

Auckland Theatre Company presents **Still Life with Chickens**

By D.F. Mamea
Directed by Fositua Amosa
Starring Goretta Chadwick

Circa Two
8 May - 2 June

Tues - Sat 7.30pm, Sun 4.30pm
\$25 - \$46



"A masterfully crafted piece of sublime simplicity that captures the heart of our humanity." – *Broadway World*

"Mamea's writing is lyrical and insightful and his portrayal of Mama is both familiar and touching." – *NZ Herald*

Still Life with Chickens Playwright, D.F. Mamea

"My mother didn't keep chickens until us kids had long left home. It had been just her and my father for a couple of decades when we heard that she had been paying particular attention to a pumpkin, taking it into the house at night, and putting it outside during the day. "That woman needs something to love," my lovely wife said, and prescribed three young chickens. And as we watched my mother feed and scold and coo at her brood, my wife suggested I write a play about it, and provided a title, gratis: *Still Life with Chickens*.

I was ambivalent: I couldn't see any drama in it. Who wants to see an old woman talking to herself? How was I going to portray the chickens? And what about my predilection for one-word titles? The idea took seed, though. I made some notes. Emboldened, I tried my hand at some scenes. I wrote and discarded a number of opening scenes before realising that writing about my mother was well off my usual writing map: here be dragons with Sunday hats and jandals. So, I did something else for a little while and then the opening scene dropped into my head, and I wrote it all down in one breathless session.

That scene is totally fictional yet it captures my mother's spirit and character. It's truthful but not actual. Most importantly, it gave me the beginning of a play that looked like it was going somewhere, generating places and names and events that weren't familial hand grenades. And the rest of the play, as any writer tasked with writing a Playwright's Note loves to brazenly lie, just wrote itself. "



Auckland Theatre Company Artistic Director, Colin McColl

"Nothing infuriates an avid gardener more than losing a hard-earned crop of greens or fruit to birds, possums, or other thieves! So, it's a testament to David's playwrighting skills that his Mama character moves from fury to a begrudging kind of friendship with the rogue chicken destroying her garden.

This prize-winning work is a beautiful, beguiling and very funny story about families, loneliness and how some friendships are just clucking surprising! Goretta Chadwick has been a favourite with Auckland Theatre Company audiences for many years with stellar performances in *Doubt*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Where We Once Belonged*, which she and the cast toured to festivals around New Zealand. I'm thrilled that she's taken up the challenge of playing Mama. Her ability to be clownish one moment and deeply moving the next is perfect for this role."



D.F. Mamea



Colin McColl



Image: Michael Smith