

Australian Made: Wesley Enoch unveils fifth and final Sydney Festival program

Embracing the city and its cultural instigators like never before, artistic director Wesley Enoch and his team have realised an entirely “Australian made” program that will manifest throughout the city through **130 events** across three weeks from **6–26 January**.

From Parramatta to Chippendale, Sydney will provide the canvas for 24 days of engaging and immersive events, exhibitions, workshops and talks. After a year hallmarked by uncertainty, the 2021 program reflects an unwavering commitment to, and celebration of, the very best Australian art, artists and the audiences who love them.

With public health and audience safety of paramount concern this year, much planning has gone into ensuring that the 2021 festival is a Covid-safe environment. All 130 events and festival venues will be deploying Covid-19 Safety Plans and implementing all mandatory Department of Health regulations including capacity and social distancing measures, as well mandatory registration where required.

In response, this summer’s Sydney Festival is set to embrace the outdoors like never before, with a spectacular new Covid-safe pop-up stage at Barangaroo Reserve. At an impressive 32 metres wide, **The Headland** stage is set to outdo both the Capitol and the Sydney Lyric in size, and will be decked out with twin side screens offering close-up views of performers. Set against the backdrop of Sydney Harbour, the stage will feature the festival’s biggest theatrical performances and companies – from Bangarra to Sydney Symphony, Paul Mac to Paul Copsis – over 16 nights for just **\$25 a ticket**.

The Headland stage will play host to ***The Pulse***, an astonishing new work by Australia’s finest circus company **Gravity & Other Myths** which brings together 30 acrobats and a 30-strong choir into a shimmering mass spectacular; **Bangarra Dance Theatre** will present ***Spirit: A Retrospective 2021*** – a powerful collection of dance stories taken from the company’s 30-year repertoire; while electro-pop icon **Paul Mac** and a choir of Sydney’s finest singers will pay homage to musical legend George Michael in the celebratory ***The Rise and Fall of Saint George***.

Elsewhere in The Headland program, **Sydney Symphony Orchestra** will premiere ***The [Uncertain] Four Seasons*** – a work where climate data is harnessed to reimagine Vivaldi’s *Four Seasons* in an ambitious collaboration between composers, designers and scientists; and the inimitable **Paul Copsis** and **iOTA** will unleash ***RAPTURE: a song cycle of Desire and Ecstasy, Murder and Mayhem*** – a contemporary song cycle spanning ecstasy, godlessness, love and pain, featuring the songs of Megan Washington, Deborah Conway, Deborah Harry and The Kinks. Completing The Headland program is ***Songs of Don***, which sees **Katie Noonan, Christine Anu, Suze DeMarchi** and **Emily Wurramara** join forces to pay tribute to one of Australia’s greatest musical troubadours, **Don Walker**.

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Created specifically for the festival in direct response to Covid restrictions, The Headland stage is designed to bring the very best Australian performing arts to as many people as possible this summer in the safest possible way, with each ticket securing audience members a dedicated, socially distanced spot.

“Sydney Festival 2021 is all about kick starting the Australian arts sector by injecting more than \$6million into the pockets of those who have done it tough,” says Enoch.

“Over 1000 artists, companies and venues have come together in a rare sign of solidarity to produce and promote an All Australian Made program that will showcase our country’s creative, cultural and artistic excellence. Our internationally acclaimed, homegrown talent have found themselves grounded in 2020 but at Sydney Festival 2021 you can see how the very best of the world can be in your own back yard. Our Covid Safe planning means there will be fewer tickets on sale for January so it’s get in quick and secure your ticket to bring your friends and family together to celebrate Sydney in Summer.”

NSW Minister for the Arts, Don Harwin echoed Enoch’s comments:

“I am absolutely delighted that Sydney Festival is going ahead this January. It is testament to Wesley’s programming vision and tenacity that he has managed to pull together an entirely Australian program — with the very best of Sydney artists, arts organisations and more coming together under the Sydney Festival banner. In particular, the festival’s new Covid-safe Headland stage at Barangaroo will be something to behold. I encourage all Sydneysiders to come out and safely participate in what will be an extraordinary cultural experience this summer.”

Alongside the Barangaroo program, the festival’s headline events include: ***Sunshine Super Girl*** – the theatrical celebration of Wiradjuri woman **Evonne Goolagong’s** life story which will see Sydney Town Hall transformed into a tennis court; and ***The Last Season***, a provoking new work of dance theatre by **Force Majeure** that explores human survival and environmental destruction. Inspired by Vivaldi’s *The Four Seasons*, *The Last Season* features stage icons **Pamela Rabe**, **Olwen Fouéré** and **Paul Capsis** alongside a cast of 15 young performers.

Following their global smash-hit *Humans* (Syd. Fest. ’17), virtuosic circus ensemble **Circa** returns to the festival with a new intimate and joyous love letter to humanity, **HUMANS 2.0**. Co-written by Tasmanian playwright Nathan Maynard (Palawa) and Aotearoa writer Jamie McCaskill (Māori), **Hide the Dog** is a truly trans-Tasman creation. Directed by Isaac Drandic (Noongar), this uplifting world premiere production celebrates friendship, culture and the world’s last Tasmanian Tiger.

Rounding out the headline program is ***H.M.S. Pinafore*** – director **Kate Gaul’s** wild reimagining of Gilbert and Sullivan’s masterpiece that puts a 21st-century spin on the song-strewn mockery of class, patriotism and the rise of unqualified people to positions of power, which will play at **Riverside Theatres**.

Free and Family

Groundswell is a new work by **Matthias Schack-Arnott**, an artist who fuses sound and movement into evocative experiences. A free, large-scale immersive installation outside Customs House in Circular Quay, *Groundswell* is an interactive artwork that responds to every step you take. As audiences take to a raised platform and shift their weight, thousands of illuminated balls below create a visual and sonic response to individual motions, ensuring each moment is different from the last.

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The beloved ***Sydney Symphony Under the Stars*** returns to Parramatta Park. Once again, conductor Benjamin Northey takes up the baton for a program ranging from the classics of the 18th and 19th centuries to the great film scores of the 20th century. And nothing – not even a global pandemic – will muzzle the famous cannons of Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*.

To understand another person, try walking a mile in their shoes. ***A Mile in My Shoes*** is a unique pop-up store that lets you do just that. Entered via a giant shoebox, the space invites visitors to try on a pair of shoes that belong to someone else (a refugee, a war veteran or a surgeon) and to listen to their story. It might be a tale of loss and sadness, hope and love, of odds overcome. No matter whose shoes you walk in, *A Mile in My Shoes* will take you further than you ever imagined.

In ***Under the Madhan***, Wiradjuri dancer **Jo Clancy** shares a series of gentle, sometimes cheeky stories about caring for Country. Mixing puppetry, song and movement, this delightful family show will see audiences learn dances and Wiradjuri words with Jo under the shade of the gifttree on a magical set designed by revered creators of visual theatre, Erth.

A brilliantly buzzy family circus adventure that hums with heart, honey and humanity, ***A Bee Story*** follows Queen Bee and Worker Bee's adventures rebuilding their hive after a bushfire. Created and directed by **Robbie Curtis** (Cirque du Soleil, Circus Oz) with musician and performer **Lizzie McRae**, this family show explores sustainability and environmentalism via acrobatics, dance and live music.

In other bee-related programming, **Dead Puppet Society** (*Laser Beak Man '20*) returns to the festival with **HIVE MIND** – an innovative new installation that sees large floating bees arranged among the trees at Vaucluse House to inspire a sense of wonder in the natural world. A constantly moving installation that brings these tiny insects to life using movement, sound and light, *HIVE MIND* uses the movement of the wind as the puppeteer, highlighting the vital role played by bees in preserving the delicate balance of our ecosystem.

Blak Out

A gift of Enoch's tenure, Sydney Festival's **Blak Out** program once again foregrounds First Nations voices with stories and performances from First Nations communities from across Australia and New Zealand. Featuring the aforementioned ***Sunshine Super Girl***, Bangarra's ***Spirit*** and ***Hide the Dog***, the 2021 Blak Out program is a richly diverse collection of dance, theatre, music, visual art and performance.

Returning for the third time and cementing a new tradition of cleansing and consideration, ***The Vigil*** returns to Barangaroo Reserve, offering an opportunity to gather together and experience a night of performance and reflection on the eve of Australia Day. Taking place the morning after, the **WugulOra ceremony** celebrates the strength and resilience of Australia's First Nations peoples through dance and song.

After their sold-out 2020 Sydney Festival show, didgeridoo virtuoso **William Barton** and powerhouse violinist **Véronique Serret** return with ***Heartland*** – an invitation into landscape, culture, language and Country. Based on the poetry of Auntie Delmae Barton (William's mother), *Heartland* blends traditional songlines and modern storytelling to create a meditative work inspired by the Australian landscape and the power of connection to place.

Audiences are invited to take a stroll through Parramatta Park to discover ***In Situ***, a collection of site-specific dance works telling First Nations stories, choreographed by dancers including Wakka

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Wakka/Kombumerri woman **Katina Olsen** and Wiradjuri woman **Emily Flannery**. This roving project was conceived by Western Sydney's Dance Makers Collective (*The Rivoli '20*) with the cultural consultation of Darug elders Peta Strachan and Julie Webb.

Songstress **Casey Donovan** brings her powerhouse vocals and rock star band to the City Recital Hall stage for **Casey Donovan in Concert**. Together with Daniel Edmonds (musical director) and their songbook of iconic hits – featuring the music of Joni Mitchell, Eva Cassidy, Adele, Ed Sheeran, Beyoncé and more – this special evening of music will remind us that Casey Donovan really is queen of the power-ballad.

Australian lyrebirds have a stunning ability to mimic the sounds of their surroundings; there isn't a song they can't sing. But the lyrebird also has an authentic identity, something uniquely its own. Inspired and intrigued by these behaviours, choreographer **Jasmin Sheppard** (Bangarra Dance Theatre's *Patyegarang*) has created **The Complication of Lyrebirds**, a contemporary dance work questioning expectations of what it means to look or sound Aboriginal.

Innovators in the realm of visual and physical theatre, **Erth**, return to Sydney Festival with a two-part project which includes **Duba** at Carriageworks and **Badu** at the Maritime Museum. At Carriageworks you'll find a guided tour like no other; Duba, meaning 'ground' in Sydney language, leads you into the living underworld for an encounter with the seldom seen. Puppetry-based, this multi-sensory experience is filled with creations inspired by work with leading international conservation zoos. Meanwhile, the Australian Maritime Museum will host another Erth experience designed just for families. **Badu**, meaning 'water' in Sydney language, is a journey into the wild wonders of our ocean and will feature beautiful puppetry, visual effects and multi-media.

Mariw Minaral (Spiritual Patterns) presents a stunning retrospective of the artworks of cultural and environmental artist, **Alick Tipote**. In *Mariw Minaral*, Tipote – arguably one of the most important artists of his generation – brings together some of the finest examples of his unique and intricate linocut printmaking practice and showcases his award-winning sculptural works and ancestral masks.

Presented by **Artspace** and Sydney Festival **Carol McGregor and Judy Watson** features the work of Carol McGregor (Wathaurung, Kulin Nation) and Judy Watson (Waanyi), two Indigenous Australian artists working with historical material and narratives to illuminate the continuing strength of Indigenous culture. With significant new commissions, the exhibition reinforces connections to country and cultural heritage through making as an act of resistance, communion, self-determination and celebration.

Elsewhere in the visual arts, **Defying Empire: 3rd National Indigenous Art Triennial** brings together works by 30 contemporary Indigenous artists to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the 1967 Referendum which recognised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australians for the first time.

Theatre

Switch off your dating apps, forget the nightclubs and tune in to a thousand-year practice of courtly Persian love poetry in **Dorr-e Dari: A Poetic Crash Course in the Language of Love**. Through intimate storytelling and epic ballads from the streets of Kabul, Tehran and Quetta via Western Sydney, your hosts Bibi, Jawad and Mahdi will guide you on the path to love. Inspired by the tradition of private recitals and 'curtain shows' performed throughout the Persian world, *Dorr-e Dari* marks the festival return of the brave and transformative theatre company **PYT Fairfield** (*Tribunal '18*).

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In ***Maureen: Harbinger of Death*** writer and performer **Jonny Hawkins** pays homage to his late friend, Maureen by sharing her acerbic life advice. Framed by Jatz crackers, velvet and cigarettes, Maureen invites audiences into her bohemian living-room for a journey of exquisite storytelling. Co-created with director Nell Ranney, and inspired by Hawkins' real-life friend, a self-described 'working-class glamour queen', ***Maureen: Harbinger of Death*** redefines our concepts of older women, honours the bounties of inter-generational relationships and pays tribute to kindness, individuality and dignity.

Thirty-year-old Fatima, under pressure to marry and have with children, seeks glory at the Queen Lebanon Australia pageant in a bid to gain her prospective in-laws' respect in the high-spirited play, ***Queen Fatima!*** Written by the acclaimed **James Elazzi** (*Lady Tabouli* '20) and directed by **Paige Rattray**, ***Queen Fatima!*** is a heartfelt comedy about celebrating our differences.

Addiction, corruption, environmental destruction. At best it seems our species has an irresistible need to self-harm. At worst, we seem bent on wiping ourselves out. Provocateur **Mitch Jones (aka Captain Ruin)** imagines our dystopian future in ***AutoCannibal***, a visceral blend of clowning, performance art and physical theatre that takes us into a world in which only one human survives.

Portable toilet engineer Kenny Smyth is proud of his job, despite what his dad and the public may think of him. In this big-hearted and hilarious salute to decency and hard work, ***KENNY*** (adapted for the stage by **Steve Rodgers** from the hit film of the same name) reminds us that all that glitters is not necessarily gold.

Seymour, Hear More

Sydney Festival takes over Chippendale's Seymour Centre with a program of Australian made music, ranging from genre-defying original works to old favourites performed in new ways.

Broadway and West End star **Philip Quast** takes us on a captivating journey through the songs and stories of his incredible life in ***Is This All Then?*** From his parents' dusty turkey farm in Tamworth to the dressing rooms of glittering theatres worldwide, the multi-award-winning star of musicals, plays and film returns to the Seymour Centre – where he first trod the boards in his professional Sydney debut ***Candide*** – with opera singer and pianist Anne-Maree McDonald to find an answer to the question, *Is This All Then?*

A richly flavoured musical treat, ***Afternoon Tea at Six*** blends traditional Persian classical music with Western jazz. For this performance, **Hamed Sadeghi's Eishan Ensemble** is joined by the spine-tingling vocals of Dharawal woman **Sonya Holowell**. Their collaboration delivers entirely original music with segues into improvisation, creating a spellbinding musical sound that defies definition.

Rewired: Musicals Reimagined by Hayes is the latest production by award-winning musical theatre and cabaret ensemble **Hayes Theatre Co**. Directed by **Richard Carroll** ***Rewired*** sees **Genevieve Lemon, Toby Francis, Sheridan Harbridge, Ryan Gonzales, Max Lambert** and **Elenoa Rokobaro** rework a selection of classic musicals like you've never heard them before.

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Jazz composer **Jeremy Rose** and the 8-piece **Earshift Orchestra** return to Sydney Festival with ***Disruption! The Voice of Drums*** – a thrilling concert-length tribute to the timeless, visceral and disruptive power of the drum. Featuring drum virtuosi **Simon Barker** and **Chloe Kim** (Barker's Korean-born protégé), *Disruption!* will sweep audiences from ancient ritual to the protest movements of today in a captivating concert that will strike at the audience's very core.

Allowed and Local

In 2021, Sydney Festival invites audiences to share in the joy of live music with **ALLOWED AND LOCAL** – the festival's takeover of some of Sydney's most storied and treasured music venues. From The Lansdowne to the Factory Theatre, Tokyo Sing Song to The Vanguard and Low 302, **ALLOWED AND LOCAL** will feature label takeovers by **Dew Process** and **Of Leisure** along with performances by **Alice Ivy, HANDSOME, Sui Zhen, Urthboy, Emily Wurramara, Birdz, E^ST, Ngaiire, Christine Anu, Annie Hamilton** and many, many more.

The full **ALLOWED AND LOCAL** program will be announced on November 26.

Opera & Classical Music

In ***Universal Woman***, the **Australian Brandenburg Orchestra** celebrates the remarkable creative achievements of Hildegard von Bingen, the twelfth-century polymath whose life story and body of work continue to resonate through the ages. A Sydney Festival exclusive, *Universal Woman* takes place amid the spine-tingling acoustics of St Mary's Cathedral Crypt, with five performances led by Brandenburg musicians on period instruments as well as singers from the Brandenburg Choir.

In a virtuosic kaleidoscope of music, ***12 Hands 6 Grands*** will see audiences experience six of Australia's best pianists playing six grand pianos at Sydney Town Hall. Here, **Piers Lane**, Artistic Director of the Sydney International Piano Competition, has invited six of Australia's best female pianists to join in this rare collaboration. Beginning with the genius of Bach, the program also features past and present Australian composers and a generous helping of Latin dance rhythms. This collaborative performance of duos, trios and quartets will culminate in an astounding, musically complex performance by all six pianists – unleashing the sheer power and sublime expressive beauty of concert grand pianos.

Musical Microparks invites audiences to step outside for a pop-up musical and performative walking tour of Erskineville, with guest artists from Somalia, China and Australia. In parks, courtyards and unexpected pockets of green, **Ensemble Offspring** (*Birdsong at Dusk '20*) has paired up with diverse special guests for six unique, cross-cultural duets – sharing universal stories told from the heart. Join the musicians of one of Australia's most imaginative and innovative ensembles as they transform inner-city landscapes into one-off sonic wonderlands.

Future Remains presents an exquisite double bill by **Sydney Chamber Opera** featuring Leoš Janáček's *Diary of One Who Disappeared* and the world premiere of Huw Belling's *Fumeblind Oracle*. Belling's composition continues the story of the dangerous woman at the heart of Janáček's work – a partner piece in which the lone woman moves from love poetry to god-guided violence.

Struggle, exertion...where do they first show up in the body? In the breath. And that's how **Jane Sheldon's poem for a dried-up river** begins: in summer darkness with the sounds of breathing floating over chirping cicadas. Gradually, two sopranos emerge from the soundscape, their labour divided – instrument and words.

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Presented in conjunction with Sydney Chamber Opera, Sheldon's beguiling performance melds opera, poetry, physical theatre and art installation in a mesmerising, unique combination. Sydney Festival's treasured **Salon Series** will also return for a fourth year, bringing together music and architecture for a series of intimate concerts in unique spaces, including the Vestibule of Sydney Town Hall and historic Vacluse House. The full line-up of musicians and venues will be announced on November 26.

Visual Arts

Using light, shadow and scale, the work of influential Australian-Chinese artist **Lindy Lee** will mesmerise you at the Museum of Contemporary Art. Slow down and absorb Lee's reflective, meditative works and her spectacular array of processes. In the most comprehensive survey exhibition of her work, **Lindy Lee: Moon in a Dew Drop** demonstrates how Lee melts bronze, pours ink, and burns paper and steel to examine ideas around art history, cultural authenticity, identity and our relationship to the cosmos.

This Sydney Festival the **Art Gallery of New South Wales** comes alive with **Archie Plus**, a festival of portraiture celebrating people and the power of community in a challenging year. From murals and music to exhibitions and pop-up performances, **Archie Plus** is a collective portrait of our local artistic community in action, a portrait of 2020, and a portrait of our city.

This time of pandemic is surreal, isolating, traumatic, tragic, frustrating, inevitable. Whatever you think it is, it's something we have never experienced before. It's a time for a reset in terms of how we live and design is key.

Design Isolate is an **Australian Design Centre** initiative to show how creative thought can help lead the way for change. Over 60 designers/creative thinkers have captured their thoughts in sketches, diagrams, drawings, text or collage on Covid-19, isolation, what 'a new normal' in Australia might look like, how they are affected and how design might contribute to recovery post-pandemic.

In times of alarmingly diminishing art school options in the tertiary and higher education systems, **Space YZ**, curated by **Daniel Mudie Cunningham**, draws inspiration from the visual arts legacy of Western Sydney University. Featuring early work by **Brook Andrew, Liam Benson, Raquel Ormella, Savanhdary Vongpoothorn** and **Justene Williams** among many others, **Space YZ** celebrates the vibrant artistic practices that have flourished from this important institution, while advocating for better access to art school education in Australia.

How do we mourn and remember the inestimable loss -of animals, of flora, of ecological worlds - wrought by the black summer fires of 2019-2020? Curated by artist **Janet Laurence, Requiem** weaves together visual art, music, poetry, performance, literature, science, philosophy and environmental advocacy to craft a time-space for us to lament and be present to the reality of the loss.

52 ACTIONS is **Artspace's** latest online commissioning platform supporting artists living and working in Australia through the development and presentation of new works. It expands upon **52 ARTISTS 52 ACTIONS**, the year-long Instagram project that ran from 2018–19, inviting 52 artists and collectives across Asia to respond to important concerns in their local contexts. This new iteration utilises the digital framework established by **52 ARTISTS 52 ACTIONS** to support Australian artists, collectives, performers, writers and creatives through the commissioning of new work. Each week for a year a different participant will present a new commission on the Artspace's website and Instagram.

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Lord Mayor Clover Moore concluded that the pandemic had shaped this year's Festival and made it more important than ever.

"The Australian arts sector has suffered badly during the pandemic and I think many people have come to appreciate and value just how much it enriches our lives. This year's Festival will not only bring relief and joy to audiences as we leave the pandemic behind, it represents a vote of confidence in the Australian arts and cultural sector."

"Sydney Festival 2021 will showcase new Australian art with bold contemporary programming that reflects the spirit of our city. We are proud to continue our role as the Festival's founding principal supporter, in partnership with the NSW Government."

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Sydney Festival 2021
6 – 26 January
www.sydneyfestival.org.au

The full Sydney Festival 2021 Program will be announced on Monday November 26

Tickets on sale now

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

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