

SHAGGY  
MAGPIE  
SONGS  
MURRAY  
EDMOND



## RISE AND SHINE

*for Jo*

When the crazies are let out  
They go by bus to see the sea  
In ones and twos in hats and shawls

And when the time comes to depart  
The empty bus stands on the sand  
The full pale moon looks down and grins

And out of sight they sing their song  
Behind a hill beneath a tree  
Their shoes are hanging from their ears

They polish them with Kiwi Polish  
(that is the ears and not the shoes)  
Although this choice is slightly foolish

*Far away yet oh so close  
Oh giant moon oh silent sand  
We feel you stuck between our toes  
You fall upon our outstretched hands*

*Shaggy Magpie Songs* is a celebration of poetry's potential – for drama and comedy, narrative and nonsense. Presented in four parts – *Praise*, *Nonsense*, *Blues* and *Pop* – the poems are at times jazzy and rollicking, at other times crooningly melancholic. Murray Edmond is a poet of lyricism and wit, reference and pastiche, thought and memory, all of which he brings in abundance to this collection.

Edmond writes: 'Songs are poems that are incomplete without their music, so I think of these poems as all wanting to get off the page and start singing and dancing. The magpies of Aotearoa are silly (and slightly dangerous) birds who have given rise to the most profound line in the New Zealand poetry canon: *Quardle oodle ardle wardle doodle . . .* I like to think the poems are the kind of songs that magpies might sing if they were into making up words: a little bubbly, a little bitter, a little absurd, and echoing with the sound of laughter: songs with shaggy tales to tell.'

Murray Edmond was born in Hamilton in 1949. He has published five books of poems with AUP including *Fool Moon* (a finalist in the 2005 Montana New Zealand Book Awards); co-edited the influential anthology *Big Smoke: New Zealand Poems 1960–1975* (AUP, 2000); and is the editor of the peer-reviewed, online journal of poetics *Ka Mate Ka Ora: A New Zealand Journal of Poetry and Poetics*. Since the 1970s, Edmond has been active in experimental and innovative theatre companies and for over 25 years has taught theatre and drama at The University of Auckland, retiring from his position as Associate Professor of Drama at the end of 2014. A collection of his critical writings, *Then It Was Now Again: Selected Critical Writing*, has recently been released by Atuanui Press and a volume of fiction, *Strait Men and Other Tales* will be published by Steele Roberts in 2015. He works as the dramaturge for Indian Ink Theatre Company, whose latest play, *Kiss the Fish*, was awarded Best New Play of 2014 in the Chapman Tripp Awards.

## ANCIENT MARINER IN AVONDALE

*Dave Mitchell 1940–2011*

Past loan-sharks and two-dollar shops  
the ancient Chinese philosopher  
in Confucian slippers shuffles to a stop.  
Mutter mutter, mutter to those slippers:

‘One time I sailed to paradise.’  
He chops the air as if he fought a fiend.  
‘It is a place you cannot visit twice.’  
His hands inscribe the air with 明.

The bros who hang there in the street shout out:  
‘Tell us why you can’t go there twice?’  
That ancient man, bright-eyed, speaks up:  
‘Only language takes you back to Paradise.’

And shuffles on. The bros they part and let  
him pass. His arm is raised in a salute,  
his eyes are fixed upon his feet.  
Just then his trance is broken by a flute –

some busker’s riffing on the blues.  
The old man’s eyes look up and shine.  
They glitter like that thing called 明.  
He starts to shimmy on those old soft shoes.

## MISTER WAT

washed my hair and cleaned my teeth  
rinky-dinky world all right

returning to my wonky shack  
kick my boots and hang my hat

bird outside on the wattle  
first chants OM then drinks the bottle

choker wraps the skull from wind  
Buddha in the pocket sings

c'est la vie Bohémienne  
the old songs sound beyond belief

thunder by day ice by night  
a cardboard box tied with string

*that's where I keep everything*

## ROMANTICS IN SEARCH OF ADVENTURES WITH MUSIC

*The potato says these things by doing them, which is the best of languages.*

– Samuel Butler, *Erewhon*

The upright polished black piano lumbers  
along the beach by horse and cart like an elephant  
stops by the cliff snorting and trembling.  
Ropes weave through pulley anchors around

the puriri and there're even wooden skis  
tied along the bottom and a mattress  
on the keyboard side.  
The piano bellows strangled and exalted

as up she swings and the contraption  
sails aloft like a rising gull. And then it jammed.  
And hung. It'd come from London so they pulled it hard.  
Hats were flung as once again it went up

till it stuck once more. And this time would not budge.  
Wrong rope wrong place wrong day.  
Five months it stayed like that. Then like Bishop Berkeley's tree  
it fell and no one heard its music as it struck the rocks below.

**MATAKITAKI, 1822**

here was the place of our greatest slaughter  
*an old green shed in a field of grass*  
*an old green shed in a field of grass*

**MUSKET OVERCAME THE MERE**  
*bronze words on a monument*

the tanker driver wears a sign DAIRY FOR LIFE  
*the river beckons like a finger in the rain*  
*the river beckons like a finger in the rain*

**SPORTS AND RUGBY CLUB 135 years**  
*because rugby is different from a sport*

when the Queen of England drinks her tea  
*she points her little pinky oh she points her pinky*  
*and points that pinky at the likes of you and me*

*Queen's Birthday, 6 June 2011*

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