



Media release

****STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL 10AM SATURDAY 5 NOVEMBER, 2016****

THE BONE FEEDER

COMMISSIONED BY AUCKLAND ARTS FESTIVAL AND PRESENTED IN ASSOCIATION WITH NEW ZEALAND OPERA

DATES: 23-25 March, 2017

VENUE: ASB Waterfront Theatre

COMPOSER GARETH FARR

LIBRETTO RENEE LIANG

DIRECTOR SARA BRODIE

CONDUCTOR PETER SCHOLES

MŌTEATEA HONE HURIHANGANUI

SET DESIGN JOHN VERRY

COSTUME DESIGN ELIZABETH WHITING

LIGHTING DESIGN JANE HAKARAIA

VIOLIN JUSTINE CORMACK

CELLO ASHLEY BROWN

MARIMBA REBECCA CELEBUSKI

TAONGA PUORO JAMES WEBSTER

ERHU DR NICHOLAS NG

GUZHENG XI YAO CHEN

...this land has grown into me, and I into the land. This soil where I stand, this is my land now.

When the bones of Chinese wanderers float, lost on the vast black of the sea and then come to rest on the shores of the Hokianga, they become embedded in the spirit and memory of the Harbour, entwined in a story that soars across lands and oceans, deep into the heart of who we all are.

The Bone Feeder is a stunning new New Zealand opera, beautifully and imaginatively scored by Gareth Farr (*Ruaumoko, From the Depths Sound the Great Sea Gongs*) with libretto by poet and playwright Renee Liang, that explores the mysteries, traumas and gifts of migration, home and belonging.

A young New Zealand Chinese man searching for his roots is guided by a magical cicada and Māori Ferryman. He crosses to 'the other side', where ghosts reveal secrets of love, loss and betrayal. His attempt to uncover his ancestor's bones disturbs the earth and, ultimately, threatens his life.

The Bone Feeder is inspired by the story of the SS Ventnor, which, in 1902, set out carrying the bones of nearly 500 Chinese men who had died in New Zealand. Tragically, the ship never made it – The Ventnor hit a rock off the Taranaki coast and eventually sank off the Hokianga Heads. Far from family and in a watery grave, there would be no-one to tend to the men's needs in the afterlife.



However, the bones ultimately found a home on New Zealand shores, when they were recovered by the people of Mitimiti and respectfully buried.

The Bone Feeder moves between two worlds - contemporary New Zealand and the afterlife, and is grounded in the experiences of early Chinese settlers and their interactions with Pākehā and Māori.

Directed by Sara Brodie (*Nixon in China*, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*, *Don Giovanni*) and conducted by the accomplished Peter Scholes, the opera takes Gareth Farr's unique combination of Western, Māori and Chinese instruments to create a sweeping, beautiful and playful piece of music sung in English, Māori and Cantonese.

The exceptional line up of instrumentalists includes NZTrio's Justine Cormack (Violin) and Ashley Brown (Cello), Taonga Puoro specialist James Webster, Rebecca Celebuski on Marimba and, on traditional Chinese instruments, Dr Nicholas Ng on Erhu from Australia, Julian Renlong Wong on dizi and Chinese New Zealand Guzheng player Xi Yao Chen.

A story rarely told in New Zealand, this Auckland Arts Festival 2017 highlight is a very special, created by some of the country's most outstanding opera-makers.

PERFORMANCE DETAILS

TICKETS	Premium \$99 A Reserve \$85 A Reserve Conc \$79 B Reserve \$75 B Reserve Conc \$69
WHEN	Thursday 23 March – Saturday 25 March, 8.00pm Sunday 26 March, 6.30pm
WHERE	ASB Waterfront Theatre, 138 Halsey St, Wynyard Quarter
BOOKINGS	Ticketmaster.co.nz 09 951 2501
DURATION	1 hour 20 mins, no interval
MORE INFO	Presented in association with NZ Opera With support from Creative NZ, Foundation North, Stout Trust, Australian High Commission Platinum patrons Sir Roderick and Gillian, Lady Deane; Bill and Frances Bell; Sir James Wallace – The Wallace Foundation
EXTRA EVENT	Post-show talk – Friday 24 March
FOLLOW	@AKLFestival #aklfest
ABOUT THE AAF	Taking place annually in March, the Auckland Arts Festival is a globally recognised event that celebrates people and culture, and showcases the unrivalled location, cultural diversity and vibrant energy of New Zealand's largest city. Over 1.6 million people have attended the Festivals to date. Auckland Arts Festival is governed by the Auckland Festival Trust. Trustees are John Judge (Chair), Rick Carlyon, Evan Davies, Sarah Judkins, Tarun Kanji, Margaret Kāwharu MNZM, Jim Moser, Ben Taufua and Fred Ward. The Trust receives core funding from Auckland Council through the Auckland Regional Amenities Funding Act, and Creative New Zealand through the Toi Tōtara Haemata programme. Significant support for AAF 2017 is received from Foundation North, Pub Charity, NZ Community Trust and The Lion Foundation.
MEDIA CONTACT	Siobhan Waterhouse Media and PR Manager Ph: +64 22 126 4149 E: siobhan.waterhouse@aaf.co.nz