

Adelaide festival 2017

Adelaide festival 2017 program: Cate Blanchett and Shakespeare get dark, weird and surreal

Program spanning opera, film, dance, music, performance art and theatre to feature Rufus Wainwright's 'symphonic visual concert' and Neil Armfield's outdoor production of *The Secret River*



📺 Cate Blanchett in Del Kathryn Barton's spider-inspired short film *Red*, which is premiering at Adelaide festival. 2017 Photograph: Adelaide festival

Canadian-American singer Rufus Wainwright, Australian theatre production *The Secret River*, Barrie Kosky's production of Handel's opera *Saul* and a film by artist Del Kathryn Barton starring [Cate Blanchett](#) mark the highlights of 2017's Adelaide festival.

Harmon, Steph. "Adelaide festival 2017 program: Cate Blanchett and Shakespeare get dark, weird, and surreal," *The Guardian*. October 26, 2016.

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The March festival is the first under the co-artistic direction of Rachel Healy and Neil Armfield, who worked together for almost a decade at Sydney's Belvoir St [Theatre](#).

The program for the 2017 Adelaide festival, which is run concurrently with Adelaide fringe, Adelaide writers' week and [Womadelaide](#), is a celebration of the dark, weird and surreal. Thursday's announcement also featured details of new festival hub the Riverbank Palais, which will [float on the river Torrens](#) throughout March.

Andrew Bovell's adaptation of [Kate Grenville's The Secret River](#), directed by Armfield himself, is set to be one of the festival highlights. The stunning first contact story, which won six Helpmann awards, will be remounted at the Anstey Hill quarry, a natural outdoor amphitheatre. "We're bringing in a sense of ownership for the Kurna people, given that this is happening on Kurna land," Armfield said.

The festival will also feature the Australian premiere of *Red*, a new short film by two-time Archibald prize-winning painter Del Kathryn Barton and starring Cate Blanchett. The film is inspired by the [bizarre mating ritual of the redback spider, whose males offer themselves up to the female as a post-coital meal](#), and has been described as "a surrealist cinematic offering and a savage tale of female power".

Adelaide will also be treated to Rufus Wainwright's "symphonic visual concert" *Prima Donna*, which will be matched with highlights from [Rufus Does Judy](#), the artist's recreation of Judy Garland's 1961 Carnegie Hall concert which has never been performed outside of the iconic venue; UK company Complicite's immersive theatre experience [The Encounter](#), which is also [part of Sydney festival's 2017 program](#); and Schaubühne Berlin's [strange, sinister and adrenaline-filled production of Richard III](#), directed by Thomas Ostermeier, which Healy said was suitable "for anyone who's fearful that Shakespeare is usually served up lukewarm".

Richard III follows on from the company's production of *Hamlet*, which played at 2010's Sydney festival. The lead performance by Lars Eidinger, who also played the title role in *Hamlet*, has been described as "mesmerising".

Healy and Armfield also pointed to *Betroffenheit*, a new dance work about the experience and aftermath of grief by rising dance star Crystal Pite and Canadian theatremaker Jonathon Young, who lost his daughter as well as a niece and a nephew in a [cabin fire in 2009](#). Healy described the piece, which received a [five-star review in the Guardian](#), as "one of the most memorable and affecting pieces of work that I can remember seeing".

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In Lebanese-British artist Tania El Khoury's sound installation Gardens Speak, audiences will literally dig into the soil to hear the stories of 10 Syrians who lost their lives in the civil war.

Italian intersex performer Silvia Calderoni will blur fiction with biography and performance art with monologue in MDLSX, an exploration of gender fluidity and identity. Armfield, who saw MDLSX in Rome, called it an "amazing performance" but one that was "very hard to classify – I suppose you'd call it dance theatre".

The program is packed with classical music, including a one-night-only performance of one of the first operas ever staged, Monteverdi's L'Orfeo, which will be recreated by baroque ensemble Concerto Italiano; and the festival's previously announced centrepiece, Handel's opera Saul directed by Barrie Kosky. [Described by the Guardian](#) as "a theatrical and musical feast of energetic choruses, surreal choreography and gorgeous singing" when it premiered in 2015, Christopher Purves will be reprising the title role, joined by a local and international cast.

There will also be a suite of chamber music performances to showcase the new concert hall at the picturesque Mount Barker Summit. Curated by Anna Goldsworthy, Chamber Landscapes will focus on Schubert and be held over six days, with Australian composers including Calvin Bowman, Deborah Cheetham and William Barton responding to the landscape.

Among home-grown productions is the world premiere of theatremakers William Yang and Annette Shun Wah's The Backstories, which will explore the Asian-Australian experience with collaboration from prominent South Australians including chef Cheong Liew, football official Moya Dodd and fashion designer Razak Mohammed.

There will also be a performance of a new experimental dance work by Restless Dance Theatre, held in an [Adelaide](#) hotel; and 1967: Music in the Key of Yes – a musical celebration of the 1967 referendum, in which more than 90% of Australians voted to remove racist clauses from the Australian constitution.

For families, Manual Cinema's Magic City will use overhead projections, shadow puppets and live-feed cameras to create real-time animated cinema based on the children's classic by Edith Nesbit; and Adelaide Symphony Orchestra will join Miriam Margolyes for a retelling of Peter and the Wolf.

• *Adelaide festival takes place from 3-19 March, with [the full festival program online now](#)*

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