

2019 Bleach* Program heralds new era for the city

Bleach* cements itself as The Gold Coast Festival in 2019 with a program that promises to be the premier arts and cultural event's most captivating yet.

The eighth annual festival runs from April 17-28 and heralds a new era for the Gold Coast while celebrating its unique rituals and culture with a jam-packed program that spans large-scale opera, award-winning dance, eye-popping cabaret, free live music, a thought-provoking political swimming carnival and a thrilling drive-in with a difference.

Over 12 days, the Gold Coast's beaches, waterways, parklands and civic gathering places become playgrounds for contemporary performance and installation with Bleach* Artistic Director and CEO Louise Bezzina calling on everyone to come and play.

"2019's Bleach* Festival signals a new chapter for the city, taking place one year after the historic staging of the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games," Ms Bezzina said.

"The Gold Coast has experienced a cultural revolution over the past few years with Bleach* at the helm and, as the Gold Coast continues to evolve, so too does Bleach*.

"In 2019, we'll turn the city on with a program of incredible arts experiences that will inspire and invigorate citizens and visitors to the Gold Coast."

Bleach* presents its largest event to date in 2019 with 28 unique productions and 132 performance including four world premieres, and three Queensland premieres, headlined by its centrepiece event, **Verdi's Requiem**, on April 27.

The blockbuster music concert, directed by Opera Queensland Artistic Director **Patrick Nolan** and featuring more than 150 musicians and singers, is performed under the stars, with HOTA's outdoor stage transformed into a fiery ceremonial sanctuary.

"Verdi's score is all-consuming and is one of the most beautiful pieces of music ever composed so this will be a very special, one-off concert for the city," Ms Bezzina said.

"*Requiem* has soaring voices, the might and force of Queensland Conservatorium Symphony Orchestra, a spectacular outdoor stage and a few other visual treats to generate no end of goosebump moments."

Bleach* again welcomes long-time collaborators **The Farm**, a Helpmann Award-winning and Gold Coast-based dance theatre company, to present newly commissioned work, **Throttle**.

Billed as a "drive-in live-action movie with a difference", *Throttle* is a B-grade thriller that plays out in front of an audience safely ensconced in their cars.

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“This intimate style of performance brings your personal fears to life with the idea that to embark on a new journey, you need to face up to your fears and overcome them,” Ms Bezzina said.

“*Throttle* has elements of stunt, the thrill of surprise, the eeriness of a stage lit by car headlights and incredible sound design that comes through your car speakers so you never quite know where the action's coming from and what's coming next.”

Also premiering in 2019 is **Water Songs**, a musical concert series that will travel through the Gold Coast's waterways.

Travelling minstrels will perform from the waterfront into backyards and public parks along the Gold Coast's network of canals, creeks and channels.

“There is a wonderful opportunity for Gold Coast locals to host or watch these intimate concerts, featuring newly composed music as well as classic covers, on their pontoons or from their local park,” Ms Bezzina said.

From canal to coast, Townsville's **Dancenorth** presents **Tectonic**, a free 15-minute performance installation staged twice a night and inspired by the plight of Torres Strait communities whose island homes will be consumed by rising sea levels.

“This is a fitting show for Bleach* given we're a coastal community on the Pacific Ocean and **Tectonic** is staged on the stunning Burleigh Beach.”

Two acclaimed female-led works make their Queensland premiere at Bleach* in 2019: **My Urrwai** and **Landing**.

Fresh from Sydney Festival 2018, *My Urrwai* is **Ghenoa Gela's** funny and moving one-woman show recounting her journey as a gay woman from the Torres Strait raised in a family of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Landing is the response of Perth artist **Tanya Lee** to Australia's detention policies and fractious relationship with Manus Island and was a hit at Tasmania's 2018 Dark Mofo.

Presented as an absurd swimming carnival, *Landing* is conducted over 24 hours in the Gold Coast Aquatic Centre with participants trying to swim the distance from Australia to Manus Island in a continuous relay, guided by people from the local migrant and refugee communities.

A solo cabaret work from Brisbane psycho-siren **Leah Shelton**, **Terror Australis** will make its Gold Coast premiere at HOTA for a limited season; a grindhouse cabaret rampant with black humour, anti-burlesque, live art and Hills-Hoist-pole-dancing.

Shelton trawls through the roadkill of the Australian national identity to reveal a litany of brutality and paranoia, drenched in sweat and beer.

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Bleach* again welcomes back production powerhouse **Strut 'n' Fret** which will stage **Limbo Unhinged** in a Spiegel tent at Broadbeach from April 17.

"We're delighted to have Strut 'n' Fret back with one of their most popular shows where visitors can enjoy the ritual of gathering in a venue like the Spiegel tent," Ms Bezzina said.

Returning in 2019 is the oceanfront **Bleach* at Burleigh** entertainment precinct, a dedicated festival hub hosting free live music and entertainment across the 12 days including a concert headlined by ARIA-winning songstress **Montaigne, Pub Choir** at the pop-up Burleigh Bleach* Club (a bar on the beach) and sets by **Mama Kin Spender** and **Kira Puru**.

"Broadbeach's Centenary Park, the state-of-the-art HOTA and the new *Bleach* at Burleigh* arts hub will become the Festival's major hotspots in 2019," Ms Bezzina said.

"Gold Coast, Bleach* is your festival. Its 2019 program is your invitation to gather, unite, connect, celebrate and be truly amazed.

"I look forward to seeing you at one of our 28 events during the 12 days of Bleach* Festival."

Gold Coast Mayor **Tom Tate** applauded the Bleach* team on designing another thought-provoking program.

"Bleach* is renowned for its surprises and for pushing the boundaries – 2019 will be no different," he said.

"I'm delighted so many local artists and companies get to take centre stage, alongside some of the country's most daring contemporary art-makers.

"2019 is also the finale for our much loved artistic director so let's get behind 2019 and make this the best festival in our city's history."

Bleach* Festival 2019 marks Bezzina's eighth and final festival following her recent appointment as Artistic Director of Brisbane Festival. Her first Brisbane Festival program will be presented in 2020.

Full program at www.bleachfestival.com.au

Bleach – The Gold Coast Festival is proudly supported by the City of Gold Coast; the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland, part of the Department of Environment and Science; and Tourism and Events Queensland.*

~ ENDS

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ABOUT BLEACH* FESTIVAL | <https://www.bleachfestival.com.au>

Bleach* Festival is the Gold Coast Festival, taking place annually across the City in April. The program is one of Australia's leading and most exciting site-specific contemporary arts programs. Quintessentially Gold Coast, Bleach* Festival celebrates the city's most dynamic and adventurous artists, welcomes renowned Australian and international collaborators and engages a broad audience through a range of events.

Utilising the Gold Coast's world-famous natural landscape as unconventional venues, Bleach* Festival aims to deliver incredible arts and cultural experiences that challenge expectations, change perceptions and provide a unique and authentic sense of place, inspiring both locals and visitors alike.

Bleach* Festival has attracted more than 470,000 people since its inaugural year in 2012. The program features work across all genres including dance, theatre, contemporary music, opera, installations, circus and major public events.

"The city's largest cultural event [Bleach Festival] reflects the growth in the glitter strip's arts and culture scene..."* – The Australian

"Bigger and more spectacular than ever..." – mygc.com.au

"Bezzina has made the annual Bleach Festival the heart and soul of the party, and this year's program is the best yet..."* – The Courier-Mail

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