



Image: Lemi Ponifasio/MAU

Lemi Ponifasio / MAU

القدس **Jerusalem**

**2020 TEACHERS
RESOURCE**

**New Zealand
Festival** **OF THE ARTS**

Wellington
Community Trust
supporting community initiatives

Curriculum Links

Drama, Dance, History,
Culture

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[Download SchoolFest 101 here.](#) Your guide to make the most of the festival experience.

CAST AND CREATIVES

Concept / Design / Director: **Lemi Ponifasio**
Technical Director: **Helen Todd**
Producer: **Susana Lei'ataua**

Head of Stage: **Mike Skinner**
Head of Sound: **Chris Ward**

Performers:

Rosie Te Rauawhea Belvie
Tame Iti
Kawiti Waetford
Ery Aryani
Terri Crawford

Anitopapa Kopua
Manarangi Mua
Rangipo Wallace Ihakara
Helmi Prasetyo

LEMI PONIFASIO

Salā **Lemi Ponifasio** is a Samoan and New Zealand director, artist, dancer, designer, and choreographer whose work defies conventional definitions. Lemi's uncompromising vision has made him one of New Zealand's most internationally-lauded artists, firmly rooted on the international stage with a reputation as a choreographer and theatre artist who will, according to the French *Le Figaro* "stand among the greatest."

In 1995 Lemi formed MAU, the philosophical foundation and direction of his work, the name of his work and the communities he works with. MAU is a platform for critical reflection and creativity with artists, scholars, activists, intellectuals and community leaders. MAU is the Samoan word that means the declaration to the truth of a matter or revolution, as an effort to transform. Lemi collaborates with people from all walks of life, working in remote villages, schools, factories, marae, castles, galleries, and stadiums. The work of MAU has featured fully staged operas, theatre, dance, exhibitions, community forums and festivals in more than 40 countries. Lemi is a Guest Curator for the 2020 New Zealand Festival.

القدس JERUSALEM

Up there, up above,
look at her dangling from the sky's throat.

Look at her fenced with the eyelashes of angels.
No one can walk toward her,
but a man can crawl on his forehead and shoulders,
perhaps even his navel.

Barefoot, knock on her door.
A prophet will open, and teach you how to march, and how to bow.

Adonis, *Concerto Al Quds*

Created in turbulent and perplexing times, القدس *Jerusalem* is Lemi Ponifasio's major new work. Inspired by the epic *Concerto Al Quds* by the great poet Adonis (Ali Ahmad Said Esber), it will premiere at the New Zealand Festival before touring internationally.

القدس *Jerusalem* is not a documentary about a city. Nor a political or religious commentary. It is a meditation on the universal tensions between idealism and reality, life and death, beauty and malice, freedom and control, love and hatred. It is the creation of a space to come together, seek recovery and new beginnings. Expect impeccable artistry from the performers of the MAU company and exquisite, stark design. If defined in traditional terms, this could be opera, theatre and dance. But it's better framed as ceremony: an intense, unforgettable evening for you to question, reflect and dream.

ABOUT THE SHOW

GENRE

Lemi Ponifasio's work crosses genres through theatre, dance, opera and social action. Looking away from the western structures that often surround the performing arts, Ponifasio draws from a diverse range of influences from the dance and ceremonies of indigenous Pacific communities to genealogy, architecture and philosophy.

Lemi has been invited to the prestigious Venice Biennale an amazing three times – for visual arts, dance and theatre, proof of his ability to transcend genres. The Venice Biennale writes "In his shows, ceremonies, performance culture, dance and contemporary theatre blend and demonstrate a strong connotation of civil commitment. Ponifasio's unique work is hard to define in conformity with the parameters of theatre and dance of the West."

CONCERTO AL QUDS

"Sky on earth / Al-Quds, a dream language / a language that history bleeds into what came before it and after it / that mixes the human and the real / ending and non-ending."
Adonis, *Concerto Al-Quds*

Adonis is the pen name of Syrian Poet Ali Ahmad Said Esber. After a stint in prison due to his political activity, in the 1950s he moved to Beirut, then Paris, living in exile. His epic poem *Concerto Al-Quds* (Al-Quds is the Arabic name for the city of Jerusalem, *quds* meaning 'holy') condemns monotheism – the belief that there is only one god – and has inspired the production of القدس *Jerusalem*. The poem focuses around the difference between the heavenly Jerusalem of religious lore and the reality of a living, breathing city, scarred by years of conflict and tourism.

Like the poem, القدس *Jerusalem* is made up of disparate fragments. By weaving together current issues, the history of the city, ceremony, theatre and dance Ponifasio creates something new through the process of creation.

LEMI PONIFASIO'S ETHOS

"The way I look at things, art is about housing. It's about education and employment and nutrition and justice. And, through the arts, I can ignite a flame about imagining and give life to our potential." Lemi Ponifasio in conversation with *e-Tangata*.

Lemi does not describe himself as a choreographer, but a communicator, a questioner. As part of the New Zealand Festival of the Arts Lemi has created a conference [Talanoa Mau – we need to talk](#) sees creatives from across disciplines respond to current issues across Aotearoa and the Pacific and give voice to new and unheard ideas, presented to among others, important decision and policy makers. Talanoa is the Sāmoan word meaning to talk openly and it is an important methodology for resolving conflicts in many Pacific cultures.

[Te Ata](#), a festival within the Festival focuses on the young people of Aotearoa. Held in Porirua – a city where nearly 45% of the population is under 25 years old, *Te Ata* invites young people to take the lead creatively, engaging in creative conversations with local communities and international artists.

These two elements come together to show Ponifasio's ethos and social movement in action.

FURTHER RESOURCES AND READINGS

INTERVIEWS

“You look at the world differently because of what’s around you. And, as an artist, you’re constantly responding to the world that you find yourself in or the world that you wish to change.” Read a kōrero with Ponifasio and Dale Husband from *e-Tangata*: e-tangata.co.nz/arts/lemi-ponifasio-im-on-the-stage-because-i-want-change-in-the-world/

“People think what I’m doing is dance so they call me a choreographer, but I don’t really set out to create dance. I never went to dance school and my approach to dance, theatre or any performance is quite different from that of European theatre, where they depict events and characters. What I’m trying to do is to bring the audience into a moment. Somebody else said it was dance, it wasn’t me.” A feature on Lemi's announcement as the author of the International Dance Day message. (requires a free registration with *The Stage*): thestage.co.uk/features/2016/international-lemi-ponifasio-dance-shouldnt-be-like-wrestling-it-should-have-opinions/

WATCH

Explore videos of performances by MAU: youtube.com/channel/UCOJn7AyNXqyOYPdJaxlRd6w

READ

Learn more about the poet Adonis and read some of his translated poetry at *The Poetry Foundation*: poetryfoundation.org/poets/adonis

Read an extract of *Concerto Al-Quds* here: kenyonreview.org/kr-online-issue/2017-septoct/selections/adonis-763879/

LISTEN

“I involved myself in the New Zealand Festival because I want to see a new direction of art and culture in our country” Lemi Ponifasio speaks with RNZ about working in the Salzburg Festival with Peter Sellars: rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/lately/audio/2018706305/ponifasio-brings-the-pacific-to-salzburg-festival-s-idomeneo

GO FURTHER

Visit Te Papa and see *MAU: House of Night and Day*, a major installation in Toi Art that acknowledges over 30 years of MAU projects: festival.nz/events/all/mau-house-night-and-day-schoolfest/

Explore the events on at the [Te Ata](http://te-ata.com) festival curated by Lemi Ponifasio for young people. Take part in the [development programme](http://te-ata.com/development-programme) and bring your whānau to the community lunch at [Pātaka Art + Museum and Te Rauparaha Park](http://te-ata.com/pataka-art-museum). More information on Te Ata can be found here: festival.nz/events/all/te-ata/

PROVOCATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

PRE-FESTIVAL

Based upon the information that your class has access to (personal knowledge, online and other media, information from the Festival) what are you expecting from the performance?

Discuss as a class the history the city of Jerusalem – what do we know about the city already? What can we find out?

View and analyse videos/photos of Lemi Ponifasio and MAU's past works. You can find video's on YouTube here: youtube.com/channel/UCOJn7AyNXqyOYPdJaxlRd6w

AT THE FESTIVAL

What sense of energy do you feel in the theatre space? What do you notice about the set before the performance has even begun?

What captures your attention in the space? The dancers? The set? The music? Why?

What questions do you have about the piece? What are the performers trying to communicate?

AFTER THE FESTIVAL

What was this show about? What was the story?

What were some of the thoughts and feelings you had as you watched the performance?

What did you notice about staging, lighting, sound, music, costume and other production elements?

How did the production elements support or enhance the performance?

How did the performers use their bodies to create different moods and characters within the pieces?

Were there any stand-out performers for you? Why? What gave them presence? Discuss what stage presence is and how we achieve it.

Were there parts of the performance you feel you didn't understand?

Were there parts of the performance that really grabbed you? Why?

How did the performance meet or exceed your expectations?

What, if anything, did you learn about Jerusalem as a place both real and metaphorical?

How was the concept of Jerusalem and the poem *Concerto Al Quds* incorporated into the performance?

Need something more? Contact your SchoolFest team with any questions about the performance.

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