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Black Grace Dance Company



Black Grace,
New Zealand's
leading contemporary
dance company



“Irrefutable force
of continual
cultural renaissance.”

— THEATREVIEW, NZ

Motivated to provide a different perspective and a fresh voice in the dance scene, Neil Ieremia founded his own company, Black Grace, in 1995, with ten male dancers of Pacific, Māori and New Zealand heritage. Drawing from his Samoan and New Zealand roots to create innovative dance works that reach across social, cultural and generational barriers, Mr. Ieremia has changed the face of contemporary dance in New Zealand and turned Black Grace into one of the most recognizable and iconic cultural brands.

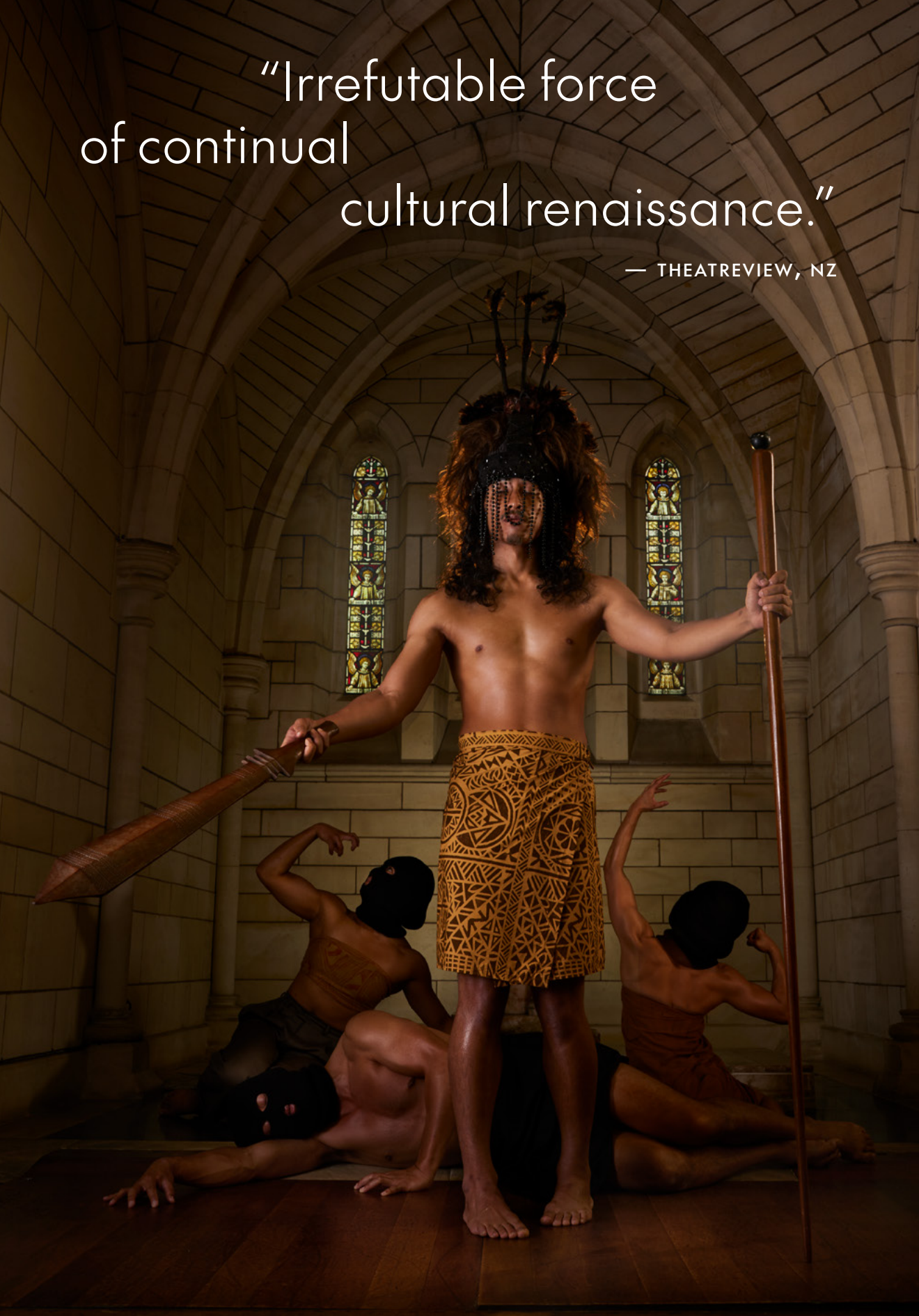
His company tours the length and breadth of New Zealand developing new audiences and a new appreciation for dance. The work itself is highly physical, rich in the story telling traditions of the South Pacific and expressed with raw finesse, unique beauty and power.

The Company features some of New Zealand's finest dancers and has toured internationally to Australia, Canada, Germany, Holland, Switzerland, Japan, Luxembourg, Scotland, Mexico, South Korea, Taiwan, New Caledonia and the United Arab Emirates.

In 2004 Black Grace made its USA debut, performing a sold-out season at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, with a subsequent return to the Festival in 2005. Since then, the Company has performed regularly throughout North America earning audience and critical acclaim.

In 2009 Black Grace was presented with a resolution passed by the Guam Legislator in recognition of their work with local communities, and 2010 saw the Mayor of Honolulu officially proclaim the 6th February 2010 as “Black Grace Day”. Black Grace received a Herald Angel Award at the 2014 Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

Neil and Black Grace received the inaugural Moana Creative Enterprise Award at the 2022 Pacific Business Trust Awards, sponsored by Creative New Zealand.



A photograph of three performers in traditional Māori haka attire, including large feathered headdresses (haka) and dark, fringed garments. They are sitting on a dark stage, illuminated by a spotlight. The performer in the center is holding a large, shallow wooden bowl. The background is dark, and other performers are visible in the distance.

"Black Grace is now
one of our foremost
cultural exports,
and its founder Ieremia,
leads the current
arts vanguard."

— STUFF, NZ

"A language that
is multi-layered
for world consumption"

— NEW ZEALAND ARTS REVIEW





"Black Grace crosses
geographical and social
boundaries, often with
innovative flair
and theatricality

... it packs the raw
visceral power
of a primal communal rite
into a carefully
constructed form of rigor
and sophistication."

— THE BOSTON GLOBE

Neil Ieremia is arguably New Zealand's most accomplished choreographer, a creative entrepreneur and inspirational leader.



NEIL IEREMIA, ONZM
FOUNDING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Born in Wellington and of Samoan heritage, Mr Ieremia was raised in a tough working class neighbourhood in a country focused more on sporting prowess and agriculture rather than creative expression. At the age of nineteen and with no formal training, Mr Ieremia resigned from his banking job, left home, enrolled in a full time dance programme and broke his parents' hearts.

As a freelance professional dancer, Mr Ieremia worked with many leading New Zealand choreographers as well as creating a number of commissioned works before founding Black Grace in 1995.

Numerous firsts for a New Zealand choreographer include sell-out performances at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival (USA debut 2004, 2005 and 2022), a

four-week season on New York City's 42nd Street, performances at the renowned Cervantino Festival in Mexico, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the 2020 Cultural Olympiad in Vancouver, The Joyce Theater in New York City and the Harris Theater in Chicago.

Among his many other achievements, Mr Ieremia has received a 2005 Arts Foundation of New Zealand Laureate Award, and the 2009 Paul D. Fleck Fellowship in the Arts from The Banff Centre, Canada. In 2015, Mr Ieremia received a City of Porirua Anniversary Award and the Senior Pacific Artist Award from Creative New Zealand. In 2016, Mr Ieremia was appointed an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to dance, and in 2021 received a KEA World Class Award. Mr Ieremia is an Honorary Member of Dance ICONS and Global Ambassador for What Dance Can Do.

"The distinguishing spirit of this troupe is incredible speed and stamina, an exhilarating, seemingly inexhaustible energy."

— THE NEW YORK TIMES



Over Black Grace's 30-year history, Neil Ileremia has created numerous choreographies, ranging from short-length (approximately 3–20 minutes) to major, full-length works (60–75 minutes), with the addition of large-scale, immersive digital works from 2022.

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