



News Release

4 April 2019

V&A Performance Festival

27 April – 6 May 2019

#VAPerformanceFestival

The V&A Performance Festival returns in 2019 to celebrate the themes of Comedy and Music. A wide range of special events will take place throughout the museum, including live performances, film screenings, talks, tours and workshops.

Highlights of the comedy programme include a stand-up night headlined by award-winning comedian and writer Shazia Mirza; an evening of drag cabaret in the museum café; improv shows and workshops with The Free Association; a performance by award-winning artist, Victoria Melody, exploring the effect of laughter on the brain; poet John Hegley doing a reading of his favourite nonsense poetry, and a host of clown schools, talks and tours celebrating the V&A Collections through a comedic lens.

The comedy programme celebrates the opening of *Laughing Matters: The State of a Nation* – a new display that reflects on the role of humour in debates around identity, empire and power over the past two hundred years. Through costume, scripts, puppets and music, the display unpicks the punchlines to discover what humour can tell us about what it means to be British today.

The music programme marks two key music anniversaries. Decca Records will be celebrating their 90th birthday with a full day of live performances by artists including cellist Sheku Kanneh-Mason and singer-songwriter Rhys Lewis, talks, screenings of David Bowie videos, rare memorabilia, fun children's workshops, and a pop-up display telling the story of Decca's past. To celebrate the 150th anniversary of the death of French composer Hector Berlioz, mezzo-soprano Rachel Kelly and pianist Edwige Herchenroder perform alongside 60 children and choirs will pop up throughout the museum, filling the galleries with music.

Throughout the festival, there will also be a display of 27 portraits of major figures in theatre and film, from Stephen Sondheim to Deborah Warner. *BEHIND THE CURTAIN* is the result of four years' work by artist Francis Hamel. The sitters have all held the position of Visiting Professor of the Cameron Mackintosh Chair of Contemporary Theatre at St Catherine's College, Oxford, a Chair endowed by the theatre producer, Sir Cameron Mackintosh in 1990. Hamel will paint live in the gallery, giving visitors the chance to watch the artist at work and to ask questions about his creative process.

About the V&A Performance Festival 2019

Admission is FREE to most events, selected events are ticketed in advance. More information can be found here:

vam.ac.uk/performance-festival

About the V&A's Theatre and Performance Collection

The V&A is home to the UK's national collection of theatre and performing arts related materials, from theatre and ballet to opera, musicals and rock and pop. Founded in the 1920s, the collection includes set models, designs, stage props, costumes, original posters, paintings and photographs, representing live performance in Britain over the last 350 years. The Museum has a permanent gallery for displays drawn from the collection and a space for temporary exhibitions. The V&A also houses the National Video Archive of Performance (NVAP), which has recorded over 300 UK theatre performances since 1992, from classic plays and musicals to new-writing and physical theatre.

For further PRESS information please contact the V&A press office on 0207 942 2502 or email press.office@vam.ac.uk (not for publication).

High resolution press images can be downloaded from <http://pressimages.vam.ac.uk>