

Maurice Shadbolt's

Once on Chunuk Bair

Directed by: Paul Roukchan

9th - 23rd May
The Rose Centre
School Road
Belmont



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Meet the Director



Paul Roukchan is delighted to be back at Company Theatre for the first time in ten years, this time in the director's chair rather than on stage as an actor. Paul has been involved in Auckland theatre for over two decades as both an actor and director and continues to balance his stage work alongside a career in the film industry as a writer and producer, while also appearing as an actor on the Australian television series Bay of Fires.

As a director, Paul has enjoyed a number of recent successes. His production of M*A*S*H received Outstanding Comedy at the 2022 ACTT Awards, followed by 12 Angry Jurors, which was awarded Outstanding Play at the 2023 NAPTA Awards. Most recently, Paul was awarded with Outstanding Direction of a Play at the 2025 NAPTA Awards held in March for his production of One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest. Paul feels incredibly fortunate to be returning to Company Theatre with such a powerful and important New Zealand story, and to be collaborating with a talented cast and crew to bring Shadbolt's remarkable play to the stage.

Director's note: Once on Chunuk Bair

Maurice Shadbolt's 'Once on Chunuk Bair' occupies a special place in New Zealand storytelling. It is not simply a war play; it is a deeply human story about identity, sacrifice, and a moment when a young nation began to understand itself. For many historians, the First World War marks the point where New Zealand first found its voice on the world stage. But it was also something bigger than that. It was the moment when two centuries collided - when an old world of empire, tradition, and inherited military thinking was suddenly forced to confront the brutal realities of modern warfare. When the war began in 1914 it was widely romanticised. For many young men across the British Empire, including thousands of New Zealanders, enlistment was seen as a point of honour and duty. War was imagined through

the lens of earlier conflicts, fought with manoeuvre and relatively limited casualties. But the First World War shattered that illusion. Machine guns, heavy artillery and entrenched positions transformed the battlefield into something industrial and devastating. Many of the generals directing these battles had been trained in nineteenth-century tactics and suddenly found themselves fighting a completely new kind of war. The result was tragic, and countless lives were lost learning lessons that came far too late.

Few moments illustrate this more starkly than Chunuk Bair during the Gallipoli campaign. In August 1915, 760 soldiers from the Wellington Infantry Battalion advanced to take the summit. Only 70 returned. It is a statistic that is almost impossible to comprehend, and it speaks to both the extraordinary courage of those soldiers and the terrible cost of the campaign.

But theatre has a unique ability to bring history like this to life. On stage we are not simply looking back at events; we are invited to see the people inside those moments. Shadbolt's writing reminds us that these were not distant figures from a textbook, but young New Zealanders: miners, shearers, bushmen, farmers, labourers, clerks and sons, bound together by loyalty, humour and an unshakeable sense of duty.

One of the most remarkable aspects of this production is that the character of Ōtaki George is played by Jordan Wallace-Leef, whose own great-great-great uncle, Harding Waipuke Leaf, was the man on whom the character is based. Theatre often asks actors to imagine the lives of people from the past, but in this case that connection is deeply personal. Having a relative of the man who inspired the character standing on stage bringing that story to life is a powerful reminder that this history is not as distant as we might think.

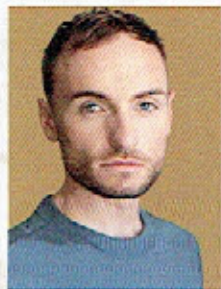
Today the First World War is often overshadowed by the scale and memory of the Second World War. Yet the truth is that the second could only happen because the first came before it, reshaping nations and setting the stage for the conflicts that followed. If this production achieves anything, I hope it plays a small part in helping us remember 'The Great War' and the New Zealanders who stood on Chunuk Bair and became part of our nation's story.

Meet the Cast



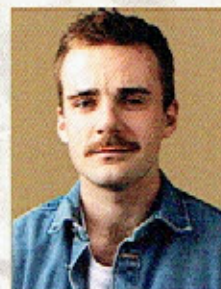
Jared Abel - Porky

This is Jared's first time at Company Theatre. He appeared in Playhouse Theatre's, 'One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest', Ellerslie Theatrical Society's 'Our Man in Havanna' and Dolphin Theatre's 'Arcadia'. Jared has been a recurring featured performer in Auckland variety show, Codeword Cabaret. As Porky, Jared has sought to find the desperate and vanishing humanity in Chunuk Bair's resident smart-ass.



Hamish Davies - Smiler

This is Hamish's second time working with Paul Roukchan, after playing Billy Claven in Titirangi Theatre's 'The Cripple of Inishmaan' in 2025. Hamish has enjoyed finding Smiler's humanity, relating to his dependable nature and lack of enthusiasm for endless warfare. Hamish's great-grandfather was part of the 9th Auckland Rifle Brigade that fought in WWI, so Hamish is very grateful to have the opportunity to revisit his ancestry and realises the great privilege in being able to tell the story from the stage.



Connor Charlesworth - Mac

Connor is an NZ actor who trained and worked in London for several years. He studied at the Academy of Live and Recorded Arts and the Guildford School of Acting and was a member of the UK National Youth Theatre. Now back in Aotearoa, he is excited to continue developing his craft. The part of Mac has been an exploration of the shift from strength and certainty into something more fragile and uncertain, particularly the discovery of quieter, more human moments within a character who initially presents as strong and assured.



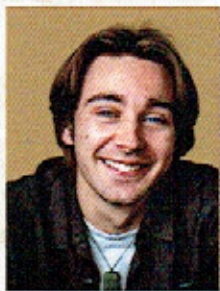
Scott Cutler - Holy

Scott is delighted to be making his debut with Company Theatre, performing the role of Holy. Last year, Scott appeared at the Playhouse Theatre, Glen Eden in 'One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest' and at Titirangi Theatre in 'The Cripple of Inishmaan.' Approaching the role of Holy has deepened his understanding of nuanced, character-driven work, particularly in bringing historical events to life with realism, honesty, and respect.



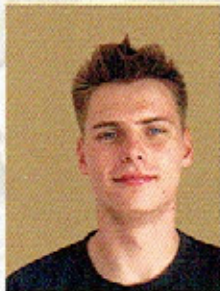
Michael Hallows - Sergeant Frank

Michael is excited to be making his Company Theatre debut and once again to be working with Paul Roukchan, who directed him in the highly successful 2025 production of 'One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest.' Sergeant Frank South represents the ordinary 'kiwi' soldier. Pragmatic, grounded, with an unromantic view of the harsh realities of war. Not blindly following a chain of command, increasingly out of touch with its men.



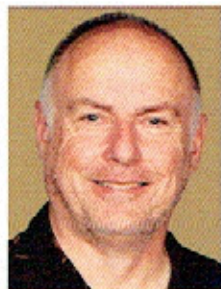
Daniel Rundle - Fred

Daniel has acted in numerous plays and short films. He graduated from The Actor's Program in 2024, and has been acting in short films, commercials and amateur feature films. This will be the first theatre show he has done since graduating from the course and he is very excited to share the story and experience of the soldiers who experienced Chunuk Bair. This is Daniel's first time with Company Theatre and he is looking forward to having fun with everyone involved.



Sam Cutler - Scruffy

Sam's previous credits include Nicely-Nicely Johnson in 'Guys and Dolls' and Jean-Michel in 'Cinderella.' He has also appeared in 'Elf The Musical' and at JTF Australia, in the New Works Showcase of 'Elephant & Piggie.' Scruffy, is a character defined by his youthful innocence who is eager to ask questions and engage with the world around him. He often struggles to fully grasp the answers he receives. His thoughtful tendencies add an unexpected depth of character to make him both endearing and lovable.

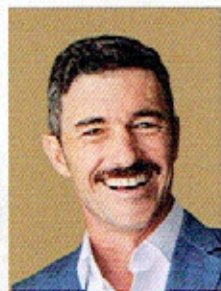


Karl Buckley - Colonel Connelly

It has been 18 years since Karl last appeared on the Company Theatre stage as Rene, in 'Allo 'Allo.' He has appeared for Centrestage Theatre as Lloyd, in 'Noises Off' and for Point Blank Productions as Richard Nixon, in 'Frost/Nixon.'

'Once On Chunuk Bair' holds a special place in his heart, directing it in 2004.

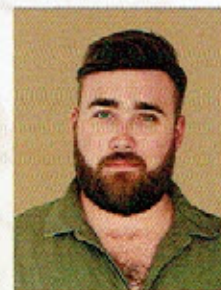
He is honoured to be able to play Colonel Connolly, working with these miserable, moaning bastards.



Francis Mountjoy - Lieutenant Harkness

Francis is looking forward to acting at The Rose Centre again after performing in 'The 39 Steps' last year. Francis is excited to be playing Lieutenant Harkness.

He has loved being part of this production and is grateful for the chance to bring this powerful story to life alongside such a talented cast and crew. He hopes you enjoy the show.



Jack Hanrahan - Nobby/Dusty/First Soldier

Jack has been involved in theatre on and off the stage for the past 20 years. Jack is a graduate of NASDA (National Academy of Singing and the Dramatic Arts) as well as a fully trained and qualified Performing Arts Teacher. He is currently teaching at Mt Roskill Grammar.

Most recently, he directed a successful season of 'The Last 5 years' at the Pumphouse Theatre. This is Jack's first play with Company Theatre and he is looking forward to playing the show's cannon fodder.



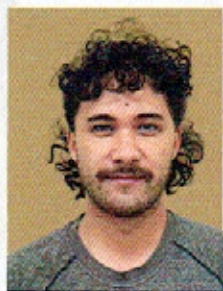
Jonathan Dunn - Lofty/Second Soldier

Jonathan Dunn, who is also known as Jay Jay, studies at South Seas Film School. He is an actor who has been on Shortland Street and other TV shows. In 2014 Jonathan performed in 'Hamp' by John Wilson, another powerful WW1 play.



Chris McRae - Corporal Bassett

This is Chris's first endeavour with Company Theatre, and he is thrilled to be joining them in the role of sedulous sapper, Corporal Bassett. He has been in many professional theatre shows. His television credits include 'Black Hands,' as well as studio vocals for the Aotearoa musical comedy 'Happiness.' Chris works regularly with New Zealand Opera, most recently, he appeared as Parpignol in 'La Bohème.'



Jordan Wallace-Leef - Otaki George

This is Jordan's second theatre production with his first being 'One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest' for which he was nominated for an ACTT award for best performer in a minor role. In his spare time he enjoys Dungeons And Dragons as well as LARPing. He is delighted to be playing the part of Otaki George, the sole Maori character. He hopes you enjoy this show!

The Setting

An indeterminate slope of dusty hillside, rising to the crest of Chunuk Bair, above the ANZAC sector of the Gallipoli Peninsula, Turkey, on 8th August 1915

There will be a 15 minute interval

Production Crew

Director	Paul Roukchan
Production Managers	Stephen Hood, Kathy Gent
Stage Manager	Vettinia Ross
Backstage Crew	Ozana Pinter
Set Design	Scott Thomas
Set Construction	Scott Thomas, assisted by Brendan Rossiter, Tony Sandy, Phil Searle, Stephen Hood, Vettinia Ross & The Cast.
Set Painting	Miriam Bradley, Caroline Parker, Tony Sandy
Set Dressing	Vettinia Ross
Make-up and Special FX	CodyCope, assisted by Extra Valentine & Jin
Props	Vettinia Ross
Sound Design & operation	Stephen Hood
Lighting Design & Operation	Stephen Hood
Costumes	Suzy Sampson, Kathy Gent
Publicity	Kathy Gent
Social Media	Suzy Sampson
Poster Design	Paul Roukchan
Programme	Catherine Maunsell
Website	Sherry Ede
Armed Combat	Alexander Holloway
Front of House	Lesley Hawkey and volunteers
Box Office	Kathy Gent
Bar	Sherry Ede and volunteers

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to our sponsors

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Ian Cunliffe, Bayleys Real Estate

Grateful thanks to Jeffrey Chambers for the loan of WW1 military memorabilia. These items and the rest of his collection are for sale. Please contact Jeffrey on onslowjc@gmail.com

For support from

The Vickers Gun built by John Way, Matt Way and Malcolm Dale, in memory of Walter Riley, killed during the assault at Sari Bair, 8 August 1915.

Alexander Holloway from NZSSCS
(New Zealand stage and screen combat society)

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NZSSCS

THE NEW ZEALAND STAGE & SCREEN COMBAT SCHOOL

From Company Theatre's President, Stephen Hood



Welcome to the first play of Company Theatre's 2026 season: *Once on Chunuk Bair*, an unglamourised portrayal of war that illustrates the human bravery & character and inhuman carnage found on the front lines of WWI's Gallipoli.

In August we bring you *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* in which a decadent, degenerate upper class believe themselves so immune to consequences that they play with other people's lives for sport.

For a change of pace, the heart-rending challenges of the mysterious, elderly 'Lady in the Van' by Alan Bennett - usually borne with touching if sometimes tetchy good humour, come to the Rose Centre's stage in November.

Thank you for coming to the show and supporting your local community theatre.

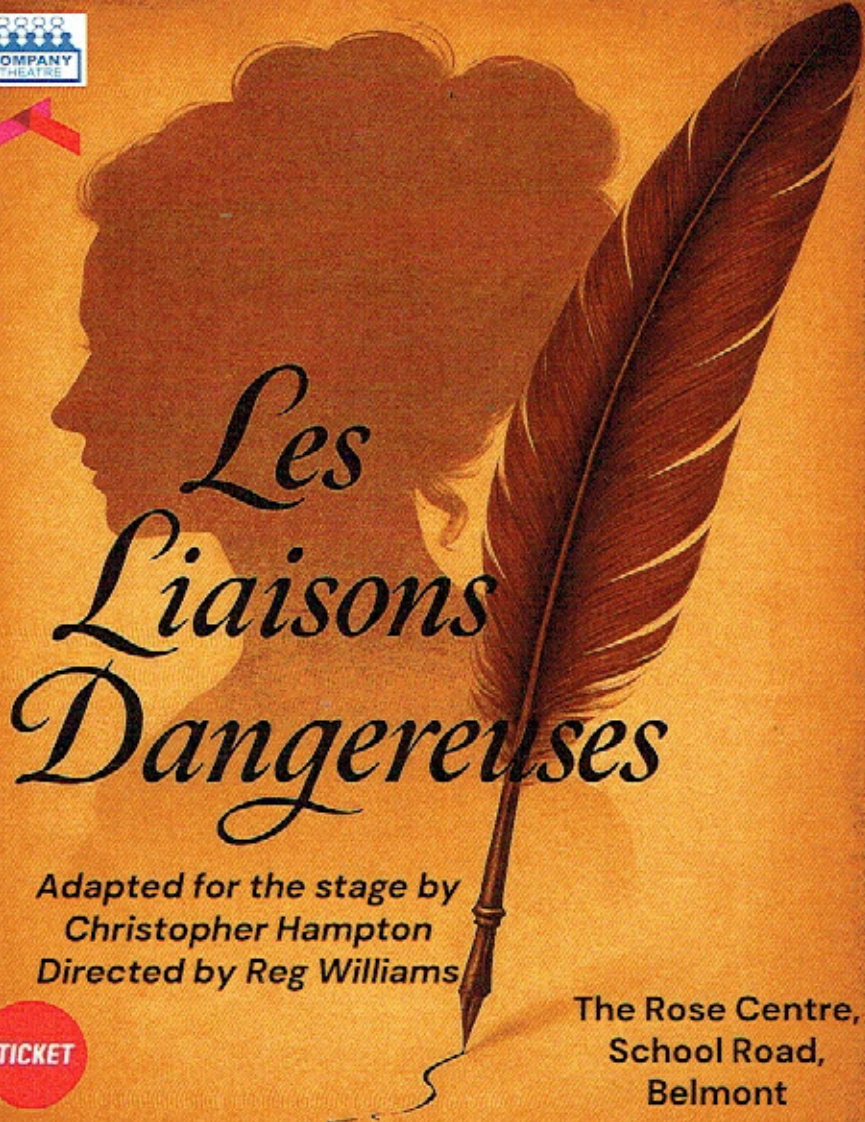
2026 Committee

Stephen Hood, Kathy Gent, Reg Williams,
Suzy Sampson, Vettinia Ross, Catherine Maunsell

We would very much like to thank the volunteers
who regularly commit their time to
front of house.

If you would like to be actively involved with
Company Theatre and want to hear about upcoming
productions through our newsletters,
visit: <https://companytheatre.co.nz/membership.html>
or email us at:
companytheatre.rose@gmail.com

NEXT AT COMPANY THEATRE



*Les
Liaisons
Dangereuses*

*Adapted for the stage by
Christopher Hampton
Directed by Reg Williams*

ITICKET

The Rose Centre,
School Road,
Belmont

AUGUST 15 - 29 2026

www.iticket.co.nz