



Media release



The Festival of the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games

Embargo on release of schedule of events in its entirety before 23 February 2006.

January 2006

Celebration: Exploration: Revelation

Festival Melbourne2006

Over 2,500 performing artists from across Australia and the Commonwealth will descend on Melbourne in March for the largest free cultural festival ever held in Australia.

Festival Melbourne2006, an integral part of the Melbourne2006 Commonwealth Games, will be an international event offering 11 days of non-stop music, dance, circus, street theatre and visual art in a range of venues across the State, including Melbourne's great outdoors.

Celebrating what the nations of the Commonwealth have in common, and appreciating what makes us different, the Festival will offer an insight into the diversity of cultures involved in the 2006 Commonwealth Games.

It will also showcase the vibrancy of Victoria's own performing arts culture, with over 800 local professional artists and technicians involved, and thousands of Victorian community members participating.

Highlights include a major program of free events in **Alexandra Gardens**, including non-stop circus performances and music from around the world and a series of free concerts at the **Sidney Myer Music Bowl**. There will also be an **exhibitions program**, a **youth festival** and a program of events in **regional Victoria**.

Victorian audiences and visitors to the State will be able to feast their eyes and ears on spectacular, death-defying aerial displays from some of the world's best circus performers, music from the Caribbean, Asia, Africa, the Pacific and more, exhibitions of traditional and contemporary art from Canada, New Zealand, Africa and parts of Asia, and be surprised and beguiled by some of the world's best street performers and artists.

"Festival Melbourne2006 will be everywhere – the Bourke Street Mall, Federation Square, Alexandra Gardens and in all of Melbourne's major arts institutions – as well as in key regional centres across the State," said **Sue Natrass**, Chairman of the Festival Melbourne2006 Cultural Working Group. "The program has something for everyone, is free, and will explore our connections with people from the Commonwealth through our shared passion for performance, art and music," she said.

Placing art alongside sport, Festival Melbourne2006 will celebrate what makes the 71 nations of the Commonwealth unique (and what they have in common) through a contemporary mix of performing arts, exhibitions and a youth festival. Free to all during the games, the Festival will significantly enhance the visitor experience to Melbourne, and be a highly visible component of Melbourne's vibrancy and energy. Easily accessible and with wide appeal, the Festival will be the biggest free cultural event in Australia's history.

Festival Melbourne 2006 Program Highlights

Myer Music Bowl

Nine free concerts will be held during the Commonwealth Games at the Myer Music Bowl, including the **Sounds of the Caribbean** featuring reigning king of reggae **Jimmy Cliff**; the **Sounds of Africa** with the legendary septuagenarian **Miriam Makeba** and her 10-piece band, **Evelyn Glennie**, the world's most acclaimed solo percussionist performing with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and a **World Percussion Spectacular** featuring Canadian group **Nexus Percussion Ensemble**, **Scrap Arts Music**, **Synergy**, **The Renegades** from Jamaica plus Australia's 80 leading percussion students. There will also be a visual athletic feast from England's **Random Contemporary Dance** and a celebration of all things **Bollywood**.

Alexandra Gardens

Alexandra Gardens will be the Festival hub, offering non-stop activity, three stages, a circus Big Top, an Aerial Rig, outdoor and roving performances, an ArtPlay Activity Centre for kids and much more. Over fifty different musical and performance groups will perform, including Tanzania's **Golden Pride Children's Choir**, the Northern Territory's **Saltwater Band**, **Kutcha Edwards**, **Shane Howard**, **Frank Yamma**, **Limestone**, featuring Nicky Bomba and Joe Camilleri, hip-hop, Irish music and Sri Lankan dance.

Sing for Water is a mass choir from Melbourne's culturally diverse communities that will celebrate the power of the collective voice, and raise funds for clean water and sanitation in East Timor. Australian legend **Paul Kelly and Friends** will perform in the final concert.

The world of circus and physical theatre will take place in the Big Top. Performances from the **National Institute of Circus Arts**, a combined youth circus featuring South Africa's **Zip Zap Circus** with the **Flying Fruitfly Circus** and the **Brewarrina Circus Project** from outback New South Wales and the *Big Top Hop*, which brings the best of our local hip hop performers together with circus performers, and Canada's contemporary Circus **Les Sept Doigts de la Main** (*Seven Fingers of the Hand*). There will also be performances from the award-winning **Candy Butchers**, and Melbourne's **Snuff Puppets** in *Circus Olé*.

Plus, there'll be daring performances on the aerial rig from England's **Upswing**, **Shenzo's Electric Stunt Orchestra** and the high-flying **Fly by Night** and spectacular outdoor performances on the Central Lawn, with Melbourne's own international street theatre sensations **Strange Fruit**, **Five Angry Men**, and the awe-inspiring elite aerialists the **Dream Engine**, plus much more.

Federation Square

Federation Square will be the City's Games hub, with the big screen operating as a Live Site every day. Every weekday traditional and contemporary dance classes from Commonwealth nations will be held in the Square, and after the evenings sporting broadcast there'll be a series of live music concerts, a highlight of which will be a special performance from combined youth choirs from Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide, singing Welsh composer Karl Jenkins' popular work *Adiemus – Songs of Sanctuary* with a 20-piece orchestra.

The Amphitheatre at Federation Square will also see several outdoor performances, and the **BMW Edge** will be home for a special cabaret performance from South Africa, *House of the Holy Afro*, and daily lunchtime forum sessions featuring discussions and interviews with festival artists. It will also showcase local indigenous performance.

The **Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI)** will present a program of local and international documentaries from 1-21 February. **Real Life on Film** will showcase the newest and most innovative documentaries from around the Commonwealth, and prizes will be presented for the Best International Documentary, Best Australian Documentary, Best Short Documentary and an Audience Award for the film which best addresses the topic "Real Life".

The Arts Centre

At the **Arts Centre Forecourt** each evening visitors can see **Conedancers**, a startling outdoor event featuring two performers suspended from and dancing on a giant inflated cone. Plus, **Legs on the Wall** will perform a newly commissioned work on the northern wall of the National Gallery of Victoria. **The Arts Centre Lawn** will be transformed into a spectacular Aussie beach for the duration of the Commonwealth Games and will feature a big screen, a performance stage and music and street theatre.

For 3 nights at the **National Gallery of Victoria**, St Kilda Rd, **9 Drawings for Projection** brings together all of the short animated films by renowned South African artist William Kentridge. Presented in 35mm it will be accompanied by a live performance of composer Philip Miller's evocative original soundtrack.

Bourke Street Mall

The Myer windows in Bourke Street Mall will be transformed into a home for Melbourne's infamous **Urban Dream Capsule**, who will be living their lives under the constant glare of passers by, on display 24 hours a day over a two week period.

Melbourne Museum

Host to a live site during the games, the Museum will also present a series of exhibitions. **Spirit of the Games** will include a selection of glittering costumes, flags and floats from the Games opening ceremony. **Carve** brings together indigenous artists from Canada, New Zealand and Australia, demonstrating the role of traditional technique, motif and custom in their individual artistic practices. And **Common Goods**, curated by Craft Victoria, is an exhibition of craft from local and international practitioners, including telephone wire weaving from South Africa, carvings from Mauritius, lace-making from Malta and more.

The **Melbourne Food and Wine Festival** will deliver a series of events at the Melbourne Museum Live site during the Games period. Events include a full week of *Culinary Pro Am* competitions, where 8 leading chefs representing different Commonwealth culinary traditions, lead a team comprising a media personality and an apprentice in a knockout cooking challenge to prepare a two course meal in 60 minutes. Also featured will be a *Victorian Producers' Market* where visitors can experience the breadth and quality of Victorian Producers. *Celebrate the Bean* provides visitors with a chance to taste a range of some of the best specialist coffees.

State Library of Victoria

The Commonwealth Writers' Prize is a prestigious annual event which rewards and celebrates excellence in contemporary fiction writing.

The State Library of Victoria is hosting the 2006 Commonwealth Writers' Prize from 9 to 14 March. Winning writers from across the Commonwealth will be in Melbourne to take part in a week long program of events including public readings, book signings and regional author tours. The Winners of the 'Best Book' and 'Best First Book' awards will be announced at a ceremony at the State Library on Tuesday 14 March.

Melbourne Galleries

Melbourne's city galleries will also be home to a series of international exhibitions. Highlights include:

Australian Centre for the Moving Image and the National Gallery of Victoria will present a major new collaboration, titled **2006 Contemporary Commonwealth**. The exhibition, juxtaposing 11 artists from across the vast range of Commonwealth nations with 11 artists from Australia, explores the theme of migration and exchange using new forms of narrative, documentary and cartography.

New06 and Plus Factors, at the **Australian Centre for Contemporary Art**, will showcase the latest from Australia's upcoming contemporary artists, plus send cutting-edge art across the streets of Melbourne.

Game On, at the **Ian Potter Museum of Art**, features international and Australian contemporary artists exploring the notion of allegiance, patriotism and the territories of sporting competition.

Worldly Things: Fantasy Coffins from Ghana is an exhibition of eight exquisitely carved coffins celebrating the role of life and death in modern Ghanaian life at **45 Downstairs**, 45 Flinders Lane.

Threading the Commonwealth, at **RMIT Gallery**, will be a fascinating exhibition telling two stories; the significance of textiles in cloth – with power costumes worn by Kings and Queens, Chiefs and key figures within the Commonwealth; and costumes worn in 'rites of passage' rituals.

The Buddy System, an interactive art installation led by artist Ani O'Neill at the **Arc 1 Gallery**, invites members of the public to learn to crochet a small flower, making the work in the social setting of a gallery. The flowers will be pinned to a wall as a floral installation that will literally, 'grow', and at the end of the exhibition will be gifted to a friend nominated by the maker.

Flash: Australian Athletes in Focus is an exhibition of newly commissioned work from the National Portrait Gallery displaying five Australian photographers' interpretations of our sporting men and women. It will be shown at the **Silvershot Gallery** in Flinders Lane.

The Youth Program

Exploring the connections between the 71 nations of the Commonwealth, the Youth Program will be presented by Melbourne's Next Wave Festival. Centred in and around **Shed 14 at Docklands**, hundreds of artists will be invited to create works inside shipping containers in what will be a massive containers village of contemporary art, music and performance. Artists will also light up the streets of Melbourne with film, video and slide projects in **A Hundred Points of Light** and **The Bodies That Were Not Ours**, showcasing indigenous arts from Australia and around the Commonwealth.

Regional Program

Local artists will work alongside visiting artists to facilitate a unique cultural exchange in four major Victorian regional centres of Ballarat, Geelong, Bendigo and Moe – all homes of Melbourne2006 Commonwealth Games live sites. Highlights of the Melbourne program will also tour to each of these centres to perform.

Festival Melbourne2006 – Wednesday 15 to Sunday 26 March, 2006.

Festival Melbourne2006 celebrates the breadth of culture and art from across the nations of the Commonwealth. The Festival is an integral part of the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games, and it is proudly funded and supported by the Victorian and Australian Governments.

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