

TE AHUREI TOI O TĀMAKI
AUCKLAND
ARTS FESTIVAL

2026

CIRCA

DUCKPOND



CIRCA
DUCKPOND

**Created by Yaron Lifschitz
& the Circa Ensemble**

Thursday 12 — Sunday 15 March 2026
Kiri Te Kanawa Theatre, Aotea Centre

Director & Stage Designer
Yaron Lifschitz

Composer & Sound Designer
Jethro Woodward

Costume Designer
Libby McDonnell

Lighting Designer
Alexander Berlage

Associate Director
Marty Evans

Voice Over Artist
Elise Greig

Hero Image
Damien Bredberg

Production Images
Pia Johnson

Performers

Alicia Maccarone

Asha Colless

Jordan Hensley-Twartz

Anisa Monsour

Luke Pearce

Georgia Pozorski

Tristan St John

Adam Strom

Rose Symons

Jamison Travers

Footage of brutal swan fight used with the kind permission of Carl Bovis.

1 hr 15 mins no interval

Duck Pond is co-commissioned by QPAC and The Arts Center at NYU Abu Dhabi, The Art House Wyong, Frankston Arts Centre, HOTA – Home of the Arts, Merrigong Theatre Company and Orange Civic Theatre.

CIRCA



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About the Company

Circa Contemporary Circus is one of the world's leading performance companies. Since 2004, from its base in Brisbane, Australia, Circa has toured the world, performing in 45+ countries to nearly two million people. Circa's works have been greeted with standing ovations, rave reviews and sold-out houses across six continents.

Circa is at the forefront of the new wave of contemporary Australian circus — pioneering how extreme physicality can create powerful and moving performances. It continues to push the boundaries of the art form, blurring the lines between movement, dance, theatre and circus. Compelled by the question "what is possible in circus?" Circa is leading the way with a diverse range of thrilling creations that "redraw the limits to which circus can aspire." (*The Age*)

Under the direction of circus visionary Yaron Lifschitz, Circa features an ensemble of exceptional, multi-skilled circus artists

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who have been a regular fixture at leading festivals and venues in New York, London, Berlin and Montreal, with seasons at Brooklyn Academy of Music, The Barbican Centre, Les Nuits de Fourvière, Chamäleon Theatre as well as major Australian Festivals.

Circa is committed to fostering the next generation of circus artists and runs Circa Academy from its studio in Brisbane. Circa also runs regular circus programs with communities throughout Queensland and around Australia.



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As a champion of live performance, Circa was the Creative Lead for the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games arts and cultural programme.

Discover more about Circa by subscribing to enews at **circa.org.au** and following the company on Facebook **@circacontemporarycircus** and Instagram **@circapresents**.

Circa acknowledges the assistance of the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its principal arts investment and advisory body and Queensland Government through Arts Queensland.

Synopsis

Prologue

Cupid appears in a flash.

ACT 1 — The palace, a dream

It is the night before the Prince's birthday. Various friends, prospective partners and assorted revellers engage in acrobatically-infused merriments. A pillow mishap abruptly ends the party. In a brief encounter the Prince meets the Ugly Duckling and, with the help of Cupid, they fall in love. Romantic duets follow.

Reality soon intrudes. It could never be that a humble duck and a magnificent prince could be together. The Duck Army comes to console the Ugly Duckling. She leaves somewhat cheerier.

ACT 2 — The lake

A lake with swans. We marvel above and below the water. In despair, the Ugly Duckling decides to throw herself into the swans. Unexpectedly she flies! She is, in fact, a swan.

The Black Swan appears. She and the White Swan fall eternally in love. Duets of love follow. The Prince, confused and devastated, implodes as the two enamoured swans head into the sunset.

ACT 3 — The theatre

We catch a glimpse of what swans are like in nature. It's almost time to go home but as we pack up the theatre, true identities are revealed and real magic — the kind that does not depend on swans, tutus or spells — is rekindled.

Yaron Lifschitz

Director



Yaron Lifschitz is a graduate of the University of New South Wales, University of Queensland, and National Institute of Dramatic Arts (NIDA), where he was the

youngest director ever accepted into its prestigious graduate director's course. Since graduating, Yaron has directed over 60 productions including large-scale events, opera, theatre, physical theatre and circus.

His work has been seen in more than 40 countries and across six continents by over 1.5 million people and has won numerous awards including six Helomann awards and the Australia Council Theatre Award. His productions have been presented at major festivals and venues around the world including Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Barbican, Les Nuits de Fourvière, Chamäleon

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and all the major Australian festivals. His film work was selected for the Berlin and Melbourne Film Festivals. He was founding Artistic Director of the Australian Museum's Theatre Unit, Head Tutor in Directing at Australian Theatre for Young People and has been a regular guest tutor in directing at NIDA.

He is currently Artistic Director and CEO of Circa, and was Creative Director of Festival 2018: the arts and cultural programme of the 21st Commonwealth Games.

Jethro Woodward

Composer & Sound Designer



Jethro Woodward is a Melbourne-based composer, musical director, arranger, musician and sound designer recognised for his expansive and highly layered

film, theatre and dance scores. A multi-Green Room Award winner and Helomann nominee, he has worked with some of Australia's leading major and independent companies including Malthouse Theatre Company, Melbourne Theatre Company, Sydney Theatre Company, Belvoir, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Opera Victoria, Chamber Made Opera, Back to Back, Chunky Move, Lucy Guerin, Australian Dance Theatre, Aphids, Stuck Pigs Squealing, Rawcus, Kage and more.

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A composition graduate from the Victorian College of the Arts, Jethro draws upon his detailed understanding of contemporary music and its uses in live performance, including innovative uses of technology, combining live instrumentation with prerecorded, electronic, musical and sound elements into a seamless flexible and responsive score.

Jethro regularly tours his work internationally and has won Green Room Awards for his work on *The Bloody Chamber* (Malthouse Theatre), *Moth* (Malthouse Theatre/Arena Theatre), *Goodbye Vaudeville Charlie Mudd* (Malthouse Theatre/Arena Theatre) and *Irony Is Not Enough* (Fragment 31). As a guitarist and singer, he regularly performs with Meow Meow and Paul Capsis, and has been a member of the band Cordarzine over the past 15 years. He most recently was the composer of *RAPTURE* at Sydney Festival 2021, directed by Michael Kantor and starring Paul Capsis and iOTA.

Libby McDonnell

Costume Designer



Libby McDonnell

is a designer and choreographer and she is currently Head of Design at Circa. Libby works in diverse genres and forms. At the heart of her work

is people and movement.

Libby has a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours) In Visual Art from Queensland College of Art, Griffith University and an Associate Degree in Dance from Queensland University of Technology. Her professional career has included performing and making independent dance work, as an Artistic Director of Ballet Theatre of Queensland and Choreographer for Blue Roo Theatre Company. For 11 years Libby has worked with the team at Circa to imagine, develop and deliver their productions locally, nationally and

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internationally. During her time at Circa she has designed costumes for over 30 productions, co-directed three main stage productions and led many of the company's engagement projects including the pilot of the Circability program.

Libby is based in Brisbane with her family.

Alexander Berlage

Lighting Designer



Alexander Berlage

is an award-winning director and lighting designer. He is co-artistic director of the Old Fitz Theatre. Alexander has won the Sydney Theatre Award

Best Direction of a Musical for the past two years in a row for *American Psycho* and *Cry-Baby* at Hayes Theatre Co.

As a lighting designer, Alexander has worked for Sydney Theatre Company, Opera Queensland, Circa, Birmingham Royal Ballet, Sydney Chamber Opera, Sydney Dance Company, Griffin Theatre, Ensemble Theatre, Hayes Theatre Co., Australian Theatre for Young People, and Redline Productions.

His smash-hit, sold-out production of *American Psycho* won nine Sydney Theatre Awards including Best Direction of a

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Musical, Best Production of a Musical, and Best Lighting Design of an Independent Production and more.

Alexander's production of *Gloria* was nominated for two Sydney Theatre Awards. Alexander's production of *Cry-Baby* received rave reviews, sold out and won four Sydney Theatre Awards including Best Direction of a Musical, and Best Production of a Musical. The same year, his productions of *There Will Be a Climax*, *Home Invasion* and *Cry-Baby* received a combined total of 12 Sydney Theatre Award nominations. For *There Will Be a Climax*, Alexander was nominated for Best Direction of an Independent Production and Best Independent Production.

Alexander's directing work includes *Diary of One Who Disappeared*, *Future Remains* (Sydney Festival); *Resonant Bodies* (Sydney Chamber Opera); *Young Frankenstein*, *American Psycho*, *Cry-Baby* (Hayes Theatre

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Co.); *Gloria* (Outhouse Theatre Co); *There Will Be a Climax* (Redline Productions/NIDA); *Home Invasion* (An Assorted Few/Old 505); and *The Van De Maar Papers* (An Assorted Few/PACT).

Alexander holds a Bachelor of Dramatic Art (Production) and a Master of Fine Art (Directing) from the National Institute for Dramatic Art, Sydney. In 2019, Alexander was awarded a Mike Walsh Fellowship.



Alicia Maccarone

Performer



Alicia Maccarone

discovered the world of circus at the early age of 13 through Flipside Youth Circus in Brisbane. At 15, Alicia left home to attend the Flying Fruit Fly

Circus based in Albury. After spending a year training and performing with Fruit Flies, Alicia relocated back to Brisbane and joined Chelsea McGuffin & Co in 2020. Since then, she's performed and toured with The 7 Fingers, Cirque Electrique and Circa.

Asha Colless

Performer



Growing up in Wollongong, **Asha Colless** was introduced to circus at the age of six, taking classes at Circus Monoxide.

Being in the air and flipping herself around quickly became her favourite thing to do, and this is where her love of performing came alive. At 19 she decided to take her training further and Study at the National Institute of Circus Arts (NICA), specialising in hula hoops and silks. Asha also loves swimming at the beach, being in nature and a good book.

Jordan Hensley-Twartz

Performer



Jordan Hensley-Twartz discovered his passion for circus arts when he enrolled in classes at Cirkidz youth circus in his hometown of Adelaide, South Australia. Here, he

found a medium that allowed him to express his love of movement, play, and storytelling. This led him to study at the National Institute of Circus Arts where he graduated in 2018 with a Bachelors of Circus Arts. Since graduating he has worked as a diaboloist and group acrobat for several different companies each time enjoying the different challenges they present.

Anisa Monsour

Performer



From a very young age **Anisa Monsour** preferred spending time with her legs in the air rather than the right way around. After starting acrobatics at dance school, Anisa,

living in Brisbane, saw a show from Circa and was instantly inspired and determined to enrol in the Circa youth classes. Training as a part of Circa's Youth Performance program, Anisa fostered her passion for circus and performing, aspiring towards a career in circus. Anisa was given the opportunity to be the second ever member of the Circa Fast Track Programme, designed for young and aspiring performers within Circa.

Right after finishing high school, Anisa joined the Circa Ensemble starting in 2025 and is excited to where this next adventure will bring her. Outside of circus Anisa loves reading and making art.

Luke Pearce

Performer



Springboarding from the UK to Australia, **Luke Pearce** brought with him a decade of gymnastics and acrobatic experience, including the career highlight of competing

at the European Championships in 2012. Following his gymnastics "retirement," Luke spent five years working alongside athletes and performers as a physiotherapist in the UK, where he discovered circus as a new outlet for his acrobatic skills and creative drive. What began as a curiosity quickly became a passion, and he developed into a self-taught circus artist specialising in hand-to-hand, banquine, group acrobatics, and handstands. In 2022, Luke left his academic career to pursue life as a full-time professional artist, spending a year at sea then leading to his most recent

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engagement with Circa in 2024. Luke has since performed across four continents, debuting in several of Circa's world-premiere creations and appearing in iconic venues such as the Sydney Opera House.

Beyond the stage, Luke's passions include travelling vast distances by bike and hiking the highest peaks he can find.



Georgia Pozorski

Performer

Born and raised in Sydney, **Georgia Pozorski** started dancing and

performing in her backyard at the age of five. She trained in dance until the age of 21, then pivoted and started a full-time career as an Occupational Therapist. While looking for something physical to do after work, she stumbled into a partner acrobatics class and fell in love with flying. She trained partner acrobatics alongside acrobats from Gravity & Other Myths in Adelaide, then moved to Melbourne to complete the Bachelor of Circus Arts at the National Institute of Circus Arts. Here, she specialised in trio acrobatics as a flyer, aerial straps, and Chinese pole. During her studies, Georgia also performed in Australia and internationally with Gravity & Other Myths.

When she's not in the air or upside down, Georgia unwinds by drawing, playing video games, and enjoying a good cup of tea.

Tristan St John

Performer



Tristan St John

laughs a lot, produces music and people say he doesn't have an off switch. Since the backyard trampoline, Tristan has always wanted to fly!

Teeterboard and trampolining were a part of his upbringing since the age of 10; not a spare second was spent off it! During the last 11 years, he has competed at national trampoline competitions, performed Teeterboard, Acrobatics and Chinese Pole to multiple audiences and has completed a Bachelor of Circus Arts.

Adam Strom

Performer



Adam Strom started circus classes at the age of six, in the hopes of becoming a superhero. He trained in acrobatics, aerials and juggling for 11 years with Flipside

Circus, while also developing his skills in dance, music and theatre. In 2014, Adam was accepted into the Quebec Circus School in Canada, where he began an intense and intimate relationship with his German wheel. Since his three years of circus school, he has created and performed in myriad productions around the world, including *Midnight Circus, Crépuscule* by Flip Fabrique, and *La Galerie* by Machine de Cirque. He likes performing so much that his superhero career is going to have to wait.

Rose Symons

Performer



Rose Symons has always been happier moving around than sitting still. After finishing high school, she had intended to study maths and science but decided

instead to pursue her love of circus.

Rose stepped into the world of circus as a youth performance troupe member at Circus Oz. She has since worked with Na Djinang Circus and One Fell Swoop Circus and graduated in 2024 from the National Institute of Circus Arts. Focussing on aerial straps, hand balancing and acrobatics, Rose loves patterns, precision and detail.

Outside of circus, Rose can be found climbing mountains or getting lost in time at her sewing machine.

Jamison Travers

Performer



Growing up in Melbourne, **Jamison Travers** was never one to sit still. After discovering circus at eight, he never looked back, training at Fly Factory before earning

his Bachelor of Circus Arts from the National Institute of Circus Arts.

Specialising in rope, straps, and teeterboard, Jamison brings strength, precision, and fearless energy to the stage. Happily throwing himself, and others around creating bold, dynamic performance.



Te Ahurei Toi o Tāmaki Auckland Arts Festival is a melting pot of shared experiences, whakaaro, live entertainment and kōrero every March.

Ko ngā mahinga toi whānui me te ahurea ki Tāmaki Makaurau o nāianei te pūmanawa o te Ahurei.

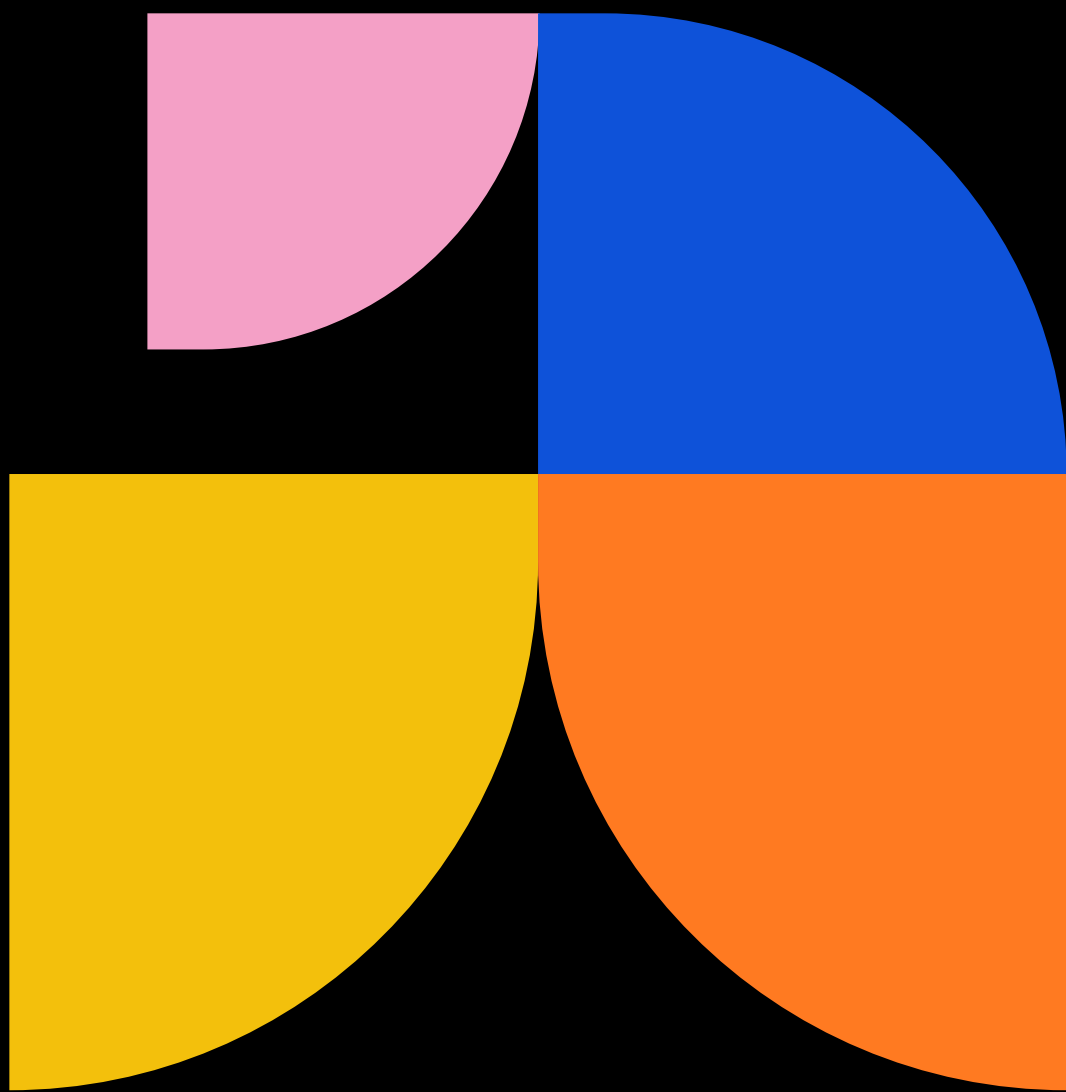
The Festival's lifeblood is arts and culture in contemporary Tāmaki Makaurau. We care deeply about celebrating artists and their kaupapa, serving the creatives and communities behind the works we present, honouring te reo and te ao Māori in all that we do, and contributing to a better city and society. That's us. Koia pū!

Every March you'll see a big reunion with our city's arts community alongside our mahi towards better accessibility and education opportunities for our audiences. We're also passionate about the works we curate and our collaboration with the many people who make those experiences happen. We strive to celebrate with generosity; human connection and manaakitanga will always be at the heart of what we stand for.

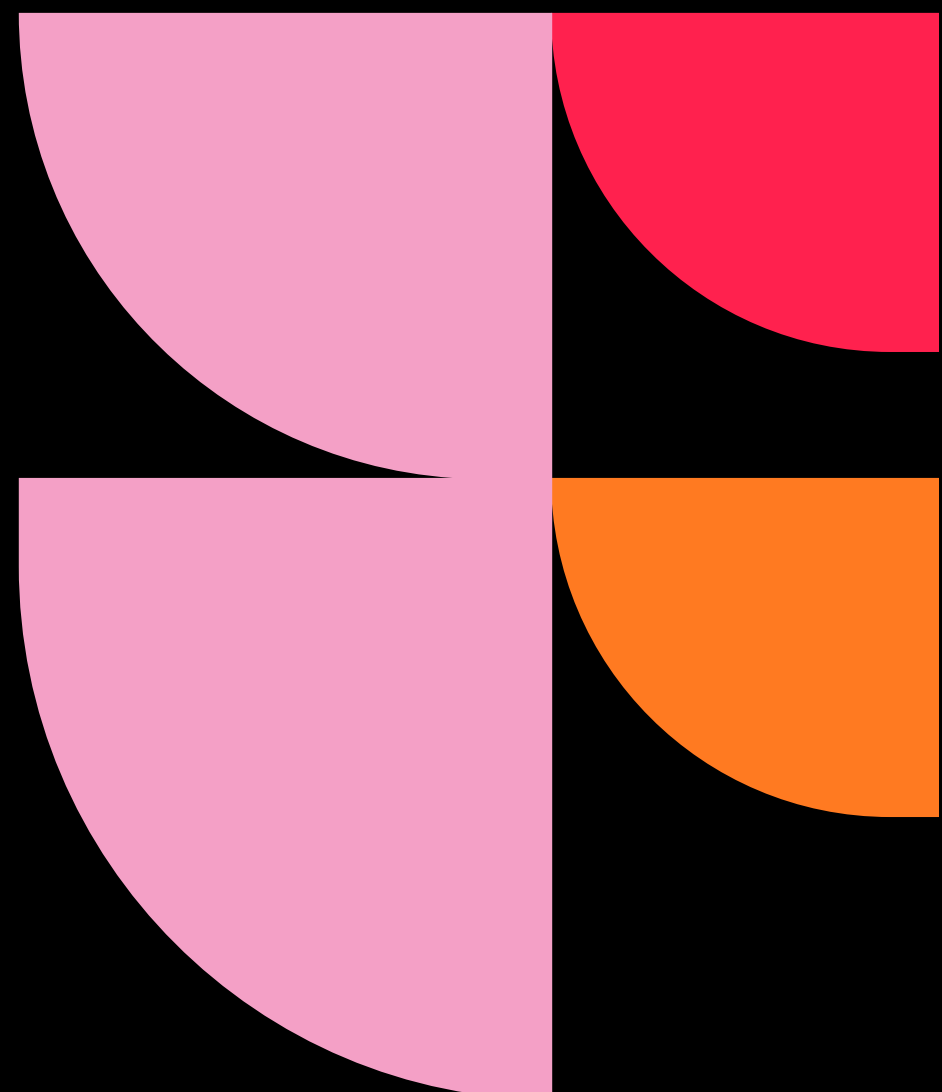
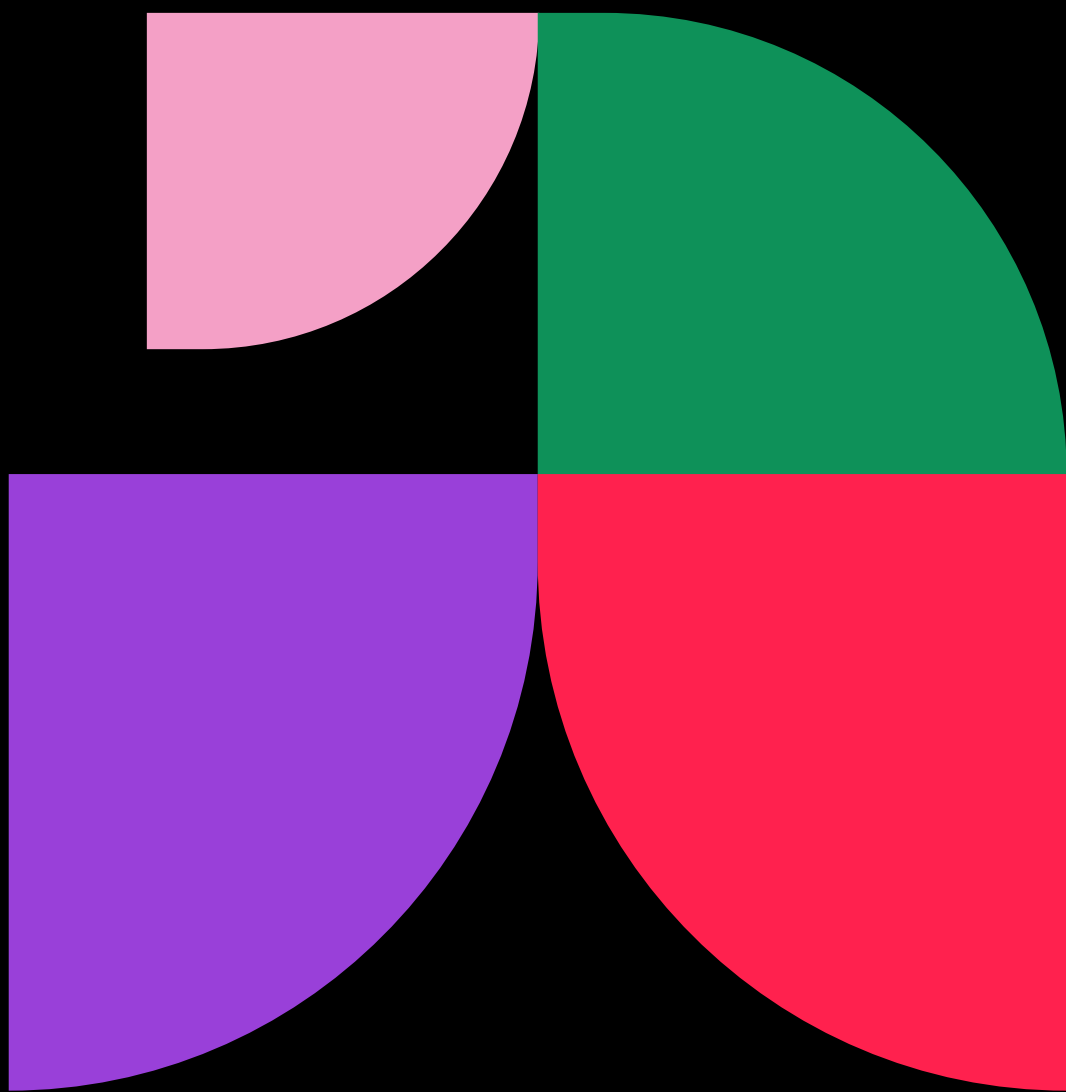
When we're on, we're on a mission to make Auckland an amazing place to socialise and be entertained in. Whether you're discovering the city for the first time or rekindling your love for its hidden gems, we truly believe that the Festival has something for everyone.

18 unforgettable days and nights.

For the ❤️ of TĀMAKI MAKĀURAU.



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AUCKLAND ARTS FESTIVAL

5—22 o Māehe • March 2026

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