



# Kid's fun the Jay way

**A** PHONE conversation with *Play School* presenter and Hollywood blockbuster bit-part actor Jay Laga'aia can be about as colourful and diverse as his body of work of the past two decades.

At no point does he have a lack of things to say, whether passionately discussing the importance of parenting, or berating the increasingly commercial nature of children's entertainment.

"We've created an era and a genre in which in order for our children to appreciate children's performances, we have to buy the T-shirt or the DVD," he said. "*Play School* has taught me I can empower parents to be the entertainer simply by saying to them 'that's an ice-cream container, toilet paper roll, tissue and a straw. You've got all this at home, so go and take the kids, fill

up the bath tub and the amount of fun will far outweigh having them sit in front of the television.'

"I'm guilty of having to use the TV to look after the kids, but you have to be proactive and create something that is organic."

The affable Polynesian – himself a father of seven children – is set to join the WA Symphony Orchestra for WASO in the Park with Jay, at Kings Park and Botanic Garden, on March 2. Designed for two to seven-year-olds, the show will be based around songs from Laga'aia's recently released CD *Come Dance and Sing*, as well as nursery rhymes.

Laga'aia started his career as an actor in 1984, notching up film credits in *Star Wars Episodes II and III* and *Never Say Die*, as well as appearances on Australian TV staples *Water Rats* and *McLeod's Daughters*. He also played the lead character Mustafa in stage musical

*The Lion King*. Laga'aia said he always made a point of keeping the same persona when on the stage and off it.

"A good acting friend of mine once said that if you try to create somebody to be Jay, then you're constantly having to upkeep that person," he said.

"The public don't like to be deceived and made fools of."

Laga'aia, who will later this year appear on *Nim's Island* alongside Jodie Foster, has set aside a week after the WASO concert to attend various Perth schools to promote the importance of communication.

"We don't talk to each other – we text and email," he said.

"We need to equip our children with the life lessons and equipment to survive – there's no point talking to Britney Spears now because that horse has well and truly bolted."

**Emilia Vranjes**



Actor Jay Laga'aia is teaming with WASO to bring music to young children.