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Gloria: How a Kiwi American War Bride Made International Headlines

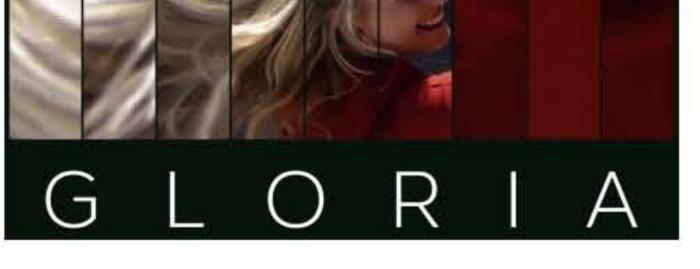
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Following a fabulous season premiere at the 2011 New Zealand Fringe Festival, 'Gloria' is set to paint the Hibiscus Coast red at Centrestage Theatre this month.

'Gloria' is a one-woman show inspired by the true story of the Waller sisters' grandmother Gloria Stanford who made international headlines as 'The Bride Who Wouldn't Leave New Zealand'.

Win a double pass to see 'Gloria' at the Centrestage Theatre



Following a whirlwind romance with an American serviceman, by the time WW2 ended in 1945, Gloria was a 21 year old war bride with an 18-month-old son living with her family in Auckland. Her new husband had never seen their son. There were no phones, just telegrams and letters that were censored by the War Office "so you could never say how you really felt," explains Amy Waller.

The US Army organised a ship called 'The Lurline' to take the large numbers of American war brides from Australia and New Zealand to their new lives in America.

A New Life

Gloria and her son joined hundreds of Kiwi women and their children climbing the gangplank to embark on a new life far away. Initially, it was all very exciting, but the reality of leaving New Zealand really hit home for many of the young women once they were on the boat. Most had no idea if or when they would ever see their friends and family again.

More than six decades later and now aged 88, Gloria recalls crying for several hours before deciding to take her destiny into her own hands by going to see the captain to tell him she wanted to get off the boat.

It was a fairly unprecedented situation in a different world back then. Quite intense pressure was brought to bear from the authorities for her to stay on the boat, but Gloria "was never one to follow the crowd. She stuck to her guns," says Amy.

Eventually, Gloria got off the boat and called a friend who owned a taxi who came to collect her and her son to join the wake that was being held for family and friends to console each other at her departure. Their surprise arrival transformed it into a different kind of party, a homecoming. There was intense international media interest at the time and the story was covered in American and Australian as well as NZ national newspapers.



"Nana's always been very, very headstrong and a passionate human rights advocate. I've always admired that. I guess that's what the play is all about, staying true to yourself," says Amy.

Amy and Catherine Waller created the original show and have since redeveloped it into a performance that will appeal to all ages with its "fusion of 1940's swing music, dancing and fearless physical theatre will keep you on the edge of your seat as you are taken from the domestic to Film Noir to the fantastical in the blink of an eye."

Showing at the Orewa Theatre (2013)

'Gloria' will run from June 29 - July 4, 7.30pm and July 2 & 4, 2 pm at the Centrestage Theatre, 60 Centreway Road, Orewa. Tickets for Senior citizens and groups of 6 or more are \$20: <http://www.iticket.co.nz/events/2013/jun/gloria> or (09) 426 7282.

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