIN, performed in I'M NOT RAPPAPORT and URINETOWN THE MUSICAL (both at Downstage Theatre) and featured in THE TEMPEST with the Peripitea players.

This is Brooke's third performance with Auckland Theatre Company following THE CRUCIBLE and THE PILLOWMAN last year.



**HERA  
DUNLEAVY**

A graduate of Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School, Hera has worked at all of New Zealand's professional theatres. Auckland Theatre Company productions include UNCLE VANYA, SERIAL KILLERS, WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?, EQUUS, DISGRACE, THE CRUCIBLE and Joanna Murray-Smith's HONOUR.

Highlights for other theatres include the original cast production of NGA TANGATA TOA, THE MASTER BUILDER, PROOF, THE CHERRY ORCHARD, CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF, TOP GIRLS, Victor Rodger's plays SONS and RANTERSTANTRUM, DOUBLE BEAT, THREE DAYS OF RAIN and BEAUTIFUL THING (for which Hera won the Chapman Tripp Award for Best Female Newcomer).

Film and television appearances include A SMALL LIFE, BLESSED, FOR GOOD, FOREVER, RUDE AWAKENINGS, KORERO MAI and AROHA.

*"No-one realises those demented looking women staring blankly at the yoghurts in the supermarket hold the future of the world in the palm of their hands." Molly*

*"There's nothing like a hefty mortgage on an Umbrian getaway to help you find one more publishable thought." Margot Mason*



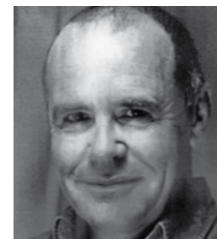
**ADAM GARDINER**

Adam last appeared for Auckland Theatre Company in Michael Galvin's THE OCEAN STAR. Other recent theatre credits include THE HOLLOW MEN, ANGELS WITH DIRTY FEET, A CLOCKWORK ORANGE, MR KOLPERT, LADIES NIGHT and NEW GOLD DREAM.

Film and television credits include EAGLE VS SHARK, POWER RANGERS, RIVER QUEEN, HEAR NO EVIL, THE LOST ONE, OUTRAGEOUS FORTUNE, FOR GOOD, LOVEBITES and HOPELESS.

Apart from acting, Adam's work for Auckland Theatre Company has included the audio visual design for EQUUS, the sound design for THE TUTOR, and tour management for HATCH OR THE PLIGHT OF THE PENGUINS.

In 2005, Adam narrowly beat a dog and a sock puppet to win the coveted Best Actor Award at the Auckland 48hr Film Festival. He is a proud member of Actors Equity.



**MICHAEL KEIR-MORRISSEY**

With over thirty years behind him in professional theatre Michael has worked as an actor all around the country and in every medium.

Of the plays he has appeared in at Circa Theatre, Centrepoint, Mercury and Theatre Corporate, standouts include the original production of ONCE ON CHUNUK BAIR and Harold Pinter's THE CARETAKER.

Highlights from Michael's Watershed days include SPECTACLE OF ONE and, SONG OF THE CIVILISED THIEF with Inside Out Company and THE TAMING OF THE SHREW in which he played Petruccio.

Recent credits include WILD CABBAGE (Silo Theatre), THE HOLLOW MEN (Bats Theatre, Circa Theatre and Maidment Theatre). His most recent Auckland Theatre Company appearance was in THE GOD BOY.



**BRIAN MANTHENGA**

FEMALE OF THE SPECIES is Brian Manthenga's debut performance for Auckland Theatre Company.

Having tired of seeing only his director, producer and cameraman on ALT TV's WORLD MUSIC SHOW, Brian felt the need to see more people hence his involvement with theatre.

Hailing from the distant sun-drenched riverside town of Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe, Brian is a recent import to Aotearoa.

Previous credits include the New Zealand 2007 GLOBAL FEST, for which he was emcee, and the lead role in Benjamin Rood's short film WATERBABY. Whenever Brian is not sharing his love of global music, he can be found practicing therapeutic massage at the Remuera Health and Rehabilitation Centre.

# CREATIVE TEAM



**JOANNA  
MURRAY-SMITH**  
*Playwright*

Joanna is a Melbourne-based playwright, screenwriter and novelist. Her plays, notably HONOUR and BOMBSHELLS, have been produced all over the world including on Broadway and in London.

Joanna's novels include TRUCE, JUDGEMENT ROCK and her latest SUNNYSIDE which is published by Penguin books. She has also written for ABC and SBS television.

THE FEMALE OF THE SPECIES, her first full-length comic play, was a runaway hit for Melbourne Theatre Company in 2006.



**COLIN MCCOLL**  
*Director*

One of New Zealand's leading theatre directors, Colin co-founded Taki Rua Theatre in 1983 and was Artistic Director of Downstage Theatre in Wellington, 1984-1992. He has led Auckland Theatre Company as Artistic Director since July 2003.

Colin has directed for the Norwegian National Theatre and the Dutch National Theatre, as well as most leading New Zealand and Australian theatre companies.

In November 2007, Colin was honoured for his artistic achievements and excellence at the eighth annual Arts Foundation of New Zealand Laureate Awards.

Previous achievements include Best Director for Auckland Theatre Company's 2001 production of ROSENCRANTZ AND GULDENSTERN ARE DEAD.

Colin has also won Best Director at the Chapman Tripp Theatre Awards several times - including for his 2002 production of WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?.

His many productions for Auckland Theatre Company include WHERE WE ONCE BELONGED, END OF THE RAINBOW, THE CRUCIBLE, HATCH OR THE PLIGHT OF THE PENGUINS, DOUBT, DISGRACE, THE DUCHESS OF MALFI, EQUUS, GOLDIE, WAITING FOR GODOT, SERIAL KILLERS, THE SEAGULL, UNCLE VANYA, DAUGHTERS OF HEAVEN and HONOUR.

Opera directing credits include QUARTET (New Zealand International Arts Festival 2004), LA BOHEME (Wellington City Opera), THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO and THE PRODIGAL CHILD for the NBR New Zealand Opera.



**TRACY  
GRANT LORD**  
*Set & Costume Designer*

*"Sometimes in theatre certain rules apply. A farce depends upon clear relationships between entrances and exits in order for characters to be introduced with bravura and perfect timing. The natural shape of the traffic, combined with points of focus on stage, clearly construct the layout of a room. A farce also demands a sense of heightened style, French doors are ubiquitous, upstage centre entrances mandatory, and light is of a particular nature, especially in the country.*

*All the script references fed the design development. Colin initially asked that the room be dressed with the particular clutter of a certain type of literary woman's life, but the room that developed is stripped to its beautiful but bare four walls, leaving a blank page, with only a few items left for us to form an opinion of the occupant. This is a room in which something needs to happen - soon. Margot is working to a deadline.*

*Thankfully this room does have a view. A view that informs the palette of the design. We see a bucolic world beyond that is almost expressionistic, with an absurd intensity of spring colour and, as homage, a piece of very iconic sculpture. It is from here that we see characters arrive, entering Margot's room and enjoying the opportunity of carrying, in a good heightened theatrical and farcical sense, a lot of style in both their individual colour and character."*

*"If mothers don't know who God is, who does?" Tess*

*"Women want a man who knows how to do two things for them really, really well: foreplay. And tax."*

*Frank*



Tracy is a Winston Churchill Fellow (1987) and has a Bachelor of Spatial Design from Auckland University of Technology (1996). She works as a freelance set and costume designer for opera, ballet and theatre.

Her work has been chosen five times to represent performance design in New Zealand at the Prague Quadrennial in the Czech Republic, including in 2007. Here, she also received the UNESCO Prize for Emerging Artists in 1999 and a Jury Award in 2003.

She was also selected to exhibit at the World Stage Design exhibition in Toronto in 2005. For the design of Brad McGann's short film POSSUM she won Best Production Design at the St Kilda Film Festival in 1999 and was a finalist for Best Craft in Short Film Drama at the NZ Film and Television Awards in 1997.

Highlights of her work include the Royal New Zealand Ballet's 50th Anniversary production of ROMEO AND JULIET, which premiered at Saddlers Wells (London) in 2004. This production received an Olivier Award nomination for Best New Dance Production in the UK in 2005.

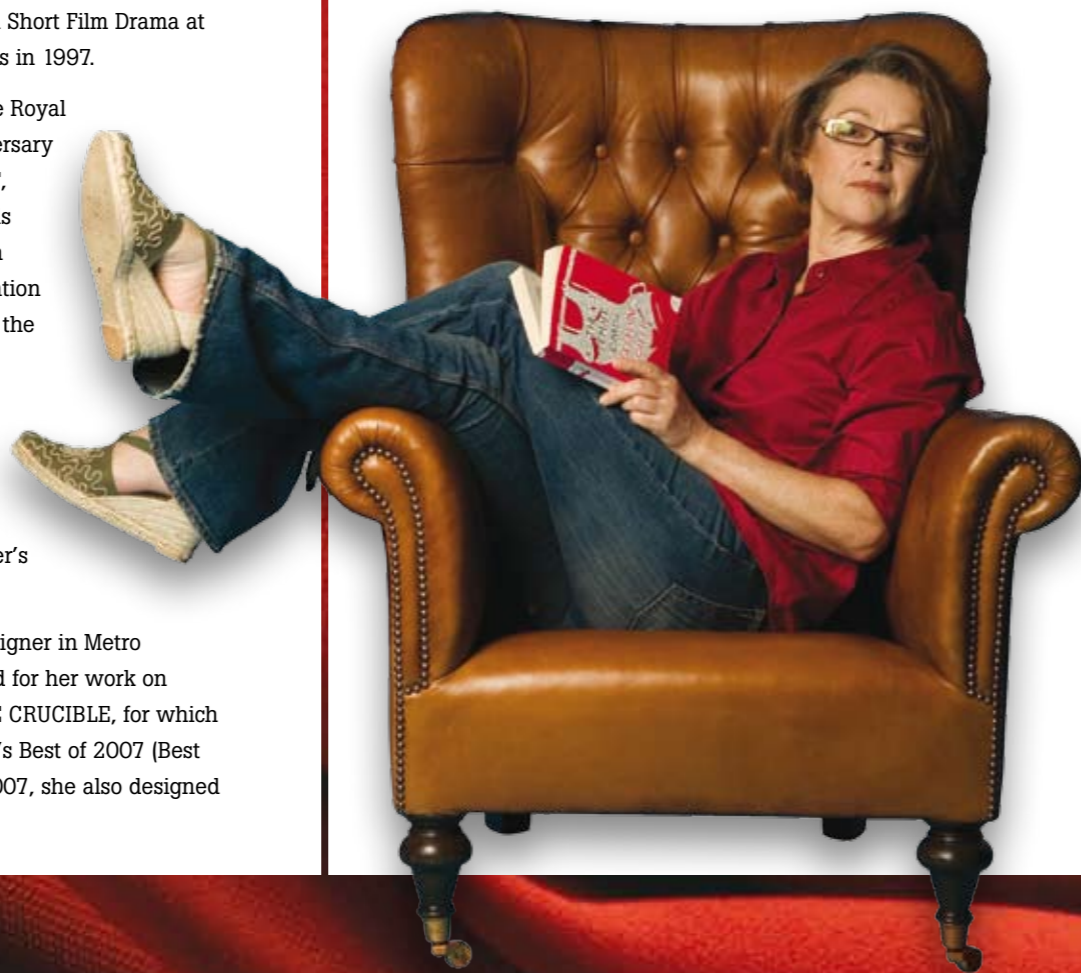
Recent productions include a new CINDERELLA for The Royal New Zealand Ballet, which was named Best Production (Ballet category for Dance) in The Listener's Best of 2007.

Tracy was chosen as Best Set Designer in Metro Magazine's 2007 Best of Auckland for her work on Auckland Theatre Company's THE CRUCIBLE, for which she was also cited in the Listener's Best of 2007 (Best Local Production, Auckland). In 2007, she also designed

costumes for Melbourne Theatre Company's THE GLASS SOLDIER.

Works in 2008 include costume design for Melbourne Theatre Company's ROCK'N'ROLL and return seasons of ROMEO AND JULIET and ABHISHEKA for the Royal New Zealand Ballet.

Previous works for Auckland Theatre Company include HIGH SOCIETY, THE GRADUATE, TRAVESTIES, A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE, THE JUDAS KISS, WIT, WIND IN THE WILLOWS, VITA AND VIRGINIA, THE HERBAL BED, MASTERCLASS, ARCADIA and DANCING AT LUGHNASA.



**BRAD GLEDHILL**  
*Lighting Designer*

*"My original decision about this play was that it needed to happen all within one environment as the play occurs in real time. Therefore it was important to create a strong visual image that can be sustained throughout the piece with only minor tweaks along the way.*

*Working with Tracy's base palette of colours and her strong architectural images and structure, I have filled the main playing area of the house, highlighted the architecture and brought the world from the outside into the room by utilizing a French door and the image of a garden beyond."*

Brad is a Lighting and Audio-Visual designer who has designed for Auckland Theatre Company and numerous dance and theatre productions.

He lectures in the Performance Technology Programme at UNITEC'S Theatre, Dance and Film School.

Brad has designed lighting for Auckland Theatre Company productions of DESIGN FOR LIVING, MY NAME IS GARY COOPER, THE TUTOR, THE SHAPE OF THINGS, THE TALENTED MR RIPLEY, PLAY 2 and PLAY 2.03.

Other designs include THE CUT (Silo), HEAD (AKO7), ALADDIN, MEASURE FOR MEASURE, MINIATURES, LASHINGS OF WHIPPED CREAM, KNOCK KNOCK TURN, CORAM BOY and many National Dance Tours of works by Michael Parmenter, Simon Ellis, Daniel Belton, Raewyn Hill and Chris Jannides.



**EDEN MULHOLLAND**  
*Sound Designer*

*"The sound design for FEMALE OF THE SPECIES is minimal and follows the action of the play closely. With musical references to the 1970's artists and smatterings of Bach throughout it gives the characters a relevant musical context to exist in. It was fun to research all the artists who were (inadvertently or not) voices for women's rights and who made music with a message popular."*

Eden has been composing music for theatre and contemporary dance since 2000. His recent credits include DESIGN FOR LIVING, MY NAME IS GARY COOPER and THE PILLOWMAN (Auckland Theatre Company), LOST PROPERTY (Fidget Co, Belgium), MINIATURES and DARK TOURISTS (with Malia Johnston).

Eden was an engineer on Michael Parmenter's Retrospective Tour and in 2006 he composed original work for Parmenter as part of a project arising from his 2005 Creative New Zealand Arts Fellowship.

Eden has also designed sound for short films by Touch Compass Dance Trust, Atamira Dance Collective and Curve Dance Collective. He is the singer and composer for the rock group Motocade which has released two EP's and made five music videos.

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AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY

WHO NEEDS SLEEP ANYWAY?

By Roger & Pip Hall

June 5 – June 28

SKYCITY Theatre

Look back and laugh at the trials, tribulations and joys of parenthood New Zealand style. With Nana wrapped around his little finger Baby P (that's P for Plunket) takes his parents on a rollercoaster ride through the first five years of life – and 100 years of colourful kiwi history!

SILO THEATRE, Auckland

THE THREEPENNY OPERA

by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill

May 29 – June 21

Maidment Theatre

A noisy hotchpotch of stock operetta characters, American jazz, John Gay's eighteenth century world of thieves, pimps and whores recast in a mythical Victorian London and all refracted through the decadent prism of Weimar cabaret.

CENTREPOINT THEATRE,

Palmerston North

AN UNSEASONABLE FALL OF SNOW

By Gary Henderson

May 10 – June 7

A bewildered young man is questioned by a ruthless interrogator, who circles like a predator, forcing him closer and closer to an awful admission. A compelling investigation of truth, consequence, and the ultimate value of human life.

DOWNSTAGE THEATRE, Wellington

MY BEAUTIFUL DIVORCE

By Geraldine Aran

May 31 – Jun 28

Watch Ginette McDonald [www.speakerlink.co.nz/sp\\_ginette\\_mcdonald.htm](http://www.speakerlink.co.nz/sp_ginette_mcdonald.htm) starring as an unexpectedly single woman in this hilarious one-woman tour de force! Wittily observant, achingly funny and heart-wrenchingly real this comedy explores what life is like for Angela, a 40something housewife, recently dumped by her accountant husband for a younger model.

CIRCA THEATRE Wellington

THE AMERICAN PILOT

By David Greig

May 10 – June 14

A funny, intelligent, topical and very human parable that takes a wry look at how the world sees America and America sees the world.

COURT THEATRE Christchurch

LETTER TO BLANCHY

By McPhail and Gadsby

March 29 – May 17

In a fishing trip gone awry, Barry, Ray, Derek and Col, three friends and an acquaintance, find themselves trapped together in a one-roomed hut. The unhappy quartet strive to make the best of things – but as the rain continues to pour, tensions begin to rise.

FORTUNE THEATRE, Dunedin

A STREET CAR NAMED DESIRE

by Tennessee Williams

May 23 – June 14

Winner of the 1948 Pulitzer Prize, this masterpiece tells the tragic story of Blanche DuBois, a fragile relic of a bygone era, and her brother-in-law, Stanley Kowalski, a steel brute trying to make it in the post-industrial age.



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# RE-DEFINING THE ROLE OF THE FEMALE OF THE SPECIES



In *FEMALE OF THE SPECIES*, Margot Mason's most famous book is *THE CEREBRAL VAGINA*. Of course it's only fiction but we can assume that if it was real, it would contain many of the same arguments as Germaine Greer's canonical work *THE FEMALE EUNUCH* and the work of other seminal feminist writers including Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, Susan Faludi and Naomi Wolf.

Greer argued in her book, *THE FEMALE EUNUCH*, that women do not realise how much men hate them, and how much they are taught to hate themselves. Christine Wallace writes that, when *THE FEMALE EUNUCH* was first published, one woman had to keep it wrapped in brown paper because her husband wouldn't let her read it; arguments and fights broke out over dinner tables and copies of it were thrown across rooms at unsuspecting husbands. It arrived in the stores in London in October 1970. By March 1971, it had nearly sold out its second printing and had been translated into eight languages.

"The title is an indication of the problem," Greer told the *New York Times* in 1971, "Women have somehow been separated from their libido, from their faculty of desire, from their sexuality. They've become suspicious about it. Like beasts, for example, who are castrated in farming in order to serve their master's ulterior motives – to be fattened or made docile – women have been cut off from their capacity for action. It's a process that sacrifices vigour for delicacy and succulence, and one that's got to be changed," she said.

Two of the book's central themes became very influential in the 1970s, namely that the nuclear family was a bad environment for women and for the raising of children; and that the manufacture of women's sexuality by Western society was demeaning and confining. Girls are feminised from childhood by being taught rules that subjugate them, Greer argued. Later, when women embrace the stereotypical version of adult femininity, they develop a sense of shame about their own bodies, and lose their natural and political autonomy. The result is powerlessness, isolation, a diminished sexuality, and a lack of joy:

"The ignorance and isolation of most women mean that they are incapable of making conversation: most of their communication with their spouses is a continuation of the power struggle. The result is that when wives come along to dinner parties they pervert civilised conversation about real issues into personal quarrels. The number of hostesses who wish they did not have to invite wives is legion."

Greer argued that women should get to know and come to accept their own bodies, taste their own menstrual blood, and give up celibacy and monogamy. But they should not burn their bras. "Bras are a ludicrous invention," she wrote, "but if you make bralessness a rule, you're just subjecting yourself to yet another repression."

French philosopher and author Simone de Beauvoir's *THE SECOND SEX* was first published in 1949 and is regarded by many as the foundation work of feminist thought.

As an existentialist, Beauvoir accepts the precept that existence precedes essence; hence one is not born a woman, but becomes one. Beauvoir argued that men had made women the "Other" in society by putting a false aura of "mystery" around them. She argued that men used this as an excuse not to understand women or their problems and not to help them, and that this stereotyping was always done in societies by the group higher in the hierarchy to the group lower in the hierarchy. She wrote that this also happened on the basis of other categories of identity, such as race, class, and religion. But she said that it was nowhere more true than with gender in which men stereotyped women and used it as an excuse to organise society into a patriarchy.

Beauvoir asserted that women are as capable of choice as men, and thus can choose to elevate themselves, moving beyond the 'immanence' to which they were previously resigned and reaching 'transcendence', a position in which one takes responsibility for oneself and the world, where one chooses one's freedom.

Betty Friedan's *THE FEMININE MYSTIQUE* remains one of the most influential, and best selling, works of the feminist canon and is often credited as spurring the women's movement.

Published in 1963, it depicted the roles of women in industrial societies, especially the full-time homemaker role, which Friedan deemed stifling. Friedan speaks of her own 'terror' at being

*"La Paglia? Intellectual porn-star! Faludi, Fallaci - they all sound like a bowl of pasta. 'I'll have the Faludi with pesto' There was no one like me!"*  
Margot Mason

alone, and observes in her life never once seeing a positive female role-model who worked and also kept a family. She provides numerous accounts of housewives who feel similarly trapped. With her psychology background, Friedan offers a critique of Freud's penis envy theory, noting a lot of paradoxes in his work. And she attempts to offer some answers to women who wish to pursue an education.

A darling of the Democratic political party, Naomi Wolf has been engaged in two presidential elections in a bid to reach the "soccer mums" and other female voters.

She had tremendous success with her first book *THE BEAUTY MYTH* which became a bestseller and is heralded as ushering in the third wave of feminism.

In the book, she argues that the standards that constitute what is called 'beauty' as a normative value are entirely socially constructed, and the patriarchy determines the content of that construction with the goal of reproducing its own hegemony of authority. Wolf posits the idea of an "iron-maiden," an intrinsically unattainable standard that is then used to punish women physically and psychologically for their failure to achieve and conform to it. Wolf criticized the fashion and beauty industries as exploitative of women, but claimed the beauty myth extended into all areas of human functioning.

Pulitzer prize winning author and journalist Susan Faludi is one of the most influential contemporary feminist writers. Her work is often controversial and sparks vigorous debate, none more so than her post 9/11 work *THE TERROR DREAM*. In this book Faludi analyzes the 2001 terrorist attacks in light of prior American experience going back to insecurity on the historical American frontier. Faludi argues that 9/11 reinvigorated in America a climate that is hostile to women. Women are viewed as weak and best suited to playing support roles for the men who protect them from attack. The book was called a "tendentious, self-important, sloppily reasoned work that gives feminism a bad name" by the *New York Times* principal book reviewer Michiko Kakutani.



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Jason Drury at Film FX, Xytech Lighting, Robyn at Natuzzi for the white leather storage day bed, MADE.

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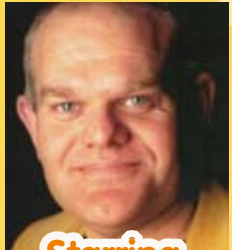
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