

**MULTICUTURAL ARTS VICTORIA
& MELBOURNE FESTIVAL
PRESENT
IGNITING IMAGINATION 2016
AMBASSADORS**



Daniel Seifu is an Ethiopian music-director, pianist, keyboardist and composer. He studied at Addis Ababa University Yared Music School as well as at the Ethiopian National Theatre. He worked as a coordinator of pop and jazz music bands as well as composer and arranger of different major musical events. In Melbourne, Daniel has been pivotal in many of the Ethiopian bands established in Australia including the sensational JAzmaris, Afrohables, Black Jesus and Dereb the Ambassador. Daniel has worked with several well-known Ethiopian musicians such as the mega pop star, Aster Awke and the BBC World Music Award winner, Mahmoud Ahmed.



Sydney born **Victoria Chiu** trained at the VCA, Melbourne, Bachelor of Dance. She has performed and toured extensively with European companies Cie Nomades, Cie Gilles Jobin, Micha Purucker, Jozsef Trefeli and Jane Turner. In Australia she has worked with Fiona Malone, Bernadette Walong and with Australian Dance Theatre for TV show Superstars of Dance filmed in LA. She has choreographed four short works in Switzerland. Her first full length work was a Sydney/Geneva collaboration with Cie József Trefeli called 'StarStruck' which premiered in Sydney and toured to Talinn, Annemasse, Dresden and Geneva funded by the Ville de Geneve, Loterie Romande and Pro Helvetia. Victoria and Roland Cox successfully created and toured 'The Ballad of Herbie Cox' to critical acclaim across Canada and to Los Angeles in April 2013. More recently, she has developed 'Do You Speak Chinese' across China and Australia. (www.chiucox.com)



James Henry has been working as a photographer in the Aboriginal community in Melbourne for the past five years covering protest marches to conferences to portraits. His strength as a photographer would have to be his diversity and this has enabled him to work in many disciplines across the country. James has also been very active in the Melbourne Aboriginal community as a musician performing with artists and groups such as the Black Arm Band, Archie Roach and the Skin choir as well as being a singer/songwriter in his own right. His diverse skill set is also apparent in music as well where he is a sort after composer and resident sound engineer at Songlines Aboriginal Music. James is quite active in sharing his knowledge in the community running workshops and giving personal advice to aspiring photographers and young musicians. (jameshenryphotography.com.au)



Suzanne Kalk is Artistic Director of The Village Festival, the only traveling multi arts festival in Australia visiting many communities. The festival creates a platform for both emerging and established professional artists, across the broadest range of disciplines and backgrounds. In her work, Suzanne is committed to creating innovative and exciting arts events and artworks that follow the ideals of inclusion, sharing and community. This often involves combining outstanding art with community activities in ways that make the arts practices more inclusive and uses the arts to create a stronger community.

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Chaco Kato's art practice involves many genres from process-based installation to improvisational drawing and picture book making. She is best known for her ephemeral, open-ended, playful installations, such as large scale string constructions, or dried veggie sculpture series. Site specificity, versatility, flexibility and providing a sense of humour or joys are key issues throughout her works, which also seek ways to transform the world we live in. She is a founding member of Slow Art Collective, an Interdisciplinary artist group whose focus is on creative practices, environmental sustainability, DIY culture, and collaborative practice. Kato completed a Fine Art degree at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston in 1989, and a Master of Fine Arts at the Victorian College of the Arts in 1999. Kato has lived in Melbourne since 1996, and has exhibited extensively in various public/commercial spaces nationally and internationally, such as the McClelland Sculpture Survey and Award in Melbourne, Esplanade in Singapore, and 3331ArtsChiyoda in Tokyo.



Ajak Kwai is the rare voice of an African woman in Australia. Ajak has a haunting melodic voice which is distinctly African and to listen to her is to experience this dark continent in all its colours, rhythms and mystery. Whether Ajak is singing in Arabic, Sudanese or English she leaves no doubt as to the depth and richness of her Dinka roots. Music is the vehicle for her stories of extraordinary life experiences as a refugee, exiled from her home town. She sings about freedom, peace, love and ... cows. Her distinctive voice and vibrant afro soul style songs have seen her in demand with many festivals including Byron Bay, Apollo Bay, National Folk Festival, Port Fairy and Melbourne Festival. This has developed her as a performer with a style that has great appeal visually and musically that you can't help feeling you are in Africa. Ajak released an album in 2008 which reflected her new funky raw Aussie/Sudanese sound.



Astrid Mendez is an artist, Industrial and Graphic Designer, Puppet-Maker and Performer. For more than ten years she has been artfully weaving her training as a designer with her inner most passion for theatre and puppets. Her projects have consistently been the result of her yearning to create and expand her talents, and her commitment has become both a challenge and an outlet; a discipline and a passion. Over the past six years, she has been participating in performances and cultural projects related to theatre and puppetry in Australia. Through experimenting and creating tiny puppets for personal use and minor events, she has discovered and developed a passion for the miniature world.



Mindy Meng Wang studied the Guzheng in China with leading masters since age six and began solo concerts at age 10, receiving many awards and honours at national and international Guzheng competitions. In 2008, she was awarded "Hull Sinfonietta's Young International Artist of the Year". She has a passionate interest in creating cross-cultural links based on her experiences of diverse music and collaborates with a range of classical, pop, electronic and traditional folkloric musicians. She has performed extensively across China and Europe and the UK including the Tate Modern, O2 Arena, Dublin City Hall, Confucius Institute (Dublin), Los Sonidos de la Biodiversidad (Spain), Festival dos Abrazos (Spain), Bidasoa Folk Festival (Spain), TMG Guzheng premiere (Portugal), jeugdenmuziek Gent Groenzaal (Belgium) among many others. She moved to Melbourne in 2011.

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Tomoko Yamasaki is a performer, writer, and grew up in the family cabaret in Nobeoka, Miyazaki, Japan. After arriving in Melbourne in 1994, she began training at Women’s Circus to express herself with her physical body as English was new. Tomoko graduated from John Bolton Theatre School in 1998 and has done further circus training with Circus Oz and Leg’s On the Wall. She has performed in: “Macho Barbie” tippie trapeze - Melbourne International Arts Festival, 2000; “Beyond Butoh Festival”- 2004, 2005, 2006; “Ray of Glass Needles” Next Wave, 2005; “Can you see me now” – Blast Theory (UK) in Tokyo, 2005; “Spin Sisters” - Melbourne Fringe Festival, 2004; “Ngapartji Ngapartji” – Perth International Festival, 2008; “The Stain” – La Mama 2014, 2015; “The Classics” – Melba Spiegeltent, 2015; and is currently creating a show Tsu na Gu. She is also a qualified Oriental Shiatsu practitioner since 2000 and practices from Fitzroy Shiatsu in Fitzroy, Victoria, Australia.