

## ANNEX A – MORE INFO ABOUT THE SHOWS

### A THOUSAND WAYS PART III: AN ASSEMBLY



#### **Programme Synopsis**

A public convening made up of you and every stranger from the project's journey. Together we follow a shared score. This final instalment is a chance to feel the power and complexities of group assembly.

**Abigail Browde and Michael Silverstone (known collectively as 600 HIGHWAYMEN), the artists behind these works' shares:**

#### **SIFA: How do you feel about being part of SIFA 2021?**

600 HIGHWAYMEN: It's very exciting and encouraging to see the ways in which arts festivals around the world are finding avenues to take place, even when the current circumstances feel like impossible limitations. Certainly SIFA 2021 will be a real highlight as it will be one of the first festivals in the world to return to in-person programming. We are very happy to be the midst of these other interesting artists and adventuresome audiences.

#### **SIFA: What can audiences look forward to for your programme?**

600 HIGHWAYMEN: The second two instalments of A Thousand Ways (Parts Two and Three) will continue the trajectory of tracing the arc from distance to togetherness. Both pieces collapse the role of the spectator and performer, offering audiences an opportunity to practice re-entering shared spaces again. As Part One of the triptych took place over the telephone, Parts Two and Three occur in-person, with all the freedom and complication that entails!



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### **SIFA: What was the inspiration behind the work that will be presented as part of SIFA 2021?**

**600 HIGHWAYMEN:** In our entire body of work, we are always looking at the complexity of sharing space, of being together. We were already investigating and creating a piece (A Thousand Ways) for intimate encounters between strangers when the pandemic hit. The circumstances of the pandemic helped bring the piece into sharper focus, however, and we began to think of the work as this triptych of experiences, one that could trace the arc of this time.

For us, one of the driving questions was about this feeling of closeness and presence -- how could we feel a sense of closeness in a time where we are required to be apart, or where we are retraining ourselves to think of physical proximity as a threat. While Part One of A Thousand Ways is dealing very specifically with physical distance, Parts Two and Three ask how can we learn to deal with one another again, as we slowly regain physical proximity

### **About 600 HIGHWAYMEN**

Since 2009, 600 HIGHWAYMEN (Abigail Browde and Michael Silverstone) have been making live art that, through a variety of radical approaches illuminate the inherent poignancy of people coming together. The work exists at the intersection of theater, dance, contemporary performance, and civic encounter. Though the processes are varied, each project revolves around the same curiosity: what occurs in the live encounter between people.

600 HIGHWAYMEN has been called the “the standard-bearers of contemporary theatre-making” by Le Monde, and “one of New York’s best non-traditional theater companies” by The New Yorker. They have received commissions from The Public Theater, Temple Contemporary, Salzburg Festival, and Festival Theater for men.

They are recipients of an Obie Award and Switzerland’s ZKB Patronize Prize, and nominees for Austria’s Nestroy Prize, the prestigious Alpert Award and NYC’s Bessie Award. In 2016, Browde and Silverstone were named artist fellows by the New York Foundation for the Arts.

### **Credits:**

A THOUSAND WAYS by 600 HIGHWAYMEN



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Written & created by Abigail Browde & Michael Silverstone

Executive Producer: Thomas O. Kriegsmann / Arktype

Line Producer: Cynthia J. Tong

Creative Consultant & Dramaturg: Andrew Kircher

This production was commissioned by The Arts Center at NYU Abu Dhabi, Stanford Live at Stanford University, Festival Theaterformen, and The Public Theater, and was originally commissioned and co-conceived by Temple Contemporary at Temple University, USA. Original support for the production was provided by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, Philadelphia.

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### play+GROUND: Closer Apart



#### **Programme Synopsis**

In this post-apocalyptic story, a father raises his daughter in the new normal where clean air is scarce and real food is hard to come by. Experience this heart-warming (non-verbal) tale of how little everyday acts make the memories we have tomorrow.

#### **Artist Bios**

##### **Ian Loy: The founder of MySuperFuture Theatrical Productions**

Ian Loy is a theatre-maker based in Singapore since 1999. He graduated from Lasalle-SIA College of the Arts in 2002 with a Diploma in Drama with Distinction and was also a recipient of the NAC Georgette Chen Arts Scholarship. Since then he has used his forte in theatre arts as a performer and director in school projects and theatre, both independently and with established theatre companies.

Ian Loy founded MySuperFuture Theatrical Productions in 2009. Through the company, he involves himself with many community outreach and theatre projects with people of all ages and abilities, coaching or creating theatre art for them, especially for the young audiences.



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With this passion, Ian Loy was also invited to be an Associate Artist with the Esplanade from 2018 to 2020. He has been creating theatre for our young audiences since 2009.

He was awarded the Singapore Young Artist Award in 2014 for his series of accomplished work in theatre for young audiences (TYA). It represents Singapore's highest award for young arts practitioners, aged 35 years and below in the year of award, whose artistic achievements and commitment have distinguished them among their peers. It encourages him to continue pursuing excellence in the arts, and to look towards inspiring others.

In 2016, Ian was nominated Best Director by LIFE! Theatre Awards for his work in Grandpa Cherry Blossoms presented by Esplanade's SUPER JAPAN Festival. This nomination in itself is unique as he was the only TYA director that is mentioned in its category ever. This serves as an affirmation for him to continue serving brilliant work in the theatres for the young.

Website: <http://main.mysuperfuture.com/>

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### THE RHYTHM OF US



#### Programme Synopsis

A long-awaited performance by two of Singapore's pre-eminent national arts companies, ***The Rhythm of Us*** is a transcendent evening of dance and music for these uncertain times.

The Rhythm of Us marks the exciting collaboration between **Singapore Dance Theatre (SDT)** and the **Singapore Symphony Orchestra (SSO)** – one bound to delight fans and new audiences as the companies break new ground in this cross-disciplinary concert.

Buoyed by a collective longing for the theatre, The Rhythm of Us leads audiences on a lyrical journey with three works, culminating in the remembrance of the transcendence and wonder of live music and dance.

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Three contemporary musical pieces will come to life with new choreography by Artistic Director of SDT Janek Schergen, well-known local choreographer Christina Chan and special guest Pam Tanowitz. Tanowitz's new work marks the first showing of her work in Singapore.

The evening opens on a meditative note with William Walton's Passacaglia for Cello, performed by cellist Ng Pei Sian and Principal Dancer Chihiro Uchida, and builds up to a crescendo with a performance of Henry Cowell's Variation on Third, featuring a string ensemble and six dancers.

In the performance's effervescent finale, expect a brand-new piece by local jazz pianist and composer, Chok Kerong, matched by fresh choreography by Christina Chan and a dazzling ensemble of musicians and dancers (as far as safe management measure will allow!).

A testament to hope and the indomitable spirit of the arts, The Rhythm of Us is an unprecedented treasure by two of Singapore's most celebrated national arts companies and a rare treat for these challenging times.

**Hans Sorensen (HS), Director, Artistic Planning of SSO and Janek Schergen (JS), the Artistic Director of SDT share:**

**SIFA: How do you feel about being part of SIFA 2021?**

HS: It is great for the SSO musicians to be able performing for a live audience again in another joint collaboration with SDT and in partnership with SIFA.

JS: We are pleased to participate in a collaboration that involves new choreography, great music and an opportunity to present ourselves in the theatre once again

**SIFA: What can audiences look forward to for your programme?**

HS: A new original production with a new commissioned piece as part of the music for this ballet.

JS: There will be three pieces with major new additions from Pam Tanowitz, creating a new work for six SDT dancers to Henry Cowell music. Singaporean choreographer, Christina Chan, will make a full cast new creation using newly commissioned music from Chok Kerong, which should be unique and exciting.

**SIFA: What was the inspiration behind the work that will be presented as part of SIFA 2021?**

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JS: We always try to balance the three pieces in terms of music, qualities of the different works in temperament and overall look plus build in scale as the evening progresses.

**SIFA: How, if at all, has the pandemic influenced your process in creating this work?**

HS: For the overall planning, the timeline was very short. Normally this process takes one-two years, but this time it was a 3-month timeline.

JS: Pam Tanowitz's work is being choreographed through Zoom video sessions, which is unprecedented and unique. It is working out far better than either Pam or the dancers expected. You don't get the one-on-one physical experience that is at the core of dance movement, but we've found a way around that. The new piece is taking shape extremely well.

### **About Singapore Dance Theatre and Singapore Symphony Orchestra**

#### **Singapore Dance Theatre**

Singapore Dance Theatre (SDT) was founded in 1988 by Goh Soo Khim and Anthony Then. The Company has since developed into Singapore's premier professional dance company comprising of 35 Company dancers plus apprentices. In 2002, SDT was honoured with the opportunity to grace the official opening of the Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay with the opening performance of Boi Sakti's Reminiscing the Moon.

More than a decade on, SDT continues to have the privilege of performing a myriad of repertoires in a world-class performing arts venue for exhilarating audiences. In the course of each year, the Company performs six seasons annually. The highlights of the Company's performance season each year include the widely popular outdoor dance event – Ballet Under the Stars at the Fort Canning Park, two full length classics at the Esplanade Theatre, and also Masterpiece in Motion which brings together three works of the finest international choreography, as well as Passages Contemporary Season.

The Company's repertoire ranges from classical to contemporary ballet, from renowned choreographers like Choo-San Goh, George Balanchine, Natalie Weir, Ma Cong, Val Caniparoli, Edmund Stripe, Kinsun Chan, Edwaard Liang, Nils Christie, Toru Shimazaki, Christina Chan, Timothy Harbour, François Klaus, Tim Rushton and Lucas Jervies.

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In 2008, Janek Schergen was appointed Artistic Director of SDT. Under his leadership, the Company has made new achievements in the international and Singapore dance arena. In the last ten years, the Company has added 30 world premieres and 19 company premieres to the repertoire, in addition to numerous revivals of the existing Company's repertoire. Janek is also the Artistic Director of the Choo-San Goh & H. Robert Magee Foundation which oversees the licensing and production of Choo-San Goh's ballets and the annual Choo-San Goh Awards for Choreography.

In 2013, SDT moved to a new premise in Bugis+ with four state-of-the-art studios. Additionally, the Company will be enhancing efforts in education and outreach, bringing the appreciation of dance to a wider audience in Singapore.

### **Singapore Symphony Orchestra**

Since its founding in 1979, the Singapore Symphony Orchestra (SSO) has been Singapore's flagship orchestra, touching lives through classical music and providing the heartbeat of the cultural scene in the cosmopolitan city-state.

In addition to its subscription series concerts, the orchestra is well-loved for its outdoor and community appearances, and its significant role educating the young people of Singapore. The SSO has also earned an international reputation for its orchestral virtuosity, having garnered sterling reviews for its overseas tours and many successful recordings.

The SSO makes its performing home at the 1,800-seat state-of-the-art Esplanade Concert Hall. More intimate works, as well as outreach and community performances take place at the 673-seat Victoria Concert Hall, the home of the SSO. The orchestra performs over 60 concerts a year, and its versatile repertoire spans all-time favourites and orchestral masterpieces to exciting cutting-edge premieres. Bridging the musical traditions of East and West, Singaporean and Asian musicians and composers are regularly showcased in the concert season. This has been a core of the SSO's programming philosophy from the very beginning under Choo Hoey, who was Music Director from 1979 to 1996.

Under the Music Directorship of Lan Shui from 1997 to 2019, the SSO has performed in Europe, Asia and the United States. In May 2016 the SSO was invited to perform at the Dresden Music Festival and the Prague Spring International Music Festival. This successful five-city tour of Germany and Prague also included the SSO's return to the Berlin Philharmonie after six years. In 2014 the SSO's debut at the 120th BBC Proms in London received critical acclaim in the major UK newspapers The Guardian and The Telegraph. The SSO has also performed in China on multiple occasions.

In the 2020/21 concert season, the SSO welcomes renowned maestro Hans Graf as its Chief Conductor.



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The SSO is part of the Singapore Symphony Group, which also manages the Singapore Symphony Chorus, and the Singapore National Youth Orchestra.

The mission of the Group is to create memorable shared experiences with music. Through the SSO and its affiliated performing groups, we spread the love for music, nurture talent and enrich our diverse communities.

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### THE INVISIBLE OPERA



#### Programme Synopsis

A contemporary, public performance where the city takes centre stage, *The Invisible Opera* brings the world premiere of its first remote edition to SIFA 2021.

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Set in a bustling square of a city centre, *The Invisible Opera* invites a solo observer to witness what we see and do not see in our public environment.

Unfolding as a hypnotic observation of the sounds and patterns of everyday life, *The Invisible Opera* gradually leads us to see the city – and our role within it – in a completely new light.

Created by Australian multidisciplinary performer **Sophia Brous**, with award-winning performance-makers Lara Thoms, Samara Hersch and US choreographer Faye Driscoll, *The Invisible Opera* presents the first iteration of its remote edition, in its world premiere at SIFA 2021.

Performed entirely remotely as a live theatrical encounter, *The Invisible Opera* features immersive sound design, electroacoustic orchestration and live vocal performance. The performance will be beamed in from Australia through a network of CCTV cameras and hidden microphones that map each movement of the square in real-time.

It follows a live libretto sung by a mellifluous security camera, describing each of the actions, objects and experiences happening in a city square in real-time. From the people, buildings, bodies and behaviours, to the unseen forces of private interest, real estate, surveillance and city planning, the performance choreographs the space into a kind of manufactured spectacle.

Ground-breaking and surprising, *The Invisible Opera* invites you step into a new experience of the city we call home

**Sophia Brous (SB), the lead artist behind this work shares:**

**SIFA: How do you feel about being part of SIFA 2021?**

SB: It feels so wonderful to be bringing *The Invisible Opera* to Singapore for SIFA! We have such a great respect for the festival, and the fantastic art that has shown there, so it's very special to be premiering the first version of this work with Gaurav and the festival in 2021. Singapore feels like the perfect place to be premiering this piece, given its density and the highly designed city planning and public spaces, we're thrilled to be bringing the piece there in May.

**SIFA: What can audiences look forward to for your programme?**

SB: *The Invisible Opera* is a theatre encounter in public space. It allows us to view a busy city square through different eyes, and develop a deeper awareness of the dynamics and interests that impact the spaces as we inhabit every day. Are we

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watched? who is watching? Who is allowed to be there, and who is not? Do we move freely, or could this space be somehow staged, produced, or predetermined?

Audiences can expect to see the city in a different way.

**SIFA: What was the inspiration behind the work that will be presented as part of SIFA 2021?**

SB: *The Invisible Opera* aims to explore what we see and do not see in our public environments. It hopes to prompt discussions about the dynamics of power and access in our public spaces, and who determines what is acceptable, how we act and what we do.

The piece is a playful and ethereal exploration of the beauty and complexity of public space - it uses music, immersive audio design and audience interaction to make the city into a space of theatre.

**SIFA: How has the pandemic influenced your process in creating this work?**

SB: The pandemic has, like for all people, had a huge impact on our ability to create and commune together over the last year. For the piece, it is meant that unfortunately we couldn't be there in Singapore to realise it in May, however this put forward some interesting opportunities and provocations for the work, and has led us to develop a range of new ideas for the realisation of the piece that feel exciting and true to the piece's themes and focus.

Coronavirus has impacted everything we do, and of course it has impacted our public spaces and city environments too. It feels only right that this piece should react to the change of the past year, and work out new and different ways of interrogating public spaces and the dynamics that shape them.

### **Artist Bios:**

**Sophia Brous** is an interdisciplinary artist and performance-maker based in New York, USA and Melbourne, Australia. A vocalist, composer, performance-maker and curator, she creates new, contemporary music performance works internationally, with artists, festivals, concert halls and cultural events.

Brous is a 2021 resident artist at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) and formerly artist-in-resident at National Sawdust, New York, The Watermill Center and the Red Bull Studios New York. She was finalist of the 2019 Melbourne Prize for Music and recipient of the World

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Tour Scholarship from the Berklee School of Music. Brous commenced as Curator at Large of Brooklyn arts institution Pioneer Works New York in Fall 2020, and is ongoing Artistic Associate of the Arts Centre Melbourne, where she created the major contemporary performing arts festival Supersense: Festival of the Ecstatic in 2015.

Brous' practice draws on far-reaching interests in devised performance, multidisciplinary collaboration and improvisation. She works with artists across music, film, theatre, dance and contemporary performance to create new, commissioned work for stage, concert, screen and public space.

Current commissions include the contemporary music theatre work for public space *The Invisible Opera* (Singapore International Festival of Art, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Arts Centre Melbourne), and multidisciplinary performance work *Mount Analogue* (Oslo Opera House/Ultima Festival Oslo, Norwegian Arts Council).

Brous' recent works include large-scale concert installation *Dream Machine* for Red Bull Music Festival New York/Pioneer Works (featuring Iggy Pop, Master Musicians of Jajouka; Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, Zeena Parkins, Greg Fox); *When The World's On Fire* for The Kennedy Centre Washington (with Marc Ribot); the world premiere of Ursula K Le Guin's *Music and Poetry of the Kesh* for RVNG International (with Okwui Okpokwasili); song cycle *Lullaby Movement* for Sydney Festival/Urban Theatre Projects/Operadagen Rotterdam/National Sawdust (with Leo Abrahams and David Coulter); and New York large ensemble *EXO-TECH* – with collaborators David Byrne, Kimbra, Moses Sumney, Questlove, Yuka Honda, Sean Lennon and Tyondai Braxton.

As a performer and vocalist, Brous has appeared in productions for The Barbican, Southbank Centre, Paris Philharmonie, BAM/Brooklyn Academy of Music, Operadagen Rotterdam, Pioneer Works, Dublin Concert Hall, National Sawdust, Dark MOFO, Sydney Opera House and Arts Centre Melbourne. She has appeared at All Tomorrow's Parties, Meredith, Laneway, Big Day Out, and the Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne International Arts Festivals.

Noted productions include The Barbican's *In Dreams: David Lynch Revisited* (directed by David Coulter); *The Arthur Russell Retrospective* (BAM); The Southbank Centre's *200 Motels* by Frank Zappa with the BBC Concert Orchestra; *DOCUMENTA Athens* (Hallucinations with Oliver Coates); Marina Abramovic's *Private Archaeologies* (MONA/Dark MOFO); Anthony McAll's *Solid Light Works* (Pioneer Works) and motion pictures *Mary Magdalene* (2018); *Judy and Punch* (2019) and *The Invisible Mountain* (2021). Brous has collaborated with artists including David Byrne, Questlove, Caroline Polachek, Julia Holter, Colin Stetson, Belle and Sebastian, Kimbra, Moses Sumney, Marc Ribot, Zeena Parkins and Mick Harvey. She works with artists in film, theatre and dance including Faye Driscoll, Okwui Okpokwasili, Ben Russell, Garth Davis, Lara Thoms and Makino Takashi.

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Alongside her creative projects, Brous is a recognised curator and festival director, and became the Program Director of the Melbourne International Jazz Festival at the age of 22 (2009-2012), before commencing as Curator of Music of the Adelaide Festival of the Arts (2010-2012) and founding and curating Supersense: Festival of the Ecstatic at the Arts Centre Melbourne in 2016. She studied music at the New England Conservatory of Music, Boston and Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne.

*“... a power house” –The Australian*  
*“... a revelation” –The Observer UK*  
*“... a prodigious chanteuse” –Rolling Stone*

### THE INVISIBLE OPERA CREATIVE TEAM CREDITS

Created by Sophia Brous with Lara Thoms, Faye Driscoll and Samara Hersch.

Lead Artist & Performer – Sophia Brous  
Co-Directors – Lara Thoms, Samara Hersch  
Dramaturg – Faye Driscoll  
Sound Design - Tilman Robinson  
Composer - John Also Bennett

Production Coordinator - Cassandra Fumi  
Producer - Freya Waterson  
Production Manager – Jeffrey Yue/Ctrl Freak (Singapore)

*The Invisible Opera* was created through the support of the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM), Arts Centre Melbourne and the Australia Council of the Arts.



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