

**Centre Stage Taupō Presents:
Once on Chunuk Bair by Maurice Shadbolt**

Audition Information Pack

Introduction

Kia ora and welcome to the 'Once on Chunuk Bair' audition pack. Thank you for considering being a part of this show. Please take the time to read all the information carefully - particularly regarding rehearsals, show dates and character descriptions.

*Please complete the Audition Registration Form

Information evening & read through: **Tuesday 8 December 2026 7pm**

We will be using this as a 'pre audition' so cast combinations can be trialled

Auditions: **Sunday 13 December 2026 7pm**

If you are unavailable for this day please it is hoped you can attend the read through 8th December - indicate on the audition registration form

Location: The Playhouse, **Centre Stage**, 2 Matai Street Taupō

Production Dates: **14th April-24th April 2027 (Term 1 School Holidays)**

The Play

Written By: Maurice Shadbolt

Directed By: Curtis Painter

Produced By: Centre Stage Taupō Inc

Production Manager: Sharon Shanks

Synopsis

It's 1915; four months after landing on the shores of the Gallipoli Peninsula, a broken and depleted Wellington Battalion finally make it to the summit of their target: Chunuk Bair. As Turkish forces move in and Allied forces hang back, our NZ soldiers are faced with the terrifying reality that they are all alone, spearheading a doomed campaign.

For our heroes, it is this isolation that helps them understand and forge a national identity for 'Fernleaves' that has left a lasting impression on Kiwis and the world.

The characters help bring a clever balance of humour, wit, and philosophy to a very dark situation. From farmers to union men, pastors to rural Māori, hard-nosed generals to naive teens, all of these characters reflect a different part of our population's tapestry. Using humour and Kiwi jargon as a Trojan Horse, these characters will prompt audiences to question their own perceptions and understanding of patriotism, the British Empire, and The Great War.

Characters required - 12 male.

Character Descriptions

Colonel Connolly

Is brave and committed. He is a genuine leader with an unconventional style, using sarcasm and irony to give commands and tell his men how much he believes in them. *Brave, stubborn, passionate, patriotic, loyal.*

Lt. Harkness

English accent?

Is new to the war. He tries to pull rank and give orders, but the battle-weary men mock his innocence. Loyal to the British Empire, it is his awe of its 'majesty' and might that initially motivates Harkness and causes tension amongst the men.

Sgt. Frank

Is trustworthy, smart and dependable. Whilst he is Connolly's right-hand man, his main focus is keeping his brother Fred safe. Frank is a union man back home and despises the Empire and what it stands for.

Porky

Is a joker. He gives his fellow soldiers a hard time, teasing them and creating black humour from their situation.

Fred

Is keen to prove himself and get out from under his older brother Frank's protective shadow.

Smiler

Is empathetic and understands other people. He recognises that Porky needs to joke, but also stands up for the others when Porky goes too far.

Holy

Is thoughtful but disillusioned. He has lost his faith after the horrors of the battlefield, and is sensitive to being reminded of it. However, he regains his belief in the end.

Scruffy

A farmhand. Deep-thinking and slightly slow-witted. A tad behind the 8-ball.

Mac

Wants to appear tough. He works hard to keep face, and gets angry at Porky for making jokes at his expense, and Scruffy for trying to help him mend the machine gun.

Otaki George

Is both philosophical and practical. He does what is required, but questions why he, a Maori, is fighting this British war. He highlights the superficiality of New Zealand's biculturalism.

Basset

Is determined and focused. He has committed to do his job of sustaining a phone line to the English Officers, and will do it at all costs.

Nobby

A young soldier who has lied about his age in order to enlist. We aren't to know him long as he is shot in the opening scene. Minimal lines.

Please contact Director [Curtis Painter](#) if you need clarification of the roles or have any questions at all

Rehearsals

Rehearsals will start January 2027 and run through to performances. Usually rehearsals will be 2 hours long (though closer to the show starting, longer rehearsals will be required). At this stage, rehearsals are intended for Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday afternoons but may change depending on the availability of the selected cast.

When you audition, please be aware that you will be required to attend all rehearsals unless otherwise advised. If you will be away or have commitments that will impact the rehearsal schedule, please advise Curtis Painter or Sharon Shanks.

If you are, or intend to be, in any other show during rehearsals or production time of this show, please advise the audition panel. *This includes any school productions/performance etc.*

If you are cast, you are required to become a financial member of Centre Stage Taupō Inc. Membership fees are as follows:

Adult \$45

Family \$65

Student \$30

Single Parent Family \$55

Senior \$30

Please direct any further inquiries to the Director, Curtis Painter at curtispainter8@gmail.com or the Production Manager, Sharon Shanks at chunuk@centrestagetaupo.co.nz