

TEMPO DANCE FESTIVAL 2019 BREAKING THROUGH

New Artistic Director for Tempo Dance Festival, Cat Ruka (Ngāpuhi, Waitaha) has unveiled a world-class programme from 2–12 October in a breakthrough year for Aotearoa’s leading pan-genre dance festival.

Following her appointment to the role in February this year, Cat immediately focused on finding ways to activate new pathways for Tempo in response to the sector’s needs, whilst also retaining Tempo’s whakapapa and upholding the mana of what has been.

“Early in the year I was lucky to happen upon an insightful Māori whakataukī [proverb], which has kept me humble and guided me safely in this pursuit. That whakataukī is, “ko te pae tawhiti whāia kia tata, ko te pae tata whakamaua kia tina - seek out distant horizons and cherish those already attained”, says Cat.

When asked to kōrero about Tempo, Cat says, “I am most inspired to speak of the cultural intersectionality it has achieved through its simple kaupapa [theme] of being a ‘pan-genre’ dance festival. Tempo tells a vivid and authentic story of who the people of Aotearoa are, and showcases the different ways our people use their bodies creatively to express their lived experiences. Dance means so many different things to so many people, and therein lies its shape-shifting magical powers”.

Cat has applied her experience and passion as an award-winning artist, tertiary arts educator, and practitioner to create a programme full of emerging creativity and vibrant dance works that place high standards for

wellbeing and holistic wellness practices for our dance communities at the forefront.

A key feature of Cat’s first programme sees dance diversity included in a gentle and implicit way, as well as Tempo’s focus on wellness. She has drawn inspiration from the Māori health model of *Te Whare Tapa Whā* and says: “Created by Professor Mason Durie, *Te Whare Tapa Whā* perceives holistic health as a four-sided pursuit which we can achieve through equally nurturing and valuing our tinana (physicality), our hinengaro (intellect), our wairua (spirituality), and our whanaungatanga (social connections). Translating this model into a framework for the festival has resulted in a programme giving equal priority to physically compelling dance, conceptual dance that ignites the intellect, dance that evokes realms of the spirit, and dance that creates openings for community connection and exchange”.

Deeply committed to artist mentoring, Cat is one of the most sought-after mentors for Māori and Pasifika performers. She has mentored rangatahi (young people) and developed educational programmes for acclaimed youth organisation, Ngā Rangatahi Toa. Youth and cultural diversity feature strongly in a programme that includes a new wave of young homegrown choreographers who are advancing dance in unexpected and exceptional ways.

Headlining this year’s festival are world-renowned choreographers Parris Goebel (*GIRL*), Bianca Hyslop and Rowan Pierce (*Pōhutu*), Zahra Killeen-Chance, Josie Archer and Kosta Bogoevski (*NZ Music Double Bill: Dances with Aldous*) and Sau E Siva Creatives (*Fa’asinomaga/Identity*).



CAT RUKA



GIRL, PARRIS GOEBEL



FA'ASINOMAGA/IDENTITY, SAU E SIVA CREATIVES

“Spearheading the genres of street dance, indigenous dance, contemporary dance and Siva Sāmoa, are the aspirational pou [pillars] that hold our festival up with strength. I mihi to you all for your innovation and creativity, your hard work, and for being the young visionaries our sector needs”, says Cat.

Changes have been made to some of the familiar Tempo-curated programmes with *Y-Chromosome* and *The Honouring Ceremony* taking a break in 2019. Cat explains: “Both of these are loved and celebrated by many. If you are one of those that take delight in these programmes please know that we are simply pressing pause while we work to ensure they each meet our sector’s high standards of cultural and gender equity”.

The Festival will continue to provide platforms for shared programmes with *Secondary Colours* for high schools, *Tertiary Improvisation Showcase* for tertiary-level dance and *Bloom* (previously *Fresh*), for emerging choreographers. The official festival closing party, *Boom Boom Room* which will feature over 20 live performers and musicians will be an opportunity for artists and audiences to join together to celebrate 10 days of fabulous dance.

Venues throughout the CBD will be activated with events within Auckland’s theatre precinct, including Q Theatre, Basement Theatre, and Aotea Square.

“I acknowledge that this is the domain of the ancestor Horotiu and the Waihorotiu stream of Ngāti Whātua ki Orākei, to whom we pay respect for the sacrifices that enable us to celebrate dance in this area. In the years to come we look forward to spreading our wings even further, in the pursuit of bringing life-changing dance experiences to more of our city’s people,” says Cat.

Underpinned by a strong vision and experience in artistry and artist mentoring, Cat has produced a bold programme showcasing Aotearoa’s dance ecology, and the richness, resilience, and diversity of its dance artists.

Cat says, “Tempo Dance Festival is one of our sector’s most treasured cornerstones that strengthens Aotearoa’s love for dance year after year. It is such an honour to be woven into the Tempo legacy as the Festival’s new Artistic Director; I acknowledge the lineage of wāhine toa [strong women] who have held this role in the past, and the spirited accomplishments they have achieved. Together we will break ground, break moulds, break bread, and break space wide open for new voices in dance. There will be kai, there will be dance-floors, and very special moments of transformation for our beloved dance audiences and participants. I look forward to sharing in the cloak of darkness with you, as the house lights go down, and the alchemy begins.”

We can hardly wait to break into dance... ■

Tempo Dance Festival
2-12 October 2019

Bookings at qtheatre.co.nz or for more info go to tempo.co.nz

