

REvolve presents

THE RESERVOIR

From the short story by Janet Frame | Adapted for the stage by Robert Ormsby

AUDITIONS | 7-8 November 2026

BATS Theatre, Wellington | 2–6 March 2027

About the production

The Reservoir is a New Zealand stage adaptation set in a rural community in 1948. At its heart is a story of childhood adventure, imagination and the moment innocence gives way to something deeper.

The production embraces theatrical simplicity. Rather than recreating the world realistically, the landscape is built through transformation: everyday backyard objects become forests, creeks, paddocks and hidden places.

We're looking for actors who enjoy exploring different theatrical techniques, physical storytelling and movement, and who are willing to play, experiment and have fun.

The reservoir itself is less a physical location than an ever-present mystery, allowing design, movement, sound and lighting to shape the audience's imagination.

Who we're looking for

We welcome auditions from performers aged 18 and over, of all ethnicities, gender expressions, cultural backgrounds, abilities and body types. We are committed to equity, diversity and inclusion throughout our work.

Some of the action depicts children at play, so actors should be comfortable with physical storytelling, movement and working closely with other performers. We encourage anyone with questions about the physical requirements to get in touch.

Creative team

Directors	Sarah Holswich and Robert Ormsby
Designer	Anna Lowe
Technical Designer	Russell Tester
Production company	REvolve

Important dates

Auditions	Saturday 7 November 2026, 10am–4pm Audition venue: 3 Queens Wharf, Wellington (opposite the entrance to TSB Arena). Please arrive 5 minutes before your assigned time and wait at the main doors. We will arrange for you to be let into the building.
Callbacks by invitation	Sunday 8 November, 11am–3pm
Casting decisions	By 14 November
Workshops	28 November – 13 December 2026 (Subject to availability)

Rehearsals	From Sunday 10 January – 1 March 2027 Rehearsals: The workshop period includes a weekend workshop on 12–13 December. Regular rehearsals will primarily take place on Sundays, although some additional rehearsals may be required leading up to production week.
Performances	2–6 March 2027 Performance venue: The Stage, BATS Theatre, Kent Terrace, Wellington.

Performance schedule

Tuesday 2 March	Pack-in, technical rehearsal and 6pm performance
Wednesday 3 March	6pm performance
Thursday 4 March	6pm performance
Friday 5 March	6pm performance
Saturday 6 March	6pm performance and pack-out

Preparing for your audition

Please prepare one monologue from the audition material included in this pack.

We'd love to see your interpretation of the character and your willingness to play. Choose a piece that interests or excites you and gives you an opportunity to show us something of yourself as a performer.

You don't need to be word-perfect, but we'd encourage you to be familiar enough with the material to work without holding a script, if possible.

Alongside your monologue, we'll explore some group exercises, improvisation and ensemble work. You may also be asked to read for different characters.

We're as interested in how you respond to and work with others as we are in your individual performance. Please wear comfortable clothing that allows you to move freely.

Content and physical activity

The production includes references to illness, death and childhood curiosity about adult relationships. Our audition and rehearsal processes also involve physical theatre, collaborative exercises and close ensemble work.

Some activities may involve working in close proximity to other performers. Please let us know if you have any access requirements or concerns so we can discuss suitable adjustments.

Character breakdown

All three roles will be played by adult performers aged 18 or over.

Mary — playing age approximately 15

Mary is the eldest sibling, and it is through her memories that we experience much of the story. She is beginning to feel the pull of the wider world. She knows that her life as a young woman is about to begin and is both excited and nervous about the prospect. She carries a sense of responsibility for her younger siblings, making sure they don't stray too far from the rules set by their parents.

Jack — playing age approximately 12 (also plays Father)

The middle child, Jack is full of adventure and bravado. He likes to play the tough guy and rarely admits when he's frightened. As the only boy, he has to put up with the company of his sisters. Beneath the bravado, however, he is caring and protective of the others.

Betsy — playing age approximately 9 (also plays Mother)

The youngest sibling, Betsy is mostly concerned with her immediate world. She can be brave, cheeky and mischievous when supported by the others, but is easily frightened when left to her own devices. Her imagination can sometimes get the better of her.

Please read through all three roles. You may be asked to explore more than one character during the audition.

Audition material - individual

Please prepare one monologue of your choice.

Mary

It was said to be 4 or 5 miles along the gully, past orchards and farms, the paddocks filled with cattle, sheep, wheat, gorse, and the squatters of the land who were the rabbits eating like modern sculpture into the hills. For so long we obeyed the command of the grownups and never walked as far as the forbidden Reservoir.

The Reservoir was the end of the world: beyond it, you fell. Beyond it were paddocks of thorns, strange cattle, strange farms, legendary people whom we would never know or recognize even if they walked among us on a Friday night downtown when we went to follow the boys and listen to the Salvation Army Band and buy a milk shake in the milk bar and then we would return home to find that everything was all right and safe, that our mother had not run away and caught the night train to the north island, that our father had not shot himself with worry over the bills.

Jack

Cracks appeared in the earth; the grass was bled yellow; the ground was littered with beetle shells and snail shells; flies came in from the unofficial rubbish dump at the back of the house; the twisting flypapers hung from the ceiling; a frantic buzzing filled the room as the flypaper became crowded.

We struck our sticks in the air! They made a whistling sound. They were supple and young. We tried to make musical instruments out of them. Time after time we hacked at the willow and the elder to make pipes to blow our music, but no sound came out but our own voices.

And why did two sticks rubbed together not make fire? Why couldn't we ever make anything out of the bits of the world lying about us?

An airplane passed in the sky. We craned our necks to read the writing on the underwing, for we collected airplane numbers. The plane was gone in a glint of the sun.

Betsy

There was enough to occupy us along the gully without our visiting the Reservoir.

First the couples. We liked to find a courting couple and follow them and when, as we know they must do because they were tired or for other reasons, they found a place in the grass and lay down together, we liked to make jokes about them, amongst ourselves.

"Just wait for him to kiss her. Watch. There. A beaut!" (Smacks a kiss.)

Often we giggled and lingered even after the couple had observed us. We were waiting for them to do it. Every man and woman did it, we knew that for a fact... Well, we speculated about technical details.

After we tired of spying on the couples we should shout after them as we went our way.

Pound, Shillings and Pence,

A man fell over a fence.

He fell on a lady,

And squashed out a baby.

Pound, Shillings and Pence!

What if a man fell on us like that and squashed out a chain of babies?

Audition material – group

These excerpts give an indication of the playful, physical and ensemble-based storytelling we will explore as a group. This is a relaxed exercise, and you do not need to learn this ahead of time.

Workshop 1

We'll never get to the Reservoir!

Whose idea was it?

I've strained my ankle!

Someone began to cry. We stopped walking.

I've strained my ankle!

It's not strained, it's sprained.

Strained.

Sprained.

All right, sprained then. I'll have to wear a bandage. I'll have to walk on crutches...

I had crutched once. Look. I've got a scar where I fell off my stilts. It's a white scar, like a centipede. It's on my shins.

Shins! Isn't it a funny word? Shins. Have you ever been kicked in the shins?

Shin. Funnybone...

It's humerus...

"Knuckles"

A sprained ankle...

A strained ankles...

A whitlow, an ingrown toenail, the root of my hair, warts, spinal meningitis, infantile paralysis...

Infantile paralysis. Infantile paralysis, you have to be wheeled in a chair and wear irons on your legs and your knees knock together...

Once you're in an iron lung you can't get out. They lock it, like a cage...

You go in an amberlance...

Ambulance...

Amberlance...

Ambulance to the hostile...

The hospital, an amberlance to the hospital...

Infantile paralysis...

Friar's Balsam! Friar's Balsam!

Baxter's Lung Preserver, Baxter's Lung Preserver!

Syrup of figs, California syrup of Figs!

The creek is going on high flow!

Workshop 2

The damp smell of the pine needles caught in our breath.

There were no birds,

Only the constant sighing of the trees.

We could see the water clearly now;

It lay, except for the waves beyond the shore, in an almost perfect calm.

Which we knew to be deceptive — else why were people so afraid of the Reservoir?

The fringe of young pines on the edge, like toy trees, subjected to the wind, sighed and told us their sad secrets.

In the Reservoir there was an appearance of neatness

Which concealed a disarray too frightening to be acknowledged

Except, without any defence,

In moments of deep sleep and dreaming.

The little sparkling innocent waves shone now green, now grey,

Petticoats, lettuce leaves;

The trees sighed and told us to be quiet,

“Hush-sh”

As if something was sleeping should not be disturbed.

Perhaps that was what the trees were always telling us,

“Hush-sh”

In case we disturbed something...

Which must never be awakened?

What was it?

Was it sleeping in the Reservoir?

Was that why people were afraid of the Reservoir?