

TEDxAuckland 2014 SPEAKER BIOS

Urzila Carlson

Natural, cheeky and straight-up South African-born, New Zealand-based, Urzila Carlson, took to the stage for the first time in 2008, and has since racked up an impressive array of awards for her stand-up comedy.

Some of the awards she holds to her name include Best Female Comedian at the 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 NZ Comedy Guild Awards, as well as the coveted TV3 People's Choice Award at the 2013 New Zealand International Comedy Festival.

She has also had 4 sold-out solo seasons (2010, 2011, 2012, 2013) at the New Zealand International Comedy Festival, and was invited to Melbourne International Comedy Festival in 2013 where she had a hugely successful sell-out season and appeared on the televised Oxfam Comedy Gala and Comedy Up Late.

Urzila is one of New Zealand's funniest comedians, male or female, and is a true star on the rise.

Matt Stone

Arguably one of the hottest chefs on the Australian dining scene, it's not rare for foodie fans of Matt's to book tables 3-months in advance at Sydney's *Stanley St. Merchants* where he's head chef, or queue 100m down the street at Greenhouse, a Perth eatery which was named Restaurant of the Year in 2010.

Matt's an Aussie that's serious about food and sustainability - if it can't be sourced locally, it's not on the menu. Greenhouse, Australia's first all-recycled restaurant is a place where foodies can touch natural materials, understand where everyday fresh food comes from and taste food straight from the garden.

When Matt's not in the kitchen, he's a regular face on TV and billboards, enthraling audiences on MasterChef Australia, Iron Chef Australia, and on his own TV show, *Aussie Recipes that Rock*, a series that is aired in over 40 countries.

In 2011, Australian Gourmet Traveller named him Best New Talent.

Mike Allsop

Air New Zealand pilot, Everest mountaineer, adventurer and extreme marathon competitor, Mike is an ordinary family man proving that anybody can accomplish extraordinary things.

Life took a dramatic turn when a flight from the USA to New Zealand led to a crash-landing into the sea off the coast of Hawaii in the dark of night. The US Coast Guard colonel who eventually rescued Mike and his crew commented that nobody else had ever survived a crash landing into that part of the ocean.

As well as becoming an Air New Zealand captain, Mike harboured another ambition – to stand at the top of Everest and, true to form, he conquered this goal in an unguided expedition. He has since gone on to conquer numerous other mountains, narrowly dodged a fatal avalanche in Peru, risked being shot in Russia, and returned a replica of a stolen Yeti hand to a monastery in Nepal. He's also one of a handful of athletes who have ever run 7 marathons in 7 days on 7 continents.

Most recently, Mike returned to the Himalayas to run the world's highest marathon around Everest. This was a feat never before attempted and a milestone that was captured in the documentary film *Chasing Altitude* showing that others too can achieve their dreams and ambitions by overcoming the fear of failure and breaking each goal into a series of smaller steps.

Rebecca Mills

Working with some of the most inspiring and influential business leaders of our generation, Rebecca is a top sustainability strategist who works with the likes of Sir Richard Branson to develop global sustainable business strategy.

Leading many projects in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors globally over the last decade, this is one kiwi that is making her mark on the global stage.

A systems thinker and scientist, she finds leverage points which, when activated, result in high impact, transformative and scalable models for individuals, business, cities and entire countries.

Rebecca is one New Zealander to watch out for.

Catherine Bell

Catherine's mission in life is to inspire people to cook and eat simple, good food. A passionate foodie and Dish Magazine co-founder, Catherine is behind the Garden to Table Trust, a programme established to teach children aged 7-10 years how to grow, harvest, cook and share food.

The programme ticks all the boxes that Catherine feels are important in the world right now: caring for and about the natural world, knowing where food comes from and how to produce it, and knowing how to feed ourselves and our families.

Catherine hopes that through the Garden to Table Trust, children can go up knowing the basic skills, reduce waste, eliminate plastic and chemicals, and eat only fresh food.

John Boone

Leaving New Zealand in 1996 to go on his big OE, John returned to New Zealand with an exciting idea - to set up an interactive percussion business for the corporate events industry. In 2003 *Rhythm Interactive* was born, and it has grown to become one of the most innovative, interactive, and entertaining team building shows for the conference and events market in New Zealand.

Since then, John has travelled throughout Australasia and Asia performing for thousands of people of all ages.

In 2009, the show won the category of Best Nationwide Corporate Entertainment at the Corporate Events Guide People's Choice Awards.

Luke Nola

Adman-turned-filmmaker Luke Nola is founder of Luke Nola & Friends, an Auckland-based production company that creates and produces award-winning television formats that inspire, engage and educate kids all over the world.

One of the most enduring formats produced is *Let's Get Inventin'*, a multi-award-winning reality TV series featuring kids aged 8-14 years with amazing invention ideas competing to build their contraptions. The series is enjoyed throughout the world, screening in over 73 countries and is the first New Zealand children's TV format ever to be licensed by the BBC in the UK.

Vaughan Rowsell

With a background in software architecture, Vaughan has worked on exciting projects including Trade Me's travelbug.co.nz, has been involved in start-ups, is a director on boards, and is CEO of Vend, a leading online point-of-sale application making waves around the globe.

Vaughan came up with the business idea while riding the length of New Zealand on his motorbike. He says the system is just like internet banking as it's all online and there is nothing for users to install - and, it even works on iPads, making life a whole lot easier for retailers.

Other past projects include developing New Zealand's (and possibly the world's) first tele-voting system, a mobile ordering system for one of the world's largest suppliers of dairy goods and their "milkies", and mobile blog software for mobile devices.

Rory Steyn

After rising through the ranks of the South African police force, Rory was appointed to the Presidential Protection Unit in 1996, and was made team leader of President Nelson Mandela's personal security detail, handling the protection of the former President both nationally and internationally.

Rory watched Mandela, up close and personal, as he led the racially divided nation from the brink of bloodshed to unexpected levels of peace and stability.

What Rory learnt from the man, once seen as a terrorist by South African authorities, changed his life forever.

Rachel Callander

After losing her daughter Evie, who had a rare chromosome condition, award winning NZ Wedding and Portrait photographer Rachel Callander turned her talent to capturing the beauty and abilities of other children with 'Super Powers'.

Rachel has traveled the length and breadth of NZ meeting ordinary families being made extraordinary through the journeys their children are taking them on.

As a result of her travels, Rachel's insights and images offer a fresh understanding and language around disability. The stunning photographs of the children alongside the conversations with their parents are presented in the Super Power Baby Project, a photographic art book due for launch in August 2014.

The Super Power Baby Project is a life affirming work. It does not shy from the notion that genetic syndromes bring with them their share of challenge, grief and difficulty. The strong message is that there is much that lies beyond that. Rachel demonstrates that these children have much to teach us about themselves and ourselves, which is to be celebrated as truly exceptional.

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