The Melbourne Historical Journal is pleased to present the winning article of the Greg Dening Memorial Prize for 2011. The prize commemorates Dening’s special relationship with the journal that spanned forty-seven years from the journal’s foundation in 1961 until Dening’s death in 2008. Throughout his career, Professor Dening was a tireless promoter of postgraduate work and endeavour. In our fiftieth year, we are proud to yet again celebrate the spirit of his work in this publication.

The Greg Dening Memorial Prize is awarded to an outstanding submission that demonstrates affinities with Greg’s own work, reflecting his diverse, creative approaches to history. This year, our judges selected Marianne Schultz and her essay ‘The Best Entertainment of its Kind Ever Witnessed in New Zealand’: the Rev. Frederick Augustus Bennett, the Rotorua Maori Entertainers and the story of Hinemoa and Tutanekai’.

Judges and peer reviewers commended Schultz for revealing new historical material and for her emphasis on creative performance as a dimension of social and political history. Her article is a cross-cultural history of the little known theatrical work of the Rev. F.A. Bennett in the early twentieth century. Schultz carefully observes a 1908 performance of the traditional Maori story of Hinemoa and Tutanekai as the starting point for an excursion into understanding the complexities of cultural commodification, assimilation, politics and belief. Popular theatre is used as a productive cross-cultural space in which to critique the ways in which identity is contested and performed. The performance actively asserts indigenous Maori culture, and is also seen to contest assimilationist versions of Maori identity.

Marianne is a deserving winner of the Greg Dening Prize, and MHJ offers her warm congratulations. We also thank the History Fellows of the University of Melbourne for their generous contribution to the prize fund, and we are especially grateful to Donna Merwick, Greg Dening’s wife and fellow historian, for her support and encouragement in establishing this prize.
On 18 July 1908 the *Christchurch Star* announced the ‘one universal verdict’ concerning the appearance of the Rotorua Maori Entertainers at the Choral Hall on Wednesday and Thursday of that week. Advertising the ‘refined, unique and immensely diverting entertainment’, the *Star* proclaimed that it was ‘the best entertainment of its kind ever witnessed in New Zealand’. Directing the performance was the Rev. Frederick Augustus Bennett, or F.A. Bennett as he was more widely known, a young, charismatic Maori leader and orator, who twenty-one years later would become the inaugural Bishop of Aotearoa. Alongside traditional *poi* and *haka*, the production featured a male quartet singing a combination of *waiata* (song), ‘Plantation Songs’, and popular tunes such the Scottish folk ballad *The Banks of Allen Water*. The troupe of entertainers had, by the time of their appearance in Christchurch, already filled theatres in Rotorua, Auckland, New Plymouth, Wanganui and Wellington.

Key amongst the performance items of that tour was the tableaux staging of the Maori legend, Hinemoa and Tutanekai. Bennett’s depiction of Hinemoa

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3. According to a report in the *Taranaki Herald*, prior to setting out on tour this group had been giving weekly performances in Rotorua, *Taranaki Herald*, July 4, 1908, 2. The itinerary of the tour was as follows: Auckland 6 July, Choral Hall; New Plymouth 8 July, Theatre Royal; Wanganui 9 and 10 July, Opera House; Wellington 15 July, Town Hall; Feilding 18 July, Drill Hall; Christchurch 22 and 23 July, Choral Hall; Dunedin 25 and 27 July, His Majesty’s Theatre; Wellington, 30 July, Town Hall. Reports indicate that most theatres were full or near capacity for every performance.
and Tutanekai presented the story of triumphant love against all odds in eight scenes. As the painted curtain of a *kainga* (village) parted, steam rose from the ground, revealing the maiden Hinemoa, beautiful in the mist, attentively poised on a large rock. The moonlit night, achieved by limelight stage lighting, added to the heightened sense of realism in the theatre and conjured a romantic and idyllic land. From this opening scene the anticipation of the audience was palpable. The tableaux brought to life the most accepted and widely known version of the legend of Hinemoa, according to which, the beautiful maiden swims across Lake Rotorua to Mokoia Island to be with her one true love, Tutanekai. Kept afloat in the water by six gourds and guided by the beautiful music of Tutanekai’s flute/horn, Hinemoa is revived from her nakedness and chilled bones by sitting in a hot pool on the island. After a friend of Tutanekai, Tiki, comes to the pool to get water and hears an unfamiliar voice, Tutanekai is summoned to investigate. Discovering that it is his love, Hinemoa, the two are united and are married.

The Rotorua Maori Entertainers (RME) was only one of many groups that F.A. Bennett led—beginning with his first choir formed in the late nineteenth century to the full-scale opera he produced in 1915—but it is arguably his most significant in the history of New Zealand popular culture. For the first time Maori performers presented a Maori-centred entertainment to Pakeha (non-Maori) audiences in theatres and opera houses. Though Bennett himself features prominently in the history of the Anglican Church and the Young Maori Party (YMP), his involvement in the early twentieth-century performing arts of New Zealand is virtually unknown. The story of this unique and successful 1908 tour, with its confluence of politics and performance, invites a reimagining of early twentieth-century New Zealand culture. How did Maori and Pakeha come together in the theatre? Examining Bennett’s integration of Maori and Pakeha performing arts and the presentation and reception thereof throws a spotlight on an era of conflict and compromise and provides a basis to discuss popular entertainment situated within assimilation politics.

Early twentieth-century New Zealand performing arts was an essential element of expanding local commodities, of which tourism and exhibitions were central.

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4 *Auckland Star*, July 7, 1908, 3; *New Zealand Herald*, July 7, 1908, 3.

5 Bennett’s 1915 opera, *Hinemoa*, produced in collaboration with composer Percy Flynn, will be discussed in more detail within Marianne Schultz, ‘Performing New Zealand: Maori and European song and dance on stage, 1860–1940’ (PhD diss., University of Auckland, forthcoming).
Maori were crucial to all of these endeavours. This 1908 tour, with its presentation of ‘old tribal customs and ceremonies of the ancient people’, confronted Pakeha with representations of Maori by Maori. However, unlike other contemporary public presentations of haka seen in tourist locations and at formal welcoming ceremonies, the theatrical setting combined European and American performance forms, thus re-interpreting Pakeha notions of Maori representations within traditional and popular culture. The Hinemoa tableaux directed and performed by Maori allowed the legendary characters of Hinemoa and Tutanekai to ‘come to life’ for the audience, therefore becoming more than just a depiction of an ancient ‘dying race’. While there is no denying that Bennett’s performances adhered to a paradigm of the acceptable display of assimilated Maori—the balance of power lay with Pakeha—the standard and content of his entertainment blurred the boundary between the races. Performance, in this instance, was able to break through barriers of race and class to create new representations of, and responses to, Maori. As most Maori cultural forms were unknown to Pakeha, Bennett’s placing of indigenous culture into theatres allowed for the transformation of these mysterious and ‘exotic’ customs into popular entertainment.

According to Nikos Papastergiadis ‘the clash of cultures that colonialism invariably provoked, rather than producing a neat bifurcation between colonizer and colonized, encouraged the formation of new cultural hybrids’. The RME and, most importantly Bennett, epitomised this hybridity. The ideology of assimilation held that Maori would succeed because of his or her abandonment of so-called uncivilised (non-British) Maori culture and customs. By the early twentieth century, Pakeha culture was deemed the desirable outcome of expression.

6 New Zealand Herald, July 7, 1908, 3.
for ‘civilised’ Maori. However, state policies of the nineteenth century meant that clashes of cultures, of form, content and circumstance, both added to and depleted cultural expressions.\(^9\) Unlike the ‘ethnological gaze’ that is demanded from a museum display or exhibition setting, Bennett’s performers allowed for a ‘theatrical gaze’, that, as described by Jane Goodall, ‘follows a sequence of action and registers bodies as vehicles of communication rather than sights in themselves’.\(^10\) Whereas the reconstruction of Maori as tourist attraction relied on the enactment of everyday settings and tasks, the re-presentation of Maori on stage and in theatres consisted of an amalgamation of cultural forms and popular entertainment.

**Rev. F.A. Bennett**

Frederick Augustus Bennett was born in Rotorua on 18 November 1872. His mother, Raiha Raitie Rodgers, was Te Arawa, Ngati Whakaue, the daughter of Captain William Rodgers, an American born in Salem Massachusetts and Katerina Rangi Kawhiti from Ohinemutu. His father, Thomas Jackson Bennett, was the son of John Boyle Bennett, from County Cork, Ireland.\(^11\) A medical doctor and lay minister for the Methodist Church, John Boyle Bennett was a close friend to Sir George Grey and acted as Registrar-General of New Zealand in the 1850s while also serving as the editor of the *New Zealander*.\(^12\) Thus, Bennett grew up surrounded by language and customs from Maori, Irish and English traditions. In her 1948 Masters thesis, Bennett’s daughter-in-law, Elaine Westerman Bennett explained, ‘from childhood he has spoken both Maori and English with model fluency and resonance’. Westerman Bennett believed that F.A. Bennett was the recipient of ‘abundant folk-lore and tribal tradition’ owing to his communal upbringing by his tribe and *hapu* (sub-tribe).\(^13\)

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\(^9\) Ranginui Walker explains that the English language was ‘seen as the key to unlocking the secrets of European culture for emulation by Maori’ and therefore was the preferred language taught at native schools from 1877: Ranginui Walker, *He Tipua: The Life and Times of Sir Apirana Ngata*, (Auckland: Viking, 2001), 221.


\(^12\) Hemi Bennett, MS-Papers-1341, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

\(^13\) Westerman Bennett, ‘The Right Reverend Frederick Augustus Bennett’, 2.
Bennett’s accomplished singing, especially with choral music, and his powerful oratorical skills were commented on throughout his life. The Bishop of Nelson, Rev. Suter, acknowledged Bennett’s strong singing voice, which he heard when the young boy sang in a church choir in Rotorua. Suter invited the then fourteen-year-old Bennett to stay with him in Nelson and further his education. Prior to this, Bennett had attended a native school at Ohinemutu and later St. Stephen’s College in Auckland. Hemi Bennett, F.A. Bennett’s brother, recorded that ‘he was famed for the resonance of his deep, rich voice, and as an orator he was probably without peer in the country. On one occasion during a church service, the congregation was so carried away by his eloquence that they burst into spontaneous applause’. The theatricality inherent in Maori *waiata* and *haka*, Anglican Church services and Irish oration found an outlet in Bennett’s theatrical productions.

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14 Hemi Bennett, MS-Papers. See also Elaine Westerman Bennett, ‘The Right Reverend Frederick Augustus Bennett’.

15 Hemi Bennett, MS-Papers.
Maori and performance

The handpicked performers of 1908 all belonged, as did Bennett himself, to the Te Arawa tribe and hapu Ngati Whakaue. Though there had been Maori performers well before Bennett’s troupe, the crossing over of Maori performance into European theatrical settings was novel. Until Bennett and the RME, Maori directed entertainment used traditional tribal settings, such as Marae, for performance, and many Pakeha believed that Maori performance lacked the cultivation of European theatrical productions. The ethnographer Elsdon Best stated that Maori possessed an ‘intelligence of a high order’. However, he believed that their songs, dance and storytelling should be viewed as largely fulfilling a need in the ‘social and ceremonial life of the people’, and therefore not of the same order as European entertainment. While there had been representations and participation of Maori in some English Victorian melodramas in New Zealand and abroad from the mid nineteenth century, these characters were usually presented as racial stereotypes in the colonial mould. With Bennett’s productions, however, Maori directed the gaze and interpretation of Maori for Pakeha and his (re)presentations steered clear from any suggestion of a war-like, savage race. For instance, a ‘troupe of New Zealand Warriors’, featured in the 1862 production *Wakehau, the Pakeha Chief* that toured Sydney and Melbourne. They performed the part of kidnapping savages and went on to repeat their performances in London the following year. Notices in the Sydney newspapers refer to this show as ‘the most unique and extraordinary ever witnessed in the colony’. In 1870 Mr A. Western produced *Philo-Maori or New Zealand As It Is* in Auckland. This production included ‘Real Maoris in their Real War Dance’. Unfortunately they do not seem to have been able to

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16 At times the touring party included up to thirty performers, augmented by the East Coast Haka Party from Ngati Porou led by Bennett’s close friend and colleague, the pro-assimilationist politician Apirana Ngata, MP.

17 A marae is a communal space connected to a tribal or subtribal meeting house.


19 Elsdon Best, *The Maori As He Was: A Brief Account of Maori Life As It Was in Pre-European Days* (Wellington: Dominion Museum, 1934), 139.


21 *Empire*, July 28, 1862. Tourism 1862–1939 Clippings File, Don Stafford Collection, Rotorua Public Library. Like Bennett’s performers, this earlier troupe were also members of Te Arawa and Ngati Whakaue.

22 *Daily Southern Cross*, April 8, 1870, 1.
capture the public’s imagination as the Daily Southern Cross reported three days after its premiere that ‘we are sorry to say that The Philo Maori was repeated’.23

The history of Maori popular entertainment includes older, indigenous forms of spectacles. Prior to the boom in colonial settlement, Maori performing arts occurred in various settings where entertainment was warranted. Te Ahukaramu Charles Royal has described Whare Tapere, or ‘house of entertainment’, as an institution of Maori popular culture or amusement that ceased in the mid-nineteenth century. Royal explains that Maori mythology contains ‘a large number of traditions which form the philosophical and spiritual basis of subsequent [sic] Maori culture’ and these myths and legends were often dramatised or told by an accomplished orator within the Whare Tapere.24 Whare Tapere refers to both ‘a physical building erected for the purposes of entertainment and a set of activities’.25 Within the Whare Tapere, haka, waiata, the playing of taonga puoro (musical instruments) and whaikorero (oratory) occurred. These large gatherings between whanau, hapu, and iwi (families, sub-tribes, tribe) also provided situations where young people met and enabled romantic interactions. Indeed, Royal has commented that the story of Hinemoa and Tutanekai features the Whare Tapere in action, since it is during an entertainment that the lovers first set eyes on each other.26 Within the Whare Tapere, stories moved ‘progressively from those of clear mythological nature to one[s] which contain historical figures who are nonetheless mythologized in Maori tradition’.27

European and American Influences

Alongside the history of Maori performance, an examination of the Western theatrical conventions employed by Bennett is necessary in order to understand the staging of his early twentieth-century performances. Though many forms of Western entertainment were introduced into New Zealand in the nineteenth century, the origins of staged tableaux vivants can be traced to eighteenth-century France. By the 1830s tableaux were an ‘important form of popular entertainment’ in the United States, reaching their apex of popularity in the

23 Daily Southern Cross, April 11, 1870, 4.
25 Ibid.,105, 163.
26 Ibid.,135.
27 Ibid.,127.
1850s. Aided by costumes, scenery, lighting and musical accompaniment, tableaux recreated a still, silent image, which represented the original as close as humanly possible. Tableaux were also described as contributing to the ‘edification, refinement or moral uplift of the audience’. However, throughout the 1840s and 1850s, tableaux were seen in most popular entertainment venues in New York, and thus the themes, subjects and representations came to encompass both ‘high’ and ‘low’ art.

Tableaux were also incorporated into local historical pageants in the early twentieth century, particularly in the United States and, as David Glassberg has argued, this ‘public historical imagery’ contributed to how Americans defined their ‘sense of identity and direction’. The tableaux Bennett presented to his Pakeha audiences and its acceptance as popular entertainment suggests a crossing of cultures and new representations of race and nationhood. It is argued here that the tableaux of Hinemoa and Tutanekai, a dramatisation of an already familiar story of historical figures, gave audiences in 1908 a similar ‘sense of identity and direction’ in early twentieth-century New Zealand.

Tableaux, in both amateur and professional form, made their first appearance on New Zealand stages in the 1850s. The Nelson Dramatic Society presented a series of tableaux vivants depicting the life of Napoleon in June 1856, while the proprietors of the Royal Olympic Theatre in Wellington included tableaux in their opening season that same year. The Daily Southern Cross described these tableaux as ‘art personifying poetry’. In April 1870 a tableaux of six scenes in three acts titled The Pledge! or The Blessings of Teetotalism [sic] opened at Auckland’s Prince of Wales Theatre. And in 1885 the Christchurch based

29 Ibid., 16.
30 Lawrence Levine explains that the terms ‘High’ and ‘Low’ art were derived from the phrenological terms ‘highbrowed’ and ‘lowbrowed’, prominently featured in the nineteenth-century practice of determining racial types and intelligence by measuring cranial shapes and capacities’, Lawrence Levine, Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 221-222.
32 Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle, June 11, 1856, 2; Daily Southern Cross, December 9, 1856, 3.
33 Daily Southern Cross, April 6, 1870, 1.
E.W. Seager produced *Vivants Variants*.34 By the 1880s and 1890s, tableaux vivants were seen in many contexts and were included in many fundraising events for schools, churches and organisations throughout the country. A tableau of ‘carpenters and seamen’ appeared in the Labour Day procession of trade unions in Wellington in 1897.35 Therefore, by the time that F.A. Bennett applied for a patent for his tableau of *Hinemoa and Tutanekai* in 1914, this form of entertainment had been seen in New Zealand for over fifty years.

It is therefore not surprising that Bennett chose this form of entertainment to present his version of the story of Hinemoa and Tutanekai. However, that he did so allows us to examine the transculturation that occurred on this tour.36 That is, the input, influences and ideas flowing in many directions at once can be viewed as a ‘result of multiple encounters rather than a single one’.37 The ‘Plantation Songs’ that Bennett’s singers performed were also a borrowed theatrical style and hark back to the Minstrel performances of the mid nineteenth century. These types of songs were first heard in New Zealand from visiting African American performing troupes from the 1870s and though black-face performers toured here earlier as ‘Ethiopian Serenaders’ in the 1860s, presenting caricaturised songs of ‘the negro’.38 In the late 1880s the Fisk Jubilee Singers, a successful group of African American performers from Tennessee, toured both the North and South Islands, as did another group of black performers, the Hicks-Sawyer Minstrels.39 It has been said of the Fisk Singers that they ‘standardized the performance of Negro spirituals by performing them in choral settings’ and Lori Lynne Brooks emphasises their important contribution to American culture: ‘if

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35 *Wanganui Chronicle*, October 14, 1897, 2.
36 Peter Burke explains that the term ‘transculturation’, coined by the sociologist Fernando Ortiz, is appropriate when describing the two-way transference of cultures that occur with cultural encounters. Peter Burke, *Cultural Hybridity*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), 41.
37 Ibid. 25
white Americans knew anything about Negro spirituals, it was due to the successful national and world tours’ of the group.40

The Jubilee tours also provided an opportunity for Mr. Frederick J. Loudin, the leader of the Fisk singers, to express his political views. Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff explain that Loudin ‘used the Jubilee platform to make public statements on the issue of civil rights. He was…the most politically outspoken black entertainer of the nineteenth century’.41 It is possible to imagine the teen-aged Bennett was present at a performance given by the Fisk singers in New Zealand and, inspired by Loudin’s ability to combine politics and entertainment, applied this format to his own group decades later. As will be discussed below, Bennett utilised the seductive power of music, drama and imagery to inform his Pakeha audiences on the social state of Maori in the early twentieth century.

The RME performances in 1908 align with Susan Reed’s understanding of why traditional or indigenous cultural practices are the product of transculturalisation in colonial societies: ‘[m]aking performances—and performers—respectable is a common practice of postcolonial nations as they adapt traditional cultural forms for presentation as “cultural heritage”’.42 Indeed, F.A. Bennett is credited as giving an address to his audiences on the ‘purification of the national dances of the Maori’ on this tour in order that Pakeha would accept some form of haka.43 If we apply Reed’s argument to Bennett’s experience, then we can begin to understand the process surrounding the creation of his 1908 programme. As Reed says:

> implicit in this move [to respectability] is the assumption that traditional performances are too raw, crude, rustic, and unrefined for presentation on the modern stage. The gaze of cultural outsiders—middle and upper classes, foreigners, and tourists—dominates this process. Performances are changed to conform to the demands of the proscenium stage (such as forward orientation and the use of special lighting, sound, and sets).44

41 Abbott and Seroff, Out of Sight, 3.
43 Evening Post, July 16, 1908, 2.
44 Reed, Dance and the Nation, 14.
Bennett altered the presentation of Maori embodied expression so that his Pakeha audiences would be comfortable with an ‘authentic’ yet safe performance experience.

The Legend of Hinemoa and Tutanekai

Bennett’s embodied presentation of a well-known Maori legend highlights how Maori could achieve cultural representation within the assimilative ideology of the day. By the late nineteenth century the story of Hinemoa and Tutanekai had progressed beyond Te Arawa and had become a ‘Maori legend’. Indeed, A.W. Reed has called the Hinemoa and Tutanekai story the ‘best known, best loved in all Maoridom’. George Grey’s collection of Maori myths and legends, published in 1854 as *Nga Mahi a Nga Tupuna Maori*, and the following year as *Polynesian Mythology*, is based on language, stories, religion and customs of Maori as told to him by a member of Te Arawa, Wiremu Maihi Te Rangikaiake. The legend of Hinemoa is included in this collection. In his introduction, Grey recalled how he acquired the story on his visit to Mokoia in December, 1849: ‘a native chief came up to me and knowing of my fondness for legends, he told me the beautiful legend of his ancestress Hinemoa, who had landed on the spot where we sat’. Grey, impressed with the story’s ‘strong sensation of pleasure’ included it in his 1855 publication.

A prolific storyteller who provided Grey with most of his knowledge of Maori legends and history, Te Rangikaiake (1815 to 1896), also known as William Marsh, was most likely the ‘native chief’ who related this legend to Grey. He also instructed Grey in *te reo* Maori (the Maori language). Te Rangikaiake chronicled Maori genealogy that reflected his own Te Arawa ancestry, but following Grey’s publications these stories eventually became representative.

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46 See Jennifer Curnow, ‘Wiremu Maihi Te Rangikaiake: His Life and Work’ (Master’s thesis, University of Auckland, 1983). An introduction to a 1907 publication of *Hinemoa and Tutanekai* by H.J. Fletcher states that, ‘Sir George Grey in the month of December 1849’ visited Mokoia Island. ‘While sitting on the edge of Hinemoa’s bath, a Maori chief, descendant of Hinemoa, recited the story. It was written by Mr. G.S.Cooper (Assistant Private Secretary to his Excellency) with the assistance of Pirikawau Interpreter’. H.J. Fletcher, *Introduction to Hinemoa, with notes and vocabulary*, 1907, ID: Sommerville 1064, Auckland War Memorial Museum Library.
48 Ibid.
of all Maori. Jennifer Curnow believes that both Te Rangikaheke and Grey viewed the setting down and translation of legends as a political act. Grey, as colonial Governor of New Zealand, acknowledged that these stories and his understanding of them played a crucial role in his ability to govern effectively:

I could not, as Governor of the country, permit so close a veil to remain drawn between myself and the aged and influential chiefs, whom it was my duty to attach to British interests and to the British race. Only one thing could, under such circumstances, be done, and that was to acquaint myself with the ancient language of the country, to collect its traditional poems and legends, to induce their priests to impart to me their mythology, and to study their proverbs.49

Te Rangikaheke hoped that Grey, and perhaps all Pakeha, would have better relations with Maori if the legends and religious histories were known.

Following the development of a Maori written language, the legend became available to both Pakeha and Maori for the first time. More importantly, what was once tribally based knowledge now became a tool of assimilation and aided in the dissolution of boundaries between tribes. A further development happened in 1908 with the tableaux staging. The pattern of translation and interpretation can be seen in Bennett’s version of the story. His Hinemoa and Tutanekai moved beyond printed legend, as they became embodied representatives of both ancestral and legendary figures.

Grey’s publication led to many dramatisations of the story before Bennett’s tableaux staging and it inspired many Pakeha artists to create theatrical and/or musical adaptations, beginning in the late nineteenth century. In 1880 The New Zealand Times reported that ‘the manuscript of a new extravaganza entitled Hinemoa from the pen of “Grif” (Mr. Griffen of Wanganui)’ had crossed the desk of the reporter and was an ‘ambitious effort…well worth production on the stage’.50 In 1896 the Australian born composer Alfred Hill presented his cantata, Hinemoa at the Wellington Industrial Exhibition. Prior to Hill’s effort, Miss Alice Rowley presented her morceau por piano, Hinemoa in 1887 with a dedication written by Thomas Bracken, to Sir George Grey.51

50 New Zealand Times, November 9, 1880, 2.
51 Alice Rowley, ‘Hinemoa, morceau por piano’, score, 1887, Grey New Zealand Collection, GNZMS 294, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland City Library.
Peter Gibbons explains that ‘cultural colonization’ occurred in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries primarily through printed material where ‘large amounts of information about New Zealand and its indigenous phenomena were standardized’.\footnote{Peter Gibbons, ‘Cultural Colonization and National Identity’, \textit{New Zealand Journal of History} 36 (2002): 9–13.} Gibbons argues that Maori themselves and their cultures were textualised by Pakeha, so that the colonists could ‘know’ the people they were displacing.\footnote{Ibid.} Although Hill's cantata was described as the ‘most pretentious item’ performed on 18 November 1896, the ‘Maori Legend for Soli, Chorus and Orchestra’ was nonetheless praised as ‘a work of distinctly New Zealand character, the product of exceptional gifts, musical and literary’.\footnote{Evening Post, November 19, 1896, 5.} Despite the legend providing the inspiration and Hill’s use of a supposedly Maori ‘tune’ for the cantata’s flute motif, it appears that no Maori performers were engaged as singers or performers.\footnote{Ibid.} However, the singers did attempt to appear Maori; the women chorus members adorned their hair with white feathers and the male chorus performed a ‘savage, fierce and vengeful wardance’.\footnote{Observer, March 6, 1897, 3, 9. These comments refer to the performances that took place in Auckland in March 1897.} The stage setting included a ‘miniature Maori whare’ and ‘Maori carvings and mats’.\footnote{Ibid., 9.} Though these representations can be viewed through the contemporary lens of cultural colonisation, Hill’s intention was to pay respect and give an air of authenticity to these symbols of Maoridom. Moreover, I would argue that performance introduces another dimension to this debate, as it was through the agency of the Maori performers on stage that their embodied (re)presentations both colluded with and resisted cultural colonisation.

Therefore, by the early twentieth century the Hinemoa story was firmly connected with Maori in general and the Rotorua region in particular, and served as an important symbol of Maori romanticism for Pakeha and the tourist trade, both foreign and domestic. Since New Zealand’s early tourist industry was...
centred in Rotorua, it is understandable that a local legend would be exploited to represent what P.J. Galbraith refers to as the European fascination with Maori as ‘an unknown element’. The ‘invention of Maori’ was robustly pursued in the early years of the tourist industry in New Zealand and nowhere more fervently than in Rotorua.

Rotorua, the tourist industry and Maori as aesthetic experience

In 1901 the first government department of tourism in the world was established in New Zealand, and its initial primary focus was on selling Rotorua as a tourist destination to international visitors. Margaret McClure has explained how Thomas E. Donne, the first Superintendent of the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts ‘constructed’ the identity of Maori in the thermal region of

Figure 2: Weekly Graphic and New Zealand Mail, July 1, 1908, 35.
[Source: The University of Auckland Library Special Collections.]

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Whakarewarewa. In 1881 the Thermal-Springs District Act enabled the government to take control of the Rotorua district's hot springs, geysers and scenic areas, and in 1896 the government purchased Whakarewarewa as 'property of the nation'. This arrangement allowed the government to create 'roles' for Te Arawa and Ngati Whakaue as 'living' Maori. Indeed, Donne re-imagined Maori for tourists when he had a model village and pa built on the site of a former fighting pa, including 'a small carved house, two watch-towers and a cookhouse', in addition to '30 carved posts' that had been on display at the 1906-07 Christchurch Exhibition. By the time the village opened to the public in 1909 the Tourist Department had moved in three families to be representative of 'authentic' Maori life.

The Bennett home, situated on the shores of Lake Rotorua at Ohinemutu, provided an ideal location for the young Frederick to observe the tourist trade. During his childhood, Bennett was aware of the attraction that both Maori and the natural scenic wonders held for tourists. At the beginning of the century, the visitor to Whakarewarewa could experience Maori in natural settings 'performing' tasks such as women cooking and washing in hot pools and men carving posts, pipes, and walking sticks. It is not surprising that in 1908 the first half of the RME programme, the 'Maori at home, at play', depicted, via tableaux, the Ohinemutu pa. Now the tourist need not travel to Rotorua as Bennett took the Maori and his or her environment on tour. Bennett and his performers metamorphosed Maori into dramatic representations in the wake of the development of a model village at Whakarewarewa and the invention of the 'Maori as aesthetic experience'.

The aesthetic experience of Maori extended itself to high fashion as well with jewellery shops catering to domestic and foreign tourists. In the same month that Bennett's tour took place, an Auckland Queen Street jeweller was advertising the latest in quality pendants for the fashionable woman. Amongst the gold and pearl pendants were two symbols of Maori culture: a greenstone tiki and a greenstone heart carved with the words 'Kia Ora'. Such items were part of the cultural hybridity that thrived in New Zealand culture during the late

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60 Ibid., 41–48.
61 Ibid., 14–15.
62 Ibid., 47.
63 Ibid., 43–49; Galbraith, 'Colonials in Wonderland', 7.
nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Though these pendants could adorn the necks of both Maori and Pakeha women, or may have been designed with the female tourist in mind, these symbols of Maori culture became part of the popular culture and fashion of the day.

'Pure, wholesome and elevating' entertainment

The well-heeled and fashionable also flocked to the theatre performances, including Bennett's performances, in Opera Houses and Town Halls. Advance newspaper publicity whetted the public's imagination with the advertisement banner—'see what the trained Maori can do'—and notices also assured readers that 'the tableaux cannot but be instructive as well as amusing'. If, as Mary Chapman explains, the aim of tableaux is to depict 'a single instant' but imply 'a complete narrative' then Bennett's Hinemoa accomplished that. The scene breakdown of Bennett's tableaux is as follows:

Tableaux-Scene: Lake Rotorua and Mokoia Island (from Owhata)
Hinemoa on Iri-iri Kapua Rock (listening to the strains of Tutanekai's flute (koauau).
Hinemoa swimming to Mokoia Island.
Hinemoa resting on "Hinewhata", a carved pole erected in Lake Rotorua.
Hinemoa in Bath.
Tiki giving drink to Hinemoa.
Hinemoa breaks the Calabash.
Tutanekai and Tiki appear.
Recognition of Hinemoa by Tutanekai.

Jane Stafford and Mark Williams have discussed the term 'Maoriland', used in the late-nineteenth century, as a 'literary synonym for New Zealand'. The authors explain how this term was applied by Pakeha 'to provide the descendants of settlers with a history peculiar to themselves.' Jane Stafford and Mark Williams, Maoriland: New Zealand Literature 1872–1914 (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2006), 11–14.

Peter Gibbons explains how in the late-nineteenth century Maori names were applied to 'post offices, suburbs, streets and schools' as a means to 'gather indigenous knowledge'. Peter Gibbons, 'Cultural Colonization and National Identity', 11.

Star, July 18, 1908, 6; Wanganui Herald, July 7, 1908, 5.


PC 4, 1914/15, Archives New Zealand. In 1914 Bennett applied to the patent office to claim copyright of his Tableaux of Hinemoa in addition to three other tableaux. The application outlines the scene breakdown as cited.
According to the Feilding Star on 9 July 1908, Bennett devised ‘scenery and effects’ that made this tableau the ‘favourite item on the programme’. The incandescent lighting proved especially effective. The slow and elegant portrayal was ‘striking’ and ‘poetical’ and it is clear that Bennett devised his tableaux presentation to alter the perception of Maori for his Pakeha audiences. Musical items between scenes, allowing the performers time to change positions, juxtaposed present day Maori with the idyllic Maori of ‘the famous old story’. Between scenes a and b (Hinemoa on rock and Hinemoa’s swim) the Female Quartet sang, while between scenes c and d (Hinemoa resting and Hinemoa in bath) the Male Quartet entertained. The songs, versions of English folk and popular tunes of the day, concluded with a part-singing version in te reo Maori of Home Sweet Home/Te Kainga Tupu, presented by a full mixed choir. Casting aside traditional Maori costumes, the performers took on the appearance of middle to upper class English. Dressed in European-style clothing (the Male Quartet in full evening dress and the women in blouses and long skirts), Bennett’s performers personified the assimilated Maori. Even the idealised Maori wahine, Hinemoa, appeared in more clothing than was anticipated, according to the reviewer from the New Zealand Truth who objected that a ‘fully dressed swimmer butchers the probabilities of the legend’.

At the conclusion of the first half, Bennett took to the stage and addressed the audience directly, explaining that the entertainment given that evening was ‘pure, wholesome and elevating’, displayed by the harmonious singing of the male and female choirs and the chaste but romantic tableaux. The part-singing in particular (singing in four-part harmony made popular by minstrel singers) was designed to showcase the training and discipline undertaken by Bennett’s performers. The male quartet singing of ‘Plantation Songs’ certainly echoes the Fisk Singers presentation of four-part harmony. As the Fisk singers also

69 Feilding Star, July 9, 1908, 2.
70 New Zealand Herald, July 7, 1908, 3; Christchurch Star, July 23, 1908, 1.
71 New Zealand Herald, July 7, 1908, 3.
72 Evening Post, July 25, 1908, 6; New Zealand Freelance, July 18, 1908, 14; Star, July 23, 1908, 1.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
toured Australia in the 1880s, their influence was evident on both sides of the Tasman, and Bennett’s musical director, Mr. F.M. Lyons from Adelaide, might well have had them in mind when he worked with the Maori singers. Although his performers represented a colonised, rather than a formerly enslaved, people, Bennett committed himself to presenting Maori culture, including haka, waiata, games and legends to a naïve Pakeha community. Bennett explained that these activities depicted Maori ‘as he was to be seen 50 years ago’.76 The aim was both to educate and entertain.

The Young Maori Party (YMP)

With his booming, eloquent voice, Bennett addressed the audience at interval, enticing with his plea for ‘Pakeha help in order that the Maori may be uplifted from his present state’ and outlined the aims and objectives of the YMP ‘of which proceeds from this tour would be donated’.77 Begun as a students’ association at Te Aute College, the YMP worked towards promoting ‘Christianity, temperance, sanitation and hard work’ amongst Maori.78 The predominately Pakeha audiences seemed happy to donate to the cause and the income from ticket sales would have made a substantial contribution to the YMP. Reports mention capacity or near full houses at most venues, including Opera Houses and Town Halls, during the six-week tour.79 With ticket prices set at 3s, 2s and 1s, (equivalent to today’s prices of approximately twenty five, eighteen and nine New Zealand dollars respectively) the financial contribution to the YMP was significant. The support given the YMP by both Maori and Pakeha was hinted at in the New Zealand Herald’s review. The writer believed that the YMP was ‘an association in which the deepest interest is being taken by all New Zealand’ and Bennett hoped to increase both interest and knowledge with this

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76 The Evening Post reported that ‘about twelve months ago Mr. F.M. Lyons took this company in hand and commenced a course of instruction in part singing’. Evening Post, July 13, 1908, 2. Otago Witness, July 29, 1908, 69.

77 Evening Post, July 8, 1908, 3.


79 Newspaper reports describe the ‘crowded and enthusiastic audiences’ at the Feilding Drill Hall, Feilding Star, July 9, 1908, 2; ‘the Pakeha audience, by the way filled the building to the doors’ at the Auckland Choral Hall, New Zealand Herald, July 7, 1908, 3; ‘a fairly large audience’ at the Christchurch Choral Hall, Star, July 23, 1908, 1; ‘an audience that almost filled the Opera House’, in Wellington, Evening Post, July 20, 1908, 2.
tour throughout the country.80

According to Richard Hill, the YMP leaders believed that the survival of the race was dependant on Maori utilising ‘aspects of European culture for their own well-being. Preservation and renewal of those facets of their own culture which they did see as highly desirable was possible only within the paradigm of British ideas, policies and culture’.81 It is clear from both the performance of the RME and Bennett’s direct address to the audience that the education of the Pakeha was very much at the forefront of his objectives on this tour. Reviews substantiate this aim; the *Evening Post* advised readers that there was much in this show to ‘appeal to all students of Maori life and legendary lore’.82 In Dunedin, the *Otago Witness* reviewer commented that ‘were it not for the explanatory and interesting observations by the Rev. F.A. Bennett, which precede each item, the audience would be lost in conjecture as to what was going forward on stage’.83

**Assimilation and Performance**

That Maori culture could be both educational and entertaining challenged the prevailing views of assimilation held by Pakeha and many Maori. However, not all who saw the production agreed that F.A. Bennett should be involved in such an enterprise. The *New Zealand Truth* reported that ‘the story of Hinemoa and Tutanekai was a classic in Maori legendary lore, but dubious in moral for the edification of young girls. Any modern maiden who departs from home to live in sin with a man is graded lost by the pious, and in the circumstances the staging of the piece by the parsons is a grave departure from the path of rectitude’.84 Another reviewer complained that ‘had the warriors not been garbed in white singlets and black knickers under their mats’ the presentation would have been more realistic.85 Obviously for some Pakeha, the representation of Maori needed to stay within the realm of ‘as he was’ and not reflect the modern, assimilated Maori. This conflict—ownership and acceptance of indigenous Maori culture

80 *New Zealand Herald*, July 7, 1908, 3.
82 *Evening Post*, July 13, 1908, 2.
83 *Otago Witness*, July 29, 1908, 69.
84 *New Zealand Truth*, August 1, 1908, 1.
85 *Christchurch Star*, July 23, 1908, 1.
and legends by Pakeha on the one hand, and rejection of representations of assimilated Maori on the other—is at the heart of the challenge that Bennett’s production posed. These contradictions also point to the formations of new representations of New Zealand.

The notion that assimilation totally depleted Maori of their culture is challenged when analysing Bennett’s production. Though the joining together of Maori and Pakeha through marriage and procreation had occurred throughout the nineteenth century, the goal of assimilation held that Maori culture would be overridden by Pakeha culture, with the diminution of language, beliefs and customs.86 M.P.K. Sorrenson believes that although Bennett and fellow members of the YMP had shared Maori and Pakeha ancestry, this does not wholly explain their successes. While Sorrenson accepts that their combined ancestry contributed to their ease in the company of Pakeha, most of these men were raised in a Maori environment. Thus, as Sorrenson explains, it was ‘not the European ancestry of some of the Young Maori Party but their identification as Maoris [sic] which provided the spur for success in a Pakeha world’.87

The temporal nature of live performance combined with its unpredictability and volatility are elements that set representation of culture via the theatre apart from museum exhibitions. Lawrence Levine’s belief that ‘in the theatre people not only sat under one roof, they interacted’ aligns with reports from the RME 1908 tour.88 The Evening Post’s favourable review reported that ‘seldom is there seen so much sympathetic enthusiasm between audience and performers as was exhibited on this occasion. It would be difficult to say whether the audience or performers enjoyed themselves most’.89 The Feilding Star’s reviewer three weeks prior also came to a similar conclusion:

the comedians of the company are strong in their plantation melodies, and the heartiness with which they enter into the fun becomes contagious and send the audience away in genuine good humour.90

86 In her study of eighteenth and nineteenth-century South Island inter-racial Maori/Pakeha families, Angela Wanhalla believes that such marriages were of strategic importance and served to ‘regulate economic and social encounters’. See Angela Wanhalla, In/visible Sight: The Mixed-Descent Families of Southern New Zealand (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2009), 4–5.
88 Lawrence Levine, Highbrow/Lowbrow, 56.
89 Evening Post, July 31, 1908, 2.
90 Feilding Star, July 9, 1908, 2.
It was through the physicality, humour and poignancy that the performers and the spectators connected and it was owing to this connection that Bennett was able to deliver his political address directly to the audience.

**Manufactured cultural representation**

An examination of Bennett’s productions reveals that while he adapted theatrical conventions to cater to the needs of his audiences, he also encouraged a new appreciation of Maori culture. The ‘enthusiastic receptions’ and ‘double and triple encores’ that Bennett’s production elicited highlight the warm reception that greeted the Maori performers.\(^91\) The Hinemoa tableaux—a Maori story performed by Maori in a European fashion—heralded a new direction for New Zealand popular culture and is examined here in relation to forms of hybrid embodied cultural identities.\(^92\) Most importantly, while on stage, Bennett’s performers were in control of their representation and the gaze of the spectator. Jane Goodall’s view of the relationship between the *Australian Cannibal Boomerang Throwers* and their audiences in the late nineteenth century is appropriate here. Goodall states that

> as bodies engaged in performance they had opportunities to exercise very significant forms of control in their relationship with spectators. As performing bodies, those on show were engaged in sequences of action that could be calculated for particular kinds of effects.\(^93\)

Bennett’s performers had similar power over their Pakeha spectators and manufactured a new way of viewing and understanding Maori that began a shift in cultural representations over the next century.

The Hinemoa and Tutanekai tableaux are but one example of a creative and adaptive approach to assimilation, both in the sense of innovation and also creative artistic endeavours. In New Zealand, the cultural expressions that developed following Bennett’s productions contributed to the evolution of cultural identities. Bennett’s legacy of representations of New Zealand was significant. In 1914 a feature film, *Hinemoa*, directed by Australian George H.

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92. The use of the word ‘hybrid’ is acknowledged to be complicated and a further discussion will appear elsewhere in Schultz, ‘Performing New Zealand’. The term ‘cultural hybridity’ has a recent history and as Peter Burke advises ‘needs to be handled with care’. I take his advice and proceed with my own application of the term cautiously. Peter Burke, *Cultural Hybridity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), 35.
Tarr and shot in Rotorua, featured many of Bennett’s performers, with Bennett working closely with Tarr, and in 1915 Bennett produced, in collaboration with English composer Percy Flynn, a full-scale opera of the Hinemoa story.94 The musical, *Marama: the Mere and the Maori Maid*, produced in 1920, starred one of Bennett’s singers, Mere Amohau. Though Bennett is most remembered and revered as Bishop of Aotearoa, it was through his theatrical contributions that he forged cultural understandings between Maori and Pakeha as well as creating new forms of cultural expression for Maori.

Conclusion

The Rev. F.A. Bennett and his RME aimed to bring Maori and Pakeha together in the theatre. If cultural hybridity, or what Peter Burke refers to as ‘cultural translations’, suggests ‘a breaking and a joining at the same time’, then the

RME’s performances of 1908 align with this interpretation of hybridity. Bennett broke with ‘tradition’ by presenting customs, games and legends in a theatrical setting performed by Maori for the enjoyment and education of Pakeha. As his performances also raised funds for a political movement, Maori culture acquired a new dimension and use. Arguably, we can say that Bennett’s innovative performances, with their blending of Maori, European and American performing arts, produced a new way of seeing and understanding Maori in the service of Maori political and social aims. Examining Bennett’s tour of 1908 and in particular his presentation of the Hinemoa and Tutanekai tableaux allows us to consider how cultures evolve, mutate and adapt to their surroundings and circumstances.

The dramatisation of a Te Arawa legend made popular, domesticated and cherished by all New Zealanders through the interpretation of a colonial governor and (re)presented on stage by Maori for Pakeha, influenced the course of twentieth-century New Zealand popular culture. Re-imagining Bennett’s staging of the Hinemoa legend along with theatricalised games and his interpretation of ‘Plantation Songs’ highlights this formation of culture that represented the reality of early twentieth-century New Zealand. F.A. Bennett and his entertainers reshaped culture into popular entertainment thus creating new representations of not only Maori, but also New Zealand through performance in the early twentieth century.