

Embargoed until Tuesday 25 July at 7pm

MELBOURNE FESTIVAL 2017



From fifty trips around the sun to 240 years of the United States, from the development of civilisation to the entire history of the planet, this year's Melbourne Festival brings together works of scale and intensity that encourage us to see all of humanity, where we have come from, and what incredible things we are capable of.

Today, Melbourne Festival Artistic Director, Jonathan Holloway launched his second Melbourne Festival program, with more than 65 events running over 17 days in October.

The centrepiece of the 2017 Festival is **A 24-Decade History of Popular Music** from glittering New York performance artist **Taylor Mac**. This once-in-a-lifetime event is a decade-by-decade walk through America from 1776 to 2016, told through the songs of the time, reinterpreted through a radical queer lens, and told from the perspective of groups whose stories are often forgotten, dismissed, or buried.

Part celebration, part exorcism, all party, this extravaganza will take its place as one of the most spectacular moments Melbourne has ever witnessed.

Tree of Codes is an extraordinary dance event a collaboration between choreographer Wayne **McGregor**, visual artist **Olafur Eliasson**, musician **Jamie xx** and the **Paris Opera Ballet**. For six performances only in the State Theatre, **Tree of Codes** is a collision of contemporary ballet, visual art and electronic music, launching itself from the springboard of novelist Jonathan Safran Foer's enigmatic book-sculpture of the same name.

Danish choreographer and dancer **Mette Ingvarstsen's 7 Pleasures** has its Australian premiere at the Festival, a work that investigates the seven roles of pleasure and explores how perceptions of nudity and sexuality have changed over time. 12 dancers – wearing nothing but what nature gave them – join to form a single organism of ecstatic flesh, the distinction between bodies loses its certainty, and a journey in search of a pleasure beyond one's own skin begins.

After decades earning applause as the mind behind the inimitable American indie pop band **The Magnetic Fields**, **Stephin Merritt** has created a brand new set to celebrate his 50th birthday – a song for each year of his melodious existence. Exclusive to Melbourne Festival, this live kaleidoscopic journey will see him singing each song from his **50 Song Memoir**, released to critical acclaim earlier this year.

Bangsokol: A Requiem For Cambodia is an extraordinary new work spanning song, film, dance and voice and is the first orchestral performance that address the traumas that occurred in Cambodia. It marks a first time collaboration between Oscar-nominated film director **Rithy Panh** and lauded composer **Him Sophy** - both survivors of the Khmer Rouge and now at the forefront of Cambodia's cultural renaissance.

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Beneath thousands of suspended steel blades, one of China's most epic stories is reinvented as one of this century's most ravishing spectacles in **Under Siege**. Renowned choreographer and dancer **Yang Liping** presents the epochal tale known in Chinese opera and lore as *Farewell My Concubine* with a high-octane mix of performers from ballet, hip-hop, kung-fu and Peking opera. The production is designed by Academy and BAFT award-winning set and costume designer **Tim Yip** (*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*).

Victorian Opera and Malthouse Theatre team up with **Meow Meow**, **Paul Capsis**, **Le Gateau Chocolat**, and **Kanen Breen** for the Australian premiere of **Tom Waits' Black Rider: The Casting Of The Magic Bullets** a delirious journey through a vivid theatrical landscape that is part gothic, part opera, and all dance with the devil.

French artists **Halory Goerger** and **Antoine Defoort** from **L'Amicale De Production** are turning the theory of evolution on its head with one of the most talked-about works of contemporary international theatre, **Germinal**. What if you had to make everything that ever existed and you only had an hour – how would you do it?

Artistic Director, Jonathan Holloway said: "We have searched the world for the most courageous, visionary and ambitious artists: artists who are actively taking on the biggest subjects with flair, excitement and drive. We have drawn together as many of them as possible to create a blockbuster that attempts to remind us all what humankind is capable of.

"Nowhere else in the world could you see monumental or sentinel works like *Tree Of Codes*, *Taylor Mac*, *Under Siege*, *Magnetic Fields' 50 Songs* and *Bangsokol* under the same banner and in the same three weeks, but that is what makes Melbourne astonishing. This year's Festival is the result of collaboration without compromise, of great people bringing out and amplifying the best in other great people."

Minister for Creative Industries Martin Foley said: "This is an ambitious, audacious program from the Melbourne Festival team that will bring iconic artists and spectacular international works to our city, while celebrating and profiling our own ground-breaking creatives. It's a festival for a city that embraces bold art and big ideas."

Other 2017 highlights drawn from a spectacular line-up of dance, theatre, contemporary and classical music, visual arts and free events include: **We Love Arabs** (a satirical dance/theatre piece from Israel), Terence Malik's film **The Voyage of Time** (narrated by Cate Blanchett, with the MSO performing a live score), **The Season** (an indigenous comedy by writer and performer Nathan Maynard), **Please Continue, Hamlet** (a homicide trial with real barristers, judge and court psychologist), acclaimed Korean artist, **Ayoung Kim**, **All Of My Friends Were There** (The Guerrilla Museum's follow up to last year's hit *Funeral*), **Backbone** (Adelaide's acrobatic sensations Gravity and Other Myths), **Ever** (a new work from Phillip Adams and BalletLab), **Brenda Rae** (Grammy-nominated American soprano), **Joep Beving** (Dutch pianist who came to fame after 85 million people watched his music on Spotify), **American artist Joseph Kosuth**, a pioneer of Conceptual art and installation art, plus Nashville alt-country icons **Lambchop** return after a 12-year absence).

The Festival opens on Wednesday 4 October with **Tanderrum** – part opening ceremony and part Welcome to Country – as we celebrate the ground we stand on and the people whose ancestors walked it before our time.

Melbourne Festival takes place from 4-22 October 2017

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