

MEDIA RELEASE
For immediate release

Level 5, 10 Hickson Road The Rocks
Sydney NSW 2000 Australia
Phone 61 2 8248 6500 Fax 61 2 8248 6599
sydneyfestival.org.au



Sydney Festival launches 40th anniversary year with special season of *Desdemona* and Festival centrepiece *Woyzeck*



Photo: *Desdemona* © Mark Allan

"This is a remarkable, challenging and bravely original work."

The Guardian on *Desdemona*

"In a ritual of spellbinding beauty, staged by Sellars, these two women, of different generations and continents, stand up to Shakespeare."

LA Times on *Desdemona*

"So beautiful, so devastating, so visually striking and of such visionary power, that we barely dare to breathe."

Die Welt on *Woyzeck*

Sydney Festival launches its 40th anniversary year with two great works of art; a special October season of *Desdemona* based on Shakespeare's *Othello*, and Festival theatre highlight *Woyzeck* - a stage adaptation of Georg **Büchner's** eponymous play by American musicians **Tom Waits** and **Kathleen Brennan**, and acclaimed theatre director **Robert Wilson**.

For the first time, Sydney Festival will open to audiences outside of its summer Festival dates with the powerful performance *Desdemona*, marking the beginning of our celebrations for the 40th Sydney Festival.

In an extraordinary narrative of words, music and song, the story of *Desdemona* from Shakespeare's *Othello* is re-imagined by Nobel Prize laureate **Toni Morrison**, Malian singer songwriter **Rokia Traoré** and acclaimed stage director **Peter Sellars**, featuring actress **Tina Benko** as Shakespeare's doomed heroine.

Desdemona, the most fiery angel in Shakespeare's creation, is a radiant and radical woman of independence, courage, and love. Toni Morrison creates an astonishing and provocative voice for *Desdemona* from the grave, revealing secrets in *Othello* that will forever change our reading of the play.

With original songs by Rokia Traoré and under the direction of Peter Sellars, the audience is transported into an intimate, spellbinding theatrical séance, both haunted and liberating, that moves in words and music across continents and centuries, connecting Elizabethan England to the Courts of Timbuktu to the future of the human race.

In January, Sydney Festival presents Thalia Theater Hamburg's chilling masterpiece *Woyzeck* as the headline performance for 2016 in an Australian exclusive season - made possible for Sydney by the NSW Government, through its tourism and major events agency Destination NSW. Making their long awaited Australian debut performance, leading German company Thalia Theater Hamburg present the stage adaptation and musical retelling of **Georg Büchner's** fragmented text.

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

Level 5, 10 Hickson Road The Rocks
Sydney NSW 2000 Australia
Phone 61 2 8248 6500 Fax 61 2 8248 6599
sydneyfestival.org.au



Acclaimed theatre director **Robert Wilson**, American musicians **Tom Waits** and **Kathleen Brennan** have reinvented the raw and unforgiving *Woyzeck* as a 21st century musical. Something between a fever dream and social drama, *Woyzeck* is a lurid performance dealing with madness, obsession and murder.

A simple soldier on the fringes of society, *Woyzeck* sacrifices his body and sanity to an arrogant doctor's medical experiments. Facing a narrow and lifeless existence, *Woyzeck* loves Marie, but what can he offer her? When a drum major catches Marie's eye, it all becomes too much for *Woyzeck* as he transcends into a downward spiral of madness and vengeful fantasies.

After his early death in 1837, Büchner left *Woyzeck* open for appropriation. Working with Robert Wilson, Tom Waits and Kathleen Brennan created a musical re-working of *Woyzeck* releasing this music as the album, '*Blood Money*'. Waits' songs look inside the characters and his music gives a new dimension to Büchner's text.

"Woyzeck deals with madness and obsession, with children and murder – all things that move us. The piece is wild and lurid and exciting and it inspires your imagination. It makes you fear for the characters and reflect on your own life. I don't think you can really demand more than that from a play." writes Tom Waits.

Under the direction of **Jette Steckel**, the actors are in constant combat with an oversized grid of steel and rope that is stretched across the stage and forms the centre of the powerful set design. Integrated with the action, the actors climb, hang and stumble over the netting which becomes an obstacle and a foothold; a prison in which the characters are both restrained and propelled.

Deputy Premier and Minister for the Arts, Troy Grant, says "*Sydney Festival's 40th anniversary year will see a great line-up of artistic activity beginning with the special October season of *Desdemona*, an acclaimed piece of contemporary theatre.*"

"The NSW Government is proud to support Australia's biggest and best summer festival. Over four decades, it has grown to become a wonderful showcase of home-grown and international talent," Mr Grant says.

"The festival offers visitors and residents a diverse array of opportunities to experience the arts as well as providing a significant boost to our economy."

Festival Director **Lieven Bertels** says "*Sydney Festival is proud to present international work by some of the world's most extraordinary artists including Peter Sellars, Toni Morrison, Rokia Traore, Robert Wilson, Tom Waits and Jette Steckel, and to introduce Australian audiences to the work of leading German theatre company Thalia Hamburg in their long-awaited Australian debut. Both significant works in their own right, these performances will move audiences in words and music across continents and centuries.*"

Join us in marking the beginning of our celebrations for the 40th Sydney Festival with the powerful and unique season of *Desdemona* and the Festival centrepiece performance *Woyzeck*.

Individual media releases are available for download at sydneyfestival.org.au/media

Tickets go on sale at 10am on August 6.

Limited ticket offer: Book tickets to both *Desdemona* and *Woyzeck* for \$170 on sydneyfestival.org.au/early

Desdemona

Text
Music
Director
Cast
Musicians

Toni Morrison
Rokia Traoré
Peter Sellars
Tina Benko, Rokia Traoré
Mamah Diabaté (n'goni), Toumani Kouyaté (kora), Fatim Kouyaté and Marie Dembelé (vocals)

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

Level 5, 10 Hickson Road The Rocks
Sydney NSW 2000 Australia
Phone 61 2 8248 6500 Fax 61 2 8248 6599
sydneyfestival.org.au



Lighting Design	James F. Ingalls
Sound Design	Alexis Giraud
Sound Engineer	Antoine Audibert
Production Stage Manager	Anne Dechêne
Assistant Stage Manager	Pamela Salling
Producer	Diane J. Malecki

Where Roslyn Packer Theatre, Walsh Bay

When 23-24 October at 8pm
25 October at 2pm

Duration 120 minutes

Price Premium \$129
A Reserve \$109 - \$98
B Reserve \$85 - \$77

Bookings Sydney Festival on 1300 856 876
Roslyn Packer Theatre on 02 9250 1999
sydneyfestival.org.au/Desdemona



Woyzeck

Adapted from **Georg Büchner**
Created by **Tom Waits, Kathleen Brennan and Robert Wilson**
Songs and lyrics by **Tom Waits and Kathleen Brennan**
Text adaptation by **Ann-Christin Rommen / Wolfgang Wiens**

Director	Jette Steckel
Stage Design	Florian Lösche
Costume Design	Pauline Hüners
Musical Director	Gerd Bessler, Laurenz Wannemacher
Dramaturgy	Susanne Meister
Musicians	Gabriel Coburger, Johannes Huth, Uwe Granitza, Stephan Krause, Edouard Tachalow, Laurenz Wannemacher
Actors	Bernd Grawert, Julian Greis, Franziska Hartmann, Philipp Hochmair, Felix Knopp, Tilo Werner, Jörg Pohl, Gabriela Maria Schmeide

Where Carriageworks Bay 17

When 7-12 January at 8pm
No performance on Sunday

Duration 110 minutes

Price Premium \$89
A Reserve \$79/\$71

Bookings Sydney Festival on 1300 856 876
sydneyfestival.org.au/woyzeck



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

Level 5, 10 Hickson Road The Rocks
Sydney NSW 2000 Australia
Phone 61 2 8248 6500 Fax 61 2 8248 6599
sydneyfestival.org.au



CARRIAGEWORKS



For interviews and further information contact:

Jessica Keirle, Publicity Manager, 02 8248 6525 / 0438 805 109 jessica.keirle@sydneyfestival.org.au