




NEWS AND BLOG

# Magical, Mythical and Mighty Kids Theatre

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## Magical, Mythical and Mighty Kids Theatre

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23 Sep 2010

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THE EDGE in association with The Oryza Foundation for Asian Performing Arts presents **THE SECRET OF DONGTING LAKE**

Written by Michelanne Forster/ Directed by Ben Crowder

A Dragon, a Princess, a Hero and an Army of Rats run riot these school holidays when **The Secret of Dongting Lake** opens at the Auckland Town Hall on October 4.

Based on a Chinese folk story, *The Secret of Dongting Lake* follows our young hero Chen Yang as he leaves his life in a poor fishing village and sets sail across Dongting Lake in the mighty General Wong’s army. Disobeying orders after saving a water dragon, Chen Yang is washed ashore after a fierce storm destroys the ship. Here he meets the Empress of the mysterious island and her beautiful daughter. All isn’t a fairytale for Chen Yang though, as he discovers on the eventual return to his village.

This premiere production has attracted a top team of Auckland’s finest creators, producers and designers for what is set to be a visually arresting and magical piece of children’s [theatre](#). Acclaimed writer **Michelanne Forster** first developed this as a script idea for the Calico’s Children’s Theatre. Her original script, designed to be performed by young school students has been re-imagined by Forster for this new adaptation which boasts a professional cast and caters to an audience of 6 – 10 year olds. Forster is a much loved and revered NZ playwright (*The Rosenberg Sisters*, *Daughters of Heaven*) who also brings her experiences with a younger generation of New Zealanders as a children’s book author.

With his work hallmarked by [innovation](#), director **Ben Crowder’s** previous work for young audiences has included Silo Theatre’s sell-out smash hit *Badjelly The Witch* and the large scale [touring](#) production of *Buzzy Bee’s Big Day Out*. Not resigned to simply catering for younger audiences, Crowder’s innovation has led to his most recent work, *360* (debuting as part of the International Festival of the Arts in Wellington) and the 2006 Chapman Tripp award winning *Head* – which pushed contemporary technologies with the theater form.

**The Secret of Dongting Lake** features a cast of eight actors who bring over 20 colourful characters to the stage. Offering audiences a truly authentic and original experience the producers have chosen to cast actors with Asian heritage. With a cast featuring the diverse and eclectic talents of – JJ Fong (*Pop Starlet and Recording Artist*), Mitchell Kwan (*Gymnast and Springboard Diver*), Omer Gilroy (*Young and Hungry, member of hip hop crew Clueless*), Min Kim (*Runway Model and Graphic Designer*), Yuri Kinugawa (*Memory and Desire, Me and Dick Frizell*), Leand Macadaan (*Rent, Asian Tales: Native Alienz*), Perlina Lau (*Short and Sweet Festival, [Music Teacher](#)*), and Hweiling Ow (*Best Actress for Auckland 48hr Film Competition*). All of the cast in this production are of East Asian descent.

Dongting Lake is a real lake in North Eastern China. The area is well-known in Chinese history, [literature](#) and art. Dragon boat racing is said to have originated here and a dragon-king is said to live at the bottom of the lake. With its rich mythology and ancient traditions it makes a wonderful and highly engaging subject for a theatre production.

With its exciting visuals, madcap action and talented team **The Secret of Dongting Lake** is set to be an amazing and entertaining school holiday adventure.

The Secret of Dongting Lake has been generously funded by Creative New Zealand and Auckland City.

**Preshow Entertainment:** Storytellers from Auckland City Libraries will be reading from 10.30am until the show at 11am.

**The Secret Of Dongting Lake** plays:

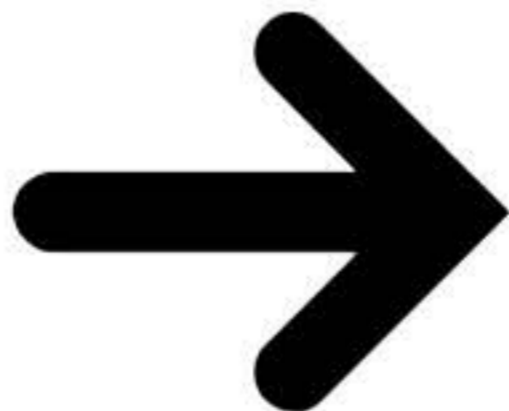
4<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> October 2010, 11am

Concert Chamber, Auckland Town Hall, THE EDGE

Tickets: \$15.00 plus booking fees, Bookings through THE EDGE: 0800 BUY TICKETS or [www.buytickets.co.nz](http://www.buytickets.co.nz),  
[Recommended for ages: 6-10 years](#)

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