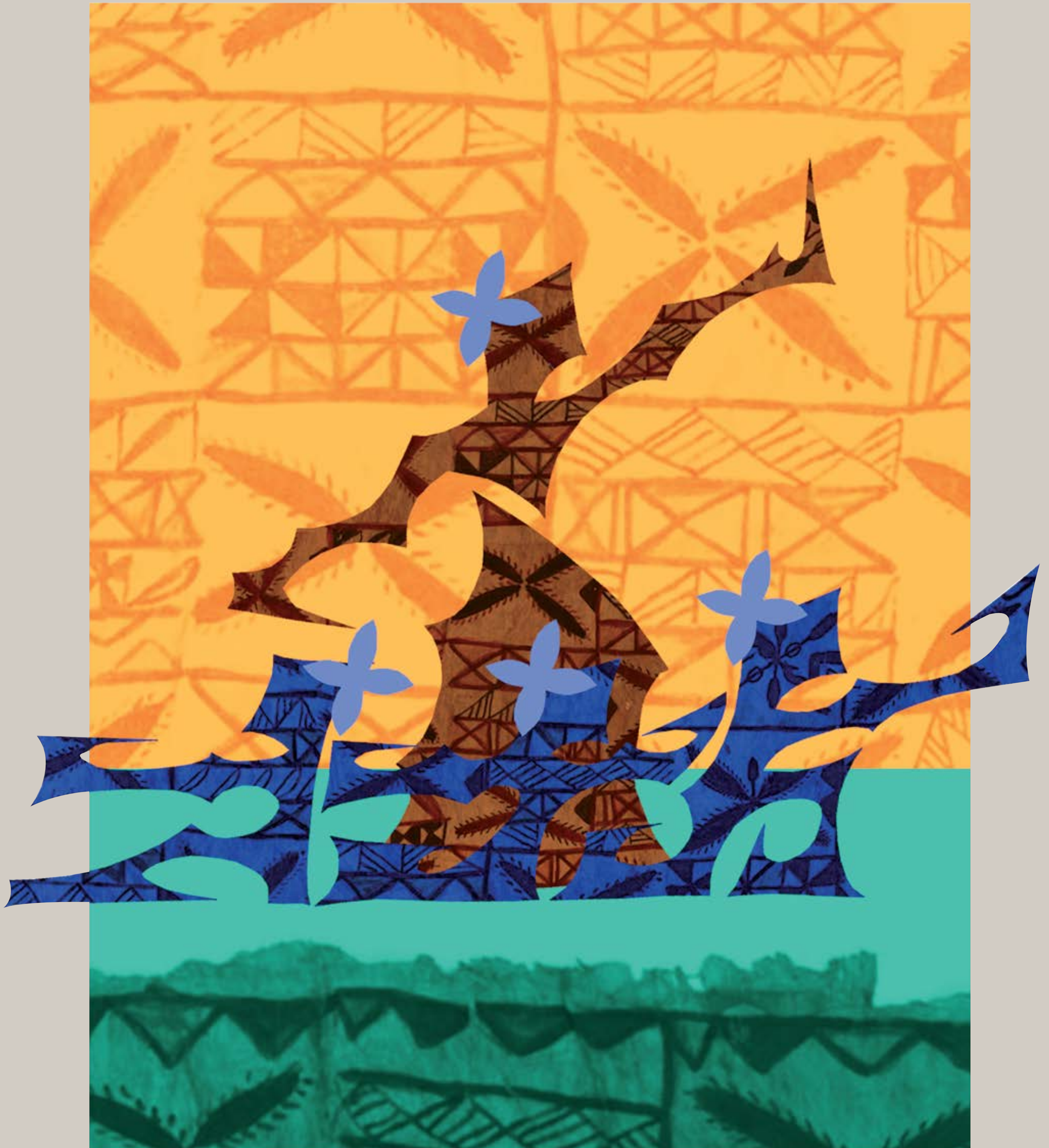


PACIFIC

DANCE FESTIVAL 2026



Programme

pacificdance.org.nz

Director's Welcome



Pacific Greetings. Welcome to the 2026 Pacific Dance Festival.

As we open the festival I want to acknowledge Samoa Language Week. This week we celebrate one of the many languages spoken in Aotearoa by the people of the Moana Nui A Kiwa who call Aotearoa 'home'. This year's festival represents many of the Pacific cultures who dance, sing and chant through their dance language in order to keep our Pacific culture alive while contributing to the cultural landscape.

As a Charitable Trust we are dedicated to sharing our

culture with all of Aotearoa and wish to thank all the artists who have made this festival possible.

Thank you for supporting your festival and our mission to 'enrich our lives through Pacific dance.'

**Faafetai tele lava,
Nga mihi nui,**

Iosefa Enari MNZM

Pacific Islands Dance Fono

Pacific Islands Dance Fono Trust (PIDF) is the governing body of Pacific Dance New Zealand (PDNZ). We are a dance development organisation that aims to foster, support and develop the Pacific dance sector in New Zealand and abroad.

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PACIFIC

DANCE FESTIVAL 2026

Overview

Activation

Unitec Dance Students
Sunday 31 May, 12pm
Auckland War Memorial
Museum, South Atrium -
Te Ao Mārama

Samoan Language Week 1 Workshop One

Charlene TeDrow & Rosanna
Raymond

Thursday 4 June
10.30am-3pm

Studio 1, Toi Tu, Ponsonby

Samoan Language Week 1 Workshop Two

Charlene TeDrow & Rosanna
Raymond

Friday 5 June
4.30pm-8.30pm

Te Oro, Glen Innes

Pacific Dance Festival Launch

Friday 5 June, 7.30pm
Mangere Arts Centre

Call to Wallis

by Justin Haiu

Friday 5 June, 8pm

Saturday 6 June, 8pm
Mangere Arts Centre

Moana Show

6 works by UNITEC
& NZ School of Dance

Tuesday 9 June, 8pm
Mangere Arts Centre

Triple Bill

Kamata(a)ga

by Kapieri Samisoni
& Antonio Matagi

We came from the sea

by Julia Mageau-Gray

Vignette of the Frigate

by Viliamu Yandall

Wednesday 10 June, 8pm

Mangere Arts Centre

The Voices of our Ancestors

by Marewan Kiribati Youth

Friday 12 June, 8pm

Mangere Arts Centre

Shifting Centre Workshop

Saturday 13 June

1pm-2pm

Mangere Arts Centre

The Circle

by Shifting Centre

Monday 15 June, 8pm

Tuesday 16 June, 8pm

Mangere Arts Centre

Call to Wallis

by Justin Haiu

Sunday 12 July, 6pm

Turner Centre Te Puawai
Kerikeri, Northland

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For festival enquiries, please contact
Joanna Bourke at Pacific Dance Festival
021 356 515 or email
marketing@pacificdance.co.nz

01

Call to Wallis

by Justin Haiu

Friday 5 June, 8pm

Saturday 6 June, 8pm

Mangere Arts Centre

Call to Wallis is a contemporary dance-theatre piece by Justin Haiu that explores cultural identity, heritage, and personal roots through movement, storytelling, and music.

The work follows a loosely autobiographical journey of a Pacific Island-born individual raised in Aotearoa who feels a pull toward their ancestral homeland - Wallis Island. Through a series of vivid, often playful scenes, the piece builds toward a return to cultural origins. Stylistically, the piece mixes hip-hop, contemporary dance, Pacific movement traditions, live drumming, and theatrical elements, reflecting the hybrid identity it portrays.

Cast:

Eric Ripley

Aloali'i Tapu

Aisea Latu

Tupua Tigafua

Li'amānaia Tupe Lualua

Petronilla Maletina

Su'a-Woo Ching

Musician:

Isitolo Alesana

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02





Moana Show

6 works by NZ School of Dance
& Unitec Dance

Tuesday 9 June, 8pm
Mangere Arts Centre

The *Moana Showcase* is a powerful and essential platform for the Pacific and Māori students of *Unitec Dance* and *The New Zealand School of Dance*. Each year, the festival offers an open, generous invitation - an empty stage waiting to be filled with the imagination, ambition, curiosity, and the courage of emerging artists.

Our students step into that space boldly. They create original choreography, collaborate with one another, and perform new works crafted by respected professional practitioners. *The Moana Showcase* brings our two schools together on one stage – an opportunity to learn, to exchange, and to be inspired by each other’s artistry. In a world marked by uncertainty and global

unrest, dance matters. The act of moving, creating, collaborating, and speaking through the body is a declaration of presence and purpose. It is connection. It is resistance. It is joy.

Tonight, we dance for you – with pride, with gratitude, and with heart.

Nga mihi nui, and enjoy the performance.

Katie Burton &
Paula Steeds-Huston

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03



The Heilala in the Concrete Garden

'Isope 'Akau'ola
NZ School of Dance

Inspired by the great Māori and Pasifika bands of the 60s and 70s, *The Heilala in the Concrete Garden* explores what it means to uphold the mana of the moana within an urban landscape.

Choreographers:

'Isope 'Akau'ola in collaboration with dancers

Dancers:

Millie Carey
Miere Christensen-White
Mia Raeli
Amelia Tapsell

Image:

NZSD contemporary dance students Millie Carey, Amelia Tapsell, Miere Christensen-White, Mia Raeli

Photo:

Stephen A'Court

05

Moana Show



Pupa

by Mya Fisher (Te Āti Awa)
Unitec Dance

Pupa investigates how the self is destabilised and reformed through embodied change, exploring growth and evolution through transformation and the conversation between body and other. Existing within a shifting physical landscape, the performers move through states of resistance and adaptation as identities continuously unravel and rebuild. Through the negotiation between bodies, the work considers how transformation can reshape perception, behaviour and physical presence, creating space for new ways of existing to emerge. Rather than presenting change as linear or resolved, *'Pupa'* embraces instability and uncertainty as necessary parts of becoming.

Mya Fisher (Te Āti Awa) is a Pākehā/Māori emerging dance artist from Ōtautahi, now based in Tāmaki Makaurau, and is currently completing a Bachelor of Performing and Screen Arts, majoring in Contemporary Dance at Unitec. She is passionate about developing her choreographic practice, creating physically immersive work that investigates body-material relations, while contributing to the future of contemporary dance in Aotearoa.

Dancers:

Mikah BatachEl
Wiseman Zekaria Mataiti

Image:

Pupa, Unitec

Credit:

Jinki Cambronero

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To Stand, and Stand Again (Forever)

by Mia Raeli
NZ School of Dance

Meditating on the rain that swims in my skin and on the bark of the eucalypt. Becoming small again as I gaze from this mountain to the valley, to the sea. Kind sounds of curiosity and kinship. Learning this land.

Dancers:

Millie Carey
Miere Christensen-White
Amelia Tapsell with Mia Raeli



NZSD contemporary dance students Mia Raeli, Millie Carey, Miere Christensen-White & Amelia Tapsell

Photo by Stephen A'Court

Moana Show

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Moana Show



Whip Snap

by Praise Tupa'i & Nikita Black
Unitec Dance

Two vocabularies collide, minds sync, and suddenly the room speaks one language. Bodies slip into harmony, teasing the line between unity and illusion. Are we together... or faking it brilliantly?

Nikita Black and ***Praise Tupa'i*** are emerging dance artists from Tāmaki Makaurau, currently in their second year of study at Unitec Dance. They have a background in contemporary, commercial and street dance. Nikita and Praise are interested in exploring and creating works that are thought provoking and reflective of everyday life and the world around them.

Choreographers & Dancers:

Praise Tupa'i
Nikita Black

Image:

Whip Snap Unitec

Credit:

Jinki Cambroner

07

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NZSD contemporary dance student
Miere Christensen-White

Photo by Stephen A'Court

In the Meantime

Choreographed by
Amelia Tapsell
NZ School of Dance

Exploring the frustration of being stuck waiting. It plays on the constant urge to check the time while also trying to resist it and let go. The movement sits in that tension, feeling impatient, restless and slightly on edge, figuring out what it means to just wait it out.

Dancer:
Amelia Tapsell

Followed by,

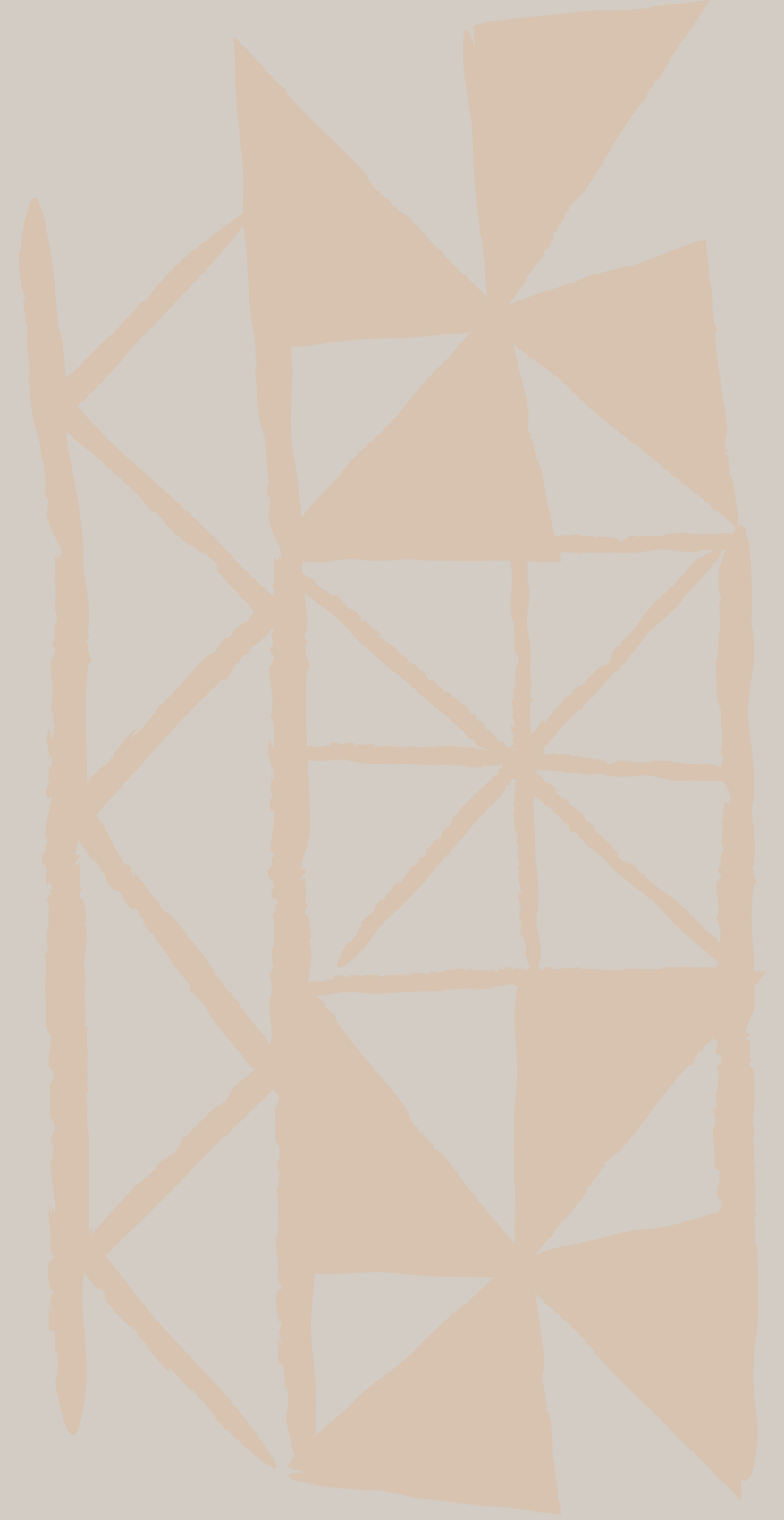
Nature of Dreams

Choreographed by
Millie Carey
NZ School of Dance

The absurd nature of dreams and how they are always changing. My movement quality is driven by the abrupt switches in music and stimulus.

Dancer:
Millie Carey

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099

Moana Show



Nothing Leaves the Parade

by Wiseman Zekaria Mataiti
Unitec Dance

At what point does a parade stop being just a parade?

In ***Nothing Leaves the Parade***, bodies pull up, shift, and take space inside a moving system where spectacle, Vā and collective memory continuously remixes itself.

Driven by live DJing, recurring siren calls, and a physical language rooted in South Auckland and Pasifika lived experience, the work unfolds as an environment rather than an event.

Here, humour cuts through tension and performance sits beside excess. This parade becomes something contagious: reshaping itself as it moves.

Nothing here settles. Nothing really dips out.

Because once that signal lands, the parade has already begun.

Nothing Leaves the Parade**Choreographer:**

Wiseman Zekaria Mataiti

Rehearsal Support:

Tai'ulagi Paulalei Hogue

Dancers:

Mya Fisher

Devonté Tama'ali'i

Praise Tupa'i

Nikita Black

Madison Tipene-Thomas

Jaelin Le La'Ulu

Jelah Bryce

Jireh Taotua

Gabriel Barlow Brown

Zaria Uluakiola,

Wiseman Zekaria Mataiti

Tai'ulagi Paulalei Hogue

Music:

Original composition by Devonté Tama'ali'i

Image:

Nothing Leaves the Parade, Unitec

Credit:

Jinki Cambronero

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Triple Bill

Kamata(a)ga

We Came From the Sea Vignette of the Frigate

Wednesday 10 June, 8pm
Mangere Arts Centre

Kamata(a)ga

by Kapieri Samisoni
& Antonio Matagi

Kamata(a)ga is drawn from the Rotuman Kamataga and Niuean Kamataaga, both meaning 'Beginning'.

It is a contemporary Pacific dance work that honours the beauty of origins, connection and renewal.

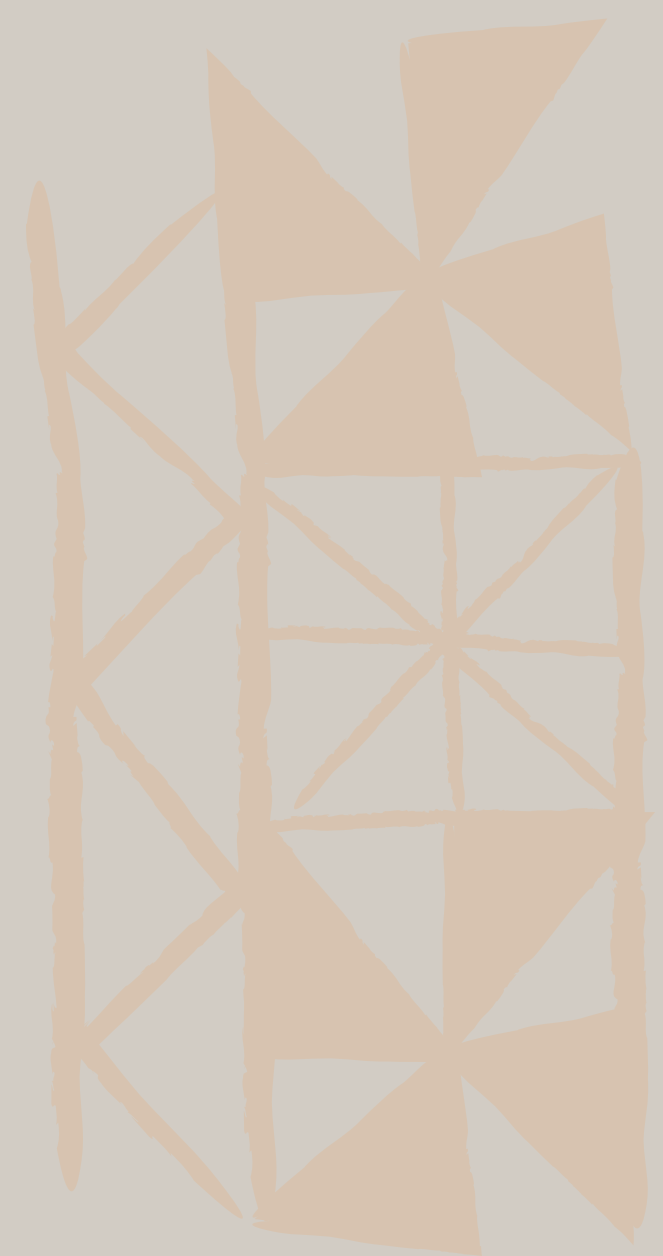
It weaves together the lived experiences, traditions and creative voices of two choreographers, merging their identities into a unified expression. *Kamata(a)ga* is both a beginning and a continuation.

Cast:

Kapieri Samisoni
Antonio Matagi

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12





Triple Bill

We Came From The Sea

by Julia Mageau Gray

An intergenerational conversation around memory, knowledge and skin.

We Came From The Sea, bringing together ***Te Wehi Kore Karena Haraki Akuhata Grant-Koria*** and ***Mierewai Grant-Koria***, in collaboration with ***Julia Mageau Gray***.

This sharing evokes Oceanic connections and the linguistic, visual, and physical languages Pacific peoples share.

A poignant reminder that our bodies are the physical representation of our many ancestors.

Cast:

Karena Grant-Koria, Mierewai Grant-Koria, of Turongo Collective, Salevasa Gray & Julia Mageau Gray of Melanesian Marks

Image:

We came from the Sea

Credit:

Julia Mageau Gray

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Vignette of the frigate

by Viliamu Yandall

Vignette of the Frigate [bird]

explores the migration of Pacific Peoples, focusing on Sāmoan migration experiences and the realities that are faced in a Western world by the diasporic communities. Inspired by the lived migration experience of the choreographer's grandmother, who moved to New Zealand in the 1970s in search of opportunities before eventually returning home to the islands, the work aims to critique and reflect on the nuances behind 'success' and whether these countries abroad can truly be the sought-after 'land of milk and honey'.

The duality of gain and loss that can be experienced is something that this work aims to explore. Pacific peoples move in hopes of finding opportunities, growth and stability. However it also allows room for a subconscious forsaking of cultural identity that won't be realised until it's too late.

Language can be lost, traditions can be reshaped, and the connections to the fa'asamoa can be weakened as distance from the homeland only grows greater with time.

Overall, '***Vignette of the Frigate [bird]***' explores what can be lost within pursuits of Western ideals of success, and how these shifts and changes echo throughout generations. It reflects on the constantly evolving identities of younger members within the diaspora, and how they have to negotiate the underlying tension between their inherited cultural roots amongst the pressures of assimilation. A negotiation between heritage and change.

Cast:

Viliamu Yandall
Cate Benson
Courtney Blair-Lehmann
Kerah Rapake McLean-Duffy
Grace Moon
Seraphina Faith Su'a
PJ Tauti
Princess Veloso
Ngamarama Tuariki

This work is developed through the Pacific Dance Choreographic Lab programme.



The Voices of our Ancestors by Marewen Kiribati Youth

Friday 12 June, 8pm
Mangere Arts Centre

A vibrant, soul-stirring celebration of Kiribati identity, pride, and intergenerational storytelling. *The Voices of Our Ancestors* brings the raw power of Kiribati movement, song, and theatre to the stage — honouring the past while uplifting the next generation. Led by the dynamic *Marewen Kiribati Youth* from South Auckland, this performance weaves together traditional dance, contemporary expression, and cultural ceremony. It's a heartfelt tribute to the stories carried by our elders, and a reminder that legacy lives on through our young people. Expect bold

choreography, striking visuals, and the unmistakable spirit of Kiribati culture — joyful, proud, and deeply moving.

Choreographer:

Timoara Tonganibeia

Performers:

Marewen Kiribati Youth

This work is developed through the Pacific Dance Choreographic Lab programme.

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The Circle

by Shifting Centre

Monday 15 June, 8pm

Tuesday 16 June, 8pm

Mangere Arts Centre

The Circle is a dance theatre work set in an alternate present, following a community of characters as they journey through their shared world in search of Utopia. This work delves into themes of support and celebration, understanding that true liberation is not only found in standing together through struggle but also in actively celebrating each other's successes.

As the work unfolds, the characters are challenged to confront the complexities of what support really means, recognising that it takes on many different forms for different people.

Director:

Sefa Tunupopo
Vaiala, Puipa'a (Samoa)

Producer:

Tamia Filipo
Fakaofu (Tokelau)

Lighting Design:

Isadora Lao

Sound Design:

Grayson Ziogas
Montell Nickel
Levi Siaosi

Marketing & Media:

Havea Latu

Cast:

Kaysee Savali
Faleula, Nofoali'i, Vailima (Samoa)
Oto Lupo
Gagaifolevao Lefaga, Fasito'otai
(Samoa & Niue)
Montell Nickel
Vaipuna, Tuana'i (Samoa)
Levi Siaosi
Faleasi'u (Samoa)
Kōwhai Deuchars
Ngāti Kahungunu (Aotearoa)
Tamia Filipo
Fakaofu (Tokelau)

Image:

The_Circle_Hero Image Full

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Acknowledgements

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Te Oro Arts Centre,
UNITEC, New Zealand School of Dance,
Auckland War Memorial Museum.

