

Purakau Pounamu

Stories of the Greenstone Islands (Aotearoa New Zealand)
National tour of Great Britain October/November 2003

Presented in association with Arts Council England, Visiting Arts & Creative New Zealand.



Rangimoana Taylor is the most respected Maori storyteller in New Zealand. He draws from the cycle of traditional stories that order Maori understandings of the world and of the supernatural, which have parallels with classical civilisations. ...

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National touring Programme Final Report

By Christopher Preston

Introduction The idea to bring Rangimoana Taylor on a storytelling tour of the UK goes back to the year 2000 during one of my regular visits to Aotearoa, but it wasn't until my 2002 visit he said yes to my proposal. Advice from Sita Ramamurthy led me to talk to Ben Haggerty of the Crick Crack Club who revealed an extensive network of storytelling organisations nationwide. Following some preliminary research with venues, a call to the touring department of Arts Council England enlisted enthusiastic encouragement from Mark Allen. My original application to Arts Council England projected 17 performances playing to an audience of 1,480. Our final figures were 38 performances playing to 3,680.

Planning & Pre Tour Organisation Internet connection has proved essential throughout from communication with venues, dissemination of promotional material to researching and booking accommodation. The first challenge was to persuade clubs and venues to book a performer unknown to them. The idea of a Maori storyteller was initially attractive, particularly as Aotearoa New Zealand currently has a high international profile through: films such as *The Lord of the Rings* and *Whale Rider* and benefits from being on the list of top ten holiday destinations. My belief that there is an inherent interest in cultural diversity throughout Britain (not just because of important initiatives such as Decibel) would prove to be correct later during the tour. To secure the bookings however I needed recommendations, the equivalent of theatre reviews. Research on the web led me to contact festival organisers who had seen Rangimoana perform his stories and I am indebted to the following for responding by email to my requests:

Dr. Margaret Read MacDonald, King County Library System Issaquah, Washington wrote: *Rangimoana is an amazing teller. He combines movement and voice in a most evocative way. And his mana shines through with such strength that the audiences are always involved and touched by his tellings. If you can present him to your audiences, you will be offering them a rare gift indeed.*

Jay O'Callahan, storyteller, performer, author and workshop leader. National Festival, Tennessee wrote: *Rangimoana Taylor was one of the most dramatic and galvanizing performers I've met. He has a powerful sense of story and ritual. He brings a sweep with him, a sense of place and time and makes us realize that all life is an epic.*

Greg Cleave (Ngati Porou/Te Rarawa ki Hokianga) MANAGER - EVENTS The Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa wrote: *His storytelling ability is renowned, and he is able to take Maori concepts and make them easily understandable to a general audience in both an entertaining and educational manner. His style can be described as energetic, enthusiastic and empowering.*

Garry Nicholas General Manager, Toi Maori Aotearoa wrote: *The Māori tradition of storytelling is extremely complex as it requires such a knowledge of genealogies and events. Your adaptations into English have provided access to a wider audience and enabled greater cultural understanding of Māori values and beliefs. Interaction with UK storytellers and audiences furthers this understanding.*

In addition to the existing storytelling clubs, Rural Touring Network were enthusiastic customers. So immediate was the response from some of the Rural Touring network that late responders missed out and promoters at the end of the list missed out on mailings altogether. Joanna Bremner at the Netherbow Centre in Edinburgh, whilst unable to programme Rangimoana for the Edinburgh Storytelling Festival herself, sent a comprehensive list of contacts throughout Scotland. Once again the early responders were programmed and I was in the unusual position of having a cancellation list.

Funding Successful applications were made to: Arts Council England 46%; Visiting Arts 9.5% and Creative New Zealand 5%. This important core funding allowed the tour to go ahead with financial confidence. Fees & Box office receipts made up 35%, travel expenses 3% and Programme sales 1.5% of the final budget. Considerable time was spent approaching New Zealand companies in the UK for commercial sponsorship. Sadly none felt able to take up this opportunity.

Marketing David Hugo designed the project image using photographs of contemporary Maori art by Bethany Matai Edmunds. 14,000 generic A5 postcards were printed, giving details of all performances and workshops. Our new website carried more detailed information about venues and in several cases, provided links to venue web sites. While it is impossible to know how many people attended performances as a result, we can report that since its launch in August 2003 there have been over 2,000 hits on the site. CD's of the original artwork and press release material were made available to Village Halls and small venues to create their own posters with local details and contact their local press, though some venues would have liked posters for overprinting. Storytelling Cafe and Creative Arts East chose to design and print their own A5 leaflets and early publicity material sent out ensured that Purakau Pounamu was included in season brochures for venues and the Rural Touring Schemes. A ten by eight front of house photograph of Rangimoana was dispatched to each venue to create advance interest.

Press interest was less successful and releases to the literary editors of the broadsheets created little response. The New Zealand News (UK) however did a feature and sent a photographer to the New Zealand House performance. New Zealanders throughout Britain picked up this information and made the effort to attend.

Further publicity for the Performances and workshops was distributed through the email directory of Storytellers managed by Graham Langley and the Society for Storytelling, which manages a Storytelling diary. Arts Council emailing lists were used, as was Creative Newham.

Decibel: Although not directly supported by Decibel, Purakau Pounamu made a significant contribution to the festival. Artservice Touring Rural venues in Leicestershire and Lincolnshire made it their contribution to cultural diversity (Decibel Newsletter Oct 03) and David Prescott at Theatre Royal Plymouth programmed us in the One Voice Festival at the Barbican Theatre during Black History Month. Information was sent to Co-ordinators of the 'Roots' project at local BBC Radio stations. This was picked up by: Parminder Dosanji at Leicester, who ran an interview with Rangimoana and Yve Ngoo in Newcastle upon Tyne, who added our material to their web site.

The effectiveness of the marketing is born out by a box office average of 81%. Many of the storytelling venues were filled to capacity and reported record audiences, this in spite of the fact that Rangimoana was unknown as a storyteller in the UK.

The Tour In 7 weeks we did 38 performances, 2 workshops, 1 Radio show and travelled 4,250 miles by car.

The audience We performed to a total of 3,680 people in the following age ranges: Children (14 years and under) 25% Youth (15 - 24) 12% Adults 25+ 49% Seniors 14%

The high percentage of children under 14 is a reflection of 4 school performances in Scotland and 1 each in Plymouth, Louth and Wednesbury. Likewise the percentage of Youth attendances (usually conspicuous by their absence) is significant due to bookings at Bishop Grosseteste College in Lincoln, the Metropolitan University and East 15 Acting School, all of which had a majority of students attending. The dilemma arts organisations face in attracting a youth audience is frustrating. In these three cases, student attendance was, if not compulsory, strongly recommended, yet audience response was the most enthusiastic we encountered, suggesting that if young people can be enticed to attend, they have a great time. In all other venues the majority of the audience was made up of Adults and Seniors, indicating a significant audience in this age group for Storytelling. It is quite incorrect to assume that this art form is an activity only for children. Concentrating on the percentages for the 10 Rural Touring venues, the age ranges break down as follows: Children 15% Youth 3% Adults 57% Seniors 25% The percentage of the adult audience is even greater when we look at the 11 Storytelling Clubs and venues: Children 3% Youth 6% Adults 77% Seniors 14% As we would have expected, touring rural areas, 96% of our audience was white. One percent was of Maori/pacific origin and many of these people made a particular effort to attend, surprising us in some very isolated places throughout the UK. At almost every non-school venue there were New Zealanders, Maori and/or Pakeha (white) present. A significant number of the British attendees were there because they had visited the country and wanted to promote New Zealand as a holiday destination to others in the community or had a connection or personal fascination. For the storytelling audience, this was a new cultural area and along with the rural audiences, they wanted to learn more about a people who are mainly represented here by the Haka (War Dance). The men from the Village of Screddington did us the particular honour of performing Ka Mate! to us following a New Zealand super. Several villages made efforts to decorate their halls with posters from the New Zealand tourist office.

The Performances: Rangimoana began each performance off stage, calling in Maori to announce his arrival and to tell the people who he is. This beginning was extremely dramatic and the subsequent silent approach with his face covered held the audience intrigued and in suspense. The introduction to the performance generally included an explanation of the call, acknowledging the people and the land here and explaining Rangimoana's origins on the East Coast of Aotearoa. The Mountain Hikurangi, he described as the first place in the world the Sun greets each day. The Waiapu river, he acknowledged as the source of nourishment; his ancestral lord being Porourangi and hence his people being known as Ngati Porou.



This would be followed by "We look, we listen in order to talk or communicate" done with actions and audience participation. In many venues Rangimoana would get the audience to repeat this mantra in Maori - Titiro, Whakaronge, Korero by teaching them the words phonetically. Where a large proportion of the audience were children, the opening call was modified. As this was the first time Rangimoana had performed an entire programme of stories, we had trouble initially with timing and over running. The tendency was to give the audience too much, with the result that the interval could be late arriving. After we had worked out the timings of each story the performance settled down to a regular pattern. The introduction would be followed by one of the Maui Stories; either *The Birth and Return of Maui* for younger audiences or *Maui and the Gift of Fire* for adults. Maui was introduced to British audiences as the Pacific equivalent of Hercules. Rangimoana's strong physical accompaniment to the stories is a particular feature and both of these stories would be retold using just movement and the audience re-telling the stories to each other. British audiences were mostly enthusiastic about joining in and responses ranged from full-throated unison telling from drama students to quiet, but concentrated re-telling from villagers. As the tour progressed, Rangimoana learnt how to encourage British audiences to join in and found warmth which he had not expected. The main point of re-telling the stories was to gift the story to the audience so that having now told the story once, they would be able to remember it and re-tell it to others. Rangimoana's only stipulation was that they should acknowledge where the story comes from.

The Birth and Return of Maui was performed 17 times. It tells that he was thought to be stillborn and his Mother sent him out to sea in a basket woven from her hair. Rescued by the Sky Father, Ranginui, Maui is brought up with the Gods and learns how to change into different animals and plants. Ultimately however this is a story of reconciliation and how six-year-old Maui is tested by his Mother to prove his lineage in order to return to his family.



The Gift of Fire was performed 22 times and is the more dramatic of the 2 Maui stories, portraying the fearsome goddess of fire and her sad fate having been tricked by Maui. This story grew in power and pathos throughout the tour as Rangimoana highlighted Maui the trickster and left the audience feeling pity for the cold and lonely Goddess who had given up her powers so that we can be warm today.

In his between story chat, Rangimoana often worked in elements of Maori Philosophy. The notion that Knowledge is a Male element (as possessed by Maui) and Wisdom is of the Female was proposed. Only with the fusion of the two elements can we then proceed to higher levels and scholarship. These wisdoms are present in all cultures and Rangimoana, by using humour most successfully, managed to both deliver the Maori view of the world and demonstrate how universal these views are.

The Feistiness of Maori women was of great interest to audiences and the references to Princess Te Puea and the land marches lead by Dame Whina Cooper would then be followed by the well known story of Rona the Woman in the Moon and accompanying song, which was performed 17 times, either at the end of the first half or to begin the second part. We also chose to perform Rona live on BBC Radio 7's programme "Big Toe".

Artist Manu Bennett had carved the taiha Rangi-Tope especially for this tour. As a ceremonial weapon, he played a key role in the programme. Rangimoana pointed out his features: The tongue and eyes of the God of War balanced by the God of Peace reflecting these elements within himself. The white feathers of the Albatross (as apposed to the usual Red, Grey or Black feathers) represented education and endurance, emphasising the importance of passing knowledge and experience to the next generation. Rangi-Tope became the third member of the tour and provided the inspiration for the modern story of *Queen Elizabeth II's visit to Aotearoa in 1990*. Rangimoana described the Building of a fleet of war canoes and how they met her and made the three traditional challenges, with Taiha, which she accepted. This story was performed 4 times.

The Story of *Rata and The Tree* (performed 3 times) was an excellent choice for secondary school level audiences, particularly those interested in conservation. Having a repertoire of 18 stories proved invaluable for particular situations. *Matariki, Hinemoa & Tutanekai, The Story of Creation, Hatu Patu* and *Tane Creates the Stars* were each told once and *The Crying Moon* (re-told in Maori) was told twice.

As the tour progressed, three stories dominated the second half of the programme: *Tawhaki, The Most Beautiful Woman in the World* and *The Ugly Man*. These three stories developed the importance of inner strength as opposed to outward beauty and are as relevant today as they would have been in the ancient world. Six of the seven brothers in *Most Beautiful Woman* (5 performances) are vain with toned muscular bodies, yet it is the youngest and plainest brother who wins the love of the most beautiful woman. She does not rate her beauty and despairs of having her other talents recognised. This story balanced the second half well with *The Ugly Man* (18 performances), which told the story of the disabled Tama, his hidden talents and great spirit which overcame evil and retained the love of a beautiful woman. He endures great pain to become tattooed all over his body by the sky people of the 10th heaven, thus outwitting the magic of his adversary.



Tawhaki with 26 performances was the most successful of all the stories and later incorporated the anecdotes about the Taiha, Rangi-Tope. The demonstration of moves became part of the story with *Tawhaki* teaching a class prior to the attack by the sky people. He then proceeded to fight for real so the audience had ample opportunity to see the grace and skill required for this form of martial art. In this story, *Tawhaki* begins outwardly perfect, and is seemingly completed by his love for the Princess from the 12th heaven. When she is taken from him, however, he discovers true grief for the first time and has to acquire inner strength in order to climb to the 12th Heaven and reclaim her. Finally he has to make an impossible choice in order to stay with his love, never to return to his own lands. These are themes, which resonate with us in the 21st Century. *Tawhaki* made a dramatic and emotional ending to the programme.

All performances ended with a 2-minute farewell of greetings. From the lakes and Rivers of Aotearoa to the lakes and rivers of "These Islands". From the Hills and Mountains and from the forests and lands were sent greetings. From the Majesty of the Pacific to the Might of the Atlantic, from the people of Aotearoa to the people of this land and finally with shared food baskets (A symbol of hospitality), a hope that the world could be fed, both in the mind and the spirit and the physical.

The Venues: Each Venue was different and the range of conditions was extensive and sometimes challenging. The smallest venue was The Coal Wharf at Copredy with only 35 seats and a narrow aisle to a 3m x 2m stage, there was hardly any room for movement. The Changing room was a narrow boat on the nearby canal, and it rained just before the show was about to start. The performance was nevertheless excellent and enthusiastically received. By contrast, theatres such as The Drum in Plymouth and The Riverhead Theatre in Louth had dedicated dressing rooms and plenty of room to move around the stage. Five of our storytelling venues were for Graham Langley's Storytelling Caf , which he runs on a monthly basis in the West Midlands with the help of local storytellers. Graham took a large risk booking us as Rangimoana was unknown to the storytelling community and I would like to acknowledge his support. By the end of the week we had forged an excellent relationship with Graham and we were privileged to hear his and his associates' stories. Storytelling Caf  is steadily growing in popularity and we were able to bring in new audiences, many of who have promised to become regular attendees. Two of the five storytelling Caf  venues experienced full houses and the others record attendances. Other storytelling venues and promoters were equally encouraging and enthusiastic, with the exception of Wales where we over ran and made an unwise choice of stories. The Bit Crack Club in Newcastle upon Tyne paid the biggest compliment to Rangimoana. They had arranged to have a local spot following our two sets but after our programme, no one wanted to follow and the audience chose to remain with our stories in their heads. Our thanks also to: Honor Giles, who is leading Word of Mouth in Manchester from strength to strength, and Linda Hencher who is beginning to organise storytelling in the North Yorkshire villages of Wass and Coxwold.

The rural touring network made up an important part of our tour and these venues were quite different from the storytelling venues, but equally rewarding. Thanks in particular to the enthusiasm of Sue Roberts at Arts Service who booked five performances in Lincolnshire and Leicestershire and Alistair Winch at Creative Arts East who programmed three shows in North Norfolk. Rural hospitality is fantastic and audiences responsive. All villages we visited took the opportunity to make this event special for their community. Local people organise the year's programme on a voluntary basis and many host five to six events. This is an opportunity for the community to meet on a regular basis and with so many villagers now commuting to urban areas to work, this communication is important. Several Village Hall venues turned the evening into a cabaret style event serving food and drinks. Raffles were an important part of the evening, particularly the draw.

Greatly enjoyed, many comments on the quality of performance - particularly people are pleased to see professional artists in a small village community. Sue Harris, East Ruston , Norfolk.

All very appreciative of the opportunity to see something different and an obviously very high standard of performance in our own village hall. John Coleman Hoby & District Village Hall,

Four highlights: 1. Appearing in the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology at Cambridge University had a spiritual importance for Rangimoana. He performed next to their collection of Maori artefacts and near to other Polynesian art. Samoan/New Zealander Roseanna Raymond preceded Rangimoana; she is a performance poet and member of Nagati Ranana in London. *May I take this opportunity to say how much all those attending enjoyed the evening .* Sarah-Jane Harknett Outreach Organiser.



2. The opportunity to share a stage with storyteller Jan Blake in the Purcell Room for the South Bank Children's literature Festival was an honour. Jan tells West African and West Indian Stories with such energy and has such a rapport with her audience that she is a hard act to follow.



3. The replica Iron Age roundhouse at the Ancient Technology Centre in Dorset is a regular storytelling venue. Almost in the middle of nowhere, this great wood and earth cathedral-like structure is terraced for audience seating and is lit by a fire in the centre and oil lamps hung from the oak pillars. Here we played to a capacity audience in the most atmospheric venue of the tour. *We loved that Rangimoana enjoyed the venue so much. The Maori stories were fascinating and it was possible to hear each word from the back row.*



4. The view from the penthouse on top of New Zealand House in the Haymarket is outstanding. Here the capacity audience were greeted as they entered by members of Ngati Ranana with a Porwhiri. The club also performed Waiata (song) during the interval while refreshments were served. Dressed in black, Ngati Ranana looked and sounded terrific. We are particularly grateful to Kateia Burrows for co-producing this event. *Congratulations on such a fascinating evening (We) were really enthralled. What a wonderful generous culture!* Jennifer Rose



More comments from venues and audiences: Inevitably audience tastes differ and a few were unimpressed. By enlarge the great majority were enthusiastic.

Rangimoana is a beautifully centred performer who completely engaged the audience ♦ A performance of quality. QEH Bristol.

Kept me involved all the way through. He creates really strong pictures with his words. QEH Bristol.

A very visual storyteller with a considerable presence on stage ♦ the audience was clearly captivated. Solihull Arts Complex

A wonderful storyteller - it's great to be transported from hectic living to another world if only for an evening. Solihull

A wonderful evening in the presence of a big hearted performer. Solihull

Thank you for the beauty of your words and the openness of your heart. Solihull.

Very moving ♦ Powerful ♦ Charismatic .. Marvellous ♦ Fascinating .. Very unusual ♦ Wonderful ♦ Fantastic and Powerful. The Students of East 15 Acting School.

Words cannot adequately describe the spell binding performance. The Children and staff thought it was brilliant. Gorebridge Primary School Scotland.

From Monks Dyke Technical College, Louth, Norfolk: *A strong memorable performance. He captured the audience early on and allowed them to journey with him. Aidan MacBride- Stewart, Drama Teacher.*

I thought that Rangimoana was a bit weird to begin with, because I didn't expect a man to walk out shaking leaves in front of his face. ♦ He made the stories more interesting because he put actions and emotions into his performance. Matthew Dean (Year 11)

He created an atmosphere I have never felt before. The silence of the audience let the story encapsulate inside my mind. Ben Wittey (Year 11)

I think I'll remember his performance and his story for a good while, thanks to his confidence, I'm thankful for sharing his view on life to us. (sic) Anon (Year 11)

Venues: Ruskin Mill Nailsworth, Gloucestershire; St. Donats Arts Centre South Glamorgan; "Word of Mouth" Manchester, Leicestershire Guild of Storytelling; Screddington Community Centre, Lincs.; Sidcot School, N. Somerset; QEH Theatre, Bristol; Drum Theatre, Plymouth; Barbican Theatre, Plymouth; The Ancient Technology Centre (Roundhouse), Dorset; The Penthouse, New Zealand House; Wednesbury Library; Wood Green High School, Wednesbury; MAC, Birmingham; Good for You Café, Matlock; Solihull Arts Complex; Hedgate Theatre, Colchester; Loughbrough Town Hall; Shepeau Stow CP School; Riverhead Theatre, Louth; Bishop Grosseteste College, Lincoln; Hoby & District Village Hall, Lincs.; East Ruston Village Hall, Norfolk; Hindolveston Village Hall, Norfolk; Granary Theatre, Wells-next-the-Sea; Purcell Room, South Bank Centre; Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology, Cambridge University; Coxwold Village Hall, N. Yorkshire; The Coal Wharf,

Cropredy, Oxon; Alloa Library; Midlothian Schools; Clydebank town Hall, Dumbarton; The Bit Crack Club, Newcastle-upon-Tyne; BBC Radio 7; Monks Dyke College, Louth; London Metropolitan University & East 15 Acting School.

Access and Equality of Opportunity. In accordance with our commitment to Equal opportunities, every effort was made to disseminate information about the tour and workshops as widely as possible. We were able to adjust our schedules and fit in extra performances in response to requests from schools and colleges providing educational experiences for a wider range than originally targeted. The most important factor in access was the ability to keep the venue fees low and small venues were able to take advantage of top up funding from the rural Touring Scheme. This meant that as a rule top price tickets were around £5 and affordable at less than the cost of a cinema ticket.

Workshop Report 2003. Although the offer of workshops was included in the initial blurb to venues and clubs, The Bit Crack Club in Newcastle was the only customer. There were several reasons for this. Rangimoana was unknown on the British Storytelling circuit and many clubs run their own workshops. Maya Productions took a decision to offer a London Workshop, which ran at Hoxton Hall. The feedback comments speak for themselves.

Newcastle workshop November 2003: 13 Attendees



Comments: *It has been a treat of a day - out of the ordinary yet inspired by the ordinary. Many thanks.*

A workshop with someone who really knows his culture and is generous in how he shares it through speech, experience and fun.

I will be attempting The Creation Story on Monday for 300 children - I will practice tomorrow!

It has left me curious to learn more about Maori culture and keen to take many of the key ideas and beliefs into my work with children to provide a system, which truly teaches them about what it is to be human.

Thank you for sharing your stories and culture with us. I have had a fantastic day and have learned so much. I think today will inform my future work.

London workshop November 2003: 8 Attendees

Comments: *I came not knowing what to expect, and I think this workshop went beyond I am surely re-energised and full of enthusiasm to develop what I have learned with the children I work with.*

I enjoyed the experience of finding out how my own life story could be turned into a story..... and thank you for the Maori language - the wonderful resonance and emotion of it.

Thank you so much. I have not smiled this much in a very long time. I'm leaving the workshop feeling enlightened and happy and calm. I have loved every minute.... It's also made me look at the

way I workmy eyes have just been opened to the land that I live in and the people that I live with and love.

Would love to work with Rangimoana for a prolonged period of time. Will look forward to his return.

Clearly people attending the workshops have found them extremely valuable and relevant to their own work in the future. Charmaine Humphries, a Youth arts leader from Immediate Theatre, reported to me that she has already found ideas from the London workshop invaluable in her work with the excluded young people she works with in Hackney.

An important observation, which Rangimoana made during the tour, was the lack of English stories told. There are plenty of English storytellers telling Irish, Scottish and Welsh stories but the English cannon, which does exist, is neglected. Admittedly some traditional stories such as Dick Whittington and Jack & the Beanstalk live on in pantomime but many rural communities don't consider their local anecdotes interesting enough to record.

Summary and conclusions

a. From Rangimoana I found that this tour was one of the most enjoyable I have done in many years. Of course there are several reasons for this, including the financial support that was given by Arts Councils both in the United Kingdom and Aotearoa / New Zealand. However full marks must go to Maya Productions and Christopher Preston for his work over the past year enabling me to perform in the UK. Touring is very exhausting and tempers can become frayed, but perhaps because of his background in performance work he was able to anticipate my needs as a performer including making sure that changing and warm up facilities were available at every venue and making sure that we were at each venue at least an hour and a half before I was due to perform and that I was not disturbed during this time. This meant that he was the diplomat before the shows, as I was after the shows. It really was incredible for me to perform in such a variety of venues including village halls, theatres, educational institutions and a replica of an ancient Roundhouse. The tours I do are usually only to major cities this time I was given the opportunity to meet people from throughout the United Kingdom. The reports that I received from all places except one were extremely complimentary for both performances and workshops and I would be very happy to work with Maya Productions again if ever the opportunity was to arise again as this tour has certainly been a very positive experience for me. Thanks to everyone that made this tour possible for me.

Rangimoana Taylor

b. From Christopher Preston This was a project whose time was right. Audience interest, availability of personnel and funding enthusiasm all came together. This was also a new format for Rangimoana's storytelling as it was the first time he had toured so extensively and formally with his stories and with a whole programme. This was also an opportunity to refine and develop the stories and to learn which ones worked best with a British audience. No story was ever performed the same way. They assumed an organic quality and changed and adjusted to the audience and inspiration. There are possibilities to publish some stories as illustrated books or in CD format. Within the structure of the programme and relating to the stories, Rangimoana was able to include anecdotes on Maori culture past and present and to include some more personal family stories with humour, respect and love. We proved that British audiences are interested in diversity and in storytelling. This art form has some difficulty in classification. Usually described, as "Literature" it however remains importantly, an oral tradition and suffers from the notion that Literature is a written form. The strong element of performance suggests that Storytelling might find a more comfortable home classified as "Theatre". Maya Productions in particular would welcome this and as we are involved in the writing of plays, which are then performed, we believe that storytelling is the foundation of all good playwriting and theatre. The opportunity for me to tour with Rangimoana out of London has given me a lot of valuable information about regional audiences and venues. Experience of the range of conditions and challenges for example on the Rural Touring Circuit has been fascinating and having made excellent contacts with bookers and venue managers will prove vitally important for future ventures. It is hoped that we can build on this experience and reputation

with a second tour in 2005. Our proposal would be to offer in addition to the ancient legends, some contemporary stories by writers such as Apirana Taylor, Patricia Grace and Witi Ihimaera. We would also like to expand the options to include other Polynesian stories drawing on the repertoire of Samoan performance poet Roseanna Raymond. Whilst we would want to revisit many of the venues, I would like to offer opportunities to new audiences and in particular those who found our schedule over subscribed. Having established Rangimoana's credentials in the storytelling circle, we would like to run more workshops, not just because people find his techniques invaluable for their own work but to encourage more local storytelling and rediscovery of English folk tales.

Christopher Preston

Creative Producer Maya Productions

December 2003

All photographs  Christopher Preston

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