

PICAA INC. & CREATIVE BRIMBANK PRESENTS

MUJA

PASEFIKA
THEATRE
FESTIVAL





ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Pacific Island Creative Arts Australia Inc (PICAA) respectfully acknowledges and recognises the Wurundjeri and Bunurong Peoples as the Traditional Custodians of this land and pays respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.





RITA SEUMANUTAFAPALALA

PICAA Managing Director
| Music Director

Arts Practice:
Ethnomusicologist |
Composer | Curator

Ancestral villages:
Falealupo | Vaimoso |
Sasina | Sapapali'i.
SAMOA

Here in Melbourne, Victoria, we are surrounded by talented and creative members of Pasefika communities. From children to adults, singers, rappers, dancers, choreographers and producers - we are a creative community brimming with unseen artistic talent.

Pacific Island Creative Arts Australia Inc. (PICAA) was established in 2016 - a first ever platform for local Pasefika creatives to create, develop and perform our own theatre works. Imagine a world where our young creatives can feel bold and confident enough to shape their own worlds: This is what PICAA has been working towards for many years and we truly believe that providing these opportunities for our Pasefika communities, is a beautiful pathway to our young people realising their creative dreams.

MUA: Pasefika Theatre Festival is our latest theatre-dream realised. It has provided our young people with the opportunity to venture into the world of creative arts and storytelling. Exploring ways of cultural and self expression, and under the mentorship of MUA's Artistic Director, Asalemo Tofete, we bear witness to the development of exciting and emerging talent within our Pasefika community.

We will continue to provide creative mentorship through our PICAA initiatives - our meaalofa (gift) to the Arts and Pasefika community. We will also continue to contribute to a more multicultural Arts sector here in Australia. The PICAA core team is made up of creatives with various artistic backgrounds and expertise however, as a team we share the same creative mind and hopes for our community and MUA exemplifies the culmination of our many years of creative engagement with our community.

Thank you for joining us in this journey of creative discovery and expression. Thank you for supporting Pasefika creative arts and artists.

Fa'afetai le tapua'i.
The PICAA team.

DIRECTOR NOTES

“This is just our truth, for now. Yeah. Our truth for now”

There just aren't enough Pacific Island theatre works on stage in Melbourne. It was this idea that prompted this dream. It became a passion project which has taken a long time in the making. In its first dreaming, Covid came along and like a lot of things which lay in its path, this project too was shoved to the side for many years. At last, PICAA were able to bring it out into the light. Which I am really excited about.

The original idea was to collaborate and produce as many creative Artists as possible in Melbourne. Culminating in a Buffet of Pacific Island Theatrical delights. We began with 58 expressions of Interest. However, due to life it filtered down to 4 talented Artists from different stages of their careers to present a smorgasbord of Pacific Dance, Music and Text. And yes, I love using food metaphors. IYKYK!

MUA is translated throughout the Pacific as first, ahead or front. In his case we wanted to use the forward momentum of the word. Our dream is that MUA will be an annual festival of Pacific Theatre Treats. MUA is designed to be a work in progress. Its purpose was to be a springboard for Pacific Artists with these vignettes or moments to become full-length shows. Each Artist was given the concept of what it is they have deep down in their heart to explore. They have come up with different ideas and concepts which are a testament to the diverse issues which affect the Pacific community at large. Issues of the effects of climate change, the struggle of identity issues to heartfelt tributes to our loved ones.

I thank the brave creatives Luana, Rex, Sikivi and Sanele who have chosen to display their hearts and minds on the stage and look forward to developing these works further. I acknowledge all my peers who are also creating platforms and spaces for Pacific people to share and engage in throughout Melbourne and indeed the rest of Australia.

It has been a dream come true to return to the rehearsal room to work with this group of Pacific Artists, Creatives and Crew to bring these stories to life. The rehearsal room has been packed with joy, challenges, plenty of failures and even more successes. And I am proud to share these stories with the Melbourne community and across Australia which is a central mission of PICAA INC.

ASALEMO TOFETE

PICAA Theatre Director & Creative Associate

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

WORD FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

ASALEMO TOFETE

SINKING ISLANDS

MALAGA FAFINE

CHOREOGRAPHY & ARTISTIC/CREATIVE DIRECTION BY
ASALEMO TOFETE, SIKIVI TAFEA & SANELE SAVEA

PERFORMED BY
PEPEALOFA ALESANA | ANIYAH OMERI-TOFETE | LUANA OMERI-
TOFETE

TALA PASIFIKA

WRITTEN & PERFORMED
BY REX PELMAN

OUR TRUTH FOR NOW

WRITTEN BY LUANA OMERI-TOFETE

PERFORMED BY
ANIYAH OMERI-TOFETE | LILA ROSE OMERI-TOFETE | LUANA
OMERI-TOFETE | JACI SILVA | LUCI SILVA | FALCON TOFETE-SUA |
MEMPHIS TOFETE-SUA | SADE IAELI TAFEA

KI IKŪ FĀ

WRITTEN & PERFORMED BY SIKIVI TAFEA
MUSIC COMPOSITION AND PRODUCTION
SIKIVI TAFEA & FRANK LEATI





ASALEMO TOFETE



ASALEMO TOFETE

Theatre Director & Creative Associate

Asalemo was bestowed the matai title 'Fulisia' from Luatuanu'u village in Samoa.

Ancestral villages: Luatuanu'u | Lona i Fagaloa SAMOA

Asalemo is a director, playwright and award-winning actor with an impressive portfolio of New Zealand and Australian-based productions. These include a variety of Shakespearean works within the Pop-Up Globe (2017-2019), in particular 'Much Ado About Nothing' and 'Hamlet' in 2019, 'The Merchant of Venice' and 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' in 2018. Asalemo also featured in the MYOB 'Try Hero' commercial advertisement. A graduate of Toi Whaakari: New Zealand Drama School (Bachelor of Performing Arts) and Victoria University in Wellington (Bachelor of Arts/Theatre), Asalemo is Creative Director of all PICA Theatre projects.

He wrote and directed Australia's very first Pasefika Musical 'ReHavaiki' (A.Tofete/R.Seumanutafa-Palala, 2017) and has facilitated performing arts workshops and programs that focus on developing the creative talents of Pasefika youth in community. These programs include 'Acting for Youth' (2017-2021), 'Performing Arts for Pasefika Youth' programme (2021) and more recently, 'Island Chronicles' (2022-2023).

In 2024, Asalemo is the creative director of the upcoming Pasefika Theatre Festival, an inaugural event that is create in-residence at Creative Brimbank (Brimbank City Council). This festival will be Australia's very first Pasefika festival of its kind.



SIKIVI TAFEA



SIKIVI TAFEA

PICAA Dance/Music Director &
Creative Associate

Arts Practice: Theatre, Dance &
Music Director | Choreographer
| Performer

Steve was bestowed the matai
titles 'Vaimaisenu'u' from Solosolo
village, and 'Lelili'o' from Aufaga
village in Samoa.

Ancestral villages: Aufaga |
Solosolo SAMOA

Steve has a deep love for community and the arts and is a master at fusing the two, culminating in a variety of creative works. He is also an experienced and passionate performer on stage in Pacific theatre, band music, MC hosting and choreography. His theatre experience began in Christchurch, as a member of the Pacific Underground casts in the productions 'Prospects' (O.Kightley, 1998) and 'Rangi and Mau's Fantastic Voyage' (S.Lelisi, J.Vaele, 2000-2001) and 'Island Summer' (P. Mavaega, 2005). He also directed Melbourne's first Samoan theatre production 'Amataga o le Alofa' (D.Tuitea) in 2016.

A seasoned stage musician, Steve has frontlined and composed music for various bands, including Pacific Reggae bands 'Jahmen' (Christchurch) and 'New Generation' (Melbourne) and he currently co-directs 'Pasefika Vitoria Choir' (2016-present). In 2003-2004 his expertise in Samoan traditional dance choreography was showcased in 'Return to Paradise' (D.Fenika), a production that focused on Pasefika dance and fashion, leading to numerous dance performances in New Zealand that year.

As a youth worker and program facilitator, Steve is no stranger to community events and was the face of the Pacific Island community's COVID-19 lockdown communications (2020-2022), as well as Pasifika Festival events hosted by Know Your Roots Inc. (Shepparton, 2021) and Women's Federation of World Peace (Melbourne, 2020).

In 2024, Steve is the creative director of PICAA's outreach program 'Spirit of Pasefika'. A program that is attended by over 100 Pacific Island community members each year, with weekly rehearsals from January to March each year, with the final performance at the annual City of Melbourne 'Moomba Parade'.

REXSON PELMAN



REXSON PELMAN

Performing Tala Pasifika

Ancestral villages: Fagaloa and Vaimoso SAMOA.

Rexson Pelman is a performer, wrestler, sound designer, community theatre maker and facilitator, and music producer. His work with WesternEdge Youth Arts is diverse. In 2012 he worked with the Chronicles project, culminating in travelling to Beagle Bay Aboriginal Community in Western Australia to create performance with remote young people. He is also a member of Playback West as a musician and performer. Rex has worked in many primary and secondary schools in Melbourne as a facilitating artist, creating performance with hundreds of young people. He has also worked for Platform Youth Theatre 'My Island Dreams' as Lead Artist and is 1 of 3 Creators of Western Edges 'LELE'.

Rex was a member of the Edge Ensemble performing in the Fate, (FCAC) and Fate 2.0 2013 Art Centre. Scheherazade project 2014 (FCAC), IAGO (Malthouse) 2015, Caliban (Malthouse) 2016 & 2017, Lele, Butterfly 2018 (FCAC) and LELE 2022 (STACC) & 2023 (Wyndham Cultural Centre). In 2014 he performed lead in 'Billy Possible' at Metonnoia theatre.

Rex is also a sound engineer. Much of his work in performance is merged with creating sound design and music for performance. He was sound designer and engineer for 'Begin as You Wish to Continue' 2013 Backbone Youth Arts QLD. Uprising Theatre's 'Zombies performance' 2013 and '1001 Nights' 2014, Western Edge's 'Scheherazade' 2014, VU's School Production from 2020-2024, LELE 2022 and 2023, Sub30 Collectives Feature film 'The Retreat' and 'Malthouse's' 2021 & 2022 'Atlantis'.

SANELE SAVEA



SANELE SAVEA
Creative

Sanele was bestowed the Matai title 'Tunaimati'a'.

Ancestral villages: Levi Saleimoa SAMOA.

Already performing in front of family and relatives at the age of five, Sanele Savea knew that performing is for him. With his deep passion for musical theater and pacific dance he extended his theater pacific fan status to performer status and starred in hit musicals, such as Little Shop of Horror as Mr Mushnik and Where we Once Belong as Filiga. These shows showcased his outstanding and convincing acting skills and strong vocals. Sanele Savea has a Diploma degree in Performing Arts from PIPA (Pacific Island Performing Arts).

He was nominated for the best supporting actor in the short film called Manurewa in the Berlin International Film Festival and Magma Film Festival. He was also in a short film called the Last Saint. Sanele has done a lot of Theatre shows from - Dawn Raid, Pua'a, Blood Wedding, Duffy, Taro King, Amataga o le Alofa and Rehavaiki. From stage to screen, Sanele also landed a few commercial roles - VIC BIG build 2019, Bakers Delight 2020 and Spotlight 2020.

When he's not performing, he teaches pacific dance to community as a dancing tutor to help our troubled youths to use their skills and talent to pursue a career, and volunteers his time in PICAA (Pacific Island Creative Arts Australia).



LUANA OMERI-TOFETE



LUANA OMERI-TOFETE

Writer of 'Our Truth, For Now'

Ancestral Villages:
Luatuanu'u/Lona I
Fagaloa/Aleipata - Malaela

Of Samoan Descent, she is the second eldest of seven girls and is in her final year of school. Luana has been a part of the PICAA family since she was 9 years old. She was a part of Australia's first Pacific musical REHAVAIKI where she played Hine-Nui-Te-Po the Maori goddess of death.

Since then she has participated in a number of PICAA events such as performing at the Moomba Parade and at Pasifix at the Sydney Myer Music Bowl. Also was the sound engineer on the PICAA youth short film "Island Chronicles"

Luana makes her debut as a playwright for the MUA Pasefika Theatre Festival. When she was approached by Artistic Director Asalemo Tofete she did not hesitate at jumping at the chance.

Her piece 'Our Truth, For Now' was inspired by thoughts and feelings of being disconnected to culture as expressed by people around her and also on social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram. Luana has thoroughly enjoyed working on this project and looks forward to developing this work and her skills in the Arts further. Also Luana cant wait to see what PICAA has to offer next.

YOUTH PIECE

WRITTEN BY LUANA OMERI-TOFETE

JACI SILVA

Favourite food: Soft tacos

Memorable moment of this project:

Making memories with friends

Quote: Only do what your heart tells you.

LUCI SILVA

Favourite food: Crispy Chicken Sushi

Memorable moment of this project:

Getting to know each other

Quote: Be the reason someone smile.

SADE IAELI TAFEA

Favourite food: Korean Fried Chicken

Memorable moment of this project:

Getting to know everyone

Quote: Phillipians 4:3 - I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

FALCON TOFETE-SUA

Favourite Food: Sushi

Memorable moment of this project: Our first time getting together and introducing ourselves; it's good to meet new people.

Quote: Psalms 118:8 - It's better to have refuge in the Lord than trust in humans.

MEMPHIS TOFETE-SUA

Favourite food: Vietnamese Rolls

Memorable moment of this project: All of us coming together and having a laugh and learning more about our culture.

Quote: John 3:16 - For God so loved the world, that He gave His only son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but shall have eternal life.

LILA ROSE OMERI-TOFETE

Favourite food: Kokolaisa and kalo

Memorable moment of this project: Making new friends and doing the dance.

Quote: Follow the path that you want.

ANITYAH OMERI-TOFETE

Favourite food: Crab Sticks

Memorable moment of this project: Getting to know everyone

Quote: Joshua 1:9 - Be strong and courageous, don't be afraid, don't be discouraged for the Lord our God is with you wherever you go.



GINA TAFEA



PICAA CULTURAL ARTS DIRECTOR & CREATIVE ASSOCIATE

Arts Practice: Designer | Artist |
Facilitator

Gina was bestowed the matai title
'Malagama'ali'i' from Lalomalava
village in Samoa.

Ancestral villages: Lalomalava |
Papa Sataua | Sapapali'i SAMOA

Gina's role in developing sustainable and alternative solutions in creating Pasefika traditional and contemporary attire for cultural practice in Australia is a key feature in her arts practice. A graduate of Design Academy (Auckland, NZ) with a focus on Fashion Design and Construction, Gina is sought after by community members and organisations for her specialized knowledge and practice of measina Samoa (Samoan sacred treasures) for cultural ceremonies.

Her love for Pasefika arts and craft, as well as her developed skill and expertise in measina Samoa stems from her Samoan upbringing in Christchurch, and then later on in Melbourne. As the director of PICAA Cultural Arts, Gina is heavily involved in all theatre productions as the lead costume designer and maker. A highly-respected artist, her costume design skills were showcased in the productions 'Amataga o le Alofa' (D.Tuitea, 2016) and 'ReHavaiki' (A.Tofete/R.Seumanutafa-Palala, 2017).

She is our key facilitator of the popular Tuiga Class program – a series of creative workshops for community members to create tuiga (traditional headdress) pieces for cultural use. A highlight of Gina's leadership in cultural attire includes the 2017 Exhibition 'Taumeasina Samoa: Sharing Cultural Heritage and Knowledge' at Hunt Club Community Arts Centre, hosted by PICAA in partnership with Brimbank City Council. More recently, Gina was commissioned by Melbourne Museum to design and create a tuiga as a special piece for the Pacific collections. Gina is also a regular designer for Miss Samoa Victoria Inc.

In 2024, Gina is the producer of the upcoming inaugural event 'Pasefika Theatre Festival' (May, 2024) and is also the cultural costume advisor/designer for 'Spirit of Pasefika'.



PRODUCTION TEAM

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
ASALEMO TOFETE

PRODUCER
GINA TAFEA

MUSIC & TALENT
SIKIVI TAFEA

PRODUCTION & STAGE MANAGERS
AKENESE OMERI-TOFETE, MONIQUE O'KEEFFE, MESEPA TAULA, CECILIA GILBERT & SUSANA VAKAMEILALO

BOWERY THEATRE LIGHTING AND SOUND TEAM

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Creative
Brimbank

