



30 YEARS OF MELBOURNE FESTIVAL

It was 1977 when Sir Rupert Hamer posited the idea that Melbourne should have an international arts festival. At the time, the Arts Centre was only half way through construction. While the foundations of the city were much in evidence—the famous grid layout, majestic architecture, generously wide streets—the Melbourne that we know and love today—with its buzzing laneways, designer retail, thriving restaurant and bar scene, galleries, river walks and public spaces—still lay ahead.

As Melbourne morphed into Australia's most liveable city, model of multiculturalism, a leader in arts and design, technological innovator, lover of sport and hungry for ideas, Melbourne Festival continued to emulate the city's trajectory by responding to the times and the growing cultural wealth of our thriving metropolis.

Over 30 years, 11 Artistic Directors strived to create the festival of Melbourne in all its dimensions. On the first night of the first festival Gian Carlo Menotti presented the Victoria State Opera performing Ken Russell's production of *Madam Butterfly*; John Truscott positioned arches over Princes Bridge and imagined the grandeur of *Botanica*; Richard

Wherrett mesmerized us with Robert Wilson's masterpiece *Einstein on the Beach*; In the 10th anniversary program, Leo Scholfield brought to life the glory of the Myer Mural Hall with Barbara Cook and Michael Feinstein; Clifford Hocking presented The Australian Ballet and Bangarra Dance Theatre's *Rites* to the Stravinsky score; Sue Natrass closed the streets at Flinders Street station with lights, music and story-telling; Jonathan Mills gave us the gift of the Kirov Opera and Orchestra; Robyn Archer had us dancing in Federation Square and drawn into Back to Back Theatre's *soft*.

The memory of the 20th year was made indelible when Kristy Edmunds presented Theatre du Soleil's *Le Dernier Caravansérail* in the Royal Exhibition Building. *Angels Demon Parade* by AES+F was another of those unforgettable festival experiences in the form of colossal jet-black sculptures positioned on St Kilda Road in Brett Sheehy's first program. Josephine Ridge concludes her years as Artistic Director in this, the 30th Anniversary year. In the previous two we have been graced by the unique blend of power, skill and beauty of Sylvie Guillem as well as the perennially influential Trisha Brown.

On 15 September 1986, six painted trams paraded down Swanston Street and the first *Spoletto Melbourne Festival* was launched. Later that evening, audiences could see the Victoria State Opera production of *Madam Butterfly* directed by Ken Russell in the State Theatre and, in the Athenaeum, the Washington Opera Company performed Gian Carlo Menotti's productions of *The Medium* and *The Telephone*.

From *Melbourne Spoleto: a Festival of Three Worlds* through varying title changes including its most enduring as the *Melbourne International Arts Festival* to its current moniker *Melbourne Festival*, like its name, the Festival has evolved over time.

A series of three forums will focus on 30 years of Melbourne Festival in reference to three defining questions: What does it mean to be a festival of Melbourne? An international festival? And an arts festival? Josephine Ridge, Artistic Director (2013–2015) will introduce each panel and, within the broader themes, the Festival's curatorial history will be represented by previous Artistic Directors: Robyn Archer AO, Sir Jonathan Mills AO and Brett Sheehy AO. They will be joined by other artistic and city leaders.

ARTS FOR ARTS SAKE: Brett Sheehy AO (2009 — 2012) - Sat 10 Oct Melbourne, base for Australia's most sophisticated independent theatre sector; focus of contemporary dance in Australia; home to this country's most enthusiastic and knowledgeable music audiences across the full breadth of genres; lover of the visual arts and appreciator of design; and host to the achievements of the

MSO, MTC and The Australian Ballet, which, along with so many other companies and artists, have also made their mark overseas. Brett Sheehy AO will be joined by other guests to discuss how the art forms and the approach and concerns of artists have changed over the past 30 years. What has been the impact on Melbourne's culture, identity and how does a festival such as Melbourne's reflect and contribute to that evolution?

A FESTIVAL OF MELBOURNE: Robyn Archer AO (2002 — 2004) - Sat 17 Oct

When the Festival was first created, Melbourne was a very different city but contemporary Melbourne is as much defined by its heritage as it is by its position as a leader in architecture, design, urban planning and the arts. Capital of sport and a centre of intellectual discourse, the Melbourne we live in is a complex and intriguing mix of dynamics. Conceived for Melbourne, how has the Festival shaped and been shaped by the changing culture, politics and landscape of this city? Robyn Archer AO will be joined in discussion by a panel of guests who have helped shape the city and the festival we love.

FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL: Sir Jonathan Mills AO (2000 — 2001) - Sat 24 Oct

When Melbourne Festival was conceived it was, like its counterparts around the country, primarily seen as a vehicle to import international artists who would not otherwise be seen here. Thirty years later Melburnians are fortunate to see work from around the world throughout the year. This change is mirrored in most aspects of life in Melbourne in 2015; this is a city now vitally connected politically, culturally and economically in ways that have changed our position in and relationship to the world. Driven by technological innovation, the world itself is a more globally connected place. How has this impacted the role of Melbourne's international arts festival? Sir Jonathan Mills AO will be joined by a panel of guests whose experience expertly places them to discuss the international context of Melbourne Festival and of Melbourne; the city destined to become Australia's biggest.