

The background features a black silhouette of a stage with red curtains. Several bright spotlights are visible, creating lens flare effects. The text is centered on the stage.

They're running the show now...

# THEATRE KIDS

— a series —

With the end of their schooling years coming fast to a close and with only spite for their teacher to fuel them, a group of high school seniors decide to run this year's end of year school show, not anticipating the complications that come with it...

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## PREMISE:

Theatre Kids follows a group of high school seniors who, after despising the experience of last year's big school show, decide to put on their own out of spite. As tensions rise and the ever looming threat of "the real world" gets larger and larger, our main characters become more than the sum of their parts. They become a family.

A coming of age comedy about and for one of the most niche groups of teenagers, the nerdy, socially awkward theatre kids. A series about the deep, incredible bonds of love we share with one another despite the fact that after high school, we may never see each other again.

Theatre Kids primarily follows overachieving Hannah, her anxious best friend Naomi, the always reliable John and king of the theatre department Owen.

Each of them, in their own ways, are dealing with the fact that their public school days are coming to a close. Hannah can't wait to be done with it, Naomi and John are anxious about what they're going to do next and Owen refuses to acknowledge it at all.

After Ms Darling, the aging hippie drama teacher, announces that the big school show this year is going to be *Midsummers Night's Dream*, the same show as last year, Hannah grows furious, complaining to the vice principal and the school board, pitching that the student body could do a better job, using a play that Naomi wrote as a part of her pitch.

After she promises to do it for half the cost Darling is asking for, the board accepts, giving her only six months before the show is supposed to premiere.

Almost solely motivated by spite, she recruits her friends into the fold, confident that together they can outshine Darling and put on the best show the school has ever seen.

The others are less concerned with that, and are more interested in simply distracting themselves from the future.

They start casting, crewing, and put together an entire team of likeminded kids, all of whom are more excited than anything to have some form of real creative freedom. As opening night gets closer and closer, it quickly becomes clear that our heroes have bitten off more than they can chew. John starts taking on more and more responsibility, balancing his not great home life with his persona as "the reliable one". Owen is forced to introspect, after having spent so long working towards being the top dog in the theatre department what that leaves him without it. And the crew are forced to deal with the attempted sabotages from a bitter Ms Darling.

But at the heart of everything is the friendship of Naomi and Hannah. Naomi begins to realise that, for almost as long as she's known her, Hannah has seen her as an extension of herself. The very integrity of their friendship is put at risk when she begins to realise that they don't share the same goals, that Hannah cares more about her own personal successes than she does about her. Despite almost being torn apart entirely, the show ultimately brings our main characters together. They each learn how to let go, Owen letting go of the theatre department, Hannah letting go of Naomi. They learn that even though they may never see each other again after this year, they'll always have this moment.

## CHARACTERS:

**HANNAH HUDSON** is an outspoken, confident, brass, natural born leader. Remarkably confident in her own abilities with a tendency to accidentally steamroll over others when she has a good idea. She's driven by spite for her teacher Ms Darling and a desire to prove herself. Ultimately, more than anything, she's done with high school. An incredibly talented performer, she wants nothing more than to escape the limited scope of her high school theatre department and take on the world. She sees this show as a first step beyond those confines and do something meaningful for once.

**OWEN SOOK** is the ultimate himbo. A large, kind, easily excitable performer. What he lacks in intelligence he more than makes up for in empathy and sincerity. Incredibly in touch with his own emotions which makes him easily the best performer at the school. While he's a nobody everywhere else, in the theatre department he's incredibly popular and well liked. There, he's a king and has been waiting for his crown his entire schooling career. To Owen, this is the pinnacle of what he can achieve and the idea of a future beyond it is terrifying. For him, this show is a way of holding onto school for as long as humanly possible and refusing to let go.

Stuck in the middle of this is **NAOMI MATAFEO**. A classic introvert at heart, except for when she's around her closest friends. Reasonable, practical and whip smart, for a long time has felt most comfortable taking the lead from other people- Hannah in particular. But now almost done with school she's having a bit of an internal crisis. She's existed as an extension of Hannah for so long that she doesn't know what she wants out of her own life. She's also terrified of the future because she feels she doesn't have any control of her trajectory. she hopes that this show will help her start to get a grasp on her own life, despite her not wanting anything to do with it in the first place.

**JOHN BAMBERGER**, the most hardworking and sarcastic person in the department, isn't struggling with a looming future. Rather, he just loves the theatre for what it represents, a safe space away from his not great home life, full of people that he loves dearly and would do anything for. Building up a persona of "The reliable one" he's scared of letting people down and them rejecting him for not living up to his own standards. Because of this he works harder than anyone else, thinking that burning the candle at both ends is the only way to get ahead.

**MS DARLING** is the school's drama teacher. An aging hippie with a love of the classics and the old acting techniques. With a tendency to take things far too personally, she finds Hannah especially frustrating, seeing her as a younger version of herself. Constantly misunderstood by her students, wanting to help them but utterly failing to inspire them, she thinks that the best way forward is to shut down the show entirely, so the kids don't have to deal with the stress that comes with putting on a show like this.

## **WORLD:**

Theatre Kids is set at CHERRY HILL HIGH SCHOOL, a suburban public school in the fictional Auckland suburb of Cherry Hill. An idyllic vision of a public school with all the finishing's, Cherry Hill High is exactly what you'd expect a public high school to be. For this series however, we're going to be spending ninety percent of our time inside the school theatre, green room and associated theatre department.

While the rest of the student body mills about doing their own thing, the kids inside the theatre department are a community all their own. For the most part they're invisible to the larger school body, outcasts, nerds, generally ignored, but in the theatre that dynamic is completely flipped. Depending on what their skill set is, here the nerdiest kid out in school can be the most popular kid in class.

To our main characters, anything and everything to do with the theatre department is the most important, pressing issue in their lives. Any other drama to do with their parents, other friends or family only becomes pressing when it forces itself to be. Since they're running the school show this year, the theatre students have an unprecedented amount of creative control, making it imperative that they put all their creative energy into it. The show must go on.

## **GENRE/TONE:**

A single camera coming of age half-hour comedy, Theatre Kids is firmly set in the real world. With a focus on character similar to contemporary's like Derry Girls & Sex Education, the naturally strange lives of these oddball kids dictate the tone of the show.

It's ultimately a story about growing up and what that means to people who either can't wait to or don't want to, so it should be allowed to become sad, intense or simply more emotionally resonant when it needs to be.

Every episode, the audience should be able to put themselves firmly in the shoes of our main characters- hormone riddled, awkward, passionate teens, and experience all the emotions, no matter what they are, along with them.

Mixed in with all that is the faintest surrealism. Used to highlight the delicate emotional states of our leads, the world can sometimes move at strange, surreal paces. Hannah is terrified of being trapped in the confines of high school so in moments of great pressure the world around her seems to slow down. Naomi feels like she's not in control of her own life, so when she feels especially small, she'll start to drift without any control of where she's going. Owen feels like the future is catching up far too fast and will suddenly find himself teleporting between moments.

This small bit of visual flair makes Theatre Kids stand out and offers a visual insight into our characters heads.

## **AUDIENCE:**

This series target audience is in the title. Theatre Kids is about and made for the theatre kids of the world. Inspired by the writer's real-life adolescent experience as an anti-social kid who found his people in his high school theatre department, this series is made specifically for those kinds of kids, kids who feel like they don't belong anywhere else for whatever reason. All of the teenage characters in Theatre Kids are designed to be accurate representations of a modern high school theatre department- diverse, nerdy and odd. Unlike a lot of media for teenagers, these characters aren't sexualized or perfectly sculpted. The intention is that young people watching can look at the screen and see themselves.

Talking specifically, the aim is to target in to the 13-19 teenage demographic, particularly girls. Teens are some of the most loyal, passionate consumers on the planet. They respond to the media that they resonate with on an incredible, emotional level and the hope is to reward that kind of response with a series that sees them for who they are.

While of course we would want to move beyond that demographic, target the 20-35 young adult demographic, responding to media that they would find enticing and nostalgic, and even the 40-50+ demographic of adults watching with their teenage children, the main goal is focus in on that core theatre-loving, nerdy, teenage girl.

## **WHERE THE SERIES BELONGS:**

Theatre Kids is a series designed for young people who can relate to the people they see on screen. For that reason, it's best suited for streaming. Young people are getting more and more of their content online, either through Netflix, YouTube, TVNZ On Demand or any of the other many streaming services that have been launched in the last decade.

On streaming, there has been an explosion of content for young people of all genre and tone- specifically on Netflix.

This is a market that TVNZ On Demand has not capitalized on. Though this is not necessarily a quintessentially kiwi story I think being developed for TVNZ On Demand would make the show and the platform both stand out, with more young people being attracted to the platform and seeing what it has to offer.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

Theatre Kids is partially based on a true story. In the writers last year of high school, where he was heavily involved in the theatre department, four friends were motivated out of spite to go behind the drama teachers back and develop their own show from scratch to put on the following year. The writer performed in that show, developing friendships and memories that last to this day. Serving as both a love letter to said relationships and memories as well as an introspective look at themselves and the key people in their life as a younger person.

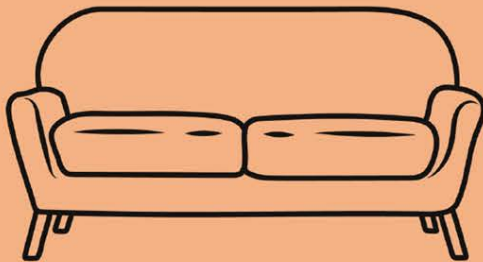


## MATT BUTLER- Writer

Based in Auckland, Matt has spent the last few years working in the New Zealand film & television industry, as a writer, as crew, and many other positions in between.

His writing work is primarily short form, such as the web-series In The Rainbow and his award winning short film Some Body By The Lake.

Most of his time has been spent working in the TV sector, for companies such as Sky Television, Whitebait Media and Warner Brothers TV. Matt loves writing quirky characters and finding a good balance of dark, fun and sincere in his work.



LIVING ROOM  
CREATIVES

## MELANIE SWEARS & SARAH DAWES AKA LIVING ROOM CREATIVES- Producers

Living Room Creatives are a team of two passionate and driven female filmmakers. We write and produce original pieces of work in a variety of formats and currently have three projects in post-production. We enjoy thinking outside the box to tell stories and take a fresh and modern approach to our projects.

From working large scale dramas and live TV to managing our own post-production, we have the knowledge and expertise to get things done. Our goal as film makers is to “connect, create and collaborate” to help bring these stories to life. We love authentic driven character pieces that offer a unique perspective that audiences may not have seen before.