

MEDIA RELEASE

Level 5, 10 Hickson Road, The Rocks

Sydney NSW 2000 Australia

Phone +61 2 8248 6500

sydneyfestival.org.au

SYDFEST 2020

FROM THE CBD TO PARRAMATTA: SYDNEY FESTIVAL UNLEASHES ITS 2020 PROGRAM ON THE CITY

Set to engage minds, stir souls and transform the city, Sydney Festival today announces its blockbuster 2020 program – inviting audiences to discover the best of new Australian and international theatre, music, visual art, dance and ideas in corners of the city both known and unknown.

From Barangaroo Reserve and Parramatta to some of the city's most unique spaces, Sydney Festival's 2020 line-up sees Festival-goers of all ages exploring the city through a range of over 75 large-scale public events, exhibitions, installations and performances.

An essential fixture of Sydney's summer calendar, Sydney Festival 2020 takes place over three big weeks from 8–26 January.

As the largest single commissioner of Australian works in the country, Sydney Festival 2020 presents 46 new co-commissioned works, alongside 14 world premiere shows, four Australian premieres and six Australian exclusives, highlighting the Festival's commitment to taking local talent and creativity to the world stage, while at the same time bringing the best of the world to Sydney.

Unveiling his fourth Festival program in 2020, Sydney Festival Director **Wesley Enoch** said:

"Sydney Festival brings to our city the newest works from the world's most adventurous artists. We unearth the interesting, the new and the exciting. Wherever there is a debate to be had, a diversity of opinion or the need to speak the neglected story, Sydney Festival is there. We are proudly diverse. We are equal parts cultural ambition and celebration."

Festival highlights include the return of all-ages festival favourites *Opera in the Domain* and *Sydney Symphony Under the Stars*; Reg Livermore's groundbreaking, gender-flexing Betty Blokk-Buster character returns to wow a new generation in *Betty Blokk-Buster Reimagined*, starring Josh Quong Tart; multidisciplinary artist **Lars Jan** and Early Morning Opera will bring essayist **Joan Didion**'s now-iconic 1979 work *The White Album* to the stage; and Canadian choreographer **Dana Gringas** and *Animals of Distinction* will present their monumental new dance work *Frontera*.

Elsewhere in the program, French choreographer **François Chaignaud** and dramatist **Nino Laisné** present an opera-ballet love letter to centuries of Spanish culture in *Romances Inciertos, un Autre Orlando*; French stage and screen superstar **Isabelle Adjani** gives a searing portrayal of a performer on the brink in a radical re-staging of John Cassavetes' cult classic *Opening Night*; while Festival-goers are once again invited to gather fireside and participate in a smoking ceremony, and reflect on the resilience and beauty of Australia's Indigenous heritage at special Festival events, *The Vigil* and *Procession*.

NEW COMMISSIONS

In a hilarious new work from two leading First Nations theatre companies – Melbourne's **ILBIJERRI Theatre Company** and NZ's **Te Rēhia Theatre** – audiences are invited to the wedding reception of Māori woman Hera and Aboriginal man Kane, in the world premiere season of *BLACK TIES*. Will Hera and Kane's perfect day end in chaos as the biggest mob of Aunties, Uncles and cousins from both sides of the ditch converge, this irreverent and comical new work is co-commissioned by Sydney Festival.

Premiering at Sydney Festival, **Ensemble Theatre's Black Cockatoo** brings to the stage the largely unheard, remarkable true story of Australia's first international sports team and its legendary First Nations captain, Johnny Mullagh. *Black Cockatoo* is directed by Wesley Enoch (*Black Diggers*) and written by celebrated screenwriter Geoffrey Atherden (*BabaKiueria*).

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Bungul, Gurrumul's Mother's Bungul, Gurrumul's Grandmother's Bungul, Gurrumul's Manikay is an exquisite tribute to the talent and musical legacy of **Gurrumul Yunupingu**. With the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, his family perform the songlines that have forged their identity. Directed by senior Yolngu Don Wininba Ganambarr and Nigel Jamieson, with live performances by Yolngu dancers and senior songmen, *Bungul* is a ceremonial celebration of Dr G's final record *Djarimirri (Child of the Rainbow)*, one of the transcendent albums of our time.

Twenty-one years after releasing their critically acclaimed portrait of Howard-era Australia – *Who's Afraid of the Working Class* – writers **Andrew Bovell, Patricia Cornelius, Melissa Reeves, Christos Tsiolkas** and **Irine Vela** reunite to once again take the nation's pulse with the funny and ferocious ***Anthem***. Appearing at Sydney Festival in its world premiere season, *Anthem* has been hailed by *The Saturday Paper* as "brimming with compassion and moody delights and performed by a superb ensemble cast."

Betty is back! The spirit of Reg Livermore's groundbreaking, gender-flexing, one-man cabaret show *Betty Blokk-Buster Follies* returns to wow a new generation when **Red Line Productions** and **Josh Quong Tart** present ***Betty Blokk-Buster Reimagined*** at the Magic Mirrors Spiegel tent in Hyde Park.

In an exhilarating performance, hip hop dance innovator **Nick Power's** brand-new collaboration ***Two Crews*** brings together two leading dance crews: all-female Parisian act **Lady Rocks** and Sydney group **Riddim Nation**. Meeting for the first time, the crews present a high-energy cypher dance battle, set to music by Sydney composer Jack Prest.

And at Parramatta's Prince Alfred Square, 16 young dancers from FORM Dance Projects and 48 musicians of the Western Sydney Youth Orchestra perform ***ENCOUNTER***, a joyful site-specific work produced by **Fling Physical Theatre**, and celebrating the extraordinariness of growing up in Western Sydney.

INTERNATIONAL AUTEURS AND AUSTRALIAN EXCLUSIVES

In a performance exclusive to Sydney Festival, Academy Award-nominated French stage and screen superstar **Isabelle Adjani** gives a searing portrayal of an actor on the brink of a breakdown, in a radical re-imagining of trailblazing filmmaker John Cassavetes' cult classic ***Opening Night*** – staged here by maverick French director Cyril Teste.

At Roslyn Packer Theatre, experimental theatre director and large-scale installation artist Lars Jan's company Early Morning Opera adapts seminal American essayist Joan Didion's now-iconic 1979 work ***The White Album*** for the stage – bringing to vivid life Didion's chronicle of the decline of American counter-culture in the 1960s.

Exclusive to the Festival, ***Romances Inciertos, un Autre Orlando*** is an opera-ballet love letter to centuries of Spanish culture from the extraordinary talents of French choreographer **François Chaignaud** and dramatist **Nino Laisné** with a four-piece Baroque band.

Making its Australian premiere at Carriageworks, ***Frontera*** is a monumental new dance work that makes use of intricate staccato light fields and projections, by game-changing Canadian choreographer **Dana Gringas** and her multimedia dance company **Animals of Distinction**, to a soundtrack by Fly Pan Am.

UK provocateur Lucy McCormick brings her provocatively sacrilegious trashpunk-dubstep retelling of The New Testament, ***Triple Threat***, to Carriageworks in an exclusive run of shows described by *The Guardian* as "boundary-pulverising" and *Time Out* as "joyously depraved."

Canadian marionette master **Ronnie Burkett** (*The Daisy Theatre*, Sydney Festival 2018) returns to Sydney Festival with powerful new work ***Forget Me Not*** – a tender call-to-arms and a rich theatrical love letter to our better selves, where each audience member plays a part in the story.

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A West End smash-hit and kick-ass feminist 'her-story' lesson, **SIX** is an electrifying all-female pop musical that remixes the history of the six ill-fated wives of Henry VIII. Presented by Sydney Opera House in association with Louise Withers, Michael Coppel & Linda Bewick by arrangement with Kenny Wax, Wendy & Andy Barnes and George Stiles, this a slick, sassy sing-off that flips the rebellious queens into historical heroines.

Internationally lauded UK performance artist **Bryony Kimmings** brings her darkly offbeat, deeply funny and sharply heartbreaking feminist musical *I'm a Phoenix, Bitch* to the Drama Theatre at the Opera House, after sell-out international runs.

BLAK OUT

Central to the 2020 program, Sydney Festival's Blak Out program foregrounds First Nations voices, to the fore with stories and performances from First Nations communities across Australia, Canada, Aotearoa, Papua New Guinea and the Pacific.

Thirty years after its premiere, the world's best-loved Aboriginal musical, **Bran Nue Dae**, gets a major revival at Riverside Theatres. Legendary Australian actor **Ernie Dingo** reprises his role as Uncle Tadpole, in Jimmy Chi and Kuckles exuberant portrayal of 1960s Western Australia.

Marking the eve of an anniversary that many Australians have an uneasy association with, **Procession** invites Sydneysiders and visitors to come together on 25 January and make their way through the streets of Sydney, for a smoking ceremony led by local Elders, with performances at key destinations along the walk. The event concludes at Barangaroo Reserve at dusk to begin *The Vigil*.

The Vigil is an opportunity to gather campfire-side at Barangaroo Reserve and experience a night of stories, performance and reflection. Held from dusk on 25 January until dawn on 26 January, *The Vigil* is a time to reflect on and consider Australia's Indigenous heritage, its colonial heritage and contemporary multicultural migration. Hear live music from **Archie Roach** and guests alongside choral and poetry performances that showcase the resilience, beauty and joy of First Nations cultures.

Also at Barangaroo Reserve, 250 flags fly in **Proclamation**, a large-scale art installation exploring Australia's diverse ideas about land and country, belonging and possession. Participants Australia-wide are invited to submit images online that reflect their precise or ephemeral ideas of, and connection to, land, country and belonging. See the Sydney Festival website for details on how to participate.

In a world premiere theatre production from **Moogahlin Performing Arts**, Muruwari playwright **Jane Harrison's The Visitors** transports audiences back to 1788 to a pivotal moment in history. Seven senior First Nations lawmen meet on the shores of Gadigal land, as strange, tall ships dock in the bay, to debate the question: "Should these strangers be welcomed, or should the clans rise as one and resist?"

At City Recital Hall, Polaris Prize-winning Indigenous Canadian composer, pianist and operatic singer **Jeremy Dutcher** performs his soaring and emotional rearrangements of rare archival recordings of his First Nation's songs.

MUSIC

Music once again rings through the Festival program, with a diverse program of events bringing contemporary and classical song, sound and storytelling to audiences of all ages – right across the city.

In what has become a time-honoured tradition for thousands of Sydneysiders, **Opera in The Domain** returns in 2020; while in Parramatta, a Festival favourite returns as the **Sydney Symphony Orchestra** performs *Sydney Symphony Under the Stars*.

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Regarded as ‘the voice of the Stolen Generations,’ beloved singer-songwriter **Archie Roach** brings his remarkable life story to the stage in ***Tell Me Why*** – a spectacular live concert celebrating his eponymous memoir and latest album. Roach is joined by award-winning jazz composer and improviser **Paul Grabowsky**, along with special guest vocalists **Emma Donovan** and **Sally Dastey**.

For one night only, alt-rock statesman **Steve Kilbey**, frontman of **The Church**, performs his new solo album, ***Sydney Rococo*** – a lyrical homage to his adopted home – accompanied by a string orchestra and his world-class backing band at City Recital Hall.

In a much-anticipated Australian first performance, the anonymous masked, country crooner known as **Orville Peck** – whose seductively deep drawl *The Guardian* describes as “Roy Orbison’s *I Drove All Night* if it had a Grindr profile,” – takes the stage at the Magic Mirrors Spiegel tent with tales of the North American badlands.

Human-sung melodies and synthetic voices intertwine, while the line between artist and machine is blurred, in the stunning live performance of Berlin-based avant-garde US composer and electronic artist **Holly Herndon**, who has developed and collaborated with an “AI baby” named Spawn for her new album *Proto*.

Internationally lauded UK vocal ensemble **Tenebrae** present two separate works of exquisite, transcendental a cappella choral music at City Recital Hall, led by former King’s singer **Nigel Short**.

At Sydney Town Hall, audiences are invited to lie down and feel the resonant power of the historic Sydney Town Hall organ reverberate through them, allowing music and light to wash over them as Ireland-based Australian sound artist **Robert Curgenvin** performs his 50-minute musical journey ***Bronze Lands***.

The Salon Series returns with world-class performances from internationally renowned artists including award-winning Canadian neo-classical pop star **Jeremy Dutcher**, Australian musical great **William Barton** with **Auntie Delmae Barton** and **Veronique Serret**, Nashville guitar virtuoso **William Tyler** and many more. The series opens up secret Sydney spaces including the Town Hall Vestibule, Q Station Manly and the Museum of Contemporary Art.

Iron in the Blood sees award-winning saxophonist Jeremy Rose and his 17-piece **Earshift Orchestra** interpret Robert Hughes’ bestselling history of the conflict era, *The Fatal Shore*, through a stunning narrative-jazz performance, with actors William Zappa and Patrick Dickson.

One of Australia’s most innovative percussive performing arts companies **Speak Percussion** brings ***Atlas of the Sky*** – the award-winning new composition by internationally acclaimed Australian composer **Liza Lim** – to Sydney Festival. The performance combines Speak Percussion’s elemental, propulsive rhythms and purpose-built instruments with the incredible vocal palette of soprano **Jessica Aszodi** and a ‘crowd’ of 16 trained and untrained vocalists, creating a swarming wall of sound.

VISUAL ARTS

Three major video works from Kudjala/Gangalu artist **Daniel Boyd** will map the walls of Carriageworks with Boyd’s infinite cosmos of compositions and prismatic colour; while **REMEMBER ME** – a monumental illuminated text work by Melbourne-based Kamilaroi artist **Reko Rennie** – stands outside Carriageworks as a searing reminder of the massacres and the survival of the real sovereigns of this country, the Aboriginal people of Australia. Spanning 100 metres in length, ***Radiant Flux*** sees Perth artist **Rebecca Baumann** cover every glass surface in Carriageworks with dichroic film to create a kaleidoscopic world of colour and light; while Sydney artist **Kate Mitchell** uses electromagnetic field imaging equipment to photograph the auras of participants in ***All Auras Touch***, creating aura images for each of the 1,023 recognised occupations in Australia – a snapshot of country right now.

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Campbelltown Arts Centre hosts ***The Island***, a career-spanning survey of the work of one of the most prominent and important contemporary visual artists working in Australia today, **Vernon Ah Kee**.

At the National Art School, ***Who Are These Strangers and Where Are They Going?*** is a timely and powerful showcase of the work of Badtjala artist **Dr Fiona Foley**; at Artspace, multidisciplinary artist **Taloi Havini's** immersive new exhibition ***Reclamation*** highlights the complex ties between Havini's place of birth (the Autonomous Region of Bougainville) and Australia; while First Nations artists **Blak Douglas, Karla Dickens** and **Jason Wing** team up with curator **Djon Mundine OAM** and Mosman Art Gallery to present ***Three Views*** – taking over secret sites in the Armoured Casemates at Georges Head Battery to offer darkly humorous First Nations perspectives on Sydney Harbour.

TAKE THE FAMILY

Premiering at Sydney Festival, ***She Conjured the Clouds***, by internationally acclaimed artist **Justene Williams**, presents a glowing, vibrating, technicolour journey of the senses, for both kids and adults and accessible for all audiences; while in ***Air Play*** US circus duo **Seth Bloom** and **Christina Gelsone** make playthings of air and gravity with larger-than-life balloons, flying umbrellas and giant kites.

After topping the Children's iTunes chart, Australia's favourite electro-rock band **Regurgitator** bring their very fun and very silly ***POGOGO SHOW*** for kids to the Magic Mirrors Spiegeltent; while award-winning artist **Tim Sharp's** cult classic puppet show ***Laser Beak Man*** comes to the Sydney Opera House, offering eye-popping visuals by **Dead Puppet Society** and a live score by **Sam Cromack** of Brisbane indie rock act **Ball Park Music**.

At the Seymour Centre, legendary youth circus **The Flying Fruit Fly Circus** will celebrate its 40th anniversary with ***Time Flies***; **MCA** and **Fambo** hosts ***Contemporary Kids X Fambo: A Queer Program for all Kinds of Families***; and at Tumbalong Park in Darling Harbour families can explore ***Dodecalis Luminarium*** – an immense, radiantly lit, inflated labyrinth by **Architects of Air** and **Insite Arts**.

On January 26, Sydney Harbour again hosts the annual ocean extravaganza, ***Ferrython***, where audiences can join the race as a ticketed passenger aboard a ferry or bring a picnic and barrack for their favourite ferry from the shore.

OUR STORIES

Sydney Festival continues to shine a spotlight on unique, important and often neglected stories: the 2020 program presents a range of works reflecting the diversity of the human experience.

Award-winning Australian choreographer **Stephanie Lake** unleash her most ambitious work to date with ***Colossus***. A hypnotic, visually stunning masterwork that sees 50 bodies move as one, ***Colossus*** features pre-professional dancers from **Ev & Bow, NAISDA, New Zealand School of Dance** and **Sydney Dance Company**.

In ***The Mermaid***, performance artist **Hanna Cormick's** confronting work re-contextualises the medical devices she lives with to manage various health complications; exposing often invisible topics around the social model of disability and rebelling against a rare disease and its limitations.

Master showman and magician **James Galea** reveals all in ***Poof! Secrets of a Magician*** – a hilarious, confessional adults-only magic-themed show that poses a series of questions-in-songs such as ***Are All Magicians Gay?*** and asks what happens when you know all the secrets and lose touch with the magic in your own life.

In ***The Aspie Hour***, charismatic performers **Sophie Smyth** and **Ryan Smedley** use their shared love of musical theatre to debunk common misconceptions about their Asperger's syndrome, in a heartfelt, hilarious show that celebrates the life-changing glee of big-hearted song and dance.

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True West is a season of independent theatre from Riverside's National Theatre of Parramatta, celebrating contemporary voices and stories from Sydney's west – featuring the world premiere of award-winning director **Dino Dimitriadis'** take on the **James Elazzi**-penned **Lady Tabouli**; and play readings of **Boom** and **Garage Sale**.

Strut & Fret – the mad-genius makers behind *LIMBO* (Sydney Festival 2014 and 2015) and *Cantina* (Sydney Festival 2013) – bring together a cast of international prodigies and deviants for the Spiegeltent cabaret spectacular **LIFE – the show**.

Elsewhere, **S. Shakthidharan**, writer of Sydney Festival 2019 hit and Helpmann Award-winner **Counting and Cracking**, presents a work-in-progress showing of **宿 (stay)**, in collaboration with Singaporean performing arts company **SATheCollective**, who also premiere their experimental new album melding traditional Chinese instruments with contemporary electronics.

INTIMATE PERFORMANCES IN UNIQUE SPACES

In 2020, Sydney Festival continues its tradition of bringing audiences and artists together for intimate performances, opening up some of the city's hidden spaces to provide experiences like no other.

Mysteries unravel over the course of an unforgettable evening of fine dining and awe-inspiring illusions, when world-renowned Scottish mentalist **Scott Silven** presents **At The Illusionist's Table** at QT Sydney; an immersive, narrative-driven global sell-out hit show that “even [had] jaded New York audiences happily losing their minds,” according to the *The New York Times*.

In **Double Delicious**, stellar storyteller-cooks **Benjamin Law, Elizabeth Chong, Valerie Berry, Raghav Handa** and **Heather Jeong** reveal the secrets of their stories and dishes, serving up intimate, affecting tales while slicing, stirring and plating personally and culturally significant cuisine.

At Carriageworks, **Counterpilot** present their award-winning social experiment **TRUTHMACHINE**, which sees real audience participants volunteer to take a lie detector test in front of a live audience, with the help of high-tech biometric sensors and live voting systems.

Of the 2020 festival, **Minister for the Arts Don Harwin** said: “each January, Sydney Festival transforms our city into a cultural cacophony of theatre, music, dance and ideas. Not only does the 2020 program showcase the very best of international and local arts, it also highlights the very best of this wonderful city — from Hyde Park to Parramatta; Carriageworks to The Domain, Sydney Festival is a city-wide celebration to be enjoyed by all Sydneysiders. The NSW Government is proud to support such an energetic and diverse event.”

Lord Mayor Clover Moore says: “Sydney Festival is one of the key events in our cultural calendar – it's a time to celebrate summer's great weather and long evenings with an incredible range of world-class artists and performers.

I always look forward to sitting down and going through the program to pick out some 'must sees'. This year I'm particularly looking forward to **BLACK TIES**, a collaboration between Aboriginal theatre group ILBIJERRI and New Zealand's Māori theatre, Tē Rehia, which will have its world premiere season in our magnificent Town Hall.

“The City is proud to support the Sydney Festival. I can't wait to see what artistic director Wesley Enoch has in store to surprise and delight in new, different and unexpected ways, whether through dance, theatre, music or cabaret.”

--- ENDS ---

Tickets on sale 9am Thursday 31 October

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Media contacts:

Tiki Menegola | tiki@commonstate.co | 0467 227 822

Jadan Carroll | jadan@commonstate.co | 0405 818 120

Media information and images can be found at the [Sydney Festival Media Centre](#)