

Press Release**Date of Issue: 30 March 2022****LEADING AUSTRALIAN PERFORMERS AT EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL
AS PART OF UK/AUSTRALIA SEASON**

The UK/Australia Season, the largest and most ambitious cultural exchange between the two nations, today announces a series of new commissions and UK premieres as part of Edinburgh International Festival (5 – 28 August 2022). The diverse group of Australian performing artists is the largest contingent to attend the festival in its 75-year history.

Highlights of the UK/Australia Season at Edinburgh International Festival:

- The festival's spectacular free opening event *Macro* sees acclaimed Australian circus company Gravity & Other Myths joined by First Nations dance company Djuki Mala, the National Youth Choir of Scotland and a host of Scottish musicians (5 August)
- The UK debut performance by the Australian World Orchestra, conducted by Zubin Mehta and featuring Australian soprano Siobhan Stagg (19 August)
- Chineke! Chamber Ensemble perform with digeridoo virtuoso William Barton (12 August)
- The European premiere of *You Know We Belong Together* is Julia Hales' deeply personal exploration of the frustrations and aspirations of living with Down Syndrome, set around her favourite programme *Home and Away* (24 – 27 August)
- Violist and composer Brett Dean performs with and conducts the Hebrides Ensemble (20 August)
- UK premiere of award-winning play *Counting and Cracking* by Sydney-based theatre company Belvoir, which explores Australia as an immigrant nation and Sri Lanka post-independence (8 – 11 August)
- *The Pulse* by Gravity & Other Myths combines acrobats with a choir of thirty voices at the Edinburgh Playhouse (8&9 August)

Michael Naphthali, UK/Australia Season Director, said:

"The Australian artists we are presenting at the 75th Edinburgh International Festival (EIF) showcase the highest levels of Australian creativity, innovation and imagination. With more than 200 events are taking place across our two nations as part of the Season, it is thrilling to support Australia's return to the EIF with our largest ever contingent of performing arts companies as each in their own way will offer audiences a response to the question posed by the Season "*Who Are We Now?*" To present a programme of this scale in any normal year would be notable; that we are partnering with EIF to do so in the receding shadow of a global pandemic is simultaneously astonishing and inspiring."

Fergus Linehan, Festival Director and Chief Executive, said:

"Over the past year, we at the Festival, working closely with the UK/Australia Season, have reflected on the theme of '*Who Are We Now?*' The result is a truly significant programme of music, theatre and dance that offers audiences a sense of Australia's past, one that includes the world's oldest civilization, it's present, and glimpses of its future. The Season has also offered us the opportunity to open doors of collaboration between Australian and Scottish artists that will, we hope, form creative relationships that will last long after this year's festival."

Exploring the theme “*Who Are We Now?*” the UK / Australia Season 2021 – 22 will deliver an ambitious programme of events in the UK in 2022 including: the UK dance tour of *Between Tiny Cities*, choreographed by internationally-renowned Sydney hip-hop dance artist Nick Power; Brisbane’s Circa Contemporary Circus bring Stravinsky’s seminal *The Rite of Spring* to the circus stage at Brighton Festival; and Queensland Ballet’s new talent will be on show at the Royal Ballet’s Next Generation Festival. For more information, visit ukaustrialseason.com.

The UK / Australia Season events at the 75th Edinburgh International Festival are supported by the UK/ Australia Season Patrons, the Australian Government, through the Australian Cultural Diplomacy Grants Program, the International Cultural Diplomacy Arts Fund, the Australian Cultural Fund and the British Council. Further support has been provided by the Government of South Australia through Arts South Australia, EventScotland and the PLACE programme.

Listings Information:

UK premiere: Macro

Gravity & Other Myths
5 August
BT Murrayfield
Free event

Edinburgh International Festival opens with *Macro*, a free event for families at BT Murrayfield Stadium. Acclaimed Australian circus company Gravity & Other Myths are joined by First Nations dance company Djuki Mala, the National Youth Choir of Scotland and a host of Scottish musicians including Aidan O’Rourke (fiddle), Kathleen MacInnes (vocals) and Brighde Chaimbeul (pipes) for a spectacle that combines music and performance with projections and a light display.

The Pulse

Gravity & Other Myths
8 & 9 August
Edinburgh Playhouse

World-renowned acrobatics and physical theatre company Gravity & Other Myths return to the festival stage with their most ambitious work yet. *The Pulse* brings together three of their core ensemble with a choir of thirty voices.

UK premiere: Counting and Cracking

8 – 14 August 2022
The Lyceum

Sydney-based theatre company Belvoir present the UK premiere of their award-winning production, *Counting and Cracking* at Edinburgh International Festival. Featuring a cast of 19 performers hailing from six different countries, it follows the journey of one Sri Lankan-Australian family over four generations, from 1956 to 2004. While telling this family’s epic story of break up and reunion, the narrative also tells the tale of two countries: Sri Lanka post-independence and Australia as an immigrant nation.

European premiere: You Know We Belong Together

From Black Swan State Theatre Company of WA
24-27 August
The Lyceum

Australian actor and presenter Julia Hales has watched every single episode of *Home and Away*, but she’s never seen another person with Down Syndrome in the cast. In *You Know We Belong Together*, Julia and a cast of six actors put their own lives on stage, sharing their experiences through monologues, sketches, video, dance and song to call for greater inclusivity for a community rarely represented on stage or screen. It is a deeply personal exploration of the frustrations and aspirations of living with Down Syndrome.

Australian World Orchestra with Maestro Zubin Mehta

19 August
Usher Hall

Maestro Zubin Mehta will conduct Australia's finest musicians from around the world for the UK debut of the Australian World Orchestra (AWO). The performance features special guest Australian soprano Siobhan Stagg.

The AWO showcases musicians united from the world's great ensembles. Founded by Australian conductor Alexander Briger the AWO's reputation for excellence has firmly established it as a global representative of Australian classical music. The orchestra has attracted the world's leading conductors including Sir Simon Rattle, Riccardo Muti, Zubin Mehta and Australians Simone Young & Alexander Briger.

The programme is:

Webern *Passacaglia & Six Pieces for Orchestra*
Debussy *Ariettes oubliées* (orchestrated by Brett Dean)
Dvořák *Symphony No 7*

Chineke! Chamber Ensemble with William Barton

12 August 2022
The Queen's Hall

First a proactive foundation, then an orchestra, and now a movement, Chineke!, whose name translates as spirit of creation, has captivated the popular imagination.

Showcasing the orchestra's finest musicians, the Chineke! Chamber Ensemble brings together five brilliant but intimate works by Black and Indigenous musicians, from William Grant Still's celebration of African American experience to the blues energy of young US composer Valerie Coleman. The Chineke! musicians give premieres of two brilliant new works by Australian Aboriginal composers. Deborah Cheetham weaves together threads of imagery and history in her tapestry-inspired *Ngarrgooroon*, while William Barton draws on his virtuosity as a didgeridoo player in his *The Rising of Mother Country*.

Brett Dean and the Hebrides Ensemble

20 August 2022
The Queen's Hall

Australian musician Brett Dean is respected worldwide as both a violist and a composer. He collaborates with the Edinburgh-based Hebrides Ensemble in the surreal reminiscences and swirling colours of his own *Recollections*, a vivid voyage into musical memory.

Dean joins the Hebrides players, too, in the rich melodiousness of Brahms's youthful *String Sextet No 1*, shot through with its own sense of poignant nostalgia.

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Press Pack: Download press images <https://bit.ly/3uBZuwq>.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About UK/Australia Season 2021 -22: The UK/Australia Season is a joint initiative by the British Council and the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The Season highlights the breadth of partnership between Australia and the UK and aims to deepen and extend cultural connections. The Season started in September 2021 and concludes in March 2022 in Australia and in December 2022 in the UK. The theme '*Who Are We Now?*' will reflect on our history, explore our current relationship, and imagine our future together. The Season will feature programming for all ages and will celebrate the diversity of cultures and languages in both countries. It will emphasise Australia's First Nations voices, enable cultural exchange with Wales, Scotland, England and Northern Ireland, and the diverse societies that have emerged in both Australia and the UK through migration. ukaustrialiseason.com

About the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade: The Australian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) works closely with a broad range of partners to advance Australia's security and prosperity globally. Relationships are at the heart of DFAT work. Through initiatives like the UK/Australia Season, DFAT works with partners to showcase Australia as an innovative, creative, diverse, and tolerant nation, which assists with strengthening Australia's influence, reputation, reach and relationships overseas. dfat.gov.au

About the British Council: The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. It builds connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and other countries through arts and culture, education, and the English language. In 2019-2020 the British Council reached over 75 million people directly and 758 million people overall including online broadcasts and publications. Founded in 1934 the British Council is a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body and receives 14.5 per cent core funding grant from the UK government. britishcouncil.org.au

About Edinburgh International Festival

Edinburgh International Festival is the world's leading performing arts festival, featuring the finest performers from the worlds of dance, opera, music and theatre. Created in 1947 to celebrate the enduring human spirit following the adversity of war, the International Festival serves as an annual cultural exchange for three weeks every August. This year the International Festival celebrates its 75th Anniversary and will take place from 5-28 August 2022. eif.co.uk