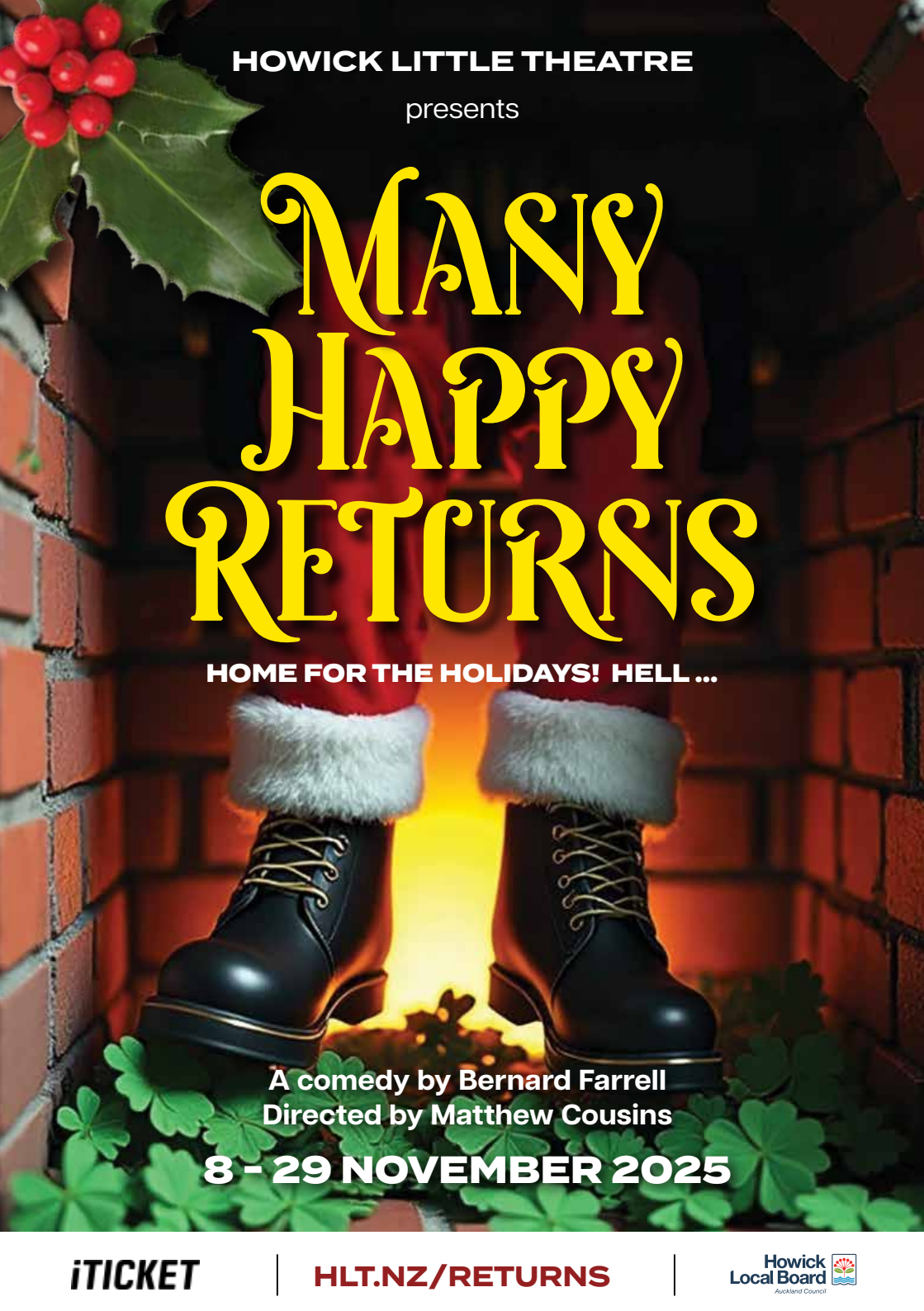




HOWICK LITTLE THEATRE

presents

MANY HAPPY RETURNS

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS! HELL...

A comedy by Bernard Farrell
Directed by Matthew Cousins

8 - 29 NOVEMBER 2025

iTICKET

HLT.NZ/RETURNS

Howick
Local Board
Auckland Council



Please switch off cellphones before entering the theatre.
It is strictly forbidden for audience members to make
any form of recording of this production.



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MANY HAPPY RETURNS



FROM THE DIRECTOR

Many Happy Returns is a departure from my usual directing fare of period plays, with Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* and a couple of Agatha Christies under my belt. I wanted to try my hand at a contemporary comedy, and *Many Happy Returns* fitted the bill. Thanks to my wonderful cast who brought this play to life and made this fast-moving and funny play a joy to work on. There were lots of laughs throughout the rehearsal process (some scripted; some not) and I hope audiences enjoy watching the play as much as we enjoyed putting it together. Thanks also to my crew for keeping things moving behind the scenes.

Matthew Cousins

Setting: An old farmhouse on the outskirts of town, not too far from Dublin.

ACT ONE: The afternoon of Christmas Eve.

There will be a 20-minute interval between Acts One and Two.

ACT TWO: Sc 1: Twenty minutes later. ACT TWO: Sc 2: Ten minutes later.

THE CAST

Arthur
Adrian Chapman

Irene
Shivaun Statham

Matty
Brian Keegan

Gladys
Penel Keegan

Declan
KC Throne
Henderson

Amanda
Cecile Fleming

PRODUCTION CREATIVES

Director
Matthew Cousins

**Production
Co-ordinator**
Ellie Barrow

Set Design
Matthew Cousins

**Lighting & Sound
Design**
Nicole Ashley

**Wardrobe Team
Leader**
Jenny Connors

Wardrobe Trainees
Viktoria Jowers-
Wilding,
Heléna van Zyl

Stage Manager
Rosie Elder

Décor
Sue LaFleur

Properties
Sarah Watt,
Vince Thompson,
Sue LaFleur

**Technical
Operators**
Caitlin Flower,
Dylan Day,
Tony Simmons,
Parag Londhe

Prompt
Debbie Allan,
Bairón Falado

Intimacy Adviser
Lauren Wilson

Graphic Design
Emma Love

Photography
AJ Johnson,
Lyndon Katene
– LK Creative

**Set Construction
Crew**

David Gifford
(Set Foreman)
Doug Johnston
Ian McMahon
Andrew Walden
Dan Vlad

**SPECIAL
THANKS**

To Dolphin Theatre
for the loan of props.



MATTHEW COUSINS

Director

Matthew has been involved in theatre since his early years, both onstage and as a director. Most recently he appeared in HLT's *The Case of the Frightened Lady* earlier this year and in *Around the World in 80 Days* in 2024.

He last directed the sold-out season of HLT's *A Murder is Announced* in 2023. He also directed *Spider's Web* in 2021 at Dolphin Theatre.



ADRIAN CHAPMAN

Arthur

Many Happy Returns is Adrian's first full season play with HLT, after three outings with the Studio team: *Swallow the Fly* (2020), *Tiny Beautiful Things* (2021) and *Howick Little Plays* (2023). Adrian's excited to be doing a play by one of his favourite playwrights and also to have the opportunity to use his own accent. He says it has been a pleasure to work with Matthew and the rest of the team and he hopes everyone enjoys a seasonal dose of Irish humour.



BRIAN KEEGAN

Matty

Brian is delighted to be back on stage at HLT after last being onstage as Dan in another play by Bernard Farrell, *Kevin's Bed*, in 2010. This is where he met his soulmate, Penel, and now they're back on stage together again. With a strong cast, great director and wonderful support from everyone at HLT, he says this promises to be a great way to end a successful season. Brian has also directed at HLT, Dolphin Theatre and Shoreside Theatre over the past decade.



PENEL KEEGAN

Gladys

Penel is delighted to be back on stage at HLT again. It's been a while – so long she can't remember when... The greatest delight is that she is on stage with her darling husband Brian – the last time being 15 years ago when they first met (cast as husband and wife) – on stage at HLT in a play by the same playwright! Penel has acted and directed at HLT and Dolphin Theatre a lot over the years and always loves the whole process.



SHIVAUN STATHAM

Shivaun has been involved in community theatre for many years. She has played roles from Queens to clowns and everything in-between. A particular highlight was playing midwife Lizzy in *The Welkin* for Foolish Wit at The PumpHouse in 2023. She was last seen on stage at HLT earlier this year as Veronica in *Renovations for Six*. She is delighted to be back, alongside this wonderful cast and crew, and wishes you much laughter this festive season. She would like to thank Bruno, Lark and Ember for their unwavering support.

Irene



KC THRONE HENDERSON

KC holds a diploma from the Pacific Institute of Performing Arts. He has previously performed his dark comedy solo show *The Young & the Reckless* to raucous success at the Mangere Arts Centre, where it was part of the Pacific Fringe and Auckland Fringe.

For two years, he was in the cast of Dave Armstrong's stage adaptation of Sia Figiel's novel *Where We Once Belonged*, which was part of the World Theatre Festival and Otago Festival of the Arts. KC is writing a soap opera that he will also be acting in, and this will be his first time performing at HLT.

Declan

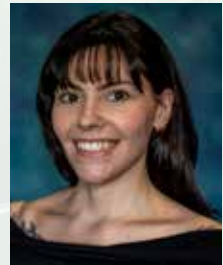


CECILE FLEMING

Originally from Canada, Cece has made Aotearoa home for the past eight years and is thrilled to make her theatrical debut (as an adult, that is) as Amanda. By day, Cece works in commercial property, flexing her creative problem-solving skills; by night, she's rekindling her love of performance at HLT.

A lifelong fan of musicals and theatre, Cece fondly recalls watching *Phantom of the Opera* at the Majestic Theatre in NYC while touring with her school's jazz band. Many years later, she is delighted to be on stage amongst a cast of talented and hilarious actors. Cece hopes to bring Amanda to life with whimsy, warmth, and a dash of mischief, and looks forward to sharing this Christmas story.

Amanda



THE PLAY

Irene and Arthur have decked out their modest Dublin farmhouse for the holidays in anticipation of their friend Declan's return from New Zealand. A self-made millionaire, Declan is the focus of their meticulously crafted image of prosperity, which hides a cunning plan to secure their financial future. However, the festive cheer turns to disquiet as secrets start to unravel for a Christmas present nobody wanted. NB: This play features mild adult language and a brief sequence of flashing lights. Recommended for ages 16+.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

Bernard Farrell was born in Sandycove in County Dublin in 1939. His contemporary comedies – both light and dark – have been described as “well-wrought, cleverly shaped with a keen sense of absurdity” and as “dark and dangerous comedy in which characters are poised on the knife-edge between hilarious absurdity and hysterical breakdown”.

Both his parents were passionate about the theatre and his childhood was filled with attending plays. Following school at CBC Monkstown and further education at People's College Ballsbridge, he worked for Sealink until 1980, when he resigned to write full-time for the theatre.

Most of his 22 stage plays have been premiered at the Abbey Theatre or the Gate Theatre in Dublin or at Red Kettle Theatre in Waterford. He was awarded The Rooney Prize for Literature in 1980, The Sunday Tribune Comedy of the year Award for *Forty Four Sycamore* in 1992, and in 1998 *Kevin's Bed* was nominated as best Irish Play in the Irish Times/ESB Theatre Awards.

He was Writer-In-Association at the Abbey Theatre in 1996/97 and has also served on the theatre's Advisory Council and as Director of the Abbey Board. In 2014, he was presented with The John B Keane Lifetime Achievement Award in association with Mercier Press.

His work has been performed in almost all of Ireland's leading theatres, and has also been produced in the US, Canada, the UK, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, New Zealand and Australia. He has also written for television, notably for the long-running RTÉ series *Glenroe*.

PATRON

Jennifer Ward-Lealand CNZM
Te Atamira

2025-2026 MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Laurie Mills (President)
Matthew Cousins (Vice Pres.)
Roger Mudford (Treasurer)
James Calverley
Judith Clarke
Trevor Hynes
Alison Mudford
Linda Lehrke

FOUNDER

Alma Woods, MBE

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PO Box 82-003,
Highland Park, Auckland 2143
hit.nz

BOOKINGS

Book at ticket.co.nz
or phone 361 1000.

COSTUME HIRE

HLT hires costumes.
Phone office for details.



ACTING CLASSES

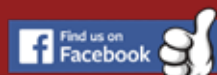
Weekly acting classes for all ages are taught by leading professionals. For details, see hit.nz or call the office.

FUNDRAISING AND GROUP BOOKINGS

Is your group looking to fundraise or socialise?

A PlayDate booking reserves all the theatre for a performance, and your guests can enjoy the friendly social atmosphere before the show and at the interval.

For details of PlayDates and smaller group bookings, contact the office.



COMING TO HOWICK LITTLE THEATRE 2026

THE GREAT DIVDE

**BIG MONEY MEETS
SMALL-TOWN BACKLASH**

21 FEB - 14 MAR

A comedy by David Williamson

Directed by AJ Johnson

When wealthy developer Alex Whittle sets her sights on the quiet coastal Australian town of Wallis Heads, she expects to buy land and loyalty with ease. But Penny, a determined solo mum, won't let progress trample her home or community. What follows is a sharp, hilarious showdown of money, morals, and survival as neighbours take sides and the town splits over its future.

HOWICK LITTLE PLAYS

25- 28 MARCH

**Directed by Vic Leilua, Carolyn Loader
& Beate Wiebel**

Eight 10-minute plays, from comedy to drama

THE LAMPLIGHTERS

**THREE DETECTIVES.
ONE UNSOLVED CASE**

9 - 30 MAY

A thriller by Glenn Chandler

Directed by Carlos Lehmann

In a remote Cumbrian farmhouse, three former detectives reunite on the anniversary of a murder case that still haunts them. When a determined young crime writer joins them, unwilling to let the past lie, old loyalties splinter and buried secrets start to surface. As mist closes in and the night deepens, their friendship falters and, after ten years, the truth may finally emerge. *Adult content.*

BLOOMSDAY

ONE LOVE ACROSS A LIFETIME

11 JUL - 1 AUG

A dramatic romance by Steven Dietz

Directed by Penel Keegan

Years after a brief, life-changing encounter with an enchanting Dublin tour guide, Robert returns to the city, unable to forget the woman he let slip away. As memory and reality intertwine, younger and older versions of Robert and Cait retrace their steps through Dublin's streets in a tender and time-twisting story of what was, what wasn't, and what might still be.

THE COTTAGE

**SECRETS, MISCHIEF,
AND ABSOLUTE CHAOS**

12 SEPT - 3 OCT

A comedy by Sandy Ruskin

Directed by Laurie Mills

In a cosy English cottage, Sylvia arrives to confront her lover, determined that they come clean about their affair to their unsuspecting spouses. But one revelation leads to another, and soon skeletons tumble out faster than anyone can hide them. This whirlwind of tangled romances and gleeful self-awareness unpicks the ridiculous ways we love and lie, and proves the truth is rarely neat and tidy. *Adult content.*

FIREFLIES

**IT'S NEVER TOO LATE
FOR A LITTLE LIGHT**

14 NOV - 5 DEC

A comedy by Matthew Barber

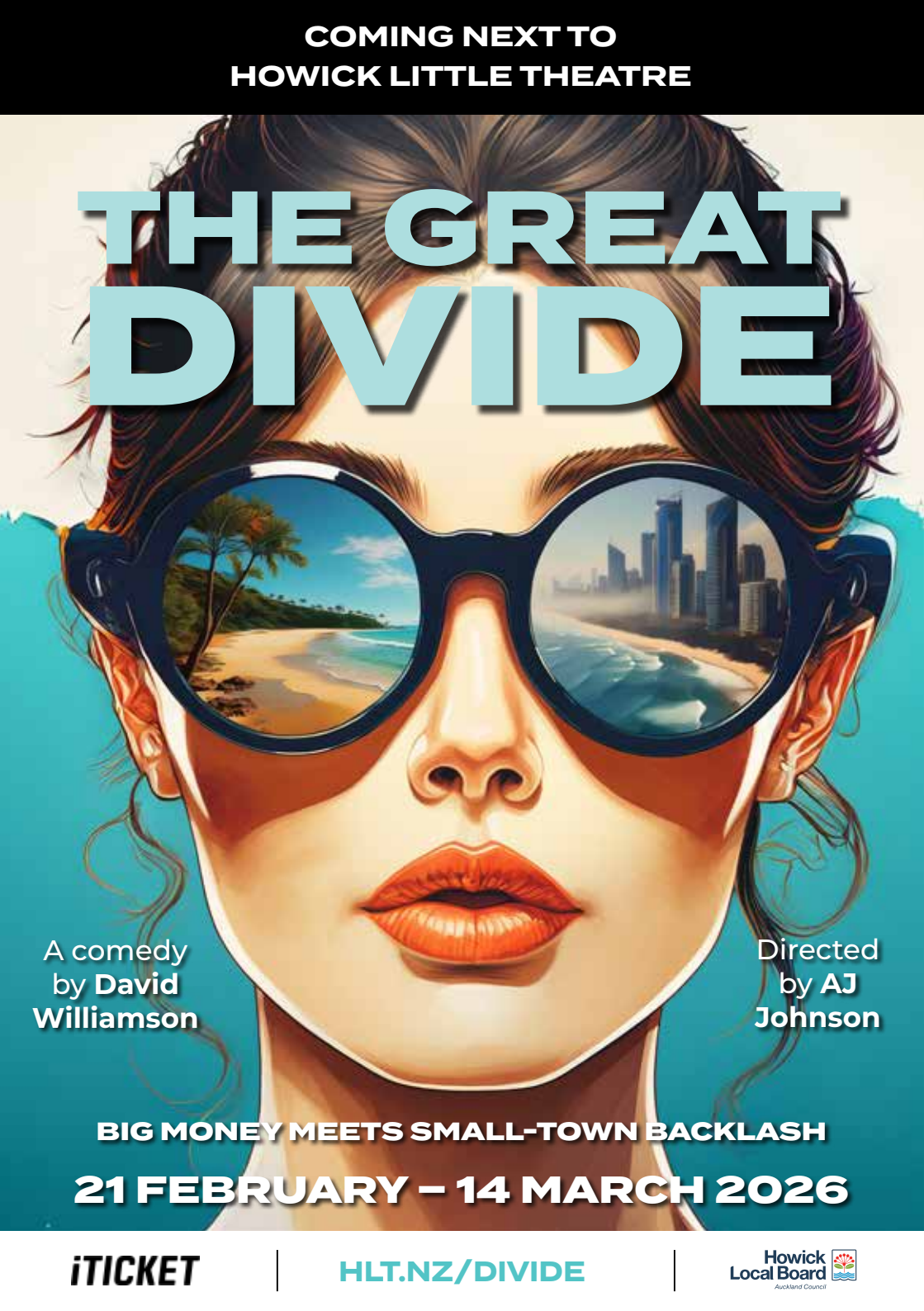
From the novel *Eleanor and Abel* by Annette Sanford

Directed by Tracey Holdsworth

Retired schoolteacher Eleanor Bannister lives a life of quiet routine in her small American town until a storm leaves a hole in her roof and brings the charming yet guarded Abel Brown to her door. What starts as a simple repair grows into unexpected friendship and the quiet possibility of love, even after she thought that chapter was closed.

COMING NEXT TO
HOWICK LITTLE THEATRE

THE GREAT DIVIDE



A comedy
by David
Williamson

Directed
by AJ
Johnson

BIG MONEY MEETS SMALL-TOWN BACKLASH

21 FEBRUARY – 14 MARCH 2026

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