

A Boy Wonder travels Southland

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The Southland Festival of the Arts will finish with a bang when the only show touring the region, *A Boy Wonder*, finishes in Stewart Island next Thursday.

Writer and performer Ryan Richards is now based in Auckland but grew up in Mosgiel and is looking forward to being back in the south.

"I've never been to Stewart Island and I've always wanted to go so I jumped at the opportunity.

"Stewart Island is going to be a real highlight, not least because I get to go on a boat."

Being part of the festival was a chance to get back to his roots, Richards said.

"I am hoping to talk with locals after the shows. I know southern hospitality is alive and well. No-one gives a stuff about anyone in Auckland."

A Boy Wonder is Richards' first one-man show. It was in the making for five months before the first version of the show premiered in Auckland in March 2014. "I've always wanted to make a show by myself. When you're in a group not all your ideas make it into the play, even if you think it's genius. So I wanted the opportunity to experiment."

The story is set in Roxburgh and is loosely based on Richards' own experi-



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ence of being a boy scout.

"I grew up in Central Otago and was a scout and I loved it. It [scouts] provides so many opportunities for comedy," Richards said.

In the show, Roxburgh iconic Jimmy's Pies is under threat by a corporate giant and friends, all played by Richards, try to save it with the power of scouting.

The show is appropriate for the whole

family, although Richards said when he was writing it he had adults in mind.

Arts Festival director Angela Newson said *A Boy Wonder* was an accessible show for the smaller towns.

"It's difficult for professional shows to take the risk and go to smaller towns so the festival is a good opportunity for those communities to see out-of-town talent," she said.

A Boy Wonder is touring in conjunction with the Southland Festival of the Arts with 11 shows in the South, including Te Anau, Lumsden, Tuatapere, Tokanui, Gore and Stewart Island.

■ The first show is at the Fiordland Events Centre in Te Anau today at 7.30pm. For tickets visit aboywonder.co.nz/shows.

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