



Photo: Garth Oriander

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Your guide to make the most of the festival experience.

Te Rēhia Theatre Company and ILBIJERRI Theatre Company

BLACK TIES

2020 TEACHERS RESOURCE

**New Zealand
Festival** OF THE ARTS

Wellington
Community Trust
supporting community initiatives

CAST AND CREATIVES

COMPANIES

ILBIJERRI Theatre Company (Australia)

ilbijerri.com.au

@ilbijerri

ILBIJERRI creates, presents and tours powerful and engaging theatre creatively controlled by First Nations artists that gives voice to our cultures. Born from community, ILBIJERRI remains grounded in telling the stories of what it means to be First Nations in Australia today. ILBIJERRI supports self-determination for First Nations voices through programmes that foster emerging First Nations theatre makers and industry professionals. ILBIJERRI works to reclaim First Nations ways of working within the Australian arts sector, through programmes and projects grounded in deep listening with and for community and country.

Te Rēhia Theatre Company (Aotearoa)

terehiatheatre.com

@terehiatheatre

Established in 2012, Te Rēhia Theatre is a proudly Māori theatre company, championing Māori playwrights, tikanga Māori arts practice, te reo Māori and the presentation of our diverse stories. Te Rēhia Theatre, named in honour of the atua of leisure is led by Amber Curreen and Tainui Tukiwaho based at Te Pou – The Auckland home of Māori Theatre. We're passionate about te reo Māori in theatre and the exploration of innovative ways of telling Māori stories.

CREATIVE TEAM

Written by **John Harvey** and **Tainui Tukiwaho**

Directed by **Rachael Maza** and **Tainui Tukiwaho**

Set Design: **Jacob Nash**

Composer and Musical Director: **Brendon Boney**

Lighting Designer: **Jane Hakaraia**

AV Designer: **James Henry**

Sound Designer: **Laughton Kora**

Costume Designer: **Te Ura Hoskins**

Produced by **Nina Bonacci** (Senior Producer, ILBIJERRI Theatre Company), **Laila Thaker** (Associate Producer, ILBIJERRI Theatre Company), **Amber Curreen** (Te Rēhia Theatre Company)

Cast

Jack Charles - Uncle Mick
Mark Coles Smith - Kane Baker
Lana Garland - Sylvia Tapuwera
Tawhirangi Macpherson - Tama-Girl
Lisa Maza - Ruth Baker
Tuakoi Ohia - Hera Tapuwera
Brady Peeti - Shannon
Tainui Tukiwaho - Robert Tapuwera
Dalara Williams - Alethea Baker
Dion Williams - Jermaine

Band

Brendan Boney - **Tony**
Mayella Dewis - **Sarsaparilla**
Laughton Kora - **Blackie**

ABOUT THE SHOW

Māori corporate hotshot Hera and Aboriginal consultancy entrepreneur Kane have their perfect future all mapped out. But there is one thing they can't control... their families! Nau mai, piki mai, grab your bow tie; you're invited to the biggest, brownest wedding that Wellington has ever seen! With a live band playing your favourite wedding classics, you'll leave sure that the power of love can unite all people – for better or worse.

Created by a bold and brilliant team of Māori, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, BLACK TIES is a hilarious and heart-warming immersive theatre experience where you're the guest of honour on the big day.

ARTIST STATEMENTS

RACHAEL MAZA, Co-Director, and ILBIJERRI's Artistic Director

"The big highlight for me is that I finally get to work with an all First Nations creative team and what a team: Jacob Nash, Brendon Boney, James Henry, John Harvey, but especially my old and new whanau from NZ: Tainui Tukiwaho, Amber Curreen, Jane Hakaraia, Laughton Kora and Te Ura Hoskins. On and off stage this work is a celebration of who we are as Blackfullas and Māoris: the resilience, the humour, the passion, strong family, culture, thriving despite our shared experiences of colonisation.

I think about the trajectory of black theatre in [Australia] to where we are today and this cocktail of hard hitting/political and humour has always been there – how else could we have survived."

JOHN HARVEY, Co-Writer

"When we started out on this journey we wanted to make a show that our Elders, our Aunties and Uncles – in fact all of our community could enjoy. And in BLACK TIES we have spades of that! BLACK TIES celebrates our rich cultures and our connection across the water between our people.

ILBIJERRI Theatre Company is leading the way in creating paths for our stories on an international level and the company's perfectly placed to embark on a bold First Nations collaboration of this scale thanks to the support of AsiaTOPA and Major Festivals Institute. I think as First Nations people we often have conversations with other Māori sisters and brothers across the water, but rarely do we embark on these types of collaborations – it's been amazing experience for me as writer."

TAINUI TUKIWAHO, Co-Writer and Co-Director

"He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata. What is the most important thing in the world? It is people, it is people, it is people.

This whakataukī or proverb from home speaks to the importance of people and relationships to ngai Māori. BLACK TIES brings these relationships to the stage, blows them up, re builds them and allows us to love and laugh with our people from both sides of the ditch. We empower our people by bringing our mums, our aunties, our cousins to the stage and sharing what is important for them; it is family, it is laughter, it is music, it is kai!

Whether we are fighting for our land and our language, mourning our loved ones or having a party, these same things remain. It is the ultimate act of self determination for us as first peoples artists to create theatre at the scale of BLACK TIES for our people, by our people and about what we think is important. We've started a mean party, can't wait for everyone to join us."

PRODUCTION AND TECHNIQUES

SET

In the first act images are projected onto an otherwise sparse set to convey the different environments of Australia and Aotearoa, seamlessly transporting us between countries. The screens also make us privy to texts and video chats between characters. In the second half the screens help the audience follow the narrative occurring off and around the stage during the chaos of the wedding reception.

The main device used in the set design is a radical restaging of the second act. The audience leaves the theatre returning to a decked-out wedding reception with all the trimmings. The audience becomes a member of the whanau, experiencing the celebration as a wedding guest themselves.

MUSIC

The soundtrack is key to create the immersive experience of BLACK TIES. The performance is set to a score of ballads and wedding classics performed by a live band. Throughout the performance, characters break into song driving in story lines with over the top musical-esque performances. Like in a traditional musical, the songs are ways for the characters to express and reveal their emotions. Music is also used to create transitions between scenes – classic songs from each country indicate the move back and forth from Australia to Aotearoa.

SCRIPT

BLACK TIES is a comedy and full of ridiculous moments and lots of laughs. Comedic writing can make the discussion of serious topics easier to convey and communicate. "The rom-com format is this kind of light transport genre; on the surface it is kind of fun and bubbles along. What is underneath all of that is this intersectional cultural reflection," Tainui Tukiwaho told the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

Slang, Te Reo, colloquialisms and words particular to the two cultures are used extensively throughout the script, showing the characters pride and investment in their cultures. This also leads to more than one misunderstanding between the two families.

THEMES AND MOTIFS

The main themes of BLACK TIES is the importance of family, culture and reminding us that we have more in common than we expect.

The importance of family and culture: The key conflicts in BLACK TIES are the desires by both mothers in law to protect their children. More broadly, conflict also arises from the impact of centuries of oppression of indigenous cultures. Misunderstanding after misunderstanding leads to a major blowout, which eventually is soothed by the same thing that started it – the love of family and culture.

The Rom-Com: BLACK TIES plays with the tropes of a rom-com, cheesy music, sunset proposals and crazy in-laws. Utilising this recognisable format Harvey and Tukiwaho can ride off this comedy while slipping in dialogues about oppression, racism, masculinity, colonialism and other taboos.

Te Reo

Te Reo is used frequently throughout the script. We've included some of the words and phrases below:

Haere mai Welcome! Enter!

Hapū to be pregnant

Hōhā tired, fed up

Hongi to touch noses as a greeting

Ka pai good job

Kai food

Karakia prayer

Kaumātua Māori elders

Kei a koe all yours

Kōhanga nest, nursery, birthplace

Mahi work

Mana authority, power; secondary meaning: reputation, influence

Mana wāhine strong, powerful woman

Moko Māori traditional tattoo on face or body

Pōwhiri formal welcome ceremony

Waiata song or chant that follows a speech

Whaea mother

Whakapapa genealogy

Whānau extended family

Wharepaku toilet

Tūtira mai ngā iwi

Tūtira mai ngā iwi, is sung many times in the performance. The waiata is a song about unity written by Wiremu Te Tau Huata. It is often sung at times when we stand together in strength or support.

Did you recognise this waiata? What do you know about the history and use of the waiata? How was it used in the performance? Why was this song chosen to be included in the performance? How does it relate to the themes of BLACK TIES?

Tūtira mai ngā iwi,
tātou tātou e
Tūtira mai ngā iwi,
tātou tātou e
Whai-a te marama-tanga,
me te aroha - e ngā iwi!
Ki-a ko tapa tahi,
Ki-a ko-tahi rā
Tātou tātou e

(Repeat)
Tā-tou tā-tou e E!!
Hi aue hei !!!

English Translation

Line up together people
All of us, all of us
Stand in rows people
All of us, all of us
Seek after knowledge
and love of others - everyone
Think as one
Act as one
All of us, all of us

All of us, All of us!!
Hi aue hei !!!

FURTHER RESOURCES AND READINGS

REVIEWS

“Comedy can convey a host of serious issues, including problems common to many cultures – such as absent fathers.” Read a review of BLACK TIES on the Guardian

[theguardian.com/culture/2020/jan/13/black-ties-review-chaos-comedy-and-cultural-clashes-in-a-wedding-gone-wrong](https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2020/jan/13/black-ties-review-chaos-comedy-and-cultural-clashes-in-a-wedding-gone-wrong)

WATCH

Watch the trailer for BLACK TIES: youtu.be/tcGi9CNOa0o

Take a look at ILBIJERRI on YouTube: youtube.com/user/ilbijerritheatreco

Take a look at Te Rēhia on YouTube: youtube.com/channel/UCeAzZvGyZUvnksyU-gFloGO

READ

Hear from the cast and crew of BLACK TIES in conversation with the Sydney Morning Herald:

[smh.com.au/culture/theatre/welcome-to-a-marriage-of-cultures-in-black-ties-20200113-p53r33.html](https://www.smh.com.au/culture/theatre/welcome-to-a-marriage-of-cultures-in-black-ties-20200113-p53r33.html)

LISTEN

Tainui Tukiwaho talks about BLACK TIES with RNZ Nine to Noon:

[rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/ninetonoon/audio/2018732171/black-ties-not-your-average-rom-com](https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/ninetonoon/audio/2018732171/black-ties-not-your-average-rom-com)

GO FURTHER

Explore the meaning and history of Hera and Kane’s wedding clothing:

Possum skin cloak aiatsis.gov.au/exhibitions/possum-skin-cloak
Korowai collections.tepapa.govt.nz/topic/3614

Research the history of Māori theatre – te whare tapere hōu at Te Ara: teara.govt.nz/en/maori-theatre-te-whare-tapere-hou

Find out more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their history and culture:

Learn about the history of Australia’s First People:
shareourpride.reconciliation.org.au/sections/first-australians/

Read about Nindethana, the first Aboriginal theatre company (founded by Uncle Jack Charles and director Rachel MAza’s father Bob Maza) and the theatres that came after it:
creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/arts/aboriginal-theatres

Discover the work of performer Uncle Jack Charles. An actor, musician, activist and Elder, he is a victim of the Stolen Generation, for many years he was a petty thief and imprisoned. Now he advocates for Aboriginal rights and mentors prison inmates and is one of Australia’s best-loved actors.

Find his book here: penguin.com.au/books/jack-charles-9780143792222

Watch a 12 min talk by Uncle Jack Charles at TEDxSydney: youtu.be/WYvJ6CVuOUk

PROVOCATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

PRE-FESTIVAL

Have you ever been to a wedding? What was it like? Discuss as a class the ceremony, decorations, food and the emotions of the people involved.

What do you know about the history of First Nations people of Australia? What can you find out before the performance?

What is important to your family and culture? What traditions, stories and taonga are a special part of your heritage?

Watch the trailer and read about the show. What are you expecting from the performance?

AT THE FESTIVAL

What sense of energy do you feel in the theatre space? What do you notice about the set before the performance has even begun?

What captures your attention during the play? The actors? The set? The music? Why?

What questions do you have about the production? What are the themes of the play?

AFTER THE FESTIVAL

Did you have a favourite part of the performance? Why was this effective?

What were some ways that the two families and cultures clashed? Was this resolved? How?

How was music used in the performance? How did it communicate the themes and narrative of the show? What feelings did this evoke? Was it effective?

How was technology such as screens, projections and cameras used to communicate the play's narrative?

How did the format of the performance serve the narrative? What production elements were used to communicate the changing settings and scenes?

How did the performers use drama techniques (voice, body, movement and space) to create their characters?

How was the audience engaged during the performance, what techniques were used to facilitate this?

What did the set and costume tell you about each of the characters?

He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata.

What is the most important thing in the world? It is people, it is people, it is people.

Tainui Tukiwaho, Co-Writer and Co-Director uses this whakataukī when he talks about BLACK TIES. What does this mean to you? How is it reflected in BLACK TIES?

Need something more? Contact your SchoolFest team with any questions about the performance.

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