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# Free Theatre's quirky international project

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STUART LLOYD HARRIS

The Mauricio Kagel Project at Free Theatre culminates with a presentation as part of the 2015 Christchurch Arts Festival in September.

A unique project by Christchurch group Free Theatre includes a collaboration by two internationally renowned artists.

Chinese composer Gao Ping and New Zealand conductor Hamish McKeich

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are working with the Christchurch experimental theatre collective to push the boundaries of music-as-performance.

Peter Falkenberg, inspired by avant garde Argentine-German director Mauricio Kagel, has launched a project that sees musicians working with instruments as if they are theatrical props and actors working with theatrical props as if they are instruments.

Kagel was influenced by John Cage and the Dada cabarets to create a new music-theatre genre.

Falkenberg believes it results in music making becoming theatre as "a comic, absurd and joyously

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playful activity".

The project culminates with a presentation as part of the 2015 Christchurch Arts Festival (CAF) in September.

Pianist-composer Ping is developing a work that draws on his cultural heritage and his experiments working between Chinese and Western musical idioms.

While McKeich sees this project as a continuation of a fruitful collaboration with Free Theatre that began in 2013 with *The Soldier's Tale*, a Christchurch Symphony Orchestra production.

Having performed with major orchestras all over the world, McKeich has a particular

passion for developing the repertoire of contemporary and experimental music.

"Mixing different disciplines together is not easy to do but I'm personally convinced this collaboration has the recipe for success and longevity. I'm personally delighted to be involved," he says.

The Mauricio Kagel Project continues Free Theatre's aims to build new collaborations and audiences in the restored Arts Centre.

While it is a challenge for the artists to be working in different places before coming together in September, producer George

Parker says this is all part of pursuing the company's ambitions to develop ground-breaking collaborations.

"The great thing about this project is that we're working with two great artists who believe art emerges when traditional boundaries are crossed. We're really thrilled to be developing a project that can go on, grow, evolve and flourish, contributing to this city's reputation for influential experimental art."

#### THE DETAILS:

Work-in-development presentation, 8.30pm (70 minutes), Thursday, September 10 and Friday, September

11 at the Fletcher  
Construction  
Festival Studio, The  
Gym, The Arts  
Centre. Tickets \$15  
from  
artsfestival.co.nz.  
/mauricio-kagel-  
project

An instrumental  
theatre workshop is  
being held on  
Saturday, August 15  
at The Gym, The  
Arts Centre, from  
10am-1pm.  
Participants will be  
experimenting with  
sounds, textures  
and movement, and  
creating and  
building fantastical  
musical  
instruments out of a  
range of everyday  
materials. For more  
information, or to  
book a place, please  
contact  
education@freetheatre.org.nz.  
Cost \$10. Suitable  
for those aged 14  
and over.

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