

## MEDIA RELEASE

### *The Keys are in the Margarine*

*'Profound and enlightening'*

*'Wonderfully compassionate and informative production'*

*'Real. Connected. Moved on so many levels'*

*'Very poignant and oh so true'*



Remarkable comments from audience members responding to *The Keys are in the Margarine* - a play about Dementia and Alzheimer's.

Memory loss affects 2 out of every 3 New Zealanders in some way. Today, more than 70,000 New Zealanders live with Alzheimer's disease or dementia – a number that is expected to triple by 2050.

They're conditions none of us can ignore, but few of us can understand – making this a significant piece of theatre. These are conversations we need to hear.

*The Keys are in the Margarine* is an award winning unique form of verbatim, or documentary theatre, 'real, mesmerizing, and an almost alarmingly truthful form of theatre'.

The play is created from interviews with people who have direct experience of these conditions – caregivers, family members, doctors and the people themselves. Their stories communicate the all-encompassing effect dementia has on their lives and everyone around them.

In the performance the four actors re-present the edited testimony from 17 people as precisely as possible. With the original voices playing in their ears the actors relay the original words spoken (every vocal inflexion, intonation and hesitation) as well as replicating the physical gestures and facial expressions that originally accompanied the words. The result is compelling, informative and stunning theatre.

*The Keys are in the Margarine* has already played to enthusiastic audiences during two national tours. WOW! Productions Trust is proud to be able to present the 2022 tour to Dunedin, Waiheke and Whangarei this August and September. Actors' Serena Cotton, Nadya Shaw Bennett, Ross Johnston, and Cindy Diver perform under the direction on Professor Stuart Young, with design by Martyn Roberts and Anna van den Bosch. This is a piece not to missed.

According to one reviewer *The Keys are in the Margarine* 'interweaves hilarity with heartbreak to poignant effect, while providing deep insights on what it means to be human'.

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## Other relevant information:

### The Creators

“One of the fascinating aspects of verbatim theatre is that you don’t know what story you will be telling until it emerges from the participants testimony” says writer Cindy Diver. “With *The Keys are in the Margarine* numerous themes came to light from the interviews. After many hours of collaborative editing we had a script that was in turn thought provoking, funny and deeply poignant”.



Co Writer GP Susie Lawless says “We could see the opportunity to allow the voices of those living with dementia to be heard. The stigma around the heartbreaking, but increasingly common illness makes it difficult for these people and their families to tell their stories. And we know that the burden for carers is immense”. Cindy and Susie worked with Professor Stuart Young to create an elegant script that follows the experience of those living with Alzheimer’s and Dementia from diagnosis to end of life care.

Hearing from those living with the illness, caregivers, family members, doctors and support workers, supports the all-encompassing effect dementia has on the lives of sufferers and anyone around them.

### Background

*The Keys are in the Margarine* premiered with a sold out extended season in the Fortune Studio Theatre in Dunedin in 2014 and toured New Zealand in both 2015 and 2019. The play won the Robert Lord Script/Narrative of the year at the Dunedin Theatre Awards. Excerpts have been presented at national and international medical conferences in Australia and New Zealand

### Dementia in New Zealand

*The Keys are in the Margarine* grew out of a unique partnership between theatre and medical practitioners. It has been widely reported recently that there are, at present, 70,000 New Zealanders living with dementia. By the year 2050, it is estimated there will be 150,000. Governments and experts in the fields of dementia have been meeting in international symposiums around the world to discuss this ever increasing issue. It is estimated that 2 of every 3 New Zealanders are affected by dementia, either experiencing it personally or in a close family member. It is a subject about which greater awareness and understanding is urgently needed.

*The Keys are in the Margarine* aims to destigmatise dementia, and to promote community awareness and understanding of this hidden disease and its ongoing, complex issues. Seventeen New Zealanders from all walks of life were gracious and brave enough to reveal their stories for the project, finding the process healing and rewarding.

## Reviews

*"I am struck by the sheer skill of the actors, as they switch accents and body language, even their gestures meticulously copied from the filmed interviews... [T]he actors ... show they can suppress their own egos, not interpreting but replicating... The experienced actors, playing some eighteen characters, are uniformly excellent". (Terry McTavish, Theatreview)*

*"Their experiences give rise to some profound insights on what it means to be human and the extent to which memory defines who we are."* – Herald Review

*"...a moving and inspiring theatre experience. Highly recommended"* – The Star

*"The work that has gone into the composition of this production deserve the highest of praise... The actors are phenomenal... Their grace and courage is astounding, as is that of the interviewees... Their efforts have resulted in a thoroughly moving production that raises vital and accessible awareness of dementia."* – Madelaine Empson, Regional News Wellington

*"...moments of humour, and there are strong elements of love and courage"* – Otago Daily Times

*"...a gentle, well-crafted handling of a scary, sad, interesting and heartbreaking topic"* – Theatreview

*"... profound insights on what it means to be human and the extent to which memory defines who we are."* - NZ Herald

## General ...and Forums

Creating and producing *The Keys are in the Margarine* was an extremely complex process technically and technologically. It was also a deeply profound theatrical experience, for audiences and those involved in the project: interviewees as well as the company. Audiences often leave the theatre moved, amused, tearful and at times deeply grateful for the opportunity to have experiences like their own represented and shared.

The Alzheimer's Society noted an upsurge of people talking much more openly about their worries during the play's seasons; likewise, many people found that the safe space provided by the forums held after some performance enabled them to begin to talk about their experiences.

Forums are planned on the Saturday night performances, with experts in dementia research chairing discussions and answering questions.

