

## The Gospel according to Taane

Cultural norms of the wider New Zealand are being questioned and some replaced with a more genuine reflection of our multi-racial mix. More pressure is going on existing institutions to allow and encourage such moves. While some of those institutions appear to see the need to change, others only dig their heels in and become reactionary.

That's the larger stage that play-

wright, Selwyn Muru finds his play, 'The gospel according to Taane' being acted out on.

Cleric, the Reverend Hiki (Rangimoana Taylor) finds after some years administering to his Anglican parish that he has been neglecting his Maori side. In this he is ably helped in his doubts by Tu (Rongopai Broughton) an activist who espouses such causes as Bastion Point and Land Marches.

Rangimoana Taylor as Hiki



Inevitably Hiki finds his clerical indoctrination incompatible with his taha Maori and renounces his church calling to seek his true self. The Anglican Church is the 'bad guy' of the piece, along with the missionaries who subverted the Maori people to put away their multitude of gods in favour of the one supreme being.

That this play has precedence in the wider New Zealand society should give it a strong credibility especially among Maori audiences as there have been Maori clerics who renounced the 'cloth' because of the incompatibility they saw in their position. Personal reasons aside, it's this inner conflict that 'The Gospel according to Taane' is concerned with.

It's handled well by the cast, Te Ohu Whakaari with Rangimoana Taylor as director. There were a lot of new faces in the cast that opened the show at the New Depot theatre in Wellington but the presentation was lively and fresh. I found the dialogue quite believable, apart from the odd grating phrase like Hiki to Tu, "you're just a communist agitator". If the show is taken around the country, as planned it needs to be presented in places accessible to a wide New Zealand audience. I feel a tour of marae would not have the same impact as it would be like preaching to the converted (or is that unconverted).

## Pohutukawa Tree

"Arena Theatre" a semi-professional group mounted this production of "Pohutukawa Tree" — the first in the Auckland area since the death of Bruce Mason. It is a good attempt aimed obviously at secondary schools.

The play centres on a matriarch, Aroha Mataira, and her two children — Johnny and Queenie — and portrays Aroha's strong pull towards Christ on one hand and her Maoritanga on the other. Set in the late 1940's the play is now an anachronism.

Today Aroha seems a very "screwed up" Maori and one wonders just how much this picture of a Maori matriarch was indeed the norm in those times. She appears to reach her level of "screwed-upness" by her literal acceptance of Christ which at times intermingles with and contradicts her Maoritanga. She reaches such a state that she discards