

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT



Director: Blaise Barham

Music: Robyn Bryant

With support from



'Louder Together' - World Youth Festival - Antwerp, August 2026

The Experimental Theatre Collective (ETC)

DIRECTED: By Blaise Barham

MUSIC: Robyn Bryant

BOOK BY: Paul Percy

Duration: 45–50 minutes

Performed by young people from Aotearoa, New Zealand. This work is created for international and local audiences and is being presented at the **World Youth Festival, Antwerp, August 2026**, plus at the **In Flanders Fields Museum, Ypres (Ieper)**. And a proposed performance at Le Quesnoy, France

Ultimately, this work exists because it refuses to let history remain safely in the past. It shifts the question from *what happened then* to *what is still happening now*, exposing war not as a concluded event but as a pattern that continues to organise bodies, language, and behaviour. By placing young performers inside inherited consequence rather than historical representation, the work asks who, once again, is being trained to carry what was never resolved, and challenges audiences to recognise how repetition is continually mistaken for learning. For communities who have long held the responsibility of remembrance, this work seeks to extend that act, placing a new generation in direct relationship with what has been carried before them.

The significance of this work is unmistakable.

The Ground Remembers Us is a non-linear theatrical work set in the aftermath of the Battle of Passchendaele, where the land of Flanders becomes the central witness to war's enduring consequences.

The story is carried through a series of embodied characters, Absented, Learnt, Recurrent, Distorted, Traumatized and Extracted, each representing a state left behind by conflict. They are not literal soldiers, but manifestations of what war does to people, memory, and time. Together, they move through a fractured landscape where identity has shifted, and nothing returns unchanged. This is not an attempt to recreate service, but to approach its consequences with care and seriousness.

Flanders' ground sits at the heart of the work. It holds the weight of over 500,000 casualties from the 1917 campaign, but more hauntingly, it holds those who were never recovered. Over 42,000 soldiers from Passchendaele have no known grave, their bodies lost to the mud, absorbed into the earth itself. In this piece, they are not gone; they remain embedded in the land. It is in this ground that these young New Zealanders will stand and work.

As the characters emerge, repeat, and break apart, the work reveals a cycle of consequence rather than a sequence of events. Absence becomes presence, memory becomes distortion, and survival becomes a form of alteration. The ground does not forget, it carries, reshapes, and returns what was left behind.

The significance of this work now is unmistakable. While it draws from 1917, it speaks directly to the present, particularly for young people. Conflict today continues to leave the same indelible marks: displacement, trauma, loss, and lives that never fully return to what they were. By abstracting these impacts into form and image, the work creates a way for a new generation to engage with the reality of war beyond headlines or history books. It asks what it means not only to remember, but to inherit responsibly.

The piece isn't driven by a specific cultural lens; it's grounded in the consequences of war and the shared human cost borne by all involved.

"Everything becomes senseless, a lunacy, a horrible bad joke of peoples and their history... so that one feels that all human beginnings are doomed in this war."

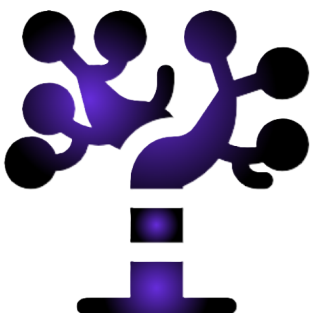
- Rudolf Binding (German officer): from his diary from Flanders

The Ground Remembers Us ultimately becomes both remembrance and warning, an acknowledgement that while time moves forward, the consequences of conflict do not disappear. They are carried, inherited, and, if unexamined, repeated. This work places that responsibility, carefully, into younger hands.

Supporting New Zealand Youth Selected to Represent Theatre New Zealand at a World Youth Festival.

Produced by The Experimental Theatre Collective

Experimental Theatre Collective, have gathered a group of young New Zealand artists who have been **officially selected to represent Theatre New Zealand at a World Youth Festival in Belgium**, with performances and site-based work taking place in **Antwerp and Ypres**.



Experimental Theatre Collective

They will present ***The Ground Remembers Us***, a New Zealand-written, directed and devised theatre work of significance that explores what New Zealand soldiers endured during the First World War. For these young people, this is not simply an overseas tour; it is a journey into the landscapes where that history lives. Their selection recognises the strength, discipline, and seriousness of this work, and offers a rare opportunity for young New Zealanders to represent their country internationally through contemporary theatre.

This project takes these young people back to the very places where the history they are engaging with unfolded.

We Need Your Support

We are asking you to support this as a continuation of remembrance, carried forward by a new generation.

We are seeking your support to help realise the international presentation of *The Ground Remembers Us*, a New Zealand theatre work travelling to Antwerp, Ypres and Le Quesnoy, France this August–September.

This is a concentrated two-week international season of performances and site-responsive work across Flanders, connecting Aotearoa to landscapes marked by the events of Passchendaele and the liberation of Le Quesnoy. A key presentation within this season is at the Youth World Festival in Antwerp, placing the work within an international platform for young artists and audiences. It is both an artistic undertaking and an act of remembrance. In this sense, it becomes a different kind of duty, one of presence, care, and witness.

The touring party consists of ten: seven performers, alongside the director, with additional technical and chaperone support to ensure the safe delivery and operation of the work across multiple international sites. All performers and the director are contributing their labour in-kind.

We have already secured meaningful support. The ensemble has contributed significantly toward travel expenses, demonstrating strong confidence in the value of this project. No fees are charged for creative or performance work within the ensemble; all artists contribute their time voluntarily, with funding directed only to essential costs such as travel, accommodation, and basic living expenses. The total remaining project budget is 48,000.00, excluding international travel to and from Europe for the artists.



THIS SUMMARISES THE FUNDS THAT WE NOW NEED TO COVER:

- Travel & Accommodation (European regional Travel): \$15,000.00
- Performance Delivery (venues, local production, logistics): \$13,000
- Technical & Production Support (Equipment Hire/Personnel): \$7,000
- Sound Design & Composition: \$7,500
- Costumes: \$5,600

To meet this, we are inviting you to support this initiative.

THESE CONTRIBUTIONS WILL DIRECTLY ENABLE:

- Travel and accommodation for the company while in Europe
- Delivery of performances across Antwerp, Ypres and Le Quesnoy, France, including a proposed presentation at the Le Quesnoy Museum
- Technical, costume, and sound realisation of the work
- Local transport and on-the-ground logistics in Belgium and northern France

Your support ensures that these young New Zealanders are able to stand, work, and perform in the same ground where this history is held. On our return to Aotearoa, the work will continue its life through presentations at locations around New Zealand, ensuring wider access and ongoing engagement with the project.

This is a lean, artist-led project with no surplus; every dollar directly supports the delivery of the work across this two-week international presentation.

Your support would play a vital role in bringing this New Zealand work into an international context of deep historical resonance, ensuring its themes of memory, consequence, and remembrance are shared where they matter most. It allows remembrance to continue, not only in memory, but in action.

We would welcome the opportunity to acknowledge your support and share this journey with you.

For all contributions, contact paul.percy@theatrenewzealand.co.nz or go direct to our [Give-a-Little page](#)

Ngā mihi nui,
PAUL PERCY - BA MFA (CP) - Producer “The Ground Remembers Us”

Creative Team



DIRECTOR: Blaise Barham is an award-winning director, performer and educator, and co-founder of Sahara BreeZe Productions and Experimental Theatre Collective. As well as having studied nationally at The University of Otago and Hagley Theatre School (Le Coq), he has trained internationally with Philippe Gaulier in Paris, Zen Zen Zo in Brisbane and Dairakudakan in Japan. Blaise specialises in contemporary physical theatre, often blending movement, circus and physical comedy to create bold, interdisciplinary performance. His productions have toured nationally. Blaise is also passionate about high-quality movement training that builds confidence, creativity and ensemble connection to participants of all backgrounds and abilities. He is excited to tour this new production internationally.



SOUND: Robyn Bryant is an Aotearoa New Zealand-based composer with significant international experience across film, theatre, and live performance. Bryant has worked on major international productions, including contributing to the music team for *Avatar: The Way of Water* and subsequent Avatar projects, where her work included instrument design, score preparation, music editing, and large-scale session coordination. Her compositional practice spans feature films, short films, documentaries, and live cinematic works, and is grounded in a deep understanding of sound as structure, texture, and system.

Bryant's work is recognised for its restraint, precision, and ability to operate beneath narrative rather than illustrate it. Rather than using music to guide emotion, she creates pressure-based sound environments that shape attention, endurance, and spatial perception. In *The Ground Remembers Us*, her score functions as a continuous, non-melodic system that persists independently of human action, reinforcing the work's central concerns with repetition, conditioning, and survival without resolution.



PRODUCER: Paul Percy is a senior New Zealand theatre-maker, director, and arts leader with over 40 years' experience. As President of Theatre New Zealand, he leads a national strategy focused on youth development, inclusivity, and international collaboration. His original works have been staged across New Zealand, Australia, and Asia, ranging from political drama to music theatre, alongside an extensive body of plays for young people and community groups. He has established key international partnerships, including a 2024 agreement with Opendoek (Belgium), and holds an MFA in Creative Practice (Theatre). His leadership combines artistic depth with global perspective.

PERFORMERS:



Beth Gibson has a passion for all things theatre. Her journey started at 12, when she attended drama classes at Christchurch's main professional theatre 'The Court Theatre'. She became part of the theatre's Youth Company in 2023. She is also currently an active member of the *University of Canterbury's* drama society whilst also studying Law and Criminal Justice. Her main credits are performing in *Titus Andronicus* as Chiron, in *Almost, Maine* as Marvalyn and as part of the chorus in *The Arsonist*. Beth enjoys the whimsy of physical theatre and is excited to be a part of *The Ground Remembers Us*.



Jessie Grace Harris always deeply appreciates how the arts take feelings and emotion, and turn them into something that brings us together. Since childhood, she's loved performing and working with groups of artists; being fortunate enough to be taught by Original Scripts Drama School where she learnt about physical theatre, and devising shows from scratch. She has performed in *The Crucible* as Tituba, *Mother Courage and Her Children* as Kattrin, as well as Shakespeare Globe Centre NZ festivals over the years, where she has performed and also directed. She is so grateful to be part of *The Ground Remembers Us*, a show she feels can give a voice to those who gave their lives for ours.



Makayla Hulme is an avid performer and is excited to join the cast of *The Ground Remembers Us*. Some of her stage and screen credits include Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*, Lucius in *Titus Andronicus*, Jess in *Heads or Tails*, Mary Warren in *The Crucible*, and Polly Stokes in *The Sweet Science of Bruising*. She has trained at the Globe Theatre, Royal Shakespeare Company, Court Theatre Youth Company, Hagley Theatre Company, and is now studying to become a hair and makeup artist at Yoobee College. She is looking forward to this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reflect and collaborate to bring this devised show to life.



Shanna Moe is a lover of theatre and people and is thrilled to be part of *The Ground Remembers Us*. Her credits include Mary in *Mary Poppins the Musical*, Rosalind in *As You Like It*, Genie in *Aladdin Jr.*, and Race in *Newsies Jr.* She's spending her gap year refining her skills by creating short films, starting a podcast, training and performing at the Globe Theatre in London with the SGCNZ Young Shakespeare Company, and travelling. Her dream is to attend an Australian or UK drama school. She thanks her family for always encouraging her! Visit her website and connect with her: ooa.nz



Isaac Power is an up and coming actor, and theatre creator from New Zealand. Isaac had the pleasure to go to London as part of the Sheliah Winn Shakespeare festival in 2022. Trained in the Jacques Lecoq and Jacques Copeau methodology by Pedro Illgenfritz, at Hagley Theatre School in 2024 - 2025. Isaac is familiar with: clown, mask, drag, psychophysical training and neutral mask. They would have already debuted in their first professional show by the time you're reading this with the Hagley Theatre School six month theatre creation course - so wish them luck!



Sophia Roy is a passionate and dedicated performer, who is thrilled to be a part of *The Ground Remembers Us*. Her stage credits include Simba in *Lion King JR*, Cat in the Hat in *Seussical*, Enid in *Legally Blonde*, and as a model and performer for the 2024 World of Wearable Art. She is trained in Drama through NCEA Levels 1-3 earning distinctions in the course. She is now studying at the University of Canterbury with an Arts Degree in History, Te Reo Māori and Geography. Sophia is thoroughly excited to be given this amazing opportunity to devise, perform and learn through such an incredible event.



Lily Stott loves engaging in storytelling whether it's through song, dance, drama, art, or creative writing. A lover of both plays and musicals, her most recent performances are as Cassius in *Julius Caesar*, the Dowager Empress in *Anastasia: Youth Edition*, and as Narrator in *Blood Brothers*. She is thrilled to be a part of *The Ground Remembers Us*, as it allows her to delve into a new world of physical theatre and travel overseas for this once-in-a-lifetime experience.



THE GROUND REMEMBERS US

A youth-led act of witness

ANTWERP 2026



Theatre New Zealand
Te Pūtoi Whakaari o Aotearoa

With support from
The Passchendaele
Society NZ



LOUDER TOGETHER