



Press Release

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FACTORY INTERNATIONAL UNVEILS 2027 SEASON AS IT CELEBRATES 20 YEARS OF ERA-DEFINING NEW WORK

- From Sir Ian McKellen in the world's first Mixed Reality play to Florentina Holzinger's *A Year Without Summer*, the 2027 season features nine UK and world premieres and the return of Manchester International Festival.
- 2027 builds on two decades of ambitious new work, seen by more than 1.8 million people around the world.

Factory International today announces a season of new art and performance for 2027, celebrating 20 years of commissioning, producing and presenting ambitious boundary-pushing work from some of the world's leading artists.

The wide-ranging programme features nine UK and World premieres including the world's first Mixed Reality play featuring **Ian McKellen**, **Golda Rosheuvel**, **Arinzé Kene** and **Rosie Sheehy**; a radical new show by director, choreographer and performance artist **Florentina Holzinger** combining music, theatre, art and excess in a bold story of transformation; a groundbreaking dance opera from award-winning choreographer **Gregory Maqoma** with a libretto by **Karthika Nair**; a timely new theatrical work from **Javaad Alipoor** and **Chris Thorpe** where cult film, the Iranian revolution and social apocalypse collide; a powerful and intense visual performance by **Bashar Murkus** which tests the limits of the human body; an electrifying dance production of **Russell T Davies'** *It's A Sin* from leading contemporary dance company **Rambert**; a new genre-bending festive show from **Darren Pritchard**, co-directed by **Vicki Amedume** blending circus, dance, drag, theatre, aerial performance and music; **Phelim McDermott** and **Philip Glass's** latest collaboration, the world premiere of a major new production of *Einstein on the Beach*; and **Hetain Patel's** collaboration with over 250 people from across Greater Manchester as *Come As You Really Are* reaches its conclusion with one of its largest presentations yet. In addition **Manchester International Festival** will return to take over the city for its 2027 edition.

The anniversary season marks two decades since the organisation's beginnings with the inaugural Manchester International Festival in 2007 – the first major arts festivals dedicated solely to commissioning and producing ambitious new work of scale. Now, with its own year-round venue, Aviva Studios, Factory International enters its third decade having commissioned more than 200 new artworks, shared with almost two million people worldwide.

John McGrath, Artistic Director and Chief Executive, Factory International said: "Culture has always been a driving force in Manchester - shaping the city, challenging it to reinvent itself and helping to define its place on the world stage. Twenty years ago, Manchester International Festival put

the city at the centre of the international cultural conversation, asking what the art of tomorrow could be. Over the past two decades, we have invited some of the world's biggest artists to Manchester to create work that has shifted the artistic goalposts - work that could not have been created anywhere else. Equally importantly, the voices of our communities have rung out through our work, creating opportunities, jobs and joy with and for the people of the region. As we mark our 20th anniversary and unveil our 2027 season, we continue to build on this remarkable legacy: championing creative ambition, welcoming pioneering, fearless artists from near and far to our shapeshifting home, Aviva Studios, and making work that changes how people see the world and how the world sees our city, bringing people together, and, ultimately, changing lives."

Programme highlights:

- The European premiere of **AN ARK**, a one-of-a-kind mixed theatrical encounter delivered through **Mixed Reality** glasses, features performances from **Ian McKellen**, **Golda Rosheuvel**, **Arinzé Kene** and **Rosie Sheehy** that place audiences at the heart of a moving exploration of life, love and loss. From Mixed Reality pioneer **Todd Eckert**, Tony Award-winning Stockport-born writer **Simon Stephens** and celebrated director **Sarah Frankcom** (27 March - 10 April).
- Acclaimed Austrian director, choreographer and performance artist **Florentina Holzinger** follows her lauded *Seaworld Venice* exhibit at the Venice Biennale with a rare UK residency at Aviva Studios to present **A Year Without Summer**, a landmark piece of theatre and art inspired by the year 1816 when the Mount Tambora eruption in Indonesia plunged the world into darkness, and Mary Shelley wrote *Frankenstein*. Performed by 24 women and non-binary performers ranging from their 20s to 80s, it is a striking journey through health, identity, ageing, technology and the limits of the human body. (14 - 16 October)
- Award-winning South-African choreographer **Gregory Maqoma** returns to Manchester with the UK premiere of **Genesis: The Beginning and End of Time**, a ground-breaking dance opera with a libretto by **Karthika Nair** that explores the timeless quest for Black liberation inspired by the revolutionary ideas of Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon and Steve Biko, and the poetic defiance of migrant communities across the world. (22 - 24 October)
- **English National Opera (ENO)** and **Factory International** present **Philip Glass's** iconic opera **Einstein on the Beach** in a new spectacular experiential adaptation filling the vast warehouse space of Aviva Studios. Inspired by ideas on time, space and the birth of quantum physics, Improbable's **Phelim McDermott** joins forces with the **BBC Philharmonic Orchestra**, an award-winning design team and a huge cast of multi-talented singers and performers to re-imagine one of the most influential operas of all time in the composer's 90th year. (29 May - 12 June)
- **Russell T Davies'** landmark series **It's A Sin** - one of the most impactful and lauded TV shows of the past decade - will be transformed into a raw, visceral and devastating dance story of love and survival brought to life by **Rambert's** extraordinary dancers. The world premiere production is directed and choreographed by Artistic Director **Benoit Swan Pouffer** and executive-produced by Davies, **The Pet Shop Boys** and **Glyn Fussell**, the show takes us into the joys and pain of young lives in the 1990s. (16 - 27 Feb 2027)
- Palestinian director **Bashar Murkus** tests the limits of the human body in **DEADLIFT – الحَمَالُون**, a powerful and intense visual performance created without spoken text, exploring endurance and rebuilding in Palestine produced by **Al-Harah Theater** in partnership with **Boy**

Jonkergouw Producties and **Riksteatern**. The UK premiere is presented in partnership with Shubbak Festival. (5 - 6 June)

- Stemming from the thousands of reported sightings of Iranian revolutionary leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's face in the moon in 1978, the world premiere of **Cinema Tehran** by **Javaad Alipoor** and **Chris Thorpe** is a major new theatrical work blending performance, documentary, projection and visual tricks to explore themes of revolution, mass belief and the power of stories to shape a nation. (5 - 10 October)
- **Come As You Really Are** by **Heta Patel** celebrates the diversity and playful worlds of over 250 makers, modifiers, enthusiasts and collectors from every borough of Greater Manchester, aged five to 90 years old, bringing together thousands of objects to tell their stories in a free, interactive, family-friendly exhibition. It will also feature Patel's own artwork, plus a programme of exclusive performances, workshops and tours, curated by Heta and local Community Curators, as the nationwide project comes to a conclusion at Aviva Studios with one of its largest presentations yet. Commissioned and produced by **Artangel** in partnership with **Factory International** (13 - 20 February).
- The world premiere of **Party In The Sky** is a new genre-bending show conceived by **Darren Pritchard** and developed and co-directed with **Vicki Amedume** featuring a unique blend of circus, dance, drag, theatre, aerial performance and music in a bold and joyful celebration of life. A show for the festive season in two versions – with a family edition, and a late night club incarnation. (Winter 2027).
- **Manchester International Festival (MIF)** returns to Manchester in 2027 taking over the city from **1 - 18 July**, marking two decades of the biennial event. The full programme of extraordinary world premieres and special events will be revealed in March.

[FULL PROGRAMME DETAILS FOR THE 2027 SEASON ARE AVAILABLE HERE.](#)

Factory International has played an integral role in Manchester's cultural and physical regeneration over the past two decades. In 2023 the opening of Factory International's landmark home Aviva Studios - a purpose-built, uniquely versatile space, designed to transform around the ideas and ambitions of artists - cemented Manchester's reputation as the primary destination for the world's leading artists to create innovative work of unprecedented scale and ambition. In 2024, the venue was named by Time Magazine as one of the 100 Best Places to Visit in the World.

Alongside its cutting-edge arts programme, Aviva Studios - the new home for music in the UK, recognised for its outstanding acoustics - will host an eclectic range of music performances including two-night residencies from electronic pioneer **Bonobo** (4-5 February) and Mercury-winning jazz visionaries **Ezra Collective** (12-13 March); the world premiere of **Nubya Garcia's** first cello concerto, commissioned by Factory International and written especially for Manchester Camerata's **Hannah Roberts** (18 March); Americana folk band **The Dead South** (6 March); indie folk pop singer songwriter **Lizzy McAlpine** (4-5 April), **Slippery People** recreating the iconic Talking Heads concert film **Stop Making Sense** (17 April), five-time Grammy-winning collective **Snarky Puppy** (24 April) and cult indie rock band **Tindersticks** (6 May) with further acts to be announced.

The 2027 programme gathers artists from across the UK and from Austria, the United States, France, South Africa, Palestine and Iran, building on an ever-growing legacy of international collaboration and artistic exchange. One of the world's leading cultural exporters, Factory International creates work in Manchester that is seen by millions world-wide. To date it has presented over 65 commissions in more than 35 different countries, with seven commissions receiving international presentations around the world in 2026 from Taiwan and South Korea to America and Germany. Marina Abramovic's **Balkan Erotic Epic** will be performed at Berliner Festspiele followed by its North American premiere at New

York's Parke Avenue Armory this autumn and its Asian premiere at West K Performing Arts, Hong Kong in 2028. Earlier in the year, Blackhaine's *And Now I Know What Love Is* and Huang Ruo's *City of Floating Sounds* both played at the Holland Festival in Amsterdam; Ryan Gander's *The Find* was presented at Freeze LIVE in Seoul; Germain Kruij's *A Possibility* opened at Theater Heerlen and Holland Festival in the Netherlands plus Kunstenfestivaldesarts in Brussels; and *The Surge, An Ode to Sinéad O'Connor* received its American premiere at the Joyce Theatre in New York. Following the recent West End run of *Tao of Glass* @sohoplace Theatre, this autumn two more Factory International premieres will receive London transfers. Radiohead's collaboration with the RSC, *Hamlet Hail to the Thief* will run at the Barbican later this month, whilst ENO's *Angel's Bone* will open at the London Coliseum.

From world-class productions to workshops, Factory International builds vital foundations for Manchester's local communities and for the next generation of culture-makers, playing a significant role in the growth of Manchester's creative economy. Through Factory Academy which offers free, industry-leading training programmes and artist development initiatives including Artist Takeover, Young Curators, Factory Sounds and Factory Fellowships Factory International provides tangible pathways for young people to enter employment within the creative sector. These initiatives offer practical support, including funding, mentoring, access to space to create, and training, to help break down the barriers to entering and progressing within the creative industries and to help contribute to a stronger, inclusive creative sector for future generations.

Councillor Garry Bridges, Leader of Manchester City Council, said: *"Culture and the arts are critical to making Manchester the place it is today - a city where people want to live and work, and where world-class art is produced and performed."*

"We have never accepted standing still in Manchester, instead taking the initiative and forging our own path. Manchester International Festival and its beginnings back in 2007 is a perfect example of our Mancunian 'can do' spirit and together with Factory International has been a key part of Manchester's success story over the last 20 years - putting culture at the heart of our growth as a city, and world-class performances, jobs, training, and opportunities on the doorsteps of local people."

"We're now globally recognised as a place where ground-breaking art of all genres is both made - going out from Manchester to the world - and also performed."

"Manchester's journey is far from over and Manchester International Festival and Factory International will continue to be central to our ambitions to create a dynamic and thriving city that is also fairer and more inclusive."

Rebecca Ball, Area Director North, Arts Council England said *"We are so proud to have supported Manchester International Festival since its inception in 2007 and to have Factory International as part of our National Portfolio in its home at Aviva Studios. The organisation has cemented its reputation as a trailblazer of original and ambitious work and for the innovative opportunities it has developed for communities across Greater Manchester to get involved. The 20th anniversary season will bring more pioneering premieres to the city and we are excited to see what is planned for the next 20 years!"*

Tickets for the newly announced programme are on sale to members now, and will be on sale to AMEX holders on 16 October ahead of general on sale on 20 October. Tickets are available from £10 across all shows.

ENDS

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Listings

Come As You Really Are

13 - 20 February 2027

The North Warehouse

It's a Sin

16 - 27 Feb 2027

The Hall

AN ARK

27 March - 10 April

The Hall

Einstein on the Beach

29 May - 12 June 2027

The Warehouse

DEADLIFT – الحَمَّالون

5-6 June

The Hall

MIF 27

1- 18 July 2027

Cinema Tehran

5 - 10 October 2027 - On sale from Spring 2027

The North Warehouse

A Year Without Summer

14 - 16 October 2027 - On sale from Spring 2027

The Warehouse

Genesis: The Beginning and End of Time

22 - 24 October 2027 - On sale from Spring 2027

Party in the Sky

Coming soon - Winter 2027

Please note all press ticket requests are dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

About Factory International

Factory International is an international arts organisation based in Manchester – the creative force behind Aviva Studios and Manchester International Festival (MIF). One of the world's leading producers of new art and performance, Factory International commissions and produces ambitious new work, giving artists the freedom to experiment, create and realise ideas at scale before sharing them with audiences around the world.

Factory International has played an integral role in Manchester's cultural and physical regeneration since the establishment of Manchester International Festival in 2007 – one of the world's leading arts festivals, and the first to be entirely focused on the commissioning and producing of ambitious new work. Today, Factory International continues that legacy, commissioning bold new work year-round, championing artists and creativity, and providing routes into training and employment that will grow the region's creative economy for generations to come.

Its home, Aviva Studios, is a new kind of arts venue: shapeshifting, highly flexible and built to accommodate ambitious ideas. Designed by the world-leading practice Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA), it is also a major destination for music and a civic space where artists, audiences and communities can come together. Every two years, the biennial Manchester International Festival continues to transform the city into a stage for world premieres, new work and new ideas.

Factory International's productions travel widely, in partnership with leading international festivals and venues, taking ambitious new work made in Manchester to audiences around the world and establishing Factory International as a leading UK cultural exporter.

Factory International is committed to developing the artists and creative workforce of tomorrow. Through Factory Academy and artist development programmes including Artist Takeovers, Factory Sounds and Factory Fellowship, it provides practical support, training, mentoring, funding and access to space, helping to break down barriers to entering and progressing within the creative industries.

At the heart of Factory International's work is a belief that great art belongs to everyone. Through free events, accessible ticket prices and deep partnerships across Greater Manchester, communities are not only audiences but active participants in shaping the organisation's programme, commissions and creative work.

Impact at a glance

- **200+ ambitious new works** have been commissioned and developed by Factory International over the past 20 years, creating opportunities for artists and helping cement Manchester's reputation as a global centre for creativity.
- **65+ Factory International and MIF commissions** have gone on to reach **almost 1.9 million people in 35+ countries**, with **120 co-commissioning partners across 24 countries** helping bring ambitious new work made in Manchester to the world.
- **3,084 Greater Manchester residents** have been supported by Factory Academy since 2018 through training, mentoring and skills development. **1,149** have completed fully funded programmes, with nearly 700 graduates progressing into paid work – and more than 250 gaining employment at Factory International.
- **4,141 artists** have accessed opportunities to develop and showcase their work through Factory Fellows, Factory Sounds and the wider programme since 2017.

- **2,500+ artists** have connected, shared ideas and built networks through Factory International's Artist Socials and Artist Drop-ins since 2017.
- **120,000+ people from Greater Manchester communities** have taken part in Factory International's Engagement Programmes, from workshops and participation projects to world-class productions.
- **11,000+ people** have stepped onto Factory International's stages since 2007.

About Tin Drum

Tin Drum is a New York-based, globally active collection of artists, technologists and designers working to create and present work through the new medium of Mixed Reality. Our focus is never the tech, but rather what the tech can achieve that is not otherwise possible. At the center of everything we do is the sacred relationship between artist and audience.

Todd Eckert founded the company in 2016, coming from a background of music, film and some video game development. Tin Drum does not work in VR, but instead concentrates exclusively on the screenless MR hardware design, which is capable of presenting recorded performance as an event happening as part of the world in real time.

The Life, a collaboration with legendary performance artist Marina Abramović, was the world's first publicly-presented large-scale Mixed Reality exhibition. *Medusa*, a large-scale work blending design with generative algorithmic software had a sold-out run at London's Victoria and Albert Museum and was followed by a record-setting presentation at Brooklyn's Pioneer Works.

Kagami, with Academy Award-winning composer and pianist Ryuichi Sakamoto, is the most ambitious Full Dimensional Film piece ever attempted, and it has set the bar for MR experience. It has been presented in 7 cities to date, with new shows coming over the next several months.

Tin Drum's work has been seen by over 100,000 people to date.

About English National Opera:

English National Opera (ENO) is one of the UK's leading opera companies, dedicated to creating extraordinary encounters with opera, on stage and beyond. Performing in English and presenting bold, imaginative productions in an inclusive environment, ENO brings together outstanding artists, musicians and creative teams to tell powerful stories to the widest possible audience.

ENO is a dual-centre opera company, presenting a season at the iconic London Coliseum every year alongside dynamic work in Greater Manchester as part of its pioneering partnership with the city-region. Across the country, ENO runs a wide-ranging programme of learning, participation, creative health and community engagement that supports emerging artists and opens up opera to people of all ages and backgrounds.

Founded in 1931 as Sadlers Wells Opera, ENO has played a central role in the cultural life of the nation for more than 90 years.

English National Opera, creating opera without limits.

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