



A New Zealand Comedy Trust Development Initiative



## **CLASS COMEDIANS 2020**

*Investing in the future of New Zealand comedy and the arts*

**Jump to:**

[Programme Objectives page 4](#)

[Programme Overview page 7](#)

[Programme Dates page 8](#)

## **Vision**

Class Comedians provides an extra-curricular learning and development opportunity for senior secondary-school performers in the comedy genre, and is run at no cost to those involved. In a nutshell - we teach funny kids how to do comedy and about the comedy industry, and we've been doing it for nearly two decades now!

The Class Comedians program is an initiative run by the New Zealand Comedy Trust which is the charitable organization behind the annual NZ International Comedy Festival. Since its beginnings in 2001, hundreds of students have taken part in the programme. Class Comedians combines the experience and know-how of professional comics and performance industry experts to deliver a well-rounded introduction to the comedy industry. The programme works towards an exciting opportunity to perform alongside a world class array of comedians during the New Zealand International Comedy Festival in May in the Class Comedians Showcase.

## **Mission**

The Class Comedians programme was developed to provide students with opportunities to express themselves through making and presenting comedy as a positive reinforcement of their self-image and potential. Class Comedians is an opportunity for youth to perform in a community-spirited festival environment, giving them the ability to form a better confidence in themselves and their talents. The programme also fosters future involvement in the New Zealand comedy industry by encouraging youth to see comedy as a valid art form, one that requires professionalism, dedication and a wide range of abilities, and can be turned into a career. It also provides a window into the wider arts industry and all the different careers the Arts has to offer.

## **Benefits**

The benefits for the students involved in this programme are clear and overwhelmingly positive. As well as the specific skills learnt and industry knowledge gained, the secondary benefits of the programme are equally beneficial. Students develop improved communication, social and cooperative skills and an increased sense of positive self-image and potential. They create their own community as a class that remains strong long after the programme has finished. They also connect to other graduates, to the Comedy industry as a whole and to the wider arts community. The New Zealand Comedy Trust also strives to keep in touch with Class



Comedians after the programme, welcoming them into the comedy whānau and encouraging them to pursue their creative goals.

This programme has launched many of NZ's brightest comedy careers. Our former Class Comedians have a prestigious track record – **Rose Matafeo**, one of our first ever graduates, won the biggest global prize in comedy at the Edinburgh Fringe in 2018. Other graduates who have since gone on to amazing things are **Rhys Mathewson** (*The Project*), **James Roque** (*Frickin Dangerous Bro*, *The Spinoff TV*), **James Malcolm** (Billy T nominee) and **Ruby Esther** (winner of 2017 Raw & 2018 Best Debut).



# Programme Objectives

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In context, the students will:

1. Develop practical knowledge in comedy by exploring and using the elements, conventions, processes, techniques and technologies of the discipline.
2. Gain confidence in public speaking and learn about the craft of communicating and selling ideas.
3. Teach the value of thinking outside of the square to gain a broader understand of society, politics and culture.
4. Develop ideas in comedy, individually and collectively, drawing on a variety of sources of motivation to make comedy happen.
5. Communicate and interpret meaning in comedy, presenting and responding to a wide range of genre.

Core comedic genres and skills taught include (but aren't limited to!):

1. Stand-up comedy
2. Writing
3. Comedy for TV
4. Improvisation
5. Clowning and physical comedy
6. Sketch and character comedy
7. Observational comedy

Students will utilize and extend their own:

1. Communication skills
2. Public Speaking skills
3. Confidence & resilience
4. Social and Co-operative skills
5. Self-management and Competitive skills
6. Information gathering skills
7. Work and Study skills
8. Writing & Editing skills



## Trust's Long-Term Objectives for Programme

1. To become an essential part of extracurricular performance activities for high school aged students.
2. To extend the Class Comedians programme as a nationwide initiative.
3. To cultivate and support the next generation of New Zealand professional comedians and is a vital way for us to increase representation in the NZ comedy industry

The programme has proved to be an overwhelming success and is essential in the continued development of the New Zealand comedy industry. Many past graduates have gone on to become professional comedians as well as performing regularly at the annual NZ International Comedy Festival. These quotes from those involved in past Class Comedians are a testament to the success of the programme:

*"Being a part of Class Comedians in 2006 was the most important thing that has ever happened to me, bar perhaps my birth. By joining the programme, I have discovered not only the comedy industry but also how to make a career out of it, which is now what I have achieved. One of the key benefits of Class Comedians is that it gives people such as me, who want to make a life out of comedy, the foundation skills that allow them to grow as performers."*

**Rhys Mathewson - Class Comedian Graduate turned mentor (and Billy T Award winner)**

*"Class Comedians was the most amazing and eye-opening experience I have had so far. Class Comedians did not only teach me tips and tricks on stand-up comedy, but I learnt some good life skills as well. It made me work hard towards a goal, it gave me self-motivation and more confidence on and off the stage. I made heaps of awesome friends and connections and have found my passion. I had no knowledge about stand-up comedy and no intentions of even trying it until the workshop came to my school. It's a balance between a passion and a challenge, which is why I love it so much. I truly think Class Comedians is such a phenomenal programme."*

**Alice Cassidy – Class Comedian Graduate**

*"This was the defining moment for me, realising that my gift of the gab was actually useful. Being onstage is not a challenge for me, but being myself using material I had written was the most terrifying experience I have ever had...and the most rewarding. I would recommend that everybody have a go. I would do it all over again in a heart-beat just to meet new people and learn so much."*

**Ethan Davenport – Class Comedian Graduate**

*"Weeks after the end of the programme, some of the students have become regular performers in the Wellington scene. (Students) have cajoled their parents to accompany them to the regular weekly gigs, where they've been able to perform alongside last year's Class Comedian graduates."*

**Jerome Chandrasen – Class Comedian Tutor**

*"My daughter Julie is 16 years old and extremely unsure of herself and her abilities... Julie's transformation during this six-week period was a joy to watch. For the first time in a long time, she seemed to find a group of kids she fits in with and totally enjoyed going to the Class Comedians sessions....her feedback was extremely positive and I really got the*





*impression that not only was she enjoying group lessons but was receiving a lot of one-on-one instruction, which she very much appreciated.*

*I am grateful for the Class Comedians Programme for not only spotting her talents but then allowing her to develop and showcase them in a manner in which she was comfortable with totally successful... she did great and came home jubilant and with heaps more confidence."*

**Danielle Williamson – Mum of Julie, Class Comedian**

*"I took part in the Wellington Class Comedians programme and it was one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. The education has been invaluable to me as I have attempted to pursue stand-up comedy, alongside my part-time work. Since Class Comedians, I have won the national Raw Comedy Quest, been a Billy T Nominee, and performed in front of a crowd of 700 at SkyCity Theatre - there is not a single doubt in my mind that I wouldn't have achieved any of this without the Class Comedians programme - before I took part I didn't even know that performing stand-up comedy was a viable option for me.*

*The Class Comedians programme also taught me key skills outside of comedy. The writing exercises we used to write comedy, also helped to improve my writing in general. I learnt time management through the implementation of deadlines; I knew that if I didn't have enough material in time for the show I would not be able to perform. Most importantly the Class Comedians programme played a major part in helping me overcome my depression, by putting in place a routine for me to follow over the school holidays, and giving me something to do that I found worthwhile."*

**James Malcolm – Class Comedians Graduate 2013 (and winner of RAW 2014, and Billy T Nominee 2016)**

## WHAT WE ACHIEVE



### ROSE MATAFEO

- 2007 - Graduated Class Comedians Programme
- 2008 - Finalist in NZICF Raw Comedy Quest
- 2011 - Performed first solo show
- 2011 - Winner: Best Newcomer Award
- 2012 - Nominated for the Billy T Award
- 2012 - First television appearance: AotearoHa: Next Big Things
- 2013 - Winner: The Billy T Award
- 2015 - Recipient of the Creative Comedy Initiative grant to create 'Rose Matafeo is FINALLY DEAD'
- 2015 - Performed 'Rose Matafeo is FINALLY DEAD' at Edinburgh Fringe
- 2017 - Winner: The Fred Award
- 2018 - Winner: Edinburgh Fringe Best Comedy Show



# CLASS COMEDIANS - Programme Brief

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## **Comedy 101 Workshops – the first taster of Class Comedians**

During March, high school students are invited to take their first step in the Class Comedians programme by attending the free Comedy 101-style workshops across Auckland and Wellington in March. These workshops showcase some sweet live performances from professional comedians, providing the experience of seeing a variety of styles of comedy, and learn first-hand the basics of stand-up comedy. Special guest performances include a recent graduate student from the programme or a newer comic who give the students in attendance a realistic goal for the future.

From this workshop, we invite students to apply for the full Class Comedians Programme. We aim to select at least one student from each school we visit, which means we draw students from across the Auckland region.

## **Workshops – April/May School Holidays & Weekends**

These workshops are designed to give students an exposure in all aspects of the industry. The programme will provide specific, attainable and measurable learning experiences. Areas of learning covered include; public speaking, stand-up comedy, writing comedy, comedy for TV, improvisation, clowning and physical comedy, sketch, character and observational comedy. Another essential skill is they are taught is resilience.

Guest tutors during this time can include; reviewers, tv presenters, journalists, previous graduates, Festival staff, producers and of course a full range of comedians from New Zealand and around the world. Students are also taken on visits to a range of performance venues, and media organisations. The main outcome is a skeletal body of work that will form the basis of the students' performance piece for their showcase at the NZ International Comedy Festival.

Class Comedians also receive a standby pass to see many of the shows in the Festival totally free, giving them the opportunity to see the incredible range of styles and possibilities within the comedy sphere.

## **The Final Showcase at the NZ International Comedy Festival.**

This is the ultimate event of the programme at which our young comedians perform and 'graduate'. All participants receive certificates of completion in recognition of their efforts.



## Programme Dates

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In 2020, the Class Comedians programme is running in Auckland and Wellington. Check out the full dates for each city below.

### A note about the Intensive Programme

Students are not required to attend the Comedy 101 Workshops to be eligible for the Intensive Programme, however space on the programme is limited, so they will need to apply online by visiting [www.comedyfestival.co.nz/classcomedians](http://www.comedyfestival.co.nz/classcomedians)

## Auckland

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### STEP ONE

#### Comedy 101 Workshops

(90 minutes)

Mon 9 March 6.30pm                      Mangere Arts Centre, Mangere  
or Sat 14 March 2pm                      TAPAC, Western Springs

### STEP TWO

#### Intensive 10-Day Programme

Applications open from 9 March – 20 March 2020

(10am – 4pm on the following dates)

Weekend One:                      Sat 4 - Sun 5 April  
School Holidays Week One:      Wed 15 – Fri 17 Apr  
School Holidays Week Two:      Mon 20 – Wed 22 Apr  
Weekend Two:                      Sat 8 - Sun 9 May

Comedy Festival Showcase 4.30pm Sat 16 May - Q Theatre Loft

## Wellington

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### STEP ONE

#### Comedy 101 Workshops

(90 minutes)

Sat 14 March 2pm                      Toi Whakaari, Newtown  
or Sun 15 March 2pm                      Dowse Art Gallery, Lower Hutt

### STEP TWO

#### Intensive 10-Day Programme

Applications open from 9 March – 20 March 2020

(10am – 4pm on the following dates)

Weekend One:                      Sat 4 April  
School Holidays Week One:      Wed 15 – Fri 17 Apr  
School Holidays Week Two:      Mon 20 – Wed 22 Apr  
Weekend Two:                      Sat 8 – Sun 9 May  
Weekend Three:                      Sat 16 May

Comedy Festival Showcase 4pm Sat 23 May - The Random Stage at BATS Theatre





## After Class Comedians...

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Class Comedians are encouraged to stay involved and in touch – many grads have gone on to write for and star on TV, win the Raw Comedy Quest (18+), perform on international stages, win top comedy awards and so much more! Even those who don't end up going down the comedy path will come away with exciting new skills and some brilliant stories.

The Festival will also continue to offer opportunities to our Class Comedians such as heading along to live television filmings, attending other performances and checking in to see how we can help out with the next stage of their comedy journey – whether that be working towards a Festival show, touching base with fellow comedians or creating other connections within the broader arts industry.

# Class Comedians

*is just the beginning!*

