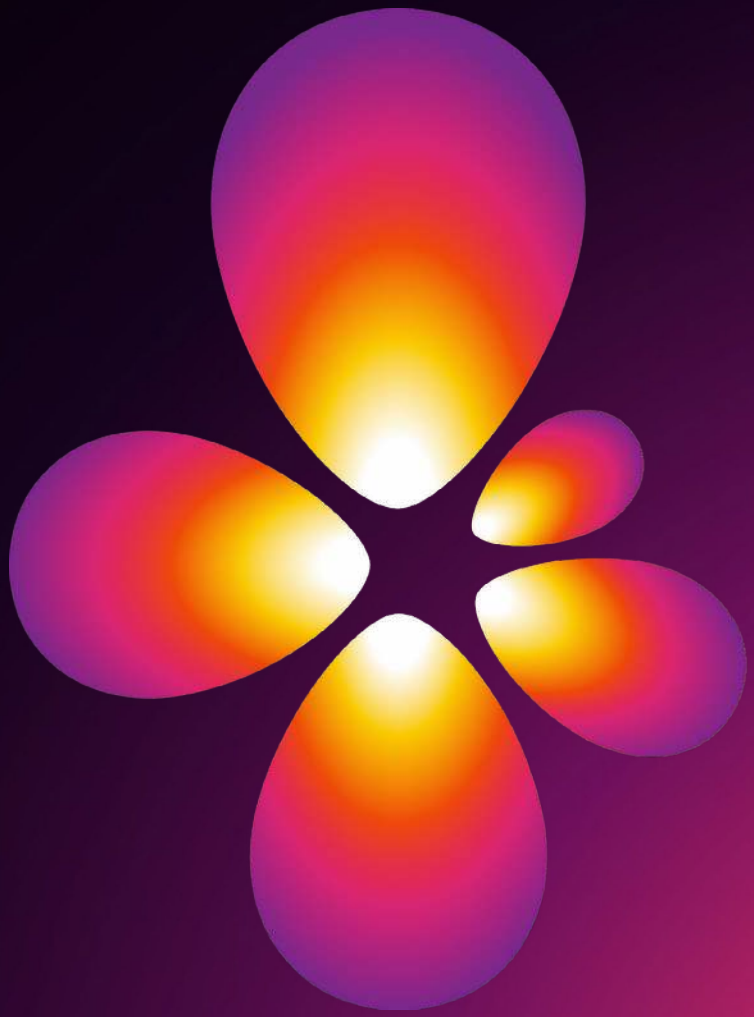


BAKU INTERNATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL

SEASON 2

BAKU, AZERBAIJAN

28 OCTOBER – 8 NOVEMBER 2026

MUSIC

Ayaka Uchio
Azerbaijan State Symphony Orchestra
Baku State Chamber Orchestra
Bertrand Maillot
BIAF Festival Orchestra
Bodi van der Heijden
Boris Baraz
David Garrett
Dmitry Sitkovetsky
Eduard Israelov
Evgenia Startseva
Farhad Badalbeyli
Franck van der Heijden
Fredrika Mikkola
Fuad Ibrahimov
Gemer Kerimli
Janez Podlesek
Jennifer Moreau
John Haywood
Laura Handler
Liana Gourdjia
Lukas Geniušas
Marina Hands
Maxim Vengerov
Michael Vaisburd
Nigar Jafarova
Nino Janjgava
Nhlanhla Mahlangu
Nitin Sawhney
Orchestra of the Sofia
Gubaidulina Center for Contemporary Music
Owen Belton
Roberto De Rosa
Scott Gibbons
Sophi Rochlin
Tine Thing Helseth

THEATRE

Aleksandr Borovsky
Anna Zavtur
Boris Repetur
Dmitry Krymov
Elizaveta Boyarskaya
Evgenia Dodina
Evgeny Zayfrid
Gesher Theatre
Igor Chernevich
Israel Demidov
Itay Tarkhanov
Leo Gabriadze
Lev Dodin
Maly Drama Theatre – Theatre of Europe, St. Petersburg
Nikita Goldman
Nikita Oleinikov
Oleg Ryazantsev
Polina Pakhomova
Polina Sevastyanikhina
Rezo Gabriadze
Marionette Theatre
Ruth Senderovich
Sergey Kuryshev

DANCE

Aaron S. Watkin
Akram Khan
Akram Khan Company
Crystal Pite
Darren Devaney
Ella Storme
English National Ballet
Héloïse Jocqueviel
House of Dance Company
Jean-Christophe Maillot
Johnny McMillan
Juan Gil
Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo
Mavin Khoo
S-E-D
Shahar Binyamini
Sharon Eyal
Vanessa Sweekhorst
William Forsythe

PERFORMANCE

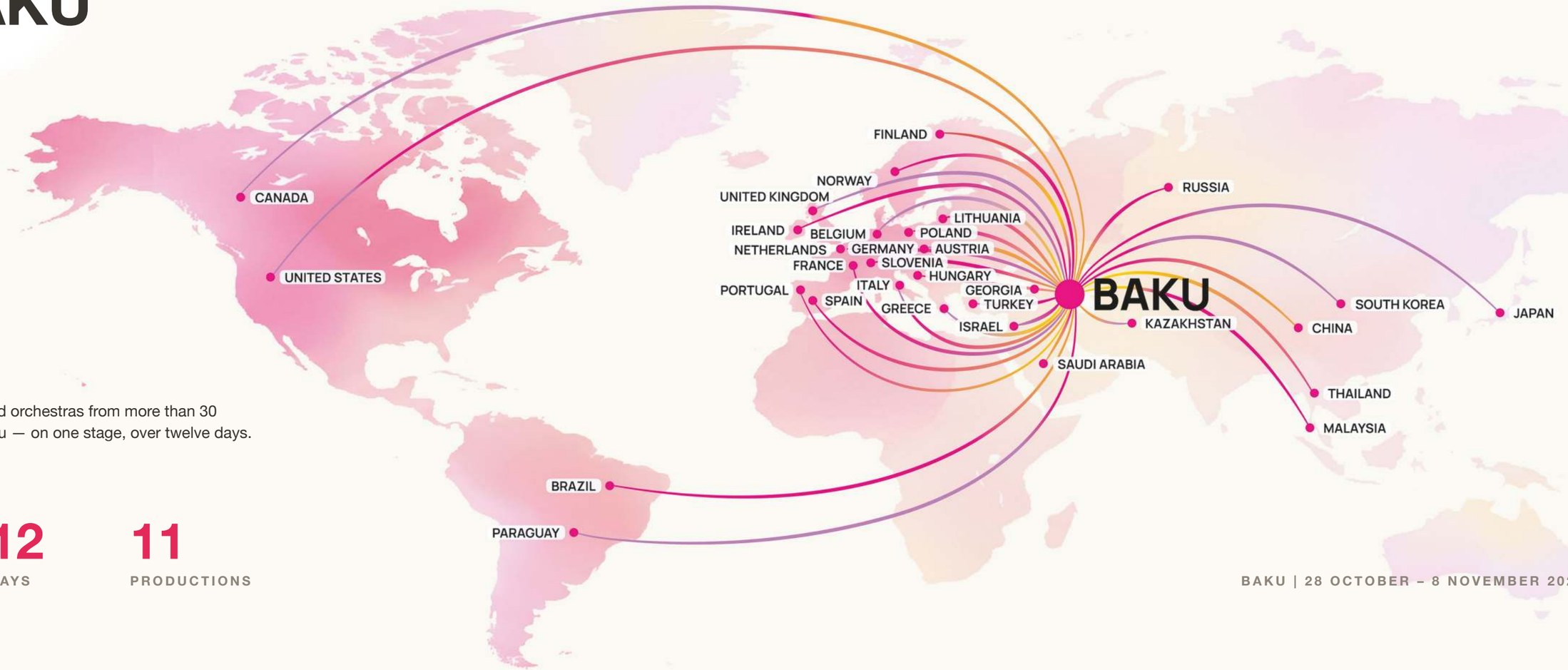
Anaparn
Catherine Rans
Dagmar Hunzinger
Isak Myrberg Dahle
Leonardo Sbabo
Magdalena Anna Gornikiewicz
Maxime Arnould
Romeo Castellucci

PUBLIC TALKS

Peter Frankopan
Zumrud Dadashzade

WHERE THE FESTIVAL COMES FROM

THE WORLD IN BAKU



Artists, companies and orchestras from more than 30 countries meet in Baku — on one stage, over twelve days.

30+ COUNTRIES

12 DAYS

11 PRODUCTIONS

BAKU | 28 OCTOBER – 8 NOVEMBER 2026

12 DAYS **24** EVENTS **12** VENUES **5** DISCIPLINES

About BIAF 7

Festival Calendar 9

Main Programme 12

Collateral Programme 73

Education Programme 81

Venues 82

Partners 90

Festival Information 91

BAKU INTERNATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL

Built on encounter

The Baku International Arts Festival (BIAF) is an annual multigenre performing arts event that brings the best of classical music, dance and drama together in a single programme. While following the model of the great established international festivals, BIAF sets it in a region where many cultures, languages and traditions have long shared the same ground. Its core programme of eleven productions gathers some of the most celebrated names in the performing arts, arriving from London and Monte-Carlo, St Petersburg and Jaffa, Tbilisi and Johannesburg: English National Ballet and Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo, Akram Khan and Crystal Pite, William Kentridge and the Rezo Gabriadze Marionette Theatre, Lev Dodin and Dmitry Krymov, Maxim Vengerov and David Garrett.

BIAF stands at the crossing point of a new cultural Silk Road that is now taking shape. As trade moves again across the Caspian along the Middle Corridor, culture is following the same map: festivals, museums and biennials are setting artists, ideas and audiences in motion between the Gulf, Asia and Europe. Baku is where those currents converge, and BIAF is where they meet.

Around the core events runs a parallel programme that spills out of the theatres into cinemas, museums and streets: public talks, among them historian Peter Frankopan on the Silk Roads, special events and performances with names like Sharon Eyal and Romeo Castellucci, an open-air cinema and city walks, together with an educational programme of masterclasses with the visiting companies.

In its first week BIAF runs alongside Baku Art Weekend, an international contemporary arts event showcasing Azerbaijani artists alongside international names. The two festivals share venues and audiences, reflecting the global trend of synergies and collaborations between performing and visual arts.

A first edition declares an intention. A second proves that the artists come back and the audience was no one-off. From 28 October to 8 November 2026 Baku becomes the stage as the second edition moves across multiple venues, from the medieval Old City to Zaha Hadid's Heydar Aliyev Center: six centuries on a single festival pass.

Why Baku

Baku has always been shaped by meetings of East and West. For centuries the roads out of its gates ran across the countries and empires along the Silk Roads, and its caravanserais lodged merchants from all of them. The oil boom of the late nineteenth century turned a fortress town into one of the most cosmopolitan cities, built by people of many faiths and origins; by 1900 it was producing roughly half the world's oil.

Its art grew from the same ground – mugham found its way into European opera, a national school of composers absorbed the Western and Russian traditions and made them its own, and jazz and mugham fused at a single piano. So when BIAF programmes works that refuse to stay inside one genre, such as a Kentridge film played against a live symphony orchestra, an Akram Khan dance piece co-created with a visual artist, or a Castellucci site-specific installation whose sound is drawn from human hair, staged in a former power station, it is not introducing Baku to the idea of crossing forms. It is programming to a local strength.

And BIAF is about exchange, not just presentation. Visiting companies meet the cultural landscape of Azerbaijan, and Azerbaijani artists work inside the productions rather than beside them. At a time when dialogue across borders matters more than ever, artists from different countries sharing the same stages is a statement made in repertoire.

Shostakovich 120

In the summer of 1934, a 27-year-old Dmitri Shostakovich sat down at a piano in Baku to play a concerto he had finished only months before. Nearly a hundred years later, the same Concerto for Piano, Trumpet and Strings opens the festival, conducted by Baku-born Dmitry Sitkovetsky.

The roots go deep. Gara Garayev and Jovdat Hajiyev, who between them shaped twentieth-century Azerbaijani music, studied with Shostakovich in Moscow. His Tenth Symphony, played live beneath Kentridge's Oh To Believe in Another World, hides a horn call spelling the name of Elmira Nazirova, a Baku pianist and his former student. This is not a borrowed anniversary. The symphony has a Baku address inside it.

The festival ends where it began, at the Philharmonic, with Maxim Vengerov playing the violin voice of Scheherazade: the storyteller who survives by stopping every night in the middle of a story.

How did a fortress town on the Caspian become the place where Kentridge, Dodin, Akram Khan and Castellucci meet in a single fortnight? Our long read follows the thread from Silk Road caravanserais and the oil boom to the first opera of the Muslim East, from Ali and Nino and its extraordinary author to Shostakovich's Baku classroom, and reads the 2026 programme through the city that hosts it.

The tale continues.

THE TALE CONTINUES
THE LONG READ

Scan to read
the long read

FESTIVAL CALENDAR

MUSIC | THEATRE | DANCE | PERFORMANCE | PUBLIC TALK | EDUCATION

28 OCT

20:00	**Festival Opening Concert** Lukas Geniušas | Tine Thing Helseth | Dmitry Sitkovetsky	MUSIC Philharmonic Hall	12

29 OCT

10:30	**Masterclasses** Podlesek | Hood Pérez | Baraz | Kane	EDUCATION Baku Music Academy	81
12:00	**The Legacy of Dmitri Shostakovich** Sitkovetsky | Dadashzade	PUBLIC TALK Baku Book Center	77
19:30	**The Seagull** Lev Dodin | Maly Drama Theatre — Theatre of Europe	THEATRE Musical Theatre	19

30 OCT

15:30	**Public Talk with Lev Dodin** Moderator: Anastasia Kim	PUBLIC TALK Baku Book Center	78
19:30	**The Seagull** Lev Dodin | Maly Drama Theatre — Theatre of Europe	THEATRE Musical Theatre	19
20:00	**Oh To Believe in Another World** William Kentridge | BIAF Festival Orchestra	MUSIC Nizami Cinema Centre	25

31 OCT

11:00	**Masterclasses** Dmitry Sitkovetsky | Liana Gourdjia	EDUCATION International Mugham Centre	81
15:00	**Akram Khan* & Manal AlDowayan**** *joining online **in person	PUBLIC TALK Gazelli Art House Baku	79
20:00	**Thikra: Night of Remembering** Akram Khan Company	DANCE Drama Theatre	33

01 NOV

13:00	**Sharon Eyal — Inside the Studio** Open rehearsal and conversation with the artist	DANCE Heydar Aliyev Center	74
19:30	**Bloody Mary** Dmitry Krymov | Gesher Theatre	THEATRE Musical Theatre	40
20:00	**Thikra: Night of Remembering** Akram Khan Company	DANCE Drama Theatre	33

02 NOV

15:00	**The Teacher and the Students** Shostakovich | Garayev | Melikov	MUSIC Baku Music Academy	49
20:00	**Bloody Mary** Dmitry Krymov | Gesher Theatre	THEATRE Musical Theatre	40

03 NOV

11:00	**Masterclass with Dmitry Sitkovetsky**	EDUCATION Baku Music Academy	81
17:00 20:00	**Alfred and Violetta** Rezo Gabriadze Theatre	THEATRE Heydar Aliyev Center	45

04 NOV

17:00 20:00	**Alfred and Violetta** Rezo Gabriadze Theatre	THEATRE Heydar Aliyev Center	45
20:00	**David Garrett** Millennium Symphony	MUSIC Heydar Aliyev Center	52

05 NOV

20:00	**New Earth // Bolero X** Shahar Binyamini | House of Dance	DANCE Drama Theatre	58

06 NOV

11:00	**Contemporary Dance Workshop** Shahar Binyamini | open registration	EDUCATION YARAT Contemporary Art Centre	81
13:00	**Dance Workshop** Dancers of Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo	EDUCATION Baku Choreography Academy	81
15:00	**To Carthage then I came** Romeo Castellucci | Scott Gibbons	PERFORMANCE Stone Chronicle Museum	75
19:30	**Masters in Motion: Forsythe / Pite** English National Ballet	DANCE Musical Theatre	62
20:00	**New Earth // Bolero X** Shahar Binyamini | House of Dance	DANCE Drama Theatre	58

07 NOV

15:00	**To Carthage then I came** Romeo Castellucci | Scott Gibbons	PERFORMANCE Stone Chronicle Museum	75
19:30	**Masters in Motion: Forsythe / Pite** English National Ballet	DANCE Musical Theatre	62
20:00	**LAC** Jean-Christophe Maillot | Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo	DANCE Heydar Aliyev Palace	66

08 NOV

13:00	**Public Talk with Peter Frankopan** Moderator: Anthony Burr	PUBLIC TALK Baku Book Center	80
19:00	**Festival Closing Concert** Maxim Vengerov | Evgenia Startseva	MUSIC Philharmonic Hall	69

Festival Opening Concert

A Tribute to Dmitri Shostakovich

Lukas Geniušas | Tine Thing Helseth | Dmitry Sitkovetsky | BIAF Festival Orchestra | Baku State Chamber Orchestra

DATE	TIME	VENUE
28 October	**20:00**	**The Azerbaijan State Philharmonic Hall named after Muslim Magomayev**

RUNNING TIME	AGE
2 hours 15 minutes, with one intermission	**6+**

The Opening Concert at the Philharmonic Hall consciously echoes that evening from ninety-two years ago. Lukas Geniušas — grandson of Vera Gornostaeva, who taught piano at the Moscow Conservatory for half a century — and Tine Thing Helseth play the Concerto for Piano, Trumpet and Strings, Shostakovich's First, written in 1933: circus turns, silent-film chases and sudden unguarded lyricism.

It is the same concerto the composer played on this stage in 1934, months after the ink was dry. Its two initially antagonistic voices ultimately become partners — an apt opening gesture for a festival founded on encounter, and for a second season whose opening programme is built around works for two.

Nor is the conductor accidental. Dmitry Sitkovetsky was born in Baku in 1954, the son of the violinist Julian Sitkovetsky and of Bella Davidovich. After leaving the Soviet Union at twenty-two, he built an international career as violinist, conductor and transcriber, and later founded a biennial festival in his native city. He returns to open this edition and to conduct the Tenth Symphony beneath Kentridge's film. He also leads the BIAF Festival Orchestra, bringing together the Azerbaijan State Chamber Orchestra named after Gara Garayev with invited international musicians for the occasion — the guest principle applied inside the pit rather than only on the stage.

Shostakovich came back in 1949, in 1952 to hear Seven Beauties and to play his own music at the Philharmonic, and in 1956 for the republic's first congress of composers. Spanning three centuries, the programme moves from Vivaldi and Bach to Shostakovich, Fikret Amirov and Elmira Nazirova. Nazirova's Andante Cantabile carries a direct link to Shostakovich — she studied composition with him at the Moscow Conservatory — while Amirov's Symphony for String Orchestra, To the Memory of Nizami brings another distinctive Azerbaijani voice to the evening.

Dramatic intensity and subtle irony, lyrical depth and virtuoso brilliance shape an evening in which music from different eras and traditions enters into dialogue with Shostakovich's artistic world.

"Its two initially antagonistic voices ultimately become partners — an apt opening gesture for a festival founded on encounter."

PROGRAMME

PART I

Dmitri Shostakovich
Two Pieces for String Octet, Op. 11
I. Prelude — Adagio | II. Scherzo — Allegro molto
Version for strings by Dmitry Sitkovetsky

Antonio Vivaldi
Concerto for Two Violins and Cello in D Minor, Op. 3 No. 11
Janez Podlesek | Liana Gourdjia | Boris Baraz

Elmira Nazirova
Andante Cantabile
Arrangement for String Orchestra by Jakov Jakoulov

Dmitri Shostakovich
Piano Concerto No. 1 in C Minor, Op. 35
for Piano, Trumpet and String Orchestra
Lukas Geniušas | Tine Thing Helseth

PART II

Johann Sebastian Bach
Prelude No. 24 in B Minor, BWV 869
from The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I | orchestrated by Leopold Stokowski

Fikret Amirov
Symphony for String Orchestra "To the Memory of Nizami"
II. Allegretto giocoso | IV. Allegro con brio

Dmitri Shostakovich
Five Pieces for Two Violins and Strings
Arranged by Jakov Jakoulov | World Premiere
Dmitry Sitkovetsky | Gemer Kerimli | Ayaka Uchio | Laura Handler | Fredrika Mikkola | Sophi Rochlin

Pablo de Sarasate
Navarra Fantasy, Op. 33
for Six Violins and Strings | Arranged by Dmitry Sitkovetsky
Liana Gourdjia | Ayaka Uchio | Sophi Rochlin | Jennifer Moreau | Laura Handler | Fredrika Mikkola

CREDITS

SOLOISTS

Lukas Geniušas Piano
Tine Thing Helseth Trumpet

CONDUCTOR

Dmitry Sitkovetsky

ORCHESTRA

BIAF Festival Orchestra
Baku State Chamber Orchestra

VIOLINS

Dmitry Sitkovetsky
Sophi Rochlin
Fredrika Mikkola
Janez Podlesek
Jennifer Moreau
Laura Handler
Liana Gourdjia
Gemer Kerimli
Ayaka Uchio
Boris Baraz Cello

VIOLIN & CONDUCTOR

Dmitry Sitkovetsky

Born in Baku into a distinguished musical family, Dmitry Sitkovetsky is the son of renowned violinist Julian Sitkovetsky and celebrated pianist Bella Davidovich, winner of the 1949 International Chopin Competition. An internationally acclaimed violinist, conductor and arranger, he has enjoyed a distinguished career spanning more than four decades, performing with leading orchestras and at major concert halls worldwide. He is also celebrated for his landmark transcription of Bach's Goldberg Variations and as the founder of New European Strings.

PIANO

Lukas Geniušas

Lithuanian-Russian pianist Lukas Geniušas is an acclaimed international soloist, celebrated for his brilliance, maturity and wide-ranging repertoire. A Silver Medalist at both the 2015 Tchaikovsky Competition and the 2010 International Chopin Competition, he has performed at leading venues including Wigmore Hall, Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Elbphilharmonie and Carnegie Hall, collaborating with major orchestras and conductors worldwide.

TRUMPET

Tine Thing Helseth

Norwegian trumpeter Tine Thing Helseth is internationally acclaimed for her soulful, lyrical sound and distinctive musical voice. A recipient of the Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship and Echo Klassik's Newcomer of the Year, she was the first classical artist to receive Norway's Spellemannprisen Newcomer of the Year award. Since 2023, she has served as Artistic Director of the Risør Chamber Music Festival.

THE ORCHESTRA

BIAF Festival Orchestra is a unique international ensemble founded by Dmitry Sitkovetsky, who serves as its Founder, Artistic Director and Conductor.

For BIAF, Dmitry Sitkovetsky has brought together leading musicians from the Azerbaijan State Symphony Orchestra and Baku State Chamber Orchestra alongside acclaimed artists from the international music scene. The ensemble unites distinguished performance traditions, international experience and individual artistic voices within a shared musical vision.

At BIAF, this meeting becomes more than a concert: it is a living dialogue between musical cultures and generations, embodying the festival's spirit of bringing together artists, traditions and artistic languages from around the world.

"A living dialogue between musical cultures and generations."

BAKU STATE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

FIRST VIOLIN

Janez Podlesek
Liana Gourdjia
Ayaka Uchio
Khayala Abdullayeva
Sophi Rochlin
Laura Handler
Emil Huseynov

SECOND VIOLIN

Jennifer Moreau
Alexey Ziganov
Rauf Abiyev
Gemer Kerimli
Fredrika Mikkola
Khadija Gasimova
Shafag Mammadova

VIOLA

Federico Andres Hood
Marija Rome
Ziba Aliyeva
Manca Kosmač
Narmin Alilova
Ayan Mamedova

CELLO

Boris Baraz
Marius Diaz Lleal
Aydan Rustamli
Ulviyye Mustafazadeh

BASS

Brendan Kane
Elgun Babayev

BAKI DÖVLƏT KAMERA ORKESTRİ

Baku State Chamber Orchestra

SOLOISTS OF THE BIAF FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA

VIOLIN
Sophi Rochlin

VIOLIN
Fredrika Mikkola

VIOLIN
Janez Podlesek

VIOLIN
Jennifer Moreau

VIOLIN
Laura Handler

VIOLIN
Liana Gourdjia

VIOLIN
Gemer Kerimli

VIOLIN
Ayaka Uchio

CELLO
Boris Baraz

The Seagull

Maly Drama Theatre — Theatre of Europe

Adapted for the stage by Lev Dodin based on Anton Chekhov's eponymous play

DATE	TIME	VENUE
29 – 30 October	**19:30**	**Musical Theatre**

RUNNING TIME	AGE
2 hours 30 minutes, with one intermission *Performed in Russian with English and Azerbaijani surtitles*	**18+ | guests aged 16+ accompanied by a parent or guardian**

The Seagull is a composition for the stage by Lev Dodin, based on Anton Chekhov's play of the same name. The production combines Chekhov's dramatic text with reflections on literature and art drawn from his letters and notes. This is Dodin's second staging of The Seagull, following his 2001 production. More than two decades later, he returns to Chekhov with a new perspective, shaped by time and experience.

The production's stage world is created by set designer Alexander Borovsky and lighting designer Damir Ismagilov, with space and light forming an integral part of Dodin's interpretation of The Seagull.

CREDITS

CREATIVE TEAM

Lev Dodin Director

Aleksandr Borovsky Set and Costume Designer

Damir Ismagilov Lighting Designer

CAST

Elizaveta Boyarskaya Irina Nikolayevna Arkadina, Trepleva by marriage, actress

Evgeny Zayfrid Konstantin Gavrilovich Treplev, her son

Sergei Kuryshev Pyotr Nikolayevich Sorin, her brother

Anna Zavtur Nina Mikhailovna Zarechnaya

Polina Sevastyanikhina Maria Ilyinichna, Sorin's housekeeper

Oleg Ryazantsev Semyon Semyonovich Medvedenko, school-teacher

Igor Chernevich Boris Alekseyevich Trigorin, writer

"Life is funny in its tragedy, and sometimes in its absurdity. One could say that human life is a tragedy; one could equally say that it is a comedy that ends as a tragedy. There is no contradiction in this. It does not mean that the audience should be laughing all the time. They may smile; they may even laugh. The more humour there is in a tragic story, the more compelling it becomes, I think, because it gains dimension — a sense of life, of something breathing. But that does not mean we should sit and wait to be made to laugh."

LEV DODIN

DIRECTOR

Lev Dodin

Lev Dodin was born in 1944 in Siberia, where his family was evacuated during the war. As a youth, he studied theater at the Leningrad Young Artists' Theatre with Marvey Dubrovin, who had worked as assistant director to Meyerhold. After high school graduation, Dodin attended Leningrad Theatre Institute, studying with Boris Zon, a student of Stanislavsky. The first work Dodin directed for the Maly Drama Theatre, Leningrad, was Karel Capek's The Robber in 1974, then Abramov's The House in 1980.

Since becoming Artistic Director at MDT in 1983, his works include Brothers and Sisters, Lord of the Flies, Gaudeamus, The Devils, Stars in the Morning Sky, The Cherry Orchard (1994), Claustrophobia, Platonov/A Play with No Name, Chevengur, Uncle Vanya, Life and Fate, Love's Labour's Lost, Long Day's Journey into Night, Three Sisters, Love and Intrigue, Enemy of the People, The Cherry Orchard (2014), Hamlet, Fear Love Despair, Brothers Karamazov, The Seagull, King Lear, Ward Number 6, Romeo and Juliet in the Dusk, Family Affair, Lower Depth (2026).

His opera productions include Elektra at the Salzburg Festival, Mazeppa at Milan's La Scala, Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District at Florence's Maggio Musicale Festival, The Queen of Spades (Amsterdam, Florence, Paris), Chovanshina at the Vienna State Opera and Luisa Miller at the Verdi Festival, Parma.

In 1967, Dodin began to teach acting and directing and has been teaching since. He is a professor at the St Petersburg State Academy of Performing Arts and chair of the directing department. He has taught several generations of actors and directors; many are currently working at the Maly Drama Theatre. Some of his most famous productions – Brothers and Sisters, Gaudeamus, Life and Fate to name a few – have been devised as diploma productions of his acting classes of different years. The youngest class of actors taught by him has joined the company in 2025.

Dodin has developed his own system, refined over decades of theatrical work with his permanent company of actors. Dodin's method, inspired by his two teachers, one a custodian of Meyerhold method, the other of Stanislavsky's, is focused on creating a spiritual theatrical entity – a group of actors who together are artistically more capable, versatile and insightful than each one of them could be separately, individual brilliance notwithstanding.

Chekhov's quartet of main plays is Dodin's special forte – he's directed all four to much praise of the critics and admiration of the audiences, his directing vision seems to be on the same wavelength with the eternal questions Chekhov asks of us all.

COMPANY

Maly Drama Theatre — Theatre of Europe

Founded in Leningrad in 1944, the Maly Drama Theatre (MDT) had come into being when many theaters were evacuated from the city. Currently with the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation as its statutor, MDT has evolved from a small theatre, touring regionally, into one of Russia's most internationally recognised theatre companies.

A defining chapter in its artistic history began with Lev Dodin, whose collaboration with MDT started in 1974. In 1983 Dodin became the theatre's chief Director, and since 2002 has led MDT as its Artistic Director. Under his leadership, the theatre has developed a distinctive artistic language rooted in psychological depth, artistic integrity, and a powerful ensemble tradition.

From the late 1980s, MDT gained wide international recognition, presenting its productions across Europe, the United States, Asia and South America, receiving major Russian and international theatre awards. In 1998, the Maly Drama Theatre was granted the prestigious status of Theatre of Europe, becoming the third theatre to receive this distinction, following the Odéon-Théâtre de l'Europe in Paris and Piccolo Teatro di Milano.

Today the Maly Drama Theatre numbers 60 actors in its permanent company, consisting mainly of Dodin's ex-students, and participates in leading festivals in Russia and internationally, besides performing in St Petersburg.

At BIAF 2026, the Maly Drama Theatre — Theatre of Europe presents Lev Dodin's production of Anton Chekhov's The Seagull, bringing the theatre's distinctive artistic vision to one of the great works of world drama.

1944
founded in Leningrad

60
actors in the permanent company

1998
Theatre of Europe status

"A distinctive artistic language rooted in psychological depth, artistic integrity, and a powerful ensemble tradition."

Oh To Believe in Another World

A film by William Kentridge for Shostakovich's Symphony No. 10

William Kentridge | BIAF Festival Orchestra | Dmitry Sitkovetsky

Fikret Amirov / Elmira Nazirova — Concerto on Arabian Themes for Piano and Orchestra

Farhad Badalbeyli | Fuad Ibrahimov | BIAF Festival Orchestra

DATE	TIME	VENUE
30 October	**20:00**	**Nizami Cinema Centre**
RUNNING TIME		AGE
approx. 2 hours, with one intermission		**12+**

Kentridge's Oh To Believe in Another World was conceived to accompany a live performance of Dmitri Shostakovich's Symphony No. 10, bringing music, history and the visual arts into a single theatrical space. Among the figures inhabiting Kentridge's visual world, Elmira Nazirova holds particular significance: Shostakovich was in intense correspondence with her while composing the symphony.

The first half brings Kentridge's film together with Shostakovich's Symphony No. 10, performed by the BIAF Festival Orchestra under Dmitry Sitkovetsky.

In the second half, Nazirova moves beyond Kentridge's visual world to appear in a different role — as a composer. Farhad Badalbeyli joins the BIAF Festival Orchestra for the Concerto on Arabian Themes for Piano and Orchestra by Fikret Amirov and Elmira Nazirova, conducted by Fuad Ibrahimov. Nazirova thus provides the link between Shostakovich's Tenth and the Azerbaijani musical tradition of the second half.

"The brilliance of Kentridge's film is that it makes you feel the majesty and pathos of this music from the darkest times of the 20th century."

THE GUARDIAN

PROGRAMME

PART I

Oh To Believe in Another World
A film by William Kentridge for Shostakovich's Symphony No. 10
presented with a live performance of

Dmitri Shostakovich
Symphony No. 10 in E Minor, Op. 93
I. Moderato | II. Allegro | III. Allegretto | IV. Andante — Allegro

CREDITS

BIAF Festival Orchestra | Dmitry Sitkovetsky, conductor

PART II

Fikret Amirov / Elmira Nazirova
Concerto on Arabian Themes for Piano and Orchestra

CREDITS

Farhad Badalbeyli, piano | BIAF Festival Orchestra | Fuad Ibrahimov, conductor

Courtesy of Kentridge Studio

ARTIST'S NOTE

A FILM FOR SHOSTAKOVICH SYMPHONY NO. 10

How to make a film to accompany a live orchestral performance of a symphony?

There are already 80 musicians in the orchestra. There is the shine of the brass. The excitement of watching the relationship between the conductor and the musicians. Behind this, to put a film. The key task in making the film Oh To Believe in Another World to accompany the Shostakovich Symphony No. 10, is to find something that does not turn the symphony into film music — a series of images and narratives that overwhelm the music itself; nor to have something that disappears, that runs simply as a series of anodyne backdrops. But the story of Shostakovich and his complicated relationship to the state in the Soviet Union, from its early days just after the 1917 revolution, all the way through to Stalin's death in 1953, provides the material for thinking visually about the trajectory that Shostakovich had to follow, from the early days of the Soviet Union to the writing of the symphony.

The film is set inside what appears to be an abandoned Soviet museum, which in fact is made of cardboard, on the table in the artist's studio (at times there are fragments of the studio visible). Using a miniature camera, we move through the different halls of the museum, which also include a community theatre hall, a public swimming pool, a quarry at the side of the main halls of the museum.

A corridor of vitrines holding stuffed historical figures. Intertitles in the film are from various sources, but the main source are the plays and poems of Vladimir Mayakovsky — who in the early years following the revolution was an enthusiastic supporter of the Soviet project. But as the years passed and the hopes of the revolution receded, he grew increasingly disillusioned. In 1930 he shot himself.

"The task of the project is to try to show within the visual film some of the ambiguities Shostakovich had to negotiate, not just in this symphony, but in all the work that he made. We have to find a way to both acknowledge the independence of the music — that it exists now in the post-Soviet era (we can still feel the emotional journey of the symphony, independent of its historical moorings); but at the same time acknowledge the particular character of the era from which it comes."

William Kentridge, May 10, 2022

CREATIVE TEAM

William Kentridge Director

Janus Fouché | Žana Marović Editors

Greta Goiris Costume & Puppet Designer

Sabine Theunissen Set & Model Designer

Duško Marović, SASC Cinematographer

FEATURED PERFORMERS

Thulani Chauke

Andrea Fabi

Teresa Phuti Mojela

Luc De Wit

and

Phuphuma Love Minus Isicathamiya chorus

PROJECT INITIATOR

Numa Bischof Ullmann

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

THE OFFICE performing arts + film

Globally represented by Pomegranate Arts

"Oh To Believe in Another World" has been commissioned by the Luzerner Sinfonieorchester. The world premiere took place in Luzern, Switzerland on 15 June 2022.

ADDITIONAL PRODUCTION CREDITS

Boyd Design | Brendon Boyd Production Manager

Matthew Deinhart Technical Director

Sibe Kokke Video Control

Emmanuelle Erhart | Judith Stokart Costume & Puppet Makers

Joshua Trappler Assistant Editor

Octavia Sonyane Assistant Compositor

Mushroom Media Compositing

Luaan Hong VFX Supervisor

Jannes Hendrikz | Novak Miler | Sarah Kwan Compositors

Chris-Waldo de Wet | Jacques van der Merwe Additional Camera

Nhlanhla Mahlangu Assistant Director of Chorus

WILLIAM KENTRIDGE STUDIO

Anne McIlleron Studio Director

Linda Leibowitz Administration

Natalie Dembo Coordination

Taryn Buccellato Production

Damon Garstang | Claire Zinn Assistant Model Makers

Diego Sillands Assistant Puppet Maker

Chloe Noto | Joey Netshiambo | Joy Woolcott | Nomonde Qhina | Thandi Mzizi | Travis Macdougall Workshop Assistants

THE OFFICE PERFORMING ARTS + FILM

Executive Producer

Rachel Chanoff, Laurie Cearley, Lynn Koek, Alex Papasimakopoulou, Catherine DeGennaro, Elly Obeney, Carol Blanco, Nadine Goellner, Olli Chanoff, Noah Bashevkin, Chloe Golding, Zion Jackson, Scout Eisenberg, Jose Alvarado, Raleigh Capozzalo, Ana Maroto, Barbara Sartore, Soleil George, Sarah Suzuki, Mego Williams, Lia Camille Crockett, Hashim Latif, Gabriela Yadegari

POMEGRANATE ARTS

Global Representatives

Linda Brumbach, Alisa E. Regas

ARTIST

William Kentridge

William Kentridge (born Johannesburg, South Africa, 1955) is internationally acclaimed for his drawings, films, theatre and opera productions. His method combines drawing, writing, film, performance, music, theatre, and collaborative practices to create works of art that are grounded in politics, science, literature and history, yet maintaining a space for contradiction and uncertainty.

Kentridge's work has been seen in museums and galleries around the world since the 1990s, including MoMA in New York, Musée du Louvre in Paris, Whitechapel Gallery in London, the Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid, the Kunstmuseum in Basel, the Royal Academy of Arts in London and BOZAR in Brussels, among many others. He has participated a number of times in Documenta in Kassel and the Venice Biennale.

Opera productions include Mozart's The Magic Flute, Shostakovich's The Nose, Alban Berg's operas Lulu and Wozzeck, and Monteverdi's L'Orfeo, staged at opera houses including the Metropolitan Opera in New York, English National Opera in London, Sydney Opera House and Glyndebourne in the UK.

Kentridge's theatrical productions, performed in theatres and at festivals across the globe include Refuse the Hour, Winterreise, The Head & the Load, Sibyl and The Great Yes, The Great No.

In 2016 Kentridge founded the Centre for the Less Good Idea in Johannesburg: a space for responsive thinking and making through experimental, collaborative and cross-disciplinary arts practices. The Centre hosts an ongoing programme of workshops, public performance and mentorship activities.

Kentridge received honorary doctorates from several universities including Yale, London University, Columbia University and SOAS University of London, and has received a number of awards acknowledging his artistic practice and productions. In 2021 he was made a Foreign Associate Member to the French Académie des Beaux Arts, Paris. In 2022 he was presented the Honour of the Order of the Star of Italy and in 2023 he received the Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Opera for Sibyl in London.

His work can be found in the collections of Carnegie Museum of Art (New York), Fondation Cartier (Paris), Sharjah Art Foundation, MoMA (New York), MoCA (Los Angeles), Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam), Johannesburg Art Gallery and many others; as well as private collections worldwide.

Courtesy of Kentridge Studio

CONDUCTOR

Fuad Ibrahimov

Since May 2023, Fuad Ibrahimov has served as Artistic Director and Chief Conductor of the Azerbaijan State Symphony Orchestra named after Uzeyir Hajibeyli. He is also Chief Conductor of the Neue Philharmonie München and conductor of the Baku Chamber Orchestra.

Trained in Baku and at the Cologne University of Music, Fuad Ibrahimov developed his conducting career in Germany before establishing a broad international presence. He made his debut with the Gürzenich Orchestra in 2012 and has since appeared with leading orchestras in Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Austria, the Czech Republic and beyond.

At BIAF 2025, Fuad Ibrahimov conducted both the Festival Opening Concert with pianist Behzod Abduraimov and the Azerbaijan State Symphony Orchestra, and the Festival Closing Concert with violinist and conductor Dmitry Sitkovetsky. At BIAF 2026 he conducts Fikret Amirov and Elmira Nazirova's Concerto on Arab Themes with Farhad Badalbeyli, linking the festival's international programme directly to Azerbaijan's musical heritage.

PIANO

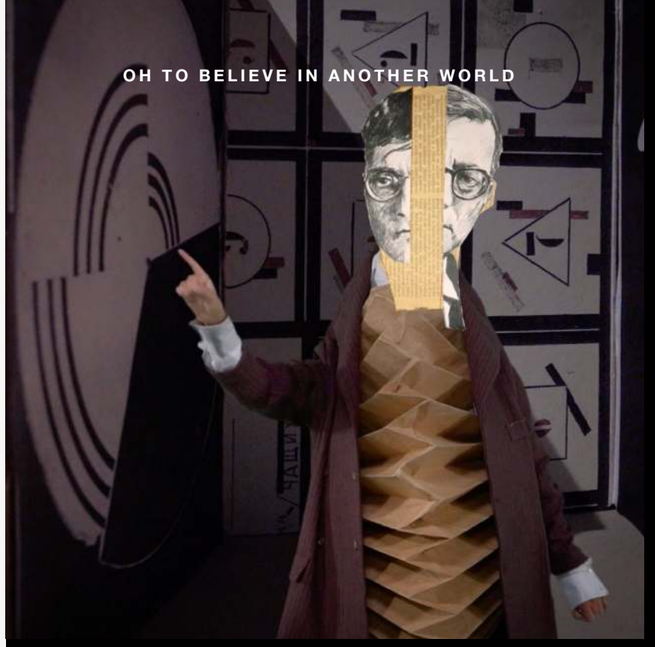
Farhad Badalbeyli

Farhad Badalbeyli is a distinguished Azerbaijani pianist, composer and educator, People's Artist of the USSR and Azerbaijan, Professor and Rector of the Uzeyir Hajibeyli Baku Academy of Music, a position he has held since 1991.

A laureate of the B. Smetana International Piano Competition and the Vianna da Motta International Piano Competition, Farhad Badalbeyli has performed in more than 50 countries, appearing with leading orchestras and conductors. He is also a Laureate of State Prizes and a recipient of the Order of "Istiglal", one of Azerbaijan's highest state honours, awarded for contributions to the development of Azerbaijani musical culture.

For decades, Farhad Badalbeyli has been a central figure in Azerbaijan's musical life. He is Artistic Director of the Gabala International Music Festival and Chairman of the Union of Musical Figures of Azerbaijan.

Farhad Badalbeyli personally knew Dmitri Shostakovich and Fikret Amirov. At BIAF 2026 he performs Fikret Amirov and Elmira Nazirova's Concerto on Arab Themes.



THE ORCHESTRA

BIAF Festival Orchestra

STRINGS

First Violins
Janez Podlesek
Concertmaster
Liana Gourdjia
Concertmaster
Ayaka Uchio
Said Mammedov
Sophi Rochlin
Khayala Abdullayeva
Laura Handler
Emil Huseynov
Ilia Wulf
Shukufa Rasulova
Kenan Mammedzadeh
Khadija Mirgulamli

Second Violins
Jennifer Moreau
Principal, Second Violins
Alexey Ziganov
Rauf Abiyev
Gemer Kerimli
Fredrika Mikkola
Faila Ismayilova
Nijat Feyziyev
Bahadur Rzayev
Khadija Gasimova
Shafag Mammadova
Khadija Gadjili

Violas
Federico Andres Hood
Principal Viola
Maria Rome
Manca Kosmač
Ziba Aliyeva
Sabuhi Akhundov
Narmin Alilova
Ayan Mammadova
Azad Khalilov

Cellos
Marius Diaz Lleal
Principal Cello
Boris Baraz
Alexey Miltykh
Georgi Imanov
Orkhan Jumayev
Aydan Rustamli
Nargiz Manafli
Ulviyye Mustafazadeh

Double Basses
Brendan Kane
Principal Double Bass
Elgun Babayev
Alexandr Pavlov
Ravan Ahmadzadeh
Hasan Asadov
Anton Izgagin

WOODWINDS

Flutes
Nijat Salmanov
I Flute
Nijat Mammedov
II Flute
Magda Ibrahimova
Piccolo

Oboes
Aziz Panah
I Oboe
Anjelika Vorojeeva
II Oboe
Marina Munoz Prada
English Horn

Clarinets
Mamed Rajabli
I Clarinet
Asif Guliyev
II Clarinet
Said Baghirzade
III Clarinet
Zaman Hasanov
Bass Clarinet

Bassoons
Irina Bysova
I Bassoon
Ganbar Mamedov
II Bassoon
Carmen Juara Pérez
Contrafaggot

BRASS

Horns
Mar Sanjuan
I Horn
Kamran Guliyev
II Horn
Greta Deri
III Horn
Aghasamad Hasanov
IV Horn

Trumpets
Israfil Rasulov
I Trumpet
Tural Guliyev
II Trumpet
Rovshan Guliyev
III Trumpet

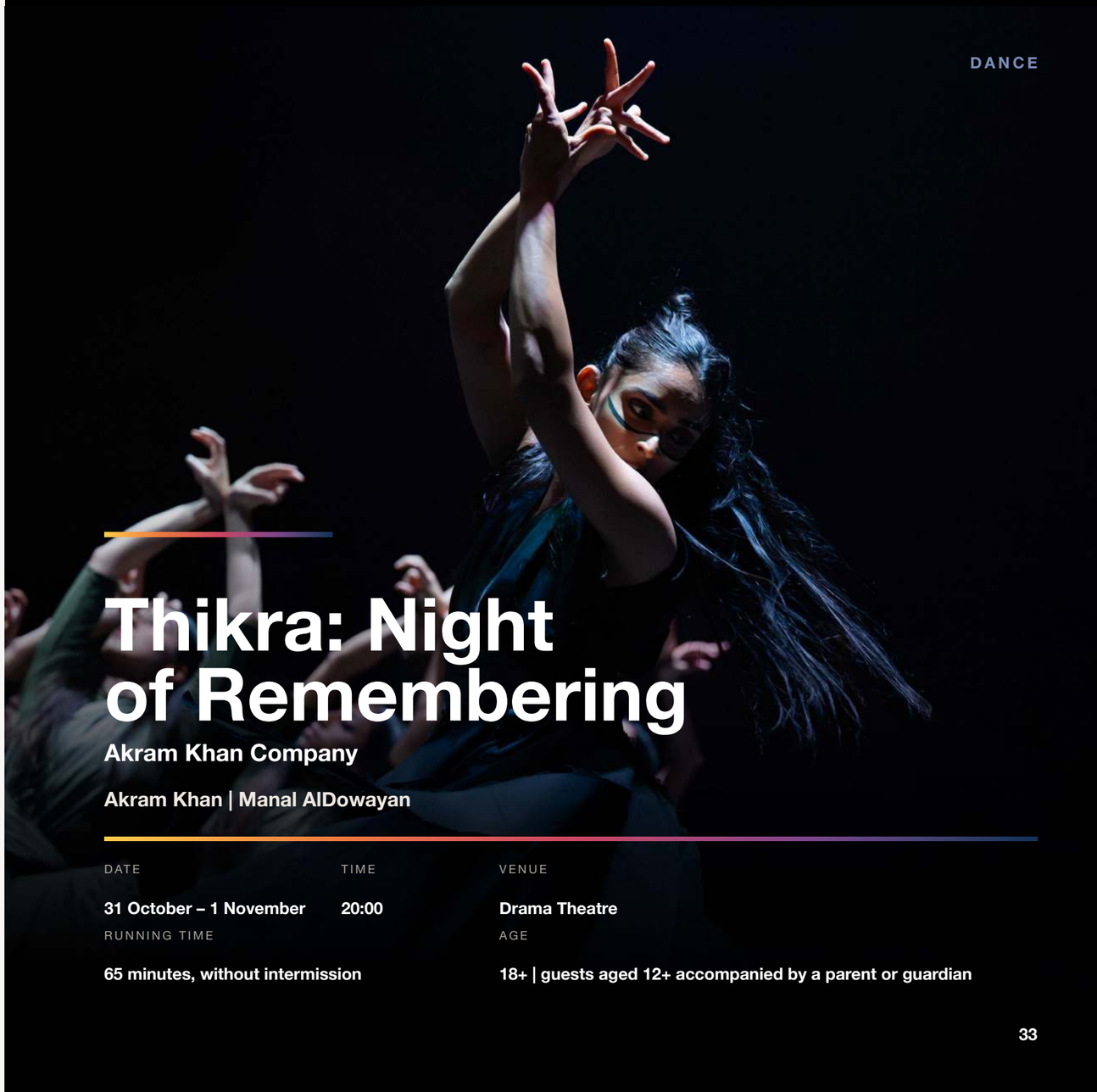
Trombones
Kamal Gadirov
I Trombone
Vladislav Kuznecov
II Trombone
Nemat Tanriverdiyev
III Trombone

Tuba
Nikolaj Leontyev

PERCUSSION

Timpani
Ujal Mammadkhan

Percussion
Kamal Huseynov
Boris Pashkin
Rasul Zulfugarli
Yusif Alizade
Azer Safarzade



Thikra: Night of Remembering

Akram Khan Company

Akram Khan | Manal AlDowayan

DATE	TIME	VENUE
31 October – 1 November	**20:00**	**Drama Theatre**
RUNNING TIME		AGE
65 minutes, without intermission		**18+ | guests aged 12+ accompanied by a parent or guardian**

Thikra: Night of Remembering is Akram Khan Company's final touring production, created in collaboration with award-winning visual artist Manal AlDowayan. Thikra draws inspiration from AlUla's ancient landscapes, mythology and cultural heritage to evoke the idea that "without a past, there is no future."

Combining Bharatanatyam and contemporary voices, the piece is performed by an all-female ensemble, accompanied by an original score from Aditya Prakash, sound design by Gareth Fry, lighting by Zeynep Kepekli and dramaturgy by Blue Pieta.

CREDITS

ARTISTIC TEAM

Akram Khan Director / Choreographer

Manal AlDowayan Visual Director / Costume and Scenography

Manal AlDowayan & Akram Khan Narrative Concept

Mavin Khoo Creative Associate / Coach

Aditya Prakash Music Composer and Soundscape Designer

Gareth Fry Sound Designer

Zeynep Kepekli Lighting Designer

Imogen Clarke Associate Lighting Designer

Blue Pieta Dramaturge

Angela Towler Rehearsal Director

DANCERS

Laura Bufano, Ching-Ying Chien, Amrita Doshi, Ekta Doshi, Kavya Ganesh, Shreya Kannan, Madoka Kariya, Nikita Rao, Rohini Shetty, Elpida Skourou, Seren Williams

PRODUCTION AND TECHNICAL CREDITS

Farooq Chaudhry Producing Director

Isabel Tamen Executive Director

Carla Giachello Production of Visual Direction

Svitlana Bil Company Manager

Anthony Forrester Touring Production Manager

Harry Abbott Technical Stage Manager

Michael Cunningham Technical Manager

Matt Armstrong Sound Engineer Supervisor

Connor Sale Lighting Engineer Supervisor

Anne-Marie Bigby Wardrobe Supervisor

Peggy Housset Costume Maker

Tin Shed Set Builder

FEATURED MUSIC IN SCORE

"Gyura Beli Belo Platno" by London Bulgarian Choir, directed by Dessislava Stefanova

"The Elephant's Funeral" by Sushma Soma with Aditya Prakash

Vengaya Promotions Managing Agent

Production Photography **Camilla Greenwell**

COMMISSIONED BY

Thikra: Night of Remembering by Akram Khan and Manal AlDowayan, commissioned by Wadi AlFann, Valley of the Arts, AlUla

وادي الفن
Wadi AlFann

DIRECTOR / CHOREOGRAPHER

Akram Khan

Akram Khan is one of the most celebrated and respected dance artists of today. In over 25 years, he has created a body of work that has contributed significantly to the arts in the UK and abroad. His reputation has been built on the success of imaginative, highly accessible and relevant productions such as Thikra: Night of Remembering, GIGENIS: the generation of the Earth, Jungle Book reimagined, Outwitting the Devil, XENOS, Until the Lions, Kaash, iTMOi, DESH, Vertical Road, Gnosis and zero degrees.

As an instinctive and natural collaborator, Khan has been a magnet to world-class artists from other cultures and disciplines. His previous collaborators include the National Ballet of China, actress Juliette Binoche, ballerina Sylvie Guillem, choreographers/dancers Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui and Israel Galván, singer Kylie Minogue, indie rock band Florence and the Machine, visual artists Anish Kapoor, Antony Gormley and Tim Yip, writer Hanif Kureishi and composers Steve Reich, Nitin Sawhney, Jocelyn Pook and Ben Frost.

Khan's work is recognised as being profoundly moving, in which his intelligently crafted storytelling is effortlessly intimate and epic. Described by the Financial Times as an artist "who speaks tremendously of tremendous things", a highlight of his career was the creation of a section of the London 2012 Olympic Games Opening Ceremony that was received with unanimous acclaim.

Khan has also built close collaborations with leading ballet institutions, including English National Ballet, for which he created Dust, his acclaimed reimagining of Giselle, followed by Creature, and more recently The Royal Danish Ballet on Lady Macbeth.

Khan has been the recipient of numerous awards throughout his career including the Laurence Olivier Award, the Bessie Award (New York Dance and Performance Award), the prestigious ISPA Distinguished Artist Award, the Fred and Adele Astaire Award, the Herald Archangel Award at the Edinburgh International Festival, the South Bank Sky Arts Award and ten Critics' Circle National Dance Awards for his Company (AKC).

Khan was awarded an MBE for services to dance in 2005. In 2022, he was announced as the new Chancellor of De Montfort University, and he is also an Honorary Graduate of Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, University of London as well as Roehampton and De Montfort Universities, and an Honorary Fellow of Trinity Laban and the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts.

Khan is an Associate Artist of Sadler's Wells and Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts, London as well as Curve.

VISUAL DIRECTOR /
COSTUME AND SCENOGRAPHY

Manal AlDowayan

Embracing diverse media, Manal AlDowayan's work encompasses black and white photography, sculpture, video, sound, neon and large-scale participatory installations. Her artistic practice revolves around themes of invisibility, active forgetting, archives, and collective memory, with a large focus on the status of women and their representation. In the past 20 years of her career she has been awarded several commissions that produced engaging work that both question the status of society and at the same time tell its stories.

Manal holds a Master's Degree in Contemporary Art Practice in Public Spheres from the Royal College of Art, London and her works can be found in the collections of the British Museum, London; Centre Pompidou collection in Paris, Guggenheim Collection in New York and Abu Dhabi, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek, Denmark and Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha. In 2024, AlDowayan represented Saudi Arabia at the 60th Venice Biennale.

"It also leaves you fascinated to see what Khan will come up with next as he embarks on another stage of his mercurial, marvellous career."

THE TELEGRAPH

Akram Khan

ABOUT WADI ALFANN

Wadi AlFann, meaning 'Valley of the Arts', will be a global cultural destination for land art, where era-defining works by artists from around the world will be permanently sited in the monumental landscape of AlUla, the extraordinary desert region of north-west Saudi Arabia.

New, large-scale, site-specific commissions by Manal AlDowayan, Agnes Denes, Michael Heizer, Ahmed Mater and James Turrell will be the first five works to be conceived for Wadi AlFann, a spectacular valley spanning approximately 65 square kilometres. Further artists are engaged and commissioned through temporary exhibitions including Desert X AlUla, the 'Wadi AlFann Presents' performance commissioning and exhibitions programmes, and the Public Art programme.

Wadi AlFann will offer a profound opportunity to experience art in dialogue with nature. Learning from the desert, the artists are responding to the landscape of AlUla, taking inspiration from its dramatic topography, undulating vistas, remarkable geological structures and complex natural ecosystem and local communities. The works will be created with respect for the landscape, set against the stunning sandstone cliffs and canyons of the vast terrain.

Wadi AlFann will provide unparalleled opportunities for local communities to experience art as a source of education and enrichment. Through job creation, skills development and engagement with local creatives, Wadi AlFann will strengthen AlUla's cultural economy, inspiring a new generation of arts professionals and enhancing quality of life for its residents.

This epic new destination will also welcome art lovers, adventurers, and globetrotters from across the world on a transformative cultural journey to a unique place of creative and geographical wonder, continuing the region's history as a place of cross-cultural exchange.

Thikra by Akram Khan and Manal AlDowayan, commissioned by Wadi AlFann. Courtesy of the Royal Commission for AlUla

Bloody Mary

Gesher Theatre

Dmitry Krymov

DATE	TIME	VENUE
1 – 2 November	**19:30 / 20:00**	**Musical Theatre**

RUNNING TIME

1 hour 30 minutes, without intermission
Performed in Russian with English and Azerbaijani surtitles

AGE

18+ | guests aged 16+ accompanied by a parent or guardian

By Dmitry Krymov

In an emergency room, people from different worlds and eras converge. Among them are two actresses preparing to perform Mary Stuart. Gradually, their conversations begin to merge with the play itself, and the old story of power, jealousy, and execution unfolds here and now. When everything ends in death, life continues — and the cycle begins again.

Dmitry Krymov's Bloody Mary is neither an adaptation nor an illustration of Schiller's drama. It is an entirely new theatrical world, constructed from fragments of a bloody historical plot, from our conscious and unconscious memories of it, and from the realities of the present day, in which Mary Stuart becomes the starting point for a profound contemporary conversation.

Its fictional characters — grotesque, almost circus-like figures, people transformed into symbols — gradually acquire flesh and blood before our eyes. Masks crack, clowning turns into confession, and theatrical personas become startlingly human. In this theater, comedy always stands beside tragedy, and play becomes both a way of existing and a means of telling the story of our complicated lives.

Dmitry Krymov — one of the most influential directors of his generation, he is known for dismantling theatrical conventions and reinventing the language of the stage. His theater operates according to the laws of imagination and play — dangerous, absurd, and deeply human. Here, fantasy exposes reality and reveals its hidden meanings.

CREDITS

CREATIVE TEAM

Dmitry Krymov Play and Direction
Based on "Mary Stuart" by Friedrich Schiller
Kate Erdeni Set and Costume Design
Katya Sassonsky Dramaturgy
Michael Vaisburd Music Editing and Sound
Gleb Filshtinsky Lighting
Katherine Vizitey Assistant Director

CAST

Israel (Sasha) Demidov First Grandmother / Queen Elizabeth
Evgenia Dodina Second Grandmother / Mary Stuart
Polina Pakhomova Nurse
Nikita Goldman Cyclist / Assistant Director
Nikita Oleinikov Man Pierced by a Rapier
Ruth Senderovich Granddaughter of the First Grandmother
Itay Tarkhanov Grandson of the Second Grandmother
Boris Repetur Diver / Prompter

In the roles of make-up artists and costume crew:

Polina Pakhomova, Nikita Oleinikov, Ruth Senderovich, Itay Tarkhanov

PRODUCTION TEAM

Roman Kvetner General Producer
Alena Amiton Executive Producer
Inna Krymova Director's Producer
Maxim Rozenberg Technical Director
Sergey Novitsky Head of Lighting and Sound Department
Yuri Sukhanov, Dmitry Sukhanov and the Theatre

DIRECTOR

Dmitry Krymov

Dmitry Krymov (b. 1954, Moscow) is a theatre director, stage designer, visual artist, and educator. A graduate of the Moscow Art Theatre School, he began his career as a stage designer and has created the scenography for nearly 100 theatre productions.

In 2003, Krymov began directing. From 2004 to 2018, he was the artistic director of the Theatre Laboratory at the School of Dramatic Art in Moscow, where he created more than 30 productions. His work has been presented at major international theatre festivals and venues across Europe, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Israel, and many other countries.

Krymov is a five-time recipient of Russia's Golden Mask Award and has received the Crystal Turandot, the Stanislavsky Award, and the Grand Prix of the Edinburgh Festival. Together with his students, he was awarded the Golden Triga, the highest prize of the Prague Quadrennial. Since 2022, Krymov has been based in New York, where he founded Krymov Lab NYC in partnership with La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club and serves as its artistic director.

The company is a resident company of La MaMa and continues to develop and present new theatrical work in New York. Krymov also continues to direct internationally, with recent productions in the Czech Republic, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, and the United Kingdom.

In 2026, Krymov created Bloody Mary specifically for Gesher Theatre in Tel Aviv. Inspired by Friedrich Schiller's Mary Stuart, the production is an original theatrical work that brings together historical memory, contemporary reality, grotesque, comedy, and tragedy. Bloody Mary premiered at Gesher Theatre on June 21, 2026, and is presented internationally as part of the theatre's repertoire.

COMPANY

Gesher Theatre

In 1991, during the first Gulf War, a group of Russian actors under the leadership of Yevgeny Arye, a prominent stage director from Moscow, and Slava Maltsev, who became the first General Manager of Gesher Theatre, immigrated to Israel and, in a bold move, founded a theatre symbolically named Gesher — "a bridge" in Hebrew. It all started like a scene from the theatre of the absurd. A group of actors crowded into a small cellar in Tel Aviv, rehearsing Hebrew texts transcribed into the Cyrillic alphabet, running in their costumes and gas masks to the nearest shelter each time the sirens started wailing to warn of an Iraqi missile attack. Yet against all odds, from its first production of Stoppard's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead (April 1991), Gesher was hailed as The Russian Miracle of the Israeli Theatre.

Over the years, Gesher Theatre has lived up to its symbolic name and has become a bridge between cultures. The theatre has incorporated many Israeli actors into its ranks, its productions are now mostly in Hebrew, and it has moved into a permanent home in Jaffa. It has staged over 120 productions, represented Israel at numerous international festivals, won many awards, and was praised by The Times as "one of the greatest and most important troupes in the world".

This unprecedented success should be attributed first and foremost to the talented and dedicated actors, and to the relentless energy and artistic vision of Yevgeny Arye, Gesher's founder and Artistic Director, who created a unique theatrical language combining the principles of traditional Russian theatre with an original and innovative approach.

For many years, Gesher Theatre has been led by its General Director, Lena Kreindlin, who has been part of the theatre since its very beginning. Working alongside Yevgeny Arye from the theatre's earliest years, she played a crucial role in transforming Gesher from a newly founded immigrant company into one of Israel's leading theatres. Under her leadership, Gesher has expanded its international presence, developed new generations of artists and audiences, and continued to evolve while preserving the distinctive artistic identity on which it was founded. Following Yevgeny Arye's passing, Kreindlin ensured the theatre's artistic continuity while opening a new chapter in its history, bringing major Israeli and international directors and artists to Gesher and strengthening its place on the international theatre scene.

Gesher Theatre is deeply grateful to the City of Tel Aviv–Jaffa, the Israeli Ministry of Culture and Sport, and the Friends of Gesher Theatre, under the leadership of its Chairman, Mr. Israel Makov, and Mrs. Ruthy Heilpern, whose longstanding support has made the theatre's artistic work and international activity possible.

Gesher Theatre would also like to express its sincere gratitude to the supporters whose generosity made its participation in the Baku International Arts Festival possible.

Special thanks to the general producer of Gesher Theatre, Roman Kvetner.

Photo by Daniel Kaminsky

Workshops Scenery

Fedor Khaitov Technical Artist

Alexander Patlin, Andrey Kalashnikov Costumes

Olga Berezina, Ilya Davydov, Alexandra Sakharova, Ales Dikan Props

Maryana Garaev Makeup and Wigs

PERFORMANCE CREW

Katerina Vizitey Assistant Director

Darya Dontsova, Vera Moshkovich Costumes

Olga Berezina, Ales Dikan, Anna Krasina Props

Michael Vaisburd Sound

Alexander Sikirin, Alexey Filimonov Lighting

Maryana Garaev Makeup

Pavel Davidovich, Dmitry Raizman Stage Crew

Hana Shato Surtitles

MUSIC

The performance includes excerpts from the opera Maria Stuarda by Gaetano Donizetti, as well as quotations from works by Sofia Gubaidulina.

FIRST PERFORMANCE

21 June 2026

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE "BLOODY MARY CLUB" FOR SUPPORTING THIS PERFORMANCE

Olga and Alexander Turkot

Olga and Gleb Rudenko

An anonymous donor described as "the most extravagant person in the world"

And another anonymous donor described as "the most unpredictable person in Europe"

Photo by Daniel Kaminsky

Alfred and Violetta

Rezo Gabriadze Marionette Theatre

Rezo Gabriadze | Leo Gabriadze

DATE

3 – 4 November

TIME

17:00 / 20:00

VENUE

Heydar Aliyev Center

RUNNING TIME

75 minutes, without intermission

A post-show Q&A will follow the first performance

AGE

Children under 12 are not admitted

Rezo Gabriadze Theatre presents Alfred and Violetta, a tender, gently witty love story inspired by La Dame aux Camélias and La Traviata. Set in Tbilisi in the 1990s, the romance unfolds amid upheaval, separation and unexpected journeys. The production that launched the Gabriadze Theatre was later reimagined and completed by Leo Gabriadze, giving this much-loved work a new life on stage.

The history of the Gabriadze Marionette Theatre began in 1981 with the play Alfred and Violetta, where the eternal love story, well-known thanks to the novel by Alexandre Dumas fils La Dame aux Camélias and the opera by Giuseppe Verdi La Traviata, was given a completely new artistic life by Rezo Gabriadze. After a long intermission, the play returned to the stage of Gabriadze Theatre, but in a new form. During the year before his death, Rezo Gabriadze almost completely rewrote and renewed the play. The initial plan was finalized by the artistic director of the theatre, Leo Gabriadze, who is the director of this new performance.

The premiere of the renewed Alfred and Violetta took place in 2022 at the Goldoni Theatre in Venice, Italy.

"More than the narrative, which is rich with local and vibrant historical references, we are captivated by the Gabriadze family's inventions."

LES ECHOS

© Irakli Sharashidze

CREDITS

Rezo Gabriadze Playwright, Art Director
Leo Gabriadze Director
Veronika Gabriadze Producer
Tamar Amirajibi Troupe Manager
Tamar Kobakhidze Set Designer
Tamta Turmanidze Literary Editor
David Khositashvili Sound Editor
Nino Janjghava, Eduard Israelovi Musical Arrangement
Mamuka Bakradze Lighting Designer
Anna Sokhashvili Assistant Director
Avto Tsertsvadze Supply Manager
Natela Tsiklauri General Manager
Donald Rayfield English translation of the play
Nunu Geladze Italian translation of the song "Tbiliso"

CHARACTER VOICES

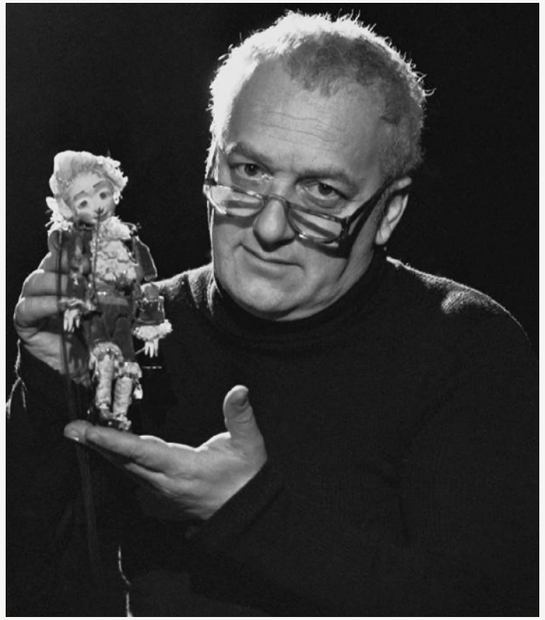
Nato Kakhidze Violetta
Vano Dugladze Alfred
Erosi Manjgaladze Germont
Ramaz Chkhikvadze Nevermore
Sergey Garmash Sergo the Locomotive
Grigol Zhordania Cuckoo
Otar Baghaturia Narrator
Teimuraz Tsiklauri Benedictus
Davit Gotsiridze Tututsa
Apolon Kublashvili Hundred-Percent
Nikoloz Kvantaliani Hard-as-nails
Nikoloz Katsaridze Hammer
Rusudan Bolkvadze Arabian
Nanuka Khuskivadze Monkey
Aleko Begalishvili A vendor from Tbilisi flea market
Nino Arsenishvili A bird from Tbilisi flea market
Davit Dvalishvili Watermelon Seller

ANIMATORS

Tamar Amirajibi, Badri Gvazava, Irakli Sharashidze, Medea Bliadze, Tamar Kobakhidze, Giorgi Giorgobiani, Natia Demetrashvili, Mariam Ikoshvili, Nino Migriauli, Mikheil Barnovi, Beno Jijiashvili, Imeda Guliashvili

PUPPET MASTERS AND SET DECORATORS

Giorgi Giorgobiani, Tamar Kobakhidze, Levan Kiknavelidze, Alexandre Kheimanovski, Maka Pachkoria, Medea Bliadze, Nana Chezhia, Natia Shengelia, Tamar Zumbadze, Levan Mindorashvili, Avtandil Gonashvili, Gela Jangirashvili, Luka Gonashvili



Rezo Gabriadze

TBILISI

Gabriadze Theatre

Gabriadze Theatre stands in the heart of Tbilisi's historical Old Town, located at 13 Shavteli Street. It was founded by Rezo Gabriadze in 1981. With a seating capacity of just 80, the Theatre is among the world's preeminent cultural institutions.

Director, playwright, artist, and sculptor Rezo Gabriadze crafted his plays, created marionettes, and brought them to life on his stage. His theatre is a unique, author-driven space where medieval marionette art is infused with new significance and seamlessly integrated into Georgian culture. For many years, Gabriadze has promoted Georgian culture internationally through his performances.

In its 45-year history, the Gabriadze Theatre has toured numerous countries and participated in international festivals in Avignon, Edinburgh, New York, Toronto, Belgrade, Charleston, Dresden, Moscow, and other cities. The universality of Gabriadze's artistic language resonates with audiences worldwide, making his characters' emotions universally understandable.

Leo Gabriadze, artistic director and producer of the Gabriadze Theatre, is the principal guardian of the delicate poetic world created by his father. Since Rezo's passing in 2021, Leo has continued his father's work. Gabriadze Theatre currently features five performances: The Autumn of My Springtime, Ramona, Alfred and Violetta, Marshal de Fantie's Diamond, The Eccentrics.

This distinctive atmosphere extends beyond the stage. The theatre's facade itself features golden letters with Rezo Gabriadze's motto: "Extra Cepam Nihil Cogito Nos Lacrimare" — "Let tears flow only from chopping onions." This motto has become a symbol of the theatre and Gabriadze's universe.

Since 2010, the theatre's clock tower has become a main attraction, featuring intricate designs based on Gabriadze's sketches.

Every hour, an angel emerges from painted doors to ring a bell. Inside the tower is a small puppet theatre presenting the Circle of Life performance twice a day. The tower also features ceramic panels created by Gabriadze. In 2019, Atlas Obscura listed the Gabriadze Theatre's clock tower among the 17 iconic monumental clocks worldwide.

© Irakli Sharashidze

The Teacher and the Students

Dmitry Sitkovetsky | Farhad Badalbeyli | Boris Baraz | Nigar Jafarova

DATE	TIME	VENUE
2 November	**15:00**	**Baku Music Academy**
RUNNING TIME		AGE
2 hours, with one intermission		**6+**

At the heart of the programme is a direct line of artistic inheritance: Gara Garayev studied with Dmitri Shostakovich, and Arif Melikov, in turn, studied with Garayev.

The performers give this continuity a personal dimension. For Dmitry Sitkovetsky, Shostakovich's music is connected to his own family history: his father, Julian Sitkovetsky, was an early interpreter of the composer's First Violin Concerto and his mother, Bella Davidovich, performed Shostakovich's 2nd Piano Concerto in Moscow with the composer in the audience. Farhad Badalbeyli knew both Gara Garayev and Arif Melikov personally. Together with Boris Baraz and Nigar Jafarova they bring this history into the immediacy of live chamber performance.

At BIAF, this musical connection is not simply remembered — it comes alive again on stage, linking past, present and future, and above all continuing from teacher to student.

"Linking past, present and future, and above all continuing from teacher to student."

PROGRAMME

Gara Garayev
String Quartet No. 2
Jeyla Seyidova | Said Mammedov | Vagif Imanov | Alexey Miltykh

Arif Melikov
Six Romances on Poems by Nazim Hikmet
for voice and piano
Nigar Jafarova | Farhad Badalbeyli

Dmitri Shostakovich
Piano Trio No. 2 in E minor, Op. 67
I. Andante | II. Allegro con brio | III. Largo | IV. Allegretto
Dmitry Sitkovetsky | Boris Baraz | Farhad Badalbeyli

CREDITS

Nigar Jafarova Soprano
Farhad Badalbeyli Piano
Dmitry Sitkovetsky Violin
Jeyla Seyidova Violin
Said Mammedov Violin
Vagif Imanov Viola
Alexey Miltykh Cello
Boris Baraz Cello

THE TEACHER AND THE STUDENTS — PERFORMERS

SOPRANO
Nigar Jafarova

PIANO
Farhad Badalbeyli

VIOLIN
Dmitry Sitkovetsky

VIOLIN
Jeyla Seyidova

VIOLIN
Said Mammedov

VIOLA
Vakhtanq Imanov

CELLO
Alexey Miltykh

CELLO
Boris Baraz

DAVID GARRETT

Millennium Symphony

Crossover Programme

Orchestra of the Sofia Gubaidulina Center for Contemporary Music

DATE	TIME	VENUE
4 November	**20:00**	**Heydar Aliyev Center**
RUNNING TIME		AGE
approx. 2 hours, with one intermission		**6+**

Garrett's crossover language is rooted in a rigorous classical education. Having studied at the Juilliard School in New York under Itzhak Perlman, he made a deliberate artistic choice to bring the classical tradition into dialogue with the music of his own time. Rather than moving between two separate genres, he consciously unites classical virtuosity with the energy of pop and rock — an approach that resonates closely with the concept of BIAF's second season, built around encounter, dialogue and the meeting of different artistic worlds.

The programme brings together music by some of the most iconic artists and composers across pop, rock, classical and film music in a monumental and genre-spanning retrospective in a class of its own: The White Stripes, Beyoncé, Maroon 5, Shawn Mendes, Harry Styles, Tones and I, Hozier, Avicii, Ed Sheeran, Luis Fonsi feat. Daddy Yankee, Rammstein, The Weeknd, Rihanna, Destiny's Child, Måneskin, Nirvana, Aerosmith, Michael Jackson, Ludwig van Beethoven, Hans Zimmer, David Guetta and Taylor Swift — a symphonic tribute to the artists and composers whose music has shaped generations.

"I'm so grateful for all the loyal fans who have been with me on my musical journey for years, and for all the new people who have joined us through Millennium Symphony."

DAVID GARRETT

VIOLIN

David Garrett

The German/American violinist David Garrett has enchanted the music world again and again with his ingenious violin variations. In the more than three decades of his meteoric career, he thrilled an audience of millions with masterful classical interpretations and as a unique crossover performer who pushed the boundaries between serious and popular music and opened up new dimensions.

David Garrett has already released 18 albums, which reached 18 top ten placements in Europe, Asia and the USA alone. While five classical albums in a row climbed to No. 1 in the charts, he also achieved this feat with the crossover bestseller Rock Symphonies.

More than five million CDs and 6 billion streams worldwide prove the international popularity of David Garrett, whose records have been refined with 14 platinum and 32 gold awards. All over the world, he was enthusiastically celebrated by over four million fans at around 1,700 live concerts. Creativity and versatility have made the violin virtuoso one of the most successful solo artists ever, who effortlessly commutes between the most renowned concert halls and the largest arenas.

PROGRAMME

PART I

The White Stripes Seven Nation Army
Beyoncé Naughty Girl
Maroon 5 Moves Like Jagger
Shawn Mendes Señorita
Harry Styles As It Was
Tones and I Dance Monkey
Hozier Take Me to Church
Avicii Wake Me Up
Ed Sheeran The Joker and the Queen
Luis Fonsi Despacito feat. Daddy Yankee
Rammstein Mein Herz Brennt
Ed Sheeran Shape of You

PART II

The Weeknd Blinding Lights
Rihanna Russian Roulette
Destiny's Child Survivor
Måneskin The Loneliest

MEDLEY

Nirvana Smells Like Teen Spirit
Aerosmith Walk This Way
Michael Jackson Smooth Criminal
Ludwig van Beethoven The 5th
Hans Zimmer He's a Pirate
David Guetta Titanium
Taylor Swift Shake It Off

CREDITS

ARTIST

David Garrett

BAND

Franck van der Heijden Musical Director + Guitar
John Haywood Keyboards
Bodi van der Heijden Drummer
Roberto De Rosa Bassist

ORCHESTRA & STAGE

Orchestra of the Sofia Gubaidulina Center for Contemporary Music Orchestra
Vanessa Sweekhorst, Ella Storme Acrobats

MANAGEMENT DAVID GARRETT

Tobias Weigold-Wimmer — Weigold & Böhm International Artists & Tours GmbH
Jörg Kollenbroich — plan B | konzepte
Ben Wolf, Nikolaj Georgiew Photos cover & backcover

MUSICAL DIRECTOR | GUITAR

Franck van der Heijden

Franck van der Heijden, who lives in Baarn, Netherlands, graduated in 1990 from the Conservatory in Hilversum with a degree in composition, arrangement, and guitar. Since then, he has regularly demonstrated his versatile musical talents as an arranger, producing composer, and musician.

As a composer, he has written many original works for recordings by other artists, music for commercials, live events, and radio and TV productions. As an arranger and/or producer, Franck has worked with artists such as David Guetta, Michael Jackson, Sia, U2, Mr. Probz, Charlie Puth, Andrea Bocelli, Rihanna, and the Dutch rock stars "Within Temptation." He also wrote the orchestral arrangements for Michael Jackson's single "Hold My Hand" (from the album Michael) and "Never Felt So Good" (the first track from the album Xscape). Additionally, he produced David Guetta's album Listen, which was released in 2014 and includes his hit tracks "Dangerous" and "Lovers On The Sun." And of course — last but not least — the highly successful collaboration with David Garrett.

As Musical Director, Franck has been involved in numerous live productions, including the immensely successful "Night of the Proms" tour. This is where his regular collaboration with David Garrett began in 2002. Since then, Franck, in his dual role as arranger and producer, has been closely involved in the work on all crossover albums by and with David Garrett. He also took on the role of Musical Director and co-arranger for the soundtrack of the film The Devil's Violinist.

The string arrangements for Celine Dion's album released in 2016 were also done by him, as well as those for the re-recording of "Where Is the Love" by the Black Eyed Peas. Franck van der Heijden also wrote the orchestral arrangements for "This One's for You" for the UEFA European Championship. The closing ceremony in Paris on July 10, 2016, where he finally stood at the conductor's podium, was watched by 80,000 spectators in the stadium and more than 800 million worldwide on screens.

KEYBOARDS

John Haywood

John Haywood is a composer, producer, pianist and arranger who specialises in the classical crossover music world and sporting title music for television and multimedia.

John studied piano with Bernard Roberts and composition with Joseph Horovitz at the Royal College of Music and graduated in 1997. Since then, he has toured worldwide with David Garrett, whilst co-producing his studio albums and music content for his live shows. Millennium Symphony has been a particularly creative and inspirational project, in both recording the album with David and working on the material for the live shows.

Other notable artists John has composed, arranged and produced for include Emeli Sandé, Paloma Faith, Skunk Anansie, Laura Wright, Natasha Marsh, Martynas Levickis, Hayley Westenra and the Military Wives Choirs. John became an ambassador for the Military Wives Choirs in 2018, supporting their charitable aims in music.

For television, John has produced title music for a wide range of sports coverage. He composed and produced the music for the Olympic Broadcasting Services worldwide feed for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics and Paralympics. He has produced title music for a succession of ITV Sports coverage programmes including FIFA World Cup 2014, UEFA Football European Championships since 2008, and the Rugby World Cup coverage in 2011, 2015, 2019 and 2023.

John also composed and produced the underscore music for the Invictus Games opening ceremony in 2016, composed and produced the music for the UEFA Football European Championships 2020 closing montage, and produced music for the ITV Six Nations 2021 coverage with Laura Wright.

DRUMS

Bodi van der Heijden

Bodi van der Heijden has been playing drums since the age of 6. During his youth he was mostly into playing sports, but in his early teens he truly fell in love with music and playing drums. After he finished high school, he decided to study at the conservatory of Utrecht. In 2021, before starting his third year of studying, he got the offer to join David Garrett's band. Since then Bodi has been the permanent drummer for David, a position in which he has toured extensively around the globe.

In addition Bodi works with other bands from the Netherlands with repertoire ranging from styles like rock, jazz and funk. He has a broad taste in music and is open to participate in all kinds of music projects. Besides playing live drums, Bodi writes and produces music as well. He also teaches the drums at various music schools.

BASS

Roberto De Rosa

Italian electric bass player, producer, composer and educator, professionally into music since 2004, he graduated at San Pietro a Majella Conservatory of Naples and Giuseppe Martucci Conservatory of Salerno. Over 20 years of music experience have afforded him the skills to play myriad styles of music with ease, working on stage and studio sessions with notable Italian and international artists including David Garrett, Mietta, Sal Da Vinci, Valentina Stella, Bugo, Peppino di Capri, Rosanna Fratello, Nello Daniele, Giulia Luzi, Tommaso Primo and others. Over the years he has performed at many events and television shows as well, and recorded albums and singles. He attended and performed at notable music shows such as NAMM (Los Angeles) and Guitar Summit (Germany) as well as Italian SHG, Guitar Show and Musika Expo.

Orchestra of the Sofia Gubaidulina Center for Contemporary Music

Founded in 2003, the Orchestra of the Sofia Gubaidulina Center for Contemporary Music in Kazan occupies a distinctive place in the musical life of the Republic of Tatarstan.

The ensemble's artistic profile is closely connected with the legacy of Sofia Gubaidulina, whose uncompromising artistic vision continues to inspire its approach to contemporary music, programming and performance.

An important focus of the orchestra's work is the music of composers from Tatarstan. Through premieres, new commissions and collaborative projects, the ensemble has become a significant platform for contemporary composition and a vital voice in the region's musical culture.

The orchestra regularly appears at major festivals and cultural projects, including Europe–Asia, The Sounding House of Sofia, Mus-Tranzit, Kremlin Live, Music of Faith and Aksenov Fest. Since 2023, the orchestra has performed under the baton of Dmitry Zheleznov, Honoured Artist of the Republic of Tatarstan.

New Earth // Bolero X

Shahar Binyamini
House of Dance Be’er Sheva

DATE	TIME	VENUE
5 – 6 November	**20:00**	**Drama Theatre**

RUNNING TIME	AGE
75 minutes, with one intermission	**18+ | guests aged 12+ accompanied by a parent or guardian**

NEW EARTH

Moving between the familiar and the unknown, Shahar Binyamini explores the forces that connect us to the earth, to one another and to the life unfolding around us.

Boundaries dissolve as movement, rhythm and physical sensation become expressions of a shared connection to the natural world. The work reflects on renewal and on the ways in which movement can reshape our relationship with ourselves, with others and with the world we inhabit.

BOLERO X

With 30 performers on stage, Bolero X becomes a celebration of the physical force of dance — of the energies that define us as individuals and, at the same time, draw us together as a collective.

CREDITS

NEW EARTH

Shahar Binyamini Choreography, Artistic Direction, Concept, Costume and Set Design

Vessel | Piris Eliyahu | Mohammad Reza Mortazavi | Ahuva Ozeri | Tai Rona | Mark Eliyahu Music

Ofer Laufer Lighting Design and Technical Direction

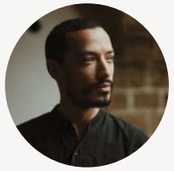
Naor Walker, Roni Milatin, Ziv Bashor, Tom Nissim, Shaked Werner, Khaveevyah Hercules, Elia Magnazi, Nuri Ron-Shitrit Dancers

BOLERO X

Shahar Binyamini Choreography, Artistic Direction and Costume Design

Boléro, M.81 | Berlin Philharmonic | Pierre Boulez Music

Ofer Laufer Lighting Design and Technical Direction



CHOREOGRAPHER & ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Shahar Binyamini

Shahar Binyamini is an internationally acclaimed choreographer, dancer, and artistic director whose work merges the worlds of dance, science, and design.

Binyamini was a member of Batsheva Dance Company from 2006 to 2013, performing works by choreographers Ohad Naharin and Sharon Eyal. In 2016, he began his international choreographic career with FLAT, created for Frontier Danceland in Singapore.

Binyamini’s work also extends beyond the traditional dance field. He collaborated with the artist SZA as choreographer for the music video of her song “SNOOZE”. In 2022, his choreography was commissioned for the opening of Shanghai Fashion Week.

In 2013, Binyamini co-founded TNUDA with Professor Atan Gross of the Weizmann Institute of Science. The research group explores the relationship between dance, science, and movement, and subsequently developed a research programme for students at the Weizmann Institute, conducted from 2014 to 2016.

Binyamini has also worked in academia as a guest professor at UCLA, where he created LUNG for the Opera and Dance Department. In 2021, he received the Israeli Minister of Culture Award for Promising Choreographer. His work continues to explore connections between contemporary dance, scientific research, visual design, and interdisciplinary artistic practice. Today, Binyamini continues to create and work internationally, while also serving as the Artistic Director and Choreographer of the House of Dance Company in Be’er Sheva.

Photo by Ascaf Avraham

BE'ER SHEVA

House of Dance

Based in a restored Ottoman-era building in the Old City of Be'er Sheva, House of Dance (HOD) Company is a professional contemporary dance company founded in 2016 by the House of Dance Association.

The company creates original contemporary dance works and develops community and educational projects, bringing together professional performance, artistic experimentation, and social engagement. Its movement language draws on contemporary dance, contact improvisation, and embodied storytelling, exploring themes of identity, trauma, resilience, belonging, and human connection.

Alongside its artistic work, House of Dance develops movement-based programmes for communities affected by trauma, including participants living with PTSD, in collaboration with therapists, social workers, and community organisations.

The company presents full-length productions, festival works, collaborative and site-specific projects across Israel and internationally. Rooted in Be'er Sheva and southern Israel, House of Dance connects contemporary dance with community, place, and a distinctive local cultural perspective.

Naor Walker, Roni Milatin, Ziv Bashor, Tom Nissim, Shaked Werner, Khaveevyah Hercules, Elia Magnazi, Nuri Ron-Shitrit Dancers

With the participation of Ironi Alef High School of Arts, Tel Aviv, Hasadna – Dance Training Program, Ga'aton, Dancers from Azerbaijan

GENERAL CREDITS

Dadi Alufer CEO
Ben Rachamim Producer
Sumaia Michelle Company Manager
Ascaf Avraham Photography
House of Dance, Be'er Sheva, Israel Production

Photo by Ascaf Avraham

Photo by Ascaf Avraham

Masters in Motion: Forsythe / Pite

English National Ballet

Crystal Pite | William Forsythe

DATE	TIME	VENUE
6 – 7 November	**19:30**	**Musical Theatre**

RUNNING TIME	AGE
approx. 1 hour 30 minutes, with one intermission	**18+ | guests aged 12+ accompanied by a parent or guardian**

English National Ballet made its first appearance in Azerbaijan at the Baku International Arts Festival, presenting works by two internationally acclaimed masters of contemporary choreography: Crystal Pite and William Forsythe.

Crystal Pite's Body and Soul (Part 1) is a hypnotic work that explores themes of conflict and connectedness. It opens with two dancers in black suits and white shirts, bathed in a stark light. They move to a voice, speaking in French, describing their actions. As the words repeat in loops and echoes, the duet swells to a crowd, seamlessly blending precision and fluidity and morphing into mesmerising waves of movement across the stage.

William Forsythe has been pushing ballet to its limits for decades — and continues to do so. His piece Playlist (EP) combines ballet classicism and athleticism with an unexpected soundtrack of pop, r'n'b and house — including Barry White and Natalie Cole. The result? Pure joy!

"Guaranteed to leave you with a great giddy grin on your face."

The Telegraph

CREDITS

CREATIVE TEAM — BODY & SOUL (PART I)

Crystal Pite Choreography
Owen Belton Music
Frédéric Chopin Additional Music
Marina Hands Voice
Jay Gower Taylor Scenography
Nancy Bryant Costume Design
Tom Visser Lighting Design
Eric Beauchesne Stager
Spencer Dickhaus Stager
Jermaine Spivey Stager

CREATIVE TEAM — PLAYLIST (EP)

William Forsythe Choreography & Costume Design
Tanja Rühl Lighting Design
Peven Everett "Surely Shorty" (Soul Heaven Records/ BMG); Abra "Vegas" (True Panther Sounds); Lion Babe "Impossible" (Jax Jones remix) (Polydor Records/ Universal Music Group); Khalid "Location" (Right Hand Music Group); Barry White "Sha La La Means I Love You" (Warner Chappell); Natalie Cole "This Will Be (An Everlasting Love)" (Capitol Records/Warner Chappell) Music

ENGLISH NATIONAL BALLET

Aaron S. Watkin Artistic Director

CHOREOGRAPHER

William Forsythe

Born in New York in 1949, William Forsythe is one of the most influential choreographers of his generation, whose work has profoundly redefined the possibilities of ballet as a contemporary art form. Following his tenure with Stuttgart Ballet and two decades as director of Ballett Frankfurt, he founded The Forsythe Company and has created works for leading companies including Paris Opera Ballet, English National Ballet, Boston Ballet and La Scala Ballet Company. His artistic practice extends beyond choreography to installations, film and digital projects, with his Choreographic Objects presented by major institutions including the Louvre, MoMA, Tate Modern and the Venice Biennale.

CHOREOGRAPHER

Crystal Pite

Crystal Pite is one of the leading and most distinctive choreographic voices of her generation. Her work, acclaimed for its striking theatricality, emotional depth and architectural precision, has been commissioned and presented by the world's foremost dance companies, including The Royal Ballet, Paris Opera Ballet, Nederlands Dans Theater and The National Ballet of Canada. As the founder and artistic director of Kidd Pivot, Pite has developed a singular choreographic language at the intersection of dance and theatre. Her exceptional contribution to contemporary dance has been recognised with the Benois de la Danse, five Olivier Awards and the Governor General's Performing Arts Award, among numerous international honours.

LONDON

English National Ballet

Since its inception in 1950, English National Ballet has been at the forefront of ballet's growth and evolution, creating moving, meaningful experiences that take ballet to new places – creatively, emotionally, and physically.

Over its history, the company has showcased a unique, diverse repertoire, inspiring audiences with masterpieces created by many visionaries. English National Ballet continues to treasure its rich legacy by preserving the great classical works – those that capture profound emotions with unmatched beauty. It is also committed to fostering new choreographic voices who push the boundaries of ballet, and commissions new works with great acclaim.

English National Ballet breaks down barriers and opens up the possibilities of ballet to connect with people, whoever and wherever they are. It runs an extensive and ambitious engagement programme for schools, children, young people and elders, with the goal of connecting more people to dance, realising its incredible power to inspire, heal and deepen the emotional connections between us all.

Photo by ASH

Photo by Isabella Turolla

Photo by ASH

Photo by ASH

LES BALLETS DE MONTE CARLO

Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo

LAC

Choreography Jean-Christophe Maillot

DATE	TIME	VENUE
7 November	20:00	Heydar Aliyev Palace

RUNNING TIME	AGE
1 hour 40 minutes, without intermission	18+ | guests aged 12+ accompanied by a parent or guardian

Audiences often associate Swan Lake with its Act II, a stalwart of the classical repertoire so powerfully identifiable by the whiteness of its choreography accompanied by Tchaikovsky's legendary score. Act II of Swan Lake can be considered as one of the first abstract ballets. A ballet to be contemplated without worrying about what is being said.

LAC by Jean-Christophe Maillot is another narrative ballet. In Swan Lake, everything is obscure, complicated and rich in meaning… Tchaikovsky himself came up with the idea of writing a symphonic ballet about a human creature whose metamorphosis would make any love impossible. The creation of the swan, from Greek, Nordic and Russian legends, makes it a fascinating hybrid being from its very conception.

In collaboration with the writer Jean Rouaud, Jean-Christophe Maillot revives the torments of a story connected to our nightmares. These buried experiences are resurrected and combined against a Machiavellian, family backdrop used to present a ballet of contrasts. The change from animal into human being infuses the entire work and questions our own nature. We believe that we differ from animals because of our ability to make choices. But is this all we are capable of? Are we not after all just as lost as this Prince? Jean-Christophe Maillot shows him faltering between white and black, good and evil, innocence and eroticism. Perhaps our humanity ultimately lies in this unsophisticated insatiability that defines us from our first cry — We want everything!

CREDITS

Jean-Christophe Maillot Choreography
Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky Music
Bertrand Maillot Composition
Ernest Pignon-Ernest Set Design
Philippe Guillotel Costumes
Jean-Christophe Maillot & Samuel Thery Lighting
Jean-Christophe Maillot & Jean Rouaud Libretto
Alice Blangero Photo

CHOREOGRAPHER-DIRECTOR

Jean-Christophe Maillot

Jean-Christophe Maillot studied dance and piano at the Conservatoire National de Région de Tours, then joined the Rosella Hightower International Dance School in Cannes until he won the Prix de Lausanne in 1977. He was then hired by John Neumeier at the Hamburg Ballet where he played leading roles for five years as a soloist in leading roles.

An accident brutally ended his career as a dancer. In 1983, he was appointed choreographer and director of the Ballet du Grand Théâtre de Tours, which he went on to make a Centre Chorégraphique National [National Choreographic Centre] in 1989. He created around twenty ballets there. In 1987, for Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo, he created Le Mandarin Merveilleux which was a sensation.

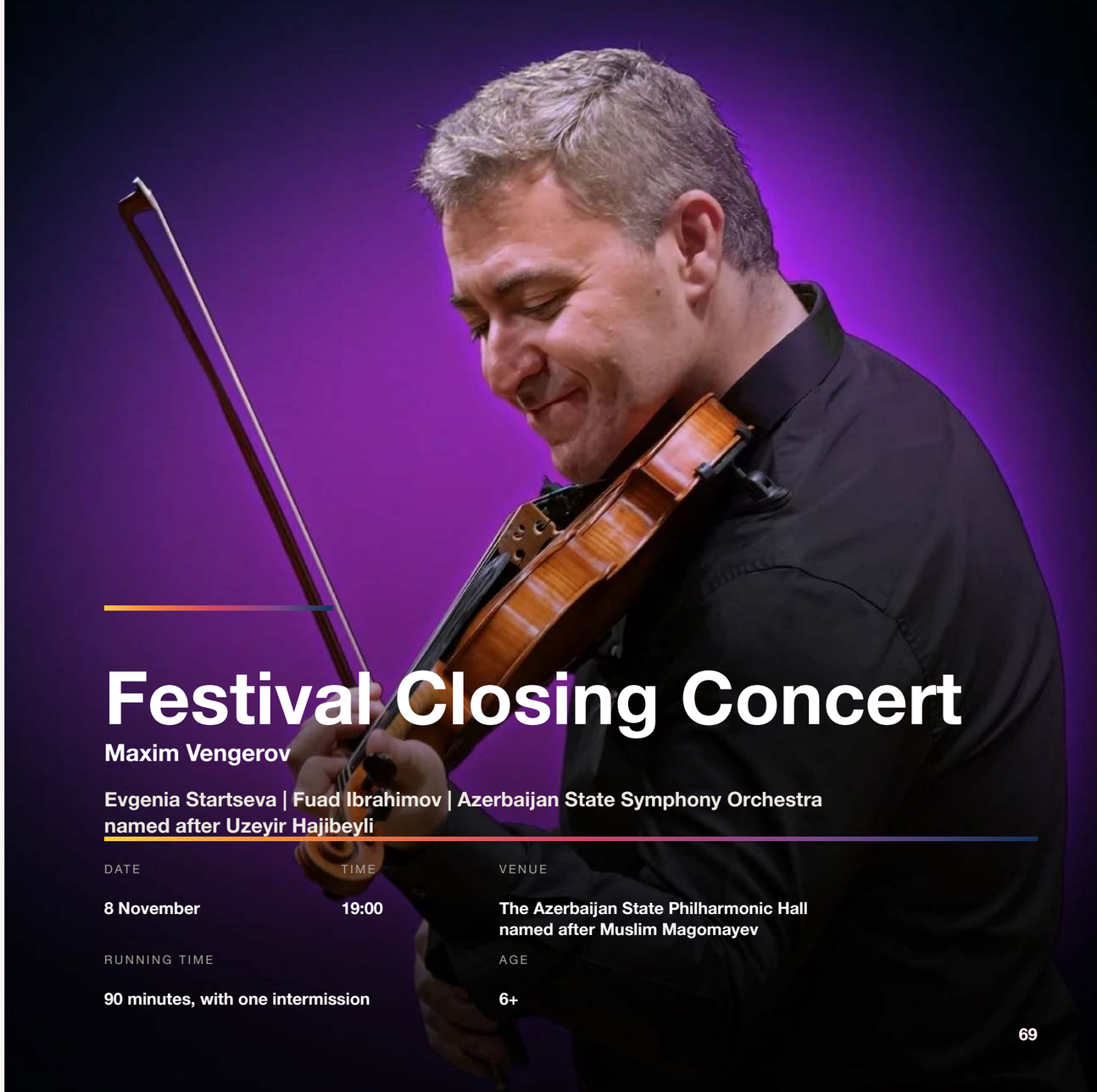
Photo by Alice Blangero

He was appointed Choreographer-Director of La Compagnie by H.R.H. the Princess of Hanover in September 1993. His arrival gave new impetus to Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo and its fifty dancers. He has created more than forty-five ballets in Monaco: Vers un pays sage (1995), Roméo et Juliette (1996), Cendrillon (1999), La Belle (2001), Le Songe (2005), Altro Canto (2006), Faust (2007), LAC (2011), CHORE (2013), Casse-Noisette Compagnie (2013), Core meu (2019), Coppél-i.A. (2019), Ma Bayadère (2025).

Jean-Christophe Maillot's repertoire has been performed by the greatest international dance companies such as the American Ballet Theater, the Pacific Northwest Ballet, the Boston Ballet, the Nederlands Dans Theater, the Ballet du Teatro alla Scala.... In 2007, he directed his first opera production, Faust, for the National Theatre of Hessen and directed his first choreographic film, Cendrillon.

In 2011, Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo was transformed by bringing together La Compagnie, the Monaco Dance Forum Festival and l'Académie Princesse Grace in one structure. H.R.H. The Princess of Hanover, as Chair, appointed Jean-Christophe Maillot as its head.

Photo by Alice Blangero



Festival Closing Concert

Maxim Vengerov

Evgenia Startseva | Fuad Ibrahimov | Azerbaijan State Symphony Orchestra named after Uzeyir Hajibeyli

DATE	TIME	VENUE
8 November	**19:00**	**The Azerbaijan State Philharmonic Hall named after Muslim Magomayev**

RUNNING TIME	AGE
90 minutes, with one intermission	**6+**

One of the world's foremost violinists, Maxim Vengerov, will appear alongside pianist Evgenia Startseva and the Azerbaijan State Symphony Orchestra named after Uzeyir Hajibeyli, under the baton of Fuad Ibrahimov, for an evening of exceptional artistry.

The programme brings together the profound emotional intensity of Dmitri Shostakovich and Rimsky-Korsakov's legendary symphonic suite Scheherazade. In Maxim Vengerov's interpretation, the violin becomes a voice of remarkable depth and expression, unfolding within the rich colours and sweeping sonorities of the symphony orchestra.

In Baku — a city where East and West meet — Scheherazade takes on a particular resonance, evoking a world of imagination, poetry, and the timeless allure of the East.

This concert will provide a distinguished finale to the second season of BIAF. The festival ends where it began, at the Philharmonic, with Scheherazade returning us to the figure of the storyteller herself — the woman who survives by ensuring that every night ends in the middle of a story. There is a fitting irony in closing a festival on the Caspian with a St Petersburg composer's imagined East, performed in a city accustomed to answering such imaginings with a reality of its own.

"A thousand and one nights: the tale continues."

BIAF 2026

PROGRAMME

PART I

César Franck
Sonata in A major for Violin and Piano, FWV 8
I. Allegretto ben moderato | II. Allegro | III. Recitativo–Fantasia: Ben moderato – Molto lento | IV. Allegretto poco mosso

Dmitri Shostakovich
Ten Preludes from Op. 34
transcribed for violin and piano by Dmitri Tsyganov

PART II

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov
Scheherazade, Symphonic Suite, Op. 35
Solo violin: Maxim Vengerov

Fikret Amirov
Azerbaijan Capriccio

CREDITS

Maxim Vengerov Violin

Evgenia Startseva Piano

Fuad Ibrahimov Conductor

Azerbaijan State Symphony Orchestra named after Uzeyir Hajibeyli

VIOLIN

Maxim Vengerov

Violinist Maxim Vengerov is universally hailed as one of the world's finest musicians, and often referred to as the greatest living string player in the world today.

Born in 1974, he began his career as a solo violinist at the age of five, won the Wieniawski and Carl Flesch international competitions at ages 10 and 15 respectively, studied with Galina Tourchaninova and Zakhar Bron, made his first recording at the age of 10, and went on to record for high-profile labels including Melodia, Teldec, Deutsche Gramophone and Warner, earning among others, Grammy and Gramophone artist of the year awards.

In 2020, Vengerov became Classic FM's first solo artist in residence and released a new recording of Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto with conductor Myung-Whun Chung and the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, coupled with works by Saint- Saëns and Ravel. A new live video recording of the Tchaikovsky Concerto from the Konzerthaus Vienna concert from November 2025 with Maestro Chung and the Tokyo Philharmonic orchestra is now available on Maxim Vengerov's You Tube channel as well as Mezzo and Medici. He also made a live recording of his 2018 Carnegie Hall recital.

In recent years, Vengerov has opened the season of the Orchestra Filarmonica della Scala with Riccardo Chailly and the Shanghai International Music Festival with Christoph Eschenbach. He also celebrated 40 years on stage with a sold-out Royal Albert Hall concert, performing both Brahms's Violin Concerto and Double Concerto, and toured in recital around the world. His 50th birthday celebrations in the 2024–2025 season included the launch of his three-season Perspectives series at Carnegie Hall which will see him perform over 12 concerts over the next three seasons partnering up with other famous musicians including Ivan Fischer, Evgeny Kissin, Yefim Bronfman, Alisa Weilerstein, Steven Isserliss, Sir Antonio Pappano and Martha Argerich.

One of Vengerov's greatest passions is teaching. He has held positions at the Mozarteum University Salzburg, and Royal Academy and Royal College of Music in London. In 2018, he became the Goodwill Ambassador of the Musica Mundi School, a unique institution that supports young talents. In order to make music education more accessible, he established his own online teaching platform in January 2021 at maximvengerov.com.

Vengerov has received numerous awards, including a Grammy Award for Best Instrumental Soloist Performance and a World Economic Forum Crystal Award in 2007. He was also named a chevalier of the Ordre du Mérite Culturel from the palace in Monte Carlo, where he resides. In 1997, he became the first classical musician to be appointed International Goodwill Ambassador by UNICEF, which has enabled him to continue to inspire children worldwide through music. He plays the ex-Kreutzer Stradivari (1727), among other violins.

PIANO

Evgenia Startseva

Evgenia Startseva is a Kazakhstan-born pianist with an international career as a soloist and chamber musician. She studied at the Gnessin Russian Academy of Music with Theodore Gutmann and Ekaterina Derzhavina, continued her studies at the Moscow State Conservatoire and completed her postgraduate training at the Musikhochschule Saarbrücken.

Evgenia Startseva has performed across Europe, the United States, South Africa and Asia at major venues including the Royal Albert Hall and Royal Festival Hall in London, Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. She has collaborated with leading musicians including Maxim Vengerov, Alisa Weilerstein and Lawrence Power, and has appeared at numerous international festivals.

Her recordings include works by Mozart, Prokofiev and Shostakovich, alongside chamber music with the Ognisko Ensemble. Evgenia Startseva is also dedicated to music education and teaches piano at Eton College.

At BIAF 2026, Evgenia Startseva joins Maxim Vengerov for the Festival Closing Concert at the Azerbaijan State Academic Philharmonic Hall, performing works by César Franck and Dmitri Shostakovich.

Azerbaijan State Symphony Orchestra named after Uzeyir Hajibeyli

COLLATERAL PROGRAMME

01 **Sharon Eyal — Inside the Studio**
Open rehearsal and conversation with the artist
1 NOVEMBER
Heydar Aliyev Center
74

02 **To Carthage then I came**
Romeo Castellucci | Scott Gibbons
6 – 7 NOVEMBER
Stone Chronicle Museum
75

03 **Public Talk: The Legacy of Dmitri Shostakovich**
Dmitry Sitkovetsky | Zumrud Dadashzade
29 OCTOBER
Baku Book Center
77

04 **Public Talk with Lev Dodin**
Maly Drama Theatre — Theatre of Europe, St Petersburg
30 OCTOBER
Baku Book Center
78

05 **Public Talk: Akram Khan & Manal AlDowayan**
In collaboration with Gazelli Art House Baku
31 OCTOBER
Gazelli Art House Baku
79

06 **Public Talk with Peter Frankopan**
Professor of Global History, University of Oxford
8 NOVEMBER
Baku Book Center
80

PERFORMANCE

Photo by

Sharon Eyal — Inside the Studio

Open rehearsal and conversation with the artist

DATE	TIME	VENUE
1 November	**13:00**	**Heydar Aliyev Center**

RUNNING TIME	LANGUAGE
60 minutes	**English**

Sharon Eyal is one of the most distinctive voices in contemporary dance. Her choreographic language brings together physical intensity, rhythm, music and a powerful visual sensibility. To bring this vision to life with complete artistic freedom, she founded her company, S-E-D, in 2013 alongside her collaborator and partner, Gai Behar. In 2022, the duo moved to Paris, establishing a new hub for their work and deepening their roots in the European cultural scene. Alongside her company's repertoire, Eyal has created works for leading companies around the world, earning international recognition as a leading figure in contemporary dance.

Following the presentation of Delay the Sadness at BIAF, Sharon Eyal returns to the festival with Inside the Studio — an open rehearsal offering audiences a closer encounter with her creative process and the dancers at work.

The programme opens with a 20-minute documentary film, followed by a 30-minute live showing featuring Héloïse Jocqueviel, Darren Devaney, Johnny McMillan and Juan Gil in three excerpts: Christina; a duet inspired by Into the Hairy; and an excerpt from Delay the Sadness.

The programme concludes with an open conversation with Sharon Eyal and the dancers — an invitation to look beyond the stage and hear directly from the artists about the creative process, exploration and the emergence of a new choreographic language.

PERFORMANCE

Photo by Frankie Casillo

To Carthage then I came

Romeo Castellucci | Scott Gibbons

DATE	TIME	VENUE
6 – 7 November	**15:00**	**Stone Chronicle Museum**

RUNNING TIME
approx. 35 minutes

Major Tools

Beneath the vault of a roof, six long golden tubes hang at head height.
The tubes vary in length, like ancient units of measurement.
Mene Tekel Peres
Their diameter is that of a fist
No light, only the intrinsic glow of gold.
The tubes are struck by the long hair of several people who, without even being noticed, enter the space, one after the other.
The movement of their bodies is undulating, obstinate.
The rhythm and violence of the blows on the tubes generate the music of the spheres.
It happens that the hair, like snakes, coils around the tube, trapping the body.
The volume increases logarithmically.
The sound arises from the people's exertion because it is a gesture, not an artistic expression.
The sound is that of an alarm announcing a fire.
Carthage

The project To Carthage then I came stems from a physical action long investigated by Romeo Castellucci, an ancient gesture rooted in a tradition of prayers and rituality. With the crucial contribution of composer Scott Gibbons, the action has materialized into a concert for

golden pipes.

The action begins with a slow, growing rhythm, gradually increasing in pace. This multiplied gesture generates a layered soundscape, where sounds overlap and intertwine into a telluric symphony composed by Scott Gibbons, offering a constantly changing sound and a deepening physical experience.

DIRECTOR

Romeo Castellucci

Director and stage, lighting and costume designer Romeo Castellucci (Cesena, Italy, 1960) is known throughout the world for creating a theatre founded on the totality of the arts and aimed at an integral perception. His theatre engages in a type of dramaturgy that overturns the primacy of literature, thus becoming a complex and supple form of art, a theatre made of extraordinarily rich images expressed in a language as comprehensible as music, sculpture, painting or architecture.

His stagings are regularly invited and produced by the most prestigious international theatres, opera houses and festivals, in over sixty countries covering all the continents. In his career he has received important prizes and awards.

In March 2024, Bérénice, a monologue based on Jean Racine, debuted with Isabelle Huppert.

In 2025, he made his debut at the Venice Biennale with I mangiatori di patate - The Potato Eaters, a performance staged on the island of Lazzaretto Vecchio, and in Geneva with a version of Pergolesi's Stabat Mater, performed by Barbara Hannigan and Jacub Josef Orlinski.

In 2026, he will appear for the first time at La Scala in Milan with Pelléas et Mélisande, and again at the Salzburg Festival with Saint François d'Assise, while his new theatre debut is expected in autumn 2026.

COMPOSER

Scott Gibbons

Scott Gibbons is an American-born composer and performer of electroacoustic music, active for more than three decades in the field of sound experimentation. A seminal figure in dark ambient and micromusic, Gibbons explores the relationship between natural acoustic phenomena and technology, creating sounds that emerge from the depths of matter — from the molecular to the cosmic scale. Since 1998, Gibbons has been a close artistic collaborator of Romeo Castellucci, creating music and sound for major productions including Genesi. From the Museum of Sleep, Tragedia Endogonidia and La Divina Commedia. Their long-standing collaboration continues with To Carthage Then I Came. Gibbons has released more than 30 albums and collaborated with artists and ensembles across experimental music and the performing arts. His work has also extended to large-scale projects, including sound compositions for the inauguration of the Louvre Abu Dhabi and the 120th anniversary of the Eiffel Tower, incorporating sounds recorded from the tower itself.

CREDITS

Eugenio Resta Technical Direction
Caterina Soranzo Production
Benedetta Briglia Head of Production
Giulia Colla Organization
Carmen Castellucci | Francesca Di Serio | Gionni Gardini | Dario Neri On-site Technical Team
Giacomo Calli | Nicola Ratti Technicians
Michela Medri | Elisa Bruno | Simona Barducci Administration
Massimiliano Coli Finance

To Carthage then I came is conceived as the second phase of the project Senza Titolo, a production by Triennale Milano and Societas, commissioned on the occasion of the centenary of Triennale Milano in 2023.

PUBLIC TALK

The Legacy of Dmitri Shostakovich

Dmitry Sitkovetsky | Zumrud Dadashzade

Marking the 120th anniversary of Dmitri Shostakovich's birth, this Public Talk explores the legacy of one of the twentieth century's most influential composers, with a particular focus on his connection to Baku and Azerbaijan's musical heritage.

Shostakovich's relationship with Baku forms part of a wider cultural history shaped by artistic exchange, musical traditions and the lives of remarkable musicians. His work, created against a complex historical and political backdrop, continues to raise enduring questions about the relationship between art and power, individual expression and the realities of its time.

Bringing together historical insight and musical perspective, the conversation will explore Shostakovich's place in Baku's cultural history and consider how his music continues to resonate across generations.

Dmitry Sitkovetsky

DATE	TIME	VENUE
29 October	**12:00**	**Baku Book Center**
RUNNING TIME		LANGUAGE
45–60 minutes		**Russian**

MODERATOR

TBC

PARTICIPANTS

Dmitry Sitkovetsky Violinist and Conductor

Zumrud Dadashzade Musicologist | Professor and Head of the Department of Music History, Baku Music Academy | Honored Art Worker of Azerbaijan

PUBLIC TALK

Public Talk with Lev Dodin

Maly Drama Theatre — Theatre of Europe, St Petersburg

Lev Dodin is one of the defining figures of European theatre — a director, teacher and artistic leader whose work has shaped generations of actors and theatre-makers.

Over more than five decades, he has developed a distinctive theatrical language rooted in literature, ensemble and an exceptionally rigorous rehearsal process. His artistic journey is inseparable from the Maly Drama Theatre – Theatre of Europe, where a unique theatrical culture has evolved under his direction and gained international recognition.

Lev Dodin

DATE	TIME	VENUE
30 October	**15:30**	**Baku Book Center**
RUNNING TIME		LANGUAGE
60 minutes		**Russian**

Presented alongside BIAF's festival performance of The Seagull, this public talk offers a rare opportunity to hear directly from the creator of the production. Chekhov has remained a vital presence throughout Dodin's creative life, and The Seagull opens a wider perspective on an artistic practice built over decades — a theatre of precision and depth, where literature becomes lived experience and the stage remains in constant dialogue with the present.

CREDITS

Anastasia Kim, theatre scholar and producer Moderator

PUBLIC TALK

Akram Khan & Manal AlDowayan

In collaboration with Gazelli Art House Baku

DATE	TIME	VENUE
31 October	**15:00**	**Gazelli Art House Baku**
RUNNING TIME		LANGUAGE
60 minutes		**English**

Manal AlDowayan in person | Akram Khan joining online from New York

This Public Talk brings together two artists whose practices have made a significant impact on contemporary culture: Akram Khan, an internationally acclaimed choreographer and a leading figure in contemporary performing arts, and Manal AlDowayan, one of Saudi Arabia's leading contemporary artists working internationally.

Over the past twenty-five years, Akram Khan has developed a distinctive choreographic language rooted in the dialogue between the classical Indian tradition of Kathak and contemporary dance. In Thikra: Night of Remembering, presented as part of BIAF's main programme, this language meets the visual world of Manal AlDowayan. As Visual Director, AlDowayan created the production's scenography and costumes, while its narrative concept was developed collaboratively with Khan.

The Public Talk continues this dialogue at Gazelli Art House, where AlDowayan's practice is presented as part of the group exhibition Everything Folds, Unfolds, Refolds, curated by Auronda Scalera and Dr Alfredo Cramerotti. Bringing together Manal AlDowayan, Sophia Al-Maria, Aziza Kadyri, Raya Kassisieh, Almagul Menlibayeva and Elnara Nasirli, the exhibition explores ideas of transformation, perception and the shifting relationship between the physical and the imagined.

The Public Talk takes this interdisciplinary exchange beyond the stage, creating a space for live dialogue between artists and audiences.

Photograph of Akram and Manal in the desert: Courtesy of the Royal Commission for AlUla

PUBLIC TALK

Public Talk with Peter Frankopan

Professor of Global History, University of Oxford

Peter Frankopan is Professor of Global History at the University of Oxford, Director of the Oxford Centre for Byzantine Research, and Senior Research Fellow at Worcester College. His work explores the connections between cultures, regions and civilizations, with a particular focus on Byzantium, the Silk Roads, Central Asia, Russia and the Middle East.

He is the author of the international bestseller The Silk Roads: A New History of the World, which offers a new perspective on the networks of exchange that have shaped global history. His most recent book, The Earth Transformed: An Untold History, examines the relationship between the natural environment and the course of human history.

In Baku — a city shaped by centuries of trade and cultural exchange between East and West — Peter Frankopan explores the world of the Silk Roads and the networks that connected people, ideas, cultures and goods across vast distances. As part of the BIAF Public Talk programme, he brings this history into dialogue with Baku itself — a city that has long stood at the crossroads of these encounters.

Peter Frankopan

DATE	TIME	VENUE
8 November	13:00	Baku Book Center
RUNNING TIME		**LANGUAGE**
approx. 90 minutes		English

HOST

Anthony Burr – Journalist and Public Relations Expert

EDUCATION PROGRAMME

01 **Masterclasses**
Janez Podlesek | Federico Hood | Boris Baraz | Brendan Kane
29 OCTOBER | 10:30
Baku Music Academy

02 **Masterclasses with Dmitry Sitkovetsky and Liana Gourdjia**
Students of Shusha Music College
31 OCTOBER | 11:00
International Mugham Centre

03 **Masterclass with Dmitry Sitkovetsky**
3 NOVEMBER | 11:00
Baku Music Academy

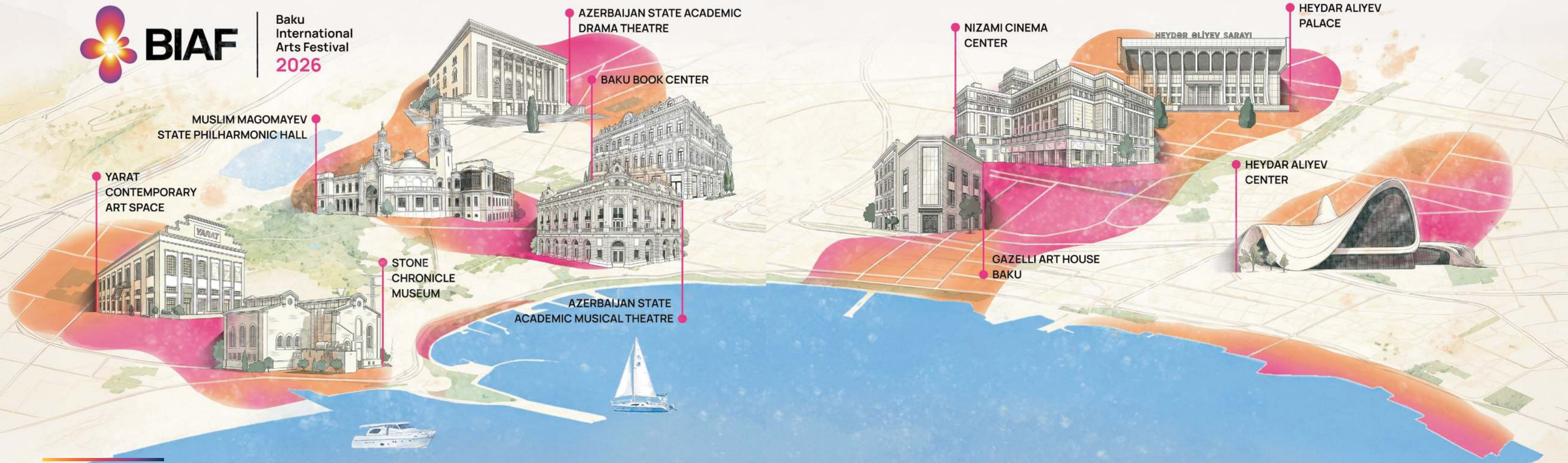
04 **Contemporary Dance Workshop**
Shahar Binyamini | open registration
6 NOVEMBER | 11:00
YARAT Contemporary Art Centre

05 **Dance Workshop**
Dancers of Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo
6 NOVEMBER | 13:00
Baku Choreography Academy

28 OCTOBER – 8 NOVEMBER 2026

BAKU INTERNATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL | SEASON 2

BIAF



FESTIVAL GUIDE

VENUES

Across twelve days the festival unfolds through Baku's concert halls, theatres, cinemas, museums, galleries and academies. Together they trace different periods in the city's history — from the Old City to Zaha Hadid's Heydar Aliyev Center.

01 Azerbaijan State Academic Musical Theatre 84
02 Azerbaijan State Academic Drama Theatre 84
03 Azerbaijan State Philharmonic Hall 85
04 Heydar Aliyev Palace 85
05 Heydar Aliyev Center 86
06 Stone Chronicle Museum 86
07 Nizami Cinema Center 87
08 Baku Book Center 87
09 YARAT Contemporary Art Space 88
10 Gazelli Art House Baku 88
11 Baku Music Academy 89
12 Baku Choreography Academy 89

Scan to open the venues in Google Maps

1 Azerbaijan State Academic Musical Theatre

Zarifa Aliyeva Street 8

The Azerbaijan State Academic Musical Theatre is one of Baku's prominent cultural venues, with a history dating back to 1910 and a longstanding tradition in the development of musical theatre in Azerbaijan.

Following an extensive reconstruction completed in 2013, the theatre combines its historic character with modern performance facilities. Its main auditorium seats 460 guests and is equipped with contemporary sound and acoustic systems, modern stage technology and a fully reconstructed rotating stage.

2 Azerbaijan State Academic Drama Theatre

Füzuli Street 1

The oldest theatre in the country and one of Baku's leading cultural stages. Its history dates back to 1873, when the first plays in the Azerbaijani language were performed here. The current building, constructed in 1919 in Neoclassical style, has become an important architectural landmark of the capital.

Today, the theatre continues national traditions while embracing both classical and contemporary works. Its stage hosts Azerbaijani playwrights as well as world classics. Azdrama is a cultural arena where new ideas are born and Azerbaijan's theatrical school is shaped.

3 The Azerbaijan State Philharmonic Hall named after Muslim Magomayev

Sabail district, Istiglaliyyat Street 10

Opened in 1912 in the years of the oil boom and modelled on the casino at Monte-Carlo, the Philharmonic is the city's principal concert hall and one of its most recognisable buildings.

It is the hall where Dmitri Shostakovich performed his own music in 1934 and again in 1952, and where BIAF 2026 both opens and closes.

4 Heydar Aliyev Palace

35 Bulbul Avenue

Heydar Aliyev Palace, named after the National Leader of the Azerbaijani people Heydar Aliyev, holds an important place in the socio-political life of the country. The palace was opened to the public in 1972.

As one of the most recognizable architectural landmarks of the capital, Heydar Aliyev Palace functions as a unique venue where the most prestigious state events are held. It is one of the ideal places to experience the cultural life of Baku: through the events held here, visitors to the city have the opportunity to witness Azerbaijani music, art, and stage culture live. Its location in the central part of the city also makes the palace easily accessible for tourists.

5 Heydar Aliyev Center

1 Heydar Aliyev Avenue

The Heydar Aliyev Center is one of the most magnificent and modern architectural landmarks of Baku. The center is dedicated to the memory of the National Leader of the Azerbaijani people, Heydar Aliyev, and holds an important place in the cultural life of the country.

The building of the center was designed by the renowned architect Zaha Hadid. Its wave-like and flowing form is considered one of the most remarkable examples of modern architecture. The building's unusual design is distinguished by the absence of sharp angles and the harmony of smooth lines. These features give the structure both aesthetic beauty and a distinctive architectural style.

Inside the center there are exhibition halls, conference rooms, a museum section, and spacious areas intended for various cultural events. Visitors have the opportunity to become acquainted with Azerbaijan's rich cultural heritage while also experiencing examples of contemporary art.

6 Stone Chronicle Museum

Mikayıl Useynov Avenue 28

Stone Chronicle Museum on the territory of the State Flag Square has been created by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation. On 8 June 2015, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, First Lady, President of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation Mehriban Aliyeva, and Vice-president of the Foundation Leyla Aliyeva acquainted themselves with the museum.

The museum is located in the building of a power station built in 1921 that once provided for the energy supply of the oil fields. Many types of stone plastic art are displayed in the exposition of the Museum. The exposition includes, along with exhibits brought from Gobustan and Qala reserves, works by sculptor Hussein Hagverdy. At this exhibition, the sculptor presents a history he called "The Artery".

7 The Nizami Cinema Center

20 Bulbul Avenue

The Nizami Cinema Center is one of the most well-known cinema complexes in Baku. The cinema center is named after the prominent Azerbaijani poet Nizami Ganjavi. The building was constructed in 1934 based on the design of architects Sadiq Dadashov and Mikayil Huseynov.

Both local and foreign films are screened at the Nizami Cinema Center. In addition, various film festivals, presentations, cultural events, and special cinema-related projects are organized here. Located in the center of the city, this cinema complex is a comfortable and attractive leisure destination for both local residents and tourists. With its modern interior and extensive film program, the Nizami Cinema Center is considered an important part of Baku's cinematic culture. A statue of Nizami Ganjavi is installed on the facade of the cinema center.

8 The Baku Book Center

5 Uzeyir Hajibeyli Street

The Baku Book Center, established with the initiative and support of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, officially opened its doors to visitors on September 1, 2018. The Center offers a diverse selection of books across various genres in Azerbaijani, Russian, Turkish, English, Chinese, French, German, Arabic, and other languages.

Covering 2,500 square meters, the Baku Book Center offers a diverse collection of books published by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation on both the ground and first floors. In addition, visitors can discover a variety of items, including "I Love Baku" clothes, souvenirs and accessories, "Azərpoçt" products, bestsellers in different languages, non-fiction books, classic literature, art albums, and tourist guidebooks.

9 YARAT Contemporary Art Space

National Flag Square, Bayil District

YARAT Contemporary Art Space is one of Azerbaijan's leading platforms for contemporary art. Founded in Baku in 2011, the non-profit organisation supports contemporary artistic practice in Azerbaijan while creating opportunities for dialogue and exchange between local and international artists.

The YARAT Contemporary Art Centre opened in 2015 in a converted Soviet-era naval building overlooking the Caspian Sea. Its two floors provide approximately 2,000 square metres of exhibition space, hosting temporary exhibitions, new commissions and works from the YARAT Collection. The Centre also includes an auditorium designed for screenings, performances and educational events.

Through exhibitions, performances, talks, educational programmes and interdisciplinary projects, YARAT has become an important hub for contemporary culture and creative exchange in Baku and the wider region.

10 Gazelli Art House Baku

172 Lev Tolstoy Street

Founded in 2010 by Mila Askarova, Gazelli Art House is an international contemporary art gallery with spaces in Baku, London and New York. The gallery represents a diverse roster of artists, from leading figures associated with Post-War movements such as Pop Art and Abstract Expressionism to ultra-contemporary voices exploring new forms of artistic expression in the digital age.

Gazelli Art House Baku places a particular focus on art from Azerbaijan and neighbouring countries, while connecting local and international artistic practices and fostering cross-cultural dialogue. The Baku space hosts exhibitions, talks, screenings, performances and other cultural programmes, bringing together artists, curators, researchers and audiences.

11 Baku Music Academy

Shamsi Badalbeyli St. 98

Founded in 1921 with the involvement of the renowned Azerbaijani composer Uzeyir Hajibeyli, Baku Music Academy is one of the country's leading institutions of musical education and culture.
Since 1939, the Academy has occupied its historic building, designed by prominent Azerbaijani architects Sadig Dadashov and Mikayil Huseynov. Associated with distinguished composers such as Gara Garayev and Fikret Amirov, the Academy has played a significant role in the development of Azerbaijani classical music.
Under the leadership of renowned pianist Farhad Badalbeyli since 1991, the Academy continues to host concerts, masterclasses and international musical events.

12 Baku Choreography Academy

Rashid Behbudov St. 75

The history of Baku Choreography Academy dates back to 1922, when a ballet studio was established in Baku. In 1929, it was transformed into the Baku Choreographic School, becoming the first institution of its kind not only in the Caucasus but also in the East, and laying the foundations for professional ballet education in Azerbaijan.
The institution is closely associated with Gamar Almaszade, recognized as the first ballerina not only of Azerbaijan but also of the East. A pioneering figure of Azerbaijani ballet, she studied here and later trained celebrated dancers, including Leyla Vakilova and Rafiqa Akhundova. Its graduates have gone on to perform on international stages, including the renowned Mariinsky Theatre.
Officially established as an academy in 2014, the institution continues to preserve and develop the traditions of classical ballet and Azerbaijani national dance. Located in central Baku, the Academy remains an important cultural institution, connecting generations of dancers and choreographers.

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Heydar Aliyev Foundation

Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Heydar Aliyev Center

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PRESS

pr@biaf.az
Media enquiries, accreditation and interviews

TICKETS

tickets@biaf.az
Ticket purchases and refunds

iticket.az

PARTNERSHIPS

partners@biaf.az
Partnership and collaboration proposals

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volunteers@biaf.az
Volunteer programme and applications

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info@biaf.az
General festival information and assistance

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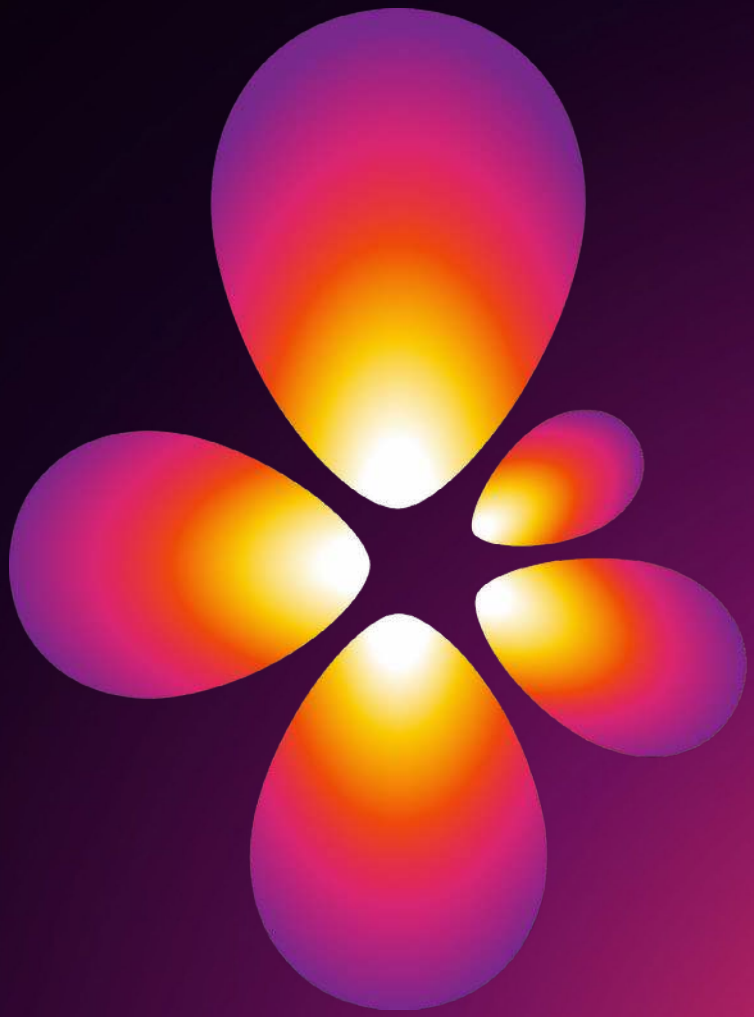
28 October – 8 November 2026