

Sydney Festival opens to celebrate its 40th anniversary



Photo: Olivier Grossetête Marseille 2013 © Vincent Lucas

Each January, Sydney Festival enlivens and transforms Sydney with a bold cultural celebration based on the highest quality art and big ideas. Sydney Festival opens today to celebrate its 40th anniversary and the final year for esteemed Festival Director **Lieven Bertels** with a spectacular program bursting with free and ticketed events across theatre, dance, circus, opera and contemporary and classical music.

Sydney Festival 2016 is comprised of 157 events, a staggering 89 of which are free. With 383 performances across 34 indoor and outdoor venues, Sydney Festival 2016 features 902 artists from across 22 countries. With 11 world premieres, 20 Australian premieres and 8 Australian exclusives, summer in our beautiful city is not to be missed.

Exclusive performances headline the Festival with Germany's famous **Thalia Theater Hamburg** and director **Jette Steckel** who will make their Australian debut with *Woyzeck*, a stage adaptation by **Robert Wilson**, **Tom Waits** and **Kathleen Brennan**. Whilst acclaimed choreographer **Anne Teresa de Kaesmaeker** returns to Australia with her company **Rosas** to present her earliest choreography *Fase Four Moments to the Music of Steve Reich*, a seminal piece in the evolution of contemporary dance, and major dance concert work *Vortex Temporum*, a thrilling and extraordinary collaboration across art forms by Rosas and contemporary music ensemble **Ictus**.

Sydney loves a good party, and what better way to celebrate 40 years than with **The Flaming Lips** in The Domain, for free! Headlining the famous free concert *Summer Sounds in The Domain* on January 9, The Flaming Lips are a musical force to be reckoned with offering cult favourites like 'She Don't Use Jelly' alongside chart hits as 'Do You Realize??' and live performances that are simply unrivalled. Supports acts include **DJ Misbehaviour** (UK), Nordic electro-pop from **Hermigervill** (Iceland) and **FM Belfast** (Iceland) and Sydney garage punks **Royal Headache**, in their only Sydney appearance this January.

The opening weekend will see one of the largest community participation events presented in Sydney Festival's history, with a 30 metre high monumental building titled *The People's Tower* springing up in Darling Harbour and the fantastically epic *The Ephemeral City* in the Cutaway at Barangaroo Reserve. Art and architecture will collide as we gather the community to help build monumental cardboard structures. Also in the Cutaway at Barangaroo Reserve, **Shaun Gladwell's** newest video work, *Skateboarders vs Minimalism*



will premiere in a large projection along the western wall in a commission by Catriona and Simon Mordant AM. Both works can be enjoyed from a bird's eye view on a free Flying Fox - zipping between the cardboard buildings and video installation on a giant 165m zip line.

In 2016, some of the biggest international names in classical music come together for exquisite collaborations. Opening the Festival with a hauntingly beautiful encounter between voice and visuals, baritone superstar **Matthias Goerne** and visual artist **William Kentridge** perform Schubert's song cycle *Winterreise* whilst on the closing weekend of the Festival, **Anima Eterna Brugge** will perform Australia's first ever Beethoven symphonic marathon on period instruments in *Anima Eterna Brugge Beethoven's Symphonies*. Taking place over five consecutive evenings, Beethoven's exuberant Ninth Symphony will raise the roof of the Sydney Opera House in a grand finale performance with Sydney's own **Australian Brandenburg Choir**.

Collaborations between Australian and international artists shine in 2016 when **Sydney Chamber Orchestra** team up with European director **Pierre Audi** in *Passion*, a 21st century retelling of Monteverdi's *l'Orfeo* by French composer **Pascal Dusapin**. In a new work created exclusively in digital format and co-commissioned with Holland Festival, Australian singer-songwriter **Kate Miller-Heidke** performs the enigmatic title role in the interactive song cycle *The Book of Sand*. Created by **Michel van der Aa** as three parallel layers of music and film, viewers create their own path by switching between storytelling layers in an accessible work available Australia wide.

Immersive experiences and community works are central to this year's theatre events. In *The Object Lesson*, audience members are welcomed into a towering installation of haphazard trinkets, objects and souvenirs as actor and illusionist **Geoff Sobelle** explores our relationship with everyday objects in a magical act of storytelling. Inspired by real-life human reactions to trauma, **Catherine McClements** is joined by local community choirs in *The Events* - an extraordinary fusion of theatre and music, whilst in a taboo busting tell-all performance, Sydney's over 65's draw on all their wisdom and experience to share true stories of their romantic and sex lives in *All the Sex I've Ever Had*.

Sydney Festival will present new Australian works of magnitude and cultural importance with the Helpmann Award-winning opera *The Rabbits*, and **Stephen Page's** directorial debut feature film *SPEAR* by **Bangarra Dance Theatre**. In a major new work by Broome's internationally acclaimed dance-theatre company **Marrugeku**, *Cut the Sky* explores our relationship with Country – our past, present and future through an Aboriginal lens – and humanity's frailty in the face of our own actions.

The 2016 music program features some of the globe's most exciting artists of our generation. In an Australian premiere season, four-time Grammy Award-winning jazz drummer and composer **Antonio Sanchez** will perform his fervent score live alongside the film screening of the hit movie *Birdman (Or, the Unexpected virtue of ignorance)* and **Joanna Newsom** will return to launch her new album *Divers* at the Sydney Opera House in her first Australian show in five years. The orchestral masterpiece that broke new ground in minimalism in 1975 by pairing concert hall aesthetics with pop will be restaged in *Arthur Russell's Instrumentals* under the direction of **Peter Gordon**, featuring the original core ensemble. Australia's favourite underground rock band **Dirty Three** will reconvene for the first time in three years for a special Festival show, whilst Morrissey and The Smiths fans will have their heroes music treated to a Mexican makeover in Spanish, via vibrant rhythms of ranchera, mariachi, mambo and cha cha cha in **Mexrrissey**.

Hyde Park's hugely popular Festival hub **Meriton Festival Village** returns with a variety of thrilling circus, comedy and cabaret shows, activities and a wide range of contemporary music performances. A world premiere and new Australian work by Sydney Festival favourite **Meow Meow** headlines the Festival Village in *Meow Meow's Little Mermaid*, and award-winning actor-singer-author **Alan Cumming** returns to Sydney with his new show *Alan Cumming Sings Sappy Songs!* Australia's leading circus company **Circa** will invite audiences to enter a world of physical daring in the beautiful and truly virtuosic *What Will Have Been*. **Djuki Mala** will thrill adults and children alike with their high-energy and stunning fusion of traditional Indigenous culture, contemporary dance and storytelling, and **Family Week** will return with a jam-packed week full of

MEDIA RELEASE: For immediate release

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



family shows and free fun.

In a special new music series, Sydney Festival will present three distinct branches of new folk music over the course of three consecutive summers Sundays in the sublime architecture and rich acoustics of St Stephen's Uniting Church – a short walk away from the hub of activity at the Village. The line-up will feature Finnish singer-songwriter **Mirel Wagner** and New Zealand's **Nadia's Reid**; **Sir Richard Bishop** and **Daniel Bachman** play twinkling American Primitive guitar instrumentals; and treasured American outsider folk veteran **Michael Hurley** appears with modern freak-folk torchbearer **Meg Baird**.

Our **Parramatta** program is larger than ever with our new Festival hub in Prince Alfred Square hosting a program of free events for the duration of the Festival and a large scale fairground like no other. Recycled objects gain new life in surprising and spectacular ways in the captivating wonderland of fun that is *Arquitectura de Feria*. **Compagnia Finzi Pasca** will also bring their mix of astonishing acts and fantastic visuals to Riverside Theatre in *La Verita*, a circus spectacle inspired by Spanish surrealist Salvador Dalí.

In Sydney's inner west, the hugely popular Festival within the Festival, **About An Hour** returns to Carriageworks. With a long weekend of diverse 60-minute events spanning theatre, dance, music and storytelling from Australia, France, Japan and the UK, tickets are just \$35 giving you maximum bang for your Festival buck.

To celebrate 40 years of the Festival, London based-photographer **Eva Vermandel** has brought our history to life with an evocative series of portraits scattered throughout the city in the special free installation *40 Portraits*. In another free installation, music and environmental sounds weave through the landscape of one of Sydney's most beautiful outdoor spaces – the garden at Vaucluse House, Sydney Living Museums in *Pleasure Garden*.

The Hon. Mike Baird MP, Premier of NSW says *"I would like to congratulate Festival Director Lieven Bertels and the entire Festival team for producing a stellar line up of events for the 40th anniversary year that has something for everyone. Sydney really comes alive in the summer and I would encourage everyone to get to at least one of the 157 events on offer in 2016 – particularly those being held at our city's impressive new creative arts space, the Cutaway at Barangaroo Reserve."*

Deputy Premier and Minister for the Arts, Troy Grant, says the NSW Government is proud to once again support the iconic Sydney Festival. *"The world-class 2016 program is incredibly diverse with a range of both free and ticketed events that everyone can access with an even stronger presence in Western Sydney, aligning perfectly with the three key aims of our arts and cultural policy – excellence, access and strength,"* says Mr Grant.

Festival Director Lieven Bertels says *"It's such a privilege to be part of the 40th anniversary of Australia's favourite summer arts festival. Sydney Festival has commissioned and presented a record-breaking number of new Australian works, and takes pride in creating unique opportunities for Australian and international artists to collaborate. Over these forty years, we have taken audiences on a wonderful voyage, and our 2016 festival is an important milestone on that trip!"*

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

When Thursday 7 January - Tuesday 26 January 2016

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For interviews and further information contact:

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

Cath Hayes, Publicist, 02 8248 6546 / 0431417112 cath.hayes@sydneyfestival.org.au

Julia Barnes, Publicist, 02 8248 6538 / 0402 678 589 julia.barnes@sydneyfestival.org.au