

Saturday, February 3, 2018, 8pm
Sunday, February 4, 2018, 3pm
Zellerbach Hall

Circa *Il Ritorno*

Created by Yaron Lifschitz with Quincy Grant and the Circa Ensemble
Music by Claudio Monteverdi, Quincy Grant, and Traditional

Yaron Lifschitz, *director*
Quincy Grant, *composer and arranger*
John Barber, Quincy Grant, Jakub Jankowski, Claudio Monteverdi, Cornel Wilczek, *composers*
Natalie Murray Beale, *music director*

Circa Ensemble
Caroline Baillon, Nathan Boyle, Marty Evans, Bridie Hooper,
Todd Kilby, Nathan Knowles, Cecilia Martin

Kate Howden, *mezzo-soprano*
Benedict Nelson, *baritone*

Natalie Murray-Beale, *music director and keyboards*
Pal Banda, *cello*
Nicholas Bootiman, *violin and viola*
Cecilia de Santa Maria, *harp*

Danielle Kellie, *senior producer*
Jason Organ, *technical director/lighting designer*
Yaron Lifschitz and Jason Organ, *stage design*
Libby McDonnell, *costume design*
David Lieberman Artists' Representatives, *representation*

Il Ritorno was co-commissioned by the Brisbane Festival, the Barbican Centre (London), Les Nuits de Fourvière, Espace Jean Legendre, Théâtre de Compiègne – Scène nationale de l'Oise en prefiguration, the Dusseldorf Festival, and Les Théâtres de la ville de Luxembourg, and was first presented at the Brisbane Festival.

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

Circa received funds from Creative Partnerships Australia and the Danielle and Daniel Besen Foundation towards the creation of *Il Ritorno*.

This performance will last approximately 75 minutes and be performed without an intermission.

Cal Performances' 2017–18 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.



A Word From the Director

A hero returns home after 20 long years of war and life at sea.

Monteverdi's *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* tells the story of the triumphant return of Ulysses from Troy and the travails and adventures described in Homer's *The Odyssey*. From this opera I have distilled four pieces of music—the Sinfonia; Penelope's great aria of mourning (and hope and rage), “Di misera regina”; Ulysses' aria of return, “Dormo ancora”; and the final duet that reunites Ulysses and Penelope. These are repeated, varied, and moved between voice, instruments, and electronica to form the soundtrack to a different kind of odyssey—the overlapping experiences of those displaced by war and famine.

Today, over 65 million people have been forcibly displaced and are unable to return to their homes—victims of geopolitics whose crushing nostalgia, post-traumatic memory, and cold hopes are at the center of *Il Ritorno*. In this circus-opera, history, antiquity, and the current waves of refugees who search for home all meld together into bodies, voices, and music.

Circus is an art form of extremes. As is opera. Each is highly virtuosic and deeply human. I hope in *Il Ritorno* to use this virtuosity and emotional power to capture something of the passions and stakes of these extreme times, when returning home is, for many, an impossibility, and when it can be difficult to know who or what a hero is.

—Yaron Lifschitz

Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria

Monteverdi's *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* is one of the earliest operas; along with *Orfeo* and *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, it stands at the center of Monteverdi's reputation as one of the greatest of all opera composers. First performed in 1640, the work tells the story of Ulysses' return to Ithaca after the Trojan wars. For 20 years his faithful wife Penelope has been holding suitors at bay as she clings to the hope that he will return.

Ulysses is returned by the gods to Ithaca and the opera tells of how he is reunited with his

son, Telemaco, and then with Penelope. In Circa's reimagining of this story, the tale is heavily influenced by Primo Levi's description of returning from Auschwitz in *The Truce* and is recounted by a group of survivors of a terrible war. It is a story within a story—an attempt by the displaced to dream of a homecoming.

About Circa

Circa Contemporary Circus is one of the world's leading performance companies. Since 2004, from its base in Brisbane, Australia, Circa has toured the world—performing in 39 countries to over one million people. The company's works have been greeted with standing ovations, rave reviews, and sold-out houses across six continents.

Circa is at the forefront of the new wave of contemporary Australian circus—pioneering how extreme physicality can create powerful and moving performances. It continues to push the boundaries of the art form, blurring the lines between movement, dance, theater, and circus, and is leading the way with a diverse range of thrilling creations that “redraw the limits to which circus can aspire” (*The Age*).

Under the direction of circus visionary Yaron Lifschitz, Circa features an ensemble of exceptional, multi-skilled circus artists and has been a regular fixture at leading festivals and venues in New York, London, Berlin, and Montreal, including seasons at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, London's Barbican Centre, Les Nuits de Fourvière, Chamäleon Theatre, and at major Australian festivals.

Circa is committed to fostering the next generation of circus artists and runs a training center from its studio in Brisbane. The company also conducts regular circus programs with communities throughout Queensland and around Australia. As a champion of live performance, Circa manages arTour and is the Creative Lead for the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games arts and cultural program.

Yaron Lifschitz (*director*) is a graduate of the University of New South Wales, University of Queensland, and National Institute of Dramatic Arts (NIDA), where he was the youngest direc-

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

tor ever accepted into its prestigious graduate director's course. Since graduating, he has directed over 60 productions including large-scale events, opera, theater, physical theater, and circus.

Lifschitz's work has been seen by more than one million people in 39 countries across six continents and has won numerous honors, including six Helpmann Awards and the Australia Council Theatre Award. His productions have been presented at major festivals and venues around the world, including at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Barbican, Les Nuits de Fourvière, Chamaleon, and all the major Australian festivals. His film work was selected for the film festivals of Berlin and Melbourne. Lifschitz was founding artistic director of the Australian Museum's Theatre Unit and head tutor in directing at the Australian Theatre for Young People, and has been a regular guest tutor in directing at NIDA. Currently the artistic director and CEO of Circa, Lifschitz is also the creative director of Festival 2018, the arts and cultural program of the 21st Commonwealth Games. In 2018 he will direct four new Circa creations as well as a new production of *Idomeneo* that will open in Lisbon at the Teatro Nacional de São Carlos.

Quincy Grant (*composer and arranger*) composes music for theater, concerts, and film. His work has been performed in Germany and Canada and by the leading Australian orchestras, and his film scores have been broadcast by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and SBS. Grant plays music ranging from rock to new music and, most recently, wild gypsy music with Golonka and prog-folk-rock with Mumpsimus. In 2014 he had the pleasure of working with Circa in *Carnival of the Animals*; he is thrilled to collaborate with them again for *Il Ritorno*.

Libby McDonnell (*costume designer*) is a versatile artist working as a designer, performer, and choreographer throughout Australia and internationally. She currently works with Circa as a costume designer and creative associate. McDonnell's costume design credits for Circa include *How Like an Angel*, *Wunderkammer*,

Beyond, *Carnival of the Animals*, *Opus*, and *Il Ritorno*. She was also costume designer for Gavin Webber and Regurgitator's *Rockshow*, and has assisted Claire Marshall with various productions. McDonnell is a graduate of the Queensland University of Technology, where she earned an associate degree in dance.

ENSEMBLE

Caroline Baillon discovered the circus arts when she was only seven years old; after that, she could never imagine doing anything else. In 2009 she moved to Quebec City, where she enrolled in the professional circus program at the École Nationale de Cirque. She discovered how to work and play with other artists while studying hand-to-hand and banquine. Baillon has toured extensively as part of the duo Conor and Caroline. She also has created and specializes in her own aerial routine and interpretation of the multicorde. She joined Circa in 2017 and appeared in the premiere season of *Spanish Baroque*. Baillon has toured with the company since then, including performing the UK tour of *Depart*, and in *Humans* at Edinburgh Fringe.

Nathan Boyle has been a natural performer his entire life. As a youngster, he terrorized his parents with his handstands and cartwheels; they soon saw his passion for performing and acrobatics and enrolled him in gymnastics classes. Boyle's passion for acrobatics led him to sports acrobatics, where he represented and won titles for New South Wales at many national championships. After accepting a spot at the National Institute of Circus Arts, Boyle specialized in cloudswing, adagio, bungee trapeze, and teeterboard, and performed at an International Circus Festival in Auch, France in 2009. He joined Circa as a full-time ensemble member in 2011 and has since entertained audiences nationally and internationally. Highlights have included creating and taking part in the world premiere of "S" at the Brisbane Festival and participating in the company's national tour of Australia in 2012.



Marty Evans came to the circus arts by a more roundabout route than most. After watching nothing but circus videos during his lunch breaks while working at Australia's only nuclear reactor, he decided to abandon a successful scientific career to pursue a career as a circus artist. His first taste of circus life came at the University of Sydney in 2010 as he tried to entertain himself during free periods by learning to throw people into the air and catch them again. Evans trained at the National Institute of Circus Arts in Melbourne. He is a fiercely determined and hard-working performer and enjoys exploring new challenges and techniques. Evans joined Circa full-time in 2015, and has been involved in the creation of productions including *When One Door Closes* and *Humans*.

Bridie Hooper tumbled into the Spaghetti Circus at the age of 11, where she learned to bend, fly, and dream. At the age of 16, she ventured south, to the banks of the Murray River, to join the Flying Fruit Fly Circus. Then, in 2008, Hooper left Australia to complete her studies at the Montreal National Circus School, where

she performed in the Vancouver Olympics Opening Ceremony, at Festival CIRCA, and in the Montreal Completement Cirque Festival in 2010 and 2011. Upon graduating in 2012, she toured Quebec with *Vague de Cirque*, performed in *GOP Variété Dummy*, and finally returned to Australia to work with Circa. Since then, she has toured across America, Europe, and Australia, and participated in several new creations for the company, including *When One Door Closes*, *Humans*, and *One Beautiful Thing*.

Todd Kilby, from the New South Wales coastal city of Newcastle, was born into the life of surfing and "all things beach." He has a black belt in taekwondo and both trained and performed with Circus Avalon and Hands Free Physical Theatre, with whom he won a CONDA award for stunt choreography. Kilby joined the National Institute of Circus Arts in 2008 and while there worked with the Tangentyre Council in Alice Springs, teaching in the local Indigenous Youth Circus Arts Center. A specialist in Chinese pole and hoop diving, he has also trained in teeterboard, adagio, tumbling, and knock-



about. Kilby is a multifaceted performer with a uniquely Australian style that combines circus, dance, martial arts, and drama. He has a love of performing and entertaining audiences through exploration and raw human energy. For Kilby, Circa is an “elephant of awesome on the savanna of circus.”

Nathan Knowles was introduced to the circus world at the age of seven, after he marched home from school to proclaim to his parents that, one day, he would leave suburbia behind and never look back. Following 10 years of studying acrobatic dance and contortion, he was accepted into Montreal’s National Circus School, where he spent four years specializing in hand balancing, contortion, and aerial hoop. Knowles joined Circa in 2016, touring Mexico, Australia, and Europe. He has since participated in the creation of *Humans*, and *One Beautiful Thing*.

Cecilia Martin grew up as an only child, with Spanish as her first language; she was engaging with her friends physically before she could communicate verbally. Martin grew up surrounded by sports, music, and art and discovered her passion for the circus early on, attending Warehouse Circus in Canberra. She went on to co-found the Poncho Circus at the age of 15, where she created and performed in numerous shows. Upon graduating high school, she went on to study circus full time at the National Institute of Circus Arts, where she specialized in dance trapeze, Washington trapeze, and group acrobatics. Martin is also a talented musician, and has composed scores to three different circus productions. She joined Circa in late 2016 and has since participated in the creation of *Humans* and *One Beautiful Thing*.

Natalie Murray Beale (*music director and keyboards*) is an Australian-British conductor who studied at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, and in London at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and the National Opera Studio. She then went on to study with Jorma Panula in Amsterdam and Helsinki. Among her awards are a conductor scholarship with

the London Symphony Chorus and a BBC Performing Arts Fund Fellowship. Beale holds the positions of artistic advisor at Sadler’s Wells, conductor-in-residence at Project Instrumental, and visiting professor at the Royal College of Music. She was guest director of the London Symphony Chorus from 2008–10. Opera engagements include John Adams’ *The Gospel According to the Other Mary* at Theater Bonn, *Le Nozze di Figaro* at the Croatian National Opera, and *Il Ritorno* with Circa in Melbourne, London, Luxembourg, and Toronto. Beale has assisted Esa-Pekka Salonen, Jérémie Rhorer, Rinaldo Alessandrini, and Nicholas Kraemer on productions at the National Opera of Paris, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Aix-en-Provence Festival, Wiener Festwochen, and the Welsh National Opera. On the concert stage, she has conducted the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Malta Philharmonic, Dallas Opera Orchestra, Orquestra Sinfonica Portuguesa, Sinfonietta Krakovia, City of London Sinfonia, and Chamber Orchestra of London in programs of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Rossini, Schubert, Sibelius, Prokofiev, Debussy, Stravinsky, and Britten. In addition, Beale has collaborated with film composer Christian Henson, conducting his scores for *Robot Overlords* and *Alien: Isolation* (which was nominated for BAFTA Award).

Australian mezzo-soprano **Kate Howden** studied at the Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance with Améral Gunson and the Royal Academy of Music with Elizabeth Ritchie and Jonathan Papp, where she was a member of Song Circle and the Bach Cantatas Series. She recently completed her training at the National Opera Studio (London) and currently studies privately with Susan Roberts. Howden has been supported in her studies by the Robert Vivian Memorial, Kathleen, Ian Potter Cultural, Countess of Munster Musical, Tait Memorial, Opus 50 Charitable, Riddiford, and Josephine Baker trusts; Opera North; Jennie Blythe; Matthew and Sally Ferrey; and the Australian Music Foundation. Her opera engagements include the title role Massenet’s *Cendrillon*, Bianca in *The Rape of Lucretia*, La Ciesca in *Gianni Schicchi*, and La suora zelatrice in *Suor Angelica* for



the Royal Academy Opera; Hänsel in *Hänsel und Gretel* for Opera Holloway at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe; Cherubino in *Le Nozze di Figaro* for Harrow Opera; and Annio in *La Clemenza di Tito* for Hampstead Garden Opera. Her concert repertoire includes works by Haydn, Mozart, Berlioz, and Duruflé. Recent engagements include *Il Ritorno* at London's Barbican Theatre with Circa and Satie's *Mort de Socrate* with Joanna Macgregor at King's Place.

British baritone **Benedict Nelson** has established an international reputation through his intelligent musicality and elegant interpretations. Praised for his sensitivity and ease on stage, Nelson is equally at home on the recital and concert platform as he is on the operatic stage. During his time as one of the inaugural Harewood Artists at English National Opera, Nelson sang a number of leading roles, including the title role in *Billy Budd* in a new production by David Alden, Figaro in *The Barber of*

Seville, Valentin in *Faust*, Demetrius in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in a new production by Christopher Alden, and Belcore in *The Elixir of Love*. Highlights of the 2017–18 season include Donnacha Dennehy's acclaimed *The Second Violinist* for Wide Open Opera, and Henry Cuffe in Britten's *Gloriana* for Teatro Real. In concert he will sing Orff's *Carmina Burana* with the Gulbenkian Orchestra, Peter Maxwell Davies' *Eight Songs for a Mad King* with the Aurora Orchestra, and recitals at the Oxford Lieder Festival.

Photography by Tristram Kenton.

circa.org.au
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BLURRING BOUNDARIES

These performances are part of the 2017/18 Berkeley RADICAL *Blurring Boundaries* programming strand, which presents artists who are dissolving the very boundaries of their art forms and creating performances that cut across cultures and disciplines, accepted definitions of classical and contemporary, and even time and space. *Blurring Boundaries* continues this season with performances by the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra (Feb 9–11); Company Wang Ramirez with its acclaimed hip-hop-meets-tanztheater opus, *Borderline* (Feb 24–25); and soprano Julia Bullock and pianist John Arida (Mar 25). For more information, please visit calperformances.org.