

**HAMILTON TOI
ARTS ORA KI
FESTIVAL KIRIKIRIRI**



20 FEB — 1 MAR 2026

THANK YOU TO OUR WONDERFUL FUNDERS & SPONSORS

MAJOR FUNDERS/SPONSORS



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COVER ARTWORK

Performer: Monika Rose (Empress Stilt Dance) **Photographer:** Mark Hamilton
Creative Direction: KingSt Advertising

MAYORAL WELCOME

TEENAA KOUTOU

Welcome to everyone attending our spectacular 2026 Hamilton Arts Festival Toi Ora ki Kirikiriroa!

As always, it is wonderful to see our city come alive with the magic of the arts.

Hamilton City Council remains a proud partner of this iconic festival, which continues to grow from strength to strength. Now New Zealand's largest regional arts festival, it engages more than 800 performers each year, and offers an inspiring range of award-winning drama, musical theatre, dance, comedy, Toi Maaori, contemporary and classical music, for all to enjoy.

Just this year, Air New Zealand joined the Festival as an in-kind supporter, which is a testament to the Festival's reputation and reach.

My sincere thanks go to the Hamilton Gardens Summer Festival Foundation, Festival Director Geoff Turkington, generous funders, volunteers, and of course the talented artists and performers who make this festival possible.

If you are new to Hamilton, please take the opportunity to explore our wonderful city, from the award-winning Hamilton Gardens, Te Whare Taonga o Waikato Museum & Gallery and Hamilton Zoo, to our vibrant eateries, street art, fabulous green spaces and river walks.

Enjoy your time and have a memorable stay in our city. I look forward to seeing you out and about at the Festival!



Tim Macindoe
Mayor of Hamilton

NAU MAI, HAERE MAI KI TE TOI ORA KI KIRIKIROA 2026

Welcome to the Hamilton Arts Festival Toi Ora ki Kirikiriroa 2026

On behalf of the Hamilton Gardens Summer Festival Foundation, we are delighted to welcome you back to the largest and most magical arts festivals in regional Aotearoa New Zealand!

We know that for many, life continues to be challenging, which is why this year's theme — joy — feels more important than ever. Our 2026 programme has been lovingly crafted to celebrate all that is (mostly) bright and positive within our community — a vibrant, uplifting reminder of the power of connection, creativity, and shared experience.

Across 10 days and nights, you'll find music, theatre, dance, comedy, cabaret and immersive experiences that bring people together in a celebration of humanity. It's about laughter, movement, storytelling and wonder - moments that allow us to pause, smile, and rediscover what makes life beautiful.

We're especially proud this year to present international acts of scale alongside some of Aotearoa's most exciting artists and storytellers - ensuring that while we open our arms to the world, we continue to champion our own voices and stories.

None of this would be possible without the incredible generosity of our funders, sponsors, patrons, and the more than 100 volunteers who give their time, skill and heart to make this Festival possible. We extend our deepest thanks to Hamilton City Council, WEL Energy Trust, Grassroots Trust, the Glenice & John Gallagher Foundation, Creative New Zealand, Trust Waikato, Hamilton Gardens, and our many community and corporate partners for their unwavering support.

We also welcome aboard to the Festival whaanau Air NZ and Novotel Hamilton Tainui, whose support has opened up a new world of possibilities for the Festival.

So, come and celebrate with us. Let's fill the gardens - and our hearts - with joy!

Arohanui,



Chris Williams
Chair



Geoff Turkington
Director

FESTIVAL INFO

HOW TO BOOK

Book online at:

hamiltonartsfestival.co.nz or
eventfinda.co.nz

Book in person at:

**Hamilton Gardens
Gallagher Visitor Centre
10am to 6pm Daily**

During the Festival (20 Feb – 1 Mar, 2026) tickets can also be purchased from The Gallagher Visitor Centre at the Hamilton Gardens.

Please note that while booking fees are included in the advertised price, these may vary across booking channels. Additional delivery fees and/or credit card fees will apply.

Accepted payment types include EFTPOS, Visa and Mastercard (including payWave).

MULTI-BUY DISCOUNT

GET 15% OFF when you buy General Admission tickets to three or more shows in one purchase. Most shows are included. Please refer to individual show details to confirm eligibility.

Please note that all events are strictly no BYO alcohol, this includes 0% alcohol. Due to liquor licensing regulations, we are required to check all bags on arrival.

Wet Weather

Backup venues are in place for most events and will be used in the case of severe or unsafe weather conditions. Light rain or occasional showers are not expected to affect performances.

Please check the event page on our website or our social media channels for the latest weather updates. As many Festival events take place outdoors, we encourage you to come prepared for all weather conditions.

Sound Bleed

Some performances may experience a degree of sound bleed from other Festival events taking place nearby.

While we do our best to mitigate this, in some cases it is unavoidable in an outdoor setting and we can not issue refunds to audience members for sound bleed.

Seating

All shows are seated unless BYO seating is indicated. Please refer to specific shows for more information.

Where BYO seating is required, we ask that you respect other audience members by bringing blankets or low festival seating so as not to block anyone's views.

Instagram: @hamartsfestival
Facebook: @HAFTOKK

SUPPORT THE ARTS

We need your help to keep our Festival alive!

Your vision and generosity will help secure the future of Waikato's premier annual arts event.



**SCAN
TO BECOME
A PATRON**

BECOME A FESTIVAL PATRON

If you want to support the arts in Hamilton and have fun doing it, become a 'friend with benefits'.

In appreciation of your generosity, patrons will receive exclusive benefits, invitations to VIP events, and special recognition in our Festival programme.

A warm thank you to our generous patrons and donors:

<i>Claire Jenkinson-Johns</i>	<i>Jan Gilby</i>
<i>Pip Oatham</i>	<i>Elizabeth Carpenter</i>
<i>Bronwyn Bent</i>	<i>Peta Goldsworthy</i>
<i>Tony Schramm</i>	<i>Neil & Jan Richardson</i>
<i>Pam & Les Roa</i>	<i>Scot Stratford</i>
<i>Kate Plaw</i>	<i>Linley Parry</i>
<i>Megan Smith</i>	<i>Lyndall Hermitage</i>



**SCAN
TO MAKE A
DONATION**

MAKE A ONE OFF DONATION

Every little bit counts! To make a one off donation of anywhere between \$20-\$500 scan the QR code.

Donations will go directly towards artist and audience experience costs (not administrative overheads).

To learn more about how you can support the Festival, please contact our team at **supporters@hamiltonartsfestival.co.nz**.

Alternatively, you can make a donation or become a patron via our website **hamiltonartsfestival.co.nz**

FESTIVAL TEAM

HAMILTON GARDENS SUMMER FESTIVAL FOUNDATION

Chair

Chris Williams

Trustees

Raewyn Sporle, Marleina Ruka, Lucy Ryan, Benny Marama, Kyle Chuen, Peta Goldsworthy, Frances Oliver

Accountant

Helen Yates, Cleland Hancox

FESTIVAL TEAM

Director

Geoff Turkington

Associate Director & Publicist

Nick Walsh

HamLit Curators

Elisabeth Easter and Bridget van der Zijpp

National Publicist

Elisabeth Easter

Production/Technical Management

Gareth Amyes, Chase Ten Hove, Aaron Chesham and the team from ACLX

Audience Experience &

Waste Minimalisation Manager

Maureen Cruickshank

Artist Liaison Officer

Rachael Bloemendal

Economic Benefit Project Lead

Kat Waswo

Social Media Videographer

William Fitzgerald

Production Liaison Officer

Ric Grocott

Marketing and Design

KingSt Advertising

Food and Beverage

Amber Sissons, Kelsie McLellan and the team from Montana Food & Events

Venue Partners

Hamilton Gardens, Meteor Theatre, Riverlea Theatre, Hamilton City



Visit the new Medieval Garden. *Now open.*

Enter a sanctuary of cloistered corridors and healing herbs, inspired by the medieval monasteries of Italy.

Discover a world of wonders.

hamiltongardens.co.nz



**Hamilton
Gardens**

Festival Hub & Grassroots Trust

FREE & LIVE STAGE



Enjoy delicious kai and soak up the Festival atmosphere with friends and whaanau at the Festival Hub.

Located in the Central Court of Hamilton Gardens, the Festival Hub and Grassroots Trust Stage (Turtle Lake Stage) showcase local talent every night of the Festival from 5pm. Enjoy a selection of food and drinks available for purchase thanks to Montana Food & Events.

Check out the Grassroots Trust Stage timetable on our website in the weeks prior to the Festival for a full line-up of acts.

Card payment only. Please note cash cannot be accepted and there are no cash-out facilities available onsite.

Please note that all events are strictly no BYO alcohol. Due to liquor licensing regulations, we are required to check all bags on arrival. This includes 0% alcohol drinks.

A STORY OF WONDER AND WHIMSY

A whisper drifts on the breeze, laughter shimmers through the trees, and the air hums with stories waiting to be told.

Within the Hamilton Gardens Pavilion, the Neon Hanging Garden of Babylon glows — a radiant heart of light and sound where music, theatre, and storytelling entwine beneath luminous vines.

Guiding all who wander are the **Empress Stilt Dancers** — towering guardians of grace who remind us that when imagination takes root, even the ordinary begins to bloom.

Experience the magic of the Pavilion, and encounter the Empress Stilt Dancers around the Festival Hub throughout the Festival.

LET'S WORK TOGETHER TO KEEP OUR CITY BEAUTIFUL

We're proud of our beautiful city and the magical setting of our Festival, Hamilton Gardens.

With your help, we hope to reduce our footprint as much as possible. Whatever you bring into the Festival, please remember to take it home with you when you leave.

Presented thanks to:

grassroots
trust



**Hamilton
City Council**
Te kaunihera o Kirikiriroa





BYO
SEATS

90

NO
DOGS


FIJIAN FLYING CIRCUS

VOU Fijian Dance Co

Bold, breathtaking and human, *Fijian Flying Circus* is a world-first fusion of Fijian storytelling and contemporary circus.

Follow Loma, a curious young girl who stumbles into a mystical world where veli (forest spirits), giants, and elemental forces live in harmony with Fiji's lush flora and fauna. When a cheeky veli steals one of her enchanted shoes, Loma embarks on a thrilling journey to retrieve it, guided by her mischievous sidekick Tui.

A vibrant mix of jaw-dropping stunts, cheeky humour, and deep Fijian warmth — expect to laugh, gasp, and maybe even tear up as these incredible humans remind us that we're all part of one big, flying family.

When:

Friday 27 Feb &
Saturday 28 Feb, 7:45pm

Tickets:

\$34.00 General Admission
\$30.00 Concession
\$28.90 Multi-buy
\$100 Family (two adults &
two children)
\$20.00 Children (12 and under)

Where:

Rhododendron Lawn

Presented thanks to:



Please note that all events are strictly no BYO alcohol, this includes 0% alcohol. Due to liquor licensing regulations, we are required to check all bags on arrival.



DON MCGLASHAN

AND THE OTHERS



With special guest Hollie Smith

Don McGlashan is one of New Zealand's most highly regarded songwriters. He rose to fame with the groups Blam Blam Blam, The Front Lawn, and The Mutton Birds, who released four New Zealand Top Ten albums. Their song "Anchor Me" won the APRA Silver Scroll in 1994.

His 2006 gospel anthem "Bathe in the River" — sung by Hollie Smith — earned Don a second Silver Scroll and has become one of the biggest New Zealand singles of all time. He was made an Arts Laureate in 2002 and, in 2023, was inducted into the New Zealand Music Hall of Fame.

Special guest vocalist Hollie Smith will join Don McGlashan and The Others on a selection of songs.

When:

Sunday March 1, 6:30pm

Tickets:

\$55.00 General Admission

\$48.00 Concession

\$46.75 Multi-buy

Children 12 and under free with
full-paying GA adult

Where:

Rhododendron Lawn

Presented thanks to:



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★★★★★

“The drag party you always
wish you’d be invited to!”

– Glam Adelaide

Presented thanks to:

AIR NEW ZEALAND 

NO
VO
TEL
HAMILTON
TAIRAU



R18

90

DIRTY LAUNDRY

After nearly 20 years of selling out festivals around the world, the Briefs boys are finally coming to Hamilton — Hills Hoist at the ready — to air their *Dirty Laundry* in a high-energy party cabaret.

Led by Fez Faanana (aka Shivanana), the show features beloved Briefs favourites alongside some dazzling new boys and toys.

With more glitter stains, grit, and ballsy attitude than ever before, these fabulous misfits deliver a night of breathtaking physicality, gob-smacking comedy, unapologetic truths, and ridiculous showmanship.

Set your cycle to HOT and watch these boys tumble dry!

When:

Friday 20 Feb, 8:30pm
Saturday 21 Feb, 8:30pm

Tickets:

\$56.00 General Admission
\$52.00 Concession
\$47.60 Multi-buy

Where:

The Pavilion



Licensed bar available



CHEEHOO 2

It's time to Cheehoo again!

A highlight of our 2024 Festival, *Cheehoo!* returns for another vibrant celebration of Pasifika culture and musical theatre — and this time, Orchestras Central is joining the ride, adding orchestral flair to the mix.

Through personal stories and powerful performances, *Cheehoo!* celebrates the rich Pasifika cultures that shape our community.

Spend the evening with us, singing, dancing, and cheehoo-ing the night away!

Please note that all events are strictly no BYO alcohol, this includes 0% alcohol. Due to liquor licensing regulations, we are required to check all bags on arrival.



When:

Friday 20 Feb, 7:45pm

Tickets:

\$26.00 General Admission

\$20.00 Concession

\$22.10 Multi-buy

Where:

Rhododendron Lawn

Presented thanks to:



SUNSET SYMPHONY

BYO
SEATS

120

NO
DOGS

Trust Waikato Symphony Orchestra

One of the Waikato's most iconic and beloved events returns with a programme that celebrates collaboration, community, music and dance.

Experience symphonic favourites from the likes of Tchaikovsky, alongside dance numbers spanning culture and history — from Latin dance to music from *The Lord of the Rings* — all against the backdrop of a stunning Rhododendron Lawn sunset.

Bring a blanket, sit back, and enjoy the show, or don your dancing shoes and dance into the sunset!

6:15pm Gates open

7:20pm Kulios String Quartet with Orchestras Central

8:00pm Trust Waikato Symphony Orchestra conducted by Rupert D'Cruze

The evening will be MC'd by Stu and Camille from The Breeze and feature a guest appearance from Don McGlashan.

This is a licensed event with bar facilities, and food available for purchase. *Please note that all events are strictly no BYO alcohol, this includes 0% alcohol. Due to liquor licensing regulations, we are required to check all bags on arrival.*

The full programme can be found at orchestras.org.nz

When:

Saturday 21 Feb
Gates open 6:15pm

Tickets:

Entry by donation

Where:

Rhododendron Lawn

Presented thanks to:





DAN FORREST CREATION

Hamilton City Brass & Hamilton Festival Chorus

Join us for Dan Forrest's most ambitious work yet — a breathtaking new oratorio arranged for brass band by Todd Smith.

Written to celebrate the 225th anniversary of Haydn's iconic masterpiece, this 68-minute journey invites you to explore the wonders of our planet through soaring choral harmonies, rich orchestral textures, and stunning solos for soprano and baritone.

Come together with a cast of over 100 local musicians for this spellbinding Rhododendron Lawn performance.

Please note that all events are strictly no BYO alcohol, this includes 0% alcohol. Due to liquor licensing regulations, we are required to check all bags on arrival.

BYO
SEATS

75

NO
DOGS

When:

Wednesday 25 Feb, 7:30pm

Tickets:

\$36.00 General Admission

\$32.50 Concession

\$30.60 Multi-buy

Where:

Rhododendron Lawn

Presented thanks to:





OPERA BY CANDLELIGHT

Orchestras Central

Experience a magical summer evening of operatic brilliance in the Ancient Egyptian Garden.

Acclaimed soprano Emma Pearson and contralto Kristin Darragh — celebrated on opera stages in Germany and Australasia — join forces with Central Ensemble to perform new arrangements by Michael F. Williams. Together, they present a stunning programme of Italian baroque, romantic and French opera favourites.

From Handel and Monteverdi to Puccini and Bizet, this is a rare opportunity to enjoy world-class voices and musicianship in an intimate, open-air concert, surrounded by nature and candlelight.

Book early — limited tickets.

When:

Sunday 22 Feb, 8:30pm

Tickets:

\$100.00 General Admission

\$90.00 Concession

\$85.00 Multi-buy

Where:

Ancient Egyptian Garden

Presented thanks to:





PŌTAKA NAUTILUS & PEPE



Pōtaka Nautilus & Pepe celebrates the musicianship and beauty of taonga puoro (traditional maaori musical instruments), brought to life through contemporary dance and cinema, in the stunning setting of the Surrealist Garden.

In *Pōtaka Nautilus*, digital shells become virtual stages, carrying dancers as they navigate the coastal zones of Aotearoa. Instruments such as the kooauau, puupuu harakeke, and puutaatara explore the acts of voyaging and returning to land.

In the second work, *Pepe*, we meet a solo traveller embodying both the male and female aspects of Hineraukatauri, atua of traditional musical instruments and kaitiaki of all flutes (kooauau) in the taonga puoro family. Drawing on the motif of the case moth, dance intertwines with music, craft, and digital media to create a deeply immersive and symbolic performance.

When:

Thursday 26 Feb, 6:30pm

Tickets:

\$36.00 General Admission

\$32.00 Concession

\$30.60 Multi-buy

Where:

Surrealist Garden

Presented thanks to:

AIR NEW ZEALAND 

**NO
VO
TEL**
HAMILTON
TAUNGI



BLACK COMET



After electrifying sets at WOMAD Aotearoa and CubaDupa, Black Comet bring their intergalactic modern funk to the Surrealist Garden.

Founded by Ninja and Laughton Kora (Kora, L.A.B, Fly My Pretties), this multi-dimensional collective delivers groove-driven music infused with vivid storytelling.

Laughton's theatrical flair fuels the band's high-energy, precision-tight funk, alongside Dan Antunovich on bass, Poihakena Reid on keys, sax, and talkbox, and Adam Tobeck on drums.

When:

Thursday 26 Feb, 8:30pm

Tickets:

\$42.00 General Admission

\$38.00 Concession

\$35.70 Multi-buy

Where:

Surrealist Garden

Please note that all events are strictly no BYO alcohol, this includes 0% alcohol.



SONGS FOR NOBODIES

90

Five witty and poignant stories of 'nobodies', ordinary women who each have their lives changed by a brief encounter with an iconic 'somebody'.

Fate brings these women together; Judy Garland and a bathroom attendant, Patsy Cline and an usher, Edith Piaf and a librarian, Billie Holiday and a young reporter, Maria Callas and a nanny.

Songs for Nobodies sees Jackie Clarke (*The Lady Killers*, *Chicago*, *Mamma Mia*) bring 10 characters to life in a tour de force performance.

"Clarke's genius lies in summoning these icons without slipping into mimicry..... you feel the song take possession. It wasn't imitation; it was visitation." – Broadway World.

When:

Saturday 28 Feb, 8pm

Tickets:

\$38.00 General Admission

\$34.00 Concession

\$32.30 Multi-buy

Where:

Pavilion

"Songs for Nobodies is a triumph."
– Andrew Whiteside



Licensed bar available

THE RUG



**After a hit launch season in 2024,
The Rug is back!**

It's early ice-age and when a brave hunter brings a sabre-tooth tiger rug back to his cave, he sparks off a rivalry with the neighbours who want a bigger, brighter rug.

Through this story, we witness the birth of materialism and 'keeping up with the Joneses'. A salesman weaves his magic and a tiger lurks in the background longing for his mate and looking for revenge. It's funny, poignant and sad and an exploration of our most basic human traits. Last chance to see *The Rug* before it heads out on tour!

Presented thanks to:

Opening
Night
Productions.

When:

Sunday 22 Feb, 2pm & 6:30pm

Tickets:

\$38.00 General Admission

\$34.00 Concession

\$32.30 Multi-buy

\$20.00 Youth (12-18)

Where:

Riverlea Theatre



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Look the part this summer
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official Hamilton Arts Festival
Toi Ora ki Kirikiriroa merchandise,
including tees, caps, hoodies and
more.

Head to our website
to shop now!

hamiltonartsfestival.co.nz/shop



HAMLIT 2026

An inspiring weekend
of thought-provoking
author conversations in
the Hamilton Gardens.

Curated by Elisabeth Easter and Bridget van der Zijpp

Multi-buy discount: A 15% discount applies when you
purchase tickets for three or more sessions.

All sessions
are **\$25** unless
otherwise
stated.

DAY
DONE
EVENTS

SATURDAY
21 FEB





Are We Who We Say We Are

Josie Shapiro follows her hit novel *Everything is Beautiful and Everything Hurts* with *Good Things Come and Go*, an ode to taking risks.

Gina Butson's novel *The Stars are a Million Glittering Worlds* traverses complicated relationships, guilt and grief from Aotearoa to Guatemala.

These two observers of contemporary life discuss their works with novelist Bridget van der Zijpp, co-curator of HamLit.



Beyond the 6 O'Clock News

Award-winning broadcaster, Mike McRoberts movingly charts his journey reclaiming his native tongue in *Speaking My Language Te Kōrero i Tōku Reo*.

Waikato-born Lisette Reymer's *No I Don't Get Danger Money* recounts her high-risk adventures as a foreign correspondent reporting from the world's hotspots.

They discuss their journalistic past and present, and the state of the media with broadcaster Miriama Kamo.



Flower Power

He Puāwai: A Natural History of New Zealand Flowers by botanist Phil Garnock-Jones is beautiful — featuring 100 native flowers photographed in 3D and viewed with special glasses revealing their magical glory.

Phil introduces some of our most remarkable native treasures in awe-inspiring detail and for extra fun he will take flowers from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as inspiration, comparing their stories to our puawai.



10:30am



12pm



1.30pm

Where:

Indian Char Bagh Garden

Where:

Indian Char Bagh Garden

Where:

Japanese Garden of Contemplation

Presented thanks to:





The Search for Meaning

Best-selling author Dr Hinemoa Elder will waananga with award-winning Waikato poet Dr Marama Salsano about the intersection between culture, creativity and mental health.

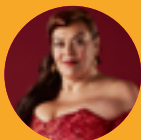
Exploring the importance of indigenous narratives around wellbeing and resilience, Hinemoa's *Ara: A Māori Guidebook of the Mind* is rooted in the wisdom of Maaori culture.

This session is for everyone seeking clarity amid the chaos of modern life.



3pm

Where:
Indian Char Bagh Garden



Giving Birth to My Father

Award-winning poet Tusiata Avia joins acclaimed playwright Victor Rodger to discuss *Giving Birth to My Father*, her most personal book yet.

In this collection exploring grief and renewal, Tusiata tells both the imagined story of her father's last days and what really happened.

The event will feature powerful readings by Tusiata, an acclaimed performer. Prepare for tears, laughs, and goosebumps.



4.30pm

Where:
Indian Char Bagh Garden



Sonic Gardens for the Wild

Curated by Tracey Slaughter

Award-winning writer and editor Tracey Slaughter joins emerging and established local voices, to bring colourful creative work from literary journals *Mayhem* and *Poetry Aotearoa Alive*, with dramatic staging by One Question Theatre.



5:45pm

Free Entry
Where:
Grassroots Trust Stage,
Festival Hub

Presented thanks to:

grassroots
trust



Doctor I Like Your Medicine

"It's through the telling of stories that we make sense of ourselves and each other."

This is the mantra of Dr Lucy O'Hagan who will perform her extraordinary one-woman show *Inside the GP Consultation* as an introduction to a discussion about her brilliantly warm, wise and candid book *Everything but the Medicine: A Doctor's Tale*.



60

10:30am

Where:
Indian Char Bagh Garden



Hanging with the Crims

Steve Braunias' *Polkinghorne* provides personal and gripping insights into the trial of the now notorious eye surgeon.

Jared Savage exposes Aotearoa's criminal underbelly in his best-seller *Underworld*.

So what's it like to be a writer who draws back the curtain on crime?

Award-winning crime fiction writer Fiona Sussman – author of *Hooked Up* – will delve into the challenges, risks and rewards.



60

12pm

Where:
Indian Char Bagh Garden

DAY TWO

EVENTS

SUNDAY
22 FEB



Sunshine Through a Prism

Suzanne Lynch rose to fame in the '60s as one half of singing duo The Chicks and went on to tour internationally with Cat Stevens, Neil Sedaka and Charles Aznavour.

Suzanne's stunning memoir *Yesterday When I Was Young* recounts her eventful life as an internationally revered vocalist.

She'll share with author and broadcaster Karyn Hay – expect a song or two.



1.30pm

Where:
Indian Char Bagh Garden



So Embarrassing!

Kate Camp explores her teen musings in *Leather & Chains: My 1986 Diary*.

Catherine Chidgey's latest novels *Pet*, *The Axeman's Carnival*, and *The Book of Guilt* have been taking the world by storm.

The lauded writers discuss their creative evolution with Elisabeth Easter, author of *Seed* and co-curator of HamLit.

Warning: torturously funny teenage diary entries may be read out loud.



3pm

Where:
Indian Char Bagh Garden



Poetic Expressions of Whakapapa

**Curated by
Dr Marama Salsano**

Genealogies and layers of things and people (human, non-human and beyond-human kin) are steeped in the landscapes of Kirikiriroa Hamilton.

In this free event, six exceptional local poets share creative work and stories that connect them to layers of ancestors and landscapes, sometimes recognisable and at other times more obscure.



5pm

Free Entry

Where
Grassroots Trust Stage,
Festival Hub

Presented thanks to:

grassroots
trust





SOLILOQUOY

Infinite Monkey Theatre

Unable to spread the ashes of his late father, Hamish sits atop a cliff, overlooking a sea of fog. There he meets Olivia, a young woman on a similar journey. Together, they explore mortality, love, mental health, and attempt to answer one of life's most pressing questions: are ghosts real?

Soliloquy is an intimate and modern reimagining of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, examining how our experiences, relationships, and interactions with media shape our worldview and who we are as human beings.

Content warnings: existential themes; discussions of suicide.

When:

Sunday 22 Feb, 4:30pm
Wednesday 25 Feb, 5:30pm
Sunday 1 Mar, 4pm

Tickets:

\$36.00 General Admission
\$32.00 Concession
\$30.60 Multi-buy

Where:

Japanese Garden of Contemplation

Presented thanks to:

grassroots
trust



SUPPING WITH THE DEVIL

Leni Riefenstahl was called 'Hitler's Pin-Up Girl'. A dancer, an actor and one of the most brilliant and innovative film makers of the 20th century, she sold her soul to Hitler's Third Reich and destroyed her career.

This solo theatre performance by Jan Bolwell tells Riefenstahl's story using text, music, dance and videography. As a young and talented artist Riefenstahl made films like *Triumph of the Will*, regarded as one of the greatest propaganda films of all time, and *Olympia*, on the 1936 Berlin Olympics. After the Second World War, Riefenstahl was ostracised in Germany and never made another film until she was in her 90s.

Supping with the Devil is a psychological study of a superb artist who becomes corrupted in her quest for power and fame.

When:

Thursday 26 Feb, 7pm

Tickets:

\$36.00 General Admission
\$32.00 Concession
\$30.60 Multi-buy

Where:

Riverlea Theatre





“Mel Dodge’s
performance
burns bright.”
– Dominion Post

MISS BRONTË



Brave Theatre

Charlotte Brontë has a secret. In fact, secrets seem to run in the family...

How could an unmarried woman living in a secluded parsonage, with only her sisters for company, write one of the world’s greatest love stories? She had tasted love and her secrets echo in the pages of *Jane Eyre*.

Inspired by the letters and novels of Charlotte Brontë, *Miss Brontë* tells a story of ambition, forbidden love and the bond of family. Created by award-winning director Lyndee-Jane Rutherford and performer Mel Dodge, who received standing ovations for her 2024 performance in *Prima Facie*, this is a play for theatre and literature lovers alike.

“Perceptive, intelligent, fiery, romantic, poignant and packed into a potent 75 minutes. Triumphant, tragic and riddled with moral dilemma.” – Theatreview

“Mel Dodge’s performance burns bright.” – Dominion Post

When:

Saturday 21 Feb & Sunday
22 Feb, 4pm

Tickets:

\$36.00 General Admission
\$32.00 Concession
\$30.60 Multi-buy

Where:

Chinoiserie Garden

Presented thanks to:





SPEED IS EMOTIONAL

ADHD – it's so hot right now! Pooneke's creative powerhouse Jo Randerson, ONZM, unpacks their diagnosis, neurodivergent parenting, sad songs, men taking their time, and more in this 'funny as hell' theatre extravaganza.

Diagnosed with ADHD in their '40s alongside their son, Jo's restless energy fuels their fiercely funny artistic voice. A true arts polymath, Jo has earned accolades as performer, comedian, writer, activist, director, curator, theatremaker, filmmaker, witch, and clown, recently receiving the 2023 Topp Prize for Comedy.

In *Speed is Emotional*, Jo bares their soul, sharing the exhilaration, exhaustion, joy, and absurdity of living and parenting with neurodivergence. With punk poetic magic, they create a beautiful comedy about transcending labels and living at a voltage so high it might blow the mains.

When:

Saturday 21 Feb, 7pm

Sunday 22 Feb, 4pm

Tickets:

\$34.00 General Admission

\$24.00 Concession

\$20.00 Child (under 18)

\$24.00 Group (6 or more)

Where:

The Meteor Theatre

Presented thanks to:



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all February!***

Catch the '17 Hamilton Gardens/
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February until Sunday 1st March.



**Check the
timetable here!**



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GARDEN OF RETURNING SOULS

Waikato Contemporary Dance Projects Trust

Celebrate the opening of the Medieval Garden — a space of wonder, calm, and haunting beauty.

Experience a site-specific dance created for the garden by contemporary choreographer Karen Barbour, theatre artist Declan Patrick, and local performers. Let the enchanting sounds of musical director Rachael Griffith-Hughes wash over you, offering moments of renewal, peace, and connection.

Garden of Returning Souls is a performance for all, designed to nourish wellbeing and bring community together.

When:

Friday 20 Feb, 6pm
Wednesday 25 Feb, 6pm
Thursday 26 Feb, 6pm
Friday 27 Feb, 6pm
Saturday 28 Feb, 3pm

Tickets:

\$20.00 General Admission
\$17.00 Multi-buy

Where:

Medieval Garden



FLAMENCODANZA

Experience the fiery passion and elegance of an internationally acclaimed dance and guitar duo, celebrated at festivals across Europe, Australia, and the US.

This award-winning show blends Flamenco, Brazilian music, and jazz, bursting with colour and energy, while contemporary Flamenco dance showcases strength, elegance, and grace.

When:

Sunday 1 Mar, 5pm

Tickets:

\$40.00 General Admission
\$36.00 Concession
\$32.00 Multi-buy

Where:

Medici Court



THE VOICE OF VISION



Identity Dance Company

Blending world-championship-winning hip-hop and street dance styles with immersive choreography, *The Voice of Vision* is a bold exploration of the unseen forces that shape movement and creation.

Created by a powerhouse team of acclaimed and emerging artists, this production marks an exciting new chapter — a glimpse into the evolution of future works for 2026 and beyond.

More than a performance — it's a transmission.

When:

Sunday 22 Feb, 6:30pm

Tickets:

\$28.00 General Admission

\$25.00 Concession

\$14.00 Children 5-12

\$23.80 Multi-buy

Where:

Rhododendron Lawn

Presented thanks to:

grassroots
trust



This is a licensed event with bar facilities, and food available for purchase. Please note that all events are strictly no BYO alcohol, this includes 0% alcohol. Due to liquor licensing regulations, we are required to check all bags on arrival.



BATTLE CHORUS

You asked for it — and here it is. After selling out shows across Aotearoa, the hit social sing-along experience finally lands in Hamilton!

Battle Chorus unites audiences for an unforgettable night of iconic melodies and soaring harmonies.

Guided by two of Aotearoa's musical heavyweights, the crowd splits into teams, grabs a drink, learns a few choruses, and goes head-to-head in an epic song battle.

Vocal talent optional, enthusiasm mandatory!

When:

Friday 27 Feb, 6pm

Tickets:

\$32.00 General Admission

\$28.00 Concession

\$27.20 Multi-buy

Where:

The Pavilion

90

Licensed bar available



MYSTERY OF THE JADE MENAGERIE

Apocalypse Lounge Room Break is back with a brand-new mystery game.

Under the guise of a game of hide-and-seek, the Monkey King has tricked his fellow animals into becoming jade figures, now scattered along the Scholar's Path.

The Jade Emperor sends a group of advisors to find and return them but the Monkey King loves puzzles and games, and he's not going to make it easy...

Journey through the Chinese Scholars Garden, a timeless landscape of symbols and stories. Can your party of 4-6 advisors outwit the Monkey King?

When:

Saturday 21 Feb, 11am, 3pm

Sunday 22 Feb, 11am, 1pm, 3pm

Wednesday 25 Feb, 5:45pm

Thursday 26 Feb, 5:45pm

Saturday 28 Feb, 11am, 1pm, 3pm & 5pm

Sunday 1 March, 11am, 1pm, 3pm & 5pm

Tickets:

\$180.00 General Admission

Team of 4-6 people

Where:

Chinese Scholars Garden

60



TE RADAR'S KIWI COUNTRY

What's a fipple flute and why should you not talk about them around the stockyards? Exactly how dry is a Swanndri?

Join raconteur Te Radar as he fossicks through the rural bits and pieces that reveal the untold stories of our past and present. Based on the acclaimed book *Kiwi Country: Rural New Zealand in 100 Objects* by Te Radar and Ruth Spencer, this world premiere show is a wild romp through the sheds and paddocks, the outhouses and the orchards of New Zealand.

Equal parts history, hilarity, and heartfelt nostalgia, *Kiwi Country* invites audiences to hear the stories hidden in plain sight: the artefacts and anecdotes that remind us who we are.



When:

Thursday 26 Feb, 6pm

Tickets:

\$36.00 General Admission

\$32.00 Concession

\$30.60 Multi-buy

Where:

Medici Court

60



CAPTAIN MORROW AND THE SANDS OF TIME

Figment Productions

Think *The Mighty Boosh* meets *Treasure Island*: Two actors. One musician. 40+ characters. And plenty of chaos.

Directed by Bernie Duncan and showing in Kirikiriroa for the first time, this absurdist, fast-paced show is perfect for comedy fans and theatre-goers alike. Starring Callum Brodie, Ella Hope-Higginson and Ali Sewell.

"Completely bonkers. It will give you deep belly laughs for over an hour, and maybe aching smile muscles for a few days after." - Theatreview

"Captain Morrow and the Sands of Time is simply a work of pure genius." - Red Raven

"A comic gem: absurd, immaculately performed, and full of heart." - NZ Herald

When:

Friday 20 Feb, 6:30pm

Saturday 21 Feb, 6:15pm

Sunday 22 Feb, 5:30pm

Tickets:

\$38.00 General Admission

\$34.00 Concession

\$32.30 Multi-buy

Where:

Modernist Garden

60



GARDEN GIGGLES

Laugh Club NZ

After rave reviews in New Zealand and around the world and sold out shows at the 2024 and 2025 Hamilton Arts Festivals, Laugh Club NZ brings a stellar evening of comedy featuring:

Tarun Mohanbhai — MC (Wed 25 Feb)
Keegan Govind — MC (Fri 27 Feb)

Liv McKenzie (*7 Days, Cubicle Confessions*)

Pax Assadi (*Raised by Refugees, 7 Days, Taskmaster*)

Paul Ego (*7 Days, Taskmaster*)

When:

Wednesday 25 Feb, 7:15pm
 Friday 27 Feb, 8:30pm

Tickets:

\$49.00 General Admission
 \$45.00 Concession
 \$41.65 Multi-buy

Where:

The Pavilion

Licensed bar available

RHYS MATHEWSON 10TH RODEO



After five years of sobriety, Rhys Mathewson started to relapse. Now, in front of an audience of strangers, he's ready to share exactly what happened...

In this sharp, vulnerable and deeply personal hour, the Billy T and Fred Award-winning comic (*7 Days, Dancing With The Stars*) unpacks addiction, shame, compassion and the chaos of being human — all with gut-punch honesty and side-splitting humour.

Winner: Director's Choice – 2024 NZ International Comedy Festival.

"Mathewson walks a remarkable tightrope... 10th Rodeo is a sharp, smart, vulnerable, and surprisingly moving work of comedy."
 – The Post

When:

Saturday 21 Feb, 5pm

Tickets:

\$38.00 General Admission
 \$34.00 Concession
 \$32.30 Multi-buy

Where:

Medici Court



CORO

Direct from sold-out shows at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, your favourite daytime soap is getting a comedic reboot.

Coming up on *Coro*: someone's up the duff, there's yet another scene in the local pub (of course), and two Kiwis battle with Manchester accents!

Five episodes, two actors, nine characters, and 60 minutes of action-packed mundanity.

"Absolutely hilarious... the epitome of fringe." – Edinburgh Fringe Review

"Consistently impressive." – Wellyott

When:

Friday 27 Feb, 6pm

Saturday 28 Feb, 3:30pm

Tickets:

\$34.00 General Admission

\$30.00 Concession

\$28.90 Multi-buy

Where:

Medici Court

60



JUST EAT THE DAMN SAUSAGE

Just Eat the Damn Sausage is a bold, brave, and award-winning solo hour of comedy from the multi-faceted Hamilton-born entertainer Harriet Moir.

The show flips the bird to the patriarchy and the many ways it has tried to keep her small and quiet: puberty, periods, pregnancy, perimenopause, piss, processed meat.

And please be quiet.

Winner: Best Comedy and NZ Fringe Tour Awards - Dunedin Fringe 2025

Warning: Contains partial nudity.

When:

Saturday 28 Feb, 6pm

Tickets:

\$34.00 General Admission

\$30.00 Concession

\$28.90 Multi-buy

Where:

Medici Court

60



ROADKILL THE MUSICAL

This Uber-Cool Musical takes you on a wildly immersive journey through love, life, and rock 'n' roll — all from the back seat of a van.

Buckle up as ordinary Uber trips explode into chaos, revealing the private world of Terry — driver, dreamer, and wannabe rockstar. Think carpool karaoke meets love story meets murder mystery.

With only nine seats per ride, grab your mates for a private gig in the fast lane!

Winner: Best in Fringe and Emerging Artist of the Year - Dunedin Fringe, Most Innovative - 2025 NZ Fringe Awards.

When:

Friday 27 Feb, 5:15pm & 7:15
Saturday 28 Feb, 3:30pm, 5:15pm
& 7pm

Tickets:

\$32.00 General Admission
\$27.20 Multi-buy

Where:

Festival Hub

60



THE NUKES UKELELE

For over 15 years, The Nukes have been spreading harmony and joy across Australasia. More than just a ukulele band, this West Auckland trio mix vaudeville, Rat Pack swagger, and musical mayhem to create high-energy shows for all ages.

With original songs, dazzling musicianship, and rich three-part harmonies, The Nukes transform the humble ukulele into a powerhouse of humour and creativity.

Audiences can expect engaging performances, laughter, and a truly memorable musical experience.

When:

Saturday 28 Feb, 6:30pm

Tickets:

\$32.00 General Admission
\$28.00 Concession
\$27.20 Multi-buy

Where:

Mansfield Garden Tennis Court

75

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MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

The iconic Summer Shakespeare is back.

You're invited to the play of the season! A war of words between Signor Benedick and Lady Beatrice threatens to steal the stage, while young lovers Hero and Claudio find their romance tested by scandalous deception.

Expect laughter, longing, and plenty of mischief in Shakespeare's classic enemies-to-lovers romantic comedy – *Bridgerton*-style!

One might say love and wit are the true victors, but we'll let you judge for yourselves.

When:

Saturday 21 Feb, 5pm

Sunday 22, 4pm

Sunday 1 March, 5am (Yes, sunrise!)

Tickets:

Entry by Koha

Where:

Rogers Rose Garden



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City Council**
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AHI AFTER MAHUIKA

Ahi After Mahuika is a powerful, multi-sensory theatre experience inspired by the Maaori goddess of fire.

Blending myth and reality, it follows a young girl's journey to restore what she has broken. Guided by Mahuika's fiery wisdom, she travels through sacred forests, uncovering the secrets of flame within Aotearoa's ancient trees. Along the way, she learns the importance of balance, responsibility, and the fire that lives within us all.

Designed with accessibility and inclusivity at its heart, *Ahi After Mahuika* uses innovative sensory techniques, original music, and interactive elements to create an immersive world. Audiences will feel, hear, and see the story unfold — from the warmth of fire to the cool touch of rain — offering a deeply engaging experience for everyone, especially those with disabilities.

When:

Thursday 26 Feb, 11am, 2pm

Tickets:

\$17.50 General Admission

Where:

The Pavilion





ALL THE THINGS I WISH I COULD BE

Blast off with *All The Things I Wish I Could Be* — a wild musical adventure about two lovable dads dreaming of becoming everything from All Blacks to ballerinas, and mad monkeys to silly monsters.

Bursting with original live songs, this very Kiwi comedy is full of heart, hilarity, and high-energy fun for tamariki and grown-ups alike.

Starring Tom Knowles and award-winning comedian-musician Jed Parsons (aka Jeff Parsnips), this show is a joyful celebration of imagination, friendship, and the endless possibilities of who we can be.

When:

Sunday 22 Feb, 11am & 2:30pm

60

Tickets:

\$20.00 General Admission

\$17.00 Multi-buy

Where:

The Pavilion

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DR HUBBLE'S BRILLIANT BUBBLES

Dr Hubble is Australia's favourite Bubbleman. Over the past 10 years, he has performed in theatres, festivals, and schools across every state in Australia.

Using simple soap bubbles, Dr Hubble creates magical moments of wonder. Expect to see bubbles you've never imagined — from square and octagon bubbles to chimneys and the spectacular explode-a-bubble. This fun, funny, and occasionally educational show also carries a gentle message of sustainability.

"Children and adults were agape with wonder." – Weekend Notes

When:

Saturday 28 Feb, 11am & 2:30pm

60

Tickets:

\$20.00 General Admission

\$17.00 Multi-buy

\$15.00 Children (12 & under)

\$62.00 Family (two adults & two children)

Where:

The Pavilion

Presented thanks to:

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Presented thanks to:



MOVIES AT THE METEOR

Gather the whaanau together, **BYO** blankets or bean bags and get comfy for *Movies at The Meteor*.



SIONE'S WEDDING

When:

Wednesday 25 Feb, 6:30pm

EAGLE VS SHARK

When:

Wednesday 25 Feb, 8:15pm

Tickets:

\$18.00 Double Pass

105

90



SHREK

When:

Thursday 26 Feb, 6pm

Tickets:

\$10.00 Single Pass

90



ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW

When:

Friday 27 Feb, 8pm

Tickets:

\$10.00 Single Pass

105



THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING

When:

Saturday 28 February, 1pm

THE TWO TOWERS

When:

Saturday 28 February, 4pm

THE RETURN OF THE KING

When:

Saturday 28 February, 7:15pm

Tickets:

\$25.00 Marathon Pass

600



HE PIKO HE TANIWHA



Haka Maaori Cultural Experience

He Piko He Taniwha extends the Festival footprint onto the Waikato River. This immersive story-telling experience shares cultural narratives, waiata and ceremonial practices relating to the Waikato River and the Hamilton Gardens.

Each tour will include a range of interactive cultural activities, including a visit to Te Parapara Maaori Garden and a hands-on waka (canoe) paddling experience on the Waikato River to view the international award-winning Te Ara Pekapeka bridge installation.

When:

Saturday 21 Feb, 10am,
12:30pm, 3pm
Sunday 22 Feb, 10am,
12:30pm, 3pm
Saturday 28 Feb, 10am,
12:30pm, 3pm
Sunday 1 March, 10am,
12:30pm, 3pm

Tickets:

\$60.00 Adult (16 years
& over)
\$40.00 Child (15 years
& under)

Where:

Meet at The Fern Court



HIDDEN TRAILS & MEDIEVAL TALES

A rare opportunity to lift the curtain and look backstage at Hamilton Gardens itself.

Hidden Trails & Medieval Tales takes you behind the scenes to the secret spaces and stories that lie beyond the public eye — from Mansfield House to the hidden service lanes and a sneak peek at the early stages of the Baroque Garden.

This special Festival event concludes with a visit to the stunning new Medieval Garden which is opening just days prior. Be one of the first to gain insight into its rich layers of design and historical significance. This experience is perfect for those who love the Gardens and want to see them in a whole new light.

Due to the exclusive nature of this tour, numbers will be limited, secure your spot early.

When:

Friday 20 Feb, 5:30pm
 Sunday 22 Feb, 5:30pm
 Wednesday 25 Feb, 5:30pm
 Thursday 26 Feb, 5:30pm
 Friday 27 Feb, 5:30pm
 Saturday 28 Feb, 5:30pm
 Sunday 1 March, 5:30pm

Tickets:

\$59.00 General Admission
 \$53.00 Concession
 \$50.15 Multi-buy

Where:

Meet at The Fern Court

Presented thanks to:



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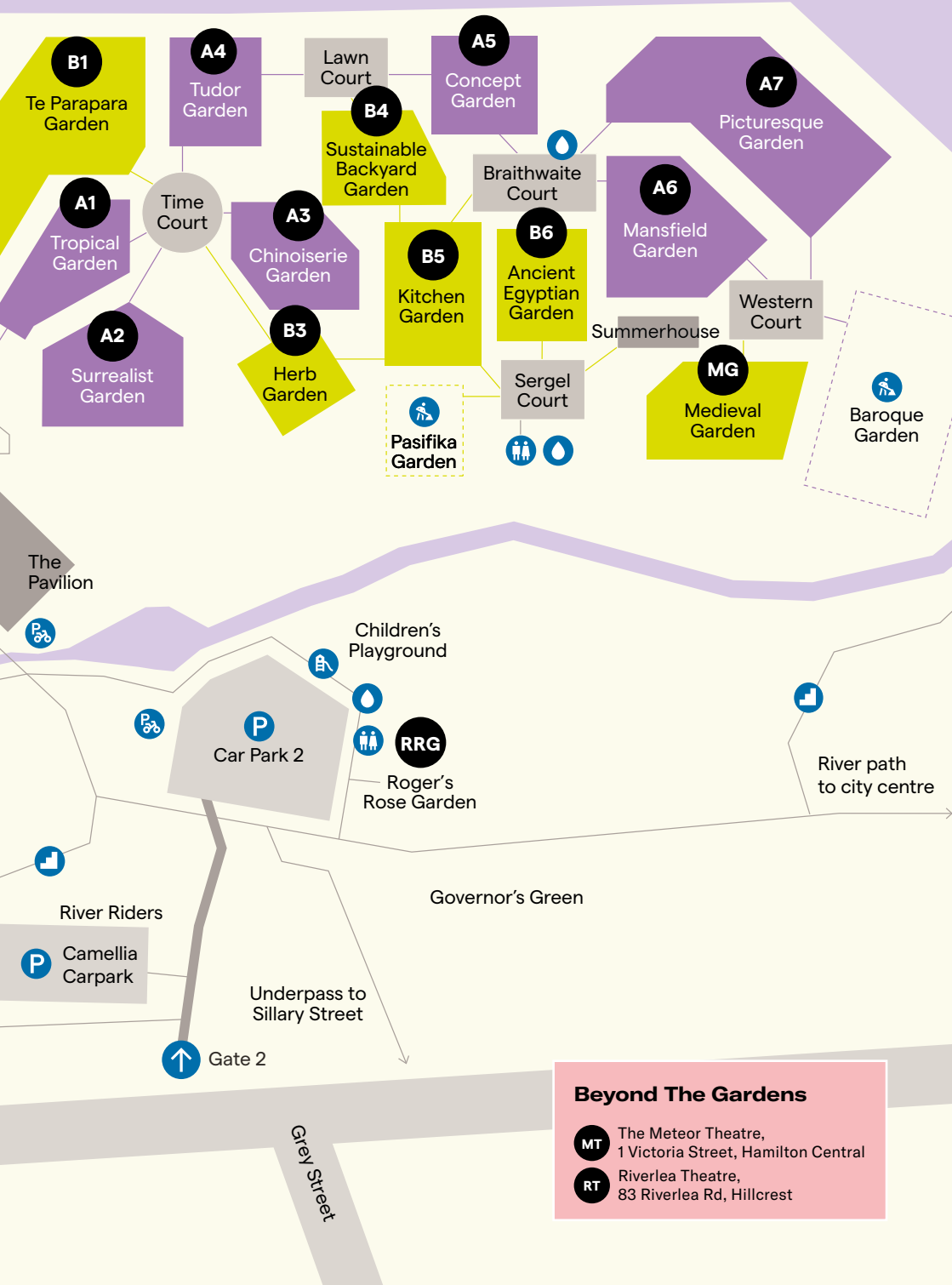
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FESTIVAL TIMETABLE

PERFORMANCE	VENUE	PAGE	FRI 20	SAT 21	SUN 22	WED 25	THU 26	FRI 27	SAT 28	SUN 1
GRASSROOTS TRUST FESTIVAL HUB STAGE	HUB	8	5pm	5pm	5pm	5pm	5pm	5pm	5pm	5pm
HIDDEN TRAILS & MIDIEVAL TALES	FC	43	5:30pm		5:30pm	5:30pm	5:30pm	5:30pm	5:30pm	5:30pm
GARDEN OF RETURNING SOULS	MG	32	6pm			6pm	6pm	6pm	3pm	
CAPTAIN MORROW AND THE SANDS OF TIME	C4	35	6:30pm	6:15pm	5:30pm					
CHEEHOO 2	RL	16	7:45pm							
DIRTY LAUNDRY	PAV	14	8:30pm	8:30pm						
HE PIKO HE TANIWHA	FC	42		10am, 12:30pm, 3pm	10am, 12:30pm, 3pm				10am, 12:30pm, 3pm	10am, 12:30pm, 3pm
MYSTERY OF THE JADE MENAGERIE	C3	34		11am, 3pm	11am, 1pm, 3pm	5:45pm	5:45pm		11am, 1pm, 3pm & 5pm	11am, 1pm, 3pm & 5pm
MISS BRONTË	A3	30		4pm	4pm					
MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING	RRG	39		5pm	4pm					5am
RHYS MATTHEWSON 10TH RODEO	C6	36		5pm						
SUNSET SYMPHONY	RL	17		6:15pm						
SPEED IS EMOTIONAL	MT	31		7pm	4pm					
ALL THE THINGS I WISH I COULD BE	PAV	40			11am, 2:30pm					
THE RUG	RT	23			2pm, 6:30pm					
SOLILQUY	C1	29			4:30pm	5:30pm				4pm
THE VOICE OF VISION	RL	33			6:30pm					
OPERA BY CANDLELIGHT	B6	19			8:30pm					
MOVIES AT THE METEOR	MT	41				6:30pm, 8:15pm	6pm	8pm	1pm, 4pm, 7:15pm	
GARDEN GIGGLES	PAV	36				7:15pm		8.30pm		
DAN FORREST CREATION	RL	18				7:30pm	11am, 2pm			
AHI AFTER MAHIKA	PAV	39								
TE RADAR'S KIWI COUNTRY	C6	35					6pm			
POTAKA NAUTILUS & PEPE	A2	20					6:30pm			
SUPPING WITH THE DEVIL	RT	29					7pm			

BLACK COMET	A2	21					8:30pm			
ROADKILL THE MUSICAL	HUB	38						5:15pm, 7:15pm	3:30pm, 5:15pm, 7pm	
CORO	C6	37						6pm	3:30pm	
BATTLE CHORUS	PAV	34						6pm		
FUJIAN FLYING CIRCUS	RL	10						7:45pm	7:45pm	
DR HUBBLE'S BRILLIANT BUBBLES	PAV	40							11am, 2:30pm	
JUST EAT THE DAMN SAUSAGE	C6	37							6pm	
THE NUKES UKELELE	A6	38							6:30pm	
SONGS FOR NOBODIES	PAV	22							8pm	
FLAMENCODANZA	C6	32								5pm
DON MCGLASHAN & THE OTHERS	RL	12								6:30pm

HAMLIT TIMETABLE

EVENTS	VENUE	PAGE	SAT 21	SUN 22						
ARE WE WHO WE SAY WE ARE	C5	25	10:30am							
BEYOND THE 6 O'CLOCK NEWS	C5	25	12pm							
FLOWER POWER	C1	25	1:30pm							
THE SEARCH FOR MEANING	C5	26	3pm							
GIVING BIRTH TO MY FATHER	C5	26	4:30pm							
SONIC GARDENS FOR THE WILD	HUB	26	5:45pm							
DOCTOR I LIKE YOUR MEDICINE	C5	27		10:30am						
HANGING WITH THE CRIMS	C5	27		12pm						
SUNSHINE THROUGH A PRISM	C5	28		1:30pm						
SO EMBARRASSING!	C5	28		3pm						
POETIC EXPRESSIONS OF WHAKAPAPA	HUB	28		5pm						





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