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Opus

BAM Howard Gilman Opera House
Nov 4—7 at 7:30pm; Nov 8 at 3pm

Running time: one hour & 25 minutes, no intermission

Circa
Debussy String Quartet

Directed by **Yaron Lifschitz**

Season Sponsor:

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CIRCA



Yaron Lifschitz



Nathan Boyle



Jessica Connell



Robbie Curtis



Lauren Herley



Rowan Heydon-White



Bridie Hooper



Todd Kilby



Daniel O'Brien



Kathryn O'Keeffe



Paul O'Keeffe



Brittannie Portelli



Kim Rossi



Duncan West



Billie Wilson-Coffey

CIRCA ENSEMBLE

Nathan Boyle
Jessica Connell
Robbie Curtis
Lauren Herley
Rowan Heydon-White
Bridie Hooper
Todd Kilby
Daniel O'Brien
Kathryn O'Keeffe
Paul O'Keeffe,
Brittannie Portelli
Kimberley Rossi
Duncan West
Billie Wilson-Coffey

DEBUSSY STRING QUARTET

Christophe Collette violin
Marc Vieillefon violin
Vincent Deprecq viola
Cédric Conchon cello

Producer **Danielle Kellie**

Technical director/lighting designer **Jason Organ**

Costume design **Libby McDonnell**

Set design **Yaron Lifschitz, Jason Organ**

Sound engineer **Christophe Germanique**

International agent **Paul Tanguay**

USA agent **Tommy Kriegsmann, ArKtype**

A Nuits de Fourvière production/ Département du Rhône, coproduced with Les Théâtres de la ville de Luxembourg, GREC Festival of Barcelona, Le Cirque-Théâtre d'Elbeuf, Dusseldorf Festival, Barbican Theatre, CACCV Espace Jean Legendre-Compiègne. This project has been assisted by the Australian Government's Major Festivals Initiative, managed by the Australia Council its arts funding and advisory body, in association with the Confederation of Australian International Arts Festivals, Brisbane Festival, Perth International Arts Festival, and Melbourne Festival.

Circa acknowledges the assistance of the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding advisory body and the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland.



The Debussy Quartet acknowledges the support of the French Ministry of Arts, Région Rhône-Alpes, City of Lyon, and SPEDIDAM.



Opus is a meeting of Circa, 14 of our ensemble acrobats, the Debussy String Quartet, and the music of Shostakovich. It is personal, political, historical, passionate, violent, and lyrical.

Shostakovich lived in Soviet-era Russia and in his quartets he wrote the intimate, personal things he was unable to express in his larger compositions. These are dense, astounding pieces of music. In *Opus*, we have chosen four of them.

The overture is an early student work—Adagio (Elegy) for String Quartet—a simple rhapsodic vision that tantalizingly foreshadows the dark future.

The 11th quartet is made of seven movements. Like all the quartets here, it is played straight through without breaks between the movements. In its 17 or so minutes it alternates dissonant, frozen moments with savage ones until some kind of lyricism is found (or at least hinted at).

The 8th quartet is perhaps the most famous string quartet of the 20th century and its five movements for me talk of death, politics, and the individual. For instance, Shostakovich writes his initials musically (DSCH) and later three can be heard that suggest the knocks of the KGB on the door even as they echo the start of Beethoven's 5th symphony.

Finally in the 5th quartet, almost 30 minutes long, three large, dense and wonderful movements mix lyricism, poetry, and organic rebirth with the difficult entrails of a tragic century.

—Yaron Lifschitz, *Director*



CIRCA

From Brisbane, Australia comes a bold new vision of contemporary circus, a blending of bodies, light, sound, and skills. A place where acrobatics and movement meld into a seamless whole. A celebration of the expressive possibilities of the human body at its extremes. Since 2006 Circa has toured to 33 countries across six continents. Circa's work has been rapturously received by audiences, presenters, and critics around the world. Critics have raved about Circa, calling the work "stunning...exquisite... heart stopping" and "electrically charged." Circa's current touring shows span diverse contexts from works for families in traditional arts centers to European contemporary arts festivals. Its works are highly innovative, genre-bending pieces that stretch the practice and perceptions of circus. Circa features a full-time ensemble, a concentrated administrative team, and a dedicated circus studio. Circa also runs a Training Centre with an impressive workshop program in Brisbane at our professional studio, in schools and with partners throughout Queensland and beyond. On top of our term-based and one-off training activities, Circa has an impressive track record of producing quality workshops for children, young people, and adults in a range of community contexts. circa.org.au

DEBUSSY STRING QUARTET

The Debussy String Quartet has built a reputation graced with international acclaim through their many recordings and live performances. Since its creation in 1990, it has enlivened the chamber music world with stylish and stimulating performances. Based in Lyon and honored as winners of the Evian International String Quartet Competition, the quartet performs about 120 concerts a year across Europe, Asia, Australia, North America, and more. The quartet's recording schedule has included the release of more than 25 CDs in 25 years, with works ranging from French music (recently, around Debussy and Caplet which enriches its collection composed of Bonnal, Ravel, Fauré, Witkowski, and Lekeu) to Weber and Shostakovich, with the complete string quartets recorded by Arion. It includes the acclaimed Decca label release of the landmark Mozart Requiem recording, in the 1802 transcription by Peter Lichtenthal (about which a documentary film has also been made). The quartet's mixed chamber music repertoire includes its highly regarded CD of the Brahms and Webern clarinet quintets with clarinetist

Jean François Verdier and a highly acclaimed collaboration with François Chaplin in several Mozart piano concertos. Its members are the founders of Les Cordes en Ballade, a chamber music festival and an academy of chamber music in the South of France, where they perform and teach each summer.

YARON LIFSCHITZ (artistic director) is a graduate of the University of New South Wales, University of Queensland, and National Institute of Dramatic Arts (NIDA) where he was the youngest director ever accepted into its prestigious graduate director's course. Since graduating, Lifschitz has directed more than 60 productions including large-scale events, opera, theater, physical theater, and circus. His work has been seen in 33 countries, across six continents by over 500,000 people. He was founding artistic director of the Australian Museum's Theatre Unit, head tutor in directing at Australian Theatre for Young People, and has been a regular guest tutor in directing at NIDA since 1995. He is currently artistic director and CEO of Circa. With Circa, Lifschitz has created works such as *by the light of stars that are no longer...*, *CIRCA*, *Wunderkammer*, *How Like an Angel*, *"S" Beyond Opus*, and most recently *Carnival of the Animals* which world premiered in 2014. His recent works have been reviewed as being "stunning," "exquisite," and "the standard to which all other circuses can aspire." Lifschitz lives in Brisbane with his son, Oscar. His passion is creating works of philosophical and poetic depth from the traditional languages of circus.

NATHAN BOYLE has been a natural performer his whole life. After terrorizing his parents at a young age with handstands and cartwheels, they saw his passion for performing and acrobatics and enrolled him in gymnastics. His passion for acrobatics took him to sports acrobatics where he represented and won titles for New South Wales at many national championships. After accepting his position at the National Institute of Circus Arts, (NICA) Boyle specialized in cloudswing, adagio, bungee trapeze, and teeterboard. While at NICA, Boyle performed at an International Circus Festival (CIRCA festival) in Auch, France in 2009. He joined Circa as a full-time ensemble member in 2011 and has since entertained audiences around the world.

ROBBIE CURTIS has performed nationally and internationally. He started off his circus career in

the Flying Fruit Fly Circus. During his high school years he also performed with Opera Australia as a dancer, juggler, and acrobat. After completing high school he moved to New Zealand to train in contemporary and classical dance at the New Zealand School of Dance in Wellington. Curtis has since worked with Legs on the Wall in *Beautiful Noise* for Brisbane Festival, *Voyage* at the Birmingham Cultural Olympiad, and the opening of the Sydney Festival. He has also worked with the Australian Ballet in its 50th Anniversary season (*Infinity*) and in Gideon Obarzanek's work *There's Definitely a Prince Involved*. Curtis has also collaborated and performed work by Anton, Alice Lee Holland, Circus Monoxide, and Shaun Parker.

JESSICA CONNELL completed a diploma in circus arts at the National Institute of Circus Arts (NICA) in Melbourne. Formerly a member of the Flying Fruit Fly Circus specializing in hula-hoops and aerials, she spent five years performing around Australia in a variety of productions. She also contributed to A4's first production, *Downpour*, in 2009. In 2011, Connell joined Circa where she was part of an eight-month season of *Wunderkammer* at the Chamaeleon Theatre in Berlin. She then performed a three-month Australian regional tour of the Helpmann Award-winning show *CIRCA*. A highlight for her was performing in the world premiere of *S* by Circa at the Brisbane Festival in September 2012—her first new production with the company.

LAUREN HERLEY graduated from the National Circus School of Montreal, specializing in vertical rope, contortion, and handstands. She has worked and collaborated with Compagnie Dave St.-Pierre, Cirque Eloize, Les Sept Doigts de la Main, Cirque du Soleil, Compagnie Marie Chouinard, and Nord Nord Est. Herley describes herself as a rope artist, but on stage and in creation has also performed and studied everything from hand-to-hand to hair hanging. She enjoys risk and the beauty of pain, and enjoys playing guitar, singing, listening to jazz music, and writing poetry.

ROWAN HEYDON-WHITE started flying around on a trapeze at an early age. After graduating with a bachelor of arts, majoring in physical theater, she decided she wanted to actively delve further into circus and moved to New Zealand

to also complete a diploma in circus arts. Over the years she has performed widely around both Australia and internationally for various events ranging from corporate and private functions to festivals and many contemporary circus productions. Highlights include touring with Circus Oz, Legs on the Wall, Awkward Productions, and Catcher.

BRIDIE HOOPER tumbled into Spaghetti Circus at the age of 11, where her imagination was unleashed. She was taught to bend, fly, and dream, and at 16, she ventured south to the banks of the Murray River to join the Flying Fruit Fly Circus. In 2008 Hooper left Australia to complete her studies at the Montreal National Circus School, where she performed in the Vancouver Olympics Opening Ceremony, at Festival CIRCA, and in the Montréal Complètement Cirque Festival in 2010 and 2011. Upon graduating in 2012 Hooper toured Quebec with *Vague de Cirque*, performed in *GOP Variété Dummy*, and returned to Australia to work with Circa.

KATHRYN O'KEEFFE trained in Canberra as a gymnast and dancer before going to the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) in 2003 to study dance. She worked as an independent artist performing in, and creating, works that mixed dance, physical theater, and circus for theater, festivals, and events. During 2010 O'Keeffe was part of the seven-month aerial resident company that performed *Airbourne*, directed by Doug Tremlett and choreographed by Sue Broadway at the World Expo in Shanghai, China. O'Keeffe first worked with Circa in 2011 where she performed in the world premiere of *Nocturne* in South Korea. She has been a full-time ensemble member with Circa since 2012, and has performed in shows including *S*, *How Like an Angel*, *CIRCA*, *Wunderkammer*, and *Beyond*.

PAUL O'KEEFFE ("the human whippet, dexterous daredevil, neat freak and mister fixit") had his first professional gig in 1996 playing a lead role in Company Skylark's *Wake Baby*. Since then he has toured the world from outback Australia to Broadway, performing in circus, dance, puppetry, and musical and physical theater. Off stage, O'Keeffe has co-founded circus company, Kronik; co-set up a professional circus training studio in Melbourne; co-managed Warehouse Circus; ran independent circus





troupes; and co-coordinated and implemented a number of circus workshops including one for 10,000 scouts over a 10-day period. He has performed with Circus Oz, Circus Monoxide, Kronik, *Cantina* by Strut & Fret Production House, Australian Choreographic Centre, Jigsaw Theatre Company, Out of the Blue Studios, Malcom C. Cooke & Associates, and Legs on the Wall, among others.

TODD KILBY, from the New South Wales coastal city of Newcastle, was born into a life of surfing and the beach. He is a black belt in Taekwondo and has both trained and performed with Circus Avalon and Hands Free Physical Theatre with whom he won a CONDA (City of Newcastle Drama Award) for stunt choreography. He joined the National Institute of Circus Arts (NICA) in 2008 and while there worked with the Tangentyre Council in Alice Springs teaching in the local Indigenous Youth Circus Arts Centre. While specializing in Chinese pole and hoop diving, he has also been trained in teeterboard, adagio, tumbling, and knockabout. Kilby is a multifaceted performer with a uniquely Australian style combining circus, dance, martial arts, and drama.

DANIEL O'BRIEN has been physically active his whole life, primarily focusing on his gymnastics training in his hometown and small gyms along the Queensland coastline. After high school O'Brien made a decision to transition from the sport of gymnastics to a possible career in circus performance. He decided to move to Melbourne and study at the National Institute of Circus Arts (NICA), specializing in hand-balancing and aerial straps, where he gained his first experience as a performer.

BRITTANNIE PORTELLI has more than 10 years experience in elite sports, and so had the perfect foundation to transition into circus. After competing internationally in both aerobic gymnastics and synchronized swimming, she wanted to combine her love for physical movement with her passion for performing. She completed the three-year bachelor degree program at the National Institute of Circus Arts (NICA) in 2010 where she specialized as an aerialist. Shortly after graduating, at the age of 20, she started working with Circa as a full-time ensemble member. While at Circa, Portelli has toured extensively and has many

highlights including three Helpmann awards, an eight-month season of *Wunderkammer* at the Chamaeleon Theater in Berlin, an Australian tour of *CIRCA*, and performing in New York City and Montreal.

KIM ROSSI grew up competing in athletics and playing representative AFL. After seeing one of Circa's show's, Rossi joined its youth performance troupe, Circa Zoo. After two years of training and performing, she was given the opportunity to be the first member of fast track, a program designed for young and aspiring performers within Circa. In 2011, Rossi left Circa Zoo and fast track and became a full-time ensemble member. Since then she has toured numerous shows in various countries. One of her highlights was performing *Wunderkammer* at the Sydney Opera House.

DUNCAN WEST started training in acrobatics in 2010 after watching his younger brother (and chief inspiration) perform his graduation show at NICA. In need of a new hobby, he started learning Chinese pole from Youtube.com, and after a couple of years, started training hand-to-hand with an electrical engineer who happened to be a (very) patient, ex-circus performer. They trained after work, purely for the joy, the friendship, and to conquer new skills. He joined Circa in 2013 and since then he has circus-navigated the globe, performing from New Zealand to Namur and from Orange to Athens. Offstage he spends most of his time, baking, eating, reading, and trying to work out which country he's in.

BILLIE WILSON-COFFEY discovered Spaghetti Circus at the age of 11 before moving to Melbourne to study at the National Institute of Circus Arts in 2007. In her graduating year, she made her international debut at the 4th World Circus Festival in Moscow. Wilson-Coffey joined Circa as a guest artist in 2011 for the world premiere of *Nocturne* in South Korea. While working as a guest artist for Circa, she continued her solo work performing in cabarets and festivals nation wide. She became an ensemble member of Circa in 2014, and toured *How Like an Angel* before an eight-month residency at the Chamaeleon Theatre in Berlin performing Circa's production of *Beyond*.