

NELSON ARTS FESTIVAL

2023 REPORT

nelsonartsfestival.nz

11 days of unmissable arts experiences
for and with Whakatū

Core Funder:

 **Nelson**
City Council | Te Kaunihera o
Whakatū

2023 CURATORIAL INTENTION

Every year, we are guided by a thematic vision in our mahi and programming, reflecting on the world at large and our place in Te Taihū and Aotearoa.

In 2022, we sat with the (un)certainly of change. It challenged us, the instability gnawing at our absolutes. As we rolled with the punches, sometimes it was hard to see how to soar with the winds. But the winds were still there, calling - and journeys are still to be taken.

In 2023, we are looking to the heavens in preparation to return to the Moon. In the face of the climate crisis and war and oppression, we see increasing migration to reach safer lands, for the Race to Zero.

We seek authenticity as we wade through misinformation. We discover growth and spark to counter austerity and hardship. As we journey together around the Sun, we find ourselves 8 billion strong and 8 billion divided. And so we look to be part of the momentum - rewilding, regenerating, rebalancing, reinvigorating.

On our whenua, so with art - our material to craft and hold is growth, change - constantly ebbing and flowing, transforming.

Mā te kimi ka kite, mā te kite ka mōhio, mā te mōhio ka mārama.

Seek and discover. Discover and know. Know and become enlightened.

Migrate / Momentum / Movement.

Re(wild), re(move), re(wake).

Be curious.

Nelson Arts Festival 2023.

Exploring

Us | You | Whenua | Whakatū

Lydia Zanetti, Te Kaihautū | Executive & Artistic Director,
Nelson Arts Festival

2023 WRAP 19 - 29 October 2023

The **29th Nelson Arts Festival featured 53 outstanding arts events**, ranging from inflatable sculptures and mesmerising doppelgängers, Irish music legends and Indigenous literary heroes, poetry readings accompanied by birdsong at dusk, and workshops that empowered tamariki, rangatahi and queer community members to share their voice. We inhabited much-loved venues and surprising new spaces, dancers reimaged our streets, art installations welcomed visitors at Nelson Airport, and we transformed a gallery into giant spheres of soothing colour and a boxing ring into a spoken word arena. We celebrated the return of the much-loved community event *Mask Carnivale* and the world premiere of our timely commission *Tense*, by local Donna McLeod and performed by artist collective Te Oro Hā.

53 events | 1,100+ artists | 21 locations

The Nelson Festivals Trust Board and Festival team are incredibly proud of all moments big and small that made this year's Festival so very special – and with more than **5,991 Pay What You Can tickets** purchased and an estimated **52,596+ people** engaging with our **12 free events and exhibitions**, we know that we created a Festival that was relevant, timely and inspiring to our community.

Connection + community through art

Arts are essential to wellbeing. Our audiences speak of the positive impact of our events, reporting feelings of joy, positivity and wellbeing, as well as an increased sense of connection with their community and inspiration fuelled by their experiences during the Festival.

"At the events we attended we saw people we knew, reconnected, made plans to connect again. Feeling connected feels good."

- audience feedback

Pay What You Can

Again in 2023, one of our key goals was to make the Festival accessible to a wider section of our community through our community engagement, Access Programme, diverse curatorial programming and the second year of our Pay What You Can ticketing trial.

As an Aotearoa NZ-first for a major arts festival, all our events were either free or Pay What You Can (PWYC) in both 2022 and 2023. Based on the results of our two-year PWYC trial, we can confidently say that **PWYC ticketing increases access to Festival events for many people** - particularly those who haven't engaged with the Festival in the past (87% of new audiences utilised lower price points in 2023). Financial accessibility is one of our most important tools to reach more of our community and to build a love of the arts and audiences for the future - not only the Festival, but the arts industry in Te Taihū year-round.

OUR 2023 PROGRAMME AT A GLANCE

Celebrating diversity, representation & artistic excellence

Nelson Festivals Trust looks to the horizon, igniting sparks of transformation and inciting the power of creativity as a force for positive change. We fiercely stand as a champion for artists and the arts, a catalyst for crucial conversations, and a mirror to our moment in time. We foster connections and collaborations, by uplifting and celebrating our whole community through artistic and cultural experiences.

- **53 events**
- **Over 540 local, national + international artists** contributed to the main programme, plus the *Mask Carnivale* saw **over 560 local creatives** perform in the Parade and on multiple stages
- **31% of events were led by our local community** (*Mask Carnivale* counted as one event)
- **5 special commissions + world premieres**
- **7 Aotearoa performance + visual arts premieres**
- **5 Aotearoa book premieres**
- **21 venues** across Whakatū Nelson + Te Tai-o-Aorere Tasman

In 2023, our programme featured **over 1,100 artists** from across the motu (and beyond) and celebrated the creative community in Whakatū. We supported local, national and international producers and artists to develop and present new work, build sustainability for touring works, and take first steps into festival presentations. We hosted Aotearoa and world premieres, delved into film with the call to climate action *Can I Live?* and directly invest into the wealth of incredible talent in Whakatū and Te Taihu, for example through our *By Whakatū Residency* programme and our sold-out 2023 special commission about the Nelson Tenth, *Tense*. We did not shy away from difficult but essential conversations in change-making art events with *The Savage Coloniser Show* and *Tackling Hate*, while also taking arts experiences into unexpected places like the Nelson Airport, Victory Boxing Gym and the Brook Waimārama Sanctuary.

"Congratulations to the festival team for a superb delivery. The city felt full, alive, exciting, and all the interactions with both the festival team and with the wider community felt energising and affirming. The reputation of the festival helped to open many doors, and this enabled an ambitious project to be fully realised.

The festival has been a real highlight in the year, and it has been brilliant to be part of it."

- artist feedback

Diversity and inclusion continue to be a key focus of our programming efforts:

Kaupapa Māori and BIPOC-led events made up 53% of our overall programme, while 13 of our 33 featured authors in our Pukapuka Talks line-up are Māori (40% of the line-up) alongside Indian, Chinese and Samoan writers.

- **29% kaupapa Māori events**
- **53% led by Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour**
- **69% led by non-male identifying artists**
- **6% of our artists identify as Disabled or Chronically Ill, including one major installation**
- **15.5% led by the LGBTIQA+ community**

"I enjoyed Maōri telling their story, I felt for the first time that Maōri had a significant role in the Arts Festival."

"I was impressed by the [Māori and Pasifika] content and I appreciate the festival including meaty contemporary issues such as gender, sexuality, health, race, historical / institutional inequities, disability, etc..."

- audience feedback



Locally, we were thrilled to collaborate with the **Pasifika Arts and Culture Committee (PACC)** to host a stage entirely dedicated to Pasifika artists at the **Mask Carnivale** – this involved **more than 120 performers** and was an absolute **crowd favourite** during the event. We continued to partner with local arts organisation **Cultural Conversations** on former refugee and migrant-led events and workshops, as well as **Multi-Cultural Youth Nelson Tasman** and **Nelson Youth Council** specifically for youth-led programmes, ensuring our offering is inclusive and relevant to rangatahi in Te Taihiti.

"It was amazing to unite our Pasifika communities through this initiative & you could feel the passion & pride as an audience member. I also felt there was a wide range of our community in the audience from all walks of life & across many ages." - artist feedback



Accessibility

This year, our **Access Programme** grew to three NZSL interpreted, three audio-described events, a guided touch tour and a pre-recorded audio-described exhibition tour. In addition, accessibility and supportive structures were also the focus of our major visual arts exhibition, with **Bailee Lobb's** soft, touchable sculptures offering a sensory-reduced immersion in colour in **Sensory Self Portraits**.

On top of these bespoke events, we improved financial accessibility through our pricing structure and continuously invest in creating a safe festival experience for all.

- **100% of our ticketed events were Pay What You Can (PWYC)** [not including two umbrella events]
- **86% of our audience agreed that PWYC increases access to, and participation** in the Festival – notably first-time attendees said this as well as festival goers from Māori and Pasifika communities (**97%**)
- **12 free events and experiences** (*Mask Carnivale* counted as one event)
- **Safety online and in-person:** we invested in developing risk mitigation strategies for the safety of all team and artists, and put clear processes in place to prevent harm across our spaces

"Thanks for offering NZSL interpreters and making the festival accessible to sign language users and the Deaf community. It was amazing to see this service offered." - audience feedback

We continue to position ourselves as a key player in our sector through our courageous and innovative programming and are proud to build a reputation among artists with our manaakitanga and focus on supporting their practice. We are here to support, share, shine a spotlight and uplift our artists to reach their goals.

"Impressed beyond words re PWYC for this allows me to continue supporting this awesome festival which you can be justifiably proud of. Congratulations on taking this thoughtful initiative for making it accessible for many of us pensioners- a guaranteed reading audience." -audience feedback

Championing the transformative power of the arts

"There were so many experiences I will carry for a long time...." - audience feedback

Our programming is diverse and inspiring, surprising, and challenging – and with audience and artists at its heart. World-class touring shows sit alongside emerging artists' first festival appearances and community-led events that celebrate the incredible creative potential in our region.

This year, we found innovative ways to present iconic artists like **Witi Ihimaera**, alongside other writers and poets he has inspired, and **Gráda** whose performance at Neudorf Vineyards served as the perfect finale. We embraced new formats like **Theia x Te Kaahu's** innovative *Girl, In A Savage World* and created a platform for new talents like the young dancers in *Tōrua* and genre-bending musicians in our Deville Music Hub programme en route to hitting international stages. By presenting internationally acclaimed performers such as **Foster Group Dance** and **Laser Kiwi**, award-winning authors like **Tusiata Avia** and comedy powerhouses **Hayley Sproull** and **Kura Forrester** alongside emerging artists including **Elisabeth Pointon**, **Airana Ngarewa**, **Emma Ling Sidnam** and **Keri-Mei Zagrobelna**, we create a Festival that champions artistic excellence and embraces innovation.

"It felt like a fresh new direction for the festival. It's good to be challenged!"

We carefully design events that are **free and accessible** to our whole community, select artists and shows that would otherwise not travel to our region, and challenge ourselves to reach and engage with new audiences, for example through unconventional venues like **Victory Boxing Gym** and the **Airport**, youth-led initiatives like **Tune Up** and **Whispers in the Streets**, and city activations that invite everyone to participate.



"Being invited to participate in the 2023 Arts Festival was a huge area for growth for me and my whānau. It was inspiring and empowering and I became better at public speaking and more confident. Thanks very much for supporting my mahi."
- artist feedback

Audience Growth & Engagement

The positive impact of these experiences and activations on our community is reflected in our audience growth and diversification, our high number of return attendees, the high level of engagement with our online content, and, most importantly, in our community's reports of increased wellbeing and sense of belonging.

"Thank you once again for such a rich, varied and engaging festival. It's definitely a highlight of our year." - audience feedback

- **5,991 tickets sold**
- Plus **52,500+ people** engaging with our free events and exhibitions
- **527 Pukapuka Talks books sold**
- **24% of audience were first time attendees** – a steady growth in building future audiences! (19% new attendees in 2022, 14% in 2021, less than 10% in 2019)
- **Loyal returning audience: 76%** have attended the Festival before
- **94%** Festival goers keen to attend future festivals
- **Continued growth** in reach on our social media platforms, reaching **over 118,500 people** across Facebook and Instagram alone and seeing **26,000 new visits** to our website
- **15,000 programme brochures** printed and distributed
- Widespread coverage across **both local and national media**, attracting audiences to our region
- All our artists told us that they **loved their visit to Whakatū** and were keen to return – as artists or as visitors (or both)

"The arts festival is a wonderful addition to the regional events calendar. The programme is always varied and interesting, and this year didn't disappoint. It was great to have the masked parade back again and the cbd buzzing with a carnival atmosphere. Well done to the team that made the whole thing happen!"



Increased wellbeing & community impact:

- **75% of festival attendees report increases in their feelings of joy, positivity and wellbeing** after coming to Festival events – increased financial accessibility has a direct impact on how many, and how often, people can come to Festival events and feel connected and inspired
- **80% of our audience noticed a difference in feeling connected to their community** through the Festival
- **82% felt inspired** by our diverse offering of experiences
- **68% felt represented** in our 2023 programme

We celebrate our community and rich Festival history with the Mask Carnivale and collaborative partnerships, and build up local talent by pairing amazing Te Taihū musicians with (inter)nationally acclaimed bands.

"I think Nelson can be an old and conservative audience, so I appreciated it all the more when I attended events that made the audience a little uncomfortable. Good on you programmers for that. The news of the day is scary and difficult to deal with: climate crises, humanitarian crises, cost of living crises: any art that helps us to deal with this in constructive ways is very welcome." - audience feedback

We programme works that question and confront the status quo, inspire and celebrate diversity, discuss the urgent topics of our time and invite us to consider the world beyond our own bubble.

The Savage Coloniser Show, Tense, There's a Cure for This and ***Tackling Hate*** (and more!) brought Māori and Pasifika voices to the forefront and set the tone of what we believe art is capable: to incite the power of creativity as a force for positive change.

"Not only inspired but challenged, and believe it sped up change in the fabric of our culture here in Whakatū."



Building audiences for the future through access and innovation

Pay What You Can (PWYC): Improving accessibility to arts experiences

In 2022 and 2023, the Nelson Arts Festival trialled a **Pay What You Can (PWYC) ticketing model across all ticketed events**, responding to feedback in past audience surveys that the highest barrier to attendance was the cost of tickets. We believe that **PWYC makes the Festival more financially accessible to more of our community** and will build a love of the arts in the hearts of those living in Whakatū and beyond.

Innovation in ticketing

Our PWYC ticketing featured **five tiers** from which to choose, including a recommended price point as the middle tier (Tier 3). This recommended tier reflected the traditional Festival ticket price. Any amount paid above this, i.e. Tier 4 and 5, directly offset the lower price points – Tier 4 and 5 ticket buyers were effectively “paying it forward”, supporting others to access Festival events.

“Both shows were worth more than I paid PWYC. But we couldn’t have gone without PWYC. Thanks heaps for being so brave.”
- audience feedback

Key outcomes + insights

Increased accessibility + inclusion:

Looking at our audience numbers, PWYC ticketing significantly **increased financial accessibility** to festival events for many, and has contributed to our growth in first-time festival goers and audience diversification.

“Pay what you can is fantastic for me and allows me to bring more people to the festival. Instead of paying the top price, I can pay a level down and buy a ticket for a friend. I love it.”

On average, people selected the lower tiers in 2023 which reflects the current economic climate – it was really meaningful to receive the feedback from our audience that these ticket options allowed the arts to stay in their lives despite financial constraints.

“I wasn’t in a position to pay full price this year (though I have been in the past). I wouldn’t have attended the event I did had it not been financially accessible to me.”

“It is encouraging that our young rangatahi and those who are struggling with the increased living expenses can attend with the PWYC ticketing.”



Increased diversity + participation:

- In 2019, most Festival goers were a returning audience and we had less than 10% newcomers. In 2023, **24% of attendees came to the Festival for the first time** – a significant growth!
- Of first-time attendees, **87% highlighted PWYC as helpful** towards them attending the Festival. Of those who identify as Māori and Pasifika, **97% note PWYC as helpful** towards access.
- Steady **increase in younger people attending the Festival**, especially for rangatahi (aged 25 and younger), and those aged 30-40.
- More people are able to **attend more events** (e.g. 61% attended 2 events, 27% came to 3-5 events) - the lower tier priced tickets especially aided audiences to experience more of the Festival
- **86%** of survey respondents agree that **PWYC helps increase access** to arts experiences/Festival events; for **91%** this applied to themselves or people they know.
- Over the last two years, we have seen an **increase in Māori, Pasifika, Asian participation throughout** – for example, Māori audiences increased from 3% in 2021 and 6% in 2022 to 10% in 2023

Meaningful contributions through arts experiences:

On top of lowering financial barriers for some members of the community, PWYC also encourages patrons to **pay it forward**:

- **11%** of our overall audience chose to pay Tier 4 or 5
- Among the first-time audience, **27%** chose the higher tiers

This shows that our ticketing and programming also attract new audiences from different socio-economic backgrounds, and that **PWYC can be a valuable tool for individual philanthropy**.

"I'm so glad you offer this, it feels good to be able to pay more now since I'm able, and it was essential for me to attend previous events at lower price points."

"I'm finding life financially tough at the moment so I really appreciated being able to attend a comedy night but pay what you can felt more affordable. I added on a small donation to bring the price I paid up a little, but not quite to the next [PWYC] bracket."

Outlook:

Unfortunately, with the end of 2023 comes the end of our Ministry of Culture and Heritage funding to trial Pay What You Can.

We are very hopeful that we can find a way to continue this incredible initiative ongoing – we believe that affordable access to meaningful arts experiences remains more important than ever for our collective wellbeing in our rapidly changing world, and that our Festival can make a valuable contribution to our community this way - **89% of our community think PWYC should continue** (90% first time attendees say this, 95% of Māori and Pasifika audience)



"I think this was a real game changer, and this was mirrored by many of my peers (and random strangers, too). A huge thanks to the PWYC sponsors MCH and NBS - PLEASE KEEP THIS UP!" - audience feedback



The PWYC ticketing initiative was made possible by funding from The Cultural Sector Innovation Fund, Manatū Taonga | Ministry of Culture and Heritage, as well as the support of our Kārearea Partner, Nelson Building Society (NBS).



BIG, BOLD, BEAUTIFUL:
UNMISSABLE EXPERIENCES,
CRUCIALS CONVERSATIONS
& INSPIRING INTERACTIONS
THROUGHOUT OUR 2023 FESTIVAL.



"Great diversity offered and felt like a buzz around town great to be involved in it."
-audience feedback

ACCESS PROGRAMME

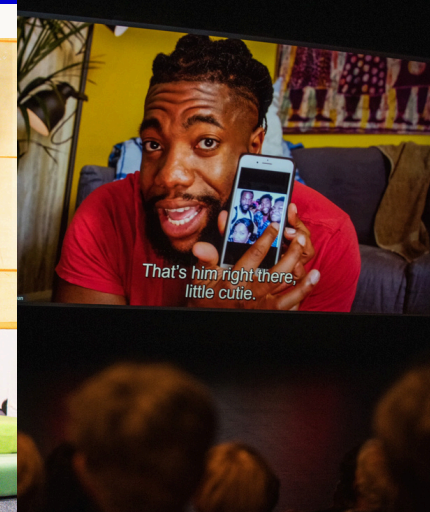
Established in 2022, our **Access Programme** continued to grow this year, expanding our offering specifically tailored to the needs of our blind and low vision, and d/Deaf communities. This year, we presented NZSL interpretation at three major events (*The Savage Coloniser Show*, *Ailments*, *There's A Cure For This*), plus audio-description at *The Savage Coloniser Show*, *Can I Live?* (this event was also fully captioned) and a pre-recorded audio-described exhibition tour as well as a **Touch Tour** of *Sensory Self Portraits*.

Highlights included the **Platform Interpreting NZ's** interpreters (almost) stealing the show at **Hayley Sproull's** *Ailments* – it was noted by the d/Deaf audience members how meaningful it was to have a comedy show that is largely focused on spoken word wit made more accessible to them, while hearing attendees praised the additional level of humour added to the show by Paul and Kelly's interpretation alongside Hayley.



The **Touch Tour** and guided **Visual Arts** experience for the blind and low vision community of *Sensory Self Portraits* and **Karen Sewell's** sculpture at the Nelson Cathedral was a fantastic experience for everyone involved, and we were thrilled to host an exhibition of works that were soothing to all senses.

Despite their focus on colour immersion, the tactility of Bailee Lobb's works and their immersive spaces paired with Ange Pearson's audio description and guidance made the experience highly meaning and capably to meet different access needs. Lobb's work explores her experience of disability and living with chronic illness, and we were honoured to share her perspective and support her art practice with a **new work** concerned with the need for rest, respite, and sleep alongside the soft sculptures.



More generally, great care goes into selecting our Festival locations each year, and we are proud that all our venues are wheelchair accessible and welcome service dogs. **We are committed to continuous investment in removing barriers to and increasing the accessibility of our events and experiences.**

TAMARIKI & RANGATAHI

Within our diverse programme each year, we curate several offerings to spark joy and creativity in curious young minds with school matinees, suitable evening performances and our authors in schools offering (this year, tamariki were invited to become authors themselves, inspired by **Rajorshi and Leela Chakraborti's** funny novel, *The Bad Smell Hotel*).

It is important to us that these opportunities are relevant to our rangatahi; therefore, we aim to create opportunities to participate and get directly involved with the Festival. In 2023, for the second year running, our opening night music event **Tune Up** was youth-led and co-created in collaboration with **Nelson Youth Council** and our Festival partner **RockQuest**. Providing the opportunity for rangatahi to develop skills in event planning and programming provides a sense of ownership and results a great level of participation at the event: a big crowd of young people coming together to celebrate their peers performing, whilst creating a free outdoor music event accessible to the whole community.



Another successful youth project to return in 2023 was our **Whispers in the Streets** installation across inner-city bollards; this time showcasing poster designs featuring the response by first-year NMIT Arts & Media students to our 2023 curatorial intent.



2023 also marked the return of our much-loved community event **Mask Carnivale**, which has traditionally involved numerous schools, community groups and individual makers and performers from across Te Taihū. While there were fewer parade participants in comparison to pre-pandemic years, we were delighted to see **our streets come alive with thousands of people** celebrating the artists performing across the parade, several stages and zones in the Whakatū CBD. Rangatahi and tamariki took centre stage throughout the event with fantastic entries for the Kim Merry Supreme Award in the parade, opening the event with kapa haka by **Nga Ahu Rau**, the Nelson Central School choir performing alongside the **Voice Collective**, and several youth musicians wowing the crowds on the main stages.



PUKAPUKA TALKS

Our 2023 Pukapuka Talks programme featured **33 authors and thought leaders**, with the line-up's diversity reflecting the breadth of who we are here in Aotearoa, including:

- 13 Māori authors
- BIPOC authors made up 54% of our featured writers
- 7 authors from LGBTQIA+ community

Once again, we had a real eye for **artistic excellence** in our programming: eight of our 2023 Pukapuka Talks authors were longlisted for the 2024 Ockham NZ Book Awards, on top of our line-up of earlier winners - with **Tusiata Avia MNZM** being awarded a 2023 Prime Minister's Award for Literary Achievement earlier in the year, **Ariana Tikao** holding a 2020 Arts Foundation Laureate Award, **Emma Ling Sidnam** winning the 2022 Michael Gifkins Prize, which resulted in the publication of her debut novel *Backwaters*, and of course, **Witi Ihimaera DCNZM QSM** having won almost every literary award there is.



Our gala event, which celebrated Witi's outstanding contribution to Aotearoa New Zealand literature over the past 50 years, resulted in a standing ovation from the audience in the sold-out Theatre Royal. We were thrilled to witness the connections formed not only between Witi and his fellow authors on the stage but also to other Festival artists and the wider community. It was a real honour to be welcomed onto **Whakatū Marae** with a pōwhiri in Witi's honour, and to see him kōrero with mana whenua from Te Āwhina Marae at Te Noninga Kumu in Motueka.



VISUAL ARTS



Our Visual Arts programme is further proof of our Festival punching above its weight in dedication to elevating artists: while we are immensely proud to umbrella the beautiful exhibitions of our collaborative gallery partners, we take our commitment one step further by presenting our own programme of visual artists from across Aotearoa and by investing in local talent – **Melissa Banks'** stunning exhibition on kapa haka in Te Taihu, **Te Ara o Hine Rēhia**, was a breakthrough success for our Festival photographer (you can see her images throughout this report) and is now touring to other museum across the motu. **Keri-Mei Zagrobelna's** jewellery- meets-dance-meets-video work *Te Pito* mesmerised passers-by in our city streets every Festival night, while **Bailee Lobb's** *Sensory Self Portraits* transformed the Refinery ArtSpace into soothing colour fields and **Elisabeth Pointon's** *BIG TIME* quite literally popped up at the Nelson Airport and transformed the terminal into a gallery space.



11 DAYS OF UNMISSABLE ARTS EXPERIENCES CAPTURED

NELSON ARTS FESTIVAL



NGĀ MIHI | THANK YOU

It truly takes a village.

Our whānau of partners deserves a round of applause for their support:

MOA PARTNERS:



NelsonMail



KEA PARTNERS:

Downing



**Bowater
Toyota**



VenueTech



KERERŪ PARTNERS:

Tides Hotel Bar Eatery | Orbit World Travel | Avoca Web Design | Fujifilm Business Innovation | Neudorf Vineyards | Tohu Wines | PaperPlus Nelson | Phantom Billstickers | Chia Sisters | Nelson Magazine | Cutting Edge Signs

PĪWAKAWAKA FESTIVAL SUPPORTERS:

NZ Society of Authors Top of the South branch | READ NZ Te Pou Muramura | Resene | Interislander | The Green Collective | Community Art Works | NZ Brochures & Distribution | NRDA | Speedy Signs Nelson | Fineline Architecture | Mainfreight

TŪI PARTNER:

Pic's Peanut Butter

Keen to join our Festival whānau?

Partnership with the Nelson Arts Festival is not a donation but a sound investment in community and a great marketing opportunity for your organisation.

Let's connect: annie@nelsonartsfestival.nz

NELSON ARTS FESTIVAL



AND THAT'S A WRAP, 2023!

To our community:

We're so grateful to our amazing community for showing up for our artists and celebrating them alongside us, for coming out to enjoy the arts experiences that we pour so much love, careful planning and intention into, for bringing your friends and whānau, engaging in our content and sharing your feedback with us.

The Nelson Arts Festival is for you, Whakatū – and with you, because without our community, our annual 11 days of unmissable arts experiences would not be what they are. Thank you.

To our artists:

WOW!! What incredibly talented and generous humans you are. You make us so proud and we love nothing more than celebrate, promote, and share your beautiful art with our community (and the world!). Thank you for sharing your mahi toi with us and for making this Festival what we hope it to be - a celebration of arts and creativity, connection, and community!

And to all our amazing crew, volunteers, partners and funders: Thank you from the bottom of our hearts. This would not have been possible without you.

We cannot wait to do it all over again in 2024 and celebrate our 30th birthday with you!

The Nelson Arts Festival 2023 was made possible with the support of our funders:

CORE FUNDER:



MAJOR FUNDERS:



GRANTS:



NELSON ARTS FESTIVAL



Watch our [2023 Festival](#) & [Mask Carnivale Videos](#)

Find out more:
nelsonartsfestival.nz

Contact us:
info@nelsonartsfestival.nz



"The festival created memories and stirred things within us that will linger long after the festival's conclusion. The festival left its imprint not only in our theatres, galleries, marae, and music venues but more significantly, in the streets!"

My personal highlights were those works that were shaped and experienced on the streets of Whakatū. From winging our way around the awe-inspiring movement of Tōrua to the echoes of the stunning Pasifika voices taking center stage at the Carnivale.

The often quiet and tired streets were alive and brimming with life again. This is my best attempt to give a virtual standing ovation to everyone who made it happen....." - audience feedback

The Nelson Arts Festival returns for its 30th iteration from 24 October to 3 November 2024. Come celebrate!
www.nelsonartsfestival.nz