



Holistic Strata by S20 Hiroaki Umeda.

THE LEADING EDGE OF THE AVANT-GARDE

The 'Unfolding Kafka Festival' once again brings artistic experimentation to both Bangkok and Chiang Mai

STORY: BENJAMIN TARDIF

SCHEDULE

NOVEMBER 3-12

- ▶ Saiyah #2.3 [installation]
- ▶ K: Kafka In KomiKs [exhibition]

NOVEMBER 7

- ▶ Kafka In Film [screening and lecture]

NOVEMBER 8

- ▶ Red Peter [dance]
- ▶ Kafka In Film [screening and lecture]

NOVEMBER 9

- ▶ Be Claude [theatre]
- ▶ A Crossbreed [lecture]
- ▶ Red Peter [dance]
- ▶ Bio-erosion [dance]

NOVEMBER 10

- ▶ Kafka In Film [screening]
- ▶ Be Claude [theatre]
- ▶ Bio-erosion [dance]

NOVEMBER 11-12 (double bill)

- ▶ NO-Body [dance]
- ▶ Mutiko Ala Neska [dance]
- ▶ Kafka In Film [screening]

NOVEMBER 20-21 (double bill)

- ▶ Holistic Strata [performance]
- ▶ Goofy [dance]

NOVEMBER 22

- ▶ Talk & Share with artists

For more details about the programme and venues, visit www.unfoldingkafkafestival.com. To get your festival pass (1,650 baht) or for more information concerning group tours, contact unfoldingkafkafestival@gmail.com.

The "Unfolding Kafka Festival" provides a platform for outstanding artistic trends in the field of contemporary art in Thailand. For the second edition, the festival will be held in Bangkok from Nov 3-22, and in Chiang Mai from Nov 24 and 25.

With Franz Kafka as the starting point and seed inspiration, the festival incorporates various artistic disciplines, from media performance to dance, film to visual art. Kafka's fascinating style and mysterious characters provide the artists plenty of room for interpretation. In a natural and rational way, Kafka combines the obscure and surreal with the real world. But this time the festival wants to expand on Kafka's works through abstract and conceptual art, and ask questions of how choreography, physical movements, installations, sculpture and visual art interact to address animalism, gender and identity, folding and unfolding material or bodies.

In November, among the panoply of performances, the festival will highlight the immersive media/sound/performance experience by the internationally-known Japanese artist Hiroaki Umeda. Supported by the Japan Foundation, Umeda will perform *Holistic Strata* for two nights on Nov 20 and 21 at the Sodsai Pantoomkomol Center for Dramatic Arts, Chulalongkorn University, in Bangkok, and a Southeast Asian premiere, *Duo*, on Nov 24 at the Maiiam Contemporary Art Museum in Chiang Mai.

On the same nights, presented as a double bill, dancer Roni Chadash, supported by the Embassy of Israel in Thailand, will perform her creation *Goofy*, in which audiences will be amazed by the brilliant use of her physicality without allowing the audience to see her head through almost the whole piece. Then for the Double Bill of Director's Pick, on Nov 11 and 12, there is a special presentation (exclusively for festival pass-holders) at the Rose Hotel Bangkok, allowing those present to experience an intimate and "headless" encounter with Chadash's dance installation *NO-Body*.

Since Kafka's influence spans across Europe, this year's programme also features a French artist. In collaboration with l'Ambassade de France en Thaïlande, the street performance group 1 Watt will perform a solo street performance called *Be Claude*. The male street artist explores the themes of gender and identity through his feminine side in an absurd and funny, but nonetheless philosophical, manner. *Be Claude* will take place on the Festival Grand Opening on Nov 9 around Soi Goethe/Sathon 1, but also on Students' Night (Nov 10) at the Rose Hotel Bangkok.

Finally, in collaboration with the Goethe-Institut Thailand, the festival offers a wide variety of exhibitions and activities for those interested in visual art, graphic design and movies. From Nov 3-12 at Bangkok CityCity Gallery, the Berlin-based Japanese visual artist Yoko Seyama will present for the first time in Southeast Asia her art installation *Saiyah #2.3*, where light folds and unfolds to continuously modify the surrounding space in various hues.

On Nov 7 and 8 at the Goethe-Institut Thailand, the Head of the Filmmuseum Muenchen (Collections), Stefan Droessler will give a lecture in which he immerses us into Kafka's world and reality through excerpts of rare reconditioned silent films, with excerpts of his diaries, pictures from the places he lived and cinemas he visited, as well as clips from the movies he saw in the beginning of the 20th century.

Finally, from Nov 3 to Dec 17 in Soi Goethe and at the Goethe-Institut Thailand, don't miss the exhibition "K: Kafka In KomiKs", where you can learn about Kafka's dark universe through graphic artworks. This graphical narrative serves not only an artistic and creative function; it also makes the abstraction more visible, accessible and tangible, allowing both Kafka enthusiasts and new readers to experience and interpret him in their own way.

Also on offer are special tours of the exhibition for students and other groups, to make the experience more comprehensible.



Yoko Seyama's Saiyah #2.3.

PHOTO © YOKO SEYAMA / UNFOLDING KAFKA



Roni Chadash.

PHOTO © OREN LAJNE / UNFOLDING KAFKA

TPO performs poignant requiems for King Rama IX

CONCERT REVIEW

■ DON MOISEN

On Saturday and Sunday last week, Thailand Philharmonic Orchestra performed the concert "Requiem For King Rama IX" in honour of the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej at Prince Mahidol Hall, Mahidol University, Salaya.

The venue and event were auspicious: Prince Mahidol was studying medicine at Harvard University at the time his son was born in Massachusetts — the son who would become King Rama IX and at one time the world's longest-reigning living monarch. Prince Mahidol's name has been attached to Mahidol University, the country's leading medical training school. Moreover, the College of Music at Mahidol University has become one of the largest and most renowned music schools in Southeast Asia.

Thailand Philharmonic Orchestra, one of the country's leading orchestras, has its home at Prince Mahidol Hall, a world-class space outstanding for both its architectural design and acoustic quality. Over the past few years, the hall has hosted the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra's centennial

concert, the Hunan Symphony, the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra, the BBC Symphony, the World Doctor's Orchestra, the Boston Brass, the Berlin Philharmonic Winds and The Academy of Ancient Music.

In 2018, Prince Mahidol Hall will be welcoming two very special orchestras to Thailand for the first time: the Berlin Philharmonic conducted by Maestro Gustavo Dudamel, and the London Symphony Orchestra.

The concert Requiem For King Rama IX opened with a Christian prayer service where homage was paid to the late king by five Thai-Christian organisations: the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand, the Church of Christ in Thailand, the Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand, Thailand Baptist Convention and Seventh-day Adventist Church of Thailand.

Following the service, Thailand Philharmonic Orchestra, along with five choirs from the Christian organisations and joined by the Mahidol University Chorus, performed selections from the requiems of Mozart, Faure and Verdi, as well as a work



PHOTO COURTESY OF THAILAND PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

by Narong Prangcharoen, Thailand's foremost classical composer. Narong, who was recently named the new dean at the College of Music, Mahidol University, to succeed Dr Sugree Charoensuk, composed a piece called *Kwan For Chorus And Orchestra*, which ended with a very gentle pluck by the double bass violins, sounding very much like a final heartbeat, so poignant and powerful.

The power and volume of Giuseppe Verdi's *Deas Irae* from his *Requiem* came from the placement of some trumpets in the balconies, giving a 3D aura to the spectacular concert. The soloists for the concert included Thai soprano Sassaya Chevalit, Italian mezzo soprano Martinia Belli, tenor Danilo Formaggia and bass Stefano Rinaldi. All of them were absolutely wonderful.

It is through the efforts of Khunying Patama Leeswadtrakul, chairman of the TPO Board of Directors — in co-ordination and sponsorship with Christian Unity, composed of the Catholic Bishop's Conference of Thailand, Church of Christ in Thailand, Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand, Thailand Baptist Convention and Seventh-Day Adventist Church of Thailand — that made this event possible.

The TPO next season begins in the first week of November and programme information can be found at thailandphil.com.