



Press Release

FACTORY INTERNATIONAL 2027 SEASON SHOW BY SHOW

Come As You Really Are (13 - 20 February)

Commissioned and Produced by Artangel. The presentation at Aviva Studios is produced in partnership with Factory International

What links Star Wars stormtroopers and Polish film posters? A momentous collection of Spice Girls memorabilia and light-up jellyfish? Miniatures, model railways and the Muppets?

Every day, millions of us dedicate time to our favourite hobbies – and Greater Manchester is no exception. From foraging to clowning, larping to skating and swimming to singing, our region is filled with people who have a passion. ***Come As You Really Are*** brings together thousands of objects to tell their stories in an interactive, family-friendly exhibition.

Come As You Really Are is a nationwide project by **Artangel** and artist **Hetain Patel**, who has presented objects from hobbyists in galleries and museums across the UK with a network of partners. Now he brings the project to a close here at Aviva Studios with one of his largest presentations yet.

Bringing together over 250 makers, modifiers, enthusiasts and collectors from every borough of Greater Manchester, ranging from five to 90 years old, *Come As You Really Are* is a celebration of the diversity of our city, its people and their pastimes.

Amidst their objects, find Hetain Patel's own artwork including a new cinematic film, which adopts Hollywood aesthetics to explore hobbies across the UK, two Spider-Man outfits and two sculptures created from cars: *Fiesta Transformer* (2013) and *Somerset Road* (2024).

Looking for a new hobby? On select days, join tours and workshops – or watch a surprise performance – curated by Hetain Patel and Greater Manchester hobbyists who have joined us as Community Curators. Hetain Patel is a London-based artist and filmmaker. Often rooted in personal experience and that of his immigrant family, Patel's work explores the complex and multi-dimensional nature of identity. *Come As You Really Are* is his most ambitious and far-reaching project to date.

A celebration of self-expression and creativity, *Come As You Really Are* is the loudest presentation of our quiet pastimes.

Hetain Patel said: *"There is a vulnerability in sharing something so personal, which often happens in private spaces around the responsibilities of daily life. But there is also a tremendous power in sharing collectively, which is at the heart of this project. I hope people join us in this celebration of the unstoppable nature of self-expression that is demonstrated by our hobbies."*

Co-commissioned with Factory International, Manchester; Grundy Art Gallery, Blackpool; Museum of Making, Derby Museums Trust; Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, Swansea; National Festival of Making with Blackburn Museum & Art Gallery and Wolverhampton Art Gallery.

In partnership with Barnsley Civic; Inverness Museum and Art Gallery and Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art, Sunderland. With thanks to CCA Derry~Londonderry and Tate St Ives.

Supported by Artangel's Guardian Angels.

Artangel is generously supported using public funding by Arts Council England, and by the private patronage of The Artangel International Circle, Special Angels, and The Company of Angels.

It's a Sin

(16 - 27 Feb 2027) WORLD PREMIERE

A Rambert and Factory International production

Rambert and **Factory International** transform **Russell T Davies'** landmark series ***It's a Sin*** into a powerful dance story of love and survival – directed and choreographed by Artistic Director **Benoit Swan Pouffer**.

Joy as resistance. Love as survival.

In the heart of '80s London, Ritchie, Roscoe, Colin and Jill are chasing identity, connection and a life on their own terms. When day spills into night, they find a world of abandon, music and friendship where bodies move freely and life feels limitless.

But as the AIDS crisis begins to unfold, their lives are irrevocably changed. Love, fear and defiance collide as they fight for each other in a world that is rapidly shifting around them – and increasingly hostile to their existence.

Brought to life by Rambert's extraordinary dancers, *It's a Sin* weaves past and present into something raw, visceral and devastating – an epic story told through movement, asking who gets remembered, who gets left behind and how we choose to live now.

Presented by Rambert and Factory International. Co-produced with Wales Millennium Centre (Cardiff), Capital Theatres (Edinburgh), Sadler's Wells (London), and Les Théâtres de la Ville (Luxembourg).

Executive Producers: Russell T Davies, Pet Shop Boys, Glyn Fussell.

This production is inspired by the television series "It's a Sin" created by Russell T Davies and produced by Red Production Company.

Presented by Rambert and Factory International. Co-produced with Wales Millennium Centre (Cardiff), Capital Theatres (Edinburgh), Sadler's Wells (London), and Les Théâtres de la Ville (Luxembourg).

AN ARK

(27 March - 10 April) EUROPEAN PREMIERE

A Tin Drum and Factory International production

When does a story become theatre? Is it when the actors step on to the stage? What if the actors are with you, but not with you?

AN ARK is the world's first Mixed Reality play – a journey through sex, love, death, work and everything that makes a life, addressed directly to you.

Through Mixed Reality glasses, experience theatre like you've never seen it before: up-close, intimate and with unflinching eye contact, creating an impossibly close connection between actor and audience. This new form of theatre places you at the heart of a deeply personal exploration of what it means to live, to grieve and to connect.

Captured in a single take, this one-of-a-kind theatrical encounter features extraordinary performances from Ian McKellen (King Lear, Hamlet, Lord of the Rings), Golda Rosheuvel (Not Your Superwoman, Bridgerton), Arinzé Kene (Misty, Get Up, Stand Up!) and Rosie Sheehy (Guess How Much I Love You, Machinal).

Mixed Reality pioneer Todd Eckert returns to Manchester after a sold-out run of *KAGAMI* – a groundbreaking Mixed Reality concert with Ryuichi Sakamoto – at MIF23. For *AN ARK*, he collaborates with Tony Award-winning writer Simon Stephens (*Vanya*, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*) and critically acclaimed director Sarah Frankcom (*The Nico Project*, *Robin/Red/Breast*).

Following its extended run at The Shed in New York, *AN ARK* makes its European debut at Aviva Studios.

Ian McKellen said: *"A new Simon Stephens play is always an excitement but when it is written to be performed in this unique way, it feels more like an explosion! The four of us in front of 50 cameras simultaneously, relishing the chance to explore a new way of acting. New York has already been impressed with the result - now it's Manchester's turn."*

Golda Rosheuvel said: *"Performing in An Ark was one of the most unique experiences I've ever had. It was a profoundly moving piece to be part of, both as a performer and as a human being. Simon Stephens' writing has such a powerful way of investigating what it means to be human, while simultaneously exploring the complexities of the self. Being immersed in that world, and sharing it with an audience, was an incredibly special experience. The piece stayed with me long after performing it, and I feel very fortunate to have been part of it."*

Arinzé Kene said: *"Making An Ark was truly an experience like no other. In my twenty years of acting I can confidently say that I have nothing to compare it to. It is a piece of art that is genuinely unique. Unique in the way it was conceived by Simon Stephens words, Sarah Frankcom's direction, Todd Eckert's vision, and the technology used to capture it. Its originality carries over to the experience of watching it. It's a heartbreaking story in a mind altering medium."*

Rosie Sheehy said: *"Making An Ark with such a remarkable team was a true adventure. Experimenting with what theatre can be is always a thrill - when the boundaries are being stretched this far it can feel terrifying at times. However, being surrounded by such an extraordinary group of people took away that fear and replaced it with excitement and reward. It felt very good to be part of it all."*

Todd Eckert, Founder of Tin Drum, said: *"Every work in every art form has its origin somewhere in the world. For AN ARK it all starts in Manchester. If that city didn't exist, our play wouldn't either. As we celebrate our tenth anniversary, it's a very happy - and completely appropriate - event for us to be opening the show in Europe there."*

Simon Stephens, Writer, said: *"It means a great deal to bring AN ARK to Manchester. There is a particular thrill at being engaged in a technology that is in the earliest years of its life. There is an uncanny haunting in the qualities of An Ark that I can't wait to see again. What lives with me most, though, is not the energy of the new but the resonance of the human. We look deep into those actors' eyes and they see us and they touch us with the story they tell. It is a startling new technology that is engaged in kindling something ancient and deep within us. I can't wait to see it again."*

Sarah Frankcom, Director, said: *"I said yes to the invitation to work with Tin Drum to realise Simon's play after experiencing the technology used in Kagami. I was intrigued by how it put an audience into a different*

relationship in a live experience. I loved the possibilities of its intimacy and the way it could summon up a collective communal experience and make the audience feel like ghosts. As a theatre maker I loved the idea of being able to put an audience into the centre of a play and make them another character that actors could directly interact with. This feels like the beginning of a new form. And whilst there is no 'live' in a traditional sense - I've been very struck by how much an audience interacts with the actors and how they laugh, cry and reach to hold their hands."

Following its extended run at The Shed in New York, *AN ARK* makes its European debut at Aviva Studios.

Einstein on the Beach

(29 May - 12 June) WORLD PREMIERE PRODUCTION

Co-commissioned and co-produced by English National Opera, Factory International, Park Avenue Armory and Improbable (in association with Scene and Heni Koenigsberg LLC)

Experience the gravitational pull of this iconic opera in a new production directed by Improbable's Phelim McDermott and created for the present moment

"The distinction between past, present and future is... a stubbornly persistent illusion." – Albert Einstein

Over a century ago, Albert Einstein changed how we see the universe through the power of human imagination, with his novel ideas on space, time and quantum physics. Fifty years ago, Philip Glass and Robert Wilson revolutionised opera with *Einstein on the Beach*, blowing open the possibilities of the genre by incorporating experimental music and theatre. Now, *Einstein on the Beach* is transformed again with a once-in-a-lifetime experiential staging.

A collision of artforms – music and theatre, live art and light, sculpture and movement – *Einstein on the Beach* invites you to enter a 360-degree world where Einstein's ideas and Glass's music are felt all around you. Vast in scale, it encompasses a huge cast of vocalists, instrumentalists, actors and movement artists, including local performers from across Greater Manchester.

With this ambitious new staging, Phelim McDermott – acclaimed director and co-founder of Improbable – completes the *Glass Portrait Trilogy*. Having directed *Satyagraha* in 2026 and the Grammy and Olivier Award-winning production of *Akhnaten* in 2016 for English National Opera, he then collaborated with Philip Glass on the critically acclaimed MIF19 stage production *Tao of Glass*. Now, over 20 years since meeting Philip Glass, McDermott returns to the beginning, taking on the challenge of Glass's epic first opera.

For *Einstein on the Beach*, McDermott is joined by designer Tom Pye, his collaborator on *Akhnaten* and the West End hit *My Neighbour Totoro*. Conducted by Brad Lubman, The BBC Philharmonic Orchestra return to Aviva Studios after their collaboration with ENO and Factory International on the genre-defying opera *Angel's Bone*. With a powerhouse vocal ensemble – a collaboration between the Chorus of ENO and Kantos Chamber Choir – they bring Glass's athletic, minimalist score to life.

Rarely performed at full-scale in its entirety, *Einstein on the Beach* is an experiment in human creativity – a testament to the power of ideas that change the world. Leave any preconceptions at the door and take a quantum leap of faith.

Phelim McDermott, Director, said: *"Einstein on the Beach was of its time. Now, I wonder whether it is even more so. Half a century later, perhaps its time has truly come."*

Commissioned and Produced by English National Opera, Factory International, Park Avenue Armory and Improbable (in association with Scene and Heni Koenigsberg Productions LLC).

In partnership with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra.

DEADLIFT – الخَمَالُون

(5 - 6 June) UK PREMIERE

*An Al-Harah Theater production in partnership with Boy Jonkergouw Producties and Riksteatern
Presented by Factory International and Shubbak*

DEADLIFT is a powerful visual performance exploring the human body, endurance and rebuilding in Palestine directed by **Bashar Murkus**.

How much can a body carry before it breaks?

Palestinian director **Bashar Murkus** transforms **Suleiman Mansour's** iconic image of a porter carrying Jerusalem into a wordless visual performance.

Suleiman Mansour's painting *Jamal Al Mahamel*, often translated as *Camel of Burdens*, shows a porter bent beneath the unbearable weight of an entire city. In **DEADLIFT**, **Bashar Murkus** translates this enduring symbol into intense physical theatre, asking how much a human body can bear and when endurance itself becomes resistance.

Created without spoken text, **DEADLIFT** centres around a Palestinian ensemble, moving through cycles of weight, exhaustion, injury, care and reconstruction. Watch as a city is carried, broken and built again testing the limits of the human body.

Bashar Murkus is a Palestinian theatre director and playwright and the Artistic Director of Khashabi Theatre in Haifa. His work moves between theatre, performance and visual art to create a distinctive visual and physical language. His performances have been staged across the world and engage with urgent political questions while remaining rooted in deeply human concerns.

Poetic and visually stunning, **DEADLIFT** is a tribute to people living through destruction and to the stubborn human impulse to rise, carry and build again.

*Produced by **Al-Harah Theater** in partnership with **Boy Jonkergouw Producties** and **Riksteatern**
UK Premiere presented by **Factory International** and **Shubbak***

MANCHESTER INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL 2027

(1- 18 July)

New dates are announced today for **Manchester International Festival (MIF)** which will run from **1 - 18 July 2027**. The biennial festival will feature a wide-ranging programme of original new work by an array of international artists taking place in venues and spaces around the city. Full programme details will be announced in due course.

Cinema Tehran

(5 - 10 October) WORLD PREMIERE

*Co-Produced by **Factory International** and **The Javaad Alipoor Company***

A legendary cult film, the Iranian revolution and social apocalypse collide in the major new theatrical work, **Cinema Tehran**.

In 1978, as the Iranian revolution broke out, thousands of Iranians reported seeing the face of Khomeini – the man who would soon become known as the leader of the revolution – in the moon. At the same time, some of the biggest names in Iranian cinema were just beginning to make their mark.

Cinema Tehran is a new work by British-Iranian artist **Javaad Alipoor** and writer **Chris Thorpe** inspired by this moment of mass hallucination. Zooming forward to the present day, the show follows two artists who uncover fragments of a long-lost cult film.

Blending performance, documentary, projections and visual tricks, *Cinema Tehran* is both an adaptation of this hard-boiled Tehrani noir, which has inspired generations of Iranian filmmakers, and the unbelievable story of its creation. As Iran hurtles towards revolution and war, two things emerge: the modern Middle East and the modern world of collective visions and beliefs, battling for attention and supremacy.

Javaad Alipoor is an award-winning writer, director and performer, and the founding Artistic Director of The Javaad Alipoor Company (TJAC). His recent work includes the company's adaptation of the Booker shortlisted *Elmet* and the international hit *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, his most recent collaboration with Chris Thorpe.

Chris Thorpe is a Manchester-based writer and performer whose work tours internationally and is regularly produced worldwide. Current projects include *Talking About The Fire* with China Plate, the UN and ICAN, directed by Claire O'Reilly, and *Always Maybe The Last Time*, a new show about the psychology of the climate crisis with FUEL, directed by Vicky Featherstone.

At a time when competing visions of reality are reshaping societies, *Cinema Tehran* asks why some ideas grip entire societies and what turns private hope into collective action.

Javaad Alipoor said: "*Cinema Tehran is a show about Iran and Iranian cinema. It's about how corruption, breakneck social change and autocracy erode the foundations of a society, and our ability to see what's true. And its heart it's a love letter to the kind of Iranian noir that articulates this in stories about love, art and redemption. Like The Javaad Alipoor Company, Factory International carries the internationalism and ambition necessary to make this kind of work in its bones. To open this piece with them in our home city, at the heart of such a compelling season isn't just a privilege. It's coming home.*"

Chris Thorpe said: "*What drew us to this is the same thing that draws us to all our collaborations - something apparently weird happened, that felt like it was connected to why the world's in the state it's in, and we wanted to go on the ride of exploring that instinctive connection. So, the audience can expect to go on that ride with us. A journey that's based in the fractured online and offline world we're all trying and failing to deal with, the adrenaline of revolution, and one of the richest cinema traditions on the planet. And partly in the 90s/00s TV show, Stars in their Eyes.*"

A Year Without Summer **(14 - 16 October) UK PREMIERE**

Florentina Holzinger combines poetry, humour, music and excess in a radical exploration of women's bodies and our quest for immortality in *A Year Without Summer*.

Acclaimed Austrian director, choreographer and performance artist Florentina Holzinger presents a bold story of transformation and the search for utopia in the midst of an apocalypse. Blending dance, musical theatre, acrobatics and body horror, *A Year Without Summer* is an unforgettable exploration of what it means to be human.

Inspired by the real "year without summer" in 1816 when the eruption of Mount Tambora in Indonesia plunged much of the world into darkness, the production revisits the moment Mary Shelley conceived *Frankenstein*. From this starting point, Holzinger and her ensemble – comprised of 24 women and non-binary performers ranging in age from their 20s to 80s – create a striking journey through health, identity, ageing, technology and the limits of the human body.

Bringing together powerful contrasts – youth and age, pain and tenderness, humans and machines, life and death – the production unfolds through a series of unforgettable images.

Florentina Holzinger is transforming contemporary art and theatre with her boundary-pushing blend of dance, acrobatics, body horror and performance art. *Seaworld Venice* (2026), her striking Venice Biennial contribution, cemented her status as one of the most exciting and influential artists working today. *A Year Without Summer* is a rare opportunity to experience her visually spectacular work in the UK.

A landmark piece of theatre and art, *A Year Without Summer* is filled with dark humour, vulnerability and beauty.

A production by Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz (Berlin), Florentina Holzinger/Spirit and neon lobster in co-production with Tanzquartier Wien, International Summer Festival Kampnagel (Hamburg), Dansenhus (Stockholm), DE SINGEL (Antwerp), Maska (Ljubljana), asphalt Festival (Dusseldorf), RISING (Melbourne), Factory International (Manchester), Divine Comedy International Theater Festival / Łaźnia Nowa Theater (Krakow) and marvaða Iceland (Reykjavik).

Genesis: The Beginning and End of Time

(22 - 24 October) UK PREMIERE

A Gregory Maqoma Industries and Factory International production

Award-winning South African choreographer **Gregory Maqoma** returns to Manchester with a ground-breaking dance opera exploring the timeless quest for Black liberation.

Blending movement, live music and poetry, ***Genesis: The Beginning and End of Time*** journeys from the dawn of human creation through centuries of empire and colonial oppression that have crushed people and kingdoms.

Inspired by the revolutionary ideas of Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon and Steve Biko, and the poetic defiance of migrant communities across the world, director Gregory Maqoma and librettist **Karthika Nair** construct an intense narrative of mourning, resistance and hope – confronting colonial legacies that remain today.

Through pulsating music, songs and rhythms rooted in South African traditions, this high-octane performance explores how history repeats itself and how memory is vital to empowering resistance.

Gregory Maqoma returns to Aviva Studios after choreographing *Return to the Forest* (2026) and *The Global Playground* (MIF21) by Theatre-Rites, and *Tree* (MIF19) by Idris Elba and Kwame Kwei-Armah.

Both protest and archive, *Genesis: The Beginning and End of Time* is a reclamation of voice, of occupied space, of stolen time.

Gregory Maqoma says: "Time is not linear in GENESIS. Our ancestors inhabit our present, our histories live within our bodies, and every ending carries the possibility of another beginning. We dance not to escape

history, but to transform our relationship with it! For To Live - To Truly Live - is to be a conscious participant in the miracle of now!"

Produced by Gregory Maqoma Industries. Co-produced with Factory International, Baxter Theatre (Centre at The University of Cape Town) and Theatre de la Ville - Paris with the support of Dance Reflections by Van Cleef & Arpels.

Party in the Sky **(Winter 2027) WORLD PREMIERE**

A Darren Pritchard and Factory International production

Factory International Associate Artist **Darren Pritchard** premieres ***Party In The Sky*** – a spectacular blend of theatre and circus – at Aviva Studios as part of the winter 2027 season.

Party In The Sky builds on *Party Underground*, Pritchard's touring show, and will be presented in two versions: a family spectacular and *Party After Dark*, an adult celebration.

A native Mancunian, Darren is a director, producer, choreographer. Darren has 20 years of experience in the fashion, theatre, television and performing arts industries. In addition to his leadership in the infamous Ghetto Fabulous and pioneering efforts in Black Pride MCR, Darren is also the co-artistic director for the Manchester-based arts organisation. Darren returns to Aviva Studios after House of MCR in June 2024 and Liberation Pride Pageant in August 2026.

Darren Pritchard said: *"I want to create bold, joyful theatre that puts QTPOC communities, the wider POC community and our allies centre stage while creating opportunities for artists across the North and taking our stories to new audiences."*

This project is supported by the Theatre Breakthrough Fund and was developed in association with Upswing