



MEDIA RELEASE:

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Forums to highlight role of theatre and creativity in prisons

German theatre practitioner Uta Plate will lead a series of forums and workshops in New Zealand in February and March to highlight the role of theatre and creativity in prisons, in partnership with Goethe-Institut New Zealand and Arts Access Aotearoa.

The three Creativity in Corrections forums, to be held in Wellington (10 February), Christchurch (29 February and 1 March) and Auckland (3 and 4 March), will include panel discussions, practical workshops and networking opportunities,

For the past 20 years, Uta has been running workshops and devising plays with prisoners, young people and asylum seekers in Germany and in countries such as Chile, Sweden, China, Turkey, Palestine and Russia.

“My last big project was about World War II and working with young people from Russia, Poland and Germany,” Uta says. “There was an ensemble of 18, and we dived into stories about the war, digging deep and getting dirty.

“I’m very interested in the blind spots – what people don’t see or choose not to see. For me, theatre connects us to the unseen pain and suffering in the world.”

Bettina Senff, Director of Goethe-Institut New Zealand, says Uta’s forums and workshops will provide opportunities for a two-way sharing of skills and experience.

“The Goethe-Institut is proud to bring Uta back to New Zealand,” Bettina says. “Uta is a gifted educator and theatre practitioner with a wealth of knowledge and tools to share.

“Feedback from her workshops last year shows that Uta’s integrity, empathy and genuine engagement will make the forums and workshops a memorable, two-way learning process.”

In early 2015, Uta spent three months as an artist-in-residence in Wellington, supported by Goethe-Institut New Zealand in association with the Wellington City Council and Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School.

As part of the residency, she facilitated a one-day workshop called *Move-Dance-Write* with the 20 women undertaking the six-month programme in the Drug Treatment Unit at Arohata Prison and two students from Toi Whakaari. The workshop was co-ordinated by Jacqui Moyes, Arts in Corrections Advisor, Arts Access Aotearoa.

Following the Wellington forum and with funding from Wellington City Council, Uta will facilitate a second workshop, called *The Looking Glass*, where she will work with the 20

women currently in the Drug Treatment Unit at Arohata Prison. The other participants will be the clinical and Corrections staff, eight artists and writers, and Jacqui Moyes.

As well as benefiting the prisoners, *The Looking Glass* aims to upskill New Zealand arts practitioners and writers so they can continue teaching creative expression in prisons and the wider community.

The focus of the nine-day project is addiction but Uta is clear that her workshops aren't about therapy.

"My role is to provide some tools and 'maps' for participants to experience what theatre can offer," she says. "I'm not there to judge anyone or offer therapy.

"What I'm hoping to achieve is that each person will see herself as a creative person, not as a victim. That they will say, 'On stage, I can create anything and in life, I can do anything'. But they have to do the work. They have to make decisions and choices."

The three Creativity in Corrections forums in Wellington, Christchurch and Auckland are free and open to the public. However, numbers are limited and you need to book by contacting Jacqui Moyes (04 802 4349 jacqui.moyes@artsaccess.org.nz).

For more information, please contact:

Iona McNaughton, Communications Manager, Arts Access Aotearoa

T: 04-802 4349 / 021 799 059 E: iona.mcnaughton@artsaccess.org.nz