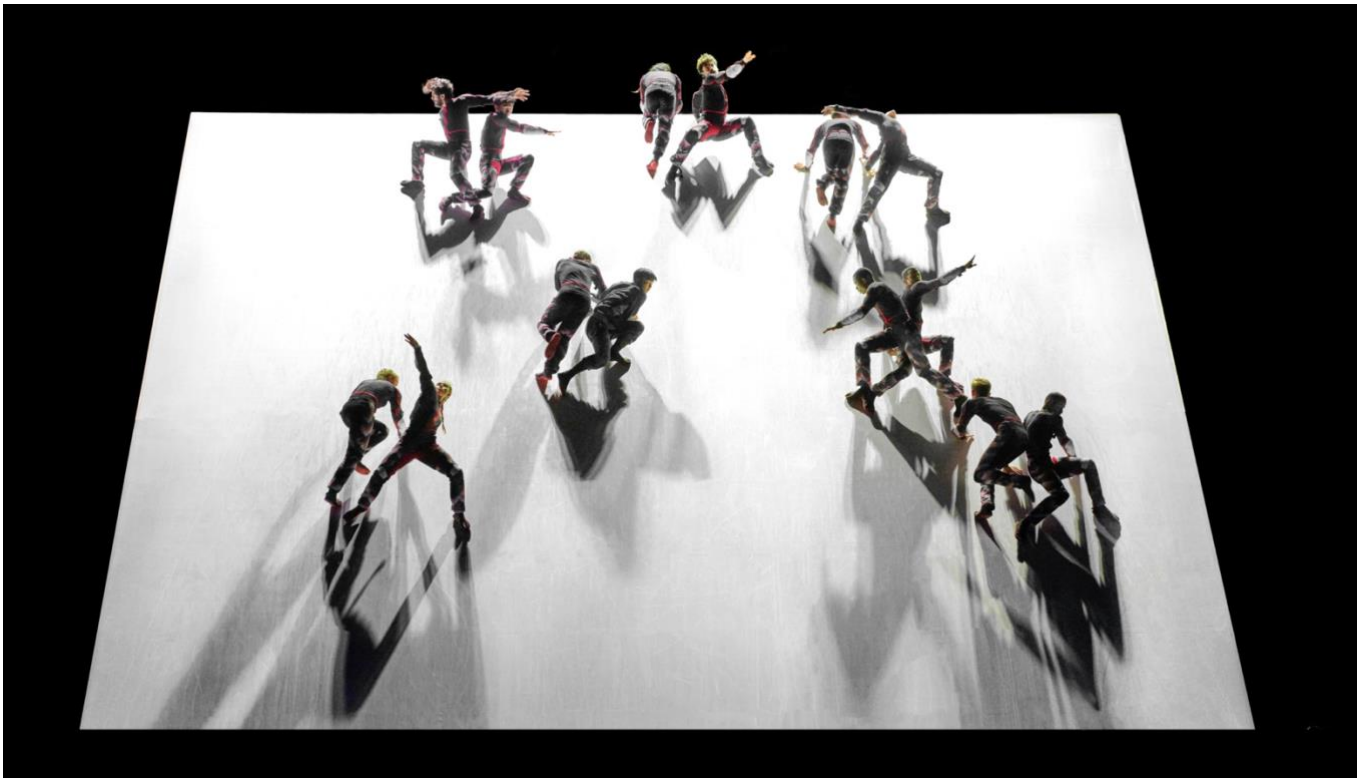


# MEDIA RELEASE

## SYDNEY FESTIVAL 2024: BOLDER THAN EVER

Thursday 26 October 2023



Göteborgs Operans Danskompani's *Skid*

The mainstay of Sydney's high summer season, Sydney Festival, sails back this January with a first class line-up of World Premieres, extraordinary immersive experiences, cutting-edge public art, Australian exclusives, free events, trailblazing First Nations programming and an epic live music offering.

Once again, Sydneysiders and visitors are invited to rediscover their city differently – from parks to beaches, harbour inlets to retro fun parlours – proving there's nowhere else but Sydney to experience an exhilarating summer of art. From **5-28 January** get ready for **24** days of music, performance, theatre, art, fashion, circus and dance right across Greater Sydney. Featuring **25** World Premieres, **30** Australian exclusives, **14** co-commissioned works and **57** free events amidst an expansive program of local and international highlights, Sydney Festival will host more than **1,000** artists and over **146** events.

This year, Sydney's iconic harbour will take centre stage, with works and events presented on – and in celebration of – water throughout January, including Puccini's nautical one act opera, *Il Tabarro*, performed aboard the Carpentaria lightship, and live music from global roamers, *Arka Kinari*, whose bespoke sailing vessel serves as both their touring van and stage.

Come January the historic Hungry Mile of Walsh Bay will evolve into *The Thirsty Mile*, a full swing festival takeover by the water in a cheeky nod to the wharves' working history and a fierce nod forward to what audiences are

thirsty to see change. This new summer hotspot and festival hub includes theatres, bars, exhibition spaces, cabaret speakeasys and a dedicated late-night club. And for the first time ever, all eight venues in the **Walsh Bay Arts Precinct** will be activated, with dance, art and performance showcased both on stage and around the theatres themselves.

A bumper **Blak Out** bill, curated by Sydney Festival's Creative Artist in Residence **Jacob Nash**, will present three World Premieres alongside a packed wider program of powerful First Nations work, including the much-anticipated rock n' roll **Warumpi Band** story, **Big Name, No Blankets**.

Meanwhile, the weaving of intergenerational, intercultural and interpersonal stories will be embedded in the very fabric of the festival, from the likes of Broome's early pearling industry in **Marrugeku's** dance piece **Mutiara**, to extraordinary First Nations stories of Brazil with **Lia Rodrigues' Encantado** through to **Night Songs at Coney Island**, an immersive choral experience balancing darkness and light at one of Sydney's most iconic attractions.

Sharing her third program as **Festival Director, Olivia Ansell**, said: "Saltwater stories, freshwater stories and the weaving of over one thousand local and international artists. Get ready for a blockbuster summer that speaks to the heart and soul of Sydney – the best harbour city in the world. 2024 offers explosive live music, spellbinding theatre, exquisite dance, electrifying circus and immersive experiences that lift Sydney's underbelly – see you in January at the Thirsty Mile!"

**The Hon. John Graham, MLC, NSW Minister for the Arts, Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy**, said: "Sydney Festival brings our city to life in Summer. It opens a new year with a burst of cultural expression and artistic activity full of diverse ideas from around the world alongside a deep commitment to First Nations expression and a championing of the multicultural force we have become in NSW."

"The sounds, tastes and emotions of the communities the Festival interacts with kick off any year with great joy. It is why you are in Sydney in January. It is why so many people from around the country and the world want to be here too."

## HIGHLIGHTS

Presented by Victorian Opera, **Il Tabarro** sees the first opera in Puccini's *Il Trittico* transferred to 1930s Depression-era Sydney and staged aboard the historic lightship, The Carpentaria, in a darkly romantic tale of passion, desperation and heartbreak. Featuring exceptional Australian talent and a live orchestra, this maverick style free event, which marks 100 years since Puccini's death, makes for an unmissable night under the stars.

At Sydney Opera House, 11 dancers transform 140 colourful blankets into shape-shifting costumes and spirits of healing in **Encantado**, a jubilant dance work designed to re-enchant the world. Over her 40-year career, celebrated Brazilian choreographer **Lia Rodrigues** has worked tirelessly to build synergies between art, activism and social processes. In **Encantado** she takes inspiration from the very real environmental and spiritual struggles experienced in today's Brazil to ask: How can we become close to each other and to the world we are a part of once again?

A globally touring music production moved by the wind and powered by the sun, **Arka Kinari**, is set to drop anchor in Sydney Harbour. By night the vessel transforms into a stage for a free, exhilarating performance from **Grey Filastine** (US) and **Nova Ruth** (Indonesia), a multimedia duo who use their extraordinary music and cinematic visuals to imagine life after the carbon economy, promote resilience and encourage re-engagement with the sea. In collisions of psychedelic beats, Javanese post-folk and analogue synths with video, design and dance, they express a radically different vision of the possible.

Parramatta's Riverside Theatres raises the curtain on the romping new musical comedy from award-winning songwriting team **Kate Miller-Heidke** and **Keir Nuttall** and director **Simon Phillips** (all three of whom were behind the smash-hit *Muriel's Wedding The Musical*). Opening to rave reviews at Brisbane Festival earlier this year and starring music theatre's Max McKenna (*Muriel's Wedding The Musical*, *Jagged Little Pill*), **BANANALAND** follows Australia's least-loved punk rock protest band, Kitty Litter, as they become an accidental hit on the kids' music charts. Is Kitty Litter set to become the next Wiggles? (Spoiler: Yes!) Can they buy into their accidental 'kids' band' fame and still keep their heads high? Maybe.

Savour Cambodia's heritage with a spectacular circus celebrating healing, joy and rice in **White Gold** at the Seymour Centre. Be astonished by hypnotic dance, mesmerising music, live painting and circus arts – spanning juggling, tumbling and teeterboard – dating back 1,200 years. Founded by refugees and based in Battambang,

**Phare**, who are soon to debut at New York City's Victory Theatre on Broadway, is a unique contemporary circus sprung from a non-profit NGO. It provides free education and training in circus arts, theatre, music, dance and design to students, and in turn, infuses Phare's work with the reality of their own life experiences.

## BLAK OUT

Curated by Sydney Festival Artist in Residence **Jacob Nash**, this year's **Blak Out** program brings together some of Australia's most talented First Nations artists to share their powerful stories, challenge ideas and set the Blak agenda.

Leading the bill is the World Premiere of **ILBIJERRI Theatre Company's *Big Name, No Blankets***, a theatrical tribute to rock royalty, the **Warumpi Band**, who made history as the first rock'n'roll band to sing in Aboriginal languages. Packed with humour and the band's iconic songs and rockstar performances, this joyful show tells the story of the **Warumpi Band** and the power their music had in amplifying black voices and stories while unifying hearts and minds. Created in collaboration with founding band member **Sammy Butcher** and the families of **Warumpi Band** members, ***Big Name, No Blankets*** is co-directed by theatre icon **Dr Rachael Maza AM** and **Anyupa Butcher**.

Once again, ***The Vigil*** returns for a sixth year to look at the future through the eyes of those who will inherit it. ***Vigil: The Future*** is about hope, empowering young voices and giving them a platform to share their messages for the future to the people of Sydney and Australia. On 25 January, a large-scale installation on Barangaroo Headland will spark into life with a choir of First Nations young people singing of their dreams, realities and hopes for the future. Joined on stage by some very special guests, their songs will fill the skies of Sydney.

***Tiddas*** follows five women, best friends for decades, as they meet once a month to talk about books, lovers, and dissect each other's lives with honesty and warmth. But each woman carries a complex secret, and one weekend, without warning, everything comes unstuck. Wiradjuri author and playwright **Anita Heiss'** own adaptation of her much-loved novel is paying a visit from its hometown in Brisbane as part of the Sydney Festival Blak Out program and co-presented by **Belvoir**.

Join four mainland-born Torres Strait Islander women as they battle against the rising tide threatening their home, culture and identity in ***GURR ERA OP*** ("the face of the sea" in Meriam Mir), a celebratory sharing of culture and a call to action in the face of climate devastation. Award-winning choreographer and performer **Ghenoa Gela** presents her landmark World Premiere work, in a culmination of many years of creative association with **Force Majeure**. Presented now in collaboration with **ILBIJERRI Theatre Company's Amy Sole**, the result is a vivid interweaving of contemporary storytelling, movement and spoken word.

Seasoned circus star and completely unqualified camp leader **Dale Woodbridge-Brown** can't use a compass but proves everyone can earn their badge for being their most authentic self. The Faboriginal boy from the bush serves up fierce skills and sass with a lot of humour and heart, proving that even the squarest tent peg can fit in a round hole with empathy, understanding and some silly games. ***Camp Culture*** is a join-in-the-fun circus show full of games and activities for any age.

From **Queensland's Arc Circus Co.**, the creators of the wonderfully buzzy *A Bee Story*, comes a visually amazing piece of site-specific acrobatics and physical theatre that fuses First Nations dance, storytelling and contemporary circus. Made in collaboration between **Arc Circus Co.**, **Luther Cora** and his team from **Yugambeh Aboriginal Dancers**, and inspired by a famous Dreamtime story, ***Living Sculptures: How the Birds got their Colours*** will see living sculptures fly and glide across various outdoor locations, including Sydney's iconic Bondi Beach.

## THE THIRSTY MILE

Across one of the most knockout harbourside locations in the world, Sydney's historic working wharf district will be reimagined anew with ***The Thirsty Mile***: a knowing throwback to the original Hungry Mile docklands area of Walsh Bay. An expansive festival takeover, the pop-up precinct will encompass theatres, bars, exhibition spaces and a club, with the *Thirsty Mile's Moonshine Bar* playing host to immersive music experiences and the festival's dedicated late-night hang out. Come early, stay late.

Everyone's favourite brunch crew is cruising back to the Wharf for a full season residency at *The Thirsty Mile's* speakeasy – and this time they're taking charge of the night in ***Smashed: The Nightcap***. Host **Victoria Falconer** leads a world-class femme-fronted ensemble serving delicious cabaret, exquisite drag, jaw-dropping circus and a live-n-kickin' dive band, plus a smuggled-in selection of Festival headliners as nightly special guests.

Art strangles architecture on a grand scale in **Hi-Vis**, the sinuous sculpture taking over a Walsh Bay wharf. British sculptor **Michael Shaw** – whose works have wound their way around international arts festivals, galleries and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London – uses the building like a mould to inform and form the geometry of his vibrant 46-metre-long installation. Designed specifically in response to the architectural features of the venue, **Hi-Vis**' neon colours cast a luminous glow on the wood of the wharf, and after the sun sets, UV lights make the sculpture glow in the dark.

Weaving throughout **Hi-Vis**, **SPIN** is an interactive guided dance event with three Deaf hosts and a DJ, inspired by club culture and social dance scenes in San Francisco, Mexico, Cuba and Berlin. Created by Australian Deaf dance artist and performer **Anna Seymour**, it celebrates connection, escapism, hedonism and the power of dance ritual. **SPIN** is also a playful interrogation of who can belong and coexist in the rave realm – a challenge to assumptions that Deaf people cannot enjoy these spaces.

Art meets music and dance in **Sculptured Riddims**. Dance artists share their creative responses to **Michael Shaw's Hi-Vis** installation, taking shape over three nights in the Moonshine Bar. Led by artist and educator **Azzam Mohamed**, each event showcases different communities, cultures, music genres and dance styles – from street to club to Afro dance styles – offering a totally immersive and inclusive experience.

Night owls can then dance the night away amidst wild art installations at the festival's supercharged club nights. **Late Nights at The Thirsty Mile** delivers a vast range of electronic genres from across the world, with parties hosted by **Astral People**, **Wavyland** and **Finely Tuned**, plus a huge closing night with South African **DJ Mo Laudi**.

Then shake it all off the next morning with **Sunrise Yoga** at Wharf 4 / 5. Bask in the early-morning rays, soak in the ambient tunes and stretch out those nine-to-five aches and pains with an energising yoga session by the water. There's no better way to start your Festival day.

On display at **The Thirsty Mile** is a selection of screen-printed artworks, textiles and calendars alongside materials from the renowned 'Garage' in Mt Druitt in western Sydney. Curated by **Nadia Odlum**, **Talking Posters: Garage Graphix 1981-1998** reveals the role of artistic collaboration in giving voice to community concerns, expressed through the unique styles and typography from a pre-digital era of poster-making.

## IMMERSIVE

**Night Songs at Coney Island** takes over the iconic Sydney Luna Park for an immersive nighttime experience featuring artists from the **Sydney Philharmonia Choirs**, vocal soloists **Peter Coleman Wright AO** and **Cheryl Barker AO**, a children's ensemble, and chamber orchestra performing music by Poulenc, Stravinsky and Mahler. This playground setting comes to life with Poulenc's buoyant and jubilant *Sextet for Piano and Winds*, before the shadow of grief and loss takes over, set against a community's lament for atonement sung to Stravinsky's *Mass*. Woven throughout the evening is Mahler's hauntingly personal *Kindertotenlieder (Songs on the Death of Children)*, performed by Coleman-Wright and Barker.

Created by the multi-disciplinary Māori artist **Lisa Reihana**, the majestic **Te Wheke-a-Muturangi: The Adversary** will take up residence in Watermans Cove, gently animated by harbour breezes and shifting currents, bathed in sunlight and moonlight. Made from more than 1,000 pieces, the giant female octopus sculpture tells another side of the story of the Polynesian navigator Kupe who, it is said, discovered Aotearoa New Zealand. In addition, Sydney-based Maori choir **Te Aranganui** will share stories of Te Moana Nui a Kiwa (Pacific Ocean) on the first day of the Festival. Festival-goers can also hit the harbour and get up close via a kayak tour from **Sydney Harbour Kayaks**.

Audiences can create the eco-friendly designer haute couture of their dreams at **Fast Fashion's** workshop-performance hybrid space in Darling Harbour's Tumbalong Park. Using old clothes and textile waste, artists will be on hand to help budding designers realise their creations with demonstrations, assistance and nimble thimbles, before they then take their wares to the runway. Lampooning the fashion industry while reclaiming the catwalk as a welcoming, celebratory space of creative expression, **House of Fast Fashion** melds art therapy, improvisational theatre and visual art making to create interactive and inclusive installations.

The festival will also invite hands-on participation and learning with a series of workshops and masterclasses, including dance expression with **Dalisa Pigram** and **Rachael Swain** of **Marrugeku**, choreographic methodologies from **Dancenorth's Amber Haines**, an immersion in Torres Strait Islander storytelling with performers from **GURR ERA OP** and a Cambodian circus workshop hosted by members of the phenomenal **Phare Circus (White Gold)**.

## WESTERN SYDNEY

Year on year, Sydney Festival has been committed to bringing some of the festival's best and brightest performers, artists and talents to audiences in Parramatta. Along with the sure-fire hit **BANANALAND** at Riverside Theatres, 2024 continues this connection with another packed program of events for festival-goers in the west.

Join Melbourne-based Palestinian artist, activist and theatre-maker **Aseel Tayah** at **A'amar**, a sensory evening of food, poetry, exquisite song and storytelling from her family's homeland. Guests are immersed in a multi-course Arabic meal, as Tayah and fellow musicians take you on a journey that celebrates and honours friendship, love and new beginnings.

Intrepid explorers at Parramatta's Riverside Theatres discover a prehistoric world of astonishing (and remarkably life-like) dinosaurs, including every child's favourite flesh-eating giant, the Tyrannosaurus Rex, a Triceratops, Giraffatitan, Microraptor and Segnosaurus! Now an international smash hit selling out venues across the UK and the USA, **Dinosaur World Live** makes its debut in Australia in 2024.

The **Multicultural Comedy Gala** returns to take the mickey out of everything that makes us different, but also so much the same, with an acclaimed line-up of award-winning stand-up stars. Whether First Nations, first generation, tenth generation or a new Australian, there is plenty to laugh at with appearances from **Nazeem Hussain** (*Legally Brown*); **George Kapiniaris** (*Fat Pizza*); **He Huang** (*Australia's Got Talent*); **Cameron Duggan** (*At Home Alone Together*); **Gavin Sempel** (*Black Comedy*); and triple j's **Amelia Navascues**.

And the starlit summer concert that audiences love is back at Parramatta Park with a soaring new program to lift this evening picnic into the stratosphere. This year, **Sydney Symphony Under the Stars: Pictures in the Sky** will showcase the didgeridoo magic of **William Barton**, joined by **Aunty Delmae Barton**, **Véronique Serret** and **Iva Davies AM**, and the transportive sitar playing of **Anoushka Shankar**. All in collaboration with **Sydney Symphony Orchestra** and guest conductor **Benjamin Northey**, who will bring it home with traditional classics and a big sparkly bang.

## DANCE

One of Europe's foremost contemporary dance companies, **GöteborgsOperans Danskompani** presents a Swedish double-bill of cutting-edge contemporary dance at the Roslyn Packer Theatre. In **Skid**, by Belgian and French choreographer **Damien Jalet**, 17 dancers battle gravity on a vertiginous, 34-degree slope – sliding, swaying, struggling back to the top as the dancers are quite literally pushed to the edge of their abilities to perform without toppling down the slope.

Then, in **Sharon Eyal's SAABA**, an intoxicating dancefloor with pulsating rhythms sees dancers pushing movements to an unearthly extreme. Drawing from the catwalk and club to produce a hybrid choreography, Eyal's dancers wear flesh-coloured body suits by Dior's Creative Director **Maria Grazia Chiuri** and perform on demi-pointe for almost the entire work.

At Sydney Dance Company, two high-octane works from Australia and the UK explore class, gender and the fortitude of feminism. A highly physical work somewhere between dance, cabaret and performance art, **Emma Harrison's** solo work **Wolverine**, explores critical notions of gender, power, the pervasiveness of feminine archetypes in our stories, and the repercussions of those tropes on women's bodies. And in **Hope Hunt and the Ascension into Lazarus**, the id of the Northern Irish chav is broken down and raised again in **Oona Doherty's** dextrous choreography. It's a swaggering, loving tribute to a group rarely afforded space in contemporary dance.

Directed by **Amber Haines** and **Kyle Page**, **Dancenorth Australia** joins forces with three-time Grammy nominated Australian band **Hiatus Kaiyote** and sound artist **Byron J. Scullin** to create a soaring composition evoking pleasure and possibility. In **Wayfinder**, an undulating sound sculpture condenses and expands this scintillating score, immersing audiences in a new sonic dimension. Japanese-Australian visual artist **Hiromi Tango** offers her joyful, heart-expanding artwork to both the stage design and costumes for this sublime new performance.

Drawing on diasporic connections, Southeast Asian martial art silat, and Yawuru and Minangkabau dance forms, intercultural dance company **Marrugeku** brings to life the buried, haunting story of Broome's pearling industry in **Mutiara** at the Seymour Centre. **Marrugeku's Dalisa Pigram** and Singaporeans Sultari **Amin Farid** and **Zee Zunnur** co-choreograph and perform, collaborating with Broome ex-pearl diver **Ahmat Bin Fadal**. Reflecting on

both the early colonial racism and the bonds between Malay peoples and First Peoples of the Kimberley, **Mutiara** is a celebration of the resilience, love and the strength of ancestors.

The Seymour Centre courtyard will be transformed to **Banyan Pasar**, a Southeast Asian market tucked away in a celebration of the rich, artistic culture of Cambodia and its neighbours. Featuring food trucks, tuk tuks, craft markets and live entertainment from local artists and DJs from the Southeast Asian-Australian communities, perfect for the hot summer nights.

## THEATRE

Acclaimed Belgian innovators **Ontroerend Goed** return to Sydney Festival with a captivating and innovative call to action that stands at the point where visual art, theatre, poetry and political protest meet. Winner of the 2019 de Fringe First Award, **Are we not drawn onward to new erA** reflects the this-way/that-way tensions of a world on the brink in a technically masterful and jaw-dropping palindromic production.

**Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World** is a wild ride down the rabbit hole of Wikipedia and murder mystery podcasts, sorting through the tangle of information available online in a post-colonial world to reveal the limits of search engines in solving a decades old cold case. An investigation into the nature of investigations, with the unsolved murder of Iranian pop icon Fereydown Farrokhzad at its centre, this multimedia mystery from **Javaad Alipoor** will consume audiences at the Sydney Opera House.

Created by writer-director **James Ley**, the riotous **Ode to Joy (How Gordon got to go to the nasty pig party)** follows Scottish civil servant Gordon as he attempts to abandon his homonormative behaviour for a sex party in Berlin's Berghain. One of the succès de scandales of the 2022 Edinburgh Fringe, **Ode to Joy (How Gordon got to go to the nasty pig party)** is a ribald rites-of-passage queer play about love, hedonism and kinky sex with strangers.

Award-winning Scotland-based circus artist **Sadiq Ali** delivers a heady mix of love and nightlife, expertly performed on Chinese poles and set to a banging soundtrack. Based on Ali's personal experience and candid interviews with members of the LGBTQI+ community who identify as (ex) Muslim, **The Chosen Haram** deals with themes of sexuality, faith, addiction and the intricacies of Islam. Stacked with physical humour, pain and joy, it's a love story like no other.

Ireland's **Brokentalkers** and New York's **Adrienne Truscott** unpack the cult of male genius in a slapstick comedy that stings. Having stormed the Edinburgh Fringe and Melbourne's RISING Festival, **Masterclass** proves all too familiar in its wickedly funny takedown of the macho artist.

From internationally acclaimed writer and one of the UK's most prominent trans voices, **Travis Alabanza (Burgerz)**, **Overflow** returns to Sydney after a rave-reviewed 2022 Australian premiere season at Darlinghurst Theatre Company, directed by **Dino Dimitriadis**.

Yuwaalaraay playwright **Hannah Belanzky** and Kalkadoon director **Abbie-lee Lewis** bring their exceptional talent to the stage for **Saplings**, a collection of hilarious and heartbreaking stories born from workshops with young people experiencing the youth justice system, from Marrickville to Moree. Set to a rap and hip-hop soundtrack made by young people in the youth justice system, **Saplings** gives an honest, raw look into the adult consequences faced by some of our most vulnerable.

Awe-inspiring acrobatics meets exquisite music in a contemporary reimagining of **Orpheus & Eurydice** presented collectively by **Opera Australia** and Sydney Festival. Projections seamlessly integrate surtitles into the action on stage, as brilliant singers come together with the trailblazing circus artists of **Circa**, one of Australia's most successful cultural exports. Starring French countertenor **Christophe Dumaux** as Orpheus, performing opposite Australian soprano **Cathy-Di Zhang**, who makes her role debut singing both Eurydice and Amor under the baton of conductor **Dane Lam**.

## MUSIC

Sydney Festival presents an expansive music menu for all tastes and persuasions in venues, theatres, pop-up hot spots and outdoor spaces right across town.

In **Soliloquy**, Melbourne recorder virtuoso **Genevieve Lacey** subverts the hierarchy of traditional concert music presentation by inviting 32 untrained participants to share a stage with a musician and a professional contemporary dancer (a thrilling rare performance from **Stephanie Lake**). This untrained chorus will create a performance around Baroque composer **Georg Philipp Telemann's Twelve Fantasias for Solo Flute**, working to

simple directions – **Soliloquy** is all about listening – to become a living part of the music in an enthralling, unique ritual unlike anything experienced before.

World music superstar and nine-times Grammy nominee, **Anoushka Shankar**, returns after a standout 2018 tour. A virtuoso sitarist and composer, Shankar and her hotshot quintet – all startlingly talented solo artists in their own right – will fill the Sydney Opera House Concert Hall with a sublime and dynamic neoclassical approach to Indian music.

One of Australia's most beloved and acclaimed singer-songwriters, **Courtney Barnett**, gives a special two-part performance at City Recital Hall. First, the arrival of a gorgeous new chapter from Barnett with the release of her instrumental album, *End of the Day* (music from the film *Anonymous Club*), performed and improvised with collaborator Stella Mozgawa. Then, Barnett sings treasured tracks from her incomparable back catalogue.

Also appearing at the City Recital Hall is one of the most striking folk singers performing today, Ireland's **Lisa O'Neill**. Renowned for her transporting live shows, O'Neill's inimitable voice is raw, evocative and laden with emotion. A powerful storyteller with a strong sense of self, O'Neill's is a talent that demands to be heard.

Created by **Paul Grabowsky AO** and starring Australian performers **Joe Camilleri** and **Deborah Conway**, **Edge of Reality** is a unique tribute to the cultural icon that is Elvis Presley. With heartfelt, re-imagined renditions of the king's greatest hits, **Edge of Reality** celebrates one of the 20th century's most prolific musicians who continues to influence generations to this day.

And the sell-out **Brett Whiteley Studio Sessions** are back, offering the chance to hear from some of the festival's stand-out music acts in a more intimate setting, including **Anoushka Shankar** – who will perform under Whiteley's portrait of her father, **Ravi Shankar** – **Harold López-Nussa**, **Judith Hill** and **Rizo**, plus performances from beloved Sydney artists **Tim Freedman** of The Whitlams and vocalist **Jo Davie**. Hear how their musical tastes, travels, and favourite place gloriously intersect with Whiteley's own inspirations alongside the accompanying *Chapters 1959-1969*, an exhibition of Whiteley's works painted abroad.

## LIVE MUSIC AT THE ACO NEILSON

The ACO Neilson will play host to a standout roster of international and local music-makers throughout January, many of whom are performing their only Australian shows exclusively at Sydney Festival.

Leading the first week of programming at the ACO Neilson is one of the most accomplished Latin jazz pianists and composers, **Harold López-Nussa**, arriving all the way from Cuba to share songs from *Timba a la Americana*, his first album on the legendary Blue Note Records. Norwegian guitarist and composer **LILJA** then brings her band and multifaceted musical vision – spanning jazz, folk and an array of rich global influences – to Australia for the first time. Later, Berlin-based trumpeter **Konstantin Döben** and his band **Conic Rose** share their mesmerising compositions of indie-pop, jazz, electronica, soul and ambient, before the multi-talented pianist and composer **Amaro Freitas** arrives to demonstrate the many ways his unique sound has come to redefine Brazilian jazz. Mid-week sees instrumental powerhouses the **Josh Meader Trio** take the stage in a special hometown show from three gifted musicians who never miss a beat. Rounding out week one is Indian five-piece **Peter Cat Recording Co**, led by the bewitching baritone of founder and frontman **Suryakant Sawhney**. Landing in Sydney hot off their rapturously received sold-out tours of the US and Europe, the outfit share their genre-defying blend of hot club-style jazz, psychedelic art rock, space disco and cabaret.

Week two opens with an Irish songman with a poet's soul. **David Keenan's** already-prolific catalogue charts folk, rock, blues and his own keen-eyed poetry. Then comes Brooklyn-based multi-hyphenate **SUO**, a spiky, swoony and effortlessly cool performer known for her strutting, androgynous stage energy and comparisons to Patti Smith and Lou Reed. Music legends **Deborah Conway** and **Willy Zygiel** will present a no-holds-barred music and words memoir of their rock'n'roll life in **Songs From the Book of Life**, exploring their four-decade-long musical careers through eight scenes and eight songs. First Nations singer-songwriter on-the-rise, **Kee'ahn**, will dazzle crowds with their rich vocals, lush melodies and gift for songwriting about heartbreak, healing and vulnerability. Praised as an artist "with an incredible ability to merge musical worlds", producer and singer-songwriter **Trophie** shares her cross-genre style and three-octave vocal range with the audiences for one night only. Buffalo, New York's indie-folk hope **Julie Byrne** brings her songs of searching, grieving and healing to Sydney, playing songs from 2023's remarkable *The Greater Wings* with spellbinding presence. Finally, experience the transformative, ethereal voice of musician, writer and accessibility advocate **Eliza Hull**, also featuring **roya the destroya**, a one legged physical theatre and dance artist who starred in Hull's recent music video for single 'Running Water'.

**Temperament** – a week-long celebration and deconstruction of **JS Bach** then takes over the ACO Neilson in the third and final week of the festival to pay homage to one of the most prolific composers in Western classical musical history. Featuring an exceptional program of local and international artists and ensembles, each dedicated to pushing musical boundaries some 300 years on, including **Bach Akademie Australia, Korkmaz Can Sağlam, Australian Chamber Orchestra, Andrew Bukenya: Bach in Colour, Australian Brandenburg Orchestra**, co-curator **Benjamin Skepper** and **Ensemble Apex**.

## CABARET

Down by the harbour, Sydney Theatre Company's wharf theatres will together be transformed into an old-fashioned speakeasy as the home of the festival's sizzling cabaret season.

The World Premiere of **Send for Nellie** tells the true tale of the most impressive career in Australian cabaret you've probably never heard of: the legendary singer and cross-dressing cabaret artist, Nellie Small. Written by **Alana Valentine**, co-curated by **Kween G**, directed by **Liesel Badorrek** and produced by **Sue Donnelly**, this bold new work unearths one of our great untold stories in song and Nellie's own words, with powerhouse performer **Elenoa Rokobaro** centre stage and dressed to the nines.

UK singer-performer **Sarah-Louise Young and Russel Lucas'** award-winning chaotic cult cabaret rejoices in the raw and fearlessly pioneering artistry of one of the most influential voices in pop culture: Kate Bush. Far more than an act of mimicry, **An Evening Without Kate Bush** is a spellbinding, shape-shifting, communal spectacle for new and diehard fans alike.

Drawing inspiration from Edith Piaf, Dolly Parton and Nina Simone, laced with Freddie Mercury, the GRAMMY® Award-winning glamour-puss chanteuse and festival favourite **Rizo** returns after a sold-out season in Sydney Festival 2018. Known for her powerhouse vocals and glitter-doused provocations, **Rizo's Prizmatism** is a seductive cabaret showcase melding vintage pop, rock'n'roll punk and ridiculous hi-jinks.

Unmissable new jazz star, **Alma Zygiel** brings her American songbook repertoire into the 21st century with raw emotion, velvety nuance and bold gravelly chutzpah. Accompanied by a live band, the daughter of Australian music legends **Deborah Conway** and **Willy Zygiel** will redefine songs made famous by Ella Fitzgerald, Bessie Smith, Louis Armstrong and Billie Holiday in her show **Premarital Sextet**.

RnB soul songstress **Prinnie Stevens** (*The Voice; The Bodyguard*) returns to the Festival with more heart-wrenching ballads and soul-stirring pop stories of the greats for **Lady Sings the Blues Volume II**. Stevens draws upon her experience spanning music theatre, pop, soul and gospel, with a setlist paying homage to Mahalia Jackson, Nina Simone, Aretha Franklin, Tina Turner and more.

Cabaret powerhouse and Helpmann Award-winner **Michael Griffiths** takes audiences on a very personal, funny and sometimes melancholy deep dive into the songs of pop superstars The Pet Shop Boys – musical beacons for gay men growing up and coming out. Directed by **Dean Bryant**, **It's a Sin: Songs of Love and Shame** sees Griffiths bring his inimitable cabaret style to PSB classics like *Rent, Love Comes Quickly, Suburbia, You Only Tell Me You Love Me When You're Drunk* and *Go West*.

Comedy star **Michelle Brasier's** (*Mad as Hell, Utopia, Get Krackin*) all-singing, all-joking, all-heartbreaking show – about her experience living in the shadows of a hereditary illness – has been a rocket to acclaim. Catch the hilarious, deeply personal, finely tuned – and phenomenally successful – **Average Bear** when it returns to Sydney for two nights only.

## FAMILY

Devised by New Zealand's clown prince **Thom Monckton**, whose *The Artist* was a highlight of Sydney Festival 2023, **The King of Taking** delivers a cackle-inducing physical comedy that shows what happens when the joint is run by clowns. Royally funny, Monckton's latest solo performance follows a childish and petulant King who can only tread upon on red carpet and move to the sound of fanfare.

Traditional Korean *pansori* storytelling and Czech puppetry combine in the charming tale of **Sugung-ga: The Other Side of the World**, where a turtle must persuade a hare to give up his liver to an underwater dragon king. Live cello music, playful puppetry and witty storytelling colour this mesmerising all-ages gem from South Korea's **Moksung Theatre Company**.



After touring the US, the Netherlands, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia and Singapore, Yogyakarta's renowned **Papermoon Puppet Theatre** heads to Sydney for the first time to present a work grounded in Indonesia's centuries-old traditions of puppetry. Based on a story told by a four-year-old boy (all of the animal puppet designs in the show are based on his drawings, too), **A Bucket of Beetles** is a story about the connection between humans and nature, that leaves audience with the question: are we taking enough care of our water, soil and air?

Flocking to *The Thirsty Mile*, Bondi Beach and Circular Quay this summer in free roaming performances are the **Snuff Puppets' Seagulls**. Out and about, in your face and in this case, likely to be rooting around in your shopping bag, flying off with your hat or fighting for that one thing all gulls go mad for – a hot chip.

Visit **The Leo Kelly Blacktown Arts Centre** for **Hive Festival**, two fun-filled days of hands-on art making, music, performance and play for children and families. Join 'art walks' that surprise at every turn, collaborate on a gigantic cardboard-sculpture with designer and architect **Noa Haim** (Collective Paper Aesthetics) and take an exciting audio adventure from Sydney to Blacktown, connecting sounds and stories of big cities, neighbourhoods and dreams.

The award-winning **The Listies** present a hilarious mixtape of silly songs, zany sketches and classic clowning. For over a decade Rich and Matt have toured the world doing shows for literally gazillions of kidults (that's kids and their adults). **Make Some Noise** is a comedy concert for humans aged four to 400.

## VISUAL ARTS

The **Museum of Contemporary Art** presents a solo exhibition by British visual art **Tacita Dean** in what will be the largest collection of the artist's work in the Southern Hemisphere. One of the most important living artists of our times, Dean is best known for her works made with analogue film. Her use of the analogue medium in the digital age speaks to the precarious conditions of the contemporary era. At a time of constant change, her works are distinguished by meticulous attention to detail that encourages slow and careful observation of the surrounding world.

**Louise Bourgeois: Has the Day Invaded the Night or Has the Night Invaded the Day?** At the **Art Gallery of NSW** reveals the extraordinary reach and intensity of Bourgeois' art, from her haunting *Personage* sculptures of the 1940s to her tough yet tender textile works of the 1990s and 2000s, in the largest exhibition of her work ever seen in Australia.

The **Art Gallery of NSW** will share a comprehensive exhibition from one of the great innovators of European abstraction in **Kandinsky**. Drawing from the Guggenheim's rich holdings, this comprehensive presentation will reveal Vasily Kandinsky's work in depth – from his beginnings in Munich, to his return to his birthplace of Moscow with the outbreak of World War One, followed by the interwar years in Germany where he was an instructor at the Bauhaus, and his final chapter in Paris.

To celebrate the reopening of **Artspace** in Woolloomooloo, Sydney Festival supports two artist talks. Bundjalung and Kullilli journalist, radio broadcaster and writer **Daniel Browning** in conversation with **Larissa Behrendt** to discuss Browning's first book, *Close to the Subject*. Secondly, a lecture from multidisciplinary artist and composer DJ, **Mo Laudi** (Ntshepe Tsekere Bopape) will invite movement and deep listening into the archives of resistance held among Afro-Electronic music cultures.

Sydney Festival is also delighted to support exhibitions, talks and conversations at partner organisations across Sydney, including the **National Art School's** exhibition of works from members of the Chinese diaspora, **In Our Time: Four Decades of Art from China and Beyond, the Geoff Raby Collection; Manly Art Gallery's** celebration of mid-century modern architecture, *Lost in Palm Springs*; boundary pushing photography at **Bondi Pavilion Gallery's Earth, Sea and Sky: Australian Contemporary Photography**; and **Brett Whiteley Chapters 1959-69** at **Brett Whiteley Studios** which will also play host to a series of intimate live music performances.

## SYDNEY FESTIVAL AT HOME

As in previous years, Sydney Festival provides access to a wide range of both new and past programming for audiences near and far with the festival's **AT HOME** line-up.

Enjoy livestreams of the floating opera *Il Tabarro*, this year's **Vigil: The Future**, and catch acrobatic and dance performance **Living Sculptures: How the Birds got their Colours** on world-famous Bondi Beach.

On demand, watch the Australian premiere of *Cirque du Cambodia* (a documentary that follows two young Cambodians on their quest to join the big tops of Cirque du Soleil), and uncover the story behind the ground-breaking **Warumpi Band**, in the *Big Name No Blanket* 2013 documentary. Tune in to concerts from **Tim Freedman**, **Lisa Moore** and **Hamed Sadeghi** and discover the inspiration behind incredible new dance work, *GURR ERA OP*.

Sydney is the centre-point for creativity in the Asia-Pacific region, offering a world-class calendar of cultural events including Sydney Festival and delivering more than \$1 billion into the local economy.

– ENDS –

#### **NOTES TO EDITOR**

- Sydney Festival runs 5-28 January 2024
- Tickets for all shows on sale from 12pm Thursday 26 October
- Visit [sydneyfestival.org.au](https://sydneyfestival.org.au) for more details

#### **MEDIA KIT**

Imagery, B-roll and media sheets available [here](#).

#### **ABOUT SYDNEY FESTIVAL**

Sydney Festival is one of Australia's largest international arts festivals, with a stellar reputation for bold, inventive and intelligent programming. Its vibrancy reflects the confidence, creativity and vigour of one of the world's most beautiful cities. Under the curation of Festival Director Olivia Ansell, the Festival's mission is to deliver an exhilarating summer of art, drawing stories from Sydney's 65,000-year history through to its contemporary zeitgeist. Sydney Festival stages the world's best artists whilst nurturing its homegrown talent; many of Australia's most memorable theatrical productions have stemmed from its premieres and commissions. The buzz of summer wouldn't be the same without the Festival's spectacular installations, immersive experiences and live events splashed across Sydney each January.