

R o o t s

Photography

Joshua Thomas

Words

Dudley Benson

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GOLDEN RETRIEVER PRESS

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Words

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36a Tennyson Street, Dunedin Otepoti 9016
goldenretrieverrecords@gmail.com

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Intro- duction

Soon after making the initial plans to record *Forest: Songs by Hirini Melbourne*, it became obvious to me that the process would be worth documenting in some way. Filming didn't seem right, considering not only the cost, but also a certain sensitivity and responsibility I felt in working with Hirini's waiata. I eventually asked my partner Josh, who produces my live shows and who I often collaborate with on photographs, to formally document the album project on his camera, and then the tour that followed. These are the images that make up *Roots*.

Josh began on the day the first seeds of the project were planted, at Te Wharawhara Ulva Island in June 2008, and took the final photograph two-and-a-half years later at the Oratia Settlers Hall in Waitakere, Auckland, on the closing show of our tour.

As any independent artist well knows, there are numerous facets to an album project, some exhilarating

and others mundane, but almost all of which you have to manage yourself. As well as offering an insight into the evolution of the album and tour projects, Josh and I also wanted these images to reflect the realities of the independent musician at work.

Following the forty-nine images, I've answered questions I invited from listeners of the album, people who saw the tour show, colleagues and friends. I also asked them to describe themselves in three words or less, and the place they come from or are associated with. I thank them for this dialogue. The Appendix is an archive of promotional photography and images associated with the project. Finally, the Index lists the details of each photograph.

Kia ora rā, e tihe mauri ora.

Dudley

November 2011

*Photo-
graphs*





















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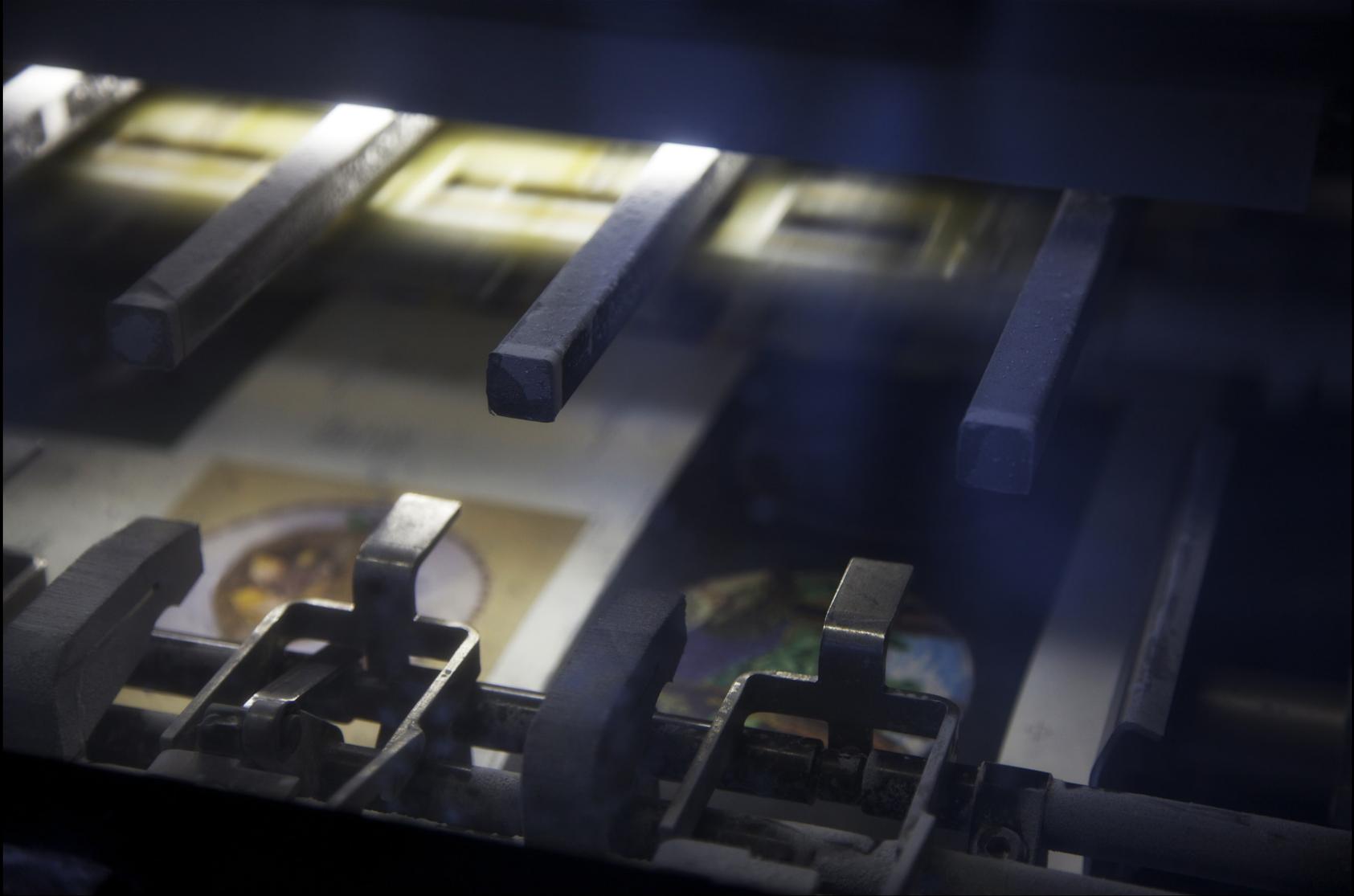


















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Name of Concert CONCERT Dudley Benson Five with the Dawn Chorus

Date/s of Concert PERFORMANCE DATES See attached

Venue VENUE NAME See attached

Performer Name NAME OF PERFORMER OR GROUP Dudley Benson et al.

Title of works performed	Composer/s and publisher/s	Vocal	Non-vocal	Duration
1 <u>Tonight You Belong To Me</u>	<u>Billy Rose / Lee David</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>2:30</u>
2 <u>Pipi Māua ē</u>	<u>Hirini Melbourne</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>2:30</u>
3 <u>Pūrekehua</u>	<u>Hirini Melbourne</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>3:00</u>
4 <u>Pipihāngaroa</u>	<u>Hirini Melbourne</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>4:30</u>
5 <u>Tūiairako</u>	<u>Hirini Melbourne</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>4:30</u>
6 <u>Pūgawawāwā</u>	<u>Hirini Melbourne</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>3:00</u>
7 <u>Astama</u>	<u>Dudley Benson</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>3:30</u>
8 <u>Wilow</u>	<u>Dudley Benson</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>4:05</u>
9 <u>Ragaki</u>	<u>Dudley Benson</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>4:46</u>
10 <u>Tui</u>	<u>Dudley Benson / Hirini Melbourne</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>4:00</u>
11 <u>Nothing Left but Hell</u>	<u>Dudley Benson</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>4:00</u>
12 <u>Kuru</u>	<u>Dudley Benson / Hirini Melbourne</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>4:00</u>
13 <u>On the Shoulders of the Earth</u>	<u>Dudley Benson</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>4:00</u>
14 <u>It's Akaroa's Fault</u>	<u>Dudley Benson</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>4:00</u>
15 <u>Kiri</u>	<u>Hirini Melbourne</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>5:00</u>
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*Ques-
tions &
An-
swers*



When you made The Awakening, you were singing characters and surroundings to life that were a part of your own family history in Canterbury. As a Pākehā pop musician, did you have any trepidation going into a project that would rework waiata designed by Hirini Melbourne to strengthen te reo Māori, a language that you were relatively new to?

Sam Wicks / Mangawhau, Tamaki Makaurau / Writer & broadcaster

I think having trepidations when entering into any creative process is quite a standard and healthy thing to experience, and even healthier if you can recognise what those trepidations are and deal with them directly. Feelings of caution are really valuable as guides and safety signals, especially in projects which require sensitivity – such as the balance of an indigenous expression being approached from a non-indigenous perspective.

The major concerns I had about this project were based on my lack of knowledge and understanding of te Ao Māori. I grew up in a conservative Pākehā society which taught that Captain Cook ‘discovered’ this place, and anything before that moment was of little significance. Moving to Auckland in my early twenties exposed me to a far more culturally diverse society than the one I’d

come from, and it wasn’t long before I began to realise that as a citizen of Aotearoa, I’d not been properly introduced to or educated about the Māori world.

Once the idea to make *Forest* came about and I was given permission by Hirini’s widow Jan, I knew that I needed an understanding of te reo before going much further. That resulted in a year-and-a-half at the University of Auckland studying the language, history, politics and contemporary issues facing Māoridom. It was a hugely enriching experience both personally and as an artist taking on this project, and allowed me to record the album with a much deeper understanding of the ideas Hirini might’ve wanted his waiata to express.

It did occur to me that I might experience some criticism as a Pākehā appropriating Māori work. I respect attitudes of protection and wariness over such taonga as Hirini’s waiata, because vivid examples of terrible misappropriation, misunderstanding and disrespect of Māori artwork continue to take place in Aotearoa and internationally. At this stage I haven’t been approached with any such attitude, although I did learn of a person who didn’t think I should’ve had the right to do the project, so I suppose that view may exist in some capacity. In general though the feedback I’ve had from people close to Hirini’s work, Māori and non-Māori, has been tumeke.

Why did you decide to make an entirely voice-based album?

Martyn Pepperell / Writer & DJ / Wellington

Several reasons...

Recording *The Awakening* with its significant number of instruments took perhaps a year-and-a-half, and felt quite compartmental in the way it all came together. So, practically speaking, I wanted to manage this project far more fluidly and succinctly, and felt that honing in on very few instruments was a way of keeping this process and the energy of the sound tight. I actually started arranging *Forest* for a small group of instruments and a choir – a sort of chamber ensemble.

I don't remember the moment the instruments were politely ditched, but I know that the decision to focus on the human voice grew from two principles: firstly, birds are singers, and as the heroes of

the waiata, that should be honoured; secondly, I was thinking a lot about the fact that if we as people were to strip everything that we have and are right back to the essential, and in doing so open ourselves completely up to Nature, we would be left only with our voices.

Once I was sure that this was the way to progress, the whole project suddenly had a new level of clarity to me, and felt much stronger in its communication with the birds and Hirini's ideas. I could then look at all the ways the voice could be used (although I only really touched the surface of this on the album), and could start working with people who used their voices in unique ways. It was an example of how creating a restriction can free up possibilities and directions.

I was looking at the cover of Forest trying to think of a question to ask you about the work contained in the album, but it was hard to think of something specific as I had many conversations with you over the years while you were putting the album together – and I used to run into you around the university when you were studying Māori there (which was part of the making of the album). The longer I looked at the cover of Forest recalling our conversations, the album and your performances of the songs; the more I became curious about the image on it. Would you tell me the story of the cover image please?

Tracey Williams / Artist. Researcher. Ethical-ist. / Auckland

The cover image is a fabric appliqué by Florence Dennison, a craft artist from Tuatapere, Murihiku Southland. I'd been collecting her work – cushions with native bird appliqué sewn into them – from the Tuatapere Country Craft store for a year or two before I asked her to create the *Forest* artwork. Not only did I love her cushions and knew her work would be interesting in the context of album art, but it felt good to keep some of the creativity coming from the South, near Ulva Island where the project began.

Our process was relatively clear. Florence would make ten fabric panels: one for each bird (and the spider), one of me, a cover image, and an alternative version of the cover image. For the individual bird panels, Florence worked from photographs of birds by Rod Morris and Buller's illustrations.

The portrait panel also ended up being straightforward. It was the cover that we hadn't been sure about, and wanted to leave open until as close as possible to the time of finishing the album itself. We'd initially thought that an image of all the birds together could work, but it didn't – it was chaos. I think with that realisation came the obvious answer; the cover panel needed to be the forest itself – both the place belonging to these birds, and the pathway into it for us as listeners.

For that particular panel, Florence and I looked at Henri Rousseau paintings. We were interested in the way Rousseau layered his jungle scenes, and Florence applied some of his ideas into this panel.

I'm still somewhat intrigued by the cover of

Forest and its nocturnal counterpart. I like that it has an evasiveness about it – naive in the way that it is presented, but expressing something ancient, and not necessarily designed for human beings to fully understand or partake in.

In terms of this project, are there any artists from New Zealand or abroad that you feel a musical kinship with (musically or stylistically)?

David Klein / Dreamer / Melbourne

I tend not to listen to music when I'm working on a project – mainly because I have to keep my brain clear enough to listen critically to what I'm making at the time – but naturally there are subconscious influences that creep into the work, and sometimes conscious ones too.

Between finishing *The Awakening* and arranging *Forest*, there were in fact a few artists I was listening to quite regularly. Looking back, I think they became important because I needed god-parent figures who'd broken ground in the various areas that *Forest* was heading in, specifically in their message or in the treatment of the voice.

Kaupapa-wise, I listened to a lot of Yoko Ono – particularly her beautiful album *Between My Head & The Sky*. I have so much respect for Ono,

especially her ability to be both politically blunt and poetic at the same time, and I aimed to be as clear as she is in her message of our need to care for the planet. She became such a beacon of courage for me during this project. On the evening I recorded the main vocal to Kiwi, which really had to be done right and wouldn't work if I didn't get it in the first few takes, we turned off all the lights in the studio and I knelt down on the floor with the microphone and an image of Ono performing 'Cut Piece'. I stared at it as I sang the lament, and that take was the only one we needed.

In terms of the style and production of the album, I greatly respect Björk's use of the human voice on her *Medúlla* record – she opened up so much possibility that I think it would be fair to say that

Forest would be different had Björk not made *Medúlla*.

I also became quite enamoured with the work of Meredith Monk. She is another artist who has explored the voice thoroughly, and beautifully. I'm amazed by the narrative that Monk can create in her music without using any words at all, and with such guttural parts of her voice. She is like a volcano – fearless in using the mouth and throat as a gateway to gracefully vomit out whatever inner force is inside her.

What other influences (beyond the original versions) affected the mood for your interpretations of Hirini's waiata?

Emile Holmewood / Male, 5'9", 72kg / Westport

The major influence I wanted to bring to the work was the voice of Nature in Aotearoa.

To me this means many things, and yet it's also quite indefinable and intangible. It's that totally un-human and ingraspable essence that I wanted to try to inject into the record as a whole, and I really don't know if it's there or not, but I was constantly reminding myself of that idea throughout the process of making the album.

For example, once I'd arranged a passage of music, I'd ask myself: how could this melody be represented in Nature? Luckily for me most of Hirini's melodies and phrases already do this so seamlessly. For example, if you listen to the intervals and rhythm in Hirini's repeated melody of 'Whakarongo mai, Tūī', you can hear how he has

musically translated the tūī call within it. His Kōkako is another clear example of this.

The closest bond I got happening between Nature and the arranging process was through doing the initial stages of writing the melodies and imagining the textures, outdoors. I wrote the climax of Pīpī Manu E walking on Rakiura, the choral part to Kiwi sitting in Grey Lynn park, and did a lot of dancing to beat-patterns for Ruru on the beach at Cosy Nook. When I was in these places and focusing on the waiata, it was like a chemical rush of ideas and possibilities, but all very calm and assuring.

If I think of the 'moodiest' song on the record, I suppose it's Kiwi. There were many things that brought about the tangitangi. How I feel about

the plight of our birds and wildlife, the greater environment and the lack of significance given to its preservation by governments past and present was the most obvious and aggravating influence at the time. Touring that song was interesting, because we finished every show with it, and the root cause of that sadness would change. During the tour the miners at Pike River were killed, and the anguish and frustration of that situation forced itself into the lament. More recently we performed the show for the Nelson Arts Festival, and the tangitangi became about the oil spill in the Bay of Plenty.

It is said 'sacred architecture is frozen music'. If you viewed each track of Forest as a series of structures / buildings if you like, how would the 'Forest buildings' inspire the people who live and dwell within them?

A.E. Mason / Alchemaeic Healer / Omhango

From the very outset, my hope has been that this album would be like a primer for New Zealanders to engage at an honest level with the environment, and then to express that in their daily lives. It's not that I assume people don't, and of course I understand that there's a certain preaching-to-the-choir element in this ideal, but I do feel that as a society in general we're still a bit behind with our understanding of how important our natural environment is to our own survival. It's not yet taken for granted that the health of our air, water and soil directly relates to our own health - and it should be. New Zealanders who do talk like this and force us to think about this reality tend to get labelled as distractible tree-huggers, when they should be admired and respected for just saying it like it is. I'm lucky in a way because I can say these things through music, and

instead people are very happy to receive these messages because they can sing along.

So I would really hope that this is what is most inspiring about *Forest* - that it might allow us to just be open about our love and concern for nature in whatever it is as individuals that we do. I'm a singer, but you might be a healer, or work in an office - it doesn't really matter, you can bring nature into your everyday. Once that language becomes colloquial, that's when as a culture we'll advance to being responsible caregivers of the land, and all the benefits will come.

Of course, I know that in creating something loaded with intentions, people will interpret (and maybe be inspired) in their own way.

Was there anyone instrumental in encouraging your respect and obvious love of nature?

Hazel Milligan / Kind, creative, sensitive / Pt Chevalier, Auckland

My parents, particularly my mother Adrienne. I grew up on the Port Hills of Christchurch on a long, steep property which began with a house at the street end, moved on through a garden with a brick path that eventually turned into dirt and wound for a few hundred metres into a series of fields, areas of bush, rock and pine forest. We referred to these places collectively as 'down the back', and this is where the goats my Mum bred lived. I remember Mum being quite relaxed about me at a very young age wandering around and playing down the back. Maybe now a mother like this would be looked at sideways, but she must have trusted that I'd be fine, maybe that I'd be learning, and probably was relieved to have some time to herself.

The long-term result of spending a lot of time

down the back by myself (or with the goats, cats and dogs) is a love I now have for doing just that - walking through Aotearoa bush and forest. This is probably the most creatively inspiring thing I can do at the moment.

My Mum also closely involved her children in the lives of her goats. She would wake us in the night to be present at the birth of kids, and then answer our inevitable questions about the after-birth and that sort of thing. Equally when it was time to cull the herd, we were there for that, and would eventually eat them. For a few years my entire preschool would come up to our place for the goat experience - patting, feeding, no culling - and so I suppose I learnt that nature can be discussed and should be shared and respected.

My parents had a plant nursery called The Wholesale Plant Nursery, in Barrington Street of Christchurch. Naturally, my siblings and I spent a lot of time there, playing and then helping out as we got older. Of course simply because you might sell nature doesn't mean you respect it, but my parents did, and loved working with plants and people. I also love being in gardens, and one day I'd like to be able to rattle off the Latin and native names of plants and trees the way they could.

What is the one moment on this album that best represents you as a person?

Michael McClelland / Musician, writer / Auckland

I don't think there is one moment that stands out as being more personal than others, and I hope that *Forest* might be an overall expression of me as a person, at the time it was made.

There are definitely songs and details that I loved making and sharing, and that I suppose reflect something about me. They would have to be...

The climax in *Pīpī Manu E* where the voices converge with each other and Gerry Findlay's mimicking. I was imagining my body bursting open with love for Nature, and becoming a part of it.

The mid-section of *Tīrairaka*, where things really take off. It was a painfully long process to record the keyboard-like chords in the back-

ground - I had to sing every note of the scale over about three octaves, one at a time on 'mmm', getting the tuning and length exactly right, before we fed each note into the midi-notation I'd arranged. It was like a human-computer chord sequencer, but once it was done, and we got it working in with Homeboy's beat, I had so much fun singing my main vocal over it.

Tūi was wonderful because Vashti was a part of it. Because I was working with a singer whose technique is so soft and delicate, I had to compliment that, and not get carried away. I learned how much I love singing with restraint.

Ruru became a bit of a break-out piece for me, because I made the decision to write almost completely new lyrics. It was great to be able to

work on a song in which the venting of anger was such a core part of its drive. Ruru was left quite late in the recording process because I wasn't entirely certain of how I would source his main aggravations - he needed a current affair! After marching up Queen Street against government-proposed mining of Schedule 4 protected National Parks, I knew exactly what Mr Ruru would be so furious about, and formed the kaupapa of the song that afternoon in May 2010.

I enjoy *Pūngāwerewere* because its melody is so happy-go-lucky, and for some reason has a nostalgic appeal for me too...so singalong-able.

Finally, *Kiwi* is a conglomeration of my thoughts and emotions on *Papatūānuku* in 2010 - not just the lament, but the optimistic passages too.

What was the most challenging aspect of recording these songs?

Robert E. Drake / Librarian / Archivist / San Diego, California

The most memorable technical difficulty we faced was due to the lack of instruments on the album.

One conventional way to record an album with instruments would be to begin with those instruments that are most dominant in the songs. For example, in *The Awakening* we recorded the piano first. You then build on top of that base with other layers which are specifically tuned in relation to it. *Forest* was constructed with two different bases: the male close-harmony quartet layer and the choir layer. We recorded those parts first, then King Homeboy's beats, and then my vocal. We found through working this way that human tuning is a variable thing, and unlike a piano which will maintain the same pitch throughout a song,

the voice can (and will) sharpen and flatten of its own accord.

We had to deal with a number of base layer recordings in which there were tuning shifts, and these of course presented problems for recording the next layers. There would've been simple ways to avoid this, such as feeding constant droning key notes to performers while they were singing, but having not recorded an acapella record before I wasn't quite prepared for that. Somehow we got around it.

I also had a relatively small budget for what I wanted to do, and that was a constant challenge. I don't want to moan about that, but dancing around limited resources does take up energy.

Given that the concept of Forest is driven by environmental and ecological concerns, both issues underpinned by managing and maintaining our scarce resources for as long as possible, was the decision to record versions of Hirini Melbourne songs (rather than Dudley Benson originals) a critical part of this? The idea of covers seems to play both to the reuse & recycle mantras of contemporary environmentalism, and also to this sense of preserving our taonga for the generations to come.

Aaron Hawkins / Man About Town / Otepoti

The idea of preservation of taonga is really complex, and subjective. It's true that part of the motivation for this project grew from the fact that I wanted to share Hirini's waiata with a new, or different audience. As well as that, there were the obvious environmental and ecological reasons for making the album. Beyond those ambitions, though, it was simply a musical thing: the musician inside me was really shouting about how incredible these songs were, and convincing me that I could do interesting things with them.

I don't know if at that point I was totally conscious of the fact that the project was then engaging in a process of preservation or rejuvenation of taonga, because at the time - mid-2008 - I wasn't educated in te Ao Māori. I still don't really

know if *Forest* is an engagement with preservation, and I think people often make their own decisions about that sort of thing.

At the time of taking on this project I wasn't ready to be writing new material as such. I felt exhausted and maybe a little brow-furrowed after releasing *The Awakening*, doing what to me felt like a lot of interviews, and touring. That feeling of being drained contributed to the fact that I had no desire to write anything following that period, but at the same time I was still quite excited musically because the tour had left me thinking about developing new directions, sound-wise. So looking back I suppose a covers or interpretations project was perhaps inevitable, although not according to the reuse & recycle idea. I think it's great that it could be interpreted that way.

Since 2008 I've been mainly an arranger and producer rather than a writer; I think this project has been essential as a time to marinate, and I feel now I'm ready to dictate the kōrero again.

Are there any songs that you wanted to include in the album but didn't or could not?

Robert E. Drake / Librarian / Archivist / San Diego, California

I'd given myself the restriction of only taking bird waiata from Hirini's record *Forest & Ocean*, which was released posthumously in 2006. That album is made up of two LPs that were released in 1979 & 1980. They're quite unusual LPs in the sense that they are a melding together of narrated bird stories, bird calls, and Hirini's waiata. *Children of Tāne* is about the forest birds, and *Friends of Maui* is about the sea birds. They're a lovely set, and I learned from Murdoch Riley who released the records through his label Viking Seven Seas, that in 2006 he went back to the LPs and extracted Hirini's waiata recordings from them, which was hard work because the waiata were often ingrained within the bird calls. That's how the album *Forest & Ocean* came about - it's a collection of the forest and sea bird waiata from those two LPs, separated from the

narration and bird calls. From the thirteen waiata on the forest side of *Forest & Ocean*, I chose seven songs. Seven seemed like a good number, and I felt that keeping the album on the shorter side was in keeping with the listening experience of Hirini's songs - they seem to gently wander in and then disappear before you really know what it was you've just been listening to.

I chose the seven songs based mainly on instinct, and on simply what I liked, but I also thought about songs that would work together well as an album. Aside from the birds, I couldn't ignore Pūngāwerewere, the spider, so ended up relenting on my rule of 'bird waiata only'.

The one song I think I could've made work for the

album but didn't because it's not on *Forest & Ocean* is Pūrerehua. Who would've thought one of the catchiest New Zealand pop songs was about the life cycle of the caterpillar? I'm happy we sang Pūrerehua on tour and that it's on the live album.

To launch the album, you held a Listening Party. Did you come up with that idea? What was the kaupapa behind the concept? Was watching people listening to your performance still a 'performance'? Do people listen to live and recorded performances differently? Would you hold a Listening Party for another project or was it something suggested by the particular nature of the Forest project?

Elizabeth Mitchell / Friend, fan, producer / Tamaki Makaurau

It seems to be relatively common to have an album launch – some people call them listening parties but in most cases I don't think much listening gets done. I hadn't had a launch of any kind previously, but for *Forest* it felt tika to share it with friends, whānau and people who had worked on the record, before releasing it. It needed a warm haere mai into the world, and gathering supportive people together in a community space was the way to do that. So I called it a listening hui, and we had it at the Grey Lynn Library Hall on the weekend before the release.

We asked people to bring a cushion – someone even bought a beanbag – and I suppose about thirty of us sat on the floor in the middle of the room, and listened to the record. I sat at the back, and yes, it was interesting to watch body language!

I have a friend who is a singer and also a connoisseur of 90s RnB. When I saw her subtly grinding during the beats of Tīrairaka, I felt really satisfied. In the middle of the record people were smiling along to Tūi, there was some movement again in Ruru, and then finally Kiwi was very still.

I suppose the brain must process listening experiences really differently – certainly I think the energy of listening to a recording is different to a live performance. Personally, I am generally quite critical when I first listen to a record. I'm thinking about how or why the artist made certain things happen, such as a lyric or rhythm pattern or harmony – while also trying to understand the nature of the work as a whole. I suppose that is the point at which a record is either going to be listened-to in the future, or not, and if it is I'll

eventually relax with it and enjoy it more passively. Being at a live show is totally different for me, I tend to just be a lot more trusting of the experience, and let it happen rather than dictate the rules of whether it is 'worthy' or not. Perhaps it is just an individual thing.

I think the listening hui is a positive thing to do, and certainly as I'm becoming more interested in discussing society in my work, I plan to bring hui in at various other key stages of future projects.

You mentioned that Andrew from The Dawn Chorus translated your songs from previous albums for the Forest tour. Did these alternative versions offer you new insights into your own work?

Emile Holmewood / Male, 5'9", 72kg / Westport

Arranging, I think, is so close to writing – potentially a very personal thing and a hugely decisive element in how a song finally sounds. There's an amount of responsibility in using the melodies, rhythms and instruments of a song to help to impart the messages within it, and using these tools an arranger can essentially decide what parts of a song to accentuate, or to dull down.

So until this tour, I'd never approached anyone else to arrange my songs – I just preferred to have the control over them. But there can be a point when I grow a bit sick of re-building the same song for different contexts. For example, a song like *Asthma* I've been performing since 2006, and it's been arranged as a solo live version, a version recorded for *The Awakening*, an-

other for *The Awakening* tour, and so on...

So when I began planning which songs to perform on the *Forest* tour, I felt like it was time to relent some of that control. Audiences have heard my versions of *The Awakening* songs a few times now, so I thought it would be interesting for them to hear someone else's perspective on them. On a more practical level, I was really busy with album and tour prep, so it made sense for me to pass on those songs to an arranger, while I focused my energy on Hirini's waiata.

It didn't take long for me to find Andrew Baldwin, because everyone I asked suggested him. Once we'd met, talked about it all and both felt comfortable with each other and what we wanted from the new arrangements, I then asked him to come

on tour as a tenor, to which thankfully he agreed.

I love Andrew's versions, but I don't think they offered me any new insight on the pieces themselves. Perhaps this is because they aren't too radical – and they weren't designed to be. What I gained most from Andrew's arrangements was actually through the exchange itself, and how positive it was. I was reminded of the value of relenting: inviting someone else's energy and ideas, even at such a crucial stage, can be the best thing to do...It seems so obvious now that I write it.

How does the Nigel Brown landscape painting create the appropriate context for your performance?

Anna-Marie White / Art gallery curator / Nelson

The kaupapa of the show was about keeping the focus as much as possible on the music, and avoiding any distraction from the central ideas of the songs. This meant performing in venues that supported the idea of community, sharing a cup of tea with our audiences after the shows, and was one of the reasons I asked Cat Ruka – a dance artist rather than a musician – to open the shows, and to do it without music.

It also meant keeping the visual experience of the show sharp and minimal, and I was inspired by the Kiwi Concert Party and their incredibly simple but showy aesthetic which they managed to achieve in circumstances where resources were slim. One of the staging techniques that they used to great effect was the painted backdrop. Josh and I felt that Nigel, with his beautifully

stylised and signature approach to Aotearoa landscape would be able to give us something that would support the songs, without distract from them, and could give the audience a visual pathway into the place where these waiata grew from. The forest, mountains and rivers of Nigel's backdrop were like the habitats of the creatures we sang about, and the range of colours were chosen to reflect the dynamics that are represented in the music. Certainly for us as performers, the backdrop became the eighth member of the band.

Furthermore, the costumes were treated with the same references. The bowtie/barbershop idea really grew from that, and Matt Nash, the designer of most of the pieces we wore, knew of Shona Tawhiao, a designer who works with natural fibre. She made our bowties from flax

finished in a glossy black paint. Matt made the shirt-dress that Hopey wore, and Kristin Toller made the fabric jewellery that Cat and Hopey wore with the goal of adding an organic female energy to the somewhat polished look of us boys.

The play between songs on tour - was it written, directed, choreographed?

Warwick Broadhead / A human being / My past, long-time

Mostly improvised really, although good stories like 'Paul the Pūngāwerewere' got told several times...

I find that when I'm on stage I have to be careful, because it can often head into awkward-comedy territory, or I expose some sort of personal detail about myself or someone I know. So usually I have a broad idea of what I might want to say before songs, if anything, and try to retain focus on that.

On this tour, the story that got me most into trouble was my kōrero to my Auckland audience - friends and whānau in attendance - about Nothing Left At All. I explained that I wrote the song when I was 21 and leaving Christchurch for the first time, and how suddenly it was relevant

once more because I was about to leave Auckland and move to Dunedin. We performed the song, and I thought people really enjoyed it. But no, not all! It turned out a couple of friends were semi-hurt by the chorus, 'There is nothing left here, there is nothing left here, just a shadow in the corner of a feeling'... So before singing the song on the rest of the tour I told this story, and apologised in advance for any unintended offense.

If beauty is a symbol for the transcendent nature of divinity, what do you view as the beauty in Aotearoa, and are we really awake to it? Is the sound of the tūi enough to keep us awake?

A.E. Mason / Alchemaeic Healer / Owhango

I think identifying beauty, particularly in Nature, is one of those things that evolves throughout our lives. Sometimes I have outer-body experiences where I realise I'm fascinated by something that even five years ago I wouldn't have known where to look for let alone be interested in. Over the past year I've been planting ferns so I'm now very interested in different varieties and how well the ones I've already planted are growing. And in that moment when I'm talking to the fern as I plant it I realise how this Dudley is so different to five-years-ago Dudley, who would maybe have been obsessed about importing a certain record and trying to spread it around. So I think that the things we find beautiful and fascinating change as we do, and are very personal.

I'm not convinced that everyone gets the chance to learn to identify beauty in Nature, and therefore respond to it. Many people are in circumstances where either they've never been taught to appreciate it by someone else, or they're prevented by elements out of their control. For these reasons, taking joy from Nature to me feels not like a right so much as a privilege, and that's not how it should be. Then there are people that could engage if they wanted to, but just couldn't care less. So to generalise, I suppose we aren't yet fully awake to the wairua of Nature, but have humans ever been? And will we ever be? I don't know.

I do have a mantra though: that all the answers to our problems can be found within Nature. With that in mind, I think on a personal level keeping

hold of lovely spontaneous moments like a tūi calling can make your day that much more real, and easier. So perhaps it's about keeping ourselves awake, with Nature's help...

Incorporating the beatboxer is a stroke of genius and added immense appeal to the show for me. How did your relationship with Hopey One come about?

Andy Clover / Creative / Nelson

Originally I'd hoped King Homeboy would beatbox on tour, as he did on the album. The timing didn't work for him, so I went online and googled something along the lines of 'beatboxer New Zealand'. Hopey popped up very early on, and I was pretty blown away by the videos of her doing her thing. Because she was based in Brisbane I didn't get my hopes up, and simply wrote to her asking if she knew of any beatboxers in Aotearoa who might be interested in this specific tour project. I was obviously thrilled that she instantly came on board, and it all worked out the way it did.

Hopey is remarkable to work with. She taught me about the differences between her style of beatboxing and King Homeboy's - she uses inhaling as a central part of her technique, while Homeboy

(and I believe most male beatboxers) are generally exhalers. Hopey's technique is also different because as opposed to a male beatboxer who has tenor or bass vocal cords, she has alto. This means that to create some of the bassier effects of her beats she has to manipulate the microphone to exaggerate the bass-end of certain plosives. So interesting.

It was also refreshing to have a female energy on stage - and a gentle but profound energy at that. This was something people responded to in the shows, and despite originally envisaging an all-male show a la Kiwi Concert Party, it makes total sense to me now that the balance created was the right one.

I have had the greatest honour and privilege to perform ngā waiata a Hirini Melbourne through the British Isles and Europe with “Te Roopu o Ngāti Ranana”. Dudley, have you ever performed on stage wearing black jockeys and a piupiu? I know you would be great.

Mat Nelson / Smooth, suave & single / Hastings, Hawkes Bay. Ngāti Kahungunu / Rongomaiwahine

Thanks Mat. No, I haven't ever gone there. Somehow I'm not as convinced as you that I could make it work. I did a course in kapa haka at the University of Auckland and as much as I wanted to be great at it at the time, I found it a bit scary.

E te manu tioriori, your music calls forth a world that did not exist until you sung it into existence. How do you find a place that does not exist? And how do you know you have arrived there, when 'there' does not exist until you have found it?

Tiopira McDowell / Student, musician / Tamaki Herehere-e-Nga-Waka

This isn't easy of course, and I don't pretend that I'm able to do this completely, but I've found that the work I've made that others have responded to most has come as a result of letting go of the map, and heading off into the trees.

I've learnt that one of the roles of an artist is to be constantly looking for this new place. The travelling part of the process can be fraught, but that too informs the destination, and I'm growing to understand that a certain amount of inner stress is a necessary part of that tension. As long as it doesn't take too many years off my life I'm happy to acknowledge that part of my creative process, while trying to give it only the minimum of energy it needs to keep some of that heat alive.

It's amazing to witness or be a part of work made

by someone who has found their own place. I know when I'm registering that resonance because I feel a rush of inspiration to make my own statement, somehow related (but not always) to what that person is expressing. So to a certain extent, I think you can observe other people and how they've managed to deviate from expectations, and learn from their influence.

Most importantly, I think you need to trust yourself, and your instinct. That can probably be applied to everything we do, but certainly when I'm creating something, I've found that as much as possible, I need to remove all existing boundaries from the vision, and know that with time and thought and an honest kaupapa, something new will happen.

At Pipitea that night I saw 'te ao Māori' come alive to people from many worlds, which to me showed the tupuna associated with the show were as passionate about this medium of communication as the performers...We had this beautiful blending of Māori, non-Māori, marae, ancestors and community, so my question is this: how do we continue to create this exquisite harmony of peoples and places so it becomes the normal experience of all of our mokopuna?

Lisa Chant / Māori global citizen / Otamatea marae, Tinopai Village, Kaipara Harbour

My feeling is that there's a tide coming in, and it is unstoppable.

I believe that more and more New Zealanders are wanting to discuss, create and initiate a paradigm-level change in how we identify ourselves and each other. There's a deep frustration in people at this time, and though the cause of that friction varies for different people, I feel it is a great and necessary thing: at some point it's going to force the gestation of a projected future into a real one. There are of course people who are terrified of this, though they wouldn't articulate the kaupapa in the same way as I have, but on the whole I meet people all the time who are part of this tide and urging it on.

From my point of view, the most exciting and relevant artwork being presented in Aotearoa at the moment is work that contributes to this hui. It's particularly inspiring to engage with such artists of my own generation who, like me, are developing the things they want to say and finding the best ways of saying it through their work.

I think our mokopuna will be experiencing the harmony you talk about Lisa, on a far greater level than past generations have. It takes courage to make the commitment to express potentially divisive issues in our daily lives, but I believe that more of us are doing this, and normalising the discussion for our coming generations. By looking at our concerns right in the eye and being ready to acknowledge both the mistakes as

well as the achievements of our ancestors, we'll then embrace Aotearoa as the open and evolving whare that really it is.

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NEW ALBUM

DETAILS ANNOUNCED SOON

#1
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NEW ALBUM

DETAILS ANNOUNCED SOON

The image shows the interior of a large, ornate cathedral. The perspective is from the side of the nave, looking down a long red carpet that runs down the center. Rows of dark wooden pews are arranged on either side of the carpet. The walls are made of light-colored stone or brick, featuring a series of pointed arches. The ceiling is high and vaulted, with several smaller arches visible. In the distance, a group of people is gathered near the altar area. The lighting is warm and focused on the central aisle.

NEW
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Forest:
Songs by Hirini Melbourne

H

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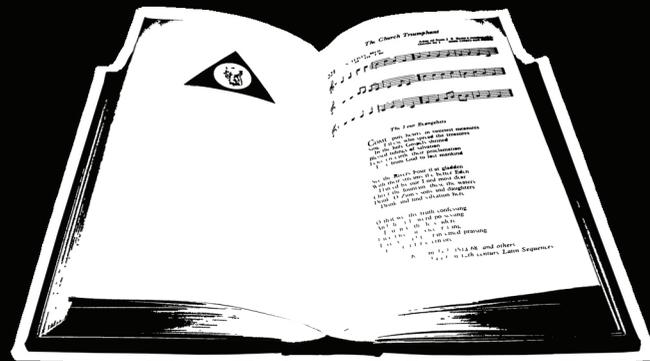
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The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy Kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
as in heaven, so on earth.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the Kingdom,
the power, and the glory,
forever and ever.
Amen.

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