

IHI. WEHI. MANA.



TE AHUREI TOI O TĀMAKI
AUCKLAND
ARTS FESTIVAL

2026

IHI. WEHI. MANA.

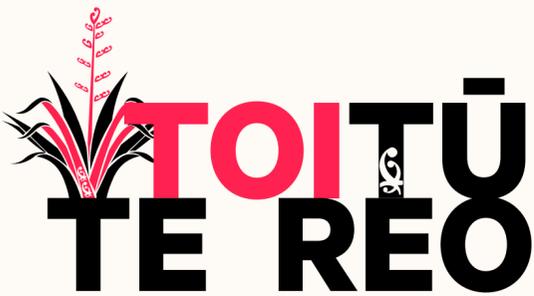
Friday 20 & Saturday 21 March 2026
Kiri Te Kanawa Theatre, Aotea Centre

Supported by



APRA AMCOS
Te Tautāwhinga
kaitito puoro, kaitito pūoru

Part of



2 hrs inc interval
Suitable for all ages.

Creative Team, Te Waka Huia:

Tapeta Wehi

Annette Wehi

Director

Dr Karen Grylls CNZM

Composer of commissioned waiata

Robert Wiremu

Choir facilitators

Jonathan Palmer

Eloise Page

Piano accompanists

Robert Wiremu

Sofia Onishko

MC

Mātai Smith

About Te Waka Huia

In 2026, Te Waka Huia Kapa Haka celebrates 45 years since being formed by kapa haka icons Ngāpō and Pīmia Wehi in Tāmaki Makaurau as a response to the many requests from Māori across the city for kapa haka tutelage from two of the most celebrated kapa haka practitioners in Aotearoa through the years. It is also a celebration of 40 years since their first appearance on the national Kapa Haka stage. Their first performance was in 1986 in Christchurch at the then Polynesian Festival, now called Te Matatini.

In this time, they have won the national title five times, setting a new festival record for their wins in 1986, 1992, 1994, 2009 and 2013. They are a household name within the kapa haka world and their songs are sung everywhere. They have represented Aotearoa abroad on many occasions and continue to deliver a high standard of excellence in their performance, most recently at Te Matatini o Te Kāhui Mounga

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held in Taranaki in February 2025 where they were selected to be part of Te Mātangirua, the group of 12 finalists after four days of competition between 55 kapa haka.

Hundreds of members of Te Waka Huia have gone on to lead their own groups, many of them winning accolades and titles.

Kapa Haka is an art characterised by its special status and unique contribution to the makeup of Aotearoa New Zealand and is a proven and successful platform that assists with the retention of Māori language and culture. Every year, thousands of people across the country are honing their skills to be part of an art form that provides physical and mental stimulation while upskilling participants in vocal ability, movement, kākahu design, traditional weaponry skills, choreography and cultural knowledge and traditions.







Karen Gylls photographed by Charles Brooks.

About Karen Grylls

In 2006, Dr Karen Grylls ONZM (1999), CNZM (2023) had the fortune to make the acquaintance of Ngāpō and Pīmia Wehi and the rest, as they say, is history. For more than 30 years, this relationship has seen choirs across Aotearoa include reo Māori music in their repertoire with many of the waiata having been composed by members of the Wehi whānau.

Dr Grylls is an Honorary Associate Professor in Choral Conducting at the University of Auckland. She conducted the New Zealand Youth Choir from 1989 to 2011, founded Voices NZ in 1998 and was Artistic Director of three internationally acclaimed national choirs: these two, and the NZ Secondary Student's choir until 2024. From 2011 to 2013, Karen was also Artistic Director of Toronto's Exultate Chamber Choir.

Her performances with the Youth Choir and Voices NZ have won international competitions and awards and her work with the national choirs in New Zealand has been

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acknowledged with her appointment as Artistic Director Emerita to Choirs Aotearoa NZ in 2025.

At the University of Auckland, Karen has established a postgraduate pathway in Conducting at the Masters and Doctoral level. Many prize-winning conductors from The Big Sing, the national secondary schools choral competition, have studied with her.

Karen received an Auckland University Distinguished Teaching Award in Music (1996), an Officer of the New Zealand, Order of Merit (ONZM) in 1999, and Companion to the New Zealand Order of Merit (CNZM) in 2023, for her services to choral music. She is also the recipient of two national citations for services to New Zealand music from the Composers' Association of New Zealand.

Karen is much in demand as an adjudicator for competitions and festivals worldwide, most recently in Bali and Taipei, the 48th International competition in Tolosa, and the Marktoberdorf International Chamber Choir Competition, Bavaria. She is sought after internationally as a choral clinician and regularly conducts international masterclasses and workshops.

About *Ihi. Wehi. Mana.*

For many years, Dr Karen Grylls and Robert Wiremu have been talking about bringing these two elements together to create a celebration of the work that both Te Waka Huia and the choral world have done together, as well as to celebrate the waiata and the singing skills that have formed part of the collaboration and reciprocity between both art forms. For this production, a bespoke choir has been formed through a group of choral singers who have volunteered their time and energy to be part of this momentous occasion. We extend an enormous vote of thanks to each and every person who has travelled from near and far to be part of this important celebration.

Each of the groups will perform a repertoire that celebrates their particular art form — choral music performed in te reo Māori by the *Ihi. Wehi. Mana.* choir, directed by Dr Karen Grylls, and accompanied on piano by Robert Wiremu and Sofia Onishko. One fantastic part of this repertoire is the world premiere of a brand-new choral piece, titled *Ihi. Wehi. Mana.*, composed by Robert Wiremu for this celebration.





Mātai Smith serves as MC for this event.

Mātai brings with him many years of experience on a kapa haka stage, both as a performer and as an MC.

Mātai has a vast background in media in Aotearoa through radio and television as well as being a celebrated reo Māori advocate, currently serving as co-chair of Te Mātāwai.

Te Ahurei Toi o Tāmaki Auckland Arts Festival is a melting pot of shared experiences, whakaaro, live entertainment and kōrero every March.

Ko ngā mahinga toi whānui me te ahurea ki Tāmaki Makaurau o nāianei te pūmanawa o te Ahurei.

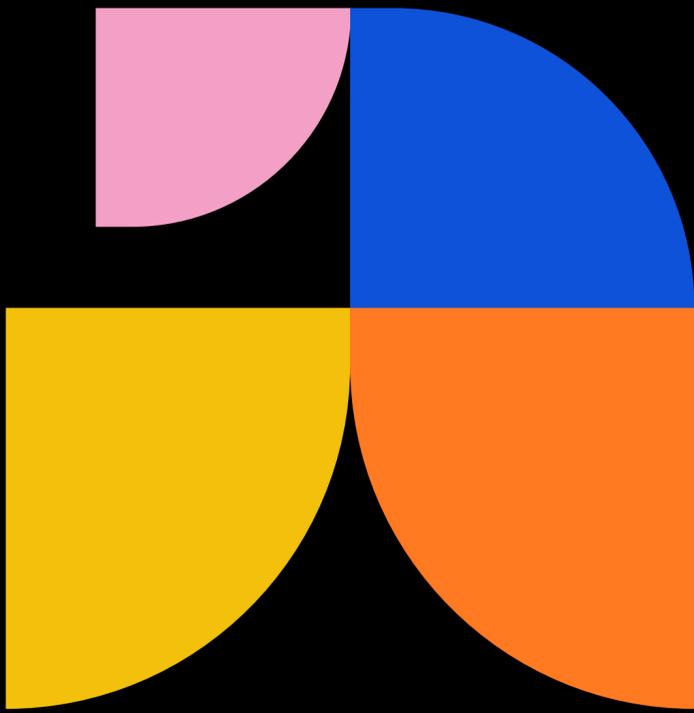
The Festival's lifeblood is arts and culture in contemporary Tāmaki Makaurau. We care deeply about celebrating artists and their kaupapa, serving the creatives and communities behind the works we present, honouring te reo and te ao Māori in all that we do, and contributing to a better city and society. That's us. Koia pū!

Every March you'll see a big reunion with our city's arts community alongside our mahi towards better accessibility and education opportunities for our audiences. We're also passionate about the works we curate and our collaboration with the many people who make those experiences happen. We strive to celebrate with generosity; human connection and manaakitanga will always be at the heart of what we stand for.

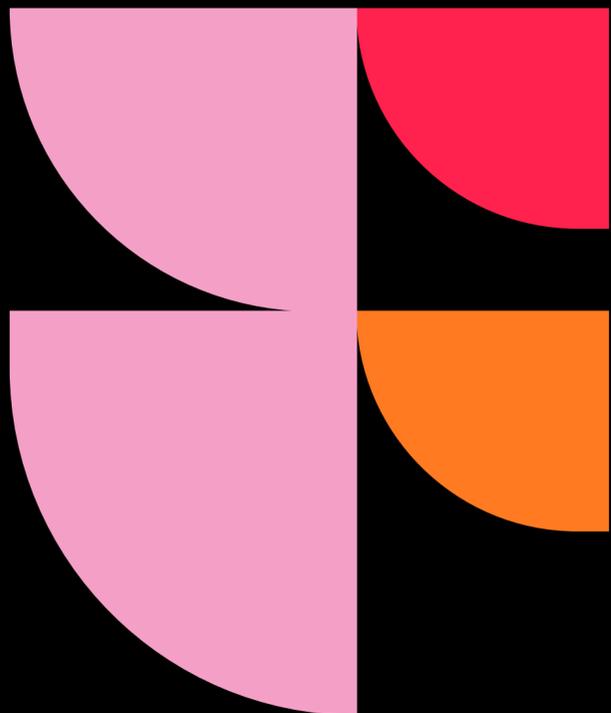
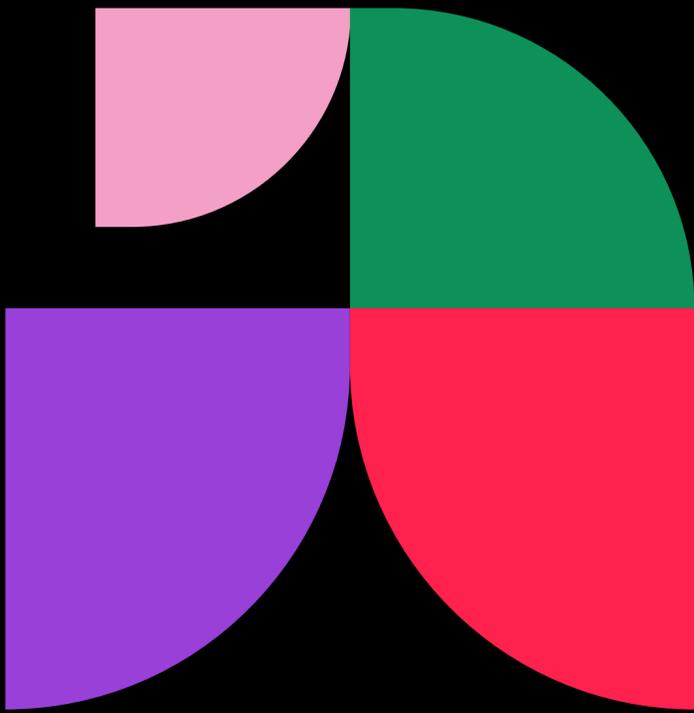
When we're on, we're on a mission to make Auckland an amazing place to socialise and be entertained in. Whether you're discovering the city for the first time or rekindling your love for its hidden gems, we truly believe that the Festival has something for everyone.

18 unforgettable days and nights.

For the ❤️ of TĀMAKI MAKĀURAU.



TE AHUREI
TOI O
TĀMAKI



AUCKLAND ARTS FESTIVAL

5—22 o Māehe • March 2026

Core funders



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