



## JUL 04 OKI MAI TAMA MA – TE REHIA THEATRE COMPANY

**Hoki Mai Tama Ma** bills itself as a revolutionary new art form and it lives up to its aims, effectively combining Italian Commedia dell'Arte masks with Te Ao Maori (the Maori world).

It tells the story of Tama and his cousin Bella, who are trying to understand why their Koro suddenly took off to Italy after the death of his wife, their grandmother. At first we are just as confused as the two cousins, but as the story develops we start to understand who the masked characters are, and how they connect the present day to the past. The story takes us back to World War II with the Maori Battalion, and while at the beginning the masks hide the secrets of the past, at the end it is a mask which provides us with the key to the mystery.

The play explores love and loyalty over two generations with great warmth and humour. Just four actors, each playing a number of roles, display skill and versatility, and on the night we were there they clearly won the appreciation of an enthusiastic audience. Regan Taylor (Nuku) gave a particularly memorable performance.

Director Gerald Urquhart uses a minimalist set to great advantage with the clever use of lighting and sound, including images projected on to screens.

Some plays make it clear from the very beginning what they are about; others are understood as they unfold, and even more so in retrospect. This is one of the latter but don't let that put you off: it's worth the wait, and in the process you'll be intrigued and entertained.

The writer and producers are to be congratulated for creating such a boldly innovative and heartwarming play. They have lived up to the self-proclaimed aim of the Te Rehia Theatre Company: "To create trailblazing and pioneering Maori storytelling in theatre."

**Te Rēhia Theatre presents Hoki Mai Tama Mā is on at Mangere Arts Centre until 5 July and at the Herald Theatre 9 – 12 July.**

Reviewed by Linda Bean

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