YMCĀ



Atamira
Dance Company

Oli
Mathiesen

YMCĀ

Presented by
Atamira Dance Company

Choreographed by
Oli Mathiesen

Tempo Dance Festival
13 & 14 October 2026

Nelson Arts Festival
31 October 2026

Atamira Dance Company presents *YMCĀ*, a first full-length commission by acclaimed choreographer Oli Mathiesen (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Hine, Ngāti Manu).

A bold takatāpui rebirth of the Village People, *YMCĀ* parallels the pop culture icons through a cast caught between character and confession. Wearing a rack of performed identities, the band interrogates the archetypes, the macho men, and the staging of queerness and indigeneity. A discography somewhere between authenticity, expectation, and spectacle.

1970's luxe meets 18th-century bloodshed; a disco interior with a cultural inferior. Beneath the work's carpeted exterior lies a horned tension, where inherited narratives are pulled apart, restaged, and worn by someone else. A carpetbagger is a "special person in anybody's land". The script is up for revision as our new Village People endeavour to rewrite their story. To live a life of freedom, machos make a stand.

Hot off the heels of the Venice Biennale Danza, and known for genre-defying works including *The Butterfly Who Flew Into The Rave*, Mathiesen brings his new distinctive choreographic voice to Atamira - the tuakana platform for Māori contemporary dance, championing the next generation of artists.

Alluring, camp-soaked, and unapologetically original, *YMCĀ* invites audiences into a world where appropriation has never looked so good.

Ko Wai Mātou
About Atamira Dance Company

A tuakana platform for Māori contemporary dance in Aotearoa, Atamira Dance Company holds and advances the artform across generations. For over 26 years, Atamira has nurtured Māori contemporary dance as a living, evolving practice, grounded in mātauranga Māori and expressed through bold, contemporary movement. Through the creation, presentation, and touring of new work, Atamira uplifts artists and connects audiences locally and internationally, supporting the artform to flourish now and into the future.

atamiradance.co.nz



A message from Bianca Hyslop
Kaihautū | Director
Atamira Dance Company

When Ranginui and Papatūānuku separated, light entered the world for the first time. Before that illumination came Hīnātore, the first flicker of light, carrying the promise of possibility and all that was yet to emerge.

For me, Hīnātore speaks to something fundamental about the creative process. That moment of curiosity, intuition or inspiration when an idea first begins to take shape. We don't yet know what it might become, but something compels us to follow it.

As a tuakana platform for Māori contemporary dance, Atamira exists to make space for this exploration. To champion artists who are curious, courageous and willing to take risks, and to support the emergence of new choreographic voices, forms and possibilities.

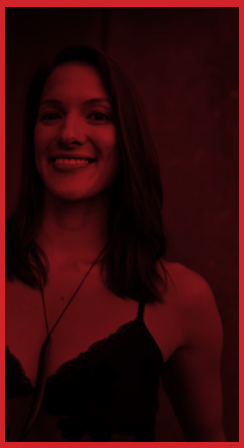
It is in this spirit that we welcome *YMCĀ*, a new commission by Oli Mathiesen (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Hine, Ngāti Manu).

Oli's journey with Atamira began shortly after graduating from Unitec, developing their choreographic practice through *KAHA - Tripleboost* and later performing internationally with the company in *Te Wheke*. Since then, Oli has continued to forge a distinctive artistic voice, bringing boldness, curiosity and an unmistakable perspective to contemporary performance.

Following the success of *The Butterfly Who Flew Into The Rave* at Edinburgh Fringe and across Australia, and their recent selection for a choreographic commission at the Venice Biennale Danza, Oli represents an exciting generation of Māori artists pushing the boundaries of what contemporary dance can be.

There is something deeply meaningful about witnessing an artist's evolution and having the privilege of walking alongside them at different moments in their journey. With *YMCĀ*, we celebrate not only Oli's extraordinary creative trajectory, but also the importance of investing in Māori artistic voices and the futures they imagine.

Hīnātore reminds us that creation begins not with certainty, but with curiosity and the courage to follow what is not yet known. In championing artists like Oli, we honour a continuum of Māori creativity and innovation, making space for new worlds, new expressions and possibilities yet to be imagined.





A Message from Oli Mathiesen
Choreographer
YMCĀ

Atamira Dance Company has been a pou in my artistic development for many years. A place where my Māoritanga and dance practice have grown from the same roots. I feel incredibly lucky and grateful to return and create this work with the people who have transformed my existence, who I have danced beside from the beginning, who have witnessed every version of me along the way.

These six dancers are some of my closest friends. Our relationships extend far beyond the studio, shaped by years of shared experiences, artistic exploration, and growing alongside one another as Māori. There is a particular kind of trust that comes from creating with people who know you so deeply, and '*YMCĀ*' is as much a celebration of these friendships as it is an interrogation of identity, representation and belonging.

I haven't always been intrigued by the Village People. In fact, their hyper-masculine personas, cheap choreography, and recent political alignment have done everything to deter me. Yet the culturally irrelevant group, whose timeless discography is embedded in the Western world's pop zeitgeist, harbours a history of discourse and tension that closely mirrors my own experiences as a dancer.

The band was formed in the late '70s by French producers Jacques Morali and Henri Belolo, who pulled together gay male archetypes they had plucked from Greenwich Village in Lower Manhattan. Yet the group assembled as an image of American queerness did not reflect the fact that the majority of its members identified as straight.

This idea of performed queerness, and of gay stereotypes becoming a marketing commodity, is where their story intersects with ours. As a Māori queer artist working within Western contemporary dance, these tensions feel deeply familiar. Our identities are celebrated, programmed, and funded, yet we are constantly navigating the structures through which our stories are told. What happens when the very things that make us who we are become something to be performed, consumed, or appropriated?

Together, we reimagine the Village People through a distinctly Māori and takatāpui lens. We exist somewhere between character and confession, embracing the absurdity, humour and camp of these archetypes while interrogating the systems and histories that have shaped them.



One of the work's most uneasy choices is reimagining the Village People's Native American archetype as Māori. This isn't a claim that our histories are interchangeable, nor a neat correction of the original stereotype. Rather, it asks what happens when a Māori body inhabits an archetype that popular culture has flattened into a generic image of Indigeneity. Where is the line between reclaiming and repeating? Are we appropriating ourselves?

Ngā mihi nui ki te kamupene o Atamira. Also to Bianca for trusting me with this process and creation. Ka rere hoki te mihi ki ngā kaitautoko, to all of the incredible designers, artists, and supporters who have wrapped themselves around this kaupapa to bring this vision to life. Ka mutu, he mihi mutunga kore ki āku hoa haere to Abbie, Caleb, Madi, Sharvon, Tai, and Toalei for the generosity, trust, curiosity, and aroha you poured into building this world together. Our friendships, our shared Māoritanga, and the intimacy of knowing one another become the foundation from which this work lives.



Credits

Kaitito Nekehanga | Choreographer
Oli Mathiesen
(Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Hine, Ngāti Manu)

Kaikanikani | Dancers
Abbie Rogers (Kāi Tahu, Te Arawa)
Caleb Heke (Ngāpuhi)
Madison Tumataroa
(Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāti Pāhauwera)
Sharvon Mortimer (Ngāti Porou)
Tai Taranui Hemana (Te Arawa)
Toalei Pearl (Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Kauwhata)

Kaihoahoa Whakaaturanga | Set Design
Oli Mathiesen

Kaihoahoa Tūrama | Lighting Design
Rowan Pierce

Kaihoahoa Oro | Sound Design
Oli Mathiesen

Kaitito Puoro |
Sound Composition & Production
Taimana Davis
(Ngāti Hine, Te Rarawa, Ngāti Kahu, Ngāpuhi nui tonu)

Pūoro | Additional Music
Hello? Stella? Artois..? Artaud?
by Ewa Justka
Yumeji's Theme by Shigeru Umebayashi

Kaiwhakarākei Kākahu |
Costume Sourcing & Styling
Ashley M. David
Marama Lloydd (Ngāpuhi, Te Tahawai, Te Rarawa, Ngāti Kahu)

Kaihanga Kākahu | Costume Construction
Natalie Miskin
Madison Tumataroa

Kaiāwhina Matua |
Production Support Lead
Rowan Pierce

Kaiāwhina | Production Support
Spencer Earwaker

Kaitautoko | Production Assistance
Alex Leonhartsberger
Rob Larsen (Ngāti Awa ki te Awa o te Atua)
Max Mason
Rose Morrison

Kaitiaki Atamira | Stage Manager
Gina Heidekruger

Ringa Hangarau | Operator
Jazmin Whittall

Pia | Secondees
Eva Puata (Ngāti Maru)
Miere Christensen-White (Ngāti Porou, Kai Tahu)

Pia | Intern
Rangimāria Te Arani-Waiātarere
(Ngāpuhi, Kāi Tahu)

Whakatairanga | Campaign
Creative Direction - Kaan Hiini (Te Arawa, Ngāpuhi, Te Rarawa)
Photography - Sophie Miya-Smith
Videography - Benj Brooking (Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāi Tamanuhiri)
Production Design - Filament Eleven 11

Te Kāhui o Atamira | Atamira Management
Kaihautū | Director
Bianca Hyslop (Te Arawa, Ngāti Whakaue, Tūhourangi Ngāti Wāhiao)

Kaiwhakahaere | General Manager
Ashley M. David

Kaiwhakaputa Auaha | Creative Producer
Marama Lloydd (Ngāpuhi, Te Tahawai, Te Rarawa, Ngāti Kahu)

Kaiwhakaputa Tairanga, Ako |
Marketing and Education Producer
Abbie Rogers (Kāi Tahu, Te Arawa)

Kaiwhakahaere Putea | Finance Executive
Suzanne Watt

Poari | Board of Trustees
Co-Chair - Dolina Wehipeihana (Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Tūkorehe)
Co-Chair - Moana Nepia (Ngāti Porou, Te Aitanga a Hauiti, Rongowhakaata)
Puawai Cairns (Ngāiterangi, Ngāti Ranginui, Ngāti Pūkenga)
Mereana Beconcini (Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Kahungunu ki Te Wairoa, Ngāti Ruapani)
Natasha Pearce

Ngā Mihi | Thank you
Brad Gledhill and Rachel Marlow at Filament Eleven 11, Brydie Colquhoun (Ngāpuhi), Te Pou Theatre & Corban Estate Arts Centre, Sofia Miernik, Taiaroa Royal, Hāmiora Bailey, Zanetti