

Press Release

TUESDAY 14 MARCH 2023

PROGRAMME ANNOUNCED FOR 2023 MANCHESTER INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

- **Factory International presents city-wide festival featuring new work from artists including Ryan Gander, Maxine Peake, Ryuichi Sakamoto, Tino Sehgal and Juan Mata, and music from Janelle Monáe, John Grant, Angélique Kidjo and more**
- **Raising the curtain on Factory International's flagship new building with a major exhibition of Yayoi Kusama's spectacular inflatables in the warehouse**
- **Festival presented across Manchester with £10 tickets for all shows and many free events**

Factory International today announces the 2023 edition of Manchester International Festival (MIF) from **29 June to 16 July**. Working with partners regionally and across the globe, the wide-ranging programme of original new work by artists from around the world will take place in venues and spaces throughout the city and at Factory International's much-anticipated new home, which opens its doors for the first time for the Festival, in advance of its official opening in October.

From a collaboration exploring art and the beautiful game by curator **Hans Ulrich Obrist** and footballer **Juan Mata**, featuring new work by **Tino Sehgal**, to a mixed reality concert by Japanese composer **Ryuichi Sakamoto**, from a live photographic performance by **Benji Reid** to a musical adaptation of a cult queer classic by **Philip Venables** and **Ted Huffman**, the expansive programme of new work premiering at the Festival will see artforms merge, breaking new creative ground and challenging perceptions.

A major exhibition of **Yayoi Kusama's** inflatable sculptures will form a centrepiece of the Festival, the first work to be presented at Factory International's flagship new venue. *You, Me and the Balloons* will take over the vast warehouse space, inviting audiences to take an exhilarating journey through Kusama's psychedelic creations.

Manchester's much-loved Festival Square relocates to the building's outdoor spaces with free live music from over 100 performers, and a wide variety of food and drink, creating a new riverside destination for Manchester.

Rooted in Manchester, events will also take place in spaces and places across the city - including a city-wide quest for collectible coin artworks by **Ryan Gander**, a celebration of our connection to water on the banks of the River Medlock by **Risham Syed** and **Angie Bual**, and a chilling adaptation of a lost dystopian masterpiece in the depths of the John Rylands library by **Maxine Peake**, **Sarah Frankcom** and **Imogen Knight**.

Other highlights include a diverse programme of music, headlined by a three-day residency from Grammy-nominated singer-songwriter **Janelle Monáe**, including performances from **Angélique**

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Kidjo, Alison Goldfrapp, and revered Sufi singer **Sanam Marvi**; the premiere of a new show from **John Grant** and the **Richard Hawley band** celebrating pop and country legend Patsy Cline; a world premiere by **John Luther Adams** inspired by arctic landscapes performed by the **BBC Philharmonic**; and a night of dance and music from award-winning choreographer **Sharon Eyal, Gai Behar** and record label **Young**.

Building on the significant digital presence the Festival has pioneered since 2017, MIF23 will also feature a broad online offer including livestreams and behind-the-scenes broadcasts, plus the world premiere of a new film by artist and director **Jenn Nkiru**, and a programme of talks from **Guardian Live** that will take place in person and online - full details to be announced.

Greater Manchester residents are once again at the heart of MIF23, from performing on Festival Square, to volunteering in an array of roles across the Festival. Many of the works reflect on the personal experiences of the city's diverse communities, from youth led performances, and exhibitions surrounding mental health as part of *Balmy Army* to a futuristic and interactive journey through Manchester by **Blast Theory** and **Manchester Street Poem** led by those most marginalised in the city.

Alongside the artists presenting new work at MIF23, a group of international artists will take up residency in communities in Greater Manchester to soak up the Festival and plan projects for the future, including **El Conde de Torrefiel, The Nest Collective, Shilpa Gupta** and **FAFSWAG**.

Reflecting its commitment to developing the next generation of creative talent, MIF23 will see artists from all stages of their careers given platforms to develop and learn during the festival. Six artists from the North will shadow the creation of MIF23 projects through the Factory Creative Fellowships, and ten creatives involved in Manchester's music scene will be offered financial support towards the creation of a new project and the opportunity to perform on Festival Square as part of the recently launched Factory Sounds.

Working with partners across the globe, once again much of the work made in Manchester for MIF23 will go on to travel internationally, building on an audience to date of over 1.6 million people in more than 30 countries who have experienced MIF's work overseas.

Artistic Director and Chief Executive, Factory International & Manchester International Festival **John McGrath** says: *"From the radical and agenda setting to the purest of celebrations, MIF23's programme covers a huge range of art forms and styles - from a ritual on the banks of a newly uncovered river, to mixed reality from one of Japan's greatest composers, from a hunt for artworks across the city to a residency from one of American music's most vibrant superstars. A genuine melting pot of creativity where artists share their ideas with each other and the public, the Festival will once again take the temperature of our times, and imagine possibilities for the future."*

As always MIF is rooted in its home - in the spaces and places of Greater Manchester. So at the same time as we take up residency in our flagship new venue with our centrepiece exhibition of Yayoi Kusama's incredible inflatable sculptures, the Festival will extend its reach throughout the city: finding unexpected locations to show its work in, and working with local artists and residents to perform and take part. MIF23 will be a true celebration of the city and its cultural offerings."

MIF23 provides the first opportunity for audiences to experience Factory International's new venue, ahead of its official opening in October. Designed by **Ellen van Loon**, OMA Partner and lead

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architect, the ultra-flexible building is based around vast, adaptable spaces that can be constantly reconfigured, enabling artists to develop and create large-scale work of invention and ambition, of a kind not seen anywhere else in the world. It is the largest new national cultural project since the opening of Tate Modern in 2000, and is made possible thanks to initial HM Government investment and backing from Manchester City Council and Arts Council England.

Councillor Lutfur Rahman OBE, Deputy Leader Manchester City Council, says: *"We take culture very seriously here in Manchester. It plays a big part in our global reputation and economic success, making Manchester a city that people and businesses the world over want to visit, work, live, and invest in. The Festival is a real celebration of that – showcasing the fantastic venues and spaces around the city, drawing national and global audiences, and creating opportunities for local people to get involved, through jobs, volunteering and the chance to perform and participate in shows.*

"Being able to invite audiences to experience our brand-new building for the first time as part of this year's brilliant Manchester International Festival, as well as a programme of events right across the city, is very exciting and should not be missed. This new chapter takes our cultural ambitions to the next level and then some. Putting a world-class building on our doorstep that brings with it a wealth of jobs, training, and opportunities that further cement our place as an international centre and incubator for culture, creativity and innovation.

"The eyes of the world are once again on Manchester, the festival, and this new space - and they will not be disappointed."

Sarah Maxfield, Area Director, North, Arts Council England. Says: *"I'm excited to see this year's Manchester International Festival programme. Not only is the city welcoming back its internationally renowned festival but also presenting work for the first time in Factory International's venue and new public spaces. This is a huge moment for both Manchester and the wider Northern cultural scene. I can't wait to see the city buzzing with people experiencing world class arts and culture by artists from here at home and from around the world. This is going to be one exciting summer for Manchester!"*

Tickets for MIF23 are on sale to Factory International members from 28 March and on general sale 30 March.

The MIF23 programme is:

In a series of works in the outdoor spaces across the city, **Ryan Gander** invites audiences to undertake a quest across the city in search of his latest artworks. Hundreds of thousands of collectable coins will be hiding in plain sight across Manchester, each embellished with words offering guidance on daily decisions. Left on park benches, walls, steps, in food courts and libraries, tucked away in parking ticket machines or between tram seats, Gander sets out an invitation for all of Manchester to go out and explore. With *The Find* (29 June – 16 July), Ryan Gander injects mystery into people's everyday encounters, encouraging them to see the world around them differently.

On the banks of the River Medlock in Mayfield Park, artist **Risham Syed** and director **Angie Bual** will draw on ancient practices and river rituals from South Asian culture, in *Each Tiny Drop* (29 June), a special restorative event that honours our connection to water - and to one another. Audiences are invited to collect water specially transported from the Soan River in Pakistan and steward it into the River Medlock in a celebration of the life source we so often take for granted.

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A collaboration between **Blast Theory** and **Manchester Street Poem**, *We Cut Through Dust* (29 June – 16 July) takes audiences on a walk through the city into the future guided by a series of phone calls. Set in a world not too far from now, the walk starts at a location where your mobile phone triggers a giant mechanical sign to open, and the story to begin. Blast Theory is an artist group which makes interactive work exploring social and political questions, and Manchester Street Poem is a co-produced art collective whose work reflects the personal experiences of Manchester's marginalised communities.

A rich performance programme includes *Kagami* (29 June – 9 July), a unique collaboration between award-winning musician and composer **Ryuichi Sakamoto** and **Tin Drum**, the world's premiere mixed reality content production studio. Drawing on a body of work spanning electronic to classical composition and performance, *Kagami* represents a new kind of concert, fusing dimensional moving photography with the real world to create a never-before-experienced mixed reality presentation. Audiences will wear optically-transparent devices to view the virtual Sakamoto performing on a piano alongside dimensional art aligned with the music, and are free to wander and explore during the hour-long event at Versa Manchester Studios.

Composer **Philip Venables** and director **Ted Huffman** present a world premiere musical adaptation of Larry Mitchell and Ned Asta's cult 1977 book *The Faggots and Their Friends Between Revolutions* at HOME (29 June – 2 July), reimagining the history of the world through a queer lens with a cast of actors, singers and musicians. The ultimate anarchic bedtime story in which fables and myths celebrate queer community and conjure up a world on the brink of revolution with battle re-enactments, cheerleading, and all-night raves mixed with lute songs and court dances.

Another cult classic text from 1977 is brought to life at MIF23 by **Maxine Peake**, **Sarah Frankcom** and **Imogen Knight**, who will adapt *They*, Kay Dick's dystopian masterpiece, with a live, afterhours performance by Peake inside the iconic John Rylands Library. *They* (5-9 July) is the trio's latest Festival collaboration, following *The Masque of Anarchy*, *The Skriker* and *The Nico Project*, which all celebrated radical acts and artists. The project marks the group's first production as the newly-formed company MAAT – a collective adventure to make new work in conversation with Music, Art, Activism and Theatre.

One of the biggest mysteries in the history of modern travel merges with a personal story from **Helgard Haug**, director and co-founder of the award-winning German theatre group **Rimini Protokoll** in *All right. Good night.* (6-8 July). In 2014, a flight carrying 227 passengers and 12 crew members took off from Kuala Lumpur, heading towards Beijing, but the plane disappeared from radar. Shortly after the disappearance, Haug's own father developed dementia. This powerful UK premiere is a meditation on disappearance, loss and how to deal with uncertainty. Performed live at HOME with a haunting contemporary score from **Barbara Morgenstern** and arranger **Davor Vincze**.

The freedom, energy and intimacy that runs through club culture is celebrated in a night of dance and music in Manchester's iconic New Century Hall night club. *R.O.S.E* (13-16 July) is a collaboration between award-winning choreographer **Sharon Eyal** and her artistic director and long-term collaborator **Gai Behar**, and London-based record label **Young** which brings the dark hedonism of Eyal's choreography and artistry of her dancers off the stage and onto the dancefloor alongside new music curated by Young. **Ben UFO** DJs throughout, playing for both the dancers during performances and the audience between.

Winner of the inaugural Bruntwood Prize for Playwriting 2019, International Award, **Kimber Lee's** *untitled f*ck m*ss s**gon play* (29 June – 22 July) makes its world premiere directed by **Roy**



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Alexander Weise (*The Mountaintop*) and designed by **Moi Tran** for the Royal Exchange Theatre as part of MIF23. The anticipated production, co-produced with the Young Vic and Headlong, jumps through time – wriggling inside of and then exploding lifetimes of repeating Asian stereotypes, wrestling history for the right to control your own narrative in a world that thinks it can tell you who you are.

A centrepiece of the Festival presented at Factory International's flagship new venue, **Yayoi Kusama's** *You, Me and the Balloons* (30 June – 28 Aug) will bring together three decades of the renowned Japanese artist's spectacular inflatable artworks for the first time. Created especially for Factory International's vast new warehouse space, *You, Me and the Balloons* will be Kusama's largest ever immersive environment, featuring works over 10 metres tall. The exhibition will invite visitors to take an exhilarating journey through Kusama's psychedelic creations including giant dolls, spectacular tendrilled landscapes and a vast constellation of polka-dot spheres.

Another visual art highlight, *The Trequartista – Art and Football United* brings together 11 contemporary artists and 11 footballers to produce new works inspired by the Trequartista, a legendary position and style in football that is rapidly disappearing. Co-curated by **Hans Ulrich Obrist** and footballer **Juan Mata**, *The Trequartista* is conceptualised and developed by writer **Josh Willdigg**. 11 teams of footballers and artists will work together over two years, culminating in a group show at the 2025 edition of Manchester International Festival.

The project kicks off at MIF23 with a world premiere of *This entry* – a new work by artist **Tino Sehgal**, made with the involvement of **Juan Mata** and presented at the National Football Museum (29 June – 5 July) and the Whitworth (7 – 16 July). Known for artworks composed using exclusively the human body, voice and social interaction, Tino has exhibited his work at the world's biggest art galleries – from New York's Guggenheim to London's Tate Modern, Paris' Palais de Tokyo and Hong Kong's Tai Kwun. *This entry* is a playful choreographic exchange between a footballer, violinist, cyclist and singing dancer.

At the Whitworth, *Economics the Blockbuster: It's Not Business As Usual* (30 June – 22 October) presents a selection of extraordinary art projects that each operate as real-world economic systems. Together they propose new ways of 'doing business'. Building on the Whitworth's ongoing commitment to being a useful museum driven by a civic purpose, this project addresses economics as a social and financial set of relations that we all take part in. From a community-led drinks company to a crypto-financed youth agency, the exhibition includes new artist commissions, merchandise with a purpose, business collaborations and a live programme of talks and activities.

Manchester's industrial history and modern-day architecture intertwine in a meditative new film by British artist and filmmaker **Jenn Nkiru** (from 29 June). In this new work for Virtual Factory, she weaves together new footage and archive material to explore parallels between architecture and the human body – and how they both shapeshift through time and space. Taking Manchester's industrial history as a starting point, Nkiru's short film pays homage to the people and culture that make up a city. This is the final commission in the Virtual Factory series, which invited artists to create online works inspired by the architecture and site of Factory International's new space.

Known for award-winning Afro-futurist images that seem to defy gravity, **Benji Reid** invites us to watch him at play as he creates live photography in this genre-bending show, *Find Your Eyes* (12-16 July). A choreo-photolist, Benji combines photography, choreography and theatre to make striking and surreal images which speak to his experiences as a Black man in the UK today. The world premiere of his new show at MIF23 exposes the making of this work – a behind-the-scenes look at

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Benji's life and practice where the stage becomes a studio. Choreographing three performers, Benji will create live photographs in front of an audience at Manchester Academy, interlacing the action with recollection of resonant moments from his life.

Over the past year young people, artists, madpride organisers, radical dreamers and disability justice doers have come together for mental health support that works. *Balmy Army* (1-15 July) is art and activism rolled into one, from sharing poetry to making placards, to social media takeovers and mass acts of civil disobedience. The gallery at HOME is the *Balmy Army's* space to play and plan during the Festival. There are also a number of events in the works which anyone is welcome to join – including a rally through the streets of the city on the last weekend of the Festival celebrating young people making change. *Balmy Army* reminds us that mental health isn't just about individuals – and that community, care and creativity are some of our greatest ways to heal.

A diverse programme of music is headlined by Grammy-nominated singer-songwriter **Janelle Monáe** (30 June – 2 July), who will take up residency in the city performing for three nights over the opening weekend. **Alison Goldfrapp** (14 July) makes a welcome return to the Festival with music from her first solo foray, and **John Grant and the Richard Hawley band** (11 July) debut their new show singing the songs of pop and country legend Patsy Cline.

The Grammy-award winning **Angélique Kidjo** (4 July) performs her first show in Manchester in ten years with guest appearances from some fantastic emerging local talent, and revered Sufi singer **Sanam Marvi** will celebrate the rich culture and sound of Pakistan. **The Comet Is Coming** present *Hyper-Dimensional Expansion Beam* (12 July) – a unique collision of the band's cosmic sounds and filmmaker **Daisy Dickinson's** transcendent visuals, and for one night only, **Justin Vivian Bond** (6 July) - a living legend of cabaret - will headline a night of trans excellence from TransCreative with a raucous and seductive evening of songs, stories and some very special guests. On the final weekend of MIF23, Factory Sounds alumni **Sam Malik** will present *Desi Factory* (15 July), a night with some of the best in the British South Asian new music scene featuring **Ezu, Bambi Bains** and BBC Asian Network's **Bobby Friction**. Headlined by **Zack Knight**, more artists will be announced in spring.

Manchester's inventive classical scene plays a key part at this year's MIF, as electronic artist and BBC Radio 6 music host **AFRODEUTSCHE** premieres a new composition with the innovative **Manchester Camerata** (5 July), and Royal Northern College of Music partner with **Anna Meredith** (8 July) for a sensational performance of her Mercury Prize-shortlisted album *FIBS* as part of RNCM's 50th anniversary celebrations. **Manchester Collective** and theatre company **Slung Low** will present a vibrant staging of Benjamin Britten's community opera, *Noah's Flood* (9 July) featuring **Lemn Sissay** live as the voice of God and 180 schoolchildren alongside a professional cast. The **BBC Philharmonic** will perform a world premiere by **John Luther Adams**, played by pianist **Ralph Van Raat** alongside new commissions by **Ailís Ní Ríain** and **Alissa Firsova** - all the works in the evening's programme, *Sonic Geography* (7 July), are inspired by the climate crisis.

Festival Square relocates to its new home for MIF23, introducing visitors to Factory International's outdoor spaces - a new riverside destination for Manchester - with live sets from over 100 live bands, artists and DJs and a wide variety of food and drink (30 June – 16 July). Full line-up and more details to come later this spring.

A series of collaborations at the Festival celebrate new openings, developments and milestones with cultural venues across the city. From *50 Hours of Freedom* (14 July), a 50-hour lock-in at Contact with three local non-binary artists working with **Danez Smith**, marking 50 years of the city's pioneering youth-led arts venue; to *Modelling Queer Utopias*, a behind-the-scenes tour of Salford's newly

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redeveloped Islington Mill (1, 8, 15 July), a provocative and caring space where people make creativity their lives; to *Sonics, stories and scenes of the Diaspora* (1 July), a day-long takeover presented by **SEEN Magazine and Manchester Museum** in the ground-breaking new South Asia Gallery, celebrating the sounds of global majority and South Asian diaspora artists.

ENDS.

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About Manchester International Festival & Factory International

Factory International is the organisation behind both Manchester International Festival (MIF), and the landmark new space which will open in 2023, creating a global destination for arts music and culture in the heart of Manchester. Factory International will commission and present a year-round programme of original creative work, music and special events at its new venue, online, and internationally through its network of co-commissioners and partners. It will also stage the city-wide Manchester International Festival every other year at its new home and in spaces and venues across Greater Manchester.

Factory International builds on the legacy of Manchester International Festival, 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, MIF has commissioned, produced and presented world premieres by artists including Marina Abramović, Damon Albarn, Laurie Anderson, Björk, Boris Charmatz, Jeremy Deller, Idris Elba and Kwame Kwei-Armah, Elbow, Tracey Emin, Akram Khan, David Lynch, Ibrahim Mahama, Wayne McGregor, Steve McQueen, Marta Minujín, Cillian Murphy, Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy, Yoko Ono, Thomas Ostermeier, Maxine Peake, Punchdrunk, Skepta, Christine Sun Kim, The xx, and Robert Wilson.

These and other world-renowned artists from different art forms and backgrounds create dynamic, innovative and forward-thinking new work reflecting the spectrum of performing arts, visual arts and popular culture, staged across Greater Manchester – from theatres, galleries and concert halls to railway depots, churches and car parks. Working closely with cultural organisations globally, whose financial and creative input helps to make many of these projects possible, much of the work made at

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MIF also goes on to travel the world, reaching an audience of 1.6 million people in more than 30 countries to date.

The design of Factory International's landmark new cultural space is led by Ellen van Loon of the world-leading practice Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA). Built with flexibility in mind, the building is based around large, open, adaptable spaces that can be constantly reconfigured, enabling artists to develop and create large-scale work of invention and ambition, of a kind not seen anywhere else in the world. Driven by the same interests and ambitions that defines MIF, artists will be encouraged to create work in new ways, to collaborate across disciplines and blur the boundaries between art and popular culture. Audiences will be able to enjoy the broadest range of art forms from major exhibitions and concerts to intimate performances and immersive experiences, while the venue's outside areas will come alive with pop-up performances, events and markets, creating a thriving new riverside destination for all.

Manchester residents play a key role in Factory International, participating in flagship commissions, co-designing programmes of activity, and shaping the organisation through involvement in its public forums. Skills, training and development opportunities for local people are provided through the Factory Academy, helping to build the technicians, producers and other talent that will bring the future alive, and providing opportunities for careers in Manchester's ever-growing Creative Industries.

Factory International will strengthen the city's status as a national and international centre for culture, creativity and innovation, as well as a major visitor destination. The economic impact of Factory International will be considerable, creating or supporting up to 1,500 direct and indirect jobs and adding £1.1 billion to the city's economy over a decade.

The venue's development is led by Manchester City Council, with backing from HM Government and Arts Council England.

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MIF23 ARTISTS' QUOTES

Alison Goldfrapp

"It's an honour to be returning to MIF to play a special one-off show in Manchester this summer. It's such a great festival to be a part of and I can't wait to share this new era of my music with everyone there."

Juan Mata / The Trequartista – Art and Football United

"It is fantastic to be returning to Manchester, the city I called home for more than eight years, and to be part of Manchester International Festival for the first time. I am thrilled to be co-curating 'The Trequartista – Art and Football United' with Hans Ulrich Obrist over the next two years, bringing together two of my passions: the worlds of football and art."

Jenn Nkiru / Virtual Factory

"I'm excited to be lending my voice to this project which will tell an expansive history of Manchester and the Greater North in ways that haven't been seen before."

Philip Venables / The Faggots and Their Friends Between Revolutions

"Faggots and their Friends is both a joyful and sinister bedtime story, a playful re-telling of 'how we got where we are today', with song, music, dancing, improvisation, storytelling and heaps of glorious faggotry. I've never made anything as free, as open and celebratory as this before, so I'm incredibly excited to present it to Manchester audiences."

Ju Row Farr, Artist and Co-Founder of Blast Theory / We Cut Through Dust

"We've always been huge fans of MIF and so we're thrilled to be taking our latest project, We Cut Through Dust, to Manchester this summer. We Cut Through Dust has been made in collaboration with Manchester Street Poem who are an amazing group of people and a force of nature. Working with them is taking us to new creative places."

John Grant / John Grant sings the songs of Patsy Cline with Richard Hawley and Band

"Very excited to be playing MIF as Manchester is the home of Piccadilly Records and many of the folks I work with. I'm doubly excited to be singing the songs of Patsy Cline whose music and voice I've been a big fan of since the mid 80s when the movie Sweet Dreams came out. I've been singing those songs ever since and now I get to do that with one of my favourite singers and musicians, the incredible Richard Hawley and his spectacular band. And I get to do all this in Manchester, one of the all-time great homes of music."

John Luther Adams / Prophecies of Stone, for Sonic Geography

"This music arose from the earth beneath my feet, remembering that wherever we are, we are walking in deep time."

Kimber Lee / untitled f*ck m*ss sgon play**

"For me, this play is a way to transform the provenance of very old pain into a joyful shout, a burst of laughter, and a journey to freedom. At its core, the play celebrates the unbreakable thing at the core of a human being, this thing that comes alive through connection if we're willing to reckon with the truth, to actually see one another. These past few years have cost us all so much, not least the ability to gather together and laugh, and Roy and I are absolutely thrilled to finally be able to invite audiences into the hilarious rollercoaster ride we're constructing, to laugh out loud fully and without reserve in a room full of people -- come thru!"

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Risham Syed / Each Tiny Drop

“Each Tiny Drop is a coming together of ideas, emotions and thoughts as rivers Soan and Medlock meet. It is an introspection to evoke from our collective memory, the experience of togetherness with nature and the rest of the world. To experience togetherness with ourselves, our surroundings, and the earth is to know that life is inextricably connected, resilient and is one, wherever it may exist.”

Angie Bual / Each Tiny Drop

“The Medlock is a river reborn having been built over for so long. River rituals from cultures around the world have strengthened our relationship with rivers over centuries and reminded us to care for them. Here we ask audiences to cherish each tiny drop and let it join the flow of the Medlock in a poetics and mindful action.”

Ryan Gander / The Find

“In Britain at the moment, it feels to me like a sort of breaking point. Our obsession with the individual and not the collective and our need for attention and money all seems quite distracting. I wanted to make a project that would bring people together through a common goal or quest...a find. I have this terrible feeling that we don't look hard enough. The world outside a gallery or museum is amazing and there are many more phenomenal things in the real world outside, than the art world inside. Yet, I feel like we don't see any of it because we are not looking. Why are we turned off? Or unprimed to notice and question stuff? I thought a good way to get us all involved in the act of exploring and looking would be to give us an objective, a prize of sorts, something to find. So, the hunt starts here...”

Benji Reid / Find Your Eyes

“This performance is a culmination of all my practices, from popping to contemporary to physical theatre to directing to photography. This work is a dance between all forms framed as a meditation in the artist's studio.”

Ryuichi Sakamoto / Kagami

There is, in reality, a virtual me.

This virtual me will not age, and will continue to play the piano for years, decades, centuries. Will there be humans then?

Will the squids that will conquer the earth after humanity listen to me?

What will pianos be to them?

What about music?

Will there be empathy there?

Empathy that spans hundreds of thousands of years.

Ah, but the batteries won't last that long.

Adam Szabo, Artistic Director & Chief Executive, Manchester Collective / Noah's Flood

“Noah's Flood is a totally unique work—it's part of a rich operatic tradition, but with sharing, inclusion and community at its beating heart. A joyful spirit of collaboration runs through the piece, making it the ideal debut for Manchester Collective and Slung Low to perform at MIF23. This production will showcase British opera at its very finest, made in the North, for the people, by the people.”

Maxine Peake, Sarah Franckom and Imogen Knight / They

“In a climate of escalating culture wars, the erosion of Arts in education and a continuing political disregard for the value of creativity in building a fair society, They speaks truth to power. It celebrates the importance of making art as a means of survival and resistance and rich inspiration to make something for the times we find ourselves in right now.”