

Ringing Changes ticks all of the right boxes at the Wanganui Repertory Theatre

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Ringing Changes "is nothing short of an all-round work of craft" according to Aaron Potaka. Photo / Supplied

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By: Aaron Potaka



The comedy *Ringing Changes*, on a run at Wanganui Repertory Theatre for the next week, is nothing short of an all-round work of craft.

Centred on salary man and father Buck McArthur (Chris Stedman), Ted Charlton's story features bizarre snapshots five years apart of a post-Rogernomics, pre-millennial New Zild nuclear family, and is fully whanaungatanga if you include Grandma (Meg McPhail) and the kids' partners.

If you ever wondered why 2018 looks like it is, blame the advent of the personal computer and the diversification of identity politics from the 1990s, as we see it lumped on Dad hard and fast. The ensemble of mini-narratives is enabled by a large cast and multitude of subplots throwing libertarian curveballs at him and his adaption to new technologies and social mores.

Buck's gin-slinging mother, wedding anniversaries, impending marriages of children, lotto, and the modern science of microwave ovens is built up with the energy of Caius Wigglesworth as number one child Andrew, and child number three, Heather with Ashlyn Morris playing the sly-grogging, wise-cracking font of wisdom as a reflection of McPhail's Grandma.

Meanwhile; child number four Dick (Jamie O'Hagan) plays the gee gees with Grandma, Mikayla Walker as Maxine and ex-girlfriend of child number two Jessie (Jess Alder) tête-à-tête, and more! *Ringin' Changes* is packing as much comedy as 10 falling pianos.

Two highlights of the production have to be the mobile phone used by Andrew in his stockbroker phase, and the stage set, dressed like state house modern, and the visual dissonance of its design out-photoshopping anything on the internet. From the spaces constructed, the staging could dial-up crowded, noisy, infectious chaos, down to a quiet chat between two friends in an instant.

With the story arcing across five years and a time of flux, Charlton crosses the generation gap in his audience. The age demographics are covered with views of those years through history and plotline while memory and the personal connection is achieved with well-cast actors conveying frenetic family dynamics.

Charlton and Hudson have masterminded a piece of theatre that scores from everywhere, with 110 per cent effort, emotion, colour, and flair. In a word - booyah! *Ringin' Changes* is a hit.

Upcoming performances; Sunday matinee, 8th July, at 2pm, 12th, 13th, and 14th July at 7.30pm.