

MEDIA RELEASE

Level 5, 10 Hickson Road The Rocks
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sydneyfestival.org.au



Sydney Festival 2017



Photo: The Beach by Snarkitecture, photo credit Noah Kalina

Sydney Festival is an annual cultural celebration that transforms Sydney every January, delivering the highest quality art and big ideas. In 2017, Sydney Festival introduces **Wesley Enoch's** inaugural program, which features a renewed focus on theatre and dance, with a strong commitment to support new Australian work. This spectacular program is bursting with free and ticketed events across theatre, dance, circus, opera and contemporary and classical music.

Sydney Festival 2017 is comprised of 150 events, a staggering 73 of which are free. 454 performances will take place across 46 venues, featuring 1021 artists from 15 countries. With 16 world premieres, 9 Australian premieres and 14 Australian exclusives, summer in Sydney is not to be missed.

The senses will be a key focus of this year's Festival, with audiences invited to participate in a series of events and performances incorporating sensory enhancement and deprivation. *Scent of Sydney* is a free immersive exhibition created by conceptual and olfactory artist, **Cat Jones**, which explores whether you can really know a city by the way it smells. *Imagined Touch* pairs Deafblind artists **Heather Lawson** and **Michelle Stevens**, who create a unique sensory environment in which audiences experience storytelling through intensified touch and tactile communication.

Direct from Broadway comes the Australian premiere of the award-winning and technologically ground-breaking work from **Complicite**, *The Encounter*. Directed by **Simon McBurney**, the production utilises binaural technology to directly transmit the compelling story of a National Geographic journalist lost in the Amazon via headphones.

Internationally renowned UK theatre company, **Cheek by Jowl** present a piercing production of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* with **Pushkin Theatre Moscow**, which delves into the depths of an unpredictable city to dissect the nature of government, love and justice. In another performance exclusive to Sydney, *Still Life* is a hybrid of visual physical theatre and performance art based on the Greek myth of Sisyphus by award-winning artist **Dimitris Papaioannou**.

For a cool change this summer, Sydneysiders are invited to *The Beach*; a joyous monochromatic installation of 1.1 million recyclable polyethylene balls at the Cutaway at Barangaroo Reserve, and free for everyone to jump in and enjoy! Situated in Hyde Park, *House of Mirrors* is an interactive installation featuring a labyrinth of endless mirrors magnified to terrifying dimensions.

Indigenous and local Australian work is strongly represented in 2017 with the world premiere

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performance of *The Season*, written by Aboriginal playwright **Nathan Maynard** and performed by an all-Indigenous cast. In a special Sydney Opera House performance to mark the 50th anniversary of Australia's 1967 Indigenous rights referendum - which saw 90.77% of Australian's vote 'Yes' - 1967 *Music in the Key of Yes* is a concert of remembrance and gratitude to those who fought for civil rights. Also responding to the anniversary of the referendum, Australian visual artist **Vernon Ah Kee** presents a thought-provoking portrait of black and white political issues, attitudes and ideologies in the exhibition *Vernon Ah Kee – Not An Animal Or A Plant*.

Together with **Belvoir**, Sydney Festival will present the much lauded, four-time Helpmann Award nominated play *Prize Fighter* from Brisbane's **La Boite Theatre Company & Brisbane Festival** and *Which Way Home* by writer-performer **Katie Beckett** and Australia's longest running Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander theatre company, **ILBIJERRI Theatre Company**.

In a celebration of the Indigenous heritage of Sydney and the growing movement to reawaken local language, Sydney Festival will present *Bayala – Let's Speak Sydney Language*. Working with Eora and Darug community leaders and language experts – classes, talks, an installation and a mass choral performance have been developed to celebrate the local language of the Sydney area.

Queensland Theatre's Helpmann award winning musical *Ladies in Black* comes to Sydney Festival in January. Based on **Madeleine St John's** novel, the toe-tapping production is adapted by **Carolyn Burns**, directed by **Simon Phillips** (*Priscilla Queen of the Desert, Love Never Dies*), with original music from **Tim Finn** (Split Enz, Crowded House).

Headlining the music program are heavyweights **Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds** who return to Sydney stages ready to perform their 16th studio album *Skeleton Tree*; and in her first live performances in Australia since 2012, **PJ Harvey** returns to Sydney Festival with a full 10-piece band, following the release of the critically acclaimed album *The Hope Six Demolition Project*.

St Stephen's Music is back in 2017 with intimate performances from some of the world's leading performers across the genres of soul, folk-country, electronica and R&B. Programmed over two weekends in January the line-up will feature the otherworldly vocals of **Moses Sumney**, pioneer of electronic music's 'new wave' movement **Kaitlyn Aurelia Smith**, UK-Australian experimental trio **Szun Waves** and **Dori Freeman's** perfect country folk, to name a few.

For the first time, a dedicated free outdoor stage will offer 21 nights of free entertainment in the much-loved **Meriton Festival Village** in Hyde Park. Headlining the free Village stage will be *The Hair Salon*; starring **Bob Downe**, the resident house show features *The Big Hair Show* – a nonstop variety show, *The Perm Set* – a curated live music program, and Spanish hair sculptors **Osadia**. More than doubling the free programming in the Village, the outdoor stage will also play host to a range of DJ's, performances, bands and celebrations.

The ticketed Village program will showcase a variety of cabaret, comedy and contemporary music, headlined by male burlesque/cabaret company *Briefs*. Fresh from sell-out seasons in Berlin and London and described as the love child of Ru Paul's Drag Race and Cirque du Soleil, *Briefs* is an Aussie sharp-shooting cabaret of burlesque with balls. **Yana Alana** also returns to Sydney Festival baring her soul, not her derriere, through emotionally naked interpretations of well-known songs in *Covered*.

In Western Sydney, Campbelltown Arts Centre and Sydney Festival present the first major exhibition by artist **Myuran Sukumaran** in *Another Day in Paradise*. Facilitated by close friend and mentor **Ben Quilty**, the exhibition presents a vast and sobering series of powerful portraits by Sukumaran, painted during his incarceration at Bali's Kerobokan jail and from his final incarceration on Nusa Kambangan Island.

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Sydney Festival's eclectic dance program includes companion pieces *Cry Jailolo* and *Balabala* by Indonesia's **EkosDance Company**, exploring coral reef destruction from climate change and overfishing. *Blood on the Dance Floor* is Indigenous artist, **Jacob Boehme's** response to being diagnosed with HIV and turning to his ancestors for answers. **FORM Dance Projects** presents *Champions*, inspired by the soccer team, Western Sydney Wanderers, and developed in consultation with coaches and athletes.

In 2017 Sydney Festival is delighted to launch **Circus City** in Parramatta. Running for ten days from January 12 – 22, Circus City will feature four shows, 34 workshops and 55 free events including talks, films, an exhibition and a series of events for circus professionals. Canada's **Cirque Éloize** headlines the program with the international sensation *iD*; a high-energy blend of circus arts and urban dance that's been seen by over one million people since its premiere. The extensive program is family friendly and proudly accessible, with a range of free and ticketed events on offer.

In a unique Sydney Festival collaboration, *Nude Live* sees **Sydney Dance Company** respond to more than 100 powerful artworks spanning two centuries from the **Art Gallery of NSW's** summer exhibition *Nude: Art from the Tate collection*. Witness six dancers moving and breathing, their bodies and souls bared as they explore one of art's greatest subjects, the unclothed human body.

Urban Theatre Projects offers audiences unforgettable experiences in unusual locations and their latest venture makes its world premiere at Sydney Festival. Presented in a multi-level car park in Blacktown, *Home Country* is an epic story which shares perspectives on place and identity.

In The Domain, crowd favourites *Symphony Under the Stars* and *Opera in the Domain* return. For the first time, *Symphony Under the Stars* will also be presented in the beautiful Parramatta Park as part of Sydney Festival. Bring a hamper, a blanket and your friends, and settle in for a free concert with the **Sydney Symphony Orchestra**.

In a commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Canadian Confederation, Sydney Festival will present a diverse range of works from Canada in 2017. From the raw athletic power and urban-infused dance performance *Inheritor Album* from **Company 605** to award winning Cliff Cardinal's performance in *Huff* by **Native Earth Performing Arts**, messages of acceptance and difference are examined.

Sydney Festival's classical music program includes **Sydney Symphony Orchestra's** performance of Finnish composer, **Rautavaara's** most popular and enduring works. The world's fastest pianist, Ukrainian **Lubomyr Melnyk**, will create a symphony of sound with a single instrument. Sacred medieval chants from the banks of the Adriatic will be brought to life by Croatian ensemble, **Dalmatica** and Canadian **Nicole Lizée** brings pop, rave culture, cult cinema and psychedelia into the realm of classical music together with **The Australian Art Orchestra** in *Sex, Lynch and Video Games: An Exploration of 90's Screen Culture – Nicole Lizée with The Australian Art Orchestra*.

Sydney Festival Director Wesley Enoch says: "Launching my first Program is like inviting a whole lot of friends and family to a party. My job is to cater for a range of tastes and provide an array of opportunities for everyone to feel enriched. A festival is an act of generosity. Everyone can come and enjoy Sydney Festival but like every party it is always best when you meet new people and feel like you have given something in every exchange you make. Sydney Festival is like a cultural New Year's resolution. Here is the opportunity to share some time with friends and strangers and do new things that enrich your life."

Deputy Premier and Minister for the Arts, Troy Grant, said the NSW Government is proud to once again support Sydney Festival. "Sydney Festival champions artistic and cultural excellence, with a diverse program and range of free and ticketed events that everyone can access. Each year Sydney

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Festival showcases Australian and international artists across a range of art forms, presenting world, Australian and Sydney-only exclusive performances that attract visitors to our city. 2017 will see an expanded program in Western Sydney with the new Circus City in Parramatta and I would encourage everyone to get to at least one of the world-class events on offer.”

Lord Mayor Clover Moore said “Fifty years on from the ‘67 Indigenous rights referendum, this year’s festival will mark the historic decision with 1967 Music in the Key of Yes – and another strong piece of Indigenous programming, Bayala, is shaping up to be a summer highlight. It’s terrific to see the Festival Village in Hyde Park will return in January with a new outdoor stage and 21 days of free entertainment. Congratulations to our new Festival Director Wesley Enoch, and his fantastic team, and their clear commitment to showcasing new Australian work.”

Celebrate summer with Sydney Festival and purchase a Festival Multipack - on sale 9am Thursday 27 October. Single tickets are on sale 9am Monday 31 October.

When: January 7 – 29

More information: sydneyfestival.org.au

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