

# MEDIA RELEASE

## SYDNEY FESTIVAL 2025 PROGRAM: THEATRICAL RAPTURES, MUSIC LUMINARIES AND A WOVEN WONDERLAND ENLIVEN SUMMER OF ART



*Wendy Whiteley's Garden, As You Like It or The Land Acknowledgement, A Model Murder, KATMA*

30 October 2024

Summer in Sydney is set to soar to new heights with the unveiling of a blockbuster Sydney Festival program for 2025. Running 4–26 January, the almost month-long international arts festival is an opportunity to rediscover the city differently, from Sydney Town Hall's conversion into a Wild West pioneer town, to a salacious true crime tale staged in the docks of Darlinghurst Courthouse. Across World Premiere productions, Australian exclusives and immersive experiences that reflect the city's identity, Sydney Festival is the home of world class theatre, must-see music and powerful performance this January.

With tickets officially on sale from today, Sydney Festival is rewarding pre-planners, savvy shoppers and festival fanatics with an allocation of **\$49 Early Bird tickets** up for grabs across the entire ticketed program until 2 December (or sold out). With A Reserve seats available for just \$49, this limited offer celebrates Sydney Festival's milestone 49th anniversary whilst addressing cost of living pressure by encouraging festival-goers to book early, see multiple shows and secure a prime position.

Complementing the ticketed program, Sydney Festival's action-packed free program for 2025 will ensure a truly accessible and expanded summer of art for all. Throughout January, Sydneysiders and visitors will once again be enticed to take part in an exhilarating summer of art across **23** days of storytelling, knowledge sharing and cultural immersion.

Introducing her fourth and final festival line-up, **Festival Director Olivia Ansell** said: "Sydney Festival has long held summer's cultural pulse and this year is quite the heartbeat. Stories of Oceania, destiny and what we leave behind through to bold explorations of utopia and dystopia, Sydney Festival 2025 promises an exhilarating and thought-provoking journey through the arts with exceptional talent at the reins. This January, immerse yourself in a summer of unforgettable performances, groundbreaking new works, and exclusive experiences that reimagine the world around us."

**The Hon. John Graham, Minister for the Arts**, said: "Sydney Festival has timing on its side, delivering a burst of cultural expression and artistic activity from January 4 when the city is largely off work and ready to celebrate and explore during the long hot days and nights."

"This year's edition puts First Nations artists at the forefront and brings new international works to Australia to ignite and inspire audiences. I encourage everyone to hunt through the program, attend and see what Sydney Festival 2025 has to offer."

Featuring over **130** shows and events, including **22** World Premieres, **24** Australian exclusives, **43** locations, and over **50** free events inclusive of more than **12** nights of free live music, Sydney Festival 2025 amasses an expansive roster of diverse local artists and renowned international names this summer.

Year on year, the Festival's annual program serves as a reflection of the questions, ideas and themes consuming the cultural zeitgeist, as brought to life in the words and works of its talented class of featured artists. In 2025, the often blurry edges of utopian idealism and dystopian despair are writ large in the likes of **Dark Noon's** extraordinary one-act dismantling of American history and **Cliff Cardinal's** subversive updating of the Bard's classic in **As You Like It or The Land Acknowledgement**.

Concurrently, examinations of birth and destiny are explored via the transformative installations of **2025 Visual Artist in Residence Telly Tuita** and the participatory **What We Leave Behind** project from **Cave Urban**, which serves as a totem of festival-goers' hopes for the future.

Curated by Sydney Festival's **Creative Artist in Residence, Jacob Nash**, the First Nations-led **Blak Out** program introduces a new gathering space and expanded festival footprint with three weekends of conversation and events that celebrate the coming together of people, country, spirit and truths.

Across the city, Sydney Festival will play host to some of the hottest about shows of the season, from the highly anticipated World Premiere of **Siegfried & Roy: The Unauthorised Opera** and a deeply personal night of storytelling from Sydney icon **William Yang**, to an exciting new dance work by celebrated Australian choreographer **Stephanie Lake**, an eclectic run of live music gigs at the ACO On The Pier, and a blockbuster roster of powerhouse cabaret featuring **Christie Whelan Browne, Rachael Beck** and **Katie Noonan**.

## FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

Step inside the Darlinghurst Courthouse for a sensational 20th century murder trial inspired by one of Sydney's most titillating scandals in **A Model Murder**. Shirley Beiger was a part-time page three girl enraged by her two-timing boyfriend. She shot him, point blank, outside Chequers Nightclub one night in 1954. Guilty or innocent? Audiences will decide. Playwright **Melanie Tait** (*The Appleton Ladies' Potato Race; A Broadcast Coup*) and co-writer and director **Sheridan Harbridge** (*44 Sex Acts in One Week*) return to the very courthouse of Beiger's original trial, opened exclusively for this Sydney Festival season, for a wickedly funny and immersive recreation of the sensational true crime event that had Australia on tenterhooks.

The Wild West rolls into the Sydney Town Hall with the Sydney Festival-exclusive staging of Danish visionary **Tue Biering's** breakout Edinburgh Fringe hit, **Dark Noon**. Fresh from a five-star run at New York's St Ann's Warehouse, a phenomenal South African cast flip the script on Hollywood tropes, reimagining the frontier with slapstick humour, satire and breathtaking stagecraft. As a pioneer town springs up in real time, **Dark Noon** pulls audiences into a raw, immersive ride through history that confronts power, race and displacement.

Award-winning Swiss director **Milo Rau** ends his trilogy of political works with a reimagining of Sophocles' *Antigone*. Theatre meets activism in **Antigone in the Amazon** as a group of Brazilian and European actors and musicians portray the environmental endgame unfolding at the edge of the Amazon rainforest in Pará, Brazil. From a classical story of one woman's stance against the state emerges a dark song about the dangers of exploiting the land and its people.

In an Australian exclusive, Canadian First Nations cultural provocateur **Cliff Cardinal** brings **As You Like It or The Land Acknowledgement** to the Sydney Opera House for an evening of Shakespeare like none other. Affording audiences a poignant glimpse of the unvarnished truth of the reconciliation process between Indigenous communities and colonial settlers in Canada, what results is a devastating yet laugh-out-loud examination of land acknowledgements as cultural and political practice.

Making its World Premiere at the festival, **Constantine Costi** and **Luke Di Somma's** brand-new Australian opera, **Siegfried & Roy: The Unauthorised Opera**, is a modern stage spectacle inspired by Las Vegas' most famous and legendary duo. Raised in war-torn Germany, the eccentric showmen went on to become the highest paid magic act Sin City had ever seen. Complete with live magic, powerhouse vocals, and the iconic duo's show stopping tiger, Mantacore, this epic new opera has plenty of tricks up its bedazzled sleeves.

## THE THIRSTY MILE

January's high-summer period will also see the return of **The Thirsty Mile**, the festival's insatiable takeover of the **Walsh Bay Arts Precinct**.

Sydney Festival is delighted to name Tongan-born and Western Sydney-raised artist, **Telly Tuita**, as its **Visual Artist in Residence** for 2025 with his bold and brilliant 'Tongpop' aesthetic set to consume **The Thirsty Mile**. Influenced by his Polynesian diasporic experience, nostalgic pop-culture references and memories of his homeland in Tonga, **The Tā and Vā (Time and Space) of Tongpop** will envelop indoor and outdoor spaces across the precinct.

Throughout the month, the pop-up hub will serve as the festival's all day and late night hotspot, incorporating eight exhibition spaces and theatres, 12 nights of free live music, World Premiere productions, large scale public art, rejuvenating yoga classes and plenty more festival-only programming to satisfy parched palettes.

Opening with a **Festival Welcome** event on Friday 3 January, Telly's visual takeover will be unveiled alongside uplifting live performance from the **Tongan National Conference Choir** in collaboration with **Leo Tanoi**. Plus a special Welcome to Country by First Nations artist and cultural Advisor **Uncle Matthew Doyle**

Set to be the jewel of the waterside precinct, **Telly Tuita** will also transform the exterior of the **SS John Oxley** with his signature aesthetic, while over at Pier 2/3, his playful collaboration with **Amigo & Amigo** sees a vibrant, family-friendly **Colour Maze** unravel across the wharf.

The centrepiece **Moonshine Bar** will be also reimagined anew by Tuita's artistry, serving as the perfect pre and post-show pitstop or as a festival experience in its own right, with free live music and DJs every Thursday to Sunday night.

Music consultant **Leo Tanoi** aka **DJ Black President** will be on the decks to keep the sounds of the Pacific pumping alongside **Voli K**. Another night will celebrate some incredible LGBTIAQ+ artists, with appearances from **PEPTALK**, **Brendan Maclean** and **Mama de Leche**. Other performers from further afield include Reunion Island's **AURUS** and **Dizzy Days** while local favourites **Thunderfox**, **Cumbiamuffin**, **Tijuana Taxi**, **Foxy Fuzz** and **Maggie Tra** share the best the harbour city has to offer.

## BLAK OUT

The 2025 Blak Out program, as curated by Sydney Festival's Creative Artist in Residence Jake Nash, works to unite some of Australia's most talented First Nations artists to share their powerful stories, challenge perspectives and honour truths in a special month-long program.

Over three weeks in January, a new gathering space at Barangaroo Reserve will be home to much of the free and community Blak Out program. Below the woven canopy produced by **Cave Urban** in collaboration with First Nations fibre artists, **Vigil: Gunyah** will host conversations curated by ABC Radio National's **Rudi Bremer** as well as a series of workshops and performances led by local artists and thinkers. Throughout the program, a soundscape from composer and sound designer **Brendon Boney** will fill the space – encouraging passersby to sit, listen and reflect on their own contributions to a First Nations-led future.

Following this reflection, **Vigil: Truths** will emerge on 25 January at Barangaroo Reserve. This year's ceremony focuses on being heard, sharing knowledge and presenting First Nations visions of what's to come. At its core is the act of listening – listening to the many voices that will resonate across the land and waters this January and beyond.

After a knockout run, the gritty new play **Jacky** arrives at Belvoir Theatre with its whip smart deconstruction of private life, work life and that thing called 'culture'. Written by Arrernte playwright **Declan Furber Gillick** and directed by **Mark Wilson**, **Jacky** stars **Guy Simon** (*Jasper Jones*, *The Visitors*) returning in the title role alongside **Greg Stone** (*A Doll's House, Part 2*)

Inspired by the devastating 2019–2020 fires and the changing climate, **Plant a Promise** is multi-format work which weaves together Indigenous knowledge and environmental science to share the importance of caring for Country. Conceived by choreographer and playwright **Henrietta Baird**, the World Premiere production is presented in four parts: a moving dance performance and native planting held at Bangarra's Studio Theatre, a Baya (fire) installation by the water at **The Thirsty Mile**, and yarns hosted Barangaroo Reserve as part of **Vigil: Gunyah**. Together, these four elements invite Indigenous and non-Indigenous audiences to explore culture and environment, and to find connection in those spaces that colonial systems have tended to separate.

Bookending the Blak Out program is a duo of hotly anticipated album launch events from two of the most commanding talents in Australian music today. To open the season, Kamilaroi and Tongan artist **Radical Son** will perform ***Bilambiyal***, his new album rich in themes of cultural connection, heritage and belonging. And at the festival's tail-end, Murrawarri-Filipino rapper-drummer **DOBBY** weaves hip-hop and immersive storytelling to rally against the exploitation of the Murray-Darling Basin with the release of his debut, ***WARRANGU; River Story***.

Curated by Wiradjuri Yuin actor and Redfern resident **Angeline Penrith** (*Wayside Bride*), ***Redfern Renaissance*** is a series of workshops, discussion panels and performances celebrating the history of National Black Theatre, which operated in Redfern from 1972-1977. The company left a long legacy of activism, self-determination and radical re-thinking of Blak futures through the arts. Alongside **Jacky** in the Upstairs Theatre, two classic productions sit at the heart of the program at Belvoir: ***The Cake Man*** by **Robert Merritt** and ***Here Comes the N\*\*\*\*r*** by **Gerry Bostock** – a work that has never been published in full and to this day can only be found in excerpts.

***bagan bariwariganyan: echoes of country*** is a body of new works created by renowned Gorawarl/Jerrawongarla storyteller and artist **Aunty Julie Freeman**, leading Walbunja/Ngarigo artist **Aunty Cheryl Davison** and Wiradyuri/Kamilaroi artist **Jonathan Jones**, displayed at Bundanon in the Shoalhaven region. Depicting the Glossy Black-cockatoo creation story of Cambewarra Mountain, the work sings with the stories of the region, celebrating local traditions and the ongoing collaboration of these three artists and cultural leaders.

**Aunty Lola Ryan** hails from a lineage of esteemed Dharawal shell artists from La Perouse. She has designed ***Ngabu***, a giant interactive installation mounted on top of the overhead bridge on Hickson Road, in homage to the series of shell harbour bridges created by her mother Lola Delia Ryan, many of which are now found in the collections of the nation's most prominent cultural institutions. Climb up and over the arch of Aunty Lola's bridge and marvel at the giant colourful shell patterns while also taking in the view of Sydney Harbour Bridge.

## **THEATRE, OPERA AND CABARET**

The internationally acclaimed **Back to Back Theatre** – winner of the 2024 Venice Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement in Theatre – returns to Sydney Festival with the must-see ***MULTIPLE BAD THINGS***. The Sydney Opera House stage will be transformed into a toneless warehouse at the end of the world wherein three employees wrestle with a seemingly pointless task and struggle to work together.

Celebrating his 80th birthday, the beloved Chinese-Australian visual and performance artist, **William Yang**, reflects on a remarkable life well-lived in ***Milestone***. Set against **Elena Kats-Chernin**'s haunting score, performed live by a chamber ensemble and Kats-Chernin on piano, Yang weaves together themes of family, cultural and sexual identity with his signature blend of warmth, disarming humour and total candour. Drawing on Yang's vast collection of documentary photographs, ***Milestone*** is also the story of queer Australia, from the early days of Sydney's Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras to the HIV/AIDS epidemic of the 1980s and 90s.

***The Tamilization of Ahilan Ratnamohan*** is a personal story about reminiscence, loss and language fascination. Author, choreographer and actor, **Ahilan Ratnamohan** attempts the performance entirely in Tamil, a language he didn't learn as a child. His mother, sitting next to him on stage, becomes his teacher who encourages and prompts him. In this way, Ahilan traces the roots of this language loss to its rediscovery.

After packed-out runs at the Metropolitan Opera of New York and Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, this playful new staging of **Cendrillon** (*Cinderella*) makes a grand Australian debut presented by **Opera Australia**. With a delightful dash of humour, lavish costumes and playful choreography **Laurent Pelly's** staging transports audiences into a land of enchantment and nostalgia. Relishing the role, audience favourite and internationally renowned Australian mezzo **Emma Matthews** helps make dreams come true as the Fairy Godmother.

In a deeply personal cabaret, musical powerhouse **Christie Whelan Browne** (*Show People*) looks back from her childhood to today – from the blue light discos and crushing teenage doubt to battles with endometriosis and her own self-worth – to tell a tale of hard-worn self-acceptance. Written and directed by **Sheridan Harbridge**, **Life in Plastic** features a dizzying array of dance hits and pop anthems. Plus, guest appearances from Barbie, some full-on dental braces, soul-bearing diary entries and one triumphant dancing dinosaur, in a story of finding oneself and loving that person without bounds.

Blending storytelling, cabaret and dazzling drag, **Tina – A Tropical Love Story** is a heartfelt tribute to the indomitable spirit of Tina Turner. Enter the enchanting realm of First Nations drag performer **Miss Ellaneous (AKA Ben Graetz)**, who shares deeply personal tales of growing up in Darwin and the profound impact of the Queen of Rock 'n' Roll. **Tina – A Tropical Love Story** is written, performed and directed by Graetz with special performances from guest artists from the drag, First Nations and queer performance scene. Simply the best.

Australian star of stage and screen, **Rachael Beck** (*Beauty and the Beast*, *Les Misérables*, *Cats*) performs a collection of verbatim stories shared by extraordinary Australian women. Co-created by **James Millar** (*Matilda the Musical*) and with contributions by local singer/songwriters, **In Her Own Words** is an anecdotal, surprising and revealing celebration of inspiring female stories with stories from composer-pop star **Kate Miller-Heidke**, visual artists **Yvette Coppersmith** and **Sally Browne**, screen producer **Celia Tait**, Oz Harvest visionary **Ronni Kahn**, journalist and bestselling author **Sarah Wilson**, choreographer **Kelley Abbey**, Les Girls legend **Carlotta** and more.

The angelic vocals and emotional depth of Jeff Buckley's 1994 masterpiece, **Grace**, will be paid tribute by multi-award-winning Australian singer and festival favourite **Katie Noonan** on the occasion of the seminal album's 30th anniversary. Two years after her "spine-tingling" (*Sydney Morning Herald*) tribute to Joni Mitchell's *Blue* at Sydney Festival, the ARIA Award-winning Australian singer and her band recreate **Grace** for five mesmerising shows.

Drawing on her Weitou ancestry, **Rainbow Chan** reimagines a ritual known as the bridal lament, a public performance of grief in which a bride wept and sang in front of family and friends. Conceived and structured as a song cycle, **The Bridal Lament** 哭嫁歌 brings to life intergenerational and cross-cultural perspectives on diasporic experiences and the complex history of Hong Kong. With a new suite of songs by Chan and direction from CAAP Artistic Director **Tessa Leong**, this lush and lavish work pays homage to ritual in a vibrant world of projection, movement and colour.

## DANCE

Following *Colossus* and *Manifesto* (smash successes at Sydney Festival in 2020 and 2023), **The Chronicles** is a cathartic new dance work by Australia's boldest choreographer, **Stephanie Lake**. Lake's explosive bodily language is translated by twelve incredible dancers alongside a masterful electro-acoustic score by **Robin Fox**, the ethereal sounds of a children's choir and a stirring solo vocalist. Pulsing with energy and sensuality, **The Chronicles** explores the cycles of life and the inevitability of change.

The timeless Greek myth of Eurydice takes on new life in **AFTERWORLD**, a World Premiere work that brings together the visionary choreography of **Sue Healey**, the live percussion and electronic music of innovative composer **Laurence Pike**, and five incredible dancers, set against the ethereal film presence of 109-year-old **Eileen Kramer** as the tragic Eurydice.

Honouring their roots in Sydney's underground queer and diasporic club scenes, **Justin Talplacido Shoulder** and the collective behind **ANITO** build on their shared histories of costume, puppetry, dance and experimental electronic music to reimagine myths and stories for the now. Creating a "Queer Filipino Future Folkloric space of storytelling", the dance work centres on the importance of natural spirits, intuiting with them as guides towards imagining possible parallel futures.

The vibrant culture of Spain comes to the **Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre**. Exclusive to Sydney Festival, **A Taste of Spain** features a captivating collaboration between the **Pepa Molina Flamenco Dance Company** and the **Western Sydney Youth Orchestra**, interpreting "Suite Española" by the illustrious **Isaac Albéniz**. Begin your evening with a welcoming glass of sangria and indulge in a selection of Spanish-inspired dishes. The rich flavours of Spain will complement a night of enchanting performances that capture the essence of Spanish fiestas.

## IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCES

Saddle up for **Cowboy** at Parramatta's Riverside Theatres, an interactive solo contemporary dance work where audiences are not just a spectator; they are brawling in the saloon, robbing a train and transforming the story as it unfolds for one hell of a ride. Creator and performer **Michael Smith**, armed with an original score by **Regurgitator** bassist **Ben Ely**, gallops across the frontier to reveal the shared humanity beneath the Stetson, and the raw desires and hidden vulnerabilities that shape our identities.

**KATMA** is a slang term from Sudan meaning "suffocation" or "no room for breathing" – a word that describes the intensity of hard partying. This immersive performance, directed by **Azzam Mohamed** (*Sculptured Riddims*), brings that frenetic energy to the dancefloor, pulling inspiration from both Sudan and Australia's party scenes. With no seats, the audience is part of the action, fully surrounded by seven dancers performing a dynamic fusion of street and club dance styles: breaking, hip-hop, krump, waacking, locking, house and Afro dances.

The festival's beloved Brett Whiteley Studio Sessions series goes alfresco for 2025 with five diverse live music acts set to perform live in the lush and leafy surrounds of **Wendy Whiteley's Secret Garden**. Brett Whiteley's record collection was as eclectic as the many stories and memories planted in Wendy's bohemian garden – a place for joy, grief, reflection and hope. **Maharshi Raval, William Barton and Véronique Serret, NoSax NoClar, Sydney Philharmonia Choirs**, and **Joseph and James Tawadros** will each bring their unique stylings for a special open-air music experience in Lavender Bay.

Occupying a new immersive black box space at **The Thirsty Mile, ENIGMA: Immersive Sound and Video Art** presents a free exhibition of several absorbing works from Australia's leading video and sound artists. From late October onwards, **ENIGMA** will host a rotating roster of installations from artists including **Oren Ambarchi** and **Angelica Mesiti**.

**Sunrise Yoga** has a vibrant new home: the **Colour Maze**, which boasts knockout views of Sydney Harbour. Join **Jazz Luna** on the mat at sunrise for energising Vinyasa (flow) practice, accompanied by the blissed-out beats of the Festival's in-house DJ.

## MUSIC LUMINARIES

Much-loved singer-songwriter **Rufus Wainwright** brings a selection of his finest pop and folk compositions to the Sydney Opera House. Performing solo on piano and guitar with his soaring baritone, the extraordinary Juno Award-winning and three-time GRAMMY® nominated showman takes audiences through his wide-ranging, technicolour songbook as part of his Australian tour.

Melbourne alt-rock band **Not Drowning, Waving** fronted by **David Bridie** re-unite with Papua New Guinean musician **George Telek** in a rare performance of their groundbreaking 1990 collaboration, **Tabaran**. Marking the 35th anniversary of the album – and inspired by the upcoming 50th anniversary of PNG's independence – Telek and Bridie will be joined by many of the original musicians from the recording plus an impressive line-up of new talent from PNG and Australia.

Opened in late 80s Detroit, the Music Institute became the Motor City's response to the legendary house and disco clubs of its time. For the first time ever, co-founders **Chez Damier** and **Alton Miller** are touring together to share the story behind one of dance music's pivotal club nights. They'll dig deep into their encyclopaedic collections to recreate the iconic experience at City Recital Hall.

**Perry Keyes**, the voice of inner-Sydney's south returns to the stage with a live cinematic presentation of his sixth LP. **Black & White Town** chronicles the grit and glory of public housing life in Redfern and Waterloo, with Keyes' songs set to the backdrop of the evocative images of Sydney filmmaker and photographer **Johnny Barker**.

Sydney musical institution and best-kept local secret, the **Starfish Club**, is bringing its dynamic jazz groove to ACO On The Pier. Across two shows, **Jonathan Zwartz**, **Hamish Stuart** and the incredible Starfish ensemble will be joined by special guests, including acclaimed vocalist **Dannielle De Andrea** (aka Gaha) and rising star **Ruby Jackson** with **Laneous** and **Barney McAll**.

More than 70 years after its composition John Cage's magnum opus, *Sonatas and Interludes*, is reimagined as a three-dimensional world at Carriageworks. For **The Cage Project**, Australian percussionist, composer and sound artist **Matthias Schack-Arnott** creates an immersive installation of concert and visual art as a large mobile of floating percussion instruments rotates above a massive kinetic sculpture by acclaimed French pianist **Cédric Tiberghien**.

**The Emma Pask Big Band** reprise Park's celebrated Latin jazz album **Cosita Divina** on its 10th anniversary. The local jazz legend and her vibrant 12-piece Latin jazz orchestra evoke a journey through the lush sounds of Brazilian, Cuban and Spanish song, showcasing why she's a favourite of Latin star Ricky Martin and audiences worldwide.

## FUTURE FREQUENCIES

Discover tomorrow's next big thing with the **Future Frequencies** line-up. New and upcoming talent from across Australia and around the globe descend on Sydney for a series of must-see gigs and performances.

Drawing weighty comparisons to the likes of Marvin Gaye and David Ruffin, Daptone Records recruit **Jalen Ngonda** is bringing golden-era soul to a new generation. Fresh from the release of his 2023 debut album, *Come Around and Love Me*, Ngonda is ready to make festival audiences swoon over two nights at City Recital Hall.

New York-raised vocalist **Yaya Bey** is one of R&B's most original new stars, with a sound and swagger that's entirely her own, blending boundary-pushing neo-soul with funk. Onstage, Bey is a force of nature, with setlists speaking to self-love, loss and resilience. After a run of critically lauded releases, the R&B shapeshifter will make her hotly anticipated Australian debut.



Raised in East London's Isle of Dogs, **Hak Baker** cemented his iconoclastic status with 2023's *Worlds End FM*. Earning a cadre of fans including The Streets, Fontaines D.C. and Pete Doherty, Baker's street-level storytelling and genre-scuffing "G-folk" sound will collide with the Sydney Festival stage.

Alternately tough and tender, Melbourne's **Cash Savage and The Last Drinks** have developed a reputation as one of the country's most ferocious live acts. Following the success of their brutally honest fifth studio album, *So This Is Love*, the outfit will bring their bruising post-punk rock to town.

In her first visit to Sydney, the rising star of the European jazz scene, Ukrainian-born, Berlin-based singer and musician Ganna Gryniva – aka **GANNA** – shares her stunning fusion of modern jazz, electro beats and traditional Ukrainian folk alongside gifted guitarist **Tal Arditi**.

Led by producer and saxophonist **Pete Cunningham**, Bristol collective **Ishmael Ensemble** explore the sounds of spiritual jazz, psychedelic dub and experimental electronica to create a sonic terrain entirely their own. Their latest album, *Rituals*, is almost psychedelic in its blend of colours, textures, facets and moods.

Singer, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Jófríður Ákadóttir, aka **JFDR**, has evolved into one of Iceland's most prodigious artists, with Björk having cited her as an inspiration. Music-lovers will enjoy the artist's restrained gentleness and sublime experimental electro-folk in an intimate one-off concert.

With a genre-defying and charismatic take on jazz, R&B and electro-funk, Canadian-Filipina artist **Mary Ancheta Quartet** has brought high-voltage stage presence to Montreal Jazz Festival, Vancouver International Jazz Festival and other high profile showcases across Canada. Inspired by the likes of Squarepusher, The Meters and Prince, the quartet extends an irresistible invitation to groove.

Combining the freewheeling talents of saxophonist and clarinetist **Bastien Weeger** and beatboxer and bass clarinetist **Julien Stella**, the French duo **NoSax NoClar** is shaking up the European jazz scene with performances at festivals like *Jazzahead!* in Germany. Their sound represents contemporary jazz at its most agile and inventive, bringing in influences from folklore to Balkan, Celtic and Berber music to produce lively, hard-hitting tracks where timbre, rhythm and melody are one.

ARIA-nominated, internationally acclaimed vocalist and dancer **Parvyn**, known as the lead of cult psychedelic band The Bombay Royale, lights up the festival. With her hypnotic fusion of pop, electronica and traditional Indian sounds, her live shows brilliantly synthesise the many strands of her career.

Breaking out with earworm singles on tastemaking French label Kitsuné, Australia's own synth-pop queen **Chela** evolved again with 2023's electrifying queer anthems "Cool 2B Queer" and "Hard 4 You". Expect charisma to burn and some seriously enviable dance moves.

Presented by **Astral People**, the series *Ode to Inspiration* joins the dots between the trailblazers who opened doors and tomorrow's new radicals walking through them. Sydney's **Setwun & The Soulstronauts** pay homage to **Roy Ayers**, a prophet of funk, soul and jazz. While Melbourne singer, songwriter and selector **Allysha Joy** reinterprets the songbook of **Roberta Flack** alongside material from her new album, *The Making of Silk*.

Returning to the Australian National Maritime Museum for its ninth year and featuring a world-class program of musicians, dancers, entrepreneurs and interactive experiences, **New Beginnings Festival** is a celebration of Sydney's refugee, migrant, multicultural and multi-generational communities.

## RESONANCE

This year's classical program at ACO On The Pier sees four of Australia's most celebrated music ensembles and solo artists respond to the theme "birth, destiny and what we leave behind" – inspired by Sydney Festival **Visual Artist in Residence Telly Tuita** and his Tongan ancestors.

From beautiful simplicity to pandemonium beyond recognition, **Omega Ensemble** presents a program of contemporary masterworks, featuring Missy Mazzoli's GRAMMY®-nominated double bass concerto *Dark with Excessive Bright* with guest bassist **Jaan Pallandi** and groundbreaking music from American composer Samuel Adams.

Mezzo-soprano and vocalist **Lotte Betts-Dean** presents a highly charged, virtuosic and wide-reaching program, fusing contemporary music for voice and electronics with four centuries of international art song. Lotte will be joined on stage by her laptop, surround-sound speakers and longstanding collaborator, pianist **Joseph Havlat**, to perform an unusual and thrilling tapestry of vocal music, including rare gems by composers and songwriters across the musical and historical spectrum from Barbara Strozzi, Erin Gee and Giacinto Scelsi to Nick Drake, Caroline Polachekto and Béla Bartók.

The music of Bach – perfect and universal – is the connecting thread in a compelling program from **Bach Akademie Australia**. Looking to the heavens for inspiration in *Bach: Birth and Destiny*, voices and instruments dance and resound in music from the high Renaissance to today, from Europe to the Pacific – with the Morning Star as a guiding light.

Returning with an all-new quartet, **ACO Up Close: Legacies** following the musical traditions of Bach and Haydn into the current century. Running through the program are moving stories of music left unfinished and challenges handed to future generations.

## **CIRCUS, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING**

Throughout the festival season, the general public is invited to share a message of hope for the future, with their written actions woven into this unique installation on Tallawoladah Lawn outside the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia in Circular Quay. From art and architecture collective Cave Urban along with Sydney Festival, *What We Leave Behind* is an opportunity to share and connect without leaving a trace.

**Colour Maze** is an imaginative play experience that inspires children and the young at heart to get hands-on with visual art and journey through the "Tongpop" aesthetic of Sydney Festival **Visual Artist in Residence Telly Tuita**. Brought to life by public art experts **Amigo & Amigo**, the studio has teamed up with Tuita to create ten rooms for young explorers to wind their way through – with building blocks, swings and knitted playgrounds. Kids can channel their inner artist with climbable craft and sticker activities featuring Tongan motifs through a blaze of colour.

Bringing their thrilling antics and infectious energy to Parramatta's Riverside Theatres and the Pavilion Arts Centre, Quebec's **Cirque Alfonse** spin childhood memories and rural cliches into *Animal*, a surreal circus experience set to an infectious live soundtrack of 'agricultural funk'. Expect jaw-dropping acrobatics, daring juggling (everything from eggs to giant cowbells), tap dancing, absurd humour and even a tractor doing wheelies. Founded by **Antoine Carabinier-Lépine** and his father **Alain**, **Cirque Alfonse** is an intergenerational rural-raised circus collective who have spent the past twenty years touring the biggest cities in the world with their truly authentic circus style.

Also at Riverside Theatres in Parramatta is *BullyBully*, a hilarious musical for ages 3+ told in the style of *West Side Story*, with two performers, many songs, funny quarrels, some bickering and (eventually) a happy ending. It's created by **René Geerlings**, who has kept thousands of young children (and their grown-ups) on the edge of their seats. Netherlands company **Maas theater en dans** presents this

award-winning, joyous musical in its Australian Premiere season, in association with Sydney Opera House.

***Converted!*** is a comedy disco musical about teenagers who just want to fall in love, but face a system desperate to police, politicise and discuss their identities. Written by award-winning comedy writer **Vic Zerbst** and composer **Oliver John Cameron** and directed by **Australian Theatre for Young People's** Associate Director, **Hayden Tonazzi**, it's a feel-good show that affirms and celebrates queer teenagers who just want to be themselves.

Explore the hidden worlds of young people in ***Stories From Here***, an audio walking tour by **Outloud** that invites listeners to see Bankstown through young people's eyes. Across the suburb, posters with QR codes will play stories written and recorded by young people about the places that matter to them. Go solo, pop on headphones for a guided tour with an artist or take a virtual tour.

The aerial experts at **Sydney Trapeze School** are setting up shop in Palm Grove under the Western Distributor in Darling Harbour and showcasing their high-flying best with two free shows a day in ***Swing! Circus at Darling Harbour***. Bring the family to marvel at their acrobatic daredevilry. Take a leap of faith with paid trapeze lessons or stay grounded with free drop-in circus skills workshops.

Weaving together hopes for the future, ***What We Leave Behind*** invites the public to share messages of hope for our collective future. Written actions will be woven into a unique installation on Tallawoladah Lawn, in collaboration with art and architecture collective **Cave Urban**.

Soak in a magical summer evening featuring some of the nation's most talented musicians with the return of the beloved free outdoor concert, ***Sydney Symphony Under the Stars*** at Parramatta Park. Be charmed by Egyptian-Australian oud virtuoso **Joseph Tawadros** performing a selection of his finest works. The **Sydney Symphony Orchestra** brings the orchestral showstoppers, topped off with a rousing fireworks finale.

***The Whale*** sails into Bondi for an interactive and immersive experience by **Spare Parts Puppet Theatre** in the Pavilion Courtyard. Be transported on a sonic journey of migration and myth, with a large-scale moving whale figure suspended in space and surrounded by other fantastical sea creatures.

Festival favourite **Branch Nebula** returns with a hair-raiser at Seymour Centre – the anarchic street energy of ***Air Time*** is set to be exhilarating, with the risk and danger of bodies on foot and on wheels colliding in a confined space.

The fun-filled **Hive Festival** returns this summer for children and families. Explore a buzzing world of art and play. Come together for art-making, be immersed in the magic of storytelling and experience playful performances at the Art Gallery of New South Wales and The Leo Kelly Blacktown Arts Centre.

## **TALKS, WORKSHOPS, MASTERCLASSES AND IN-CONVERSATION EVENTS**

Join ocean explorer, filmmaker and technology innovator, **James Cameron** (*Titanic, Avatar*), veteran of eight pioneering deep-sea expeditions, in conversation about shipwrecks across the Pacific and his dive to the deepest point on Earth in the **DEEPSEA CHALLENGER** submersible built in Sydney and now on display at the Australian National Maritime Museum

The *Sydney Morning Herald* chief investigative reporter and 10-time Walkley winner **Kate McClymont** joins **Sydney Festival Director Olivia Ansell** at the State Library of NSW to dive into Sydney's most unusual crime stories, including the many trials that took place in Darlinghurst Courthouse, the location of Shirley Beiger's original trial now turned immersive theatre venue for ***A Model Murder***.

***The Art of Architecture: First Nations Design*** at Chau Chak Wing Museum explores how First Nations people engage in Sydney's urban planning, architecture and public art – focusing on the collaboration with non-First Nations partners and the unique outcomes.

In support of Manly Art Gallery's exhibition, *The Water Understands*, pianist and composer **Sophie Hutchings**, First Nations filmmaker and public artist **Jacob Nash** and multi-disciplinary artist **Shaun Gladwell** are joined by *ArtsHub* Visual Arts Editor **Gina Fairley** to unpack the influence of water on their work – whether visual, performative or musical.

Theatrical gamechanger **Cliff Cardinal** will be joined by Sydney Festival's own **Jake Nash** for a special in-conversation event about challenging dogmas and upending conventions on stage in ***As You Like It or The Land Acknowledgement***.

For dancers, **Azzam Mohamed**, educator and director of **KATMA**, will share his infectious energy in both a **Street Dance Workshop** and **Freestyle Dance Lab Masterclass** while renowned choreographer **Stephanie Lake** also provides first hand teaching in a **Contemporary Dance Masterclass**.

In another masterclass, choreographer **Sue Healey** and composer and percussionist **Laurence Pike** invite professional dancers and musicians to experience sonic and physical rhythm-making, exploring improvisational structures drawing upon elements from the work **AFTERWORLD**.

## VISUAL ARTS

The **Art Gallery of New South Wales** hosts the first ever Australian retrospective dedicated to Belgian pioneer, **René Magritte** with over 100 works by the prominent surrealist painter on display. Also at AGNSW is **Cao Fei: My City is Yours**, a neo-bright reflection of China's rapid urbanisation and digital revolutions in film, photography and installations. The gallery also houses a major new commission in the Tank by one of Australia's most acclaimed contemporary artists. **Angelica Mesiti: The Rites of When** is a large-scale video and sound installation that reimagines collective and communal rituals in relation to seasonal cycles, at a time of environmental uncertainty and flux.

New York-based artist **Julie Mehretu** is widely regarded as one of the most significant painters of her generation. **Julie Mehretu: A Transcore of the Radical Imaginatory** at the **Museum of Contemporary Art Australia** showcases her new and recent works about revolution, migration, global capitalism and climate change.

**Artspace** presents a ground-breaking Pacific-led exhibition of new works from artists **Latai Taumoepeau** and **Elisapeta Hinemoa Heta** entitled **Re-Stor(y)ing Oceania**. Through story, song, performance, action and activism, connect with communities living on the islands and atolls of the Southern Hemisphere – and listen to their demands for greater climate justice.

***The Water Understands*** is contemporary art exhibition at **Manly Art Gallery & Museum** that interrogates water as a life-giving element, featuring **Miguel Angelo Libarnes, Leah Bullen, Michael Cook, Tamara Dean, Keg De Souza, Shaun Gladwell, Phillip George, Gregory Hodge, Anna Madeleine Raupach, Douglas Schofield** and **Angela Tiatia**.

**Bankstown Biennale** returns to the **Bankstown Arts Centre** for a third edition with a First Nations-led program, **Same Same/Different**. The exhibition title draws from a common phrase used at the Top End of Australia by Asian and First Nations people alike, describing similarities whilst acknowledging differences.

Using state-of-the-art projections, video and priceless artefacts, the immersive ***Machu Picchu and the Golden Empires of Peru*** exhibition at **Australian Museum** offers an unparalleled glimpse into the opulent history of the Andean people. Beat the heat every Wednesday evening at the **Australian Museum's Peruvian Nights** with free live music and films, Peruvian inspired snacks and refreshments, and late night entry into the blockbuster exhibition. Celebrated Peruvian percussionist **Giorgio Rojas** teams up with musical outfit **ALLY** to provide Afro-Peruvian and Andalusian traditional rhythms.

Kick it out-of-hours with some of Sydney's biggest cultural institutions for **Art Up Late**. The **Art Gallery of New South Wales** is serving up two curated music programs inspired by the Cao Fei and Magritte exhibitions, plus Angelica Mesiti's *The Rites of When*. The **Museum of Contemporary Art Australia** is bringing live tunes with *Up Late: Julie Mehretu* and **Bankstown Arts Centre** and **Manly Art Gallery & Museum** also have night's covered with thought-provoking evening events.

– ENDS –

### NOTES TO EDITOR

- Sydney Festival runs 4-26 January 2025
- Tickets for all shows on sale from 9.00am AEDT Wednesday 30 October 2024
- To celebrate the 49<sup>th</sup> edition, early bird tickets priced at \$49 will be available for A Reserve seats and General Admission across all ticketed shows
- The special early bird offer is strictly limited and runs from 30 October to 2 December (or until sold out)
- Visit [sydneyfestival.org.au](https://sydneyfestival.org.au) for more details

### MEDIA CENTRE

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

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**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.

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. In 2026 Sydney Festival will celebrate its 50th anniversary.