



Free Theatre Christchurch

Arts Centre of Christchurch PO Box 2736 • Rolleston Ave, Christchurch 8013
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ELLA AND SUSN

Directed by Peter Falkenberg, these plays present rarely heard voices from the margins of society. In *Ella* a man, dressed in his mother's clothes (à la Hitchcock's *Psycho*), tells the story of his mother, abused and institutionalised. In *Susn* a young woman confesses to her priest how her first sexual experiences have caused her to want to leave the church.

In 2004 Te Puna Toi (Performance Research Project) commissioned Free Theatre Christchurch to present a series of duologues as part of a retrospective of works by radical Bavarian playwright, filmmaker, novelist and painter Herbert Achternbusch.

Represented in 2009 as part of a single production, *ELLA AND SUSN* had short acclaimed seasons in Christchurch and Dunedin (the production won Best Theatre at the 2009 Dunedin Fringe Festival and was nominated for Best Production Design).



In staging these works, Free Theatre Christchurch continues a 30-year reputation for presenting rarely staged plays in provocative and innovative ways. *ELLA AND SUSN* were translated by the director and presented in English for the first time by the Free Theatre. This production has received particular attention for its unusual narrative style, “rich, satisfying prose” (The Press) and unusual staging, which is a feature of Achternbusch's unconventional and challenging work. Despite being one of the most prolific artists of the past forty years, he remains largely unknown. His obscurity is primarily due to his unwillingness to adhere to the norms of art and society, most exemplified when he set fire to an art reward he received: a \$20,000 cheque.

The performance runs for 90 mins (with no intermission).

Free Theatre Christchurch: *Ella and Susn*, 2010. For details, please contact: admin@freetheatre.org.nz, call 03 3653159 or visit www.freetheatre.org.nz.

“Achternbusch’s feast of delights... theatrical paintings, three-dimensional and verbal... *ELLA AND SUSN* showed us the depth of creativity that so often distinguishes the work of Peter Falkenberg”
Alan Scott, The Press

“...the kind of theatre that keeps you thinking and wanting to talk about it... gritty, provocative and stylish”
Christina Stachurski, Christchurch Star



“However sleep-deprived and grumpy one becomes, the Fringe still holds surprises like [*ELLA AND SUSN*] to stimulate, and delight. To remind one of the transcendent power of theatre to create images that are ineradicable.”

Terry McTavish Theatreview Dunedin

“[I]f we accept that the main job of theatre is to be theatrical, to make us see freshly, Peter Falkenberg and his team are right on track.”

Lin Clark, Theatreview Christchurch

For further information about *Ella and Susn*, including production history, images and reviews, please go to:
<http://www.freetheatre.org.nz/history/acht.shtml>

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