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Magical, Mythical And Mighty Kids Theatre

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Media Release – For Immediate Release

Magical, Mythical And Mighty Kids Theatre

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 Gangster 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 Auckland City and Creative New Zealand.

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

The Secret Of Dongting Lake plays:

4th - 9th 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](#), Recommended for ages: 6-10 years

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