

Arts Centre Melbourne presents

## Asia TOPA: Asia-Pacific Triennial of Performing Arts 2020 Full Program Announcement



*Pollen Revolution*, Akira Kasai, part of the Dancehouse Japan Focus. Image Credit: Daiso Hiroyasu

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, 12 NOVEMBER 2019** – The full [Asia TOPA: Asia-Pacific Triennial of Performing Arts 2020](#) program has been unveiled with an astonishing 54 works – many of those featuring intercultural collaborations – spanning dance, theatre, music, contemporary performance, film, digital and visual art, with much more to come within the Public Program.

Of those 54 works, 30 have been seeded and commissioned as new works by Arts Centre Melbourne and Asia TOPA, with partners and presenters connecting artists, groups and companies from within the Asia-Pacific region including Singapore, China, Thailand, Japan, New Zealand, India and Pakistan among others. This shows how integral and dynamic relationships between Asian and Australian contemporary artists are in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In anticipation of the second iteration of Asia TOPA, the new and provocative collaborations between these artists and arts organisations in Victoria, and across Asia, will reflect the contemporary imagination and lived experience of artists and creative thinkers from the Asia-Pacific region.

Led by **Arts Centre Melbourne**, Asia TOPA 2020 is a joint initiative with the **Sidney Myer Fund** celebrating, creating and nurturing contemporary performance from across the region. With Presenting Partner **Singapore Airlines**, it explores the connections between contemporary Australia and its growing diaspora through a truly innovative approach to collaboration via the Asia TOPA Consortium and Program Partners from the Melbourne Arts Precinct and city centre.

### Asia TOPA 2020: DANCE & PERFORMANCE

Dance has become an art form where language transcends traditional forms of communication and this idea has been explored in the Asia TOPA Dance & Performance curation. Previously announced [Samsara](#) (5 – 7 March 2020) and [À Ó Làng Phó](#) (27 – 29 February 2020) will form part of the wider program alongside the world premiere of [Metal](#) by **Lucy Guerin Inc.** and **Ensemble Tikoro** (24 – 27 February 2020) where five dancers and eight metal-heads share the stage in a meeting of cultures, art forms, languages and belief systems. The performance sees heavy metal and traditional throat singing collide with contemporary Australian dance in an encounter that ultimately transforms them both to invent new mythologies for a globalised world.

The **Dancehouse Japan Focus** will showcase the very best in Japanese dance practise with [Pollen Revolution](#) (21 – 22 February 2020), [Good Luck](#) (5 – 6 March 2020) and [Matou](#) (7 – 8 February 2020). Across these three works, audiences will be taken on a surreal and startling journey through time, cultures, and states of being in **Pollen Revolution** as **Akira Kasai** shifts between classical Japanese, hip-hop and the soulful other-worlds of butoh; follow a curious and compelling narrative in **Good Luck** as former **Dumb Type** member **Takao Kawaguchi** performs slow, continuous movement as though it were a filmic scene played at one tenth of its original speed; and observe **Ruri Mito** explore the body as a mysterious, haunted vessel, unable to be understood or seen in its entirety in **Matou**.

In another Australian first, Indonesian artist **Kamila Andini** brings her mesmerising convergence of contemporary Indonesian dance and physical storytelling in a stage adaptation of her award-winning film [The Seen and Unseen](#) (20, 22 – 24 and 26 – 29 February 2020). A cast of extraordinary child performers from Bali's Komunitas Bumi Bajra bring a captivating honesty and playful energy to profound meditations on life, grief and hope.

Other highlights in the Asia TOPA dance program include [SVA Kranti: The Revolution Within](#) (28 – 29 February 2020) by Indian performer and activist **Mallika Sarabhai**, [Ibu-Ibu Belu](#) (27 – 28 March 2020), [Chinese Square Dancers](#) (24 – 28 February 2020) and [Not Today's Yesterday](#) (10 – 11 March 2020 in Bendigo) and (12 – 13 March 2020 in Parkdale).

## Asia TOPA 2020: THEATRE

As part of Asia TOPA's commitment to introducing powerful new voices from Asia to our Australian stages, [BLACK TIES](#) (20 – 29 February 2020), [SAIGON](#) (12 – 15 March 2020), and [Torch The Place](#) (8 February – 21 March 2020) were announced as part of Asia TOPA's Legends & Icons, with a number of other urgent theatre pieces to shape the stage for new voices during the festival season.

The next generation of profoundly talented and original voices within this festival include [Oedipus Schmoedipus](#) (18 – 21 March 2020 in English, 25 – 28 March 2020 in Cantonese) which returns to Melbourne after a sold-out season in 2015. This irreverent work from provocative Australian collective, **post – Zoë Coombs Marr, Mish Grigor and Natalie Rose** – piles up classic dramatic death scenes into an engaging spectacle of glee-ridden blood and gore. The multi-language double-bill is a first for Asia TOPA with productions of the work in English and Cantonese featuring **ManMan Kwok** and **Man Sui Hing** of the **Hong Kong Repertory Theatre**. Asia TOPA co-commissioned the Cantonese translation with Freespace West Kowloon where the work has been performed to standing ovations.

To most of the world, Lai Teck was the leader of the Malayan Communist Party from 1939 to 1947. Said to have had more than 30 pseudonyms, the real Lai Teck was himself a work of fiction and so **Ho Tzu Nyen's** [The Mysterious Lai Teck](#) (4 – 7 March 2020) – a story of ghosts and gaps, self-invention and escape – is staged in such a way that the real and the illusory seem locked in an eternal dance.

Other highlights in the Asia TOPA theatre program include two international collaborations with [William Shakespeare's The Winter's Tale](#) (4 – 8 March 2020) and [Hades Fading \(Hades Memudar\)](#) (27 February – 1 March 2020), two new Asia TOPA commissions [Made in China 2.0 & Folding Beijing](#) (27 – 29 February 2020) which will receive work-in-progress showings by Malthouse Theatre, and at Arts House audiences can see Filipino musical [Are You Ready To Take The Law Into Your Own Hands](#) (26 – 29 February 2020) and [What is Chinese?](#) (20 – 29 February 2020).

## Asia TOPA 2020: MUSIC

Asia TOPA is particularly excited to be presenting a mammoth program of contemporary music offerings in the 2020 festival. After bringing thousands of people together in 2017 for a huge celebration of Asian pop culture, [ASIA POP FEST](#) returns to the iconic Sidney Myer Music Bowl on 13 March 2020 with some of Asia's most exciting pop artists. In partnership with **Frontier Touring**, the Bowl will come alive as the sun goes down with the exciting line-up to be announced in the coming months.

In an Australian exclusive, one of the greatest spiritual singers alive [Abida Parveen](#) will perform a rare concert for Western audiences along with her outstanding ensemble at Hamer Hall on 29 February 2020. Parveen has been described by The

Guardian as “the greatest female Sufi singer in history”, and has played a crucial role in the evolution of an art form traditionally performed by men. While she specialises in two forms of Sufi poetry – Ghazals and Kafis – Parveen has also attracted ecstatic admirers like Bjork and John Tavener.

Asia TOPA 2020 takes over Melbourne Museum’s night party *Nocturnal* on 21 March 2020 for a celebration of China’s most exciting new music, curated by tastemakers **IndieWorks China**. [Nocturnal x Asia TOPA](#) will see headliners **Click#15** bring their quirky brand of funk to Australia for the first time following their appearance on wildly popular Chinese TV show *The Big Band*. Also on the bill, punters will see indie-rock darlings **Carsick Cars** and electronic act **Jungle Mico Project**.

In an exclusive program curated for Asia TOPA by The SUBSTATION, **SUBSONIC** will celebrate the experimental music pioneers of today. Previously announced [Ryoji Ikeda – datamatics \[ver. 2.0\]](#) and [NONOTAK – Shiro](#) will be one of five incredible acts in this series joined by [Dragon Ladies Don’t Weep](#) with the world premiere of an international collaboration between Japanese filmmaker **Makino Takashi** and Australian composer **Lawrence English**, [Boris with Merzbow](#), [Akio Suzuki](#) with Aki Onda and guests, and [Terre Thaemlitz](#).

In a world premiere, Indonesian film director **Garin Nugroho** returns to Asia TOPA 2020 – after stunning audiences at Asia TOPA 2017 with *Satan Jawa* – with a stirring, provocative work merging film with live dance and a 16-voice choir to impart a moving story of creation set against the backdrop of environmental disaster. [The Planet – A Lament](#) (21 – 22 February 2020) sees Nugroho collaborate with composers, visual artists and choreographers as they mourn a world lost, while offering hope for another that may yet be nurtured in its wake.

From a new wave of multimedia artists comes [Sinofuturists](#), a program showcasing ground-breaking multidisciplinary works and discussions that combine immersive gaming environments, traditional Chinese music, digital avatars and civic ethics. From 5 – 27 March 2020, *Sinofuturists* will ask how technology can offer new modes of expression, and what this means for our future realities locally, regionally and globally. Audiences can see [Alex Wang](#) (26 March 2020) and [Howie Lee](#) (27 March 2020) with live AV performances, [Park Jiha](#) supported by **Moopie** (21 February 2020), [Mythologies](#) (28 February 2020), [Praise!](#) With local artists **Marcus Whale** and **Eugene Choi** (20 – 23 February 2020), [Chi Udaka](#) (23 – 24 January 2020) and [Woven Song Australian Launch](#) by **Deborah Cheetham AO Yorta Yorta** (15 – 16 February 2020).

Previously announced music works include [Joe Hisaishi in Concert](#) (26 February 2020), [Music from the Studio Ghibli Films of Hayao Miyazaki](#) (29 February 2020), [Meeting Points Series: Hand to Earth](#) (23 February 2020) and [MSO’s Chinese New Year Concert](#) (31 January 2020).

## Asia TOPA 2020: VISUAL ARTS & INSTALLATIONS

The breadth of programming within the visual arts realm of Asia TOPA comes from Thailand, South Korea, India, China, France and Iran, among others. The curated artists are inviting people into these works in non-traditional ways encouraging audiences to interact in multi-sensory, technological and performative based works.

These unique experiences can be had at [Virtual Intimacy](#) (13 – 15 March 2020), [Double Delicious](#) (19 – 22 February 2020), [Knowledge in your hands, eyes and mind](#) (8 February – 22 March 2020), [HuRU-hARa](#) (20 – 23 February, 27 February – 1 March 2020), [Feedback Loops](#) (7 December 2019 – 22 March 2020), [When It Rains \(I feel like eating Jeon\)](#) (20 – 23 February, 27 February – 1 March 2020), [Biometric Mirror: Performance Under Surveillance](#) (20 – 21, 27 – 28 February 2020), [Fermenting: Listen](#) (6 – 8 March 2020), [Japanese Modernism](#) (28 February – 4 October 2020), [Turning Points: Contemporary Photography from China](#) (until 27 January 2020), [Obang](#) (28 February – 1 March 2020) and [Shirin Neshat: Dreamers](#) (15 November 2019 – 19 April 2020).

## Asia TOPA 2020: PUBLIC PROGRAM

Through the support of University of Melbourne, **Dr Sadih Boonstra** has curated Asia TOPA’s Public Program inviting people to connect more deeply with the artists and works in the festival through a series of creative interventions, talks and panel discussions, masterclasses and demonstration performances. From conversations about the interplay of art and politics through to explorations of artistic processes in an intercultural framework, the Public Program is an opportunity to explore the

broader issues that shape contemporary daily life in the Asia-Pacific region through the lens of the creative practise. Open to all, the MPavilion will host free lunchtime talks and performances featuring Asia TOPA artists every Wednesday to Sunday from 19 February – 15 March 2020.

Special events include first exposure to a thrilling new international collaboration in progress and masterclasses by **Chunky Move**. Artists and students can participate in a series of international artist-led workshops hosted by VCA, The University of Melbourne and NICA. **Public Displays of Affection: How Can Artists Rebrand Soft Power?** will be a day-long forum on 3 March 2020 to debate cultural diplomacy, creative exchange, and the power of artistic influence across the Indo-Pacific, and from 2 – 20 March 2020, Arts Centre Melbourne will partner with **Melbourne Fringe** to host the development of projects exploring the complexity and possibilities of documentary theatre. Artists and producers from Australia, India, Malaysia, Taiwan, Singapore and China will put the spotlight on how performance makers utilise science, artefacts and documents in a theatre of contemporary speculation.

## Notes to Editors

The founding Asia TOPA Consortium consists of Arts Centre Melbourne, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Australian Centre for the Moving Image, Chunky Move, Federation Square, Malthouse Theatre, Melbourne Recital Centre, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Melbourne Theatre Company, Museums Victoria, National Gallery of Victoria, State Library of Victoria, The Australian Ballet, Victorian College of the Arts and the Victorian Opera.

Asia TOPA is a joint initiative of the Sidney Myer Fund and Arts Centre Melbourne with support from the Australian and Victorian governments. With major seed funding from the Sidney Myer Fund, Arts Centre Melbourne has initiated a landmark collaboration with Melbourne's community of culture makers and national arts leaders to introduce powerful new voices from Asia to our stages. Asia TOPA takes place from January to March 2020.

Images can be found [here](#).

**Arts Centre Melbourne presents**  
**Asia TOPA: Asia-Pacific Triennial of Performing Arts 2020**  
January – March 2020  
Bookings at [asiatopa.com.au](http://asiatopa.com.au)

For more information about Arts Centre Melbourne, please visit [www.artscentremelbourne.com.au](http://www.artscentremelbourne.com.au) or phone 1300 182 183. Become a fan of [Arts Centre Melbourne on Facebook](#) or follow [@artscentremelb](#) on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

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