



BIOGRAPHY: LEIGH SMALL SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL CEO

Leigh Small has worked for over 25 years in management positions in many of Sydney's performing arts companies, including **Sydney Opera House**, **Sydney Theatre Company**, and as Executive Director of **Sydney Dance Company** for 10 years. Small is also a freelance producer who has worked for the **Queensland Performing Arts Centre** and the **English National Ballet**.

From her appointment in 2010, Leigh Small has steered **Sydney Film Festival** from financial uncertainty to unprecedented attendances, revenue and reputation. Her goal is to continue to increase audiences and to become even more relevant to Sydney's broader audiences.

Small said, "The Festival's aim is to be the best public-facing film festival in Australia. We show the best of the best international films, we create stimulating and productive environments for local and international filmmakers who attend the Festival, and we create opportunities for Australian filmmakers."

A large part of Leigh Small's role as CEO is in creating the company's vision. "Our mission statement here is shared experience. In an era where you can consume film in any format at any time, the whole point of a festival is to bring things together in a curated way at one time, for a vast audience to share an experience, and to ignite important conversations. And for that reason Sydney Film Festival has a bright future and an important role in society."

Small is also dedicated to creating an organisational and financial structure that is completely sustainable.

Small's career began at **Belvoir St Theatre** (1986–88). She then worked in the UK for two years taking on a series of marketing and publicity positions in film and television, including at **Portobello Productions** and **Channel 4**.

As Marketing and Publicity Manager at **Sydney Theatre Company** (1991–93) she worked on successful campaigns for educational research programs, commercial ventures, international tours and subscription series, increasing subscriptions from 13,000 to 17,000 in just two years.

Small started at **Sydney Opera House** (1994–97) as Marketing Manager and then went on to become Director of Programming and Commercial Operations. She led the first market research programs at the iconic venue and was responsible for a new strategic plan, which brought about a complete rebranding of the Opera House in the late '90s, developing the venue from an architectural icon into an internationally renowned performing arts centre.

She then spent 10 years heading up **Sydney Dance Company** (1997–2007). As Executive Director she reinvigorated the company with strategies and a public appeal campaign that led to an attendance increase of over 150%. Small developed partnerships for Sydney Dance Company, including the first between Western and Chinese dance companies, with the Shanghai City Dance Company. She led the company to be a part of the Australian Major Performing Arts Group, leading government and media lobbying.



Small was appointed CEO of Sydney Film Festival in 2010 by **Festival Chairman Chris Freeland**, the National Managing Partner of the Australian offices of corporate law firm Baker & McKenzie. The following year, Leigh appointed the new **Festival Director Nashen Moodley**.

For Leigh Small, Sydney Film Festival's future is to be, "a festival of the best films of the year, which is consumed by, and accessible to, everyone who wants to consume it, in a festival environment with filmmakers there, so that it is a shared experience. It is the single thing that has to stay the same."

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

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*****Sydney Film Festival Press Pack and Images Available [HERE](#)**

ABOUT SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

From Wednesday 6 June to Sunday 17 June 2018, the 65th Sydney Film Festival offers Sydneysiders another exciting season of cinema amidst a whirlwind of premieres, red-carpet openings, in-depth discussions, international guests and more.

Sydney Film Festival also presents an Official Competition of 12 films that vie for the Sydney Film Prize, a highly respected honour that awards a \$60,000 cash prize based on the decision of a jury of international and Australian filmmakers and industry professionals. Previous Sydney Film Prize winners: *On Body and Soul* (2017); *Aquarius* (2016); *Arabian Nights* (2015); *Two Days, One Night* (2014); *Only God Forgives* (2013); *Alps* (2012); *A Separation* (2011); *Heartbeats* (2010); *Bronson* (2009); and *Hunger* (2008).

The Festival is a major event on the New South Wales cultural calendar and is one of the world's longest-running film festivals. For more information visit: sff.org.au.

The 65th Sydney Film Festival is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW and Destination NSW, the Federal Government through Screen Australia and the City of Sydney. The Festival's Strategic Partner is the NSW Government via its tourism and major events agency, Destination NSW.

