

COMPANY THEATRE

POP CORN

by BEN ELTON directed by Suzy Sampson

12-26th May Wed-Sat 8pm, Sun 4pm The Rose Centre, Belmont

\$27 Adults, \$22 Concessions booking fee applies

book at www.iticket.co.nz or phone 09 361 1000

RP16
coarse language & mature content

A NOTE ON POPCORN

from Suzy Sampson

DIRECTOR



Thank you all for joining us this evening. I have been a big fan of Ben Elton's work ever since I first saw his hysterically funny TV programs *The Young Ones* and *Blackadder*.

I saw this play in Hong Kong ten years ago and it hit hard and stayed in my memory ever since - it was a piece of theatre that brought the issues of sexual exploitation in the film industry, the frightening reality of gun culture and the ease with which anyone can purchase guns to the fore. It left me questioning and debating with fellow theatre-goers the influence that violent movies can have on our youth.

I chose this play to present for *Company Theatre* in the aftermath of yet another high school massacre in the USA because I was deeply saddened by the fact that 20 years after Ben Elton wrote this play these issues are still prevalent in society. *Popcorn* is a play that will confront, shock and also amuse and that's a powerful combination in live theatre. The actors in this production have given their all to bring to life some very serious issues - it will be an emotional roller coaster but we hope that at the end of it we have left you with the memory of a well written play well performed.



WELCOME

from Linda Camplin

PRESIDENT OF COMPANY THEATRE

Welcome to our first play of the 2018 *Company Theatre* season and to Suzy Sampson, as a first time director for us. It's great to have three senior students from Takapuna Grammar School in the cast. We have another local school connection in that Nick Brown, who plays *Bruce*, is the Head of Drama at Westlake Boys High School.

All of the cast and crew have worked very hard on this production and we hope you have a memorable, stimulating, and enjoyable night at the theatre with us.

CAST

Bruce Delamitri
Nick Brown

Karla, a Film Producer
Shona Harris

Farrah Delamitri
Gina Sneesby

Velvet Delamitri
Jasmine Gray

Brooke, an Actress
Elizabeth Swan

Wayne
Francis Johnson

Scout
Grace Chisholm

Kirsten
Suzy Sampson

Bill
Elliot Blakely

THE SCENES

Act 1 Prologue - In a Los Angeles bank

Scene 1 - Bruce Delamitri's Hollywood home

Scene 2 - As above

Scene 3 - At the Oscars ceremony

Scene 4 - Bruce Delamitri's Hollywood home

There will be an interval of 15 minutes.

Act 2 - Bruce's living room. Follows on from the end of Act 1.



SUZY SAMPSON

Director of Popcorn

Suzy trained at the London Academy for Performing Arts and RADA in the UK, TVi Studios in LA and The Stella Adler Academy in New York and as well as directing and producing theatre has acted professionally for TV, stage and screen in the UK, Prague, Hong Kong, Singapore, Melbourne and NZ. She has most recently directed Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Tauranga 2018)

Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Te Puna Quarry Open Air), Alex Broun's *Diary of a Break up Breakdown* (Auckland Short & Sweet Festival) and Kate Fodor's *100 Saints You Should Know* (Hong Kong). Her last stage appearance was with Company Theatre in *Ladies Day* (2017) and previously in the one woman show *Shakespeare's Will* in which she portrayed Anne Hathaway and won the HK Arts Award for Best Production.



Director Suzy Sampson with the cast of Popcorn



NICK BROWN

Bruce Delamitri

Nick is an award-winning director, actor and teacher, and the current head of drama & theatre arts at Westlake Boys' High School. He studied Drama, Theatre & Performance at London University, (BA Hons.) and Manchester University (MA), & trained at the Guildford School of Acting. In his native UK, Nick sang in musicals in the West End, toured in plays, performed in pantomime, and appeared on television.

In New Zealand he has filmed a TV advert and won a NAPTA as Best Actor for playing *Sweeney Todd* for Auckland Music Theatre. An accomplished director, he has worked in Rome, Bermuda, London, and twice Off-Broadway in New York. In New Zealand, his school productions have won 13 AML- and iTicket-Showdown awards, including Outstanding Play, Outstanding Musical and People's Choice (all twice) as well as Best Director.

GRACE CHISHOLM

Scout

Grace Chisholm attends Takapuna Grammar School and is in her final year. She has been involved in drama and musical theatre all throughout school. She has been a part of musicals such as *Grease*, *Into the Woods*, *The Little Mermaid* and *The Wizard of Oz*. She also has done many plays with Devonport Drama and wishes to continue performing after school.



FRANCIS JOHNSON

Wayne

Francis lives in Devonport and attends Takapuna Grammar School. He has acted in *Sherlock Holmes* and *The Three Musketeers* for Devonport Drama, played Putzie in *Grease*, played Jaques in a school production of *As You Like It*, and at school is studying Drama, Musical Theatre, and Media Studies.



ELIZABETH SWAN

Brooke, an Aspiring Actress

Elizabeth's last appearances for Company Theatre were as Fury in *When Dad Married Fury*, and Annie in *The Pain and The Passion*. Elizabeth grew up participating in speech and drama groups and received Trinity College of London accreditation. She was in the obligatory School musicals and now proudly works for SKYCITY, managing Casino promotions and advertising for the Events, Entertainment and Sponsorship team.

SHONA HARRIS

Karla, a Movie Producer

Shona is originally from Montreal, Canada. She trained as an actress first at Concordia University, Montreal, and then as a classical singer with McGill University's Schulich School of Music. Shona then moved to London, UK to pursue a Masters in Speech and Drama at The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. She acted professionally in London before moving to Auckland, NZ last year to pursue a Graduate Teaching Diploma in the areas of Dance and Drama. Shona is delighted to be involved in *Popcorn*, her first production since arriving in NZ.



GINA SNEESBY

Farrah Delamitri

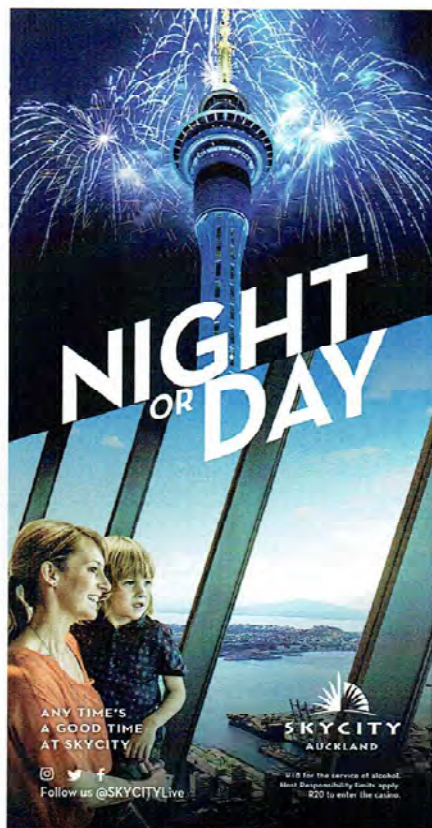
Gina is from the UK and moved to New Zealand in January. She's been part of a drama group in East London for the last 7 years and has had numerous roles with them including Lydia Languish in Sheridan's *The Rivals*, Antigone in the *Oedipus* plays and Dana in the first amateur production of *The Acid Test* by Anya Reiss. She has greatly enjoyed being part of this production and Company Theatre.



JASMINE GRAY

Velvet Delamitri

Jasmine lives locally, and is in Year 13 at Takapuna Grammar School. She has been involved with Devonport Drama productions since 2013, in addition to school productions such as *Grease*. Most recently, she has played Celia in *As You Like It*, making it to the National University of Otago Sheilah Winn Shakespeare Festival (UOSWSF) being held in Wellington later this year. At school, she is studying English, Drama and Media Studies.



ELLIOT BLAKELY

Bill

A recent graduate from the South Seas screen acting program, Elliot developed his foundations in acting at the Sheilah Winn Shakespeare in schools program, and later with Shakespeare Globe NZ. He has since performed as Edmund Blackadder, Howard Wagner and as Javert with the *Broadway Dreams* local musical showcase. Having such a deep enjoyment for Ben Elton's work, Elliot is thrilled to be able to play a camera guy mad enough to film a pair of serial killers.



SUZY SAMPSON

Kirsten, a TV Reporter

Suzy felt it wasn't fair to ask of her actors anything she wasn't prepared to do herself - that being to appear on stage in their underwear! And so she took on the role of the TV reporter Kirsten. Suzy has been acting internationally for 20 years and recent Shakespearean roles have included Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth*, Jacques in *As You Like It* and Simonides in *Pericles* in addition to Kate in Harold Pinter's *Old Times*, Stevie in Edward Albee's *The Goat or Who is Sylvia*, Diana in Neil Simon's *California Suite* and her award winning role as Anne Hathaway in Vern Thiessen's one woman show *Shakespeare's Will*.



CREW FOR POPCORN

Director	Suzy Sampson
Set Design	Suzy Sampson
Production Managers	Linda Camplin, Sherry Ede
Stage Managers	Kay Williams, Marissa Wilson
Rehearsal Prompts	Melissa Roberts, Sofia Miernik
Lighting & Sound	Stephen Hood
Wardrobe	Suzy Sampson, Cathie Sandy
Wardrobe/Hair Assistants	Sofia Miernik, Gail Carran
Properties	Helen Porteus, Ella Lennon
Set Painting	Tony Sandy
Set Construction Manager	Phil Davis (<i>special thank you for the spiral stairs</i>)
Set Construction Assistants	James Carrick, Stephen Hood, Alastair Fletcher, Kay Williams, Linda Camplin, John Davies
Programme Design	Hayley Atkins, Sherry Ede
Poster Design	Richard Moore
Publicity	Suzy Sampson, Sherry Ede, Katie Vincent, Kathy Gent
FOH Manager	Lesley Hawkey
Bar Manager	Alastair Fletcher
Box Office Manager	Kathy Gent

THANKS TO

Furniture for the set refurbished and created by Bespoke Retro.
 A special thank you to the volunteers who look after front of house.
 Thank you to our major sponsors Barfoot & Thompson Devonport,
 SKY CITY Entertainment and Rowley Funerals.
 Thank you to The Rose Centre.



There will be
ONE INTERVAL
 of 15 minutes
 Refreshments,
 Ice Creams, Chocolates
 and a variety of drinks
 will



BEN ELTON

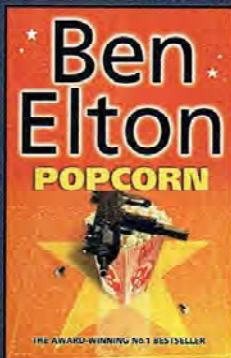
Playwright of 'Popcorn'



Ben Elton (born 3 May 1959) is a British-Australian comedian, author, playwright, actor and director. He was a part of London's alternative comedy movement of the 1980s and became a writer on series such as *The Young Ones* and *Blackadder*, as well as continuing as a stand-up comedian on stage and television.

His style in the 1980s was left-wing political satire. Since then he has published 15 novels and written the musicals *We Will Rock You* (2002) and *Love Never Dies* (2010), the sequel to *The Phantom of the Opera*. His novels cover the Dystopian, Comedy, and Crime genres.

Popcorn was originally a 1996 novel by Ben Elton. It shares themes with a number of movies from the mid-1990s, most notably *Natural Born Killers* by Oliver Stone and *Pulp Fiction* and *Reservoir Dogs* by Quentin Tarantino.



SYNOPSIS OF POPCORN

Bruce Delamitri is a Hollywood Film Maker who makes Tarantino style movies. He has just won an Oscar for his latest film as the play opens.

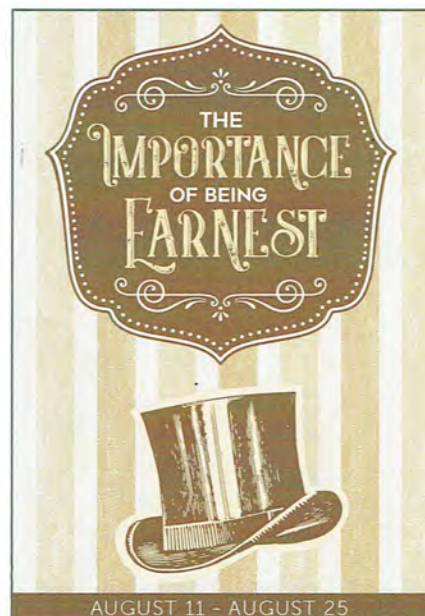
Teenage lovers Wayne and Scout watch Bruce's movies and have taken to imitating his movies in real life and have gained notoriety as "The Mall Murderers". The Press is blaming Bruce for their murder sprees and film Producer Karla isn't happy. Neither is his soon to be ex-wife Farrah who is worried that there will be a backlash, people will start suing and she'll lose her divorce settlement.

When Wayne and Scout break into Bruce's house and interrupt his seduction of Playboy Centrefold Brooke, on the night of his Oscar win, moral debate about taking responsibility for one's actions soon disintegrates with catastrophic results.

NEXT WITH COMPANY THEATRE

Our upcoming shows for August and November

See companytheatre.co.nz for details



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Local production of play Popcorn 'edgy'

KENDALL HUTT

When the lights go off at The Rose Centre in Belmont, the cast and crew of Ben Elton's *Popcorn* dance.

The play's director, Suzy Sampson, said the post-rehearsal ritual helped the actors deal with the intensity of the material.

"Every rehearsal someone gets to choose a song and we turn the lights out and everyone gets it all out of the system because you do get very emotional during the running of the play."

Popcorn, adapted from Elton's 1996 novel of the same name, follows Tarantino-esque Hollywood film maker Bruce Delamitri and his unfortunate run-in with teen psychopaths and "Mall Murderers" Scout and Wayne after Delamitri has won an Oscar.

With its themes of sexploitation in the film industry - recently highlighted by the #MeToo movement - and gun violence, Sampson said *Popcorn* was an "edgy" choice for a community theatre.

"It's usually something that would be played on a big West End or an Auckland Theatre Company stage."

After seeing the survivors of the Parkland shooting take charge of the gun control debate, Sampson decided she wanted school students to be involved in the play.



Young actors Grace Chisholm and Francis Johnson say it has been fun to play the villains in Ben Elton's *Popcorn*.

KENDALL HUTT/
STUFF

"They're very mature young actors and their auditions blew me away. I knew that they'd be able to handle the serious nature of the play."

Francis Johnson, 16, Grace Chisholm, 17, and Jasmine Gray, 17, play Wayne, Scout and Delamitri's daughter, Velvet.

The senior Takapuna Grammar School students said it had been

beneficial to work with a more experienced company.

"Having cast members who are older and have different life experiences gives you a different connection to people rather than if you were classmates," Grace said.

■ *Popcorn* runs from May 12 till May 26 at The Rose Centre, School Rd, Belmont. Visit iticket.co.nz.

R16 Recommended
 Contains strong language
 and sexual references

Popcorn is

Ben Elton's response to the controversy
 over whether watching a violent film can
 make people commit violent acts.

**"Funny, gripping and genuinely
 thought provoking."** Daily Telegraph

THE STORY

Set in a Hollywood mansion of film director Bruce Delamitri after
 he wins an Oscar for his film about a young couple
 who go on a killing spree.

Bruce rejects any responsibility for those who are killing people in
 a similar fashion to the characters in his movie.

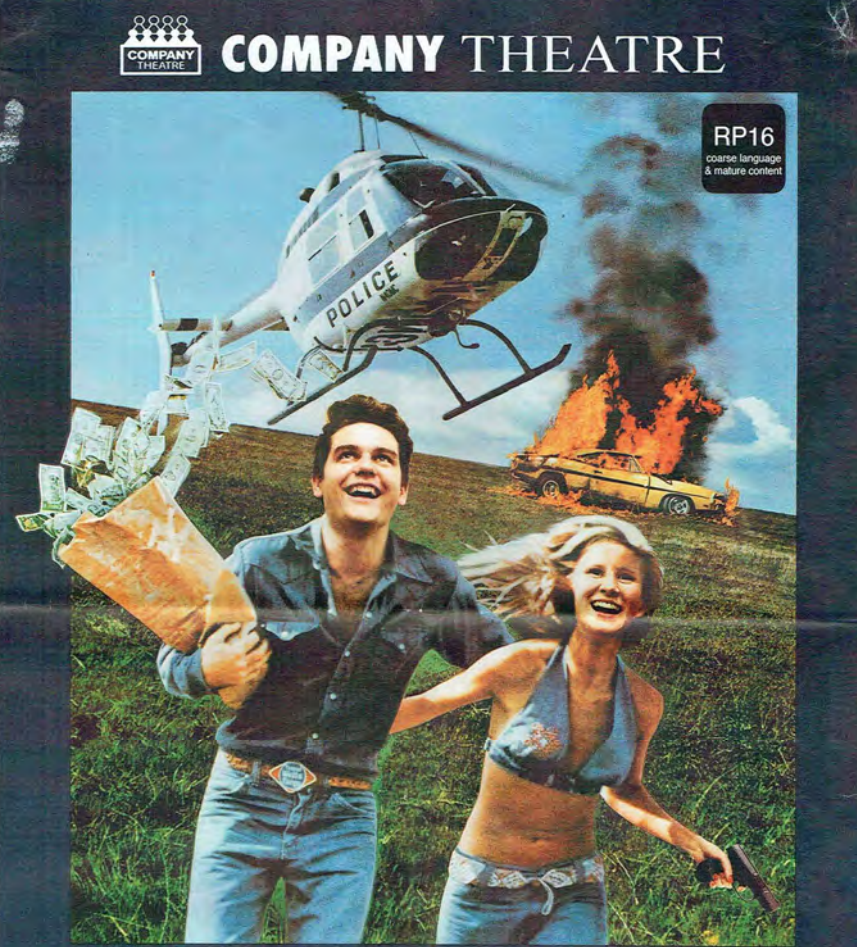
Suddenly, the real-life murderers break into his house and reveal
 that they are huge fans of his movies.

A hostage situation puts everyone in danger.
 Many viewpoints are shown in this intelligent play.

"Gripping and genuinely thought provoking." - Daily Telegraph

GRIPPING HOSTAGE DRAMA!

Won an Olivier Award for **BEST NEW COMEDY**



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