

NELSON ARTS FESTIVAL

22 OCTOBER – 1 NOVEMBER 2026
[NELSONARTSFESTIVAL.NZ](https://nelsonartsfestival.nz)

NAU MAI, HAERE MAI

I'm delighted to welcome you to this year's Nelson Arts Festival – 11 days that celebrate the creativity, energy and community spirit that makes Nelson such a special place.

Each Spring, this popular event – the longest running annual regional arts festival in New Zealand – brings our community together while welcoming visitors from across the country to experience exceptional theatre, music, dance, literature, visual arts and family events. It's a celebration of creativity that enriches our city culturally, socially and economically.

A particular highlight this year is **Machine de Cirque**, making its exclusive South Island appearance in Nelson. This spectacular international production is a wonderful addition to the programme.

As a proud core funder, Nelson City Council recognises the important role the festival plays in strengthening our city, supporting our creative sector and enriching the lives of residents and visitors. Whether you're discovering a new artist, joining friends at **The Big Swing Street Party** on Saturday 24 October, or simply enjoying the atmosphere around the city, there is something for everyone.

I encourage you to explore the programme, support our artists and venues, and enjoy another outstanding Nelson Arts Festival.

Hon Dr Nick Smith,
Mayor of Nelson | Te Koromatua o Whakatū

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Nelson Arts Festival, now celebrating its 32nd year as New Zealand's longest-running annual regional arts festival.

Arts festivals play an important role in enriching communities, showcasing New Zealand creativity, attracting visitors and supporting regional economies. They also provide opportunities for local artists to share their work alongside leading national and international performers.

This year's programme includes **Machine de Cirque** from Québec, an internationally acclaimed contemporary circus company appearing exclusively in the South Island. The production has been supported through the Government's

Events Boost Fund, which invests in events that encourage more visitors to New Zealand while strengthening our cultural offering.

Alongside this international highlight, the festival presents an outstanding programme of theatre, music, dance, literature, comedy and visual arts that reflects the depth and diversity of our creative sector.

I congratulate Nelson Festivals Trust, its supporters and volunteers for continuing to deliver a festival of national significance, and I hope you enjoy everything this year's programme has to offer.

Hon Paul Goldsmith,
Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage

KIA MAUMAHARA, KI TŌU MANA, ĀHUA AKE

EMBRACE INDIVIDUALITY;
CHERISH YOUR OWN UNIQUENESS.

There are moments in history when simply choosing to gather, create, imagine and celebrate becomes an act of quiet defiance.

Now feels like one of those moments.

At a time when many of us are carrying the weight of uncertainty and division, Nelson Arts Festival leans into **JOY** as an act of collective hope. Not because life is without challenges, but because the arts have always helped us navigate them. Gifting us the courage to imagine differently, to show up for each other, and to strengthen the connections that hold our communities together.

Creativity has long been part of the wairua of Whakatū Nelson. It is reflected in the city's reputation as one of Aotearoa's distinctly creative places. Creativity is alive in our local artists, storytellers, musicians, makers, artisans and in the remarkable landscapes that continue to inspire and hold us. It is woven into who we are.

We're especially proud that this year's programme shines a light on the extraordinary creatives within Whakatū Nelson, alongside outstanding national and international voices.

Across eleven days, the works we've brought together for 2026 ask something of us. They invite us to participate, to connect, to *let go*, to dance, to listen, to question and to grow. They remind us that creativity isn't something reserved for "artists". It belongs to all of us, and when we build it together, it transforms all of us.

This year, we invite you to gather with us in a quiet riot. One that gathers momentum with every conversation and act of curiosity. A riot of joy, generosity, playfulness, learning and discovery. A reminder that our greatest strength has always been each other.

Janelle Bish,
Nelson Arts Festival, Artistic Director



Images: Stéphane Bourgeois

MACHINE DE CIRQUE

MACHINE DE CIRQUE COMPANY



"Endlessly inventive, ridiculously energetic...Machine de Cirque has it all."



TIRI: TE ARAROA WOMAN FAR WALKING

AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY

THEATRE | 12+    

THEATRE ROYAL | THUR 22 OCT +
FRI 23 OCT | 7PM | 90 MIN | \$54 – \$65

An extraordinary mapping of Aotearoa, seen through the eyes of Te Tiriti o Waitangi Mahana. Her story. Our history.

From the acclaimed creator of *The Haka Party Incident*, director **Katie Wolfe** (Ngāti Mutunga, Ngāti Tama) brings this epic tale of Tiri Mahana, a 186-year-old matriarch whose life spans from the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi to present-day Aotearoa. This bilingual retelling by **Witi Ihimaera Smiler** (Te Whānau a Kai, Te Aitanga a Mahaki, Ngāti Ira, Ngāti Porou), Katie Wolfe and **Maioha Allen** (Ngāti Apakura, Waikato Maniapoto) draws on the original play *Woman Far Walking*.

Featuring award-winning actors **Miriama McDowell** (Ngāti Hine, Ngāpuhi) and **Nī Dekkers-Reihana** (Ngāpuhi, Te Rarawa, Ngāti Porou), this powerful production celebrates wāhine Māori and the rangatahi who will carry Aotearoa forward – reminding us that the good things, the right things in life, are worth fighting for.

By Witi Ihimaera Smiler.

Supported By: **Downing**



ARTIST TALK

OPENING NIGHT ONLY

Join us post-performance for a very special kōrero with Katie Wolfe, Witi Ihimaera Smiler, Miriama McDowell and Nī Dekkers-Reihana to hear about the creative evolution of this kaupapa.

THE GATHERING TIDE

CHLOE LOFTUS

COMMUNITY DANCE PROJECT | ALL  

TĀHUNANUI BEACH, ROCKS ROAD | MON 26 OCT
(RAIN DATE, SAT 31 OCT) | PERFORMANCE 7PM | 60 MIN
BEACH DJ UNTIL 10PM | FREE – REGISTER ONLINE

A sunset event of collective joy.

Tāhunanui Beach becomes the stage as internationally acclaimed local artist **Chloe Loftus** brings the community of Whakatū together in a bold, large-scale celebration of place and belonging. Featuring local people at the centre of the work, this immersive sunset experience unfolds through movement, music, ritual and collective joy, ending with a shared swim and beach party beneath the night sky, featuring **DJ Alvaro Saura Moreno**.

Stay tuned for ways to participate in this one-off festival experience.

Supported By:



Image: Loren Pasquier

SWING

IAN PIDD

COMMUNITY ARTS |  

UPPER TRAFALGAR STREET
THUR 22 OCT – SAT 31 OCT
DAILY, SEE WEBSITE | FREE

Swing is big, beautiful and joyous.

A giant, playful, bright yellow swing. Almost 9 meters tall. It's the swing of your childhood. It is spectacular and eye catching and as you approach the giant plaything you notice there is quite a crowd. People are lining up waiting to have a go. Whether you are a teenager, an adult, in a wheelchair, willing or slightly nervous, everyone wants to play.

Swing riders must be 120cm or taller.



Image: Ian Pidd

THE BIG SWING STREET PARTY

NELSON ARTS FESTIVAL

COMMUNITY ARTS |  

UPPER TRAFALGAR STREET
SAT 24 OCT | 12PM – 6PM | FREE

Join us on Upper Trafalgar Street for a joyful explosion of culture, creativity and community on Saturday 24 October.

This will be a vibrant and fun-filled day with live performances, music, dancing, roving artists and interactive experiences. At its centre, Swing plays host to *Sarees on the Swing* and performances from rising stars of Te Taihū.

Presented By: **NelsonMail**

Image: Steve Hussey

YMCĀ

ATAMIRA DANCE COMPANY

MĀORI CONTEMPORARY DANCE | 16+    

THEATRE ROYAL | SAT 31 OCT
7.30PM | 60 MIN | \$40 – \$49

Atamira Dance Company presents **YMCĀ** by choreographer **Oli Mathiesen** (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Hine, Ngāti Manu).

A bold takatāpui rebirth of the Village People, paralleling the pop culture icons through a discography of performed identities. The archetypes, macho men, and staging of queerness and indigeneity are all interrogated. 1970s luxe meets 18th-century bloodshed – a disco interior with a cultural inferior.

Alluring, camp-soaked, and unapologetically original. Appropriation has never looked so good.

Supported By: **MORE FM**
NELSON 92.8
GOLDEN BAY 92.0
MURCHISON 94.7



Photographer: Sophie Miya-Smith
Campaign Creative Director: Kaan Hiini

WEREWOLF

BINGE CULTURE

THRILLER / COMEDY / THEATRE | 12+     

THEATRE ROYAL | MON 26 OCT
2PM + 7PM | 70 MIN | \$35 – \$44

A lycanthropy outbreak has begun. A seven-day lockdown is declared over an emergency broadcast, and you have been summoned to the local shelter, where three ill-equipped wardens keep watch over a makeshift community that must learn to work together. But as the threat outside takes shape, the atmosphere inside begins to turn.

Inspired by the classic game of deception, **Werewolf** is a gripping blend of thriller and dark comedy, pulling you into an immersive world of suspicion, survival and uneasy laughter.

Heart-pounding sound design,
razor-sharp performances
and a daring, darkly funny
style. This cult hit asks:
when night falls, who do
you trust?

Supported By:

NBS | Community
We believe. We invest.

THE VALENTINA

THE REBEL ALLIANCE

THEATRE / WHĀNAU |    

THE PASTORIUS WALLER THEATRE AT THE SUTER
FRI 30 OCT, 1PM + SAT 31 OCT, 10.30AM | 60 MIN | \$19 – \$26

A live radio play. With pictures!

Join 8-year-old Ellen and her trusted crew members Neil Armstrong, Yuri Gagarin, Valentina Tereshkova and Laika the space dog on an extraordinary journey, past the edge of the unknown, and onto the surface of the mysterious and dangerous planet, Vitanonan X.

A family friendly adventure for anyone who's looked to the stars and imagined the cosmos.

The Valentina was commissioned by Auckland Live as a world premiere for *Te Ahurei Toi o Tāmaki* Auckland Arts Festival 2024.

Supported By:



Funded By:



BYLLIE-JEAN

BYLLIE-JEAN

MUSIC | 18+   18+ unless with a guardian

DEVILLE | SAT 31 OCT | DOORS OPEN 7PM,
SUPPORT ACTS* 8PM, BYLLIE-JEAN 9.30PM
120 MIN | \$27- \$35

If *Indie Trap* with a touch of *Sci-fi* and *Theatrical RnB* all birthed a fairy – it would be **Byllie-jean**. Bringing the acclaimed world of her EP *Filter* into a live experience along with a collection of new, unreleased songs emerging from her current creative practice. Byllie-jean writes and sings to find peace in rhythm, sovereignty through synthesisers and transcendence from the humanoid pandemonium via 808s. She rides the same tail winds as the hoards of shapeshifters and storytellers with oro to offer as reciprocation for life on a magical and generous planet.

**Support artists to be announced.*

Supported By:



THE PHOENIX FOUNDATION – LIVE AT NEUDORF

THE PHOENIX FOUNDATION

MUSIC | ALL  

NEUDORF VINEYARDS | SUN 1 NOV | DOORS OPEN 12PM,
SHOW STARTS 2PM | 70 MIN | \$54 – \$65

Wellington's **The Phoenix Foundation** have released numerous EPs/singles and seven albums. Their eighth is on the way! Be one of the first to hear new music from this iconic Aotearoa band who have toured the world, scored **Taika Waititi** films, collaborated with the **NZSO** and sung on The Interislander. Their music will outlive the Holocene era.

Supported By:



Image: Ebony Lamb

Ā MUA CHAMBER MUSIC NEW ZEALAND X TINA MAKERETI + RIKI PIRIHI

MUSIC | ALL  

THE PASTORIUS WALLER THEATRE AT THE SUTER
SAT 24 OCT | 7.30PM | 70 MIN | \$15 – \$59

Weaving the powerful kupu of acclaimed author and narrator **Tina Makereti** and composer and conductor **Riki Pirihi**'s visionary Rangatuone approach to composition, **Ā Mua** brings Māori futurism to life. Through four movements inspired by the Māori creation story, the work journeys from the elemental to the contemporary, grounded in mātauranga Māori.

"Ki te whaiao, ki te Ao Mārama. Light comes into the world. Matter spirals into being. The history of humanity rolls out, longer and more fascinating and complicated than we can imagine, and you have lived many lives through it, coming into and out of being."



CHOOKS

"The best live show
of the year"

The Press

COMEDY | 16+   

THE BOATHOUSE | THUR 29 OCT, 8.30PM
+ FRI 30 OCT, 7PM | 60 MIN | \$31.50 – \$35,
SEE WEBSITE FOR DOUBLE BILL DISCOUNT

CHOOKS is a riot of comedy, cabaret, clowning and gloriously unhinged chicken impressions. Join passionate chicken farmer Bridget and her netball team as they bring Las Vegas razzle-dazzle to rural Aotearoa. Expect rapid-fire sketches, show-stopping songs and hilarious dance routines in a wild, weird and wonderful celebration of women who refuse to disappear, settle down or behave themselves. Directed by **Tessa Water**.

Supported By:



Image: Emma Brittenden

DOING GREAT BAILEY POCHING

COMEDY | 16+ 

THE BOATHOUSE | THUR 29 OCT | 6.30PM | 60 MIN
\$27 – \$30, SEE WEBSITE FOR DOUBLE BILL DISCOUNT

Bailey Poching is doing great.

One of Aotearoa's most exciting new comedic voices delivers his critically acclaimed solo show, digging into grief, avoidance, and the absurd notion of convincing everyone you're okay.

Bailey is a star on the rise – featuring in Netflix's *North of North*, *7 Days* and winner of Best Debut at the NZ International Comedy Festival.

Supported By:



Image: Sacha Stejko

BATTLE CHORUS – DISCO

TUATARA COLLECTIVE

MUSIC – SINGALONG |  

NCMA | SAT 24 OCT | 8.30PM
90 MIN | \$36 – \$44

BATTLE CHORUS is heading back to Whakatū Nelson by popular demand – this time with a glittering DISCO twist!

Led by musical legend **Jason Te Mete** and introducing the glamorous **Jodes Langdon**, audiences grab a drink, join a team, and boogie-on-down to the greatest disco hits of all time. No singing experience required, just bring your shower voice, your pointing finger, and your smoothest disco outfit for the best night out you'll have in ages.

Supported By:



Image: Auckland Live

ONE NIGHT RANT

JAMES NOKISE

COMEDY |  

THE BOATHOUSE | FRI 30 OCT | 9PM | 60 MIN
\$27 – \$30, SEE WEBSITE FOR DOUBLE BILL DISCOUNT

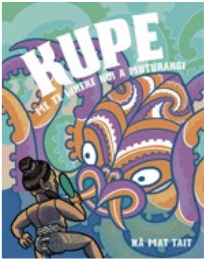
A constant sellout hit – award-winning comedian and journalist, **James Nokise**, has a brand new rant for 2026. With the same targets; our unpopular politicians – with their clumsy and cartoonish shenanigans. With his deep-cutting, jam-packed deconstructions of the headline-inducing people and policies, Nokise will get you cheering and jeering at the state of the nation all while laughing along at just how farcical things have become.

Supported By:



Image: Matt Grace

	SAT 17 PRE-FEST	WED 21 PRE-FEST	THU 22 OPENING NIGHT	FRI 23	SAT 24 LONG WEEKEND	SUN 25 LONG WEEKEND
IN YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD				TUNE UP 5.30pm (180min) Kirby Lane	THE BIG SWING STREET PARTY 12pm – 6pm Upper Trafalgar Street, 1903 Stage	
NCMA				THE SWIMMER & THE WHALES 12.30pm (60min) TOWARDS THE TRUTH 7.30pm (60min)	NIGHT, MA 10am (60min) THE STORIES WE TELL OURSELVES 1pm (60min) BEHIND THE HEADLINES 3.30pm (60min) BATTLE CHORUS – DISCO 8.30pm (90min)	BIG WORLDS IN SHORT 10am (60min) PĀPĀ VS THE PATRIARCHY 1pm (60min) WRITING THE FUTURE ON CLIMATE 3.30pm (75min) WRITERS WRITE: ACTORS READ 7pm (60min)
FAIRFIELD HOUSE						
THE PASTORIOUS WALLER THEATRE AT THE SUTER					Ā MUA 7.30pm (70min)	SHOW ME SHORTS 10am – Whānau Friendly 2pm – The Sampler 5.30pm – Aotearoa (All screenings 90min)
THEATRE ROYAL	COUCH STORIES 7pm (90min)		TIRI: TE ARAROA WOMAN FAR WALKING 7pm (90min) Post-show Artist kōrero: 8.45pm (30min)	TIRI: TE ARAROA WOMAN FAR WALKING 7pm (90min)		
TE NONINGA KUMU MOTUEKA LIBRARY	GO HARD OR GO HOME 6pm (60min)				LEVITY BEET – BAMBOO BUCKET BOING 10am (50min)	
THE BOATHOUSE						
THROUGHOUT FESTIVAL			SWING Thurs 22 Oct – Sat 31 Oct Upper Trafalgar			
	UNRAVELLING THE SAREE: BEYOND THE FOLD Fri 28 Aug – Sun 15 Nov Nelson Provincial Museum					
			CREATIVE CANS Thur 22 Oct – Sun 1 Nov Pop-Up Venue			



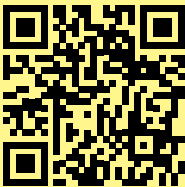
TAMARIKI AND RANGATAHI PROGRAMME

We’re delighted to bring you a bespoke programme of events for Tamariki & Rangatahi as part of the 2026 Nelson Arts Festival. For more information visit our website or scan the QR code.

nelsonartsfestival.nz/participate/tamariki-rangatahi

MON 26 LONG WEEKEND	TUE 27	WED 28	THU 29	FRI 30	SAT 31 CLOSING WEEKEND	SUN 1 CLOSING WEEKEND
BEHIND THE HILL, BESIDE THE SEA 5pm (60min) Tāhunanui School Hall THE GATHERING TIDE 7pm (60min) Beach DJ until 10pm (Rain date Sat 31 Oct) Tāhunanui Beach, Rocks Road	PLANT FIEND 6pm (60min) The Village Theatre, Tākaka	MURDER & MOJITOS 5.30pm (60min) Kismet Cocktail & Whisky Bar WHERE CONVERSATION SPEAKS AND MUSIC FLOWS 7.30pm (90min) WAA! Club		MACHINE DE CIRQUE 7pm (70min) Trafalgar Centre	MACHINE DE CIRQUE 2pm (70min) Trafalgar Centre THE CLEAN: IN THE DREAMLIFE 5pm (75min) The Vic Public House BYLLIE-JEAN 7pm – Doors Open 8pm – Support Act 9.30pm – Main Act Deville	THE PHOENIX FOUNDATION – LIVE AT NEUDORF 12pm – Doors open 2pm – Show Starts Neudorf Vineyards
ALL HER LIVES 10.30am (60min) MAKING SENSE & MAKING FUN 1pm (60min)						
			ECHOES 8pm (90min)	ECHOES 8pm (90min)	FEMINIST CLOWN POSSE 11am (120min) ECHOES 8pm (90min)	
				THE VALENTINA 1pm (60min)	THE VALENTINA 10.30am (60min)	
WEREWOLF 2pm & 7pm (70min)		KAPA HAKA – THROUGH A LENS 5.30pm (90min)			YMCĀ 7.30pm (60min)	
				DOING GREAT 6.30pm (60min) CHOOKS 8.30pm (60min)	CHOOKS 7pm (60min) ONE NIGHT RANT 9pm (60min)	
TĀHAE: STOLEN FROM THE MUSEUM Mon 26 Oct – Wed 18 Nov Tāwera						

BOOK YOUR TICKETS ONLINE



Scan to book online, and for more information about our events, venues, accessibility and content warnings.
nelsonartsfestival.nz/events

BOOK YOUR TICKETS IN PERSON

Theatre Royal
78 Rutherford Street | 12 – 4PM weekdays
Phone: 03 548 3840 (Select 1)
Nelson Centre of Musical Arts (NCMA)
48 Nile Street | 10AM – 4PM weekdays

ECHOES

MARTINE BAANVINGER

THEATRE | 12+ 

FAIRFIELD HOUSE | THUR 29 OCT – SAT 31 OCT
8PM | 90 MIN | \$27 – \$35

Echoes invites audiences to discover the rich history of Fairfield House and the whenua on which it stands, told through the voice of the house itself. As past and future intertwine, stories of those who lived, walked and returned here come to life. Through immersive sound, light and projection, Fairfield House becomes a living storyteller in a powerful theatrical journey of place, memory and belonging.

Supported By:



Image: Carry Dobbs

TĀHAE: STOLEN FROM THE MUSEUM

KAHU PAKI PAKI

VISUAL ARTS EXHIBITION | ALL 

TĀWERA | MON 26 OCT – WED 18 NOV
DAILY, SEE WEBSITE | FREE

Drawn from a lifetime of admiration for the cultural expression of the past, this exhibition is a cheeky act of quiet rebellion, reclaiming ownership of our taonga tuku iho. Recognising that many of us experienced our taonga and Māori art only through museum glass, it uses imagination to recreate these treasures for everyday access.

Led by carver and artist **Kahu Paki Paki**, this exhibition offers an intimate portal into the recreation of taonga by some of Te Taihū o Te Waka a Māui's most talented carvers, weavers and makers.

Supported By:

Image: Kahu Paki Paki

LEVITY BEET – BAMBOO BUCKET BOING

YELLOW EYE LTD

MUSIC / WHĀNAU |



TE NONINGA KUMU MOTUEKA LIBRARY
SAT 24 OCT | 10AM | 50 MIN
FREE – REGISTER ONLINE

Levity creates heartfelt, interactive performances for children of all ages, inspired by a love of music, sound and creativity. Using inventive instruments crafted from repurposed everyday objects alongside guitar and ukulele, he shares humorous songs that spark curiosity, creativity, connection and a deeper appreciation of the natural world.

Supported By: **cooper**
savage

Image: Nicholas Hollis

UNRAVELLING THE SAREE: BEYOND THE FOLD

NELSON PROVINCIAL MUSEUM

EXHIBITION |



NELSON PROVINCIAL MUSEUM | FRI 28 AUG – SUN 15 NOV
GALLERY OPENING HOURS | FREE

A community-led exhibition celebrating the South Asian saree as both a traditional and contemporary living garment, the exhibition explores the stories, cultural meanings, memories and personal connections carried in sarees from India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Pakistan. Embracing all bodies, the exhibition considers the saree as a powerful expression of culture, identity, resistance and creativity.

SHOW ME SHORTS

INTERNATIONAL SHORT FILM FESTIVAL

FILM |   *Check website for film ratings

THE PASTORIUS WALLER THEATRE AT THE SUTER
SUN 25 OCT | 90 MIN PER SESSION | \$14 – \$18

Whānau Friendly: 10am – 11.30am

The Sampler: 2pm – 3.30pm

Aotearoa Shorts: 5.30pm – 7pm

At **Show Me Shorts**, audiences can expect a handpicked selection of bold, original short films from Aotearoa and around the world. From laugh-out-loud comedies and moving dramas to inspiring documentaries and innovative animation, every screening offers a diverse mix of stories and the chance to discover exciting new filmmakers and fresh perspectives.

Supported By:

FUJIFILM

SHOW ME SHORTS FILM FESTIVAL

FEMINIST CLOWN POSSE

TESSA WATERS

WORKSHOP [PHYSICAL THEATRE] |  

FAIRFIELD HOUSE | SAT 31 OCT | 11AM
120 MIN | \$18 – \$20 REGISTRATION

An inclusive, clown and physical comedy workshop led by multi-award-winning comedian and director of Chooks Cabaret, **Tessa Waters**. Open-access and mixed-experience, friendly, welcoming first-time performers alongside seasoned professionals, all bodies welcome (yes, you too fellas!).

Whether you want to hone your performance skills or just learn how to discover joy, presence and connection in a new way – this workshop is for you.

TUNE UP

ROCKQUEST

MUSIC |   

KIRBY LANE | FRI 23 OCT
5.30PM | 180 MIN | FREE

A huge opening weekend highlight of **Nelson Arts Festival – Tune Up** returns, with an incredible line up of rangatahi musicians, all programmed by our amazing young folx at **Nelson Youth Council**, with tautoko from **Rockquest**.

Grab a bite from the food carts and immerse yourself within the glowing future of Aotearoa live music scene right here in Whakatū.

Supported By:



Image: Steve Hussey

WHERE CONVERSATION SPEAKS AND MUSIC FLOWS

CULTURAL CONVERSATIONS

MUSIC |  

WAA! CLUB | WED 28 OCT | 7.30PM | 90 MIN
SEED \$5, GROWTH \$15, IMPACT \$25

Where Conversations Speak and Music Flows brings together four musicians from different cultural traditions, meeting for the first time on stage. Through stories, improvisation and shared creativity, they weave a unique musical dialogue that celebrates diversity, connection and belonging. More than a performance, it's an invitation to experience music as a universal language of exchange and humanity.

PUKAPUKA TALKS

Presented By:



Join 32 beloved authors, exciting new voices and expert commentators for kōrero, storytelling and thought leadership on the subjects that matter.

This year, alongside Booker Prize and Ockham NZ Book Award winners, and other literary luminaries, we are celebrating local authors – around half of our storytellers live in the Nelson/Tasman region. All books will be on sale at our festival bookstore, thanks to Paper Plus Nelson, with authors available for book signings after their sessions.

PUKAPUKA TALKS DISCOUNT:

Book 3 or more tickets and save 25% off all tickets with a Pukapuka Discount!

Can be used to purchase tickets to 3 or more events in a single transaction.

GO HARD OR GO HOME

TE NONINGA KUMU MOTUEKA LIBRARY
WED 21 OCT | 6PM | 60 MIN | \$18.50 – \$25

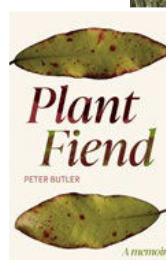
Honest, fierce and deeply moving, **Kiri Allan's** memoir asks what it costs to keep going when you can't live in half measures, and what it takes to rebuild your life after a series of poor choices. Kiri will kōrero with **Kerensa Johnston** about finding her way back to Te Ao Marama.



PLANT FIEND

VILLAGE THEATRE TĀKAKA | TUES 27 OCT
6PM | 60 MIN | \$18.50 – \$25

In *Plant Fiend*, **Peter Butler** explores his relationship with plants, which have always been both a love and a refuge – and led to the establishment and success of both Forest Herbs Research and HealthPost. Peter's memoir is the story of a driven, risk-taking entrepreneur. His successes and struggles are described with honesty, warts and all. Chaired by **Robbie Burton**.



THE SWIMMER & THE WHALES



NCMA | FRI 23 OCT | 12.30PM
60 MIN | \$18.50 – \$25

Join **Witi Ihimaera Smiler** for an intimate kōrero about how he reclaimed his voice, history and whakapapa by studying te reo Māori. Today a youthful 82-year-old, Witi is more prolific than ever, with three books out in 2026.

Witi will kōrero with filmmaker **Hamish Bennett** about his new memoir, *Te Kaikaukau | The Swimmer*, as well as his highly anticipated new YA novel, *The Star Path of the Whales: A Return to the Realm of The Whale Rider*, which revisits the classic novel that became the classic film. They will also discuss *Ariā and the Monster Island*, the third children's book in the Astromancer series.

Supported by:



TOWARDS THE TRUTH



NCMA | FRI 23 OCT | 7.30PM
60 MIN | \$18.50 – \$25

Sri Lankan author **Shehan Karunatilaka** discusses his life and literary adventures since winning the 2022 Booker Prize for his astonishing novel, *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida*, and explores how fiction can illuminate the darkest corners of our psyche. Set in the 'In Between', this supernatural murder mystery recounts photographer Maali Almeida's attempts to navigate a bureaucratic, crowded afterlife to uncover the truth of his death. While the story is a satire that examines power and bureaucracy in the past, it is also an invitation to explore personal and political questions equally relevant today. Chaired by **Ahmed Osman**.

Supported by:



Image: Dominic Sansoni



NIGHT, MA ALL 🔊

NCMA | SAT 24 OCT | 10AM
60 MIN | \$18.50 – \$25

Twelve years in the making, *Night, Ma* is **Elizabeth Knox**'s intimate account of how she and her family contended with a series of calamities in rapid succession. With **Kim Hill** guiding the conversation, Elizabeth will dive deep on the process of bringing this daring, revealing and compassionate memoir into the world.



Image: Ebony Lamb

THE STORIES WE TELL OURSELVES ALL 🔊

NCMA | SAT 24 OCT | 1PM
60 MIN | \$18.50 – \$25

Charlotte Grimshaw and **Josie Shapiro** discuss their latest novels, *The Black Monk* and *Good Things Come and Go*, in which they explore complex family dynamics, the lingering effects of grief and trauma, the urge to create art, and the dark shadow cast by addiction and secrets. Chaired by **Kiran Dass**.



Images: Ebony Lamb

BEHIND THE HEADLINES ALL 🔊

NCMA | SAT 24 OCT | 3.30PM
60 MIN | \$18.50 – \$25

Kiri Allan's *Go Hard or Go Home* and **Charlotte Glennie**'s *Every Second Counts* are both honest and hard-hitting memoirs that begin with accidents that dramatically changed the course of their lives. This is a rare opportunity to hear from two women who have lived life at full speed. Chaired by **Naomi Arnold**.

Supported by:  **MARUIA**
RIVER RETREAT

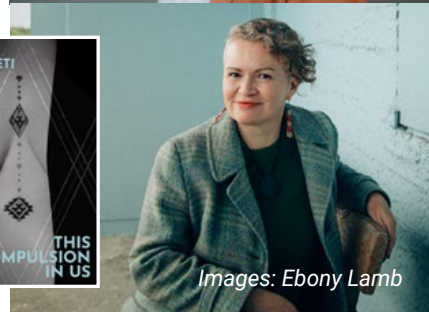
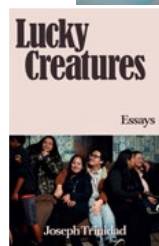


BIG WORLDS IN SHORT



NCMA | SUN 25 OCT | 10AM
60 MIN | \$18.50 – \$25

Join 2026 Ockham New Zealand General Nonfiction Book Award winner **Tina Makereti** and 2023 Adam Prize winner **Joseph Trinidad** as they unveil the lives of their ancestors in order to understand themselves. From the macro to the micro, this session explores how short creative nonfiction can shine the light on who we are and our place in the world; how understanding our own family can lead to self-understanding. Chaired by **Sylvan Thomson**.



Images: Ebony Lamb

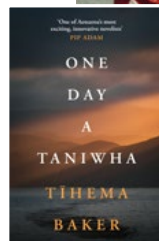
PĀPĀ VS THE PATRIARCHY



NCMA | SUN 25 OCT | 1PM
60 MIN | \$18.50 – \$25

Tihema Baker and **Lawrence Patchett** discuss their latest books, *One Day a Taniwha* and *Have This Heart*, and reflect on aspects of fatherhood and masculinity that aren't often talked about, let alone explored in literature. This deep dive into stories about men who strive for more will be chaired by **Matty Anderson**.

Supported by:



Images: Ebony Lamb

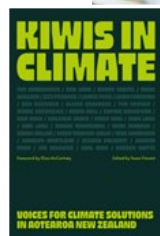
WRITING THE FUTURE ON CLIMATE



NCMA | SUN 25 OCT | 3.30PM
75 MIN | \$18.50 – \$25

In this solutions-focused session chaired by **Kim Hill**, three visionaries in the field – *Kiwis in Climate* contributing author **Barry Coates**, founder and co-CEO of Mindful Money; **Trisia Farrelly** ONZM, who is a Senior Research Scientist at Cawthron Institute; and **Aneika Young**, who is Te Ao Māori Advisor at The Nature Conservancy – will explore how tackling climate change can improve our lives.

Supported by:



ALL HER LIVES

NCMA | MON 26 OCT | 10.30AM
60 MIN | \$18.50 – \$25

Join us to celebrate the nine interlinking tales that comprise *All Her Lives*, this year's Jann Medlicott Acorn Fiction Prize winner at the 2026 Ockham New Zealand Book Awards. Learn why **Ingrid Horrocks**, the author of creative nonfiction and poetry books, turned to fiction – and the short story form, in particular – and why she believes reading about and imagining possibilities for hope is more radical than invoking dystopia. Chaired by **Claire Williamson**.



Image: Ebony Lamb

MAKING SENSE & MAKING FUN

NCMA | MON 26 OCT | 1PM
60 MIN | \$18.50 – \$25

Joseph Trinidad's *Lucky Creatures*, is a bold and playful collection about rebuilding life after his family emigrated from the Philippines. Standup comedian **Pax Assadi**, who grew up in a Pakistani/Iranian immigrant family, will be discussing his joyfully chaotic memoir, *Mortified*, which explores what we gain by embracing moments that make us cringe. Chaired by **Ahmed Osman**.

Supported by:  Rout Milner Fitchett

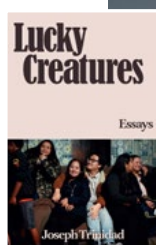


Image: Ebony Lamb

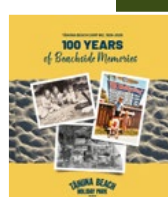
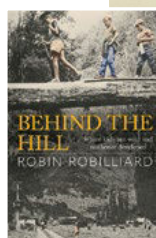


Image: Julie Zhu

BEHIND THE HILL, BESIDE THE SEA

TĀHUNANUI SCHOOL HALL | MON 26 OCT
5PM | 60 MIN | \$18.50 – \$25

Emma Gilkison and **Robin Robilliard** discuss the two remarkable social history books they have written about two of the most beloved locations in Te Taihū, the Top of the South Island: Tāhunanui Beach and Mōhua Golden Bay. Central to both books are the stories told by those who have called these two places 'home', whether for a holiday, a season or for decades. Chaired by **Kerry Sunderland**.

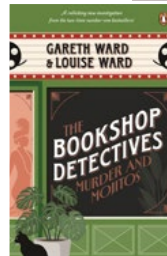


MURDER & MOJITOS 18+

KISMET COCKTAIL & WHISKY BAR
WED 28 OCT | 5.30PM | 60 MIN | \$27 – \$30

The mojitos will be flowing when **Gareth** and **Louise Ward** convene at Kismet to discuss *Murder and Mojitos*, book three in the bestselling *Bookshop Detectives* series. In this high-stakes final instalment, Art Deco glamour, a Cuban crime queen and a grammar-obsessed killer collide. Chaired by **Doug Brooks**.

Supported by: 



KAPA HAKA THROUGH A LENS ALL

THEATRE ROYAL | WED 28 OCT | 5.30PM
90 MIN | FREE – REGISTER ONLINE

Te Ara o Hine Rēhia is a visual foray into the world of kapa haka, told through the lens of photographer **Melissa Banks** and her husband **Jeremy Banks**. Each chapter in the book covers one of the seven different disciplines that make up a kapa haka bracket, evoking the emotions and feelings association with that item. Chaired by **David de Thierry**.

Supported by: 



THE CLEAN: IN THE DREAMLIFE 18+ 18+ unless with a guardian

THE VIC PUBLIC HOUSE | SAT 31 OCT
5PM | 75 MIN | \$27 – \$30

In *The Clean: in the dreamlife you need a rubber soul*, **Richard Langston** records the definitive story of the band that pioneered a low-fi, do-it-yourself approach to rock music and helped establish independent music label, *Flying Nun Records*. He will be quizzed by one of the band's biggest fans, music reviewer **Grant Smithies**, followed by a celebration of their iconic sound.



WRITERS WRITE: ACTORS READ

BRIDGET VAN DER ZIJPP

PUKAPUKA TALKS | ALL AD

NCMA AUDITORIUM, ON STAGE
SUN 25 OCT | 7PM | 60 MIN | \$18.50 – \$25

Writers Write: Actors Read, which features well-known actors reading short stories by Aotearoa's best writers, will be recorded live at this year's Nelson Arts Festival. **Doug Brooks** will read **Lawrence Patchett's** story, *Big Bastard*, and **Donna Botha** will read **Susanna Elliffe's** story, *Patron Saints of Roadkill*. Series Curator **Bridget van der Zijpp** will introduce the readings.



WRITERS
WRITE:
ACTORS
READ



COUCH STORIES ORIGINS

STORYTELLING | 18+ AD

THEATRE ROYAL | SAT 17 OCT 7PM | 90 MIN | \$25

This year we're exploring beginnings in all their wild and wonderful forms. Maybe ancestral threads or childhood mischief, perhaps the spark that launched a career, an unexpected obsession, or even a twist of local history. **Origins** invites ten Nelson locals to trace where the story began, wherever that beginning happens to be. Funny, heartfelt, and always human, it's an evening of true stories shaped by the starts that shape us.

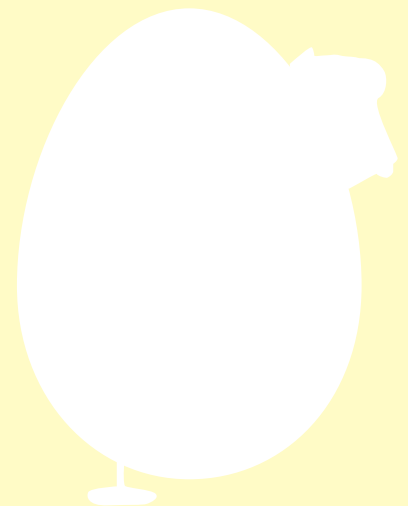


Image: Andy Anreder

CREATIVE CANS

VISUAL ARTS EXHIBITION | ALL

POP-UP VENUE, SEE WEBSITE FOR DETAILS
THUR 22 OCT – SUN 1 NOV | FREE

Creative Cans is an art collaboration between the **Nelson Arts Festival** and **NMIT's** Level 5 Digital Art and Media students. Led by local artist and tutor **Klaasz Breukel**, students will design cans and posters that are to be displayed. The project offers NMIT's creative ākonga the chance to connect with the Festival's curatorial theme while creating visual artworks and designs that showcase their views, talents and skills to the community.

BOOKING INFORMATION

BOOK YOUR TICKETS ONLINE

You can book tickets for all our events on our website:

nelsonartsfestival.nz/events



Scan to book online, and for more information about our events, venues, accessibility and content warnings.

BOOK YOUR TICKETS IN PERSON

Swing by our friendly Box Offices if you prefer to book in person:

Theatre Royal

78 Rutherford Street
12 – 4PM weekdays
Phone: 03 548 3840 (Select 1)

Nelson Centre of Musical Arts (NCMA)

48 Nile Street
10AM – 4PM weekdays

WE'RE COMMITTED TO ACCESSIBLE PRICING FOR OUR COMMUNITY

When you book a ticket for Nelson Arts Festival events, you'll find a range of ticket options to suit different situations. These may include:

Early Bird Tickets

Book your tickets early to receive a discounted price for selected shows.

Card Holders Rate

Concession prices for community services & student card holders.

Pukapuka Talks Multi-Show Discount

Buy a bundle of three or more tickets* to a range of Pukapuka Talks shows and receive a discounted price of 25%.

* This offer is for individuals, cannot be used for multiple tickets to a single event. Use our Group Discount for group bookings.

Whānau Discount

Book four or more tickets to one of our whānau shows to receive discounted pricing options.

Comedy Double Bill Discount

10% off* each ticket when purchasing tickets to two Comedy Double Bill performances on the same night.

*Card Holder Discount not applicable on this offer

Group Discount

For selected shows, book five or more tickets within a single transaction to receive a discounted price.

Questions about bookings?

Visit: nelsonartsfestival.nz/information

Email: boxoffice@theatreroyalnelson.co.nz

ACCESSIBILITY

ACCESSIBILITY AT NELSON ARTS FESTIVAL

We're passionate about providing accessibility for our community and a safe space for all.

Every event listing includes information about accessibility, and where needed, an alert symbol to indicate content warnings.

For full details of each performance, visit individual show listings on our website: nelsonartsfestival.nz/events

VENUE AND EVENT ACCESSIBILITY

All our venues are wheelchair accessible and welcome service dogs. We have accessibility symbols on all our event listings to help you navigate the programme.

Our website has extended information on all venue accessibility, including venue access and companion seats

Our website also has in-depth information about specific show accessibility, including shows that are highly visual, without major language barriers, NZ Sign Language interpreted or audio-based and/or audio-described.

QUESTIONS ABOUT ACCESSIBILITY?

Visit: nelsonartsfestival.nz/information

Email: access@nelsonartsfestival.nz

CONTENT & ACCESSIBILITY

-  Audio Based
-  Audio Described
-  Captioned Performance
-  Highly Visual
-  Low/No Language Barrier
-  NZSL Interpreted
-  Content Warning
-  Hearing Assistive Technology Available

AGE RECOMMENDATIONS

-  ALL
-  12+
-  16+
-  18+

SCAN FOR MORE INFORMATION



Content &
accessibility
informaton



View all
events

Text too small?

A large print version of this print programme is also available for download on our website.

OUR FESTIVAL WHĀNAU OF PARTNERS

Our whānau of partners stand alongside us, making bold ideas possible and helping create a festival that inspires, connects and celebrates Whakatū Nelson. From the joyful Pīwakawaka to the mighty Moa, every partner plays an essential part in this shared journey.

CORE FUNDER



MAJOR FUNDERS



GRANTS



Community Organisation Grants Scheme (COGs) |
Nelson Creative Communities Scheme | Network Tasman Trust |
Tasman Creative Communities Scheme | Top of the South
Community Foundation

MOA PARTNERS



KĀREAREA PARTNERS



KEA PARTNERS



OUR VENUE PARTNERS

Deville | Fairfield House | Kismet Cocktail &
Whisky Bar | Nelson Centre of Musical Arts (NCMA) |
Nelson Provincial Museum Pupuri Taonga o Te Tai
Ao | Neudorf Vineyards | Tāhunanui School Hall |
Tāwera | Te Noninga Kumu Motueka Public Library |
The Boathouse | The Suter Art Gallery Te Aratoi o
Whakatū | Theatre Royal | Trafalgar Centre |
Village Theatre Tākaka | WAA! Club

KERERŪ PARTNERS



TŪI PARTNERS

Pic's Peanut Butter |
Orbit World Travel

PĪWAKAWAKA FESTIVAL SUPPORTERS

Community Art Works | Nelson | NRDA |
NZ Brochures & Distribution | Proper Crisps |
Speedy Signs

INTERESTED IN JOINING OUR PARTNERS WHĀNAU?

Scan QR code
to find out more



NGĀ MIHI

A huge, heartfelt thank you to everyone that makes this festival happen. Thank you to our team of dedicated contractors, volunteers and to our community and audience who come out and celebrate with us. Thank you to the artists who share their incredible mahi and to the awesome people who support them!

OUR FESTIVALS TRUST:

Nelson Festivals Trust Board: Ali Boswijk (Chair), Luke Acland, Johny O'Donnell (Te Rarawa, Te Aupōuri), Michael Parker, Festival Patron: Pic Picot

NELSON ARTS FESTIVAL TEAM:

Ruth Roebuck – General Manager, Janelle Bish – Artistic Director, Kerry Sunderland – Pukapuka Talks Programme Lead, Jess Anderson – Marketing & Communications Lead, Lydia Hannah Thomas – Festival Producer, Ollie Azadi – Digital & Development Coordinator, Britt Coker – Volunteer & Box Office Coordinator

TECHNICAL AND DELIVERY TEAM:

JR Richardson (VenueTech) – Technical & Production Director, Head of Sound, Antony Hodgson – Head of Projection, Deputy Technical & Production Director, Wendy Cleese – Head of Lighting, Sam Cole – Special Projects Manager

FESTIVAL CREATIVE TEAM:

Elephant Publicity – Festival PR & Media Relations, Steve Hussey – Festival Photography, Innit Creative – Festival Videography

THANK YOU!