

MOSS
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24/
25



CIRCA
Opus

Friday, March 28, 2025, 7:30 PM

Street and Davis Performance Hall, Anne and Ellen Fife Theatre

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CIRCA

Opus

Created by Yaron Lifschitz and the Circa Ensemble

Music by Debussy String Quartet
Performed by the Circa Ensemble

Technical Director and Lighting Design: Jason Organ
Costume Design: Libby McDonnell
Set Design: Jason Organ and Yaron Lifschitz
Producer: Danielle Kellie

International Representation
Allen Moon, David Lieberman Artists Representatives

**This performance is supported in part by gifts from
Dr. Mark and Connie Froggatt and Clem and Georgia Carter.
Additional funding is provided by the
Timothy and Michelle Bendel Center for the Arts Excellence Fund.**

CIRCA



**Major
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Initiative**



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les droits des artistes-interprètes



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

Circa acknowledges the assistance of the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its principal arts investment and advisory body, and the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland.

Quatuor Debussy acknowledge the support of the French Ministry of Arts, Région Rhône-Alpes, City of Lyon, and SPEDIDAM.

*Circa first performed at the Moss Arts Center in 2018.
This is the first performance at the center by the Debussy String Quartet.*

director's note

Opus is a meeting of Circa, 11 of our ensemble acrobats, the Debussy String Quartet, and the music of Shostakovich. It is personal, political, historical, passionate, violent, and lyrical.

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

The overture is an early student work — *Adagio (elegy) for Strings* — a simple rhapsodic vision that tantalizingly foreshadows the dark future.

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

The Eighth Quartet is perhaps the most famous string quartet of the 20th century, and its five movements for me talk of death, politics, and the individual — for instance, Shostakovich writes his initials musically (DSCH) into the opening movement, and later one can hear three ominous knocks that suggest the knocks of the KGB on the door even as they echo the start of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.

Finally the fifth quartet, almost 30 minutes; three large, dense, and wonderful movements mixing lyricism, poetry, and organic rebirth with the difficult entrails of a tragic century.

— Yaron Lifschitz, director



biographies



yaron lifschitz, director,
stage design, and lighting design

Yaron Lifschitz is a graduate of the University of New South Wales, University of Queensland, and National Institute of Dramatic Arts (NIDA), where he was the youngest director ever accepted into its prestigious graduate director's course. Since graduating, Lifschitz has directed over 80 productions, including large-scale events, opera, theatre, physical theatre, and circus. His work has been seen in over 45 countries and across six continents by nearly 2 million people and has won numerous awards, including six Helpmann awards and the Australia Council Theatre Award. His productions have been presented at major festivals and venues around the world, including Brooklyn Academy of Music, The Barbican Centre, Les Nuits de Fourvière, Chamäleon Theatre, and all the major Australian festivals. His film work was selected for the Berlin and Melbourne Film Festivals. He was founding artistic director of the Australian Museum's Theatre Unit, head tutor in directing at Australian Theatre for Young People, and has been a regular guest tutor in directing at NIDA. Lifschitz is currently artistic director and CEO of Circa, and was creative director of Festival 2018: the arts and cultural program of the 21st Commonwealth Games.



libby mcdonnell,
costume designer

Libby McDonnell is a designer and choreographer, and she is currently head of engagement and design at Circa. McDonnell works in diverse genres and forms. At the heart of her work is people and movement. McDonnell received a bachelor of fine arts with honors in visual art from Queensland College of Art-Griffith University and an associate degree in dance from Queensland University of Technology. Her professional

career has included performing and making independent dance work, as an artistic director of Ballet Theatre of Queensland and choreographer for Blue Room Theatre Company. For 11 years McDonnell has worked with the team at Circa to imagine, develop, and deliver productions locally, nationally, and internationally. During her time at Circa she has designed costumes for over 30 productions, co-directed three mainstage productions, and led many of the company's engagement projects, including the pilot of the Circability program. McDonnell is based in Brisbane with her family.



jason organ, lighting designer

Jason Organ graduated from Queensland University of Technology in 1988 and has had an extensive career as a lighting designer, production manager, technician, and rigger. Organ has worked with companies such as Queensland Ballet, Queensland Theatre, La Boite, and Kooemba djarra, as well as festivals such as Out of the Box, Qld Music Festival, and Brisbane Festival. He was co-founder of JLX productions, a Brisbane-based lighting design and technical consultancy. Between 2010 and 2022, Organ worked exclusively with Circa as technical director, and in this time he has helped deliver 20 new productions and toured 31 countries presenting Circa's work. Organ is currently a production manager for QPAC's curatorial department.

debussy string quartet

Since its creation in 1990, the Debussy String Quartet has enlivened the chamber music world with its stylish and stimulating performances and built a reputation graced with international acclaim through its many recordings and live performances. Based in Lyon and honored as winners of the Evian International String Quartet Competition, the quartet performs about 120 concerts a year all around the world. The quartet's

biographies, cont.

recording schedule has included the release of more than 25 albums in 25 years, with works ranging from French music (recently around Debussy and Caplet, which enriches its collection composed of Bonnal, Ravel, Fauré, Witkowski, or Lekeu) to Weber or Shostakovich with the complete string quartets recorded by Arion. It includes the acclaimed Decca label release of the landmark Mozart *Requiem* recording, in the 1802 transcription by Peter Lichtenthal (about which a documentary film has also been made). The quartet's mixed chamber music repertoire includes its highly regarded CD of the Brahms and Webern clarinet quintets with clarinetist Jean-François Verdier and a highly acclaimed collaboration with François Chaplin in several Mozart piano concertos. Its members are also the founders of "Les Cordes en Ballade" a chamber music festival and an academy of chamber music in the South of France, where they perform and teach each summer.



arabella coghlan

Arabella Coghlan has always had an acute love for art and drawing, being a part of nature, and going on adventures at every opportunity. Coghlan grew up in Canberra, where she discovered Warehouse Circus in her youth as an outlet for her endless energy. At 17, following a two-year hiatus due to an injury, she decided to make the move to Albury

Wodonga to attend the Flying Fruitfly Circus, where she specialized in group acrobatics, tumble, and handstands while completing her final year of high school; she graduated in 2024. She's ecstatic to train with and be a part of the Circa Ensemble, training her main passion for flying and following wherever the adventure may take her.



asha colless

Growing up in Wollongong, Asha Colless was introduced to circus at the age of six, taking classes at Circus Monoxide. Being in the air and flipping herself around quickly became her favourite thing to do, and this is where her love of performing came alive. At 19 Colless decided to take her training further and study at the National

Institute of Circus Arts (NICA), specialising in hula hoops and silks. Colless also loves swimming at the beach, being in nature, and reading a good book.



maya davies

For as long as she can remember, Maya Davies had always said, “When I grow up, I want to join the circus,” and that’s exactly what she did. Davies grew up between Australia and the United States, but her circus training began at Cirkidz in Adelaide at the age of seven. She has always excelled in both the arts and athletics and was

thrilled when she discovered that circus could be the perfect hybrid of both. This eventually led her to the National Institute of Circus Arts, where she specialised in partner acrobatics and Chinese pole, graduating with a bachelor’s degree in circus arts. Davies is devoted to continue using circus as an art discipline; to tell stories, create striking performances, and explore physicality through an imaginative lens.

biographies, cont.



malte gerhardt

Malte Gerhardt discovered his passion for the explosive yet precise art of partner acrobatics at the age of nine with his local youth circus in southwest Germany. Gerhardt's journey led him to the State Ballet School and School of Acrobatics in Berlin, followed by completing his vocational training at CircArtive School in 2019.

He then specialised in partner acrobatics on a one-metre ball during four arts at Codarts, University for the Arts in Rotterdam, earning a BNG nomination for his graduation act, *BLANK*, in 2023. Since then, Gerhardt has co-created the family show *SuperSociety* with Stefan Bauer and performed with Circa at prestigious festivals and venues worldwide, including TOHU, Edinburgh Festival, Montréal Complètement Cirque, Circusstad Festival, and Carré.



anisa monsour

From a very young age, Anisa Monsour preferred spending time with her legs in the air rather than the right way around. After starting acrobatics at dance school, Monsour, living in Brisbane, saw a show from Circa and was instantly inspired and determined to enroll in the Circa youth classes.

Training as a part of Circa's youth performance program, she fostered her passion for circus and performing, aspiring towards a career in circus. Monsour was given the opportunity to be the second-ever member of the Circa Fast Track Program, a program designed for young and aspiring performers within Circa. After finishing high school, starting in 2025, Monsour joined the Circa Ensemble, and she is excited about where this next adventure will bring her. Outside of circus Monsour loves reading and making art.



oscar morris

Hailing from Brisbane, Oscar Morris' journey into the world of circus began at eight years old, when he joined youth classes at Flipside Circus. What started as a childhood pasttime quickly transformed into a passion, and by the time he graduated from Flipside's performance troupe, Morris was working as an independent artist and musician until joining the Circa Ensemble in 2023. When not on stage, you can find Morris playing bass, listening to records, or watching parkour videos.



kimberley rossi

Kimberley Rossi grew up in Queensland, and as a Brisbane local, it didn't take long before she stumbled upon Circa. Beginning her circus training at age 13, in just three short years Rossi was given the opportunity to be the first member of Fast Track, a program designed for young and aspiring performers within Circa. With the support of her family, Rossi decided to leave school and pursue a career in the circus industry. Shortly after, she found herself on a plane flying out to perform her first show, *Nocturne*, in Seoul, South Korea. Over the years Rossi has been a part of over 30 productions, visited some of the world's most beautiful locations, and logged over 4,000 hours in her favourite video game.

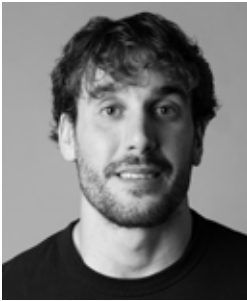
biographies, cont.



tristan st john

Tristan St John laughs a lot, produces music, and people always say he doesn't have an off switch. Since the backyard trampoline, St John has always wanted to fly! Teeterboard and trampolining were a part of his upbringing since the age of 10; not a spare second was spent off of them. During the last 11 years, he has competed

at national trampoline competitions; performed teeterboard, acrobatics, and Chinese pole to multiple audiences; and completed a bachelor's degree in circus arts.



zachery stephens

Zachery Stephens began his circus career following in the footsteps of his siblings and aspires to one day perform alongside them. With a background in competitive gymnastics and Olympic weightlifting, Stephens is no stranger to lifting weight above himself and has a terrible habit of asking anyone, regardless of

size, to stand on him. Undertaking his circus studies at the National Institute of Circus Arts, he trained for four years as a hand balancer and hand-to-hand base. However, his true love and the place where he thrives most is in an ensemble, where he can explore group acrobatics in collaboration with creative movement. Stephens' ambition as an artist is to become as versatile as possible, to never become comfortable, and most importantly, to show the world why circus is the most powerful and beautiful expression of what it means to be human.



lachlan sukroo

In an effort to curb some of Lachlan Sukroo's seemingly boundless energy, his mother enrolled him in Canberra's Warehouse Circus at the age of eight. After graduating from Warehouse's Emerging Artist Program, Sukroo co-founded an independent circus troupe named Poncho Circus. He performed with Poncho for a year before deciding that a career in circus was definitely more appealing than sitting behind a desk. He attended the National Institute of Circus Arts (NICA) studying Chinese pole, teeterboard, and group acrobatics. After graduating, he performed with Circus Oz for two years, performing internationally and around Australia before joining the Circa Ensemble in January 2019.



darby sullivan

Darby Sullivan discovered circus at a holiday program when he was seven years old; then and there, he decided this is what he would pursue. Determined to achieve his goals, Sullivan took his passion for circus and acrobatics further, graduating from the Warehouse Circus in Canberra, performing around Australia, and completing his studies at the National Institute of Circus Arts in Melbourne, where he specialised in straps, acrobatics, and teeterboard. Sullivan is now excited to keep exploring the limitations of what the human body can achieve, while sharing his art around the world.

biographies, cont.

circa

Circa: circus that moves the world.

Circa is one of the world's great performing arts companies. Since 2004, is has called Brisbane, Australia home while touring the world, captivating audiences in over 45 countries and reaching more than 2 million people. Circa's award-winning performances have earned standing ovations, rave reviews, and sold-out shows across six continents.

Everything Circa does is fueled by its core values: quality, audacity, and humanity.

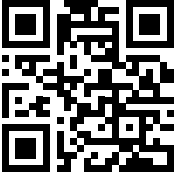
Circa is at the forefront of the new wave of contemporary Australian circus, redefining the art form by showcasing how extreme physicality can forge powerful and emotive experiences. It is relentless in the way it pushes boundaries, blending movement, dance, theatre, and circus. Under the visionary leadership of Yaron Lifschitz, and in collaboration with an extraordinary ensemble of circus artists, Circa crafts a diverse array of productions that constitute "a revolution in the spectacle of circus" (*Les Echos*).

Each year Circa tours its shows across the world and premieres multiple new creations. It is a staple at prestigious festivals and venues in New York, London, Berlin, and Montreal, as well as throughout Queensland and across Australia. Its extensive engagement programs, including Circa Academy, Circability, and Circa Cairns (a First Nations-led circus initiative) provide access, participation, and professional development outcomes. Circa has delivered major projects, including the creative lead on the Commonwealth Games Festival 2018 and managing Artour for the Queensland Government.

Circa invites you to join as it continues to "redraw the limits to which circus can aspire" (*The Age*).

Discover more about Circa by subscribing to enews at circa.org.au and following the company on Facebook at @circacontemporarycircus, Instagram and Spotify at @circapresents, and via #circacircus.

tell us what you think!



We'd love your feedback on this performance. If you complete the short survey, you can enter for a chance to win two tickets to Chucho Valdés and Irakere 50 on Saturday, May 10, 2025.

bit.ly/circa-opus-feedback

Please note, survey responses are anonymous. If you would like a response to your feedback, please email mossartscenter@vt.edu.

engagement events

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26

CIRQUE WORKSHOPS WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS

New River Valley community members ages 12 and up discovered the art of cirque and learned skills and movements for *Opus* with Circa company members as their guides in two community workshops.

go deeper

Tonight's performance utilizes movement, music, and performers of multiple disciplines to contrast positive collective action for good and unified action from fear. What might we take away as audience members about the role music and movement play in civic engagement?

Photo credits: Justin Nicholas, Jade Ferguson, and Billie Wilson-Coffey



PK-12 PROGRAMS AT THE MOSS ARTS CENTER

Each year, wildly enthusiastic students — from PK through 12th grade — fill our theatre for free matinee performances by artists from all over the world. They explore our visual arts galleries during school tours and create and learn during hands-on workshops with artists. For many students, visiting the Moss Arts Center is the first time they've ever been to a performing arts facility or gallery. Why do young people need access to the arts? Engaging in artistic activities offers a wide range of skills that they will use throughout their lives.

Learn more at bit.ly/moss-k12.

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Your gift to the Moss Arts Center helps to support access to the arts, student engagement, and cultural diversity.

Through gifts like yours, we have been able to expand opportunities for PK-12 students in our region, deepen relationships with academic partners, continue to offer \$10 tickets to performances for Virginia Tech students, and provide experiential learning opportunities for students.

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MOSS ARTS CENTER

Through Sun.,
March 30, 2025



CLOSING SOON

Shaunté Gates *This Is Not a Test*

Ruth C. Horton Gallery

Washington, D.C.-based artist Shaunté Gates' solo exhibition features a survey of mixed-media paintings and densely layered works that combine photography, painting, collage, and found materials, resulting in surreal, dreamlike compositions that merge portraiture, landscape, and architecture.

Charisse Pearlina Weston *I saw the room but darkly dreamed it ...*

*Miles C. Horton Jr. Gallery and
Sherwood Payne Quillen '71 Reception Gallery*

New York-based artist Charisse Pearlina Weston's solo exhibition engages with themes of surveillance and tactics of Black refusal by transforming materials associated with observation and control through repetition and reuse.


Charisse Pearlina Weston; pyrolytic envelop I (into the bright and distributed subject side), 2024; text etched on slumped and folded Mirropane surveillance glass and concrete; 51 1/2 x 22 x 14 1/2 inches; © Charisse Pearlina Weston; courtesy of the artist and Dr. Charles Boyd

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Virginia Tech acknowledges that we live and work on the Tutelo/Monacan People's homeland, and we recognize their continued relationships with their lands and waterways. We further acknowledge that the Morrill Land-Grant College Act (1862) enabled the commonwealth of Virginia to finance and found Virginia Tech through the forced removal of Native Nations from their lands in California and other areas in the West.

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Virginia Tech acknowledges that its Blacksburg campus sits partly on land that was previously the site of the Smithfield and Solitude Plantations, owned by members of the Preston family. Between the 1770s and the 1860s, the Prestons and other local White families that owned parcels of what became Virginia Tech also owned hundreds of enslaved people. Enslaved Black people generated resources that financed Virginia Tech's predecessor institution, the Preston and Olin Institute, and they also worked on the construction of its building.





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valdés and
irakere 50**

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Grammy winner and world-famous pianist Chucho Valdés closes the season with a tribute to 50 years of Irakere, featuring a new iteration of the band that revolutionized Afro-Latin jazz.



SPECIAL EVENTS

CONTRA DANCE AT THE Y

Contra Dance is a traditional American dance in which couples dance in two long facing lines or in groups of four. No partner required!

Y COMMUNITY GALLERY

We are proud to announce that the YMCA at Virginia Tech is opening a brand-new community art gallery in The Y Center at 1000 N. Main St., Blacksburg. We are extremely grateful to eARTh (by Diane Relf) for sponsorship of this new space and for the generous support of Shelter Alternatives and Bell Electric.

Y BOOK FAIR

Among the many volumes of books that will be available in our annual Book Fair there will be a collection of books of local origin, authors and interest. We'll have literally thousands of books, comics, graphic novels, vinyl and vintage collectibles for you to peruse at the very best prices around so get ready!!



YOUR GUIDE TO RECYCLING AT THE Y

WHAT

Textiles (gently used household items to include books, clothing, housewares, blankets, toys, etc.)

*Thrift Shop (Blacksburg)
Please deliver to Thrift Shop dock during business hours.*

Electronics (working & non-working TV's (from Mont. County residents only)

*Thrift Shop (Blacksburg)
Please deliver to Thrift Shop dock during business hours.*

Batteries (Rechargeable batteries only)

*Thrift Shop (Blacksburg)
Bring inside to Recycling Station.
Each item will need to be individually bagged. Bags and tape will be provided.*

CFL's, Ink Jet cartridges, rechargeable batteries

*Thrift Shop (Blacksburg)
Bring inside to Recycling Table. Each item will need to be individually bagged. Bags and tape will be provided.*

We love to hear from you! Feel free to send us an email at ymca@vtymca.org and we will be in contact with you soon.

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