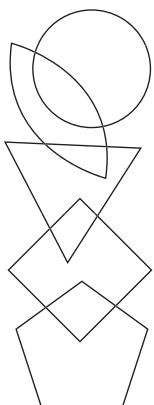


ADAM

29 January–
7 February

International Chamber Music Festival Nelson

2026



music.org.nz

Impact Report



PHOTO: INNIT CREATIVE

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HAERE MAI / WELCOME

The 2026 Adam Festival was immensely rewarding from an artistic perspective. With 24 outstanding resident instrumentalists and a wonderful tenor joining us for the full ten days, we were able to present an especially varied and engaging programme. From intimate chamber works to larger ensemble pieces, the musicians brought remarkable energy, imagination and generosity to their performances, creating many moments that were both moving and exhilarating for audiences.

One of the true joys of the festival is the opportunity it gives artists to work together over an extended period of time. Because the musicians remain in Nelson for the duration of the festival, they are able to explore repertoire in multiple ensemble combinations, developing a spirit of collaboration that is rare in the concert world.

As Artistic Director, it is a privilege to witness these musical partnerships take shape and to curate a programme that allows both performers and audiences to experience the richness and variety of chamber music in such an immersive way.

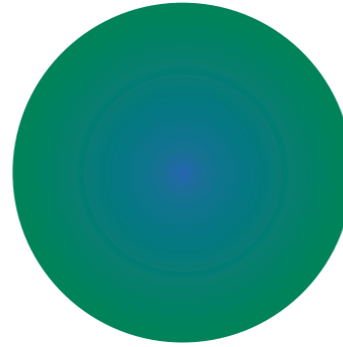
Artistic Director – Gillian Ansell

The 2026 Adam Chamber Music Festival was a highly successful celebration of chamber music, presenting a vibrant programme that was warmly received by audiences and participating musicians alike. The festival attracted strong attendance and critical acclaim, reaffirming the depth of enthusiasm for chamber music in our community and the outstanding calibre of artists who travel to Nelson to perform.

Once again, the festival helped showcase Nelson’s reputation for artistic excellence, bringing together leading New Zealand and international musicians in performances that were both inspiring and memorable.

I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all our generous donors, sponsors, and supporters. Your commitment and belief in the festival make this event possible, particularly in what continues to be challenging economic times. We are deeply grateful for your ongoing support and for helping ensure the Adam Chamber Music Festival continues to thrive.

Festival Director – Sophie Kelly



On behalf of the Nelson Music Festival Trust, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to everyone who contributed to the success of this year’s Adam Chamber Music Festival. Over ten glorious days we were privileged to share extraordinary music together — reconnecting with old friends, welcoming new audiences, and celebrating the special sense of community that the festival creates.

I would like to acknowledge the leadership of both our Festival Director and Artistic Director, whose vision and commitment continue to shape a festival of exceptional quality. My sincere thanks also go to the outstanding musicians who travel from across New Zealand and around the world to perform in Nelson, bringing their remarkable talent, generosity and collaboration to every performance.

Finally, we are profoundly grateful to our donors, sponsors and supporters. Your ongoing commitment makes the festival possible and helps ensure that Nelson continues to be recognised as a place where chamber music of the highest calibre can prosper.

Trust Chair – Alastair Kerr



PHOTO: INNIT CREATIVE

“Very enjoyable, well organised musical event. It was good to see the enthusiasm of the young people taking part. Stepping out into the local community raised your profile, and showed those not normally involved in this kind of music just how much fun it could be.”

MŌ MĀTOU/ABOUT US

A shared passion among friends sparked the creation of New Zealand's foremost boutique chamber music festival.

In 1992, a group of professional musicians performed a series of five concerts over five days. Held in the height of summer, this celebration of chamber music offered a warm and informal embrace for both performers and audience, an appealing contrast to the traditional concert hall experience.

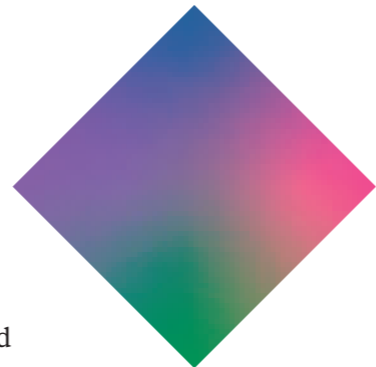
Within a few years, the festival gathered momentum, formed a board, and with the support of the Adam Foundation, settled into a biennial calendar with invited international artists.

Over the years, the festival has welcomed exceptional ensembles and artists from around the world, each contributing to its growing reputation for artistic excellence. A hallmark of the Adam Chamber Music Festival is that most performers stay for the entire ten days, allowing for inspired ensemble combinations and creating lasting connections between musicians and audiences.

Our vision: To present chamber music festivals in Nelson of international significance.

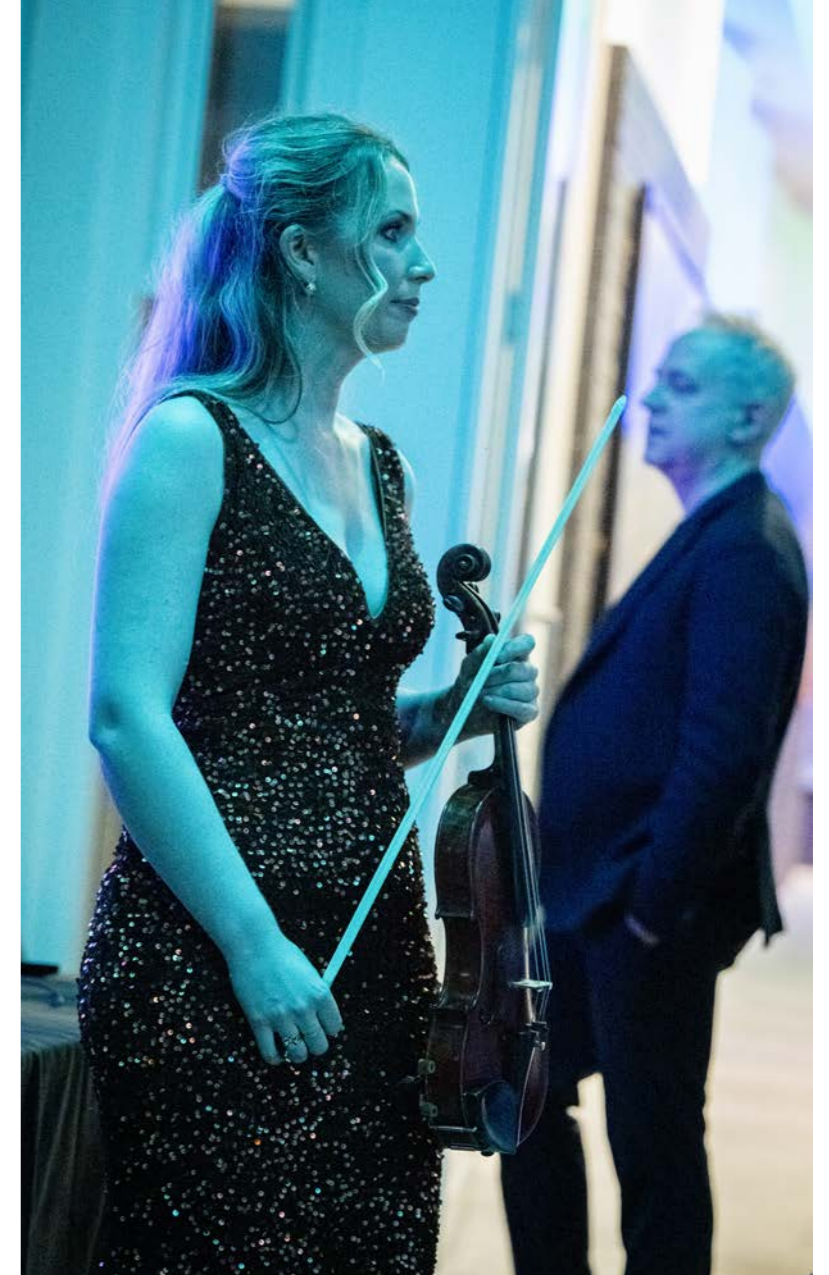
KEY PURPOSE

- To enrich the musical life and cultural reputation of New Zealand by producing its leading chamber music event.
- To produce chamber music concerts and related events of the highest international standard featuring international guests and leading New Zealand artists.
- To feature a wide variety of works including new works, New Zealand works and a high proportion of works featuring collaborations between artists.
- To attract audiences from around New Zealand and overseas providing them with exciting and inclusive chamber music experiences.
- To deliver a substantial economic contribution to the Nelson community.
- To deliver significant employment opportunities to professional chamber musicians.
- To operate in a fiscally responsible way by reaching funding and sales targets, controlling expenditure and providing monthly reporting and analysis.



“The festival presents works which I will probably not hear elsewhere. Unusual works, exciting combinations of woodwind and strings together in one ensemble, really diverse programmes, stunning musicians who are great performers in every way.”

“This was an event of the highest quality.”



PHOTOS: MELISSA BANKS



Ō MĀTOU PĀNGA / OUR IMPACT

We're thrilled with the success of the 2026 Adam Chamber Music Festival which delivered a programme of international artistic excellence while also generating strong audience engagement, regional economic benefit and meaningful community participation. Curated by Artistic Director Gillian Ansell, the festival showcased a carefully balanced programme of afternoon and evening concerts with traditional and contemporary repertoire along with new commissions and masterclasses performed by artists from around Aotearoa and the world.

INTERNATIONAL AND NEW ZEALAND ARTISTS

The festival featured an outstanding roster of musicians, including the acclaimed **Jupiter String Quartet** (USA), pianist **Jeremy Denk** (USA), tenor **Colin Ainsworth** (Canada), clarinettist **James Campbell** (Canada), violinist **Natalia Lomeiko** (UK) and double bassist **Phoebe Russell** (Australia).

They were joined by members of the New Zealand String Quartet including **Ansell** herself—along with newest member of the Quartet **Martin Smith** (cello), **Peter Clark** (NZSQ violin) and guest member **Arna Morton** (violin). Other guests included **Todd Gibson-Cornish** (bassoon), **Shadley van Wyk** (French horn), **Sarah Watkins** (piano), **Robert Orr** (oboe), **Michael Endres** (piano), **Bethany Angus** (harpsichord), **Ariana Tikao** (Kai Tahu – taongo puoro), composer in residence **Liam Furey** (piano) and our youth ensemble the **Antipodes Quartet**. Local musicians were **Bob Bickerton** (taongo puoro) and **Paul Chan** (organ) along with the Chroma Choir also participated in the Bach By Candlelight concert.

ARTISTIC COLLABORATION

A defining feature of the festival is the collaborative model, with artists performing in multiple ensemble configurations throughout the programme - from intimate duos and song recitals to large-scale chamber works and this year a festival orchestra. This varied programming allowed audiences to experience musicians in different roles and combinations creating dynamic encounters for both musicians and audiences.

Highlights included large ensemble works such as Schubert Octet in F major, D.803 and Brahms Piano Quartet No.1 in G minor, Op.25, as well as collaborative performances bringing together artists across generations and nationalities. The festival also integrated emerging musicians

through the Fellowship Ensemble, the Antipodes Quartet, providing professional development and community outreach opportunities and performances within the festival programme.

NEW COMMISSIONS

The festival continued its commitment to investing and programming new music through the presentation of two commissioned works, the first by our Young Emerging Composer in Residence Liam Furey with his work *Limbic Evolution* and the second by the highly acclaimed Janet Jennings with her new work *The Auctioneer*. These commissions expanded the contemporary chamber repertoire and demonstrated the festival's ongoing support for living composers and creative innovation.

AUDIENCE AND ARTISTIC IMPACT

Audience feedback highlighted the extraordinary calibre of the performances and the distinctive atmosphere created by the festival's residency model. Many patrons commented on the warm sense of connection between artists and audiences, with opportunities to hear musicians in multiple contexts - from major evening concerts to informal artist talks and masterclasses making for a rich audience experience.

Having internationally renowned artists performing alongside New Zealand musicians reinforced the festival's reputation for showcasing artistic excellence and its standing as one of the country's premier classical music events. The 2026 festival highlighted the power of chamber music to foster collaboration, creativity, and community, while also providing an important platform for both established and emerging artists to shine.

Feedback from attendees and participating musicians has been overwhelmingly positive and this is reflected in our audience survey and anecdotal emails and messages that have been shared with us.

“... the best music festival I have been to in years. Every concert offered something new and (usually) something familiar, performed at a very high standard. I particularly appreciated the venue, not only for its acoustic but also because I have some mobility issues and it was not only accessible, but help was readily offered.”

“World class musicians brought to a small city in a small country – we are truly blessed. I enjoy meeting visitors who come for the festival.”



PHOTOS: MELISSA BANKS

OVER THE TEN-DAY FESTIVAL PERIOD WE PRESENTED THE FOLLOWING:

National and international artists contributed to Nelson’s reputation as a centre for high-calibre chamber music.

27 musicians performed in the festival along with a further **25** in Chroma Choir who performed in the final piece of the Bach By Candlelight Concert. Of the **27, 10** were international, **15** were from around New Zealand and **2** were local.

Approximately **4,341** tickets were sold to a total of **18** ticketed events.

Two new works were commissioned and premiered during the Festival.

We presented **3** free Artist Talks and **3** free Masterclasses that were very well attended

We presented **13** free community concerts that were held at various venues around the region with an estimated **1500** people attending. Venues included The Brook Sanctuary, Nelson Library, The Suter Art Gallery, Project 100 and the Refinery ArtSpace along with a number of retirement homes and pre-schools in Nelson.

We hosted **2** special intimate Up Country concerts for our VIP Pass holders

The Festival delivered a wide-ranging programme across our flagship venue the NCMA, Nelson Cathedral and other regional locations including Lake Rotoiti Chapel and St Peters and St Paul’s Church.

The festival was officially opened by the Minister of Arts & Culture Hon Paul Goldsmith and formally closed by local Labour MP Rachel Boyack. Both acknowledged their strong support of the festival.

OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

Ticket sales and attendance figures demonstrate sustained demand and strong audience support.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

The Festival once again attracted a significant proportion of out-of-region visitors including artists, audience members, and supporters.

Impacts included accommodation bookings, hospitality and retail expenditure, employment of local technicians and suppliers, and extended visitor stays with many attendees staying on for the full ten days of the Festival programme.

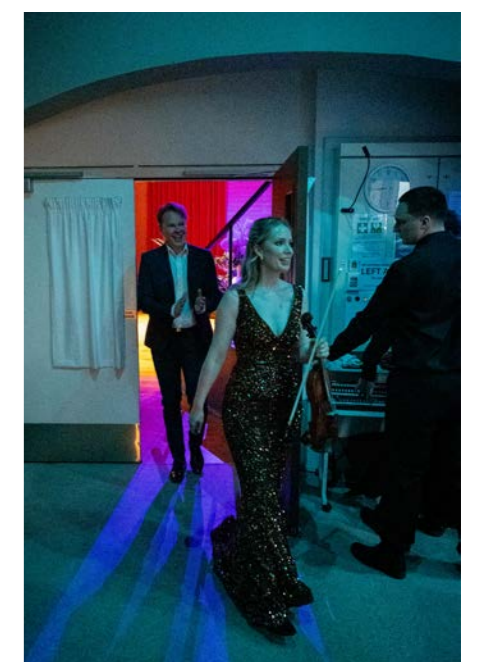
This year the festival had four hospitality partners, Hopgoods Restaurant, Eight Plates, The Boathouse and Arden, all of which offered special early pre show dinner packages and discounts to ticket holders. Feedback from these restaurant partners has been extremely positive with all hoping to continue the partnership for the 2028 Festival.

An Economic Impact Assessment undertaken by external provider Fresh Info shows strong visitor-related expenditure and positive multiplier effects.

1916 visitor nights from event

\$2,070,94 gross benefit to the region

Benefit to cost ratio was **1.42** - equivalent to a **42%** return on investment



PHOTOS: MELISSA BANKS

SOCIAL IMPACT AND COMMUNITY ACCESSIBILITY

The Festival delivered a variety of accessible events including free performances, masterclasses, workshops, and artist talks ensuring that there was access to all. A special student price was offered to encourage attendance to the concerts.

Audience surveys indicate high satisfaction rates, strong civic pride, and recognition of the Festival as a key contributor to Nelson's cultural identity.

96% of our audience were satisfied or extremely satisfied with their event experience

3,220 unique attendees of which **71%** were local, **23%** domestic visitors and **6%** were international.

71% of visiting event attendees agreed or strongly agreed that their experience attending the festival has improved their perception of Nelson city as a place to live.

SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

The Festival carefully monitored waste streams by reducing printed collateral, encouraging the use of digital ticketing. Where possible travel schedules were coordinated to minimise environmental impact.

Thanks to long term local sponsors Bowater Toyota, we had the use of a hybrid and an electric vehicle to move artists around over the festival which helped minimise our carbon impact.

ENGAGEMENT WITH TANGATA WHENUA

This year's festival embraced Ngā Toi Māori programme elements with a cross cultural collaboration between Taonga Puoro musicians Ariana Tikao and Bob Bickerton joined by Canadian clarinettist James Campbell.

We also worked with local mana whenua representative Matua Luke Katu to host a mihi whakatau for all our guest musicians that was extremely well received.

The Grand Opening Concert was opened with a traditional karanga by Cindy Batt.



KAIMAHI/TEAM

PHOTO: LATITUDE CREATIVE



Artistic Director – Gillian Ansell

Born in Auckland, New Zealander Gillian Ansell made her concerto debut as violinist with the Auckland Symphonia (Auckland Philharmonia) at 16 years of age. She was awarded an Associated Board Scholarship to the Royal College of Music, London where she won several prizes on violin and viola.

After further study on a German Academic

Exchange DAAD scholarship at the Musikhochschule in Cologne with Igor Ozim and the Amadeus Quartet, she worked professionally in London for three years before returning to New Zealand in 1987 to become a founding member of the New Zealand String Quartet.

Apart from her work in the NZSQ, in 2021 she appeared as concerto soloist with the Hawkes Bay Orchestra and Dunedin Symphony Orchestra. She is an Associate Professor at the New Zealand School of Music Te Kōki at Victoria University of Wellington, where she has taught viola and chamber music. In the 2008 New Year's Honors list she became a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM) for her services to music in New Zealand.

In 2019 she was made an Honorary Fellow of the Institute of Registered Music Teachers. Gillian has been Artistic Director of the Adam Chamber Music Festival since 2001.

Festival Director – Sophie Kelly

Sophie Kelly is a dedicated arts advocate with an extensive background in event curation and management including Nelson Arts Festival, Summer Events programme, Opera in the Park, Te Ramaroa Light Festival and Upsurge Bay of Islands Arts Festival. As well as managing the Adam Chamber Music Festival she is also the Artistic Director of the Wānaka Festival of Colour.



PHOTO: TIM CUFF

“We have always loved the Festival, but this year felt more open, friendly, fresh – still serious music, but nobody taking themselves too seriously. So much shared laughter and joy.”

“A fantastic experience of quality musicianship at the highest level, with varied and highly interesting programming.”



PHOTOS: MELISSA BANKS

Trust Chair – Alastair Kerr

Chairperson Alastair Kerr was born in England and educated in Scotland, ultimately achieving an MA Hons from the University of Glasgow. He pursued a business career with many multinational companies across Europe, the Middle East, the U.S, Canada and Australia both as an Executive and latterly as an Independent Director. Over 10 years ago, he moved with his wife to Nelson to be close to their family and he is currently the Chair of Paper Plus NZ and Cognition Education Ltd, as well as being a Trustee of the Nelson Centre of Musical Arts and its Foundation, and the New Zealand String Quartet. He has been a Trustee of the Adam Chamber Music Festival since 2019 and Chair since March 2024.



PHOTO: MELISSA BANKS

Other trustees are Deputy Chair David Knight, Lissa Cowie, Adrian Secker, Annie Henry, Sian Holden, Glenn Ching and Roger Taylor.



PHOTO: INNIT CREATIVE



PHOTOS: MELISSA BANKS

“Another superb experience that ensures Nelson punches above its weight!”



“I felt proud to see such calibre of talented musicians in Nelson. The city was just buzzing and the bars & restaurants really benefited too.”



NGĀ MIHI NUI/THANK YOU

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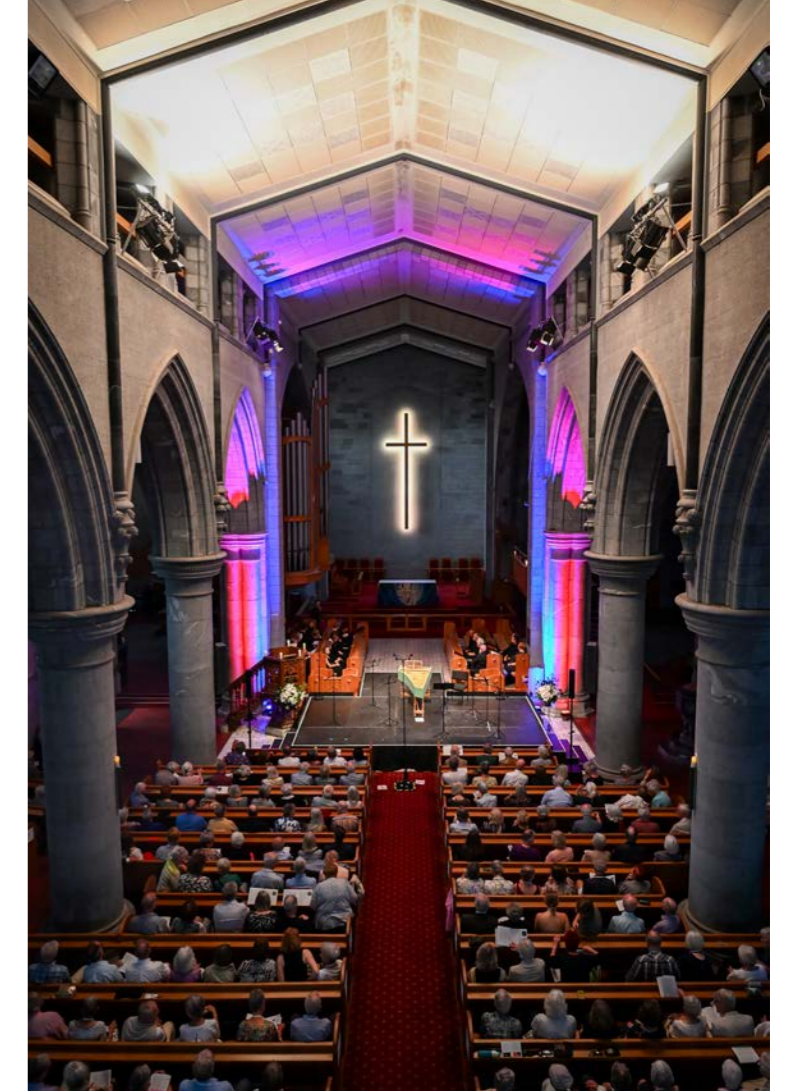
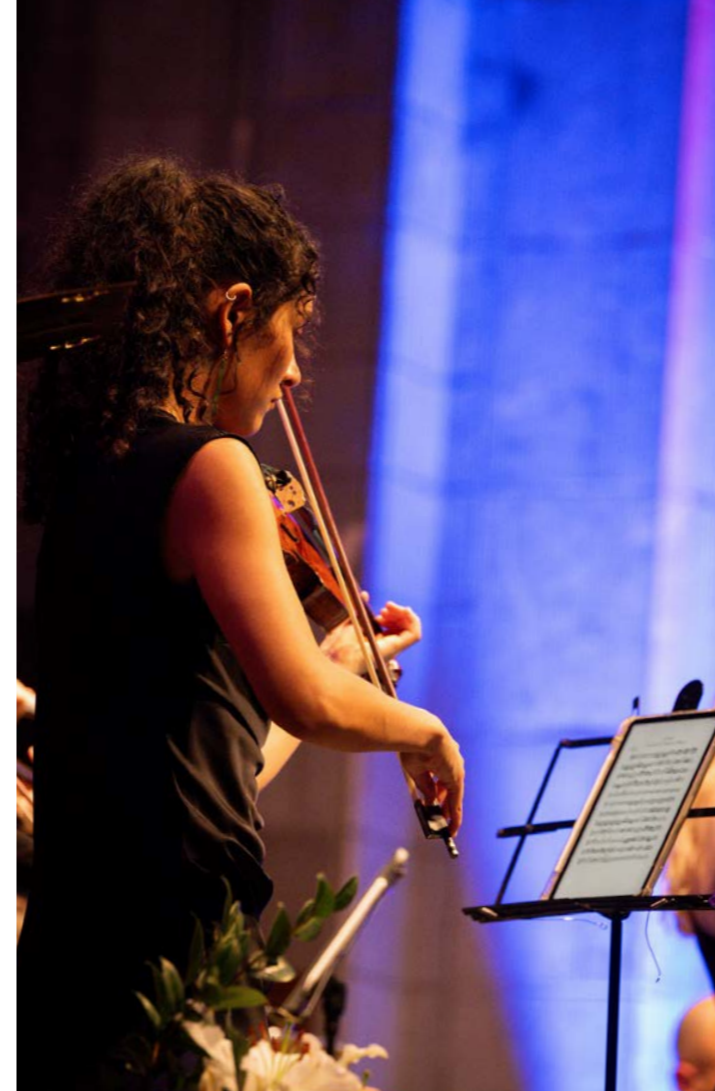
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WHAKAPĀ MAI/CONTACT US

To find out more about the Adam Chamber Music Festival or support our work, please reach out.



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