

Macau

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Life is beautiful

Operating under the motto 'Beautiful Arts, Beautiful Life!', the Macau Arts Festival is back in full force for its 20th edition. **Laura Sennett** introduces our picks of the bunch

Kicking off this year's festival is **Sutra** (May 2, 8pm, Macao Cultural Centre Grand Auditorium, \$200-\$100), a new dance work produced by Britain's Sadler's Wells company that is inspired by the dedication and determination of China's Shaolin monks. The show is coreographed by Flemish/Moroccan choreographer Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui and was highly praised by the UK's *Guardian* newspaper, who said of it: "This unique, profoundly imagined show takes the concept of cultural exchange to a whole new level."

Music, Architecture, Sonic, and Sculpture create the acronym for **MASS Ensemble with David Myriam** (Sun 10, 8pm, Macao Cultural Centre Grand Auditorium, \$100-\$40), performers who use these mediums to create cutting-edge art. Their music boasts traditional instrumentation, as well as unique instruments invented by artistic director Bill Close, such as the Earth Harp, the world's largest stringed instrument. The strings reach out from the stage to the rear of the auditorium, transforming the hall – with the audience inside – into one gigantic resonating instrument.

On Sunday 3 and Monday 4, **Wenji: Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute** (8pm, Dom Pedro V Theatre, \$60) is based on the true 2nd-century story of Cai Wenji. The story reflects nomadic culture and the strife of an unsettled existence as the heroine of the tale has to decide whether to return to her home in China, from where she was abducted, or live a new life with her husband and children in the northern wastelands. Her recorded poems and writings



Saving the world *L'Arche* (the ark) ruminates on the perilous state of the planet

documenting her experiences led to this contemporary opera that fills the stage with light and colour as the characters come to life.

With the planet in peril, being green is all the rage. Canadian group *L'Arsenal à Musique* makes the disintegrating environment the focal point of its multi-disciplinary production **L'Arche** (the ark; May 24, 3pm & 8pm, Macao Cultural Centre Grand Auditorium, \$100, \$60). Using music, projections and performance, *L'Arche* asks us to reflect on the impact we have on the

world around us, throwing a pointed gaze on the fragile equilibrium that exists between man and nature.

Meanwhile, Hofesh Shechter Company's double bill – **Uprising** and **In Your Rooms** (May 29 & 30, 8pm, Macau

Cultural Centre Grand Auditorium, \$200, \$150, \$100) is filled with impressive choreography, and original rock, electro and classical music. In *Uprising*, passion and tension are captured as seven men become locked in conflict, fighting for power, while *In Your Rooms* oozes with furious energy, touching on the provocative, political, and deeply personal, presenting a society that is scarily alienating and yet shockingly familiar.

Finally, **Chimeras** (May 24, 8pm, Macao Cultural Centre Grand Auditorium, \$100-\$40), a concert featuring four Macao premieres, is not to be missed. The talent of China's most outstanding contemporary composers is showcased in this presentation of rare and highly complex symphonic pieces. Full of ethnic flavour while also drawing from Western classical music, the medley of songs offers something for all music lovers. Buy your tickets now.

Looks like May is going to be quite a month in Macau. *Macau Arts Festival, Sat 2 to May 30. Enquiries: (853) 8399 6699; www.icm.gov.mo/fam.*



Go to your room *The Hofesh Shechter Company* get furious

Previews

Aroma of Art

St Paul's Fine Art Sat 9-June 14

Ever imagined that art could stimulate your sense of smell the way wine or food do? No, neither have we, but that's the unusual premise behind the *Aroma of Art* exhibition. French, Macanese, and one Hong Kong artist have created works of painting and photography that aim to stimulate your nasal passages. But don't worry about an olfactory assault – you'll have to use your imagination to conjure up the aromas suggested visually by each piece. We're guessing a bouquet painting will 'smell' like flowers and a city scene like pollution, but don't ask us what to expect from abstract works.

Born from the art space's collaboration with The Centre of Personal Development Studies and Les 16 Anges, a group that promotes French artists internationally, *Aroma of Art* was assembled under the curatorial tutelage of Hong Kong's Ka Fei and his Gallic counterpart Dr François de Verdère, both of whom also have works in the show. Running concurrently with Le French May in Hong Kong, the exhibition aims to play its part in favouring cultural exchange.

Paintings differ greatly in technique and content, as can be expected when works come from 20 artists. While the Macanese are more inclined towards realist compositions, the guest dabbles with abstract forms. The contrasts between the two cultures will be evident, according to Gigi Lee, coordinator of the project, so prepare to challenge your senses. *Anna Bisazza*



Smells like... art Nasal stimulation