

HOWICK LITTLE THEATRE

presents

WORST WEDDING EVER



A comedy by
Chris Chibnall

Directed by
Ashton Brown

DREAM MARRIAGE PLANS DASHED

9 - 30 NOVEMBER 2024



iTICKET

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**Howick
Local Board**
Auckland Council

WORST WEDDING EVER



THE PLAY

Rachel and Scott have their future all planned out – marriage, a family home, the lot. However, after a hopeful home purchase goes awry, their plans for the big day start to veer drastically off course and what was once a wedding worthy of envy becomes a humble DIY backyard extravaganza. As unexpected guests arrive, tempers flare and secrets spill, turning what was supposed to be a simple ceremony into a laugh-out-loud spectacle of awkward antics and family bonding.

SETTING

Act 1 Sc 1: The large back garden of the Powell family's detached West Dorset home – and elsewhere. **Act 1 Sc 2:** A Sunday afternoon four weeks later. **Act 1 Sc 3:** Two hours later.

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

The audience is asked to please vacate the auditorium for the duration.

Act 2 Sc 1: 10am on the August Bank Holiday. **Act 2 Sc 2:** 45 minutes later. **Act 3 Sc 1:** Flashback to a busy hospital corridor. **Act 3 Sc 2:** The big day. **Act 3 Sc 3:** Midnight on a moonlit beach in West Dorset.

Audience Care: This play features some mild adult language and content, including medical references that may be sensitive for some audience members.

THE CAST

Rachel

Kelsey Mercer

Scott

Sean Halstead

Liz

Stephanie Liebert

Mel

Alex Howat

Alison

Rebecca Isemonger

Andy

James Calverley

Mike

Ben Egan

Graeme

Cory Hare

Neighbours

Sho Okumoto

Bruce Wighton

PRODUCTION CREATIVES

Director

Ashton Brown

Production

co-ordinator/

Rehearsal Prompt

Alison Mudford

Set Designer/

Decor

Rebecca Isemonger

Lighting Designer

Nicole Ashley

Sound Designers

Ashton Brown

Sho Okumoto

Props

Alison Mudford

Linda Lehrke

Abi Herbert

Costume Designer/

Hair and Make-up

Senica Calder

Costume, Hair

and Make-up

Assistants

Zoe Jansson-Bush

Shelby Sparks

Stunt/Fight

Co-ordinator

Nathan Hey

Stage Manager

Sho Okumoto

Assistant Stage

Manager

Bruce Wighton

Technical

Operators

Dylan Day

Vic Leilua

Crystal Livingston

Intimacy Adviser

Nick Martin

Graphic Design

Emma Love

Photography

Andrew (AJ)

Johnson

Set Builders

David Gifford

Doug Johnston

Pat Hudson

Andrew Walden

Chris Woodhead

Dan Vlad

Set Painters

David Gifford

Judy Rankin

Rebecca Isemonger

Chiara Nitopi

Rebecca Annan

Jay Hunter

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to Affordable Portalooos of 92 Harris Street, Pukekohe (affordableportalooos.co.nz/), for the loan of a portaloo for this production. Thanks also to Donna at BodyFX (www.bodyfx.co.nz/) for all her advice and assistance.

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

As a director, there are things that are more important to me than just talent. I have heard other creatives disagree when I've made this comment before, but I would always rather work with an actor who is committed, compassionate, humble and vulnerable than one who simply has sheer talent but lacks the former. Acting is a team sport, it is an interdependent position that relies on all the other aspects of what make a production great. Theatre is about humans and humanity.

So, when casting shows, these are the qualities I look for in a performer. Having rehearsed with this immensely gorgeous team of human beings over the process of *Worst Wedding Ever*, I have been blown away by the humble, compassionate, vulnerable people they are. The fact they are all so talented on top of this has made this the most enjoyable and positive directing experience of my career to date.

Add to that a crew of equally compassionate, committed and humble creatives and you end up with a positive and creatively fulfilling experience for all involved, which we now get to pass on to you, our audience. I hope the love, passion and grounded talent of those whom I have had the privilege of spending my time with over the past few months offers you all something special, too.

My process as a director is riddled with (now officially diagnosed) ADHD, so it is not surprisingly a little chaotic. I view theatre as a living entity that grows and changes as we learn how the script comes alive. I show up on day one with little more than having read the script two or three times and work

with instinctual responses that I have in rehearsal, and I encourage the actors to do the same. As unintentionally pretentious as that may sound, a much more honest and blunt way to put it is I make up the journey as I go along – and I expect the actors (and apologise frequently for it) to buckle up and go on that journey with me. Kudos to the patience and creative flexibility of this team and for laughing with me (and occasionally at me) as we went on this slightly unhinged approach to creating.

I am no stranger to Chris Chibnall's work. I am a massive *Broadchurch* fan – in fact I would argue it is a masterpiece of writing and acting, so to find myself in the position of directing the NZ premiere of one of his works is nothing short of an absolute honour.

Don't let the title fool you. This is not a story about a wedding. It's a story about a family. A family of flaws, a family of mistakes and memories, of grudges, regrets and ultimately forgiveness. There is nothing easy about family. They are yours whether you want them or not. One of the things that drew me to this script, other than the genuine hilarity of the storytelling, is the truth that grounds each of its characters in the real world. Good comedy often has drama at its heart, and this has been encapsulated perfectly here in Chibnall's writing. It is a theatrical journey that my life unexpectedly began to echo part of during the rehearsal process, providing me with both a personal challenge and a unique sense of catharsis.

How lucky are we to have theatre. Enjoy.

Ashton Brown

ASHTON BROWN

Ashton is a writer, director, actor and general silly man. He is a father of two and a husband of one who frequently wears hats and hates talking in the third person. He has voiced characters on *Power Rangers* and appeared naked on television ads for health insurance.

When he has his clothes on, he coaches acting and writes reviews on beer and film. This is the second show he has directed for HLT. He wears jandals all year round.

Director





KELSEY MERCER

Rachel

Kelsey has enjoyed meeting wonderful people at HLT over the years, from her debut performance back in 2019 to *Howick Little Plays* in 2023. Kelsey is feeling privileged to be involved in the world of performing this year, and what better way to do that than with this beautiful cast and crew, and the colourful and compassionate direction of Ashton Brown. Kelsey intends advancing her passion and heart for performance into the future.



SEAN HALSTEAD

Scott

This is Sean's first stage performance. He started his acting journey doing classes at HLT before moving on to do more screen work, especially short films. He works as a business support analyst during the day. His hobbies include going to the gym, running, swimming, reading, learning new things, and having new experiences.



ALEX HOWAT

Mel

Alex has been performing on stage since the age of 15, when he played a chorus member in Lyndhurst Drama and Musical Society's *Fiddler on the Roof* whilst wearing a fake beard. Since then, he has performed in numerous productions for both amateur and semi-professional groups in the UK, including his favourite, *The Full Monty*. This is Alex's debut performance in NZ and he is looking forward to playing a grumpy, middle-aged Englishman – a role he has been perfecting for quite some time.



STEPHANIE LIEBERT

Liz

Hailing from a musical family, Christchurch-born Stephanie has been a performer for her entire life. With a creative career in radio and television, she is taking a break from full-time work as she tackles the challenge of Liz Powell. Previous theatre highlights have included Velma Von Tussle in *Hairspray* (SkyCity Theatre, 2014), Desiree in *A Little Night Music* (AMT, 2016), and more recently in Dolphin Theatre's *Spider's Web* (2021) and *Rehearsal For Murder* (2023), both of which won her awards. Last year saw Steph's HLT debut as Miss Marple in *A Murder Is Announced*. When she's not on stage, her passions include animals, fitness and writing.



CORY HARE

Graeme

Cory is thrilled to make his debut at HLT. No stranger to the stage, most recently performing in *Glengarry Glen Ross* (Dolphin, 2023), Cory works as the Head of Drama & Dance at Rosehill College. He is passionate about inspiring young talent and fostering creativity, and when not teaching or directing his students, he relishes the opportunity to perform. Cory looks forward to sharing this exciting journey with the community and hopes you enjoy the show.



JAMES CALVERLEY

Andy

James is a regular on the HLT stage, returning for *Worst Wedding Ever* as a very confused and lonely young man. You may have seen him earlier this year in *Grand Horizons* as Brian French – a very confused and lonely young man. Coincidence? The jury's out on whether he has range, but at least he's consistent. Off-stage, he spends most of his time picking dog fur out of his clothes and Googling "how to adult". Casting directors, please, for the love of all that's holy, give this man a confident role. He's ready. Honest. Please send all feedback to his mother.



REBECCA ISEMONGER

Rebecca is thrilled to make her debut performance with HLT. Previously, she contributed to *The House* in 2021 as the set designer. Growing up in Howick, she has a background in performing arts from her younger years, and she is excited to return to the stage as the quirky and chaotic Alison. When she's not on stage, Rebecca works as the Head of Art at Waiuku College. This is Rebecca's second set design with HLT. She sends a huge thank you to the amazing set-building team and the creative minds that collaborated to bring the set to life.

Alison



BEN EGAN

By day, Ben is a speech and drama teacher at Saint Kentigern College and Boys School. Shortly after obtaining a Bachelor's degree in Performing Arts and Screen Arts, he made his theatrical debut at Howick Little Theatre, playing Jesus in *The Book of Everything*, and has roots in Shakespearean performance. After *TBoE*, Ben stepped away from the stage to pursue screen and voice-over work, working with Fujifilm and Amazon and appearing on *Power Rangers*. He is thrilled to be back in theatre, sharing the stage with such an incredible cast and crew.

Mike



SHO OKUMOTO

Sho joined HLT in 2023 and has been consistently involved in shows. He is part of the Stage Management Team and had the opportunity to shadow directors and direct *Howick Little Plays*. He has also been involved in the tech side and enjoys helping out with lighting and programming. He had a great time working on the sound for this show. He enjoyed working with an amazing cast and crew and was thrilled to be able to work with Ashton. He is excited to share the stage with the cast.

Neighbour



BRUCE WIGHTON

As part of the Stage Management Team at Howick Little Theatre for around a dozen plays, Bruce has always managed to stay out of the limelight, only appearing on stage during blackouts to rearrange props or furniture before quickly retreating behind the curtains as the lights return. However, this time he says there's no hiding in the dark! Before joining HLT five years ago, he spent 29 years working in the tech industry, primarily with companies that developed software for the cinema exhibition sector.

Neighbour



THE PLAYWRIGHT

Chris Chibnall

Chris Chibnall (born 1970) is a Bafta-, Peabody-, and Royal Television Society award-winning screenwriter, producer and playwright. He is the creator of the internationally acclaimed *Broadchurch*, which ran for three seasons, winning four Baftas among more than 20 awards. From 2018 to 2022, Chris was the showrunner of the BBC's *Doctor Who*, casting Jodie Whittaker as the first female Doctor and winning multiple awards domestically and internationally.

Having begun to develop his playwriting skills during his youth, Chris earned an honours degree in drama and English from St Mary's University, Twickenham. He then moved into television, chiefly working as a football archivist for Sky Sports. Fearing that this would prove to be a professional cul de sac, he left to complete a Masters degree in theatre and film at the University of Sheffield.

His first short play was produced as part of Contact Theatre's Young Playwright's Festival in 1988. While studying at college, he wrote two plays, *Victims* and *Now We Are Free*, which were performed at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. In 1998, he became Writer in Residence with GRIP Theatre Company, writing full-length plays *Best Daze* and *Gaffer!* and several short plays.

Chris took part in an attachment at the Royal National Theatre Studio in 1999, followed by a year-long attachment to Soho Theatre in 2000, which resulted in his play *Kiss Me Like You Mean It*. The play was shortlisted for the Meyer-Whitworth Award and has subsequently been produced in various venues around the world, including a successful three-month run in Paris in 2004.

In February this year, his new play, *One Last Push*, premiered at the Salisbury Playhouse.

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Jennifer Te Atamira
Ward-Lealand CNZM

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Matthew Cousins (Vice Pres.)
Roger Mudford (Treasurer)
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Judith Clarke
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A year's membership fee is \$20, or \$30 for a couple

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INFORMATION

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RENOVATIONS FOR SIX

**A HALF-FINISHED HOME
AND SOME UNFINISHED
BUSINESS**

22 FEB - 15 MARCH

A comedy by Norm Foster/Canada/2019

Directed by AJ Johnson

Newly arrived to the city and keen to make new friends, Shayna and Grant Perkins invite their neighbours around to their half-finished home for dinner. Former showbiz couple the Faltermans are a seemingly idyllic pairing, while the psychiatrist Veronica Dunn-Dudet and her engineer-turned-novelist husband appear anything but. In between multiple drinks and slightly burnt spring rolls, things quickly become awkward as hilariously unexpected truths emerge.

THE CASE OF THE FRIGHTENED LADY

**NOT EVEN THE BUTLER
KNOWS WHO DID IT**

3 - 24 MAY

A comedy by Bill Scott/UK/2014

Directed by Penel Keegan

It's 1932 and Edgar Wallace, the Fleet Street editor widely known for his hugely popular and successful whodunnits, gets a desperate call from his publisher for a new novel – immediately. With only a weekend to spare and severe writer's block, the indefatigable Wallace calls on the entire household to assist, and their antics dizzily devolve into chaos as the lines between fiction and reality blur.
Family friendly.

VANYA AND SONIA AND MASHA AND SPIKE

**OLD GRUDGES. NEW PROBLEMS.
SAME OLD FAMILY.**

5 - 26 JULY

A comedy by Christopher Durang/US/2012

Directed by Tracey Holdsworth

Winner of the 2013 Tony Award for Best Play

Vanya and Sonia have led quiet and uneventful lives. However, their peaceful existence is upended when their glamorous movie-star sister Masha unexpectedly arrives. Insecurities and old resentments boil over in a weekend of wild costume parties and hilarious misunderstandings.

VANYA AND SONIA AND MASHA AND SPIKE is presented by special arrangement with Broadway Licensing, LLC. servicing the Dramatists Play Service collection. (www.dramatists.com)

RABBIT HOLE

**LOVE IS THEIR ONLY
WAY BACK**

6 - 27 SEPTEMBER

A drama by David Lindsay-Abaire/US/2006

Directed by Anna Baird

Winner of the 2007 Pulitzer Prize for Drama

Becca and Howie Corbett are struggling to find their way after losing their young son in a tragic accident. As they drift apart, the teenage driver involved in the accident reaches out, and the family are forced to confront their loss.

Adult language and content.

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MANY HAPPY RETURNS

**HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS!
HELL...**

8 - 29 NOVEMBER

A comedy by Bernard Farrell/Ireland/2005

Directed by Matthew Cousins

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.



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

ROOF RENEWAL FUNDRAISING

2024 celebrates the 70th anniversary of our beloved theatre and the 50th anniversary of our home here at Lloyd Elsmore Park. It also marks a need for us to complete vital repairs and improvements to our roof. In short, we need a new one!

We are making great progress through grants and fundraising, but we need your help!

Your donation will not only help us renew the roof but also protect our equipment, sets, props, and extensive wardrobe, and ensure the theatre continues to put on quality productions for another 70 years.

Donate online by scanning the QR code, visiting hlt.org.nz/donate or simply spread the word. Thank you for your support.



Howick Little Theatre is a non-profit and registered with the Charities Commission (No. CC21274). Donations over \$5 are tax deductible.

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