

Visionary Poetry of the Soul

For everyone who has felt the wonder of a clear spring day
and the desire to live more deeply...

THE ANGEL AND THE BELOVED

A performance by John Gibson and Sylvia Rands

October 5 – 16, 2011 at Hopetoun Alpha.

Monday and Tuesday 6.30pm, Wednesday - Saturday 8pm, Sunday 4pm.

Luminaries of NZ theatre Sylvia Rands and John Gibson celebrate work of Bohemian-Austrian poet Rainer Maria Rilke, at Hopetoun Alpha from October 5 – 16, 2011. Creating a new form of theatrical alchemy they use song, humour, live piano and any manner of styles to bring his work vividly to life .

John Gibson, pianist/composer and Sylvia Rands, actor/voice artist celebrate the poet's work as they explore the deep affinities between sound, music and words. Born out of Sylvia's own highly respected vocal teaching and her passion for 'finding the voice for what is important to say' the performance uses Rilke's words to tell the story of a maturing consciousness, the story of an everyman/woman.

"The Rainer Maria Rilke project is a theatrical and musical collaboration designed to show how poetry transforms everyday life and to expose the magic of performance in the most simple of elements, the healing power of primal word and sound." says Sylvia.

The voice training Sylvia has developed over the last ten years, Four Elements Voice, is mirrored in *The Angel and the Beloved*, as the four seasons and the four elements, earth, water, fire and air provide both the structure and narrative for the show.

Considered one of the greatest lyric poets of modern Germany, Rilke's work is experiencing an international resurgence as a new generation finds inspiration in his affirmation of the beauty and the wonder of life. As more and more people need to know why it is worth living in these challenging times, Rilke's words speak eloquently to the heart and soul.

John and Sylvia, artistic masters in their own right, haven't collaborated since Sylvia's highly acclaimed one woman show *Such Sweet Thunder* and felt this was the right production to once again combine their creative vision and talents. It's a love of Rilke's poetry and the excitement of finding a new form to express it that has brought the two together again. It's a joy for them to share the potency and deep insight of Rilke with an audience.

"It was time for us to work together again and especially a chance for me to compose music to match the work of Rilke who always seems to have the words to describe what others can't " says John. ***"Sylvia is the only person I know who has the stage presence and vocal abilities to capture the essence and transformative power of Rilke - she draws you into another world."***

In a show designed to reawaken the senses and the self through the simplest things the two will take you on a journey to an inner landscape – the world of the heart and spirit - a world beyond words.

Sylvia and John will use voice and piano on a bare stage to conjure this world where **'even what is most delicate and inapprehensible within us must be discoverable'**. (Rilke)

“By focusing on the intimacy of two performers and two disciplines, words and music, we want to show the wonders in both and reveal how richly our imaginations can be endowed by them.” says Sylvia. ***“John has an incredible musical talent. He can transmit an extraordinary range of feeling in even the simplest of compositions and I’m very excited to be working with him on this incredibly beautiful piece.”***

For a time Rilke lived in France and was secretary to the greatest sculptor of the 19th century Rodin , who encouraged him in his extraordinary ability to see in fine detail the eternal questions; what at the deepest level the feminine is, what being-human is and what, most importantly, love is. Rilke’s justly famed spirituality is rooted finally and forever in the earth, the senses, in sex.

The marriage of music and word has been seen before but rarely in such an intimate, organic context. Through the full power of song, sound, poetry and image, and in the exquisite space of Hopetoun Alpha, this show is a hymn to being.

October 5 – 16, (Monday and Tuesday 6.30pm, Wednesday - Saturday 8pm, Sunday 4pm), at Hopetoun Alpha, 19 Hopetoun St, Newton. Tickets are \$30 and \$25 concession or groups of 10+ and available from iTICKET www.iticket.co.nz or 09 3611000.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Angel and the Beloved is one of two companion theatre pieces to the book, **The Noise of Being**, Sylvia is currently writing about the Voice based on her study, research and practice of the last twenty years. They are intended to illustrate and embody the processes, principles and practices at the core of this work and its key themes; the transformative, healing power of sound and the human ability to change and evolve; the call to reclaim our emotional intelligence as a pathway to spiritual guidance and the role of the voice and body in the creative process.

Rainer Maria Rilke

What Rilke called his ‘work’ came to mean for him more and more the experiencing and expression of ‘reality’, of intensity of ‘being’ – a celebration of pure creative energy which he often names ‘God’ in his poetry and pursues with a spiritual dedication. Rilke wrote short poems dense with metaphor, he also wrote long dramatic story poems such as, *the Book of Hours, the Book of Pictures, Duino Elegies, and Songs to Orpheus*. His writing is an infinite supply of potent, timely material with universal appeal which delights in, challenges and celebrates the human spirit and the way we live our lives. *The Angel and the Beloved* draws from his abundant letters and poems – particularly on the themes of love, nature and change.

Sylvia Rands - Performer

Sylvia Rands is one of New Zealand’s most respected and inspirational teachers of Voice. Studying initially in Boston USA with Kristin Linklater in 1985 Sylvia has since developed a unique blend of vocal training which is currently in demand amongst New Zealand performance industry professionals whilst also increasingly appealing to a wide-range of people within the community as they awaken to the voice’s potential for healing and empowerment. From 1997 to 2004 Sylvia was Voice Tutor at several of Australia’s prestigious drama schools before returning to NZ in 2005 to run the voice department at Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School. She left the school in 2008 to write and resume her acting career. In 1997 Sylvia completed a training in ‘Healing with Sound’ from the Lichtenberg Institute, Germany and

she offers Sound Healing in her private practice alongside a range of voice training and professional coaching aimed at developing people's fullest expression and connection to their creative source. Her unique voice training, Four Elements Voice, developed out of thirty years experience in teaching, performing and healing, is an invitation to live from our authentic selves.

Sylvia has worked as actor, director, dramaturg and voice teacher in New Zealand and Australia for over thirty years. Auckland born, she trained at Theatre Corporate in the late 1970's and has gone on to create a celebrated body of work, roles from classics to comedy, across the country. Sylvia has received two award nominations – 1985: Best Actress for her role as Polly Hanlon in NZ's first major period television series *Hanlon*, and 1987: Best Supporting Actress for the comedy feature *Bonjour Timothy*. In 1990 her self-devised solo show *Such Sweet Thunder* celebrating Shakespeare and Women premiered at the International Festival of the Arts in Wellington, followed by acclaimed national and regional tours.

Sylvia is now resident in Auckland for the first time in thirteen years. TAPAC's 2010 season of Lorca's *The House of Bernada Alba* directed by Margaret-Mary Hollins, in which she played a leading role, was a critical and popular success, mentioned in Metro's Best of Auckland Theatre 2010 :

“In the role of the maid Poncia, Sylvia Rands commands the stage and provides an anchor point for the swirling passions of the sisters as she dispenses earthy peasant wisdom. Rands uses a wonderful array of vocal techniques to hold the audience spellbound as she swings from contemptuous irony to explosively timed humour and a brief moment of heartfelt anguish as the play reaches its electrifying climax..... The seething emotions of the play could easily be overplayed but the whole cast bring a lightness and humour to their roles “. (NZ Herald, June 14, 2010)

2011 has seen Sylvia on *Shortland St* and traveling to Papua New Guinea as vocal coach on *Mr Pip* – the movie about the book of the same name by New Zealander Lloyd Jones.

John Gibson – Musician/Performer

John Gibson has been writing original music for theatre film television and contemporary dance and art installations since 1980. He has performed as actor on television and as a solo performer in his shows *Happiness is a Warm Gun*, an ambitious rewriting of John Lennon songs - and *Randy Newman's America* both of which played to New Zealand's main centres. He has completed over a hundred scores and sound designs for theatre alone, contributing a huge body of work also as collaborator/devisor, initiator and musical director working alongside Auckland's most experienced theatre and film directors and contemporary dance choreographers.

In 2010 John composed music for two New Zealand Festival of the Arts productions *360*, and *Me and Mark Twain in Maori land*. He also wrote a score for a documentary on Ngaio Marsh and a sound score for an installation for the Taupo Festival by his partner Shona McCullagh. His latest work was as musical director for the highly successful *Raising the Titanics* show. In 2009 he received a Qantas Film and Television award for his score for Vincent Ward's film *Rain of the Children*.

“So much of my work has been about giving meaning and form to the spoken word. To making a space for performance which has required the understanding of actors as musicians and music as an effective storyteller. It is my total delight to be able to be involved with new work that breaks boundaries and opens up new worlds for an audience, in this case the astounding poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke. This is a dream project to be able to work here with one of this country's greatest actresses to make a real performance tour de force.”

Simon Coleman – Set Design

Simon Coleman has had a long and varied career in the performing arts. Over the past 24 years Simon has directed over 100 Musicals or plays and designed sets, lighting, props and costumes for countless others. In 2010 Simon directed and designed productions of *The Sound Of Music*, *SPAMalot* (Winner of Outstanding Musical 2010 - Showdown Awards) and *Fitz Bunny: Lust For Glory* a new musical by New Zealand cartoonist, Grant Buist presented by Auckland Theatre Company's Young and Hungry Festival. *Fitz Bunny* was also voted by the New Zealand Herald one of the top Five productions of 2010.

Simon also worked for other companies designing scenery, lighting or building props. Design highlights include: *That Face* – Set and Lighting design – Silo Theatre, *Mojo* – Set and Lighting design – The Basement Theatre, *Rent* – Set design – Auckland Music Theatre, *The Gleevent* – Set design – Wellington Musical Theatre and *1001 Mirrors* – design and construction - Auckland Theatre Company.

Projects for 2011 include directing *My Fair Lady* for Blenheim Musical Theatre and a new one woman play by Flaxworks productions, *Drowning In Veronica Lake* which performed at the Wellington, Auckland and Dunedin Fringe Festivals.

Elizabeth Whiting - Costume

Elizabeth has designed costumes for The NBR New Zealand Opera, Auckland Theatre Company, The Silo and contemporary dance companies such as Okareka, Black Grace, Douglas Wright Dance, Michael Parmenter, Atimira and Shona McCullagh. Opera design credits include *Faust*, *Carmen*, *La Bohème* (twice), *Falstaff*, *Barber of Seville*, *The Marriage of Figaro* (twice), *Così Fan Tutte* (NZO).

Theatre design credits include *Equus*, *Cabaret*, *Into the Woods*, *Sweet Charity*, *Hair*, *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, *The Duchess of Malfi*, *Pillow Man*, *My Name Is Gary Cooper* *The Importance of Being Earnest* (ATC); *The Country Wife*, *La Cage aux Folles*, *The Great Gatsby* and *Anything Goes* for Court Theatre *Three Days of Rain*, *Irma Vep*, *The Scene*, *Holding the Man*, *When the Rain Stops Falling* (The Silo). Ballet design credits include *Verge*, *Smashing Sweet Vixens* (RNZB).

Grant Bowler – Animation

Theo Gibson – AV Design

Theo works as an Audio Visual Technician, working previously with Shona McCullagh, Mike Hodgson, on installations such as Nelson festival Beacon install and Shona McCullagh's Mirror Me schools project. In 2008 Theo worked on Tom Reilly's short film the Ambassadors Brain as a CGI animator, and as designer of the AV interface and sound /operator for Oo Baby Baby and ATC's production of Ship Songs, also touring with both shows. In 2010 Theo has worked on the Amici Productions Ltd staging of *Rent* at Auckland's Civic Theatre and is currently filming his first documentary series on 'How to make an electric car'. Theo currently works part time at the Film Department of Performing and Screen Arts UNITEC as a Technician.