

***Taniwha* Public Programming Report**

Herald Theatre, Aotea Centre

26 June - 13 July, 2025

26 Performances

Silo's season of *Taniwha* had three public programming activities...



Talk with Dr. Dan Hikuroa - Learning from the Land: *Taniwha*, Mātauranga and our Whenua

Date: 12 July, 1pm

Location: The Civic

To coincide with Lissy & Rudi Robinson-Cole's large-scale crochet artwork *Wharenui Harikoa* programmed at the Civic Theatre, we worked with Auckland Live to deliver a free talk sharing the space from Dr. Dan Hikuroa, our Mātauranga Māori and Climate Advisor for *Taniwha*.

This talk was delivered to approximately 60 people who attended during Dan's kōrero with a short Q&A afterwards. Dan started the conversation weaving in his previous experience meeting Lissy and then talking about his expertise in using taniwha & storytelling as a means to understand and communicate science around waterways and the whenua.



Foyer Activation

To make theatregoing a more welcoming experience for families and their children, we activated the foyer as a space that extended the design within the show to create a warm and magical environment packed with activities for children to engage in and for parents and their needs.

We worked with Gabrielle Vincent, the Families Programmer at Auckland Writers' Festival, who guided us based on her experience in creating an environment for children but also functional spaces for parents who needed it. *Taniwha* was programmed during the school holidays for children and families and we had not had a show targeted at audiences that young since *Peter and the Wolf* (2017).

With this guidance, we created a foyer decorated with iconic neon yarn from *Taniwha* set designers Lissy and Rudi Robinson-Cole as well as a puppet 'stage' where children could stage a show with puppets designed by Puppetmaster Jon Coddington, and three giant 6mm acrylic frog statues.

To extend the language of papercut puppets in the show, we created a frog puppet papercraft for children to colour and craft their own frog puppet. The Auckland Live FOH staff were excellent, and helped us top up the paper puppets as required between performances.

For parents, we demarcated spaces in the foyer with clear signage for them to use as needed. We created a pram parking zone with any parents to keep their pram, a breastfeeding zone with screens and couches and a kai zone for kids who may want to eat any food brought from home.

The foyer activation was a big success, seeing parents and children engaging before and after every show. These foyer activations were celebrated on Social Media and mentioned in Renee Liang's Theatreview of *Taniwha*:

“The foyer of the Herald Theatre is bounding with energy. This makes a nice difference from the sterile space it is normally, with the ‘renovation’ five years ago making it even worse by closing it off from natural light entirely with what looks like builders’ white plasterboard walls.

[...] Back to that busy foyer, though. There are toddlers in pushchairs choosing their cup of lollies from the bar, and kids (well, mainly their parents) colouring in and cutting out frog paper puppets. There are children jumping into the makeshift puppet theatre to battle each other with hand-rod puppets. My son gets into a good-natured puppet brawl with a kid he doesn’t know, both giggling away. There’s even a screened off breastfeeding area, the first time I’ve seen one in a foyer (bravo!).”

- Renee Liang, Theatreview



Post-show Meet the Puppets

To incentivise audiences to attend the new 2pm performances, puppeteers Jon Coddington and Talia Pua demonstrated a show and tell of the puppets and their mechanisms for audiences to get a closer look after the show. These were a hit with audiences.

