

9–18 March

Loft, Q Theatre

March
2018
**ARTS FESTIVAL
AUCKLAND**

WRITTEN &
DIRECTED BY
AHI KARUNAHARAN

TEA

THE ORYZA FOUNDATION FOR ASIAN PERFORMING ARTS



THE OPPARI

*The first cup caresses
my dry lips and throat.*

*The second shatters the
walls of my lonely sadness.*

*The third searches the
dry rivulets of my soul
to find the stories of
five thousand scrolls.*

*With the fourth the pain
of past injustice vanishes
through my pores.*

*The fifth purifies
my flesh and bone.*

*With the sixth
I am in touch
with the immortals.*

*The seventh
gives such pleasure
I can hardly bear.*

1hr 40mins
PHOTOGRAPHY: MARDO EL-NOOR

A NOTE FROM AHI KARUNAHARAN

My family and I returned to Sri Lanka after being away for 25 years. Our time away was an exile of sorts. Upon my return to the motherland I was left with a longing to explore Sri Lanka's past and present.

The Sri Lanka that is etched in my memory is that of a killing field, a palpable feeling for our country and its plight. Once a place of shared values and tolerance, the tropical island has been shrouded by a cloud of sectarian violence.

Tea is a plea to reclaim the forgotten history of the tea workers and of Sri Lanka. The erosion of their legacy and memory is a product of the violent rupture enforced by the presence of the coloniser, disabling the country's capacity for regeneration.

There is not just one story to tell, a story with a beginning and an end, a story that picks up from where the past left off. This historical fiction is the piecing together of fragments of the past, part fable, part mythology and part excavation to find meaning and purpose for our troubled paradise. Seven stories in seven sips.

At the heart of *Tea* is the struggle of the spirit against oppression – of class, gender and race where the stirrings for independence begin. Nostalgic regret and repressed desire, *Tea* opens the lid on the hushed conversations, heated debates and the private ruminations held in luscious estate gardens and closed spaces, may these conversations set us free.

Tea marks a watershed moment for South Asian Theatre in Aotearoa. With an all-South Asian cast it has been an absolute honour to bring this work and these characters to life, and to quote Chadwick Boseman: "Other things will undoubtedly happen because of what we've done. This is just another doorway into something else, just as there are so many things that have gotten us to this point." I am grateful for those who have paved the way; Auckland Arts Festival and Oryza Foundation in presenting this work; my creative team, family, the amigos, the people of the tea estates whom these stories are drawn from; and to everyone who has helped us to get this blend together to brew and serve to you.

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IN ASSOCIATION WITH AGARAM PRODUCTIONS

WITH SUPPORT FROM PLATINUM PATRONS
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TEA WAS DEVELOPED WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF
AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY

CREATIVE TEAM

SUMS SELVARAJAN Producer

Of South Indian and Ceylonese heritage, Malaysian-born and bred Sums is one half of Auckland based arts management firm SquareSums&Co., with 15+ years experience as an event and performing arts producer in both Malaysia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

Sums is the Executive Director of The Oryza Foundation for Asian Performing Arts, and produces all of The Oryza Foundation's major co-productions, including *The Mooncake and the Kūmara* by Mei-Lin Hansen/Auckland Arts Festival (2014, 2016 & 2017), *Call of the Sparrows* by Chye-Ling Huang/Proudly Asian Theatre (2016) and, most recently, *Tea* by Ahi Karunaharan/Auckland Arts Festival (2017–18).

Beyond The Oryza Foundation, Sums is also responsible for a wide portfolio of arts clients including Chromacon, a New Zealand-focused indie visual arts festival, Short+Sweet Festival New Zealand, a platform dedicated to celebrating 10-minute theatre and dance in both Auckland and Wellington, and the Modern Māori Quartet, which she co-manages as Managing Director.

AHI KARUNAHARAN Writer & Director

Born in UK, bred in Aotearoa, Ahi Karunaharan has worked in the arts sector for various shows, venues, production companies and festivals both nationally and internationally since graduating from Victoria University of Wellington and Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School as an actor, writer, director and producer.

Ahi writing credit for stage and radio include *The Mourning After*, *Anchorite*, *Light vs Dark – The Adventures of Rama and Swabhoomi – Borrowed Earth*. Directing highlights include *A Fine Balance* for Prayas Theatre, The Interactive Outdoor Extravaganza *Bollywood Blockbuster*, *Shoulda Woulda Coulda* for Auckland Theatre Company and The Immersive participatory experience *Samaroh – The Great Indian Carnival* for the Auckland Arts Festival.

Ahi has worked with the internationally-acclaimed theatre company Tara Arts and collaborated and performed with various artists across the globe from Germany, Australia, Norway, Canada, India and Malaysia. Ahi was also an associate producer for Tawata Productions working on numerous award-winning productions and travelled with the company for IndigenoUS Festival at Toronto.

The founder of Agaram Productions, which curated and produced the first ever South Asian Writers Festival here in Aotearoa, Agaram continues to be the one of the leading South Asian Development Theatre companies producing new works with a South Asian focus and ongoing artist mentoring, development and leadership opportunities for those within the Arts sector. Ahi is also the Artistic Curator for Short+Sweet Festival and freelances as a dramaturg, tutor, musician and currently works for Basement Theatre in the Programming Department.

SARA BRODIE Advisor

Sara has directed and choreographed over 90 productions for companies including: New Zealand Opera, the Melbourne Arts Festival, Capital E National Children's Theatre NZ, Chamber Music New Zealand and arts festivals across New Zealand. Her most recent show was *Under The Mountain* by Pip Hall for Auckland Theatre Company.

Work has ranged from creating *Fault Lines*, a dance-theatre production about earthquakes with the Leshan Song and Dance Company of Sichuan, China, for the Melbourne and Christchurch Arts Festivals (which has toured to Montreal, China and Australia), to *Tracing Hamlet*, a community processional deconstruction of *Hamlet* at Puzzling World for the Wanaka Festival of Colour.

She is a New Zealand Arts Foundation Laureate and has an MA in Theatre from Victoria University, specialising in Laban Movement Analysis. She directed the ATC Next Stage development workshop of *Tea* in 2016, and is delighted it is now being realised in a full production.

TIFFANY SINGH Set Designer

Born in New Zealand of Indian & Pacific decent, Tiffany Singh is a New Zealand installation-based artist. Her practice explores the relationship between engagement in arts, culture and subjective well-being. Her philosophies and practices encompass influences as varied as Modernism, Eastern and Western spiritual beliefs, Jungian psychology and ancient cultures. Singh has been based in India and New Zealand since 2005, and continues to exhibit in both locations. Singh has travelled extensively throughout the East and throughout Central and South America studying cultural and mythological beliefs systems and patterns. By using arts as a tool for education, empowerment and communication, Singh has grounded her career trajectory by identifying with using art as a means to generate and affect change. Since returning to New Zealand in 2008, Singh has applied a similar framework to her practice in Aotearoa, working on sustainable community outreach and focusing on participatory works that have community building themes as their primary objective. In 2017 Tiffany received an Arts Foundation New Generation Award.

BHAVESH BHUTHADIA Set & Prop Actualiser

Bhavesh is an ideas man, designer and people person. A product designer by trade and creative explorer at heart, his endeavours have led him to apply himself across a broad range of projects and initiatives. From co-founding and regularly hosting the creative community meet-up ScribbleAKL to designing and building interactive installations, co-creating pop-up mini golf courses, facilitating creativity through workshops and more. Across all avenues he aims to take a collaborative approach and regularly applies himself on projects that involve design thinking, making, communities, placemaking, creative things of interest and his own broad self-initiated pursuits. Bhavesh also enjoys taking close-up photos of the world around us to capture the small, unnoticed details and his favourite double-scoop ice cream combo is goody-goody gum drop and lime swirl.

BOSCO SHAW Lighting Designer

Bosco is a lighting and set/space designer and builder. His interest is in work that involves bodies and movement, how light feeds across and can influence a space. Predominantly he sees his role within the development of works to propose and facilitate alternate lighting sources and means, so that an idea can evolve spatially and have subtle resonance.

He has worked with large contemporary dance companies, intimate projects and individual artists, theatre works as well as designing and installing lighting for public spaces. He has travelled extensively in this capacity, has a background in drafting and is a passionate lover of beautiful buildings and fast motorbikes.

KARNAN SABA Composer

Karnan Saba has helmed the sound design and composition duties for award-winning shows by Wellington-based Māori and Pacific theatre company Tawata Productions since 2011. His show credits include *I*, *George Nepia*, *Sunset Road*, *The Mourning After*, *The Vultures*, *The Night Mechanics* and the New Zealand International Arts Festival production of *Tu*. He worked as a Composer/Executive Producer (Sound) for the 2016 multi-media dance piece *The Beautiful Ones* which featured new works by Ria Hall and Tama Waipara.

A founding member of Wellington's South Asian bands Moksha, The Night Mechanics and Doosra, he has been involved in city's music and community arts scene as a musician, producer and event organiser since 2001. As a solo act, Karnan releases music under the name K*Saba and is affiliated with Auckland-based collective Young Gifted & Broke. He is currently based in Toronto.

MATT ELLER Sound Designer

Since graduating from Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School in 2011 with a Diploma in Entertainment Technology Matt has been busy working as a freelance technical operator and sound designer. He has been fortunate enough that his work has taken him all over New Zealand and around the world.

Matt has been nominated for a Chapman Tripp Award for Best Sound design for the production of *Equivocation* (2014) and *Don Juan* (2015). He has been involved as a sound designer for various theatre companies including *A Slightly Isolated Dog*, *Long Cloud Youth Theatre* and *Taki Rua*. Residing in Auckland, he is currently performing the dual role of sound engineer and road manager for The Modern Māori Quartet.

The chance to work on *Tea* has been a great opportunity to put his headphones back on and bring the world to life though his sound design.

PADMA AKULA Costume Designer

Padma Akula is a multi-skilled creative professional with diverse screen and theatrical experience, with a writer/director background. She is committed to character driven design, collaboration and authenticity. In addition to being a designer and a makeup artist, her experience as a performer was instrumental in discovering her talent for costume design and lends itself to meet the unique demands of dressing South Asian artists for stage. Her skills and attention to detail allow her to dress a fully dimensional character. Padma doesn't confine herself to any particular area of art or fashion. She prides herself on being able to take on any creative challenge, whether its designing costumes or hired to consult on creative direction/project management in the realm of art, theatre and dance. Padma values narrative above all else and would love to tell stories with you.

BHUVANA VENKAT
Choreographer

Multi award-winning Bhuvana Venkat graduated in Bharatanatyam (Tanjore style) from Shri Saraswathy Gana Nilayam dance school and is co-founder of Artham Dance Company. Known for fusing contemporary Indian classical dance and rare south Indian folk-dance forms, her breakthrough choreography performance was “The saints” in 2006 for which she won a state award for best choreography. She has also worked with various dance companies across south India. Recently, she along with creative director Padma Akula collaborate on delivering original dance works for New Zealanders through Artham. She won Tempo Short+Sassy Award Short+Sweet Dance 2015 for “The Rhy of Rain” and performed “Ranthambore” in FRESH-Tempo Dance Festival 2016. Her recent dance work “Ranthambore in park” exploring Puliyatam (Tiger dance, a south Indian folk dance form) with contemporary touch was produced by The Satellites and supported by the Auckland Council.

SANANDA CHATTERJEE
Rehearsal Assistant

Sananda has worn many hats for local Auckland amateur Indian theatre company Prayas since 2007 and was most recently an Associate Director for their award winning ensemble show, *Swabhaomi: Borrowed Earth*, in 2017. She loves telling stories, with an inclination for movement and ensemble. *Tea* is her first full-time, professional role in theatre, through Agaram’s artist-in-development program, as a Rehearsal Assistant under the tutelage of Ahi Karunaharan.

HONE KOUKA
Dramaturge

Hone is an acclaimed Māori director, producer and writer, youngest winner of the Bruce Mason Playwrights Award and multiple award winner. He has had plays produced in South Africa, Britain, Hawaii, Canada, Australia, Japan, New Caledonia, as well as throughout New Zealand, with three plays being translated into French, Japanese and Russian. Kouka, along with Miria George founded theatre and film production house Tawata Productions, producing the works of Māori and Pacific artists. He became a member of the New Zealand order of Merit for his services to Contemporary Māori Theatre in June 2009. He recently had two films screening at the 2016 Berlin Film Festival: *Born to Dance* (screenwriter) and *Mahana* (Executive Producer).

THE ORYZA FOUNDATION

“Asian Arts Aren’t All Martial!”

Based in Auckland, The Oryza [“o-RYE-za”] Foundation for Asian Performing Arts is a registered charity dedicated to facilitating, producing, promoting and advocating for Asian performing arts in Aotearoa. Our current focus is to identify and engage with Asian creatives and communities who are making a contribution to Aotearoa’s creative ecology. We are proud to be co-producing this work as part of our Asian Producing Programme.

AGARAM PRODUCTIONS

Agaram Productions is an international production house specialising in the development and creation of new work from New Zealand’s diverse voices and the presentation of these works to and from New Zealand to the world beyond. Agaram Productions is committed to supporting and employing local, national and international artists with a point of difference and offering entertainment of the highest quality. Past projects include the annual South Asian Writers Festival, Mumbai Monologues as well as collaborations with Auckland Theatre Company on *Light vs Dark – The Adventures of Rama*, Artham Dance Company on an entry to Short+Sweet Dance in 2015 and Prayas Theatre on *The Morning After*.

ACTORS

RASHMI PILAPITIYA
Kamala / Devaki

For the past 22 years Rashmi has worked in theatre, television and voice overs. Her experience of the acting industry has been about breaking down barriers – an ongoing theme since emerging in the early 1990s as unique ethnic voice. Throughout her training and career, Rashmi has been grounded in the bi-cultural conversation in New Zealand but always with the lens of a multicultural voice. She holds a B.A (Psychology/Sociology) University of Auckland and B.A (Performing Arts) Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School. Rashmi has had the privilege of calling Somerset, Wales, Croydon, Sunderland, Colombo, Taumarunui, Doha and for the past 30 years – Tāmaki Makaurau home.

KALYANI NAGARAJAN
Theepa / Theepa (Older)

Kalyani Nagarajan is a graduate of Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School. She has studied in France with Master Clown Philippe Gaulier, where she performed *Mask, Moliere and Melodrama*. Her recent works include, Auckland Theatre Company’s *POLO* and *The Story of Rama and Sita*, TV series *Brokenwood Mysteries*, The International Comedy Festival, as well as touring *The Gruffalo* around New Zealand and Australia. She has recently completed Indian Ink’s national tour of the *Pickle King*, and has completed her first season of a new work *Mrs Krishnans Party* where she has taken on the iconic role of Zina Krishnan and will be touring this show in the middle of this year. Kalyani is very passionate about her culture and representing her background in the New Zealand arts industry. She has practiced bharatha natyam (Indian classical dance) for 14 years. She is wanting to devise work and create comic yet heart-warming pieces that can give life and dignity to ordinary characters we usually ignore in society.

RINA PATEL
Raji / Raji (Older)

Rina Patel is the first Indian woman to graduate with a performing arts degree from Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School. She is second-generation New Zealand born of Gujarati (Karadi/Bodali) descent. She currently works as project manager for refugee youth arts organisation Mixit and is interested in how the arts sector can be utilised as an agency for shifting outdated stereotypes and views of the individual. She is about to launch 22, her debut short story collection, and can be found playing drums when away from the computer. Acting credits include: *Gas* (Thomas Sainsbury), Duffy’s Books In Homes Theatre for schools, guest roles on TV’s *Shortland Street* and comedy series *A Thousand Apologies*.

SARAID CAMERON
Janaki / Shankari

Saraid is an actress and theatre-maker based in Auckland. Saraid graduated from Unitec with a degree in Performing Arts in 2012 and since then has written and produced two of her own shows with Amelia Reynolds. Their first, *STOMACH* in 2014, debuted at Basement Theatre in a sold out season, went on to tour to Bats Theatre Wellington, and was funded and produced by Basement’s first ever Theatre in Schools Program in 2015. Their second play, *The Memory Shelf*, won Best New Script as well as the Tour Ready Award in the 2015 Auckland Fringe Festival. Saraid met Nisha Madhan through their 2015 Young and Hungry show, *The First 7500 Days of My Life*, where she played the lead role and is currently working with her on Cult Show and The Revitalisation of the New Zealand Women’s Archives. Saraid is currently working on her first solo show, *Drowning in Milk* for Q Theatre, as part of Auckland Fringe Festival.

MUSTAQ MISSOURI
Ayya / Haran (Older)

Mustaq arrived in New Zealand in March 2014 and in June of that year made his New Zealand debut theatrical performance in Prayas’s production of *The Honest Thief*. He was also one of the actors in a reading of Ahi Karunaharan’s play *Tea*, which was conducted under the guidance of the Auckland Theatre Company. He also acted in two short plays in the 2014 Short+Sweet Festival, *The Possethsion and Crossbow Cat*; the latter garnering both the Judge’s and People’s Choice Awards, with the addition of The Best Actor Award going to him. Mustaq also took part in the 2015 Summer Shakespeare season of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, where he played the role of Egeus, under the direction of Michael Hurst. Following that he was in *The Mourning After*, the first Sri Lankan play in New Zealand, a co-production between Prayas and Agaram and written by Ahi Karunaharan.

MAYEN MEHTA
Bala / Haran (Younger)

Mayen Mehta is a graduate of The Actors Program 2013 cohort. His experience in stage and screen includes stand up comedy, writing, directing and acting. His screen acting credits include *Spartacus: Blood and Sand*, *Shortland Street*, *Timeslow*, *Cabbie*, *Friday Night Bites*, *Ao-terror-roa* and *Stand Up* in which he was nominated for Best Actor at the 48 Hours Film Festival 2017. His stage acting credits include *Camino Real*, Ensemble Impact’s National Tour (2014), *A Fine Balance* and *Light vs Dark*. His stage writing debut was for the play March of Progress at the Short & Sweet Theatre Festival 2016. Mayen is a Raw Comedy Quest Grand Finalist 2017 and won the Fresh As Flick Comedy competition in 2016. Mayen also writes, directs and performs sketches for sketch comedy duo Po and Tenjal (New Zealand’s very own Harold and Kumar).

MEL ODEEDA
Ravi / Shiva

Originally from the UK, Mel has performed with various theatre companies over the years and at a number of prestigious venues all over the place – venues such as the National Theatre (London) and the Opernhaus Zurich to name but a couple. Having recently graduated from The Actors Programme, Mel has returned to acting after taking some time out and has enjoyed working with the Auckland Theatre Company, appearing on *Shortland Street*, *Shannara Chronicles* 2 and other ‘bits and bobs’. “It’s an absolute privilege to be able to create and play for living and I’m looking forward to working on this brilliant script with some incredible talent.”

RAAI BADEEU
Seelan / Seelan (Older) / Rajan

Raai Badeeu is a 2017 graduate of Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School. He is an actor, dancer, choreographer, singer and filmmaker. His stage credits include *Caucus Caucus Harvest Dawn*, *The Antigone Sound*, *The Tempest*, *The Beautiful Ones*, *Blackout*, *Before the Last Tui Drop Falls* and his solo show *Atlantis*. He recently just choreographed the musical *Once on this Island*. As a dancer he has competed at Street Dance New Zealand and Battlegrounds NZ. His screen credits include *Goblin Market*, *Yukka* and *High Tide*. He received the Emma Bishop Award for Dance and Drama in college. More than anything, he loves making films with his film company Tinhipi Films.

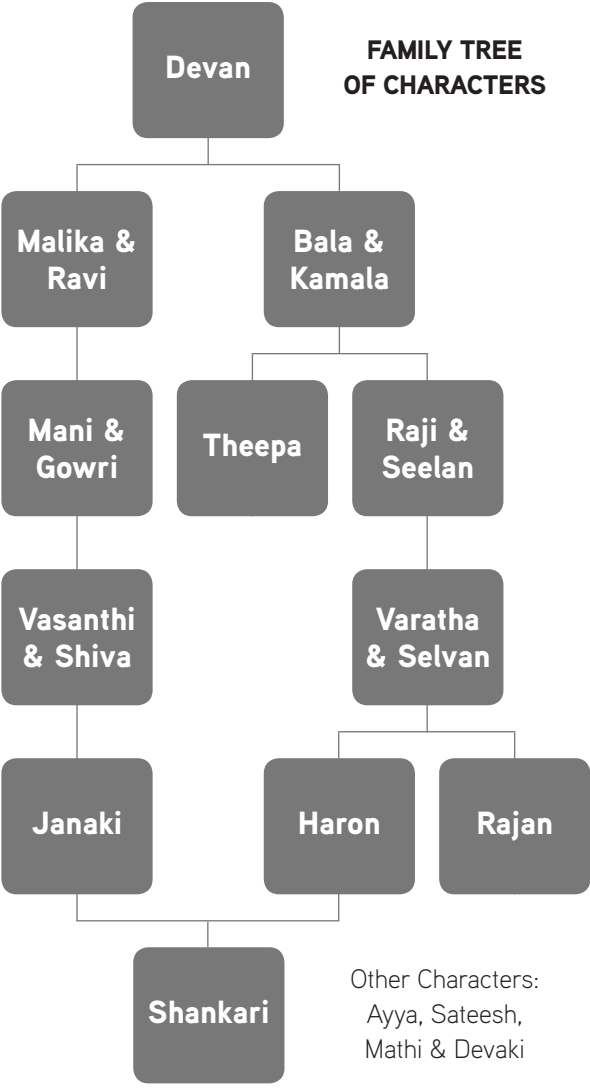
RAVIKANTH GURUNATHAN
Satheesh / Mathi

Ravi's experience in theatre includes *Giant Teeth* (ATC's Next Big Thing), *Prayas'* sold out 2015 season of *The Mourning After*, and Proudly Asian Theatre's 2016 production of *Call of the Sparrows* at the Herald Theatre. In 2017 alone he has worked on the Fringe Festival show *The Black Orchid Paradiso* and Waiti Production's award-winning rap musical *I Ain't Mad at Cha*. This was followed by Auckland Theatre Company's *Mythmakers*, touring schools performing *Light vs Dark*, a story inspired by Indian epic poem Ramayana. He has also featured in the 2017 and 2018's The Legacy Project as a part of Auckland Pride, as well as the music video for Openside's hit single, 'Branches'.

ANJULA PRAKASH
Gowri / Gowri (Older)

Anjula is a South Seas Film and Television school graduate and is currently studying English literature at the University of Auckland. She has also enjoyed a number of acting roles in theatre which include playing a grisly lizard, a hyperactive ten year old, and a belly dancing supermarket employee. When not acting, Anjula is a writer of plays, prose and poetry, and is passionate about sharing tales from her first home, Fiji.

THANK YOU Sarita So, Regan Taylor, Leela Patel, Lajja Prajapati, Anya Banerjee, Antonia Stehlein, Shaan Kesha, Katerina Fatupaito, Alvin Maharaj, Vanessa Kumar, Kaviesha Abayasekara, Melvin Bailey, Nisha Madhan, Philippa Campbell, Monica Mahindru, Andrew Foster, Ashoka Basnayaka, Shali Silva, Freya Finch, Margaret Mary Hollins, Miria George, Natano Keni, Lynne Cardy, Auckland Theatre Company, John Verryt, Hone Kouka, Asma Bashir, Kunaseelan Thedchanamoorthy, Basement Theatre, Carla Van Zon, UNITEC, Mardo El-Noor, LFHQ Studios, Prasanna Venkatesh, Sneha Shetty, Porvi Fomra, Amuthini Ilakiya, Playmarket, Geoff Budd, Thomas Brydon, Bhawani Sivakumar, True North Teas.



AUCKLAND March 2018
ARTS FESTIVAL

Auckland Arts Festival is a place for ambitious ideas by storytellers, provocateurs and creators.

The Festival reflects our contemporary, cosmopolitan city with its many communities. It challenges artists and audiences to be bold and take a risk. Through the work of artists from Aotearoa and across the world, we aim to unify, uplift, enlighten and inspire the people of Tāmaki Makaurau and our many visitors.

Taking place annually in March, 2018 marks the 10th Auckland Arts Festival. This year more than 200,000 people are expected to attend the Festival, which comprises more than 50 events taking place in all corners of the Auckland region and many of which are free.

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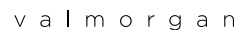
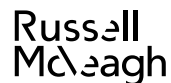
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**1–25 March
DAILY UNTIL LATE**

In partnership with



AUCKLAND LIVE

iHeartRADIO **FESTIVAL CLUB**

All roads at the Auckland Arts Festival lead back to the iHeartRadio FESTIVAL CLUB at the Aotea Centre, a hangout space and music stage for audiences, artists and the creative community to meet, mix and celebrate.

Food and drink
curated by
ART DEGO

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designed by
Angus Muir

In the centre of the Aotea Arts Precinct, this comfortable and upbeat pop-up club is your place to gather before and after a show, grab a delicious meal from a bespoke menu, enjoy live music from instrumentalists and DJs, or unwind over the long summer nights with a special Festival cocktail.