

TE AHUREI  
TOI O TĀMAKI

AUCKLAND  
ARTS FESTIVAL

FROM AWARD-WINNING THEATRE-MAKER  
ANDERS FALSTIE-JENSEN

# THE VALENTINA



Herald Theatre, Aotea Centre

7–10 March 2024

# The Valentina

## Credits

Te Ahurei Toi o Tāmaki Auckland Arts Festival  
and Auckland Live present the  
world premiere of *The Valentina*

## The Rebel Alliance

### Writer & Director

Anders Falstie-Jensen

### Performers

Talia Pua, Ross McCormack  
Bronwyn Turei (Ngāti Porou),  
Wesley Dowdell

### Set Design

John Verryt

### Lighting Design

Jane Hakaraia (Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga)

### Costume Design

Elizabeth Whiting

### Sound Design

Sean Lynch

### Puppet Design & Puppeteer

Jon Coddington

# The Valentina

## Credits

### **Stage Manager**

Chiara Niccolini

### **Production Manager & Puppeteer**

Chiara Gabrielli

### **Dramaturg**

Simon O'Connor

### **Graphic Designer**

sūn+müller

### **Electro Wizard**

Rob Larsen

### **Model Maker**

Phil Gregory

### **Set Builder**

Grant Reynolds

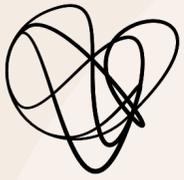
**1hr 15mins no interval**

***Contains darkness, smoke/haze effects and moments of alien horror***

**Rehearsal images by Liam Newth**

# The Valentina

## Acknowledgements



**AUCKLAND LIVE**

*The Valentina* was commissioned by Auckland Live as a world premiere for Te Ahurei Toi o Tāmaki Auckland Arts Festival 2024.

*The Valentina* is supported by



ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW ZEALAND TOI AOTEAROA

The Rebel Alliance would like to thank: Anton and Clara for endless inspiration and Catherine for always having my back; Ivan Muller (sūn+müller) for generous design support; Allison Horsley for expert Russian pronunciation tutorials; Auckland Live past and present (Bernie Haldane, Helaina Keeley, Janelle Bish and Usha Bhana) for saying yes; Shona McCullagh for saying yes and the amazing Auckland Arts Festival team, including Stefan Greder, Martyn Wood, Nick Tomlin and Roydon Christensen for guiding *The Valentina* to the stage; Philippa Campbell for last minute great suggestions; and Morgana, Dom and Millie for workshopping the script.

“Never Gonna Give You Up”

Written by: Aitken/Waterman/Stock • All Boys Music Ltd., Sids Songs Ltd.

Administered by: Universal Music Publishing Pty Ltd

# The Valentina

## Creative Notes



### **A note from the creator**

Today we are on the cusp of another space race between the US, Russia, China, India, billionaires with extraordinary egos, and space tourists who can afford paying \$50 million+ for a fun visit to the ISS. It's a cry from 1969 when Neil Armstrong, was paid an annual salary of US\$20,000 for being an astronaut + per diems. (Both he, Buzz Aldrin and Michael Collins claimed a daily \$33.31 allowance for being away from home when they went to the Moon.)

I have always loved space and science fiction and the space race of the 1960s continue to fascinate me. The space race between the US and USSR is, of course, peak Cold War, but there was nothing commercial about the superpowers gunning for the stars back then.

# The Valentina

## Creative Notes

Besides all the underlying nuclear Armageddon angst of that era, I think there was an undeniable sense of wild adventure, and a perhaps naïve optimism about what the human species is capable of doing if we set our minds to it.

Some people may find it distasteful to have Russian Cosmonauts as protagonists in today's climate, especially Valentina Tereshkova, given her pro-Putin views. I'm not for cancelling the achievements of young Cosmonauts because of the war in Ukraine and I'm not really interested in Tereshkova of today. Despite who she has become as an old woman, her achievements remain pertinent today.

As both China and the US are looking at returning to the Moon and there are now discussions of who will be the first woman on the Moon as well as who will be the first

# The Valentina

## Creative Notes

person of colour on the surface, Tereshkova remains the only woman to have ever flown a solo mission.

There is plenty in *The Valentina* for parents to unpack with their children, if they wish, about the space race, about the Cold War, about the commercialisation of space, about super powers and geopolitics, about the Soviet Union then and the Russia of today. You can also just enjoy it as face value as a celebration of the power of imagination and our endless fascination with what lies beyond.

All the while working on *The Valentina* I've been thinking a lot about the 'Overview Effect' - a term coined by Frank White in 1987. It is a sensation described by many astronauts including Yuri Gagarin and Michael Collins who from orbit were suddenly struck by a sense of the planet's fragility. And its incredibly beauty.

# **The Valentina**

## **Creative Notes**

That, and the children on it, is for me what *The Valentina* is all about.

This play started out as a short story called *The Ceiling* that was inspired by, and written for my son, Anton, in 2016. The stage version is very much inspired by my daughter, Clara. *The Valentina* is for them and all the other awesome kids out there who have wild dreams and parents who love them unconditionally.

**– Anders Falstie-Jensen**

**If you want to be kept in the loop on upcoming productions from The Rebel Alliance, contact Anders ([anders@therebelalliance.co.nz](mailto:anders@therebelalliance.co.nz)) to sign up to their mailing list.**

### The Rebel Alliance

The Rebel Alliance is an independent Auckland-based theatre company. Founded in 2006, the company has to date presented 10 works, seven of which have been premieres of new New Zealand plays, and also started off the development of *Centrepoint*, which co-won the ADAM Award for best new New Zealand play in 2015.

Often solidly planted in real life (*The Orderly, Grace, Heroic Faun No. One, Yours Truly, Standstill, Manifesto 2083* and *Back to Square One?*), the works The Rebel Alliance presents prove that truth often surpasses fiction. Extraordinary life stories move, provoke, inspire and put our own lives into perspective.

# The Valentina

Biographies – Creative Team



# The Valentina

Biographies – Creative Team



## **Anders Falstie-Jensen Playwright & Director**

Anders Falstie-Jensen hails from Jutland, Denmark. He is the producer, writer and

director for The Rebel Alliance. In his past he has worked as the national publicist for the New Zealand International Film Festival; as a stage manager for Massive Theatre Company and Douglas Wright Dance Company; and as a production manager for numerous independent productions. He also worked for several years as a casual lighting technician at the Aotea Centre. From 2014 to 2021 he was a programmer for Auckland Live and was responsible for several Summer in the Square events in Aotea Square, as well as putting together the Fringe Town programme at the Auckland Town Hall in 2019/20/21.

To date The Rebel Alliance has presented as part of arts festivals, fringe festivals and self-produced tours, and has presented more than 30 individual seasons across the country from Dunedin to Kaitaia, with Anders produced all of them.

# **The Valentina**

Biographies – Creative Team

As a director for the company, his credits are: *The Orderly, A Night of French Mayhem, The Bomb, Standstill, Yours Truly, Manifesto 2083, Watching Paint Dry* and *Back to Square One?*

As a playwright, his credits include *The Rehearsal, The Bomb, Standstill, Centrepoin* (ADAM winner for Best new New Zealand play, 2015), *Watching Paint Dry* (nominated for Most Innovative Work, New Zealand Fringe, 2019), *Let Me Tell You About Auckland* (Auckland Fringe Winner, Best Community Engagement, 2020), *Back to Square One?* (shortlisted for the ADAM award for Best new New Zealand play, 2020) and *The Valentina* (winner of Playmarket New Zealand's Plays for the Young Competition, 8 to 12-year-olds, 2020).

# The Valentina

Biographies – Creative Team



## John Verryt Set Design

John Verryt has created designs for a diverse range of projects, from *Badjelly the Witch* to *King Lear* to *The Magic Flute*.

Verryt trained in design for live performance at Theatre Corporate and Mercury Theatre and is an established practitioner in the New Zealand performing arts industry. He has and continues to work extensively with many companies, including Silo Theatre, Auckland Theatre Company, Indian Ink Theatre Company, Live Live Cinema, Nightsong Productions, The World of WearableArt, The Large Group, Te Ahurei Toi o Tāmaki Auckland Arts Festival, Tāwhiri Productions, NZ Opera, MOTH, Michael Parmenter Dance, Douglas Wright Dance, Atamira Dance, Okareka Dance, Black Grace Dance, New Zealand Dance Company and Red Leap Theatre.

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Biographies – Creative Team



## Jane Hakaraia Lighting Design

John Verryt (Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga) is a freelance theatre and TV designer. Theatre companies she works with regularly include

Auckland Theatre Company, Bullet Heart Club, Silo Theatre and Massive Company. In theatre, she is known primarily for lighting design but, in the last few years, has expanded into set design, which she has been enjoying immensely. She also works with Blue Bach Productions as art director on their TV offerings, and is currently working with Māoriland Film Festival in the design of their outdoor. Jane has a degree in design from Unitec and undertook an honours degree in design at AUT.

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Biographies – Creative Team



## Elizabeth Whiting Costume Design

Elizabeth Whiting has designed costumes for NZ Opera, Auckland Theatre Company, Silo Theatre, The Court Theatre, Red Leap Theatre, New

Zealand Dance Company, Okareka Dance Company, Black Grace, Douglas Wright Dance Company, Michael Parmenter, Atamira Dance Company, Royal New Zealand Ballet, Pop-Up Theatre London for the Edinburgh International Festival, and The World of WearableArt core show in Wellington for six years.

In 2010, Whiting won the Chapman Tripp Theatre Award for Costume Design for *The Arrival* (Red Leap Theatre). She represented New Zealand at the Prague Quadrennial of Performance Design and Space in 2003 with her costumes for *Falstaff* and, again, in 2007, with a team of designers who created the exhibition *Blow*. Her designs for *The Marriage of Figaro* have just been presented in Seattle, and her costume designs for Tosca in Perth had a great reception.

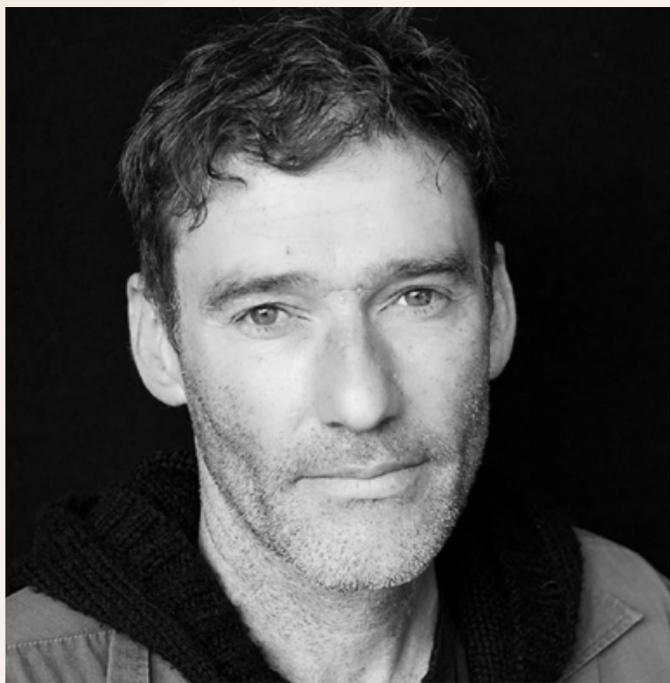
# The Valentina

Biographies – Creative Team

Whiting has designed for *Uncle Vanya* (The Court Theatre); *Kororāreka: The Ballad of Maggie Flynn* (Red Leap Theatre), *Kiss the Sky* (New Zealand Dance Company); *Blonde Poison* (Plumb Theatre); *La Bohème* and *Don Pasquale* (Opera in Schools programme) for NZ Opera; *The Cherry Orchard*, *Shortland Street – The Musical*, *Joan*, *The Daylight Athiest*, *Nell Gwynn*, *The Life of Galileo* and *King Lear* for Auckland Theatre Company; *Here Lies Love* for Silo Theatre; *Mr Red Light* and *I Just Want to be Happy* for Nightsong Productions; *Tu Meke Tūī!* for Auckland Live; *The Hall* for Bullet Heart Club; *Moulin Rouge in Concert* for Liberty Stage; and *Dirty Work* for Indian Ink Theatre Company. Her costume designs were also seen in the successfully remounted productions of *Hudson & Halls Live!* and *The Mooncake and the Kumara*.

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Biographies – Creative Team



## Sean Lynch Sound Design

Sean Lynch has been working in New Zealand professional theatre for more than 30 years. He is a musician, actor, and lighting and sound

designer. Previous sound designs include *Havoc in the Garden*, *Flintlock Musket*, *Yours Truly*, *I Love You Bro*, *Tribes*, *The Pitchfork Disney*, *The Heretic*, *Polo*, *Hir*, *Black Lover*, *The Wolves* and *Rendered*.

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Biographies – Creative Team



## John Coddington Puppet Design & Puppeteer

Jon Coddington promotes himself as a theatre designer and collaborator, illustrator, animator and sculptor,

and has been primarily working as a puppeteer and puppetmaker for eight years. Highlights include the sell-out Wellington, Auckland, Dunedin, Adelaide, Perth and Edinburgh Fringe Festival hit *Puppet Fiction* (2012–18), a marionette homage to the movie *Pulp Fiction*; and the manipulation and making of marionettes and puppets for the Fat Freddy's Drop music videos 'Clean The House' and 'Special Edition'. Recently he has worked in screen puppetry with training by Muppeteer Peter Linz at Whoa Studios in Auckland, created puppets for the Aotearoa New Zealand Festival of the Arts show *The Devil's Half Acre*, the NZ International Comedy Festival show *Hand to God*, and recently created puppets for and performed in Silo Theatre's *Peter and the Wolf*.

# The Valentina

Biographies – Creative Team



## **Chiara Niccolini** **Stage Manager**

Since completing a Bachelor of Performing & Screen Arts at Unitec in 2019, Chiara Niccolini has been working as a professional stage

manager for a number of theatre companies, including Auckland Theatre Company, Massive Theatre Company and Tim Bray Theatre Company.

Niccolini has just joined The Rebel Alliance team. She is very grateful and excited to be part of this project.

In her spare time, Niccolini enjoys rock climbing, tramping, plus various other outdoor activities.

# The Valentina

Biographies – Creative Team



## Chiara Gabrielli Production Manager & Puppeteer

Chiara Gabrielli is a theatremaker whose career began on the unceded lands of the Kaurua people, and grew in the Kulin Nations on the land of the Wurundjeri and the Boonwurrung people. Gabrielli is very excited to begin her work here in Aotearoa. She has worked across many companies as an actor, poet, drag king, puppeteer and production manager. Highlights include performing in the Ruby Award-winning State Theatre Company South Australia production of *Gorgon*, and the publication of her poems in the anthology *Spitting Teeth*. Recently Gabrielli worked again with the State Theatre Company South Australia on *Antigone*, and with the Windmill Theatre Company on *Hiccup* for their premiere season, and Australian and American tours. There is also a boy named Bruno Salsicce, who may look like Gabrielli in drag but is probably just her cousin or something.

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Biographies – Creative Team



## Simon O'Connor Dramaturg

Simon O'Connor is a theatre deviser, writer, dramaturg and actor. Theatre performances include *Krapp's Last Tape* (Fortune Theatre),

*Watching Paint Dry* (The Rebel Alliance) and *Toy Factory Fire* (Talking House). O'Connor was a researcher, co-deviser and performer for the verbatim theatre pieces *Hush* and *Be/Longing* (Otago University Theatre Studies programme) and co-devised and performed in *One Day* (RBS Productions). He is a past recipient of Bruce Mason Award for playwriting and taught playwriting for several years in Otago. O'Connor worked with Anders Falstie-Jensen previously as a dramaturg on *Back to Square One?*

# The Valentina

Biographies – Performers



# The Valentina

## Biographies – Performers



### Talia Pua

#### Ellen/Rita/others

Talia Pua is a performer, theatremaker and set designer based in Tāmaki Makaurau. She is a co-founder and Creative Director of independent theatre company Hand-Pulled Collective. In 2021, Pua made her award-winning playwriting and directing debut with *Pork and Poll Taxes*, which premiered at the Herald Theatre and went on to win the Playwrights b4 25 award. Her most recent acting credits include: *Heart Go...Boom!* (Massive Theatre Company), and *The Whale Rider* (Tim Bray). When she's not gallivanting in outer space, Pua is writing and devising her second play, a modern day fable called *Dani and the Age of Wonder*.

# The Valentina

Biographies – Performers



# The Valentina

## Biographies – Performers



### **Ross McCormack**

#### **Dad/Neil/Gork**

A 2001 graduate of the New Zealand School of Dance, Ross McCormack went on to work with the Douglas Wright Dance Company and the Royal

New Zealand Ballet, before joining the Australian Dance Theatre in 2003 where he worked closely with Garry Stewart on the creation of several works which toured the United States and Europe.

In 2005 he won the Sir Robert Helpmann Award for this performance in the work *Held*, a collaboration between Australian Dance Theatre and New York Dance photographer Lois Greenfield. He then joined the famous Belgian radical dance theatre collective, les ballets C de la B, to work for director Alain Platel and performed and toured with the company for close to a decade.

Joining Australia's Chunky Move in 2012, McCormack toured the United States and the following year he joined Melbourne-based company Lucy Guerin and Dancers to perform in the United States, United Kingdom and Europe.

# The Valentina

## Biographies – Performers

He has been commissioned to choreograph numerous work for New Zealand and Australian companies, including Footnote Dance, the New Zealand School of Dance, Okareka Dance Company, Perth's Link Dance Company and Townsville's Dancenorth. He collaborated on *Faultlines*, a new dance work created in Sichuan Province of China which premiered at the 2012 Melbourne International Festival, and the Aotearoa New Zealand Festival of the Arts commissioned McCormack's new multidisciplinary company, Muscle Mouth, to premiere AGE, a new work performed in March 2014.

In 2016 Muscle Mouth presented McCormack's *Triumphs and Other Alternatives* at the Hannah Playhouse and in Tempo Dance Festival, exploring the obsessiveness and traps of the creative process and combining sculpture making with the physical performance to create "an original and visceral new style of Movement Theatre." Also in 2016, McCormack, representing Muscle Mouth, performed a solo work *The Weight of Force* at the Hong Kong Arts Festival. In 2017, McCormack and Muscle Mouth along with T.H.E Company created *Borderline*, a double bill work to be presented at the Esplanade Theatre in Singapore.

# The Valentina

## Biographies – Performers

McCormack is the recipient of the 2015 Creative New Zealand Choreographic Fellowship and a 2017 New Zealand Arts Laureate.

In 2018, Muscle Mouth premiered *System* and saw McCormack return to Seoul to co-create and present with long-time collaborator Hyo Seung a new work inside the Best and First Festival.

2019 saw McCormack reconnect with les ballets C de la B to perform *Out of Context* in commemoration of ten years since Pina Bausch passed. The year also saw McCormack appear on stage in Red Leap Theatre's theatrical adaptation of Janet Frame's *Owls Do Cry*, and as a choreographer premiered three new works: *As It Stands* for Muscle Mouth (commissioned for Te Ahurei Toi o Tāmaki Auckland Arts Festival), *The Clearing* for Footnote Dance Company, which toured New Zealand and *Method* for the Vietnamese company H2Q Art.

McCormack was set to appear in Lucy Guerin Inc's *Untrained*, as part of Te Ahurei Toi o Tāmaki Auckland Arts Festival 2022, before it was cancelled due to Covid restrictions. *The Valentina* marks his returns to the Festival stage.

# The Valentina

Biographies – Performers



# The Valentina

Biographies – Performers



## **Bronwyn Turei** Mum/Valentina/ others

Bronwyn Turei (Ngāti Porou) is a graduate of Unitec's Performing and Screen Arts degree, majoring in acting.

Screen credits include four seasons as core cast member Cody on the hit show *Go Girls*; Holly Collins in season two of *The Brokenwood Mysteries*; Aroha in *Dirty Laundry*; Ariana in *The Tender Trap*; Arataki in *Awkward Love*, *The Bad Seed* and *The Gone*. She most recently finished filming for *The End of the Valley*.

Turei has performed with theatre companies across the country including *Little Shop Of Horrors* and *Shortland Street – The Musical* (Auckland Theatre Company); *Hemo Is Home* and *Raising The Titanics* (Te Pou Theatre); *Prison Songs* (Darwin Festival); *Little Black Bitch* (Tuatara Collective); *La Casa Azul*, *Three Days In The Country*, *Weed*, *The Father*, *The Lie*, *Modern Girls In Bed*, *Rants In The Dark* and *Elling* (Circa Theatre); and *School Dance* (Centrepont Theatre). She is also a recorded singer/songwriter.

# The Valentina

Biographies – Performers



# The Valentina

## Biographies – Performers



### **Wesley Dowdell** **Dad/Yuri/others**

Wesley Dowdell is an actor, musician and creative. He trained with Massive Theatre Company and is now involved as a director

and teaching artist. He has performed across Aotearoa and internationally, including The Royal Court Theatre in London. Some of his theatre highlights include *North By Northwest* (Auckland Theatre Company); *Frankenstein* (Court Theatre); *Red Speedo* and *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* (Auckland Theatre Company); *Hikoī* (Hāpai Productions); *Raising the Titanics* (Smackbang Theatre Company); and *The Sons of Charlie Paora* (Massive Company). Best known on New Zealand screens for his role as Aaron Spiller on *Outrageous Fortune*, other film and television highlights include *One Lane Bridge*, *Punch*, *My Life is Murder*, *Educators*, *Brokenwood Mysteries*, *Roman Empire* and *The World's Fastest Indian*. Along with his partner he has created and performed in two APO 4 Kids shows and loves to create live theatre experiences for children. Wesley lives in Waitakere and is a father of twins.

# The Valentina

Biographies – Performers



# About the Festival

## Who We Are

**Te Ahurei Toi o Tāmaki Auckland Arts Festival champions change-making, the environment, ambitious ideas, powerful voices and unique experiences that open our eyes, our hearts and our minds.**

Taking place each March in New Zealand's largest city, and reflecting its contemporary, multicultural nature, the Festival challenges its community to be courageous, to be bold, and to explore new ways of reflecting the world around us.

Through the incredible work of artists here in Aotearoa and across the globe, we aim to unify, uplift and inspire our audiences – the people of Tāmaki Makaurau, Aotearoa, and all who visit.

**To learn more about us, tap here.** 

The Auckland Festival Trust Ph [+64 09 309 0101](tel:+6493090101) Email [info@aaf.co.nz](mailto:info@aaf.co.nz)

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