



## ***Rehearsing and performing – Purapurawhetū***

*Note: While many of the following activities focus on a segment of the script, it is expected that the whole play will be read by the class early in the project so that students understand the context of the extracts they are working on.*

### Activity 1: Time shift

This activity could be for groups of three students – with two actors and a director – or for larger groups of six or more, with two actors and the rest of the group generating ideas for the actors to try out.

Read through the section of the script given in **Extract 1** (quoted below).

1. In this scene, Kui tells how Aggie Rose came to Te Kupenga. She begins by telling the story of Aggie Rose, and then she becomes Aggie Rose. Similarly when Hohepa hears her voice, he becomes the young man he was all those years ago. Play the scene so that these transitions are smooth, and yet there is a real difference between the old and the young characters.
2. What kind of body movement, gesture, voice, intonation, and overall energy contributes to these changes?
3. As young people, Aggie and Hohepa are very aware of their own physical attractiveness, and very responsive to each other.
  - Play the scene so that so that their awareness is expressed in their voice and movement.
  - At the same time, find a way of showing that they are warm people who are capable of really falling in love and committing to each other.

4. A lot of the story in this scene is told through movement. Study the extract and identify all information we can gain through movement about:
  - what happens;
  - what the characters are like;
  - what their relationship is;
  - where they are;
  - how time passes.Experiment with different ways of making your movement tell all these aspects of the story. (Note: If you don't know how to tango, simply substitute another sexy kind of dance.)
  
5. What are the differences in the scene when it has been acted out – fully utilising the opportunities offered by dance and other movement – and the way it appeared at the first read through?

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Extract 1: *Purapurawhetū* Act 1 Scene 1

KUI: Aggie Rose came down the island from a place called Tū Mai, was meant to be passing through on the bus. She got talking to one of those country cowboys, he reckoned he was going to a big hoolie that night in Te Kupenga. He asked Aggie to be his partner.

*KUI continues the dialogue but removes her headscarf and, trailing it behind her, walks to the space representing the sea. She has transformed into the young AGGIE. TYLER watches from the whare raranga. AGGIE approaches HOHEPA, who is searching in the sea. The distorted music of the familiar Fifties tune 'Save the Last Dance for Me' plays in the background.*

KUI/AGGIE: So Aggie Rose gets off that bus twenty stops too early. Winds up at the Half-Moon Corral in Te Kupenga. By the time Hohepa latched his sleepy brown eyes on her she'd dumped the cowboy and was leaning up against a wall. One knee up.

*KUI/AGGIE stands near HOHEPA, one knee up against a wall. She slowly pulls a cigarette from her cleavage and attaches a filter to it. She takes a long drag and shoots out the smoke in a hard circular stream. All the while her gaze is fixed on HOHEPA. She tosses her head back and laughs.*

KUI/AGGIE: A-ha-ha-ha!

*Hearing her laughter, HOHEPA, confused, stumbles around in the sea area.*

HOHEPA: Aggie? Aggie? (*He stands, looking around for her. Finally he sees her.*) Aggie! Is that you Aggie Rose?

AGGIE: Ha!

*AGGIE walks away from him laughing, eyeing up imaginary men and appearing totally disinterested.*

HOHEPA: My Aggie, darling Aggie, please stay, don't go. (*She continues to walk.*) I'll find him. I promise.

*AGGIE turns. She appears sad for a moment. They hold each other's gaze. HOHEPA is young again. He stands completely*

*upright. They are now at the Half-Moon Corral in Te Kupenga. The music becomes louder. Slicking his hair back, HOHEPA approaches AGGIE, smiling cheekily but often looking at his feet.*

HOHEPA: Please allow me to introduce myself, my name is Hohepa. Hohepa Te Miti. And I can't keep my eyes off you.

AGGIE (*taking a long drag and exhaling*): You from here?

HOHEPA: Yes, I am.

AGGIE: And you really think I'm something do you?

HOHEPA: Yes. Yes, I reckon I do. Like Kōpū, the morning star, your beauty has me spellbound. I ... I think I would like to weave it into a blanket, so whenever I felt the sunset too diluted, or the sea too grey, I could wrap myself up and let the very richness of you sink into my pores.

AGGIE: Well. That's what happens when you're around too many people with the same smile. You long for a bit of pepper on your chops.

HOHEPA: Would you ... would you do me the honour?

*HOHEPA bows and extends his arms. AGGIE, hands on hips, smirks, laughs loudly and gives HOHEPA the once over. The tune changes into a tango and they dance. HOHEPA spins AGGIE and she twists away from him, laughing hysterically. HOHEPA tries to embrace the 'nothingness' that a second ago was AGGIE in his arms.*

HOHEPA: Aggie! (*Once again he becomes the old HOHEPA. He kneels in despair, arms outstretched.*) Aggie Rose. Please come back. Forgive me.

## Activity 2: Coming from the city – culture shift

Read the section of *Purapurawhetū* given in Extract 2 (quoted below), in which Mata brings Ramari to help Tyler with the weaving of his panel.

This work might be either in small groups – consisting of Tyler, Ramari and Mata, and perhaps a director – or in larger groups that collectively take responsibility for brainstorming and shaping the work of the three representative actors.

1. What hints about the characters' backgrounds, attitudes and intentions are given in this section of text?
2. What evidence do we have that Ramari is the newcomer? And what is he a newcomer to?
  - Find phrases that back up your decisions.
  - Play the scene to make all the nuances you have identified come alive.
3. All the characters in this scene are Māori. Nevertheless they have different degrees of familiarity with Māori language, and different ways of using Māori within their speech. Identify as many of these differences as you can.
4. Find ways of incorporating these language differences into your acting. For example, how will Ramari's pronunciation of Māori differ from Tyler's?
5. Throughout the scene, Mata is baiting Tyler. What might be his reason? Find ways of making the baiting clear, at the same time as you make the pretence of friendliness very convincing.
6. Tyler seems to want to antagonise Ramari. What might be his reasons? Find ways of blending vulnerability and assertiveness into the acting of his character.
7. Ramari is eager to successfully fit in. Consider these questions:
  - What might make her afraid that she won't be accepted?
  - How does she work to be accepted?
  - How does she adapt to the tension between Mata and Tyler?Find ways of showing her eagerness, her fear and her sincerity in the acting of her character.

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Extract 2: *Purapurawhetū* Act 1 Scene 1

TYLER *goes back to his weaving. MATA enters, followed by RAMARI.*

RAMARI: Kia ora, Tyler. Hard at work I see.

TYLER *looks over at them. MATA stands behind RAMARI, squeezing her shoulders.*

MATA: This is Ramari, she's a whanaunga of ours. Came all the way from Christchurch to help with the preparations.

TYLER: Yeah?

RAMARI: Tenā koe, Tyler.

*For a moment, TYLER looks at them both suspiciously, then gives RAMARI a kiss and goes back to work. MATA clears his throat and gives RAMARI a nod. He walks around the room looking at this and that and generally being 'inconspicuous'.*

RAMARI: Did you realise we've got just two weeks to go before the opening of the new house? How time flies eh?

TYLER *casts her a look then moves away from her and starts work on the other side of the panel. MATA clears his throat once more.*

Not that we have anything to worry about. There are fifteen tukutuku panels finished already. Ngāti Tūora finished theirs last week. The South Island iwi have sent theirs through and the Hamioras ... the Hamioras have done three. Yours is the very last one. Exciting eh? I mean we're all just waiting.

MATA: Waiting with bated breath.

*Pause.*

RAMARI: I've heard you're an excellent weaver. (*Pause.*) Would you mind if I took a closer look?

TYLER *shrugs. RAMARI goes and looks at the panel.*

It's lovely. (*Pause.*) It's lovely, but you've still got a fair way to go.

TYLER: It'll get there.

MATA *looks over towards the pair.*

RAMARI: (*assertive*): It looks like you could use some help.

TYLER: (*rolling his eyes*): Here we go.

RAMARI: I think a bit of company is just what you need to speed things up.

TYLER: I don't want any company, okay?

MATA *walks towards them, hands behind his back.*

MATA (*menacingly*): Oh, I think you do. (*He smiles at RAMARI.*) And our Ramari here's not afraid of getting her hands dirty, are you ehine?

RAMARI: That's cool. If Tyler wants to work alone maybe he should.

MATA (*holding up a hand in protest*): No. It's already been decided. (*To RAMARI*) Don't worry. I'm sure that secretly he's very pleased you're here.

TYLER: \*\*\*\*ing ecstatic!

MATA (*rolls up his sleeves and rubs his hands together*): Well, come on then. No time like the present.

TYLER *keeps working.*

MATA: Tyler?

*There is a tense silence. TYLER stares at RAMARI for a moment.*

TYLER: Let's get started then shall we?

RAMARI *is relieved. Seeing that things are underway, MATA once more strolls around the room, picking up this and that.*

TYLER (to RAMARI): I need to see you strip first.

RAMARI: What? What did you just say?

TYLER: You heard. Strip. I need you to do that for me.

RAMARI: (*looking at TYLER*) I'm not laughing.

TYLER: Good. It's not a joke.

MATA: What's going on over there?

RAMARI (*between her teeth to TYLER*): You're a pervert.

TYLER (*loudly*): The kiekie. Using a shearing comb, size and strip it.

MATA (*to TYLER*): Never mind all the hoo-ha, just let her weave the damn thing.

TYLER *gets a chair and places it at the back of the panel.*

RAMARI: I thought I could start at the front.

TYLER: You're lucky I'm letting you work on the back. (*He unwraps a towel full of wet kiekie.*)

RAMARI: Precious aren't we? I helped make one of these at uni you know.

TYLER: Well what are you waiting for?

RAMARI *is unable to respond.*

TYLER: Thought as much. See this? This is wet kiekie. This side of the kiekie is the puku.

RAMARI: I get it, because it's fat, like a stomach. Very clever.

TYLER: When I say puku up, thread it through the gap this way. (*He demonstrates.*)

MATA (*nearby, examining a piece of kiekie*): Good on you boy for doing this kinda stuff. (*Pause.*) Weaving. (*Pause.*) Mahi raranga. Don't let anyone tell ya otherwise. Plenty of mana in doing this ... this stuff,

yes there is, it's not just for the women you know. (*Pause.*) Doesn't make a man go stupid at all.

TYLER (*holding in his anger*): Puku down means that way. To the urupā means through the gap to the left.

RAMARI: Again please.

MATA *wanders over to the window and looks out at HOHEPA in the sea.*

TYLER: In the direction of the urupā.

RAMARI: Urupā?

TYLER: Cemetery!

RAMARI: Got it. Urupā cemetery. Urupā cemetery.

TYLER: To the wharekai means ...

RAMARI: Right. In the direction of the wharekai.

TYLER: To Koro Hohepa means diagonally down to the sea. (*The weaving begins.*) Puku up to the urupā.

RAMARI: Um, puku up ... . (*She attempts to thread the kiekie through while she's talking.*) You know what I think? I think that in fifty years time, my mokopuna could be sitting in the wharenuī underneath this panel. They'll be admiring it and touching it and saying things like, 'Our kuia, Ramari, made this panel. See how stunning her stitches are? She was extremely talented. An expert in the traditional arts of the ancestors.'

TYLER (*frustrated*): Put it here.

*He pokes something through the gap so RAMARI can see it.*

No here. Here!

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## Activity 3: A story of forgiveness and healing

Read the section of *Purapurawhetū* given in Extract 3 (quoted below), where Hohepa confronts Mata.

This work might be either in small groups – consisting of Hohepa, Mata, and perhaps a director – or in larger groups that collectively take responsibility for brainstorming and shaping the work of the two representative actors.

The challenge in this scene is to capture the conflicting emotions and moods in this scene, such as:

- the ferocity of the Mata's anger and the pain in his collapse;
- the trance-like power of Hohepa, and the humanness of the way he holds Mata;
- the grasping and ambition in Mata, alongside his pain and vulnerability;
- the different ways Mata and Hohepa use sticks – as a weapon of attack and as a tool of power – striking with stick and fist, and with sprays of water;
- the use of poetic language and colloquial threat;
- the pervading disembodied chant and the physical tension between the two men on stage.

1. Begin work with a series of freeze-frames that capture each of these contrasts.
2. Taking single phrases from the text, and expand each of the freeze-frames into a short movement and sound clip. (The way you use the phrase need not be naturalistic.)
3. Work the whole extract, experimenting with using a wide range of the freeze-frames and movement and sound clips you have created.
4. Continue to refine the performance until you feel it captures the contrasts listed above.

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Extract 3: *Purapurawhetū* Act 3 Scene 2

MATA: Old man? This is no place for you.

*RAMARI takes the opportunity to leave. MATA faces HOHEPA wielding the stick. HOHEPA uses the driftwood as a tokotoko, like he is on the paepae in the middle of a whaikorero. He pays no attention to MATA.*

HOHEPA: Eyes downward cast body curled, and through the mist they came. The velvet cascaded from her waist like a waterfall. (*He passes the fallen AGGIE, cleansing the space around her with a spray of sea water.*) So beautiful it hurt to remember. 'Help me, it's been too long,' she said. And the weaver breathed and his fingers flew, breaking the spell. I am with you. I am with you. (*He passes TYLER and does the same.*)

*MATA strikes at HOHEPA. HOHEPA defends and moves.*

MATA: You're crazy! Get the hell out!

*MATA follows.*

HOHEPA: From the bottom of sea his fear turned into hope. 'They are weaving my story. Daddy. Please listen, please listen. See me. Find me. Tell them who I am.'

*AWATEA's chant becomes louder.*

MATA: I ... I'm warning you old man! Stop this!

HOHEPA: And Tama Nui te Rā roared, 'Hear them and my rays will give you the strength to stand like the tōtara.' Tangaroa smiled, licked my feet with a teal tongue and became clear. I saw a beautiful child. Tawhiri picked him up gently and placed him in my arms. He stands with us now.

MATA: You're mad! Mad! Don't make me do this –

*He raises his stick as if to strike. HOHEPA faces him.*

HOHEPA: And who is the one who carries so much fear and anger in his heart?

MATA: You better run, you pōrangi old bastard! Run back to the sea, the sea will hide you!

*MATA strikes at him, HOHEPA strikes with a spray of seawater, forcing MATA back.*

HOHEPA: The one I must forget, must forget ... the one who took our wee prince to the sea.

MATA: Enough! You hear me?

HOHEPA: Come with me Bubba, come with me, I am your brother.

MATA (*starting to break*): I have no brother! There is only me, only me!

HOHEPA: Love and trust, all he knew, before the coldness.

MATA: He had his share! There was nothing left for me! You cheated me then, and you cheat me now!

HOHEPA: Listen to him! Remember him!

MATA: I'm telling you. Stop it right now!

HOHEPA: Give him his name!

MATA: I said shut up. Shut up!

*MATA goes for HOHEPA. HOHEPA raises his stick. MATA drops to his knees and covers his ears. The chant becomes louder. HOHEPA kneels in front of him.*

HOHEPA: Ko wai ia! Ko wai ia?<sup>1</sup>

MATA: No! I can't ... I can't –

HOHEPA: Ko wai tōna ingoa? Ko wai? Ko wai?<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Who is he? Who is he?

<sup>2</sup> What is his name? What? What?

MATA: No, please no. (*Upset, MATA calls out to AWATEA.*) Awatea!  
(*Pause.*) Ko Awatea tōu ingoa!<sup>3</sup>

*The chanting fills the room and there is silence, and a great calmness. MATA falls into his fathers arms, exhausted. HOHEPA holds him.*

HOHEPA: So hard to forgive when love runs deeper than oceans. None of us are blameless.

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<sup>3</sup> Awatea is your name!