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THE MAORI MERCHANT OF VENICE
Te Tangata Whai Rawa O Weniti

DIRECTOR
DON C SELWYN

PRODUCER
RUTH KAUPUA PANAPA

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER
DON C SELWYN

ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS
SIR ROBERT MAHUTA
SELWYN MURU

ADAPTED BY DON C SELWYN FROM WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S
THE MERCHANT OF VENICE
MAORI TRANSLATION BY DR PEI TE HURINUI JONES

CAST
WAIHOROI SHORTLAND
NGARIMU DANIELS
SCOTT MORRISON
TE RANGIHAU GILBERT

Duration: 158 min

Rating:

Funded by Te Mangai Paho

Produced by He Taonga Films
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MEDIA RELEASE: 15 February 2002

NEW FILM GIVES A FRESH LOOK AT SHAKESPEARE

- Revenge Is Not So Sweet -

The new feature film, *The Maori Merchant of Venice*, due for cinema release in February-May 2002, takes a fresh, modern look at Shakespeare's 400 year-old play, "The Merchant of Venice" and finds it is still relevant.

Starring Maori actors speaking te reo, *The Maori Merchant of Venice* is subtitled in easy-to-read modern English. The design, costumes and music interweave Shakespearean elements with Maori arts in a rich, textured and modern way. Contrary to what some expect, there are no piupius and no mokos in this vision of cultural cross-fertilisation.

Directed by renowned Maori Shakespearean actor and director Don C Selwyn, *The Maori Merchant of Venice* will be presented to New Zealand by distributor Metropolis Films as a "cinema event". Starting with its World Premiere in Waikato on February 15, the film will make its way progressively around the country with defined seasons in each area, like a touring theatre show, with a series of regional charity premieres.

The premieres will be attended by the actors and the film's makers, contributing to the theatrical spirit of the evening by wearing the stylish 17th Century costumes from the film. The premieres will benefit a new charity, the Pei Te Hurinui Jones Trust, formed to fund creative writing in te reo, part of the revitalisation of the language, a lifelong passion of Don Selwyn.

To heighten the experience of being at a cinema event, the audience will be given a souvenir programme, with background information and pictures, printed in English and Maori.

There will also be special matinee screenings for schools in each area, in keeping with the film's relevance to education in areas as diverse as the study of Shakespeare, drama, Maori language, film making, art and design.

The film uses Shakespeare's plot and characters. The Jewish money-lender, Shylock, lends 3000 ducats to a handsome young Venetian, Bassanio, so that he can woo a wealthy woman, Portia. Bassanio's friend, the merchant, Antonio, stands as guarantor for the loan. Shylock, as revenge for years of mistreatment by Antonio and his Christian friends, demands that the bond be a pound of Antonio's flesh. When Antonio's ships are lost at sea and he cannot repay the loan, Shylock pursues his revenge to the court, seeking the pound of flesh, rather than the money. Portia disguises herself as a young lawyer and cleverly argues the letter of the law, winning the case for Antonio. Shylock learns that revenge is not so sweet.

The cast is headed by Waihoroi Shortland as Shylock (in Maori: Hairoka) and introduces Ngarimu Daniels as Portia (Pohia) and Scott Morrison as Antonio (Anatonio). Te Rangihau Gilbert is Bassanio (Patanio), Veeshayne Armstrong is Nerissa (Nerita), Sonny Kirikiri is Gratiano (Karatiano), Reikura Morgan is Jessica (Tiehika) and Te Arepa Kahi is Lorenzo (Roroneto).

Shakespeare's play was translated into Maori in 1945 by Dr Pei Te Hurinui Jones, who wanted to make the beauty of Shakespeare's language accessible to Maori. Don Selwyn staged it as a play in 1990 and has worked since then to make it into a film.

The Maori Merchant of Venice is produced by He Taonga Films and funded by Te Mangai Paho. Distributor: Metropolis Film Ltd. Executive producer/director: Don Selwyn; associate producers: Sir Robert Mahuta and Selwyn Muru; producer: Ruth Kaupua Panapa; director of photography: Davorin Fahn; production designer: Guy Moana; costume designer: Gavin McLean; composer: Clive Cockburn; Maori music composer: Hirini Melbourne; editor: Bella Erickson.

Interviews, photographs, video and audio clips available.

THE MAORI MERCHANT OF VENICE **Te Tangata Whai Rawa O Weniti**

SYNOPSIS

The Maori Merchant of Venice tells Shakespeare's story of conflict between Antonio, a Christian merchant, and Shylock, a Jewish moneylender and the resolution provided by a strong woman, Portia.

Set in the 17th Century cosmopolitan trading port of Venice, the film has a Maori perspective, which makes it relevant today. It's about religious discrimination, revenge for past wrongs, and business deals that go awry. It explores the nature of justice and mercy. It also involves a love story that crosses religious barriers, the effect of heritage on an individual's life decisions and the strength, wit and wisdom of women.

Shylock's determined quest for a pound of Antonio's flesh arises out of a love story: Antonio's best friend Bassanio wishes to travel to court the beautiful Portia, but he has no money. All of Antonio's cash is tied up in his ships at sea, but he agrees to be guarantor for a loan Bassanio gets from the moneylender, Shylock.

Shylock, mindful of the racial slurs and business undercutting he has suffered from Antonio, makes a tough condition: if the loan is defaulted, Antonio must pay with a pound of his flesh. Antonio, confident that his ships will come in, agrees to the bizarre clause.

Meanwhile, Shylock's daughter Jessica, falls in love with a handsome young Christian, Lorenzo. She elopes with him under cover of a masked festival, stealing from her father as she goes. Shylock is heartbroken.

Bassanio reaches Portia's magical land of Belmonte, renamed Peremona, a beautiful place embellished by Maori art, culture and ritual. He must pass a test set by Portia's deceased father: to choose the correct one of three caskets – gold, silver or lead. Many suitors from all over the world have tried and failed.

Bassanio wins Portia's hand, but quickly hears news that Antonio's ships have sunk and Shylock has had Antonio arrested, seeking his pound of flesh.

A trial, held before the Duke of Venice, ensues. Bassanio, desperate to rescue his friend, pleads to repay double the original loan with money given to him by the wealthy Portia. But Shylock, standing on principle, is not interested in the money. He wants utu (revenge).

Portia secretly travels to Venice and, disguised as a male lawyer, powerfully and convincingly argues the case for Antonio's freedom.

Portia triumphs, Antonio lives, the lovers are happy, but does Shylock really accept his sentence?

SHORT SYNOPSIS

The Maori take on Shakespeare's 'pound of flesh' drama is a story of deep seated social and religious prejudice, in which the Jew (Shylock) has a long memory of oppression, but revenge is not so sweet.

ONE-LINER

Revenge is not so sweet.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

The Maori Merchant of Venice, the Maori film version of the English bard William Shakespeare's classic play *The Merchant of Venice*, brings an exotic look, a musically rich soundtrack and a unique cultural mix to Shakespearean tradition.

The revenge drama of Jewish moneylender Shylock and his quest for a pound of Christian merchant Antonio's flesh as payment, or utu, for a defaulted loan, is told in the Maori language with easy-to-read subtitles in modern English.

The Maori Merchant of Venice contributes to the modern Shakespeare revival (*Romeo & Juliet*, *Shakespeare in Love*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*) and comes in the wake of the success of Chinese language/English subtitled *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*.

The director and executive producer of the film, Don C Selwyn, has a long-standing and distinguished career in the New Zealand film and television industry as an actor, producer and director. He is a leading proponent of Maori drama, performed in both Maori and English, and a prime mover in encouraging respect for Maori viewpoints and culture in mainstream New Zealand film and television drama. He has devoted many years to training Maori and Pacific film makers and is a mentor and inspiration to many now working in the industry.

Selwyn is a founder (with producer Ruth Kaupua Panapa) of He Taonga Films, the production company for *The Maori Merchant of Venice*.

He has been well known in New Zealand as a film and television actor since 1977's *Sleeping Dogs*, the first New Zealand feature to be exhibited internationally, and which began the Hollywood careers of Roger Donaldson and Sam Neill.

For Selwyn, an experienced Shakespearean actor whose roles encompass Oberon, Caesar, Antony, Othello and Shylock; theatre director (*The Merchant of Venice*) and Maori language film director and producer (*Maauī Pootiki, Tohunga, Te Ohaki o Nihe*), this is a project which combines his passion for Shakespeare with his commitment to the revitalisation of the Maori language.

Renowned Maori scholar Dr Pei Te Hurinui Jones translated Shakespeare's poetic 16th Century English into formal, poetic Maori in 1945. In addition to *The Merchant of Venice*, he translated Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Julius Caesar* into Maori. He wished to make the beauty and the power of Shakespeare's message accessible to Maori people. He did this alongside his other major work of translating ancient Maori songs into English.

In the late 1950s, Jones told Selwyn of the translation of *The Merchant of Venice* and of his wish that it be performed one day. Selwyn directed it as a stage play as part of the 1990 Koanga Festival in Auckland, when he was invited to stage a play in Maori.

He saw that it would translate into film and spent the past 10 years seeking funding, in addition to operating He Taonga Films as a production company (*Nga Puna, Don't Go Past With Your Nose in the Air, Feathers of Peace, the Tala Pasifika series*) and training base for Maori and Pacific film makers.

Alongside his love for Shakespeare, Selwyn's passion for the preservation and enhancement of the Maori language drives him to bring this story to a wider audience. "It is important to keep the poetic side of the language active. We need something more than the cryptic and colloquial translations from modern-day English that is common in Maori now," he says.

Selwyn's visual treatment for turning the play into a film keeps Shakespeare's plot, characters and settings, enhancing them by adding a Maori dimension. "We are using

Maori language and cultural elements as a vehicle to be able to express the dynamics that Shakespeare came up with. The characters are not sourced from Maoridom, but there are analogies,” he says.

Selwyn’s vision for *The Maori Merchant of Venice* is a dynamic interaction of colourful, strong and distinct cultures. The action takes place at the point where the edges of these cultures meet – in the world of business and law, with overlaps into the world of love and romance.

The Jewish moneylender Shylock (known in Maori as Hairoka) and his opponent, the Christian merchant Antonio (Anatonio), live in a 17th Century Venice achieved by using Italian-inspired buildings in Auckland, inner-harbour waterways and the Herald Island wharf as filming locations dressed to present Venice as a cosmopolitan trading centre.

The wealthy woman who is the key to the dispute and its solution, Portia (Pohia), lives in the magical land of Belmont (Peremona), which Shakespeare created as a fictitious place. The film locates it in New Zealand by incorporating Maori art, music and culture in the design and staging of events. For example, when the Prince of Morocco arrives in Peremona to seek Portia’s hand in marriage, he is given a ceremonial Maori welcome with conch shell, and karanga (female cry of welcome) counterpointed by Moroccan trumpets and song.

Her suitors put their case to Portia accompanied by Italian-style operatic arias performed in Maori by opera singers William Winitana and Mere Boynton, intermingled with traditional Maori wind instruments, played by Maori music expert Hirini Melbourne. When Shylock and Antonio do their business deal, they happen to be in an art gallery, part of the Venice marketplace, filled with the work of renowned artist Selwyn Muri.

The Maori Merchant of Venice has an original orchestral score by award-winning composer Clive Cockburn (*Mikhail Lermontov*) and played by the New Zealand

Symphony Orchestra, overlaid with haunting vocals by Kui Wano and choral performances by the St Joseph's Maori Girls Choir. The soundtrack was recorded by the Radio New Zealand recording department at Wellington's Michael Fowler Centre.

The cast is a mix of seasoned actors and exciting newcomers, headed by Waihoroi Shortland (48) as Shylock, the role he played in Selwyn's 1990 stage production. He is also known as a writer (*Crooked Earth*).

Selwyn chose a predominantly young cast with high levels of proficiency in Maori, aiming to inspire other young Maori to take up the language.

Antonio is played by Maori language university lecturer and first-time actor Scott Morrison (29), a cousin of Temuera Morrison. Portia is newcomer Ngarimu Daniels (22), a Maori radio newsreader and kapa haka (traditional Maori dance) tutor. Bassanio is played by Te Rangihau Gilbert (36), whose early acting roles include *Utu* and *The Silent One* when he was a teenager. Actor/university student Sonny Kirikiri (36) (*The Piano*, *Feathers of Peace*) plays Gratiano and radio personality/actress Veeshayne Armstrong (28) (*Jackson's Wharf*) is Nerissa.

Reikura Morgan (22), a childrens' television presenter (*Pukana*), plays Jessica and her real-life boyfriend Te Arepa Kahi (23) (*Mataku*, *Shortland Street*), plays her on-screen lover Lorenzo. Lawrence Makoare (32) (*Crooked Earth*, *What Becomes of the Broken Hearted*), plays the Prince of Morocco.

The film also features singers Ardre Broughton-Foote, William Winitana and Mere Boynton, Auckland Dance Company dancer Justine Hohaia, traditional musician Hirini Melbourne and artist Selwyn Muru in cameo roles. In a tribute to the history of the New Zealand film industry, veteran actress/film maker Ramai Hayward appears in the court crowd scene.

The film was made by a multi-cultural crew, including Croatian director of photography Davorin Fahn (*Small Town Blues, Aroha*), award-winning Maori designer Guy Moana (*Once Were Warriors, Moko Toa*), editor Bella Erikson (*Feathers of Peace*) and many other experienced Maori and Pakeha professionals plus several trainees, in accord with He Taonga Films' kaupapa (philosophy).

Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* has been performed as a play in countless interpretations all over the world through the centuries since it was written in about 1596. There were six silent movies made before 1923 and seven English-language television productions since 1947. The best-known was a 1973 television presentation of the stage play starring Sir Laurence Olivier as Shylock and Joan Plowright as Portia. The BBC made a television film in 1980, starring Warren Mitchell as Shylock and the most recent starred Bob Peck in 1996.

The only previous non-English language version seems to be a French/Italian film made in 1952, directed by Pierre Bilon.

The Maori Merchant of Venice is the first Shakespeare film to be produced in New Zealand and the first to be performed in Maori. It is also the first Maori-language feature film. It is funded by Te Mangai Paho, the funding body for Maori language film and television projects, with marketing assistance from the New Zealand Film Commission. Production company: He Taonga Films. Distributor: Metropolis Film. Executive producer/director: Don C Selwyn, associate producers: Selwyn Muru, Sir Robert Mahuta, producer: Ruth Kaupua Panapa; director of photography: Davorin Fahn, production designer: Guy Moana, composer: Clive Cockburn, Maori music composer Hirini Melbroune, editor Bella Erickson.

Synopsis: The Maori take on Shakespeare's 'pound of flesh' drama is a story of deep-seated social and religious prejudice, in which the Jew (Shylock) has a long memory of oppression, but revenge is not so sweet.

ABOUT THE CAST

Waihoroi Shortland – Shylock (Hairoka)

The Maori Merchant of Venice is Waihoroi Shortland's second opportunity to play Shylock. He performed the role in the 1990 stage version, also directed by Don Selwyn, at the Koanga Festival in Auckland.

Of Ngati Hine and Te Aupouri descent, Shortland (48), grew up in Matawaia in Northland, with Maori as his first language. He didn't speak English until he went to primary school at 5 years old. His strength in te reo has formed the basis of his career.

He attended St Stephens Maori boarding school in Auckland and then studied for a diploma in physical education at Otago University. His early work was for Government agencies, with some formative experience gained in the Maori Land Court, where he worked as clerk and interpreter between 1972 and 1974. This was before the Waitangi Tribunal was established in 1975.

He then moved to Auckland, working for the Department of Maori Affairs for five years on the J-Team, a team made up of workers Maori Affairs, the police and the Department of Social Welfare, dealing with juvenile offenders and street kids. He gained a Diploma of Social Work from Victoria University in Wellington in 1983.

When Maori Affairs was restructured in 1984, he joined TVNZ as a journalist in the early days of Te Karere, the Maori language news programme. In 1990 he was part of the group which included Derek Fox, Gary Wilson and Wena Harawira which formed Mana Maori Media, the pioneering Maori news agency and publisher.

He gradually moved from radio and print journalism to an interest in film and television drama. His first acting role was in the *Billy T James Show*; he played the headmaster in the TV soap opera *Homeward Bound* and in 1994 went to Easter Island as an actor in the

Hollywood film *Rapanui*, produced by Kevin Costner. He has recently acted in *Oha Ki A Nihe*, a Maori language television drama produced by He Taonga Films.

In 1993, he worked as cultural adviser and Maori dialogue writer for Jane Campion's Academy Award winning film *The Piano*, which was shot in Auckland.

He wrote the television drama *ITFM*, one of the well-regarded *Nga Puna* series produced by He Taonga Films. His most recent writing is the feature film *Crooked Earth*, which stars Temuera Morrison.

Shortland, whose great-great-grandfather was a Jewish trader, says playing Shylock was very straightforward for him.

“Playing Shylock from a Maori perspective is the easiest role because you know something about what it is to hang onto your identity and to deal with prejudice, some of it overt, some of it not so overt, in the New Zealand sense anyway.

“I love Shylock. Even knowing where he ends up, I play the scenes out as if I don't know what the end is. All of the things he does, to my mind, he does with a confidence and with a forthrightness that comes from a good place. I don't have an evil intent with Shylock.

“There's an openness and an honesty about Shylock. He makes the proposition quite openly, he pursues his line quite directly and of course he's acting not only for himself, but I see him as acting on behalf of his people.”

Ngarimu Daniels: Portia (Pohia)

The Maori Merchant of Venice is 22-year old Ngarimu Daniels' first film, a fact belied by her poised and powerful performance as Portia, the wealthy, educated woman who brings about a resolution to the conflict at the heart of the story.

She was invited to audition because director Don Selwyn had earlier cast her in one of his Maori language television dramas, *Maui Pootiki*, and realised her talent.

Her ability with Maori language is a result of being surrounded by it in her family since birth. Of Tuhoe, Te Arawa and Ngati Whatua descent, she grew up primarily in Ruatoki in the Bay of Plenty. When she was nine years old the family spent a year in England, where she attended a multicultural school. While in London, she performed in a chorus in Andrew Lloyd Webber's production of *Evita* – her introduction to acting.

She was introduced to the works of William Shakespeare while attending Bream Bay College in Northland, where she had an English teacher who was passionate about Shakespeare. She was part of the backstage crew for a school performance of *The Merchant of Venice*. She says she found the poetry and imagery of Shakespeare relatively easy to grasp because it was similar to the metaphorical style of Maori spoken by her grandparents.

Daniels is immersed in Maori culture, as a practitioner of kapa haka (Maori traditional dance), which she also tutors at Epsom Girls College in Auckland. She says her Maoritanga is a very strong part of her, as she was brought up to be proud of her culture and language.

She has just graduated from Auckland University of Technology with a Bachelor of Maori Development.

For the past three years, she has worked for Maori language radio production company Ruia Mai, as newsreader, reporter and reader of childrens' stories.

After filming *The Maori Merchant of Venice*, Daniels played a role in the upcoming Maori language television drama series, *Aroha*.

She sees Portia as a mana wahine, a strong Maori woman who is level-headed, intelligent and articulate. She sees a problem and sets about resolving it without fuss.

“Portia is very worldly. She comes across as being very knowledgeable and well educated. She knows what she wants and she’s headstrong as well. She’s not easily swayed, but she’s very graceful at the same time.

“When her husband Bassanio gets into the situation that he does, rather than just sitting back waiting for her him, he decides to help him, so she goes to the court. She’s that sort of person. She just deals with it.”

In typical Shakespeare fashion, a major part of the role called for Daniels to portray Portia in disguise as a man. Portia disguises herself as a male lawyer in order to speak in court to save Bassanio’s best friend Antonio. Daniels and Veeshayne Armstrong, who played her maidservant, Nerissa,, were outfitted in 17th Century Venetian male clothes and made up with stylish moustaches.

“In the court there was an element of having fun because she and Nerissa are dressed up as men and both their partners are oblivious that it’s them. But also she’s looking at Bassanio and thinking that she really loves him, otherwise she wouldn’t be there.”

Scott Morrison - Antonio (Antaonio)

Scott Morrison is a fluent Maori language speaker who is a lecturer in the Maori Studies Department at Massey University in Albany, Auckland. Playing Antonio, the Christian merchant in *The Maori Merchant of Venice* is his first acting role.

Morrison (29) grew up in Rotorua, of Ngati Whakaue descent. He is a second cousin of well-known New Zealand actor Temuera Morrison. His late father, John Morrison, was Sir Howard Morrison's cousin and an original member of the renowned Howard Morrison Quartet.

After leaving college, he attended Waikato University Teachers Training College, where he learned Maori language, which was reinforced by his living with flatmates in a total immersion situation where they spoke nothing but Maori for two years. He says he initially started Maori lessons because he had some space in his timetable and Maori was the only subject that fitted.

A successful academic, he has just completed his masters degree (MA), and is now studying for his doctorate (PhD). He is also a talented sportsman, having represented New Zealand in the Maori Sevens rugby team and the NZ Schools volleyball team. He represented his province, Bay of Plenty, in rugby, athletics, golf and cricket. Now a passionate golfer, he also runs and does boxing training.

He worked nights for Maori radio company Ruia Mai as a current affairs presenter, interviewing a wide range of politicians and other newsmakers. He is currently involved in a Maori cartoon project with Waihoroi Shortland, who is playing Shylock. Shortland introduced him to director Don Selwyn, who asked him to audition for the film.

He enjoyed his studies of Shakespeare's *Othello* at college, and used his knowledge of the play to make English his highest grade in his final year.

After filming *The Maori Merchant of Venice*, Morrison undertook his second acting role in the upcoming Maori language television drama series, *Aroha*.

Morrison sees Antonio as a generous and straightforward person, even though he always seems to have the weight of the world upon his shoulders, worrying about his business.

“He was almost foolishly confident that he would have the wealth to cover the loan at the time it needed to be paid back. He was a bit arrogant and a bit dismissive of Shylock, because there was that kind of Christian-Jew relationship in those days, so he didn’t take the pound of flesh bond seriously.”

Morrison says Dr Pei Te Hurinui Jones’ translation of Shakespeare is “a different kind of language. It’s a language you don’t hear that often. I believe our language initially belonged to the environment. It developed from the call of the birds and the rustling of trees and so when our ancestors spoke they used imagery and metaphor and simile and other devices in conjunction with the environment to describe their feelings. That kind of expertise is lost in the language now, where a lot of Maori speakers are just using the language to translate their English thought processes and that metaphoric language is lost.

“But you can see by the way Shakespeare wrote and the way Pei Te Hurinui translated it, that the poetical element is back inside it, so I believe this film will really lift our language and people will get a lot out of it.”

Te Rangihau Gilbert – Bassanio (Patanio)

Te Rangihau Gilbert has a multi-faceted career encompassing acting, television presenting, journalism and music, based on the strength of his Maori language skills, scientific interests, acting and musical talent.

Of Tuhoë and Ngati Kahungungu descent, Gilbert (36) grew up in a Maori-speaking family in the small town of Te Haroto on the East Coast of the North Island. It was one of the locations for Geoff Murphy's ground-breaking feature film *Utu*, and Gilbert, then a teenager, won a small role as a horseback-riding commando.

Then, at 18, he played the king's son, a lead role, in *The Silent One*, directed by Yvonne Mackay for the Gibson Group, filmed in the Cook Islands. At that stage, despite receiving encouragement to take up an acting career from Mackay and another film director, Mike Walker, Gilbert decided he wanted to be a forest ranger. He attended Victoria University and then the Whakarewarewa Forestry Training School in Rotorua.

After discovering that forestry was not for him, he returned to his Maori and science studies, this time at Waikato University. On graduation in 1992, he was offered a job at TVNZ's Maori Unit, as a trainee reporter for the *Te Karere*, the Maori news programme.

After a year's training in Auckland, he moved to Christchurch as *Te Karere*'s South Island reporter, returning a year later and moving to the prime time *One Network News*. He was then offered a presenter's job on *Marae*, a Maori magazine programme, which led to presenting on *Waka Huia*, the award-winning Maori history and cultural programme.

Then his science skills led him to the New Zealand reporter's role for the Australian science programme *Quantum*.

Alongside his television reporting and presenting, he also acted in dramas including *Shortland Street*, *True Life Stories*, *Cover Story* and an early Maori language drama *Te Kai A Te Rangatira*, made for ETV – Education TV. His most recent role was in the upcoming television series *Aroha*.

After spending a year as a current affairs reporter with Maori radio company, Ruia Mai, Gilbert moved to Perth, Australia in 1997. A talented musician and composer, he spent two years there playing in various bands and performing solo as a one-man band. He sings, plays saxophone, guitar and drums in rhythm & blues, jazz and Latin styles.

Since returning to New Zealand in 1999, Gilbert has started a Bachelor of Music and is now working at the Auckland Public Health Research Unit at Auckland University, while also acting and writing music. He has recently released a CD, titled “Hononga”, of his own compositions in Maori, in styles ranging from classical to contemporary.

The Maori Merchant of Venice is Gilbert’s first contact of any kind with the works of Shakespeare and he says it took him a while to come to grips with the classic style of Maori used in the translation by Dr Pei Te Hurinui Jones.

He sees Bassanio as “a dreamer. He wants to be a certain type of person, but he cannot achieve that by his own means. He’s in love with Portia, who is a very wealthy woman and the only way he thinks he can get her hand is by showing that he’s got a lot of money as well, so he borrows money so that he can put on airs.

“He is loyal, his intentions are well meaning, and although his head seems to be in the clouds most of the time, his heart is in the right place.”

Veeshayne Armstrong – Nerissa (Nerita)

Veeshayne Armstrong (28) is well known for her work as a radio presenter on Mai FM, a job she recently quit in order to initiate “Living Your Dreams”, a special project taking inspiration, encouragement and celebration of talent into schools.

She played a major guest role in the television series *Jackson’s Wharf* and the lead role in a bilingual short film called *The Length of a Memory* and also occasionally works a television presenter. Her most recent role was in the upcoming television drama series *Aroha*.

Of Ngati Hine descent, she grew up in Moerewa, Northland, and moved to Auckland after leaving high school. She attended a pharmaceutical course and was working in a pharmacy when she was offered a job at radio station Mai FM.

She says that even though her parents were Maori speakers, she is not fluent in the language and found the prospect of acting in *The Maori Merchant of Venice* quite intimidating but a unique opportunity. She enjoyed being surrounded by so many fluent speakers and felt it contributed to a leap forward in the development of her Maori language.

A keen sportswoman, she enjoys boxing, running and basketball. She also likes harakeke weaving and creative projects. She is also the mother of a five-year-old son.

Sonny Kirikiri - Gratiano (Karatiano)

Award-winning radio broadcaster Sonny Kirikiri (36) has developed a parallel career as an actor and has now returned to university as a student to complete his BA and B Com degrees.

His most recent radio position was for the past five years as producer of news and current affairs for Maori language radio production company Ruia Mai, winner of two awards at the RBO Radio Awards and two commendations at the Te Ohu Kai Moana Radio Festival. Before that, he ran the drive show at Aotearoa Radio for five years, after leaving university with a partial BA degree, working briefly at the Department of Social Welfare and returning to his home territory to work pruning trees in Kaingaroa Forest.

His acting career includes roles in feature films *The Piano* and *What Becomes of the Broken Hearted?* and television dramas *Heroes*, *Lawless*, *Plainclothes* and *Shortland Street*. His major Maori language roles include the feature *Feathers of Peace* and television drama *Turia*, both produced by He Taonga Films and *Colenso*, a dramatised life of the explorer Diefenbach. In fact, his role in *Feathers of Peace* called for him to speak Moriori, a language which is no longer spoken and which he mastered with the help of an American anthropologist who has made a study of the language.

Of Whanau Apanui descent, he grew up in Kaingaroa Forest, close to Rotorua. He has always fostered a love for the Maori language, a commitment that has blossomed through involvement with prominent Maori speakers like Kingi Taurua, Henry Prior, Tui Waaka and Waihoroi Shortland.

After *The Piano*, where Waihoroi Shortland, who was Maori cultural adviser, challenged all the Maori actors by saying that American actor Harvey Keitel spoke the best Maori on the set, Kirikiri returned to his elders to work on improving his Maori.

Te Arepa Kahi - Lorenzo (Roroneto)

Te Arepa Kahi (23) joined a theatre group after completing high school and has been acting and directing ever since. Playing Lorenzo in *The Maori Merchant of Venice* is his first major Maori language role.

Of Ngati Paoa and Waikato descent, he grew up in Christchurch in a musical family. He sang and played trumpet and saxophone. At age 17 he was selected to perform in a play at the Christchurch Arts Festival. He was spotted by actor/director and Maori theatre pioneer Jim Moriarty, who asked him to join the theatre troupe Te Rakau Hua o te Wao Tapu. The troupe toured New Zealand, performing in schools, universities, prisons and marae.

Kahi left the group after two and a half years to settle in Auckland, where he attended University, completing a degree in History and Maori, while taking on acting roles, including *Shortland Street* and various television commercials. His most recent credits are in the upcoming television drama series *Mataku* and *Aroha*.

He has directed a children's television show, *Tikitiki*, and a documentary *Ahorangi*, and is developing other projects.

In the past three years he has focussed on learning the Maori language, from his grandmother and by studying at university.

The role of Lorenzo has a special importance for Kahi, because his on-screen lover, Jessica, is played by his real-life sweetheart, Reikura Morgan.

Reikura Morgan - Jessica (Tiehika)

Reikura Morgan (22) makes her acting debut as Jessica in *The Maori Merchant of Venice*. She is a presenter on Maori children's television programme *Pukana* and a student. Her most recent acting role was in the upcoming television series *Aroha*.

Morgan's first contact with Shakespeare was at the age of 12, when she saw Don Selwyn's 1990 stage production of *Shakespeare's Te Tangata Whai Rawa O Weniti (Merchant of Venice)*, in which her father, Tukoroirangi, played Patanio (Bassanio).

Of Ngati Hine, Ngati Porou and Waikato descent, Morgan has been surrounded by Maori language from birth. She attended kohanga reo and kura kaupapa (pre-school through to intermediate school) at Hoani Waititi Marae in West Auckland. She was one of the first graduates of Wharekura Hoani Waititi, the first total immersion high school. She is currently attending Auckland University, completing a BA degree majoring in Maori and minoring in Ancient History – Roman, Greek and Classical Studies.

Being cast in the role of Jessica has extra significance for Morgan, since she is playing opposite her real life sweetheart, Te Arepa Kahi, who plays Jessica's love Lorenzo.

Lawrence Makoare - Prince of Morocco (Piriniha O Morako)

Lawrence Makoare (32) has established an impressive acting career over the past seven years, after his talent was discovered by Don Selwyn in a drama class.

Makoare says he was a road maintenance worker who stumbled into acting by mistake. He went to the drama class with his former wife, to look after their son while she participated, but Selwyn encouraged him to join in and very quickly arranged his first audition.

His first role was in the Hollywood feature film *Rapa Nui*, which was filmed in Easter Island and other features include *The Price of Milk*, *What Becomes of the Broken Hearted? Feathers of Peace*, also produced by He Taonga Films, and a lead role in *Crooked Earth*, playing Temuera Morrison's brother. He also played three different characters in *The Lord of the Rings*.

His television work includes *Xena Warrior Princess*, *Young Hercules*, *Greenstone*, *Mirror Mirror*, and the He Taonga Films dramas *ITFM* and *Oma Rapiti*, plus short films and commercials.

Of Ngati Whatua descent, Makoare grew up in Bastion Point, Auckland, where he still lives. He is not a fluent Maori speaker, learning the lines necessary for his character through intensive study and mentoring by Waihoroi Shortland, who plays Shylock.

In addition to road work for the City Council and other physical labouring jobs, he has also worked as a Maori wood carver. He is a keen sportsman, playing rugby league, touch football and softball as well as scuba diving, fishing and swimming.

Mana Epiha - Launcelot (Ranaharoto)

The Maori Merchant of Venice is 21-year-old radio host Mana Epiha's second film. His first was a television drama, *Te Ohake A Nihe*, also for Don Selwyn and He Taonga Films.

He has also done some television presenting work, for a youth music segment on *Marae* called *Ka Hao Te Rangatahi*. His radio work is as host for *Ae Marika*, the breakfast show on iwi radio station *Ngati Hine FM* in Whangarei, where he has worked for two years, since he left school. He is planning to attend University soon.

Of Ngapuhi descent, he grew up surrounded by Maori language, as his father and his grandparents were fluent speakers. He attended *Kura Kaupapa o Waipareira* (primary school) in West Auckland and the first total immersion high school, *Wharekura Hoani Waititi*. He excelled in debating and public speaking, consistently winning school competitions. He also studied and enjoyed Shakespeare – *Romeo and Juliet*, *MacBeth* and *Othello* - in English.

Te Kauhoe Wano - Salarino (Hararino)

Te Kauhoe Wano (38) is a television reporter/director and former school teacher taking up his second acting role in *The Maori Merchant Of Venice*. His identical twin brother, Wharehoka, also plays a role in the film, as Haranio, another friend of the merchant, Antonio.

Both brothers also acted in He Taonga Films' recent Maori language television drama, *Tohunga*, in which they played twins.

Te Kauhoe Wano, of Taranaki, Te Atiawa and Ngati Awa descent, grew up in the South Taranaki town of Hawera. After leaving Hawera High School, he attended Palmerston North Teacher's College and Massey University, graduating with a Bachelor of Education, majoring in Education and Maori. In 1985, he returned to Taranaki, where he taught initially at Opunake Primary School and then moved to Opunake High School as Maori Language and Maori Studies teacher until 1989. After travelling overseas for two years, he taught in the bilingual unit at Tauranga Boys College. He then moved to Taranaki Polytech in New Plymouth, where he was Head of Maori Studies until 2000.

In early 2000, he accepted an offer from award-winning Maori television programme *Waka Huia* to move to Auckland as a full-time reporter/director. He had previously been a local contact involved in Taranaki stories for the programme and had also presented educational resource videos. He did not grow up as a Maori speaker, focussing in his early years on Pakeha education, but on arrival at university in the early 1980s intending to be a physical education teacher, he met young Maori language speakers and was inspired to learn it himself. He structured his degree to include as much Maori as possible and says that for four years he was consumed with learning the language, travelling to every Maori language hui that he could. He continued this pursuit on his return to Taranaki, where he became involved in his mother's marae at Parihaka.

Joe Naden: Tuika O Weniti (Duke of Venice)

Joe Naden has devoted the bulk of his long career to Maori education, but he has also been an actor in television dramas and live theatre plays, Gilbert & Sullivan musicals and light opera.

He was one of the actors in Don Selwyn's 1990 stage production of *Te Tangata Whai Rawa O Weniti (Merchant of Venice)*, playing Hararino (Salarino).

A friend of Selwyn's since the 1950s, he has appeared in several of He Taonga Films' television dramas, including *Mananui* and *ITFM*, of the *Nga Puna* series.

Of Ngati Porou descent, Naden grew up speaking English and studied Latin and French. He attended Auckland University and Auckland Teacher's College. In 1979, when he was 32 years old and had been working as a teacher for many years, he was offered a job as a teacher of Maori language in Gisborne. He started learning the language immediately, keeping just a few steps ahead of his pupils.

After eight years there, he went on to become an adviser on the teaching of Maori, eventually promoted to be the first Maori school inspector in the Auckland, where he taught Maori language to all of the other inspectors.

He has taught Maori language in secondary schools and kura kaupapa, was Maori liaison officer at Auckland Institute of Technology (now AUT), and a lecturer at the Auckland College of Education (ACE), training the next generation of Maori language teachers. He has also been on various university committees researching the teaching of Maori and looking for improvements.

He is now on the board of Hoani Waititi Kura Kaupapa Maori and is chairman of Ngati Porou in Auckland.

Andy Sarich: Tupara (Tubal)

Andy Sarich (69) is a kaumatua from The Bay of Islands who is active in improving the future of education for Maori. *The Maori Merchant of Venice* is his first acting job.

He says he found the film set a different world from the marae, where he is free to improvise, “But if you live long enough, you get many challenges.”

His ancestry is mixed: Ngapuhi, Croatian, Irish and Jewish, which is fitting, since he is playing a Jewish character, Tubal (Tupara), an associate of Shylock.

He grew up speaking the Maori language and was of the generation which was punished for speaking Maori at school and punished for speaking English at home, but he retained his Maori language. He left school early, and became a truck driver, bus driver, bush contractor and farmer. Now retired, he is heading Te Reo O Te Tai Tokerau, an incorporated body working with the Ministry of Education to counteract Maori under-achievement in education.

Wharehoka Wano: Salernio (Haranio)

For Maori education consultant Wharehoka Wano (38), *The Maori Merchant of Venice* is the second time he has taken an acting role. The first was in *Tohunga*, a Maori language television drama produced by He Taonga Films, in which he and his identical twin brother, Te Kauhoe, played twins. In this film they play friends of the merchant, Antonio.

Of Taranaki, Te Atiawa and Ngati Awa descent, he grew up in Hawera, South Taranaki, attending Hawera High School, followed by Waikato University and Teacher's College. Although in his childhood he had spent time on his mother's marae at Parihaka and other Taranaki marae, he did not learn the language as a child. He learned Maori at Waikato University and from his father's family in Whakatane, where he lived with an aunt who was a native speaker. He taught English at Whakatane High School for seven years.

He then became a Maori Language teacher at primary, secondary and tertiary levels before moving to the Massey University College of Education as an adviser to Maori teachers working in total immersion schools, kura kaupapa. He now has a company, Tihi Ltd, which provides management support to kura kaupapa teachers throughout Waikato, Taranaki, Hawkes Bay and Manawatu. He is based in New Plymouth.

He has also been a presenter of several education resource videos.

He has been passionate about Shakespeare since secondary school and studied as many Shakespeare papers as possible at Waikato University and in his years as an English teacher he taught Shakespeare at 6th and 7th form level. While at university, he became aware that Dr Pei Te Hurinui Jones had translated some Shakespeare plays into Maori, but had not read any until he received the script for this film, *The Maori Merchant of Venice*.

Eru Potaka Dewes: Old Gobbo (Kopo Kaumatua)

Eru Potaka Dewes is the Dean of Theology at the Maori Anglican Theological College in Rotorua. He does not actively seek acting work, but is often sought out for particular roles, such as Old Gobbo in *The Maori Merchant of Venice*.

He describes himself as “true blood Ngati Porou, nothing else” , and is a fluent native speaker of te reo. His film work has included *The Rainbow Warrior*, *The Piano* and *Rapa Nui*, the Kevin Costner-produced Hollywood feature film, for which he and several other Maori actors went to Rapa Nui (Easter Island). He was also in *Jubilee* and played a lead role in He Taonga Films’ Maori language drama *Tohunga*.

He describes Old Gobbo as wearing “a kaleidoscope of different masks” as he is caught between his loyalty to his son and to his colleague Shylock. In what is essentially a comedic scene with a serious message about integrity, Old Gobbo shifts between being blind to his son, to recognising him, to playing games with him and eventually helping him achieve his ambition - a job with Bassanio.

He sees the film as significant in that it marks a turning point in the way Shakespeare can be presented in a culture other than English and expects that it will be of interest to Shakespeare buffs around the world, no matter what their language is.

“There was that touch of Maori design which permeates the film – the backgrounds, the taiahas, the korus – it all blended in so well with the Venetian costumes from the play itself. That blend, the Maori contribution, lifted the décor to a whole new level.

“As a fluent Maori speaker, I found that Pei Te Hurinui Jones translated it in a classical style that captures the language, and the thought, that I think Shakespeare intended.”

Ngatai Rangihau: Renato (Leonardo)

Ngatai Rangihau (30) plays Bassanio's manservant, Leonardo. *The Maori Merchant of Venice* is the second Shakespeare film he has acted in. He played a warrior in the short film *Te Po Uriuri*, directed by Toby Mills.

He also played a warrior in Sir Howard Morrison's dramatised documentary *My Kainga My Castle* and is the warrior who presents the challenge to Goldstein in the well-known ASB Bank television commercial.

He is a member of Te Matarae I Orehu, the kapa haka group which won the Aotearoa Traditional Maori Performing Arts Festival Competition in 2000 and performed a highly successful tour, IhiFreNZy, with the New Zealand Ballet company. In his four years with the group, he has travelled to Malaysia and Noumea, performing in the 2000 Pacific Arts Festival.

He also freelances as a radio voice artist, doing studio work which ranges from commercials and infomercials to recording listening comprehension exercises and Maori educational resources for schools.

Of Tuhoë and Te Arawa descent, he grew up in Ruatahuna in the Urewera National Park, surrounded by native Maori language speakers. As a child, he chose to respond in English although he was spoken to in Maori. When he was at high school, he decided to use his Maori language and has immersed himself in taha Maori ever since.

Aldre Broughton-Foote: Te Kai Waiata O Piriniha O Morako

Jazz and soul singer Aldre Foote (28) has a singing role in *The Maori Merchant of Venice* as Te Kai Waiata O Piriniha O Morako, the singer attending on the Prince of Morocco.

Of Taranaki and Kahungunu descent, she was born in Taumarunui and grew up in Tolaga Bay, on the East Coast of the North Island where she also has whakapapa links. She now lives in Whaingaroa (Raglan) and works for Maori health provider Raukura Hauora, singing in schools and marae to convey health messages to Maori people.

She has recently returned after 11 years of living in Australia, where she worked as a singer and occasionally as an extra in movies such as *Mission Impossible II*, television series *Water Rats* and some commercials.

She started learning Maori language with a group of other Maori people in Sydney , and is continuing with it now that she is back in New Zealand.

She is now performing as part of a duo, singing jazz and soul. She has released a CD of funk, r&b, soul style original songs to follow up a demo CD which was aired on Mai FM, BFM and iwi radio stations.

William Winitana: Portia's Tangata Kai Tangitangi (singer)

Opera singer William Winitana is part of Portia's team of entertainers and craftspeople in her home. Director Don Selwyn has converted Shakespeare's fictitious magical land of Belmont into a Maori place, Peremona, which is a showcase for Maori culture, music, art and design.

Winitana, of Kahungunu and Tuhoë descent, trained as a dancer and then moved into radio in Hastings as a copywriter. He discovered his talent for opera when he attended a singing course without realising it was for opera singing.

After completing his diploma in Hawkes Bay three years ago, he moved to Auckland to complete his studies at the University of Auckland.

In 1999 he had a developing artist scholarship with Opera New Zealand and in the past two years has performed in *La Bohème*, *La Rustinacana*, *Die Fleidermaus*, *Madam Butterfly* and *La Traviata*.

Mere Boynton: Portia's Tangata Kai Tangitangi (Singer)

Mere Boynton plays the singer at Portia's house who accompanies the suitors as they choose a casket.

Of Te Aitanga a Mahaki and Tuhoë descent, she is an opera singer and actress. She is about to release a CD of original music.

She has appeared in the feature films *Once Were Warriors* and *The Piano* and television dramas *Nga Wahine*, *William Colenso – At Risk of Our Lives* and *Shark in the Park*.

Her most recent television role is in the *Aroha* drama series.

She has performed in theatrical productions including "Te Hara" at Taki Rua Theatre and "Takitoru" at Downstage Theatre and numerous opera and singing engagements.

ABOUT THE FILM MAKERS

He Taonga Films Ltd – Production Company

He Taonga Films arose out of a film and television training course called He Taonga I Tawhiti (Gifts From Afar) operated from 1984 to 1990 by Don Selwyn. It was established under the wing of the then Department of Maori Affairs Tu Tangata programme. Its aim was to give Maori and Pacific people the technical skills to enable them to tell their own stories. Many of the 120 people who went through the course over its six-year existence are successfully established in the industry today.

In 1992, Selwyn and producer Ruth Kaupua Panapa formed He Taonga Films to create job opportunities for course graduates and to provide options for Maori drama writers.

He Taonga produces drama for television and cinema in Maori, English and bi-lingual. The company selects its crews on a racially-inclusive basis, depending on skill, personality and the individual's ability to work to the kaupapa or philosophy of the production. For example, the crew of *The Maori Merchant of Venice* included Maori, Pacific Islanders, Pakeha, Croatian, Sri Lankan, Australian, English and Scottish.

He Taonga Films Production Record and Awards

Maori language drama:

The Maori Merchant of Venice (2001)

Maui Pootiki (2000)

Turia (2000)

Tohunga (1999)

Te Ohake a Nihe (1998)

English language and bi-lingual drama:

Don't Go Past With Your Nose in the Air (1989) best foreign short film 1992 New York

Nga Puna series: *Kahu & Maia* (1993) - best drama 1994 Dreamspeakers Festival

Small Town Blues - drama director/best film 1998 Dreamspeakers

Oma Rapiti

Visitation

Koro's Hat

ITFM

A Day in the Life (1996) - short film & performance in a short film 1996 Dreamspeakers

Talk of the Town (1996) – best drama 1996 Dreamspeakers Festival
Feathers of Peace (1999) - New Zealand Media Peace Award 2000

Dr Pei Te Hurinui Jones – translated *The Merchant of Venice* into Te Reo Maori

Dr Pei Te Hurinui Jones JP, D.Hon, OB., is of Ngati Maniapoto – Tainui descent on his mother's side. Born 1898 – Died 1976.

In 1913 Pei Jones spent some time at Wesley Training College. He had no further formal education.

Pei Te Hurinui Jones was a prolific recorder of Tainui history and held eminent positions on the Maori Dictionary Revision and the NZ Maori Council. He translated many Maori waiata into English. He was the Chief Advisor to King Koroki, Princess Te Puea and later the present Maori Queen, Te Arikinui Dame Te Atairangikaahu.

Jones was completely bilingual and published extensively in both Maori and English. He honed his language skills by translating Shakespeare's works – *The Merchant of Venice* being one of them, and Fitzgerald's *Omar Khayyan* into Maori.

The Merchant of Venice was translated in 1945.

Dr Jones received his honorary doctorate from the Waikato University in 1968, the first Maori to be so honoured from Waikato University for literature.

Don C Selwyn: executive producer/director

Executive producer and director Don C Selwyn has a long-standing and distinguished career in the New Zealand film and television industry as an actor, producer and director. He is a leading proponent of Maori drama, performed in both Maori and English, and a prime mover in encouraging respect for Maori viewpoints and culture in mainstream New Zealand film and television drama. He has devoted many years to training Maori and Pacific film makers and is a mentor and inspiration to many now working in the industry. He is a former member of the board of the New Zealand Film Commission.

His contribution was officially recognised in 1999, when he was awarded the New Zealand Honours Award Officer of NZ Merit (ONZM). He was awarded an honorary performing arts degree from Unitec in 1999 and he was New Zealander of the Year 1995 for his contribution to arts and culture. He received the Wellington Fringe Award for service to theatre, film and television and the National Film Board of Canada Alanis Obomsawin Award for outstanding contribution to the advancement of Aboriginal film making in Canada at the Dreamspeakers Indigenous Film Festival in 1994.

A New Zealand Maori of Ngati Kuri and Te Aupouri descent, he grew up in Taumarunui in the centre of New Zealand's North Island, an area influenced by many different Maori iwi (tribes), with leaders initiating community projects for youth, education and te reo Maori (Maori language). He became a schoolteacher, noted for his pioneering methods at a multicultural school in Wellington.

Selwyn made his entry into acting as a result of a dare: he attended a rehearsal with a friend who was acting in a stage production of Shakespeare's *Midsummer Nights Dream*. (His actor friend went to Don's rugby football practice). When the actor playing Oberon became ill, the director, Nola Miller, asked Don to take over the role. Thus he discovered his talent for the stage in a pink tutu with butterfly wings as the King of the Fairies, to the good-natured ribbing of his rugby mates.

He toured with the Nola Miller Shakespeare Company, playing Caesar, Antony, Othello and Shylock as part of a well-respected acting career, which also encompassed musicals (*Porgy & Bess*), film (*Sleeping Dogs*) and television (*Mortimer's Patch*, *Marlin Bay*, *The Governor*, *Pukemanu*). He was a founding member of the New Zealand Maori Theatre Trust, with the vision that it would extend opportunities for Maori performers in Maori opera and theatre.

Always concerned with education and promotion of Maori, from 1984 to 1990 he ran a film and television training course called He Taonga I Tawhiti (Gifts From Afar) for Maori and Pacific people to give them the technical skills to enable them to tell their own stories. 120 people went through the course over its six-year existence. In 1992, with producer Ruth Kaupua Panapa, Selwyn formed He Taonga Films to create job opportunities for course graduates and to provide outlets for Maori drama writers.

Through He Taonga Films, he has produced and directed Maori language television dramas (*Maui Pootiki*, *Tohunga*) and many Maori dramas in English, including *Don't Go Past With Your Nose in the Air*, awarded best foreign short film at the New York Festival in 1992. He was executive producer of the 2000 New Zealand Media Peace Award-winning feature *The Feathers of Peace*.

Another aspect of his work has been to secure roles for Maori actors and share his acting experience with them by working as casting director on other people's productions, including feature films *Once Were Warriors*, *What Becomes of the Broken Hearted*, *Broken English*, *Jubilee* and *Crooked Earth*.

Selwyn was inspired to make *The Maori Merchant of Venice* as a film after directing Dr Pei Te Hurinui Jones' 1945 Maori translation as a stage play in the 1990 Koanga (Spring) Festival in Auckland. It is a project which combines his passion for Shakespeare with his lifelong commitment to the revitalisation of the Maori language.

Ruth Kaupua Panapa: producer

Producer Ruth Kaupua Panapa is a gifted musician and singer who has become a producer of Maori and Pacific television drama and feature films as a result of her commitment to encouraging and promoting Maori and Pacific people.

Of Tokalau Island and Samoan descent, she grew up in Mangere, South Auckland in a family of musicians. As a six-year-old she began lessons with Sister Mary Leo, the singing teacher well-known for her tutelage of Dame Kiri Te Kanawa.

On leaving school at 17, she joined the Society of Performing Arts Training Scheme (SPATS), founded by renowned entertainer Sir Howard Morrison and run by Television New Zealand in the early 1980s. It was a “Fame” type of school for young entertainers, teaching music, singing, dance, deportment and other aspects of show business. Don C Selwyn was a guest tutor.

She then became singing teacher for the group called Tu Tangata, which was based in the same building as Selwyn’s He Taonga I Tawhiti film and television training course. He invited her to help with his course and in 1987 she trained under Dick Reade as a sound recordist because she has always had technical ability and it was a natural extension of her musical talent.

Her first job as a boom operator/sound trainee was with the *E Tipu E Rea* series of Maori television dramas produced by Larry Parr. She then assisted sound recordist Ru Rakena at Comedia Productions, a production company specialising in television comedy, and later freelanced as a sound recordist and foley recordist for television companies, including Communicado, New Zealand’s largest production house.

In 1992, she and Selwyn formed He Taonga Films, a production company for Maori and Pacific television drama and feature films. The company was founded to create

productions that would provide employment for course graduates and outlets for Maori and Pacific writers. Its second production was the New York Festival award-winning TV drama *Don't Go Past With Your Nose in the Air*.

Kaupua Panapa says she was forced to become the producer after Ross Jennings, producer of the *Nga Puna* drama series in 1993 completed his contract. She has been a guiding force in the development of the company throughout its nine-year existence. In addition to her producer role, she also works as unit production manager and runs the technical side of the company.

To date, He Taonga Films has made 15 drama productions in English and Maori, including *The Maori Merchant of Venice*, the first Maori language feature film, and has four projects currently in development.

She has also assisted Selwyn in his role as casting director for major productions, including the feature films *Once Were Warriors*, *What Becomes of the Broken Hearted*, *Broken English*, *Jubilee* and *Crooked Earth*, while continuing to freelance as a sound recordist on occasion.

Selwyn Muru: associate producer

Selwyn Muru is an artist in many fields – painter, broadcaster, film maker, poet, singer, actor, composer and writer. He is a longstanding friend and business associate of Don Selwyn and He Taonga Films. He is also an adviser to Television New Zealand.

His tribal affiliations are Ngatikuri and Te Aupouri. He was born in Te Hapua.

His attitude to the arts is summed up in the statement: “For me, ... art should cover the whole spectrum of human experience. It should reflect at one extreme the pain and anguish of people, and pursue every mood they feel right through to their capacity for fun and frivolity.”

His contribution to *The Maori Merchant of Venice* included appearing in the crucial scene as an artist in the process of painting while Shylock and Antonio argue the terms of their deal. All of the paintings in the gallery in that scene are by Selwyn Muru, most from his series focusing on the sacking and burning of the Parihaka community by the government in the 19th Century.

Davorin Fahn: director of photography

For Davorin Fahn involvement on Maori language projects is not only an intriguing professional challenge but also a very absorbing personal experience.

Davorin came to New Zealand eight years ago from Croatia. He finished the Cinematography study at the Academy of Dramatic Art at the University of Zagreb in Croatia and in 1988 began shooting documentaries, music videos and television commercials.

He worked in Croatia on several feature films. His work for Croatian National Television took him to Australia to film *Walk For Peace*, a documentary he directed, shot and edited. During 91/92 he worked as a war cameraman in war districts of Croatia. He also worked in Nepal as a cameraman on the ethnological research for the Ethnologic Institute of Zagreb University.

After he moved to New Zealand he started to work as a camera person for ATV. In 1996 he shot *He Taonga's Small Town Blues*, part of the successful *Nga Puna* series. He has also shot several dramas for *He Taonga*, including *Tohunga* and *Maui Pootiki*.

He was camera operator for the feature films *Repeat Performance* and *Channelling Baby* and director of photography on several short films.

He was recently director of photography on the Maori drama series *Aroha* which won best drama series award at the Toronto imagineNATIVE international Media Arts Festival.

Davorin has additional professional interests in alternative film production technologies and Web and multimedia development.

Production Designer Guy Moana won the New Zealand Television Awards best design award for the children's superhero series *Moko Toa* and the NZ Film & Television Award

for best contribution to design for the Maori design elements of the acclaimed feature film *Once Were Warriors*, directed by Lee Tamahori.

He was Maori designer on Jane Campion's Academy Award-winning *The Piano*, and worked as a sculptor/designer for *Hercules*, *The Legendary Journeys* and *Xena: Warrior Princess* television series, produced in New Zealand by Pacific Renaissance Pictures.

He was recently production designer for the second series of *Moko Toa* for Te Haeata Productions and for the upcoming television drama series *Aroha*, for which he also directed an episode. He is now writing scripts of his own.

His wide range of skills were acquired from a diversity of work. After leaving school, he had various jobs including a timber mill, a concrete works, a window factory and cartooning for a calendar publisher. He became a Maori carver and came into contact with the film industry, initially carving props on a casual basis.

He attended Don Selwyn's He Taonga I Tawhiti Maori training course in 1984, worked on the student production, *Finders Keepers*, in the TVNZ graphics department and at video production company Vidcom.

He has freelanced in a variety of jobs, including camera assistant, boom operator, gaffer and best boy. He was grip on the feature *Magik & Rose*, directed by Vanessa Alexander. He has also had acting roles, ranging from *Funny Business* to *Once Were Warriors*.

Composer Clive Cockburn began his musical career as a classical pianist before becoming guitarist and keyboardist for pop groups, including the Top-10 1960s band, The Avengers. In the 1970s he wrote New Zealand's first pop opera, *Jenifer*, followed by the rock opera *Valdramar*, and *Pere*, a children's pantomime for television. He spent 1979 studying composition at the Grove School of Music in Los Angeles. On his return to New Zealand, he wrote for the Rodger Fox Big Band. He composed for several documentaries, one of which, *Return Journey*, starred Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, who was impressed by his music and requested that he compose for the opening of the Aotea Centre in Auckland. He has written scores for feature films including *The Returning*, major television documentaries including *Line Honours*, *Natural World of the Maori*, *Our People*, *Our Century* and *Wild South*, television themes and channel identifications, including *TV One News* (1975-87) and more than 200 TV commercials. In 2000, he won the New Zealand Television Awards original music award for the third time for the documentary, *Destination Disaster – the Sinking of the Mikhail Lermontov*. He has recently completed *Kill Or Cure*, a series on the history of medicine for the Discovery Channel. Internationally, he has won a Mobius Award for best 'patriotic' TV Commercial for 1990 *The Year*.

Maori Music Composer Hirini Melbourne has devoted his life to promoting Maori language, culture and music. Of Tuhoe descent, he is a native speaker of Maori. As a student at Auckland University in the 1970s, he was a member of Maori activist organisation Nga Tamatoa, which petitioned Government to have Maori taught in schools as part of its focus on Maori identity. He began writing songs and stories to fit with the urban experience of Maori of his generation and turned his frustration with the quality of educational resources for Maori into action by becoming editor of Maori School Publications.

His discovery of traditional Maori musical instruments led him on a journey of discovery around New Zealand as he researched their histories and uses through asking the old people. He regularly tours, giving performances and sharing explanations of the instruments and has taken the music to Pacific Arts Festivals.

He has used the Maori instruments in feature films *Mauri* and *Once Were Warriors* and has recently worked with Moana Maniapoto on Toby Mills' short film *Te Po Uriuri*, based on Shakespeare's Sonnet 147. He teaches in Te Tari Maori of the School of Maori and Pacific Development at Waikato University. His MA thesis on the history of land confiscated from Tuhoe will feature in a Waitangi Tribunal hearing this year. He is now working on his doctoral thesis on the history and development of Maori Music entitled "From When the Gods Sang to the Present".

He is currently a member of the board of the New Zealand Film Commission and the New Zealand Music Commission.

Costume designer Gavin McLean has worked in the film and television industry since the 1989 production of the Te Manuka series *E Tipu E Rea*.

His most recent feature film as costume designer was *Crooked Earth*. Just before that, he spent four years working for English production company Cloud Nine in Wellington, designing costumes for a wide range of television, including *The Tribe* series 1 and 2, *Swiss Family Robinson*, *Treasure Island*, *Enid Blyton* and *Twist in the Tale – William Shatner*.

Before that, he was costume designer for the Canadian/New Zealand co-production series *Mysterious Island*, and has experience in all aspects of the wardrobe department on numerous film and television productions.

Of Ngati Maru, Ngati Porou and Whakatohea descent, he learned his craft at the Wellington Polytechnic, gaining a Diploma in Textiles from a course which covered all aspects of costume design and making, as well as the history of costume and business management.

Te Tangata Whai Rawa – Director’s View – by Don C Selwyn

The concept and style of this production of Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice leaves the viewer in no doubt that this is a distinctly New Zealand production and the interpretation of this 17th Century drama could not have been sourced from any other cultural perspective.

The reason obviously is because the language is indigenous to New Zealand and this has allowed the adaptation to include a mix of Maori and other cultural elements. Central to the geographic identity within the film is Portia's (Pohia) domain Belmont - in Shakespeare's view a fictitious abode. This has allowed the adaptation to set Belmont (Peremona) in New Zealand.

So within the film there are two major locations that the Jewish/Christian scenario is played out. Portia is still of the Christian denomination but her cultural roots are strongly Maori. She set the protocol and cultural ethos within her estate. It functions within its own entity but there is considerable attention to detail when she engages her visiting suitors.

So the guardianship by the Turehu (the fairy people) through the great forest of Tane; the welcome to her dominion in the form of a karanga (call) and wero (warrior challenge) are part of her welcoming ritual. Surrounding the visitors presence is the generous performance by Portia's dancers, musicians, singers and servants.

The visual style in lighting, wardrobe, sets and decor reflects a distinct concept, drawn from a heritage that pervades the language and cultural depth, that the dramatic text allows us to embellish.

The basic story and characterisation is unchanged from the original drama. The film adaptation allows us to pursue a more expansive portrayal of the drama overall. The 'deal'

scene between Antonio (Anatonio) and Shylock (Hairoka) is set within the Venetian Market, surrounded by classic works of art by Selwyn Muru, which portray the historical struggle of Parihaka New Zealand.

The ethnic and cultural presence within the play are sharply defined within the film. The utilisation of Hirini Melbourne's composition both in solo and choral (St Joseph Girls Choir) performance, complement the Clive Cockburn original music score. Two talented opera singers make their film debut in two original arias as part of Portia's cultural protocol.

All these artistic images provide an intriguing background to the range of dramatic demands of the narrative.

Cast, crew and production consists of New Zealand talent. Moroccan, Spanish and Italian actors are also drawn-from within New Zealand.

The Maori Merchant of Venice provides an adaptation from New Zealand that is unprecedented in any Shakespearean film.

Background to William Shakespeare's play, *The Merchant of Venice*

Written and kindly contributed by Michael Neill (Professor of English, University of Auckland)

Written in about 1596 for London's most prestigious company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, *The Merchant of Venice* belongs to the period of Shakespeare's early maturity, when he had been working as a professional actor and dramatist for nearly a decade.

This makes it roughly contemporaneous with such works as *Romeo and Juliet* (1595-6), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595-6), *1 Henry IV* (c. 1596-7). The remarkable range of styles and genres represented even within this small group of plays is a reminder of Shakespeare's restless experimentalism, and the extraordinary reach of his genius. *The Merchant* itself is a play that pushes at the accepted boundaries of comedy by yoking elements of erotic romance with hard-edged urban comedy, and scenes of low farce with episodes of high drama and pathos that sometimes tip perilously close to tragedy.

Like many of Shakespeare's plays, it is stitched together from quite disparate sources, the most important of which are highlighted by the title page of the earliest edition (1600), as it advertises the two great climaxes of the play: "*The most excellent historie of the Merchant of Venice. With the extreme Cruelty of Shylock the Jew towards the said Merchant, in cutting a just pound of his flesh: and the obtaining of Portia by the choyce of 3 chests*".

The Shylock and Portia plots derive from quite unrelated folktales, each of which was available to Shakespeare in a variety of versions. But it was he who transformed the meaning of these ancient stories by yoking them together in a thoroughly contemporary setting - the maritime metropolis of Venice and its trading empire.

In the Elizabethan imagination, Venice stood for the fabulous wealth and luxury associated with the new world of mercantile expansionism to which England had only belatedly gained access. But, more dangerously, Venice also represented the potential corruptions of mercantilism and in Shakespeare's

play the cutthroat competitiveness of Venice is displaced onto the alien figure of Shylock – the Jew whose money-lending fuels the engines of commerce, even as he is made the scapegoat for its vices.

Shakespeare's treatment of the Jew - and the extent of his complicity in the history of prejudice that has made Shylock's very name into a term of abuse - is the great problem of the play for modern audiences. Critics have sometimes argued that, because English people had had little first-hand experience of Jews since their expulsion under Edward I, three hundred years earlier, Shylock was simply a creature of exotic fantasy.

But it is impossible to detach him so easily from the long and shameful history of European anti-semitism. Indeed, *The Merchant* was written in the immediate shadow of the terrible persecution of Spanish Jews and *conversos* conducted by the papal Inquisition, as a result of which a significant refugee population had established itself in the English capital. One of their number, a Dr Lopez, had recently been convicted of attempting to poison the Queen, and his trial had provoked violent outbursts of popular feeling: anti-semitism was alive and well in Shakespeare's London.

In such a situation, the acting companies had few scruples: while their competitors revived Marlowe's savage farce, *The Jew of Malta*, to capitalise on the scandal, the Lord Chamberlain's Men seem to have commissioned *The Merchant of Venice* for much the same purpose.

The play structures the opposition between Jew and Christian as an archetypal contest between Old Testament law and New Testament charity – recalling the perennial indictment of the Jews as a people who had stubbornly refused the new dispensation of Christ, and thereby repudiated their own true humanity.

As the Christians' favourite pun has it, to be "gentle" (a word whose connotations include nobility, generosity, tenderness, and human kindness) is to be a gentile. The "inhuman wretch", Shylock, inhabits a world of remorselessly enforced "bonds", epitomised in his "I stand here for law" (4.1.142), whilst the Christians constantly appeal to the selfless ideals of "free" lending and forgiveness of debts, articulated in Portia's great speech on mercy (4.2.180-201).

According to this scheme, the Shylock of the trial scene is a man justly hoist by his own petard, trapped and humiliated by the very law upon whose meticulous execution he has insisted.

Yet in the richness of its human detail and the power of its poetry *The Merchant of Venice* constantly resists and undermines this schematic reading.

Shylock emerges as a fully three-dimensional character, capable of feeling a pain that in some productions turns him into the hero of an abortive tragedy. His scorn is shown to spring from real suffering, just as his desire for revenge is driven by the dehumanizing effect of the humiliation that he experiences at the hands of Antonio and his fellow Christians.

When Shylock's daughter betrays him by eloping with one of his persecutors, he laments not just for his missing ducats, but for her heartless disposal of his betrothal ring, invoking a "bond" quite opposite to the bloody contract that he tries to enforce against Antonio.

It is no accident that the same token of love will become the instrument of Portia's testing of Bassanio in the last scene. The parallel is calculated to remind us, even as Shylock seems to have been comprehensively expelled from humane society, of the great appeal to common humanity with which he challenged his persecutors in Act III. The Merchant, declares the Jew:

hath disgraced me...laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies, - and what's his reason? I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is? If you prick us do we not bleed? If you tickle us do we not laugh? And if you wrong us shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that.

It is a challenge that is likely to remain with an audience long after the questionable enchantment of Belmont's moonlight and "sweet music" has faded away.