



manchester
international
festival
2025 3-20 Jul



PROGRAMME ANNOUNCED FOR 2025

MANCHESTER INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

- Factory International presents MIF25 featuring new work from Blackhaine, Eric Cantona, Edgar Davids, Juliet Ellis, FAFSWAG, Andy Field and Becky Darlington, John Grant, Shilpa Gupta, Germaine Kruij, Juan Mata, Ntombizodwa Nyoni, The Royal Ballet, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Rosabel Tan, Santiago Yahuarcani and more
- The Festival spreads its wings with events in Rochdale and Wigan alongside a plethora of guest artists from Manchester and the North West
- Over 1000 local people join MIF25 as participants and volunteers, with hundreds taking to the streets in the opening weekend and over 450 children working on a long term installation
- 8000 tickets available for £10 or less alongside free events across the Festival
- MIF25 runs Thursday 3 July to Sunday 20 July 2025

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Factory International today announces the 2025 edition of **Manchester International Festival (MIF)** from **Thursday 3 July to Sunday 20 July 2025**, the first under new Creative Director **Low Kee Hong**.

Working with partners across the city and the world to build on the MIF legacy, the wide-ranging, multi-artform programme of groundbreaking world premieres will inspire fresh perspectives, challenge conventional thought and invite audiences to ‘dream differently’ - envision new possibilities, brighter futures and utopian spaces. Presenting some of the most exciting creative minds of our generation, the programme champions indigenous artists and creators from the Global South, expanding the Festival’s renowned international impact as well as fostering deep connections with local artists and communities in the North West of England.

Creative Director at Factory International, Low Kee Hong says: *“It has been an incredible journey building the MIF25 programme with such a diverse range of artists from around the world whose voices are ever more critical in these challenging times. They encourage us to lean into visions of other possible futures, encounter cosmologies unfamiliar to our own, and enter into worlds that propose a re-enchantment of dreaming to rediscover our ability for joy,*

hope and belief in each other and our communities to build these tomorrows we want to be part of.”

Blackhaine, Eric Cantona, Edgar Davids, Juliet Ellis, FAFSWAG, Andy Field and Becky Darlington, Ryan Gander, John Grant, Shilpa Gupta, Germaine Kruip, Juan Mata, Amir Nizar Nuabi, Ntombizodwa Nyoni, Orchestral Qawwali Project, Paul Pfeiffer Keiken, The Royal Ballet, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Rosabel Tan, Ella Toone, Venture Arts, Jonathan Watkins, Ed Watson, Josh Willdigg and Santiago Yahuarcani are just some of the names who will be contributing to this extraordinary bi-annual celebration of creativity in 2025.

The Festival celebrates Manchester as a global hub of creative innovation, presenting work throughout the city and surrounding areas. MIF25 is a celebration of homegrown artists returning to the region with many of the artists programmed originally coming from the North West. As well as welcoming artists from all over the world to venues across Greater Manchester, the Festival is venturing further out than ever before with new work being presented in Rochdale and Wigan.

This year will be the first edition of the Manchester International Festival hosted within the fully operational Aviva Studios, home of Factory International. The festival will span Aviva Studios, partner venues such as HOME and the Royal Exchange, as well as unique found spaces on the city streets.

MIF25 will continue to build and strengthen its relationship with the people of Manchester and the North West with nearly 800 local people and 600 children taking part in this year's festival.

On the opening weekend hundreds of participants will join puppeteers in *THE HERDS* to parade animals made in Manchester through the city streets and beyond to open the festival. 160 young people will participate in a schools showcase taking over Festival Square and 489 school children from across all 10 boroughs of Greater Manchester will work alongside artists to create *The Inheritance*.

There will also be three specific weekends of community activations curated and hosted by MIF's Neighbourhood Organisers, who will host afternoon showcases featuring cabaret, performance and comedy.

The buzzing heart of MIF, Festival Square, returns with a free programme of live music and performances outside Aviva Studios, and this year also flowing indoors to the Social. There will also be a talks programme, to be announced in due course.

Digitally, Factory Settings launches a new project by award-winning design studio **Superflux** for MIF25. Marking the beginning of a long-term partnership, which will explore the ecological future of Aviva Studios' post-industrial site, the collaboration will launch with an augmented reality experience on the Factory Settings free AR app.

This year's festival will also see six Factory Fellows working directly alongside creatives and production teams; 15 Factory Sounds artists, as well as 400 incredible Festival volunteers.

John McGrath, Chief Executive and Artistic Director at Factory International says: *“It has been such a delight to welcome Low Kee Hong to Manchester and to see his ideas for the future of MIF develop. With a global outlook and deep local engagement, the 2025 edition of Manchester International Festival, curated by Kee Hong, promises to be an exciting new step in the story of this unique festival of new work from the world’s great artists. Our wonderful new year-round home, Aviva Studios, will form a joyful centre to the festival, while we also partner with artists and organisations across Greater Manchester to ensure a festival for everyone.”*

Rivca Burns Head of Music at Factory International says: *I’m very excited and honoured to share the first wave of music collaborations and shows for this year’s festival! A collection of global and local artists that will bring special and one-off performances to Manchester and really challenge what live music can be. Alongside the return of Festival Square which will see hundreds of performances from musicians and artists of Greater Manchester. The music projects as part of this MIF are a celebration of collaboration, of the importance and power of grassroots of not just this City that we call home but the world, and it cements this building, Aviva Studios, as an international playground where truly magical and unexpected live performance can happen that welcome audiences and artists to the unknown.*

Councillor Garry Bridges, Deputy Leader, Manchester City Council said: *“Manchester’s worldwide reputation as a city of culture and the arts is in no small part thanks to Manchester International Festival and the groundbreaking new works it has presented every two years across the city since the very first festival back in 2007. This year’s programme sounds just as brilliant with some amazing artists and creatives set to take over the city this July. As well as producing creative work that is consistently innovative, often spectacular, and always thought-provoking - much of which goes on to tour the world - the fantastic opportunities the festival also provides for local people of all ages to get involved, learn new skills, and play a part in its success, either as participants, staff, or as one of the festival’s huge army of volunteers, make a real difference in the city and literally do help change lives for the good.”*

Rebecca Ball Area Director, North, Arts Council England says *“Manchester International Festival has a well-deserved reputation for programming pioneering work from across the creative spectrum and the 2025 programme is no exception. A fantastic array of national and international artists and organisations will bring their creativity to Manchester for the first festival to be hosted within the fully-completed Aviva Studios, as well as collaborations with other city centre venues. It’s also great to see that some events will take place in Rochdale and Wigan so local communities can experience the activities on their doorstep. Manchester International Festival brings audiences from far and wide to the city, while involving communities across Greater Manchester and bringing significant economic benefit. We’re proud to support the festival and I look forward to experiencing some of the events over the summer.”*

Tickets for MIF25 are on sale to Factory International members from 12.30 11 March and on general sale 10am 19 March.

The MIF25 programme is:

THE HERDS (3 - 5 July)

From April to August 2025, ever-growing herds of life-size puppet animals will stampede into cities across Africa and Europe to flee climate disaster in THE HERDS. Travelling across 20,000km, it is a public artwork on a scale never before attempted and will vividly dramatize the climate crisis. THE HERDS will unleash a large number of captivating, life-sized animal puppets to storm the streets of Manchester, Rochdale, and Wigan, transforming the city into

a breathtaking, untamed spectacle to launch the Festival. They will be joined by hundreds of participants from across Greater Manchester. Presented by The Walk Productions and led by Artistic Director Amir Nizar Zubai, it follows the international success of *The Walk* in 2021, which saw a 12-foot tall puppet of a Syrian refugee girl called Little Amal travel from Turkey to the UK.

A Single Man (2 - 6 July)

For the first time the Festival will partner with The Royal Ballet, to present a stage version of **Christopher Isherwood's *A Single Man*** at Aviva Studios. Created by **Jonathan Watkins** with new music by **Jasmin Kent Rodgman** and **John Grant**, who will also perform live, the World Premiere of *A Single Man* will see former Royal Ballet Principal **Ed Watson** perform the central role.

Football City, Art United. (4 July – 24 August 2025)

Football City, Art United. is an ambitious group exhibition at Aviva Studios which pairs 11 artists and footballs to create new work. The project is a collaboration between World Cup and Champions' League winner **Juan Mata**, renowned curator and Serpentine Artistic Director **Hans Ulrich Obrist** and writer **Josh Willdigg**. From interactive play arenas and sound installations to animation and sculpture, *Football City, Art United* expands the worlds of art and football and the cultural contributions both make to our daily lives.

A Symphony of Flesh and Bones (10 - 13 July)

Focusing on the experiences of her father Lloyd, a world champion bodybuilder, and her brother, Antony, a former cage fighter, ***A Symphony of Flesh and Bones*** is an immersive and dreamlike film and installation by award-winning artist **Juliet Ellis**. Taking place in the South Warehouse at Aviva Studios, Ellis's new piece explores how and why we build our bodies as shelters or armour—and how the physical effects of aging impact the different identities we construct.

Venture Arts: Michael Beard (4 - 20 July)

Enjoy a live collaborative performance from **Michael Beard**, dance **Company Chameleon** and **Manchester Camerata** at **Venture Arts pop-up open studio** - filled with art, movement and music. With local artist **Michael Beard** in residence, live performances and interactive workshops, The Lab, Aviva Studios will be a welcoming space for creative exploration.

FALE SĀ / SACRED HOUSE (4 July - 10 August)

Critically acclaimed Queer Indigenous collective **FAFSWAG** take over HOME for the duration of MIF25 – with stunning digital art, live cultural ceremony and a programme of films and talks grounded in Pacific identity and culture. **FALE SĀ / SACRED HOUSE** responds to the reality that home is a precarious notion for cultures in a constant state of motion and displacement and has been created over the last two years.

And Now I Know What Love Is (9 - 19 July)

Internationally acclaimed artist, choreographer and musician **Blackhaine** will take over industrial space Diecast for the World Premiere of ***And Now I Know What Love Is*** (9 - 19 July). Performed by a company of dancers and taking inspiration from the rich, urban landscapes of North West England where he grew up - liminal, seemingly-desolate spaces - this immersive performance blends choreography and sound inviting us to question our sense of belonging and love in a world of despair.

A Possibility (17 - 20 July)

The Royal Northern College of Music will play host to a new artwork by **Germaine Kruij**. Part sculptural installation, part soundscape, part immersive experience, **A Possibility** features music by **Emily Howard** and **Hahn Rowe** performed by percussionists using Kruij's specially made brass sculptures. The piece invites audiences to transcend the immediate and explore a world of infinite possibilities.

Liberation (27 June - 26 July)

Inspired by true events in Black British History, people, politics and power collide in the World Premiere of **Liberation**, a powerful new play by writer **Ntombizodwa Nyoni**, directed by **Monique Touko**. Commissioned and staged by the Royal Exchange Theatre 80 years after the Fifth Pan African Congress took place in Manchester in 1945, **Liberation** explores the private lives of activists who fought to liberate Africa, exploring why their story remains relevant in 2025.

Santiago Yahuarcani: The Beginning of Knowledge (4 July 2025 - 4 January 2026)

The Beginning of Knowledge, the first international solo exhibition of works by Santiago Yahuarcani – artist, Indigenous activist and leader of the Aimeni (White Heron) clan of the Uitoto people will be presented by the Whitworth as part of MIF25. Working from a remote Amazonia town in northern Peru, Santiago Yahuarcani creates large-scale, narrative rich paintings exploring the relationship between the Uitoto people and the natural world. Using natural pigments and materials, Yahuarcani's work exists outside of Western art history – instead harnessing the memories, history and wisdom of his ancestors, the sacred knowledge of medicinal plants, the sounds of the jungle, and Uitoto myths that explain the multiple configurations of the universe.

An Inheritance (4 July - 2 November)

Showing at Manchester Art Gallery in 2025 and again in 2125, **An Inheritance** brings together a sprawling collection of knowledge, advice, jokes, memories and objects curated by over 500 primary school children from across every borough of Greater Manchester. Working with artists **Andy Field**, **Beckie Darlington** and **Rosabel Tan**, these young people have been thinking about Manchester 100 years from now and what they can leave behind for its children – from a jar of honey (in case there are no bees in 2125) to advice on how to make friends, and everything in between. To make sure the inheritance is passed down, key representatives from the city will attend a special ceremony where they will sign an oath written by the children promising to safeguard the collection for the next 100 years.

Balmy Army x Balmy UKraine (8 - 10 July)

Manchester's youth-led art, activism and mutual care project **Balmy Army** returns to join forces with young people from Ukraine for a three-day takeover of art and activism at Contact where young people are heard, and adults have to listen.

Shilpa Gupta (4 - 20 July)

Mumbai-based artist **Shilpa Gupta** connects and collects stories with different communities to create a thought-provoking sound installation at Rise Innovate in Rochdale.

Festival Square (4 - 20 July)

Returning to the banks of the River Irwell at Aviva Studios, and flowing indoors to the Social, **Festival Square** showcases the best talent from the city and beyond with a free programme

of live music and performances. From late night DJ sets and family fun, to spoken word and bands; and with new acts to experience and great food, this summer hangout is buzzing with all that makes Manchester special.

Ruhaniyat (رُوحانیت) - An Orchestral Sufi Experience (10 July)

A World Premiere by Rushil Ranjan (the Orchestral Qawwali Project) with Manchester Camerata and a very special guest.

Rushil Ranjan is a self-taught, critically-acclaimed, award-winning composer, arranger and producer, known for his work in bridging classical art forms from around the world. For MIF25, he brings Orchestral Qawwali Project to Aviva Studios, teaming up with Manchester Camerata, one of the UK's most adventurous orchestras. Established in 2020 by Ranjan and his partner Abi Sampa, the Orchestral Qawwali Project has soared to prominence with its unique blend of Sufi poetry, Indian Classical dance and orchestral arrangements.

Mary Anne Hobbs & Anna Phoebe (15 July)

Mary Anne Hobbs and Anna Phoebe offer a unique hybrid performance, bringing together live DJing, sound design and voice, with violins, viola and live electronics. In the age of attention-obliteration, Hobbs + Phoebe will explore the question: WHAT DO YOU WANT?

The performance will feature elements drawn from raw Manchester sources and bespoke music written for the space. This 45 minute piece will only ever be performed once, in the form it takes at MIF25.

Everything is Recorded (16 July)

Richard Russell brings his ever-evolving collaborative music project, *Everything is Recorded*, to MIF25 for an unforgettable experience. As the multi-talented producer and founder of XL Recordings, Richard Russell invites you into his musical world for a night of innovation and collaboration. This performance marks a significant milestone, as Russell will be joined on stage by an expanded lineup of collaborators and special guests, performing live for the first time. Expect intimate shows in-the-round, where live vocals, a diverse array of instruments, and a few surprises will transform *Everything is Recorded* into a dynamic, one-of-a-kind performance.

Surround Sounds (19 July)

Celebrating 20 years of Sounds from the Other City. A full immersion into the SFTOC experience, Surround Sounds injects the heady atmosphere and no-holds barred energy of one of the UK's most venerated independent music festivals, right into the heart of Aviva Studios. The secret to 20 years of success for Sounds from the Other City lies in the festival's hunger for raw and exciting ideas and a genuine openness to collaborative creativity, every year transforming the 'in between' spaces of its Salford home into a May Day Bank Holiday bonanza. For MIF 2025, the South Warehouse will become an in-the-round stage; a non-stop carousel of sounds, unexpected performances, experiencing an array of artists that exemplify the kaleidoscope of styles, energies and characters that have graced SFTOC stages over the past two decades.

Sounds of the East (6 July)

MIF and Hallé present *Sounds of the East* – an evening of music woven together by Eastern tradition and inspiration at Manchester's Bridgewater Hall under the baton of the

Hallé's new Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor, **Kahchun Wong**. The concert opens with a European premiere; Cambodian-American composer **Chinary Ung's** *Grand Spiral (Desert Flowers Bloom)*.

Factory Settings (3 July - 25 August)

A new project by award-winning design studio **Superflux** Marking the beginning of a long-term partnership, which will explore the ecological future of Aviva Studios' post-industrial site, the collaboration will launch with an augmented reality experience on the Factory Settings app. Factory Settings is a free AR app where you choose a particular lens and inhabit experiences crafted by artists.

International Artists Residency artists for 2025 will be: **Selma and Sofiane Ouissi; Chiara Bersani; Hung Chien-han and Ray Tseng; Shareef Sarhan.**

ENDS.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND MEDIA REQUESTS PLEASE CONTACT:

Maisie Lawrence, Director, Bread and Butter PR
maisie@breadandbutterpr.uk

Kate Hassell, Director, Bread and Butter PR
kate@breadandbutterpr.uk

Ben Chamberlain, Director, Bread and Butter PR
ben@breadandbutterpr.uk

Alex Hall, Press & PR Manager, Factory International
alex.hall@factoryinternational.org

Shelly Ramsdale, Press & PR Manager, Factory International
Shelly.ramsdale@factoryinternational.org

Anja Samy, Press Officer, Factory International
anja.samy@factoryinternational.org

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Press Performances

Production	Press Night	Time	Venue	Full Run Dates
Liberation	2 July	7.30pm	Royal Exchange	27 June -26 July
A Single Man	3 July	8.00pm	Law Family Hall at Aviva Studios	2-6 July
THE HERDS	3 July	6,00pm	Piccadilly Gardens	3-5 July
Santiago Yahuarcani; The Beginning of	3 July	Part of visual art	The Whitworth	2 July -Jan 2026

Knowledge		press day		
An Inheritance	3 July	Part of visual art press day	Manchester Art Gallery	3 July - 2 November
FALE SĀ / SACRED HOUSE	10 July	7.30pm	HOME	10-12 July
FAFSWAG exhibition	3 July	Part of visual art press day	HOME	4 July - 10 August
Shilpa Gupta	3 July	Part of visual art press day	R-KIX Performance Centre, Rochdale	4-20 July
Football City, Art United.	3 July	Part of visual art press day	North Warehouse Aviva Studios	4 July - 24 August
Michael Beard	4 July	Drop-in	The Lab at Aviva Studios	4-20 July
Balmy Army	8 July	Drop-in	Contact	8-10 July
Halle/ Singapore Chinese Orchestra	6 July	7.30pm	Bridgewater Hall	6 July
And Now I Know What Love	9 July	7.30pm	Diecast	9-19 July
A Symphony of Flesh and Bones	11 July	7.30pm	South Warehouse at Aviva Studios	10-13 July
A Possibility	17 July	7.30pm	Royal Northern College of Music	17-20 July
Ruhaniyat (رُوحَانِيَّة)	10 July	8.00pm	Law Family Hall at Aviva Studios	10 July
Mary Anne Hobbs & Anna Phoebe	15 July	9.00pm	South Warehouse at Aviva Studios	15 July
Everything is Recorded	16 July	8.00pm	South Warehouse at Aviva Studios	16 July
Surround Sounds	18 July	8.00pm	South Warehouse at Aviva Studios	18 July
Factory Settings	3 July	n/a	Aviva Studios	3 July - 25 August

Listings

Liberation

27 June - 26 July

Royal Exchange Theatre

Commissioned by the Royal Exchange Theatre. Produced by the Royal Exchange Theatre and Factory International.

A Single Man

2 - 6 July

Aviva Studios, Law Family Hall

A Royal Ballet and Factory International co-production.

Based on the Christopher Isherwood novel.

The HERDS

3-5 July

THE HERDS Greater Manchester is produced by The Walk Productions in partnership with Factory International. Greater Manchester events delivered in association with Rochdale Borough Council and Rochdale Development Agency, and Wigan Council. MIF25 Opening Event created in partnership with Manchester Camerata.

Santiago Yahuarcani: The Beginning of Knowledge

4 July - 4 Jan 2026

The Whitworth

A project by the Whitworth, The University of Manchester. Presented as part of Manchester International Festival 2025.

An Inheritance

4 July - 2 November

Manchester Art Gallery

Commissioned and produced by Factory International. Developed with year 5 pupils from schools across Greater Manchester.

FALE SĀ / SACRED HOUSE

10-12 July

HOME

Commissioned by HOME and Factory International. Produced by Factory International. SAUNIGA (cultural ceremony) was developed with support from Asia TOPA, Arts Centre Melbourne.

FAFSWAG exhibition

4 July -10 August

HOME

Commissioned by HOME and Factory International. Produced by Factory International. SAUNIGA (cultural ceremony) was developed with support from Asia TOPA, Arts Centre Melbourne.

Shilpa Gupta

4-20 July

R-KIX Performance Centre, Rochdale

Commissioned and produced by Factory International. In partnership with Rochdale Development Agency.

Football City, Art United.

4 July - 24 August

North Warehouse, Aviva Studios

Commissioned by Factory International and TO Live. Produced by Factory International, Manchester. Common Goal is a partner for Football City, Art United.

Venture Arts: Michael Beard

4-20 July

The Lab, Aviva Studios

Commissioned by Factory International and Venture Arts. Produced by Factory International.

Balmy Army x Balmy UKraine

8-10 July

Contact

A project by 'the vacuum cleaner' in partnership with Contact. Presented as part of Manchester International Festival 2025. Originally commissioned and produced by HOME and Factory International for Manchester International Festival 2023.

Sounds of the East

Bridgewater Hall

6 July

Presented by the Hallé in partnership with Factory International for Manchester International Festival 2025.

And Now I Know What Love

Diecast

9 - 19 July

Commissioned and produced by Factory International.

A Symphony of Flesh and Bones

10-13 July

South Warehouse at Aviva Studios

Commissioned and produced by Factory International.

A Possibility

17-20 July

Royal Northern College of Music

Commissioned and produced by Factory International.

Ruhaniyat (روحانیت) - An Orchestral Sufi Experience

10 July

Law Family Hall, Aviva Studios

Presented by Rushil Ranjan, co-founder of the Orchestral Qawwali Project, with Manchester Camerata in partnership with Factory International.

Mary Anne Hobbs & Anna Phoebe

15 July

South Warehouse, Aviva Studios

Presented by Mary Anne Hobbs & Anna Phoebe in partnership with Factory International.

Everything is Recorded

16 July

South Warehouse, Aviva Studios

Presented by Richard Russell, producer and founder of XL Recordings in partnership with Factory International.

Surround Sounds

19 July

South Warehouse, Aviva Studios

Presented by Sounds from the Other City in partnership with Factory International.

Factory Settings

3 July - 25 August

Aviva Studios

Commissioned and Produced by Factory International in partnership with Superflux.

ABOUT FACTORY INTERNATIONAL

Factory International is the organisation behind Manchester International Festival and the city's landmark cultural space, Aviva Studios.

Factory International commissions, produces and presents a year-round programme of original creative work and special events at Aviva Studios, online, and internationally through its network of co-commissioners and partners. It also stages the city-wide Manchester International Festival (MIF) every other year.

MIF is one of the world's leading arts festivals, and the first to be entirely focused on the commissioning and producing of ambitious new work. Staged every two years in Manchester since 2007, the festival invites world-renowned artists from different art forms and backgrounds to create dynamic, innovative and forward-thinking new work in venues and spaces across Greater Manchester. Previous artists include, Björk, Jeremy Deller, Akram Khan, Yayoi Kusama, David Lynch, Wayne McGregor, Steve McQueen, Yoko Ono, Maxine Peake, Skepta, and The xx

Factory International plays an important role in the lives of Greater Manchester residents, bringing jobs, skills, training and creative opportunities. Through the Factory Academy, Factory International is training the creative workforce of the future, while its pioneering creative engagement and artist development programmes create year-round opportunities for local people to get involved, from participating in flagship commissions to shaping the organisation through involvement in its public forums.

Aviva Studios was designed by the world-leading practice Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA), with Ellen van Loon as lead architect – their first major public building in the UK. Its development was led by Manchester City Council, with backing from HM Government and National Lottery funding from Arts Council England.

Factory International is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation.

factoryinternational.org