



이화극단 이화극단

Celebrating 30 Years

Auckland
21 Nov
The Civic

Christchurch
25 & 26 Nov
Isaac Theatre Royal

"Irrefutable force of continual cultural renaissance."

— THEATREVIEW



Black Grace Class of '95

*"Black Grace is the most positive, living
expression of any New Zealand art."*

— SUNDAY STAR TIMES



Siaosi Mulipola

Neil Ieremia

Ueta Sitene

Mal Tevita

Taane Mete

Maaka Pepene

Simon Fa'amoe

Sam Fuataga

Taiora Royal

Absent: Sean MacDonald

“Powerfully elegant and possessed of technical finesse of almost archaic rawness.”

— NAHE-ZEITUNG, GERMANY



TALOFA LAVA AND WARM PACIFIC GREETINGS

It is a great pleasure to welcome you this evening as we celebrate the final season of our 30th Anniversary year. 2025 has been another remarkable chapter for Black Grace, marked by a vibrant programme of domestic work—including *This Is Not A Retrospective* at the Auckland Arts Festival, a new season of Company B, our mentoring initiative, and a special appearance at the Aichi Triennale in Japan. We also continued our commitment to community outreach through the delivery of numerous free school workshops.

Tonight's performance has been made possible through the generous support of Abby McCormick O'Neil & D. Carroll Joynes, Julian & Lizanne Knights, Dame Jenny Gibbs, Nelson Wang and Philip Carter, along with Auckland Live, One Foundation, Christchurch City Council, Pub Charity and Rātā Foundation.

We warmly acknowledge Fulbright New Zealand who have supported Richard Chen See from Paul Taylor Dance Foundation to remount *Esplanade* and engage with the wider dance community.

And, with sincere gratitude, I would like to acknowledge our more than 30-year partnership with Creative New Zealand.

As we look to the future, we welcome new members to our team and farewell long-serving board member Samuelu Sefuiva. Our plans to re-establish a central city home base and training academy are well underway. We are rebuilding our international touring programme with tours planned in 2026 and 2027, enabling us to strengthen and expand our domestic and regional touring programmes.

As we bring this year to a close, on behalf of Black Grace, I thank you for your continued support and wish you and your families a safe and Happy New Year.

Neil Ieremia, ONZM
Founding Artistic Director/CE
Black Grace

IF THERE EVER WAS A TIME

I consider myself a hopeful optimist. Like many Pacific Islanders, I was raised in the church, carried along by its stories, its hymns, its promises. I have been losing my religion for the last forty years. This work is my response to what I see as the weaponisation of faith, how religious and spiritual belief systems are used to steal from the poor, erase culture and indigenous knowing, shout down freedom of choice, and justify unimaginable brutality. It's a pattern repeated throughout history and I imagine it will continue for as long as greedy hands keep rubbing together.

So, if ever there was a time for rebellion, for action, for hope, for humanity, for love – it's probably now.

CREATIVE DIRECTION

& CHOREOGRAPHY BY

LIGHTING & PRODUCTION BY

SOUND DESIGN BY

MUSIC CURATION BY

COSTUMES BY

REHEARSAL ASSISTANT

MUSIC BY

Neil Ieremia, ONZM

JAX Messenger

Faiumu Matthew Salapu Aka Anonymouz

Neil Ieremia, ONZM

Tina Thomas

Abby Ieremia

Pe A Oti Le Tagata O Iesu, performed by Neil Ieremia & Isitolo Alesana

Voodoo In My Blood, Massive Attack & Young Fathers

Sastanàqqàm, Tinariwen

Who Is The Hunter, Who Is The Prey?, The Sorcerers

Fee Fi, Young Fathers

Beneath The Dunes, The Sorcerers

I Saw, Young Fathers

Monolith, DJ Krush

Ruby, Ali Farka Toure & Toumani Diabate

Samoa Sila Sila, performed by Neil Ieremia & Isitolo Alesana

Drumming Additions, Isitolo Alesana

Intermission — 20 minutes



ESPLANADE

(First performed in 1975 by the Paul Taylor Dance Company)

An esplanade is an outdoor place to walk; in 1975 Paul Taylor, inspired by the sight of a girl running to catch a bus, created a masterwork based on pedestrian movement.

If contemporaries Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg could use ordinary “found objects” like Coke bottles and American flags in their art, Taylor would use such “found movements” as standing, walking, running, sliding and falling. The first of five sections that are set to two Bach violin concertos introduces a team of eight dancers brimming with Taylor’s signature youthful exuberance. An adagio for a family whose members never touch reflects life’s sombre side.

When three couples engage in romantic interplay, a woman standing tenderly atop her lover’s prone body suggests that love can hurt as well as soothe. The final section has dancers careening fearlessly across the stage like Kamikazes. The littlest of them – the daughter who had not been acknowledged by her family – is left alone on stage, triumphant: the meek inheriting the earth.

CHOREOGRAPHY BY
STAGED BY
MUSIC BY

Paul Taylor
Richard Chen See
Johann Sebastian Bach
Violin Concerto in E Major
Double Concerto for Two Violins in D Minor (Largo & Allegro)

COSTUMES BY
COSTUMES RECREATED BY
LIGHTING BY
LIGHTING RECREATED BY
REHEARSAL ASSISTANT

John Rawlings
Tina Thomas
Jennifer Tipton
JAX Messenger
Katie Proffitt





NEIL IEREMIA, ONZM

Neil Ieremia is arguably New Zealand's most accomplished choreographer, a creative entrepreneur and inspirational leader. Born in Wellington and of Samoan heritage, Mr Ieremia was raised in a tough working class neighbourhood in a country focused more on sporting prowess and agriculture rather than creative expression. At the age of nineteen and with no formal training, Mr Ieremia resigned from his banking job, left home, enrolled in a full time dance programme and broke his parents' hearts. As a freelance professional dancer, Mr Ieremia worked with many leading New Zealand choreographers as well as creating a number of commissioned works before founding Black Grace in 1995.

Numerous firsts for a New Zealand choreographer include sell-out performances at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival (USA debut 2004 and 2005), a four-week season on New York City's 42nd Street, performances at the renowned Cervantino Festival in Mexico, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and the 2010 Cultural Olympiad in Vancouver. Among his many other achievements, Mr Ieremia has received a 2005 Arts Foundation of New Zealand Laureate Award, and the 2009 Paul D. Fleck Fellowship in the Arts from The Banff Centre, Canada. In 2015, Mr Ieremia received a City of Porirua Anniversary Award and the Senior Pacific Artist Award from Creative New Zealand. In 2016, Mr Ieremia was appointed an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to dance, and in 2021 received a KEA World Class Award.

Neil and Black Grace received the inaugural Moana Creative Enterprise Award at the 2022 Pacific Business Trust Awards, sponsored by Creative New Zealand. Neil is an Honorary Member of Dance ICONS and Global Ambassador for What Dance Can Do.



PAUL TAYLOR

Paul Taylor, one of the most accomplished artists the United States has ever produced, helped shape and define America's homegrown art of modern dance from the earliest days of his career as a choreographer in 1954 until his death in 2018. Having performed with Martha Graham's company for several years, Mr. Taylor uniquely bridged the legendary founders of modern dance – Isadora Duncan, Ruth St. Denis, Ted Shawn, Doris Humphrey and Ms. Graham – and the dance makers of the 21st Century with whom he later worked.

Starting in 2015, at Lincoln Center he presented great modern works of the past and outstanding works by today's leading choreographers alongside his own vast repertoire. He also commissioned the next generation of dance makers to work with his renowned troupe, the Paul Taylor Dance Company, thereby helping to ensure the future of the art form.

Mr. Taylor continued to win public and critical acclaim for the vibrancy, relevance and power of his dances into his eighties, offering cogent observations on life's complexities while tackling some of society's thorniest issues.

His repertoire of 147 works covers a breathtaking range of topics, but recurring themes include the natural world and man's place within it; love and sexuality in all gender combinations; and iconic moments in American history. The New York Times hailed him as "among the great war poets." While some of his dances have been termed "dark" and others "light," the majority of his works are dualistic, mixing elements of both extremes. Mr. Taylor left an extraordinary legacy of creativity and vision not only to American modern dance but to the performing arts the world over.

"He (Neil Ieremia) has spread his artistic roots in several rich pasts and grown up and out into a sunlight of his own making"

— THE NEW YORK TIMES





DEMI-JO SEFO

Of Filipino and Malaysian heritage, Demi-Jo is originally from Australia and graduated in 2015 with a Diploma in Dance Performance. Demi-Jo made her professional debut touring with Black Grace to France and the Netherlands in 2016, performing in *Human Language*, *Mother Mother* and *Gathering Clouds*. Demi-Jo has also performed in *Another Letter from Earth*, *As Night Falls*, *Crying Men* and *Paradise Rumour*, touring with the Company to Taiwan, the United States, UAE, Japan and throughout Aotearoa.

RODNEY TYRELL

Of Samoan descent, Rodney grew up in West Auckland and first discovered dance as a teenager, partaking in cultural performances and hip-hop. After graduating with a Bachelor in Performing and Screen Arts majoring in Contemporary Dance in 2015, Rodney made his professional debut on an international tour with Black Grace to the USA in 2017. Rodney has performed in *As Night Falls*, *Pati Pati*, *Minoi*, and *Mother Mother*, and as an original cast member in *Crying Men*, *O Le Olaga – Life and Paradise Rumour*.

FUAAO TUTULU FAITH SCHUSTER

Born in Samoa, Faith's first experience in dance was with traditional Siva Samoa. Since moving to NZ in 2008, Faith completed a Bachelor's Degree in Performing and Screen Arts in 2019. Faith first worked with Black Grace in 2021 on *The Art of Black Grace 1/5*, a large-scale digital immersive experience. Faith performed in *The Outsiders' Ball* and was rehearsal assistant for the Company's 2022 tour of the USA. Faith was cast in Neil Ieremia's latest full-length work, *Paradise Rumour*, performing in the UAE, USA, Japan and Aotearoa.

OLIVER CARRUTHERS

Ollie is a freelance performer based in Tāmaki Makaurau. A Contemporary Dance graduate from Unitec, he has performed with Footnote New Zealand Dance, The New Zealand Dance Company, Okareka Dance Company, and World of WearableArt. His credits include work with musicians and artists such as Empire of the Sun, Louis Baker, and Hollie Smith. Ollie was a 2024 participant of Company B and performed in Black Grace's *This Is Not A Retrospective* 30th Anniversary celebration as part of Auckland Arts Festival.

RILA SHIBASAKI

Rila is a contemporary dancer from Tokyo, Japan. She graduated from Japan Women's College of Physical Education (Dance Major) in 2023. While still a student, she performed as a dancer in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games Opening Ceremony. In 2025, she was cast in Black Grace's project for emerging dancers, Company B, titled *Rage Rage*. She is now primarily based in New Zealand, focusing on her career growth.

ZOE WHITE

Zoe is an Auckland-born freelance dance artist of NZ European descent. Since graduating from training overseas, Zoe has danced around Aotearoa in a range of projects from ballet, physical theatre and contemporary dance to installations, music videos and film. She loves multidisciplinary collaborations and is very inspired by the artist community in Tāmaki Makaurau. Zoe was part of Black Grace Company B earlier this year and is excited to be back for this double bill.



VINCENT FARANE

Of Samoan descent, Vincent graduated from the Manukau Institute of Technology with a Bachelor of Creative Arts in 2019. Vincent first worked with Black Grace on the 2022 tour of the United States, subsequently joining the Company for the debut of *Paradise Rumour* in the UAE, with further performances across Aotearoa, the USA and Japan. Vincent has previously worked under Matu Ngaropo & Parris Goebel as a dancer, and under Michael Hurst ONZM performing in *Chicago the Musical* (NZ Tour) as Fred Casely.

DEIJA VUKONA

Deija was born in Tauranga and is of Fijian, New Zealand European and American descent. Deija graduated in 2023 with a Diploma in Dance and Dance Performance. Following some short contracts with other New Zealand-based companies, in 2024 Deija successfully auditioned for Company B, Black Grace's project for emerging dancers and was subsequently offered a full-time contract with the Company, most recently performing in *Paradise Rumour* at the Aichi Triennale, Japan.

JUSTICE KALOLO

Justice is 22 years of age and is of Samoan descent. Born in Pago Pago, American Samoa and from the Village of Ulutogia, Aleipata, Samoa, Justice was raised in Lower Hutt, Wellington. His first experience of live performance was through church, which inspired him to study and train at Toi Whakaari New Zealand Drama School where he graduated in 2024. Justice performed in Black Grace's 2025 Company B season titled *Rage Rage* and joined the Company for performances of *Paradise Rumour* as part of the Aichi Triennale, Japan.

MIRIAM JOYCE

Miriam was born and raised in Auckland, with whakapapa connecting her to Ngāpuhi as well as Irish, English, and Scottish heritage. Miriam is a 2022 Contemporary Dance graduate from the New Zealand School of Dance, currently living in Auckland while working through a plumbing and gasfitting apprenticeship alongside her dance practice.

BELIZE SCHROEDER

Belize Schroeder was born and raised in Christchurch. In 2020 she moved to Australia to attend Queensland Ballet Academy training under Louise Dealer and directorship of Christian Tatchev, graduating in 2022. In 2023 she then joined Jasmin Vardimon JV2 in England, followed by Kayzer Ballet in Portugal for their 2024/2025 season. Both JV2 and Kayzer Ballet enabled Belize to tour across the UK and Europe working with a range of choreographers and performing diverse repertoire. This double bill marks Belize's first contract with Black Grace.

PAIGE MOWBRAY - UNDERSTUDY

Paige is of Samoan and New Zealand European descent. Her full-time training includes New Zealand School of Dance – Contemporary, and Te Auaha Institute of Creativity – Commercial. In recent years, Paige has performed contracts with Pacific Dance Festival, the World of Wearable Arts and Wellington Fringe Festival.

"Black Grace is now one of our foremost cultural exports, and its founder Ieremia, leads the current arts vanguard ... a spectacle that has distinguished itself in the field of contemporary dance scene, by marrying our best performers with the boldest, nosethumbing narratives that giddily uproot all misconceptions about Aotearoa."

— STUFF





Since 1995 Black Grace has performed in 148 cities across 16 countries

From 2020 Black Grace has:

Delivered 517 national and international events

Engaged 149,606 national and international attendees

Created \$43,058,410.00* of Social and Economic Value nationally

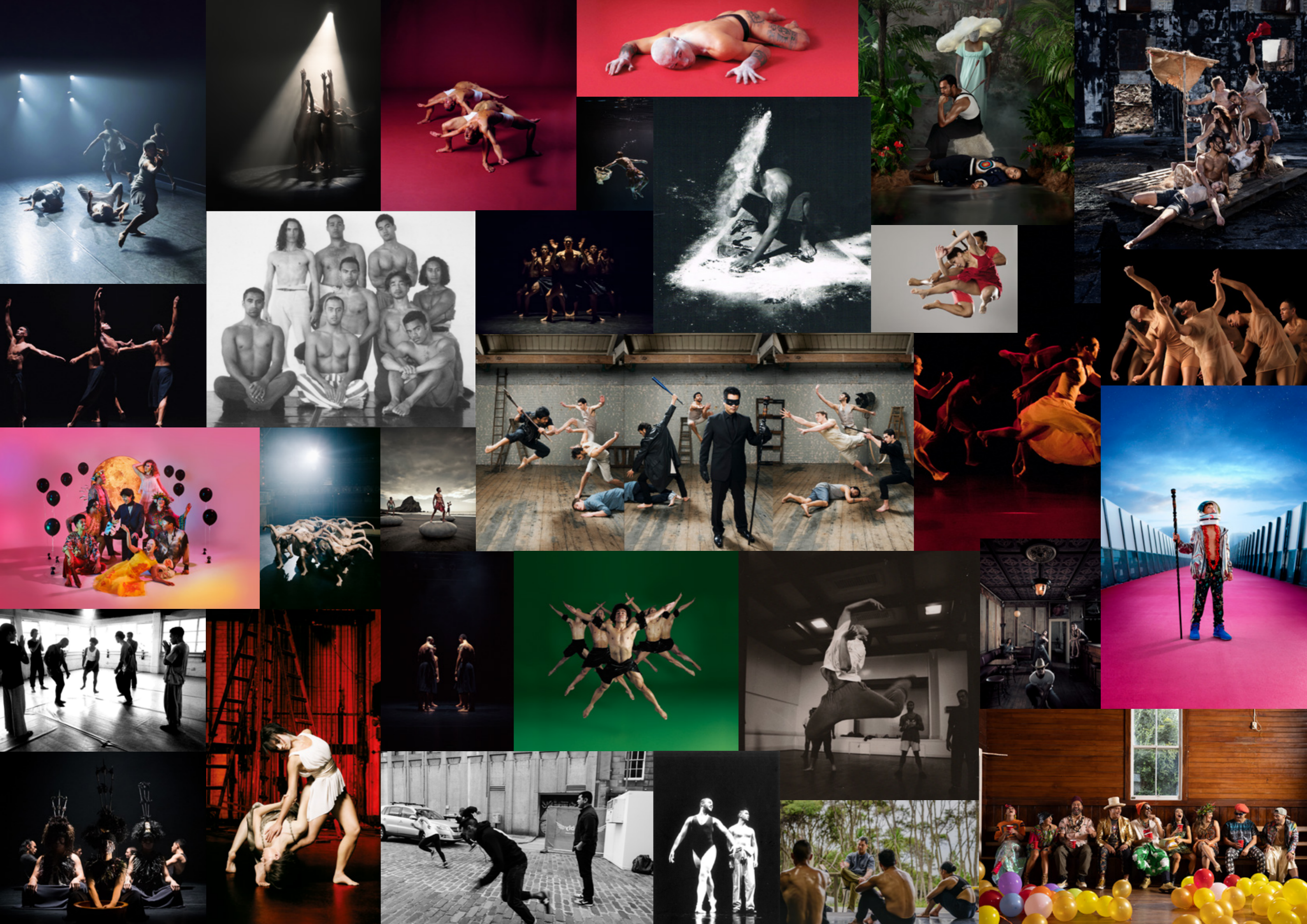
In 2023 Black Grace became a Living Wage Employer

Black Grace has employed over 200 dancers, predominately Māori and Pacific Island males

Black Grace has performed every year since its inception in 1995

The Mayor of Honolulu proclaimed the 6th of February 2010 to be known officially as 'Black Grace Day'

*Calculated using the Live Performance Value Calculator developed by Massey University, funded by the Ministry for Culture & Heritage'



BLACK GRACE

Neil Ieremia, ONZM
 Abby Ieremia
 James Wasmer
 Michael Anderson
 JAX Messenger
 Jeannie Maher

THE BLACK GRACE TRUST

Anna Fuiava (Chair)
 Julian Knights
 Ngaere Duff
 Edward Cowley
 Neil Ieremia, ONZM
 Michael Anderson (Treasurer)

STAGE MANAGER / CREATIVE ASSISTANT

Kasi Valu

PUBLICIST

Bridget de Launay

DESIGN PARTNER

Alt Group

SUSTAINING PARTNER

ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW ZEALAND TOI AOTEAROA

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 Nelson Wang
 Philip Carter

BLACK CIRCLE

Julian & Lizanne Knights
 Kent Gardner & Ngaere Duff
 Edward Cowley & Peter Browne
 Gowan & Chanel Duff
 Russ Wilkinson & Sally Aberhart

PLATINUM CIRCLE

Michael & Beth Anderson
 Gow Family Foundation
 John & Jo Gow
 Dean Anderson
 Anonymous
 Graeme Zimmerman
 Russ Wilkinson & Sally Aberhart
 Kerry & Phillipa McIntosh

GOLD CIRCLE

Chris Parke & Anna Lawrence
 Nick & Margot Kynoch
 Lale & Marina Ieremia
 Nelson Wang
 Ian & Charlotte McLoughlin

SILVER CIRCLE

Sally & Dougal Paterson
 Aumua Peaario & Peter Bradbeer
 Pacific-i Ltd
 Linda Pearson
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 Annie Ualesi
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A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO

Mr & Mrs Ieremia and the Ieremia Family; Makerita Urale & The Pacific Team at Creative New Zealand; Helaina Keeley, Adam Dauphin & the Auckland Live Team; Isaac Theatre Royal; Paul Taylor Dance Foundation; Paul Altomari & Fulbright New Zealand; Jillian Friedlander & The Friedlander Foundation; Foundation North; Auckland Council; Jessica Smith; Bernie Haldane; Ben Corban, Dean Poole & the team at Alt Group; Stephen Wainwright; Angela Gourdie; Fatu Feu'u; Chris Van Doren; Jo Blair & Brown Bread; Louise Gallagher & PAANZ; Jessica Palalagi & The Arts Foundation Te Tumu Toi; Terry & Josie Crowther; Justine Parker & NZME, Christie Sammons & Stuff; LUMO; Haydn Wong, Samuelu Sefuiva, Bernice Mene; Jarcinda Stowers-Ama, Tanya Muagututi'a; Sina Mulitalo; Ana Mulipola; Lagi-Maama Academy & Consultancy; Zoe & Ash Visvanathan; Nicole Rowland; Sarah Hinton; Sarah Foster-Sproull and Andrew Foster; Christina & Colin Jeffery; Ed Chruikshank; Shane Woolridge; John Campbell; Paul Glover; Neville, Liz & Zambesi; The Rees Hotel; Roger & Jo Wall; Stephen Marr; Kernel Wealth; Dion at Triumph & Disaster; Annette Dixon; Richard & Kirsty Beca; Raquel Jensen; Jo Bourke; Lin Walden; Anna Lim; Edwin Whenmouth; Pele Walker; Pauline Shedd; Michelle Khan & Tony Stevenson; Simon Garrett; Jinki Cambrono; our past Board Members; and especially our patrons, family & friends for 30 years of love and support, fa'afetai tele lava.

"Incredible strength, agility,
 stamina ... simply flawless"

— DANCEWORLD.COM, NEW YORK



